

# **Ruin and Ruination**

A dialogue with the ghosts of the city

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### ABSTRACT

There are contradictory thoughts associated with ruins. Mainly when we hear the word ruin, it reminds us of glorious ancient structures that evoked an aesthetic pleasure and inspired artists and philosophers throughout the history. But it also has a negative feeling, it means to destroy to turn into decay. The former is the way that we feel about ancient ruins but our way of thinking about the ruins of modern times is different.

There are different reasons for this duality and this thesis firstly attempts to explore the reasons behind this ambivalent attitude. Secondly to answer why ruins of our own time are considered invaluable, why they deserve our attention, how their qualities can offer different ways of remembrance and challenge the common perception of history and how their existence can arouse the topic of otherness in the urban context and provide a physical space for alternative cultural activities.

The design project focuses on an early twentieth century ruin in Baltimore, Maryland. The former theater building had a relatively short period of splendor followed by several alterations and decades of abandonment and decay. Through an architectural intervention, the project aims to understand and appreciate the history and qualities of the ruined theater and integrate these qualities into the atmosphere of the new space, binding the old and the new together and at the same time, retaining the incomplete character of the ruin.



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### GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Mainly when we hear the word ruin, we think of famous ancient ruin sites like the Colosseum, Acropolis or Angkor Wat. It reminds us of glorious ancient structures that evoked an aesthetic pleasure and inspired artists. But the word ruin is also associated with negative feelings. It means to disintegrate, to reduce to a state of decay, to collapse. The way we feel about the ruins of our own time is mostly associated with the latter. Modern ruins are mostly seen as unpleasant. Places that provide a space for undesirable activities and are linked to crime and, thus, threatening the safety of the residents in that area. As a result of this attitude, they become an ignored and marginalized part of the cities. Although ruins have some of the mentioned negative possibilities, they also contain positive qualities and potentials that I explore in this thesis.

There are different reasons for these ambivalent feelings about ancient and modern ruins and this thesis studies the reasons behind it. This thesis provides answers to questions of why ruins of our own time are considered invaluable, why they deserve our attention and how their existence can arouse the topic of otherness in the urban context and provide a physical space for alternative cultural activities.

The design project focuses on an early twentieth century ruin in Baltimore, Maryland. The former theater building had a relatively short period of splendor followed by several alterations and decades of abandonment and decay. Through an architectural intervention, the project aims to understand and appreciate the history and qualities of the ruined theater and integrate these qualities into the atmosphere of the new space, binding the old and the new together and at the same time, retaining the incomplete character of the ruin.

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## **PART I**

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY

DEFECTS OF MODERN RUIN

RUIN AND MEMORY

RUINS AND INFORMAL PERCEPTION OF HISTORY

RUINS AND REGULATED CITY

CASE STUDY

## Introduction

Even the greatest theoretician of modern movements, probably, never would have imagined that someday modernity would associate so closely with ruins. In our everyday understanding, we rarely connect these two words together, and yet, nowhere in the history of architecture and urbanism, could one find so many ruins, produced at a surprisingly quick pace.

Modern ruins are mostly seen negatively and thus they become an ignored and marginalized part of the cities. Through the lens of the same culture that praises and encourages fast production and consumption and commodifies everything, these stranded beings are considered as empty voids and useless. Therefore, they are seen as physical disturbances in the context of the city, which need to be appropriated quickly for the role of useful, capital-producing assets and to be har-

monized to fit in the smooth fabric of the city.

There are other notions involved in the current attitude toward modern ruins. These notions include specific aesthetic norms and tastes and necessary characteristics for being considered authentic. That is why apart from discourses of sustainability, contemporary ruins are mostly seen negatively even among architects and urban planners.

This thesis explores the notions behind the current attitude toward ruins, to answer why contemporary ruins are considered invaluable, and more importantly, why do they deserve to be treated otherwise. It explores the value of modern ruins in relation to materiality, memory, and informal history.

Firstly, I will discuss the reasons for the current negative attitude toward modern ruins. Secondly, I will take a closer look at how their

qualities can offer different ways of remembrance. Thirdly, I will discuss their role in challenging the common perception of history, and finally, I will explore how they can critique the ways that urban spaces are produced.

As much as we tend to see them as empty useless spaces, these derelict structures and landscapes possess valuable and unique qualities. By critically studying them and understanding their affordances, we might begin to appreciate their qualities, and re-evaluate our design approaches toward them.

Figure 1: An abandoned theater in Gary, Ind. By Seph Lawless, 2015.





**Figure 2:** *Melancholic pleasure of ruin.*  
 "Tintern Abbey: The Crossing and Chancel, Looking towards the East Window, 1794, by Joseph Mallord William Turner"

## History

Ruin has assumed myriad meanings throughout history. During the Renaissance period ruin was a symbol of a glorious past, bearing witness to the grand civilizations that were Lost. It evoked pleasure through its association with architecture and history. In the Baroque mind, it was linked with pleasure and melancholy and evoked a kind of sublime terror. A metaphor for terrestrial limitation in contrast with the divine truth. With the emergence of Romanticism, the aesthetic of ruins was embraced. They appeared in paintings and writings and artificial ruins, broken columns, and tumbledown arches were used in gardens to praise the aesthetic

of decay and create a picturesque landscape. Furthermore, ruin in Romanticism was a reminder of the transitory nature of life.<sup>1</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, the concept of "Age Value" emerged in academic work. Consequently, ruins that by that time had conveyed a historical and commemorative value, started to become an object of sensory experience in that they were now vessels that carried a sense of the passage of time. In that sense, the value of ruin came to be defined as the process of ruination and decay that ideally should have happened slowly and naturally over a long period of time.<sup>2</sup> With the prevalence of military invasion and resulting

destruction that happened in the twentieth century, all sorts of radical ruins were left in the landscape of western cities. The ones that the ruination came upon them instantly and were not accepted as proper ruins because their qualities did not conform to the principle of Romanticism. Furthermore, the increased consumption due to low-cost mass production that accelerated in the early twentieth century, made a larger number of things redundant. And in this story of fast material replacement, buildings were no exception.

## Defects of Modern Ruin

It is against this background of ruin history that the current value and perception of modern ruins are to be understood. In contrast to the splendid, awe-inspiring structures of grand empires or religious temples that inspired painters and poets, the new ruins that were found in the cities were considered vulgar and pedestrian among architects, artists, and other intellectuals. This notion was rooted in the norms and tastes that were developed through ages as alluded to above. Modern ruins are not accepted as proper ruins for a number of reasons. Some of them might be the following issues.

### Age Value

Firstly, they lack “Age Value”. According to Riegl, although age value can be recognized “at first glance in the monument’s outmoded appearance”,<sup>3</sup> it is also linked necessarily with the ruin’s gradual, natural, and uninterrupted decay over long periods of time. Signs of destruction by man, for instance, would diminish the ruin’s effect. Many modern ruins are man-made and were born overnight as a result of military invasion, air raids, and so on. In that sense, they are instant ruins. Apart from lacking age value, modern ruins are, obviously, young. Abandonment and ruination in many of them were caused by financial crises, naïve speculations, or capitalistic forces. Abandoned shopping malls, apartments, amusement parks, and theaters that today have filled our cities are evidence of this. Unlike the ancient ruins that decayed over centuries, modern ruins are produced instantly. So fast that even if they were made of the right material, they would not have had time “to attract foliage, accrue a patina or merge into their surroundings”.<sup>4</sup> This is what Yablon called the modern ruin’s “untimeliness”. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French philosopher, and historian, on his trip to

trip to America, was shocked by the contemporaneity of the ruins that he saw. “What! Ruins so soon”, he said when he came across the residual of a settlement that was built fast, was abandoned fast, and was reclaimed by the nature fast. But most unexpectedly, these ruins were in a country that was founded not long ago. American ruins were “day-old ruin”, he claimed.<sup>5</sup>

### Material

Secondly, modern ruins also lack ruin value with respect to their materiality. There is a definition of what could be considered authentic among architects and archeologists which is obviously influenced by the history of ruin in which modern ruins do not pass the criteria to be recognized as authentic. They are made of iron, glass, concrete, and wood. These materials either show little resistance to the forces of nature and so they could not decay gracefully (in case of wood, for example) or conversely, are too durable, and therefore are likely to merely rust and shatter (for instance, in the case of iron, glass, etc.). Aesthete of ruins always preferred stone and bronze, the right materials that know how to age gently to show the effects of time, the material that created the ruins of antiquity.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 3:**  
*Day-old ruin*  
Fisher Body Plant,  
Detroit, U.S.A. By  
philip jarman.



**Figure 4:**  
*Wrong material*  
A house in France  
built in 1912.

### Ambiguity

Another problem with modern ruins is that they are difficult to interpret. The ancient ruin is loaded with history, while the modern ruin is far more ambiguous. They do not necessarily represent the most important historical events or the highest aesthetic standards of an era. As everyday commodities, they lack the historical value that is attributed to ancient ruins. Even if one considers that some of them could be the physical remnants or evidence that help us discover the intangible heritage, a topic that has drawn some attention in the recent discourse of heritage, they might be culturally too diverse to be easily comprehensible. But I would argue that although these structures are banal compared to the grand monumental structures that were erected in the honor of Gods, they carry the traces of unspoken, forgotten parts of the history, they represent the suppressed voices, the hopes of the ordinary and the lived experience of everyday people.

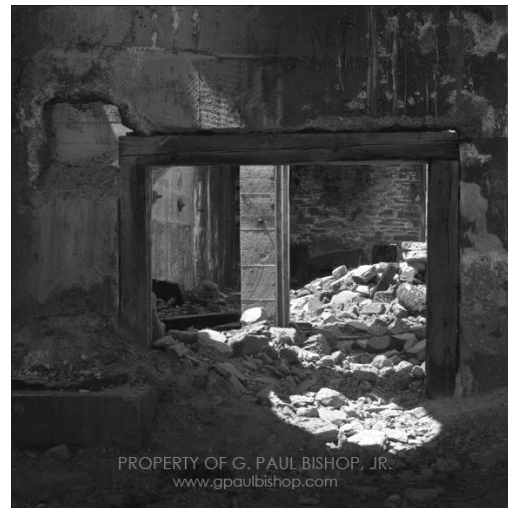
The untimeliness of modern ruins also applies to the difficulties of understanding their temporality. By definition, ruin is an ambiguous term. It can refer to the "state of a thing" as a noun, and "a process

affecting a thing" as a verb. The ruin in its noun form is perceived as passive and frozen, whereas the verbal form connotes an active and transient process.<sup>7</sup> The way we think about ancient ruin, for the most part, belongs to the former. Ancient ruins are finished. The process of ruination in them is arrested. Even the historical value that they contain, represents a civilization that has passed. They are clean and ready to be presented as official narratives of history. But the ruins of our time have not yet reached this state. They are derelicts of an era that is still in the early stages of its development. And since they have not been cared for as heritage, they are in an active process of ruination. They are in the "Fluid state of material becoming",<sup>8</sup> as Tim Edensor described it. They are caught up in this in-between situation of "not belonging", neither heritage nor waste, they are deprived of their previous use-value and yet have not been granted any cultural significance.

So, what is indeed the **value of the ruins of our time?** Why should we **care** for them?

"Somehow, we cannot leave ruins alone and let them simply exist in their mute materiality. We need to make them speak and militate for our theories."<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 5:**  
*"Fluid state of material becoming"*  
 Modern Ruins, No. 22 Abandoned Copper Mine, Copperopolis, California. By G. Paul Bishop, Jr., '83 ©2019 G.



## Ruin and Memory

Ruination is usually considered as the cause of fading and loss in relation to memory and indeed it has negative effects on the mnemonic capacity of things, but it does not necessarily result in oblivion. Ruination has also some revelatory potentials that can bring to the fore the previously marginalized memories.

### Order and Functionality

Our understanding of a built environment is connected to two things, among others, the order, and functionality of the objects within that space. When we enter a building, everything, every element that constitutes that building is placed within an order, things are situated in their right place to form a coherent ensemble. Beams, columns, ceiling, stairs, all elements inside the building, within their assigned orders, participate in forming a united and coherent experience of that space. Our encounter with this atmosphere, although affected by many other intangible elements such as lights and sound etc., is at least partly influenced by this order. It is as if what we encounter is at least partly the abstract concept of the building. As with objects within the building, our encounter is extremely affected by their use-value to the point that their *thingness* is almost invisible to us. In contrast, in a ruinous building,

things lose their order and functionality (The more the process of ruination in building advances, the power of order in it decreases). As a consequence of this, things are out of their normal order and spacing. The skeleton of the building may show itself in some parts, beams are fallen on the floor, tiles that are missing, paints that are peeled off, revealing what is underneath. The space is filled with matter. The strange juxtaposition of elements in their unexpected place creates an odd and peculiar image. This collage of (to our eyes) unrelated fragments confronts us with these elements differently and impacts us on a different level compared to how they affect us in a well-maintained building. Furthermore, things, freed from their functional obligations, emerge from invisibility, expressing, more than ever, their materiality. If a well-maintained building, is a realm of regulation and order, a ruin is a true realm of things and materiality.



**Figure 6:**  
*Disorder, disfunctional*  
Mayfair Theater, Baltimore, U.S.A.



**Figure 7:**  
*Disorder, disfunctional*  
Abandoned building in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Figure 8:

*Decay Accentuate the qualities of matter.*  
Abandoned building, 2018.



The process of decay accentuates, even more, the qualities of matter, their **vulnerability**, and their **resistance**. Bricks crumble, moisture soaks the mortar and weakens it, tendrils and roots find their way through this weakness. The roof opens up, and columns of unfiltered light pour inside the ruin and the surface of the wood starts to blister. Notwithstanding the fact that objects are placed in a disorderly manner, and the boundaries of materials, with the invasion of nature, gradually grow faint, at the same time, **a new kind of individuality emerges** in the things.<sup>10</sup> Each crumbling brick that was formerly participating in shaping a monolithic brick wall, appears in rather unique patterns of lichen, having different ragged edges. With the disappearance of the function and rise of this kind of individualities, things, beyond their categories and ranks, appear to us differently and thus they evoke different feelings.



### Movement in Ruin

The way our bodies move in a space is related to different factors. The most obvious factor is the fact of their being observed. One's body movement would be constrained if people have an awareness that they are under the gaze of others. Along with that, other factors are the urban regulations that channel our movement, informal understanding of ways of behavior in public, and self-monitoring as a result of internalization of normative modes of manner which restrict our bodies to usually perform in a non-expressive way.<sup>11</sup> Ruins, as places of disorder, invite the body to perform different movements and liberate it from all those regulations. Lack of order and hierarchy invites us to wander and improvise on which path to choose and how to move.

The absence of clear boundaries

that usually tells us about the nature of a space, boundaries between outside and inside, public, and private, safe, and dangerous, enable our bodies to have a more playful and unconventional interaction with the environment. Liberated bodies physically engage with the surroundings, touch things, jump on them, toss them, break them, and thus come into contact with a multi-sensual experience. This is analogous to how a child encounters the world without any mental barrier, restriction, expectation, or speculation about things. A child touches the dirt, jumps in water puddles, walks on the surfaces that an adult knows he/she is not supposed to. This, I call, a pure encounter with the world.

### Involuntary Memory

It is interesting how memory -like

a ruin- is fragmented. It works in strange ways. But all of these sensual experiences bring back shocks of memories from the past, the ordinary and the neglected that were not significant enough to be recorded in our conscious memory. The smells and intense materiality of the fragments and the strange ordering of things in the ruins, allow us to have sensual experiences that might trigger a different sort of memory i.e., involuntary memory.

In contrast to the conscious recalling of the past, Involuntary memory is contingent and spontaneous, and since they are entangled in sensation and clues from previous places, and atmospheres, they are difficult to grasp. They do not have specific characteristics, nor could they be categorized. Consisting mainly of different sensations during

previous intimate engagement with things and a diverse range of atmospheres and perspectives containing the movement of air, smell, vegetation, light, colors, noises, etc., They could only vaguely be identified. As Walter Benjamin described it: "Only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience, can become a component of *mémoire involuntaire*" (quote after Edensor).<sup>12</sup>

This notwithstanding, these spontaneous remembering of the past, are powerful experiences that bring to the fore the unexpected parts of the past and unfold different layers of memories. These unruly memories that erupt beyond our control, help to destabilize what is considered important, hence they are worthy of being remembered.



Figure 9: *Memory*. Collage.

## Ruins and Informal Perception of History

Figure 10. Mayfair Theater



Figure 11. Mayfair Theater



There is a tendency to see history as a linear and continuously progressing narrative. Far from being a linear narrative, however, history is fragmented, twisted, and multi-faceted. Probably a clearer understanding of the past would be possible by seeing the history through individual narratives. Reading a soldier's diary might reveal a totally different story, regarding his intentions and desires, than the prevalent stories we are told about heroic actions of passionate soldiers who fight for the shared national pride and values. But in telling the history, all those irrelevant forces, all those unaccepted futilities, and weaknesses that might just accidentally have helped the cause of a grand victory are deleted. Failures might find a way into history,

but only the useful ones, the ones that led to a victorious rise. **The reality is vastly disordered and untidy**, full of multiple faces and directions, but we are inclined to tidy it up in a one-directional linear story that rises and ends in a grand success. It is, furthermore, thought to continue its progress in the future. This is how our memory works. Our image of ourselves is what we remember of ourselves, yet our memories are not much reliable since they are selective. What we remember is mostly what we have chosen to remember at some point. And that is what we like to remember, what aids the coherent ever-evolving stories of our lives. Besides the natural tendency of our memories to homogenize the narratives of the past, there are the intention-

al attempts of the powerful to, so to speak, *summarize* the past into short, **neat sequences of events** and to even fabricate the history in ways that are desirable and beneficial in one way or another. The saturated landscape of monuments and museums that monopolizes our collective memory with clear-cut boundaries of understanding of the past testify to this. As a page of a diary of a scared reluctant soldier might reveal alternative views of the war, **ruins might reveal perceived trivial and irrelevant side-stories of history**. Through their stubborn physical existence in our cities, ruins resist and oppose and, interestingly, reveal the crevices of history. In their rebellious way, they challenge our perception of conventional history, and their unique

individuality can help us escape the trap of one-sided understanding of the past.<sup>13</sup> This might be why they seem to us as a disturbance in the cityscape. Their presence simply does not fit in the beautiful and seamless narrative that we have carved out from history and progress, and by being the ruins of our own time which occupy a transient and ambiguous state, they challenge our perception of time. All these arguments are not full-blown criticism of the conventional way of mobilizing the sites and objects, rather, they allow for multiple ways of remembrance.

“These strange places exist **outside** the city’s effective circuits and productive structures. From the economic point of view, industrial areas, railway stations, ports, unsafe residential neighborhoods, and contaminated places are **where the city is no longer**. Unincorporated margins, interior islands void of activity, oversights, these areas are simply un-inhabited, un-safe, un-productive. In short, they are foreign to the urban system, **mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city**, its negative image, as much a critique as a possible alternative.”<sup>14</sup>



Figure 12: *Marginalized ruins*. View south along John R St. from Edmund Place, Detroit, 2003, by Vergara, Camilo J., Library of Congress

## Ruins and Regulated City

The contemporary city is highly regulated. The way that our urban spaces are organized has deep roots in modernist thoughts of spatial orders, neatness, and rational spacing of things, people, and activities. An idealistic order that can remove the chaotic moving that was happening in the old street. What Marshal Berman described as Le Corbusier's antithesis to the thesis of 'the street belongs to the people' in this way: "Thus modernist architecture and planning created a modernized version of pastoral: a spatially and socially segmented world - people here, traffic there; work here, homes there; rich here, poor there; barriers of grass and concrete in between..."<sup>15</sup> We can see the marks of this notion in our contemporary cities where things and preferred activities are assigned to fix places and our movements are channeled

(and also surveilled) throughout most urban (public) spaces. In contrast to these smooth, orderly, and segmented urban spaces that impose on us choreographed performance of the body in contemporary cities, **ruins offer a messy, loose, disordered space** that can encourage improvisational movements and multisensory experiences in the space. The absence of clear boundaries and orders in ruin, enables our bodies to have a more playful and unconventional interaction with the environment.

Spatial ordering is not unnecessary but the way it is dominating our cities, restrict the diversity of experiences. To see ruins as empty voids and neglect them and their affordances, obliterate the multiplicity of readings of the city and limits the ways in which otherness can be confronted.<sup>16</sup>

"Thus modernist architecture and planning created a modernized version of pastoral: a spatially and socially **segmented world** - people here, traffic there; work here, homes there; rich here, poor there; barriers of grass and concrete in between..."<sup>15</sup>

## Case Study Landschaftspark

Landscape Architecture: Latz + Partner

Project year: 1990

Area: 230 hectares

Budget: 15.500.000 EUR

Location: Landschaftspark, Emscherstraße 71, 47137 Duisburg, Germany

Landschaftspark, the site of a former coal and steel plant is currently a public park, designed by Latz+ Partner in Duisburg, Germany. The aim of the design was to understand the history of the industrialized site and attempt to integrate and connect the existing pattern and interweave the existing fragments to the new design. The park consists of individual parts that work autonomously and are connected together with a series of pathways (old railway) and canals (old sewage system).

**The Blast furnace park:** The Piazza Metallica is created in between the existing blast furnace and other industrial structures, while all the elements that previously were used in iron casting, today form the central

figure of the park. These cast-iron plates were left to continue to rust.<sup>17</sup> This creates a strange and maybe, at first sight, chaotic landscape. But through the introduction of new activities and the presence of humans within the site, it suggests an alternate reading of the place.

