PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors, Buildings, Cities

Ertuğ Çiftçi

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Information

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Faculty	Architecture
Studio	Interiors, Buildings, Cities
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Date and place

9/06/25, Delft

Preface

This document serves as my project journal for the duration of my graduation studio: Interiors, Buildings, Cities. It provides a weekly overview of my academic activities, including notes, lectures, drawings, models, study trips, and more.

The purpose of this journal is to offer the reader insight into my development throughout the course, both in terms of academic skills and personal growth as an aspiring architectural professional.

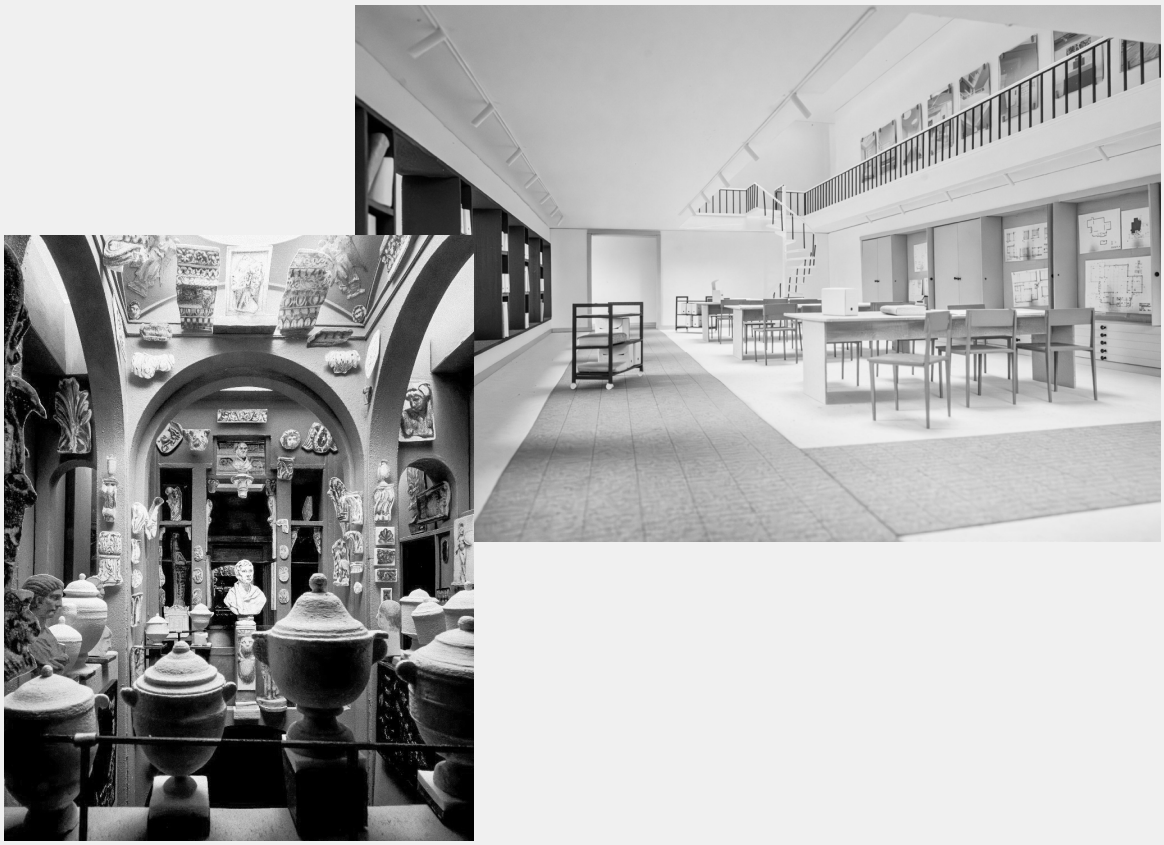
I would like to express my gratitude to all the tutors who have guided me through this project and for everything they have contributed.

Sincerely,

Ertug Ciftci

Delft, 09/06/25

PART 1/4



Week 1.01 / Week 1.10 (P1)

Looking carefully

Week 1.01

02-09-2024/08-09-2024

Introduction

During the introduction week, we were given an overview of the course and its theme. For the first assignment, titled Looking Carefully, I was assigned to Group 1, with the task of recreating the Dome Room from Sir John Soane's Museum as a model. The aim was to develop our skills in observing and interpreting architectural archival spaces.

The introductory lectures provided a general understanding of the graduation studio and gave me ideas about what I want to achieve this year. The examples of museums and archives shown in the presentations inspired me to explore these specific cases further and think about what an archive could represent in today's world.

For our group work, we organized the tasks for the model and identified potential challenges. With the Sir John Soane's Museum as our focus, the primary challenges may involve replicating the ornate details and managing the lighting accurately. This week was dedicated to planning, gathering initial thoughts, and setting up a roadmap for the project.

Image of the Sir John Soane's Museum , assigned to be recreated in a physical model by group 1.

Reading response 1.1.1

Clouds and Cataracts Optical Experiments at Sir John Soane's

Danielle Willkens

The paper explores how Sir John Soane, used his home as an architectural laboratory to conduct optical experiments, particularly as his vision began to fail due to cataracts. Soane's museum became a place where he experimented with light, reflection, and perception in response to his visual impairment. The author, Danielle Willkens, revisits these architectural innovations using modern technology, specifically 3D scanning and stereographic photography, to better understand how Soane manipulated light and space.

Sir John Soane's Vision Issues

- Soane's failing eyesight drove him to focus on light manipulation, turning his house museum into an architectural lab for testing optical principles.

Architectural Experiments

- Soane's house was a continuous architectural experiment with optical elements, such as coloured glass, mirrors, and skylights, to enhance and control light.

Mirrors, Skylights and Light Filtering

- Soane incorporated mirrors extensively (convex, flat, and mirrored surfaces in cabinets and doors) to manipulate perspectives, light, and space.

- The museum's roof included over thirty skylights with coloured glass, designed to illuminate spaces with varying effects based on the time of day.

- Soane's techniques, such as using convex mirrors and coloured skylights, emphasized the interaction between light and space, allowing him to "amplify" his dimming world.

- Soane's fascination with optics led him to experiment with light, shadow, reflection, and refraction to create dynamic spaces that changed based on lighting conditions.

3D Scanning Experiment

- The document discusses a modern-day 3D scanning experiment that uses errors in point cloud data from scans of Soane's Museum to study optical effects and space perception.

- The innovative use of 3D scanning technologies provides new insights into how reflective surfaces and light were used in the museum to alter perceptions of space.

- The study also involved creating stereographic photographs and digital models to capture reflections, light movement, and space in the museum in ways traditional documentation methods couldn't.

Historical Significance

- The museum, frozen in time, was an experimental site where Soane applied architectural and optical techniques to combat his visual impairment while exploring light and perception.

Reading response 1.1.2

Design by "Considerable Degree": Jefferson's Architecture as Applied Science.

Danielle Willkens

Jefferson viewed architecture as applied science, using empirical methods to enhance functionality, comfort, and environmental control. His designs integrated innovations in natural light, air circulation, and temperature regulation, treating buildings as experimental compositions. Key projects, like Monticello and the University of Virginia, reflect his scientific approach.

Architecture as Applied Science

- Jefferson used architectural design to test and refine ideas, similar to the scientific method.

- He prioritized structural functionality and human comfort over pure aesthetics.

Monticello as a Laboratory

- Monticello featured innovations like weathervanes, skylights, and light-controlling porches to improve indoor conditions.

University of Virginia as a Public Laboratory

- Jefferson designed the campus to promote health, social interaction, and academic inquiry, with the Rotunda serving as both library and scientific hub.

Integration of Architecture and Science

- Jefferson believed architecture should advance knowledge and improve society, using instruments like thermometers to monitor environmental conditions.

Influence of Classical Architecture

- He adapted classical principles from architects like Palladio to fit the American climate and social context, focusing on function and efficiency.

Sustainability and Environmental Awareness

- Jefferson's designs emphasized sustainability through natural light, airflow, and thermal comfort.

Jefferson as an Architect-Scientist

- His projects combined aesthetics and science, treating architecture as a tool for innovation.

Link to Sir John Soane

Unlike Jefferson, Sir John Soane had limited involvement in scientific experiments. Though part of scientific circles, Soane's contributions were more formal, focusing on the Royal Academy. This contrasts with Jefferson's active integration of science into architecture.

Reading response 1.1.3

Reading Words and Images in the Description(s) of Sir John Soane's Museum

Danielle Willkens

The essay "Reading Words and Images in the Description(s) of Sir John Soane's Museum" looks at how the museum's guidebooks changed over time and how they shaped the visitor experience. Willkens shows that these guides weren't just simple catalogues but important tools that reflected Soane's ideas about architecture, storytelling, and learning.

Soane's original Description (1830) was more than a guidebook, it was a way for him to communicate his vision of the museum as a complete work of art. He used detailed drawings and descriptions to guide visitors through the space, making them part of the experience. The guide wasn't just about the objects in the museum, but about how people moved through the rooms and how light, space, and objects came together to tell a story.

The essay points out that later curators simplified the guidebooks, turning them into more practical visitor guides. This made the museum more accessible, but it also lost some of Soane's deeper ideas. Willkens shows how this shift reflects a tension between keeping the original vision and adapting to new audiences. The introduction of photography in the 20th century helped capture the museum's atmosphere, but the guidebooks became more about documenting the museum than engaging visitors in Soane's creative process.

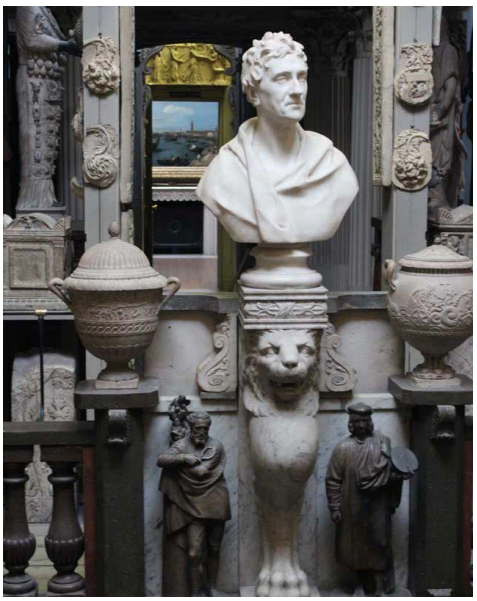
What makes this essay interesting is how it highlights the connection between the museum, the guidebooks, and the visitor experience. Soane wanted people to think for themselves and explore connections between art, architecture, and space. The essay reminds us that museums aren't just about objects, they're about creating experiences that make us think differently.

Gathering information

As part of our preparation for model making, we began by collecting images and reaching out to various sources that could help us gather information about the Dome Room in the Sir John Soane's Museum. We contacted Danielle S. Willkens, who gave the lecture on John Soane, to request additional information and inquire about the possibility of accessing 3D models of the room.

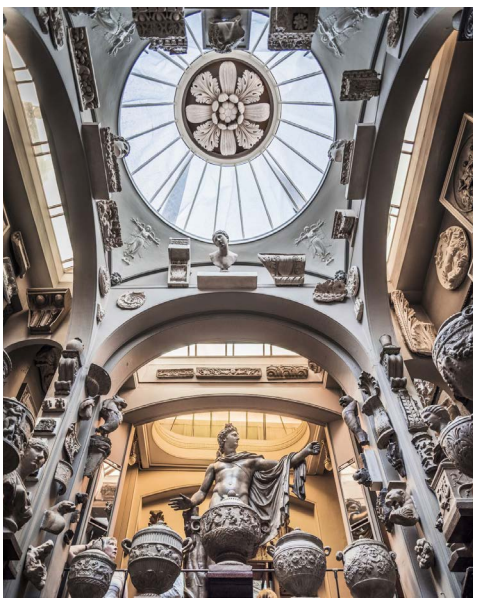
Additionally, we reached out to an architectural firm called cryptic.k, which we found online. We discovered that this firm had previously created architectural drawings of the museum, which could assist us in constructing an accurate 3D model.

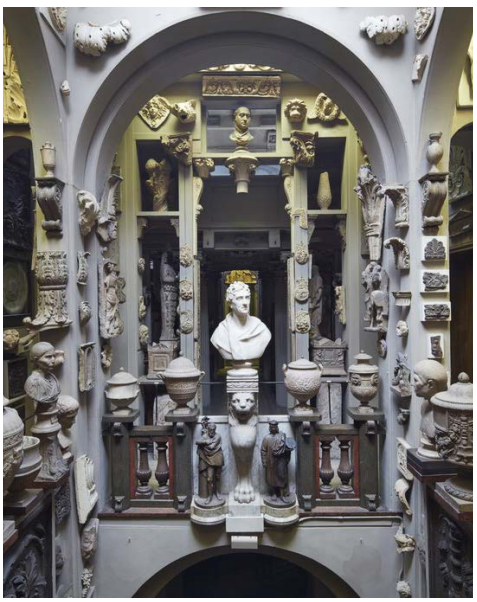
And at last, we gathered additional pictures of the Dome Room which could help us recreate the various ornaments.



Collection of pictures which helped during the initial analysis.

What is the room shaped like?
What are the ornaments in the room?
How does the light work?





Week 1.02

09-09-2024 / 15-09-2024

Getting started

This first assignment focuses on the physical model and conducting research into Sir John Soane's Museum. In the first week, I addressed what I anticipated would be the most challenging element: the artefacts and the overall shape of the room.

During this process I gained insights into working at a smaller scale. Recreating pots, vases, and intricate details introduced me to a different way of thinking in architecture. These smaller elements have a surprisingly powerful impact on the overall experience of a space, yet they are often overlooked. This process made me more aware that such details are just as integral to a design as larger architectural components.

The picture of the Sir John Soane Museum and all of it's artefacts and vases.

Sculptures and vases

One of my tasks was to find a way to recreate the ornaments at model scale. My first approach was to make the ornaments in clay. However, initial testing proved challenging and revealed some issues.

Firstly, the level of detail in these ornaments posed a problem. I realized that capturing all the details would be nearly impossible, so I decided on a level of abstraction.

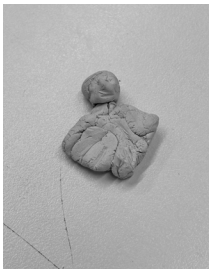
Secondly, working with clay proved difficult due to inconsistencies in quality, as shown in the images. So, I opted for different methods of production. For the vases and pots, I decided to recreate them digitally and 3D print them in plaster to achieve a matte finish. This meant I needed to find the specific vases and pots on the museum's website to check their dimensions for digital reproduction.

After initial testing, I made some optimizations to reduce the amount of material used, and the results turned out great. This meant all the other vases and pots shown in the picture could be recreated digitally and printed in plaster.

The vases and pots were relatively easy to recreate compared to the other artefacts in the room. This is why all the remaining artefacts needed to be recreated through hand drawings. This method provided the same level of abstraction as the vases and pots while still maintaining a realistic appearance. All of these drawings were done by Alessandra.

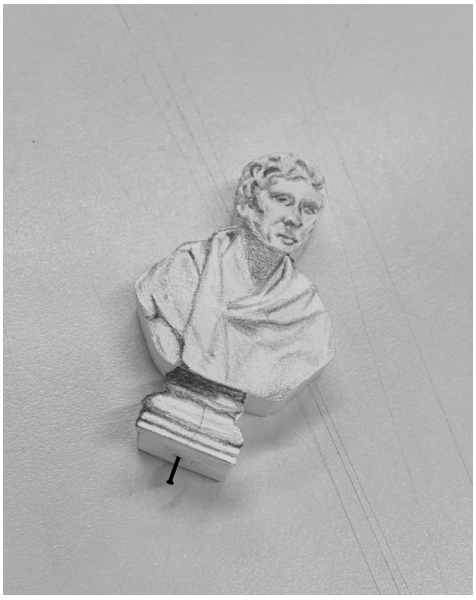
Trying clay as a sculptural material for the ornaments in the model.



Optimising the production method to something more of a higher quality and consistency.

The vase is 3D printed, the ornament is sketched.

Reading response 2.1.1

Canadian Centre for Architecture

Buildings and Gardens

Architecture museums, like the CCA, emerged from a growing desire within the architectural profession to preserve, study, and exhibit the history, theory, and practice of architecture. The CCA, founded by Phyllis Lambert, was established to foster a deeper understanding of the built environment through collections, exhibitions, and scholarly research. It highlights the role of the architect not only as a designer but also as a cultural historian and critic.

The rise of such museums can be linked to a shift in the architectural profession from being solely about technical execution to encompassing broader cultural and historical responsibilities. The CCA, for instance, reflects how architects and scholars began to view architecture as a discipline that should be critically examined, preserved, and celebrated within a historical context. This development marked a significant shift from the focus on individual building projects toward a more holistic understanding of architectural history, theory, and the socio-political impacts of the built environment.

In the context of Richards' book, the museum is presented as both a physical and intellectual space where architecture's past informs its future. It exemplifies how institutions like the CCA serve as custodians of architectural heritage and contribute to the ongoing discourse in the architectural profession, ensuring that architects remain engaged with historical precedents, cultural narratives, and theoretical debates. Thus, the evolution of architecture museums mirrors the profession's broadening scope, integrating historical reflection with contemporary practice.

Week 1.03

16-09-2024 / 22-09-2024

Plans and colouring

Building on the progress from the previous week, I dedicated this week to advancing both the model and the drawings of the Sir John Soane Museum. As I delved into more detailed drawings and models, I uncovered details I hadn't considered before, which I then needed to address in the physical model. In my view, this approach wasn't the most efficient and could have been organized differently.

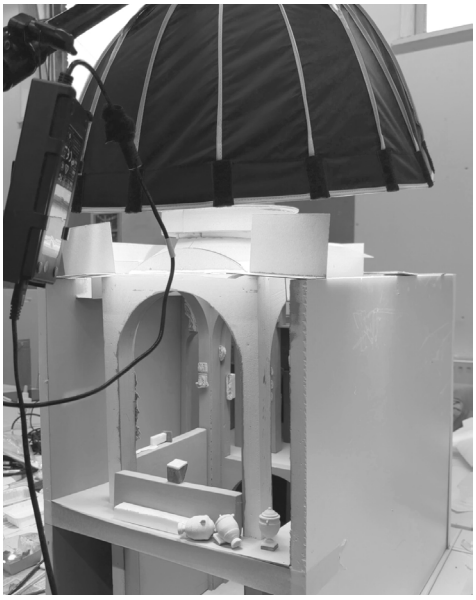
My main focus was creating a detailed façade drawing of the Sir John Soane Museum, while other group members concentrated on different parts. This division of tasks worked well and complemented my progress, especially since I was also responsible for colouring the physical model. This turned out to be quite a challenging task because the walls of the Museum appeared to have varying shades in every reference picture I found.

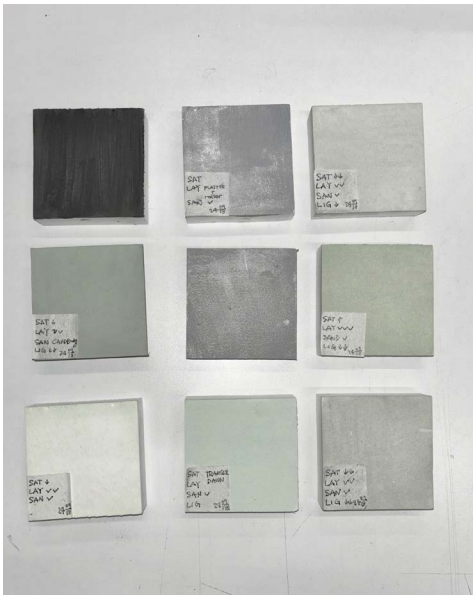
Colouring the model took much longer than I had anticipated. The paint often dried into a different shade than expected, requiring multiple adjustments. This trial-and-error process taught me a lot about working with colour, especially its nuances and how it reacts in different conditions.

It also made me reflect on the broader impact of colour in a space. Each new shade I applied dramatically altered the model's appearance and atmosphere, which I found fascinating. This experience sparked my interest in the influence of colour in architecture and design, an area I'd like to explore further.

Facade drawing of the Sir John Soane Museum, made for the research booklet.

Progress picture of the physical model. At this point the vases and pots were are 3D printed.





Numerous tests with lights were conducted throughout the modelling process to get the lighting just right. As well colouring tests on scrap pieces.

Reading response 3.1.1

The Power of the Archive and its Limits

Achille Mbembe

The term "archives" encompasses both a physical building and the collection of documents stored within it. These documents are typically related to the state's work, and the archive holds power and status through the combination of its architectural space and the documents it contains. The building itself plays a crucial role in this power, with its layout, motifs, and the atmosphere it creates, which often resembles a sacred or almost religious space, where rituals take place and fragments of time and lives are preserved. The process of turning documents into archives is not simply about storing them; it is about selecting certain documents based on their perceived value and relevance to society. These documents are coded, classified, and sealed under secrecy for a certain period, creating an aura of mystery around them.

The archive is also a result of a judgment, as not all documents are deemed worthy of preservation. Some are discarded, while others are granted the special status of being archived, often for public consultation later. This act of selecting which documents are preserved reflects the power and authority that archives hold, as well as their discriminatory nature. The process of archiving also involves the stripping of documents from their original ownership, as they become part of the public domain, accessible to anyone who wishes to consult them.

Before the digital age, archives were physical spaces, with tangible documents that could be touched, seen, and read, making the archive a multi-sensory experience. The material nature of the archive, whether through paper, ink, or the architecture itself, made it an object of both cognitive and physical engagement, holding a special status not only for the documents it contained but also for the way it physically interacted with the senses of those who accessed it.

Reading response 3.1.2

Gathering #5: Post/De/Colonial

www.nieuweinstituut.nl/en/articles/gathering-5-postdecolonial

The text discusses the second edition of Collecting Otherwise, which focused on decolonisation in heritage institutions and archives. The event, held on 24 March 2022, aimed to explore how decolonisation can act as a form of restitution, examining the roles institutions play in reconstructing heritage and implementing restitution. Through case studies and contributions, the event addressed issues like colonialism's lasting impact on architecture and design, and the importance of de-colonial agency.

Key discussions included Uttering Visibility, a work by artist and writer Hannah Dawn Henderson that explored colonial subjects in the Eibink archive, and Yasmin Tri Aryani's research on colonial architecture in Bandung, Indonesia. She highlighted the complexities of preserving colonial-era buildings and how contemporary society interacts with them, questioning the legacies of colonial design and power.

The event concluded with a reflection on the difficulty of decolonisation in institutions and cities, with a focus on the importance of detailed, granular approaches to de-colonial research. It emphasized the need for careful, slow engagement with histories and the communities affected by colonial legacies. Sumaya Kassim's video essay, The Museum Will Not Be Decolonised, was featured, cautioning against superficial claims of decolonisation in institutions and urging a deeper commitment to addressing the complexities of decoloniality.

Week 1.04

23-09-2024 / 29-09-2024

Finishing touch

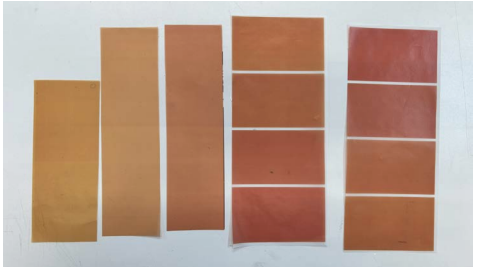
In the final week of the first assignment, we focused on completing the assignment. Several tasks remained on the to-do list, the most important being: finishing the ornaments, finalising the lighting, colouring the walls and other elements, positioning everything correctly, and taking the final image.

My main responsibilities were colouring and lighting. I had already chosen a colour for the walls during the previous week, so my primary goal was to paint every detail and apply a final coat to ensure consistency.

One of the critical elements were the skylights. In the reference photo taken at the museum, the skylights appeared to have a yellow hue. Achieving this specific tone and determining how to replicate it accurately was an essential part of the picture.

Positioning each ornament according to the camera angle proved to be another challenge, which we tackled collaboratively. While group members put a piece of tape or foam on the ornaments, another carefully placed them into the model.

Finally, taking the picture was also a time-consuming task. We took multiple shots, reviewed them, and made adjustments to the pieces and lighting as needed. Additionally, we created a sequence of images showing the ornaments gradually being removed to highlight their progression.



Coming together

With the lighting complete, the walls painted, and the ornaments in place, the final picture was gradually coming together. The images show the process of capturing the final image.

The final shot

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Looking carefully
Week 1.04
23-09-2024 / 29-09-2024

Reflection

The first assignment initially felt vague and somewhat chaotic for me. When I first saw the picture of the Sir John Soane Museum, I was shocked by the incredible amount of detail. I remember thinking, 'How on earth are we supposed to create all these ornaments?' I recall a fellow student saying, "Trust the process," and that became my motto.

As the assignment progressed, it started to feel like a true introduction to the studio. It immediately set the tone and level of production, and my initial worries quickly faded, replaced by motivation. I was concerned that my skills wouldn't be good enough, but that was nonsense. As a group, we managed to produce what I believe is a beautiful recreation of the original picture.

This assignment taught me a great deal about experience, composition, and the use of colour and light. It made me reflect on how I want my archive to be experienced and what it should look like. I also began to develop a growing interest in the role of light and colour in architectural design.

The research into the Sir John Soane Museum also taught me a lot about the experience of an archive and its potential. The museum tells a story with a clear narrative, which made me wonder, Why can't an architectural archive do the same?

I incorporated all of these insights and fascinations into my personal statement in the research plan.

A place to archive

Week 1.05

30-09-2024/06-10-2024

Antwerp

Visiting Antwerp felt like the real start of my graduation project. From the very first week, we knew we'd be working on the design of an architectural archive for the VAi. But it wasn't until the field trip that things started to feel real. We got to experience the city, its history, and, of course, De Singel, a building closely connected to the VAi and a key part of our assignment.

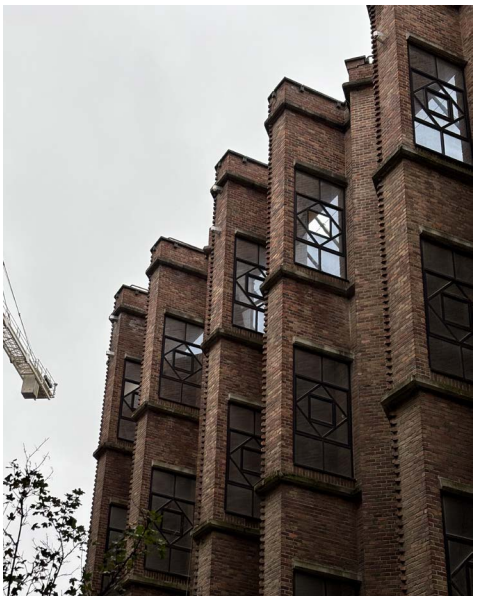
The historic walk through Antwerp gave us a better understanding of how the city developed over time. It also showed how the ring road, the Singel, has shaped the city and continues to be an important element today.

Visiting the VAi archive itself was another important moment. We saw how an archive works in practice, learned about the current setup, and heard about their plans for the future, including the need for a new building.

Walking through DeSingel made it easier to picture the project site in its actual context. Seeing how the building is used and how it fits into the area gave me some new ideas to work with. This combination of history, place, and purpose really helped me take the first steps in figuring out how to approach the design.

Historic walk trough Antwerp

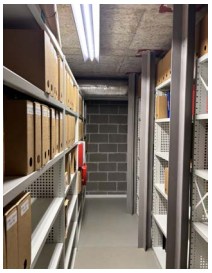
A mix between classical and modernist buildings.



Capturing the general aesthetic of the city, trying to get a feel what architecture feels like. The historical tour focussed mainly on the well-known parts of town.

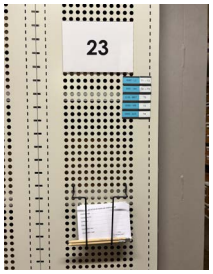
VAi Archive

Storage boxes and shelves which hold them. Linear spaces, row after row.

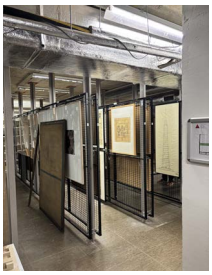



Continuation of the storage conditions and organisation of the storage boxes.

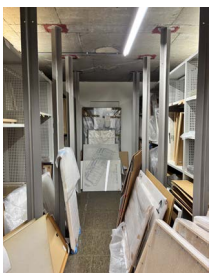
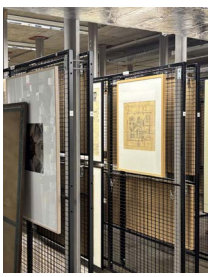
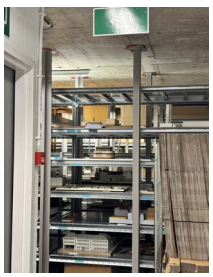




Configuration for storing paintings.




A little mess at some spaces, in transition?


Random bits and pieces which do not seem too organised.



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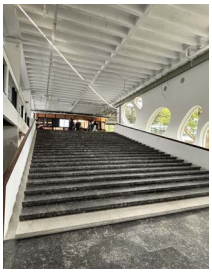
2024/2025

Antwerp
Week 1.05
30-09-2024 / 06-10-2024

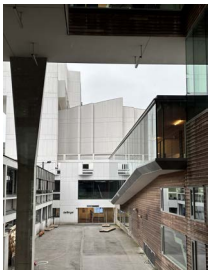
De Singel

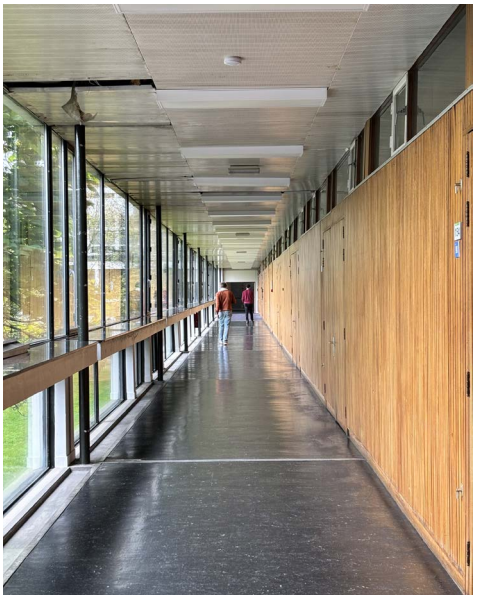
The main entrance staircase and the courtyard.



The closed facade of de Singel

The small concert hall seen from the back, and the dock yard outside.





One of the many hallways

The open facade of de Singel

The weird but interesting, long, bridge outside.

Notes

VAi

- There is an ambition to make the archive more accessible to the public, as its current visitors are primarily researchers. A public programme is being developed to address this.
- At present, the archive primarily contains conceptual materials. However, there is a growing need to store materials from existing practices.
- The organisation is funded by the government, which assigns tasks such as conducting research within its own archival works and developing comprehensive overviews.
- A significant question arises: When is something considered heritage? One perspective suggests that the act of deciding to store something marks its transformation into heritage.
- Developments are also being made to accommodate digital files, as there is an increasing need for dedicated spaces to manage and store them.
- The quarantine process is crucial. Materials arrive in folders and must undergo a thorough procedure before being placed in specialised boxes, storage containers, or other appropriate settings.

The archive is not enough

- The VAi was founded by the Province of Antwerp.
- The field of architecture is evolving, and this also impacts the archive in terms of its programme and use. The VAi's primary goals are to promote a deeper understanding of architecture, build a collection of archives and artefacts, and establish a robust public programme.
- The concept behind the VAi is to create a structurally coherent body of knowledge with hierarchical cataloguing.
- Historically, the archive in Antwerp provided architects with opportunities to study monumental buildings and contribute to their preservation. It also played a role in evaluating whether certain buildings should be considered monumental.
- The digital archive in Belgium is expanding rapidly to meet growing demand. This growth requires greater openness, careful decision-making, and ongoing adaptability.
- Key considerations include managing decay, determining what is valuable, and questioning whether the archive can continue to expand indefinitely.
- The procedural flow is also worth examining: acquisition > cataloguing > research > exhibition > public access. Each stage raises critical questions about priorities and strategies for the future.

Week 1.06

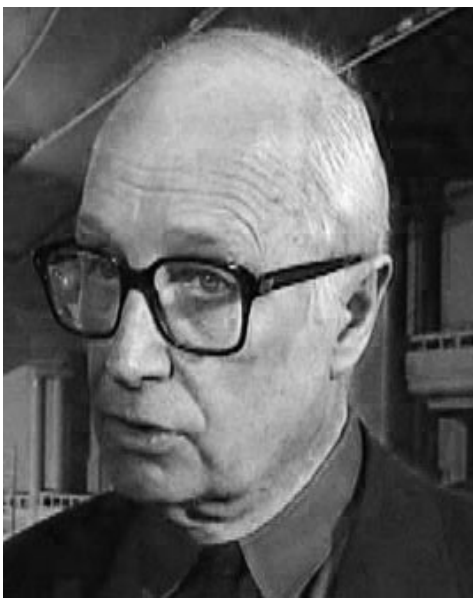
07-10-2024 / 13-10-2024

Georges Baines

Georges Baines is a Belgian architect known for his work that combines traditional and modern architectural styles. Born in 1925 in Belgium, Baines studied architecture in the post-war period, which greatly influenced his approach. He is particularly recognized for his minimalist and thoughtful use of materials, as well as his deep respect for natural landscapes. Baines often emphasized harmony between buildings and their environments, blending modernist principles with a strong sensitivity to local context and materials.

His architectural style is characterized by simplicity, the use of raw materials like concrete and wood, and a focus on functionality. He had a strong affinity for Brutalism, but softened its starkness with natural materials and forms inspired by regional traditions. This unique synthesis earned him a place as one of Belgium's most influential architects.

Baines is influential because he challenged the rigid modernist principles of his time by incorporating local materials and integrating buildings into their natural surroundings. His work inspired a new generation of architects to think beyond the sterile, industrial aesthetics of mid-20th century architecture, making a way for a more sensitive, place-based approach to modern design.



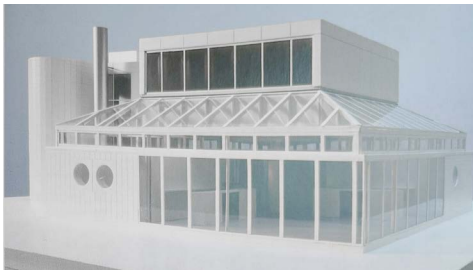
Georges Baines

Baines' work

To design an archival space for Baines' work, I first need to understand what kind of work Baines produced. The images collected give a quick reference to his work.

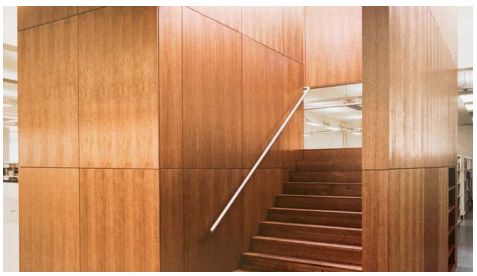
Large white spaces, with minimal colour.

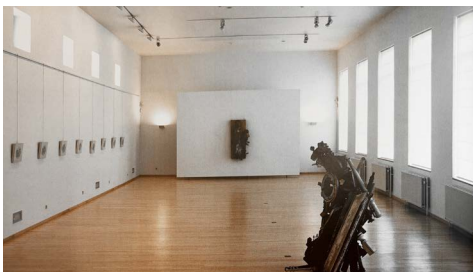
Baines' work seem to have two sides, where the one side is dominated by white spaces with minimal colour.



And on the other side white spaces supported by wood.

The use of wood





Archival process

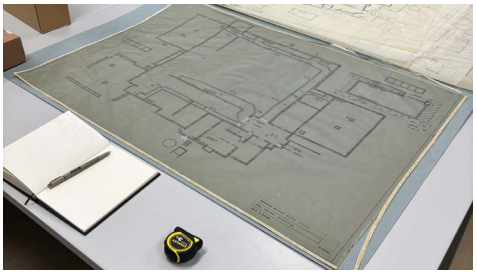
To design an archival space, the process of archiving needs to be understood to. We had experienced this process ourselves and it has been documented here.

Large drawings

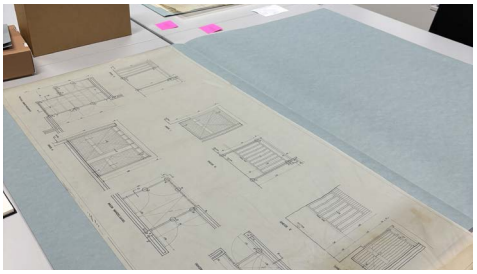
1 Arrival and setting up

2 Opening map and organising

3 Taking down details



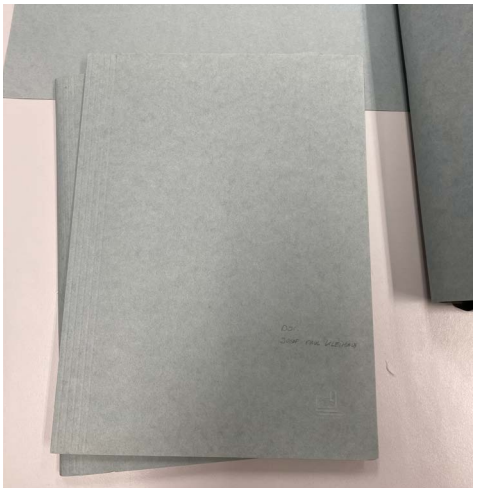
4 Studying, photographing & taking notes



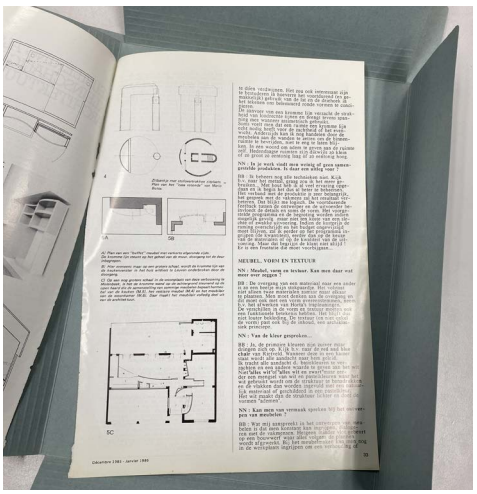
5 Packing up

Documents

1 Arrival and setting up



2 Opening map and organising



3 Studying, photographing & taking notes

Large table space is necessary

A place to organise the documents is handy.

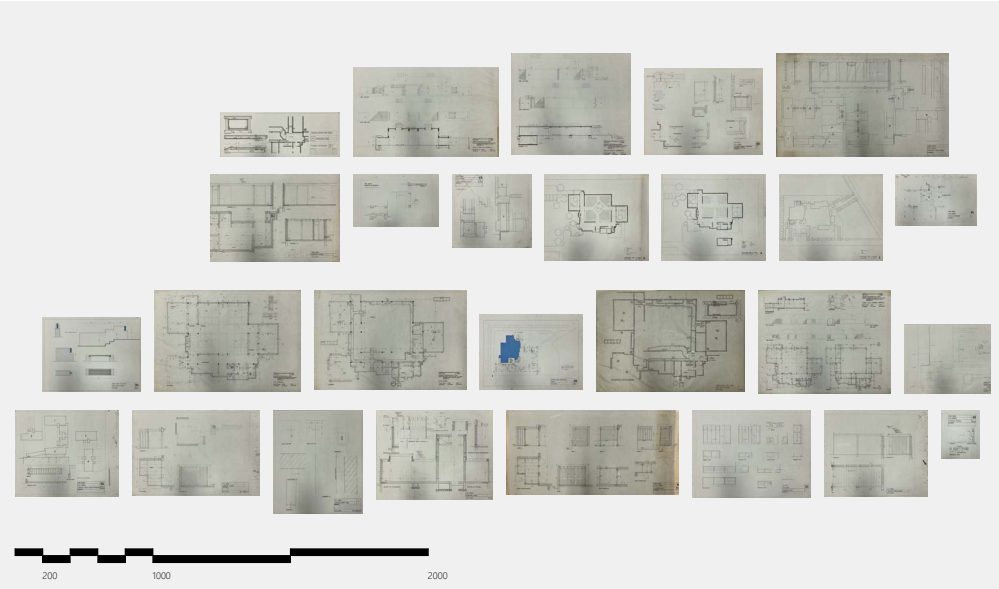
Good lighting for taking pictures

Archive products

Last but not least, it is important to understand the amount and size of the products. I measured the large drawings that I've looked into and have taken notes. With the images and scale of the drawings, these drawings have been put into scale, and formed a basis for the design of the archival space.

The amount of products are:

- Large scale drawings 28
- Boxes 2
- Maps 22



Thoughts

By organising the documents and understanding their contents, I found a lot of useful information for the room design. This information will be helpful for the upcoming design assignment, as the dimensions of these materials will influence the room's size. They also provide insight into how the room might be used and the types of functions it needs to serve.

Week 1.07

14-10-2024/20-10-2024

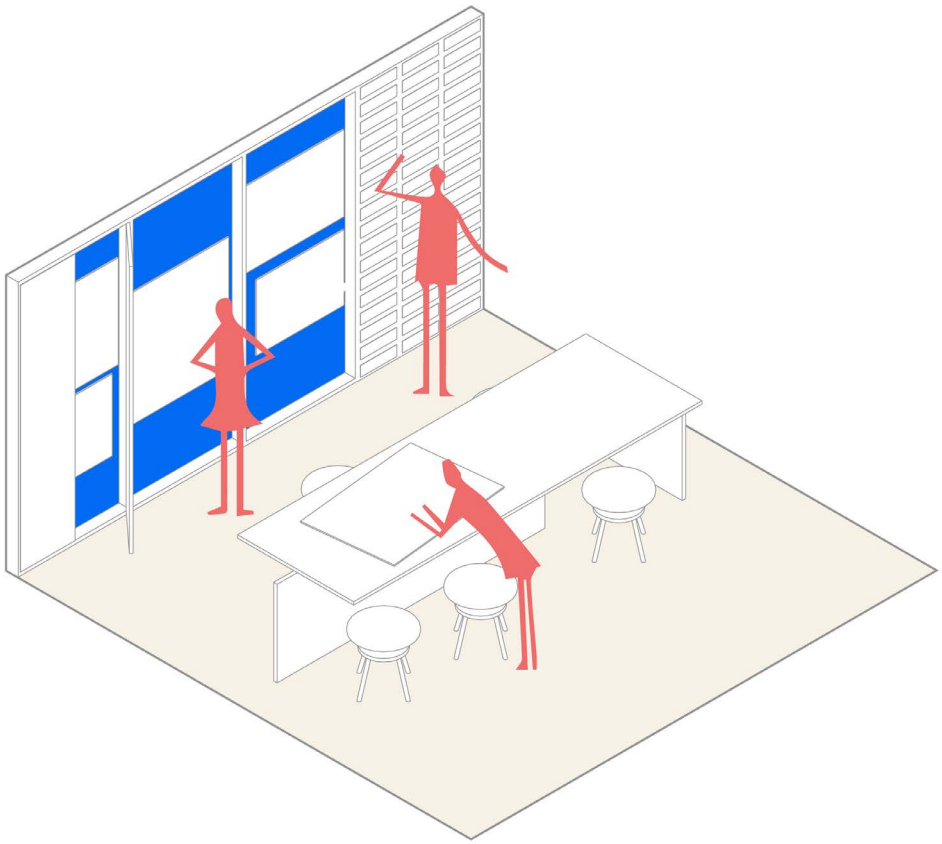
Concepts

After organising all the materials and studying Georges Baines' work, I started forming my initial ideas for the archival space. I began by sketching concepts inspired by his designs, which helped me grasp some of the key principles in his approach.

During this process, I learned how an archive functions, which influenced my concept further. I had also scaled the large archival materials to determine exactly how much space would be required.

With a clearer idea of the concept and dimensions, I sketched out more refined ideas. This initial phase motivated me to dive deeper into digital studies, where I explored various room layouts. These studies were shaped by the archiving process itself, the space requirements, and Baines' architectural style.

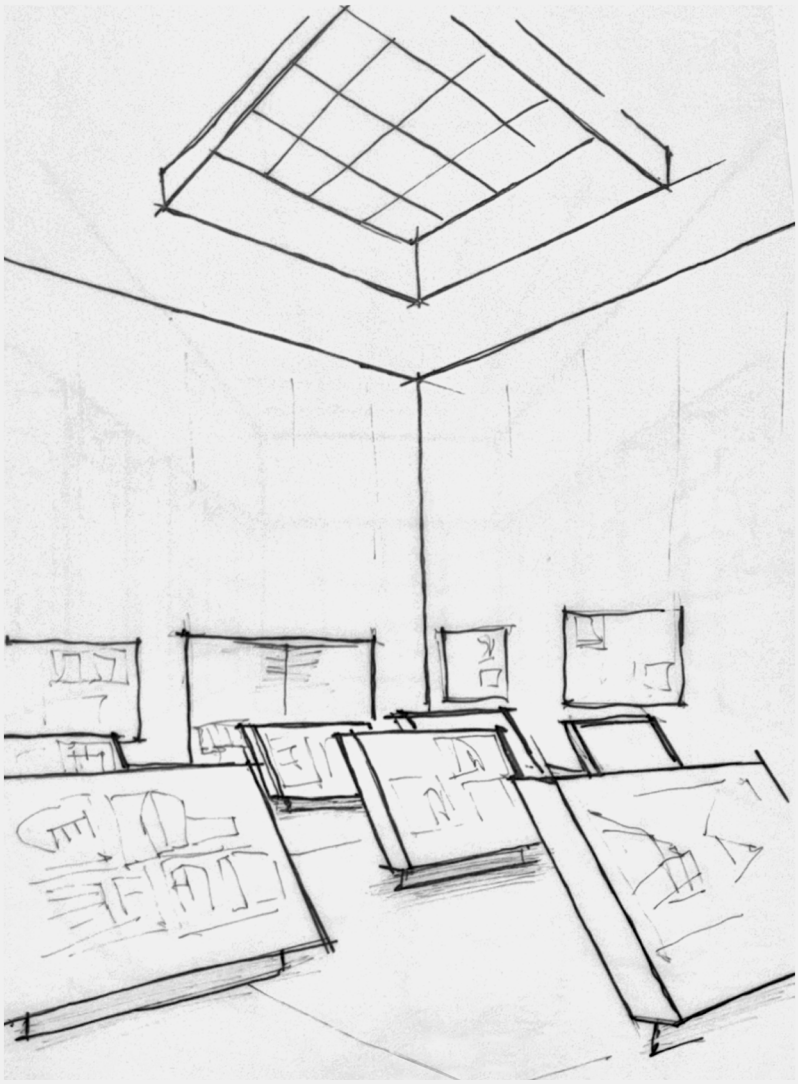
By the end of the week, I had several potential designs to choose from. It was time to select one concept and focus on developing it further. The archiving concept I have in mind is an open archive accessible to everyone. It would feature a wall unit that can be used flexibly, combined with a large table for studying, analysis, or work. What the archival process at the VAi has shown me is that having the proper room and space is really important since I myself struggled to keep the large drawings organised.



A visual of the initial archiving concept which I have in mind. A dynamic space with multifunctional furniture.

Sketches

Sketch 1



In the first sketch, the archival room is envisioned as a spacious, open area with exhibition furniture, allowing visitors to interact with archival materials.

The strength of this proposal lies in its openness, flexibility, and multi-functionality, making it an inviting space for the public. However, the main challenge is figuring out how archival work can effectively take place within this setting without compromising functionality or the preservation of materials.

Sketches

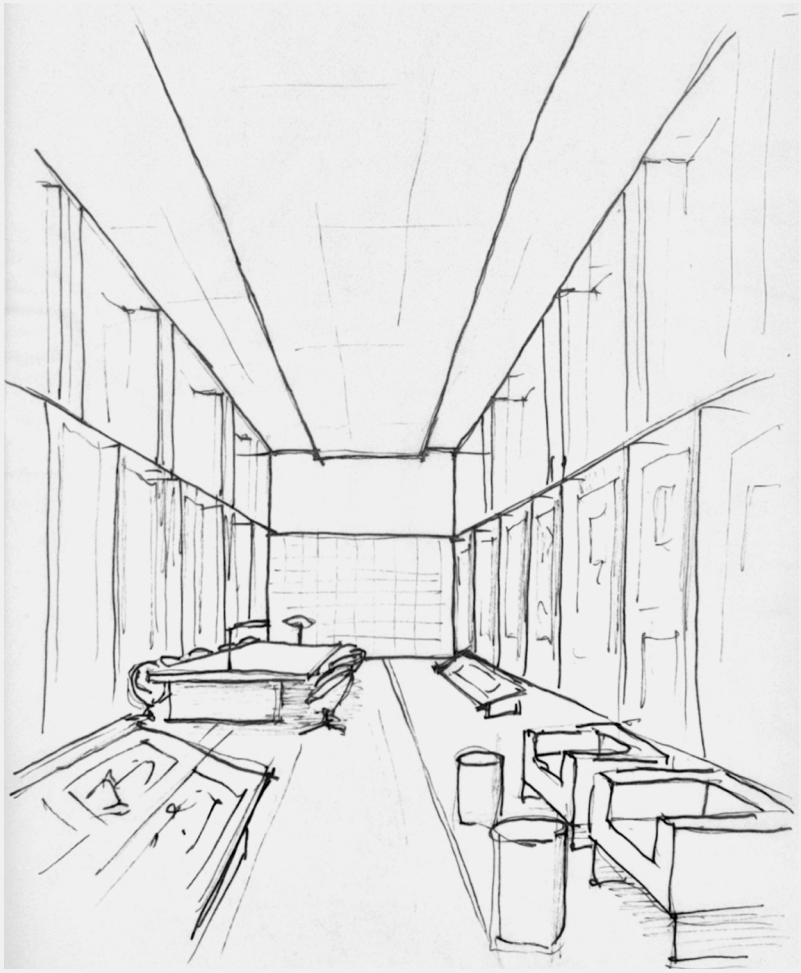
Sketch 2

The second sketch envisions the archival area as a more informal and inviting space, featuring lounge chairs, large tables with stools, and cabinets lining the walls. These cabinets allow for the display of archival pieces while providing a functional backdrop for the space.

Visitors can interact with the displayed items, work on archival tasks, or simply sit and read, creating a multifunctional environment. This concept is heavily inspired by the work of Georges Baines.

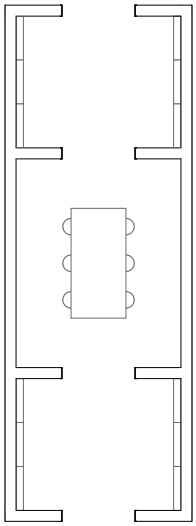
Sketches

Sketch 3

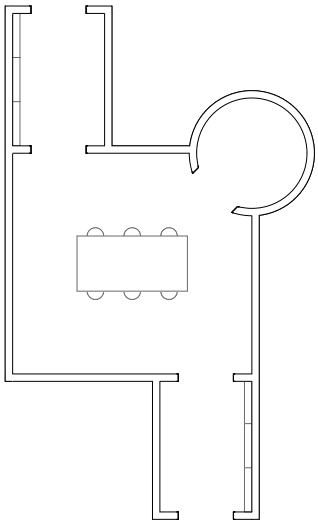


The third sketch builds on the principles of the second, refining the concept into a more functional layout. The room features furniture better suited to facilitate archival work, ensuring practicality without sacrificing the inviting atmosphere. Once again, this design draws inspiration from Georges Baines, incorporating tall ceilings and suggesting additional space behind the upper structures, adding depth and a sense of openness.

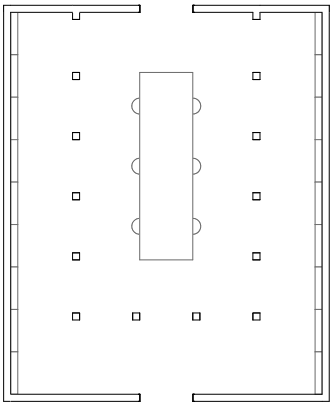
Digital studies



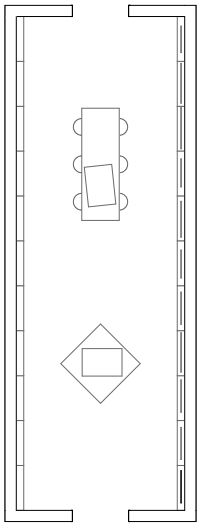
Concept 1-1



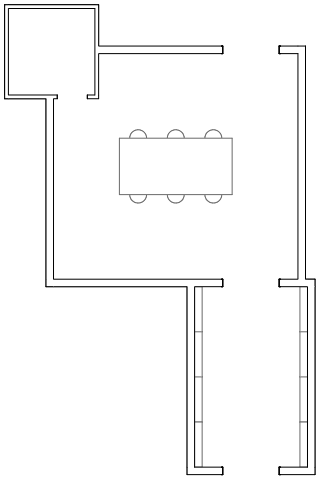
Concept 2-1



Concept 3



Concept 1-2



Concept 2-2

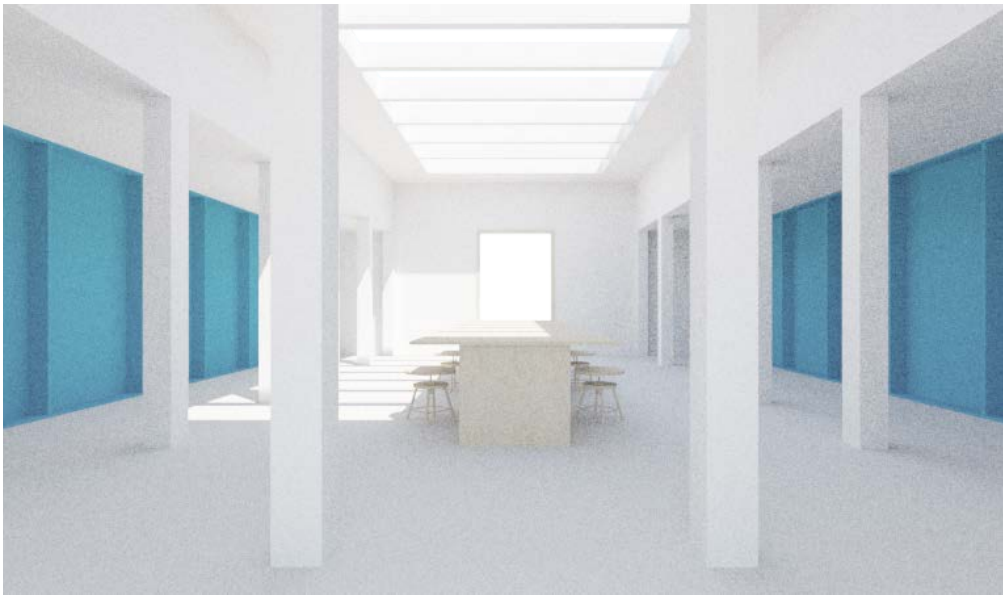
The 5 different concept ideas tried out with digital drawing. This put the scale of the room into perspective.

The sketches provided a good foundation to begin working with a digital platform. They gave me various ideas, which I explored and developed further. Some concepts proved more effective and connected more closely to Baines' work than others. The process involved a considerable amount of trial and error. In addition to the sketches, several renders were created to visualize the most interesting designs.

Ultimately, a combination of different proposals formed the basis for the continued development of the archival room.

Visualisation of concept 1-1

Visualisation of concept 1-2



Visualisation of concept 3

Week 1.08

21-10-2024 / 27-10-2024

Draft

After discussing last week's various proposals with the tutors, I began working on a first draft. This process started by refining the previous archiving concept based on the feedback I received from the tutors.

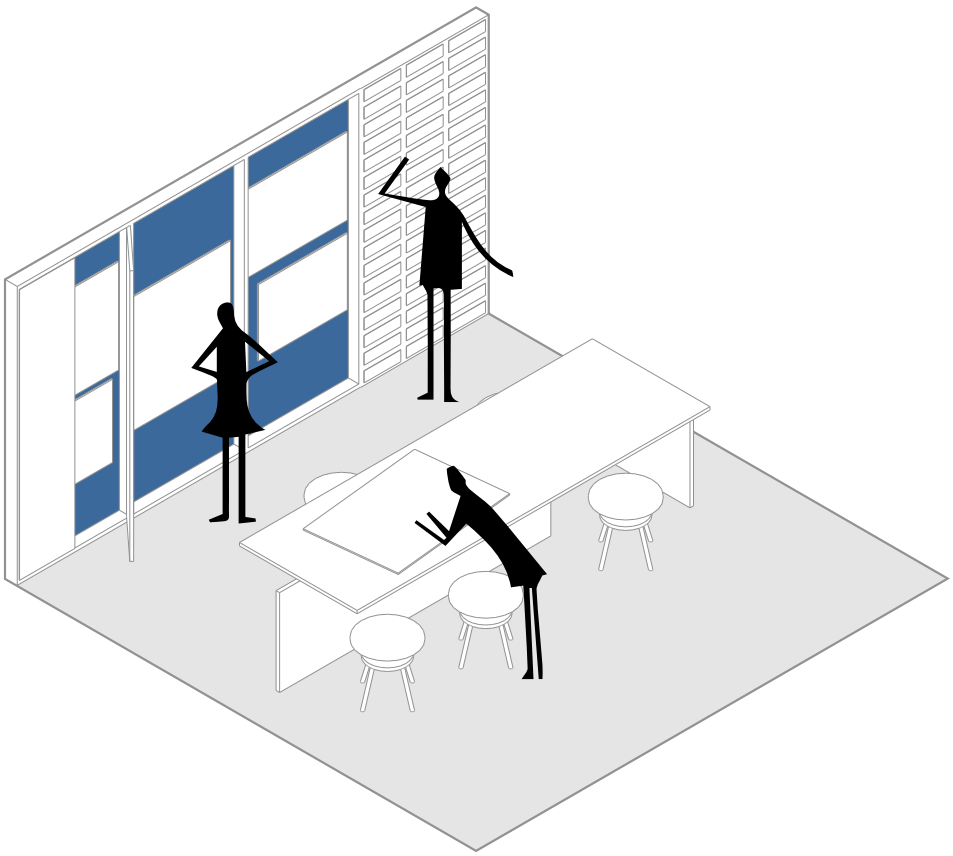
This provided a foundation for the first draft. The design is primarily based on Concept 3 from last week, but with a significant change: the space is now integrated into a larger building. To achieve this, an atrium has been placed at the centre of the room, which not only expands the space but also brings in natural light.

To enhance the archive's integration into the room, a transparent wall has been designed between the room and the archive. This creates a direct visual connection to the archive, making it more accessible and visually engaging.

The furniture pieces, which are designed to be multifunctional, have also been fully developed. Different configurations for these pieces have been explored to accommodate various uses of the space.

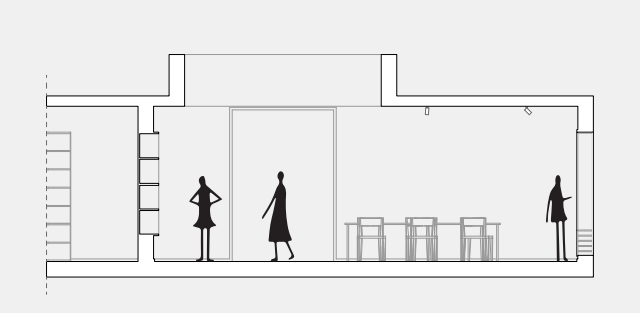
To test how the spatial layout and lighting work in practice, a scale model has been made.

Overall, it has been a productive week, but there is still more work to be done.

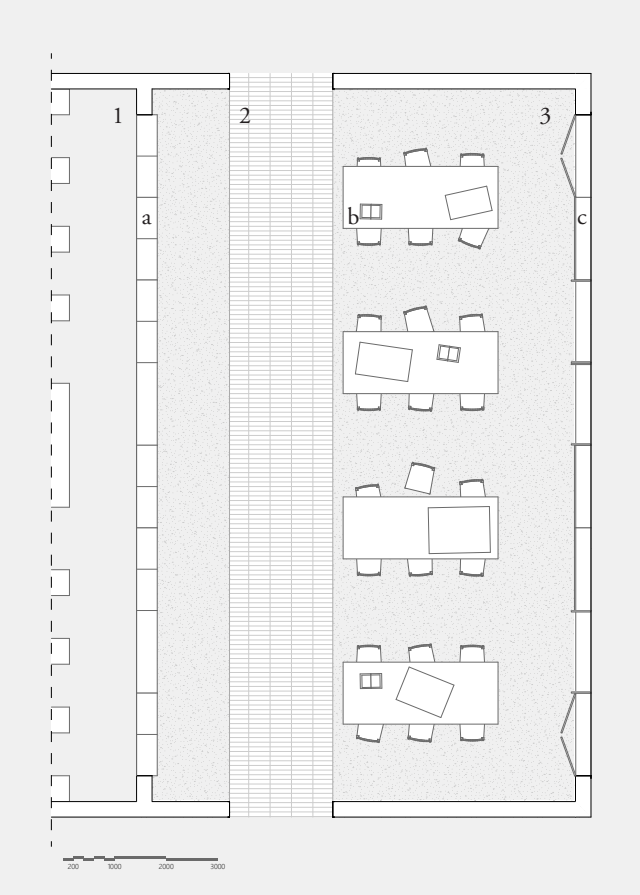


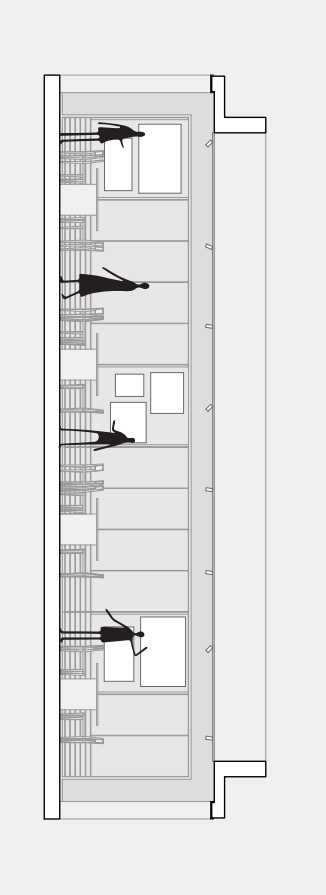
A visual of the updated archiving concept. Still a dynamic space with multifunctional furniture.

Plans



Cross section of the archival room.





Floor plan (left) and longitudinal section (right) of the archival room.

Spaces		*Furniture*	
1.	Archive	a.	Transparent closet
2.	Transition zone	b.	Work station
3.	Work / Expo space	c.	Work / Expo closet

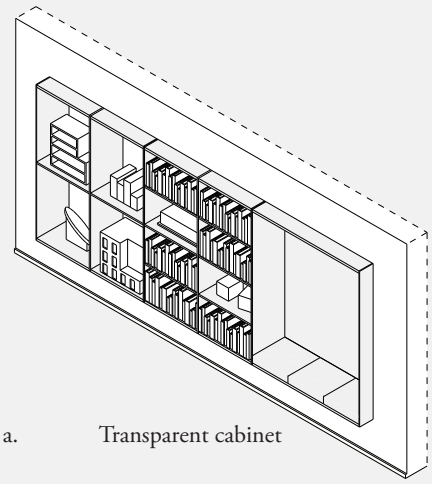
Furniture

There are three key pieces of furniture in the room that are essential to its multifunctional nature.

Transparent cabinet

The transparent cabinet serves as a transition between the main room and the archive. It functions both as storage for books, maps, and documents, and as a seating area.

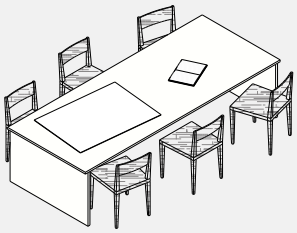
Furniture



a. Transparent cabinet

Work station

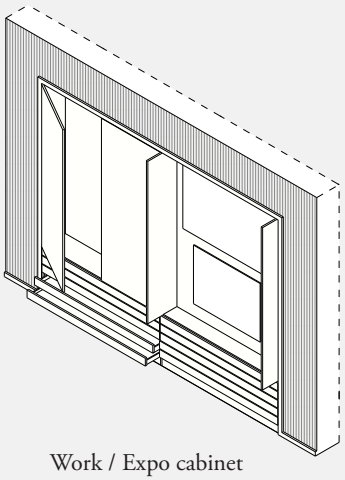
The workstation is a large table with dimensions that easily accommodate Baines' large drawings.



b. Work station

Work / Expo cabinet

The work/expo cabinet serves two functions. In a work setting, it allows users to pin up drawings using magnets for tasks such as taking photographs or organizing materials. In an exhibition or lecture setting, it can be used to display drawings that are relevant to the narrative.



c. Work / Expo cabinet

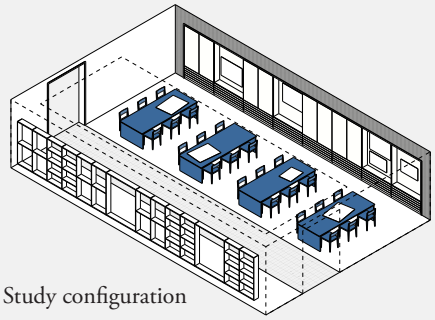
Configurations

Given the multifunctional nature and the emphasis on public engagement in this archival room, I found it essential to design the space with flexibility in mind. The room is designed with three distinct configurations.

Configurations

Study configuration

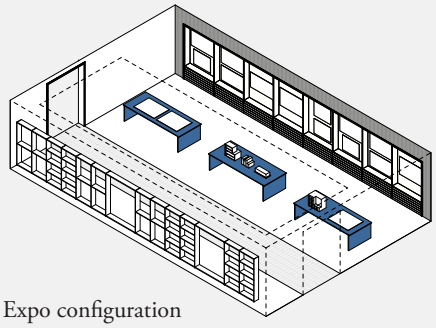
The study configuration focusses on archival work, where the tables and cabinets are set-up for study purposes.



Study configuration

Expo configuration

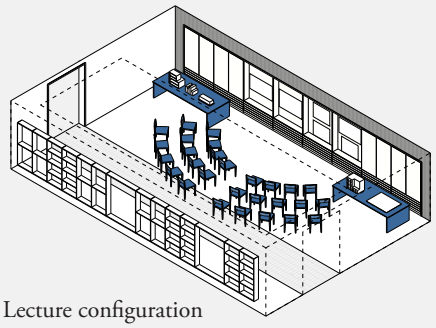
With the expo configuration the tables and cabinets are organised to hold and exposition work from the archive. For this set-up the chairs are removed, cabinets fully opened and tables turned.



Expo configuration

Lecture configuration

For the lecture configuration the chairs are focussed on one spot where someone can give a lecture using the tables and cabinets to show work.



Lecture configuration

Materials

The use of materials, like the design of the room, has been influenced by Baines' work. The main colour palette and materials are light and are complemented by the use of wood, along with a small accent colour to create contrast.

The walls will be white, and the circulation areas of the floor will be tiled, while the remaining sections will feature a light-coloured carpet.

The chairs will be made from wood, and the cabinets will also be finished in wood to maintain consistency.

Together, these colours and materials bring Baines' work to life

The choice of materials on the left, and a render with the applies materials on the bottom, giving a feel for the space, colours and materials.

Test model

The test model was created to evaluate the spatial experience and the impact of light on the space. This hands-on approach provided insights into these elements, offering a more tangible understanding of the design.

Additionally, it provided an early impression of how the final photographs of the room might look.

Week 1.09 / 1.10

28-10-2024 / 10-11-2024

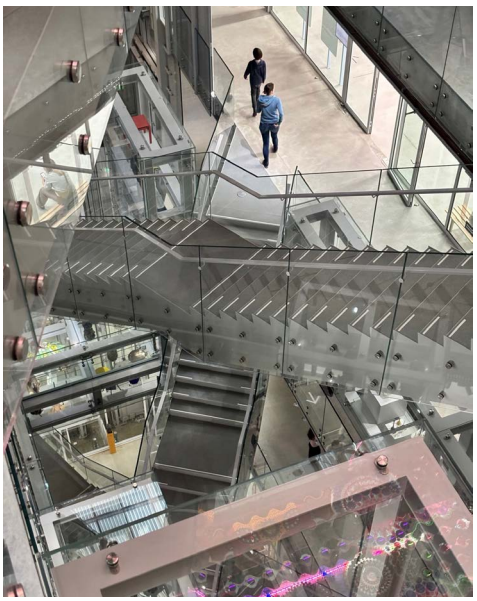
Visit Depot Rotterdam

The Depot in Rotterdam is quite an architectural statement. In order to analyse how a "publicly accessible" depot functions, I decided to set aside my architectural observations and focus on how it engages with the public, how the archivists work, and what happens in the spaces in between.

The depot had small details and features designed to capture the public, such as windows into the archive, unique spaces, and public functions. These elements help to get public engagement with the building.

The archivists, on the other hand, had their own dedicated rooms equipped with specialized tools. I also enjoyed seeing how paintings are stored and the informal restoration space, which added a layer of intrigue to the operations.

What I found even more interesting, however, were the logistical elements scattered throughout. These behind-the-scenes systems and processes played a crucial role in the building's functionality. Although the visit was brief, it provided me with valuable insights and ideas to reflect on moving forward.

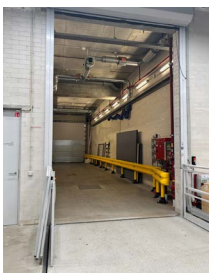


Interesting architectural elements

Windows into the archive

Trolleys

Transport

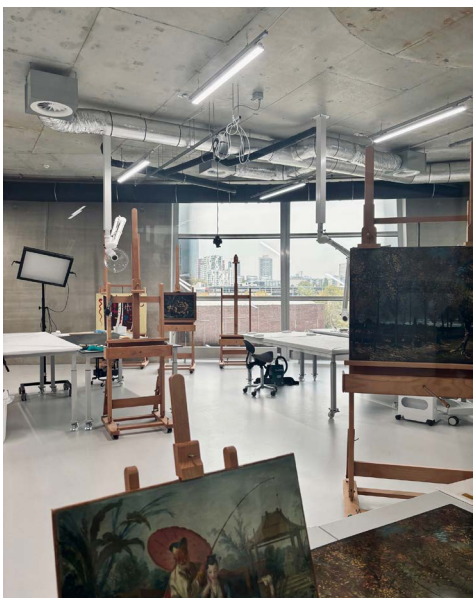


Loading ramp

Storage system

Informal restoration

Storage space



Archivists workspace

Interiors Buildings Cities
Ertuğ Çiftçi / 5837235
2024/2025

A place to archive
Week 1.09 / 1.10
28-10-2024/10-11-2024

Final design

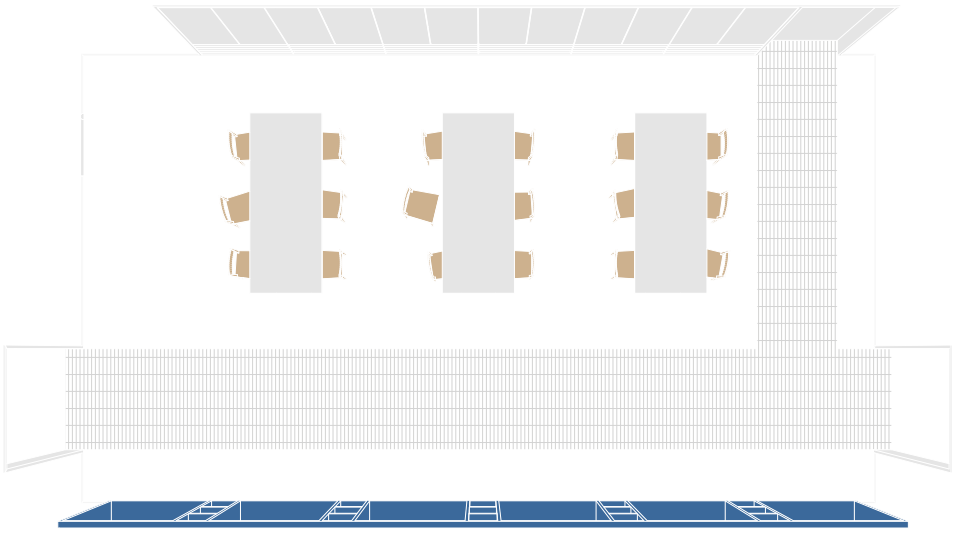
The Open Archive approaches the concept of archival spaces in a different way by supporting a broader societal role aligned with the VAI's mission to gain public engagement through debates, lectures, exhibitions, and events.

This space prioritizes flexibility, accessibility, and transparency, by focusing on three core functions: a study area for archival research, an exhibition space for displaying collections, and a lecture setting for presentations and discussions. Each setup is designed to attract diverse audiences, encouraging them to connect with architectural heritage and promoting active public interaction and awareness.

Inspired by the minimalist work of Flemish architect Georges Baines, the room is designed with simplicity in form, featuring light, natural colours and subtle accent details. An atrium brings natural light to the space, while bay windows provide sights of the outside world, creating the sense of openness and connection to the surroundings.

Multi-purpose furniture allows for easy transformation between different set-ups, reinforcing the room's adaptability to the functions.

The Open Archive is designed as a accessible environment where architecture and community intersect, creating a shared space for discovery, learning, and dialogue.



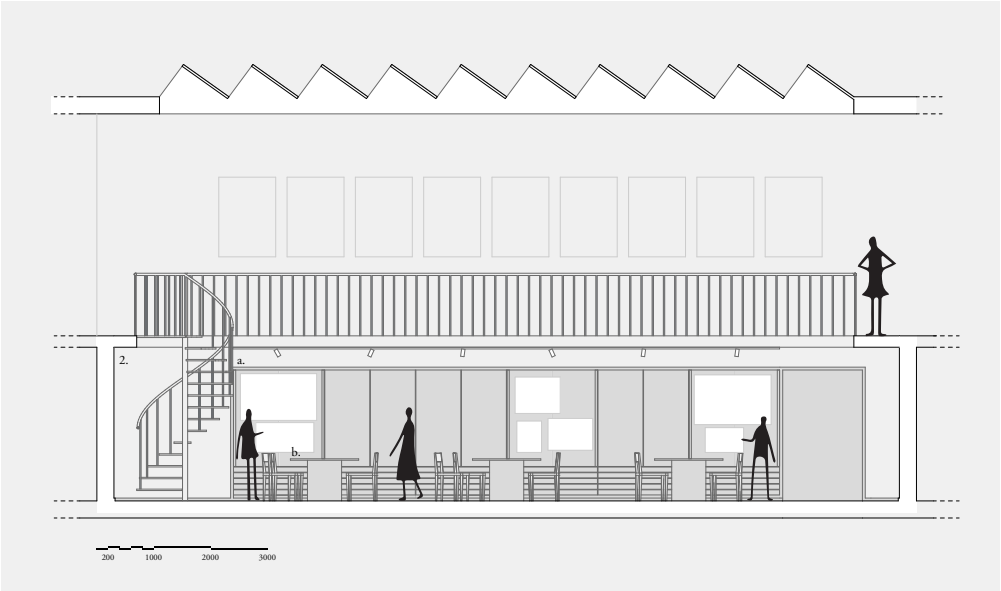
Plans 1/2

Compared to the first draft, many aspects of the space have been altered. The main atrium, originally positioned above the centre of the room, has been relocated above the workstations, ensuring that natural light reaches the areas where it is most needed.

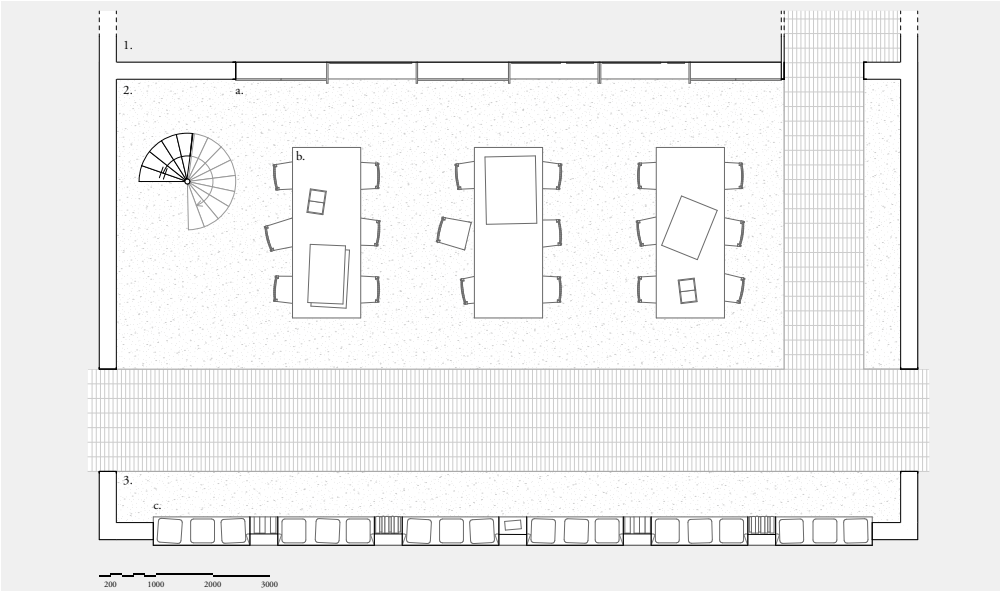
The work/expo cabinet has been further refined, and the space above the archival room has been given more context to spark imagination about its potential use. More importantly, a staircase has been added to establish a direct connection between the archival room and the rest of the building.

The transparent wall between the archival room and the archive has been replaced with a bay window, allowing occupants to have eye-level views outside while also benefiting from natural light from above.

Finally, the archive itself has been moved to a more discreet location behind the work/expo cabinet, creating a clearer separation between the workspace and storage areas.



Longitudinal section of the archival room.



Floorplan of the archival room.

