

# GRADIENT

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"Shikumen" district  
shanghai 2019

## ABSTRACT

Our city is always in a state of change and renew. Sometimes such changes are drastic; sometimes, such changes are gentle. Some of the old urban forms, plans, streets and buildings will stay, and some will disappear quickly, and will always be memories. The surviving neighborhoods, streets and buildings, together with the new modern architecture, form the status quo of modern cities.

However, between the old and the new, when we renew the city, can we still choose other positions? Can we refine the old things into skeletons, and guide us to design a "new" building that blends into the urban space? We may call this position "gradient."



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

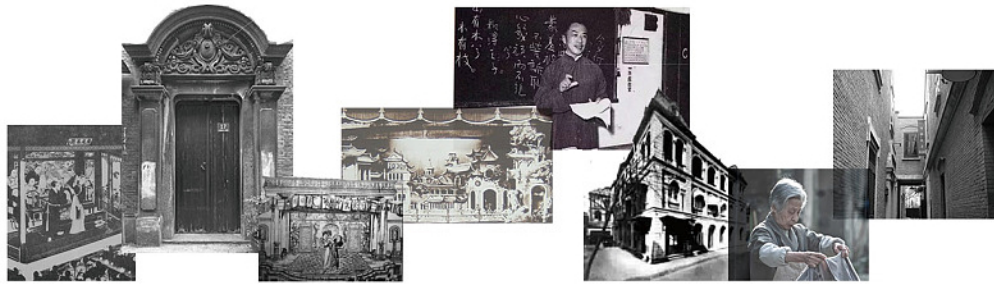
This book may contain a conclusion to the thesis topic but it by no means presents the final verdict on this ongoing exploration. The ideas in this book have been lingering in my past work endeavors and it seems that they will be present in my mind for the future to come.

I deeply thank my thesis chairman, Prof. David, for being my thesis guide and supporting me throughout, for your countless encouragements and for always pushing me to strive for the best. I would also like to thank my two other committee members, Prof. Jim and Prof. Frank, for their valuable suggestions and guidance.

I would like to thank my parents for their endless love and care, and all that they have given to me and made me what I am today.

Thanks all of you. I wouldn't make it without all of your support.

Yuchao Xu  
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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“SHIKUMEN”

i

LIGHT AND DARK

ii

RENEW THE SITE

ii

PROJECT

iv

CONCLUSION

v



## SHIKUMEN

"The wind blew the copper knocker on the black painted door, a dim lamp swayed on the window sash of the compartment, and the naughty child leaped on the old pine staircase with a sound.

There is a distant sip from Nongtang, this is the scenery of Shikumen. It is a long but never forgotten voice."



Shanghai is a complex city. **Its complexity lies in the urban form in which the old and the new coexist, as well as the complex urban culture.** Shanghai is a city planned and established by foreigners in modern times. China and foreigners have jointly perfected it. The fusion of western culture and Chinese culture is reflected in its traditional folk house "Shikumen". Shikumen is a unique form of living in Shanghai. **It is a living form that combines the traditional Chinese "street and alley space" with the structure and design of the western block.**

**Can we use the "gradient" stand to design a new building in the "Shikumen" historical block?** This is the theme of my Thesis, and it is also an issue I want to explore. "Shikumen" is a general term for an architectural form. The specific neighborhood is called "Li" in Shanghai. "Li" is divided into "Fang" by the street, and each "Fang" is divided into courtyards by the alley.

