

An always open door

The Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art

Master of Science
Architecture, Urbanism
& Building Sciences

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TU Delft

Interiors Buildings Cities

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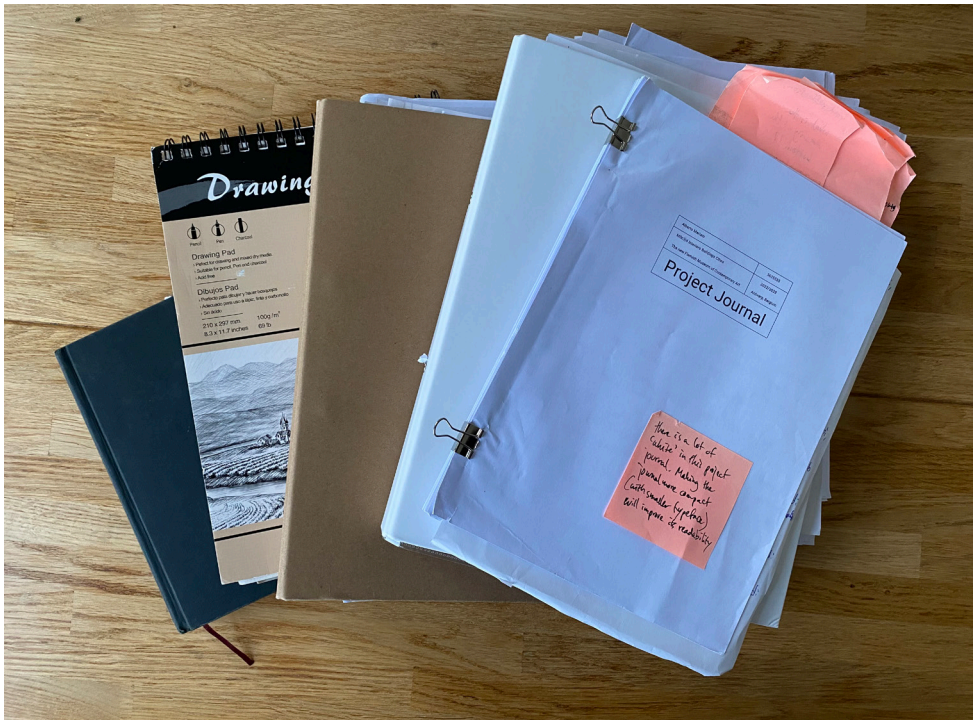
Mentors

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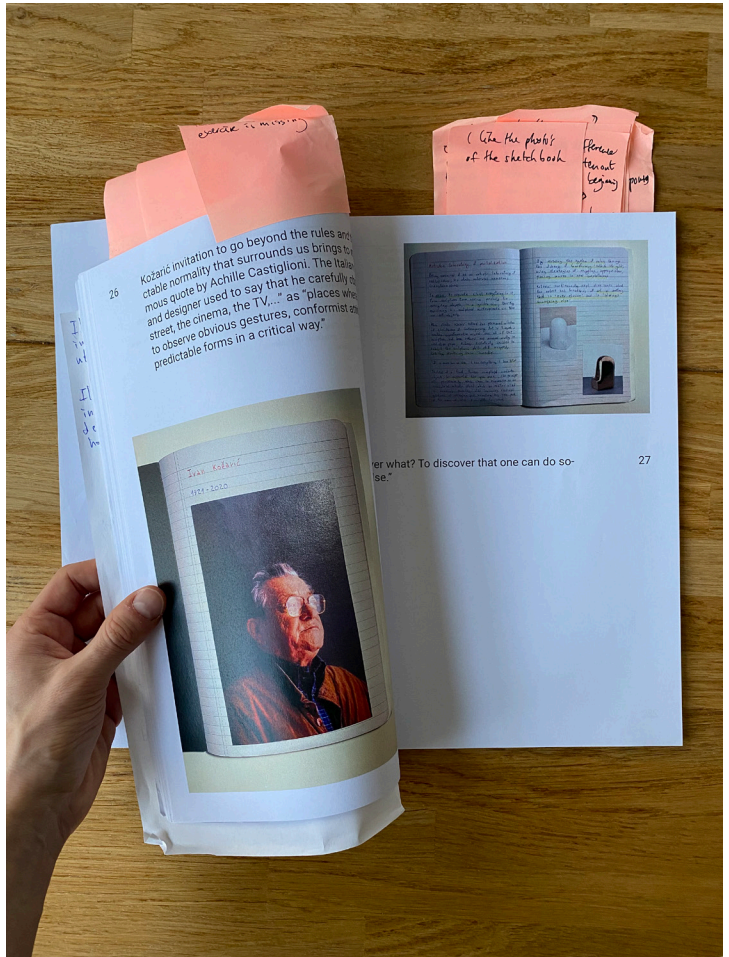
Project journal

These pages were put together one piece at a time, also at long intervals. I collected thoughts and references inside small black notebooks, each one dedicated to a different topic. One for the façades, one for the forum space, another one on the artist Ivan Kožarić, etc. These pages are the digital and more orderly transposition of these small notebooks made during the course of the year. Indeed, the purpose of the project journal is to document the design process behind this project. A non-linear process made up of readings, debates, reflections, many sketches but also many second thoughts. This is why the project journal has a non-traditional character.

8 There were mainly two approaches that accompanied me during the entire year: one based mostly on images and drawings, the other more narrative, made up of short texts and citations. The project journal is the result of the interweaving of these two approaches, with similarities and contradictions, just like the architectural process.



The project journal is the digital transposition of sketchbooks, notes, etc.



Project Journal with notes after P2 presentation

An architecture for art

This chapter brings together a series of reflections about art and museum architecture that emerged especially during the first weeks of the course. Weeks in which we carried out an intensive period of collective research consisting of readings, discussions and debates. A process that encourages students to work in groups and not only individually. Indeed, as stated in the studio manual, *“Thinking beyond individual students and courses, Interiors Buildings Cities considers its educational program as a collective and reflective space of study and discourse.”*

After this period of collective research, I continued this research process by adding more individual and specific reflections. A container of images, references and inspirations that inform the project.

An Architecture For Art

Graduation Project 2022-23



Office Baroque: Doors Crossing, 1977, from the Gordon Matta-Clark Ensemble, M HKA

A new art museum for Antwerp

Humankind has always made art. Through its appeal to the human senses, it has helped to shape the ways in which we perceive the world around us and, in its varied forms, offers a means beyond language through which we have become able to articulate our relationships with one another. Art and architecture have, together, constructed the settings through which human society has evolved and, on occasion, transformed itself. From churches and palaces, where authority and power were consolidated through the physical embodiment of systems of belief, to the development in the 19th Century, of palaces of culture, public museums and galleries, where forms and spaces of representation became a mirror through which culture could situate, consolidate or emancipate itself, within or in counterpoint to the prevailing order of things.

As modernity rapidly adapted the world to human needs and subsumed sublime nature within its own image, art became a means of resistance. Expanding out from the studio and the picture gallery it addressed that nature directly, capturing its often-fleeting splendours against a backdrop of relentless industrialisation and the ever-expanding city. In the 20th Century

the arts centre developed, offering more permeable, democratic forms of architecture through which art and culture sought to make themselves available to the populations of that industrial metropolis. In time, artists co-opted and adapted the redundant structures left behind by the contemporary city's relentless process of change. Inhabiting abandoned factories and warehouses, as places from which to critique it. New forms of art developed to document, reveal and even reshape the landscapes and infrastructures of the Holocene, or alternatively chose to abstract themselves into expressions of pure colour, form or process. Art came to offer society compelling new ways through which to express ideas. Ones that might be transcendent and revelatory but could equally be disconcerting or disorientating, sometimes even dangerous.

Simultaneously and perhaps inevitably however, the art world consolidated its age-old relationship with money and power. In the latter half of the last century, the white cube established a controlled, almost sanctified sensory context for its display. Here in an atmosphere of purified light and air, and in near silence, works of art attained a highly specific aura that allowed

Interiors
Buildings
Cities

Palace

An Architecture For Art

them to be contemplated at a distance from the complexities of real life outside; further objectifying them and heightening both their emotional value and their physical one. Although many artists sought to resist it, even the most radical forms of artistic endeavour became commodified and subsumed to the service and control of the market. Meanwhile, in seeking to establish their public purpose, the influential contemporary art institutions that exhibited them adopted and adapted the signifiers and scenographies of the world of commerce, to the extent that they became, at times, hardly distinguishable from one another...and while galleries have become more like shops, shops became galleries, with high value brands establishing their cultural authority through the establishment of collections and the exhibiting of artists, at a scale and ambition often beyond the financial means of the public sphere.

