

Hide and Seek: An Architecture of Layers

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Master of Architecture  
in  
Architecture

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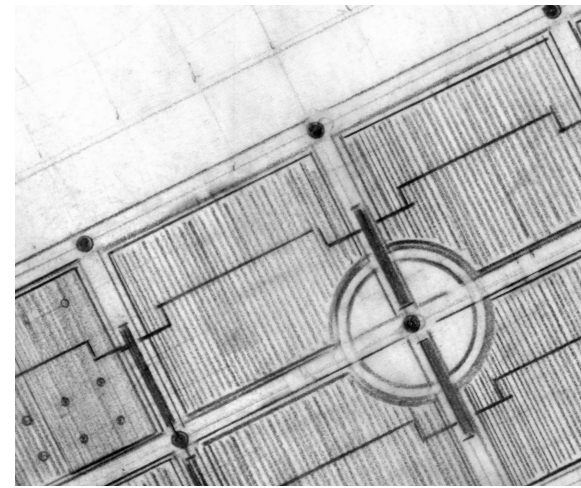
Keywords: architecture, elementary school, layers,  
playground

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### ABSTRACT

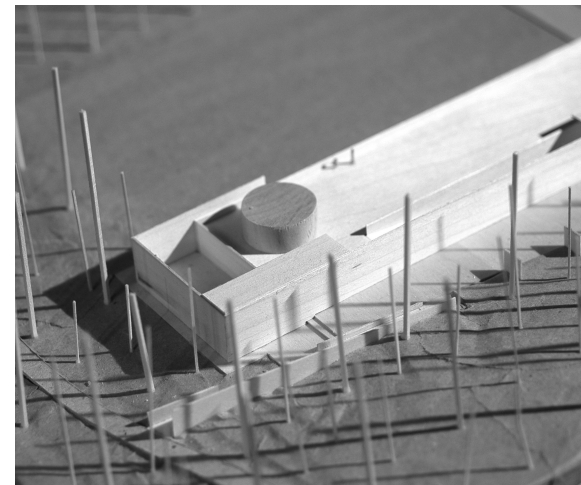


This project is an elementary school located in a suburban area outside of Williamsburg, Virginia. The building is sited on an eight acre plot of wooded land and is designed for 100 students. A playground is designed as a counterpart to the school.

A design approach which resembles the layering of space is developed through the drawings. The experience of these spaces establishes a dialogue between building and student likened to a game of hide and seek.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



To my family

Thank you for your continuous love and support.

To my talented classmates

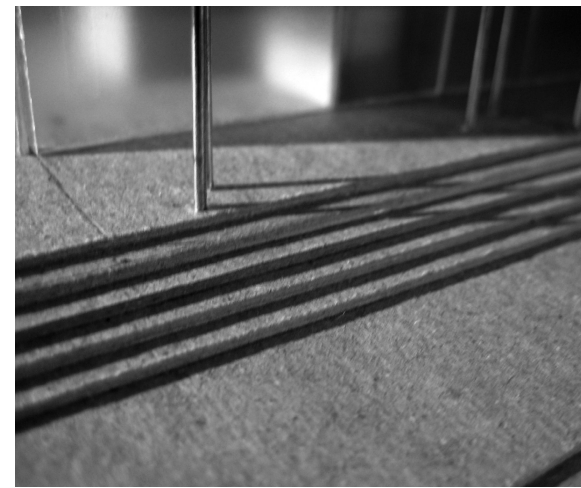
I have learned so much from you and through your work. Thank you.

To the architecture faculty at Virginia Tech

Thank you for a true education. You have shown me new ways to see the world and the architecture in it.

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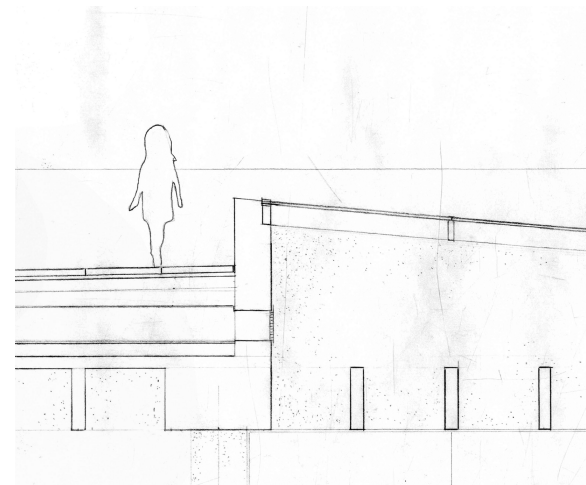
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## INTRODUCTION



The project, to design a school, was a vessel that enabled an exploration into the nature of the relationship between play and architecture. Developing the two programmatic elements of playground and school concurrently led to interpretation of this relationship in three ways:

1. Building presents plain elements which are physically enjoyable to navigate and whose use is embedded in its form, i.e., a ladder is for climbing.
2. Building presents ambiguous elements arranged in ways which encourage the imagination to discover ways of using.
3. Building presents itself as a participant in a game.

Design began to resemble playful architecture as the intention shifted from designing building elements to be played **on**, to designing a building which plays **with**, as an active participant in a game. Play no longer was bound to the program of playground, but could be associated more broadly with architecture.

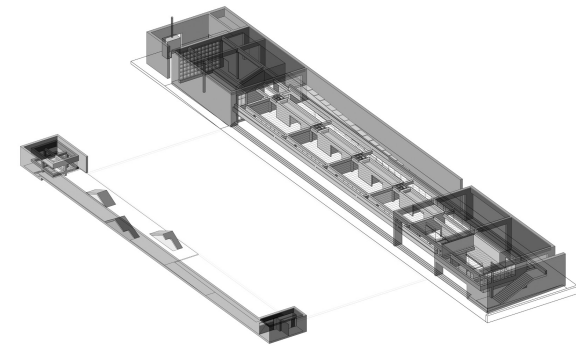
The game "hide and seek" elicits feelings of surprise, discovery, anticipation, and delight; could a building also play this game?

hide - seek  
recede - emerge  
refuge - prospect  
obscure - reveal

This project, by means of layers, attempts to compose spaces of purpose directed by these associations.

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## PROJECT



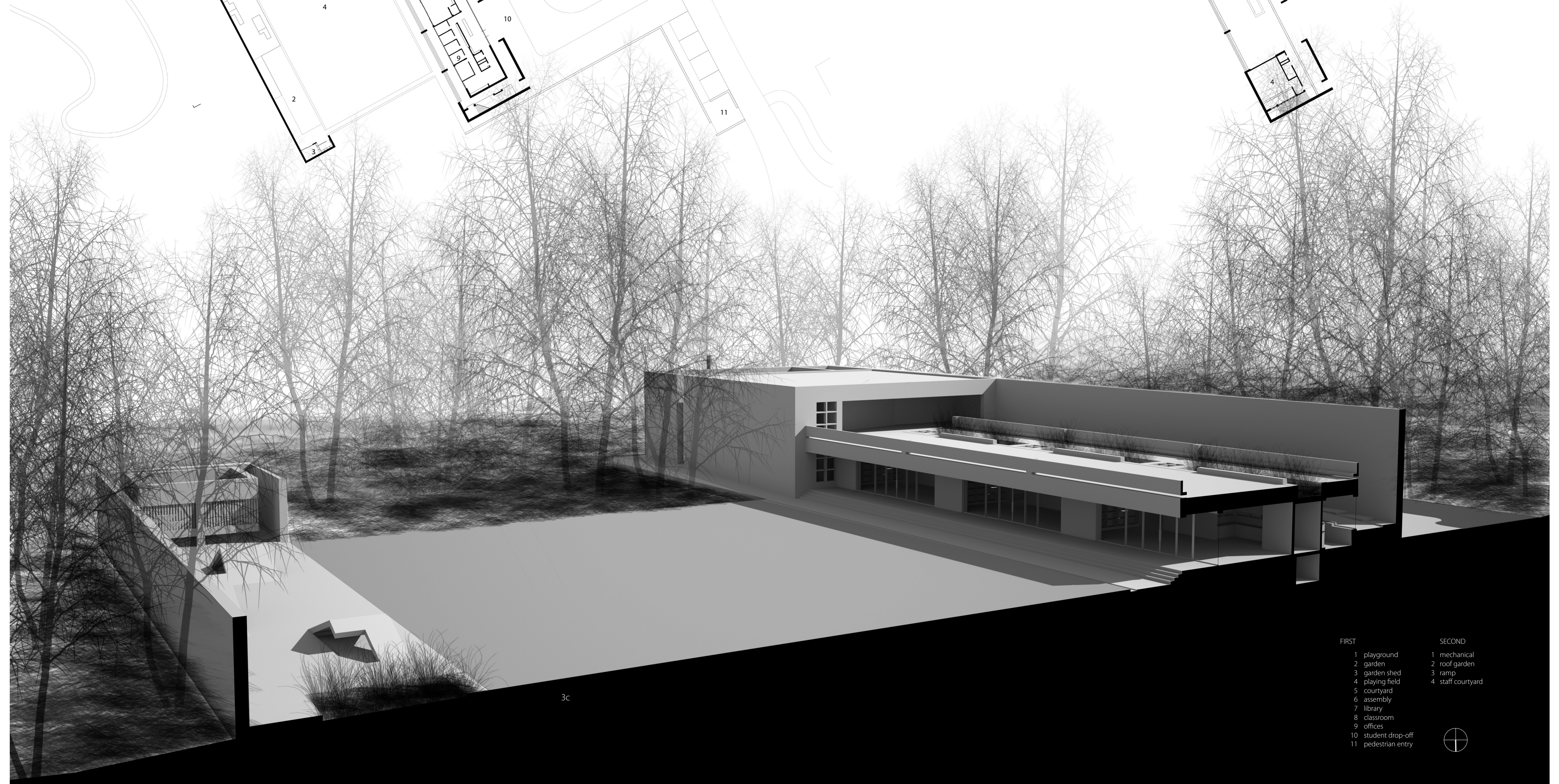
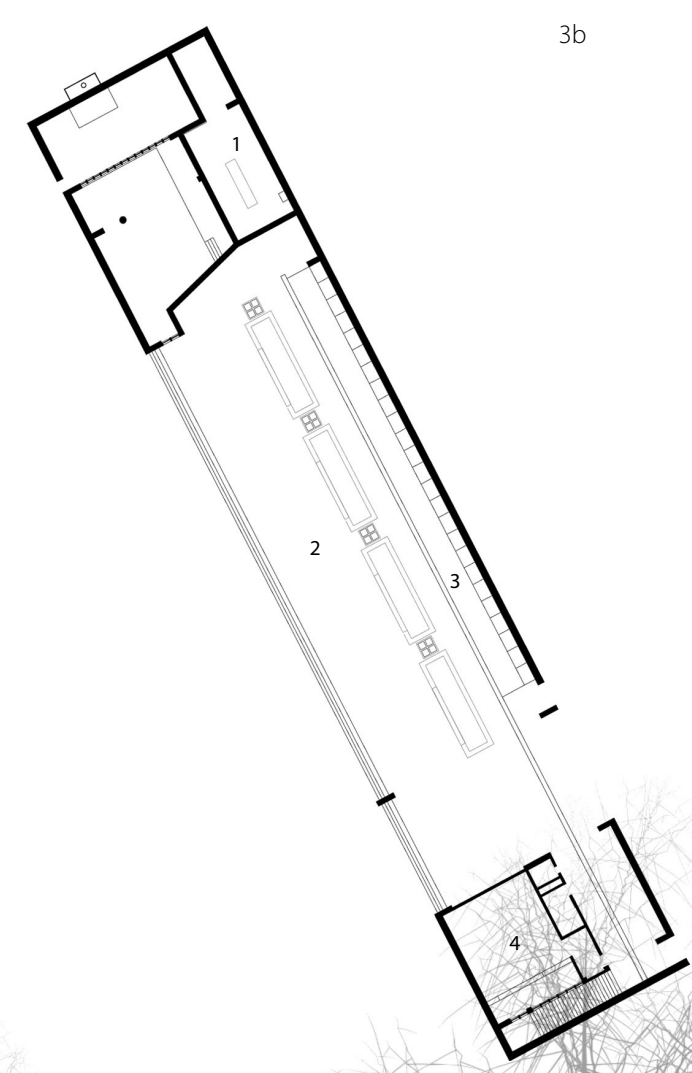
The project is a small elementary school on an eight acre wooded site near Williamsburg, Virginia. Suburban neighborhoods surround the site on two sides with the other two defined by roads. A bicycle path runs along the northwest edge.