Spaces

1. Archive
2. Work & Expo space
3. Passage

Furniture

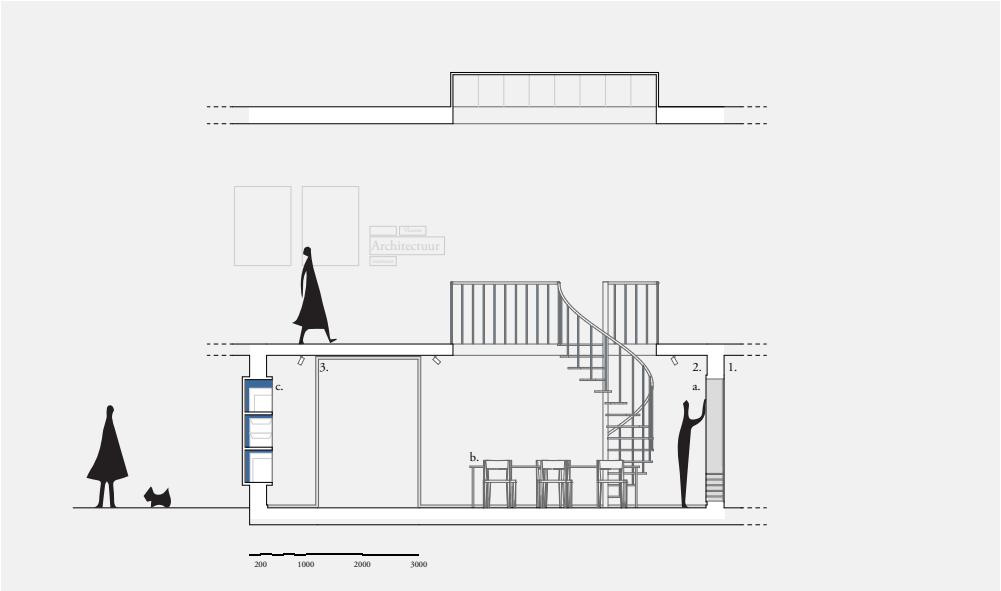
a. Work & Expo cabinet
b. Desk
c. Bay window

Main image of the archival room giving an impression of the space, colours and materials. Still the same as the first draft.

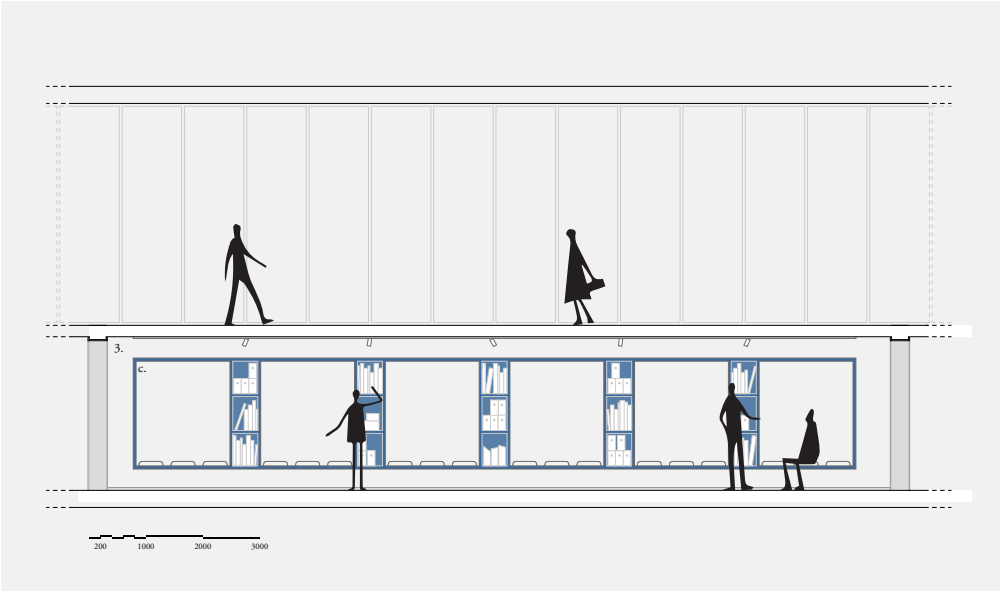
Plans 2/2

The newly designed staircase connects to the upper level, which is an undefined space but still linked to the VAi, with a vision of how this room might function within an architectural archive.

Additionally, the design of the cabinet has changed due to the newly added bay window, resulting in larger windows and smaller cabinets.



Cross section of the archival room.



Second longitudinal section of the archival room.

Spaces

1. Archive
2. Work & Expo space
3. Passage

Furniture

a. Work & Expo cabinet
b. Desk
c. Bay window

The archival room seen from above trough the atrium.

Furniture

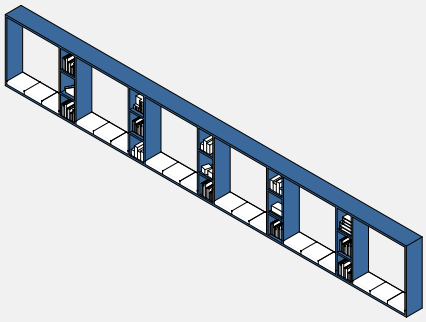
As mentioned before, with the final design the furniture changed as well. These are the final details.

Bay window

The transparent cabinet got switched out for a bay window. The cabinet space got less and is replaced by windows. But this piece of furniture still kept its function as a cabinet and seating arrangement.

9.700 x 300 x 2.300 (L x D x H)

Furniture



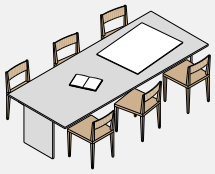
a. Bay window

Work station

The work station mainly remained the same, but instead of four tables, there are three now, due to the new staircase.

Table: 3.000 x 1.400 x 740 (L x W x H)

Chair: 480 x 500 x 800 (L x W x H)

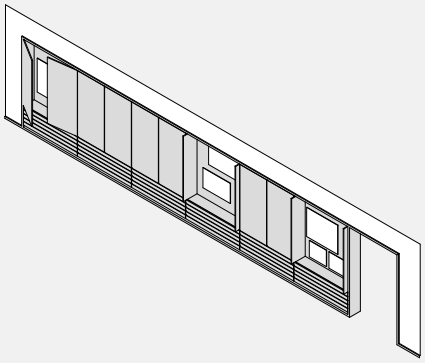


b. Work station

Work / Expo cabinet

The work / expo cabinet has been changed too. Now there is a passage on the far right side leading to the archive. The rest of the concept remained the same.

12.700 x 500 x 2.000 (L x D x H)



c. Work / Expo cabinet

Furniture set up in the expo configuration with the chairs moved away, models and drawings on the tables and the cabinets opened with pinned up drawings.

Furniture set up in the lecture configuration with the chairs focussed on one point and the cabinets assisting the lecture with the help of drawings.

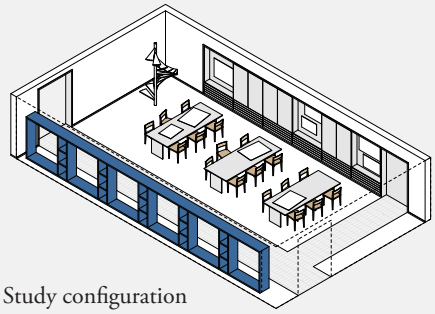
Configurations

The multifunctional nature of the room has remained the same. There is still an emphasis on public engagement and thus it is essential to have a space with flexibility. The configurations remain as:

Configurations

Study configuration

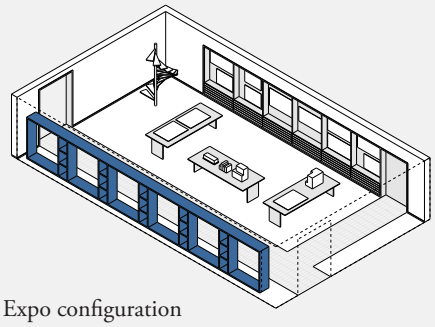
The study configuration focusses on archival work, where the tables and cabinets are set-up for study purposes.



Study configuration

Expo configuration

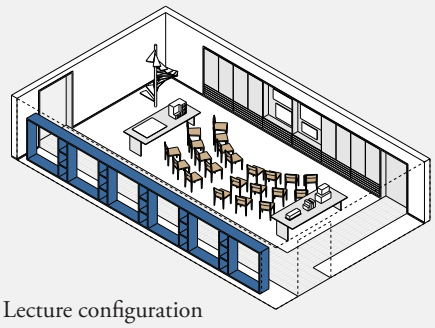
With the expo configuration the tables and cabinets are organised to hold and exposition work from the archive. For this set-up the chairs are removed, cabinets fully opened and tables turned.



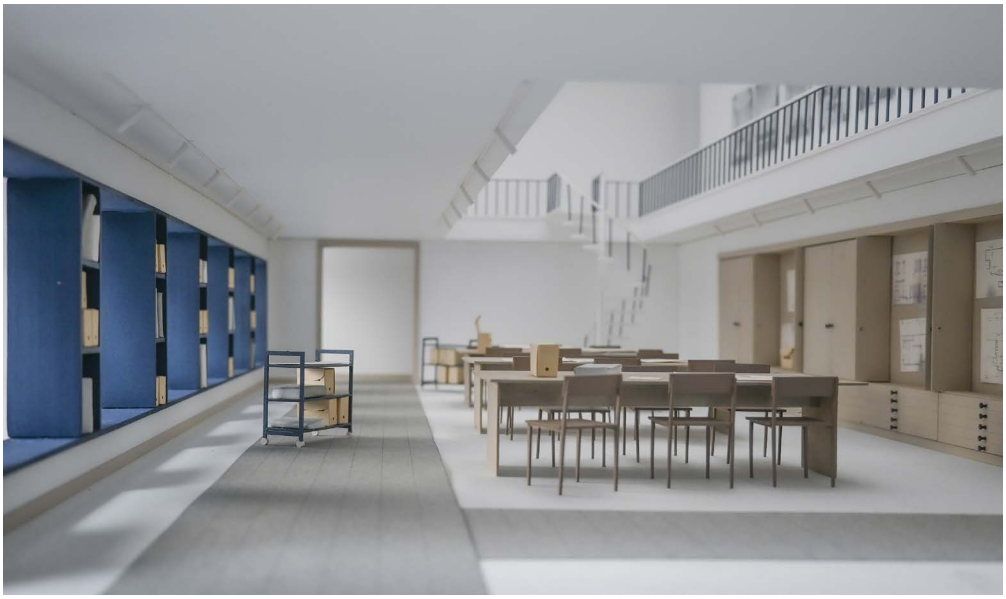
Expo configuration

Lecture configuration

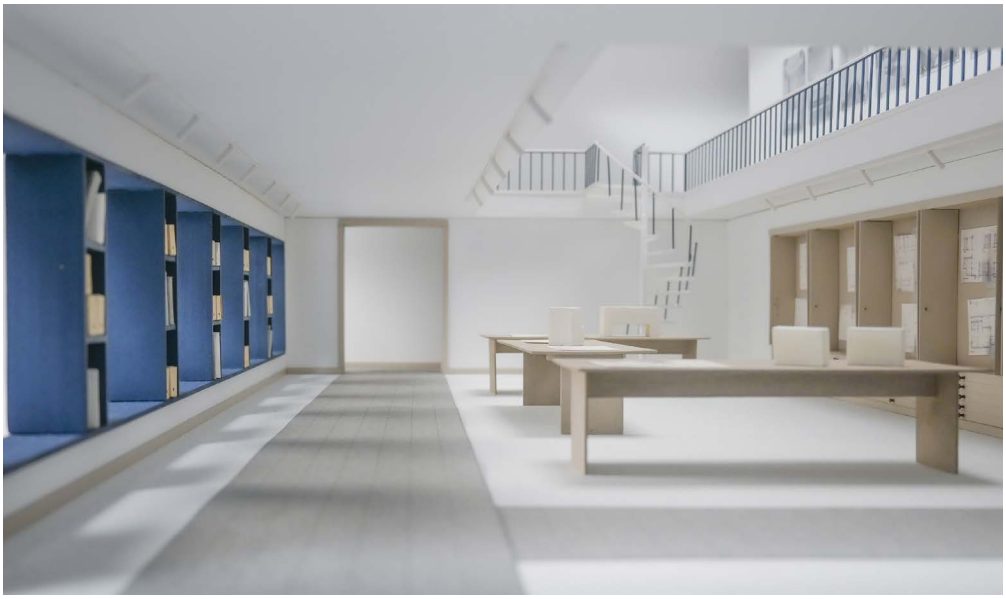
For the lecture configuration the chairs are focussed on one spot where someone can give a lecture using the tables and cabinets to show work.



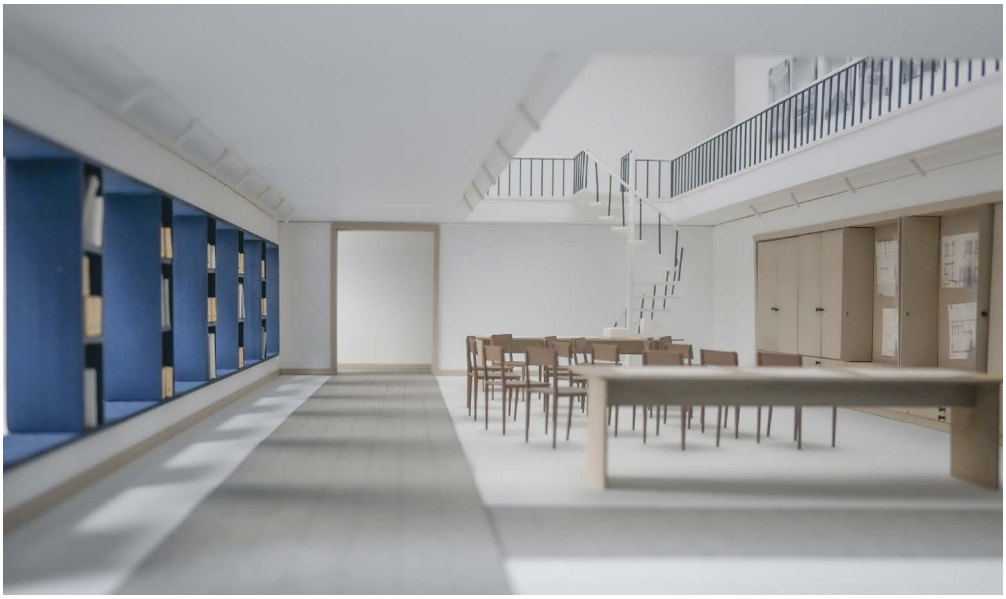
Lecture configuration



Study configuration



Expo configuration

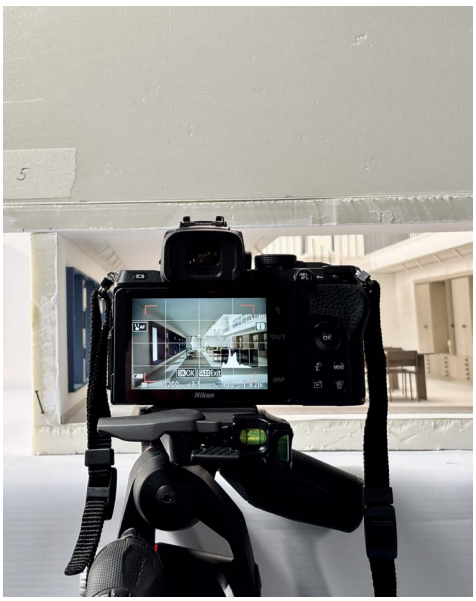


Lecture configuration

Photography process

The photography process took a considerable amount of time due to the need for multiple shots of different scenes from the same angles. For each setup, the furniture had to be swapped while keeping the camera in place. After taking three shots from one angle, the process had to be repeated for the other angles. This experience taught me a great deal about the photography process.

Additionally, working with various lighting set-ups and camera settings was a new challenge that I encountered and learned from during this process. Together with the editing of the picture itself.



Camera and light setup

The shot

P1 feedback

With the P1 presentation came the feedback, which was:

Design Quality of the Space:

Is the roof light too large?

Could it be replaced with a ceiling light coming from above?

Consider furnishing the bottom area with smaller pieces at a normal scale that can be opened and closed.

There are currently two large halls, do they really need to be there?

The room feels absent as a piece of architecture, so it's important to consider how light interacts with the space.

Think about the relationship between furniture, shutters, and windows.

Could these elements be integrated as part of the furniture in the space?

Is it possible to make the room a more uniform space?

Why doesn't the furniture extend to the end of the room?

Are pathways necessary?

How much should be done within the room?

What is the attitude toward the use of colours?

All the tables could be placed near the windows, but there are multiple aspects to consider that could enhance the space.

Questions Regarding Heights and Public Building Terms:

Clarify the required heights and terms for public buildings.

Consider the implications of spiral staircases.

How high should the ceilings be?

P1 presentation set-up

Reflection

The second assignment really immersed me in the topic of the architectural archive, an area I hadn't given much thought to before. At first, I was unsure where this project would lead. I had no clear vision for it, and it wasn't until the trip to Antwerp and the introduction to the VAi and the Singel that I began to really understand the potential direction of my work. The visit opened my eyes to the significance of these spaces and how they can shape the way we interact with architecture and history.

What intrigued me most was the idea of public engagement and the openness of an architectural archive. I found myself drawn to the notion that archives, typically seen as private, could become spaces that invite public interaction and participation. However, I wasn't quite sure how this could be realized in the context of an archive. That uncertainty became the starting point for my work

For this assignment, I focused on developing an archival room that would be flexible in its use and oriented toward public functions. I wanted to create a space that could evolve with the needs of its users, rather than being static and uninviting. This approach required me to think deeply about how the space could accommodate a variety of activities while maintaining its function as an archive.

Throughout this process, I was confronted with numerous design challenges that pushed me to rethink basic architectural principles. I had to consider proportions, the relationship between furniture and space, lighting strategies, and sightliness. These elements were all crucial to ensuring the space felt both functional and inviting. I also had to think about how the room could maintain its integrity as an archive while allowing for public interaction, which wasn't always easy to balance.

The feedback I received during this phase was invaluable. Some of the critical points raised were eye-opening, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to rethink certain aspects of my design. It's clear that there are still many challenges ahead, but the process has taught me a lot about the nuances of designing flexible, public-oriented spaces.

Moving forward, I will take these lessons with me into the next phase of the graduation studio. I plan to continue exploring the themes of public engagement, flexibility, and functionality, as they are crucial to the development of a truly effective architectural archive. This assignment has made me more excited about the potential of this project and the impact it could have on how we view and interact with architecture and history in the future.

Personal statement research plan

My interest in architectural archives goes beyond their traditional role as places to store historical documents. I believe the future of these archives lies in making them dynamic, accessible, and multifunctional spaces that actively engage with the public. To achieve this, we need to rethink archives not just as storage or study rooms but as cultural institutions that can influence political and social issues.

A key part of this vision is accessibility and transparency. Architectural archives have often been more focused on scholars and professionals, keeping them somewhat out of reach for the general public. My goal is to open up the archive in a way that captures people's curiosity and invites them to engage with the architectural heritage of Flanders. By designing spaces where everyone can explore and learn from architectural archives, we can make people more aware of architecture's role in shaping our environment and collective identity.

During the visit to the VAI, I noticed the importance of making archives transparent, active spaces, where visitors can observe the process of archival work in action. This hands-on engagement with the collection helps the public to understand the value and impact of these archives in real-time, much like the approach in Sir John Soane's Museum. The museum's display and layout immerse visitors in the collection and create a connection to the objects, which makes the architecture itself part of the story. Similarly, I envision archives as places that show the work being done and the narratives being preserved, encouraging a tangible connection with visitors.

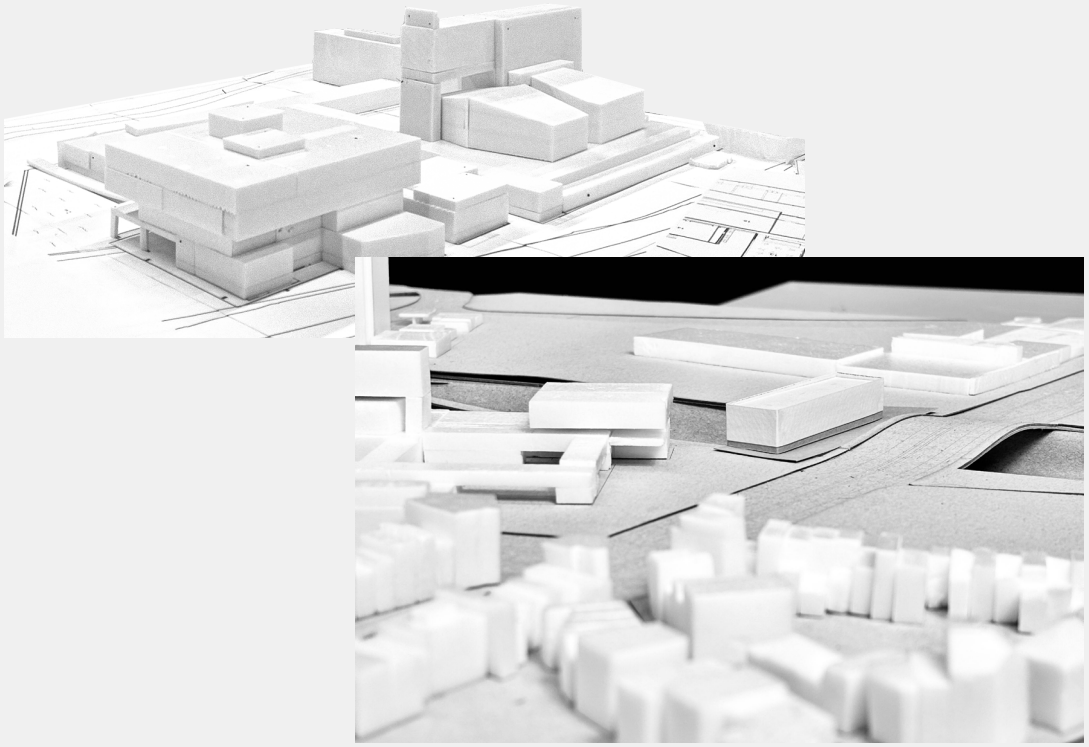
We can look to examples like the Danish Architecture Centre (DAC) in Copenhagen, which successfully engages the public with architecture through interactive exhibitions, workshops, and events that bring shared topics to life. Following this model, I see the VAI archive evolving beyond static, uniform spaces into flexible, interactive environments that focus on exhibiting and interpreting the collection of Flemish architecture. By combining exhibitions with educational programs, workshops, and public events, archives can serve as cultural hubs rather than passive storage spaces.

By doing this, I believe the archive has the potential to address broader societal and political issues. Through thorough curation and design, archives can highlight narratives around national identity, social justice, and political change. For instance, an archive focusing on state-funded projects could prompt conversations about who defines public spaces and why, sparking dialogue around the politics of space and identity.

With these ambitions, the archive will become a multifunctional space, with not only storage- and study rooms but also functions such as event spaces, collaborative work areas, and even community centres, maximizing their use and appeal to a wider audience.

In the end, my vision for architectural archives is one that brings together preservation, public engagement, education, and cultural exchange. By creating spaces that are open, interactive, and multifunctional, archives can become more than places to store history, they can be active institutions that shape contemporary culture, identity, and political thought. As a student, I'm excited about designing spaces that preserve history while shaping how people think about it in the future.

PART 2/4



Week 2.01 / Week 2.10 (P2)

Project for an Architecture Archive

Week 2.01

11-11-2024 / 17-11-2024

A new brief

VAi

The Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) represents architecture as both a subject and a discipline in Dutch-speaking Belgium. It aims to provide a meeting place for everyone who wishes to create, share, and experience architecture through its exhibitions, lectures, debates, events, and publications. The VAi offers a critical framework to consider contemporary Flemish architecture, producing a biennial yearbook and curating the Belgian Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Since 2018, this active engagement with contemporary architecture has been expanded through the acquisition of the Flanders Architectural Archive. This collection, originally developed by the Province of Antwerp but now serving all of Flanders, includes more than 180 private architect archives, such as those of Léon Stynen, Bob Van Reeth - AWG, Christian Kieckens, Bataille-Ibens, and many others.

The relationship between the archive and the VAi's other activities is still developing. This project will examine how the extensive historical material and the technically demanding conditions of the archive can become an integral component of the organisation's broader public mission.

De Singel

The VAi is currently based at De Singel, a modernist cultural campus on the southern periphery of Antwerp's historical centre. In 1958, the Ministry of Public Works commissioned architect Léon Stynen to design the first phase of this ambitious complex: a new Conservatoire as an extension to the Antwerpsche Vlaamsche Muziekschool. It featured a pavilion shaped like an open figure-eight with rooms overlooking two inner courtyards.

In 1979, work began on the second phase, which expanded the complex into the deSingel Cultural Centre, adding performance spaces for music and theatre as well as a television broadcasting centre. In 1987, the building was further extended based on designs by Stynen and his assistant Paul De Meyer, providing additional space for the Conservatoire and a small public foyer.

In 1995, Stéphane Beel developed a masterplan for reorganising and expanding De Singel and the Conservatoire, leading to the 2010 opening of a major extension. This extension now houses the VAi’s office and exhibition hall.

A New Home

With the addition of the archive, the VAi has outgrown its current facilities. The archive is housed in a separate building in central Antwerp, which is unsuitable for its purposes. In 2021, the VAi launched a competition through the Flanders Bouwmeester Open Call to create a new home for itself within the redundant Saint Hubertus Church in Berchem, Antwerp.

Although a competition winner was selected, the project was abandoned due to costs and unclear political motives.

This history is the starting point for our project. The VAi needs a new home. Our proposal begins by leveraging the existing relationships and synergies between the VAi and De Singel. This approach could engage both institutions while rethinking the complex's condition and environment.

De Singel, while an important arts venue, has an introverted character and underutilised public spaces. Abandoned facilities, such as the television studios, and large, empty circulation areas reflect the need for a renewed sense of purpose. The Beel extension, despite its ambitions, exacerbates these issues by failing to resolve the complex's ambiguous relationship with the city and its surroundings.

To Begin

We ask you to explore, document, and represent De Singel as both a historical and situated entity. Your task is to describe its relationship with its context—past, present, and potential future developments. Over the coming weeks, you will refine your project brief and test your intervention's scale and possibilities.

Interiors

By P2, we expect you to present a strategic direction and an outline for your proposals through models and drawings. Your final proposal should address the scales of interior, building, city, and landscape by the conclusion of the course.

<u>Public Areas</u>

- Reception and counter: 100 m² (including sanitary facilities and seating)
- Exhibition/multifunctional space: 200 m²
- Reading room: 200 m² (separate from the library, includes a group study room)
- Library: 200 m² (books and visitors' workstations)
- Total: 700 m²

<u>Staff Areas</u>

- Workspace: 300 m² (including offices, focus areas, and meeting rooms)
- Meeting rooms: 80 m² (large), 30 m² (small)
- Support facilities: 150 m² (kitchen, bathrooms, dressing rooms)
- Total: 560 m²

<u>Archive Areas</u>

- Storage and processing spaces: 4,000 m², including:
- Packaging materials: 120 m²
- Loading/unloading: 150 m²
- Emergency storage: 100 m²
- Triage, quarantine, and cleaning: 240 m²
- Digitisation, restoration, and other workspaces: 180 m²
- Depot storage: 2,500 m²
- The archive must account for specific climate conditions for paper and photographs, along with provisions for bulk storage and visible depots.

A new brief

In week 2.01, we received a new brief focused on developing a proposal for an architectural archive for the VAi. After the site visit, exploring various archives, and reflecting on the lessons learned from the first assignment, I felt motivated to create a well-thought-out and unique proposal.

To begin this process, I analysed the assignment in detail, developing a mission and problem statement, as well as defining location and archive requirements to guide and narrow my focus. Alongside this individual effort, we also began a group analysis of deSingel in Antwerp, starting with the creation of a model of the building itself, a task I actively contributed to.

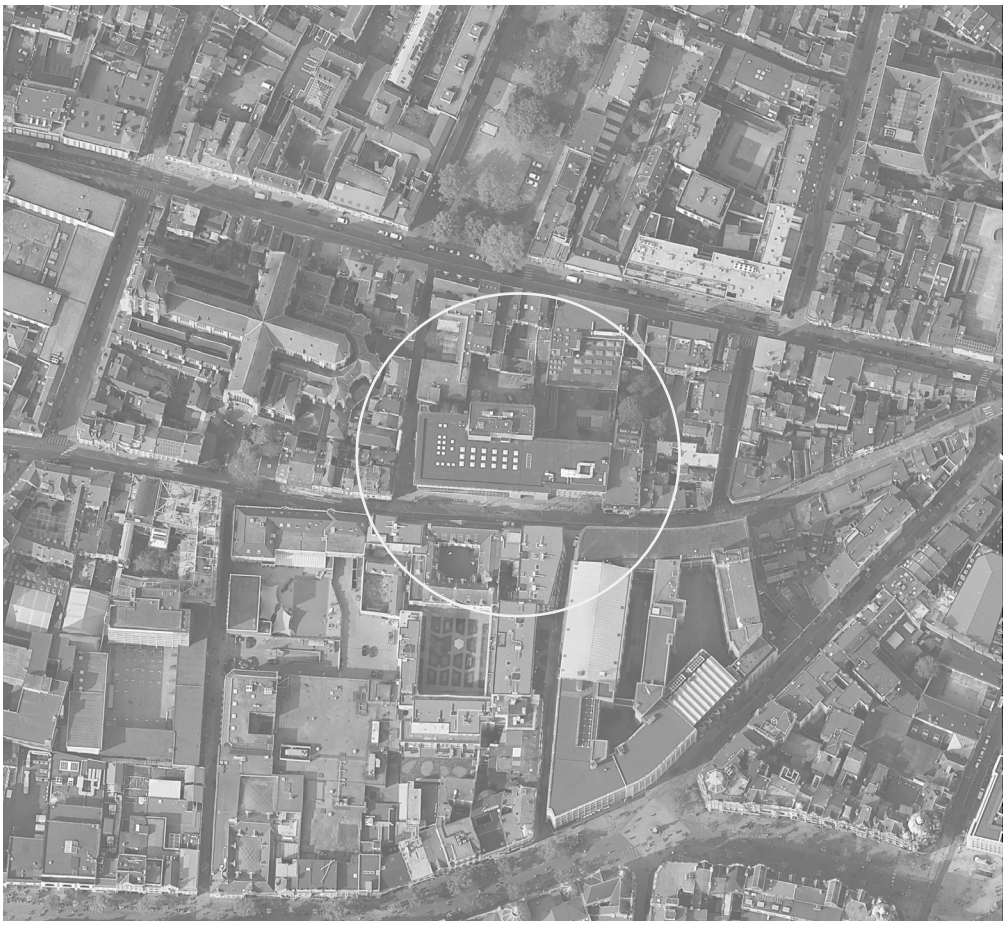
This combination of individual research and collaborative work provided a strong foundation for addressing the complexities of the assignment and moving towards a meaningful design proposal.

A picture from the inside of deSingel looking out on the facade

Mission and problem statement

The VAi's mission really speaks to me because it shows how important architecture is in preserving and sharing cultural heritage. Managing such a unique and growing collection of archives, while also making it accessible to both experts and the general public, is a responsibility that highlights the value of architecture in our lives. I appreciate how the VAi goes beyond just preservation by actively engaging people through debates, lectures, and exhibitions to encourage discussions about well-designed environments.

However, the current limitations faced by the VAi, such as the inadequate depot and the inefficiencies caused by operating across two locations, reveal the urgent need for a purpose-built facility. A new building is not just about solving practical issues but also about embodying the prestige and innovation of Flemish and Brussels architecture. I see this as an opportunity to design a space that honours the VAi's mission, provides optimal conditions for preserving and showcasing its valuable collection, and supports its staff in their critical work. Such a project would serve as a landmark for the region's architectural identity and a hub for inspiration and collaboration.



Satellite image of the VAi archive in the city centre of Antwerp

Location requirements

The VAi's relationship with deSingel is clearly an important part of its public engagement, with events, exhibitions, and lectures relying on the facilities and collaboration within the cultural campus. This proximity feels essential to keep the connection strong and to maintain the value that the VAi brings to the interdisciplinary nature of the campus. It's hard to imagine the VAi thriving without being close to deSingel, as the two seem to complement each other so well.

That said, the idea of placing a new archive within deSingel itself doesn't seem realistic. The building already has a full program and architectural limitations that make it tough to see how such a specific function could fit in without major compromises. Personally, I think it makes more sense to look at the direct surroundings, where the VAi can still stay connected to deSingel but have the space to create something purpose-built for its needs.

It's not a simple task, though. With so many other plans in the area, like the expansions of Antwerp Expo and the Conservatory's library, it feels like a balancing act between respecting what's already there and finding a solution that works for everyone. But maybe that challenge is also part of the opportunity—to create something that both fits in and stands out.

The hallways of deSingel

Site; De Singel

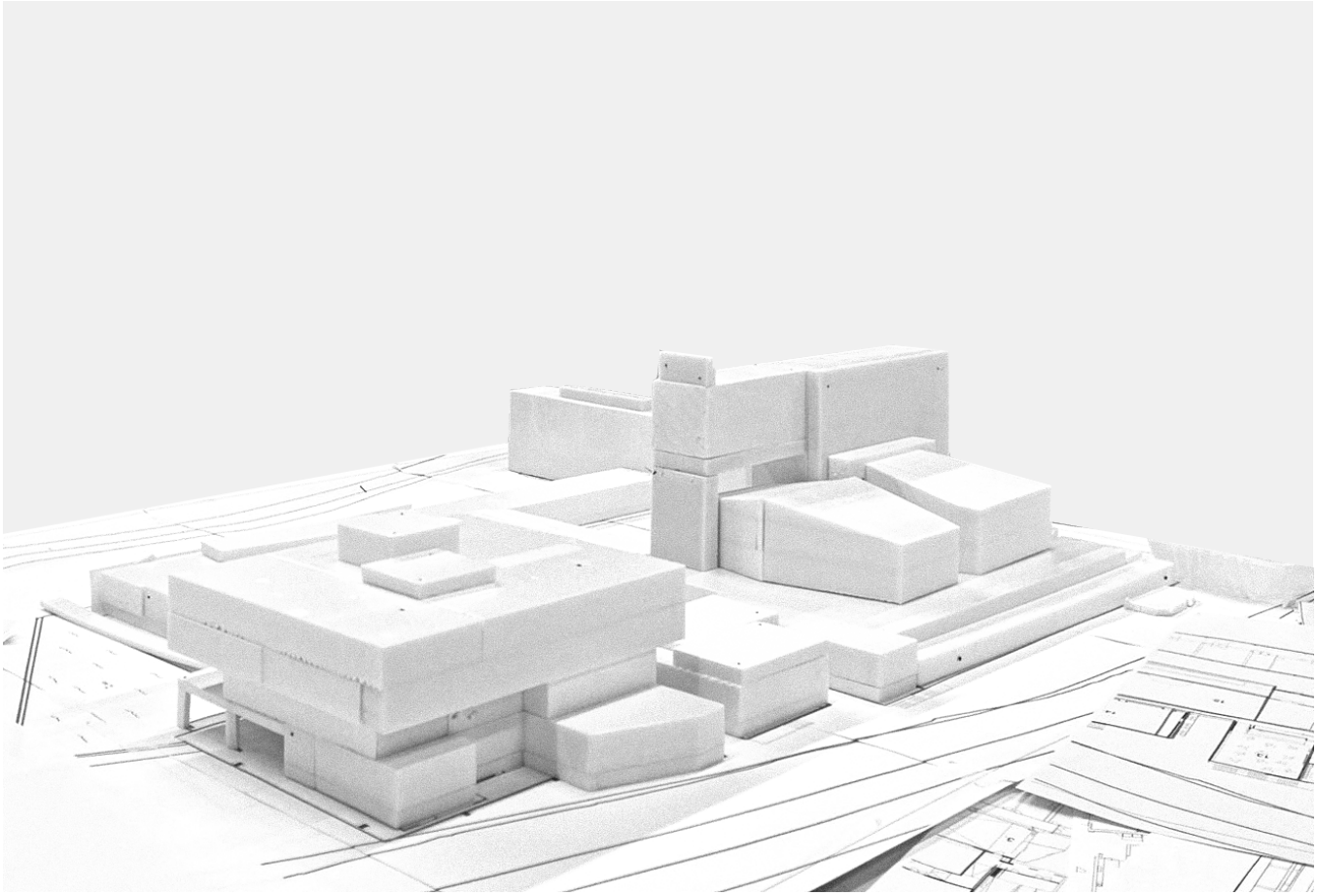
De Singel in Antwerp is positioned alongside the R1 highway, creating a dynamic but challenging urban context. The surrounding area is characterized by fragmented spaces dominated by infrastructure, including the highway and nearby railway, which define much of the spatial experience. Despite these barriers, green spaces like the Ringpark act as buffers, providing some relief from the noise and visual impact of the infrastructure. Architecturally, De Singel is a Brutalist structure, designed with bold forms and a focus on functionality, standing in contrast to the surrounding mix of residential and office buildings. Its large scale and cultural significance make it a landmark, but its integration with the surrounding urban fabric is limited, as the highway and disconnected layout create physical and visual separation. The area reflects a tension between urban infrastructure, cultural identity, and the need for accessible and cohesive public spaces.

Satellite image of deSingel, with the heavy infrastructure in the area

Model; De Singel

As part of the group research, I took on the task of contributing to the 1:250 model of deSingel. This model was created to help those interested in working with deSingel gain a clearer understanding of its massing and overall design.

DeSingel's architecture is the result of multiple construction phases, each led by different designers. Building the model provided an opportunity to grasp this layered design process in a hands-on way. Having a physical model in front of me made it easier to appreciate how the building evolved over time and how these phases have shaped its identity. This process not only deepened my understanding of the building but also reinforced the importance of analysing context and history when working with existing structures.



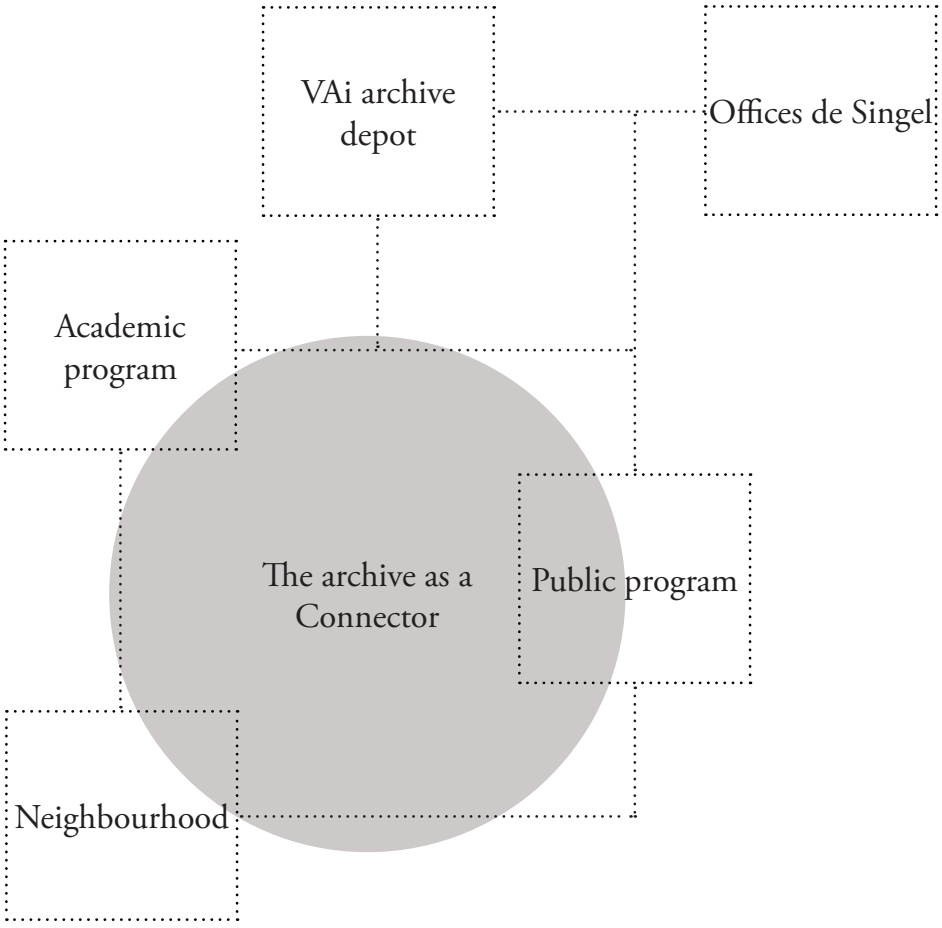
Physical model of deSingel building

The archive

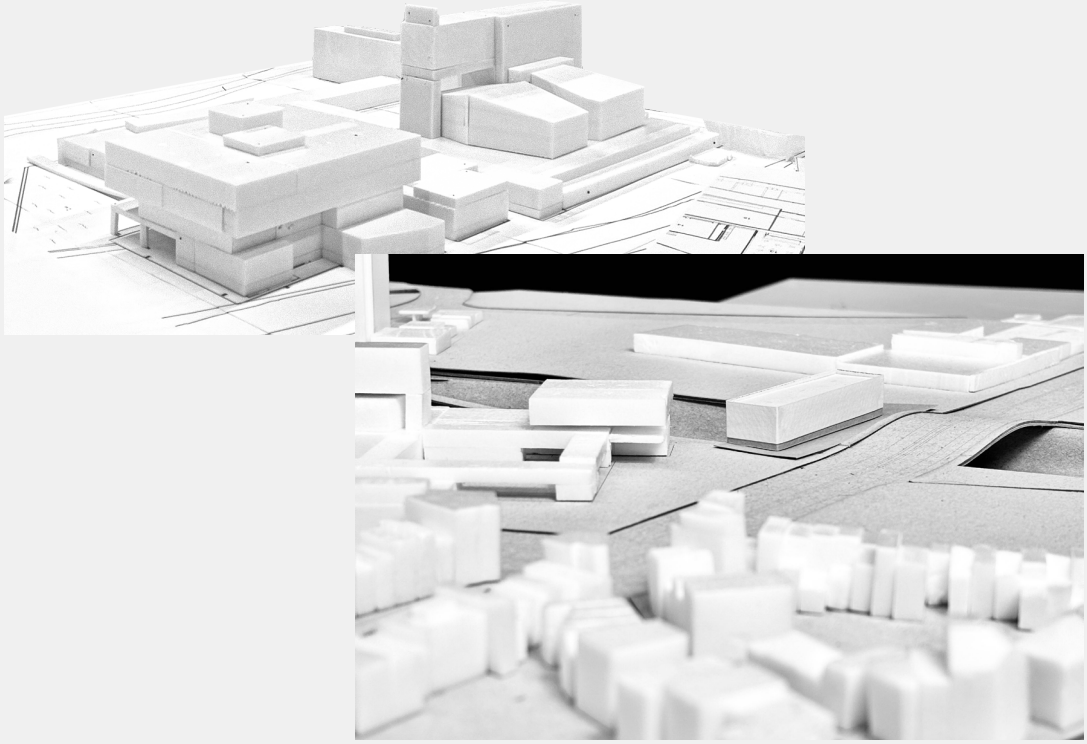
I really like the idea of turning the VAi's new archive into more than just a storage space. To me, it should be a place where people can actually experience architecture, not just preserve it. Thinking about spaces like the DAC in Copenhagen, I'd love to design something that combines the practical side of an archive with a public program that makes architecture accessible and interesting for everyone.

This isn't just about keeping the collection safe, it's about creating a place where people can connect with the architectural heritage of Flanders and Brussels. It feels like an opportunity to put that heritage on the map, both for the local community and internationally, while adding to Antwerp's cultural scene.

For my proposal, I want to focus on how the building can be both functional and inviting. It should be a place where students, researchers, and the public can come together, explore, and learn. I think that's how an archive like this can really make an impact, not just by preserving the past but by inspiring the present and future.



A diagram showing my vision for the program of the VAi archive



Week 2.02

18-11-2024 / 24-11-2024

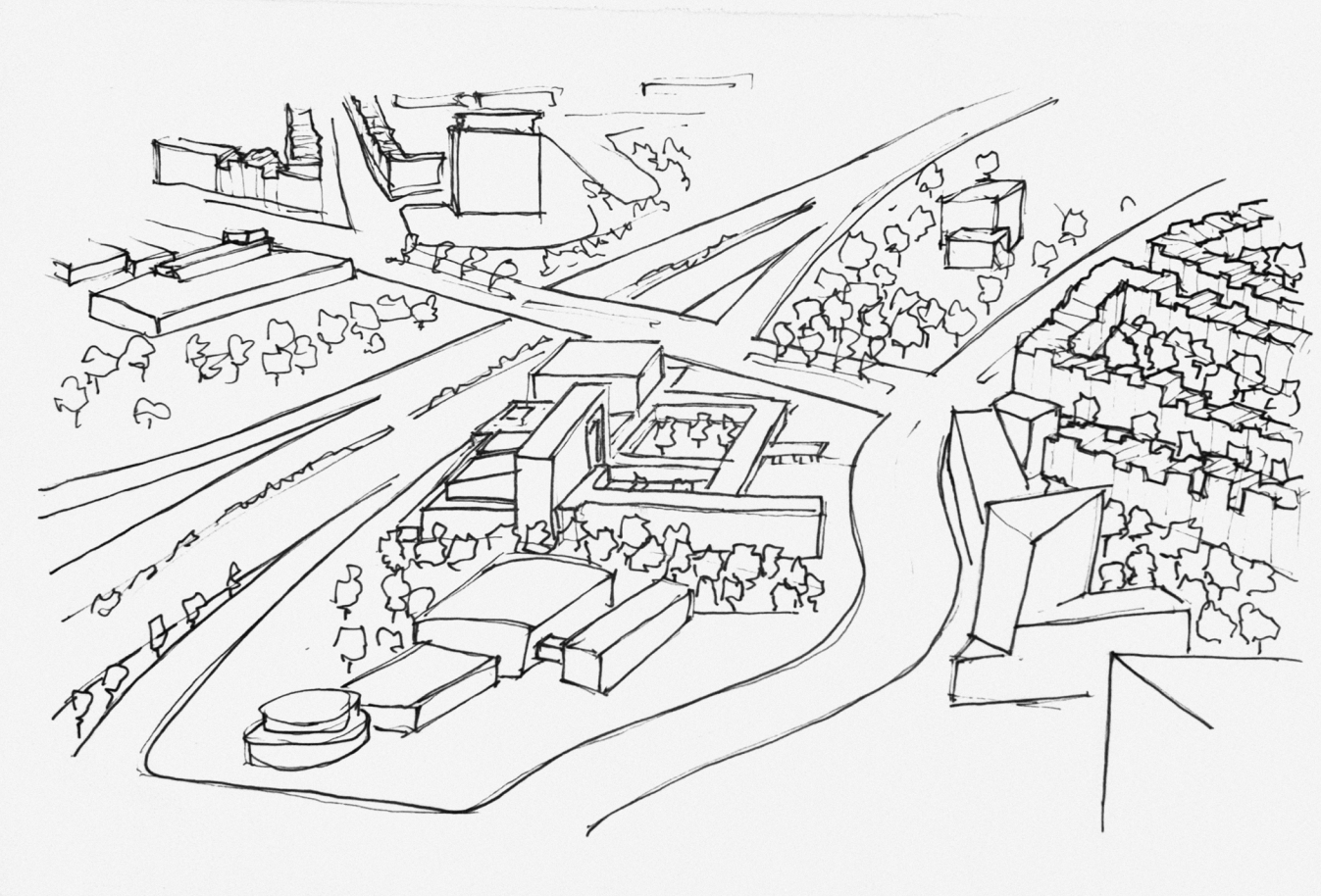
Location proposal

This week, I started exploring potential locations for the archive. With the goals and requirements roughly outlined last week, I already had some initial ideas about what the archive could be and how it might function.

I began by analysing deSingel and its surroundings, focusing on where the opportunities might lie. To me, understanding the context is one of the most important steps in a project like this. I usually do this by sketching the environment and the existing buildings. Sketching helps me break down what's there, building typologies, infrastructure, greenery, and how these elements interact with one another. It's a way of starting to understand how these pieces influence the space and how they might shape the project.

From here, I start to analyse and highlight the elements I find most interesting or important. For example, how the building might respond to deSingel's existing architecture or how it could fit into the cultural campus without overpowering it. I let these observations guide my thinking, and only after this do I begin considering specific locations and concepts. This process feels natural to me because it allows the site and its context to shape the ideas, rather than imposing something that doesn't align with the environment.

Sketch of DeSingel and its surroundings



While analyzing the environment, a few key elements really stood out to me. The first, which I had already noted the week before, is the highway. To me, it feels like this massive piece of infrastructure creates a harsh division that makes deSingel feel less visually and physically accessible. It seems natural to try to improve the connection between both sides of the highway. This thought became even clearer when I noticed the dense neighborhoods on the right-hand side and the top left. These areas feel completely disconnected from each other because of the highway cutting through them. Since I'm already leaning towards incorporating a more public program, this idea of bridging the gap feels like something worth exploring further.

Another element that caught my attention is the green corridor that deSingel is technically part of—but doesn't fully embrace. Compared to other parts of the corridor, deSingel and its surroundings seem to lack greenery. I think an intervention here, introducing more green spaces, could enhance both the area's atmosphere and its public appeal.

To sum it up, my current focus points are:

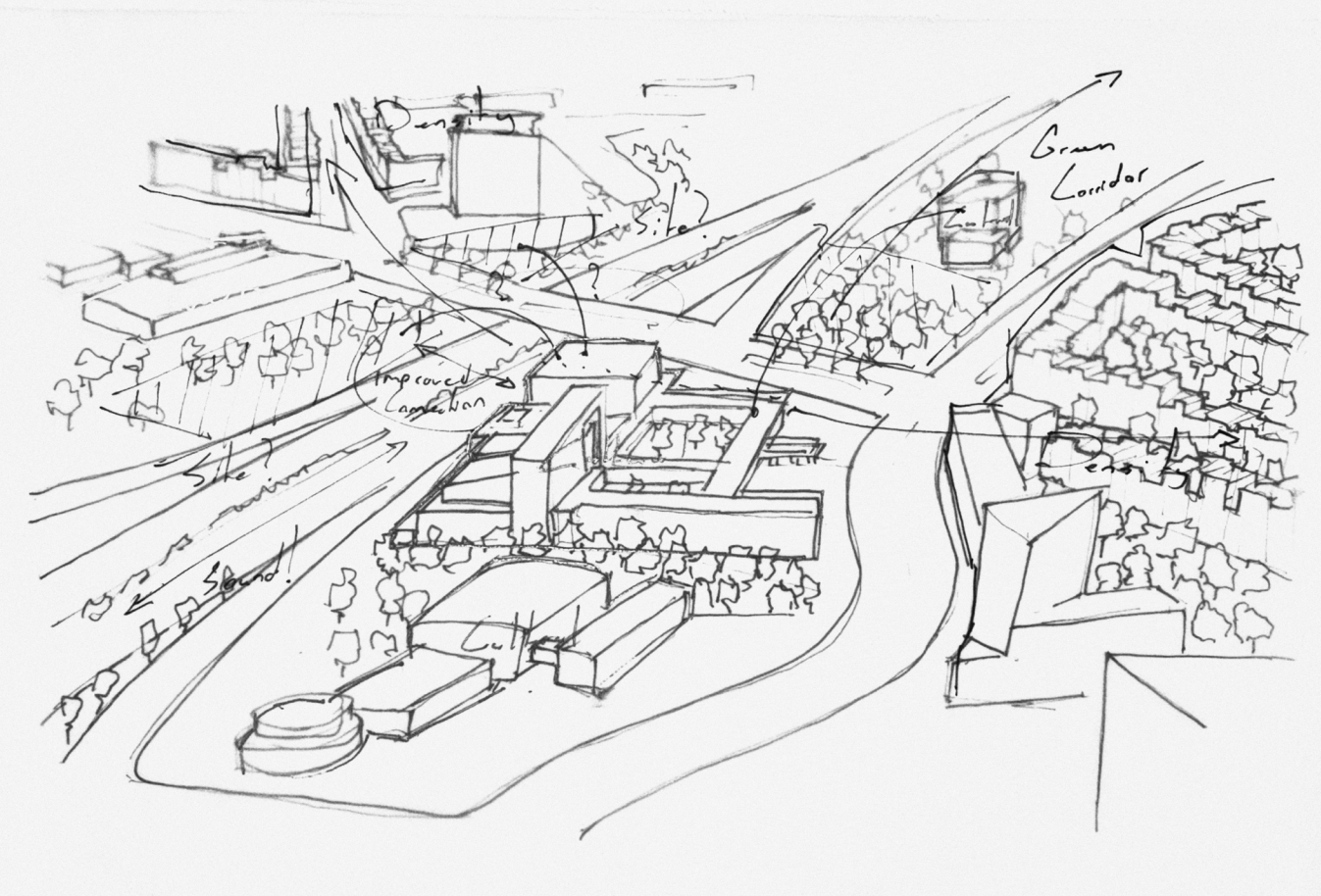
- Adding greenery to the site.

- Creating stronger connections within the urban fabric.

- Developing a program that prioritizes public engagement.

These elements feel connected, and I'm excited to explore how they can come together to shape the archive proposal.

Same sketch of DeSingel and its surroundings with analysing remarks overlaid on top



Concepts

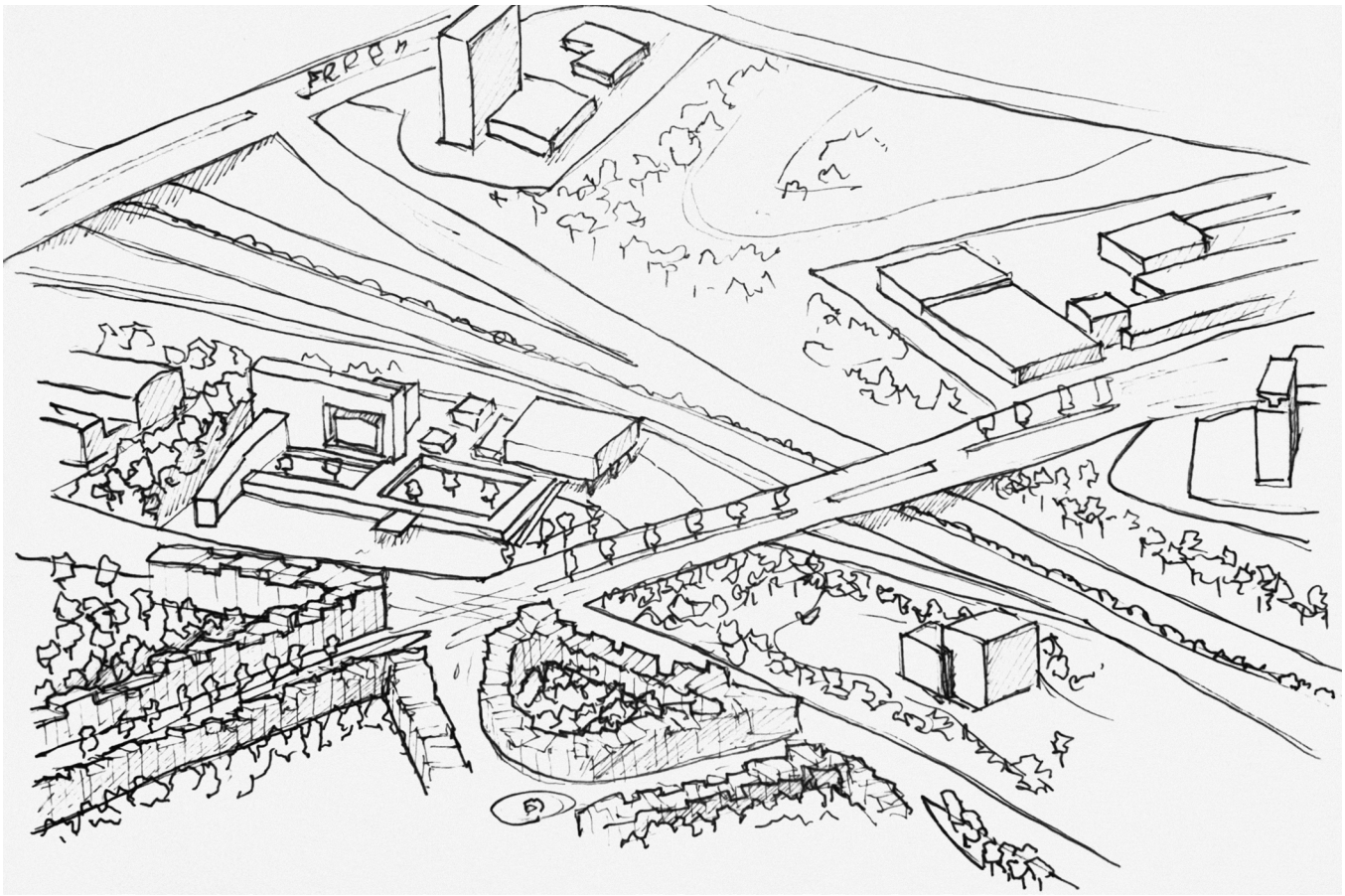
After roughly analysing the area, I started thinking about concepts that align with both my personal interests and the VAi's assignment. I had already expressed an interest in working with a new mass because I believe the solution lies there. To me, a new mass is the most sustainable, future-proof, and realistic way to create a proposal for the new archive.

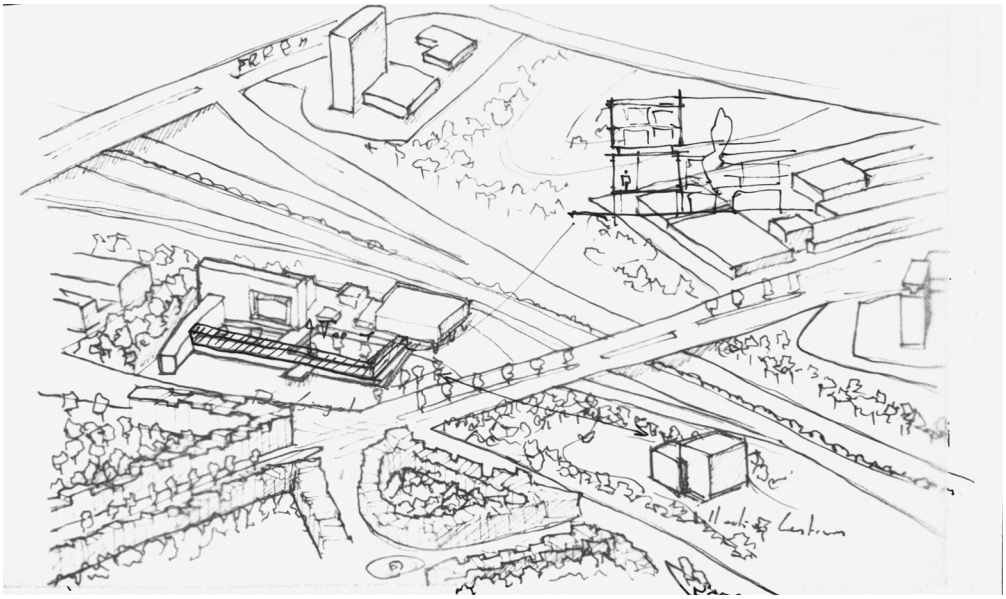
With this in mind, I sketched out three initial concepts.

The first concept involves adding a new mass on top of the lower part of deSingel, where the VAi and its archive would be housed. While this fits with my idea of working with a new mass, it doesn't address my interest in improving the urban fabric or adding greenery to the surroundings.

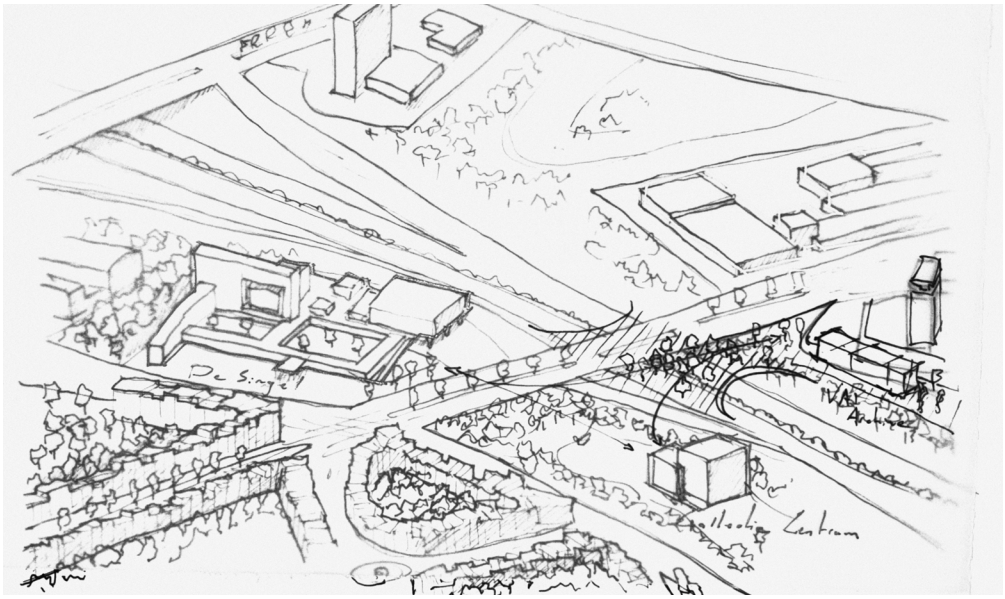
The second and third concepts are similar. Both involve widening the current bridge over the highway, topping it with a park, and placing the archive across the highway. This approach would improve the crossing, connect the two separated neighbourhoods, and integrate public greenery into the design. However, the distance between deSingel and the new archive could be an issue, potentially making the connection less practical.

Each concept has its strengths and weaknesses, but I feel drawn to the ones that explore broader urban connections and public engagement. These ideas feel more in line with my personal approach to architecture and the values of the VAi.

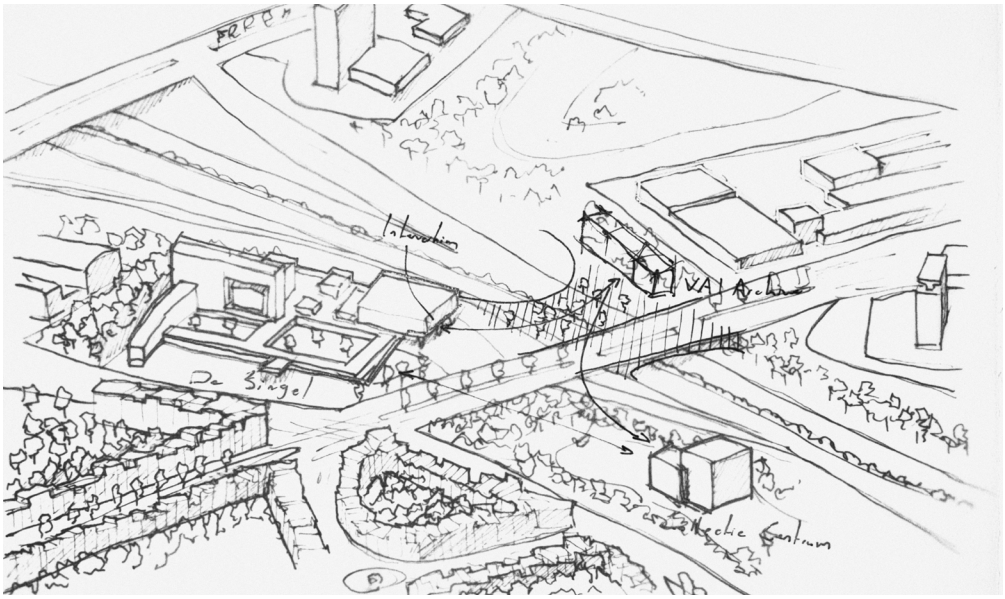




Concept 1: Topping up deSingel



Concept 2: Crossing the highway



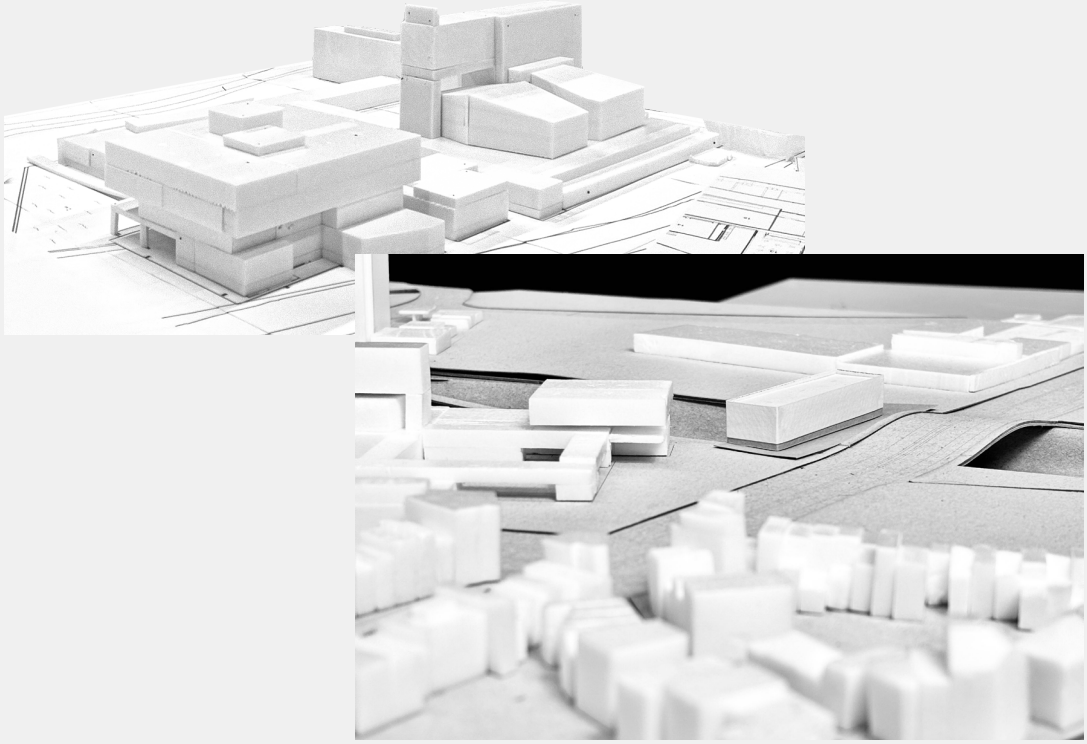
Concept 3: Crossing the highway

Pictures

These pictures were really helpful for sketching the environment and understanding the impact of the highway. They clearly show the position of deSingel in its context but also highlight how the building masses come to an abrupt stop at the highway. To me, this creates a harsh and unnatural separation.

This division feels completely at odds with the function of deSingel as a cultural hub and the public nature of the VAi's archive program. It makes me think that any proposal for the archive should address this separation and work towards reconnecting the urban fabric. The highway is not just a barrier; it's a missed opportunity to create a more cohesive and accessible space for people.

Pictures of interest for my proposal



Week 2.03

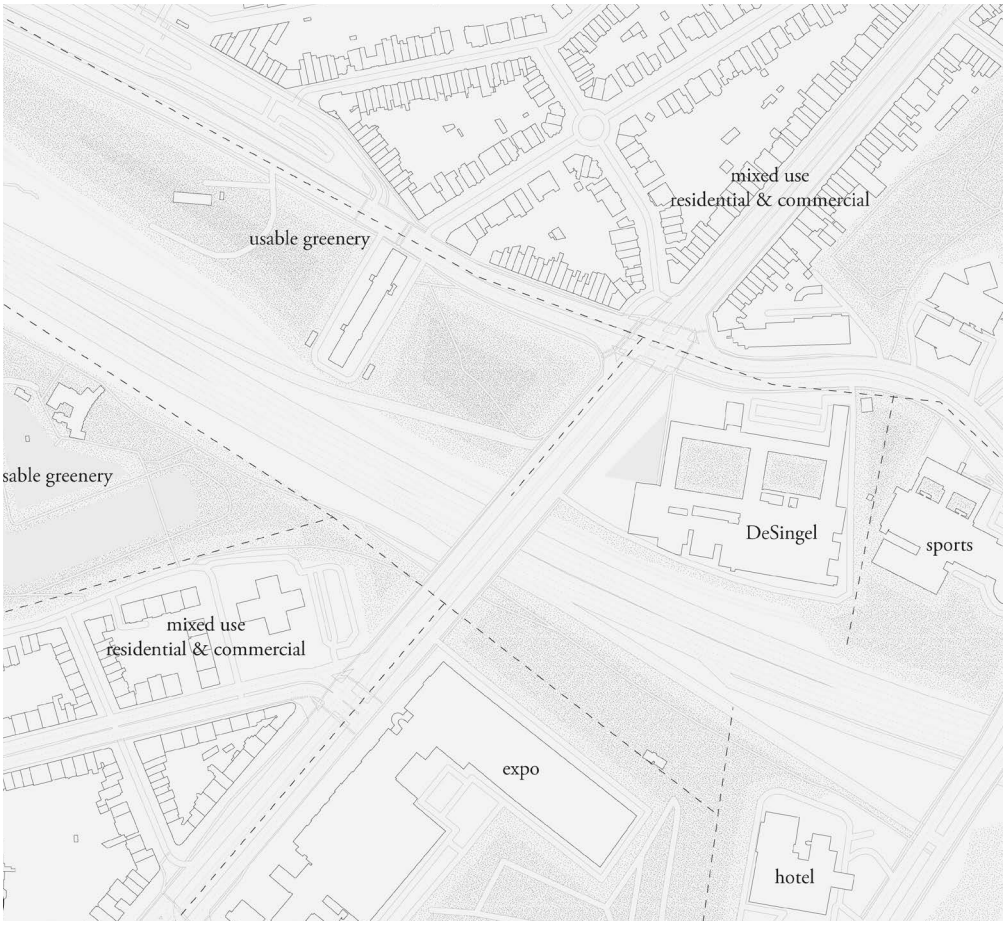
25-11-2024/01-12-2024

Settling for a location

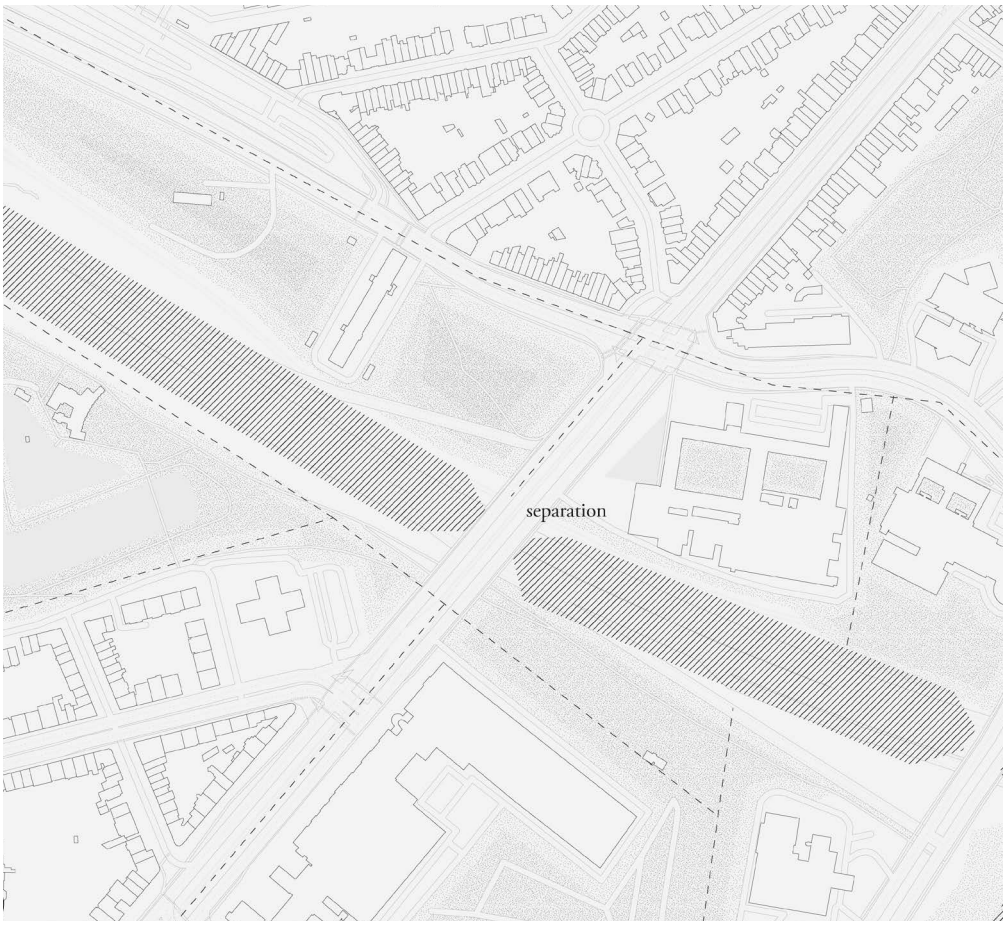
Building on the concept sketches from the previous week, I set a clear goal for myself this week: to choose a final location and commit to it. The concepts and initial thoughts I shared were well-received by the tutors, especially the idea of creating a bridge to better connect the separated neighbourhoods. This feedback evolved into a more ambitious concept, making the building itself part of the bridge. This approach would not only reconnect the urban fabric but also extend the massing of the surrounding buildings, creating a stronger link between the two neighbourhoods.

Initially, I was cautious about this concept because of the large spans involved with the highway and railway near DeSingel, they are no small challenge. To better explain my idea, I created a series of maps to illustrate the logic behind this site and explain why positioning the archive at this location makes sense.

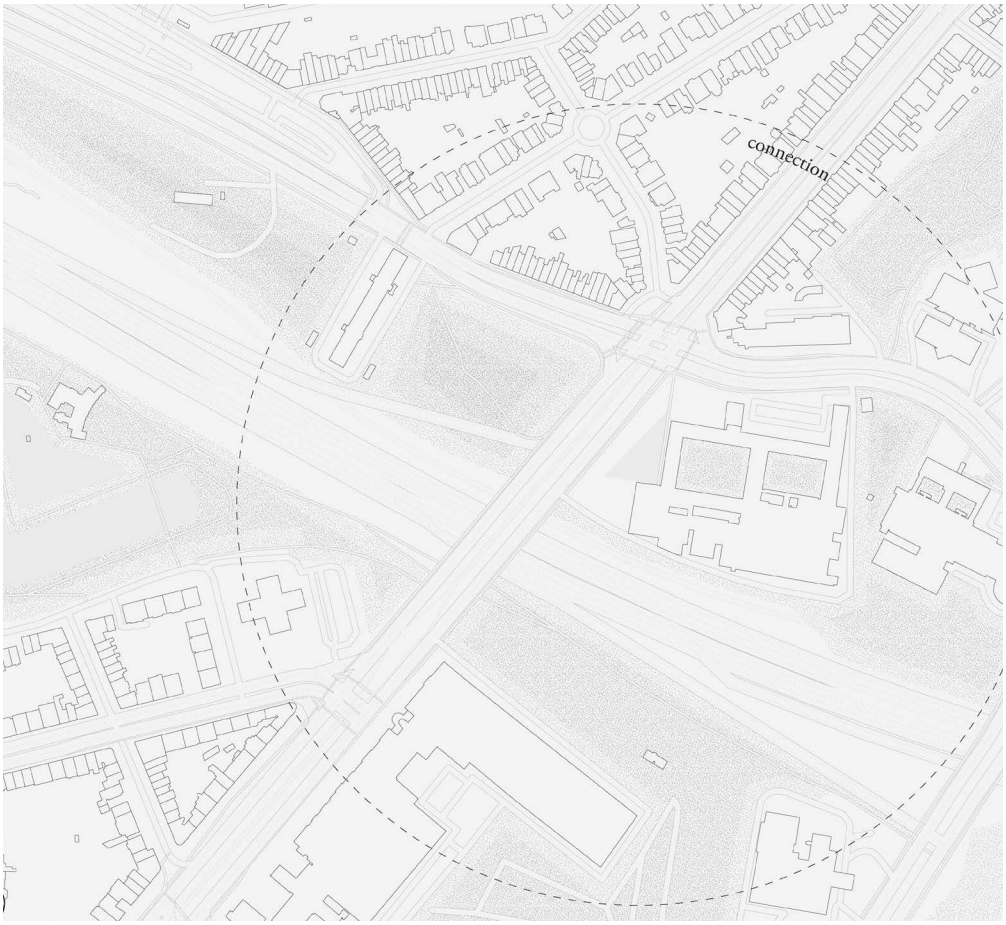
In parallel, I started exploring what it means to design a building as a bridge, particularly in structural terms. Questions like "Is the span feasible?" and "What would this mean for the structure in concrete or steel?" began shaping my analysis and research. These explorations are forming the foundation for the archive proposal, both conceptually and technically.