This year the Graduation Studio of Interiors Buildings Cities will address this contested space of the contemporary art gallery. We will consider its societal role and how its responsibilities to the heterogeneous contemporary city and its diverse population might be physically manifested in the image and presence of a new public building. As in previous iterations of the Graduation Studio, our academic project takes an actual project as its starting point, allowing the conditions and concerns of a real brief for a real client to be one key reference point in the development of both individual and collective concerns. This year we will work in relation to a competition brief for the redevelopment of M HKA, the contemporary art museum of Antwerp, on a new site close to its existing one in the South of the Belgian city.

The history, present situation and potential future of this particular museum embodies many of the larger issues and questions referred to in the opening paragraphs of this introduction. It emerged out of the activities of the Internationaal Cultureel Centrum (ICC), which was founded in the revolutionary spirit of the late 1960's, when established institutions were being radically challenged. Originally housed in an actual palace, the disused royal residence on the Meir, it proposed in 1977, the same year the Centre Pompidou opened in Paris, an unrealised plan to relocate itself to a disused office building on a pedestrian shopping street. Here it was envisaged that, alongside its museum function, the building would house a performing-arts venue, multipurpose rooms, a cinema and artists' studios, information centre, cafeteria, bookshop and a babysitting service. Two years later, following the premature death of American artist Gordon Matta-Clark, the ICC proposed to preserve his last remaining physical work, Office Baroque, as the basis for a new museum. The intention was to purchase this monumental intervention into a disused office building on the banks of Antwerp's River Schelde, and to house a new exhibition space in the neighbouring block. However, the plan was unfortunately curtailed by its pre-emptory demolition by the site's owner. Nonetheless, the Matta-Clark Collection, which ICC director Flor Bex had

instigated, became the foundation for the collection of M HKA, with the new museum, where he also became the first director, being established by Royal Decree in 1985.

Bex described it as a 'kunsthalle with a collection', with the latter being focused on contemporary art, from the 1960's onwards. Over time however M HKA has emerged as a fully-fledged museum, housed in a redeveloped and extended former grain warehouse and incorporating the archive and library of the Centre for Visual Culture. The rather introverted architecture of the current building is ambivalent, its interiors seek to approximate the monumental white cubes of the contemporary museum, while as a conversion it carries echoes of the Alternative Spaces movement, an anti-museum, avant-garde movement driven by artists, with Gordon Matta-Clark being one of the protagonists. The Belgian academic, Wouter Davidts, has commented that the transformation of the grain silo into a museum has 'resulted in a building that is, paradoxically, both formally undefinable and extremely determined, that looks generic but is very emphatically present.'

The next phase in this complex process of emergence is intended to be a move into a new, purpose built museum building, located near the current site, as an urban focus for the conversion of a monumental former dock into a new, linear public park. A key intention for this project is to consolidate the urban condition of the rapidly developing area of Antwerp South, with the proposed new museum counterpointing the major transformation of the more historically focused Museum of Fine Arts, about to re-open nearby. It will also, however, look beyond its immediate environment, through its redesignation as the Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art (VMHQ). This places new responsibilities on it, to represent not only the artists and artistic culture of Flemish Belgium but also its people; a complex and potentially divisive issue, given both the traditions of cultural exchange and the current, heterogeneous population of this great port city.

The first competition was cancelled and the proposal is that it will be re-run in the course of the current year, offering a compelling sense of currency to our work. The brief for that original competition will form the basis of our exploration, but this will also be open to your individual and collective critique. Its intentions are at some distance from the radical, social, political and artistic positioning of Matta-Clark's 'architecture', a fact the brief acknowledges in its counterpointing of anti-museum fascinations versus technical museum requirements, its desire for an atmosphere of both industrial roughness and domestic intimacy, and its requirement to be, at once, a robust skeleton and a volatile space of experimentation. To this we would add the profound need to address the environmental challenges we face, through the consideration of what, how and when to build. Our year will start with a period of design research, moving between studio and seminar. This will include an analysis of the museum / anti-museum context within which the project situates itself, exploring the idea and form of the modern art

An Architecture For Art

museum through a series of key references and a consideration of who its protagonists might be. We will also be examining elements of the collection itself, considering both their nature and the spatial contexts in which they might be displayed, before turning our attention to the brief for the new museum and developing individual projects in relation to it.

As always we will work at each scale: Interior, Building and City, although not necessarily in that order. While our project is a social, political, cultural, artistic and environmental one, these concerns will be translated directly through the material and spatial concerns of architecture, made manifest through buildings which are capable of addressing past, present and future with both a sense of continuity and an openness to change.



Office Baroque, 1977, from the Gordon Matta-Clark Ensemble, M HKA

What is an art gallery?

We have all visited one, but have we ever wondered how it works or based on which factors we choose to visit one rather than another?

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gallery. Classic avant-garde hostility expresses itself through physical discomfort (radical theater), excessive noise (music), or by removing perceptual constants (the gallery space). Common to all are transgressions of logic, dissociation of the senses, and boredom. In these arenas order (the audience) assays what quotas of disorder it can stand. Such places are, then, metaphors for consciousness and revolution. The spectator is invited into a space where the act of approach is turned back on itself. Perhaps a perfect avant-garde act would be to invite an audience and shoot it.

With postmodernism, the artist and audience are more like each other. The classic hostility is mediated, too often, by irony and farce. Both parties show themselves highly vulnerable to context, and the resulting ambiguities blur their discourse. The gallery space shows this. In the classic era of polarized artist and audience, the gallery space maintained its status quo by muffling its contradictions in the prescribed socio-esthetic imperatives. For many of us, the gallery space still gives off negative vibrations when we wander in. Esthetics are turned into a kind of social elitism – the gallery space is exclusive. Isolated in plots of space, what is on display looks a bit like valuable scarce goods, jewelry, or silver: esthetics are turned into commerce – the gallery space is expensive. What it contains is, without initiation, well-nigh incomprehensible – art is difficult. Exclusive audience, rare objects difficult to comprehend – here we have a social, financial, and intellectual snobbery which models (and at its worst parodies) our system of limited production, our modes of assigning value, our social habits at large. Never was a space, designed to accommodate the prejudices and enhance the self-image of the upper middle classes, so efficiently codified.

The classic modernist gallery is the limbo between studio and living room, where the conventions of both meet on a carefully neutralized ground. There the artist's respect for what he has invented is perfectly superimposed on the bourgeois desire for possession. For a gallery is, in the end, a place to sell things – which is O.K. The arcane social customs surrounding this – the stuff of social comedy – divert attention from the business of assigning material value to that which has none. Here the hostile artist is a

Visitors and investments

- 16 The most important and most in-demand artworks are those that bring the most visitors, but also those that require the most investment. Art should not only astonish and educate the public but also produce income, thus keeping the aura and authority of the museum institution intact. That is why a museum needs to promote its contents through specially designed exhibition spaces.



@ Guia Besana
Crowds around Da Vinci's Monnalisa at the Louvre, Paris

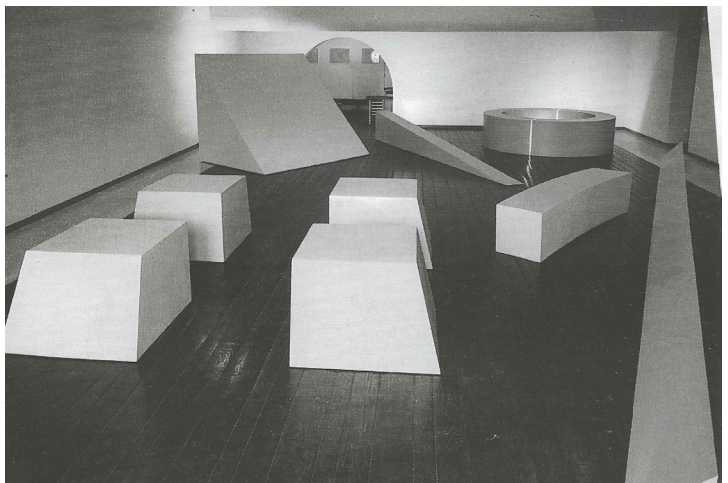
What are the recurring characteristics of today's and yesterday's exhibition spaces?

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It was the 1960s and 1970s that marked the beginning of a new artists' awareness regarding the importance of exhibition spaces. In this direction, minimal art has played a fundamental role. Indeed, artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris, through their non-allusive and non-representational works, forced the viewer to look at the artworks in relation to the spaces in which they were exhibited. It is because of those new needs of the art world that the relevance of the white cube has emerged. Indeed, the idea behind these white spaces is to create an atmosphere that allows the visitor to forget about the world around him or her. It is in this way that the exhibition space provides value to the work it houses.



@ Richard Einzig
Donald Judd at his exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London (1970)



@ Catherine Grenier, Robert Morris
Robert Morris exhibition at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles (1966)

Why do museums today need large spaces?