A section of trees buffers the entry road from parking, and a row of planted trees buffers the parking from the school. An entry canopy receives students dropped off, protects those waiting to be picked up, and provides a space to store bicycles. A long ramp to a roof garden is set parallel to the hallway. The rise of the ramp dims light in passing through the hallway, with entry to each classroom punctuated by light from above. The hallway ends in a courtyard, with library and assembly space arranged around. Central to the courtyard is a fireplace and adjacent is a path which winds through the woods. A service and structural core, with plantings above and ductwork below provides a deep threshold to the classrooms. It houses the storage, kitchen, and restroom for each class. Classrooms open to a porch and look out towards the vegetable garden and playground; a view shared with the offices. A large ornamental garden space on the roof for children is complemented by a smaller, secluded garden space for staff.

Construction is primarily concrete. The outer frame and walls are rough board formed, and the inner frame is smooth panel formed and painted. Wood casework and stud walls form interior partitions, and glass framed by steel infills openings to the outside.

The building is arranged in rows, or layers, parallel to the entry road. Rooms are made between them, and passage through, around, and over defines the experience of the building.

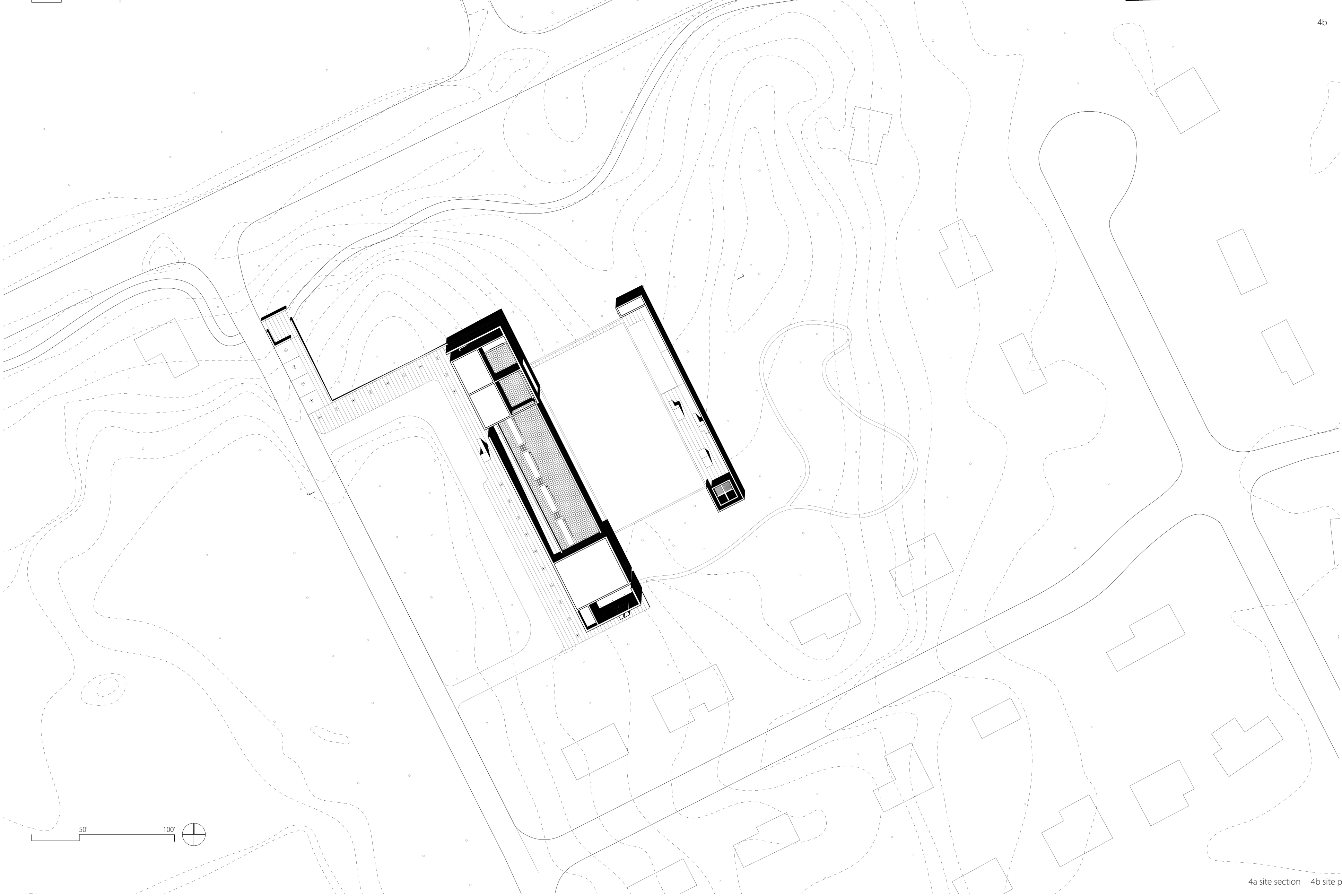
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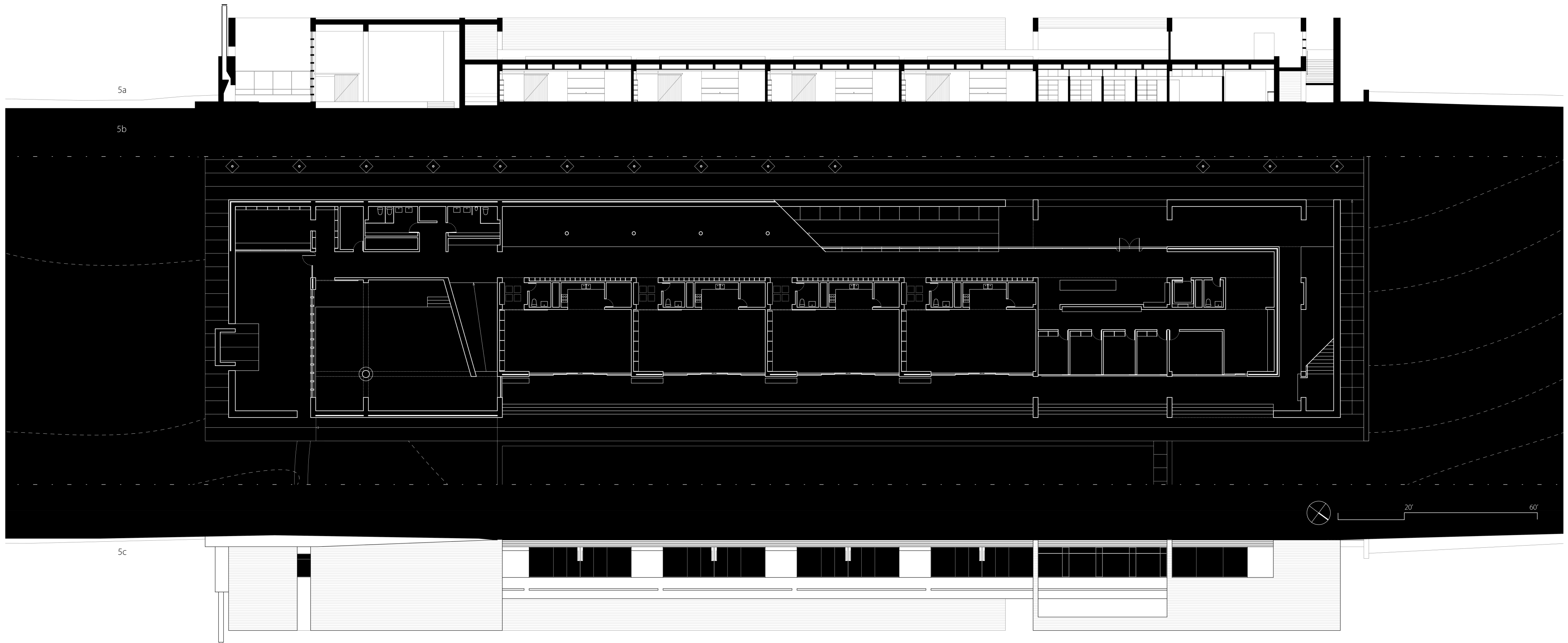


- | FIRST               | SECOND            |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 playground        | 1 mechanical      |
| 2 garden            | 2 roof garden     |
| 3 garden shed       | 3 ramp            |
| 4 playing field     | 4 staff courtyard |
| 5 courtyard         |                   |
| 6 assembly          |                   |
| 7 library           |                   |
| 8 classroom         |                   |
| 9 offices           |                   |
| 10 student drop-off |                   |
| 11 pedestrian entry |                   |





