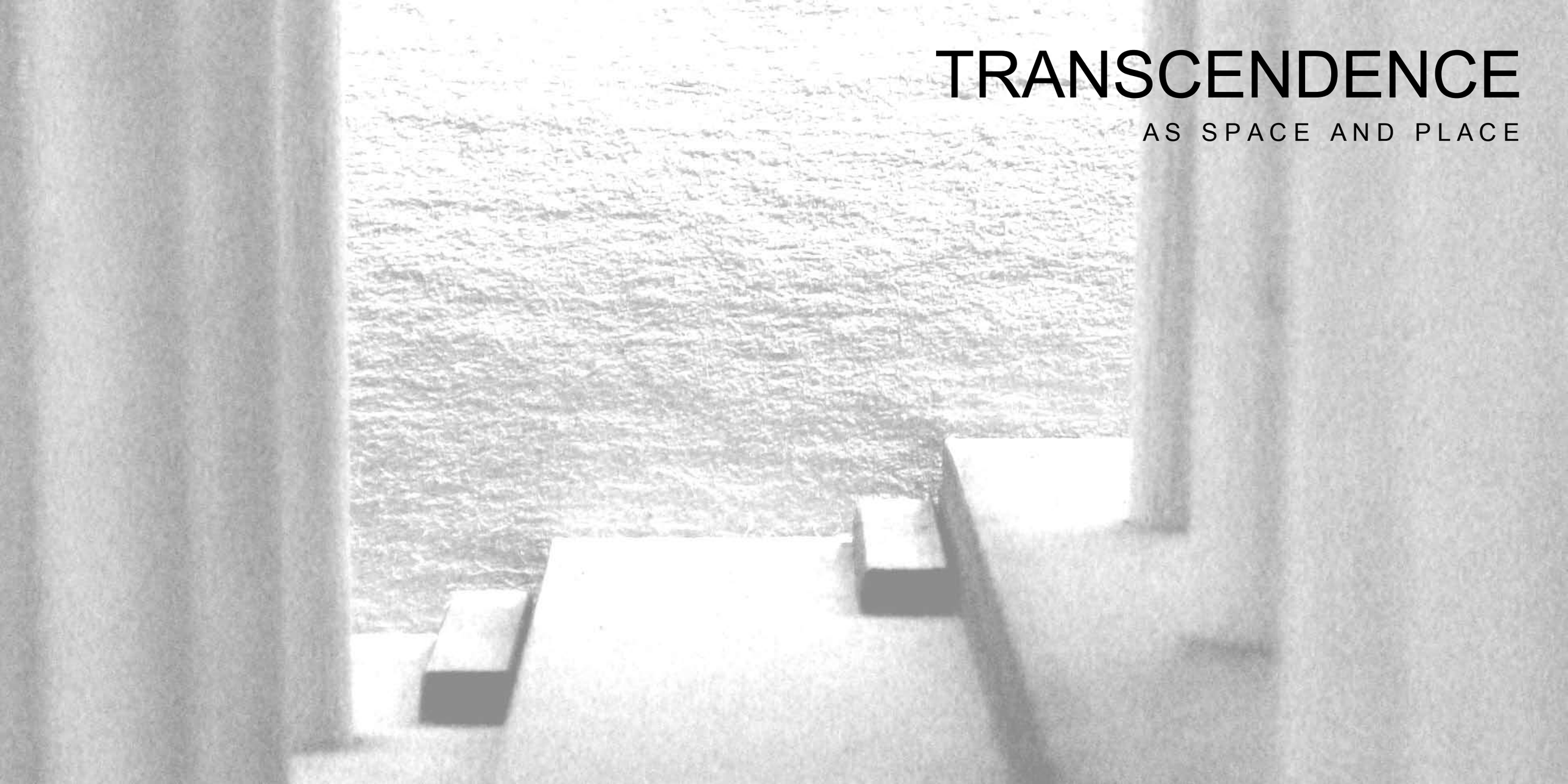

TRANSCENDENCE

AS SPACE AND PLACE

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by Ryan Douglas Dellinger

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Hans Rott, Chair
Bill Galloway
Scott Gartner

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keywords: place, space, transcendence, water

ABSTRACT

This thesis project is an exploration of the sensory experiences through which one passes in the removal from the outside world toward introspection and mental clarity. The program consists of one large meeting space and four smaller meeting spaces sited in the Virginia Tech Duck Pond.

Transcendence as Space and Place

by Ryan Douglas Dellinger

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would especially like to thank the group of friends I made during my four months in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland. Each of you will always hold a dear place in my heart and mind.

Additionally, I would like to thank my thesis committee for their guidance and encouragement:

Hans Rott, Chair
Bill Galloway
Scott Gartner

Finally, I wish to dedicate this book and the work within to Ryan “Stack” Clark and the many others who lost their lives on April 16, 2007, as well as their families and all those whose lives are emptier now that they are gone.

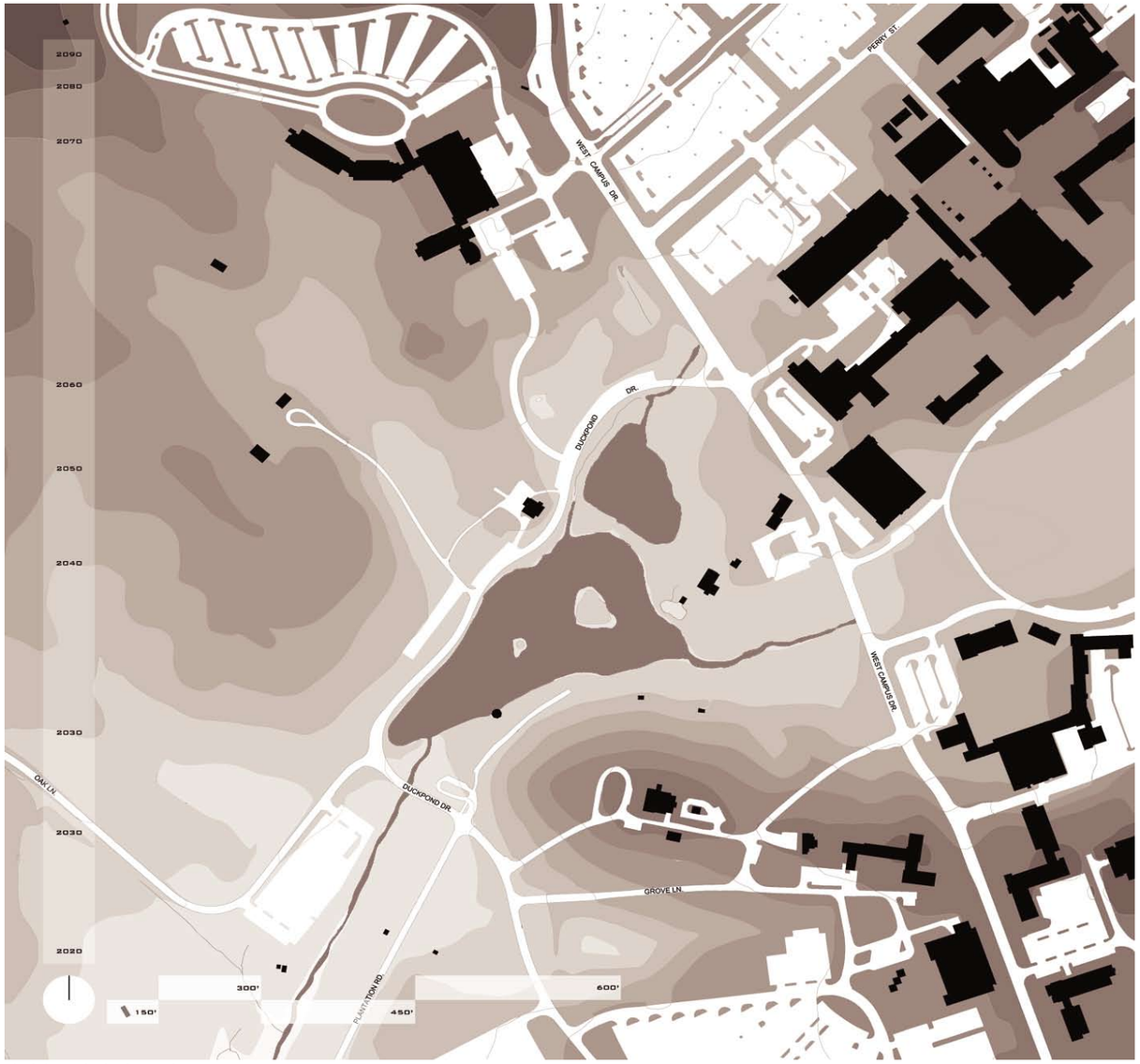
INTRODUCTION

Though there was no immediate programmatic need for a new meeting place on campus, there did exist a need for a meeting place of a new context -- a place which one must go toward, both physically and mentally. To make important decisions, one must transcend to a higher level of thinking and awareness. A new meeting place must not only provide a physical place of meeting, but also the sensory experiences to aid one in the transition from the busy mindset of daily life to a higher state of mental clarity.