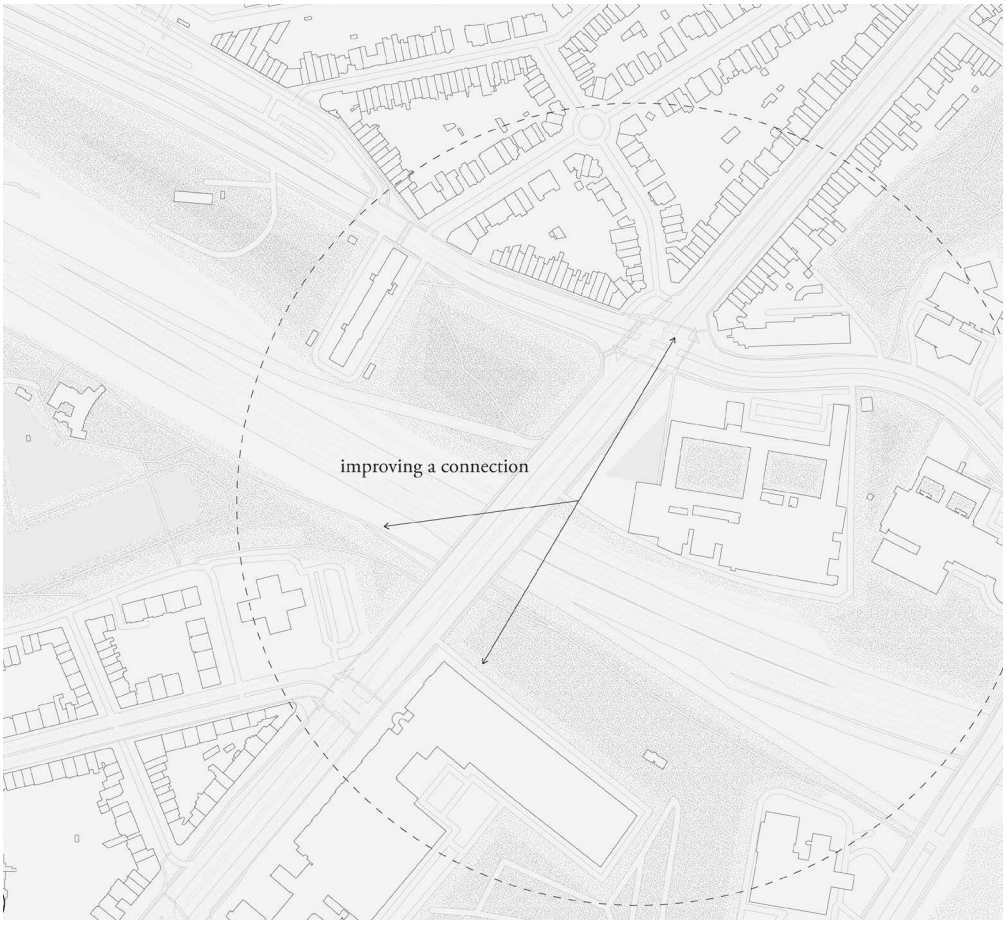
Analysing neighbourhoods, highlighting where the dense areas are, and areas with recreation, commercial or business



The challenge in this area, massive infrastructure which separates the area



DeSingel with potential to be a connector



A place for intervention to improve the connection between the two sides

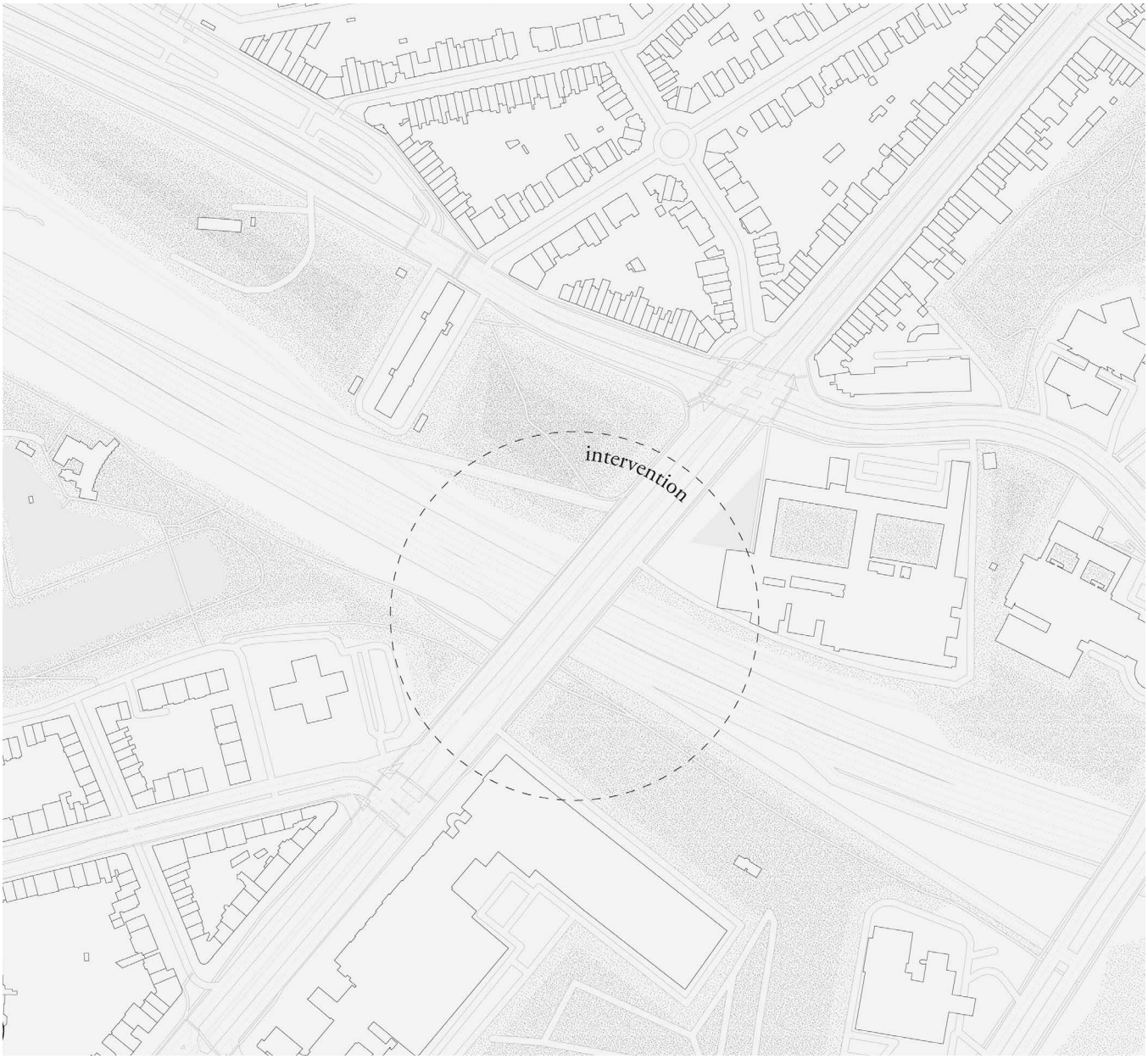
Site location

With the steps I've taken so far, it feels logical and natural to choose this location for an intervention. Placing the archive here makes sense because it aligns with my goal of addressing the harsh separation caused by the highway and reconnecting the urban fabric.

The archive wouldn't just be a functional space for storage and research but a new focal point with a public program that complements deSingel's existing cultural activities. By tying the two together, this intervention would strengthen the role of the area as a vibrant cultural hub.

This choice also reflects my interest in creating spaces that engage with their surroundings. The archive wouldn't be an isolated building but a bridge, both physically and conceptually, between the neighbourhoods, improving access and continuity in the urban landscape. This dual focus on public accessibility and urban connectivity feels like the right direction to take, both for the archive's mission and for the long-term development of the area.

The final location



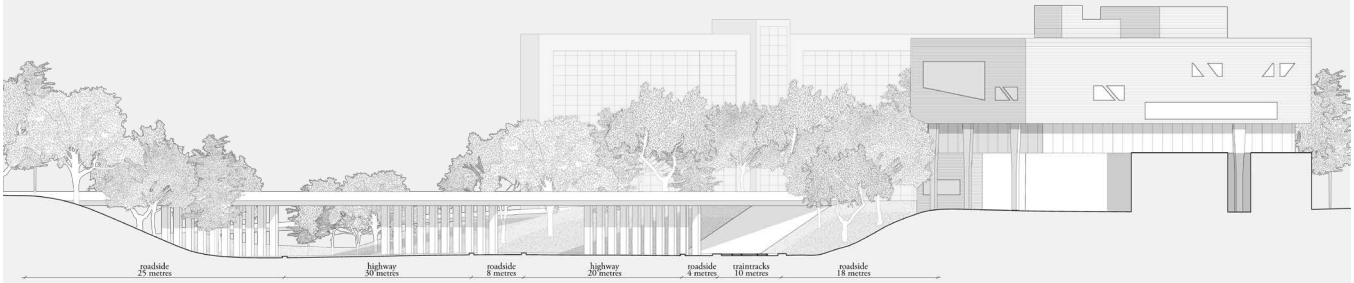
Structural translation

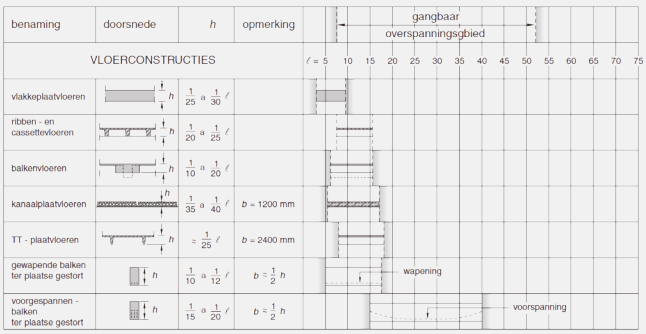
The first thing I wanted to address with this location was understanding the structural implications of building over a highway. To do this, I created a site section and measured the distances involved. This allowed me to get a clearer picture of what kind of spans I'd be dealing with and how they might influence the design.

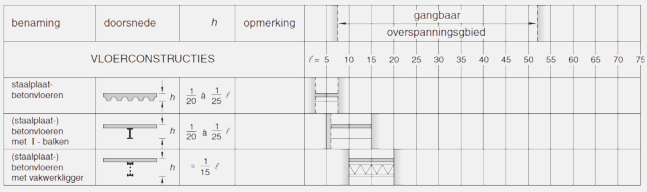
The longest span turned out to be around 30 metres. To assess whether this is feasible, I researched general structural principles for concrete and steel. From what I've found, this distance is achievable using either a pre-tensioned concrete beam or a steel truss system. This initial analysis gave me confidence that the concept of bridging the highway is structurally possible and opened up opportunities for further exploration.

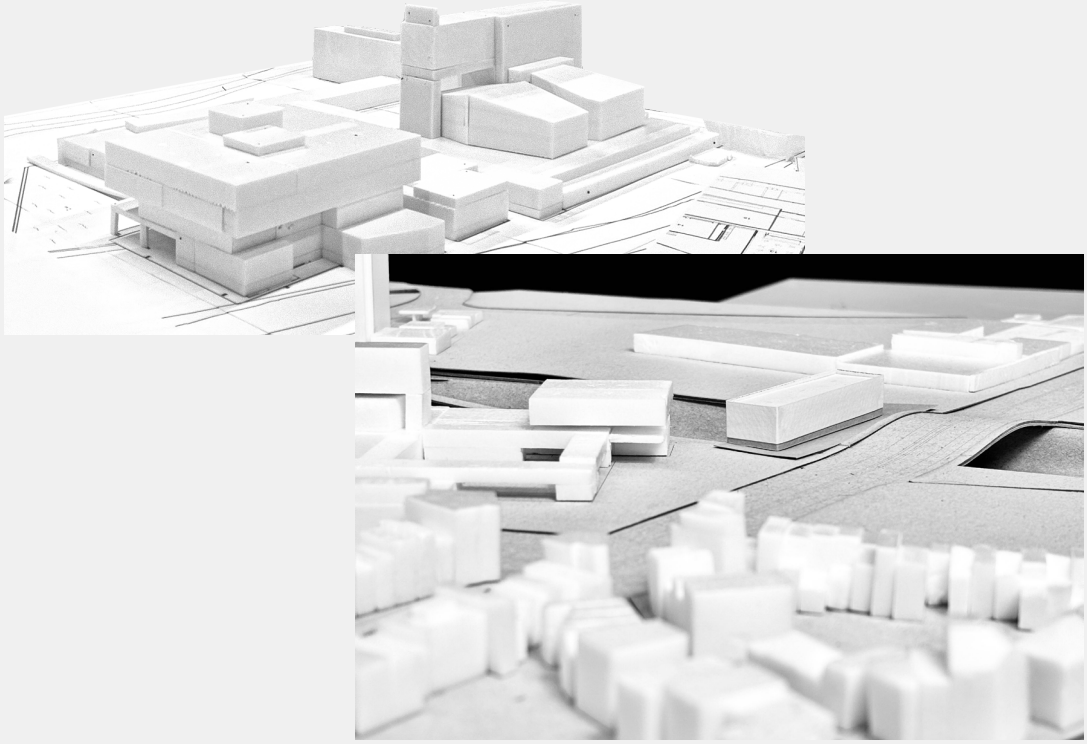
In conclusion, this location feels like the right choice for the intervention. It allows for a meaningful connection between neighbourhoods, ties into DeSingel's public program, and is structurally feasible. The archive will serve not only as a functional space but also as a bridge that enhances both the urban fabric and the cultural identity of the area.

Section of the location with technical information









Week 2.04

02-11-2024/08-12-2024

Massing

After settling on a location, the next logical step was to experiment with massing. At this stage, I was still unsure whether to position the building directly next to deSingel or across the street. Additionally, I wasn't certain about the form of the building, whether it should be short, tall, long, or something else entirely. There were numerous possibilities to explore.

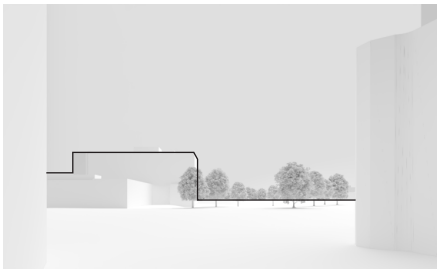
The massing studies helped me refine my direction. There was no clear-cut right or wrong approach; it felt more intuitive, trusting my instincts to judge which option worked best in terms of its urban impact. I wanted to find a mass that would blend with the existing context while enhancing the connection between the two neighbourhoods. I tested four different concepts, with concept 4 standing out as the most promising.

This massing seemed to best continue the building masses in the area, creating a smooth transition between urban zones. The close proximity to deSingel also creates an intimate plaza, which could benefit both deSingel and the new archive. This would form a new public space where people could gather and engage with the surrounding cultural atmosphere.

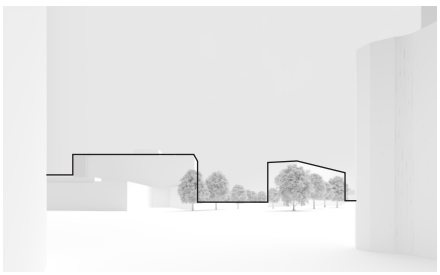
Bosmanslei

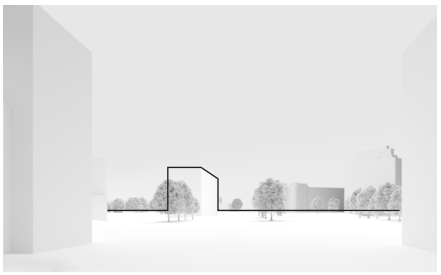
Jan van Rijswijcklaan

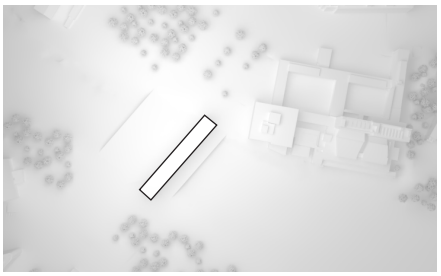
Top view



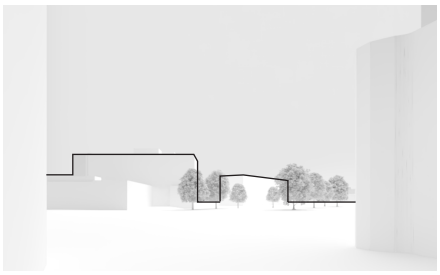
Existing

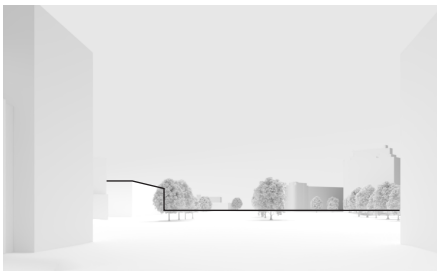


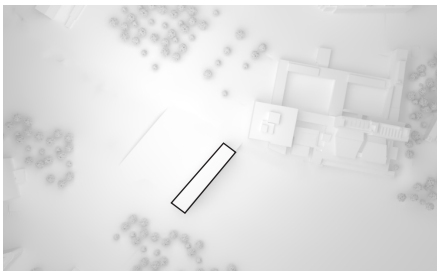




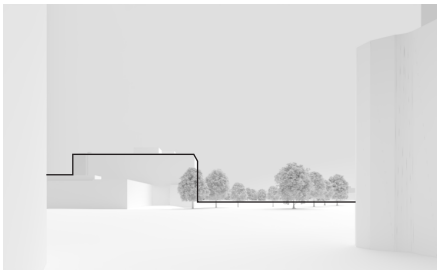
Concept 1

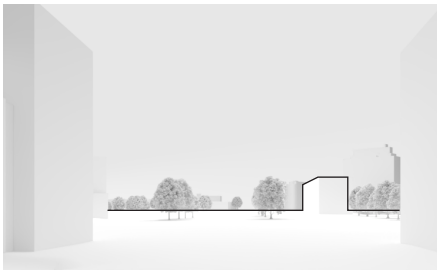


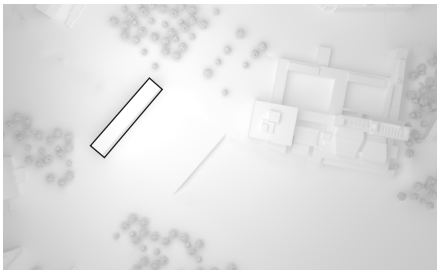




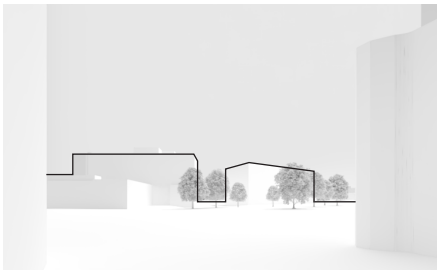
Concept 2

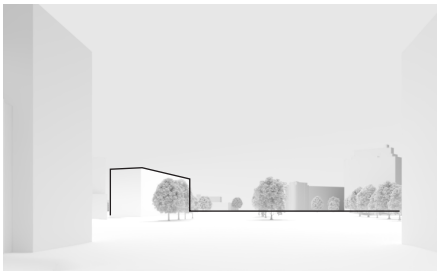


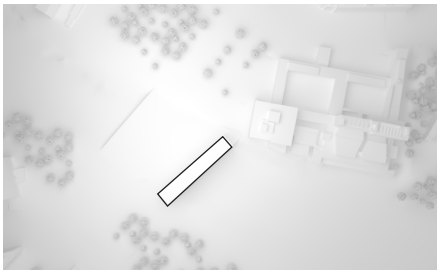




Concept 3





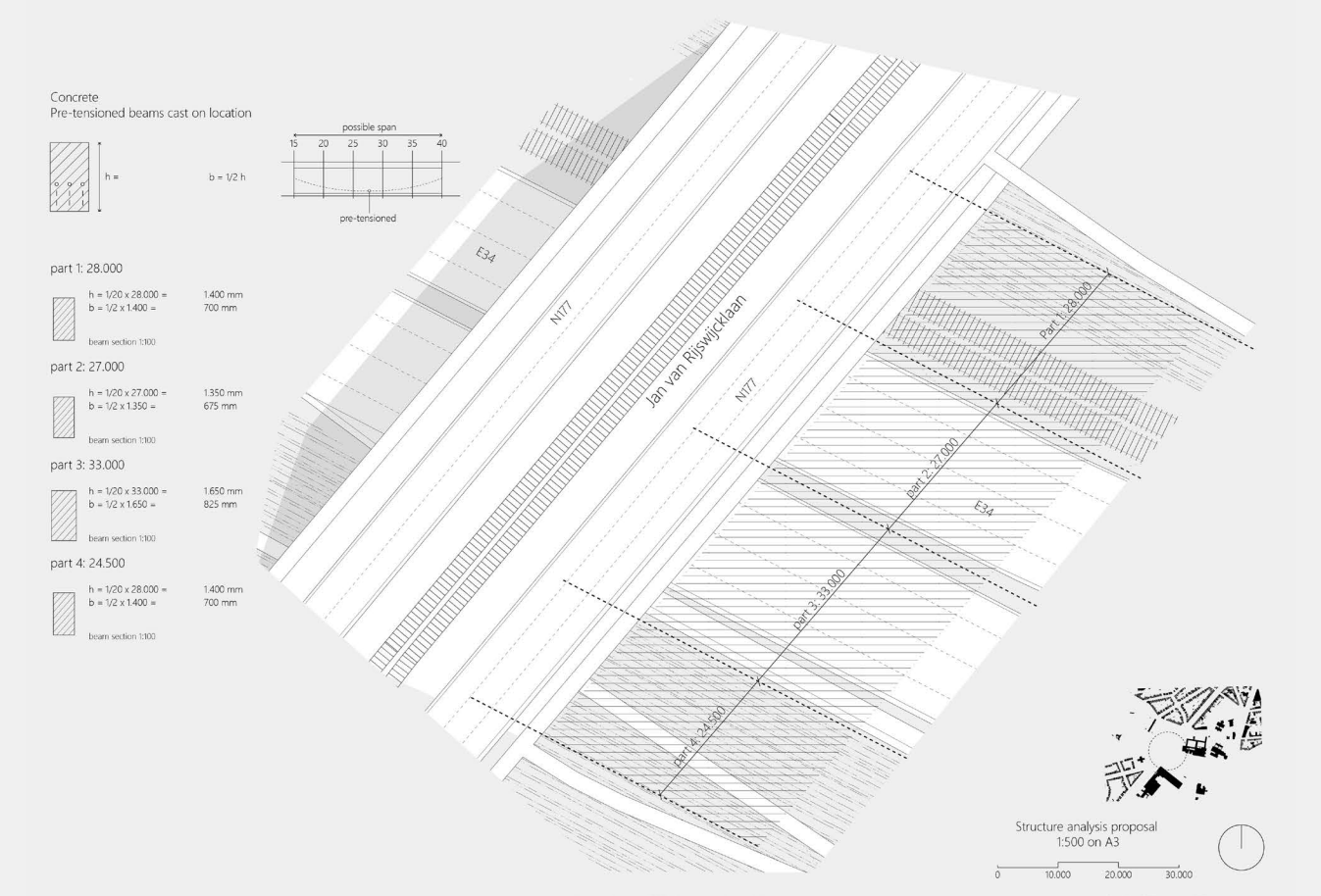


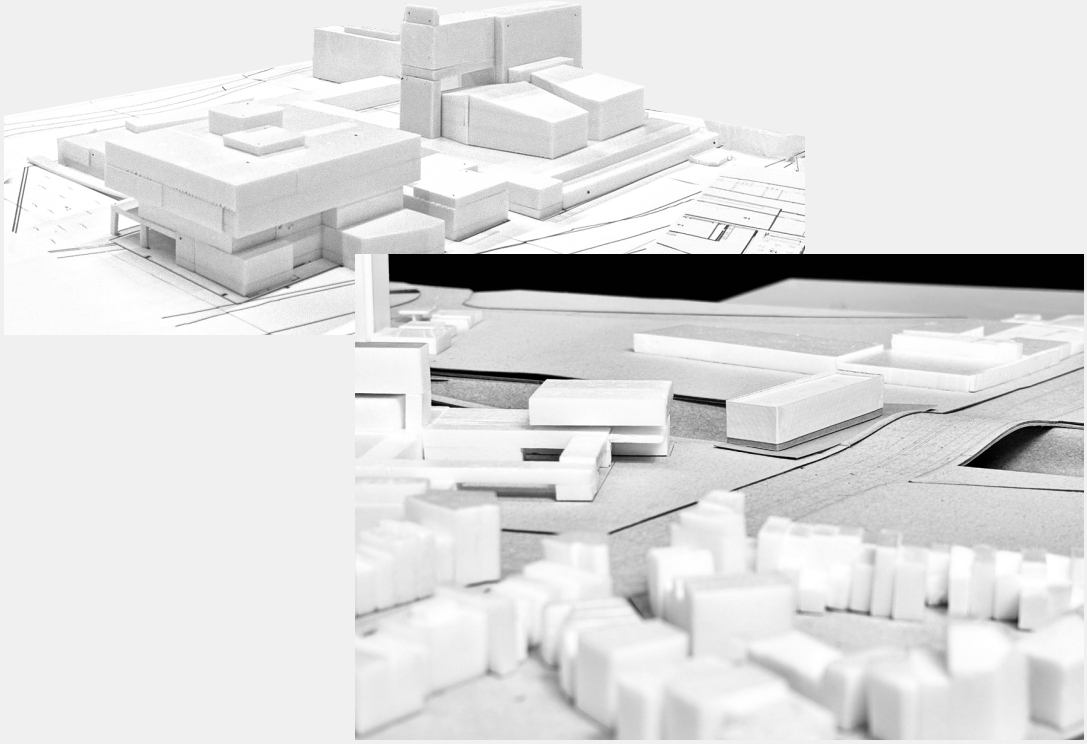
Concept 4

Continuing structure

Alongside refining the massing, I began to focus on the structural aspects and started dimensioning the concrete beams. I worked on determining the exact measurements for the spans and identified potential column placements. I chose a pre-tensioned beam, cast on-site, because they are the most efficient for spanning long lengths. Using basic dimensioning rules, I calculated the required size of the beams that would be able to cover these spans effectively.

I also made sure to check the clearance for these beams, specifically whether it would be possible to position them above the highway. After examining the heights, it seems that even with the tallest beam, there is still enough clearance to meet the minimum height requirements as per European standards, which is 5 metres. This was an important factor to consider to ensure that the structure wouldn't interfere with the highway below (Rijnmond, 2011).





Week 2.05

09-12-2024 / 15-12-2024

A connecting archive

After selecting a final location and studying the massing of the building, I decided on a temporary mass for the proposal. This decision allowed me to refine the concept and better integrate it into the environment.

The vision for this location is to create an archive that not only bridges two previously disconnected parts of the town but also extends the public programming of DeSingel across the highway. Also important to note is that it creates an important connection to the Antwerp Expo, further enhancing its role as a cultural and social hub.

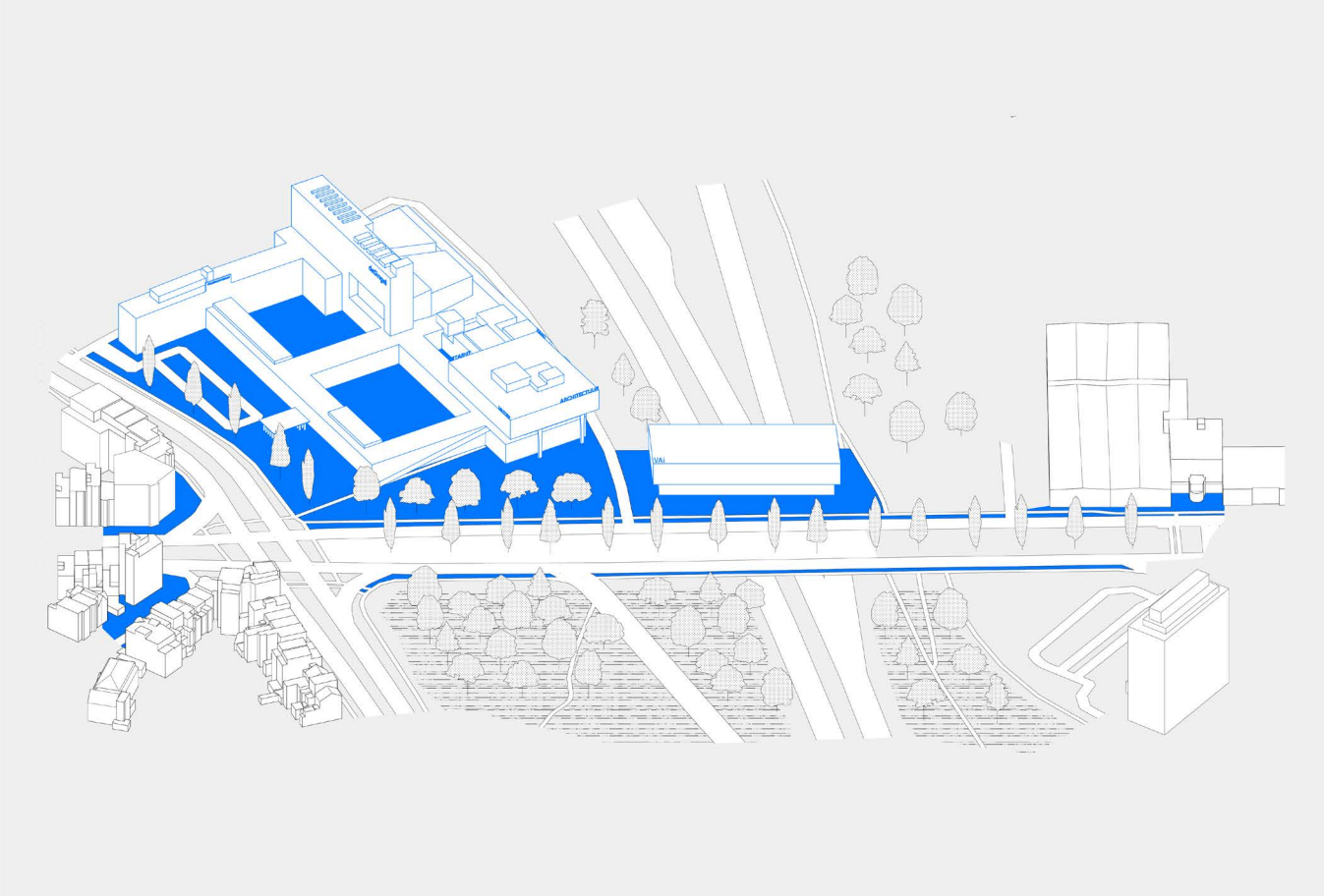
At this point, the natural next step is to delve into the design of the building itself. This includes shaping its floorplans and program, together with its architectural identity.

The diagrams made this week help to support the narrative of this design. The images show the newly placed mass on top of the highway, with the blue highlighted areas being valuable for public use.

Diagram 1 on the next page shows how the new mass fills a hole which exists in the current urban ensemble.

Diagram 2 shows how the harsh infrastructure of the highway is overpowered by the public space marked in blue. Connecting the two parts.

Diagram 3 shows how placing a mass on top of the highway also opens up possibilities of making two new plazas. Which also opens up the question, how will the greenery be integrated on the bridge.



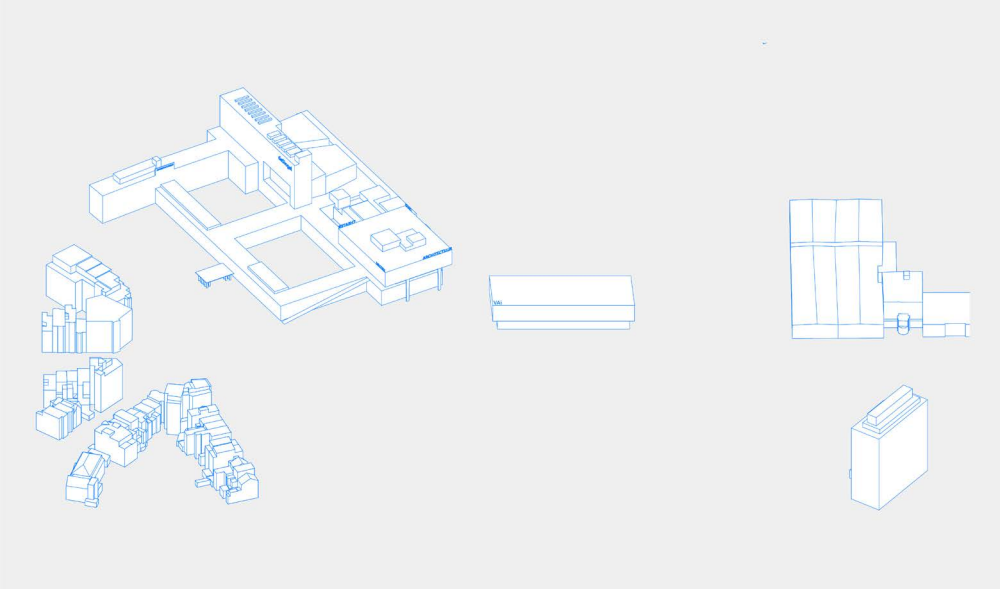


Diagram 1: Connecting urban masses

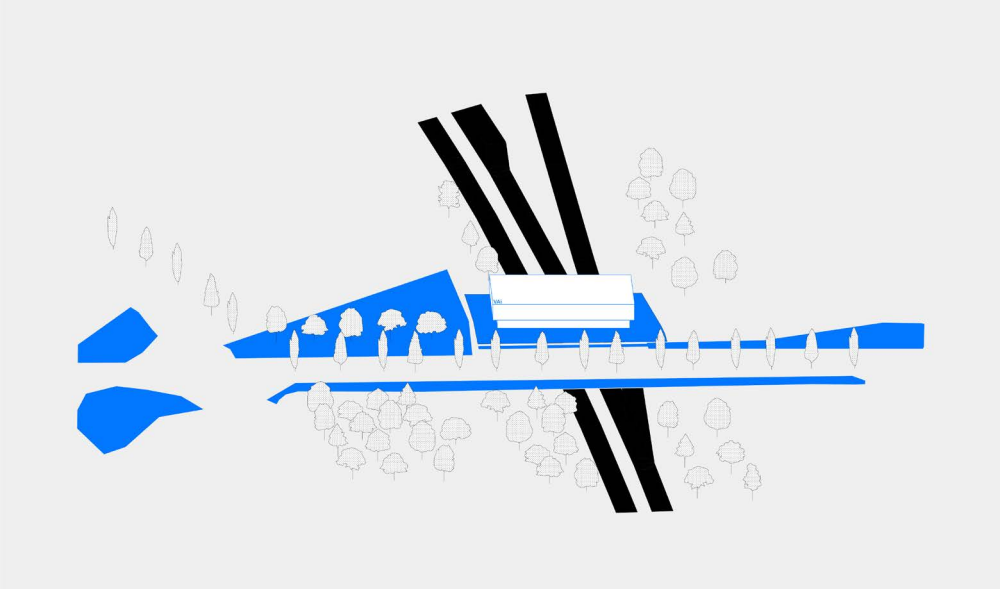


Diagram 2: Infrastricture

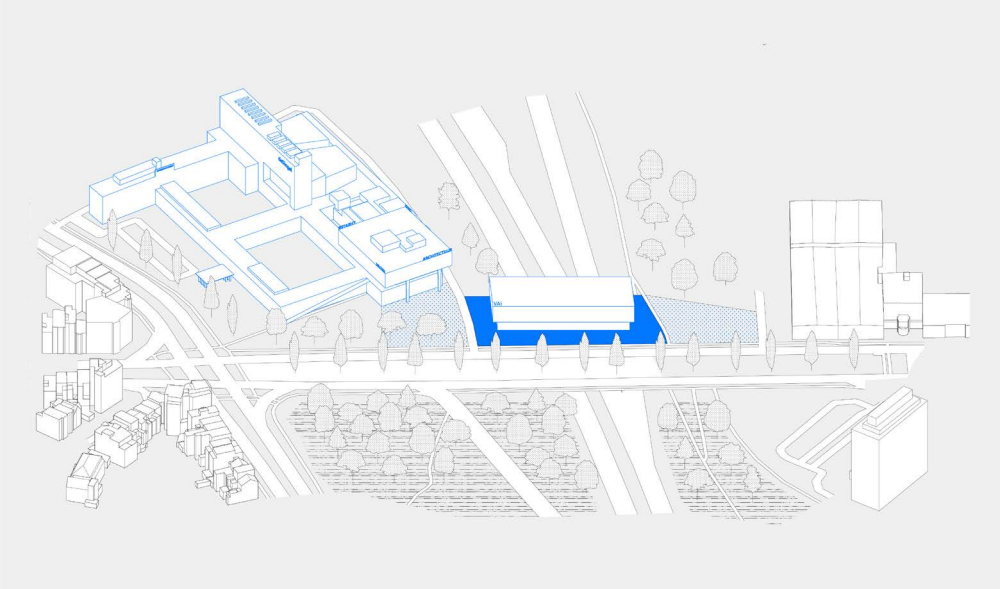


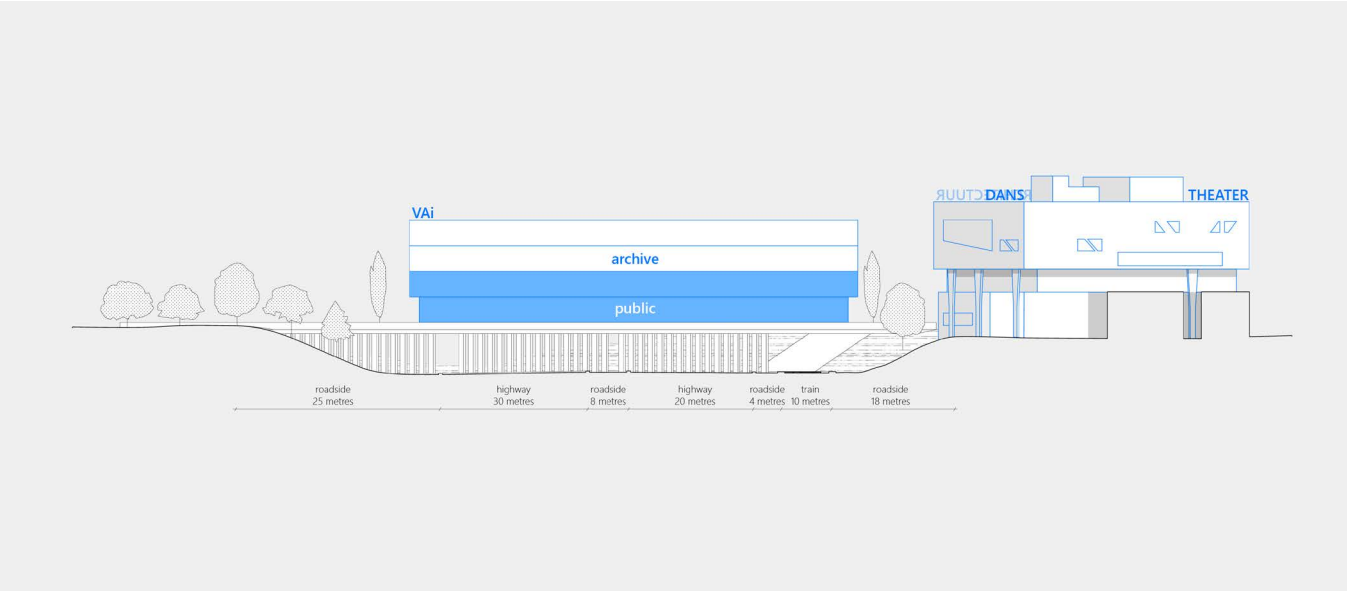
Diagram 3: Two new public plazas

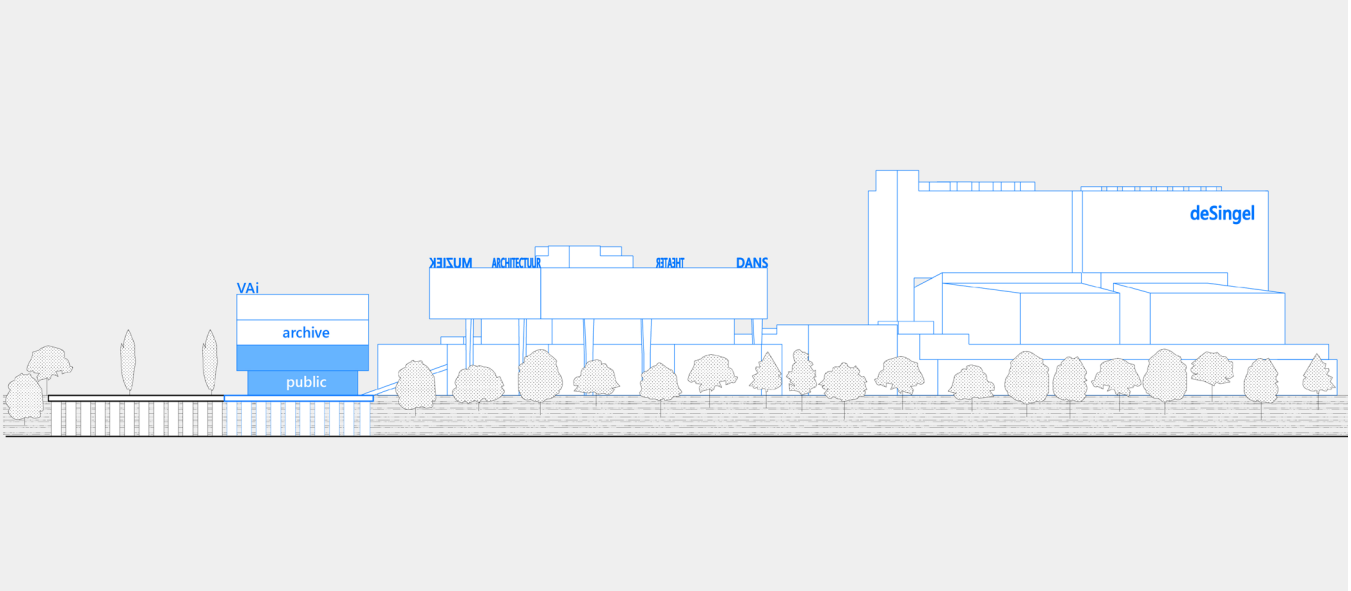
Sections & program

Building on the diagrams, I further developed the structural section from week 2.03. These visualizations illustrate how a new mass situated above the highway might take shape and how the program within the building could be organized.

To create an inviting and dynamic ground floor, I plan to put the public program here, with the option to extend it to the first floor if needed. The archive itself will occupy the top two floors, with a closed façade to ensure security and controlled environmental conditions essential for preserving its contents.

On the top a cross section of the highway, and on the bottom a longitudinal section



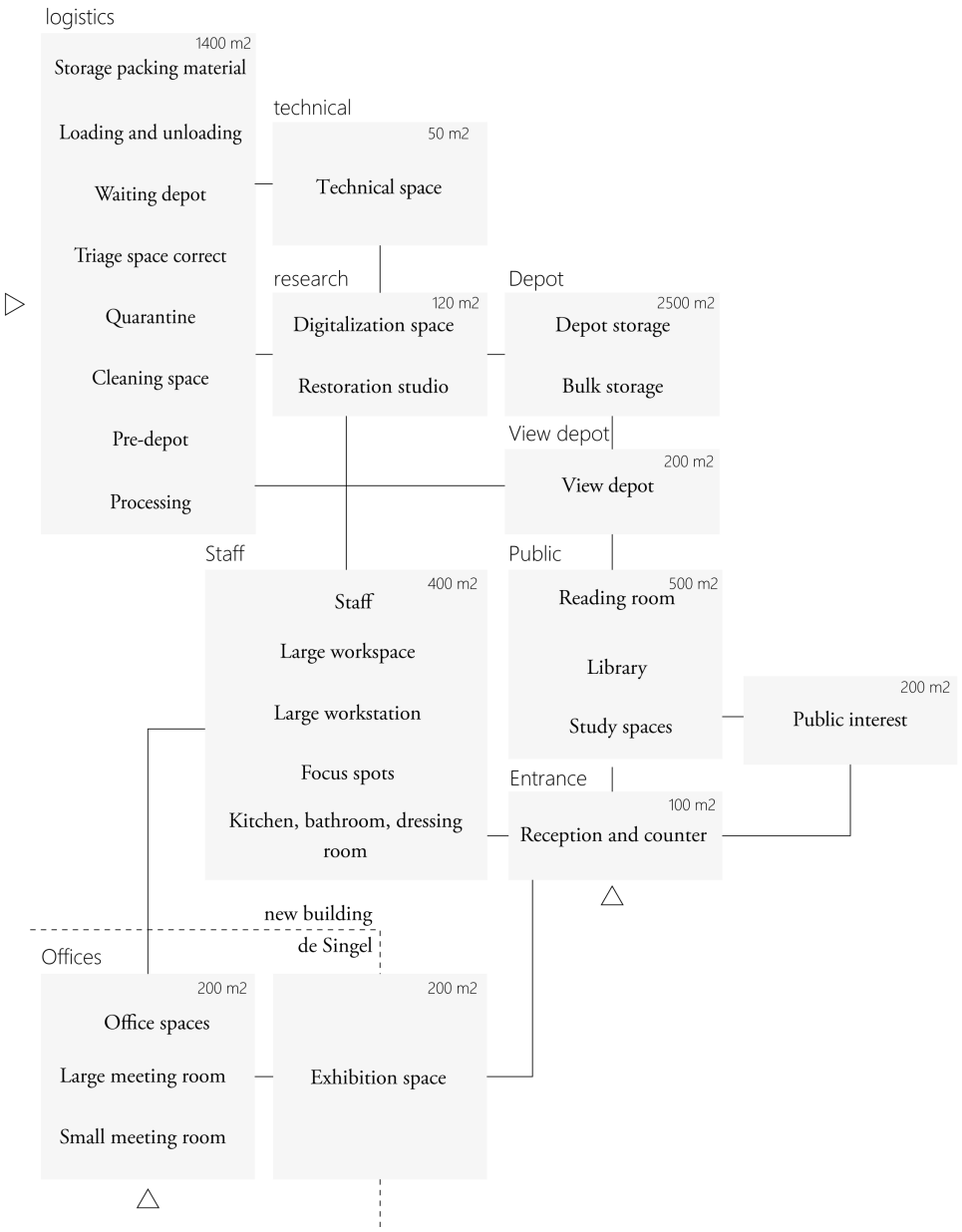


Understanding the program

With the location decided, a general shape and mass studied, and a basic understanding of the structure in place, this week I also focused on understanding the program and translating it into the form of the building.

I revisited the program outlined in the brief from week 2.01 and created a room relationship diagram. This was a crucial first step in understanding which spaces needed to be connected and how they would function together. From this diagram, I began to arrange these spaces within the general shape and mass developed in the previous week, exploring how the program could best be integrated into the design.

This process helped me bridge the gap between abstract massing studies and a more concrete building layout, setting the stage for further refinement of both the program and the architectural concept.



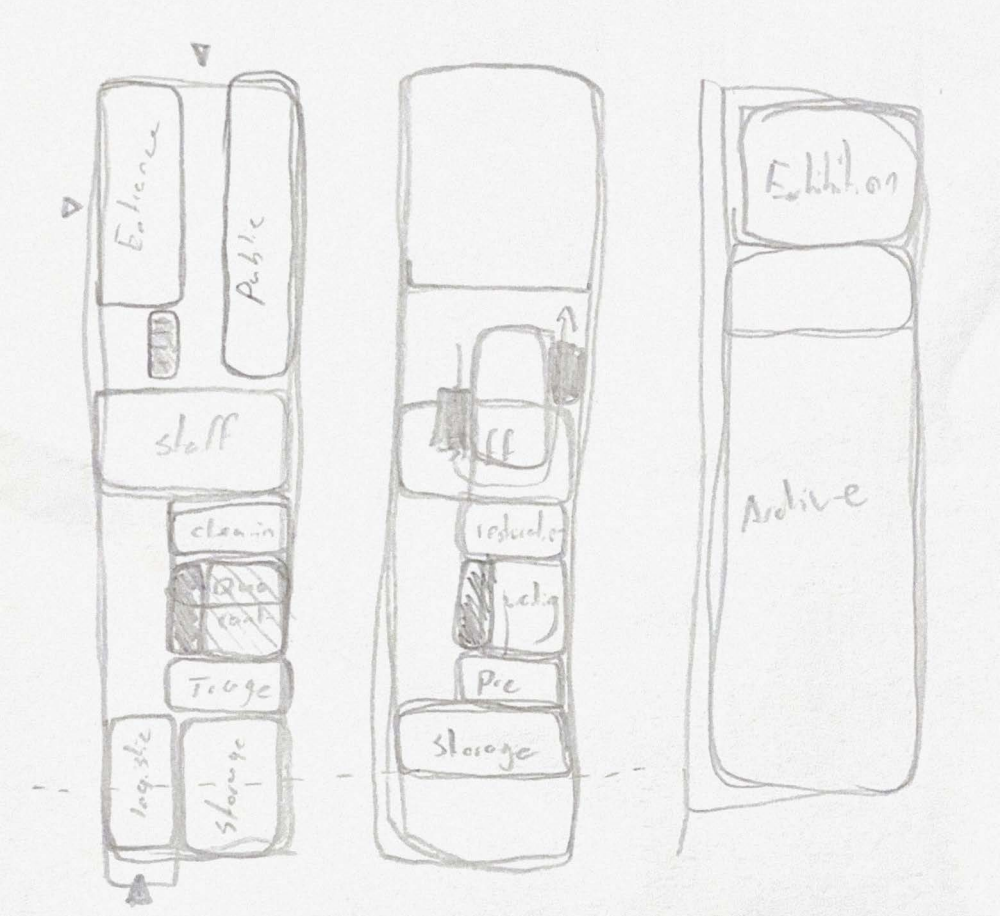
Relationship diagram for the spaces within the archive

Visual translation

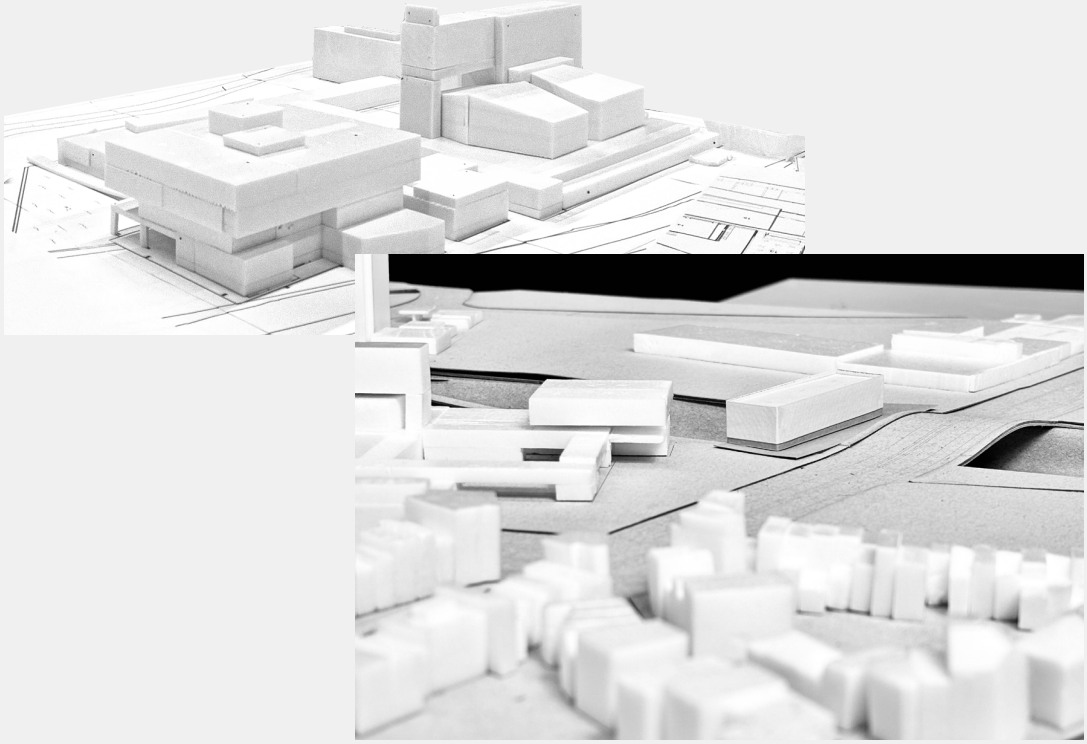
I started translating the room relationship diagram into a more visual representation, experimenting with the scale of the rooms and, more importantly, how they connect and relate to one another. This step felt like an essential progression, as it brought the abstract diagram closer to an actual spatial arrangement.

The resulting image shows a rectangular shape filled with rooms based on the program, each placed thoughtfully to reflect their connections and interactions. Working with a long, narrow building shape added a layer of complexity to the process. Fitting all the spaces while maintaining logical flows and functional adjacencies was a real challenge. However, I find this kind of problem-solving enjoyable, it's satisfying to figure out how to make everything fit within the constraints of the design.

Even when it felt difficult at times, I reminded myself that there's always a solution to be found. This approach helped me stay optimistic as I continued refining the spatial layout and thinking about how these relationships would work in practice.



First sketch of the floor plan



Week 2.06

16-12-2024 / 22-12-2024

Concept proposal

The foundations of my concept are taking shape, and I have a clear direction for how the building will be organized and used. For me, the next logical step is to dive into designing the floorplans. This is not just about spatial layout but also about defining the building's final mass, which will play a crucial role in shaping the rest of the project in relationship with the urban planning. Starting with an initial proposal for the floorplans, I'll refine them step by step, paying attention to the hallways and the character of these spaces.

Simultaneously, I'm working on the sections. At this stage, my main focus is on understanding how the structure interacts with the highway beneath the site. I'll incorporate the beams I calculated in previous weeks into these drawings, making sure the design works structurally and conceptually.

Another important aspect on my agenda this week is addressing biodiversity. This stemmed from a question raised by one of my tutors last week. The challenge lies in figuring out how to incorporate greenery on the bridge. Soil depth is a critical factor, but the structural limitations of the bridge make it a complex problem to solve. Finding a solution that balances these constraints with the goal of creating a diverse environment is something I'm excited to explore further.

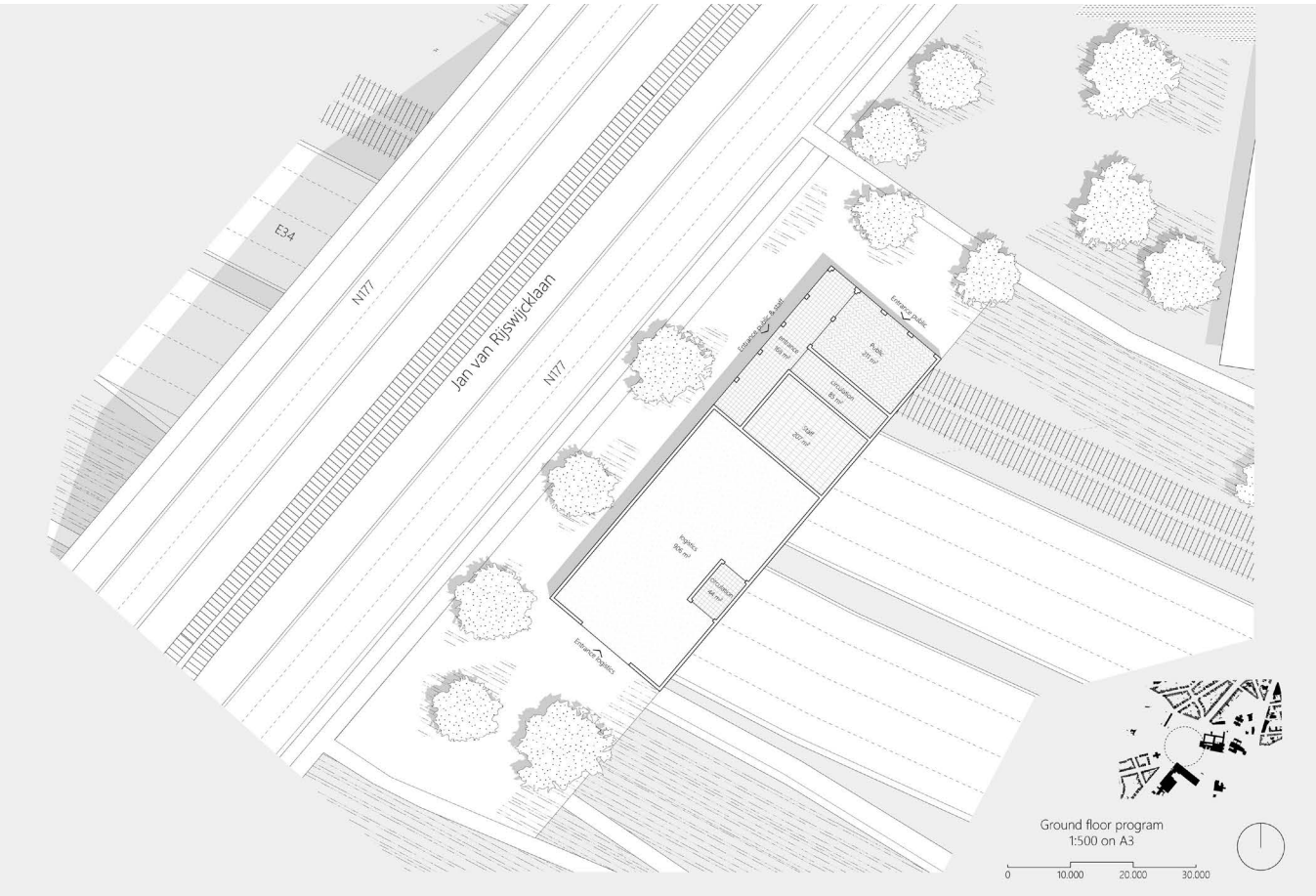
Concept floorplans

With the first draft of the floorplans, I explored the general placement of the required spaces within the building. My approach was to work from large to small, starting with grouping all smaller spaces into one general area on the floorplan (specific staff rooms into one area named "staff"). Later, I'll refine this into specific spaces.

I decided to position the building slightly off from the current parking lot of the DeSingel building. This alignment allows the facades to make use of the available space beneath the bridge, already factoring in structural considerations.

In this proposal, the building features three entrances. One is adjacent to DeSingel, ensuring easy access from the cultural campus. The second is positioned along the main new boulevard (Jan van Rijswijcklaan) to provide a welcoming entrance for the public. The third, located on the opposite side toward the expo, is designated for logistics.

The entrance from the boulevard opens into a central space, from where users can access public areas, staff rooms, or logistical zones. This space also connects to a circulation core housing the lifts and stairs, ensuring clear and efficient movement throughout the building.

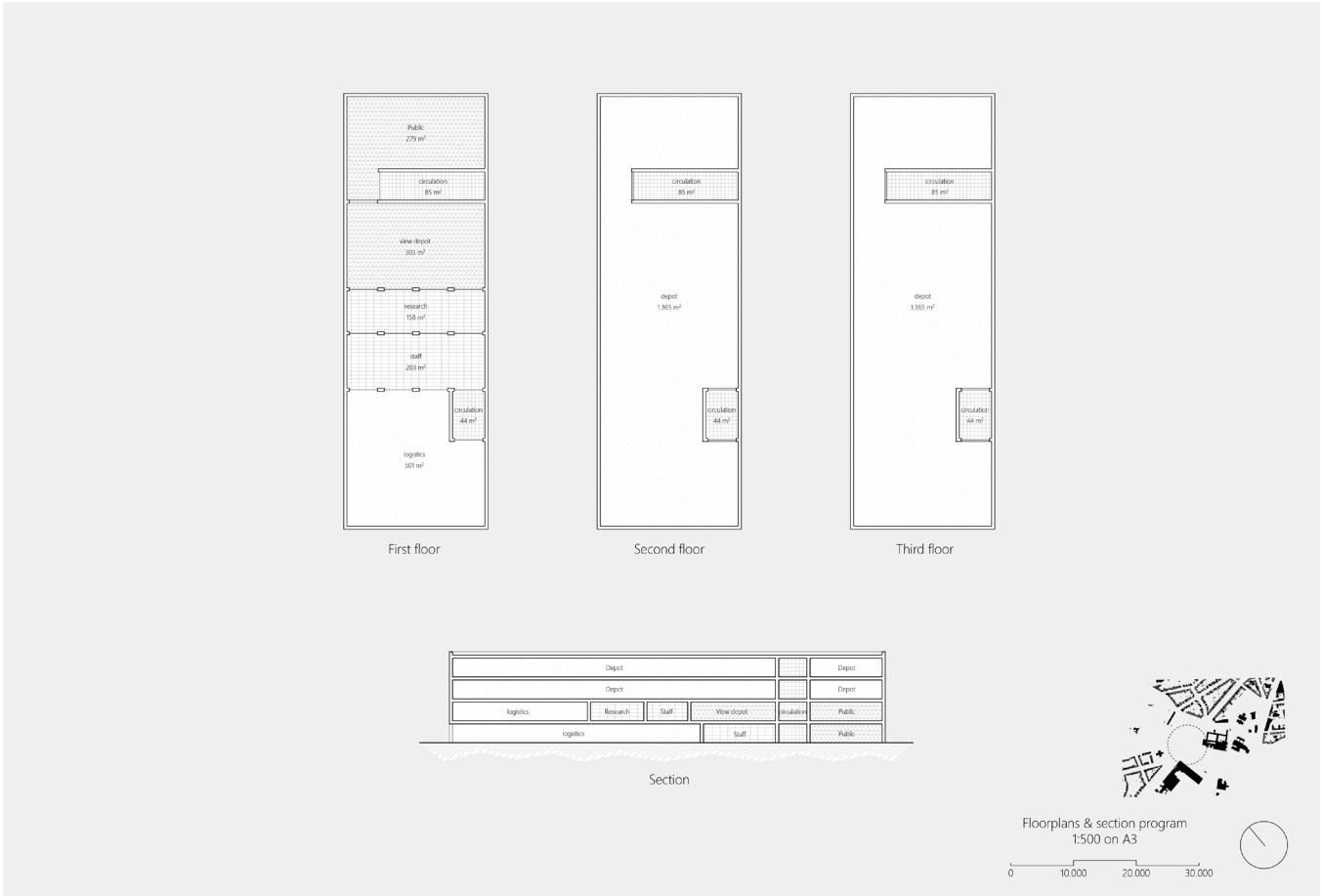


Ground floor plan, together with the direct surroundings.

The public arrives on the first floor via the main circulation core, where they can access more public spaces as well as the view depot. Adjacent to the view depot are research and staff spaces, which I've envisioned with transparent walls. This design allows visitors to observe archive staff working on archival pieces, creating a sense of openness and connection.

Logistical spaces are also located on the first floor, primarily because of the large floor area required for archive operations. This area includes a secondary circulation core dedicated to staff use. Both this secondary core and the main core provide access to the archive on the upper floors, which feature an open floor plan designed to accommodate archival cabinets.

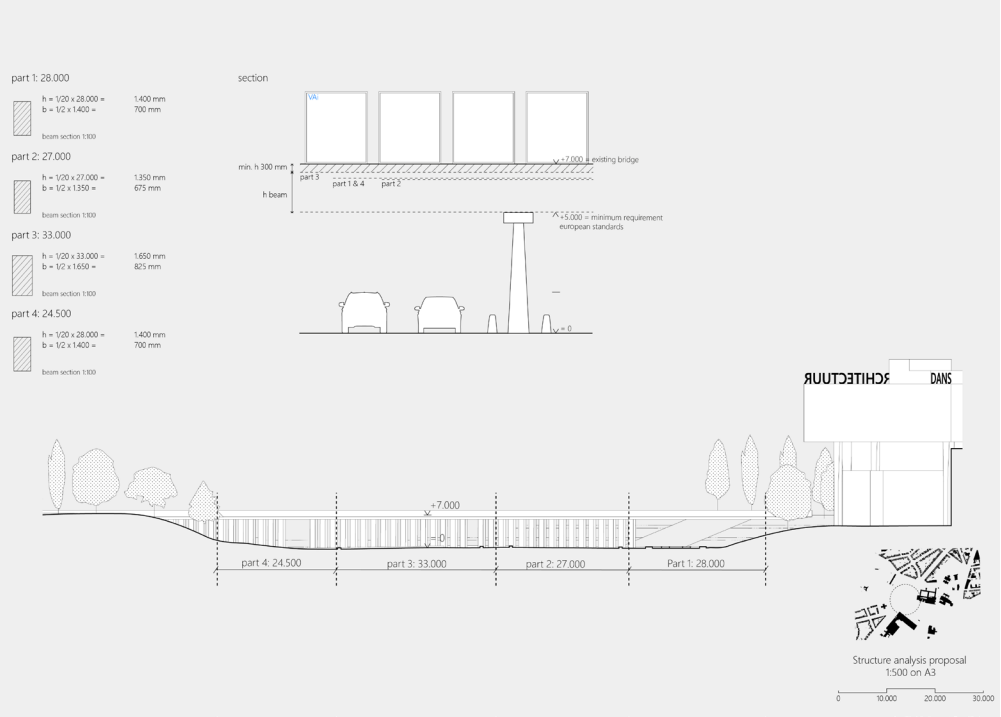
The decision to place the archive on the top two floors stems from its functional needs. Archival spaces don't require windows and are better suited to a closed façade. By positioning the spaces that do need windows, like public and staff spaces, on the ground and first floors, the building becomes more transparent and inviting from the boulevard. This transparency aligns with my goal of making the building more approachable and engaging for visitors.



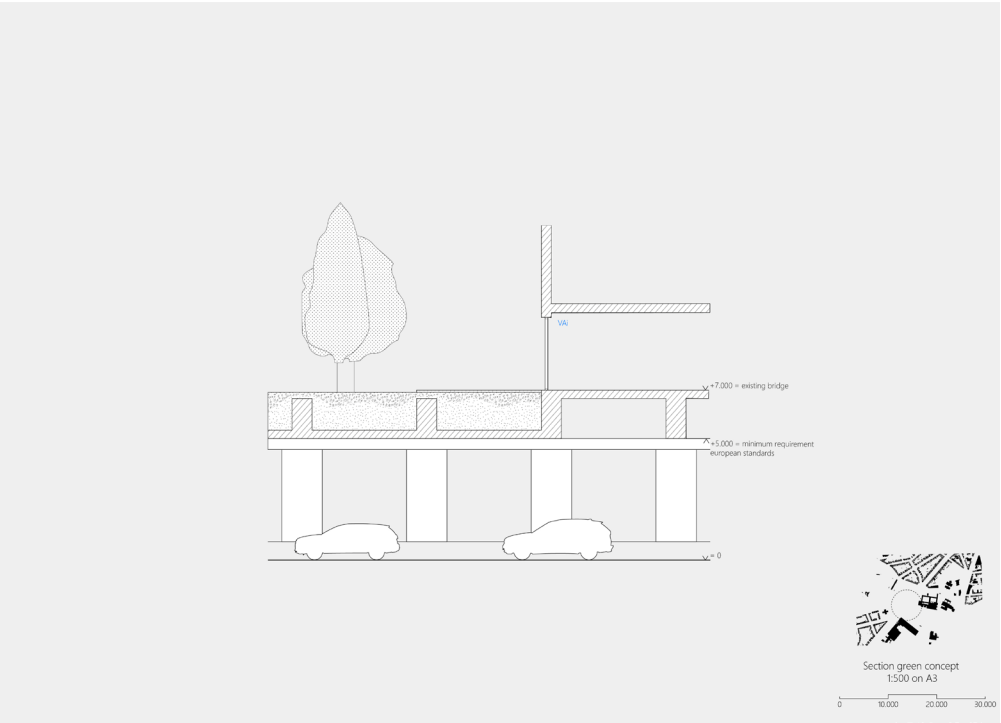
Firs, second and third floor plan, together with a sections showing the organisation of the building.

The sections highlight two key elements. The first is the structural integration of the beams in relation to the height of the highway. These drawings confirm that the building's mass will not obstruct the highway below, ensuring seamless coexistence between the structure and its context.

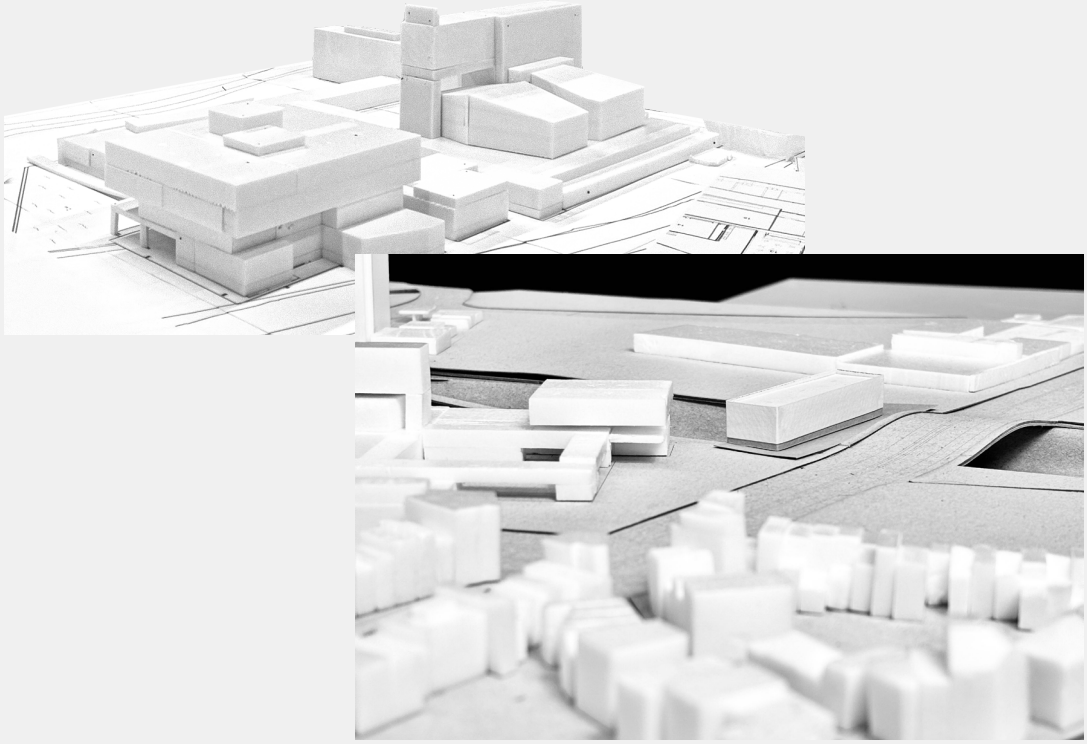
The second element focuses on biodiversity and how soil can be accommodated on the bridge to support flora and fauna. The concept involves placing the floor slabs above the beams for the building itself, while situating soil layers between the beams. This approach maximizes the available depth for soil, creating better conditions for genuine biodiversity to thrive.



Structural section showing the available space for traffic with the concrete beams in place.



Section showing the structural concept with the floor slabs on the bottom to fill the rest with soil for biodiversity.



Week 2.07

0 6 - 0 1 - 2 0 2 5 / 1 2 - 0 1 - 2 0 2 5

Into the details / sick week

The main topic of last week's tutoring session was on detailing the internal spaces of the building and the connecting elements, such as hallways and corridors. This marked an important transition in the design process, from working with large, general spaces to defining specific rooms.

Having general floorplans as a starting point was helpful, as they provided an main structure to guide the process. However, I quickly realized that designing the connecting spaces posed its own challenges. It's surprisingly easy to feel constrained by earlier concept floorplans, which can make it difficult to move forward creatively.

To address this, I decided to take a step back and revisit the basics. I returned to sketching, exploring where hallways, entrances, and corridors were truly necessary. Initially, I worked within the rectangular mass I had determined earlier, but I also experimented more freely to ensure the circulation spaces served both functionality and the overall concept.

Another topic this week was rethinking the structure for the upper floors. While 1.7-meter-tall concrete beams are practical above the highway, they're far less functional within rooms. Adjusting this element of the design became essential to ensure the structure supports both practicality and architectural intent.

I also spent some time into the demographics of the chosen site to understand the neighbourhoods surrounding it on the topics of gender, age, family typology, but also usable greenery, facilities, libraries and city offices.

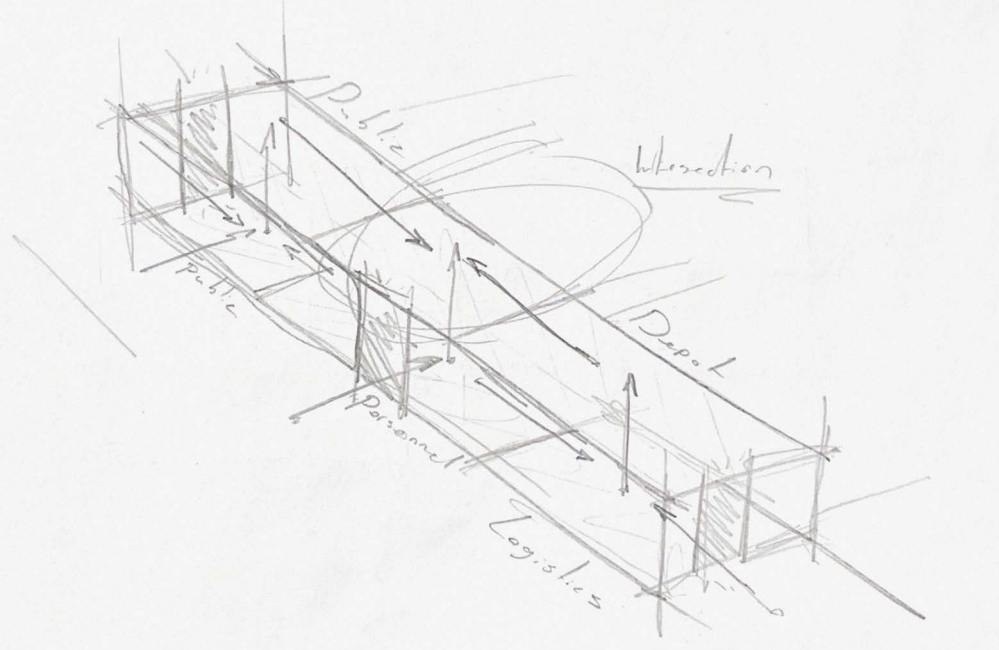
Unfortunately, progress this week was slower than I had hoped due to falling victim to the annual flu season. Despite the setback, this break provided a bit of space to reassess and refine my approach moving forward.

Internal connections

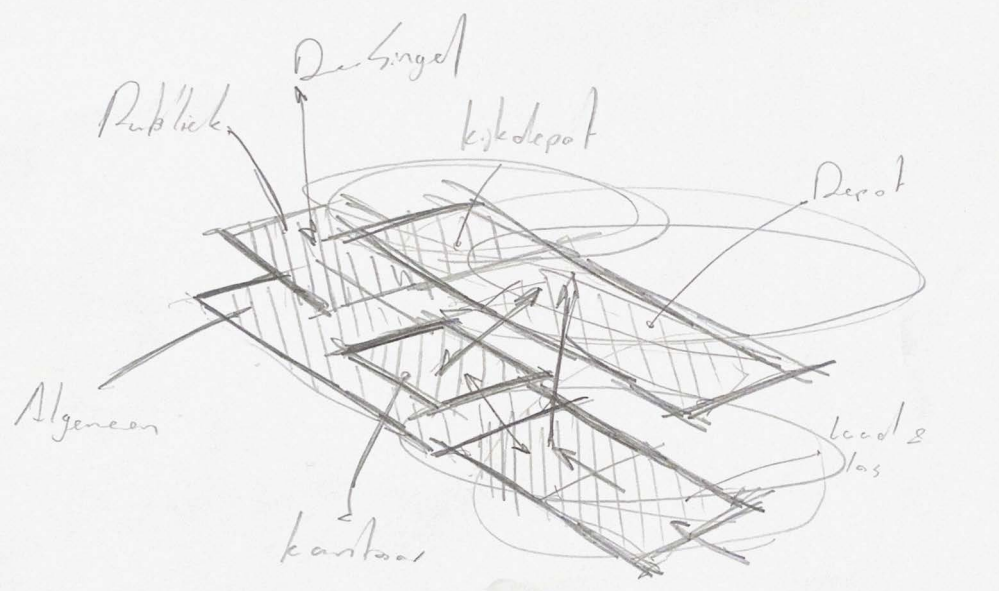
To make a bases for the internal connections, I began exploring with pencil on paper. My initial sketch focused on the rectangular mass, examining the division between public functions, logistics, and the depot, along with their respective entrances and points of intersection. This exercise revealed that a central space in the building would be crucial, a place where all these "worlds" come together.

Afterward, I looked beyond the bounds of the rectangle to better understand how different spaces need to connect.

This broader exploration helped me identify where the primary routes should be, providing clarity that will guide the design of the preliminary floorplans in the coming weeks.



Sketch of the internal layout with its connections within the rectangular mass.



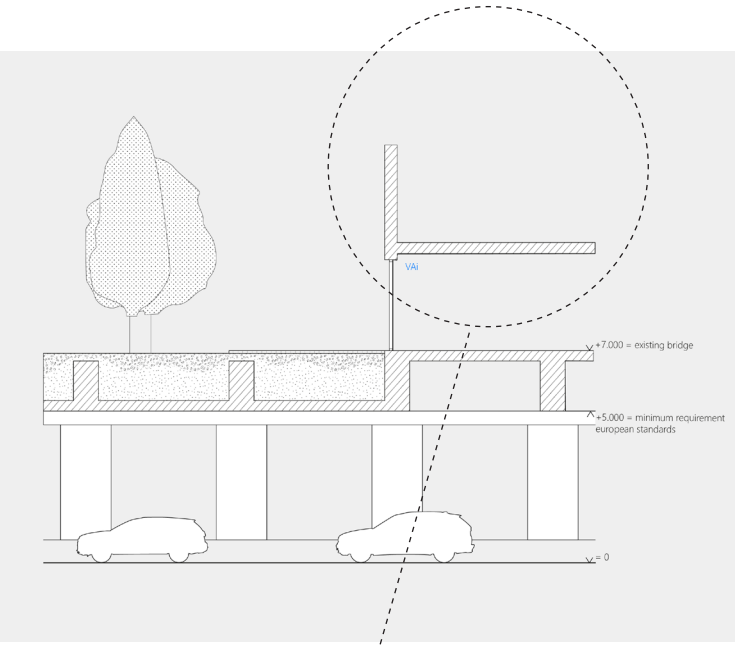
Sketch of the main connections between important spaces within the archive.

Upper structure

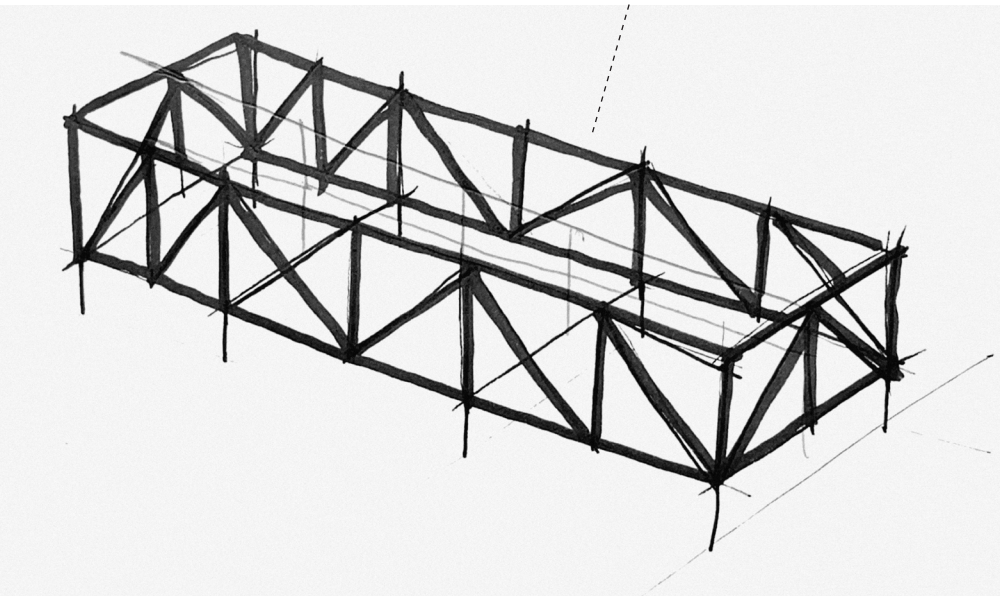
As mentioned earlier, the large concrete beams are a practical solution for the "ground floor" above the highway due to the available space. However, they prove less functional for the rest of the building.

