

A JOURNEY THROUGH A STORY

REMEMBERING TO BE A CHILD AGAIN WITH THE LITTLE PRINCE

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The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

The little girl who is the protagonist of the movie, *The Little Prince*, lost in awe and wonder at the stories that the aviator narrates to her. There was something about the little girl that reminded me of myself as a child.

Wonder disconcerts, throws off balance, to the point of turning those who experience it into strange creatures, exiles, as it were, in the world and in life. Should we manifest authentic wonder, we would seem to come from another planet, like the little prince. The familiar world no longer possesses the same validity and loses that ultimate character we wrongly attributed to it. We then, see the world as much more profound, far greater and more mysterious. Wonder makes us feel how marvelous it is that there should exist space, time, light, air, sea and flower, or even feet, hands, eyes, and perhaps most of all what Saint-Exupéry calls in *Wind, Sand and Stars*, the “true luxury” of human relations, exemplified at their summit by the rose and the fox in *Le Petit Prince*.

- Professor Thomas De Koninck¹

A B S T R A C T

myth (n.)

A traditional story which embodies a belief regarding some fact or phenomenon of experience, and in which often the forces of nature and of the soul are personified; a sacred narrative regarding a god, a hero, the origin of the world or of a people.²

A parable; An allegory.

From the French word *mythe* (1818) and directly from Modern Latin *mythus*, which originated from ancient Greek *mýthos* : “speech, thought, discourse, word, humor, conversation, story, saga, tale, anything delivered by word of mouth”. Attested in English since 1830.

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated with the fictional world of stories and the act of storytelling. Always wide-eyed and excited, I remember the countless times that I have lost myself in the mythical worlds in stories. It is moments of sadness or of anxiety, but also of wonder, of ecstasy even, the experience of the beautiful under one or the other of its innumerable forms, the joy of love, of discovery, of happiness in that sense, that are most likely to remind us of our humanity. Hence, when I started my thesis about wanting to explore the design of a built space through the context of storytelling, I was confused. There were these three questions that hounded me at every turn :

1. What is a “place for storytelling”? Does the act of storytelling really exist within the confines of a particular “place”?
2. And if yes, do stories emerge from places? Or do places emerge from stories? What is the nature of the relationship between both?
3. And if places truly are born out of stories, is it possible to craft a journey through a built space akin to our journey through the mythical worlds of a storyteller?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been an incredible journey, and I would like to thank everyone who has helped and encouraged me in this endeavor - words won't suffice to express my gratitude.

Especially, I would like to thank my thesis committee - Jim Jones, Scott Gartner and Deidre Regan for your wonderful support and infinite patience throughout the last year. You were wonderful teachers and guided me through my meandering explorations and never-ending changes.

Thank you Dedee, for also being an amazing friend and holding my hand through the entire journey. I find it beautiful that a thesis on creating friendships has given me such a loving friend in you.

Thank you Appa, Amma, Hari, Akshaya and Sahana, for making me laugh & keeping me sane through the entire course of this work.

Thank you Rajiv, my love, for being the person that you are and for being there for me unconditionally - I don't know what I would have done without you.

Thank you to Geetha aunty, Neeru, all my other family and friends, whose countless names cannot be fit within this tiny box, yet, without who my world is incomplete, and I wouldn't be who I am.

Thank you Narasimhan uncle, for being the amazing storyteller that you are, and inspiring me to look at the world in new ways that I had not imagined possible. We hear your laugh in the stars every night. We miss you, uncle.

Thank you Mark Osborne (director, *The Little Prince*) for the wonderful movie that captured the innocence and wide-eyed wonder of childhood and storytelling, and for introducing me to the magical world of The Little Prince.

And lastly, thank you, Antoine de Saint-Exupery for giving us this magical tale and the little boy with golden hair who won't grow up.

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“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

— T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets

INTRODUCTION

Answers can be elusive. As elusive as the mythical bird that is ever present yet out of sight just beyond the horizon. That is what I came to learn through the past year that I have been working on this thesis.

What is a “place for storytelling”?

Do I draw stories out of the built space? Or do I draw the built space out of stories?

I had questions on the relevance of architecture in something as raw and primal as the act of storytelling. Meandering through the various different aspects of storytelling and architecture, I have hit many dead ends and turned back on my path to a different direction instead. But, in all honesty, each rabbit hole that I went down into, changed my perception about these questions in one way or the other. To briefly sum up the things that I experimented with the last year, I dabbled with geometries and their influence on the act of storytelling. I looked at it as both a performance-like act put on by a single narrator to an audience, and as the intimate experience of huddling around the fire on a winter night with warm cocoa in hand, listening to stories. I researched on the traditional art of oral storytelling in some of the oldest societies in India, Morocco, and even in some Native American tribes. I struggled to decipher the scale and mood of the built space that I wanted. I was captivated by the magic of immersive theater and storytelling festivals. I watched countless videos of storytelling acts by the Moth group, based in New York City, which I must admit, are very entertaining.

I read and re-read works by J.R.R.Tolkein, Italo Calvino, Albert Camus, Edgar Allan Poe, Marco Frascari and other notable authors - in order to gain insight into fictional world-building, and the allegories between architecture and storytelling. They each opened up the possibility of multiple worlds existing within the same physical realm. A major turning point was the book of essays “Reading Architecture : Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience” edited by Angeliki Sioli and Yoonchun Jung, in which each essay touched upon a different aspect of how architecture and fiction are linked together more intricately than my previous understanding. I even took to exploring my thoughts via watercolor studies and fiction-writing in a bid to help me understand the nature of the space that I was trying to design.

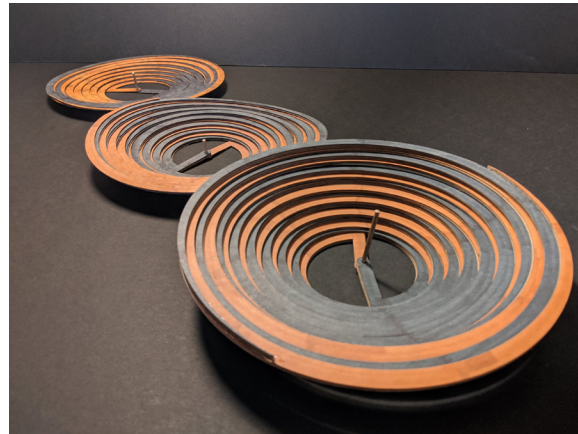
But what I did not anticipate was that, of all the wildly different things that I was exploring, the path that I was to actually take would lie in a children’s book that I had never heard about before. It was pure serendipity that I chanced upon it, and later it changed my whole thesis in ways that I could not imagine. I realized that I needed not to find “answers” to questions; but rather enjoy this beautiful journey that I was on. The magic of storytelling cannot be shut within walls, but needs to grow outwards. Storytelling is as much about excitement as it is about contemplation. It is about remembering the child within us, and about taking a moment to stop and watch sunsets. It is about rituals and thresholds and gazing at stars. It is about shattering the layers and layers of “grown-up” ideas that we tightly wrap ourselves with. It was when I stopped looking for answers, that I could truly understand what is the nature of the built space that I was dreaming of. Rather than being a single elusive construct - it was an eclectic mix of many different experiences tied together into a journey, guided by a little boy with golden hair.



Aerial view of "Spiral Jetty" (1970); Great Salt Lake, Utah, Aug. 2003
Mud, precipitated salt crystals, rock and water
Coil : 1500 ft long and 15 ft wide
Collection : Dia Art Foundation; Photograph by David Maisel "Terminal Mirage"; #251-5, 2003

PART I

Preliminary Studies



STUDY OF SPIRALS

Spiral leads and condenses to a point.

Why Spirals ?

They are beautiful.

You never return to the same place again -

Nothing ever truly repeats.

Infinitely small. Infinitely large. Endless.

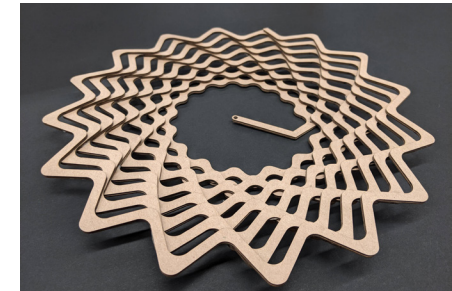
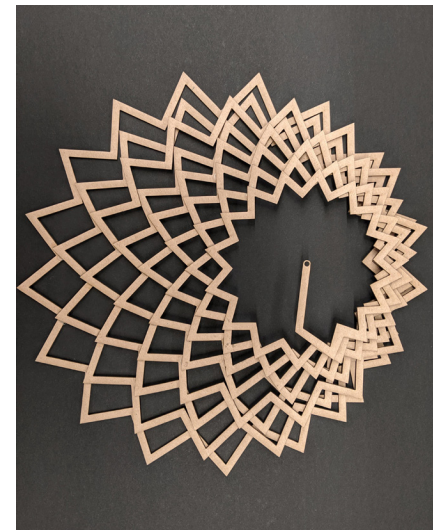
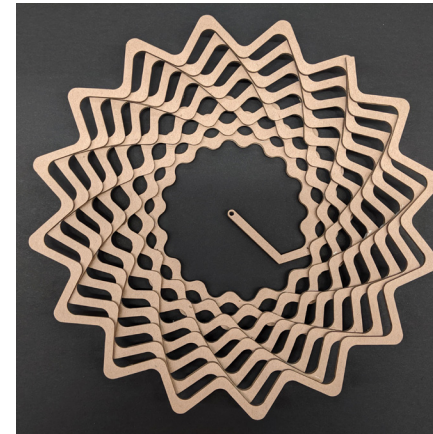
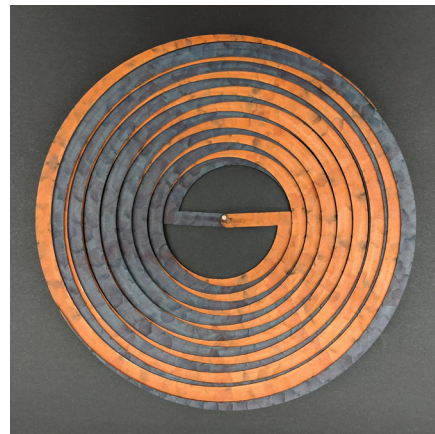
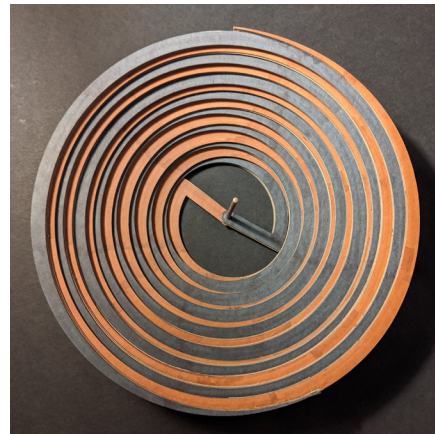
We don't know where we came from.

We don't know where we will go.

We're just a piece, at a moment, in the infinite loop of time.

The spiral evokes a sense of wonder.

I started my thesis intrigued by the physical and metaphorical beauty of spirals and their multiple connections to the mythical worlds of storytelling and otherwise. In learning about them, I was captured by its magic so much that, over the course of the entire thesis, when everything else changed or morphed into something else, the spiral geometry stayed with me, all the way till the end.



Of all the intricate geometries that I explored, the phyllotactic spiral intrigued, questioned and engulfed me in its formal beauty.



CARVING OUT THE EARTH

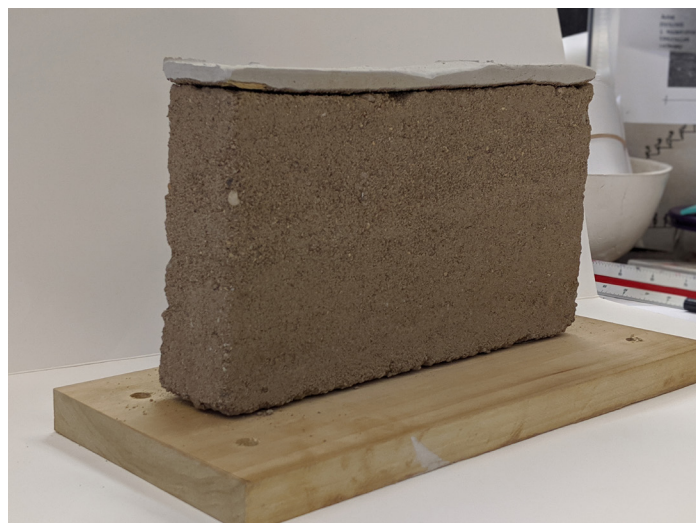
As soon as I realized that I am looking at a space that is to be carved out of the earth, I recognized the sanctity associated with the act; an imprint upon the earth needed a geometry that was beautiful not just visually, but in terms of the emotions that it evokes and the way it merges with the site. Thus, my research veered me into land art projects of the 1960s and invariably took me to the Spiral Jetty by Robert Smithson and the Observatory by Robert Morris : one, a spiral and another, a circle; each complete in its essence and reflective of the sanctity of carving onto the earth.



The Spiral Jetty, by Robert Smithson



The Observatory, by Robert Morris



MATERIAL EXPLORATIONS AND MODEL STUDIES

As I was exploring the idea of situating my project at the Heritage Park and Natural Area in Blacksburg, and I was also looking at options of carving out the earth and using them as rammed earth construction walls, I went out and collected samples of soil from the site, and subjected them to primary sedimentation tests to determine whether it is possible to have rammed earth as the primary material. Due to the fact that the site is essentially a wetlands / farmland, the soil was extremely silty-clayey, and was not ideal for what I had in mind. This changed the course of my material choices, taking me to the bare essentials of concrete and wood - Concrete as the heavy, load-bearing, retaining walls and wood for the human touch.

THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF STORYTELLING

Storytelling has always and still exists in numerous different forms : it could be as simple as a traditional storyteller captivating his audience with mythical fables in the street cafes in Morocco, or it could be curated storytelling shows such as the events held by the Moth in New York or the Scottish International Storytelling Festival in Edinburgh. Today, storytelling also holds hands with developing technology such as binaural audio using headphones, or immersive theater experience, where the listeners feel the aural presence of the storyteller even across large distances. Dance, theater, music all utilize the magic of storytelling.

Clockwise from top left :

- 1. The Among Us Series : an audio-theater experience that navigates participants through the streets of a city. The audience members are the protagonists, and the city is the stage.
- 2. The Encounter - immersive theater directed & performed by Simon McBurney, using binaural audio technology
- 3. Ana Lines at Scottish International Storytelling Festival
- 4. The Moth Mainstage at Arizona, a storytelling event
- 5. An immersive dance-storytelling event
- 6. A traditional storyteller in Marrakech, Morocco



STUDIES IN WATERCOLOR

In an attempt to better understand the atmospheres that I wanted my built space to encapsulate, I did some studies in watercolor with different palettes and strokes.

THE MAGIC OF THE LITTLE PRINCE

What I did not anticipate was that, of all the madly different things that I was exploring, the path that I was to actually take would lie in a children’s book that I had never heard about before. It’s a work that changes meaning every time you read it. Sometimes, we read it as a children’s book with starry-eyed idealism, but other times it is a metaphor and an allegorical tale with hidden meanings. The magic of storytelling cannot be shut within walls, but needs to grow outwards. Storytelling is as much about excitement as it is about contemplation. It is about remembering the child within us, and about taking a moment to stop and watch sunsets. It is about rituals and thresholds and gazing at stars. It is about shattering the layers and layers of “grown-up” ideas that we tightly wrap ourselves with.

The reason why a story becomes universal and timeless is when it is also personal. It was the story of his life. He was close to death, stranded and dehydrated in the Sahara when this mysterious little boy appears in front of him, asking for a sheep, a friend. The little boy was probably a manifestation of his own childhood.

Reading *The Little Prince*, one wants to know who Antoine Saint-Exupéry personally was, because we get to know him emotionally through the story. This led me to an obsession in trying to understand the author, his life and his many other passions. In this process, I immersed myself in Saint-Exupéry’s world through his other works such as *The Aviator*, *Southern Mail*, *Night Flight*, *Wind Sand and Stars*, *Flight to Arras* and a biography of the author by Stacy Schiff.

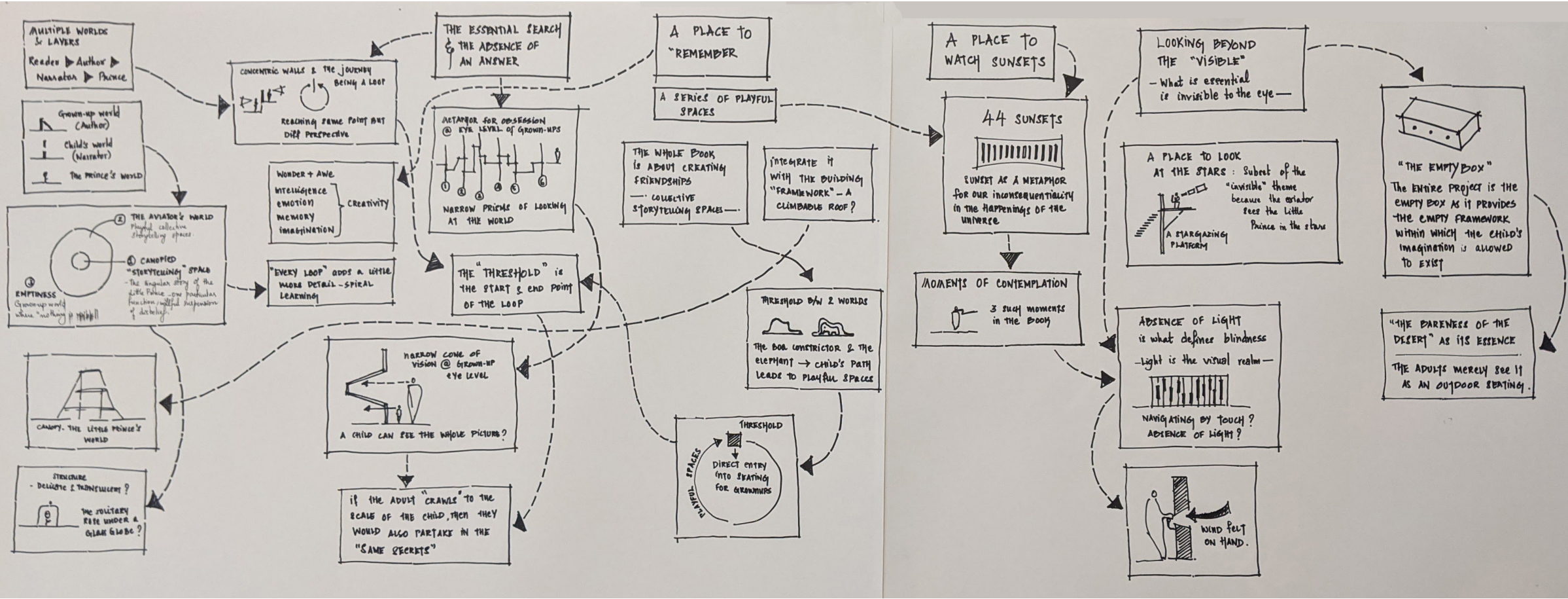




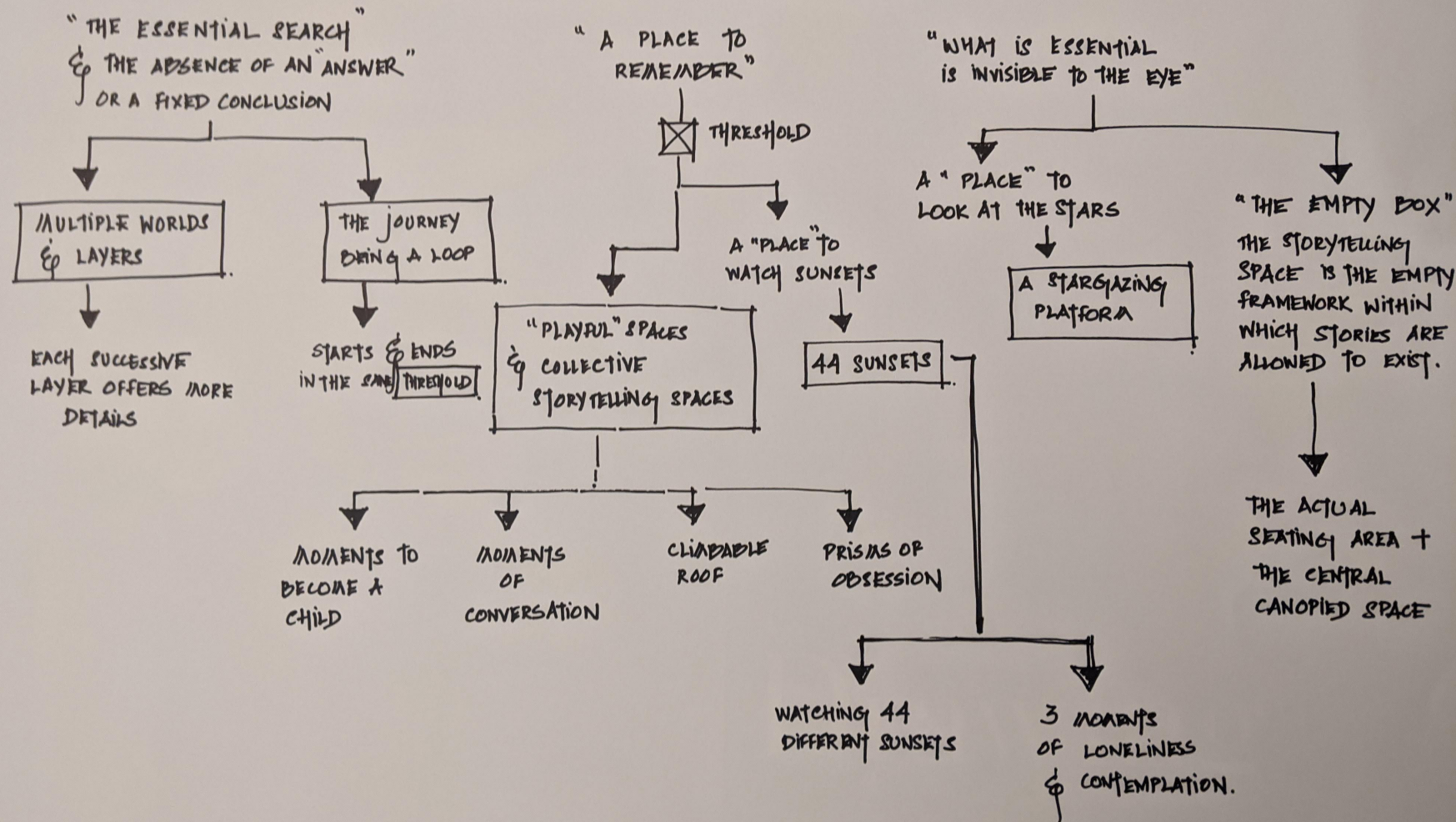
PART II

Thematic Study of
The Little Prince

An exercise in understanding the themes within The Little Prince

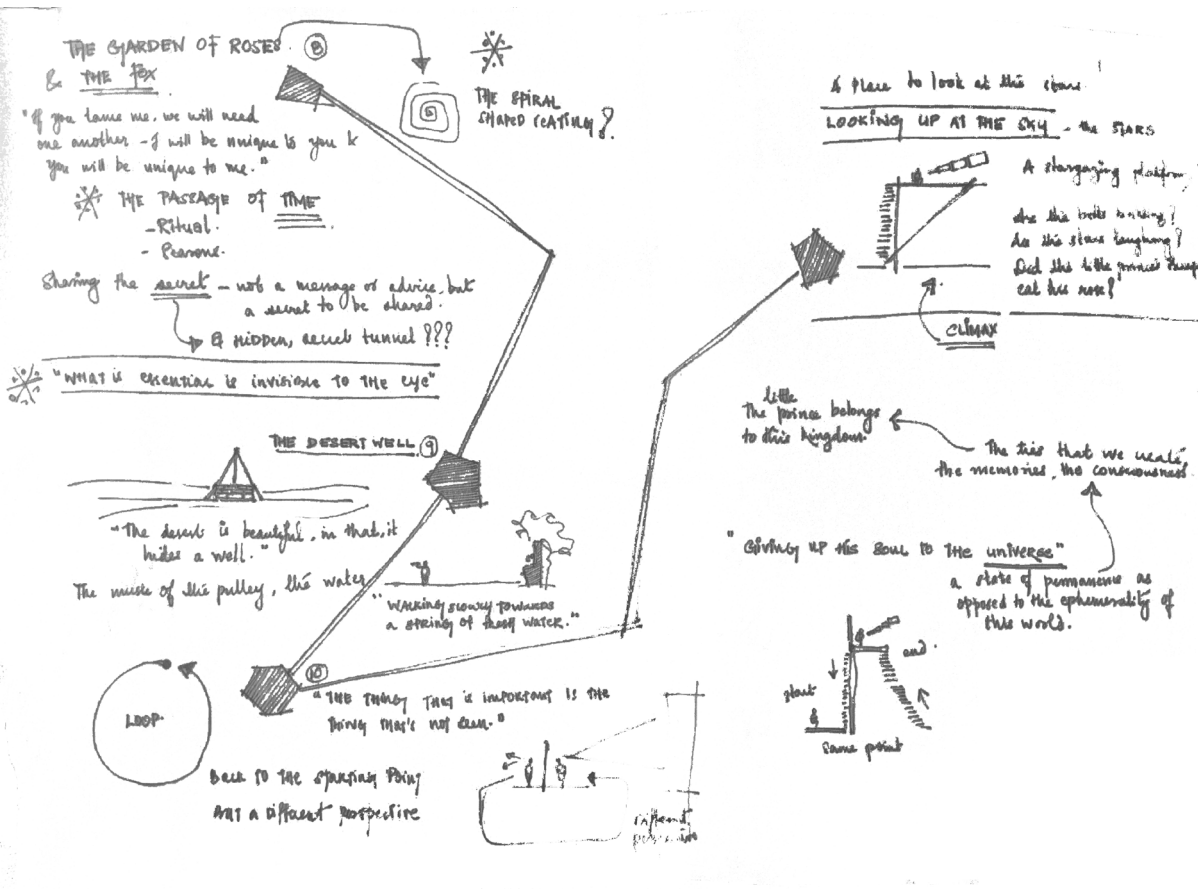
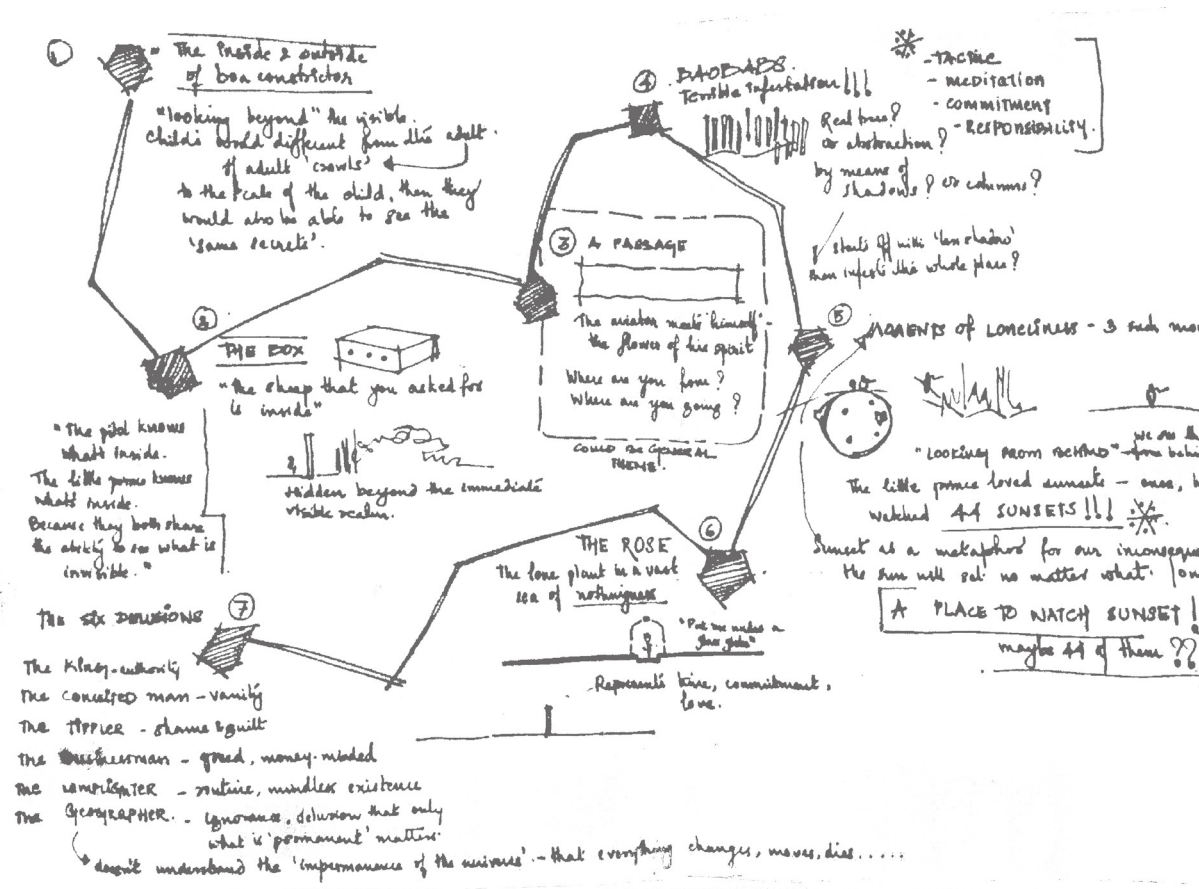