**Water Park:** The existing open wastewater canal of the old plant was transformed into a rainwater collecting canal with bridges and pathways.

**Play Points:** The whole park is an adventurous playground in a dramatic atmosphere for use of different age groups. The unusual atmosphere and scale of the elements of the derelict site, with small interventions, evokes imaginative new uses

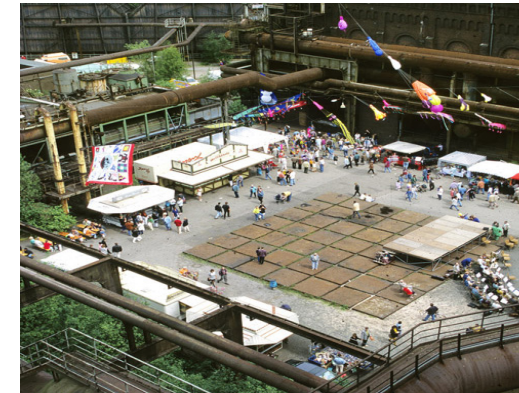


Figure 13: The Piazza Metallica



Figure 14: The water park



Figure 15: The water park



Figure 16: Master plan



Figure 17: The blast Furnace Park

of the site. The tall walls of the ore bunkers are being used as a climbing wall, the foot of a big windmill is being used as a water play area and a metal tube goes through the bunker walls like a huge snake.

**Ore Bunker Gallery:** The architects worked together with the Lehmbruck Museum and artists for envisioning the ore bunker gallery. By cutting through the thick walls, they created openings that let the passages and bridges connect to each other and form an irregular network of paths which lead to artificial gardens with artistic interventions, sound, and light effects. The design suggests approaches different from the conventional ways that were used before. Latz

does not try to romanticize the ruin or make the park an exhibition of the relics of the old plant. He creates a tension between the unusual and the ordinary, between the design intervention and the neglect. Latz himself describes it this way “The result is a metamorphosis of landscape without destroying existing features, an archetypal dialogue between the tame and the wild.”<sup>18</sup> He used memory as an important element in his design, but not in the same way that it is usually dealt with through preservation. In his way, he emphasized the transient quality of the memory, the layers of the past that can be read, interpreted, and reimagined through new experiences of the viewers.

“The result is a metamorphosis of landscape without destroying existing features, an archetypal dialogue between **the tame and the wild.**”<sup>18</sup>

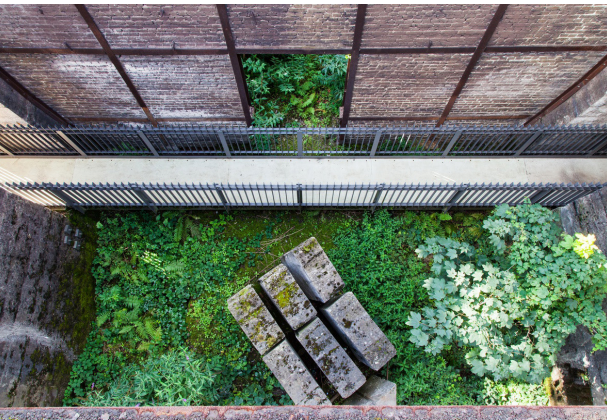


Figure 18: The Ore Bunker Gallery



Figure 19: The Ore Bunker Gallery, Passages

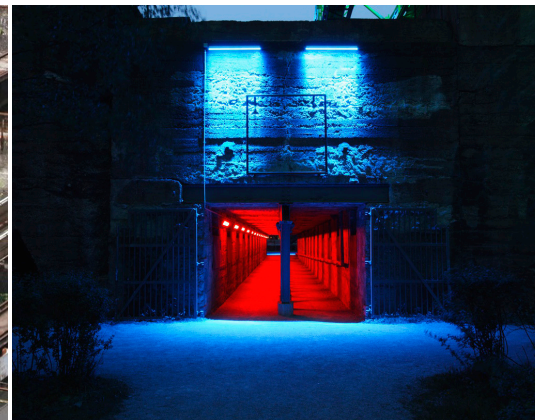


Figure 20: The Ore Bunker Gallery, Light effect



Figure 21: The Play Point



Figure 22: The Play Point, Metal tube



Figure 23: The Play Point, Climbing Wall

## Young Vic Theater

**Architect:** Haworth Tompkins

**Project Year:** 2006

**Floor area:** 3,155m<sup>2</sup>

**Budget:** £7M

**Location:** Young Vic, 66 The Cut, Lambeth, London, SE1 8LZ, United Kingdom

The Young Vic is one of the important theaters in south London, in The Cut. It was originally built in 1970 by Bill Howell, intended to be a temporary theater space for the National Theater Company. Thirty years later, its dilapidated state could not accommodate the needs of the company which became one of the most important producing houses in London. The story of the theater is a fascinating story. Before the eighteenth century, not many Londoners were aware of the existence of a neighborhood in the south part of the Thames, and after it was more accessible by bridges that were built over the Thames in the early nineteenth century, the area was known as a place for fetid factories and warehouses. It was mostly occupied

by laborers and low-income groups. During the Blitz in 1940-1941 the area, like so many other areas in London, was subjected to air raids. Around 1969 fifty-two percent of the population was still living in council housing and people were still feeling the post-war depression. It was then when The National Theater commissioned a temporary theater to be built for young people there. Frank Dunlop was in charge to find a land to build the theater, he was looking to find an old warehouse or plant for this purpose and instead, he found so many bomb sites in the neighborhood that had been used as parking after the war. He was planning to build a temporary building that can work as an extension of the National Theater.

Figure 24: Young Vic, Box office



Figure 26: Young Vic, Site Plan

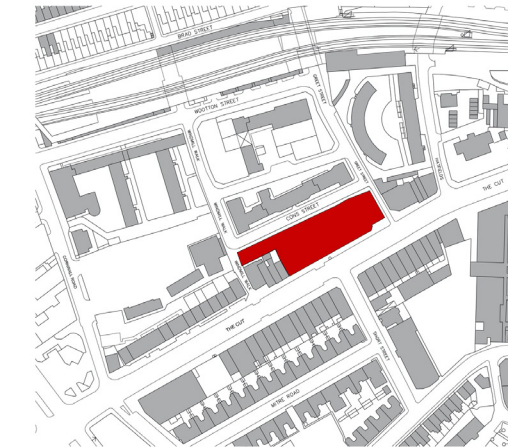


Figure 25: Young Vic, Foyer / Bar



A butcher shop was the only remaining building that had survived from bombing, on the site that Dunlop rented for building the theater. Howell, the architect who was commissioned for the project, kept the butcher shop to use it as a foyer. The fact that the theater would be a temporary place, meant that there was not much pressure on Howell to make an iconic theater and this served well for Dunlop since he believed that a humble, informal, and flexible theater would be less intimidating for the south London residence.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the building that was supposed to serve the area for only five years, became so popular that continued its life as a permanent building.



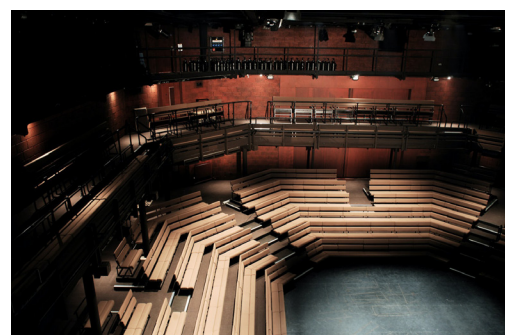
**Figure 27:**  
*Butcher Shop*  
Young Vic (Re)construction, 2005.  
The Auditorium on right,  
Front of the house on left



**Figure 28:**  
*Young Vic, Exterior*  
view from across The  
Cut.



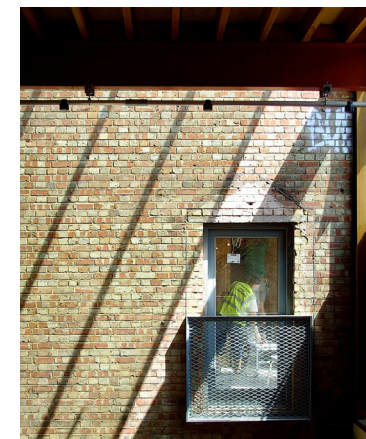
**Figure 29:**  
*Young Vic, Interior*  
Second Floor Bar and  
Terrace



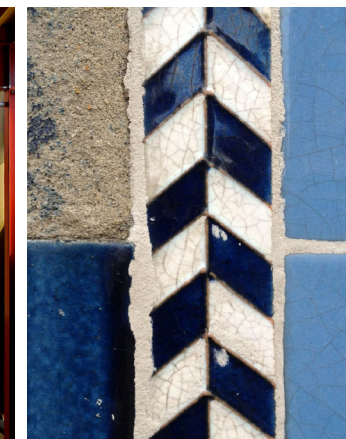
**Figure 30:**  
*Young Vic, Interior*  
The Extended  
Auditorium

“...perhaps the only architects around capable of doing the necessary work and intervening in the right places without ruining the **spirit** of the place, without stripping it of its **passion**, its **past**, of the **sweat embedded in its walls.**”<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 31:** *Survivor of the Blitz*



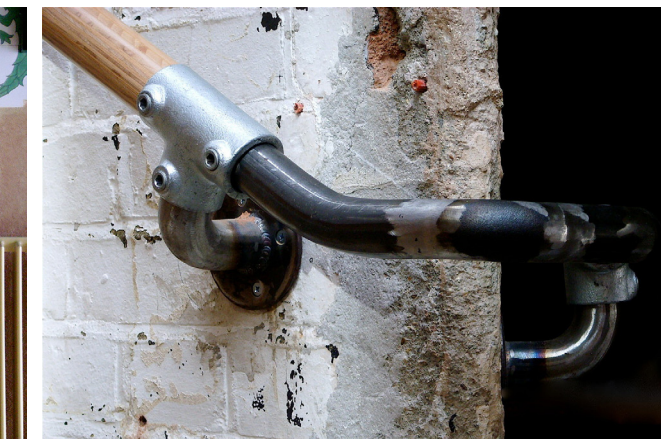
**Figure 32:** *Survivor of the Blitz*



**Figure 33:** *Survivor of the Blitz*



**Figure 34:** *Survivor of the Blitz*



In 2002, through a competition, Haworth Tompkins was selected to re-imagine the theater. The important goal for architects was to maintain the existing aesthetic of the building and continue the democratic spirit of the old theater. They kept the thrust stage Auditorium and the butcher shop, both of which was considered as important elements of communal memory and built the new additions around these two fragments.<sup>21</sup>

Howell and Haworth Tompkins, both retained the butcher shop. Howell was not looking for seamless integration of the butcher shop to the design, he did not hide it or attempt to add any effect to it. He did not memorialize it as a pre-war structure in any sentimental way, yet as Juliet Rufford wrote:

"The butcher's shop identified the theatre as a war memorial of a peculiarly performative kind. In this reading of space, our collective history and cultural memory are revisited not through glib re-enactment

but through what Wolfreys might well call an 'act of intimate (and, perhaps, therefore, partially inaccessible) psycho-topographical re-constitution'.<sup>22</sup>

Howell used the butcher shop as foyer. Haworth Tompkins changed its function to box office and kept the auditorium and tried to bind these two fragments from a different time in the history of the building to the new spaces they added. The materials they used in the new design, are ordinary and cheap, making the new design look like a makeshift building, which amazingly remembers the identity of Young Vic and continues its spirit.

In the middle of the new design, there is a bar-foyer space that connects directly to all three auditoriums (the old one and two new additions) and as they described it themselves "Serve as a public living room for the community".<sup>23</sup>

Figure 35:  
Young Vic, Drawings

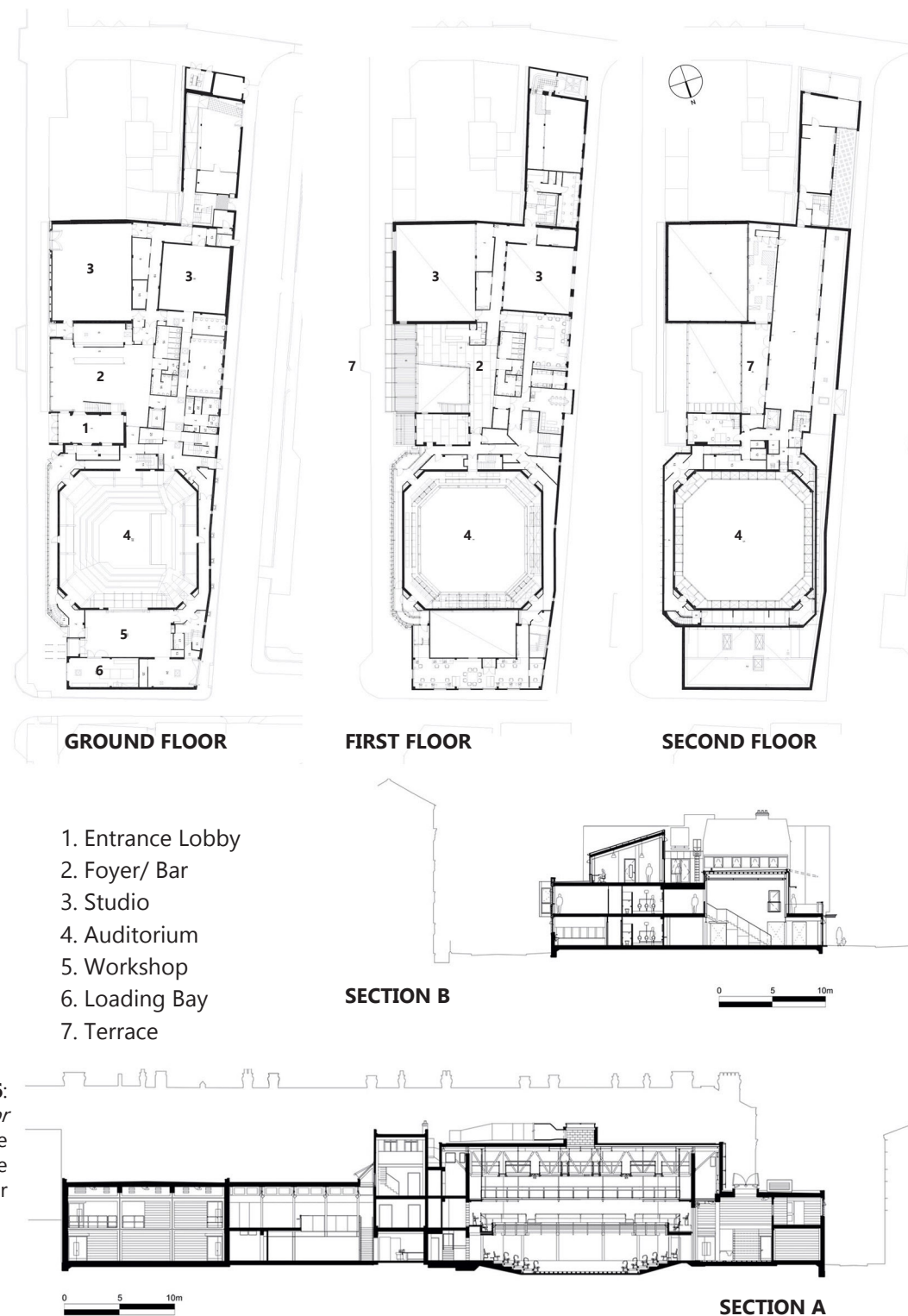
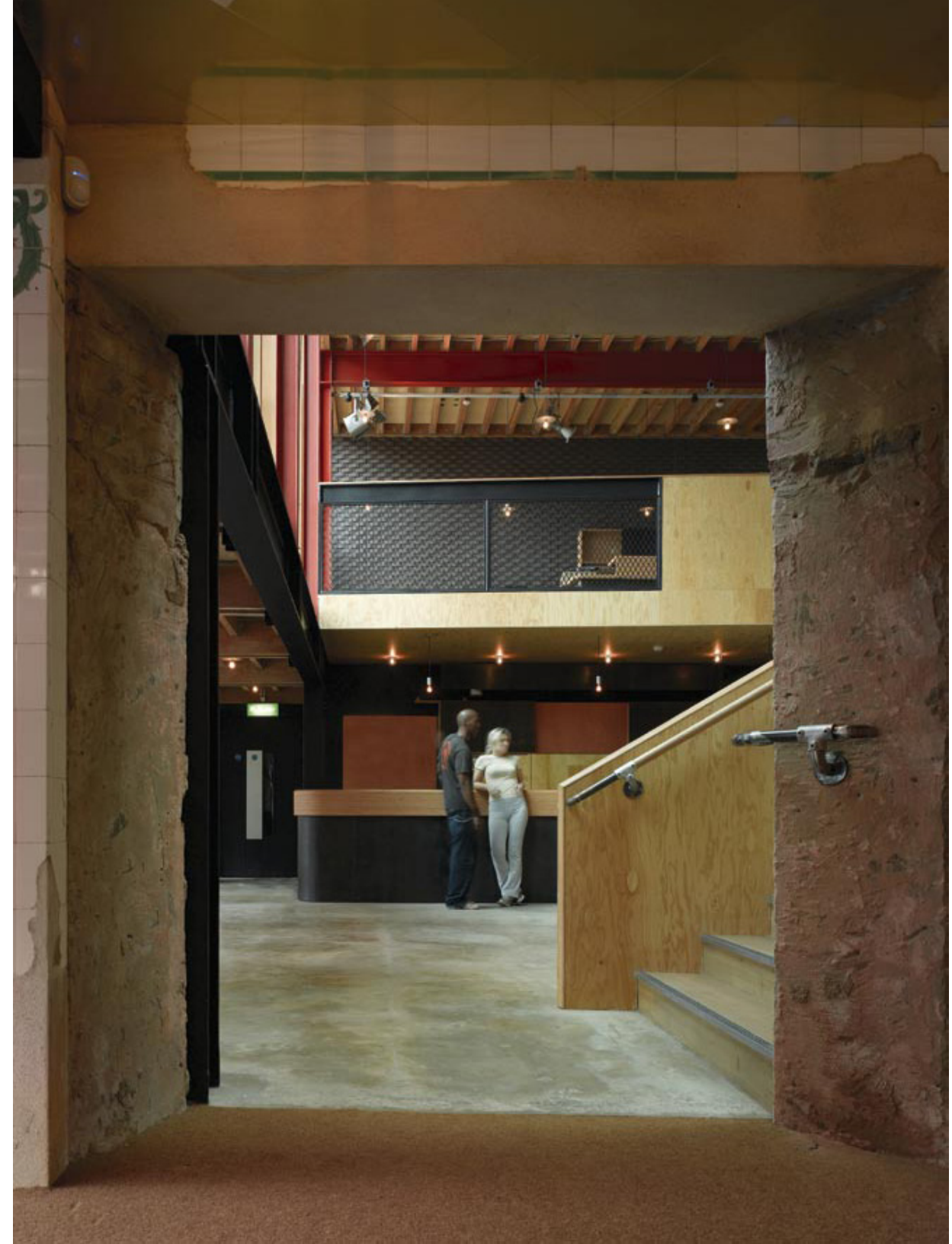


Figure 36:  
Young Vic, Interior  
Looking from the  
butcher shop to the  
foyer/ bar



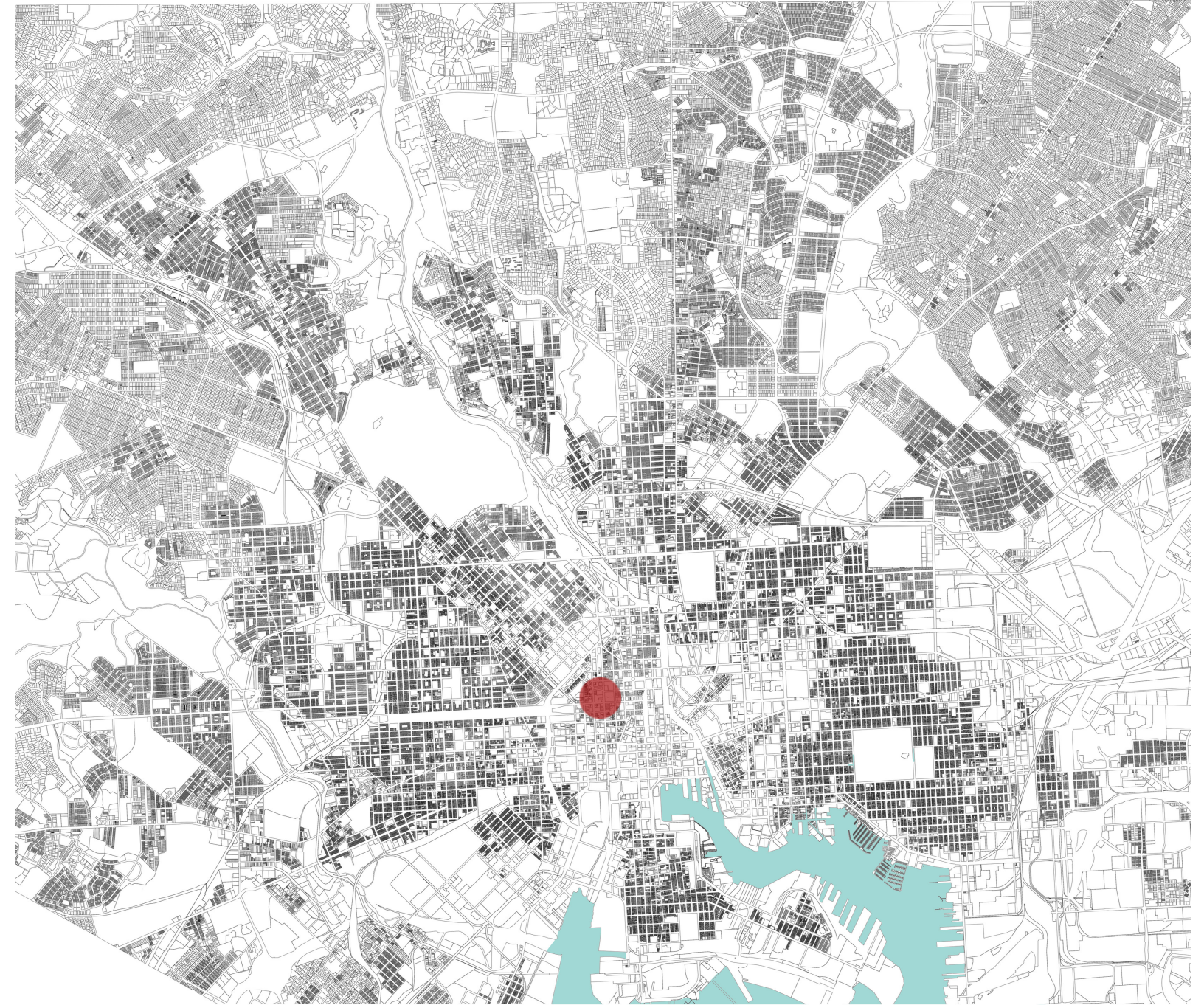
## **PART II**

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MAYFAIR THEATER  
SITE ANALYSIS  
SITE SELECTION

THE NATATORIUM | HOWARD AUDITORIUM | THE AUDITORIUM | **MAYFAIR THEATER**  
1880 | 1891 | 1902 | 1941

MARYLAND | BALTIMORE



## History

The life of the Mayfair Theater building began as a natatorium. An association in Baltimore city selected a site on North Howard Street, very close to the business district, and built a bathing house and swimming school called The Natatorium. The building opened in June 1880 but did not last for long. Ten years later James Lawrence Kernan, a wealthy theater enthusiast, obtained the building with the intention of converting it into a legitimate theater. After the alteration of the interior of the building he changed its name to the Howard Auditorium and opened it in April 1891. The name was soon shortened to The Auditorium, and it was known as such for the next 49 years. During the next decade, The Auditorium was subjected to several other alterations. First, in 1894, Kernan converted the building into an Ice Palace. It had a 50 foot by 150 foot skating floor surrounded by seating on the main floor and the gallery.

