



PERSPECTIVE:

The Influence Of Architecture On Self-Reflection

Tristan A. Hamrick

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The Influence Of Architecture On Self-Reflection

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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 in Architecture

Joseph H. Wheeler, Chair
Jim R. Jones
Clive R. Vorster

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ABSTRACT

This project seeks to explore the ways in which architecture can be used to influence the perception of those that experience it, in terms of both themselves and their place within the universe. Through a careful selection of views, material choices, and lighting strategies; this project aims to guide the inhabitants journey of self-reflection, both internally and externally.

Perception is a stay away retreat that focuses on meditation and therapy through a series of spaces that utilize the seven Chakras as a base foundation for programing. This programming allows for each of the spaces to relate to personal characteristics that when combined with the four main clinical therapy approaches provide spaces for personal exploration and growth.

Located on a mountain side within the Rockies outside of Denver, Perception is able to incorporate the variety of elevations, slopes, and material composition present at the site in order to tailor each of the buildings forms to match the desired program and method of reflection.

This thesis aims to develop a master plan of the site and set a series of foundational rules for future expansion and growth of the facility. Along with the master plan this thesis focuses on a detailed development of two buildings that represent the dichotomy of inward/outward self-reflection.

The first building represents the root chakra through the program of a yoga studio that focuses on development of self sufficiency and confidence while encouraging an introspective reflection onto the practitioners place within the site through the controlled views out of the studio. The second building is a collection of rooms sized from the individual to the whole community that leverage light and materiality to alert the individual to their relation to the building envelope around them, both physically and spiritually.

The goal of this project is to create a series of buildings that provide spaces that prompt the exploration of self reflection as both an individual and as a part of a whole through meditation and therapy.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Perception is a retreat designed to explore how architecture can influence self-perception and our understanding of place within the universe. Rooted in meditation and therapy, the project uses the seven Chakras and clinical therapy methods to shape spaces that promote introspection and personal growth. Set in the Rocky Mountains near Denver, the retreat's design responds to the natural terrain, using views, light, and materials to guide self-reflection.

The thesis includes a master plan for the site and focuses on two key buildings that embody inward and outward reflection. One, a yoga studio inspired by the root chakra, fosters inner confidence and grounding through controlled views. The other, a cluster of communal and individual rooms, uses spatial relationships and materiality to connect individuals to their physical and spiritual surroundings.

The goal is to create architecture that encourages reflection—both personal and collective—through thoughtful design rooted in nature and therapeutic practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you first and foremost to my mother and father for their unconditional love and support throughout my life and academic journey.

Thank you to my sister for always keeping me grounded and on path.

Thank you to my classmates, past and present, for their valuable input and critiques to my work; always pushing me to be the best architect that I can be.

Thank you to my friends for reminding me that there is a life outside of studio work and for making that life vastly more enjoyable.

And thank you to my thesis committee for all the time spent helping me to iterate on my design and for pushing me to think deeper about the elements of my project.

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"I feel that the Room is the beginning of Architecture..."

- *Louis Kahn*

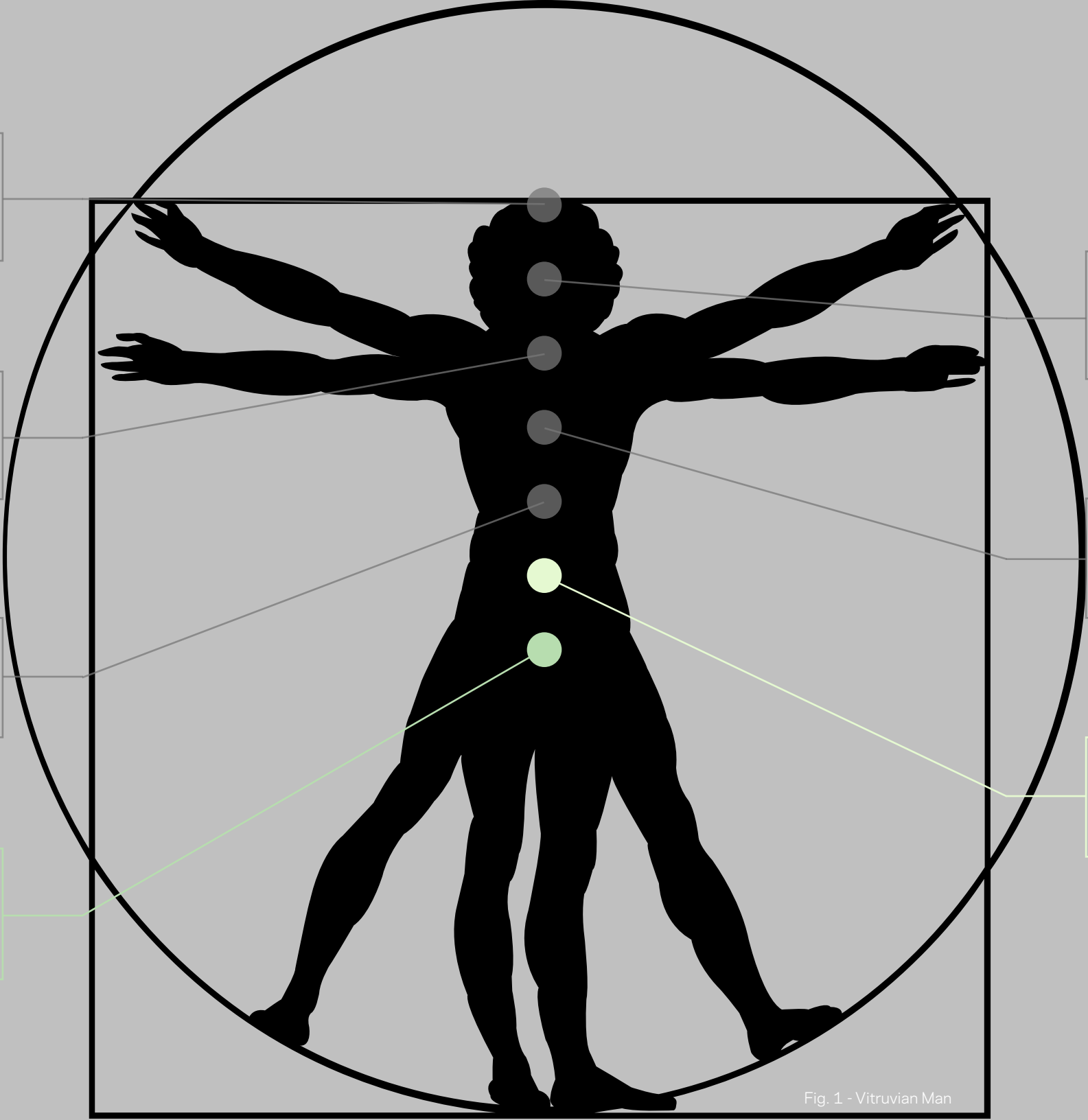
BACKGROUND

SAHASRARA - Crown
 Crown of the head
 Spirituality, Enlightenment,
 Dynamic Energy
 Inner Peace, Clear Perspective

VISHUDDHA - Throat
 Base of the throat
 Inspiration, Communication,
 Expression
 Creativity, Self-Expression

MANIPURA - Solar Plexus
 Between navel and ribs
 Ego, Anger, Aggression
 Focus, Productivity

MULADHARA - Root
 Base of the spine
 Survival, Stability, Self-
 Sufficiency
 Security, Independence



AJNA - Third Eye
 Between the Eyes
 Intelligence, Intuition, Self-
 Knowledge
 Vibrancy, Confidence

ANAHATA - Heart
 Heart
 Love, Attachment, Trust
 Compassion, Care

SWADHISTHANA - Sacral
 Four fingers below the navel
 Desires, Self-Worth, Sexuality
 Intimacy, Vibrancy

Fig. 1 - Vitruvian Man

Focus on the client and the inherent good within them
 Non-directive, Equal partners in therapy, No judgment or suggestions
 Client is in control of sessions and finds their own solutions
 Therapist is real and genuine with authentic interactions
 Understand without sympathy

HUMANISTIC

THERAPY

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL

Focus on thoughts and behavior
 Goal oriented, Practical strategies, Coping Skills
 Client recognizes unhelpful thinking and behavior
 Client becomes own therapist with a focus on current life
 Problem solving, Recognize and replace distorted thinking

Focus on unconscious thoughts and feelings
 Free association, Exploring experiences, Examine relationships
 Talk therapy that helps understand psychological roots
 Therapist acts as a guide throughout the journey not as an authority
 Increase awareness of unresolved feelings and emotions

PSYCHODYNAMIC

TYPES

GESTALT

Focus on the perceived experiences in the present
 Personal responsibility, Self-awareness, Wholeness
 Discussions about current felt experiences and perspectives
 Therapist uses experiential techniques such as role playing and association
 Regulate emotions and self-awareness in the moment

CHURCH ON THE WATER

Tadao Ando
Shimukappu, Japan

There is a homogeneous material palette that **focuses the inhabitants view out** to the external pond and natural landscape.



Fig. 2 - Church on the Water

CHURCH OF THE LIGHT

Tadao Ando
Ibaraki, Japan

The natural lighting creates an **ethereal quality within the chapel**, defining a place for meditation and prayer.



Fig. 3 - Church of the Light

CREMATORIUM BAUMSCHULENWEG

Axel Schultes
Berlin, Germany

The spacing of the columns create a series of **irregular voids** that allow for both solitary and group **gatherings of reflection**.



Fig. 4 - Crematorium Baumschulenweg

THE THERME VALS

Peter Zumthor
Therm, Switzerland

Therme Vals limited use of exterior windows creates a space that **focuses inward and encourages introspection**.



Fig. 5 - Therme Vals

JUVET LANDSCAPE HOTEL

Jensen & Skodvin Architects
Norddal, Norway

The rooms that make up the hotel are separated units that are positioned to give a **unique view of the landscape**.



Fig. 6 - Juvet Landscape Hotel

ICEFJORD CENTER

Dorte Mandrup
Ilulissat, Greenland

The center serves as a transition point between the man-made and natural environments, acting as a **point of mediation** between the two.



Fig. 7 - Icefjord Center

AMANGIRI

Rick Joy
Utah, USA

Amangiri allows the **natural experience of the site** to remain in the forefront; the architecture blending with the landscape.



Fig. 8 - Amangiri

CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE DI SCULTURA

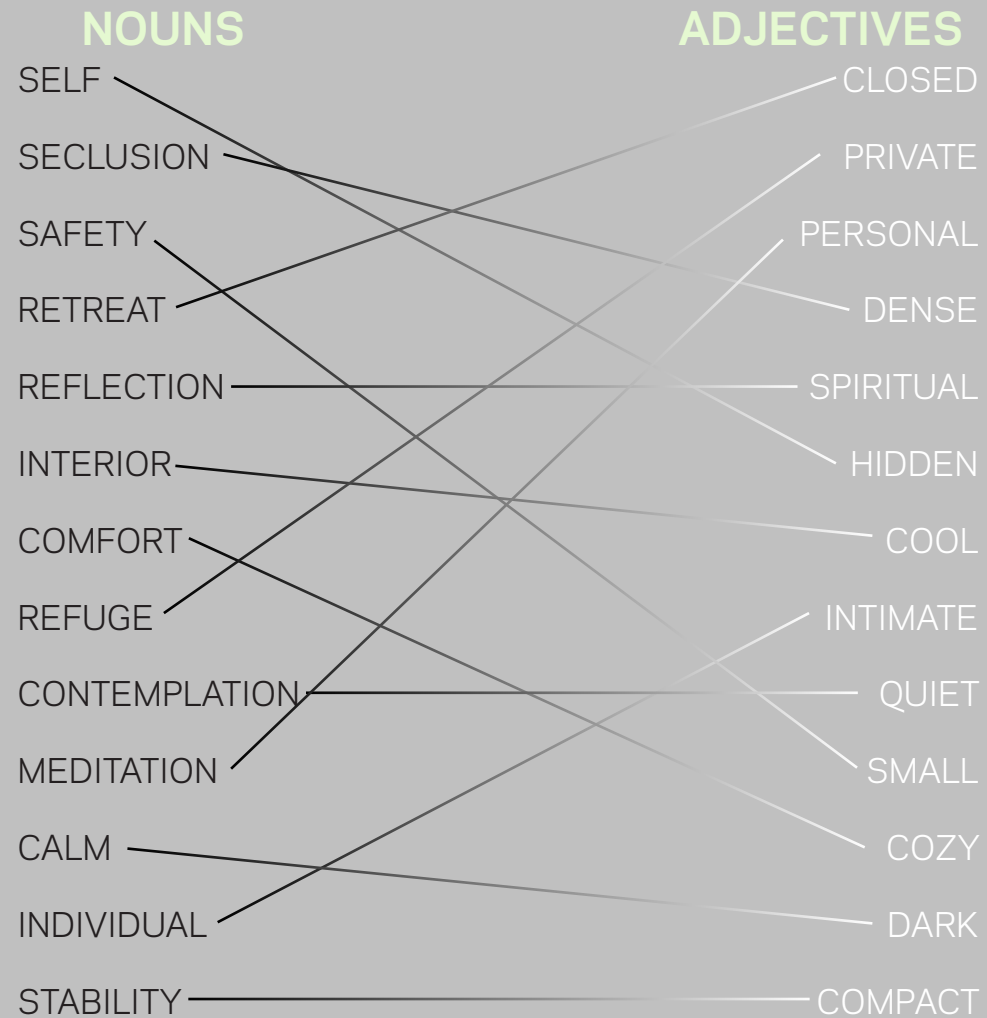
Adolfo Pederzini, Alessandro Marazzi
Peccia, Switzerland

The artists studios expand outward from the entry plaza, reinforcing **the primacy of the views out** to the valley beyond.

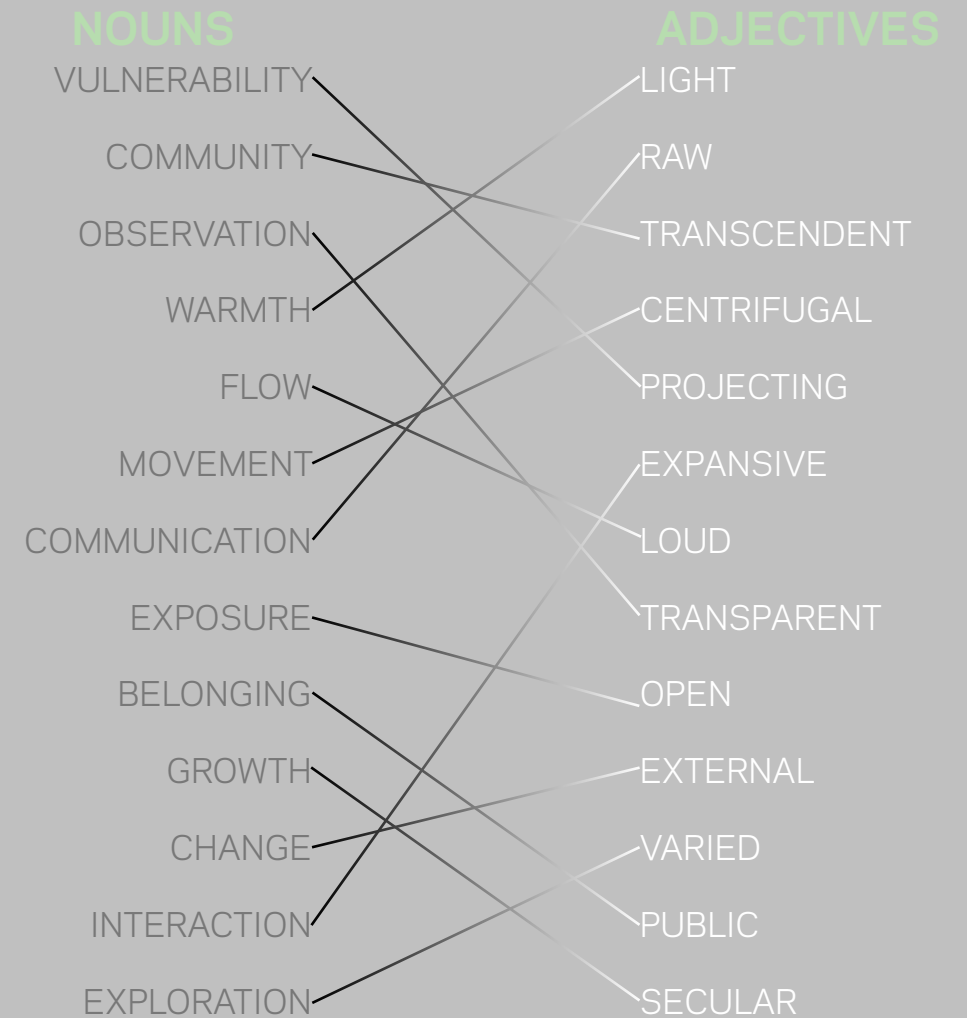


Fig. 9 - C.I.S.

INWARD



OUTWARD

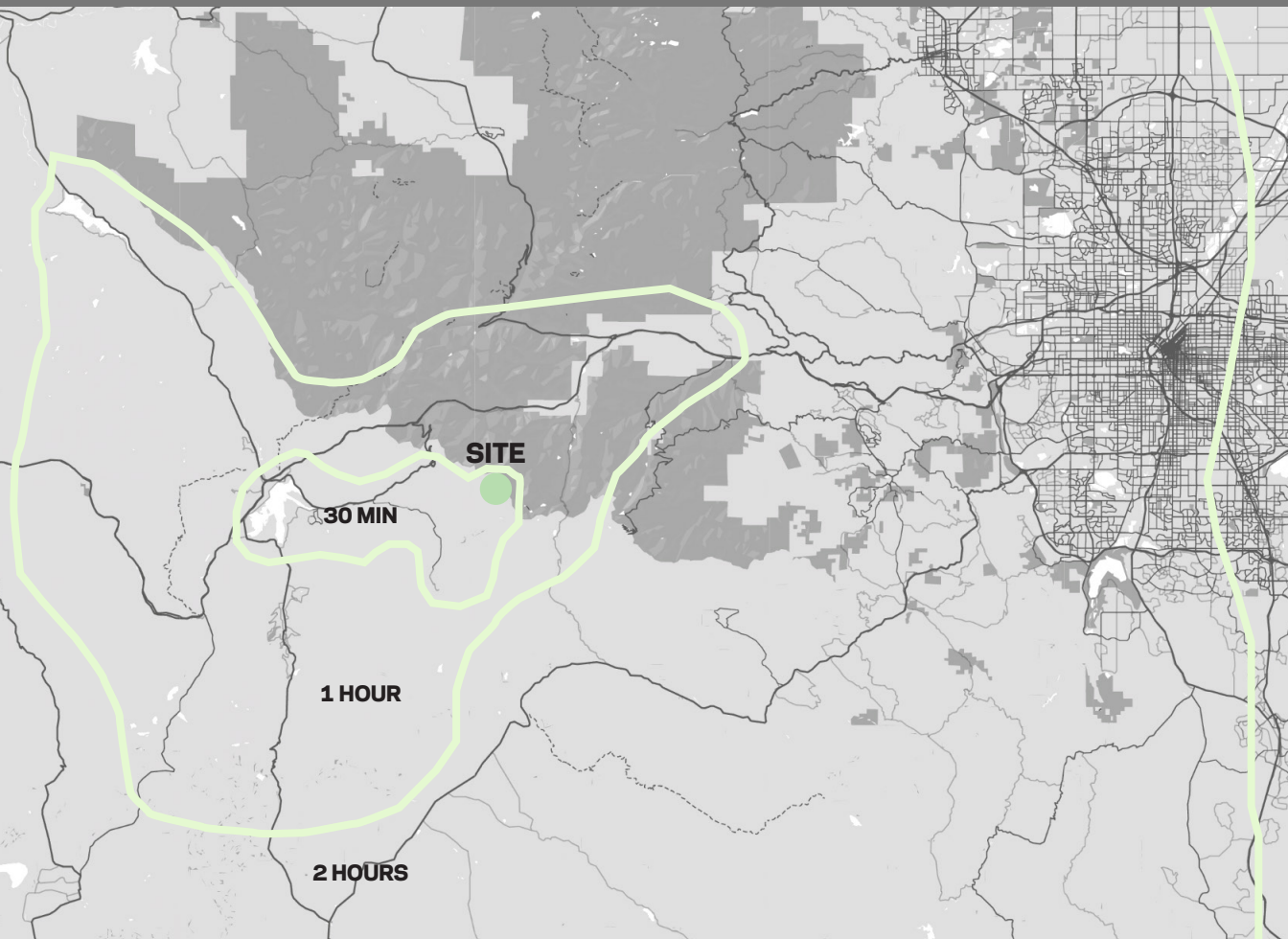
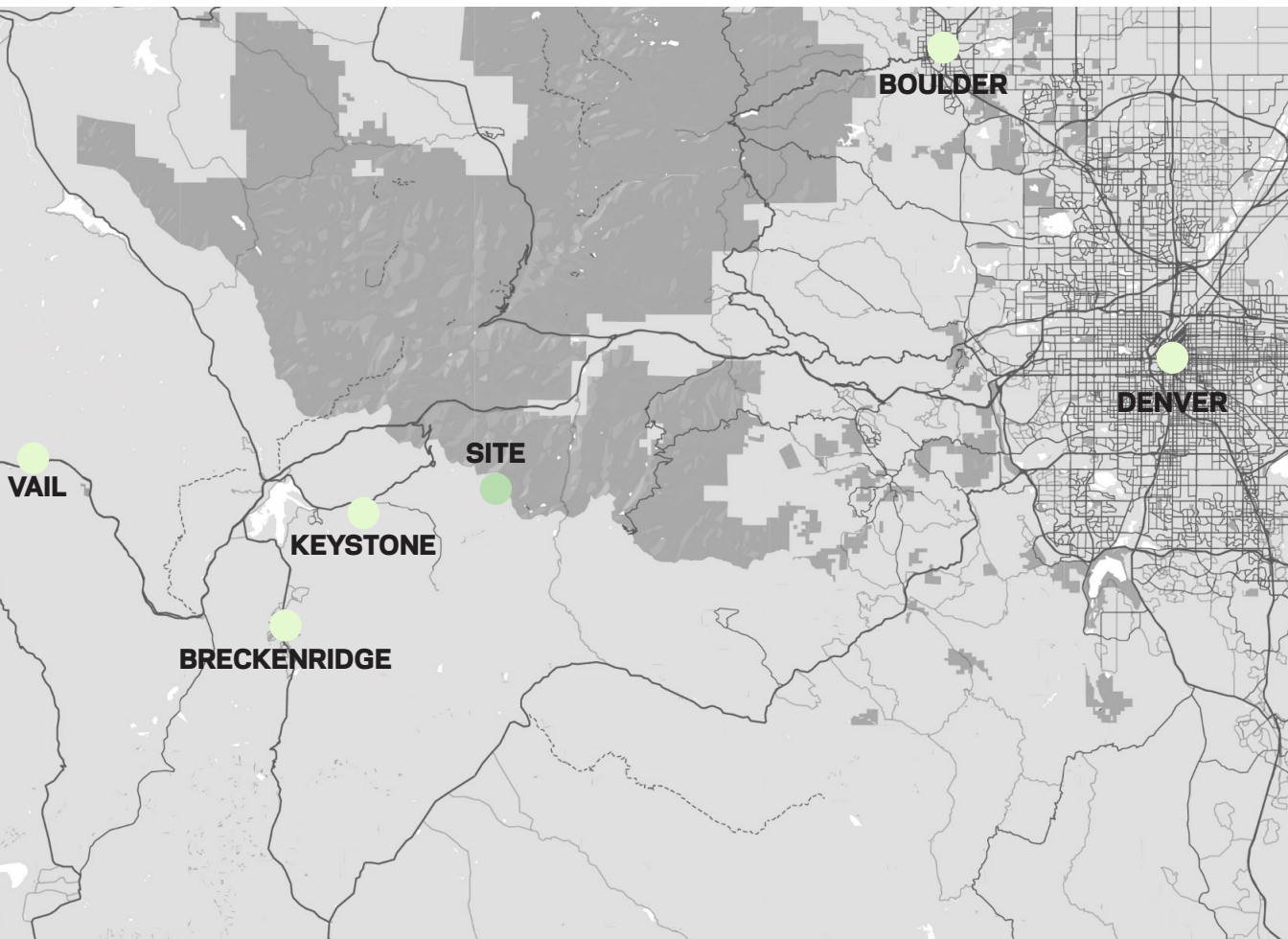


