

# How to Represent a Country in a Foreign Land: Italian Cancelleria

by  
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Thesis Defense  
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Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of  
Masters  
of  
Architecture

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Associate Professor, Chairperson

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# CANCELLERIA

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It is my intention that the building be both sympathetic to its urban and historic context and clear in the development of a new identity for an embassy complex. The building makes careful connections to the proportions and geometries of classical Italian architecture, while establishing landmark elements which are harmonious parts of a new urban focus. Such connections are not abstract, but help to engage the building in a lively conversation with its historic context.

"What will be has always been"

Louis Kahn

## ABSTRACT



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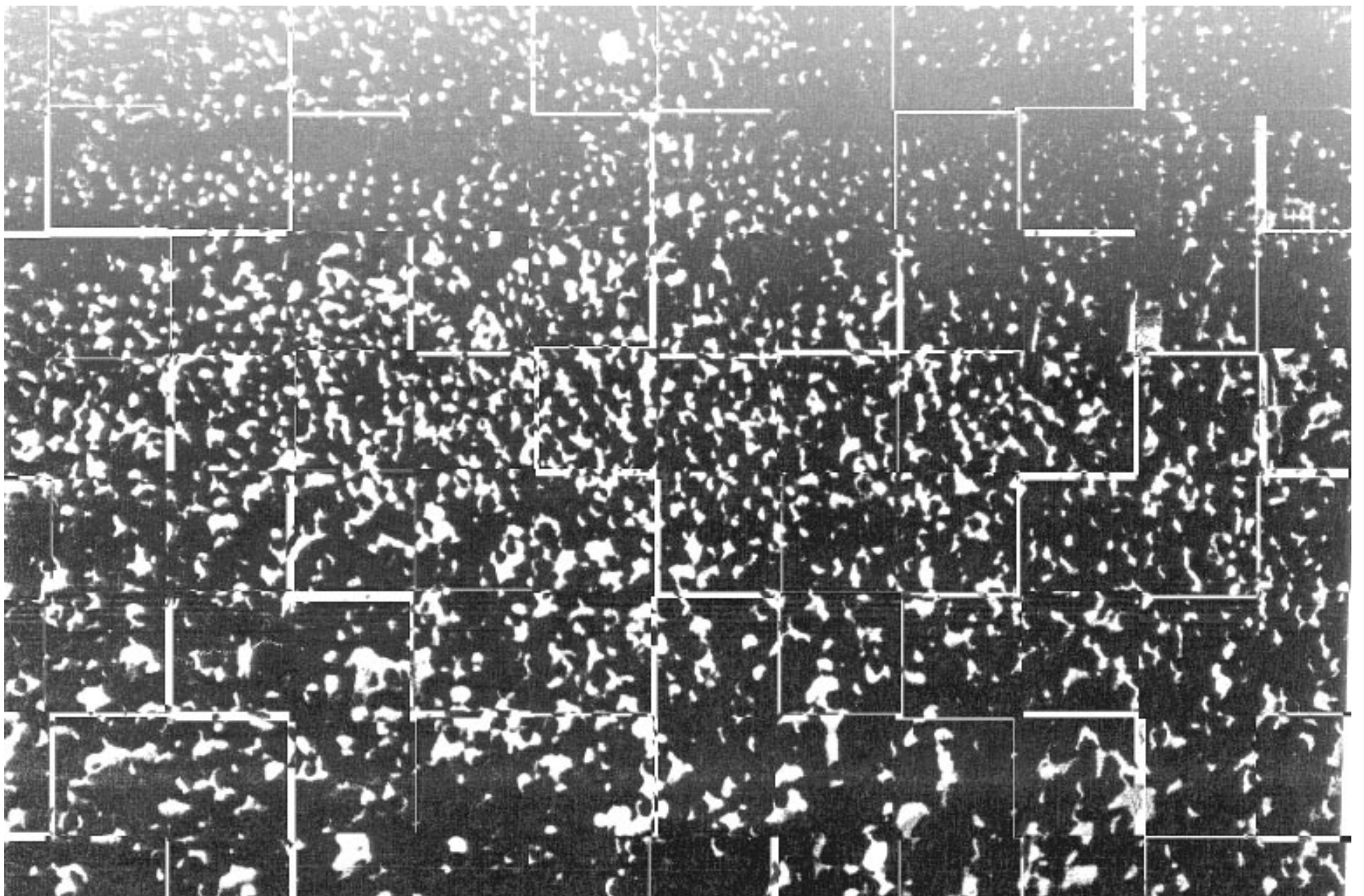
There have been so many people who have helped me complete this thesis. Not only have they helped me in my endeavor, they believed in me, and that has made all the difference.

There are a few people that I would like to recognize for their support. My parents, to them I wish to express my love and sincere thanks.

My committee. Susan Piedmont-Palladino, Jaan Holt, Dan Stuver and Ron Kagawa; the success of this project is a testament to their encouragement and professional assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Rick, for his patience, understanding and encouragement through the course of many years that will never be forgotten.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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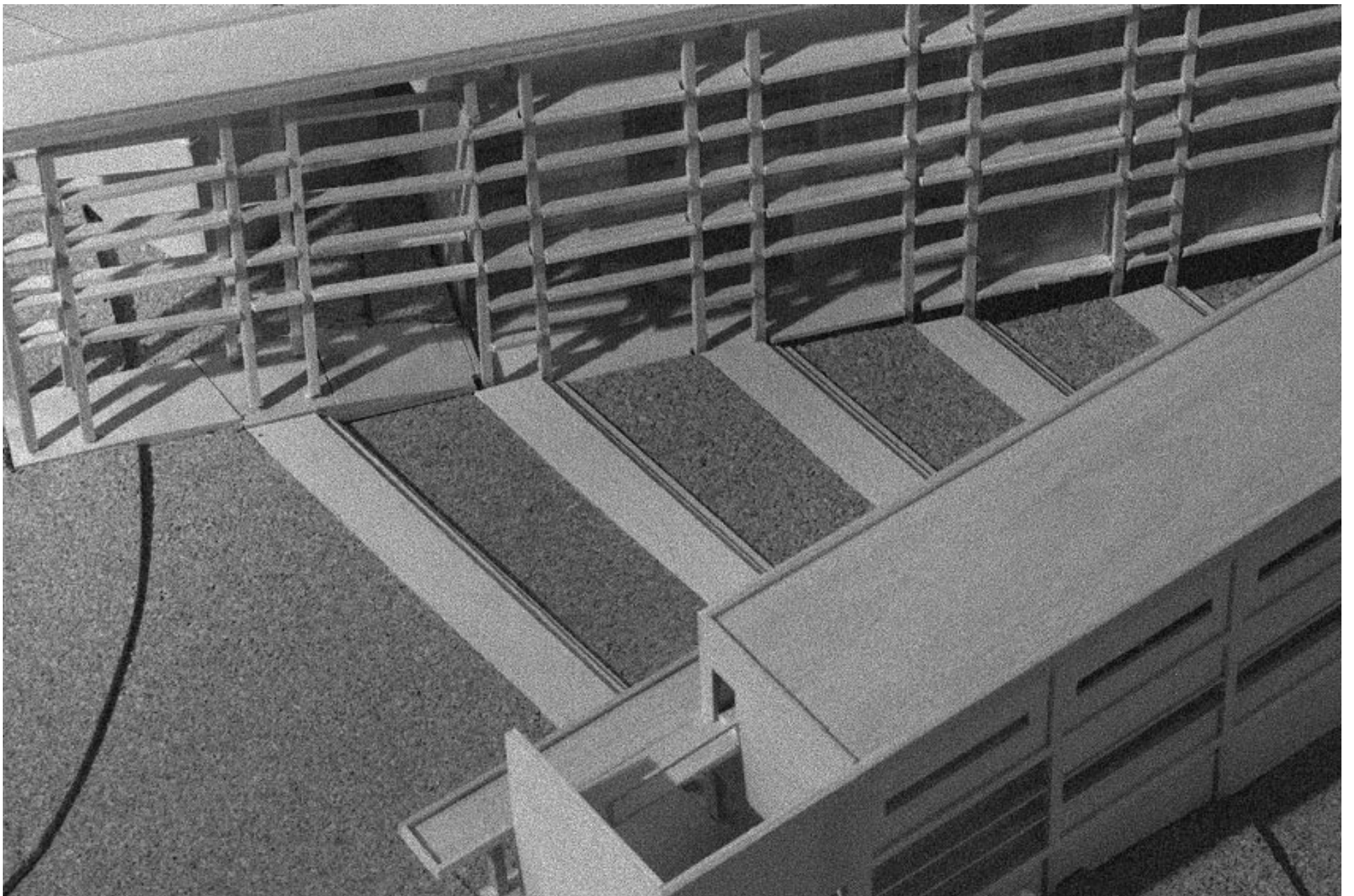
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The embassy has investigated the notion of physical environment starting from the idea of formal and functional relationships to a new way of adapting to all dimensions of scale. The formal ideas of proportion and scale are derived from Palladio and Vitruvius. The basic idea has developed into an architecture that is a testimony of durability and monumentality.

The question one must ask when designing the Italian Embassy is: How does one represent the host country in a foreign land? One has to consider the symbolic representation, how the United States perceives Italy, historic knowledge, the site, culture and lifestyle of Italy.

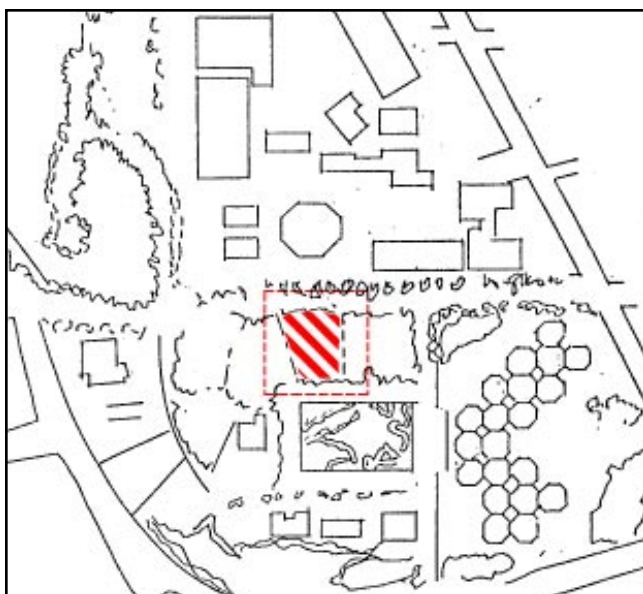
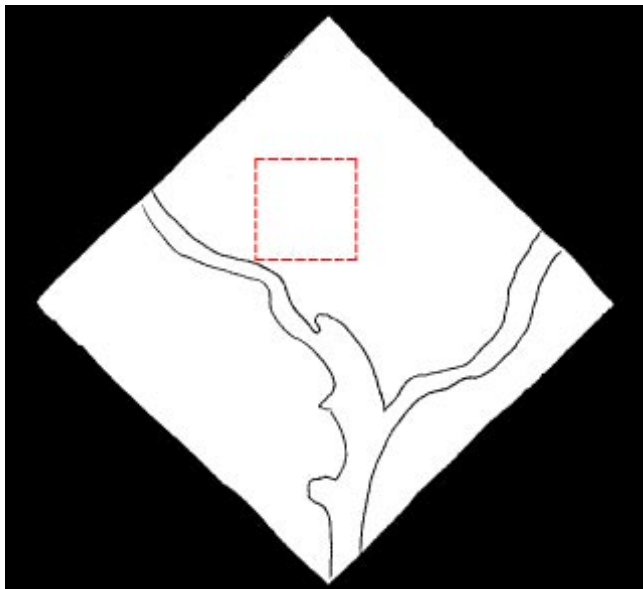
## INTRODUCTION



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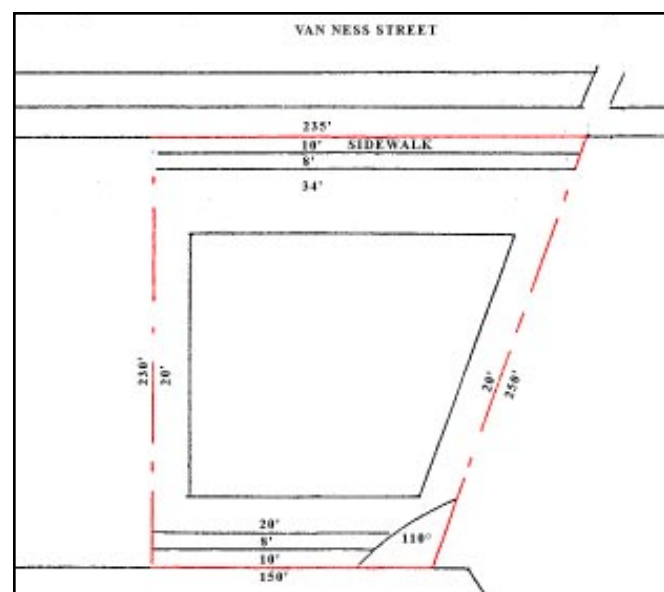
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## SITE



Adjacent to the Singapore Embassy, the site is located between International Place Dr. and Van Ness in NW Washington, DC. Adapting a building to a small site with a 15% slope from end to end became a challenge in the development of the program. The site's circulation is a series of terraces, steps and ramps that lead the public through the building's exterior space.