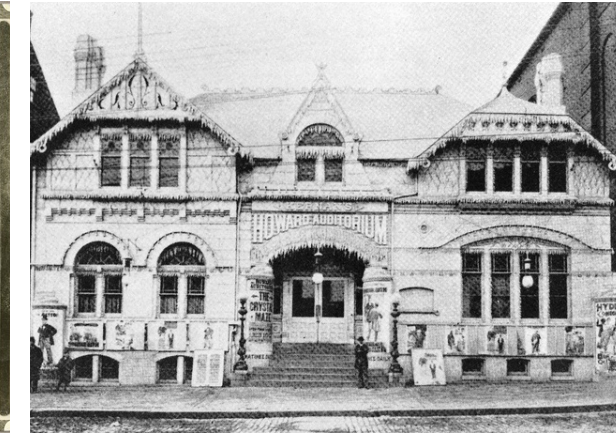
Additionally, he opened a roof garden with oriental decorations on top of the theater. But The Auditorium Ice Palace faced a lot of problems in the first year of its opening and did not last long. In 1895, J. B. McElfatrick, a New York architect, was hired for another major remodeling of the building. The major changes were adding a portico over the main entrance, painting the main façade, and retiling the lobby with white marble.

One year later, the building was converted again, this time into a concert hall. The front façade was raised 30 feet and the balcony was extended to accommodate a palm garden which was connected through a broad oak stairway to the roof garden. During intermissions, Hungarian music was played in the palm garden and audiences could have refreshments while watching the performance.

Kernan had plans to eventually replace the existing building with a new theater from the beginning,



**Figure 37:**  
*The Natatorium*



**Figure 38:**  
*The Howard Auditorium*



**Figure 39:**  
*The Auditorium*

but it took several years of rehabbing and remodeling before his plans were realized. In 1902 he announced his plans for building the greatest entertainment complex in Maryland. He had already owned the site of the Howard Auditorium, and the Academy Hotel was already there on the corner of North Howard Street and Franklin Street from 50 years ago. Kernan acquired the area adjacent to the hotel on Franklin Street for building his triple enterprise consisting of two theaters – The Auditorium Theater and the Maryland Theater- and a hotel. He demolished the old Howard Auditorium except for the underground swimming pool which he retained and converted into a Turkish bath. The new Auditorium opened in 1904. The new façade of the Auditorium was made of stone and white terra cotta in Beaux-Art style with a mansard roof with ocular windows. The three buildings offered

different entertaining spaces such as a rathskeller, a billiard hall, an oriental banquet room, an art gallery, 120 hotel rooms a Turkish bath, and two auditoriums with the capacity of 3600 theater seats. After the opening of the Maryland Theater, The Vaudeville club moved there, and The Auditorium progressed into being a place for refined musicals and legitimate shows. In 1929 the Auditorium was equipped with sound for playing two movies a day. In 1932 due to mortgage foreclosure, the three buildings were sold. In the late 1930s, the building was being used for a mixture of events and shows but attendance was not enough to keep it open. Eventually, the life of the Auditorium as a grand live theater venue came to an end in 1941.

**Figure 40:**  
*(Left) The Auditorium  
Designed in 1902*



**Figure 41:**  
*(Right Top) The  
corner of Franklin St  
& N Howard St*



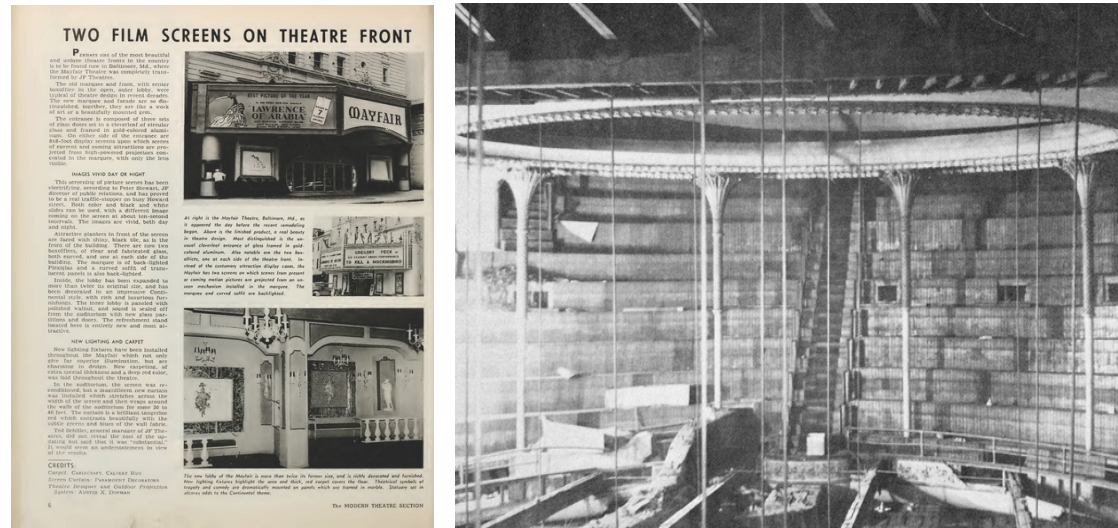
**Figure 42:**  
*(Right bottom) The  
Maryland Theater  
And The Kernan  
Hotel*



**Figure 43:**  
(From Left)  
*A Local Newspaper*

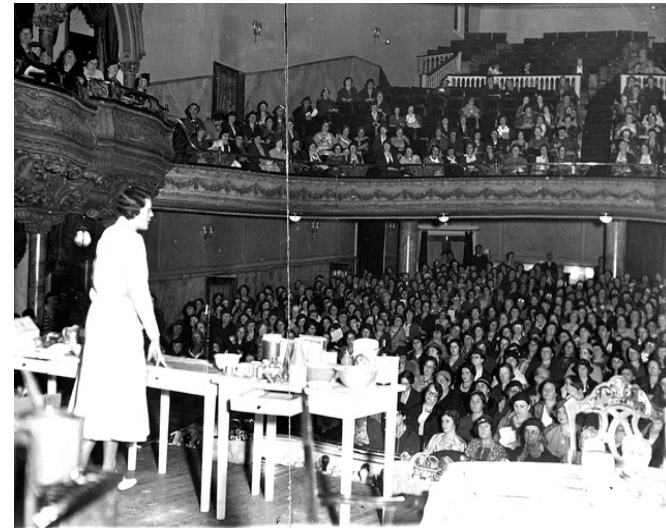


**Figure 44:**  
*The Dome and Gallery of the Auditorium*



**Figure 45:**  
*The Interior of the Auditorium 1920-1930*

**Figure 46:**  
*The Mayfair Theater East Façade after 1941 Renovation*



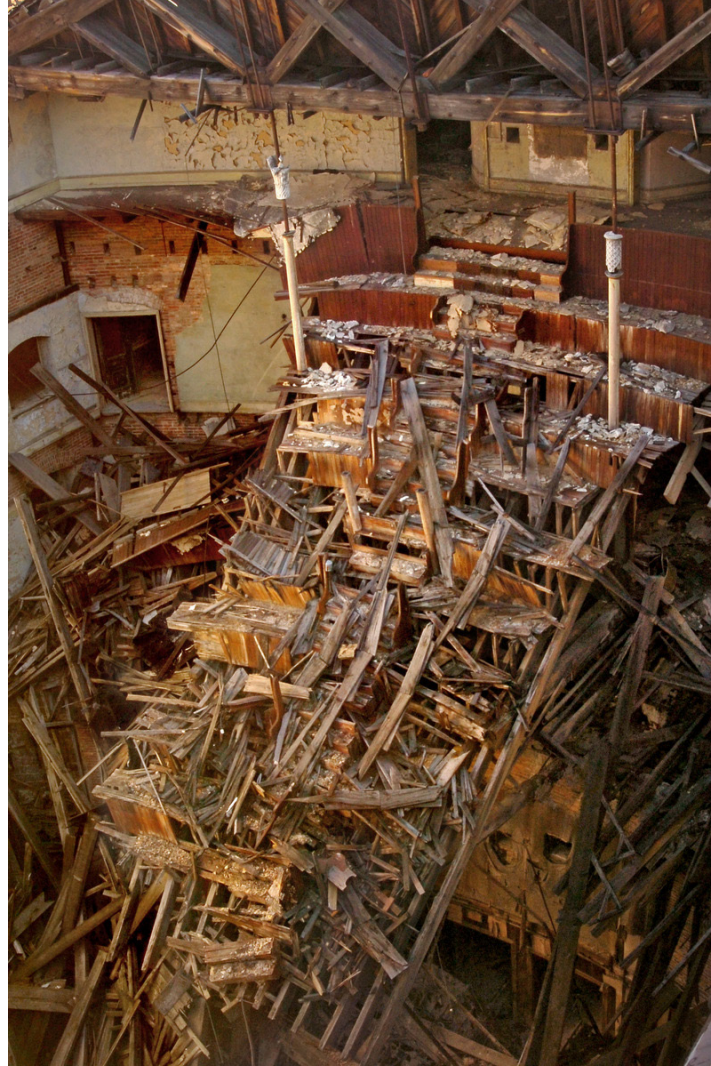
**Figure 47:**  
*The Mayfair Theater East Façade after 1963 Renovation*



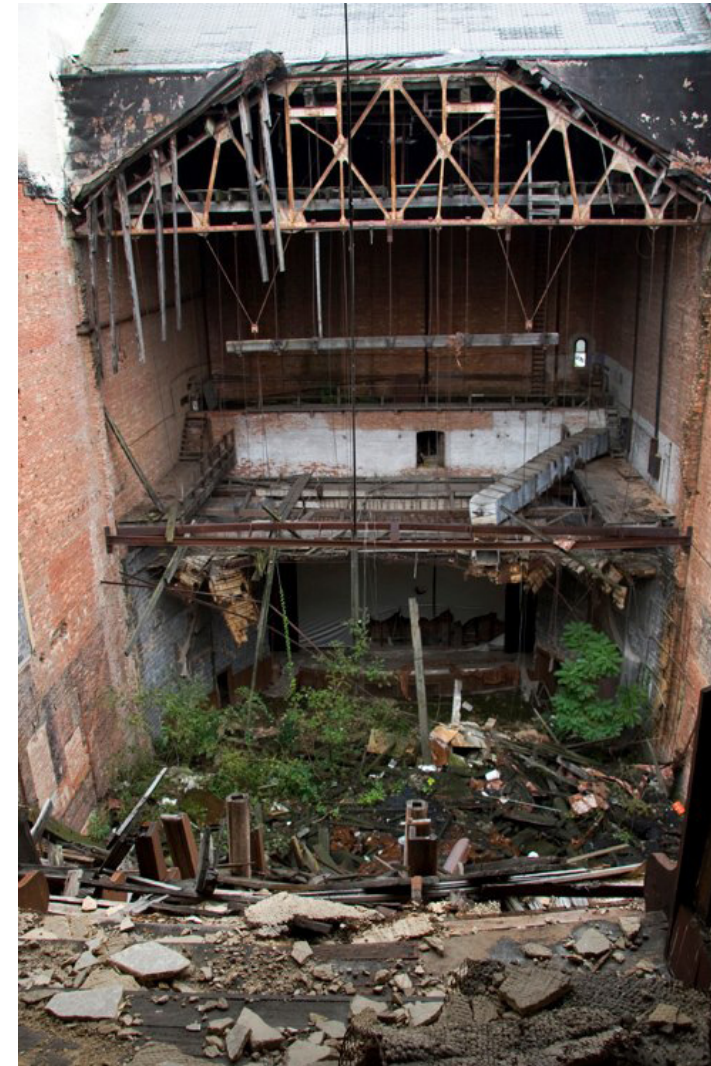
In 1940 C. W. Hicks bought the building and planned another extensive remodeling to convert it into a movie theater. E. Bernard Evander, the architect who was hired for this, preserved the original ceiling, dressing rooms, projection booth, the second balcony, and the basement and on the exterior, he kept the Beaux-Art façade. The result was a new movie theater within the exterior walls of the old theater. The floors, the proscenium, and the lobby were completely remodeled, and a modern marquee was added above the entrance door.

The Mayfair Theater was born within the shell of The Auditorium and it opened in 1941.<sup>24</sup> During the next 45 years the theater was subjected to two other remodelings. In 1960 it was equipped with 70mm projectors and in 1963 the front of the building and the entrance door were redone. Following World War Two and the massive move of the population from cities into the suburban area, during the 1950s, the theater was relegated to showing grade B action movies.<sup>25</sup>

The Mayfair Theater was working as a movie theater until 1986. In 1987 the building was acquired by the city and there were some plans for its renovation but none of them came true. It was abandoned, slowly decaying and dissipating. In 1998 its roof collapsed, and the process of its decadence accelerated. In 2014 a fire in the adjacent building harmed the structure more to a state that city engineer claimed that it was not structurally sound. After the evaluation, they demolished the unsafe parts. The Beaux-Arts façade and a small portion behind it anchored by two concrete staircases located on both sides of the lobby was regarded safe and thus remains.<sup>26</sup>



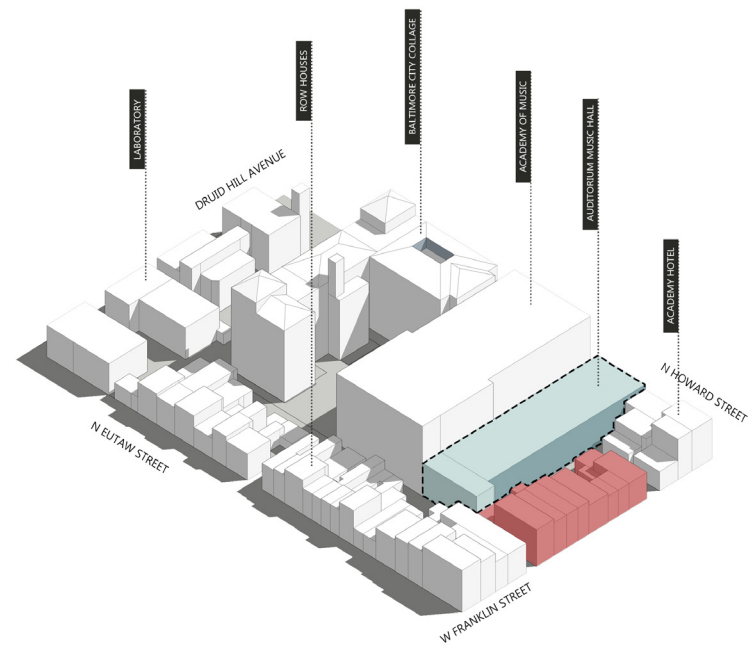
**Figure 48:**  
*The Mayfair Theater  
After The Roof  
Collapsed in  
1998*



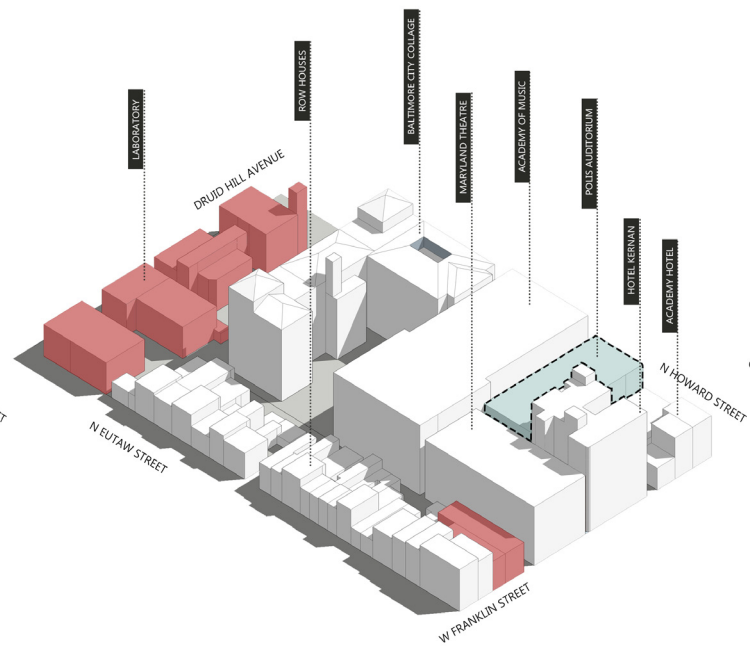
**Figure 49:** *The Mayfair Theater After The Roof Collapsed in 1998.*



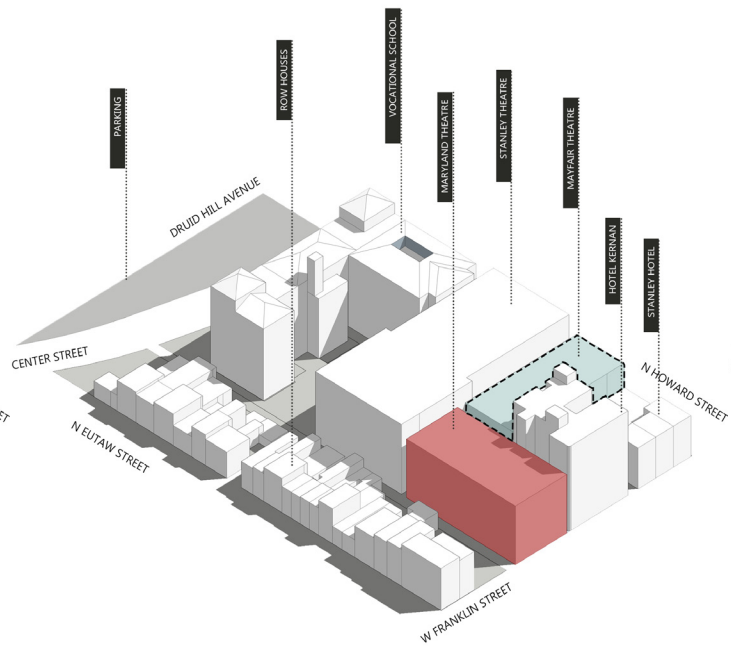
**Figure 50:** *The Mayfair Theater After Partial Demolition in 2016.*



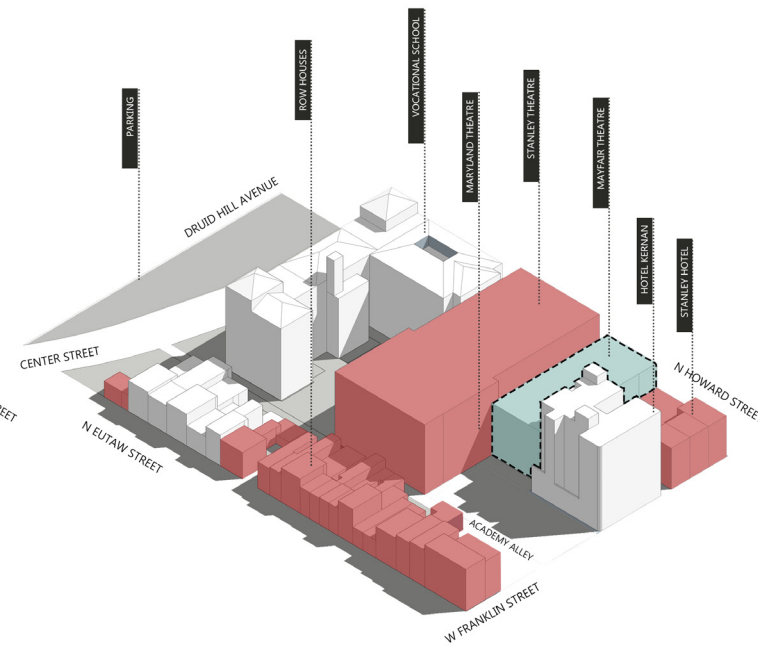
YEAR 1901



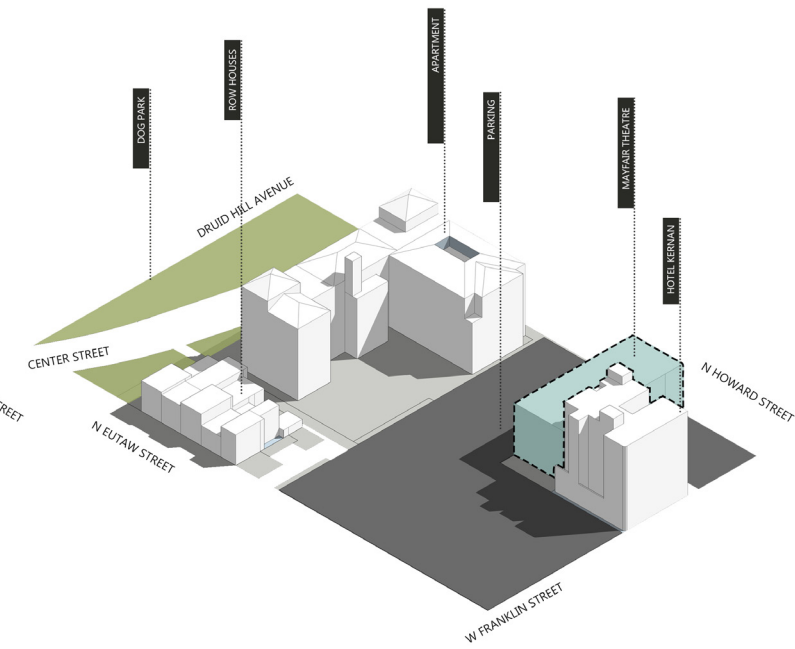
YEAR 1914



YEAR 1950



YEAR 1952



PRESENT

## Urban Block Transformation since 1901 until present

The urban block in which the Mayfair Theater is located went under an extreme transformation since 1901. The block is limited by W Center Street to the north, North Howard Street to the east, North Eutaw Street to the west, and W Franklin Street to the south.