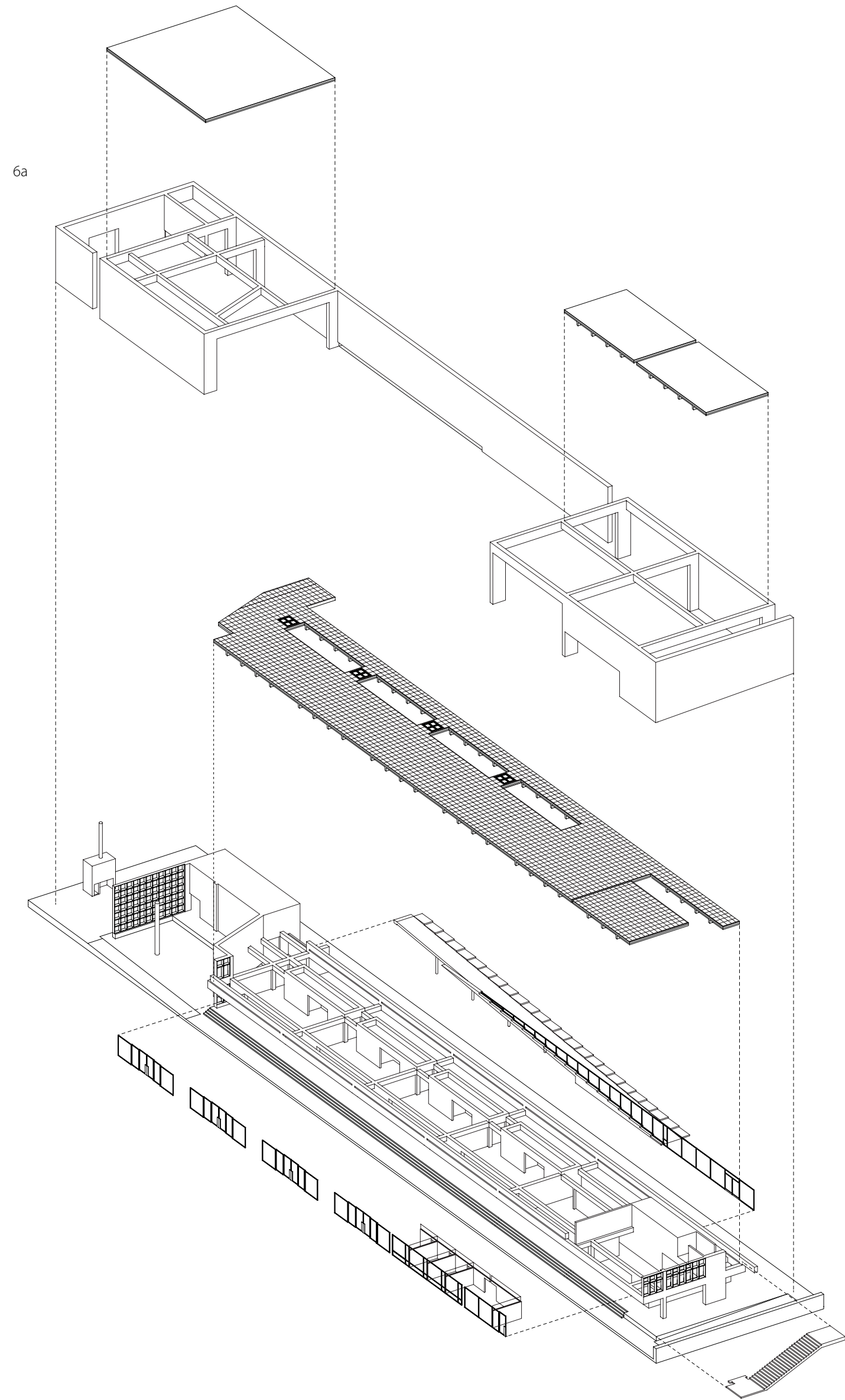


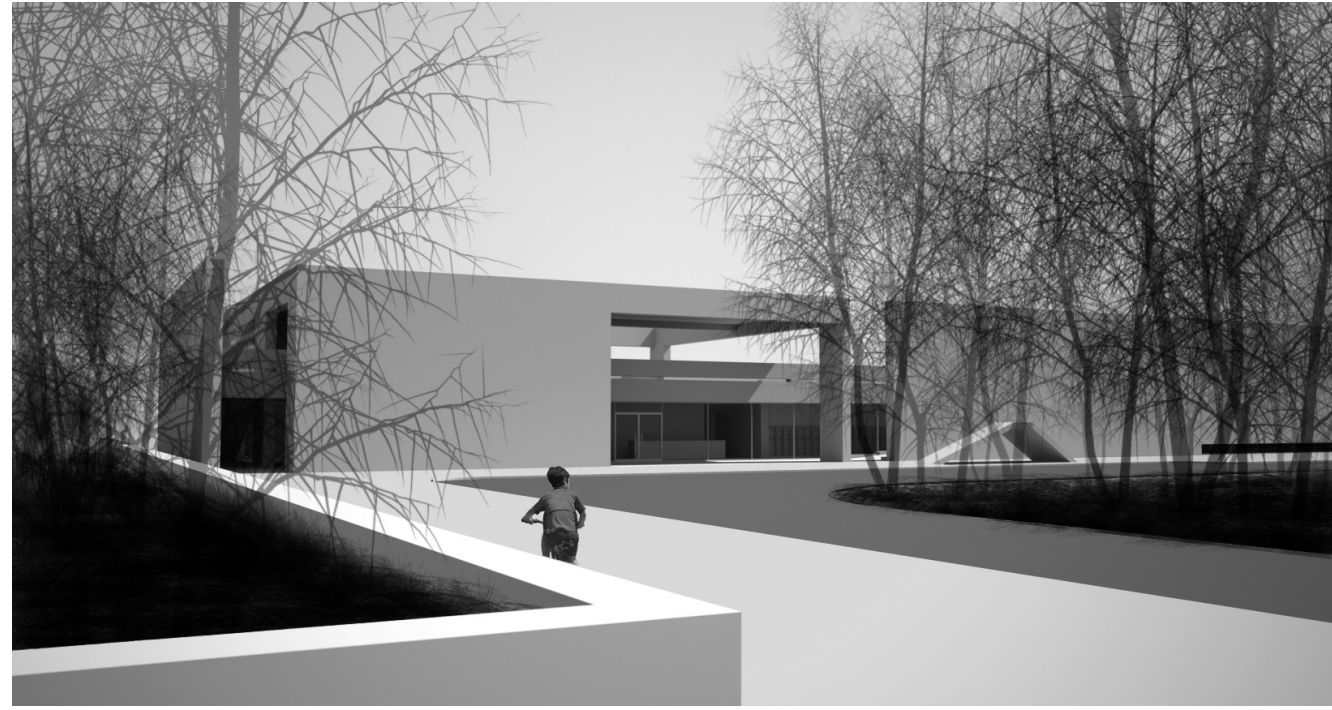


5a

5b

5c





7a



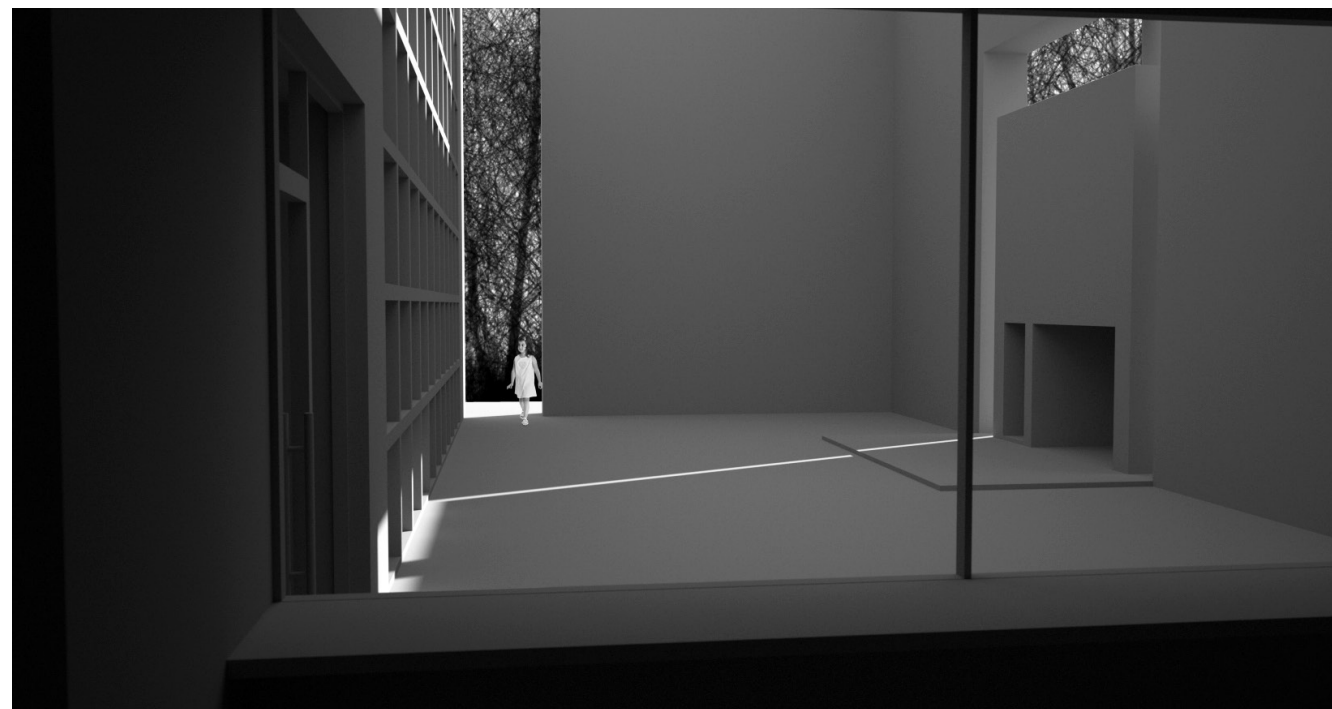
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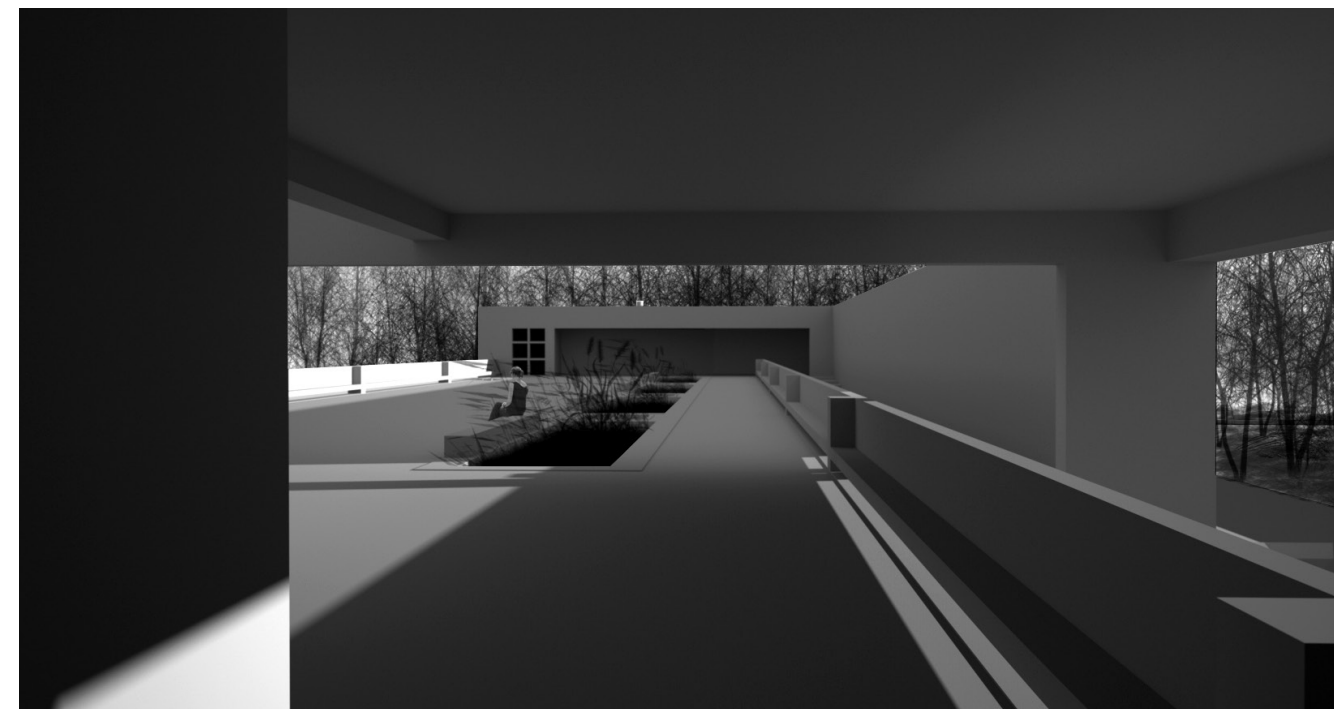
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7d