Analyzing the irregular site and complying with the required set backs, the building envelope utilizes the perimeter in an urban setting. At the urban scale the landmarks around the Embassy site are charged with symbolic meaning: Potomac river, Washington Monument, Washington Square, the Mall, and urban axes. The formal interplay of these iconic elements gives Washington much of its memorable character. These aspects were considered in the development of the building's massing.



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North



East

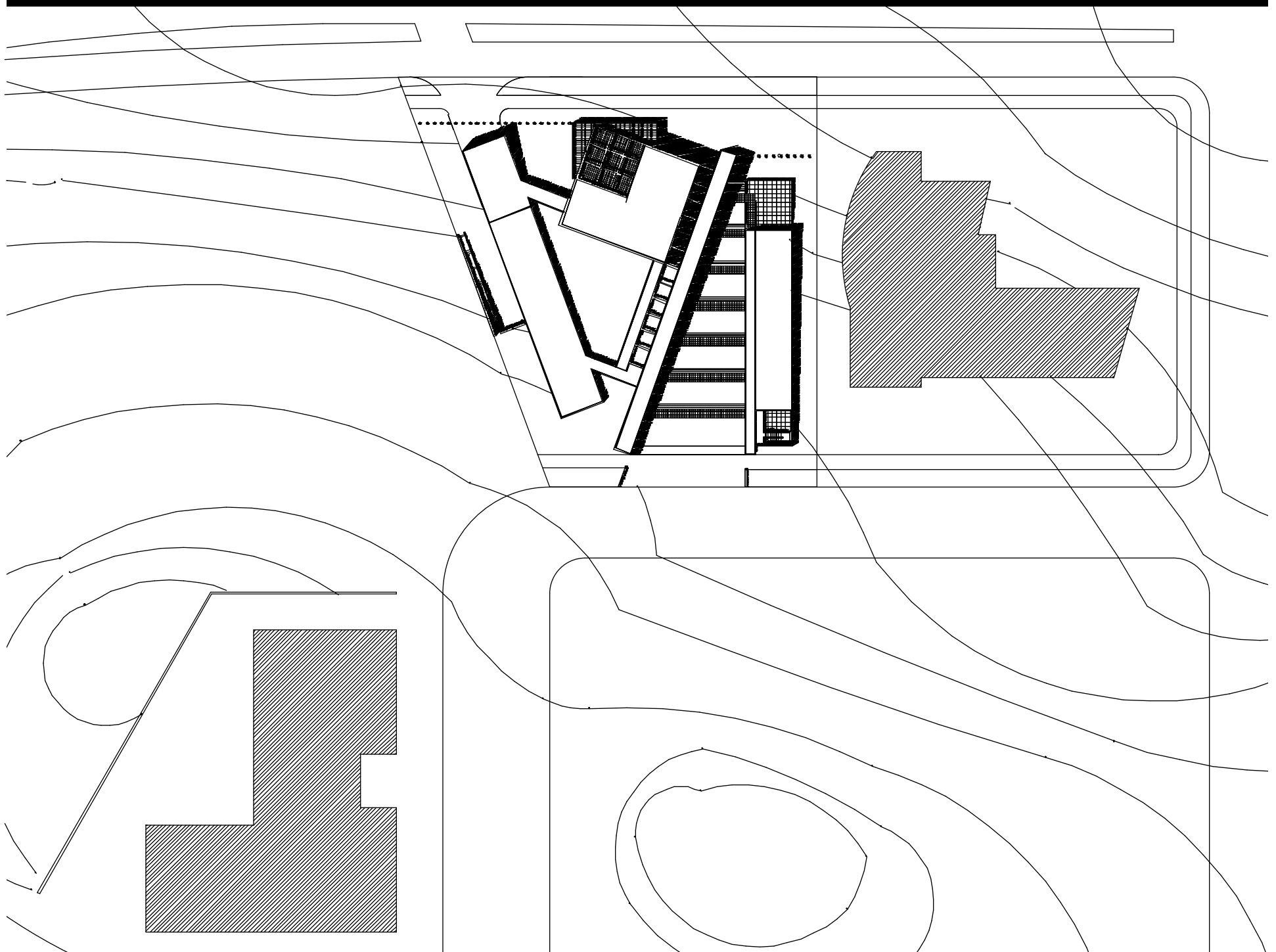


South



West

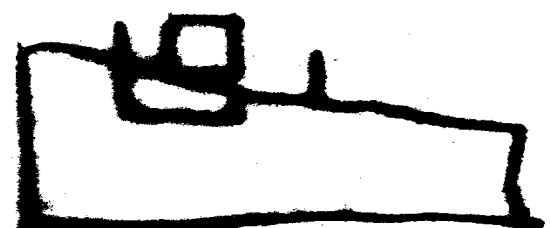
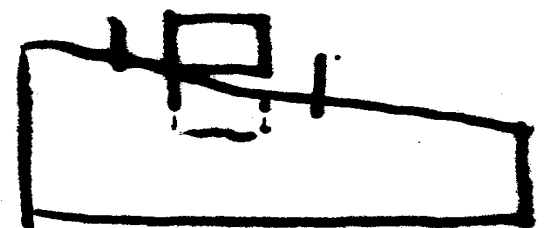
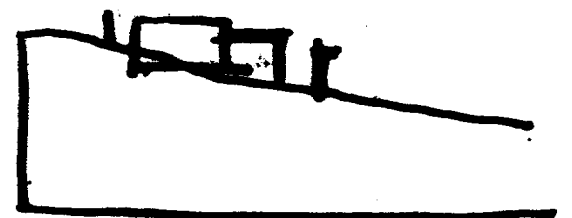
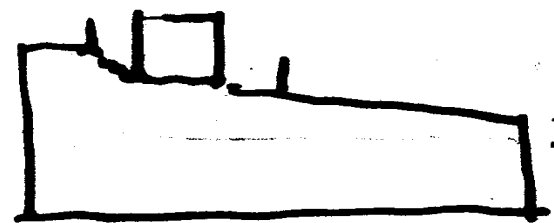
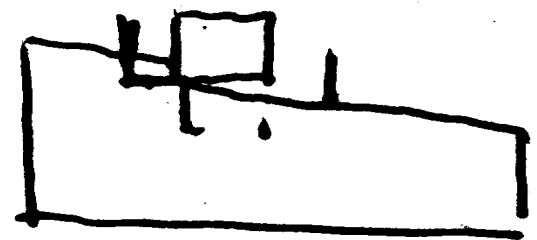
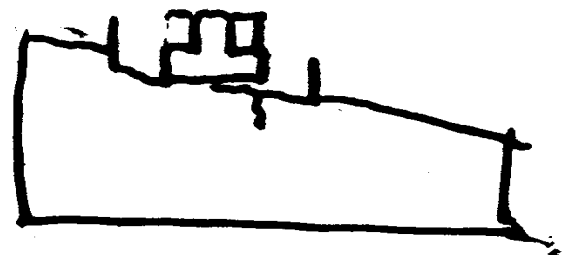
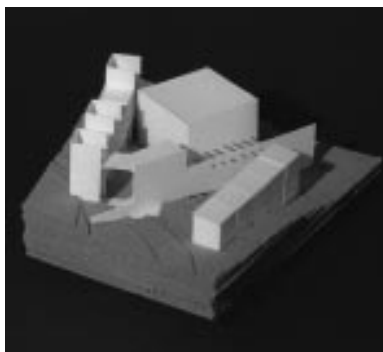
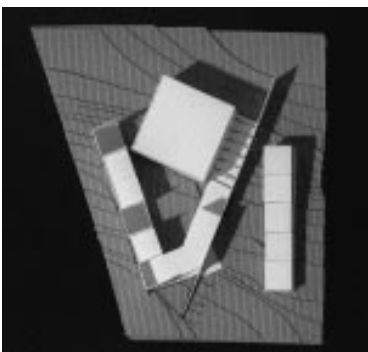
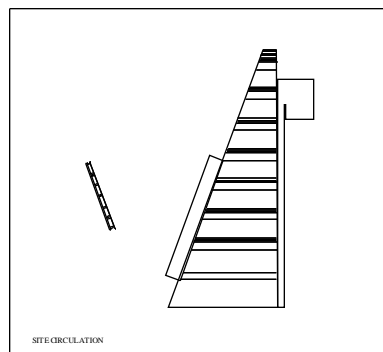
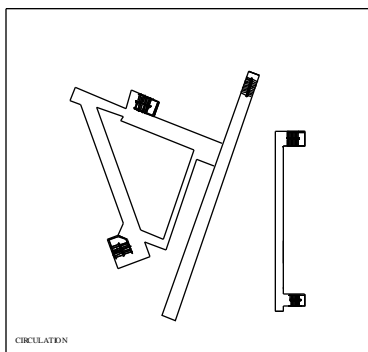
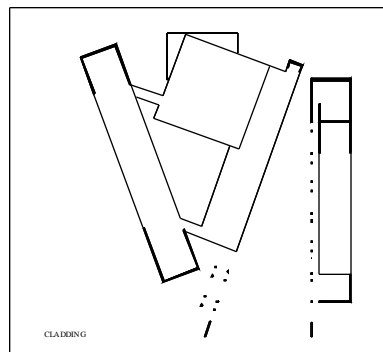
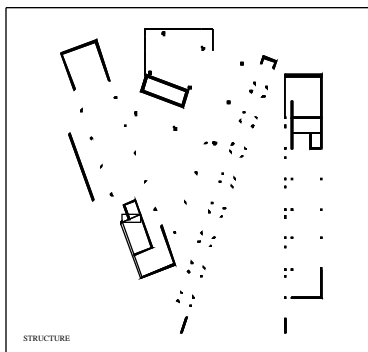
## SITE