As you can see in the diagrams above, the urban block in which the site of the project is located transformed from a compact urban block to its present condition which is mainly parking lots. In 1901 the block contained The Auditorium, The Academy of Music, Academy Hotel, Baltimore College and several row houses. By 1914, a group of row houses facing Franklin Street was replaced by the Maryland

Theater and the Kernan Hotel. 36 years later the Maryland Theater was razed and replaced by a parking lot. The Stanley Theater which had been built on the site of the Academy of Music in 1927, was demolished in 1965. Further, several other row houses that were facing the Eutaw Street was demolished. The site of these demolished buildings are currently used as a parking lot.

## Urban Block Map

In these maps you can see how the urban block changed over a century. North Howard Street that works as an important corridor in the area, used to be a very lively urban street.

As can be seen on the map it offered a variety of entertainment such as a bowling alley, clubs, shops, movie theater and art studio most of which was gradually demolished. Today the street is rather lifeless, considering a huge part of the lands adjacent to it is parking areas.

Figure 51: Sanborn Map 1901



YEAR 1901

Figure 52: Sanborn Map 1914



YEAR 1914

Figure 53: Sanborn Map 1950



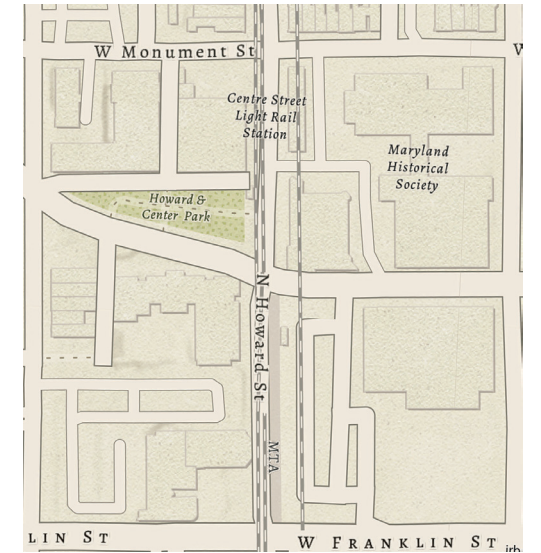
YEAR 1950

Figure 54: Sanborn Map 1952



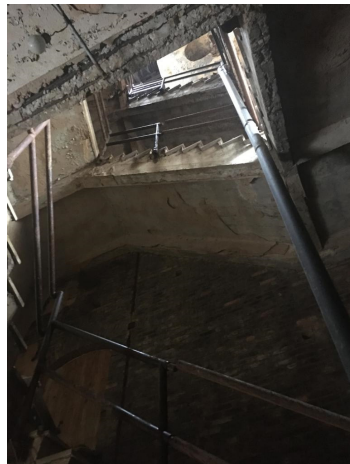
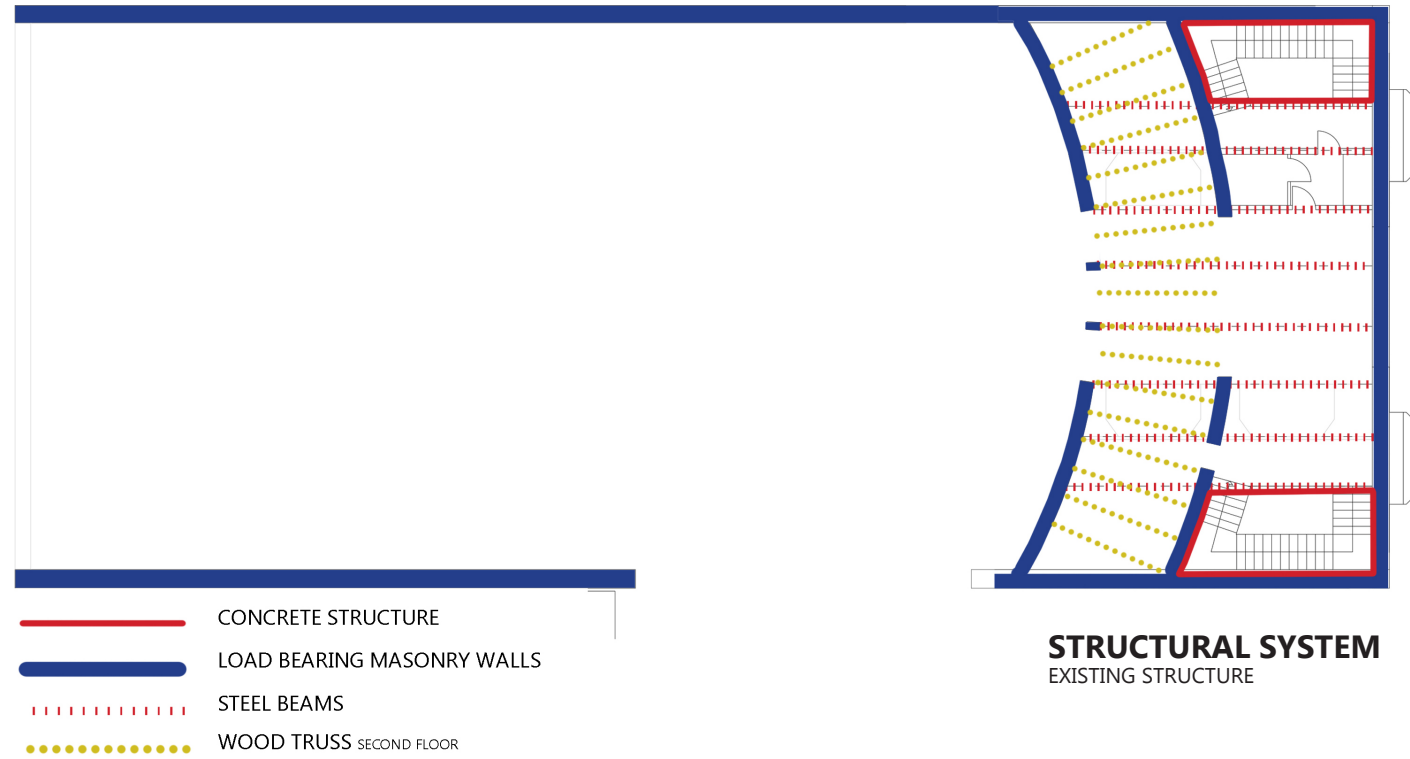
YEAR 1952

Figure 55: Current Map

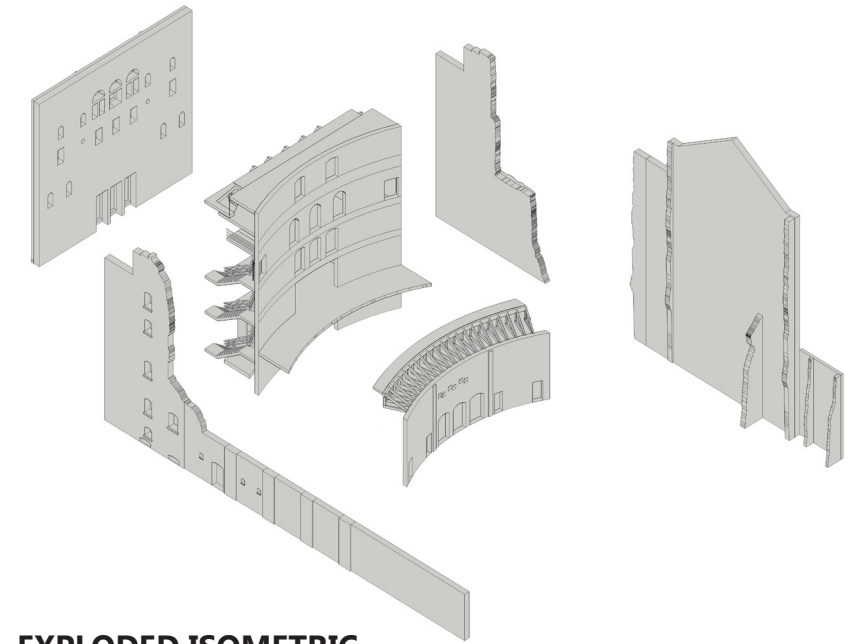


YEAR 2021

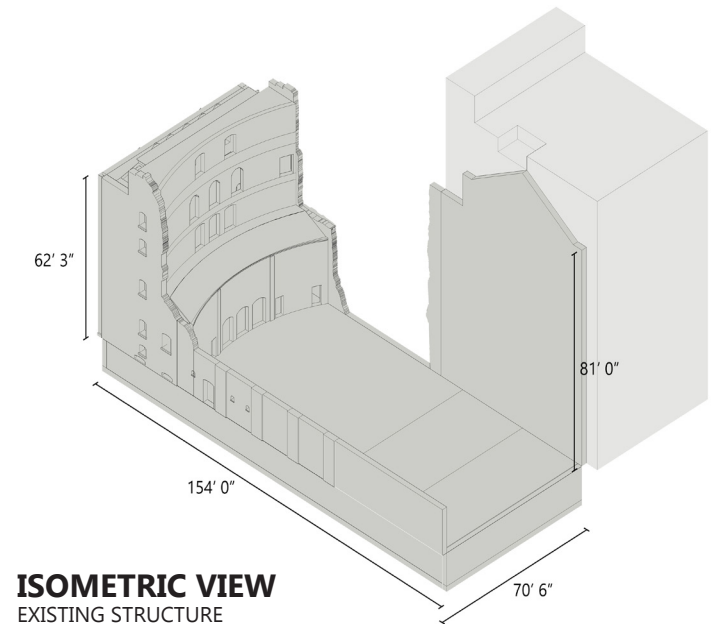
## Existing Structure



What remains of the Mayfair Theater are parts of the south and north brick walls, the white terra cotta façade (on the east) and about 40 feet depth of the building behind the façade that was the lobby. There are two concrete staircases right behind the façade on both sides that access all the four floors and the basement. The exterior brick walls and the two curved wall that used to be part of the interior, are two feet thick load bearing walls.



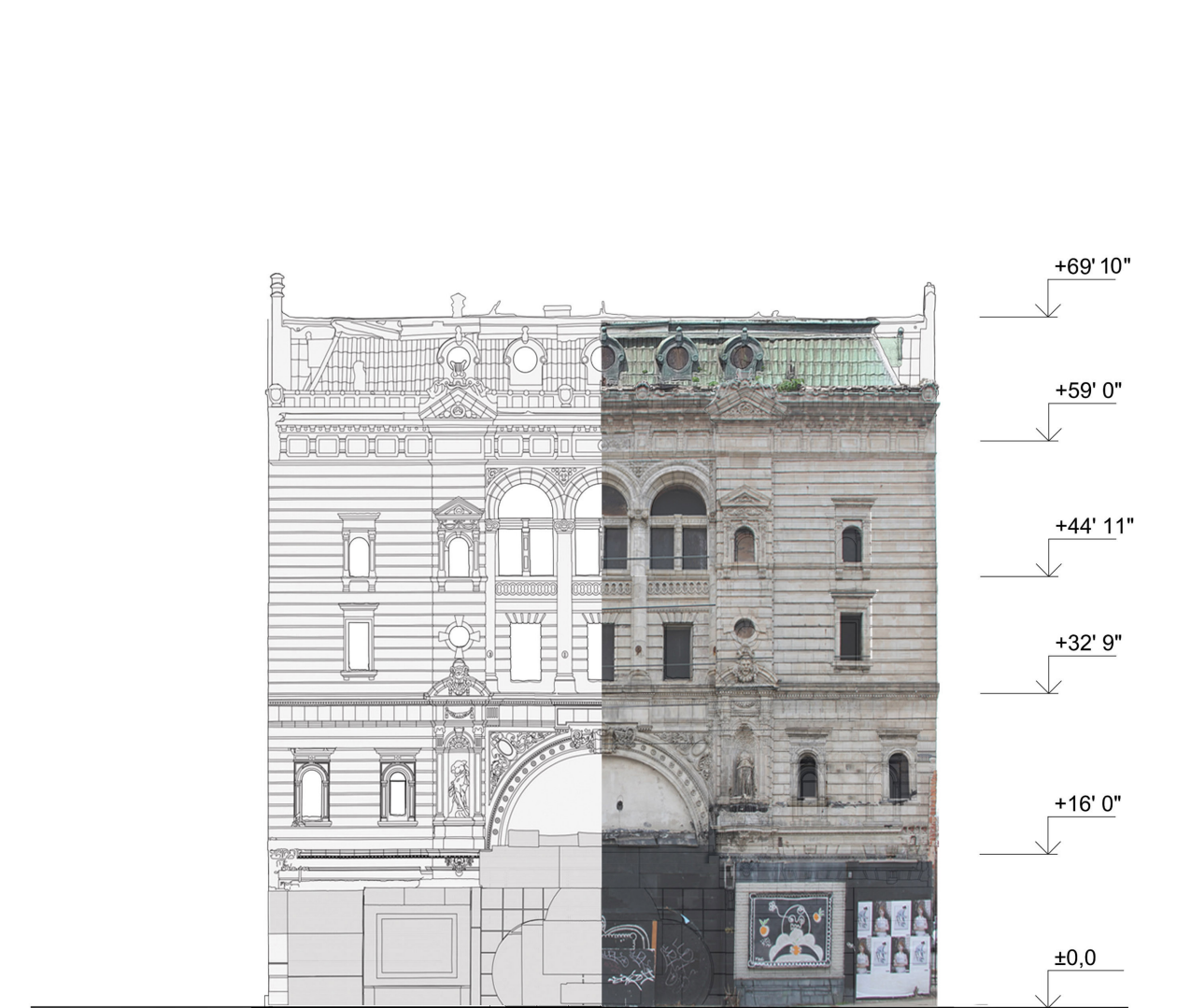
**EXPLODED ISOMETRIC**  
EXISTING STRUCTURE



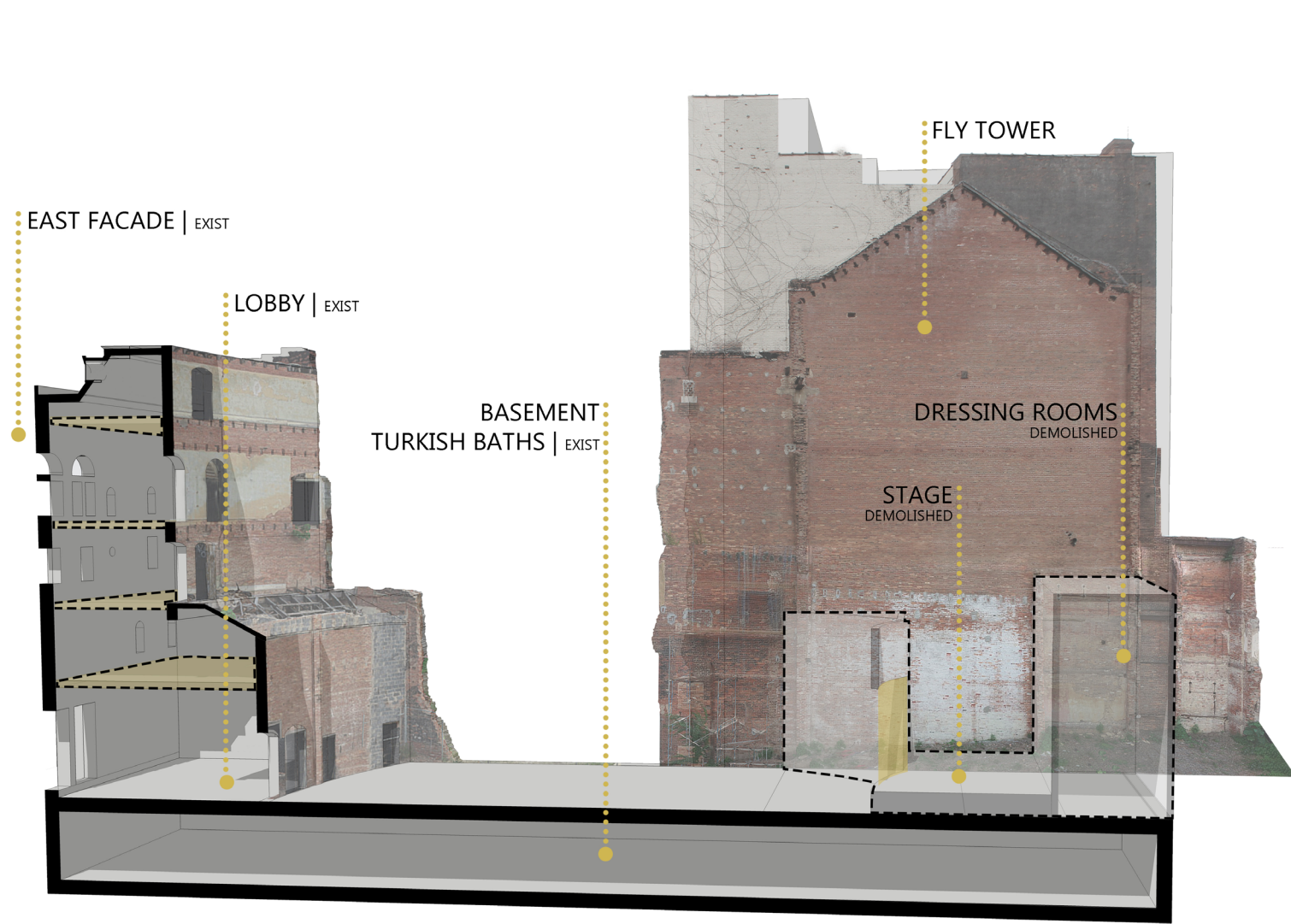
# Existing Elevation



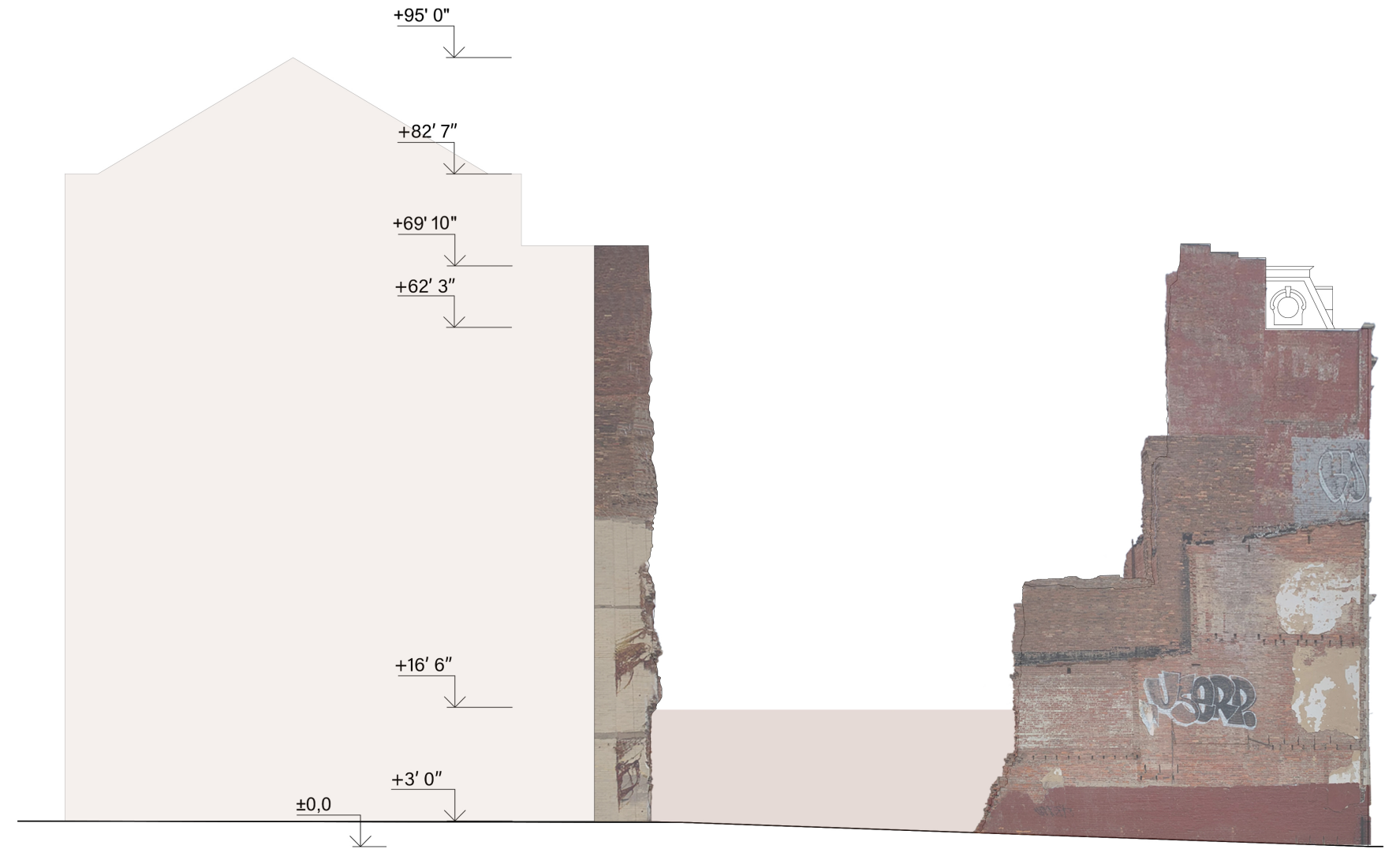
10 20 50  
**NORTH ELEVATION | EXISTING**