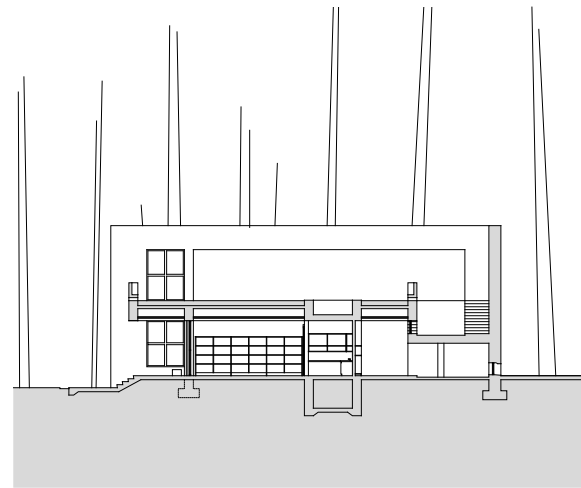
7e



7f

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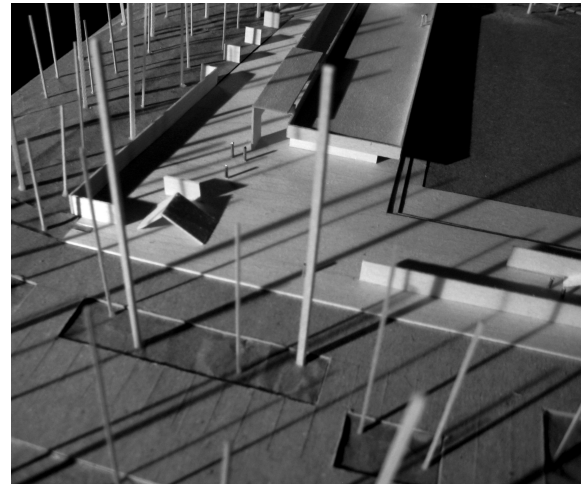
## CONCLUSIONS



Layers constrict and release; permit light and cast shadow; obscure and reveal. Darkness gives way to light; horizontal gives way to vertical; small gives way to large. Each space is a preparation for the next. The nature of each room is shown through contrast. The act of obscuring before revealing heightens awareness, impact, and presence of what is shown. Light hints at what is beyond.

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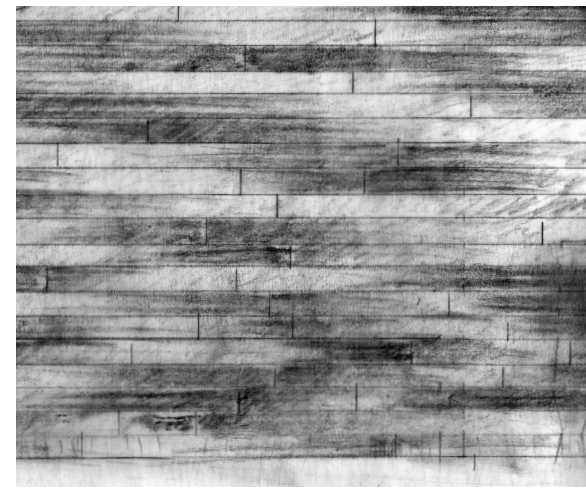
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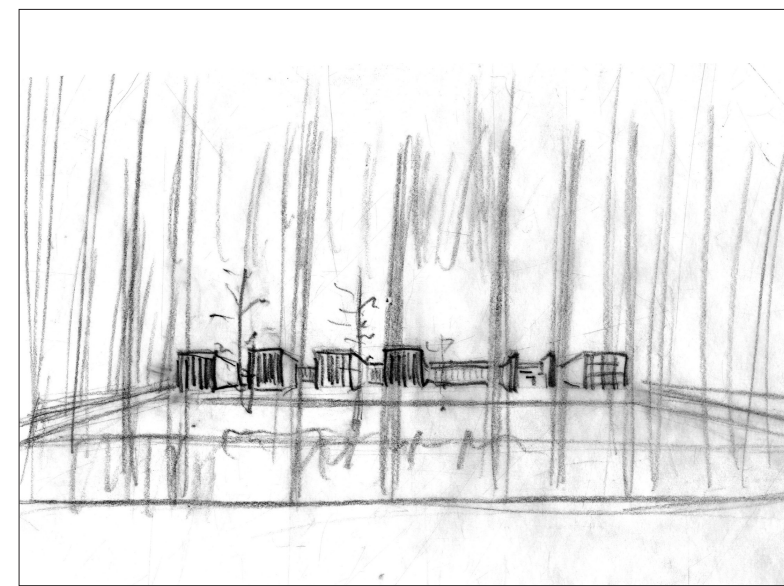
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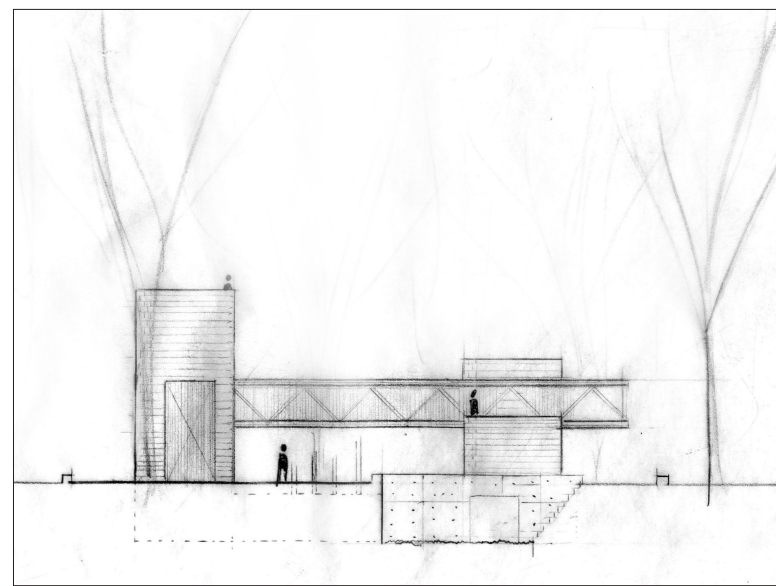
APPENDIX



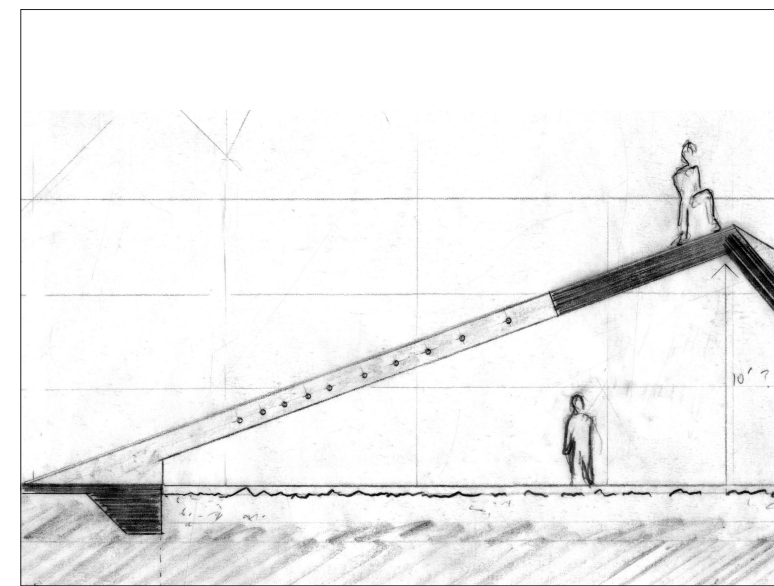
The thesis, the exploration of layers as an element in architecture, and play as it relates to architecture, is a study that continues beyond the project presented and has roots in variations before. The hope is that of these variations, this project is the strongest, but often an idea is more apparent closer to its inception. A series of images follow which relate to earlier versions of the project and may serve to clarify or contribute to understanding the work.