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## PROCESS





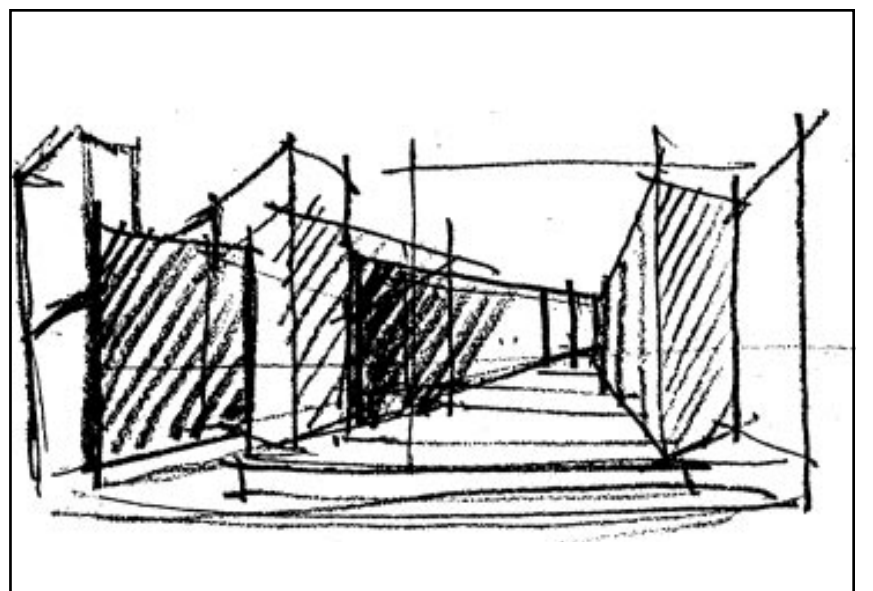
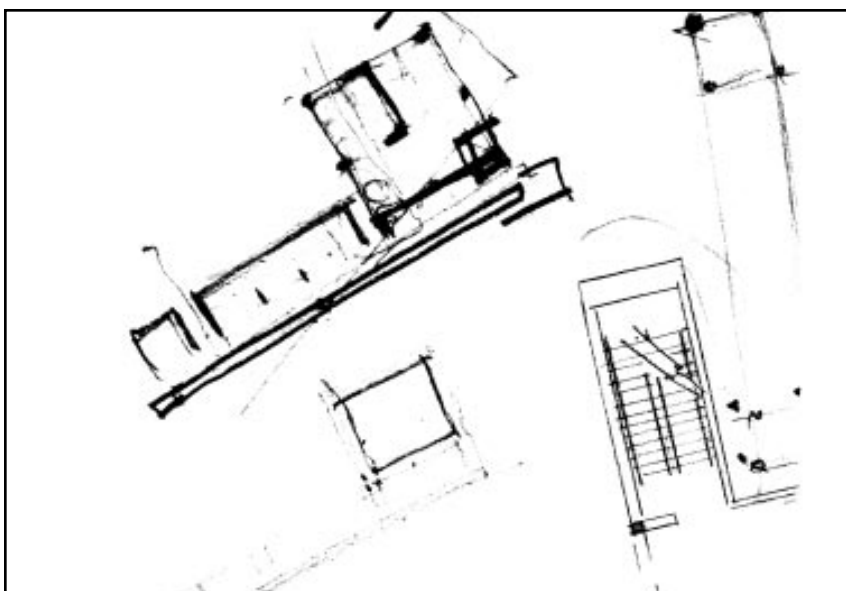
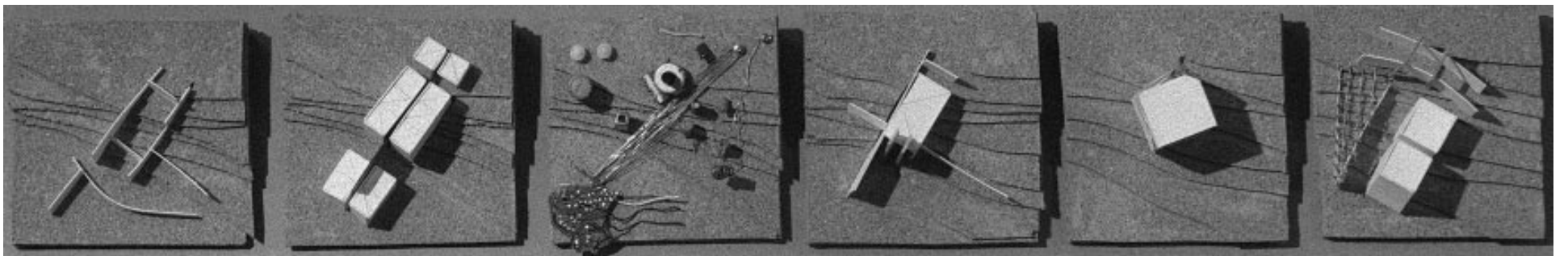
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The skewed organization of the plan was based on two intersecting geometries that meet at one axis driven through the site. The result creates open spaces that respond to the formal organization of the building.

The open spaces relate to the building in a form of light, pathways, and vistas which are used to overcome a small site with a large building program in an urban setting.

## PARTI



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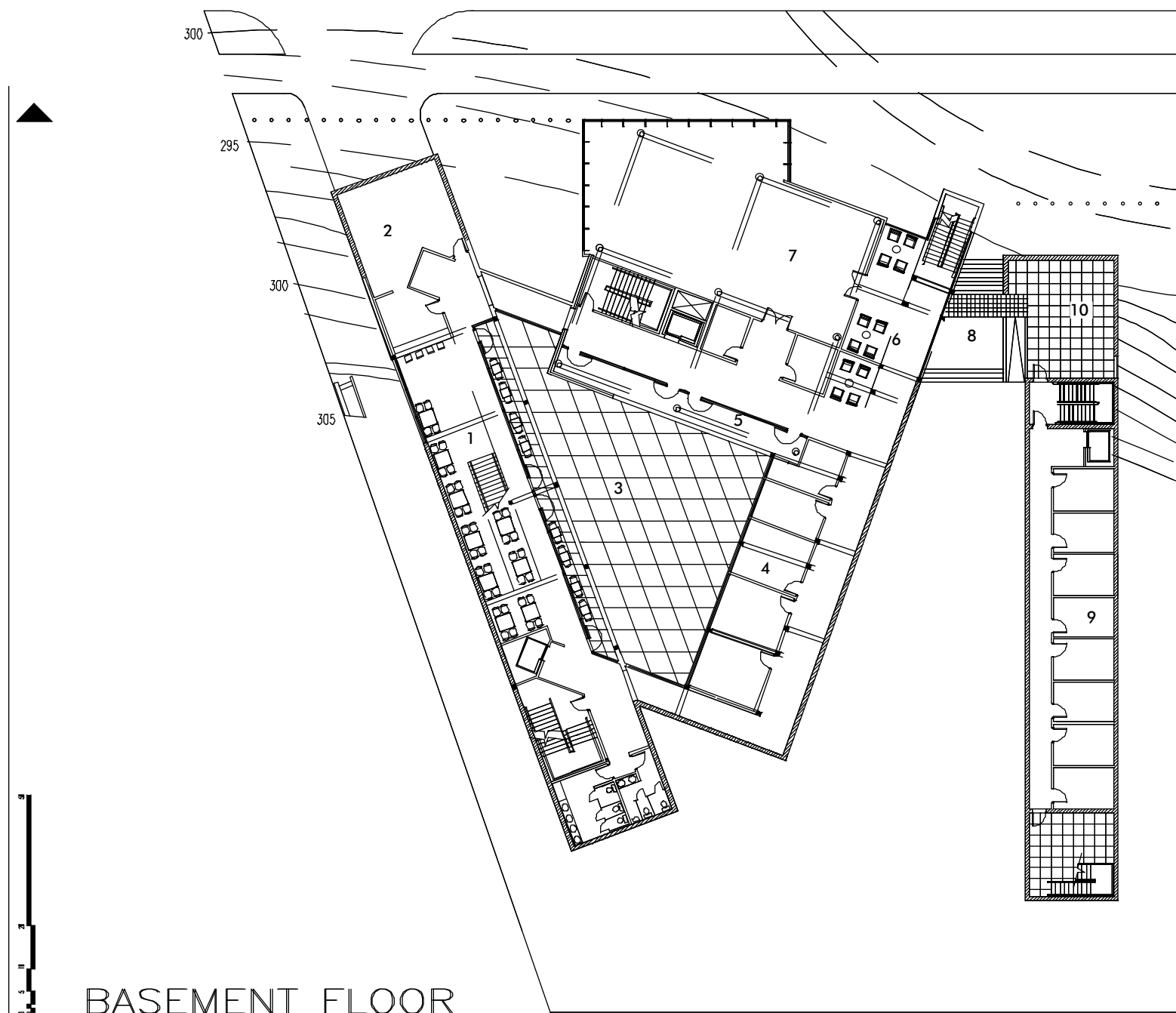
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## LEGEND

- 1 Cafeteria
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Open Courtyard
- 4 General Offices
- 5 Terrace Area
- 6 Exhibit Area
- 7 Multipurpose/  
Auditorium
- 8 Public Space
- 9 General Office
- 10 Lower Garden  
Space

## FINAL DRAWINGS



BASEMENT FLOOR

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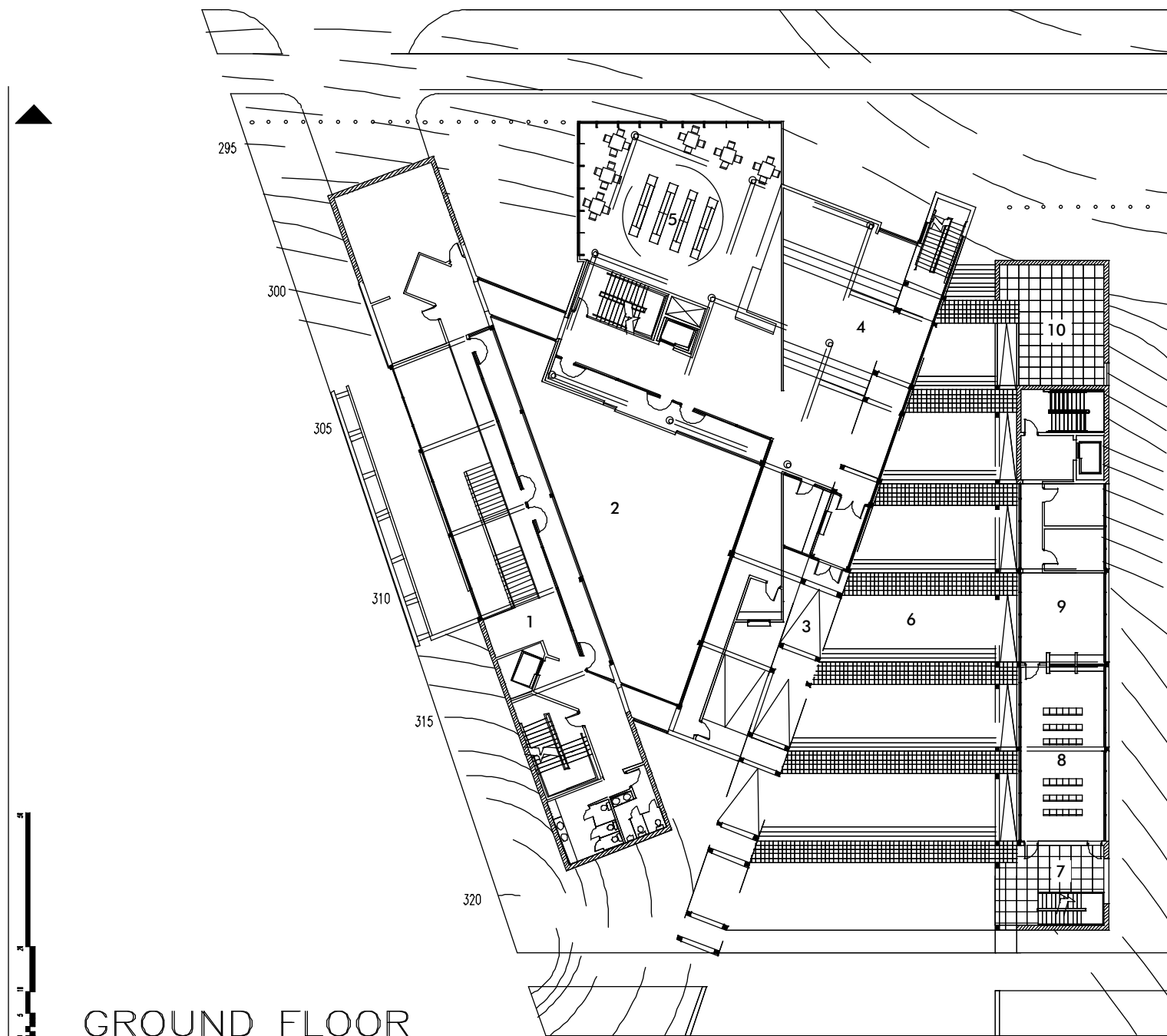
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## LEGEND

- 1 Monumental Staircase
- 2 Courtyard
- 3 Main Entrance
- 4 Exhibit Hall
- 5 Library
- 6 Public Space
- 7 Waiting Area
- 8 Consular Waiting
- 9 Consular Offices
- 10 Lower Garden Space