With my background in architectural engineering, I began exploring alternative concepts to support the floor slabs. The most promising solution, in my view, is to create a truss integrated into the façade to carry these slabs. Given that the building spans multiple floors, I propose a tall truss that extends over the full height of the façade from the first to the third floor.

This design is both efficient and practical. It allows for the necessary structural support while leaving enough space for windows on the first floor, maintaining transparency and openness, and an open floor plan. The truss would transfer its loads to large columns extending down to the space between the highways. The sketch below illustrates this truss concept.



Section from a previous study that shows the upper mass where the truss will be used.



A sketch of the multi-story truss placed on top of the columns.

Image & transparency

Exploring the theme of transparency, I began examining various building references to envision the potential appearance of the project.

Personally, I have a strong appreciation for brick and concrete as materials. Concrete aligns seamlessly with the façade of the DeSingel building, making it an excellent choice for integration. Brick, on the other hand, has deep historical roots in Flemish architecture (RIBA Books, 2001). Incorporating brick into the design would pay homage to this tradition, creating a meaningful connection by housing the architecture archive in a building that utilizes this classic material(Vlieghe, H.,1998).

To develop a material and façade concept, I reviewed various references, not to establish a definitive image, but to gain a general sense of how a straightforward study could function design-wise.

Sergison Bates Architects, ***Harbour Building Antwerp.***

Picture Plane, ***Lambeth Palace Library.***

Bedaux de Brouwer Architecten ***Museum Singer Laren.***

Caruso St John Architects, ***Newport Street Gallery.***

Based on the images and references I studied, I began exploring how the current massing of the building could work with a combination of brick and concrete. For this initial study, I envisioned the public side of the building in concrete, while the archive areas were rendered in brick.

However, after creating and reflecting on this visual, I realized it doesn't fully represent the architectural vision I'm aiming for. While I still believe these materials have strong potential for the design, the way they are currently applied doesn't achieve the balance or expression I want to convey.

This has made it clear that more exploration and experimentation are needed in the coming weeks to refine the materiality and how it interacts with the overall concept of the building. It's an ongoing process, and I'm excited to keep pushing these ideas further.

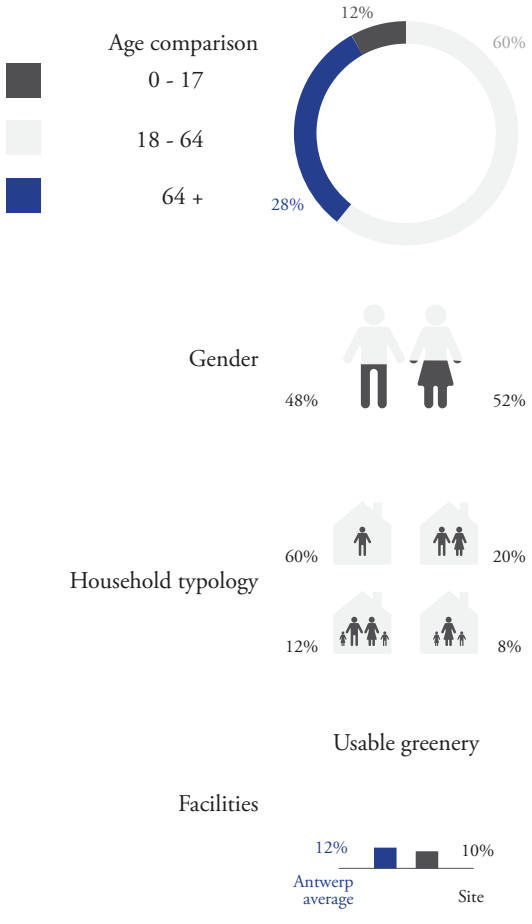
A study image with the concrete and brick materials

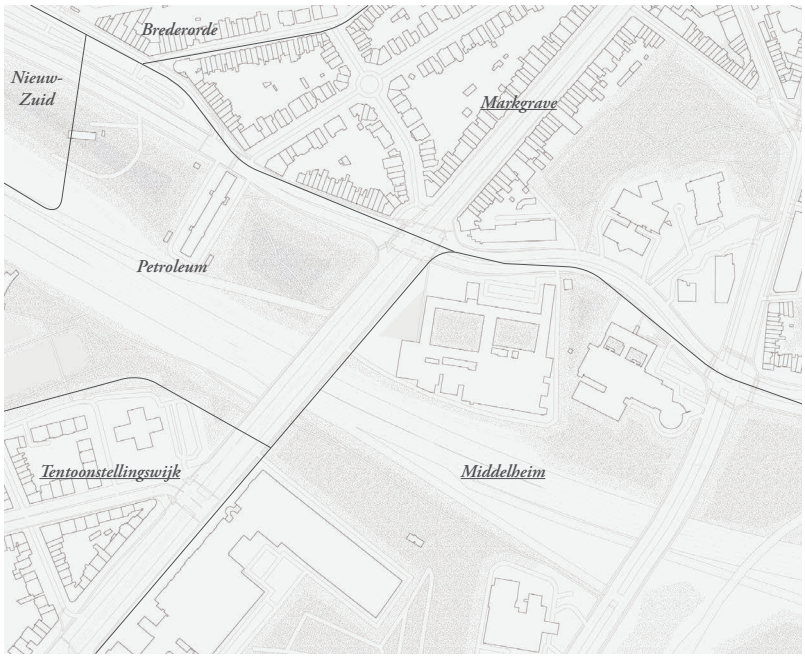
Demographics

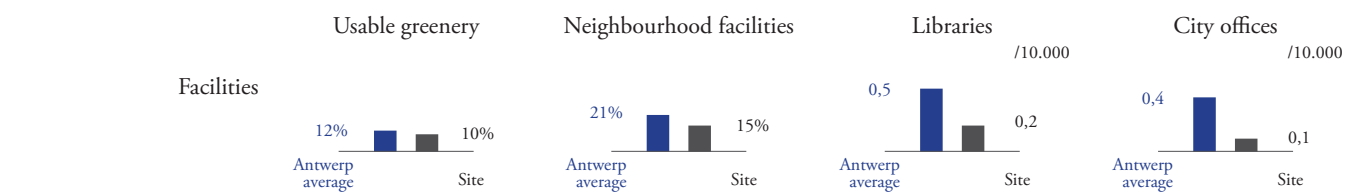
I had already decided on incorporating a larger public program than initially required. To support this decision, I set out to gather more information about the chosen site, focusing on the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. I looked into aspects such as gender distribution, age demographics, household typologies, as well as access to green spaces, facilities, libraries, and city offices.

The data revealed that the surrounding neighborhoods primarily consist of residents aged 18 to 64, with a nearly even male-to-female ratio. The most common household type is single-person living. In terms of accessible green spaces, the area falls slightly below the average for Antwerp. Additionally, the neighborhoods could benefit from more facilities such as community centres, dentists, supermarkets, public squares, and green spaces, along with libraries and city offices.

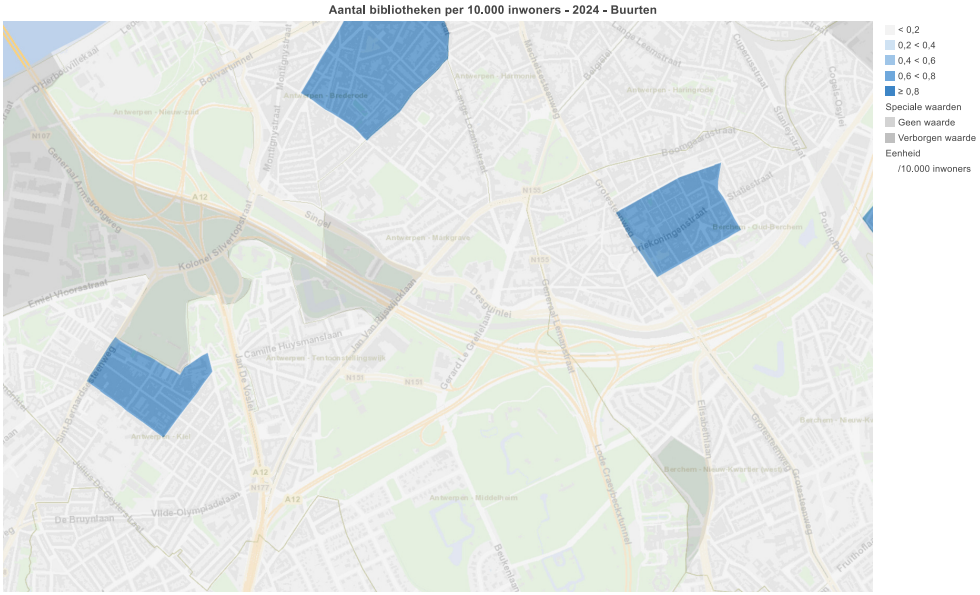
This further reinforces my decision to allocate extra space for public functions within the project.



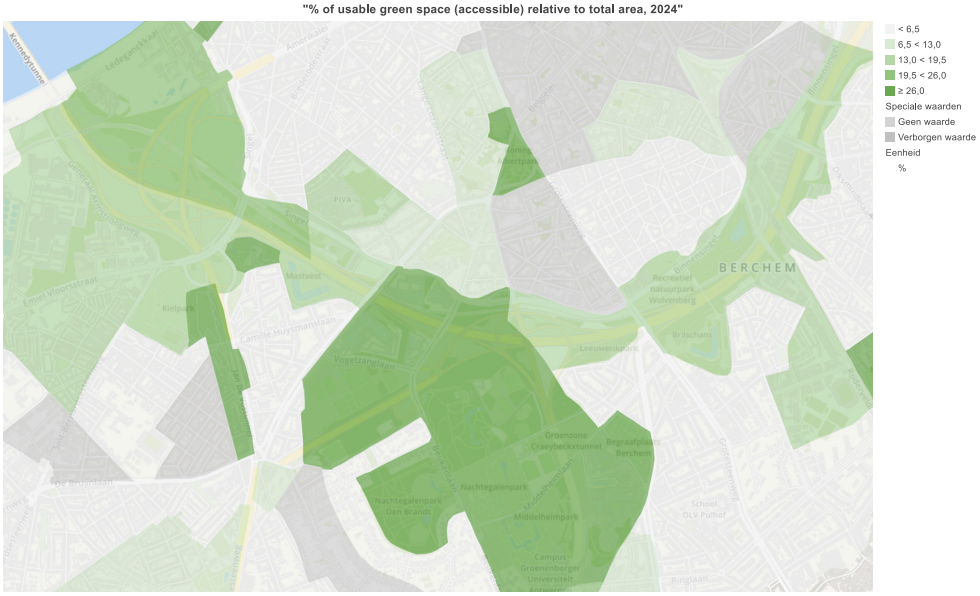




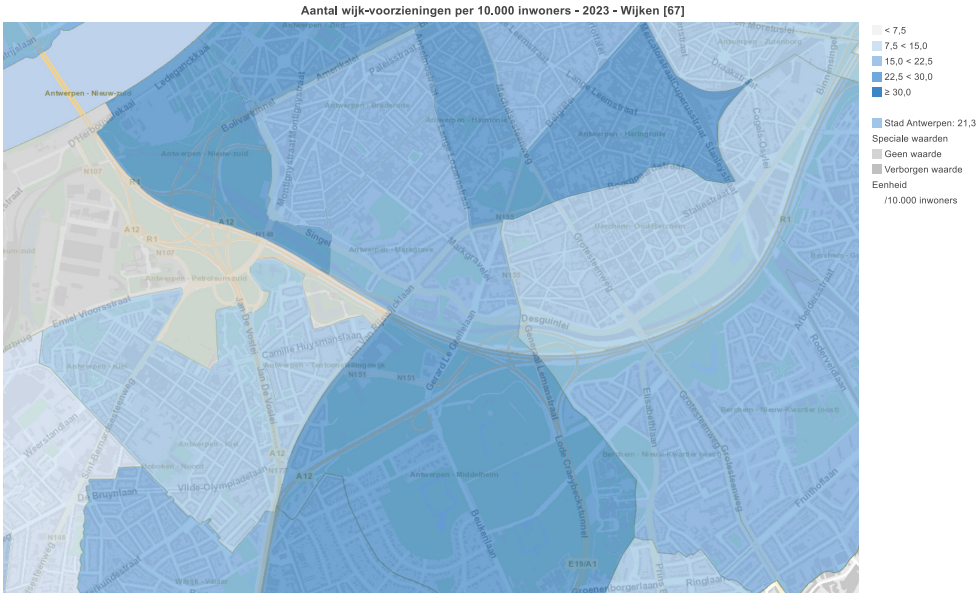
Statistics libraries



Statistics usable greenery



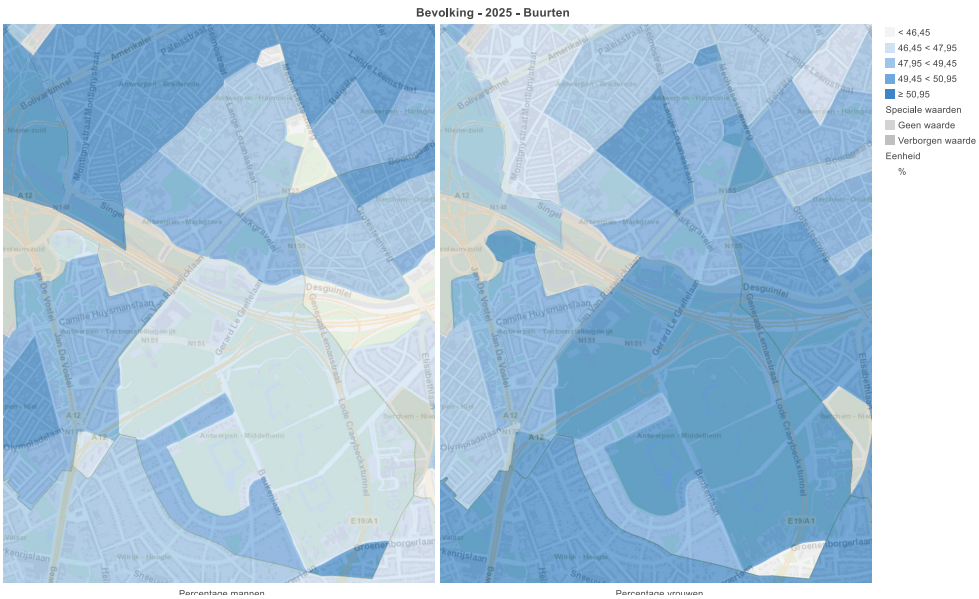
Statistics facilities

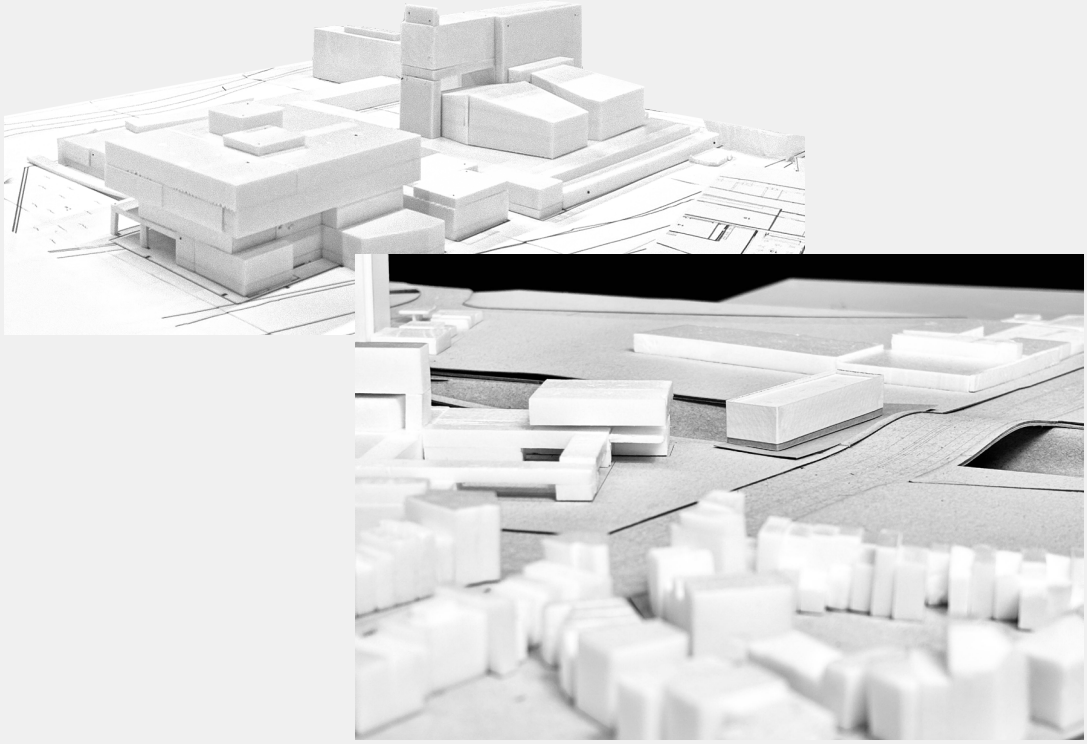


Statistics age

Statistics family typology

Statistics gender





Week 2.08

13-01-2025 / 19-01-2025

Preliminary proposal

Building on the studies from previous weeks, it was time to work toward a preliminary proposal. This felt like an important milestone, where ideas began to take more concrete shape.

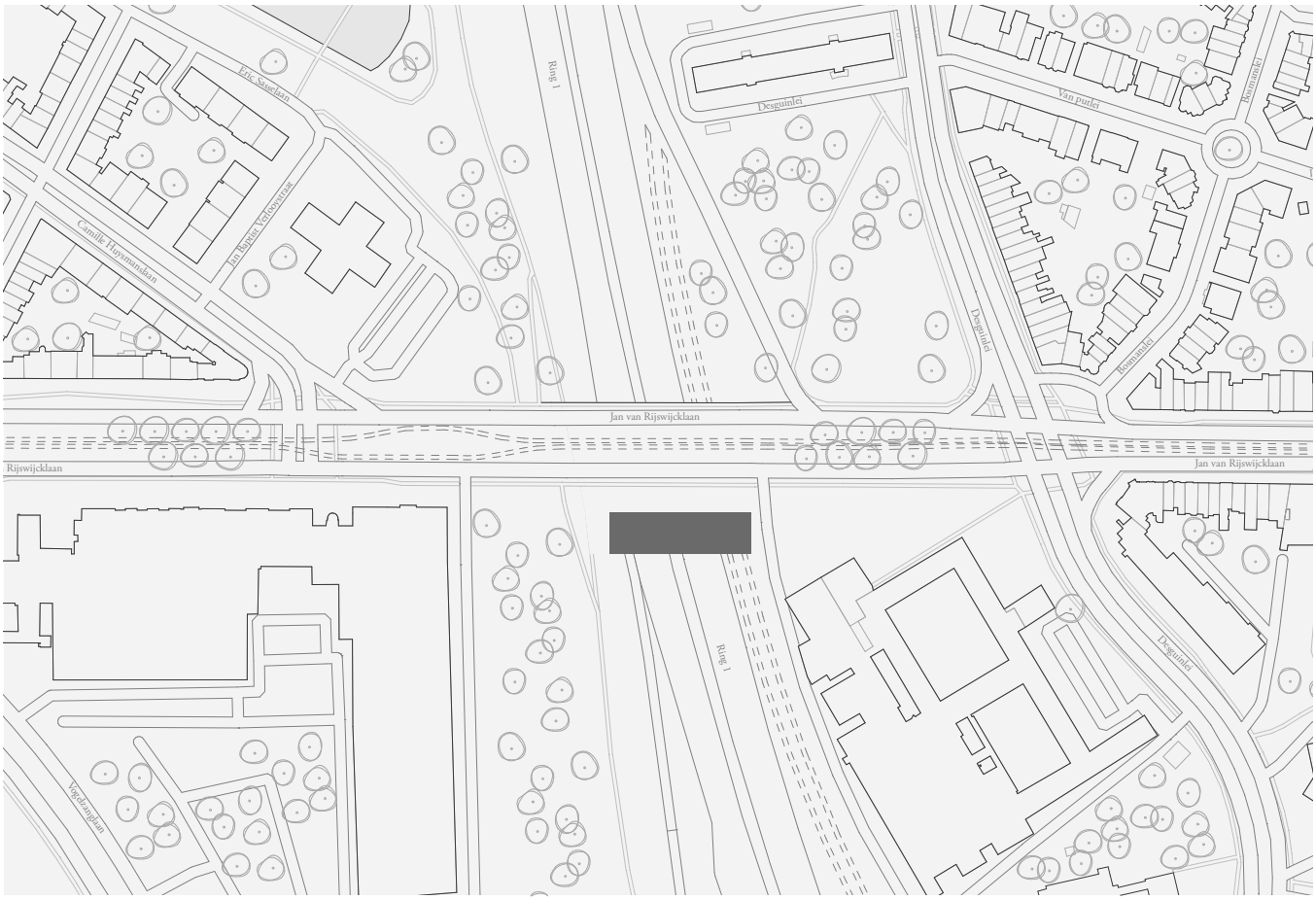
To start, I focused on organizing my drawings and creating a solid template that could serve as a foundation for the work ahead. This template allowed me to build on the insights and experiments from earlier studies systematically.

I already had a general idea of the layout, where public, logistical, staff, and archival spaces should be and how they could connect to one another. With this framework in mind, I organized the rooms, hallways, and overall building mass to align with the structural concept I had developed in recent weeks.

My main goal for the week was to have a complete drawing set that communicated the current state of the design. Alongside this, I aimed to continue refining the structural approach, as well as exploring the façade and the role of transparency in the building's image.

While there is still much to develop, this stage provided clarity and momentum for the next steps.

Site plan with the proposed archive building marked in dark grey



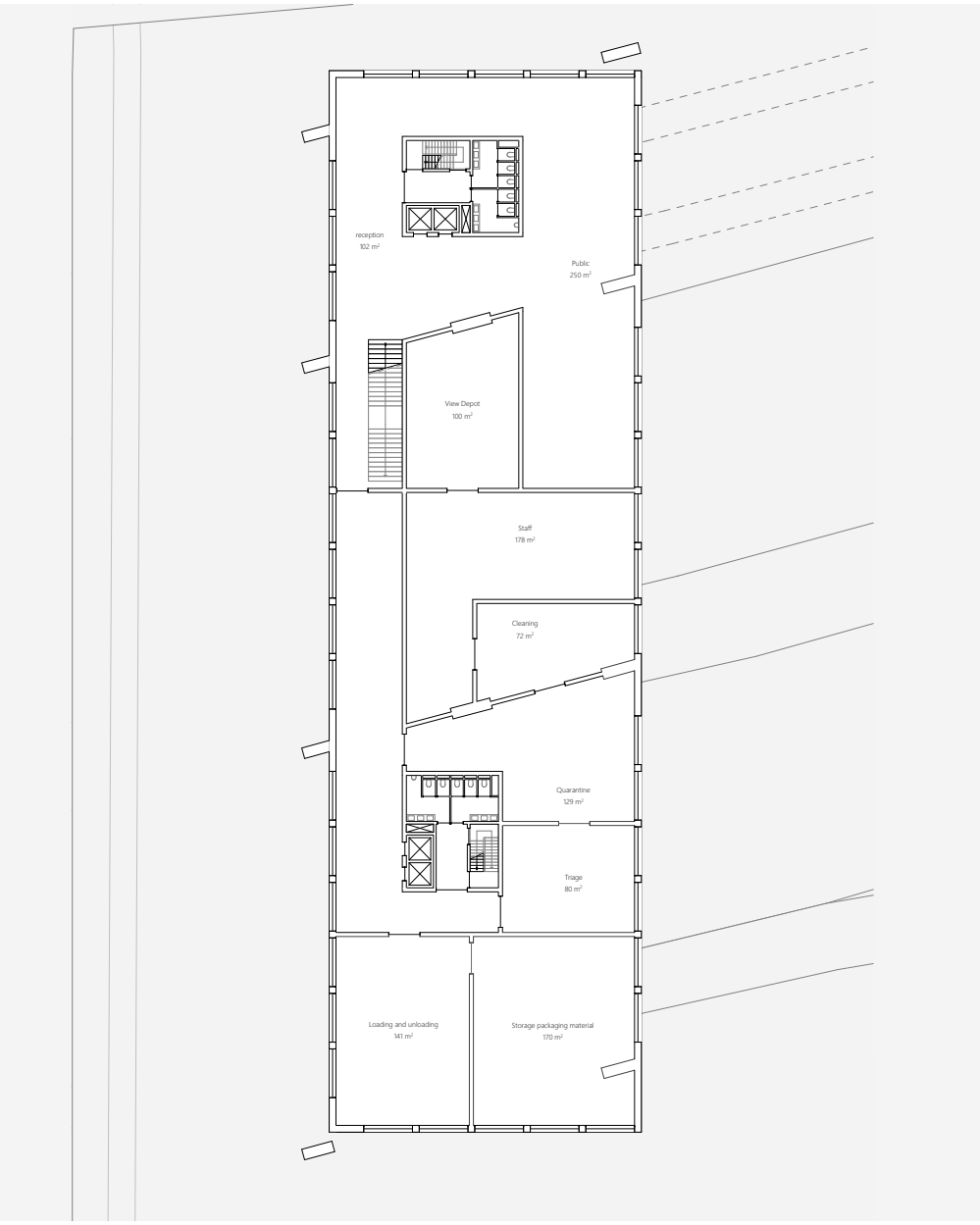
Preliminary floorplans

In the design process, I started by focusing on the building cores, ensuring that the lifts, stairs, and toilets were properly designed and met all code requirements.

The concept has stayed consistent with the initial proposal. The main entrance remains on the boulevard side, providing access for both public visitors and staff. From this entrance, the public can reach the flexible exhibition space or take the stairs up, along the open archive, to more public functions.

On the other side of the building, the logistical entrance doubles as a secondary staff entry.

This side of the building has the archival and staff spaces, such as a triangle, quarantine depot, and cleaning facilities. Another separate core is dedicated specifically for archiving purposes, ensuring efficient and organized functionality.



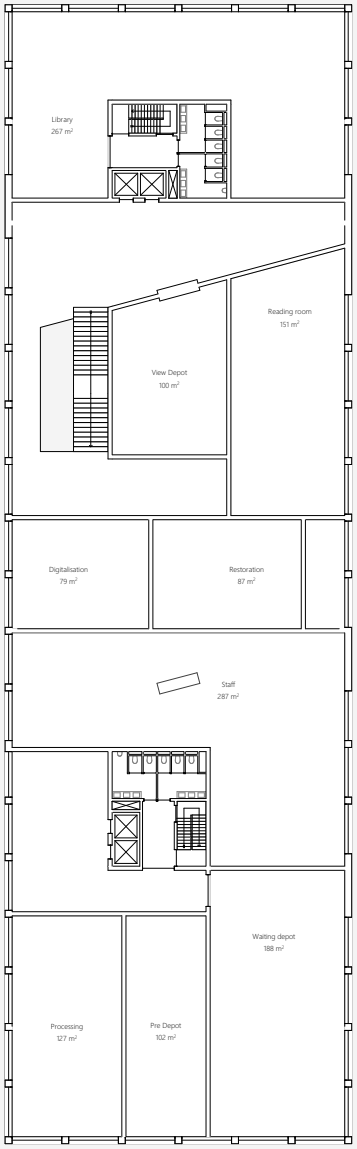
Ground floor

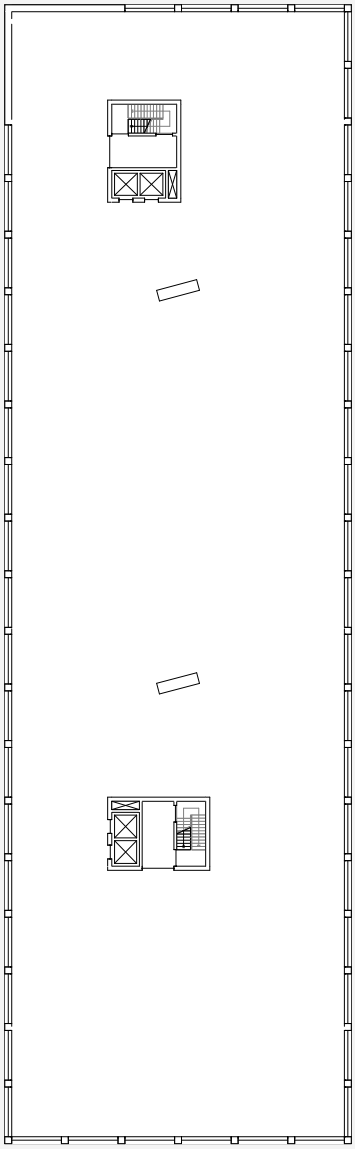
On the first floor, visitors arrive in a space where they can view the open archive or head toward the library and workrooms. A transparent wall separates this area from the digitization and restoration rooms, offering the public a glimpse into the archival work. This connection brings people closer to history, making the process of preserving and restoring artefacts more tangible.

On the bottom half of the floorplan, staff rooms and spaces dedicated to archival purposes are located. These include areas such as a pre-depot, processing rooms, and a waiting depot, supporting the building's logistical and functional needs.

The second and third floors of the building are dedicated depots, designed solely for the storage of drawings, models, photographs, and other archival materials. These floors prioritize functionality and preservation, ensuring the integrity of the archive's contents.

On the left: First floor
On the right: Second and third floor





Second and third floor

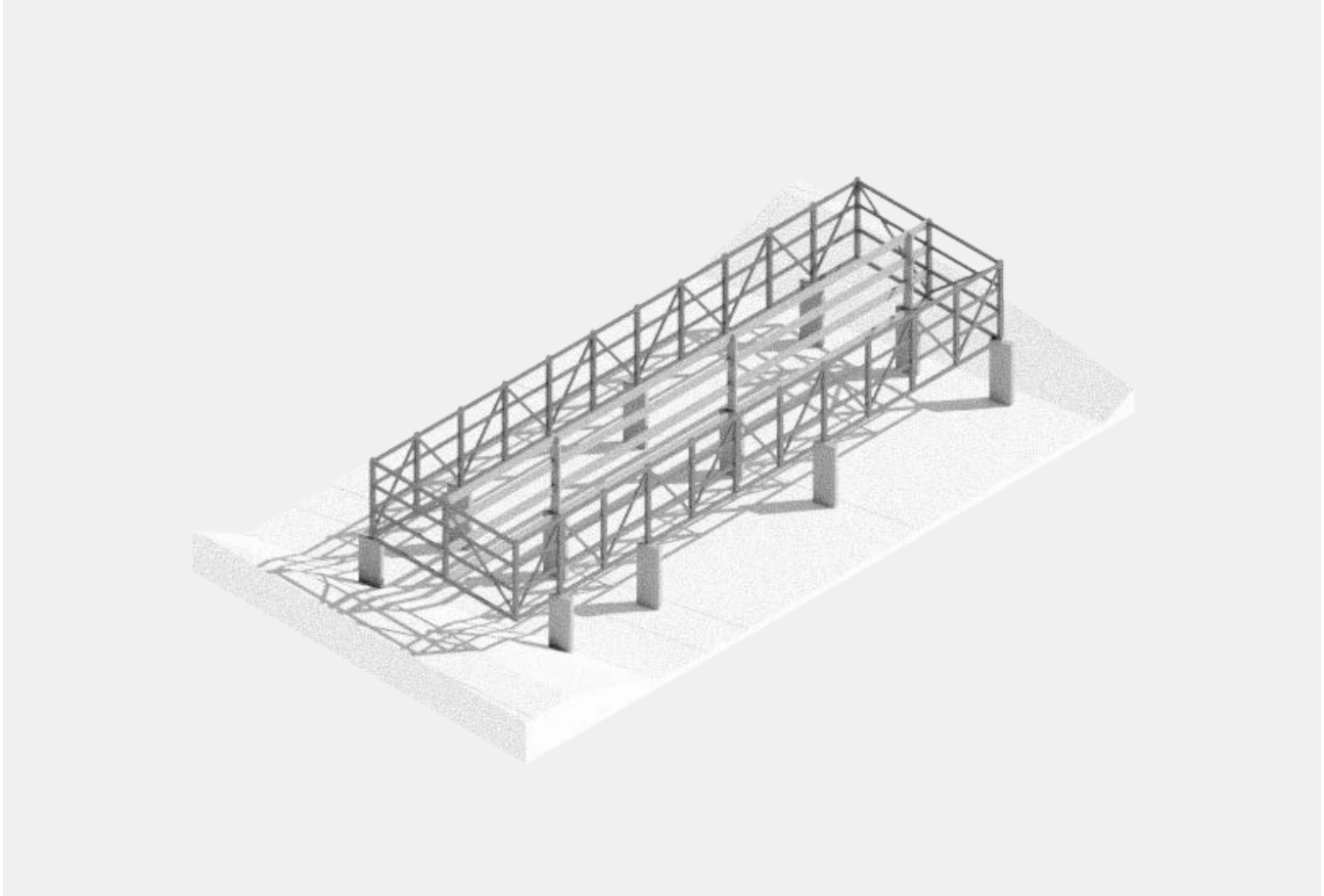
Structure: Continuation

The large distances in the proposal are challenging to work with. The initial idea was to use a concrete structure with columns and beams. However, this turned out to be unrealistic, given the architectural look I want to achieve.

While looking for alternatives, I found the Media House (VRT) project in Brussels, designed by Office 324. In this project, the entire multi-story façade is a large truss that also supports the floors. Using this as inspiration, along with another reference image shown below, I developed the first idea for the structural design.

The whole façade will be made as a structural truss that also carries the floors. The ground floor will rest on concrete beams spanning over the highway. There are still challenges within this structural proposal, but it seems possible.

First image on the right: OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Media House (VRT), Brussel.
Second image on the right: Reference image of a similair structural design.



Proposed structural design for the archive.

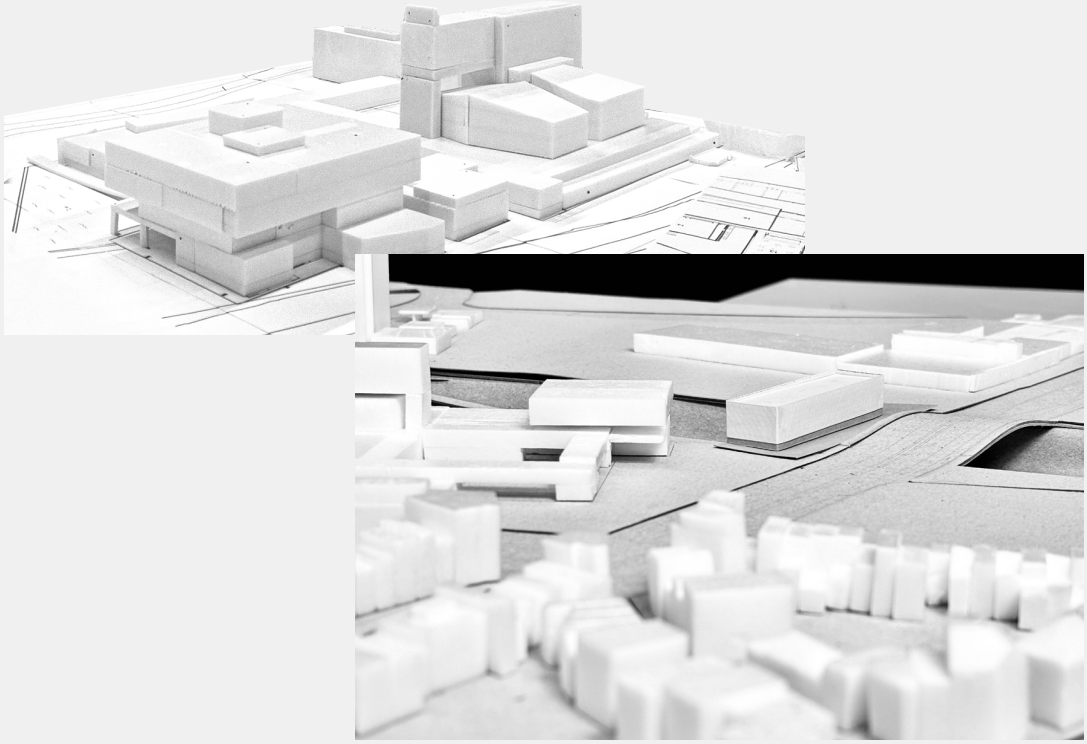
Image & transparency: Continuation

The previous week, I began studying the building mass in combination with transparency and materials. However, I wasn't entirely happy with how the building looked, it felt like it lacked character. I still believe that brick could work really well for this project due to its warm, inviting quality and its historical connection to Flemish architecture, but the earlier iteration didn't fully convey the vision I had in mind.

This week, I refined the building mass, making it flatter and longer in proportion. The ground floor, which will be almost entirely transparent, now features a concrete façade capped with a horizontal slab. Above this, a brick structure houses more specialized archival functions while still incorporating transparent openings to maintain a sense of connection. The top two levels remain dedicated to archival spaces and are therefore completely closed off.

The design feels much closer to the vision I have for this archive and is far more promising. It reassures me that there's architectural potential in this approach, particularly with the interplay of materials like brick and concrete.

Visual of the current building mass with the representative windows and materials.



Week 2.09

20-01-2024 / 26-01-2024

Preliminary proposal

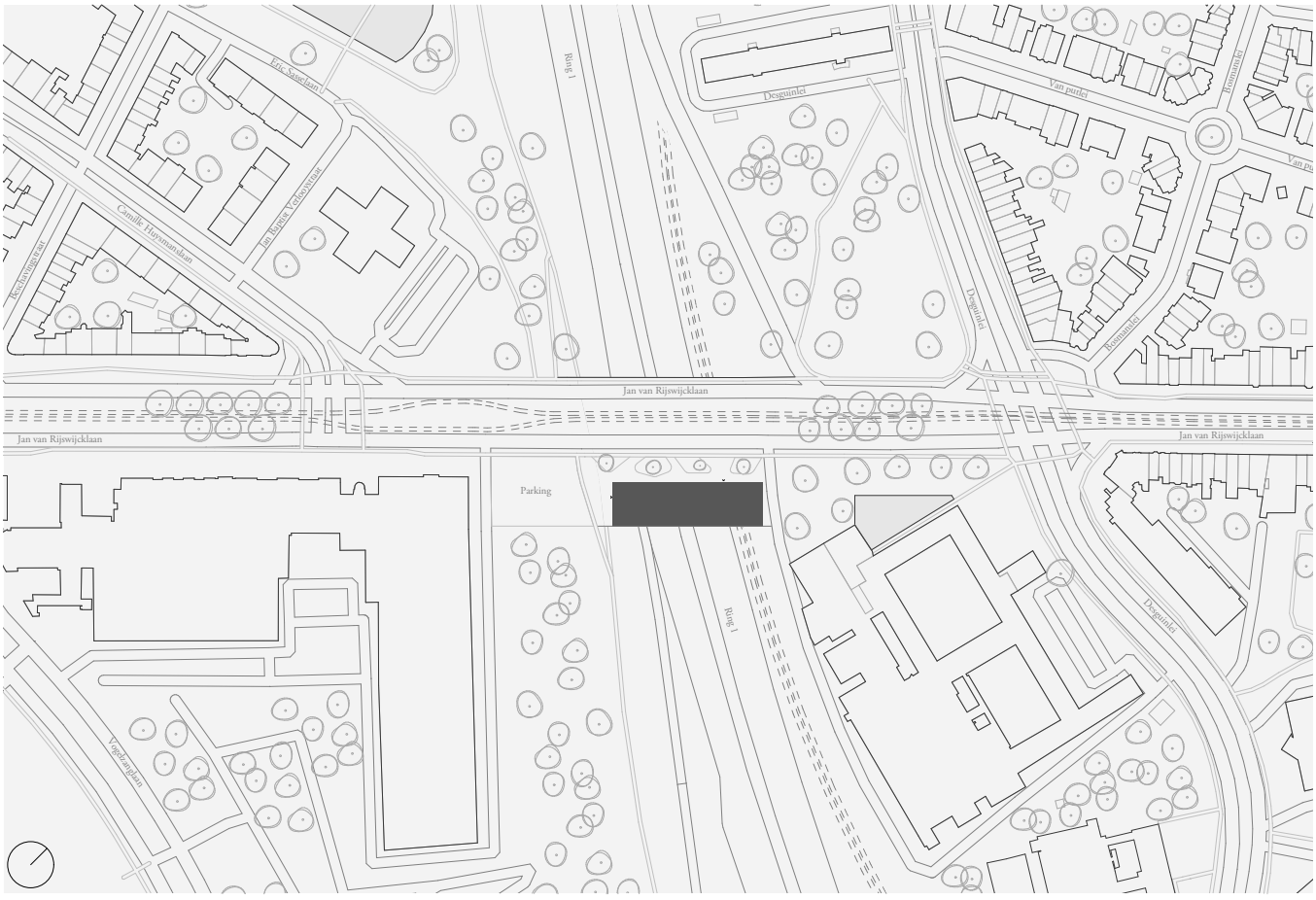
With the P2 presentations quickly approaching, it felt essential to focus on refining the floorplan design and working toward a cohesive drawing set that includes floorplans, façades, and sections. This stage marks a critical point in the project, as the drawings need to communicate the concept clearly and effectively.

Progress on these elements last week wasn't as far along as I had hoped, so there was some catching up to do. A significant part of this week was dedicated to addressing the critical feedback on the floorplans. This became the focal point of my work, as resolving the layout was crucial to advancing the overall design. Alongside the floorplans, I worked on making drawings of the façade and sections to better understand the building's spatial relationships and how the design interacts with its context.

In tandem with these updates, I also revisited the structural design of the building. I took a more thoughtful approach this time, ensuring the structure aligned seamlessly with the architectural concept and the intended use of the spaces.

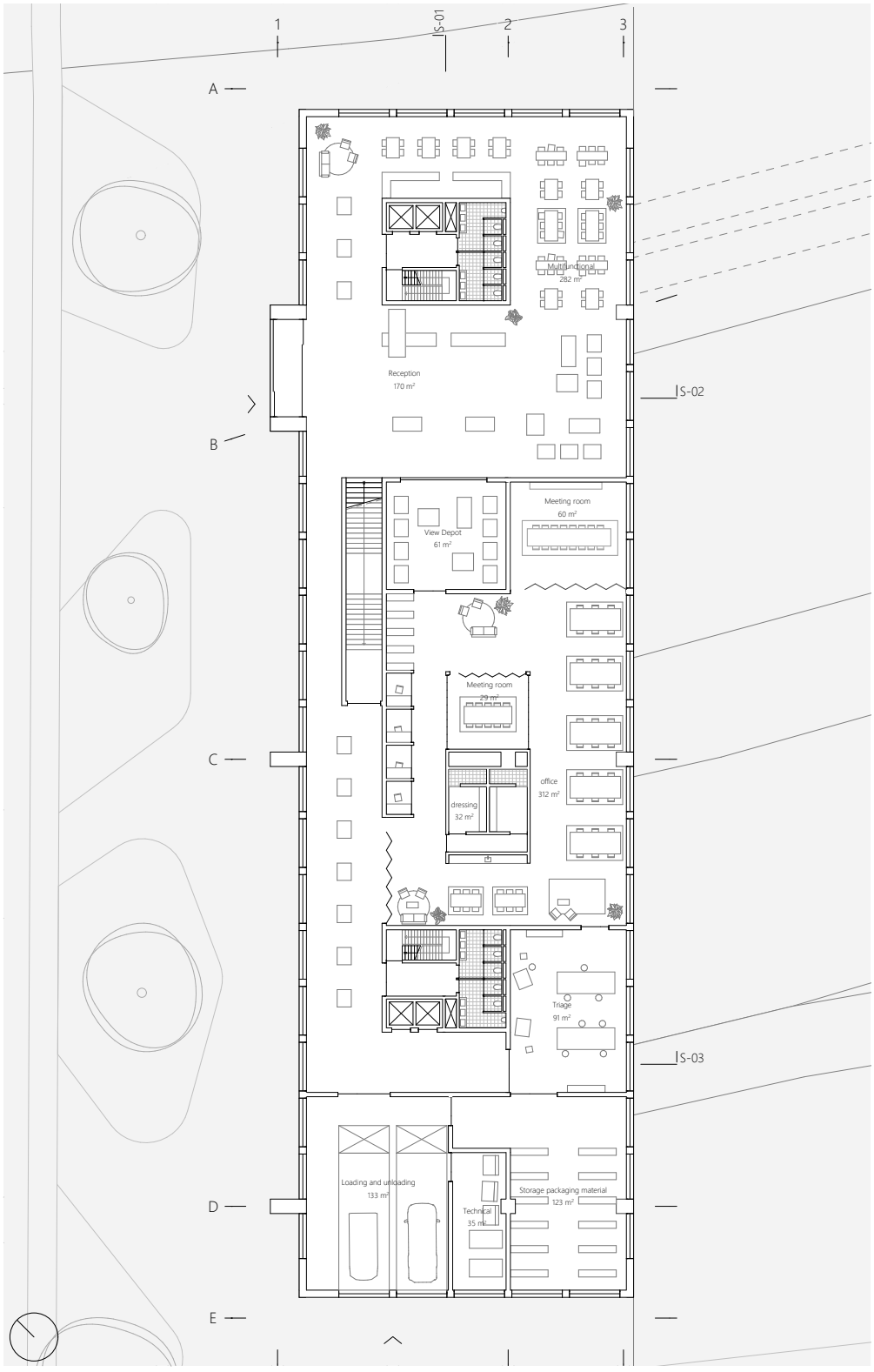
To round out the week, I did tests on both exterior and interior visuals. These helped me analyse how the design is shaping up in its environment and how the interior spaces feel in relation to the proposed layout and materials. This exercise brought valuable insight, not only into how the building interacts with its surroundings but also into how it might function and be experienced by its users.

Site plan with the proposed archive building marked in dark grey



The ground floor concept and general layout have remained largely the same, but the design of the spaces has become more detailed. As a result, I encountered more spatial challenges that needed to be addressed along the way.

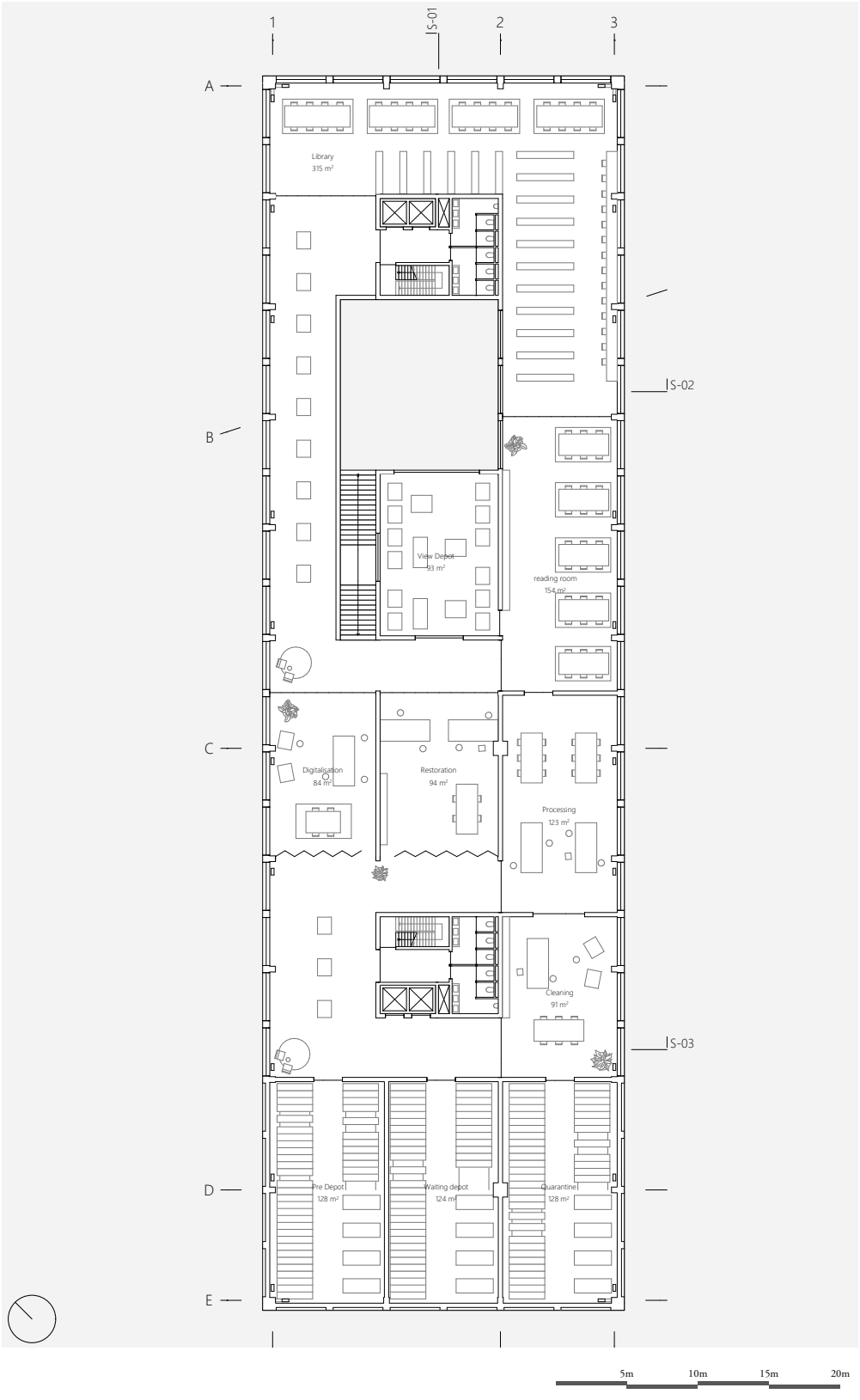
While the design doesn't feel entirely finished yet, the core principles seem to align and are coming together quite well. There's still room for refinement, but the progress so far feels solid and promising.



Ground floor

The same goes for the first floor. Once again, the general layout of the spaces remained the same, but the rooms became more detailed, providing more context and making them easier to understand.

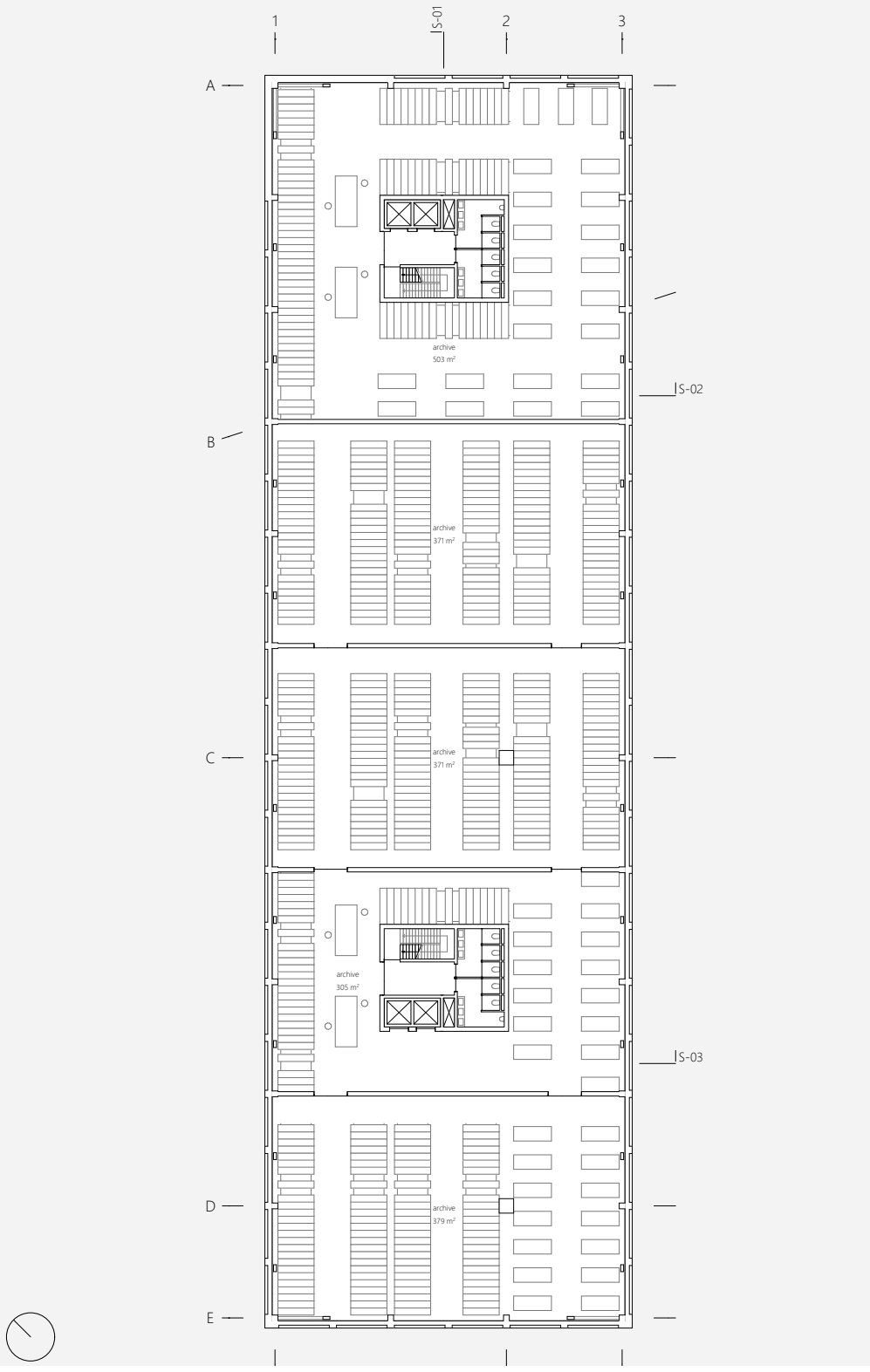
The biggest design change this week was the revision of the cores and the integration of the view depot into the overall design. This adjustment makes the view depot more visible to the public, enhancing its presence and connection to the building's purpose.



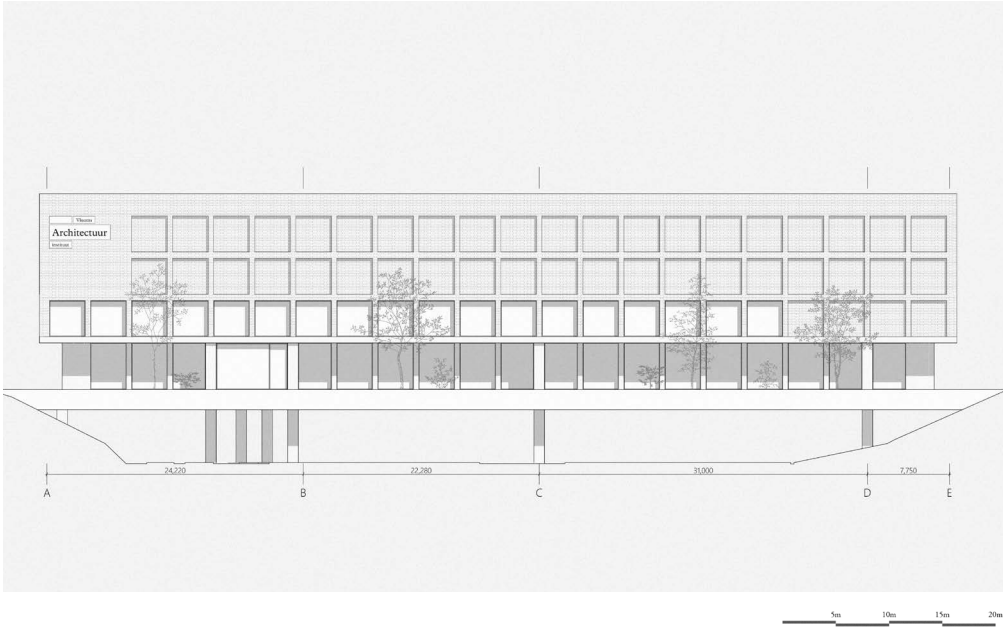
First floor

The second and third floors hadn't been fully designed last week, so I focused on them this week. The archival spaces were divided into various compartments, each capable of maintaining different temperatures, humidity levels, and other conditions to suit the specific needs of the archived materials.

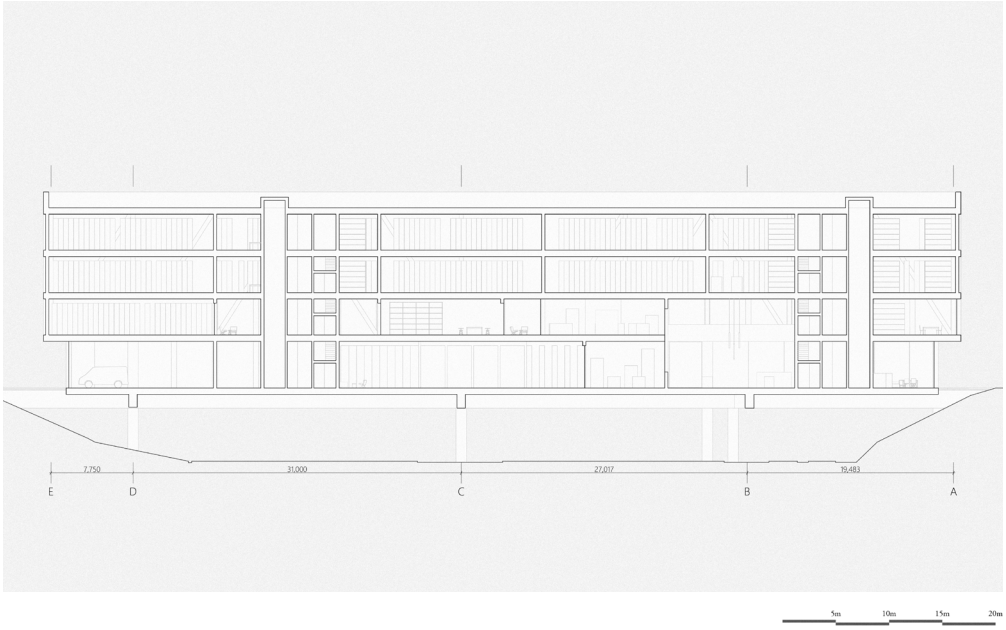
This compartmentalization not only ensures optimal preservation for the archive's contents but is also a crucial requirement for fire safety, adding an extra layer of protection to the design.



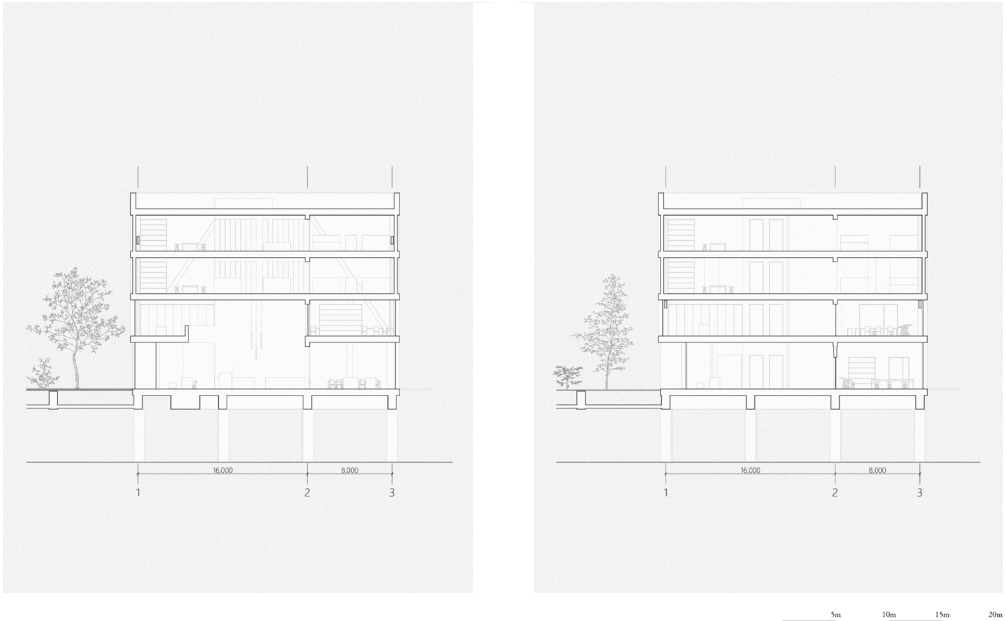
Second and third floor



Facade as seen from the boulevard



Section S-01



Section S-02 & S-03

Structure: Continuation

The main concept of the structure stayed the same this week, but it has been further refined and adapted to suit the current dimensions and spatial layout of the building. This refinement was needed to ensure the structure integrates with the overall design while maintaining its functionality and strength.

In summary, the ground floor is supported by large concrete beams, providing a solid foundation. These beams are carried by several substantial columns that extend from beneath the highway, rising to the first floor.

On top of these beams rests a façade truss, which spans across three floors. This truss not only contributes to the structural integrity of the building but also allows for the placement of the first, second, and third floors within it. By incorporating the truss in this way, the design achieves a balance between architectural design and structural efficiency, completing the framework of the building.

AXO of the structure

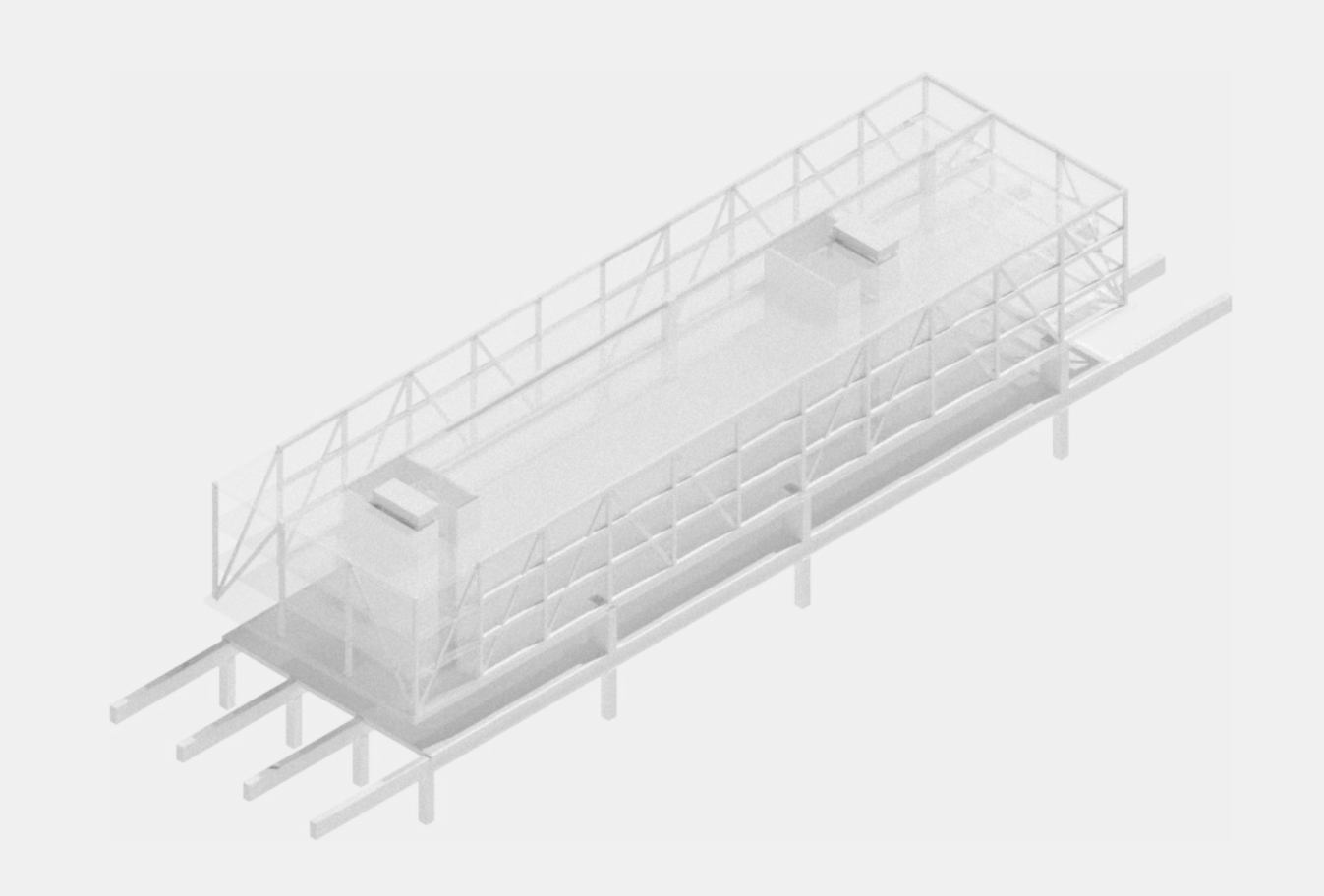


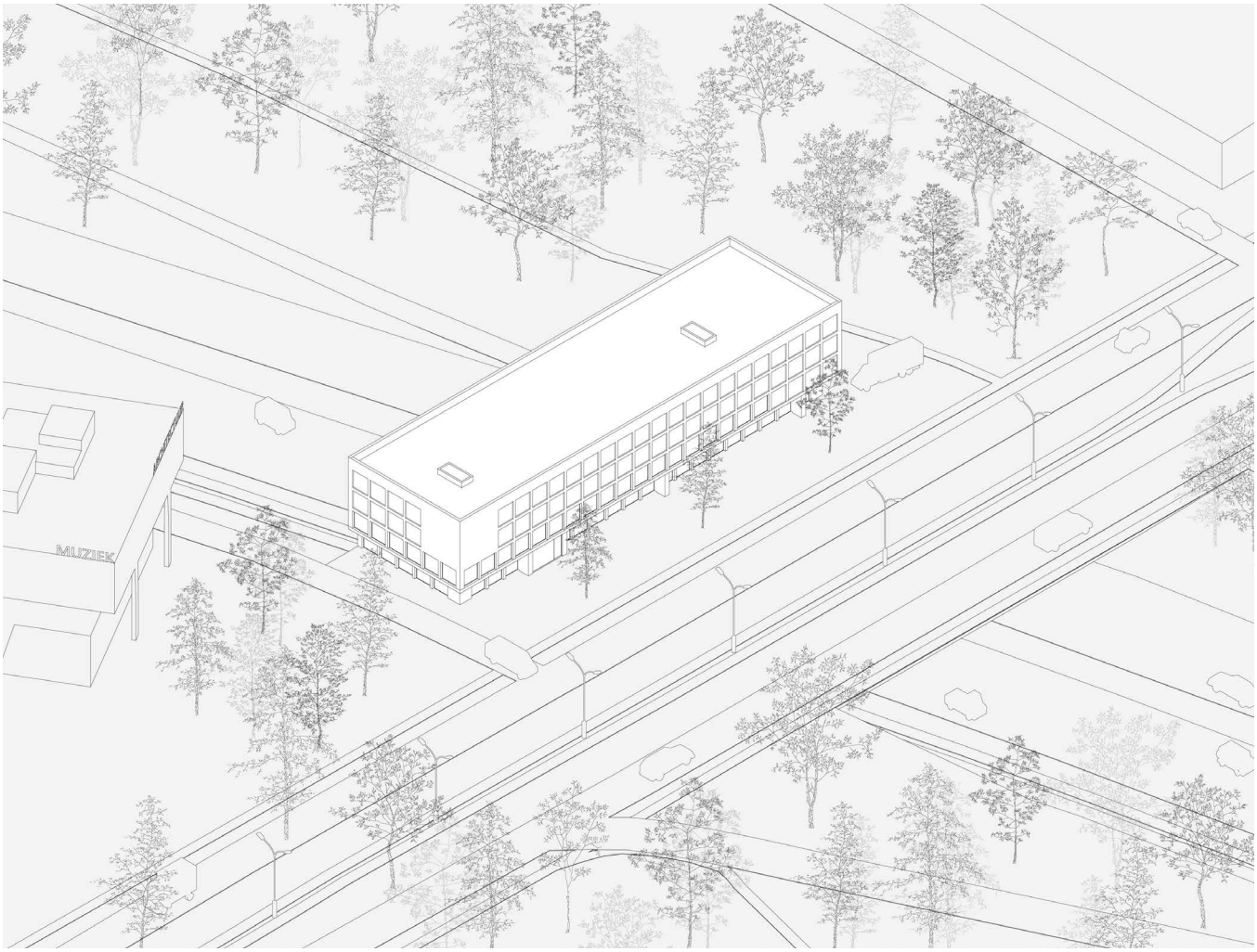
Image & transparency: Continuation

Continuing to explore the building's placement within its context, I created an axonometric drawing to show how the building sits in the surrounding environment. This image also highlighted the need for further urban design work. By positioning the building in its current location, two public plazas are formed, one between the archive and DeSingel, and another between the archive and the expo. These plazas will require additional design attention to ensure they complement the overall architectural vision.

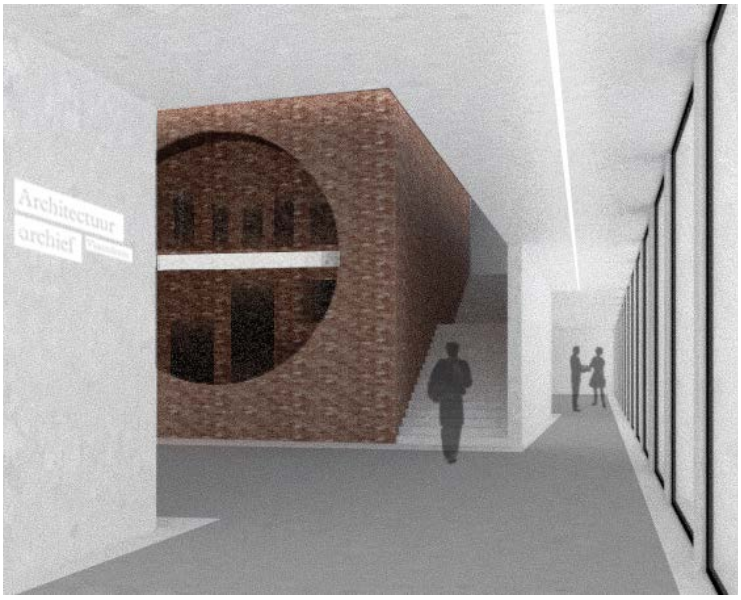
In addition to the axonometric drawing, I created other visuals, including one from a further distance to show how the building appears from afar, and another focusing on the main entrance, illustrating how visitors will be welcomed into the building. When combined with the facade image from last week, these visuals provide a solid representation of how the building will look in its current context.

That said, I still feel there's room to refine the facade design, but that may be something to address in the second semester as I continue to develop the project.

AXO of the structure

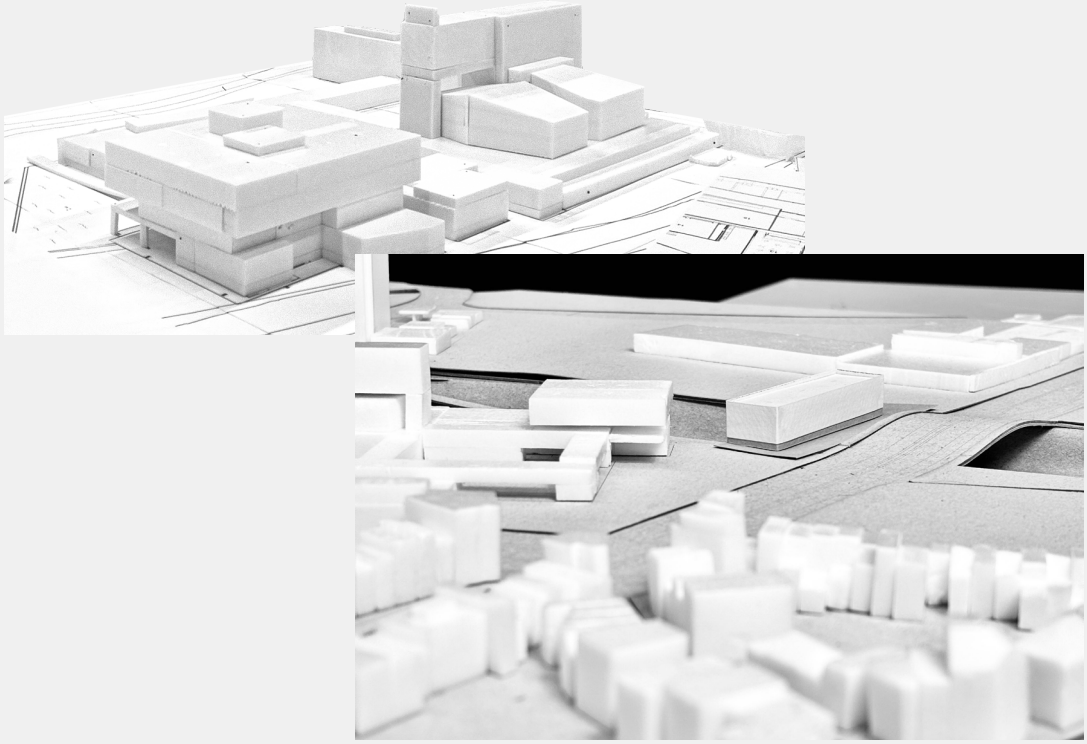


Visual of the facade



Visual of the entrance hall

Visual of the building from afar



Week 2.10 / P2

27-01-2025 / 02-02-2025

P2 proposal

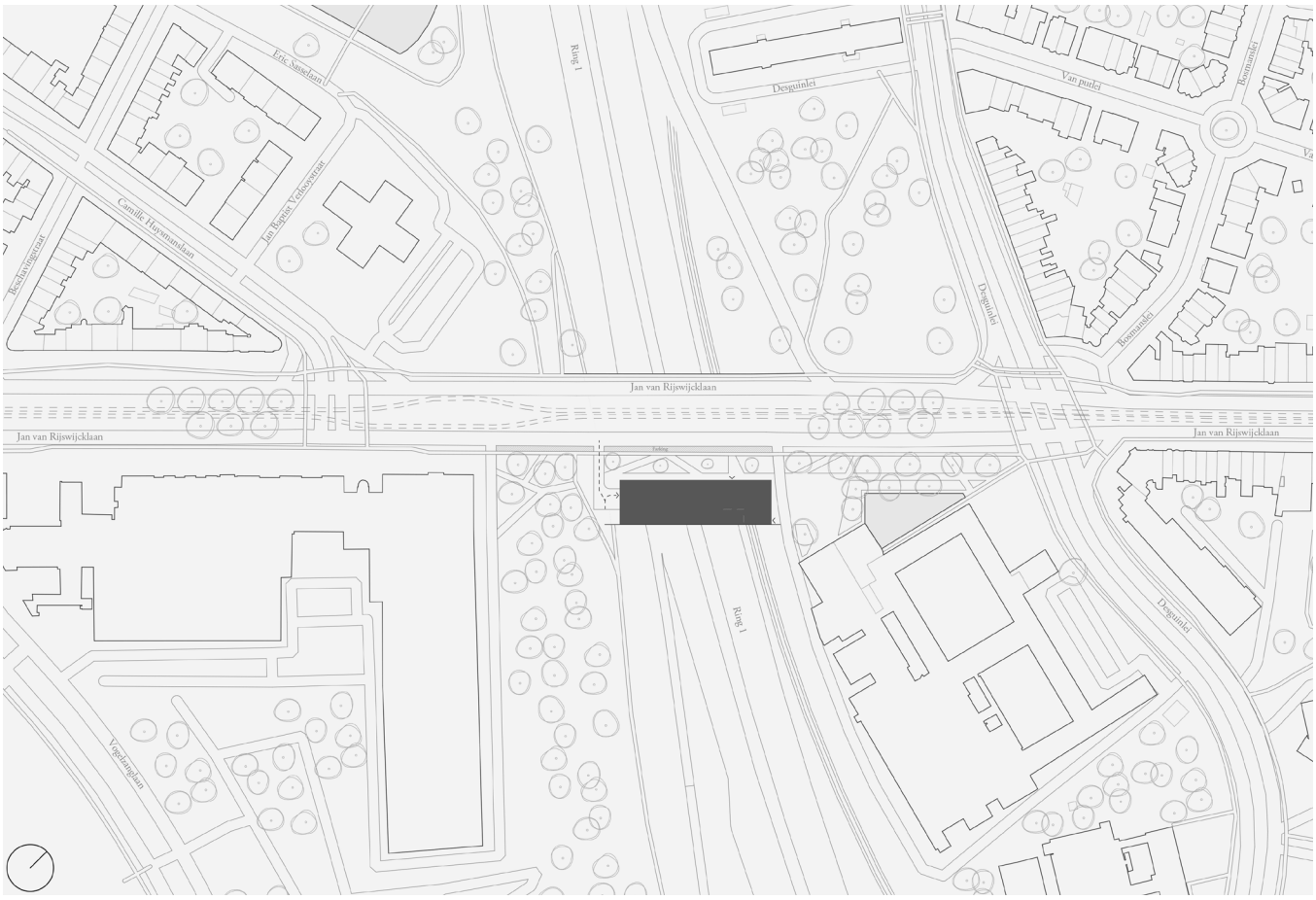
In the final week leading up to the P2 presentation, my focus was primarily on refining the storyline for the presentation and updating the drawings based on the feedback from the previous week. Ensuring a clear and compelling narrative was key, as it would help communicate the design decisions effectively.

Regarding the floor plans, the feedback from my tutor suggested that the overall layout was on the right track. Only minor adjustments were needed, mainly in terms of drawing methods and some small refinements to the plans themselves. Alongside this, I started assembling the presentation to identify any missing visuals that were necessary to support the narrative. This allowed me to determine which additional images still needed to be created.

