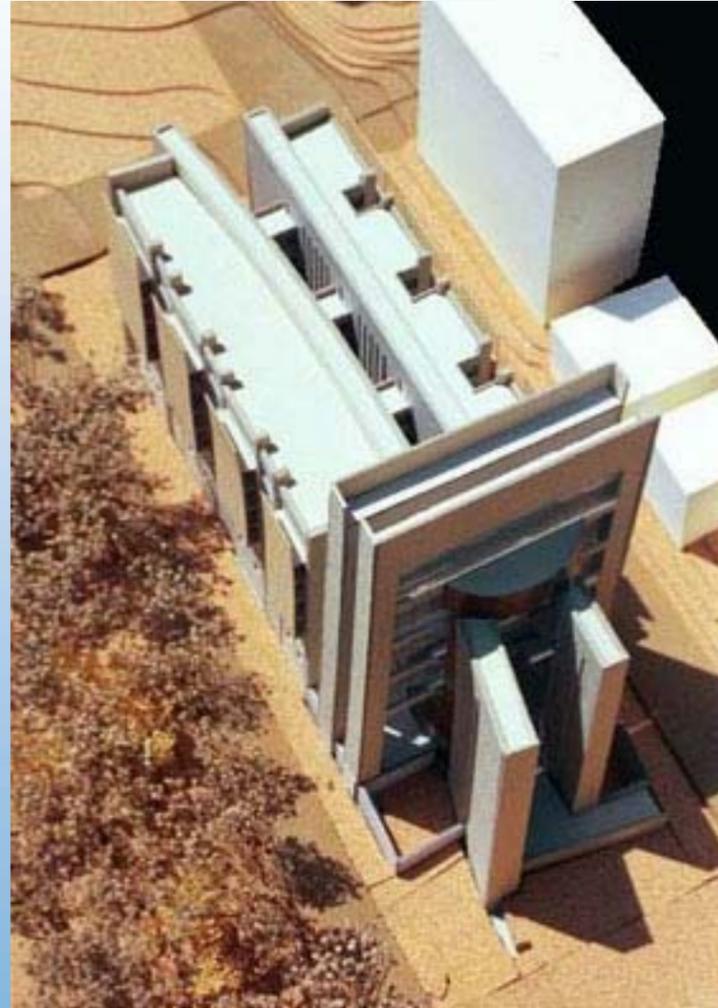


Process Sketch: Anthropomorphic Form



Final Model: View of site looking South



Final Model: View of Meditation Chapel and gardens at South of site

A few weeks ago, I was hunting for cardboard. The good kind, thick and folded flat. After searching a few blocks, I ran into a woman selling items from her apartment. She was leaving D.C. and heading for California. She needed her cardboard and asked if I was moving also. I said no, I needed it to sleep on it. She looked very surprised. "You're not homeless, are you?" I said yes. She said "You can't be....Your shoes are too clean!" I busted out laughing and told her I was truly homeless and sleeping on the streets. She took my hand and guided me to the building next door to find the best darn cardboard I ever slept on.⁴

