

PERFORMA

Industrial voids as support for the event city

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Relatore
Nicola Russi

Studenti
Alessandro Corbino
Francesco Costantin

foreword

“Architecture is as much about the events that take place in spaces as about the spaces themselves [...] the static notions of form and function long favoured by architectural discourse need to be replaced by attention to the actions that occur inside and around buildings - to the movement of bodies, to activities, to aspirations.” Bernard Tschumi

Theatre architecture has developed over the centuries in response to the need and desire for technological and engineering renewal, mainly with regard to the improvement of the scenic machine. According to each culture, it has taken on and bent different forms of language to functional needs, to the point of becoming propaganda. Theatre architecture has bent itself so much to cultural ferments that for a moment, in the second half of the twentieth century, it took place in unconventional, non-prepared spaces: a garage, a shop window, a factory, a churchyard. It was in these types of spaces that cohesion was found among the participants in the collective ritual, free of barriers that obstructed their concentration, perhaps rediscovering the ancestral role of the theatrical ritual.

The thesis reflects on the design context of unconventional theatre spaces, which stems from the experiences of twentieth-century performances, and transposes it into the design reflection of an industrial architectural reuse. Emptiness and informal as a supporting space are the key to freely colonise places and their architectural formalities. The design of weak spaces that are grafted into existing heritages, as well as the design of voids in the city, makes architectural the concept of supporting spaces for collective practices. These can be rethought in terms of non-aggressiveness, allowing them to be shaped by the event that takes place. Such a defined culture of non-aggressive reuse can coexist with the architectural gesture given by necessity. In Bergamo, an abandoned industrial complex and the lack of a theatre hall for the city's programming become an opportunity to imagine a theatre project under this lens.

notes for the reader

The thesis comes out of a design workshop in the winter of 2020/2021 with Professor Russi, which dealt with the reinterpretation of transforming areas in the industrial belt of Bergamo. The field trip in the former Reggiani factory and the imagining of a theatre within it aroused the desire to develop a necessarily more complex work.

The project lives in four parts, each one necessary but not sufficient, including the project itself. Research and study are an integral part of the project's finalisation and, above all, of the framing of its cultural figure.

FORM

The first part investigates the forms of theatre and theatre architecture, the forms of performance, and thus the forms of actor-spectator interaction. Taking its cue on the performance experiences of the second half of the 20th century, it attempts to construct a cultural context to which the project refers. The archetypes of theatrical architecture, from antiquity to the 19th century, and the revolutionary theatres of the early 20th century, are juxtaposed with ways of doing theatre that have emerged from canonical spaces, to seek different expressive dynamics. It is extremely important to understand the spatialities within which these new forms take place, what makes them capable of being support for those practices.

CONTEXT

The second part investigates the whole world that exists around the former Reggiani textile factory, in its material and immaterial forms. The current condition of Bergamo's urban dynamics as well as the current condition of the abandoned industry; its image when it was active and experienced as a textile factory; the understanding therefore of the stylistic character of the architectural recovery. Then the outlining of the project of the complex at the urban and programmatic level.

METHOD

The third part consists of an in-depth study of the functioning of the theatre machine, as a building and as its dynamics. The theatre is broken down into each of the parts that make up its organism, understood and drawn in their dimensions. These parts are then interpreted in macro-areas with functional diagrams explaining their relationships and interactions, possibilities and impediments regarding their positioning in relation to the other parts. This is the only way to acquire the basic knowledge to establish a functional programme and organisation of spaces.

METAMORPHOSIS

In the fourth part the reflections and knowledge developed in the first three phases are translated into architecture. It is the moment of planning and visualization of the intentions elaborated during the moments of research. The project reflects on how those knowledges and interpretations could come to life in the Reggiani abandoned industry. Drawings and models were the tools with which the project choices were studied and measured.

“The difference between a right and a wrong place is that there are certain criteria that work for or against life. The only difference between theatre and life is that theatre is life in a more concentrated form. What favours concentration is therefore right, what hinders concentration is not.”

Peter Brook

01

FORM

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intro

Theatre as a collective display is an expressive practice that man has felt the need to implement long before translating it into architectural forms: it is an ancestral ritual. From Ancient Greece to the contemporary age, theatre architecture has established archetypes that have spanned cultures and periods.

In the 19th century, the rise of the bourgeoisie interprets the theatre as a social salon, subsequently the technological improvements of the industrial revolutions allow the refinement of the stage machine. The stage machine thus becomes a box for fiction, which 20th century stretches to its peak with real and utopian architectures.

The theatre is originally not meant to be just a box for representing fiction to an orderly audience. In its deepest essence, it represents the shared moment of a ritual between actors and spectators, the latter considered as active participants in the staging, as is the surrounding space in which the performance takes shape.
The play must achieve total involvement and in fact represents the shared moment of a performance between all the participants.

During the 20th century, experiences that attempted to construct a theatre in these terms have emerged, united by the desire to leave “conventional” theatres and to take possession of free, un-characterised spaces, where the relationship between actors and audience was not mediated. They have taught us that to make theatre there is no need for formality, that the frontal dynamic between the stage and the audience is only one of the possible configurations.

Those experiences are therefore fundamental because they give us a different interpretation of the theatre’s space, which frees itself from the form/function dichotomy, taking the event into consideration.

The way of conceiving the architecture of these spaces, which act as supports, is extremely contemporary. In fact, they suggest an alternative, less rigorous way of designing spaces as supports, of reusing spaces for performance.

1.1 Arketipe(s)





1.1.1 Front-View Traditions

The history of theatre architecture, of spaces that have been places of gathering and performance, has evolved over time; the focal point of this evolution has been the redefinition of the spatial relationship between the stage and the stalls. From the Greek archetype until present day, the numerous rewritings and transformations of theatres have been exponentially more rapid; they have in fact followed the evolution and progress of the society and cultures of which they have been a manifestation. The more the latter changed, the faster the theatres followed different values, ideas, and customs. These forms have moulded themselves into defining a theatrical architecture in which

the scene/stalls relationship is expressed in terms of frontality and bipolarity: the two environments, separated, never contaminate each other.

With the evolutions of perspective and engineering, moreover, the stage was increasingly conceived as a magic, illusionistic box. At the same time, the auditorium was limited to evolving as an ideal viewpoint and listening point, without directly involving the spectator with the action taking place on stage. Everything was arranged for the audience to be in the best conditions to enjoy the theatrical act as well as the social circumstances it generated.

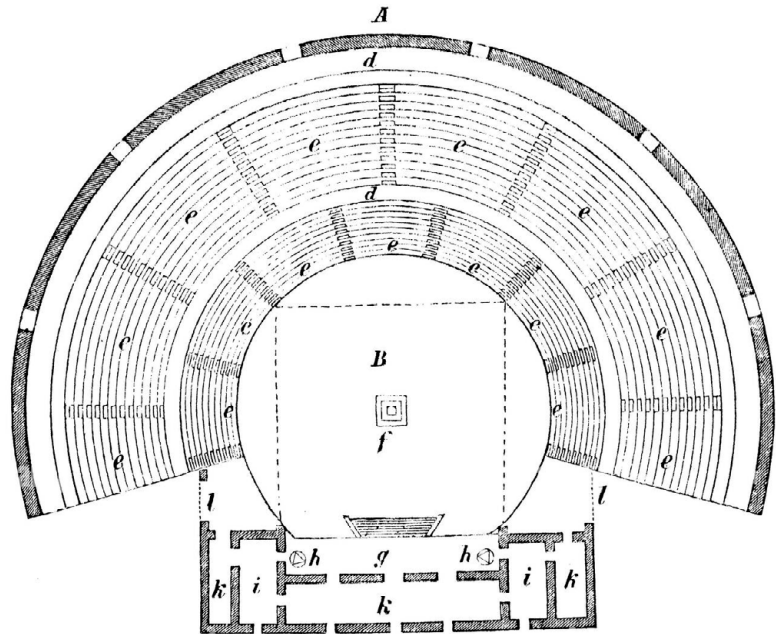
Going to the theatre, social exchanges, being seen, had taken over the art of performance.

But could we ever say that the beauty of a museum, and consequently the appreciation of the works it contains, depends exclusively on the perfection of the light shining on the painting or the distance at which we can see it? A museum is an architecture and can evoke feelings. A theatre is more than a cinema.



JR Eyerman, Audience watching premiere of "Bwana Devil" with 3D glasses, Hollywood, CA, 1952

GREEK CAVEA



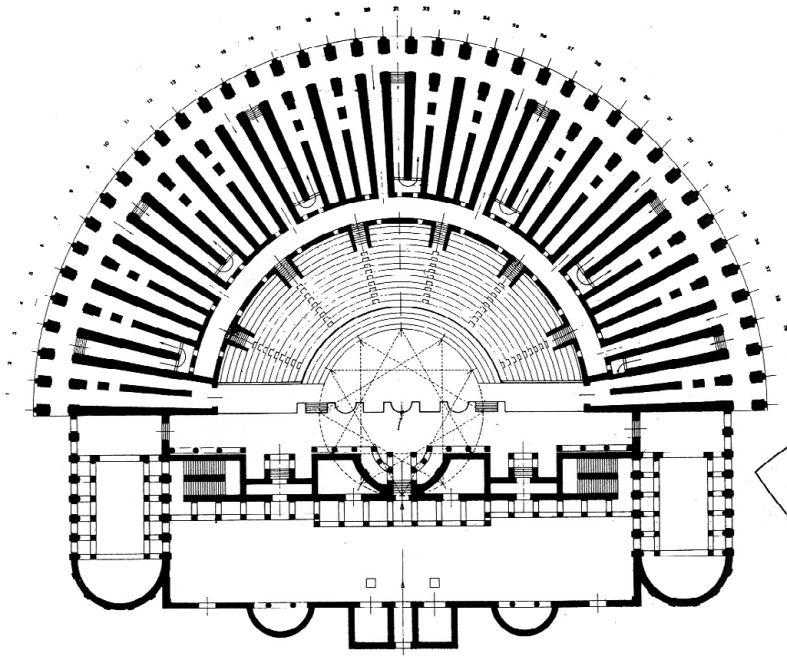
The history of theatre in the West begins with Greek civilisation. In the 6th century B.C., rituals in honour of Dionysus were elaborated into new forms of performance: dramatic contests¹ were organised three times a year in honour of the ceremony, in which all citizens took part. Theatron means in Greek “place from which one can see”, and indicated only the part of the tiers that lay on the ground, without altering its geometry.² The other spaces were then the orchestra for the ritual dances, and the skene, originally on the level of the orchestra, where the actors performed. The concept of the theatre as a single building materialised in the Hellenistic age, in the 4th century B.C., when the *skene* began to take on the more important role of the orchestra, and the precarious wooden structure was replaced by a solid masonry structure. A *proskenion* will be added as the number of characters on stage increases; the painted scenery will be enriched by the use of stage machinery: trap doors and underground passages, and cranes to stage the deities, hence the phrase *deus ex machina*.³

1. Gaelle Breton, *Teatri*, Milano, 1990 p.6

2. Cesare Molinari, *Storia del teatro*, Laterza, 1996

3. Mario Panizza, *Guide per progettare edifici per lo spettacolo*, Laterza, 1996 p.92

ROMAN HEMICYCLE THEATRE



In Roman times, the engineering culture reinterprets the Greek theatre as a building in its own, a walled ring capable of standing flat in the middle of the *urbe*.⁴ The building incorporates the stage and *cavea* into a single architecture; a horizontal ridge joins the two parts and on which the velarium can be anchored. The wall of the *scaena* extends horizontally to the end of the amphitheatre, forming a permanent scenography representing a palace.⁵ The orchestra becomes semi-circular to follow the structure in plan, and in imperial times it becomes a kind of stage of honour.⁶ Important is the introduction of the *siparium* between orchestra and stage, which will characterise later developments in theatrical architecture.⁷ Towards the end of the Empire, circus games conquer the theatre audience, and dramaturgical activity is brought into the odeons, indoor theatres built in the Greek regions of the Empire.⁸

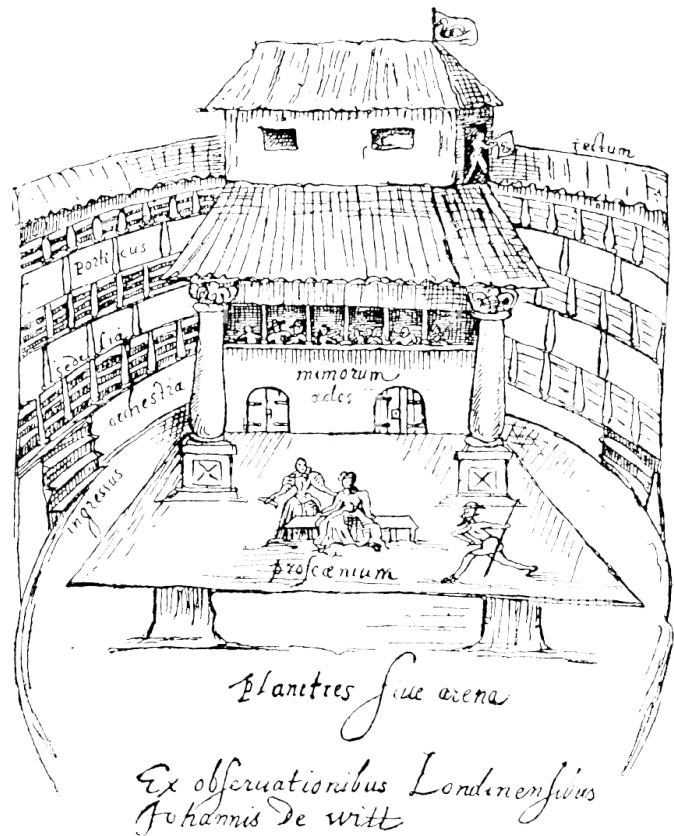
4. G.C. Argan, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1968 p.133

5. Gaëlle Breton, *Teatri*, Milano, 1990 p.7

6. Mario Panizza, *Guida per progettare edifici per lo spettacolo*, Laterza, 1996 p.100
7. *Ivi*

8. Gaëlle Breton, *Teatri*, Milano, 1990 p.7

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE THEATRE



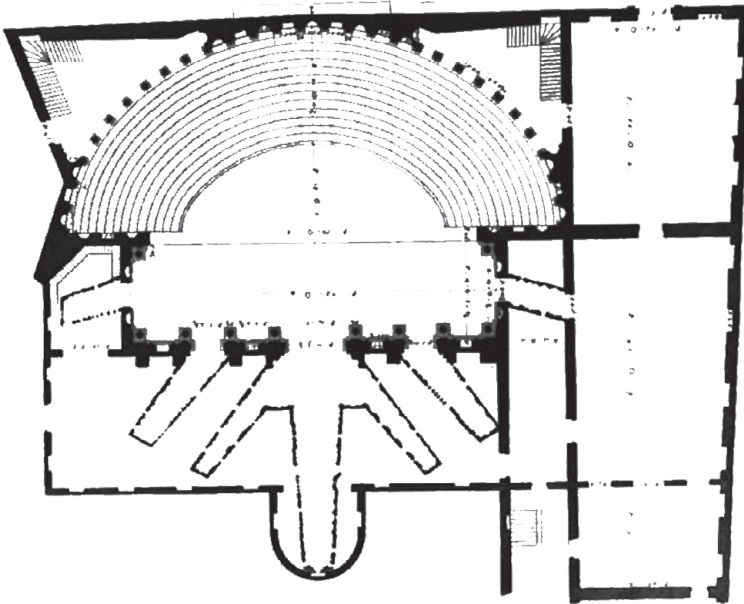
9. Cesare Molinari, *Storia del teatro*, Laterza, 1996

10. Gaelle Breton, Teatri, Milano, 1990 p.6

11. Mario Panizza, *Guide per progettare edifici per lo spettacolo*, Laterza, 1996 p.99

The Elizabethan theatre has its origins in English inns: around 1500, travelling companies of actors set up their stages in the courtyards of the inns, the audience watching around them and on the balconies.⁹ During the reign of Elizabeth I, actors became shareholders in the theatres, which began to be built in a ring¹⁰, with covered galleries on three floors all around, and the actors' house with the proscenium advancing to the centre of the circle. The open-air stalls accommodate the audience of the less affluent classes. During the performance people talk, eat, protest. The wooden structure is attached to a concrete foundation¹¹. The stage has a trapdoor, and the roof above the stage hides machines and wits.

RENAISSANCE AMPHITHEATRE



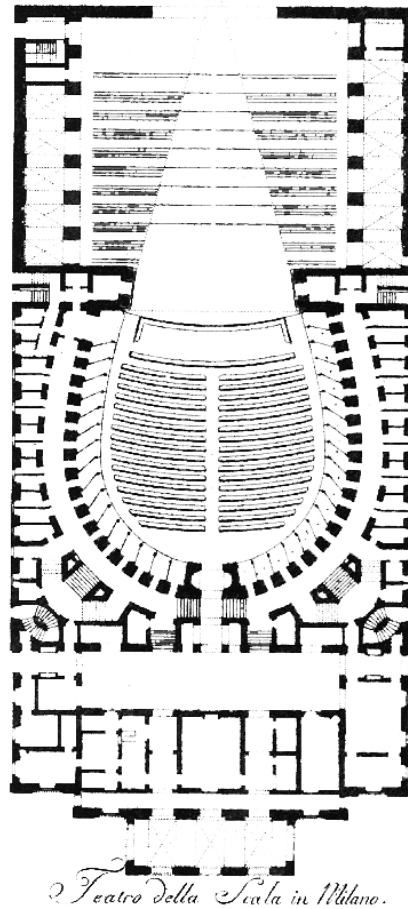
The Italian Renaissance theatre is linked to the culture of Rome and Florence in the 15th and 16th centuries, where comedy and scenography (as urban perspective) were elaborated in the palace courts.¹² After the Roman odeons, the first stable theatre built was the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, in 1580.¹³ The dramaturgical panorama of ancient theatrical texts, which were translated together with the culture of performances in the palaces of the court, allowed a theatre for restricted circles to flourish, which made use of the new treatises on scenography and the new discoveries on perspective. The seats face a flat, painted backdrop.¹⁴ Later, the backdrop will become a multi-scene perspective, in deeper halls with u-shaped stands. The Italian-style stage will be born, with the engineering machinery for the sets; the stage machine, with trapdoor, tower and backdrop, will constitute the magic box that will survive to contemporary times, manifesting itself as an extremely performative tool for staging.¹⁴

12. Cesare Molinari, *Op.Cit.* pp.16-22

13. Gaëlle Breton, *Teatri*, Milano, 1990 p.8

14. *Ibid.* p.9

ITALIAN THEATRE

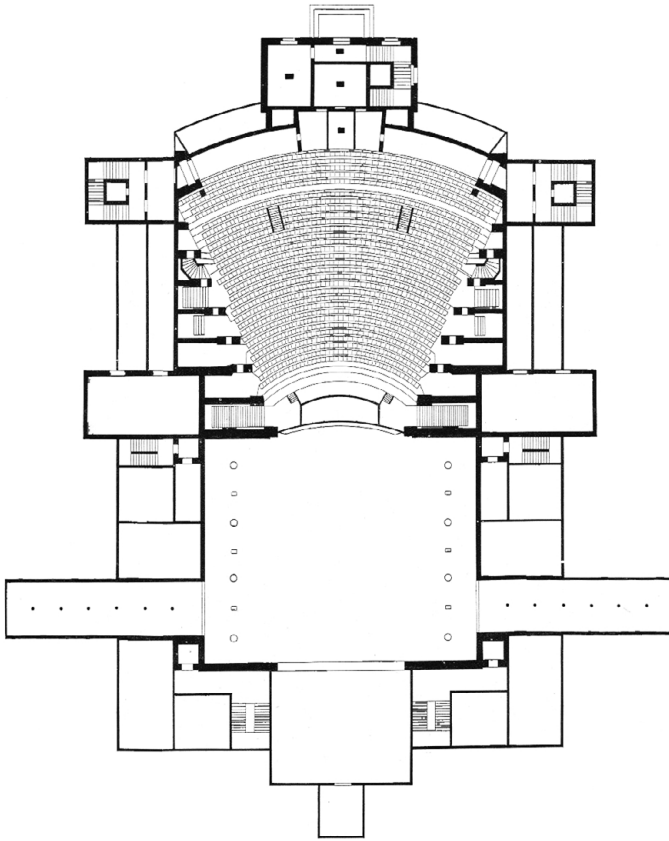


15. Gaele Breton, *Teatri*,
Milano, 1990 p.11

16. Cesare Molinari, *Storia
del teatro*, Laterza, 1996

17. Gaele Breton, *Teatri*,
Milano, 1990 p.11

At the end of the 18th century, bourgeois society and the industrial revolution brought worldly culture to its peak in the city. The Italian theatre is where this culture comes to life, with the opera house. The system of boxes, halls of honour, drawing-rooms, corridors and foyers ignites these dynamics, staging the drawing-room life of the spectators¹⁵. In the stalls-scene dynamic, the tension is not in the place of the actors, where the theatrical action takes place, but in the membrane of the boxes where the audience sees but above all is seen by other spectators¹⁶. Theatres from now on will not be built in existing buildings, but will be constructed as isolated constructions, with a central role in the chessboard of urban development in cities¹⁷.

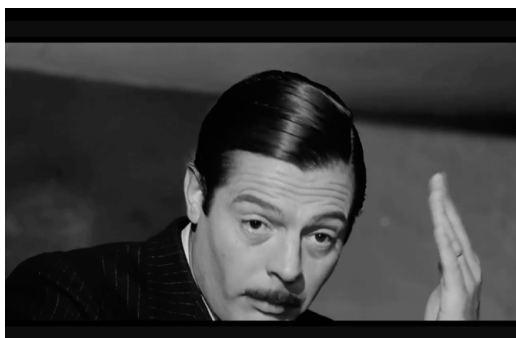
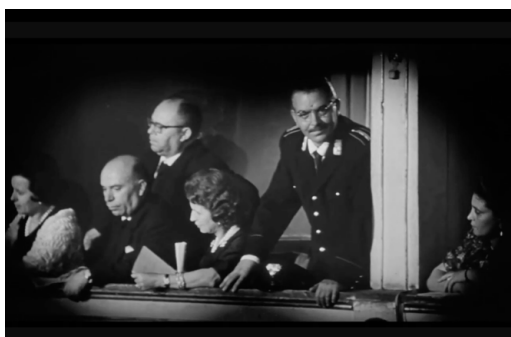
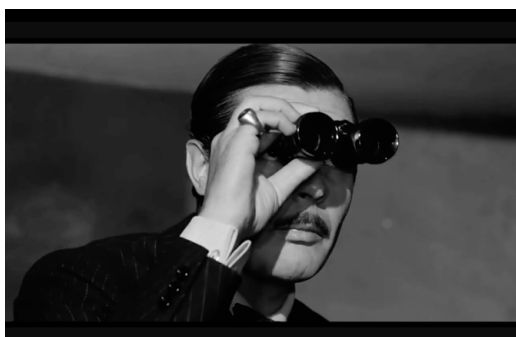
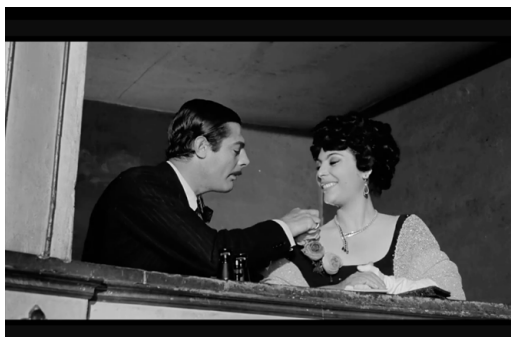
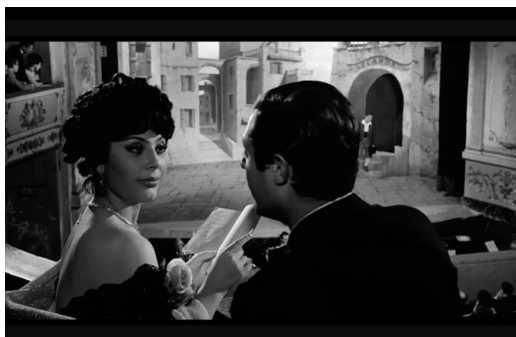


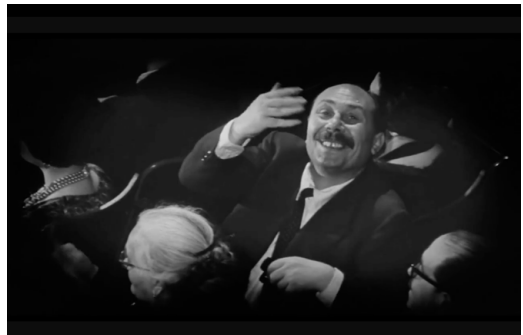
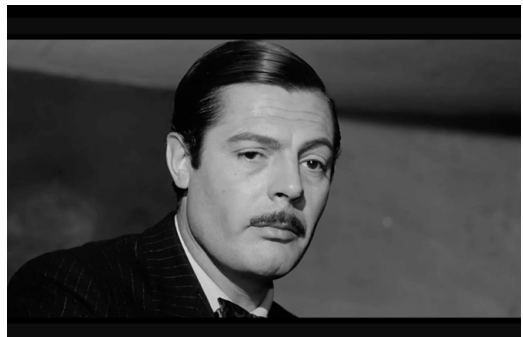
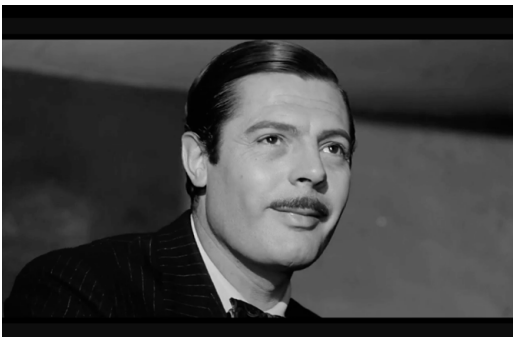
WAGNER'S THEATRE

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux built the theatre of Besançon in 1778, replacing the boxes with a tiered balcony system, foreshadowing the upheavals of the French Revolution. It was not until 1876 that Richard Wagner worked on the construction of the Bayreuth Theatre, where there was a return to the amphitheatre layout: identical viewing and listening conditions and the first seats this time were the privileged ones¹⁸. The scenic machine of the Italian theatre remains, but its mechanical parts are well hidden: the magic box that creates the illusion on stage is taken to its limits. The Bayreuth theatre is an essential piece of architecture, bare on the decorative side, resolved on the functional side¹⁹. It marks the beginning of the reappraisal of all aspects of theatre architecture that would follow in the history of the 20th century.

18. Gaëlle Breton, *Teatri*, Milano, 1990 p.12

19. Mario Panizza, *Guida per progettare edifici per lo spettacolo*, Laterza, 1996 p.85





In the scene of Pietro Germi's movie, we see Mastroianni using the theatre box of a typical Italian-style theatre as a showcase to put his wife in plain sight and arrange the so-called Italian-style divorce. The theatre is still stereotyped as a place of going to be seen. The play remains in the background.

1.1.2 Total Machines

20. Phillips, Stephen J., *Elastic architecture : Frederick Kiesler and design research in the first age of robotic culture*, The MIT press, 2017, p.35

Following the First World War, the new culture of speed had radicalised in theatre design the desire to exploit new technologies so that a new mass audience could really take part in the action: the new European theatres aspired to a revolution in theatrical dynamics.²⁰ The turmoil in the arts and architecture led to the desire to develop new spaces and machines capable of reflecting and representing the conception of man and life at that time. Utopian theatre projects overturned the traditional stage/stalls dynamic, conceiving machines capable of moving, projecting screens, rotating.

Meyerhold, a contemporary of Stanislavsky and Chekhov, rejected realism and aimed to go beyond reality through exaggerated and stylized theatrical techniques. He wanted his actors to create an engaging form of theater that would captivate the audience and challenge their imagination. His goal was to break free from the norms of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1926, El Lissitzky was commissioned to design stage sets for *I Want a Child* (*Khochu rebenka*) by Sergey Tretyakov, to be performed at the Meyerhold Theater in Moscow. Meyerhold envisioned the play as a real-time dialogue between actors and spectators, allowing the audience to “join” the performance at any moment. This required a radically different directorial approach and a completely new architectural setting. Meyerhold proposed an amphitheater design, removing boxes and tiered seating.

The utopian precept of Frederick Kiesler’s theatre clearly represents the idea of the unique space of the theatrical machine. Stephen J. Phillips states: “Theatre had evolved dramatically during the early twentieth century, which inspired Kiesler’s mobile and flexible architecture that was designed to respond to the drama of the event - the motion of the crowd.”²¹

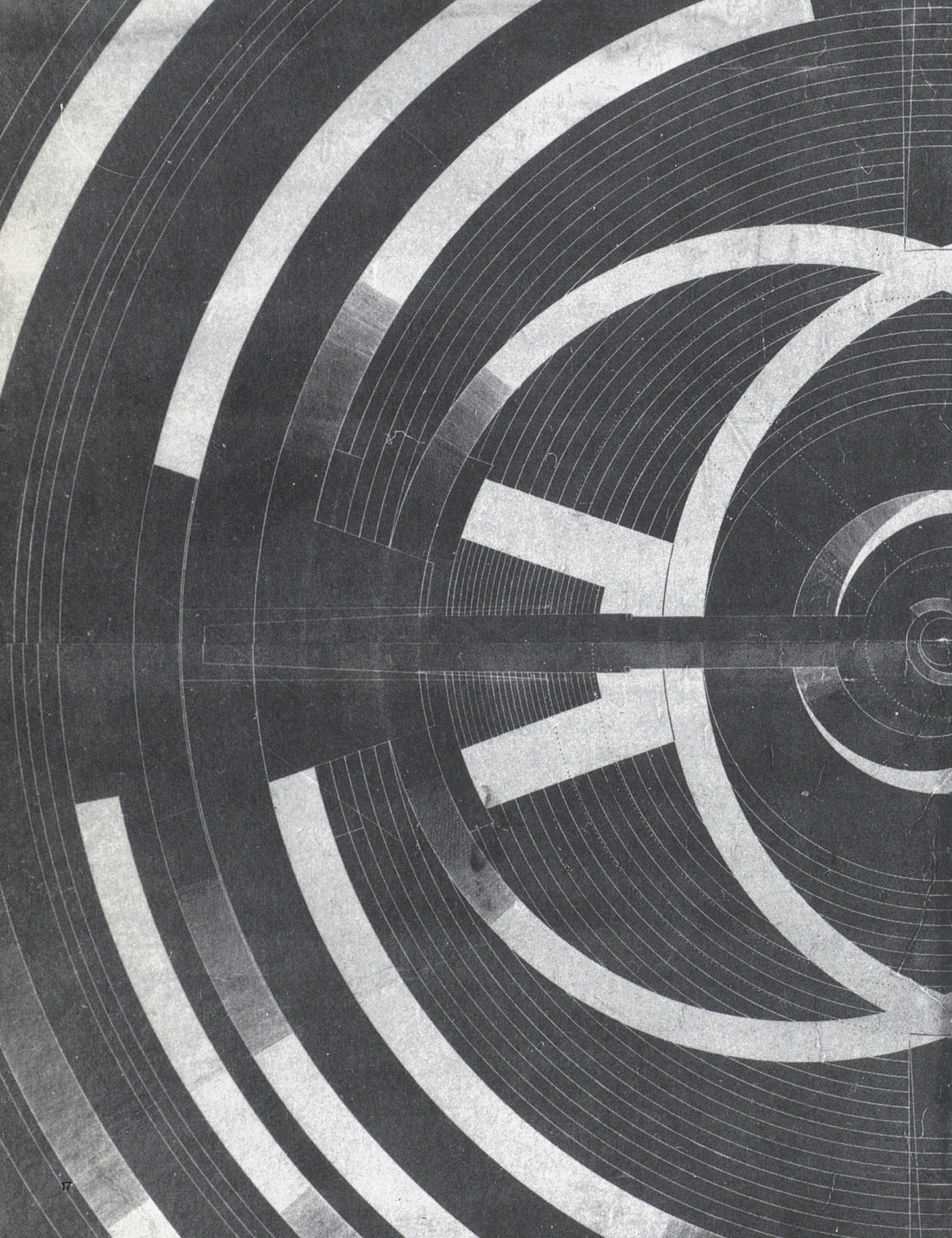
21. *ibid* p.34

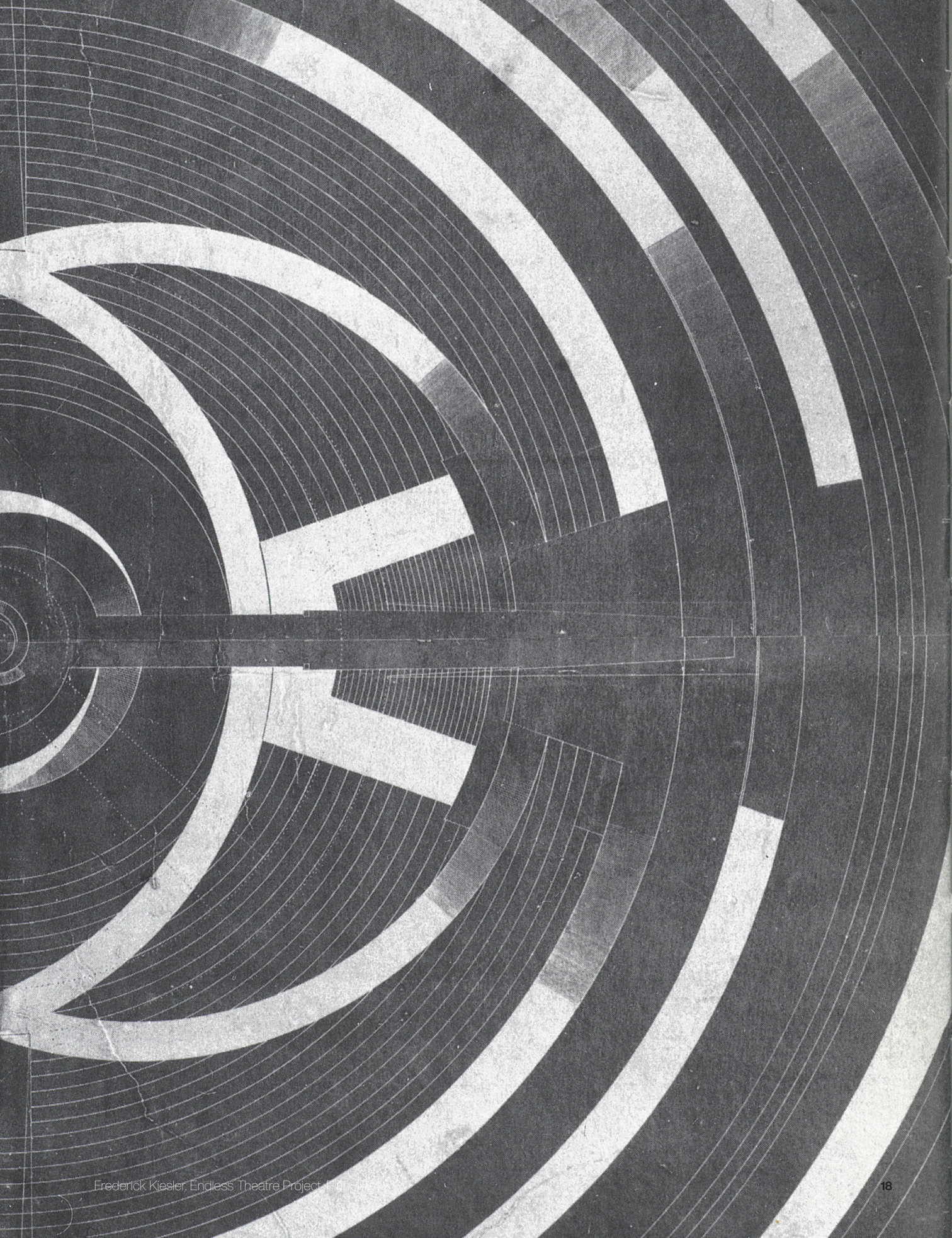
The theatre included “a battery of slides and film projectors” beamed on the shell’s interior surface to provide “an illusion of the infinite”.²² The Endless Theatre represented an architecture that challenged the conventional limits of theatre production, in which the electricity of an engaging actor-audience dynamic is expressed. There is no actor’s space and no spectator’s space: it is one continuous void that geometrically organises the intensities of contact between the participants in the performance.

22. *ibid*



El Lissitzky, Model for Sergei Tretyakov's unrealised play "I want a child", 1930





Walter Gropius was engaged in mid-1927 by Erwin Piscator, a German theatre director, when he wanted to construct a theatre machine capable of being that Political Theatre for a politically addressed audience.

The desire was that of making drama and architecture interacting together, having space and action ecoing through the audience.²³

23. Isaac, Reginald, Gropius. An illustrated bibliography of the creator of the Bauhaus, Little, Brown & Company, 1991, p. 132

The theatre accommodated what for Piscator was a minimum number, 2000 Berlin proletariats.

The absence of the proscenium allows the public to directly stand in front of the action space. The theatre was conceived as a flexibility device: the stage could be converted in three different positions and dimensions, as for the audience surrounding it.

"In my Total Theater [...] I have tried to create an instrument so flexible that a director can employ any one of the three stage forms by the use of simple, ingenious mechanisms. The expenditure for such an interchangeable stage mechanism would be fully compensated by the diversity of purposes to which such a building would lend itself: for presentation of drama, opera, film, and dance; for choral or instrumental music; for sports events or assemblies. Conventional plays could be just as easily accommodated as the most fantastic experimental creations of a stage director of the future."²⁴

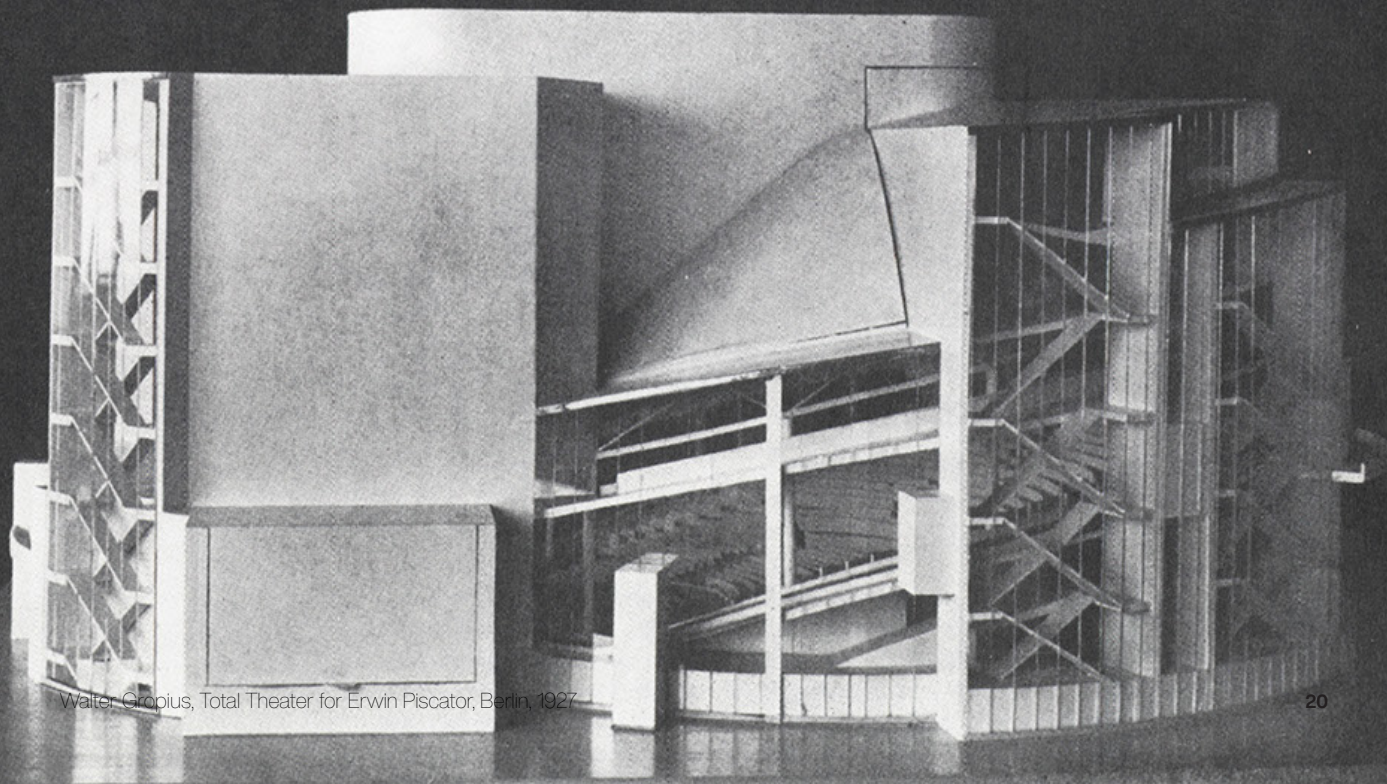
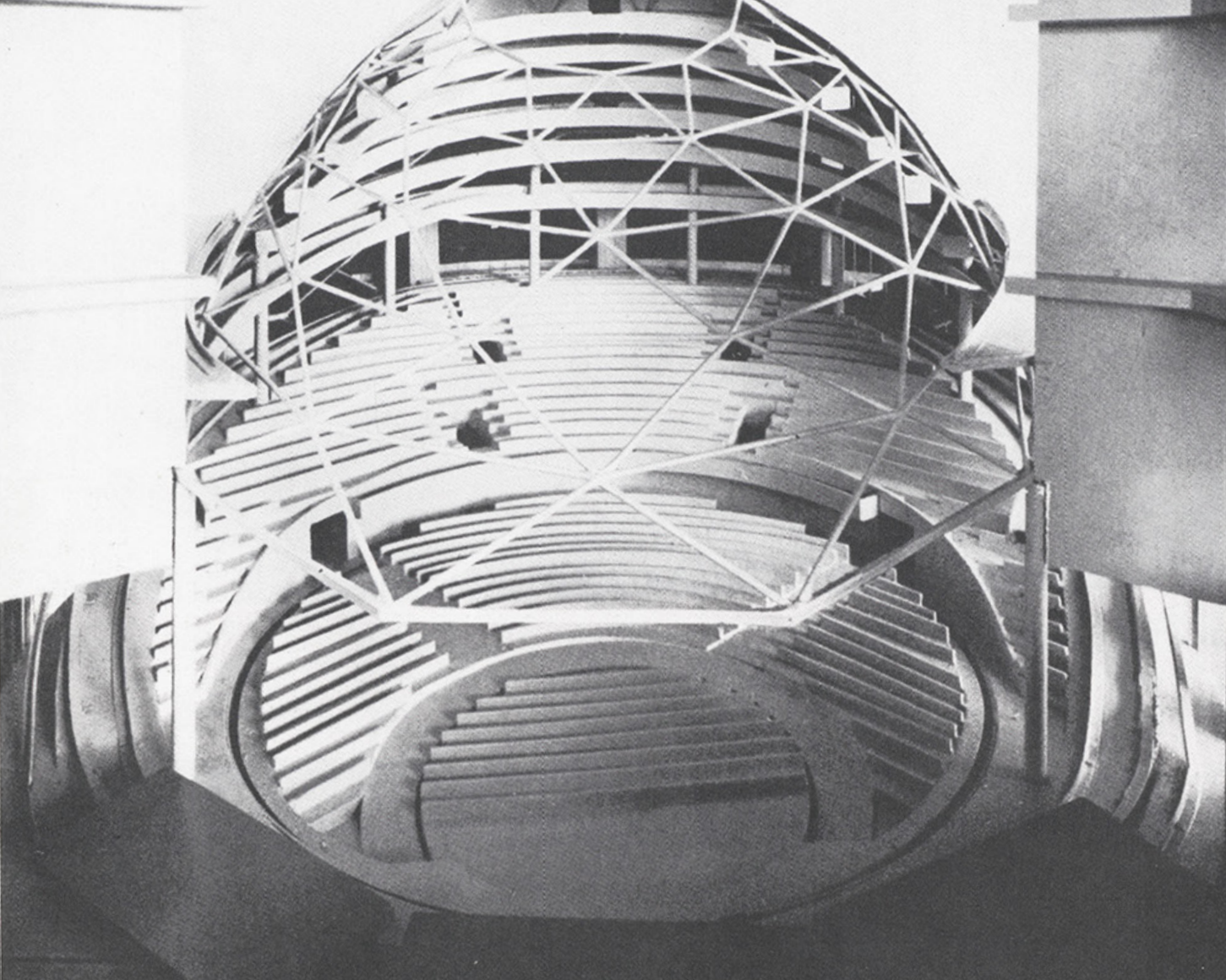
24. Gropius, Walter (Editor) and Arthur S. Wensinger (Editor), The Theater Of The Bauhaus, 1924

Around the seats a corridor runs all around: "the ambulatory wings extend into an encircling passageway that slopes with the auditorium floor on which wagons can be moved to play scenes around the audience, thereby extending the scenic environment beyond the stage. Columns, defining this encircling aisle, also serve as a structure between which to stretch projection screens."²⁵

25. Gropius, On the construction of Modern Theatre

Moreover, not just the side walls were designed to project images, but also the entire domed ceiling was thought as a screen, "expanding the stage cyclorama into the entire auditorium as an enveloping surface for moving images."²⁶

26. Hannah, Dorita, Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde, Routledge, 2019 p.197



Walter Gropius, Total Theater for Erwin Piscator, Berlin, 1927

The Total Theatre behave as a space of action and illusion, with the spectator being trapped into the event. Although it is completely the opposite of the Hellerau, an empty box, Appia's goal of bringing audiences and actors together was absorbed by Gropius in the design of his machine. The aim was

"shaking the spectator out of his lethargy, of surprising and assaulting him and obliging him to take a real interest in the play." ²⁷

27. Hannah, Dorita, Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde, Routledge, 2019 p.198

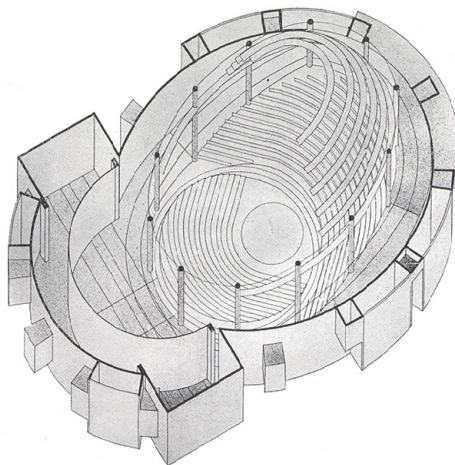
But at the same time, one could think that in this complex machine, the stage director is as trapped as the spectator.

The technical over-organization of the machine leaves no opening for the creativity of all involved in the show. The rules of movement of the mechanical parts weave a cage in which every path is written, there is no rebellion, and consequently, no matter how labyrinthine the cage may be, there is no freedom.

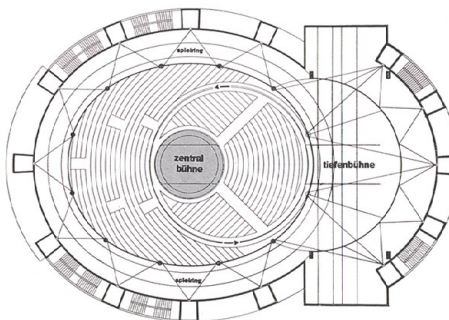
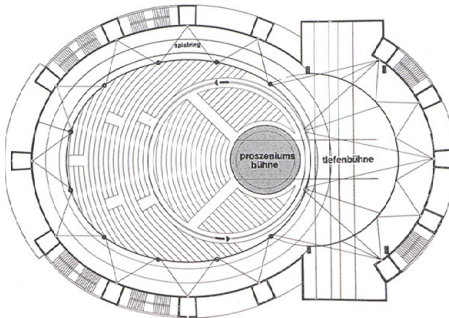
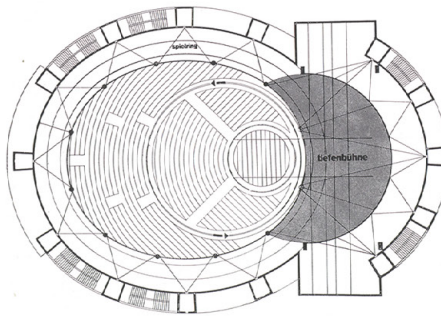
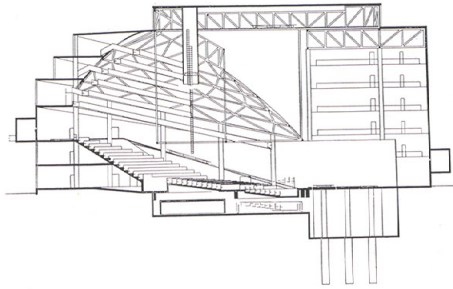
The project was steeped in political ambitions and ideas, especially regarding the relationship with the audience in terms of the feelings conveyed by the environment in which it was received. Maurice Culot affirms Gropius' machine results "more technique than imagination". This is the long distance from Appia's Hellerau: a theatre which would have a space

"burdened with a technicality which is more constraining than if it did not exist at all." ²⁸

28. Ibid



TOTAL MACHINES



1.1.2 Lost Symbiosis

29. Gaëlle Breton, Teatri,
Milano, 1990

The evolution and metamorphosis of spaces that made up theatre, intended as layout and actor-spectator relationship, followed the needs and cultural changes of various periods. However, it can be said that only on two occasions before the 20th century did theatrical experiences witness a total symbiosis between dramaturgy, society and architectural environment: those were the periods of the Greek Theatre and the Elizabethan Theatre²⁹. The reason that at first seems to have facilitated this symbiosis is that in these two theatre types the spaces are outdoors: they are not closed buildings. At the same time, the layout of the stalls, in both cases, approaches a semicircle surrounding the stage.

30. Gaëlle Breton, Teatri,
Milano, 1990

“Whereas the Greek and Elizabethan theatres are the simplest expression of the dramatic event’s place - as they incorporate the stage and the auditorium into a single open space - Italian theatre introduces a fracture, which will grow, between stage and auditorium, as well as between theatre and the outside world”.³⁰

But it is not the only reason that generates an instantaneous synergy between the observer and the performer. The surrounding conditions (i.e. the outdoor environment and the non-frontal nature of the stalls) are just the right fertile ground for all the participants in the performance to remain in the same mental and temporal space. The symbiosis lies in the fact that the actors, while acting, do not move away from the physical and spatial context in which they find themselves, this expedient allows therefore spectators and listeners to belong to the reality of the scene: the spectators are not witnessing the performance of a fiction, but they are at that moment in that place participating in the mise-en-scene of a collective rite.

Reflecting on the Greek model, one can easily understand the materiality of these concepts. The term *theatron* derives from the Greek word *theasthai*, 'to see'. When collective rituals were staged in orchestrae, suitable hillsides were chosen as venues for the spectators.

The conditions of the context, of the environment, were used in the staging of tragedy or comedy, because the opposite would have been unnatural (i.e. constructing spatial and temporal fictions in boxes).

The fact that dramatic performances usually began at sunrise led to references in the dialogue that were adapted to the situation in real time. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the action begins at the moment immediately before sunrise:

"What star is that rising over there?" asks Agamemnon, and the servant replies:

"Sirius, halfway along its course near the seven Pleiades".

A little later the light of the sun colours the east and a character declares:

"That silver light indicates the approach of dawn, the harbinger of the sun's fiery courses."

*The rest of the action takes place in the full light of day.*³¹

Now it is precisely this synchronisation of the dramatic situation with the real phenomena of nature, coupled with the idea of not being in a purpose-built building separating the stage from the audience, that still gives the theatrical performance the feeling of being all together, a single group, participating in a common rite.

"The relationship between theatre and architecture is not always obvious. Theatre is the art of the ephemeral, it is "written in the sand". It creates a space that lasts as long as the performance where architecture establishes permanence. More than a diversion, theatre is a necessity, a form of collective problematisation. It is in it that a society unfolds its myths in relative independence from the real world and can express its underlying dramas without putting its very existence at stake. When this problematisation becomes a convention, it loses its strength. its reason of being:

*"theatre is always an emergency. a perpetual revolution (...). When it crystallises something invisible begins to die (...) life is evolution, theatre is relativity."*³²

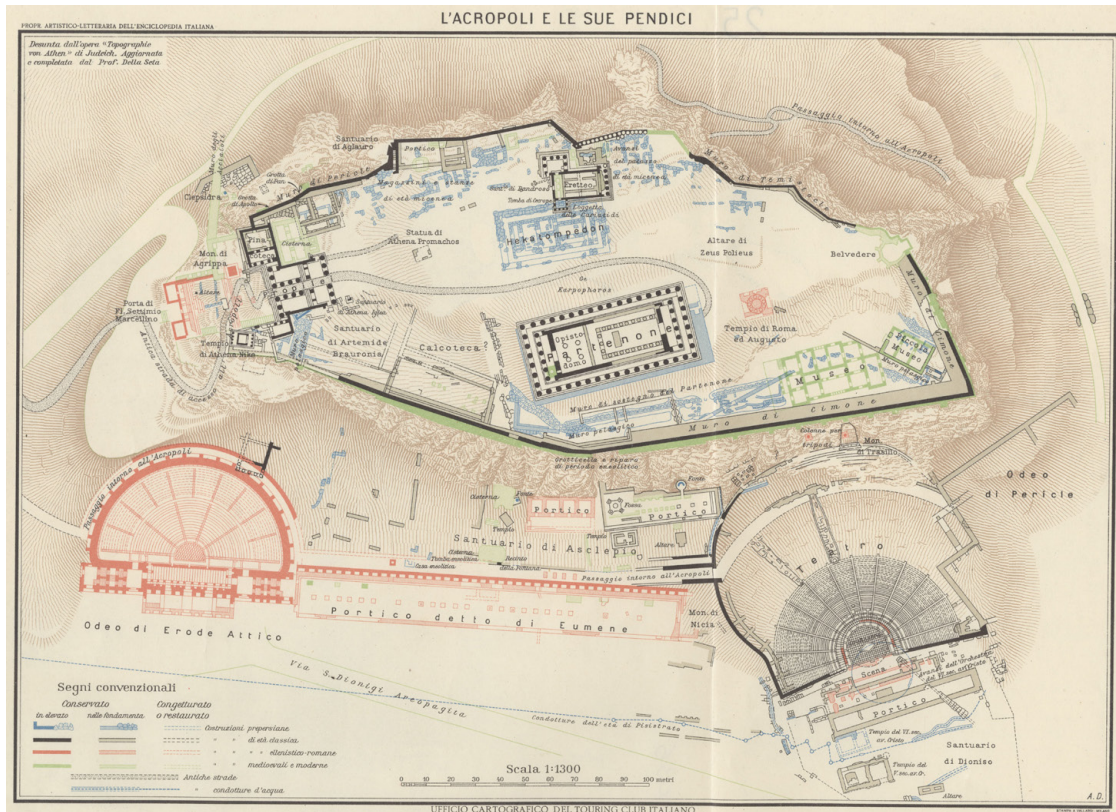
31. Allardyce Nicoll, *Lo spazio scenico. Storia dell'arte teatrale*, Bulzoni, 1971.

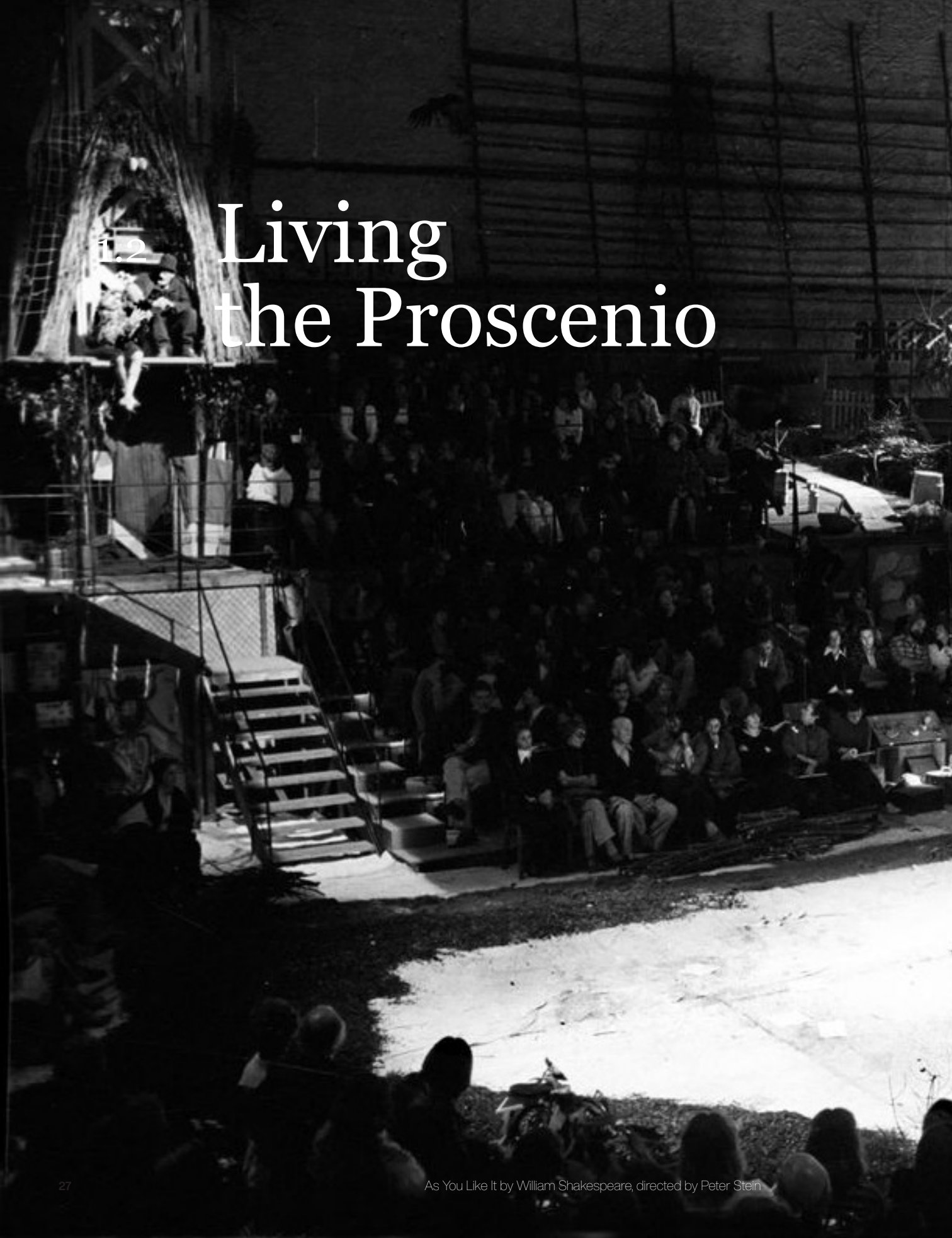
32. Ibid

When in 458 BC. Aeschylus won the Great Dionysia with the *Oresteia* which were celebrated in Athens between March and April, on the southern slopes of the Acropolis, a new theatrical space dedicated to Dionysus had replaced the collapsed wooden *ikria*, which previously allowed the performances to be followed in the vast space of the *agora*. Spectators sat on the slope; therefore, facing the sea, they had on their left the odeion wanted by Pericles, behind them the sacred fortress of the Acropolis, further on the right the Areopagus. The last tragedy of the winning trilogy was represented in front of them *Eumenides*: the goddess Athena asks the judges (twelve, as it was at the time of Aeschylus when the tribunal took place right on the Areopagus) to judge Orestes, but in reality he addresses all the Athenians, quoting and indicating the places, which were actually around them: "People of Athens, accept my decree, you who are the first to decide on a blood trial. For all time to come, year after year, the people of the Aegean will enjoy this court and its judges. This knoll [...], on the clearing where the Amazons in arms pitched their camp - at the time that, hostile to Theseus, they descended here and against the Acropolis they raised, bristling with towers, a new acropolis, and sacrificed to Ares, for which this boulder is called Areopagus - on this knoll, therefore sacred, Respect and Fear - branches of a single stock - will be, day and night, the brake of the people against an iniquitous conduct, as long as the city does not overturn the laws."

The involvement was total: not only were the spectators directly questioned, but the comparison with the siege conducted by the Amazons could not fail to recall emotionally the recent catastrophic capture of Athens by the Persians; moreover the temples still in ruins behind them [...] made their memory palpable.³³

33. Vittorio Fiore, *Spazio teatro: luoghi recuperati per la scena*, Periaceto, 2012





Living the Proscenio



During the 20th century, a drama crisis, and consequently a theatre architecture crisis, called into question the binding relationship between theatre and performance venue. There is a rejection of the 'institution' theatres that had monopolised the scene in previous centuries. The great artistic ferment of the early 20th century, the non-conformism and the revolutionary ideals of the 1960s and 1970s are the driving forces behind the overturning of the theatrical canons. Political ferment and creative tensions, rather than finding solutions within the architectural envelope, welded together to define the acceleration of the research underway throughout the 1960s [...] on the cancellation of the traditional division between actor and spectator, between stalls and stage, which Debord had considered the alpha and omega of the spectacle.³⁴

34. Cattiodoro, *Architettura scenica e teatro urbano*, Franco Angeli, 2007

In the 20th century, the space-time of the theatre has multiple realities and values, both as a place of the stage and as an environment: there is no theatre but there are many theatres. It is the place of the actor in the different performances; it is the place of the actor-spectator relationship, it is the place of the event. One wants it to be different and separate from that of the previous century: in the 20th century, the theatre lives on an obscure and substantial knot, which continually oozes out of the theatre.

What we want to do is essentially to re-theatreise the theatre: to bring the theatre back to itself, marginalising, sometimes excluding, the text and the word. If text and word are removed from the theatre, what remains is the body, with its gestures, movements and postures, the only medium capable of expressing the ineffable.³⁵ A lot of possibilities are handed over to our century: the mental and ideal theatre; the spectacle outside the theatre, from the circus to enveloping spaces; the 'Italian-style' but equipped theatre; the Italian-style theatre reformed in the auditorium (Wagner's auditorium) and thus denied as an environment; the unconfigured 'hall' (from Appia to Stanislavsky's Studies); the stage as a space-generating place. And again the pictorial scenic place or realistic illusion, the abstract scene and the material scene. The frontal relation and the wrapping relation, etc.³⁶

35. De Marinis, *Il mimo contemporaneo e la riscoperta del corpo*, in Alonge & Bonino, *Storia del Teatro Moderno e Contemporaneo. Avanguardie e utopie del teatro. Il Novecento*, Torino, Einaudi, 2001, p. 1097.

36. Cruciani, *Lo spazio del teatro*, 1992.

At bottom there are two ideologies of the theatre and its space: the space of the spectators, in which the men of the show are accommodated; the space of the men of the theatre, in which the

relationship with the spectators is built. What we basically want to do is bring the actor closer to the audience and restore to the scene its playful character, no longer that of a magic box, to rediscover the reality of the stage space, its truth.³⁷

37. Ibid

It is important to emphasise the reasons that led to the radical abandon of canonical buildings: in the 20th century, thanks to the action of the Avant-gardes, the hierarchy of theatrical genres went into a crisis, and with it the hierarchy of theatre venues similarly broke down. As a consequence, the search for spaces other than theatrical ones takes on an almost polemical value, expressing the need to reject the conditions imposed by a spatial arrangement such as the Italian-style hall and to search for different, more flexible and involving situations.

Space becomes an element of dramaturgy: the spatial dimension must be designed from scratch each time, it is not given in advance. Thus we move from the space of dramaturgy to the dramaturgy of space.³⁸

38. Vittorio Fiore, Spazio teatro : luoghi recuperati per la scena

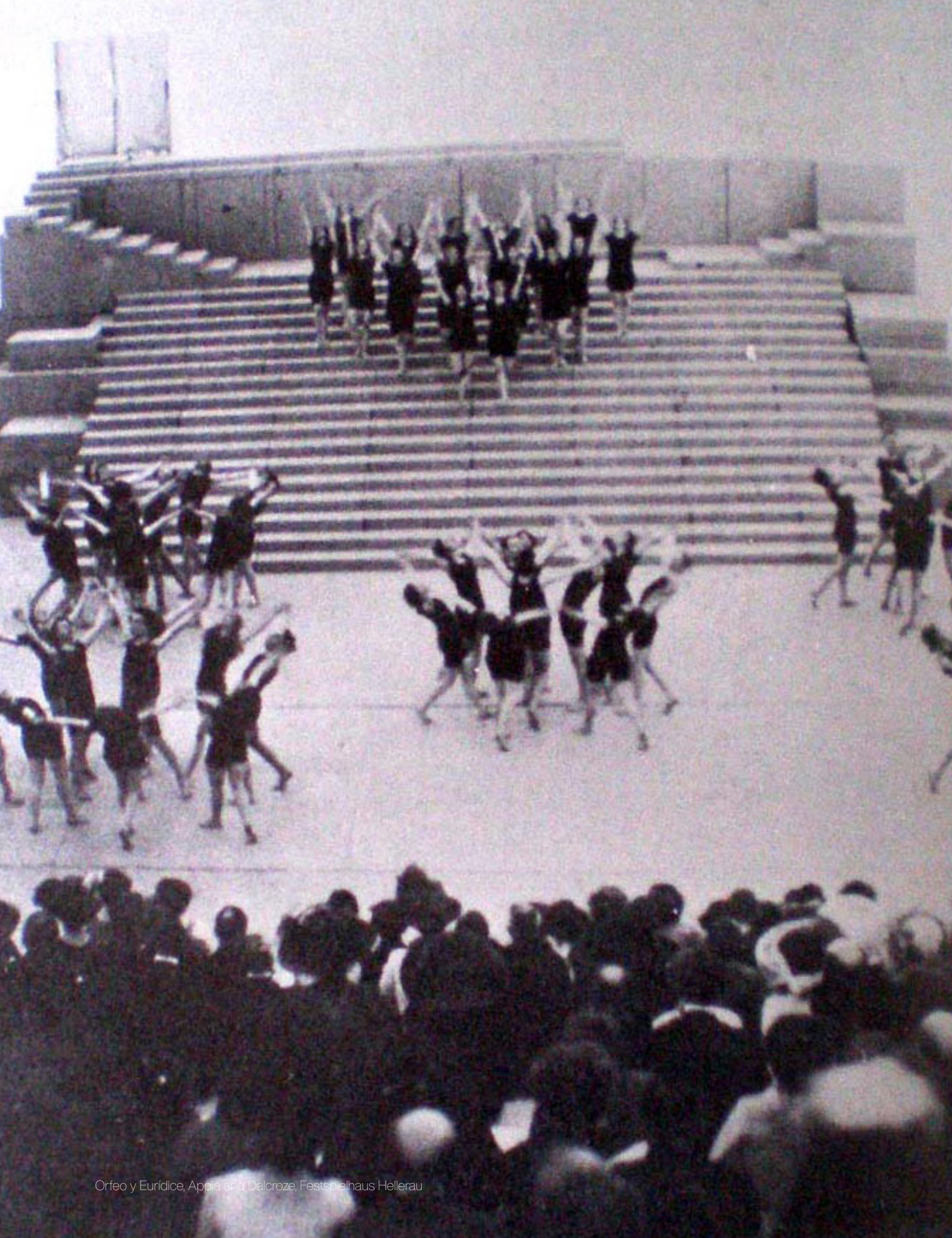
1.2.1 Body in Space

Appia, at the beginning of the 20th century, reformed theatre architecture by postulating the theory of the “plastic stage”, in which the painted backdrops and wings are replaced by stages placed on different levels and slides that allow the actor rational movements. It is the first step towards breaking down the actor/spectator barriers. Until then, the stage backdrop constituted the background, in front of which the scene came to life. The actors played on the foreground, while everything that was scenography lay on a second floor. This dynamic is broken, the scenography is one with the acting space, the actor moves in a space modelled and conceived in three dimensions. In Appia’s view, the stage is an element of a unified creation. We arrive at a total redefinition of the place of the stage action. The actor’s movement creates the scenic space, which must therefore be material and practicable, that is, it must be practicable by the actor and not only indicated by the fiction of painting. “The illusionistic painted scene,” Appia points out, “intends to imitate reality but can only place “signs” on the stage: the scenic space is instead a reality, a place of expression. And it must be ‘living space’. The geometric and practicable volumes are the instrument for the three-dimensional body of the actor; the dialectic that is explicitly established between body and space is based on the principle of *contrainte*, of opposition; this is why the volumes are at sharp angles, rigid and heavy, so that in the contrast the rhythmic movement of the human body is dramatically visualised”.³⁹

39. Cruciani, Lo spazio del teatro, 1992

Its space is always, without issue, frontal. But the revolution is profound: theatre space is an active space, a creation of the artist, never predetermined.

Theatre expands with great centripetal force, it is no longer rigidly defined in recognisable and accepted modes of production and expression; in the expansion of what is called theatre, between the development of partial languages and the search for what is essential, the theatre becomes the place of movement and expressive



Orfeo y Euridice, Appia and Dalcroze, Festspielhaus Hellerau

communication in action, a space for experimentation and verification of those arts that use the body, movement, sound, and vision. At the same time, the artistic fervour of the historical avant-gardes also began to penetrate and unhinge the principles of theatre-making that had been in force until then. They probably mostly introduced new ways of thinking about theatre and performance, enacting a revolution that was more theoretical than practical, but in any case they certainly contributed to modifying and reforming the modes of representation and the culture of theatrical space. Much of the history of the stage space, in fact, in the 20th century, is the history of the figurative arts, of linguistic and formal research movements that pressed against each other. For the avant-garde, it was absolutely necessary for the audience to have direct, unfiltered contact with the theatrical performance; and the audience could itself be part of the performance. This concept, which was very premature for its time and which would later be taken up in the second half of the 20th century by other artistic movements, took concrete form mainly with the realisation of the open stage; the latter would lead to the founding representational revolution that is the abolition of the curtain; montage, simultaneity, the plurality of places in time and space would open up to every relationship. [...] ⁴⁰

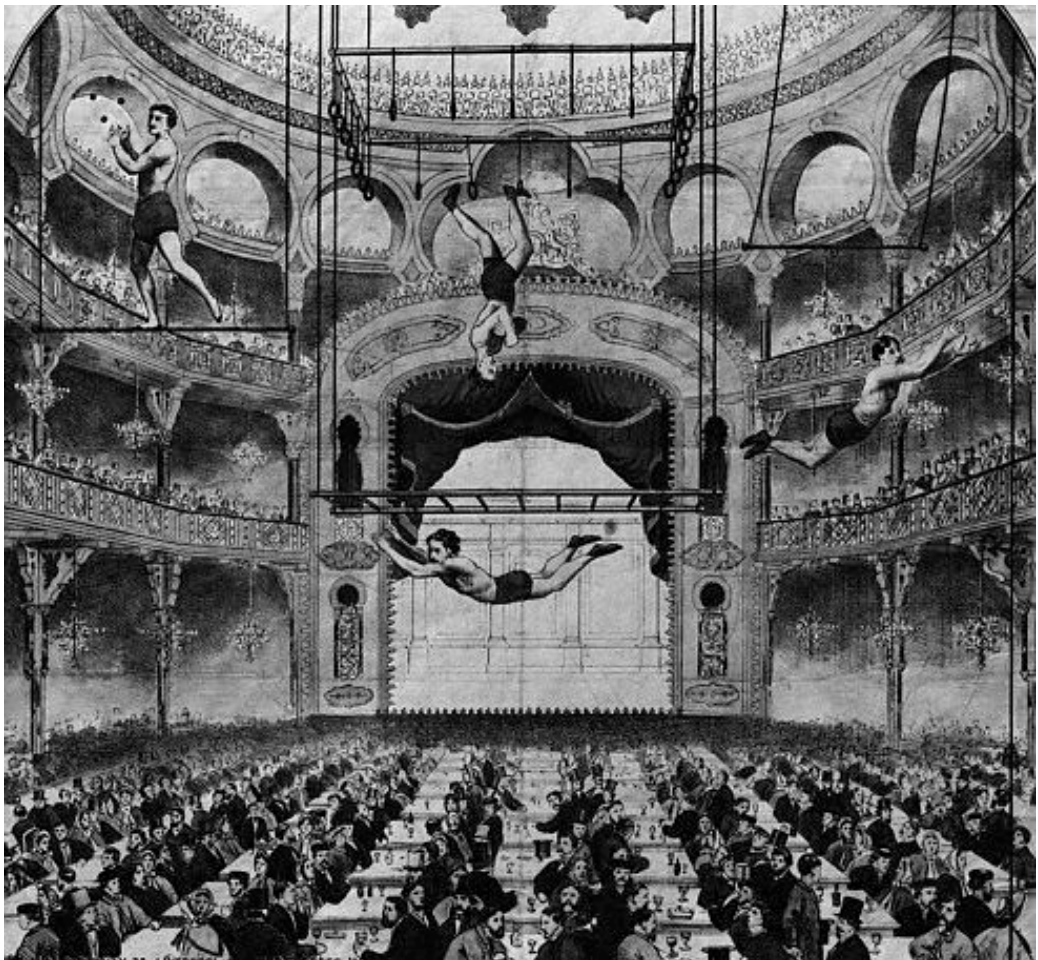
40. Cruciani, *Lo spazio del teatro*, 1992

Space will no longer be the “real” space of the spectators and the ‘fake’ space of the actors: the theatre as a whole will want to be a space of relationships, in non-codified ways. The theatre of the great theatre people will be a creative space, on the fringe because it will no longer be recognised as the space set up for spectators to see the space equipped for performance.⁴¹

41. *Id.*

The avant-gardes established a direct relationship with the public through the programmatic manifesto, the choice of autonomous channels of dissemination such as the exhibition space or the provocative performance (i.e. the Dadaist or Futurist evenings). The many researches of the European avant-gardes owe a clear debt to the early Futurism, of Marinetti and his companions, for the destruction of the stage space-time, the technique of surprise, the breaking of the optical box and the abolition of the proscenium to unite stage and auditorium, and above all for the various proposals of an ‘active’ space, a neutral and abstract space that is acted out by light and movement. Of 1913 is the *Manifesto of the Variety Theatre*, of 1915 is that (by Marinetti with Colla and Settemelli) on the *Futurist Synthetic Theatre*. Futurism wanted to invest theatre space globally, in a subversive sense. Poetics, manifestos and events follow one another

and clash, in the myth of the machine and movement, of active light and the abstract scene, of provocation, of discarding, of montage. Fixed points of this new way of interpreting performance are the rejection of a stage that illusively reproduces reality and the desire not to separate the audience from the stage. Furthermore, there is the conception of new spaces for performance, spaces understood as spaces-environments, spaces of relationship, of interaction with the stage, as were the Futurist, Dadaist and Expressionist cabarets. These were research and experiments that changed the theatre and its space. These extreme experiments with forms and languages, these even violent uses of theatre by contemporary artistic movements helped to create theatre as a place of the possible.



An artist impression of trapeze performers in a Victorian music hall



Marcel Janco, "Cabaret Voltaire", 1916

IL TEATRO FUTURISTA SINTETICO

(ATECNICO - DINAMICO - AUTONOMO - ALOGICO - IRREALE)

CONCLUSIONI:

- 1) abolire totalmente la tecnica sotto cui muore il teatro passatista;
- 2) imporre nel teatro tutte le avventure ideali della nostra genialità, per quanto inverosimili, bizzarre e antiteatrali;
- 3) sinfonizzare la sensibilità del pubblico esplorandone gli angoli più oscuri e risvegliandone le propaggini più pigre; non escludere nessun mezzo per raggiungere questo scopo;
- 4) eliminare il preconconcetto della ribalta lanciando delle reti di sensazioni tra palcoscenico e pubblico; l'azione scenica invaderà platea e spettatori;
- 5) fraternizzare calorosamente coi comici, i quali sono tra i pochi pensatori che rifuggano da ogni deformante sforzo culturale;
- 6) abolire la farsa, il vaudeville, la pochade, la commedia, il dramma e la tragedia, per creare via via al loro posto le numerose forme del teatro futurista, come: le battute in libertà, la simultaneità, la compenetrazione, la sinfonia scenica, la sensazione sceneggiata, l'ilarità dialogata, l'atto negativo, la battuta riecheggiata, la discussione extralogica, la deformazione sintetica, lo spiraglio di esplorazione scientifica....
- 7) creare tra noi e la folla, mediante un contatto continuato, una corrente di confidenza senza rispetto, così da trasfondere nei nostri pubblici la vivacità dinamica di una nuova teatralità futurista.

Ecco le *prime* nostre parole sul teatro. L'architettura futurista ci darà presto in Milano il grande edificio metallico animato da tutte le complicazioni elettromeccaniche, che solo potrà permetterci di attuare scenicamente le nostre più libere concezioni.

MILANO, 11 Gennaio 1915.

F. T. Marinetti
Emilio Settimelli
Bruno Corradini

“Throughout the 20th century, the discourse on theatre space had creative quality only if it was part of the overall discourse on theatre. The system of relations of which it is an active (but not separate) part forces it to be an environment, functional to the theatre people who meet there, in predetermined situations, the spectators. It is therefore a virtual space, uncomfortable when it is predetermined; it is an environment that thrives on its being a relationship between environments, somehow interacting.

From this point of view, twentieth-century theatre has its tradition de naissance in the Italian theatre - not the one of the bourgeois reform - with the difference, however, of becoming specific from time to time, for an artist and not for a civilisation.

The scenic space there lives the double relationship of being the space of the theatre man and the space for the spectator, and it tends to be the space for the actor that, in the theatre of theatre men and not in that of architects, incorporates and determines the other”.

Cruciani, Lo spazio del Teatro

1.2.2 Outside the Theatre

The actor's new position, by stretching his role, can escape the boundaries imposed by the stage and can embrace the spectator not only inside the theatre box, but also in everyday life. This is what happened in the second half of the 20th century, due to a number of artistic movements that felt the need to break the rules of the arts that had dominated up to that point, as a critique of the conventions of the artistic world as well as the ones imposed by society in general (Flux, ..., etc.). In New York, Allan Kaprow coined the term Happening to describe his performances "a purposefully composed form of theatre in which diverse alogical elements, including nonmatrixed performances, are organised in a compartmented structure".⁴²

42. Michael Kirby, *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology*, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965

The Happening finds its meaning in being happened, in happening. Whoever experiences the preformance is no longer divided into actor or spectator; whoever participates is both user and creator of the event.