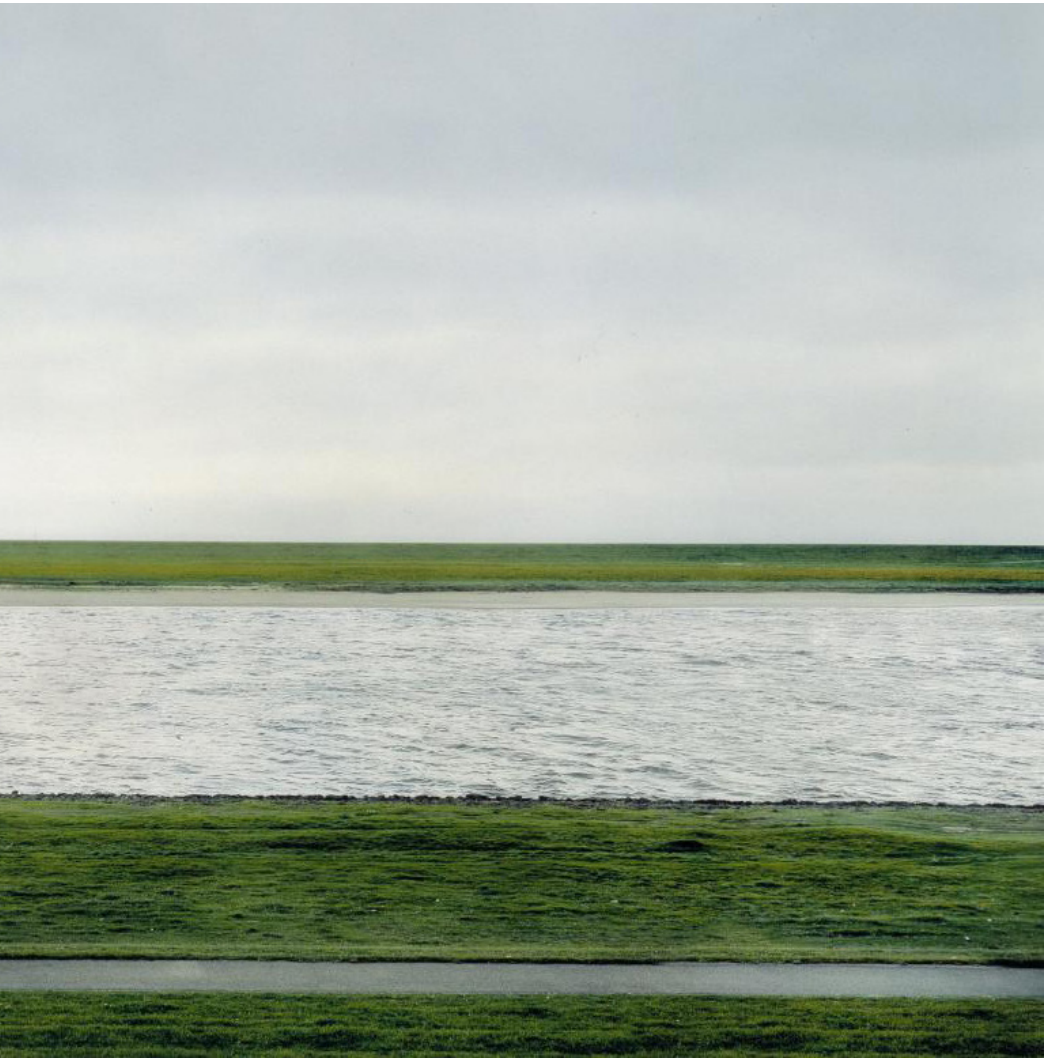
- 20 The dimensions of the artworks are changing. Museum spaces must be able to accommodate this new dimension.
- A magnificent example can be found in the Tate Modern, where the old turbine hall has given way to an immense exhibition space with a strongly industrial character reminiscent of 1970s London. In this space, as in the entire building, there is a special atmosphere. An atmosphere that makes its visitors travel, dream and enjoy but also misplace, desire and spend.



@ Andrew Dunkley and Marcus Leith, Tate Photography
Olafur Eliasson, The weather project, Tate Modern, London (2003)



Andreas Gursky, Rhein II (1999)



“This photograph by Andreas Gursky was sold for \$4,338,500 at Christie’s in New York City. Francis Outred, Head of Christie’s Post War and Contemporary Art Department in Europe, said it was especially because of the large size.”

(Hermant-Grisel, 2019)

Out of scale

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According to the Italian architecture critic Luigi Prestinenza Puglisi, *“The most interesting aspect of the Venice Biennale 2022 is the large number of artists working out of scale. As objects expand, they lose their original dimensions, become disturbing guests and force us to look at materials and forms in a new way. Especially that matter which with electronics we try to dissolve, through art returns peremptorily claiming its own centrality and importance.”*

(Prestinenza Puglisi, 2022)

Site-specific art



@ Jean-Pierre Dalbèra
Gabriel Chaile, Venice Biennale exhibition (2022)

For the Venice Biennale 2022, the artist Gabriel Chaile realised his terracotta works on site, as they were too large to fit through the doors. For the same reason, once the exhibition was over, some of these large sculptures were destroyed.

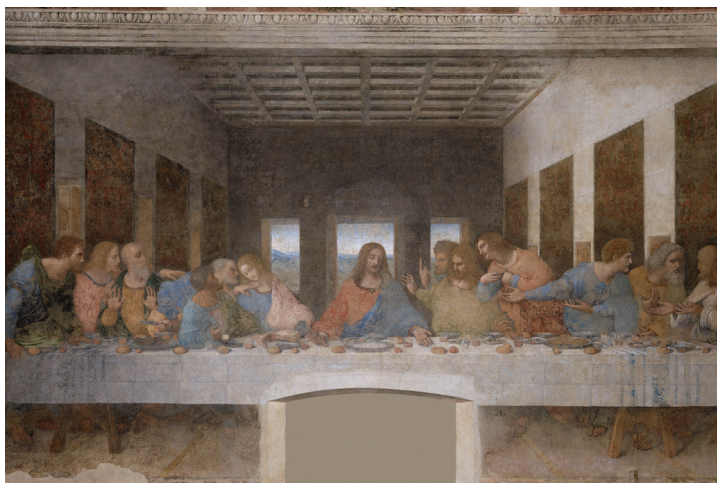
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One lesson I have learned in these weeks of research is the importance of changing perspective. In other words, to think beyond the box. A theme that is anything but trivial. Indeed, as is pointed out in the text 'Blackness at MoMA'^(English, Barat, 2019), humans are creatures of habit who find it difficult to change their minds.

But how can one change perspective, and why is it important to do so?



Todor Mitrovic, The Last Supper (2006)



@ Haltadefinizione Image Bank | Ministero della cultura
Leonardo Da Vinci, Ultima Cena (1494-1498)



Cover of the book 'Culture is bad for you', Orián Brook (2020)

Reverse perspective

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It's an approach that is used especially by artists, but sometimes also by architects and writers. For example, Orian Brook in her book 'Culture is bad for you' (Brook, O'Brein, Taylor, 2020) uses a similar method. People are used to thinking that culture is good for society. In the book this preconception is reversed to make us think. Indeed, while culture educates and enriches people, both humanly and financially, it is also the cause of profound inequalities.

This is an approach that may not directly provide solutions for architectural design, but it can help to go beyond the inequalities and injustices that continue to mark the history of art institutions. Indeed, as the Bulgarian art historian Clemena Antonova says, *"art is not separate from culture. And when you live in a globalised society, you are more and more pushed and challenged to go outside these narrow paradigms and to actually see things from the outside better and more openly."* (Goes, Mühleis, 2020)



@ Gary Krueger
Michael Asher, Claire S. Copley Gallery, Los Angeles (1974)

- 30 The artwork made by Michael Asher in 1974 in Los Angeles is a clear example of reverse perspective. The artist decided not to display any objects inside the white cube. The only thing he did was to remove the partition wall dividing the art gallery and the museum offices, revealing them to the public. Asher, therefore, did not limit himself to the artwork but also studied its visibility conditions.

It is not always the space that is subject to the artwork. Some artworks made by artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Marcel Duchamp, Iris Clert and Armand P. Arman place the viewer's attention precisely on the space in which they are exhibited.

exact appreciation of this. Its quotas of process are frozen by those traces of organized memory – documentation, which provides not the experience, but the evidence of it.

Process, then, gives us opportunities to eliminate the Eye and the Spectator as well as to institutionalize them; and this has happened. Hard-core Conceptualism eliminates the Eye in favor of the mind. The audience reads. Language is reasonably well equipped to examine the sets of conditions that formulate art's end-product: "meaning." This inquiry tends to become self-referential or contextual – that is, more like art or more like the conditions that sustain it.

One of these conditions is the gallery space. Thus there is a marvelous paradox about Joseph Kosuth's "installation" at Castelli in 1972: the tables, the benches, the open books. It is not a looking room, it is a reading room. The ceremony of informality is deceptive. Here is the aura of Wittgenstein's study, as we might imagine it. Or is it a schoolroom? Bare, essential, even puritanical, it cancels as well as draws on the special cloister of esthetics that the gallery is. It is a remarkable image.

