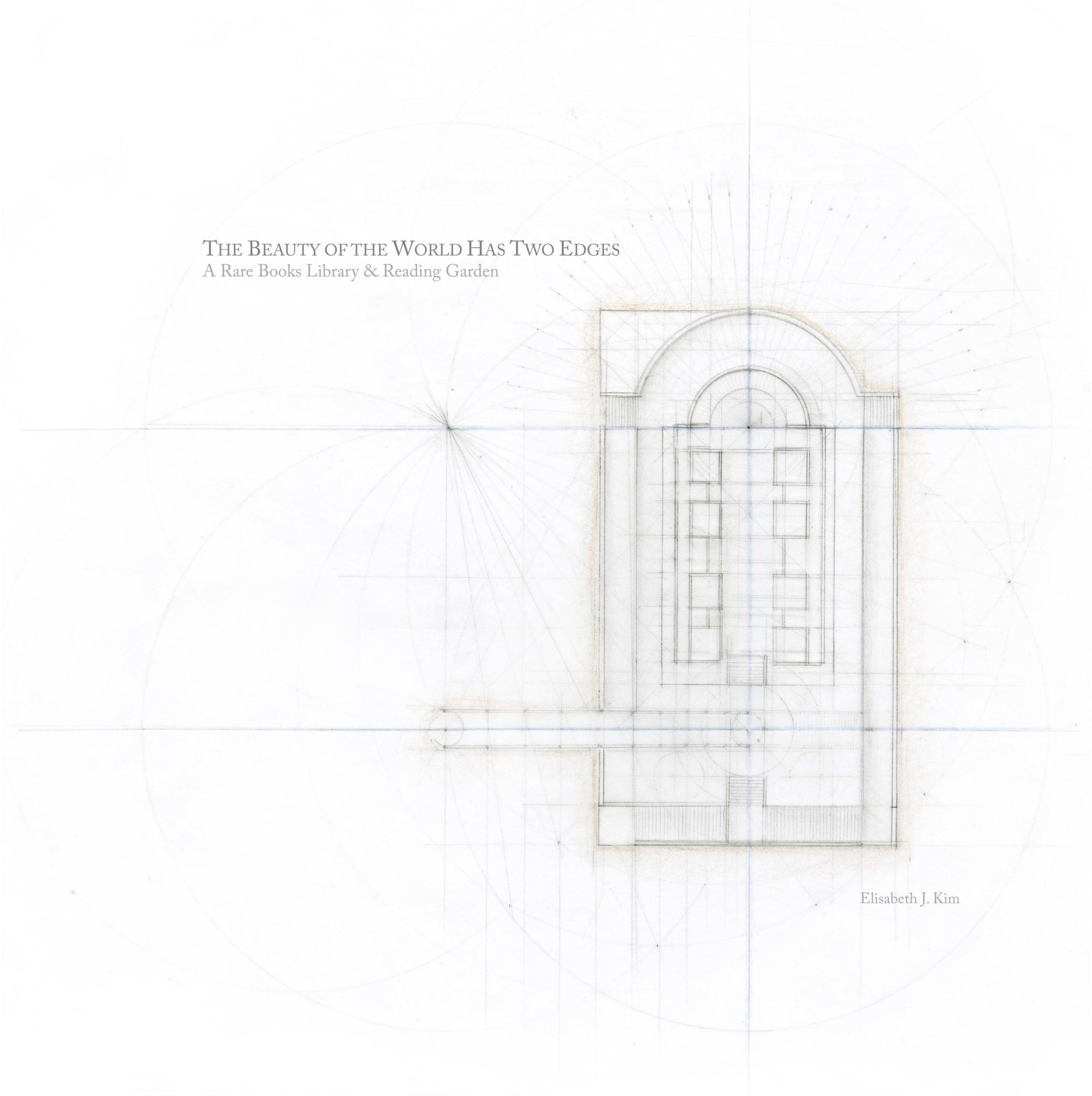


THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD HAS TWO EDGES  
A Rare Books Library & Reading Garden



Elisabeth J. Kim

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Elisabeth J. Kim

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Architecture in Architecture

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August 6th, 2012  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Library, Garden, Constructive Technique, Composition, Geometry, Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

A library for rare books and a reading garden, the following project emerged from an attempt to better understand the *idea* of an autonomous architecture. Framing architectural questions as a choice between opposing alternatives of perceived relevance (e.g., geometric construction versus geometric composition, self referential versus self governing, singular versus universal) the project, which at its beginning was a simple exercise in geometric constructive technique, evolved as it was viewed through the lenses of those dualities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bill Galloway

Thank you for helping me see through these and other walls with uncommon patience and generosity.

Steve Thompson

“A lover of wisdom, which is to say, Truth.” Thank you for imparting your words of wisdom with care, humor, and understanding.

Kay Edge

Thank you for your enthusiasm for the mysterious and ephemeral beginning of things, and for emboldening me by your example to value and enjoy them.

Virginia Pinzon

Thank you for inspiring me to pursue a path I would not have ventured on had it not been for the awakening I felt in your studio.

Family

My parents, sisters, and Elly, thank you for your unwavering confidence in my potential.

StuDiomates

Thank you for three years of kindhearted and thoughtful rapport; I am so grateful I went through this experience in your good company.

Gabe Oliver

Thank you for encouraging me to accept nothing less than my best effort.

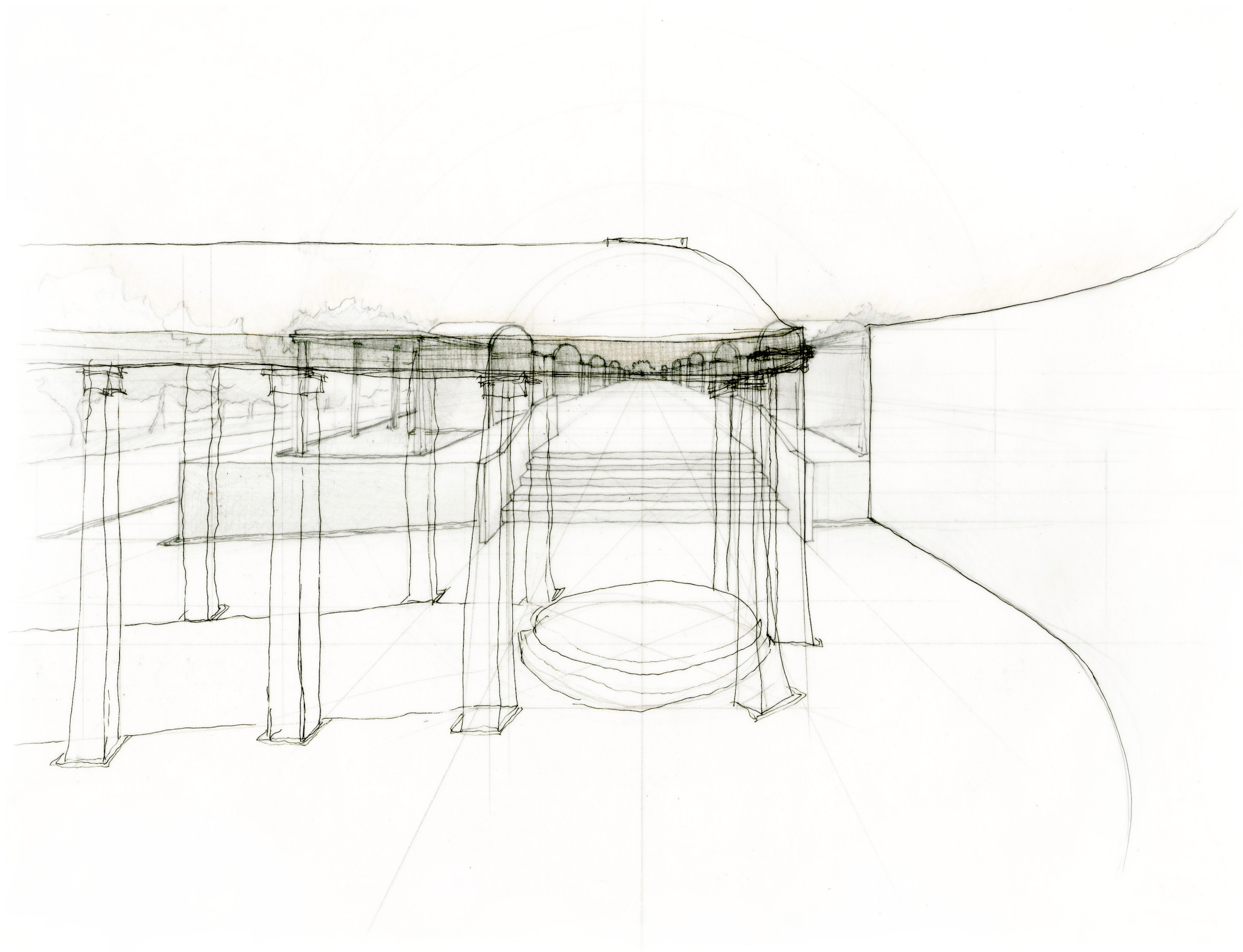
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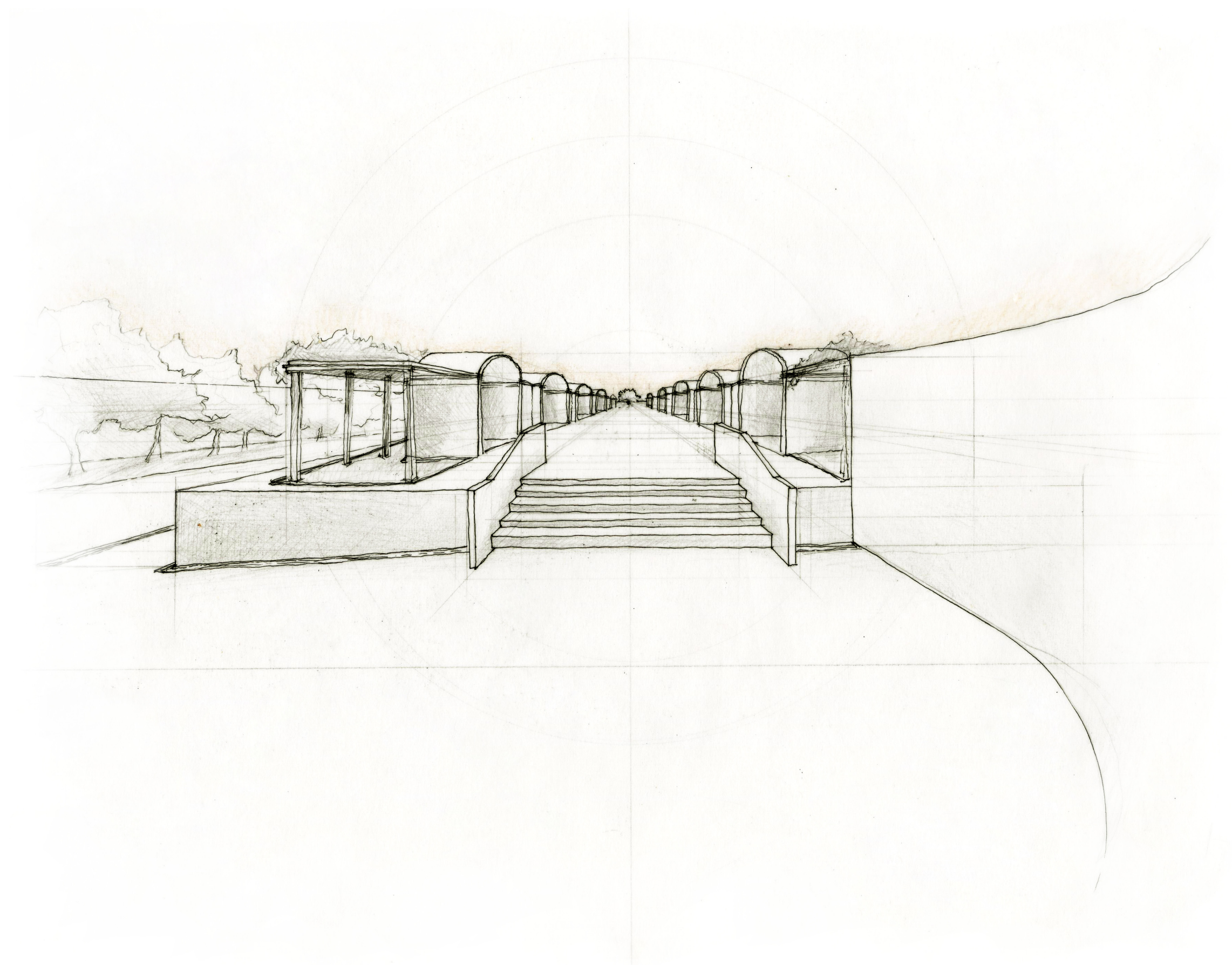
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## FOREWORD

“But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult!”

