

EROS:DESIRE IN ARCHITECTURE

POST OFFICE | THEATER SCHOOL | RETAIL STORE

BY CAROLINA DAYER

a los amantes

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE**

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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

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ABSTRACT

EROS: DESIRE IN ARCHITECTURE
CAROLINA DAYER

Dear All,
Eros moves.

In January of 2007 I decided to do research about Eros and his presence in architecture. I decided to do a thesis about LOVE. This thesis it is a story about me, since when you love architecture you give yourself completely to it. What you see in these pages, it's me: my life, my desires, my passion for architecture, my fears, my bad moments, my good moments, my joy--all of me.

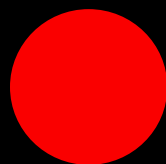
Desire in architecture seemed to me at that moment something with which I didn't know how to start working. It was so abstract that, when considered, almost anything can be a desire, and maybe it is. But this thesis is a story of how desire opened for me an infinite world of imagination and wonder--how Eros made me love the drawing, the line, the color, the wall, the shadow, the material...the architecture.

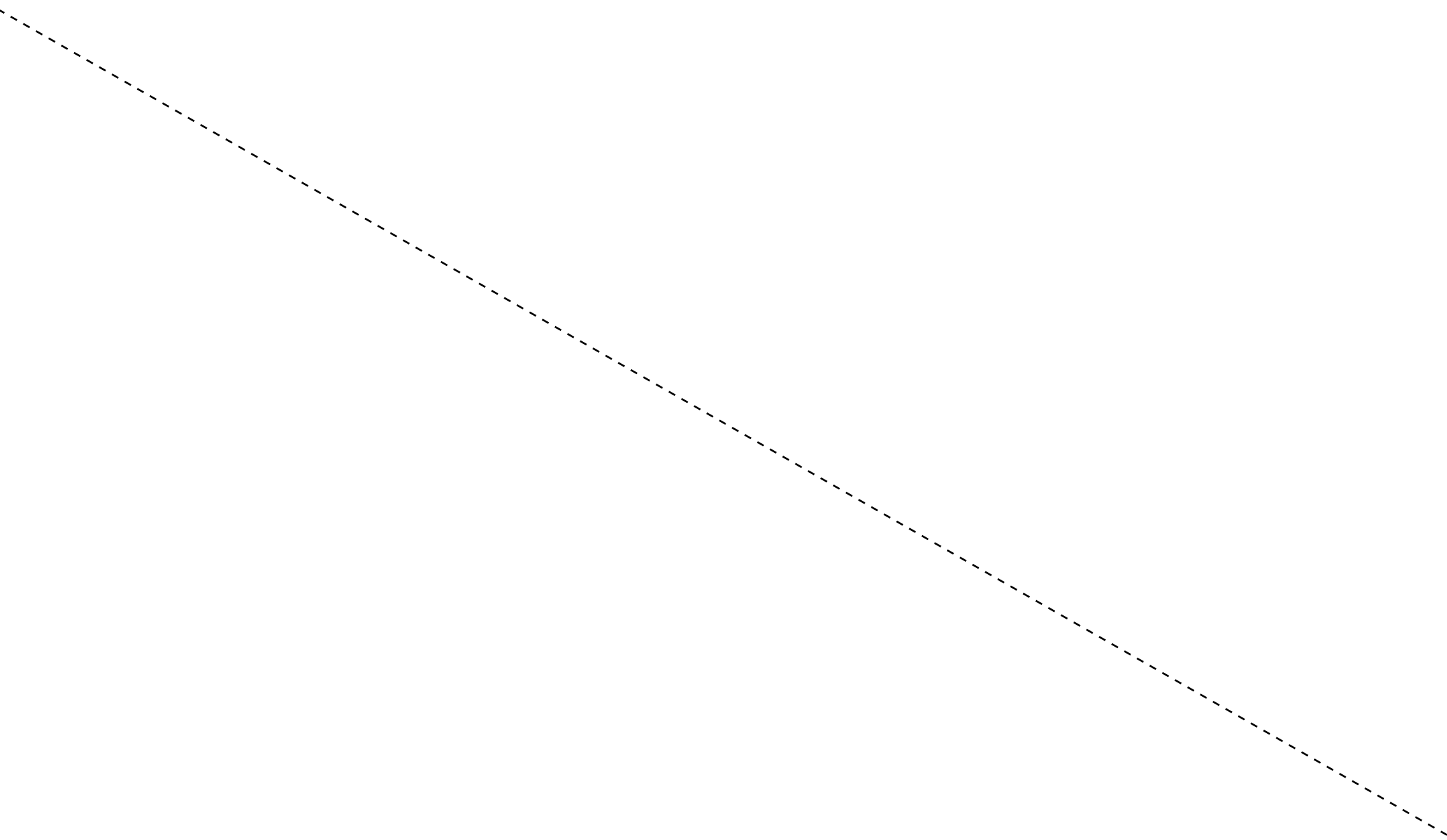
I have chosen to explore desire through the designing of a post office, theatre school, and retail shops. The site is in Washington DC, in between 7th and 8th streets SE, adjacent to Eastern Market.

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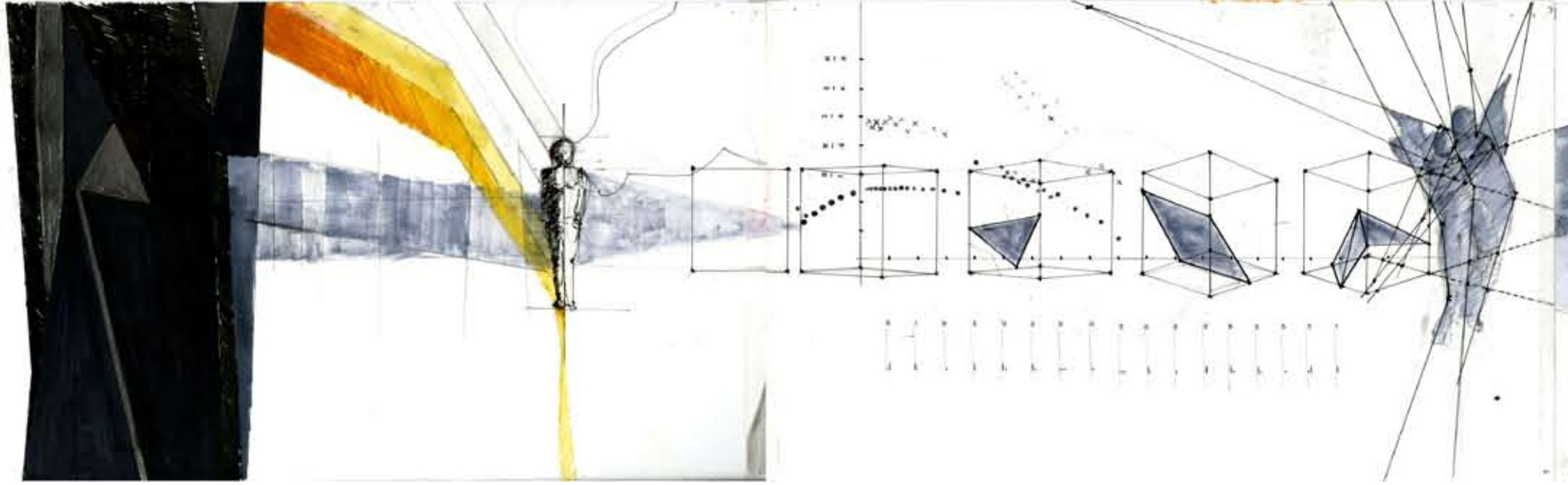
“BUILT UPON LOVE”



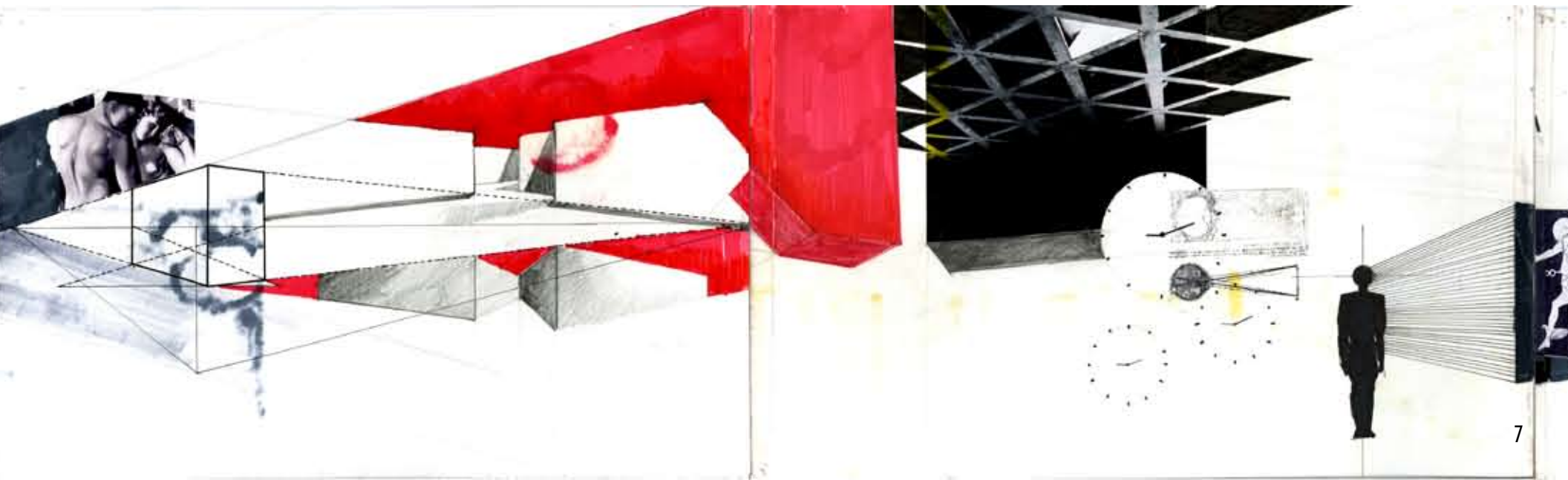


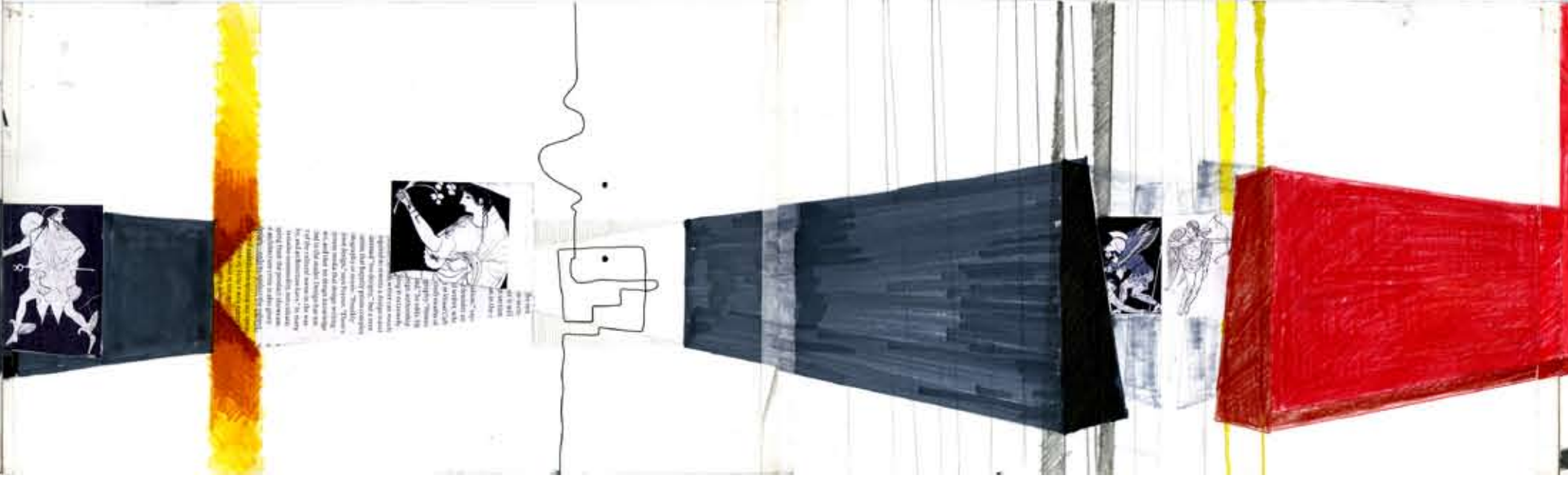
“Love is the master and governor of the arts. . . [N]o one can ever discover or learn any art unless the pleasure of learning and the desire of discovering move him. . . [A]rtists in all of the arts seek and care for nothing else but love.”

Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*

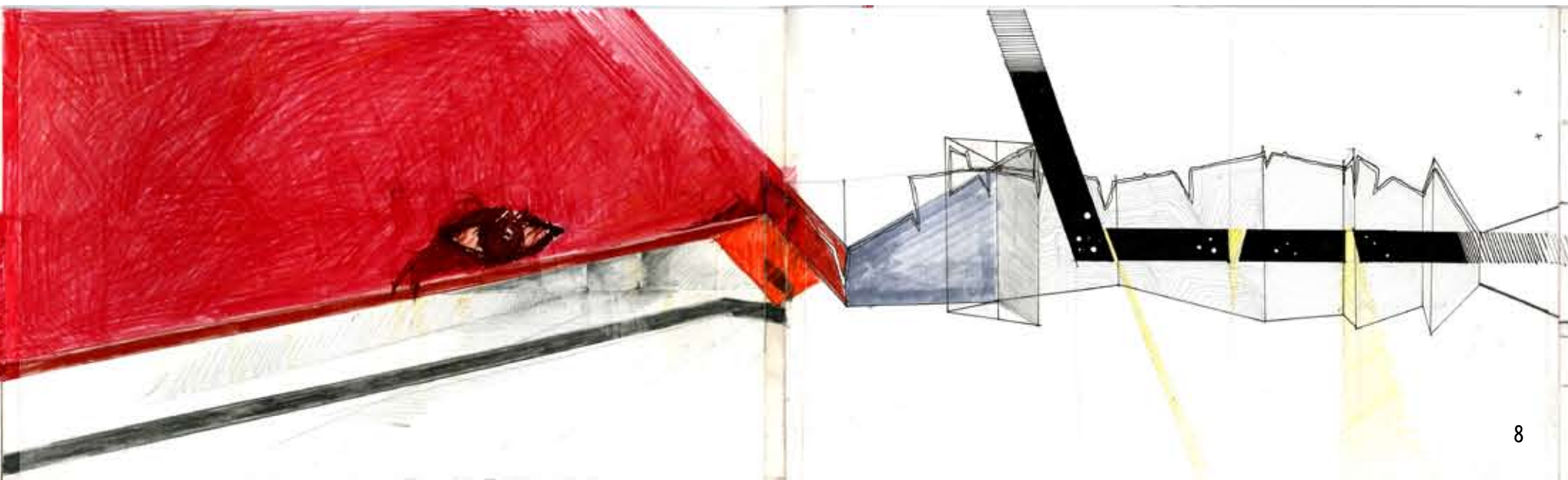


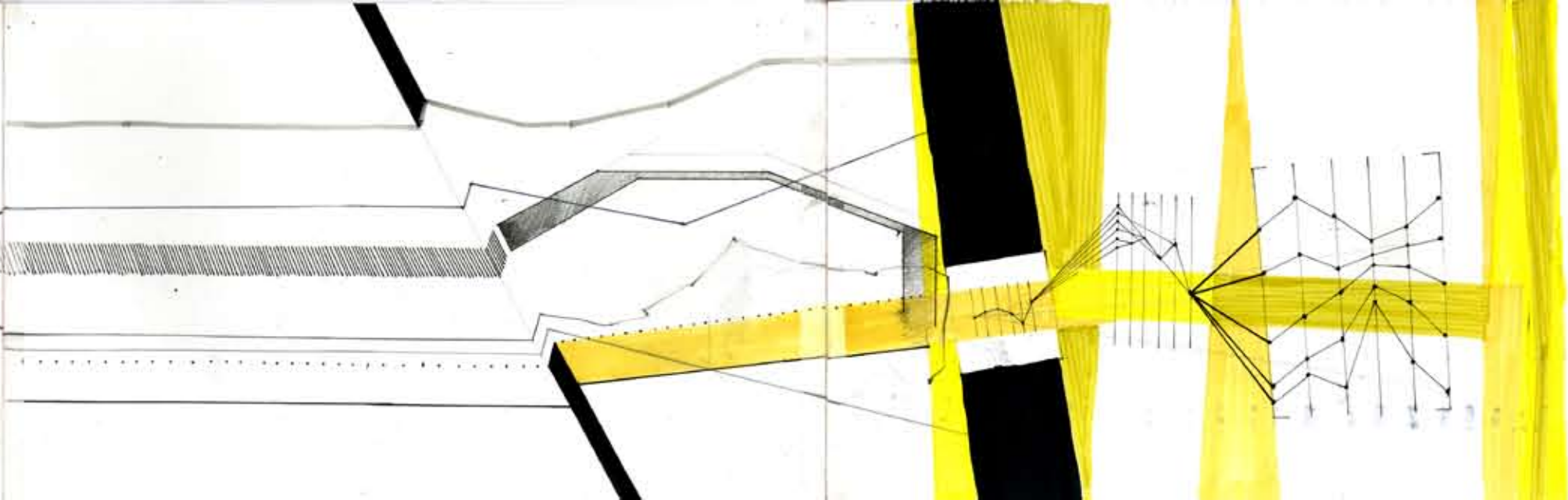
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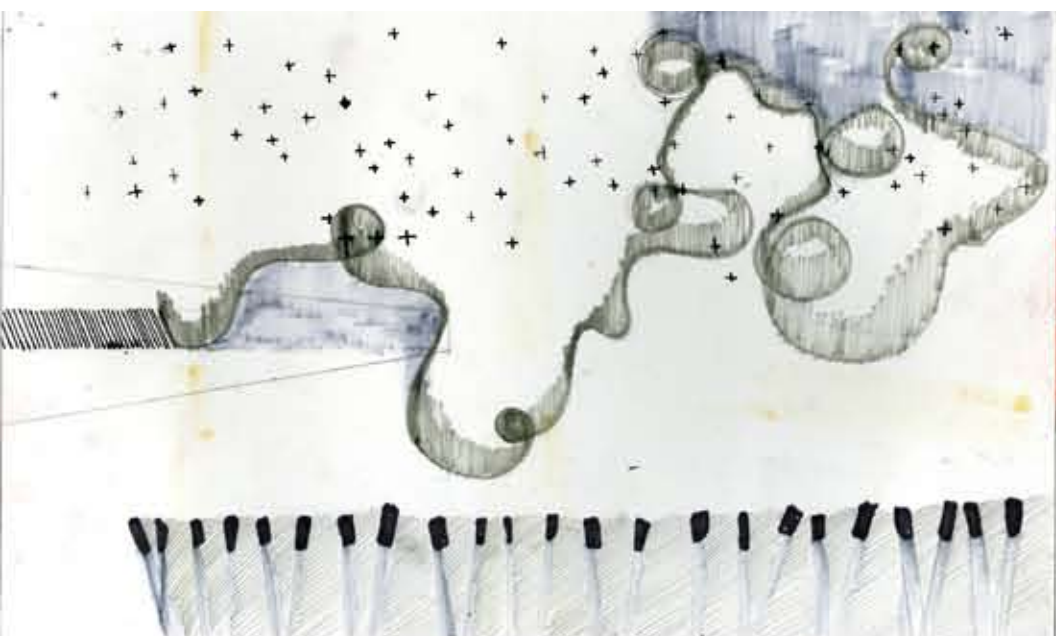


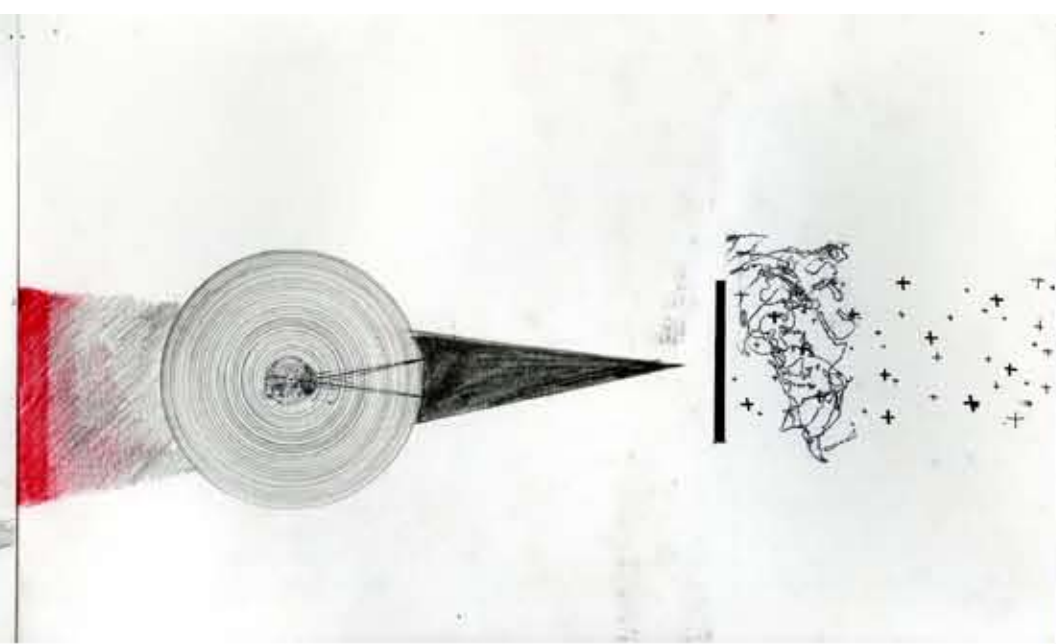
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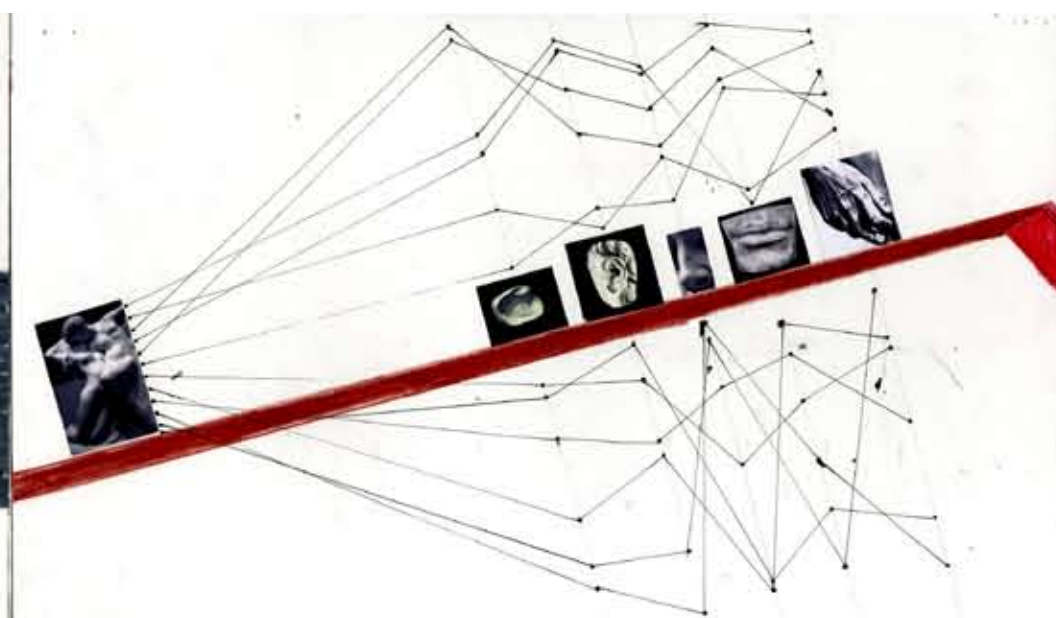


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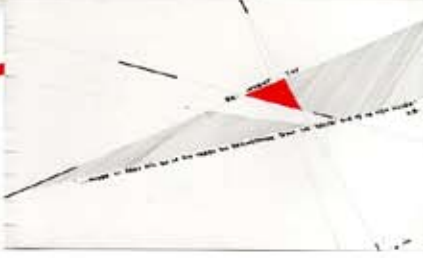
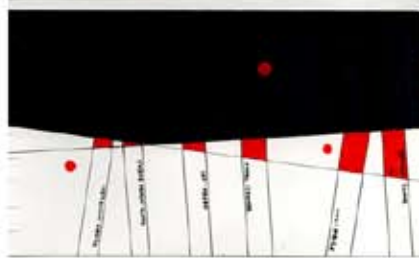
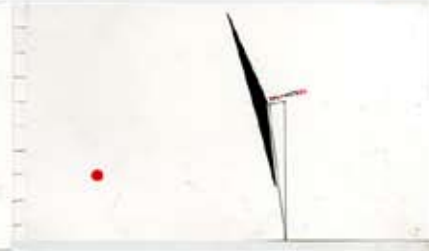
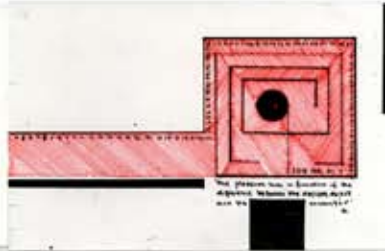
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THREE ENCOUNTERS

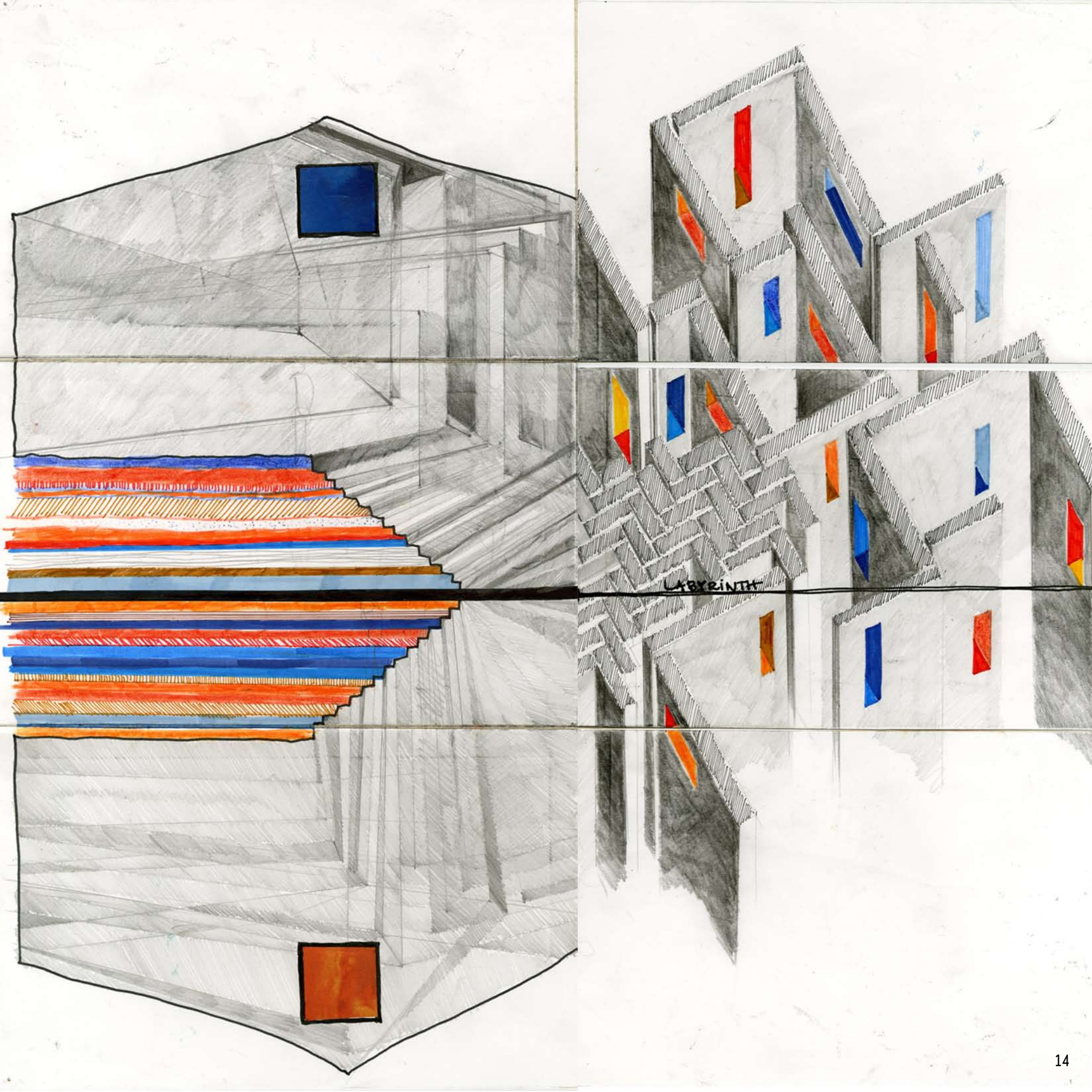
Andre Breton, a French surrealist poet, in his book *Mad Love* says that a thought comes to exist when a unique moment happens. He calls it “encounter”, and it is produced by something in the exterior world that complements, joins, completes a hidden idea in our subconscious. The encounter gives birth to something beautiful.

I tried to experience this thinking by setting up 3 encounters that originate in an imaginary world. From these points I entered into this world that has consumed me all this time. “Imagination is the core of desire.” (Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*)

From these 3 findings I began to look for the thesis’ own desire: the building.