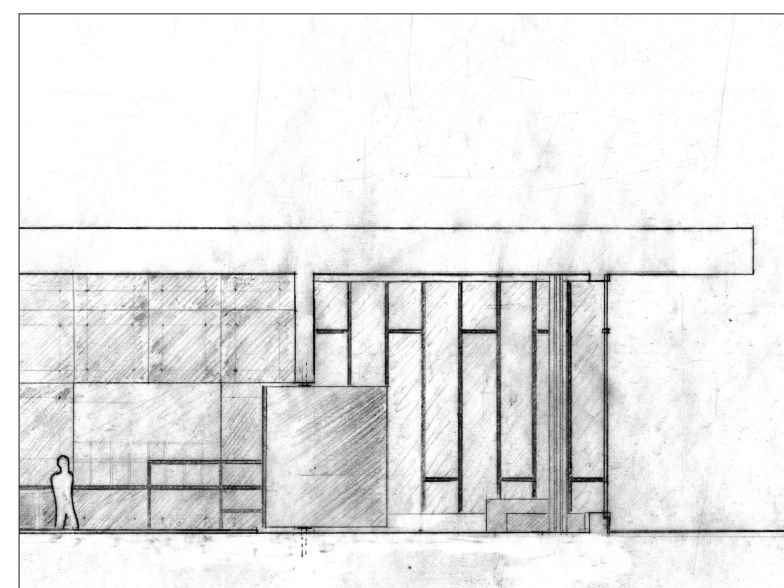
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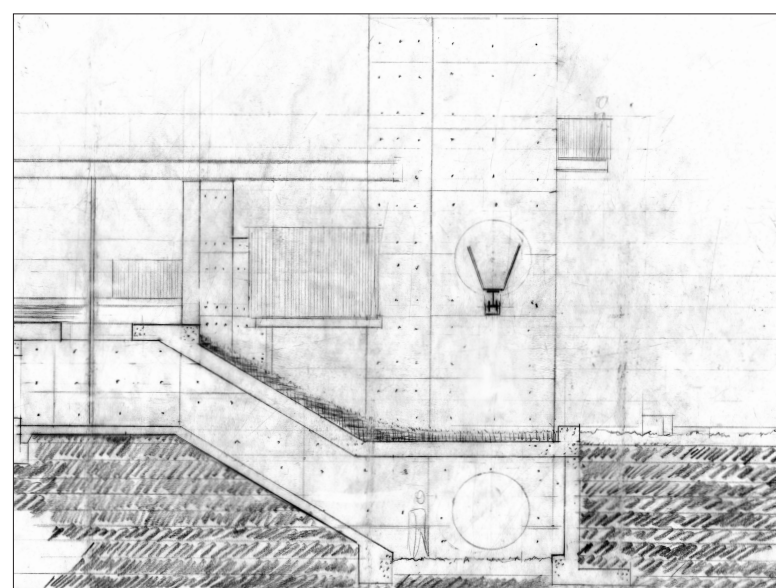
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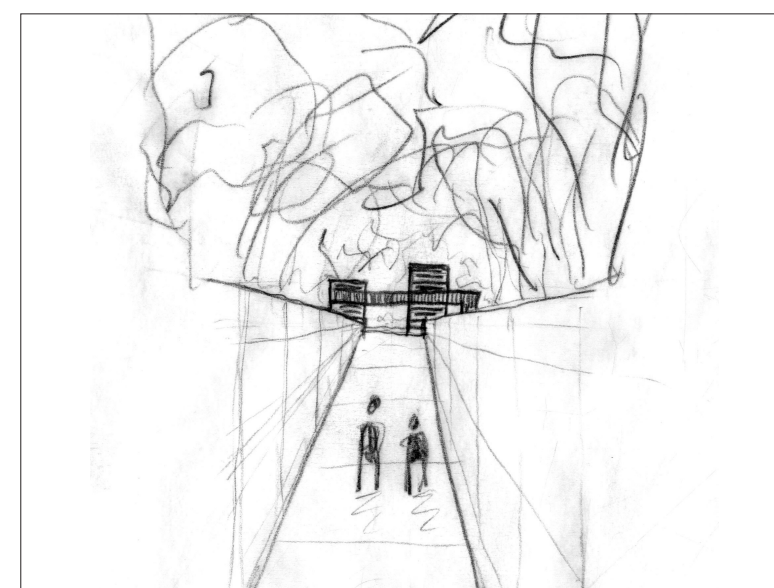
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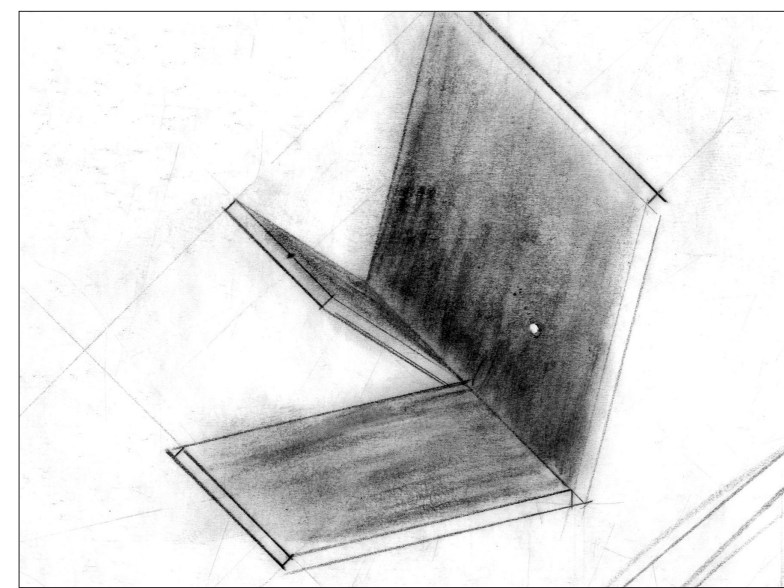
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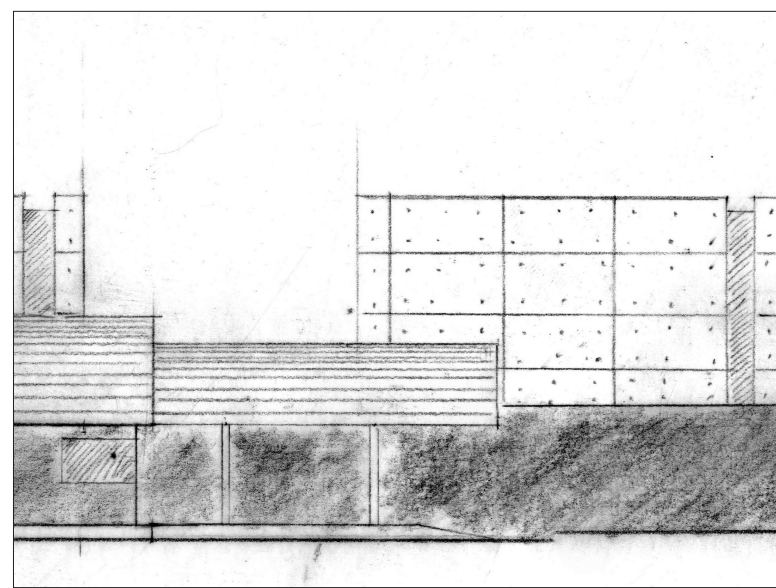
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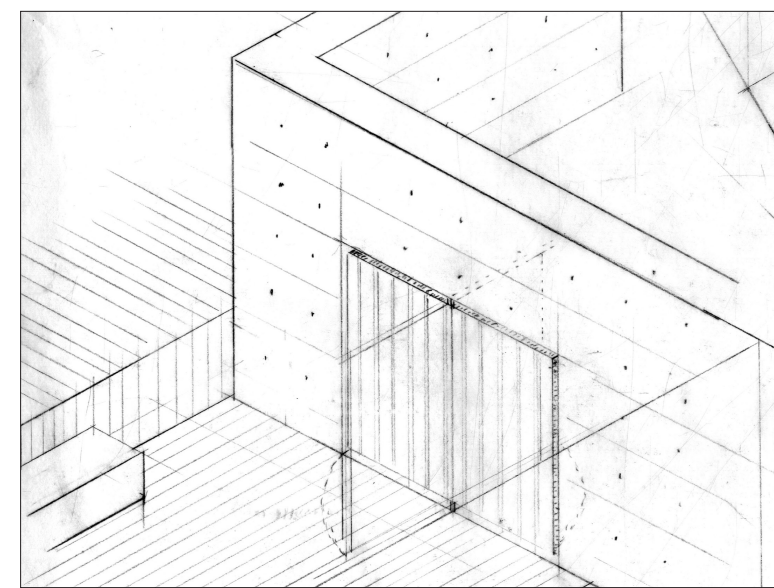
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11g