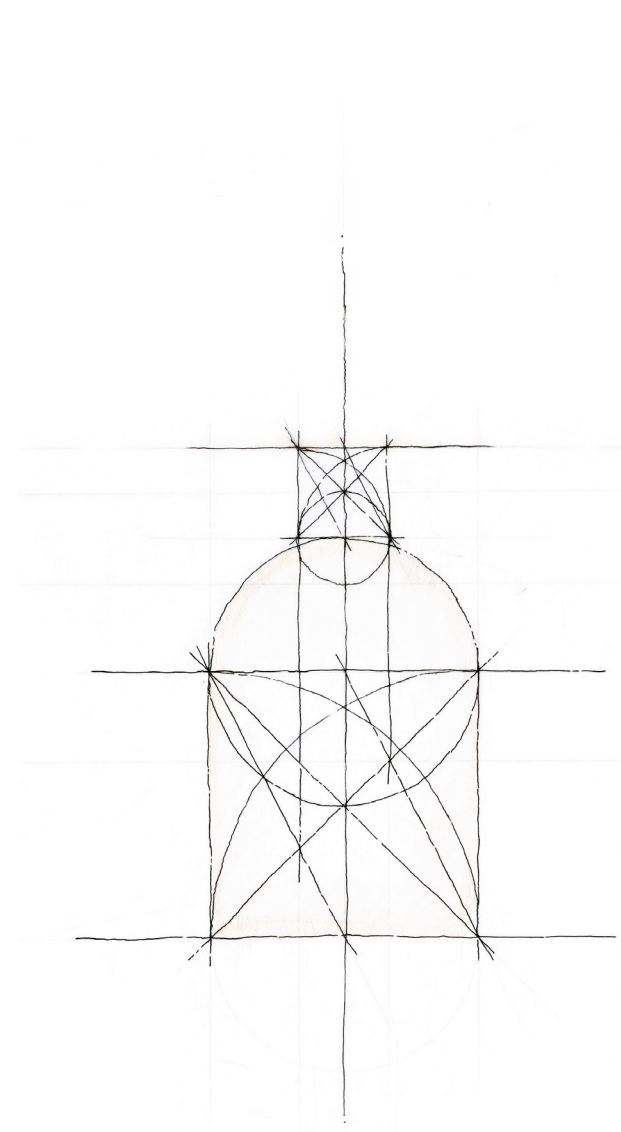
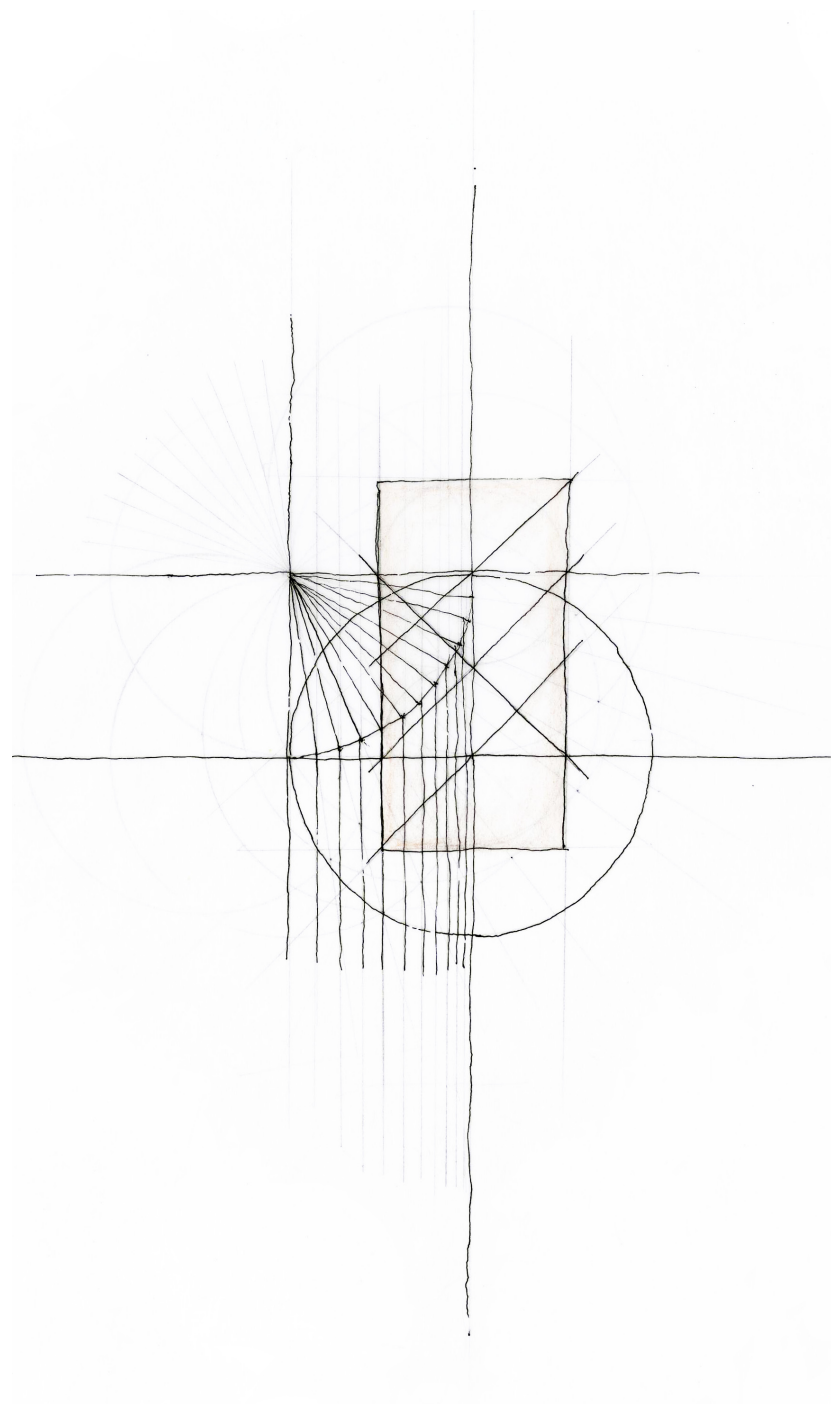
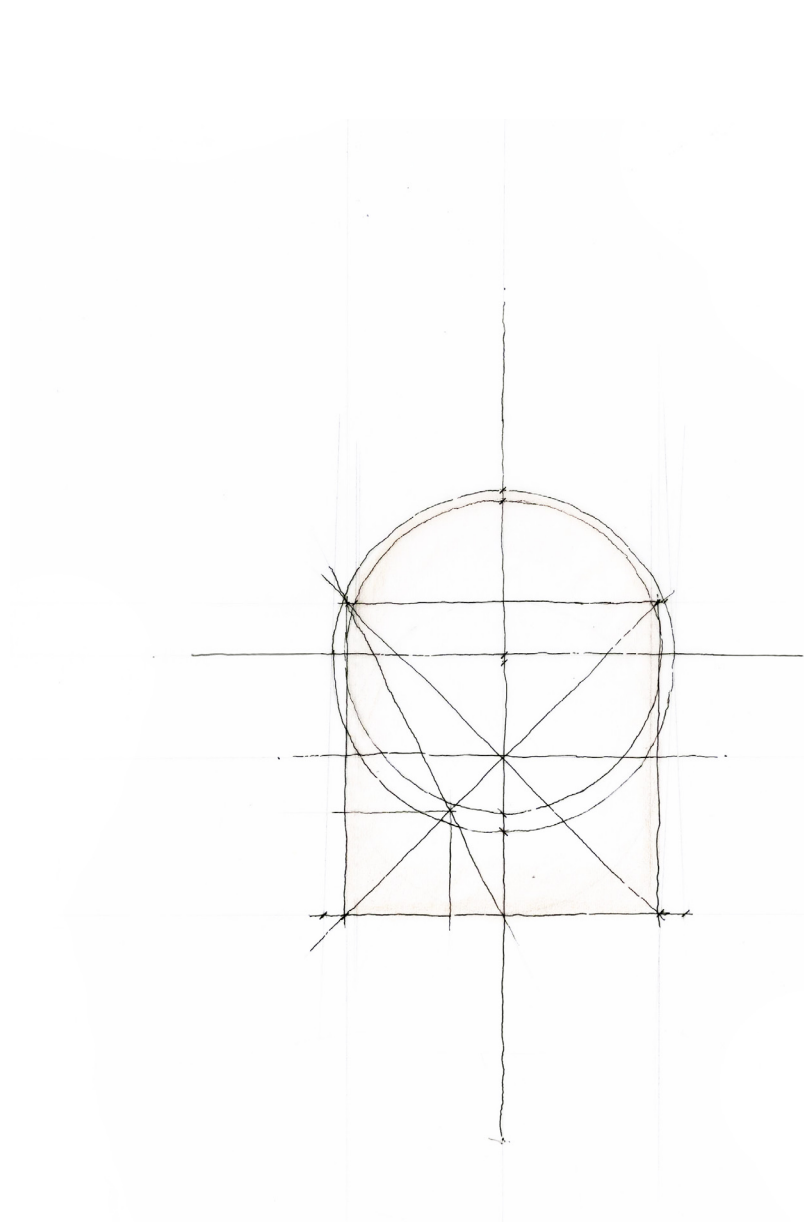
-Kate Chopin  
The Awakening, p. 34, Avon Books (1972)