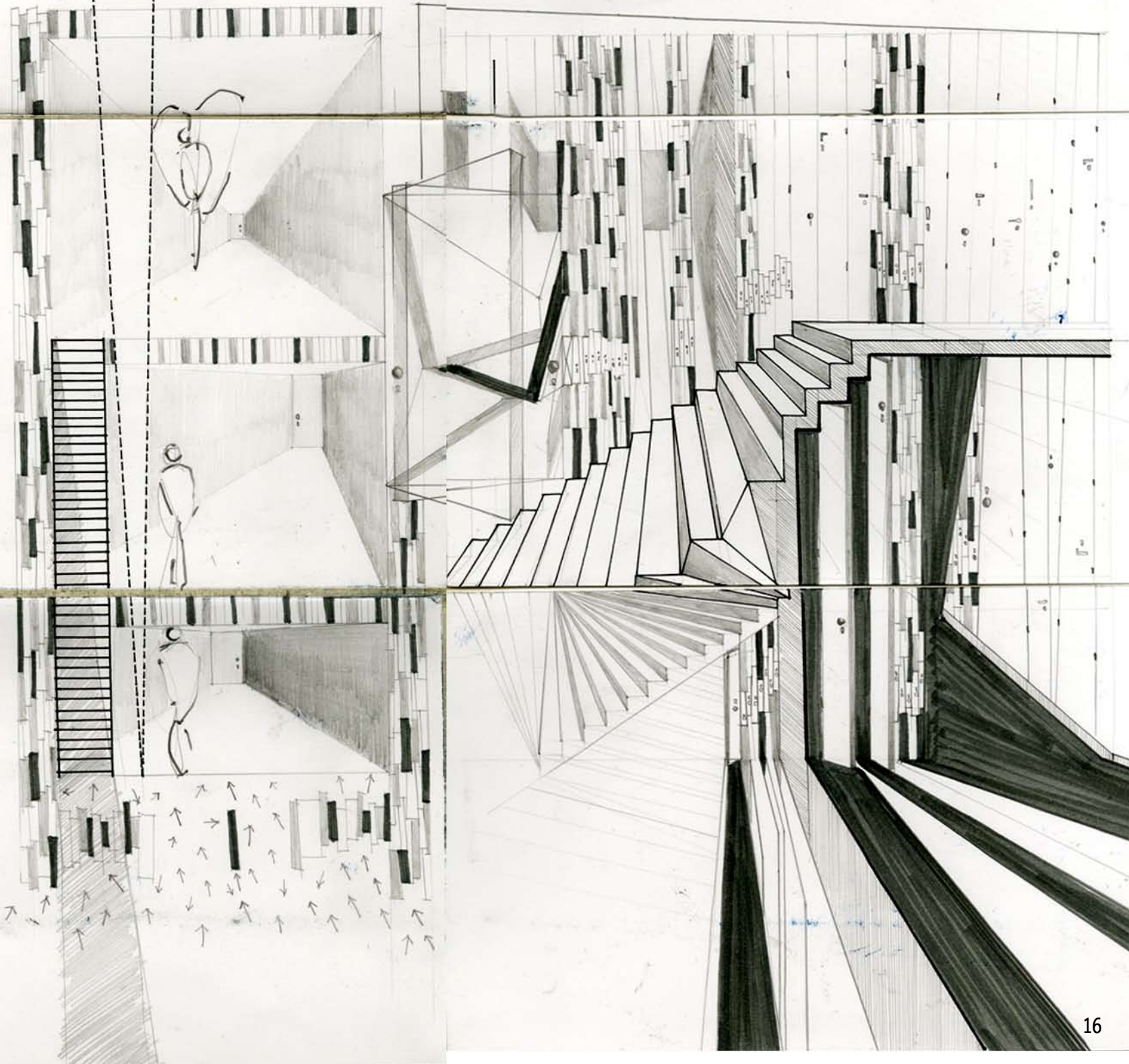
e1 ► LABYRINTH





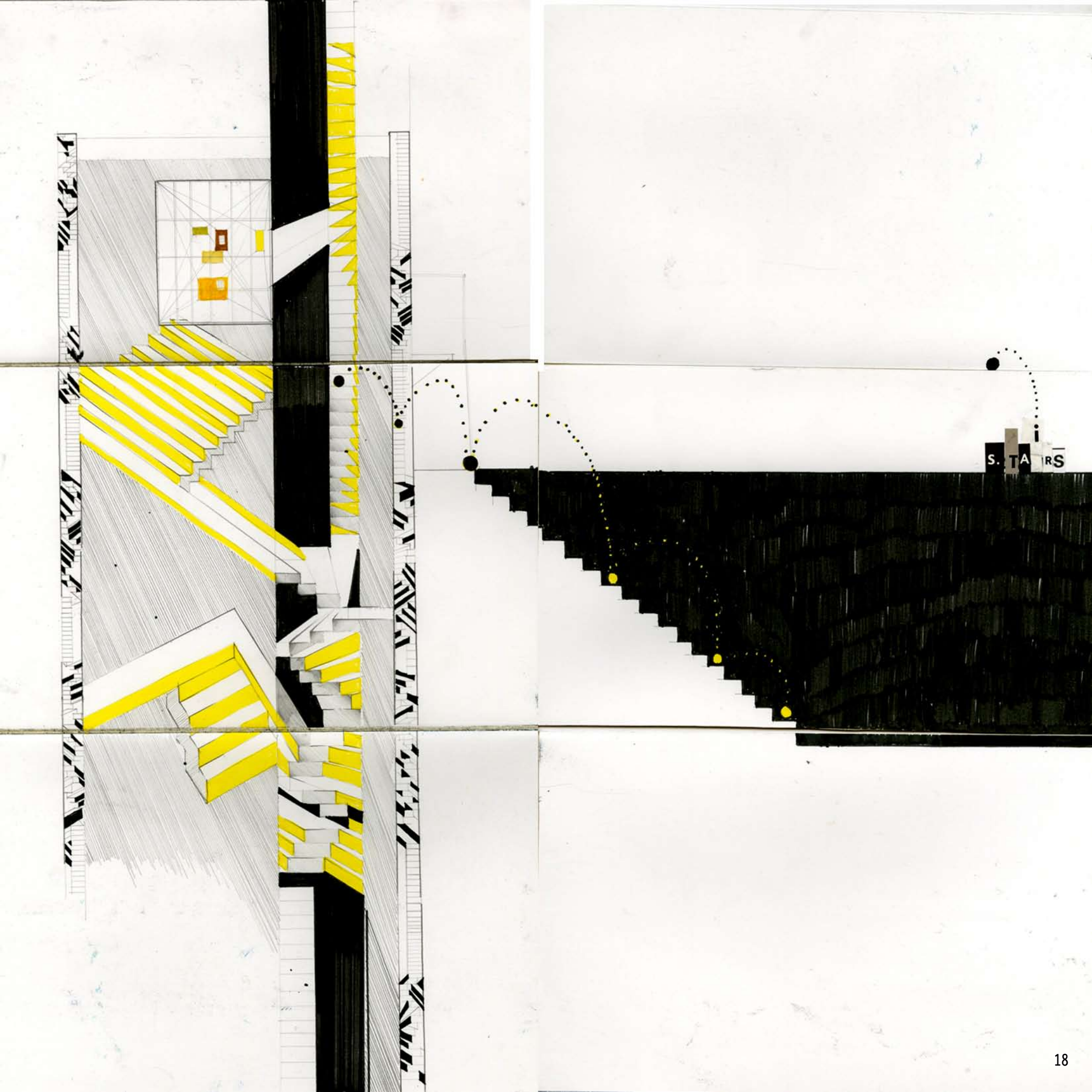
e2▶ DOORS

DOORS FOR JIM





e3 ▶ STAIRS



S. TA RS



4 ▶ WALKING TO THE REAL THROUGH THE IMAGINARY

The first approach was to look for a site: a place, a story in the city; a physical place that for me was significant in some way.

I searched for a place on the exterior that could meet with an unborn thought in my mind. That place ended up being a vacant school yard in front of the eastern market in Washington Dc, SE between 7th and 8th streets.

These drawings show my approach to the site. First I drew diagrams of my perception of the site, of my experience while I was walking in the area. Then I overlaid the real site, and that allowed me to find relationships between my desire and the site's own desires.

These are the sections of moments; they are sections of the physical world seen through perception, the imaginary world, and the TIME world.

I called them TIMES. Time 2, for example, shows my perception when I was walking on 7th street, and I tried to imagine myself being able to give transparency to all the solids. It showed me different layers creating different spaces. I was trying to cut the time, the space, the light, and the solids. All these times were my experience in the site and the record of it. After these sections the site was for me a sum of reality and my own perceptions. The site in this way became a cosmos that was waiting for me to work on it.

After the encounter with the city I encountered Georges Perec. He is a French writer who claims that humanity should start to look more into the infraordinary world. He believes that in the infraordinary things relies the truth. Examples of this are basically all the things that we have forgotten to look at. They have become too common to us, such as realizing that we have two eyes, or that we blink every second, or that when we write a letter we are using our fingers, hand, arm, shoulder, eyes and mind.

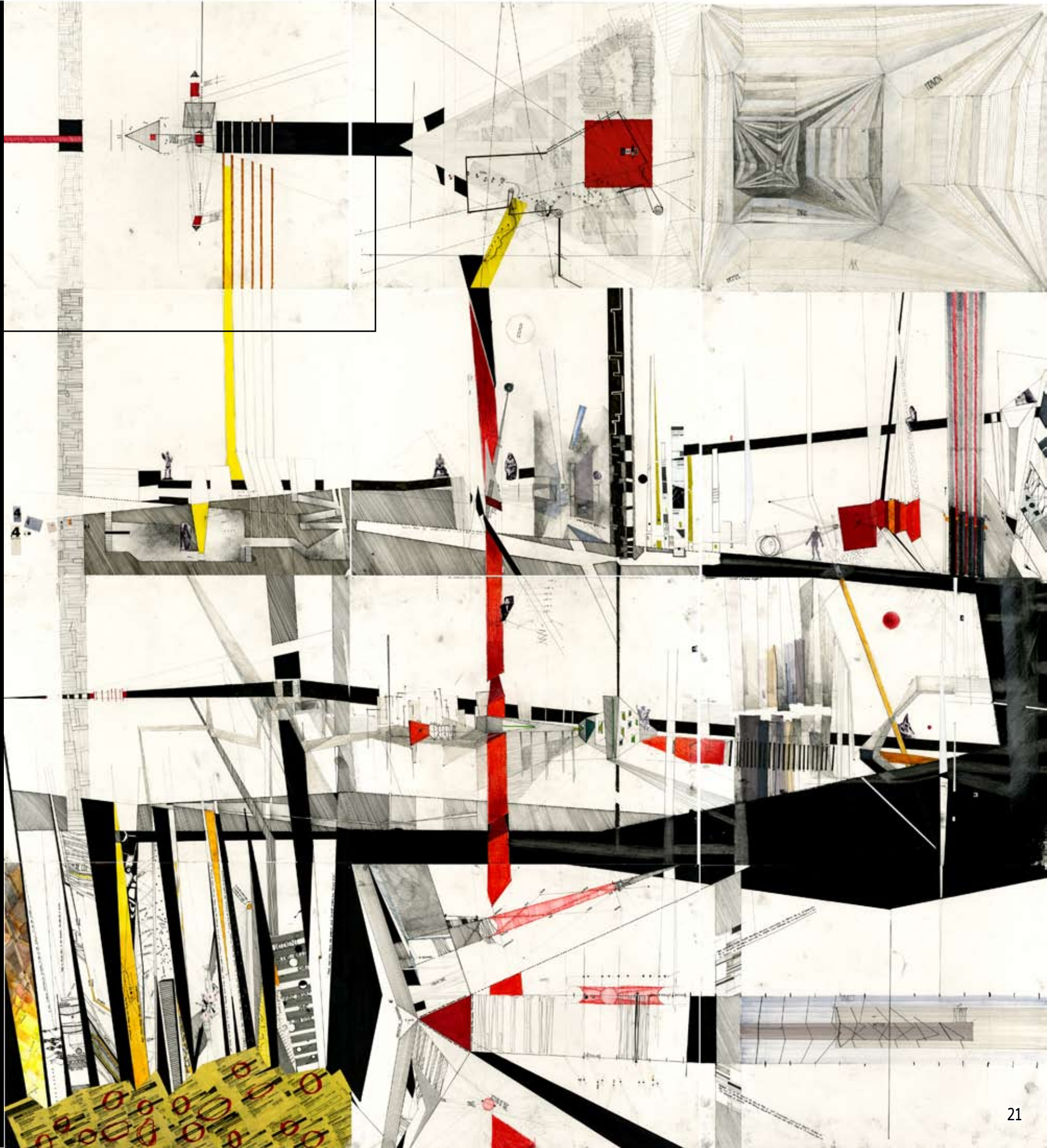
Influenced by him I started to look for my program in a place that was common: the yellow pages. I believe that architecture as well as desire can be present in any type of program.

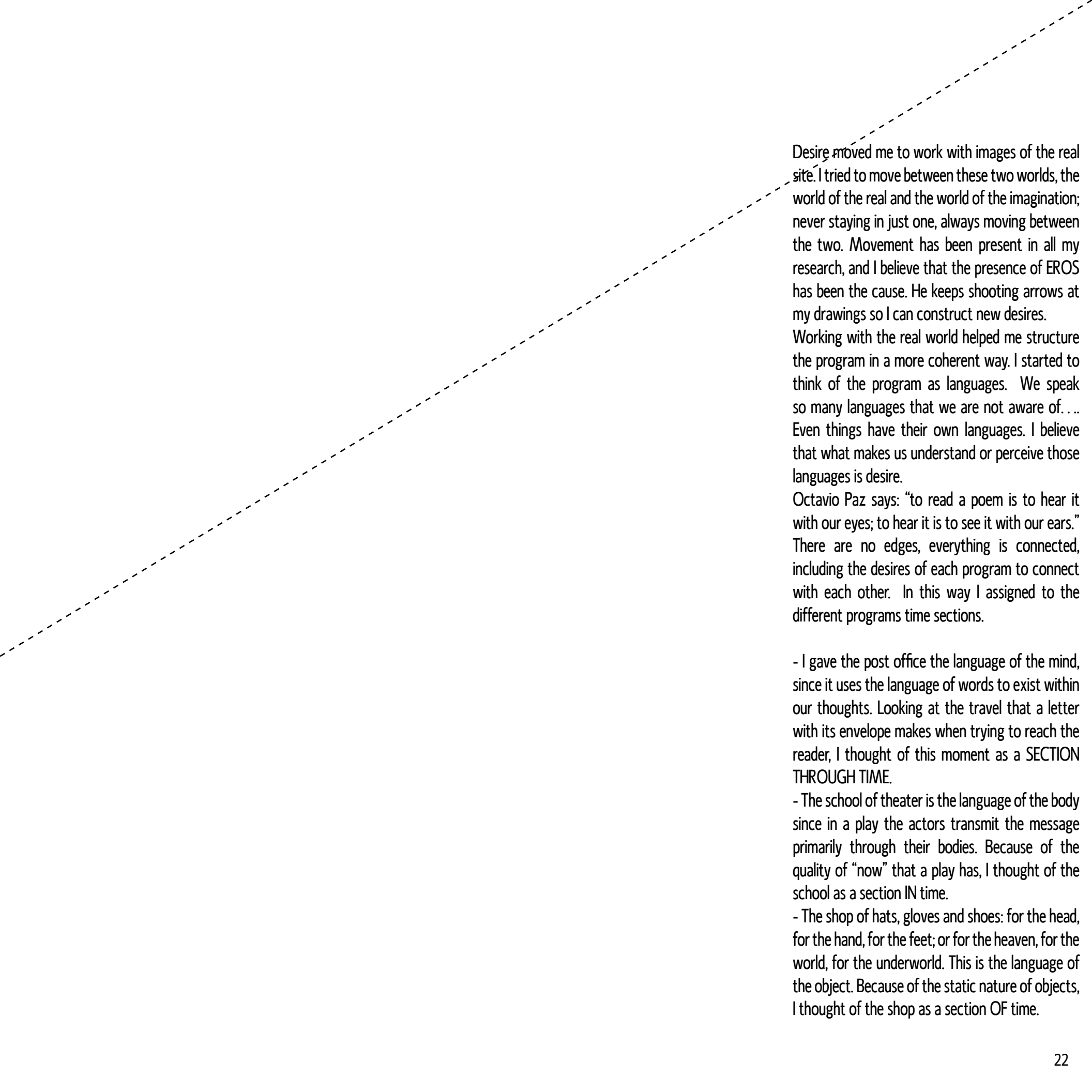
I made a selection of various random activities. I was more interested in the activities than in the building type. I had an idea, thanks to Hermes, the messenger of gods, that I wanted to do something related to letters. I had the desire at that point to write letters and to read letters. They appeared to me as powerful little worlds that connect and separate two parts, just like lovers moving between bitter and sweet moments. I became interested in this movement upon reading in *Built Upon Love* (Perez-Gomez) about Plato's *chora*: the space in-between, the space of motion and repose, the space in-between lovers, the tension existing in that universe.

Finally, by the end of this set of drawings, I chose to explore three different programs: a post office, a theater school and a retail store that was going to sell at the beginning just shoes, later adding gloves and hats.

The three were very different, but it was a challenge for me to connect them, to play with them, to find them, to make them live through desires, through infraordinary relationships.

site of imagination





Desire moved me to work with images of the real site. I tried to move between these two worlds, the world of the real and the world of the imagination; never staying in just one, always moving between the two. Movement has been present in all my research, and I believe that the presence of EROS has been the cause. He keeps shooting arrows at my drawings so I can construct new desires. Working with the real world helped me structure the program in a more coherent way. I started to think of the program as languages. We speak so many languages that we are not aware of. ... Even things have their own languages. I believe that what makes us understand or perceive those languages is desire.

Octavio Paz says: "to read a poem is to hear it with our eyes; to hear it is to see it with our ears." There are no edges, everything is connected, including the desires of each program to connect with each other. In this way I assigned to the different programs time sections.

- I gave the post office the language of the mind, since it uses the language of words to exist within our thoughts. Looking at the travel that a letter with its envelope makes when trying to reach the reader, I thought of this moment as a SECTION THROUGH TIME.

- The school of theater is the language of the body since in a play the actors transmit the message primarily through their bodies. Because of the quality of "now" that a play has, I thought of the school as a section IN time.

- The shop of hats, gloves and shoes: for the head, for the hand, for the feet; or for the heaven, for the world, for the underworld. This is the language of the object. Because of the static nature of objects, I thought of the shop as a section OF time.



EROS

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THREE

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imagination meets reality

The following are desires of the building through the study of the desire of an architectural piece: a stair, a labyrinth and a door. These elements make reference to my first encounter with the 3 drawing sets shown at the beginning of this book.

I figured that if I studied the desire of an architectural piece in fusion with the desire of each program I was going to be closer to the real desire of this project, not just to the form of it. In this way, the process of design is reversed from what we usually do. The shape of the building is the last thing that comes to light. It is a result of the essence of it, made possible by multiplying desires.

This drawing, for example, shows the tension that exists between the writer sending a letter and the reader waiting for it, or the lover sending a love message and the loved one waiting for it. I tried to imagine that moment by designing a stair. Exploring the concepts of motion and repose that Breton uses, I imagined a stair where you can go up or down, but the ceiling and the floor below the stair move in a different direction of your movement. Even if you move, you perceive the space balanced by the forces of movement going in opposite directions. Motion and repose become present; opposites occur at the same time.

The study of each desire continued by imagining the city as a writer, as a reader, and the space in-between them. I imagined the city in tension by thinking of it as a place where only the above and the below exist, the space in between being only air: the skies and the underworld; heaven and Hades. This is the world of what we don't see, what is present and absent--the air. I imagined all the windows of the city as open and the letters going through these windows connecting the city.