3 MAJOR THEMES

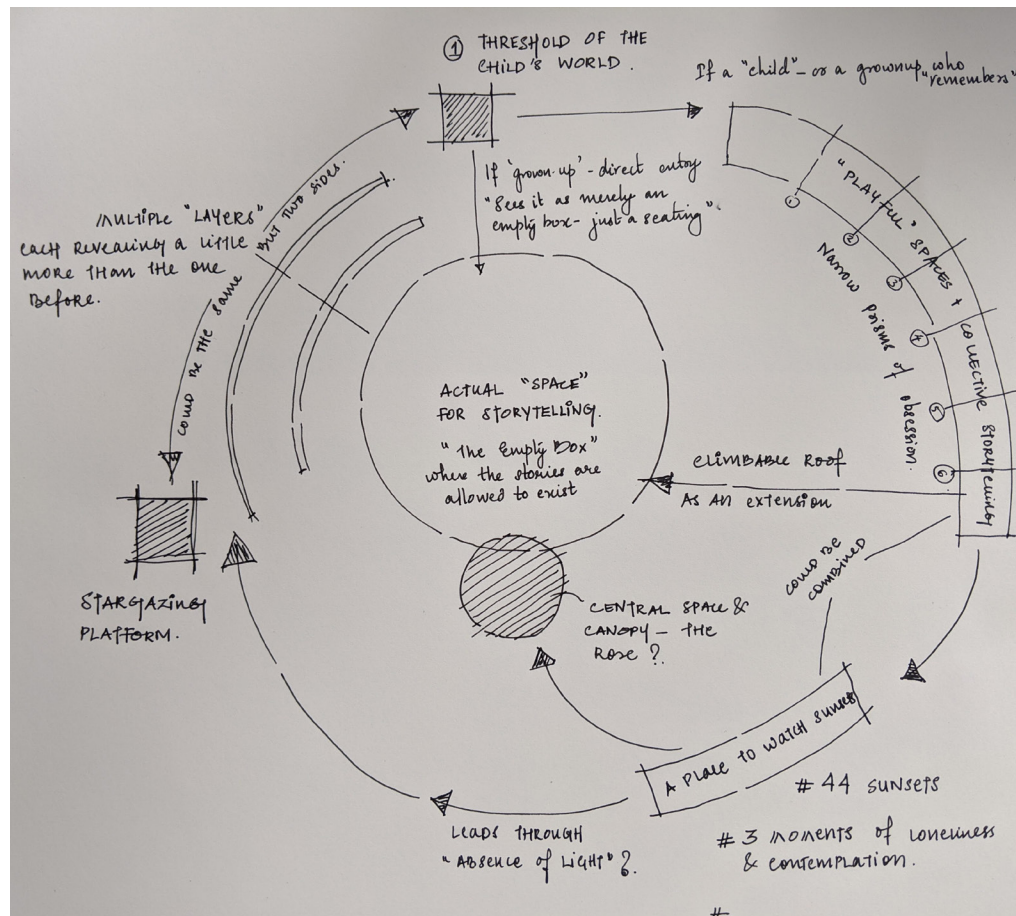


AN EXERCISE IN DISTILLING THE THEMES IN
THE BOOK TO THEIR BAREST ESSENCE

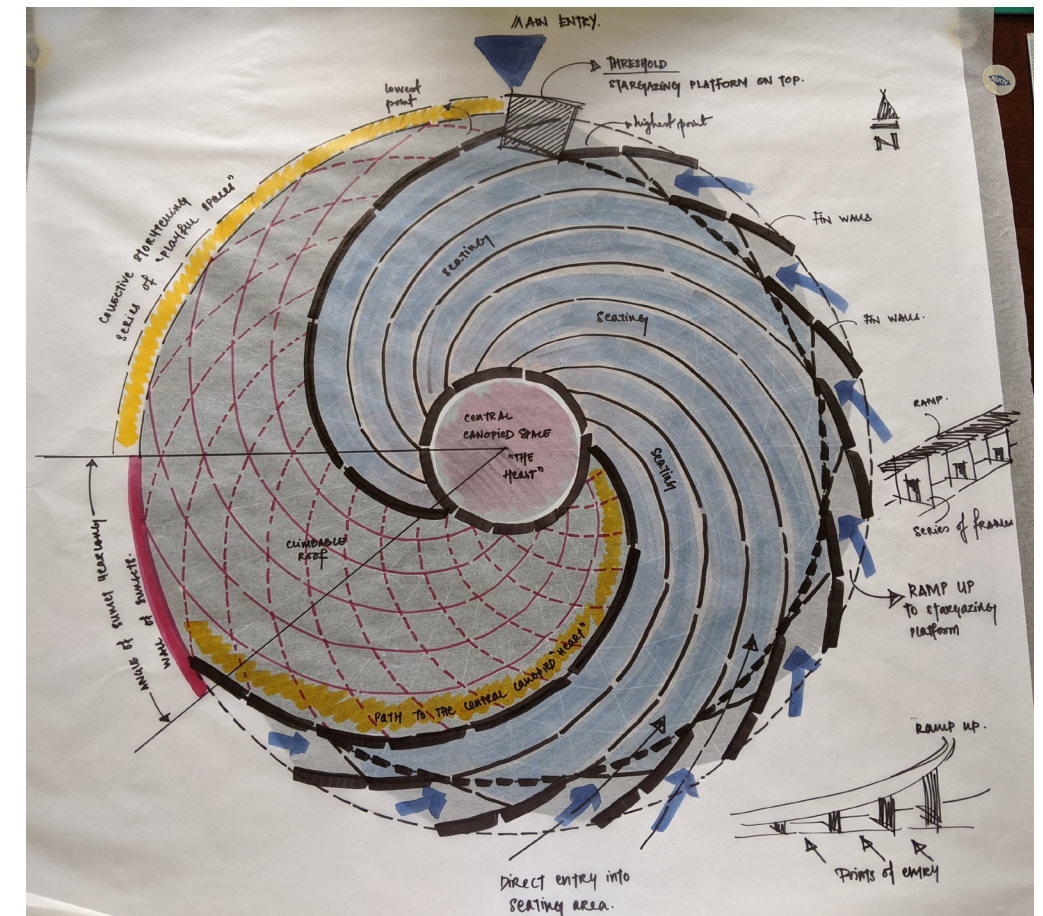
Experiential Mapping of The Little Prince



Conceptual Layout I



Conceptual Layout II



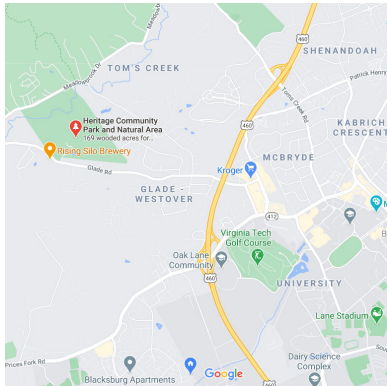


PART III

The Site

The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

The journey of the aviator with the little prince starts when his plane crashes into the Sahara, and he sees this little boy appear out of nowhere. This scene is essentially a meeting of the adult and the child within the same person. This is where the journey of this thesis also started.



Site Context, Blacksburg, VA

THE SITE

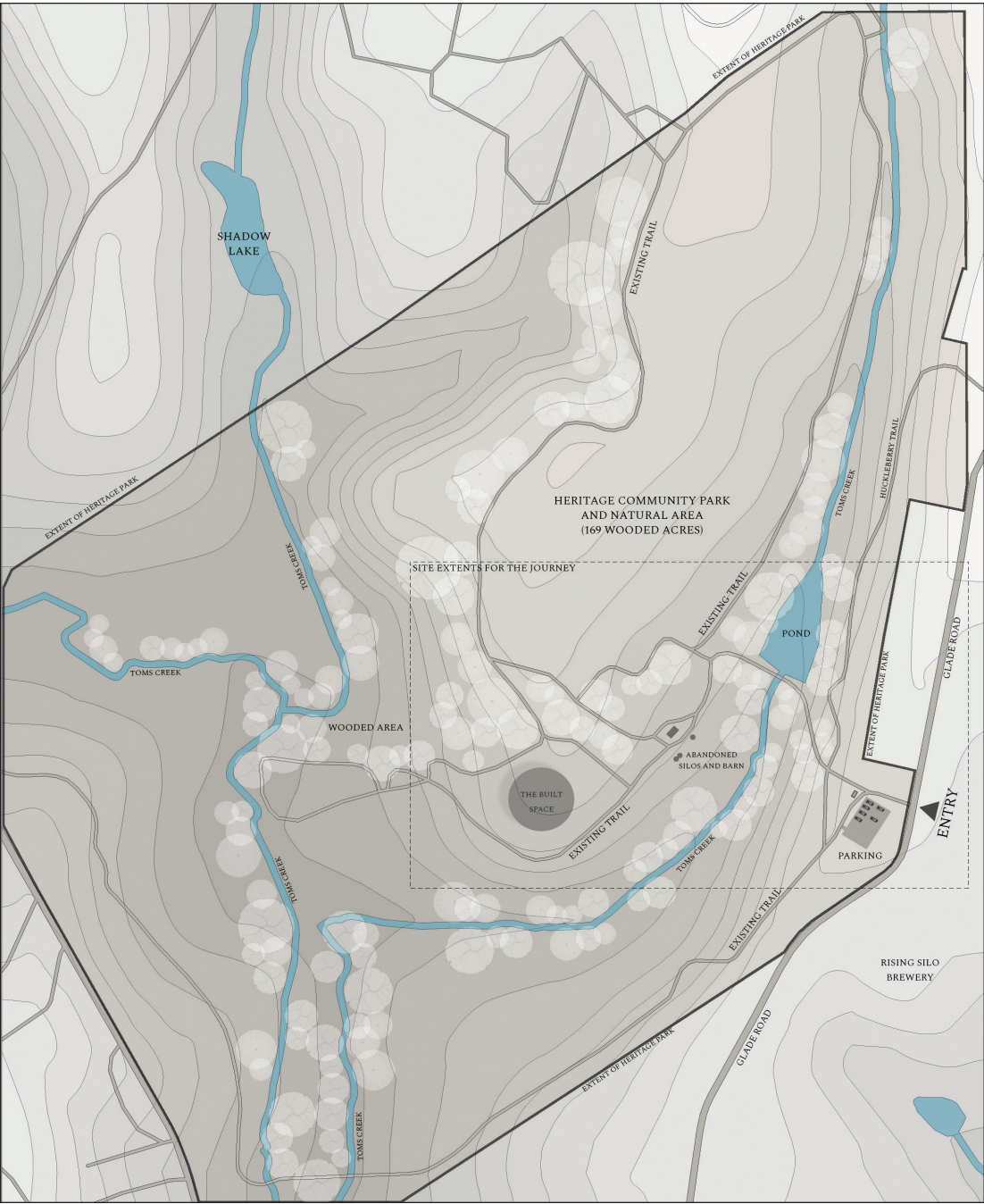
The site is within the Heritage Community Park and Natural Area, which is a wooded area of almost 170 acres, which is dotted with creeks, trails and pockets of thickly forested areas. The access to the site is via the Glade Road, which leads to a parking lot at the entry to the site.

From the parking area, there are multiple trails to enter the site, but for the purpose of this project, I chose the trail that passes via the pond and the abandoned silos. Within this larger context, the built space is located at the highest point on the site, with a panoramic view to the Jefferson Mountains Range, part of the Appalachian range.

The existing trails have been retained and modified within the project.



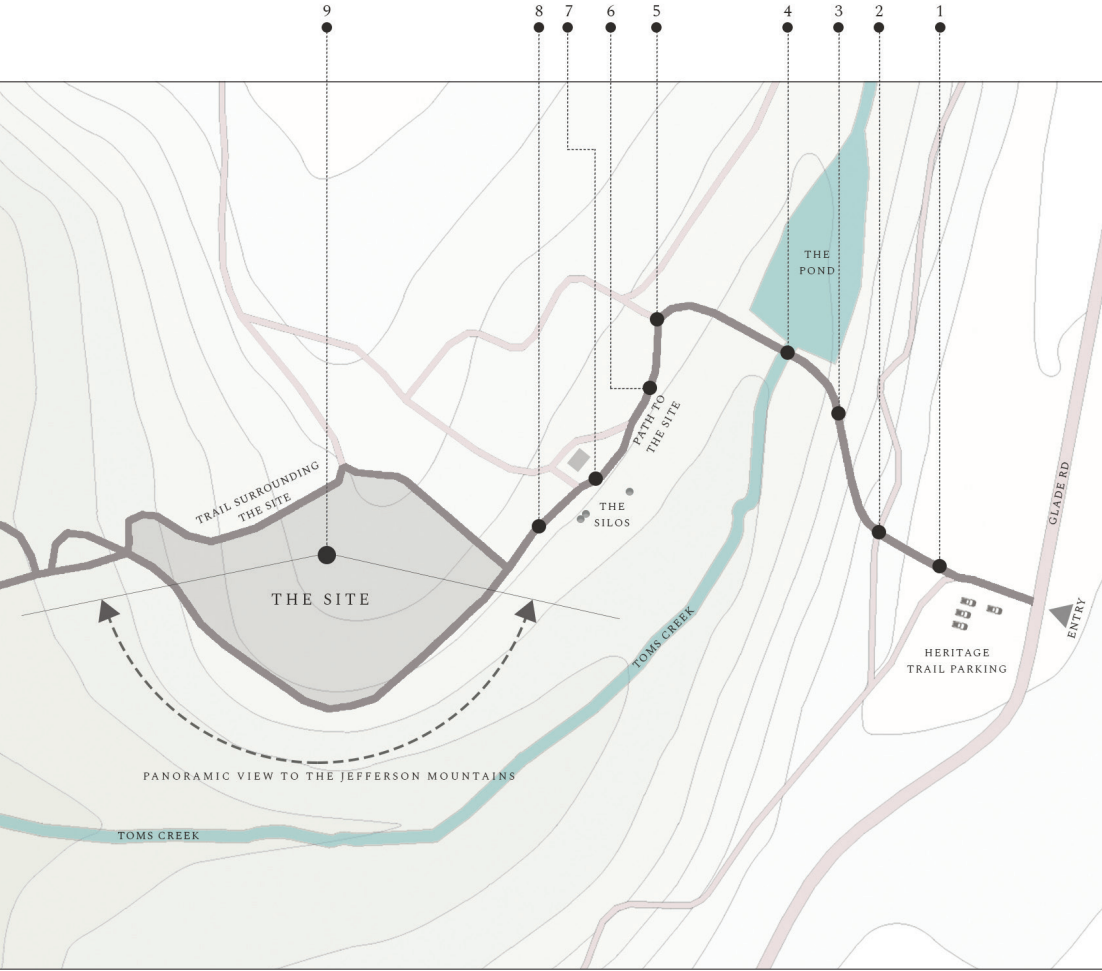
Study Model of the site, Chipboard & Buff Sheet



1

THE WALK TO THE SITE

Walking through the trail that leads us through the creek, the pond and the abandoned silos was a story in itself : each turn of the path offered a completely different view, taking us by surprise and delight. This path served as the first inspiration in creating a journey that offered a slew of surprises at every turn



1 The start of the journey



2 The gravel path leads us down



3 The first glimpse of the pond



4 The pond reflects the sky on a still clear day



5 What is that tower that is peeking out?



6 Approaching the silos & the barn

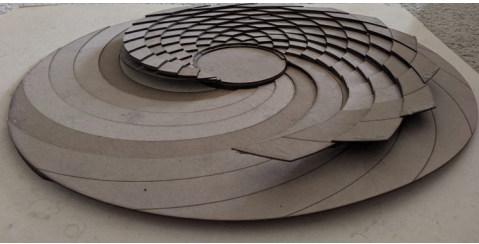
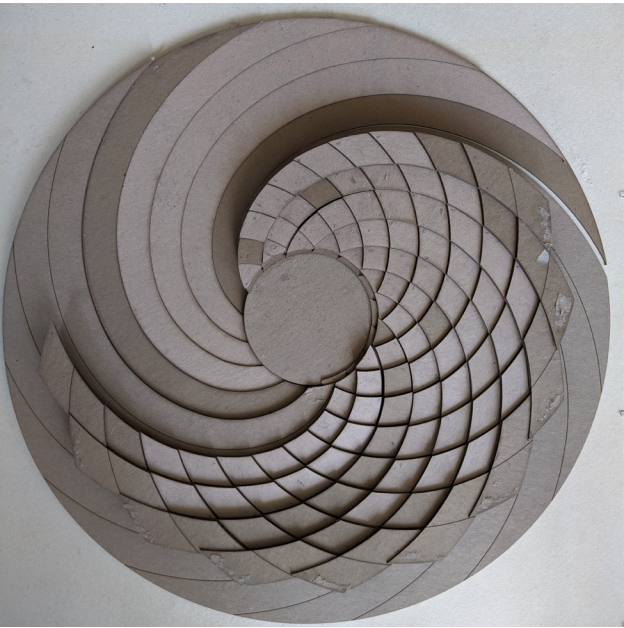
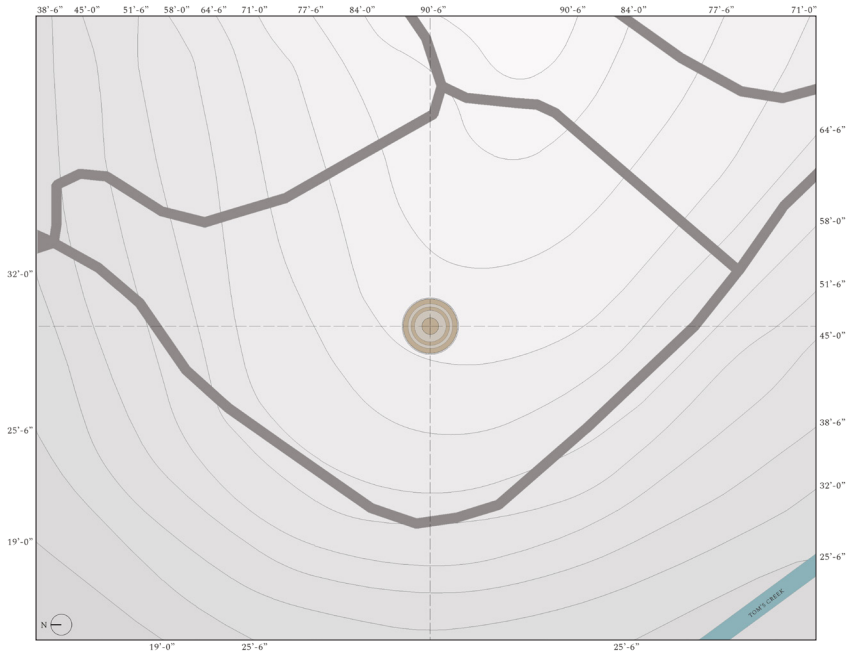


7 The silos tower over us with its presence

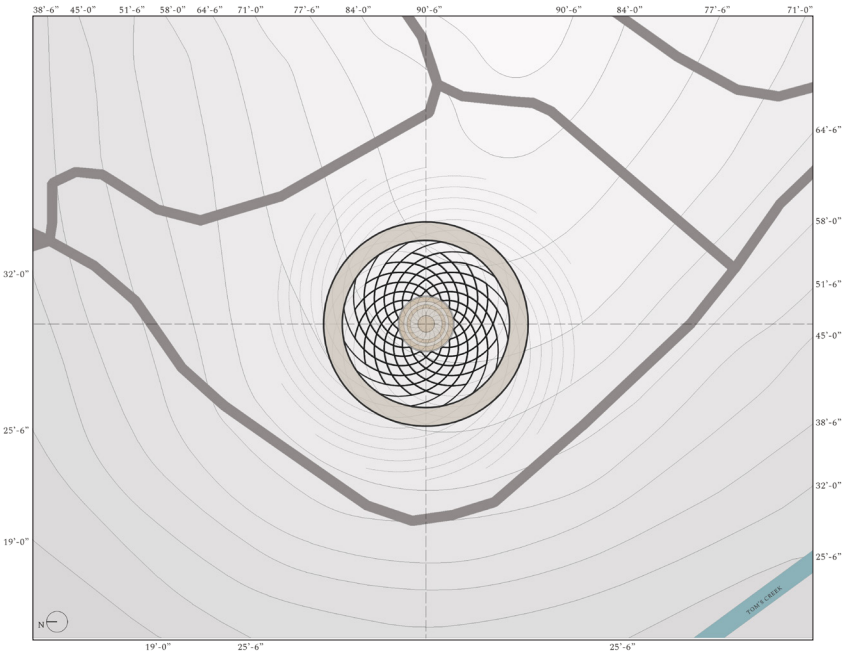
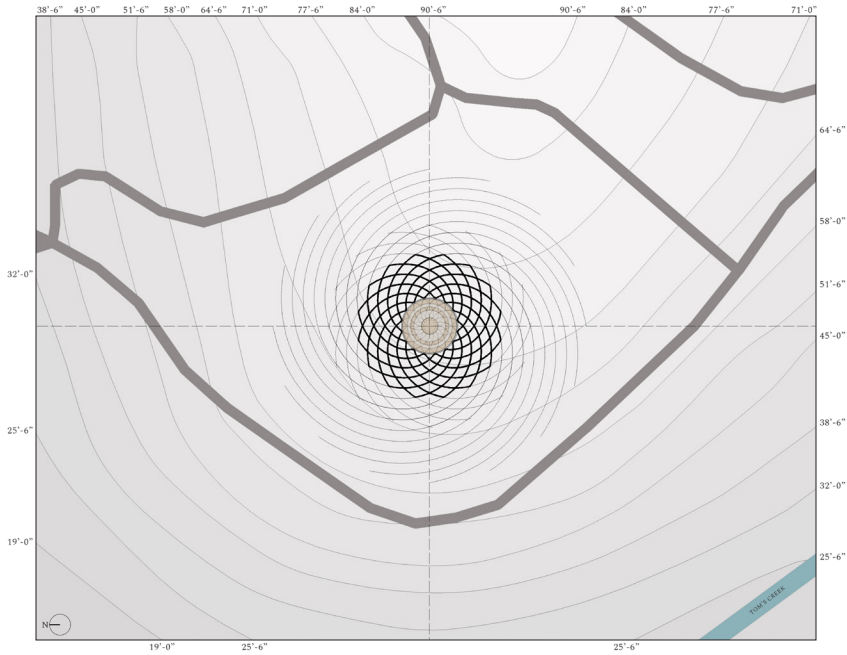
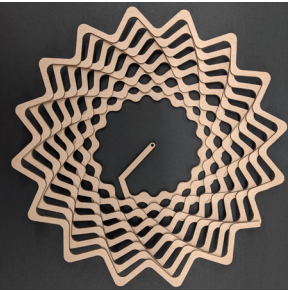


8 The view of the forests unfold slowly

The central storytelling space is essentially a reflection of probably one of the earliest forms of conversation : sitting around a central fire pit for warmth and company.



Based on my earlier studies of geometries, and inspired by the beauty and complexity of the phyllotactic spiral which expands endlessly inward and outward, I took upon the challenge of finding a balance between the circle and the spiral.

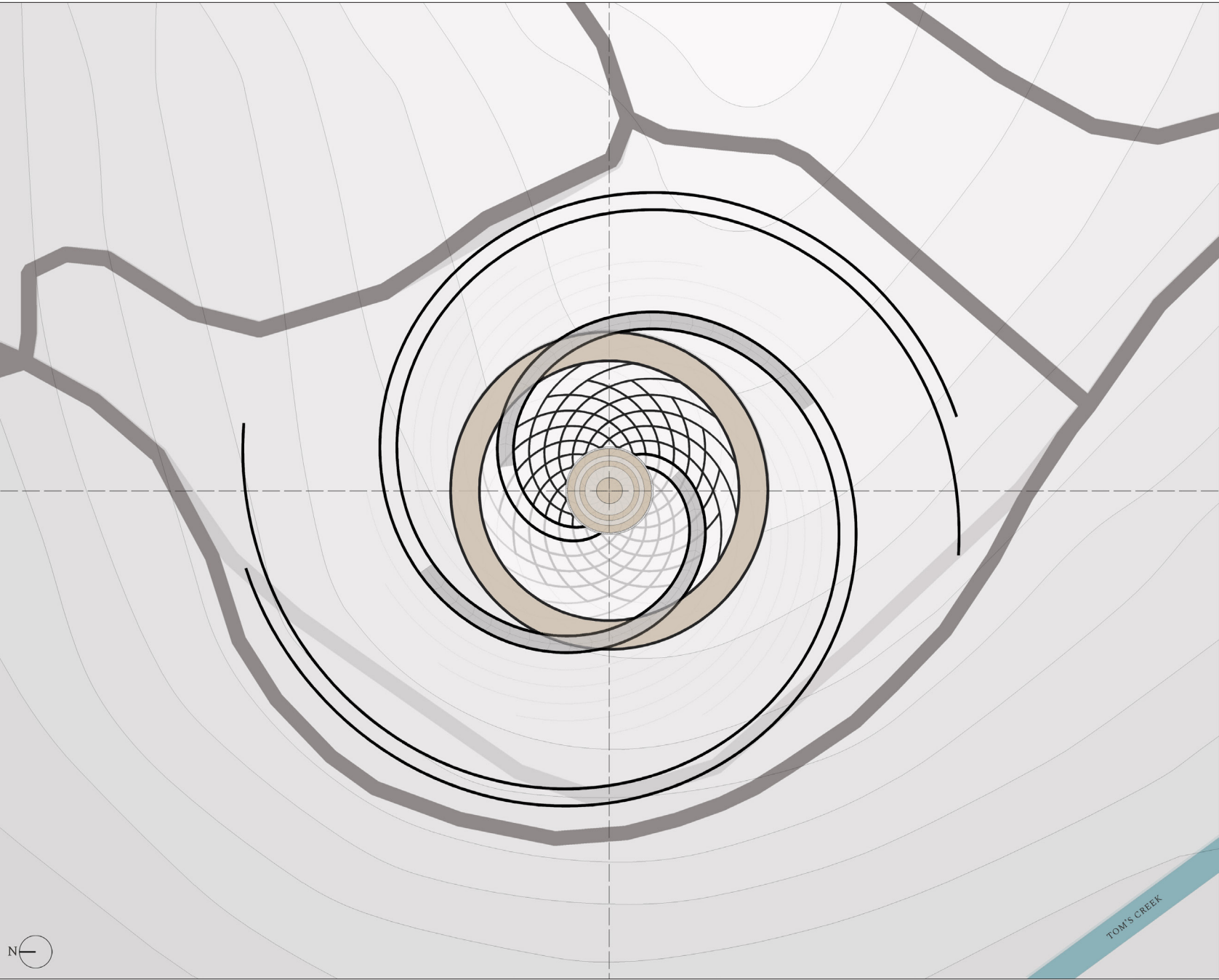


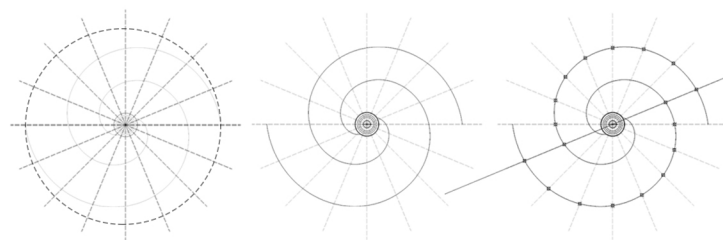
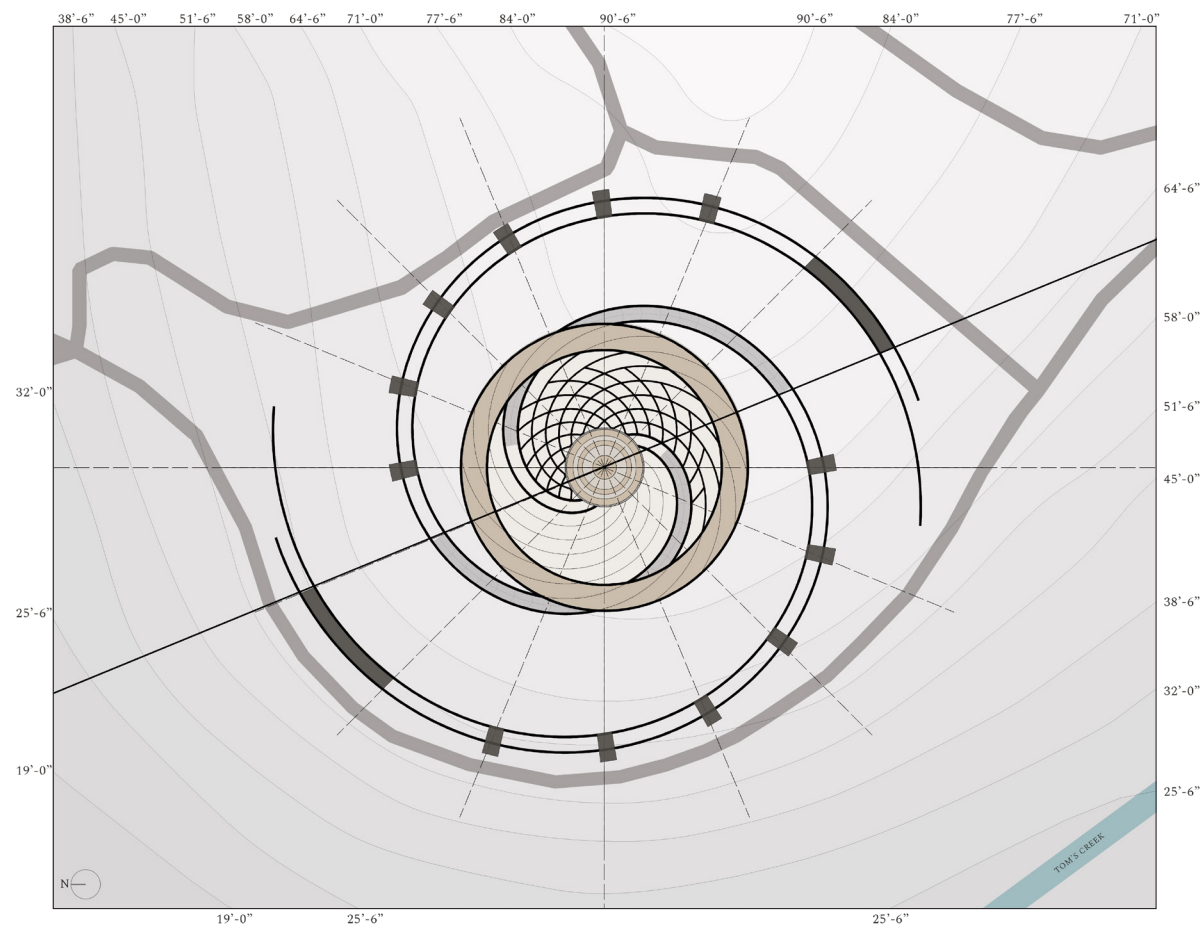
In order to bring boundary to the endlessly expanding spirals, the circle makes a reappearance, holding together the spiral arms within its all encompassing embrace. Thus, the circle becomes an exterior boundary and threshold into the spiral space within.