“There is an internal landscape, a geography of the soul; we
search for its outlines all our lives”

- Josephine Hart

SITE

POPULATION CENTERS



TRAVEL TIME

TOPO MAP

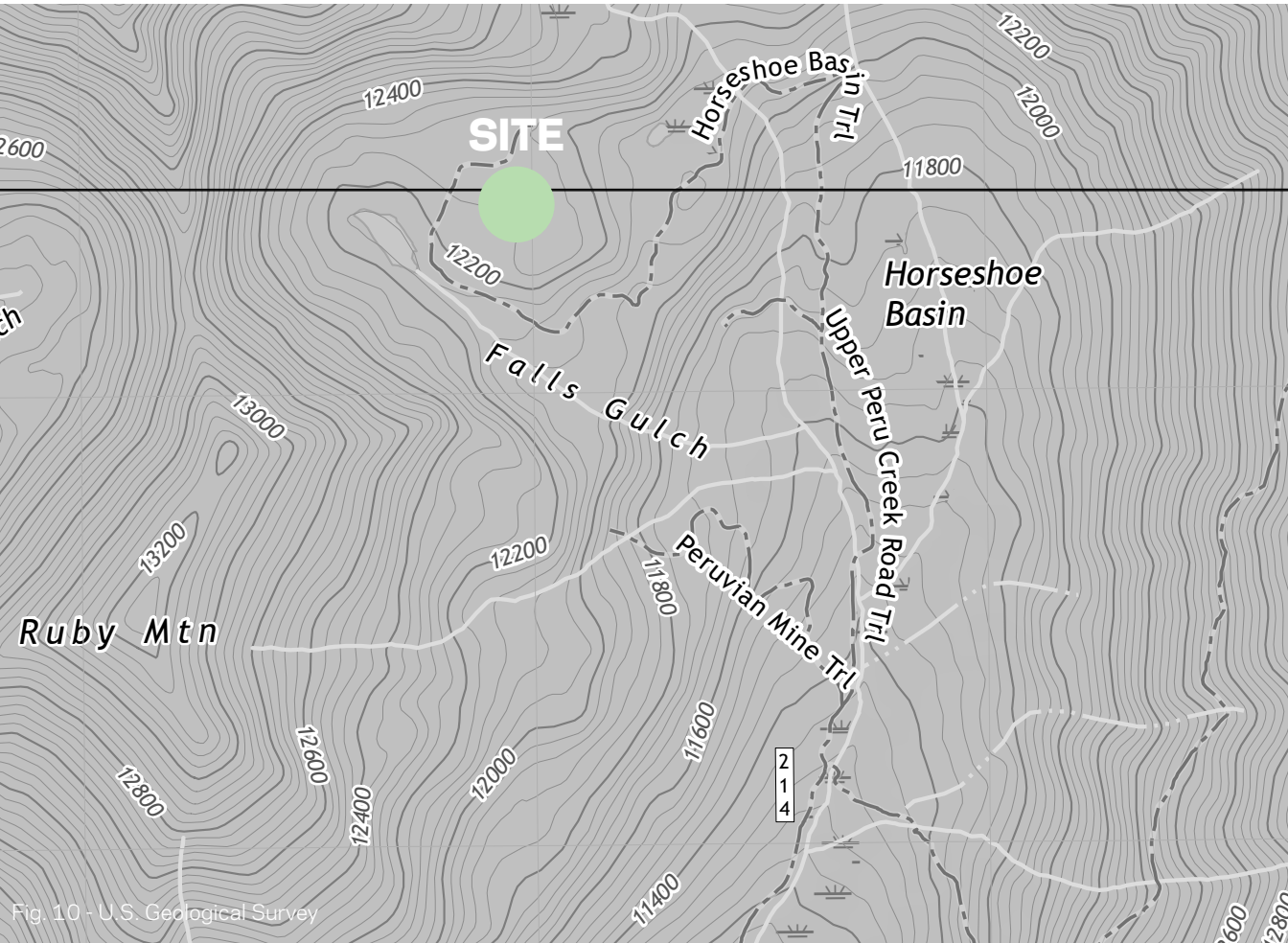
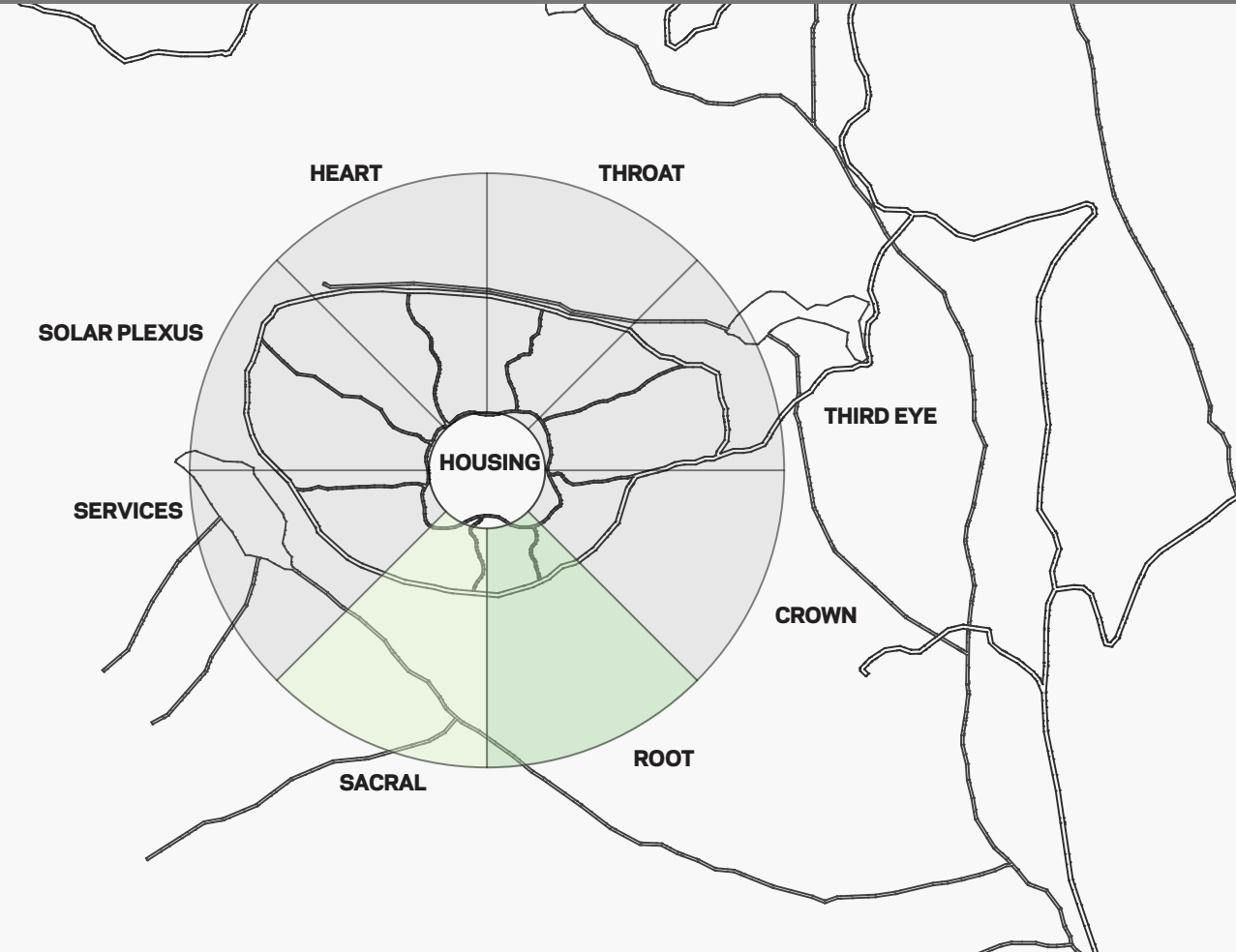
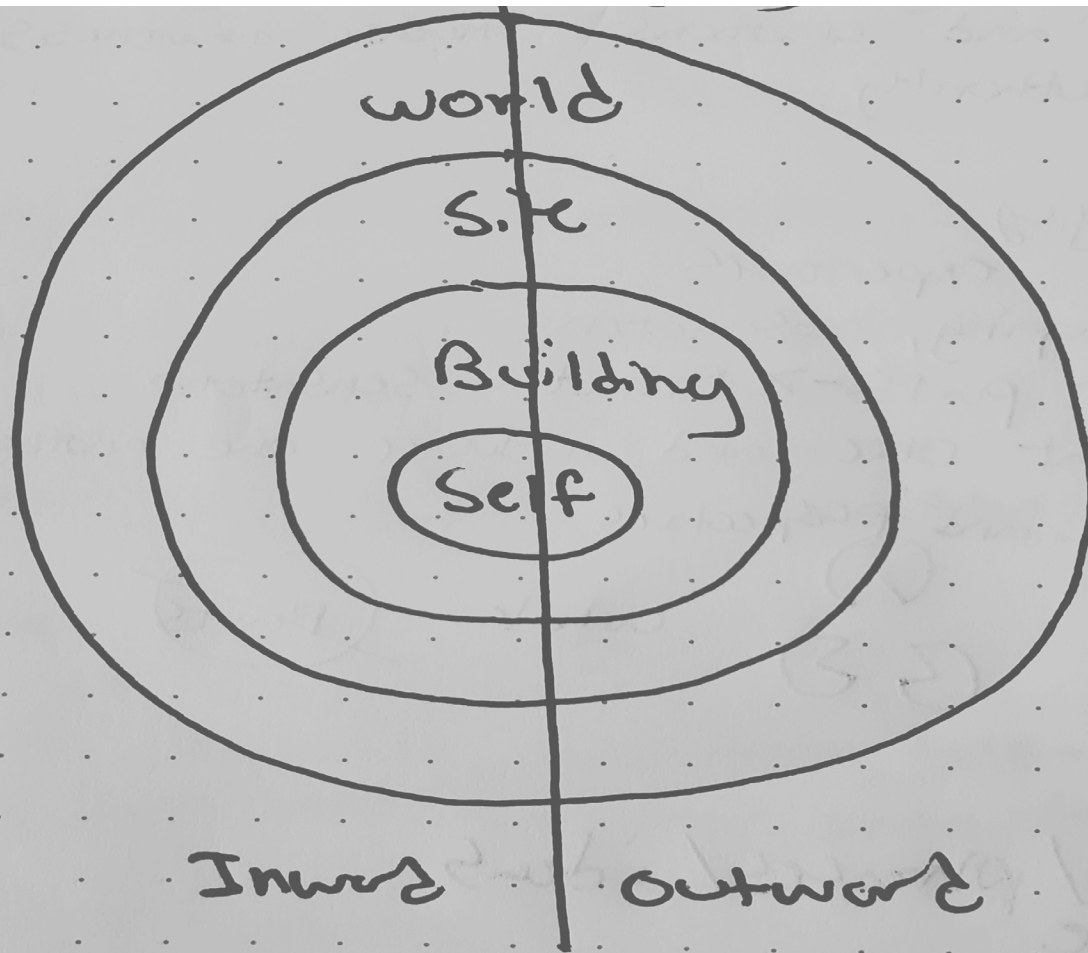


Fig. 10 - U.S. Geological Survey



PROGRAMMATIC DIAGRAM

SENSE OF PLACE



Crown - Connection to the outside, place within world
Individual, Solo pods, Circular portal up

Third eye - understanding oneself
Pairs, Therapist & patient, behavioral therapy

Throat - Communication and interpersonal
Flowing, Shifting, changing, Pathways

Heart - Care for others, empathy
Garden, Communal Space

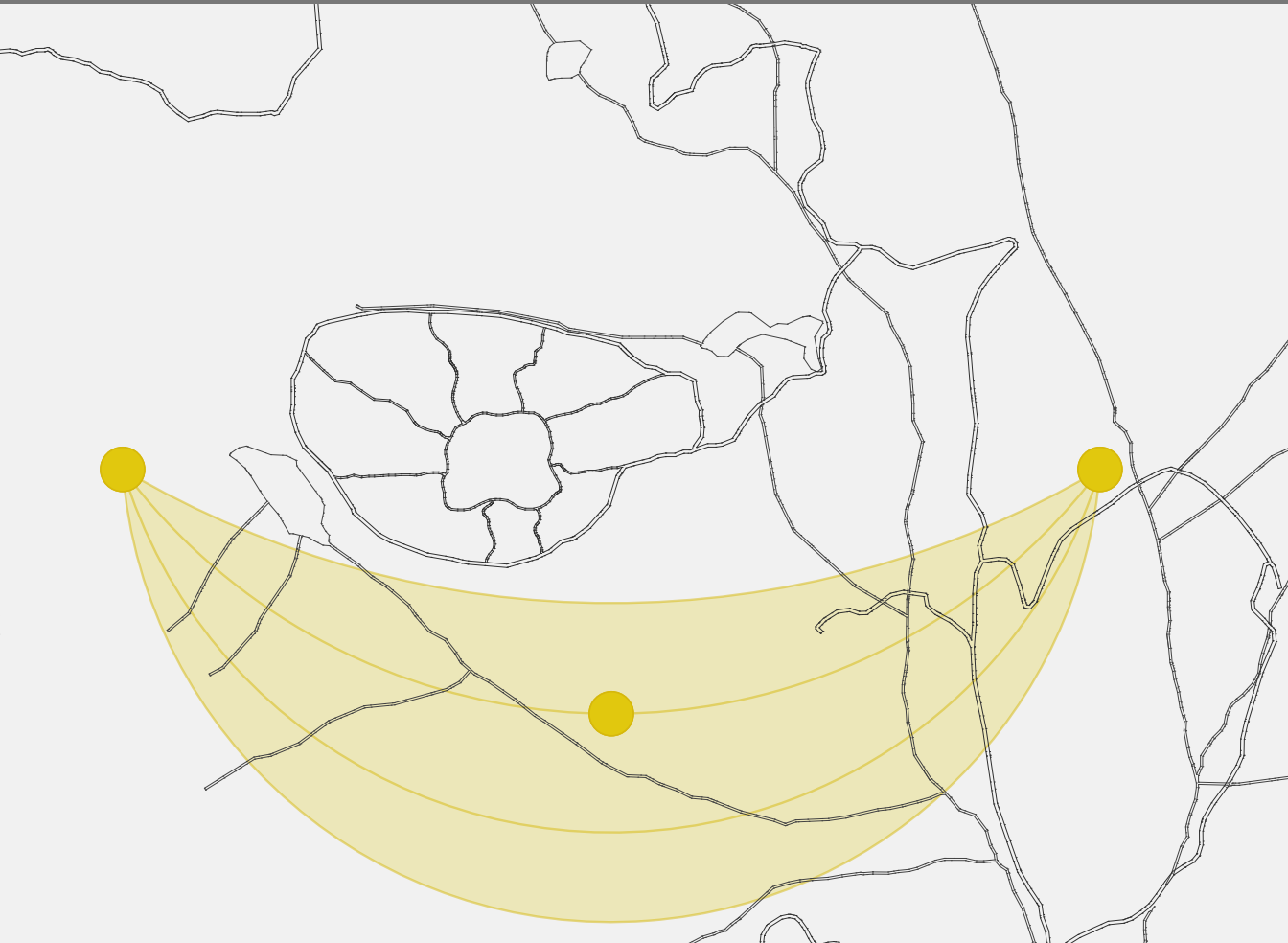
Solar plexus - Confident in skills and development
Craft workshop, Art therapy, building

Sacral - Self worth and intuition
Contemplation space, varying group size

Root - Stability & Self-sufficiency, understand body
workout / yoga studio, connect to site

