

# Children's Hospice Care

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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

in

Architecture

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## ABSTRACT

With advancements in medical technology, the mechanics of dying and death has changed significantly. Centuries ago, people mostly died of infectious diseases. From the time they were diagnosed, to the time of their death did not take long. Today, public health has improved remarkably. We have a better control over infectious diseases, but we have to deal with cancer and other chronic illnesses. The long period of treatment for such illnesses makes us spend a lot of our time in healthcare facilities such as hospitals, hospices, and care homes.

Unfortunately, in many cases, these facilities do not pay much attention to emotional and spiritual needs of their patients and are mostly designed around their own institutional and technological needs. In that regard, these buildings become pretty awful places with no natural light and long corridors.

Today, due to the nature of chronic diseases that we mostly deal with, hospice care facilities are becoming more popular. The idea of a hospice is to focus on quality of the place for families and patients who have already spent a lot of their time in a hospital setting. The goal is provide humane care for patients who do not have much time left, to make sure that they live the remainder of their lives as comfortably and as fully as possible.

It is important to remember that when such facilities are designed for children, we need to pay extra attention to their unique needs. It is important to provide opportunities for children with terminal illnesses to continue to learn and grow.

This thesis is exploration of an architectural setting in which children with a terminal prognosis would spend the last few weeks of their lives. Located in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, this project takes advantage of the existing nature of the site to create an oasis for families who have gone through an exhausting battle with an untreatable disease. The goal is to shift the focus from curing to healing and to create a nurturing place that helps to bring *normalcy* back to the lives of patients and their families.

# Children's Hospice Care

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## GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Hospice is a healthcare facility for patients with a terminal prognosis with less than 6 months to live. The purpose of a hospice is to shift the focus from seeking a cure, to making the patient more comfortable, both physically and emotionally. Hospice also assists both patient and their family to cope with what is happening through variety of counseling and therapy programs.

This thesis is exploration of an architectural setting in which children with a terminal prognosis would spend the last few weeks of their lives. Located in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, this project takes advantage of the existing nature of the site to create an oasis for families who have gone through an exhausting battle with an untreatable disease. The goal is to shift the focus from curing to healing and to create a nurturing place that helps to bring *normalcy* back to the lives of patients and their families.

to *Ashkan*, for all his love

## acknowledgments

This venture would not have been possible without the guidance and help of my WAAC faculty:

*Paul*, thank you for your continuous support, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Thank you for giving me wings to fly and opening my eyes to a whole new world.

*Susan*, thank you for keeping my feet on the ground. Thank you for making me do my best, for your patience, and the insights you shared.

*Marcia*, thank you for your passion for architecture and helping me find inspiration in everything.

*Jaan*, thank you for your spirit, for your love for architecture, and for the magical world of the WAAC!

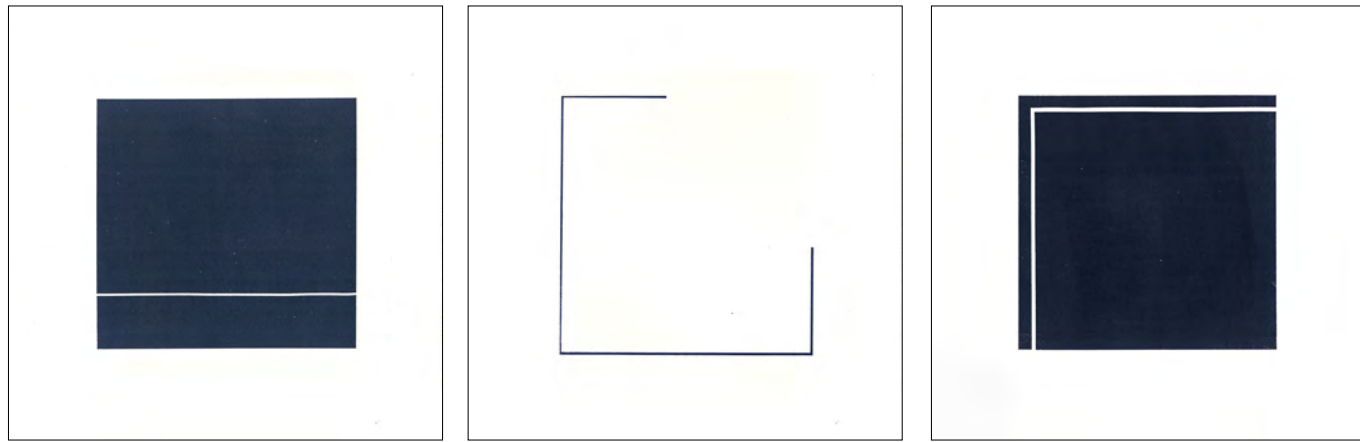
...

*Mum, Dad*, thank you for nurturing me in every way possible, and for being my biggest fans.

Thank you also to all my wonderful WAAC friends who made this an unforgettable journey.

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## research

*"WE DO NOT HAVE TO CURE TO HEAL."*<sup>1</sup>  
- DAME CICELY SAUNDERS

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1. Adams. 2011. 139.

## children

“Children are unique individuals with heightened sensory needs and special scale considerations. They move through and perceive space in a totally different way than adults. How can architectural form respond to the unique needs of children?”<sup>1</sup>

“Attention to detail in the following areas provides for playfulness, invention and enrichment:

**Color:** can delineate areas and activities, and attract children, whether the aim is to create calming environments or bright focal areas.

**Lighting:** should aim to emulate the variability and flexibility of nature, from soft, subdued and shadowy to bright task areas. Lights are also eye-catching elements: children love them as a sparkly feature.

**Texture and pattern:** can help to provide spatial differentiation (such as variety of floor finishes), tactile entertainment, as well as acting as a learning tool.

**Smell:** such as the beautiful smell of cooking, garden flowers on the breeze, wood joinery.

**Sound:** Providing sound absorption materials and sound insulation to delineate quiet areas can make a significant improvement to the ambient quality of a center. Musical features, if used judiciously, can provide hours of amusement.

**A dynamic and interesting ceiling plane:** Because of their small stature and many ways of moving other than just walking, children are constantly looking up, so the features of the voids above take on particular significance.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. Scott. 2010. Google Books Abstract at <https://books.google.com>

2. Scott. 2010. 54.

## hospice

In medieval times hospice referred to a place of shelter for exhausted and ill travelers on a long journey.<sup>1</sup> Today, hospice is a healthcare facility for patients with a terminal prognosis with less than 6 months to live. The purpose of a hospice is to shift the focus from seeking a cure, to making the patient more comfortable, both physically and emotionally. Hospice also assists both patient and their family to cope with what is happening through variety of counseling and therapy programs.

In a hospice design, we need to think of three type of users. The patient, the family, and the caregivers (workers).

For the patient, hospice becomes a second home, but also a place to say goodbye. They enter the facility knowing that they might never leave.

For the family, it provides a safe place to spend more quality time with their loved ones.

And, for the caregivers, it is a place of work, but also where they become like family to their patients; a place where they need to be the strongest ones to help others with their physical and emotional needs.

Hospice tries to heal the wounds of the dying not by curing or fixing, but rather a return to balance and re-establishing harmony between body, mind, and spirit.

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1. Adams. 2011. 139.



Image Source: [www.emaze.com](http://www.emaze.com)



Image Source: [www.childrensmercy.org](http://www.childrensmercy.org)



Image Source: [www.bacch.org](http://www.bacch.org)



Image Source: <http://www.chop.edu>



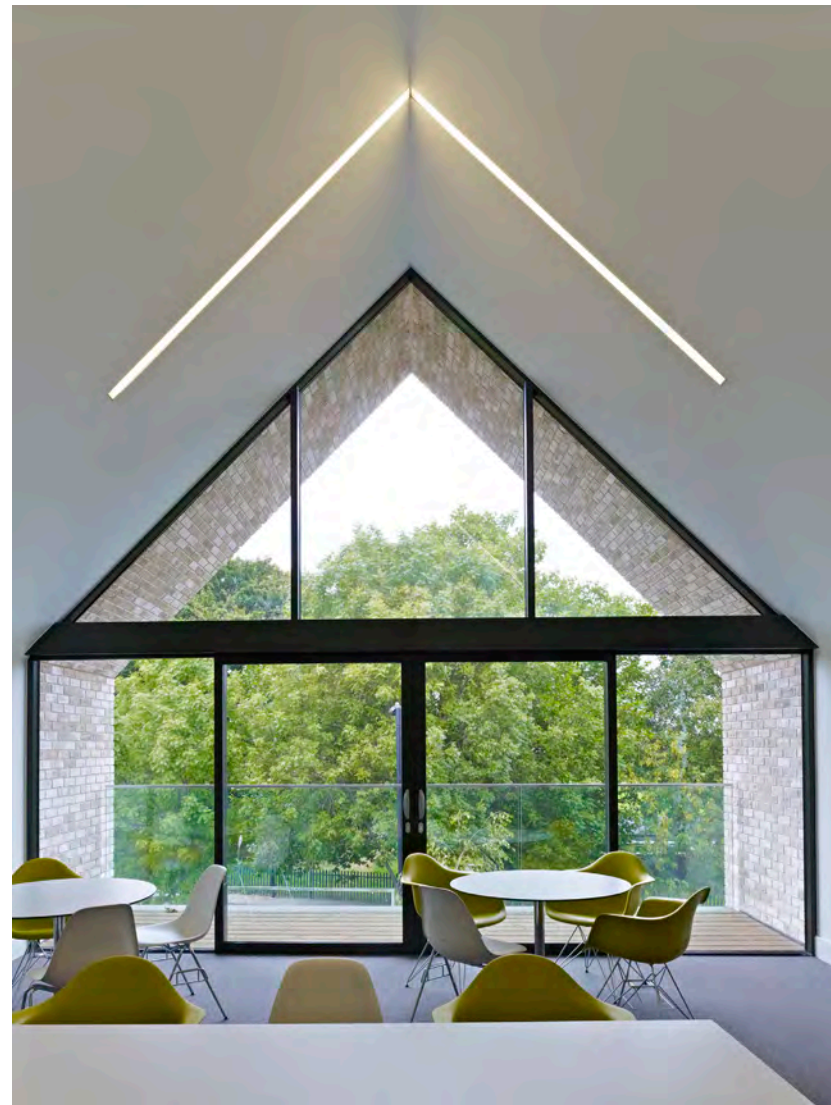
Image Source: [www.chnola.org](http://www.chnola.org)



Image Source: [www.coroflot.com](http://www.coroflot.com)

## precedents

As part of my research, I studied traditional hospital settings, children's hospitals, and hospice care facilities. I also looked into some non-traditional healthcare facilities that try to create beautiful architecture to support spiritual and emotional needs of their patients along with their medical needs.



**North London Hospice / Allford Hall Monaghan Morris**  
Image Source: ArchDaily.com



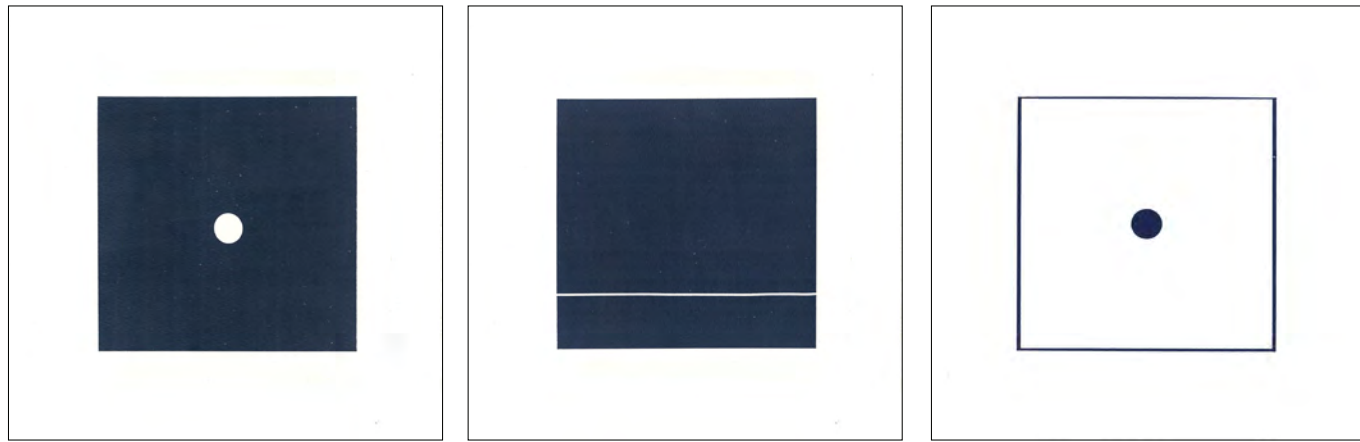
**Centre For Cancer And Health / Nord Architects** - The center is open to the city for therapy, training and counseling.  
Image Source: architectureau.com



**Maggie's Cancer Caring Center / Snohetta**  
Image Source: ArchDaily.com



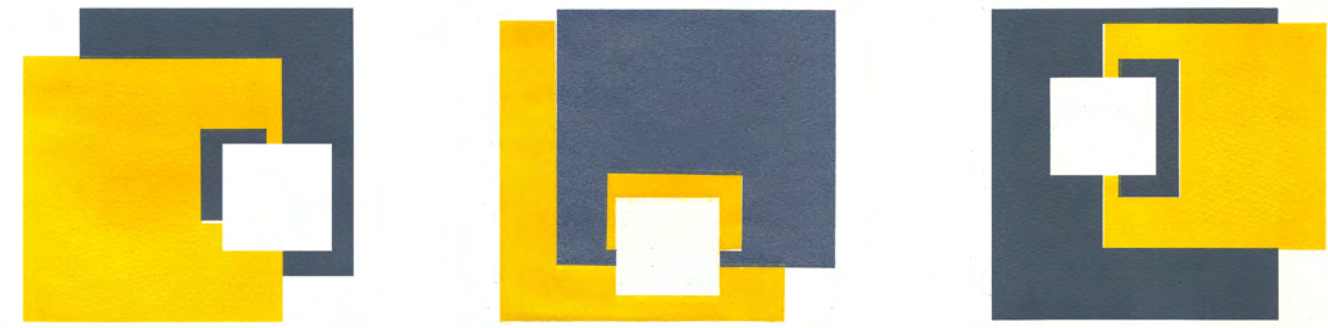
**Children's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation / Sou Fujimoto**  
Image Source: architectureau.com



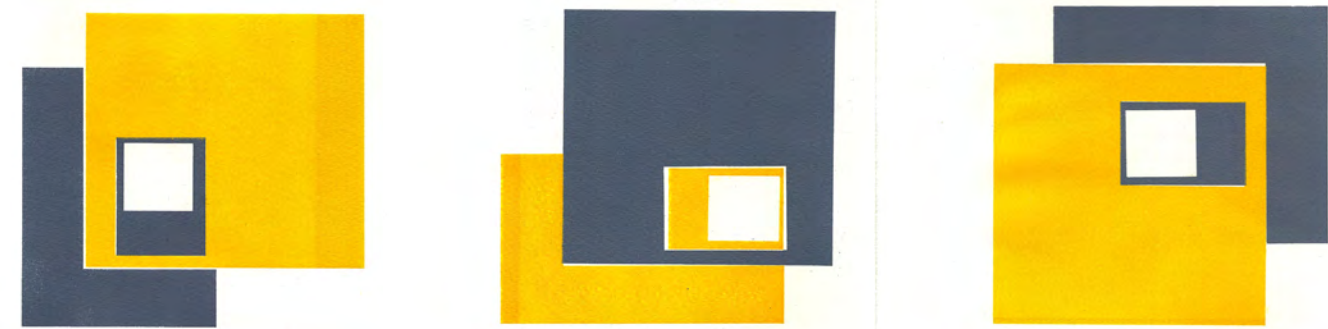
## inspirations

*"THE WOUND IS THE PLACE WHERE LIGHT ENTERS YOU."*  
-RUMI (n/a)

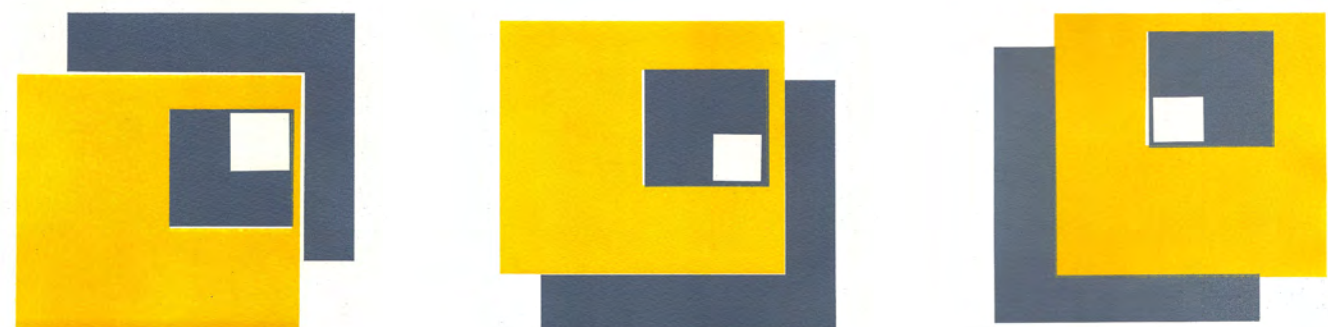
PERCEPTION SERIES



..... 3 -5 year olds are magical thinkers who sometimes cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality. In their world death is a temporary or reversible matter. They might interpret death as some sort of punishment for their bad behavior.



..... 6 -9 year olds have a more evolved sense of dying. At this stage they start to associate death with aging. They start to ask questions about death and how their body works. They start to relate death to ghosts and spirits.