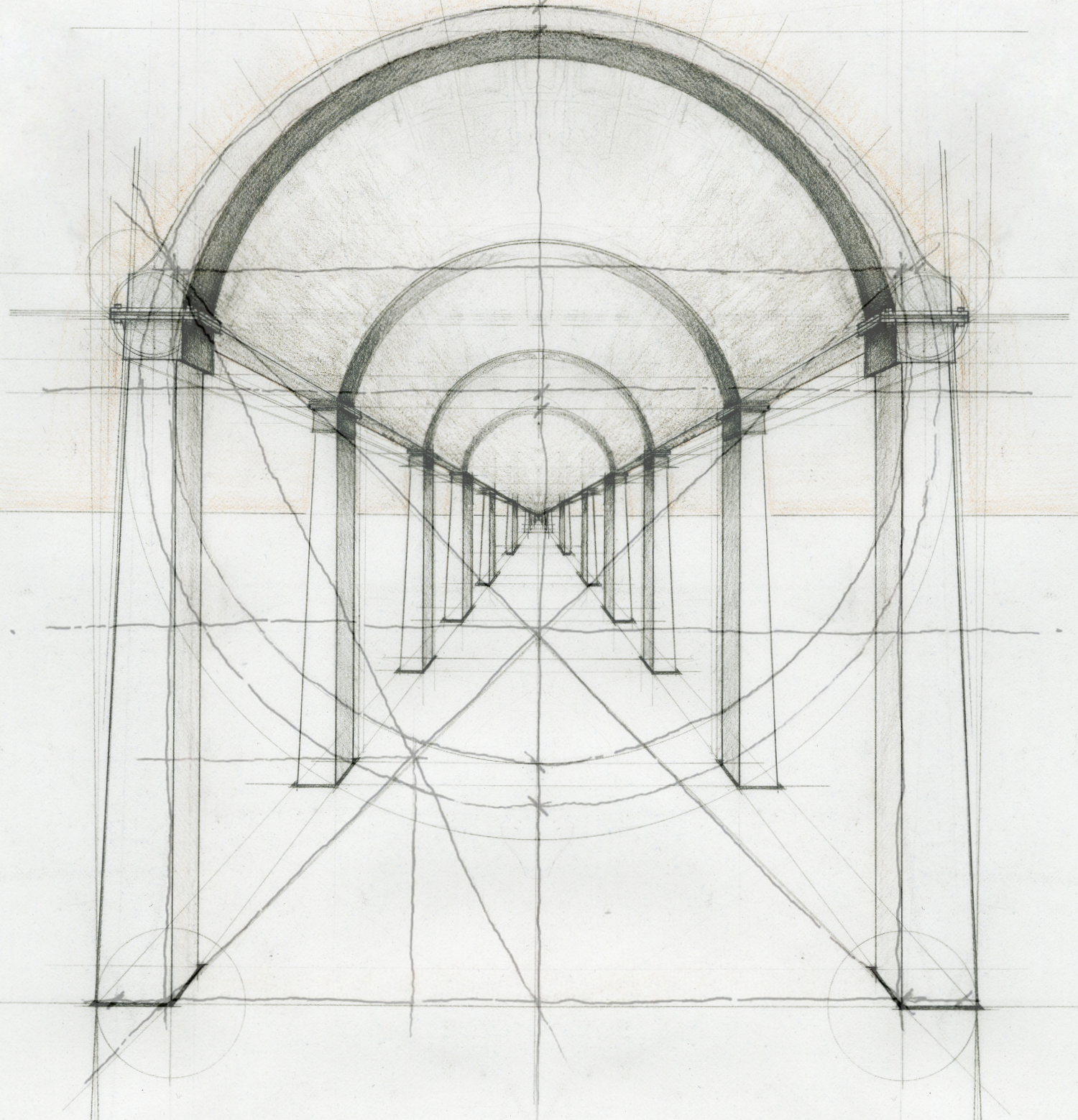


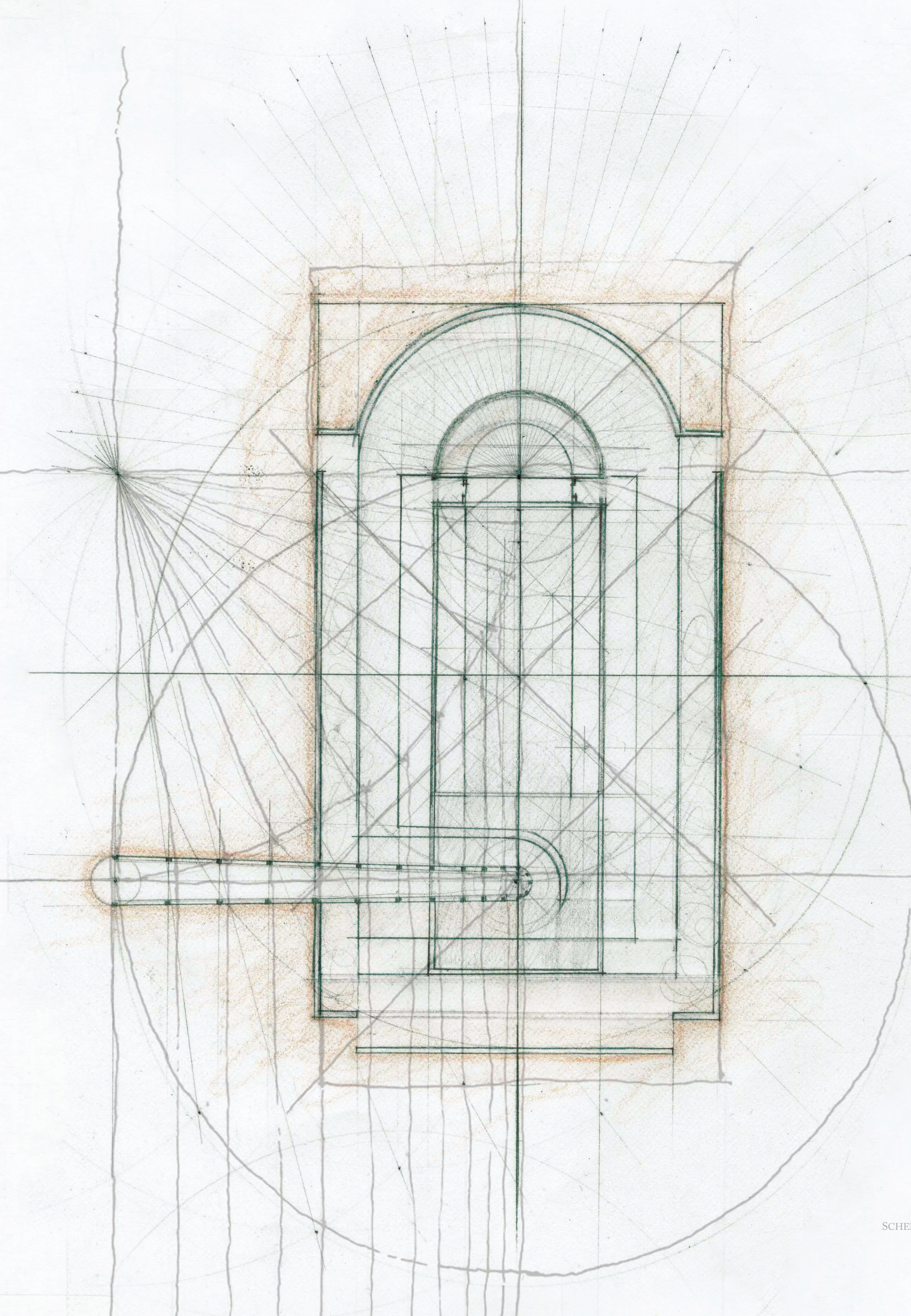


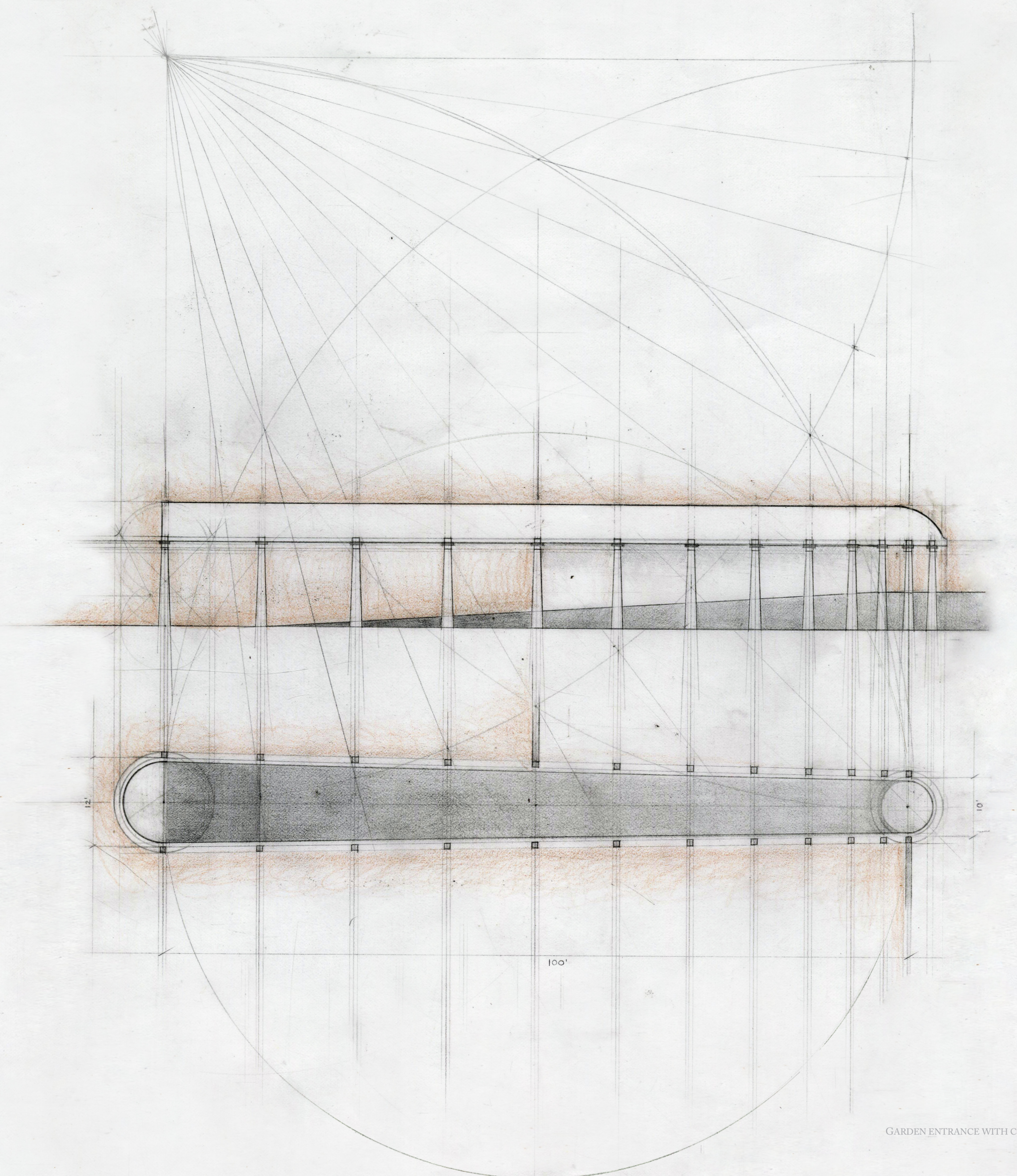


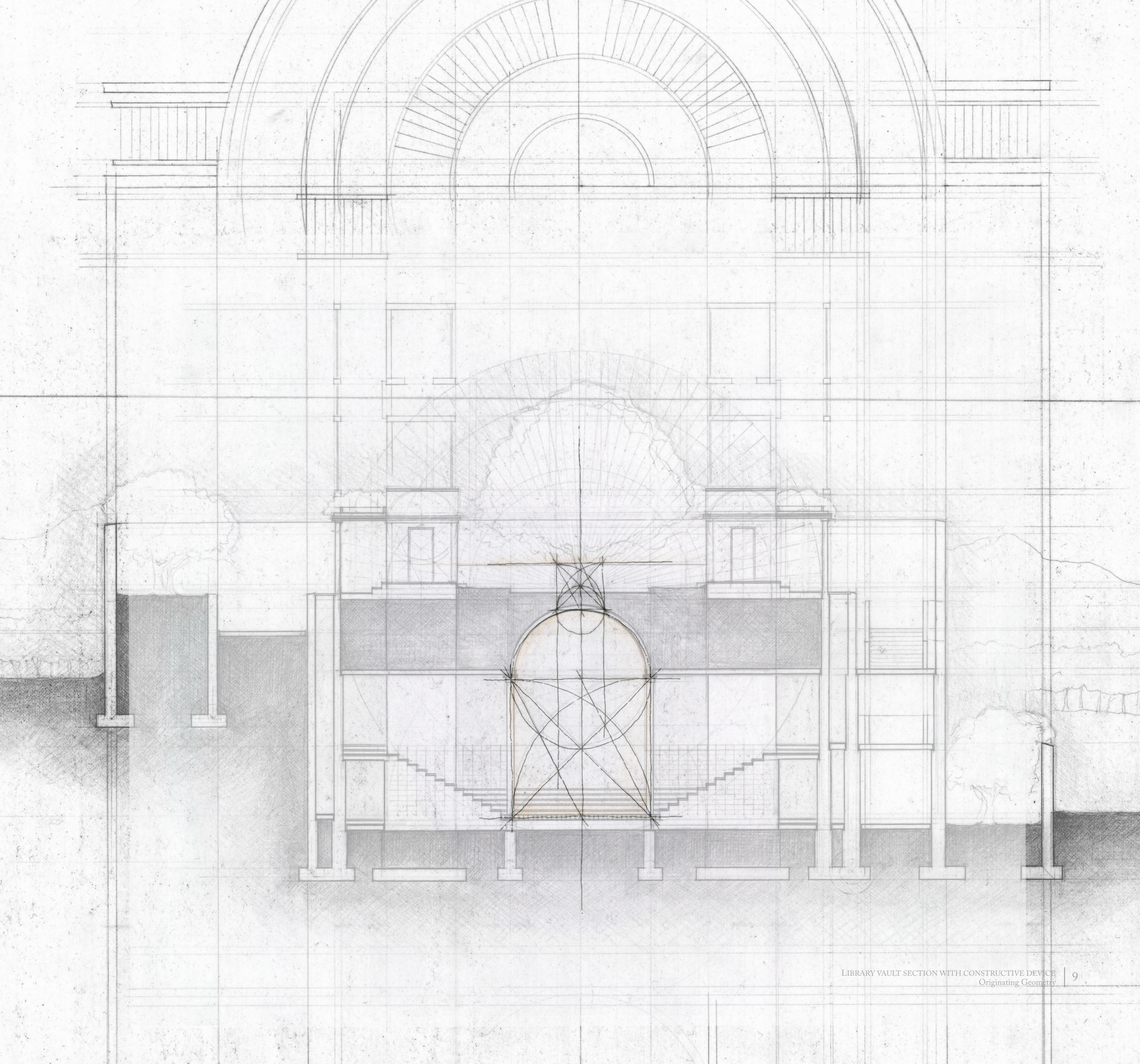
CHAPTER 1  
Originating Geometry: Invention of a Constructive Device