## FINAL DRAWINGS



GROUND FLOOR

# CANCELLERIA

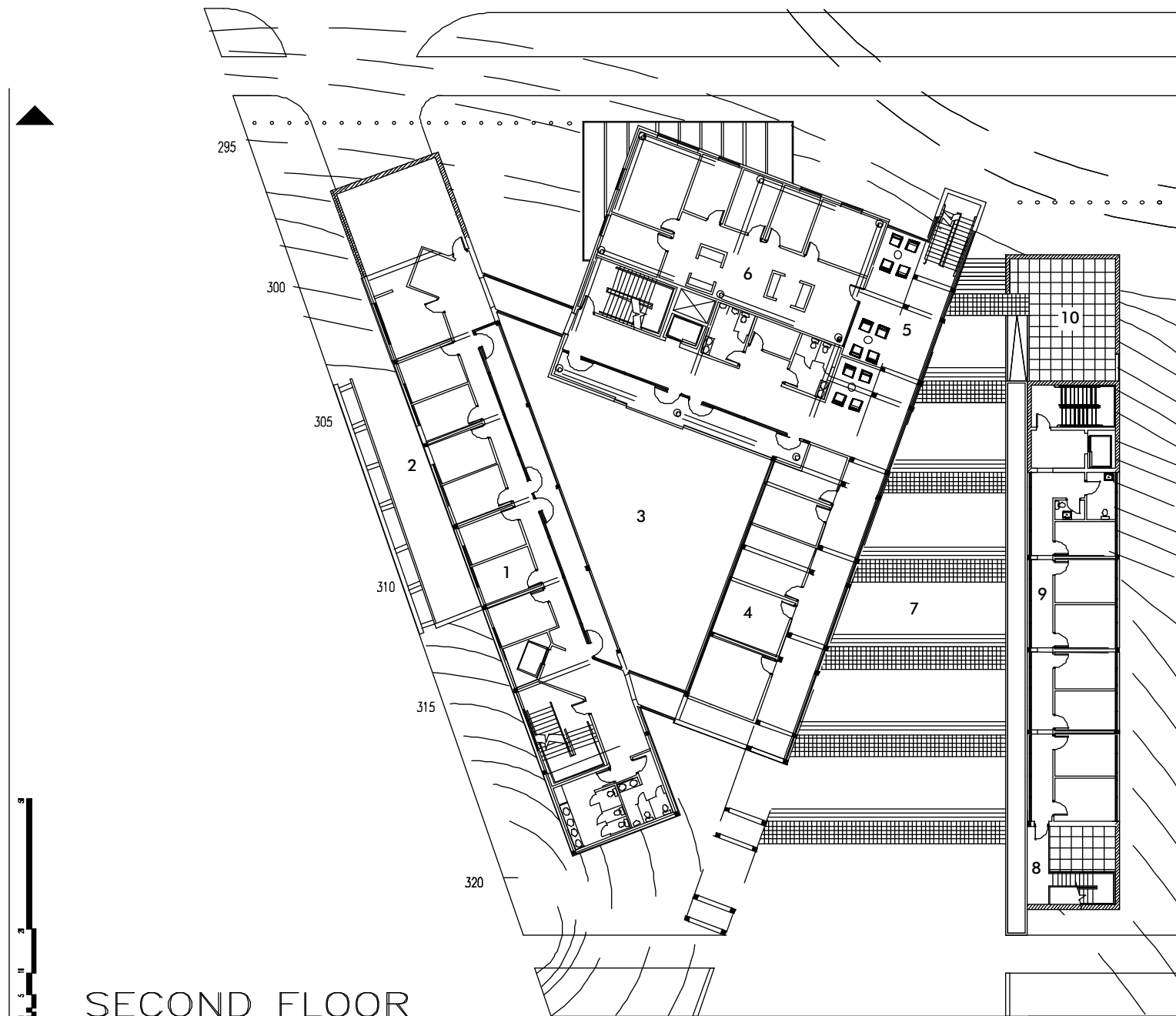
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## LEGEND

- 1 Administration Section
- 2 Exterior Stair
- 3 Courtyard
- 4 Support Offices
- 5 Exhibit Area
- 6 Political Section
- 7 Public Space
- 8 Outdoor Stair
- 9 Consular Offices
- 10 Lower Garden Space

## FINAL DRAWINGS



# CANCELLERIA

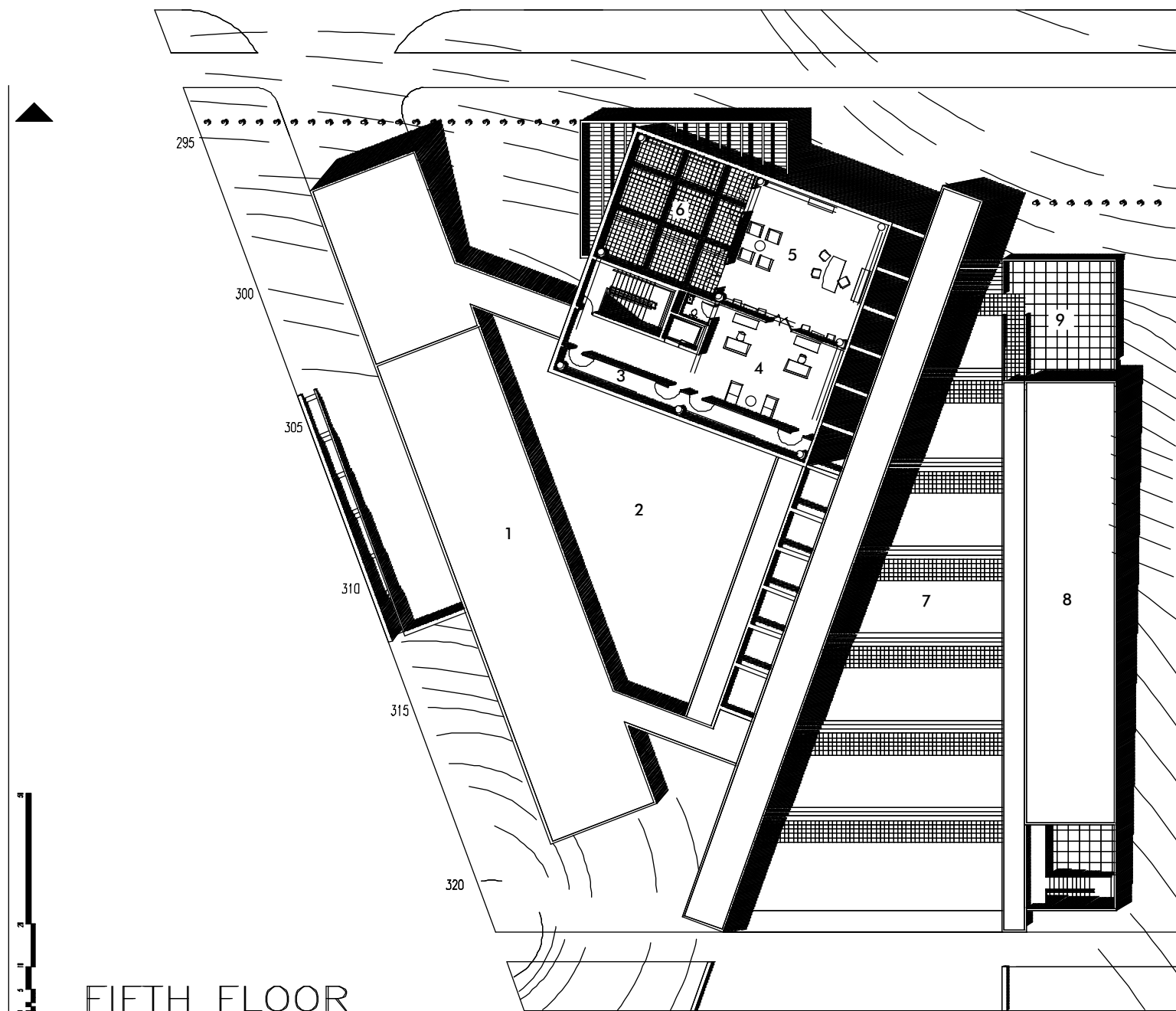
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## LEGEND

- 1 Administration Office Building
- 2 Courtyard
- 3 Balcony Area
- 4 Executive Waiting
- 5 Ambassador's Office Area
- 6 Ambassador's Private Terrace
- 7 Public Space
- 8 Consular Building
- 9 Lower Garden Space

## FINAL DRAWINGS



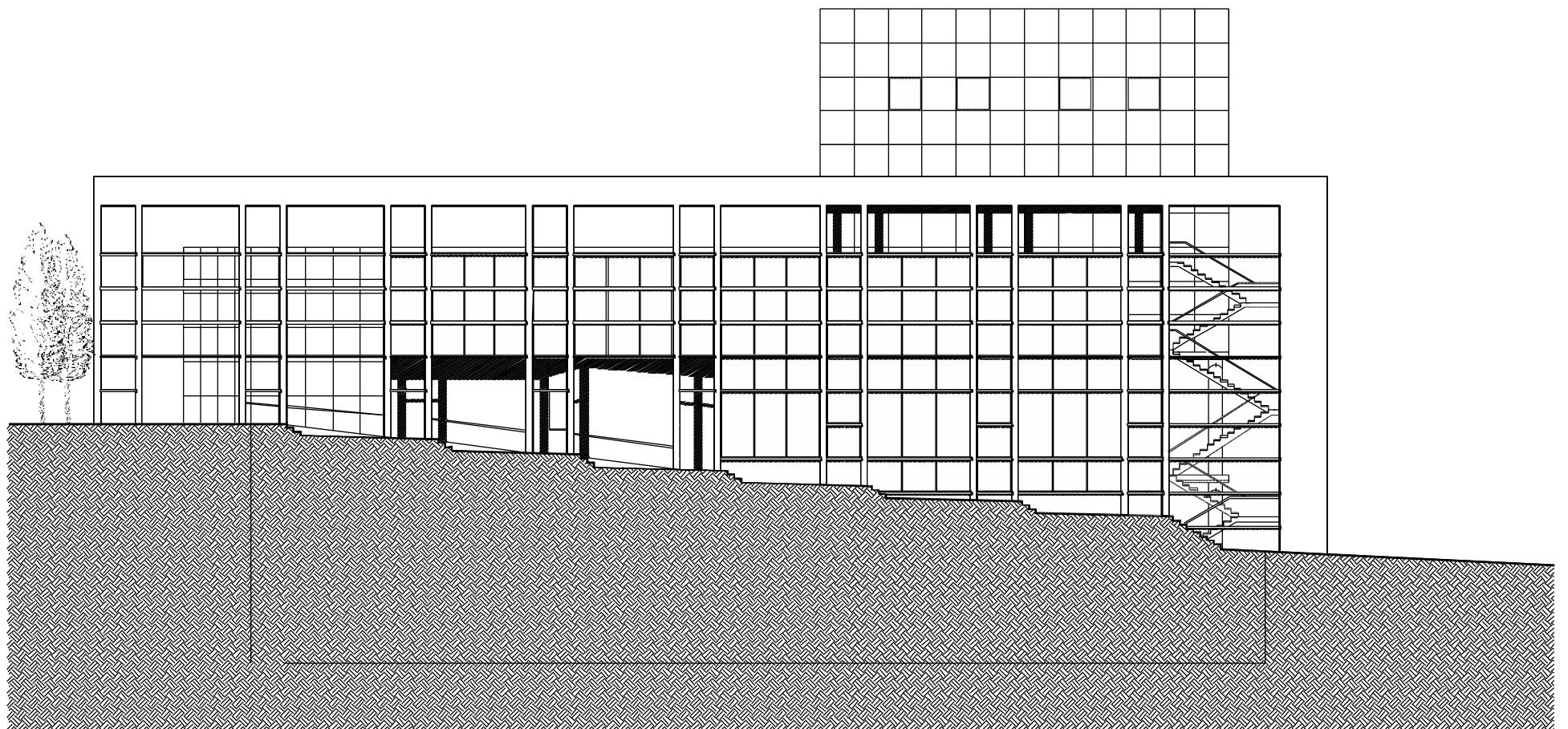
FIFTH FLOOR

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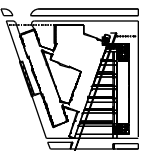
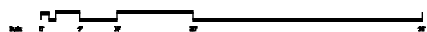
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## EAST WALL ELEVATION