..... 10 -12 year olds start to understand the permanence of death. They know that it might happen to them or their family. They feel the sadness in others caused by death of a beloved one. They also respond to it with anger or sadness, more like adults do. <sup>1</sup>

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1. <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/understand.html>



ROW HOUSE SERIES

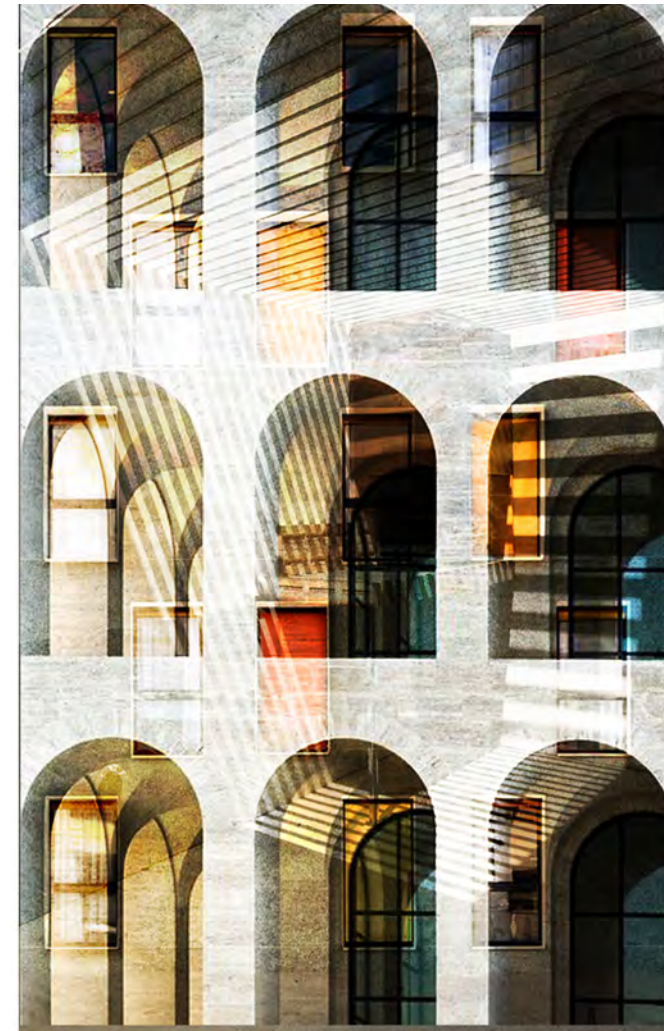
“THERE IS A BEGINNING AND AN ENDING FOR EVERYTHING THAT IS ALIVE.  
THE IN BETWEEN IS LIVING.”<sup>1</sup>



The row house series are inspired by all the children books that I read about easy ways to explain death to children. Each collage looks at this subject matter from a different point of view.

1. Mellonie & Ingpen. 2009. n/a

ADVENTURE SERIES



Color variations, moving parts, light and shadow, connection to nature, use of natural light, and changing views help create positive distractions and sense of wonder and playfulness. Through this series of collages I tried to explore these items.

Children naturally express their emotions, thoughts, and desires through play. Playing helps them understand their environment and the world in a way that makes sense to them.

## TUNNEL SERIES

It is very interesting to see “how death’s hidden presence shapes our cities, hospitals, cemeteries, crematoria, and so on” — “making visible the invisible mechanics of death and dying” — makes us wonder: “What might a good death experience mean today? how can we design differently for the dying, as well as those caring for them?”<sup>1</sup>

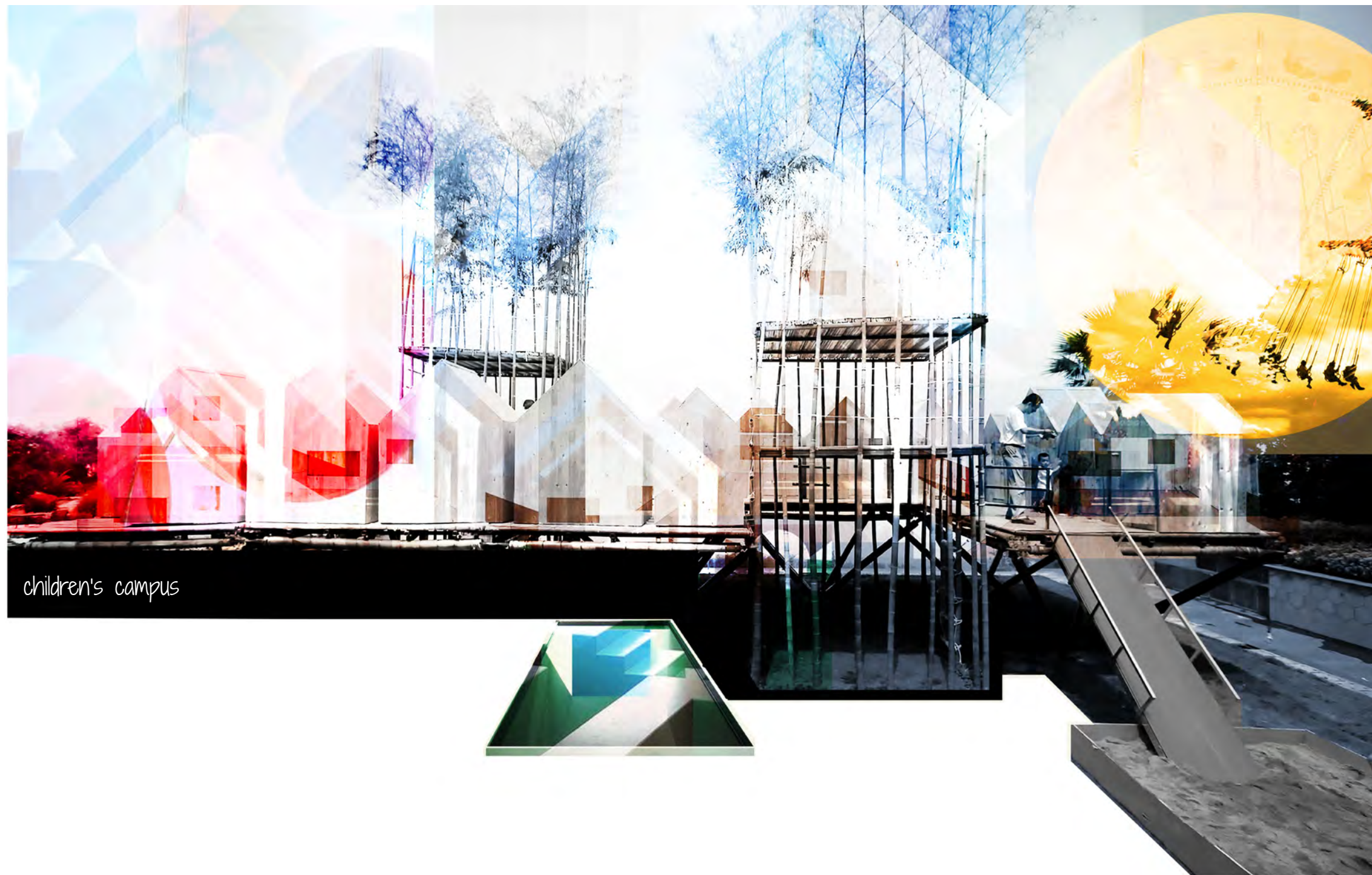


1. TED Talk by Alison Killing. Posted by: Karen Eng at <http://blog.ted.com>



“Children are small—it is their most obvious difference to adults. It is how we identify them and how they identify themselves. Their smallness can make them vulnerable and insecure, so they are naturally drawn to small cubbies and small-scaled areas where they can feel competent to cope with new challenges. Providing small microcosms within the whole gives children a sense of safety, control and belonging. Small-scale furniture and equipment, cubbies and hidey holes, low-level small windows that only children can use, breaking up a larger volume into smaller components and contrasting the big picture against the small all help children to come to terms with the world around them.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Scott. 2010. 59.



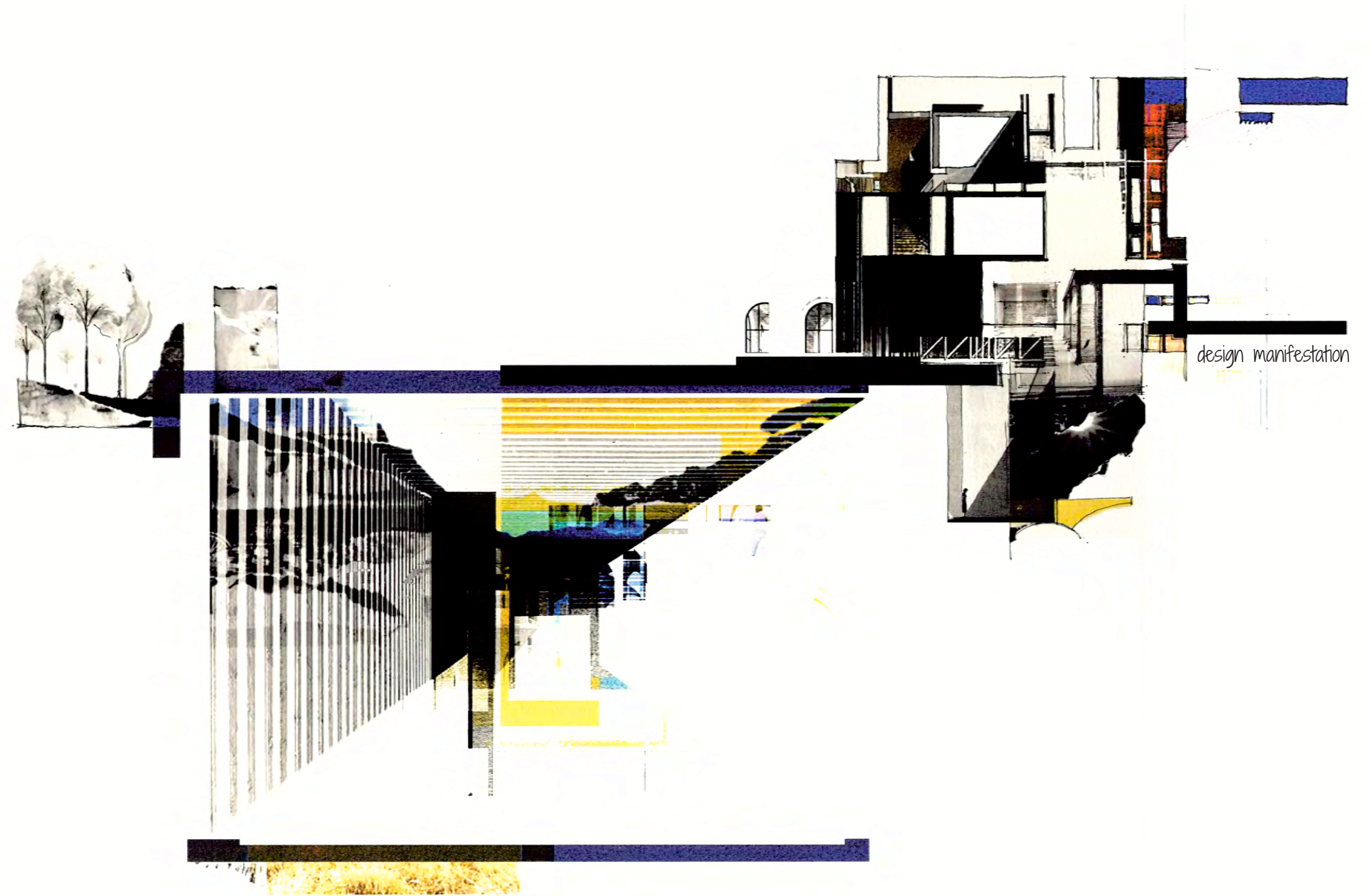
character

DUALITY SERIES



I teared random pages of magazines and newspapers. I tried to find the balance in my page. I made rules, and I broke them (just how a child's mind might work).

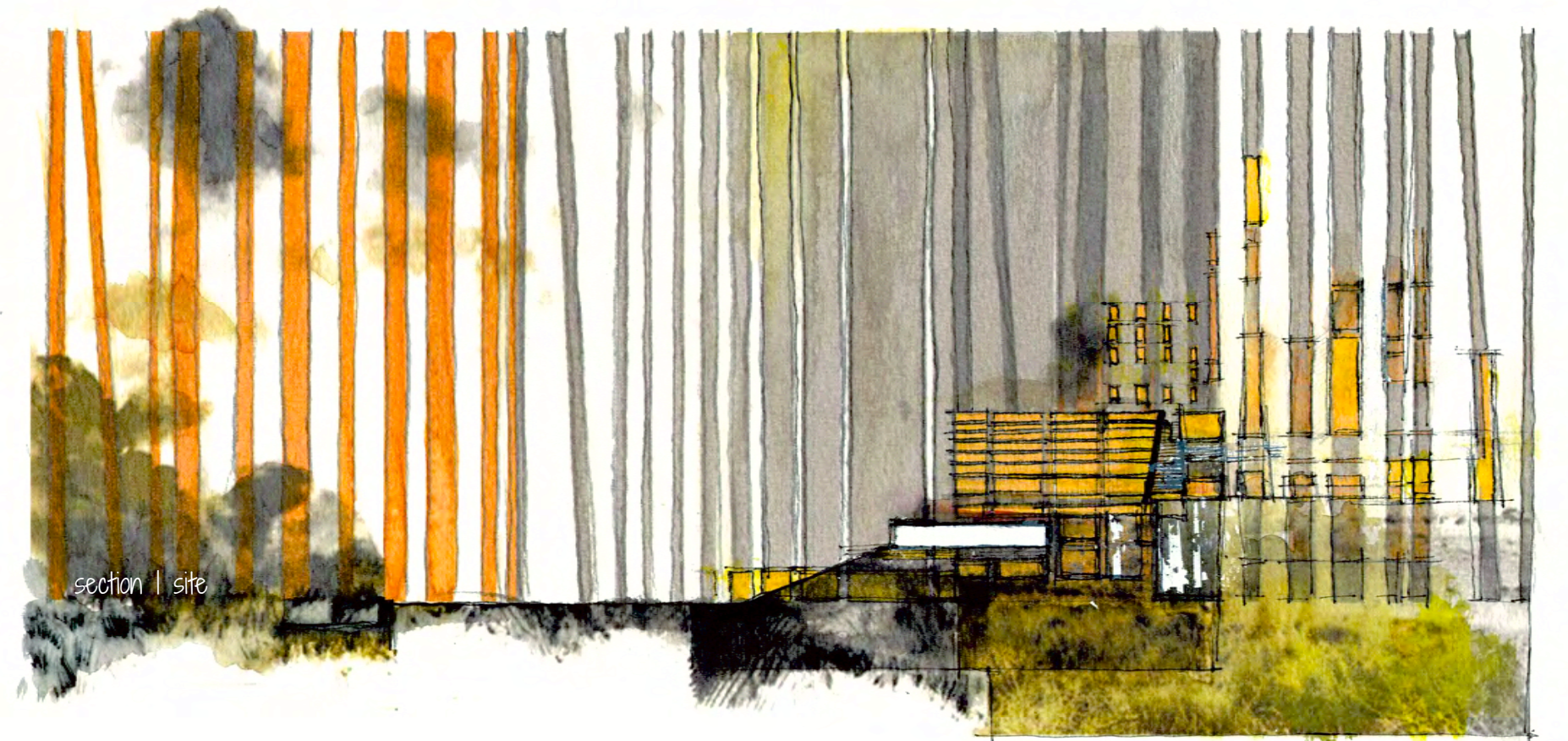
The drawing started off as a section through an imaginary site. The section shows how two worlds, two sides, and two realities come together. On one side is the child's world, SMALLER but somehow BIGGER. There are bigger details in the child's side of the drawing. The collage emphasis on duality of these two worlds, the day and night, the life and death, and the fantasy and realty.



DESIGN ABSTRACTIONS

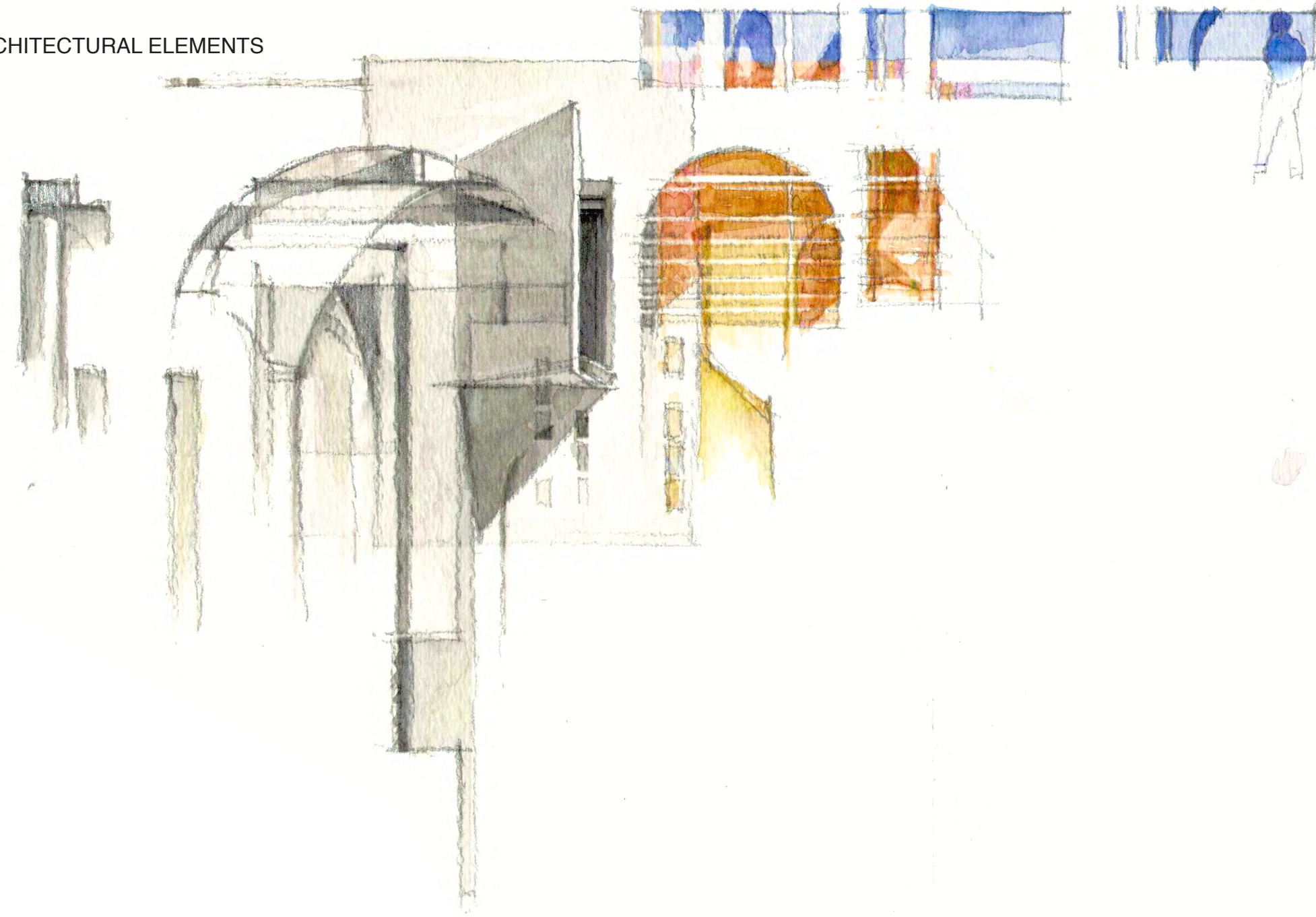


inside - outside relation / connection



section | site

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS



design goals:

- create positive distraction
- design architectural elements that reinforce the journey
- prolong the moments
- support rituals
- think about entering / exiting

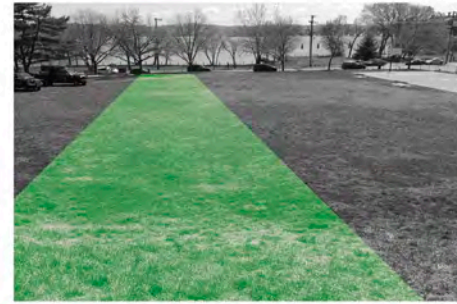
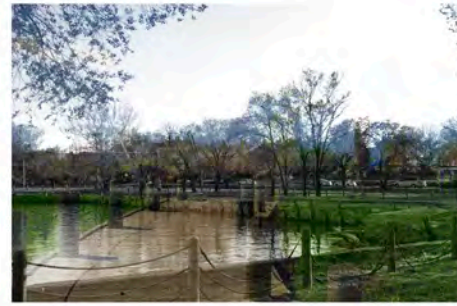


## connection

"Nature provides a constantly changing and detailed environment full of enrichment to stimulate children's minds.  
There is a wealth of spontaneous possibilities to explore." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Scott. 2010. 20.