THE SPIRAL BREAKS OUT OF THE CIRCLE

In the process of trying to bring together the two strong geometries of the spiral and the circle, the spiral eventually breaks out of the circle - the spiral walls extend out into the landscape, becoming retaining walls and navigating the site levels, thus creating a path into and out of the circular built space. In a way, the conceptual chaotic nature of the spiral reflected the child within us, that struggles to break out of the formal, ordered nature of our “grown-up” selves, which is akin to the rigid circular periphery.

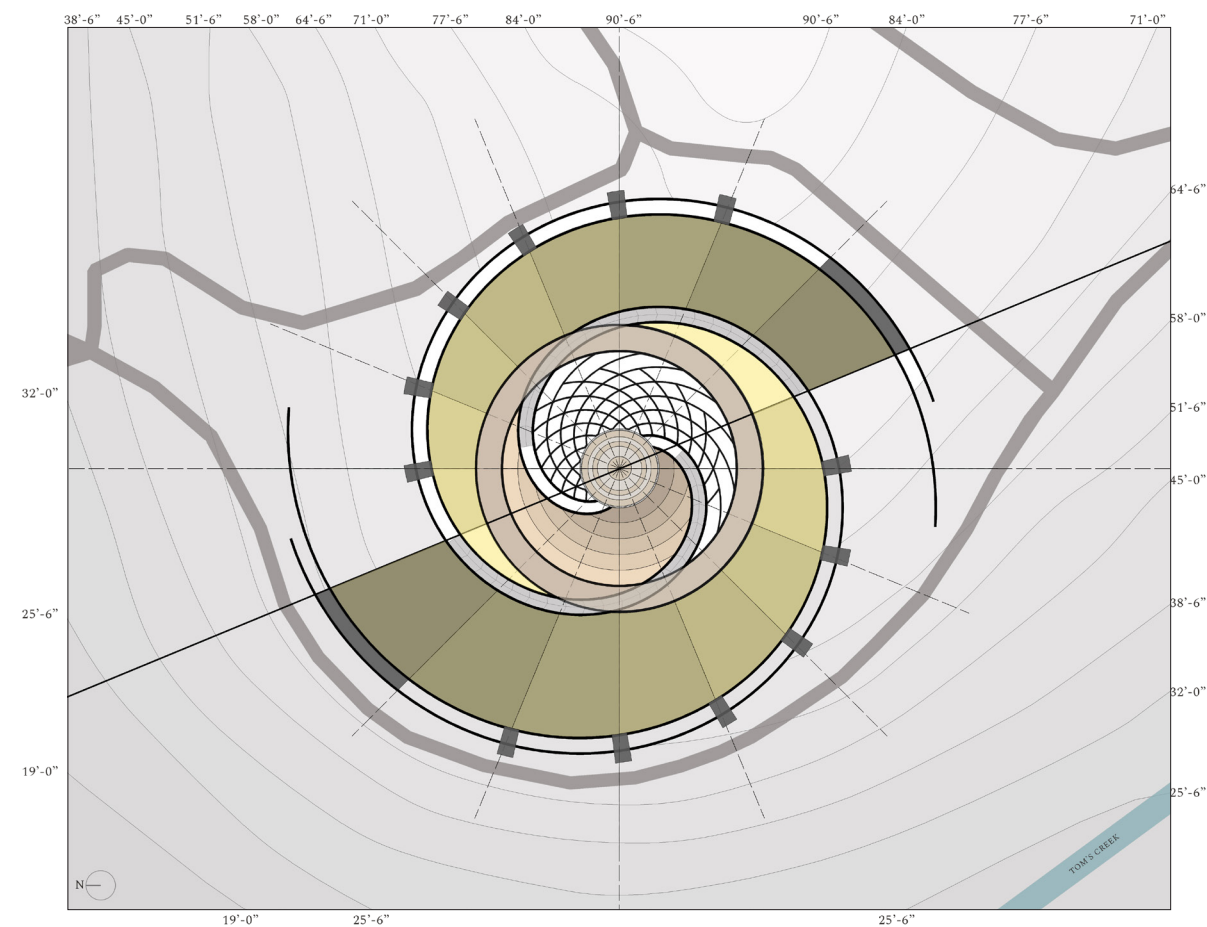
The entire journey is an attempt to reconnect with the inner child in us through different ways and means, guided by the tale of the Little Prince. In that case, it was only a matter of time before the child’s world broke out of the grown-up world.

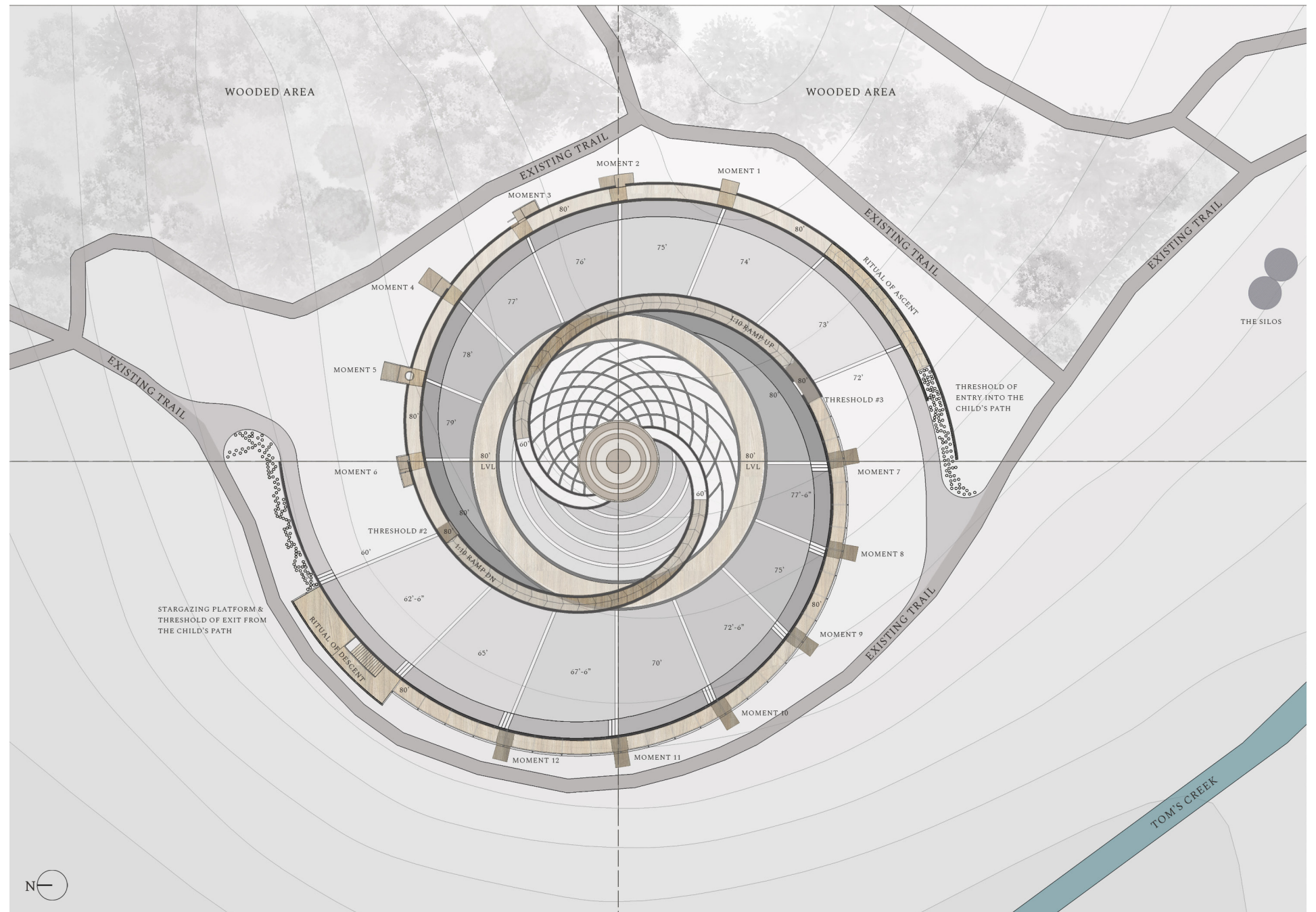


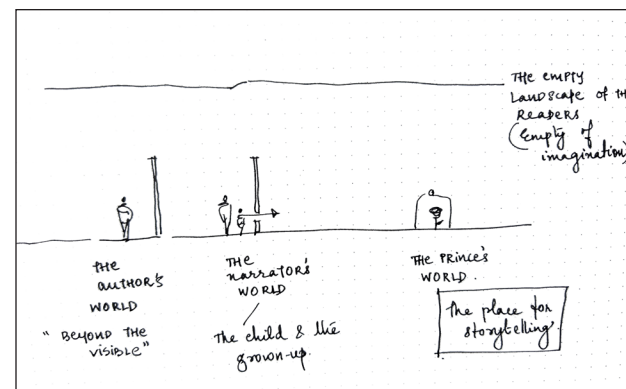
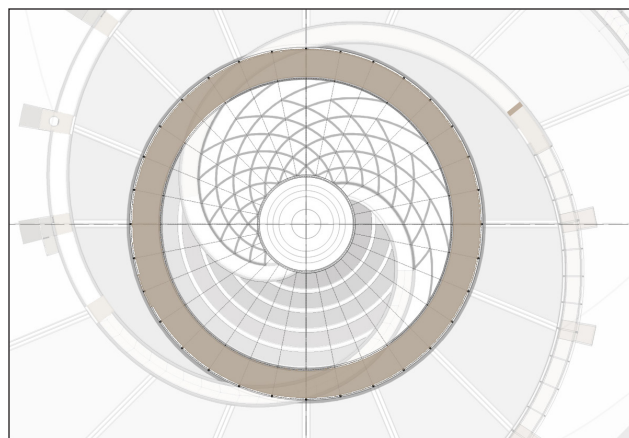
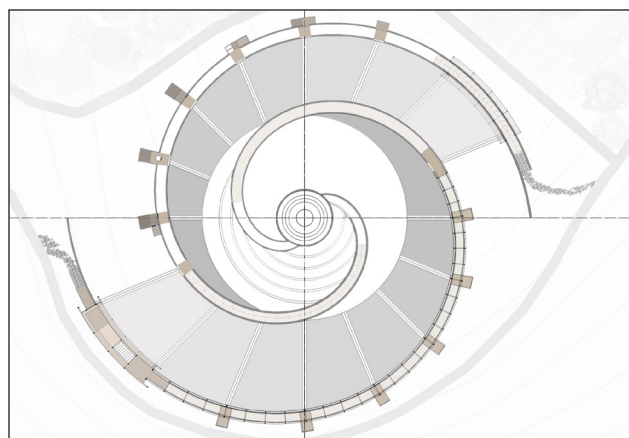
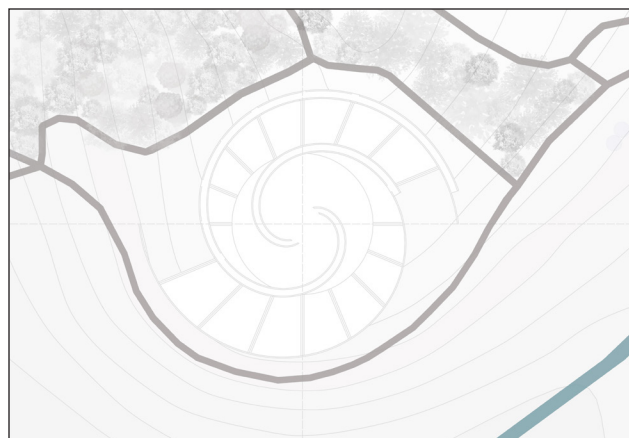


Now that the spiral walls extend out into the landscape, the superimposition of the radial lines belonging to the circle with the spiral geometry resulted in 12 distinct points that become the 12 moments in the journey, that is detailed later. These 12 moments are essentially points where we meet the child within ourselves.

As the journey slowly started falling in place, the landscape started responding to both the site levels and the complex geometry of the spiral - thus fanning out as an extended stepped landscape that is a part of the “grown-up” path.



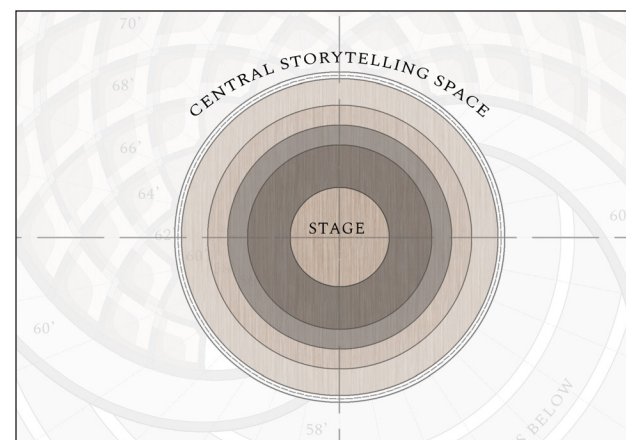


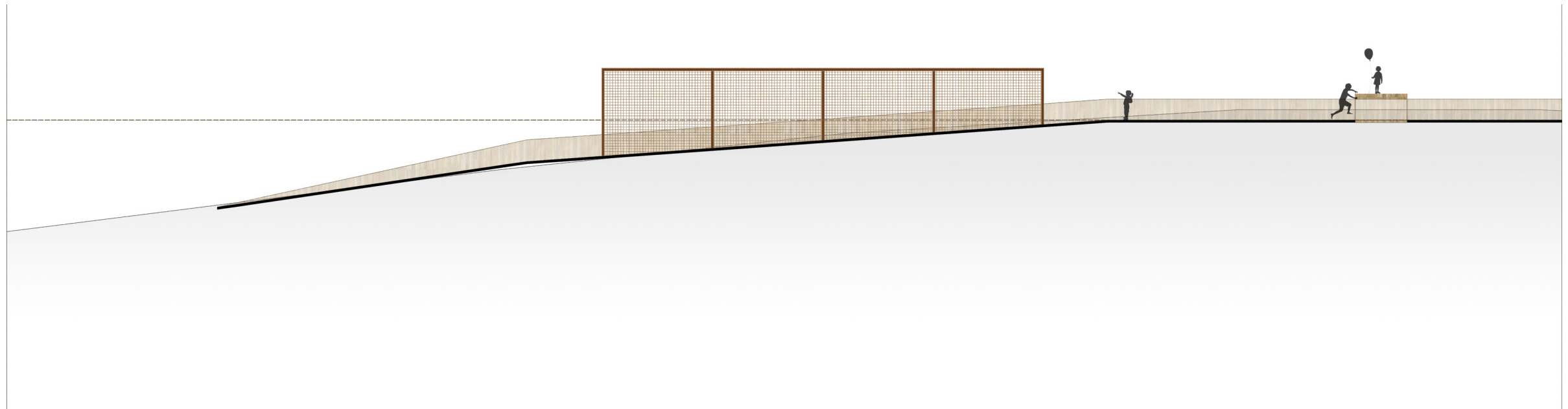


MULTIPLE WORLDS AND MULTIPLE LAYERS

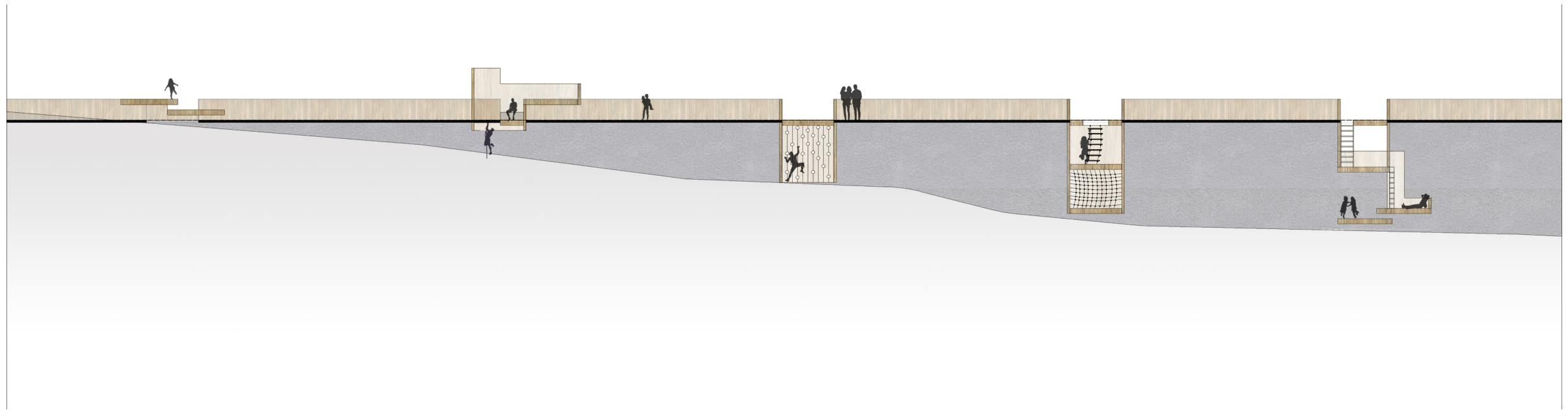
The story of the Little Prince is embedded within multiple layers, like a set of Russian dolls. The dedication to Leon Werth & the definition of the intended audience by Saint-Exupery marks the first layer, that empty landscape of the actual readers. The second layers marks that of the narrator, who uses the boa constrictor vs hat conundrum to determine between children and adults. The third and final layer is the actual world of the Little Prince, which begins after the aviator's plane crash and ends with the "disappearance" of the Little Prince.

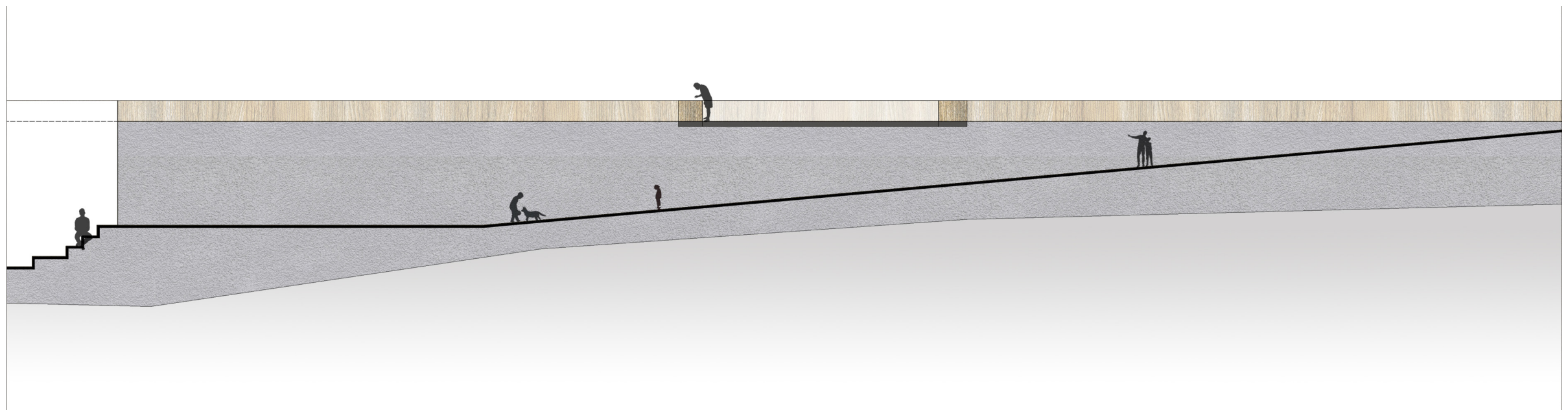
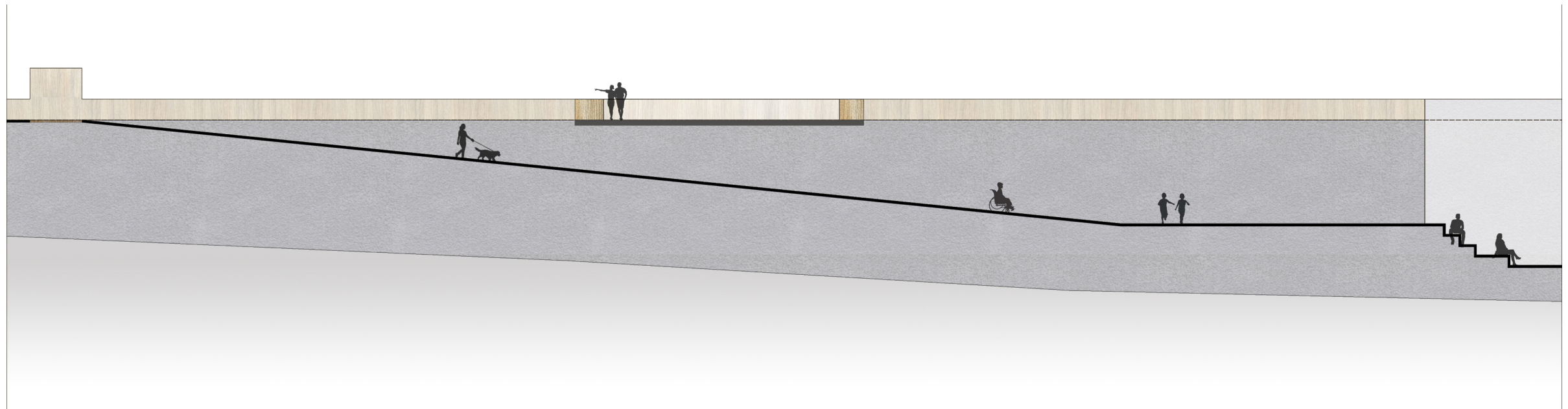
Along the same lines, project is designed as a series of spaces embedded within each other - the empty landscape of the site, the built landscape of the "grown-up path", the child's path leading to the storytelling place, at the center of which is the central stage and seating area.

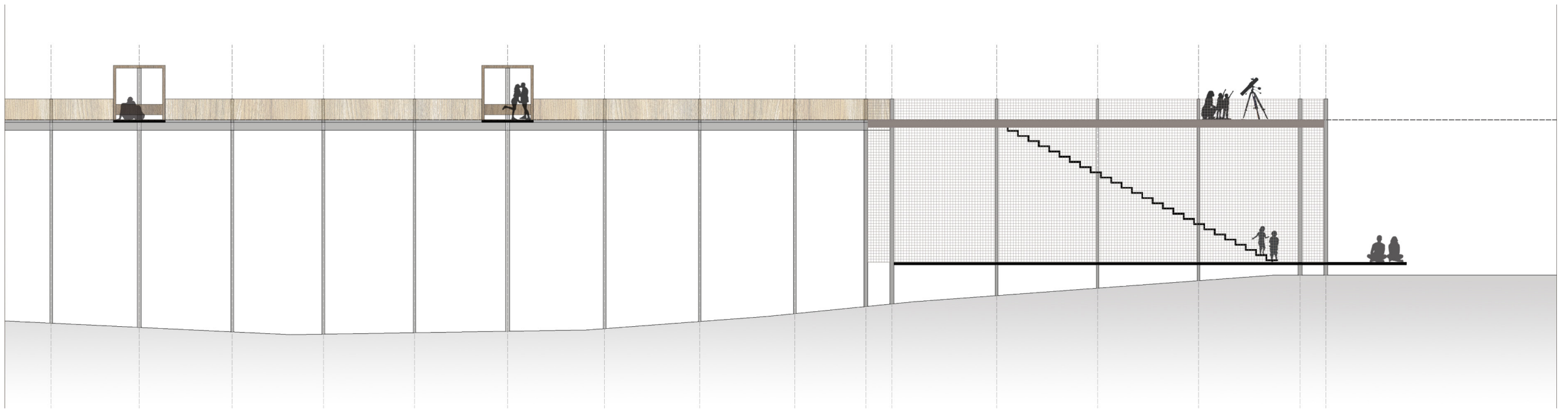
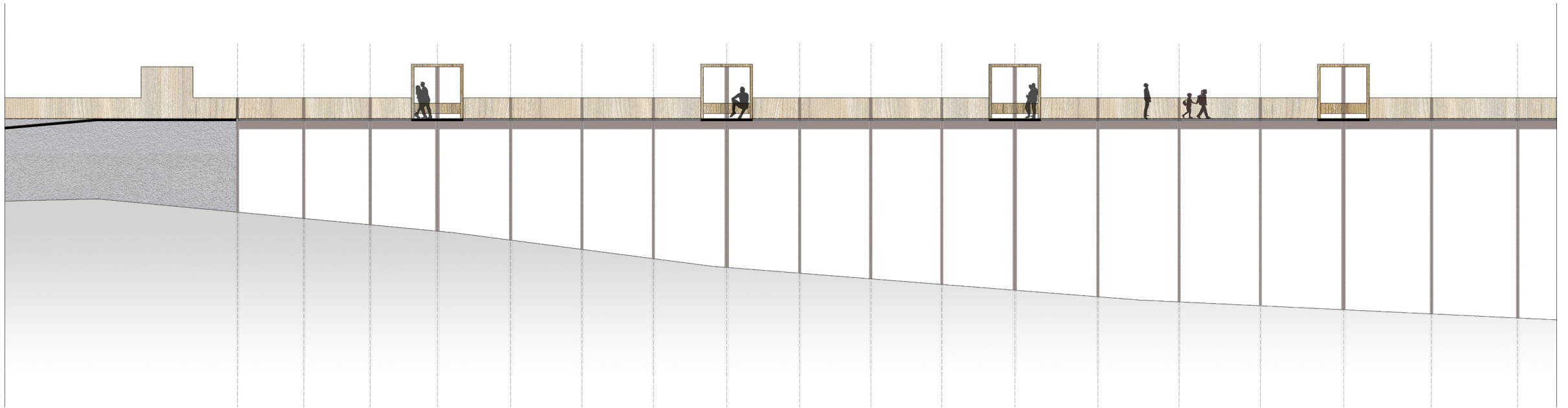




CONCEPTUAL EXPANDED SITE SECTION THROUGH THE ENTIRE “JOURNEY”





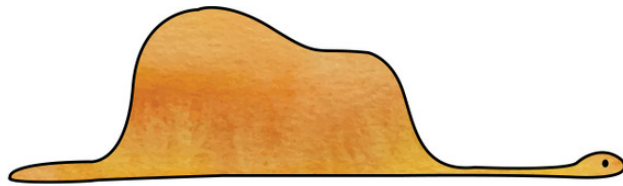




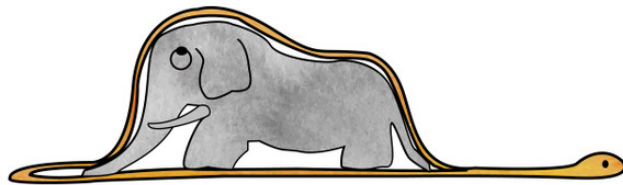
The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

The Little Prince - changes every time that you read it. Starry-eyed idealism, metaphor, allegory, philosophical meaning, plain simple children’s tale. The journey through the built space is a larger narrative that holds the narrative of “The Little Prince” in its heart. In fact, the entire journey is like the empty box that the aviator draws at the request of the Little Prince - the empty box within which the sheep exists in the prince’s world. The built space in this thesis is essentially the empty framework within which exists the possibilities of many different stories, unique to each person who passes through it.

PART IV
The Journey



"My drawing was not a picture of a hat.
It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant."



CHAPTER 1

THE ELEPHANT, THE BOA CONSTRICTOR AND THE HAT

Once when I was six years old, I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called *True Stories from Nature*, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. In the book it said: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion." I pondered deeply, then, over the adventures of the jungle. And after some work with a colored pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing.

My Drawing Number One.

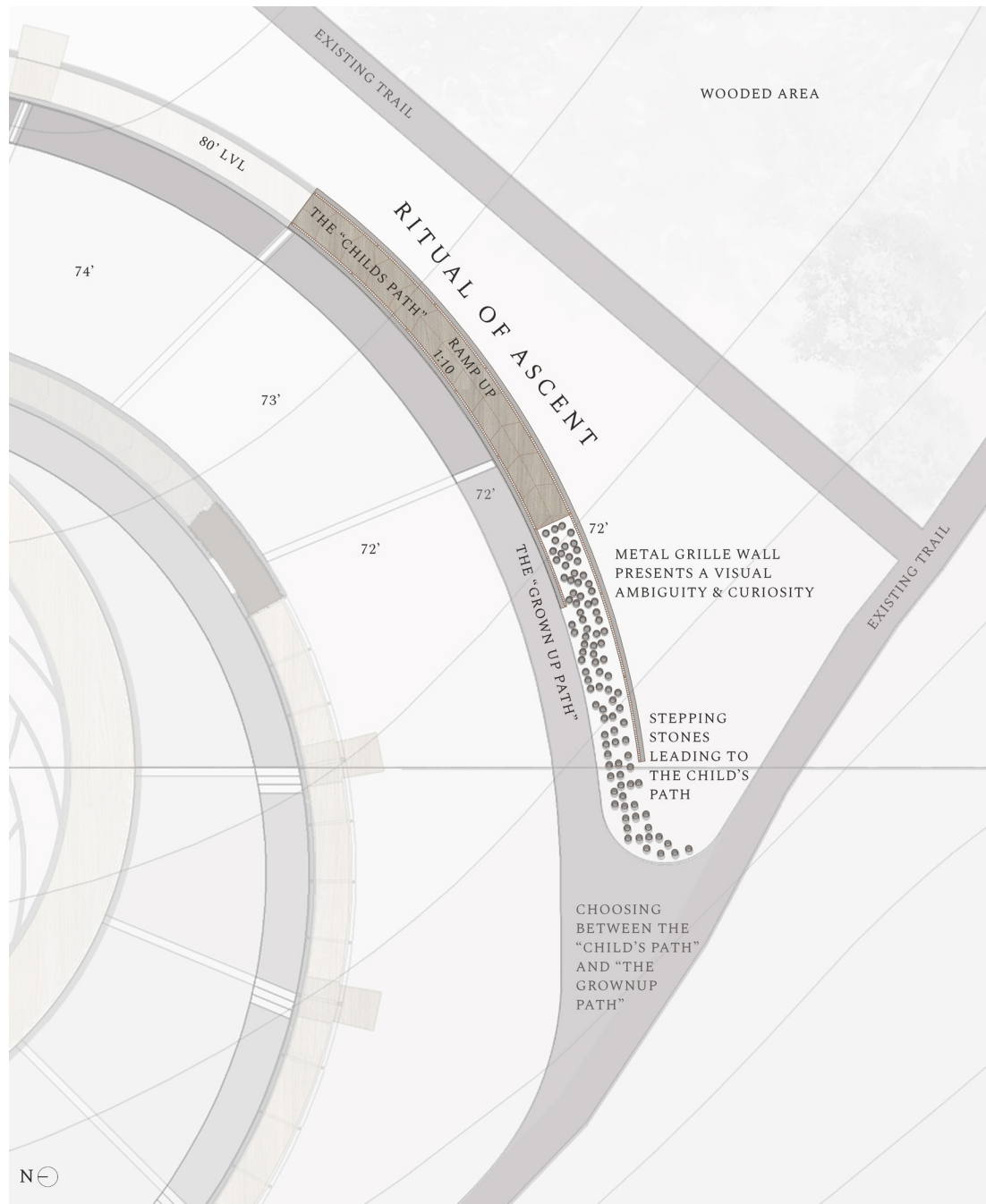
I showed my masterpiece to the grownups and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: "Frighten? Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?". **My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant.** But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing: I drew the inside of a boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained.