10 20 50  
**EAST ELEVATION | EXISTING**

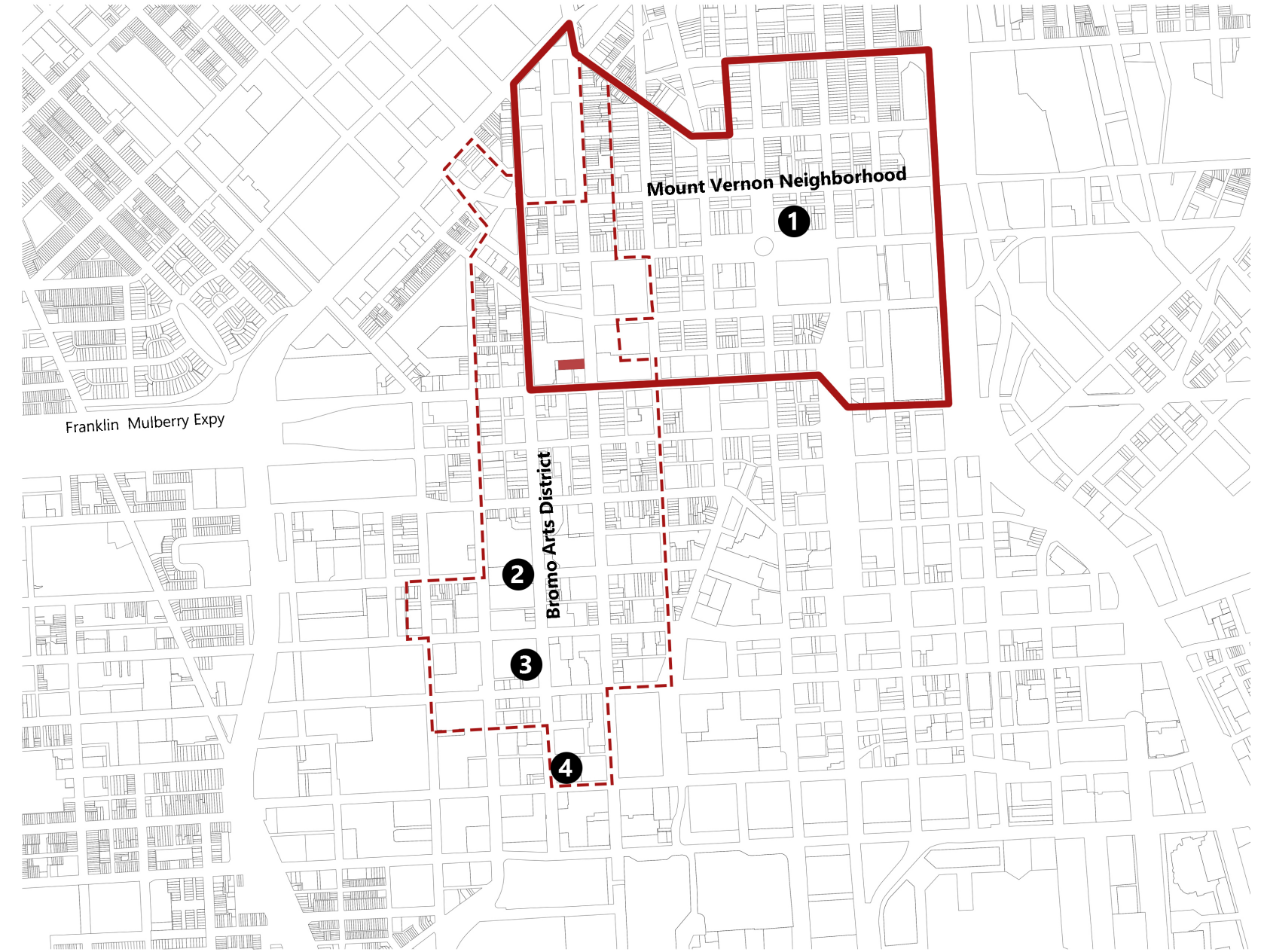


SECTION PERSPECTIVE | LOOKING TOWARD SOUTH | EXISTING



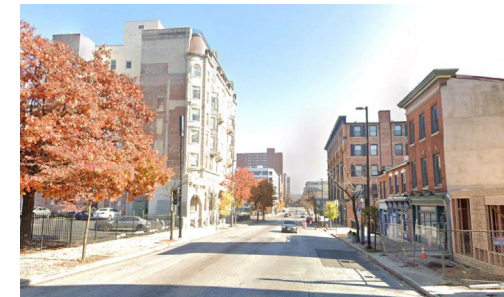
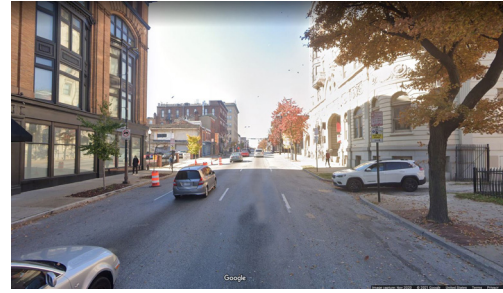
SOUTH ELEVATION | EXISTING

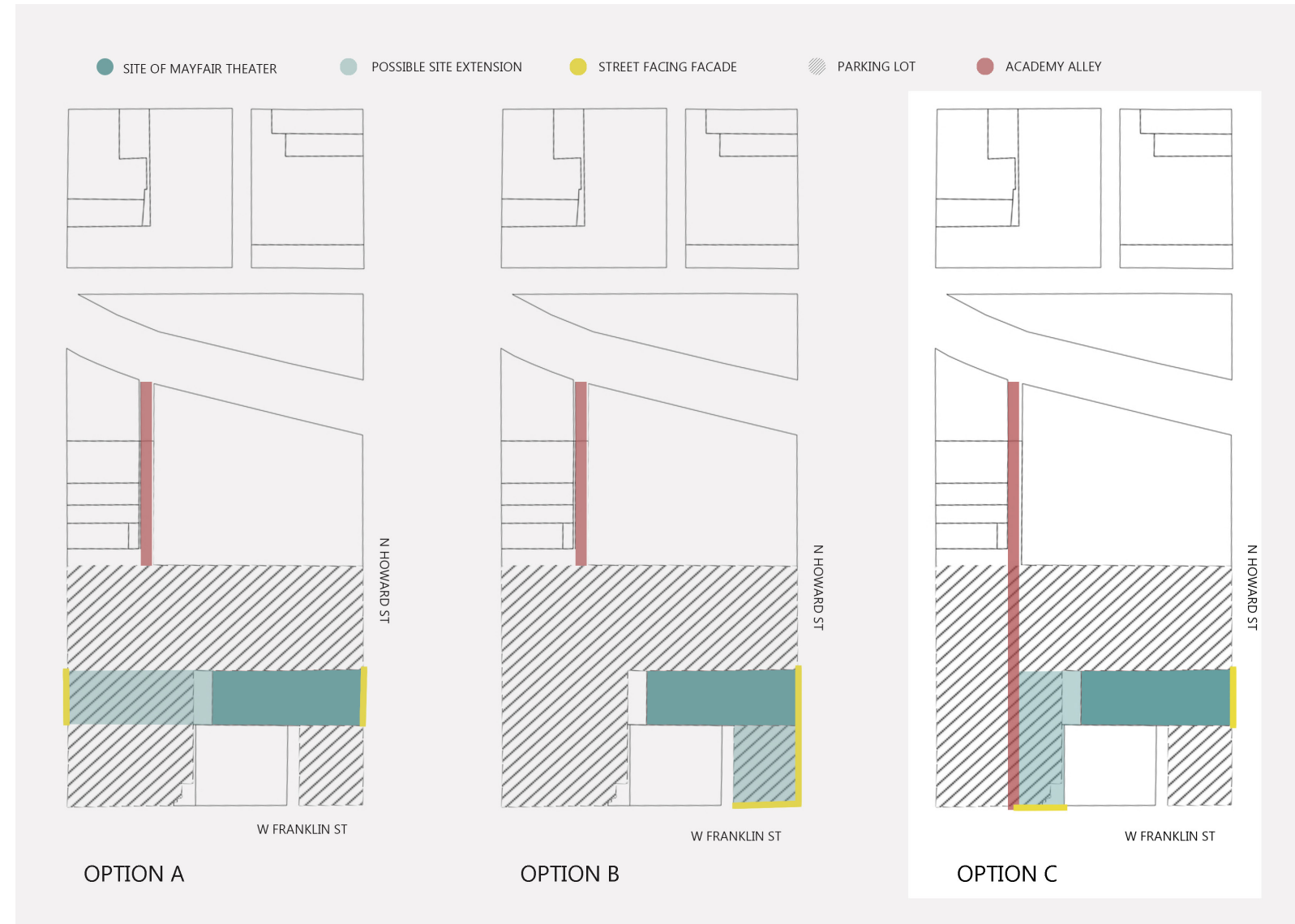
# Site Analysis



1. Washington Monument 2. Lexington Market 3. Hippodrom Theater 4. Bromo Tower

The site of the **Mayfair Theater** is located in the Mount Vernon neighborhood. This area is one of the oldest areas in the city of Baltimore. It was once home to the wealthiest families of the town but today its demography has changed. The Washington Monument, located at the intersection of W Monument Street and Charles Street, is the landmark of the neighborhood and is on the northeast side of the site. The neighborhood is part of the historic district and is filled with museums, libraries, and other cultural assets. The area **was once home to grand theaters and performance venues**. The site of the project is also in an area that the city of Baltimore designated as **Bromo Arts District** in 2012. The arts district includes Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower on its southern border and the historic Lexington Market on its north side. There are several local independent artist-run spaces.

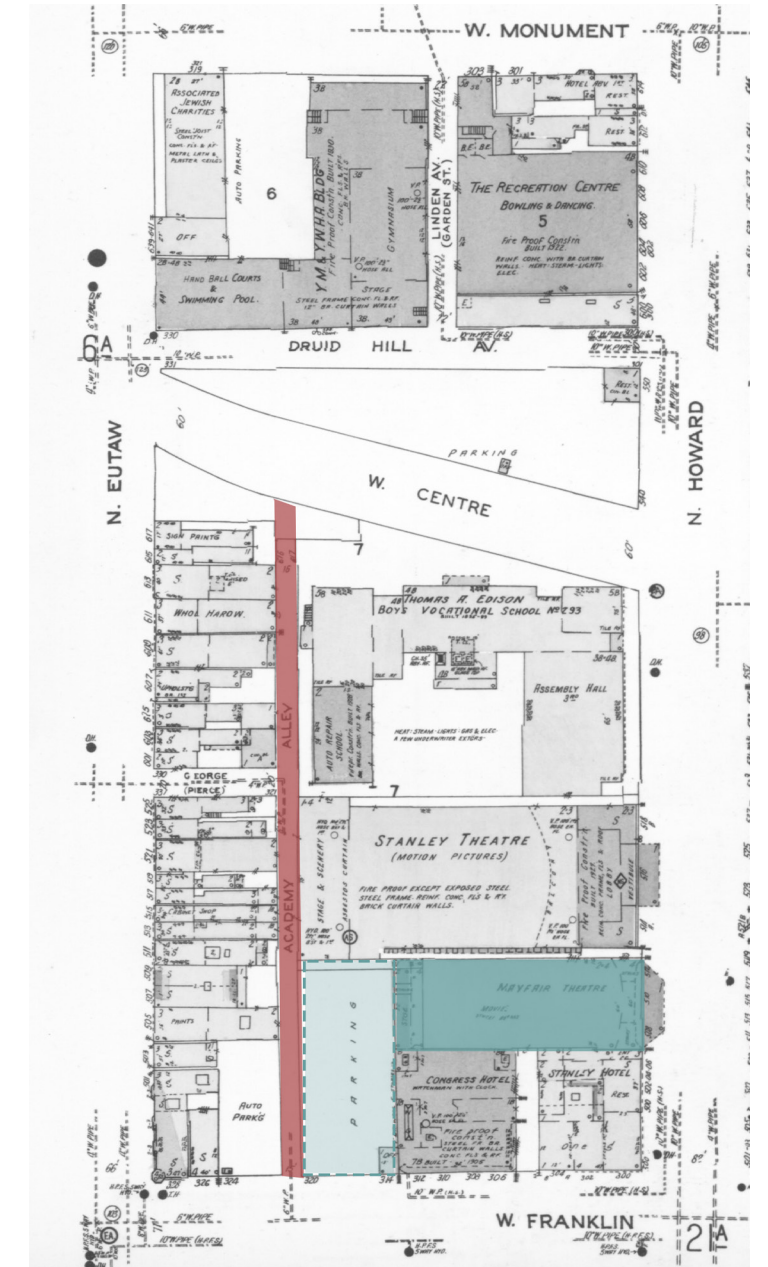




### Site Selection

The site of the Mayfair Theater is surrounded by vacant lots (which are currently parking areas) on the north, west, and (partly) south side. For the purpose of accommodating an educational section along with the performance part, I decided to take one of the adjacent vacant lots as an extension of my site.

From the old maps of Baltimore, there was an alley, called Academy Alley, right behind the site of the Mayfair Theater, and on the west side of Maryland Theater, running from north to south, and connecting Center Street to W Franklin Street. After demolishing most of the buildings on the block and turning their sites into the parking area, part of the Academy Alley was also removed. In the design proposal, I decided to revive the alley and take the vacant lot facing W Franklin Street which was the former home of the Maryland Theater. I decided so to respect the history and memory of the Mayfair Theater. These two buildings-along with the Kernan Hotel- were originally built around the same time and were parts of the previously described triple enterprise.



**PART III**

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DESIGN PROPOSAL



SITE PLAN

Based on the history of the building and its urban context I decided that the program of the building would be a **community center for performing arts**. The center would have an **educational section** on the vacant lot which was home to the Maryland Theater, and a **performance section** which is sitting within the shell of the ruined Mayfair Theater. These two parts work together and feed each other.



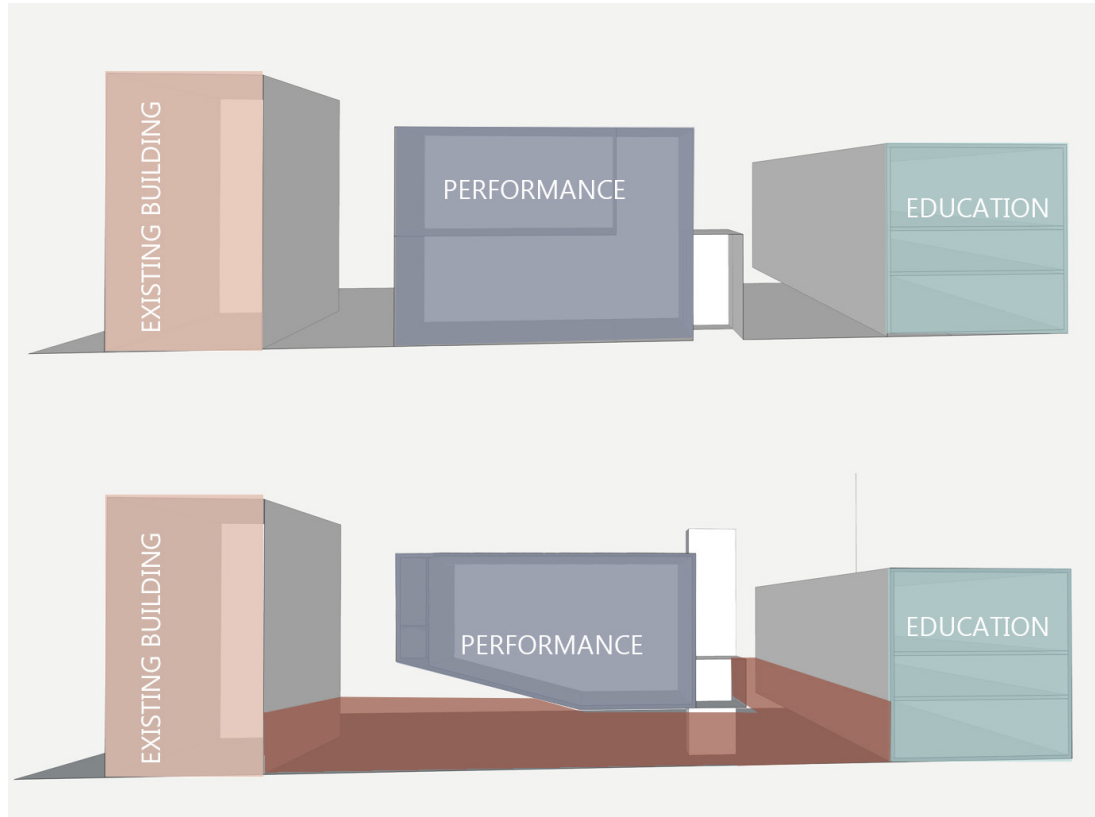
**The realization** of all the research, understanding, and knowledge developed from the initial work on this thesis to the architectural design, was not easy and straightforward. There was not one, consistent design approach for what to do. I considered the relationship between old and new for each existing architectural element, based on its individual situation, aiming to respect the ruin's materiality, and more importantly learning from its affordances. Initial designs focused on retaining the ruin while **celebrating its destruction** and creating a new space. There were strategies that I took in response to the physical remnants of the existing building, other strategies that **respect the lived memory of the building** (keeping traces of the old building, extending the balcony over the old arch), and some that are affected by what **I learned from the ruin itself** (unconventional hierarchy of

the passages, playing with boundaries of inside and outside, the idea of an open plaza, vegetation). One of the objectives that I tried to achieve in the design was to create an informal space. Ruin with all of its qualities that I tried to understand, for myself, is a representation of flexible informal space. Even though some see them as useless spaces, they afford different kinds of activity: a shelter for the homeless, a playground for teenagers, an exploring site for photographers, a hidden place for addicts, a canvas for the artist. It is a place where different activities interestingly can **co-exist**. I tried to remember and continue this spirit in the new design. The decision about the plaza was affected by this. The idea was to create a loose free space where a variety of activities can happen inside it. The design retains most of the existing elements. The elements that remain in the new design, apart

from loadbearing walls were:

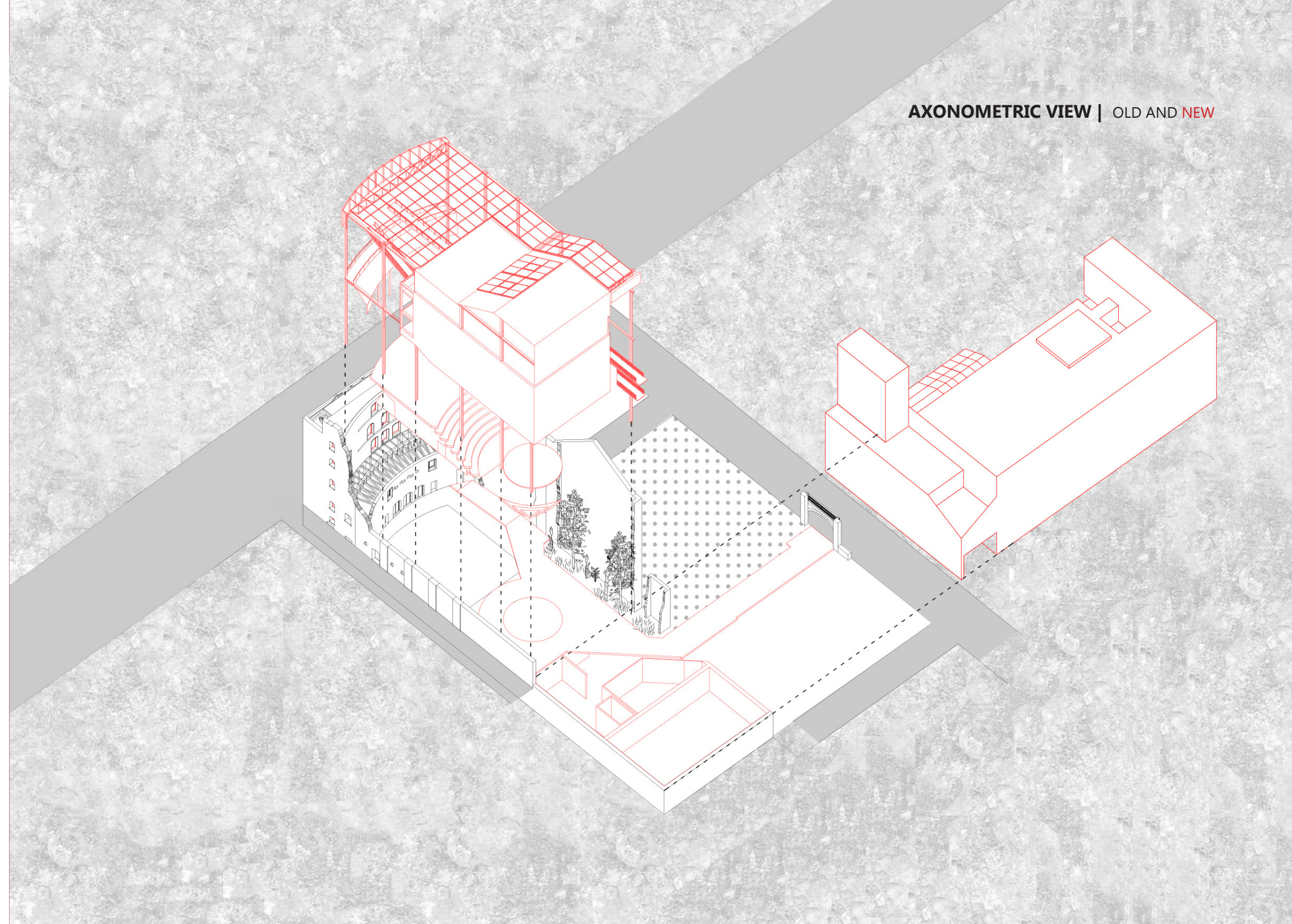
- **old wooden doors** of the main lobby
- **wallpaper**
- two **concrete staircases** on both sides of the Lobby
- a series of **wooden trusses** that previously supported part of the second-floor roof – that part of the roof has fallen but the trusses were retained, despite the fact that they are not used as structure within the new design.