SITE

The site chosen for the new meeting center was the Virginia Tech Duck Pond. As the first step toward removing one from the daily life state of mind, this remote site was chosen as a place toward which one must go, away from the central part of campus.

The potential of this site existed within the presence of the water. The decision was quickly made to site the building within the pond itself, allowing for the water to play a role in the architecture.



virginia tech duck pond context

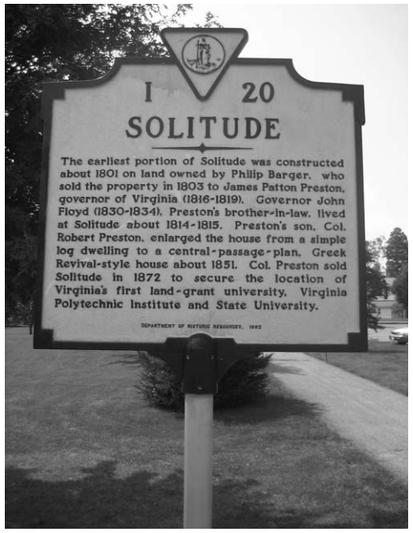
virginia tech duck pond

APPROACH

While walking along the path leading from the drillfield to the pond, it became apparent that this walk would be part of the total experience of the project. As one walks along the shore, occasional glimpses of the center of the pond are allowed by the trees lining the shore. At each of these points, the area between the two islands in the center of the pond is gradually revealed, making this an appropriate site for this project. As one moves, the building slowly emerges from between the two islands.

A large tree located midway along the shore of the pond serves as the launching point where one makes the turn from land and begins their descent into the depth of the pond.

building site sketch



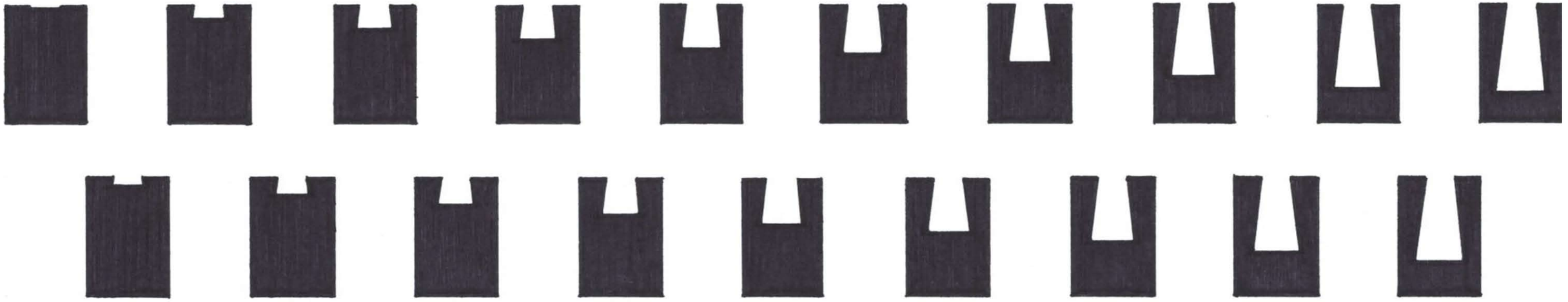
approach sequence . . .

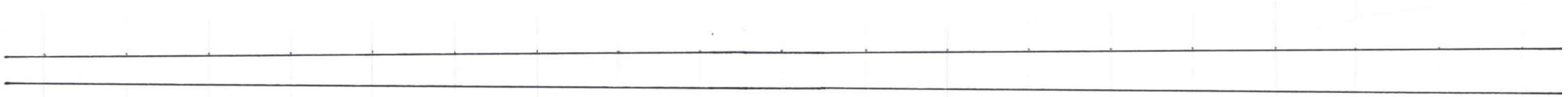
approach sequence continued . . .

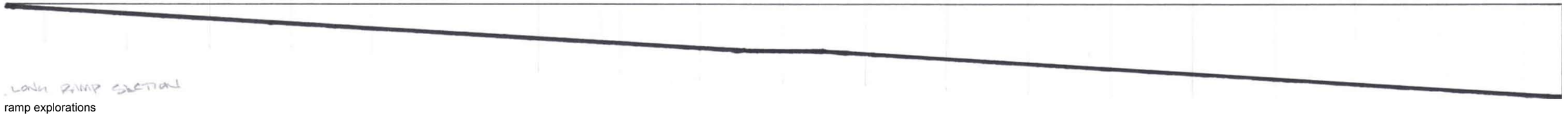
turning/launching point

RAMP

When one turns the large tree, one encounters a long, narrow, descending pathway that leads down to the main floor of the project, ten feet below the shoreline. Halfway along this path the ramp levels, allowing a final glimpse over the pond before descending below the surface. The crushed gravel pathway and the encroaching surface of the concrete walls increasingly make their presence felt near the end of the ramp. As one gets lower, the sound of each footstep is reflected and magnified.