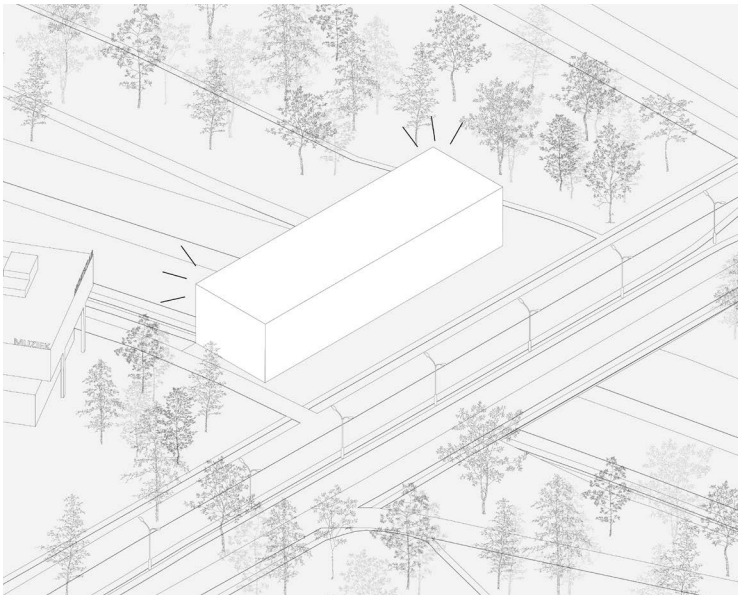
To further strengthen the presentation, I also built a quick physical model at two different scales, one at 1:1250 to show the urban context and another at 1:200 to highlight the spatial qualities of the building. Additionally, I finalized the structural concept, creating an extra drawing to illustrate and clarify the idea in more depth.

As a final task, I produced three additional interior impressions to visualize how different spaces within the building might look and function. This final push helped ensure that the project was presented in a well-rounded and coherent manner.

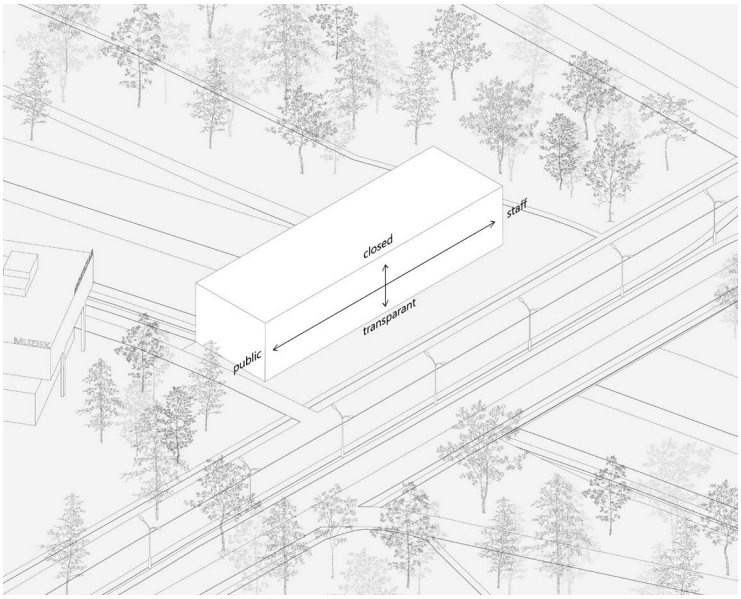
Site plan with the proposed archive building marked in dark grey



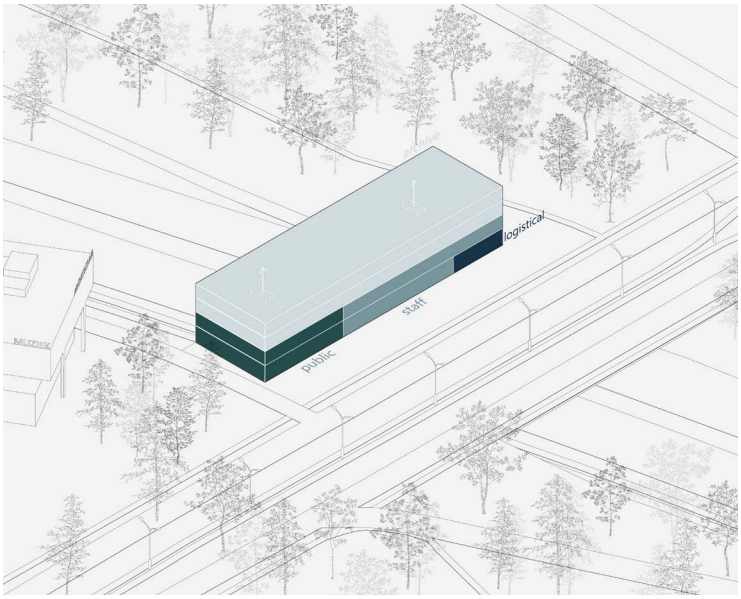
Design step images explaining the mass and program.



1 New Mass



2 Basic concept



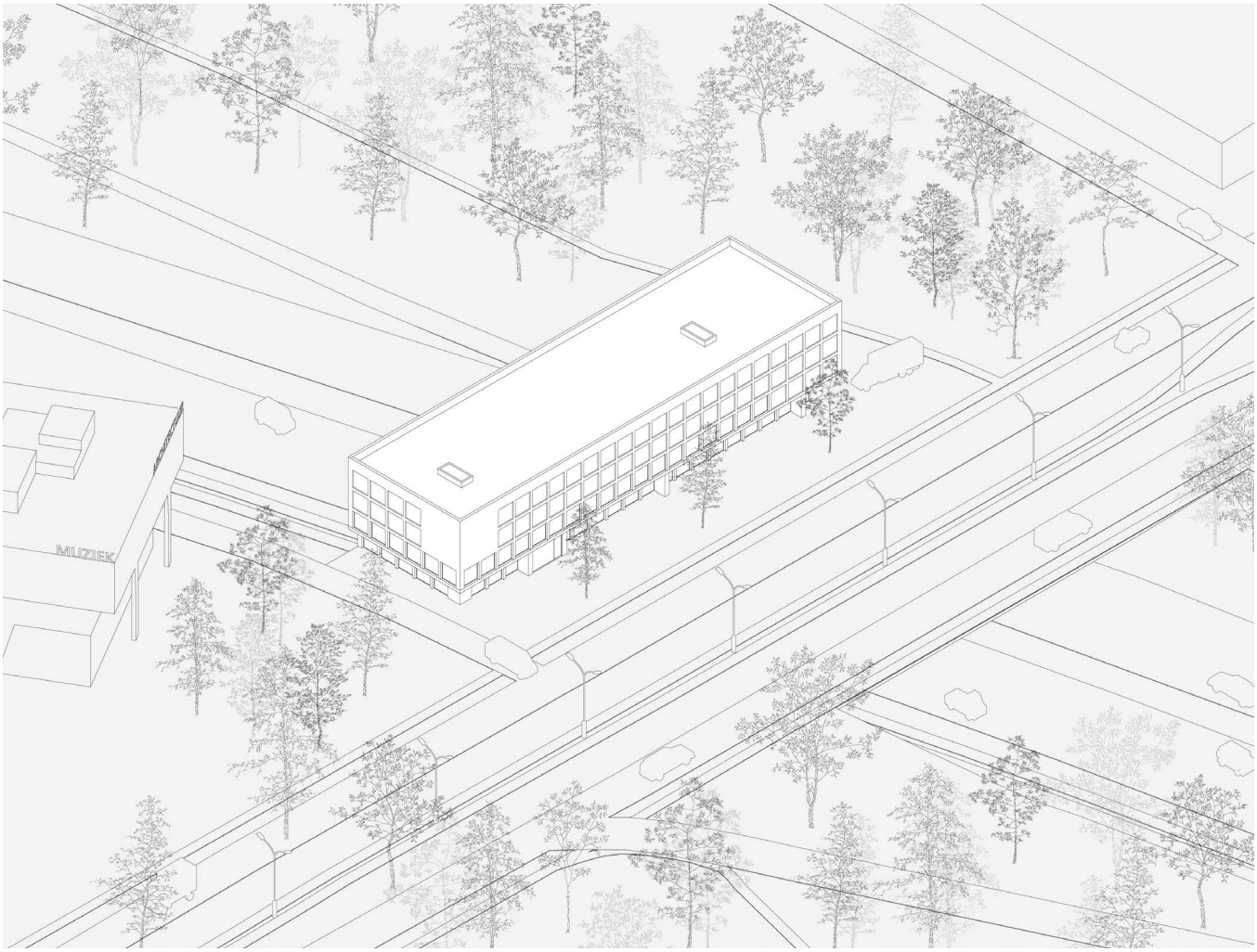
3 Program

Image & transparency

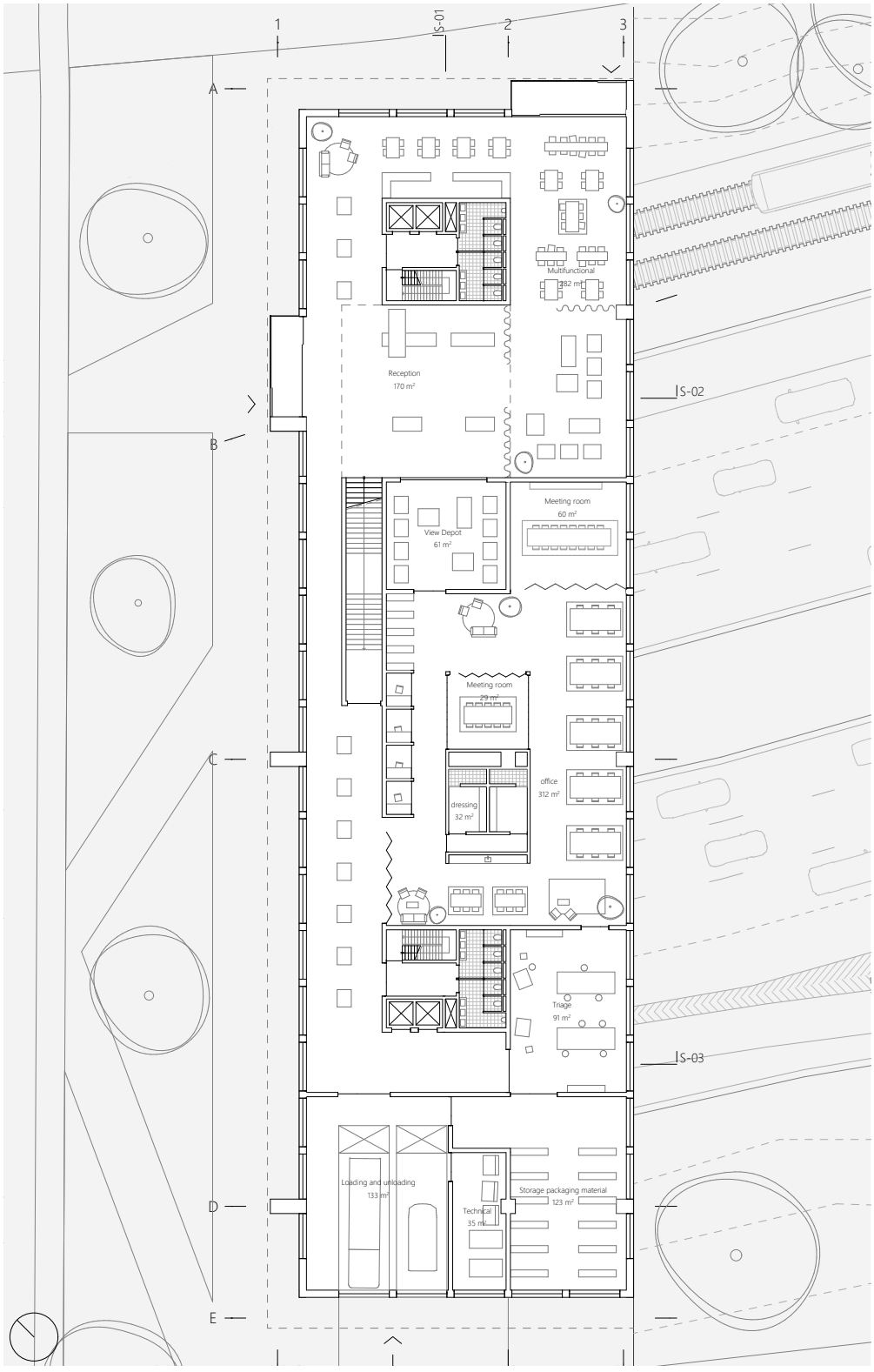
The facade design and overall massing of the building remained the same with the previous week. However, I made some minor adjustments to the AXO drawing below to refine the details and ensure it was presentation-ready.

These small refinements helped clarify the design and improve the overall readability of the drawing, making it more effective in communicating the architectural intent.

AXO of the structure

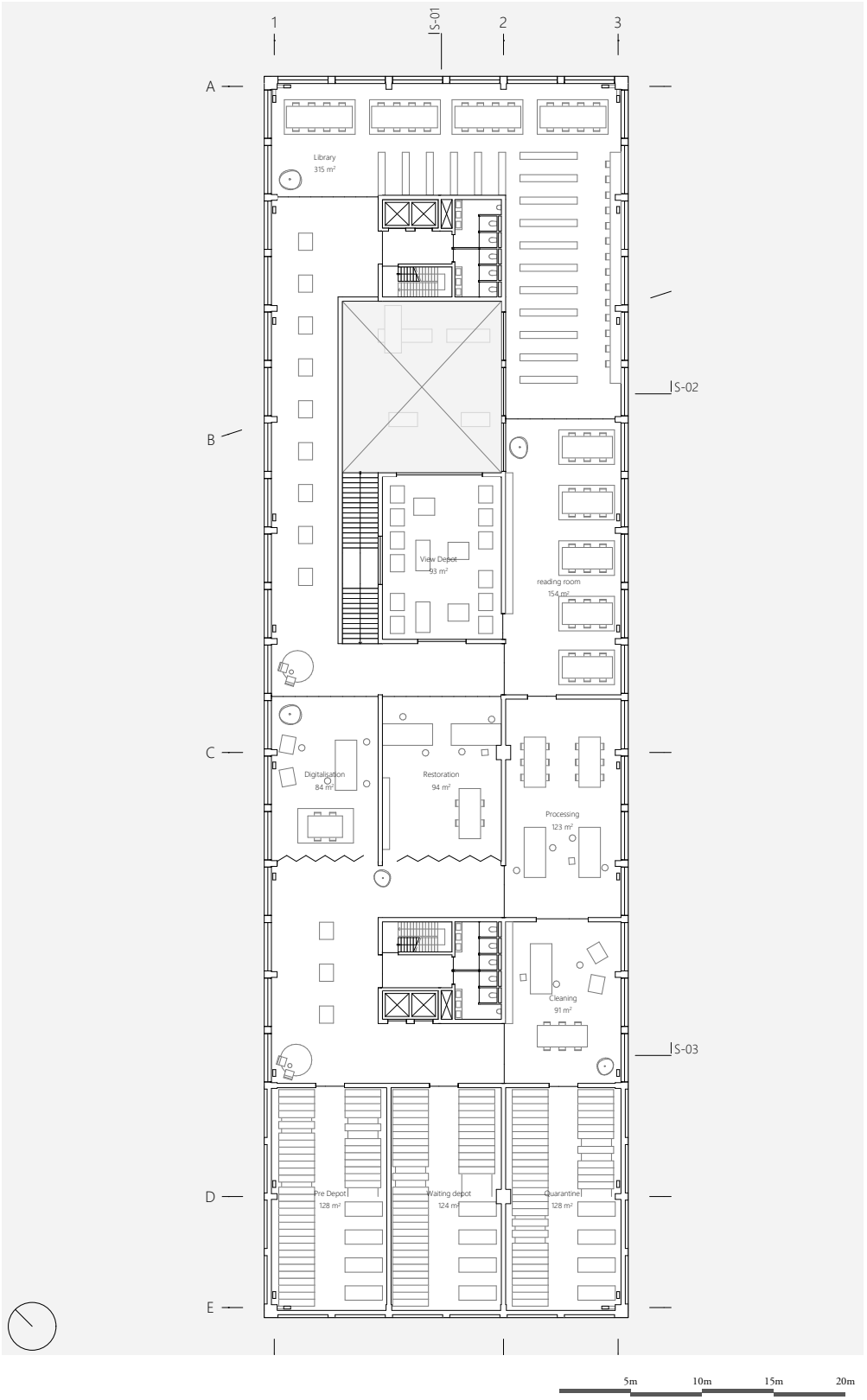


The same applies to all of the floor plans. On the ground floor, the surrounding context was added to better illustrate the building's relationship with its environment. The cores were slightly optimised, and an additional entrance was introduced on the side facing DeSingel. Additionally, the main entrance was redesigned, replacing an enclosed wall with a fully glazed element to enhance transparency and openness.



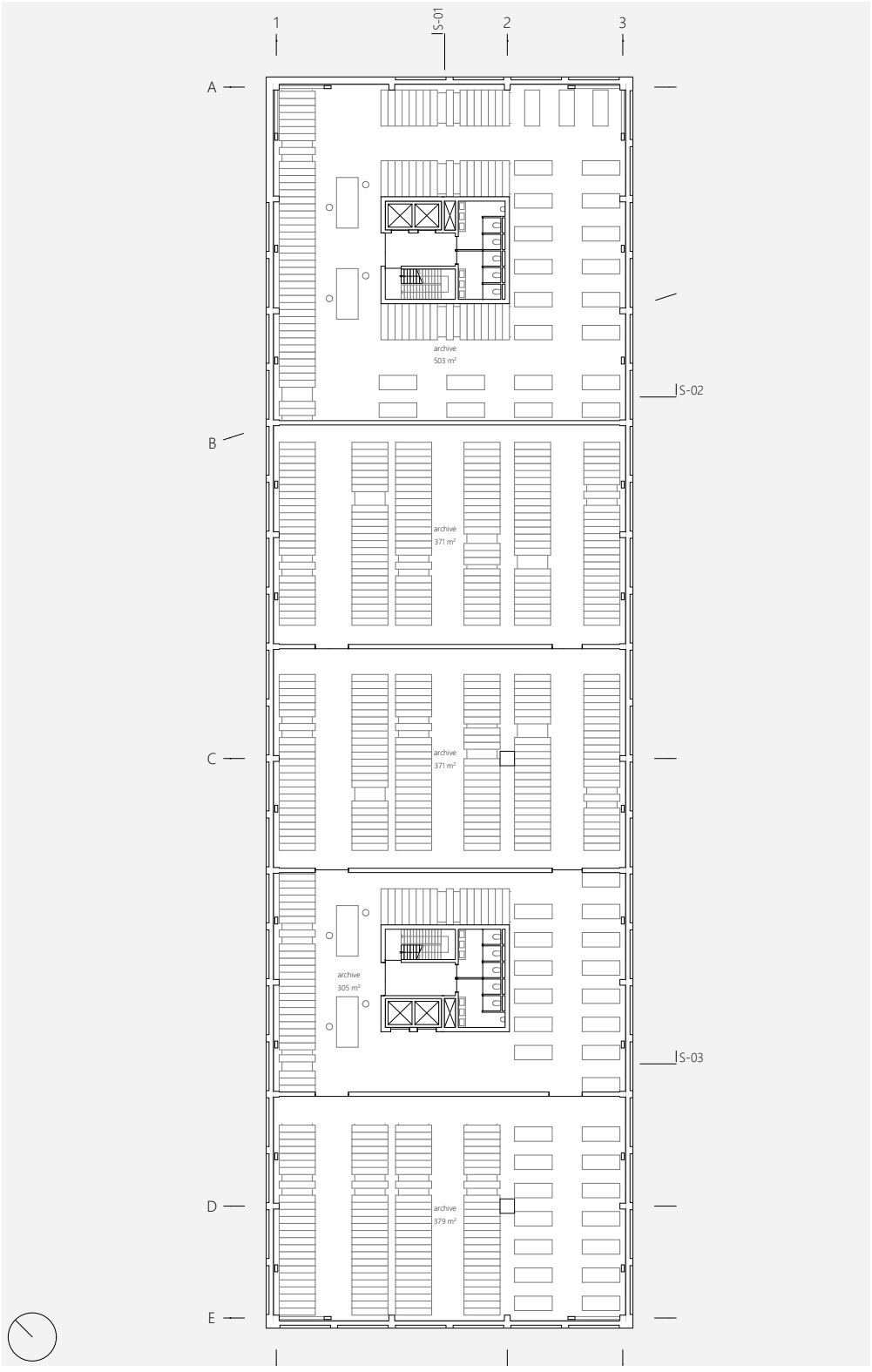
Ground floor

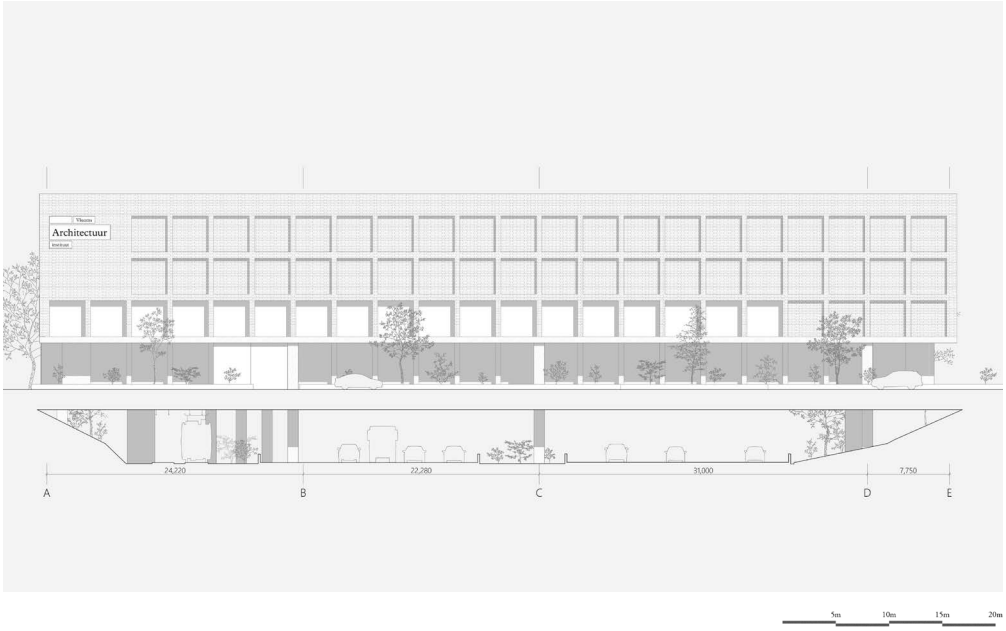
On the first floor, the overall design remained unchanged. However, minor adjustments were made, such as adding crosses to indicate floor openings.



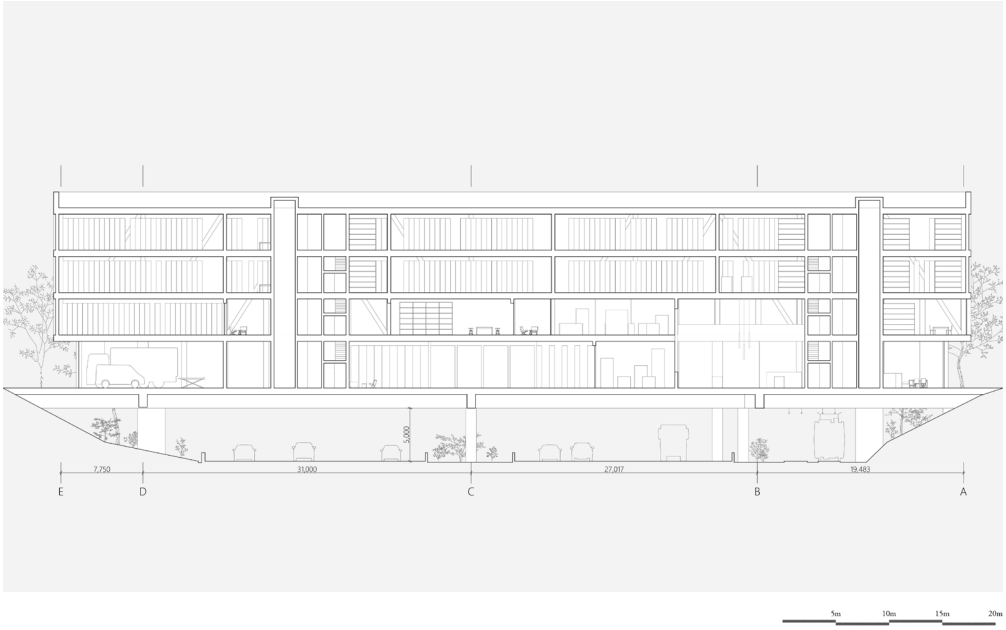
First floor

Second and third floor

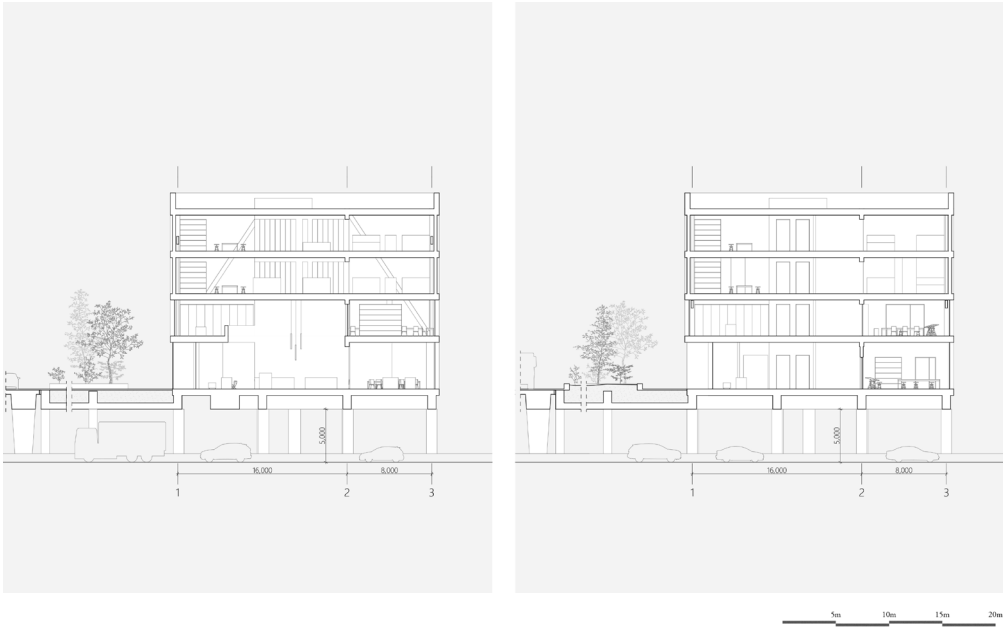




Facade as seen from the boulevard



Section S-01

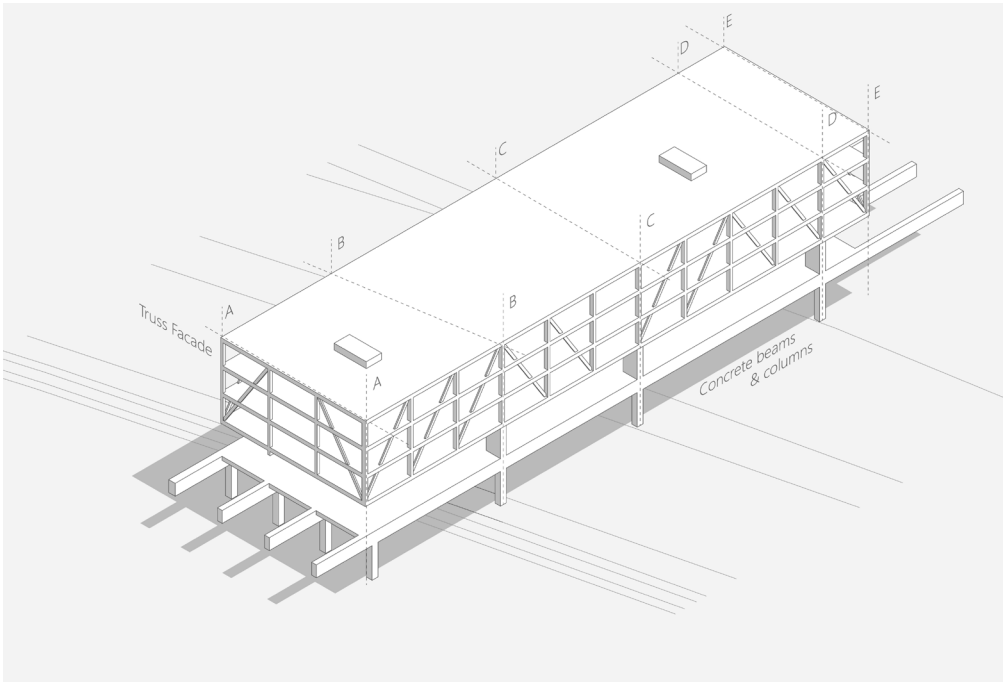


Section S-02 & S-03

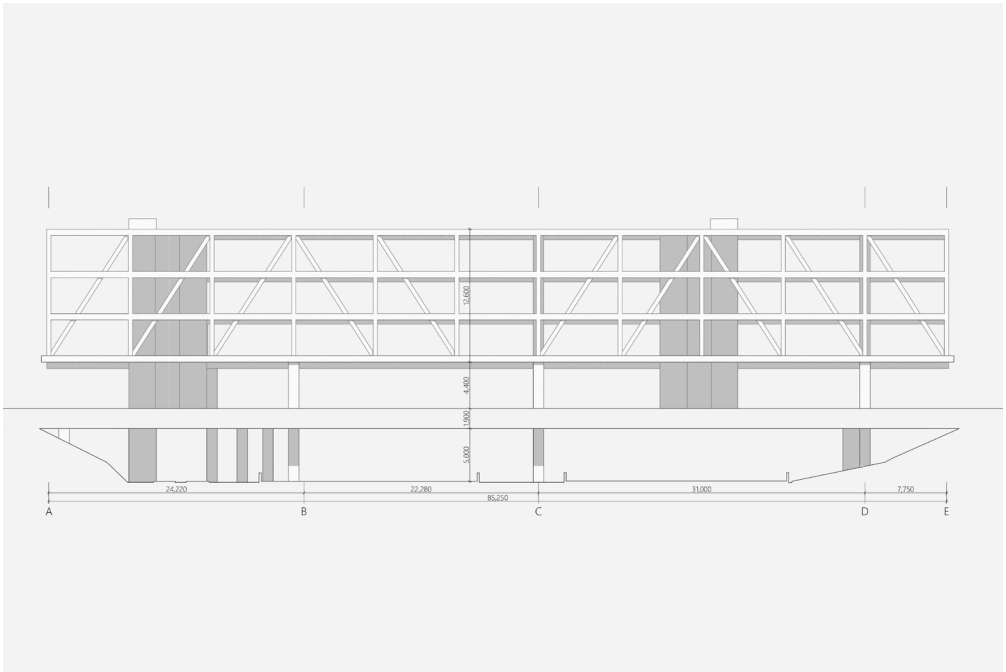
Structure

The updated structural axonometric drawing has been refined with a new style, making it more readable both on paper and on screen. Additionally, an elevation view of the structure has been created to further support and clarify the concept.

AXO of the structure



Elevation view of the structure



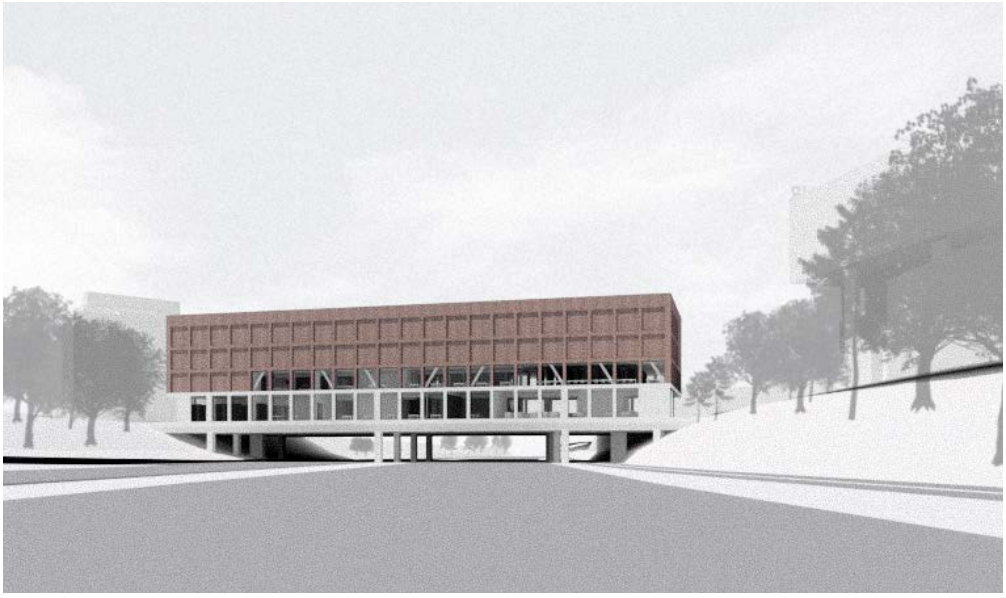
Structure Facade; 1:250

5m 10m 15m 20m

Three new impressions of the building

Reading room

Triage room



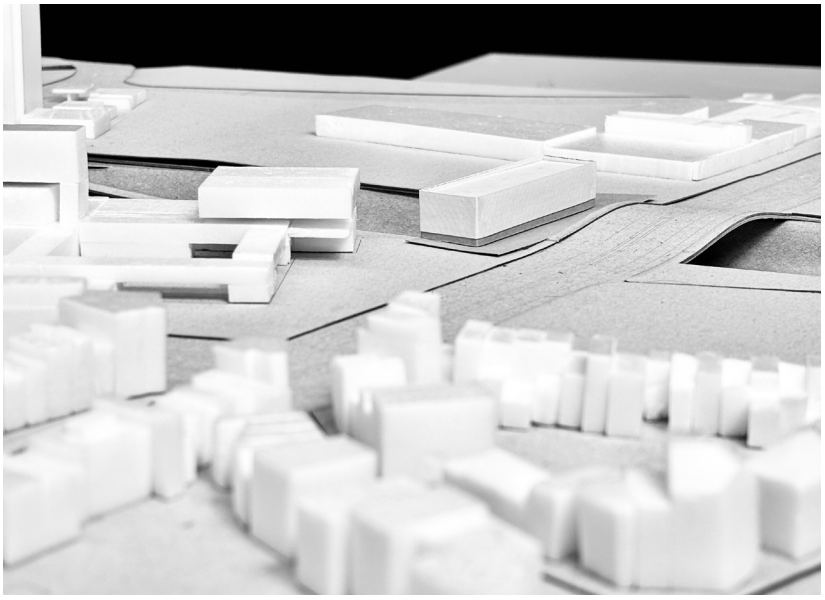
Visual of the building from the highway underneath.

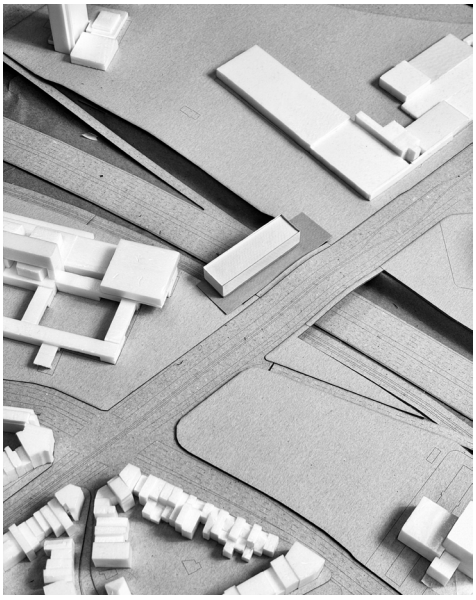
Models

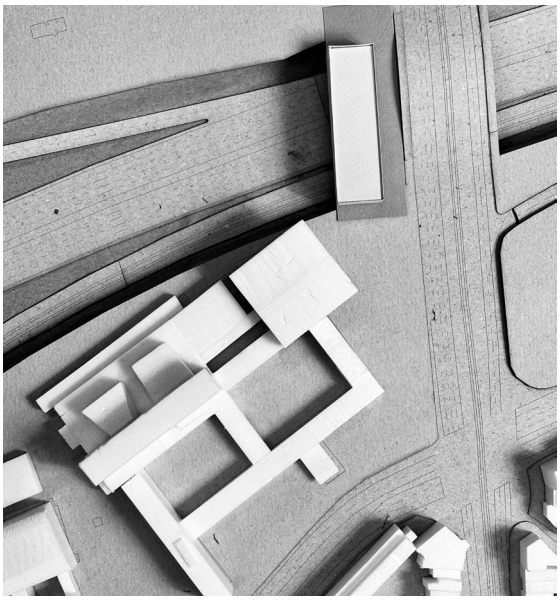
Two models were created for the exhibition, one at 1:1250 scale and the other at 1:200. The 1:200 model was intentionally cut rather than built in its entirety, as the focus at this scale was on how the building connects to DeSingel rather than its overall massing.

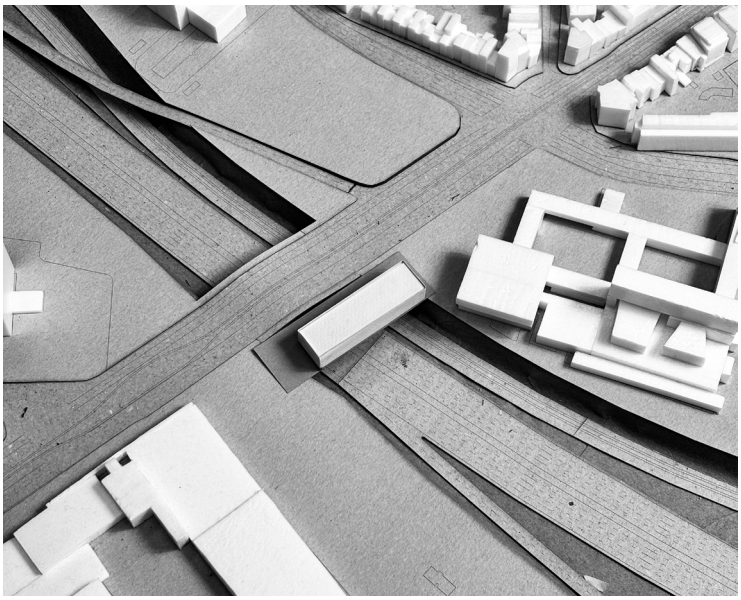
These models provided valuable additional insights into the proposal, helping to refine key aspects of the design.

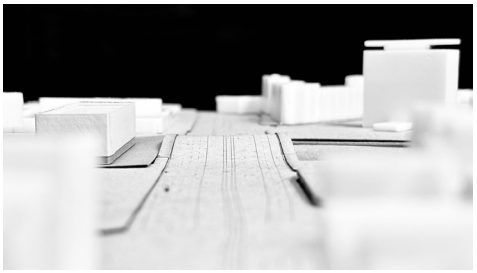
1:1250 model

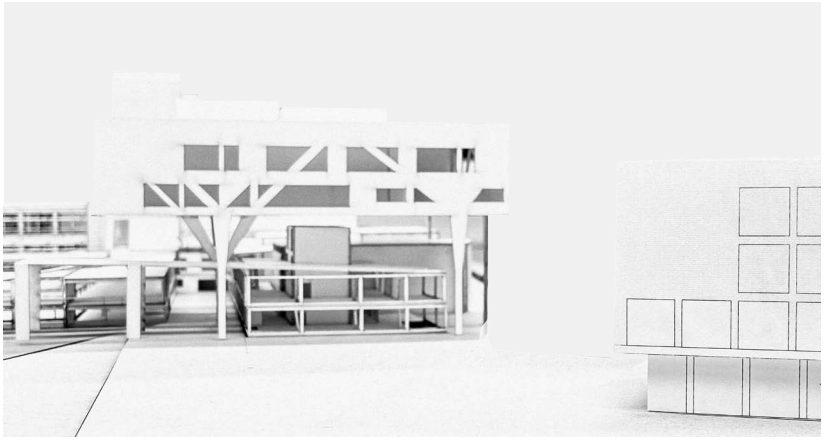


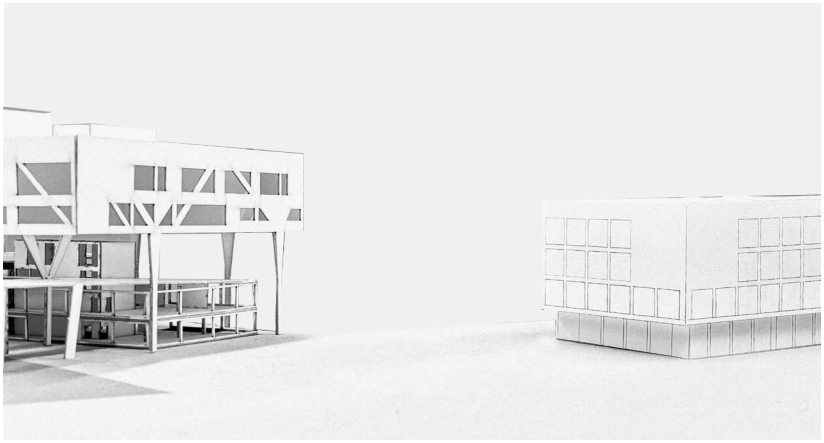




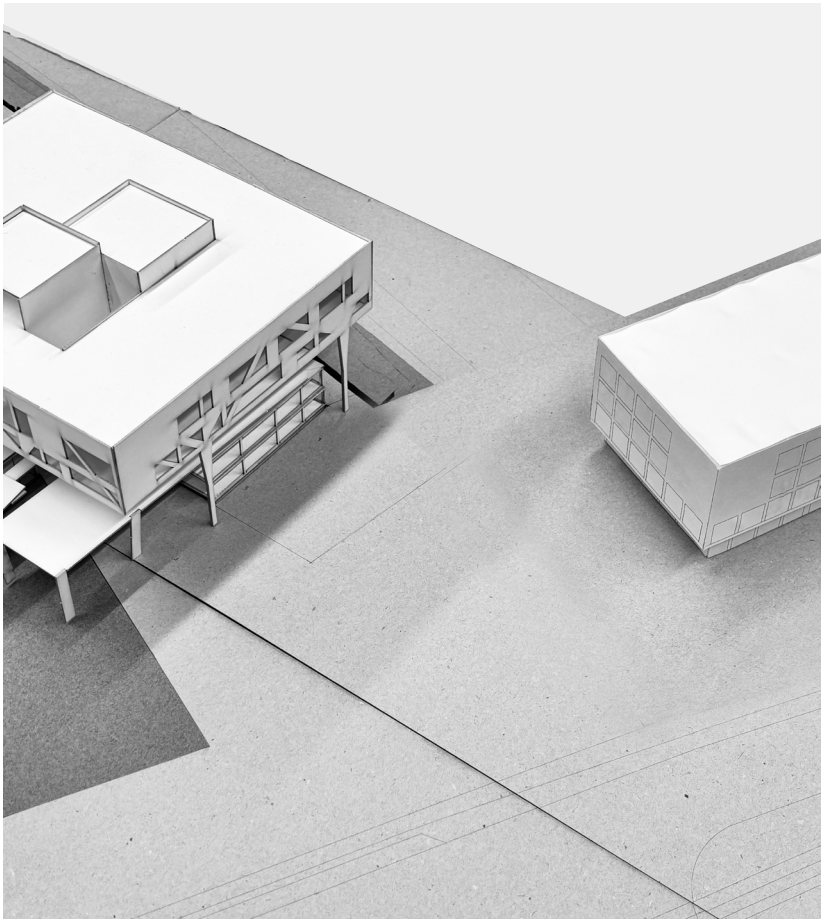








1:200 model



Reflection

One of the most compelling aspects of this project has been exploring how an archive can be more than just a storage facility. Traditionally, archives are closed-off spaces, accessible only to researchers and professionals. However, I became increasingly interested in the idea of opening up the archive to the public, creating a space that not only preserves history but also actively engages people with architecture. This shift in perspective made me question how such a space should function and what kind of architectural decisions could support this openness.

Throughout the semester, I experimented with different spatial arrangements, material choices, and structural concepts. Early on, I established a clear distinction between public and archival spaces, but refining this relationship was more challenging than expected. Finding a balance between accessibility and functionality required constant iteration, adjusting floorplans, reorganizing circulation, and reconsidering how visitors and staff would navigate the building.

The structural design also played a significant role in my development this semester. Initially, I struggled with how to integrate the building above the highway, but working through various concepts, such as the use of large concrete beams and a structural façade truss, helped me solidify a solution that was both feasible and conceptually strong.

Another key takeaway from this semester was the importance of representation and storytelling in architecture. As the P2 presentation approached, I had to translate weeks of research and design work into a coherent narrative. This process made me more aware of how drawings, models, and visuals contribute to communicating an architectural idea. Constructing a physical model and testing different visual perspectives helped me refine not only my design but also how I presented it.

Looking back, this semester has been a mix of exploration, refinement, and critical reflection. While there are still many aspects of the design that need further development, I feel that I have built a solid foundation. Moving forward, I aim to deepen my research into materiality, refine the public experience within the archive, and further integrate the design into its urban context.

This project has reinforced my passion for architecture's role in shaping cultural and historical narratives. I'm excited to see how these ideas evolve in the next semester and how the design will continue to take shape.

PART 3/4

Week 3.01 / Week 3.10 (P3)

Week 3.01

10-02-2025 / 16-02-2025

Post P2

Work resumed at a slow pace after the P2 presentation. After an intensive push to fully develop the concept for the presentation, my energy was low. This quiet period, however, gave me a chance to step back, reflect on the feedback I received, and consider the future direction of the project.

I used this time to reassess my priorities and think critically about what I wanted to achieve in the next phase. What aspects of the project still needed refinement? Which elements required deeper exploration? And ultimately, what did I want to take away from this process?

The summary below highlights the key topics that require further attention.

Feedback

Design

significance, innovativeness, knowledge and know how. Key aspects to focus on include:

- Material and technical aspects: Detailing, structure, and climate design.

- Contextual aspects: response to the surroundings in shape, function, and circulation.

Observations and feedback highlight the need for clarity in ***presentation***, ensuring that model photography is explicitly distinguished from real spaces. Questions were raised about ***spatial relationships,*** particularly regarding the institution's visibility from the highway, integration with De Singel, and structural legibility.

Research

Currently, no critical gaps were found in research development. However, aspects such as ***coherence, elaboration, and exploration*** should continue to be refined to strengthen the project's foundation.

Key Feedback and Considerations

Structural approach The bridge like nature of the building should be addressed earlier in the presentation.

Materiality and design language Consider the relationship to Stynen's architecture, material use, and how the structure interacts with the landscape.

Public engagement How does the archive function programmatically and spatially within its context? What draws people to this space?

Presentation improvements Clarify certain slides (e.g., making images larger, improving photo clarity, and using contrasting colours).

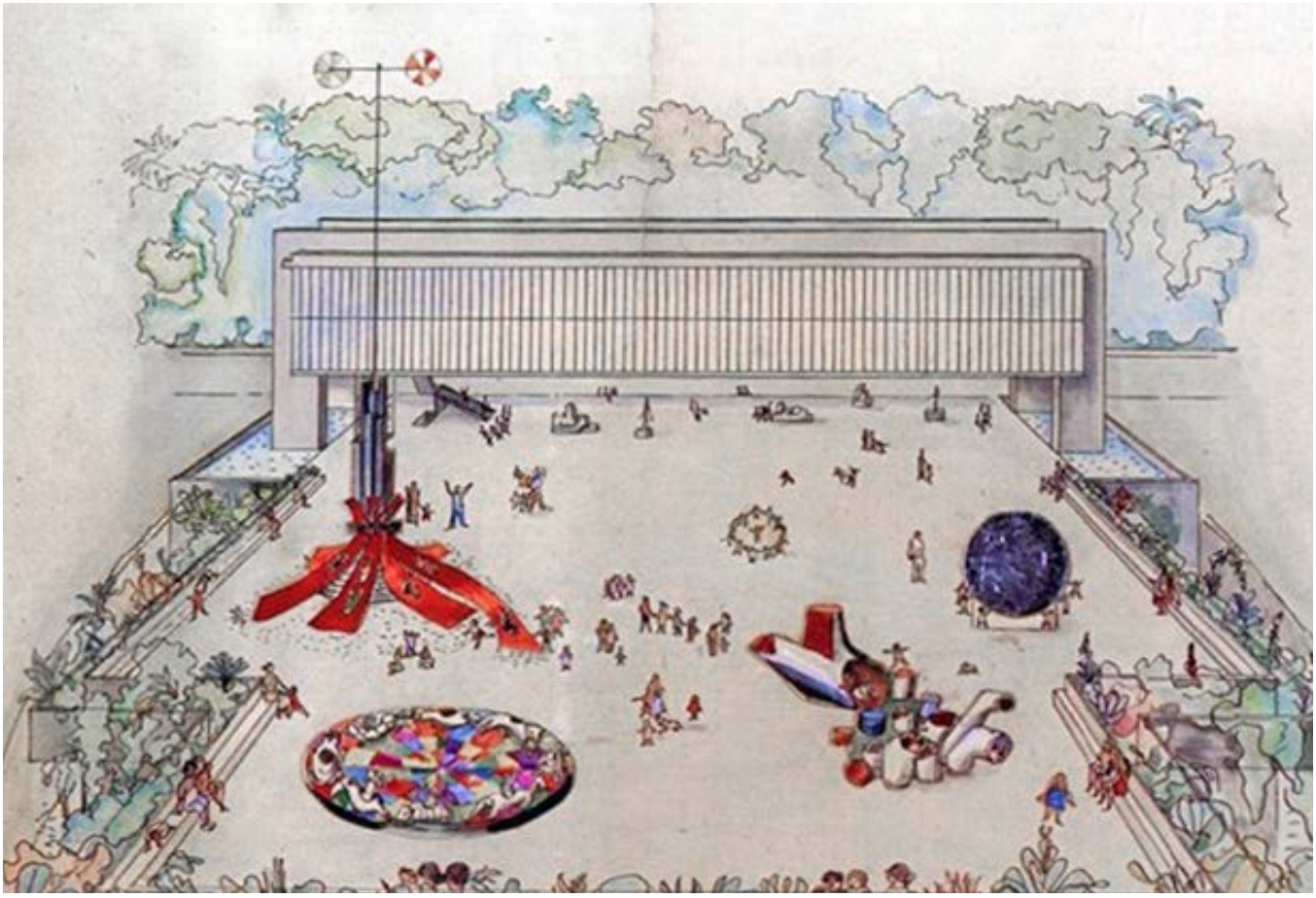
By addressing these aspects, the project can move forward with stronger coherence, clarity, and integration into its urban and cultural setting.

Architecture statement

One of the key elements I should focus on in my graduation project is the relevance of the building, its statement, and the underlying know-how that informs its design. Since my project involves creating an archival building for the VAi, which seeks to open up the archive to the public, it's crucial that the design addresses both the functional needs of the archive and the public's need for engagement and interaction. The building should serve as more than just a storage space for historical materials; it must become an accessible and inviting environment where people can engage with the archive, learn from it, and connect with its contents in meaningful ways.

In designing this building, I need to think about how the archive can be integrated into the public sphere, making it an open, transparent, and welcoming place. The challenge is to create a space that balances the technical requirements of an archival building with the social and cultural function of a public space. This means designing areas that allow for easy access to the materials, but also spaces where visitors can interact, learn, and engage with the contents of the archive in a more dynamic and immersive way.

The relevance of the building, then, lies in how it contributes to the cultural landscape by transforming the archive into a living resource that's accessible and engaging. By focusing on accessibility, transparency, and public engagement, I aim to design a space that is not only functional but also resonates with the community and invites people to interact with history and knowledge in a meaningful way. This approach will help ensure that the archive is not seen as a closed-off, exclusive institution, but rather as an open, dynamic part of the public realm.



Architectural Review, 2014.

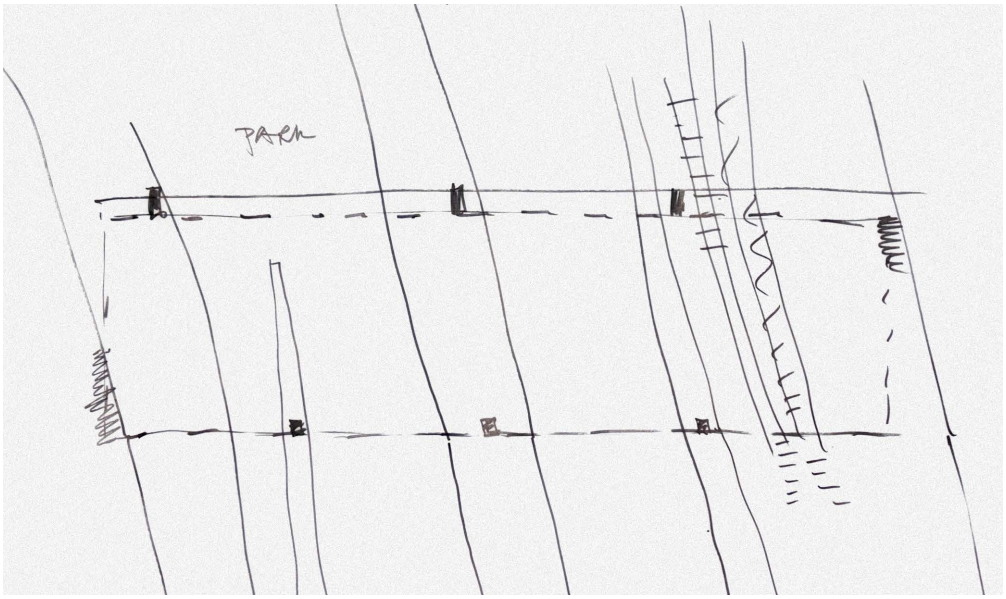
Week 3.02

17-02-2025 / 23-02-2025

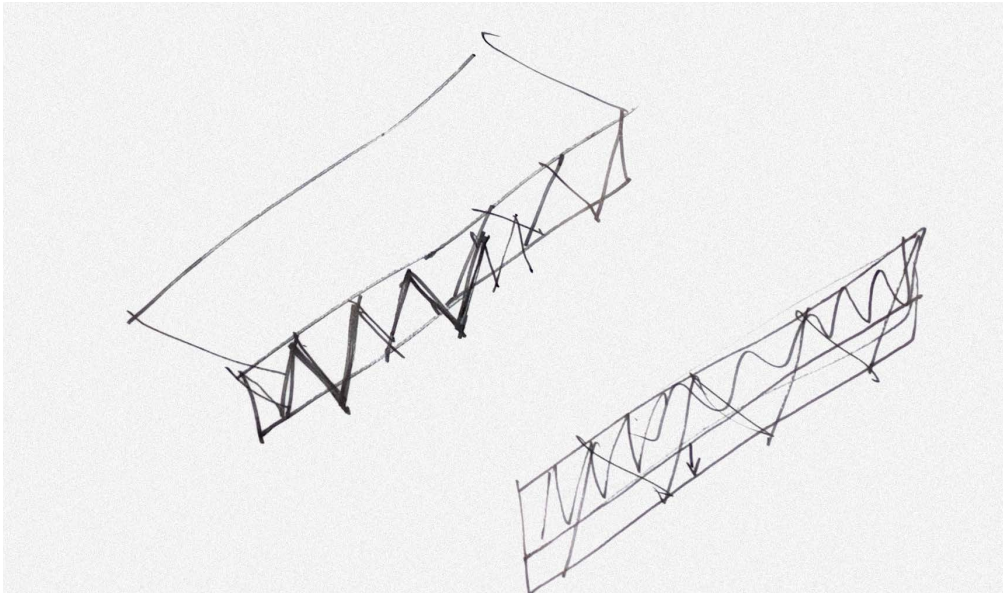
Structural challenges

I knew there were still some structural challenges in the design. While sketching, I realized that the columns used in the P2 proposal weren't aligned with the highway structure, which created a structural inconsistency that needed to be addressed logically. This misalignment raised questions about the overall coherence of the design and how to integrate the structure more seamlessly with its surrounding context.

Through further sketching, I began to explore potential solutions specifically, where the structure should land in relation to the highway and how the columns could be repositioned or rethought to achieve a more logical alignment. I also considered what the structural elements might look like in terms of both functionality and aesthetics, ensuring that the design maintained a sense of continuity and stability while also contributing to the architectural vision. These sketches helped me understand the spatial relationships and allowed me to experiment with different approaches to resolve the structural issues, bringing clarity to the next steps in the design process.



Study 2



Study 3

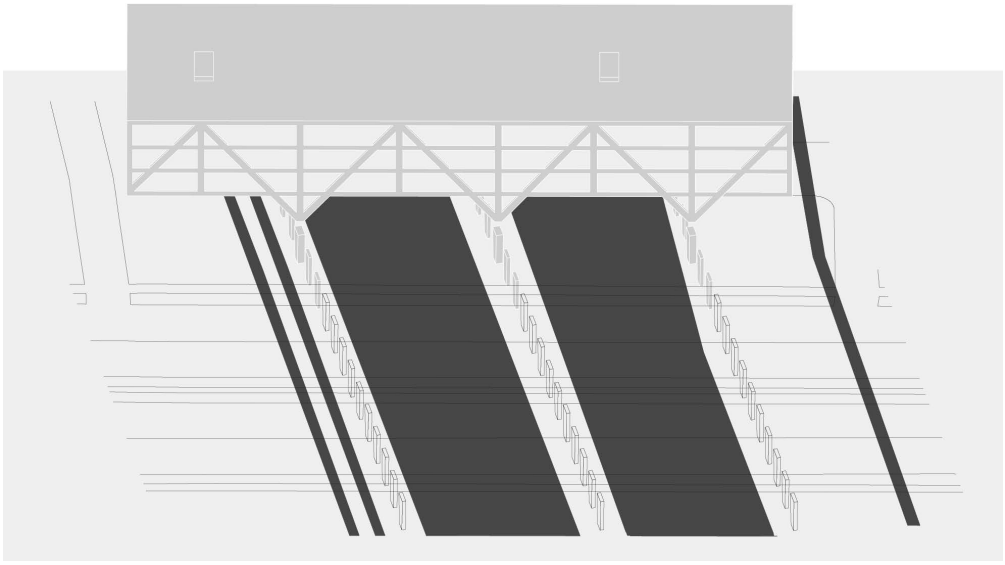
Designing with the structure

After exploring and sketching the options I had in mind, I created the images below to showcase the different, improved structural methods that could be applied for a more logical and cohesive design. These visualizations allowed me to compare how each approach would work within the overall concept, helping to clarify the most effective solution.

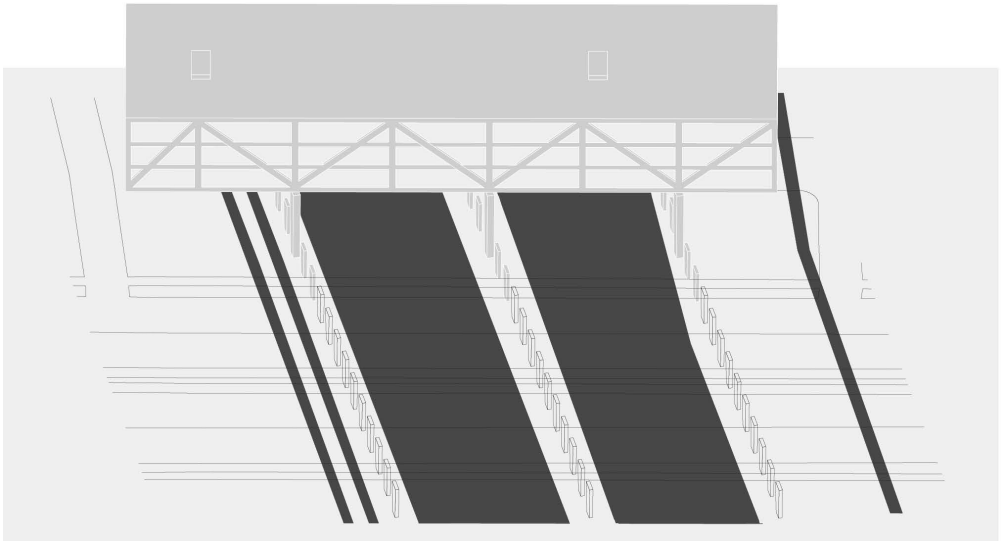
In Proposal 1, I extended the facade truss down to the ground floor, integrating it more directly into the building's base. This approach not only provided additional structural support but also created a stronger visual connection between the upper and lower portions of the building.

In Proposal 2, I kept the facade truss elevated, maintaining a lighter, more open feel on the ground floor. This method allowed for more flexibility in the space below and could offer a more dynamic interaction between the building and its surroundings, while still ensuring structural integrity. Both proposals offered distinct advantages, and through this exploration, I was able to identify the most logical and functional way to integrate the structural elements into the overall design.

Proposal 1

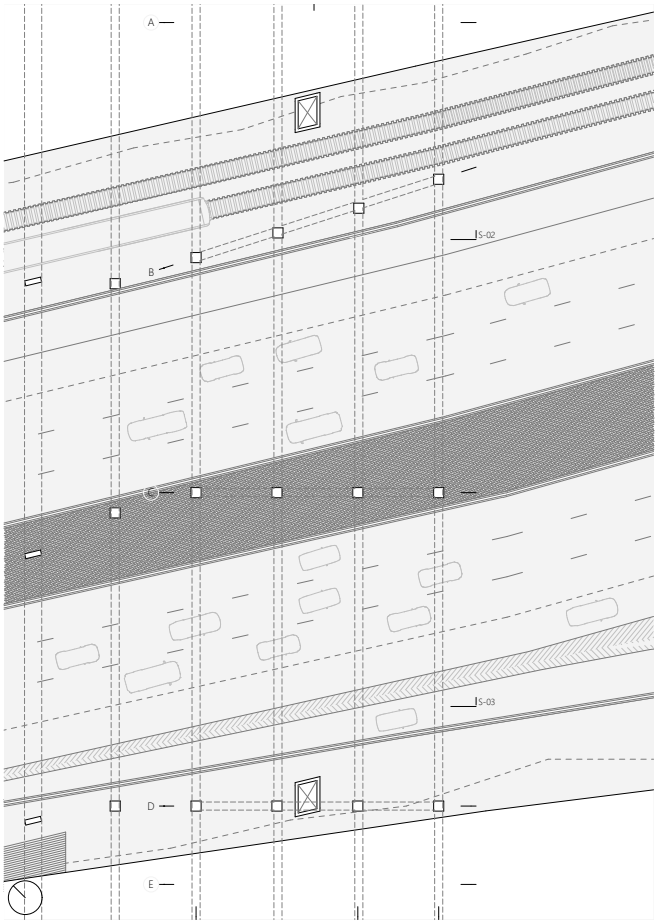


Proposal 2

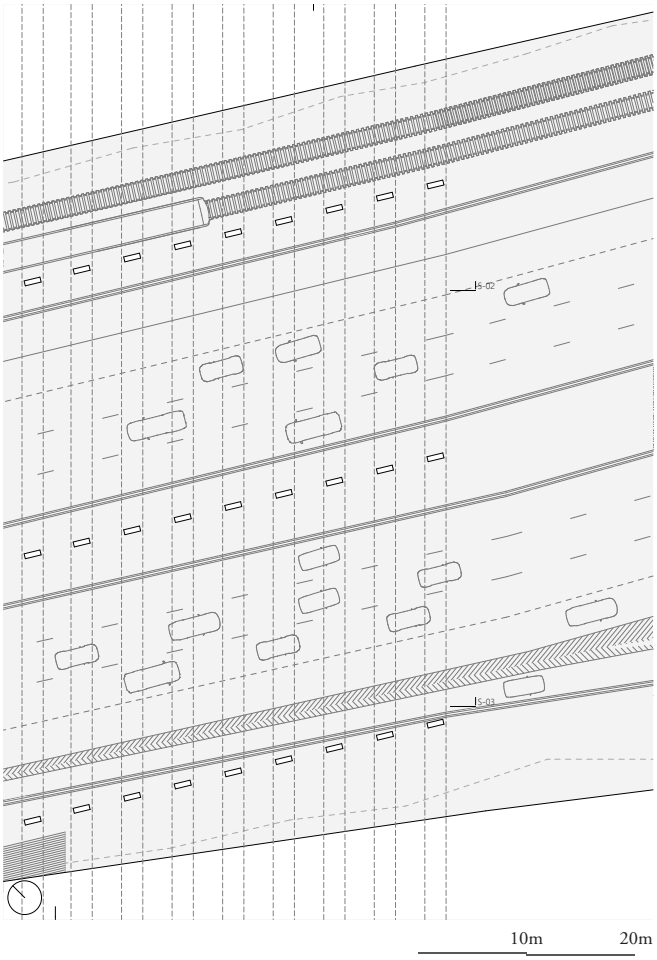


Landing the structure

Along with the images of the different structural approaches, I decided to include a drawing of the highway level to better understand how the structure interacts with that specific level. This allowed me to visualize the impact of the structural elements in relation to the surrounding context and ensure that the design was responsive to its environment. By comparing Proposal 2 on the left with the current design on the right, I could more clearly assess the differences and advantages of each approach, particularly in terms of how the structure engages with the highway level. This comparison helped me refine the design and make more informed decisions about how to integrate the building with its surroundings.



P2 Proposal, where the columns of the proposed structure do not align at all with the structure of the existing bridge, and land not logical, creating a confusing environment, especially in the car.



With further studies and designing, I made it possible to align the structure with the existing, creating a more coherent space.

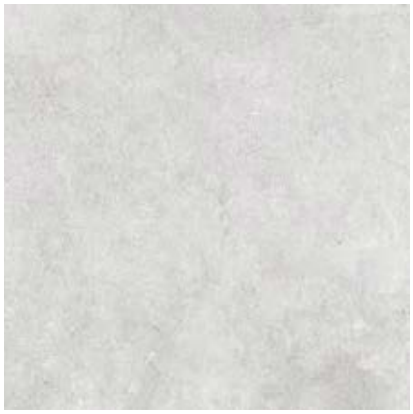
Materials

In addition to the structural considerations, the focus shifted to materials. The P2 proposal featured a brick facade, which became a key discussion point. Upon further reflection, it became clear that the materials needed to better relate to De Singel and the institution it represents. The guiding principles for choosing the materials were modern, seamless, and contemporary, aligning with the site's character while reinforcing the building's overall architectural statement.

Reflective materials were chosen to break up the mass of the building and make it appear lighter. Concrete was selected for the heavy structural elements, providing solidity and grounding to the design. Corrugated concrete was introduced in specific areas to add depth and texture to the facade, creating a more dynamic visual effect.

Different design concepts were explored with these materials applied to the existing mass of the building, as shown in the images on the next page. However, despite the potential of these materials, something was still missing. The materials had promise, but the way they were currently used didn't fully capture the intended effect, requiring further refinement to achieve a more cohesive and impactful result.

Reflective

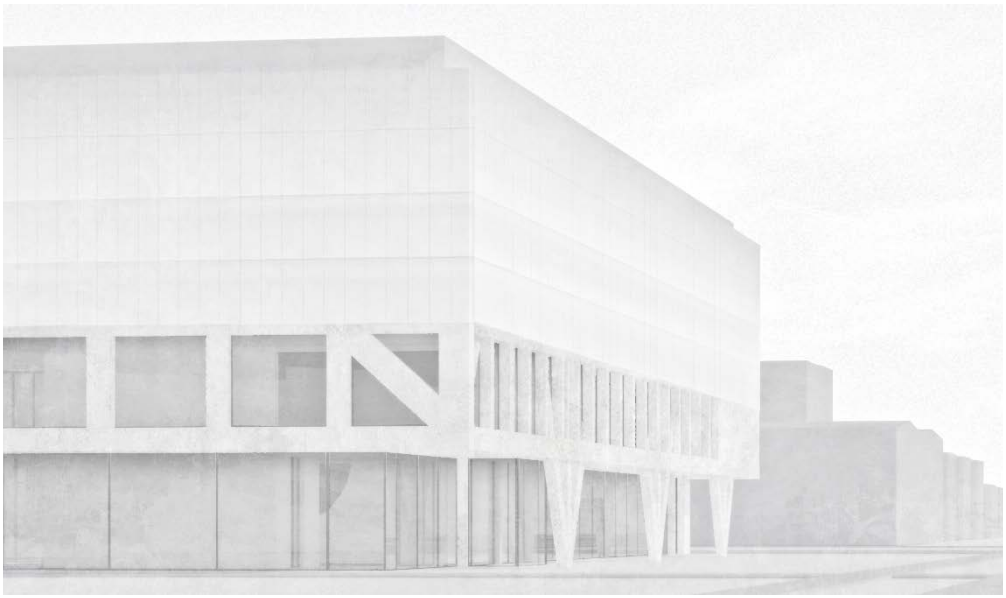


Concrete

Corrugated concrete

Study 1

Study 2



Study 3

Week 3.03

24-02-2025 / 02-03-2025

Orienting

After being dissatisfied with the images and the design from the previous week, the focus shifted to looking at references of buildings that could serve as inspiration. In all of these references, the structure appeared more elegant, thinner, and better integrated into the overall design. The use of materials was also more thoughtful, contributing to the building's aesthetic and functional qualities in a more deliberate way.

Additionally, the massing of the reference projects was more refined, avoiding the appearance of a single, monolithic block. This was a key observation, as it became clear that the design needed to move away from the bulky, undifferentiated mass that currently defined it.

The reason the design hadn't been successful so far was because it felt too large, too bland, and not yet refined. It lacked the sophistication and balance needed to make it truly resonate with its context and purpose. The reference buildings highlighted the importance of a more nuanced, thoughtful approach to both structure and massing, which became the next step in the design process.

Collection of projects with a similar design approach which I would like to achieve.

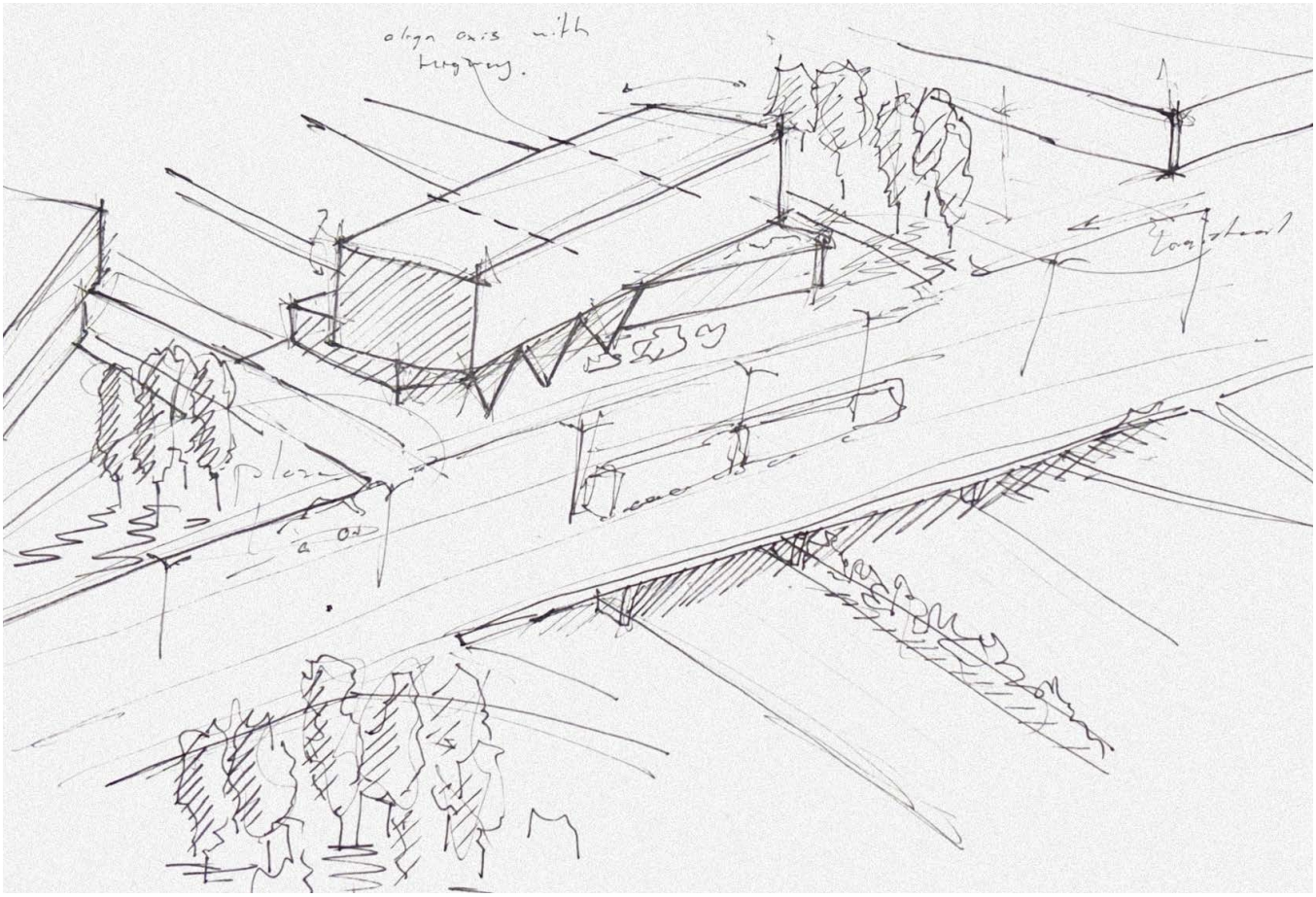
Sketching

I returned to sketching, trying to apply the design principles from the reference projects to my own. The key elements that stood out were making the structure a more elegant, integrated part of the design and breaking up the mass to give the structure more purpose and coherence.

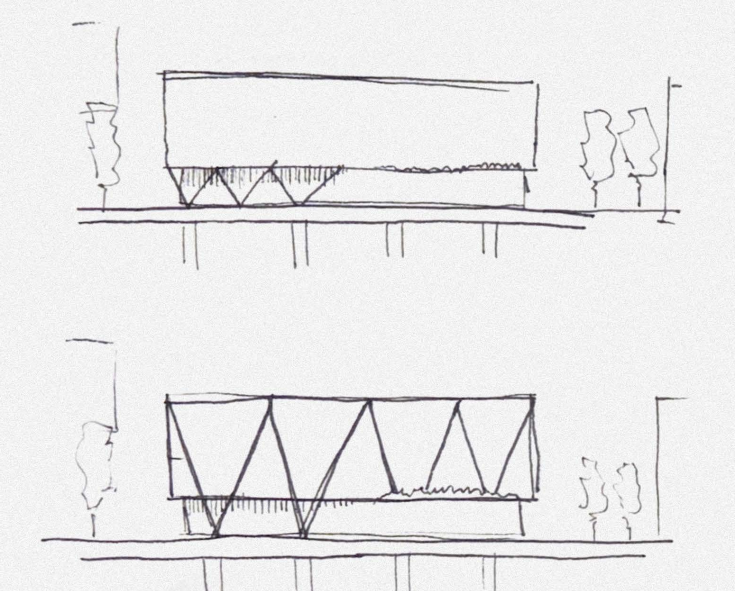
By aligning the upper mass with the highway underneath, the heavy structure would not only be optimized but also become an interesting design element in itself. This alignment allowed for a more thoughtful interaction between the building and its surrounding context, ensuring that the structure felt like it was part of the space, rather than just imposing on it.

At the ground floor level, aligning it with the boulevard would create a seamless connection with the public space, while also tying the building to the facade line of the Expo. This would help the building feel more integrated into its environment, fostering a stronger relationship between the architecture and the site. The goal was to create a design that felt both grounded and dynamic, with a clear, logical flow between the various levels and structural components.

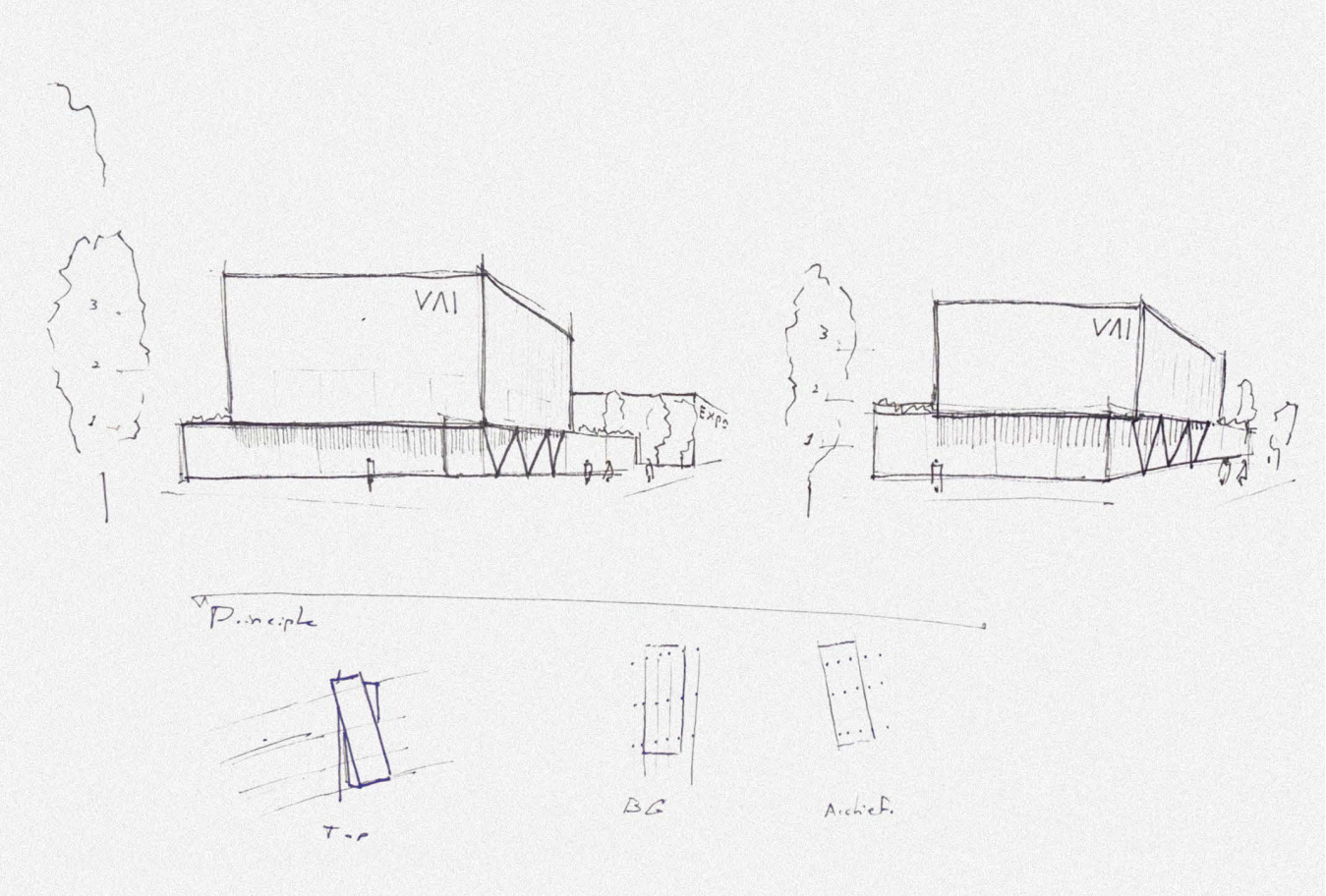
Sketch of the mass, devided in two, and alligned with the highway.