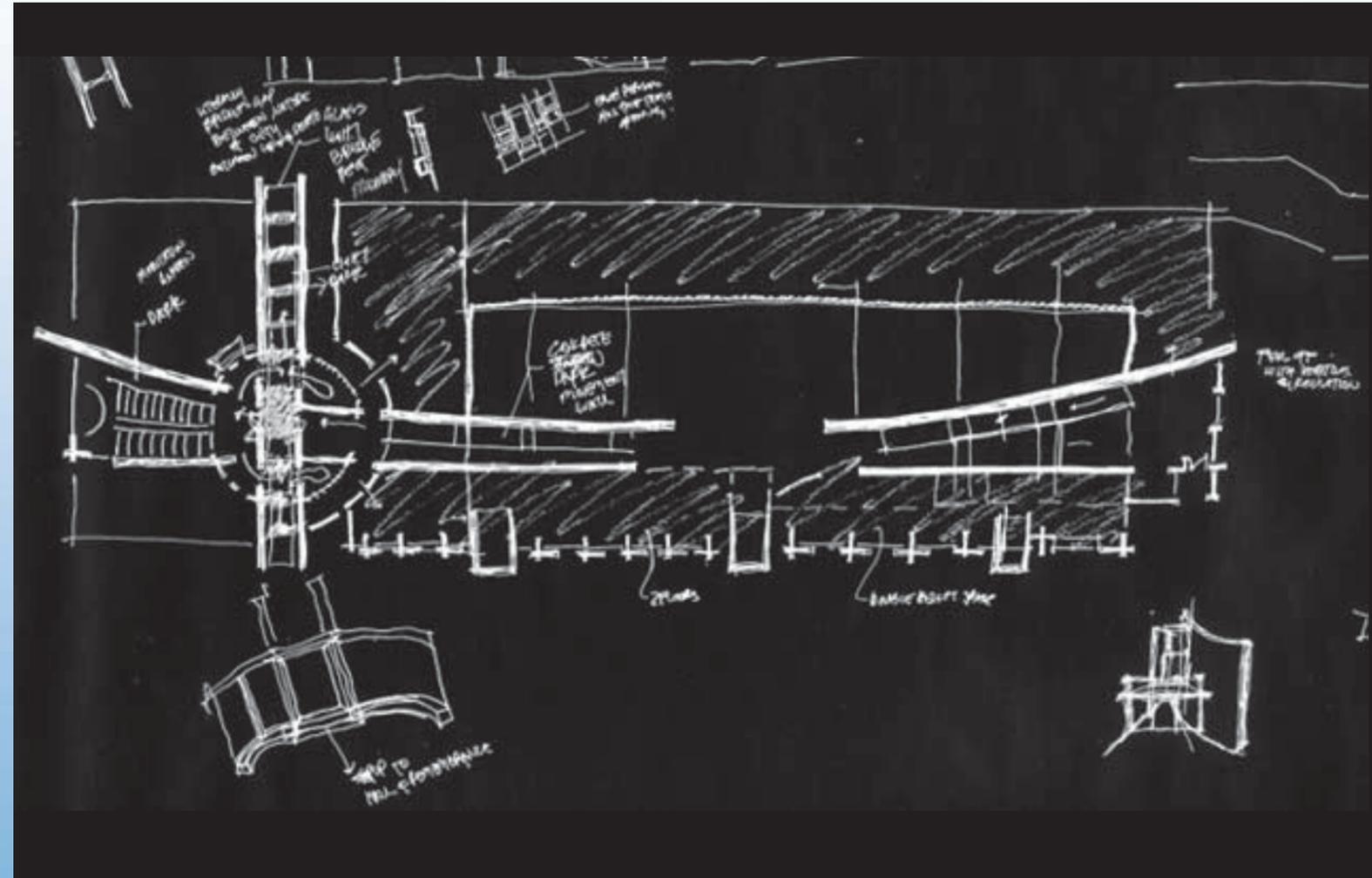
Chapter II: Designing the Threshold Process

It is often said that a building is much like the human body. The exterior materials act as skin; windows and doors are the eyes, ears and mouth; the building structure is the bones; major service banks act as organs; the ductwork, piping, cable and wires act as arteries, veins and capillaries. From this point of view, the health and vitality of the building and its components can directly affect the health of all those living and working within its walls. Healthcare facilities in particular need to be very conscious of the way a buildings' inner and outer workings affect the well being of its inhabitants. Anthropomorphic shape as a form is yet another way that architecture can express a connection to the human body.