One of the theatre groups that stands at the crossroads between theatre work and happening is the Squat Theatre, which, following the spirit of performance introduced by Alan Krapow's Happenings, takes the theatrical performance onto the street; still maintaining a distance with the spectator, who's just outside the window of a New York City shop, and thus undermining the bipolar system between the performer and the spectator. The theatrical performance is shifted to a place that belongs to the everyday life of many; leaning on uprights in the back of the shop, the spectators face a stage in front of a window overlooking the street, providing a permanent, live and often highly theatrical backdrop to their performances.⁴³

43. Cruciani, *Lo spazio del teatro*, 1992

The action of an unscripted play takes place in the space between the audience and the window, often inviting the unconscious participation of the outside world.

There is an objectification of the play, placed before everyone's eyes, as consumer goods normally found behind shop windows could be. They wanted to demonstrate and make clear that theatre belonged to everyone, that the spectacle was not restricted to a selected elite and that spectators did not have to submit, according to a relationship of alterity, to those who perform. The artistic gesture wanted to settle into normality. With their radical notions of theatre, the Squat theatre group questioned the role of the actor and that of the spectator, the boundaries between art and life, between fiction and reality.



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The experiences of theatre-events in enclosed spaces thus meet with the desire to bring performances into the streets and public squares. "In the American avant-garde theatre, space will become the intervention of the outsider in the everyday (the happenings), the strict geometries on stage that repetition over a long period of time makes meaningful, the magical and political relationship of the festive type."⁴⁴ The culmination in terms of size and socio-cultural effects of the Happenings phenomenon came with the gigantic Woodstock rock concert in which the spectators themselves became unconscious performers, or only aware of it in retrospect, of the greatest spectacle on a planetary level: the sole protagonist of the event was the staging of the event itself, regardless of the content expressed.

44. Ivi





Members of the crowd at the Woodstock Festival in Bethal, New York





45. Cruciani, Lo spazio del teatro, 1992

Starting from these interpretations, and we might say as their natural consequence in the world of theatrical performance, the Living Theatre developed. A group that for the first time completely shattered artistic conventions in the field of theatre.

Judith Malina and Julian Beck founded the Living Theatre company in New York in 1947, setting up “first a house, then a barn and then an old warehouse [...], they make poor scenes out of wrapping paper and rubbish”⁴⁵.

Their ideology is anarchic and pacifist, they identify theatre and life, actor and man. The theatre building is a fiction, it is no longer a recognised place for performance. They want to put the body back at the centre, eliminating any kind of filter that might limit its perception; consequently the spectator is placed on the same level, there are no bleachers, seats or steps that define an alterity between the beholder and the performer. There was a quest for a theatre aimed not at erudition or distraction but at attacking and provoking the spectator. For this reason, all continuity between stage and stalls was eliminated, as were sets and costumes.

“The Living is a community group that uses the theatre hall as a piazza and its space is in the first instance the tribe itself, the dissemination of actions in the most diverse places, the existential experience that shatters the aesthetic form”⁴⁶

46. Ivi

Great authors are staged in bare spaces, directors work directly in the room, they make the environment in which they act their home and their workplace. The naked environment is unique, the actor can freely experience the space and thus put more strength into his actions. “Against the theatrical building that is a lie, the stage invades the audience”. In 1968 Beck gave an interview:

“We need to go into the streets! We need to destroy this architecture that separates men!”⁴⁷

47. J. Beck e J. Malina, Il Lavoro del Living Theatre. Materiali 1952-1969, Ubulibri, Milano 1982

In the 1960s, The Living embarked on a series of European peregrinations: in which a theatrical prose with art and life at its centre was refined, and a programme of theatrical de-theatreisation (dismantling of all the cornerstones of theatrical work).⁴⁸ The street, the square became the places for performance. It was intended to show that life and art were on the same level and that was within everyone's reach.

48. Marco De Marinis, Breve storia del teatro per immagini, Carrocci, 2008

"I believe that [...] the European period [...] can and should be read not already, or not primarily, as a period of enrichments and (sometimes) revolutionary innovations of the theatrical form (of course, this was also the case, but secondarily, almost against its deepest intentions), but rather as a period in which The Living [...] began its exit from the "theatrical envelope", beginning to unravel the theatre and dismantle its cornerstones: good acting, well-constructed fiction, auteur directing, etc." ⁴⁹

49. *Id.*

The Living Theatre, from Europe, would send the message of a different use of theatre, with *Mysteries*, with *Antigone*, with *Paradise Now*, with its "actions". ⁵⁰

50. Fabrizio Cruciani e Clelia Falletti, a cura di, *Civiltà Teatrale nel xx secolo*, Il Mulino, 1986 p. 274







The space of the theatre is sought outside the theatre, but the escape from theatre buildings is substantial because it does not so much seek a form but a meaning and an environment. The radical position of a theatre man who has used very different spaces, such as Firmin Gémier, comes to be that of thinking of theatre as “a covered and heated public square where the actors arrive”.

Cruciani, Lo spazio del Teatro

1.2.3 Space Performativity

As a result of the experiences we have seen so far, new perspectives on theatrical representation mature, which increasingly move away from the antiquated models expressed by Italian-style theatre, to embrace new models of expression. Great directors bring this ideological fervour into the theatres, giving shape to a real theatrical representation, which is no longer simply happening or performance used as a means of expression or communication. A new way of doing theatre is definitively codified. Returning therefore partially inside the theatrical boxes, what the directors concentrate on is the management of the relationship between actor and spectator, a management that is always and in any case carried out with the intention of eliminating any type of alterity between the two parties. We could say that, in line with the artistic fervour and the desire to break the rules of the period, an attempt is made to apply the principles introduced by the happenings and the avant-garde within the theatres, or at least in confined, reused, abandoned environments used as theatres. It is sought a way to reconcile theoretical abstractions with the reality of the theatrical world.

Jerzy Grotowski experiments to the extreme with the problem of the theatre's space as a system of relationships and a place of experience. "The essential and generating knot of theatre is the actor-spectator relationship:[...] the scenic place can only be the kinetic medium for the actor, with necessary costumes and objects; and the space of theatre can only be an organisation of space capable of orienting, with respect to the dramaturgy of the event, the two groups that make it possible, the actors and the spectators."⁵¹

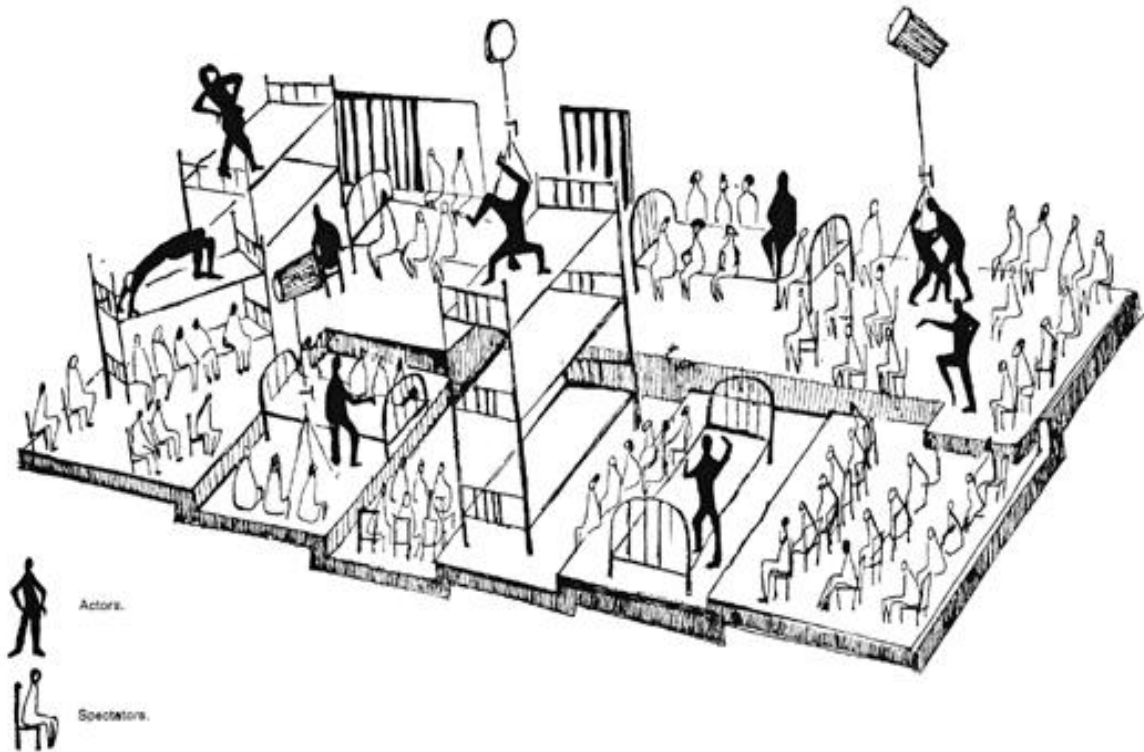
51. Cruciani, Lo spazio del teatro, 1992

Grotowski's Poor Theatre only needs an empty hall, without even a stage and chairs. The space of the theatre can redetermine itself each time thanks to the bodies that occupy it.

The actor enriches the vigour of his movements and voice, the spectator is there to perceive them. It is a total theatre, in a space organised to make an event happen that all participants experience together.

“By gradually eliminating everything that is unnecessary, we discover that theatre can exist without special make-up, costumes and sets”⁵²

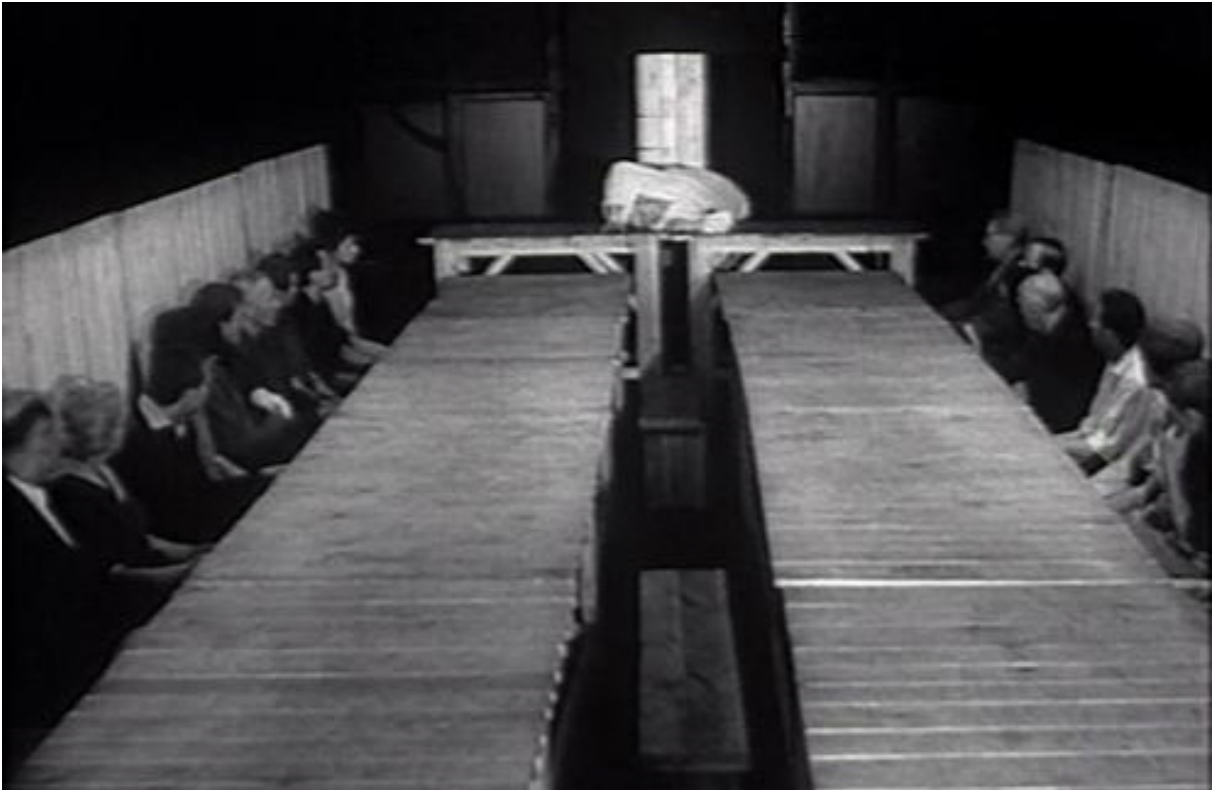
52. Grotowski, *Per un teatro povero*, Bulzoni, 1970

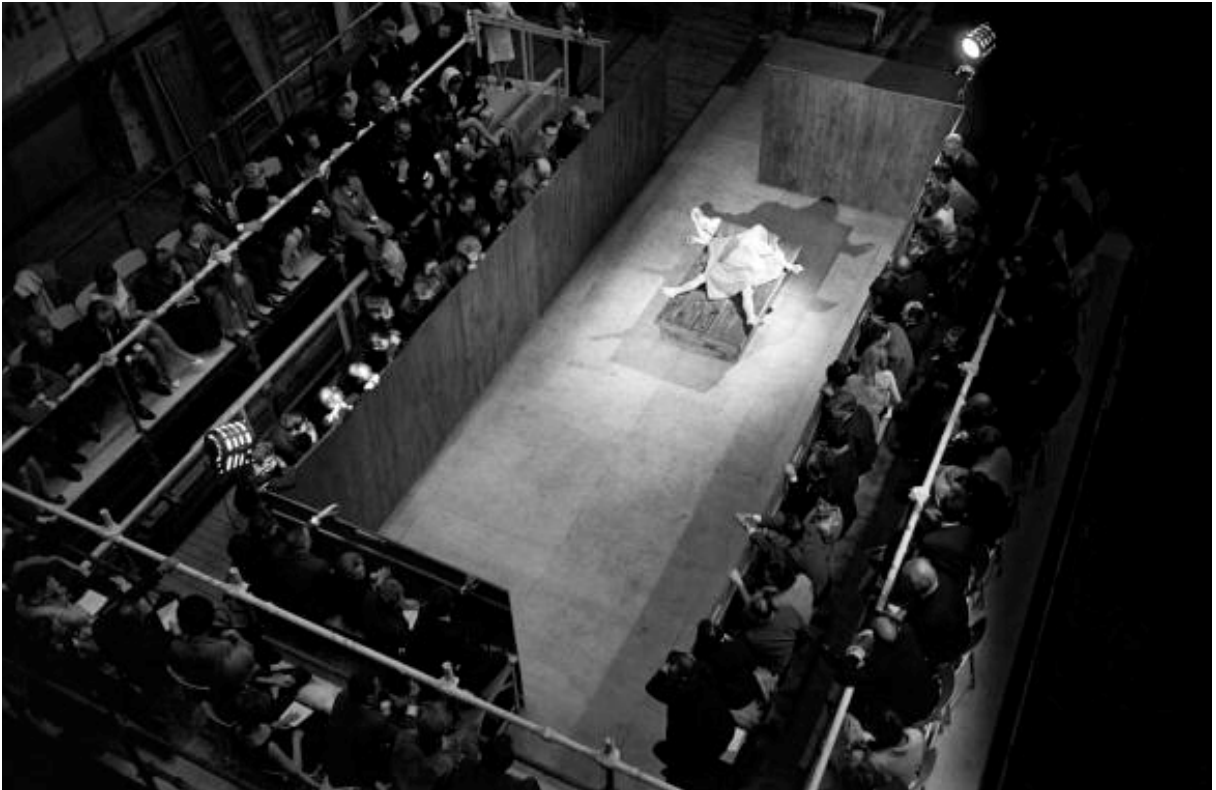


Grotowski's stage space is never prefixed, in fact it loses all fixed elements and it is completely recreated depending on the dramatic situation and the type of relationship that is intended to be established with the spectator. It is therefore a space that rarely makes use of conventional theatres, in many of his performances, actor and spectator share the stage or the stalls, these elements are no longer distinguishable.

Grotowski embodies more than anyone else the theatrical revolution of the 20th century, the one who took theatre from being an end to being a means, i.e. from pure aesthetic entertainment to an effective instrument of knowledge: his is a theatre beyond the performance, aimed in the first instance at benefiting the performer, and no longer the spectator.⁵³

53. De Marinis, *Il nuovo teatro 1947-1970*, Bompiani, 2000





The rejection of the theatrical space for an action that expands in space to involve the entire auditorium was pioneered, most consciously, by Richard Schechner. In the 1960s, his environmental theatre became a widespread mode of alternative theatre, for a space against the theatrical tradition, of fusion between actors and spectators. In the garage where his Performance Group is based, the space is a complex construction, in four floors with stairs and platforms: there is no scenic place but only the space of the action that, as in *Dionysus in 69*, allows the actor to provoke the spectator to participation.

Space is the dynamic of actions, as Schechner would specify when speaking of the Performer; and, coherently, his thought, from performance to anthropology, would be oriented towards the performative process, ritual space, and the perception of the spectator.

“All the space is used for performance; all the space is used for audience”⁵⁴

54. Richard Schechner, 6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre, *The Drama Review: TDR*, Spring, 1968, Vol. 12, No. 3, Architecture/Environment (Spring, 1968), pp. 41-64, Published by: The MIT Press

Similarly, in Italy, Luca Ronconi interprets the theatre as a place where the spectator is at the centre and where the play cannot be predefined, pre-set for serial programming, but must be conceived from time to time according to the place, the event to be told. The staging in the old theatrical boxes is no longer taken for granted, an attempt is made to involve the spectator in the work also through the physical/natural context in which one finds oneself, as happened in the early days of theatres with the Greeks and the Acropolis. Thus the physicality of the place takes on fundamental relevance, and is used to suggest the spectator.

If Schechner's Environmental Theatre unifies the entire space of the audience and the actor, in Ronconi it is the scene that becomes environmental, a dramaturgical machine for the audience. It can expand into non-theatre spaces or close into the theatre hall, literally occupying it.

In his most famous theatrical performances, we see Ronconi set the stage in places not designed for theatre, but rather he uses, by choice or by necessity, a churchyard, a former shipyard, an industrial pavilion; places he believes are better suited to express, to narrate the plays in hand. Rather than setting up a stage that simulates another reality, he seeks those realities in places that already exist.



Dionysus in 69: one of the 'towers' surrounding the central stage of the Performance Garage

On 4 July 1969, in the churchyard of S. Niccolò in Spoleto, Luca Ronconi staged Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. At that moment, Ronconi emerged as a leading director in the theatre of the second historical avant-garde.

"The audience standing in the large room, assaulted by the action taking place in different places throughout the entire usable space, with the actors acting now on movable trolleys, now on platforms at the ends of the room, now on the floor among the people. The actions often take place simultaneously, so that the spectators, after the initial astonishment, are free to move from one side of the room to the other, following the vicissitudes of their favourite hero with the same enjoyment as those wandering through fairground carts. [...] Gradually, in the multiplicity of pieces recited simultaneously, one finds the richness of Ariosto's contaminations. The fantastic dimension is in the pouring into the theatre of impressive scenic machines, built with extreme simplicity on essential wooden bases by Uberto Bertacca: an inexhaustible succession of directorial gimmicks recreate the castle of Atlas or the siege of Paris or Orlando's fight with the orca: and the sense of the marvellous is reborn. Experiencing this *Orlando Furioso* by following the paladins' mad wanderings in an amused quest, always on the edge of nonsense and resulting in madness or utopian flight, also means returning to childhood. This is the sense of the overwhelming applause that greeted the knights riding their metal horses, the impressive duels, the hovering of the hippogriff in the air. Not for years has there been such a total encounter between the audience and a performance: the cancellation of distance from the actor, who rediscovers the joy of acting in direct contact, is fundamental".⁵⁵

55. Franco Quadri, articolo su *Panorama*, 17 Luglio 1969

In the environment there is electricity, the actors' actions invade the spectators who almost have to move to let the moving machines pass, almost as if they were in the very moment of the story, taking part in it.

"What is space for me? I have always believed that every theatrical text, that is specifically written for the theatre, or literary, but susceptible of becoming a theatrical fact, implies a unique space. I have always thought that spatial coordinates, I mean in relation to the audience, should vary from text to text, and that theatre can be done anywhere."⁵⁶

56. Luca Ronconi, Gianfranco Capitta, *Teatro della conoscenza*, Laterza, Bari 2012, p.34.











In Utopia, the narrative expands in the scenic space of a street, with the audience on either side, in a tumultuous and metaphorical rubbish warehouse in which the actors move towards an impossible destination, a claim to vitality and vital humour amidst old planes, cars and wreckage.

The reproduction of an urban street in which actors-passers led the audience through the life of a hypothetical city took place inside the Ex Cantieri Navali della Giudecca, with the clear intention of making the public aware of the necessary architectural and social recovery of disused places, but highly significant from the point of view of the urban evolution of a city. The theatre space had to be the place of the acting action and at the same time of the relationship with the audience.

57. Cattiodoro, Architettura scenica e teatro urbano, Franco Angeli, 2007

“theatre can be everywhere in the city, above any background, because the first theatre is the background of social life, the very image of the city”⁵⁷





Luca Ronconi, Utopia, ex Cantieri della Giudecca (Biennale Teatro), Venezia, 1975





Luca Ronconi, Utopia, ex Cantieri della Giudecca (Biennale Teatro), Venezia, 1975

In the same years, in France, Ariane Mnouchkine pursued an idea of theatre that entirely embraced an abandoned building, an arms factory, and made it her home. The power enacted by Mnouchkine's work derives largely from the emotional intensity and depth conveyed by the place. Although rusty and with many flaws for staging, the former factory manages to capture the spectator; not having started out as a theatre, it can be configured in the most disparate ways, thus generating numerous modes of interaction between actor and spectator.

“Why in an arms factory - the Cartoucherie de Vincennes, when we set up there in 1970 - since it was dirty, blackish, full of grease, machines and holes in the roof? By what laws can such a space make the imagination breathe? First of all, the theatrical place must be an inspiring void - inspiring for the actors, for the directors and also for the spectators”.⁵⁸

58. Ariane Mnouchkine,
Intervista rilasciata nel
gennaio 1989

This place must perhaps have something maternal about it; it is an emptiness, a receptacle. There are magnificent places, but so complete that they do not need to house a theatre. [...] As we now give more importance to the text and want to tell things with more intensity and depth, we have to offer more favourable listening conditions. The text has taken the place of a certain architecture. “The Cartoucherie is almost ideal for all of us. Admittedly, the ceiling is a little low and the beams of the framework sometimes disturb, but it is a house, a theatre, a large umbrella of harmonious form, of solid material on which one can sculpt, paint, plate. It is neither wooden frames nor metal walls that vibrate, but walls and a roof. Why is a factory often a better theatrical venue than others? Because it is made to house creations, productions, works, inventions, explosions!”

“I believe that in a theatre, one always looks not for a set for a play, but for the unique scene that, under the fire of the spectators’ and actors’ imagination, becomes a Whole. That is what the Greek, Elizabethan and Italian-style theatres sought in their day. Today, until we really know what to do to replace these models, a moratorium could be considered: stop building new theatres and, in return, prevent places from dying. This is very serious! You see magnificent spaces that could be places for communion, for meetings, for theatre, for music - anything you want! They are destroyed forever... and what are they replaced with?”⁵⁹

60. Ibid







Martine Franck, 1793, at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes, Paris, France, 1972





1.3 Event Space





Living Theatre - Enthusiasm of a student undressing to take part in the performance, Politecnico di Milano, 1970

Whereas architecture formerly served as a baseline for reality - bricks and mortar, house and home, structure and foundation were the metaphors that anchored our reality - **what constitutes reality today is not so clear.**

Traditionally, architecture was placebound, linked to a condition of experience.

Today, mediated environments challenge the givens of classical time, the time of experience: on any afternoon anywhere in the world, whether at the Prado in Madrid or the Metropolitan in New York, hordes of people pass before artworks, hardly stopping to see, at best perhaps merely photographing their experience.

They (the people) have no time for the original, even less for the experience of the original. Due to media, **the time of experience has changed. [...]**

Architecture can no longer be bound by the static conditions of space and place, here and there. In a mediated world, there are no longer places in the sense that we once knew them. Architecture must now address the problem of the event. [...] People go to rock concerts not to listen - because one cannot merely "hear" the music - but to become part of the environment. This is a new type of environment, comprised of light, sound, movement, an event-structure in which architecture does not simply stand against media, but is consumed by it. [...]

Traditional architectural theory largely ignores the idea of the event.

Unfolding Events, Peter Eisenman

1.3.1 Apollonian, Dionysian

The development of art is linked to the dualism of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. On the two gods of Ancient Greece assigned to the arts is founded our theory of the existence: the figurative art, of Apollo, and the non-figurative art, of Dionysus: the two instincts, so different from each other, proceed side by side mostly in open discord.

The Apollonian is symbolizing the dream, the plastic arts, the calm magnificence of the Olympian gods;

The Dionysian is symbolizing instead the intoxication, the music, the orgiastic frenzy of Dionysus' festivals.

For Nietzsche Dionysian is also "casting one's gaze into the abyss", confronting the horror of existence without being bowed by it, accepting it and - according to a later formulation - "saying 'yes' to life."

[...] Even as the Modern movement sought to industrialize, control, and harmonize space, the avant-garde wished to radically undermine it, celebrating the sacrificial body dancing amid the debris.

This theatrical will-to-destruction - standing in opposition to an architectural will-to-creation - was prefigured by Nietzsche, whose book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, embodied the violent transition into new century calling for a return to the intoxication and excesses of ancient Dionysian rites in Greek performance in order to compensate an overemphasis on Apollonian form and vision.⁶⁰

Tragedy was an admonition and critique against the rigid Apollonian form, which the Dionysian act comes to shatter; revealing the inherent fragility of human structures, as individual identities, social institutions and constructed assemblages. Dionysus, as creator and destroyer, is a force driving through all forms, challenging their Apollonian individuation, differentiation and rigidity, making and remaking them.⁶¹ As an architecture denied this tragic Dionysian vision while it attempted to build a rational, unified world over the void, rather than "looking boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature."⁶²

Nietzsche's reconciliation of Dionysian and Apollonian forces therefore constituted a revolutionary spatial event that was also aspatial. It

60. Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Routledge, 2019 p.28

61. *Ibid.* p. 31

62. *Ibid.* p. 33

required more than tearing down the physical and metaphorical veil-as-curtain that separated the distanced viewing place of the theatron from the participatory space of the chorus.⁶³

63. *Ivi* p.32

Writing between two brutal World Wars, Walter Benjamin, in his exposition on Brecht's Epic Theatre, referred to Wagner's pit, claiming that the stage "no longer rises from an immeasurable depth; it has become a public platform."

"The abyss that separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living, the abyss whose silence heightens the sublime in drama, whose resonance heightens the intoxication of opera, this abyss which, of all the elements of the stage, most indelibly bears the traces of its sacral origins, has lost its function."⁶⁴

64. Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, p.1

Yet before we hack at the proscenium [...] we ought to have pounded it with our fists, exhausting ourselves in the task of knowing its limits, so that when it crumbles, we know what we've knocked down and whether we have anything genuine to erect in its place.⁶⁵

65. Herbert Blau, *The Impossible Theatre: a Manifesto*

Richard Wagner and Charles Garnier - progenitors of the two most significant European theatre buildings at the end of the 19th century concurrently created two different kinds of event-spaces in Bayreuth (1872-1876) and Paris (1861-1875). As these epigraphs make evident Wagner utilized architecture to focus the performance as a singular framed artwork that privileges the artists, while Garnier employed it to emphasize the multiplicity of participatory performances enacted by the public. The mutual resistance between spectacles on stage and in the auditorium, mediated by the proscenium arch, had reached a limit: the former as a scenic construction and the latter as a social construction.⁶⁶

66. Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Routledge, 2019 p.59

That style changed for the worse with the increase in size of those theatres [...] Theatre was no longer an extension of real life but a different plane of existence, a lofty world dressed with neo-classical images.⁶⁷

67. Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor and Audience*

The repeated uprights of the proscenium frame in the auditorium enclosed the audience within the perspectival scene of both architecture and scenery that converged on a mutually sited vanishing point toward the back of the stage. The buried orchestra pit reinforced this spatial unification of the real with the ideal by eliminating the usual visual and spatial interruption of musicians and conductor. Yet, while the devices of double proscenium, invisible orchestra and darkness worked to immerse the audience in the fictional world presented on the stage, they simultaneously formed distancing devices that withheld any active participatory engagement with and between the audience. The usually distracted spectators of the late 19th century were transformed into hushed listeners in the "temple" to Wagner's art. The conspicuous "neighbour" who reigned in the bourgeois theatre became an isolated "devotee" within a faithful collective. Paying tribute to Bayreuth as a "triumph of rational auditorium design over the Italian baroque tradition," Izenour praises its architecture for setting up a direct relationship between performance and individual spectator isolated in comfort and ease with an unobstructed view of the stage. As Luce Irigaray wrote the captives in Plato's Allegory of the Cave:

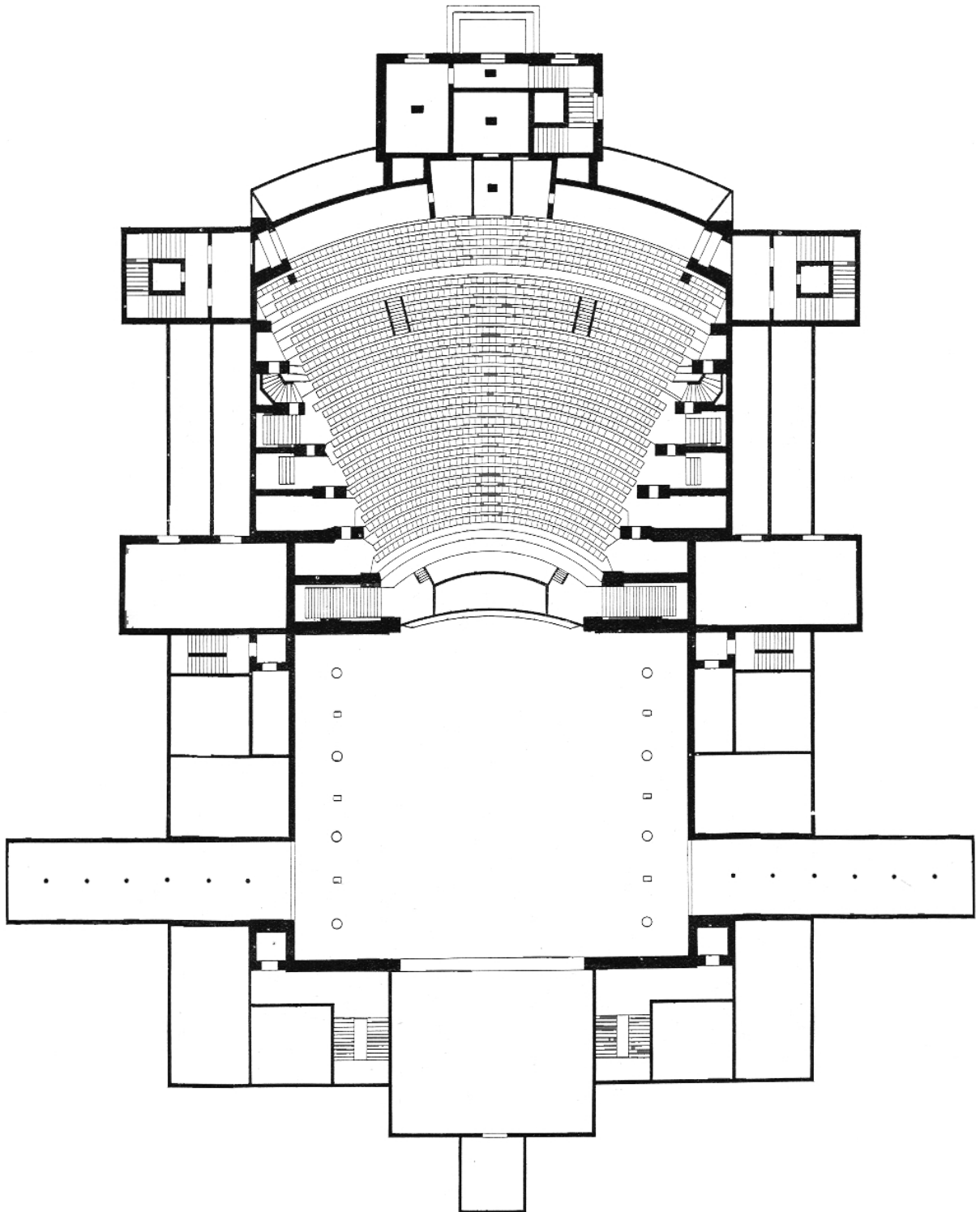
“Heads forward, eyes forward, genitals aligned, fixed in a straight direction and always straining forward, in a straight line”.

Radical and demanding in the 1870s, this way of attending a performance differed greatly from the more mobile body and distracted gaze inhabiting the baroque auditorium. Like Plato's prisoners, we are now willingly enchained to darkness, silence and each other, entranced by projected images on the wall and too often oblivious to alternative ways of participating in the event.⁶⁸

The emphasis by Wagner and subsequent theatre historians on a return to the fan-shaped amphitheatre of ancient Greece as a 'democratic form is problematic. Any resemblance to this format is in the singular inclined plane of viewers that was narrowed to 30 degrees in order to submit to the demands of the perspectival stage. Otherwise it bears little resemblance to the semi-circular amphitheatre of the antique stage, which wrapped the participatory space of the orchestra. Wagner's more constricted wedge format allowed no such inclusion. Shaw was quick to point out that, although constructed in the name of democracy, all seats may have had "equally good" views, but the wedge format positioned a larger number of people further from the action as seating spread away from the stage."⁶⁹

68. Irigaray, *The stage setup*, p.64

69. Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Routledge, 2019 p.87



All will have an air of festivity and pleasure, and without realizing what is owed to architecture for this magical effect, everyone will participate in it and everyone will thus render [...] homage to this great art, so powerful in its manifestations, so elevated in its results. ⁷⁰

70. Charles Garnier, Le Théâtre, Paris, 1871

Garnier's architecture facilitated a range of public and private performances and encounters. Like the staged *mise-en-scène*, his design was predicated on a sequence of picturesque tableaux created between bodies and the architectural scene in relation to a spectator's passage through the building. This is in keeping with Tschumi's formulation of Space/Event/Movement in which architecture is apprehended through mobility as a series of unfolding encounters. Garnier was interested in the animation of architecture by human bodies in social interaction, as well as by the light, colour and texture of its details.

In Le Théâtre Garnier describes the "theatrical art" of his architectural *mise-en-scène* as a combination of static scenery and dynamic public performance: the building is "adorned", "animated" and "enlivened" by the varying temporalities and modalities of occupation, as a result of which "all will have an air of festivity and pleasure, and without realizing what is owed to architecture for this magical effect." ⁷¹

71. *Ibid.*, p.69

In January 1875, Garnier's Opera House was hailed in Le Monde Illustré by Albert de Lasalle as "an architectural event" where the "frame has effaced the painting [...] since it is the Opéra itself the people go to see." The building was such a compelling event that the public bought tickets without even knowing what was being performed on its stage proper. Architecture itself was the performance and came to be regarded as an excessive force that threatened the art form it housed.

⁷²

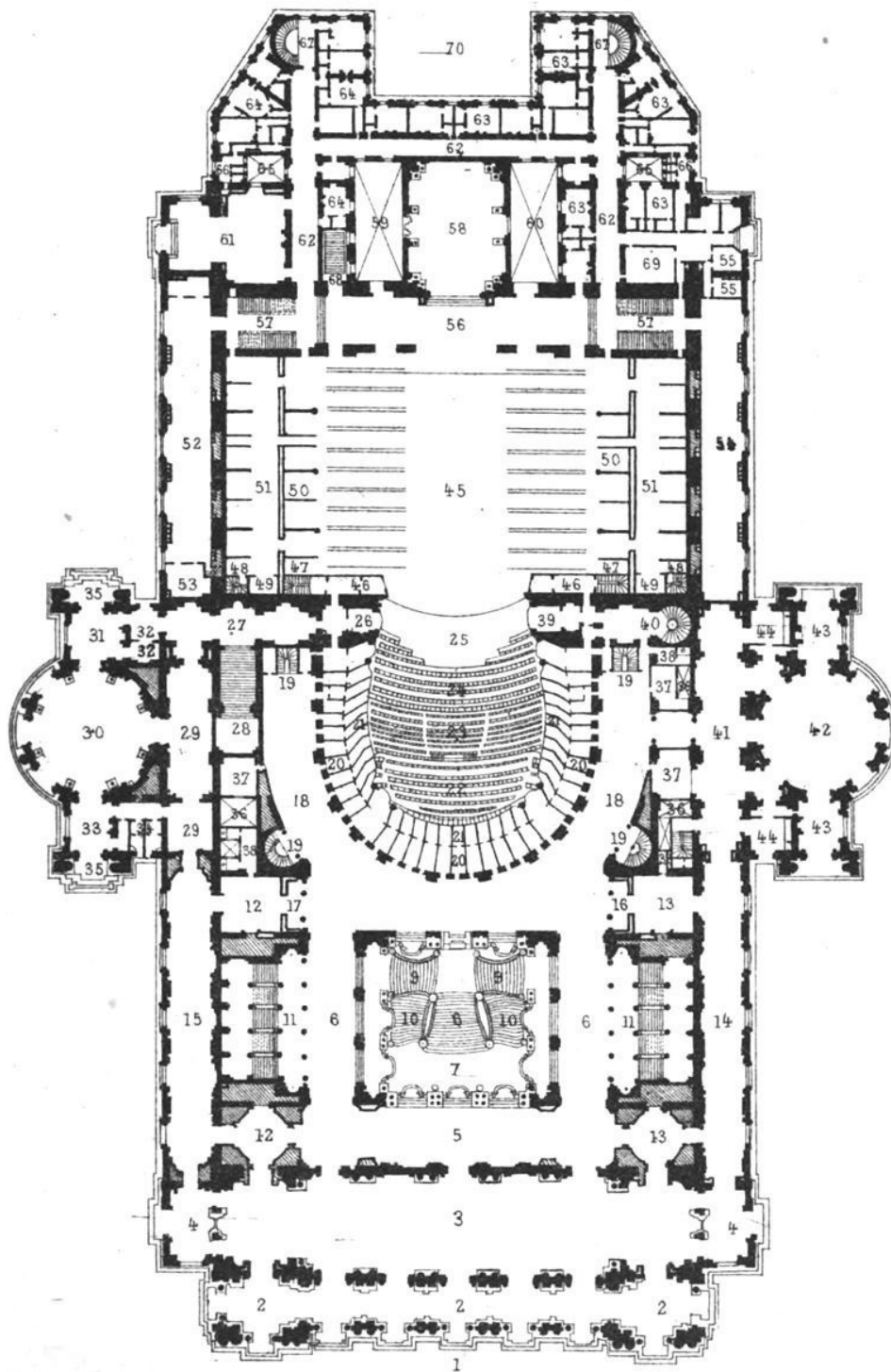
72. *Ibid.*, p.74

"In the foyers all the seats are confused, only in the auditorium are they distinct". ⁷³

73. *ibid.*

While Wagner was interested in isolating and focusing the individual, Garnier concentrate more on "la liberté collective" than "la liberté individuelle". ⁷⁴

74. *Ibid.*, p.90







Le foyer de la danse, Maison Jean Vilar, 1937

1.3.2 Event Creates Architecture

Rather than “theatre” or “architecture” we should focus on “performance” and “space”, on the “event”. The event itself molds space.

“But, as we all know, “space”, which floats around and through our tenuous connections to a rational framework, is itself a nebulous word.

Yet - whether a suspended pause, a blank area, an empty room, a discursive realm or a limitless cosmos - space performs”.⁷⁵

“It is the stuff of architects (who construct it) and scenographers (who abstract it); experienced by inhabitants (immersed in it) and spectators (who tend to regard it)”.⁷⁶

Space is a physical entity as much as a social one, it is a “performative medium” which acts on, and is activated by, its occupants, who need to be physically present within it.

75. P. Eisenman, 'Unfolding Events' in J. Crary & S. Kwinter, eds. *Incorporation* (New York, Zone, 1992), preface

76. *Ivi*

Following the logic introduced by Eisenman, an event can interpret architecture if it is placed in the condition of being shaped, modelled, from time to time, by the activities that take place there. In the theatrical sphere, any void can be interpreted as an object of performance. This concept relates to the Happenings, and this means nothing more than letting events and situations to happen. The architecture, with its purity, will be able to accommodate them.

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. ⁷⁷

77. Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Touchstone, 1996



1.3.3

Architecture Creates Event

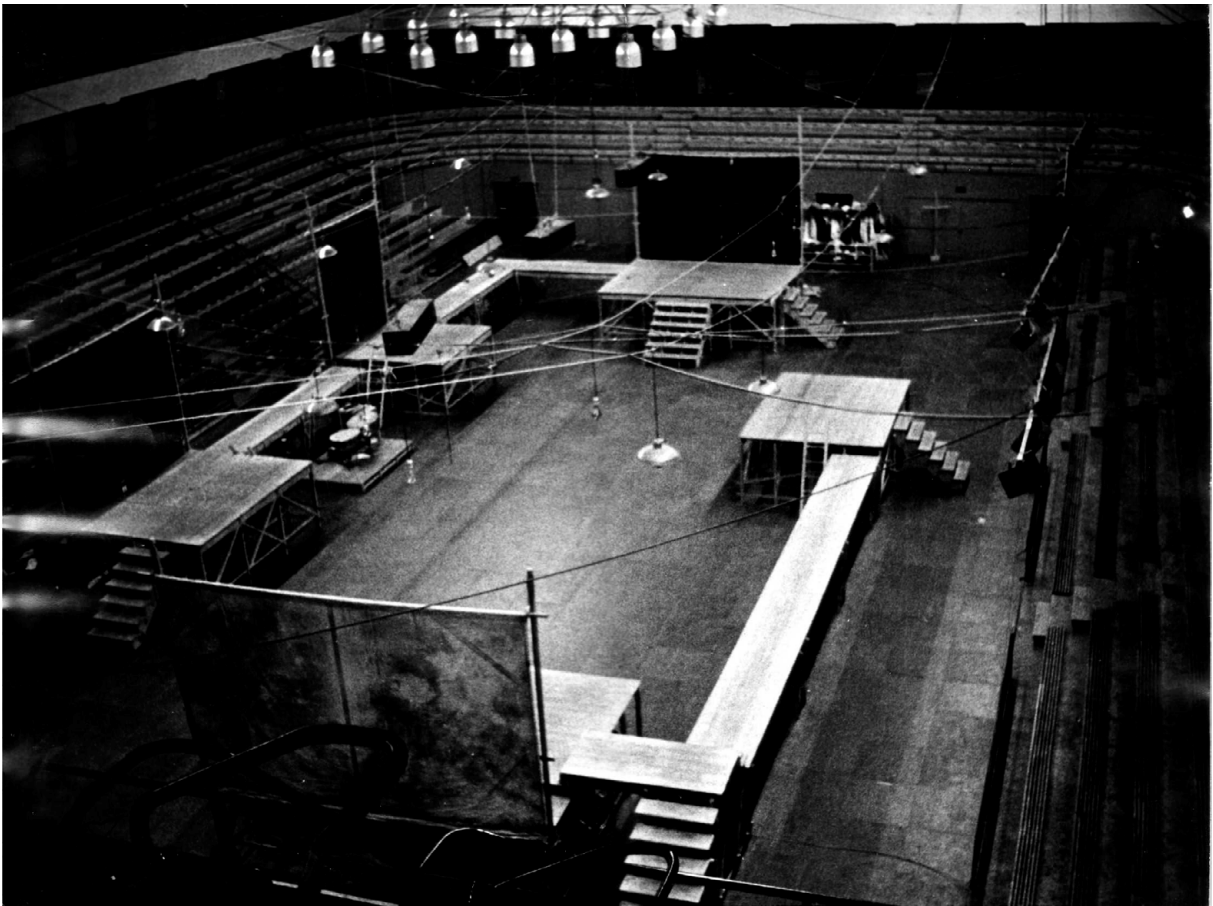
"Architecture is as much about the events that take place in spaces as about the spaces themselves [...] the static notions of form and function long favoured by architectural discourse need to be replaced by attention to the actions that occur inside and around buildings - to the movement of bodies, to activities, to aspirations; in short, to the properly social and political dimension of architecture. Moreover, the cause-and-effect relationship sanctified by modernism, by which form follows function (or vice versa), needs to be abandoned in favour of promiscuous collisions of programs and spaces, in which the terms intermingle, combine and implicate on the other in the production of a new architectural reality." ⁷⁸

78. Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities*, MIT Pr, 1994

Architecture is capable of generating events; however, this statement does not intend to portray it as a totalizing or unambiguous tool. Instead, it is more accurate to say that architecture can generate a program, leading to a multitude of events. It is the event itself, which can remain independent of the space that accommodates it, that adjusts and interacts itself with architecture in various ways.

"The built environment housing the event is itself an event."

79. M



1.3.4 Strength of Weakness

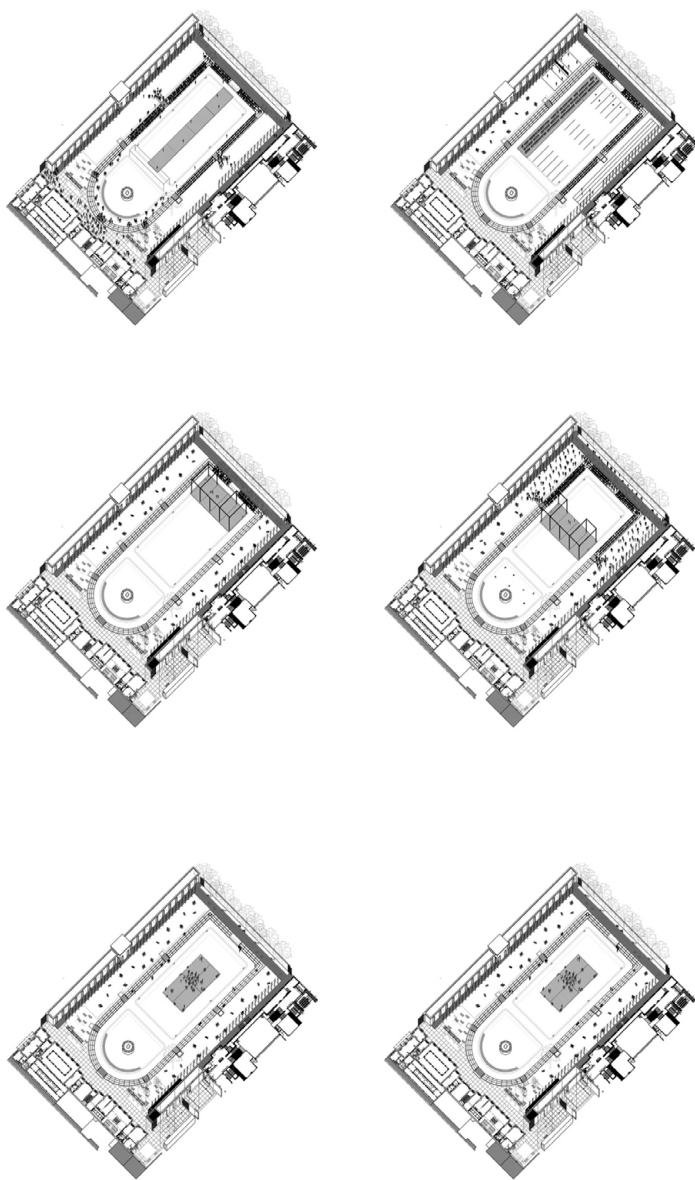
Event-space can be defined as an encounter between architecture (spatial discourse) and performance (event discourse). "While the former is associated with endurance, stability and fixity, the latter embraces ephemerality, fictionality and flux. Both discursive fields can, however, be mutually transformed as the becoming-performance of architecture and becoming-architecture of performance." [...] The incursion of movement into art challenged the assumption of a static spectator in both theatre and architecture, reinforcing a new apprehension of space by perceptual bodies in motion. New spatial models were required to express the new physics of space-time that, incorporating the event, had shifted architecture from monolithic being into a constant state of active and "perpetual becoming."⁷⁰

70. Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Routledge, 2019 p.11

To make event happen in architecture, we must consider new spatial models, characterised by temporality and ephemerality. "This is the strength of weakness; that strength which art and architecture are capable of producing precisely when they adopt a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential and weak".⁷¹

Space can no longer be conceived as univocal, but must be open to changes in uses and functions over time. Translating these words to the field of theatrical performance, a disparate number of performative typologies can thus take place in the same theatrical space, only if the latter is endowed with physical characteristics that allow it to change its spatial conformation, in order to better adapt to different representations.

71. Sola Morales. *Differences: topography in contemporary architecture*



1.3.5 Active audience

72. Mackintosh Iain,
Architecture, Actor and
Audience

The audience's role is an active, not a passive, one. "We must look for the sort of theatre which involves the audience to the extent of becoming active participators in the theatrical event, of experiencing the catharsis."⁷²

In most cases, the theaters that have been the focal point of artistic and intellectual life for the past 400 years seldom offered great comfort or a perfect view. Instead, they were small, uncomfortable, and densely packed. In these theaters, actors were typically positioned at one end of the space on a modestly equipped stage, while the audience was arranged on three sides of the acting area, with the majority seated at the front. However, this straightforward architectural arrangement of meeting the needs of actors and audience has rarely satisfied architectural or scenic innovators who have always sought to redefine the theater. They aim to create a stronger connection, more space for performances, greater comfort for the seated audience, or even an entirely new form.

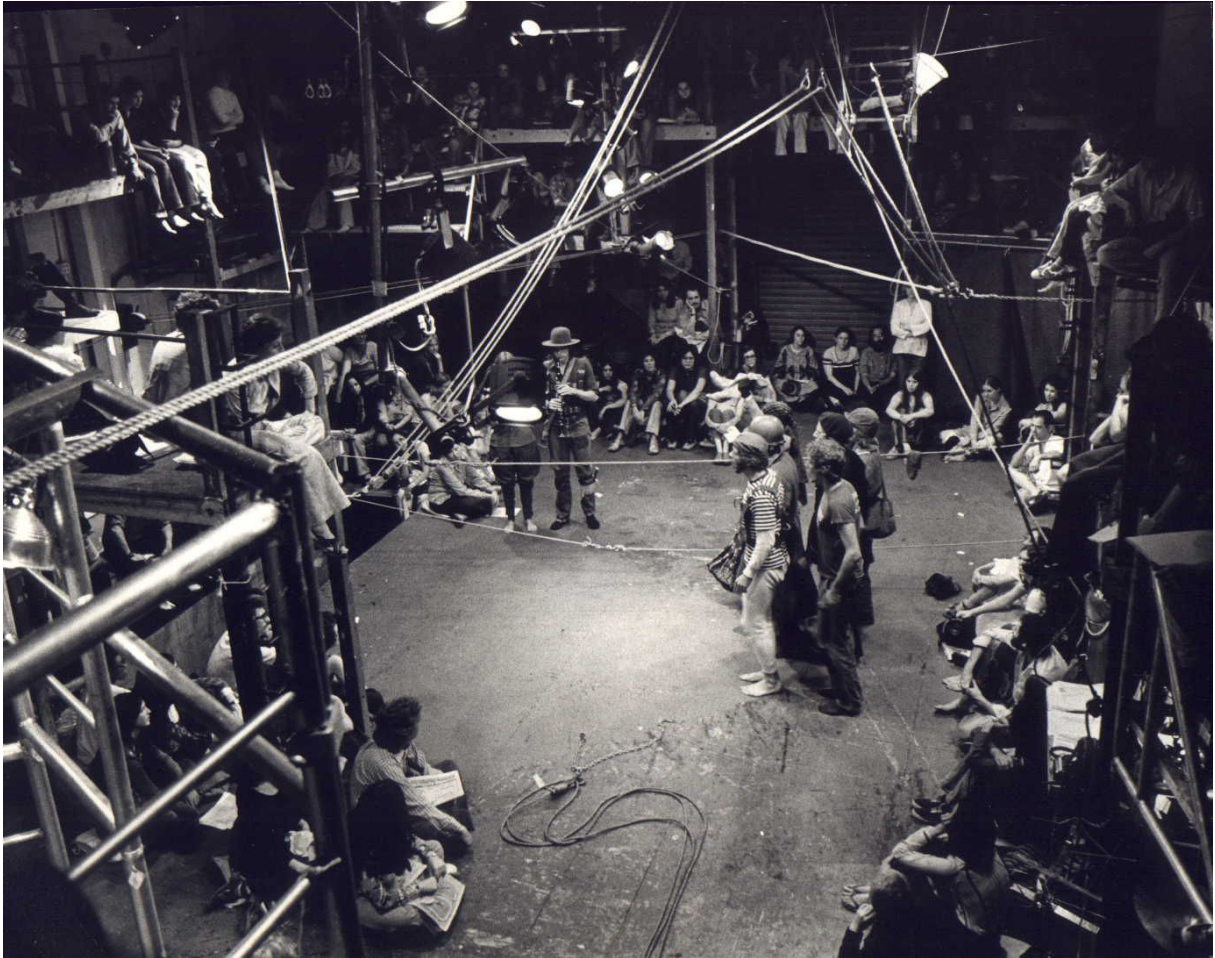
Nevertheless, what truly sets the theatrical experience apart is the intimate relationship established between performers and the audience. It goes beyond simply sitting comfortably in cushioned armchairs and watching a performance like going to the cinema. Theater encompasses much more, and to truly experience it, we must embrace discomfort. Playwrights and the actor-spectator relationship have demonstrated that this bond must be reevaluated and transcended, breaking free from the constraints imposed by historical norms. The audience must actively participate in the theatrical performance.

"This would not be good news for the tired executive sitting down to a musical after a large dinner, but is instantly understandable to young theatre makers anxious to involve the audience directly in the creative act of theatre."⁷³

73. Ibid

Peter Brook wrote in *The Shifting Point*, published in 1988, that.

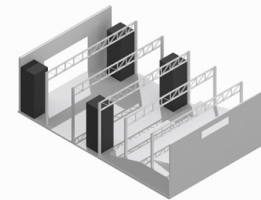
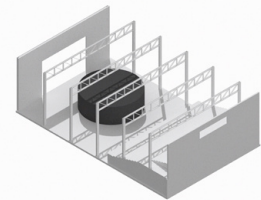
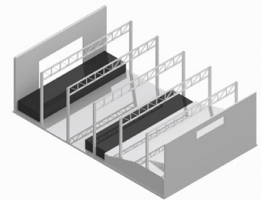
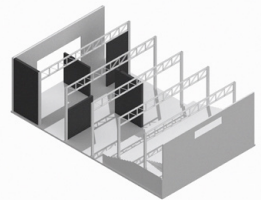
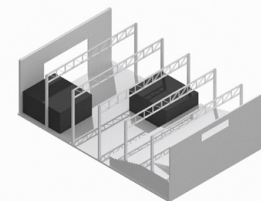
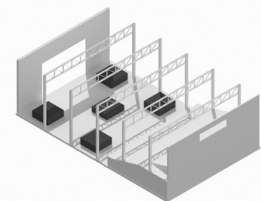
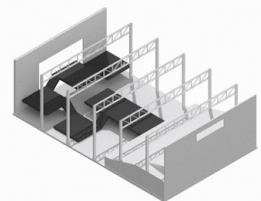
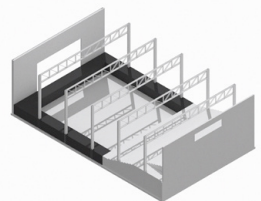
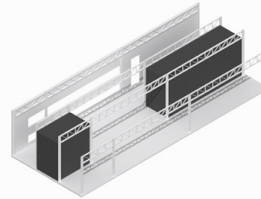
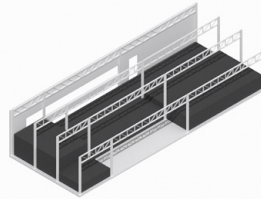
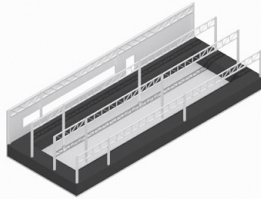
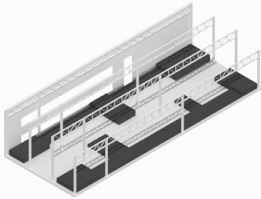
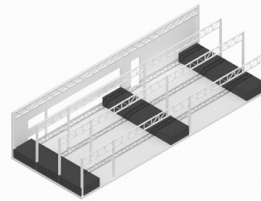
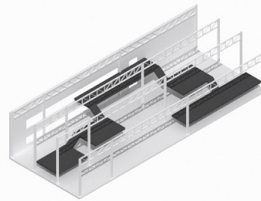
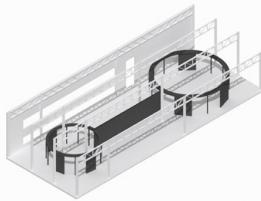
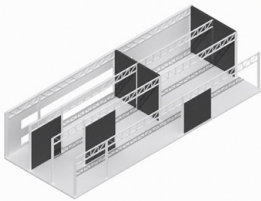
"the least important thing in the theatre is comfort"

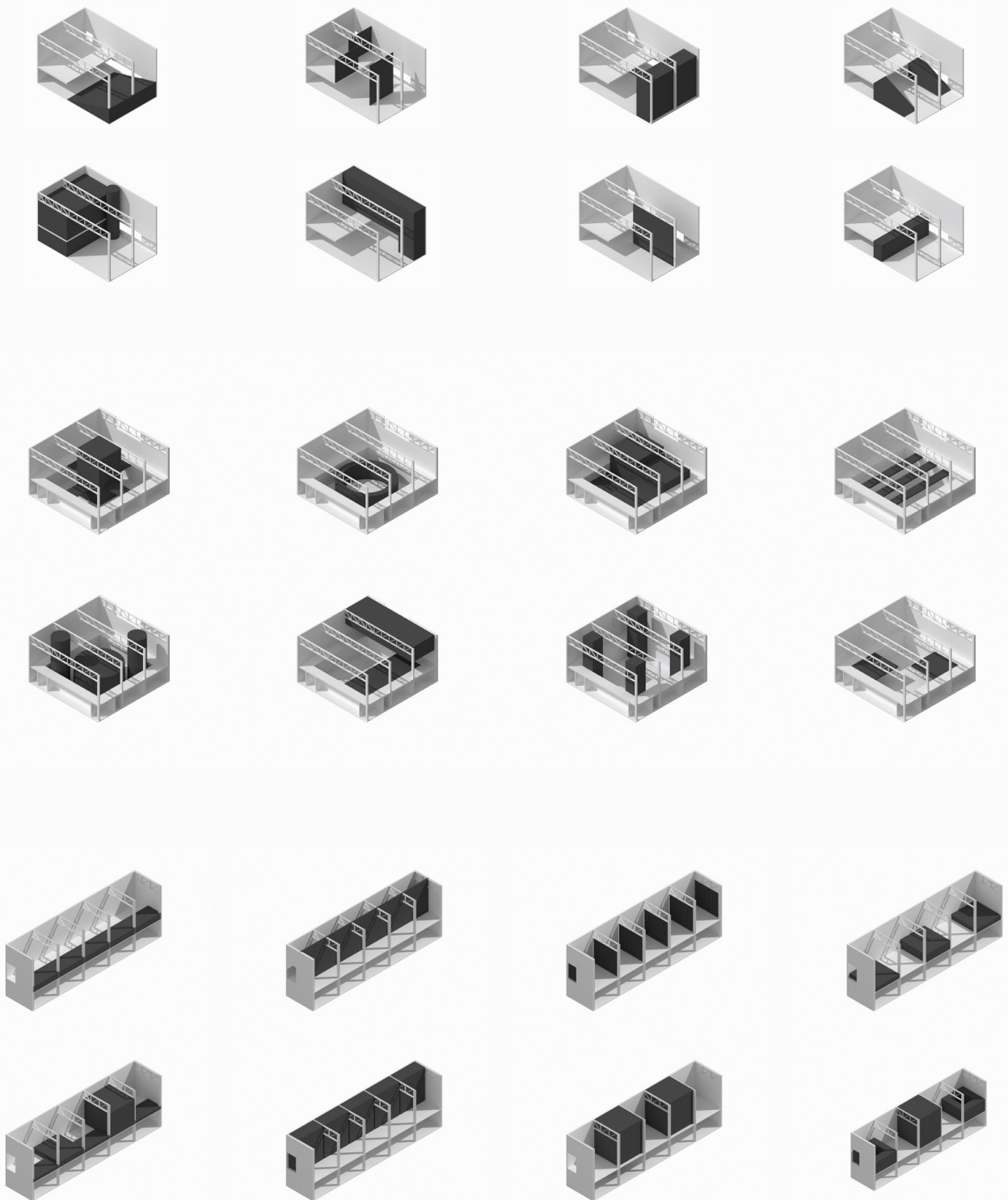


“Up until now, all we have asked of the audience has been to sit still and pay attention. In order to encourage it in this direction, we have offered it a comfortable seat and have plunged it into a semi-darkness that favours the state of complete passivity.... If the playwright and those who perform his work are to bring about a change of direction— a conversion — then the spectator must, in his turn, submit to it (the awakening of art in oneself) too. His starting point is himself, his own body. From that body, living art must radiate and spread out into space, upon which it will confer life.”

Adolphe Appia, 1912

how many ways to interpret the void as a theatre space?

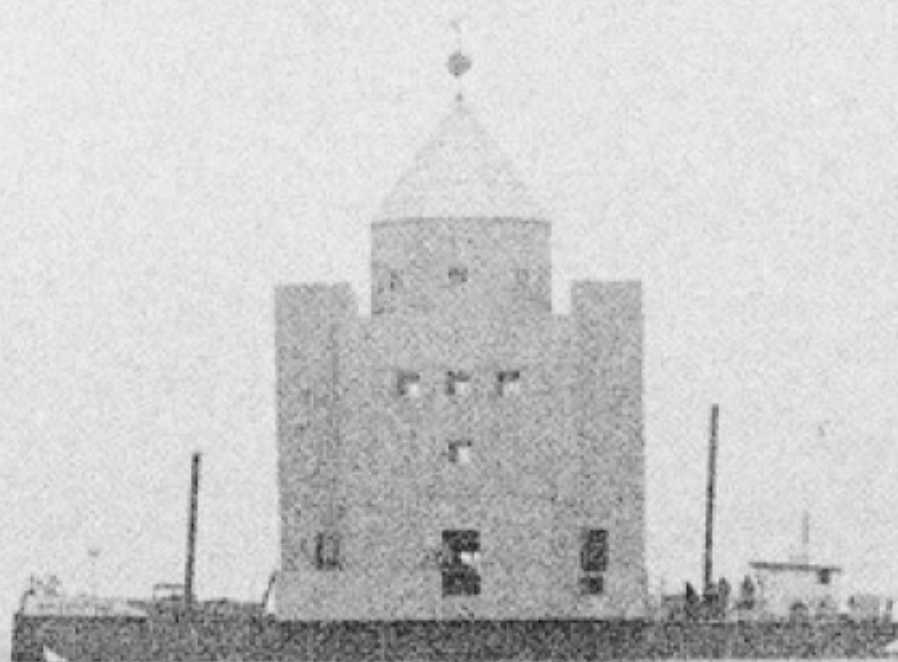




1.4 Design possibilities

[...] And so I finally get to the question I ask Ronconi: would you accept to have a theatre custom-made for you today?





“But not at all! Not at all! Let me explain: since I believe in traditions - and one tradition of our theatre, unlike others, the Anglo-Saxon in particular, is that it is not performed every night - I believe that our theatre should be an event, a special occasion. **For us, for our tradition, theatre is hardly the completion of an evening, as it is in other countries. For us, it needs to explode and disappear.** This character of exceptionality is part of the Italian spectacular tradition. Perhaps this is precisely why we, in Italy, have a shortage of written dramaturgy: because written dramaturgy is based on a concept of codified dramaturgy. I believe that it is only the codification of that dramaturgy, of a precise dramaturgical form, that makes architectural codification necessary. In the same way, it is unimaginable to think of Wagner’s opera without an orchestra pit, and without an orchestra pit located in that place; so also the structure of the Elizabethan theatre is necessary and consequent to the codification of that duration, which takes place in those specific hours of the day, with that number of characters. In our theatre this does not exist. That is why I say:

I would always be more inclined to use what is there as it can be used. If facts, experience, history, changes in taste, changes in the habits of the audience had led me to be able to imagine a dramaturgy of what is my ideal play - and my ideal play is an infinite play where there is no necessary correspondence between the whole play and the audience’s perception - I might perhaps wish for a theatre of my own.

The reason why so many of my shows are simultaneous is not to create confusion: it is to somehow try to give unification to a kind of runaway show and not to have a show to be consumed. This has always been my ideal show. **And I know that this ideal show of mine can hardly correspond to a permanent structure.** I like to think that for the spectator attending a performance, there is always another place where the performance takes place that is not the one he has before his eyes, under his direct perception. I would like there to be a moment in which the direct perception of the performance also sets the imagination in motion. I don’t think... I would really like there to be, but I don’t think it is possible to find a definite and solid place for it. **I would like to have a theatre made especially for me, but I already know that what I would like doesn’t have a place.** ⁷⁴

74. Ronconi, L’irriducibile soggettività, il luogo teatrale come crocevia di incontri e fughe, in Consonni, Teatro Corpo Architettura, Laterza, 1998

The words of Luca Ronconi, one of the best-known directors on the Italian theatre scene, give us pause for thought. In his opinion, to create a custom theatre for his purposes is a hard task, almost impossible; and he is right, it is out of this world to think about an architecture able to satisfy the needs of a single director, let alone meeting the needs of several. Instead of questioning ourselves on the architectural issue, we should focus on the event taking place inside. "Many aspects of avant-garde performance practice failed to be spatially realized in built form during the first half of the 20th century due to a mutual gap that emerged between the ancient disciplinary structure of theaters and architectures, which seem not only to have grown apart, but also, through modernism, to have been cleaved in two".⁷⁵

"theatre negated the role of architecture while architecture rejected the theatrical"⁷⁶

Following these insights, the design of a theatre nowadays cannot be expected to meet the disparate needs of various theatre directors. It is literally impossible. One will always have to cope with an individual director who will consider the spatiality of a well-done theatre project to be inadequate. Spatiality, let us be clear, inadequate for the precise play he has in mind at that moment, which will perhaps be considered adequate for later ones. If, however, one wants to meet the artistic and performative desires of the show, the theatre project can be broken down into various spatial solutions; in fact, one must take into account that, although there are a large number of directors who find it difficult to identify with the much-hated conventional theatres, and who would prefer to perform outdoors, in abandoned, evocative places, places not used as theatres, one must nevertheless admit that nowadays most performances take place, for logistical, economic and safety reasons, inside conventional theatres. What can be done, however, is to co-include various spatial typologies in the same project, from the conventional hall to the open-stage hall, and these can be configured in as many conformations; so as to come as close as possible to satisfying the needs of the performer.

The architecture project can therefore break down and offer multiple spatial solutions.

75. Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Routledge, 2019 p.2

76. Ibid

“Today, it is useful to have non-traditional theatres, such as renovated venues or transformable spaces. But you always go back to real theatres because, at the end of the day, they are always more practical places. If you have to make a hole, you can do it... without needing jackhammers!”

Patrice Chereau

5 PERFORMATIVE SPACES

we chose for our theatre

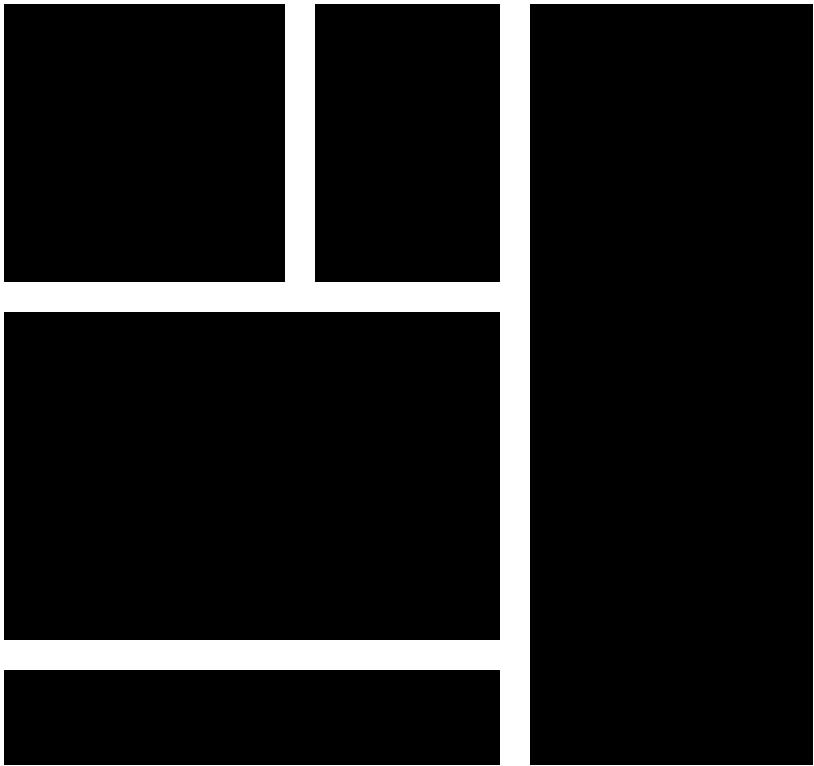
empty space

end-stage hall

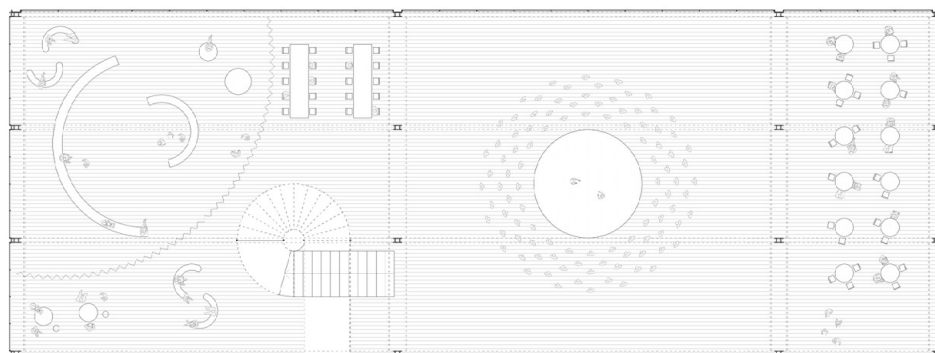
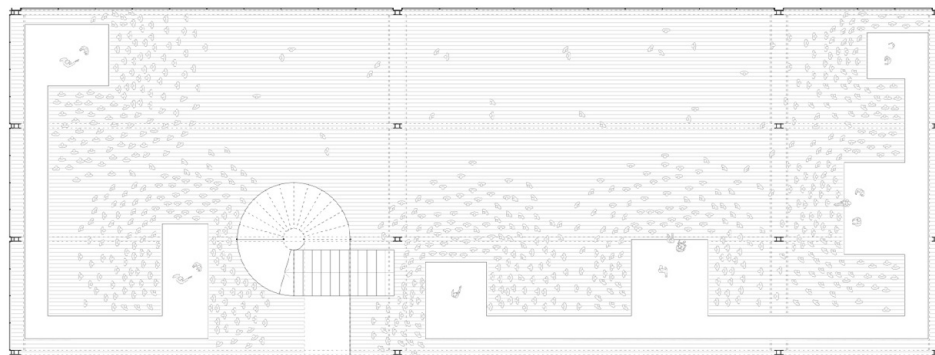
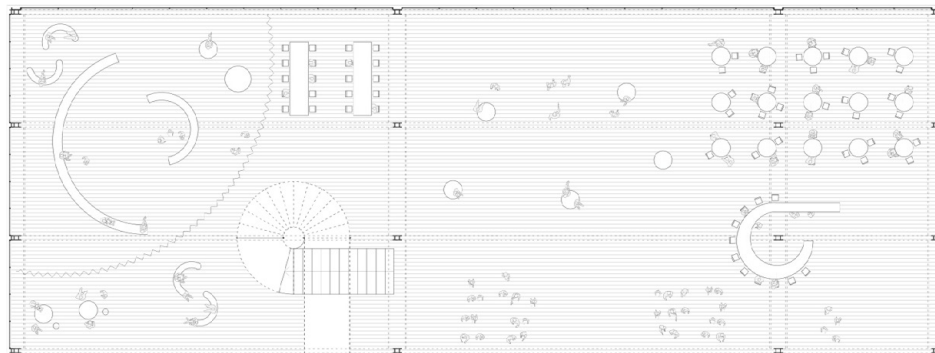
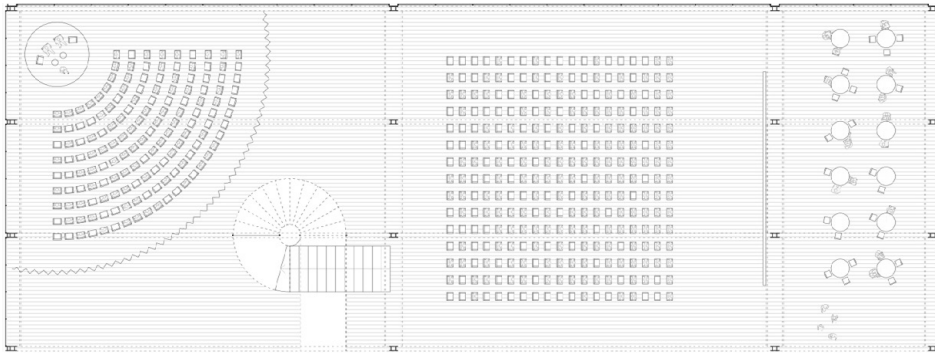
theatre in-the-round

linear stage

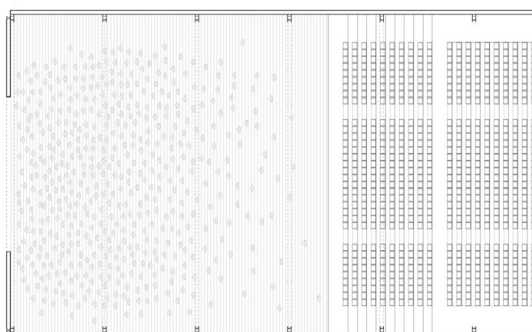
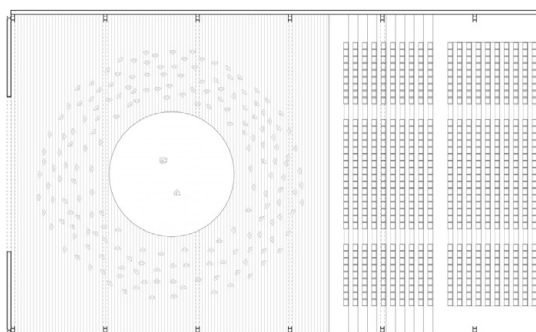
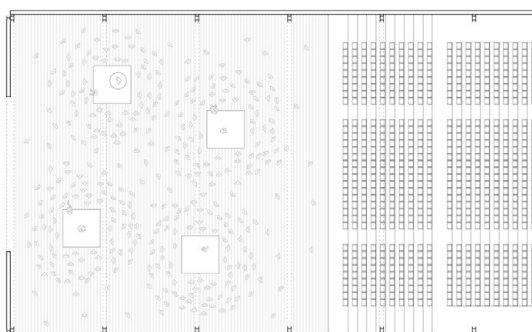
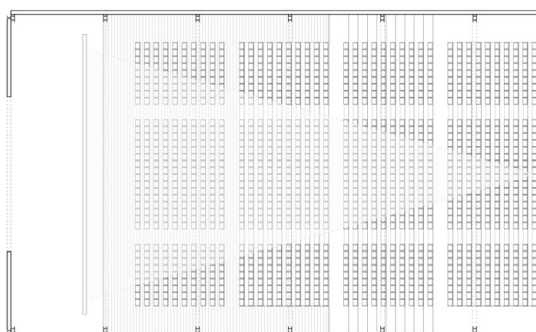
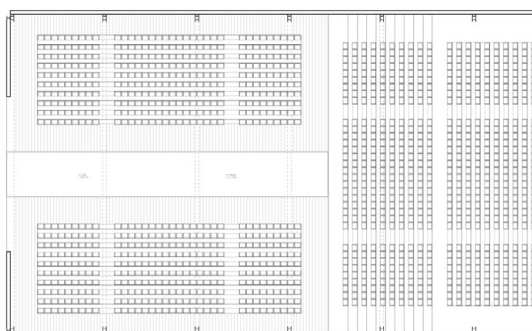
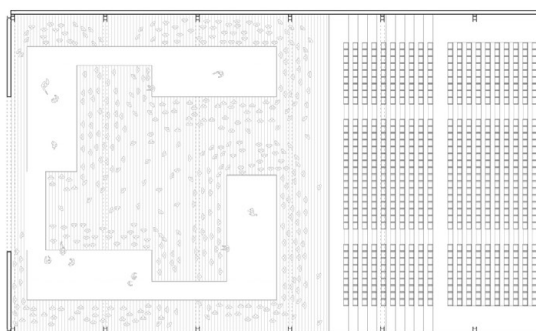
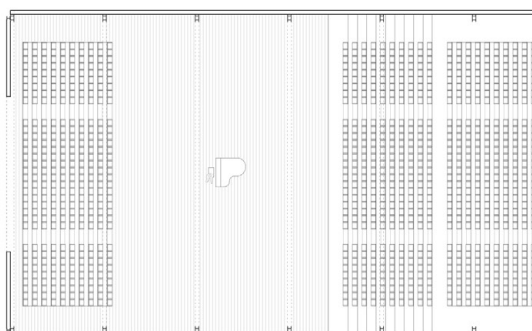
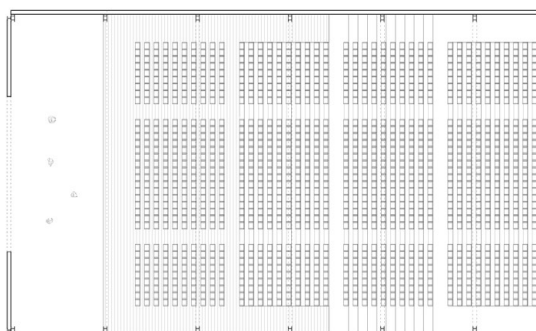
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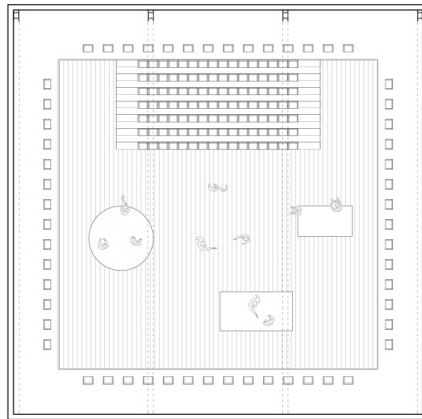
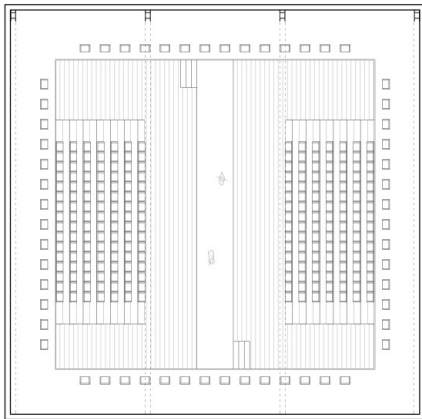
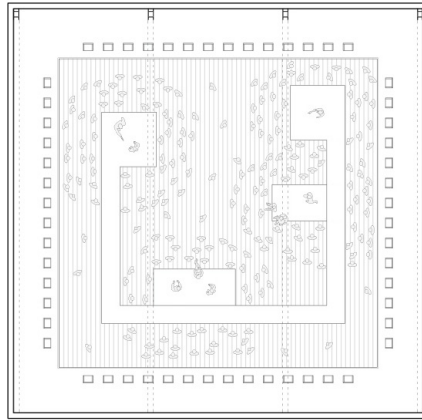
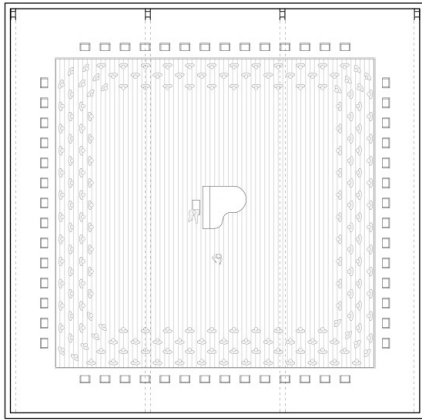
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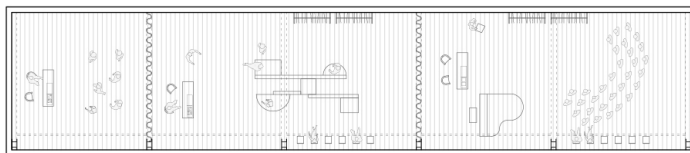
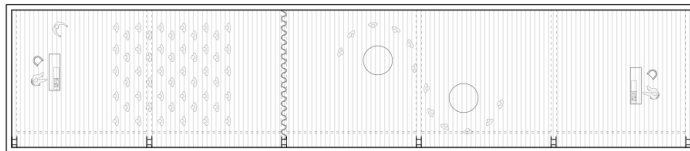
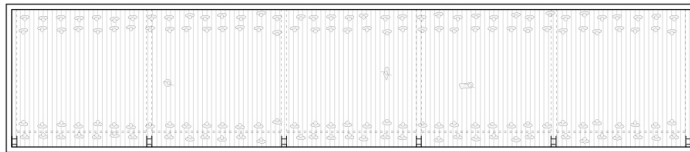
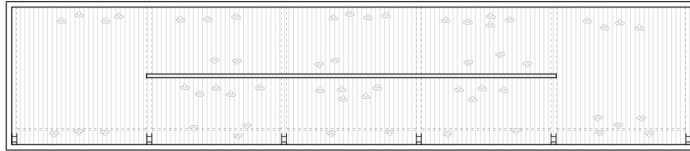
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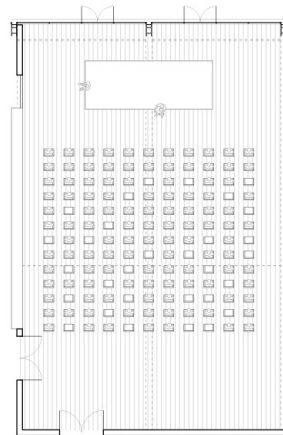
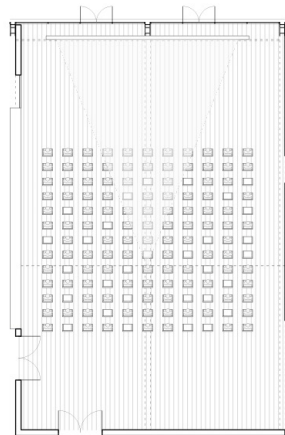
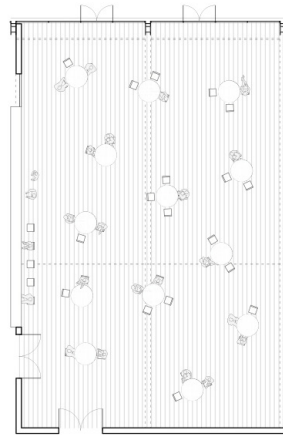
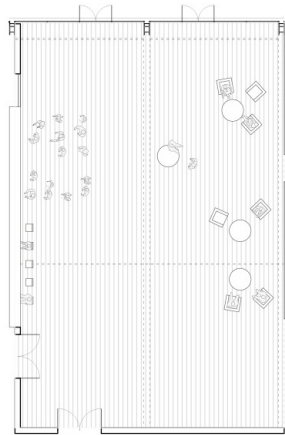
theatre in-the-round



linear stage



balcony room



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02

CONTEXT

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intro

The opportunity to design a theatre in Bergamo is seized by a lack: the closure of the PalaCreberg in June 2023 leaves a gap in the city's theatre programming. A 1,500-seat alternative to Italian-style theatres will no longer be available.