I also studied the lines of the city in its grid. I thought that the moments of tension in the city happen when multiple forces coincide, like the intersection of the metro line below ground, the street and a bridge above.

I observed the role of the citizen as a writer, the citizen waiting, and the citizen as a reader. I investigated the relationship between the body and the city: the active body, the passive body, the active city and the passive one.

My first approach to the building itself was through material investigations. I imagined a section of the building as glass in all its moments, beginning from solid sand and ending when it is a clear light piece. The desire of the material while creating the section was one of the most enjoyable moments when I was drawing.

I undertook the same study with the theater school and the shop. The materials that I chose for them are metal and cloth for the school, since metal was for me a metaphor for the bones and cloth for the skin, while the actors/students are the flesh and the soul of the building.

For the shop I chose polished concrete.

At this stage I was understanding the post office as letters that make the absent present. The school as drama that makes the unreal real. And the shop as objects that make the abstract physical.

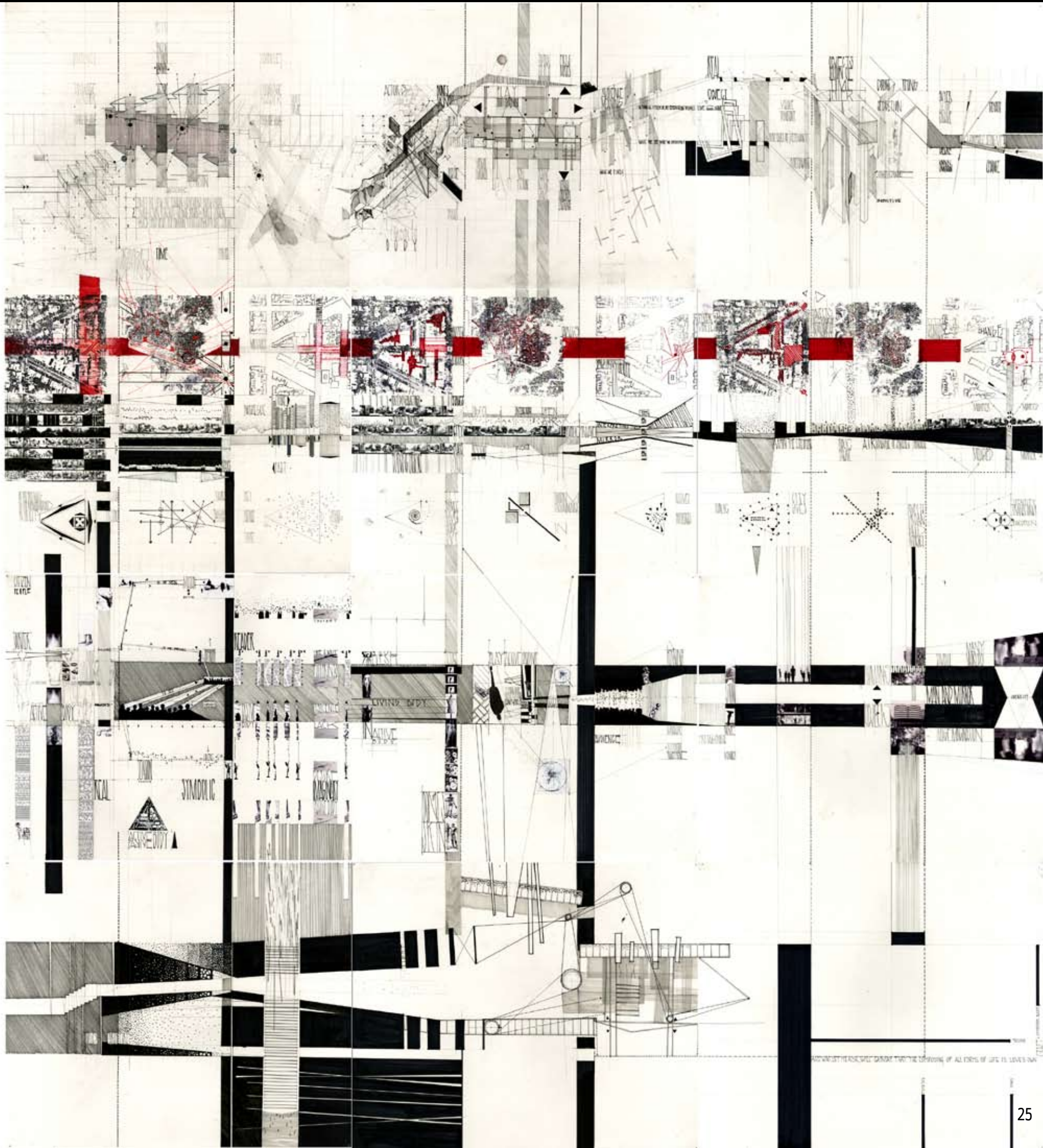


PHOTO BY THE ARCHITECT DURING THE COURSE OF LIFE IS LEARN'S DAY

I reached a point where Jaan was getting anxious and he was asking: where is the building? I needed to start bringing all my desires into a building desire, a material desire. Yet before that happened my committee chair asked me to draw the shadows of "the" building! There was no building drawn, yet I had to draw the shadows anyway. It was a difficult imaginative challenge, but it helped me to discover new desires, just like if drawings were doors that, upon completion, the drawing gives you the key to open that door. I imagined the shadows of the building in different moments.

These are the shadows imagining that the shadow has width, depth so you can have spaces inside them that also will project their own shadows. I drew the shadows of the building in plan, in section, and in the city. For each of the three buildings/programs, I did the same.

It was in this drawing that I started to get closer to the birth of the building itself. Imagining shadows activates your imagination regarding how a material will look with light or shade: the opacity of materials; the juxtaposition of different layers, the depth or thickness of things.

I imagined walls inside walls; stairs inside walls. I saw the floor, the stairs, and the ceiling walking together; walking by themselves.

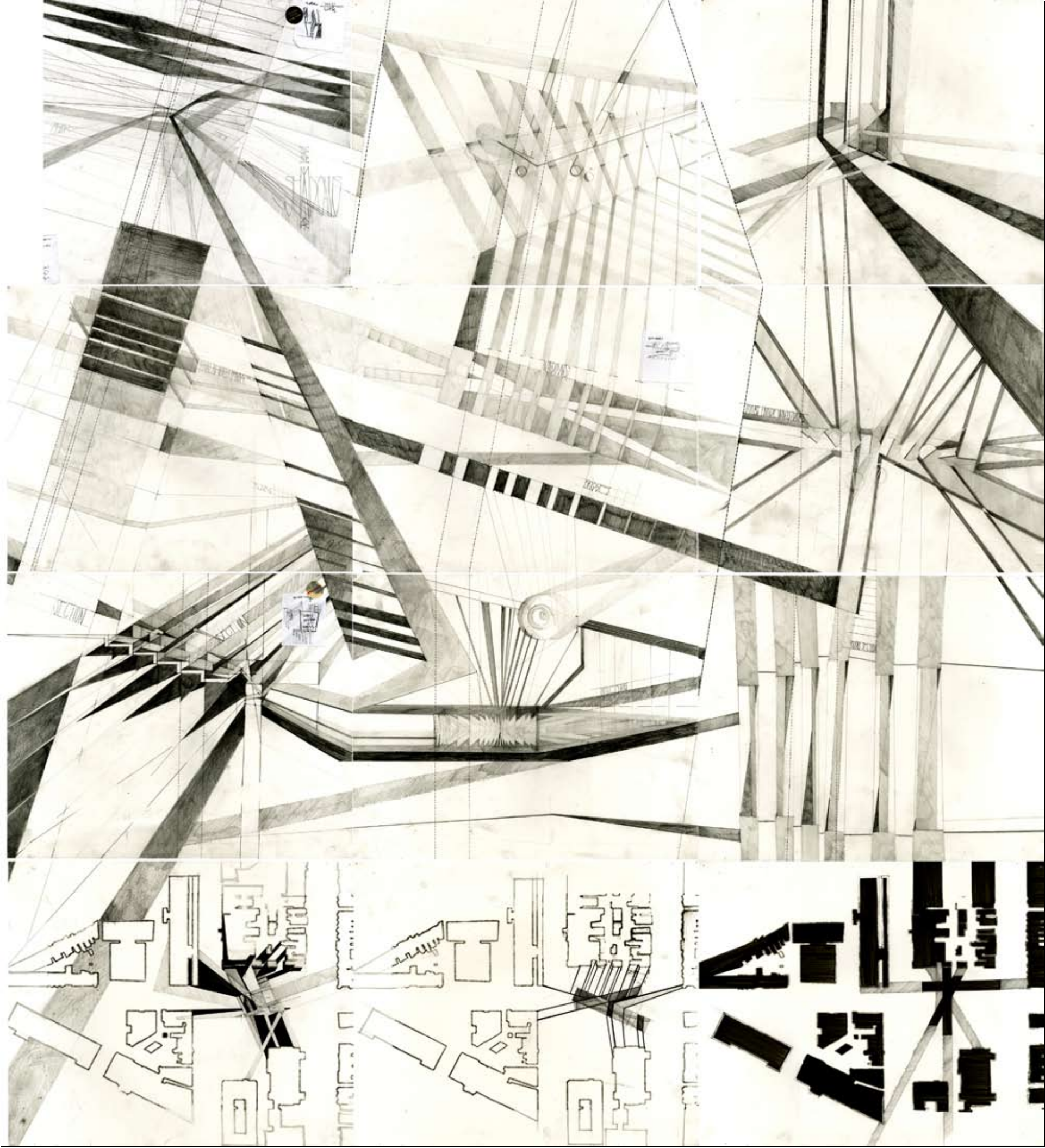
I imagined the shadows that air will project if I think of the world in negative: air being solid, solid being air.

From this I saw the shadows of glass, the shadows of metal and cloth, and the shadows of concrete.

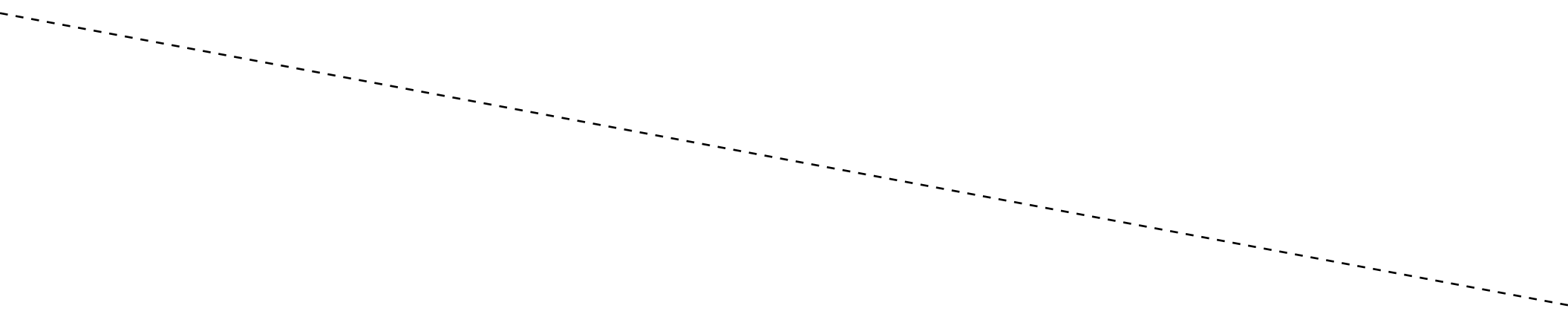
In a shadow there is a cosmos that references another one, but the reference may also stand by itself and sometimes a shadow can have its own life!

Just like the lover thinks of his loved one, he projects an idea many times of the other person although the other person has his own reality. So the idea of the lover is different from the real one, yet it is also the same.

In this way I thought that if I drew a section line through the shadows I would cut through something I was not yet seeing. I imagined the sections in another set of drawings, and I cut the paper following the drawing. Light and shadow showed me a new building with its own new shadows. Out of the two sets and the presence of them, I started to bring to reality the actual building.



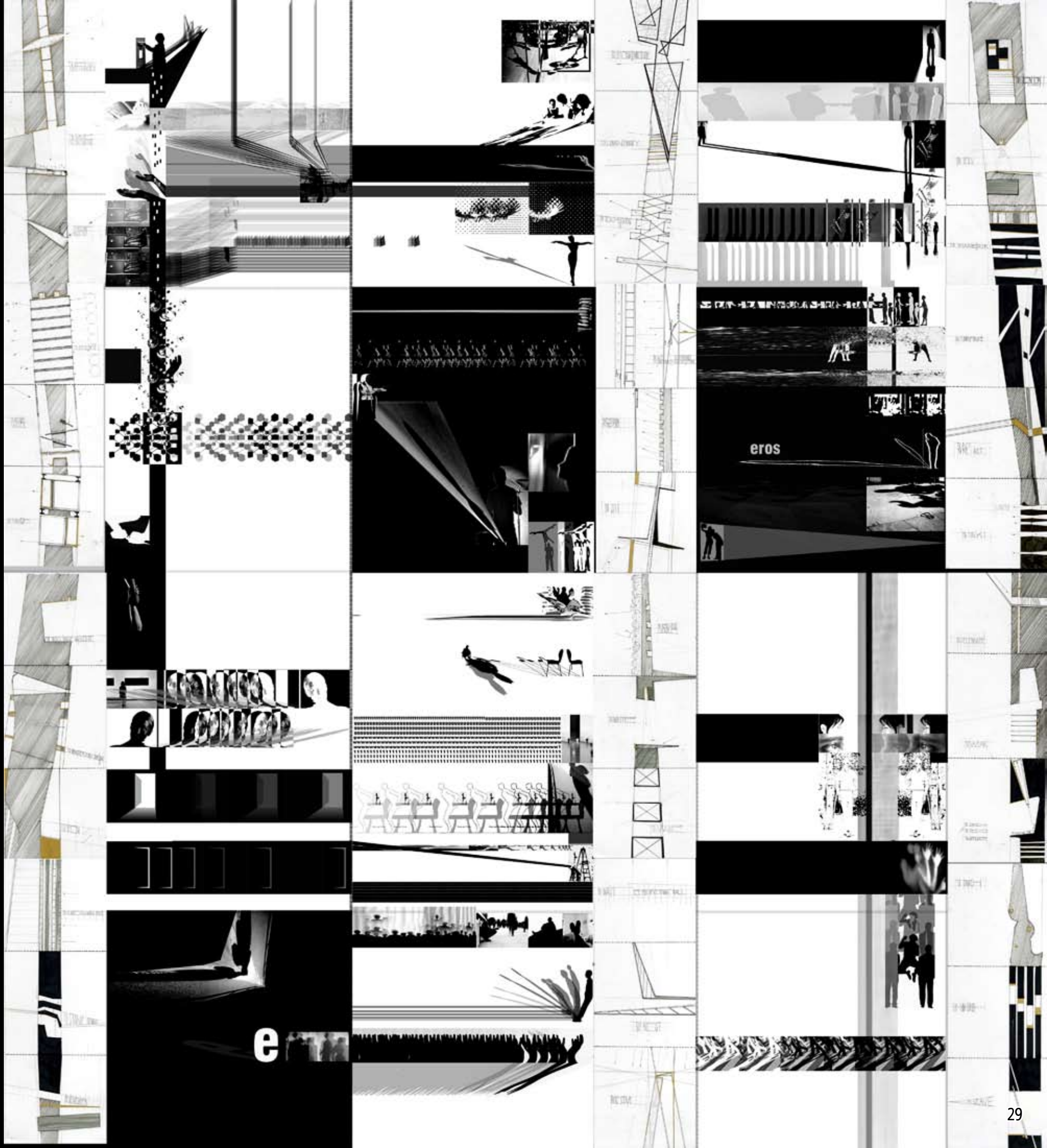
shadows



At the same time that I did this study, I made a program of activities for each program. I did not think of the activities as rooms, such as “living room”. I tried to look into the essence of each activity, like reading, writing, entering, leaving, buying, seeing, observing. I saw common activities as the origin of the building program, and I designed a wall detail for each of the them. The building of each program was in a wall detail.