Exploring what the structure could do design wise.



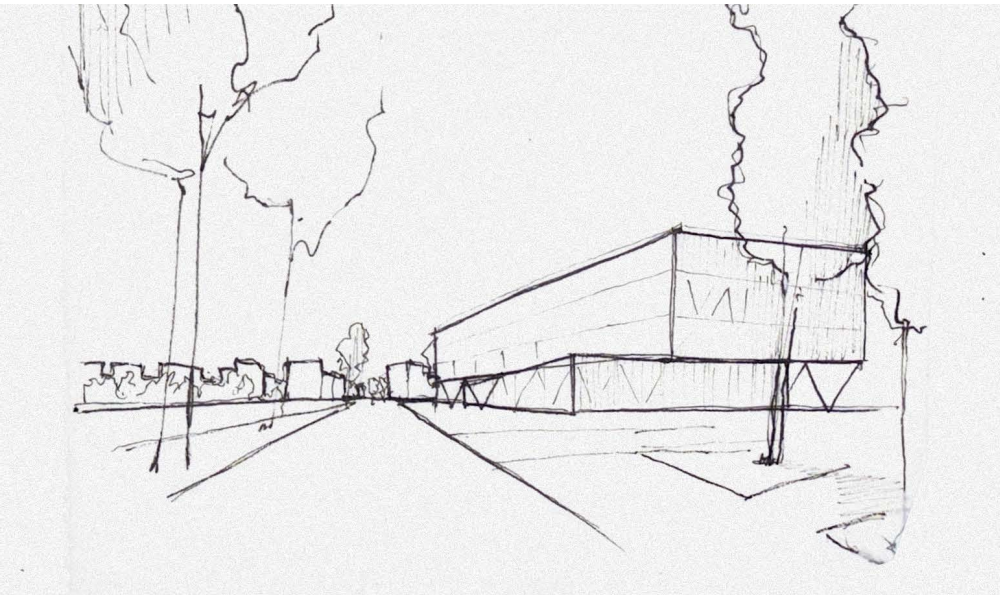
Top: Deciding wheter the devision in mass should happen on the first or second floor.
Bottom: Structural principle explained.



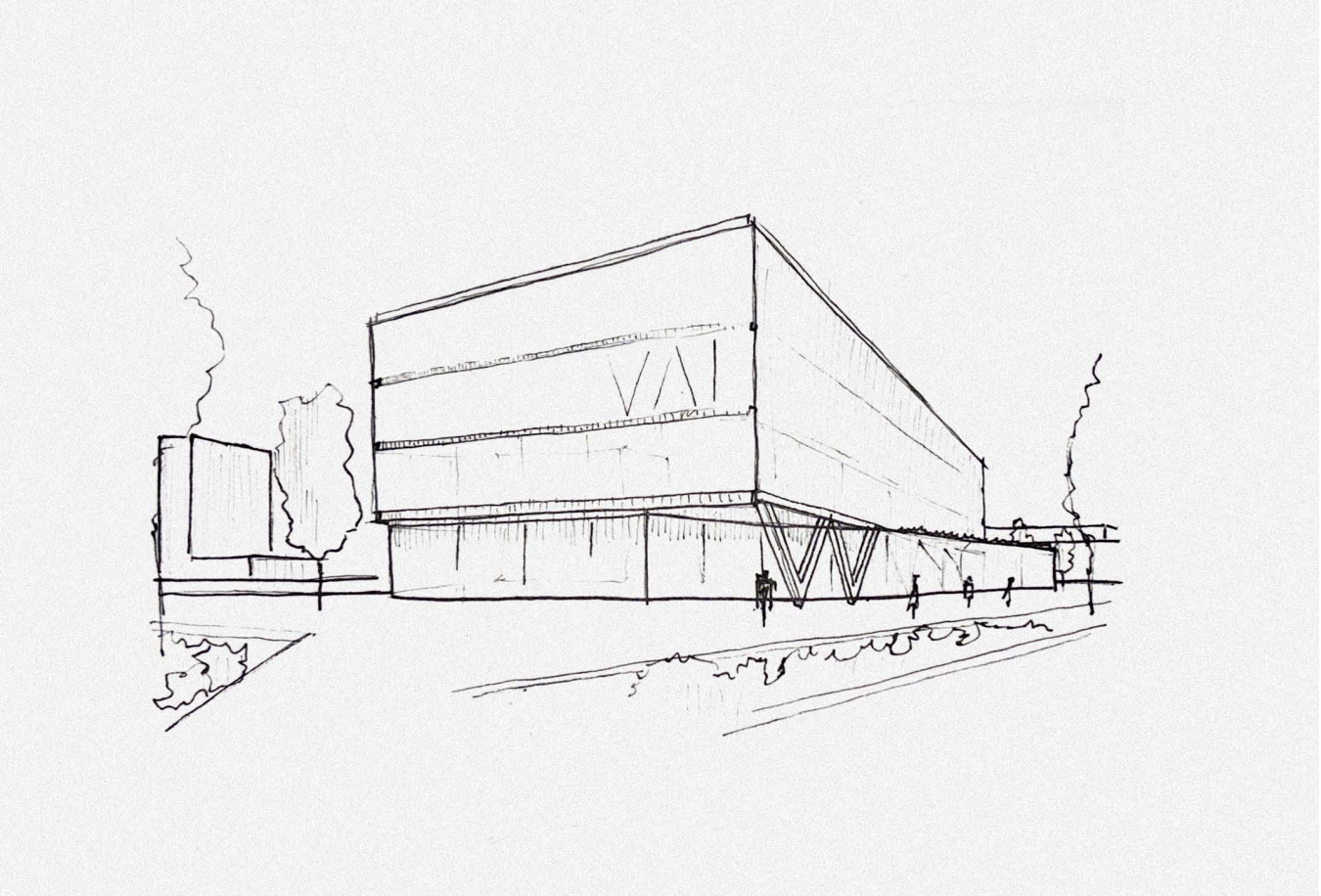
Current state

What has been decided for the current mass is to divide the massing from the first floor upwards, while supporting this upper portion on a structural truss at the ground floor. This truss will carry the first, second, and third floors, while also dividing and giving form to the ground floor.

Sketch of the building, seen from the expo side.



Sketch of the building, seen from De Singel side.



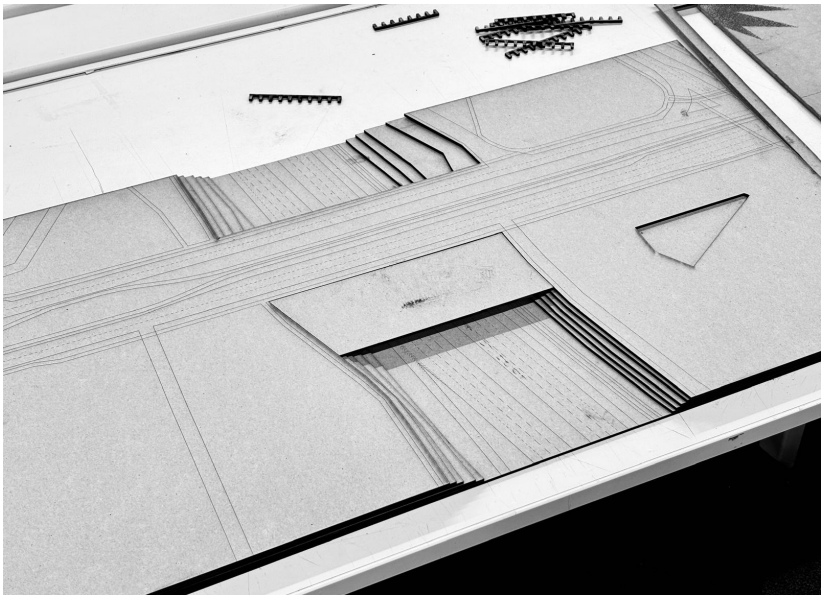
Week 3.04

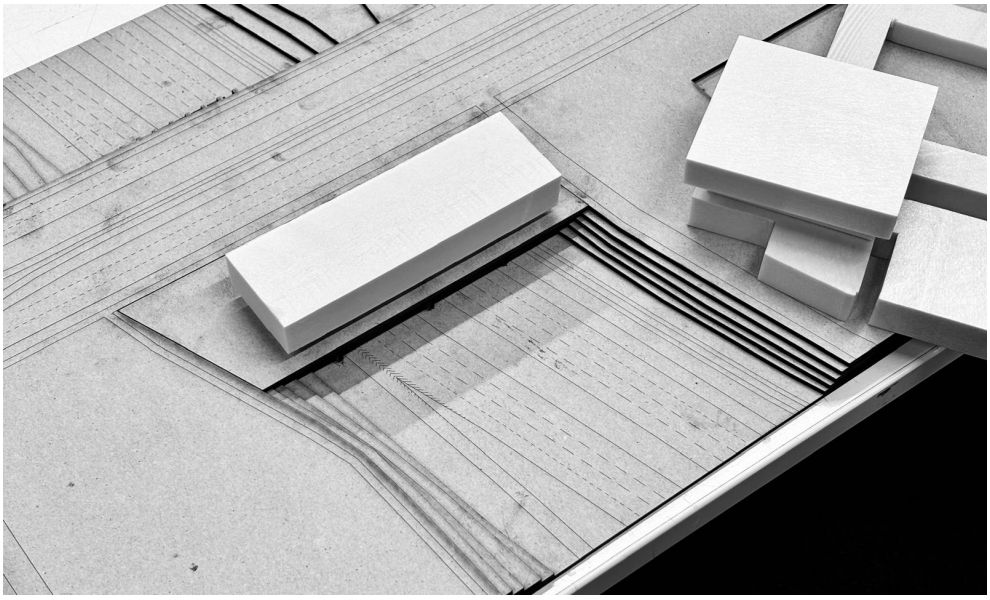
03-03-2025 / 09-03-2025

An in between scale

To truly understand the impact of dividing the mass into two, I decided to build a 1:500 model, what I like to call an "in-between scale." This allowed me, for the first time, to really grasp the scale of the project and understand how it interacted with the surrounding environment.

The model became a valuable tool for refining the massing and exploring different options. It provided a clearer sense of how the design would feel in its actual context and helped me approach the project from new perspectives. This hands-on approach not only clarified the design but also sparked fresh ideas for further development.





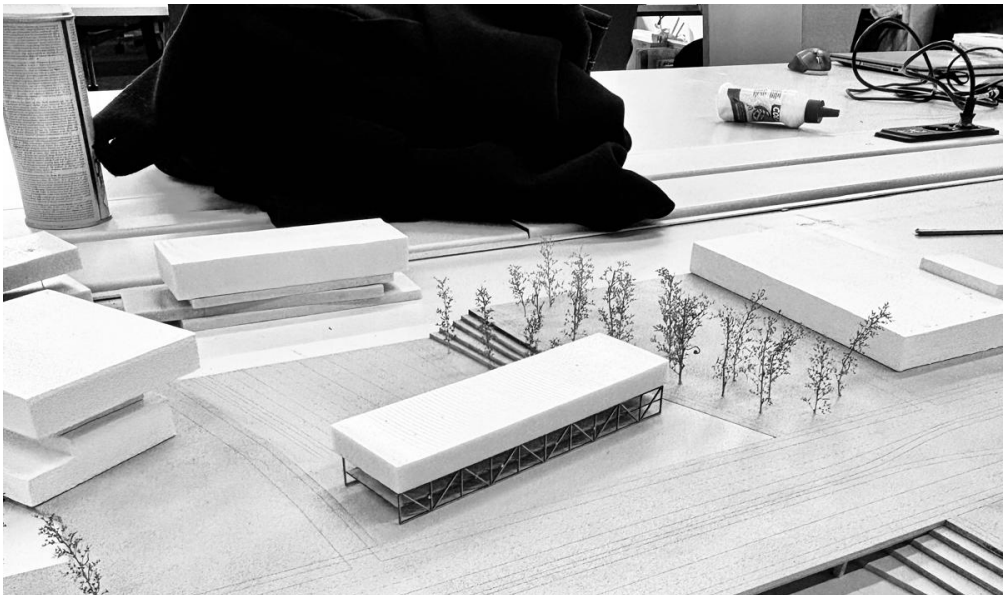
1:500 model in the make

Further sketching

The different options explored in the 1:500 model helped refine the design by testing two distinct approaches. The first study involved a version where the truss was placed on the ground floor, supporting the upper mass. This created a heavy, yet floating mass on top, giving the design a solid base while allowing the upper portion to feel light and suspended.

The second study featured a truss supporting both the ground and first floors, effectively dividing the mass into two parts. This approach made the overall design feel lighter by breaking up the bulk of the building and creating a more dynamic, segmented form. Both options allowed for further exploration of how the massing could be refined and improved in relation to the surrounding space.

Study 1, with a truss on the ground floor and a big mass on top



Study 2 with a truss on the ground and first floor, dividing the mass up into two

Week 3.05

10-03-2025 / 16-03-2025

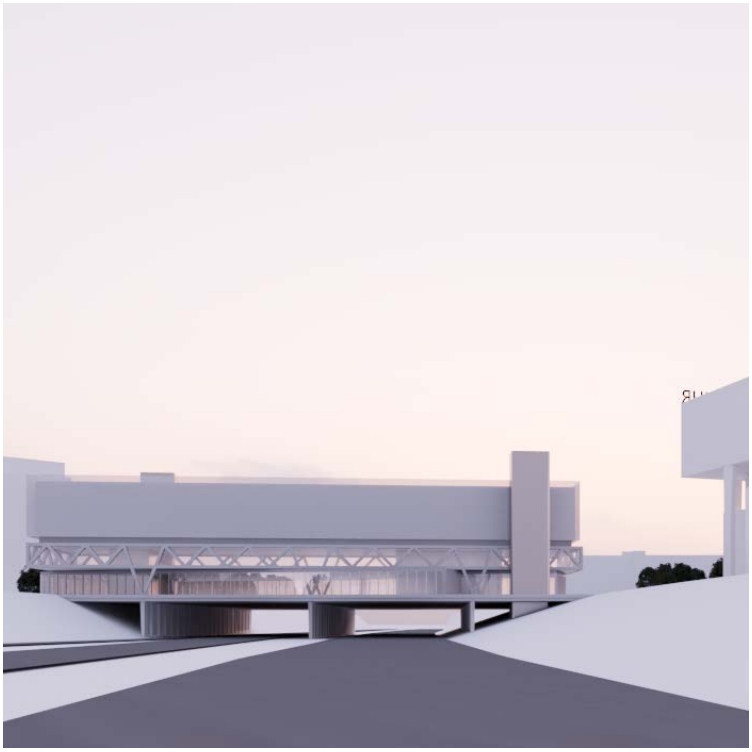
Combining mass, structure and facade

As the design process progressed, the work flow transitioned from physical to digital modelling, enabling a more efficient exploration of spatial, structural, and facade concepts. Digital modelling allowed for rapid iterations, making it easier to test how adjustments to massing, structure, and facade articulation interacted within the overall design. This shift not only accelerated the process but also provided a more precise way to evaluate proportions, materiality, and spatial relationships.

Three distinct design variants were developed, each following a similar conceptual approach but differing in execution. By comparing these variations, a deeper understanding emerged of how structural elements and facade treatments could enhance both the aesthetic and functional qualities of the building. This iterative process helped refine key design decisions, ensuring that the architectural language remained cohesive while addressing practical constraints and programmatic needs.

Variant 1

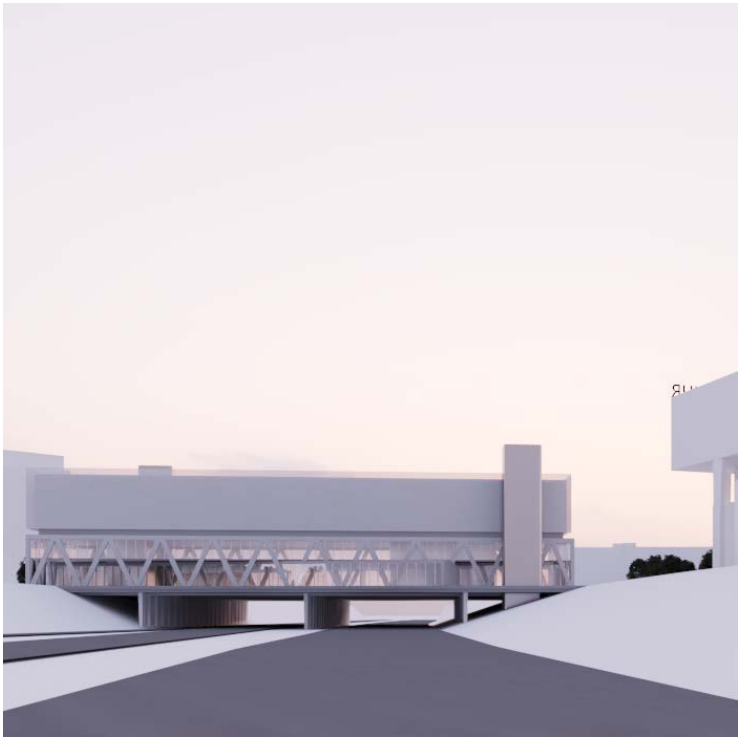
In the first variant, the truss supporting the heavy mass is integrated into the first-floor facade, with columns extending down to the highway for structural support. This approach keeps both the ground floor and upper facade open, creating a sense of transparency. However, it also strongly divides the overall mass and results in a more enclosed first-floor facade.



Render impressions variant 1;
Top image: Eye level view
Bottom image: Highway level view

Variant 2

The second variant extends the structural truss all the way down to the ground floor, resting directly on top of the bridge and its supporting beams. This approach effectively divides the overall mass into two distinct sections, creating a series of interesting outdoor spaces in the process. While this introduces new spatial opportunities, the overall structure starts to feel too heavy, especially when viewed from the highway. The extended truss and the way it interacts with the massing make the building appear overly dominant and bulky, which could compromise the balance between openness and structural expression.



Render impressions variant 2;
Top image: Eye level view
Bottom image: Highway level view

Variant 3

The third variant combines key elements from the first two approaches, striking a balance between structural logic and architectural expression. Here, the truss is positioned on the first floor, supported by columns, but extends vertically to the third floor. This strategy allows the upper mass to appear as if it is floating, significantly reducing its visual weight. The effect is especially noticeable from the highway, where the structure now feels lighter and more dynamic rather than imposing or overly heavy.

This approach maintains the openness of the ground floor while ensuring that the mass remains structurally sound and visually compelling. Unlike the first variant, where the truss integration divided the facade too much, or the second, where the mass became too dominant, this option creates a more balanced composition.

The combination of structural efficiency, visual lightness, and spatial openness makes this the preferred direction for further development.

Render impressions variant 3;
Top image: Eye level view
Bottom image: Highway level view

Week 3.06

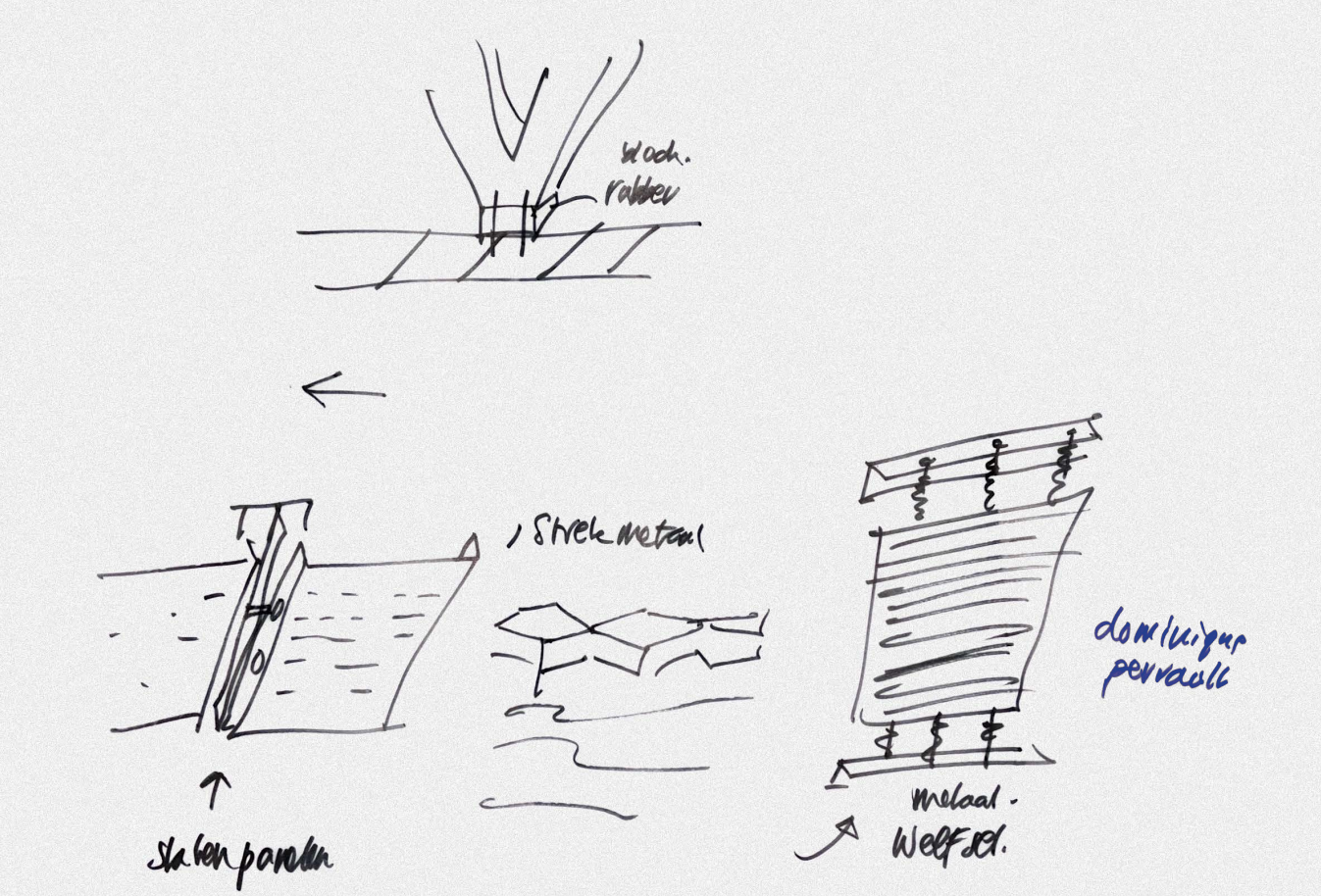
17-03-2025 / 23-03-2025

A new facade concept

Last week, an experiment with new transparent façade concepts took place. The goal was to make the mass of the building feel lighter and more dynamic. To achieve this, the idea of a secondary façade was introduced, positioned at an angle. This angled façade would reflect natural light from the sky, creating the visual impression that the building's heavy form was lightened. The inspiration for this approach came from the work of Dominique Perrault, whose projects have had a significant influence on the design process.

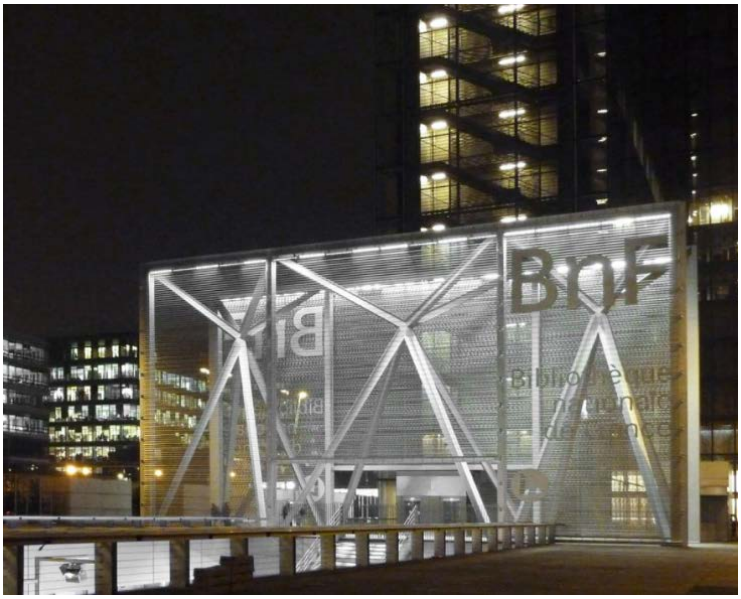
At this stage, the concept envisions the outer skin of the building to be made from stretched metal, positioned at an angle in front of a transparent glass façade. This design modification shifts the overall philosophy of the building, but in a way that enhances the overall aesthetic and functional goals.

Images from Perrault's projects, which were integral to this new vision, are included on the following page to further illustrate the design evolution.



National Library of France, (n.d.)

National Library of France – New East Entrance, (n.d.)



New Mechanics Hall (ME) for the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, (n.d.)

Olympic Tennis Centre, (n.d.)

Testing

Building upon the previous week's work, the new façade concept was tested using a similar approach, relying on digital models and renders. The design variations from Week 3.05, particularly Variant 3, served as the foundation for this new direction. The concept has shown promising results, with the digital simulations indicating that it effectively responds to both the structural and aesthetic goals of the project.

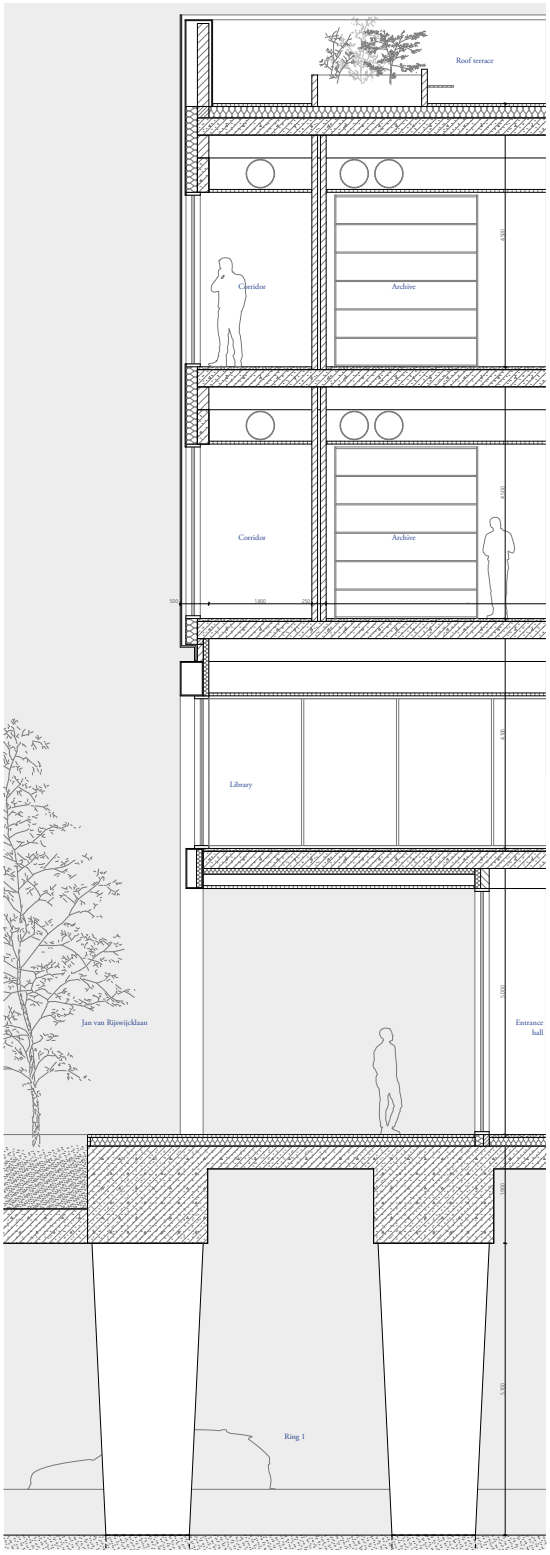
The new façade design not only aligns with the vision of lightness and transparency but also complements the overall architectural narrative. Given the positive outcome of these initial tests, the concept will be further refined and developed in the coming weeks, allowing for more detailed exploration of materials, angles, and light play.

Render impressions;
Top image: Eye level view
Bottom image: Highway level view

Fragment

The new façade concept introduced several engineering challenges that required careful consideration. In addition to experimenting with the design and aesthetics, technical fragments were developed to explore the structural and material needs of the façade. These fragments are essential for understanding the integration of the façade with the building's overall structure, ensuring both its functionality and stability.

This process involved a detailed analysis of the technical requirements, such as support mechanisms, material connections, and how the façade interacts with the rest of the building's systems. By breaking down the façade into smaller components, it became possible to identify potential issues early on and address them in the next stages of development, balancing both the visual impact and the engineering feasibility of the design.

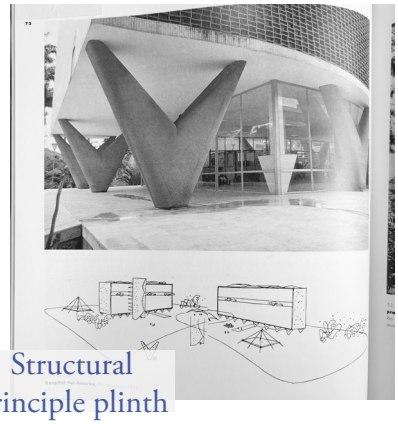


Week 3.07

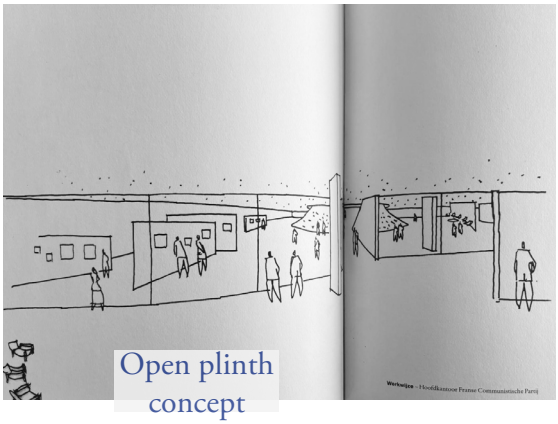
24-03-2025 / 30-03-2025

Inspiration

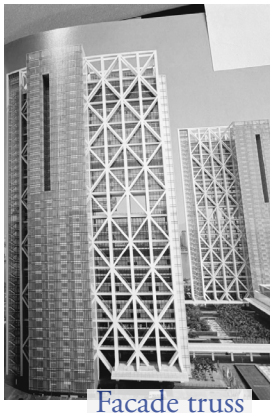
To continue the work of this week, I searched for more references that relate to my project. The BT tutor recommended looking into the work of Oscar Niemeyer and SOM, both for their structural principles and the scale and ambition of their projects, as well as their design approaches. The following images I found inspiring and particularly helpful in further shaping my ideas.



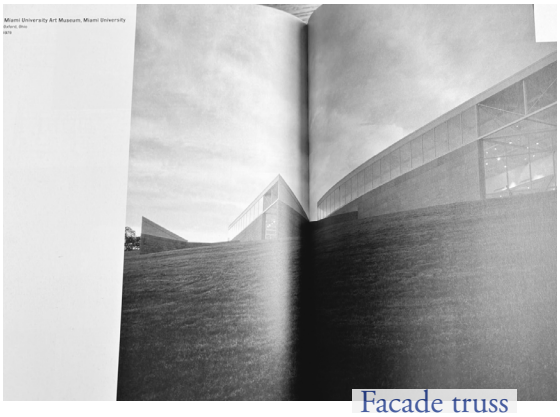
Structural principle plinth



Open plinth concept

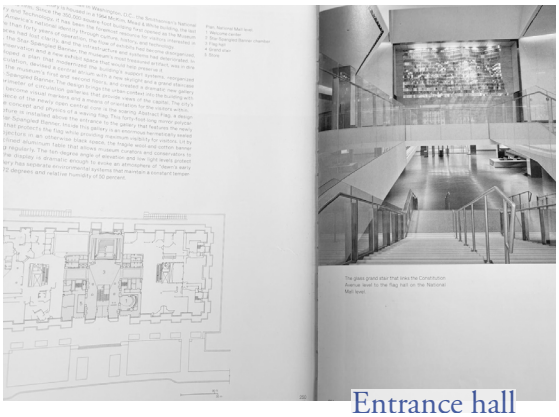


Facade truss

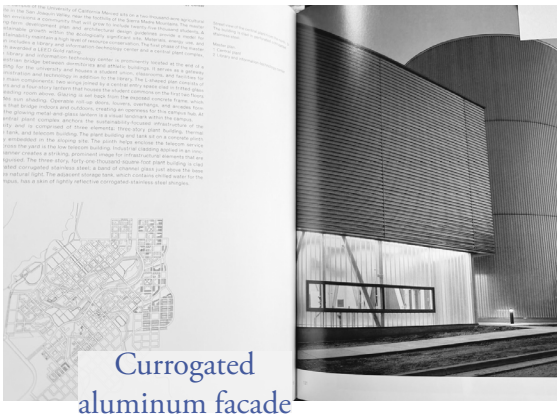


Facade truss

Light facade concept



Entrance hall



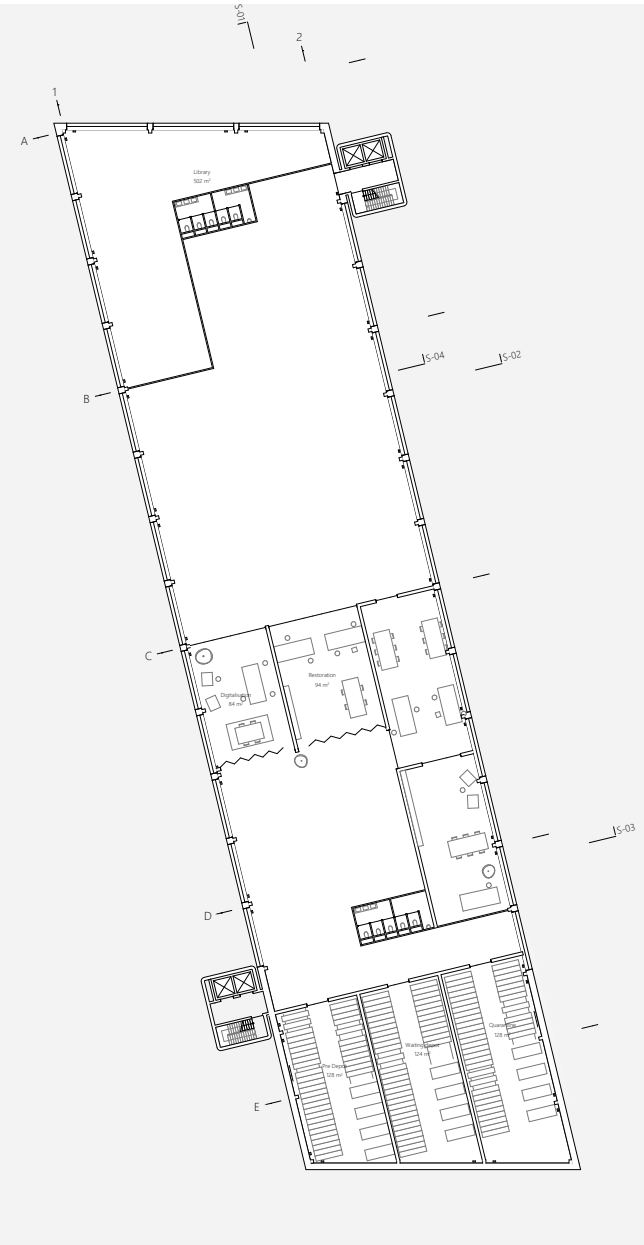
Currogated aluminum facade

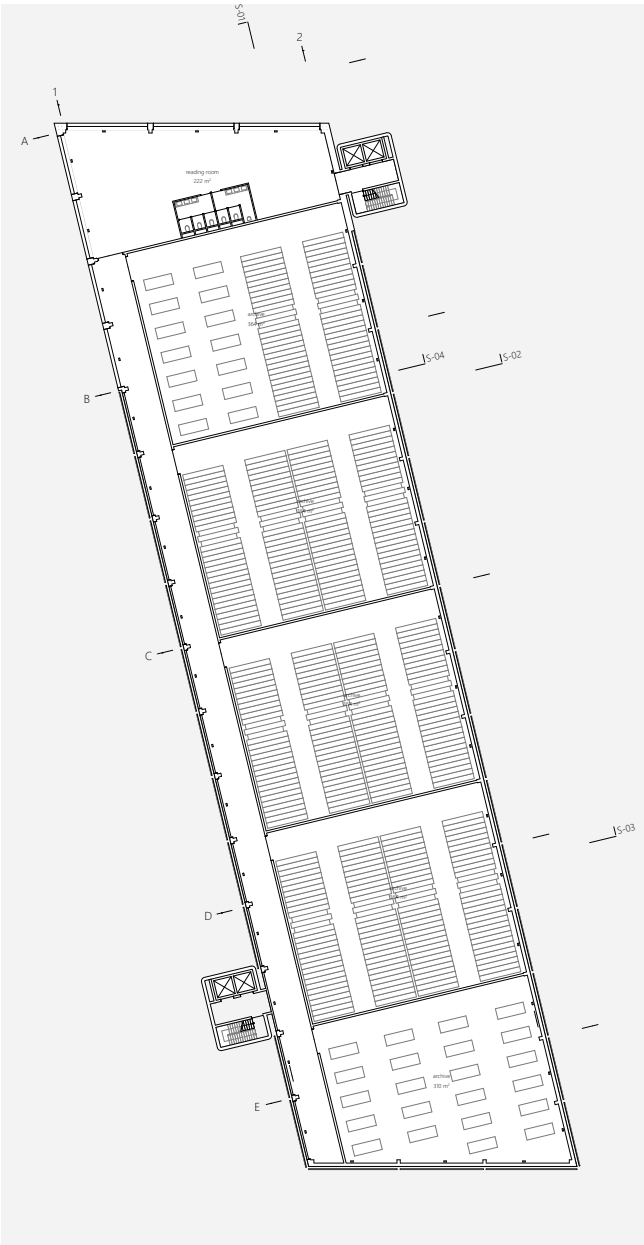
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP. (2011)
Mindlin, H. (1999)
Bruand, Y. (2008)
Adams, N., & Allen, G. (2009)

Drawings

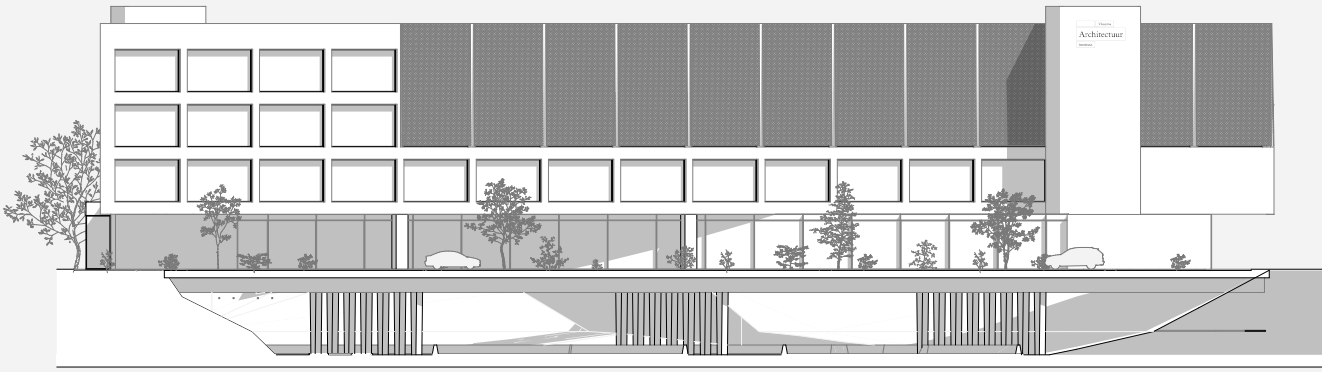
With the façade concept and technical fragments in place, it became clear that the floor plans and overall building design were falling behind. This week, the focus shifted to pushing the project forward, especially with the P3 deadline approaching. The goal was to create a more playful and engaging public route throughout the building, but this proved to be a complex challenge that will need further study and refinement.

In addition, an alternative façade composition was tested, though it didn't yield the desired results. Despite this, it offered valuable insights and lessons that will inform future design developments.

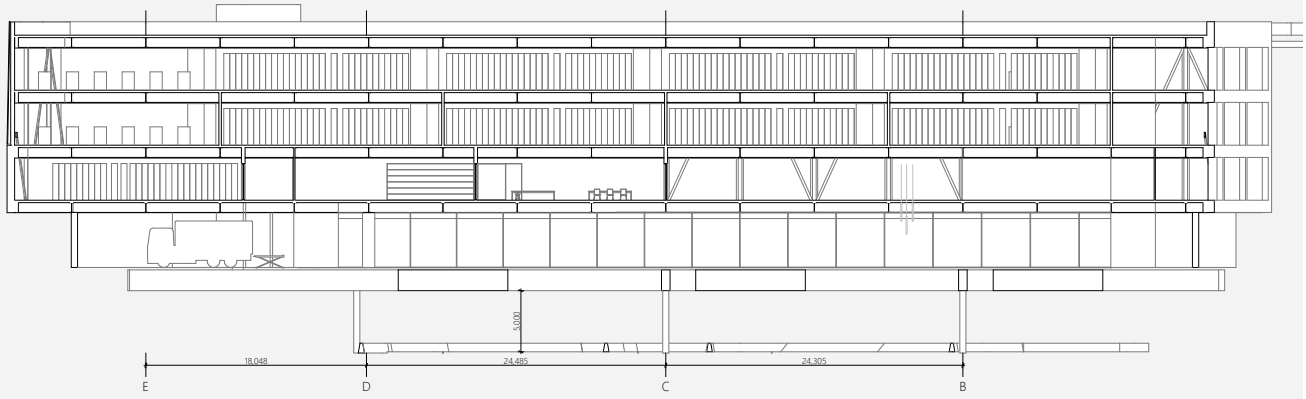




Second and third floor



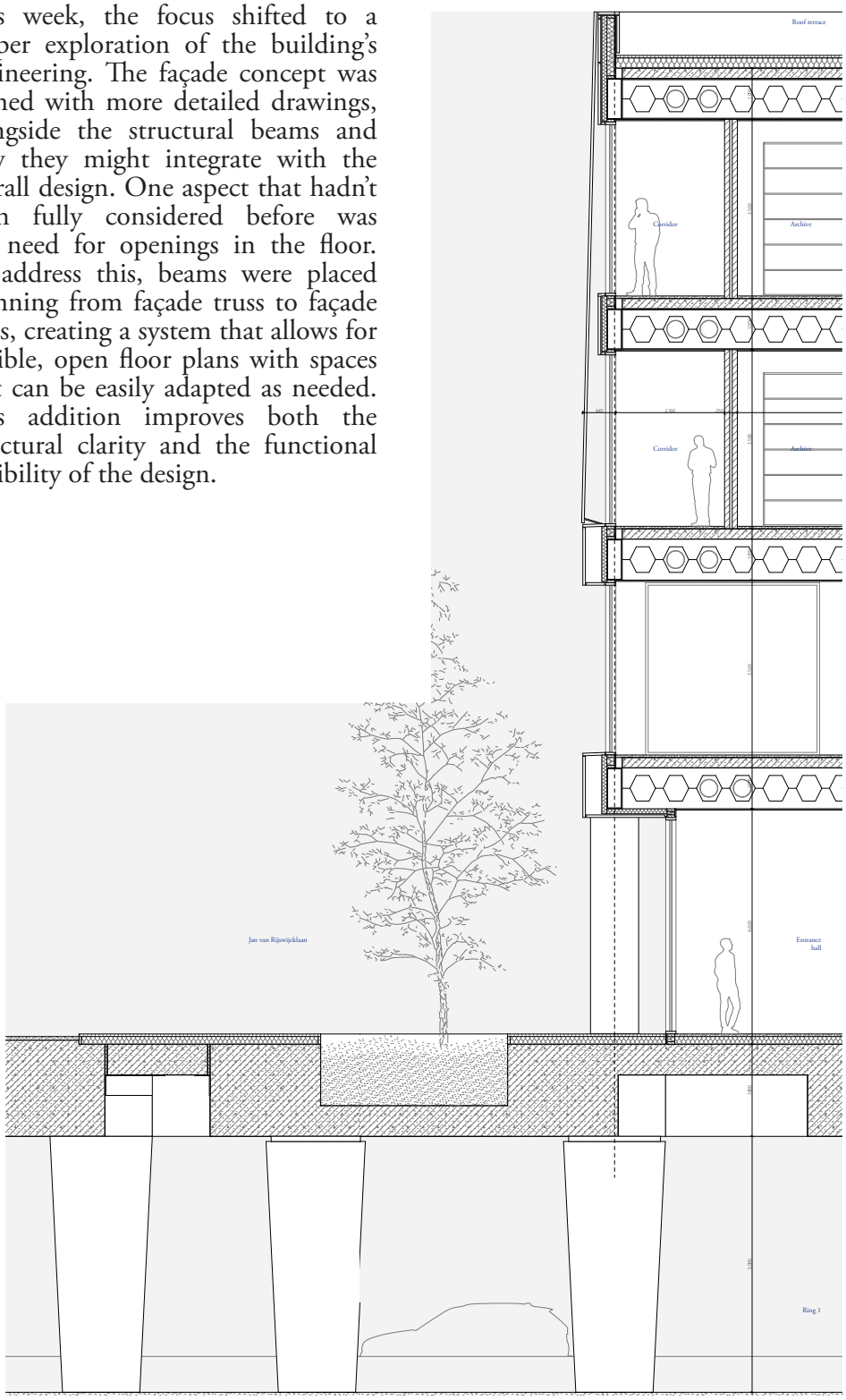
Design exploration facade



Section with the updated structure

Fragment

This week, the focus shifted to a deeper exploration of the building's engineering. The façade concept was refined with more detailed drawings, alongside the structural beams and how they might integrate with the overall design. One aspect that hadn't been fully considered before was the need for openings in the floor. To address this, beams were placed spanning from façade truss to façade truss, creating a system that allows for flexible, open floor plans with spaces that can be easily adapted as needed. This addition improves both the structural clarity and the functional flexibility of the design.



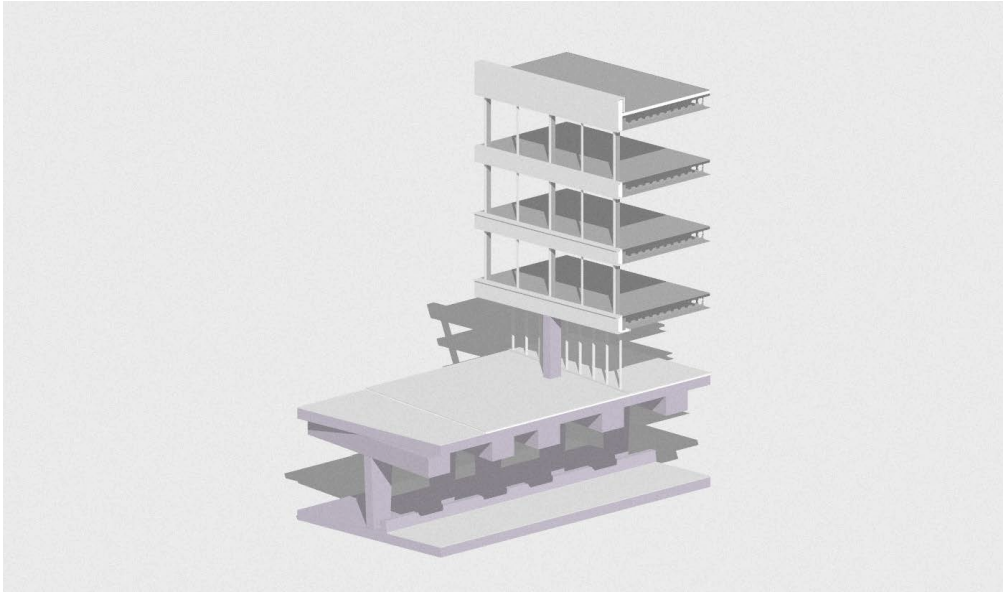
Current facade fragment

Model

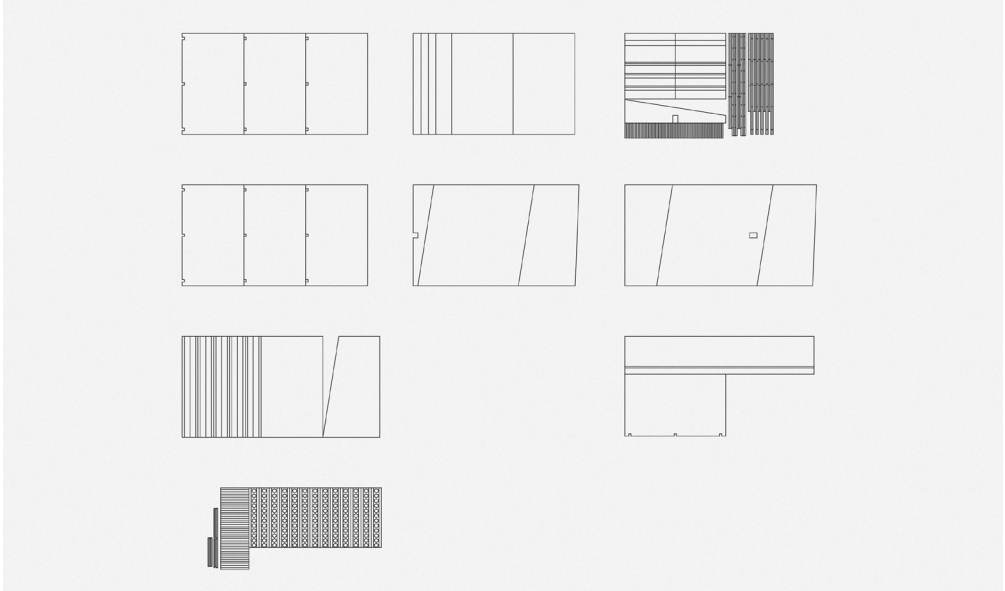
With the P3 presentation approaching next week, I started thinking about the fragment I would represent in a 1:33 scale model. At first, I hesitated about whether I should actually build the fragment drawing as a physical model, since at this scale it would become quite large and complex. I spent some time doubting whether it was worth it, but eventually realised that all this second-guessing was just wasting valuable time.

Instead, I decided to fully commit.

I created a 3D model of the fragment, prepared the laser-cut files, and set out to build a large model that would clearly show how the building sits above the highway. Taking this step felt like the right move to really communicate the spatial and structural qualities of the project.



3D model of the 1:33 fragment model



The laser-cut "puzzle"

Week 3.08 / P3

31-03-2025 / 06-04-2025

Fragment model building

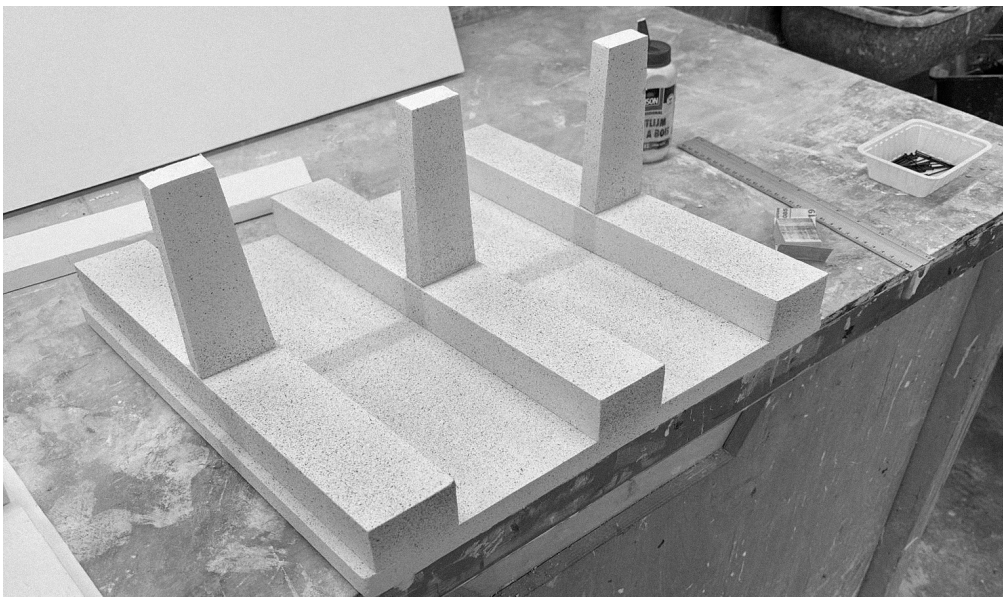
I decided that the fragment model would be a hybrid, using a mix of different building materials such as purple foam, foam board, cardboard, and MDF. While waiting for all the laser-cut parts to be ready, I got started by building the highway and bridge elements out of foam.

To give them the look of real concrete, I painted them with a special stone-effect paint. It was a new experience for me, but it worked out really well, the bridge really came to life and looked surprisingly realistic.

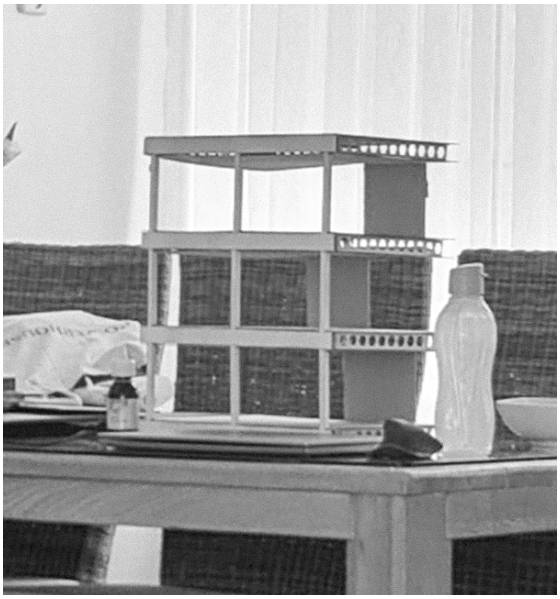
The building itself turned into a kind of laser-cut puzzle, made up of all sorts of different pieces.

I started with the structure, shown in the image at the bottom left, and slowly but surely built it up towards a complete facade. This process was supported by books...

It became a hands-on learning experience that helped me understand the relationship between structure and facade even better.

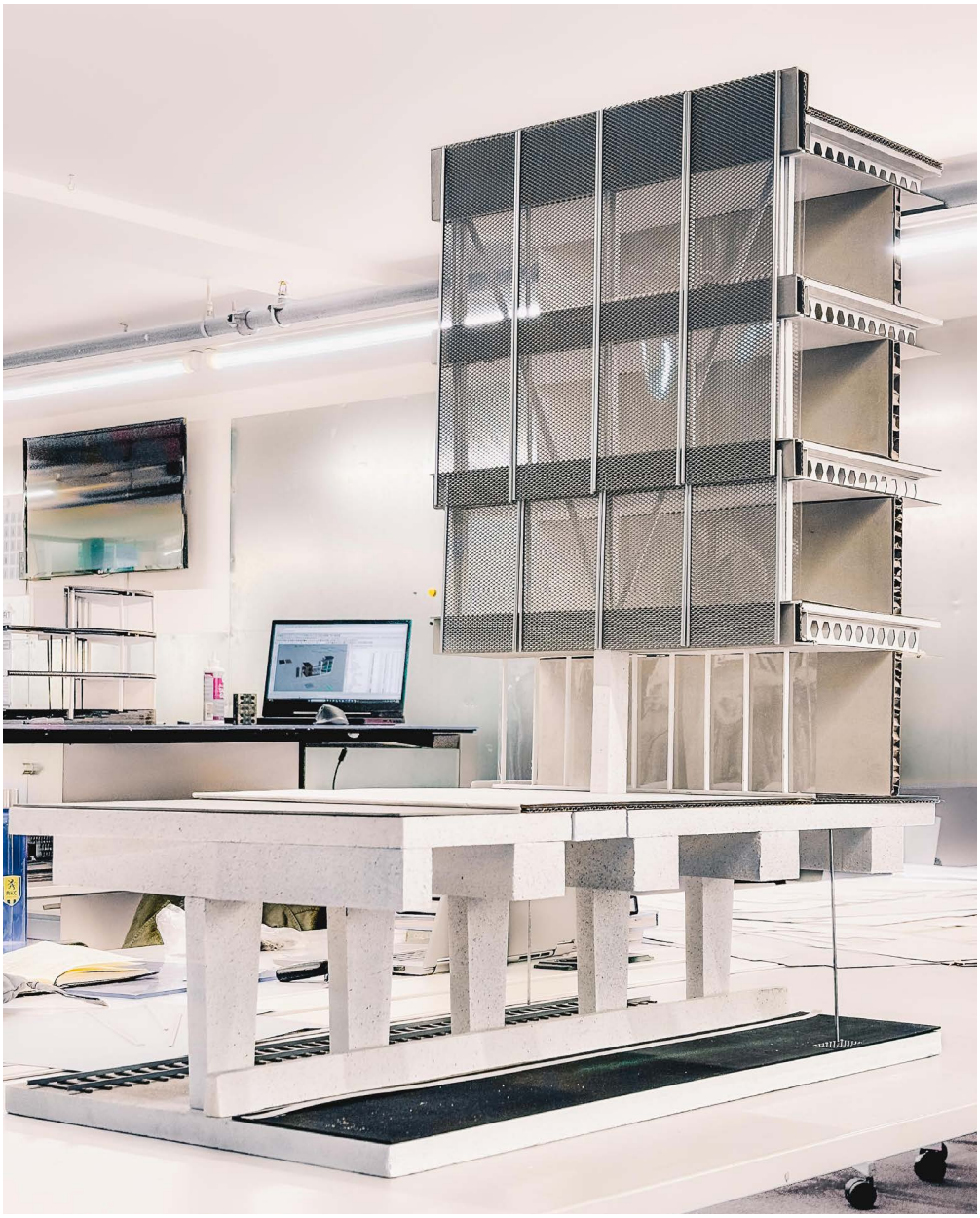


Foam covered in a concrete spray paint

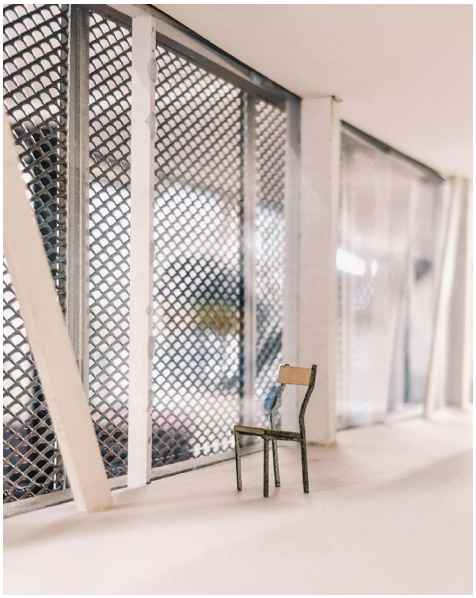


Structure (bottom left)
Facade (Bottom right)

The model came together with the transparent facade in place

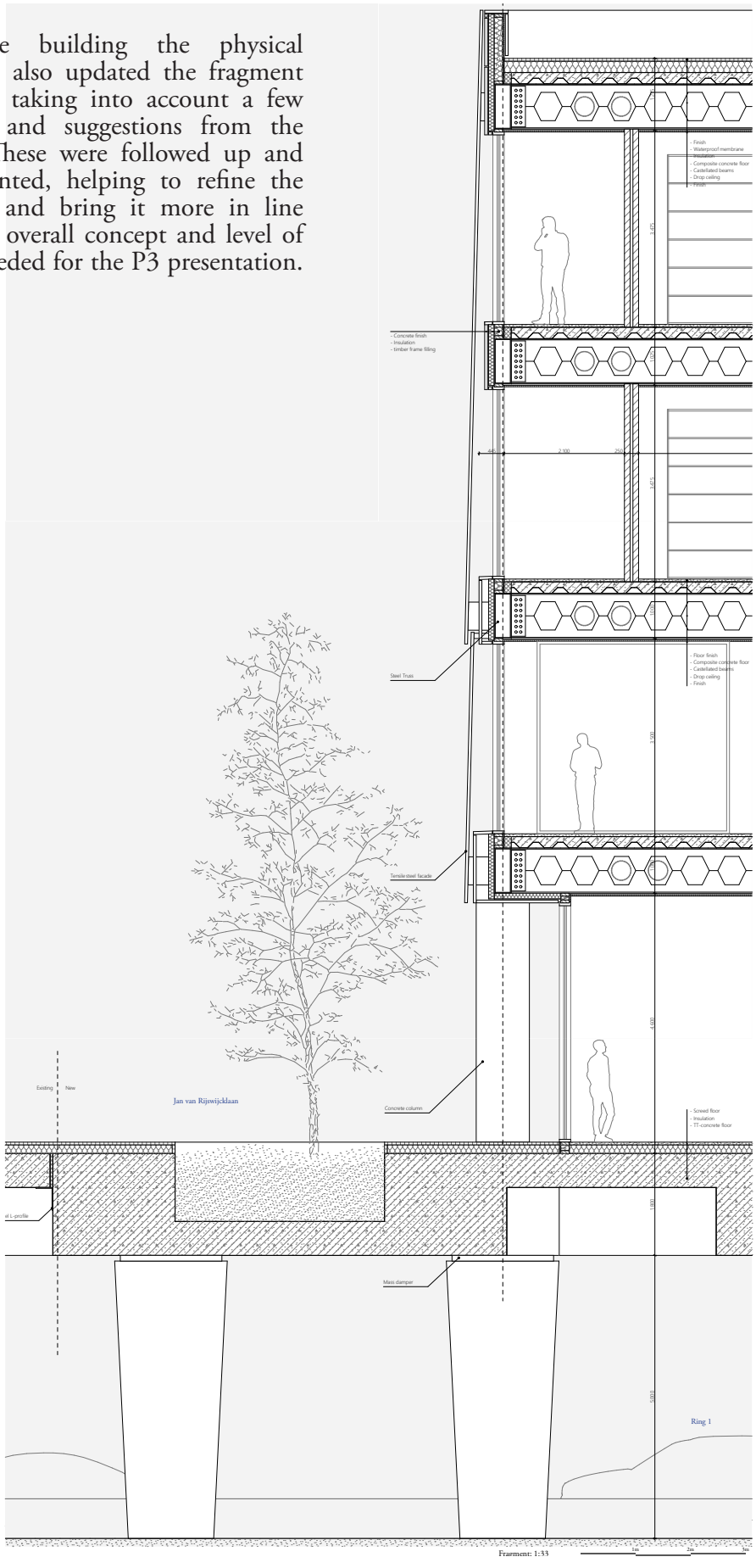


Close up images of the interior space and structural principle



Fragment

Alongside building the physical model, I also updated the fragment drawing, taking into account a few remarks and suggestions from the tutors. These were followed up and implemented, helping to refine the drawing and bring it more in line with the overall concept and level of detail needed for the P3 presentation.



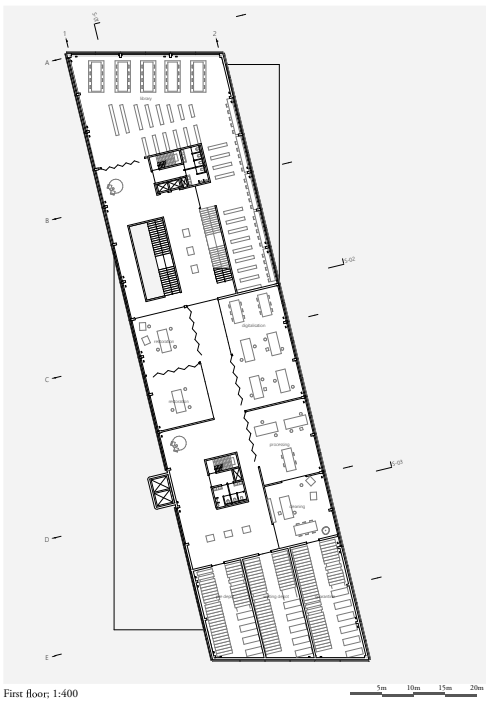
Fragment drawing

Plans

I didn't have too much time to work on the floor plans, but I couldn't show up empty-handed for the P3. I felt like the plans had been a bit neglected recently, so I knew there were quite a few things that didn't make complete sense yet and would need more attention later. Still, final product or not, they had to be present, so I made the best out of it with the time I had.

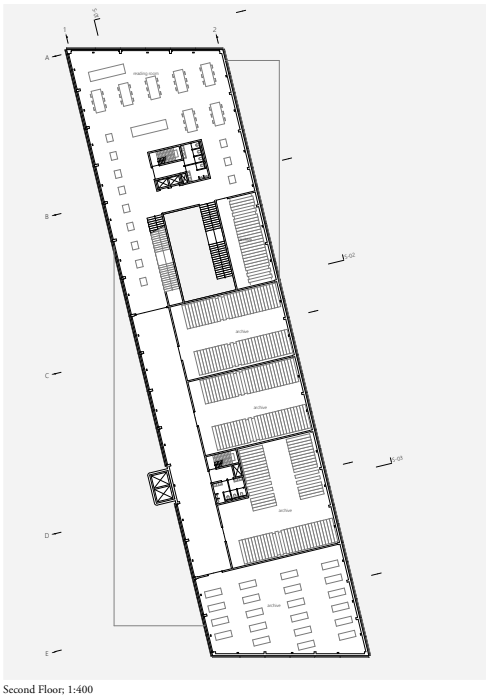
Ground and first floor plan

Ground Floor; 1:400

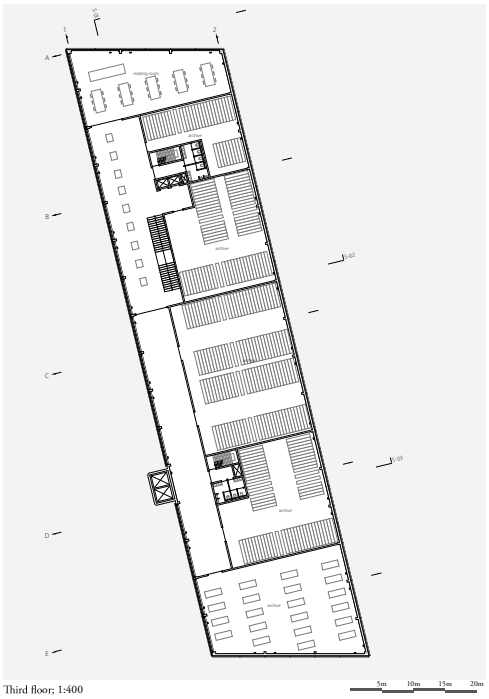


First floor; 1:400

Second and third floor plan



Second Floor; 1:400

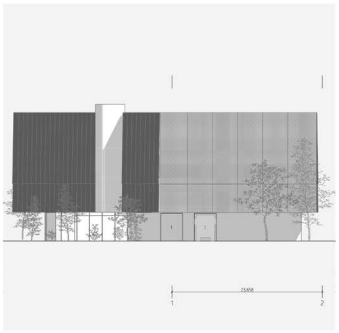


Third floor; 1:400

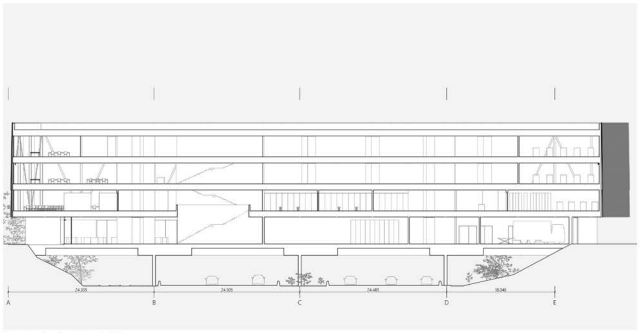
Plans

Seeing the perforated/transparent facade appear on the facade drawings made me doubt a lot. I really didn't like how the facade looked at this stage, and I already knew this wasn't going to be the final version. Still, there was no time left to properly address it before the P3, so I had to accept that it would stay like this for now.

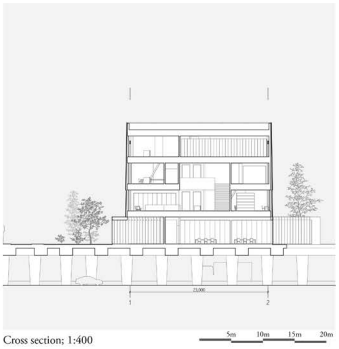
Jan van Rijswijcklaan; 1:400



Expo; 1:400



Longitudinal section; 1:400



Cross section; 1:400

Facade and sections

P3 feedback

1. Ambition

Understand the goal of creating a distinct, own character above the highway.
Concept: a "bridge on a bridge", simple, strong way to communicate the idea. Use this phrasing to clearly explain the design intent.

2. Volume and Ground Floor

Volume is very large, important to consider:
What happens at the ground level?
How is the entrance designed?
How does the ground floor become a public interior?
How does it interact with its surroundings (city, infrastructure, users)?

3. Gesture and Form

The gesture of two folded edges isn't clear, why?
Reconsider the clarity and purpose of this gesture.
Is it necessary? Could it be more expressive or more minimal?

4. Infrastructure Context

Relation to railway track needs to be considered.
Question: Is the solid wall part of the bridge structure itself?

5. Spatial Strategies

Introduce holes carved into the floors, Could act as mini-bridges inside the building.
Enhances the feeling of being "on a bridge".
Reference: Aarhus School of Architecture, box with voids inside. Useful precedent for spatial qualities.

6. Ground Floor as Landscape

What happens if the ground floor becomes a completely open landscape?
Full visual transparency, looking through from one side to the other.
Creates strong visual and spatial connection between highway, public space, and building interior.

Week 3.09

07-04-2025 / 13-04-2025

Stuck...

The feedback from the P3 left me feeling a bit lost. I already was not confident about the design going into it, and although I knew there was still a lot to be done, the feedback made me realise just how much more needed to be figured out. I did not know where to start or even where to look. I was not happy with the floor plans, the facade, or the visuals. There was a lot to do, but I felt stuck.

I spent some time aimlessly looking at references, hoping something would spark progress, but it did not lead anywhere. In the meantime, I made a 1:200 model of the mass, thinking it might help clarify things. It did not.

Eventually, I decided the best thing I could do was to reorient myself with new references and simply start sketching again. That is what I did. Through that process, I found new inspiration and worked on a visual that could guide me, something to aim for. It helped me regain some focus and motivation. I reminded myself that in the middle of chaos, there is always opportunity. Sometimes, you just have to keep going until things begin to fall into place.

Tutoring session of this week, where it felt like a lot was drawn, discussed, but still left me a bit lost.

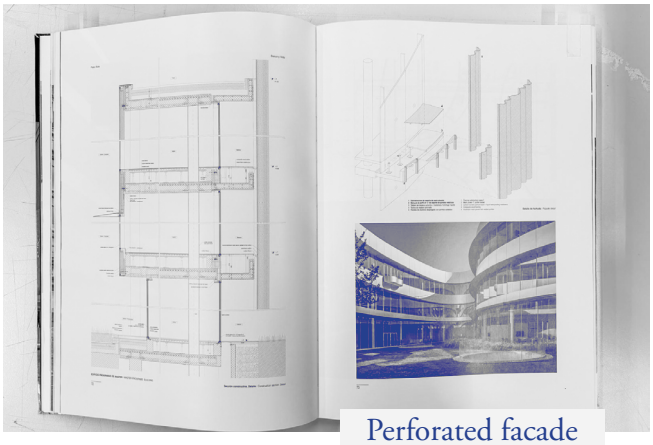
References

In looking through the references, I focused on two key elements that I was struggling with: the facade concept and the ground floor.

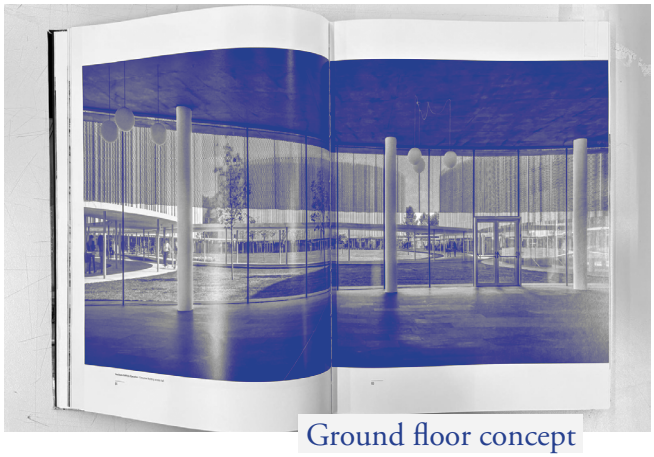
For the facade, I mainly studied the work of Dominique Perrault, but I also found useful references from SANAA. I had been unsure about using a perforated or semi-transparent facade, but seeing these examples reassured me that there was real potential in this approach.

While exploring facade concepts, I also came across two inspiring ground floor designs, both from SANAA projects. In these examples, the ground floor was kept fully glazed and transparent, clearly distinct from the rest of the building. This approach not only created a strong visual contrast but also reinforced the idea of the ground level as a more open and public space, which fits well with the goals of my own project.

Centre Pompidou. (2008)
Fernando M. C. (2023)
Uffelen, C. van. (2009)

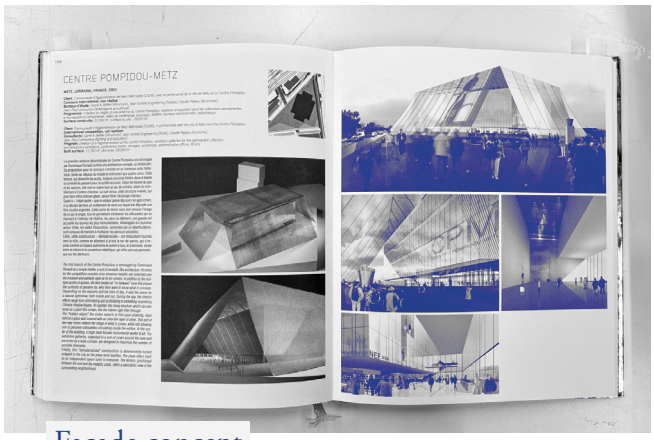


Perforated facade

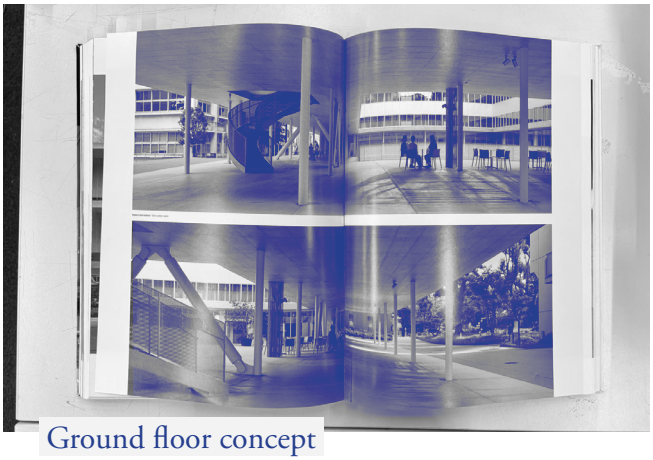


Ground floor concept

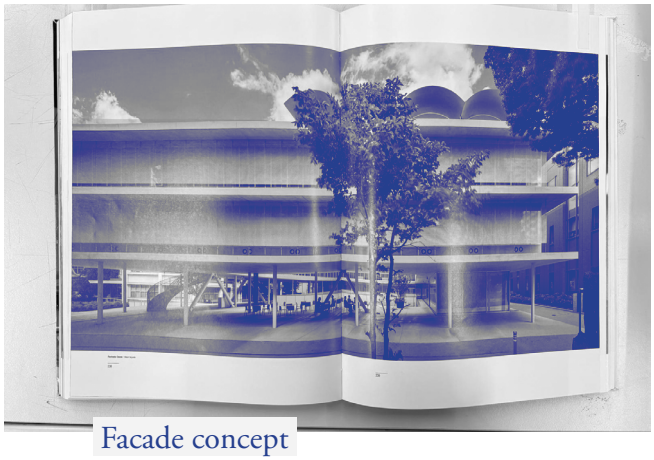
Facade concept



Facade concept



Ground floor concept



Facade concept

New facade concept

With the new references in mind, I started exploring a new facade concept based on the current massing. I decided to replace the steel mesh I had used before with a more contemporary and visually stronger material: corrugated aluminium, inspired by the reference projects I had studied. Even from the first visual, it already looked much better than the facade I had proposed at P3.

At the same time, it became clear that the ground floor would need a complete redesign, along with the other floors. The way circulation and programme were organised simply did not work for the kind of public building this project is meant to be.

There is still a lot of work to be done, but this shift felt like an important and necessary step in the right direction.