Shanghai 1930s

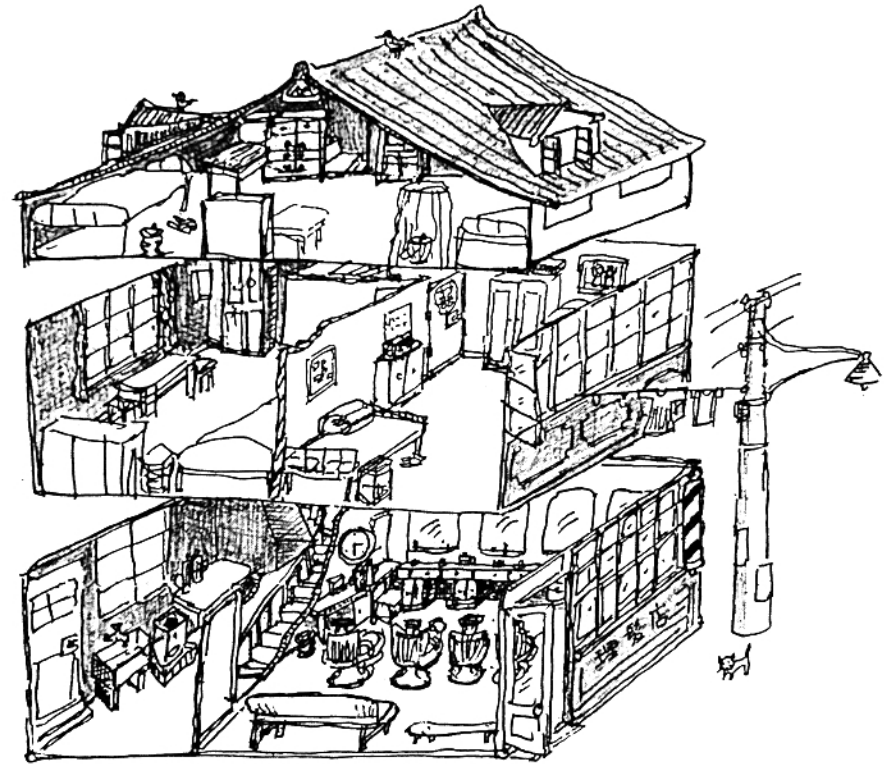


sketches of "shikumen" space





typical "shikumen" house



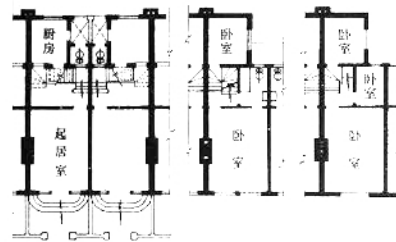
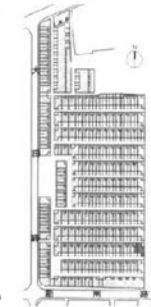
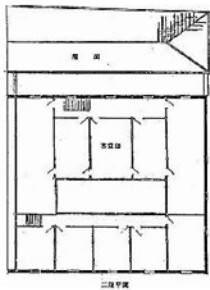
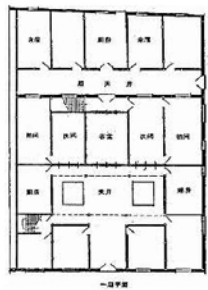


Jingan District Shanghai 1930s



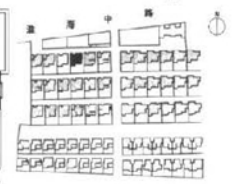
High-rise modern buildings are invading traditional neighborhoods

Jingan District Shanghai 2019



### New Shikumen

From 1930-1940, Shikumen's living quality was further improved, and the form and decoration of the building were more exquisite.

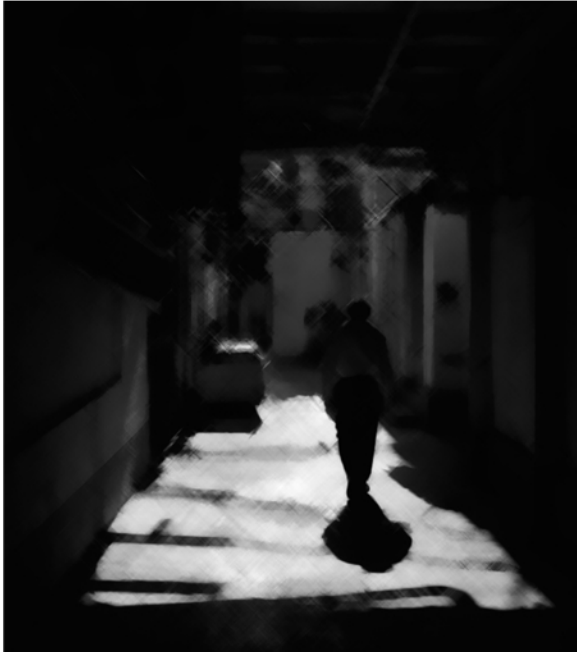


### Early form

Planar symmetrical layout, orderly, inherited the form of traditional Chinese houses.

### Development

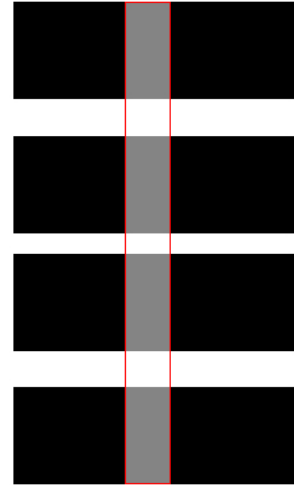
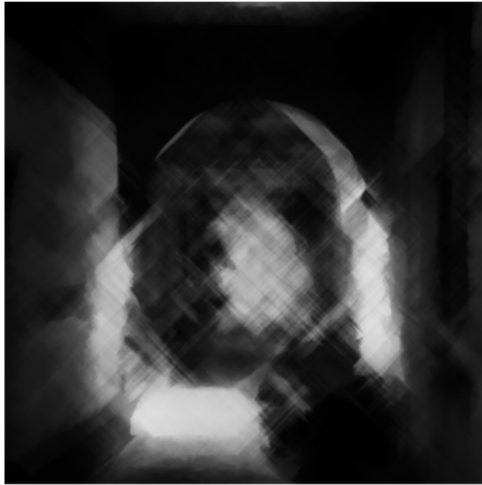
All are made of reinforced concrete, the plane is more free, and the ventilation and lighting are better.