Natural topography and anthropomorphic shape gave form to the Holistic Center project. The curve of the residence wing library wall, on the west side of the site, mimics the natural topographic curve of Rock Creek and its grassy shore at the P Street beach. In this manner, the arc wall of the residence wing symbolically represents nature and pulls it into the Holistic Center. Conversely, the linear wall of the research wing symbolically represents the grid of the city, and brings the city into the Center as well. The curved "nature" wall and the linear "city" wall come together and play against one another within the Great Hall. These two walls funnel residents into the building through the North entrance vestibule and then release the residents again through the Meditation Chapel and the South vestibule.



Process Sketch: Anthropomorphic Form



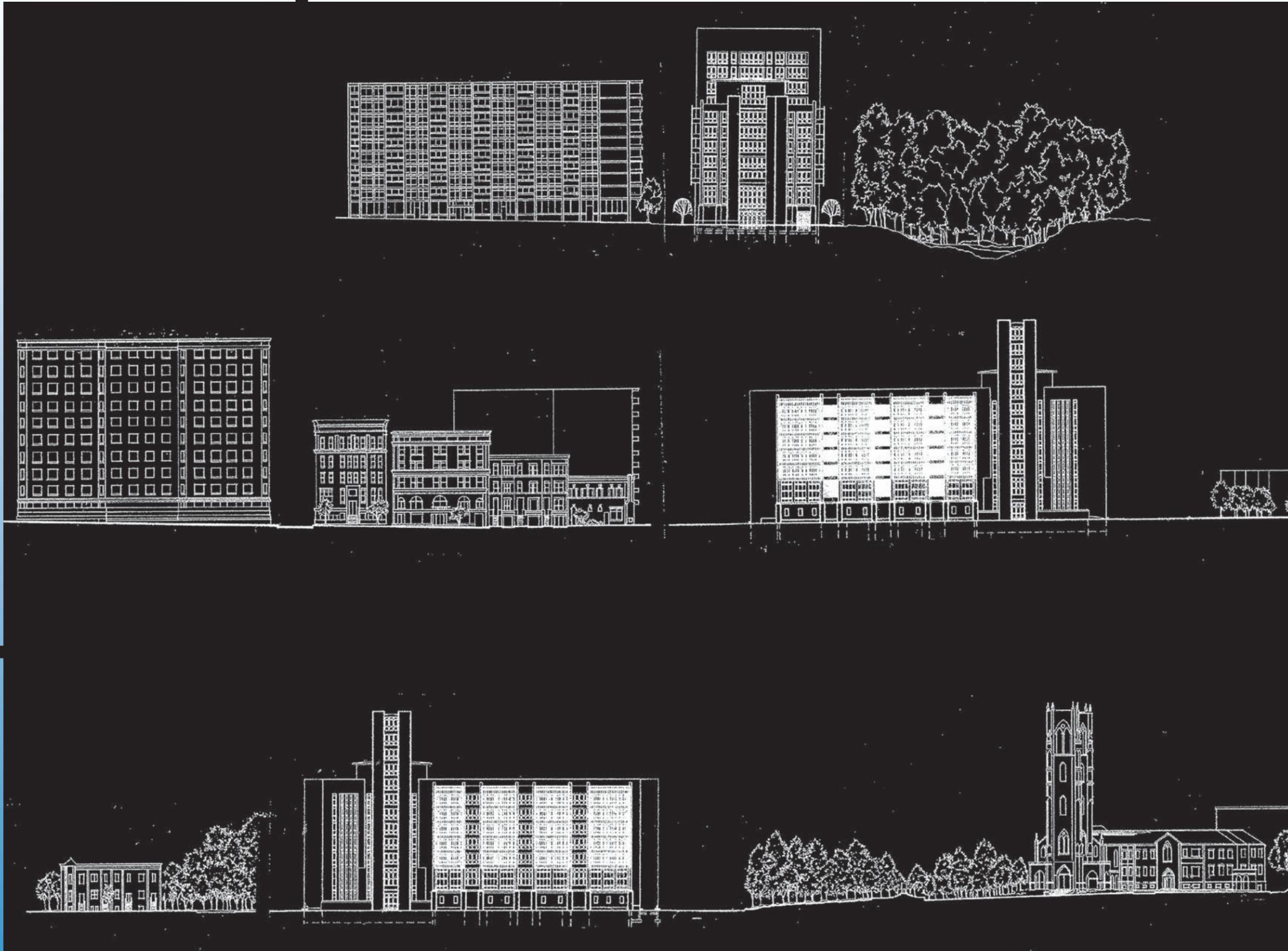
Process Sketch: Development of Anthropomorphic Form