Test render of a new more industrial facade concept inspired from the work of SANAA and Dominique Perrault

Week 3.10

14-04-2025 / 20-04-2025

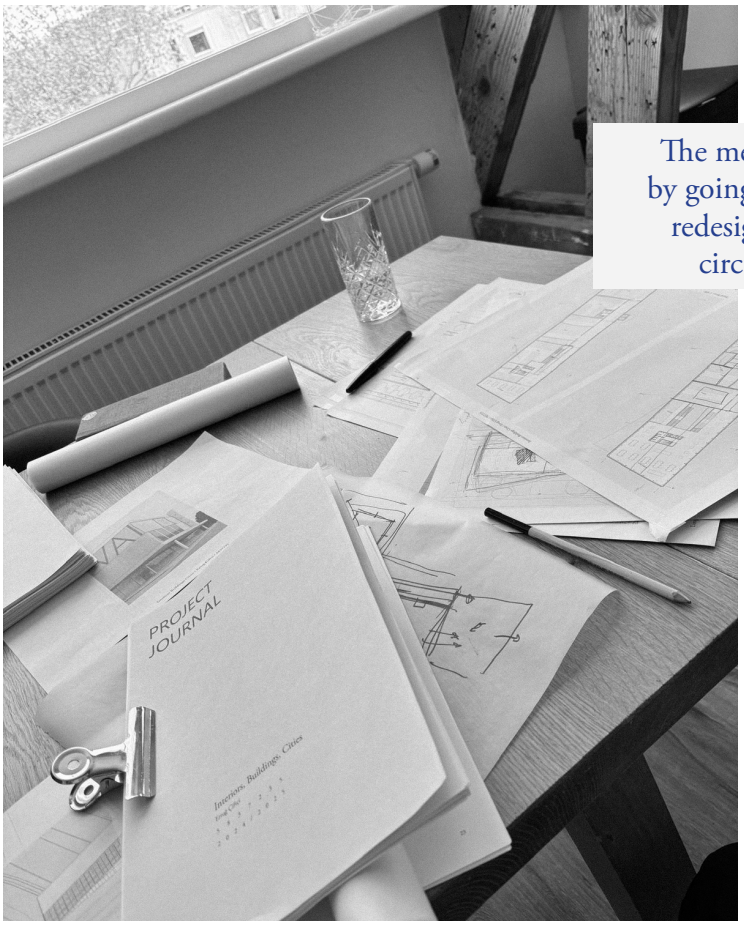
Redesigning floorplans

Over the weekend, I took some time to reflect on the project as a whole. I kept asking myself, "Why is this design not working the way I intended it to?" After letting the thoughts simmer for a while, it slowly became clear that the issue was not just the facade. A large part of the problem lay in the floor plan itself.

I want to create a public and approachable building that functions as an archive, but the current routing is confusing and disconnected. There is no clear reason for the public to move beyond the ground floor, and the internal flow does not support the kind of openness and accessibility that I envisioned. The building, as it stood, lacked a logical narrative for how people would use and experience it.

To tackle this, I started sketching directly over the floor plans from my P3 presentation. Step by step, I began reworking the circulation and rethinking how spaces relate to one another. This also meant revisiting the facade, as both the interior flow and the external appearance needed to align with the same ambition.

By redesigning the routing throughout the building and tying it back to a clearer spatial logic, the project finally began to move in the right direction. It was a reminder that sometimes stepping back and questioning the fundamentals is exactly what a project needs to move forward.

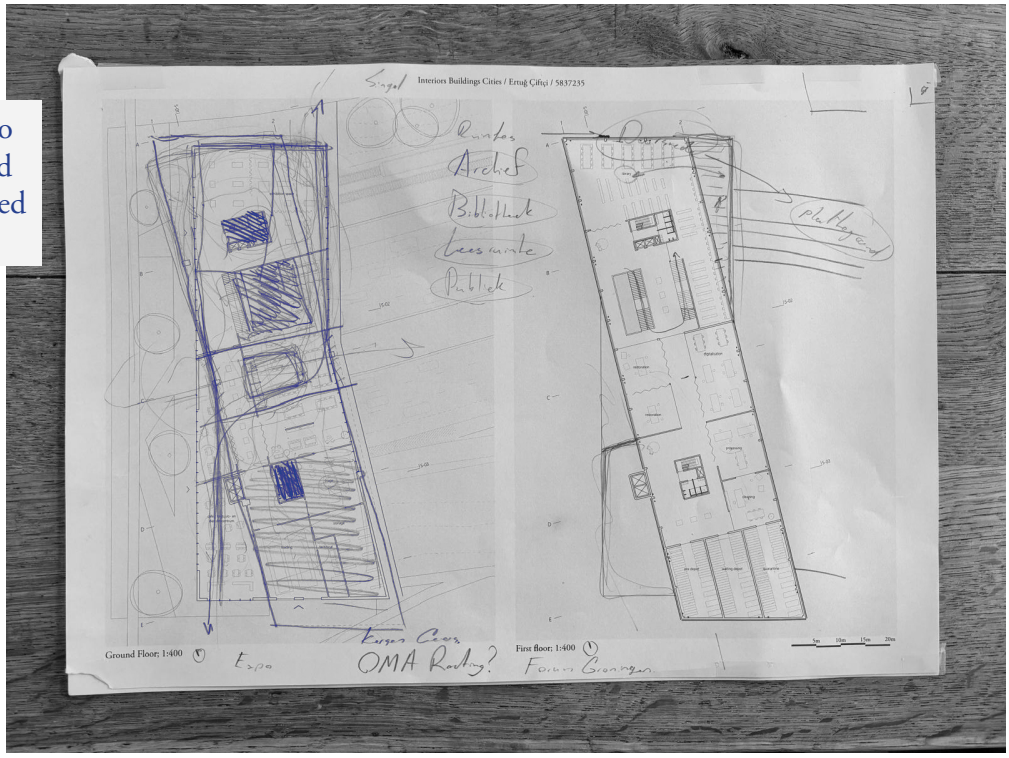


The mess created by going all in into redesigning the circulation

The ground floor still felt far too heavy and did not land well on the bridge. It lacked the openness and clarity needed for a public building in this context. The reference projects from SANAA that I looked at last week stayed with me. In those examples, the ground floor is kept light and transparent, while the heavier mass sits above. That contrast works well and helps the building feel more accessible and integrated with its surroundings.

However, the bigger challenge lay in the upper floors. These levels had no clear spatial rhythm or logic in how people move through them. To address this, I developed a new concept that introduces a long corridor along the boulevard-facing facade on every floor. The archive spaces are then pushed to the opposite side of the hallway.

Ground floor is too massive, this would need to be redesigned and made lighter.



Ground- and first floor, drawn over during a sketching session

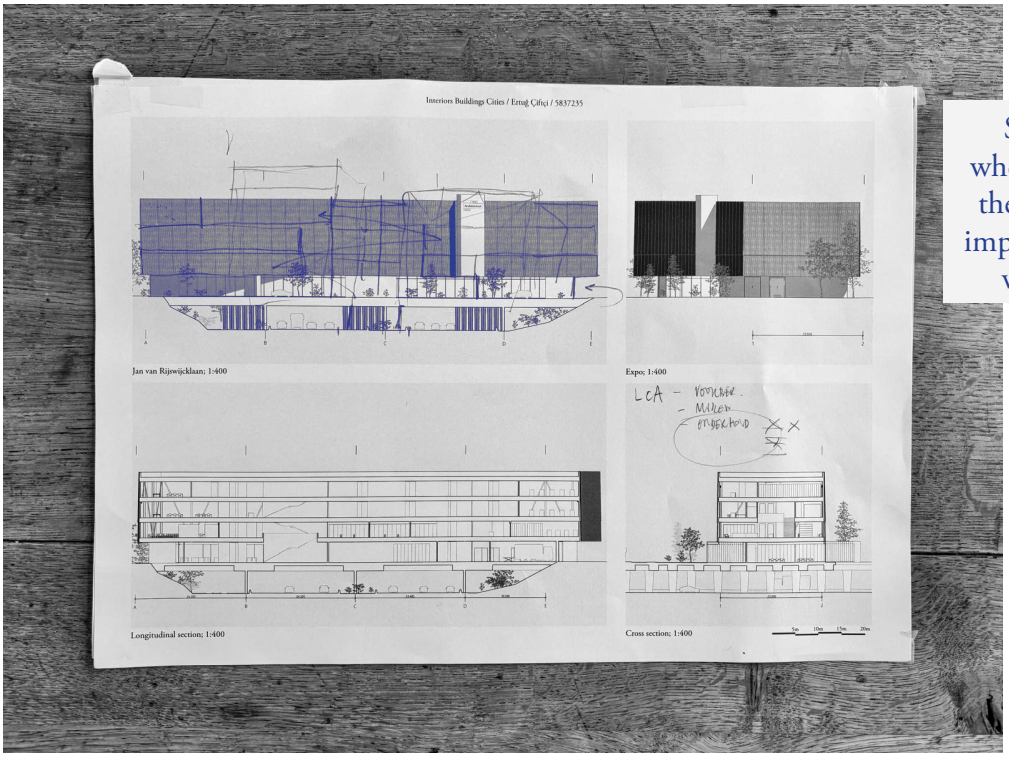
The first sketch with new archiving masses clustered on the side of the highway, and a big corridor on the side of the boulevard.

Second- and third floor, drawn over during a sketching session

What also helped was taking a closer look at the project in section. It became clear that there was little to no interaction happening in the vertical dimension either. The floors felt isolated from one another.

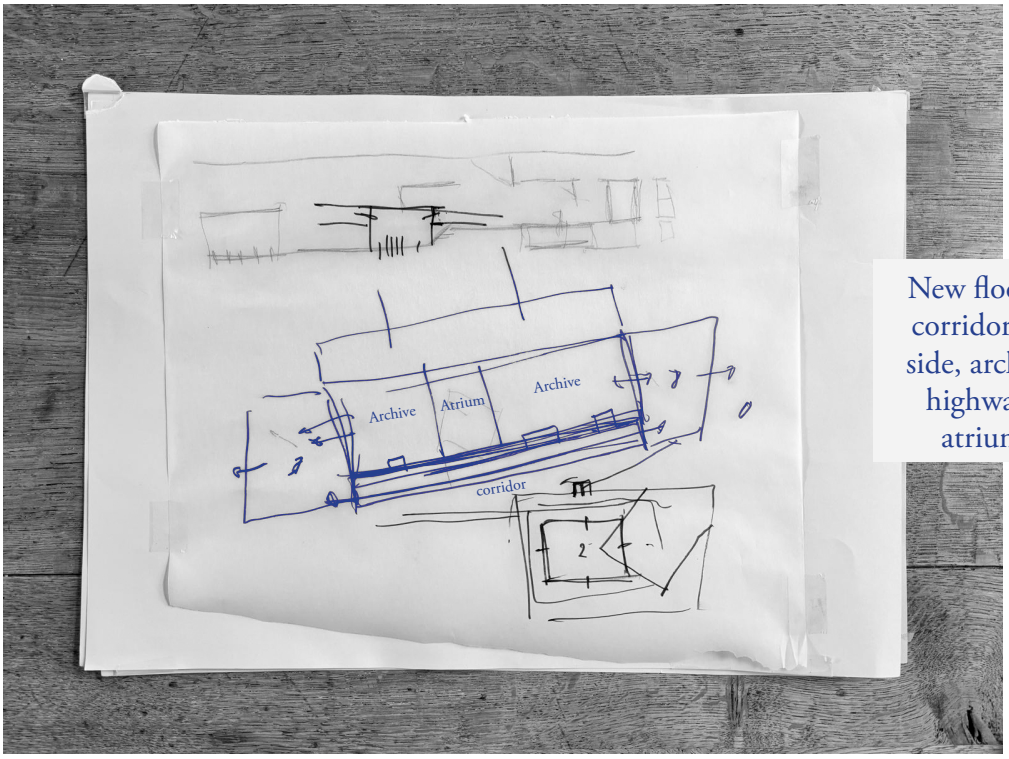
To improve this, I came up with the idea of introducing an atrium in the centre of the building. This would separate the two archive masses while creating a strong vertical link between the floors. The atrium would connect directly to the new corridor along the boulevard side and stretch across the full length of the building.

This not only improves circulation but makes the floorplan much more dynamic and adds a sense of openness that was previously missing. By working in both plan and section, the project is beginning to develop a much clearer spatial structure.



Section sketch where the atrium in the middle is seen, implying connection with the arrow

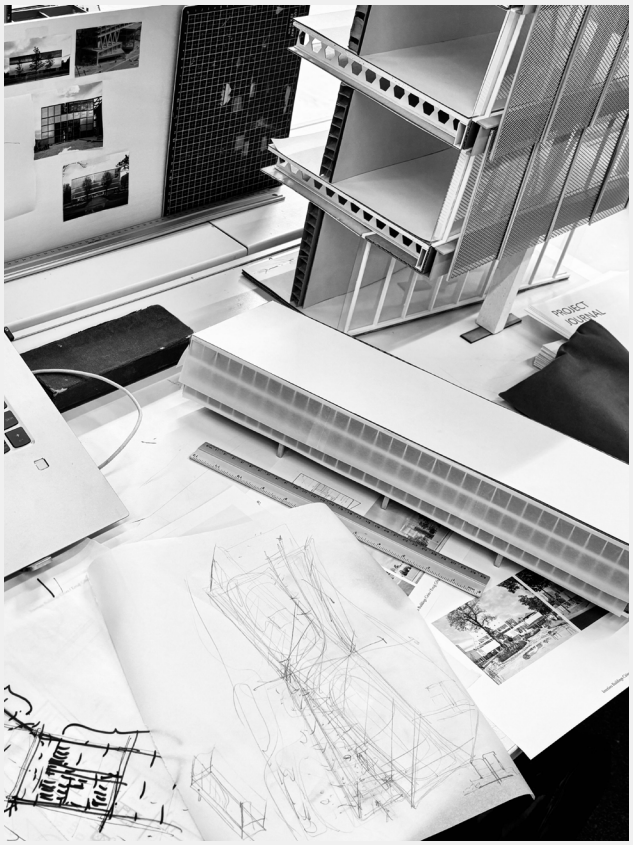
Facade and section, drawn over during a sketching session.



New floorplan with a long corridor on the boulevard side, archive masses on the highway side, and a big atrium in the middle

Sketch of the new floor plan concept

PART 4/4



Week 4.01 / Week 4.05 (P4)

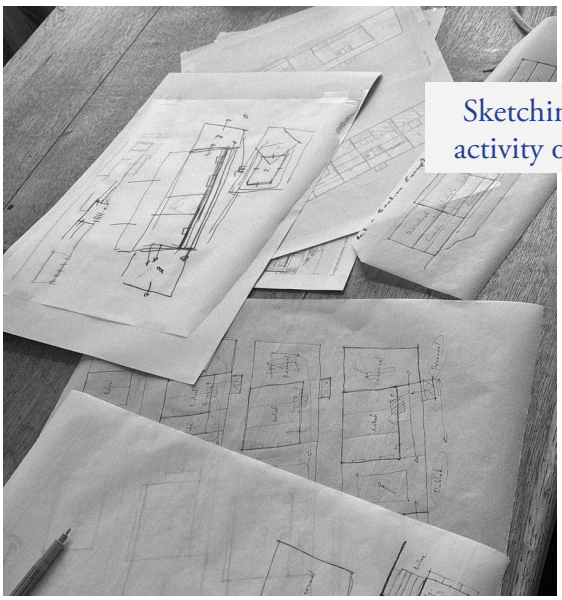
Week 4.1

21-04-2025 / 27-04-2025

Sketching variants

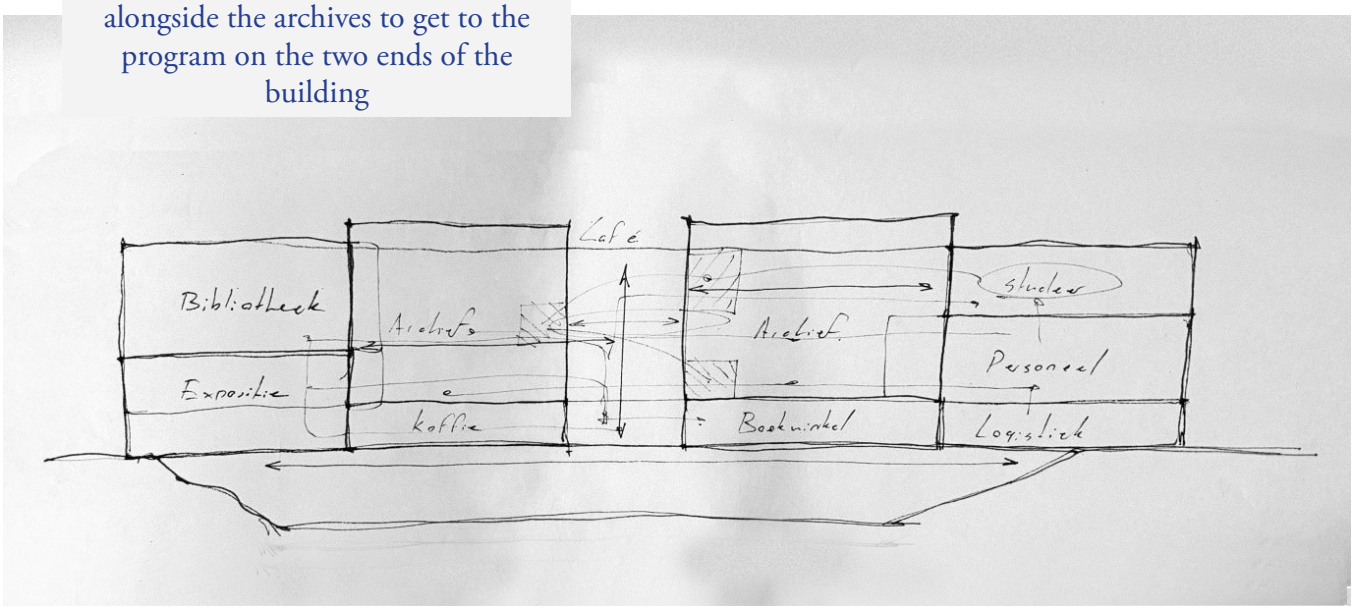
I regained confidence in the project with the new floor plan concept, but I know that developing a fresh idea also means a lot of redesign work. To clarify the specifics of the building, I decided to start with sketching.

This week, I continued exploring the best version of the floor plans, aiming to refine them before moving on to digital development. I began the process by sketching a section that illustrates what I want to achieve with the project, which is shown below. Next, I worked on various layout variants, sketching them out on paper and comparing them side by side. This allowed me to optimize the designs and select the most effective solution.



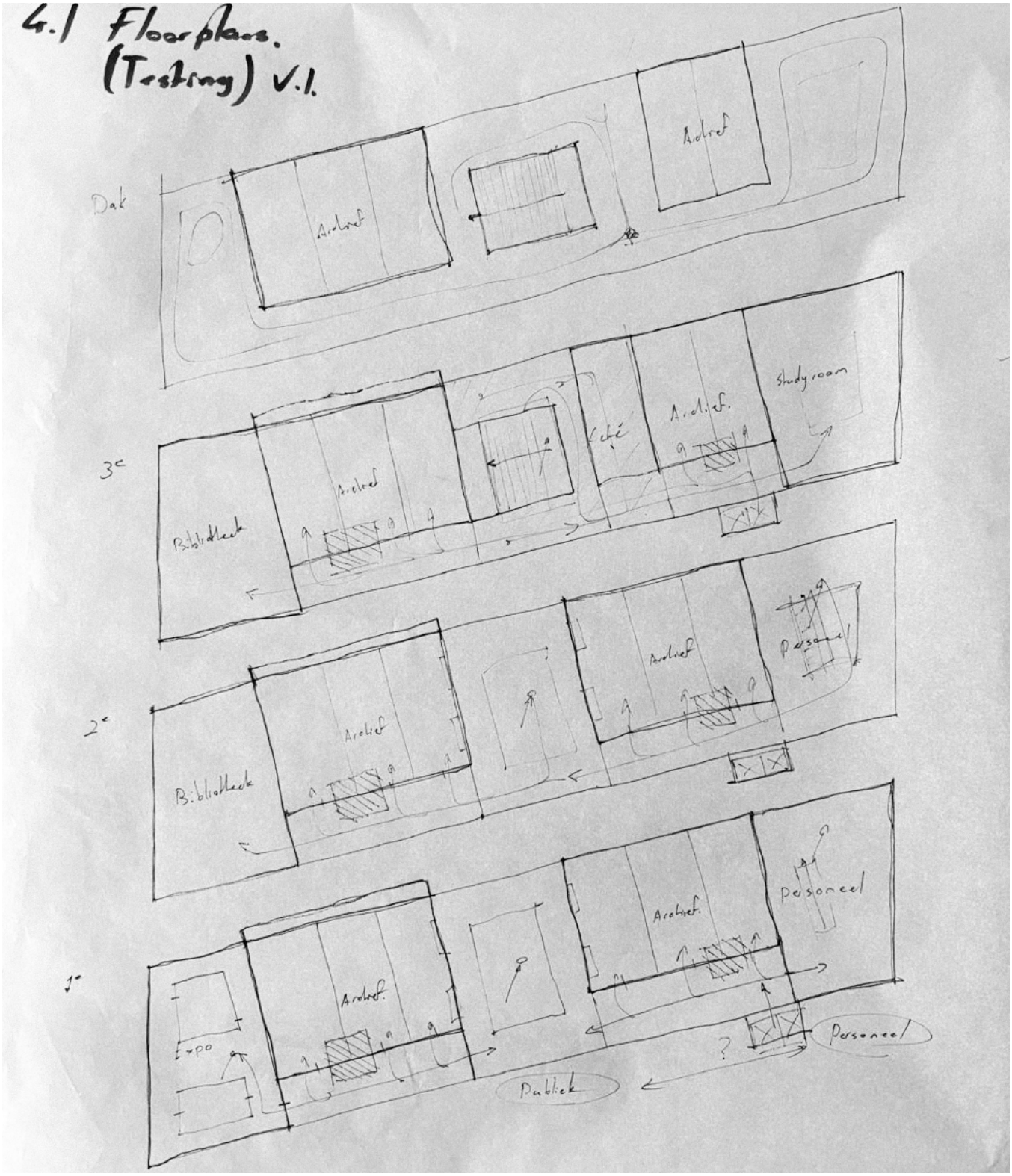
Sketching was the activity of the week

A central atrium, which connects to a long corridor, sending the users alongside the archives to get to the program on the two ends of the building

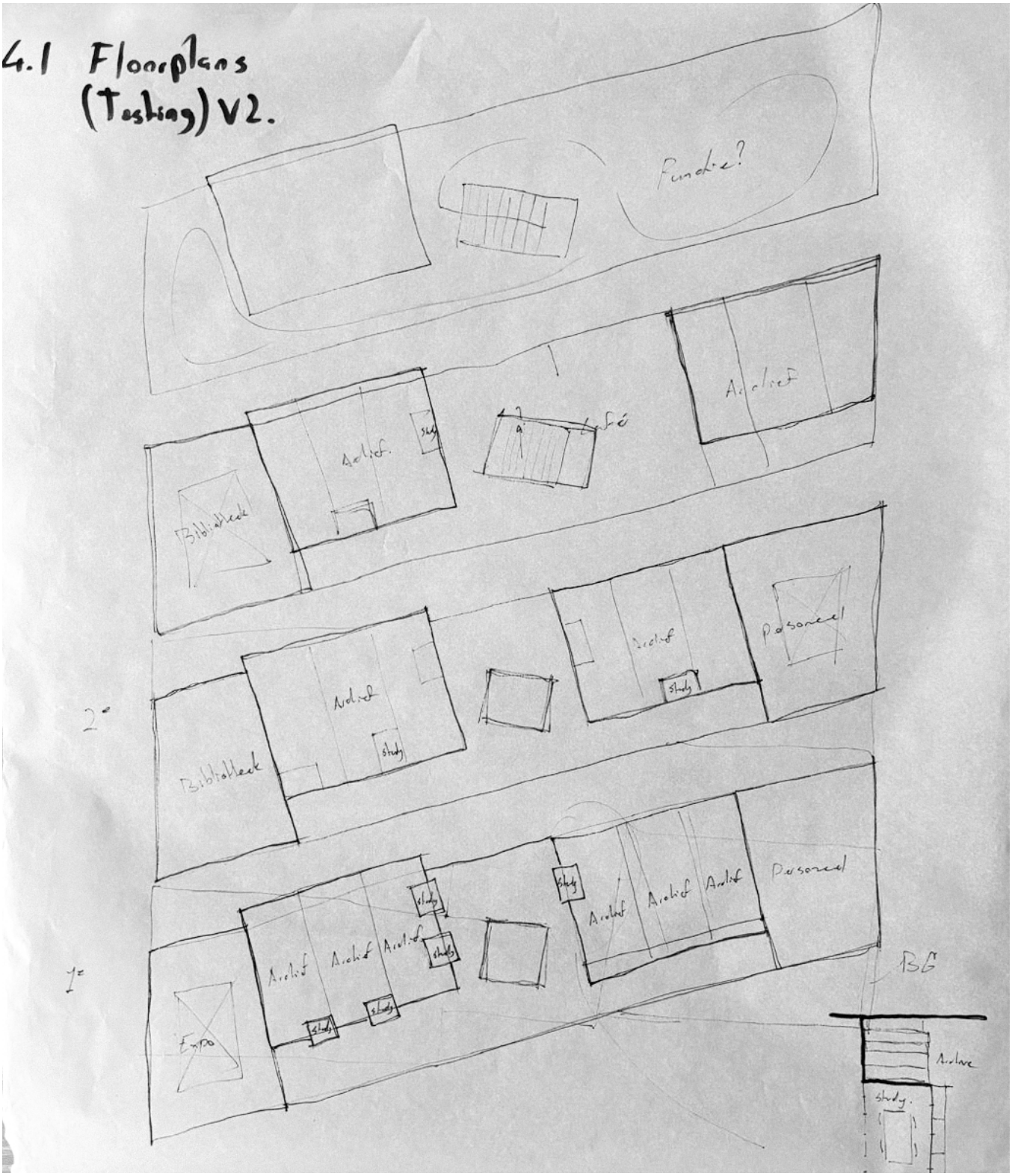


Section with the program that I wanted to achieve

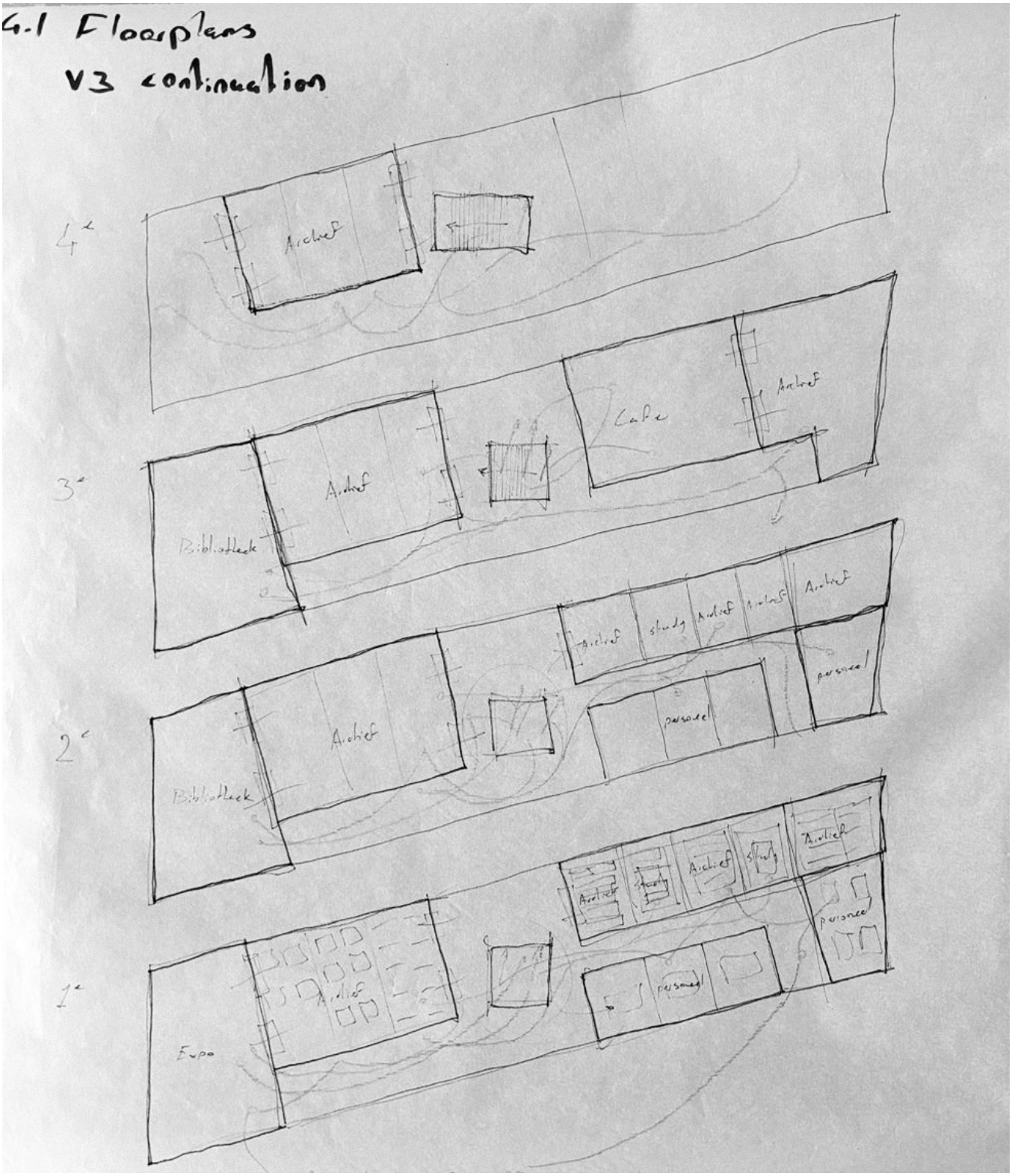
The first iteration features a program at both ends of the building, connected by a corridor that runs alongside the archive. Occasionally, a room extends into the archive space, creating a perforation. These rooms could serve as exhibition or reading rooms. With this concept the corridors do seem a bit of wasted space.



The second iteration places the atrium at an angle, introducing reading and exhibition rooms within the atrium space. However, this version faces the same issue as the previous one: the hallway does not make optimal use of the available space.

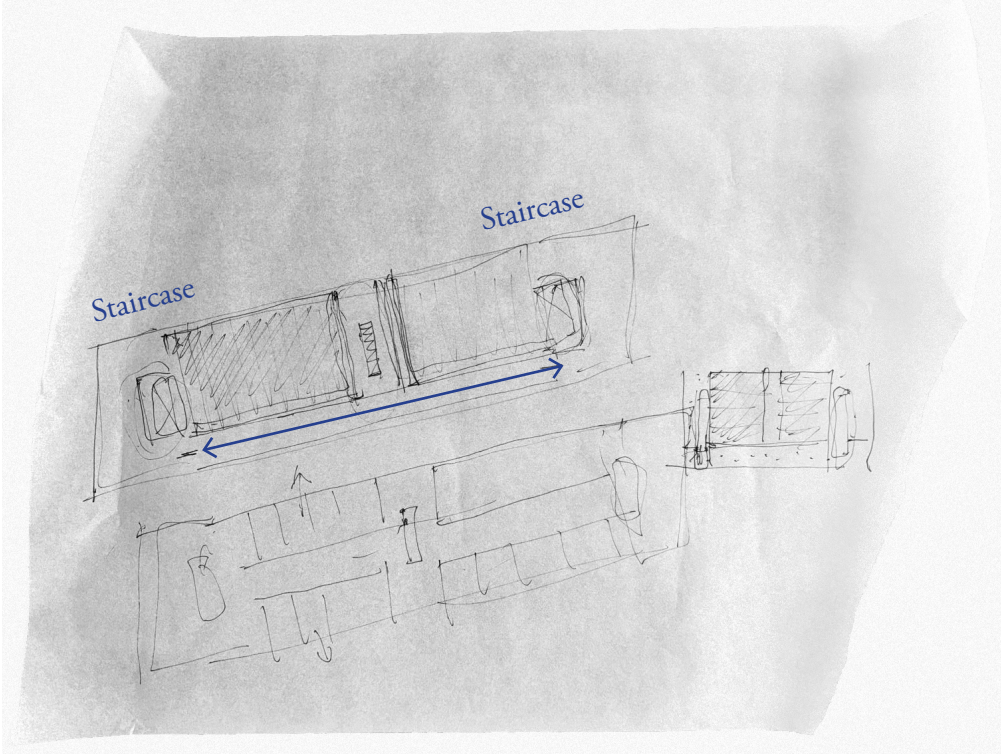


The third iteration shifts the hallway to the center of the right half of the building, creating smaller archive spaces with reading and exhibition rooms in between. Although this initially seemed like a promising idea, it results in a dark, enclosed hallway, which feels like a missed opportunity.

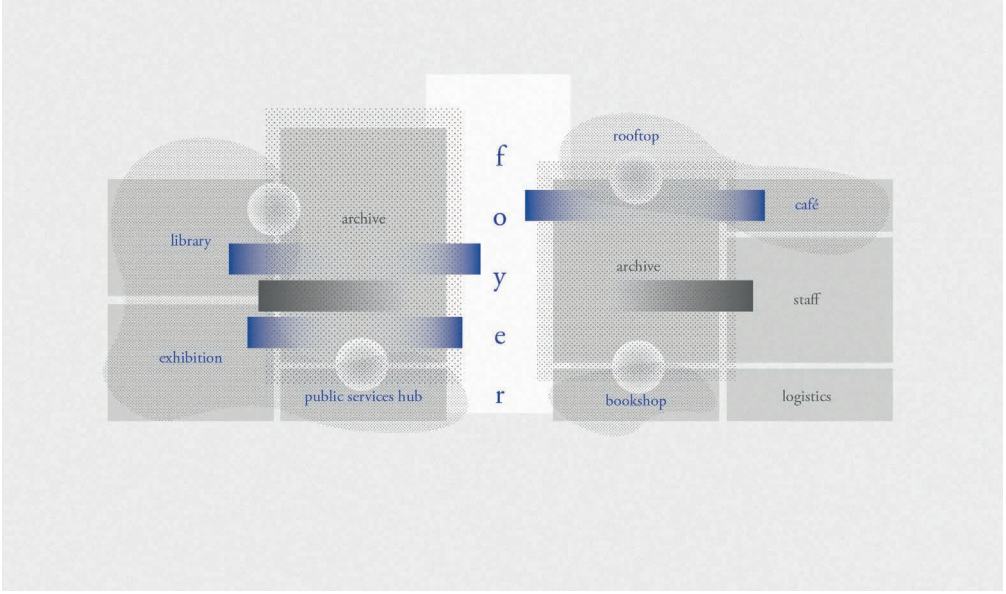


After discussing the different ideas during a tutoring session, a new concept emerged, allowing visitors to ascend from the ground floor to the first floor via a big staircase placed centrally within the atrium. From the first floor on however, the circulation would shift to the ends of the building, guiding users and the public along the corridor.

This approach also opens up the possibility of making the corridor extra wide, integrating exhibition and reading rooms directly into this expanded hallway. To illustrate this idea, I created the concept section shown below.



Tutoring session sketch



Concept section

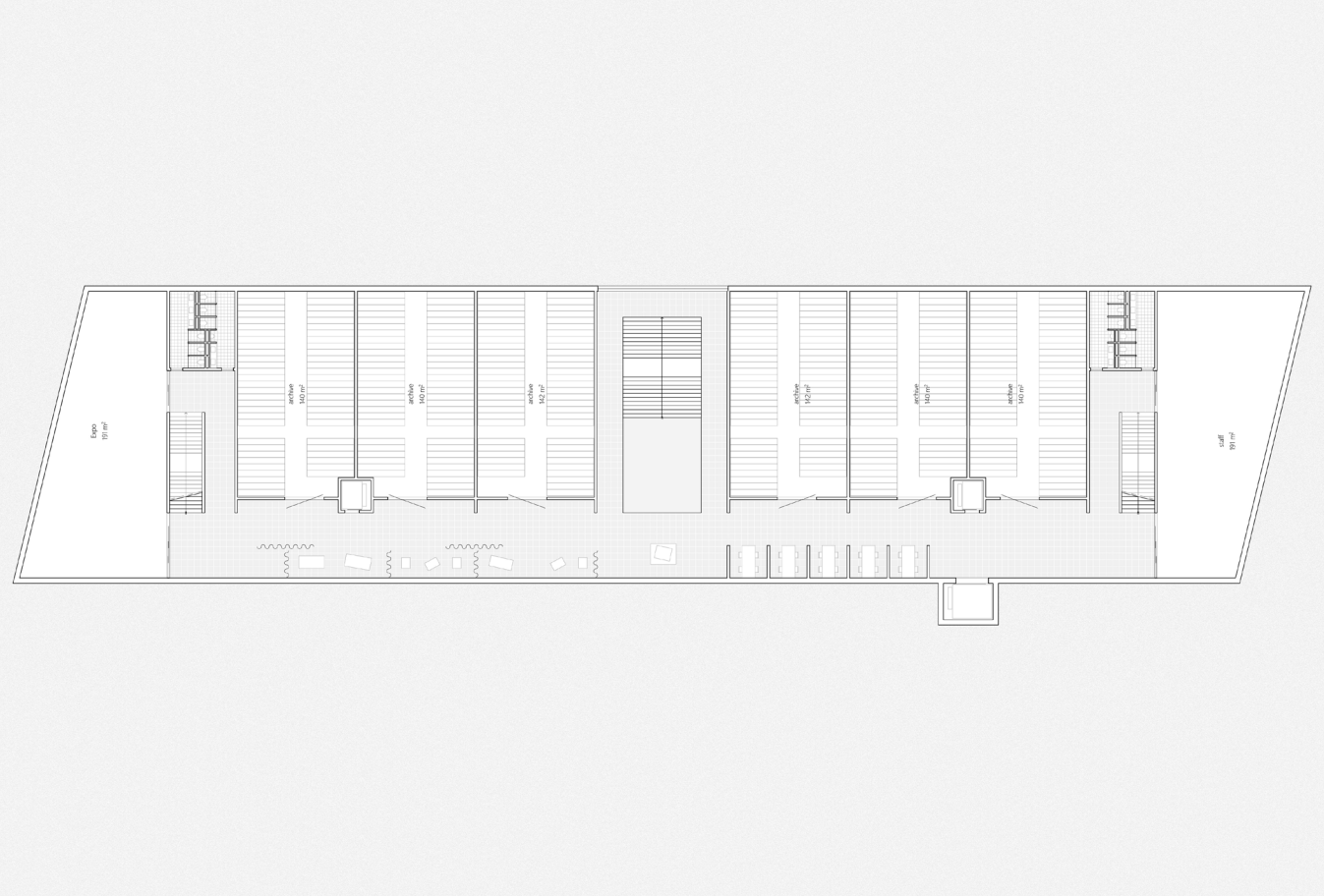
After weeks of struggling with the floor plan and trying to make the building more public and vertically accessible, I finally arrived at a design I'm truly satisfied with. All the ideas I had sketched out came together in this concept.

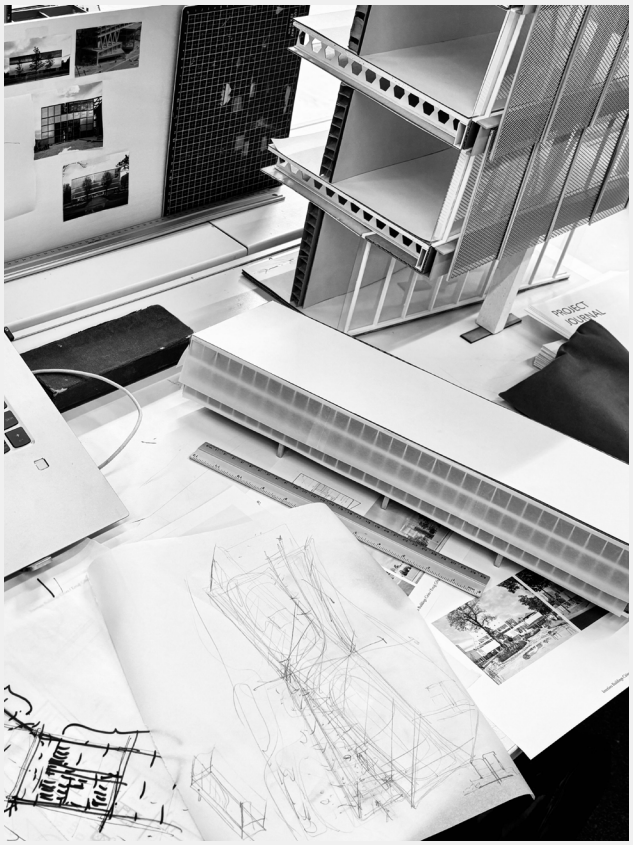
In short, the floor plan works as follows: whether you are a visitor or a member of the VAi staff, you enter the first floor via the large central staircase in the atrium. From there, you can move toward either end of the building, where public or VAi-specific functions are located.

To reach these destinations, you walk through a corridor that features either an exhibition or a workspace, both directly related to the archive. Along this route, the archives themselves are visible through openings, bringing the typically hidden world of archiving closer to the users.

To access the upper floors, you can use one of the two staircases located at either end of the building. These circulation routes also bring you into continued contact with the archive, reinforcing its presence throughout the experience of moving through the building.

Floor plan concept

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Week 4.2

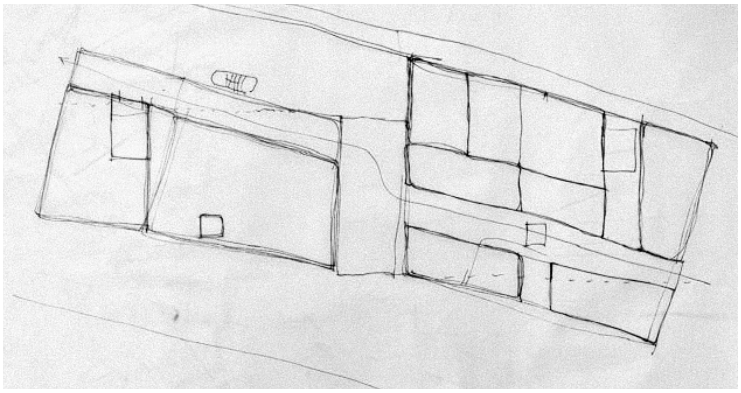
28-04-2025/04-05-2025

Solving the ground floor

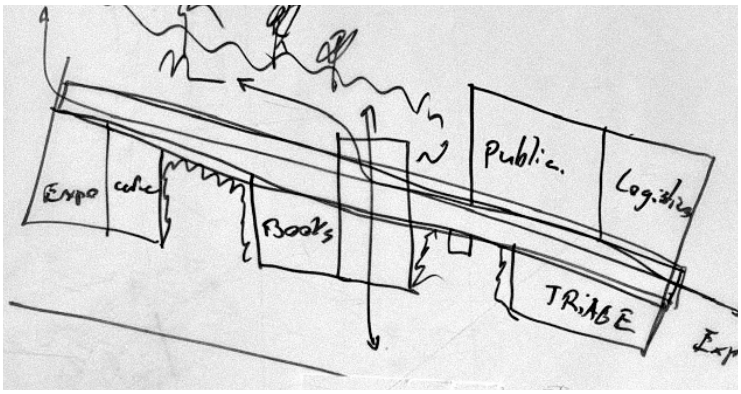
Now that the floor plans on the upper levels are more functional and refined, it was time to tackle the ground floor. A few weeks ago, I had already formed an initial idea of what this level could be, inspired by reference projects from SANAA.

As with the previous design steps, I began this process by sketching, as shown below. I started by subtracting from the overall mass, which initially felt too heavy and oversized. Gradually, I realized that the ground floor should be fundamentally different from the volume above.

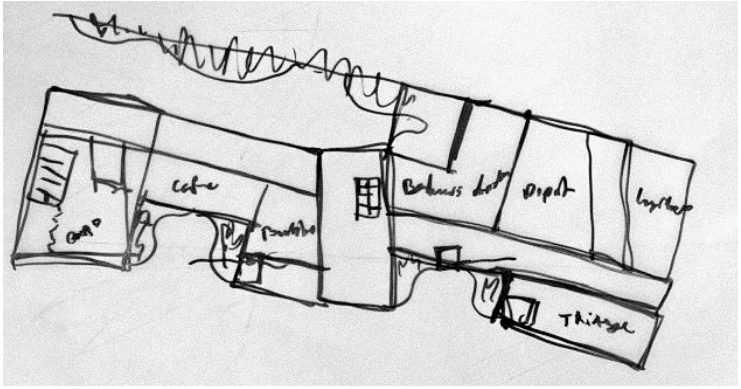
Following the same logic I applied to the upper floors, I introduced a clear route through the building, running from the side of Antwerpen Expo and parking to the De Singel and park. Along this route, I defined three connected blocks, from right to left: Archiving, Entrance, and Public.



Iteration 1: Still a large mass



Iteration 2: Creating blocks attached to a central corridor



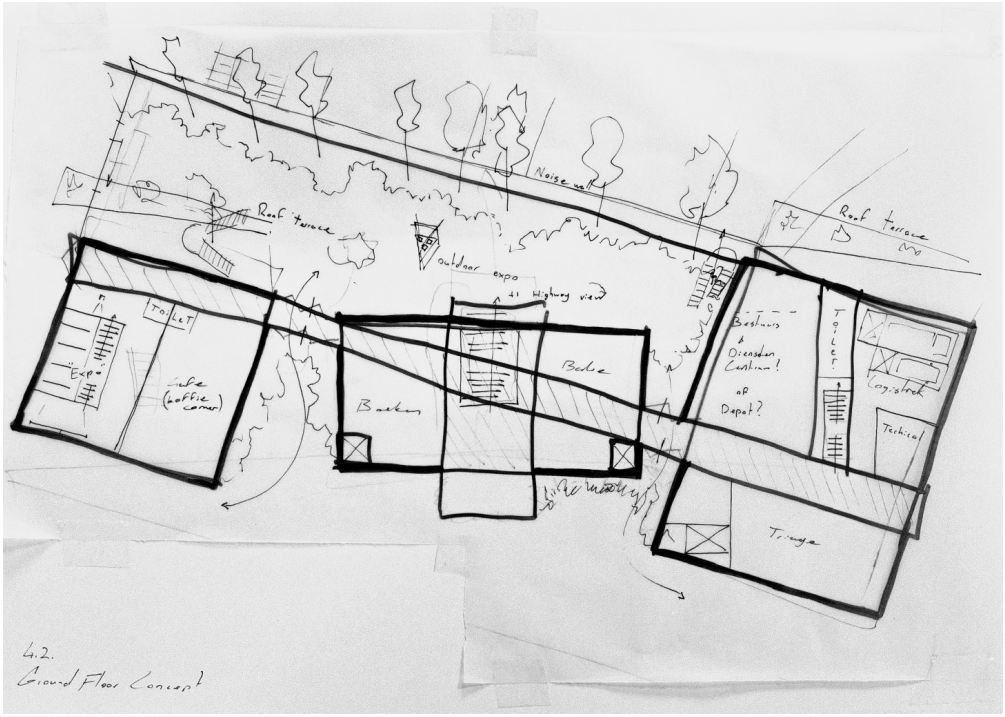
Iteration 3: Refining program according to location

As a final proposal, I developed the sketch shown below, and the design is structured as follows: the ground floor consists of three distinct volumes. From left to right, these volumes serve the functions of Public, Entrance, and Archive Logistics.

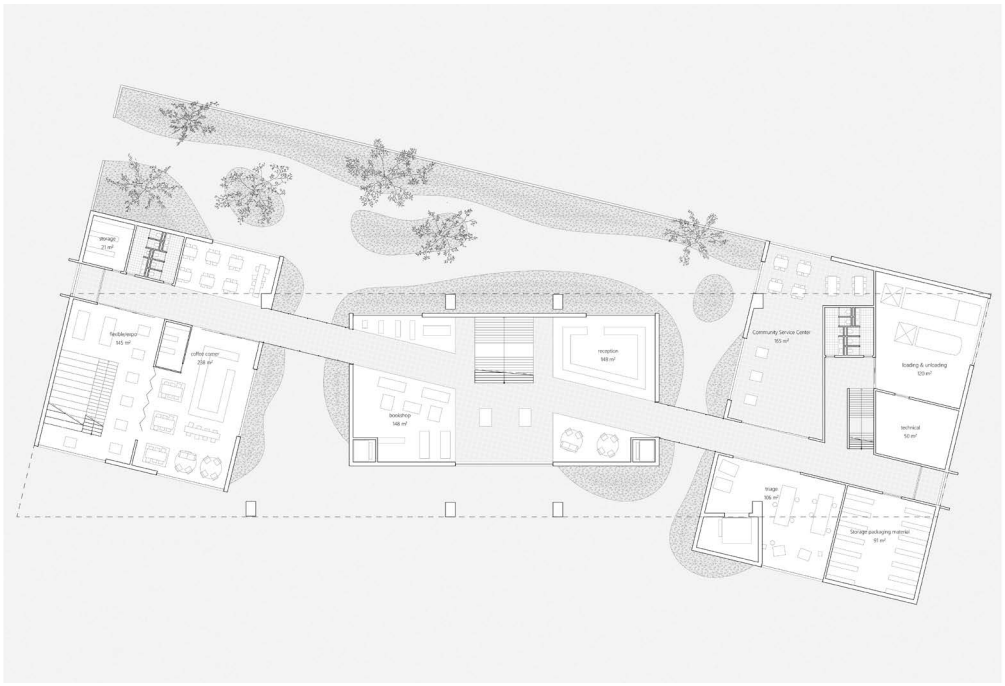
The two outer volumes are aligned with the boulevard and follow the sight lines of the Antwerp Expo further down the road. The central volume is aligned with the mass above, creating a stronger vertical connection between the floors. All three volumes are linked by a long corridor that runs from one side of the bridge to the other.

On the Antwerp Expo side, parking is provided for De Singel visitors, who must pass through this corridor to reach De Singel. On the opposite side, De Singel itself is directly accessible, surrounded by a green park.

Between the volumes, various green spaces are introduced, emphasizing the idea that the ground floor is fundamentally different from the mass above, more open, fluid, and connected to the landscape.



Sketch version of the ground floor



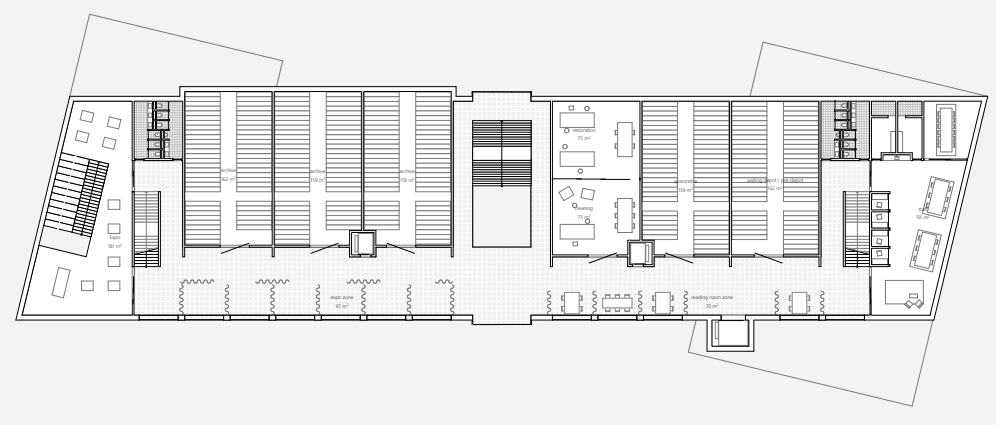
Digital translation of the sketch

Further developing the plans

In the meantime, I continued developing the other floor plans. Now that there was a strong conceptual foundation behind the layout, I could begin placing the actual program, an exercise that, at times, felt like solving a complex puzzle.

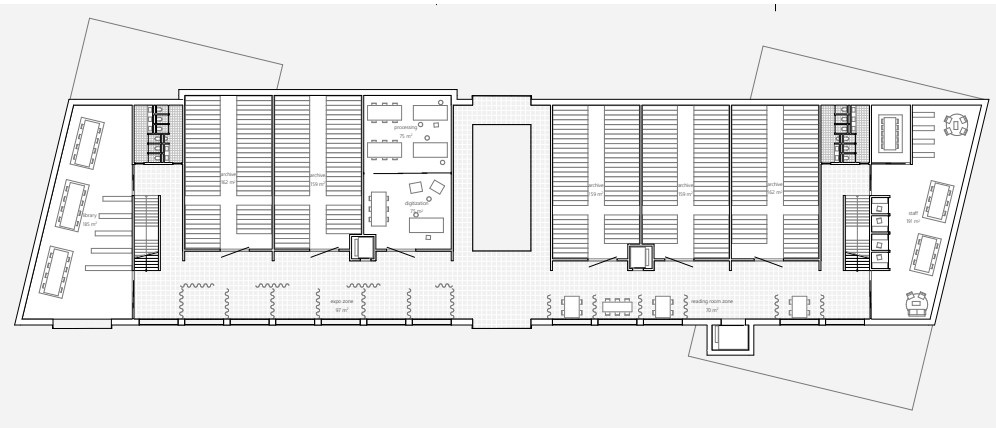
This phase was all about precision: designing individual rooms, refining their proportions, and ensuring that every space served its function efficiently while contributing to the overall spatial logic of the building. It required constant iteration, balancing circulation, daylight, adjacencies, and usability. While it may seem like a technical task, this stage was crucial in transforming the conceptual framework into a working architectural design.

A rough layout of the expo, staff and archiving rooms



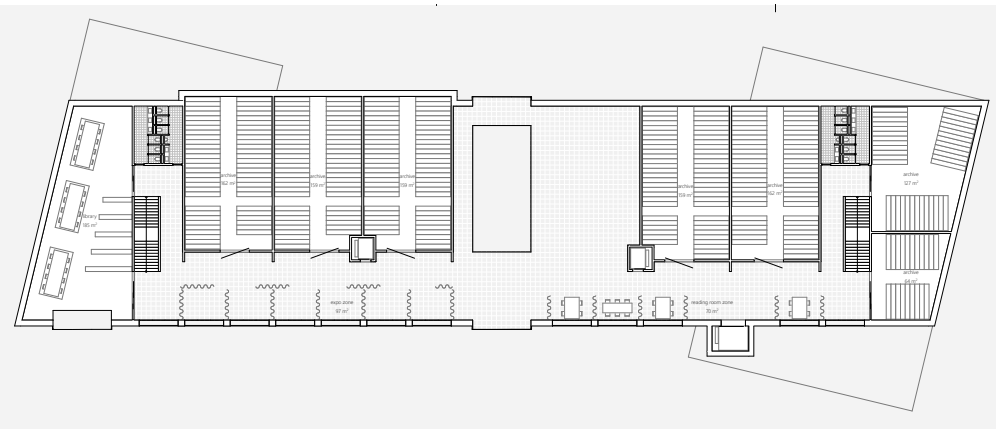
First floor

Library, expo and staff room need to be further developed



Second floor

Access to the roof still needs to be designed



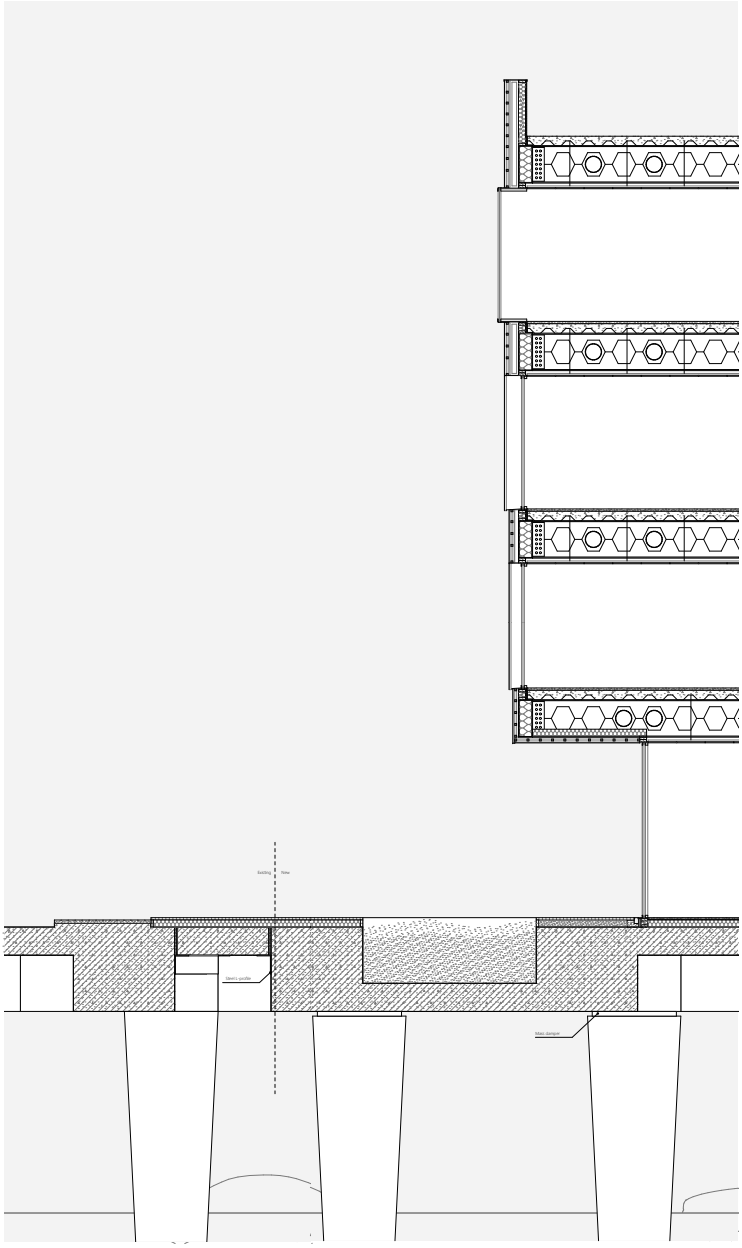
Third floor

Fragment

At this point, I realized I hadn't given much attention to the façade, I had been so focused on refining the floor plans. The current concept was to clad the building in corrugated aluminium. Spaces that required natural light, such as the atrium, offices, or library, would have full-height openings. Other areas that didn't strictly need daylight, but where it would be beneficial, would feature a perforated façade treatment. However, I wasn't entirely satisfied with the elevation as it stood, it lacked the depth and character I was aiming for.

Facade plan

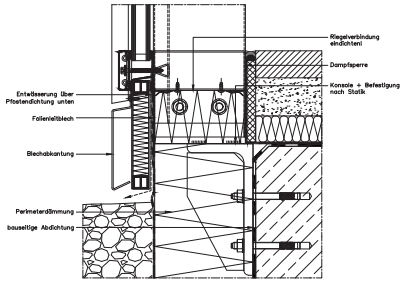
The previous render of the facade looked good, but reflected on this mass and design it was questionable. I had to make some big changes in the coming weeks before the p4.

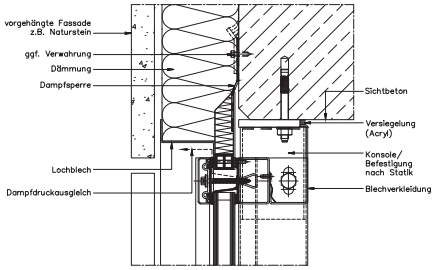


Facade fragment

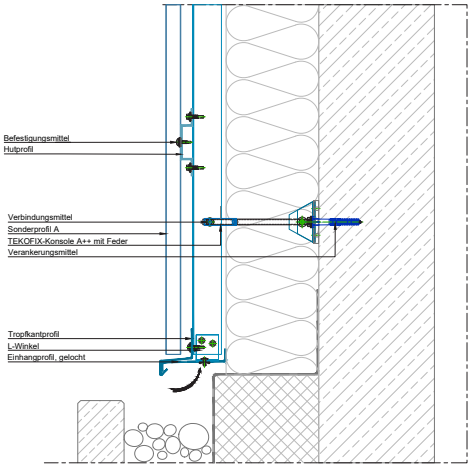
Technical elements

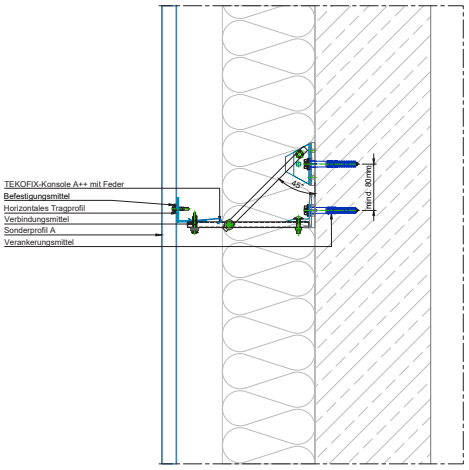
With still looking for a new facade, I knew the BT parts of fragments and details would come at last. In order to do this quickly I already started looking at technical DWG drawings of certain products which I could use in my fragments and detail drawings.

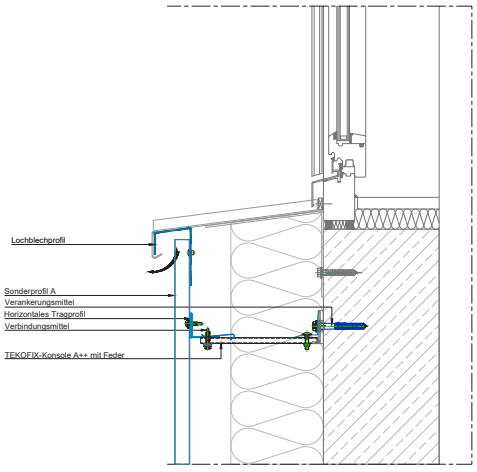


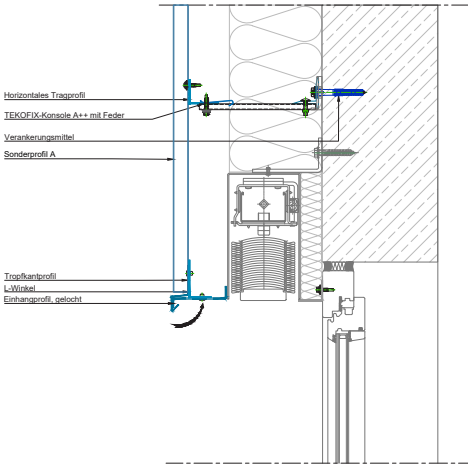


Window details

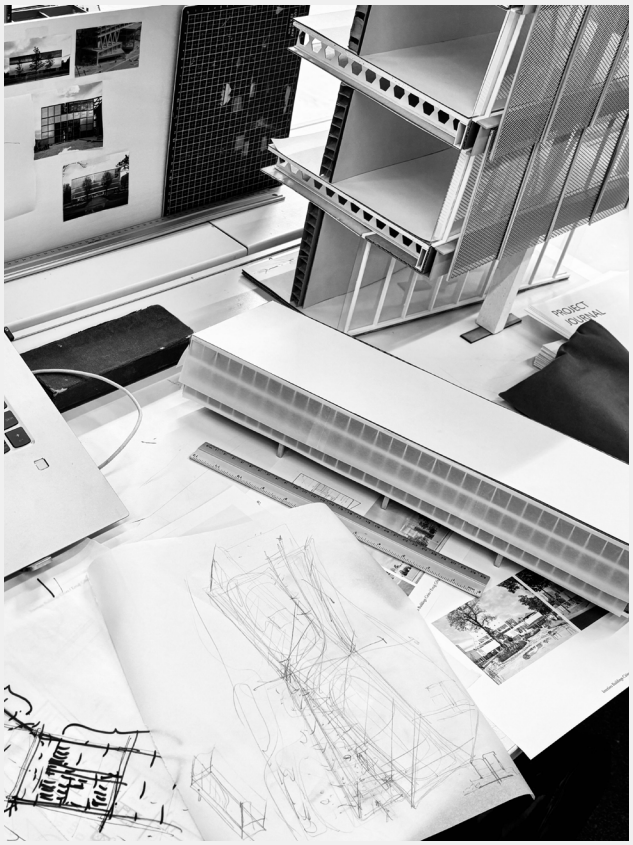








Facade system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Week 4.3

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Plans, sections and facades

With the foundations sets for the floorplans I started to further develop them to get them on a level which I would be satisfied with. Here is a short overview of aspects that changed.

The Community Service Centre is moved on the ground floor, from the right mass to the left, where it is now distributed over the ground, and first floor.

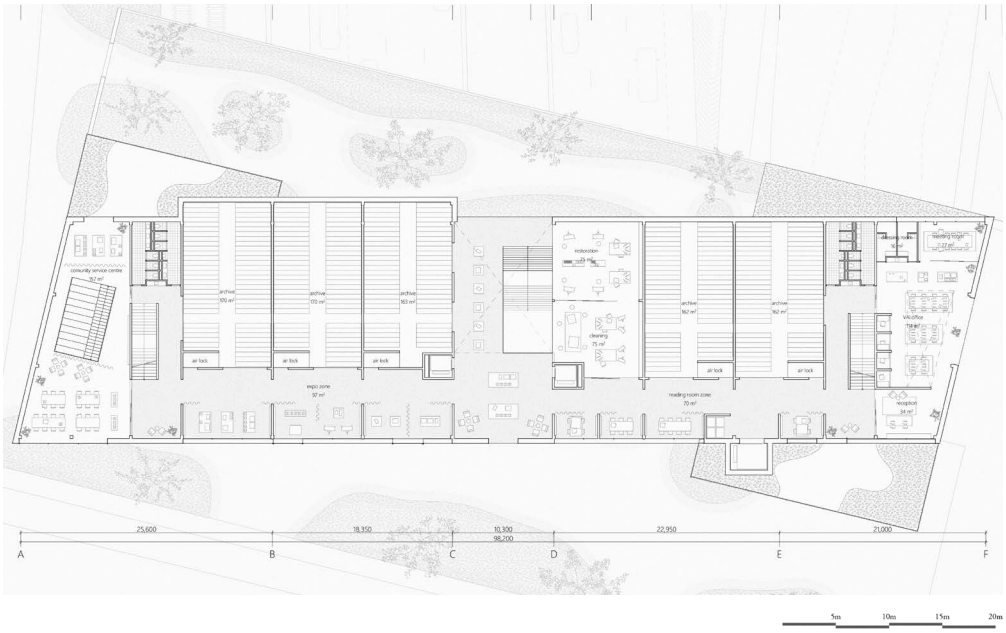
The left archive mass has been pushed out towards the highway to create even more space in the corridor for exposition space.

All spaces, such as the Public Services Centre, rooms that deal with archiving pieces, offices, library and grand cafe have been thoroughly designed with the activities in mind.

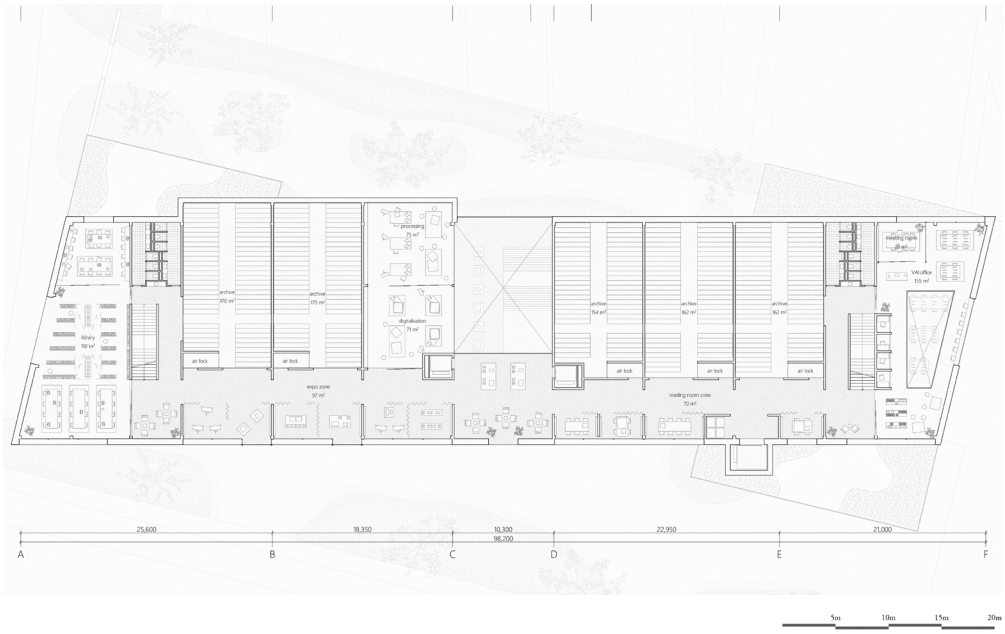
The access to the roof has been designed.

With this, the plan, in my eyes, has made a huge leap forwards in terms of plans.

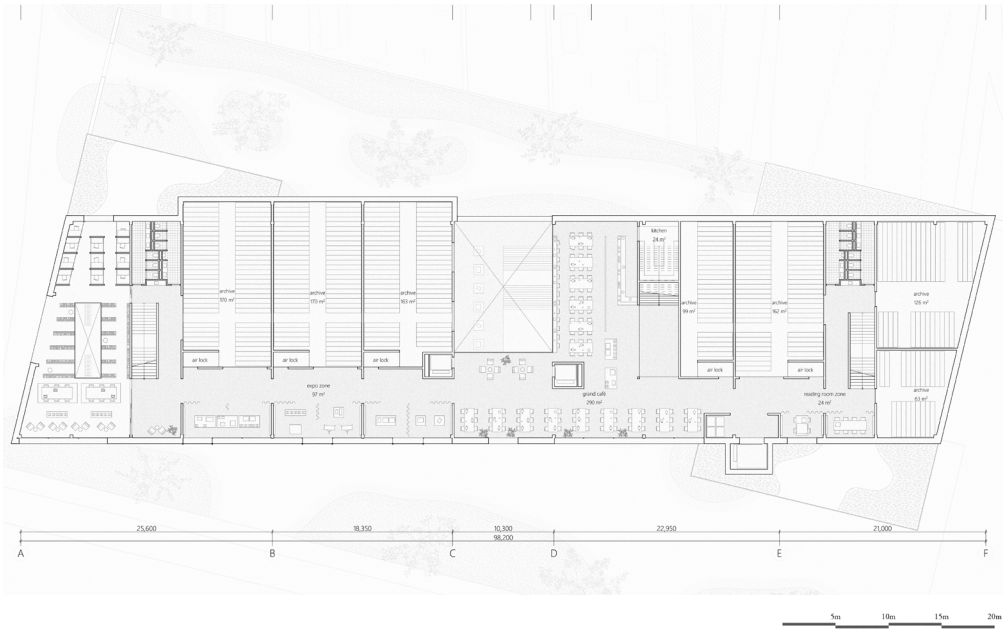
Ground floor plan



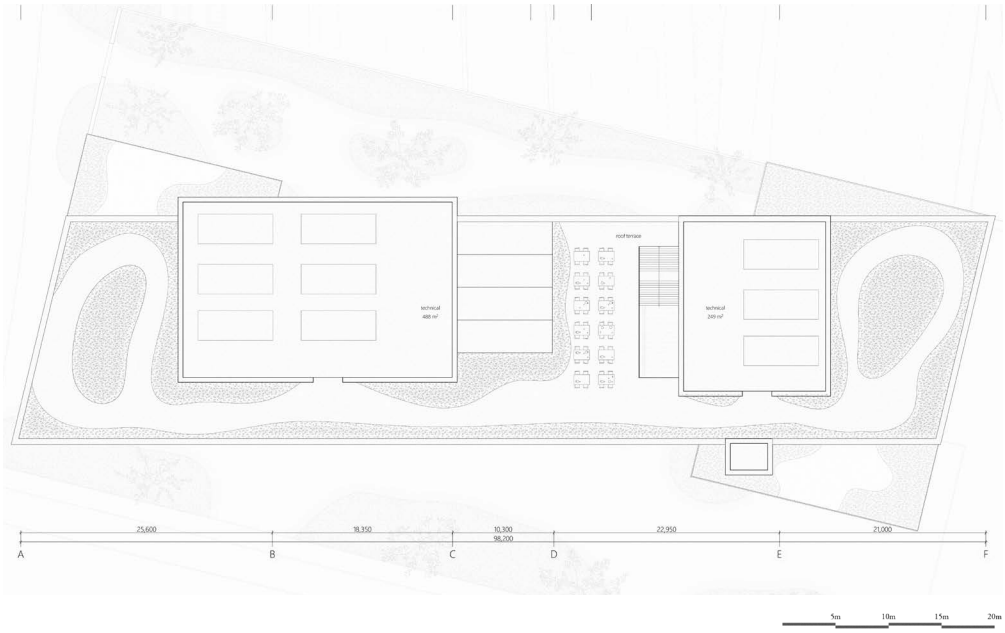
First floor



Second floor plan

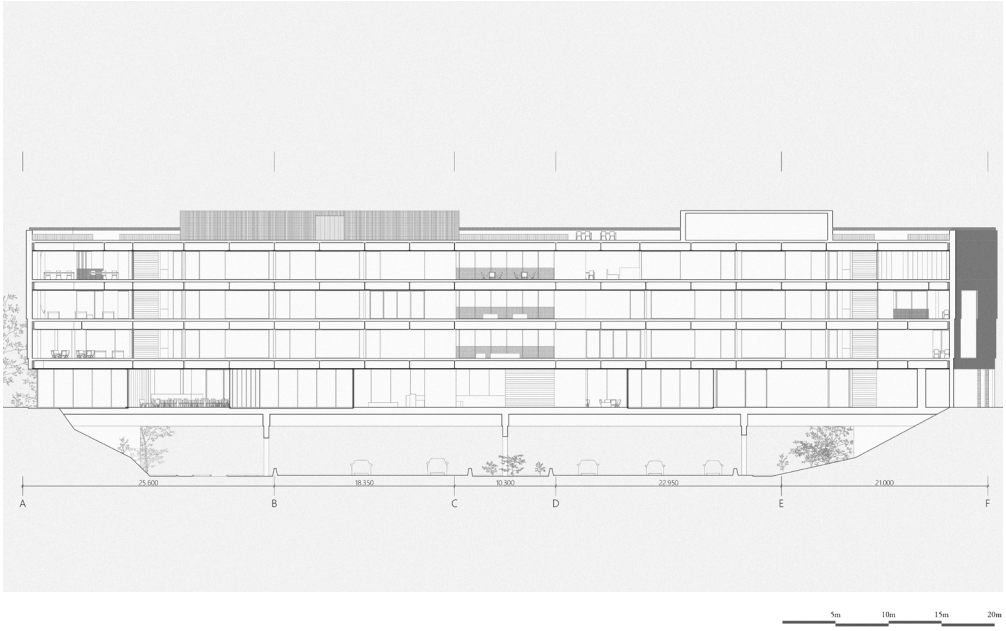


Third floor plan

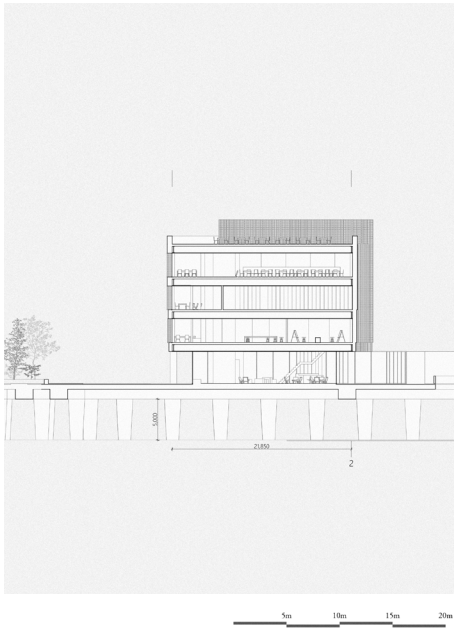


Roof plan

Longitudinal section



Cross sections



Climate

This week there was also an appointment with a climate specialist, now I couldn't avoid it, I had to make a climate scheme. I had put this off for a long time because I already had planned it out in my head, but I hadn't put it on paper however.

The building uses multiple technical systems to achieve sustainability standards which I'll explain here.

1. There is a rain collection system which collects water that can be used to flush the toilets reducing the need of clean water.

2. There is a green roof which has positive effect on cooling the building, reducing the need of cooling.

3. Solar panels help to generate solar energy.

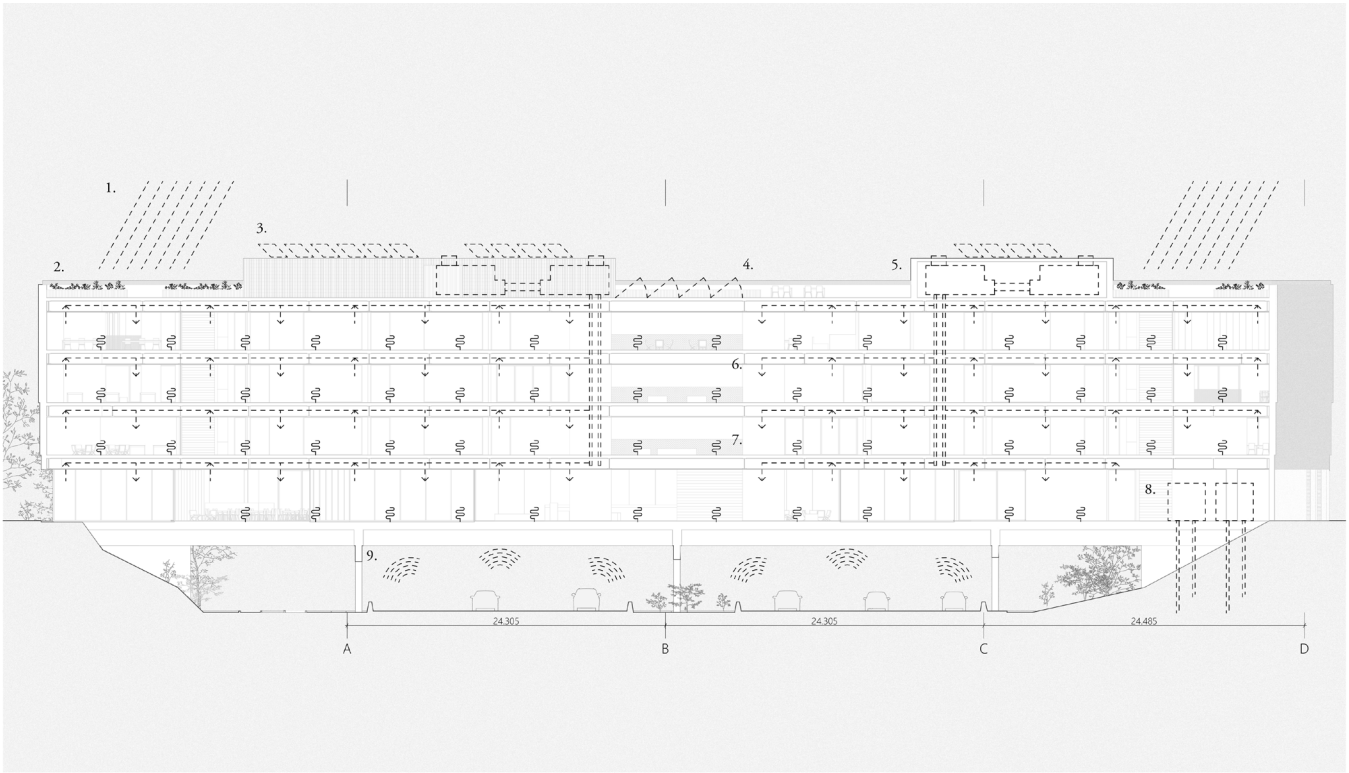
4. An atrium with a large window and open-able skylights help to warm the building in the winter.