Opportunity is matched by potential: the area of the late twentieth-century extension of the former Reggiani textile factory, closed since the 2000s, lends itself due to the shape of the land and buildings to host a functional programme for a multi-screen theatre and other related functions.

The moment of rediscovery of the abandoned site brings with it an intimate and powerful atmosphere. Spaces stopped in a bygone time; structures that have survived surrounded by rubble; details that tell of life that has stopped. This momento is intensified by the study of photographic archives and the redrawing of the existence. At the same time, it is the moment of imagination projected into the project.

Reading the area's relationship with the urban context is the key to understanding its real possibilities and potential. The planning strategies of the new PGT of Bergamo of 2021 reason on the belt of abandoned industrial areas as one of the main developments, and this, together with the need for a theatre hall, guarantees the strength and design sustainability of the proposal.

The design of the soils and the block is the translation of the encounter between the strategies at the urban level and the functional programme organised on the five buildings involved. The buildings, their forms, even the existing basements, suggest views to imagine the project; the potentialities of the external context directs the organisation and interpretations of the spaces.

Awareness of both of these readings is essential to understand the richness of the architectural heritage in a contemporary key, and the cultural figure of the function and project that will transform it.



2.1 Opportunity



We discovered Bergamo in winter 2020, thanks to an Urban Design Atelier. We decided to realise a theatre here with five spaces capable of supporting the experiences, reflections and performance practices highlighted in chapter 01 Form.



2.2 Bergamo





Pianta
della R. Città e Borghi relativi

di

DELLA CITTÀ

disegnata dall'Ingegnere Architetto

GIUSEPPE MANZINI

1865

2.2.1 Traces

7. Storia di Bergamo,
Treccani, Enciclopedia
online, URL consultato il 26
Aprile 2023

8. Walter Barbero, Bergamo,
Milano, Electa, 1985, p.7

9. *ibid*

10. *ibid* p.8

11. *ibid* p.15

The city of Bergamo has pre-Roman origins. The incursions of the Celts preceded the conquest by the Romans, which took place around the 3rd century BC. After the periods of Barbarian invasions and Seigniories, on 6 May 1428 Bergamo became part of the Most Serene Republic of Venice.⁷ Although Bergamo Alta, with its walls, may seem to be the oldest and most unique nucleus of the historic city, it actually makes up not even the largest part of it.⁸ It is well observed by following the urban representations of the city one after the other: to the built-up area inside the walled triangle on the hill is equivalent to a similar amount outside the High Wall. Both in its early days and in its post-medieval development, cores built along the axes in the plain below the hill have always been present and have continued to expand. In the 1430s, in fact, Venice realised that it was facing a unitary compartment and built the “muraine”, embracing the branches on the plain and connecting to the medieval walls of the upper city. The history of Bergamo is therefore that of “a unitary, but not uniform urban fabric”.⁹

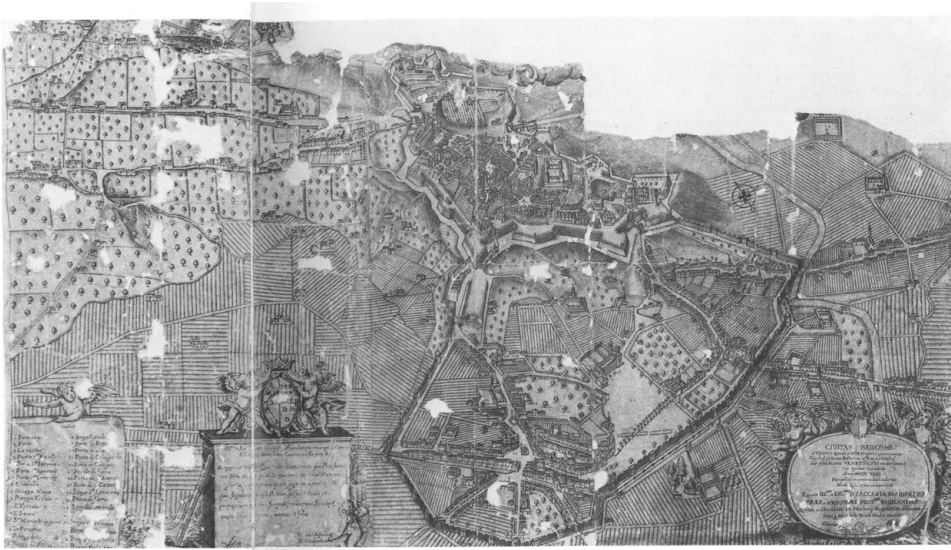
If in the upper city lies the oldest nucleus that housed the political and religious powers, the hamlets branching out below the hill constitute the mercantile soul of the city, which became more intense under Venetian rule. Direction and government above the hill faced the manufacture of cloth and fabrics and trade and fairs in the lower city. The Serenissima Republic developed Bergamo, in its systematic and functional organisation, according to this bipolarity: thus those hamlets in the lower part of the city acquired their urbanity.¹⁰ Above all, the system of artificial channelling of water between the borough spines, which is still visible today, provides a systematic organisation of the land for a growth in production activities. The Venetian fortifications, in order to defend Bergamo against the State of Milan, also strengthened Upper Bergamo as a nucleus in itself, cutting off the two spindles of the Pignolo and S. Alessandro boroughs. The ruling and managerial classes thus isolated themselves in Upper Bergamo, which, detached from the boroughs where the less affluent classes sought their dynamism of growth in production and commerce, stagnated in their representative palaces, making themselves “an irremediably ancient class, as ancient is its aristocracy”¹¹. On the contrary, the lower city became ready for social, economic and therefore urban transformations.



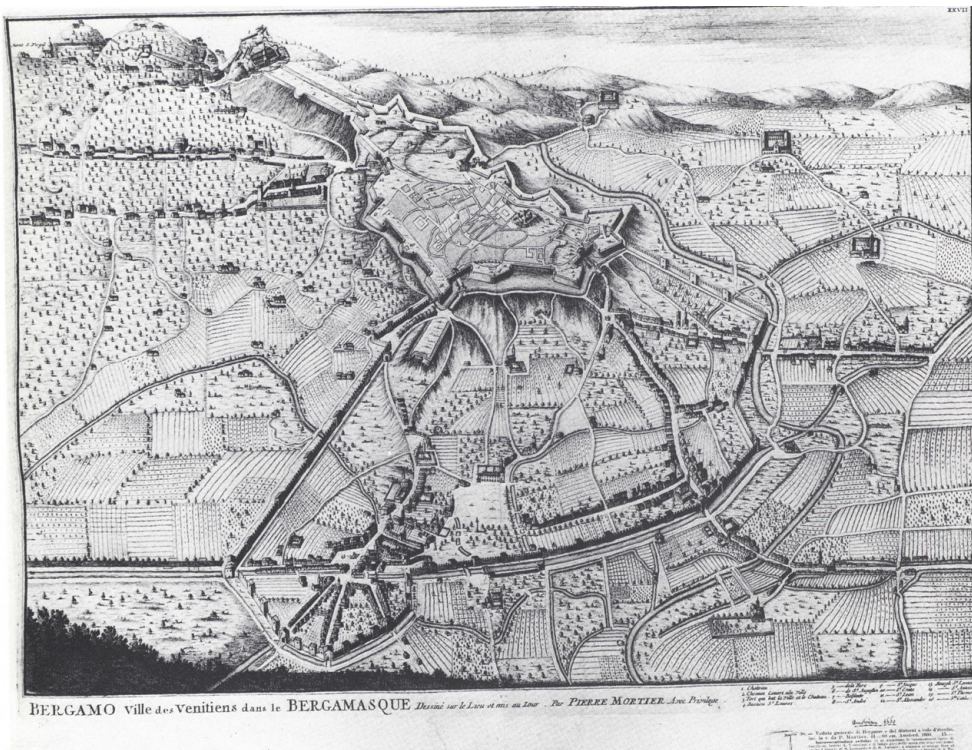
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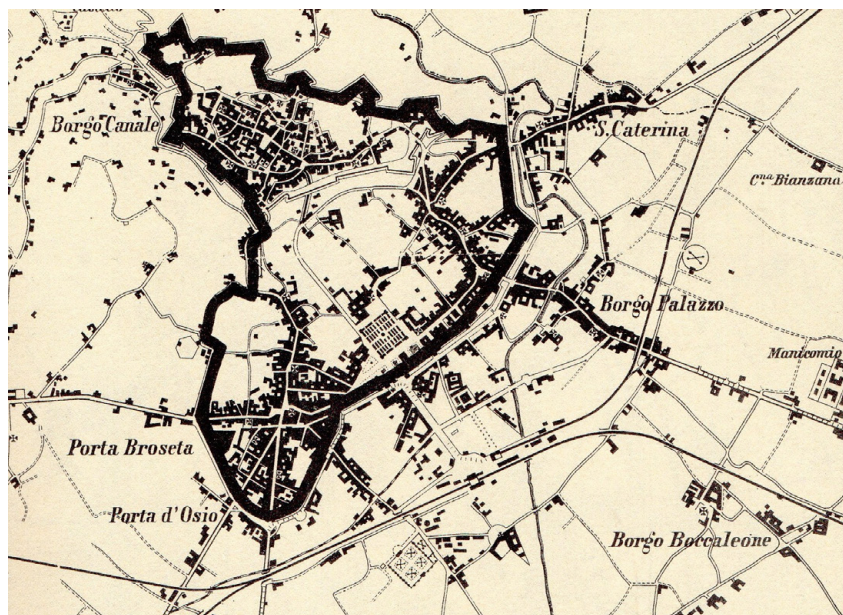
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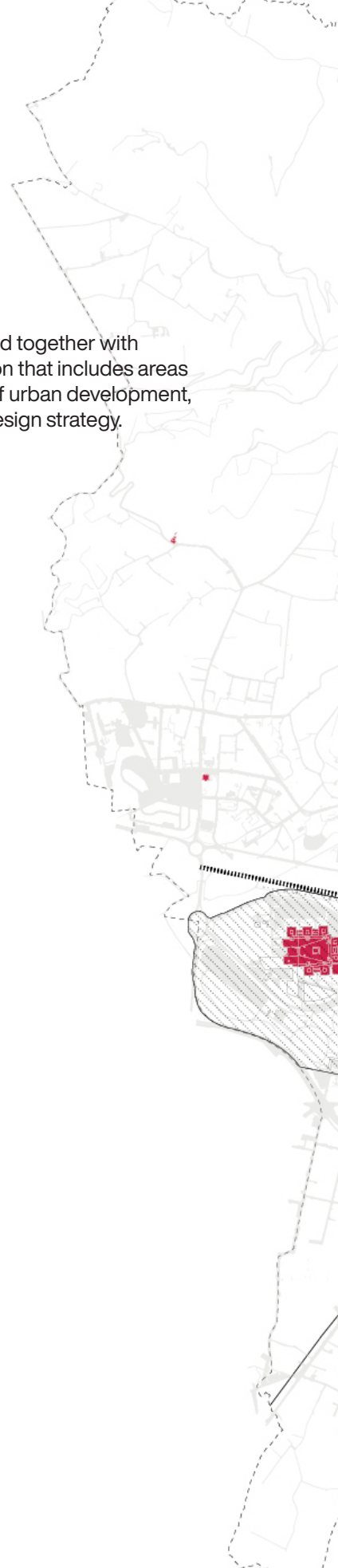
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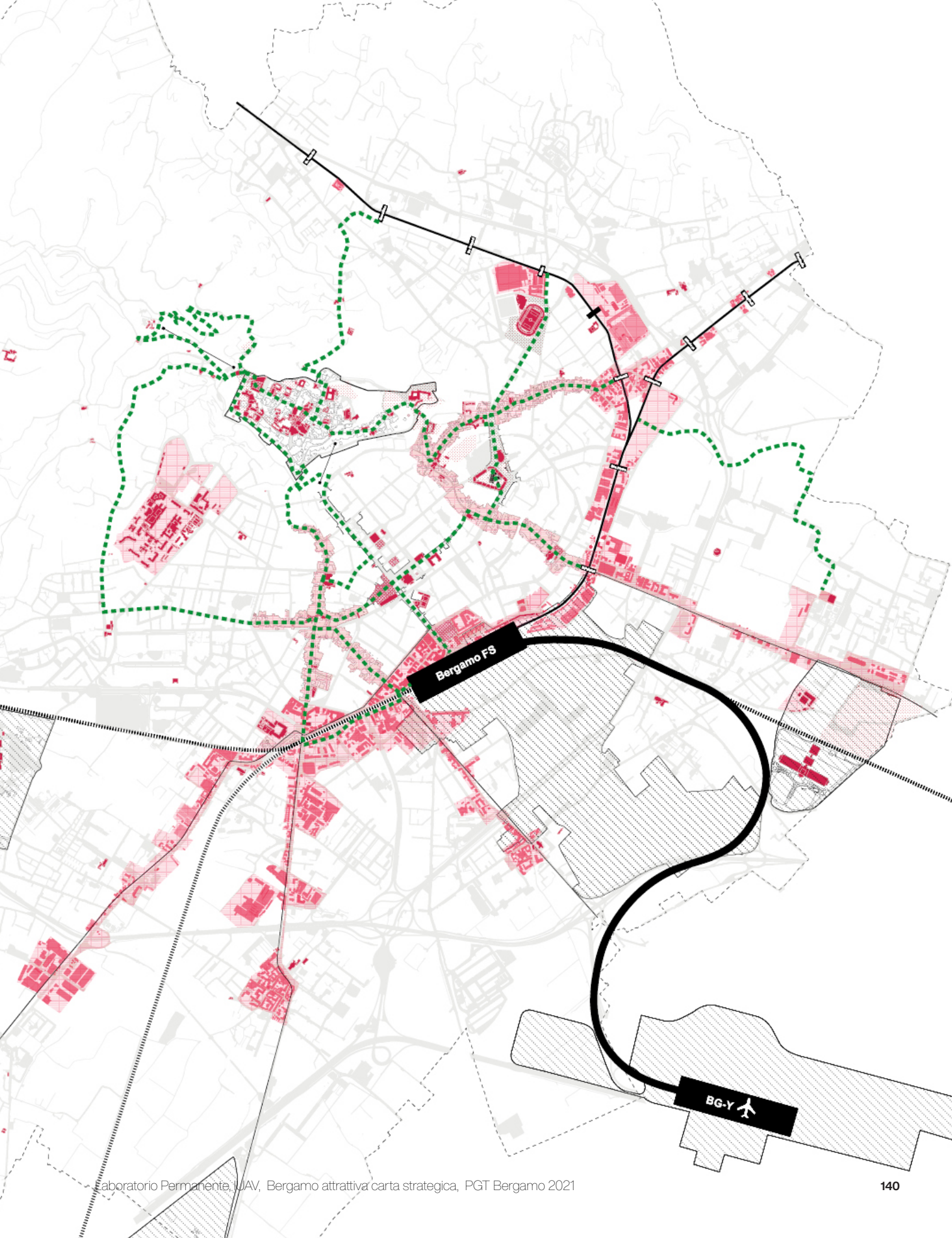
2.2.2 Planned strategies

At the beginning of 2021, the new PGT of Bergamo was presented, a strategic plan to reshape the city's transformation. The objectives are clear: Bergamo must be an attractive, sustainable, inclusive city. Among the actors who took part in the work, Ezio Micelli, a professor at the IUAV Università di Venezia, and the office Laboratorio Permanente, have constructed an urban vision that binds the agents that make up the different layers of the urban form in a complex manner. The intent is to build a green belt around the city, integrate services by geographically constellating the areas that have deficiencies, and strategically strengthen public mobility, especially thanks to the realisation of the tram line. The plan's objectives also assign strategic importance to the involvement of the abandoned industrial areas along the tramway, such as the former Reggiani factory, in the main objective of rebuilding and densifying the belt areas that, despite not being urban forms so distant from the historical backbones, nevertheless function as peripheral areas that live in function of a centre. The functional reactivation therefore aspires to give greater weight to these areas, with the objective of making them attractive poles in addition to the existing historical centre. Rethinking peripheral areas as potential places of exceptional, extra-ordinary functions is a viable way to arrive, with further transformations in between, at a seam between centre and edge.



Abandoned spaces and buildings are identified together with existing attractive elements, elaborating a vision that includes areas of regeneration by redesigning a geography of urban development, which moves away from zoning as the city's design strategy.





The map of the regeneration of the areas along the tramway constitutes the point of the plan that directs the strategies that led us to the identification of the area of the Ex Reggiani factory as a possible and suitable place of intervention for the realisation of the Theatre. The area involves the urban regeneration areas (ARU) on the route of the T1 tram, with the presence of notable buildings that will be fundamental to the design.

In the following pages urban readings are elaborated that follow the strategies of the PGT of Bergamo, concentrating the ramifications starting from the Reggiani textile industry area.



- ARU connessi al tracciato della T1
(delibera 07/08/2020)
- linea tranviaria
- tessuto poroso
- grandi aree di trasformazione
- aree verdi potenziali
- aree verdi di risulta
- Porta Sud
- DUC
- spazio pubblico
- edifici notevoli

2.3 Chronicle

Lack in the theatre programming





In Bergamo, the PalaCreberg, a 1,500-seat theatre that was created to make up for the renovation of the historic Donizzetti theatre and has remained in operation to this day, will be demolished. Its programming will be transferred to the large arena of Chorus life, the city's new residential and commercial centre. The structure will be replaced by the new sports hall, as the latter will in turn be replaced by the new headquarters of the GAMeC, Bergamo's Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, in line with the projects that are shaping the city of the future. However, doubts remain as to the real feasibility of moving the programming of the now former Creberg to the large Chorus Life arena.

Expressing misgivings about the operation, from the point of view of the entertainment industry, is Walter Alborghetti, of Zodiak: "[...] Sports clubs already feared economic difficulties, imagine a private operator - Alborghetti observes. - At the Creberg there are 1,526 saleable seats, from which the entire stage can be seen. Even with an audience of around a thousand, a show had its own sustainability, including economic sustainability, from the point of view of business risk. The multifunctional Chorus Life Arena has a capacity of 6,500. How will it be able to accommodate smaller events? I read about the planning of more than 240 events capable of attracting more than 350,000 spectators. This amounts to an average of just under 1,500 spectators per show..."¹

1. Walter Alborghetti,
intervista al Corriere della
Sera, 12 Dicembre 2022

Then there are logistical questions:

"Not knowing the costs and the facilities provided, it is difficult to make a plan" - adds Alborghetti. "At the Arena, will the stage, backdrops and equipment for a theatre performance be included in the costs? And the service staff? Moreover, the Arena was originally conceived for sports and big events, and I fear that theatre companies and artists for their tours will not agree to go to that facility, given also the competition from cities like Milan and Brescia. The Creberg, on the other hand, was conceived as a theatre to all intents and purposes, and among those where national-popular programming can be done, it is the fourth largest in Lombardy. It is true that it was created to temporarily host the Donizetti's shows, pending the completion of its restoration, but to claim that it would be demolished once the work was completed is not accurate. It is not a tensile structure, major works and investments have been made, such as the 800 thousand euro spent on soundproofing, and the interiors are on a par with other theatres. We had the old 2,500-seat Sports Hall, a 6,000-seat one was to be created, and a 2,500-3,000-seat one will be built by demolishing a theatre. I can't put my finger on the operation."²

2. ivi

CRONACA / BERGAMO CITTA' VENERDI' 05 AGOSTO 2022

Stadio, palazzetto, Montelungo, ex Ote La Bergamo del futuro

CRONACA / BERGAMO CITTA' VENERDI' 05 AGOSTO 2022

Bergamo, la nuova Gamec al Palazzetto: la Giunta approva il progetto definitivo

RIQUALIFICAZIONE Il Palazzetto dello Sport di via Pitentino sarà trasformato in un museo di arte moderna e contemporanea. Via libera al progetto definitivo

Barozzi-Veiga per le ex caserme di Bergamo

Il duo italo-catalano Barozzi-Veiga si aggiudica il concorso per il recupero delle ex caserme Montelungo-Colleoni, abbandonate da quasi vent'anni

CRONACA / BERGAMO CITTA' LUNEDI' 04 APRILE 2022

Chorus Life al giro di boa: per la cittadella del futuro servirà ancora un anno - Foto

Il PalaCreberg abbattuto nell'estate 2023, al suo posto sorgerà un nuovo Palazzetto dello Sport

La decisione presa dal Comune in accordo con Chorus Life. La nuova struttura costerà 10 milioni e sarà pronta per l'autunno 2024

Bergamo, 11 Giugno 2022 ore 09:13

Arena di Chorus Life? No, grazie. Le squadre di basket e pallavolo cercano un'altra casa

Chiesto un nuovo palasport al Comune (nell'attuale andrà la Gamec). L'ipotesi è realizzarlo al posto del Creberg Teatro. E i concerti?

It is therefore quite clear that, by pursuing these strategies, the City of Bergamo will lack a theatre capable of making up for the demolition of the Palaccreberg theatre, and the stage programming it brings with it.

The area of the former Reggiani factory is located in the north-eastern part of the city, resting on the tramway line, which according to the objectives of the PGT will be put back into operation. It is therefore part of a system of abandoned industrial areas that are potentially connected to the central fabric of Bergamo; it is also located in an area around which redevelopment work has been carried out or is already planned, with the aim of shortly shaping the Bergamo of the future (see the Atalanta Stadium, the new GAMeC, the Ex-Caserme). The area of the former Reggiani factory, with its large open spaces, has all the characteristics to host a new theatre and the consequent functions that adorn it.



2.4 Vacancy

Reggiani former textile industry



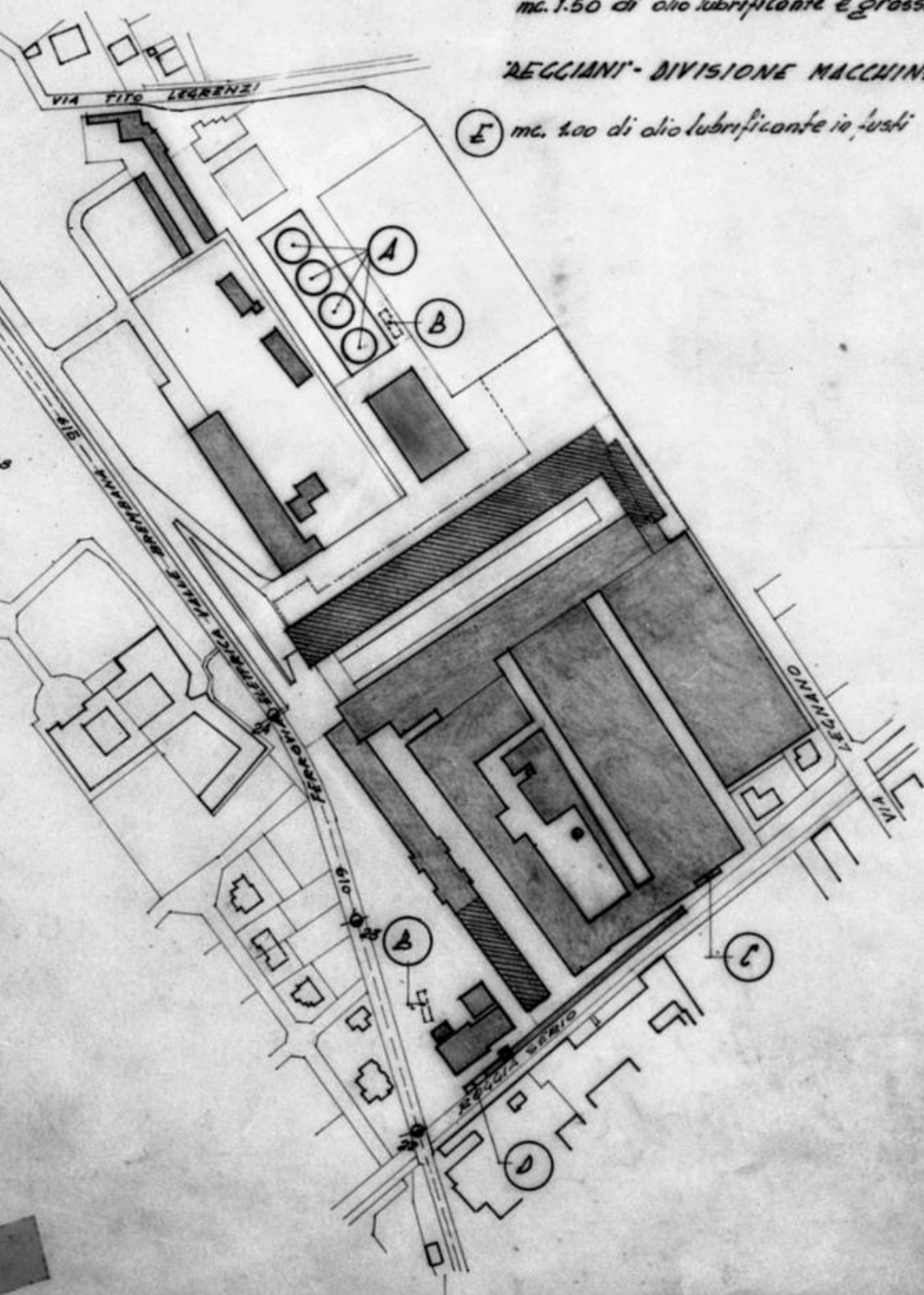
LEGGENDA

REGGIANI - DIVISIONE TESSILE:

- (A) n°4 Serbatoi da mc. 3'000. = mc. 12'000. per olio combustibile
- (B) n°2 Serbatoi da mc. 50. = mc. 100. " "
- (C) n°1 Serbatoio da mc. 50. = mc. 50. " "
- mc. 2.00 di acqua regia in fusti
- (D) mc. 0.50 di petrolio in fusti
- mc. 1.50 di olio lubrificante e grassi in fusti

REGGIANI - DIVISIONE MACCHINE:

- (E) mc. 1.00 di olio lubrificante in fusti



2.4.1 Tram / Transformation

The peripheral ex-industrial areas of Bergamo must be read as a landscape with its own identity: history and possibilities mingle to create exceptions. The tram runs on the line of the former railway that used to run along these industrial areas; it is in fact the backbone that holds together the sequence of abandoned industrial buildings built in the twentieth century. Further south of the station, three urban axes branch off from Borgo S. Alessandro, while to the north towards Borgo Palazzo and Borgo S. Caterina the areas to be redeveloped follow the geometry of the tram without transversal axes.

The Reggiani area is the penultimate in this sequence, before the industrial buildings next to the Lazzaretto and the stadium. The two hills of the upper city and the Maresana squeeze the Valbona to such an extent that the orography rapidly rises with green spaces dotted with residential buildings. This green hill seems to be the head of the system of transformation areas, which must consider this landscape presence at least at its point of contact.

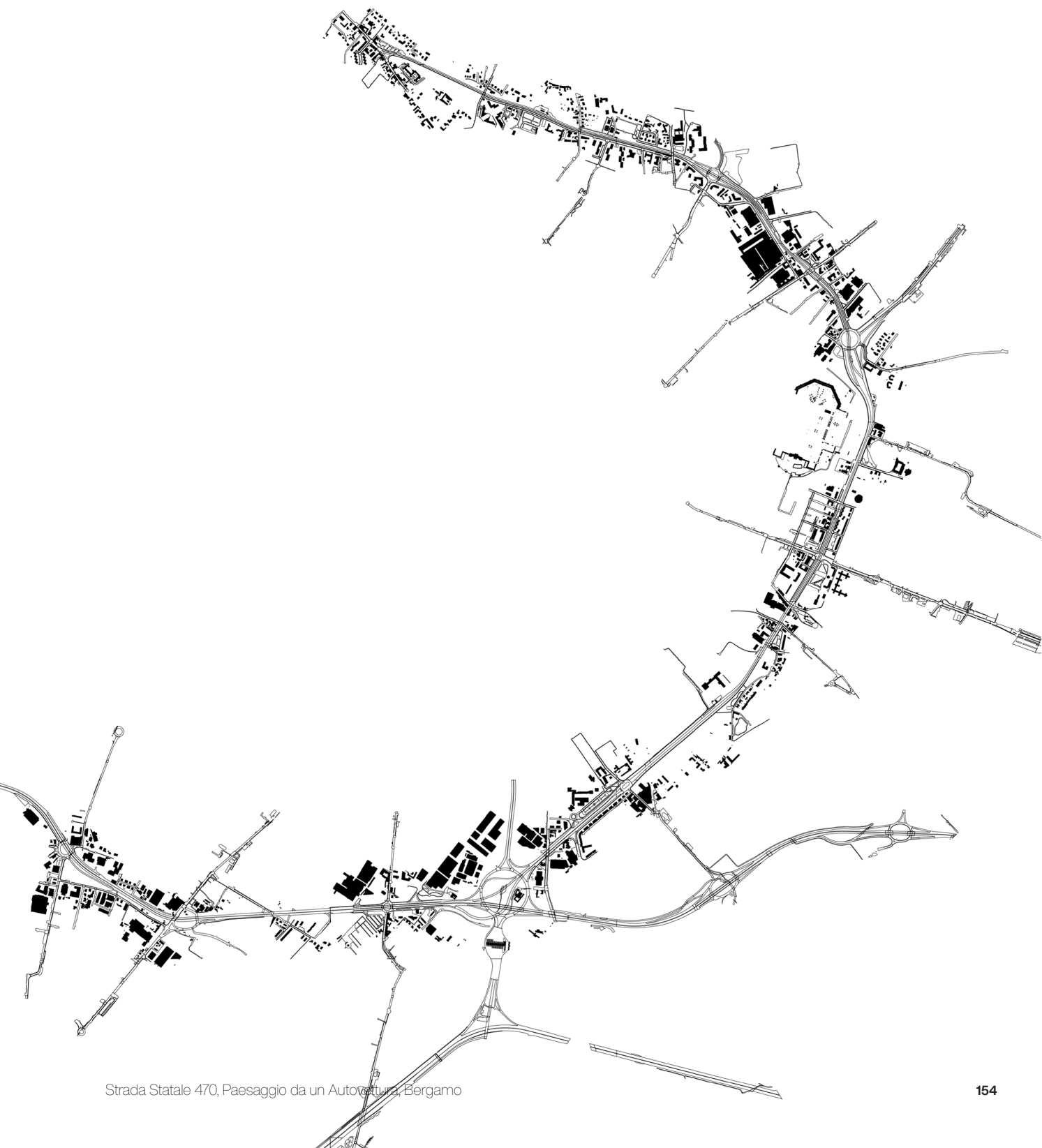


2.4.2 State Road 470 / Landscape from a Car

If it were another lens under which to observe the urban context of the former Reggiani factory, it could be that of a car driver, who, driving up and down the highway at high speed, would quickly absorb different urban atmospheres, with the background of his favourite radio. A ring dedicated to speed carries with it an urban landscape that changes without realising it, in frames that follow one another without a break. Let us imagine an architecture that is confronted with this way of being perceived, with the speed of the means of transport and the measure of space that stretches and contracts. The contemporary dynamics concerning the perception of an architecture from a car, are typical of living at speed, they are unique. We might think that they were exclusively about car use, and perhaps we would be right. Certainly, architecture in the natural and urban landscape, especially those that host an important or public function, and even more so those that develop in height, have built up the image of a place through their perception as landmark buildings. Perceiving a volume and its textures from a car is perhaps similar to perceiving it from afar, and in this sense it expresses its characteristics of architecture recognisable in the landscape, of a landmark.

The SS470 runs around Bergamo just outside the areas of the industrial belt, partly identifying itself as the boundary that marks city and suburb. The perceived landscape is not at all that of a large city centre boulevard, but rather that of a motorway on the edge of the built-up area.





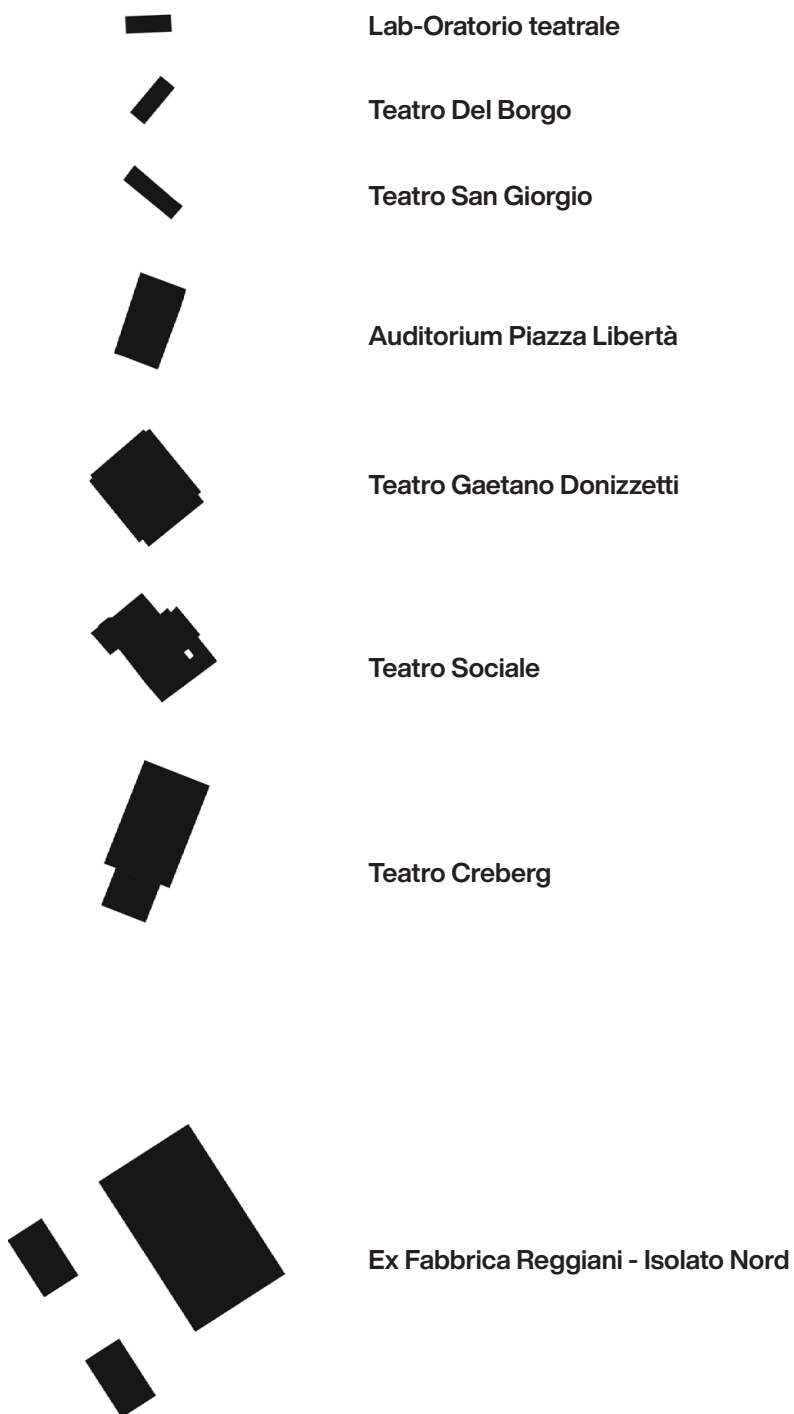
Strada Statale 470, Paesaggio da un Autostrada, Bergamo

2.4.3 Theatres in Bergamo

When planning a theatre, it is crucial to understand what type of theatre is to be designed. The programming, i.e. the type of performances, the number of seats, the design of additional theatres of a similar or different nature to the main one, the degree of flexibility of the theatres, the design of the rooms for the audience, and the possible production spaces. To these questions, part of the answer surely comes from the type and offer of the theatres already existing in the city. The Teatro Donizzetti and the Teatro Sociale are the oldest in Bergamo. Both Italian-style theatres dating back to the end of the 18th century, they mainly host opera performances. The Donizzetti, with a seating capacity of 1,154, has a horseshoe-shaped hall with three tiers of boxes and a gallery gallery gallery, and hosts opera and prose performances. The Sociale, with the same thioplogy of hall and boxes, a gallery gallery gallery and oval stalls, holds 1,300 seats and more or less the same programming as the Donzzetti. The Creberg Theatre was built as a temporary structure in 2004 to host performances during restoration work at the Donizzetti Theatre. Having been extended, it remained in use with the 1,500-seat hall and has covered the offer of shows, including prose. The others that can be found in the city have halls that do not hold more than about 200 people per seat.

What kind of theatre can and should the former Reggiani industrial complex host? What kind of flexibility can be designed into the buildings? Can the design of the block with its open spaces include one or more open-air theatres?

What is the identity of a contemporary theatre on the outskirts of a city and what is its cultural signature, and therefore its image and form?



2.4.4 Infrastructures / New Projects

At the moment, several projects have been approved in Bergamo, some of them in abandoned areas or buildings. As seen in news articles, the Creberg Theatre will be demolished to house a sports hall mainly for basketball and volleyball teams. Still in the sports sphere, the project to renovate the football stadium, the Gewiss Stadium, next to the Lazzaretto, has recently been completed. The Porta Sud station area will undergo a radical transformation, involving the expansion and redevelopment of the station and the design of buildings and land throughout the strip of land south of the station. Still along the former industrial areas on the tram, just before the Ex Reggiani block, the Chorus Life complex will rise. In what will be the former palazzetto there will be the New GAMeC, a modern and contemporary art gallery. The Montelungo and Colleoni barracks will be redeveloped as student residences.

Bergamo is therefore currently undergoing radical transformations, especially in the eastern part of the city. In addition to the fact that the existing buildings in the late twentieth-century lot of the former Reggiani factory lend themselves to hosting a theatre function due to their size, it is a suitable strategy to locate a new theatre and other functions in these areas. It is also interesting to interpret and reflect on how the rapid realisation of new architecture in an area of a city entails the reworking of that fabric.





2.4.5 **Ex Reggiani Urban Context**

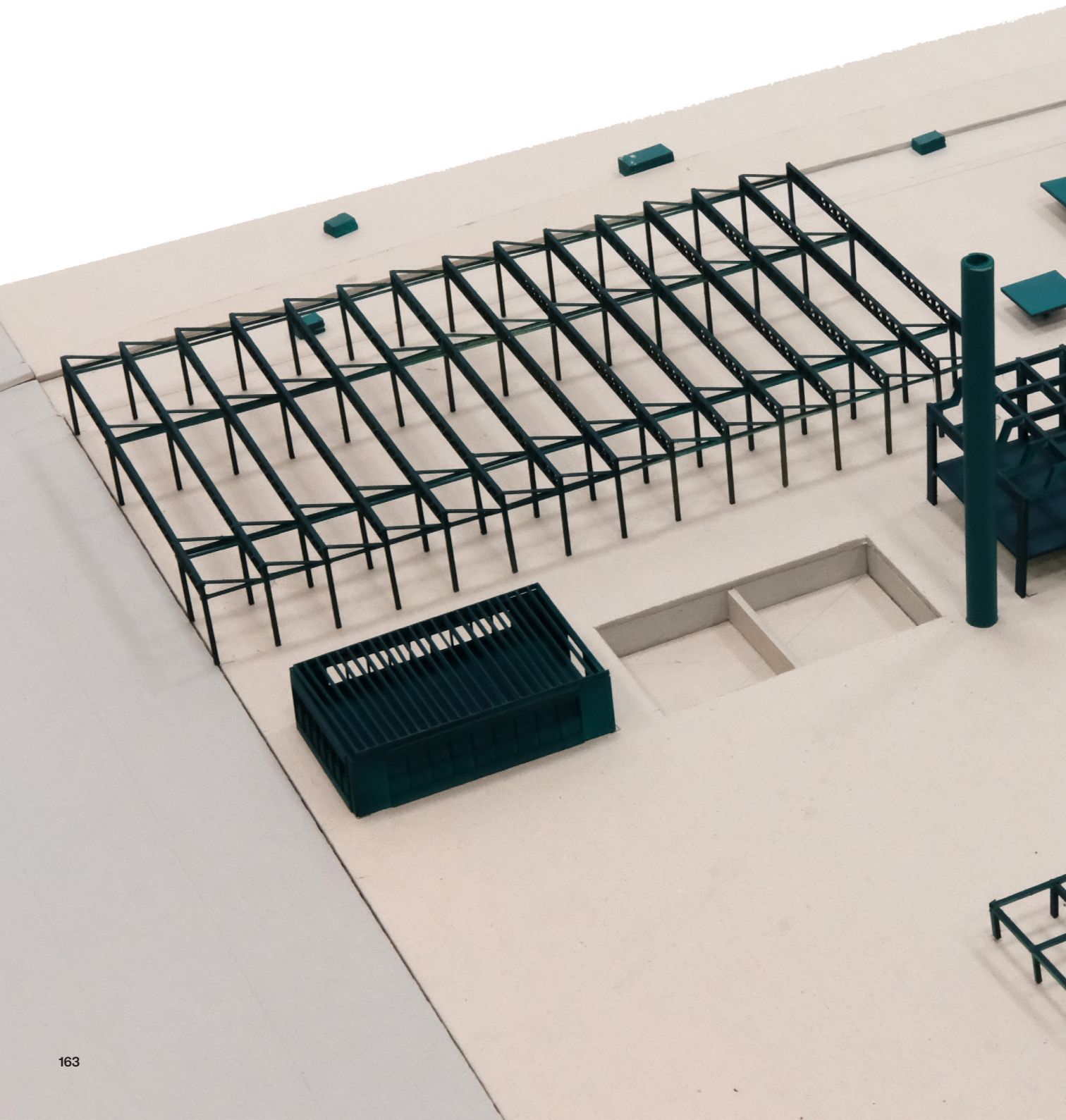
Imagining the design of a production theatre with a 1400-seat great hall means considering an architecture and a functional programme that carry with them complex urban geographies. The resulting reflections must carry with them these complexities. For example, the theatre will need a stage tower, which will therefore be an added volume to the existing large building: will this volume be clearly visible from the Upper Town, and must be taken into account. Will it also be visible at night? Will a contemporary suburban theatre in a former factory be a luminous architecture? The theatre lives at night, and so it could be a lantern that, like a lighthouse on the rocks, playfully points out a landmark. The urban landscape of the transformation areas, in the future, could be a succession of new projects, and the tram will be the means of connecting these areas. The Ex Reggiani, thanks to the tram and the railway, is thus also easily connected to the airport, as well as to extra-urban motorways, so that reception functions such as guesthouses can be discussed. At the same time, it is also an opportunity for the elaboration of a park immersed in the city, having a large unbuilt area available on the plot. What form and how do you design a contemporary park? If there are no large green public areas close by, and just beyond it you land in boundless meadows and then in the wilderness of the hill, what identity should or could the park of the new Theatre of Bergamo have? Is it the opposite pole to the possible future park of the Porta Sud station? This map and these questions are the background to the reflections on the reinterpretation of the former Reggiani factory. The context does not limit the architecture, but can suggest its experimentation.

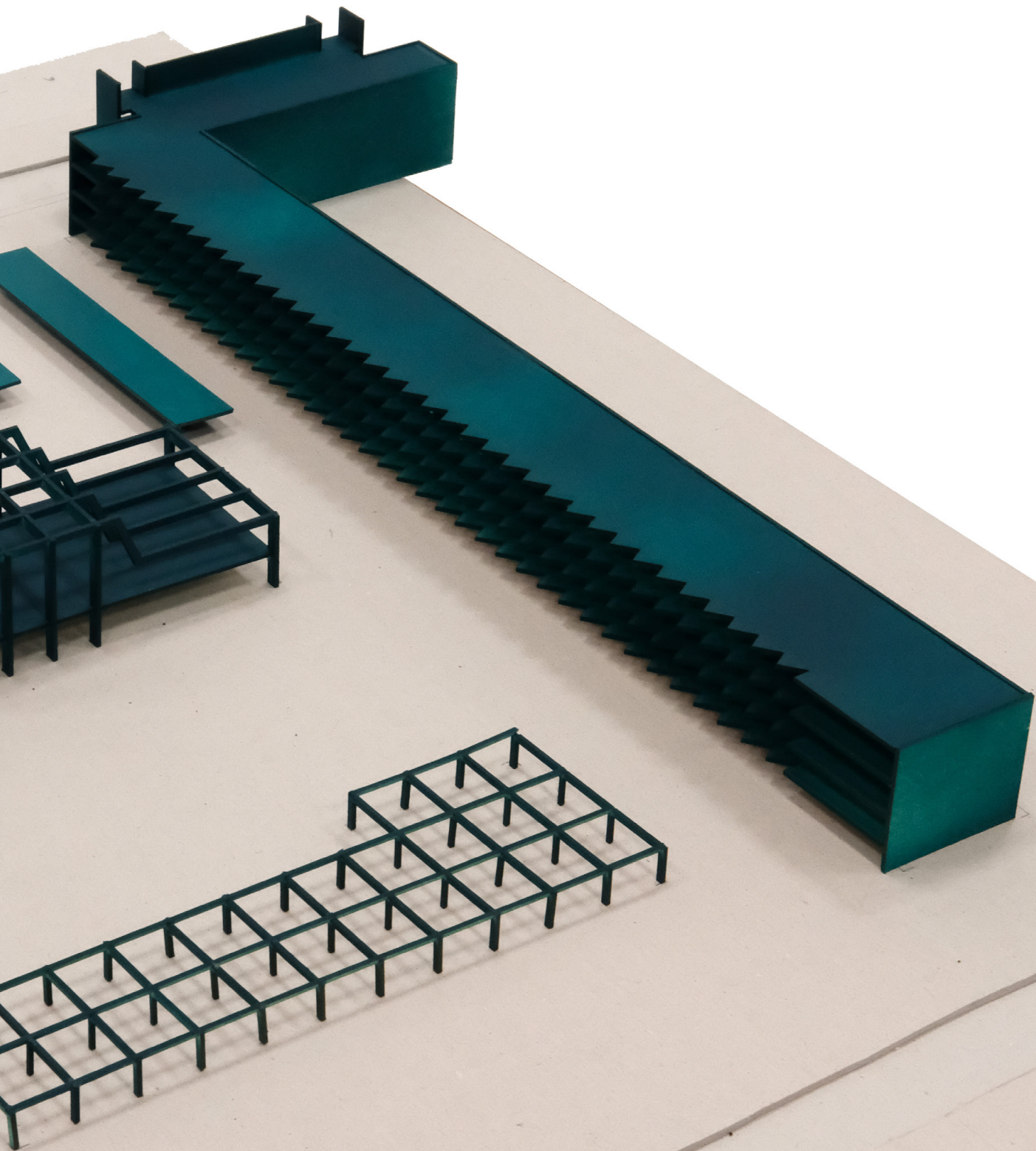


2.5 Industrial Ruins

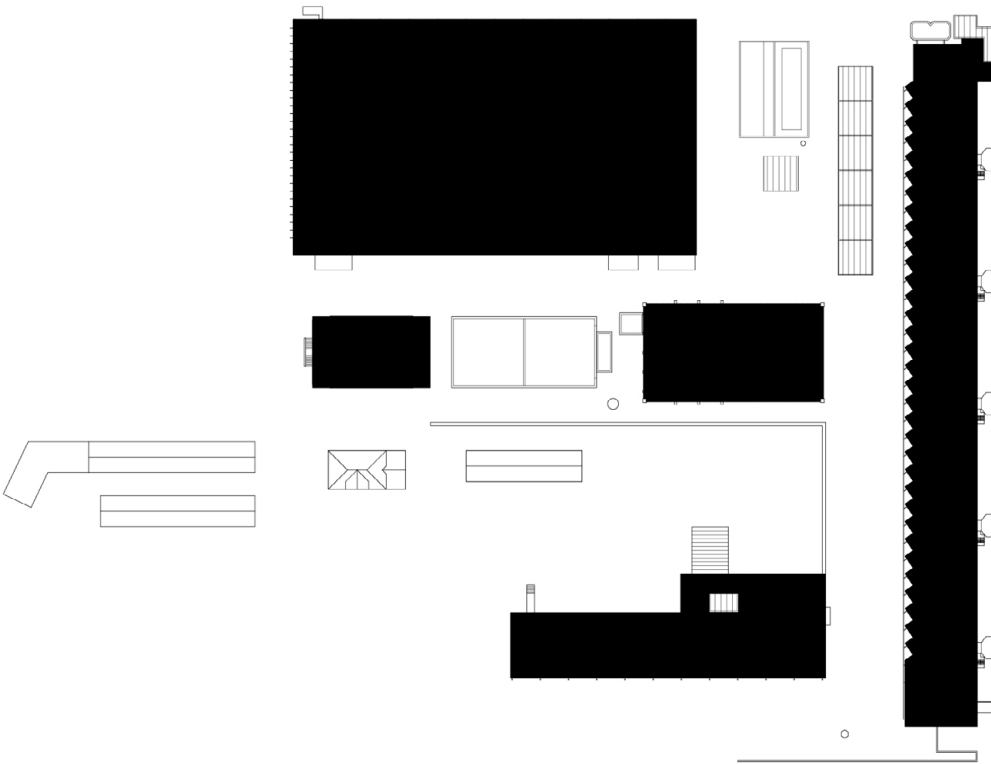




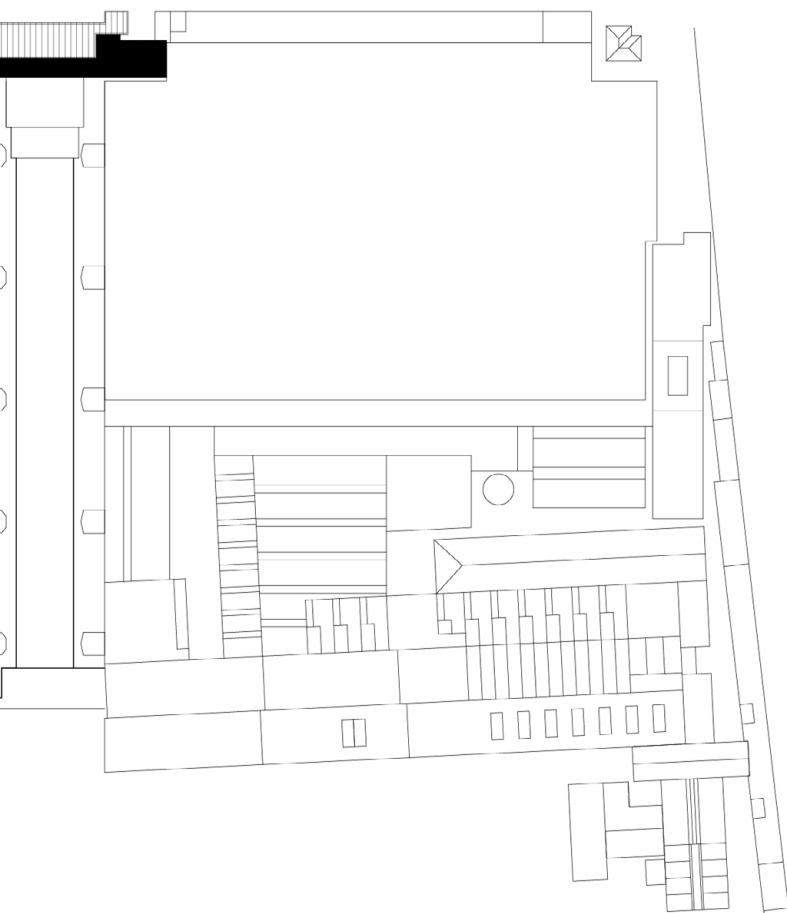




1960s expansion



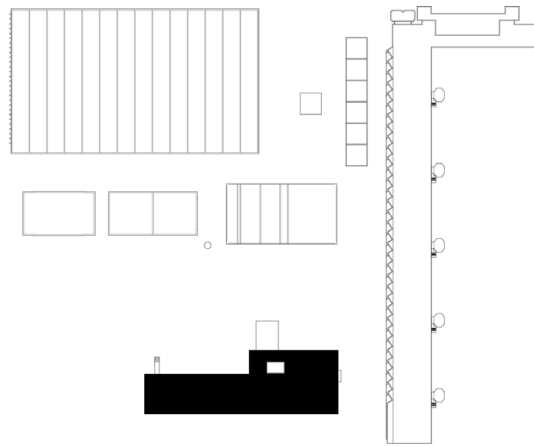
first industrial settlement



Plan of the Reggiani Complex, in black the early 20th century expansion

2.5.1 Palazzina Uffici

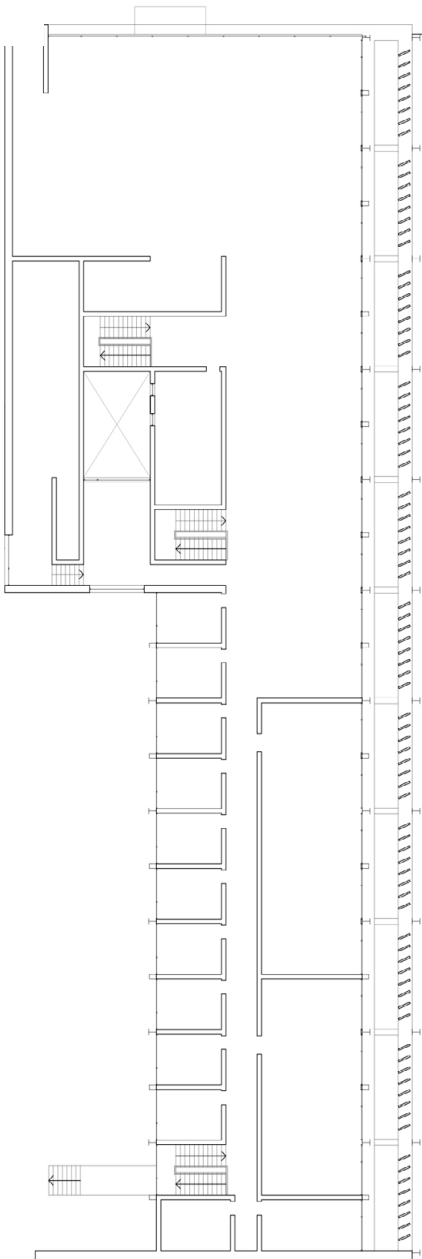
Office building

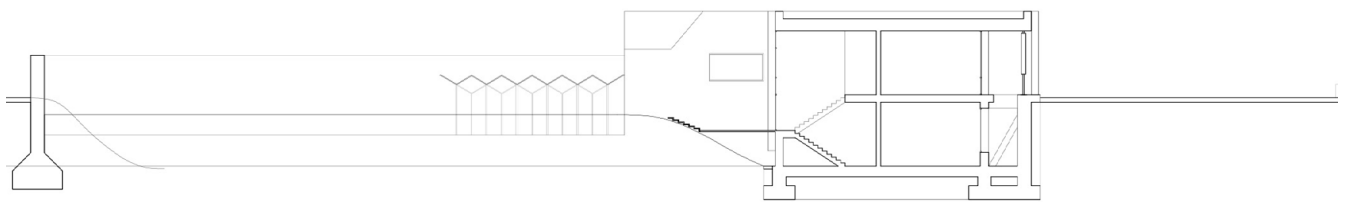


The Palazzina Uffici is the first building one encounters when entering the factory's original north-west entrance. It has two floors, one of which is a basement; the ground floor was intended to house the administrative offices of the factory; the basement housed the archives. There was a bar and an outdoor patio that related in intimacy with the underground garden in front of it. The external walls are mostly glass, thus projecting the building towards the green spaces outside. The load-bearing structure is of a mixed type, concrete and metal, and the external steel pillars are left exposed so as to sequentially mark out the score of the facade.

The main entrance is located to the south, opposite the textile finishing line, thus connecting to the main road that holds the remaining buildings together. The building's open plan structure ensures a fairly fluid use of space. The existing partitions are scanned in a regular manner and generate a sequence of uniform rooms that lend themselves well to a possible planimetric reconfiguration. It enjoys a strong intimacy with the underground garden which can lead to interesting design approaches









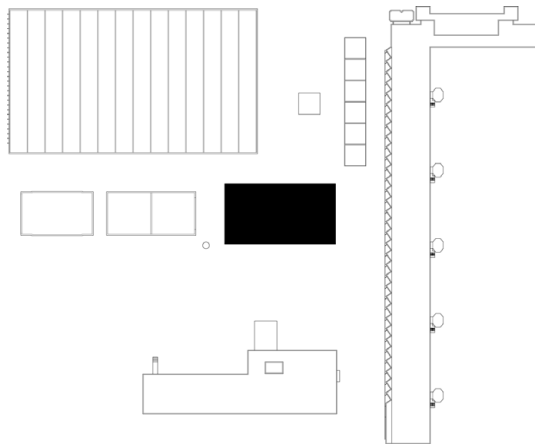






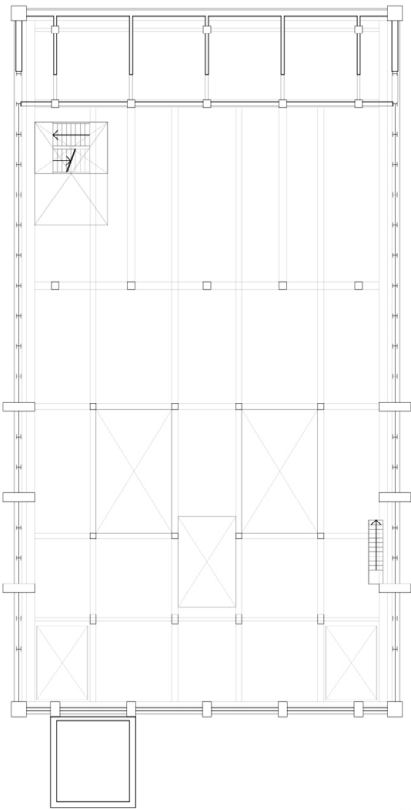
2.5.2 Centrale Termoelettrica

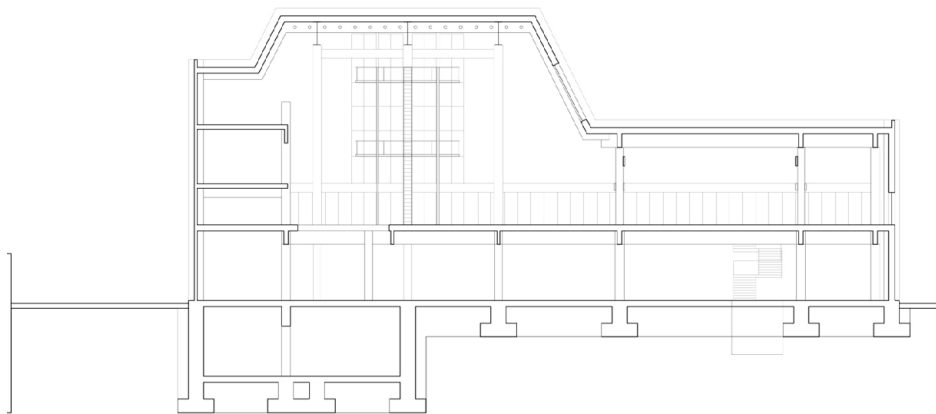
Thermoelectric Power Plant



The Centrale Termoelettrica is located in the central part of the site, between the shed building and the office building. It has a mixed concrete and steel structure. It consists of a large volume, it develops on two concrete floors of 4 m and 6 m height, supported by a large number of pillars, also in concrete, originally designed to support the large machinery; the latter, in addition to their great weight, had large volumes, which is why the floors were cut in correspondence. The remaining internal structure is therefore characterised by a concrete slab with three large holes and supported by an overabundant number of pillars. In the northern part of the building there is also a metal structure, with an attached staircase, leading to three separate levels, originally intended to house the power station offices. The external envelope, in addition to the primary concrete structure, has a dense metal structure enclosed by glass and aluminium panelling, resulting in an massive building which, thanks to the large windows, remains very bright and able to relate to the outside space. The building's large volume allows it to accommodate several functions at the same time. The large free floor areas ensure a very fluid management of flows and functions, constrained in part by the large number of pillars on the ground floor, but still leaving plenty of free space.







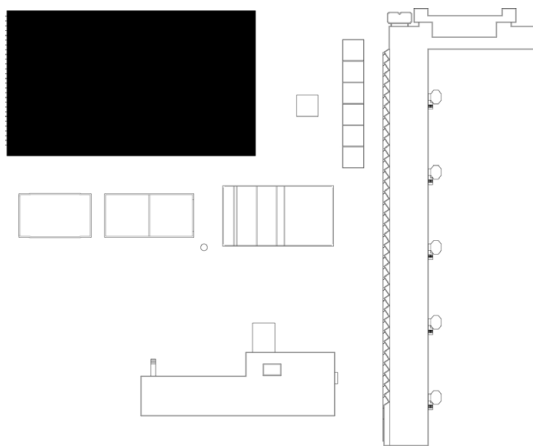








2.5.3 Shed



The Shed building is located in the north-eastern part of the plot, along the main road, and occupies an area of 6000 sqm. It is characterised by a metal structure of pillars and truss beams divided into three longitudinal spans, two of 10 m and one of 4 m. The transversal spans, each 7 m long, are crowned by a pitched metal structure, beam to beam. The last span of the building, to the north-west, has an autonomous concrete structure, and is divided into three different floors; the remaining part of the building is characterised by a large free height. The external envelope is characterised by a brick wall and a metal sheet cladding, with few openings to the outside. The building is therefore very introverted and not very bright, except for the light diffused from above through the glazing of the lattice beams.

The large bays and the great free height of the building guarantee a rather free mode of intervention. The building lends itself to being used as a container for a large function. The existing structure can be retained and integrated with partitions to increase the planimetric complexity.

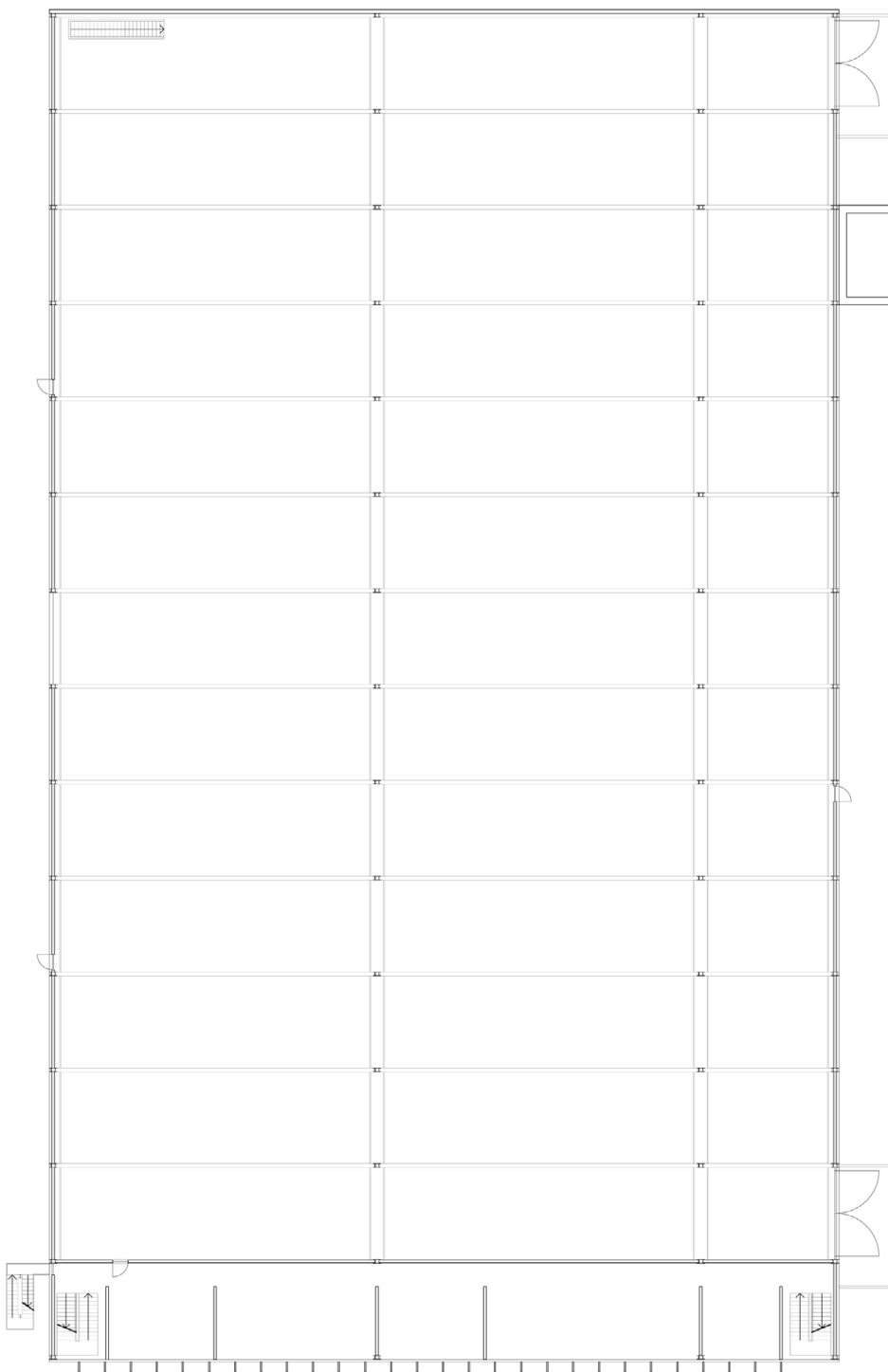


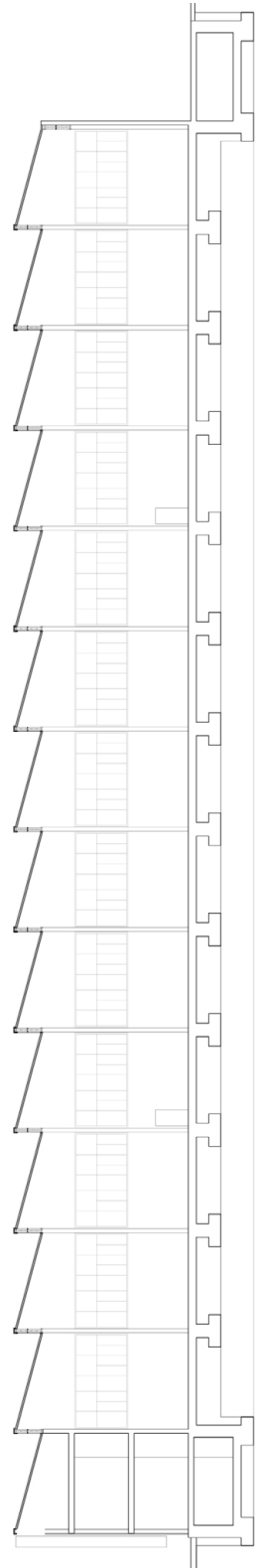
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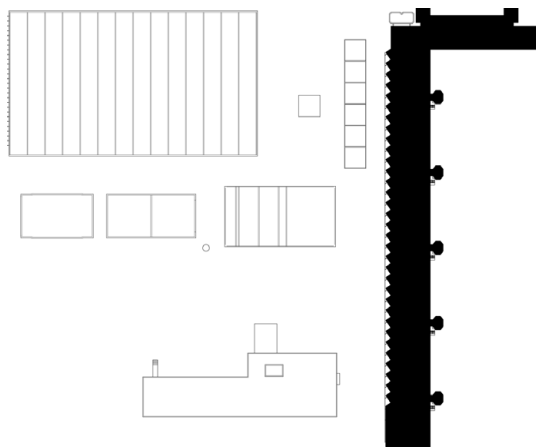






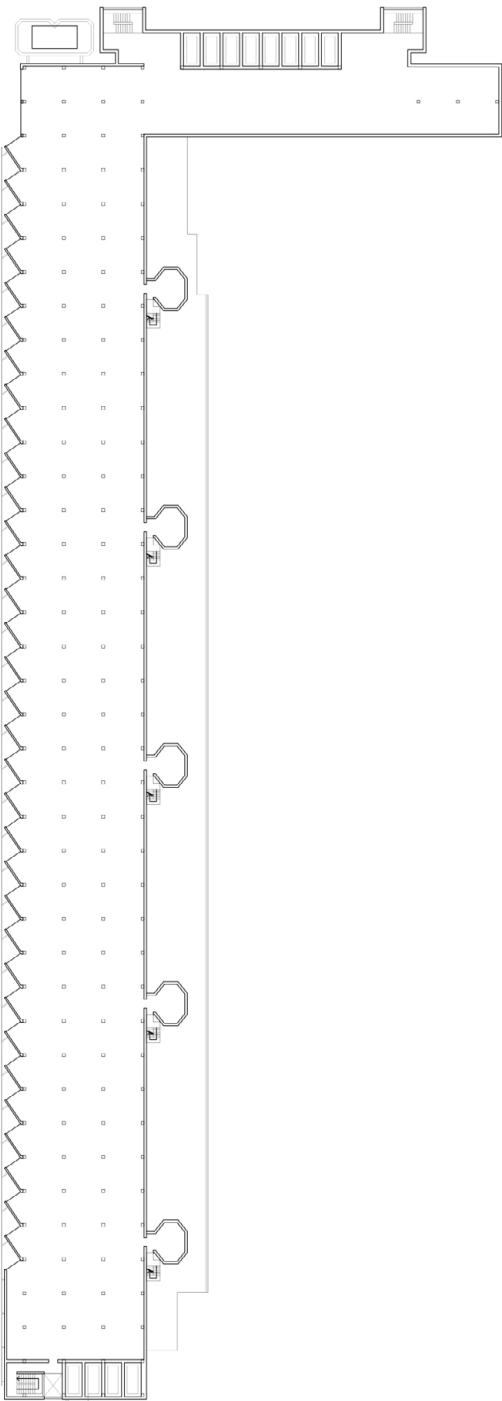
2.5.4 Linea di Finissaggio Tessile

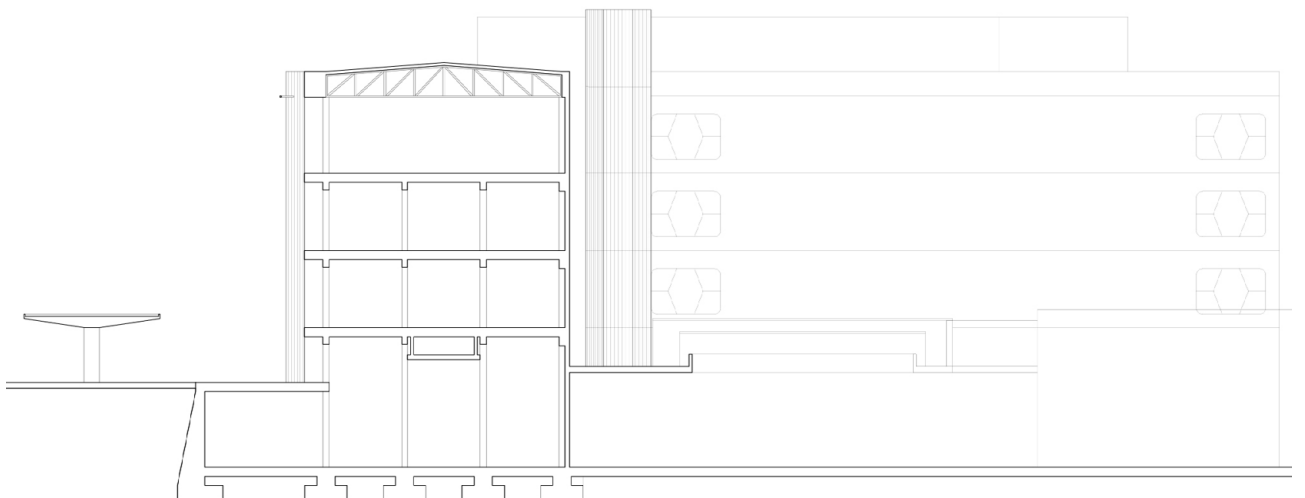
Textile Finishing Line



A linear building almost 200 metres long, four storeys high (one of which is a basement) and surrounded by five ventilation towers, is positioned on the border between the old factory and the early 20th century extension. The block is punctuated by saw-tooth glazing that rises for all four floors of the building, opening the building towards the new industrial complex. In the portion corresponding to the entrance end the building is covered with anodised aluminium corrugated panels with vertical ribbing; the composition is interrupted at the staircase block, designed as a sort of shop window and preceded by a brick wall where the seven flagpoles for the company's representative flags are placed. Structurally, it is composed as a concrete framework with no partitions, resulting in single storeys punctuated by pillars. The large floors with no vertical partitions lend themselves to new planimetric layouts, however, ordered by the strict structural mesh. The saw-tooth glazing to the north allows the building to relate to the buildings in front and to the entrance road to the lot.