PROGRAMMATIC CONNECTION

WIND STUDY



SOLAR STUDY



Fig. 11 - Google Earth Site Imagery



Fig. 13 - Google Earth Site Imagery



Fig. 12 - Google Earth Site Imagery

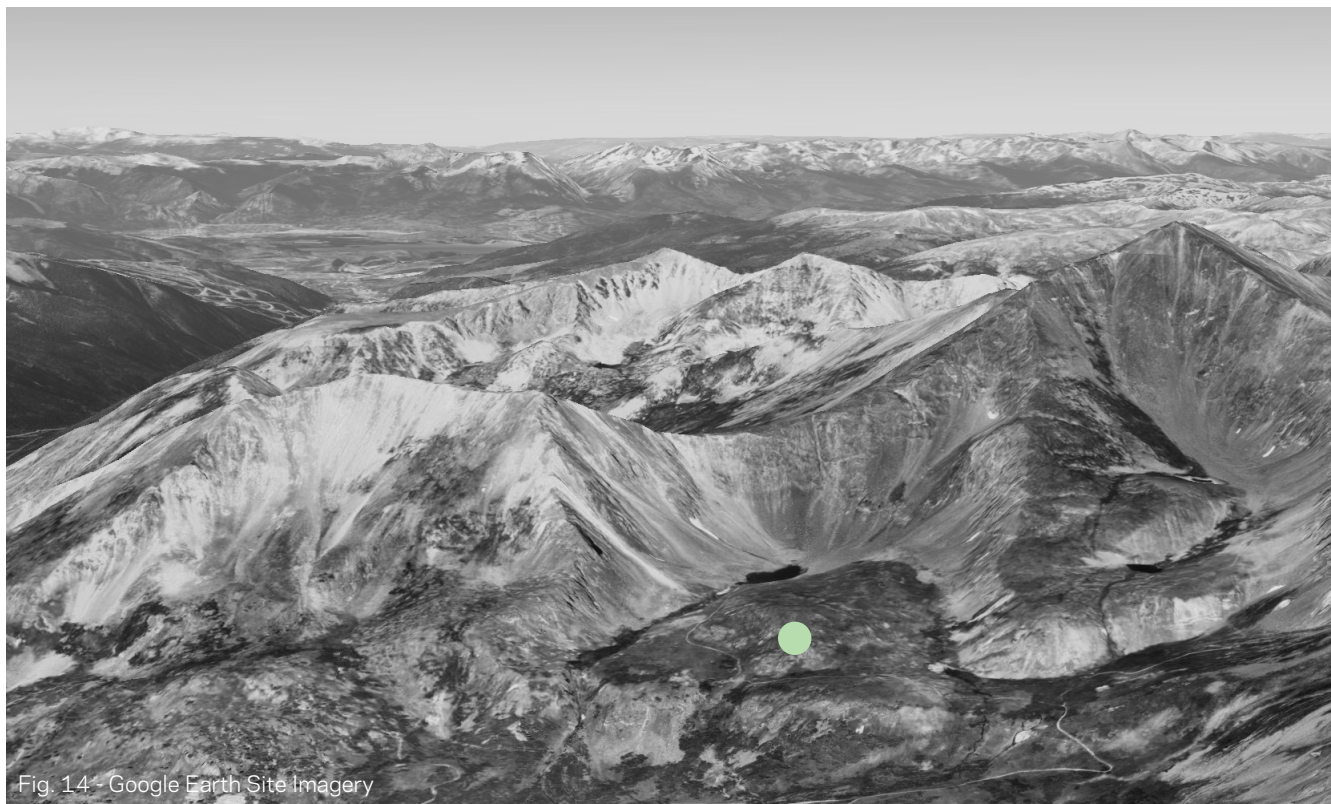


Fig. 14 - Google Earth Site Imagery

"Architecture is exposed to life. If its body is sensitive enough, it
can assume a quality that bears witness to past life"

- Peter Zumthor

OUTWARD

YOGA STUDIO

PROGRAMMATIC DIAGRAM

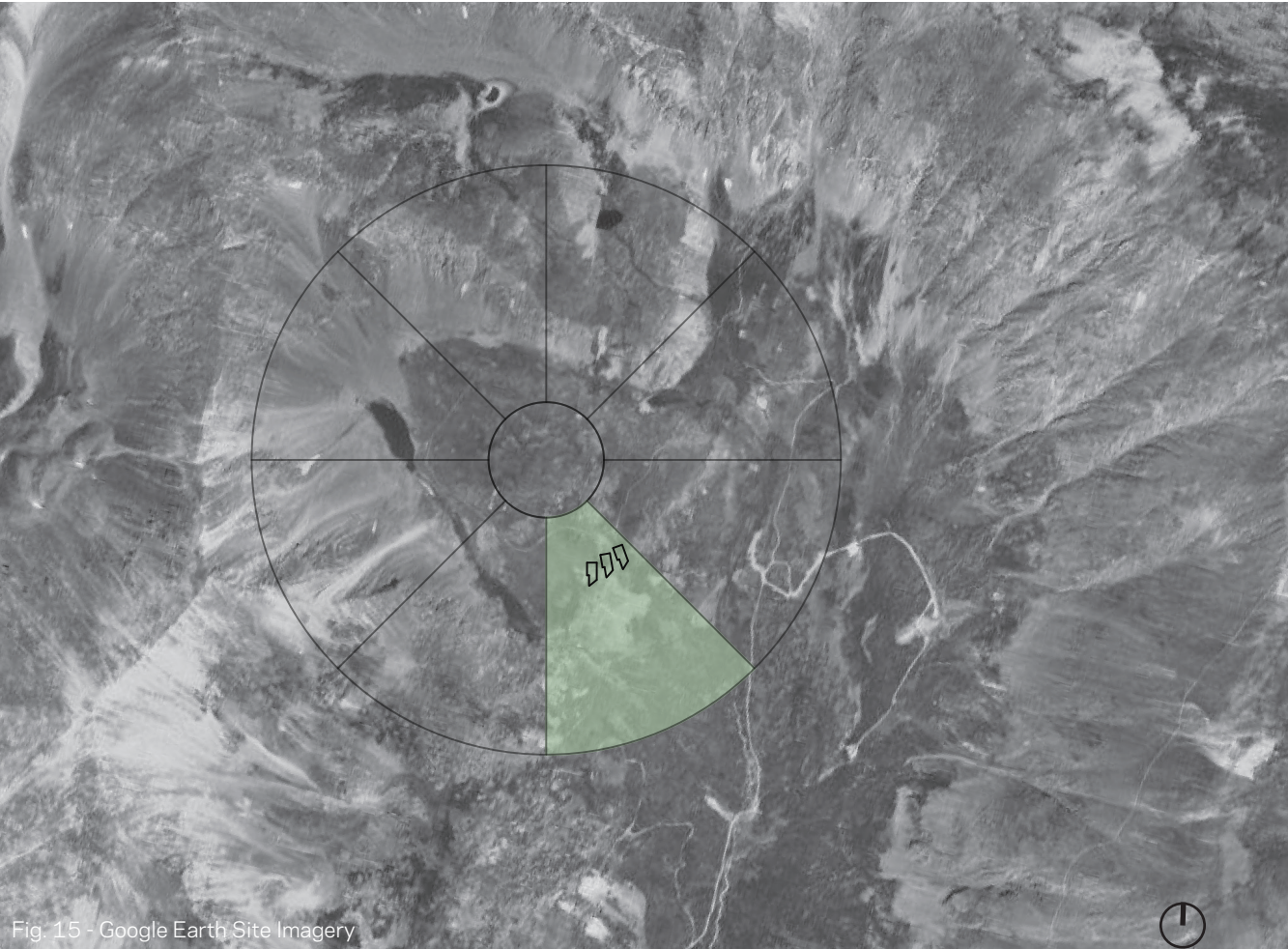


Fig. 15 - Google Earth Site Imagery

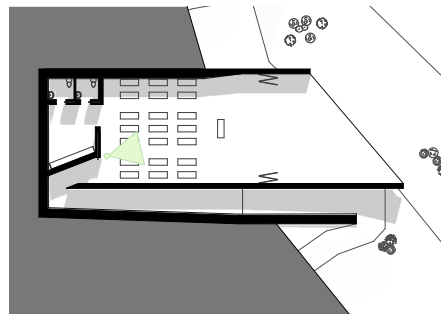
The programmatic layout overlaid on site imagery showing the section of the site the yoga studio is located within, as well as imagery showcasing the view range of the yoga studios.



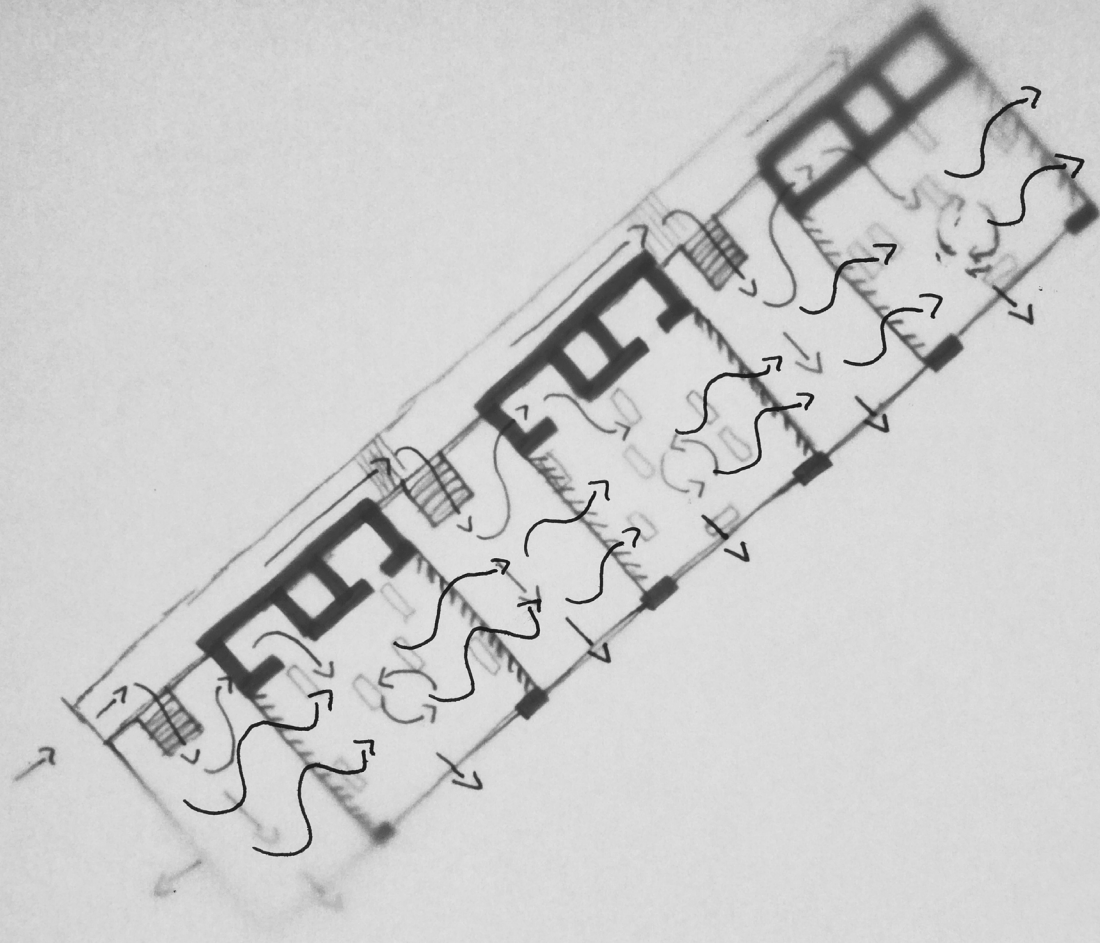
Fig. 16 - Google Earth Site Imagery



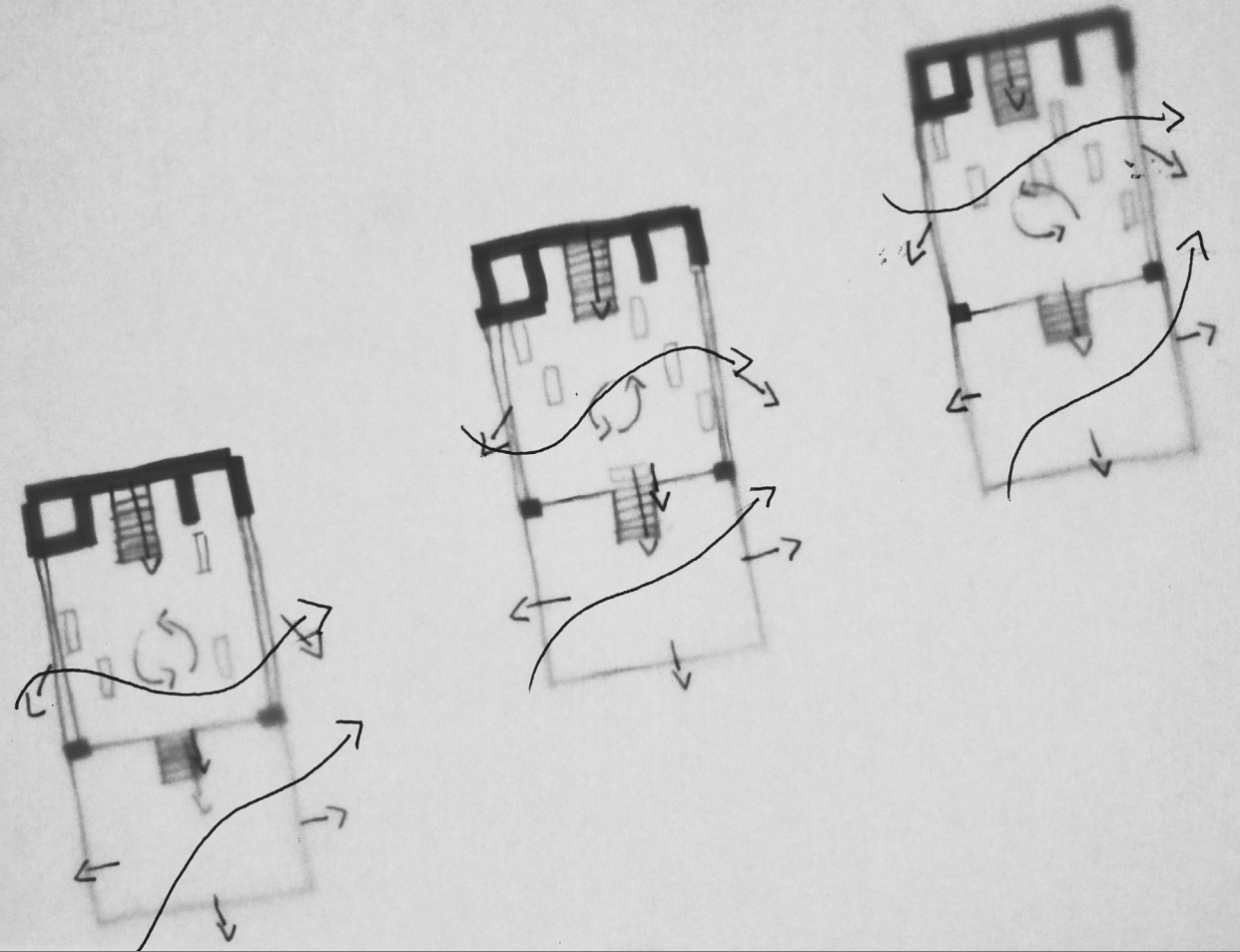
Fig. 17 - Google Earth Site Imagery



PLAN STUDY



PLAN STUDY

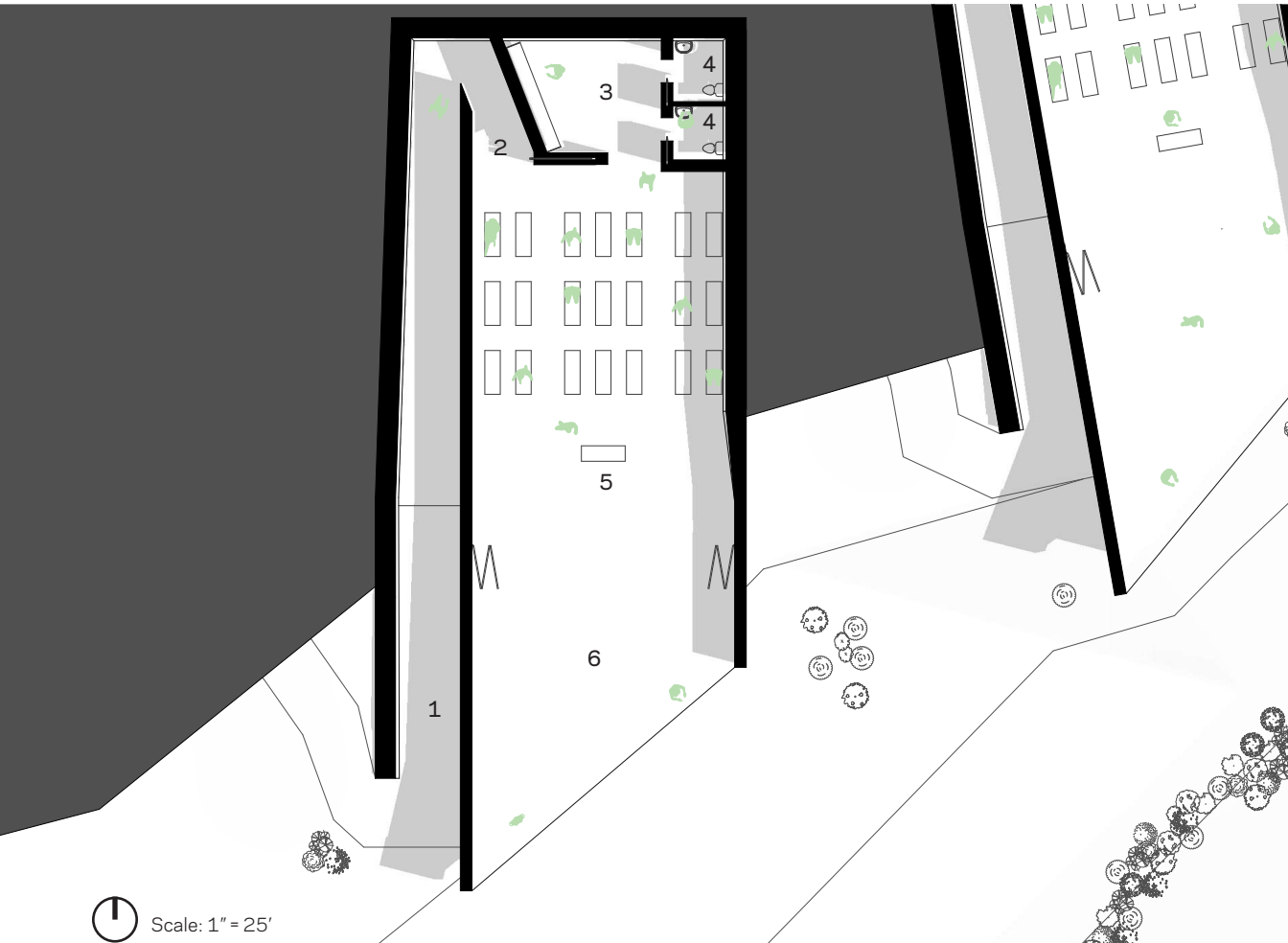


Plan layout concepts showing movement flow, primary views out, and wind interaction.

STUDIO ARRANGEMENT

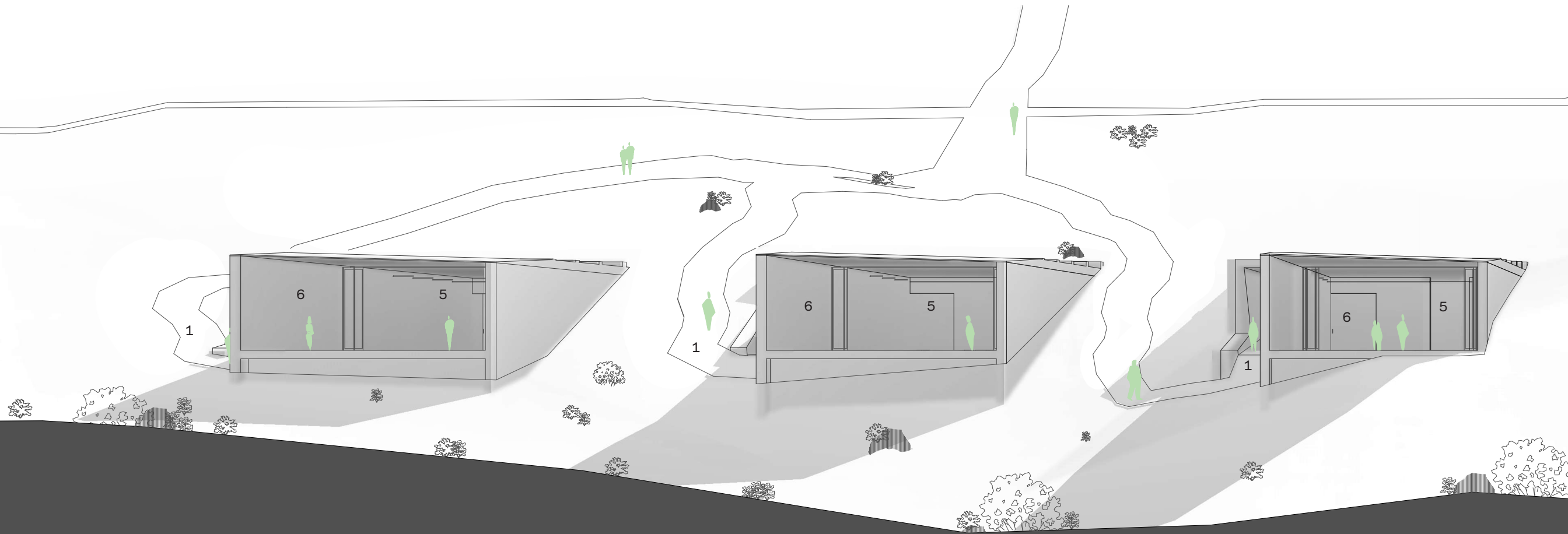


FLOOR PLAN



- 1 ENTRY WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY DOOR
- 3 STORAGE SPACE
- 4 TOILETS
- 5 YOGA STUDIO
- 6 OUTDOOR YOGA SPACE