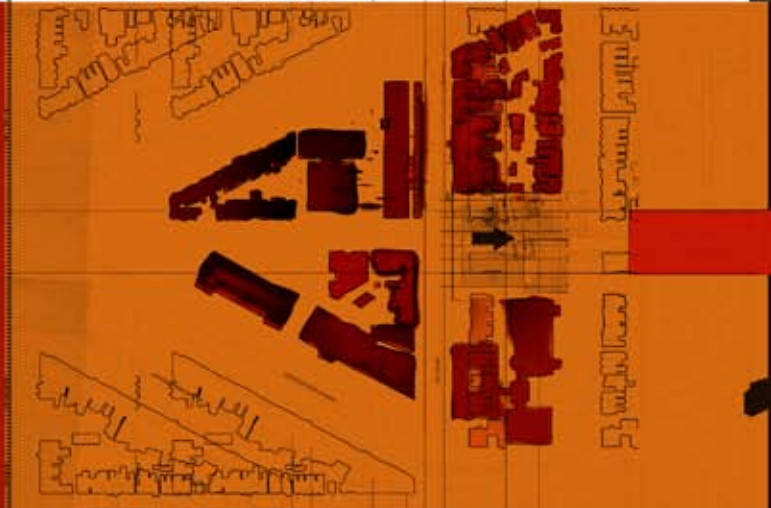
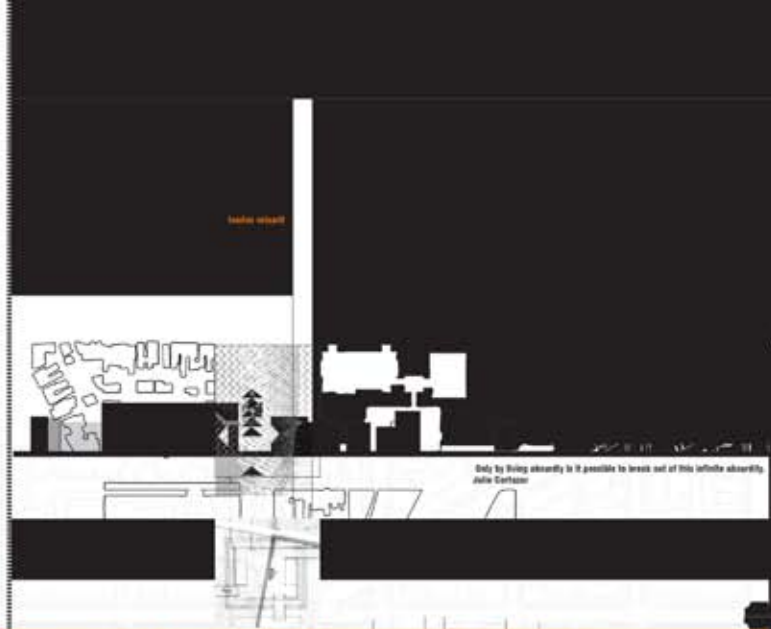
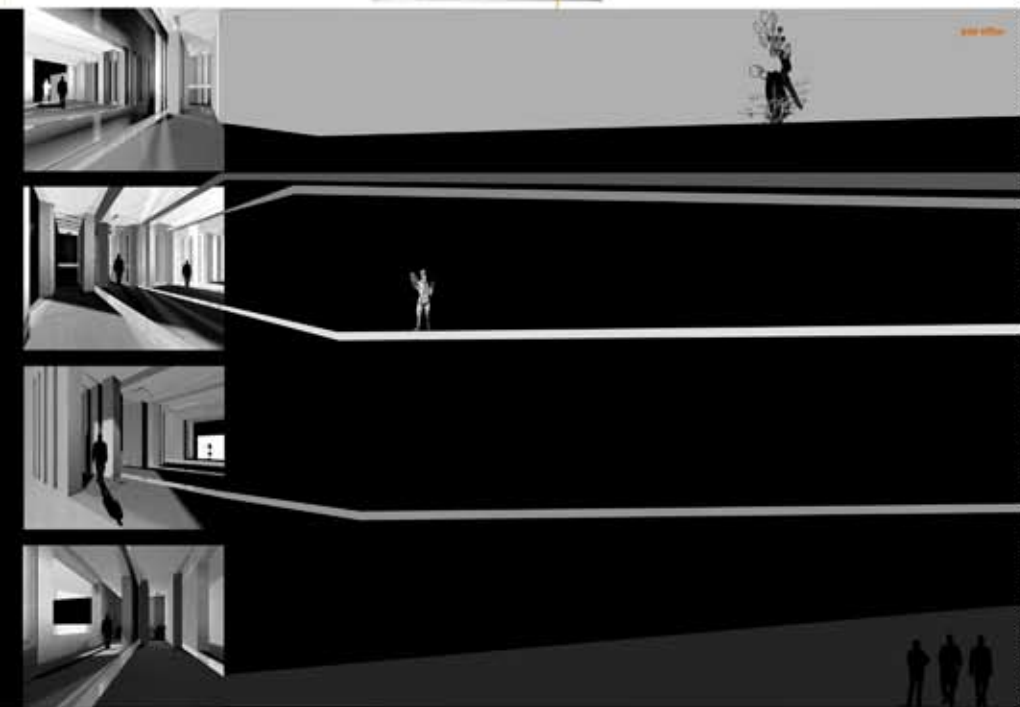
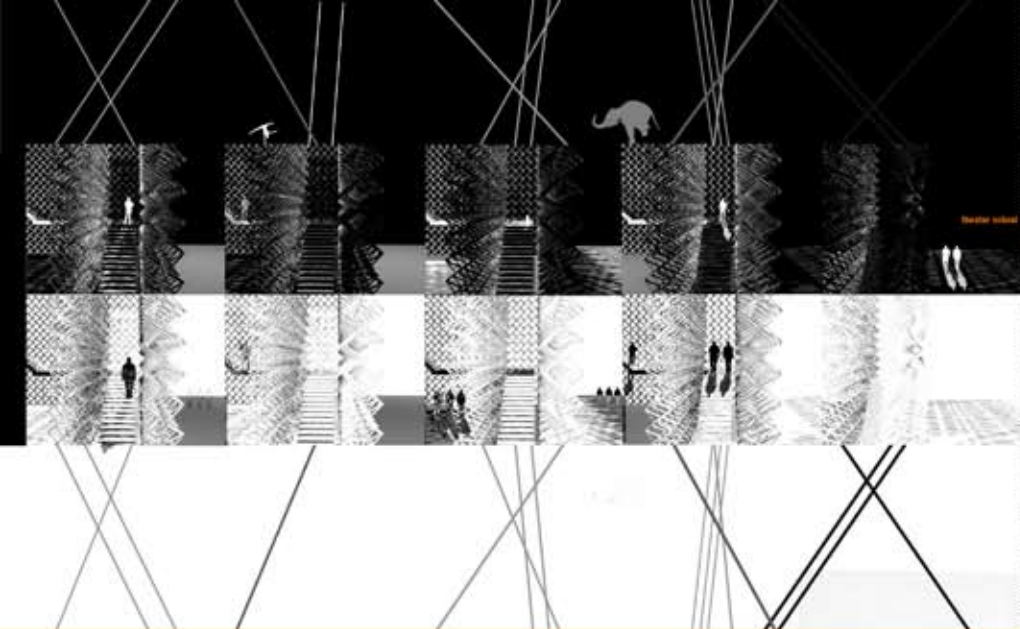
This was my first approach with the material — to find while making, to have new desires while making was always present in this process.

program of moments



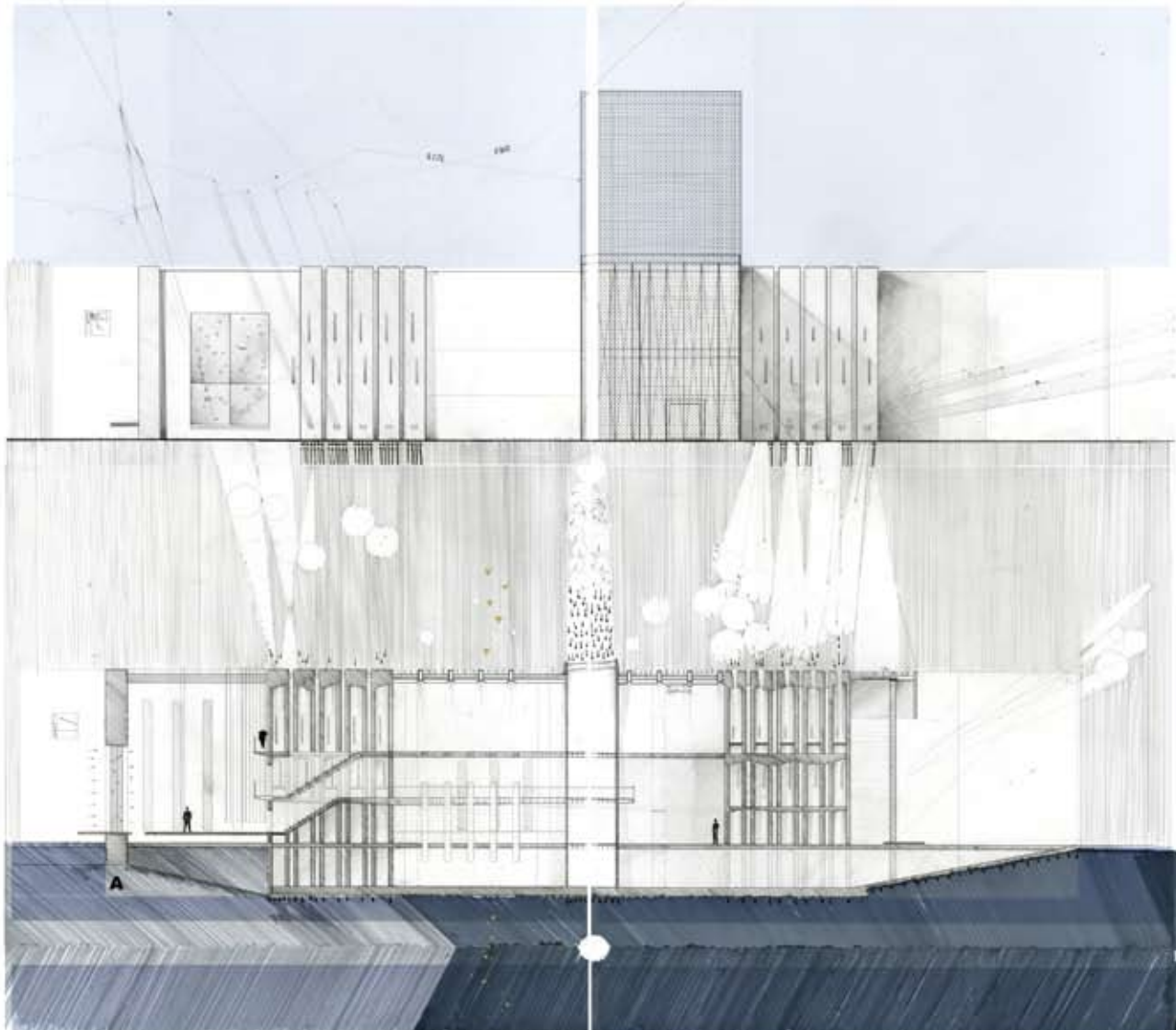
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3D studies: I was already designing the building. I had a notion of some parts of the building, the materials and some spaces, so I modeled them in Viz and worked with the shadows of them. The studies included both what I had developed and what was not yet developed.



towards the building

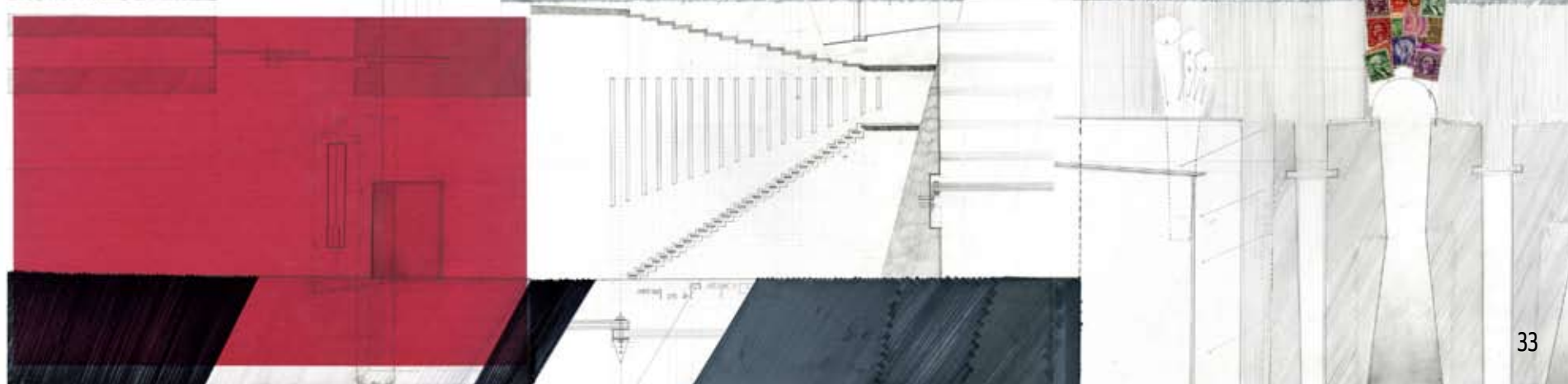
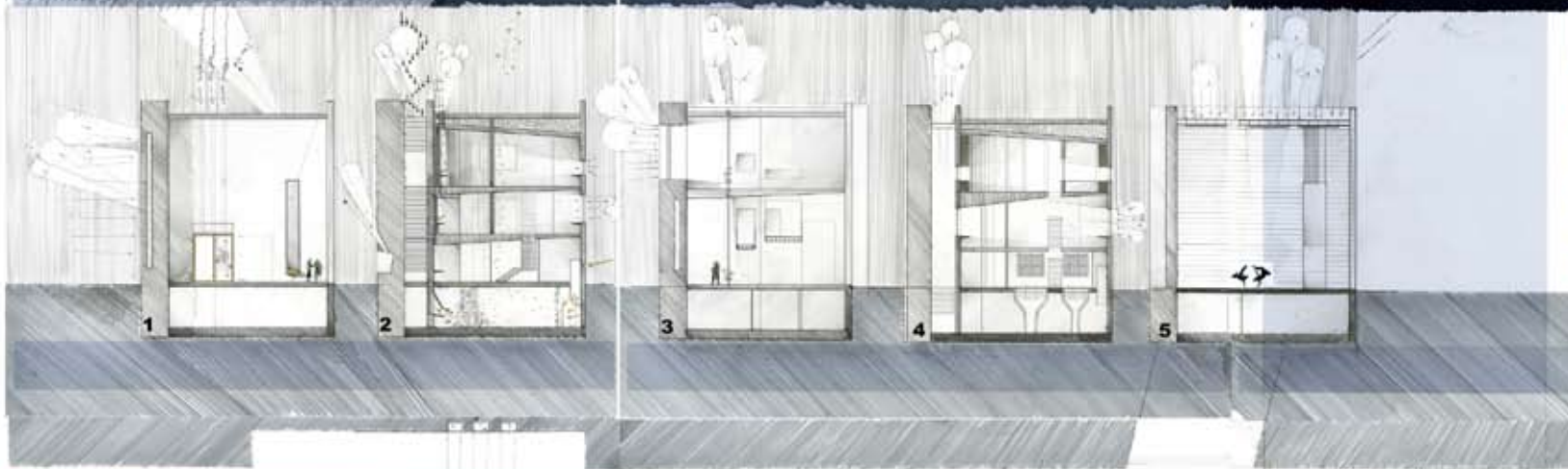
P O S T O F F I C E
E L E V A T I O N S
S E C T A I O N S
D E T A I L S



POST OFFICE

After the explosion...

There has been a lot of talk about the post office in the past few years and the future of the postal service is a hot topic. Of the three days we spent in London, we had the opportunity to visit the new post office building in London and see the future of the postal service. The new building is a masterpiece of modern architecture and is a testament to the power of the postal service. The building is a masterpiece of modern architecture and is a testament to the power of the postal service. The building is a masterpiece of modern architecture and is a testament to the power of the postal service.