So is its opposite – an image of a man in a gallery threatening his own substance with implicit or explicit violence. If Conceptualism eliminates the Eye by once again making it the servant of the mind, Body Art, such as Chris Burden's, identifies the Spectator with the artist and the artist with art – a sacramental trinity. The punishment of the Spectator is a theme of advanced art. Eliminating the Spectator by identifying him with the artist's body and enacting on that body the vicissitudes of art and process is an extraordinary conceit. We perceive again the double movement. Experience is made possible but only at the price of alienating it. There is something infinitely pathetic about the single figure in the gallery, testing limits, ritualizing its assaults on its body, gathering scanty information on the flesh it cannot shake off.

In these extreme cases art becomes the life of the mind or the life of the body, and each offers its returns. The Eye disappears into the mind, and the Spectator, in a surrogate's phantom suicide, induces his own elimination.

Joseph Kosuth

Is it a looking room? A reading room? Or is it a schoolroom?

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Joseph Kosuth, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (1972)

but very benign. We are always surprised to find Marcel Duchamp there; but there he is, inside before we know it, and after his visit – he never stays too long – the house is not quite the same. He first visited the house's "white cube" in 1938 and invented the ceiling – if invention is making us conscious of what we agree not to see, i.e., take for granted. The second time, four years later, he delivered every particle of the interior space to our consciousness – consciousness and the lack of it being Duchamp's basic dialectic.

The ceiling, until he "stood" on it in 1938, seemed relatively safe from artists. It's already taken up by skylights, chandeliers, tracks, fixtures. We don't look at the ceiling much now. In the history of indoor looking up, we rank low. Other ages put plenty up there to look at. Pompeii proposed, among other things, that more women than men looked at the ceiling. The Renaissance ceiling locked its painted figures into geometric cells. The Baroque ceiling is always selling us something other than the ceiling, as if the idea of shelter had to be transcended; the ceiling is really an arch, a dome, a sky, a vortex swirling figures until they vanish through a celestial hole, like a sublime overhead toilet; or it is a luxurious piece of hand-tooled furniture, stamped, gilded, an album for the family escutcheon. The Rococo ceiling is as embroidered as underwear (sex) or a doily (eating). The Georgian ceiling looks like a white carpet, its stuccoed border often stopping short of the angle of ceiling and walls; inside, the central rose, dimpled with shadow, from which descends the opulent chandelier. Often the imagery up there suggests that looking up was construed as a kind of looking down, which gently reverses the viewer into a walking stalactite.

With electric light, the ceiling became an intensely cultivated garden of fixtures, and modernism simply ignored it. The ceiling lost its role in the ensemble of the total room. The Georgian ceiling, for instance, dropped a palisade to the picture molding, extending the roof's domain as a graceful, graduated enclosure. Modern architecture simply ran the blank wall into the blank ceiling and lowered the lid. And what a lid! Its pods, floods, spots, canisters, ducts make it a technician's playground. Up there is yet another undiscovered vernacular, with all the probity of function that cer-

Marcel Duchamp

We don't look at the ceiling much now

35



Marcel Duchamp, 1'200 Bags of Coal, International Exhibition of Surrealism, New York (1938)

But to return to Yves Klein suspended over the pavement like a gargoyle. Klein's gallery gesture had a trial run at the Galerie Colette Allendy in Paris in 1957. He left one small room bare to, as he said, "testify to the presence of pictorial sensitivity in a state of primary matter." That "presence of pictorial sensitivity" – the empty gallery's content – was, I believe, one of the most fatal insights in postwar art. For his major gesture at Iris Clert's, "He

88 (O'Doherty, 1999, p. 88)

ty." An early visitor was John Coplans, who thought it odd.

On opening night, three thousand people came, including Albert Camus, who wrote in the book: "With the Void. Full Powers." While offering itself as site and subject, the gallery primarily hosted a transcendent gesture. The gallery, the locus of transformation, became an image of Klein's mystical system – the grand synthesis derived from the symbolists in which *azur* (International Klein Blue) became the transubstantiating device – the symbol, as it was for Goethe, of air, ether, spirit. In a conceit reminiscent of Joseph Cornell, Klein had touched space through the sputnik flight in 1957, which he surrounded with a mystical halo. Klein's ideas were a nutty but oddly persuasive mix, stirring mysticism, art, and kitsch in the same pot. His art raises again, as the work of successful charismatics does, the problem of separating the objects of art from the relics of a cult. Klein's work had generosity, utopian wit, obsession, and its share of transcendence. In that apotheosis of communication that becomes communion, he offered himself to others and others consumed him. But like Piero Manzoni, he was a prime mover, very European, rife with metaphysical disgust at the ultimate bourgeois materialism: the hoarding of life as if it were a possession on the order of a sofa.

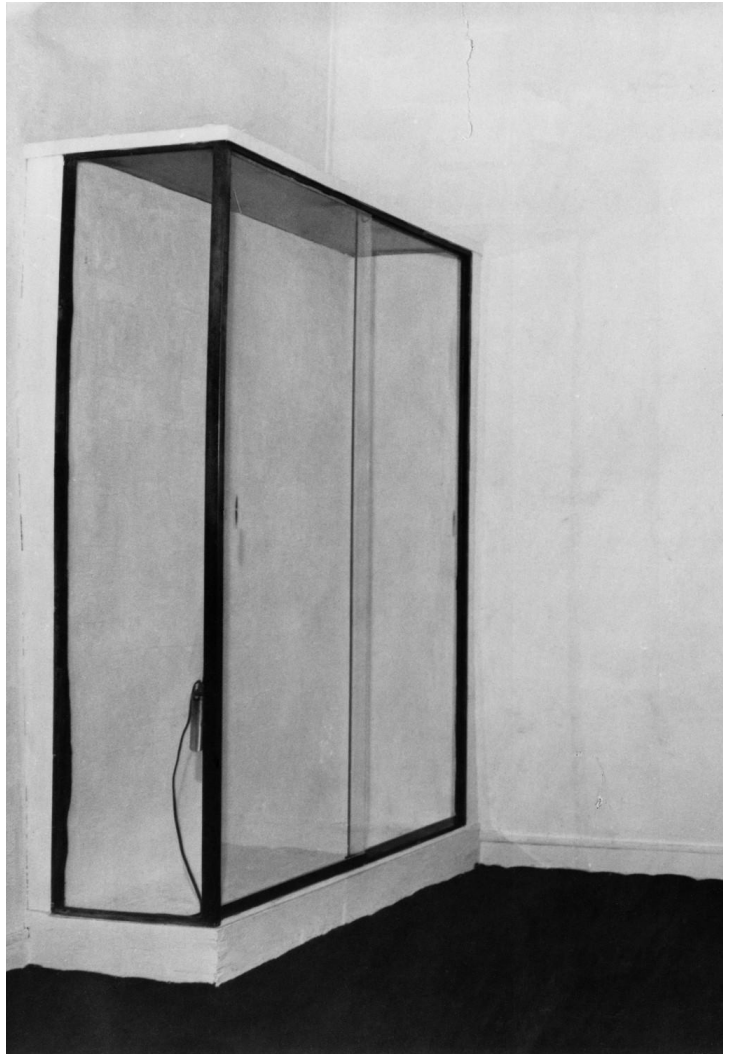
Outside blue, inside the white void. The gallery's white walls are identified with spirit, filmed over with "pictorial sensitivity." The blanched display case is an epigram on the idea of exhibition; it raises the prospect of serial contexts (in the empty gallery, the display case contains nothing). The double mechanism of display (gallery and case) reciprocally replaces the missing art with itself

(O'Doherty, 1999, p. 89)

Yves Klein

With the Void. Full Powers.

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@ The Estate of Yves Klein c/o ADAGP
Yves Klein, Le Vide, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris (1958)

To insert art into gallery or case puts the art in “quotation marks.” By making art an artificiality within the artificial, it suggests that gallery art is a trinket, a product of the boutique. What is now called the support system (a phrase that became popular with the maintenance of life in space) is becoming transparent. As time goes by, Klein’s gesture becomes more successful; history obligingly curves into an echo chamber.

The theatrics – the Garde, the cocktails (another comment on inside/outside?), the Luxor obelisk inscribing the void above like a wrinkled pencil (this one didn’t work out) – brought that attention without which a gesture is stillborn. This was the first of several gestures that use the gallery as a dialectical foil. These gestures have a history and a provenance: each tells us something about the social and esthetic agreements that preserve the gallery. Each uses a single work to draw attention to the gallery’s limits, or contains it in a single idea. As the space that socializes those products of a “radical” consciousness, the gallery is the locus of power struggles conducted through farce, comedy, irony, transcendence, and, of course, commerce. It is a space that rides on ambiguities, on unexplored assumptions, on a rhetoric that, like that of its parent, the museum, barter the discomfort of full consciousness for the benefits of permanence and order. Museums and galleries are in the paradoxical position of editing the products that extend consciousness, and so contribute, in a liberal way, to the necessary anesthesia of the masses – which goes under the guise of entertainment, in turn the laissez-faire product of leisure. None of this, I might add, strikes me as particularly vicious, since the alternatives are rampant with their own reformist hypocrisy.