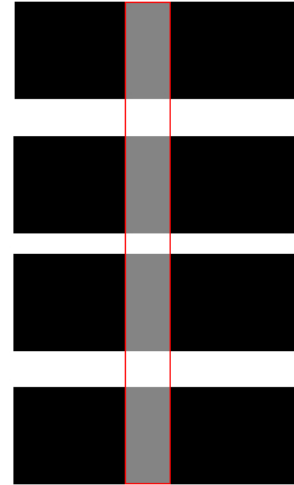


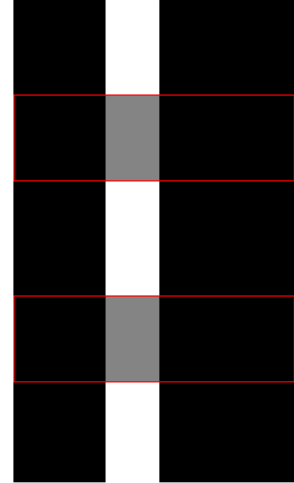
## LIGHT AND DARK

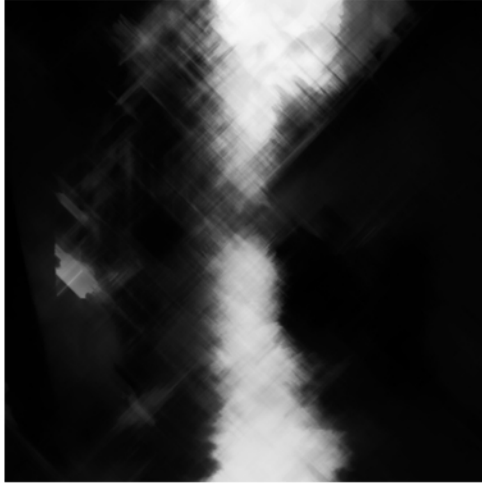
"The familiar Huaihai Road, the familiar Shikumen, and the familiar stairs, I walked into her home and placed flowers and greeting cards in front of the photo with her vivid smile, where there were already a lot of flowers blooming. A cup of tea, the same familiar scent. Tears blurred all the words on the greeting card, but years could not obscure my memory.

Long years, floating back and forth. The road of time is like the alley of Shikumen, half of which is sunlight and half is shadow. Our lives pass through it, and even if our hearts are facing the sun, our bodies cannot avoid shadows."