My Drawing Number Two.

Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them. Whenever I met one of them who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my Drawing Number One, which I have always kept. I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say:

"That is a hat."

Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man.

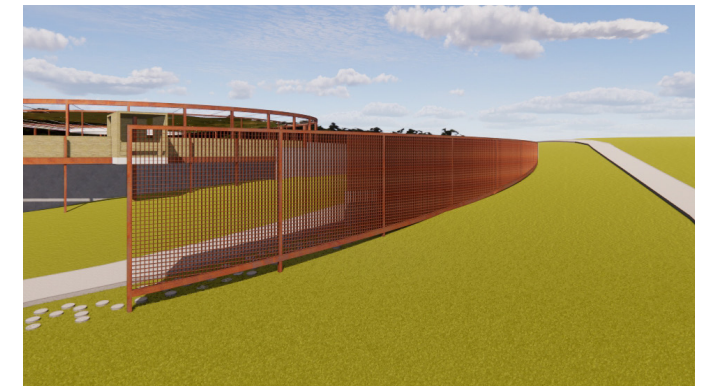
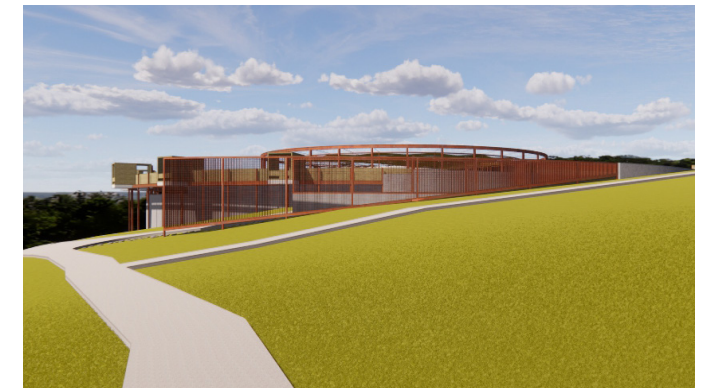


THE ENTRY THRESHOLD

CHOOSING BETWEEN THE HAT OR THE ELEPHANT INSIDE THE BOA CONSTRICTOR

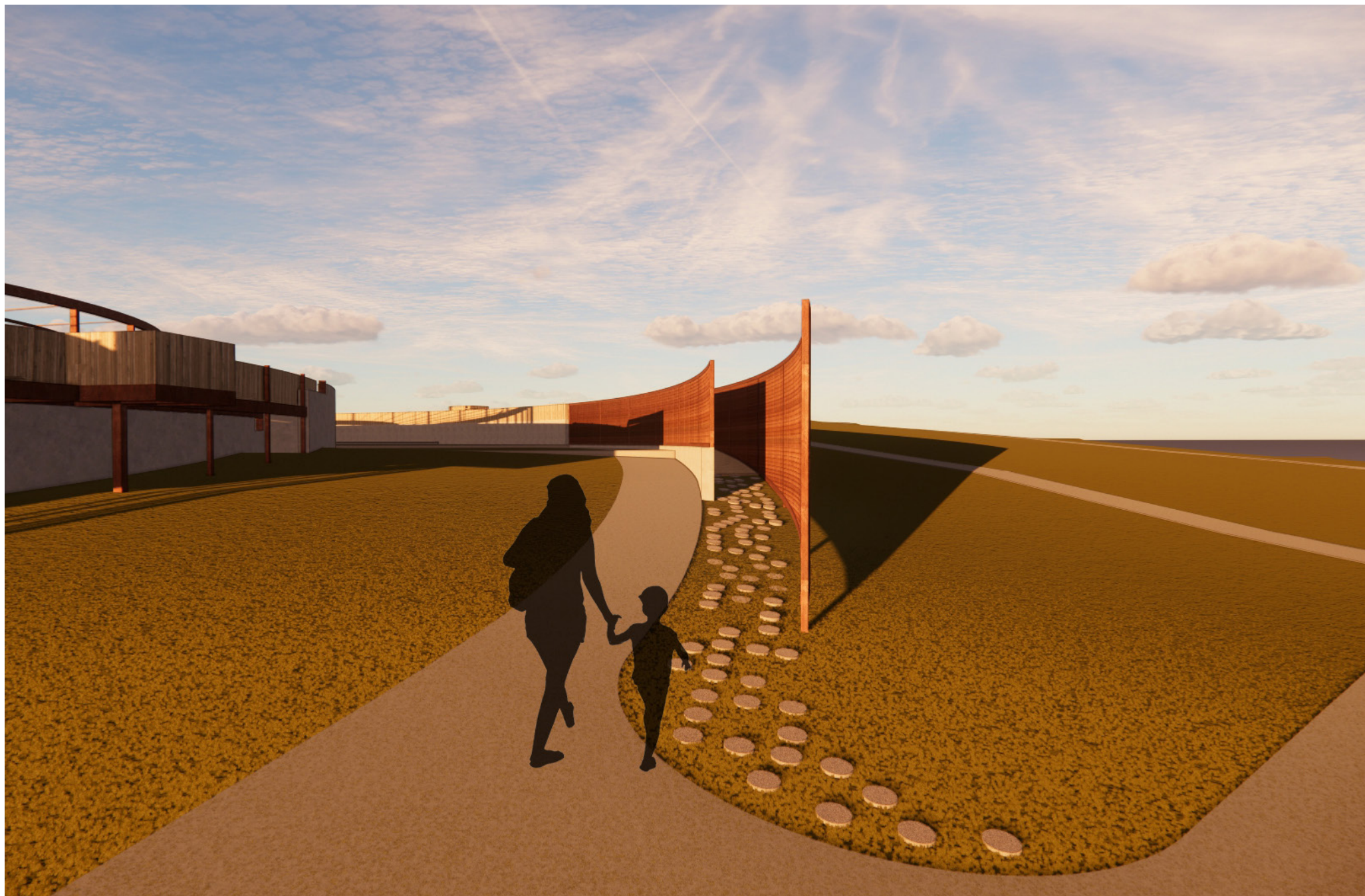
The book begins with the charming conundrum of the hat, the elephant and the boa constrictor. The narrator within the story uses his drawing of the boa constrictor and the elephant to determine whether he is among friends or adults. Lack of insight into the essential, symbolized in the interior elephant is perceived as a lack of humanity by Saint-Exupery. This is the realm of the adults that Saint-Exupery inhabited, outside of the book.

The entry threshold is a reflection of the test on choosing between the path of the child or the path of the grown up. One path leads straight from the existing site trail and is paved, regular, organized : something that we adults are inherently wired to choose. However, there is a second path that emerges alongside the first, but is irregular, not paved but rather formed of skipping stones and in a sense, is chaotic. As adults, do we possess the child-like curiosity that would take us through a path like that?

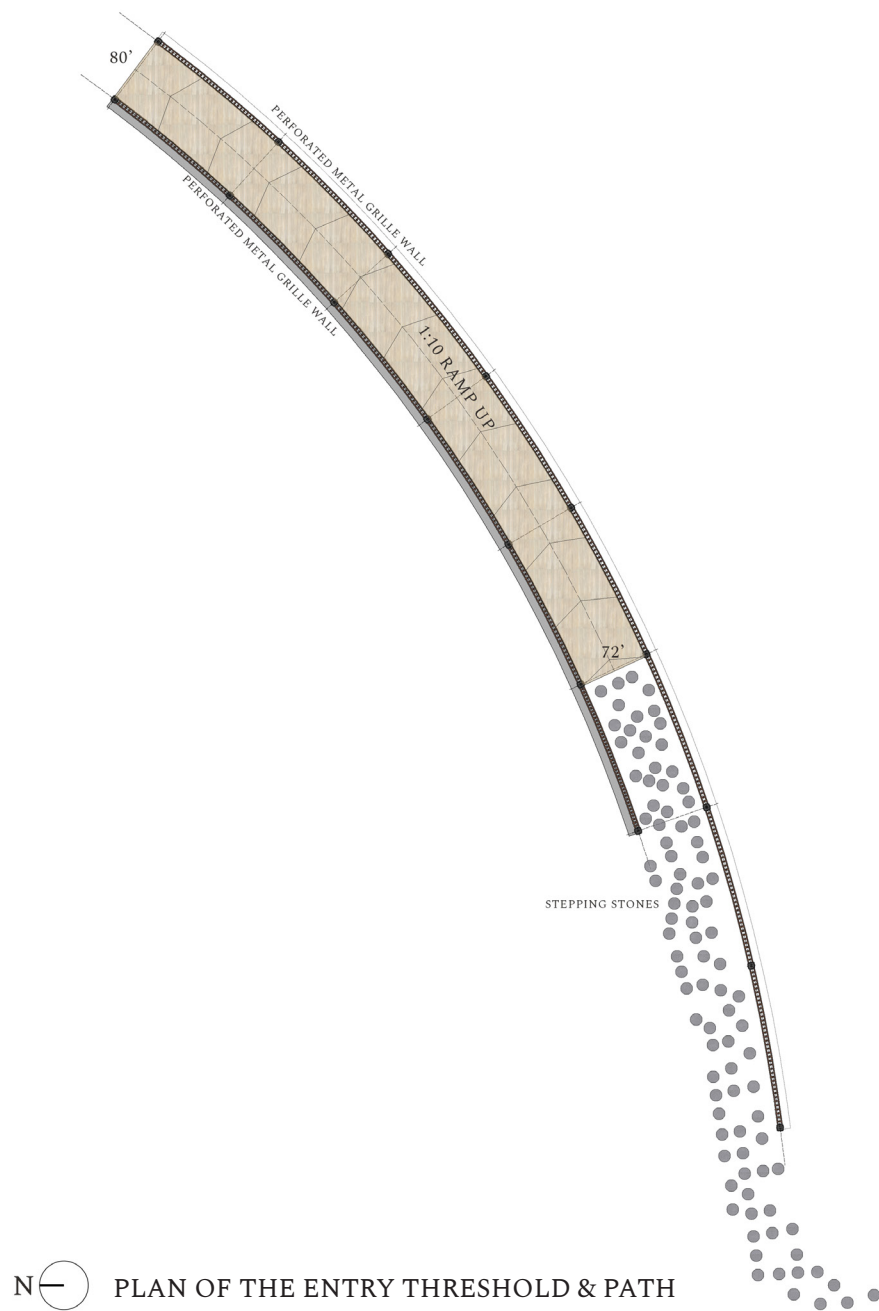


Approach to the entry threshold : The walls almost disappear and then reappear and disappear again as we move towards it, alternately obscuring and revealing the path behind it

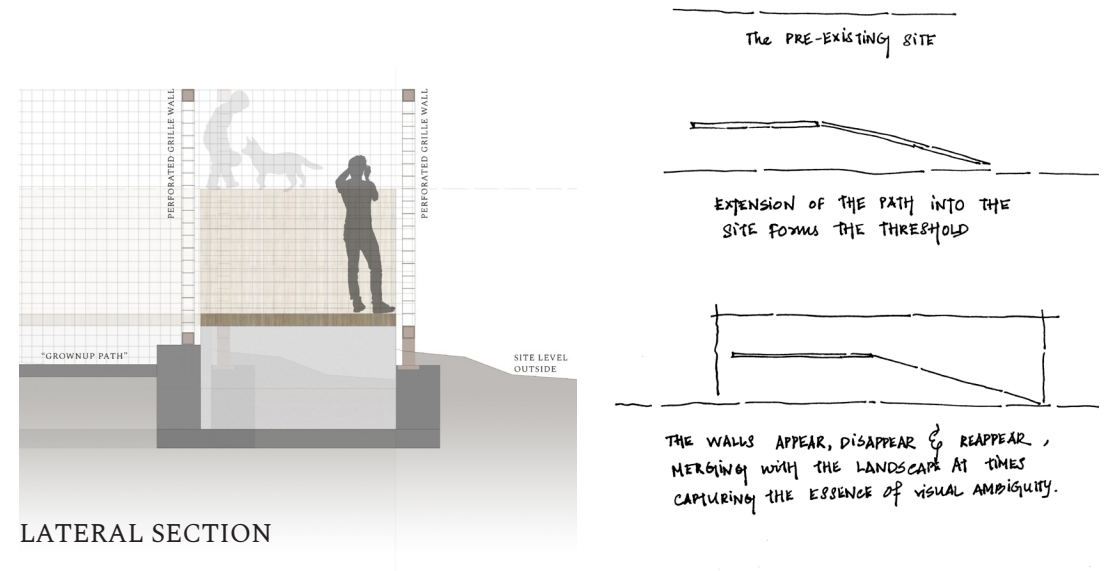




My curiosity piqued, I choose to walk along the curved path that whose end is beyond what I can see. I skip across the stones like a child, and enter the ramp that is leading me up. Enclosed on either side by grille walls, that reveal and obscure alternately, I can see glimpses of beyond in bits and pieces. I partake in a ritual of ascent : I start the journey by suspending all disbelief. As the aviator says, “In the face of overpowering mystery, one dare not disobey.

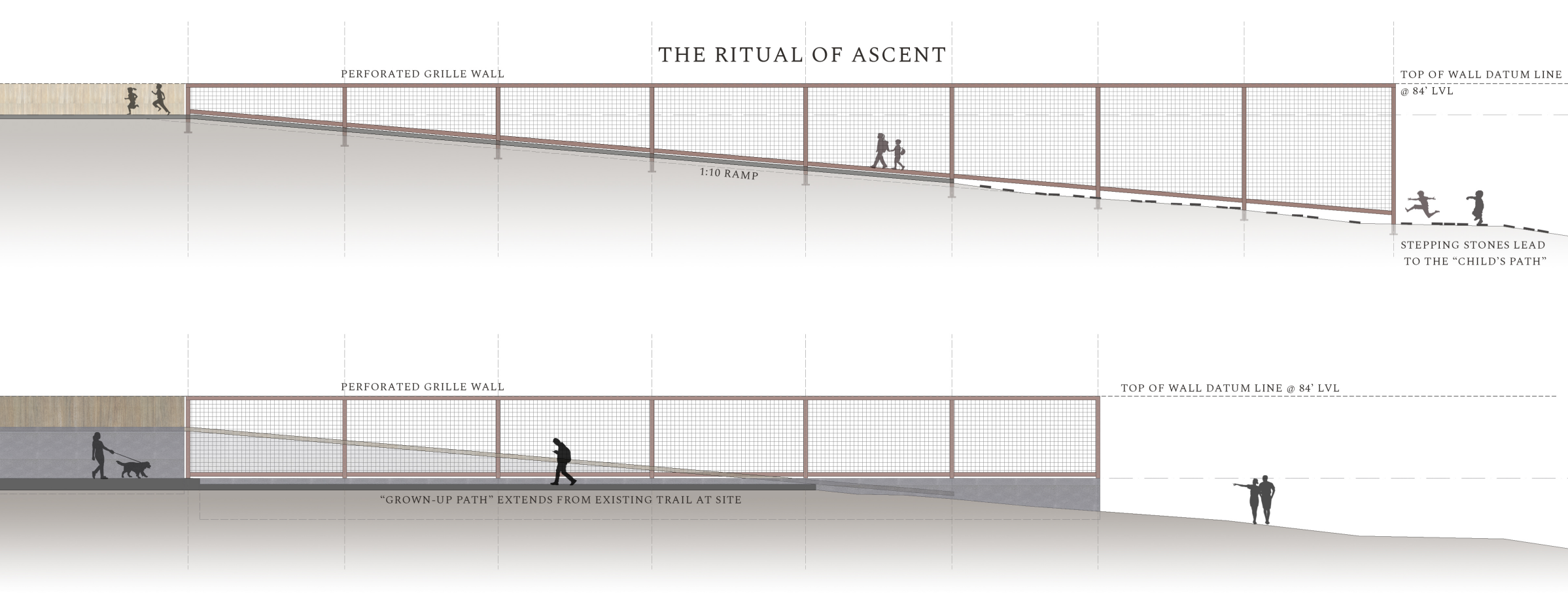


AMBIGUITY OF THE THRESHOLD & THE RITUAL OF ASCENT



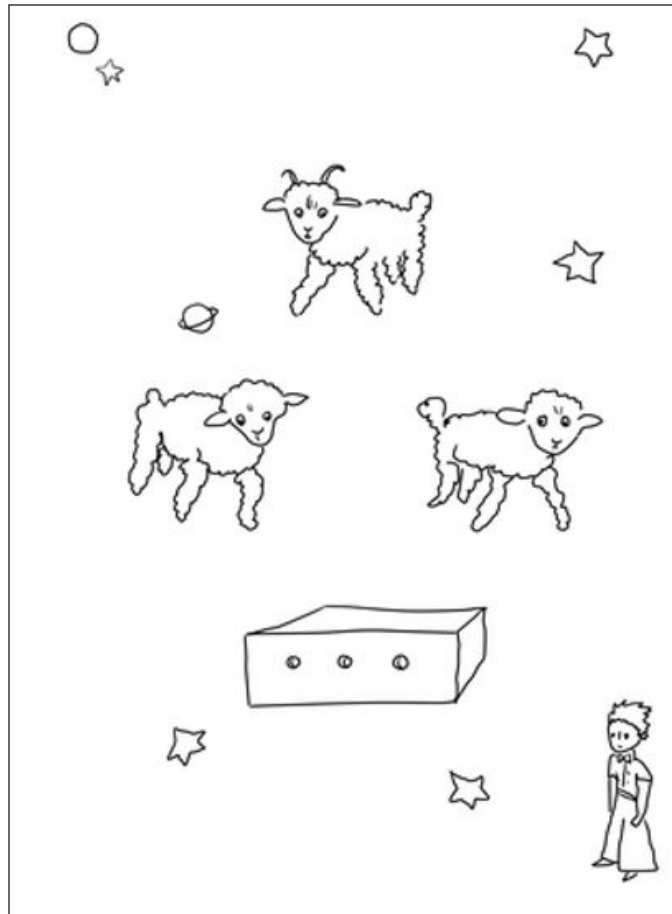
The threshold invites us to discover what lies beyond, by taking us through a ritual of ascent : almost an allegory to the act of leaving the real world and entering the world of the Little Prince. The book sets us up for this through the plane crash of the aviator, thus giving context and introduction to the character.

The threshold essentially acts as a transition from the site outside to the whimsical built space.





As I emerge out of the threshold, and above the walls, I see two kids jumping from the wall to the other side, which is again beyond my visual realm. Now, I am curious to go and see what is on the other side and to jump with the kids.



CHAPTER 2

THE EMPTY BOX AND THE SHEEP

The first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any human habitation. I was more isolated than a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean. Thus you can imagine my amazement, at sunrise, when I was awakened by an odd little voice. It said:

“If you please--draw me a sheep!”

“What!”

“Draw me a sheep!”

[. . .]

“This is only his box. The sheep you asked for is inside.”

I was very surprised to see a light break over the face of my young judge:

“That is exactly the way I wanted it! Do you think that this sheep will have to have a great deal of grass?”

“Why?”

“Because where I live everything is very small . . .”

“There will surely be enough grass for him,” I said. “It is a very small sheep that I have given you.”

He bent his head over the drawing.

“Not so small that--Look! He has gone to sleep . . .”

THE MOMENTS OF PLAY

“I forgot all about being a child. Until something miraculous happened.

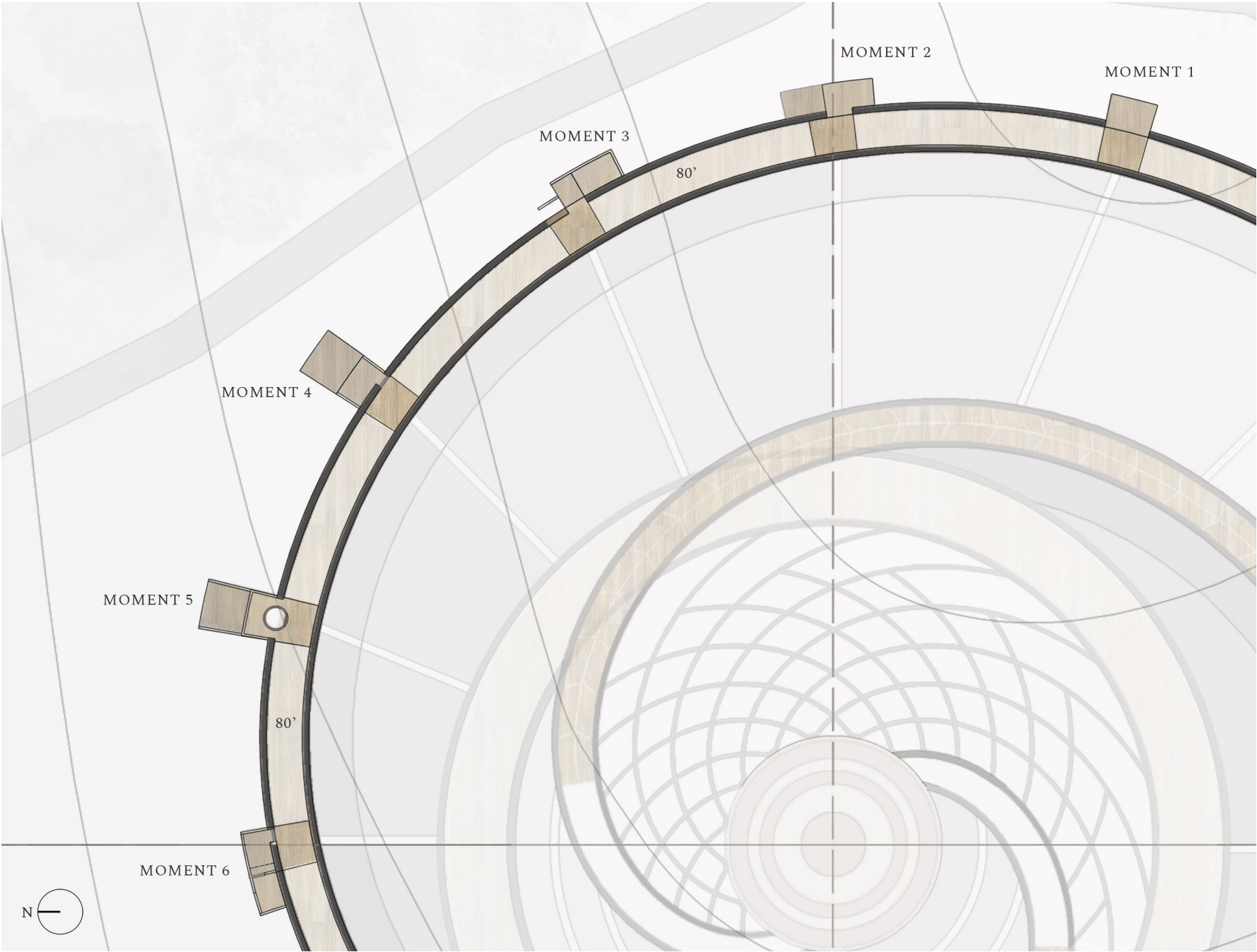
-The aviator in the Little Prince

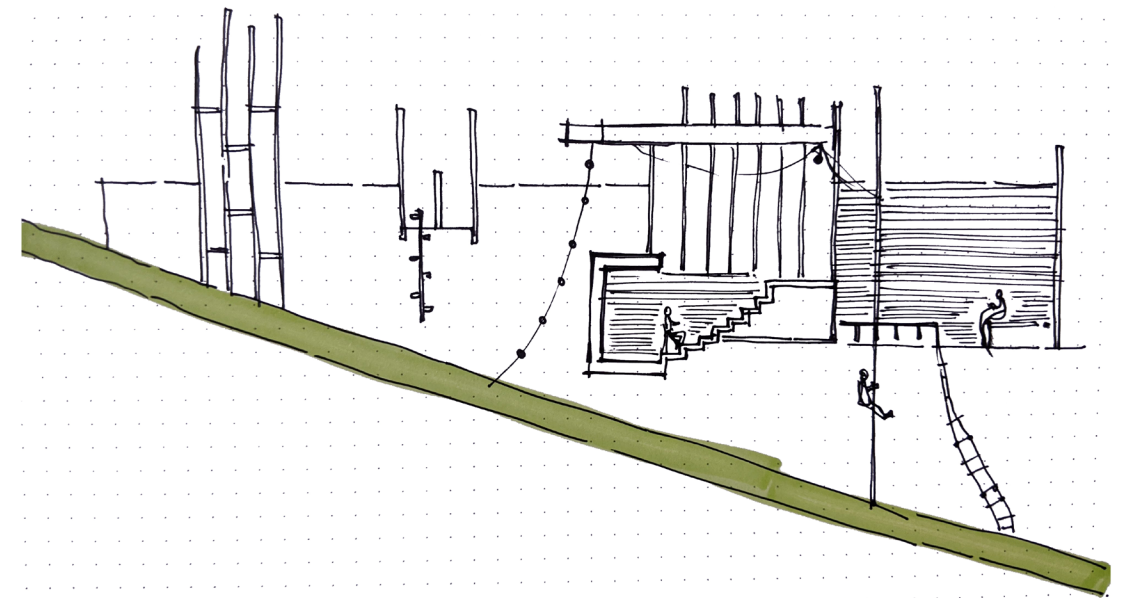
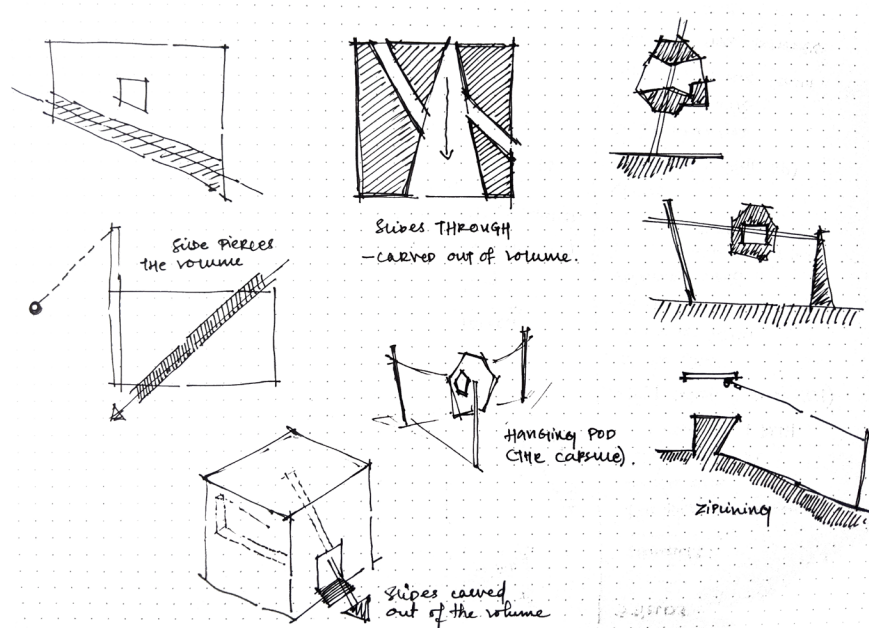
We were all children once. But, we have to grow up, there is no stopping the clock. No matter who we are as a grown-up now, we have that ability to tap back into that innocence. It is all about remembering that and staying connected to that.

It is all about “Remembering to be a child again.”

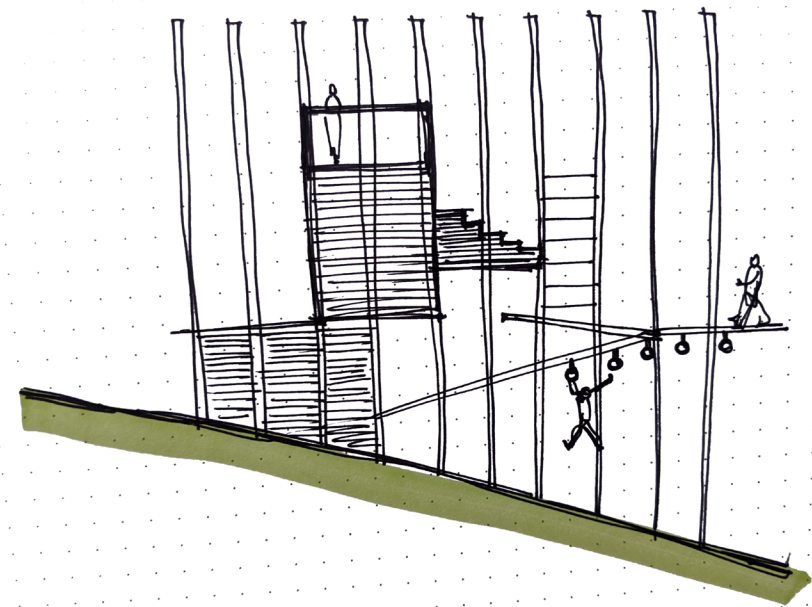
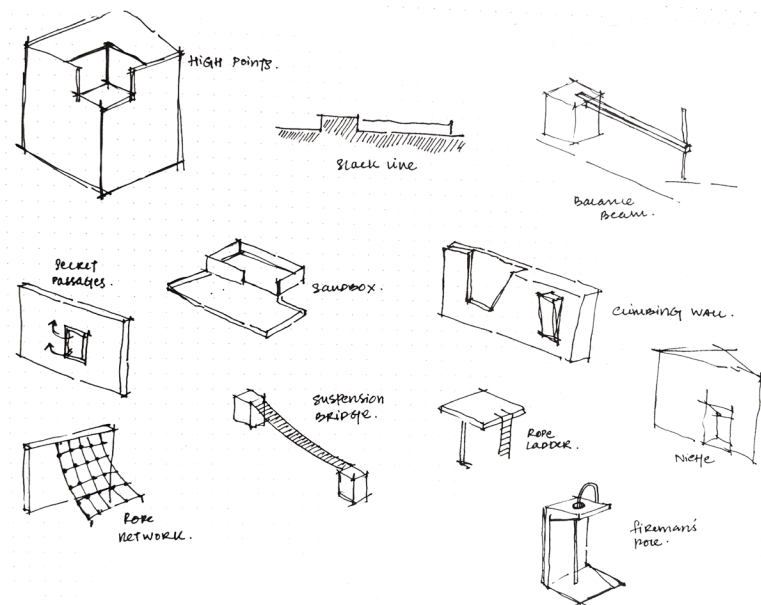
In a way, Saint-Exupery’s life was a permanent quest to return to childhood. The dedication and explanation (to Leon Werth) defines the book’s audience as “those adults” who need or wish to regain the imaginative wonder of childhood. Which is exactly the same audience intended through this built space.