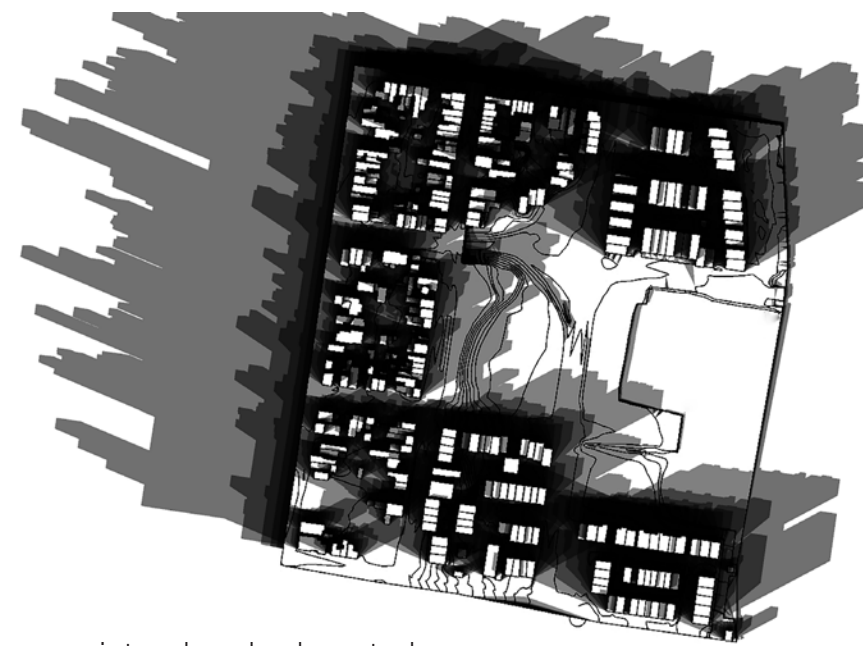
## site

The site for this project was very much inspired by all the drawings and collages that I did during the research phase.

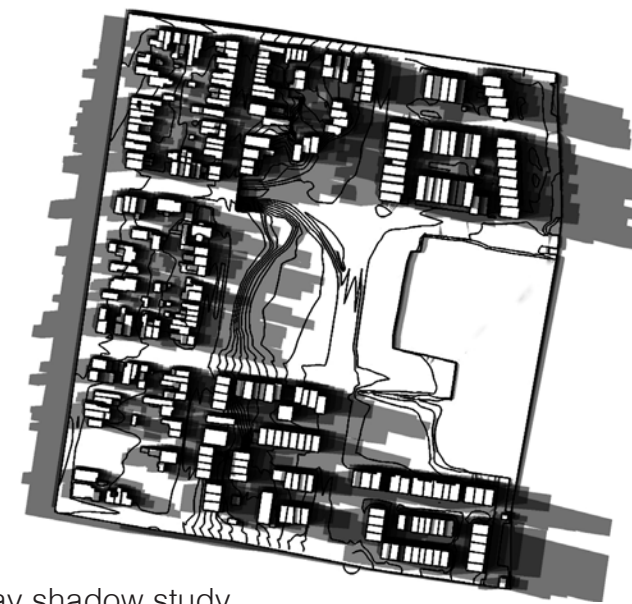
The site is part of “Wind Mill Hill” park located in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia.

Important features of the site are:

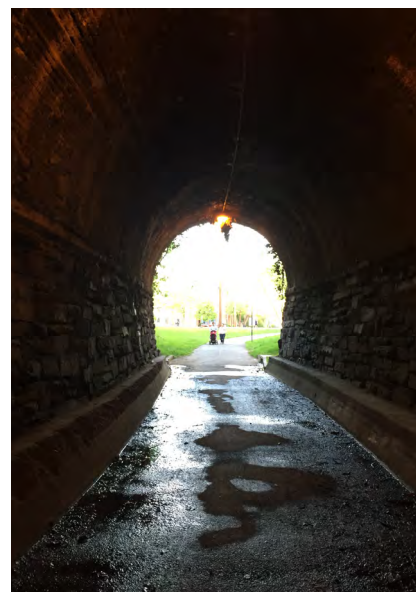
- The Nature | Topography
- Urban Fabric | Character
- Views to the water | Overlook
- The tunnel | Sense of adventure

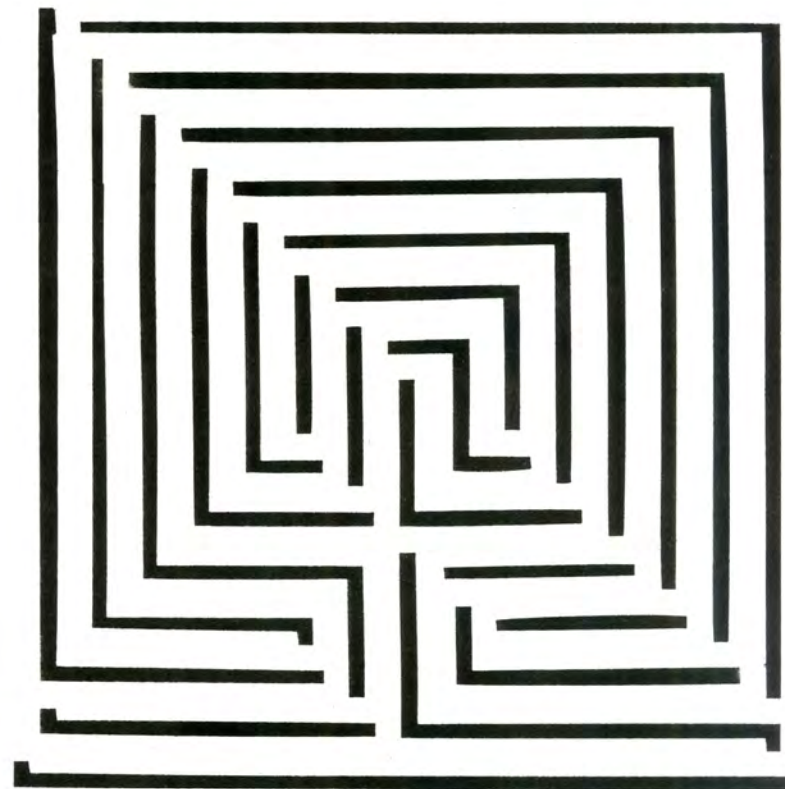


winter day shadow study

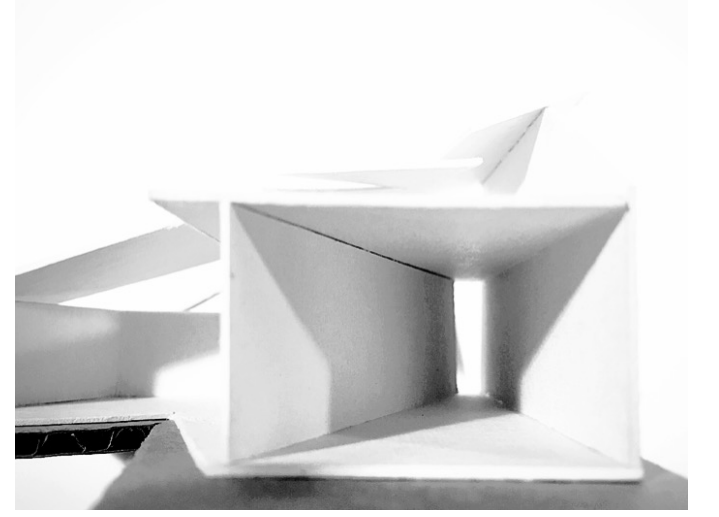
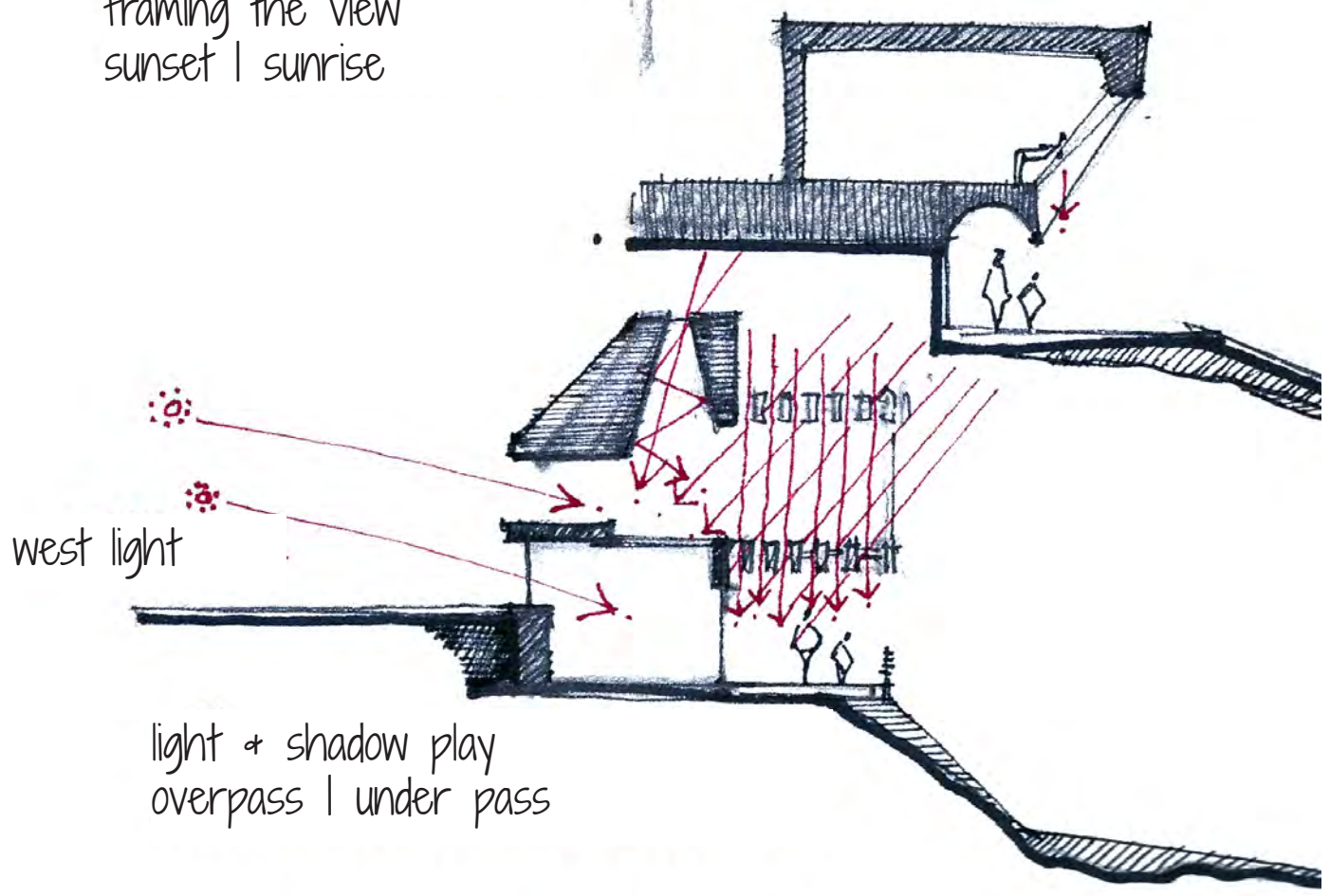
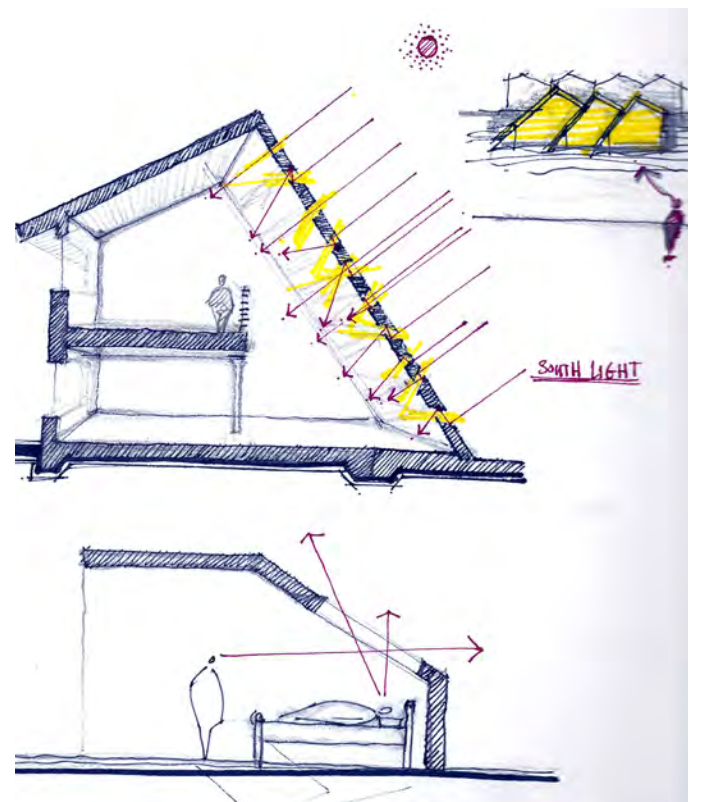
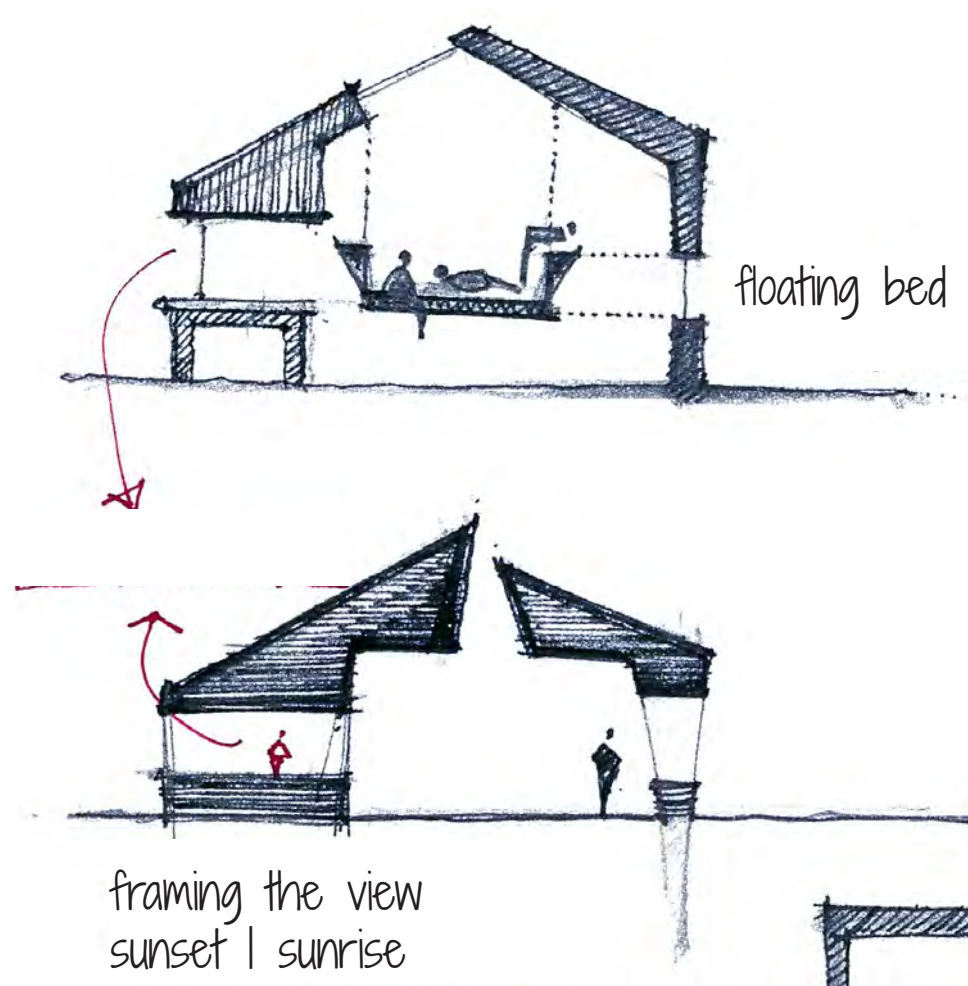
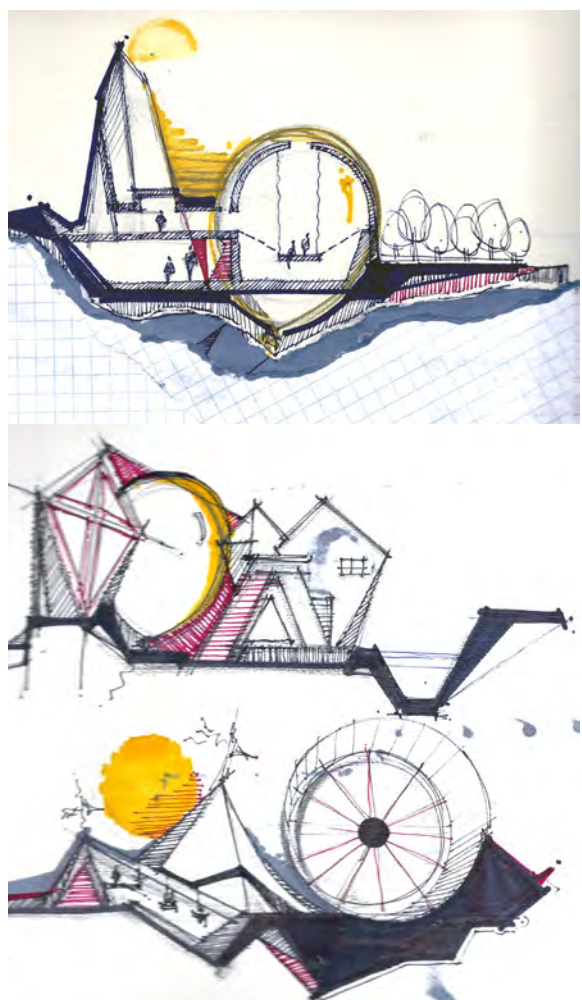
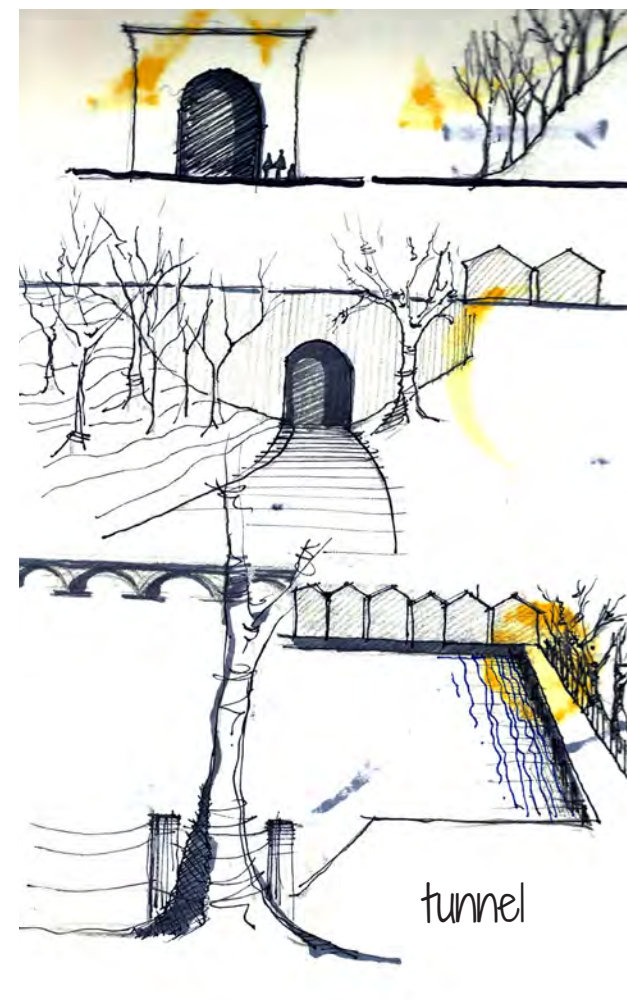
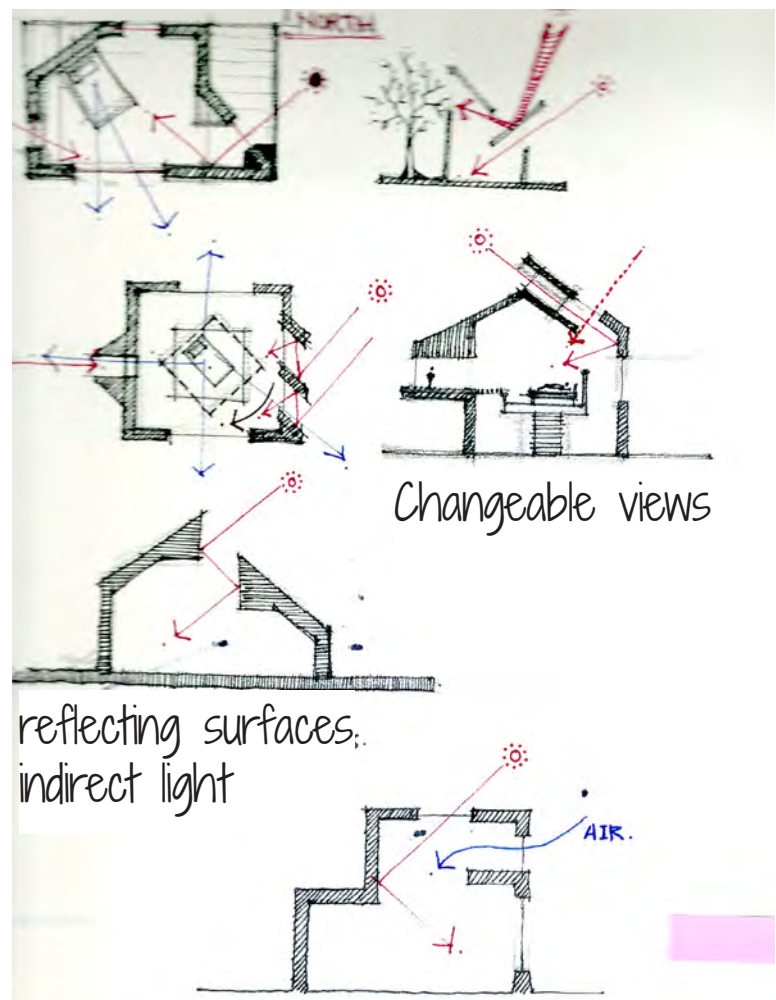
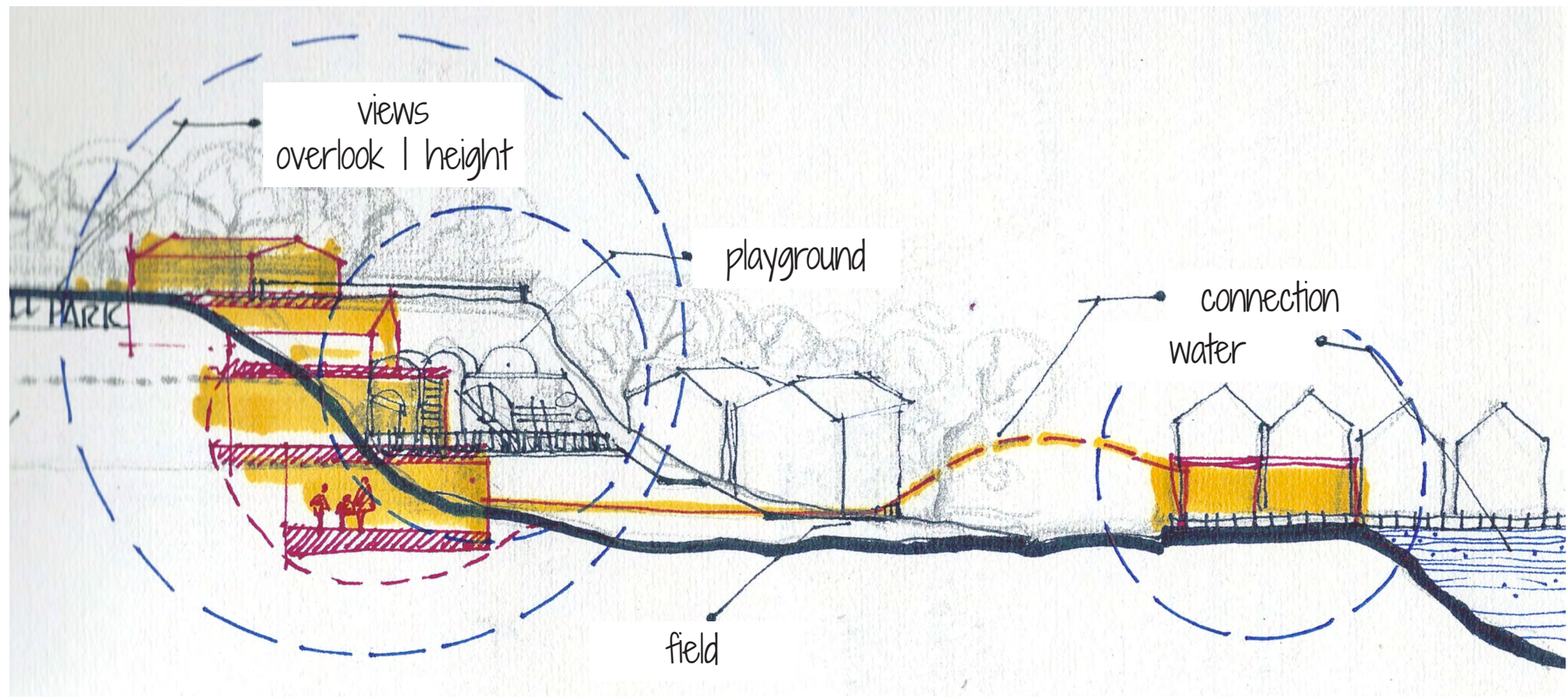