My unschooled grandfather's workday in the coal mines ended when the whistle blew. He nurtured vegetable gardens and kegs of wine, sang opera and played cards with neighbors. He polished his shoes and pressed his only suit for the Sunday group-walk to church. I have several college degrees. There is no start or stop to my work. I don't know my neighbors. Sunday is like Tuesday. My shoes are unpolished. I live in sweat pants. I drive alone to church. Opera is a distraction. They tell me I am successful.

They say my grandfather was not.⁵

Through the progression of process sketches, it is easy to see how I started with very literal anthropomorphic shapes as a way to create form for the Holistic Center. I began with two interlocked humanoid shapes. Later, I began to see the building as one human form. I abstracted that one form and paired it down to the basic elements of human form; the skull, the spine and the heart. The skull represents the mind, the spine represents the body and the heart represents the soul. In this way, the essence of what makes us individual humans is represented in tectonic form through these elements. The form of the Holistic Center represents a celebration of human life, the culmination of which is death.

The skull, and therefore the brain, of the Holistic Center is represented by the two linear Quilt Walls and both the curved and linear Prayer Hall walls. These walls give shape to the Meditation Chapel on the first floor. The Prayer Hall and the Quilt Walls combine to create the sacred wing of the building. The skull further represents memory. The two Quilt Walls are a memorial to past residents. Similarly, the two Prayer Hall walls are a physical and spiritual home to the memory of current residents.