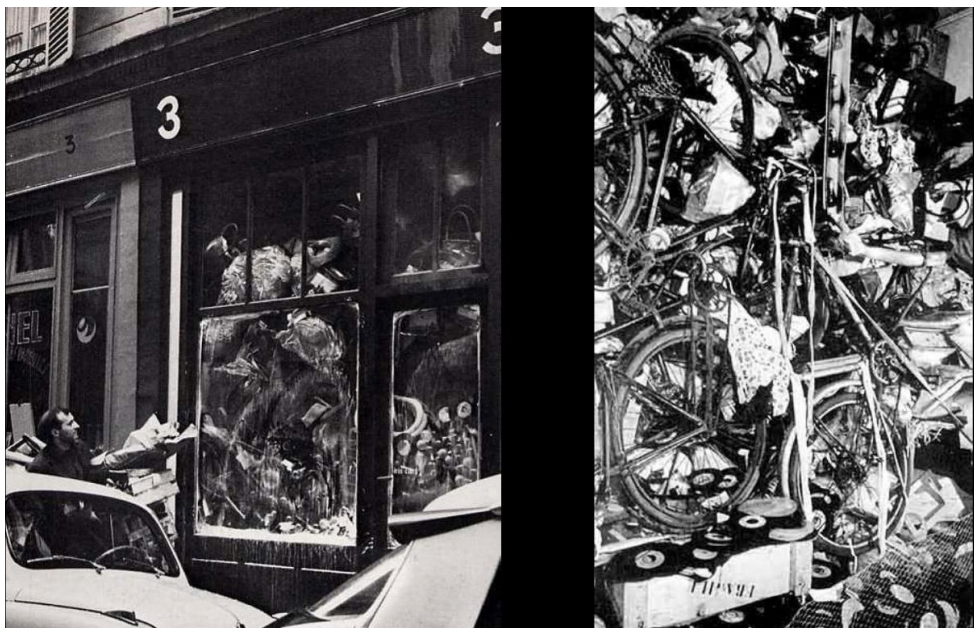
In proper teleological fashion, Klein’s gesture produced a response at the same gallery, Iris Clert’s, in October 1960, the same month that the New Realists formally composed themselves as a group. Klein’s *Void* was filled with Arman’s *Le Plein*, an accumulation of garbage, detritus, waste. Air and space were evicted until, in a kind of reverse collage, the trash reached critical mass by pressing against the walls. It could be seen pressing against the window and door. As a gesture it lacks the ecstasy of Klein’s tran-

90 For the first time in the brief history of gallery gestures, the visitor is outside the gallery.

Armand P. Arman

The visitor is outside the gallery

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Armand P. Arman, Le Plein, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris (1960)

Looking carefully

41

The work included in this chapter shows a collective interrogation of a series of case studies. The contemporary art museums that have been analysed are the Museu de Arte in São Paulo, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, the Kunsthaus Bregenz, the Tate Modern in London, the New Museum in New York, the new extension of the Kunsthaus Zürich and the FRAC Grand Large in Dunkirk. During the first four weeks of the studio, we gathered a shared body of knowledge about these museums.

In particular, together with two other colleagues (Marianna Moskal and Rafael van Hees), I was involved in the study and investigation of the new extension of the Kunsthaus Zurich, designed by the British architect David Chipperfield. The core exercise of these weeks was to recreate a photograph of the exhibition spaces of this museum in a physical model.

Recreate a photograph

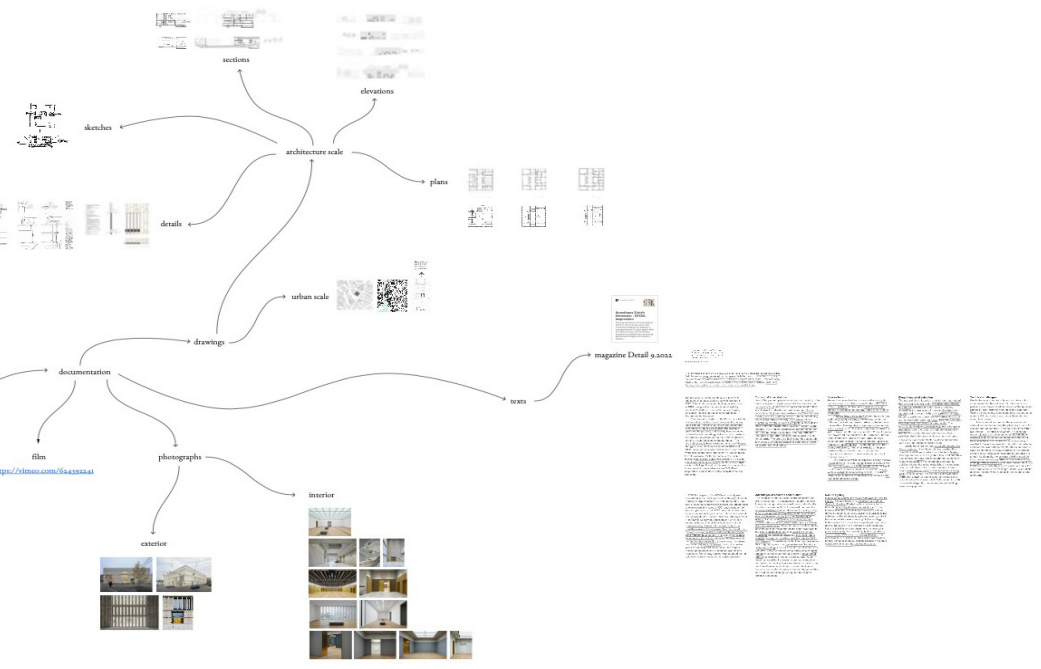
- 42 What is the purpose of this exercise? What do we learn from copying a photograph? Already during the first few days of work, we found the answers. Indeed, to replicate a photograph it is not enough to just take a look, you need to carefully observe every single detail: the different colour gradations of the concrete, how the wooden floorboards are arranged, where the natural light comes from.

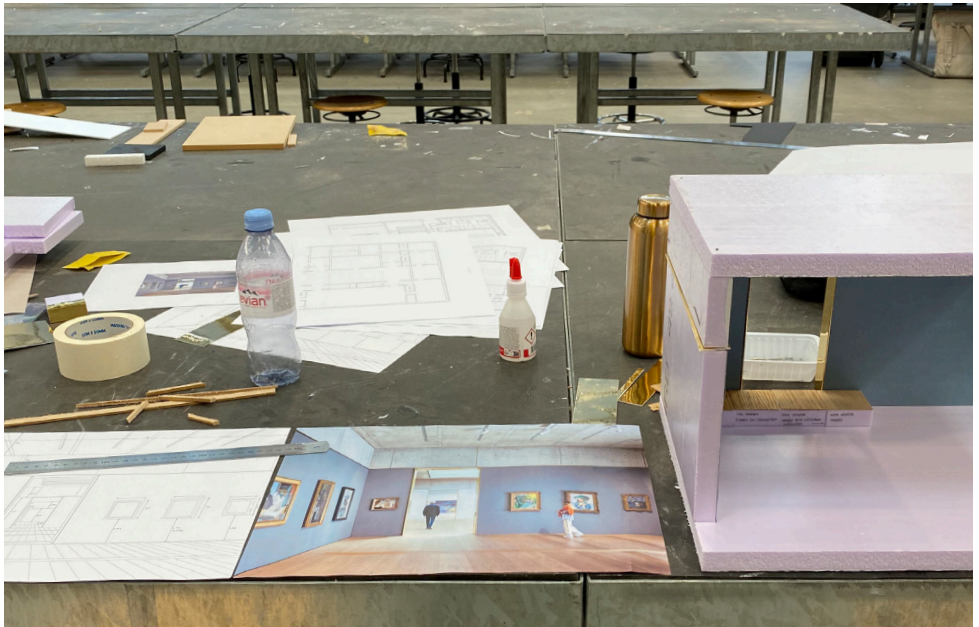
A very useful exercise, especially nowadays,
where because of internet and social networks
we are used to looking at photographs for only
a few seconds.