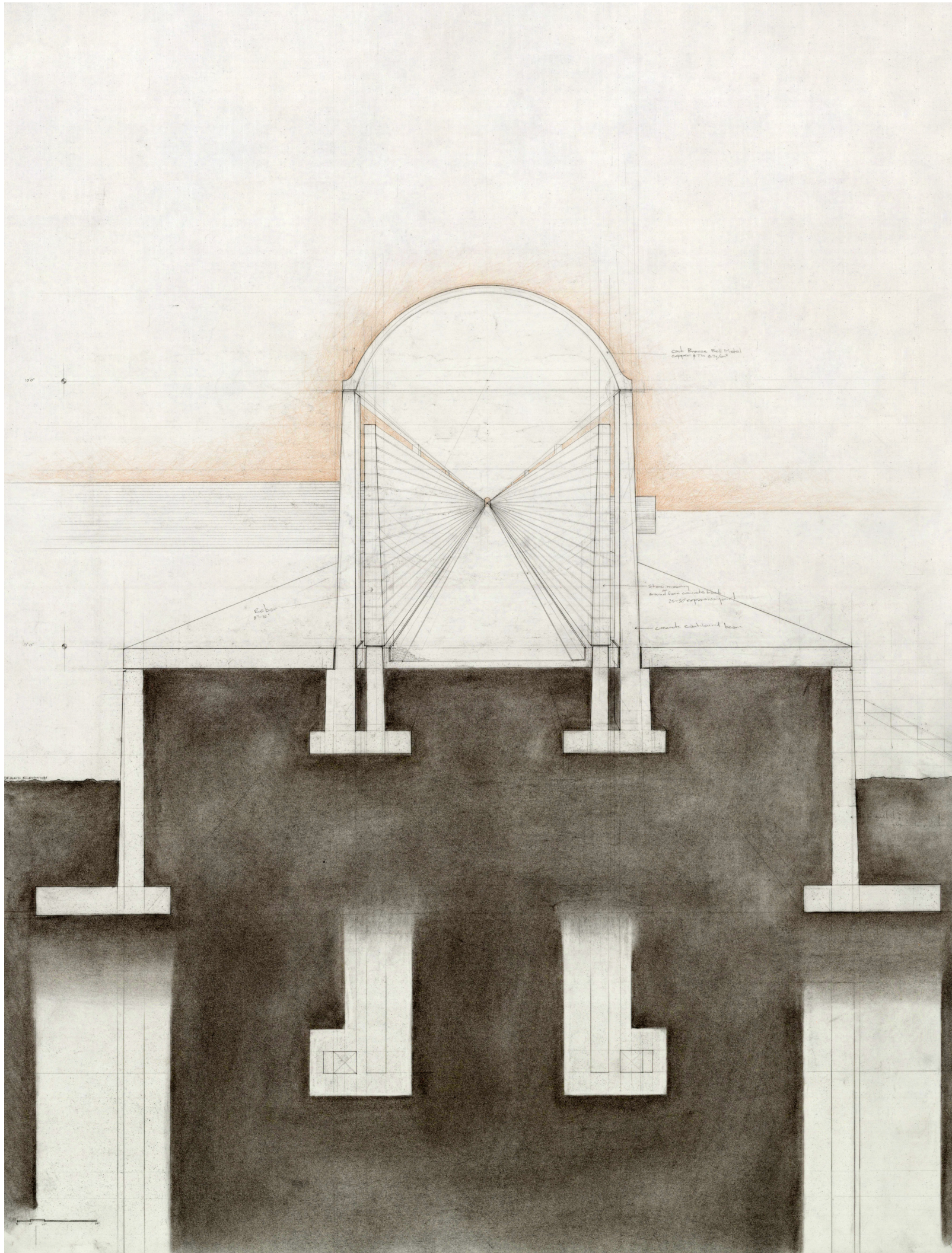


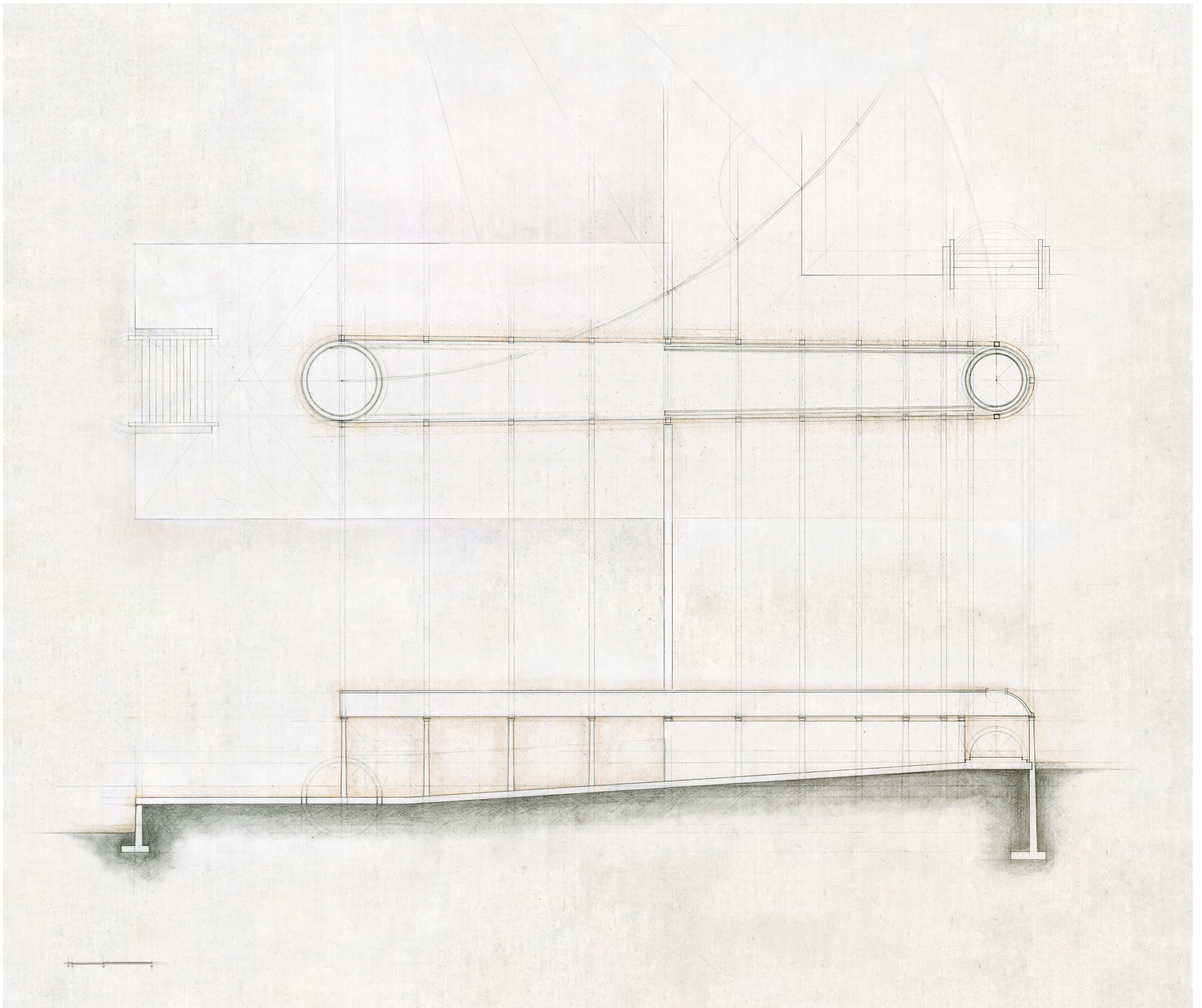


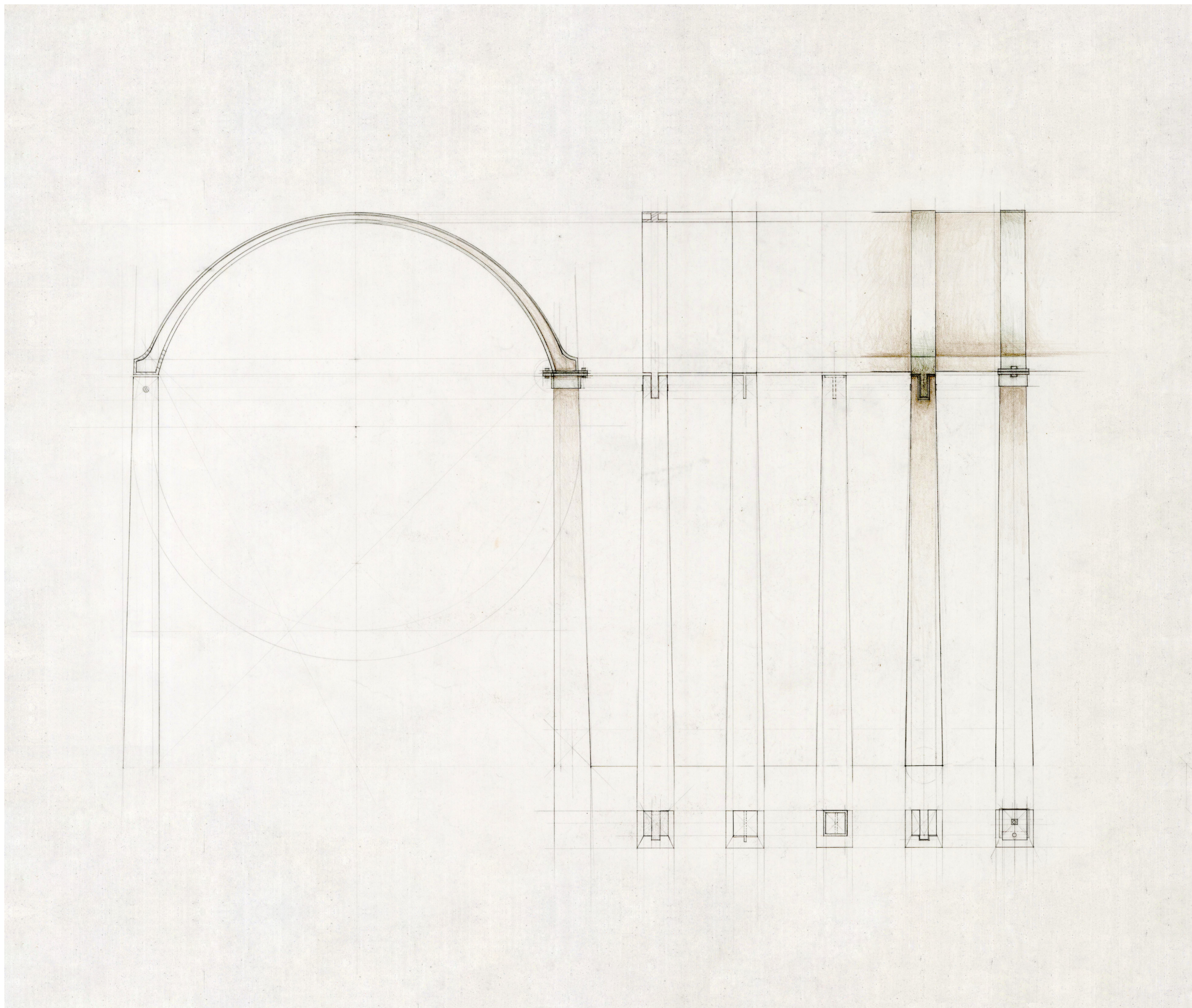
CHAPTER 2  
Embodied Geometry: Imposition of a Material Existence

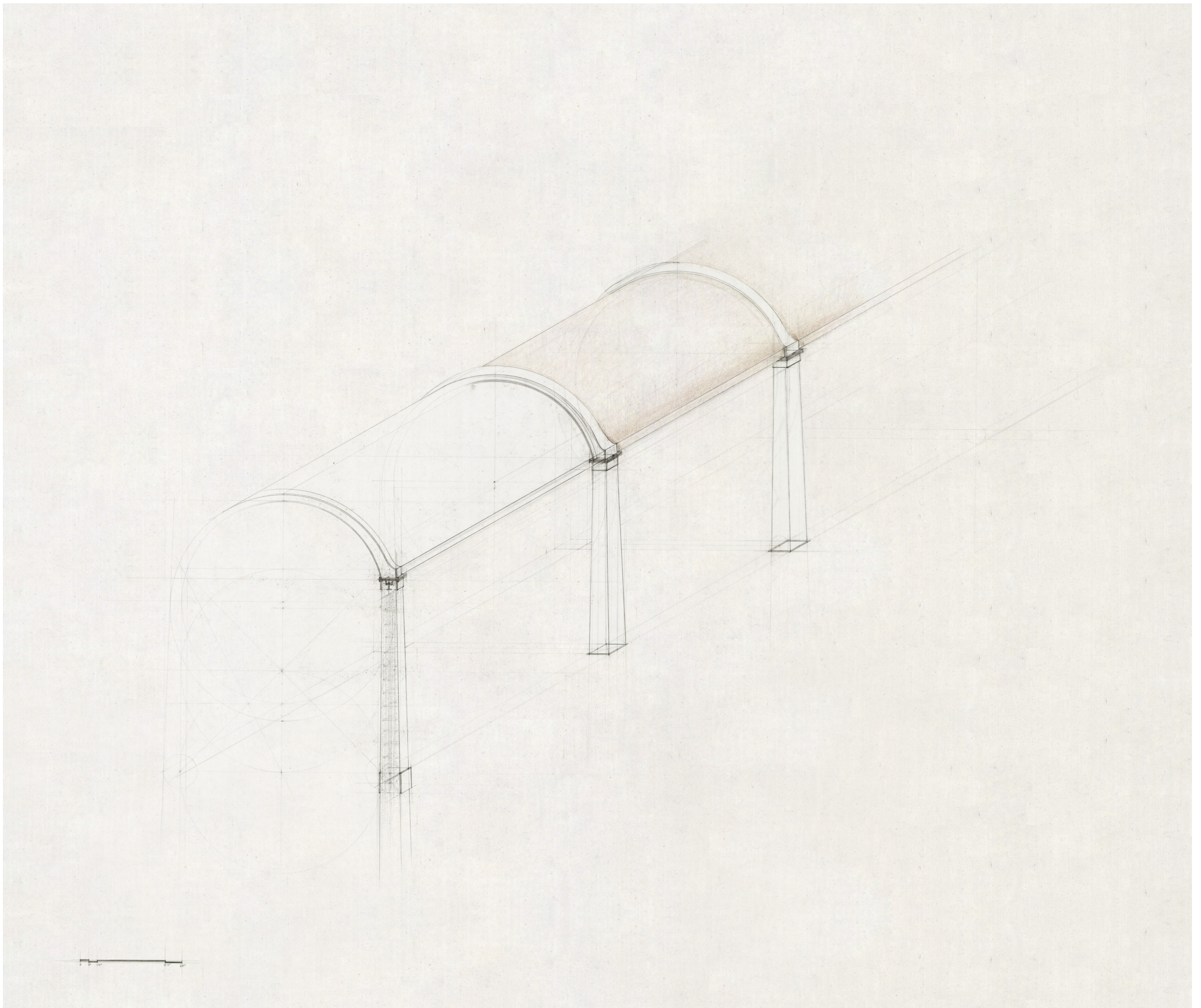
Concrete: inherent potential, elegant plainness, patiently enduring.  
Bronze: burnished, glowing, gracefully aging, powdery patina.  
Honed Stone: soft, smooth, warm, invites touch.  
Gravel: murmured stride, soft underfoot.