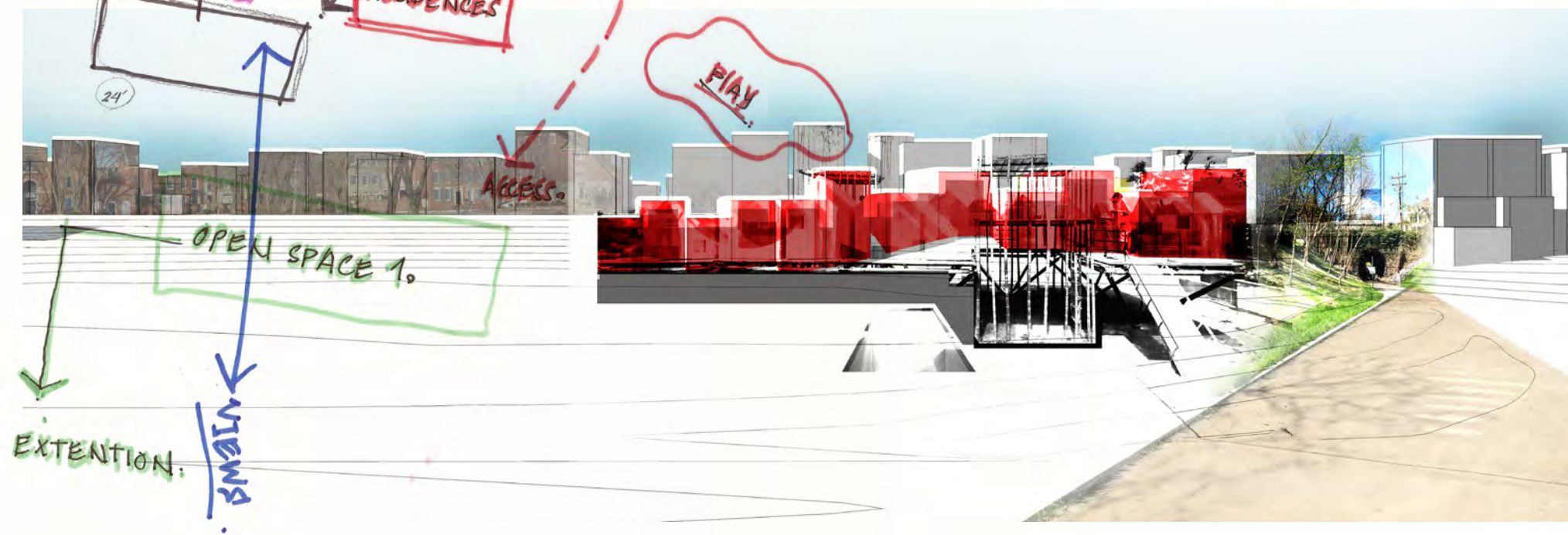
summer day shadow study





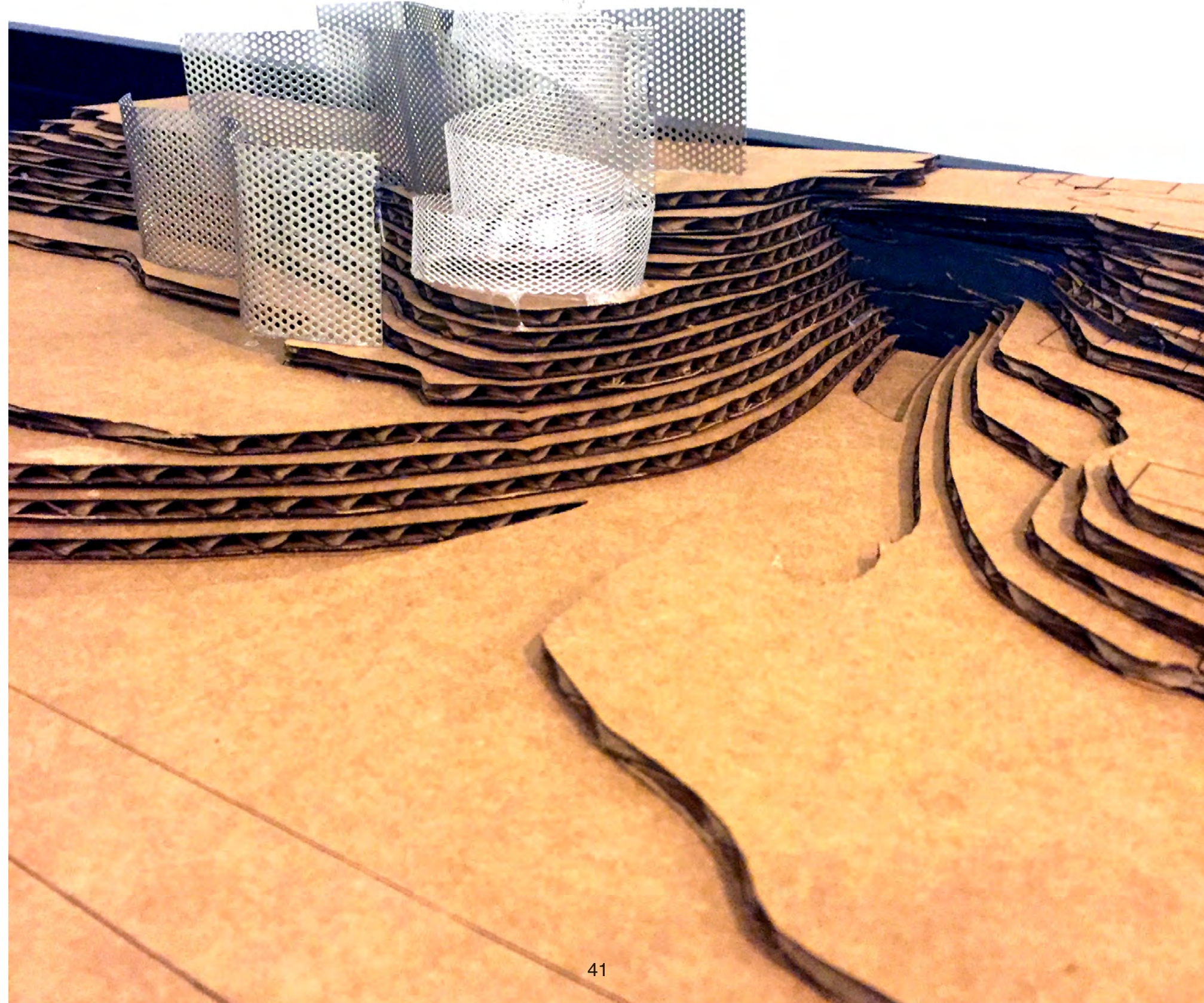
explorations





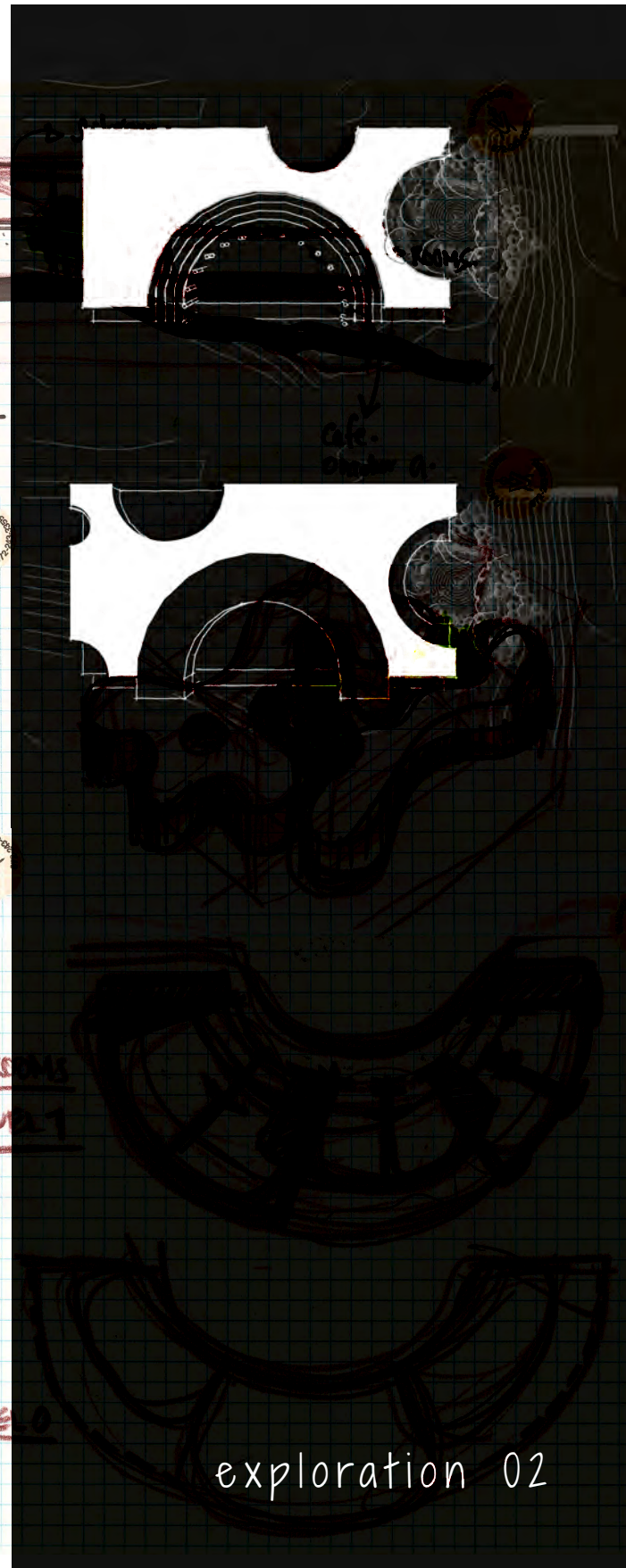
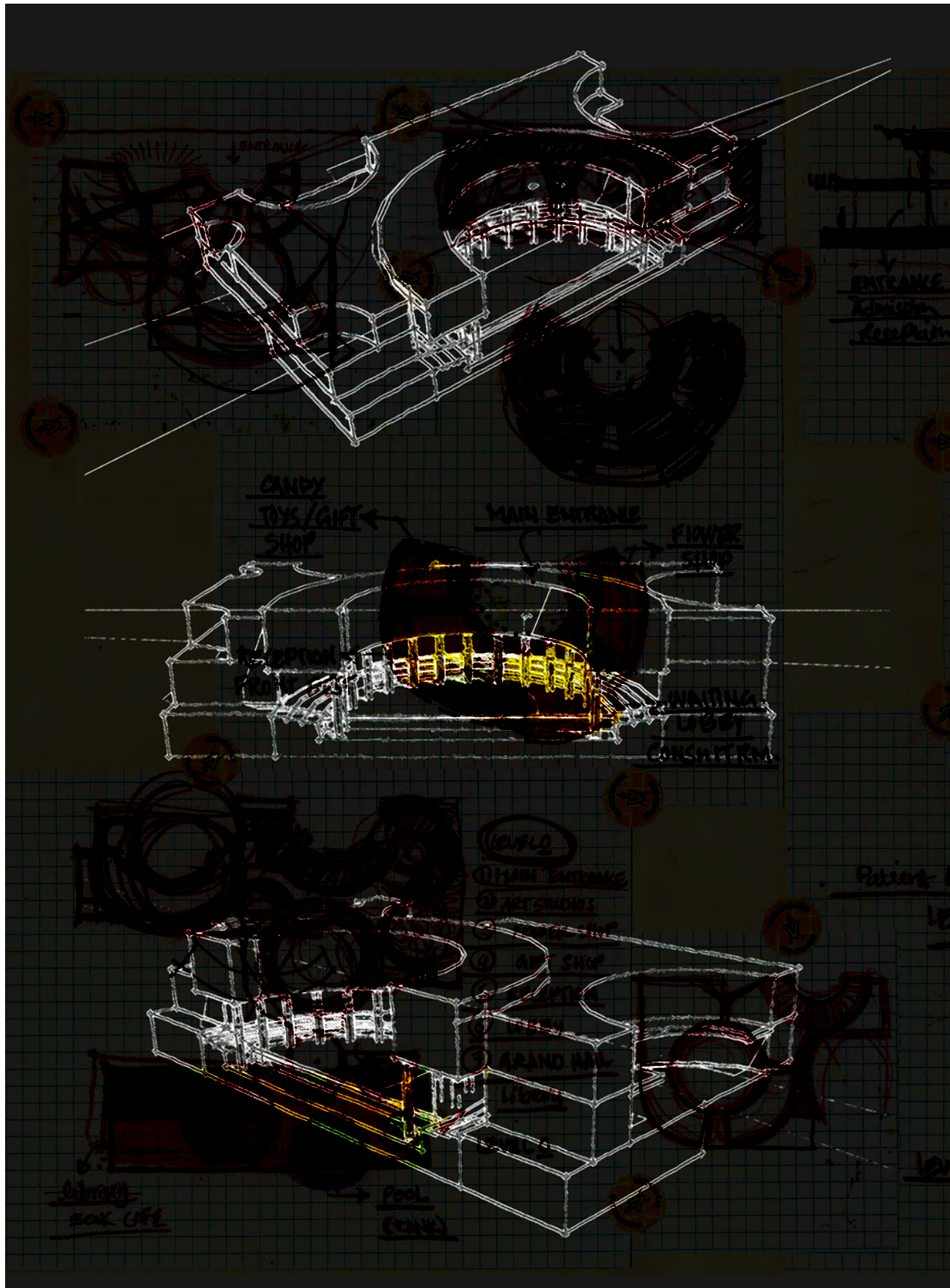
exploration 01  
campus



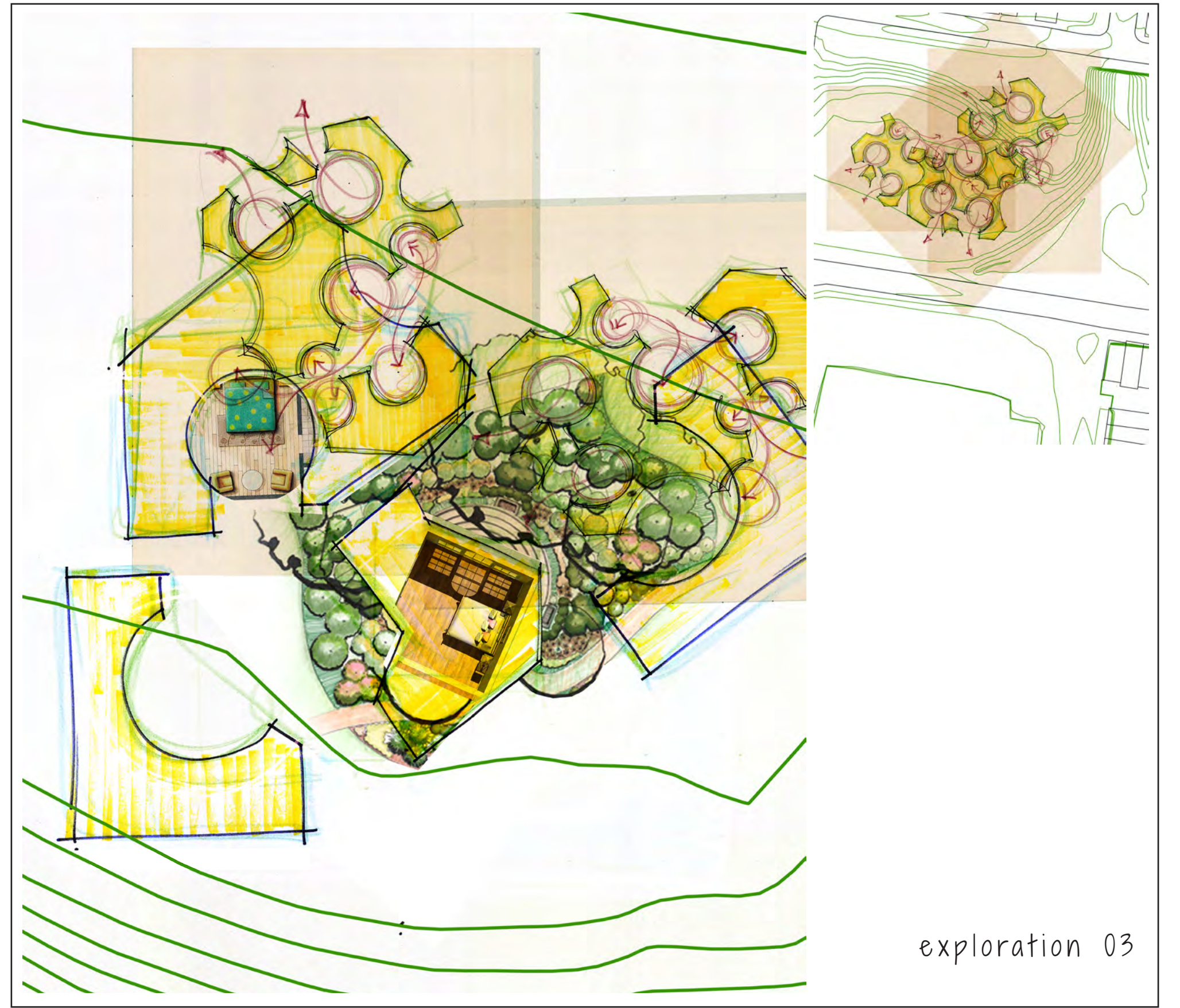


#### IMPORTANT STEPS:

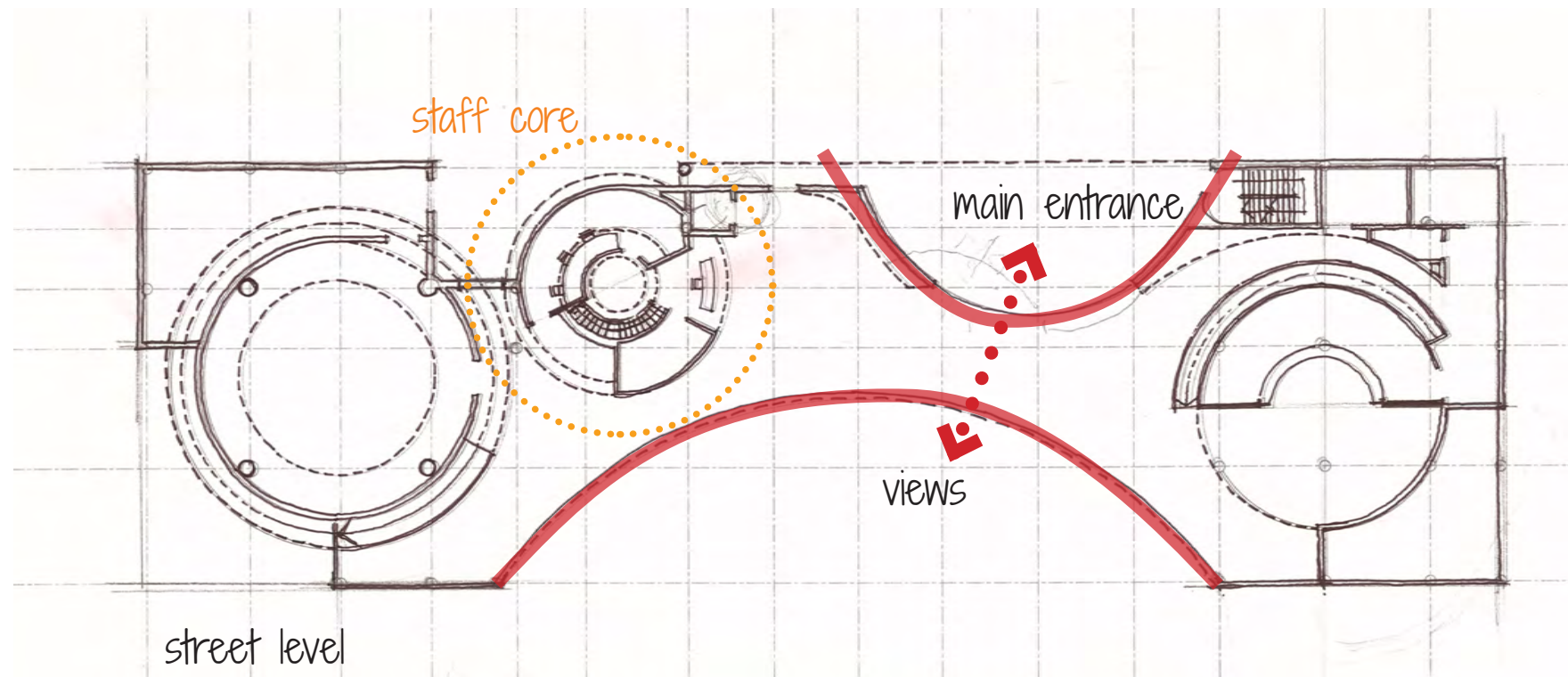