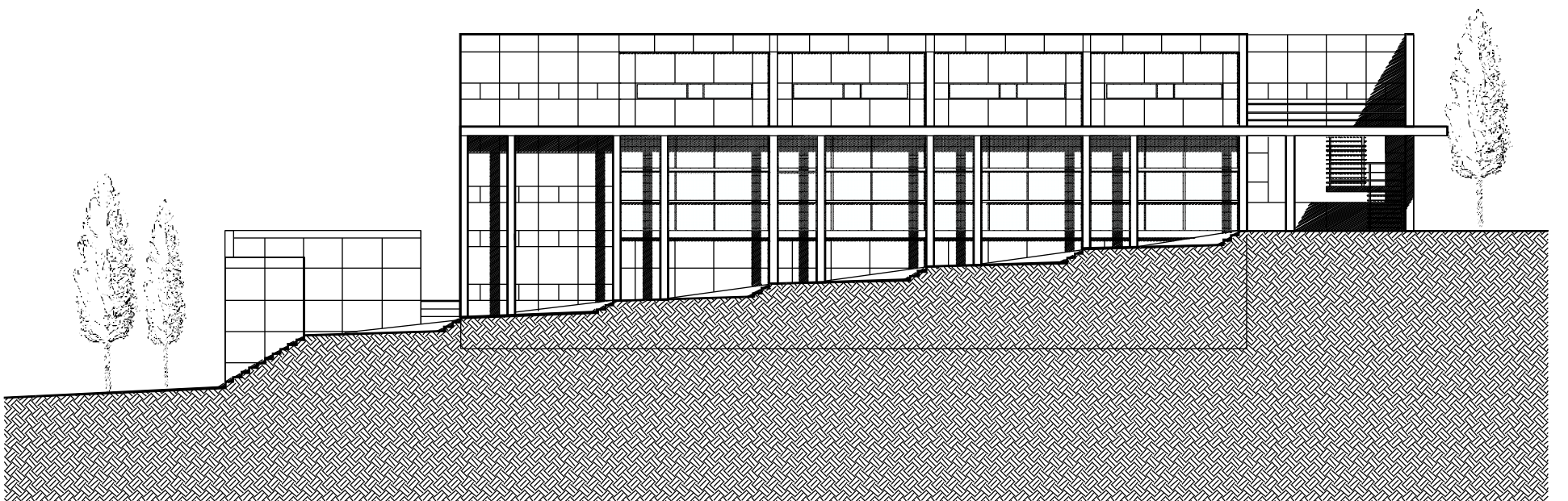


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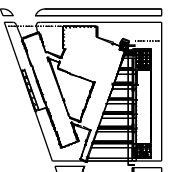
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## WEST ELEVATION

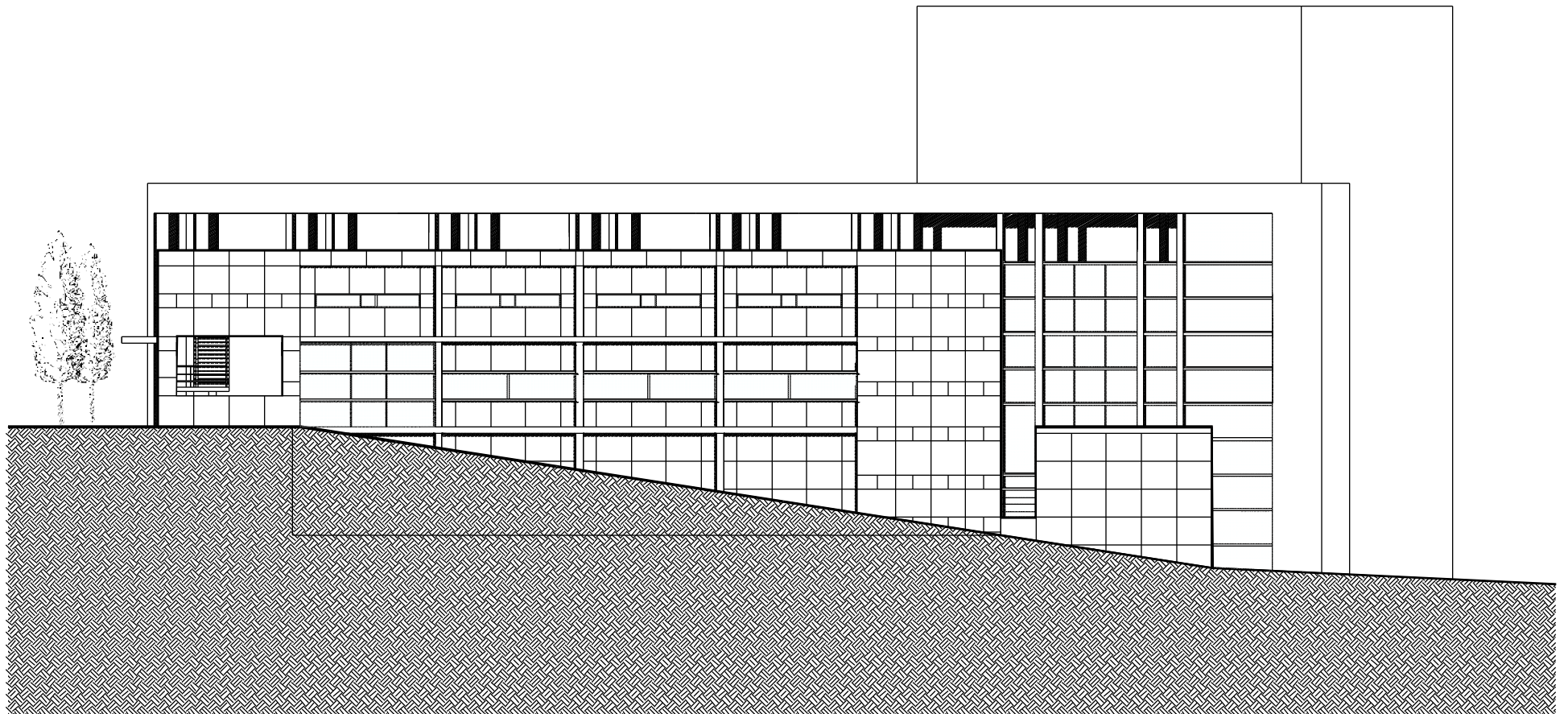


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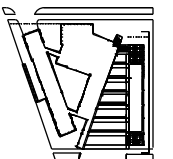
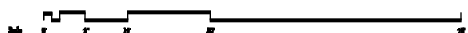
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## EAST ELEVATION



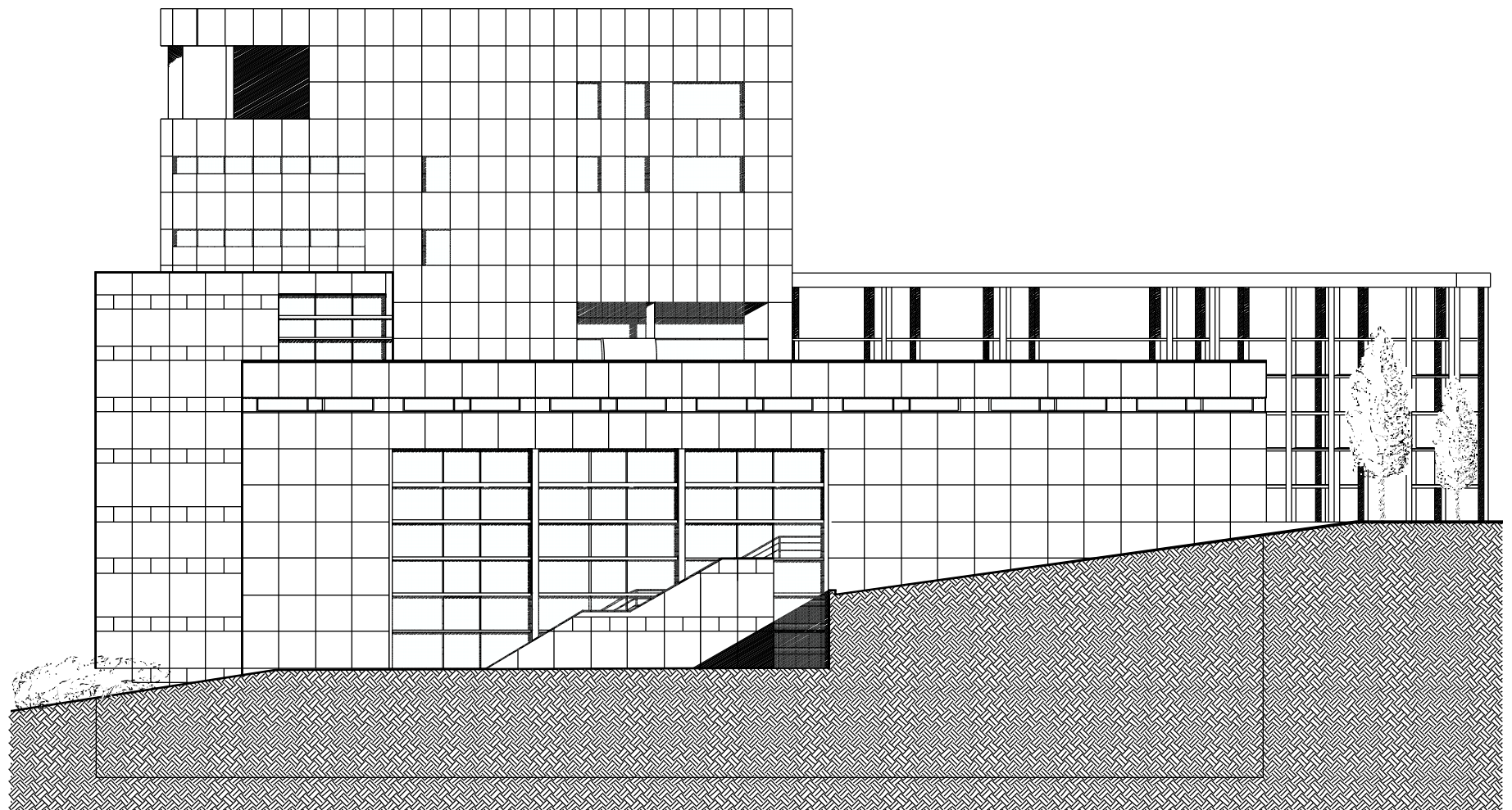


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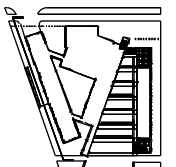
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## WEST ELEVATION

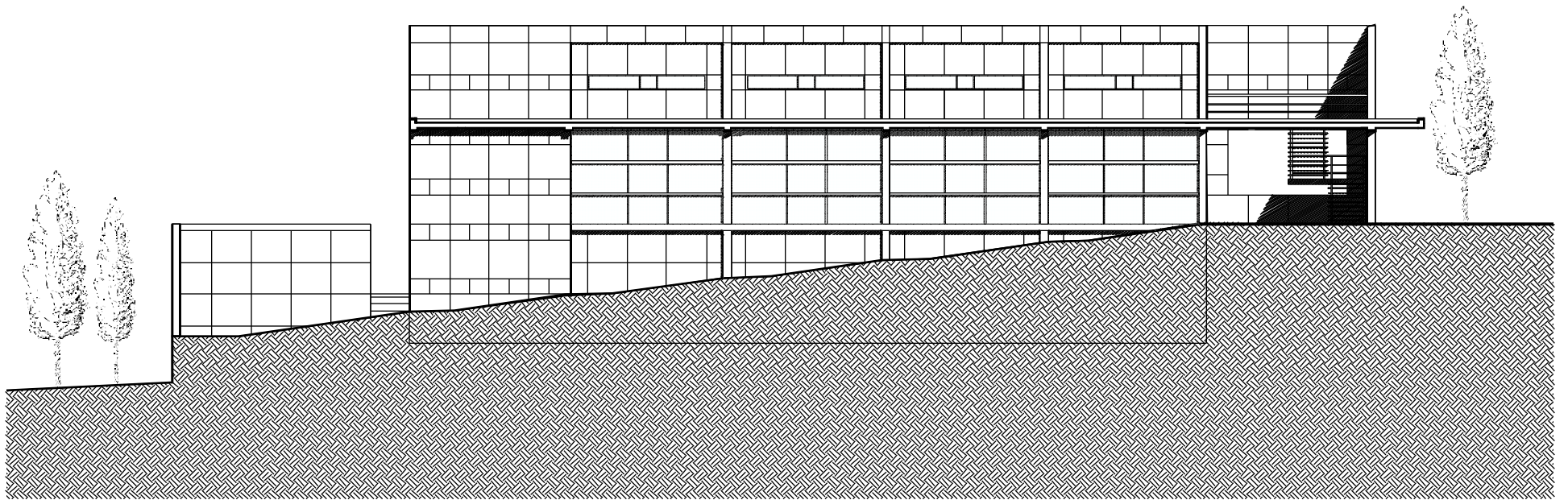


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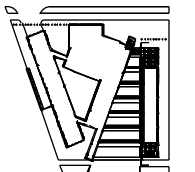
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## FINAL DRAWINGS