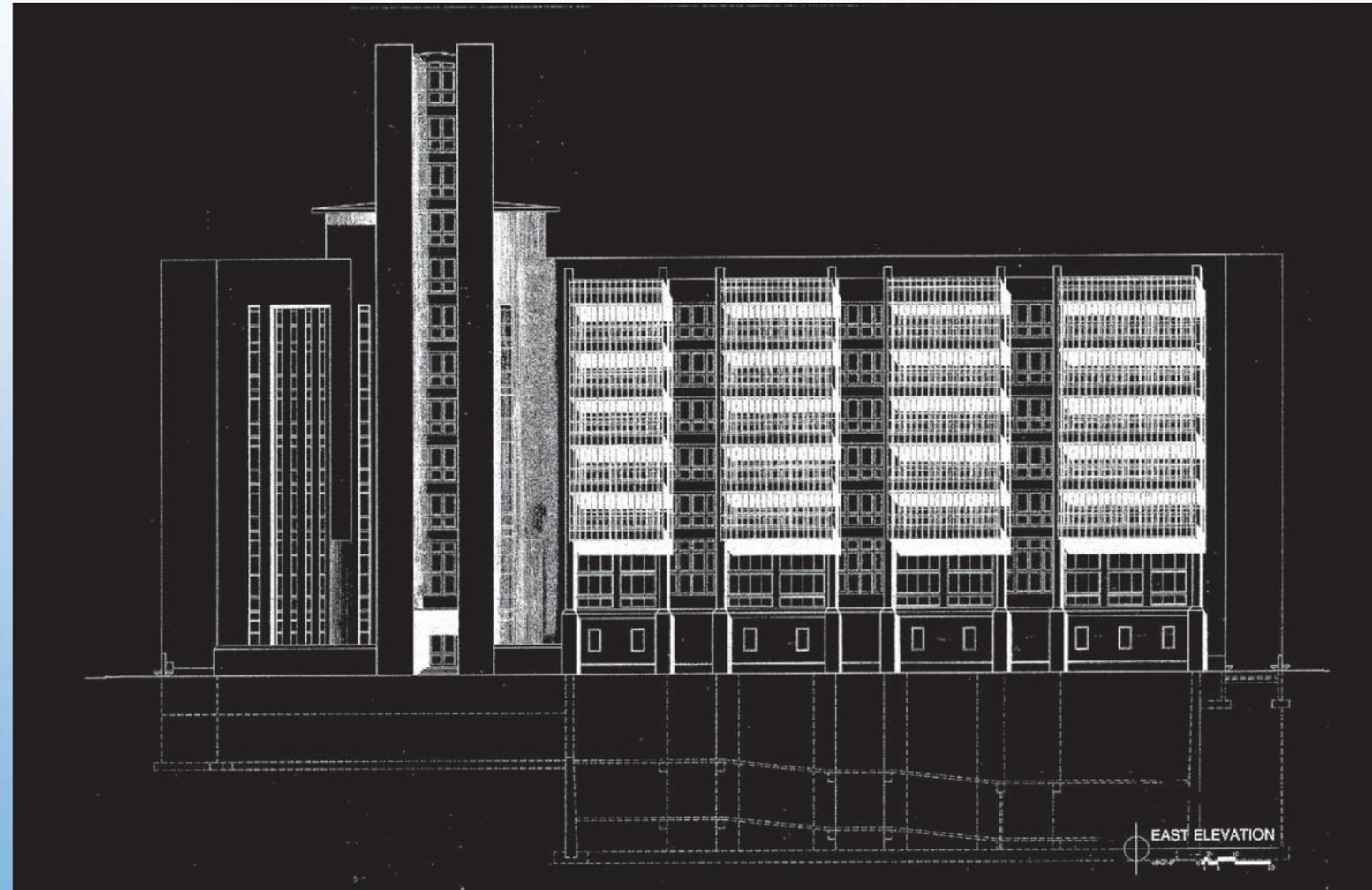
Final Drawing: Holistic Center Elevations with site and context.

We must take care not to leave any holes and corners behind which are lost and useless, and which, because they serve no purpose at all, are 'uninhabitable'. An architect must not waste space by the way he organizes material, on the contrary he must add space, and not only in the obvious places that strike the eye anyway but also in places that do not generally attract attention, ie. between things. The foregoing examples how you can increase the functionality of an architectural design by consistently taking account of the in-between space. ^{12 (p.188)}

Herman Hertzberger

The habitable space between things represents a shift in attention from the official level to the informal, to where ordinary day-to-day lives are led, and that means in the margins between the established meanings of explicit function. ^{13 (p.188)}

Herman Hertzberger



Process Sketch: Section through Spine

Like the spine of the human body, the spine of the Holistic Center is the major structural member around which everything else is formed. I see the spine of the building as the major service member. As per the teachings of Louis Kahn, the spine seeks to be a “server” to the three major wings of the building which are “served” by the spine. During my first process sketches this spine was a single building services corridor. I finally pulled, stretched and abstracted the spine into three service corridors: the Great Hall; the curved west Library Wall; and the linear east Library Wall. The residence and research wings of the building can be seen as the muscle and skin of the building. These wings are “served” by and supported structurally by the spine walls. It is through the threshold spaces of the spine that one enters either the residence or research wing of the complex.

The heart of the Holistic Center is the Meditation Chapel. The Meditation Chapel sits at the hinge of the entire complex. The intersection of spine and skull elements creates this three dimensionally asymmetrical space. The Meditation Chapel sits at the terminus of the Great Hall. The funnel effect of the Great Hall space seeks, at all times, to draw people into this single most important sacred space. The Chapel is a void space created by the structural walls of the spine surrounding it. The Quilt Wall serves the role of the flying buttresses.