- developing the program.
- locating the building on the site.
- thinking about main entrance.
- thinking about exiting rituals.
- being considerate of views and natural light.



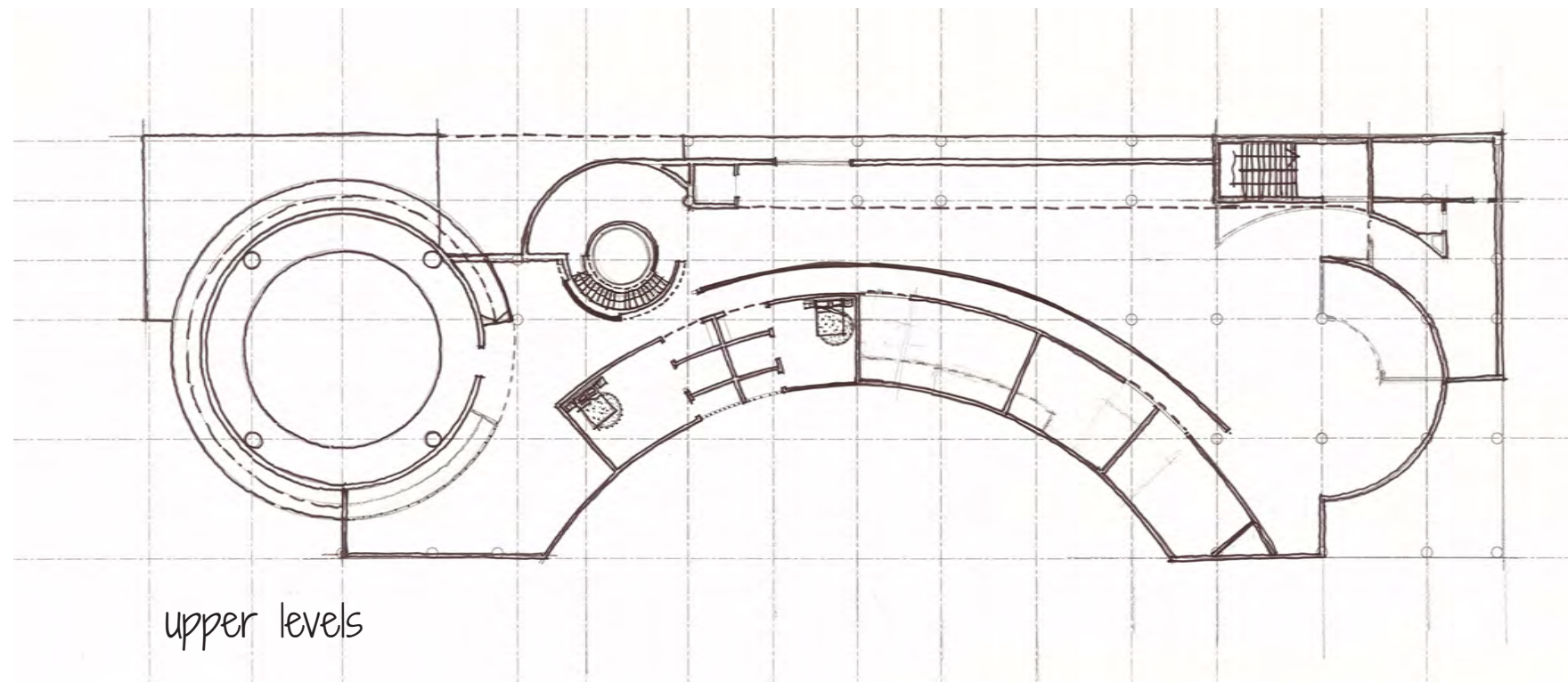
exploration 02



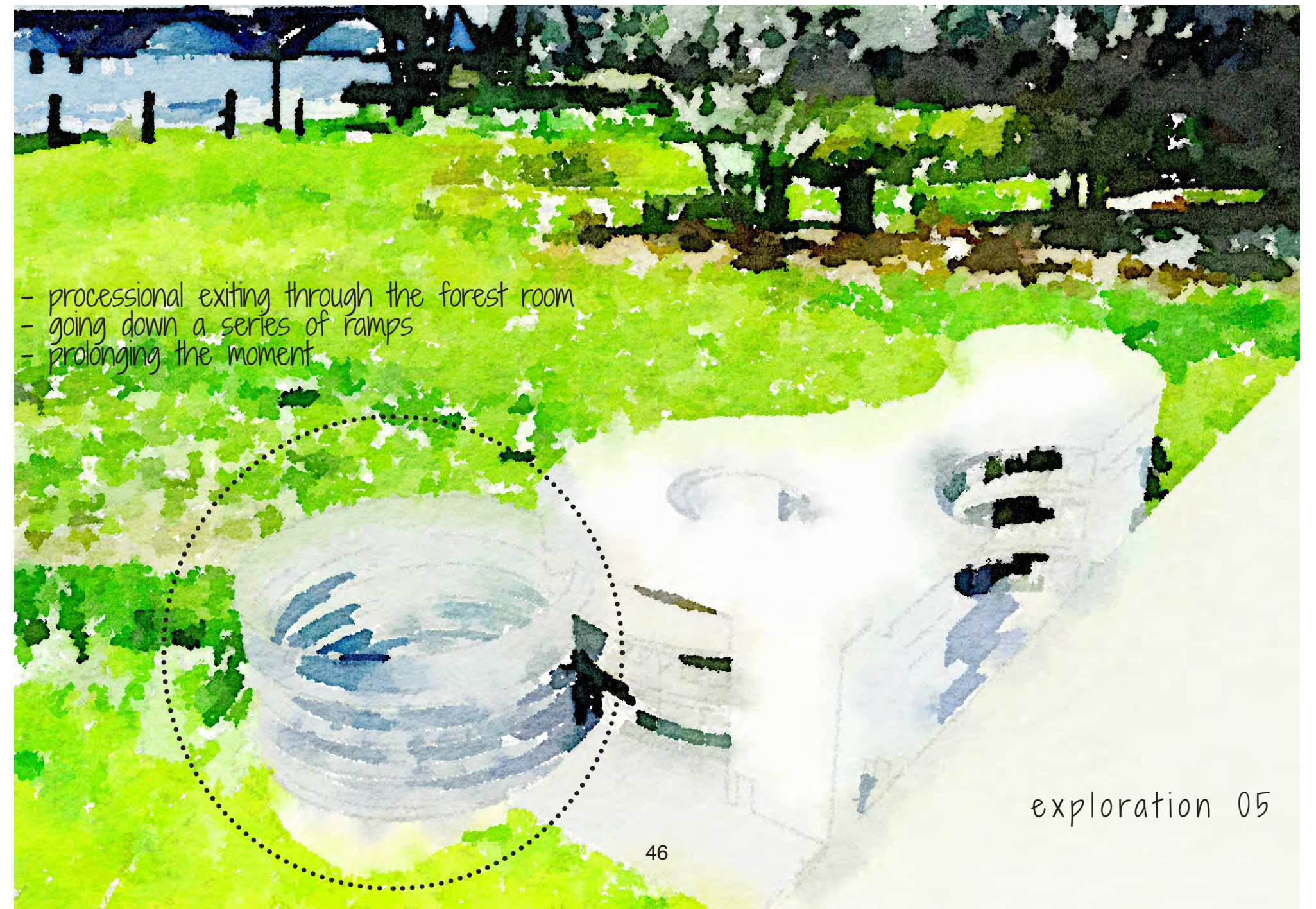
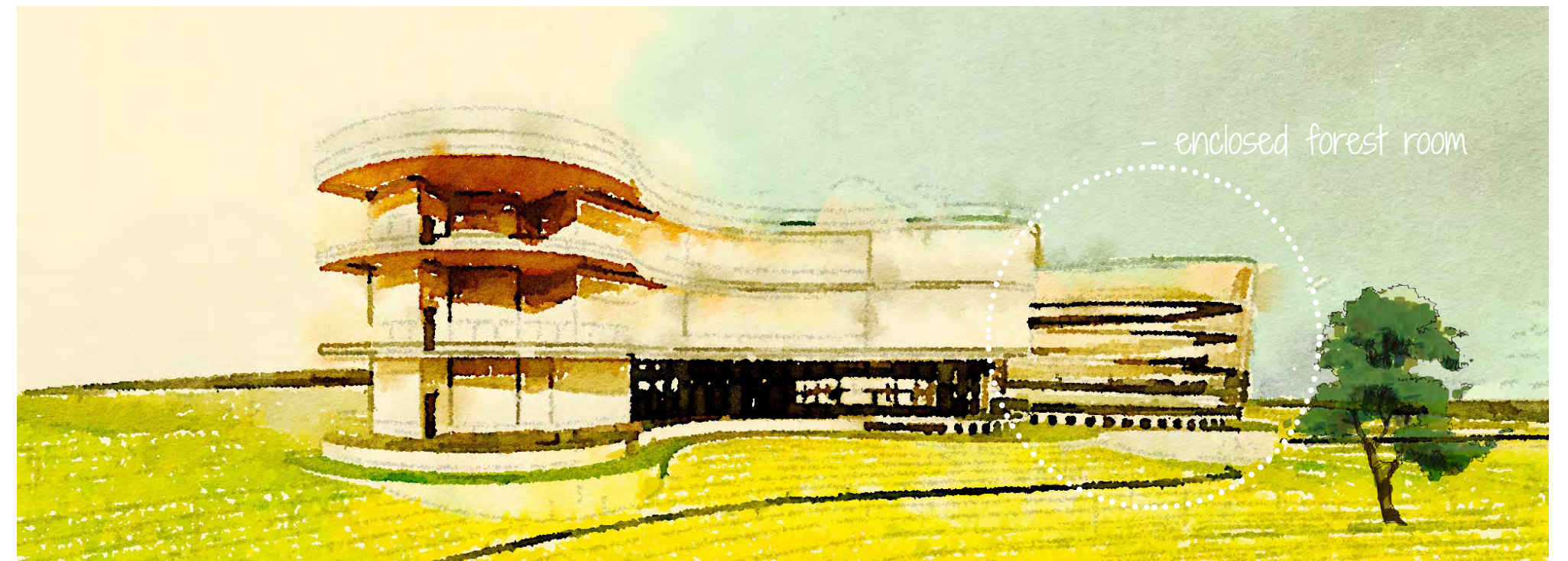
exploration 03