5. Mechanical ventilation provided fresh air throughout the building, also equipped with a heat saving system.

6. Different climate groups throughout the building, reducing the need of heating or cooling where it isn't needed.

7. Floor heating system, which is a low temperature system.

8. Vertical ground heat exchanger providing the heat or cooling needed for the floor heating system.



climate section; 1:250

0 m 5 m 10 m 15 m 20 m

1. rainwater collection
2. green roof (cooling)
3. solar panels
4. atrium skylights (cooling)
5. mechanical ventilation (heat recovery)
6. mechanical ventilation (adjusted for zone)
7. floor heating (low temperature)
8. Ground heat exchanger (low temperature)
9. vibration energy harvesting

A facade crisis

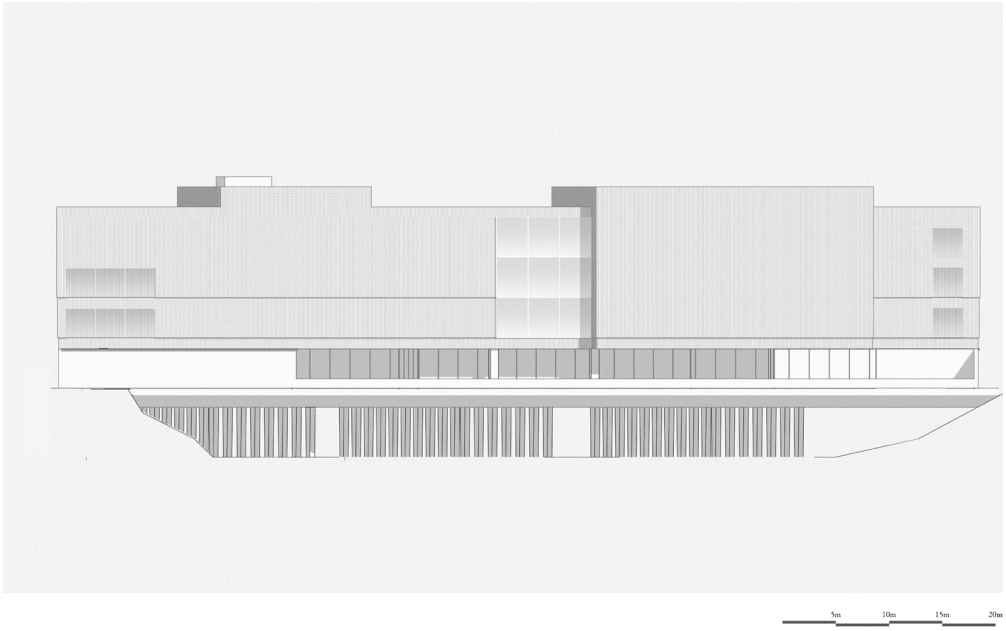
The further I went on with the design, the more I realised this was starting to become problematic. The concept that I had now, a corrugated aluminium facade, with closed panels, perforated panels, and full openings were just really not to my liking.

This building should represent a forward thinking and progressive institute, and now, it could be an industrial hall, that's what I at least thought.

The tutoring session was useful. Here I was reassured that maybe, the way of drawing it was aslo misleading, and that I should try to represent it in another way. I made a quick alternative and that already looked better, but also gave me ideas for a facade that might work better.

It would be a risky move, changes the facade somewhat with the limited time I have, but victory is always possible for the person who refuses to stop fighting.

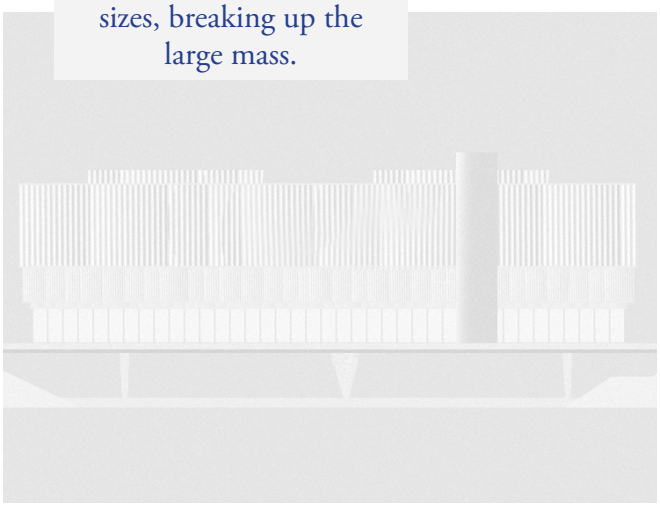
Boulevard facade



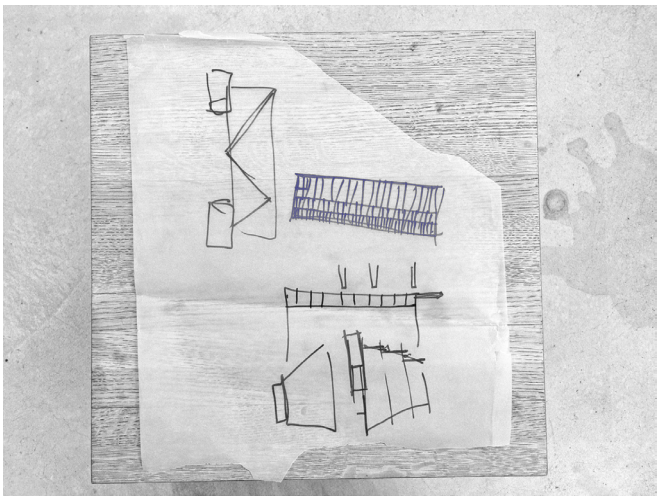
Highway facade

Facade

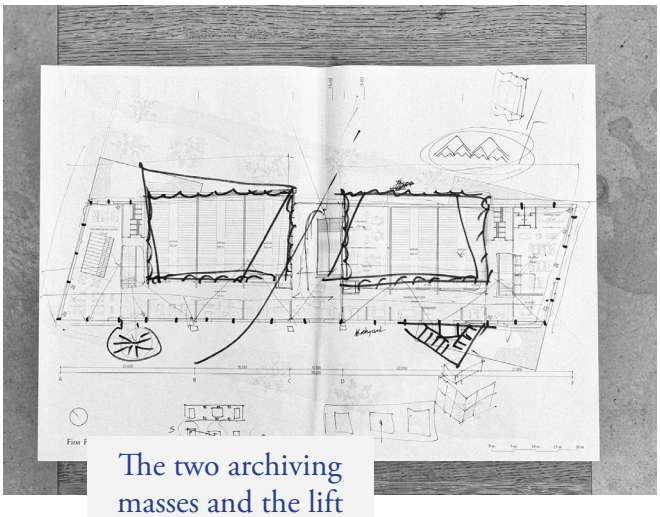
With the advise of representing the facade in a different way in an elevation view, I started. Whilst working in Photoshop I started to experiment with the corrugated aluminium and tested some variants, which I of course didn't save in the heat of the moment. But the image I was satisfied with, was the one show on this page. I realised I might need to play around with the corrugated aluminium, like smaller on the bottom, bigger in the middle, and large on the top. I started to work on this.



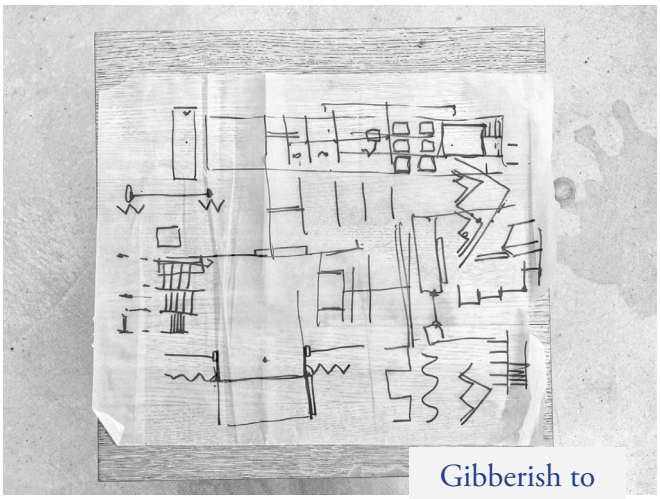
Corrugated aluminium which plays with the sizes, breaking up the large mass.



I also realised that no matter what I do, the large closed off facade on the side of the highway will not work with one material. I started to think about what I had done with the floorplans. The large archive masses and the large archive lift all stick out of the large mass, there was an opportunity here. Maybe the masses that have an archiving function need to be a totally different material. Maybe they have to contrast the high tech aluminium. With excitement I started to sketch again.

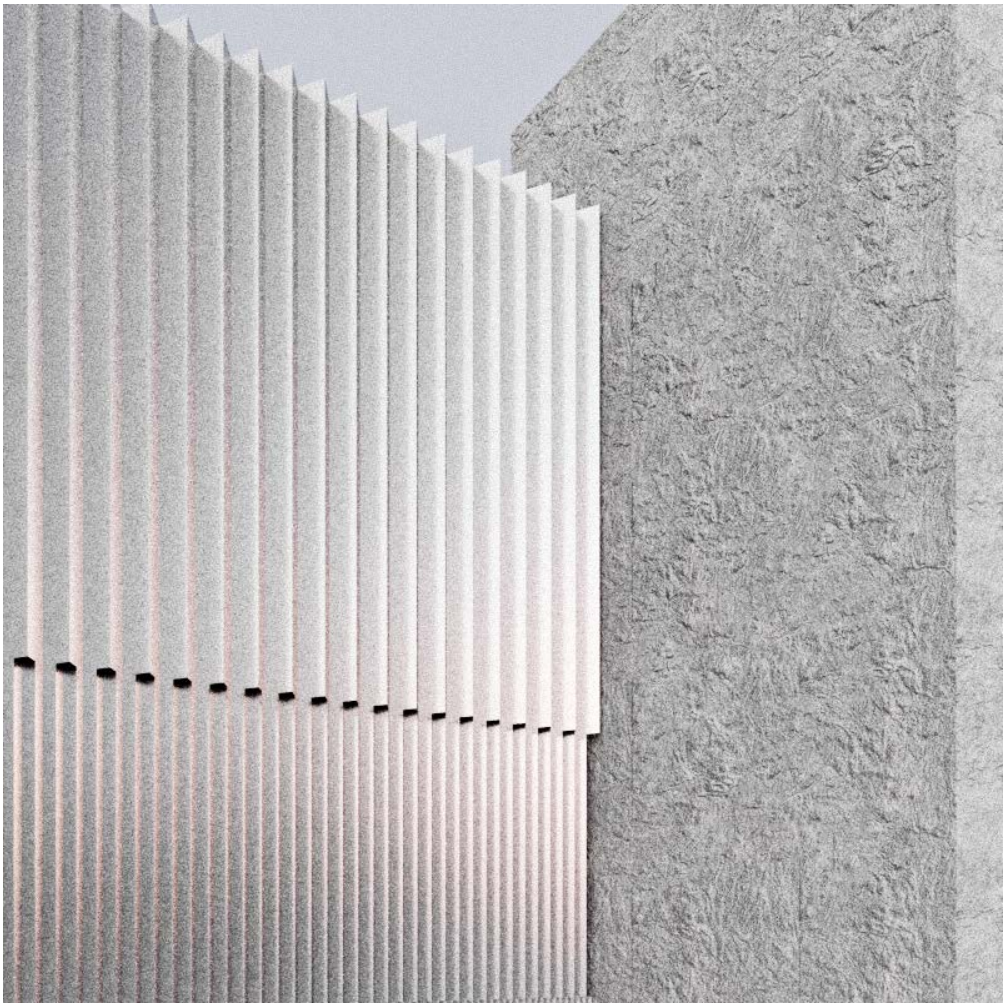


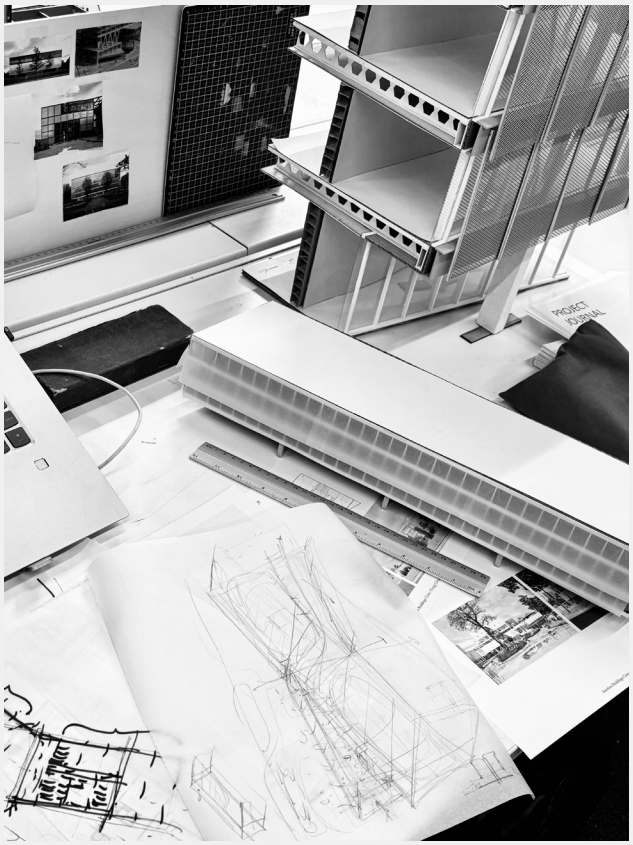
The two archiving masses and the lift on the bottom right



Gibberish to you, eureka for me

So what if, let's just say what if, I keep the details and engineering of the corrugated aluminium facade, but just change the size as it goes up, and the archiving masses? They should be harsh, heavy, concrete, in contrast to the modern aluminium. Why? These are old documents, kept for a long amount of time, it makes sense in my head to make it rough and concrete. And with that I made a quick render, which I saw potential in, for the first time in a long time I was happy with the floorplans and the facade, next week will be intense, but it will be worth it!




PROJECT
JOURNAL

Week 4.4

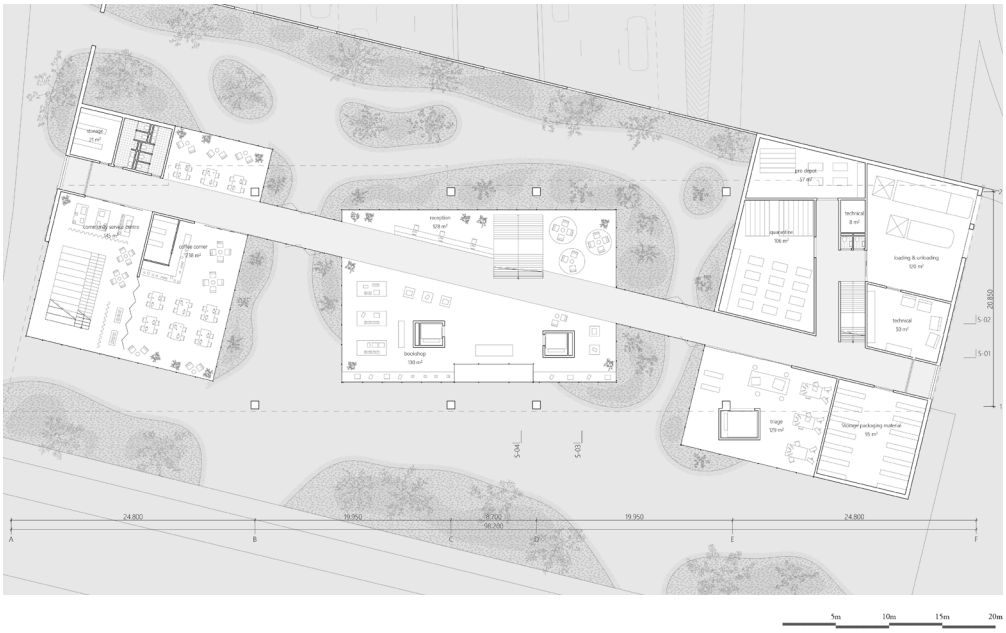
12-05-2025 / 18-05-2025

Final plans

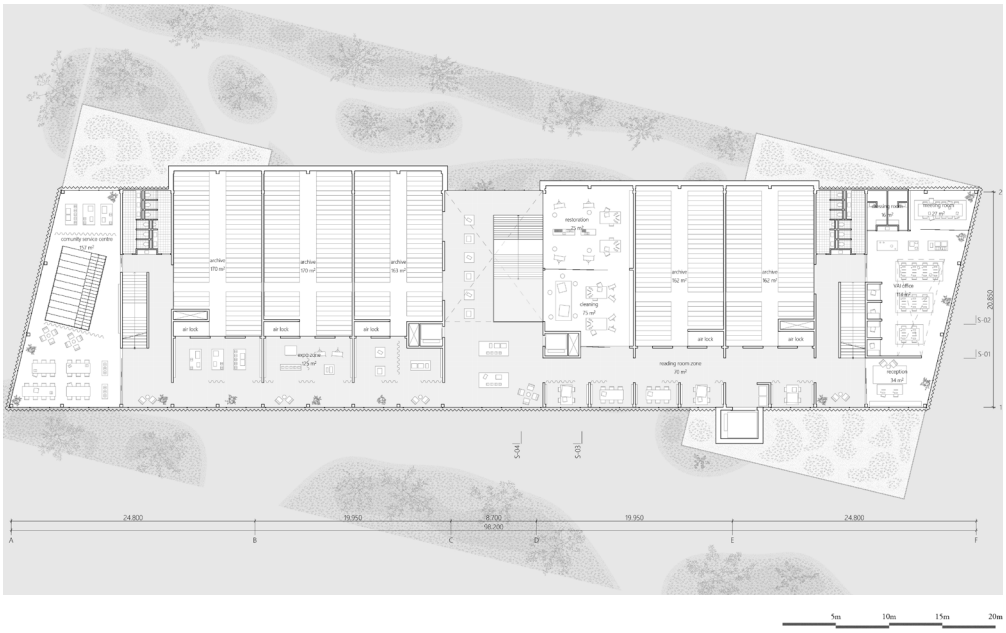
This week I tried to bring everything together. All of my previous plans, studies, and sketches had to come together into a final set of drawings that I could use for the P4 presentation.

The floor plans remained largely the same, with no major changes. The biggest shift was in the facade, which, as I mentioned last week, received a complete overhaul. I had ended the previous week with a test render of a new facade concept that really motivated me, so I committed to redesigning the entire facade.

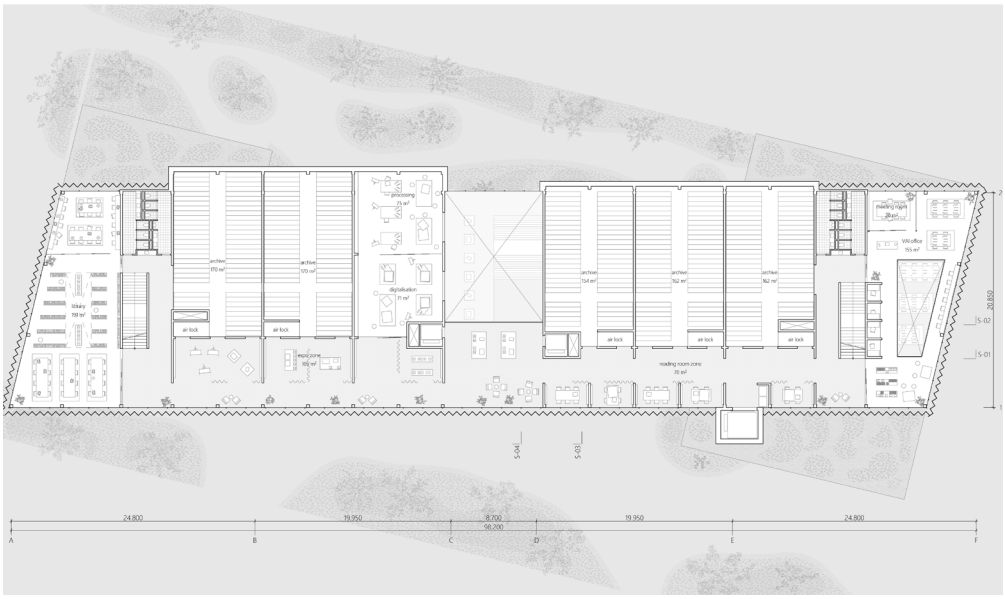
Naturally, this had an impact on the facade drawings, sections, floor plans, and fragments. So it turned into quite an intense week, trying to align and update everything in time.



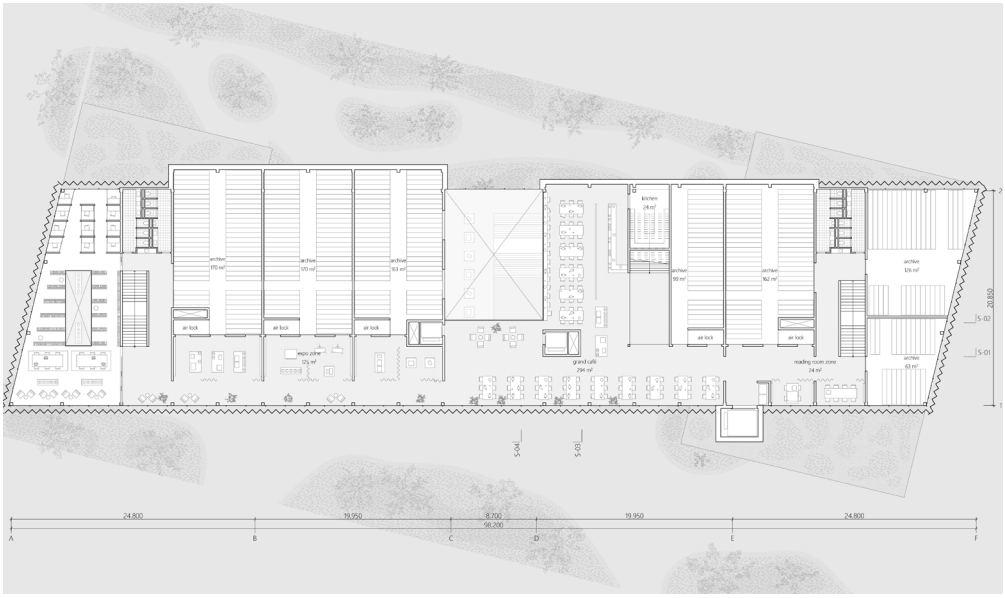
Ground floor plan



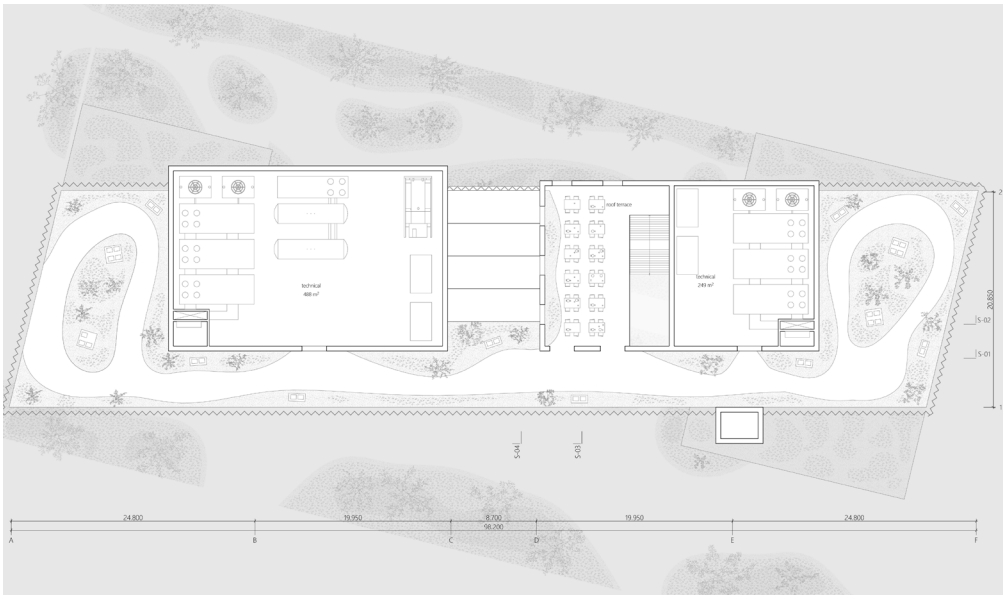
First floor



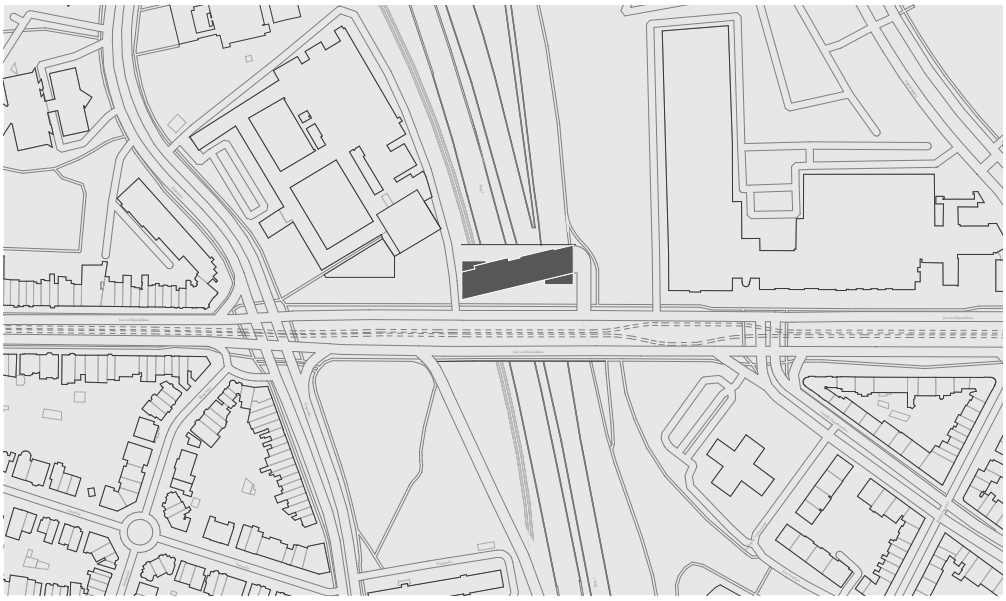
Second floor plan



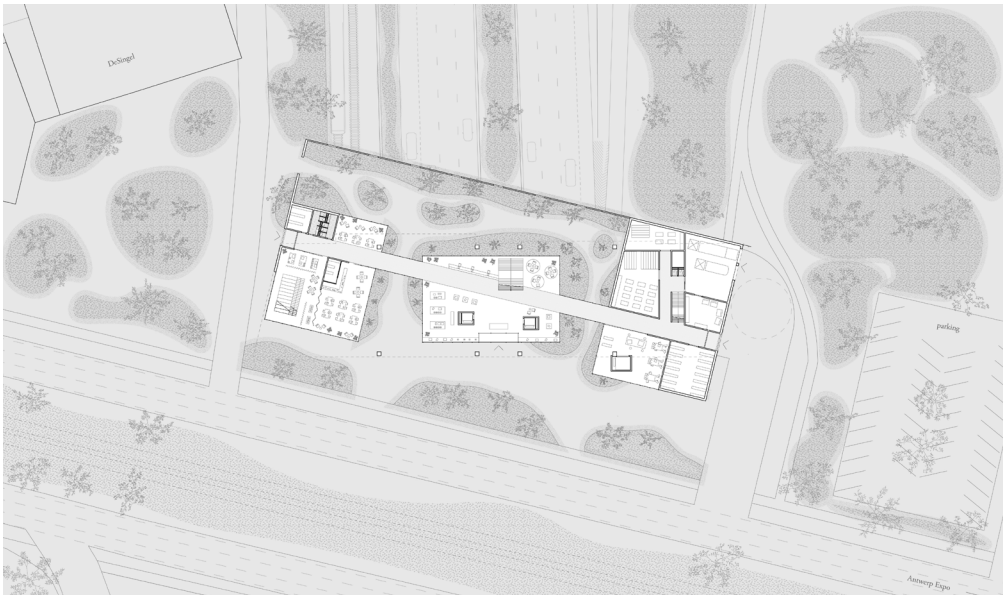
Third floor plan



Roof plan



Site plan



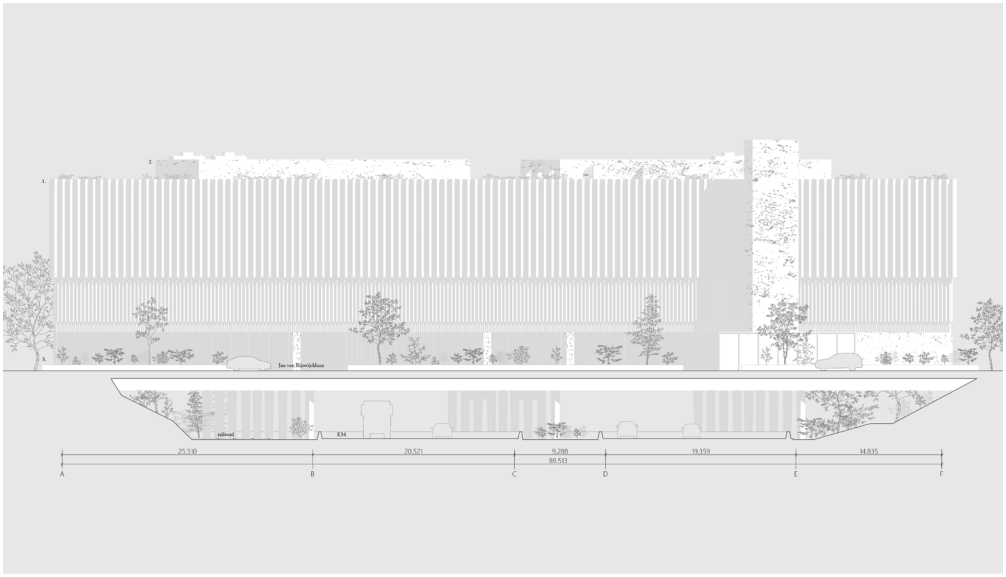
1:500 Ground floor plan

Facade redesign

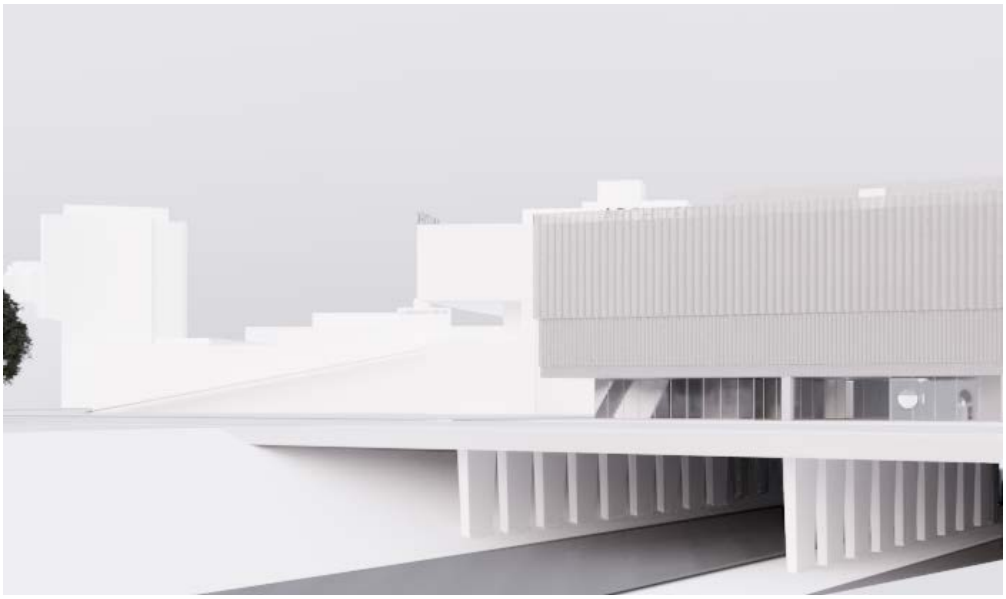
For the facade, I am still using perforated aluminium cladding. I had been struggling a lot with the window openings and eventually realised that the issue was never really about the windows themselves. The building is large, and it needs visual consistency to stay organised and easy on the eyes.

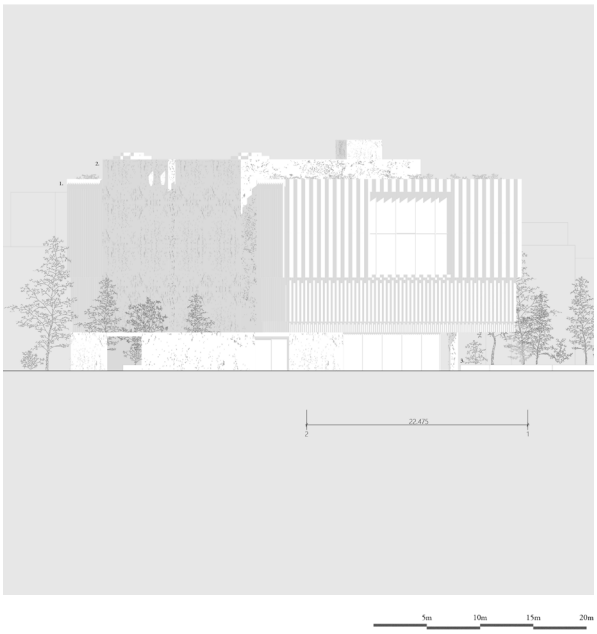
I decided that the facade will be a curtain wall, with corrugated, perforated aluminium sheets placed in front. These aluminium panels shift from a finer corrugation at the bottom to a coarser one at the top. This helps keep the overall mass consistent and elegant, while still subtly breaking up the volume and giving it rhythm.

The elements related to archiving, such as the archive rooms and the large archive lift, will be finished in rough concrete, expressing a more natural and historic feel that ties into the core identity of archiving. In contrast, the rest of the facade remains sleek, modern, and contemporary, creating a strong material contrast that reflects the dual nature of the building: both civic and functional.



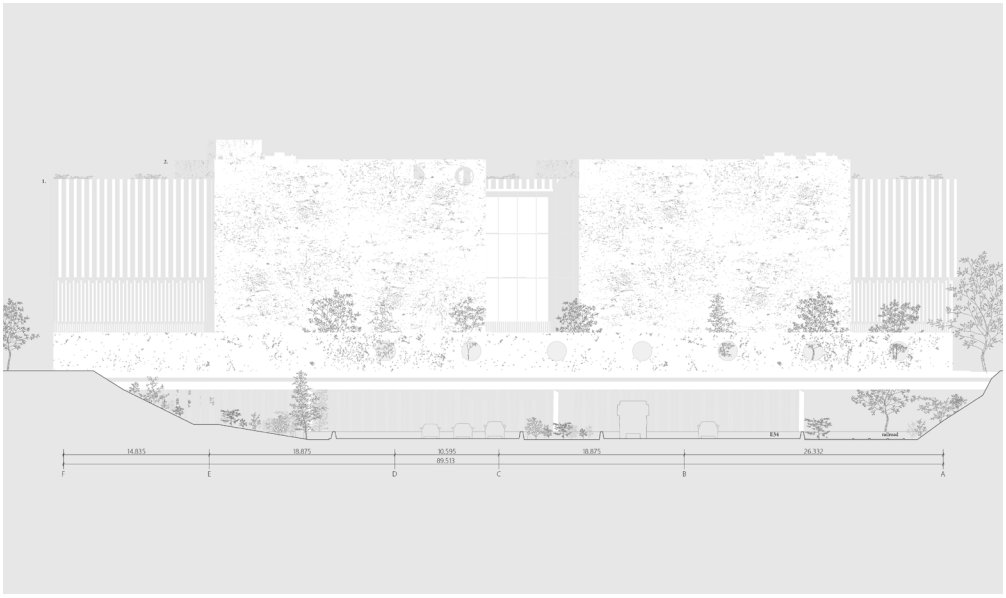
Boulevard facade





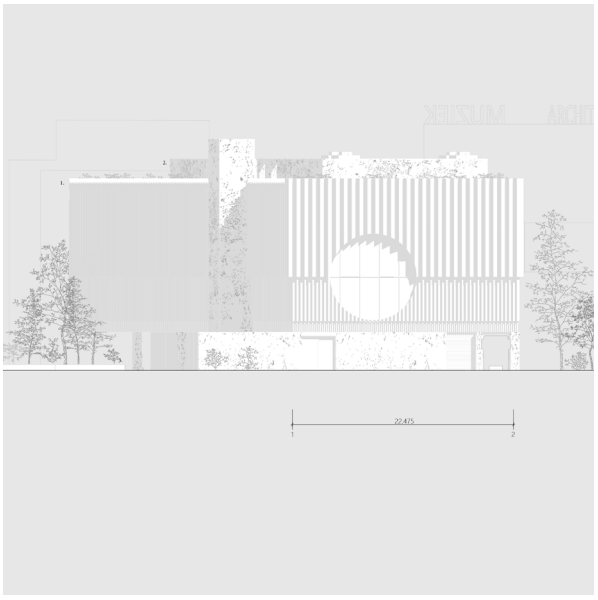
5m 10m 15m 20m

DeSingel facade



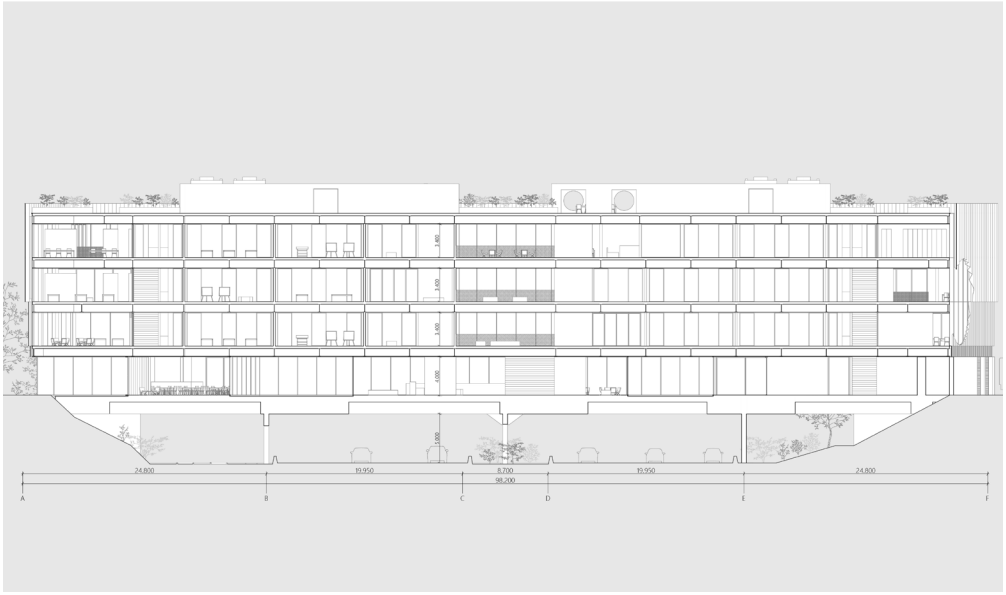
5m 10m 15m 20m

Highway facade

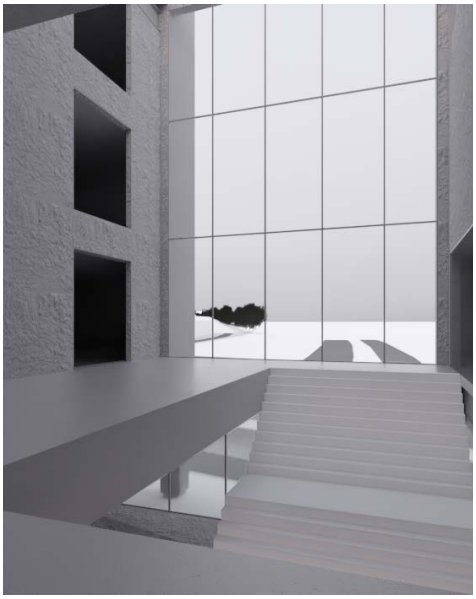


5m 10m 15m 20m

Expo facade

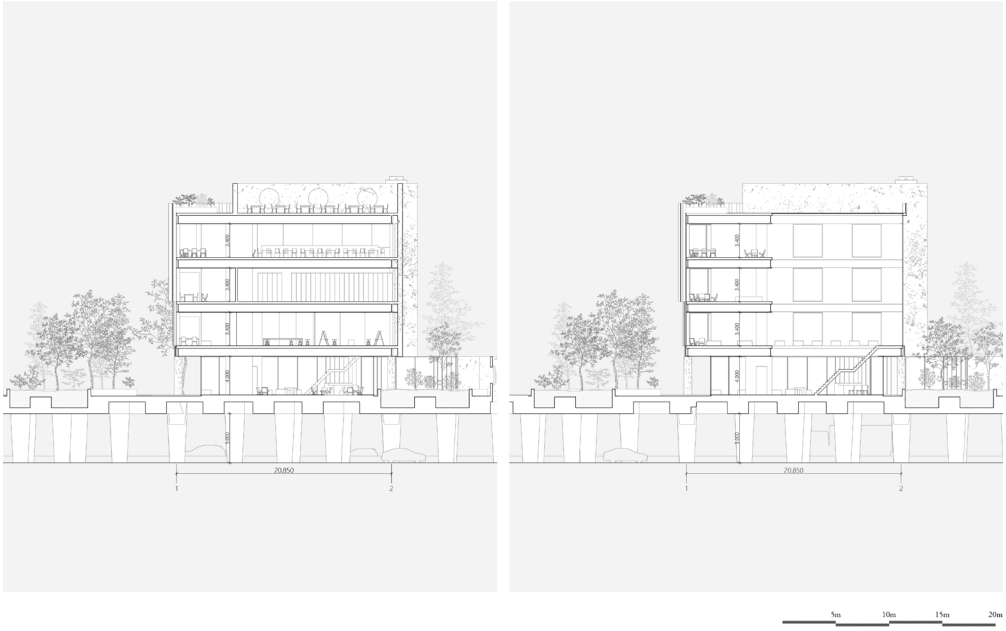


Section S-01



entrance & foyer

Section S-02



Section S-03 & S-04

expo rooms

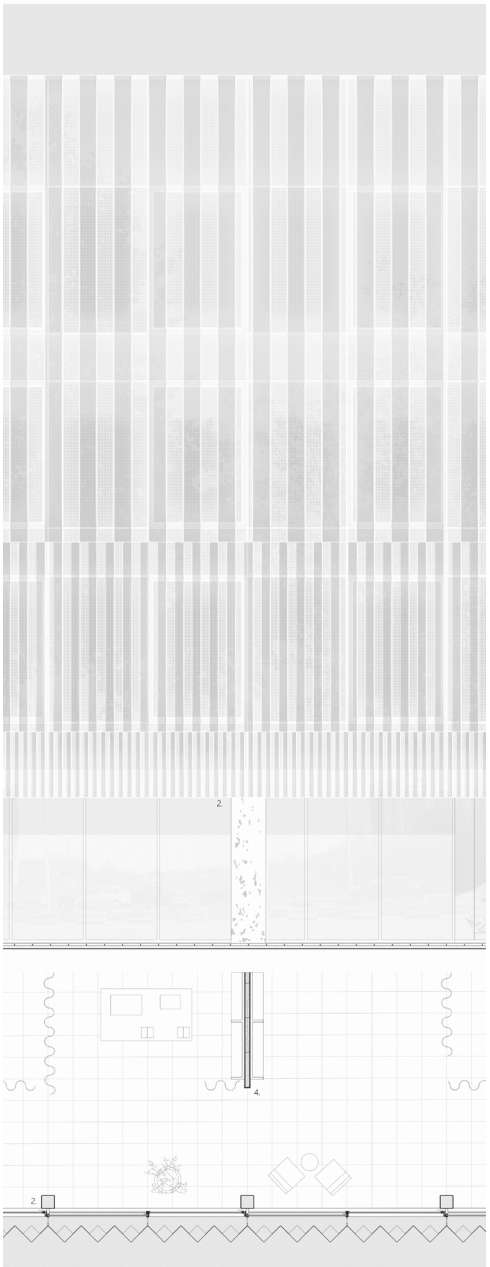
library & approach from DeSingel

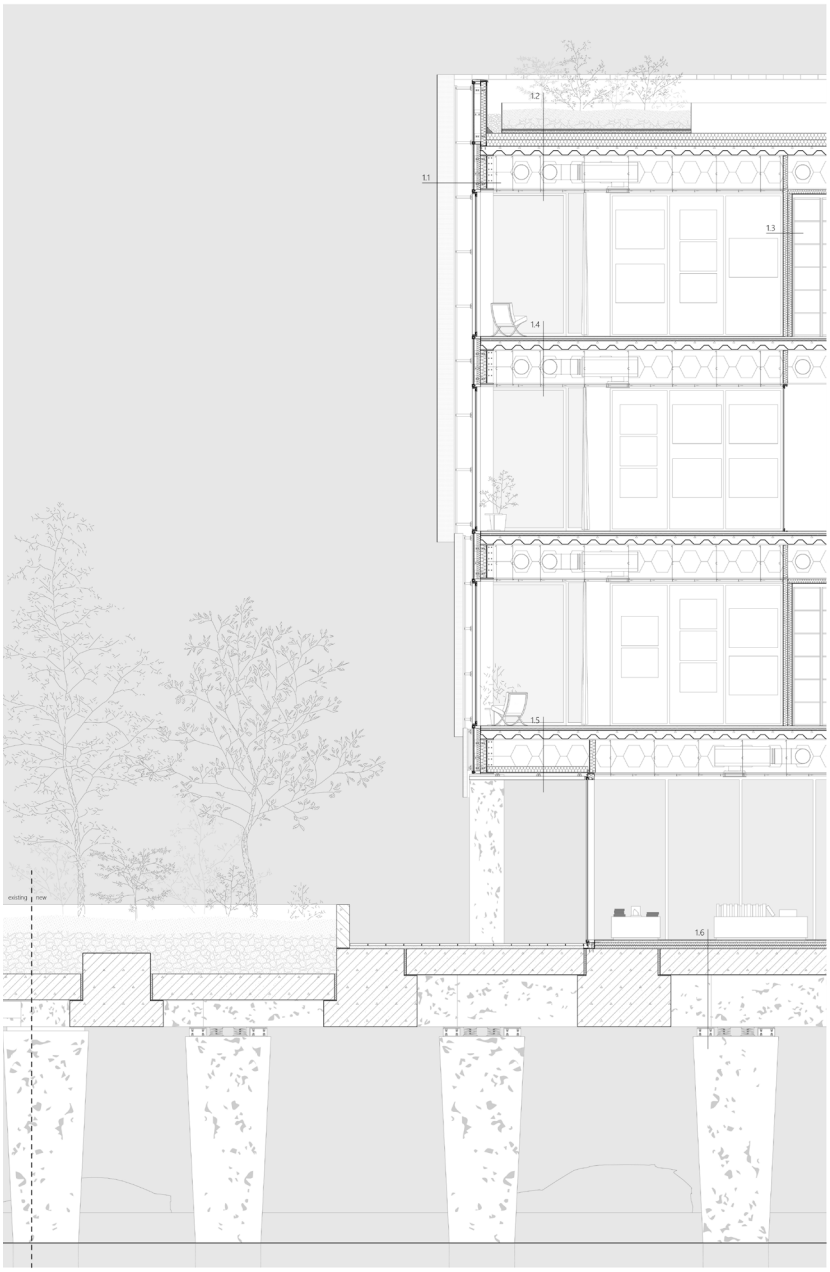
BT works

All of this architectural redesigning made me lose grip on BT a little. That meant this week I really had to focus on producing the 1:20 and 1:50 details, as well as the climate and structural schemes.

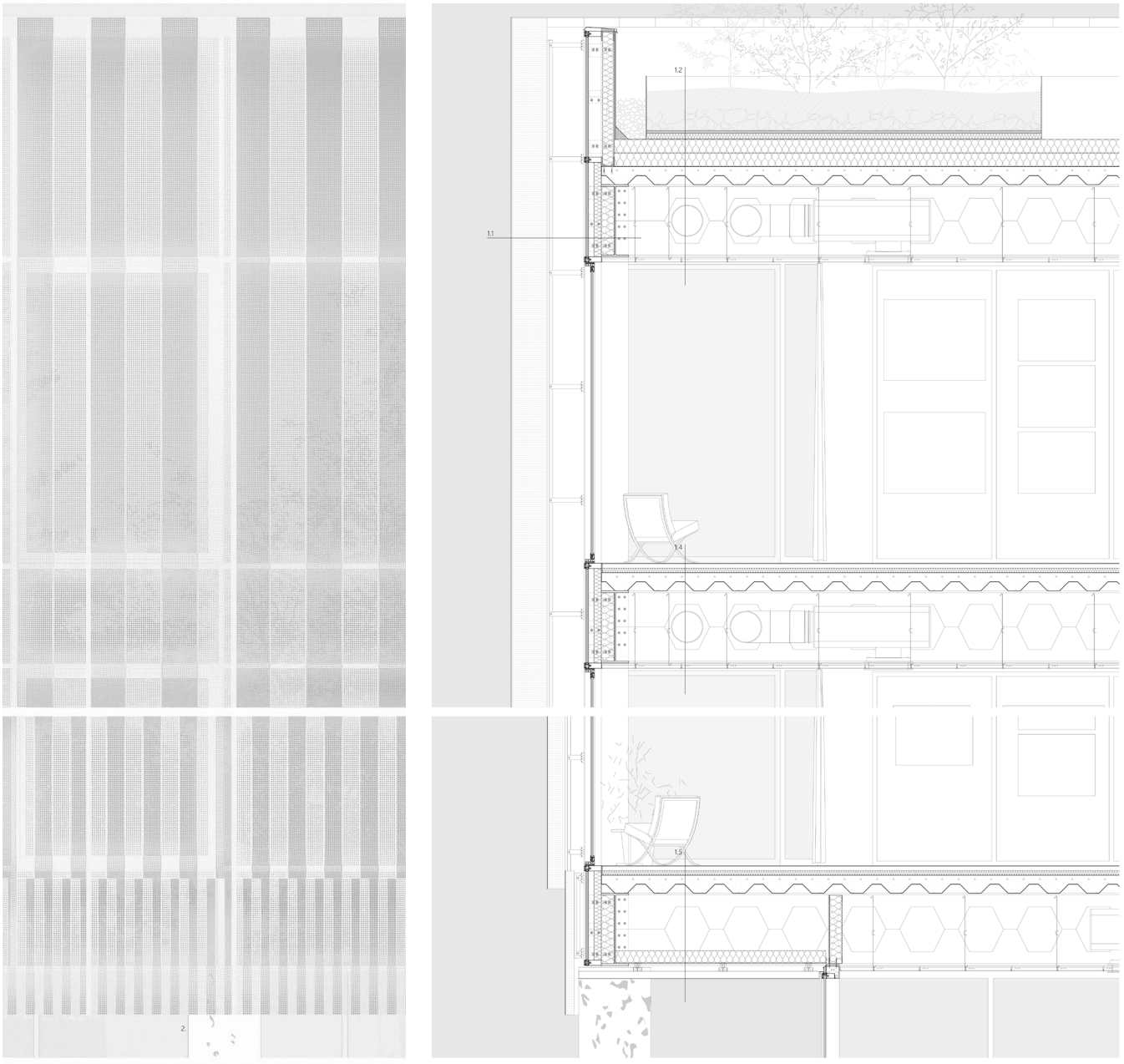
The technical aspects were already there, but the architectural elements needed to be reconsidered and refined. That's why I decided to render the fragment facades more realistically in Photoshop, so they would represent the facade concept in the best and clearest way possible.

For the climate schemes, I also decided it made the most sense to visualise the elements in a cross-section, and to include both a summer and winter version to clearly show how the building performs throughout the year.

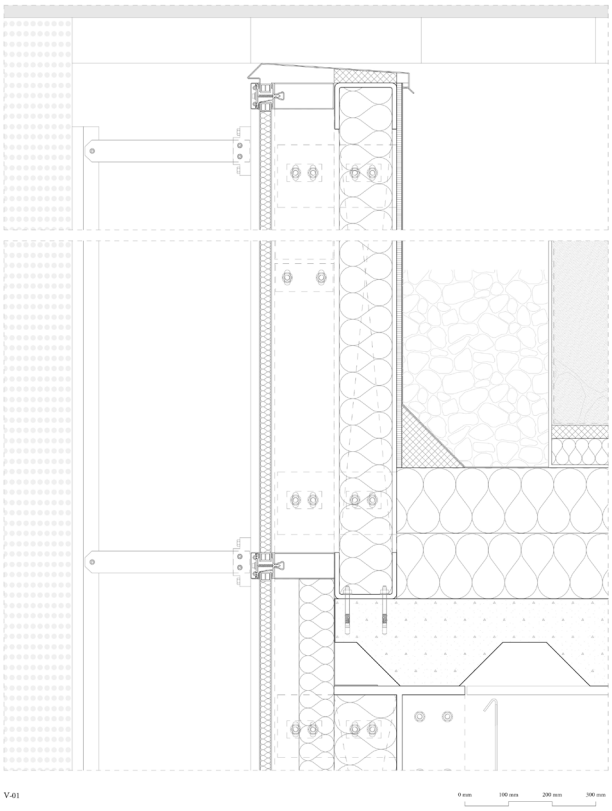




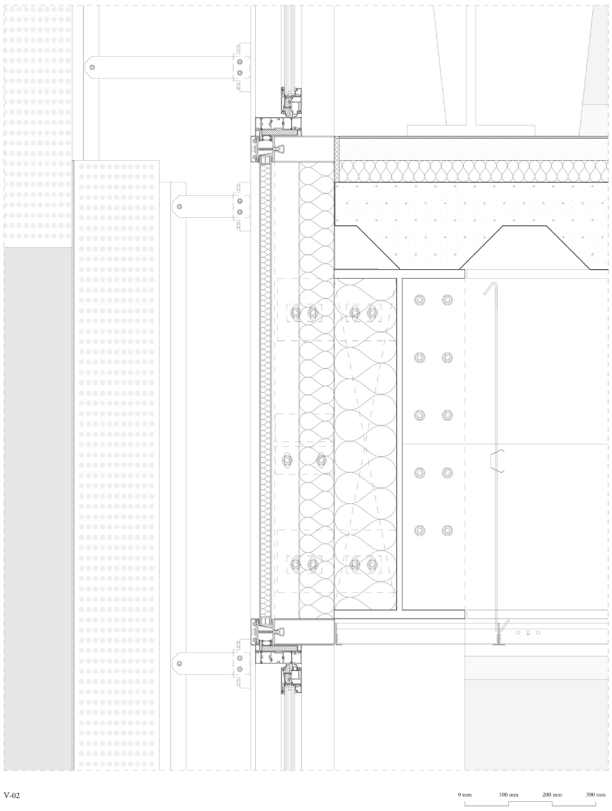
1:50 fragments



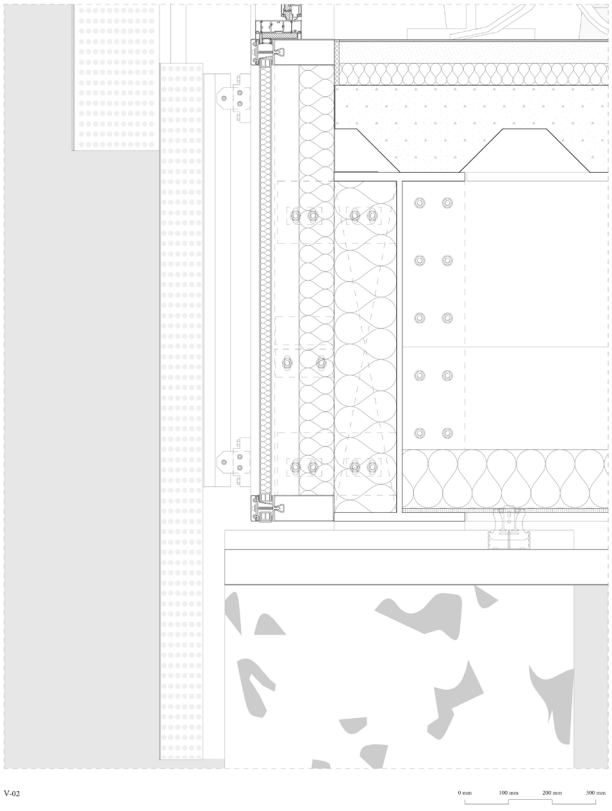
1:20 fragments



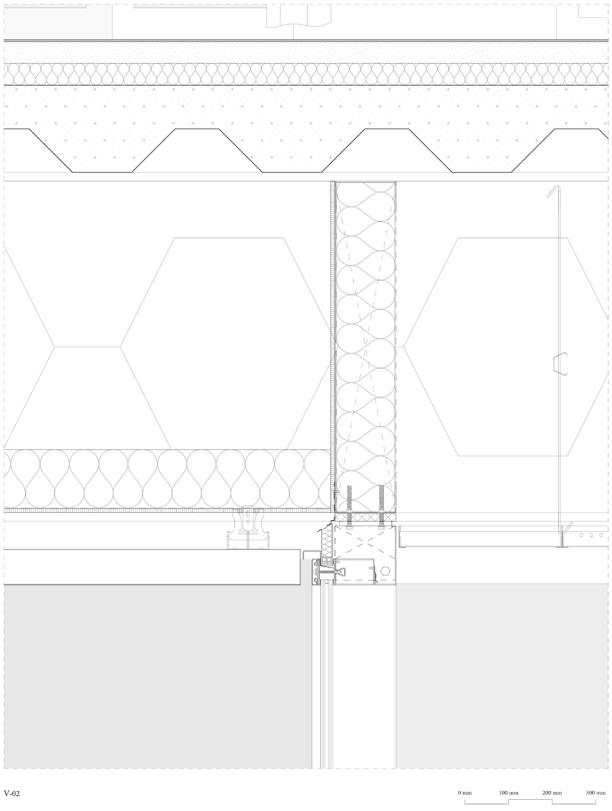
roof detail



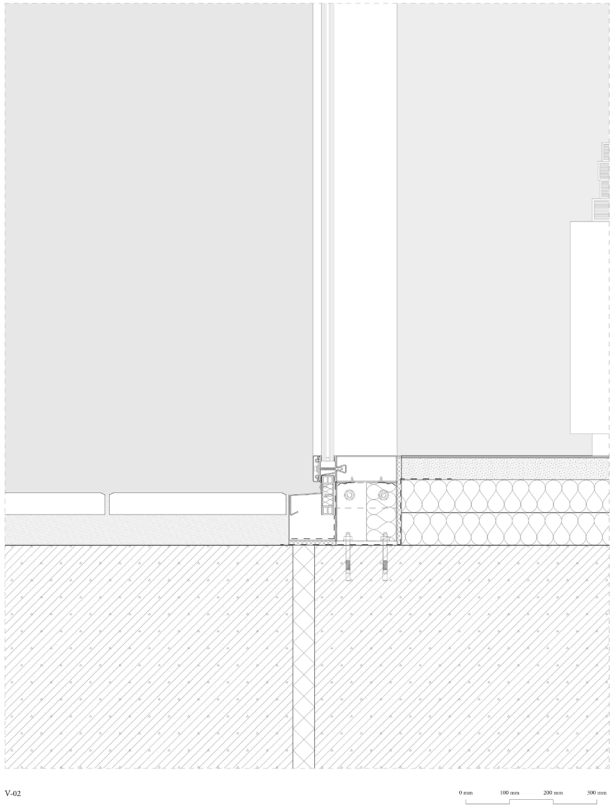
facade & floor detail



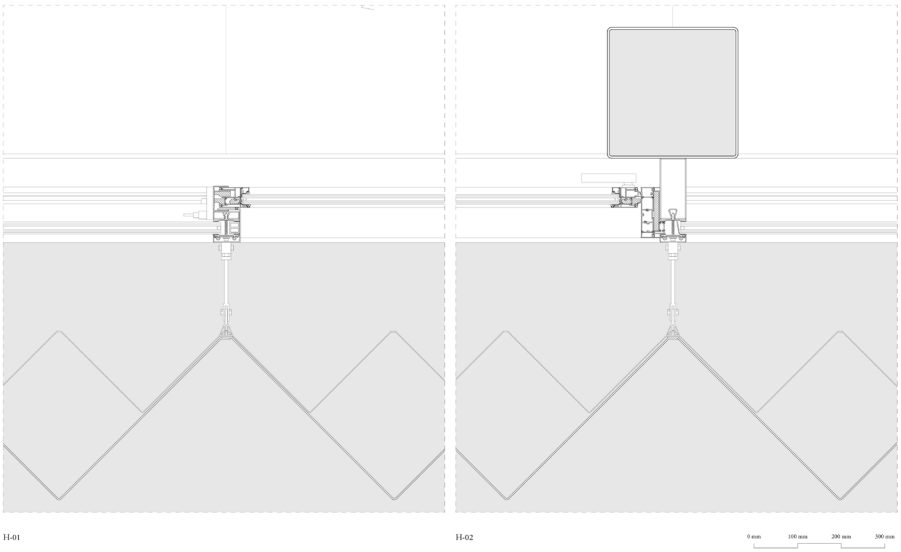
facade edge detail



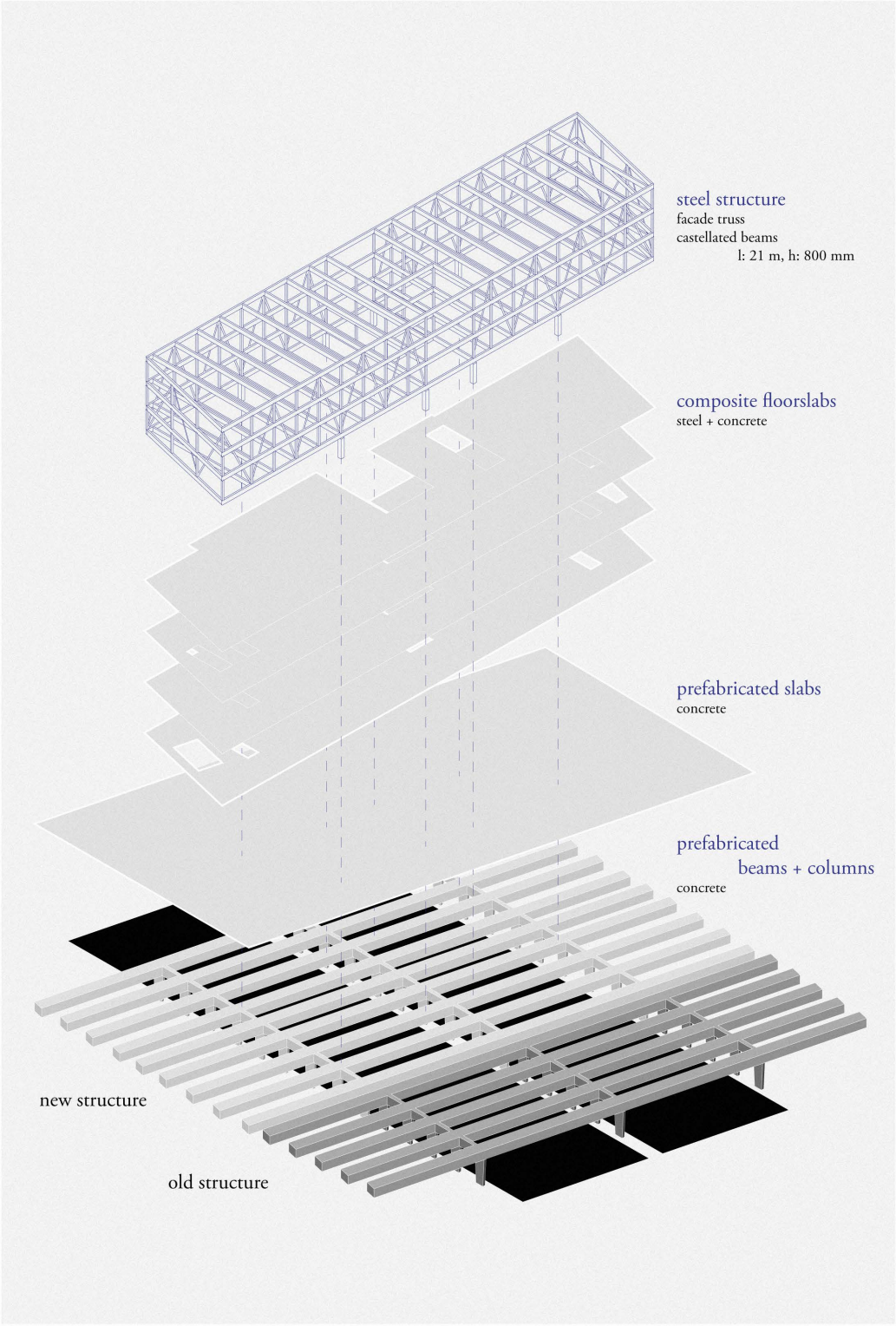
ground floor curtain wall detail



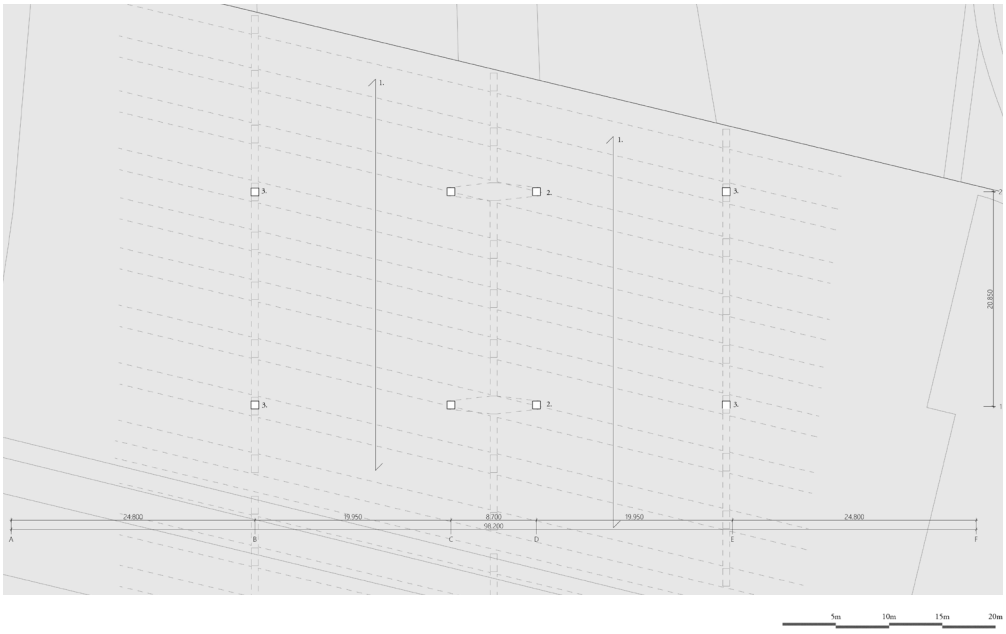
ground floor curtain wall detail



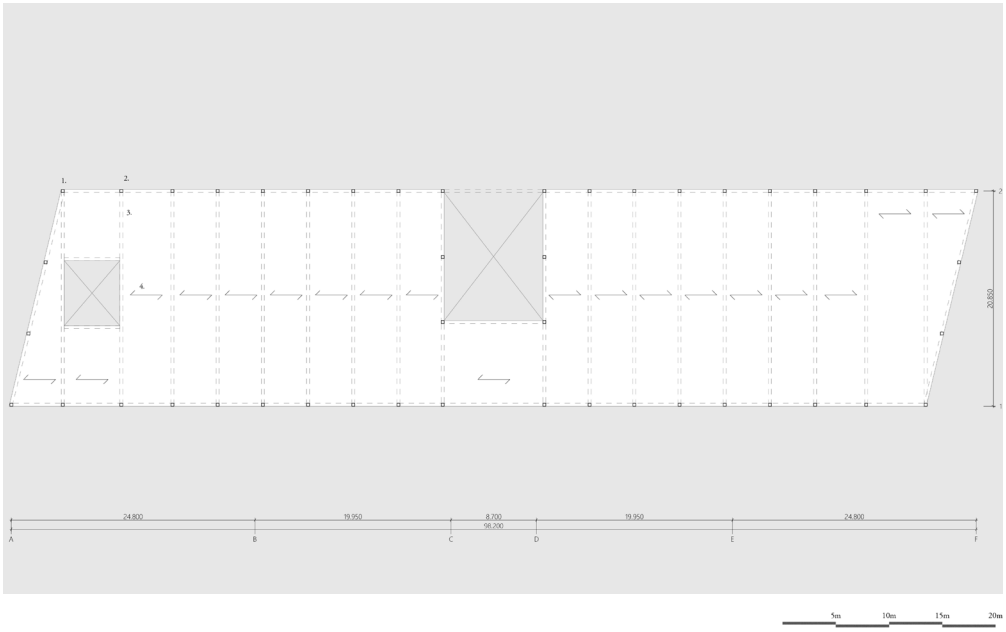
horizontal facade detail



structural AXO

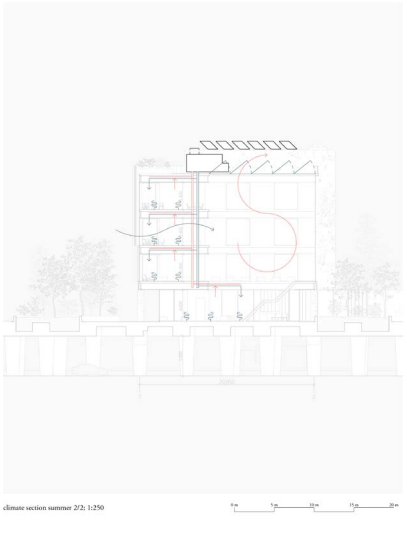


Structure ground floor plan



Structure first floor

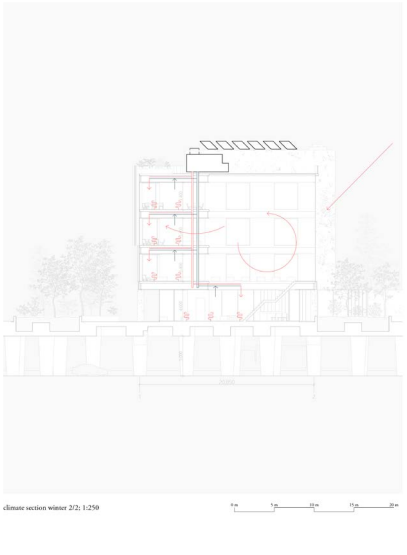
climate section summer 1/2; 1:250



climate section summer 2/2; 1:250

summer climate sections

climate section winter 1/2; 1:250



climate section winter 2/2; 1:250

winter climate sections

Reflection

Introduction

Archives are a unique building typology. For a long time, they have mainly been accessible to a limited group of users. Now, in a time where transparency is expected and institutions are opening up to the public, archives are also trying to become more accessible. And rightfully so. They hold vast amounts of knowledge and cultural value, the work is just sitting there, often unnoticed by the wider public.

It's time for archives to play a more public role: to actively showcase a region's, countries, or community's heritage. In a society where polarisation is increasingly present, perhaps archives can become places that bring people together, especially architecture archives.

Architecture is something everyone engages with. We all live in it, it's all around us. We all experience spaces, buildings and cities. That shared experience may offer a way to connect us.

This graduation project investigates how a new design for the VAi, the Vlaams Architectuur instituut, can create opportunities for the institute to become more public and to play a broader societal role at the edge of Antwerp's city centre.

How did your research influence your design and how did the design influence your research?

With this project, research and design went hand in hand. In the beginning, the studio was focused on researching through design. Everyone in the group investigated archives using architectural tools. We built detailed physical models of existing archives, analysed their layouts and spatial strategies, and asked why they were designed the way they were. Together with the rest of the studio, I gradually built up a shared understanding of what different types of archives are and how they function architecturally.

After this collective research phase, we each moved on to designing our own archival room. At that point, the relationship flipped. Now it was the design process that began to shape my research. I was no longer just studying archives, I was designing one, a room that is, and learning through doing. My understanding of the archive typology grew through sketching, building physical and digital models, literature studies, and constant iteration.

That cycle of designing, testing, and learning through making continued all the way up to P4. It made the research feel more active and directly connected to the design decisions. This way of working felt closer to the reality of architectural practice.

How do you assess the value of your way of working?

Throughout the project, I used a range of tools: sketches, physical models and digital modelling. These methods allowed me to continuously develop my understanding of the design. Each time I created something new, I understood the project better. It may not sound scientific, but I believe intuition plays a big role in architecture. At a certain point, you begin to feel what is spatially right or wrong. That feeling, of course, is shaped by all the knowledge gained through earlier studies, iterations, and feedback moments.

The feedback from tutors during presentations and weekly tutorials also played an important role in steering the project. These moments often opened up new directions or made me reframe parts of the design or research in ways I hadn't considered.

In the end, it was a balance of intuition, designing, critical reflection, and trying to keep constant interest in the theme that kept the project moving forward.

How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope, and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

My project explores how an institution like the VAi can work towards becoming a more public-facing archive, a place where people can actively engage with architecture and its cultural meaning. I aimed to design something optimistic, something that contributes rather than separates. A place for culture, work, curiosity, and discussion.

The site itself also raised important spatial and social questions. Located on the edge of Antwerp's city centre, it sits between two neighbourhoods divided by a highway. In my proposal, the new VAi literally bridges this gap. It becomes a connector, not just between these two parts of the city, but also between architecture and its public. A building that reclaims space for public use while proudly housing a regional archive.

In terms of academic and societal value, the project touches on themes of accessibility, cultural engagement, and spatial justice. It questions what an archive can be and how it can serve broader communities, not only through preservation but through openness and exchange. The design aims to offer a space that supports dialogue, learning, and shared ownership of architectural heritage.

How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

Although this project is highly site- and programme-specific, dealing with an architectural archive in Antwerp, the broader approach is transferable.

The core design challenge was to combine a highly specific and functional archive programme with a public one. The design process I followed, and documented, to balance these two aspects, while having the project within a complex urban context, can be studied and applied to similar typologies or hybrid institutional buildings elsewhere.

The value lies in the process: designing through research and understanding the archive not as an isolated, back-of-house facility, but as a civic, public space. This way of thinking could be relevant for other institutions, cultural, educational, or governmental, that are looking to move towards openness, engagement, and inclusivity.

In what ways can the architecture of archival institutions help shift their identity from closed repositories to active public agents?

Architecture plays a crucial role in redefining the identity of archival institutions. By integrating public functions such as exhibitions, workshops, reading rooms, and communal areas, these institutions can invite people in and make the archive more accessible and engaging.

Once people enter, it is up to architectural gestures, such as thoughtful routing, transparency, and spatial openness, to guide them through a narrative experience that brings the archive to life. Elements like porous facades, open layouts, and clear visual connections can signal welcome and accessibility, helping to break down the traditional image of the archive as a closed, exclusive place.

Through design, archives can shift from being silent repositories of information to active cultural spaces that engage the public, create curiosity, and have a sense of shared ownership over collective memory.

How can designing for preservation coexist with designing for flexibility, openness, and public use?

This coexistence relies on creating a clear spatial hierarchy. Spaces dedicated to preservation need to remain controlled, secure, and protected, but they can be complemented by adjacent public zones that offer flexibility, openness, and opportunities for engagement.

Put like this, it does not have to be overly complicated. Spaces that connect the archive to the public, such as reading rooms, workshop spaces, or exhibition areas, can be placed directly next to the archive. From there, visual or even limited physical connections can be made, offering glimpses into the archival process without compromising its integrity.

With clear zoning, thoughtful circulation, and a strong architectural narrative, these different worlds can be tied together. In doing so, the building not only protects its contents but also opens itself up to interaction, education, and cultural exchange.

Conclusion

This graduation project has been an exploration of how architecture can help institutions like the VAi become more public, accessible, and socially relevant spaces. Through iterative design and research, I developed a proposal that not only responds to the functional demands of an archive but also aspires to create a civic space, one that connects people, neighbourhoods, and stories.

In doing so, I have come to see design not just as a solution, but as a way of questioning, understanding, and contributing to a broader societal dialogue.

As for the process, it had its highs and lows. While in professional practice research and design often go hand in hand, I found that in an academic setting this relationship was sometimes more difficult to navigate. Evaluating whether a design was "good enough", or whether I was still on the right track, was not always easy. In an office, you can usually have critical discussion with colleagues while working towards a shared goal. In this graduation project, I sometimes felt like I lacked that kind of supported criticism, apart from the official feedback moments. As a result, I occasionally stalled in the design process. Whether that was down to my own way of working, or a result of the studio's structure, I am not entirely sure, but that part is behind me now.

In the end, I learned a lot. About the topic itself, about the possibilities of architecture, and about how powerful it can be as a tool for cultural and spatial transformation. But I also learned a lot about myself, about standing my ground when needed, about trusting my own intuition, and about continuing to push forward even when things felt uncertain.

Sources

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This journal follows my journey through the graduation studio Interiors, Buildings, Cities, where I worked on a design for the Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) in Antwerp. The project explores how an archive can become more public and take on a stronger role in the city.

Week by week, I've collected sketches, models, notes, lectures, and reflections that show how the project developed over time. It's a mix of design work, learning moments, and personal growth as I take steps toward becoming an architect.

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