43



@ Noshe
Exhibition room, Kunsthaus Zürich





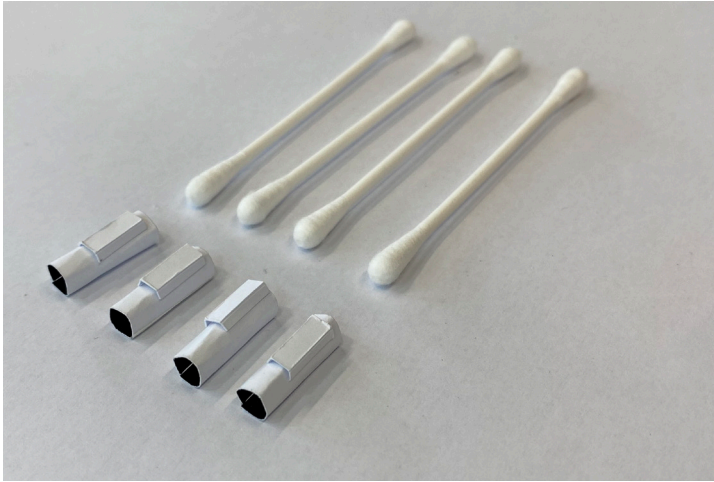
Proportion and material tests

Learning by doing

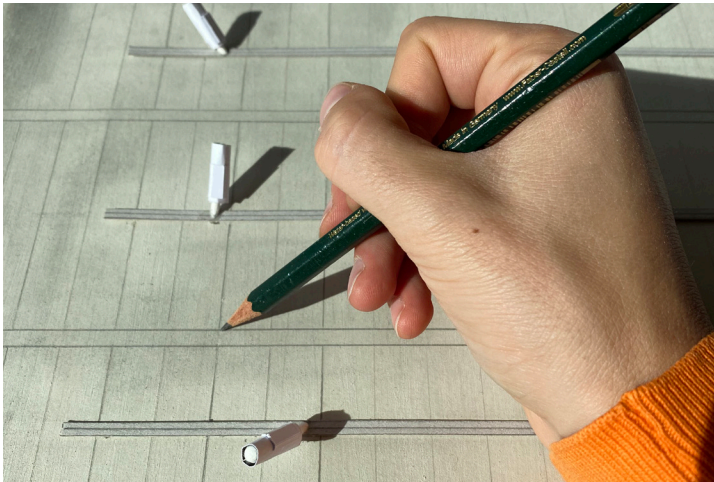
- 46 The model in architecture is not just a means to show the final result. It is a very useful design tool. It transforms the idea into an object in three dimensions. An object that provides both questions and answers.



Light tests



The lights are actually cotton buds



Grey cardboard with a bit of graphite looks like concrete



Final touches to the model



The shooting day



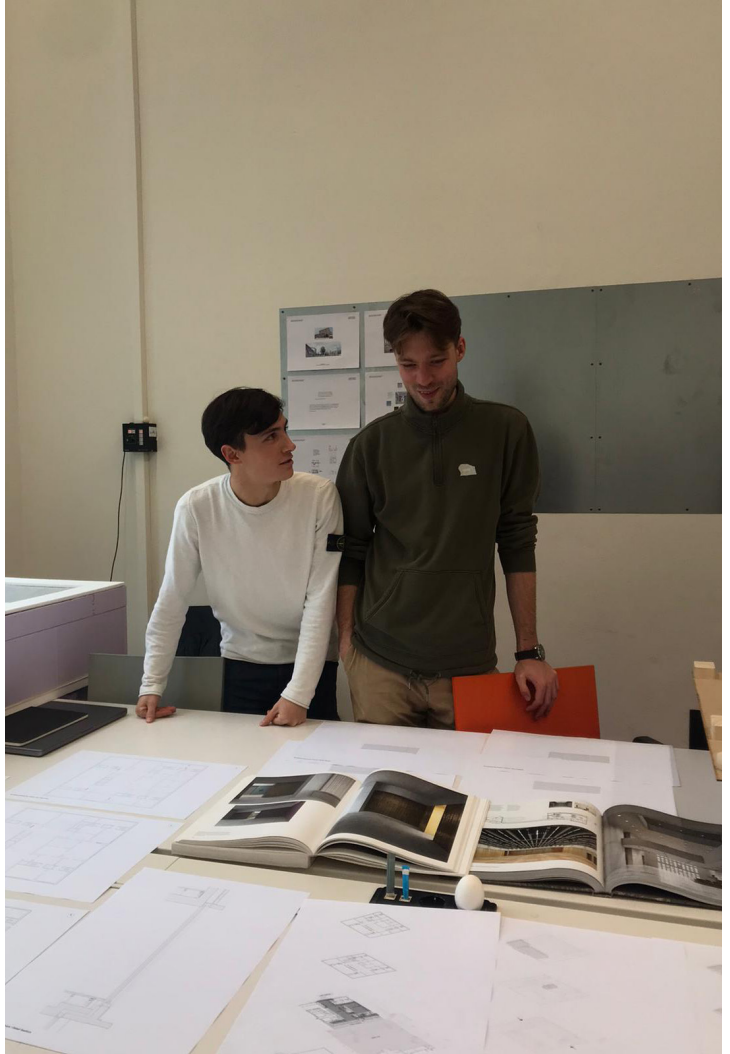
The lighting



The frame



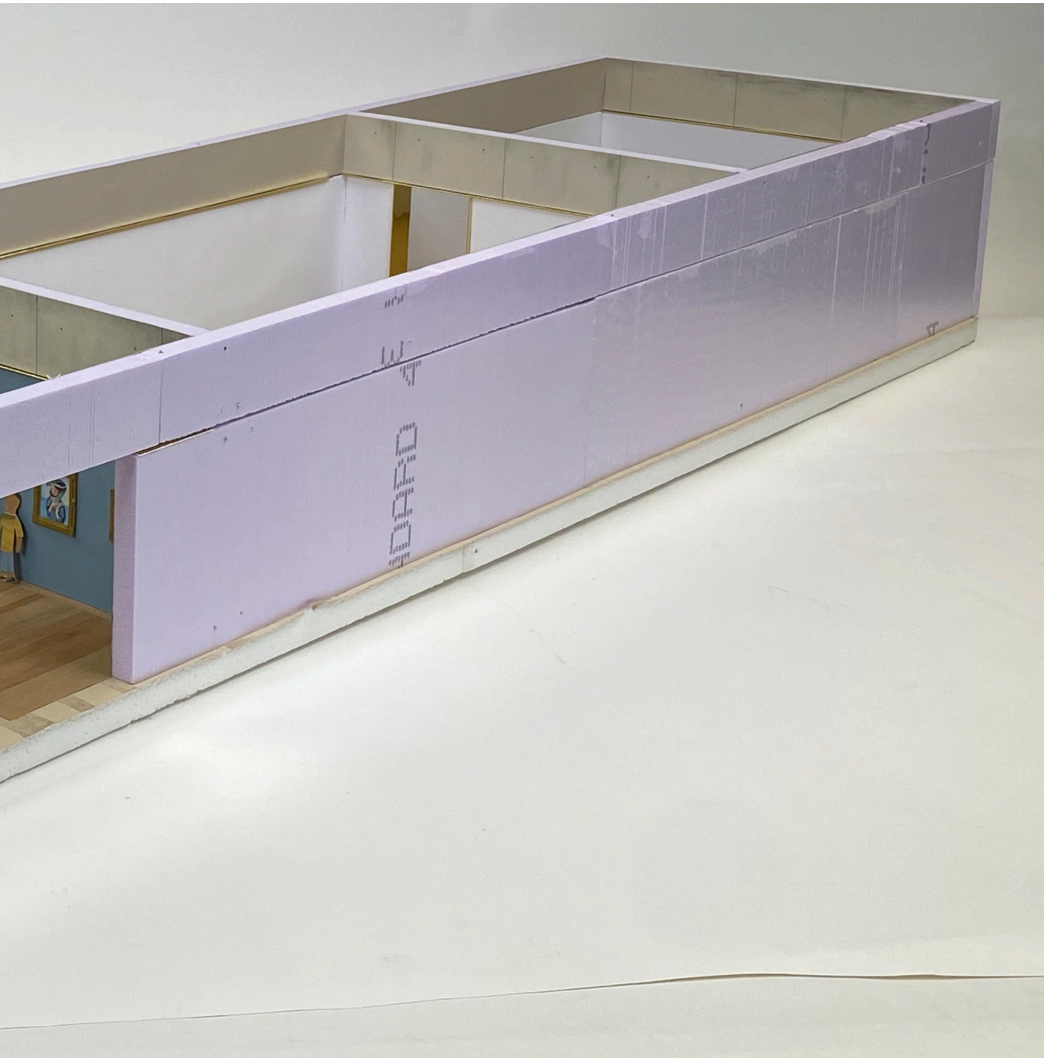
Photographs of the models and comparison with the originals



Presentation day



Photo of the model





Model photo



@ Noshe
Original photo

Spatial ensembles

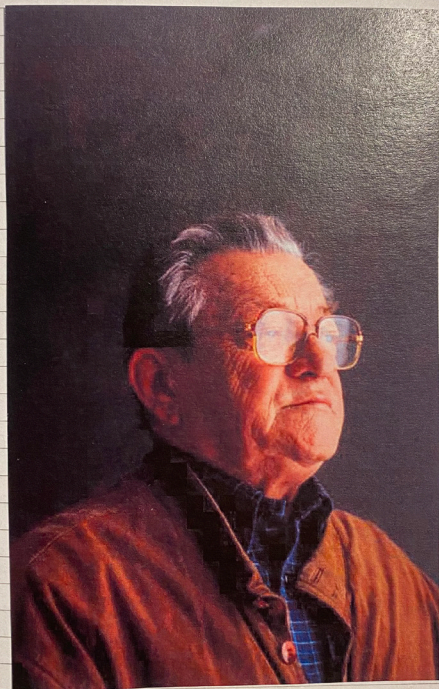
This chapter presents the first individual design exercise prepared in collaboration with the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen. Spatial ensembles interrogates and presents the collection of M HKA through the design of 27 distinct spaces displaying selected artworks from the museum's assemblage. Each student chose an artist for whom they acted as a curator, designer and architect simultaneously, choosing the works to be displayed, the spatial sequence, materials and physical qualities, as well as the function of the space itself.