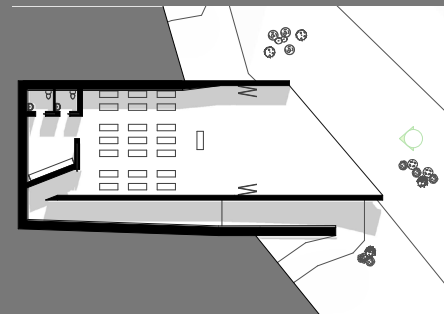
NORTH ELEVATION



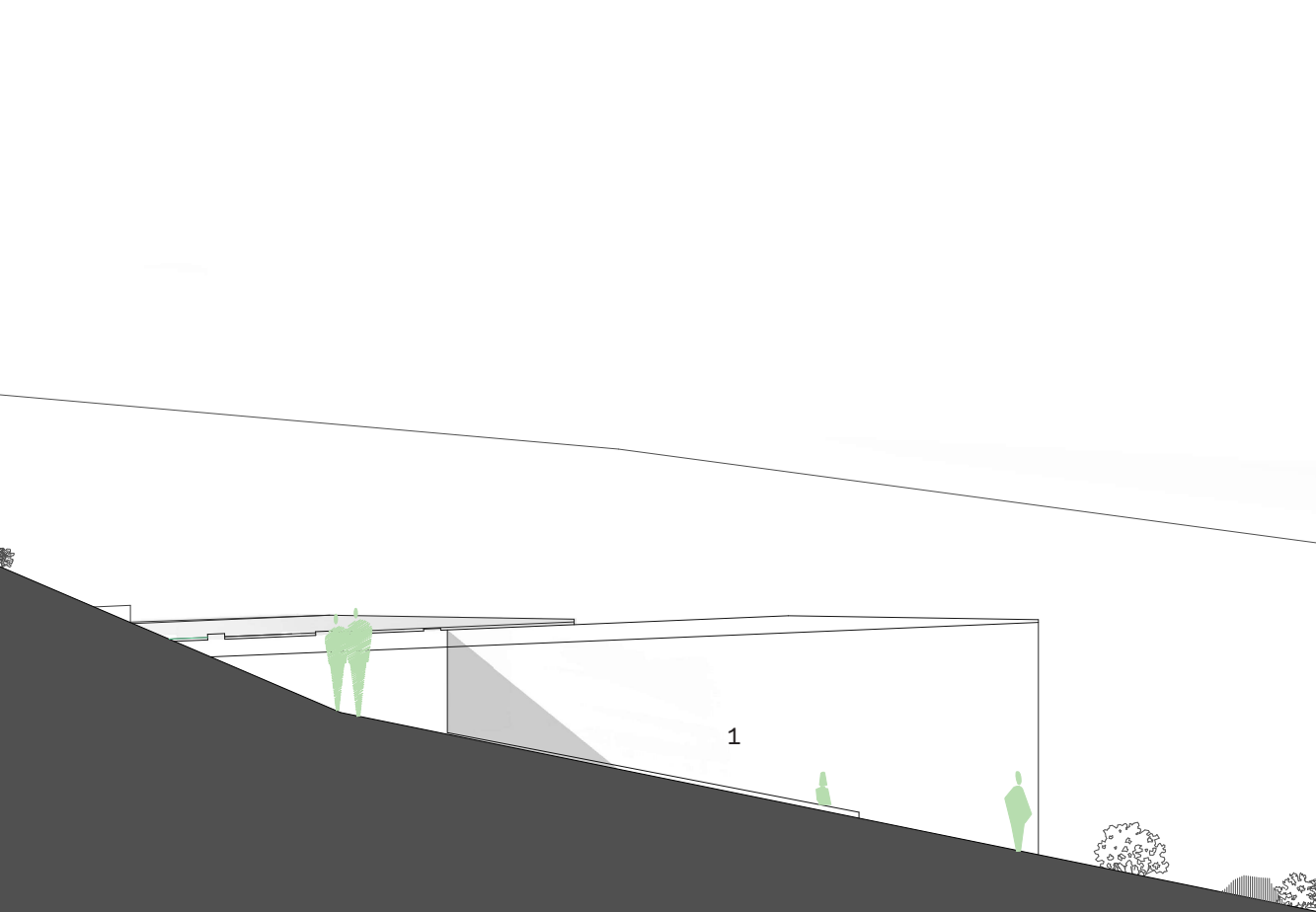
Scale: 1" = 20'

Each of the yoga studios is given a unique view of the opposite mountainside by rotating them 10 degrees from one another. This variation serves to focus the participants on the specifics of the site, connecting deeper to the landscape.

- 1 ENTRY WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY DOOR
- 3 STORAGE SPACE
- 4 TOILETS
- 5 YOGA STUDIO
- 6 OUTDOOR YOGA SPACE

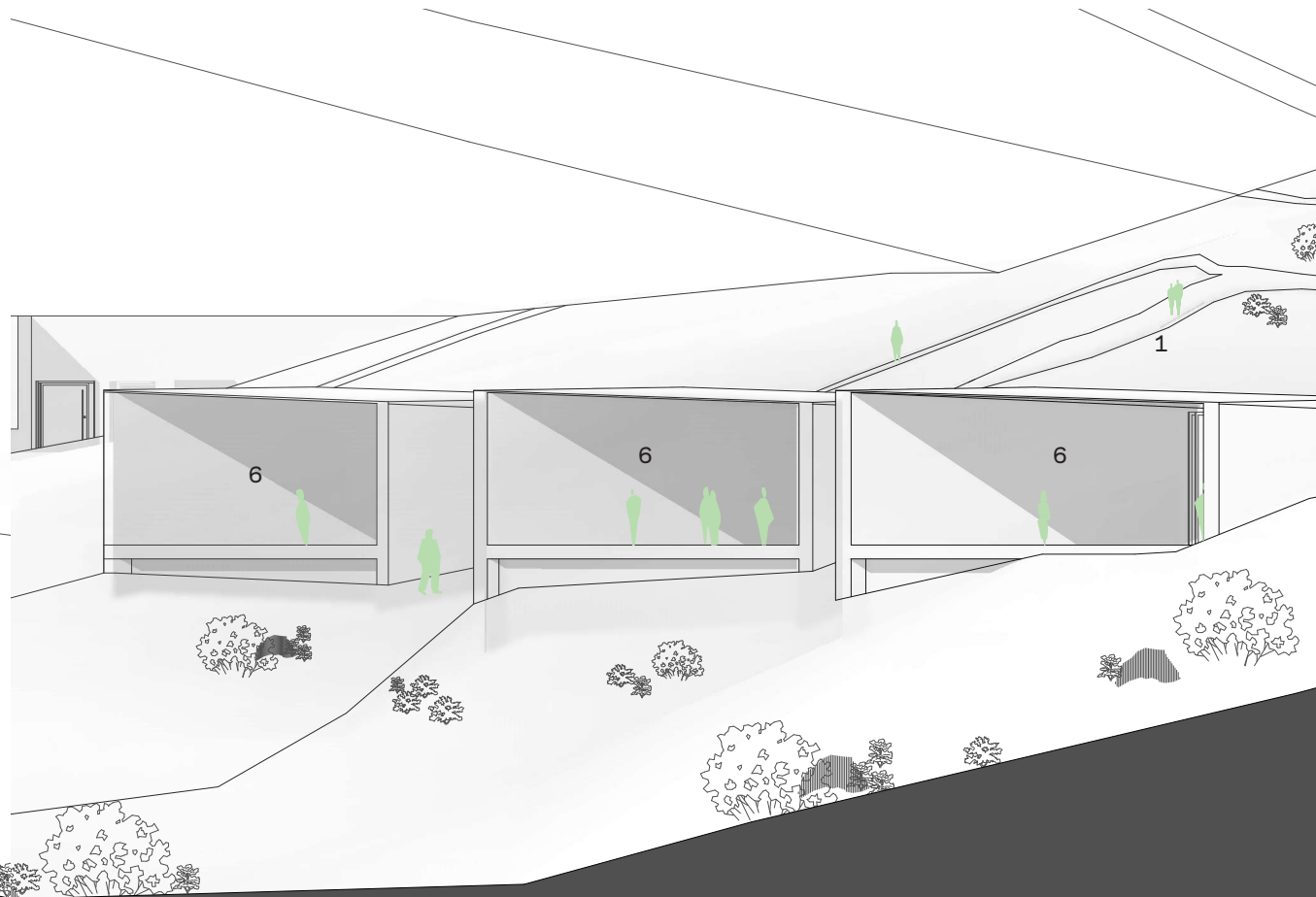


WEST ELEVATION

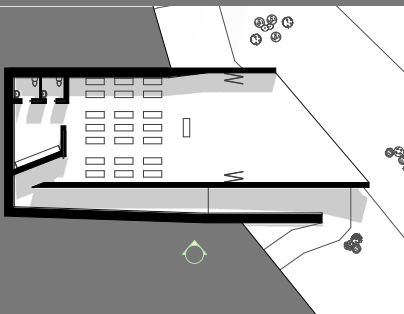


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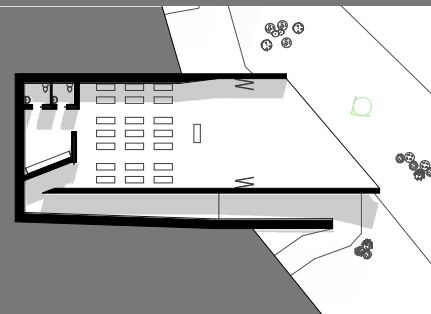
WEST ELEVATION



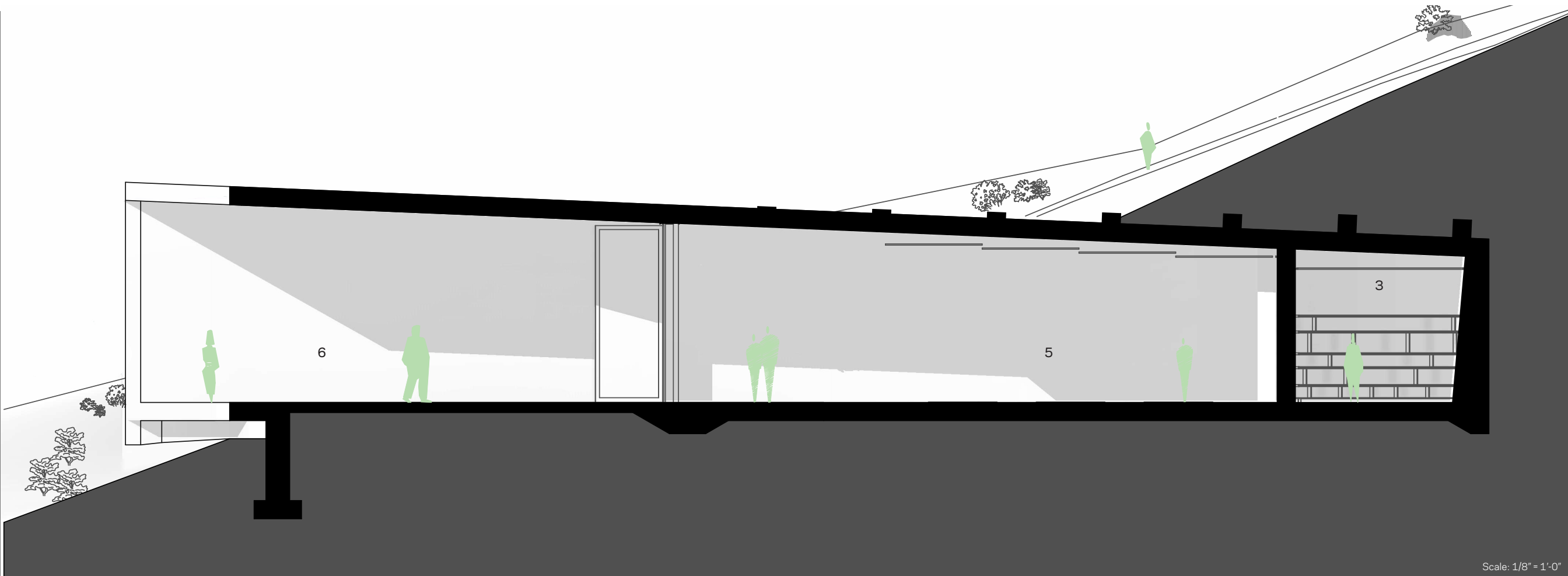
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- 1 ENTRY WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY DOOR
- 3 STORAGE SPACE
- 4 TOILETS
- 5 YOGA STUDIO
- 6 OUTDOOR YOGA SPACE



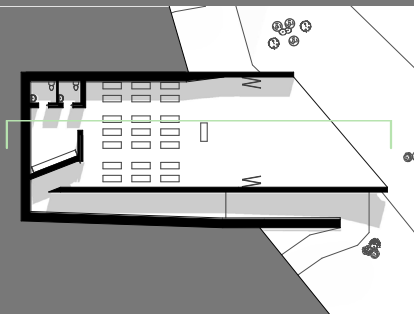
WEST SECTION



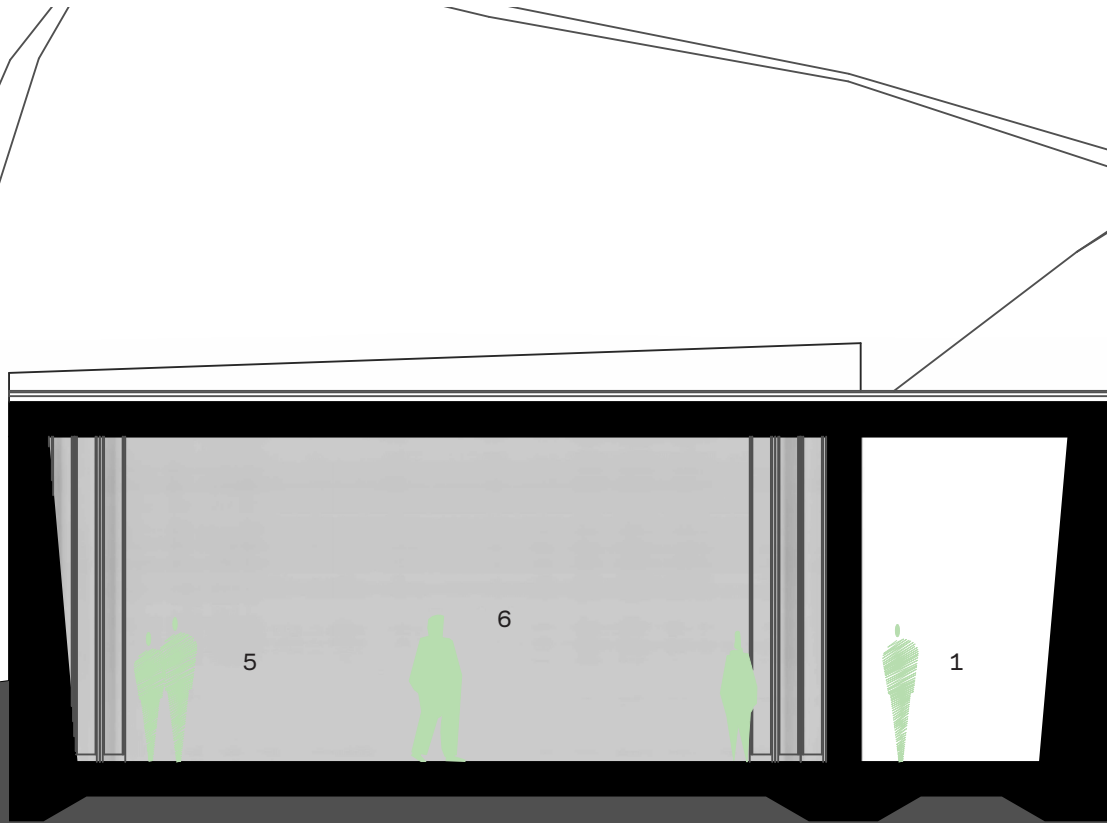
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The studios were designed so that the natural landscape is framed by the external walls at all points within the workout space; with the material composition being aligned horizontally to draw the eye out to the surrounding mountains.

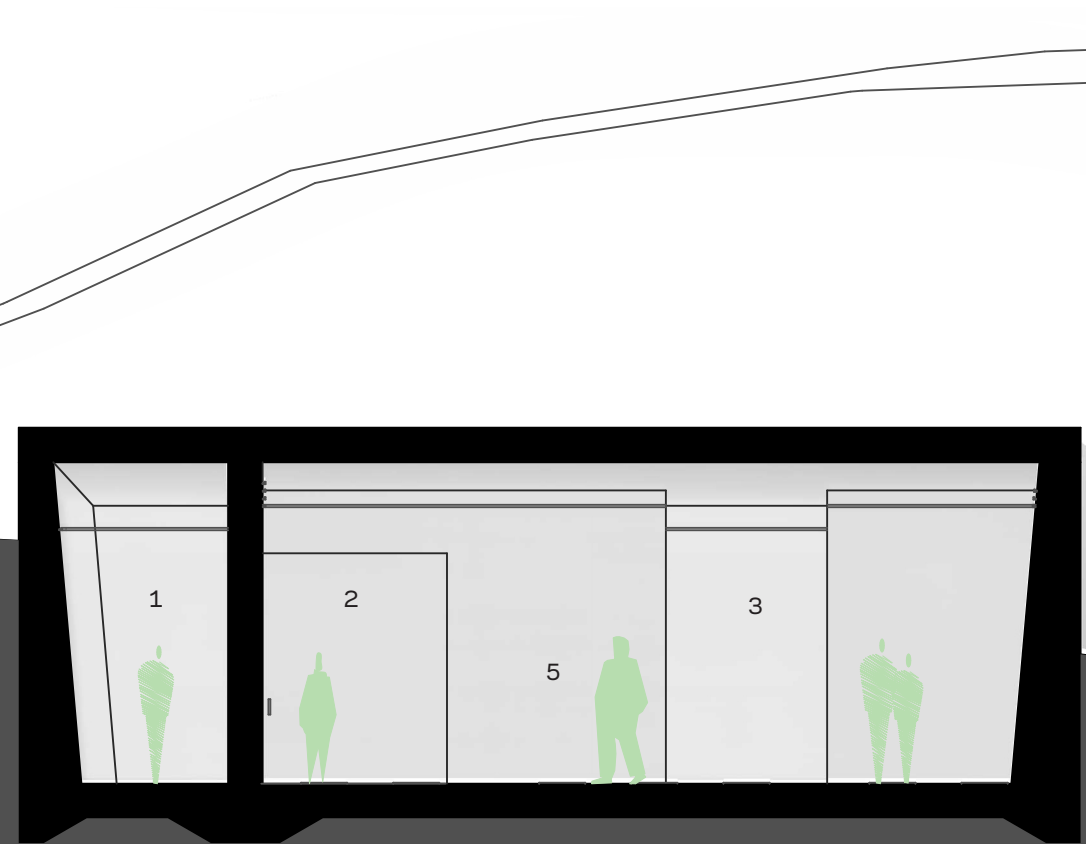
- 1 ENTRY WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY DOOR
- 3 STORAGE SPACE
- 4 TOILETS
- 5 YOGA STUDIO
- 6 OUTDOOR YOGA SPACE