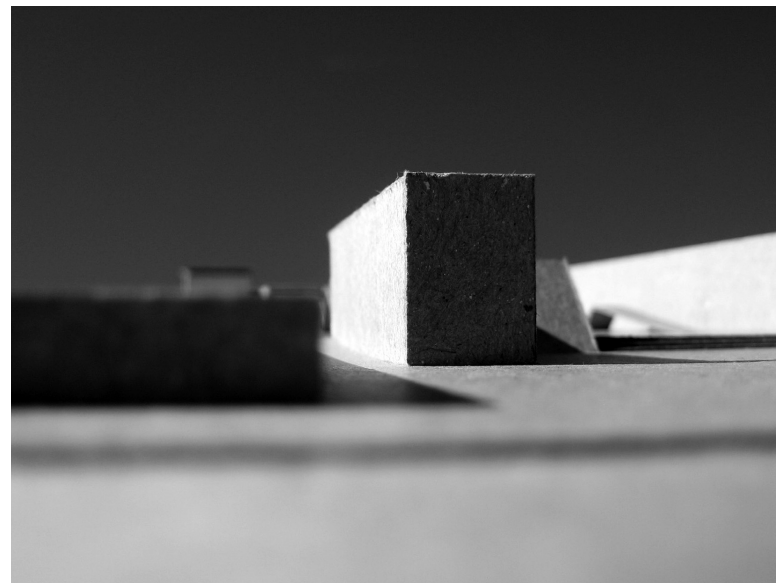


11h



11i

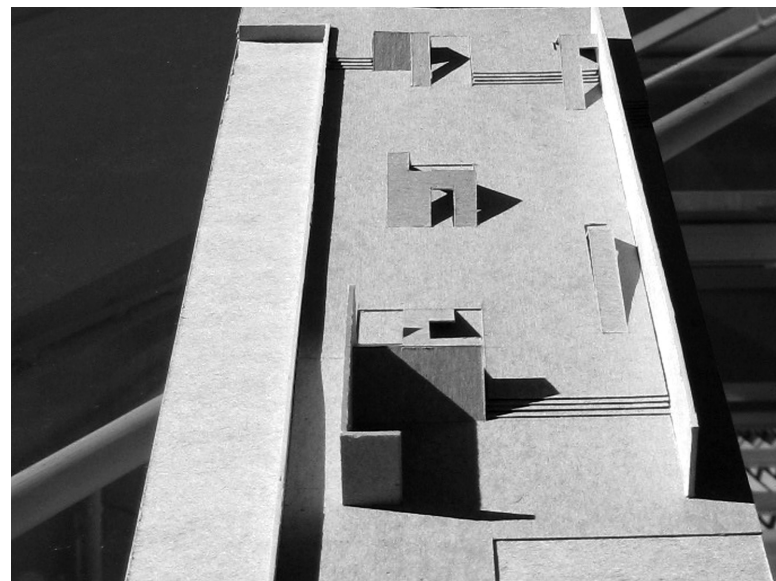




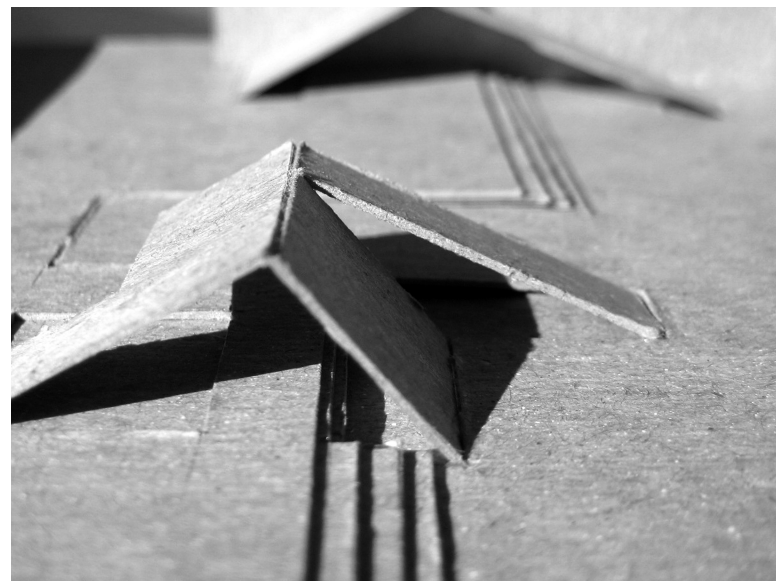
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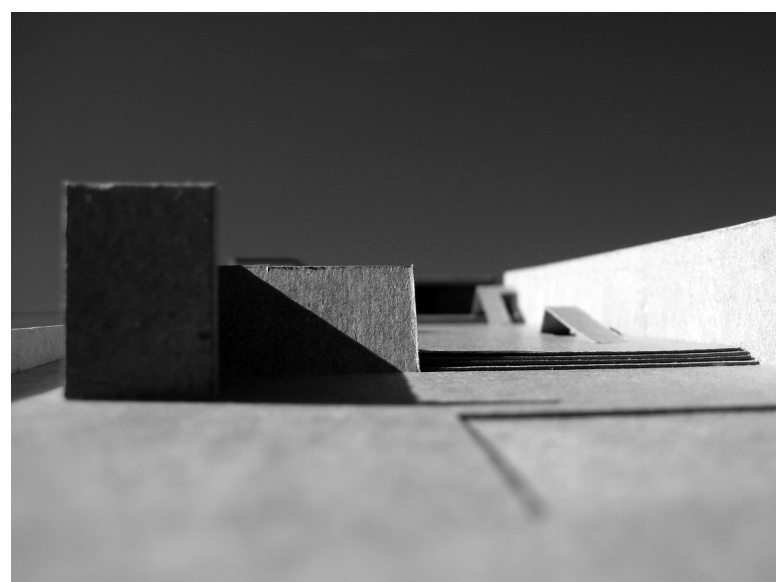
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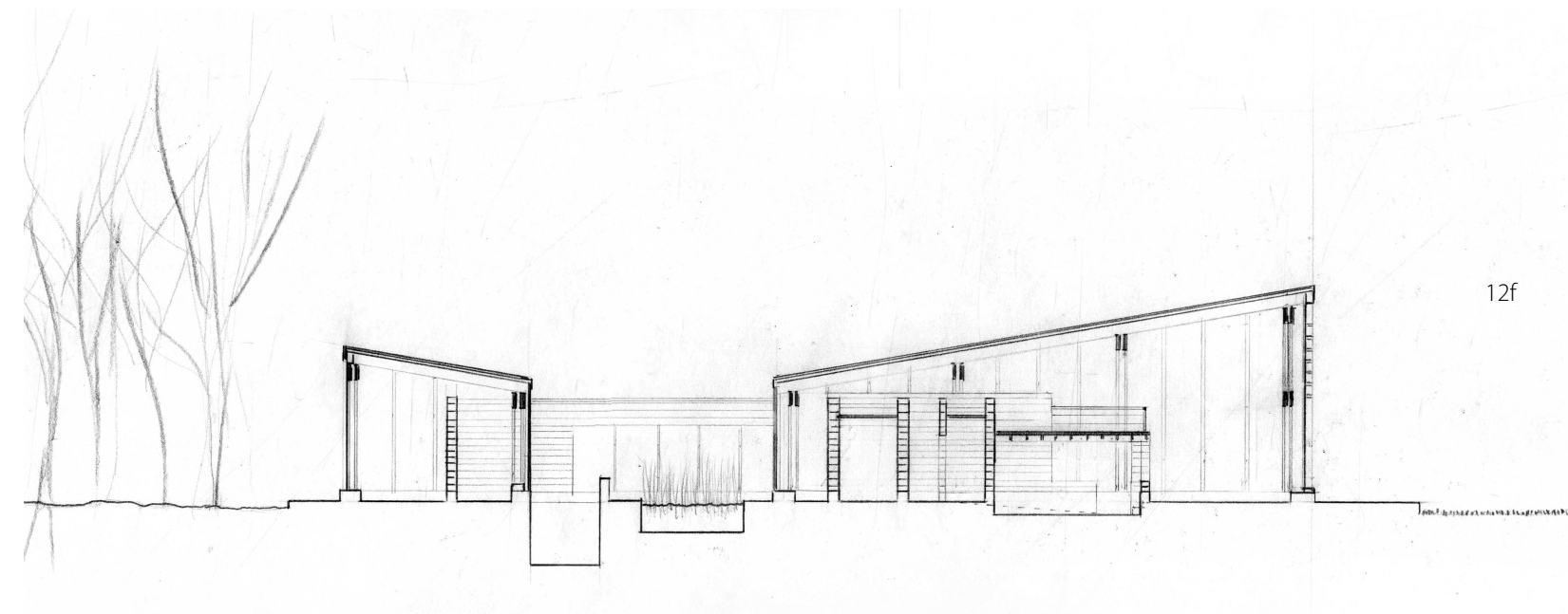
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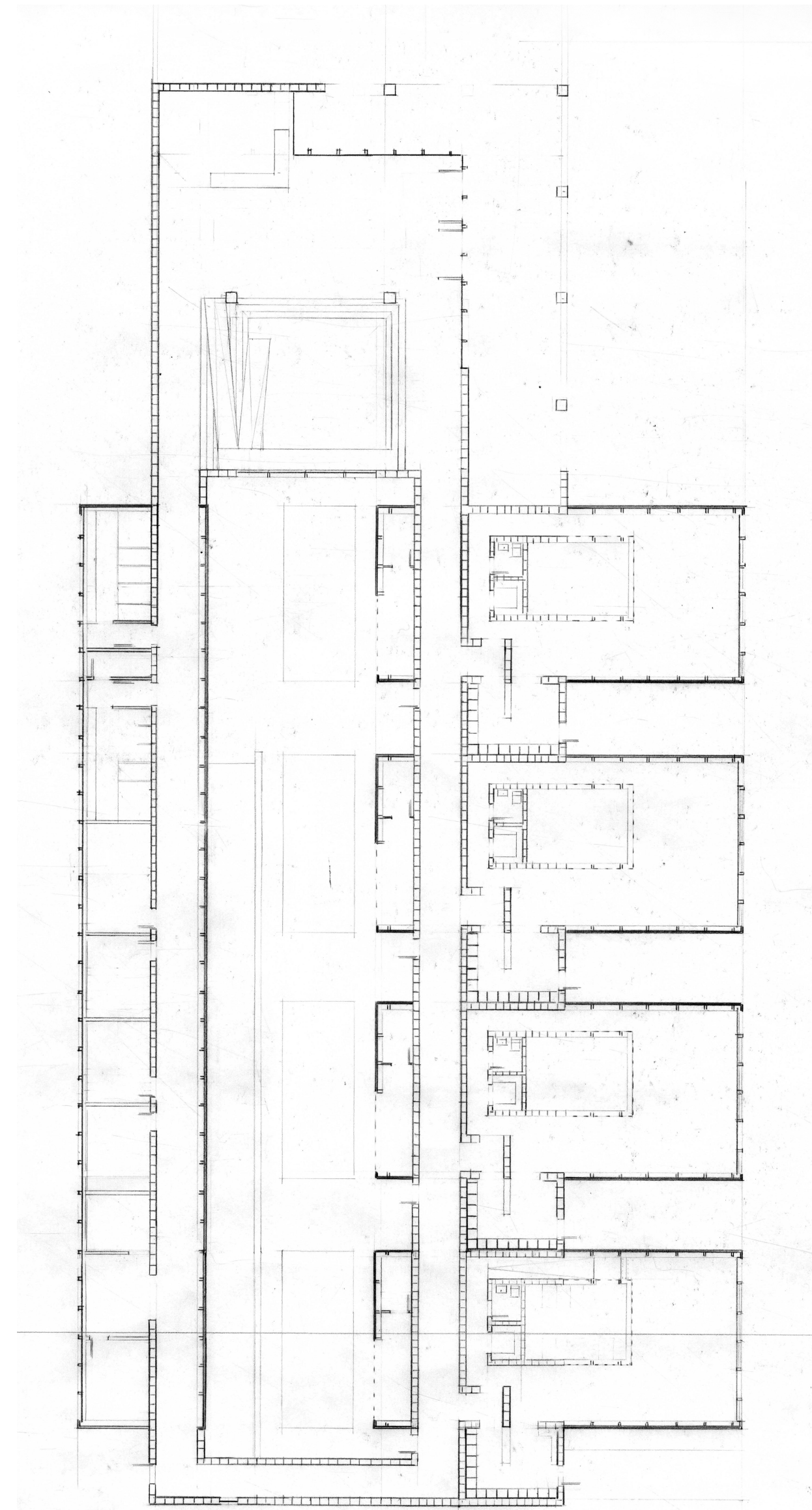
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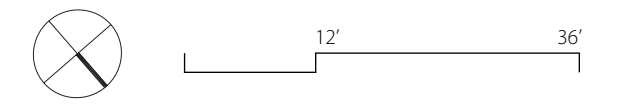
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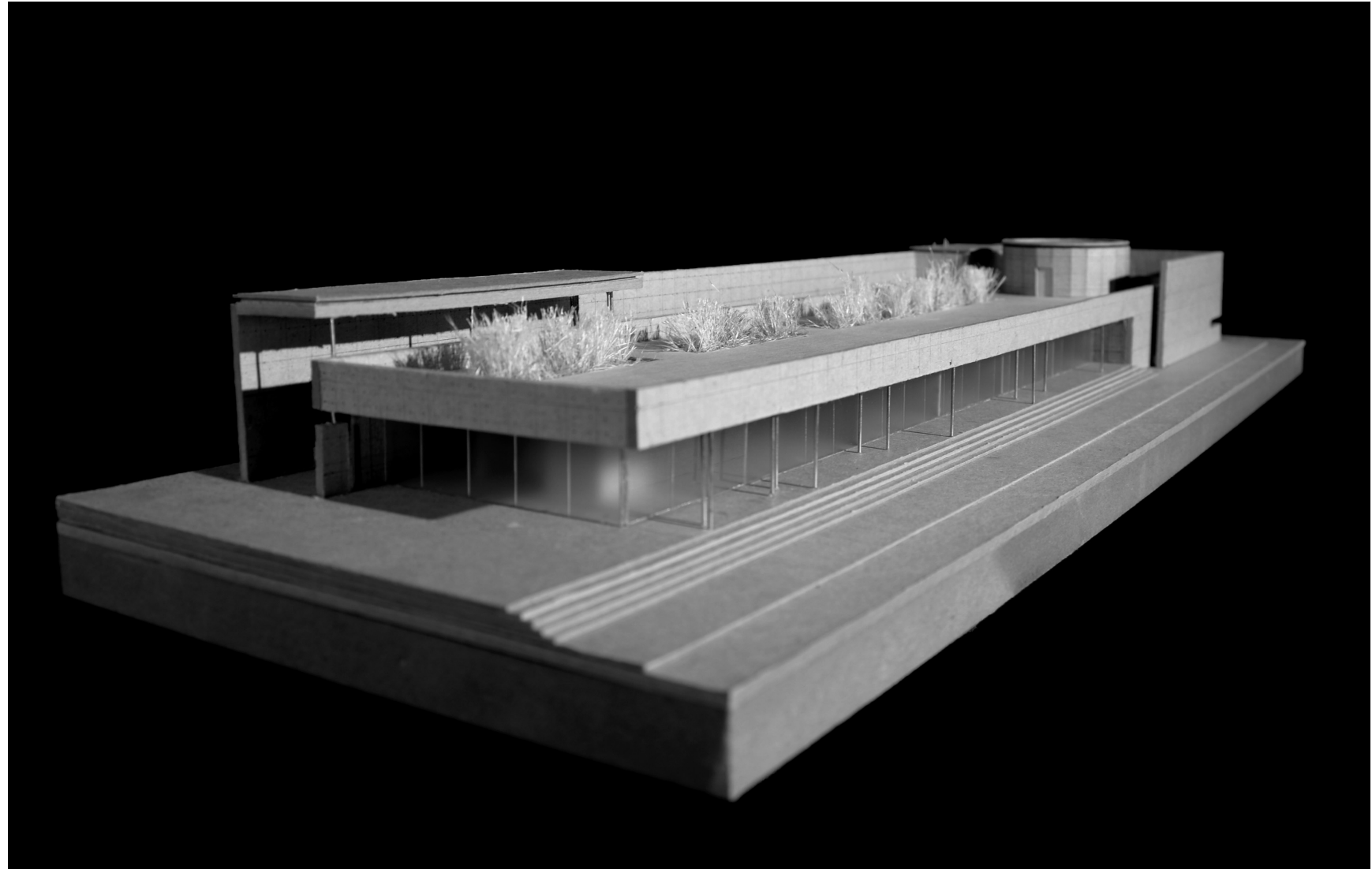