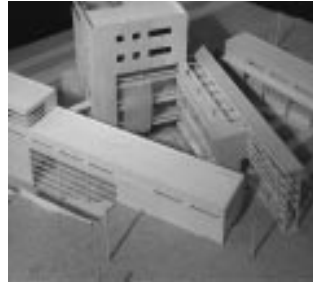
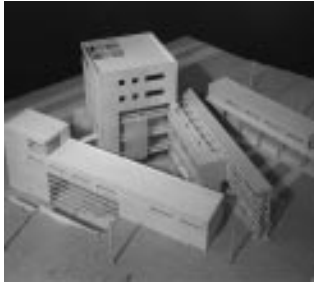


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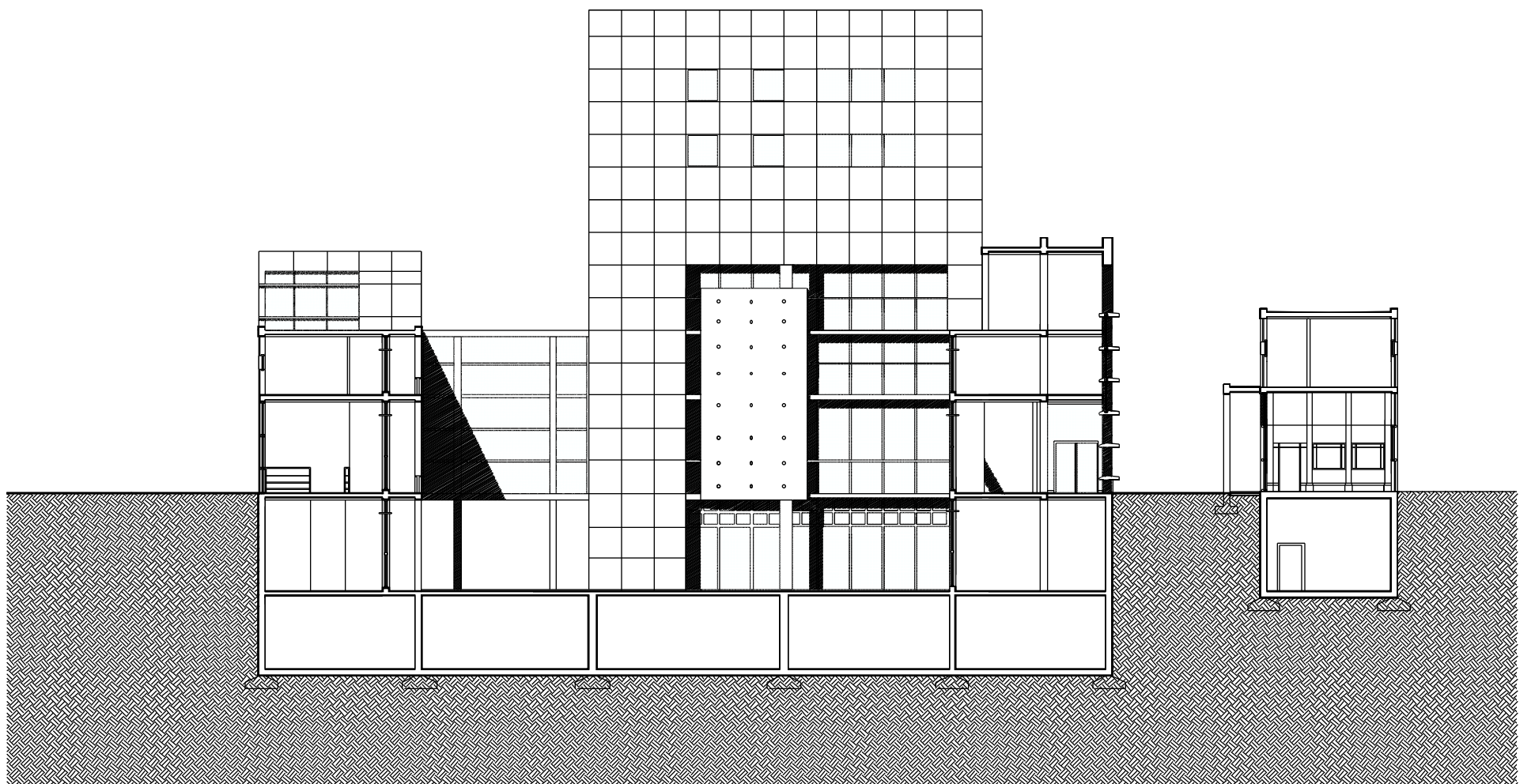


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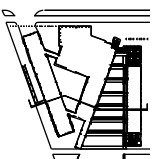
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## NORTH SECTION

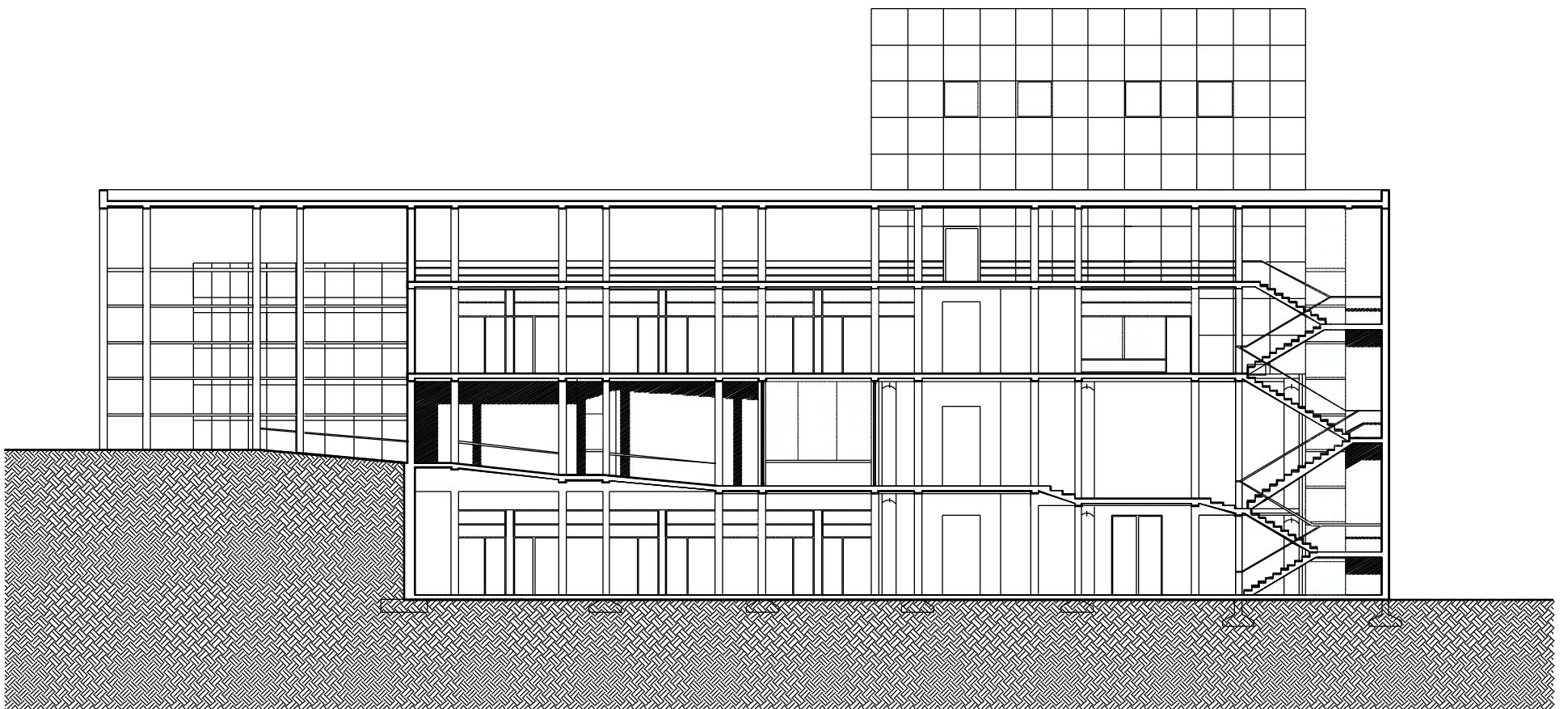


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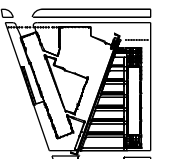
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## FINAL DRAWINGS



## EAST WALL SECTION

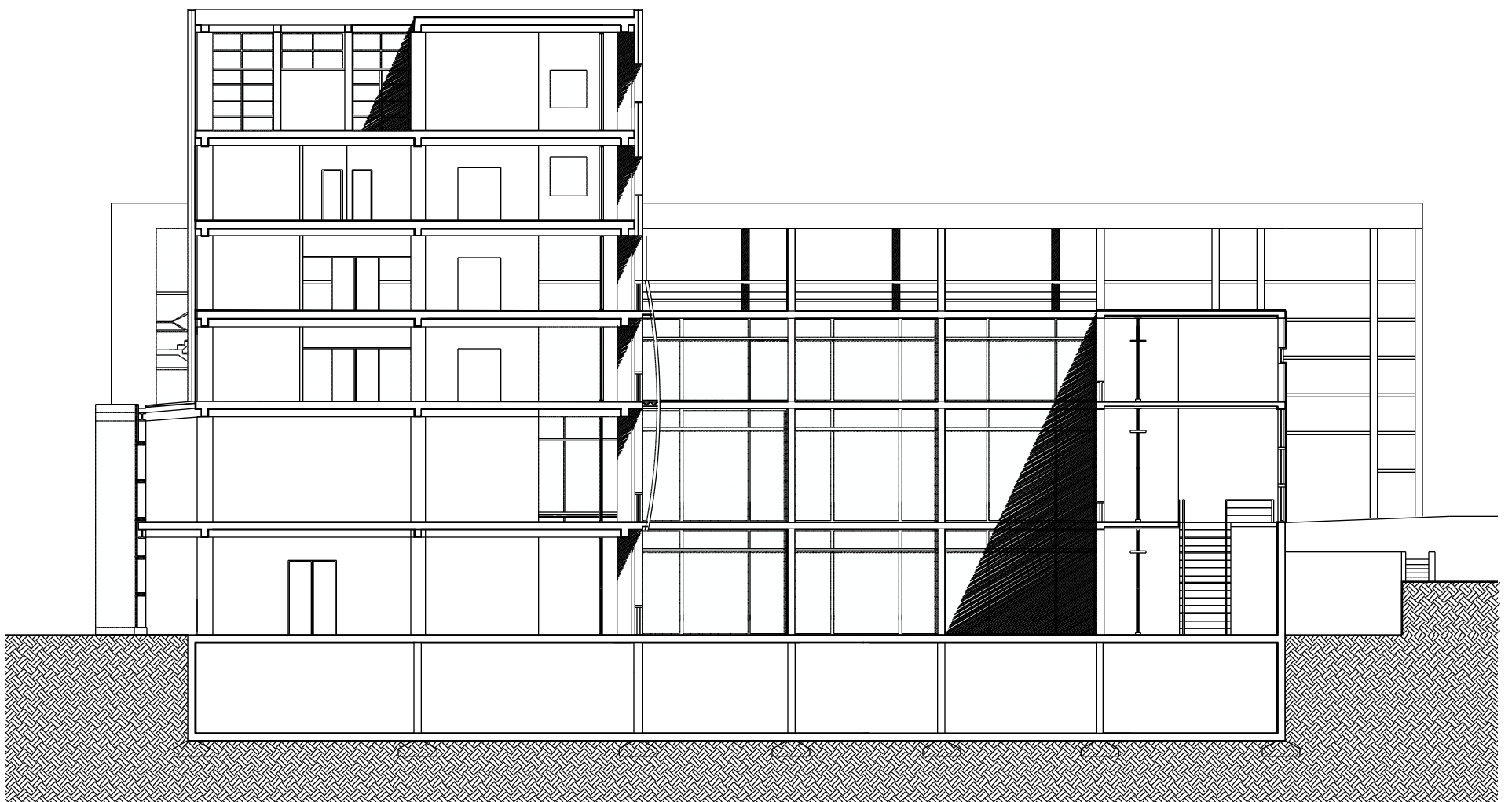


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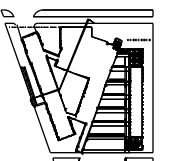
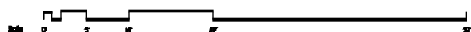
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## BUILDING SECTION