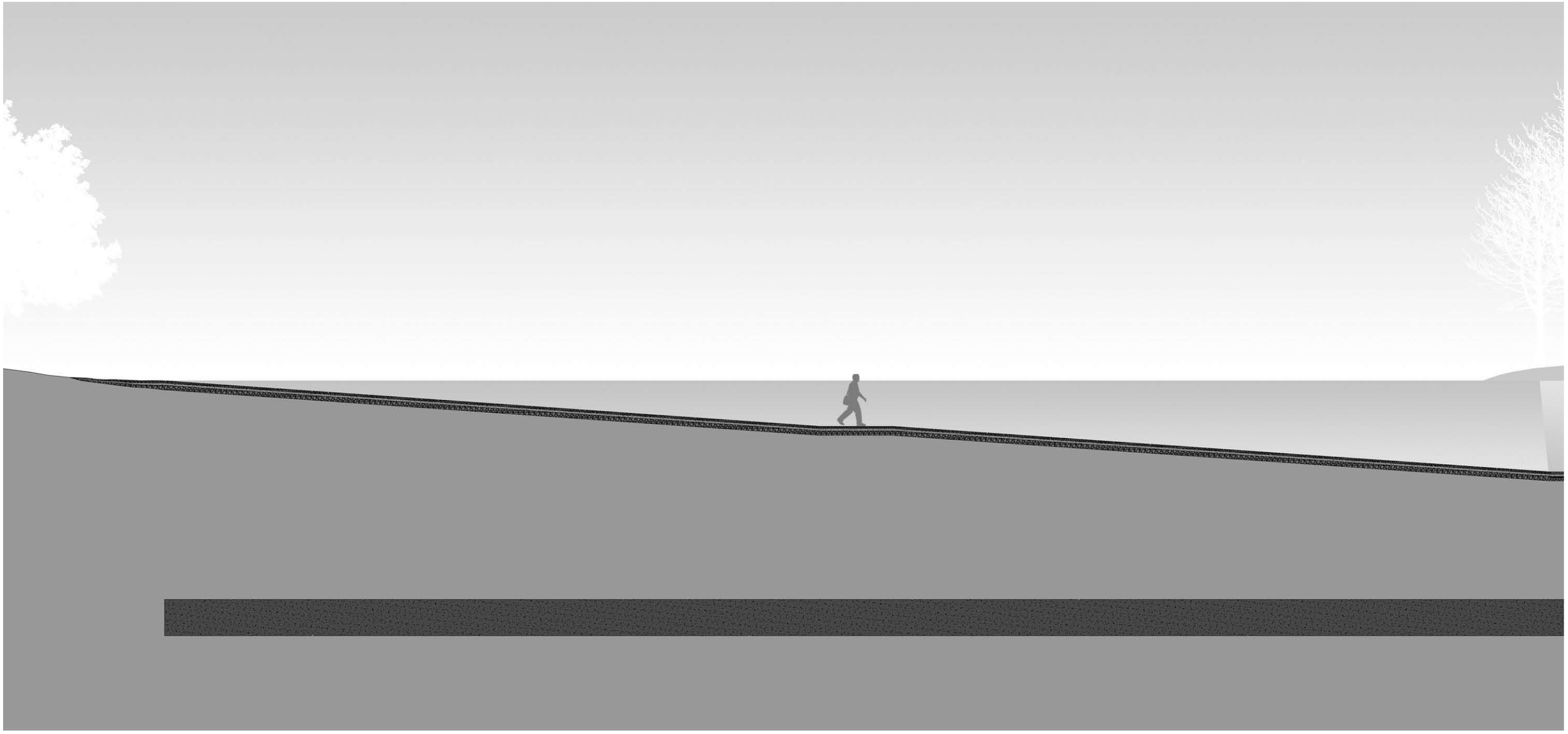




ramp explorations

early ramp model

later ramp model



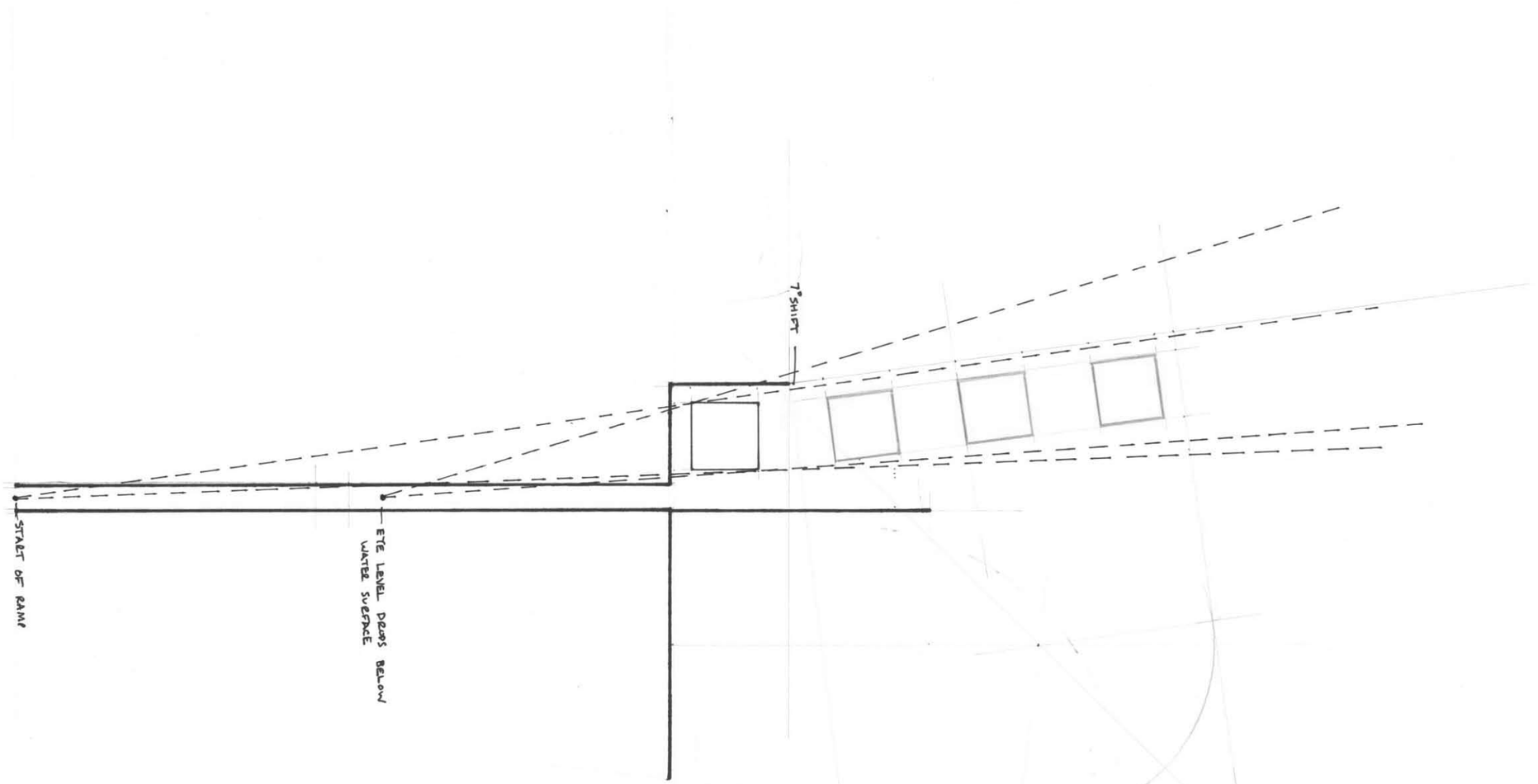
ramp section

TOWERS

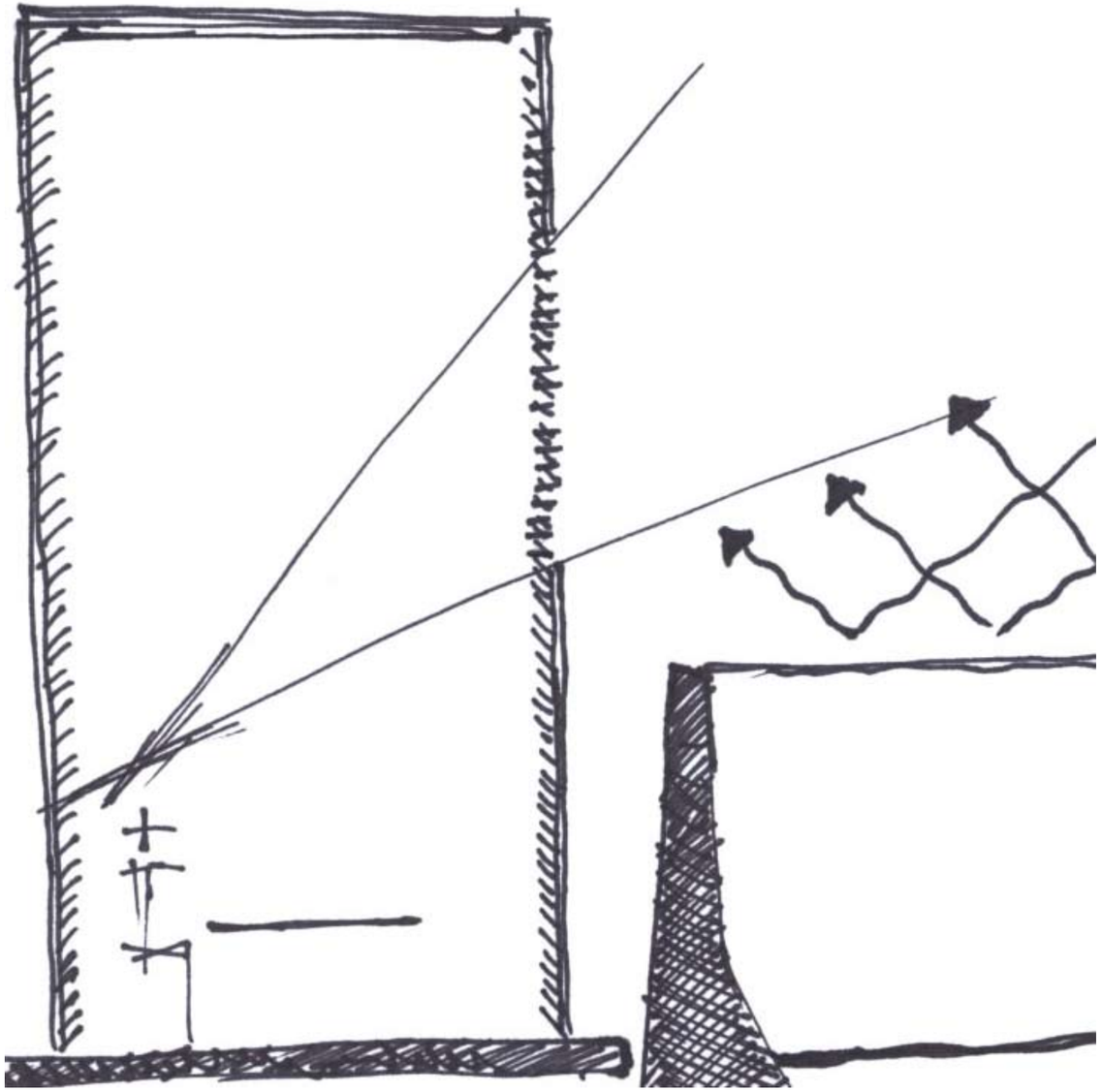
When one reaches the bottom of the ramp, one enters into a more expansive space - the walls now leaning away and the reflected noise now lost to the sky above.