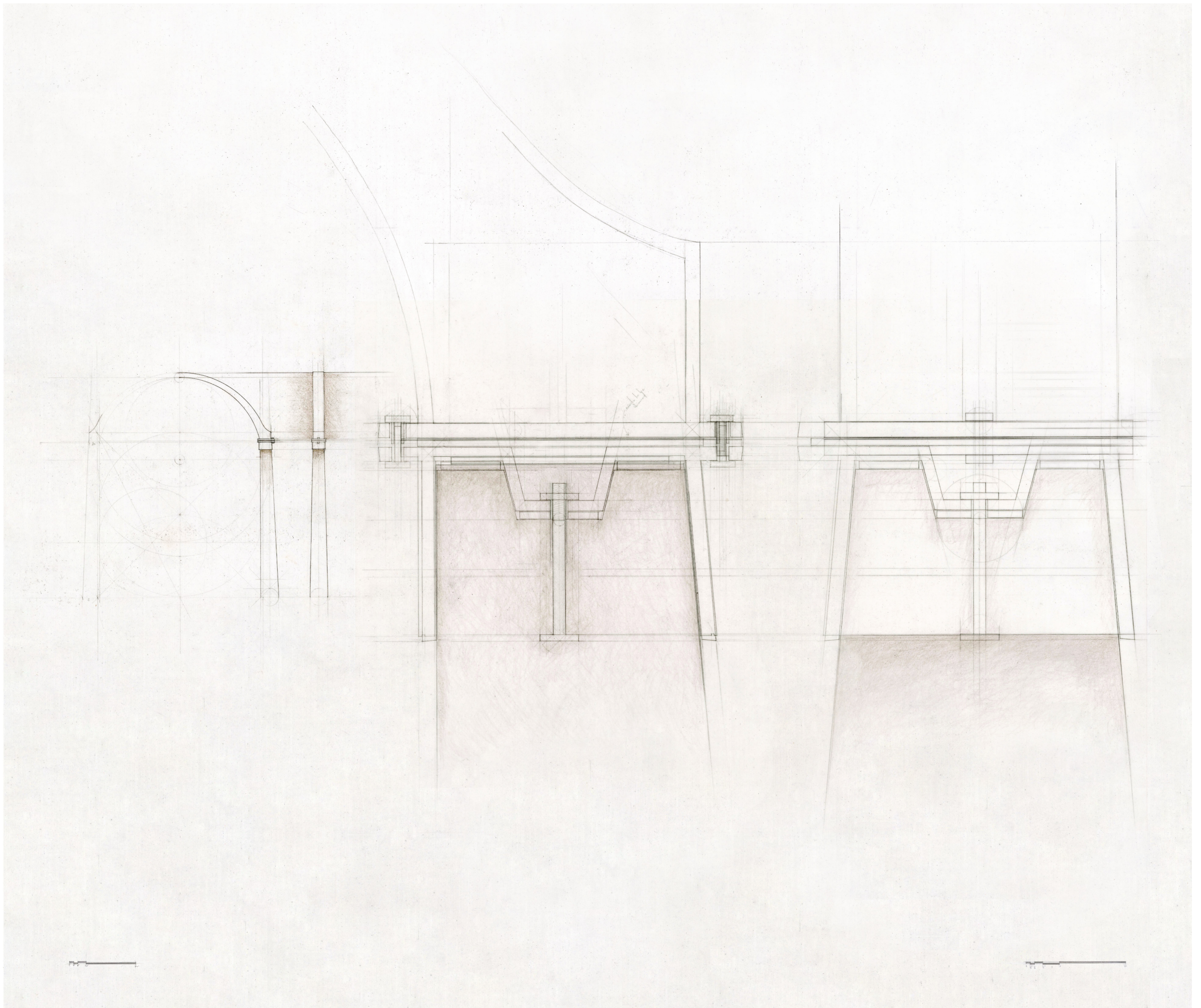








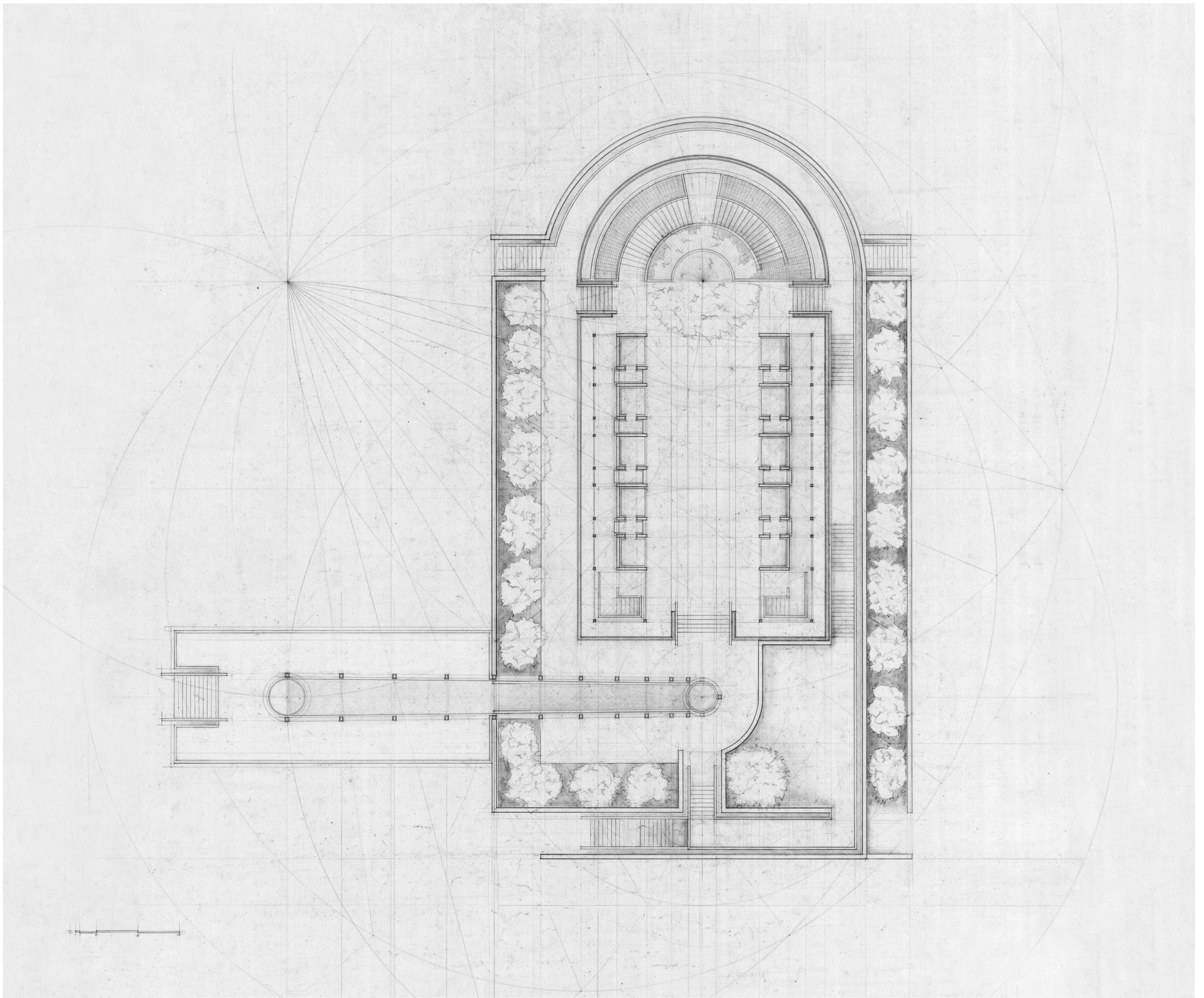




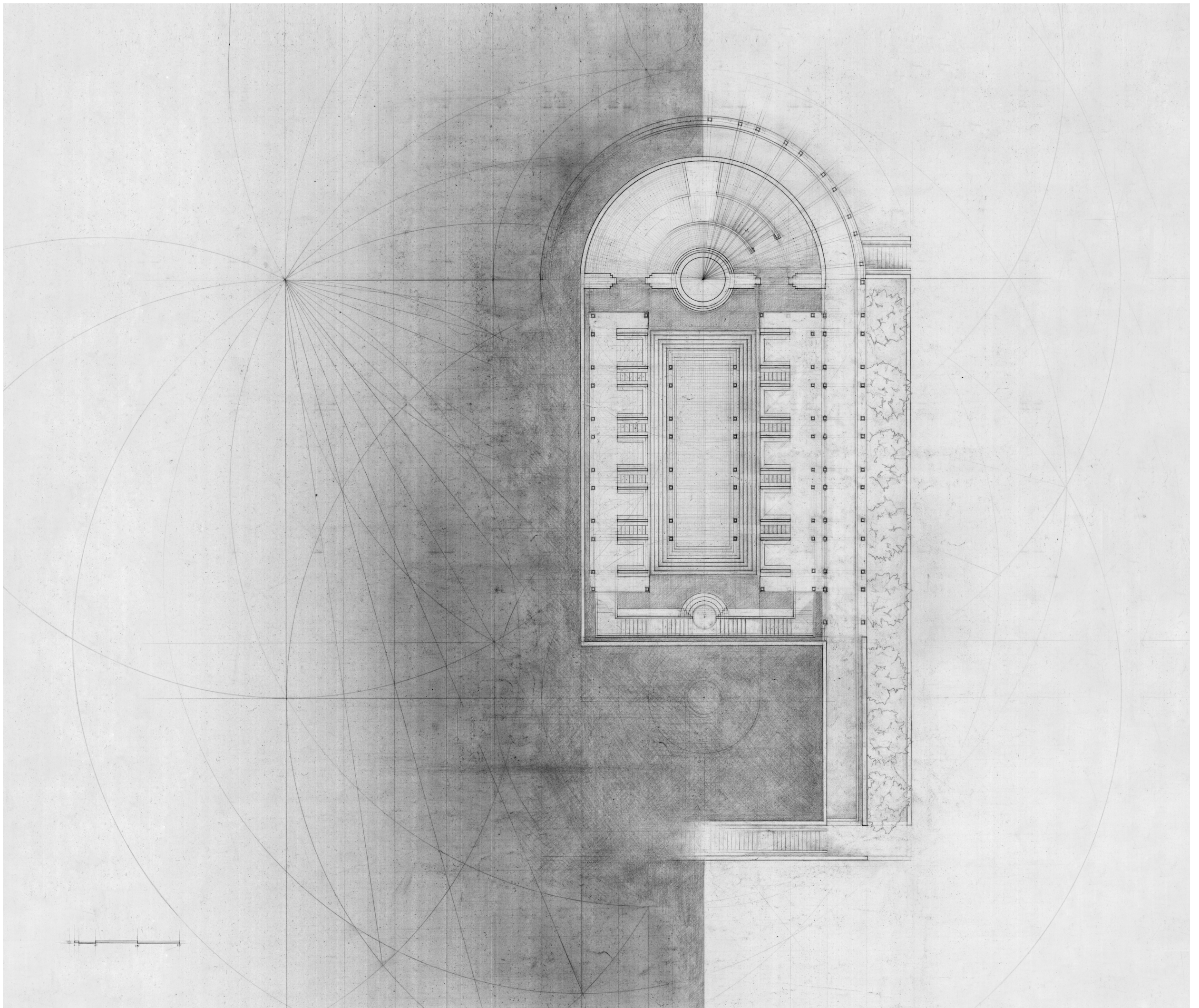
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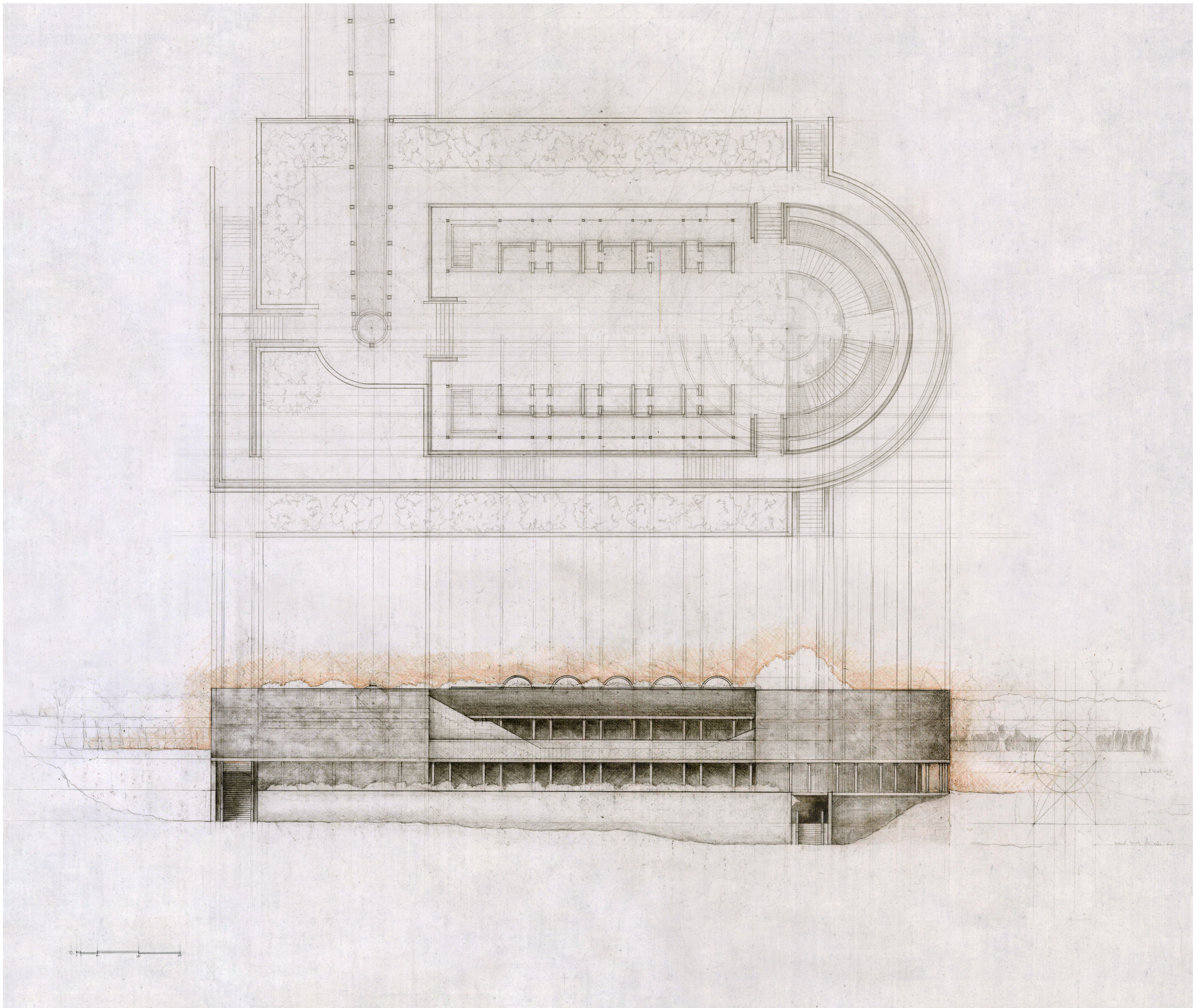
“Leaving behind the babble of the plaza, I enter the Library.  
I feel, almost physically, the gravitation of the books, the enveloping serenity of order,  
time magically desiccated and preserved.”