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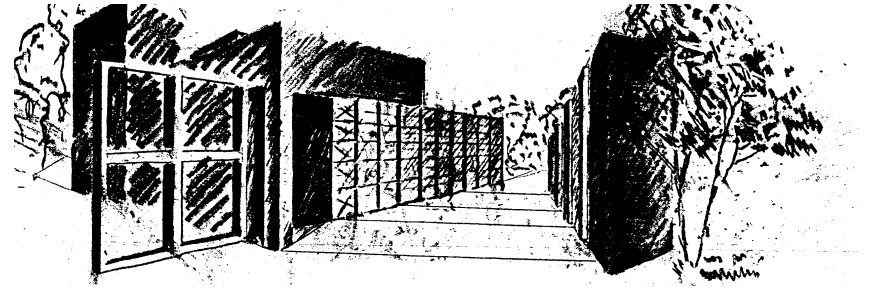
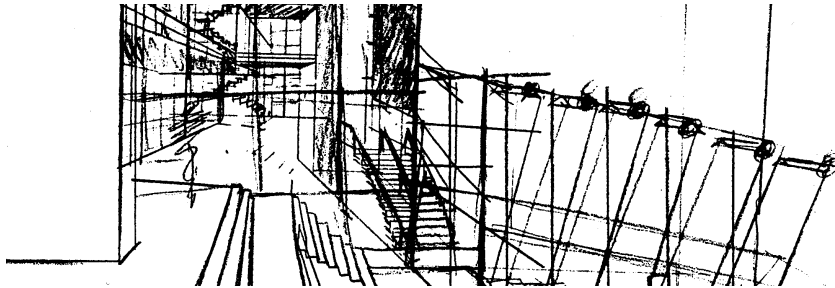


## RENDERINGS



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## RENDERINGS

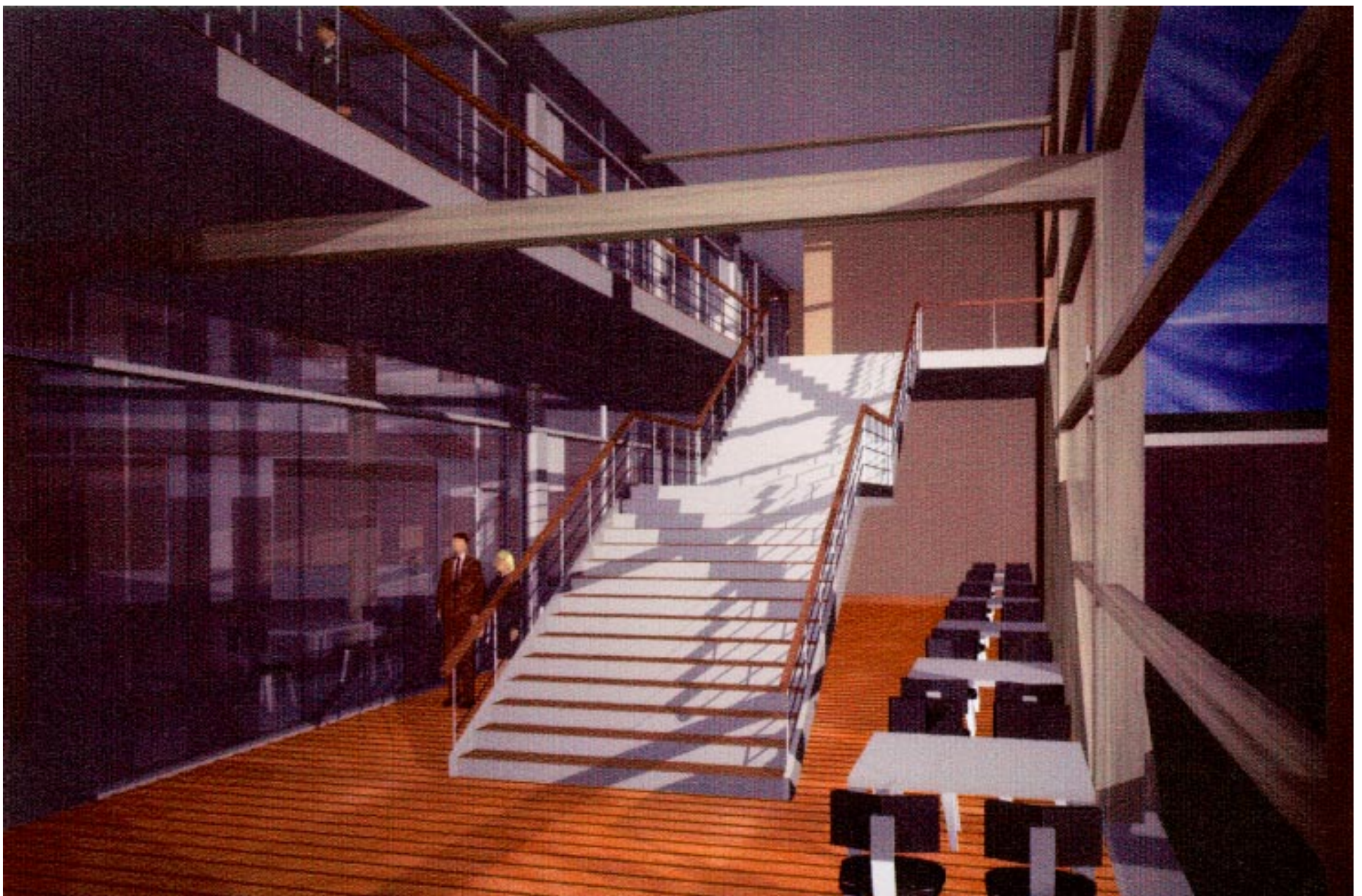


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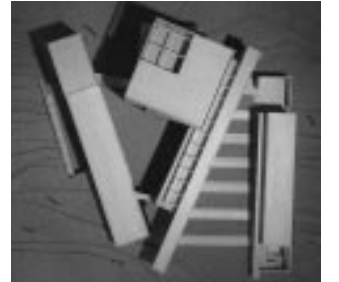
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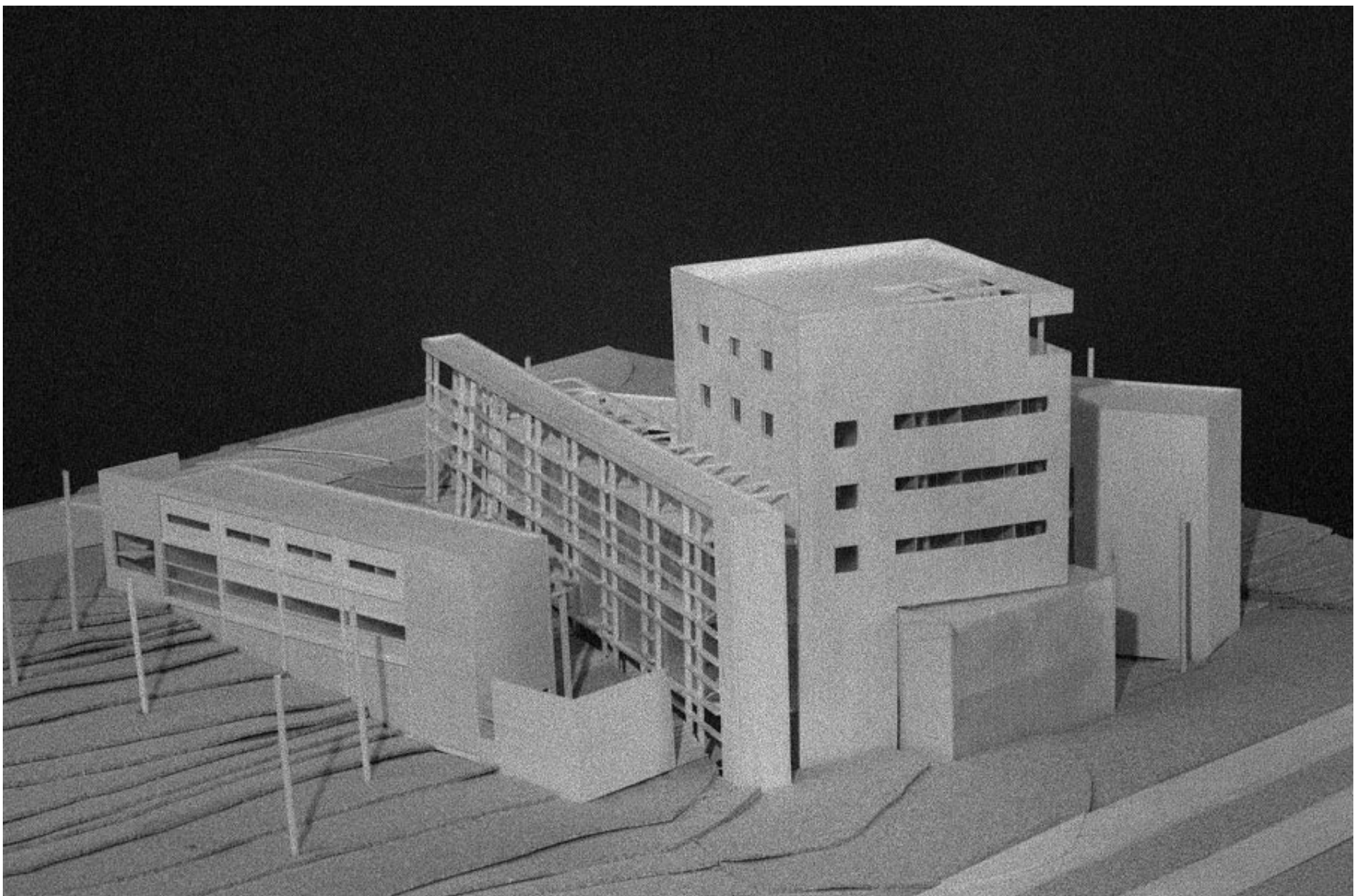


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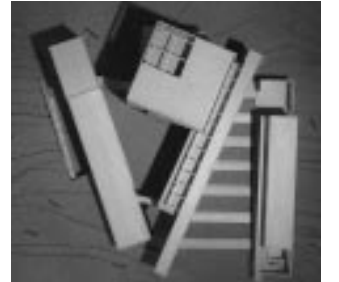
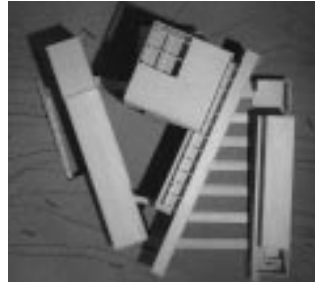
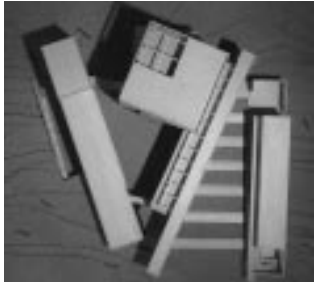