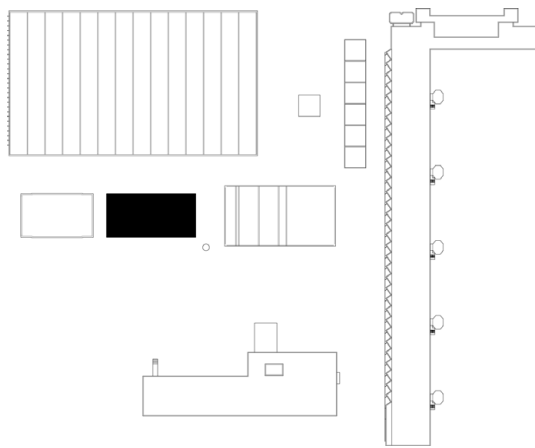




2.5.5

Vasche di raffreddamento

Cooling Tanks



They are two basins built entirely of reinforced concrete with a side length of 37 m, width of 18 m, depth of 8 m. They are located between the Centrale Termoelettrica, for which they were designed, and the Sala Libera; they thus separate the Shed building from the garden behind it.

They act as empty containers, and can play the role of a buffer between the side of the shed dedicated to the actors and the garden with the open-air theatre. They can therefore be rethought in the form of pools/gardens.









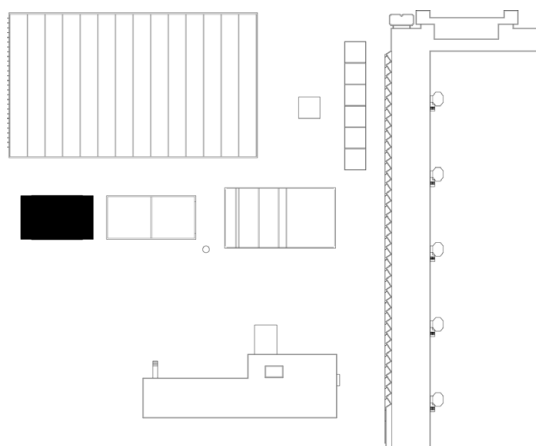






2.5.6 Sala libera

Empty Room

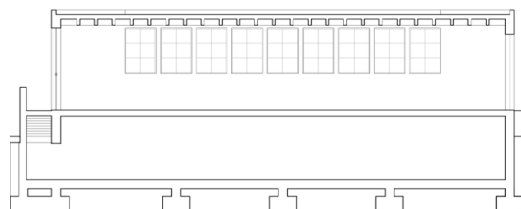


It is an open-plan building, with a rectangular layout, located in the north-west part of the lot, facing the Shed. The structure is made entirely of concrete. It has large windows at the top, thus guaranteeing great internal lighting. The large interior span, with no partitions, can be rethought in multiple ways.

There is no relationship with the outside, except for the windows at the top; thus, an introverted building emerges which, given its proximity to the shed, lends itself well to being used as a storage area for the latter.





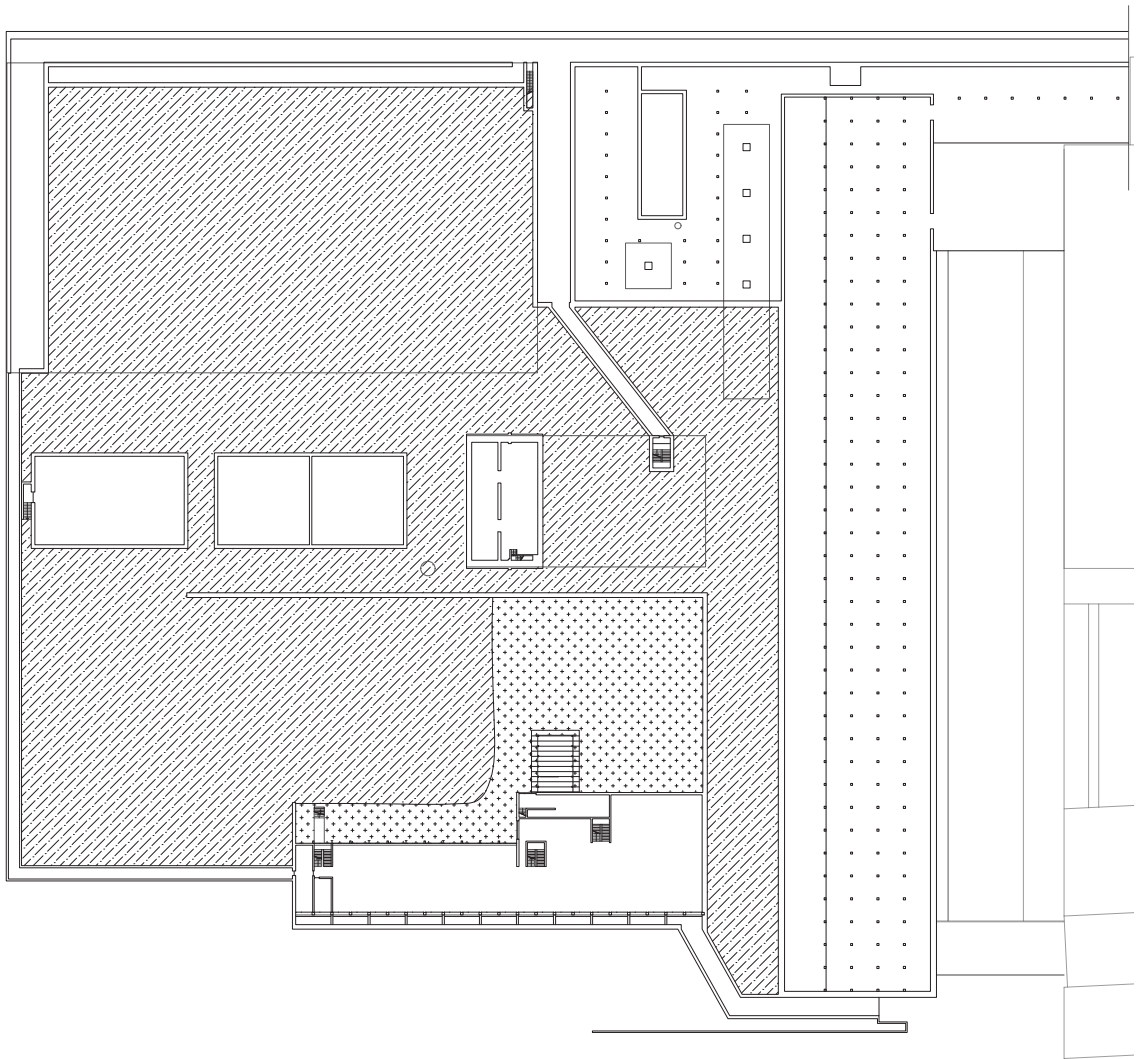






2.5.7 Underground system

The complex of the second extension of the Reggiani factory on the northern block is organised with larger, more distant buildings, which parallel the structure of the open spaces. Not only that. The system is simultaneously harmonised by three layers: volumes, voids and basements. A system of trenches oriented along the complex's *cardo* and *decumanus* connects the basements of the five buildings. A ring that starts at either end of the textile finishing line and rejoins the open hall reveals the divisions of the open spaces that can be seen on the surface: the roads between the lawns are the slabs of the trenches. Furthermore, the square on the state road with the canopies, located between the liea and the shed building, is understood to be the descent to a large sequence of underground spaces that connects to the line and beyond to the old early 20th century complex. The underground spaces between the power station, the tanks, and the free hall were actually the basement and foundation systems of four large red silos (as can be seen in the aerial photos of the Bergamo Historical Archives). Subterranean spaces then lean against the shed building, the long side of the line, and the former offices. The moment when the underground trench reaches the basement level of the former office building is curious, when on the left the opening of the building to the underground garden is discovered, which then relates directly to the level of the underground spaces. The link between the excavation, the basement spaces, and the organisation of the open spaces is strong and encloses these two elements in a single nature.



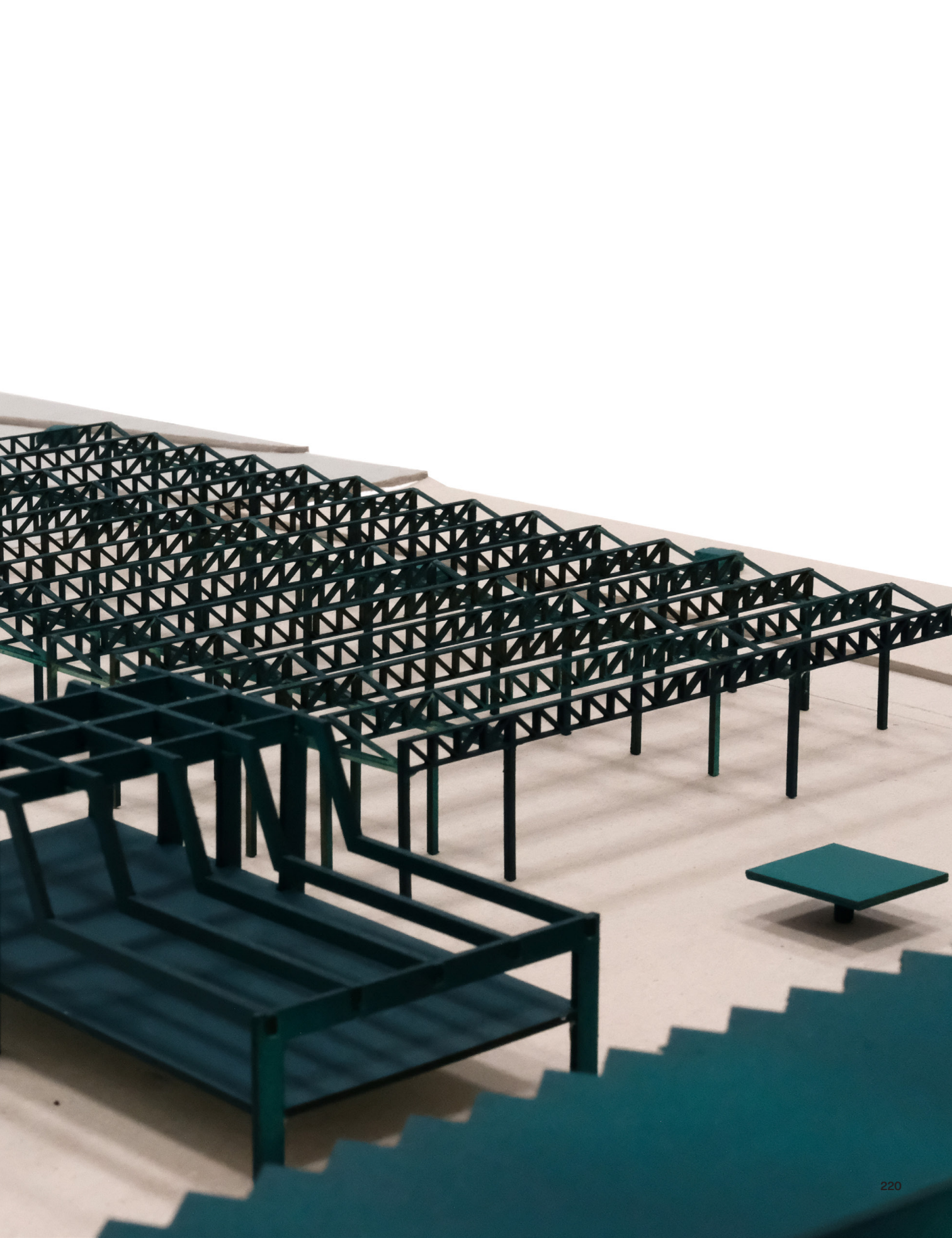


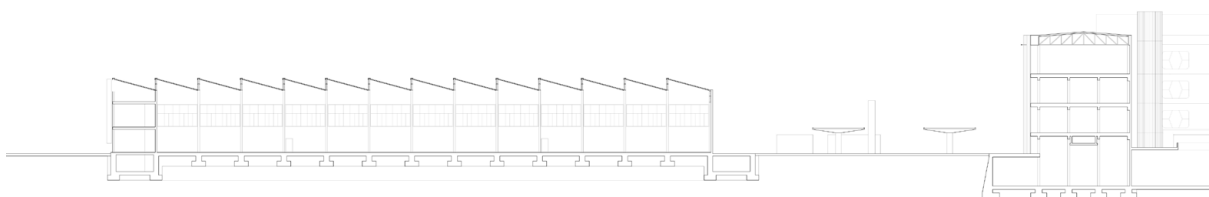
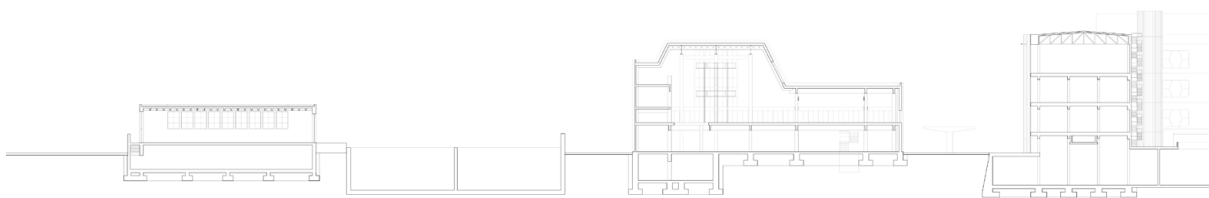
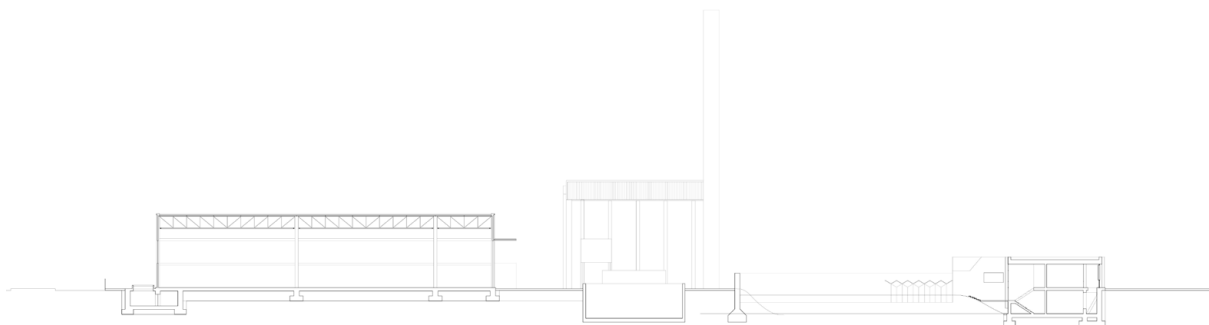












2.6 Former factory



MUSEO
DELLE STORIE
BERGAMO

Veduta verso un fabbricato dello stabilimento Reggiani, 1968






MUSEO
DELLE STORIE
DI BERGAMO



In 2009, after almost one hundred years of history, Reggiani in Bergamo, an important industry for textile finishing and the production of textile machinery and plants, closed down.

Only half a century earlier, a massive expansion project commissioned by Armando Reggiani from the renowned architect Alziro Bergonzo had made it one of the most interesting industrial complexes in our recent history (“an example of international value”, wrote Bruno Alfieri in ‘Lotus’ in 1966), a place of work for around 1.000 people whose time was punctuated by the merciless alternation of shifts, an important piece of the city’s social history. The project involved the extension of an old factory in Bergamo, with the construction of new blocks inserted in a sort of industrial campus within a pre-existing garden, bordering the first nucleus of the industrial plant dating back to the early 20th century. Bergonzo and Eynard, in particular, built the body of the new textile finishing departments of section IV, a thermoelectric power station, the units for complementary services and the office building. The resulting brownfield site is the largest space to be reconverted within the city.

“The building realisations of this vast plan (...), the thoughtful study of which was carried out in the climate of a humanistic collaboration between client and architect, have entrusted the solution of the formal requirement to a rigorous adherence to function, thus conferring to the terse rigour of volumes, dimensions, modularity and appropriate use of materials an expressive language of unusual vigour.”³

3. B. Alfieri, Ampliamento della Reggiani divisione tessile, Bergamo, in “Lotus”, n.3, 1966, p. 77



4. B. Alfieri, Ampliamento della Reggiani divisione tessile, Bergamo, in "Lotus", n.3, 1966, p. 76

“One of the main merits of this work (...), [is] having been able to conceive and create a set of buildings that dynamically integrate with each other, never leaving the spectator with a “closed” view of a sector, but rather giving him, in the alternation of volumes, the proof of an operosity that he will find when he visits the interiors.”⁴

The entrance road to the factory leads several dozen metres into nature before arriving at the office building and the forecourt where the main buildings of the large complex meet.

A facility surrounded by greenery that is almost reminiscent of a campus, that is, an autonomous production compartment, a specifically dedicated area separated from the city with respect to its internal layout logic, far from that generation of early 20th century production facilities set in the urban fabric, with the main façade along the entrance road, as was, among other things, the old Reggiani building, the A. Reggiani & C. of the early 20th century.⁵

5. Paolo Vitali, Ark 6, Architettura Industriale, Luglio 2011, p. 8

What is striking about the now former Reggiani industrial site is first and foremost its overall size: it is to all intents and purposes a piece of town, we could say an industrial district (130,000 square metres, 66,000 of which are covered).

Moving around the complex would seem to be in a miniature city, were it not for the rigorous treatment of the production buildings, which denote, in the forms of their façades, in their partitions and in the use of materials, their real purpose. Nevertheless, there remains a certain sensation of an “elsewhere”, a metaphysical aura, due to the skill with which the ensemble of volumes is ‘set up’ and the relations they establish with the surrounding urban and natural landscape, reminiscent of Bergonzo’s typical and recurring way of treating space.⁶

6. Paolo Vitali, Ark 6, Architettura Industriale, Luglio 2011, p. 10



















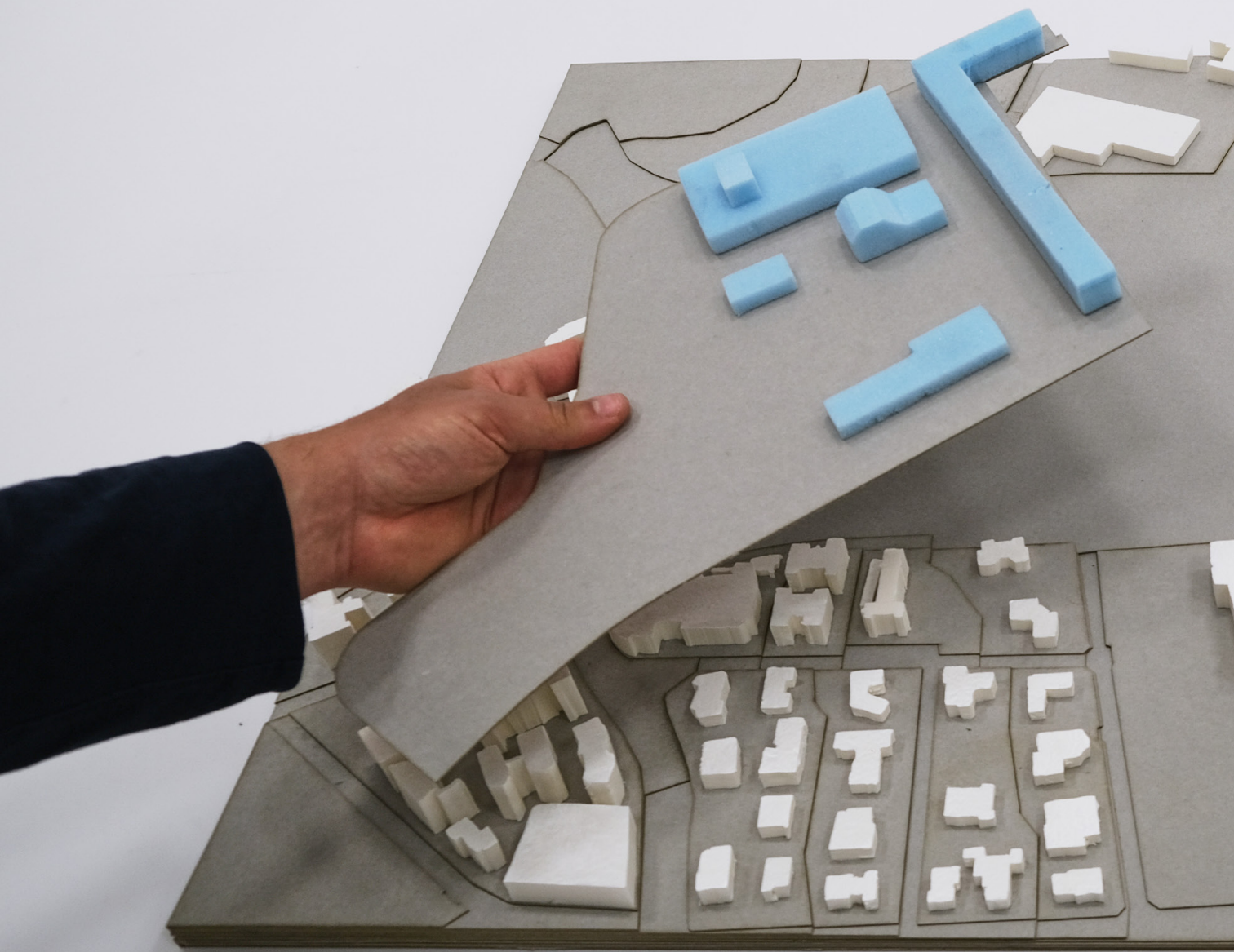


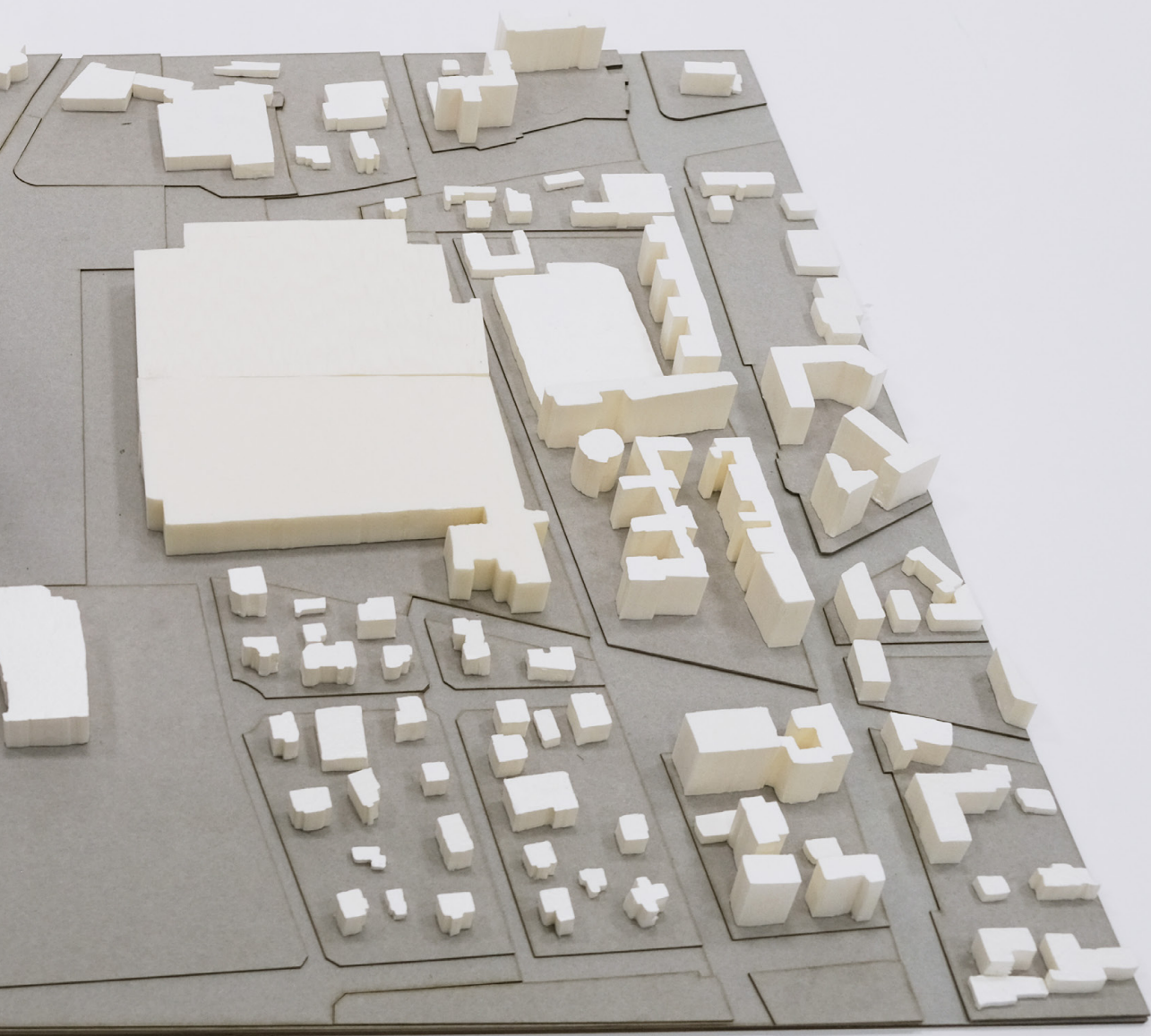


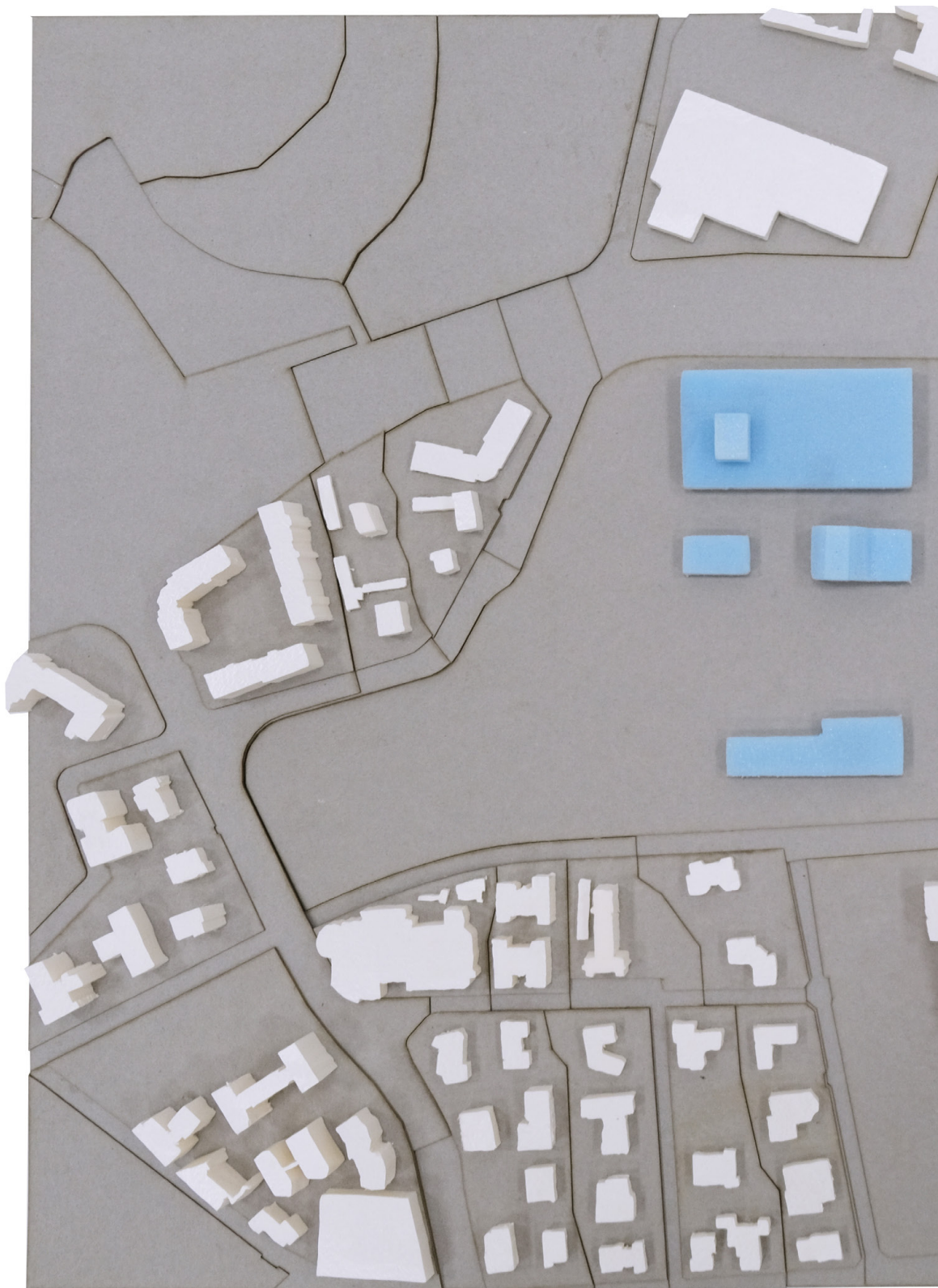


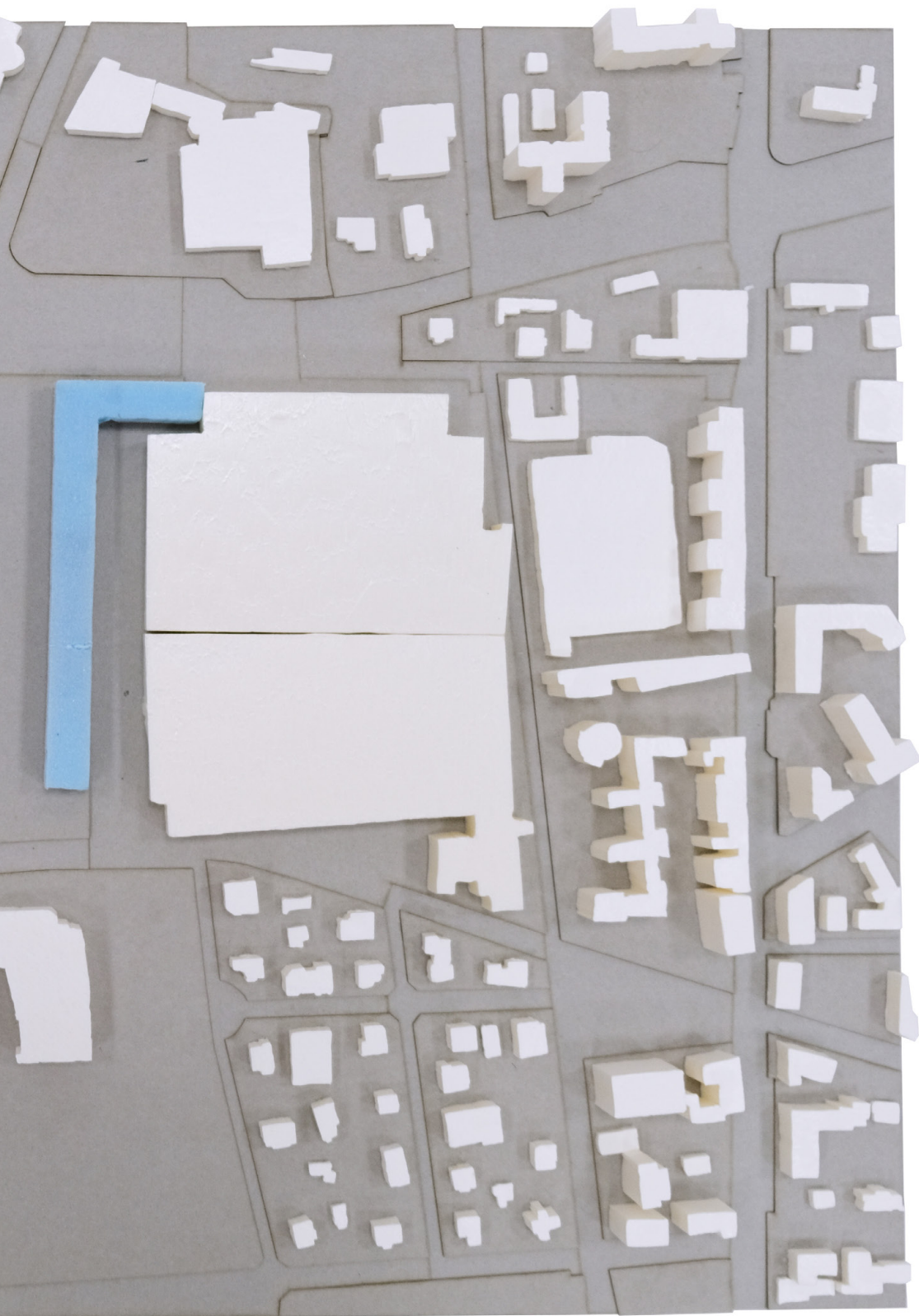


2.7 Can it host a theatre?

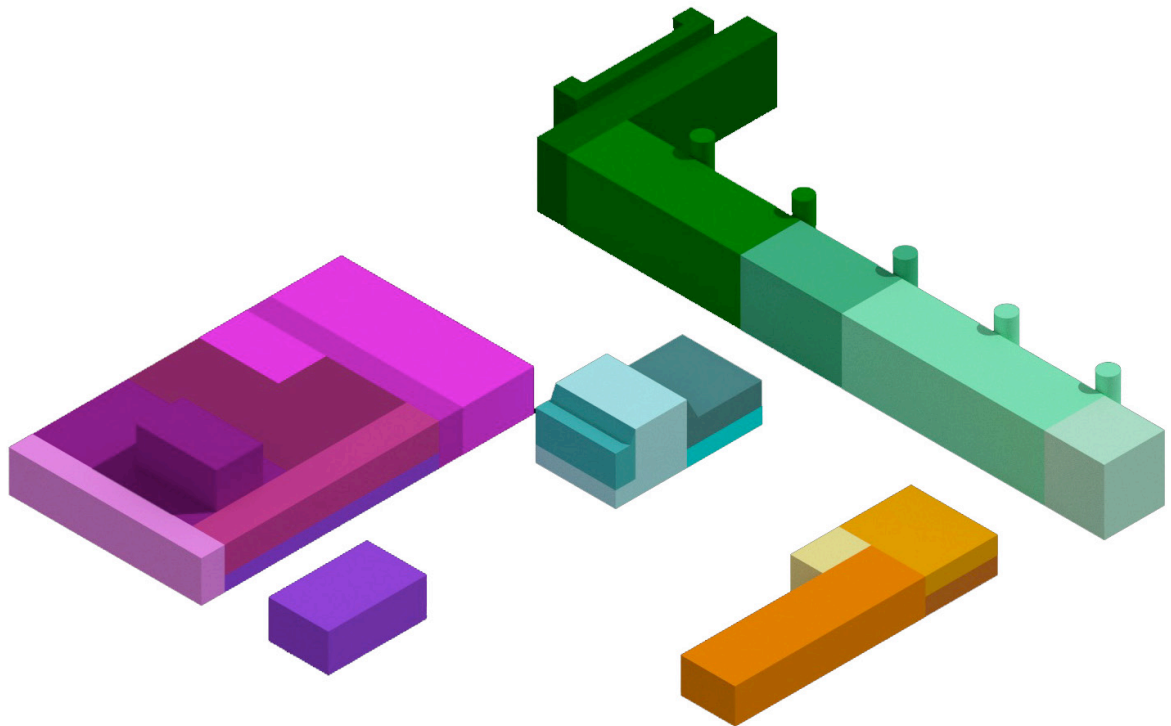




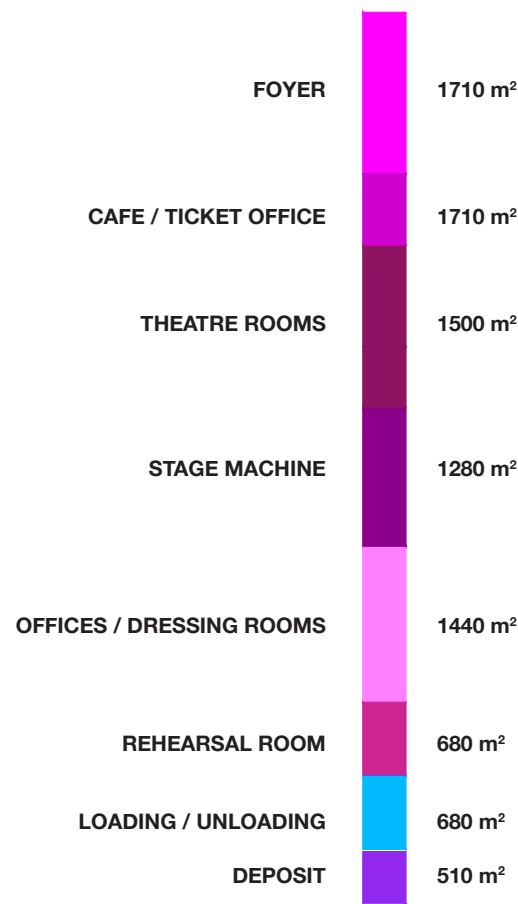




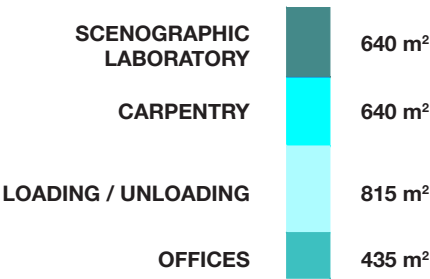
PROGRAM



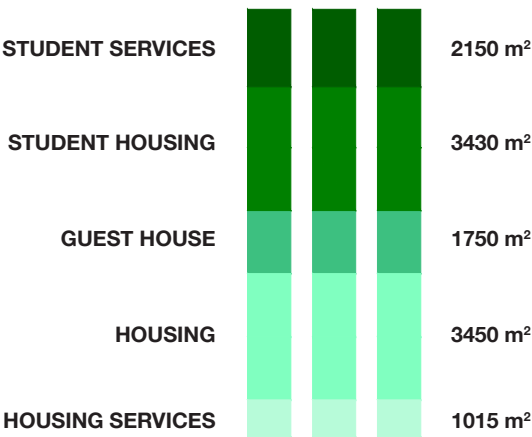
THEATRE



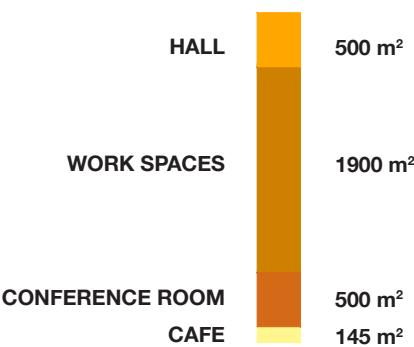
SCENIC PRODUCTION



DWELLINGS

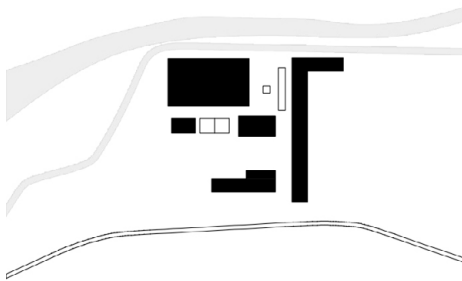


COWORKING

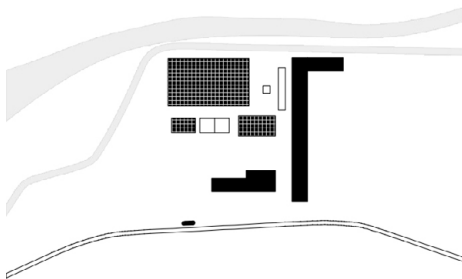


Soil organization

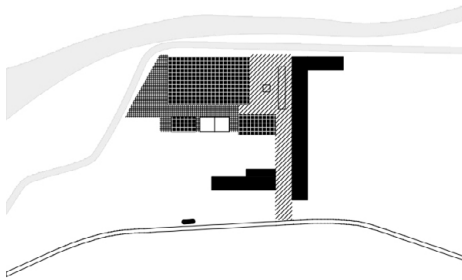
The block of the second mid-twentieth century extension of the factory presents an extremely orderly and coherent design of volumes and open spaces. The textile finishing line cuts through and creates a front for the block, the volumes are organised on three axes, squeezing up to the line leaving a space parallel to it. The volumes move closer together and further apart, creating vast spaces, squares and pathways. The first step of identifying the three buildings intended for the functions of theatre and stage workshops, especially for the adequacy of the spaces and structures, leads directly to the delineation of the area pertaining the large shed building. The latter, together with the thermoelectric power station and the free hall identify a strip that reaches north to the boundary of the block, opening onto a secondary road connected to the state road: thus the theme of the area for sorting, working and transporting materials is resolved. From the negative of this axis, the public circulation area parallel to the line (which will house the residences) is identified. The transversality of this space brings people from the tram route into the block, between its buildings, arriving at the final square in front of the theatre. Fundamental were these two considerations in identifying then the orientation of the functions within the shed building, housing the theatre: the foyer in front of the public square, the theatre part on the opposite side. Subsequently, the reading of the existing soil texture of the block is perfectly adapted to the functional reorganisation of the public open spaces, orienting a mineral strip along the front of the line and the vegetal strip in the north direction of the block. Curiously intriguing is the central position with respect to all the above-mentioned relations of the cooling tanks of the industry, from which a reed-bed, fragile and light in the ruined concrete, was born. The reed bed and this space are left in their state, the old and the new, the heavy and the light, a metaphorically undetectable place.



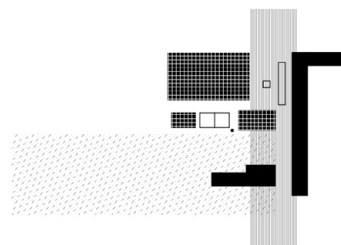
existing buildings
road and tram



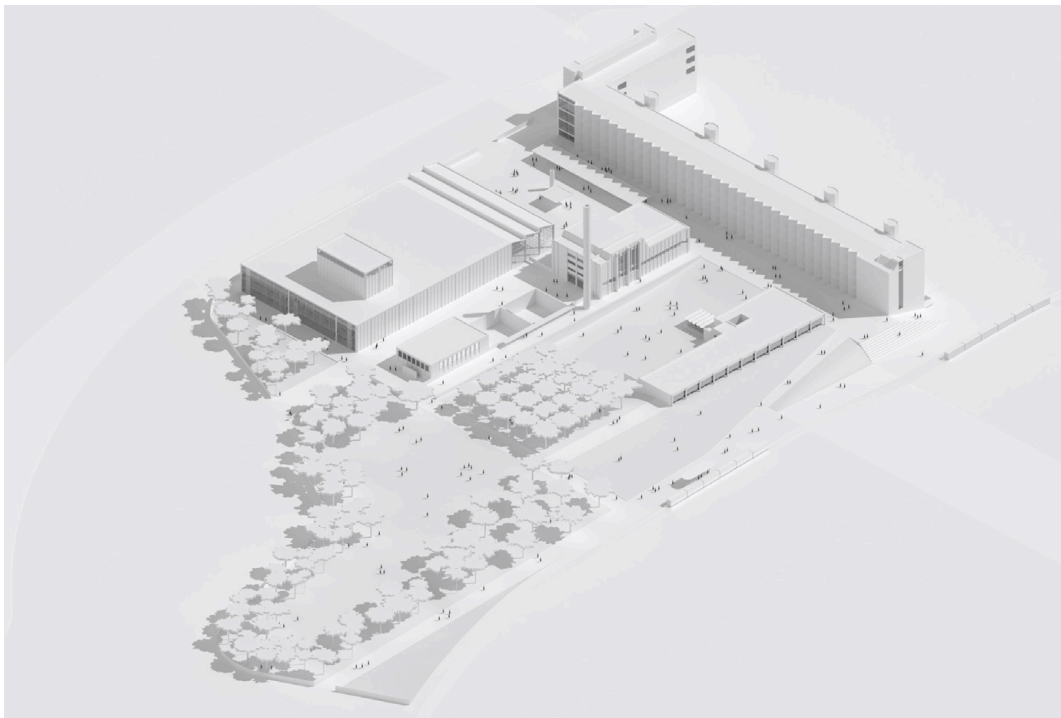
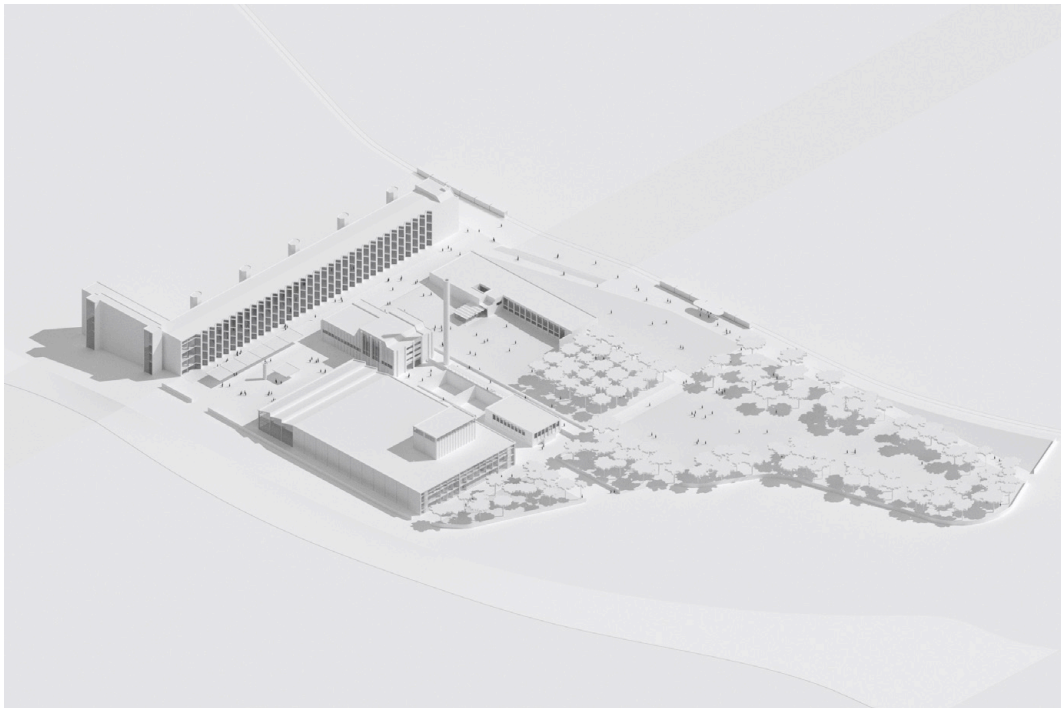
theatre and labs
tram stop



public distribution
theatre distribution



public spaces
mineral strip
vegetal strip



The open spaces of the complex are the really important asset of the area in relation to the urban context and the city. In Bergamo, it is almost impossible to find a free and vast meadow within the city's industrial belt. The Reggiani block consisted of vast lawns on the north side, which penetrated between the volumes. As the volumes are preserved, so the open spaces are reinterpreted.

The opportunity then to create, or rather keep intact, a large void is unique in this urban context. In fact it embodies a relationship between city and open land, between centre and periphery. A system of open spaces designed as a large room of free lawn penetrating between the architecture is a condition that must be grasped here, because it is absent in other situations in Bergamo.

The void needs its boundary: a frame of trees, more or less jagged, makes it a room, a space to be characterised. Other open spaces conform various possibilities: the formal garden, the sloping lawn between the Palazzina Uffici and the wall against the ground; the industrial square in front of the theatre.

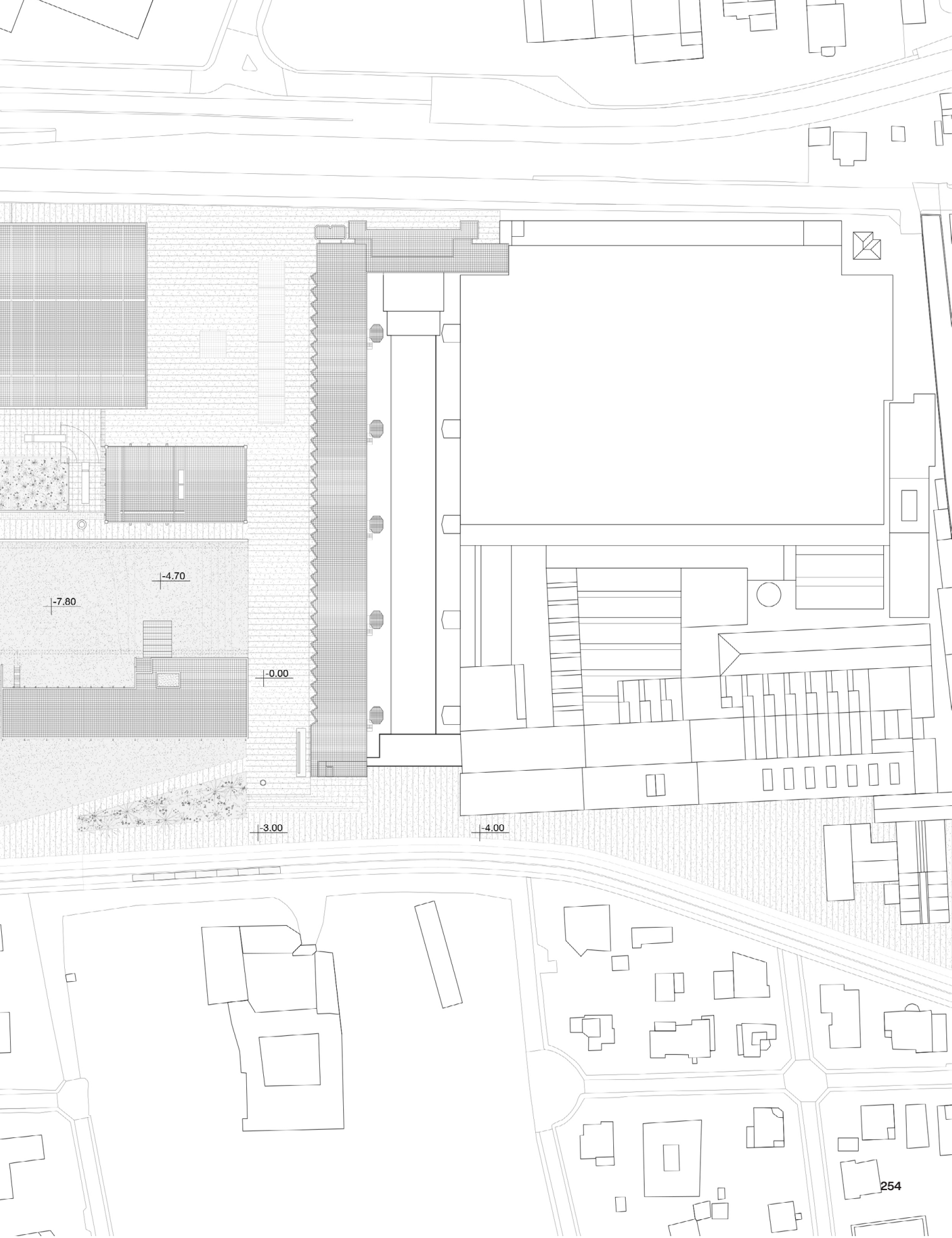
"Even more perceptive is the approach of Manuel de Solà-Morales, who proposes the design of the vacuum understood as the distance between the buildings. Solà-Morales's project for Antwerp was much more focused on the correct spacing of the buildings and their interaction with the site than on the overall form they would have in the end.

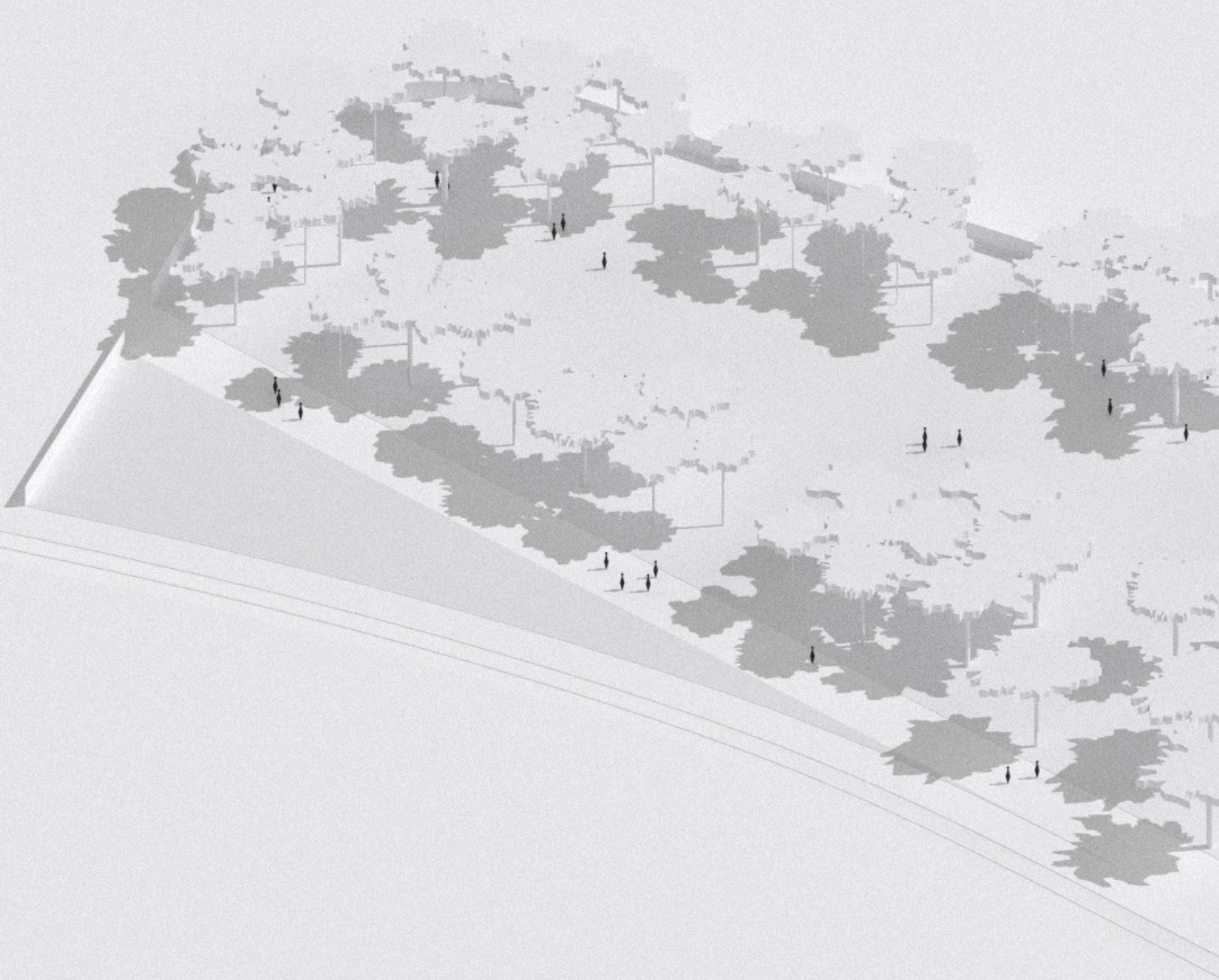
In this case, architecture neither wants to control the whole by designing everything, nor focuses exclusively on the parts on which it acts with its own materials and rules. This new approach to the project was conceived as the result of a design strategy that planned the influence that objects would have on their context and gave new cultural meaning to things that already existed without directly altering any of them.

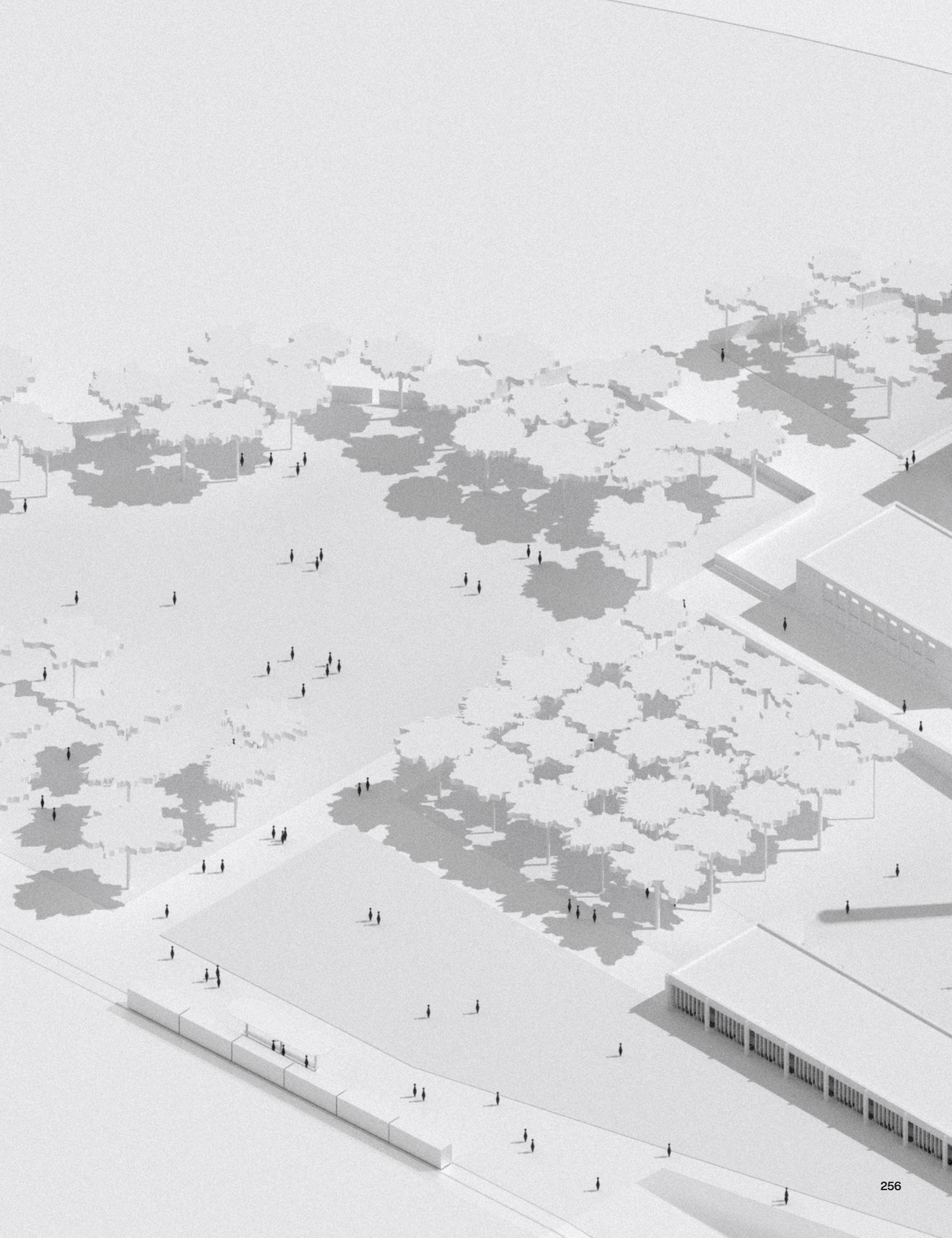
New figures set against their background thus defined a new urban context created by the constant and unpredictable relationship between them and the complex reality of today."¹⁷

17. Nicola Russi, Building Context: When Architecture Becomes The Background, in San Rocco Magazine N°4: Fuck Concepts! Context!, p. 84









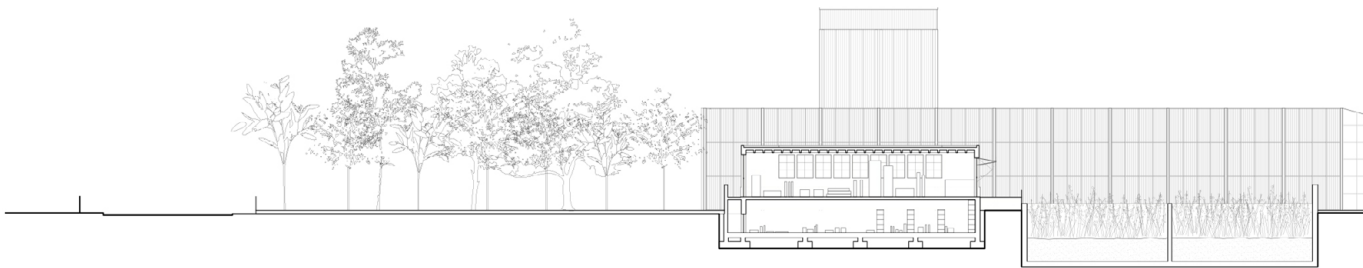
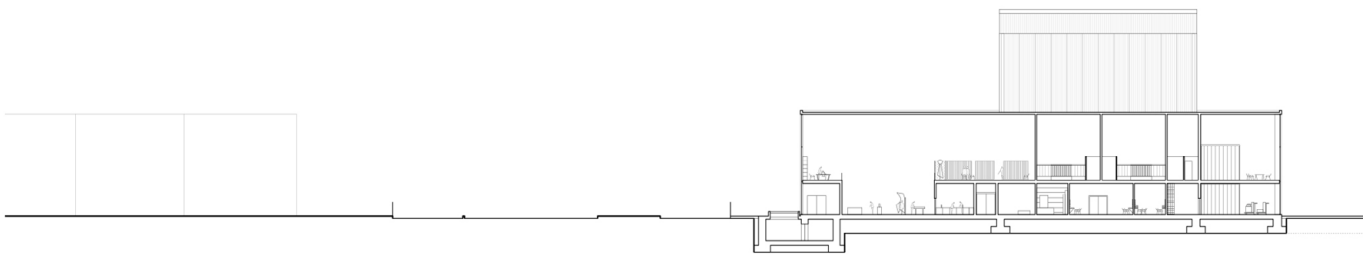


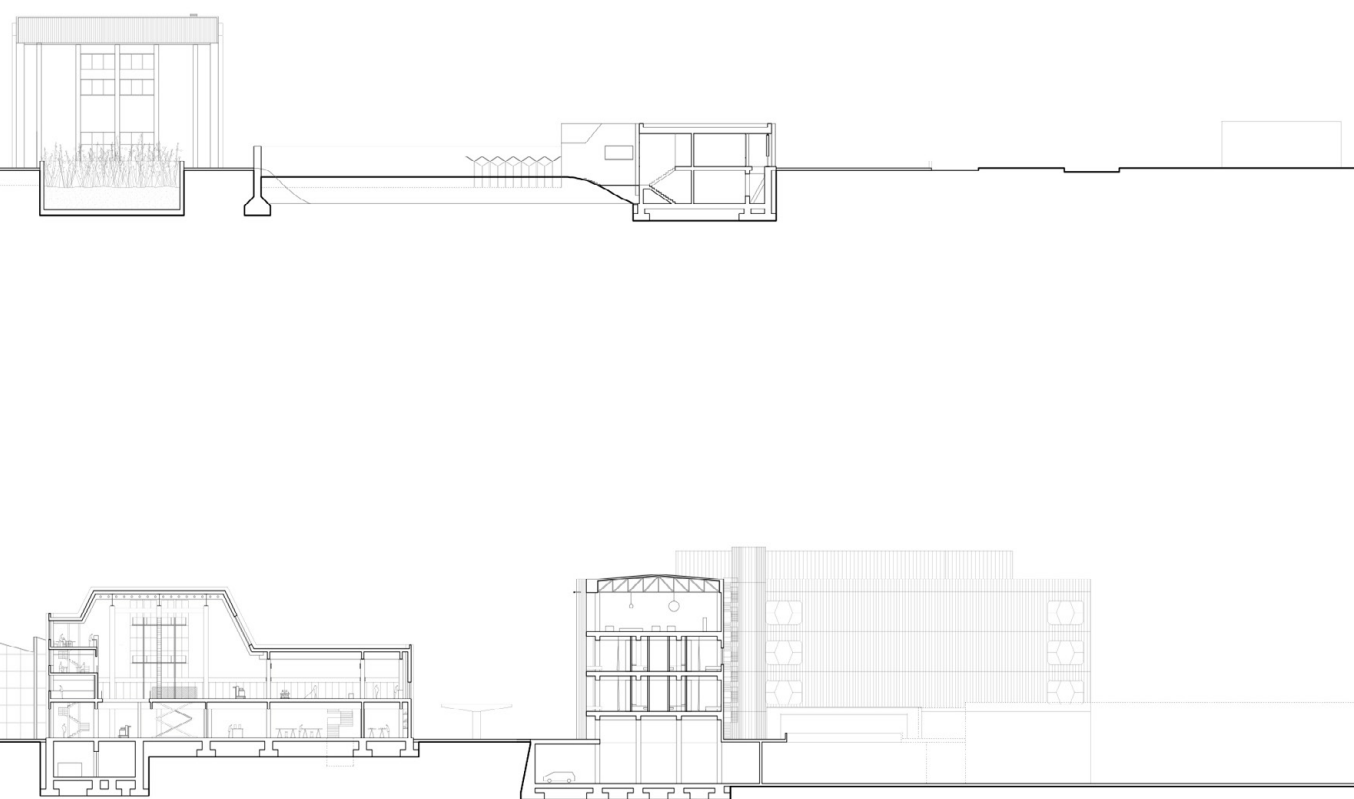
“[...] a continuous and unobstructed “*supersuperficie*”. Emptiness, not understood as absence, but rather interpreted as a completely available open field, is for Superstudio the necessary condition to accommodate and support free forms of appropriation of space”. This condition, apparently preceding architecture, is itself transformed into a design action: in order for space to be easily colonised and transformed according to dynamics that follow one another in time, it must be consciously freed of impediments, simplified, made infrastructure, a stage without scenery. [...] Imagining nothingness can mean freeing a space from obstacles, even immaterial ones, but it can also correspond to the definition of boundaries and frames that highlight its present absences, a horizon to be conquered so that the city’s different potentialities and the behaviour of its inhabitants can resonate freely. The project of the void, understood as a support, has as many declinations as the supporters of this transformation and the contexts within which this will is applied.”¹⁶

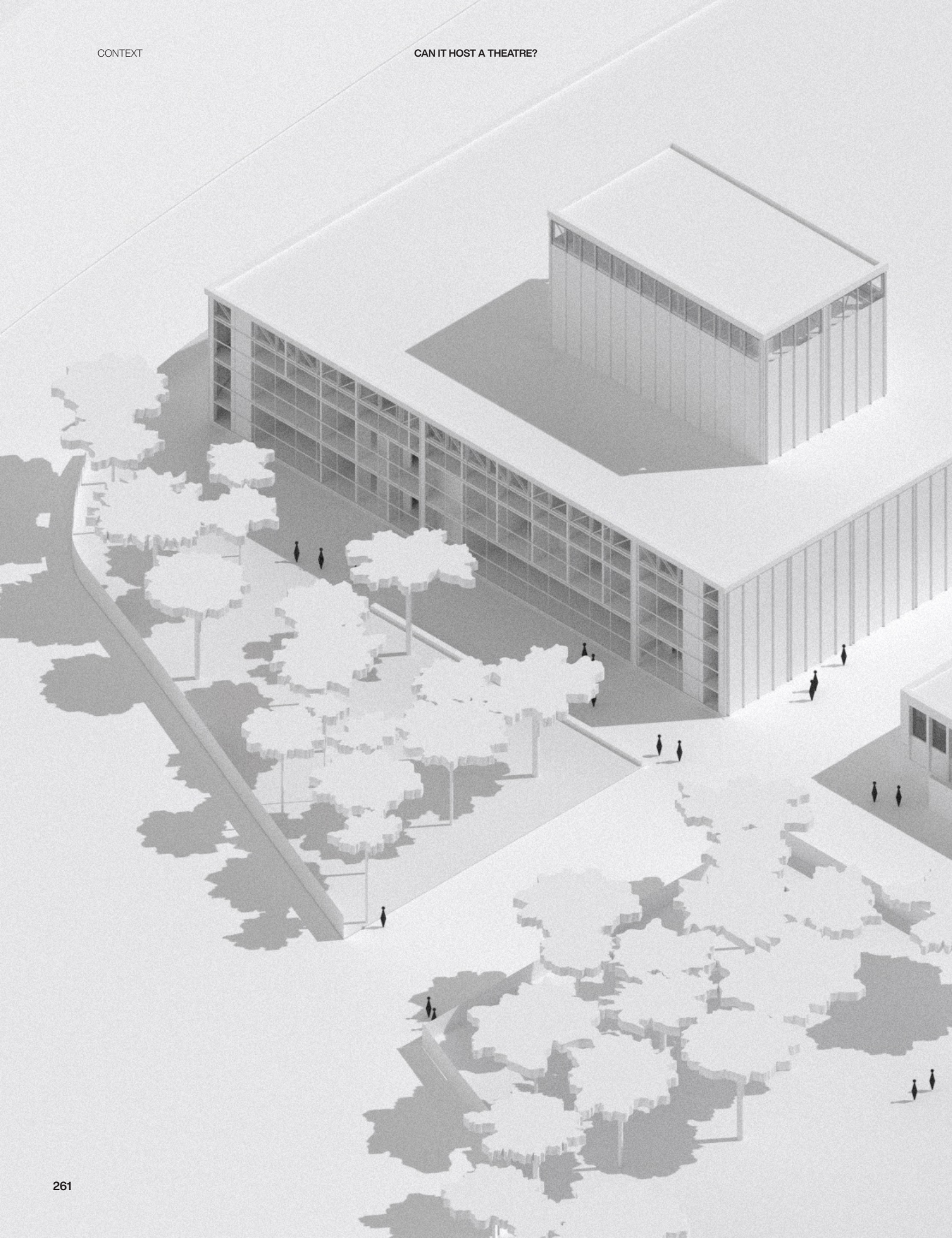
16. Nicola Russi, Background. Il progetto del vuoto, Quodlibet, Macerata, 2019, pp. 9-10

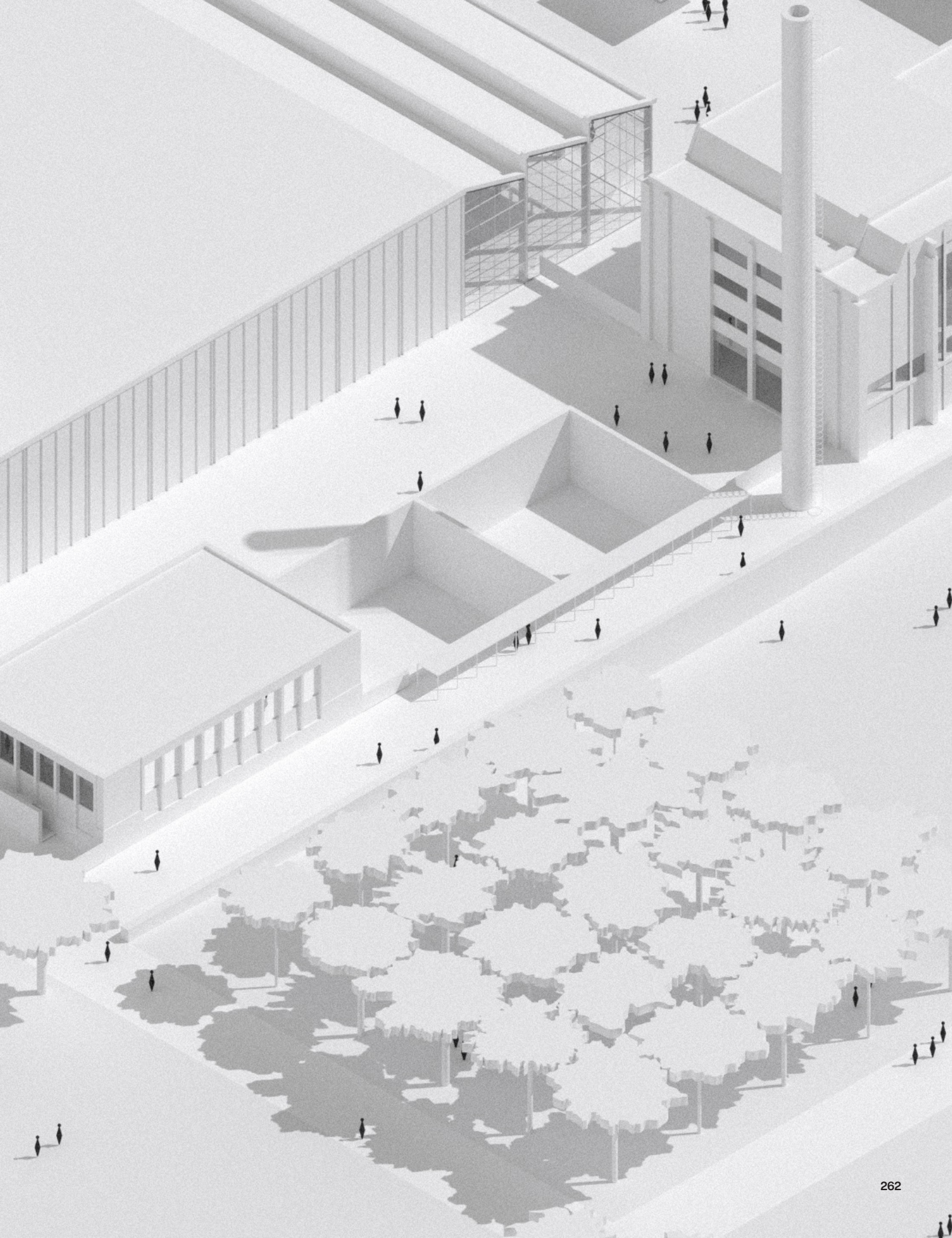
A large, open meadow is an infrastructure in its own right. The most diverse ephemeral practices can take place there. Contemporary urban design culture needs to regain an understanding of a device that works now as it has always worked in the past. Meetings, leisure, fairs, events, gatherings, community events, have characterised the open spaces of cities, and continue to do so today, now more than ever, at a time when the re-appropriation of public spaces is redefining the urban environment.

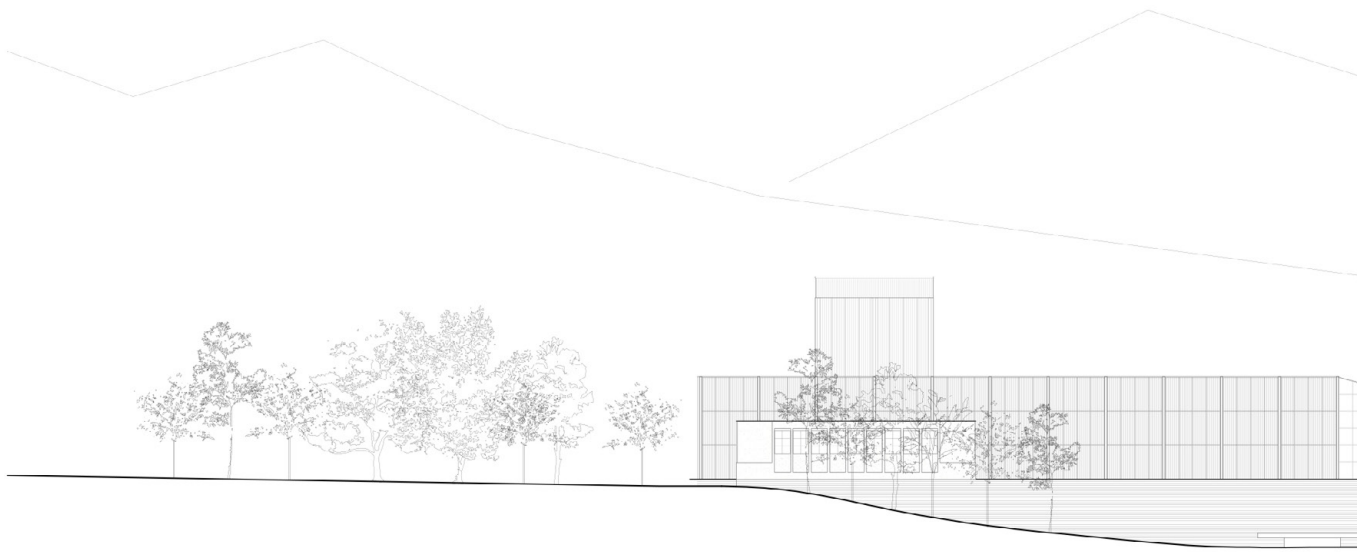
Being by form and nature a weak support, it enters the project as a space that serves the city and thus *in primis* the theatre, that the project imagines in the Reggiani complex. In the first part we saw how this is not a pretentious and unreal promise, but instead can signify a multitude of possible scenarios, which have already happened and can actually be interpreted as theatre spaces.