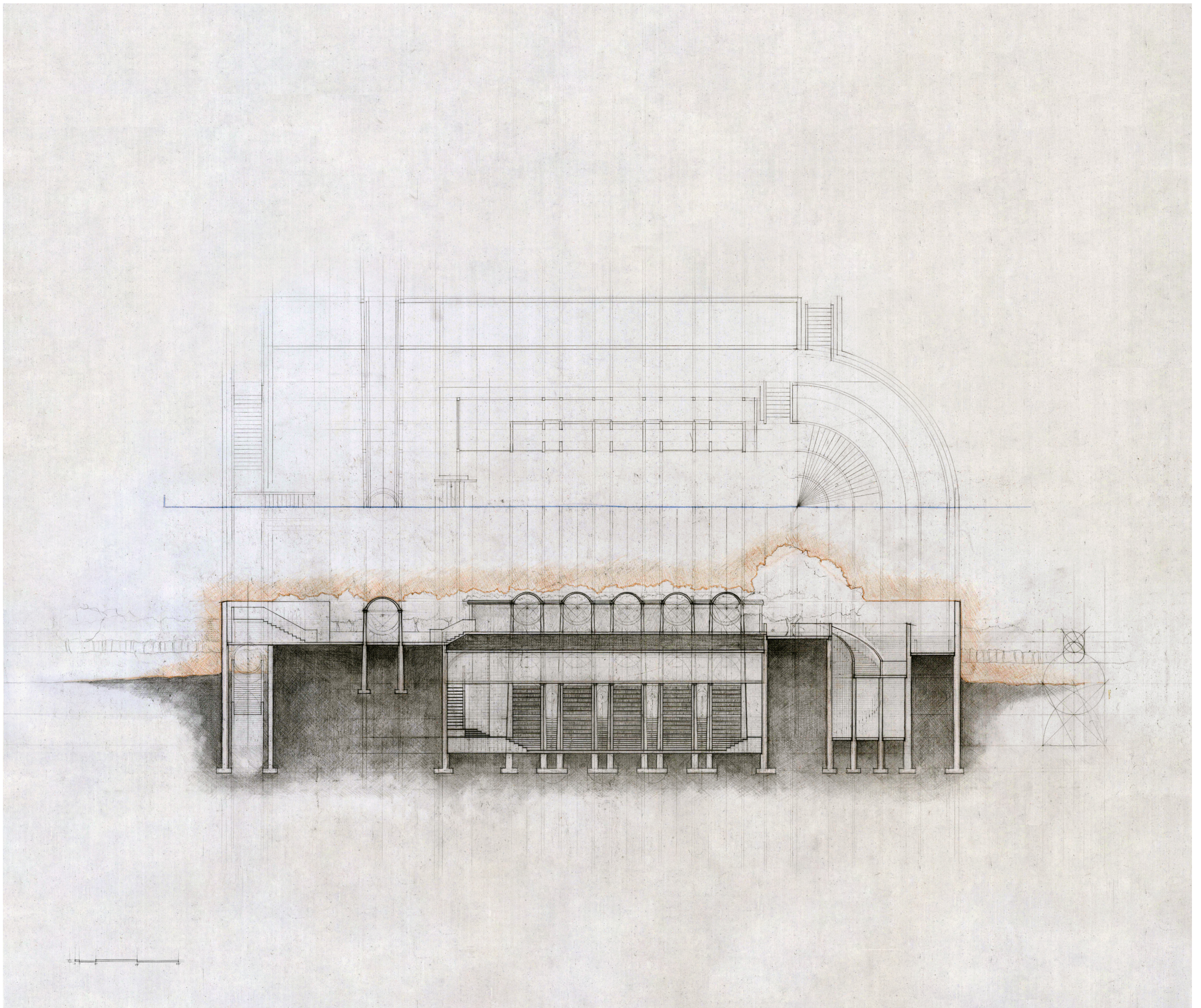
-Jorge Luis Borges  
Dreamtigers, p. 21, University of Texas Press (1964)