- bringing the edges close to each other,  
in order to provide views to the water as one enters the building

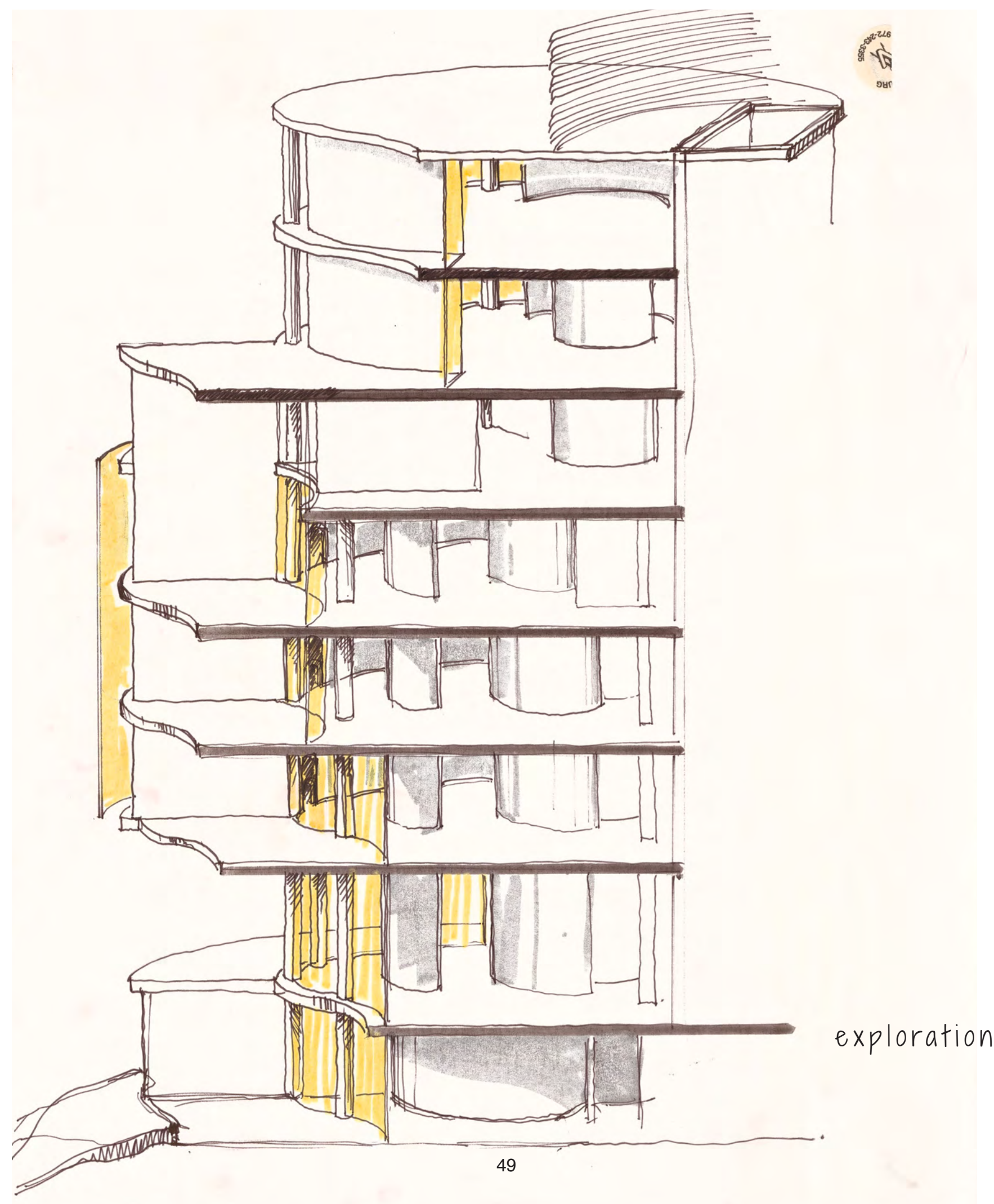
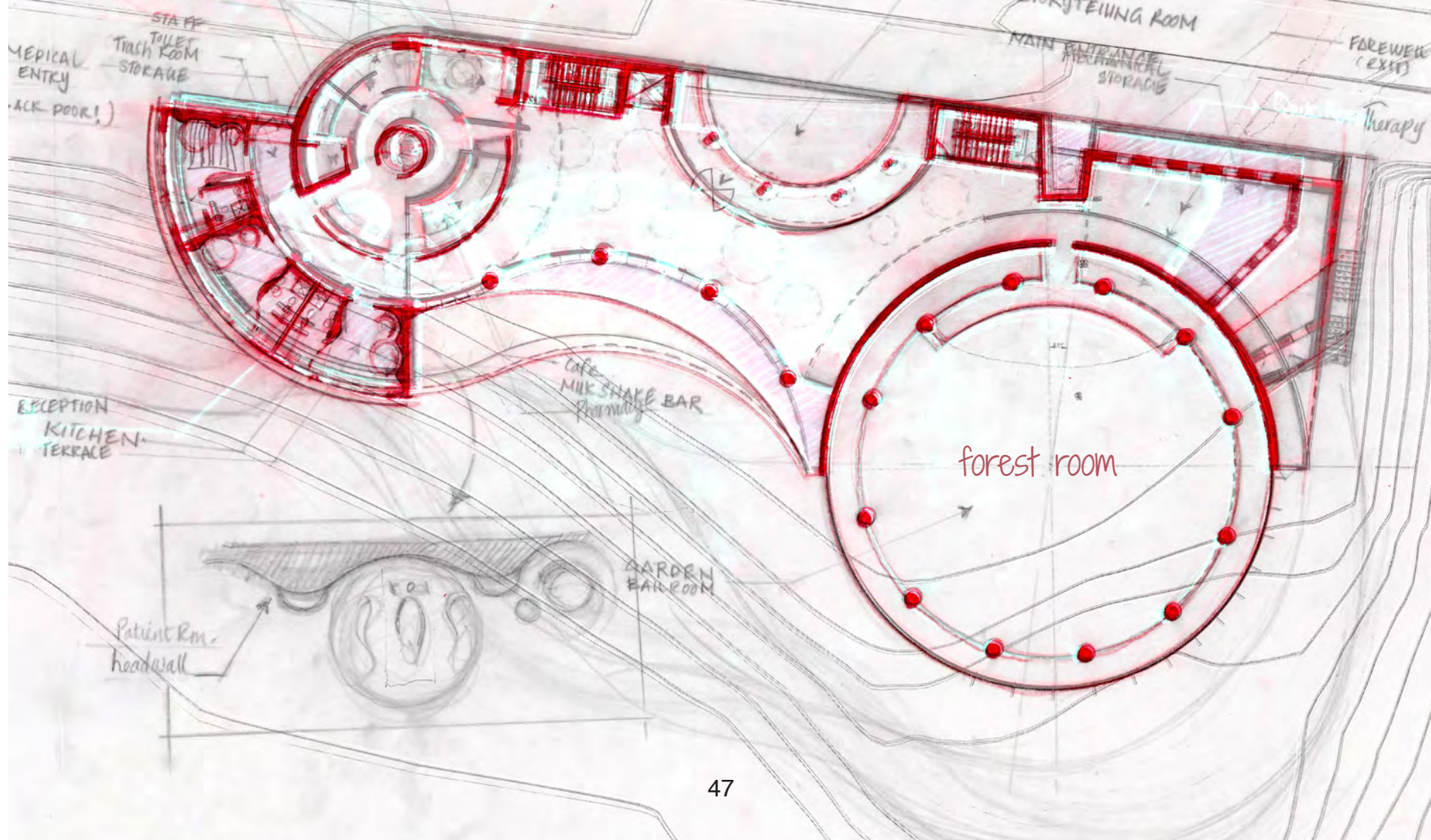
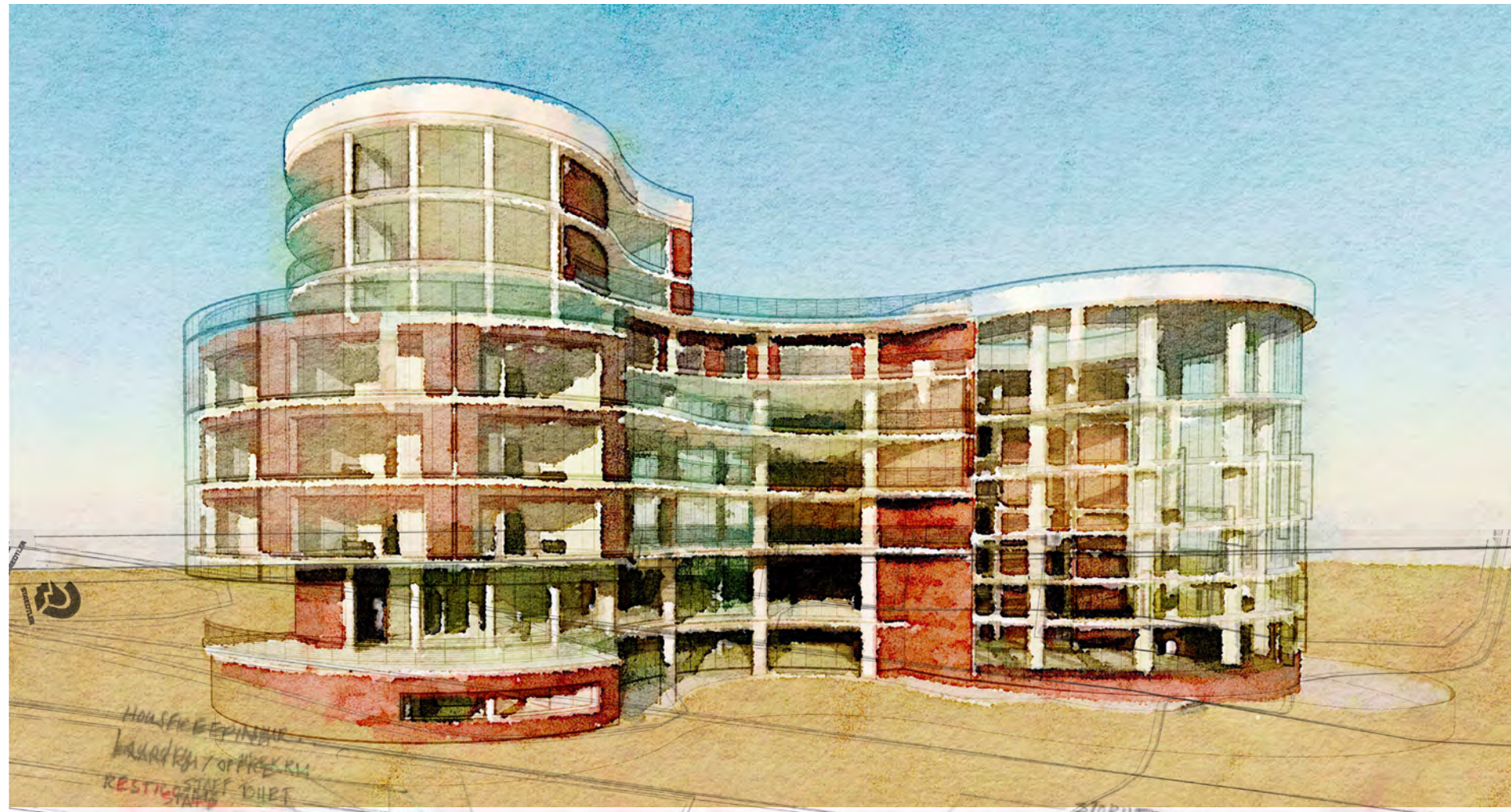


exploration 04

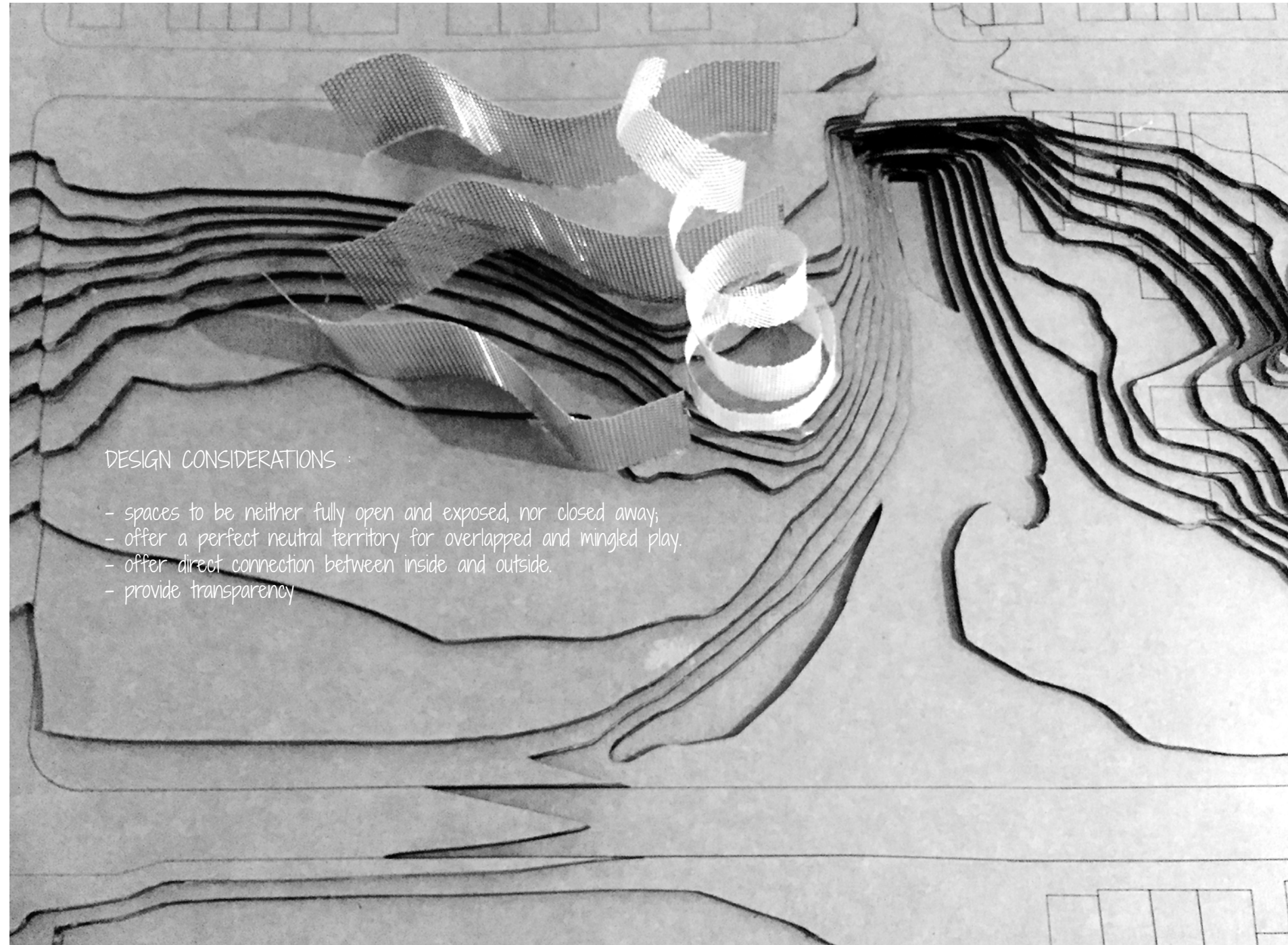


- processional exiting through the forest room
- going down a series of ramps
- prolonging the moment

exploration 05



exploration 06



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS :

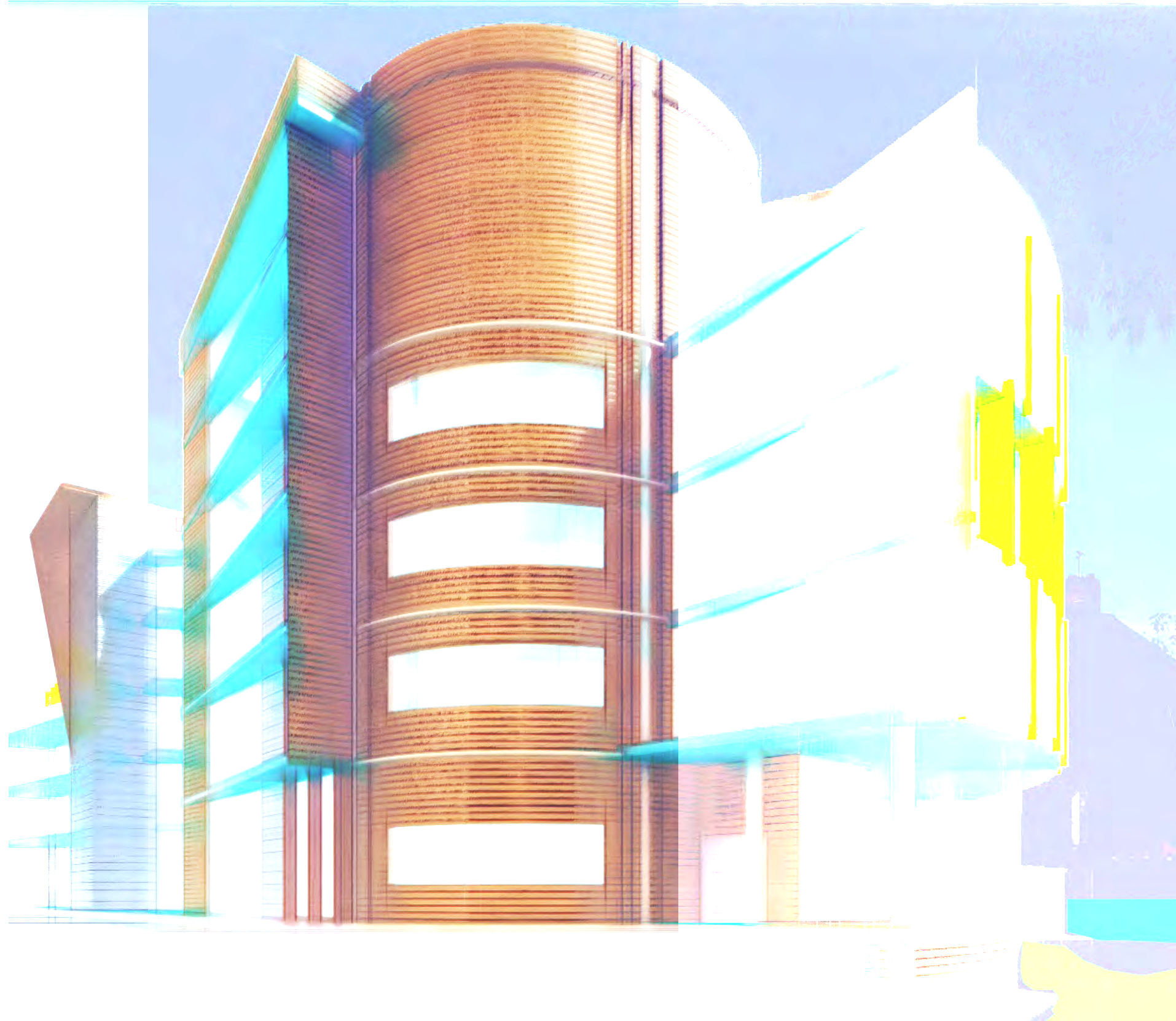
- spaces to be neither fully open and exposed, nor closed away,
- offer a perfect neutral territory for overlapped and mingled play,
- offer direct connection between inside and outside,
- provide transparency

## design

“Spatial extension, views out and beyond, and a visual sense of the collective, create a sense of inclusiveness rather than enclosure. To be able to see the sky and have a visual connection with the natural environment outside is fundamental to us all for both a sense of calmness and normalcy. Children in particular—not yet trained to ignore their instincts—yearn for that outside connection”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Scott. 2010. 40.



PLACES:

- patient rooms
- therapy rooms (music, play, ..) and/or a library
- meditation space for the families
- work place for medical staff

- a place where memory resides (mostly dealing with after death) | continuation of memories

- housekeeping support areas



exterior perspectives

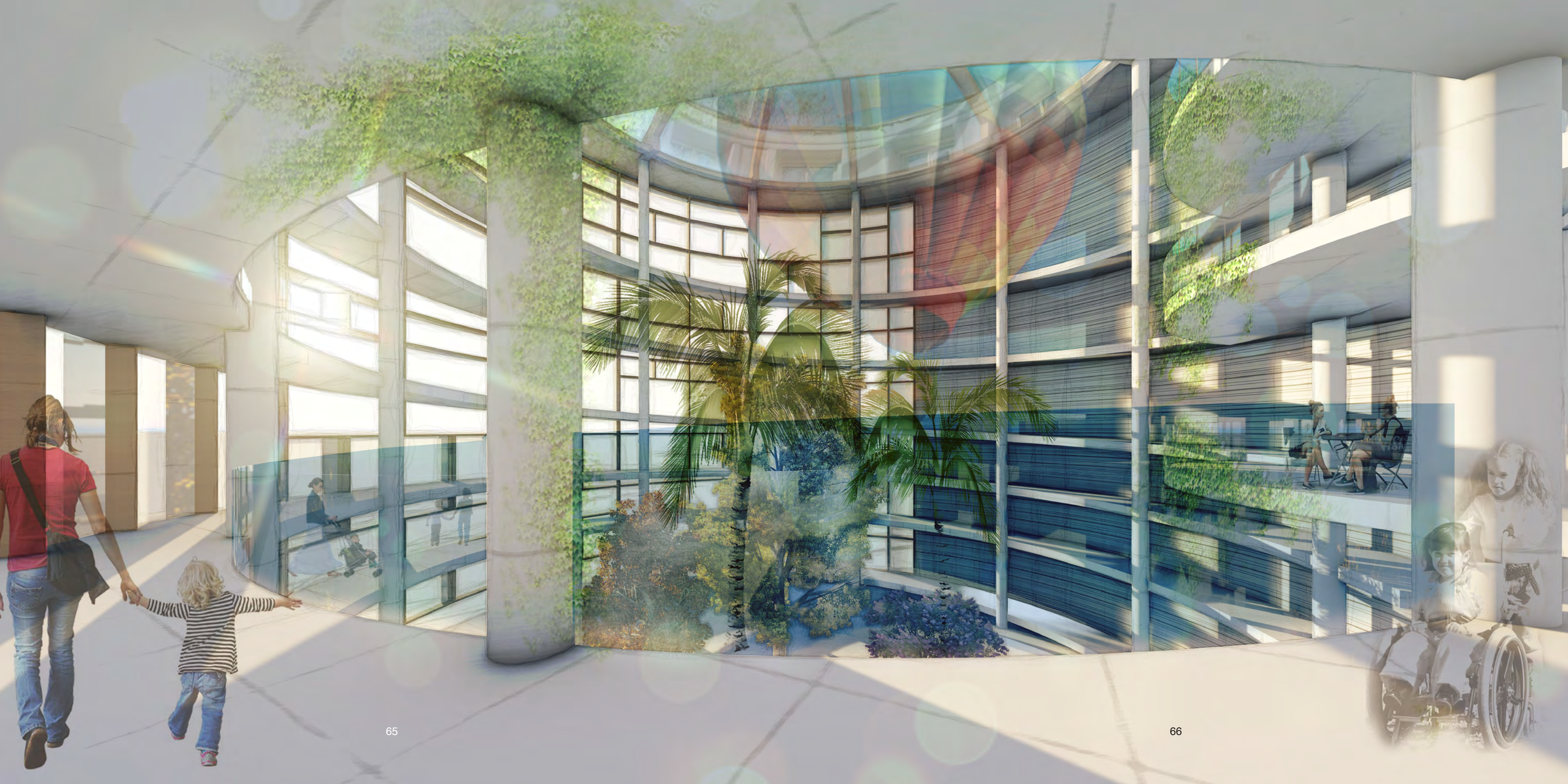


interior views











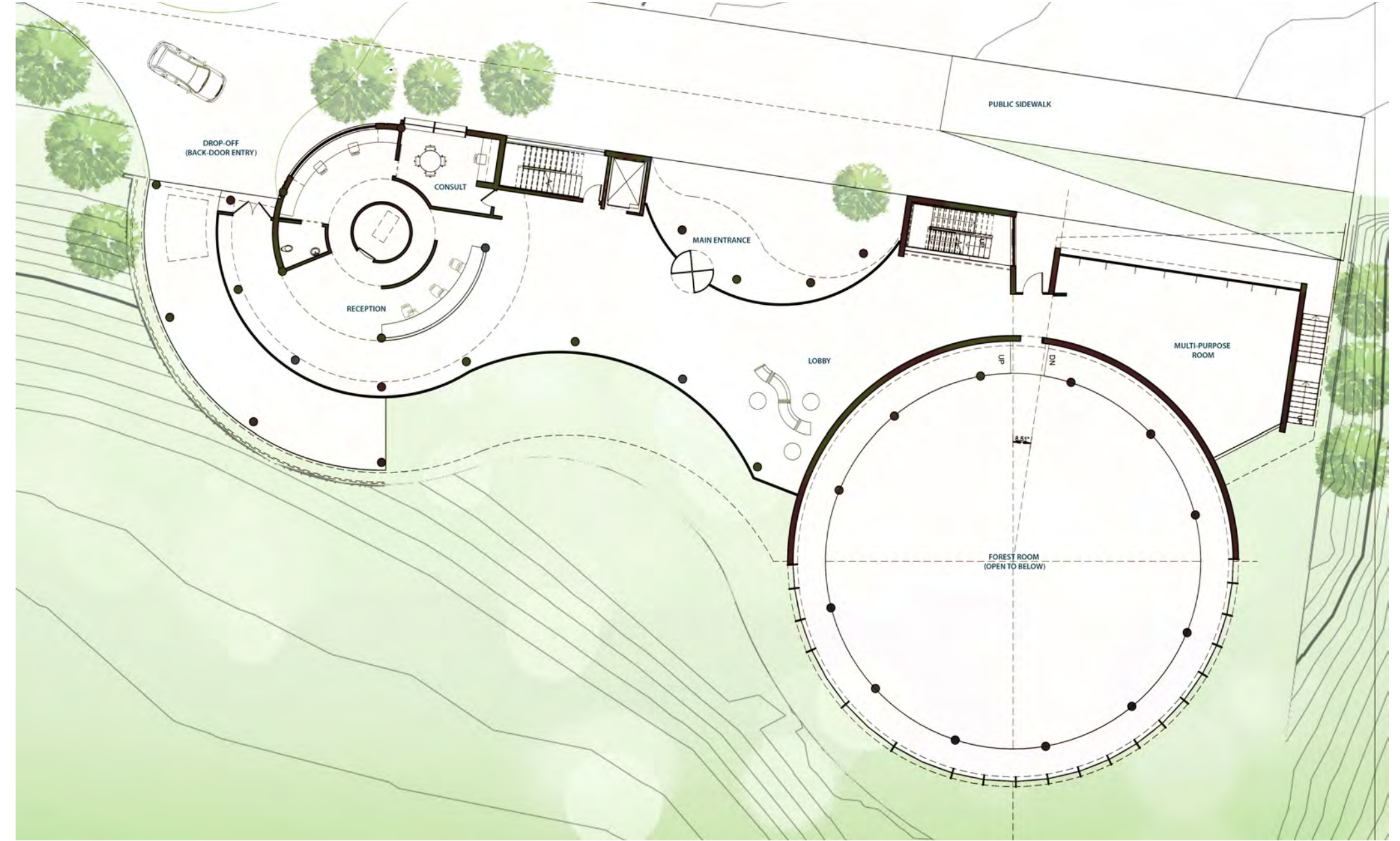
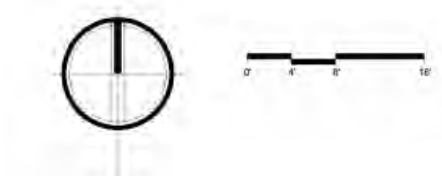
S LEE STREET