SOUTH SECTION

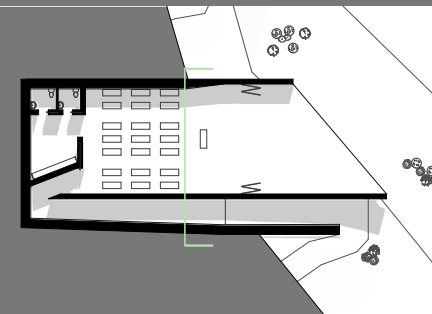


NORTH SECTION

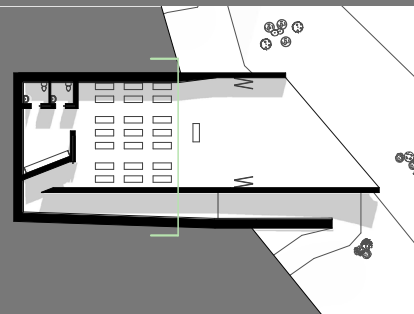


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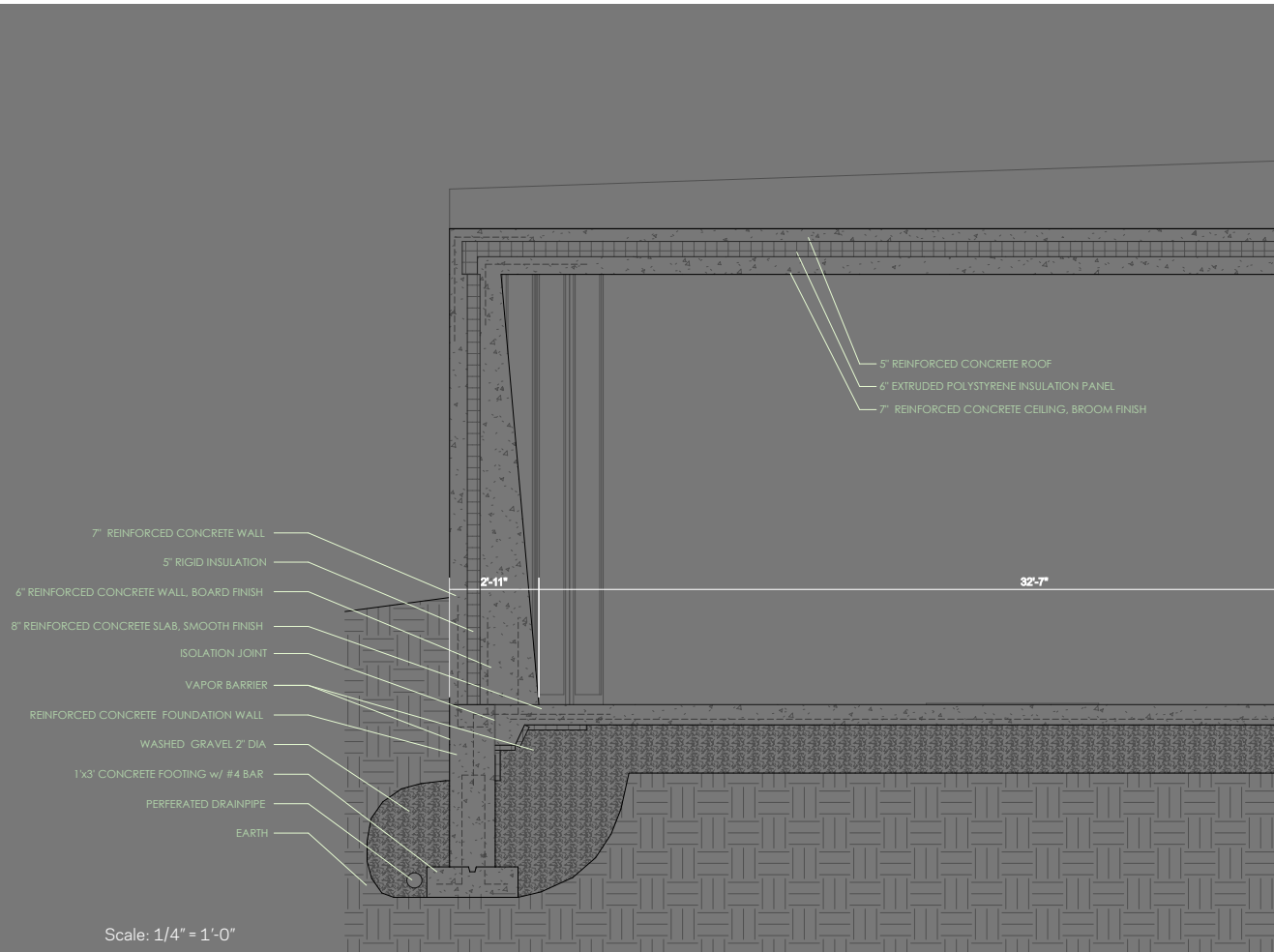
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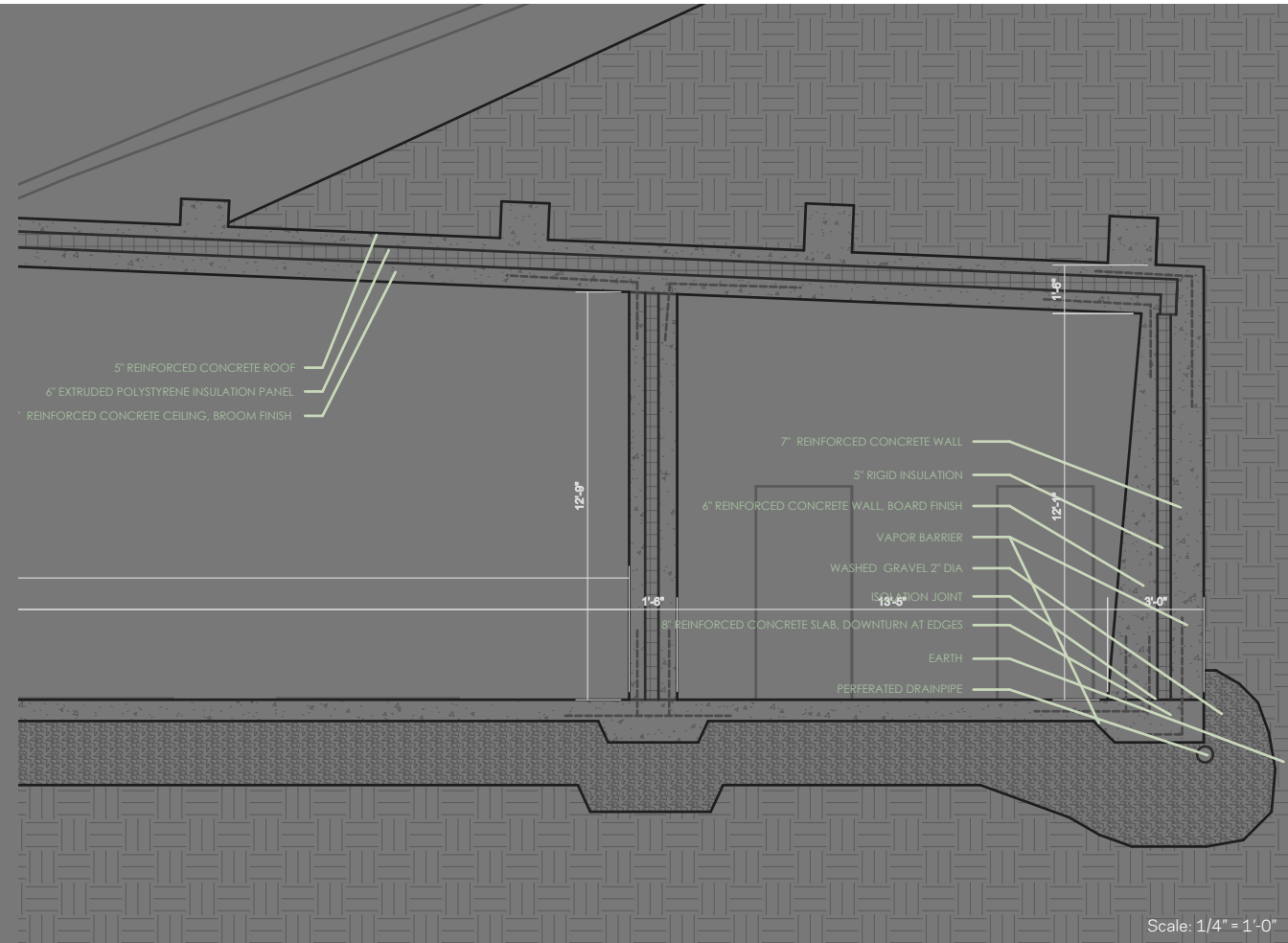
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- 2 ENTRY DOOR
- 3 STORAGE SPACE
- 4 TOILETS
- 5 YOGA STUDIO
- 6 OUTDOOR YOGA SPACE

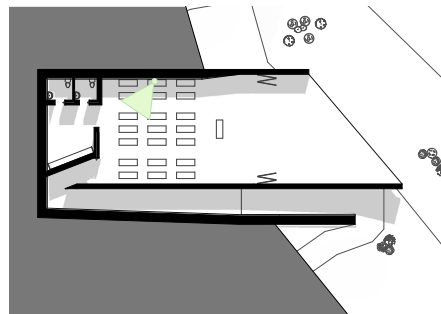


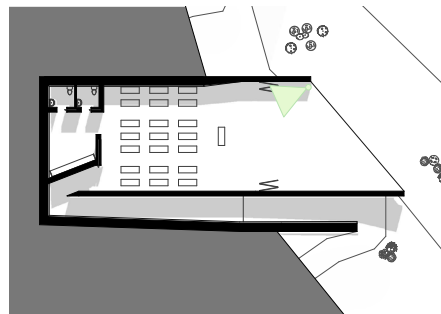
LONGITUDINAL SECTION DETAIL

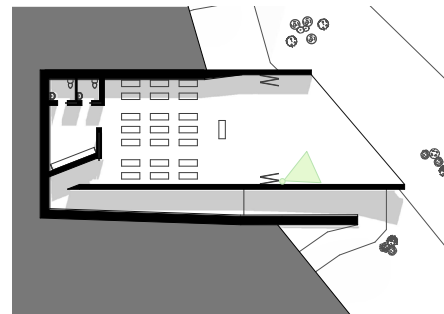


TRANSVERSE SECTION DETAIL









"Architecture is the thoughtful making of spaces"

- *Louis Kahn*

INWARD

CONTEMPLATION SPACE

PROGRAMMATIC DIAGRAM

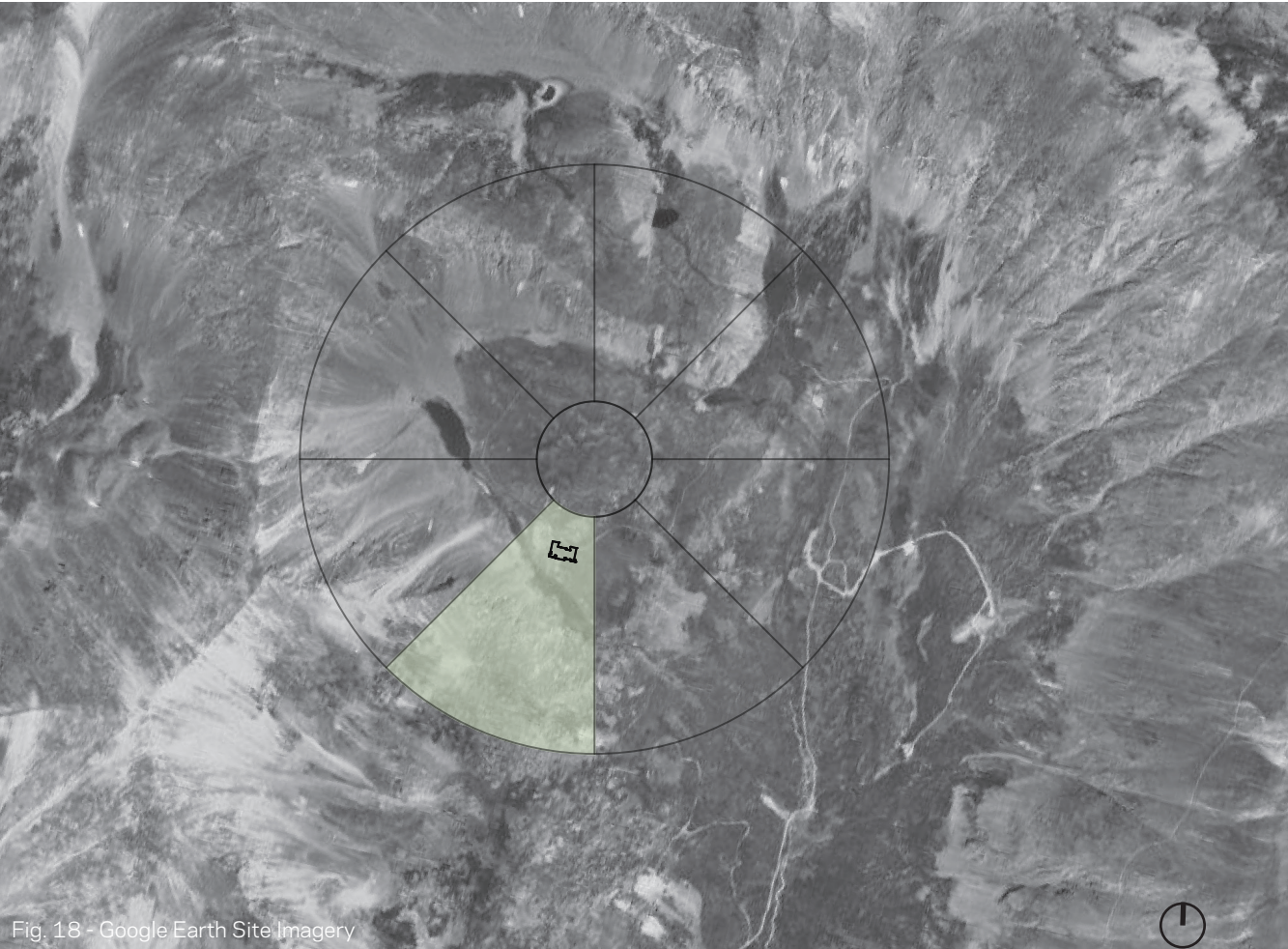


Fig. 18 - Google Earth Site Imagery

The programmatic layout overlaid on site imagery showing the section of the site the contemplation space is located within, as well as imagery showcasing the site features faced by the contemplation space.

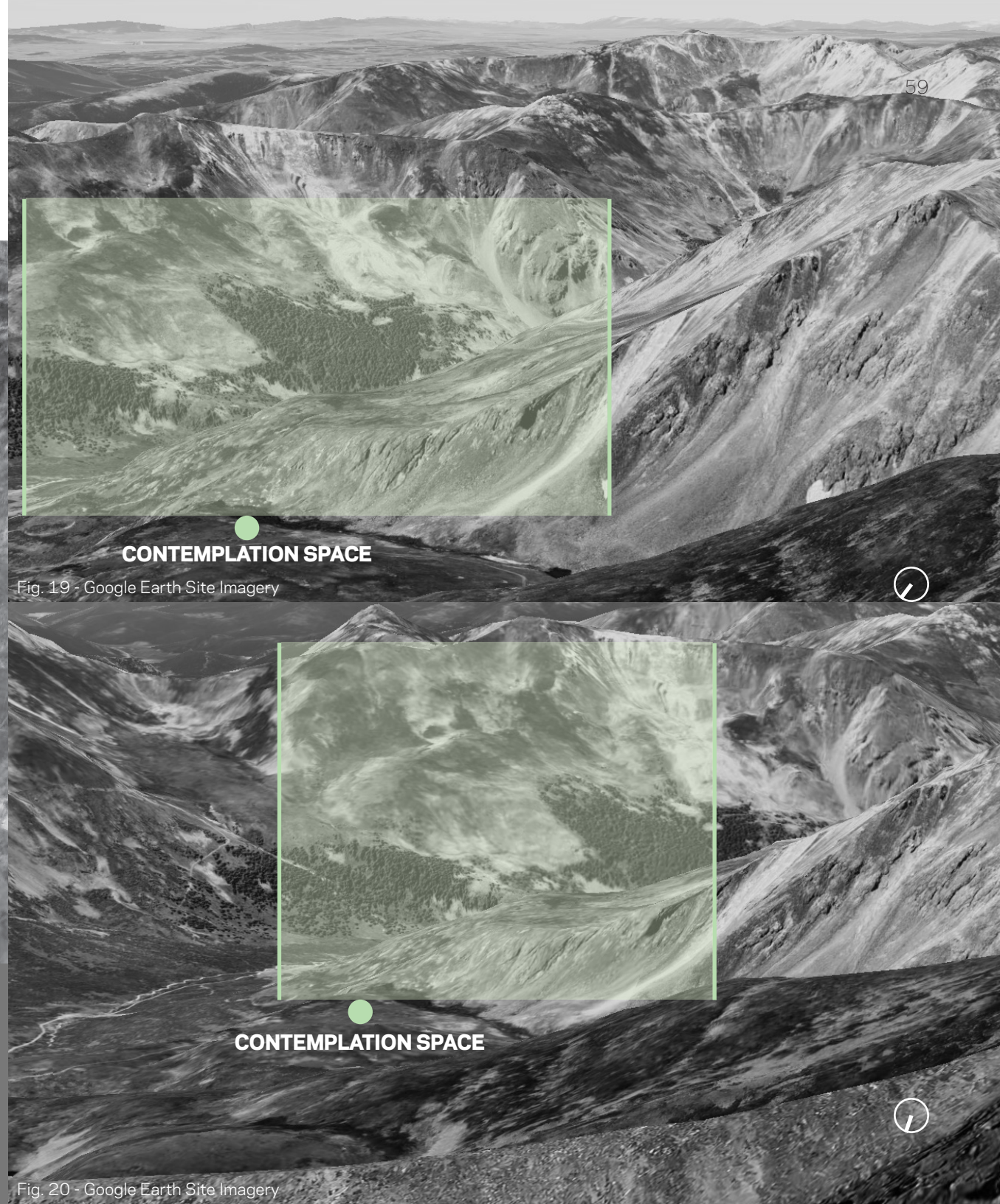
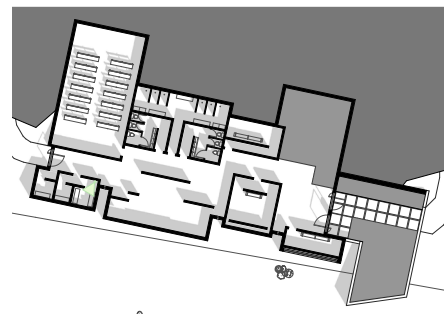
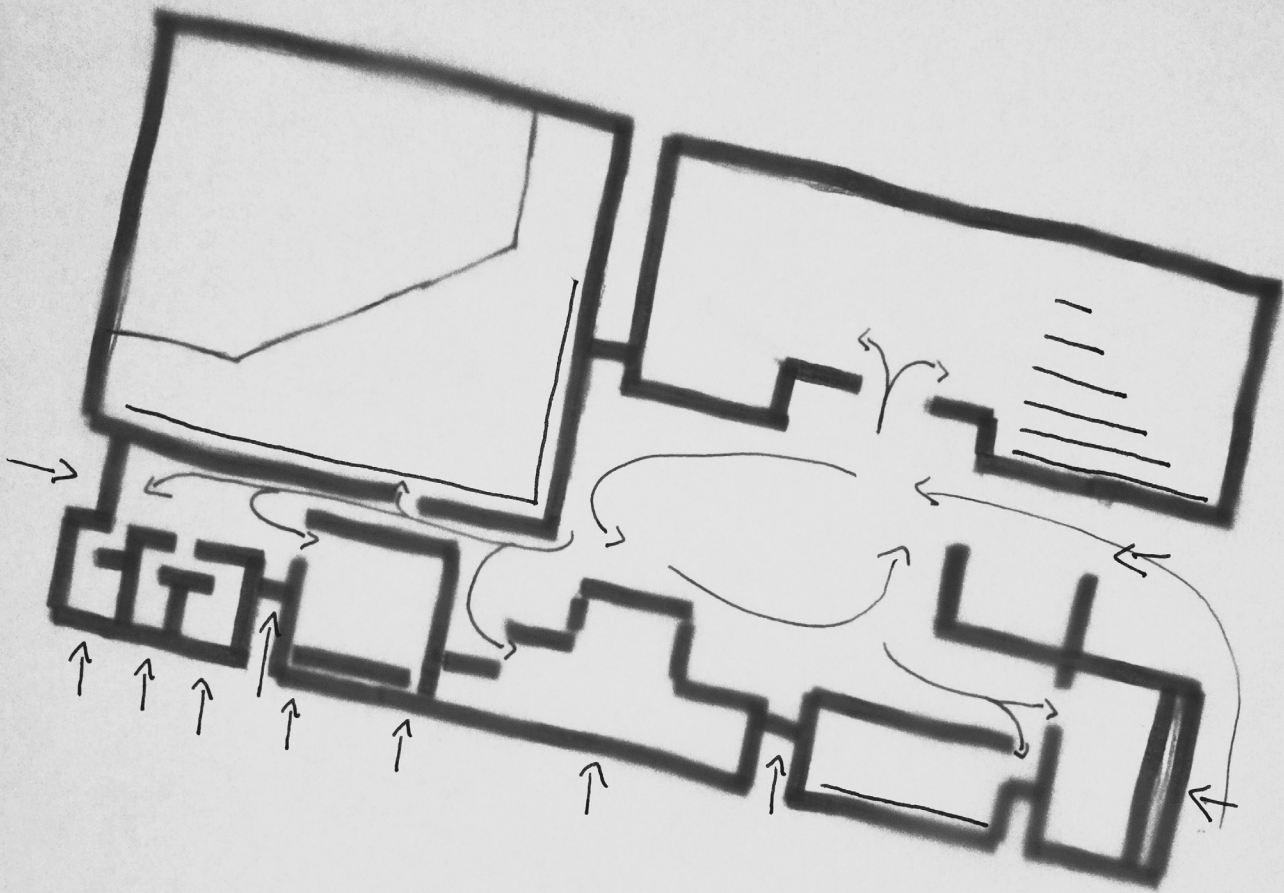