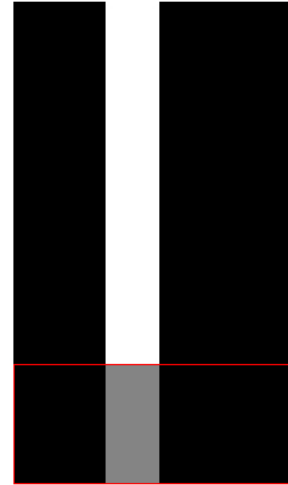




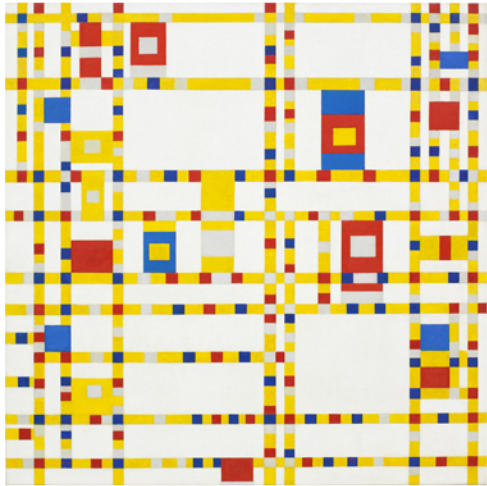




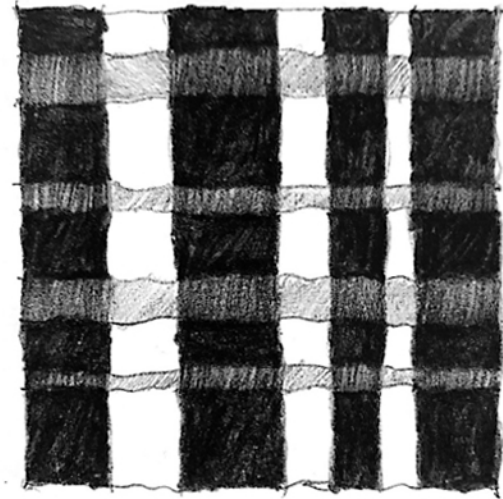






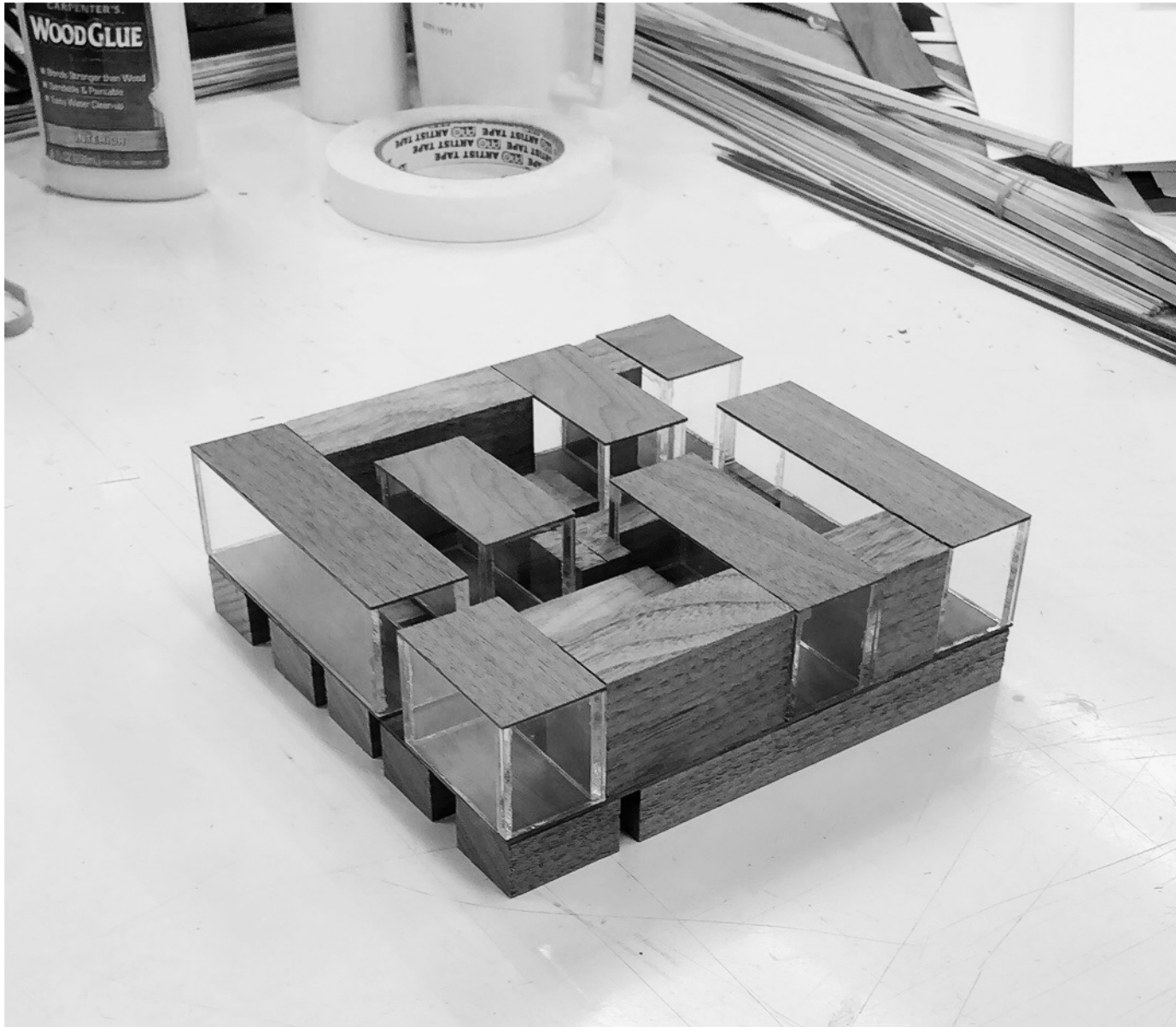


broadway boogie-woogie  
Piet Mondrian

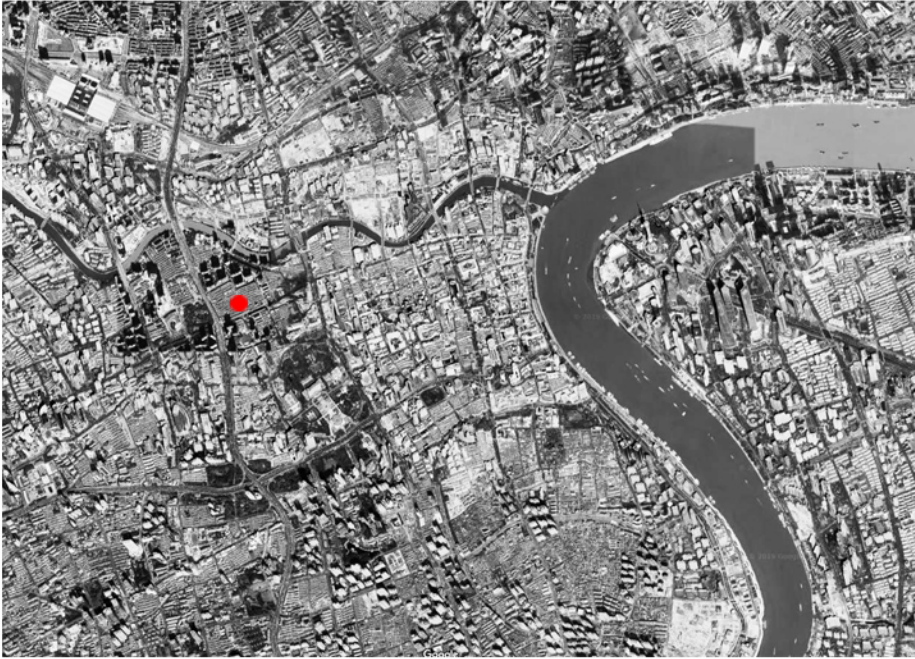


sketch drawing

The streets and lanes in Shikumen create a rhythm of light. Whether it is a slender sky or sometimes bright and sometimes dark rhythm, it can be displayed by a vertical orthogonal system. The sketch drawing was inspired by mondrian paintings.