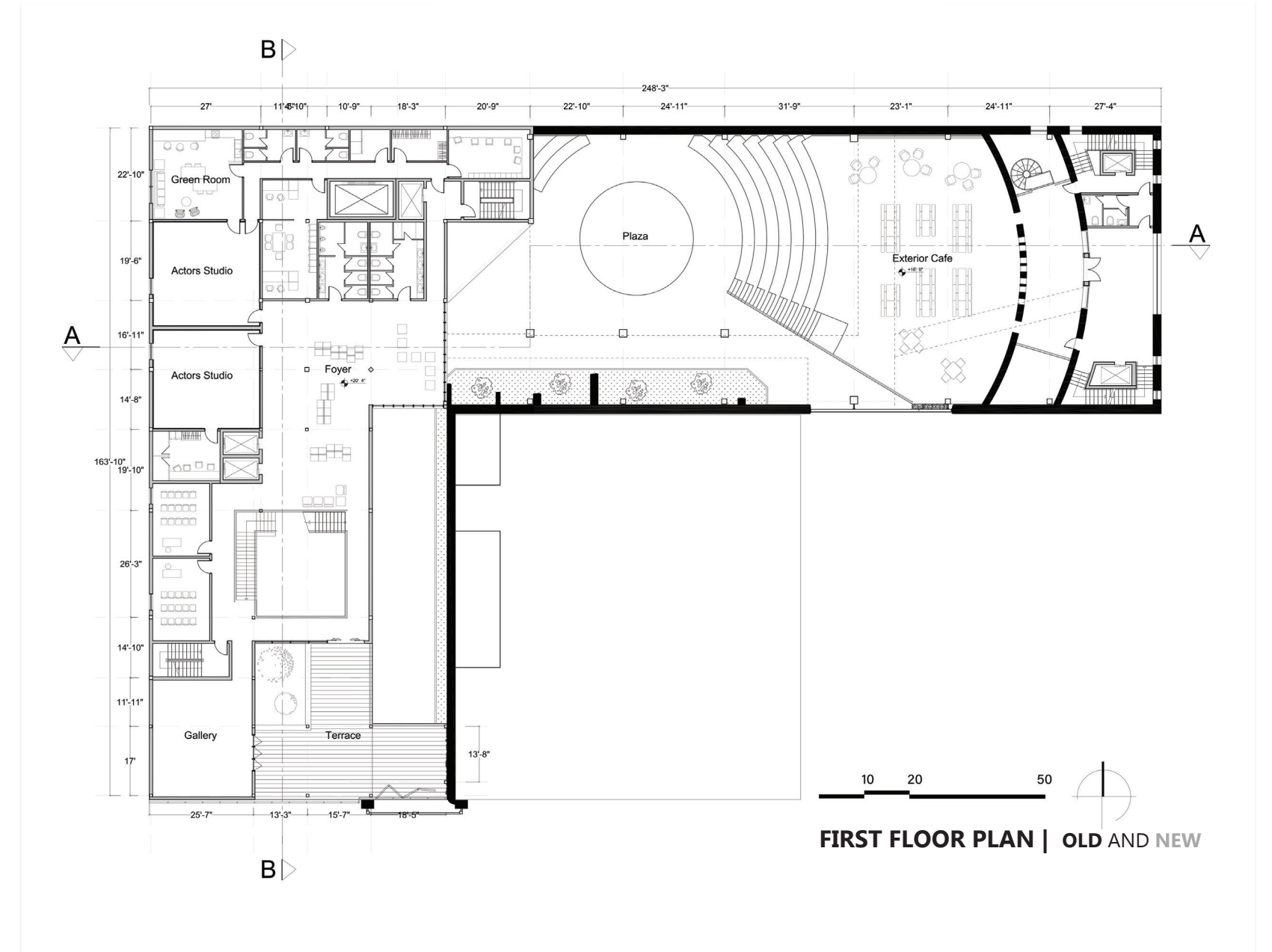
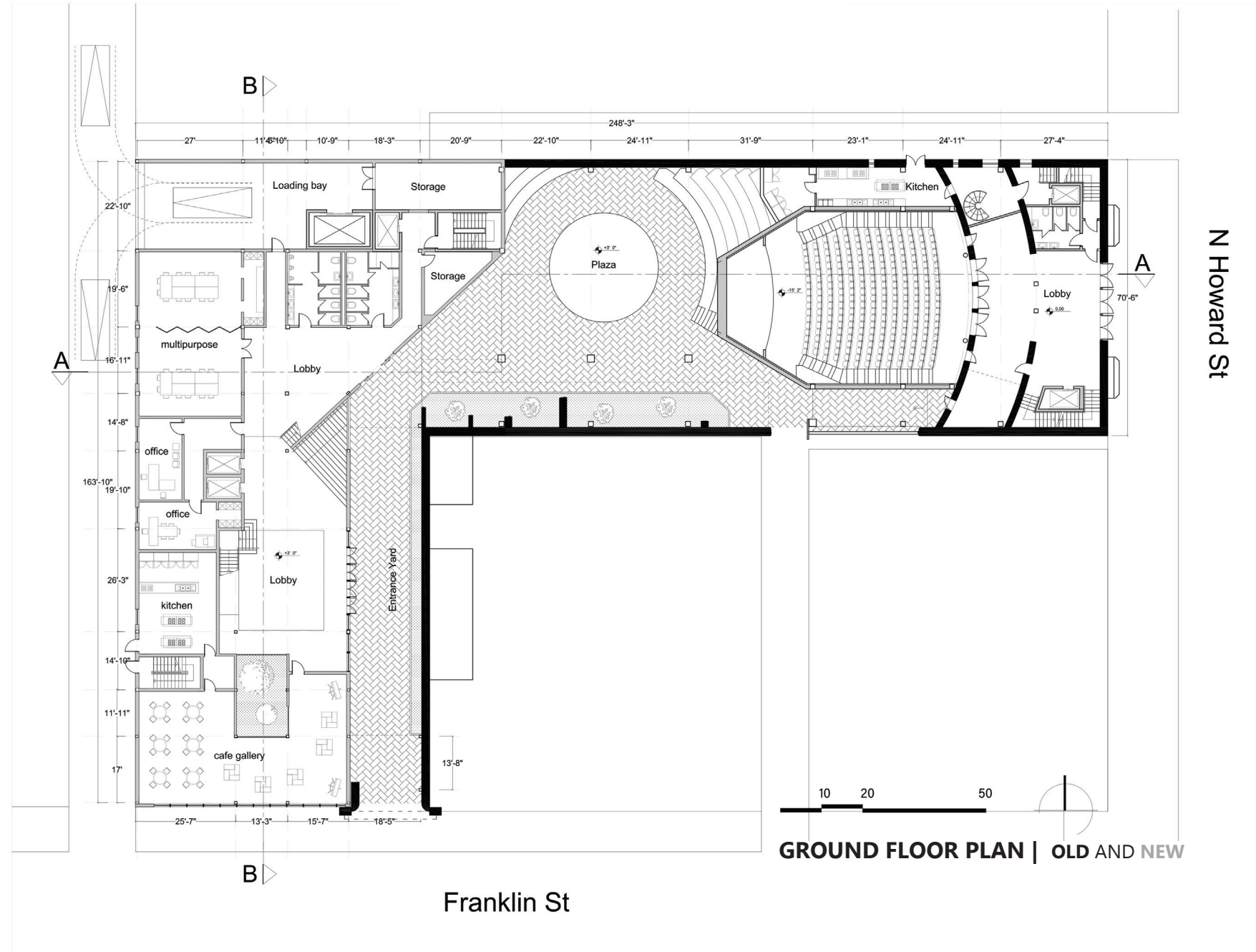
All the scars of the building reveal the past lives of the building and the people in it. So, all the small elements that I kept, from the perspective of heritage, do not have any value. But they show the traces of the life that happened in this building, and they express the passage of time.

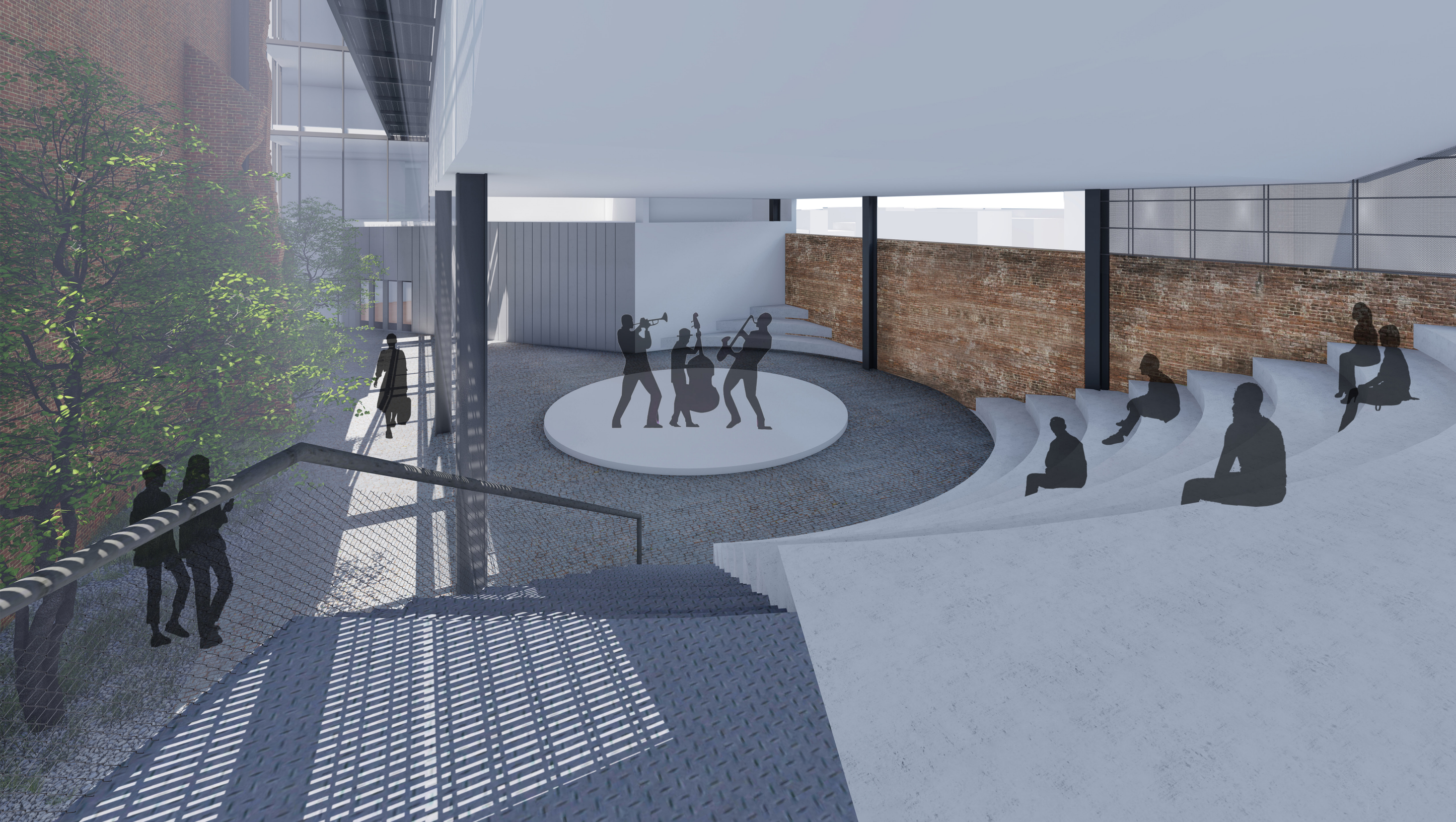


**Informal Public Space**

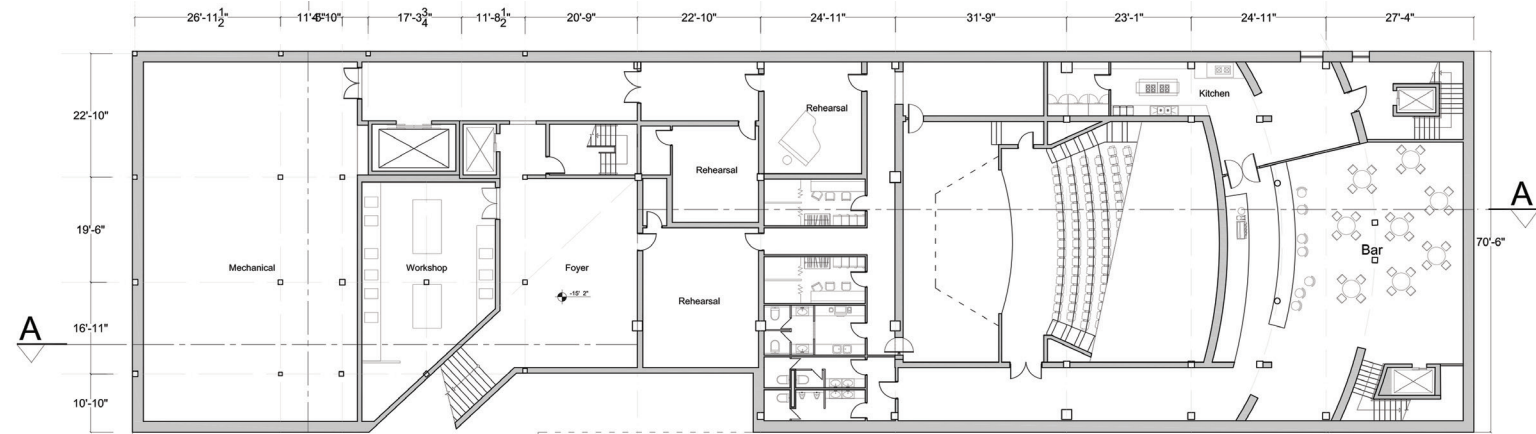
One of the concepts for the design was that I wanted to be a public and welcoming building, inviting users and outsiders alike to engage the public space. By elevating the theater above ground, and creating a plaza underneath, the building frees up more open space for the neighborhood, providing a public place for gathering and casual street performances and other kinds of activities



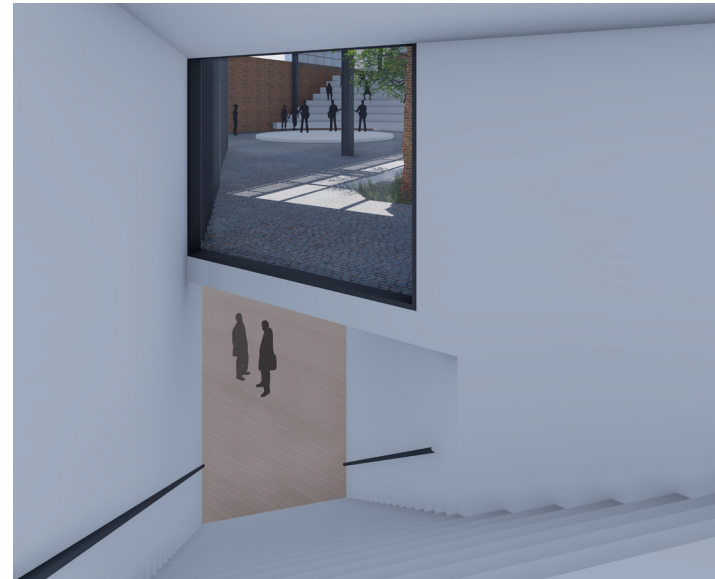
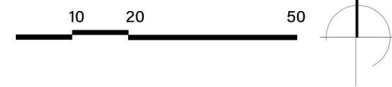




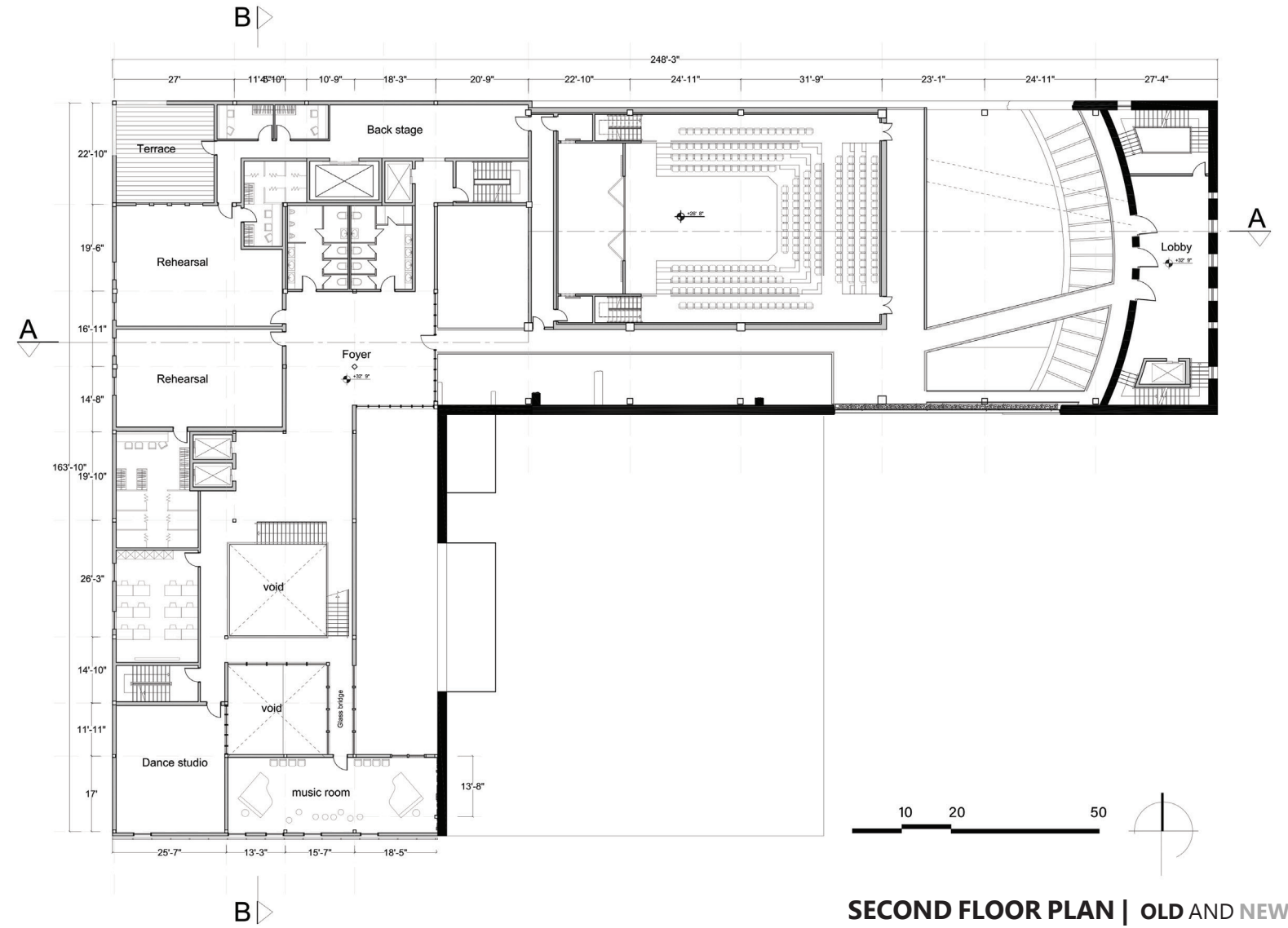
**The plaza** is accessible through two primary entrances: one from Franklin Street through the remaining arch and another one from an alley, east of the Congress Apartment (former Kernan Hotel). There is also a secondary entrance to the plaza through the main lobby. By having the character of a **free passage**, it connects the building to the life of the neighborhood. By playing with the boundaries of outside and inside it becomes **less a fortress of culture**, and more open and inclusive to a broader public. This way, a building that has had many different functions in its past and which has played different parts in the lives of many people, once again will **serve an entire community**.