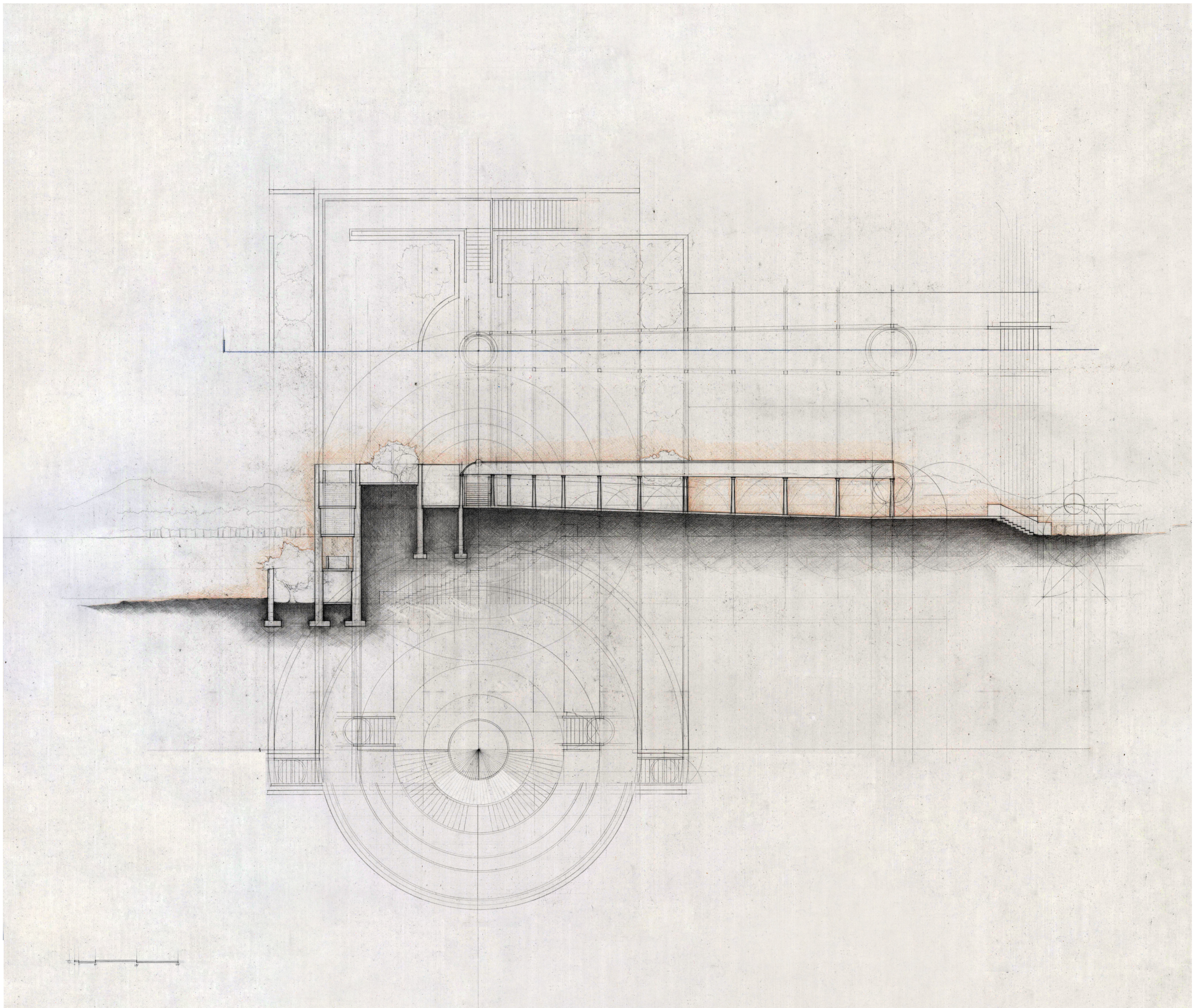


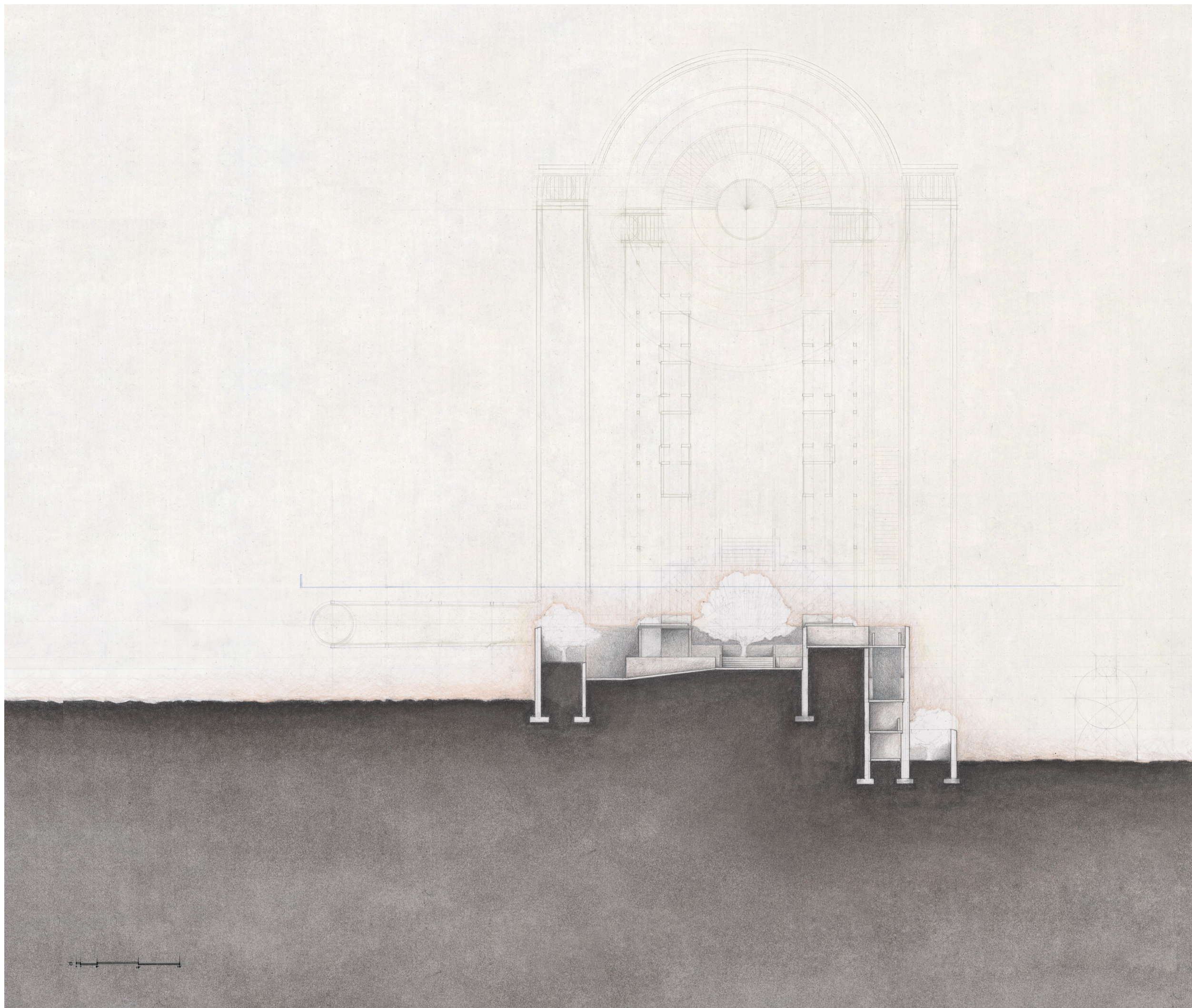


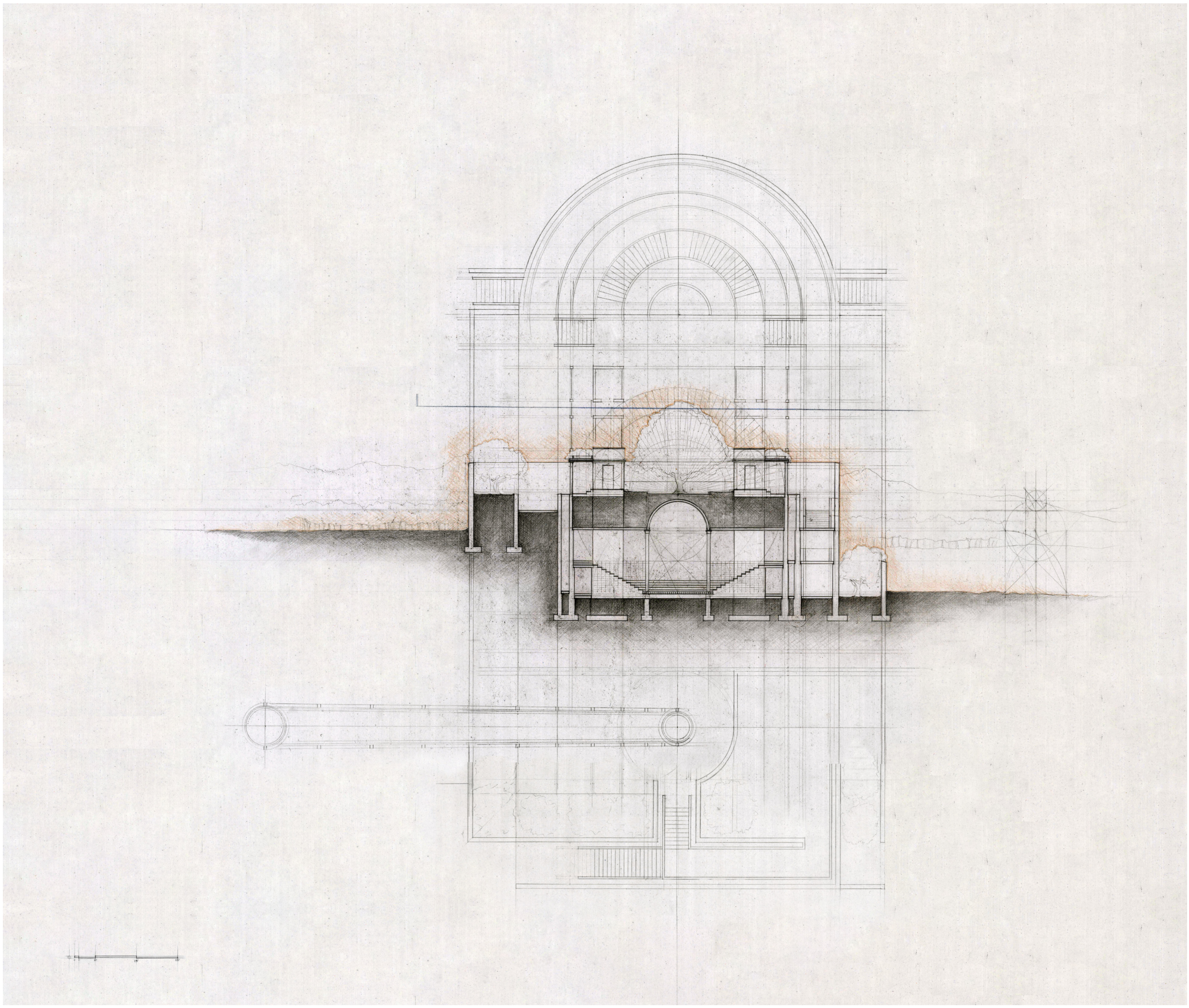












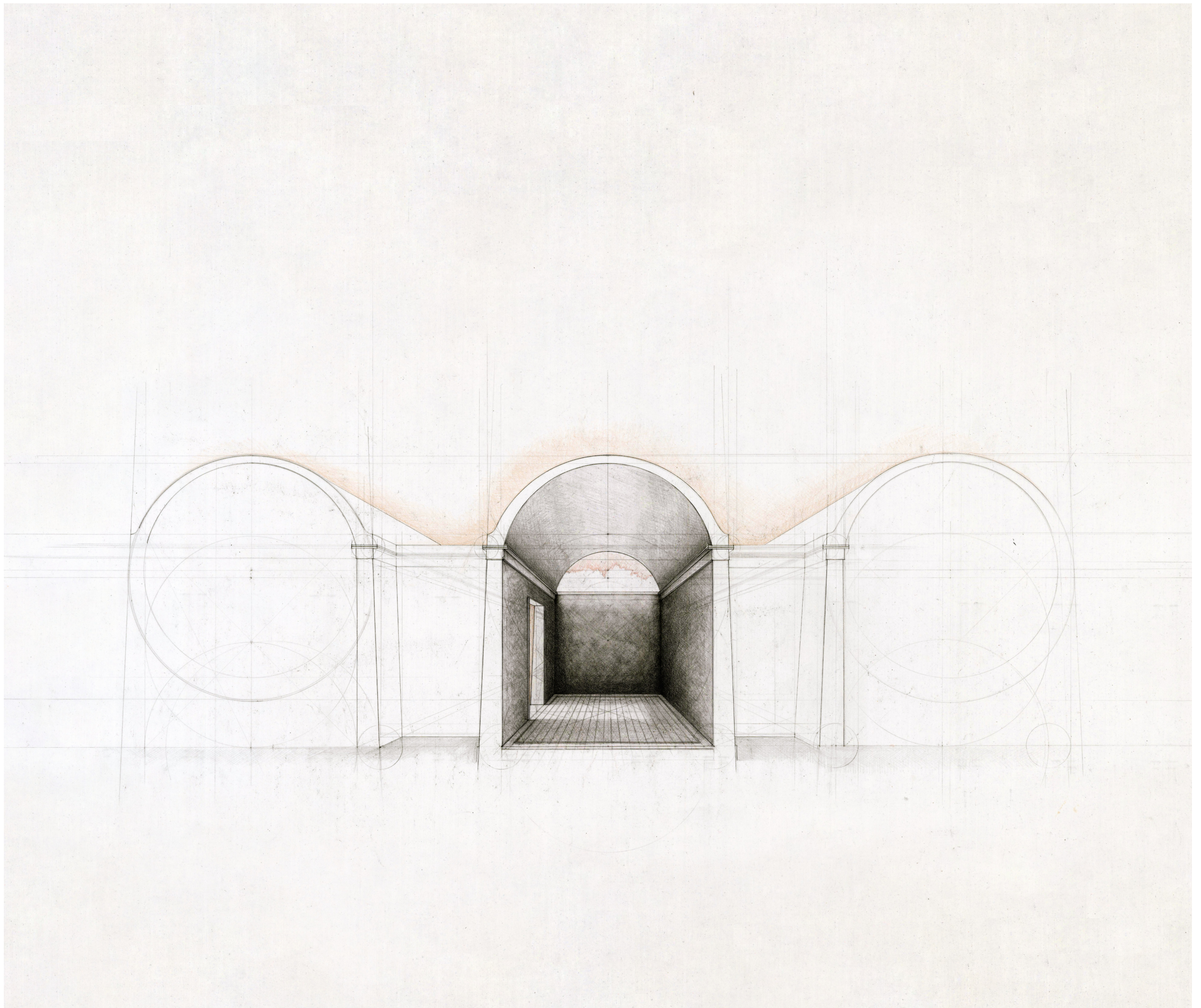
CHAPTER 4  
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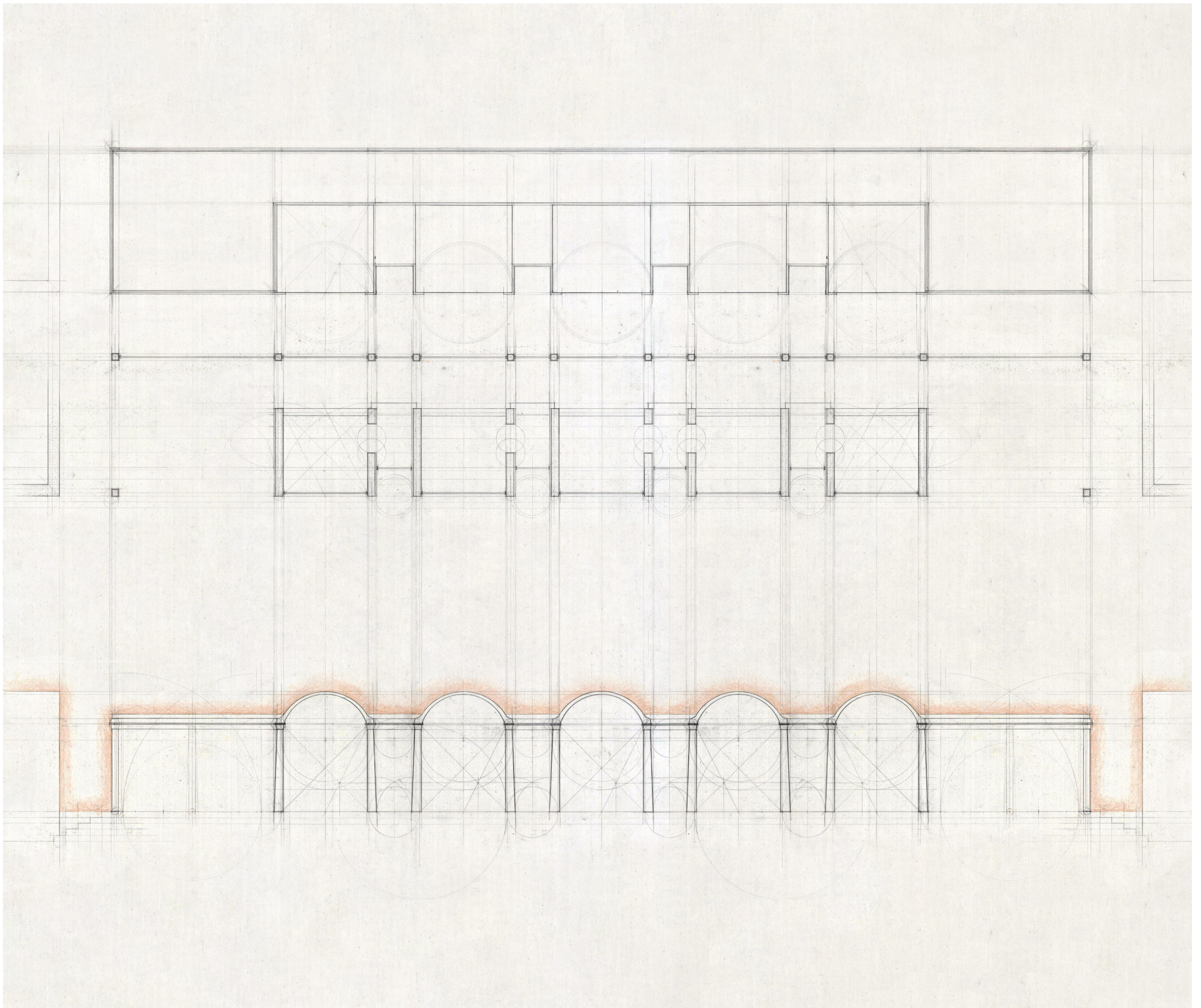
“...Consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle!”