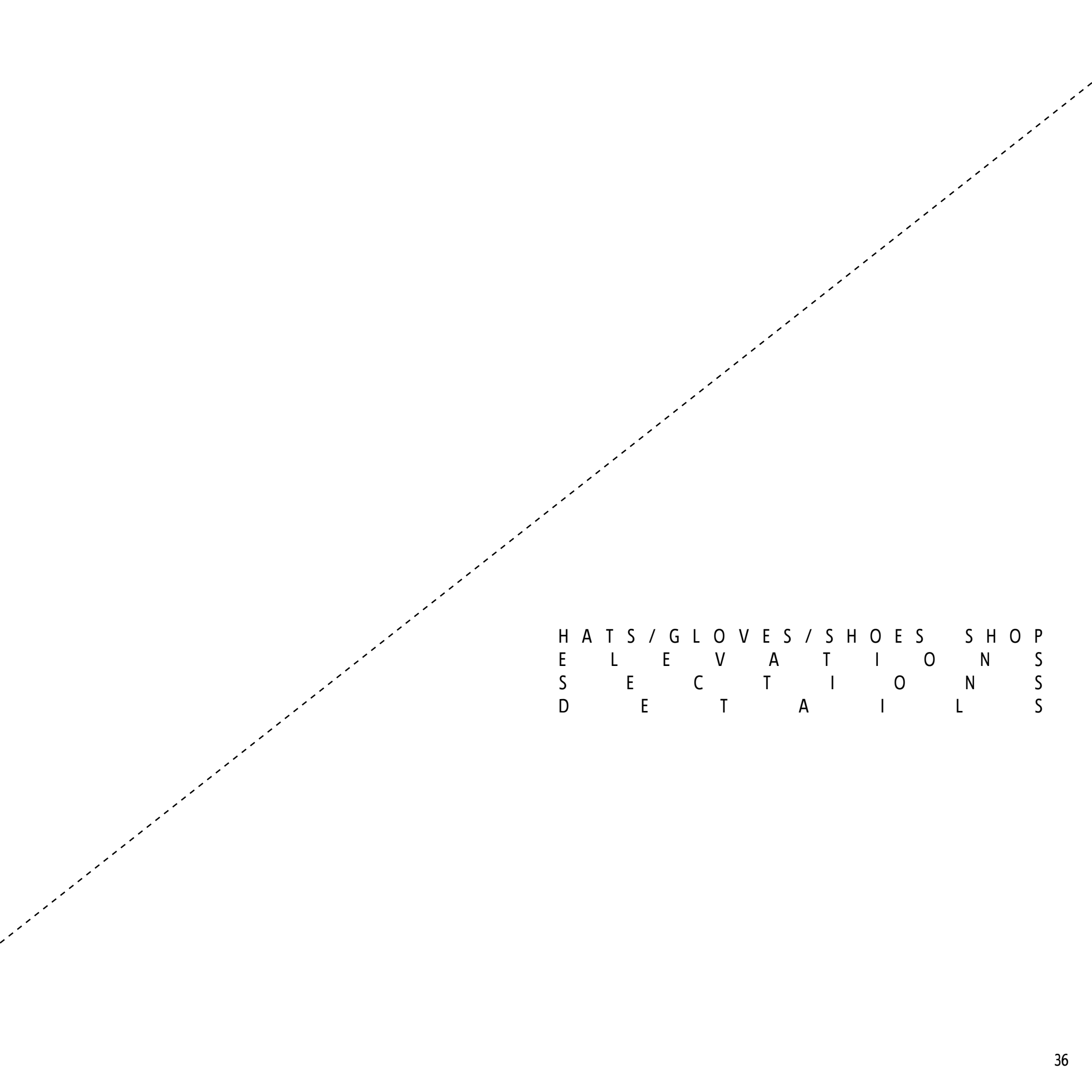


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E L E V A T I O N S
S E C T I O N S
D E T A I L S

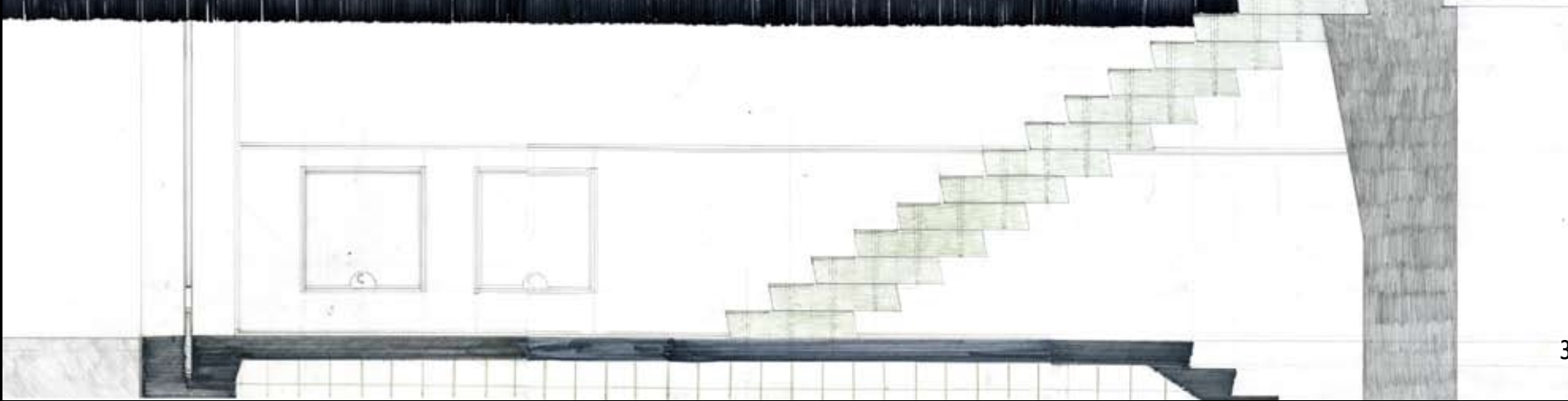
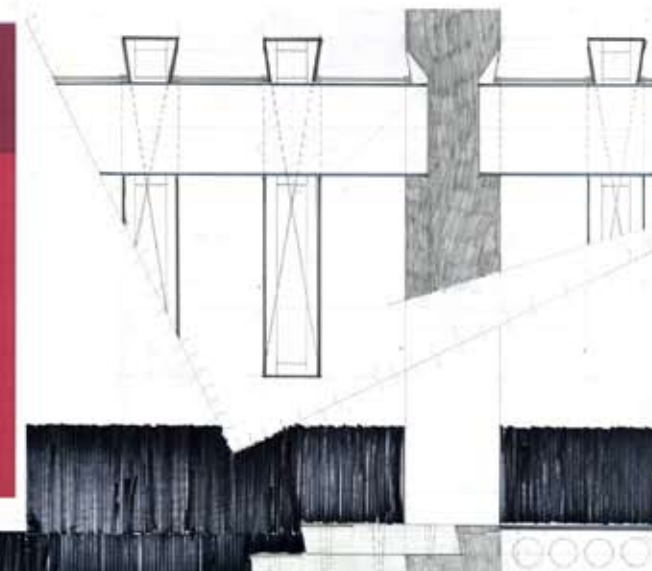
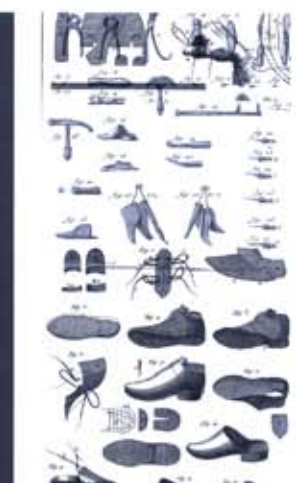
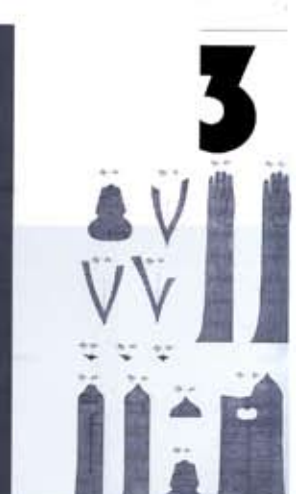
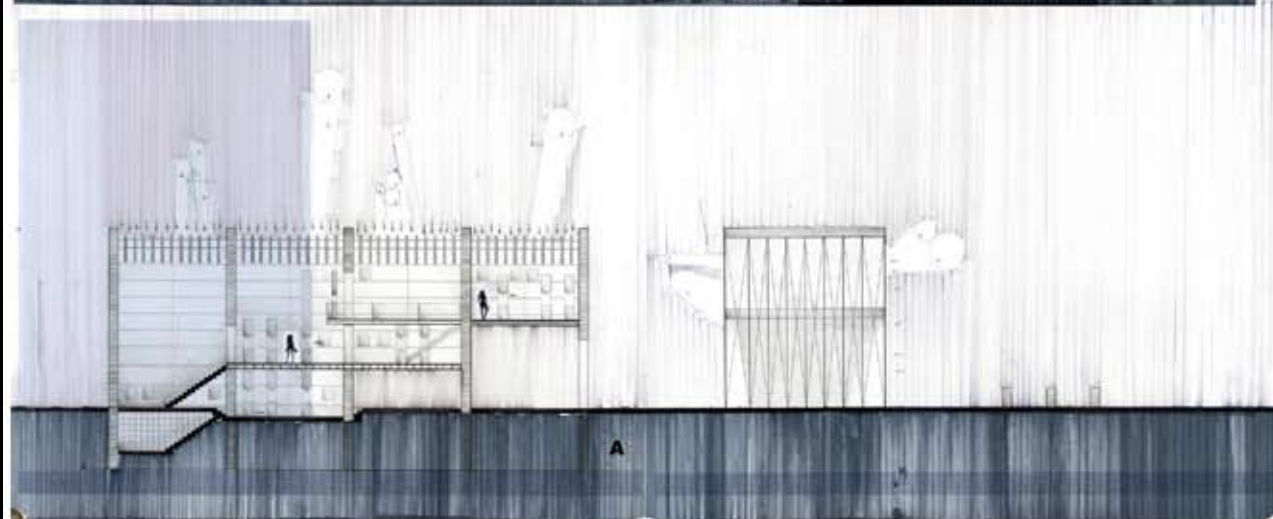
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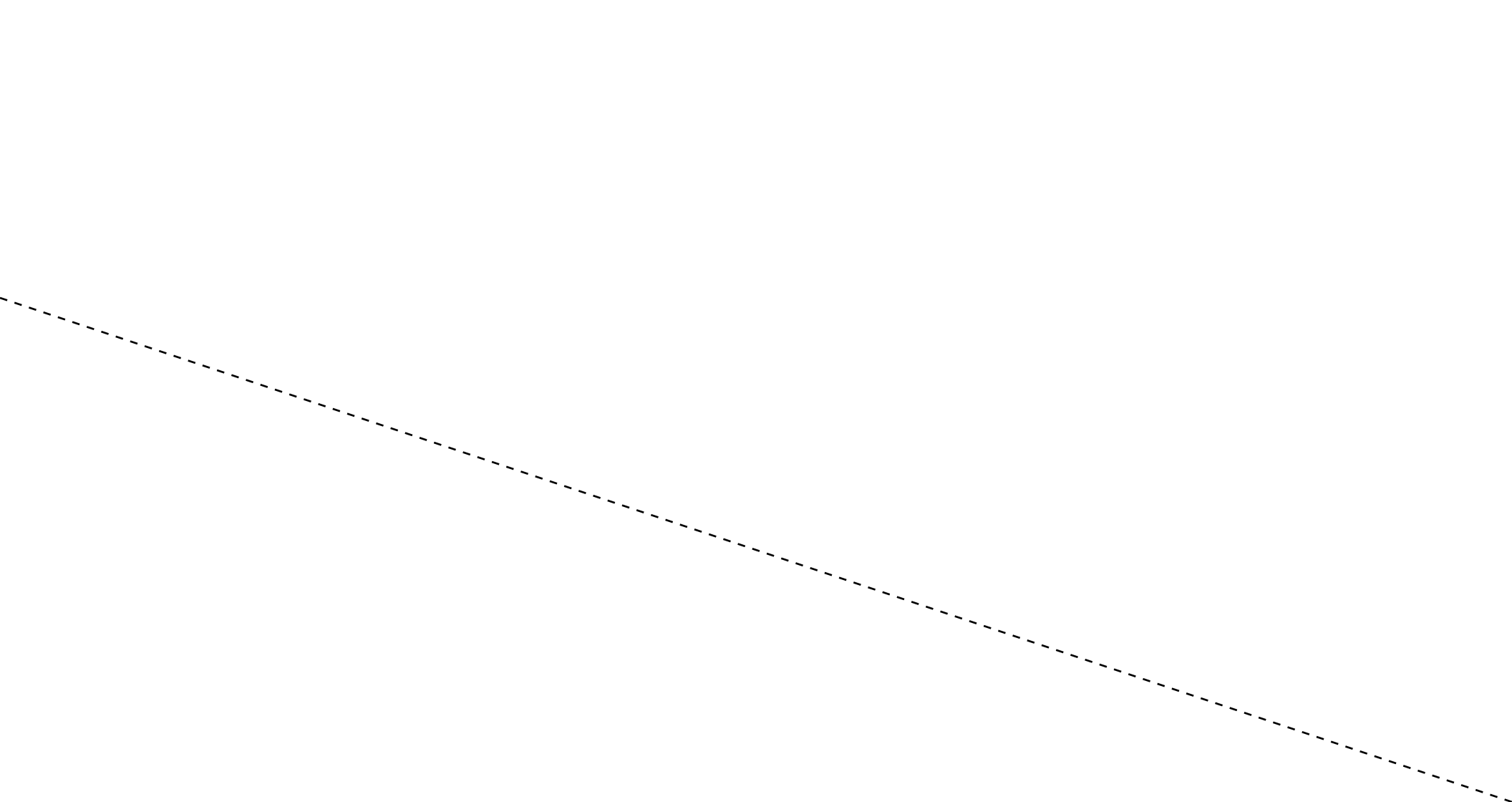