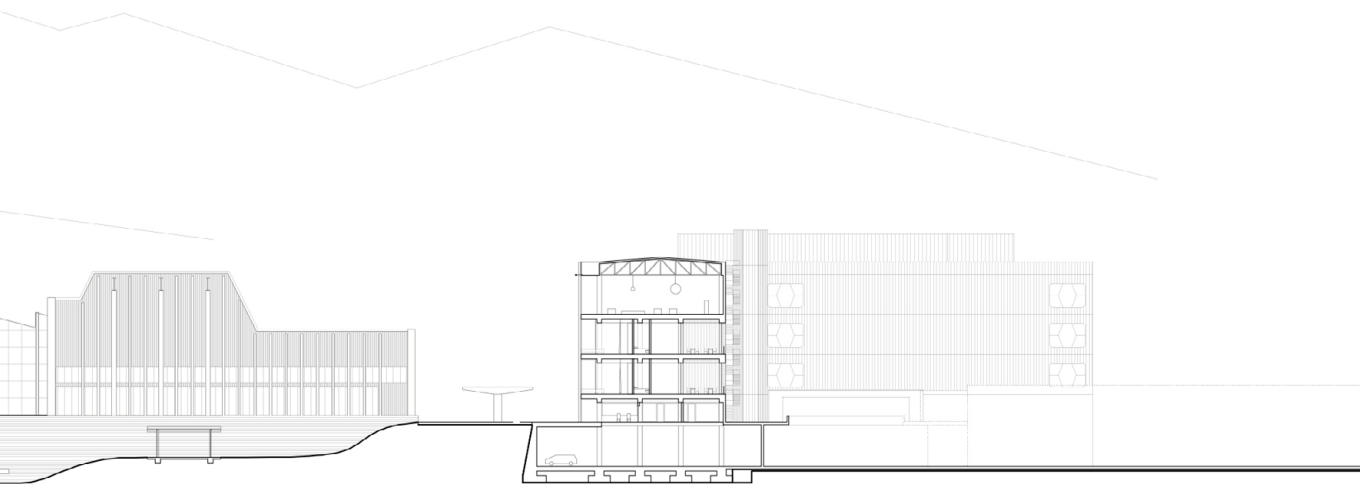




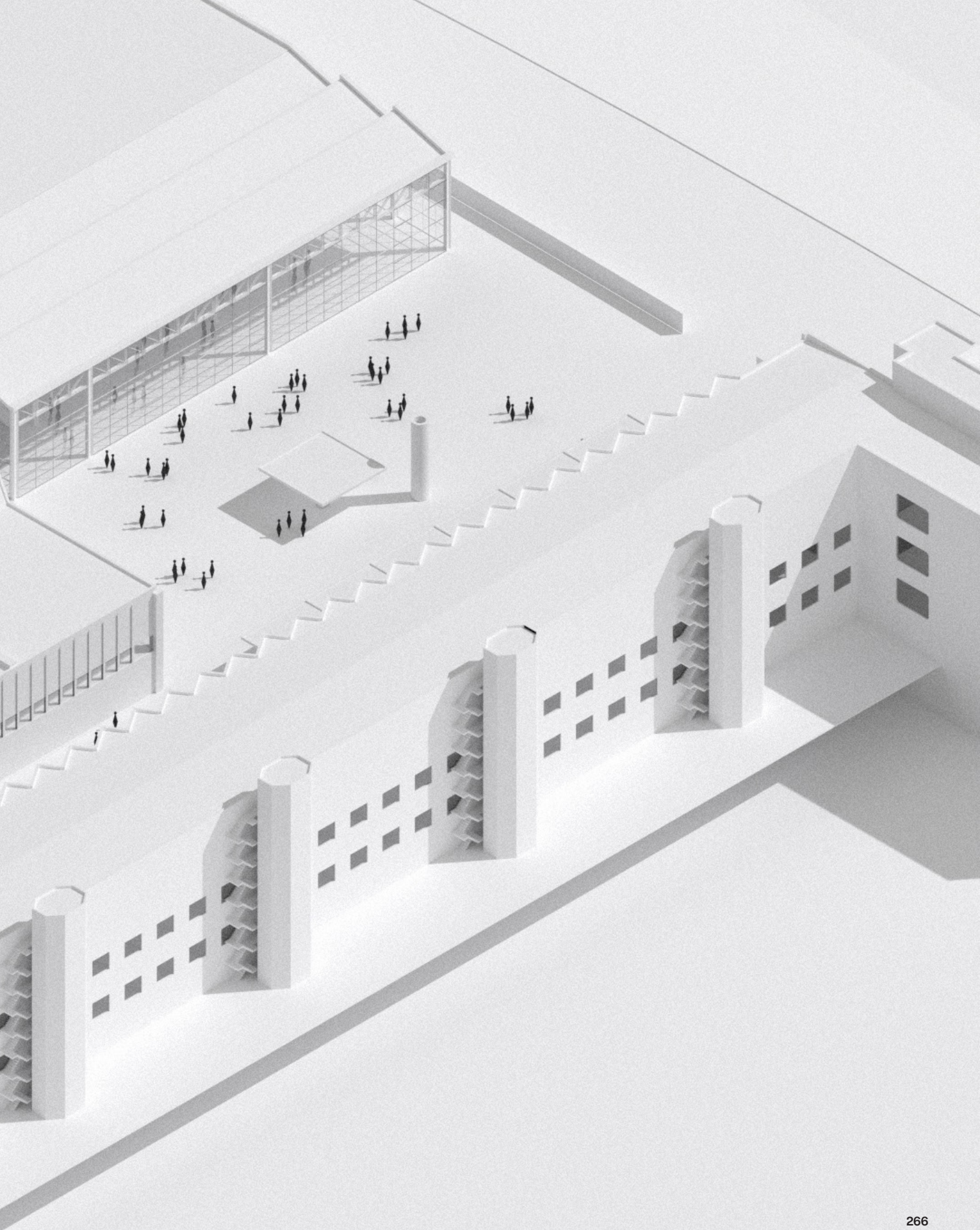


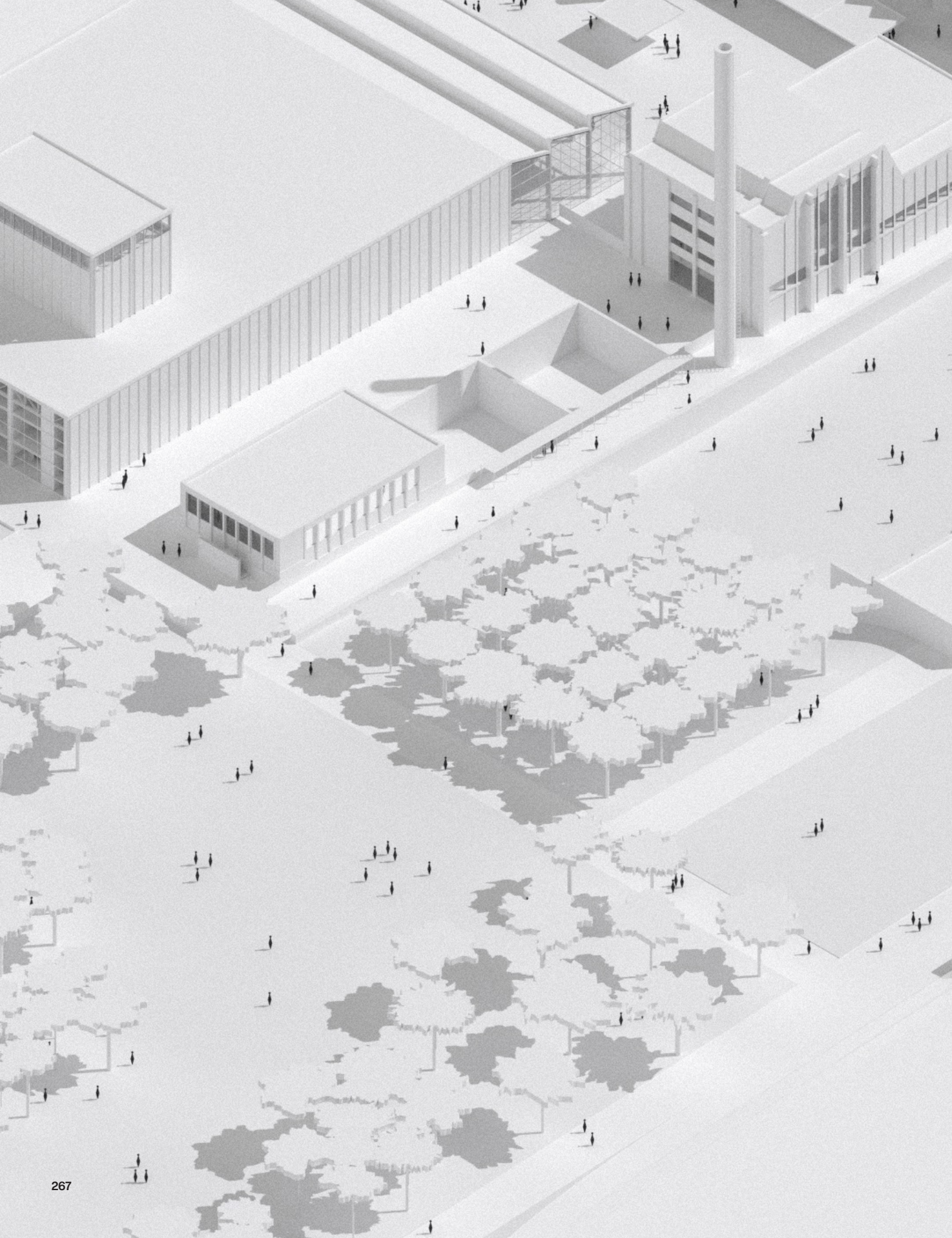


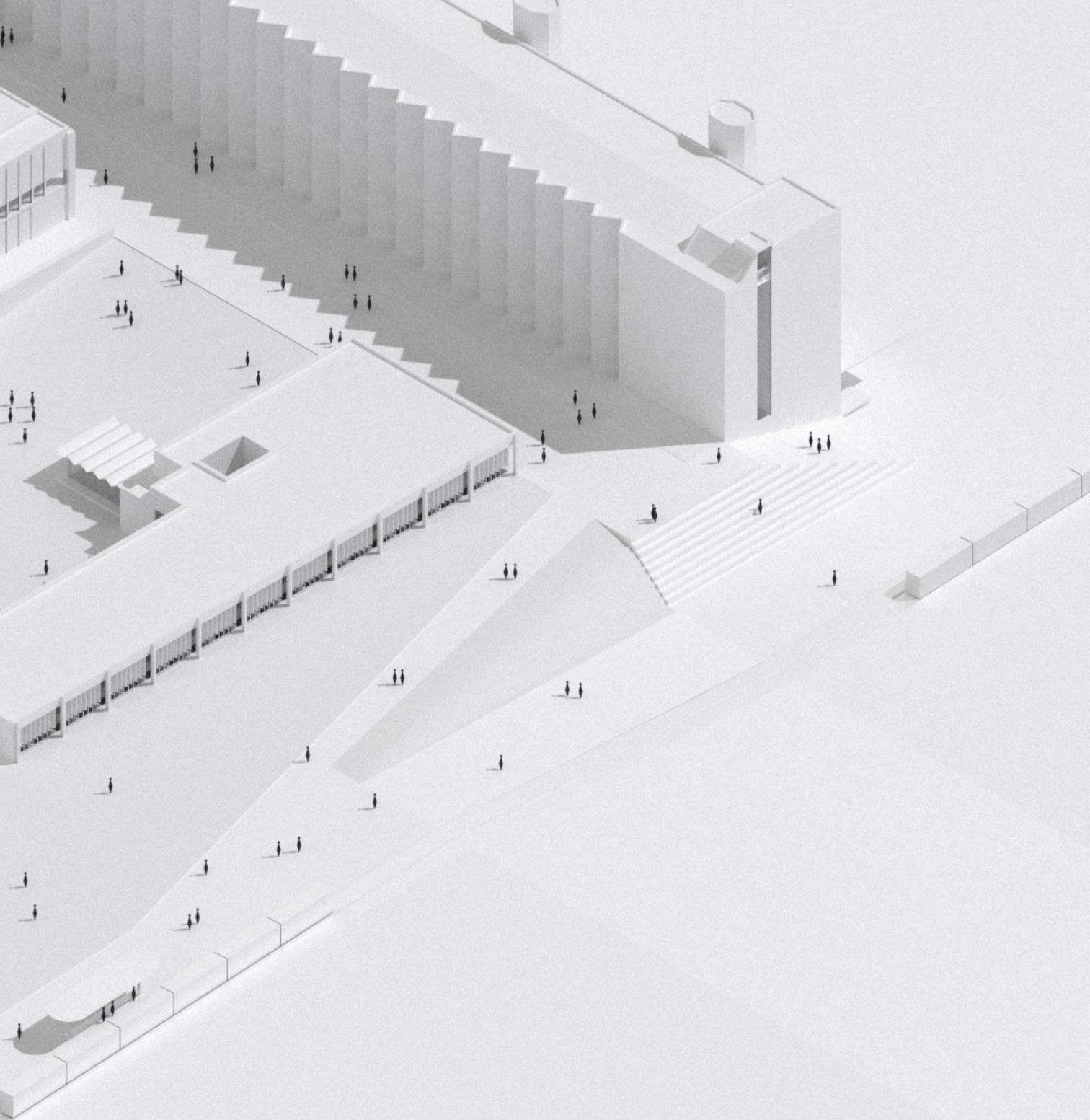












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Sitografy

Storia di Bergamo, Treccani, Enciclopedia online

Credits

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- p. 257 Massimo Vitali, Picnic Allée, 2000 © www.lamphoon.it

03

METHOD

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intro

A theatre is an organism composed of multiple parts that interact together. It is a machine that does not stop, it lives from stage production during the day, and performances at night. It also lives of the lateral activities that the flexibility of the spaces are able to support.

Our visit to the Franco Parenti Theatre in Milan allowed us to discover the atmosphere that one breathes in the spaces of a theatre, in the backstage, offices and production spaces, as well as in the halls and other spaces for the public. A theatre can become more powerful if all spaces, including those not conventionally dedicated to performance, are able to organise a staging.

The complexity of the functions and problems perceived during the visit led to the need for an accurate study of the parts of the theatre machine, scanned in each element with the minimum dimensions and spaces for operation. The design of the parts of a theatre does not only concern the steps of technology, but the architectural quality of the places and their relationships. It is also fundamental to understand the metaphorical assembly line of all the relationships between the actors that have a role in the theatre, including the audience. Some environments need to be in direct contact; others counterintuitively can be detached.

Organisational and programmatic needs and wishes then clash with the existing architecture. This is when the interpretation of the architectural ruin occurs under the lens of design wills, and the organisational and architectural vision emerges. The industrial artefact holds the signs of its history and identity. The project does not eliminate or overpower, but rather contains and enhances these particularities, through the skilful addition of new elements.

3.1 On Site TFP Visit





Teatro Franco Parenti

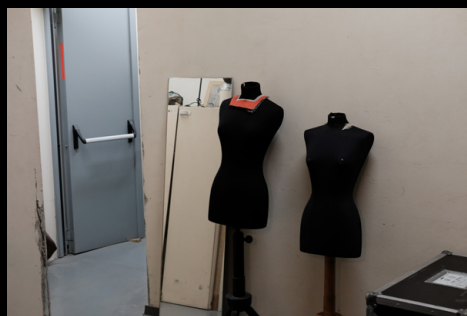


“The Theatre: 5,400 square metres on 3 levels, with 8 different halls and spaces converging towards the heart of the Theatre, the large and bright Foyer punctuated by walkways and glass windows overlooking the two outdoor pools.”¹



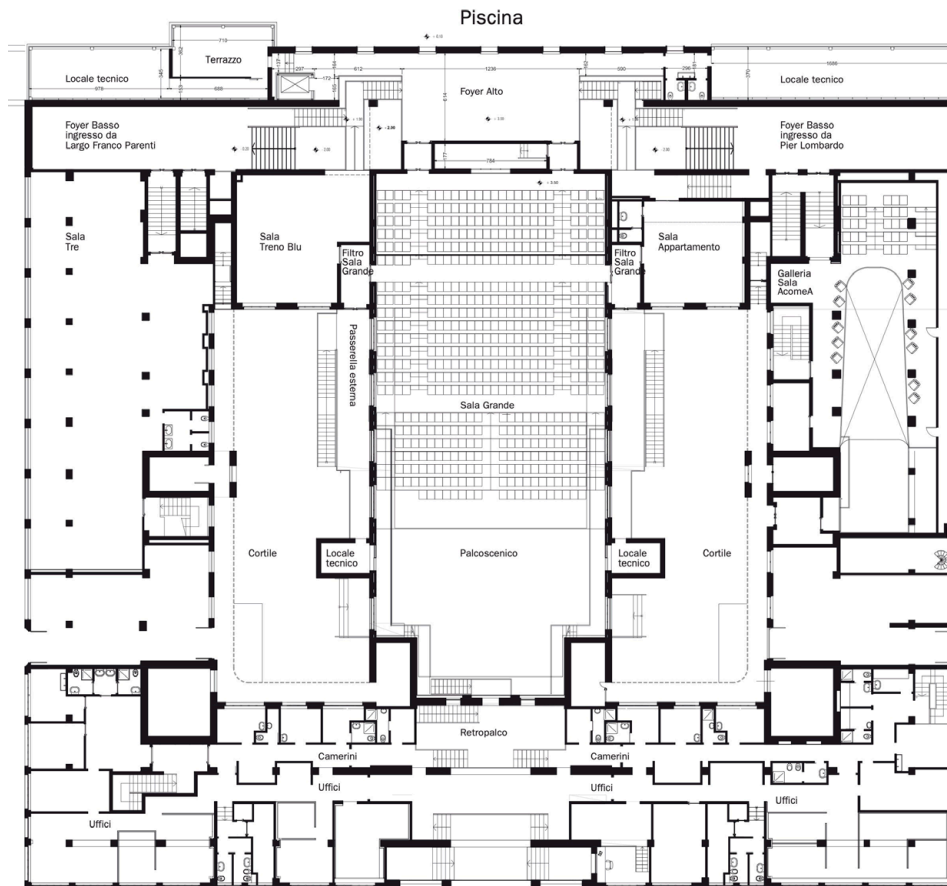
The visit to the Teatro Franco Parenti allowed us to get in touch with the real functioning of a theatre machine. Walking through the stage and backstage areas, exclusively intended for the staff and actors, was of vital importance to understand the spatial articulation of a theatre. In particular, seeing the sequence of spaces and areas intended for the technical and administrative offices and marketing, the relationship these have with the stage and with the dressing room system; each of these areas is located close to the other, so as to facilitate exchanges and interactions between the parts. The above-mentioned rooms must be in direct contact with the stage and have their own reserved entrance; they remain at the same time close to the reception areas dedicated to the public. The rooms destined for stage production are located on the lower floor; carpentry, tailoring and laundry have priority access towards the stage without being in direct contact with the dressing rooms nor with the audience areas.

1. A Milano, un luogo unico al mondo Teatro Franco Parenti e Bagni Misteriosi: uno straordinario sistema di spazi; Teatro Franco Parenti



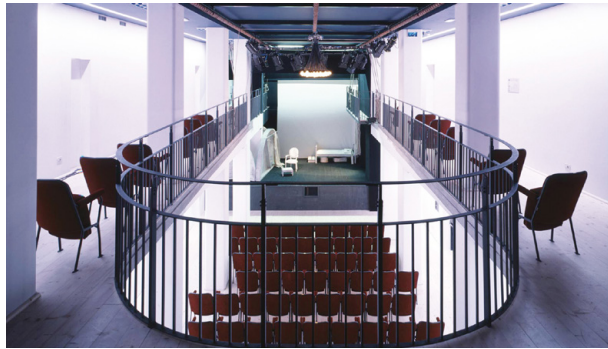
Photographic survey







The great hall of the Teatro Franco Parenti was a source of design inspiration. It is configured as a 500-seat hall and is equipped with a technology that allows the stalls and stage to be lowered to a single floor level to create a very large usable space. The hall is thus capable of hosting different types of events and theatrical performances. In addition, a sequence of open windows at the top of the side walls allows daylight to get in.



A peculiar feature of the Franco Parenti Theatre is that it has eight halls and spaces that can be used for events and performances. In addition to the Sala Grande there is the Foyer, the Foyer Alto, Sala A, the Caffè Rouge, Sala Tre and two smaller rooms; in addition, there is the multi-purpose outdoor space of the Mysterious Baths.

The theatre is thus able to accommodate different types of plays and offer a wide range of spaces to stage them. The Foyer, the heart of the theatre, occupies an area of almost 400 square metres. It is a space open to the light, in continuity with the Sala Grande, multifunctional and therefore also usable as a stage, a place for work, meeting and refreshment. The wooden plank flooring re-proposes the continuous stage, just as the ceiling grids allow the setting of scenographies and theatre wings.

The Foyer Alto is a bright and atmospheric room, located at an altitude of +3.50, occupying an area of approximately 120 square metres. Independently accessible through two street entrances, it overlooks a small terrace and opens onto the two Small Halls.

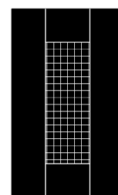
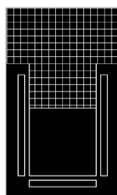
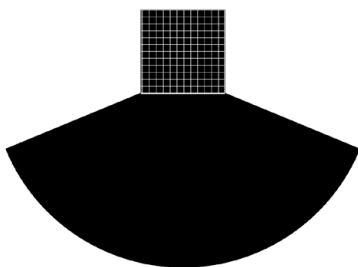
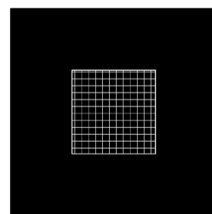
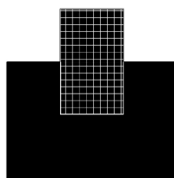
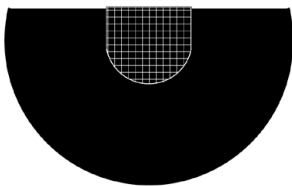
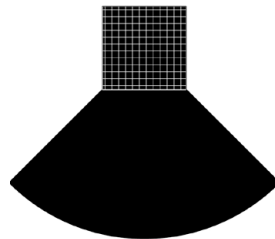
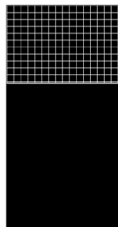
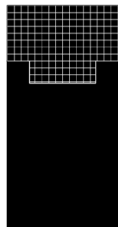
Sala A is characterised by an impressive double-height space accessed directly from the Foyer, it is long and occupies an area of approximately 250 square metres. It has 150 seats distributed between stalls and balcony. A succession of columns supporting the gallery above reproduces the more traditional atmosphere and typology of the performance hall. The tiers of stalls are movable: they can be lowered to recover a single floor level.

The Caffè Rouge is a large rectangular space overlooking the inner courtyard and occupies an area of about 160 square metres. It is modulated by a suggestive sequence of pillars and a small stage. It can also be set up as a theatre or restaurant.

Sala Tre is a space of intense luminosity that occupies almost the entire level at elevation + 1.80 of the building overlooking the tree-lined garden on Via Sabina. The rectangular room is calibrated by a succession of pillars that reproduce the rhythm of the large windowed wall on the inside. It occupies an area of approximately 250 square metres.²

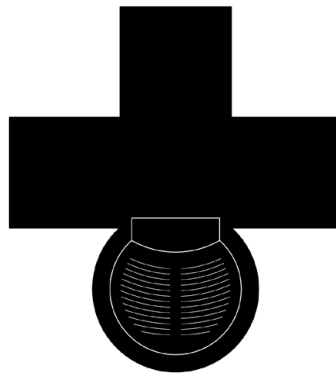
2. Ibid

3.2 **Typological Study**



3.2.1 Theatre Hall

The auditorium design dictates the scale, form and organisation of the entire theatre. As modern performance practice has evolved, so has theatre design. In fact, a very wide range of designs has emerged, each suited to different art forms and presentation styles. In many respects, a revision of auditorium design during the second half of the 20th century can be seen as a search for liberation from the restrictions imposed by the proscenium model - the division between the world of the actor and that of the audience. This led to the exploration of a shared 'open space' and a focus on the degree to which the audience surrounds the stage. At the same time, changes in society encouraged theatre designers to create more egalitarian and democratic layouts.



opera house



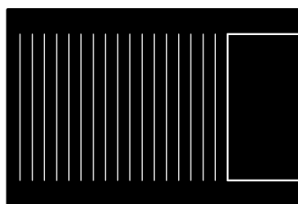
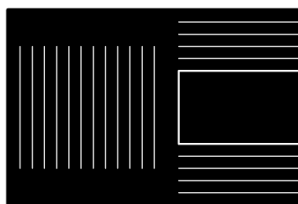
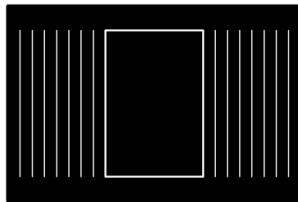
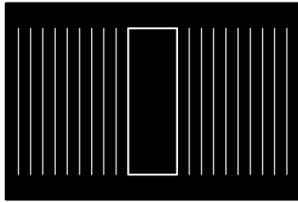
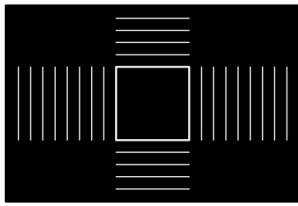
shoebox



dance theatre



recital room



Visibility and Listening

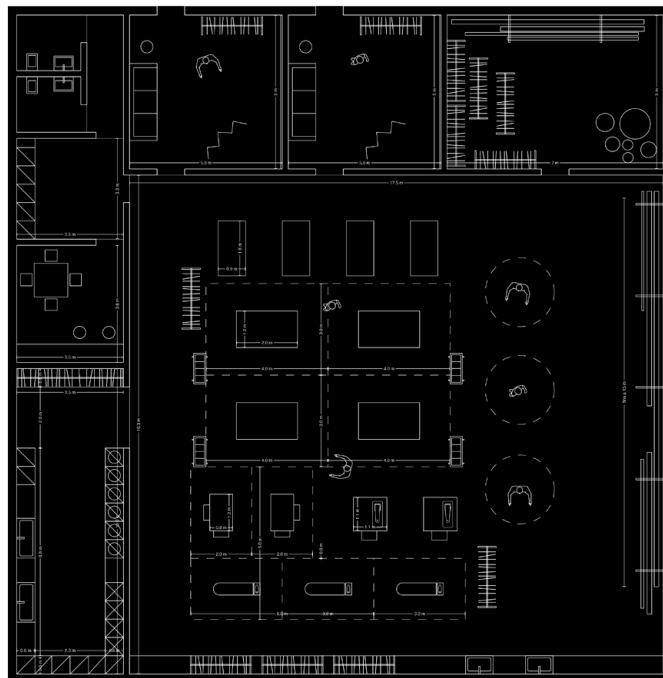
Traditionally, the shape and size of the auditorium have depended on the maximum distance for people to see and hear the performance. For a spoken-word drama, the maximum distance of the spectator is generally 20m from the proscenium. The distance is also determined by the view of the actors' expression; a degree of "closeness" where every gesture and nuance of the actors' expression is clearly visible to every audience member requires a smaller auditorium and a format that wraps the audience around the production or even makes the action interact with the audience.

Intimacy

Theatrical intimacy, immediacy and audience cohesion are essential principles of good auditorium design. For the audience, the experience of live theatre implies a sense of participation in the event, of sharing responses and of belonging to a homogeneous group. From the actors' point of view, a good space allows them to feel embraced by the audience. Theatre intimacy is about isolation and involvement. One way to achieve it is to increase the angle of the audience in relation to the stage. Some directors find that a 'wall of people' in an auditorium with a high inclination gives a perception of closeness and a clear view of the stage. A degree of 'closeness' in which every gesture and nuance of the actors' expression is clearly visible to every member of the audience requires a smaller auditorium and a format that wraps the audience around the production or even makes the action interact with the audience.

3.2.2 Tailoring

The main tailoring workshop, like the set design workshop, is not essential to be held in the main building, but it is much better if it is. It usually takes up less space than is needed for the construction of the sets and requires a closer connection with the rehearsal rooms and the performers. Costume making is a production process that must be executed in a correct sequence if it is to be efficient. In addition to cutting, sewing and fitting costumes, facilities must be provided for dyeing and painting fabrics, modelling and making accessories. The designer's sketches are discussed in the supervisor's office and a work schedule is decided. The measurements of the actors are taken or checked and the paper patterns are cut out on a drawing board. The next step is the cutting of the fabric, which takes place on cutting tables. The rest of the process involves the use of tailor's dummies, sewing tables and ironing facilities.



Storage

It is certainly best to store the raw materials for making costumes in a separate room. Cloth rolls for clothes are usually about 1 m wide, while curtain fabrics are more likely to be about 1300 mm wide. A system of deep pits or shelves can be used for fabric rolls, while drawers or boxes on adjustable shelves are suitable for small supplies and haberdashery. Packaged costumes, when in the workshop, will be stored on hanging rails, which can be fixed or, more conveniently, movable. If there is a lift nearby, the hanging rails must be designed to fit into it. When taken out of the building, they can be packed in boxes with an average size of 900 mm x 650 mm x 650 mm.

Test Chambers

Dressing rooms for costume rehearsals are required, which are easily accessible from both the tailors and the actors' dressing rooms. The optimum size is approximately 10 m², with a wall mirror in which an all-round view is possible.

Dry cleaners

A separate area is needed for the dyeing and painting of fabrics for costumes. The following are required for this: a heated dyeing tank, a large sink with hot and cold water, shelves and cabinets for dyes and acids, a surface for weighing dyes, traditionally made of marble, a bench for mixing the colours, covered with plastic laminate, a plastic bench with sufficient space for ventilation and extraction.

Drying

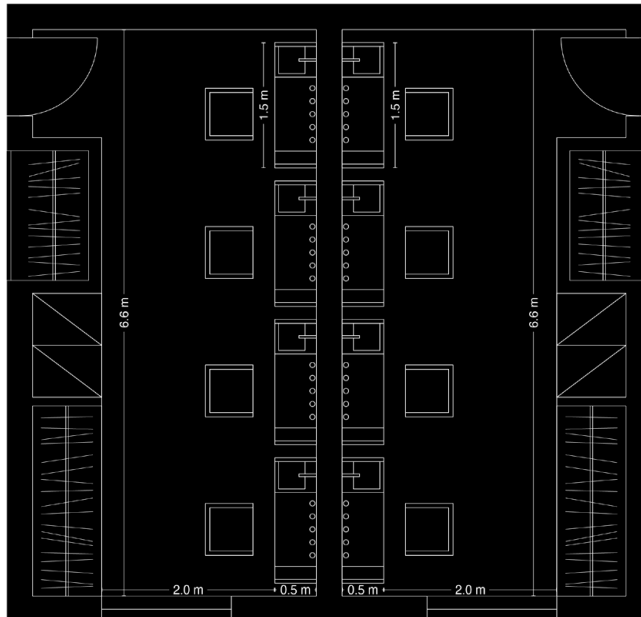
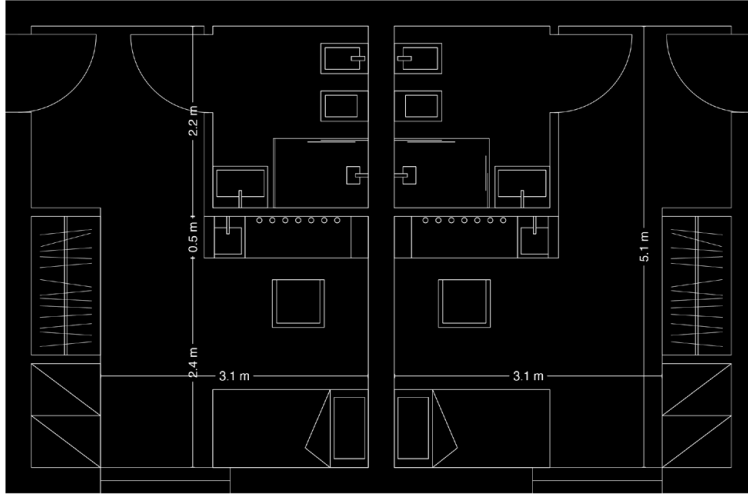
A drying room should be adjacent to the dyehouse. The wet cloth is spread out on a drying rack, which can be made of steel tubing, galvanised or plastic-coated. The tubes of the rack should be mounted at head height, at intervals of about 0.5 m, and each tube should be about 1.5 m long. Moisture will drip onto the floor, which must be arranged so that it falls into a drainage channel. A suitable finish must be chosen for the floor. The speed of drying depends on a good circulation of warm, dry air.

3.2.3 Dressing rooms

Dressing rooms are needed by all personnel working behind the theatre stage, from actors to musicians and those working in production and technical control. Everyone should have access to lockers, washbasins and showers. Dressing rooms are used both for changing and getting ready, and for waiting for people to return to work or to the stage.

Actors' dressing room

It is certainly optimal that dressing rooms have a window to the outside with natural light, as actors spend a lot of time in their dressing rooms. It is important to have a wall with mirrors, large enough and with desks no deeper than 50 cm (otherwise the actor will not be able to look at himself in the mirror close enough). Dressing rooms should have wardrobes and a small storage room. It is also important to have cloakrooms outside the dressing rooms, when the costume designers bring clothes to the actors, but they do not want to be disturbed. In some of the dressing rooms there must be a bed for sleeping. Sinks must be present, in large dressing rooms even one per stall. Showers should be present in the same number as sinks. They could be placed outside for dressing rooms with several stations, but must be grouped together and easily accessible. Bathrooms are usually outside the dressing rooms, shared, except for the star dressing room, which may resemble a hotel room. Apart from this exception, toilets should not open onto the dressing rooms. Usually more are needed than local regulations stipulate: actors and performers are often under stress, and will consume larger than average amounts of water. There should be toilets near the stage entrances, on each side, for each gender, at each level of the dressing rooms.



3.2.4

Carpentry

This workshop should be large enough to accommodate the set design and accommodate a meeting of up to six people. It should be equipped with changing rooms and showers and secure storage for personal items and tools. As they are built, the various components of the set move to an area where a trial assembly can be carried out. The space required varies, but the height is always important and must be sufficient to clear the highest part of the set. It is useful to have suspension points and a flexible hoist system in the roof structure, so that the parts of the set that will be suspended can be treated similarly for test assembly, and to facilitate the movement and construction of heavy pieces. This has implications for the load-bearing capacity of the roof. Joinery benches set against the wall have easy access to hand tool sockets and wall shelves; but for handling larger assemblies, a bench with space all around is more useful. Some of the larger woodworking machines must have a clear area in which to manoeuvre the pieces of wood to be shaped. The workshop should be designed to accommodate the following machines: circular saw, planer, band saw, mortiser.

Carpentry storage

The maximum length of wood or metal should not exceed 7 m, and a convenient method of storage is along a wall of this length on a 50 mm galvanised pipe cantilevered 900 mm from a wall at about 400 mm. Although sheet materials retain their shape better if they are laid flat, they are easier to sort if they are stacked upright; this method should be used if material changeover is fast enough. Some adhesives, fillers and sealants are volatile and require separate, safe storage.

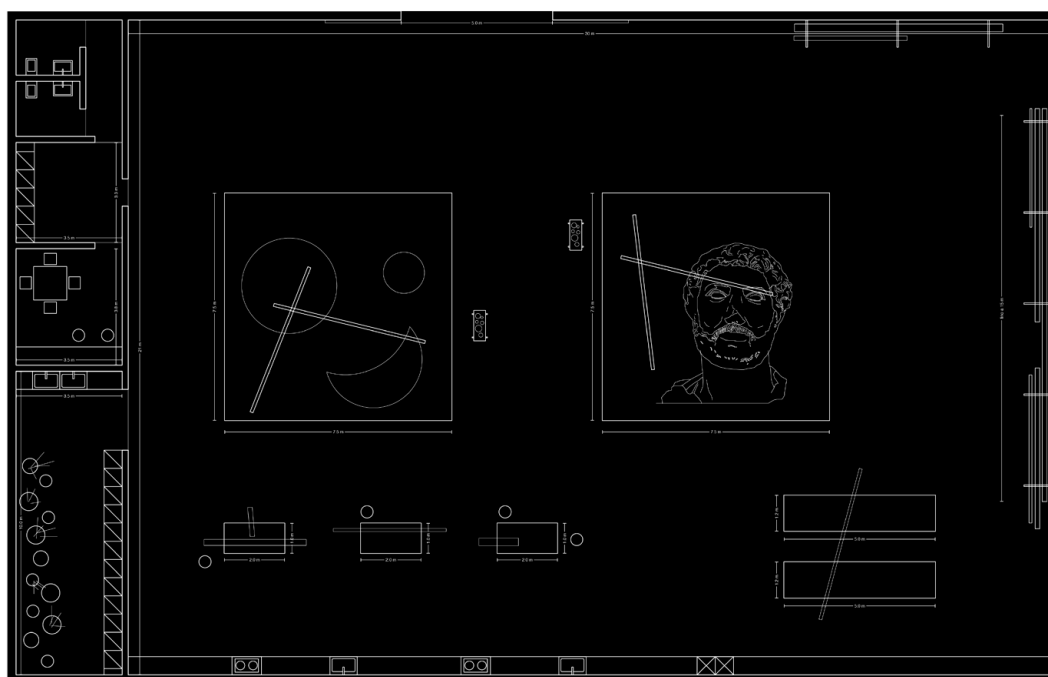
3.2.5

Scenographic Laboratory

The painting workshop will have to paint and/or texturise set pieces constructed by the workshop as well as backdrops and other decorations that will be brought in directly from the manufacturers. Backdrops can be painted lying on the floor or suspended vertically on a frame, when budget and site area are limited, economic factors favour the vertical method. The workshop should be equipped with a large sink with hot and cold water for general use and a bench for preparing colours and cleaning tools. Cookers will be needed, either mounted on the bench or in the form of a hotplate. Some of the paint will be applied with spray guns, so small compressors will have to be connected to the sockets. When paint is applied by brush, a useful accessory is a mobile palette, a trolley on wheels that contains paints, brushes, buckets and cloths and that can be transported around the painting workshop. The sets will be seen on the stage under artificial stage lighting, in the painting workshop there should be some lanterns that can be mounted to create similar lighting conditions. Most painters, however, prefer to work in daylight when they can. The staff of the painting workshop will share the facilities provided for the workshop. From the painting workshop, the set moves to the stage deck and from there to the stage.

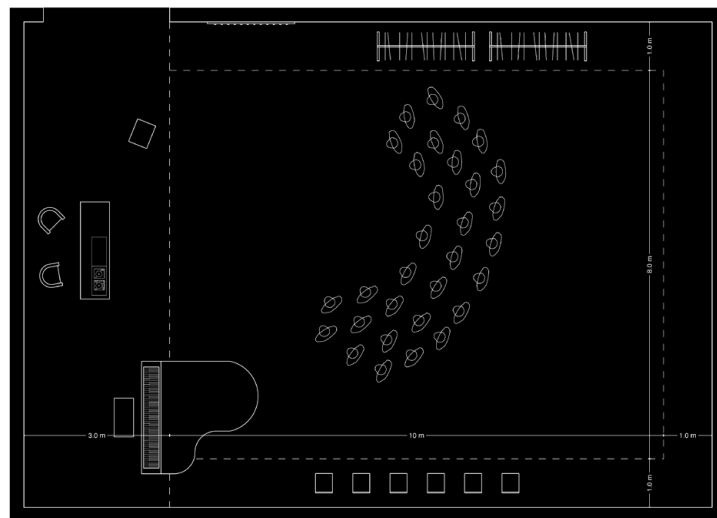
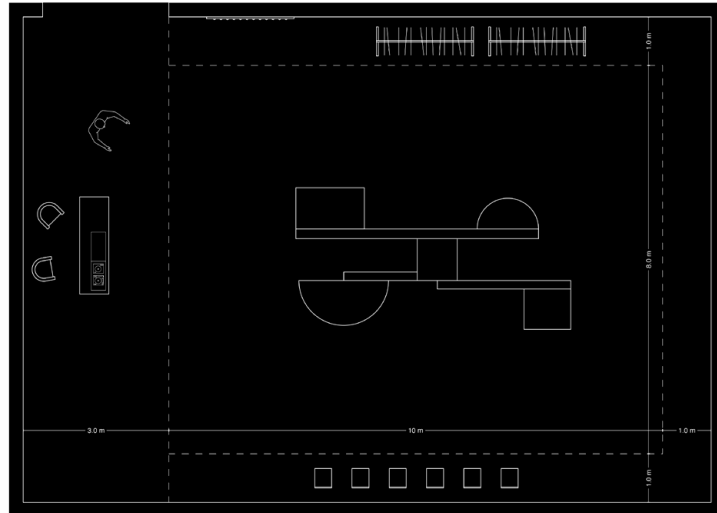
Set storage

A rolled sheet can easily be 15 m long, so it is important that the relationship between the painting workshop and the stage is carefully planned to allow an object of this length to be moved to the stage without it causing too much disruption. Set backdrops should be stored in pairs, face to face, resting on the bottom rail to prevent deformation. The average size is 1.2 m x 5 m. All storage areas must be easily accessible from backstage without passing through the auditorium.



3.2.6 Rehearsal room

The dimensions of the rehearsal room must be related to the dimensions of the stage on which the performance will be realised. Rehearsal rooms should have the same dimensions as the acting area of the stage, plus a minimum margin of about 1 m at the back and sides. There should also be a space of approximately 3 m at the front for the director and stage management and (for opera rehearsals) for the piano and conductor. If the rehearsal room is located in the same building as the main theatre, it should be close to the dressing rooms and stage management office. If this is not possible, or if the rehearsal room must be located some distance from the theatre, the facilities for costume fittings, props storage, stage management administration, personal lockers and green room facilities must be reproduced. The floor finish must be similar to that of the stage. Daylight should not be excluded, but it is essential that the walls are spacious and that the background is not distracting, so windows should be placed high up. Artificial lighting must be high and evenly distributed. The rehearsal room must be equipped with hooks for performers to leave their personal belongings and a track for rehearsal costumes.



3.2.7 Foyer

Today's theatre audience not only compares the experience they have with that of other theatres, but also with the experience they have in other leisure activities. The theatre has to compete in terms of comfort, services, and artistic, educational and entertainment programming.

Theatre hospitality is not just a complex of sorting the audience from the entrance to the auditorium. It is the opportunity to animate the theatre and also the street space. It is the place where one sees and is seen, what can leave a good memory with the visitor.

Foyers can now be larger than the auditorium, up to a quarter of the building. They are too big an investment to be just an intermission space.

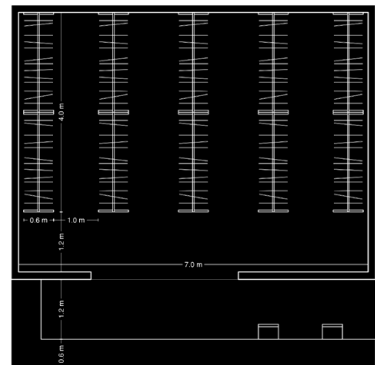
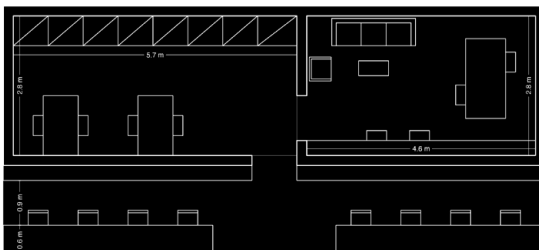
The foyer design must:

Attract and intrigue people

Promote visitor participation in additional services

Provide space for activities such as lectures, exhibitions, education, events.

The foyer is the space that contributes to improving the public perception of the arts, helping to build an audience.

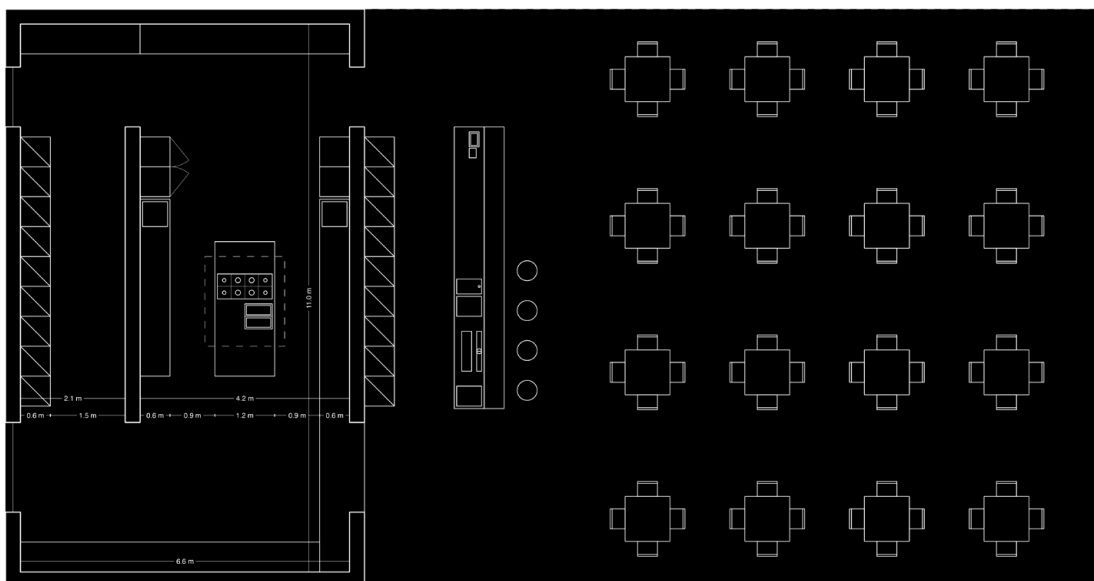


Public areas

Arrival and drop-off
Entrance Atrium
Passages and circulation stairs
Front Office
Ticket Office
Cloakroom
Toilets
Bar|Restaurant
Bookshop
Hospitality and conferences
Education
Performance areas

Support areas

Security office
Warehouse
First aid
Changing rooms for assistants and briefing office
Booking office
Sales office
Merchandising warehouses
Bar and kitchen warehouses
Kitchens, fresh and dry warehouses
Cleaning warehouses
Waste and recycling warehouses



3.2.8 Offices

Stage

The chief stage technician should have his own small office next to or near the stage. If there is easy access to the repair shop during the performance, his office should be located there, but as protected from dust as possible. He should also have space for large drawings.

Lights

A similar office should have the head lighting technician, with also AO printers, near the technical maintenance lab or the control room.

Stage Management

A typical Stage Management team for drama is three persons, or up to about 7 for shows with many characters. In a theatre with several rooms there should be ways to accommodate more teams. During the rehearsal period their focus will be on the rehearsal rooms, while during performances their focus will be on the stage. When it is not possible to connect the neighbouring office(s) to both types of halls, some of the services should be repeated. An MS office should be secure, as it contains sensitive data. It should be able to accommodate the whole team(s), with a notice board, shelves, desks, storage, also for stacking clothes or other materials that are collected during rehearsals, space for trying on clothes with a full-wall mirror, washbasin, windows with the possibility of blacking out.

Company Management

Ad hoc office for the management of the company from outside, similar to that of the SM but with less regard for performance control. There should be space to work on paperwork, have private phone conversations and see actors and staff in private.

Rest

It is also important to have a quiet room for rest, even for someone who is feeling ill or has a minor injury, with first aid, a bed and a washbasin.

Treatment

Many dance and musical companies now provide a physiotherapist, who will require a treatment room: bed, desk and two chairs, washbasin, lockers (for towels, etc.), a refrigerator (for ice packs), a first aid kit and a small area for an exercise mat and a Swiss ball.

Visiting staff

Increasingly, set designers, costume designers, lighting technicians and sound engineers, together with choreographers, stage managers, vocalists and others, are hired on a freelance basis. During production periods, they need a space where they can leave their coats, have access to the Internet and work between rehearsals. Tables, chairs and a drawing table would be useful.

Administration

Image and Marketing



3.2.9 Deposit

Lights

Theatres can accumulate a large number of lights, not all of which are always in use. The best way to store them is to hang them from 48 mm tubes, each of which can hold 6 to 8 lanterns. These should be stacked vertically about 750 mm apart, fixed 500 mm from the wall or, more commonly, on a trolley with lights on each side of a steel frame. In addition, adjustable shelves are required to store a stock of lamps or bulbs for the stage lighting equipment and other lighting fixtures of various sizes, including fluorescent tubes. The lighting crew also needs hooks to hang reels of flexible extension cables and space for stands, clamps and other accessories.

Sound

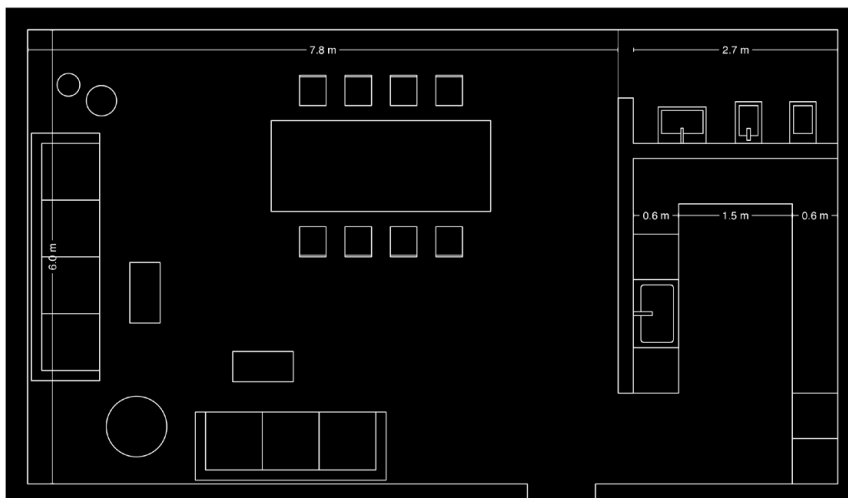
Similar space will be needed to store and maintain loudspeakers, speaker stands, microphones, cables and so on. Increasingly, space is also needed for video equipment used in productions, often packed in flight cases, which also need storage space.

Musical instruments

Large opera, dance or musical theatres may require climate-controlled storage for pianos and other large musical instruments, such as harps and percussion instruments, with easy access to the entrance and orchestra pit.

Green Room 3.2.10

The green room is the space in a theatre that serves as a waiting room and lounge for performers before, during and after a performance or show, when they are not busy on stage. It provides a large space for hired companies to relax before their performances, but can also be hired as a rehearsal or meeting space. This social aspect is what differentiates the green room from the dressing rooms.



3.2.11 Control room

Lighting control

It is essential that the lighting controller has a good view of the stage. For a conventional proscenium arch theatre, the lighting control room should ideally be located at the back of the auditorium, with an observation window offering a clear view of the stage, uninterrupted by pillars or spectators' heads, and not distorted (by tilting, dimming or reflections). The room should be acoustically isolated from the auditorium, but with an electronic link to the sound of the show. The control room should have a flat workspace for the console and any necessary external monitors as well as a computer. Access to the control room shall be from outside the auditorium, with a route preferably separate from the public areas. The route must allow the equipment to be transported.

Sound control

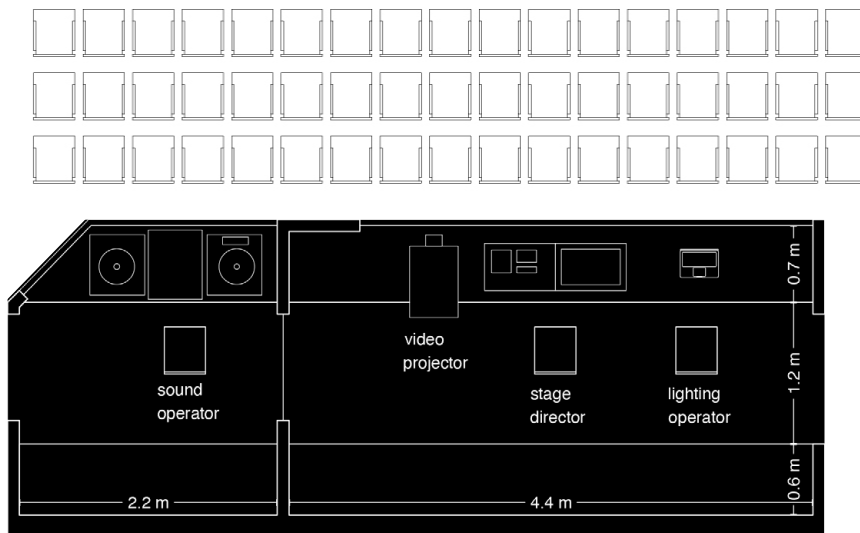
Sound for the theatre includes the reproduction of music, effects, soundscapes and atmospheric backgrounds that set the mood or establish the location. The role of the sound operator is to balance microphone sources and initiate the reproduction of sound effects with precise timing, suggested by the stage manager or visually derived from the actions on stage. The success of an amplified musical performance therefore depends to a large extent on placing the operator in a privileged position in the auditorium, where he can hear and experience the performance as if he were part of the audience. This is why sound designers go to great lengths to install mixing consoles in visually prominent positions.

Audio system storage

The equipment room is the heart of any audio system. It is usually not part of the main control area, but can be located next to it. The equipment room houses all the connections and equipment for the various systems. The racks should be as deep as possible: 800 mm is sufficient for most of the typical equipment in a theatre. For a small theatre, e.g. a studio with 250 seats, 3 or 4 full-height equipment shelves are likely to be required, implying an equipment room of at least 3m x 4m. A medium-sized theatre, up to 750 seats, would need 7 or 8 racks, with a space of 5m x 4.5m. A large theatre, with at least 1,200 seats, will probably need 10 or more racks and a space of at least 5m x 6m.

Stage manager

The stage manager is responsible for the technical coordination of performances and rehearsals and sits at the director's desk. The stage manager's desk or prompt desk is equipped with an intercom, lighting controls and video monitor. In a proscenium arch theatre, the stage manager's desk is traditionally located in the left corner of the stage. In flexible or open-stage spaces, the stage manager usually moves to the control room or a side stage in the auditorium.



3.2.12 Stage tower

Technology and people: theatre production workers, more than having the latest technology, work well in well-designed, quality environments. Technologies will become obsolete, but the principles of good design, safety and joy will remain valid. Scenography is made up of curtains, paintings, stage floor, two-dimensional scenery, three-dimensional scenery, multi-dimensional scenery, lighting, sound.

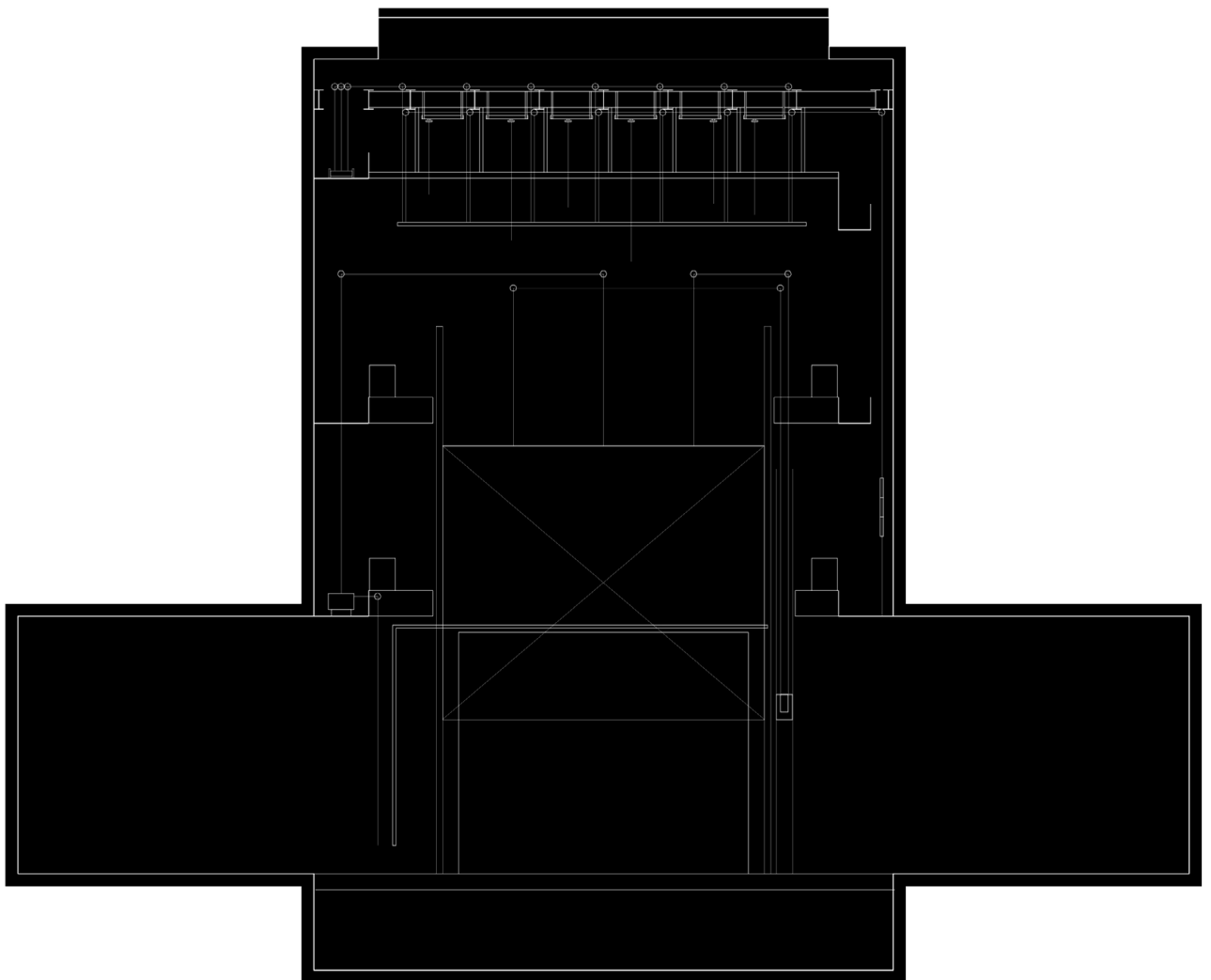
Scenic tower

- Grid
- Galleries
- Tyres (with motorised or counterweighted system)
- Control systems for lifting
- Security curtains
- Partitioning shutters
- (Possible) chain hoists
- (Possible) elements for scenery, lights or action above the stalls

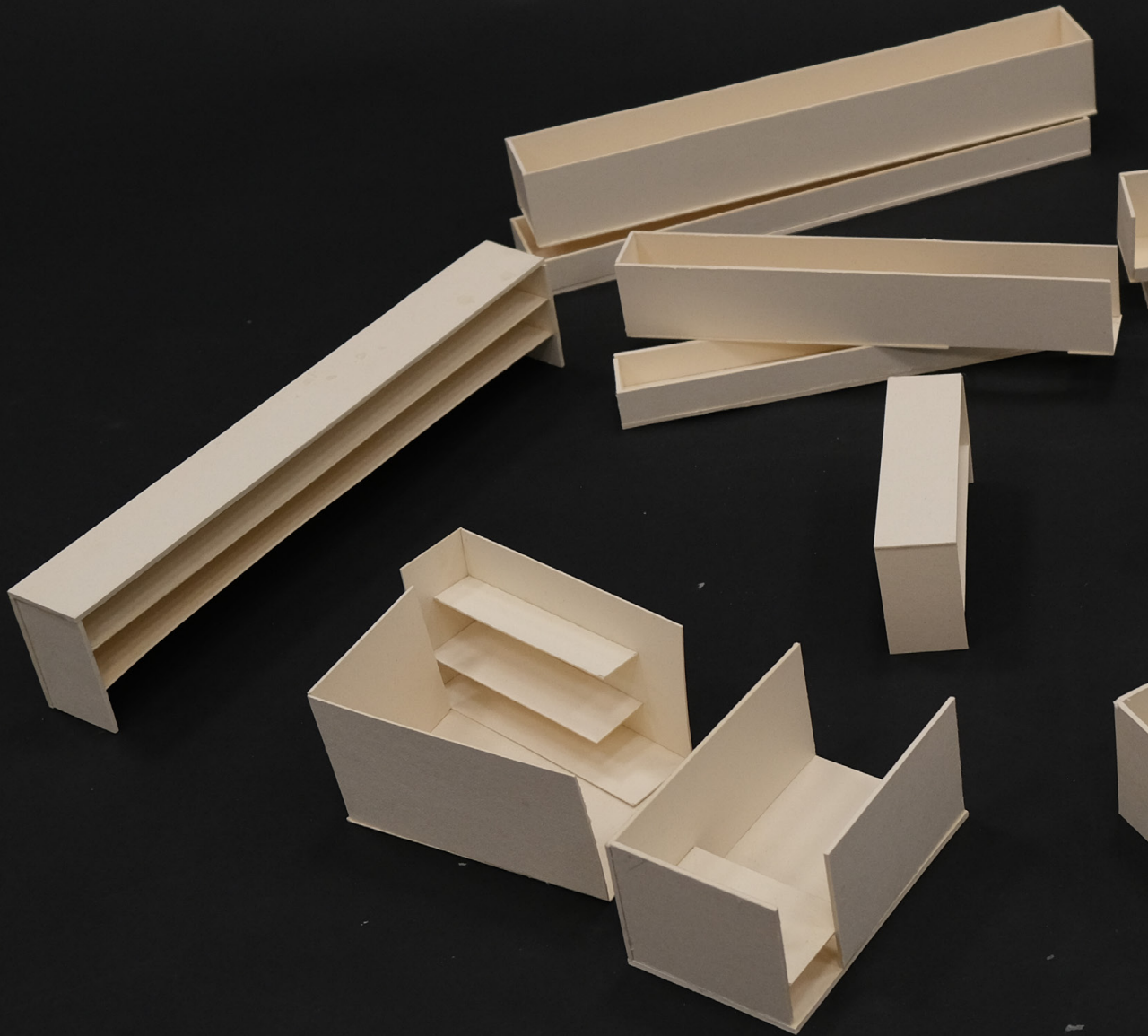
Substage

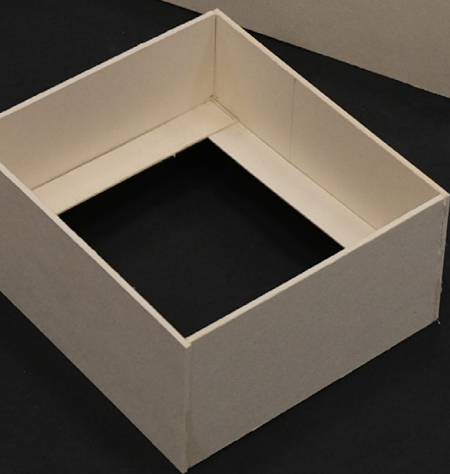
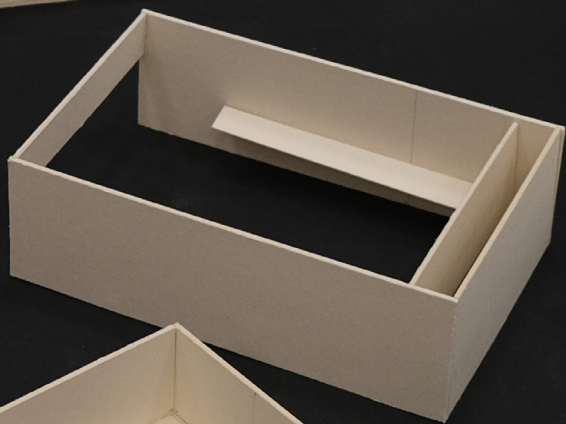
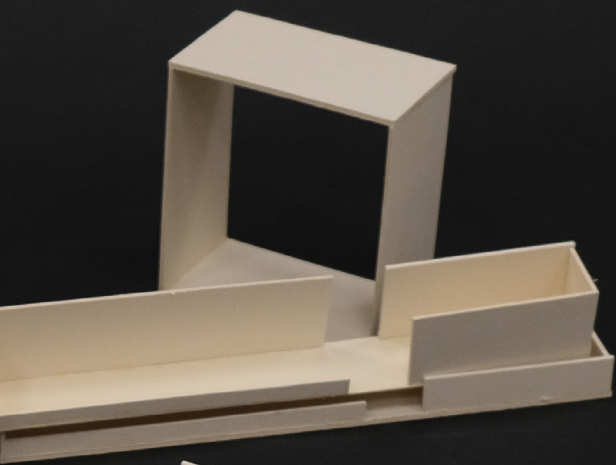
- Eventual machinery such as the trap, a simple opening in the floor to appear/disappear
- Lifts
- Rotating platforms
- Wagons

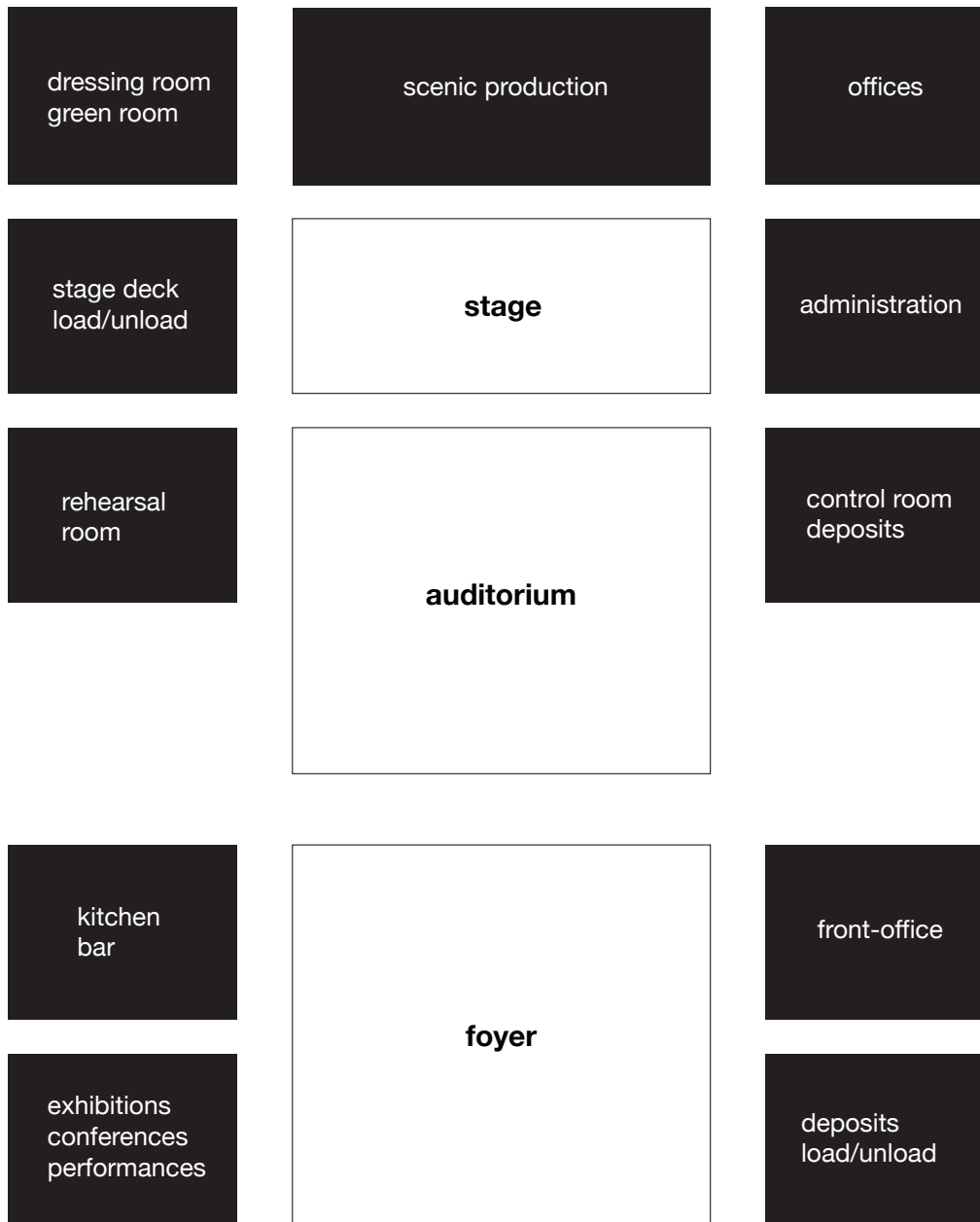
Stage structure must be rigid, so that lights and sets do not move when there are dances or actions with many actors simultaneously. Having to adapt to various requirements, most of the stage should be removable (not concrete, but steel structure with removable wooden panels). The under-stage should be able to allow set pieces and actors to disappear underneath. Where possible the under-stage should be several storeys high. Other types of stage can be built above the stage.

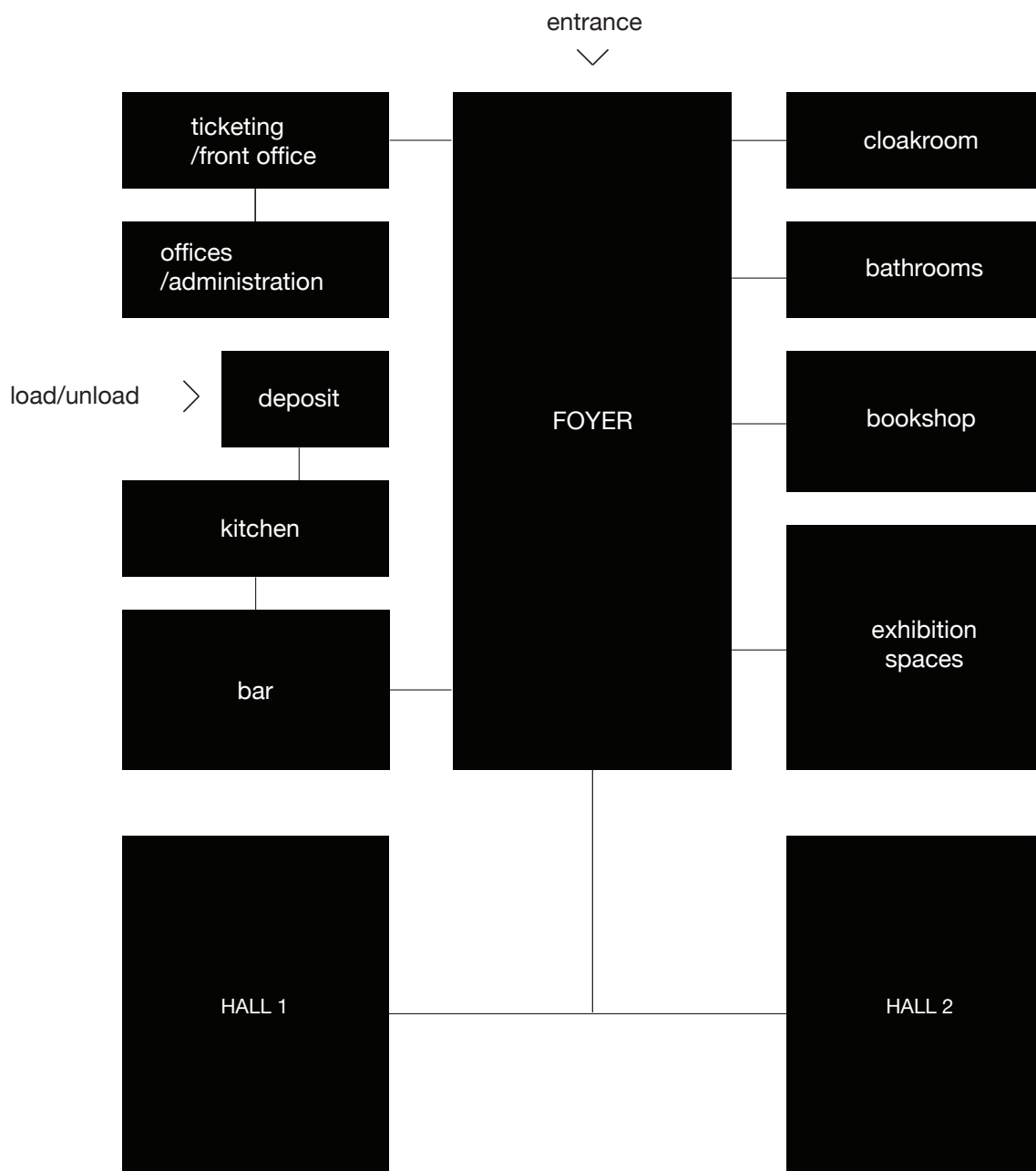


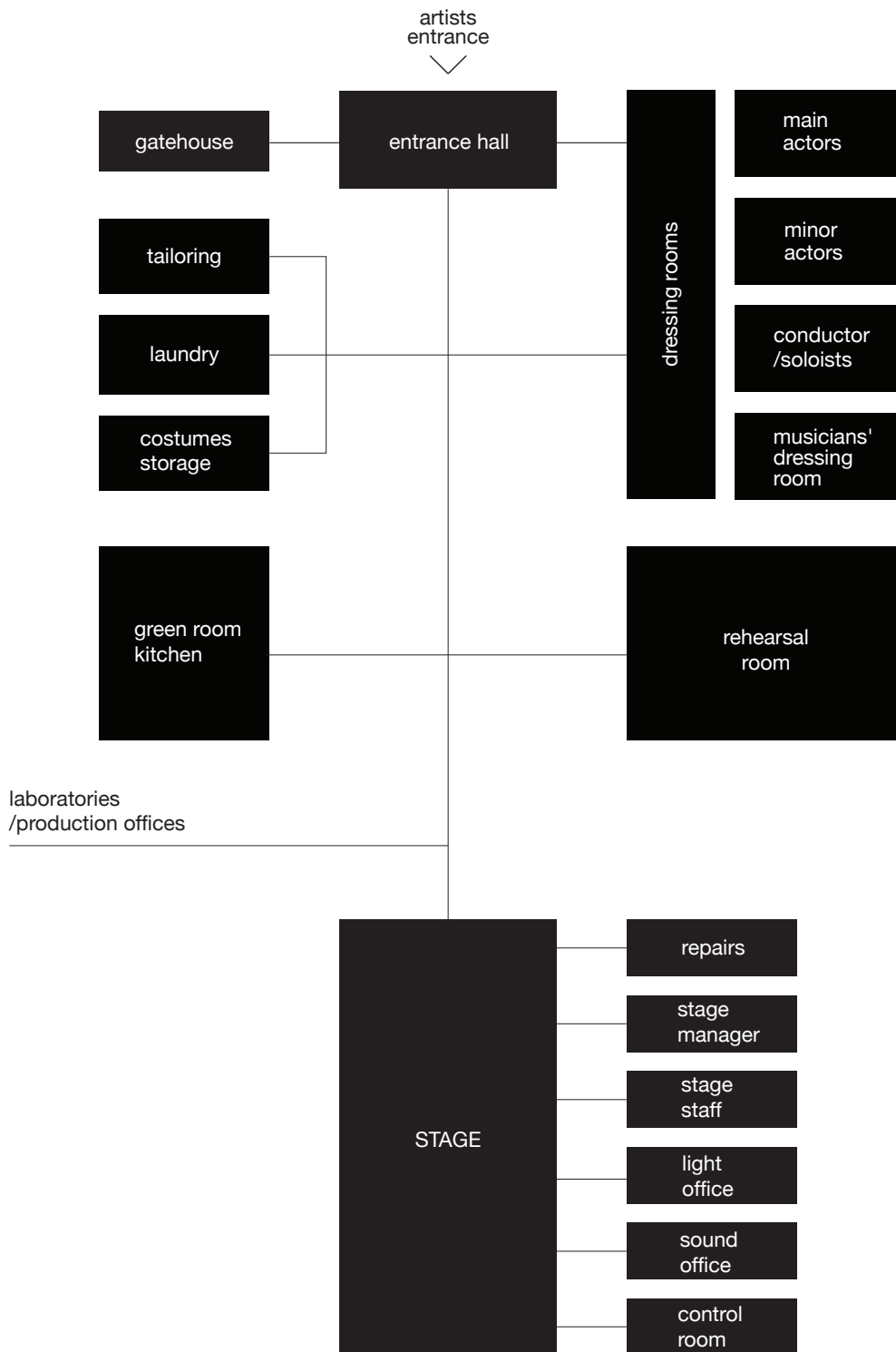
3.3 Assembly Line

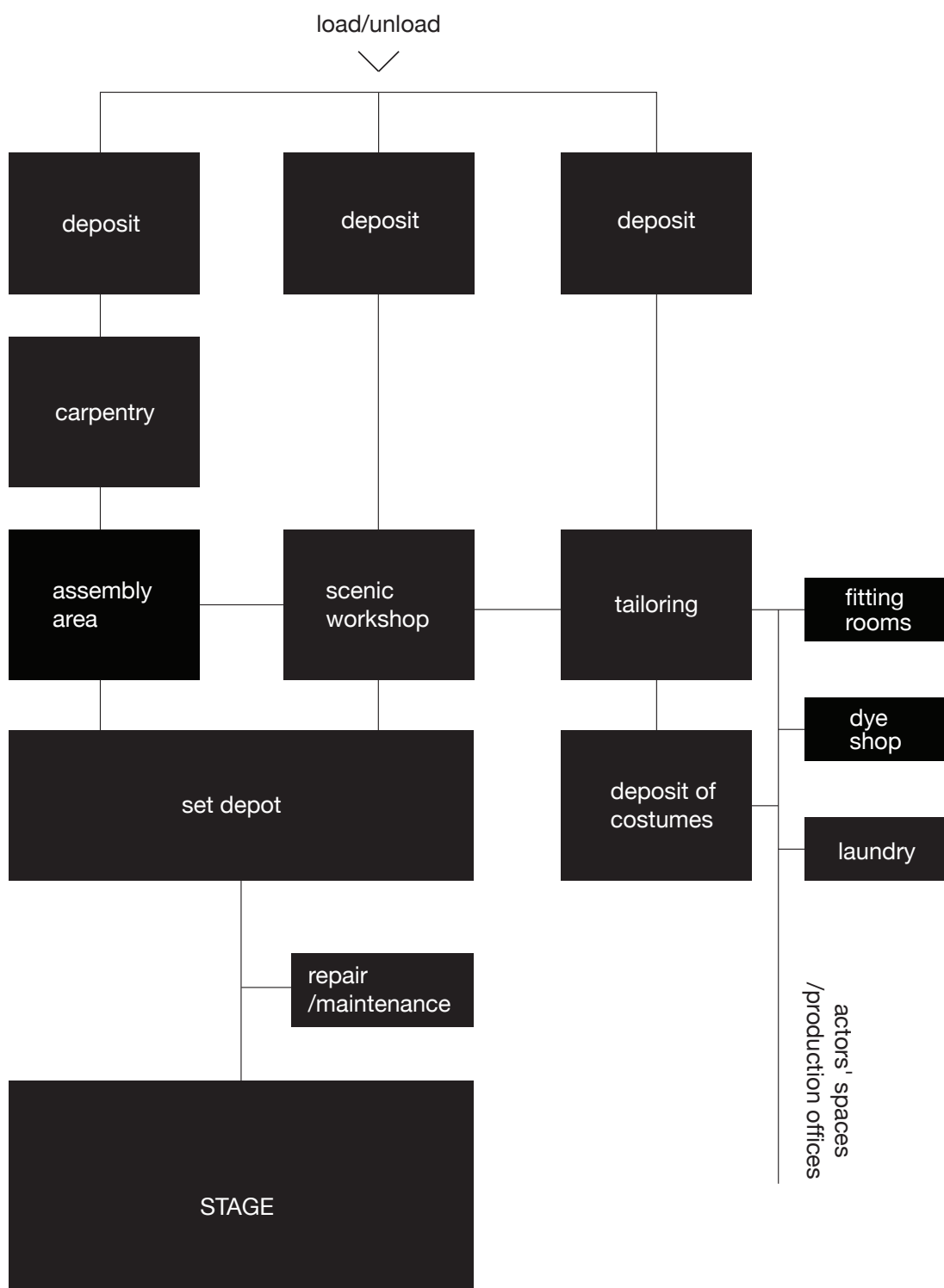














3.4 Re-Use Methodology



The confrontation with abandoned architecture at the time of design and restoration is characterising for the intervention strategies on the existing, both functional and compositional. Different restoration theories may suggest multiple stylistic solutions. The Reggiani factory buildings considered are all made of reinforced concrete, except for the steel building with lattice girders and shed rooflights. These are structures that had to support heavy loads: large spans, machinery, transported material. However, they are no ordinary industrial architecture: the quality of the spaces, the light, the atmosphere were noticeable. Inside the volumes, as well as outside among the voids of the complex, there are spatial architectural qualities of remarkable interest, which even make it easy and immediate to imagine uses there. Enchanting relationships between solids and voids, structures and heights:

*“These types are a very straightforward and direct reflection of the necessities. This makes them so powerful. If you look at the structures that start with very heavy columns and then diminish as they go up because the load is diminishing, that’s where my main interest comes from”.*¹²

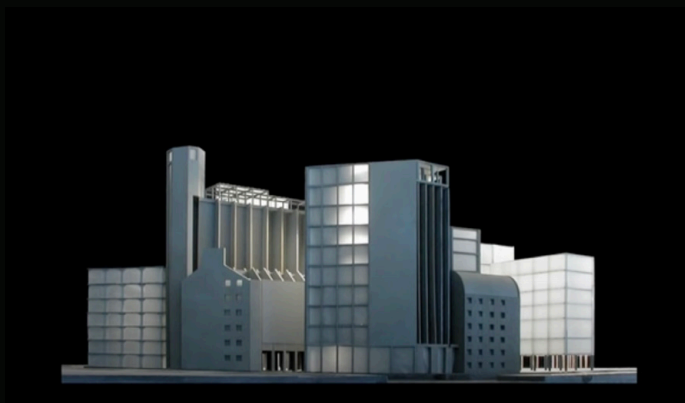
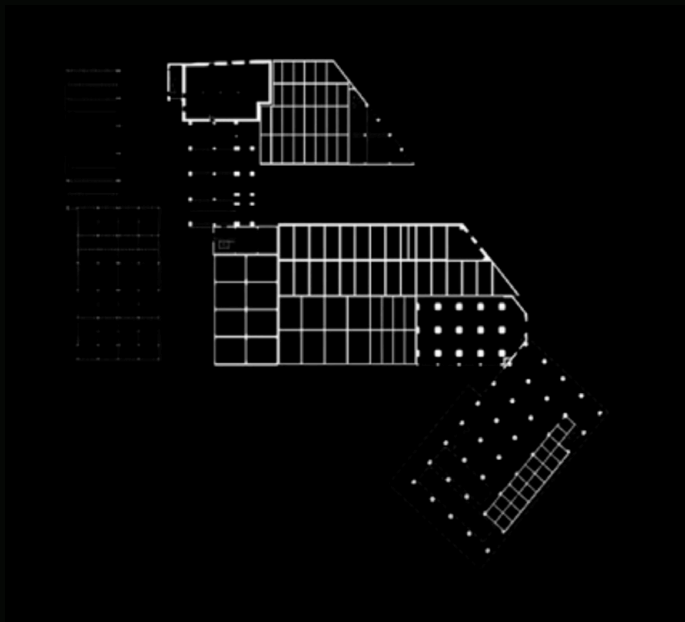
12. Peter Zumthor, I’m always in the building, interview from Robert-Jan de Kort, published on Archined on 05/07/2010,

Peter Zumthor, in the competition winning project, which is now ongoing, for the Meelfabriek in Leiden, develops a clear strategy for the recovery of the late 19th and early 20th century Dutch industrial architecture with which he is confronted.