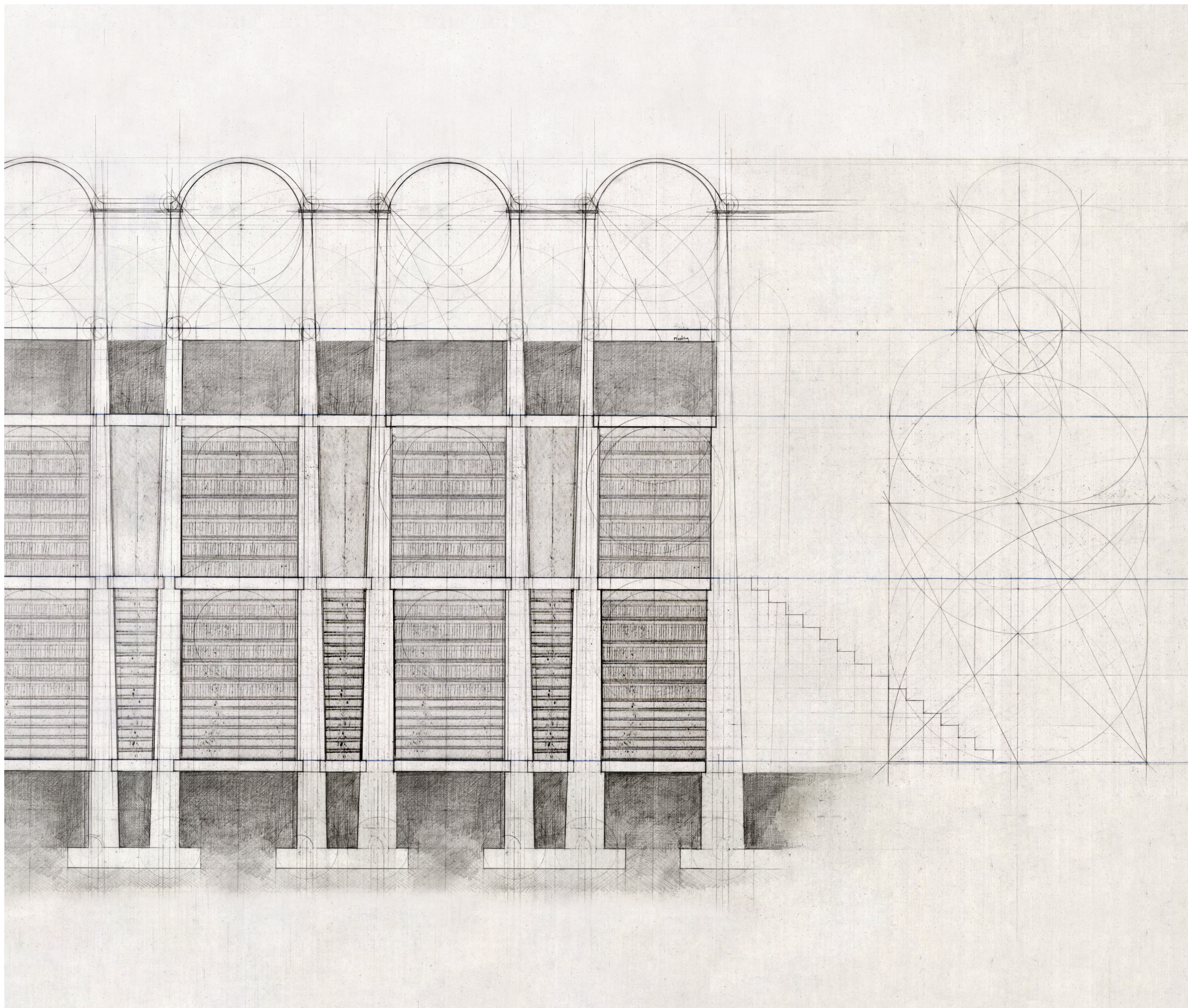
-Herman Melville

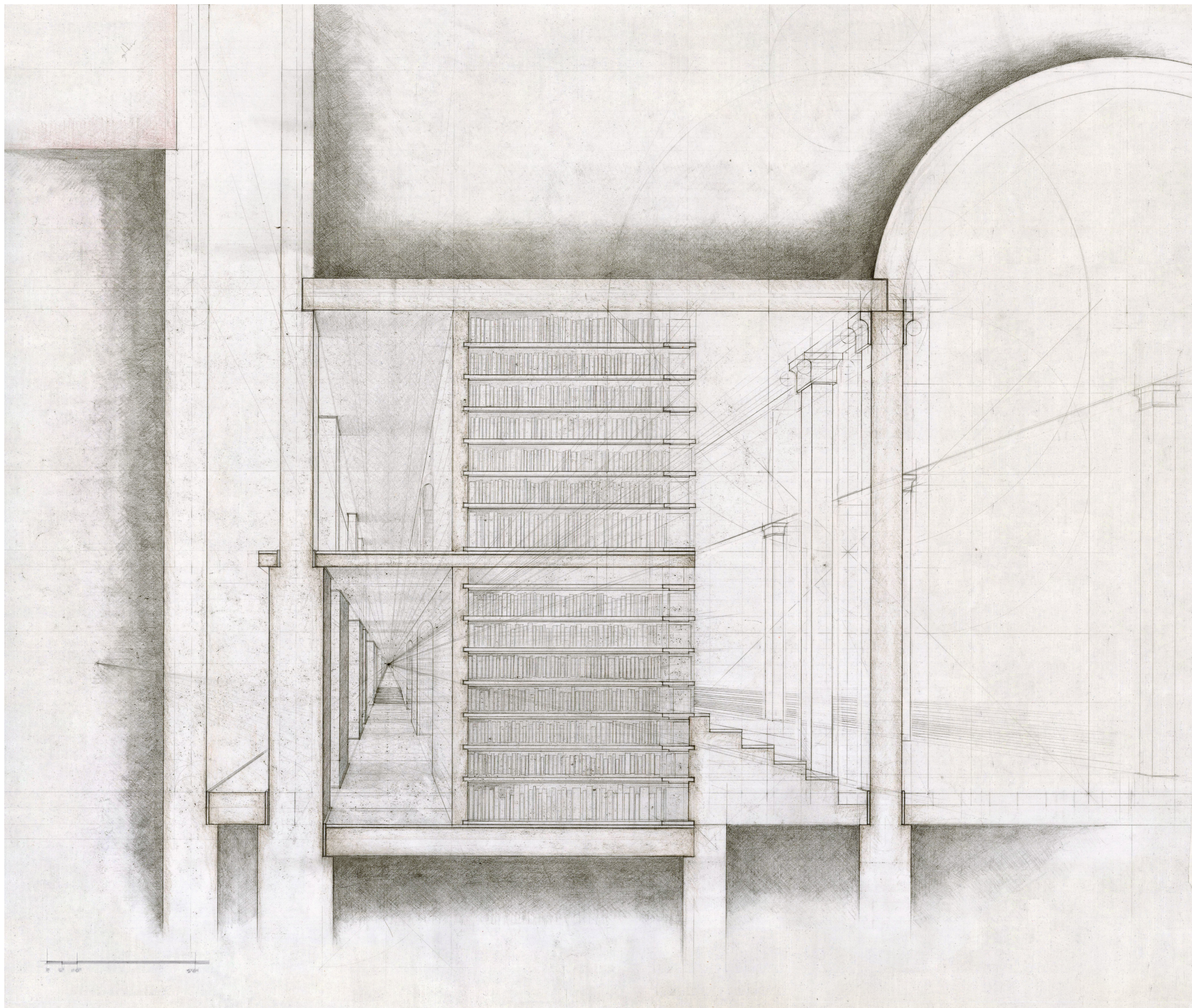
Moby Dick p. 293, Bantam Books (1981)

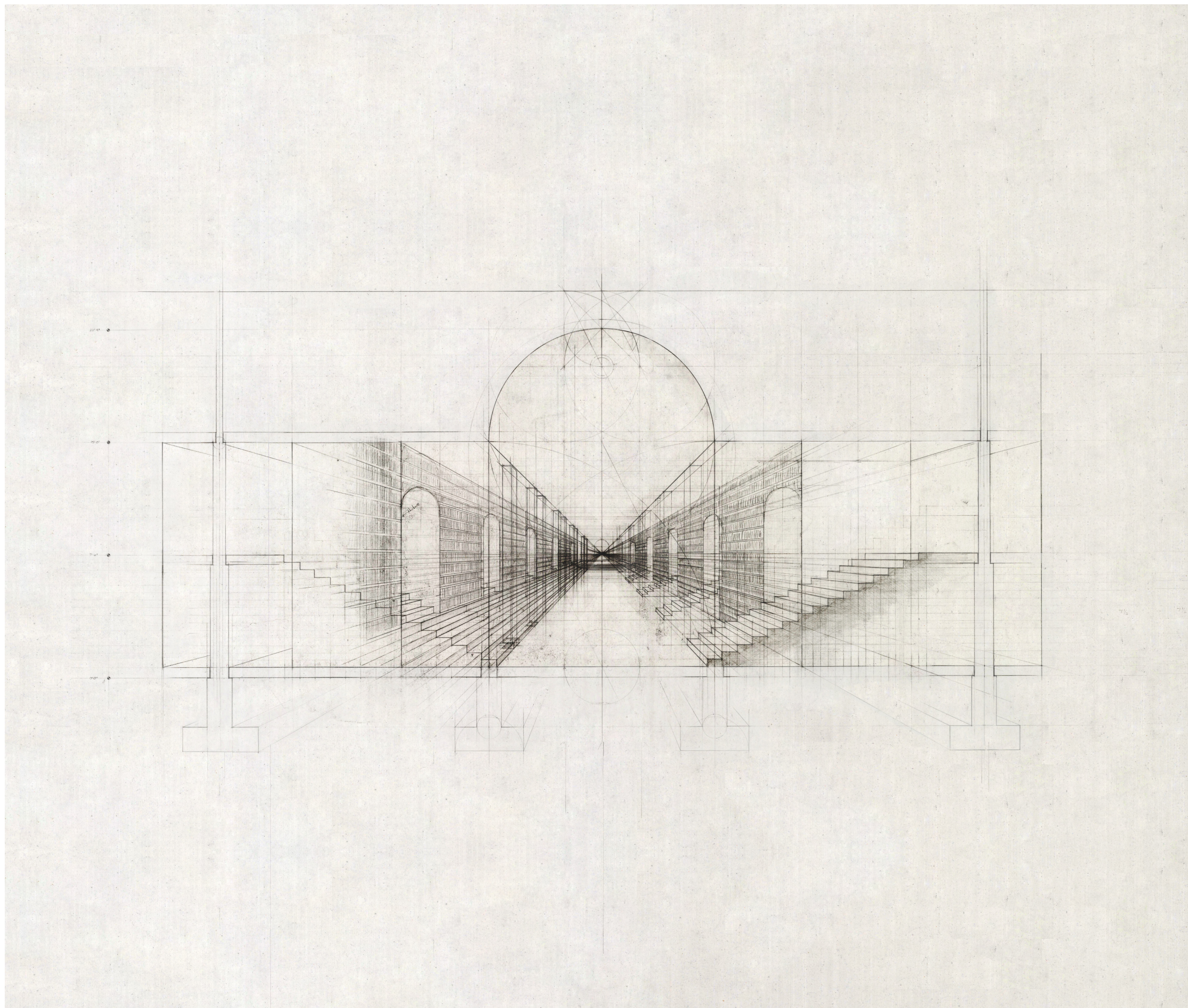












## AFTERWORD

“Perhaps that’s what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that’s what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I’m neither one side nor the other, I’m in the middle, I’m the partition, I’ve two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that’s what I feel, myself vibrating, I’m the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world,  
I don’t belong to either.”

–Samuel Beckett  
The Unnamable, p. 91, Grove Press (1978)

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All images were made by the author

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“All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter.  
Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

-Samuel Beckett  
Worstward Ho, Grove Press (1984)