GIBBON STREET

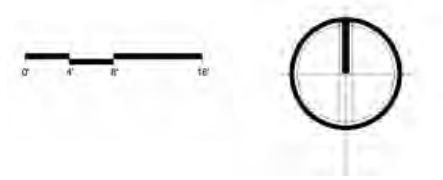


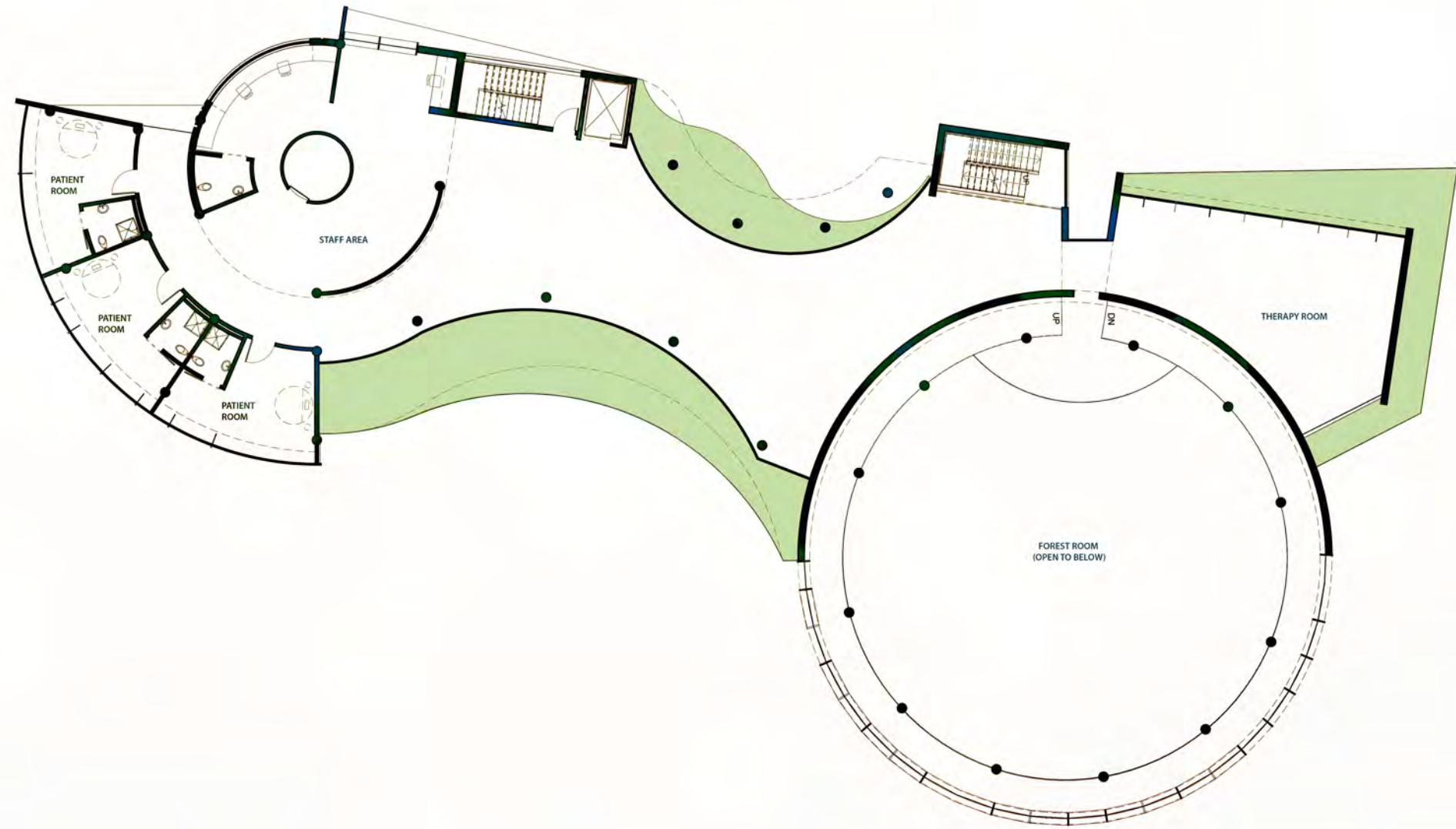


PARK LEVEL

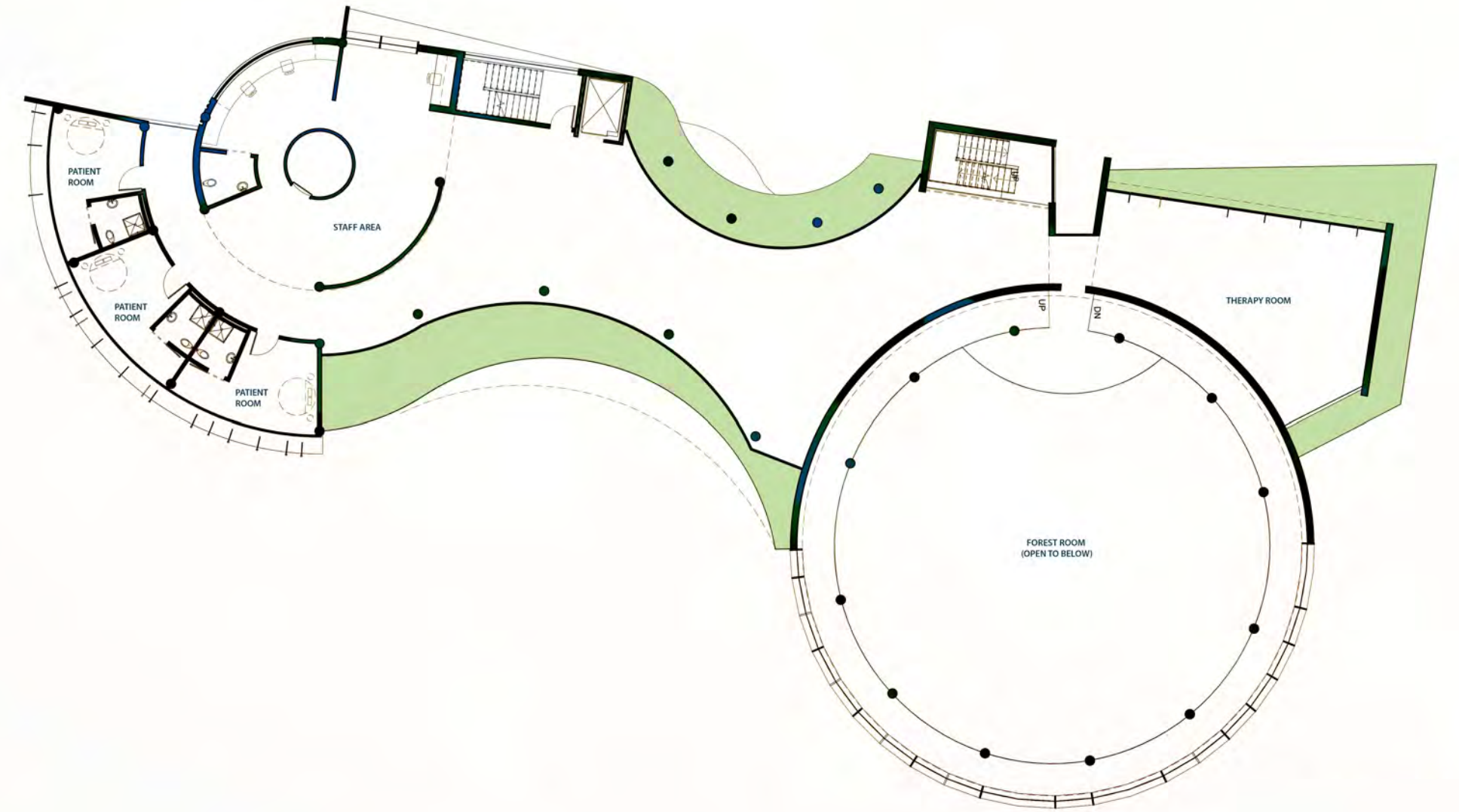


STREET LEVEL

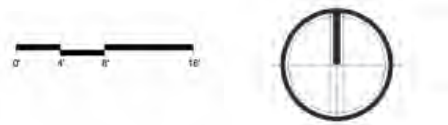


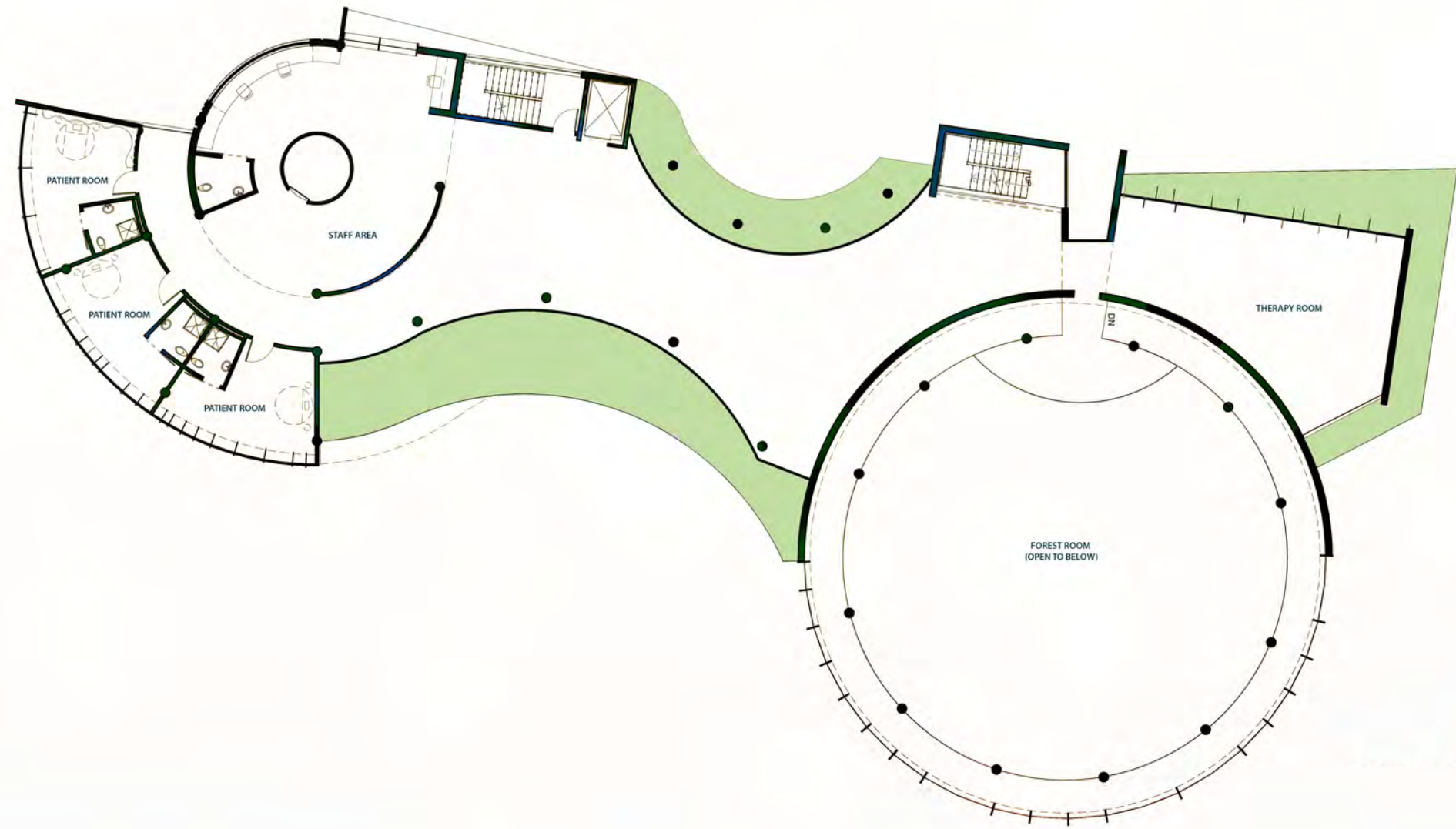


LEVEL 2

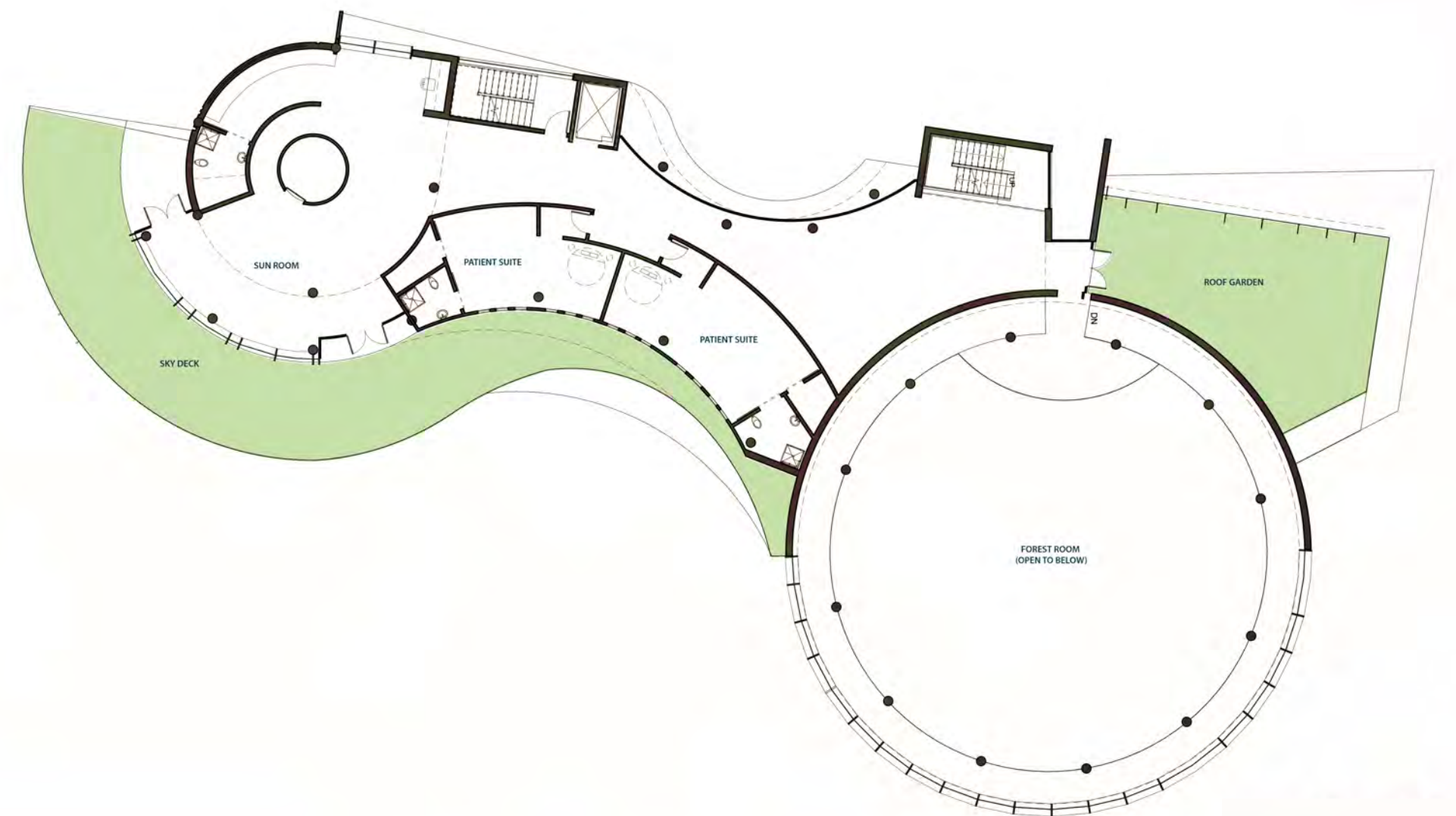
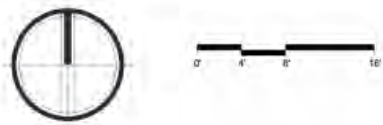


LEVEL 3

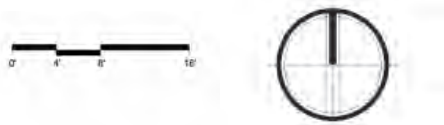


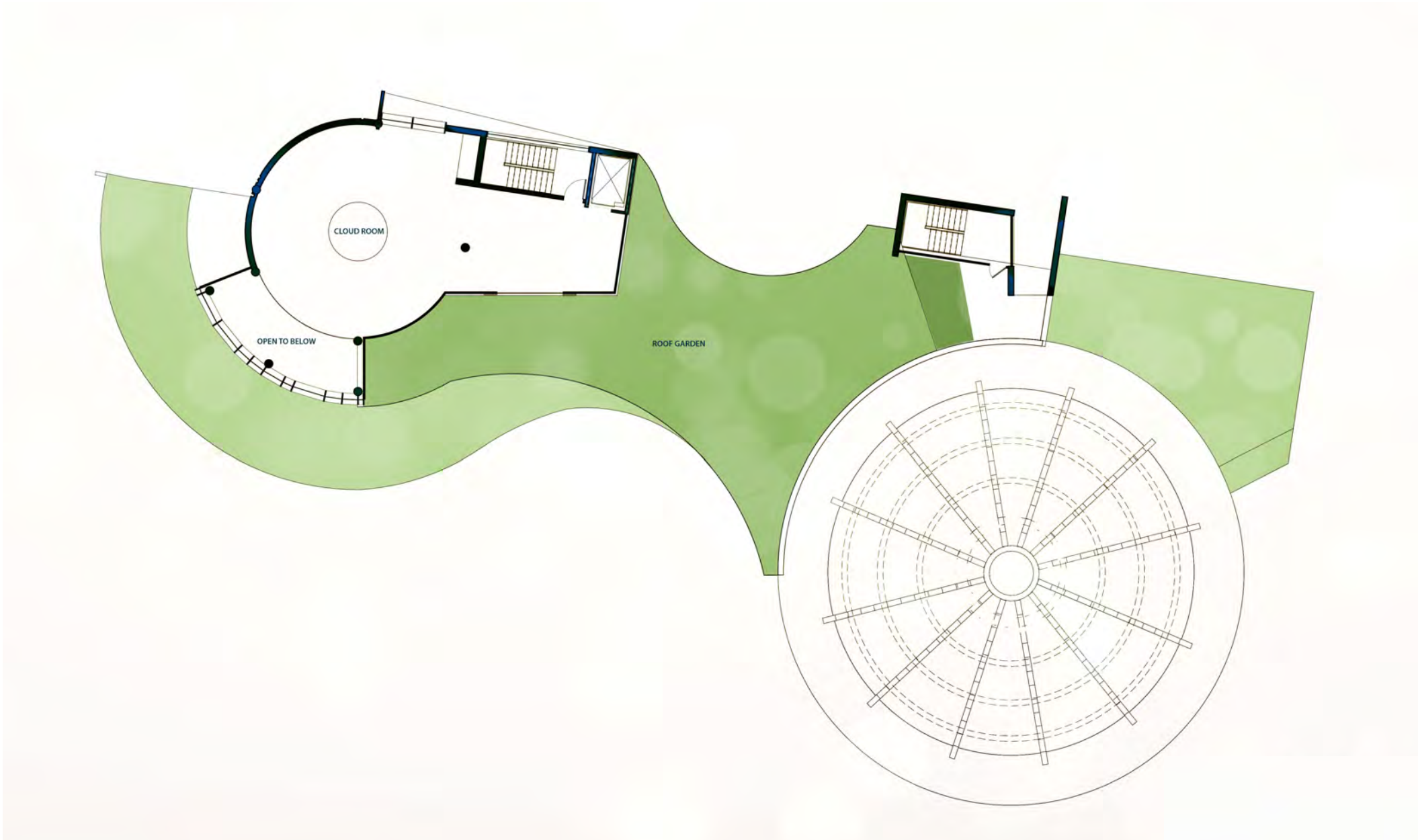


LEVEL 4

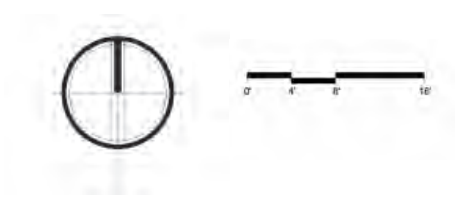


SUN DECK LEVEL 5





ROOFTOP LEVEL 6

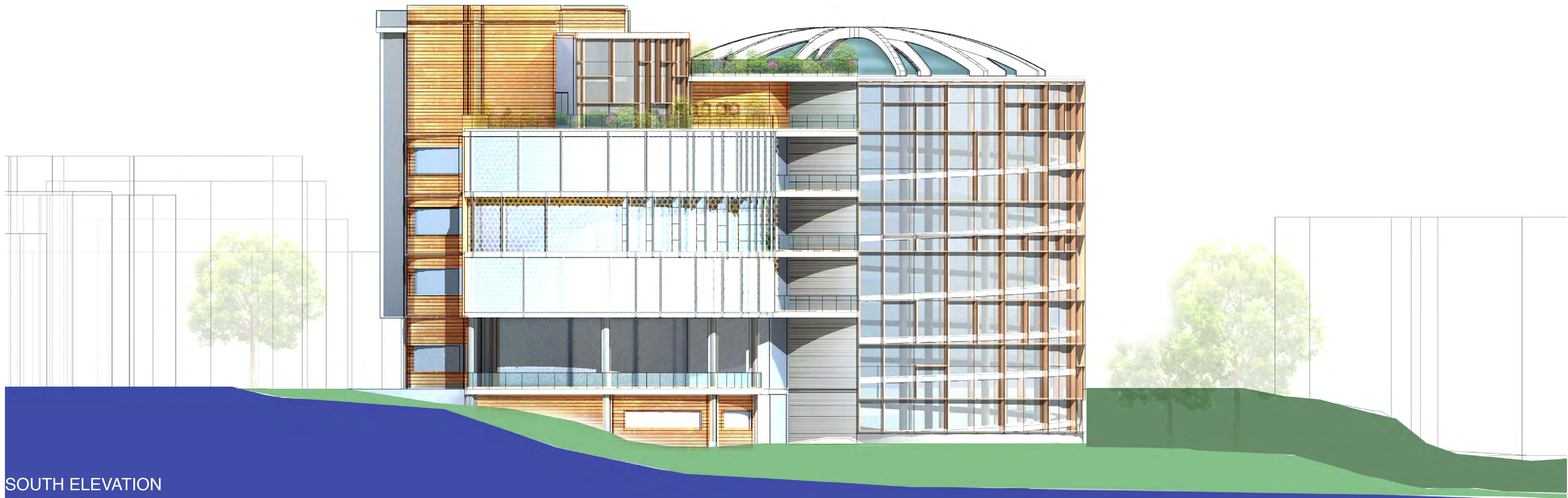


# sections & elevations





NORTH-SOUTH SECTION



SOUTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

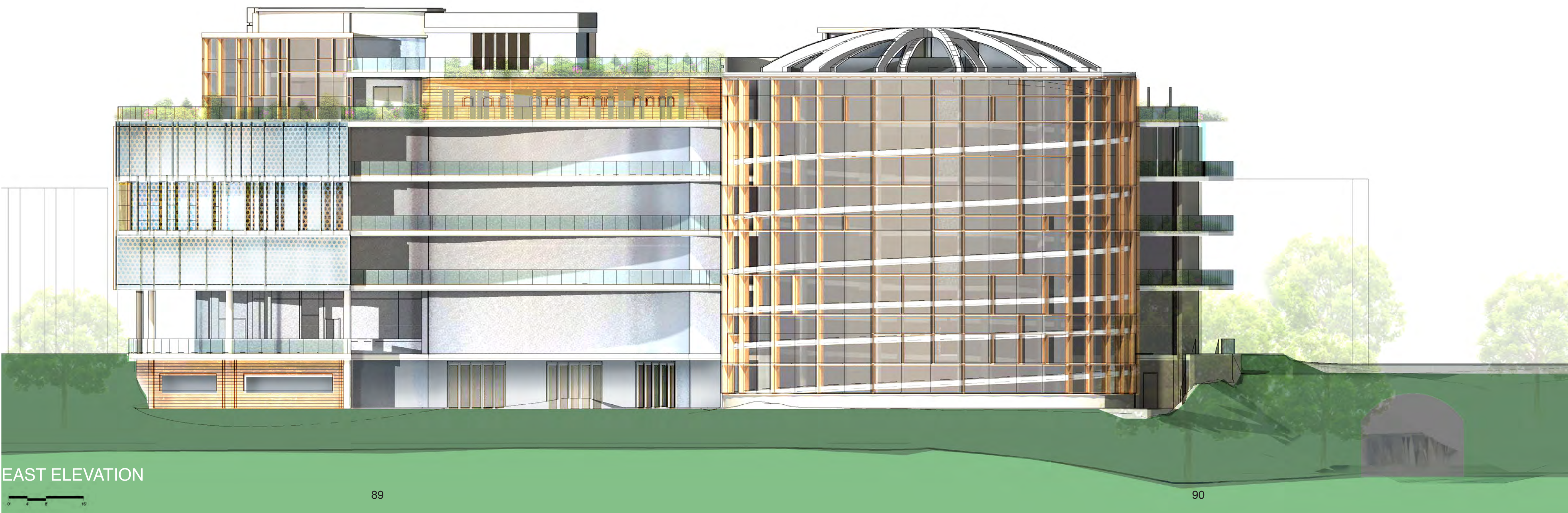




NORTH ELEVATION

87

88



EAST ELEVATION



89

90



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