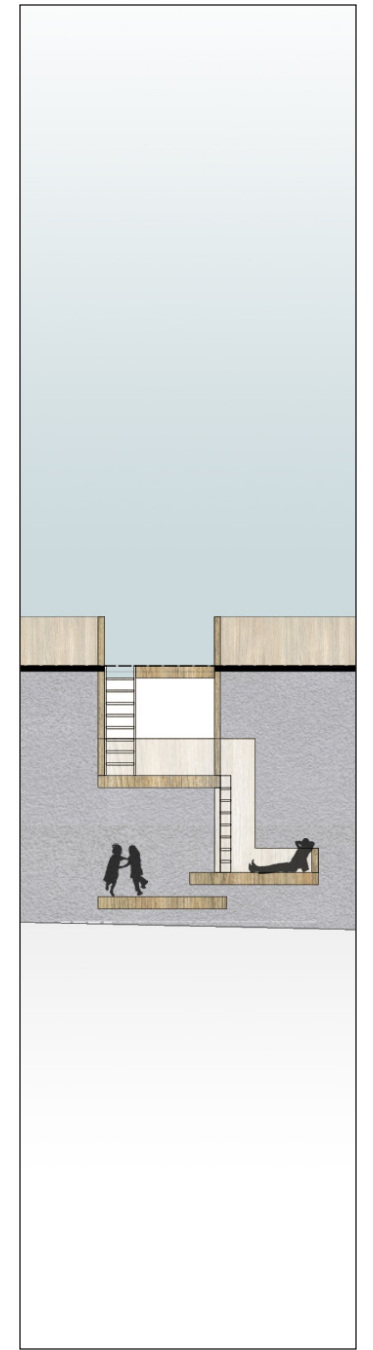
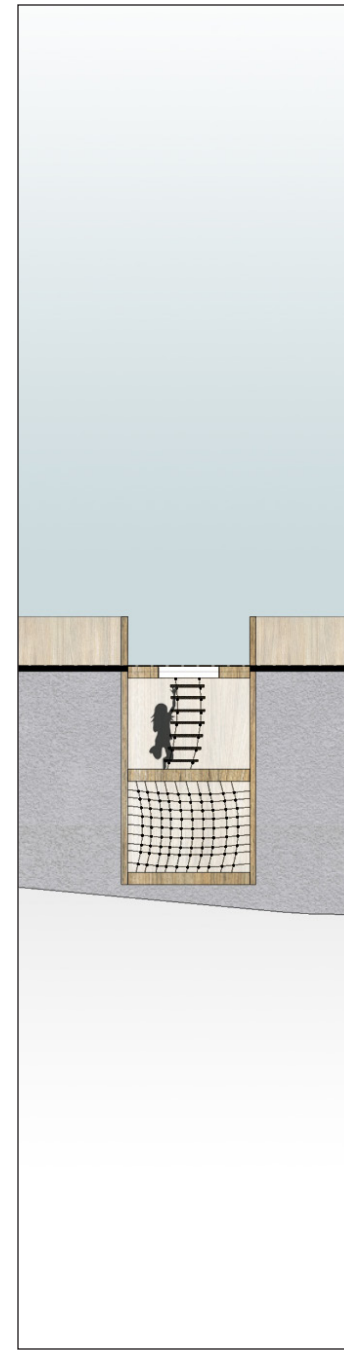
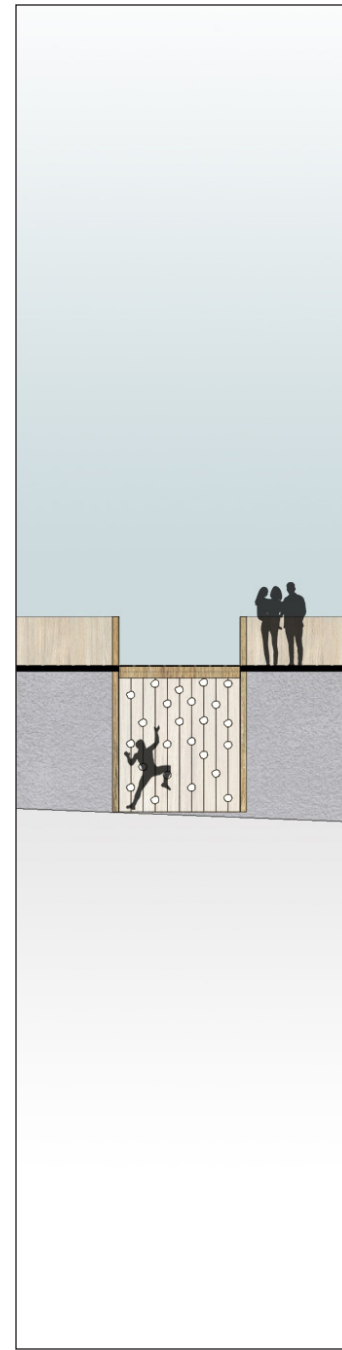
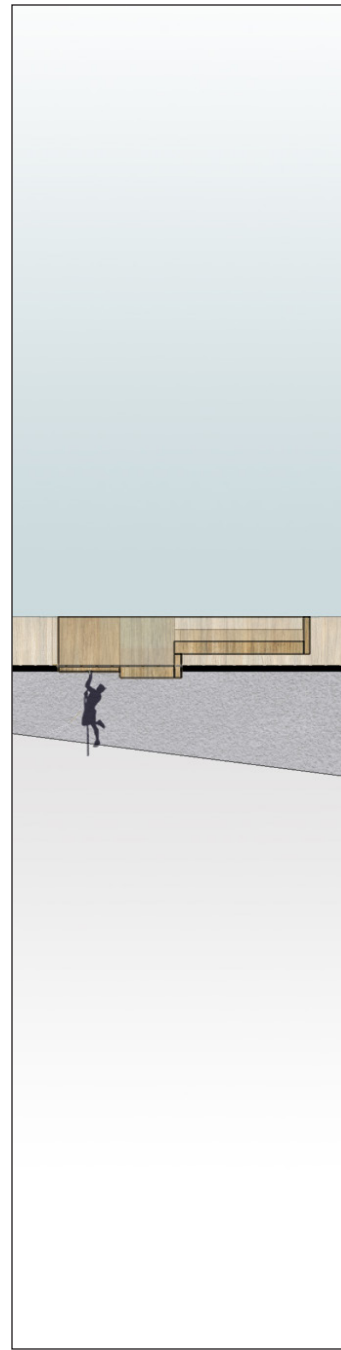
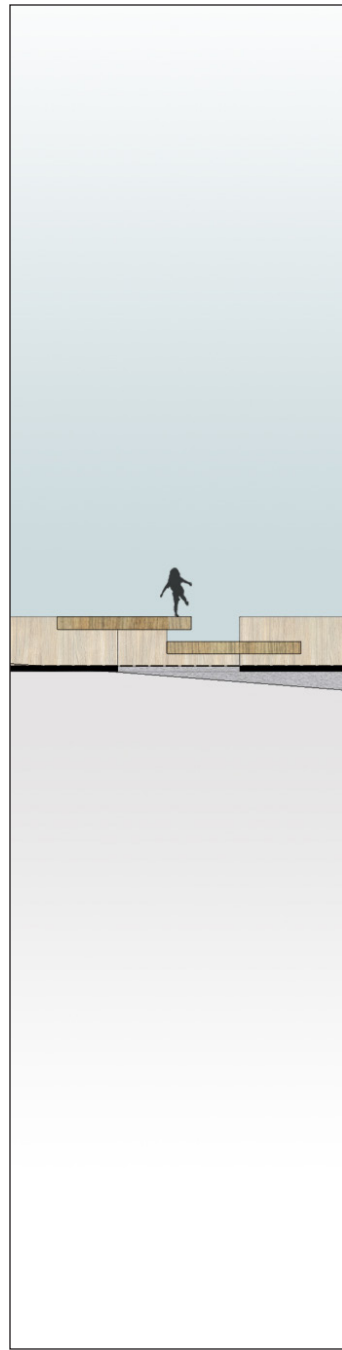
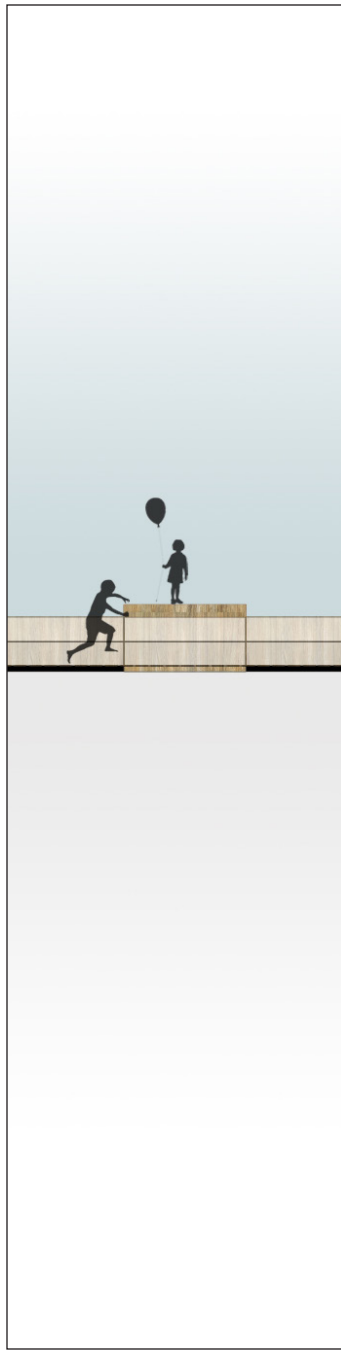
The 6 moments of play that mark points in the journey are each unique in their ways of movement : some of them require jumping around, some need us to climb on ropes and nets and ladders. They are all accessible to adults, yet scaled down so as to slow us down as against our pace of walking. They also act as alternate points of entry into the “child’s path”.

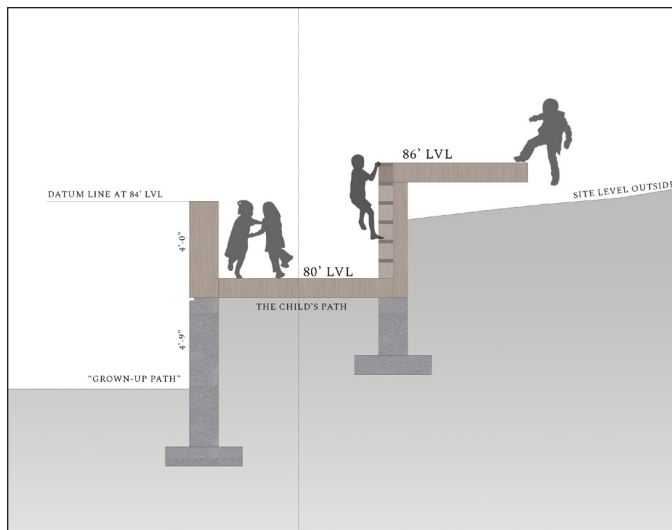
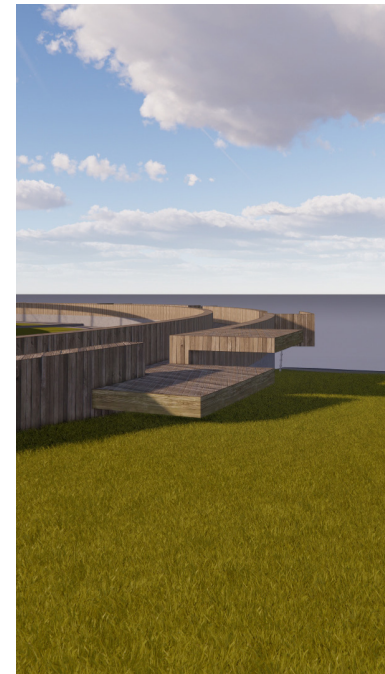
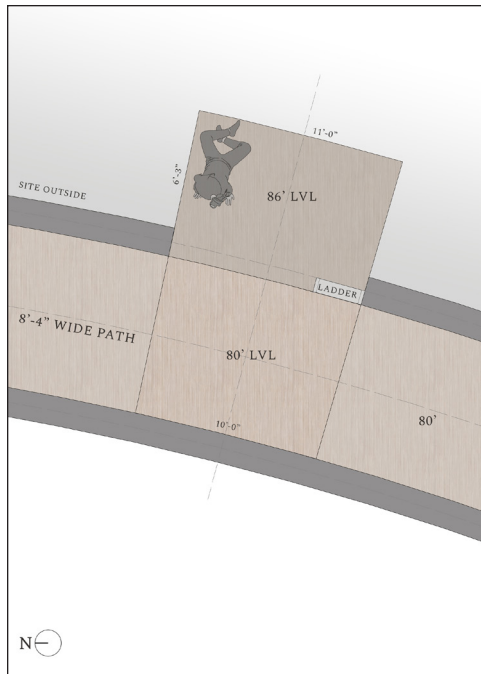




Conceptual diagrams exploring alternate ways of movement, as a child would : this is to subvert the typical “grown-up” way of walking across regular straight paths.





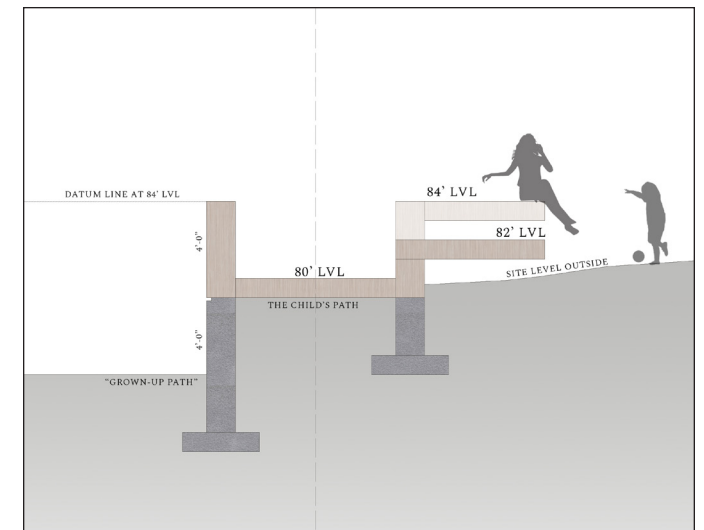


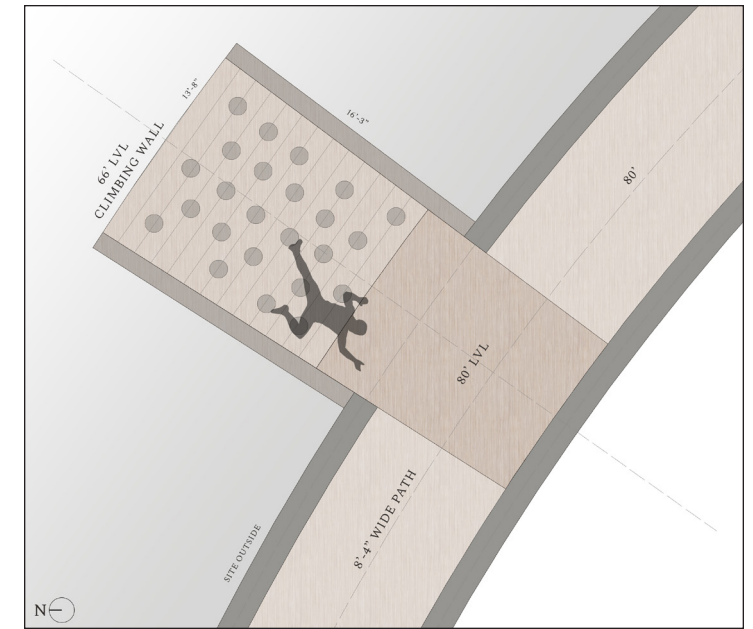
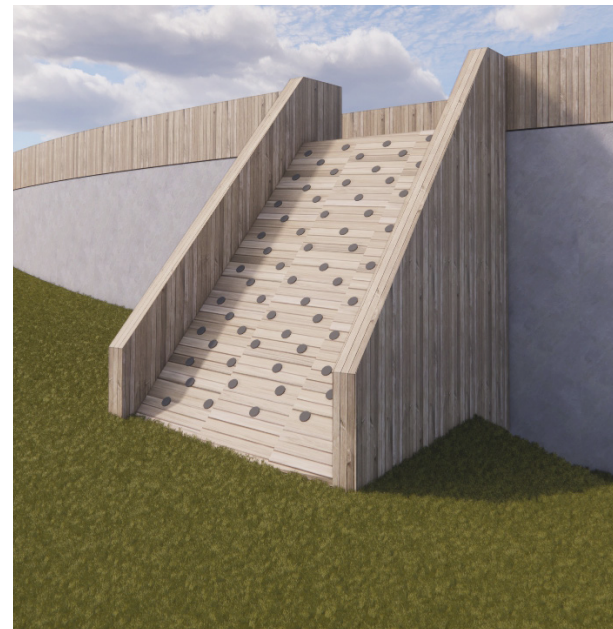
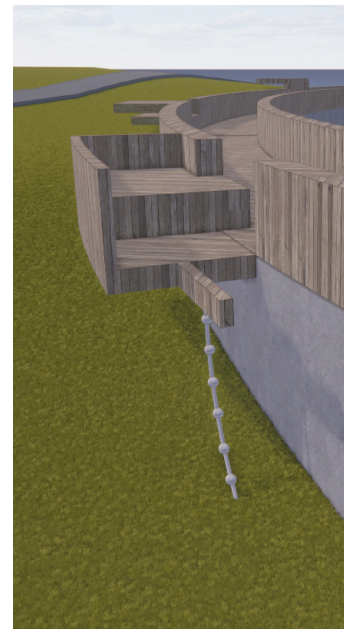
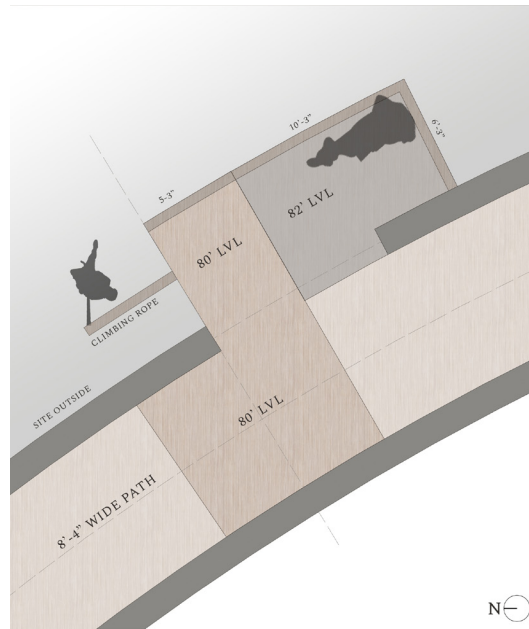
MOMENT OF PLAY #1 : The floor up above

This is the first of the six moments which is a simple platform extending out into the landscape : however, the site levels outside keep the platform raised and is accessed by a ladder. As we proceed along the path, each moment becomes a more complex construct than the previous one. Each moment also responds to the site levels outside in a different way, resulting in six unique structures.

MOMENT OF PLAY #2 : Jumping across levels

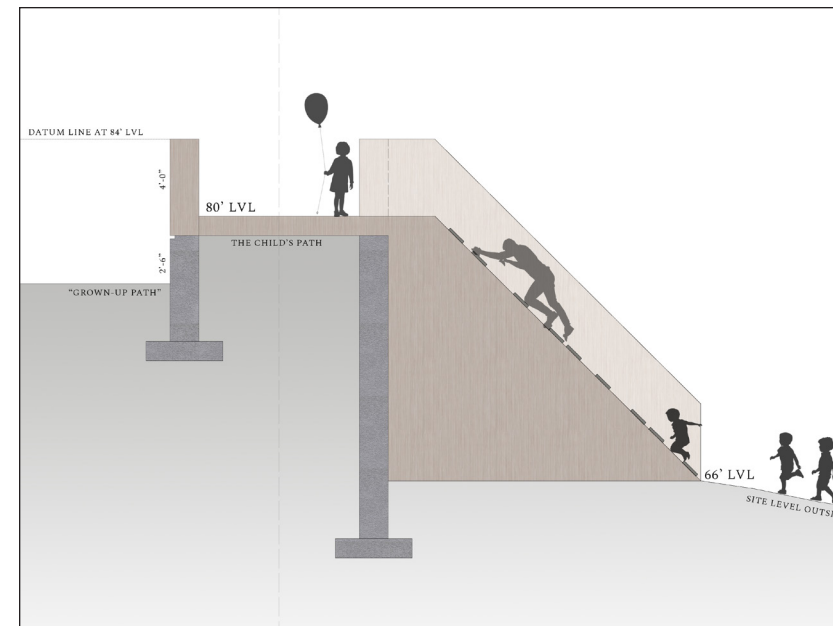
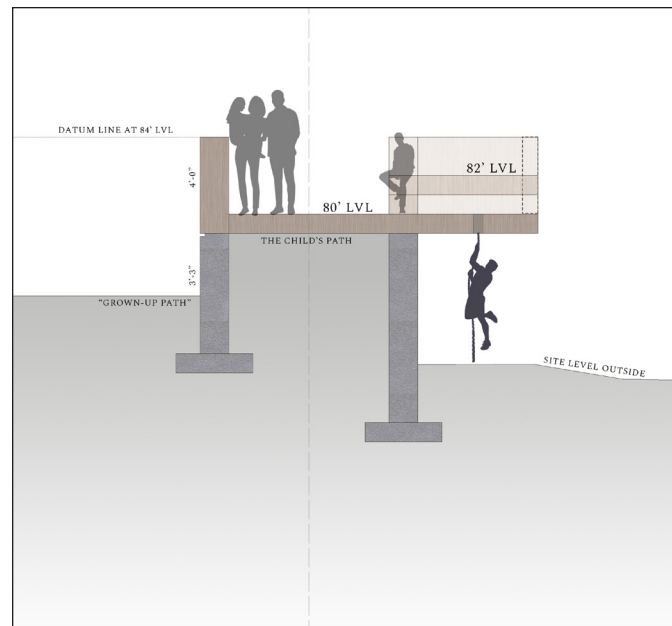
The second of the six moments is a series of platforms that one jumps across eventually jumping onto the site.





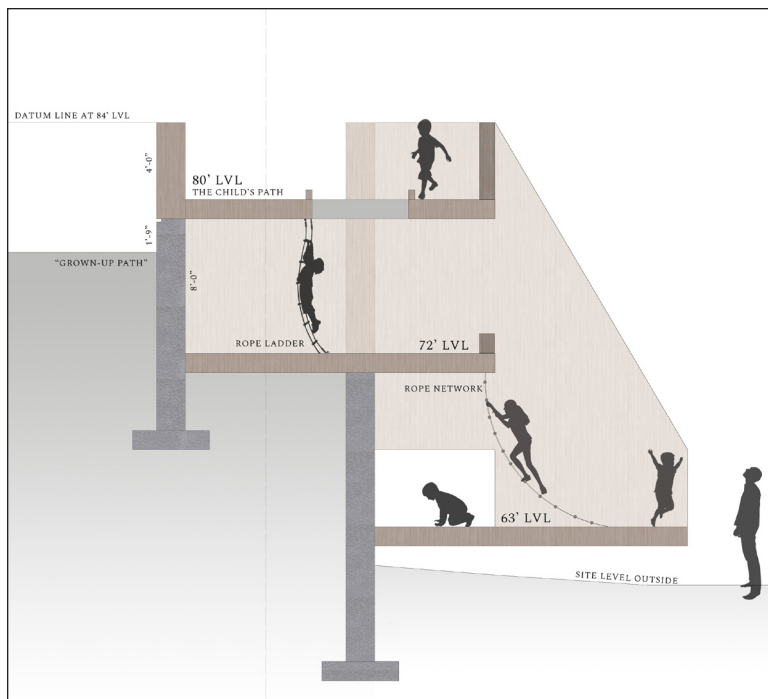
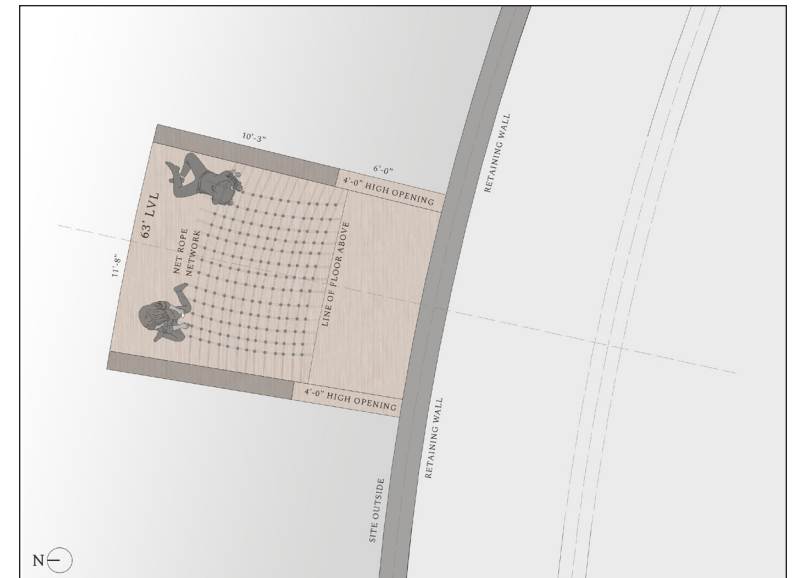
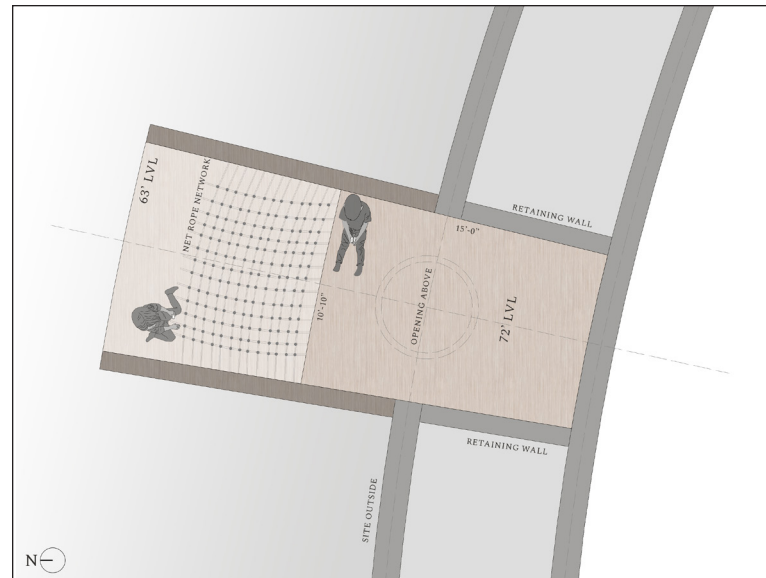
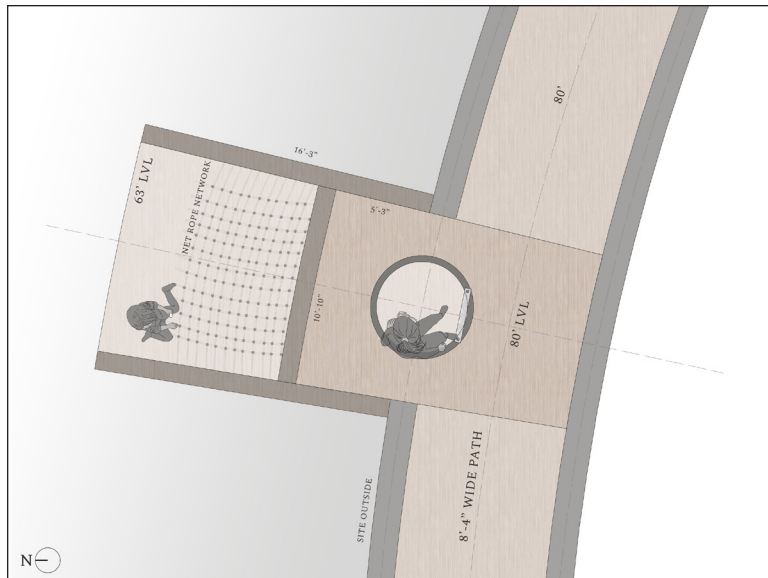
MOMENT OF PLAY #3 : The knotted rope

The third moment responds to the dropping site levels outside by becoming a more complex series of platforms - and also throwing out a climbing rope from a cantilevered beam.