theater school

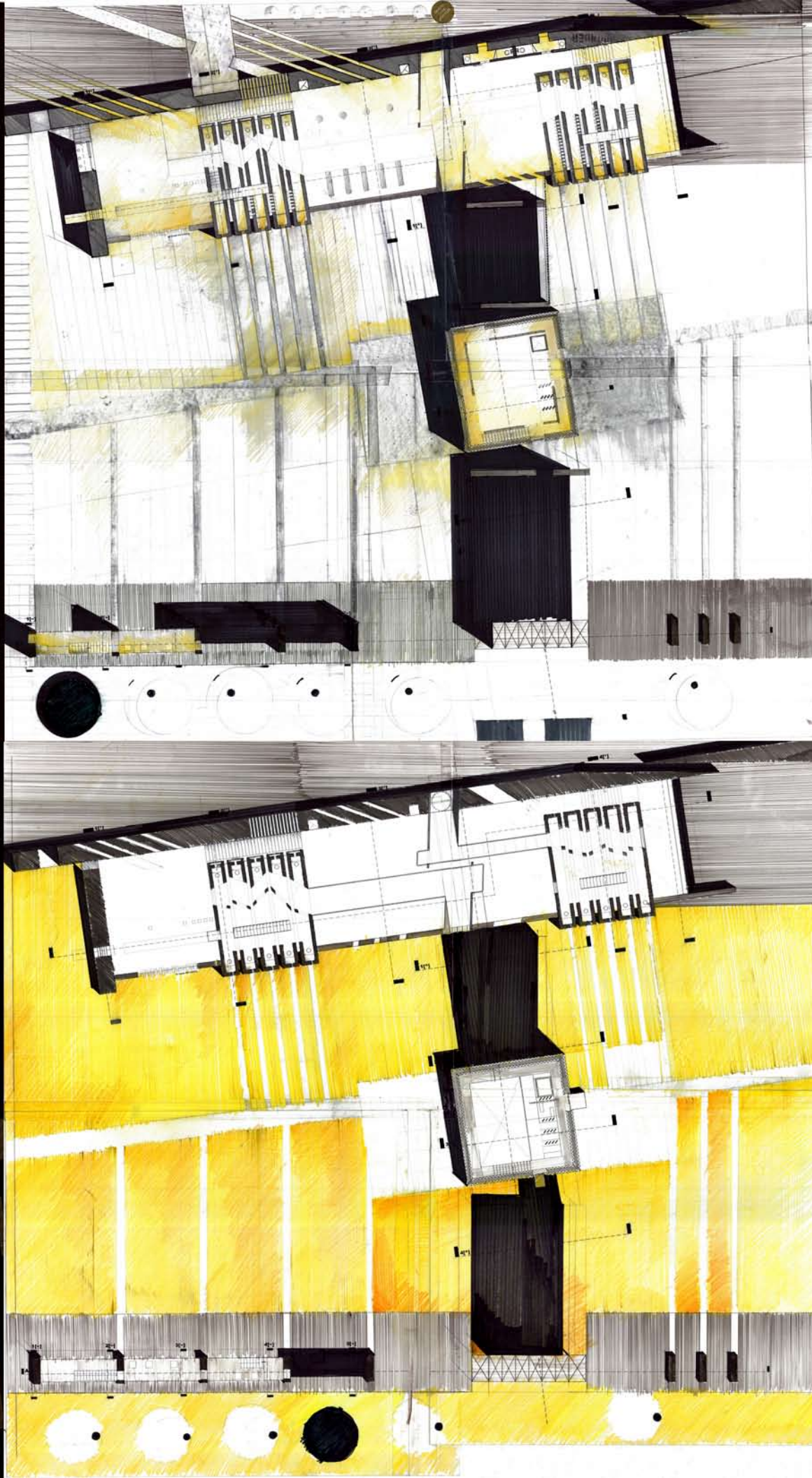


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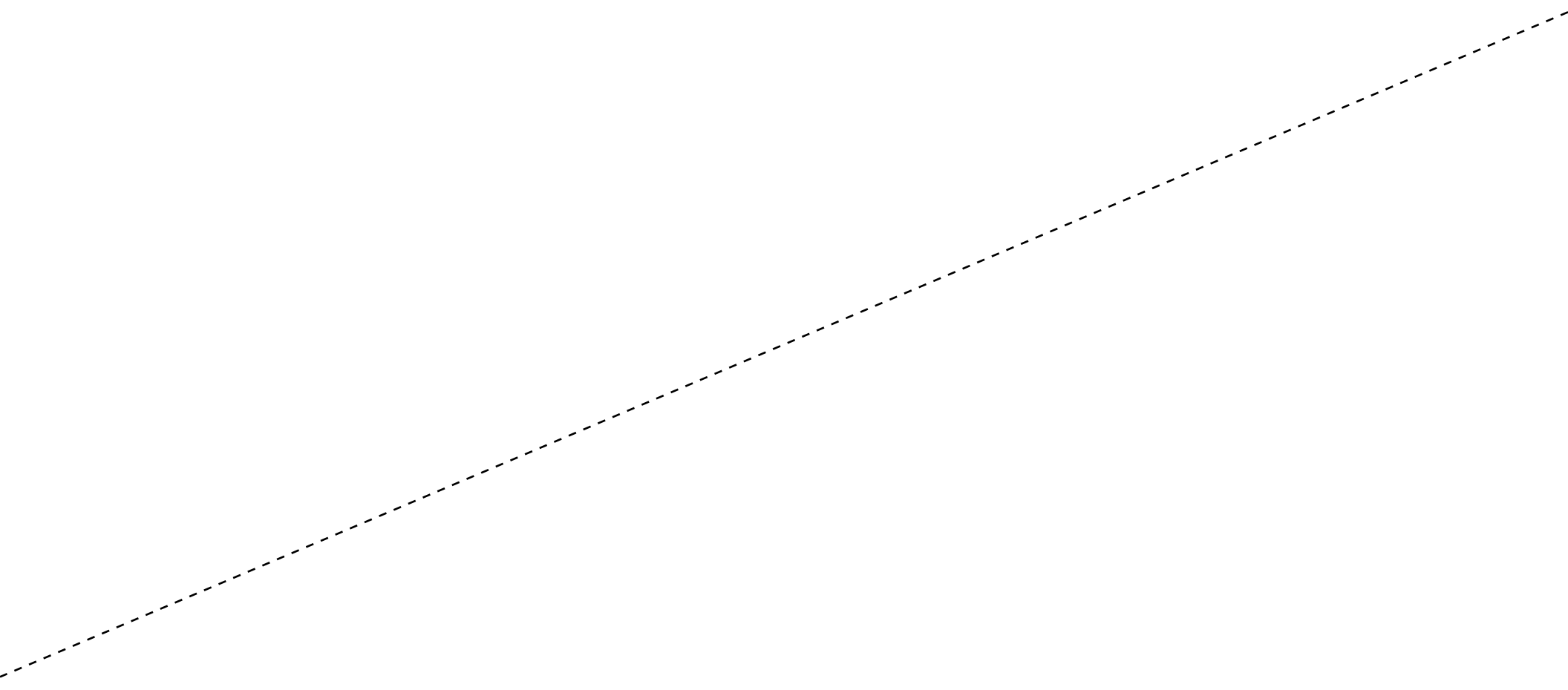


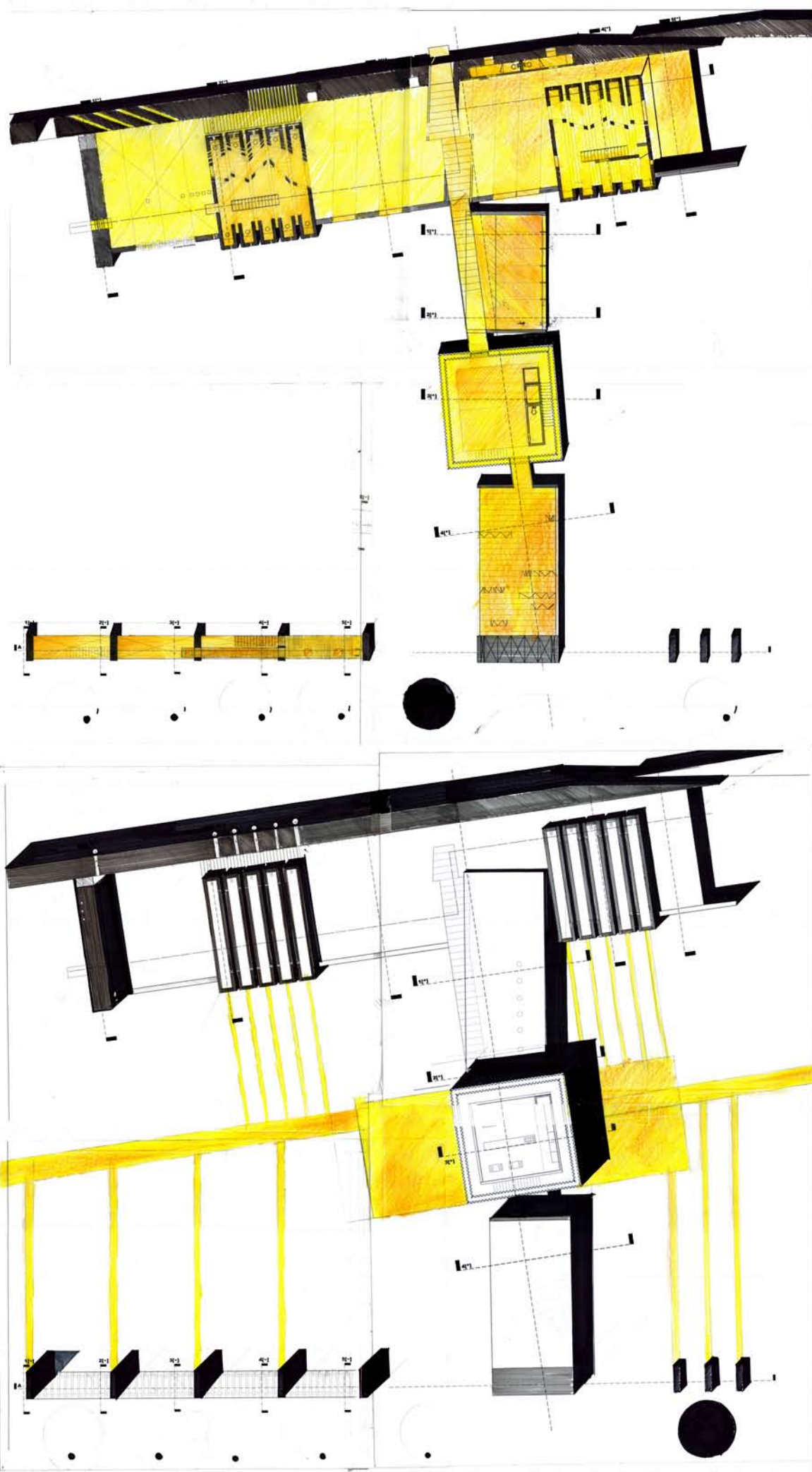


P L A N S
P A R T O N E



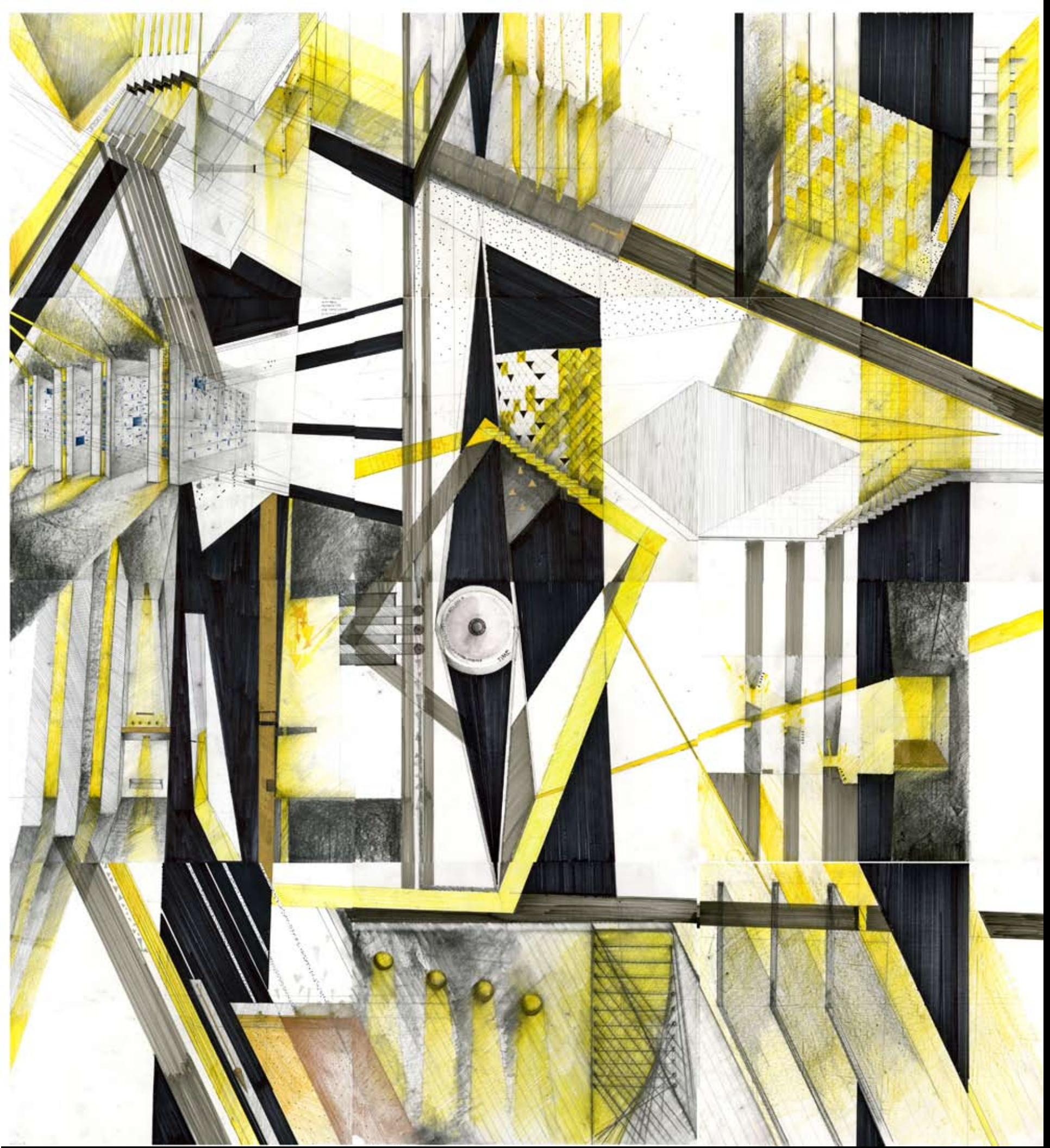
P L A N S
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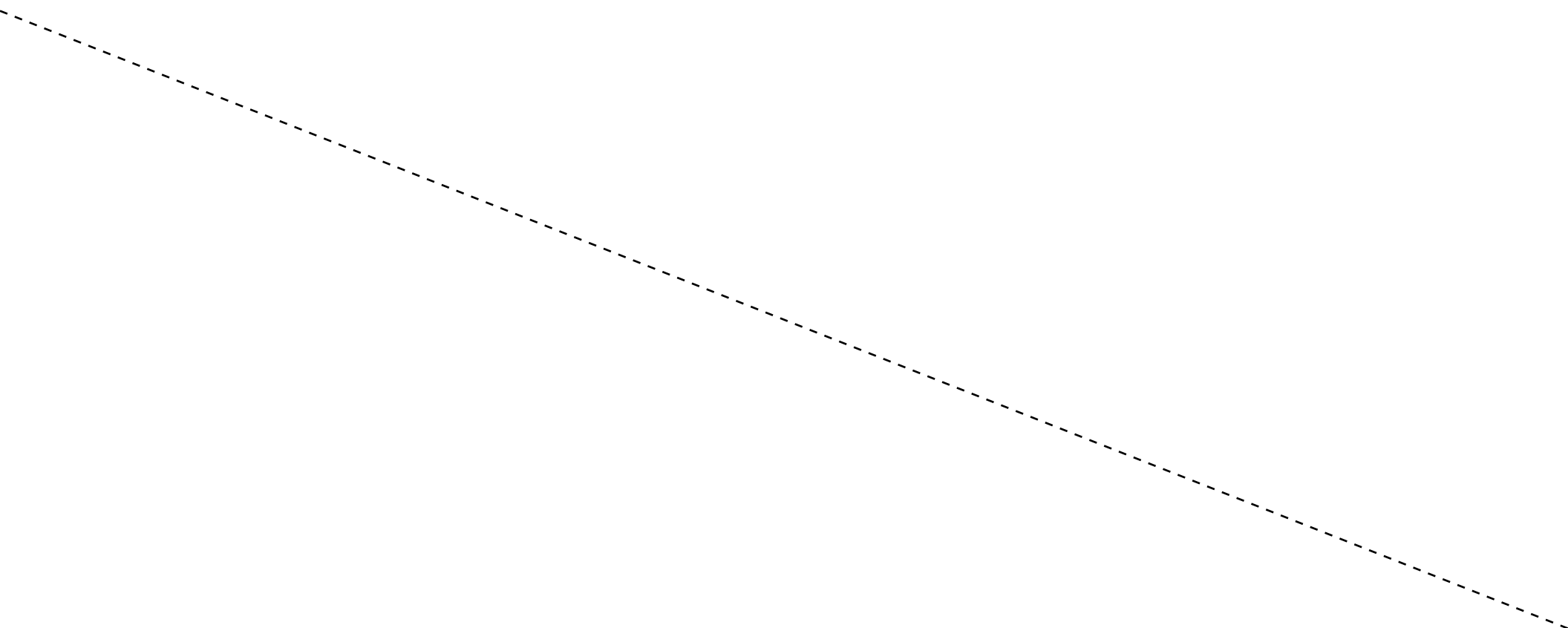






S P A C E D E S I R E S
DRAWINGS OF PERCEPTION/IMAGINATION/REALITY

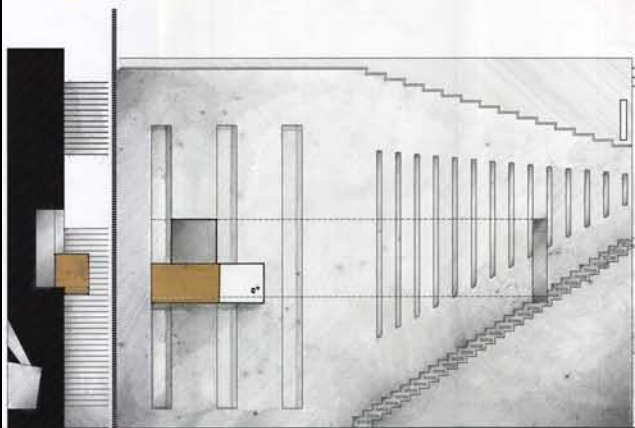




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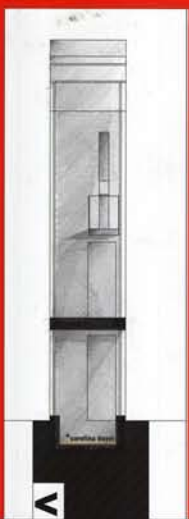