“The design strategy put forward by you in the competition was very clear; revealing the different constructions by replacing the old facades with more transparent ones. Did this strategy evolve during the process towards the realisation of the project?

*No. This concept was clear after five minutes. It was clear to me already, because there was a time that I was trying to teach to my students the importance of architectural structure. That’s why in Milan I brought them to see old factories to see where this power comes from. Nowadays architecture has nothing to do with bones and structures and anatomy any more, only with skin. This was not about skin, this was about flesh and bones. We have here a beautiful example, so we said: look at this. There are about eight different building types. Beautiful”.*¹³

13. Ibid



Reggiani's industrial architectures are interpreted in their anatomy, in the body that supports them. The spirit of those industrial artefacts lies in their skeletons, in the environments they create within them and in the language and construction technique. The details and the resolution of the framing of the structures is what expresses the essence of those textile factories, like monumental architectures whose construction detail manifests the generation of the whole space.

The preservation of structures, and patinas as far as possible, intersects with the condition of creating a theatre space in an abandoned building. It is the particular atmosphere between old and new that generates an environment with more layers. Brook argues that in the early 1970s, the theatrical imagery, which is so realisable within a proscenium arch theatre, became less important to him than the theatrical energy. Les Bouffes du Nord and the Majestic naturally had a sense of a theatrical place, as they had once been theatres. For many architects, this preference for unprepared spaces seems at best incomprehensible and at worst an insult to their profession. (It is said that at a meeting of the National Theatre building committee in the 1960s, Denys Lasdun suggested that Peter Brook would prefer a bombed out site in Brixton to anything he, an architect, could design. Brook replied "Yes"). For experimentalists and avant-gardists, the 'found space' clearly announces that the theatre performed here will be different from that performed in a normal theatre building. The audience has the feeling that actors have come to town and taken possession of this particular structure.

"I seek in one building both the sensuality of the old and the flexibility of the new".¹⁴

14. Nicola Russi, Alessandro Benedetti, *Vesper No. 5, Moby Dick: avventure e scoperte*, Università Iuav di Venezia Department of Architecture and Arts, p.71



If theatre is life in a more concentrated form (Peter Brook), then the stylistic choices for reuse reflect the methodology of designing a stage set in a hall. Even more so: if theatre spaces are no longer just the halls, but any other space that manages to become a support for staging practices, then the architectural recuero must conceive the atmospheres of scenic backdrop that each space will arouse through the new juxtaposed with the old.

“[...] their masonry boxes would no longer be casings but scenographies; the visitor would become the spectator of many staged events, a staging born of the tenets and criteria of architecture, restoration, and scenography combined”.¹⁵

The reuse project interprets the concept of weak spaces, support spaces, in the intervention on reinforced concrete architecture in a compositional key. The same reflection conveyed on the steel building, the one that will house the theatre, is interpreted with a cue taken from Viollet Le-Duc's lesson:

“To restore a construction, is not to maintain, repair or remake it; it is to restore it to a complete state that may never have existed until that moment”.

The steel building is the last one designed, as a shed housing heavy machinery, totally free inside apart from the building on the north front. Interpreting even the interior as an architecture still in search of its ‘complete state’, one can operate by reversing the image of the least characterised building in the complex: a cladding that stands out by detaching itself from the other buildings, a foyer with a more transparent skin, a scenic tower that vertically grafts itself onto the structural frame.

15. Nicola Russi, Alessandro Benedetti, *Vesper No. 5, Moby Dick: avventure e scoperte*, Università Iuav di Venezia Department of Architecture and Arts, p.71



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A Milano, un luogo unico al mondo, Teatro Franco Parenti e Bagni Misteriosi: uno straordinario sistema di spazi; Teatro Franco Parenti, PDF on the website <https://teatrofrancoparenti.it/>

Credits

N.B. if not specified, the images are to be considered produced by the authors

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- p. 284 Teatro Franco Parenti, Section © <https://teatrofrancoparenti.it/>
- p. 285 Teatro Franco Parenti, four main theatre halls: Sala A, Caffè Rouge, Sala Tre, Foyer Grande © <https://teatrofrancoparenti.it/>
- p. 320 Frames from "Lecture by Peter Zumthor", A+ Architecture In Belgium, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, 29/11/2011
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- p.324 Laboratorio Permanente, Palazzina Bagni Misteriosi, Sala Testori, 2019 © Delfino Sisto Legnani,

04

METAMORPHOSIS

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intro

Each industrial architecture in the block is characterised by a specific function. Working within the existing, the project bends itself to the conditions and spaces of the ruins, which actually suggest strategies and design intuitions. The project enhances those relationships that are already present, and makes them its own by handing them over to the new functions.

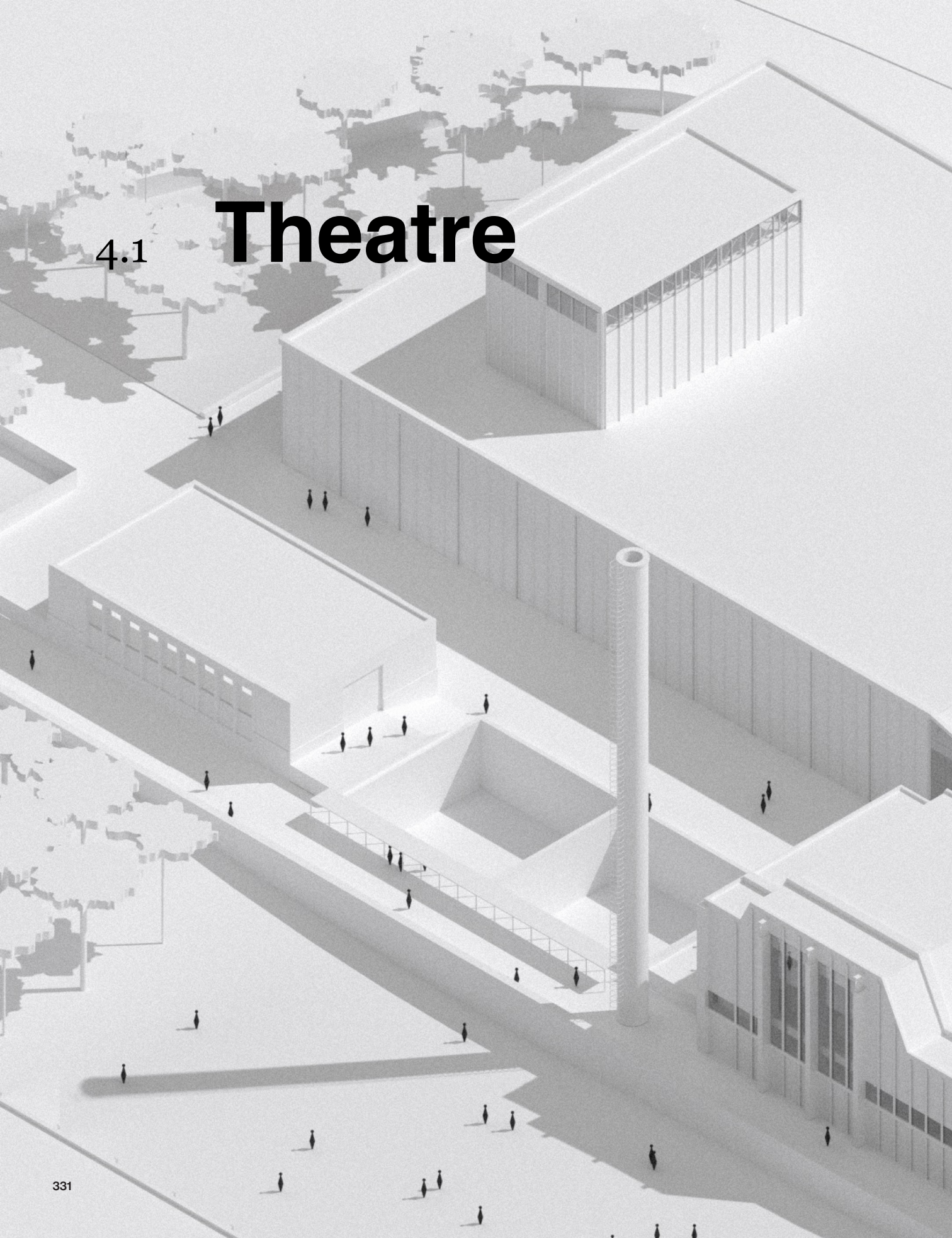
The organisation of programs in the volumes is linked to the programmatic vision of open spaces, and thus of the city. More intimate places are created, others denser. Spaces and opportunities, flexibility and potentialities are designed. Public open spaces and those pertaining the stage production enclose and fragment the block together with the architectures. The production is showcased, so as to transport people (and audience) into the same world of the fiction they will witness, conceiving it as part of their reality: it is fundamental for the spectator's consciousness to take part in a collective ritual.

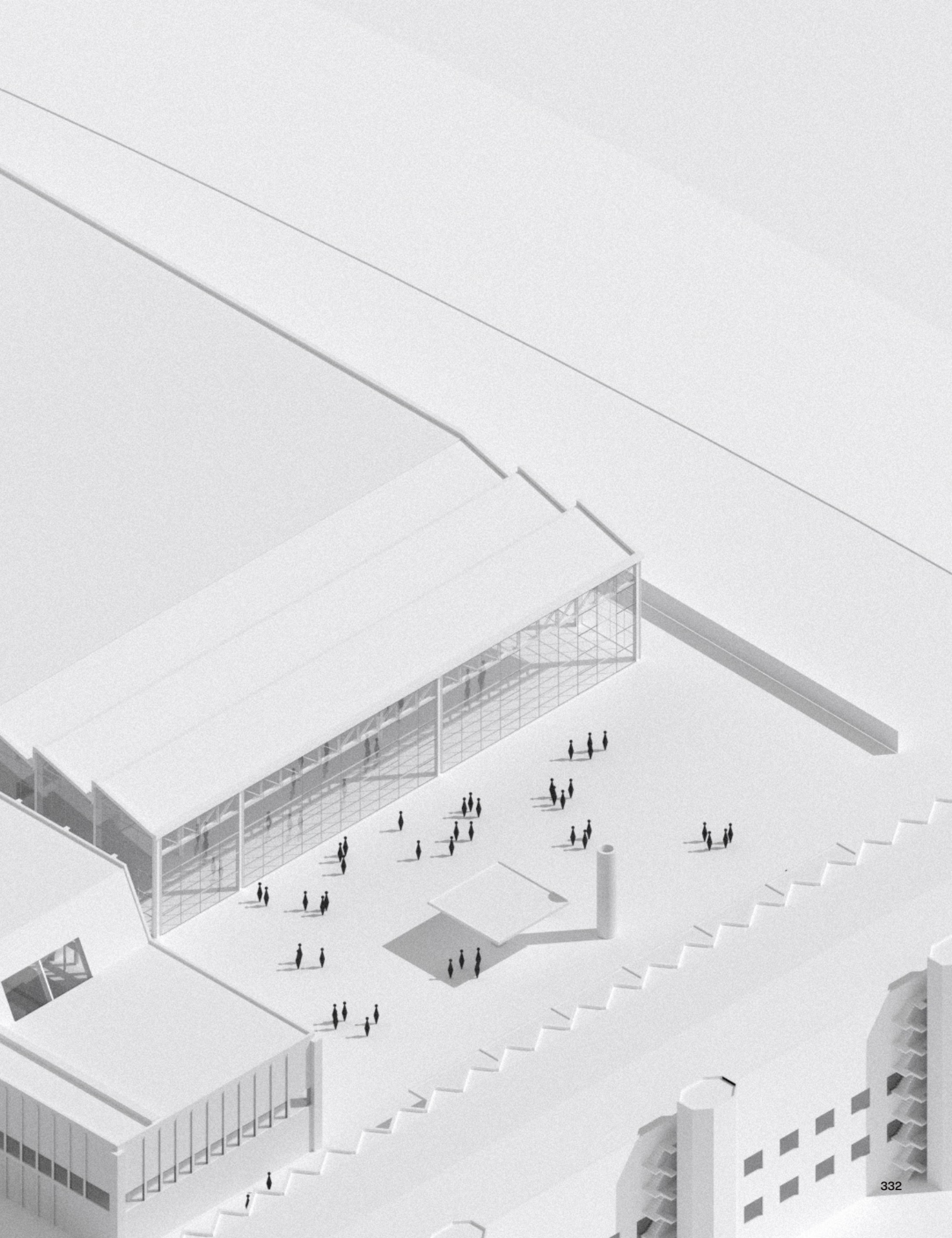
The project returns to the steps of the research: tells of the possibility of designing weak, equivocal, supporting spaces. Areas to accommodate performances are scattered inside and outside buildings. Rooms in the trees or among reclaimed industrial ruins build the scenic backdrops against which to imagine collective practices. The interior spaces maintain the industrial character of large, free spaces. All the servant functions allow these spaces to have the effective possibility of being organised for performance.

Transported by imagination, one discovers a theatrical world already filled with history and meaning. The abandoned textile factory has the potential to tell a thousand other stories, just by adding a stage tower.

4.1

Theatre





Setting the machine

The organisational logic in plan follows the compositional rhythm of the existing spans.

The linear building, with its own concrete structure on three floors, is conserved to contain offices and dressing rooms.

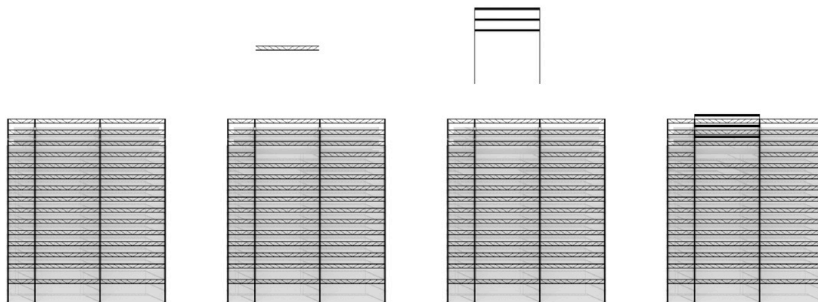
The great hall occupies five spans. The scenic tower is attached to it and, consequently, the stage deck and the theatre services: tailoring, actors' entrance and repair room.

A linear bar, dedicated to audience services, generates a large entrance foyer and creates a filter between the public square and the more intimate entrance to the theatre halls. The large hall is then joined by a small hall that, leaving two bays free, generates a second foyer, a waiting area for the entrance to the shows; the rehearsal room runs lengthwise along the long side of the main hall.

Between the rehearsal room and the block of offices and dressing rooms, an area is created for loading and unloading stage materials.

Six emergency stairs are placed on the perimeter of the building to allow safety exits for the users.

The stage tower is a volume added to the existing building and consequently requires its own structure to replace one original truss, going over in height twice as the existing height.

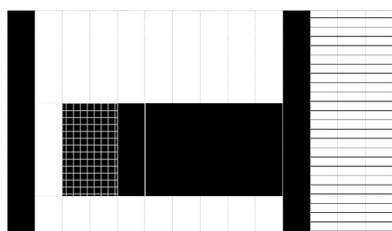




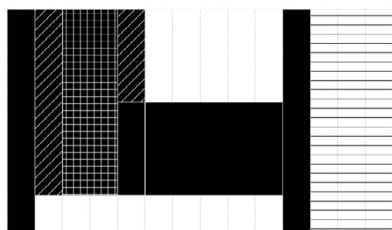
office/dressing room



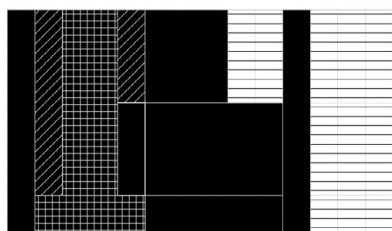
big hall



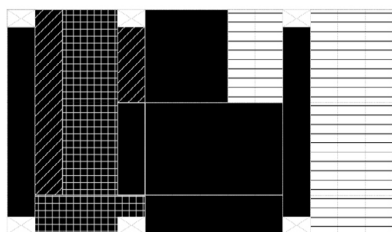
service bar/foyer
& scenic tower



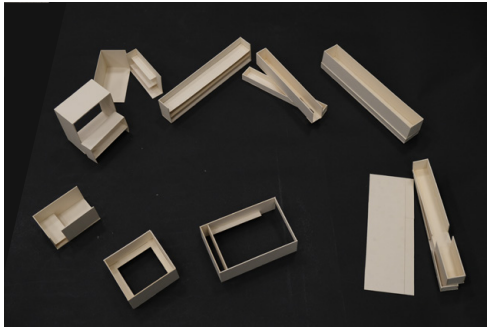
tailoring & repair shop



small hall, rehearsal room
& load/unload



emergency stairs



1_elements



2_big hall



5_service bar



6_foyer



9_scenic tower



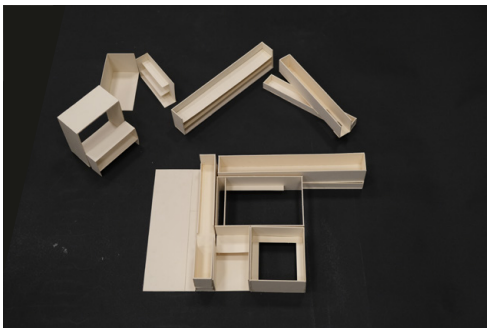
10_stage bridge



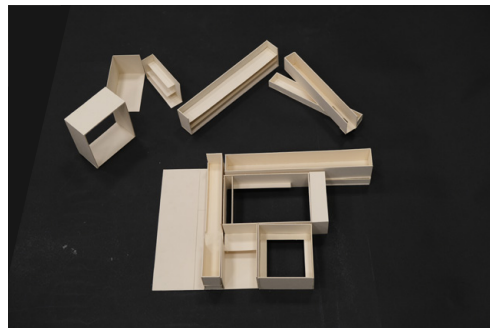
3_rehearsal room



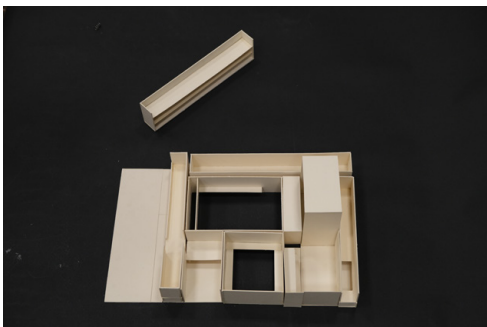
4_small hall



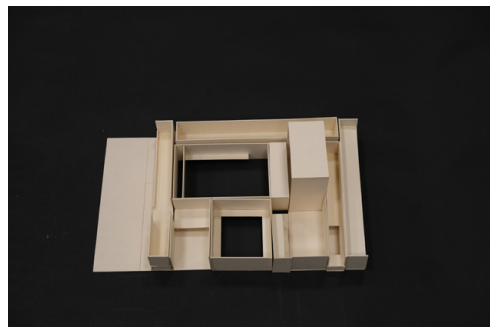
7_second foyer



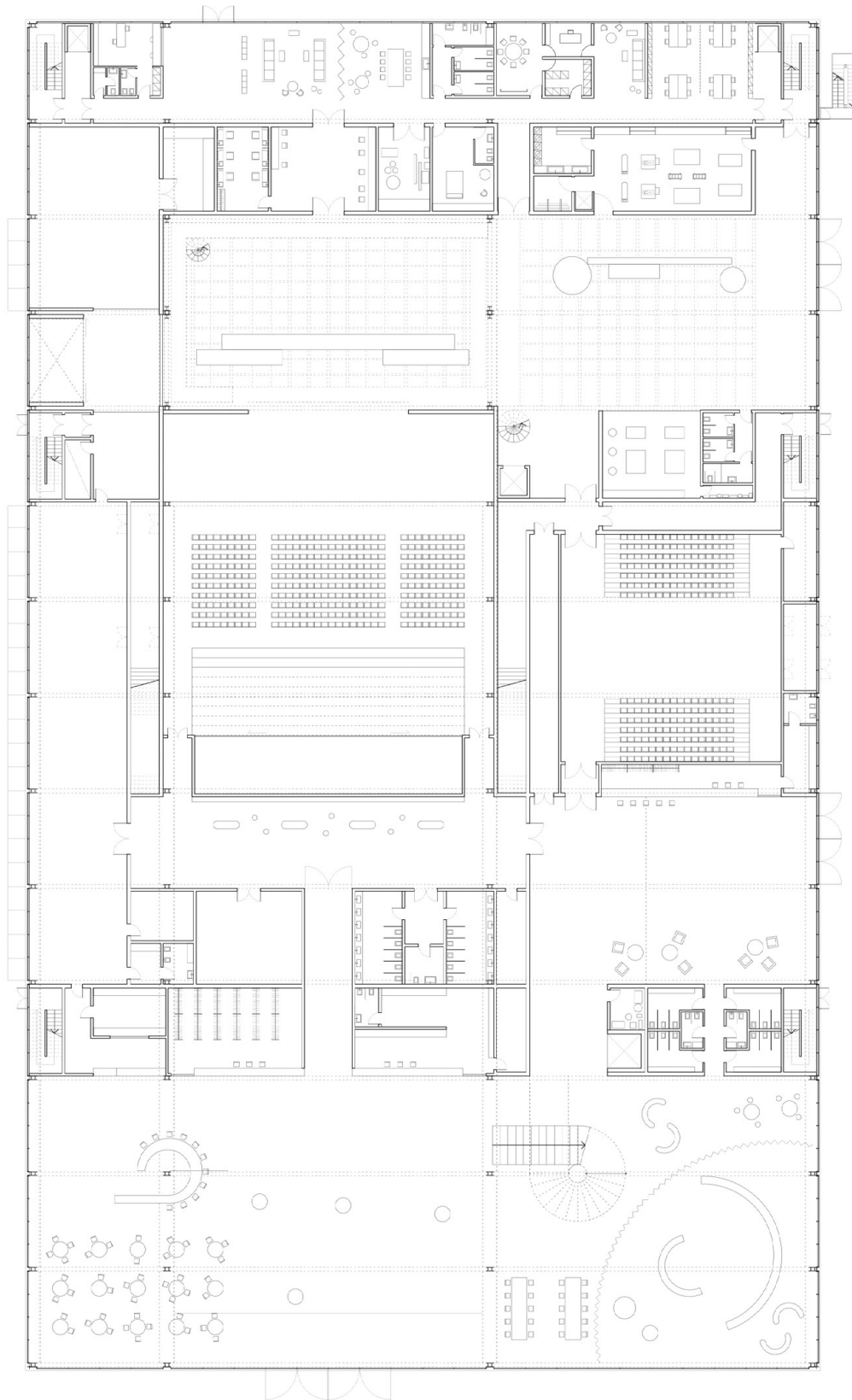
8_proscenium

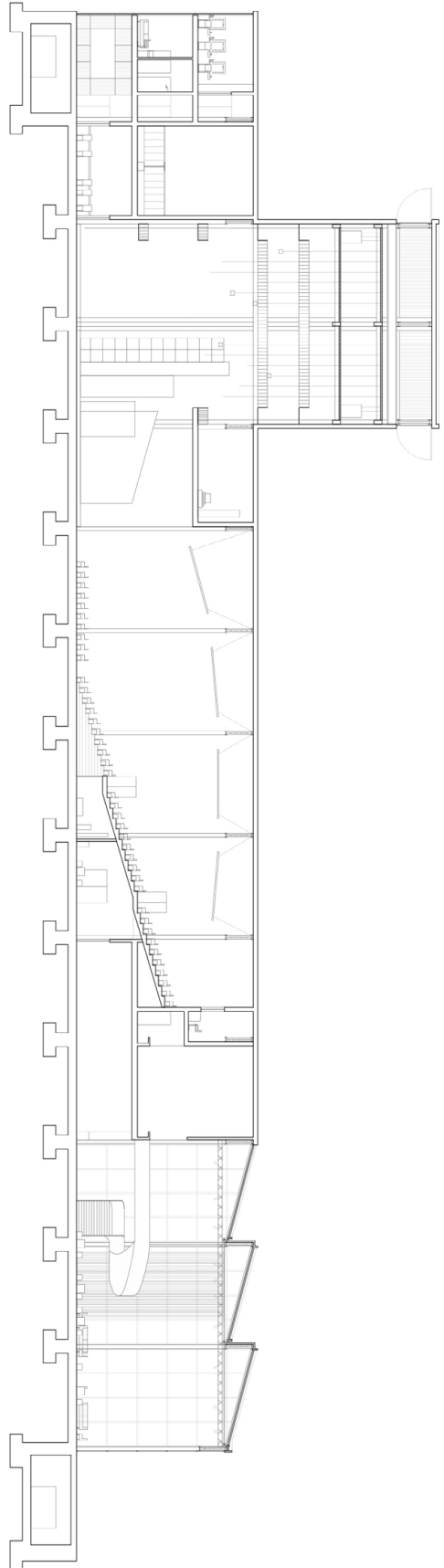
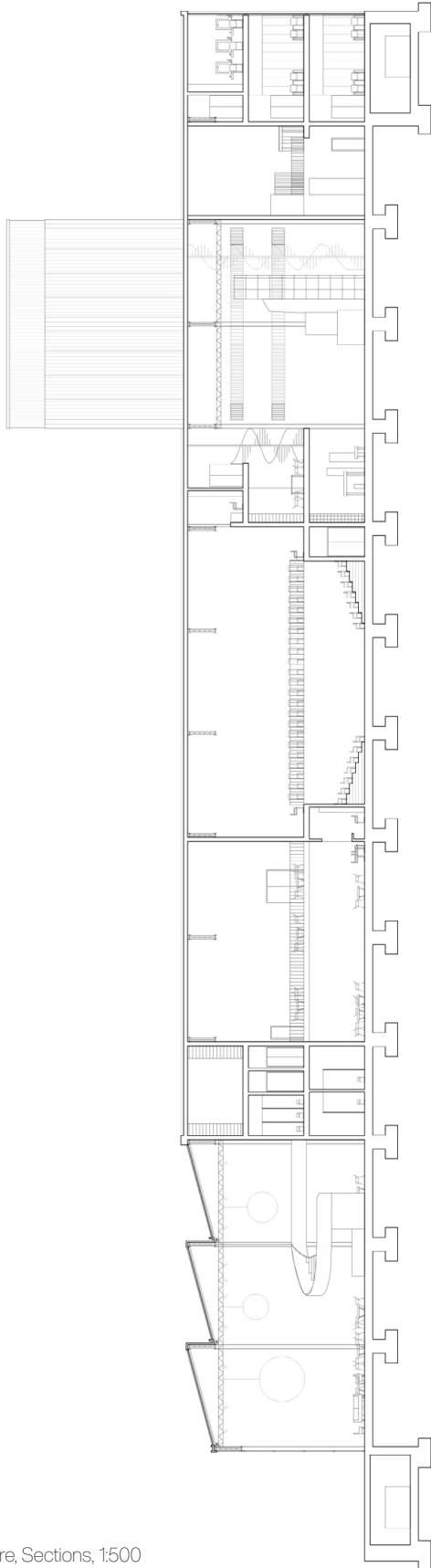


11_tailoring and actors entrance

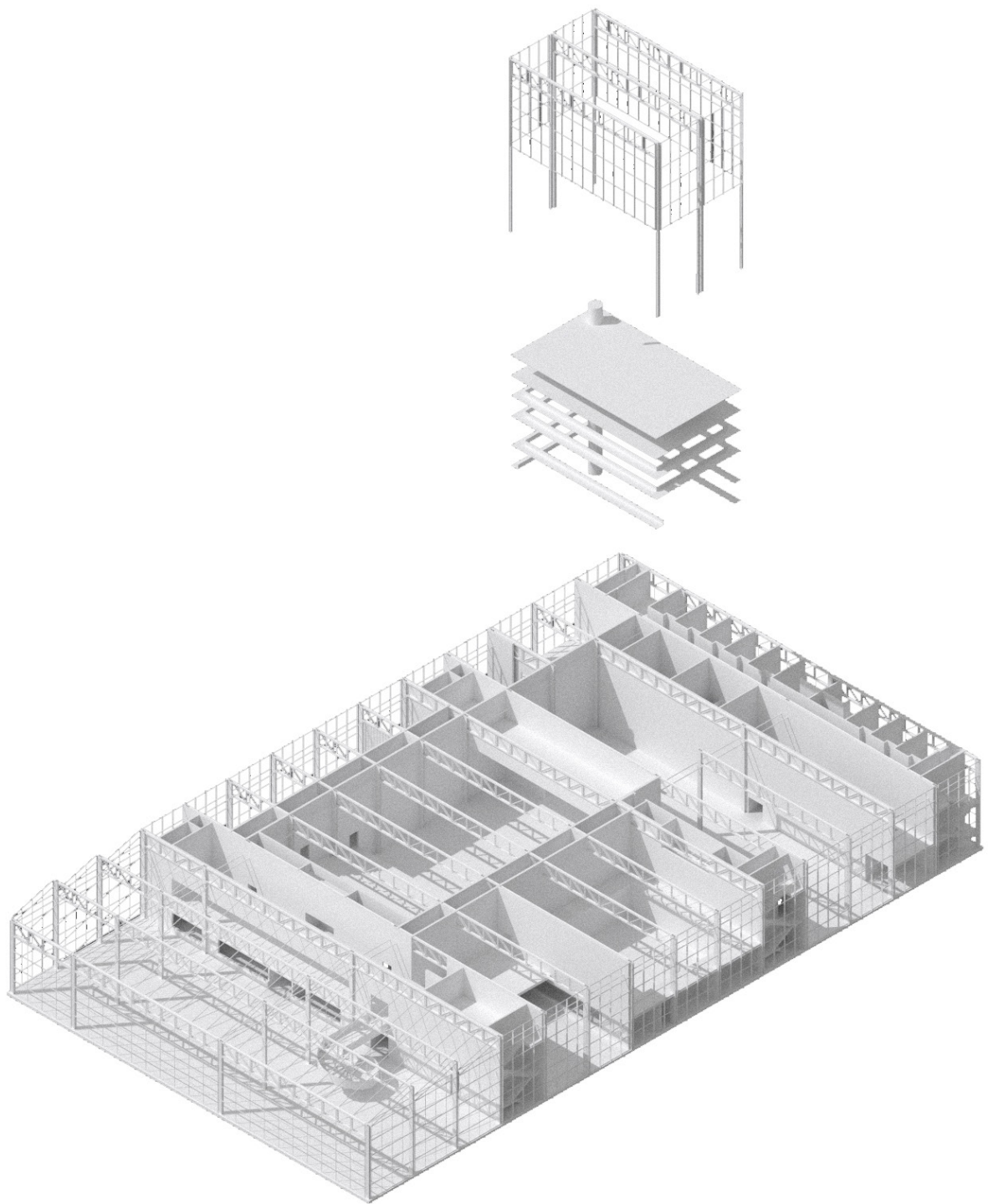


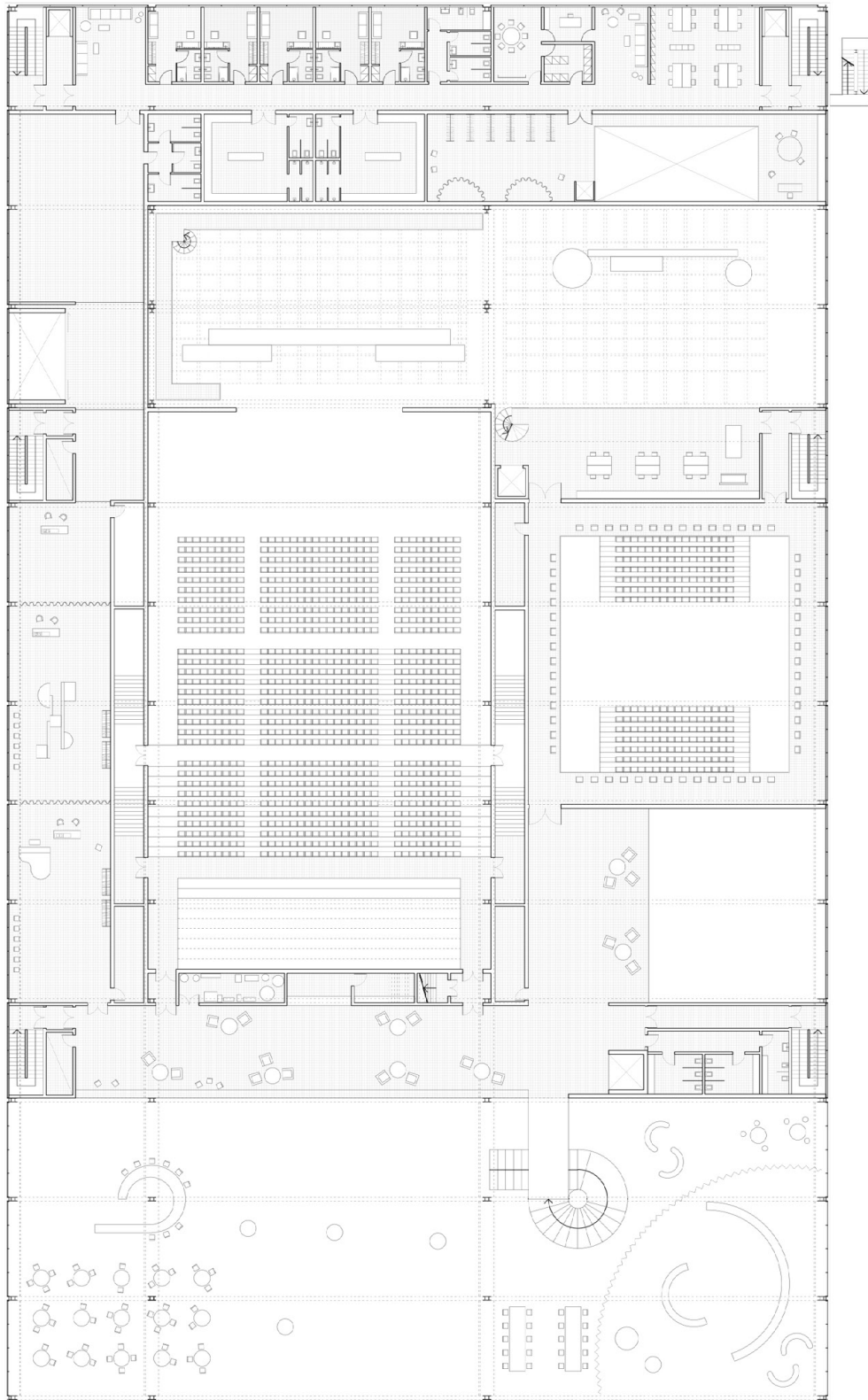
12_offices and dressing rooms

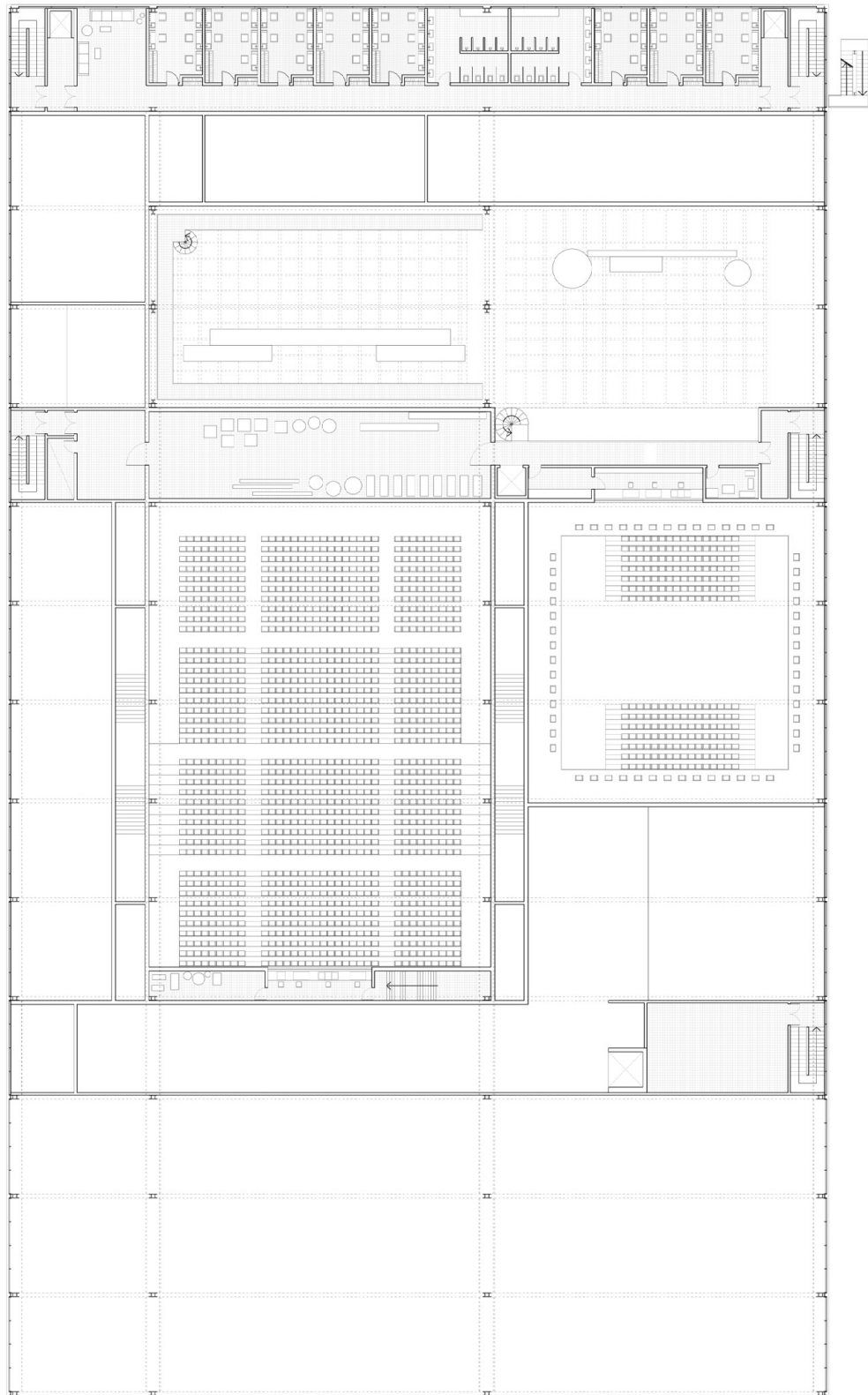




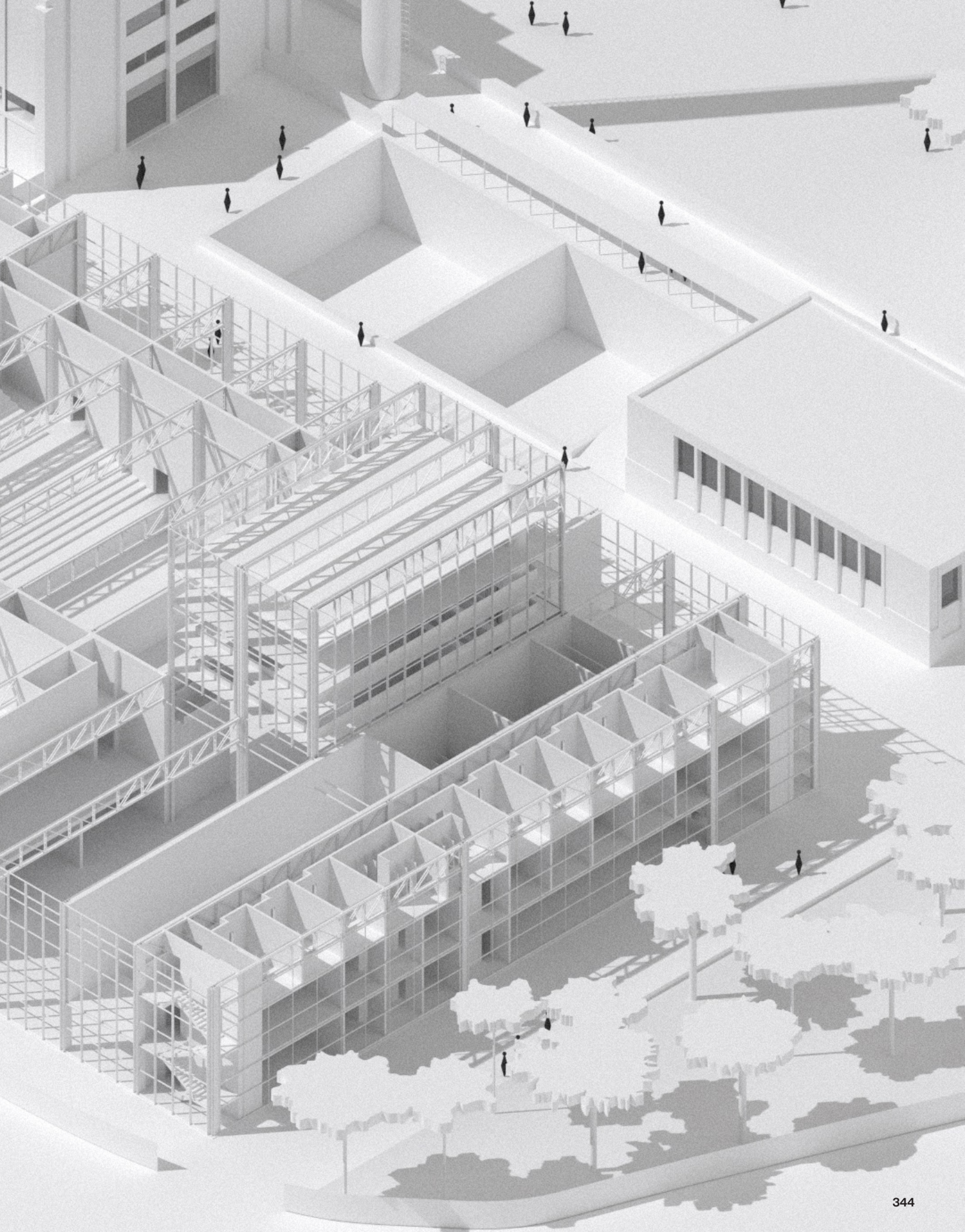
The stage tower is the part of the machine that emerges from the existing volume. The functional necessity becomes an architectural gesture.

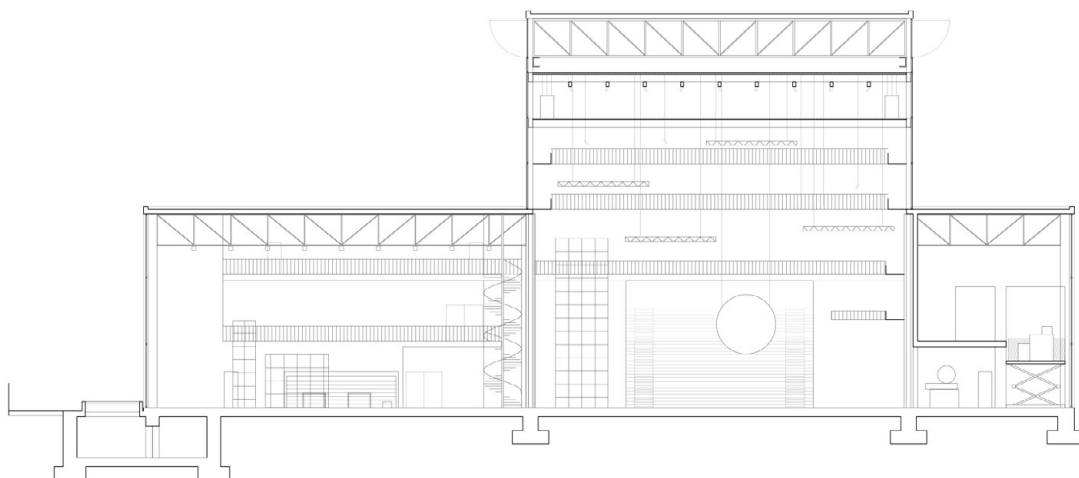
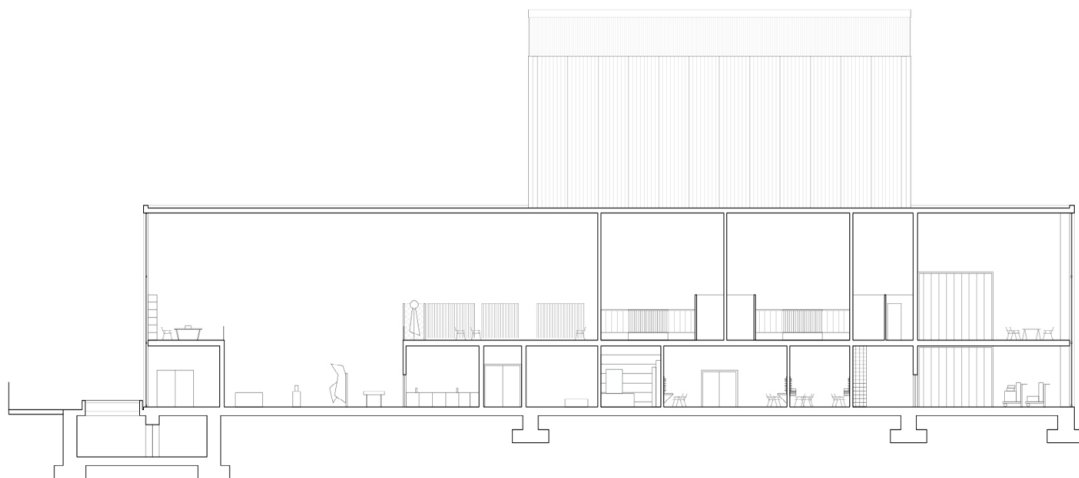


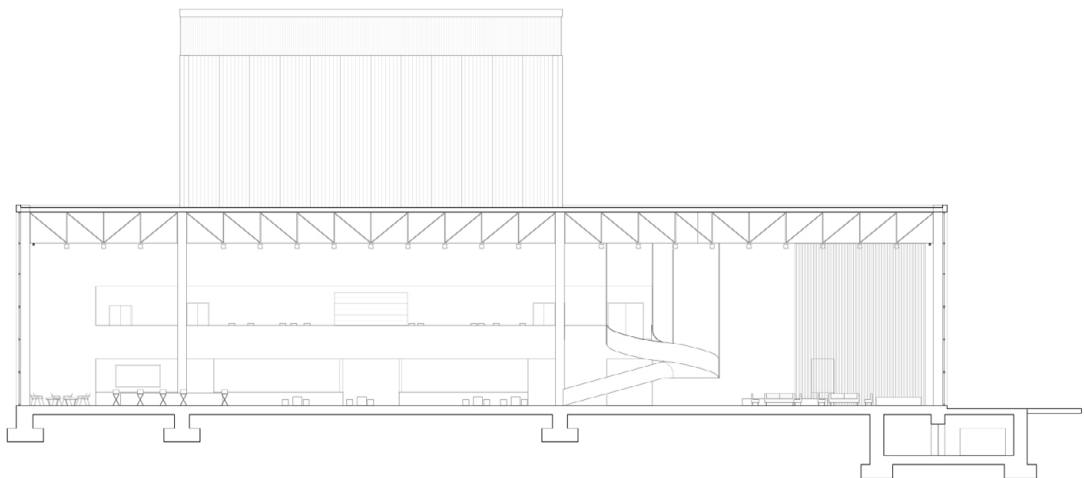
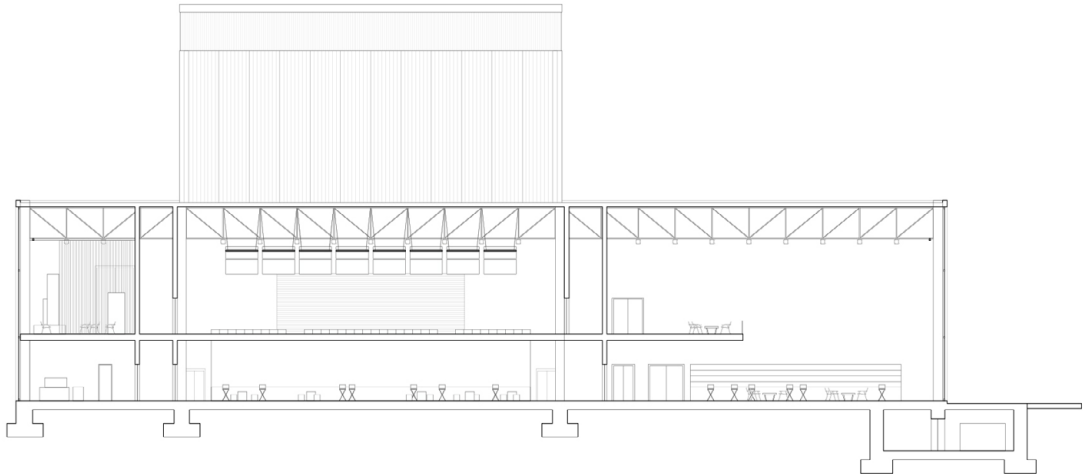


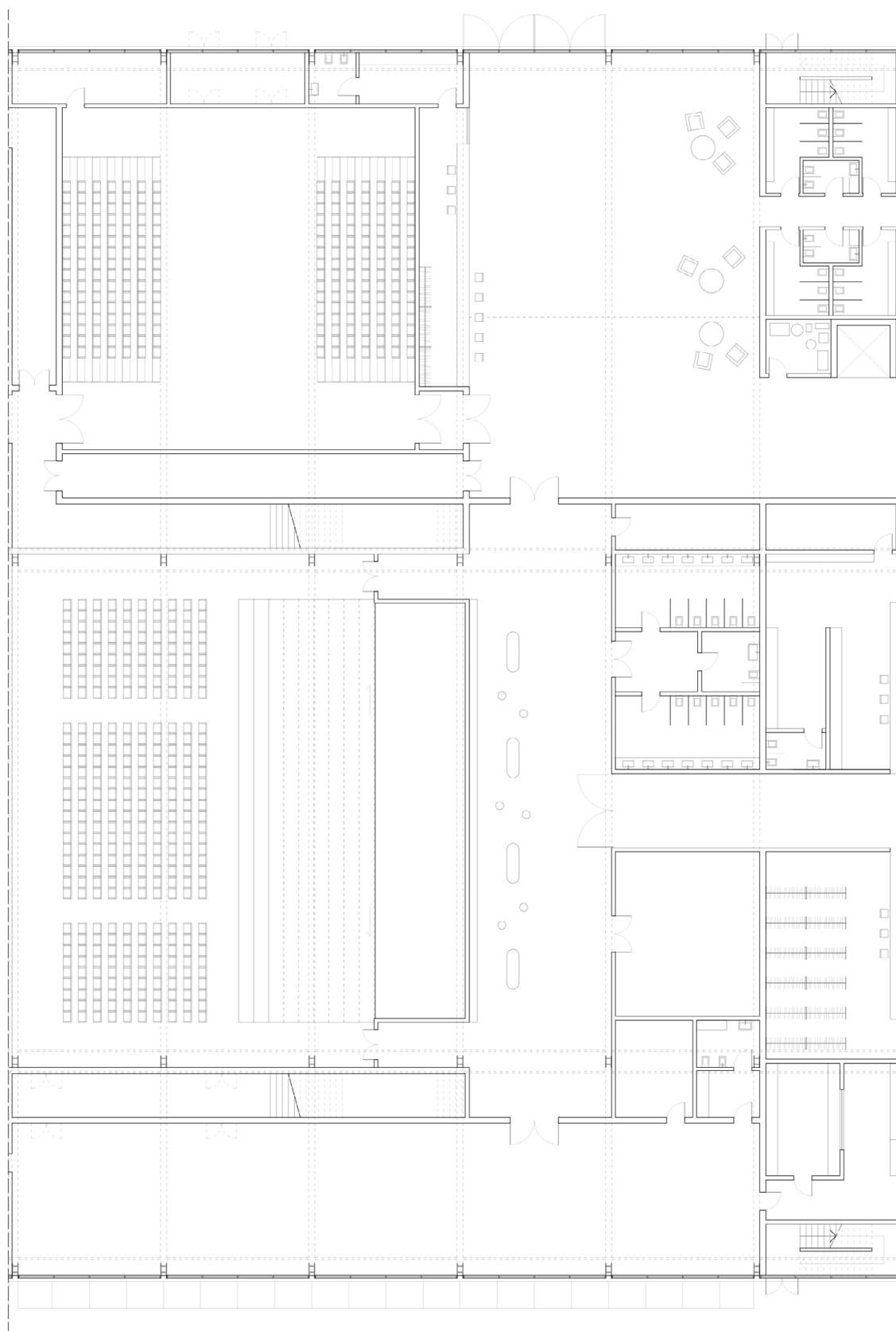


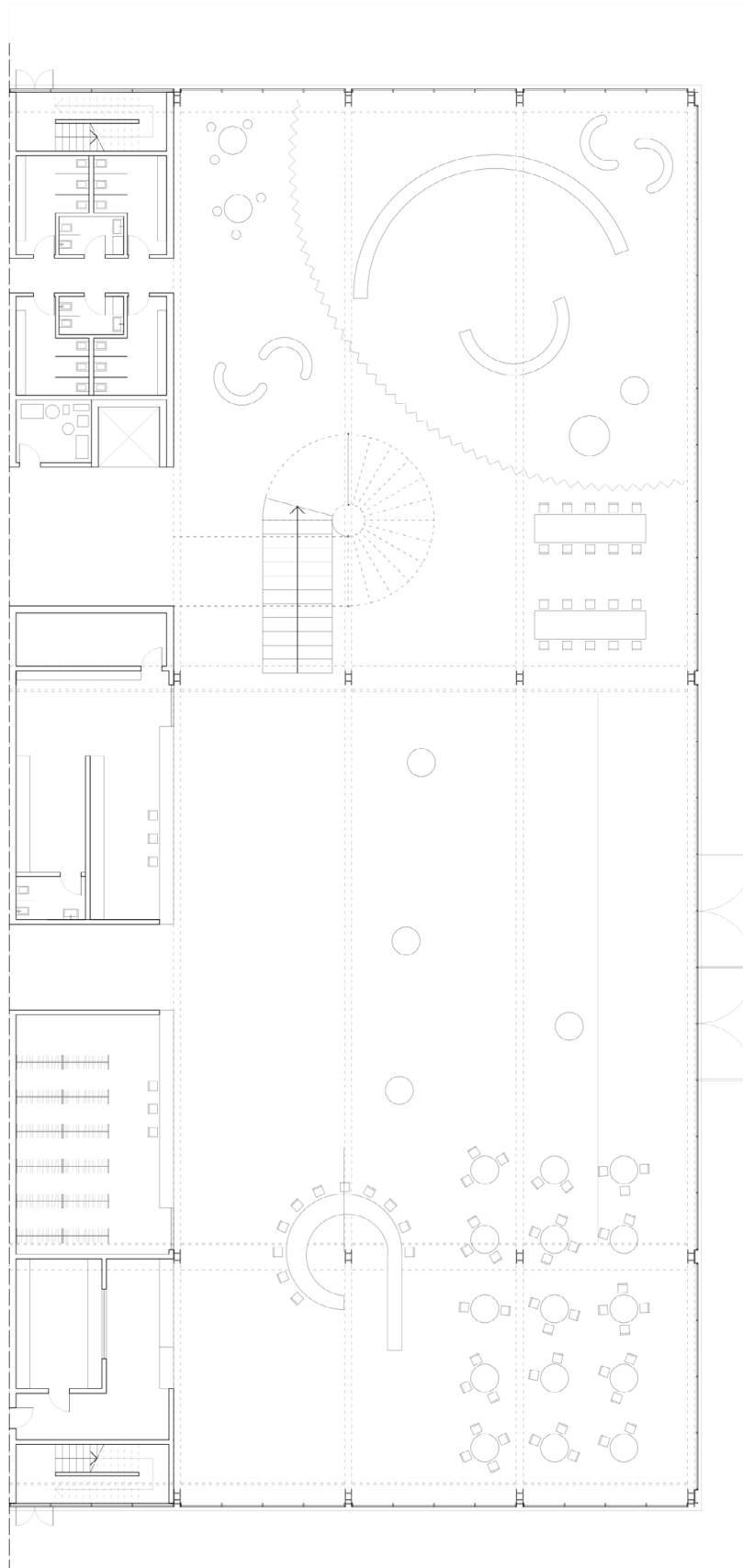


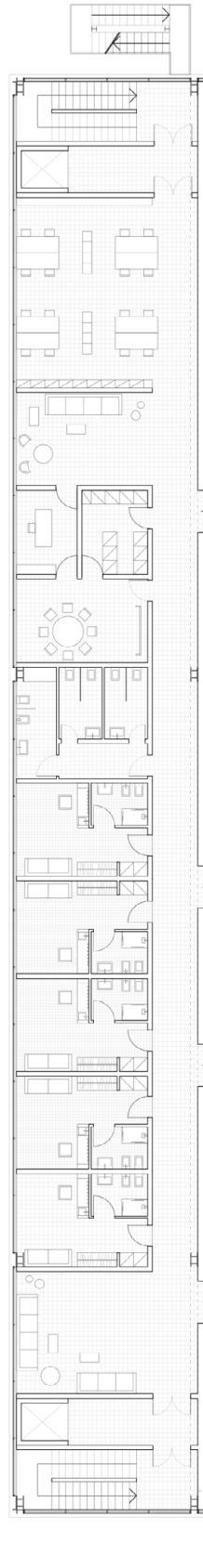
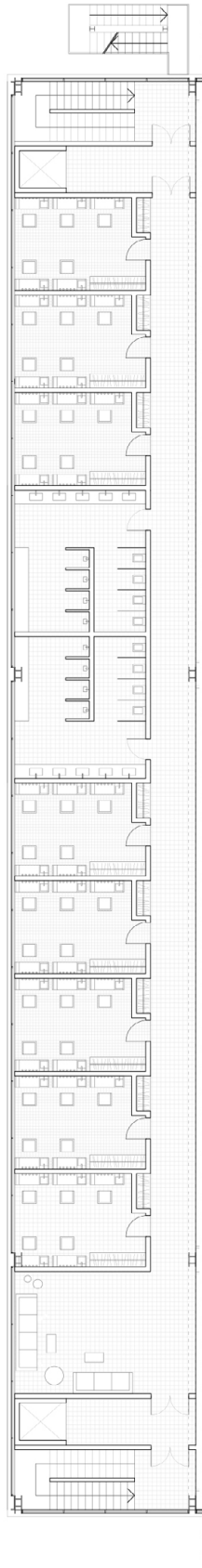


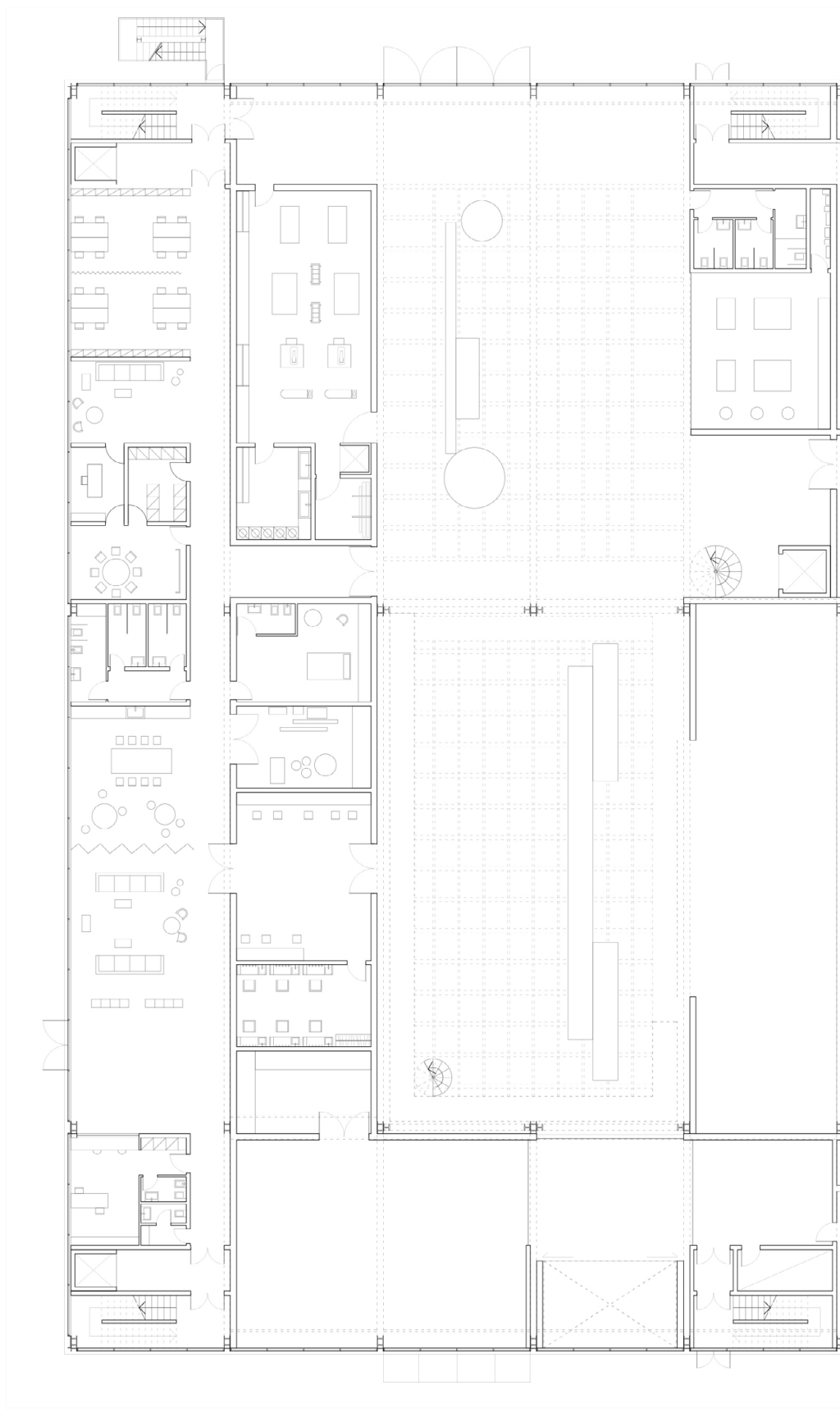




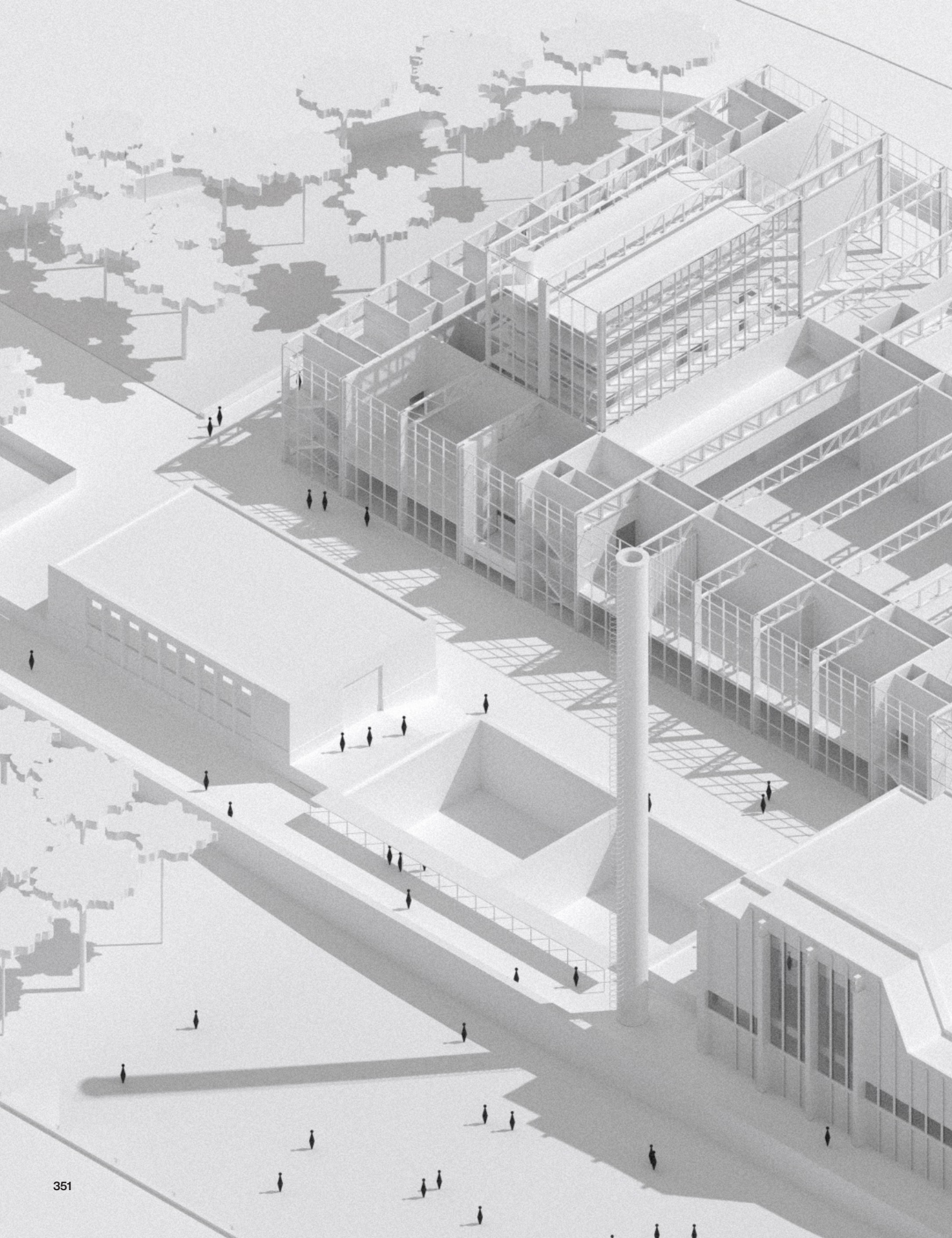








Theatre, stage deck and actors' entrance, 1:300





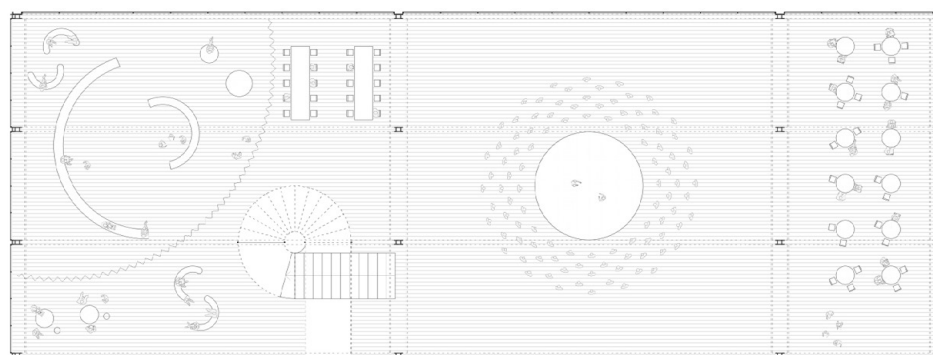
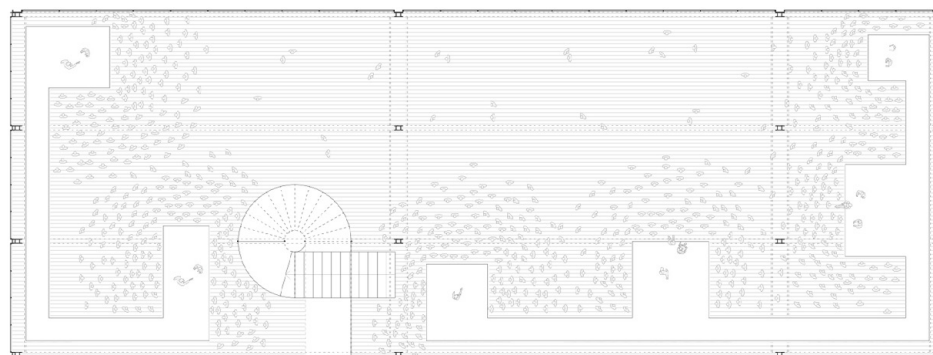
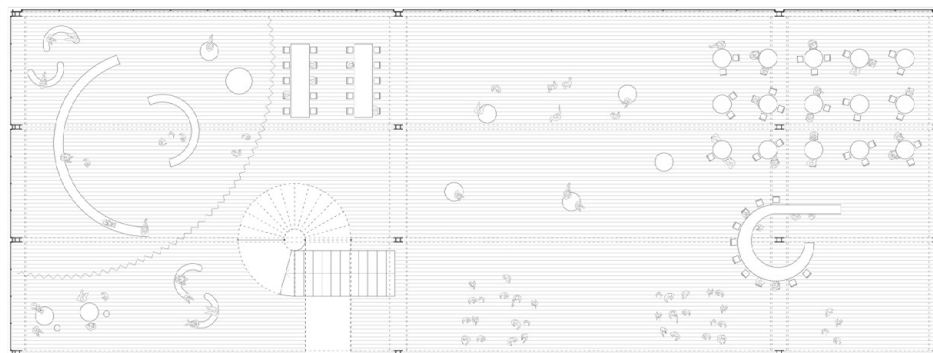
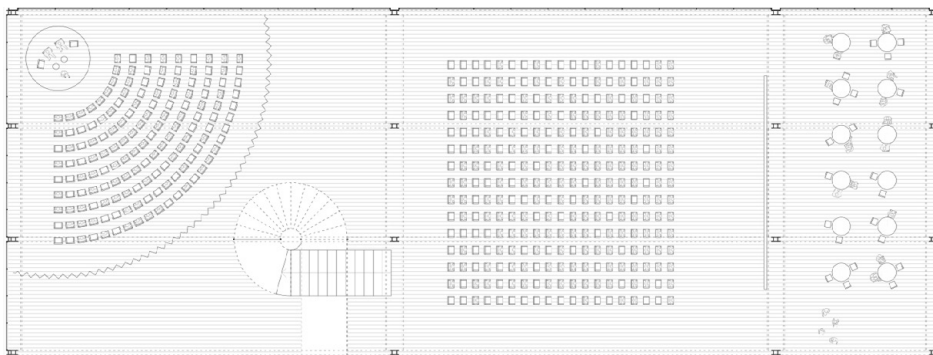


The project presents four different spaces suitable for staging: two, the large hall and the small hall, are created as normal performance halls. The others, the rehearsal room and the two foyers, are easily converted into theatre rooms or other practice spaces. Each is better suited to certain theatrical performances, depending on the size and proportions and the actor-spectator-scenography dynamics to be achieved. Together they succeed in producing a performance machine that guarantees a plurality of possible solutions, and opens up numerous possibilities.

empty space

The foyer at the entrance to the theatre was conceived as a large covered square, with the aim of being a filter between the outside and the more intimate entrance to the theatre. The compositional intent was to leave this environment as free as possible. There is no permanent spatial subdivision element. The space is only marked on the ground by the existing pillar structure; it thus lends itself to being shaped according to numerous configurations, dictated by the needs of the audience and the theatre-goers. This space is in no way intended to impose functional obligations, but rather to be configured from time to time by the event that takes place there. The foyer can be set up in the first instance as a theatre reception area with front office, cafeteria and lounge for waiting, meeting and study; it is therefore an environment that is intended to be open not only to the audience of the performances but also to external users, open to the city. A system of curtains generates a circumscribed environment that lends itself additionally to generate an isolated room.

In second instance, the foyer space can be configured to host theatre performances or film projections, occupying one of the bays or all of them at the same time, as required. It can also be designed as a large square for a fair and events involving a large number of visitors.





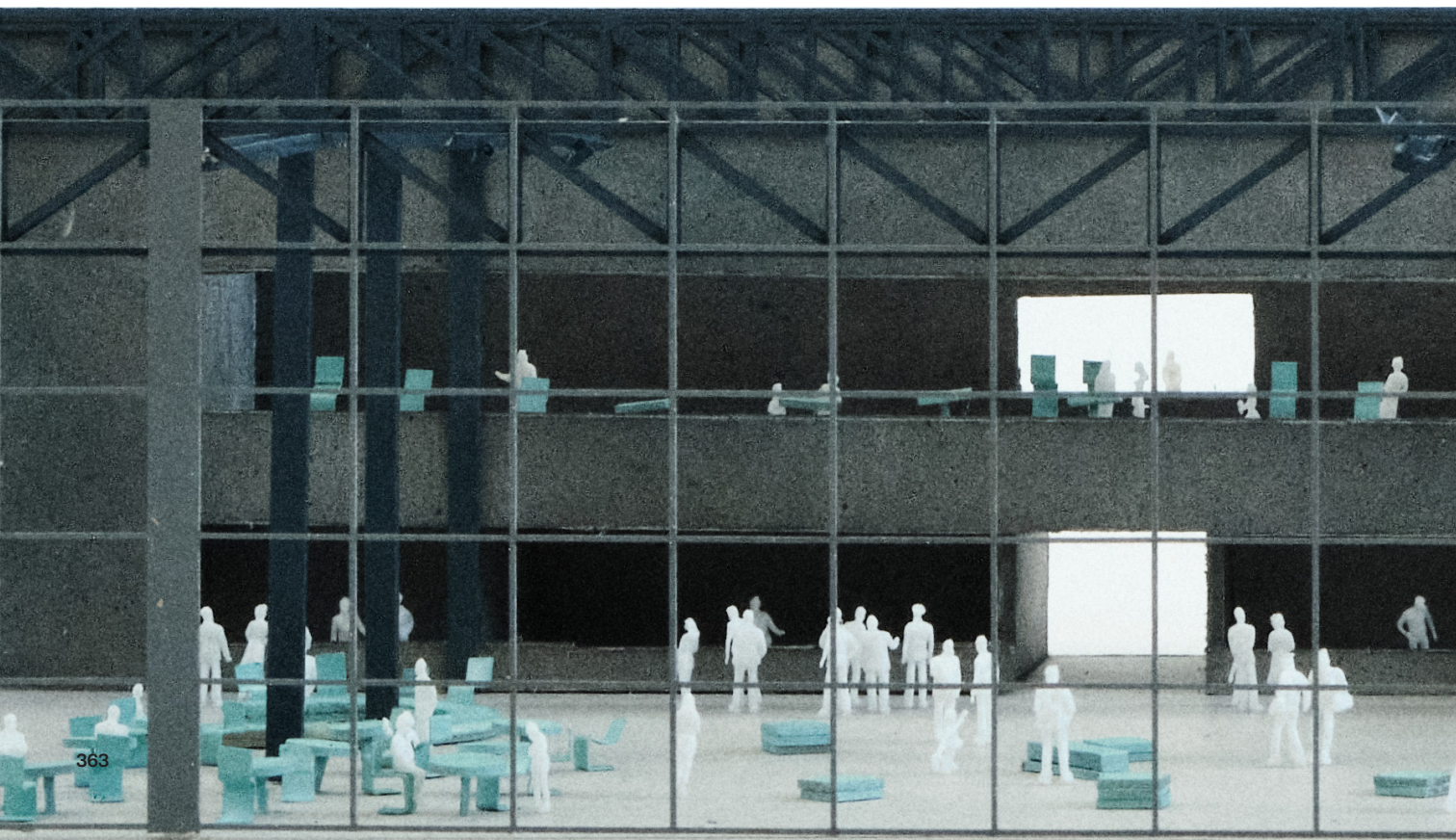


The metal staircase is the new element added to the industrial nave.

Thus the space becomes the foyer of a theatre, through an archetypal gesture.