sketch model 1/16



## RENEW THE SITE

The site is located in a historical district of Shikumen, in the middle of "Dao Da Li". The site now occupied by an abandoned regular square modern building that was once a supermarket. Although the building has damaged the texture of the historic district, it has also been part of the history of the city for decades.



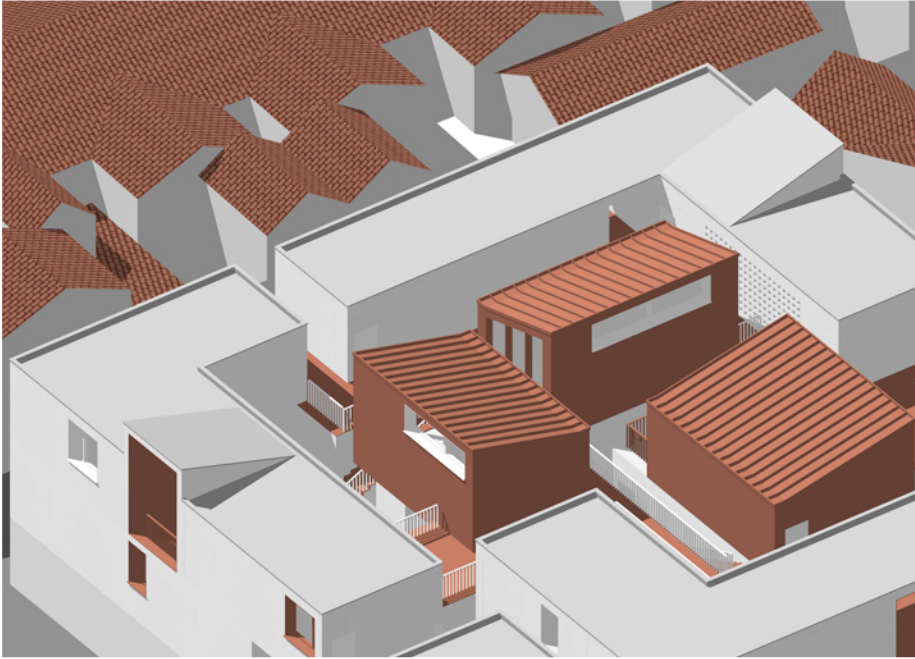




site plan

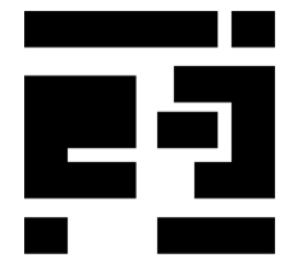
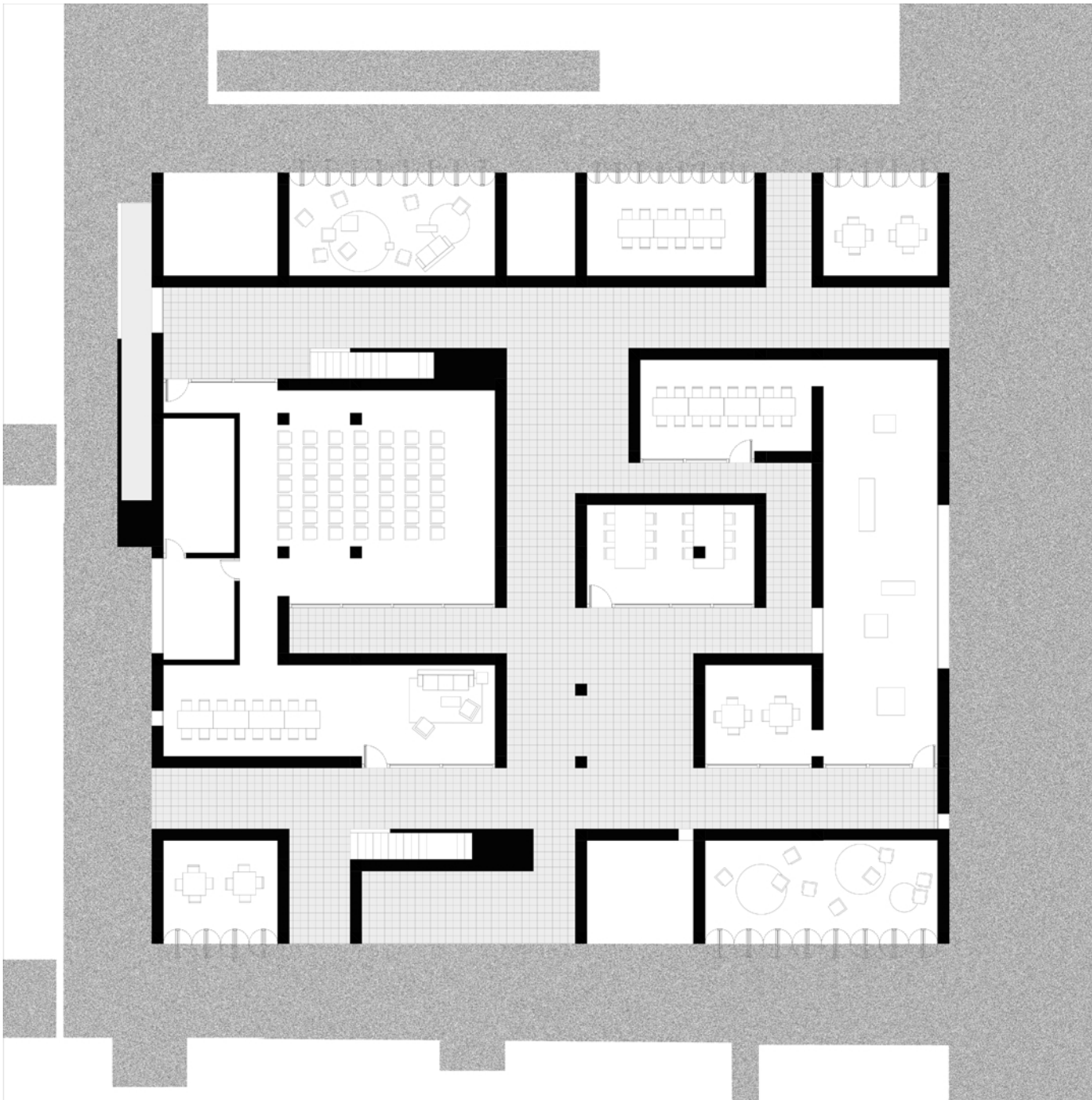