Upon entering this space, one encounters a single tower standing just over thirty feet tall. Moving through the space, one discovers a slight shift in the main axis of the project, along with three identical towers that were previously hidden from all vantage points along the ramp. A vertical concrete wall along the path allows one to sense the distancing of the three towers caused by their shift from the primary axis.

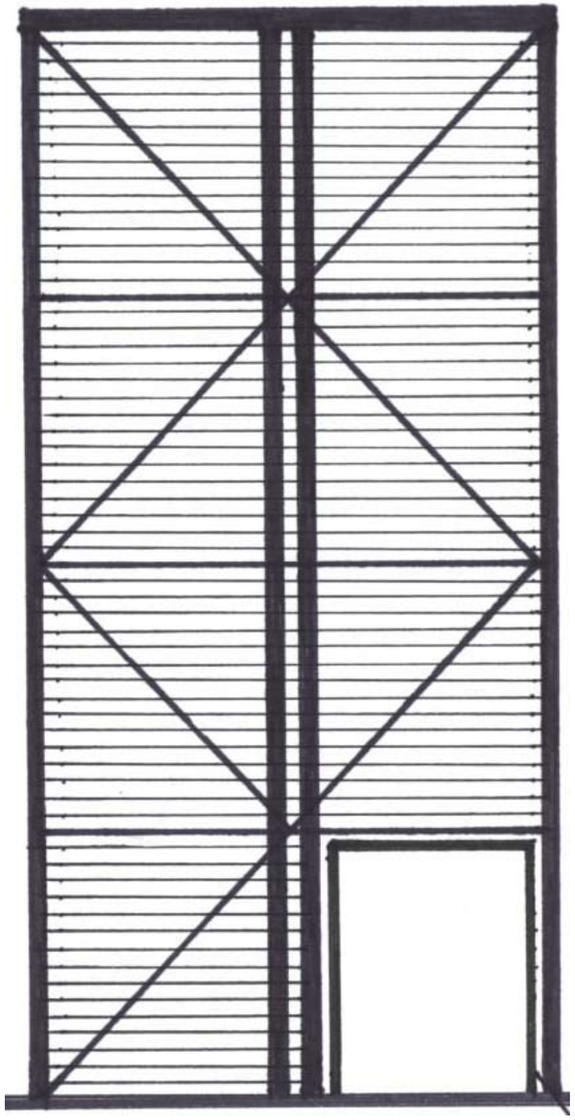
The height of each tower allows for the project to be identified from each of the brief vantage points along the approach to the project site. Louvers on all faces of the towers block out direct sunlight while providing a surface on which reflected sunlight from the pond surface may be received. This condition provides a dynamic lighting for those who inhabit the lower space of each tower to work or meet with others.