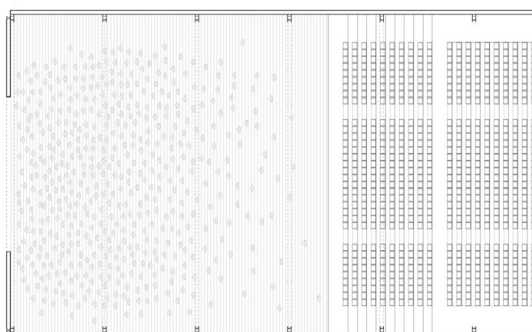
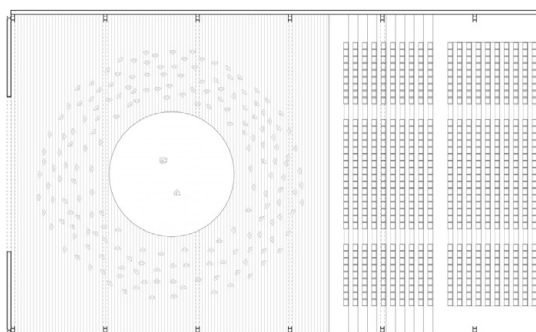
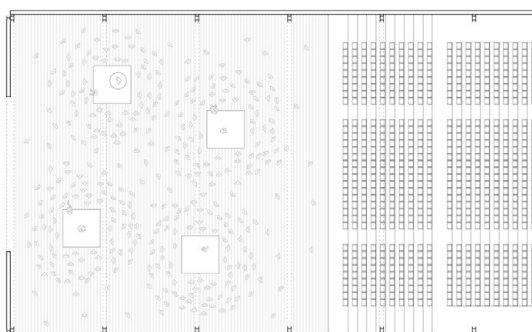
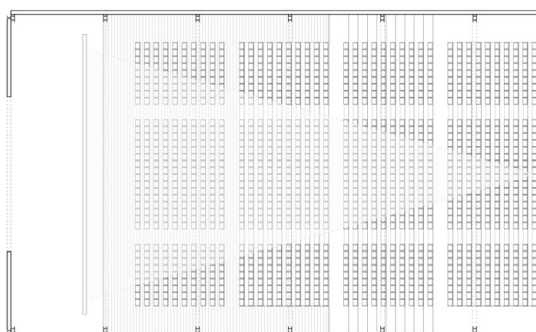
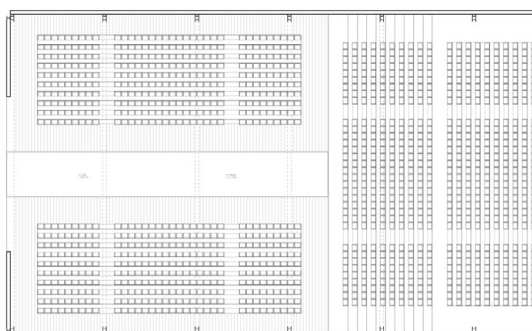
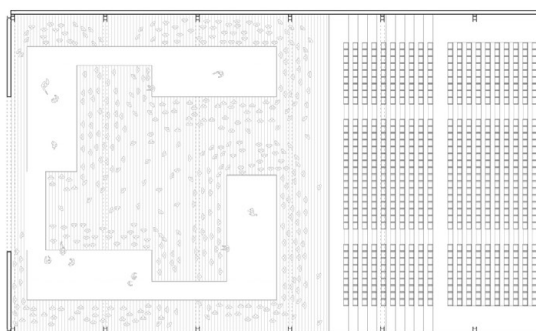
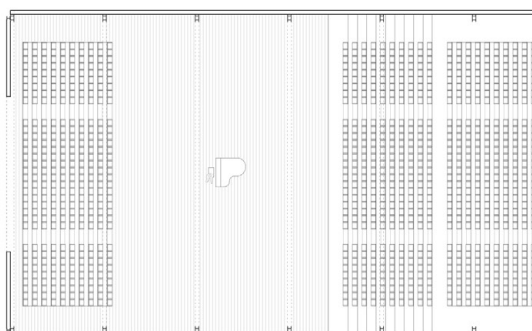
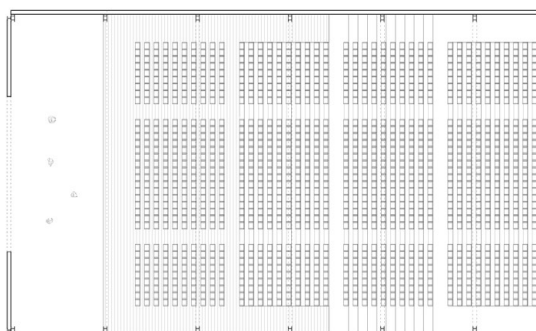


The staircase and the balcony overlooking the void are the supporting elements for a flexible void.
A normal foyer where all can happen.



end-stage hall

The theatre's large hall is designed to accommodate performances that require the support of large sets and events with large audiences. In its standard configuration, the hall consists of four tiers of bleachers, thus lending itself well to large theatrical performances as well as concerts, conferences and projections, with 1360 seats. The first two tiers of bleachers can be removed to increase the stage area, which can thus be used to make room for large sets, moving scenery or for standing audience interaction with the theatrical performance. A part of the tiers of bleachers remains fixed, however, in case the audience needs to be seated or is to be given a choice as to how to interact with the performance. The movable tiers can otherwise be arranged, in the free part of the stage, facing each other, creating an even more intimate central stage environment. The room is therefore designed in such a way that each director can find the configuration that best suits the play she or he has in mind.

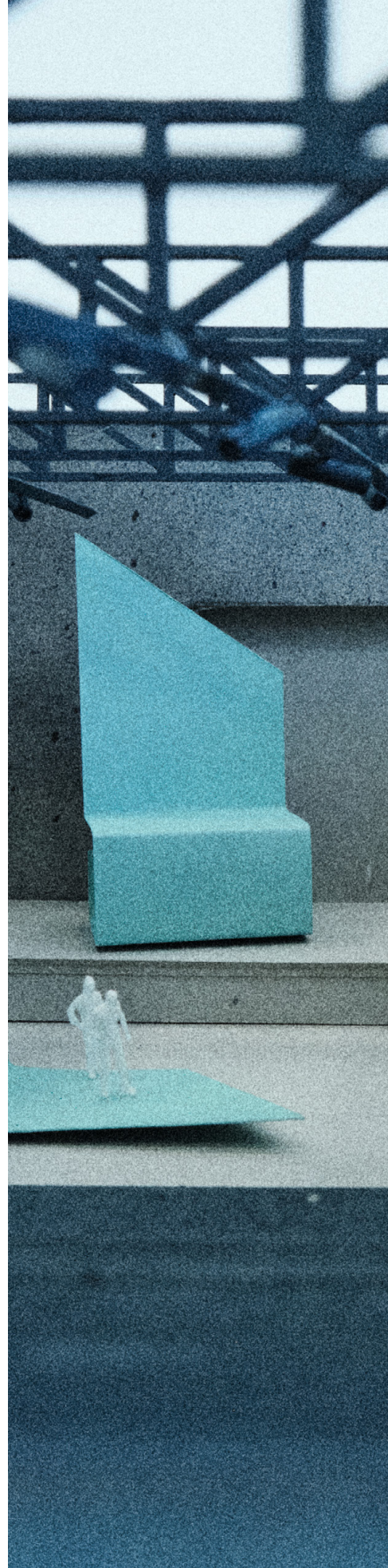


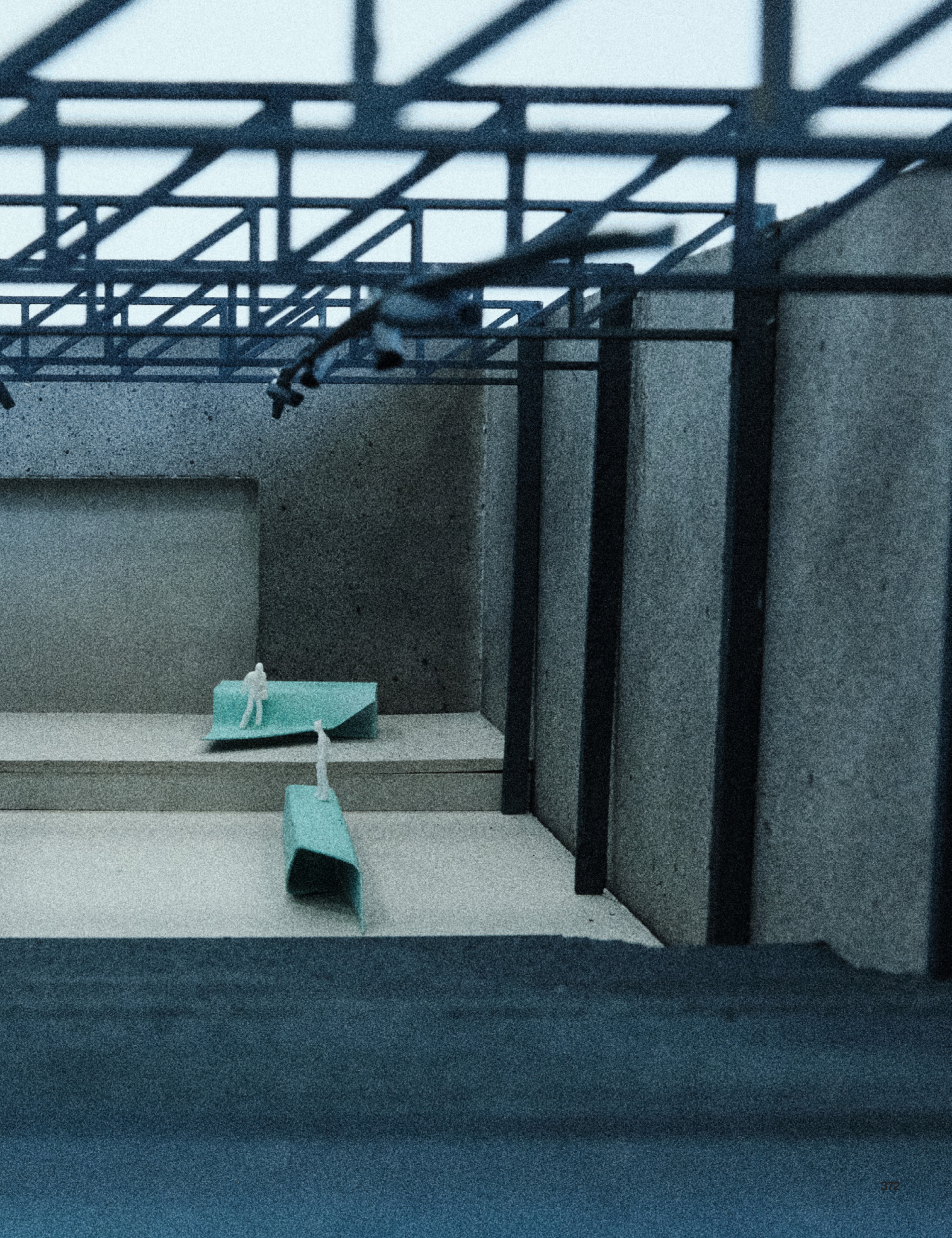




The unique charm of the reused site holds together a history, an architectural identity, and a new way of appropriating space.

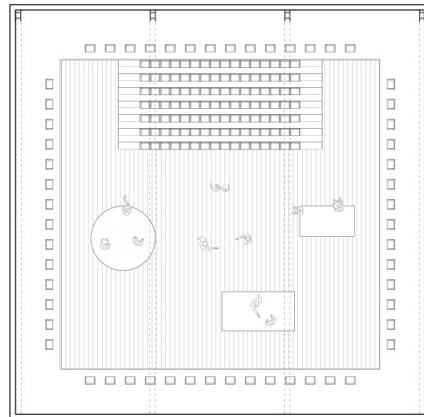
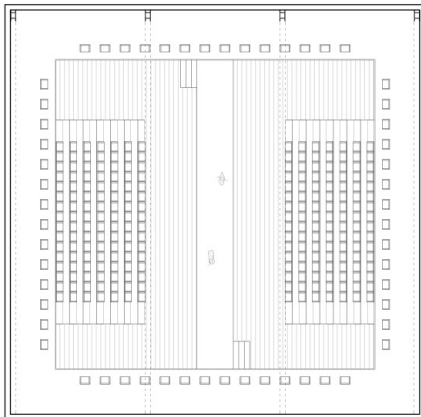
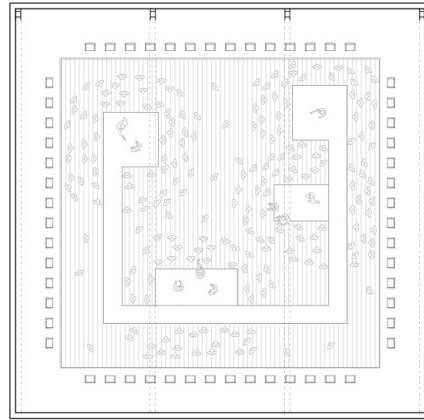
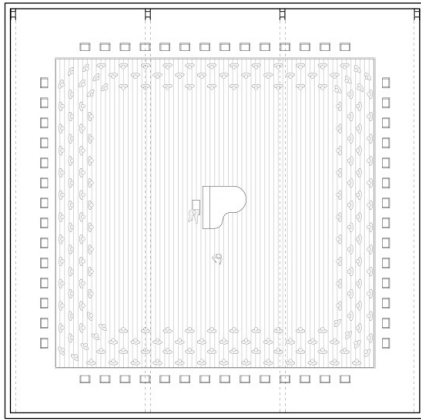




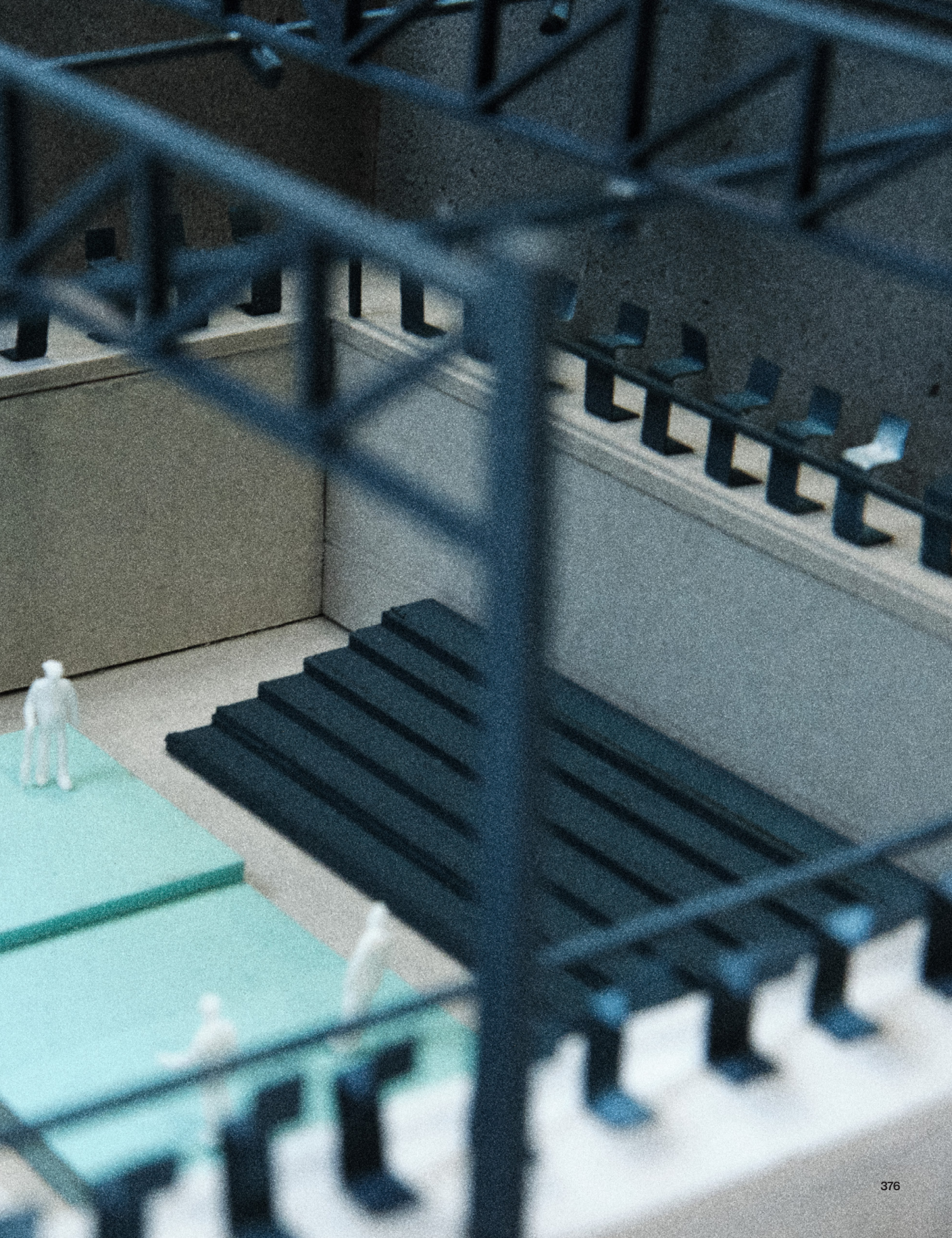


theatre in the round

The square theatre room, second in size in the project, generates a circumscribed, intimate environment, where the spectator can establish a relationship of complicity with the actor and vice versa. The space, seemingly constraining, lends itself to hosting numerous show configurations. In this case, the architecture is designed with a precise use in mind, but here, once again, it is the events, the performances, that will dictate the spatial rules. As a matter of fact, the hall is conceived as a relatively neutral space, which creates an all-encompassing atmosphere, but at the same time wants to take a step back and let the programmes, which change over time, find a home. The space can be configured as a theatre hall in the first place, with one or two tiers of bleachers; it can be set up without any grandstand, allowing spectators to watch the performance standing up, thus increasing the sense of intimacy, or otherwise leaving access to the audience only from the upper level, where there is a balcony from which to look out, letting the floor below to become entirely available for the theatrical performance. It can hosts approximately 350 seats.

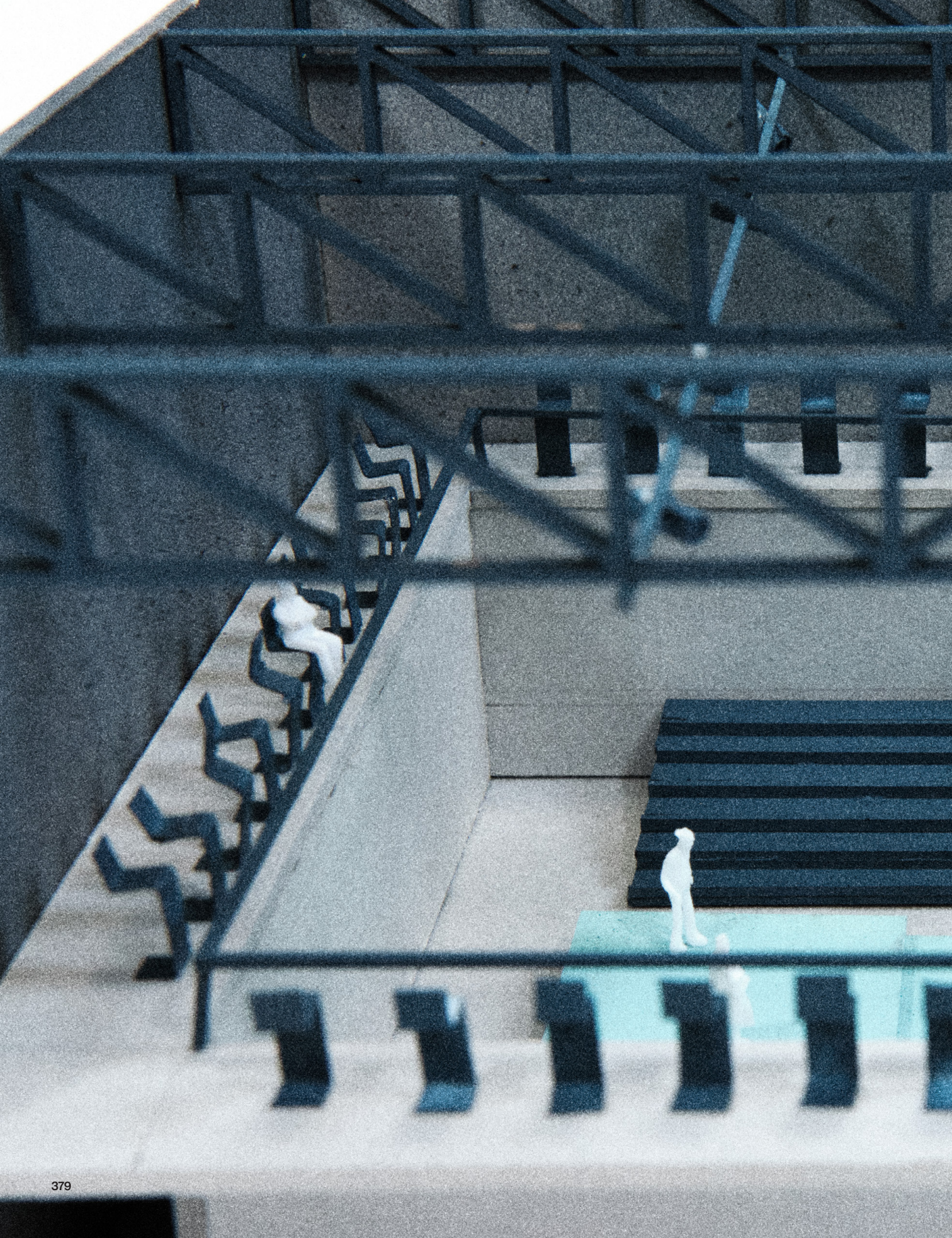


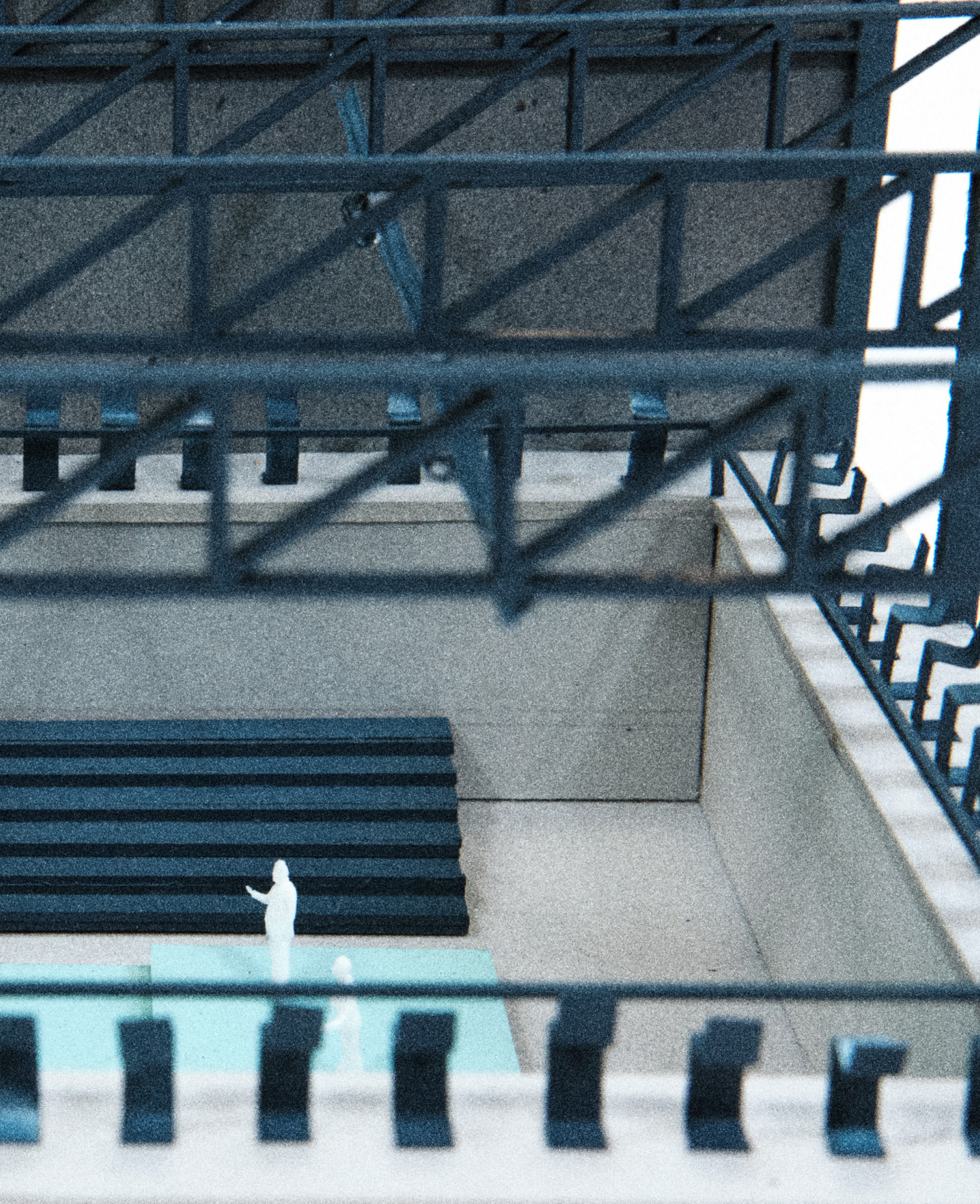






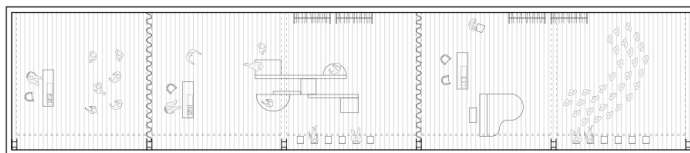
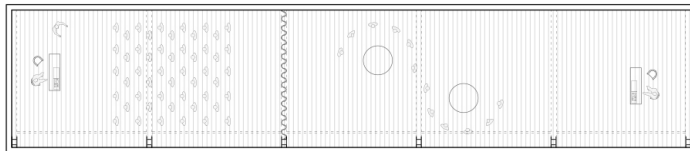
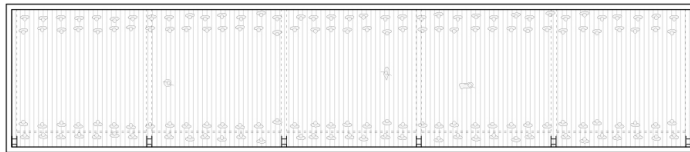
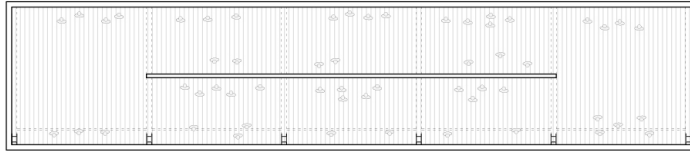
Where there is no frontality,
where the space in a room
is centred, an engaging
intimacy is created.





linear stage

The theatre's rehearsal room is 40 m long with a width of approximately 7 m. It serves in the first instance as a space for the preparation of theatre pieces and can be subdivided, through movable curtains, into several rooms, so that members of the same theatre company can rehearse different parts simultaneously. By freeing the entire room from the movable partitions, it is possible to obtain a single room capable of hosting singular events. In this case, spectators can stand at the edge of the long hall and watch the play standing up. It can hosts approximately 200 people. The apparently neutral room is designed to suit the needs of several directors, who can decide whether to exploit it in its entirety or use only a few bays, in order to find the right spatial dimension for their performance. In addition, the room lends itself well to being reconfigured as an exhibition space, fashion shows and many other practices. As a matter of fact, it is the only theatre space that can be configured for events that develops linearly. Architecture creates the event.





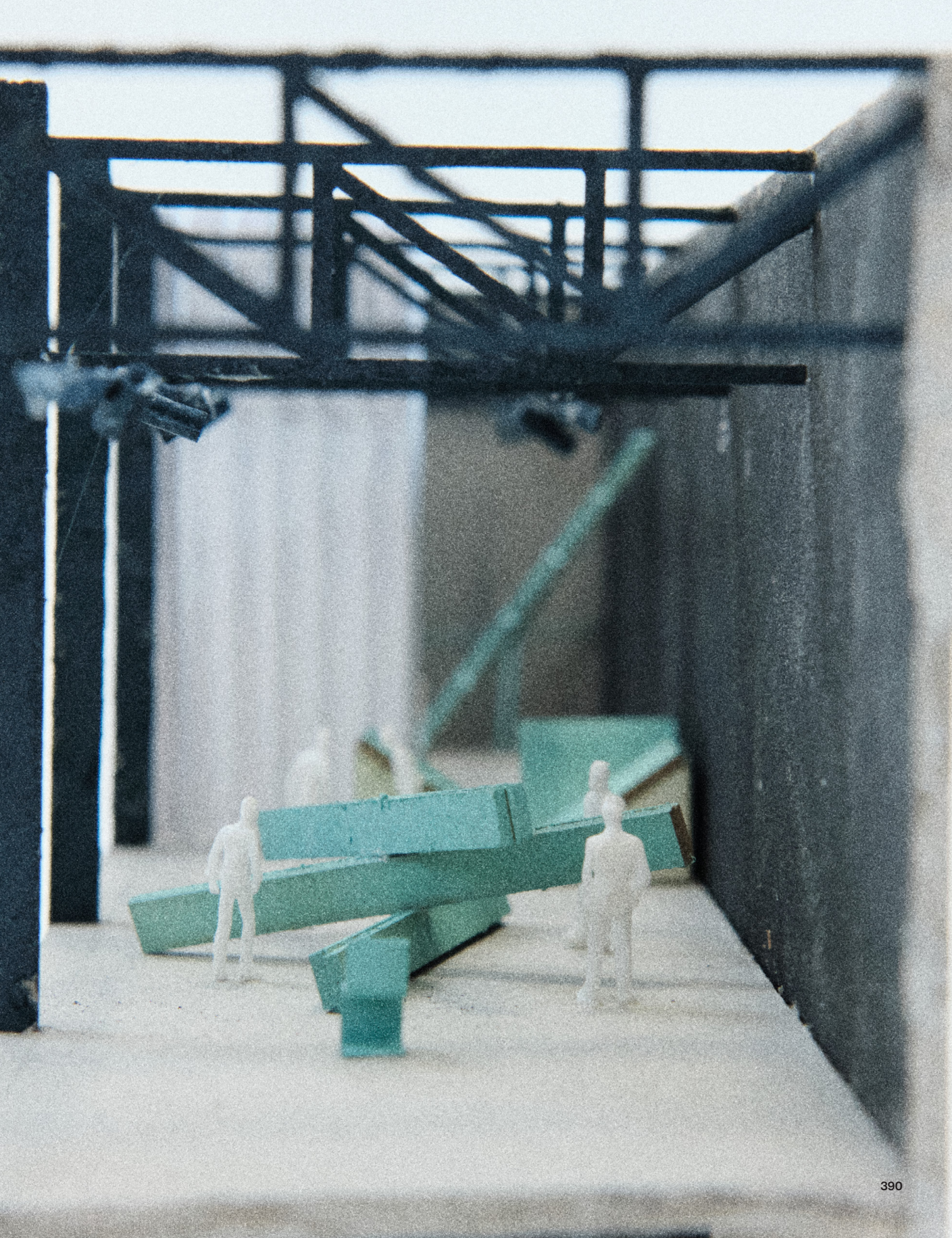
How can you use a space
that develops linearly?



A sequence of rooms?
A continuous void?

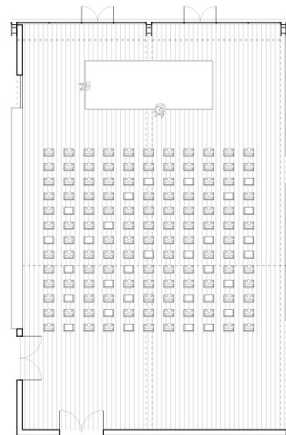
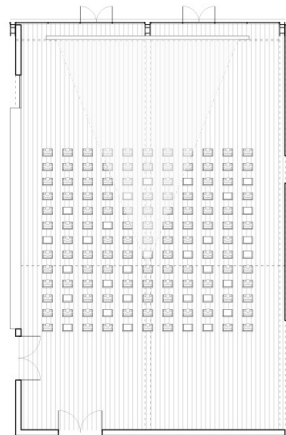
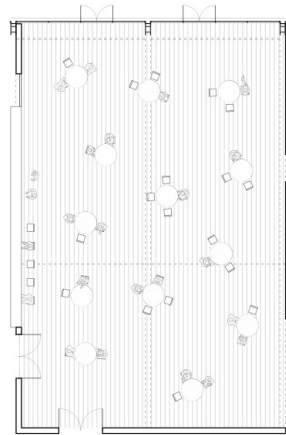
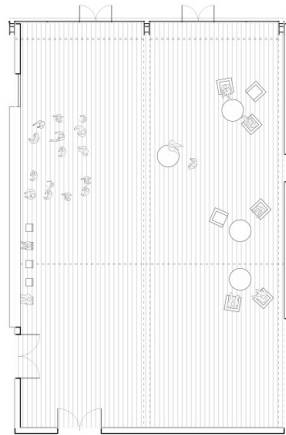






balcony room

After the large foyer, passing through the reception bar that acts as an interior façade, one arrives at a secondary reduction, also on two levels: an interior lounge with its own balcony, measured to create a more intimate and cosy ambience. A space that is more directly connected to the large and square halls, as well as to the rehearsal rooms, via the long balcony facing the entrance foyer. Even this space should not be interpreted in a one-sided manner. It is the most intimate of the five halls and can be reinterpreted in a variety of ways. With a maximum capacity of about 100 people, it completes the possibilities of the theatre building, adding this smaller dimension to the other large spaces of the theatre architecture. It acts as a suitable space to operate the theatre even when the main great hall is not in use: this secondary foyer then becomes the entrance to the theatre.







No place is set up for only
one use.
Everything is measured with
many possibilities.

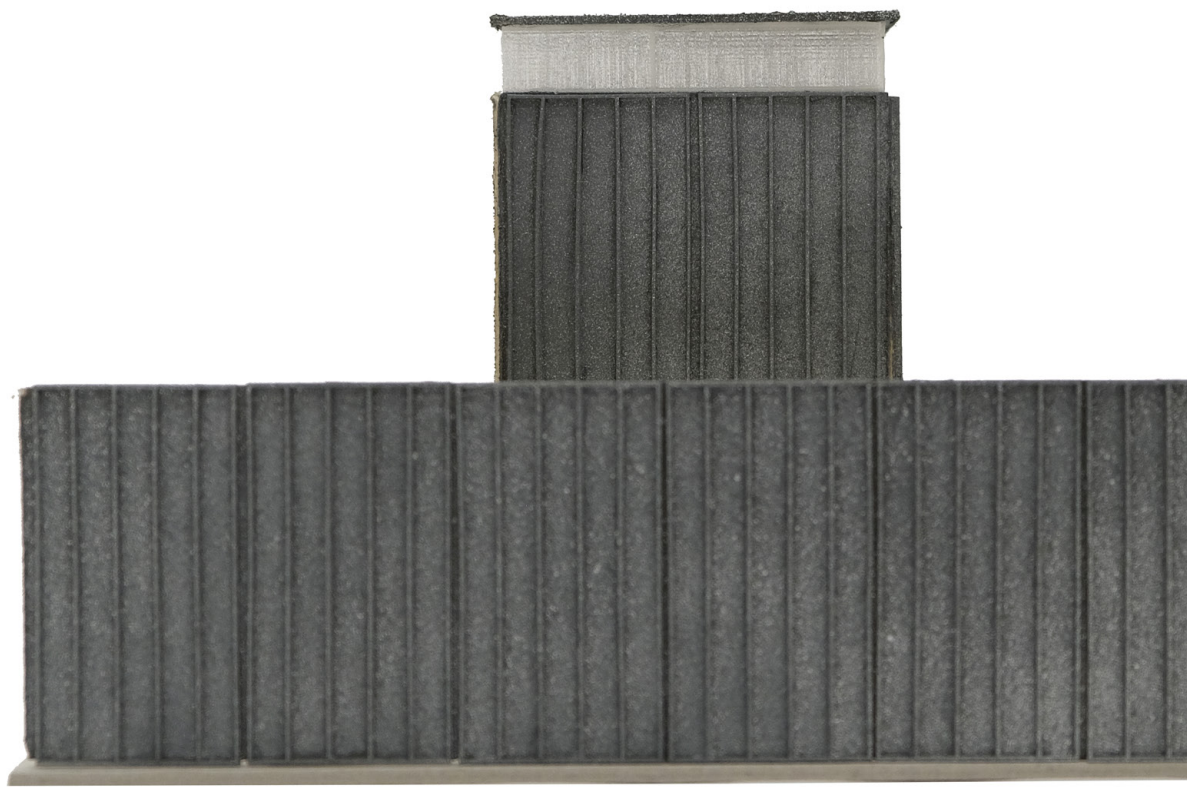


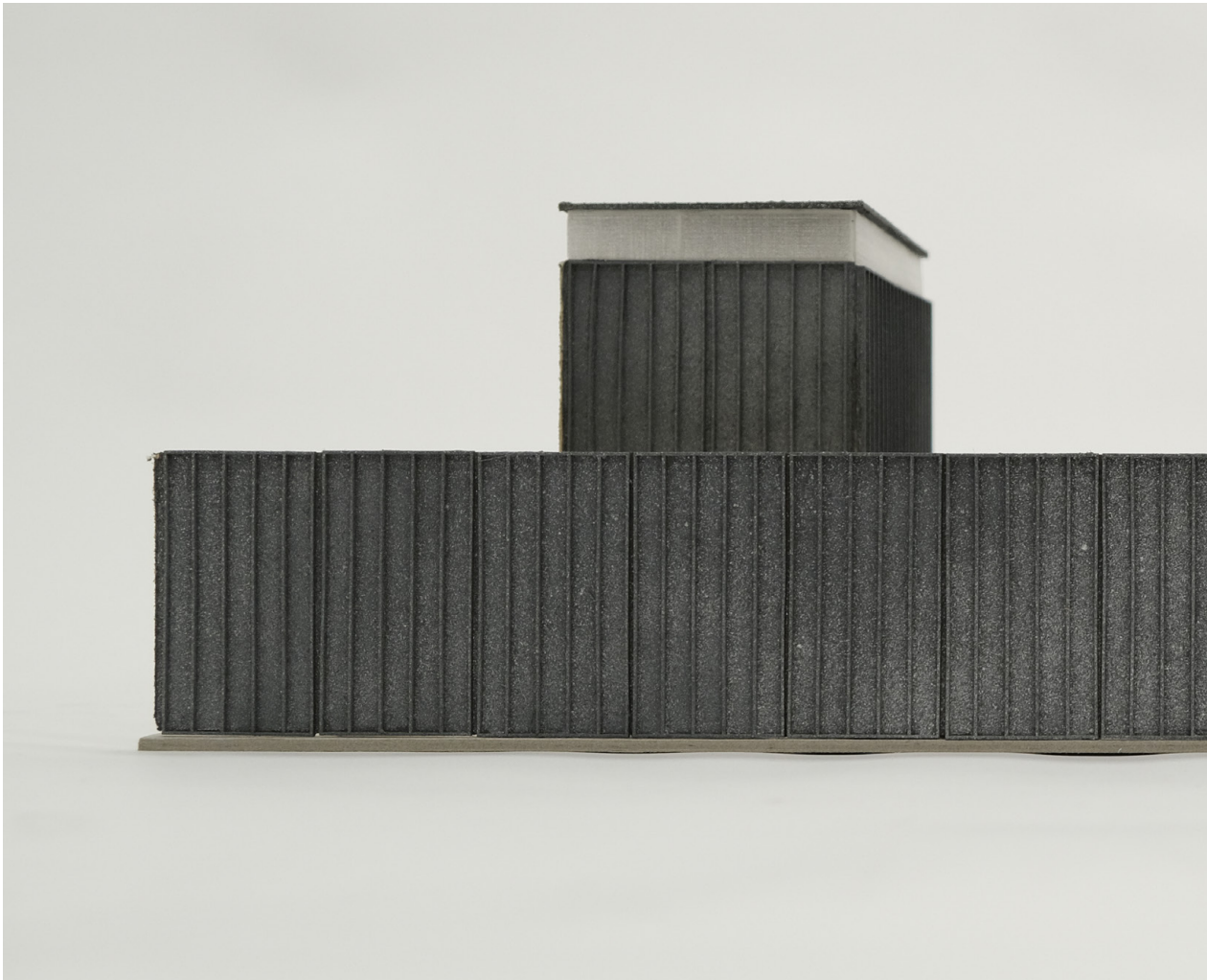


Façade

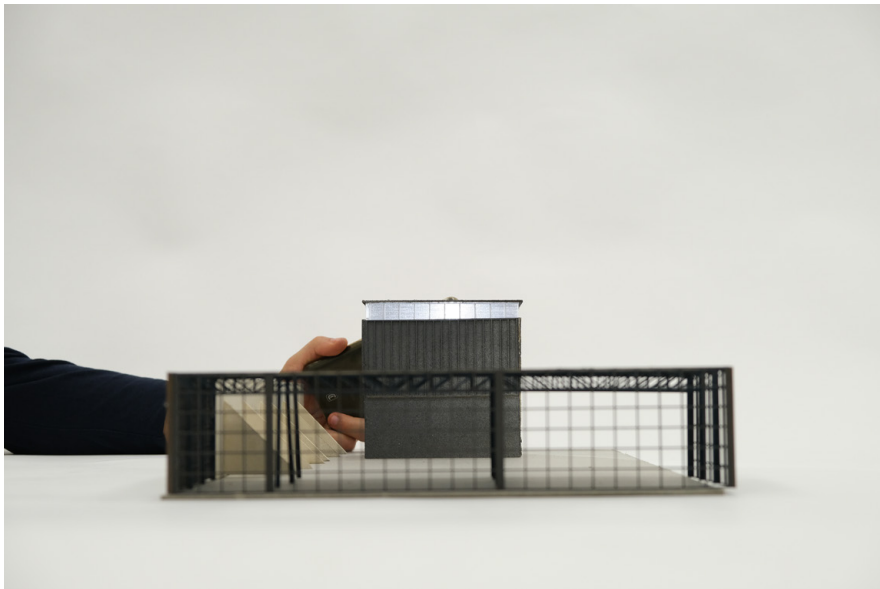
The new skin of the Theatre is chosen in relation to the industrial context of the Reggiani complex. Following the vertical scanning of the other buildings, the facade relates to them by also having a vertical one, formed by a metal cladding facade from pillar to pillar. The original structure, maintained as a driving force of the project, dictates the shape of the facade, making itself recognisable from outside.

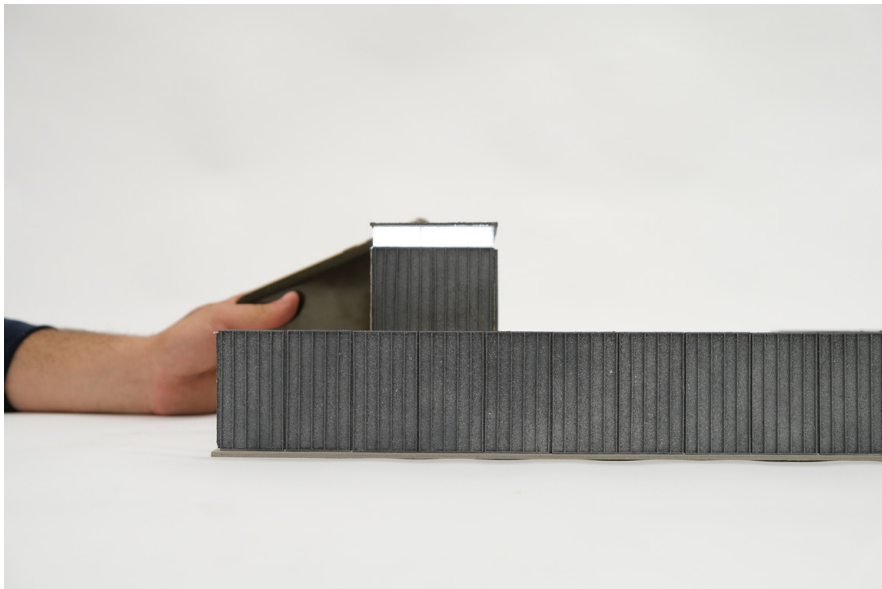
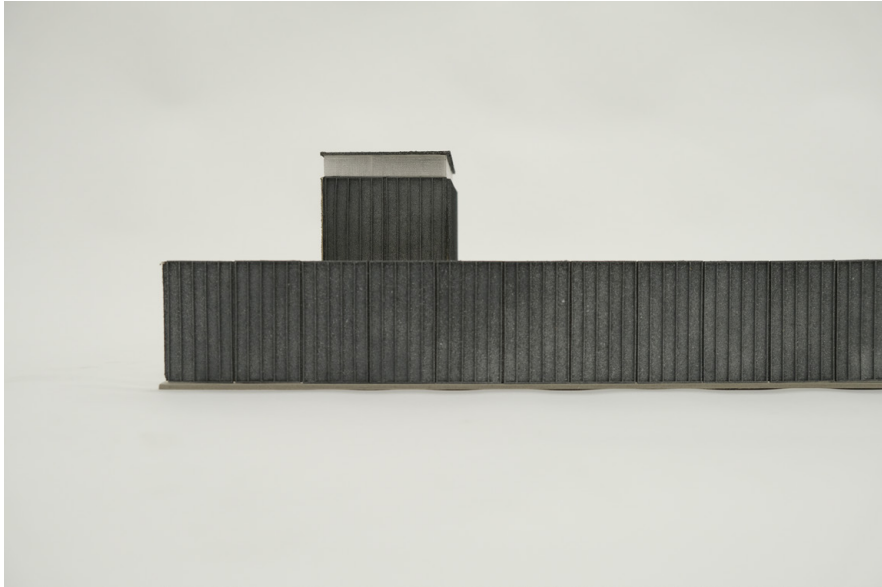
Overall it has an introverted behaviour, wanting to give as much intimacy as possible to the theatre spaces. The only part of the theatre which has a completely different behaviour is the one dedicated to the public. The foyer is therefore completely made of a transparent coating with a metal substructure anchored to the original structural system. The foyer invites people to get in, it is conceived as a public space inside the theatre; in this way the second facade of the building, the service bar which includes all the services needed for the theatre-going people, assumes the role of internal facade for the front-of-house.





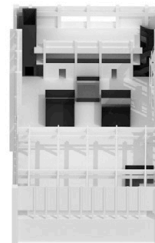
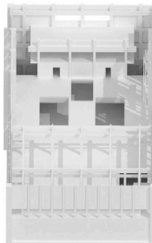
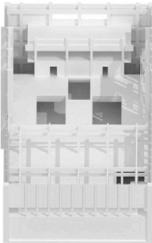


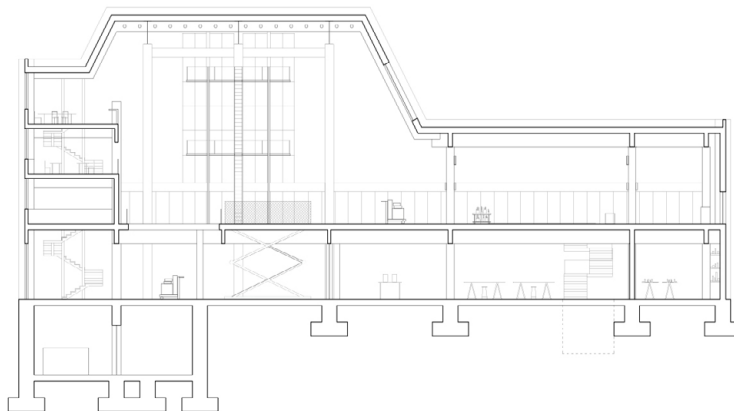


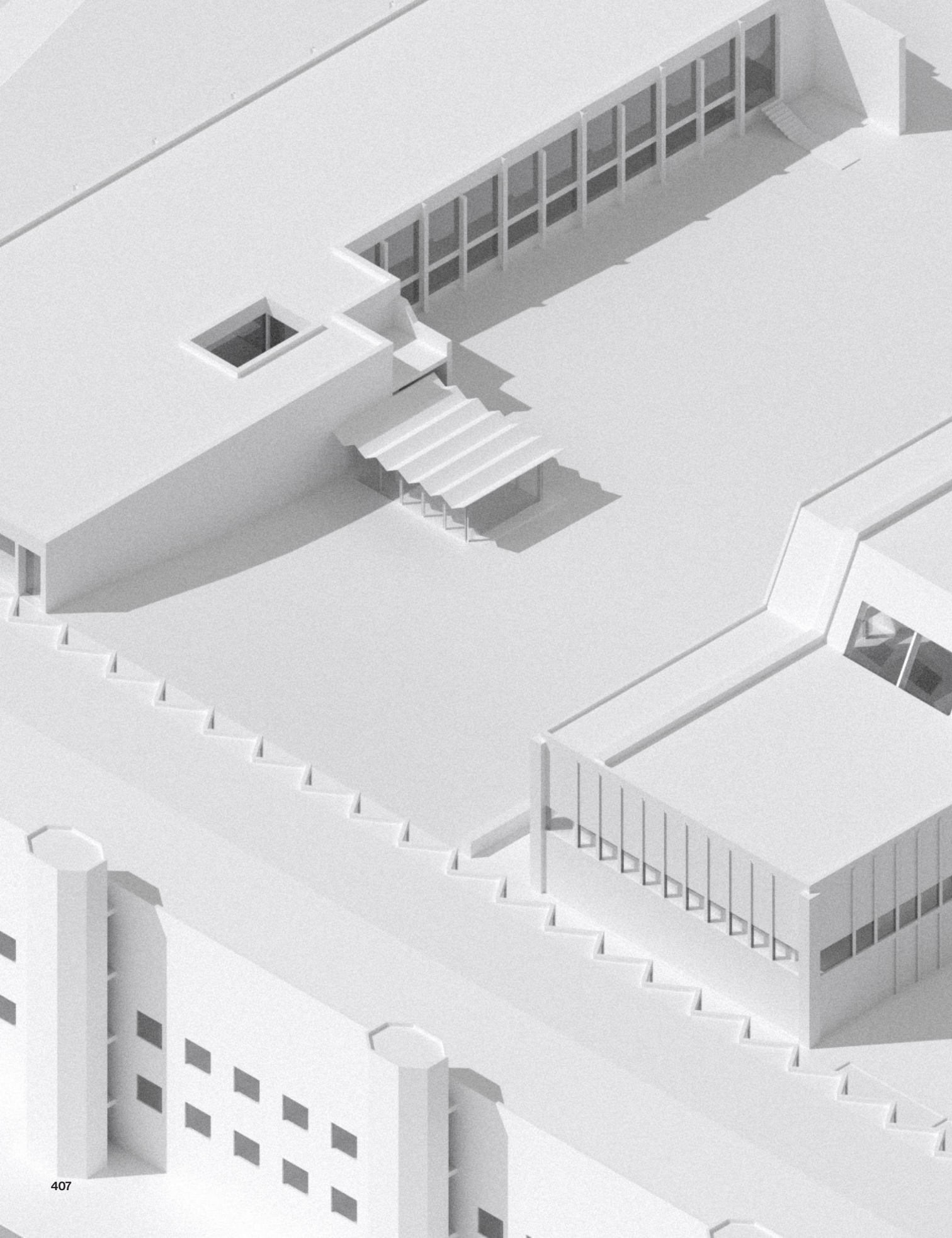


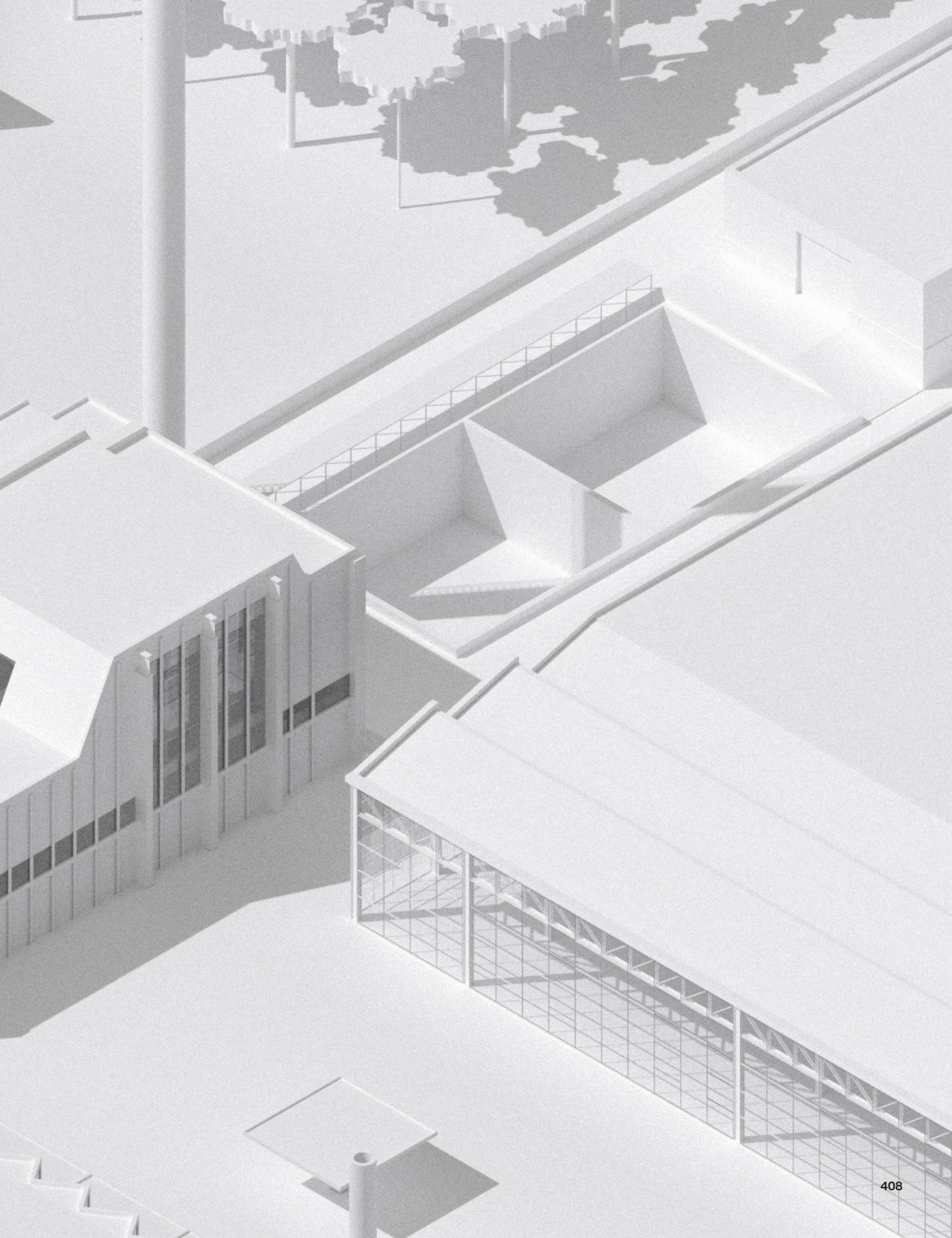
4.2 Laboratories

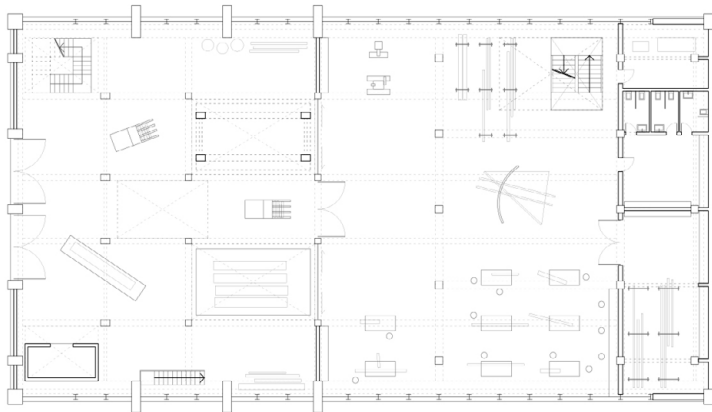
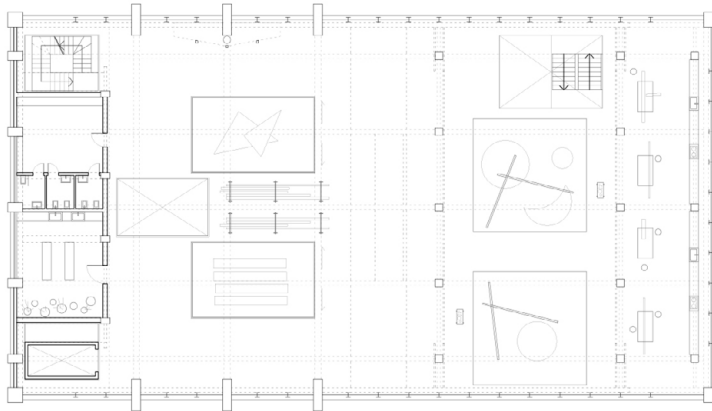
The system of theatre laboratories, inserted in the old Centrale Termoelettrica, develops over four storeys: two large ones and two narrow “balconies”, already present in the old factory. The ground floor accommodates the entrance and the load/unload area, with two freight elevators occupying the big holes in the slab where factory machines were originally placed, and the Carpentry on the space which continues, separated from the entrance. The latter can therefore take advantage of the big load/unload area in front of it, having to deal often with large pieces of wood. On the first floor there is the Scenographic laboratory, left with as much free space as possible in order to give the workers many possibilities to arrange the pieces for the sets. On the two remaining narrow balconies the offices are placed, overlooking the work zone, as well as a green room on the last balcony. The holes on the sides are the opportunity to construct the vertical connections which are needed to activate the building: the lift and the staircase.

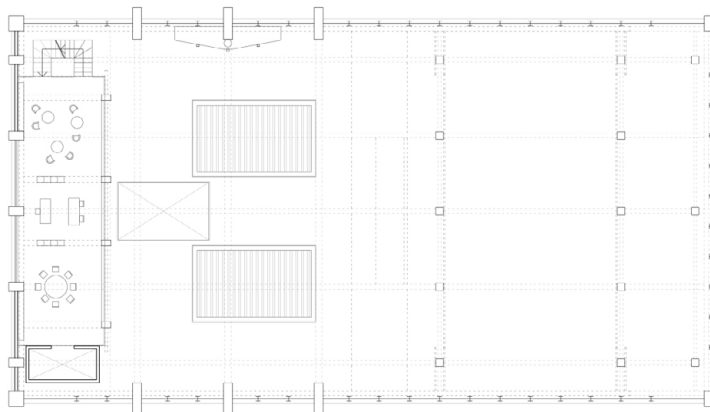
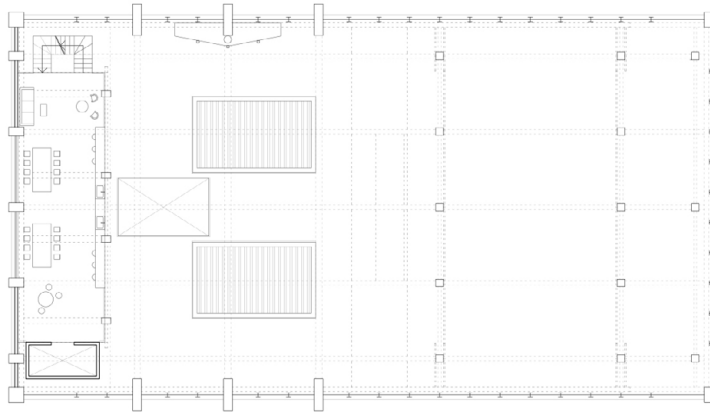


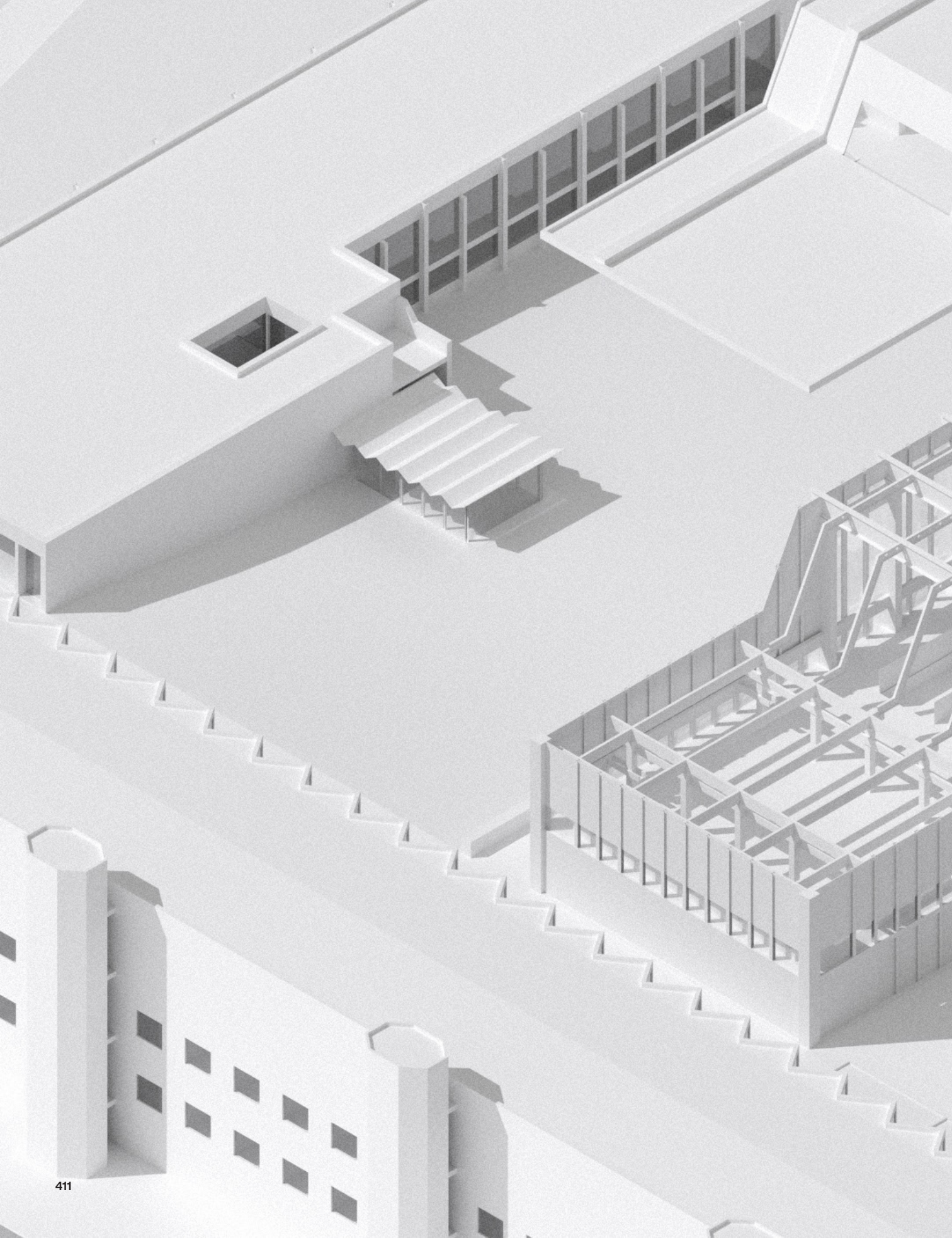


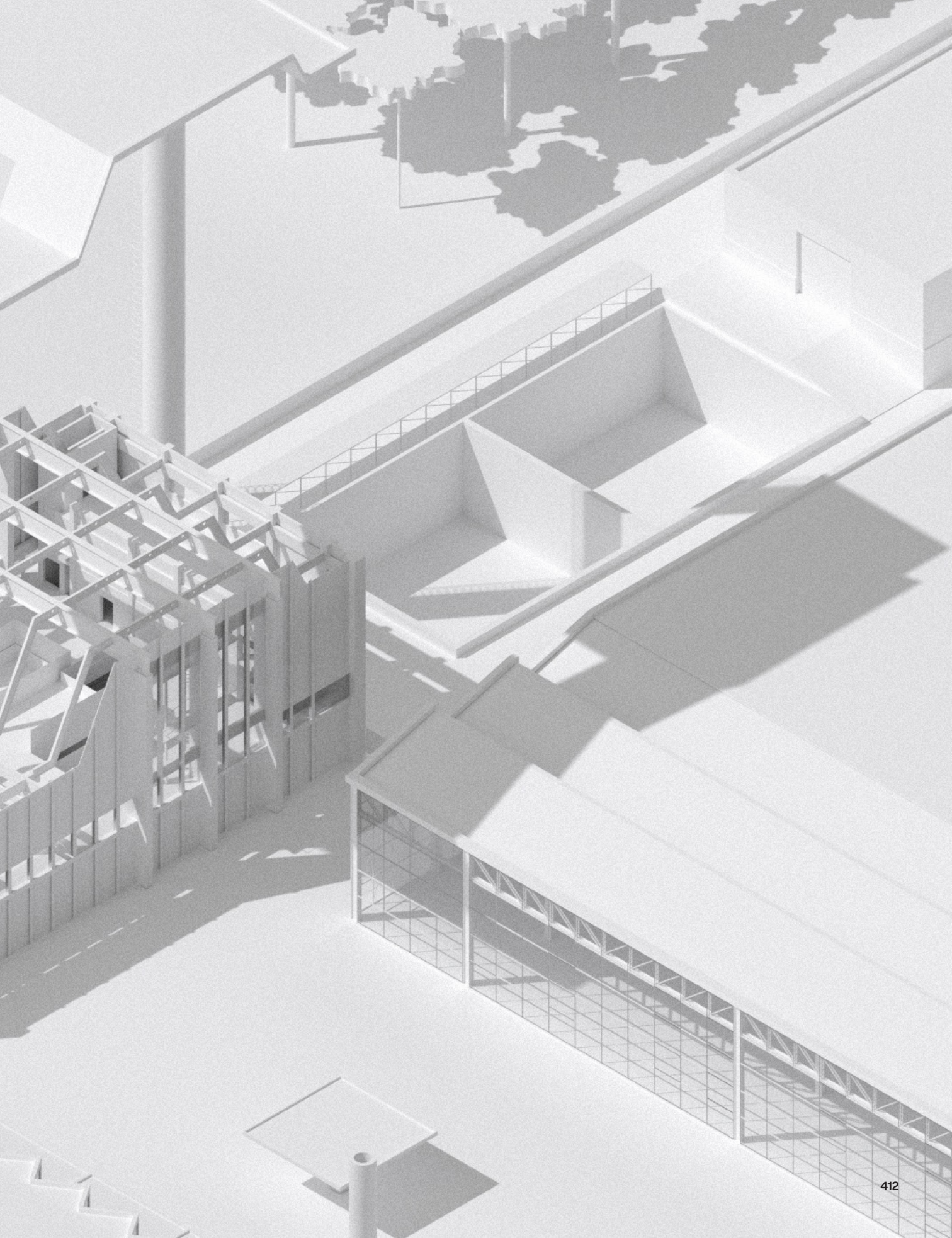


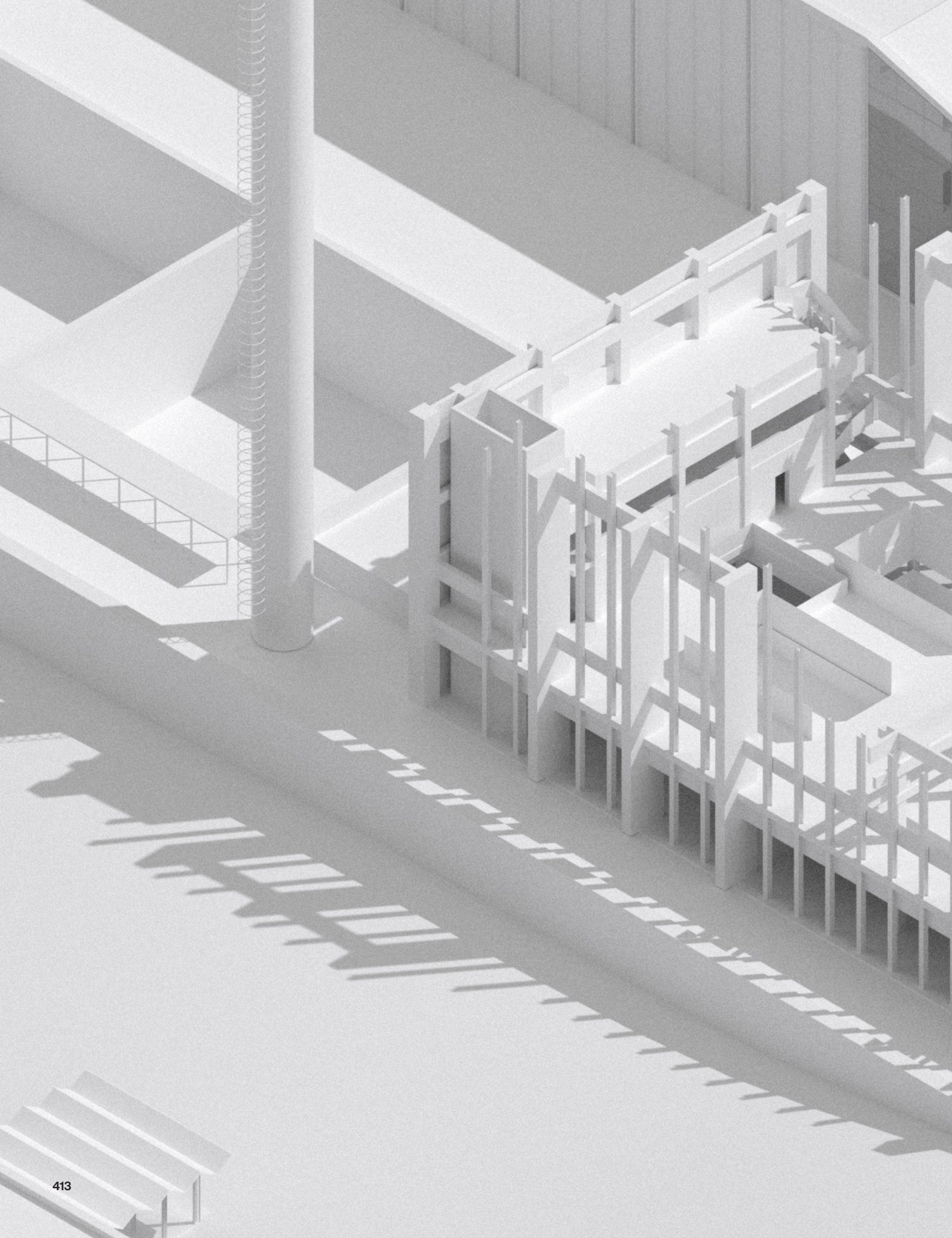


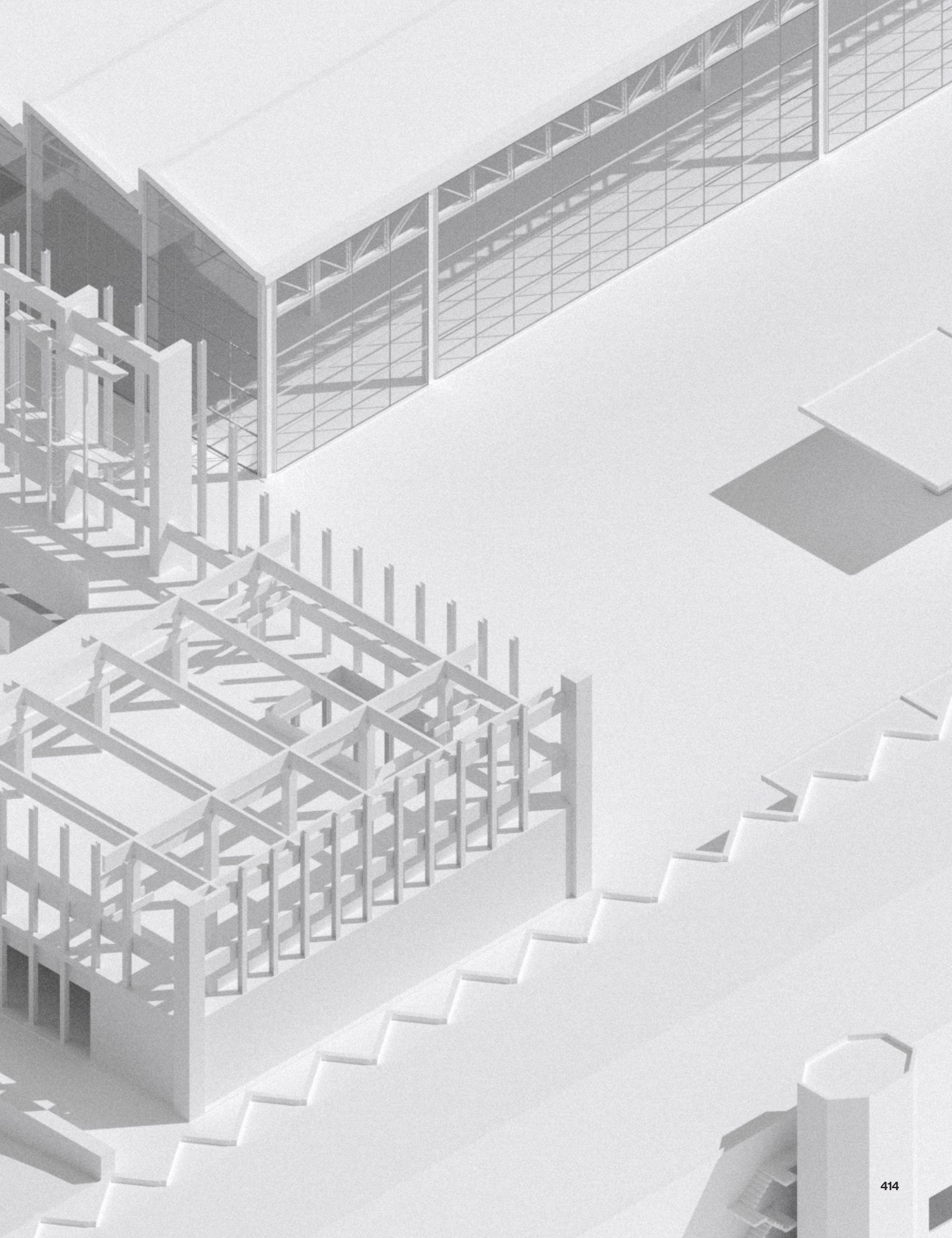






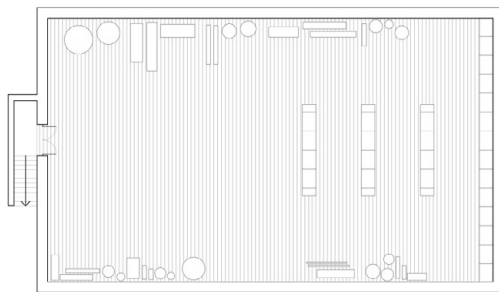
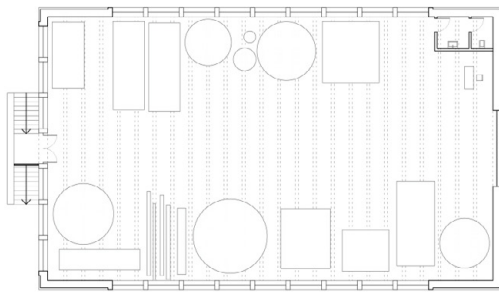
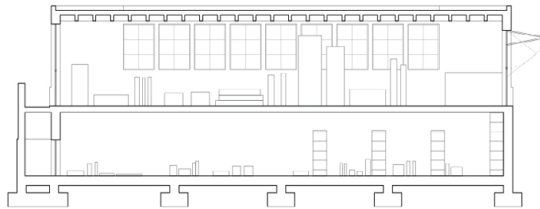