Atelijer Kožarić was a kind of 'laboratory of transformations'. Through these transformations, Ivan Kožarić overcomes physical barriers and explores endless possibilities. To give an example, in 1971, he almost entirely covered his studio with gold paint.

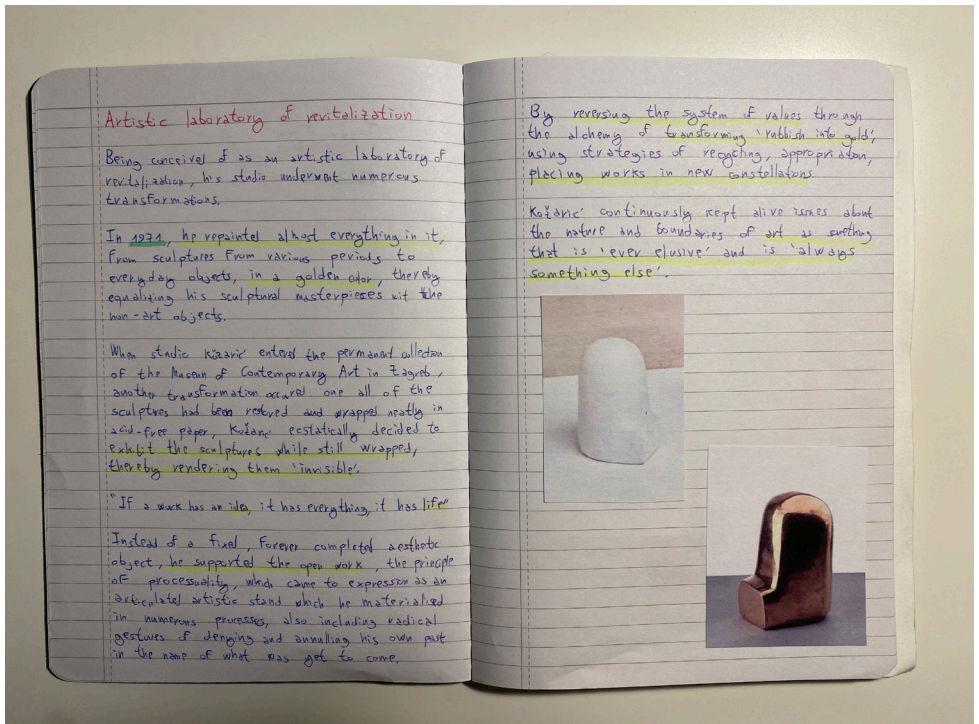
The initial idea was to exhibit his work by trying to imitate the disorder and abundance of objects that characterised his Atelijer. However, the MUHKA in Antwerp has only a few fragments of the Croatian artist's vast oeuvre. Therefore, the concept behind this exhibition space goes in precisely the opposite direction; it is an attempt to present his work in the most organised way possible. An always-open door highlights the entrance to the Atelijer: a place where everyone is welcome, now as then.

Ivan Kožarić

1921 - 2020



Ivan Kozaric



Artistic laboratory of revitalization

Being conceived of as an artistic laboratory of revitalization, his studio underwent numerous transformations.

In 1971, he repainted almost everything in it, from sculptures from various periods to everyday objects, in a golden color, thereby equalizing his sculptural masterpieces with the non-art objects.

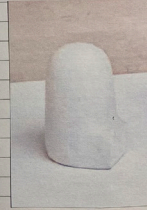
When Studio Kizavic entered the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, another transformation occurred: one of the sculptures had been removed and wrapped neatly in acid-free paper. Kolaric ecstatically decided to exhibit the sculptures while still wrapped, thereby rendering them 'invisible'.

"If a work has an idea, it has everything, it has life"

Instead of a fixed, forever completed aesthetic object, he supported the open work, the principle of processuality, which came to expression as an articulated artistic stand which he materialized in numerous processes, also including radical gestures of denying and annulling his own part in the name of what was yet to come.

By reversing the system of values through the alchemy of transforming 'rubbish into gold', using strategies of recycling, appropriation, placing works in new constellations.

Kolaric continuously kept alive issues about the nature and boundaries of art as something that is 'ever elusive' and is 'always something else'.



Notebook with notes on the artist's approach, pictures of previous exhibitions, etc.

62 Kožarić invitation to go beyond the rules and the predictable normality that surrounds us brings to mind a famous quote by Achille Castiglioni. The Italian architect and designer used to say that he carefully observed "the street, the cinema, the TV,..." as "places where you learn to observe obvious gestures, conformist attitudes and predictable forms in a critical way."

"To discover what? To discover that one can do something else."

63

The studio



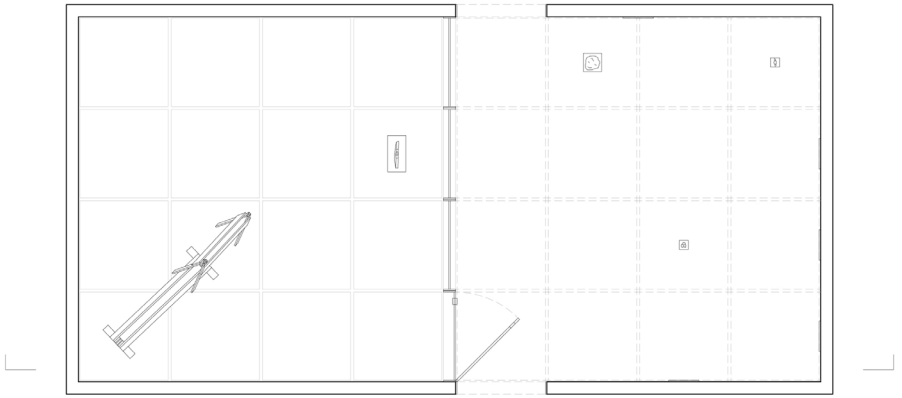
In 2007, the city of Zagreb purchased the complete studio with more than 6000 works and other objects.



64 The atmosphere is that of a scientific laboratory. A laboratory in which the artworks are displayed as autonomous elements. Each piece of art is placed on a pedestal and surrounded by the space it needs. This way, the architecture leaves room for the visitors' curiosity and imagination. It is up to the viewer to make associations and discover affinities and similarities between the artworks.



Photo of the model



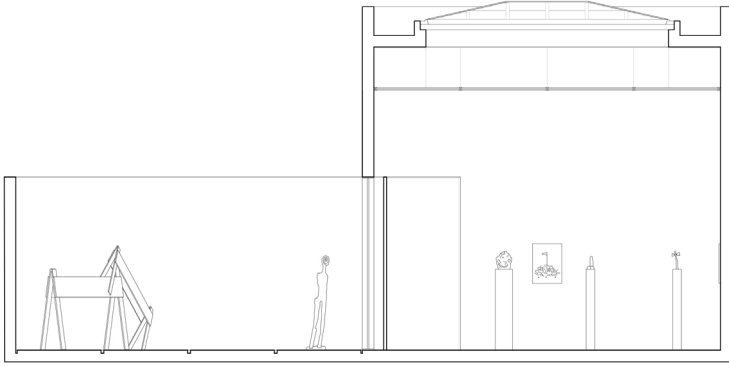
Plan



Photo of the model



Photo of the model



Section



Photo of the model



Photo of the model



Photo of the model



Photo of the model



Photo of the model

Zuidersluis

This year's graduation studio addresses the design of the new 'Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art' (VMHK) in Antwerp. The project is based on a competition currently underway, giving a compelling sense of currency to this work. Currently, the 'Museum of Contemporary Art of Antwerp' (MHKA) building does not communicate with the city and suffers from a lack of space. Therefore, the new building offers an exceptional opportunity to further expand the museum as an institution and position it internationally.