Fig. 19 - Google Earth Site Imagery

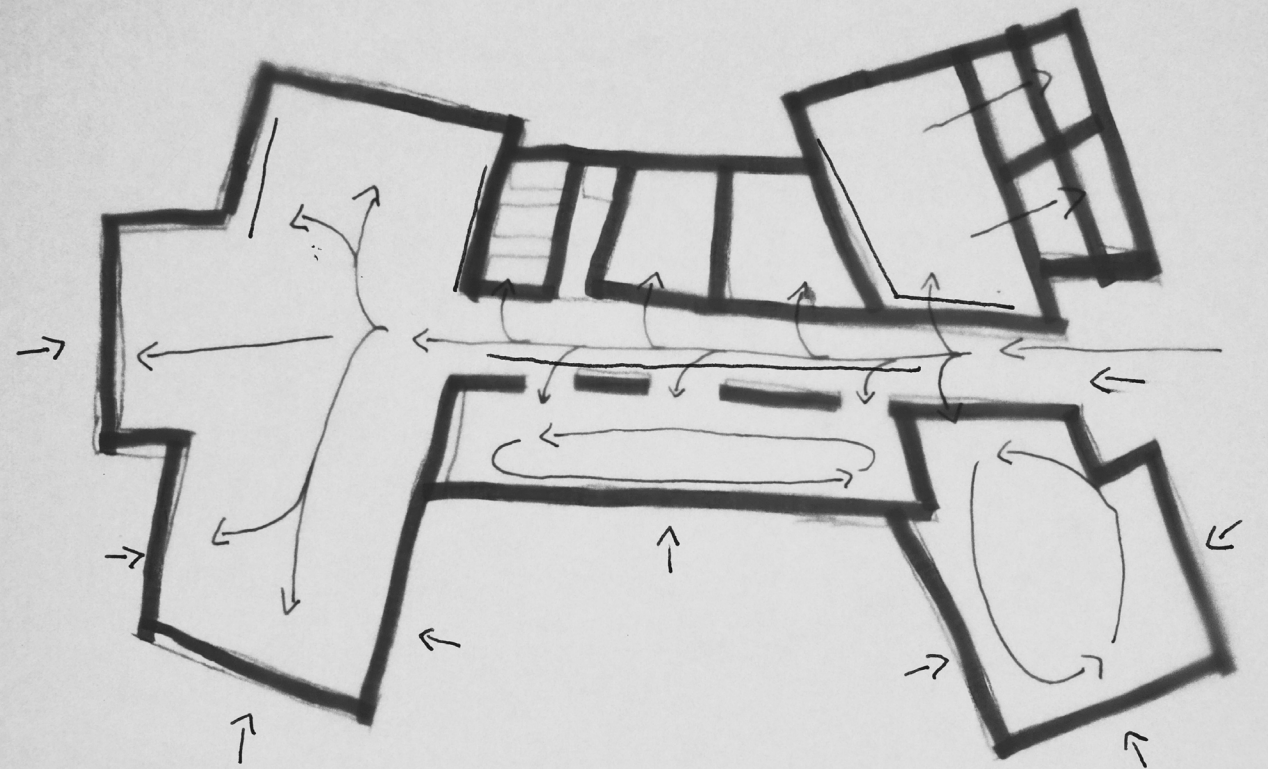
Fig. 20 - Google Earth Site Imagery



PLAN STUDY



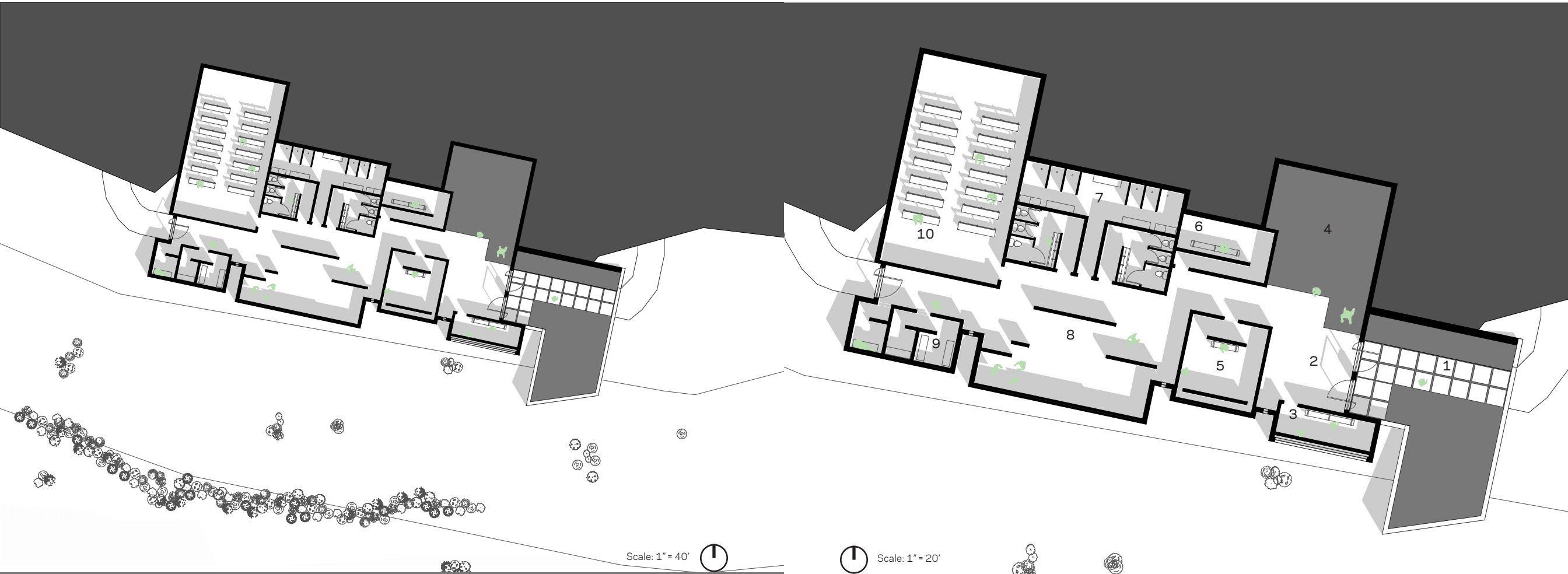
PLAN STUDY



Plan layout concepts showing movement flow and natural light ingress points.

SITE POSITION

FLOOR PLAN

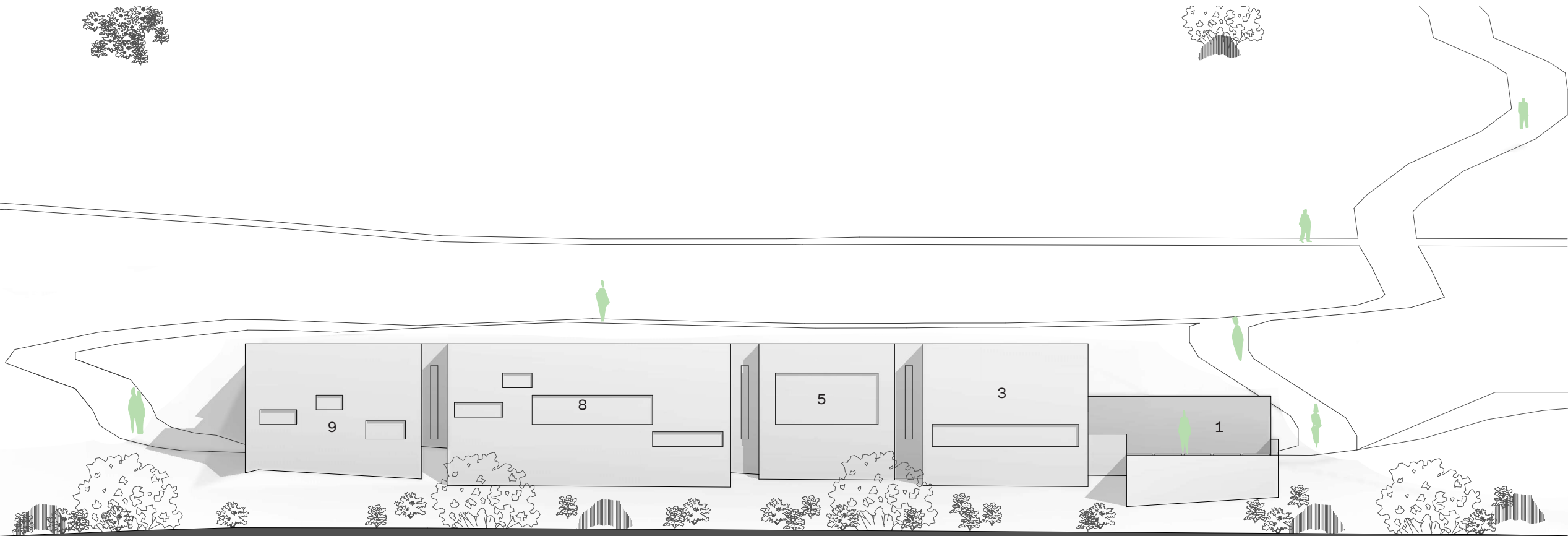


Scale: 1" = 40'

Scale: 1" = 20'

- 1 INFINITY POOL & WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 BOTTOM LIT SPACE
- 4 INDOOR BATH
- 5 SIDE LIT SPACE
- 6 REAR LIT SPACE
- 7 SHOWERS/TOILETS
- 8 CONTEMPLATION FIELD
- 9 SOLO SPACE
- 10 GROUP SPACE

NORTH ELEVATION



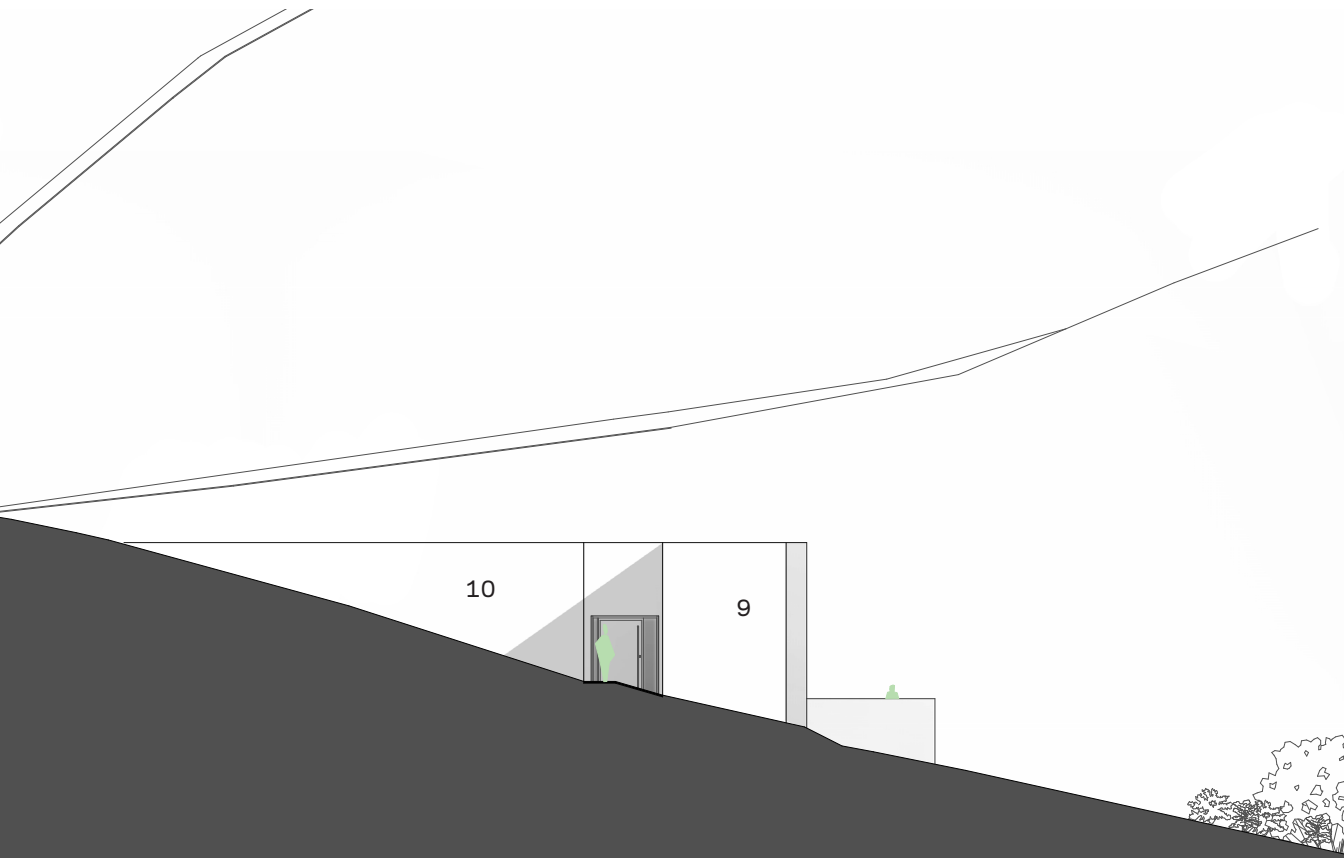
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The contemplation space focuses the participants attention inward, as such external views are not important. However, the exterior facade was modulated creating internal spaces that play with light and materiality, encouraging increased awareness of participants impact on the space.

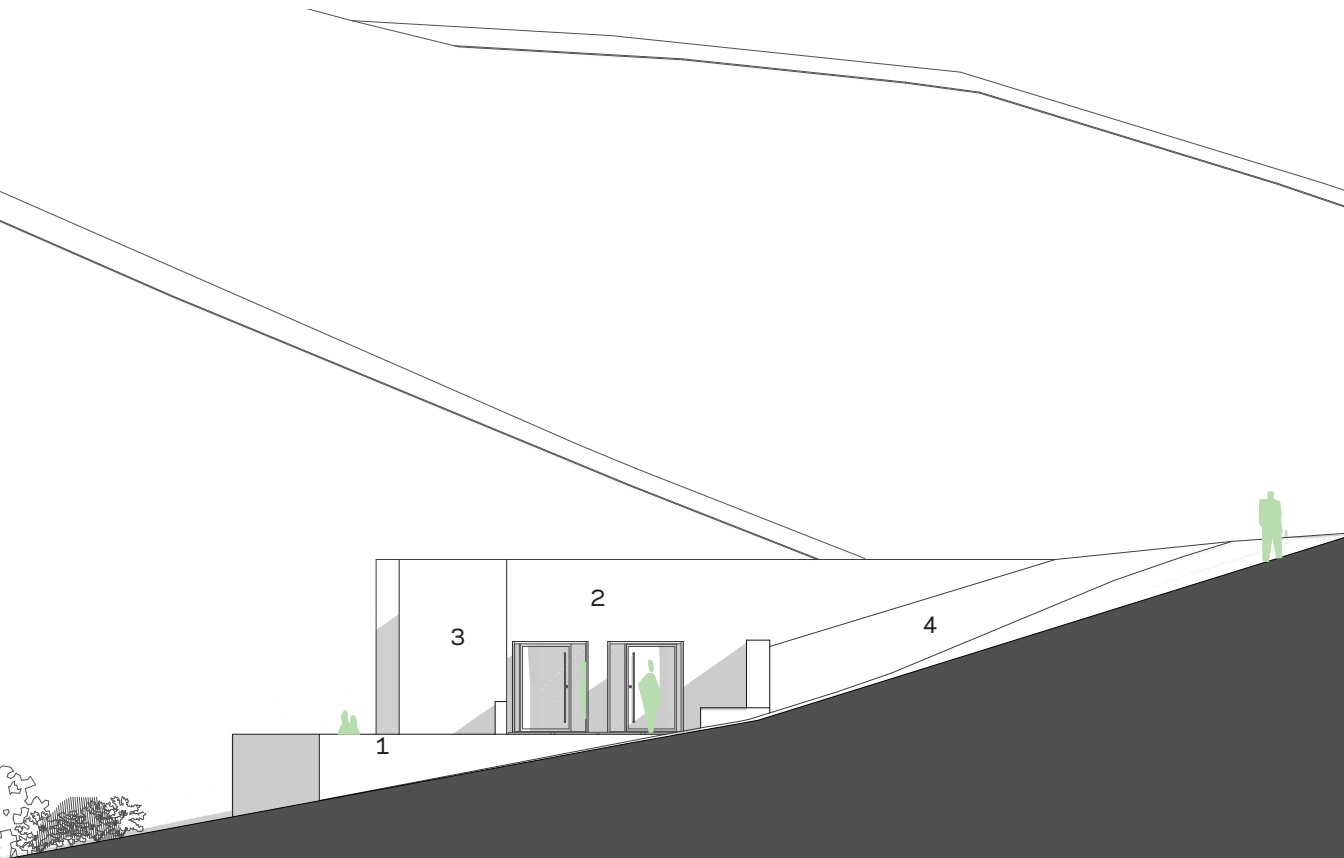
- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 INFINITY POOL & WALKWAY | 6 REAR LIT SPACE |
| 2 ENTRY | 7 SHOWERS/TOILETS |
| 3 BOTTOM LIT SPACE | 8 CONTEMPLATION FIELD |
| 4 INDOOR BATH | 9 SOLO SPACE |
| 5 SIDE LIT SPACE | 10 GROUP SPACE |