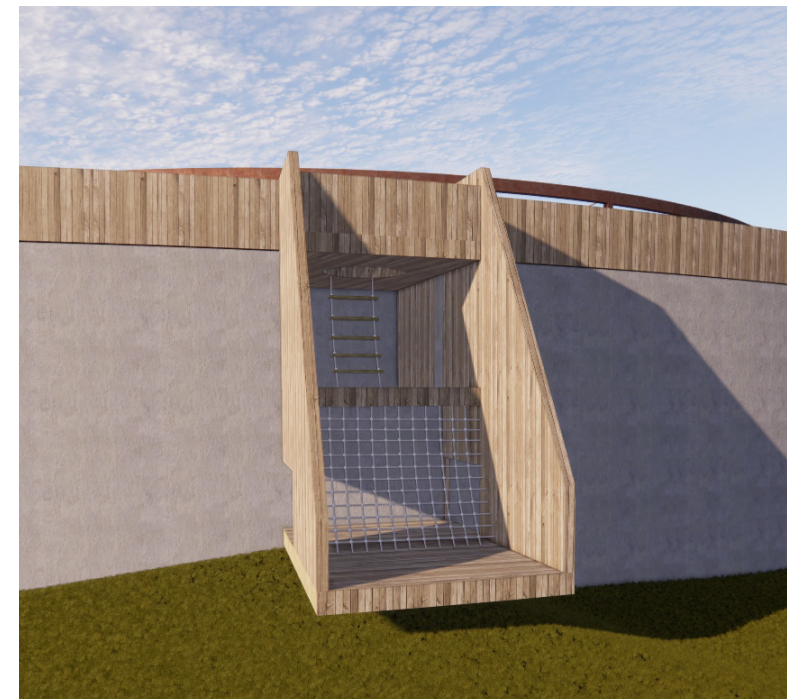
MOMENT OF PLAY #4 : The climbing wall

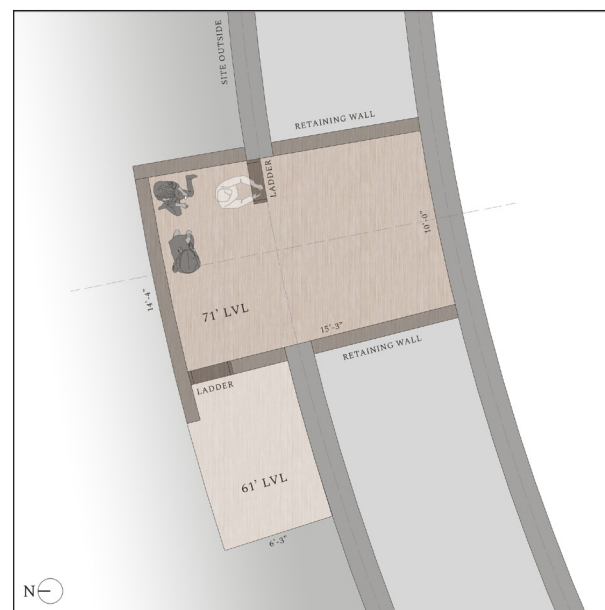
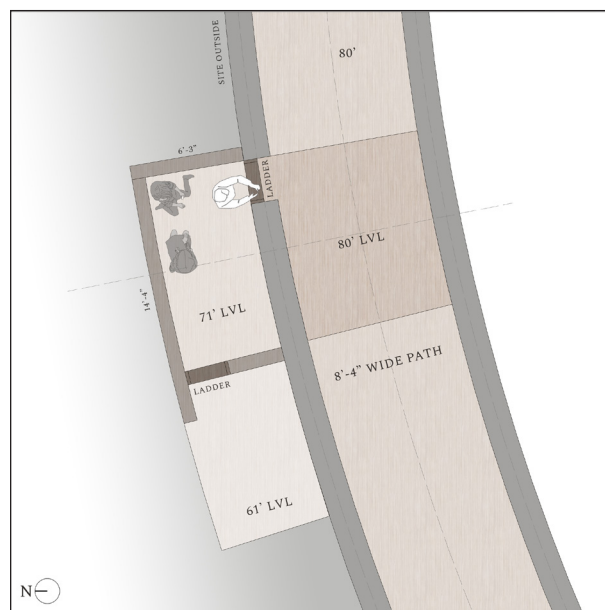
The fourth moment navigates a 12' drop from the path to the site level outside through a sloped climbing wall.



MOMENT OF PLAY #5 : The rope ladder and netted floor

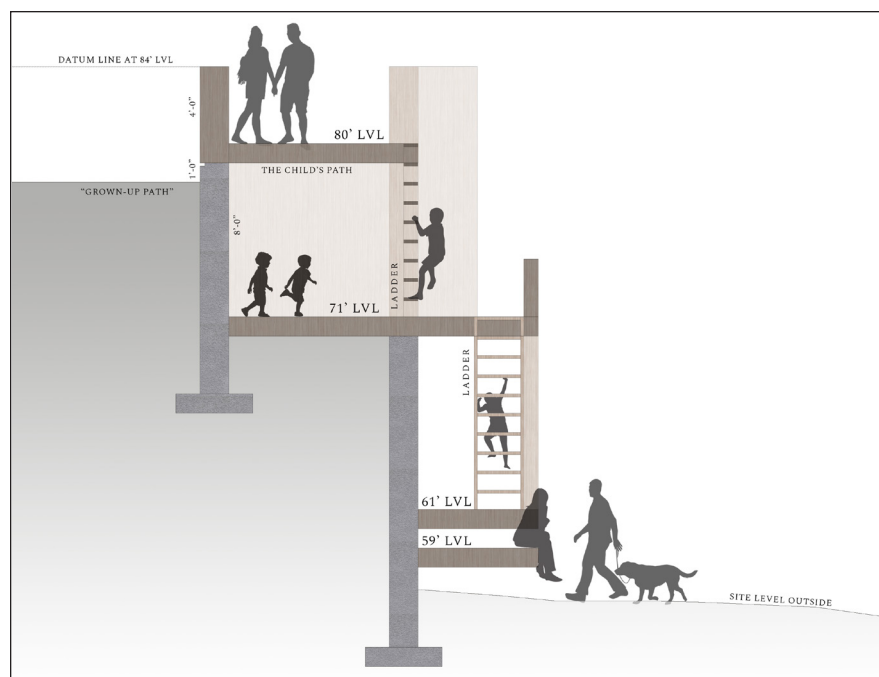
The fifth moment morphs into a complex structure of multiple levels. The circular opening in the path leads down to a second level via a rope ladder from which, a netted floor slopes down to a third level above the site outside.





MOMENT OF PLAY #6 : The tree-house

Navigating a level difference of 20', the last moment is an elaborate structure that is almost reminiscent of the tree-house structures that used to fascinate me when I was a child. The multiple levels and ladders in different directions present a varying shadow play at different times of the day. The structure looks as if there might be someone asking for a secret password to the club as one reaches the top via the ladder. It is a hark back to the aspects of movement that excited us as children, and to remember to be that child again.





The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

CHAPTER 3

THE TAMING OF THE FOX

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.

“Please, tame me!” he said.

“I want to, very much,” the little prince replied. “But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand.”

“One only understands the things that one tames,” said the fox. “Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready-made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends anymore. If you want a friend, tame me...”

“What must I do, to tame you?” asked the little prince.

“You must be very patient,” replied the fox. “First you will sit down at a little distance from me, like that, in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day...”

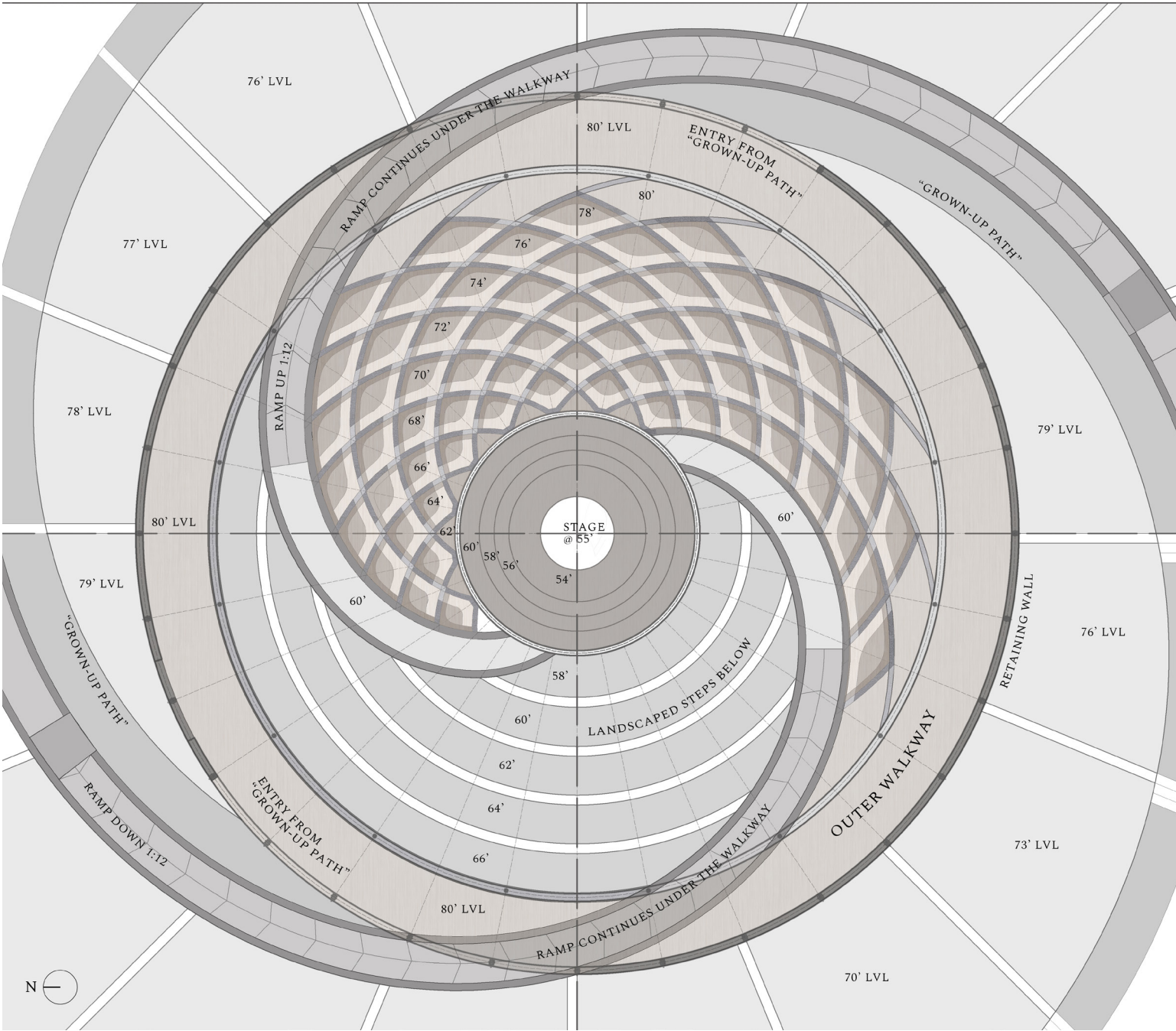
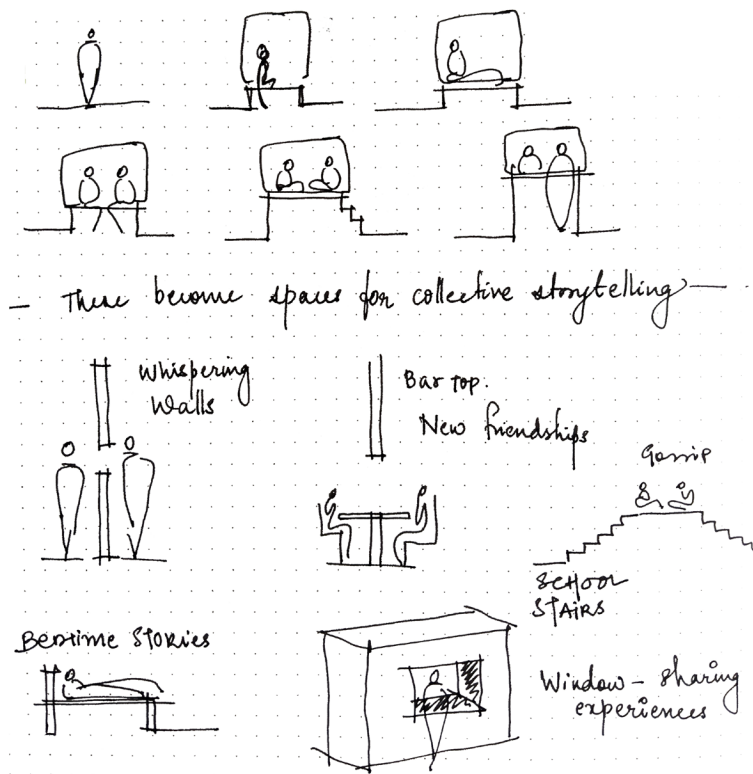
The next day the little prince came back.

A PLACE FOR STORYTELLING

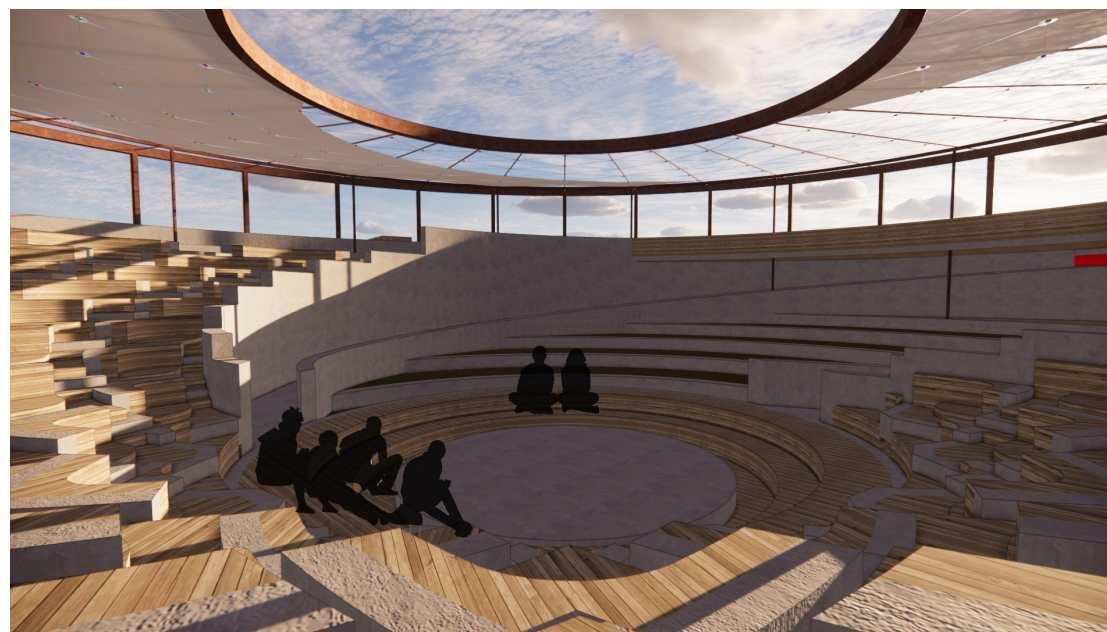
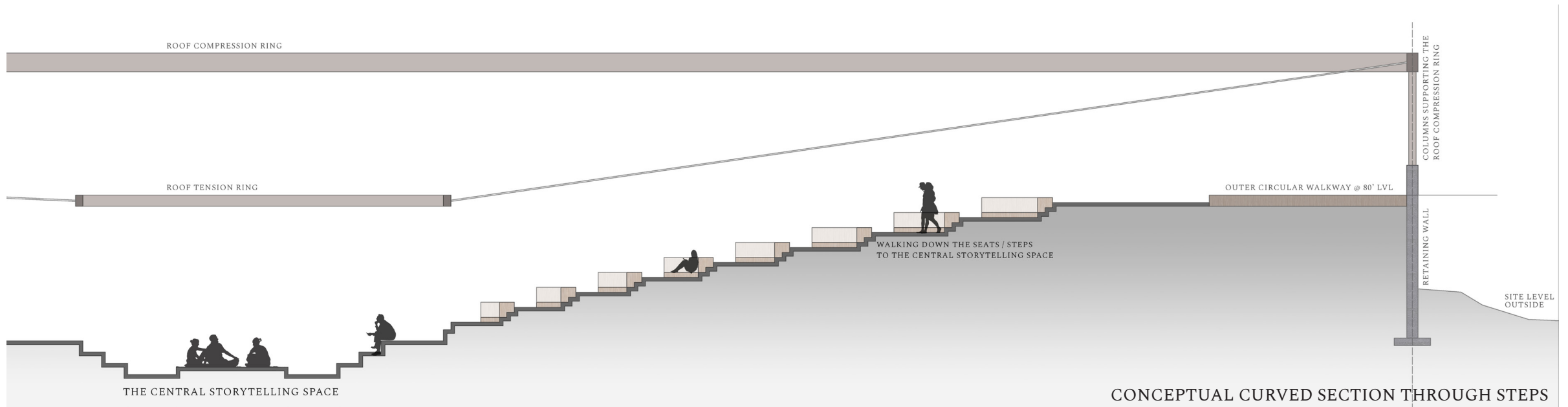
“Here is my secret”, said the fox, “It’s quite simple : One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes. It’s the time that you spent on your rose that makes your rose so important.” The fox teaches the little prince the value and importance of creating ties and friendships. The romance of “connecting” was essential to the author, Saint-Exupery who would fly death-defying assignments in order to deliver a few sacks of handwritten mail across the continent. The author tells us that the “true kingdom” of the little prince, and in turn, ours, is the consciousness : the person that we are, the ties that we create, the memories that we leave behind.

Stories bring us together, we bring together stories. Storytelling and friendships are inextricable - storytelling exists in the shared realms of being a performance art and the world of conversations between people.

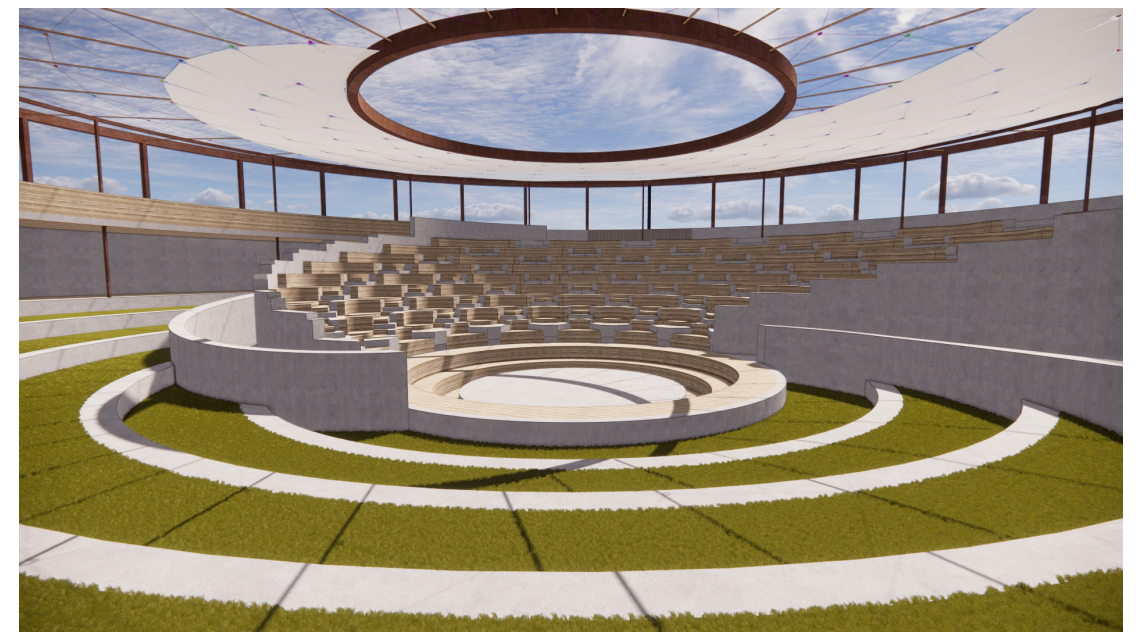
This built space exists similarly in both realms with a stepped seating facing towards a stage, and a series of open landscaped steps which become a setting for casual conversations



PLAN @ 80' LVL



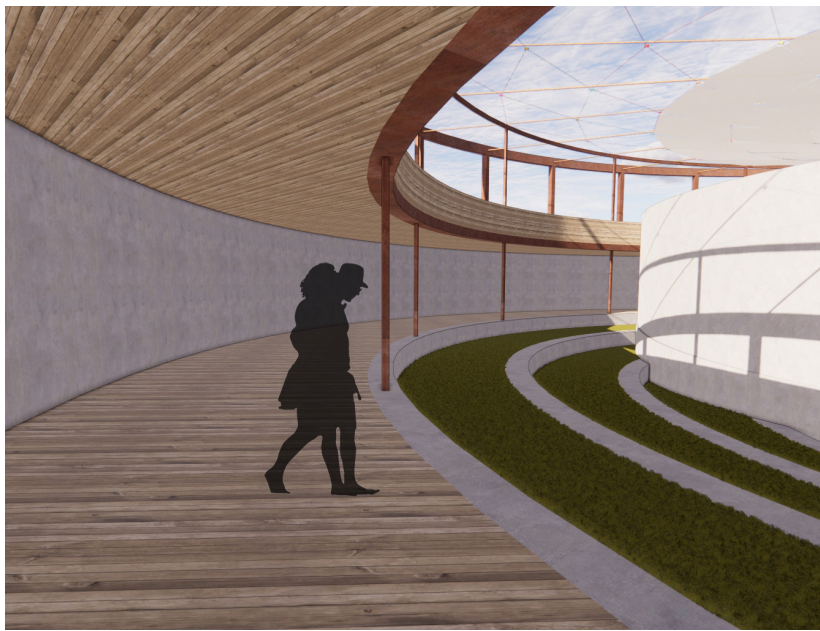
VIEW FROM THE BUILT SEATING AREA



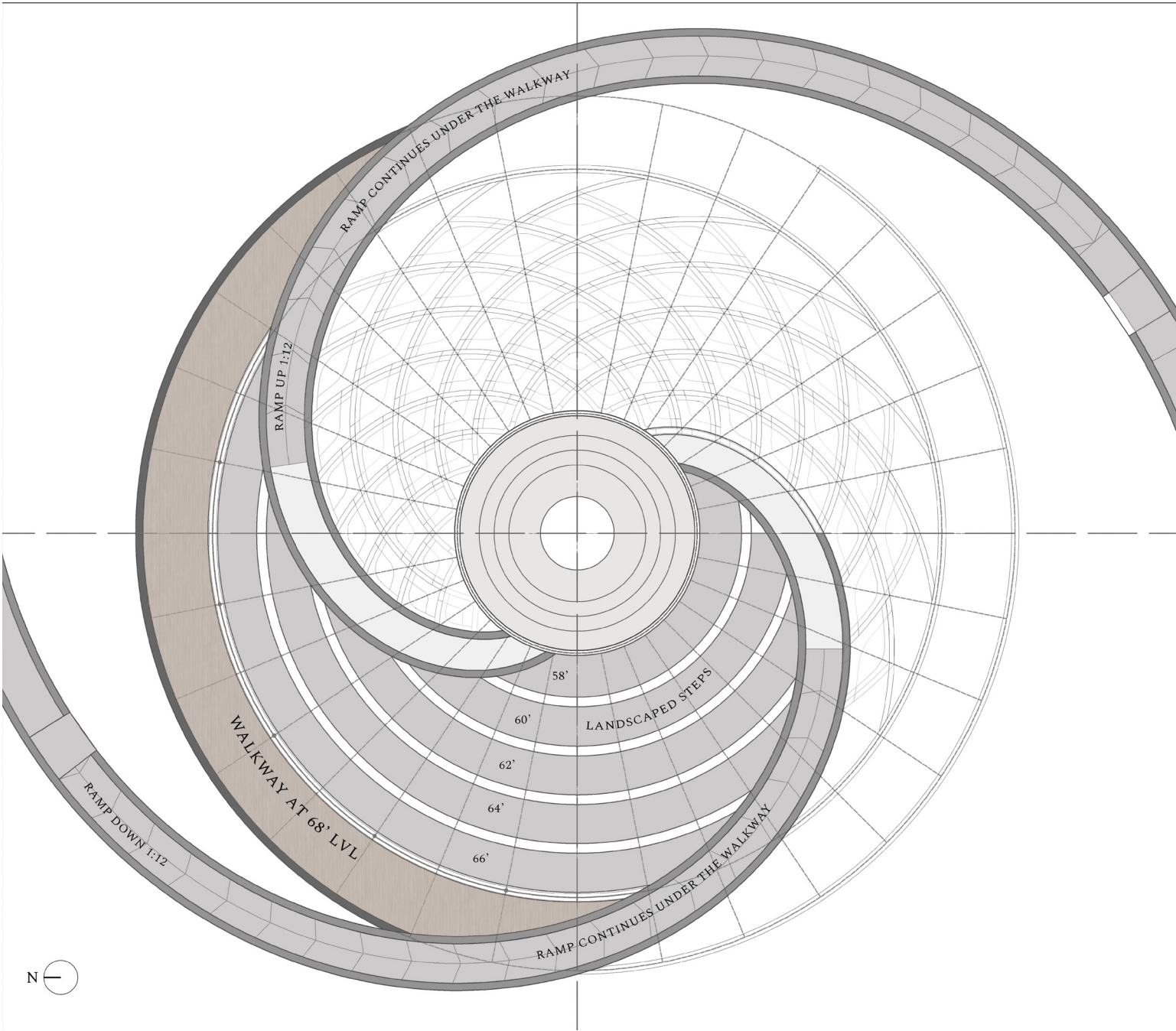
VIEW FROM THE LANDSCAPED STEPS



The ramp continues beneath the circular walkway



A walkway at 68' lvl wraps around the landscaped steps



PLAN @ 68' LVL

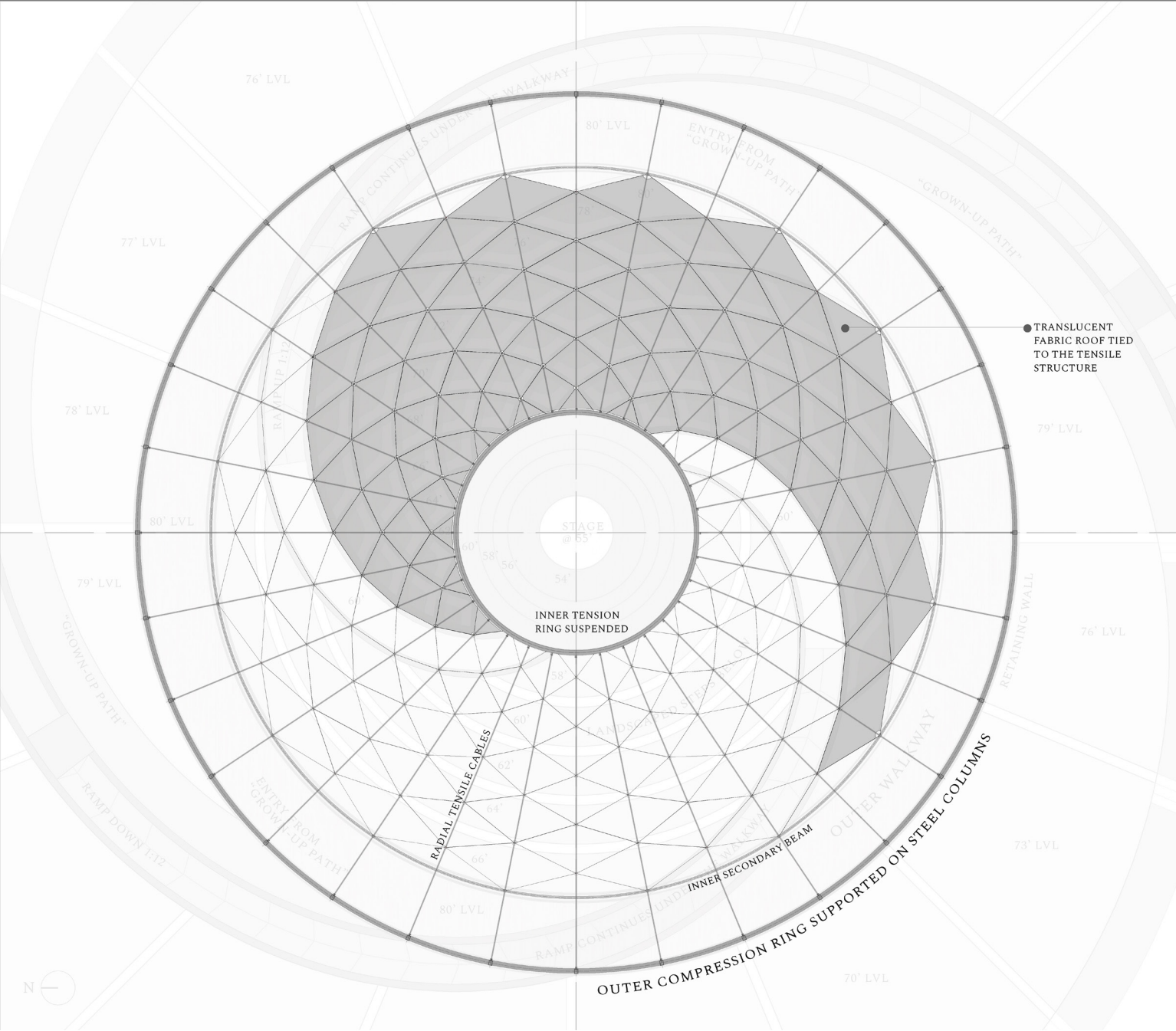
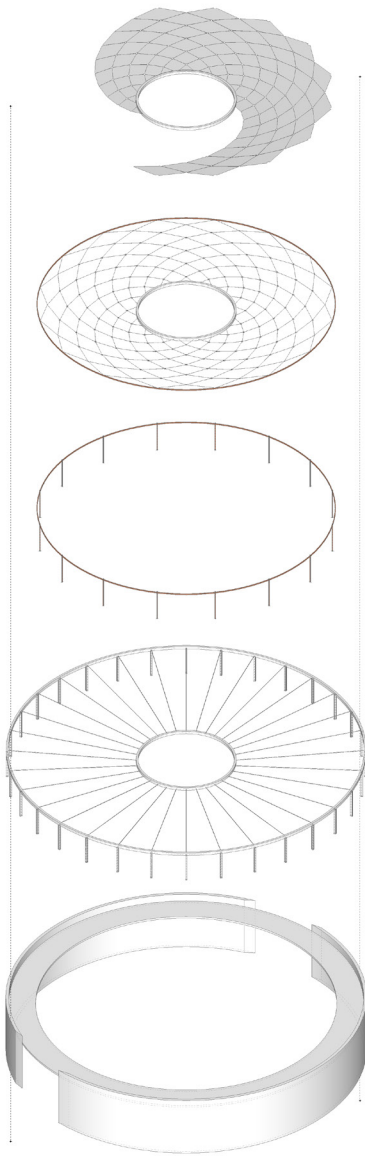
THE ROOF CANOPY

The roof is essentially a form that is reflective of the complex spiral geometry below, yet, is almost a plane that is floating in the sky, disappearing at times, due to the lightweight, translucent nature of the structure and fabric. It also takes its essence from the dream catcher and the fascinating folklores associated with them, which seemed appropriate for a space that exists for the sole purpose of being an empty box for all the imaginary sheep to exist.