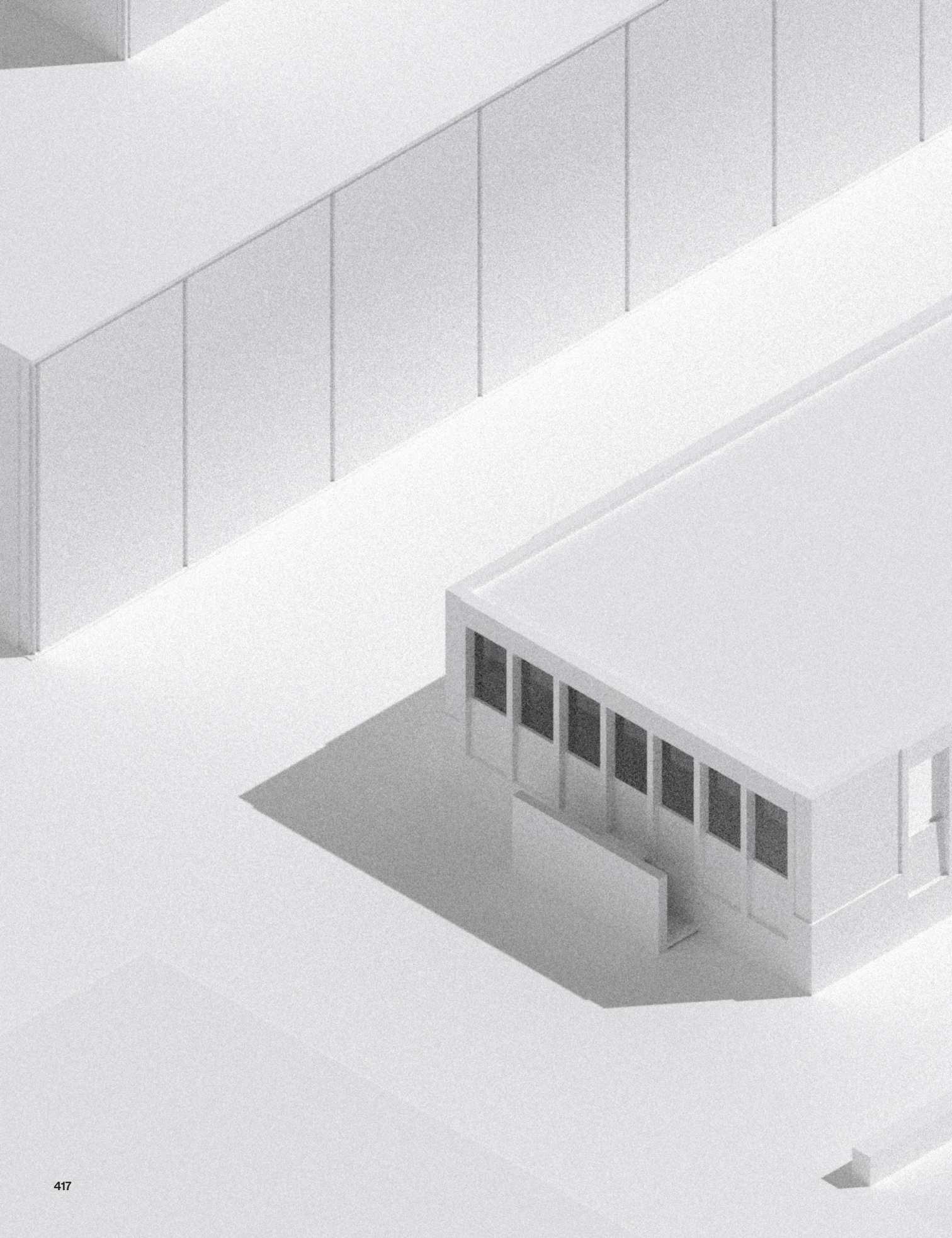


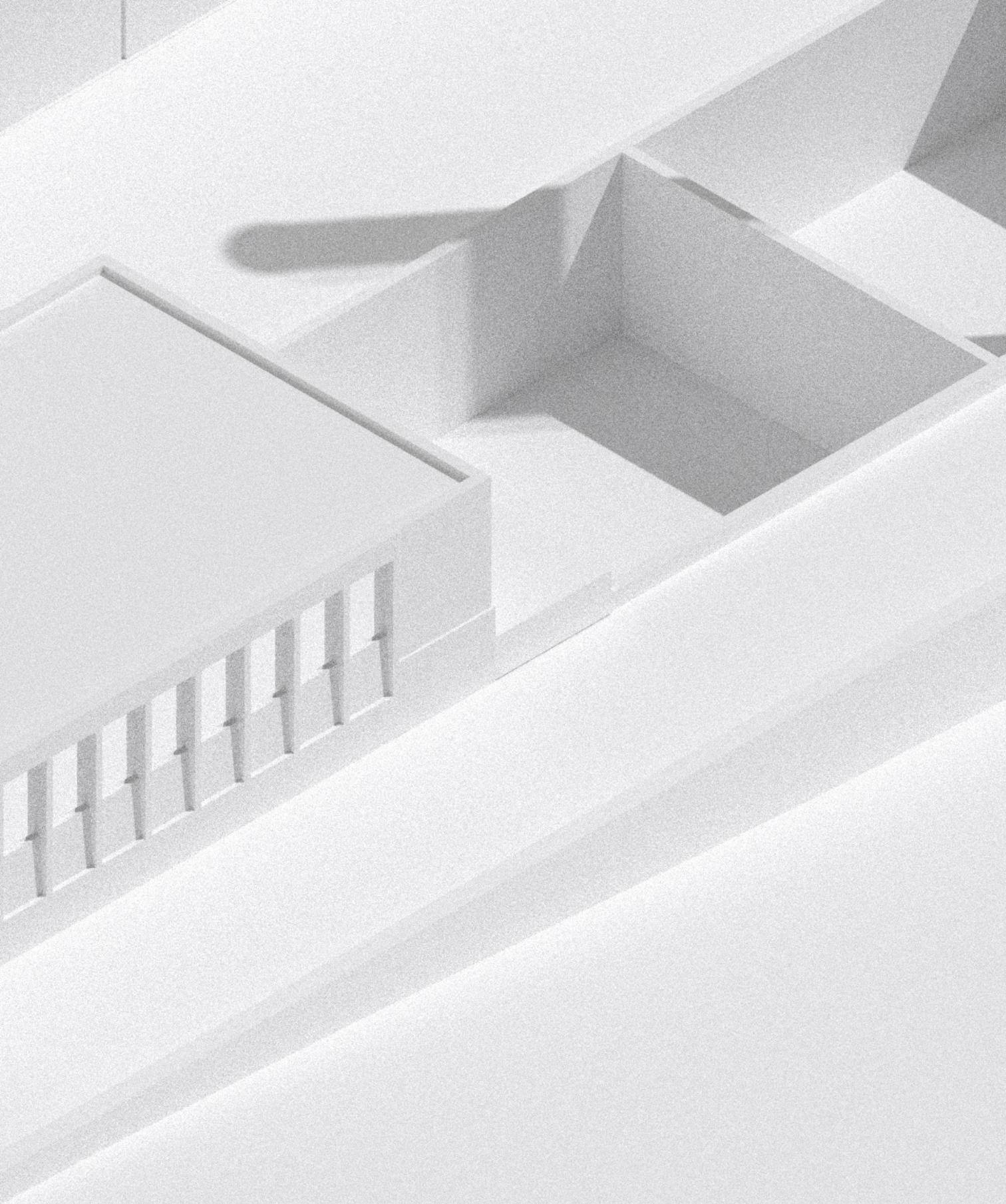


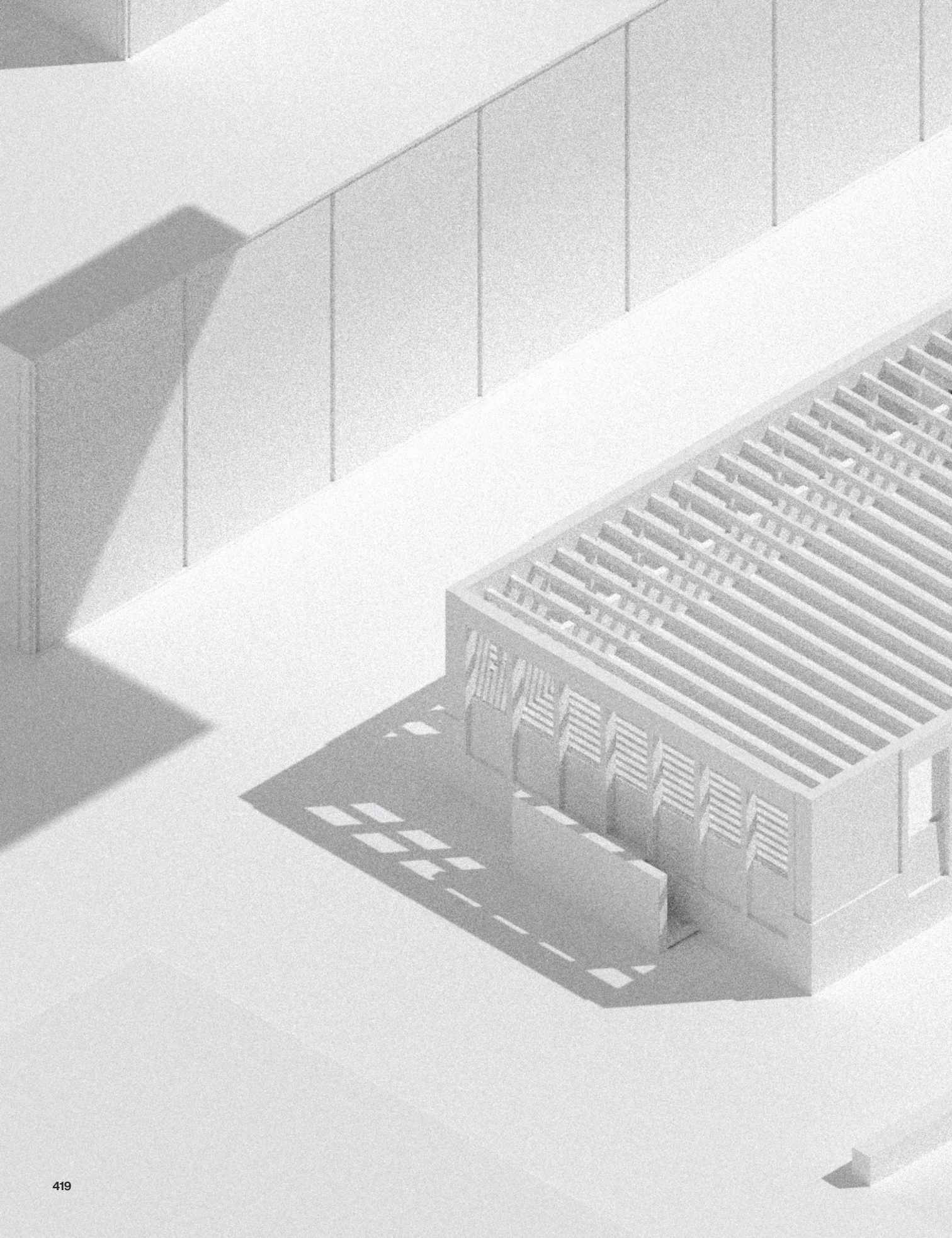
4.3 Deposit

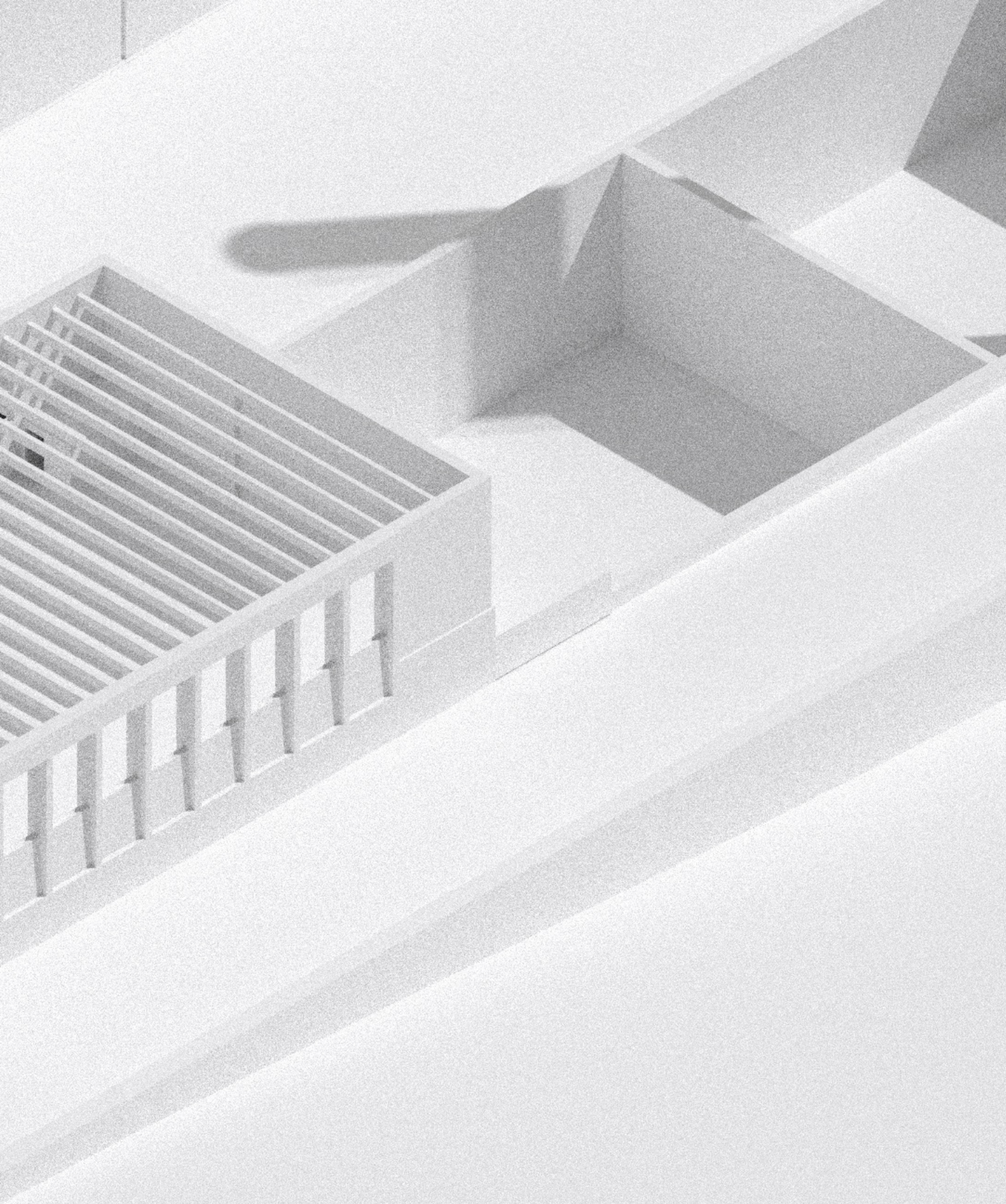
The deposit of the theatre is allocated in the small building next to the ex shed building. It is characterised by an entirely free space and a great height which therefore suits perfectly for a theatre deposite. The original windows were placed on the top part of the walls allowing a great amount of light to get in. The building has a windowless basement that is accessed from outside, allowing for additional underground storage space. The floor plan of the upper floor is not at the ground level of the complex, but about two metres higher. On the side facing the water tanks, there is a ramp facing the theatre that oprts to the level of the storage slab.









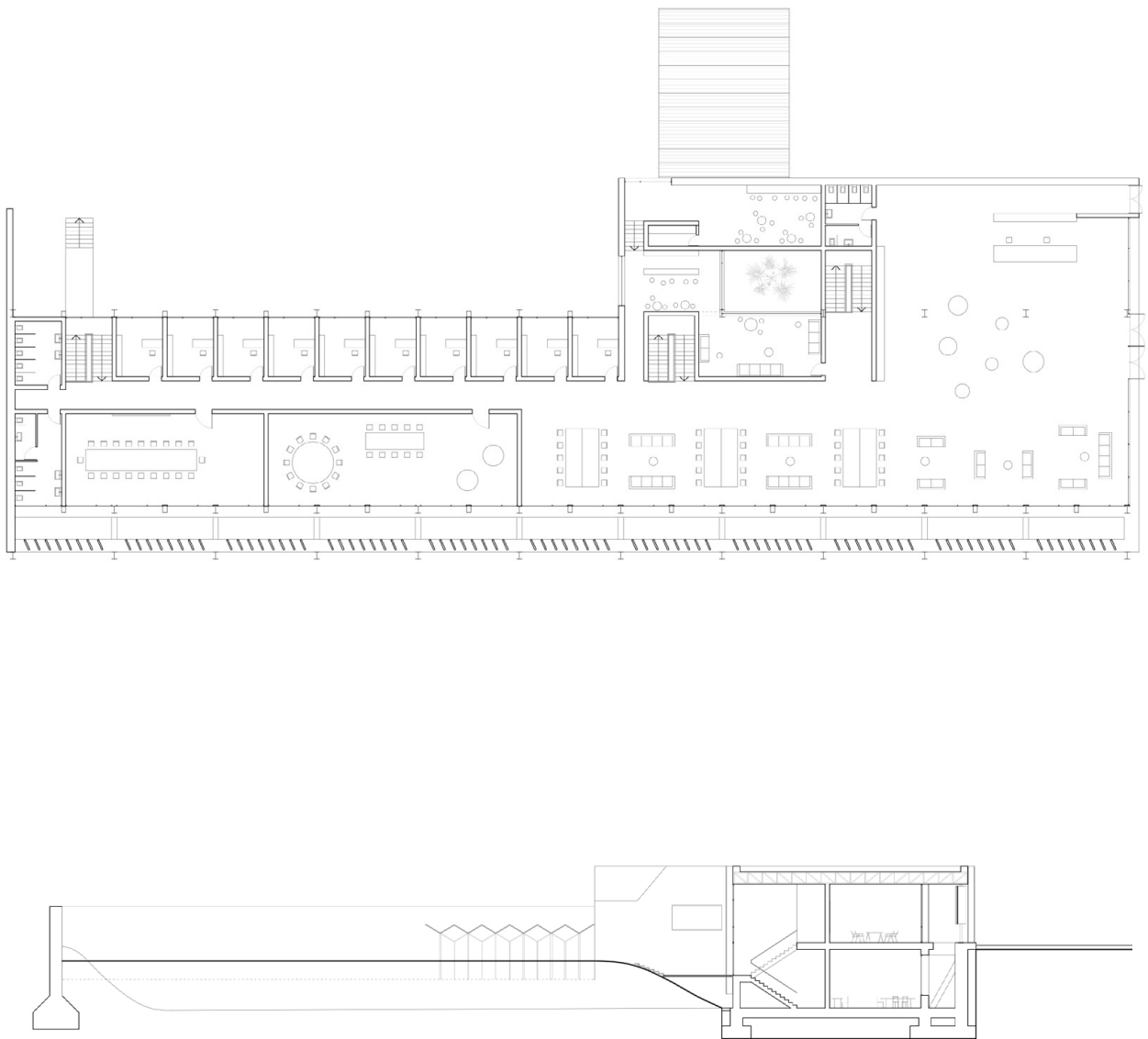


4.4 Coworking

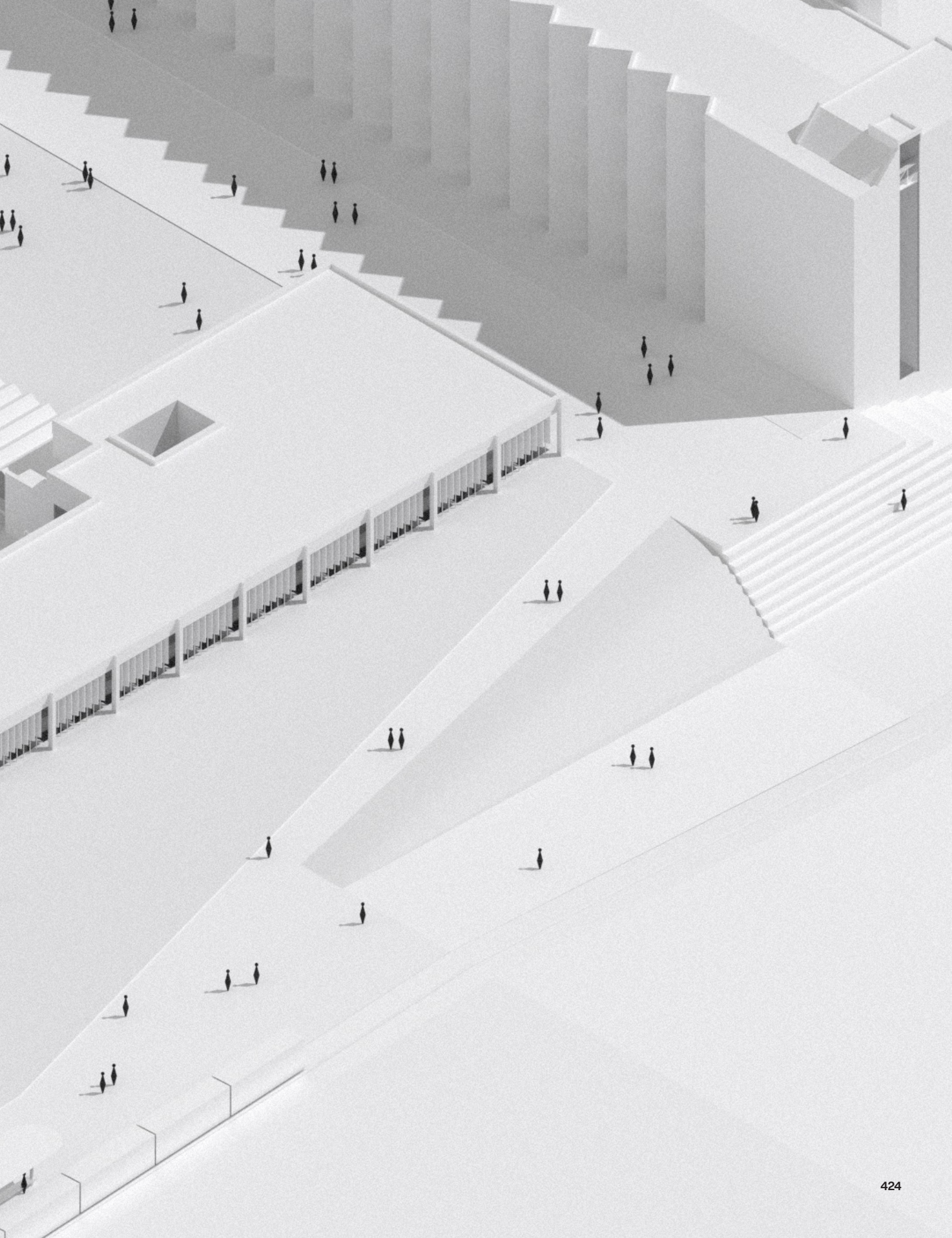
The original Palazzina degli Uffici, being originally an office building for the industry, is already well fitted in accomplishing the role of a coworking space. The internal partitions are entirely maintained. On the ground floor a wide entrance area serves as a front office space. Then a common working tables area is placed, facing the bar block. A corridor divides two sides of the building, each of them facing the outside park: a series of single working spaces facing the hypogeum garden and two large private meeting spaces on the side of the tram.

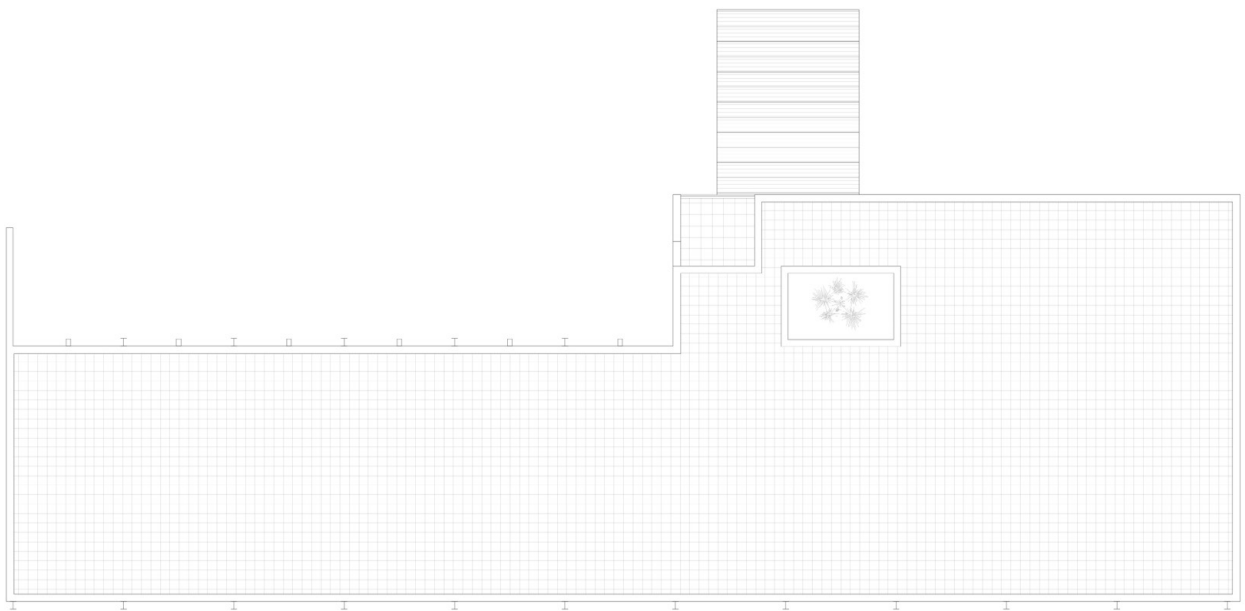
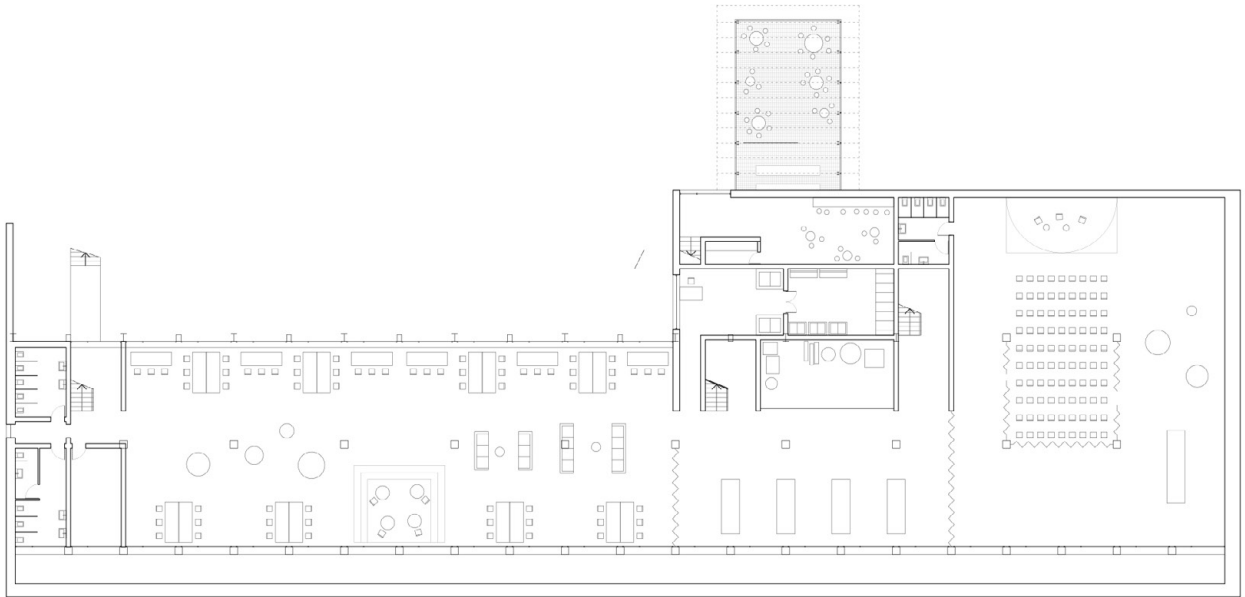
On the basement floor, entirely facing in intimacy the park inbetween the buildings, is conceived as a common working area. Mobile partitions guarantee flexibility of spaces. The last part of the floor can be configured as a conference room, and small rooms for printing and other machines are present.

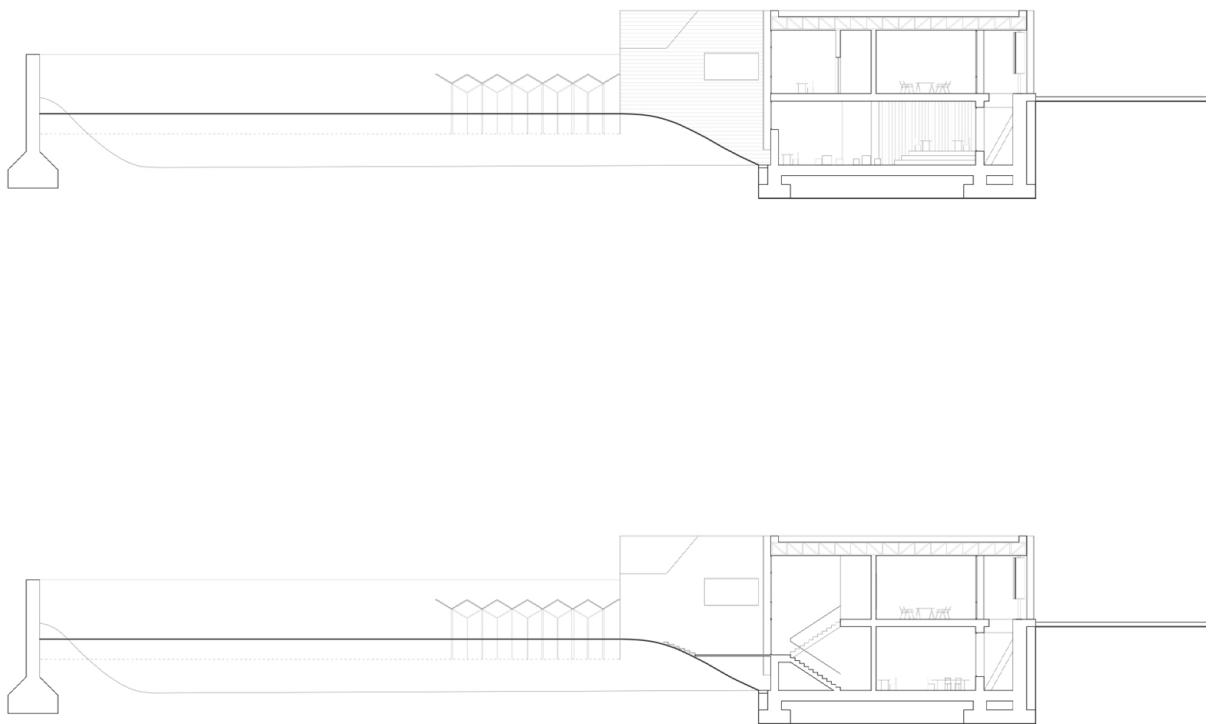
The office building is the architecture that resolves the difference in height with the garden inside the block, which has a lower elevation. It is an opportunity to realise the café directly connected to the coworking, with the existing metal canopy expanding over the garden.



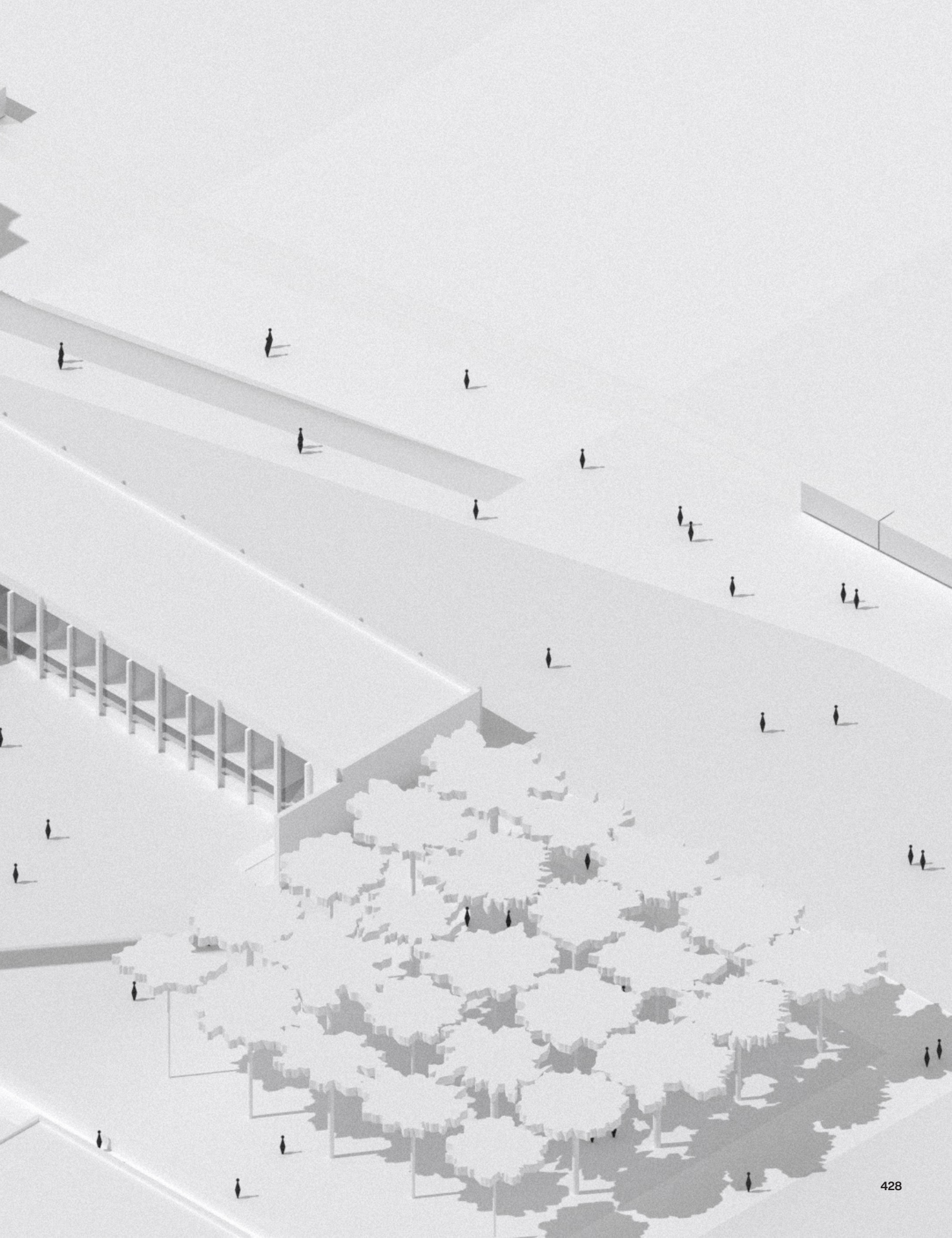




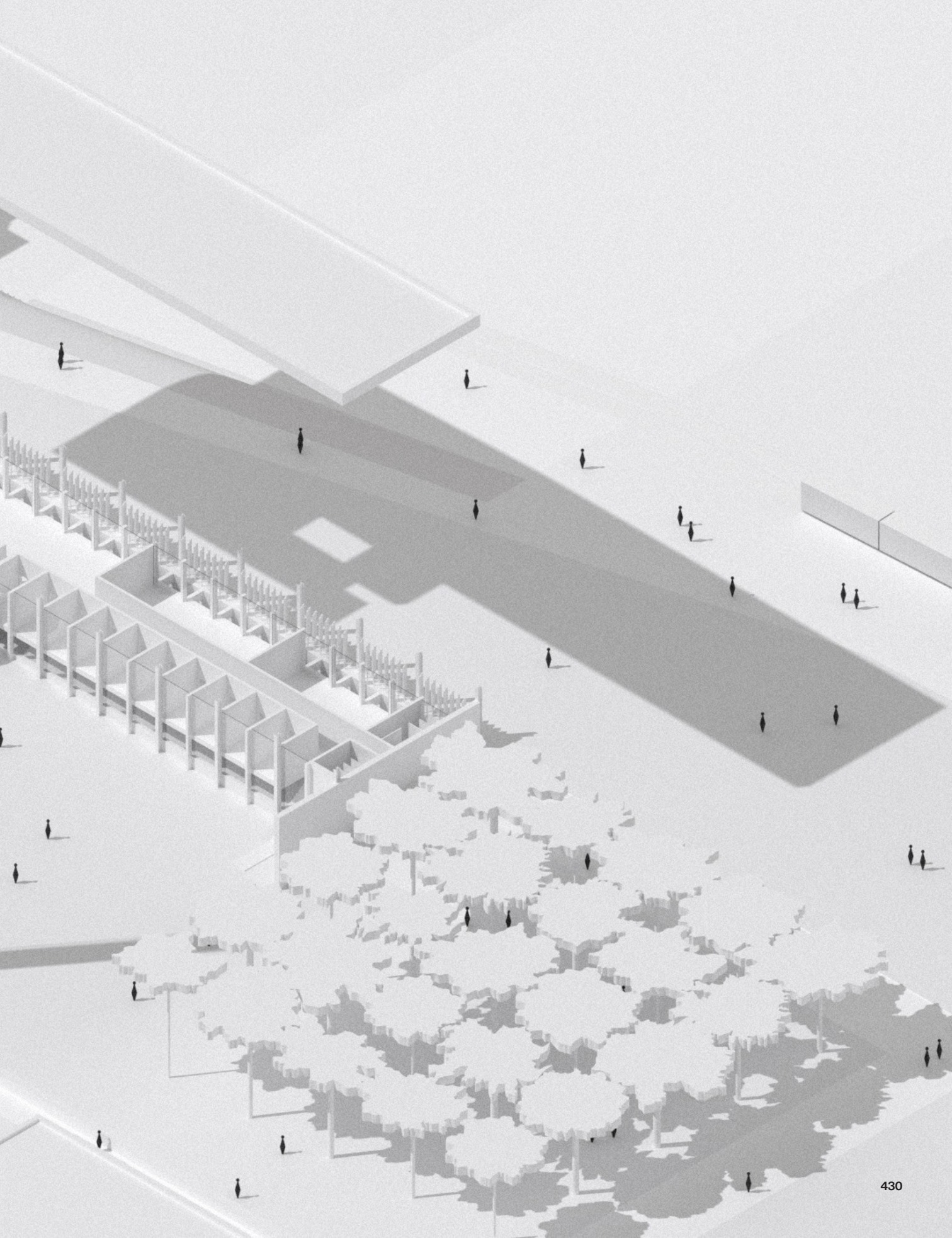












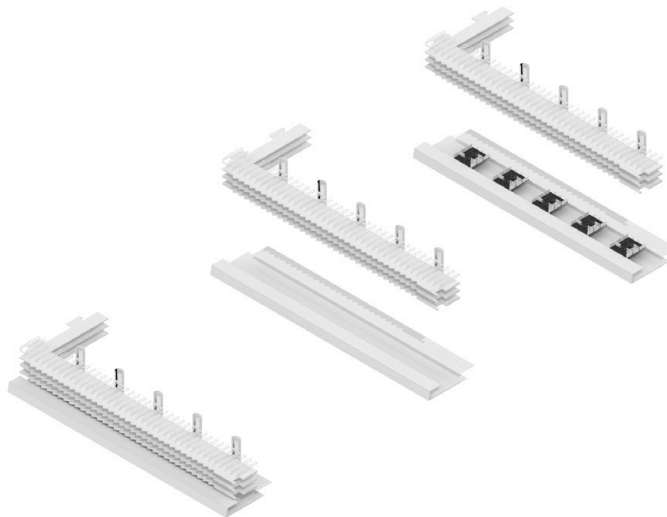
4.5 Housing

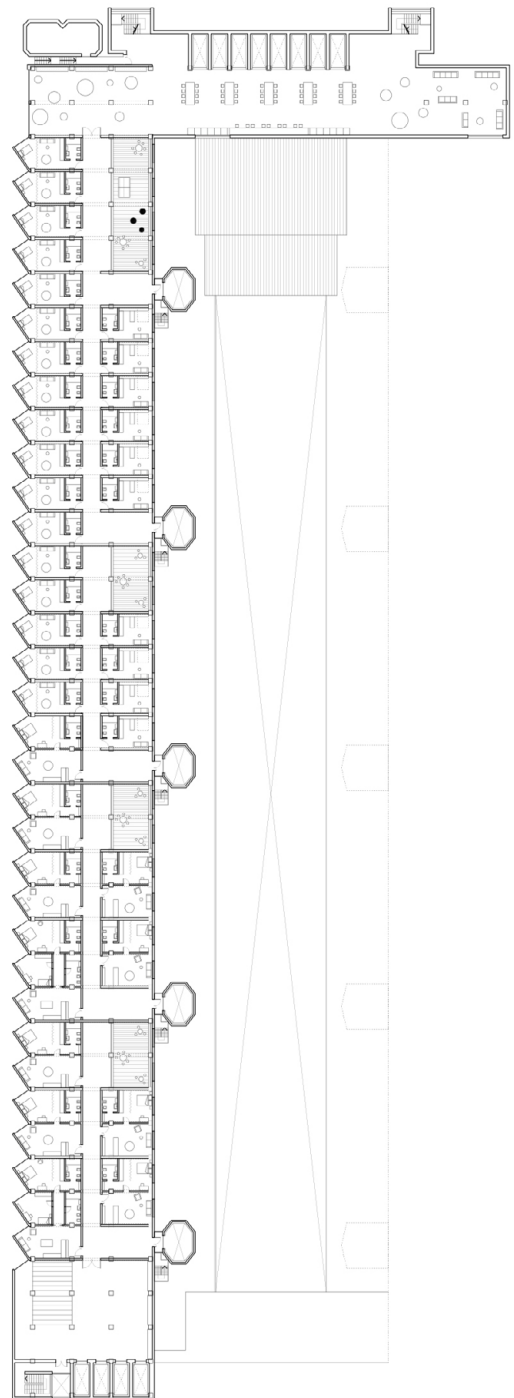
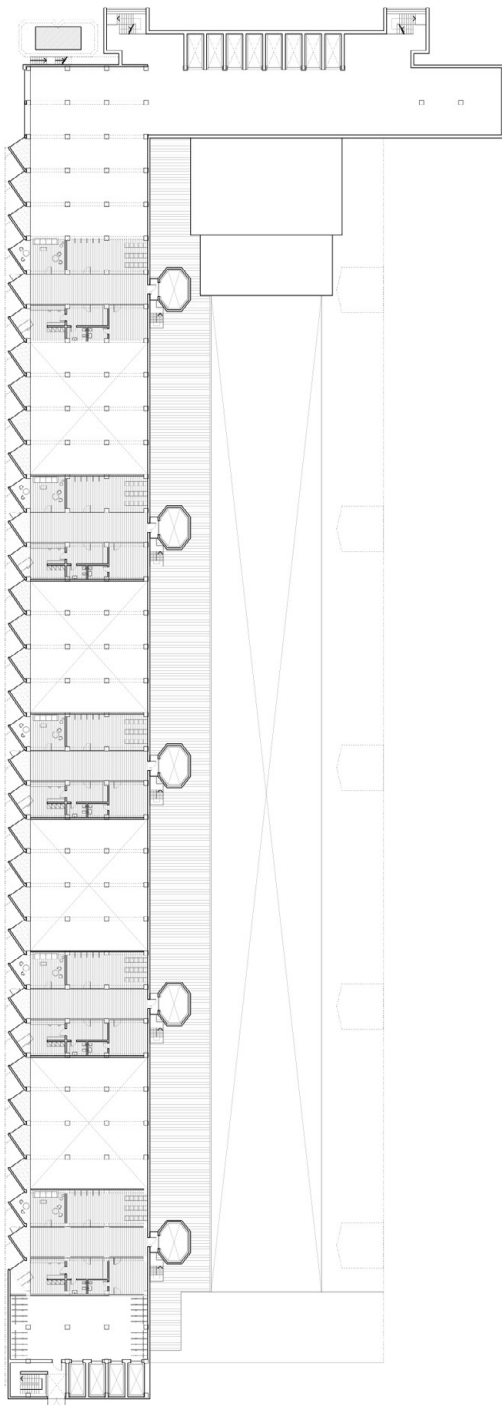
The housing block takes advantage of the rigorous original structural scanning of the building.

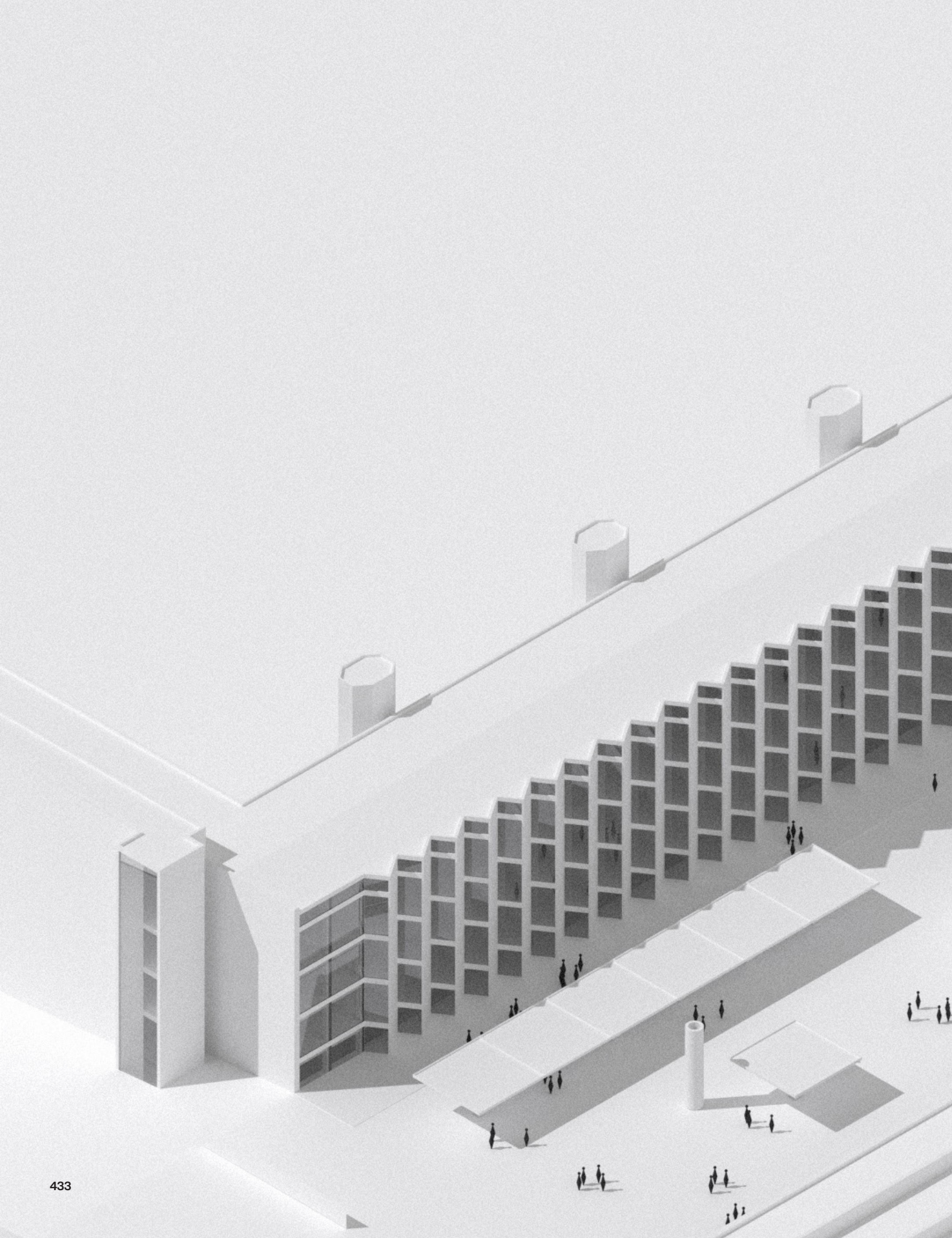
The ground floor didn't originally exist. Consisting of a window overlooking the huge basement deposit, the access to the housing system is solved by adding punctually a walkway for reaching the stairs on the other side of the building. This walkway hosts the gatehouse of each housing system and the related services, storage, waiting area and bicycle parking area.

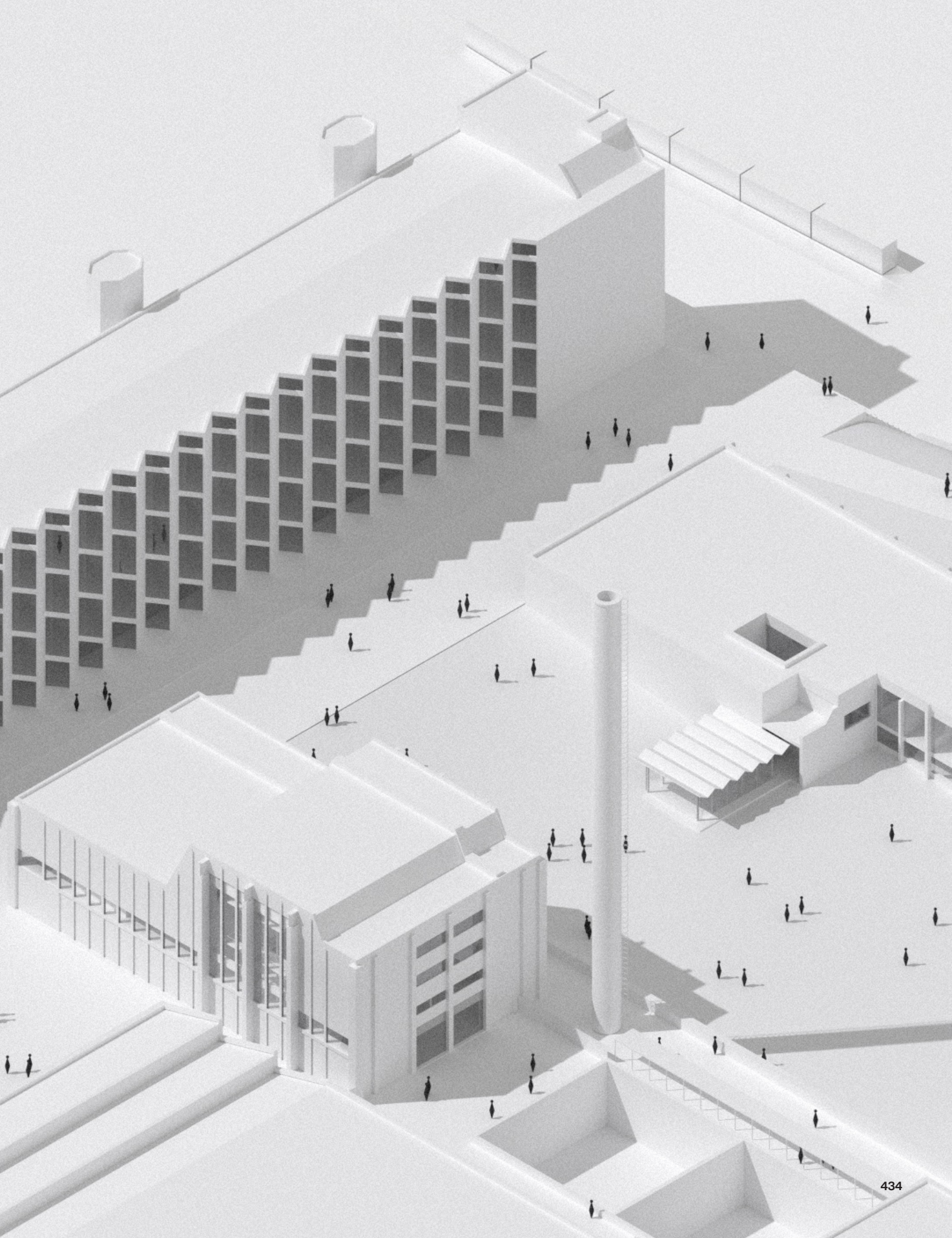
The housing blocks are divided according to the system of staircases introduced into the ventilation towers originally present. Four different housing system are therefore created: student housing, guesthouse for the theatre, normal housing and social housing. Every housing system has four different types of accommodation: a single use room type A and type B, a double room type A and type B, with the types differing in size.

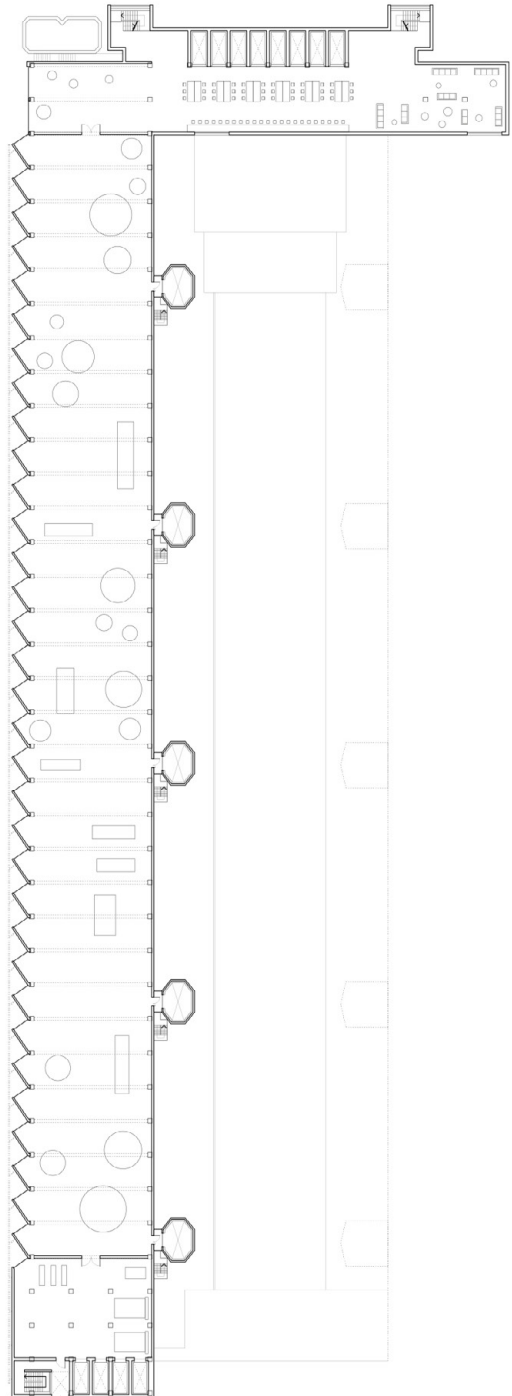
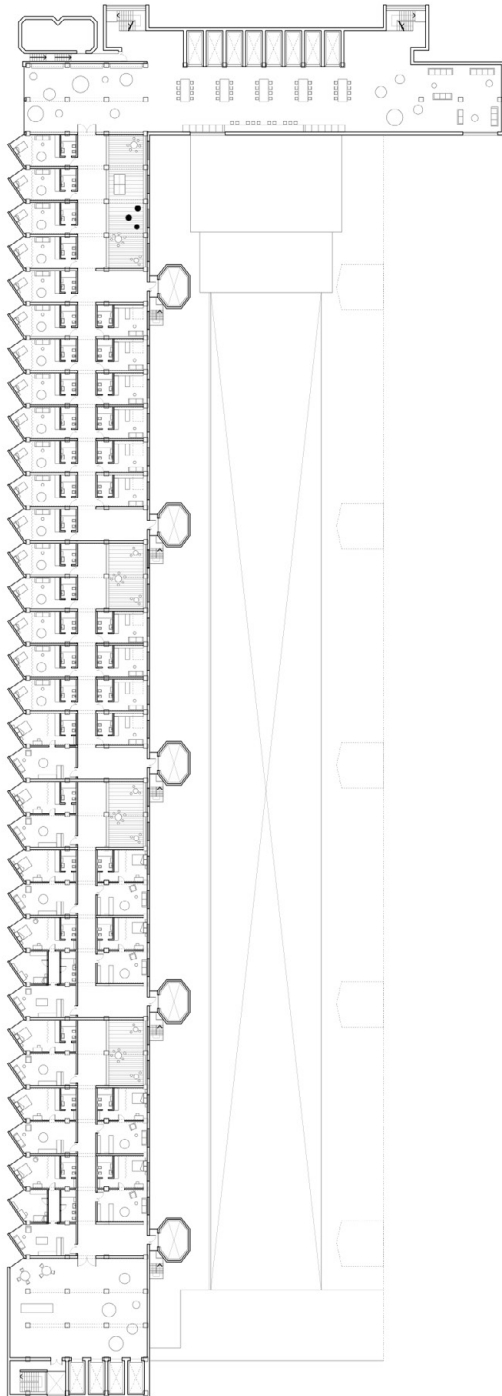
On the back of the building facing south, wide terraces are placed, to offer a variety of common areas, and new windows are created for each unit. The last floor plan with the metal trusses is left free, as a plan for communal and interpretable spaces.

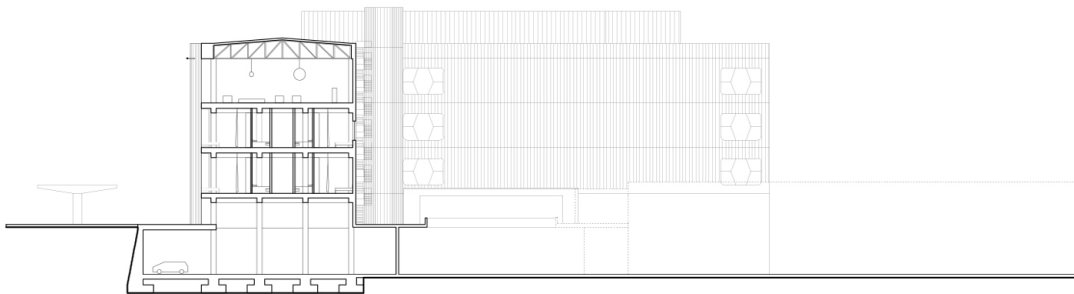


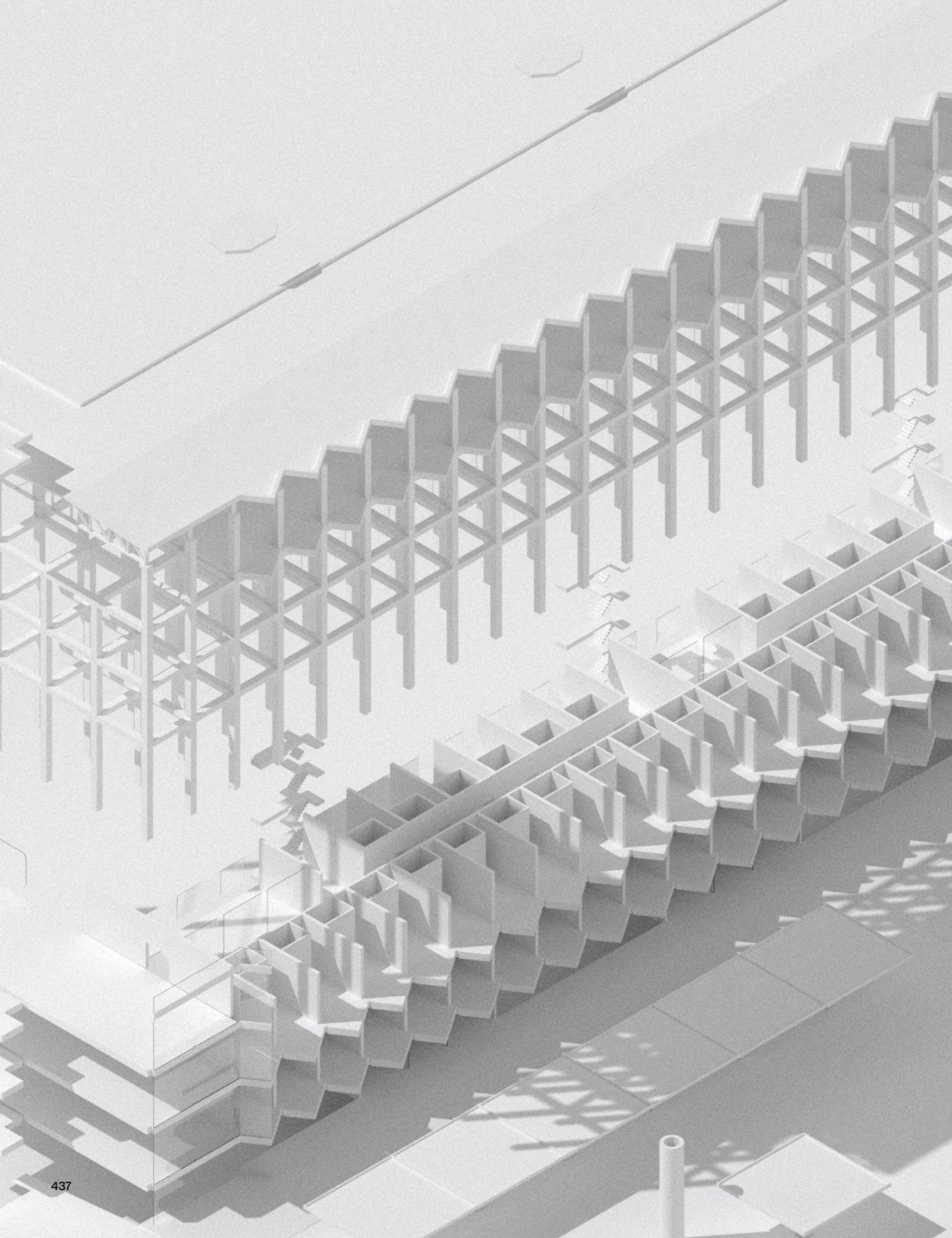


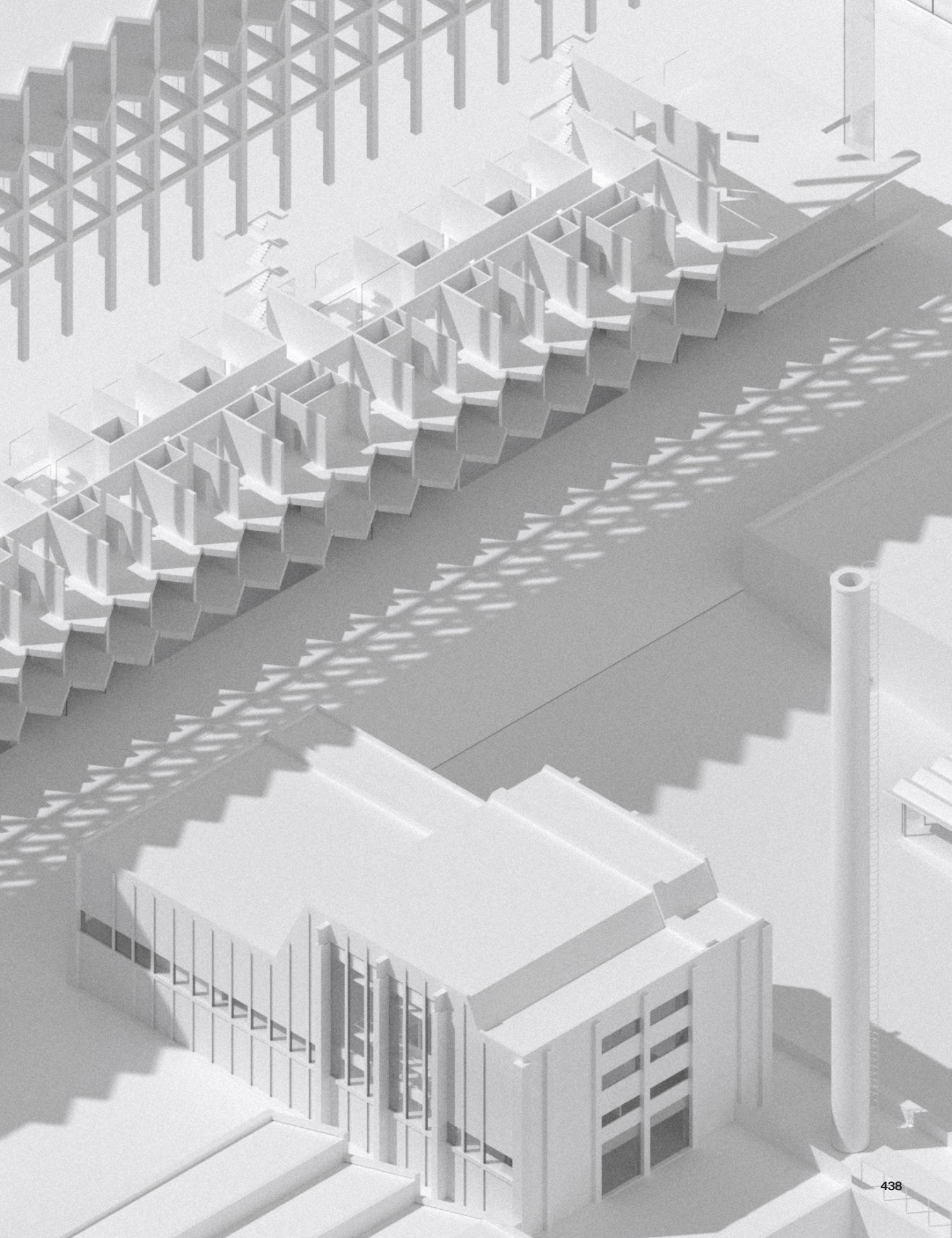


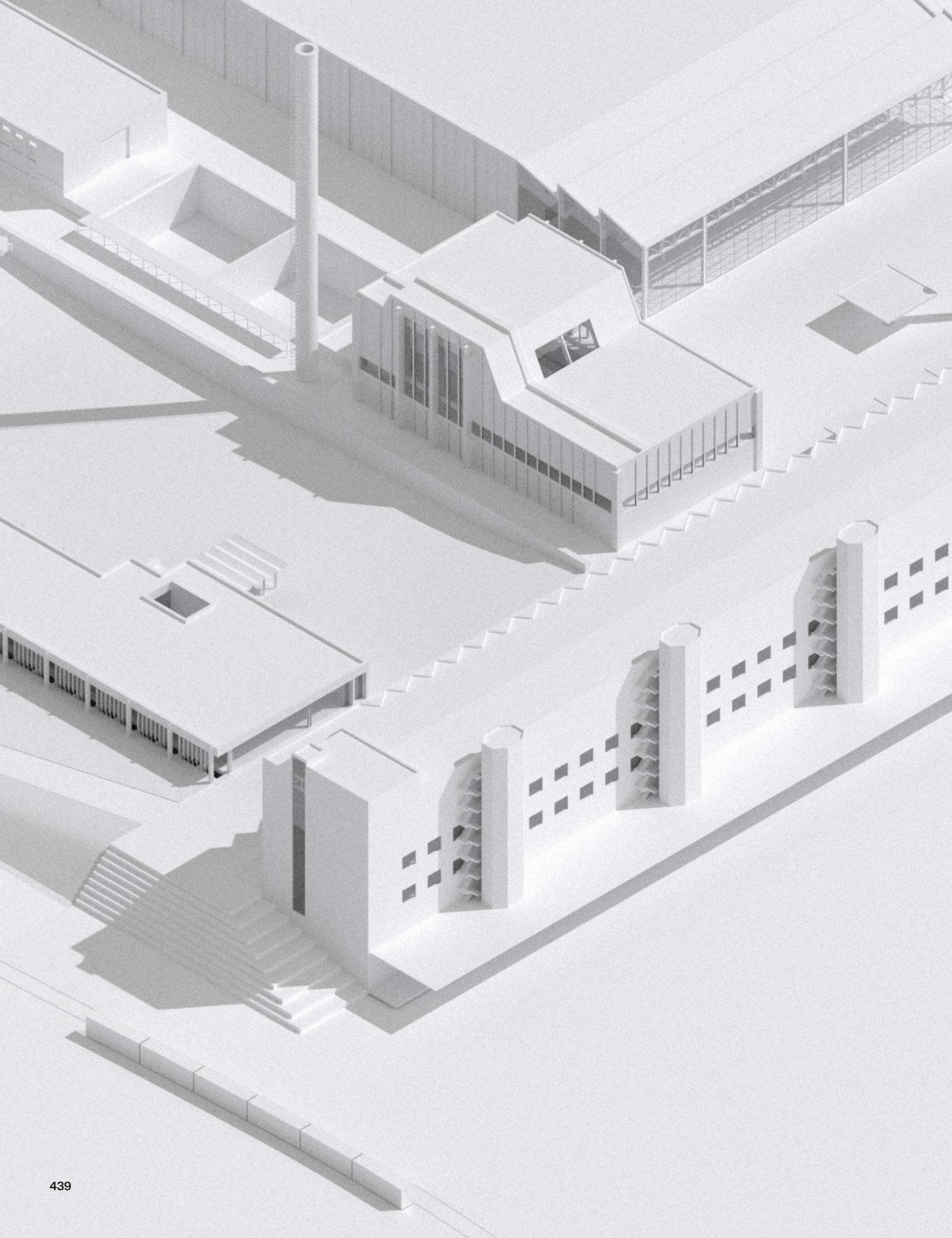


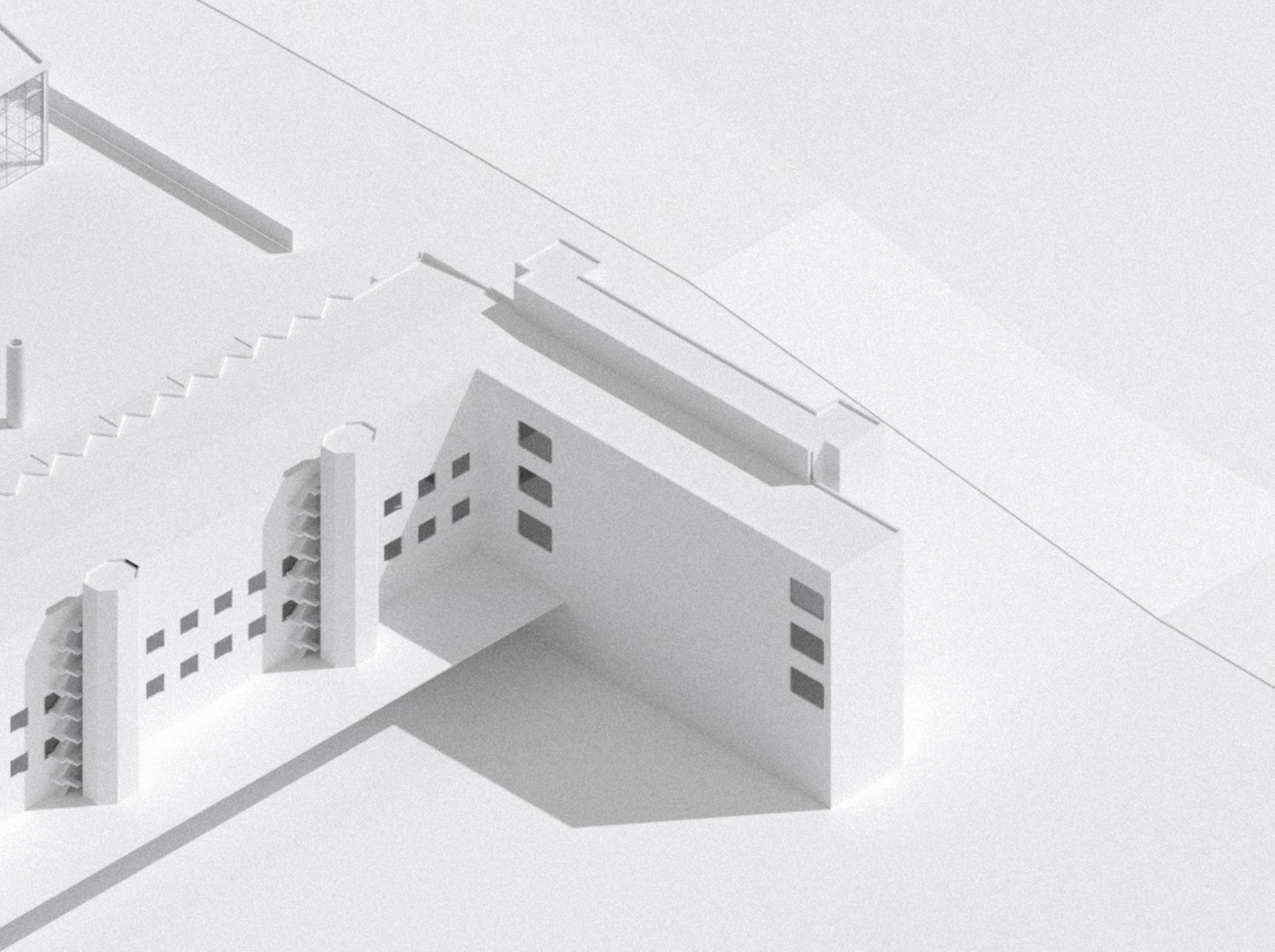




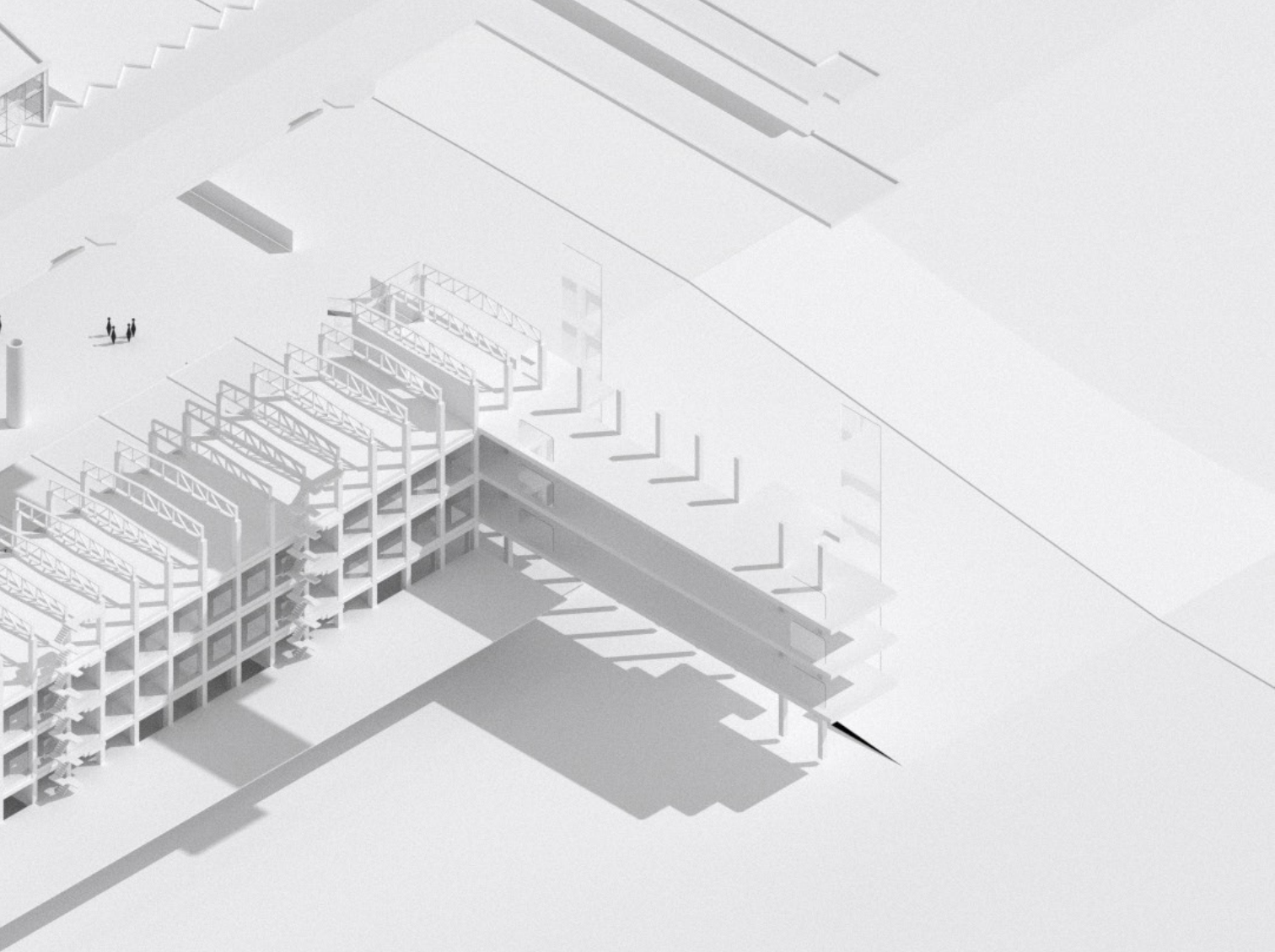












Credits

N.B. if not specified, the images are to be considered produced by the authors

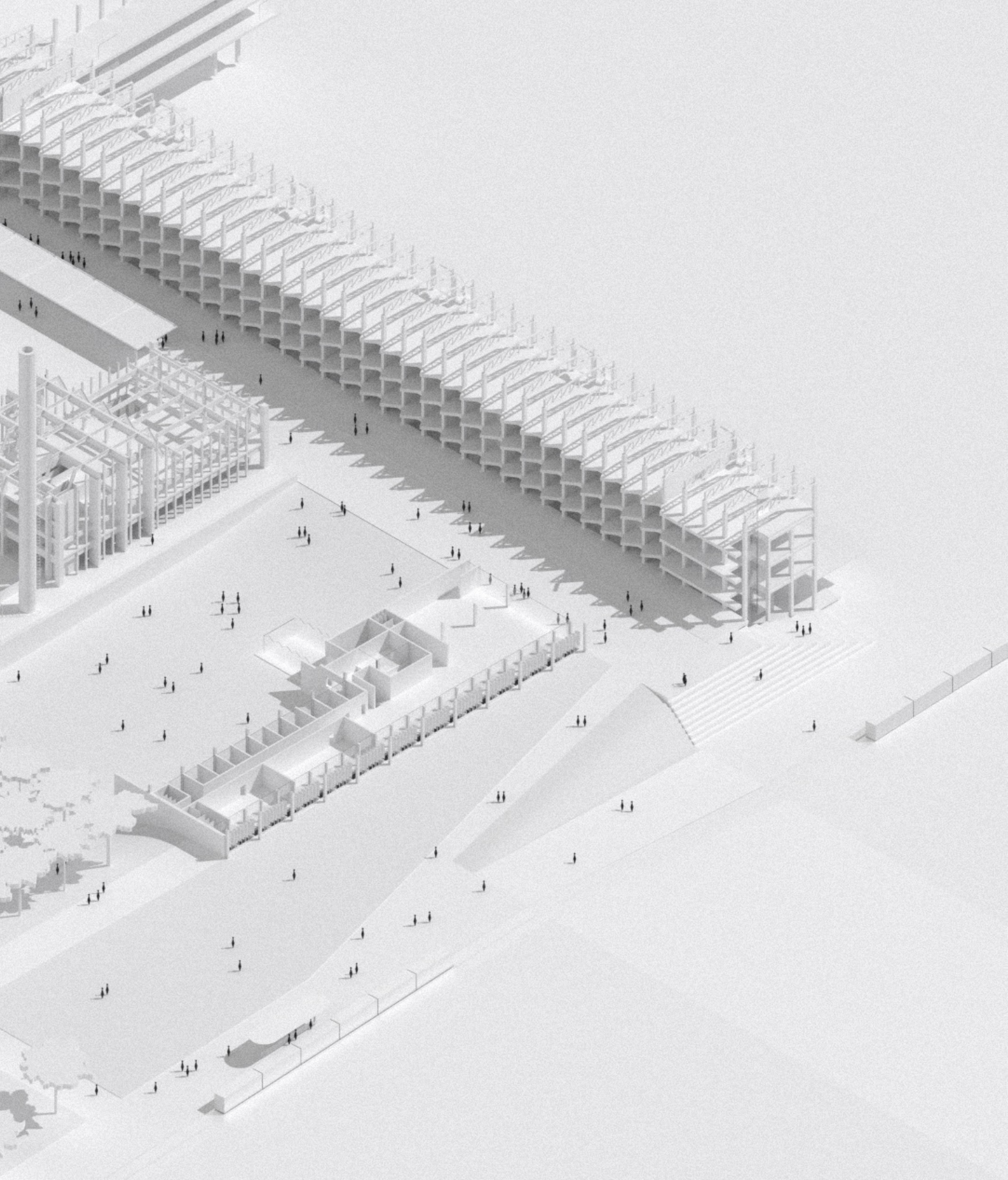
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Once a textile factory, let's
imagine contemporary ways
to inhabit it.

Be astonished by the soul
and the structure of what
remains.

Let events flood in its voids.







A Nicola Russi,
per avermi formato, per il consiglio e la
fiducia.

Alla mia famiglia,
il supporto sempre avuto al mio fianco, e
che troverò sempre.

Agli amici e alle amiche,
alle risate, le esperienze e i momenti
insieme.

A Valentina,
amica con la quale rido, amante con cui
mi emoziono.

A Francesco,
è stato trovare la strada insieme.

Alessandro

Ad Alessandro
per avermi sopportato

A Nicola
per averci guidato

Alla mia famiglia
per avermi sostenuto

Agli amici
per avermi accompagnato

Francesco