EAST ELEVATION

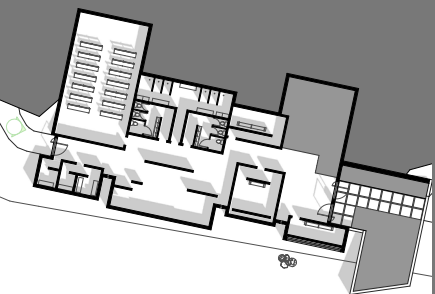


WEST ELEVATION

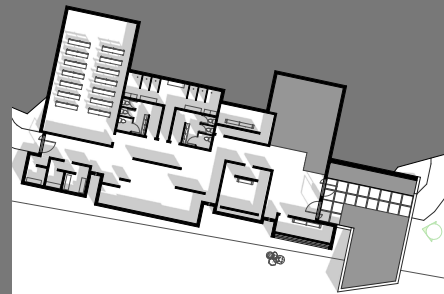


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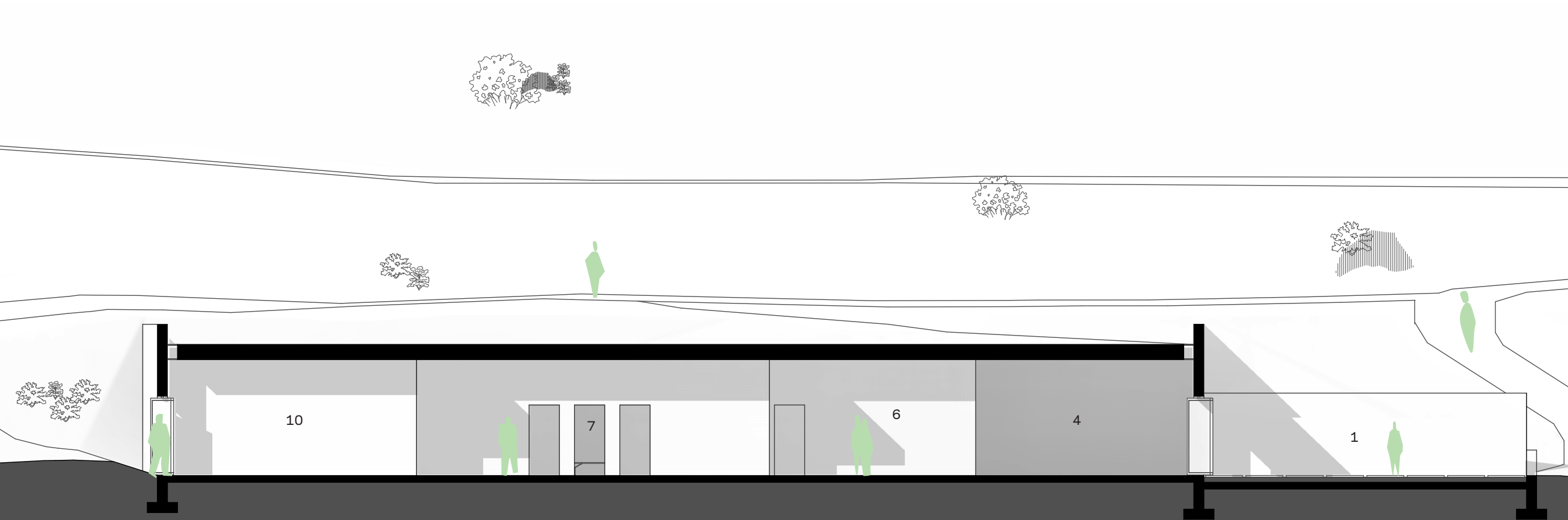
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- 1 INFINITY POOL & WALKWAY
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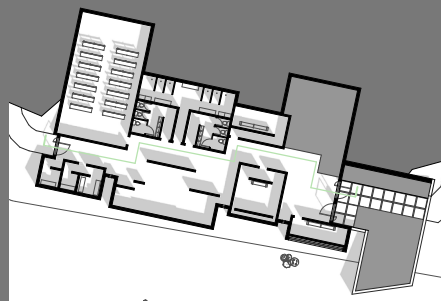
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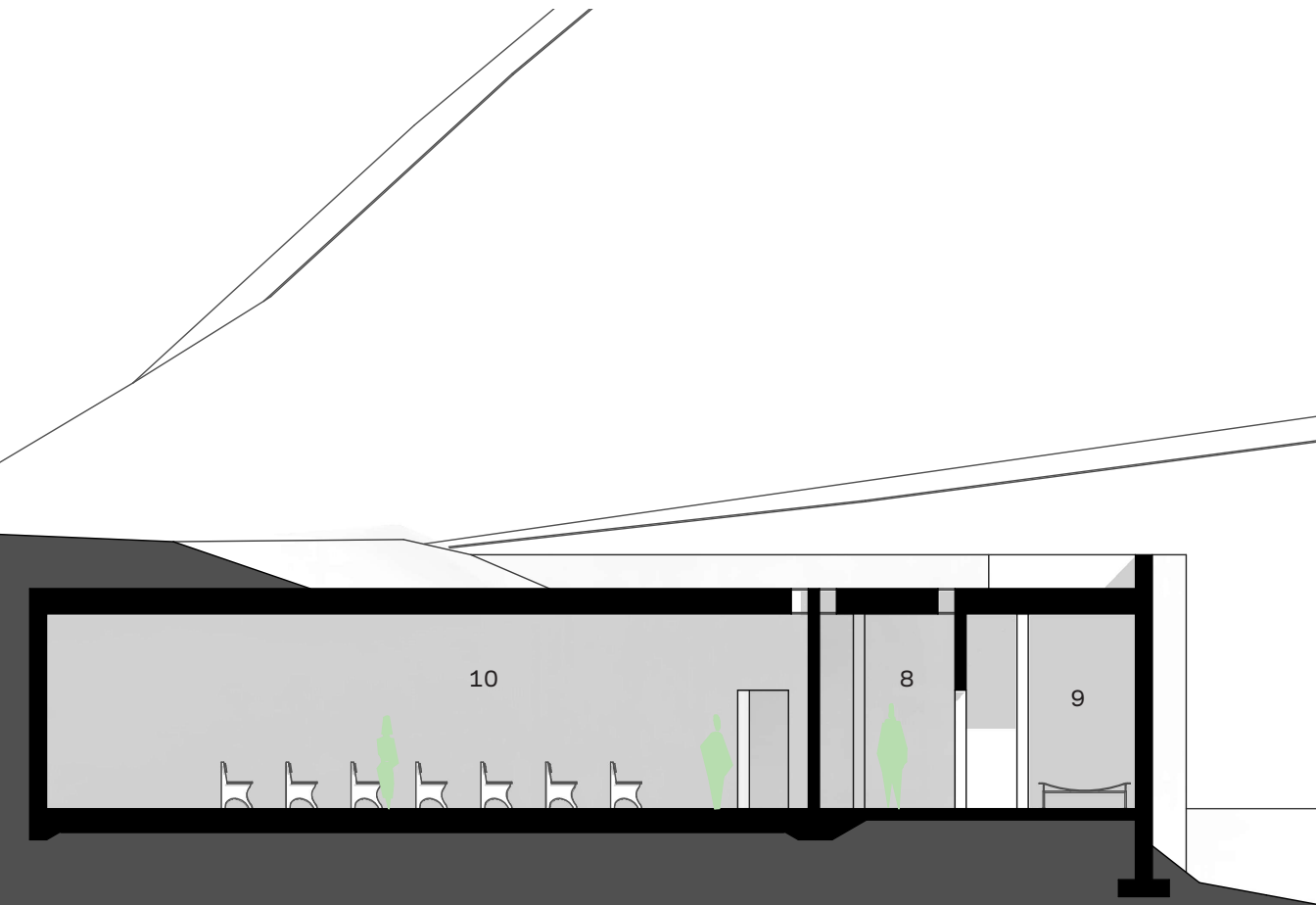
Scale: 3/32" = 1'-0"

The contemplative building was designed as a looping path, with rooms branching off along the main hallway. This let the participants remain in control of the journey, engaging with the spaces that most interested them as they traveled along the path.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 INFINITY POOL & WALKWAY | 6 REAR LIT SPACE |
| 2 ENTRY | 7 SHOWERS/TOILETS |
| 3 BOTTOM LIT SPACE | 8 CONTEMPLATION FIELD |
| 4 INDOOR BATH | 9 SOLO SPACE |
| 5 SIDE LIT SPACE | 10 GROUP SPACE |

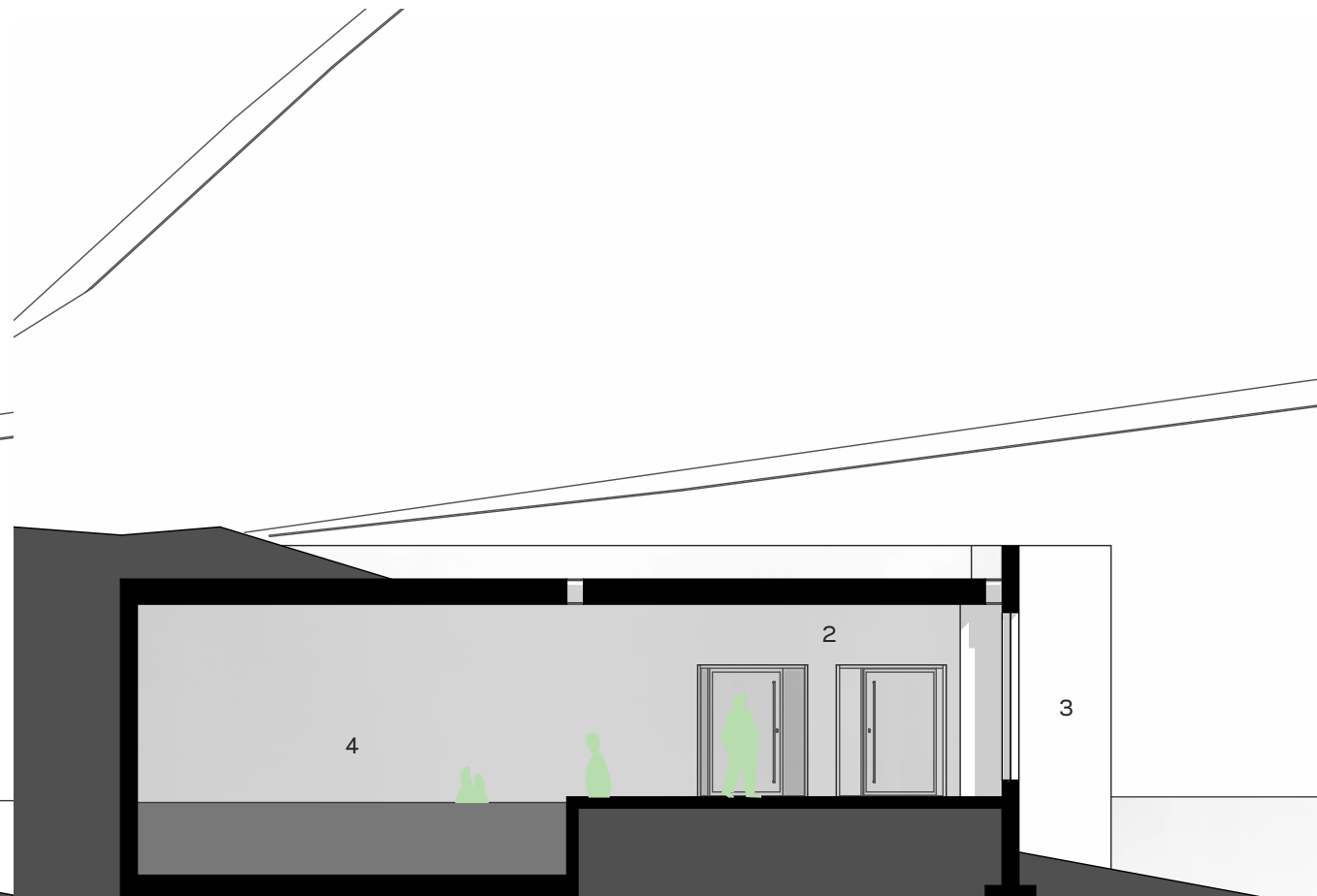


CHAPEL SECTION

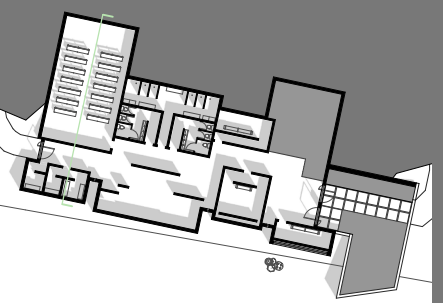


Scale: 3/32" = 1'-0"

INTERIOR BATH SECTION

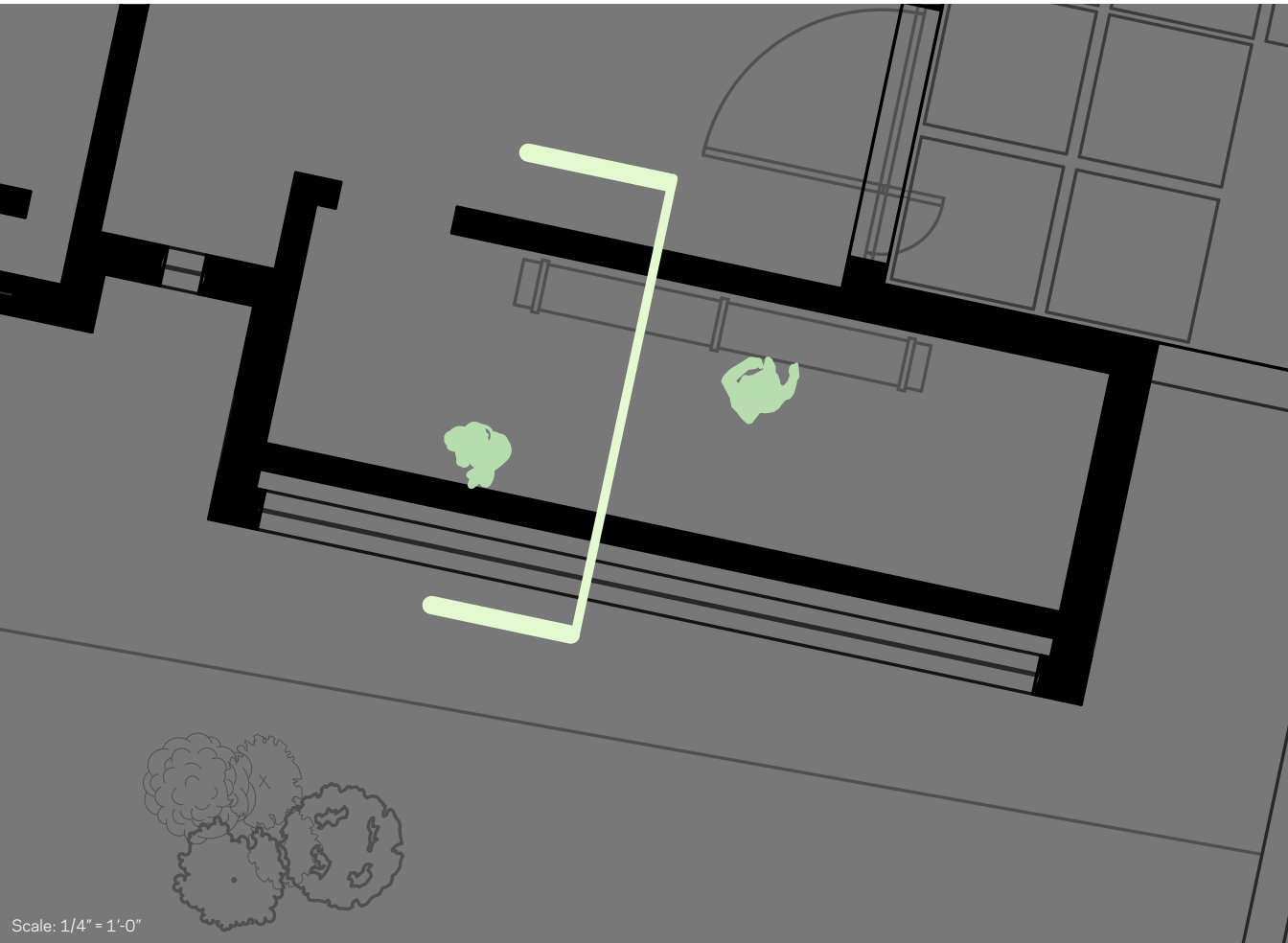


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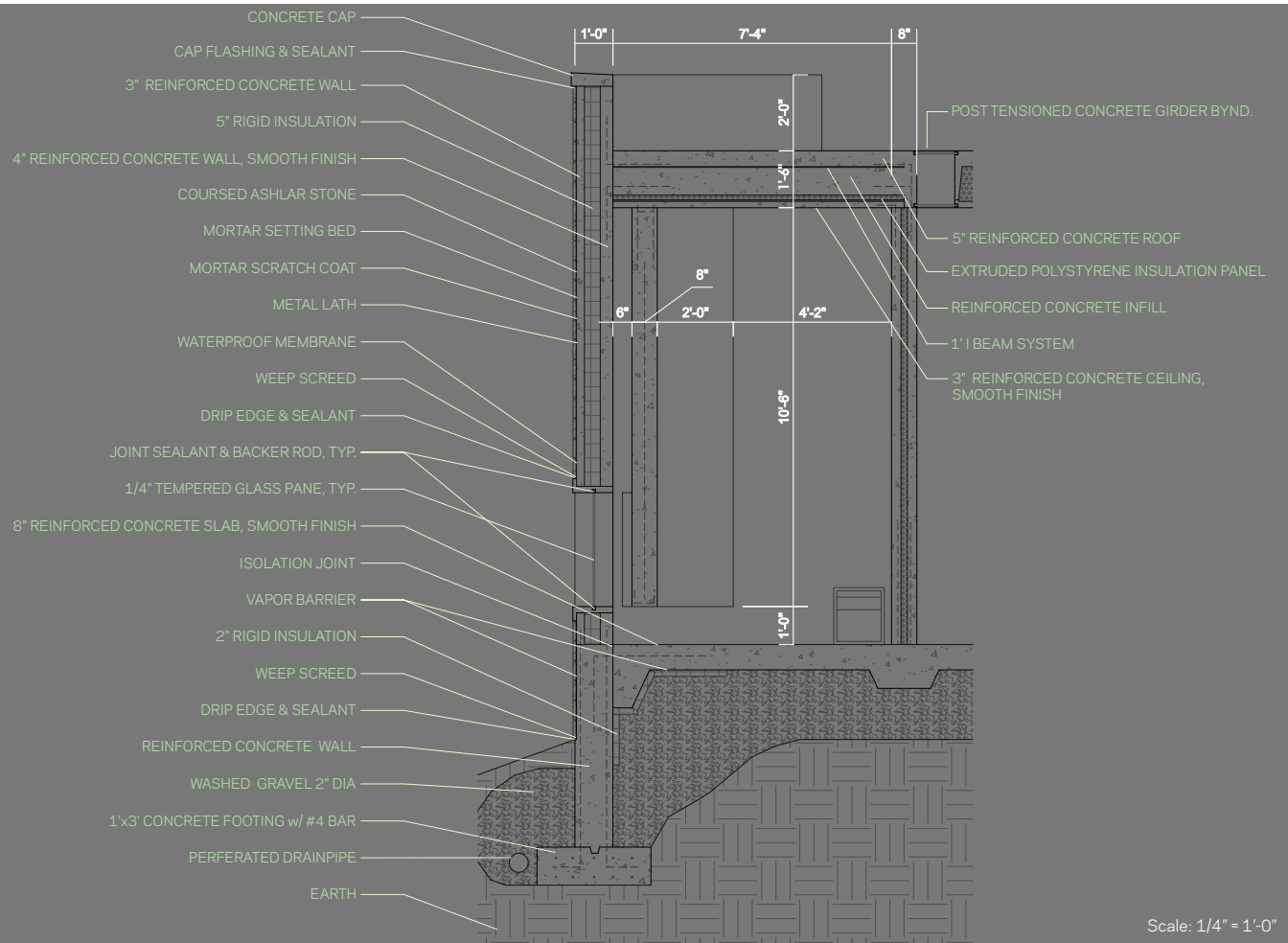
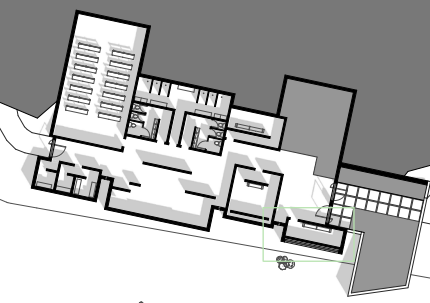


- 1 INFINITY POOL & WALKWAY
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 BOTTOM LIT SPACE
- 4 INDOOR BATH
- 5 SIDE LIT SPACE
- 6 REAR LIT SPACE
- 7 SHOWERS/TOILETS
- 8 CONTEMPLATION FIELD
- 9 SOLO SPACE
- 10 GROUP SPACE