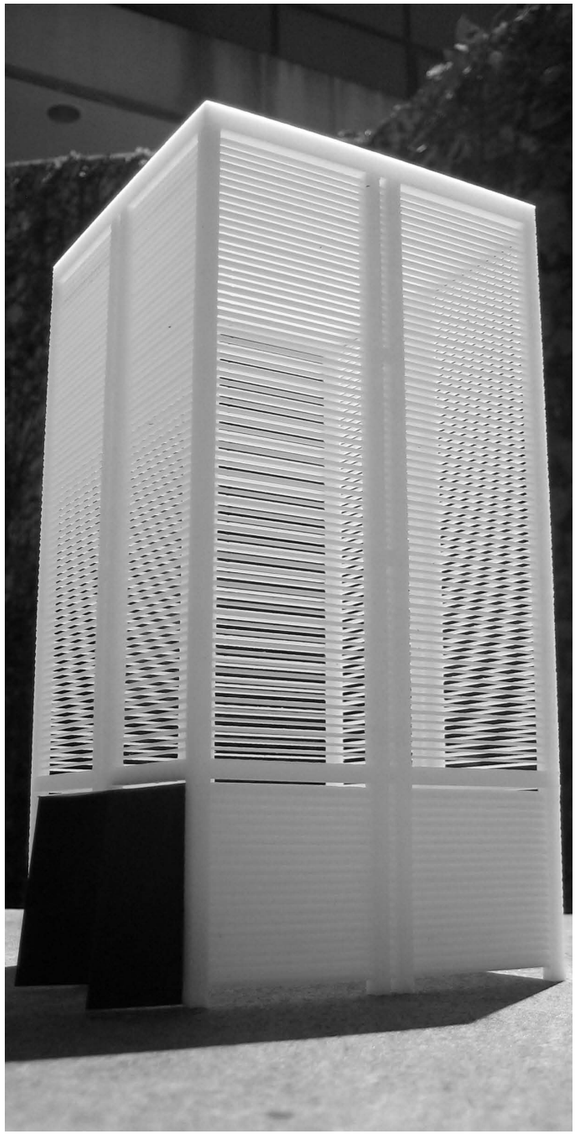
shifting axis diagram



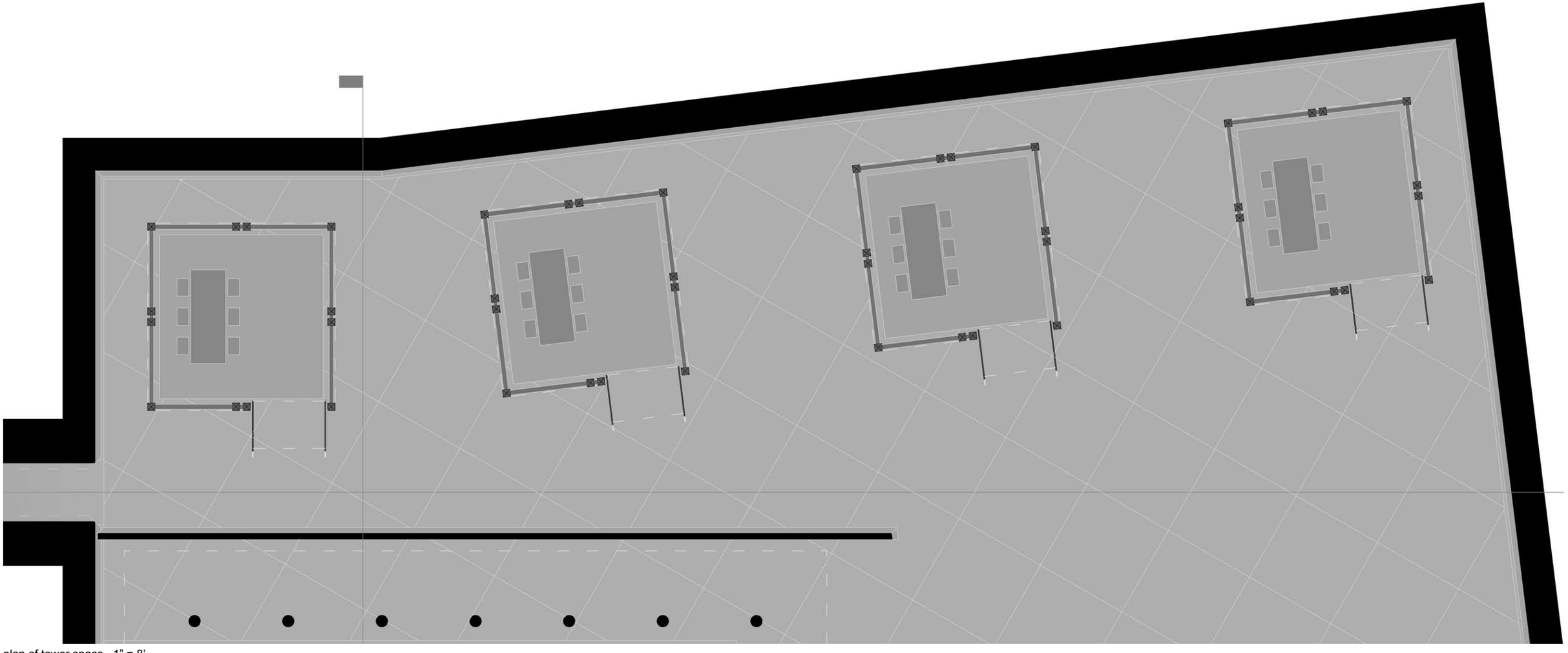
tower section development



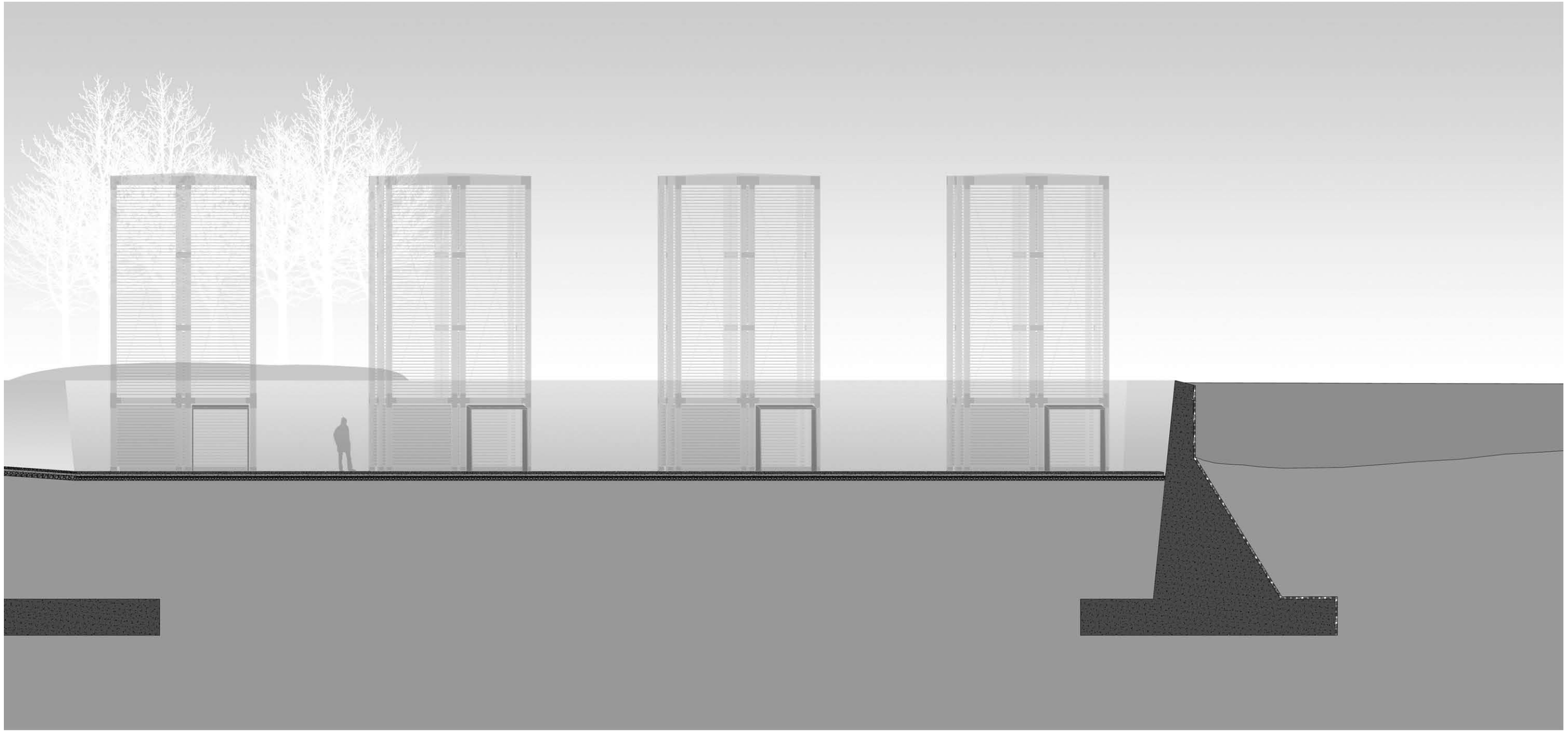
tower elevation development



final tower model



plan of tower space 1” = 8’



tower space section / elevation of towers

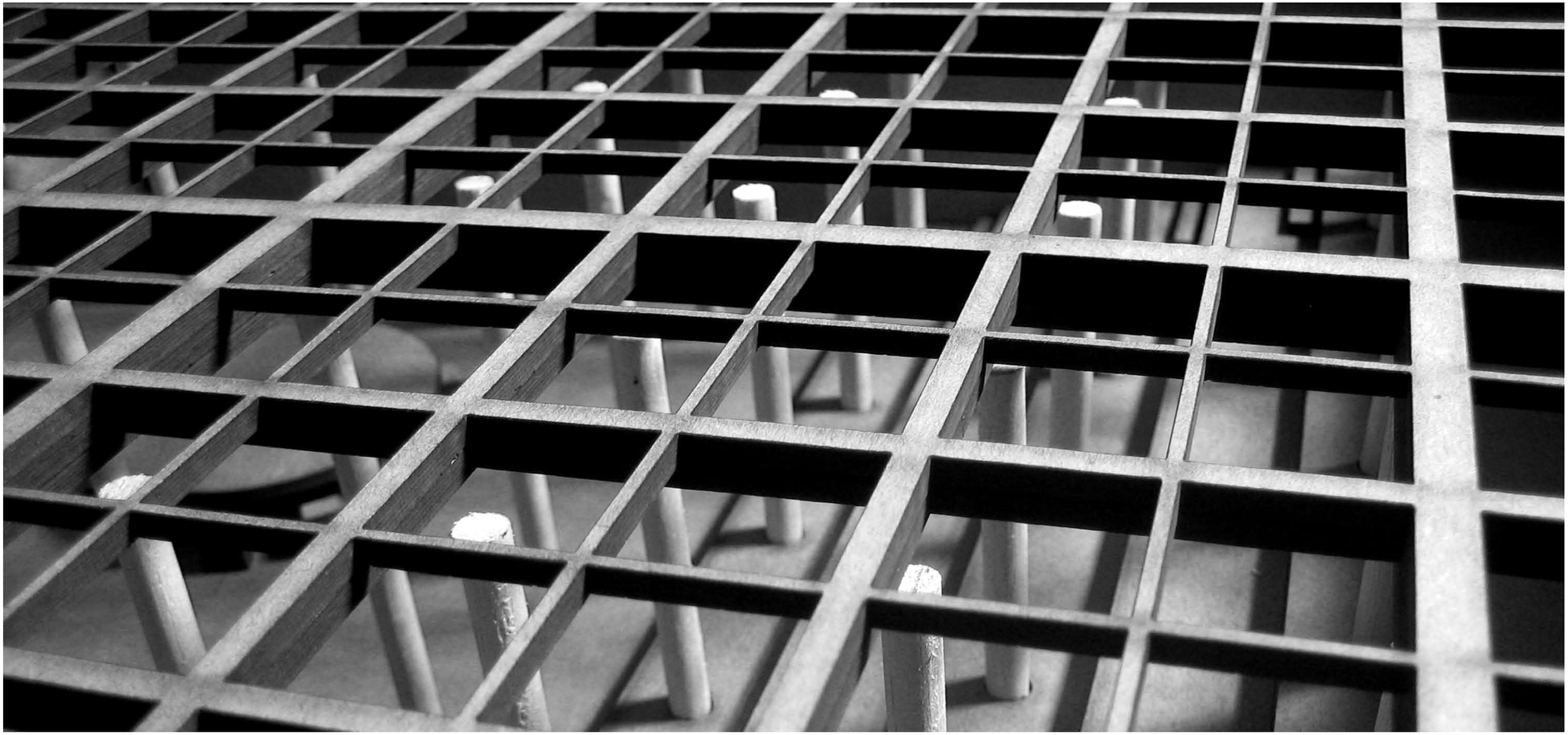
PLACE

At the end of the main axis, one turns the vertical concrete wall and encounters the main space or place within the project, consisting of a field of columns and the main meeting space.