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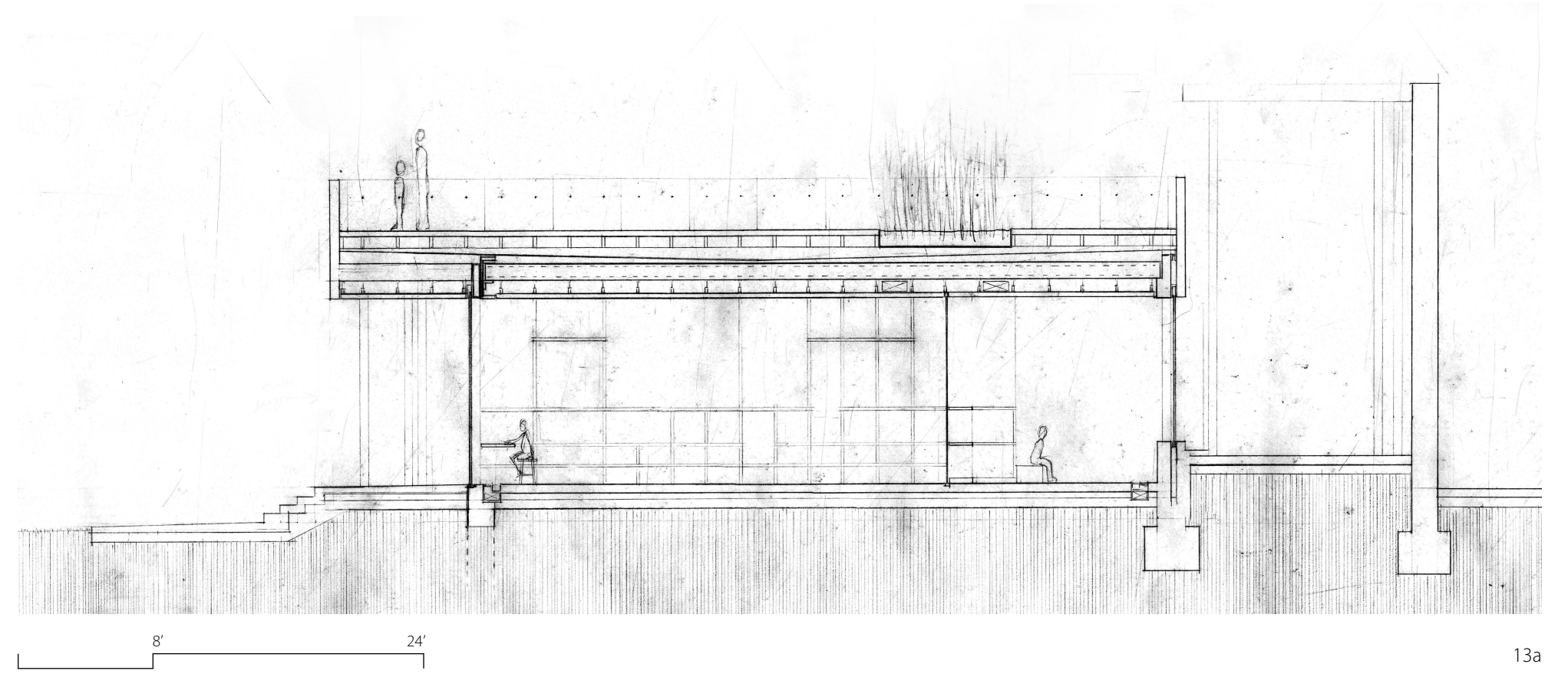


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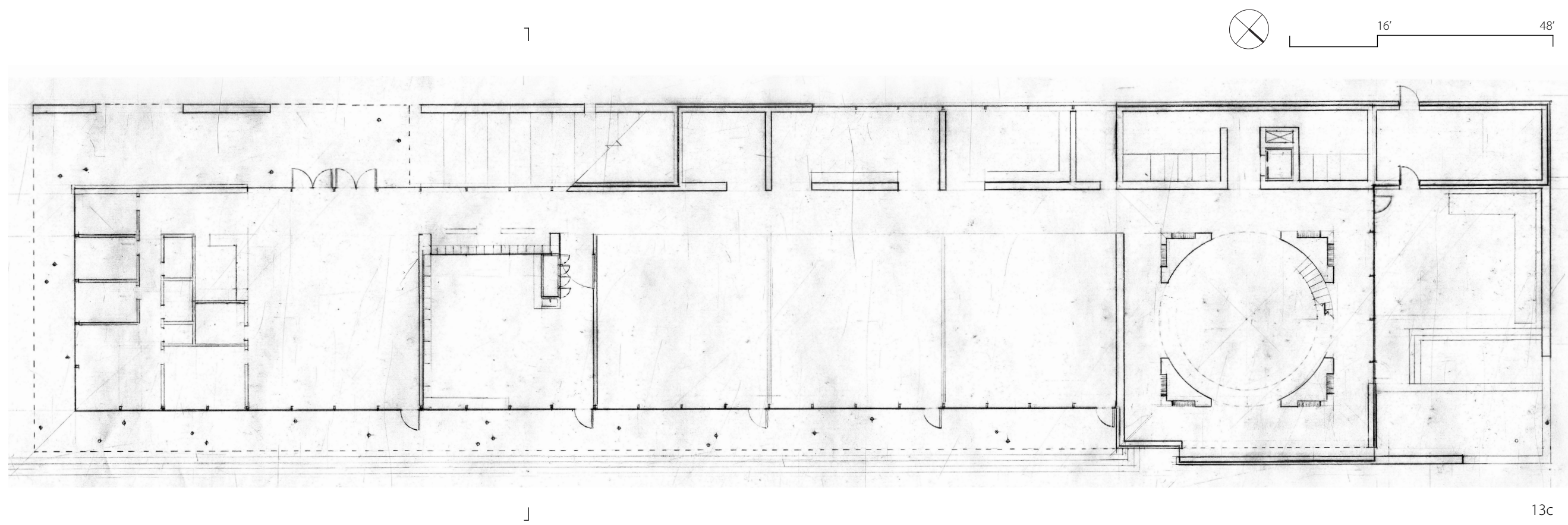