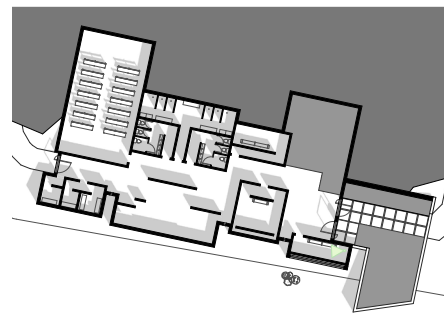


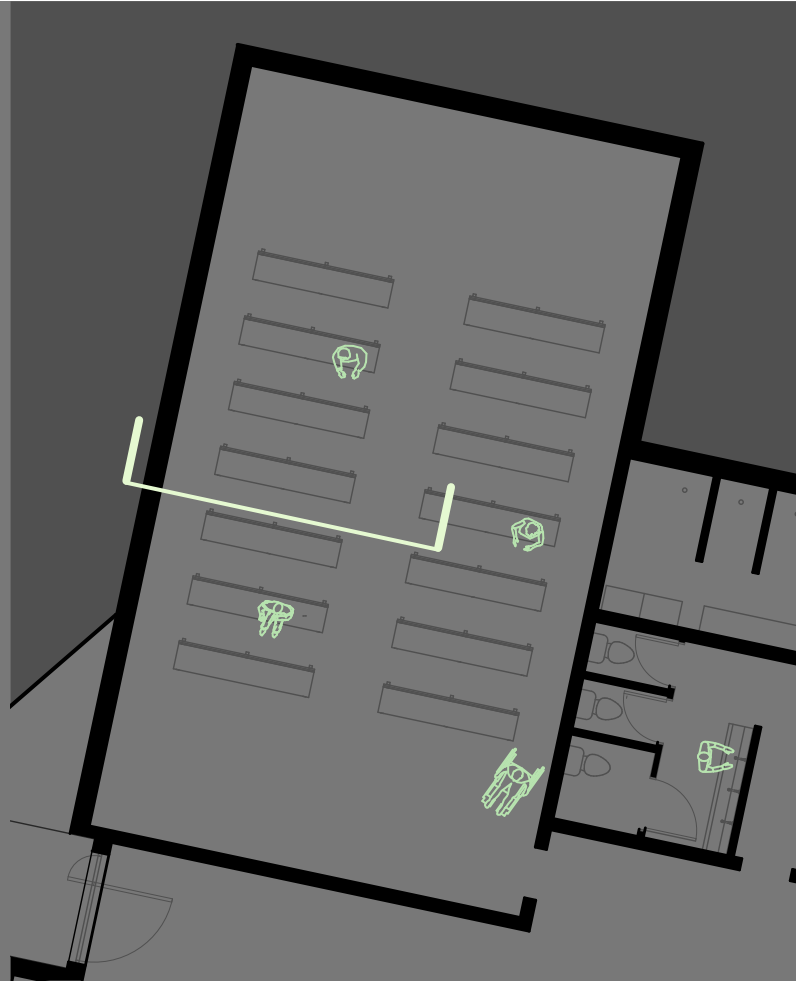


Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

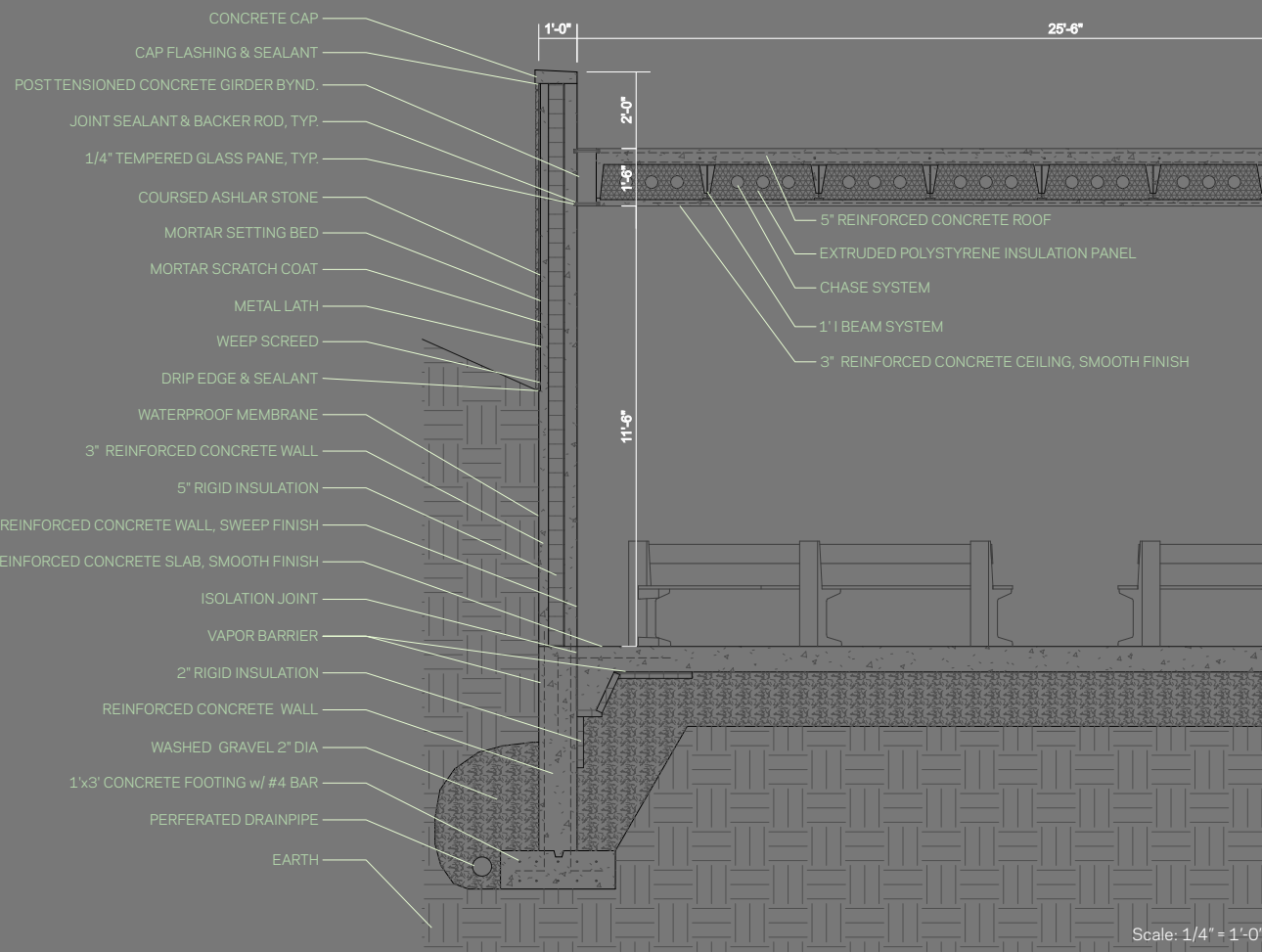


Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

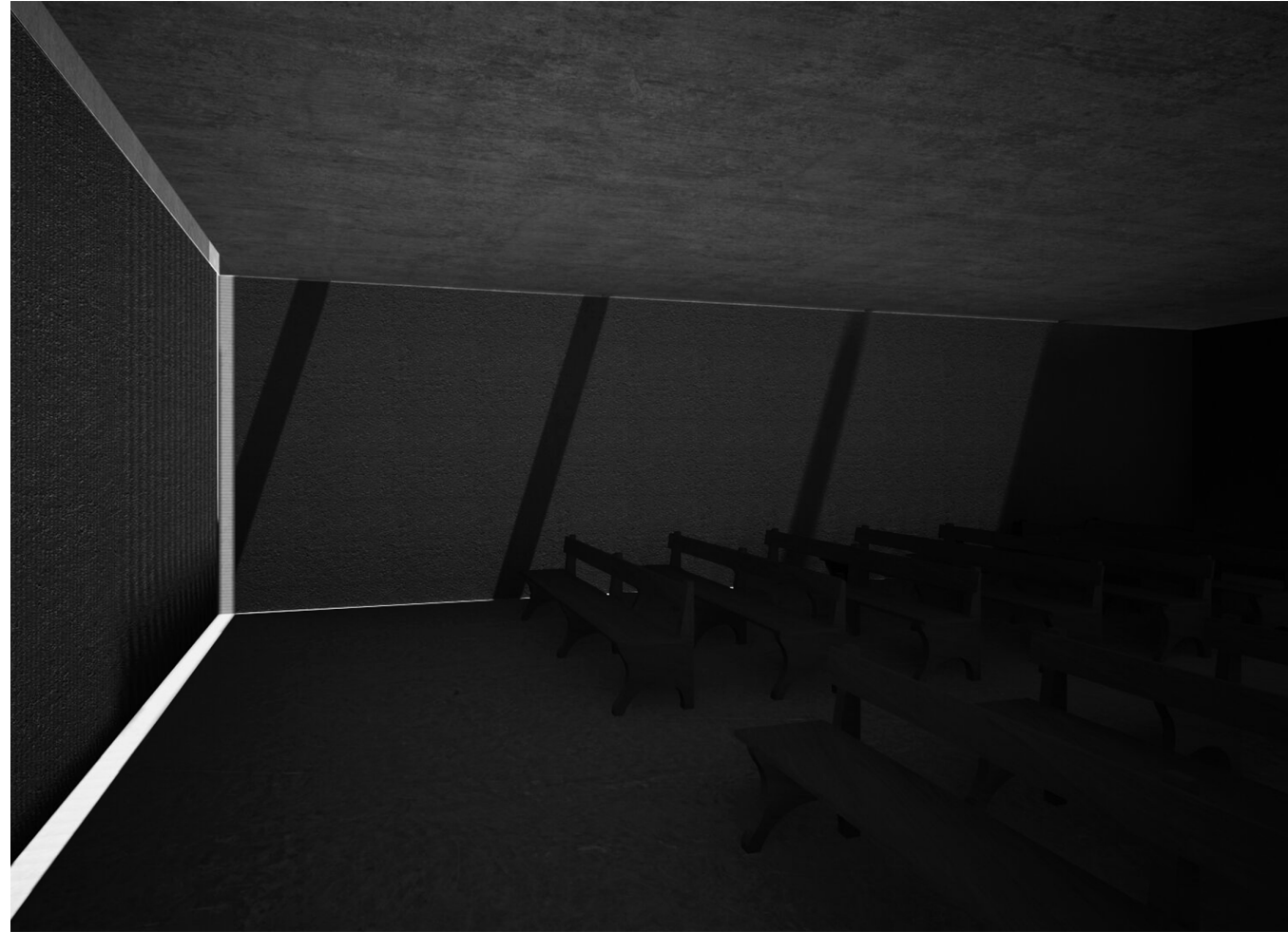




Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



“Light is not so much something that reveals as it is itself the
revelation”

- *James Turrell*

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Perception is a retreat designed to explore how architecture can influence self-perception and our understanding of place within the universe.

The goal is to create architecture that encourages reflection—both personal and collective—through thoughtful design rooted in nature and therapeutic practice.

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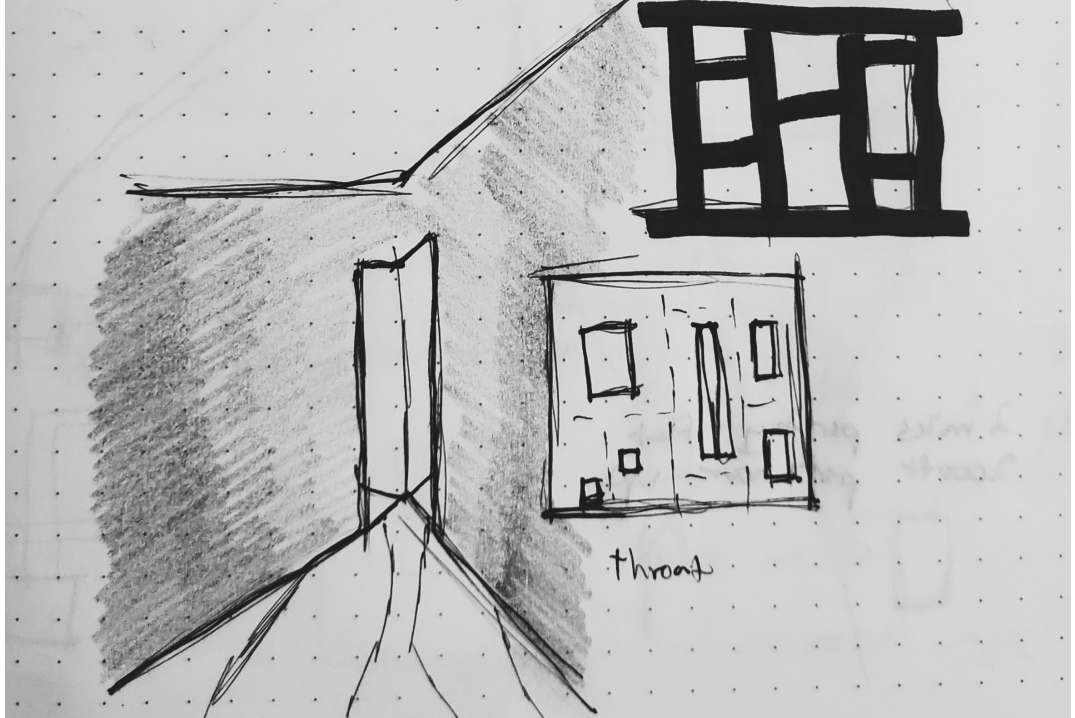
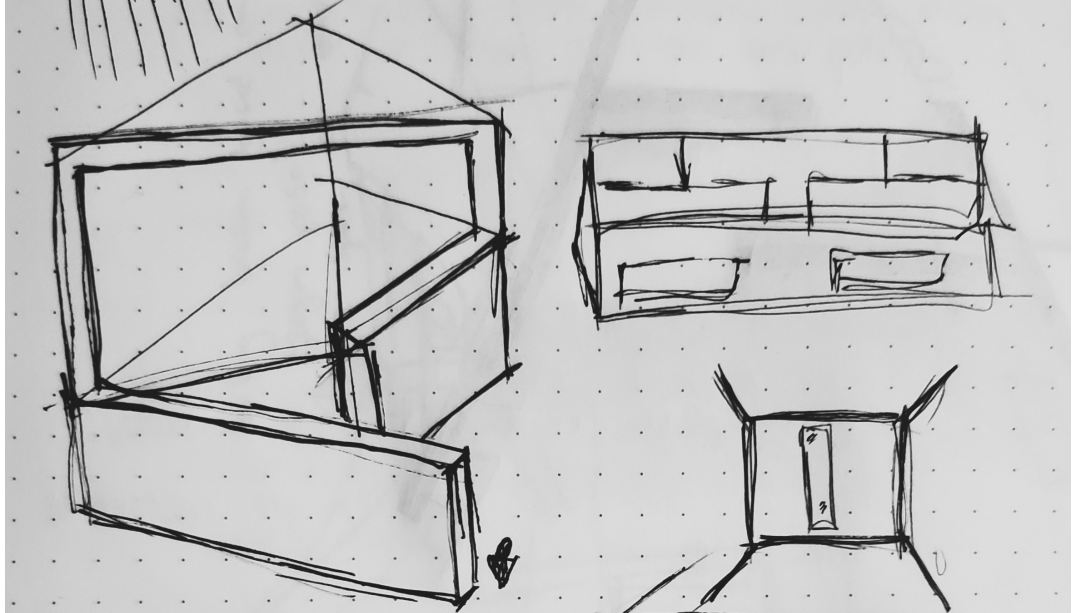
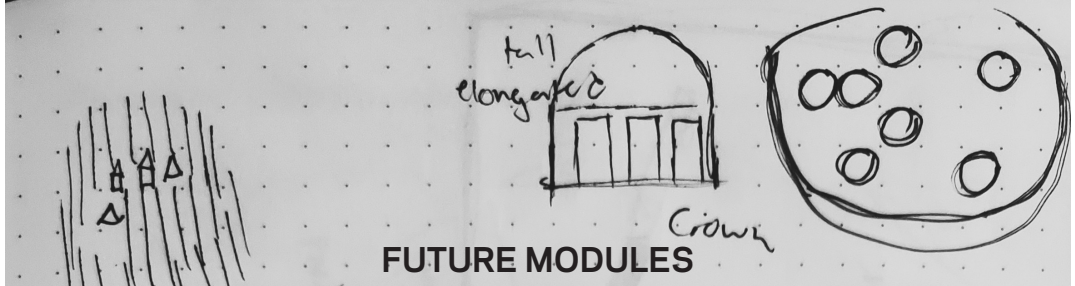
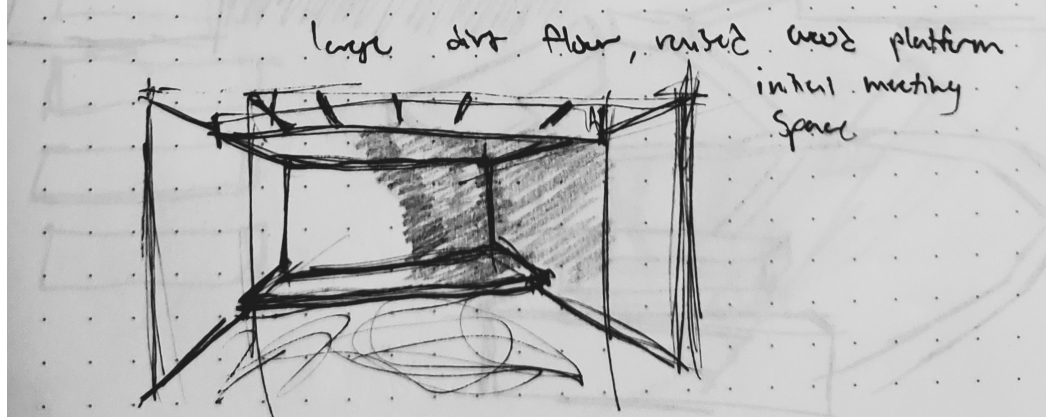
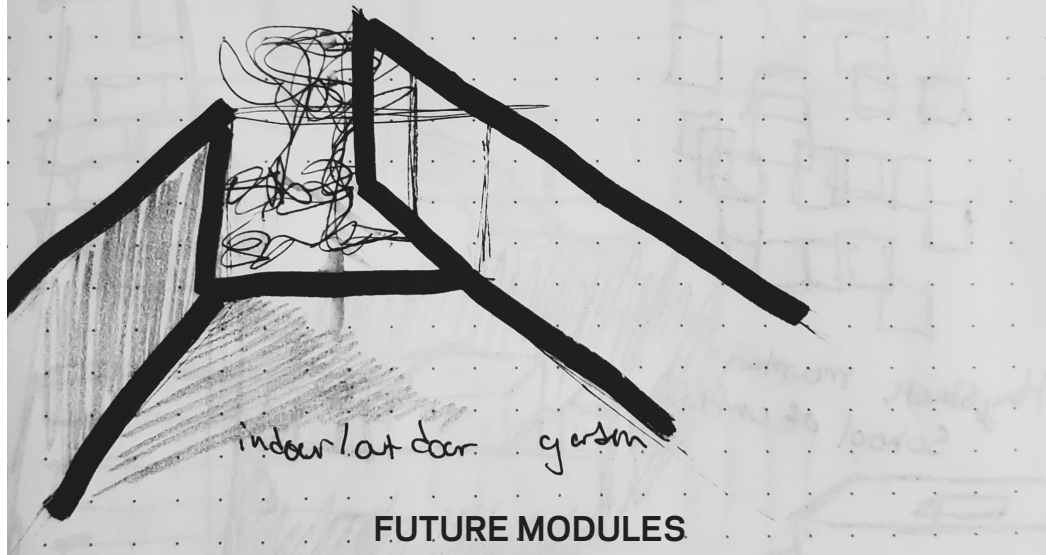
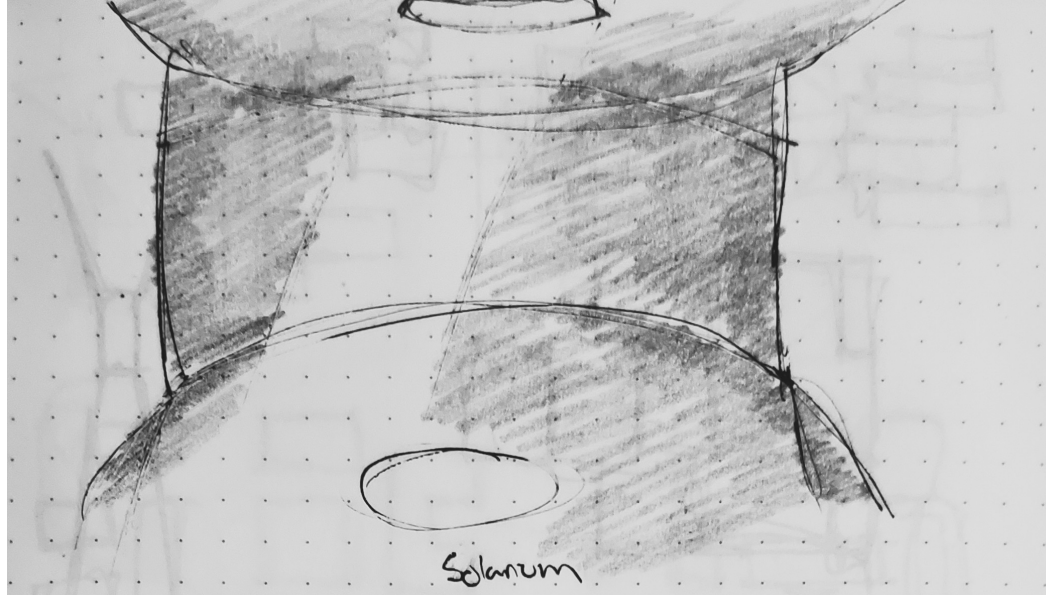
FIGURES

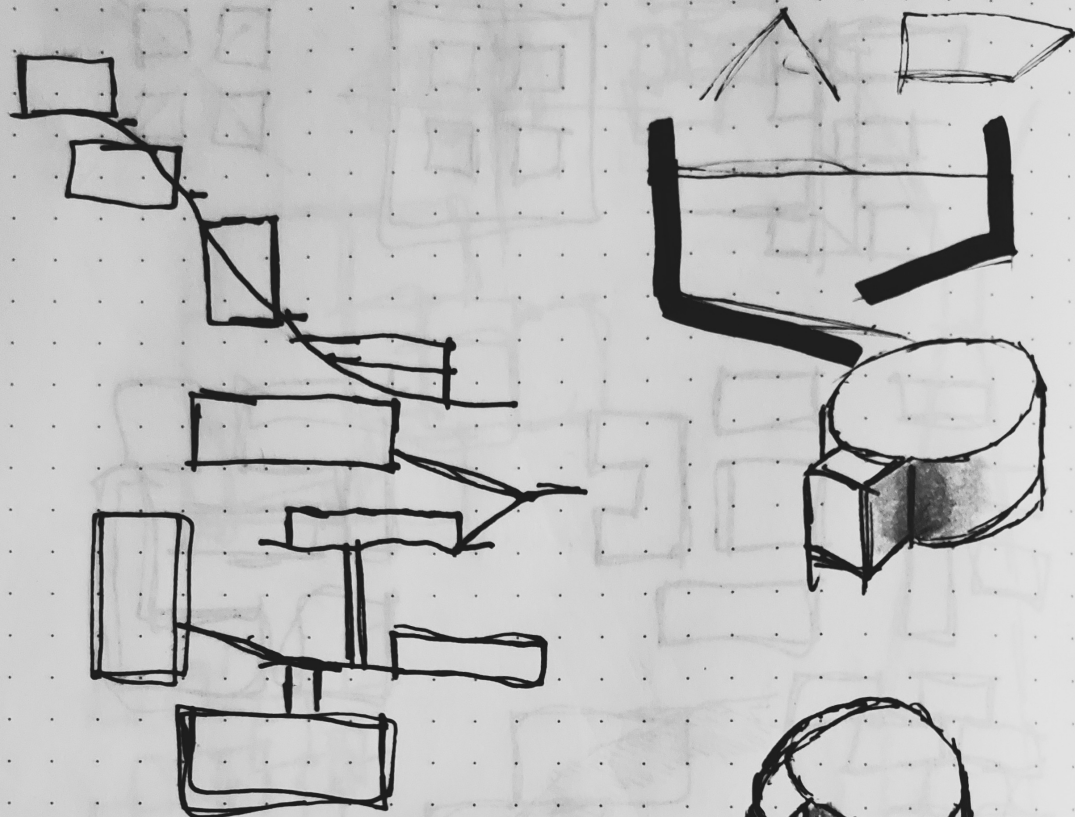
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"The architect models in space as a sculptor in clay"

- *Geoffrey Scott*

APPENDIX





FUTURE MODULES