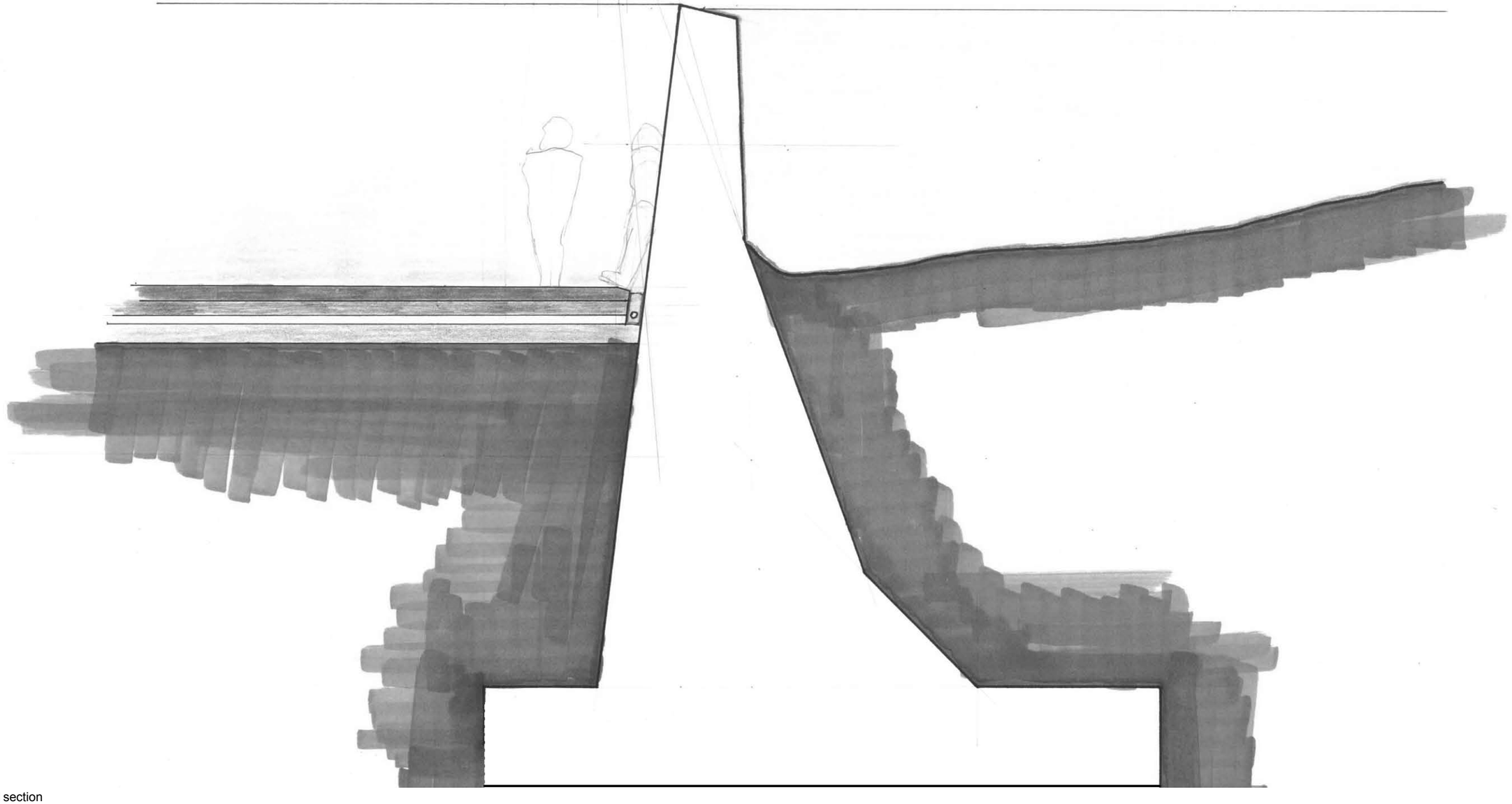
Only nine of the columns within the field serve a structural purpose and to articulate this fact, the remaining columns stop short of the concrete roof itself, serving only as a filter through which one passes to reach the main meeting space. Twelve of these columns terminate directly below coffers in the roof grid to further articulate that only a select few of the columns serve a structural purpose.

As one enters this place, the concrete floor begins to step down, releasing one to the back corner where the main meeting place is located. At this deepest point in the project, the presence of the surrounding sloped walls is at its greatest. The sloped top of each wall provides a surface on which the ripples of the pond may play.

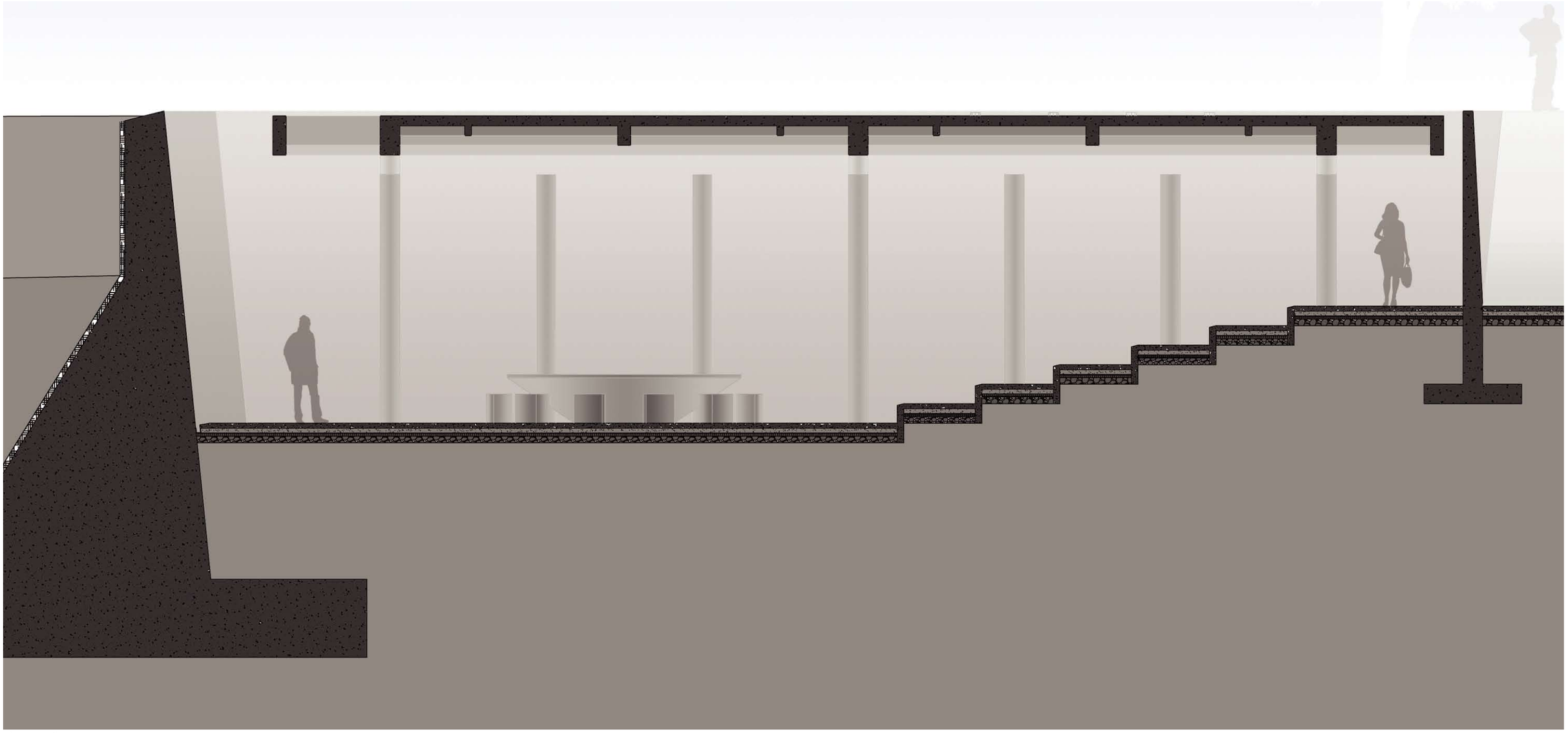
Light is brought into this space along the edges of the roof. A few sections of the roof are left open to the sky to allow additional sunlight to reflect into the main place off of the surrounding walls. Glass boat deck light prisms are cast into the concrete roof to allow the depth of the roof and its grid to be perceived.