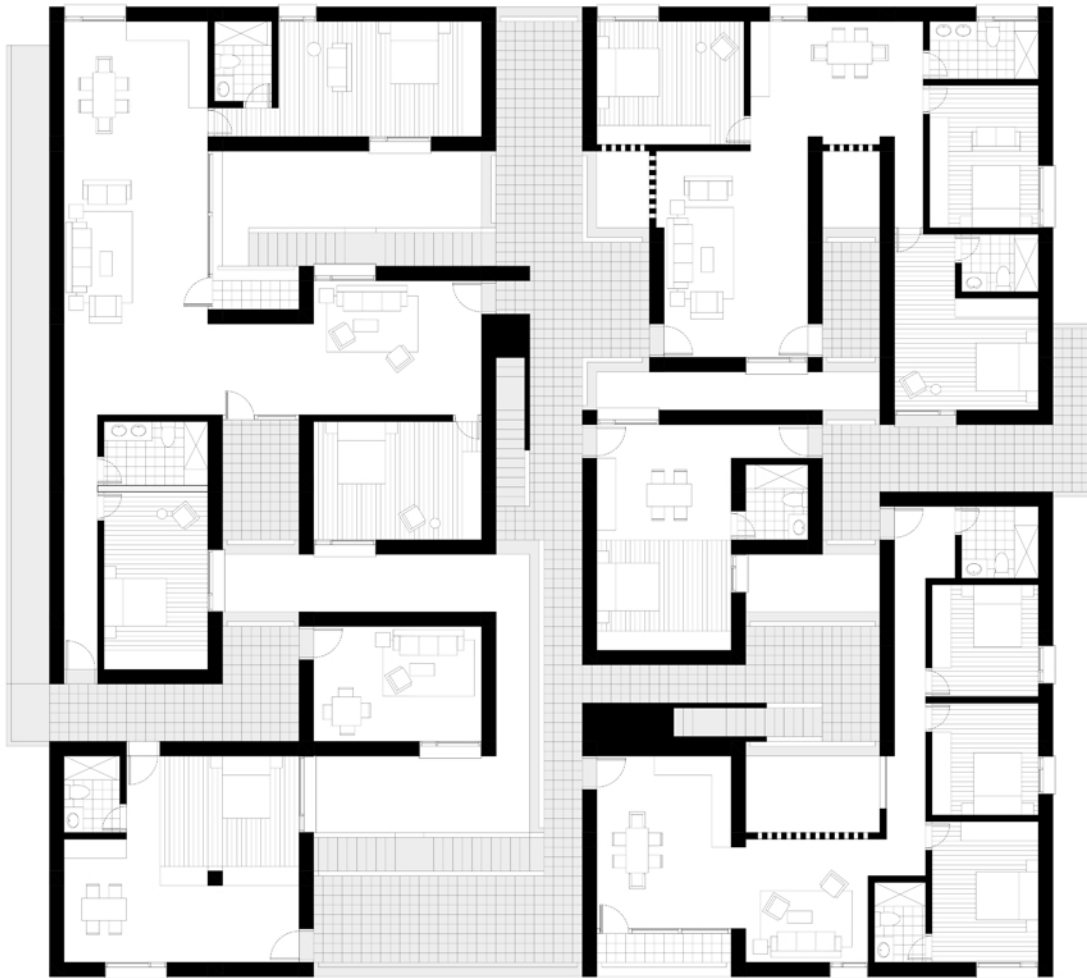


## PROJECT

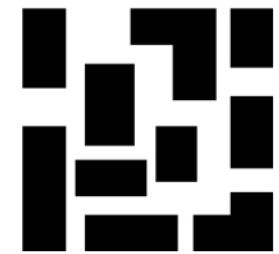
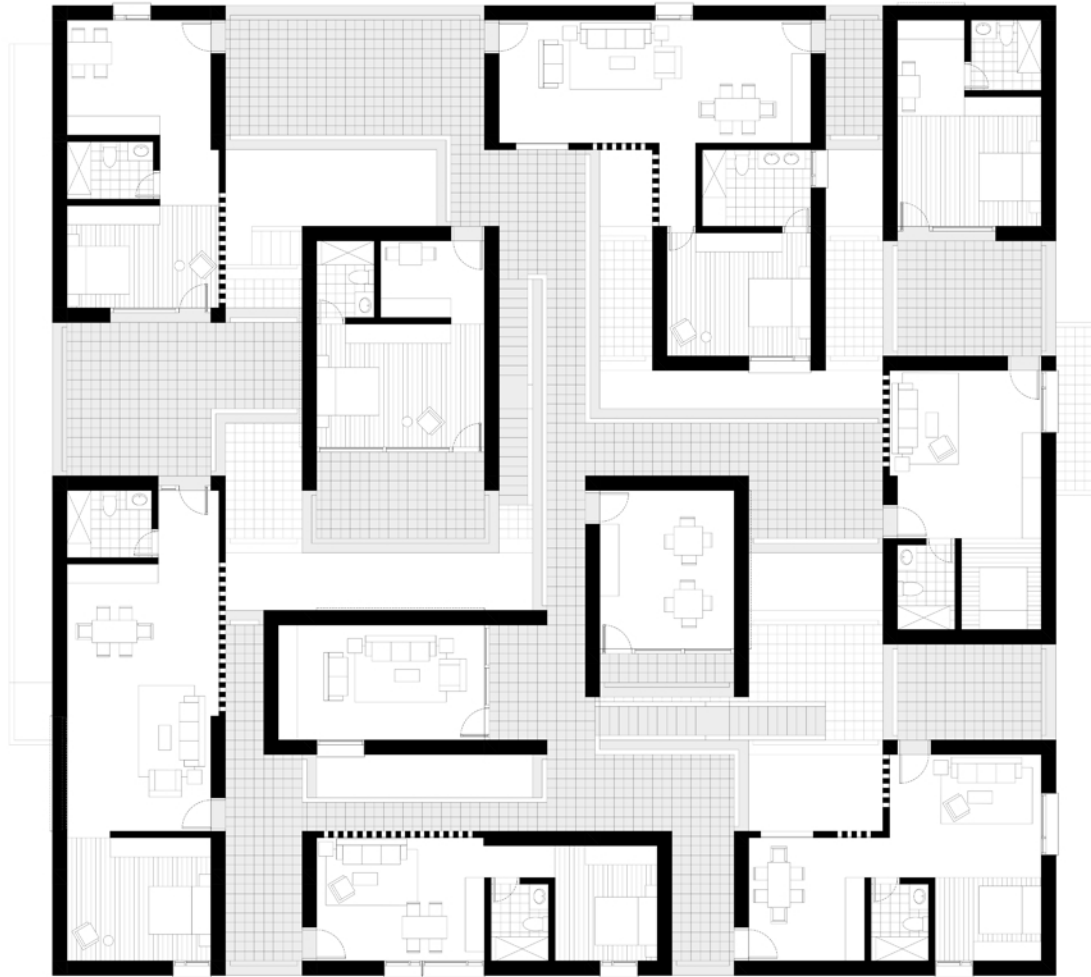
" Gradient " is a design concept that combines this modern building that was built 20 years ago with the architectural form of Shikumen, and finally presents a result which is born from the status quo and then regrowth by architect. I plan to build a new mix-use building on the site, mixing the commercial functions of the ground floor with the residential functions of the second and third floor. This is a building facing Shikumen, a building that integrates and serves the community.