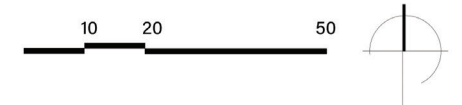
**BASEMENT PLAN**

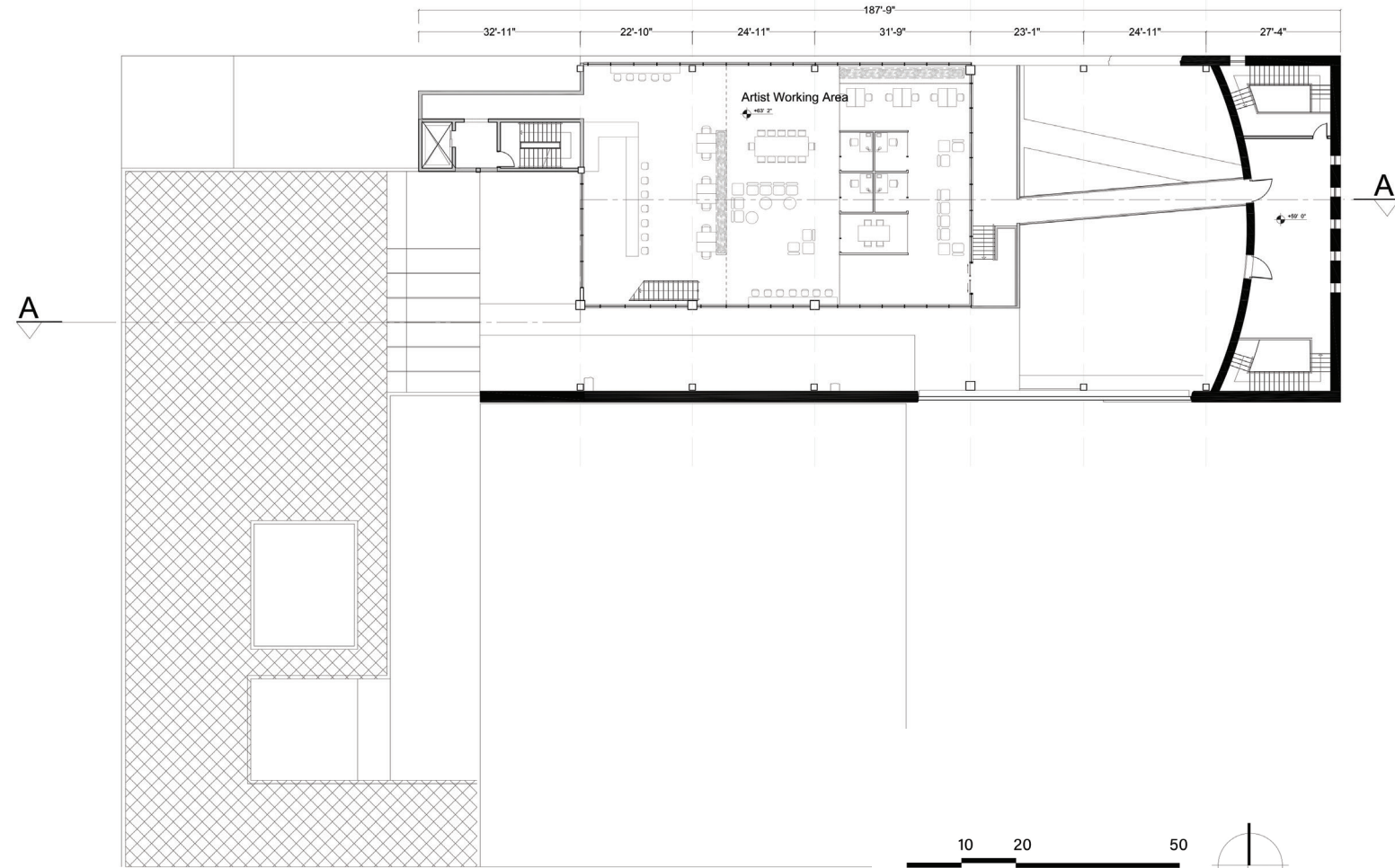


In the original design of Kernan's entertainment complex, the three buildings were connected through **underground passages and interior halls**. In the new design, the performance space has an auditorium in the basement which is connected to the ground floor foyer of the educational part.

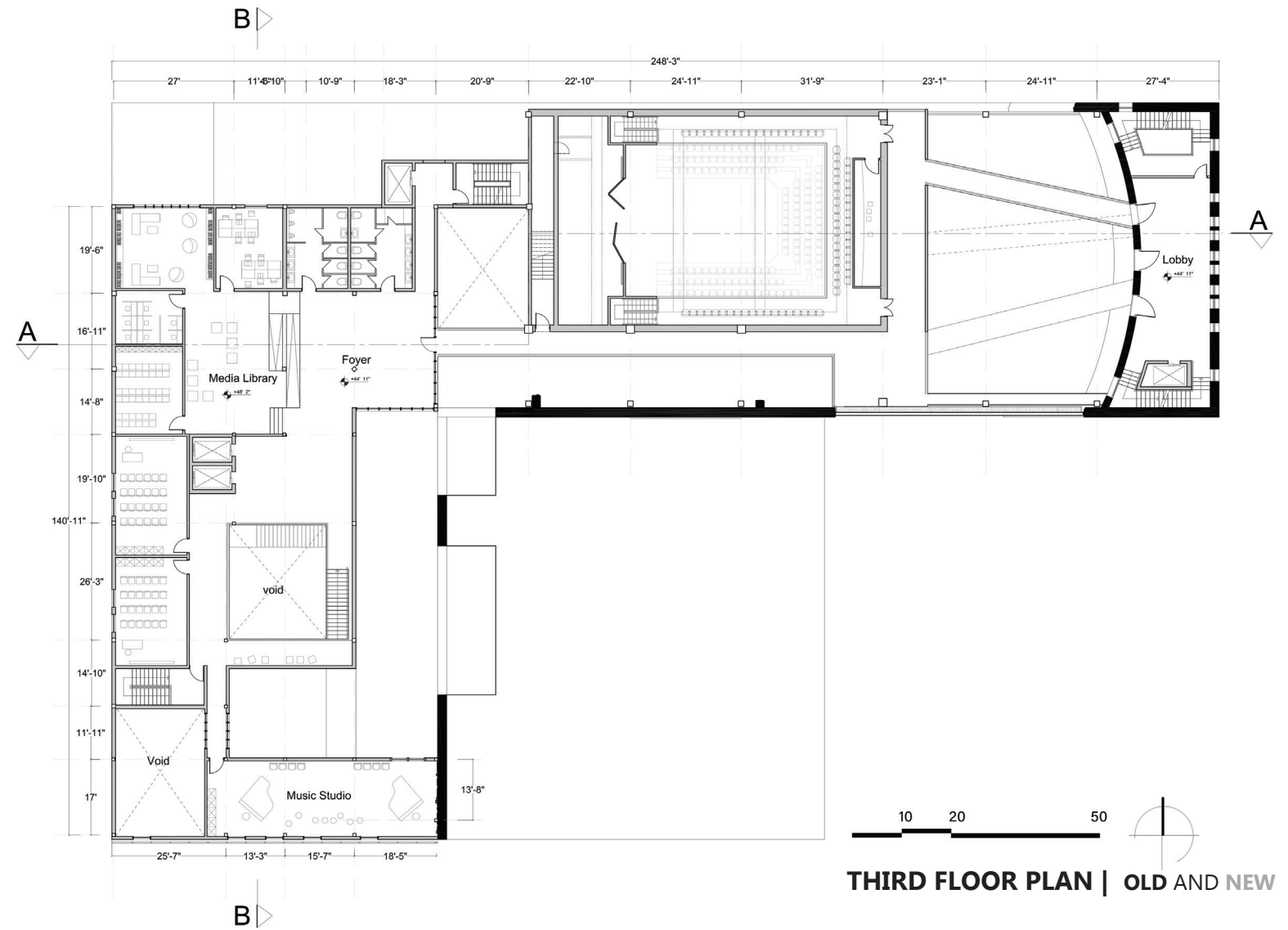


**SECOND FLOOR PLAN | OLD AND NEW**

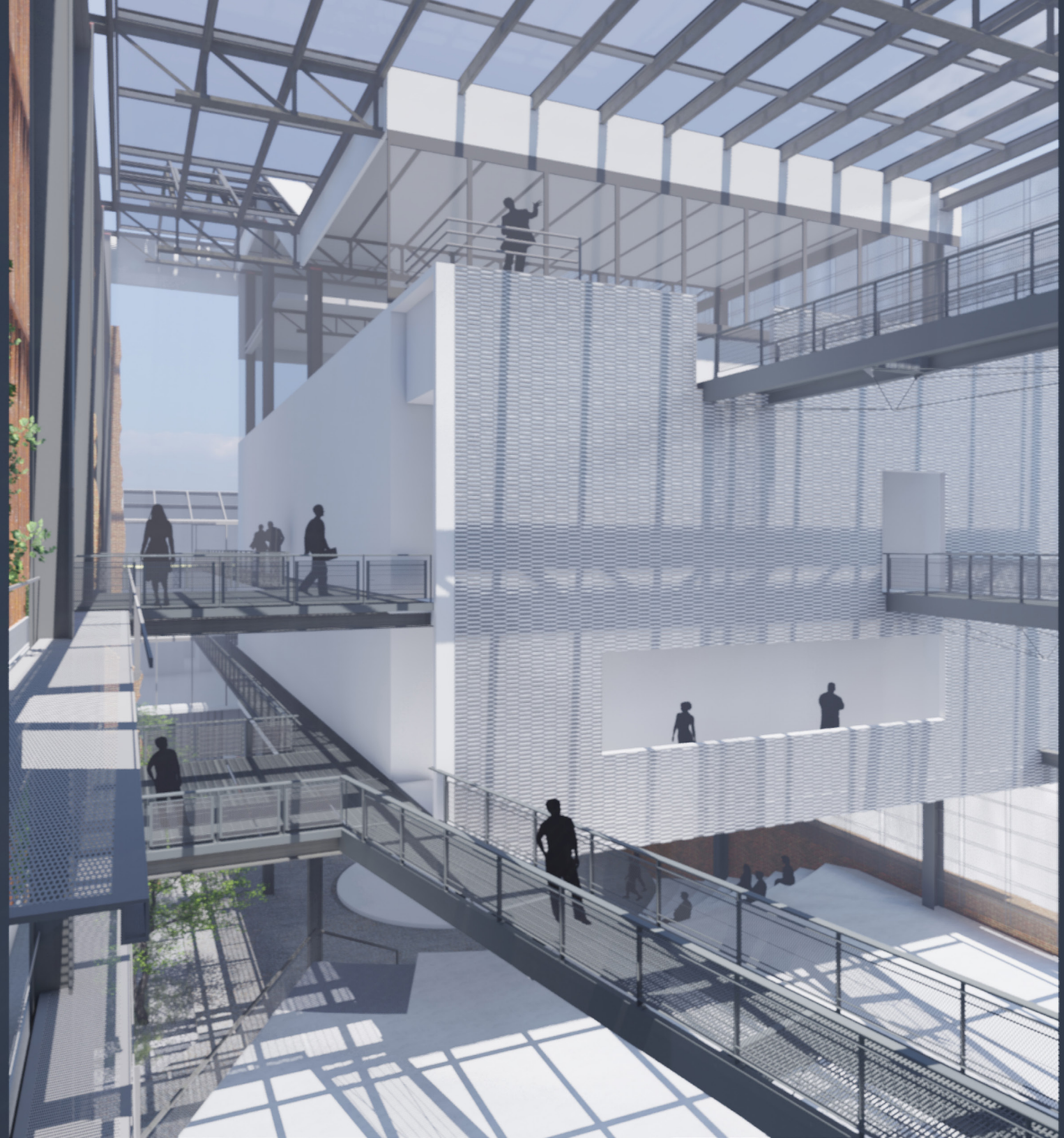




FOURTH FLOOR PLAN | OLD AND NEW

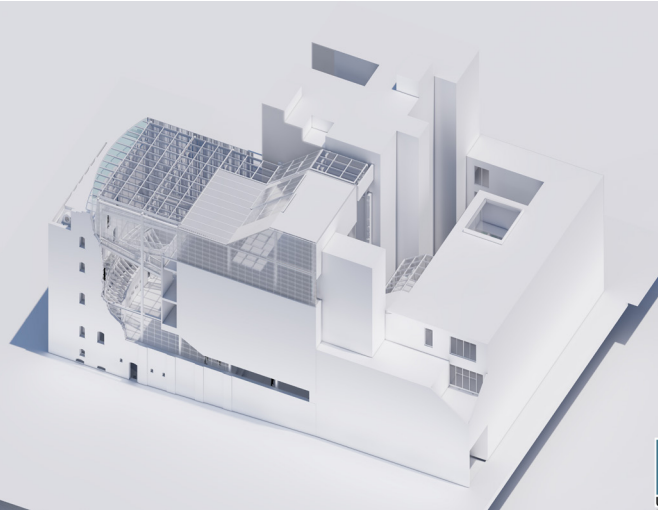


THIRD FLOOR PLAN | OLD AND NEW



FIFTH FLOOR PLAN

The main lobby from the old building works as the lobby for the new building as well. On upper floors the old lobby connects to the new amphitheater and the educational part through **a series of bridges** and elevated pathways, stitching the old and the new together. Although this decision might not respond precisely to the conventional typologies of theaters, it makes the space full of **peculiarity, provoking surprising experiences and circulations.**

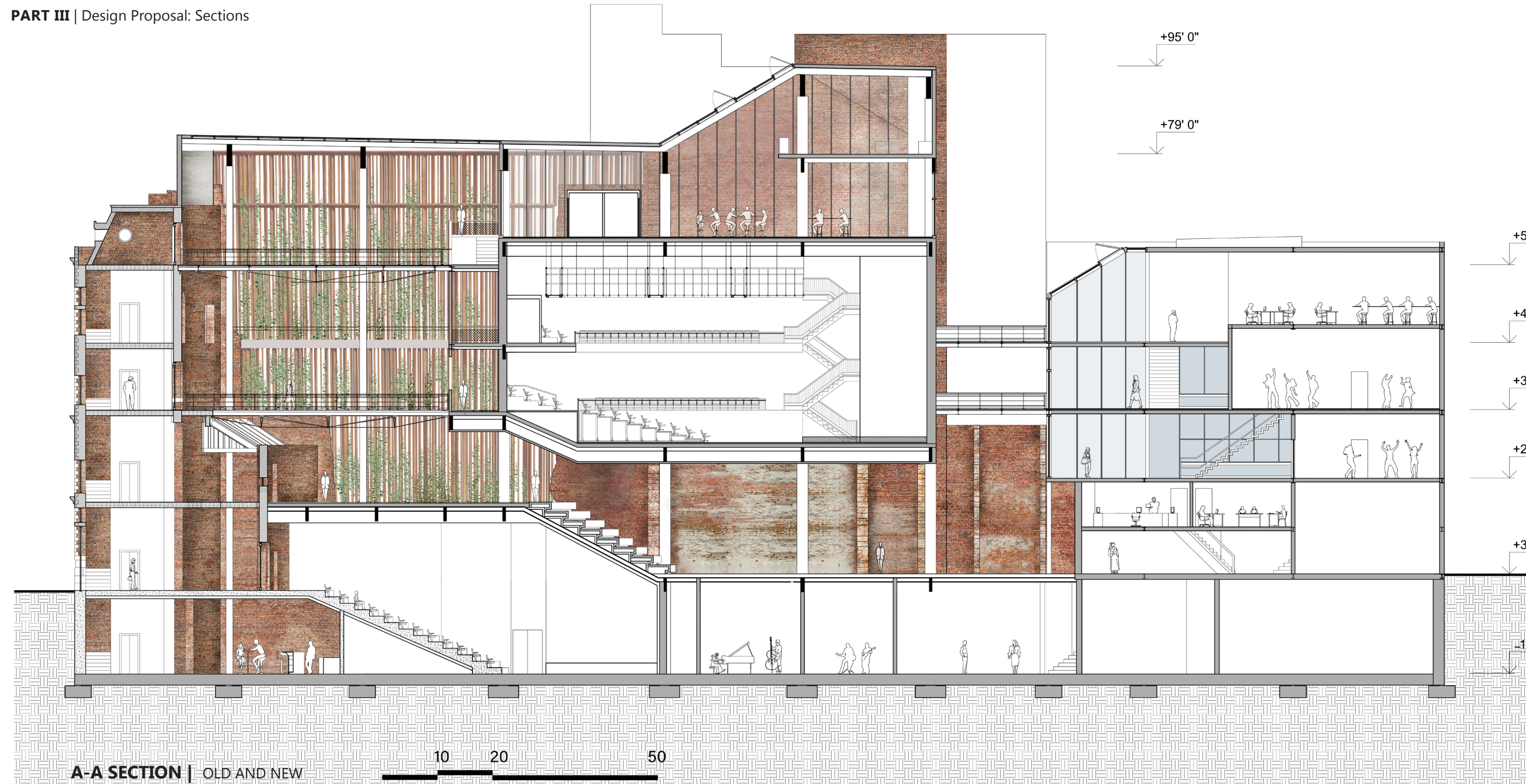


## MATERIAL PALETTE | EXTERIOR | OLD AND NEW

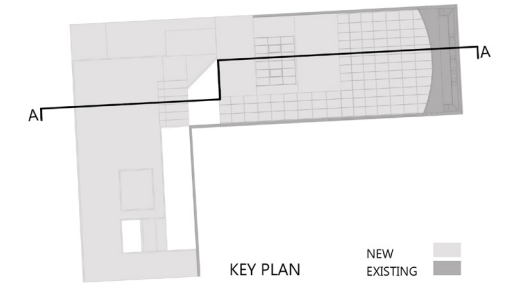


**The material** that I used for the new structure is steel. In contrast to the heavy massive existing structure, it provides a lighter feeling. Corten steel is used in facades. It is a durable material, shows the passage of time, and makes an interesting dialogue with the existing brick material. Steel mesh is used in the façade of educational area, in the interior, and wraps the main auditorium. Glass is used in the roof of the atrium and around the

courtyard. There are small gardens along the linear yard and in the plaza, and flower boxes that are installed within the Corten steel slats for ivy. By bringing the greenery to the building I was trying to **blur the boundaries** between inside and outside. I used **inexpensive and ordinary materials that make the place look informal**. In that way it would be more welcoming and less intimidating for the residents of the area.