columns pulled away from the roof structure



boundary wall section

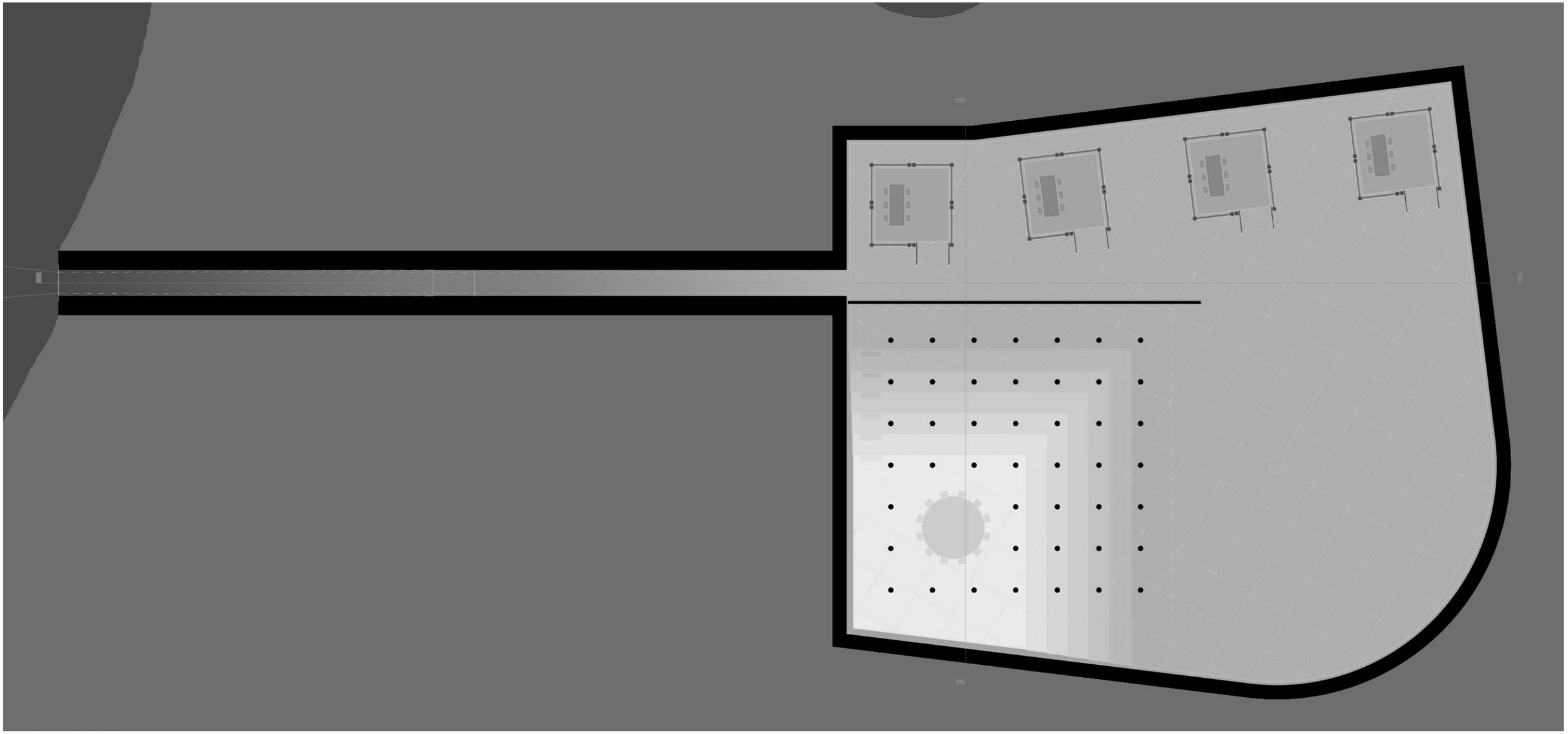


place section

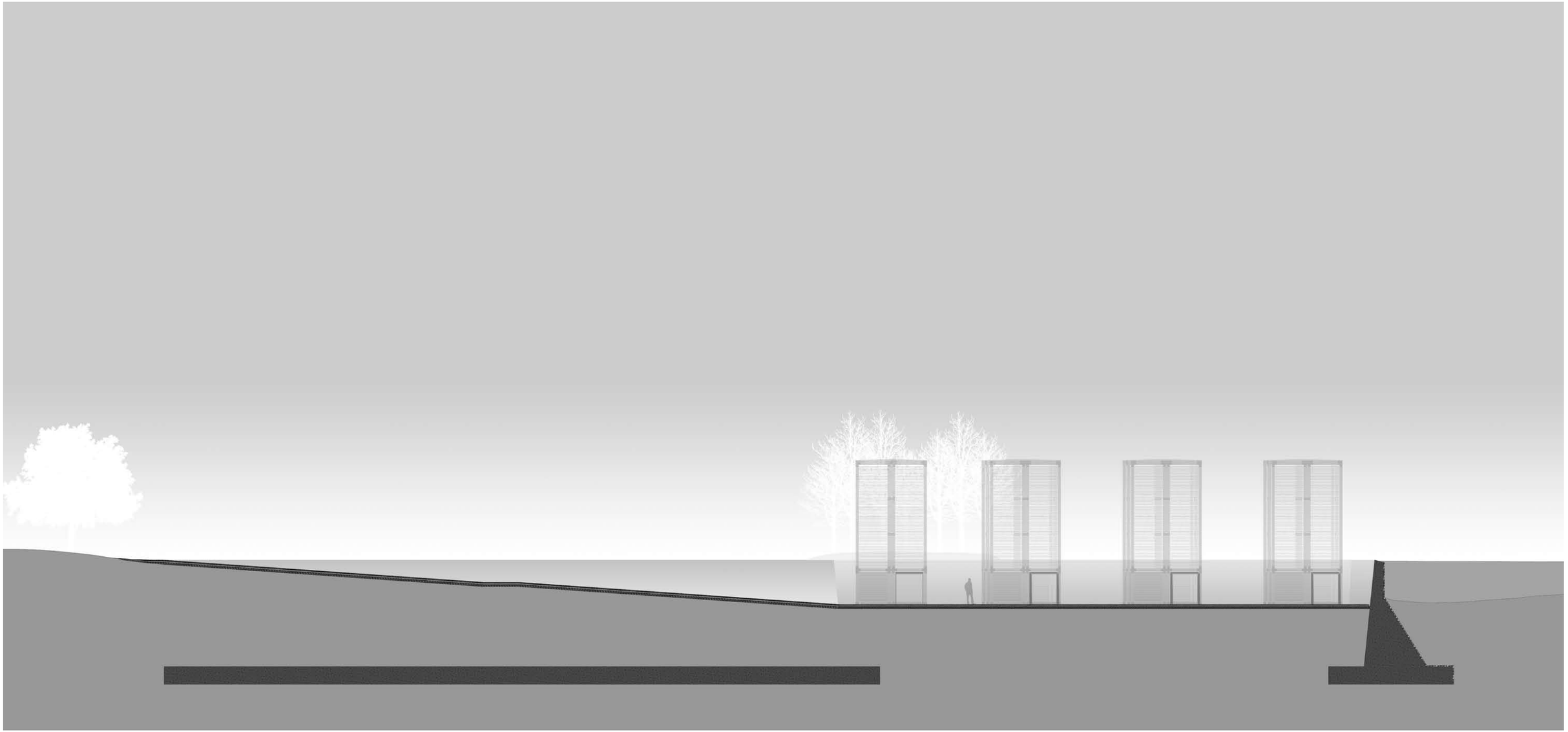
light model photographs

CONTEXT

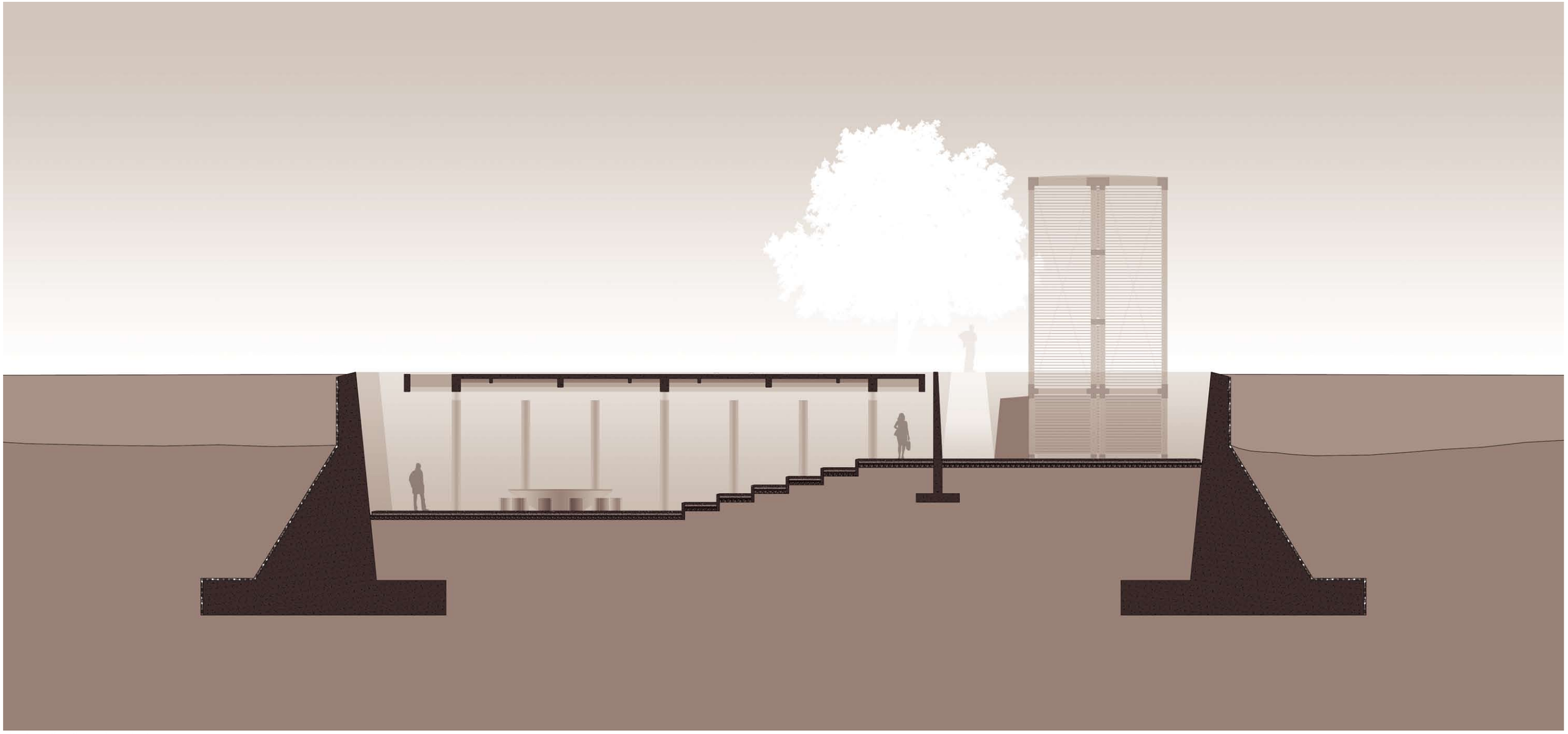
All of the sensory experiences throughout this project are aimed at removing one from the busy thoughts of the outside world. Between the time that one begins their walk toward the project and the time that they