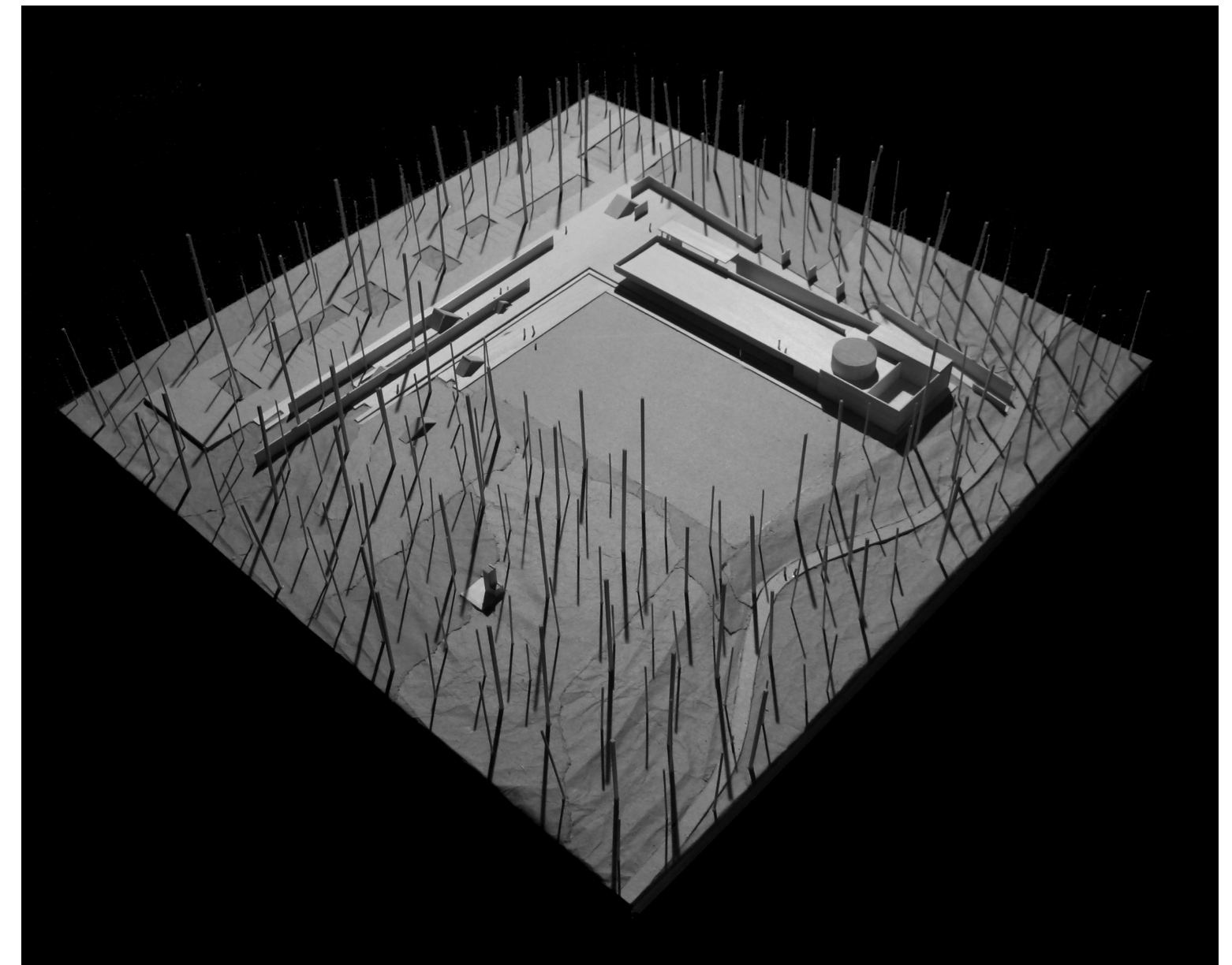
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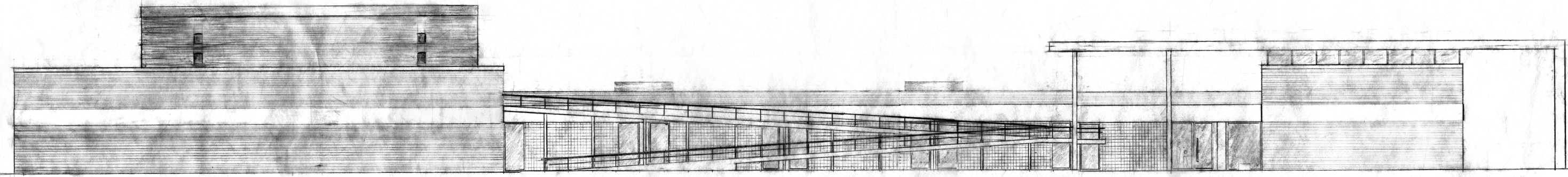
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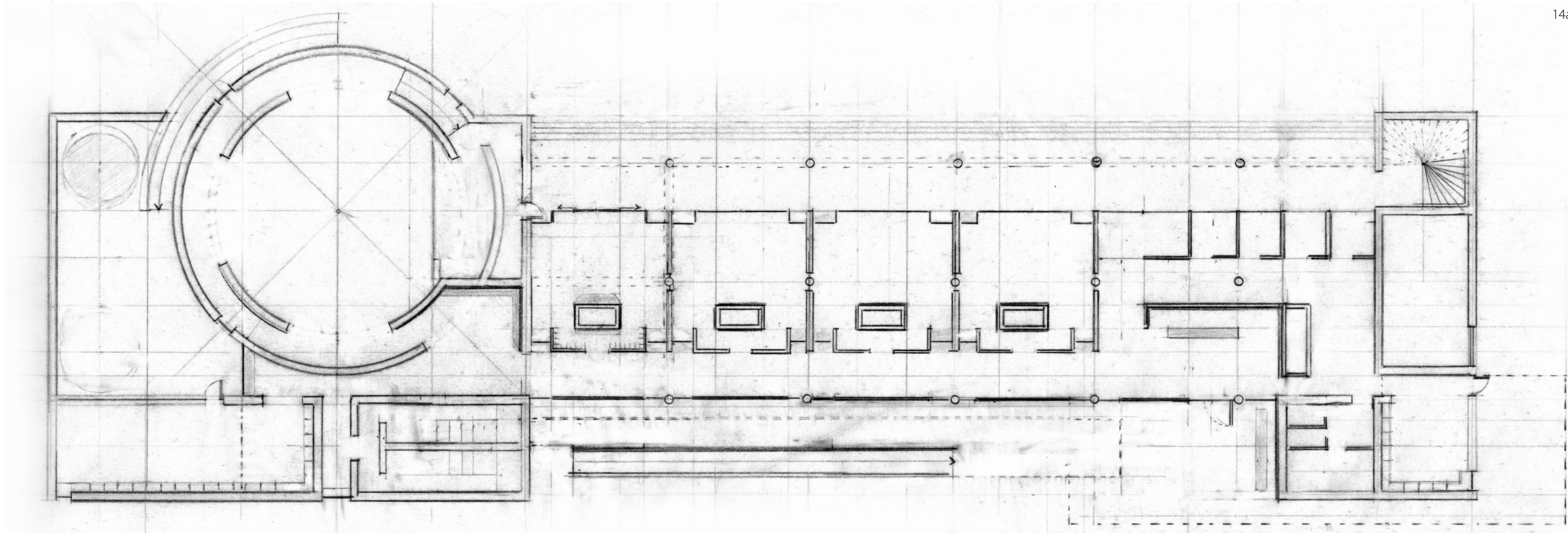
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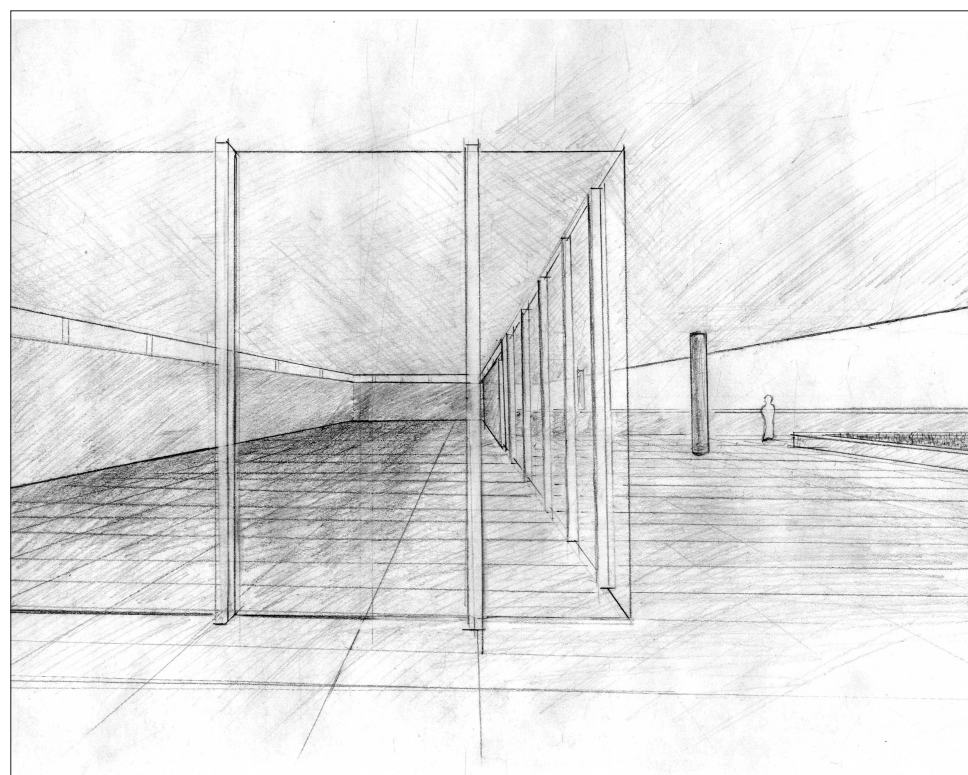
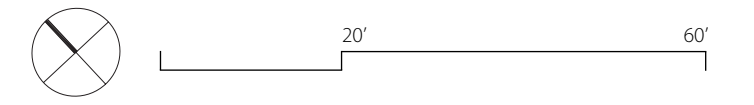
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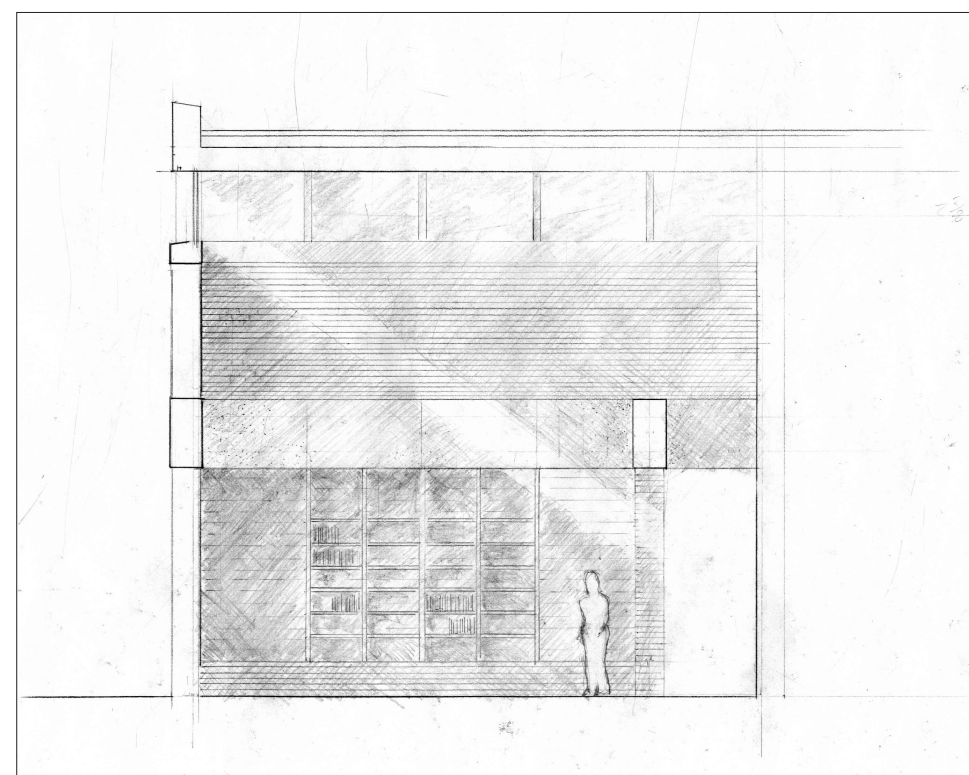
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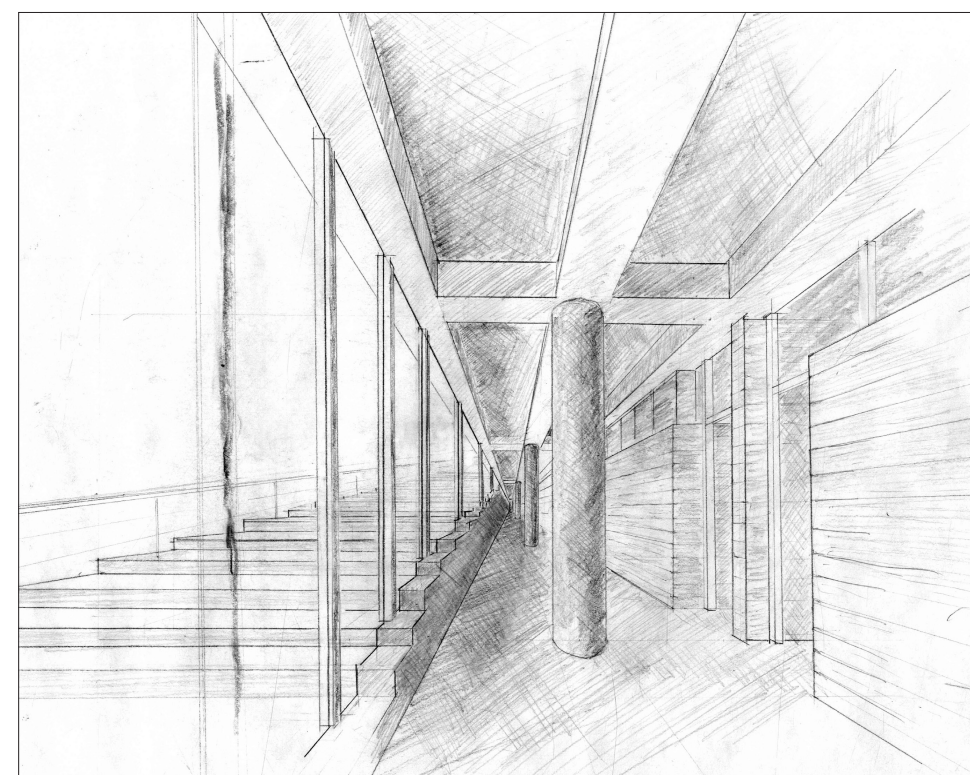
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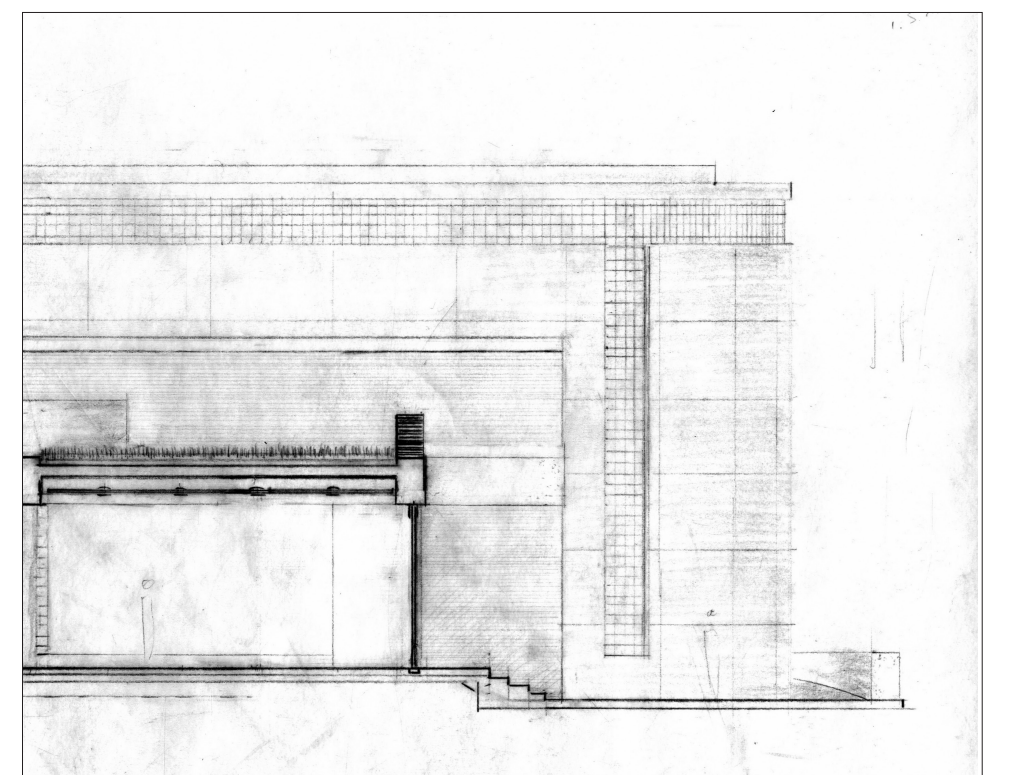
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