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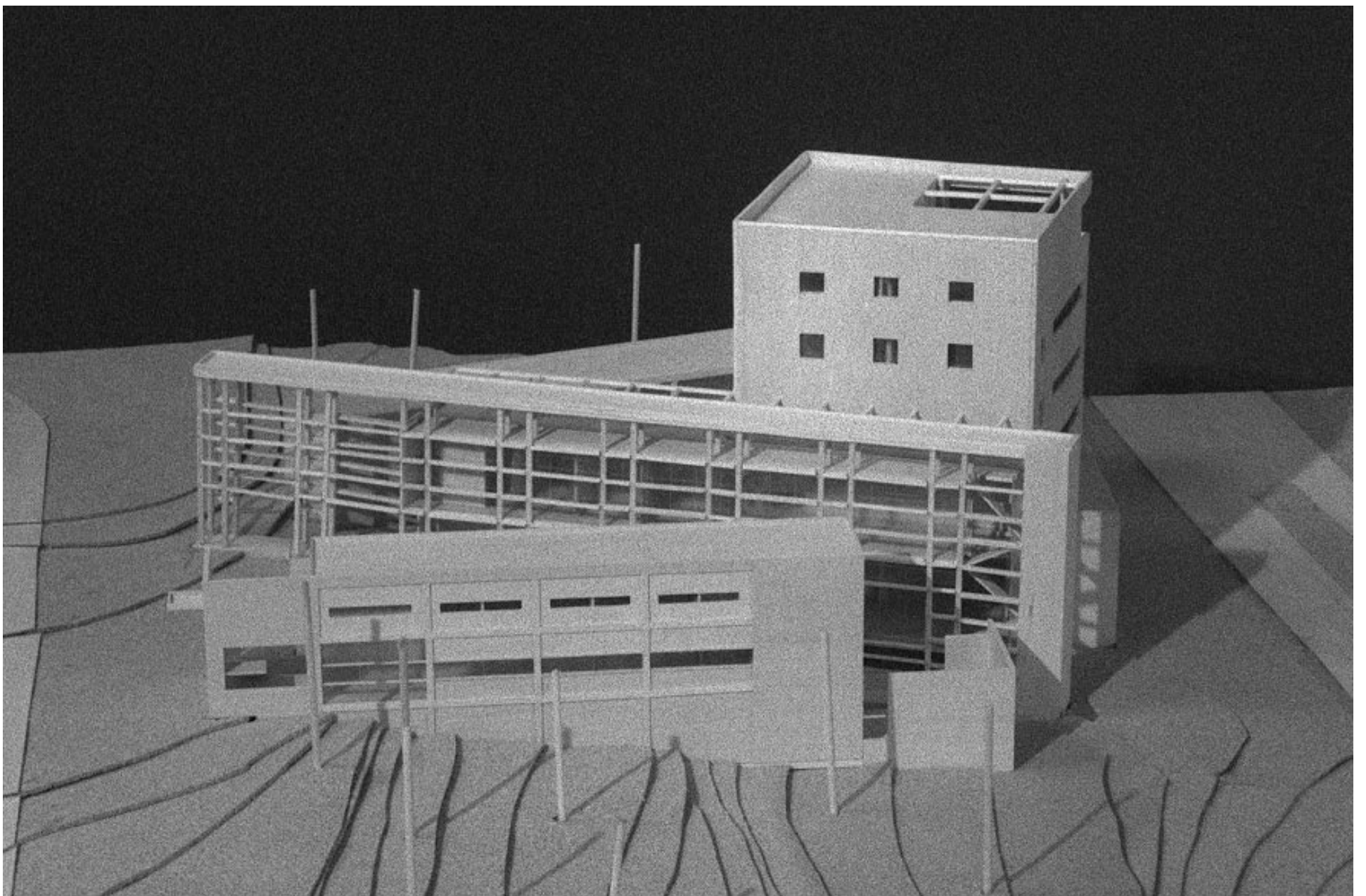


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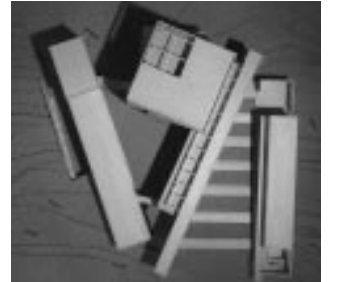
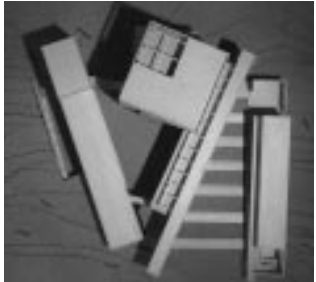


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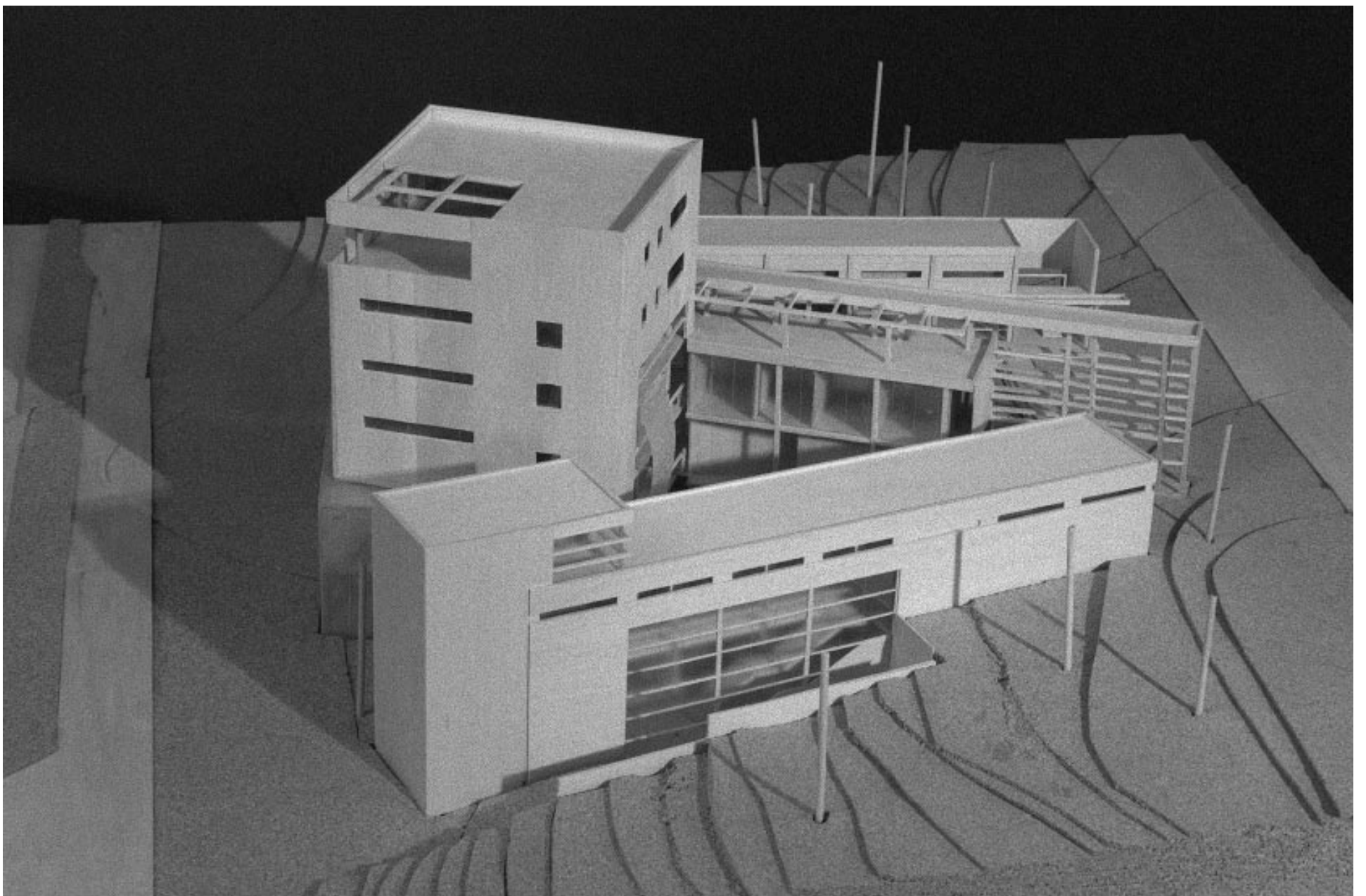


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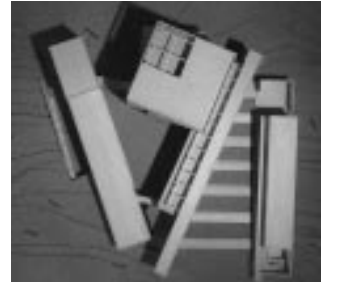
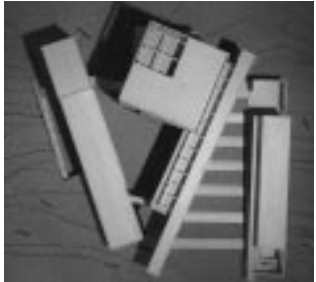


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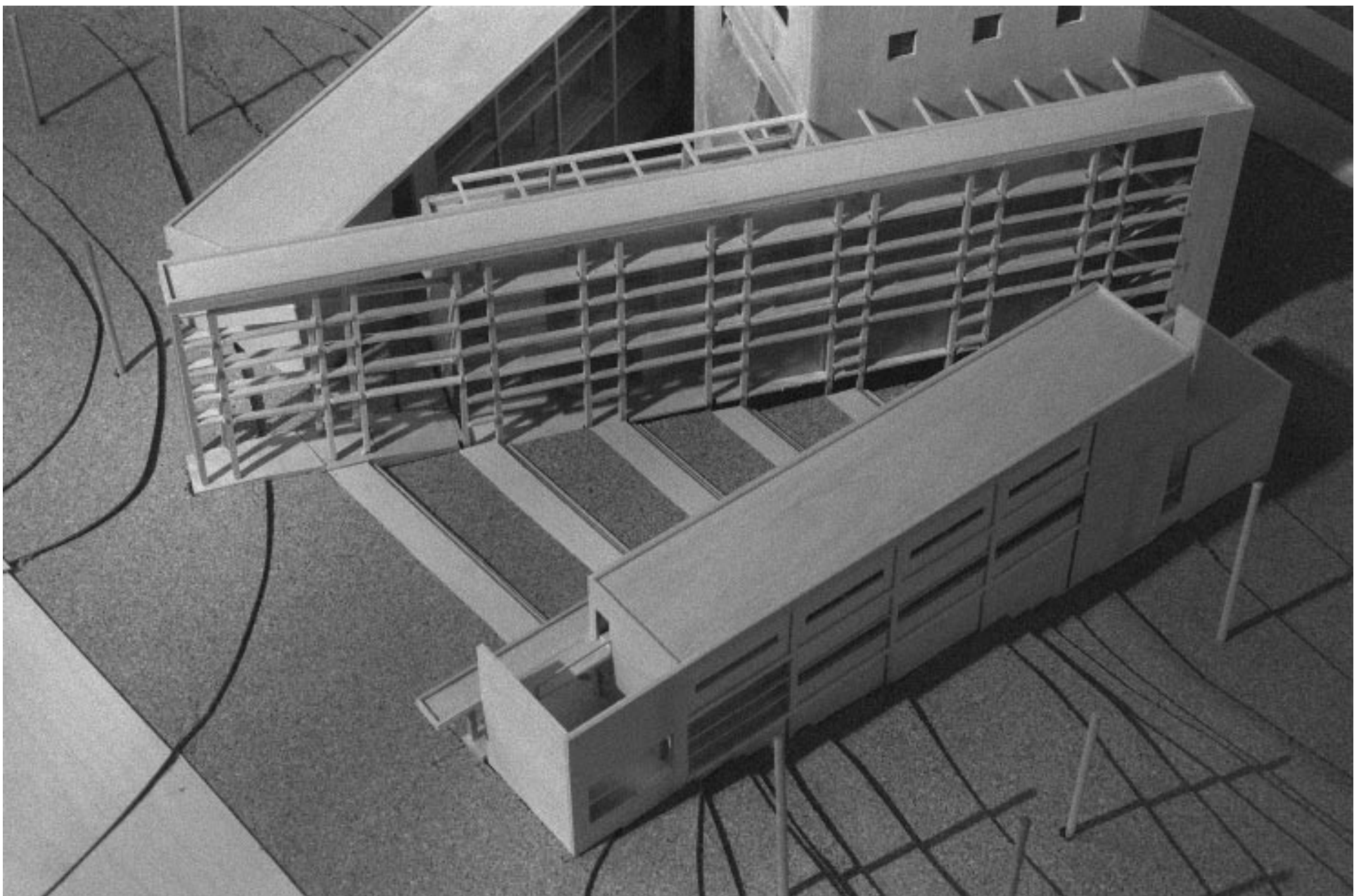


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FINAL MODEL



**Michelle Scurfield**

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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
College of Architecture and Urban Planning  
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B.S. Human Ecology  
Major: Interior Design

**PRACTICAL  
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Sept. 1991 - Present

**Project Interior Designer**  
**Department of State, Washington, DC**

Feb. 1991 - Aug. 1991

**Designer, IBD Affiliate**  
**Harris Design Group, Bethesda, MD**

Dec. 1989 - May 1990

**Designer, IBD Affiliate**  
**Architectural Interiors, Chicago, IL**

Aug. 1988 - Nov. 1989

**Designer, IBD Affiliate**  
**Contract Design Group, South Bend, IN**

**HONORS/AWARDS:**

1st Place in the 1993 Specifications Writing Competition sponsored by the Construction Specifications Institute, Washington DC Chapter.

**United States Department of State**

- Outstanding Performance Award in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996
- United States Department of State Meritorious Award for La Paz, Bolivia