reach the main meeting place, their mindset should become very clear and free from distraction.



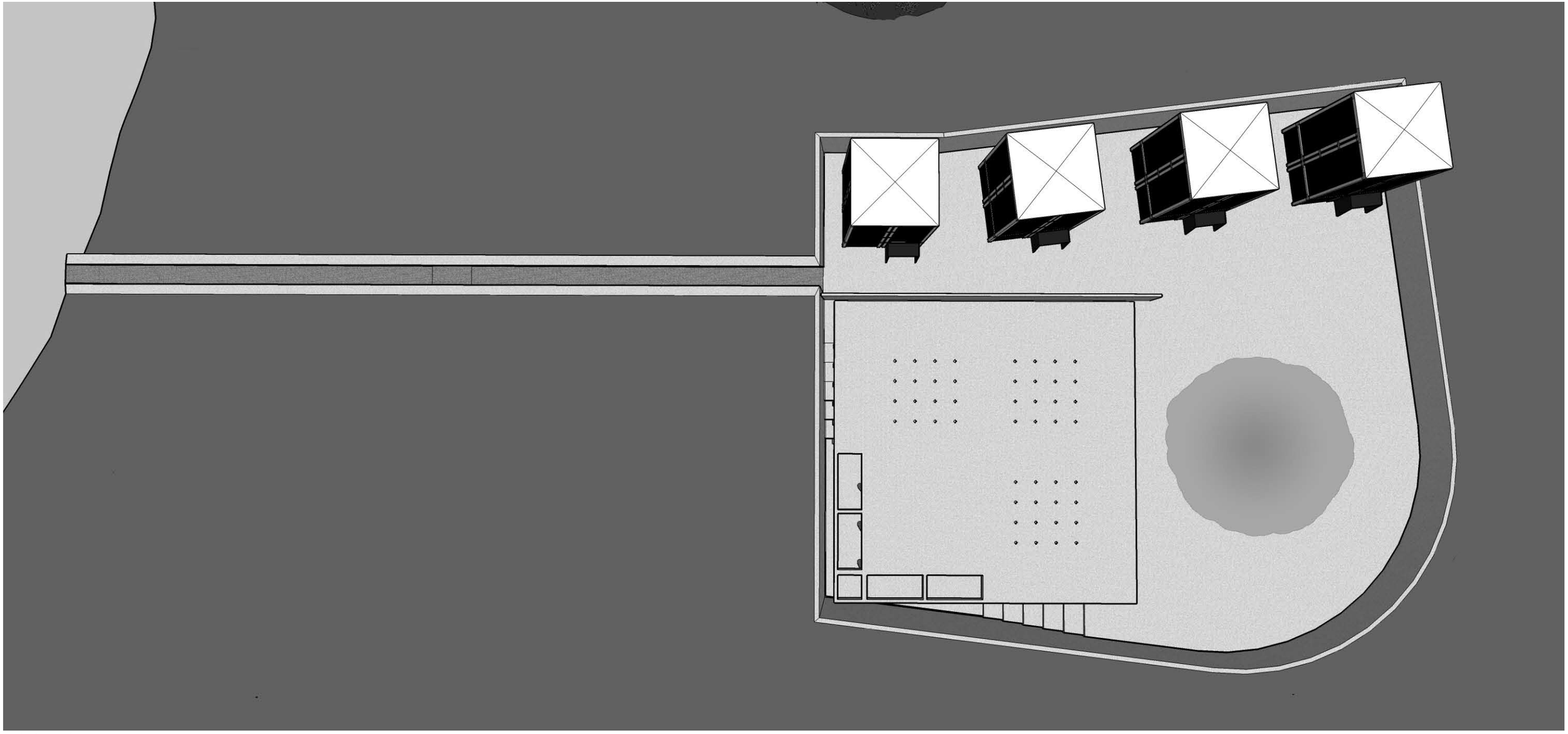
plan of project 1” = 20’



long section through project



short section through project



project overview

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All of the drawings, photographs and writing within this book are the original work of the author.

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