THE STRUCTURE

The roof is a lightweight tensile fabric structure tied to the outer compression ring supported on a series of 32 columns on the periphery of the circular walkway. The compression ring takes the structural load, with the tension beam at the center offering the stretch and tautness. The tension ring is suspended by the radial steel cables, and a secondary set of cables along the spiral offers the framework on which the translucent fabric is stretched and tied.

The concept of a peripheral compression ring supporting the roof, along with a smaller tension ring at the center has many precedents in stadium designs like Madison Square Stadium in New York, The Forum in California etc.

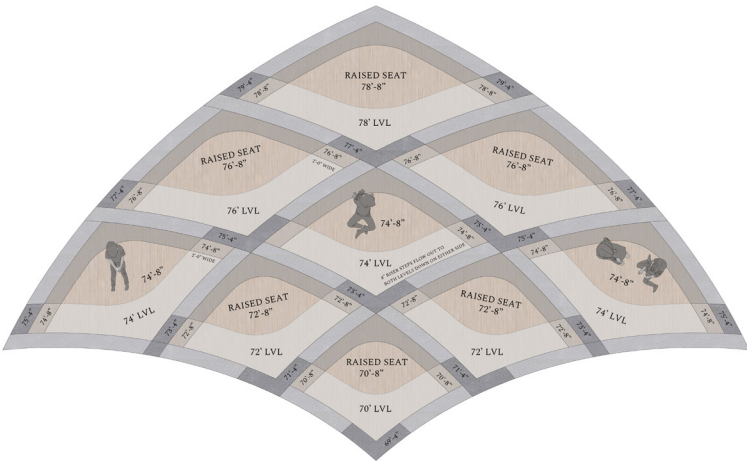


ROOF PLAN @ 95' LVL

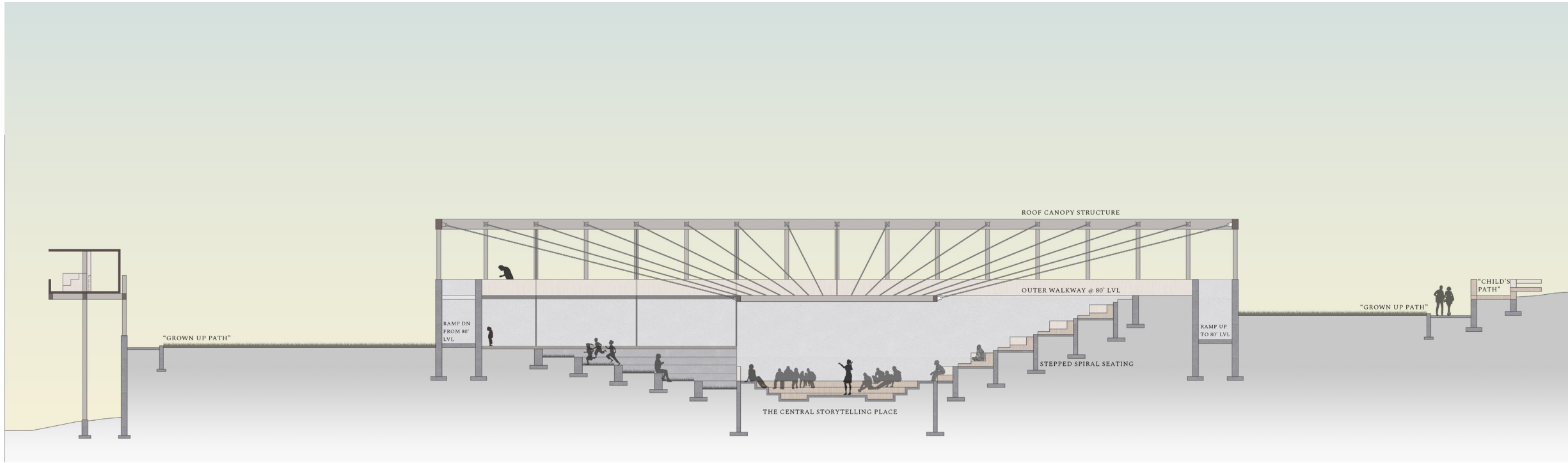


The circular walkway at 80' LVL

Each level steps down on both sides to the next level, along a spiral path : The seats are alcoves embedded snugly within the geometry of the intersecting spirals. While thinking about how I would like to sit while listening to a story, I always kept coming back to the bed-sheet tents and bay windows which offered a secret magical place within the larger context of the room : they were essentially alcoves before I even knew what the word meant.



DETAILED PLAN OF SEATING



DIAGONAL SECTION THROUGH THE SITE



The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

CHAPTER 4

WATCHING THE SUNSETS

For a long time you had found your only entertainment in the quiet pleasure of looking at the sunset. I learned that new detail on the morning of the fourth day, when you said to me:

“I am very fond of sunsets. Come, let us go look at a sunset now.”

“One day,” you said to me, “I saw the sunset forty-four times!”

And a little later you added:

“You know--one loves the sunset, when one is so sad . . .”

“Were you so sad, then?” I asked, “on the day of the forty-four sunsets?”

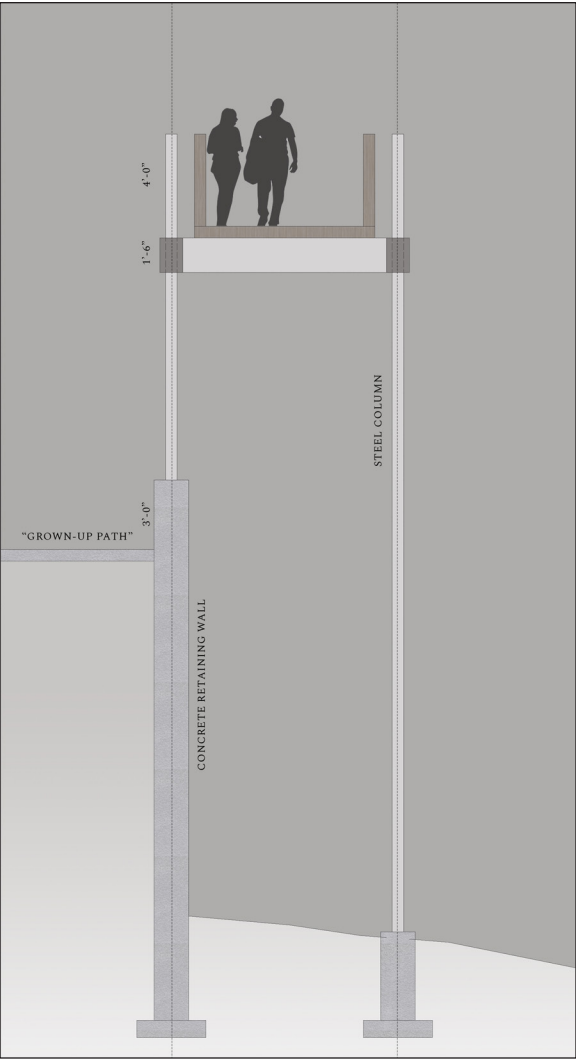
But the little prince made no reply.

Time stops, and then we all watch the sunset. It reminds us of how little we are, because no matter what, as the day ends, the sun will set. We are inconsequential to the process. The universe is impermanent. Our life is impermanent. Everything is constantly moving, changing, evolving. It is also a metaphor for the understanding of this fact.

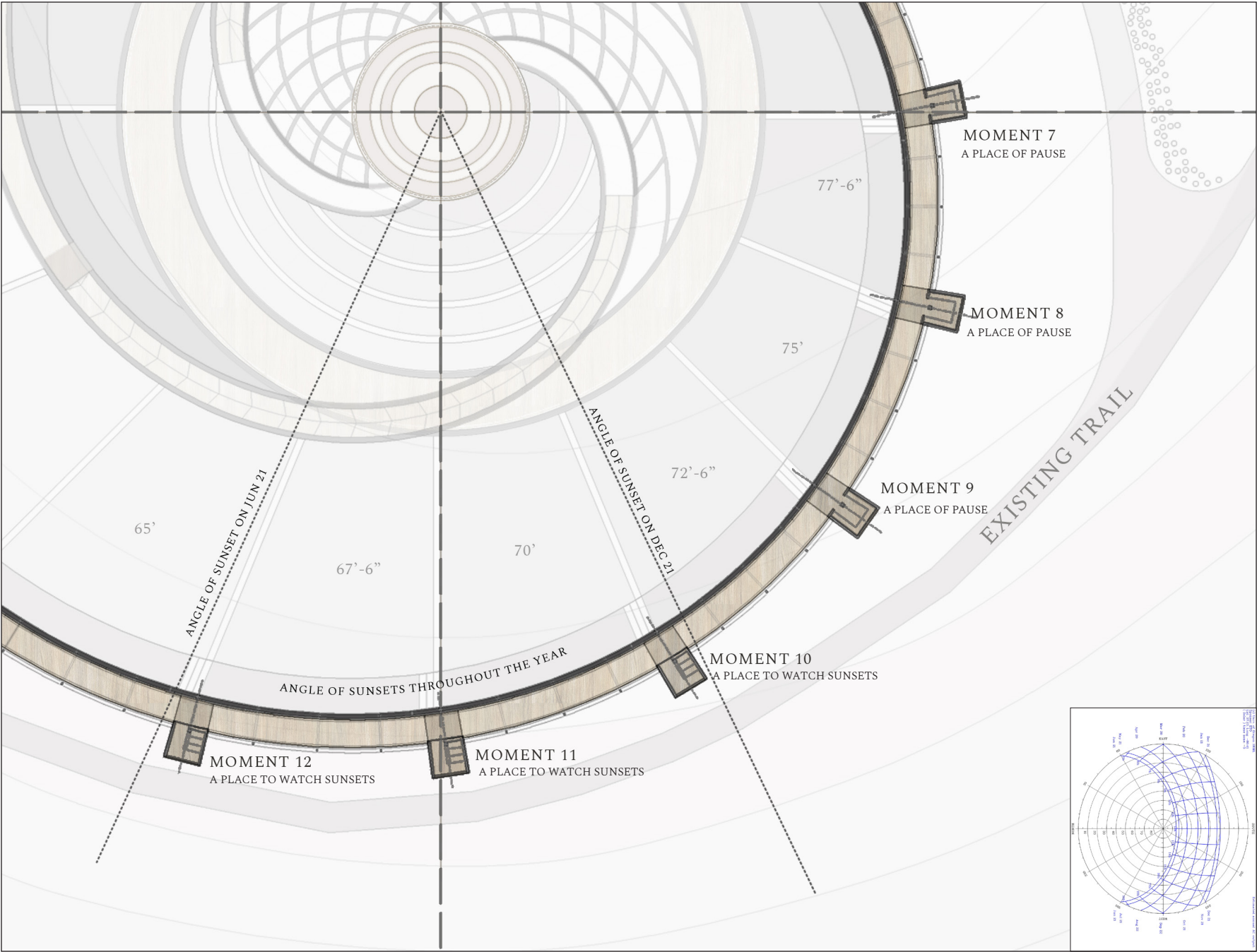
When you contemplate the sunset, we are truly free, in that moment.

MOMENTS OF CONTEMPLATION

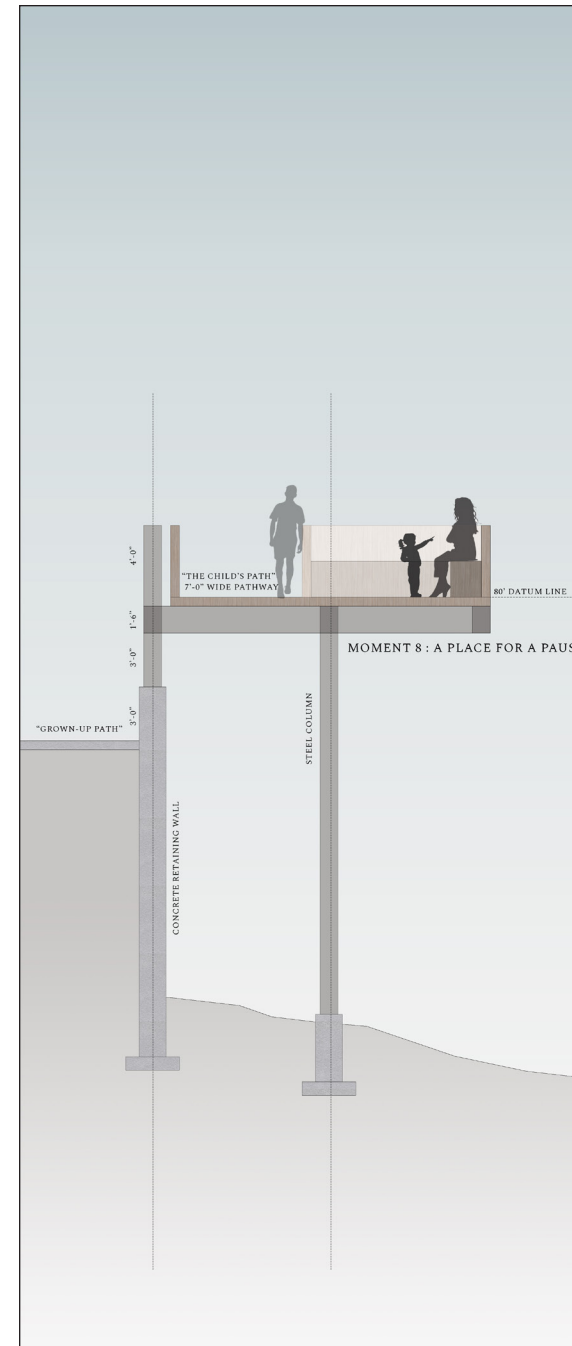
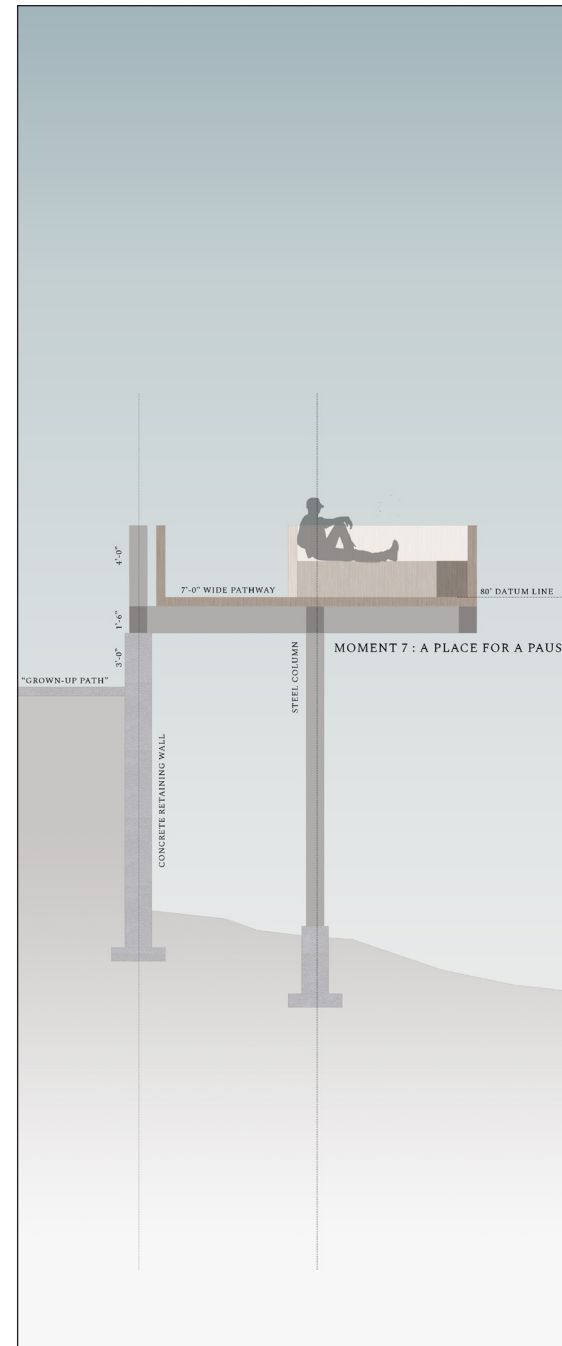
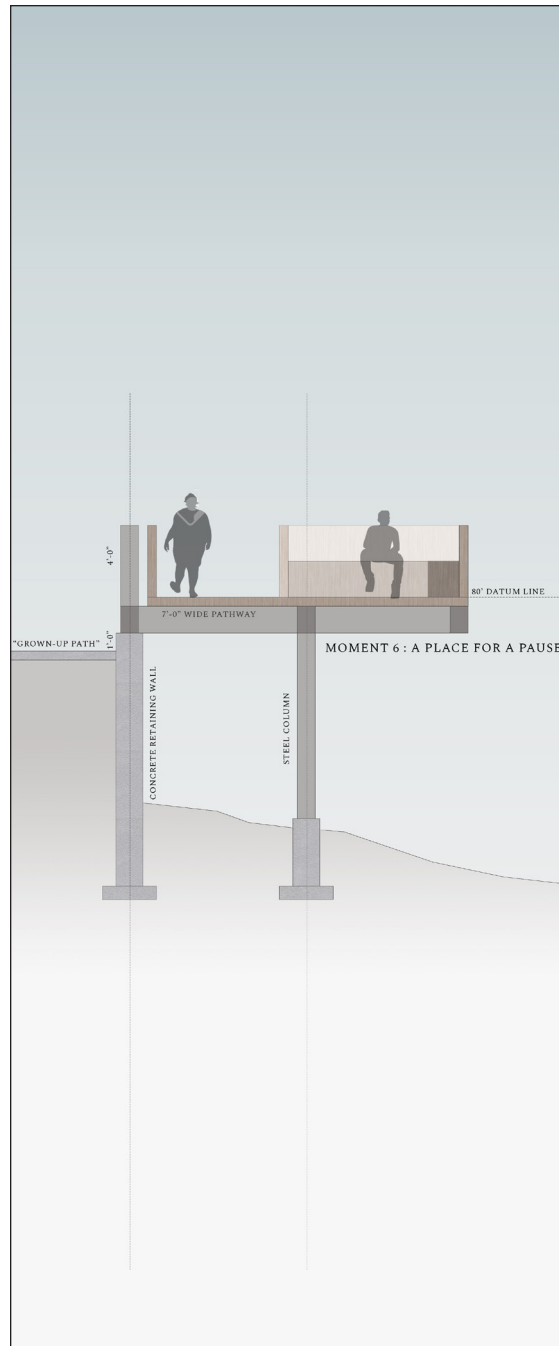
The Little Prince parades as a children’s book and is playful at the beginning, yet as it progresses, it becomes a quiet meditation on love, grief and separation. On a similar note, the second set of moments are places for pause and contemplation.



TYP. SECTION OF RAMP



PLAN OF THE EXIT PATHWAY AND THE MOMENTS OF CONTEMPLATION



MOMENTS OF PAUSE : (#7, #8 and #9)

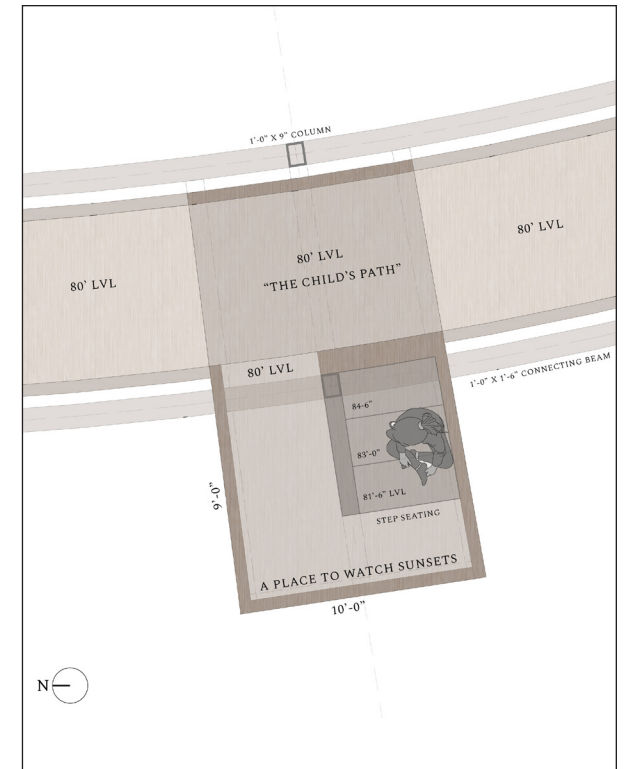
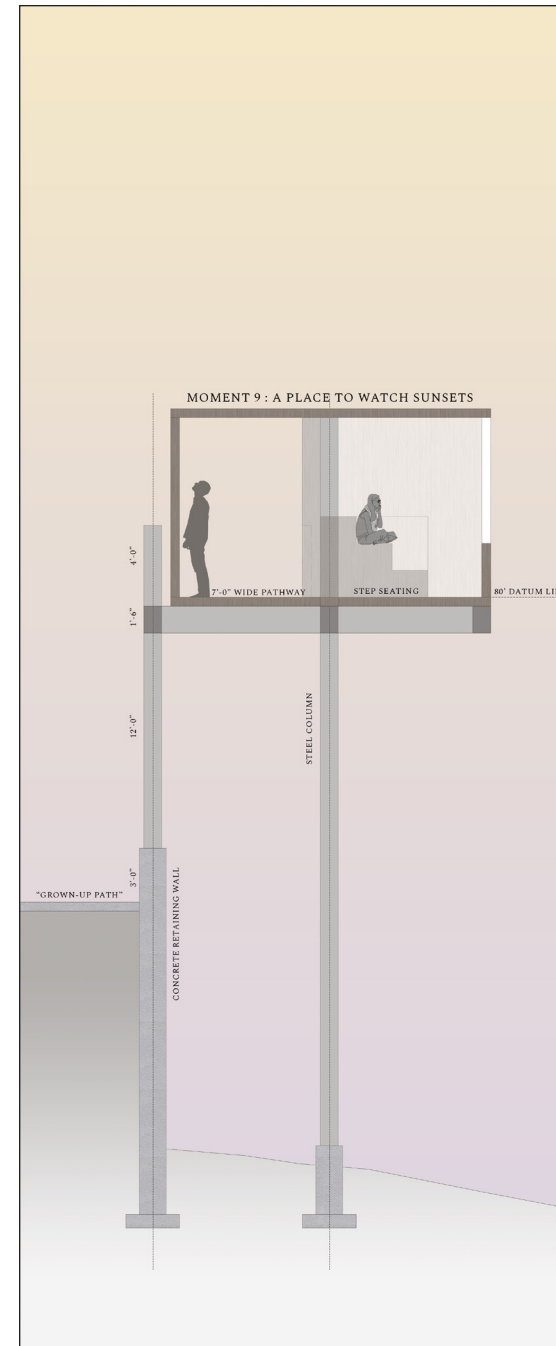
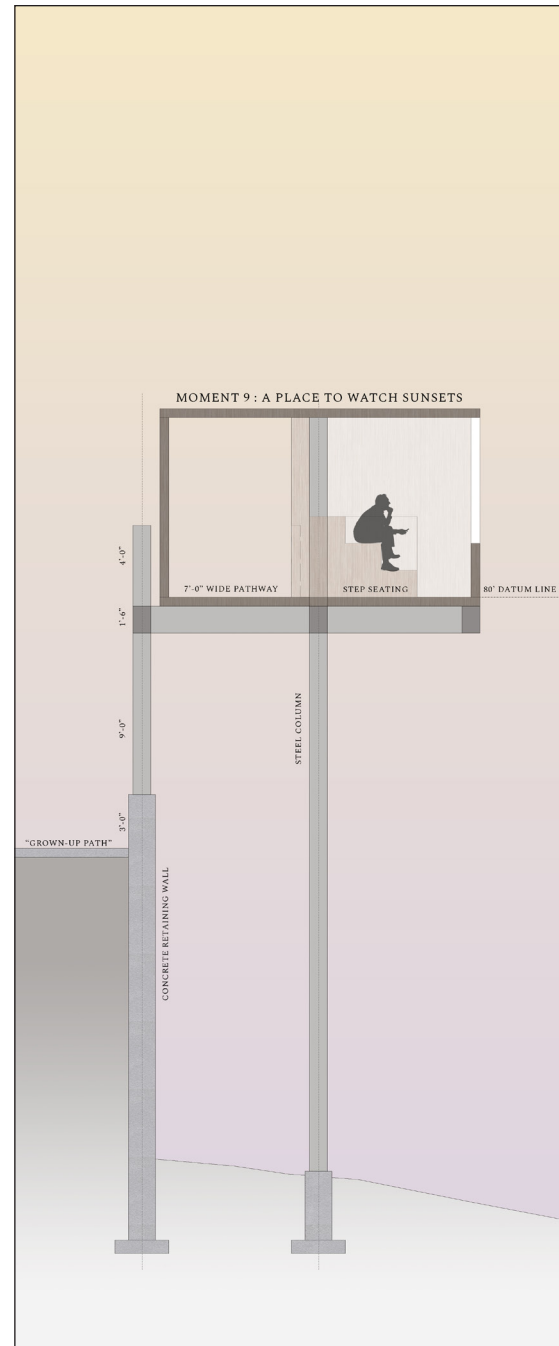
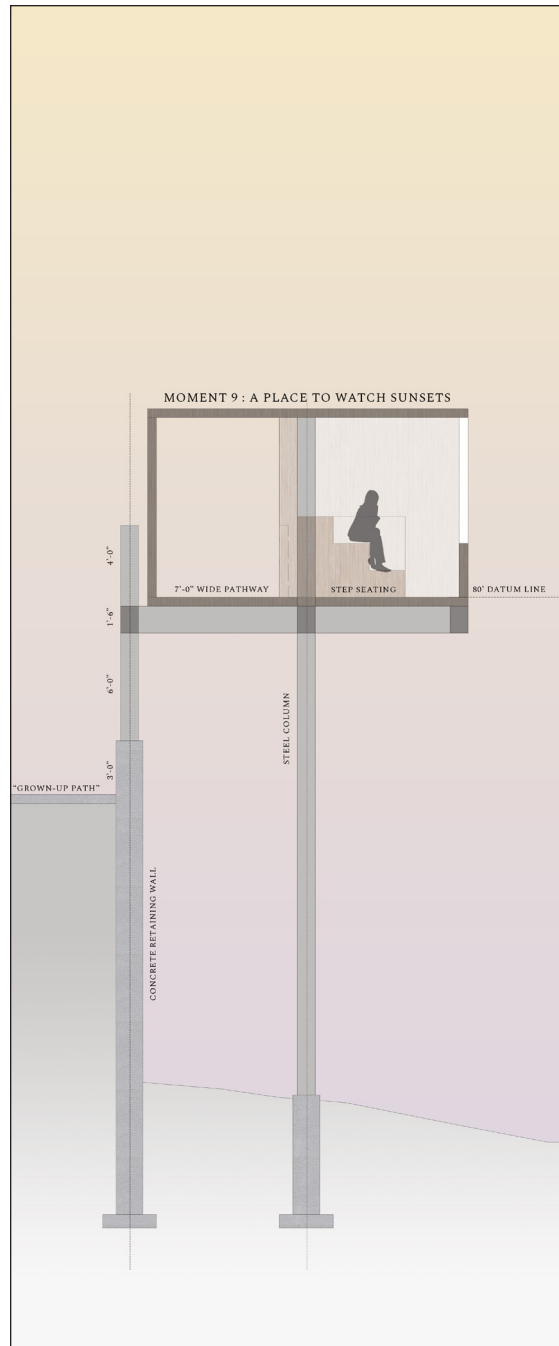
These three moments are essentially places that invite us to pause : to stop, sit down and breathe. They extend out from the ramp, cantilevered from the ramp structure, thus also becoming viewing platforms looking out into the site. However, as one sits down, our gaze is directed upwards, slowly taking us to a meditative state.



VIEW INSIDE THE MOMENT OF PAUSE

APPROACH FROM THE RAMP INTO THE MOMENT OF PAUSE

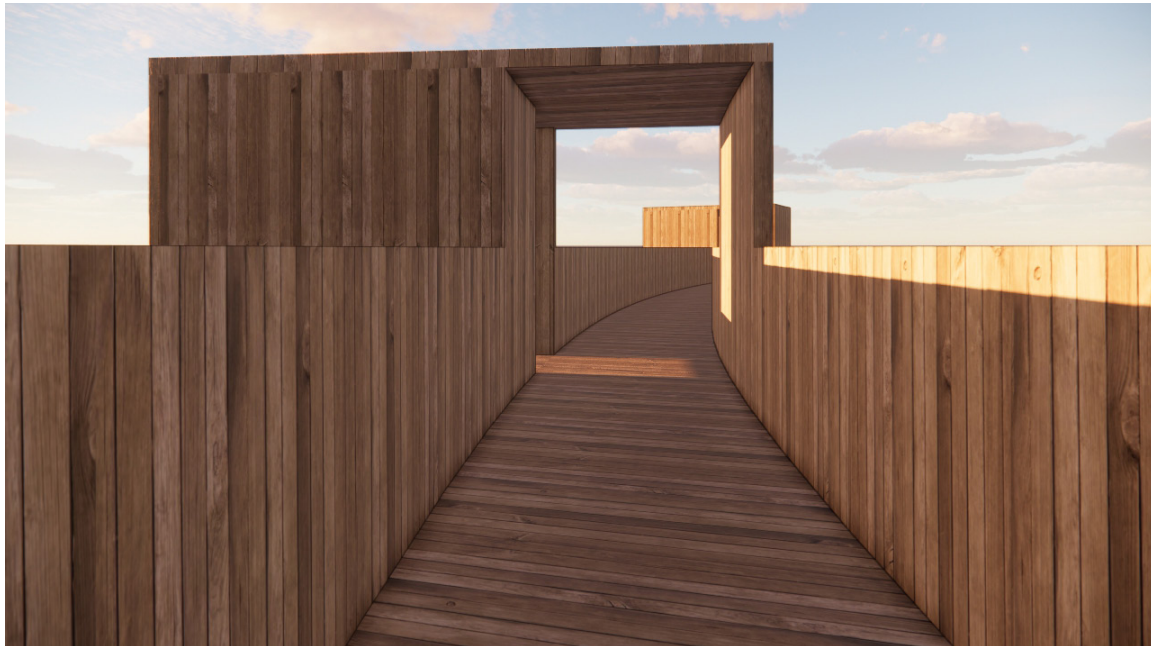




MOMENTS OF SUNSET-WATCHING (#10, #11 and #12)

There is something that is truly magical about sun-sets that they become the second set of moments of contemplation - When we watch the sun set, we are reminded of how little we are, our inconsequential-ity to the act of the sun setting, irrespective of who and what we are.