1st floor plan

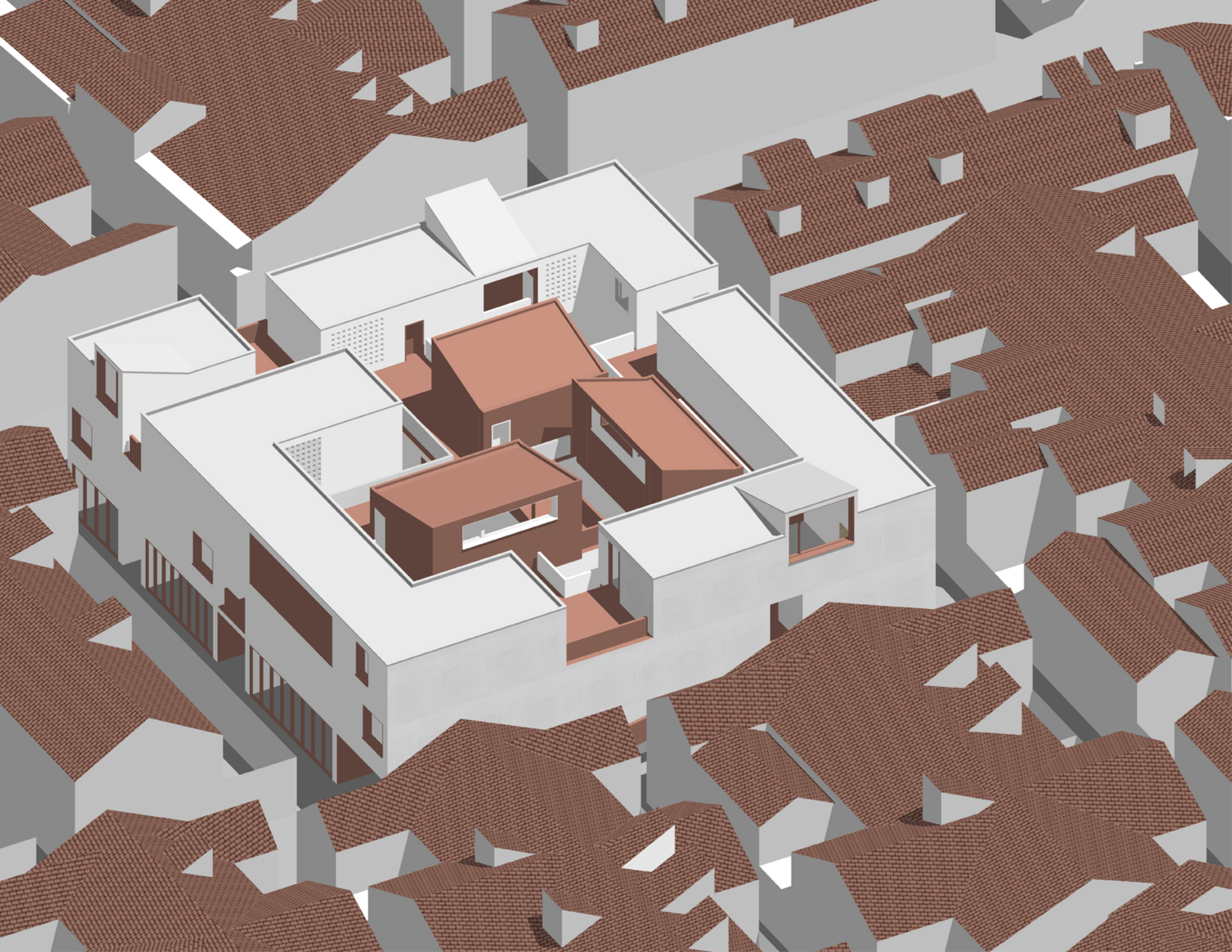


2nd floor plan



3rd floor plan







11:30 am light



5:30 pm light





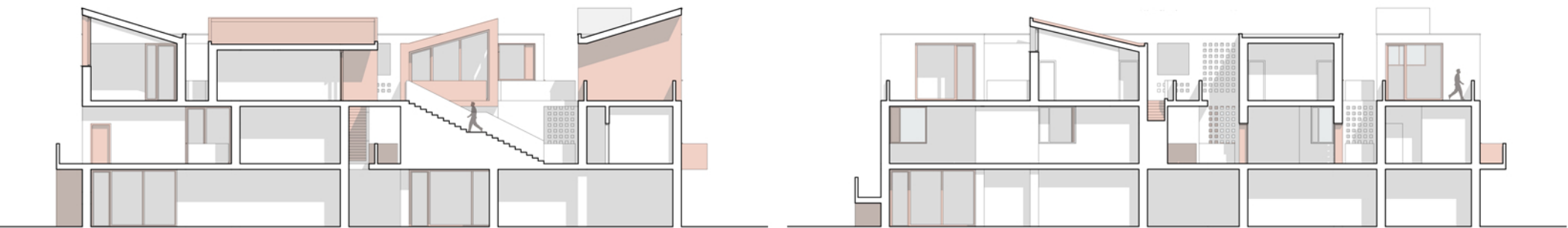
11:30 am light



5:30 pm light



section plans





## CONCLUSION

Urban renewal must consider the continuation and development of urban culture, but continuation and development does not mean inaction. We realize that the problem of the city is there, and then how to connect the newly generated space with the original space in a new way.

The city is constantly developing, and the core of the development process is the people living in it. City culture is closely related to users, and the change of users will create another cultural state, such as the old people who used to play chess and cards in the streets become young skateboarders. What it reflects is not the activity itself, but the relationship between urban space and human activities and needs.