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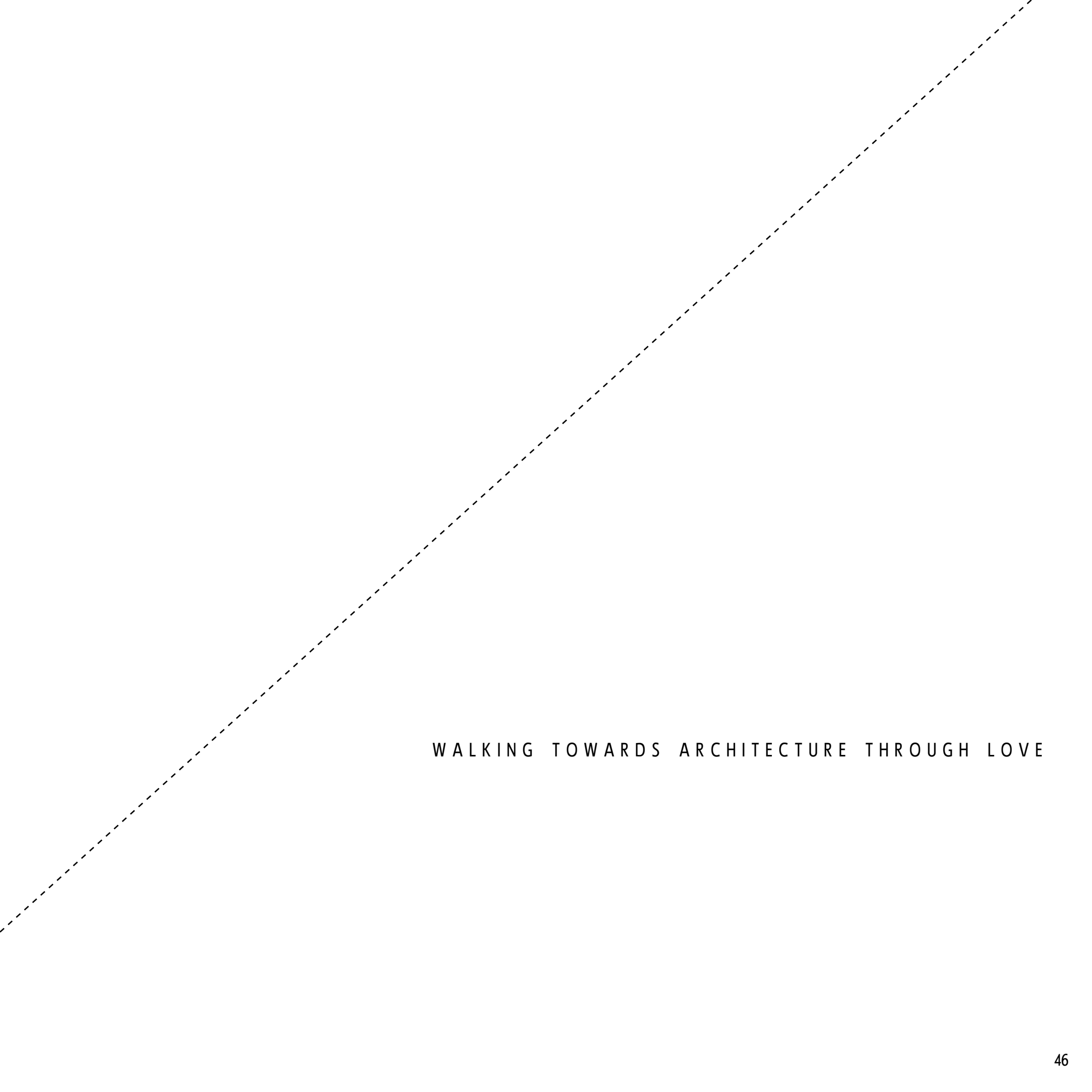
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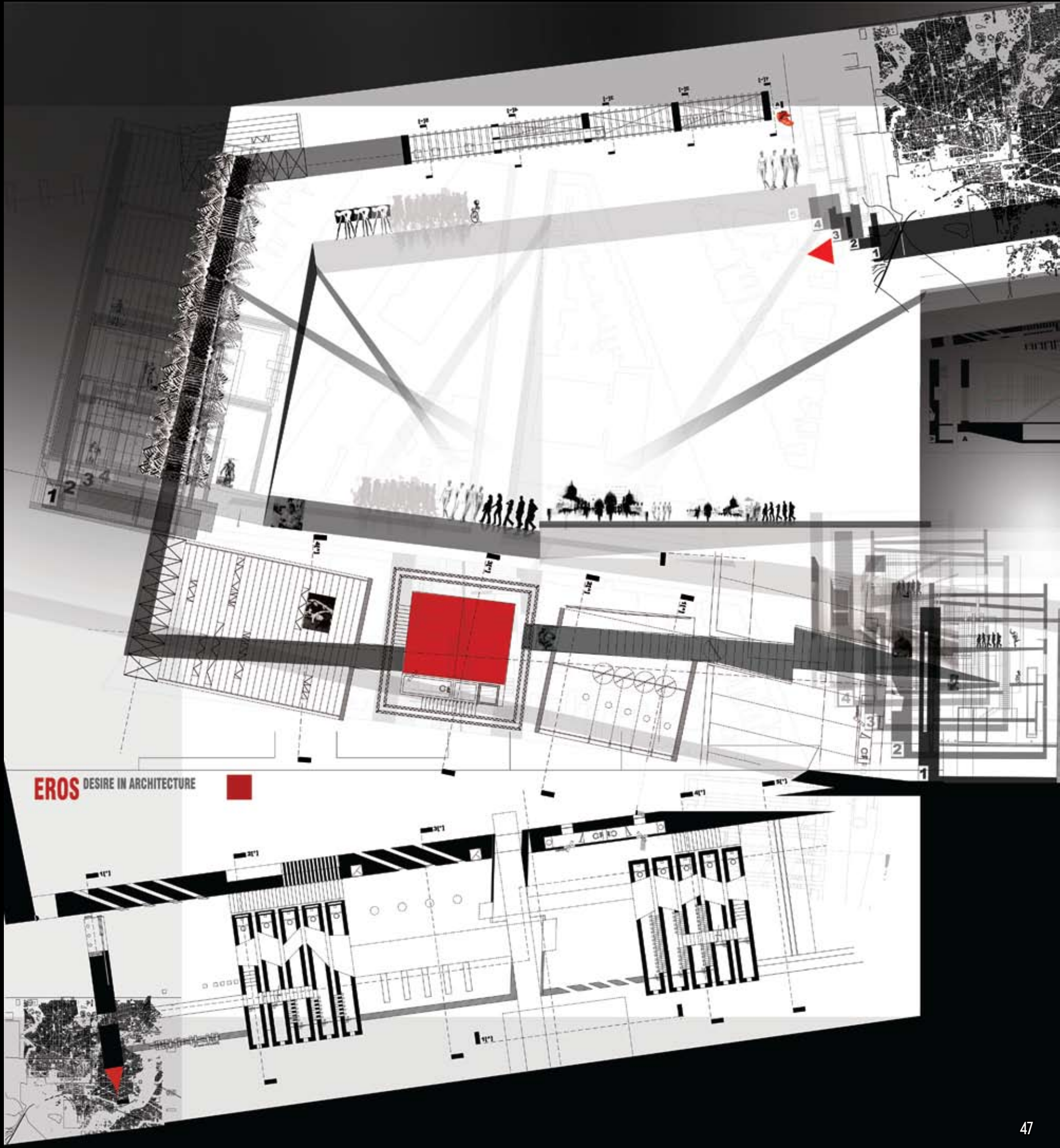


#carolina dayer

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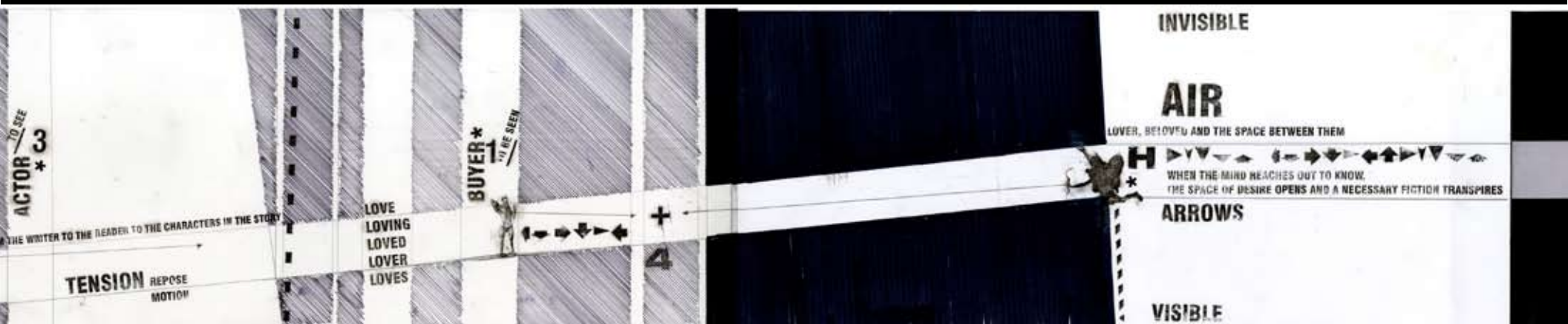
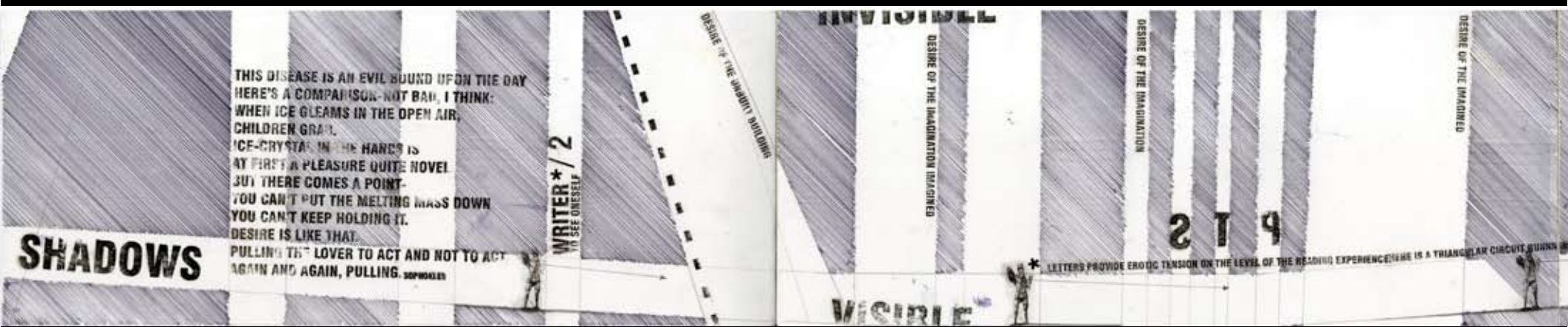


WALKING TOWARDS ARCHITECTURE THROUGH LOVE





EROS INSIDE MY DRAWINGS



5

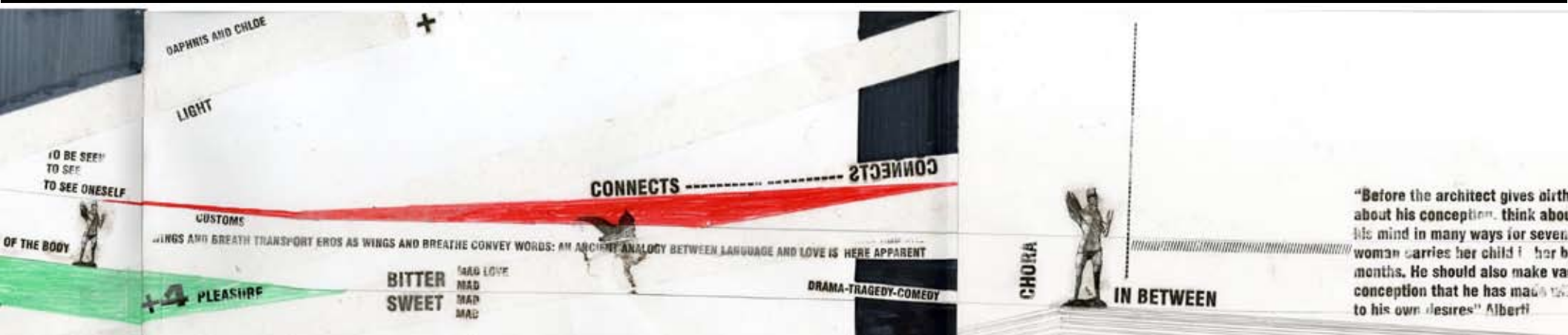
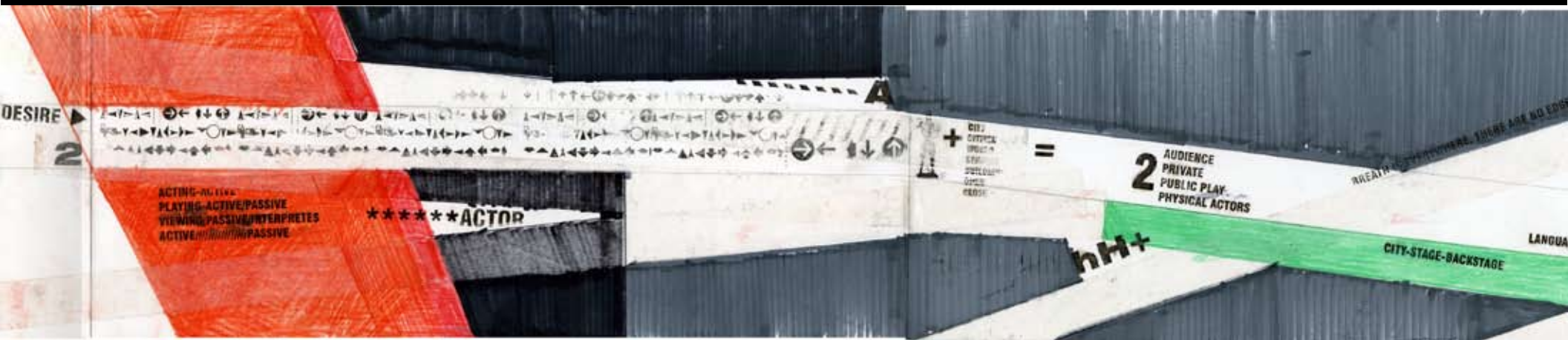


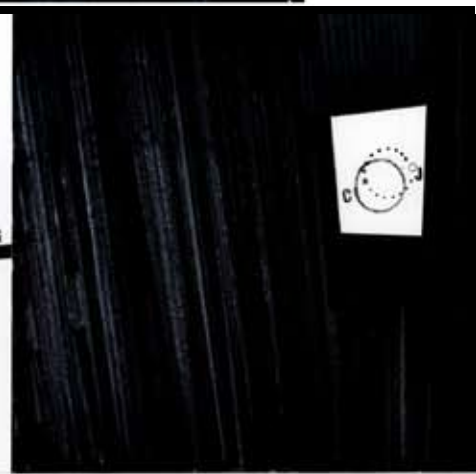
living program
experience program
love program

A BLIND POINT WHERE THE REALITY OF WHAT WE ARE DISAPPEARS INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF WHAT WE COULD BE IF WE

The word "convulsive" which I use to describe the only beauty which should concern motion. There can be no beauty at all, as far as I am concerned-convulsive be







RED ROOM



THANKS

Dear All,

Part 2

First of all thanks my committee.

Paul, thank you..You have been my mentor, my master, you have been with me all the time in this path and I admire you so much, I have so much of you now. Thanks for giving me wings to fly.

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THANK YOU

Matt V,

ALE to start and to finish this path with me---a pesar de todo
VALE ADRI PATO PO GREG NACHO BENNY DENA SOLE
ELE ELEO LIZ- I missed you LEO CELI MARIEL PIPO COQUI
MARIO GOGUI MARCO ALBERTO ANDRE ANNE ELLEN
STEVEN- thanks for the peanuts TORTONESE DIEGA FABIO
CHARLY RICHARD JAIME LETI GREG FRED RYAN THOMAS
LESLIE GLADYS CHILE COTY GABI MOHAMMED FEI
YANYAN POSTMAN RYO NEGRA BERNASI CONSTANZE
BRIAN LINDA FERNAN MABEL ELIF

Thanks to you all

Finally

SPECIAL THANKS TO MY FAMILY- All the thanks to them!

Mama, Papa, Silvi, Pablo GRACIAS. ...all this is for you, all what I am is because of you. Pablo, thanks for being here today.

And Jon. I wouldn't have done anything of this without you. ...So many things between us///Thanks Jon, because I

felt in love with my project while I was falling in love with you. You have been my muse.

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2006: Best Student Studio Award at WAAC [Washington Alexandria Architecture Center]

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WAAC Director's Award

WAAC Kyrus/Wheeler Award

DC Interschool Competition-1st Place

Annual AIA Northern Virginia Scholarshi

Greenway Competition-1st Place

Thesis Director's Award of Dictinction at WAAC

Crystal Award for Outstanding Thesis

THE END
THE BEGINNING