These moments align with the angle of sunsets on the solstices and equinoxes, and thus signify important celestial events. Within each "box" that cantilevers out from the ramp, is a set of steps that become a place to sit down and watch the sunset through the framing device.



Approaching the “moment of sunset” from the ramp



View of the sunset through the framing device



The first partial glimpse through the framing device



View of the seating area inside the “moment of sunset”



The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015.
Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

CHAPTER 5

GAZING AT THE STARS

“All men have the stars,” he answered, “but they are not the same things for different people. For some, who are travelers, the stars are guides. For others they are no more than little lights in the sky. For others, who are scholars, they are problems. For my businessman they were wealth. But all these stars are silent. You, you alone, will have the stars as no one else has them“

“What are you trying to say?“

“In one of the stars I shall be living. In one of them I shall be laughing. And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing, when you look at the sky at night... you, only you, will have stars that can laugh!“

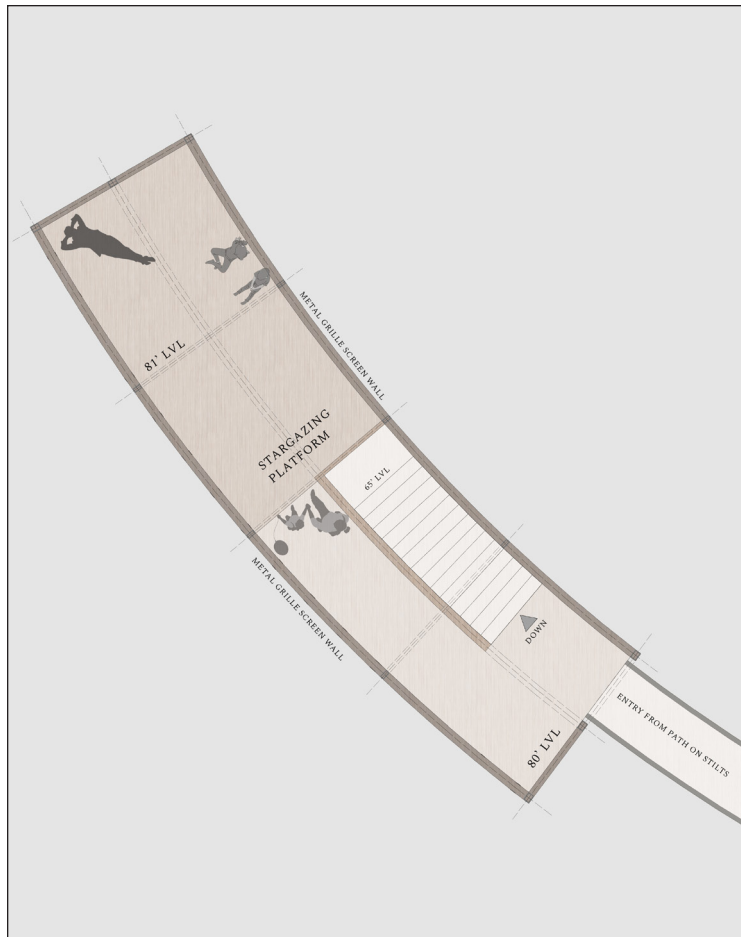
[. . .]

And now six years have already gone by... I have never yet told this story.

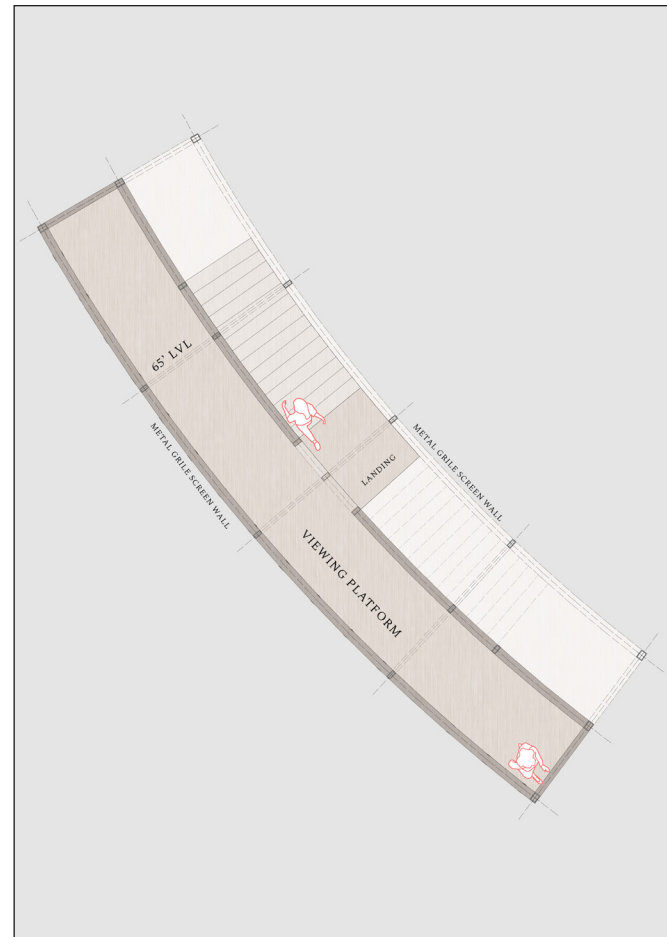
... and at night I love to listen to the stars. It is like five hundred million little bells...

[. . .]

For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has eaten a rose... Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: is it yes or no?



PLAN OF STARGAZING PLATFORM @ 80' LVL

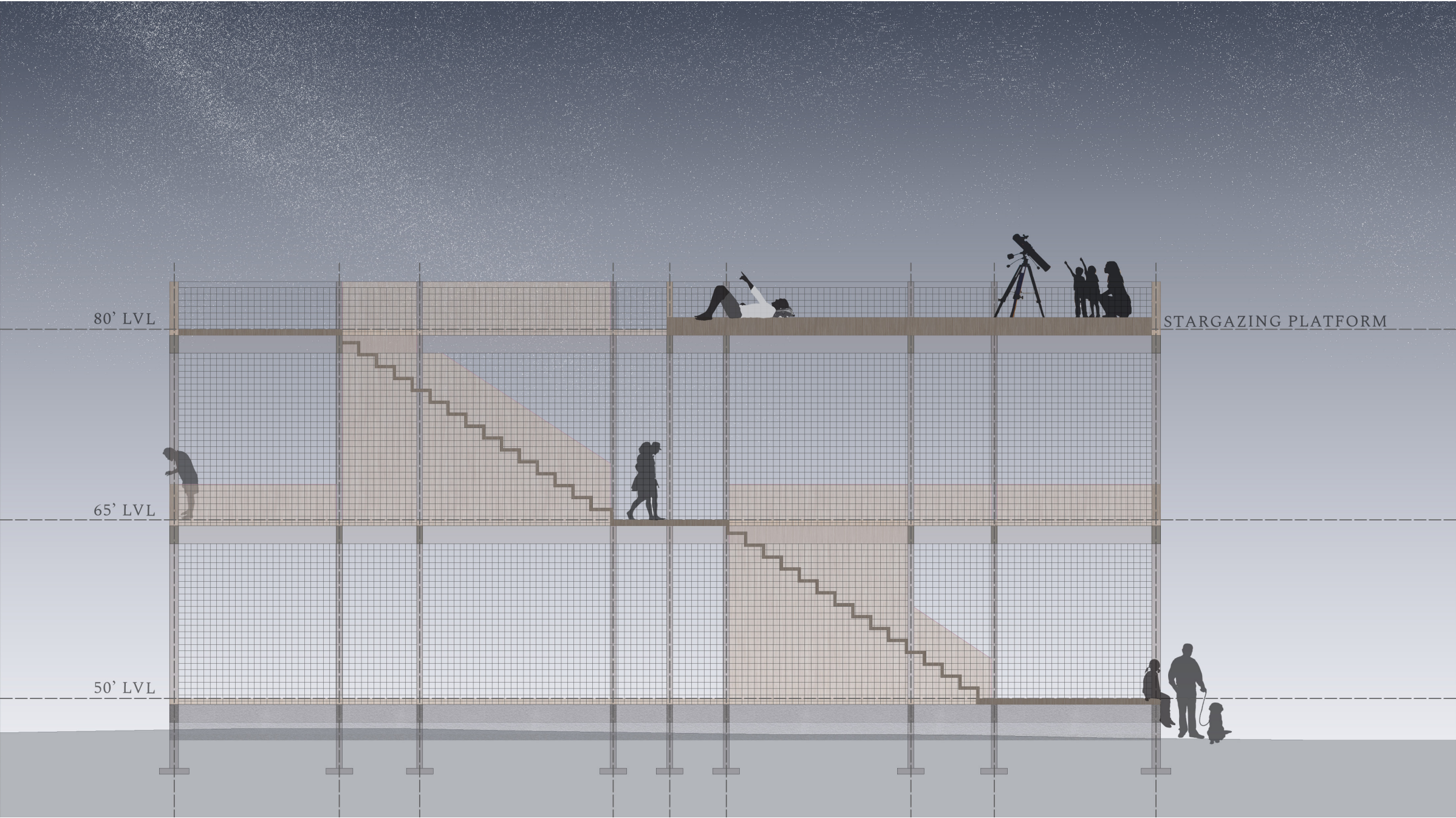


PLAN OF VIEWING PLATFORM @ 65' LVL

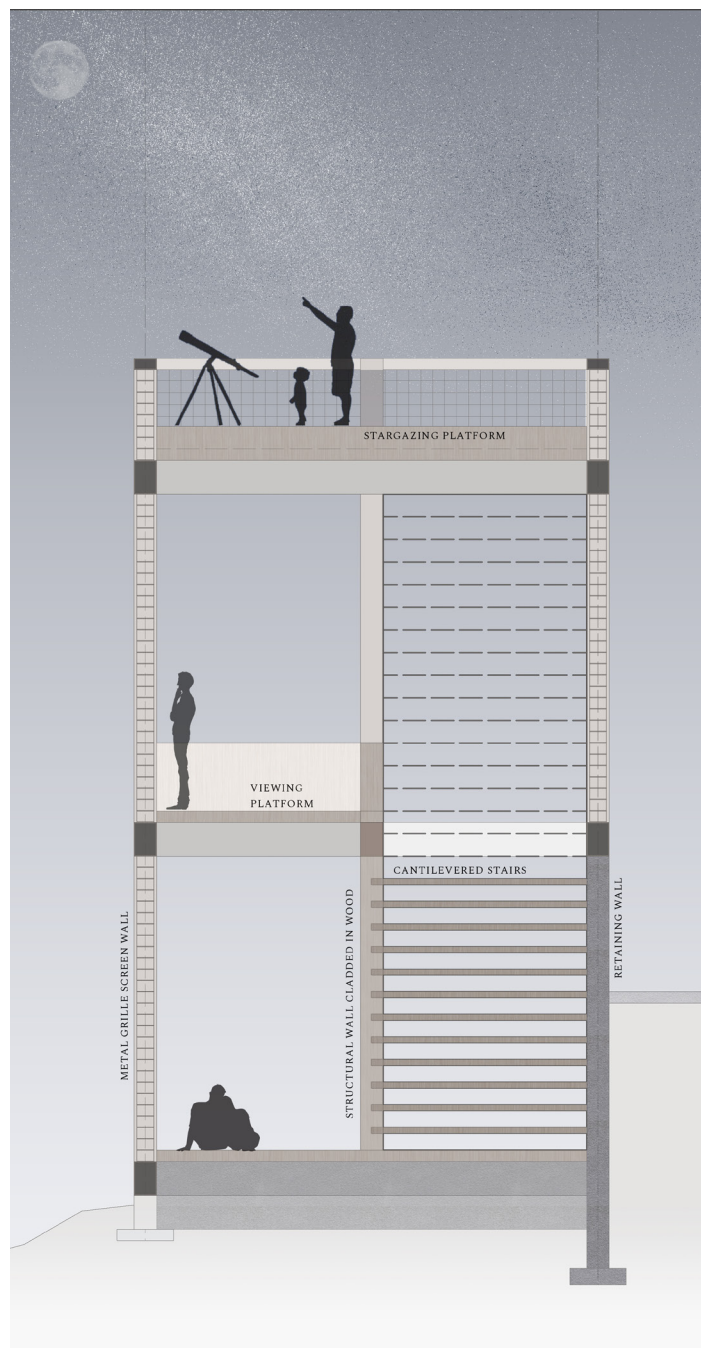


PLAN OF EXIT THRESHOLD AT SITE LEVEL (49' LVL)

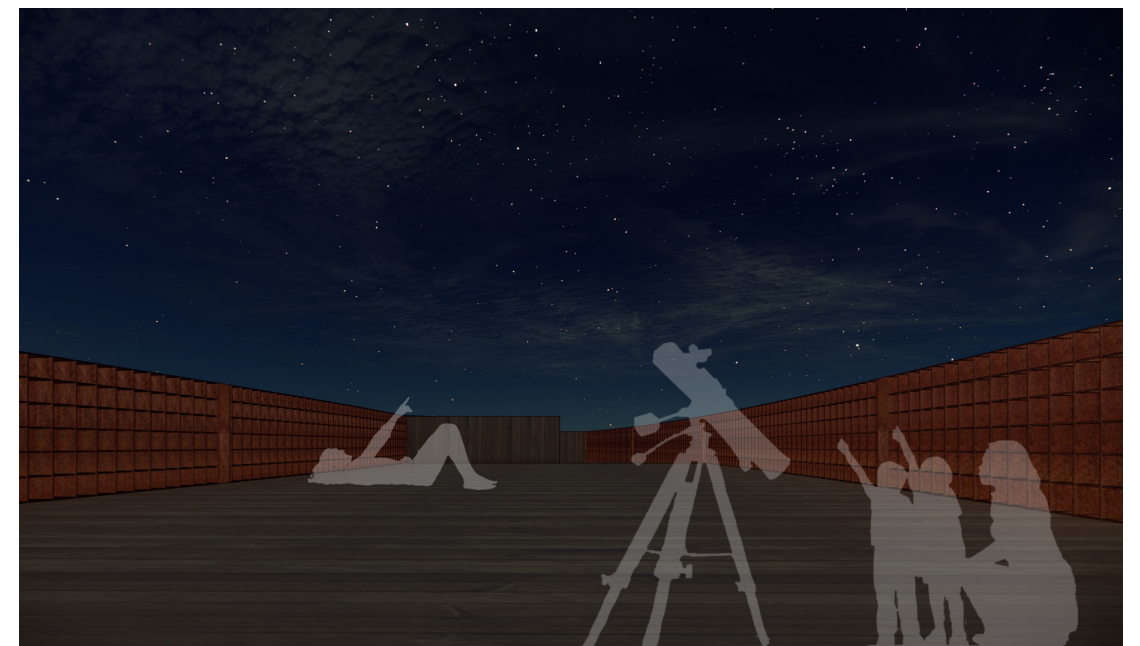
Approaching the final part of the “journey”, akin to approaching the last chapter of the book, we learn about the little prince laughing among the stars and the aviator imploring us to keep looking at them every night. Thus, the ideal endpoint of this journey had to culminate in a stargazing platform, which sits atop the threshold of exit, which takes us back to the site level, via a staircase. The exit threshold mirrors the formal language of the entry threshold, making them in a way, two sides of the same point that we reach at the end of the journey, like the Little Prince did at the end of his cosmic journey.



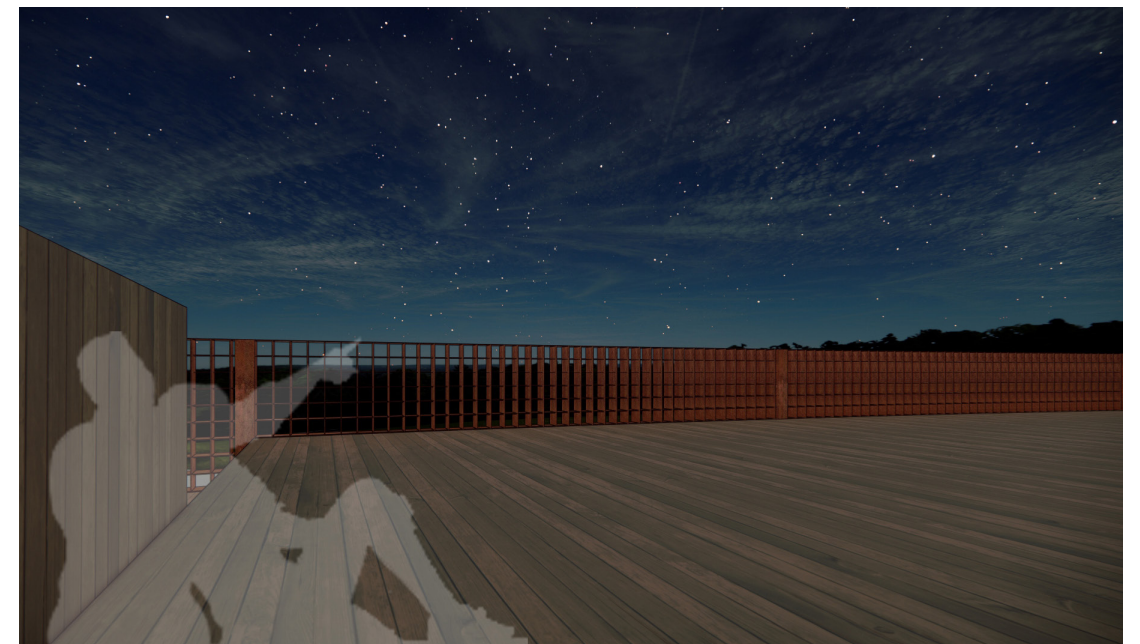
SECTION THROUGH THE STARGAZING PLATFORM & EXIT THRESHOLD

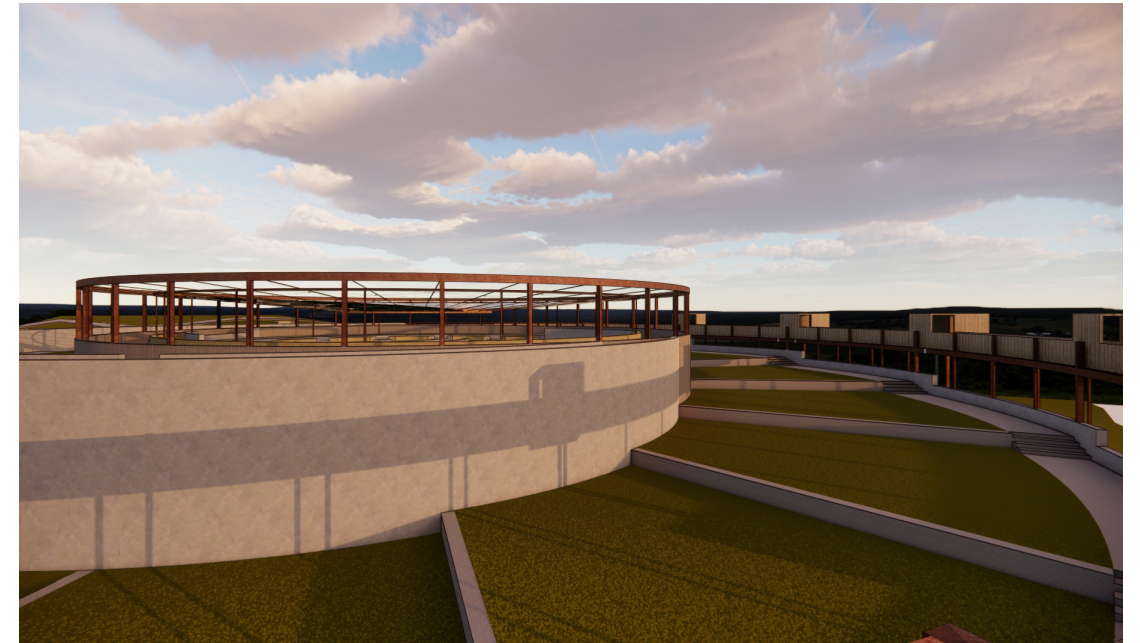
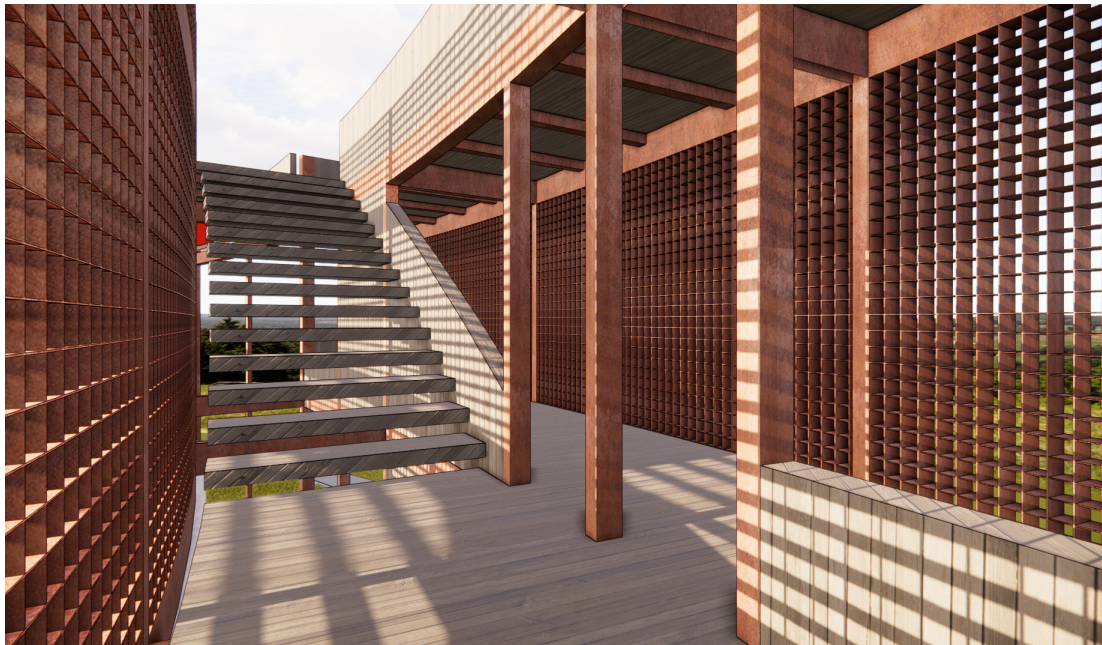


LATERAL SECTION



The Stargazing platform

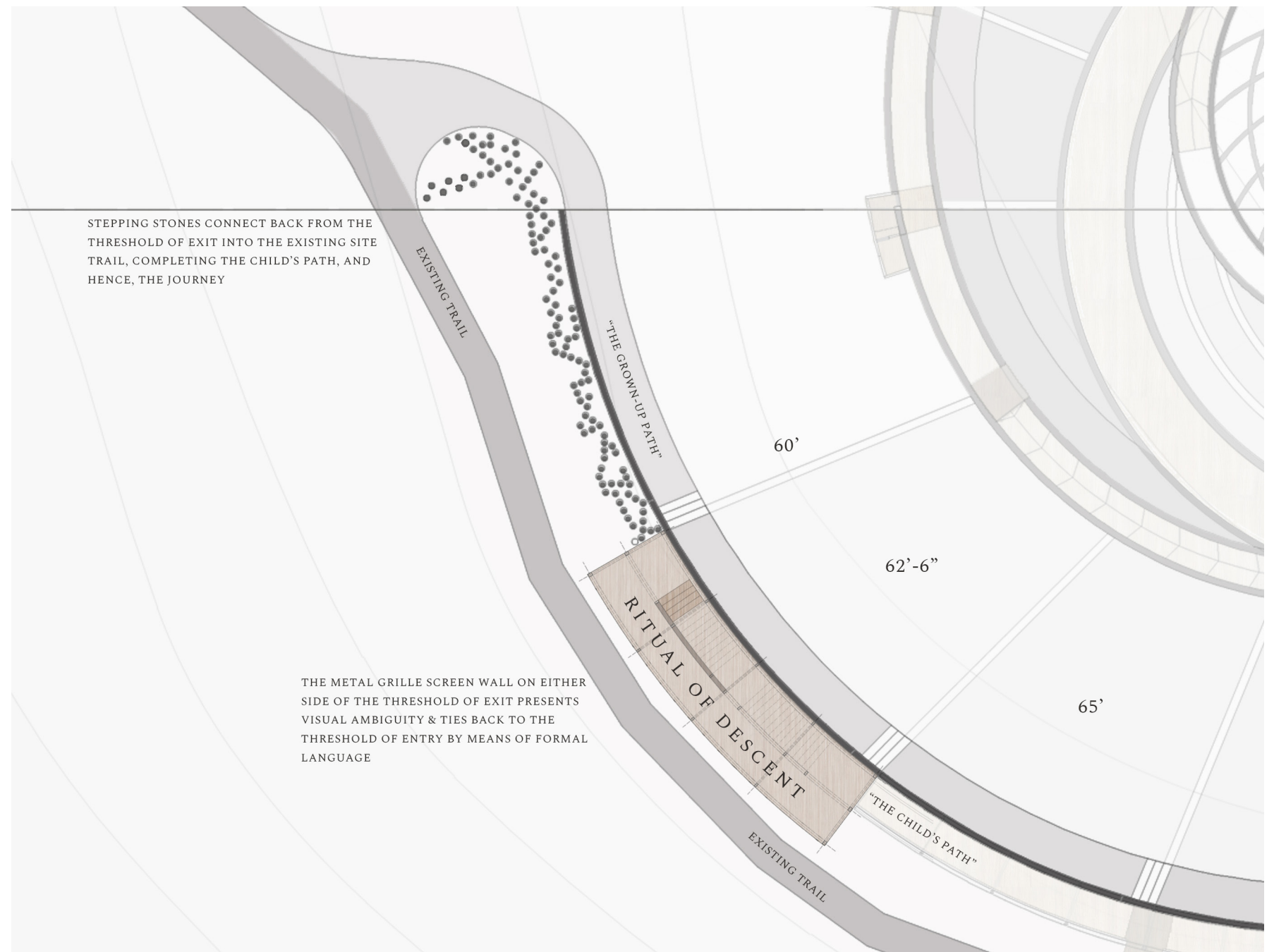




THE EXIT THRESHOLD

The exit threshold is a stair that brings us back down to the site level, inviting us to participate in a “Ritual of Descent” that is complementary to the “Ritual of Ascent” at the entry threshold. It is akin to entering the fictional world of the Little Prince at the first chapter, going through the entire journey with him and leaving the world of the story after the last chapter, coming down to the real world - literally and metaphorically. The entire story, and by extension the whole journey happens at a single level - the 80’ LVL Datum Line, even though it is comprised of numerous different moments of play, pauses, sunset points, thresholds, seating area, landscaped steps that emerge out of the major datum level.

The exit threshold mirrors the formal language of the entry threshold, thus tying them together : they are in essence two parts of the same point. It is almost as if we reached back to the same point, yet we take away and leave behind ties to the place and the people in it.



THE EXIT THRESHOLD & THE RITUAL OF DESCENT



“Then if a child comes to you, if he laughs, if he has golden hair, if he doesn’t answer your questions, you’ll know who he is.
If this should happen, be kind! Don’t let me go on being so sad: Send word immediately that he’s come back...”



The Little Prince, Directed by Mark Osborne, Production by ON Entertainment - Orange Studio - LPPTV - M6 Films - Lucky Red, 2015. Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80057578>

There is a beautiful & poignant ambiguity to the ending of the story, which I have always been unsure of how to interpret, no matter how many times I have read the book. The same happens with this project, which is hard to categorize - being an eclectic mix of many different spaces.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

It is those moments of sadness or of anxiety, but also of wonder and ecstasy even; the experience of the beautiful in one or more of its innumerable forms; the joy of love, of discovery, of happiness in that sense - these are the moments that are most likely to remind us of our humanity. As this project progressed, there was one question that haunted me every now and then : what is this journey? What is the need to indulge in this journey? Is there a purpose or destination to the whole project? And, it was ironic that the answer to the question was hiding in plain sight within the story of the Little Prince, waiting for me to discover it.

“I am thirsty for this water,” said the little prince. “Give me some of it to drink...”

And I understood what he had been looking for. I raised the bucket to his lips. He drank, his eyes closed. It was as sweet as some special festival treat. This water was indeed a different thing from ordinary nourishment. Its sweetness was born of the walk under the stars, the song of the pulley, the effort of my arms. It was good for the heart, like a present. When I was a little boy, the lights of the Christmas tree, the music of the Midnight Mass, the tenderness of smiling faces, used to make up, so, the radiance of the gifts I received.

“The men where you live,” said the little prince, “raise five thousand roses in the same garden and they do not find in it what they are looking for.”

“They do not find it,” I replied.

Saint-Exupery puts an end to the futility of passive time and instead creates a time that belongs to the soul. The music of the pulley and the hard work involved is what makes the water sweet. Likewise, it is the journey itself, meandering through the ramps, moments of play, sunset-watching and star-gazing that is the essence of the built space within this project. Sans any destination.

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