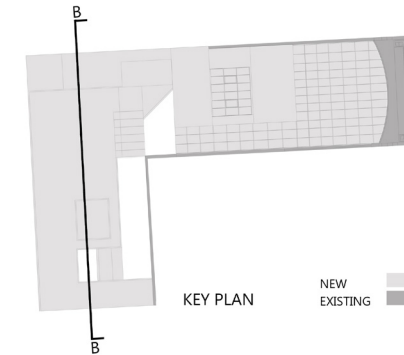
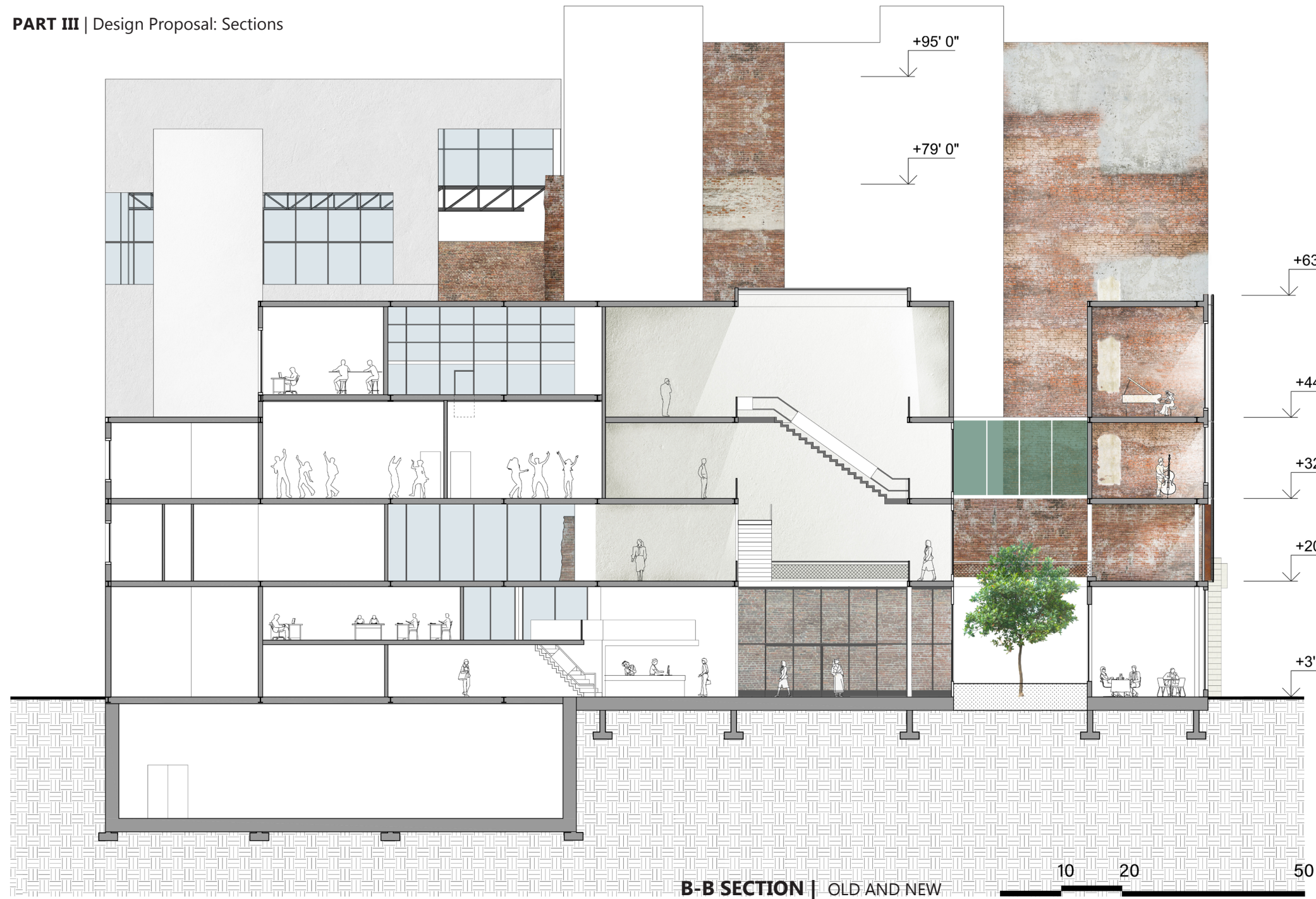


A-A SECTION | OLD AND NEW



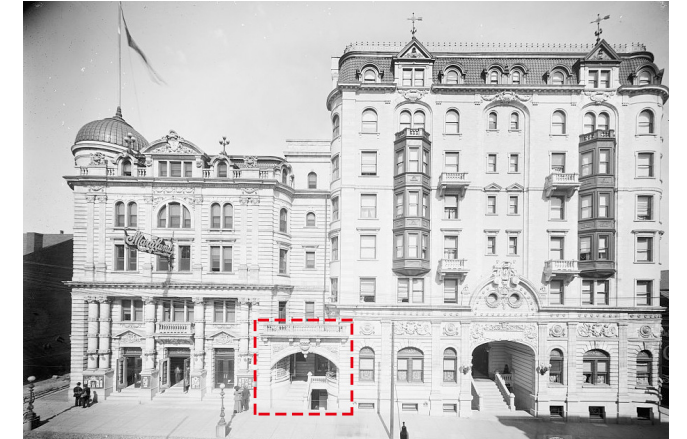
The design includes dance and music studios, rehearsal rooms, classrooms, gallery space, offices for the community center, and a gathering area in the educational area of the project. In addition, a flexible auditorium, a music venue, a public plaza, an outdoor gathering space and cafe, artist working areas, and an exhibition gallery all sits within the shell of the old building.

The Corten slat on the south side acts like a curtain. it's not structural, rather it is intended to be understood as a permeable surface against the massive construction typology of the existing buildings. Flower boxes are installed on the inner side of it so ivy can grow in between the Corten slats. The ivy helps with the cooling and shade for the outdoor cafe and makes an interesting combination with the Corten slats.

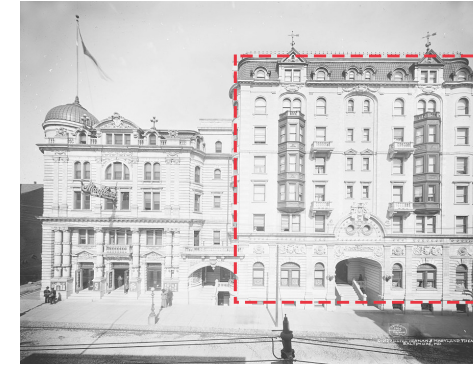


The only part left from the Maryland Theater is an **archway** that I used as the entrance to the educational area of the project. The linear yard behind the old arch also serves as an alley that connects to the plaza.

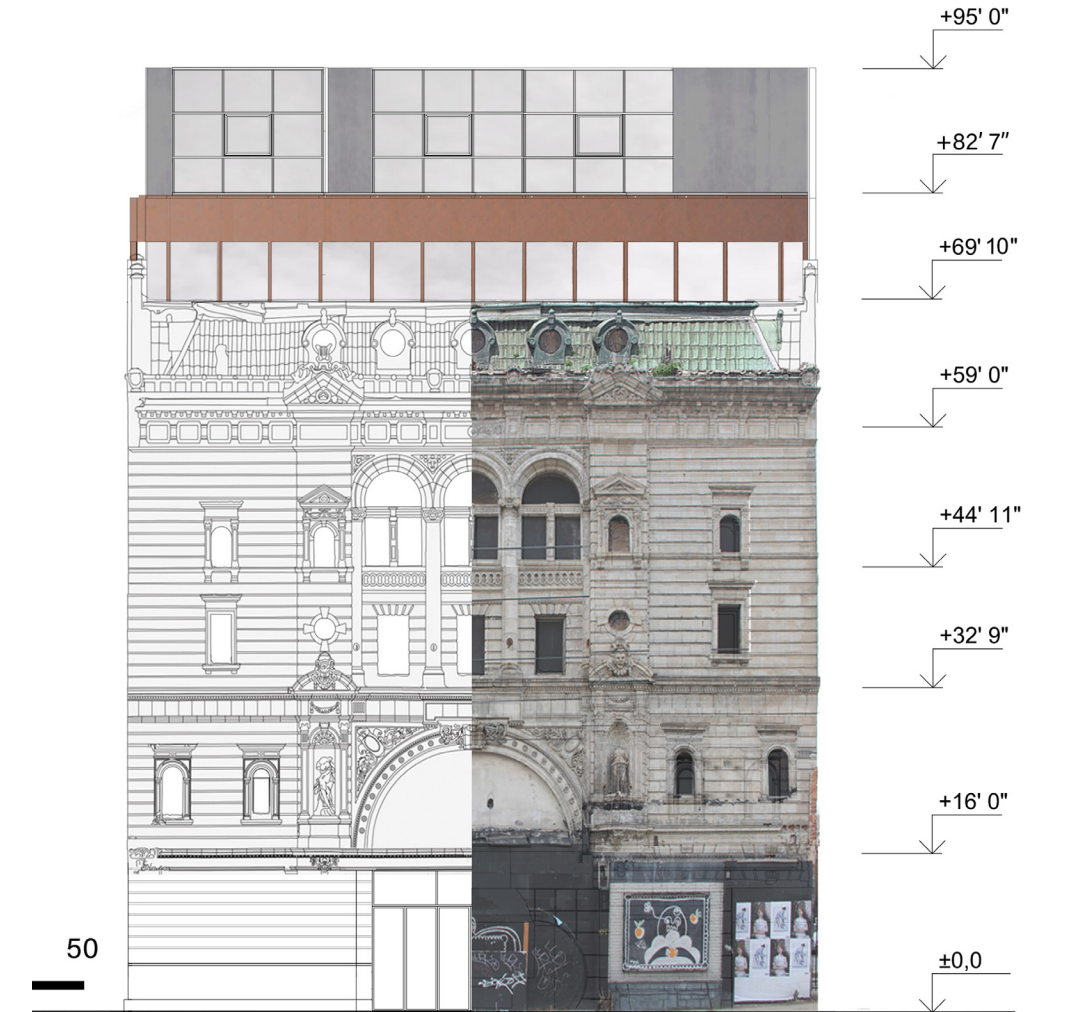
The old archway had a terrace above it in the original design. What remains of the terrace is its balustrade. Inspired by the original idea, a terrace was designed on the first level of educational area. The terrace is open to the entrance yard and to the small courtyard in the lobby. With operable panels above the old arch, the building also opens up to the street. From the street it becomes the **frame of a scene** that displays the movement of people on the inside to the neighborhood outside.



The new facade was designed to be **simple** and elegant to contrast with the adjacent and highly ornamented existing facade of the former Kernan Hotel. For that purpose, the facade is mainly covered by Corten steel mesh with operable panels in some parts. While it allows both light and sun into the space, it also hides the interior of the building behind the facade, allowing limited **glimpses of the inside**.

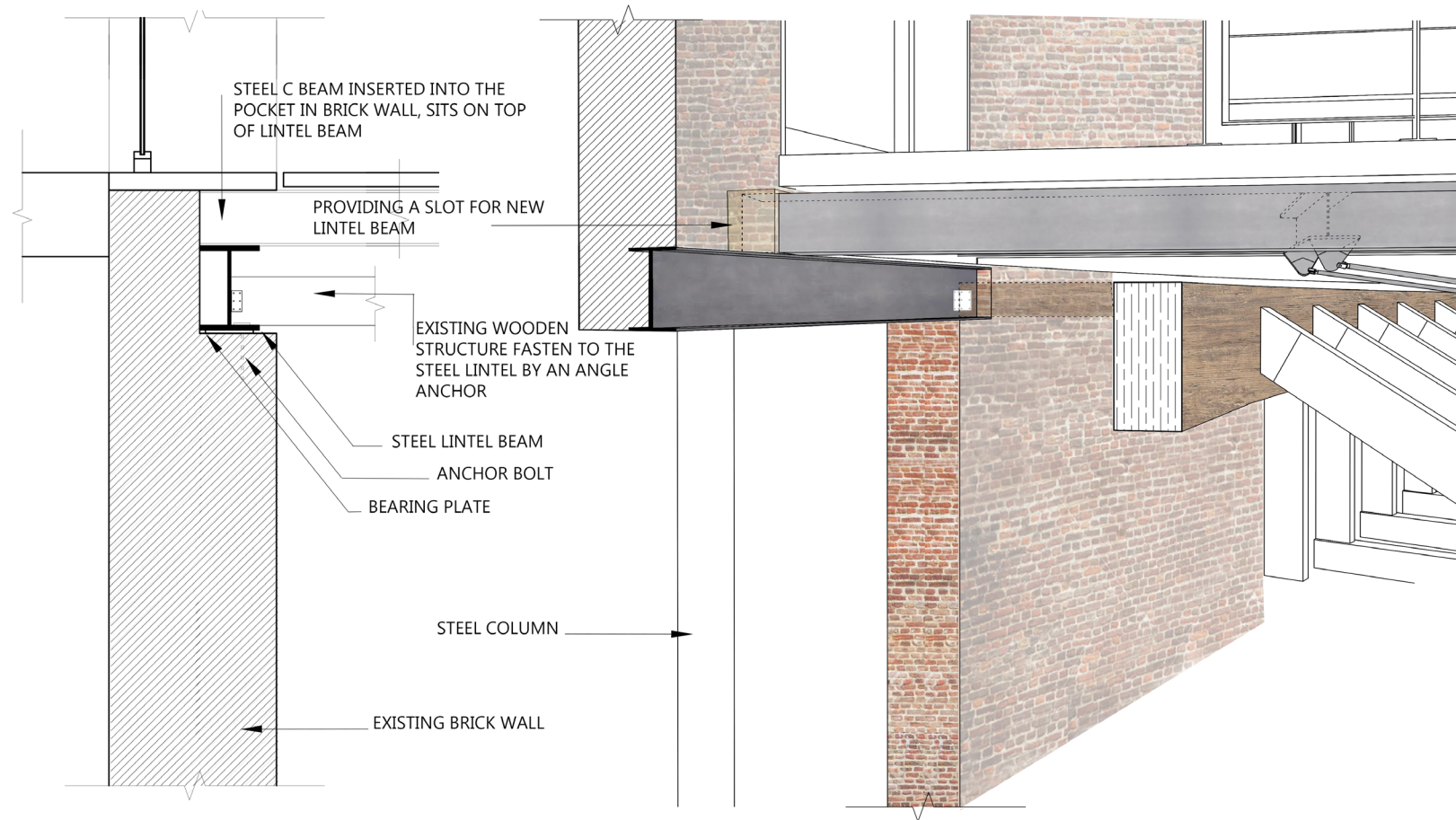


SOUTH ELEVATION | OLD AND NEW

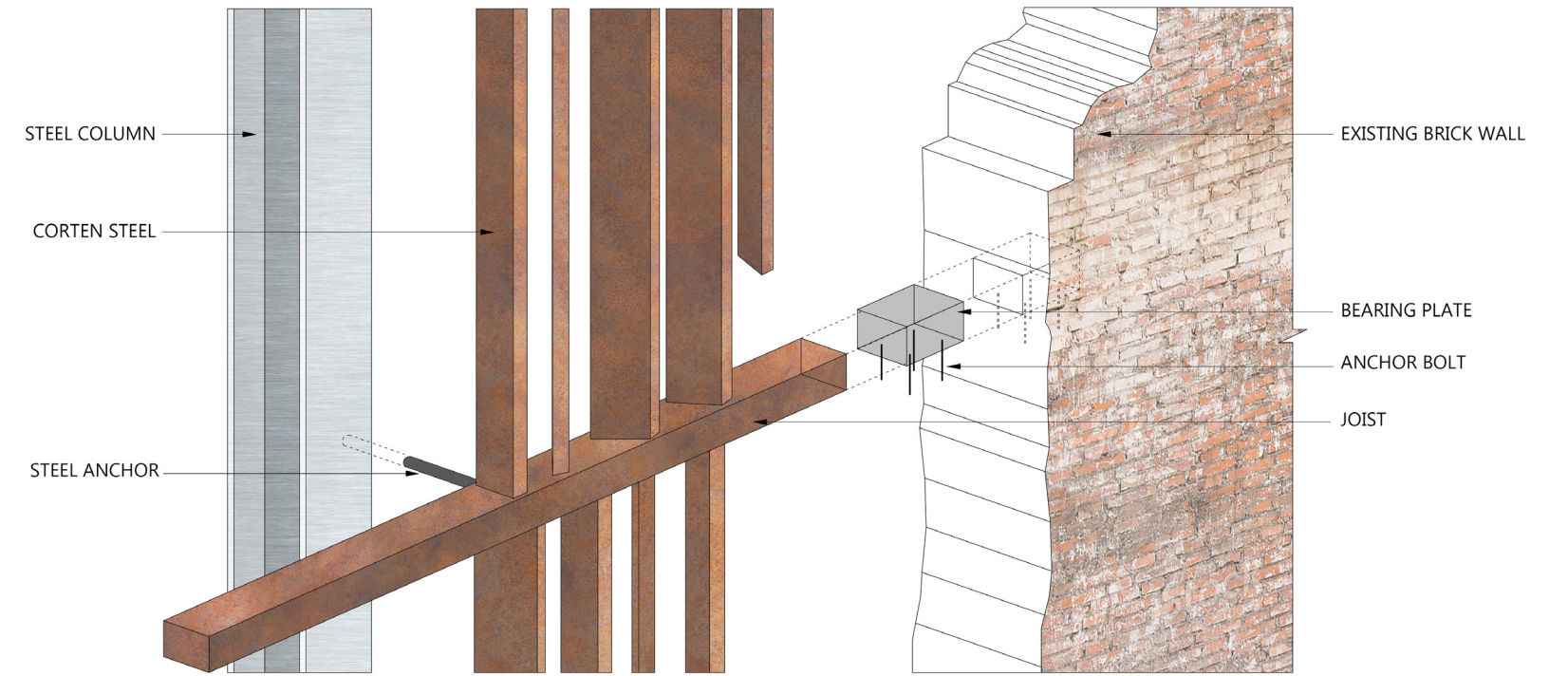


EAST ELEVATION | OLD AND NEW

**DETAIL 1 | CONNECTION OF STEEL BRIDGE TO BRICK WALL**



**DETAIL 2 | CONNECTION OF CORTEN SLAT TO BRICK WALL**





**Exterior View** | The Mayfair community center from across N Howard St



**Exterior View** | Terrace above the old arch opens up to Franklin St

Some of the existing architectural structures remained open, exposed to the outside to allow the original building fabric **to breathe and show its aging.**

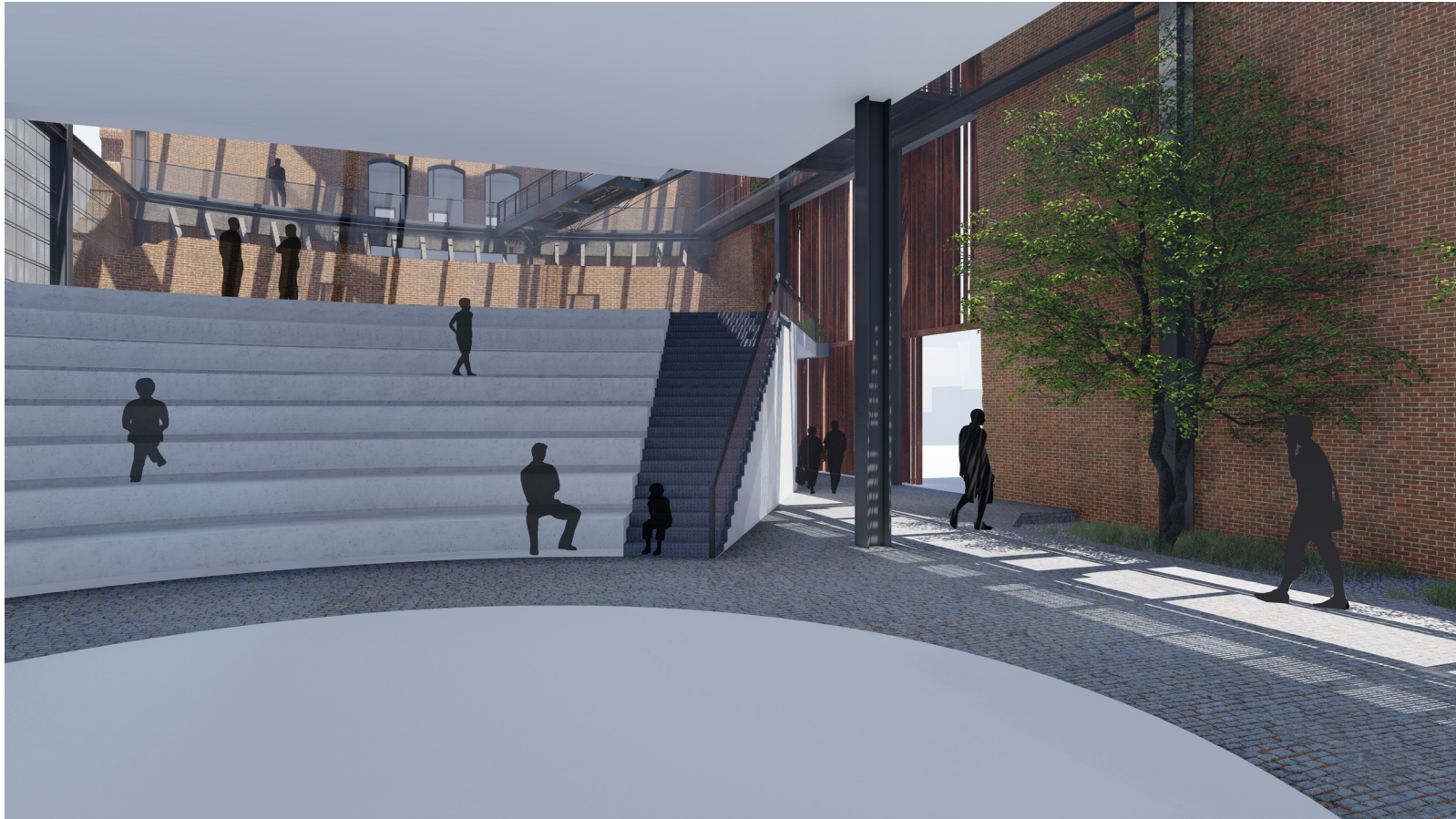
The new additions are mostly separated from the old building by an atrium. **The atrium** works as an outside space inside the building. It is five-story high and roofed with glass, but mainly open on the north and south sides. Filled with an abundance of light and air movement, It offers you a **moment of hesitation and remembrance.**



The Plaza | Linear yard connects to the plaza



The Plaza | Looking toward the old building



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465–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132512462271>.

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<sup>3</sup> Alois Riegl, "The modern cult of monuments: its essence and its development.", in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Nicholas. Stanley Price, and Mansfield. Kirby Talley Jr., and Alessandra. Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 72

<sup>4</sup> Nick Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Nick Yablon, 20.

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<sup>10</sup> Edensor and Berg Publishers, *Industrial Ruins*, 114.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Edensor, "Walking through Ruins," January 1, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Edensor and Berg Publishers, *Industrial Ruins*, 143.

<sup>13</sup> Bjørnar Olsen and Þóra Pétursdóttir, *Ruin Memories: Materiality, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past* (London ; New York : Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, [2014] © 2014, 2014), 12.

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Latz, "The Idea of Making Time Visible," *Topos* 33 (2000), <https://philpapers.org/rec/LATTIO-2>.

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<sup>20</sup> "An Exuberant Young Theatre," *Financial Times*, October 31, 2006, <https://www.ft.com/content/f28a8ecc-68ff-11db-b4c2-0000779e2340>.

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<sup>22</sup> Rufford, "Haworth Tompkins' Young Vic Theatre."

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