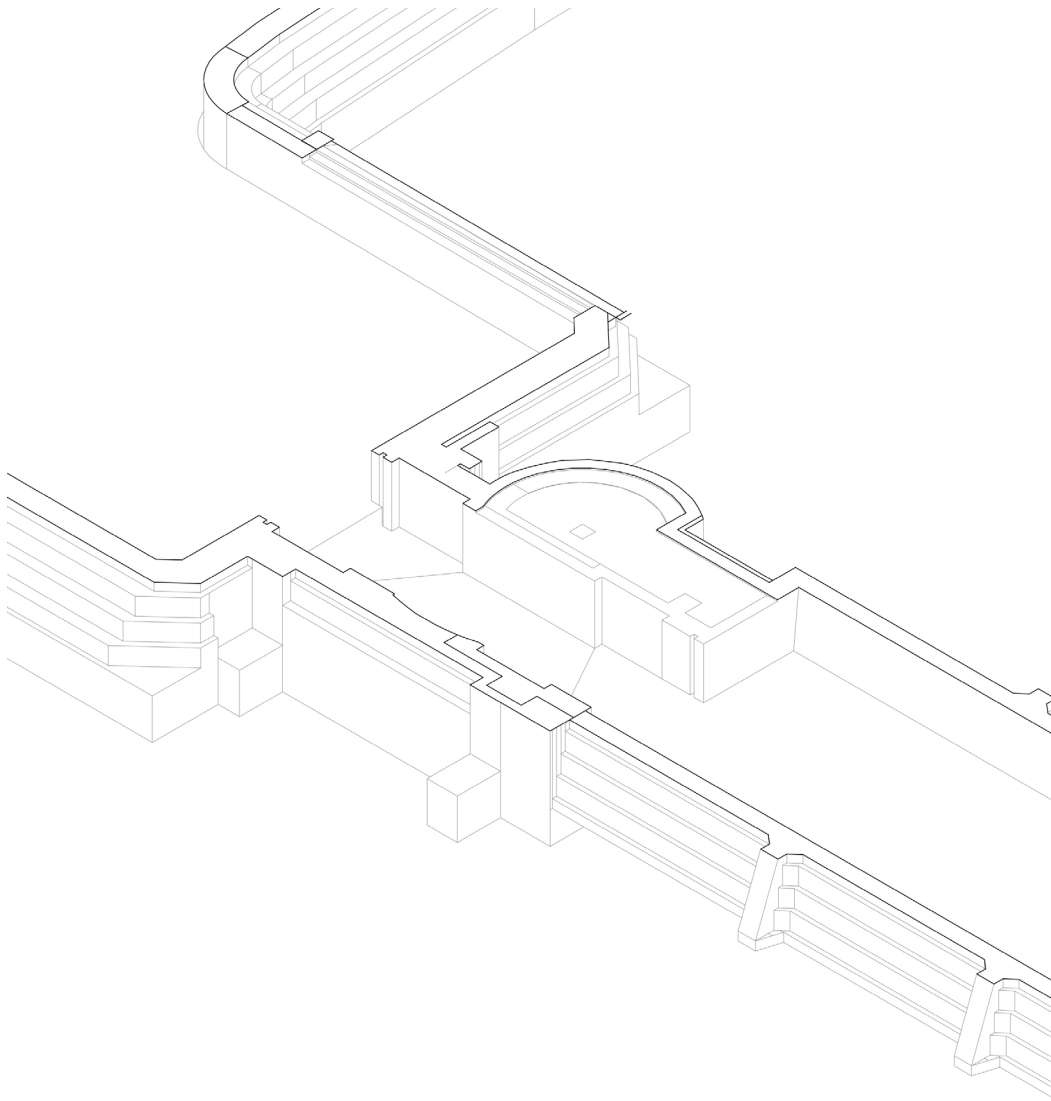


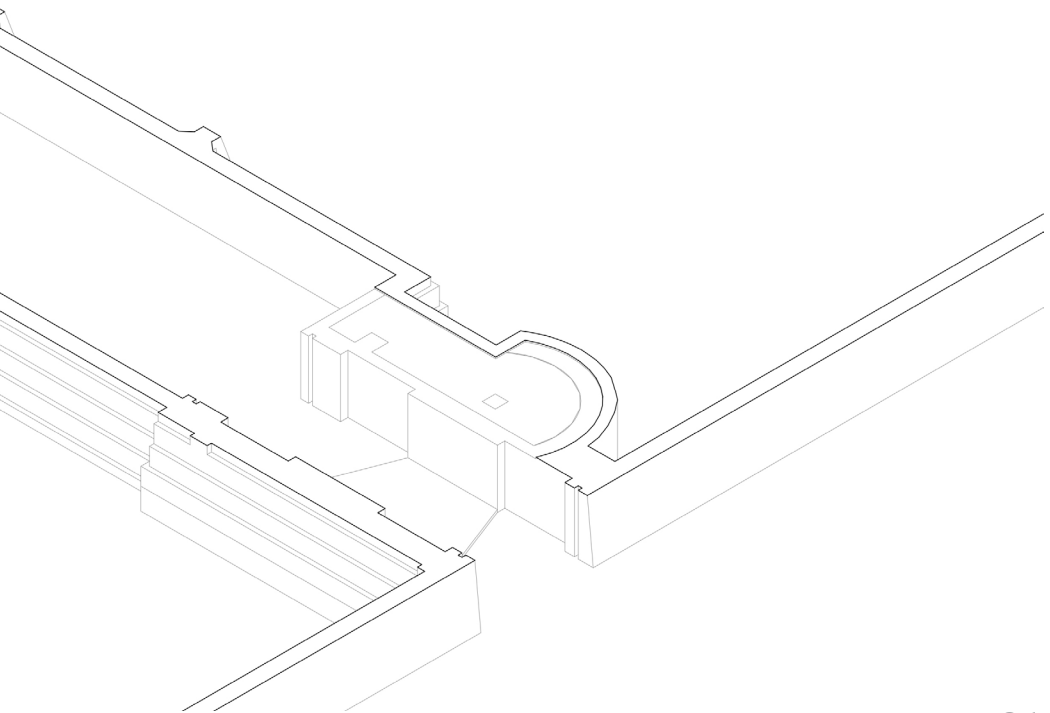
The passage of a large ship on the river Scheldt

The site for the new 'Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art' (VMHK) is that of the Zuider slu-
is, which used to be the entrance to the three
Zuiderdokken. This is a strategic location as it
connects the bank of the Scheldt River with the
Zuiderdokken area, where a large park will soon
be built. The construction of a new building
thus represents a significant opportunity to
reconnect these two parts of the city.



The zuider sluis



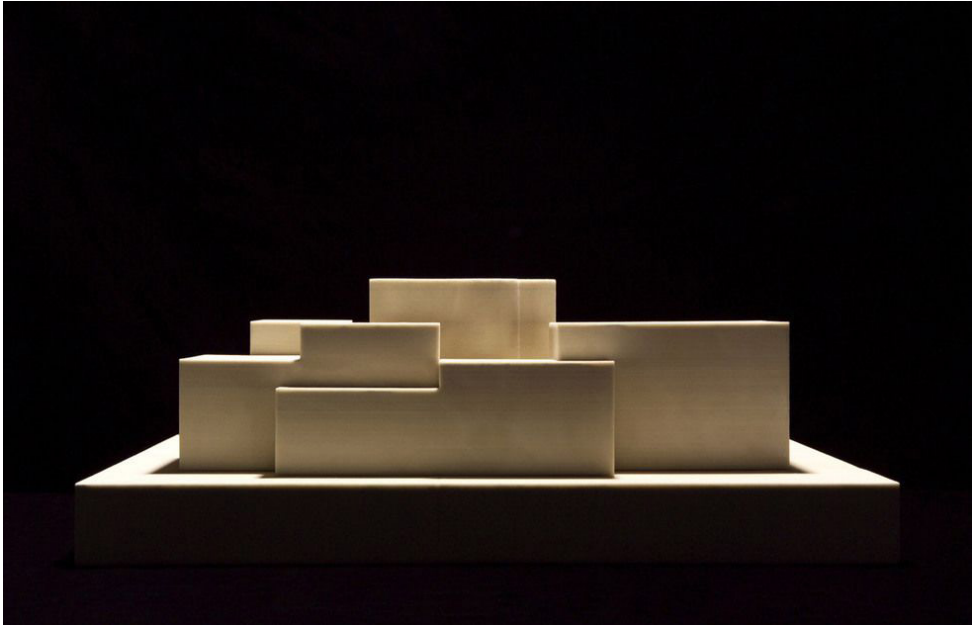


82 Today the site is occupied by the former Court of Appeal building. It will be entirely demolished to make way for a new architecture that is more functional and open to the city. Reverting the building would still require many changes, which take time and are very expensive. In contrast, total demolition shortens the time, lowers the cost, and allows for a completely different building that is more flexible, more durable and also more open to the city. The construction of this new building thus represents a significant opportunity to reconnect these two parts of the city.



View from the park of the former Court of Appeal building

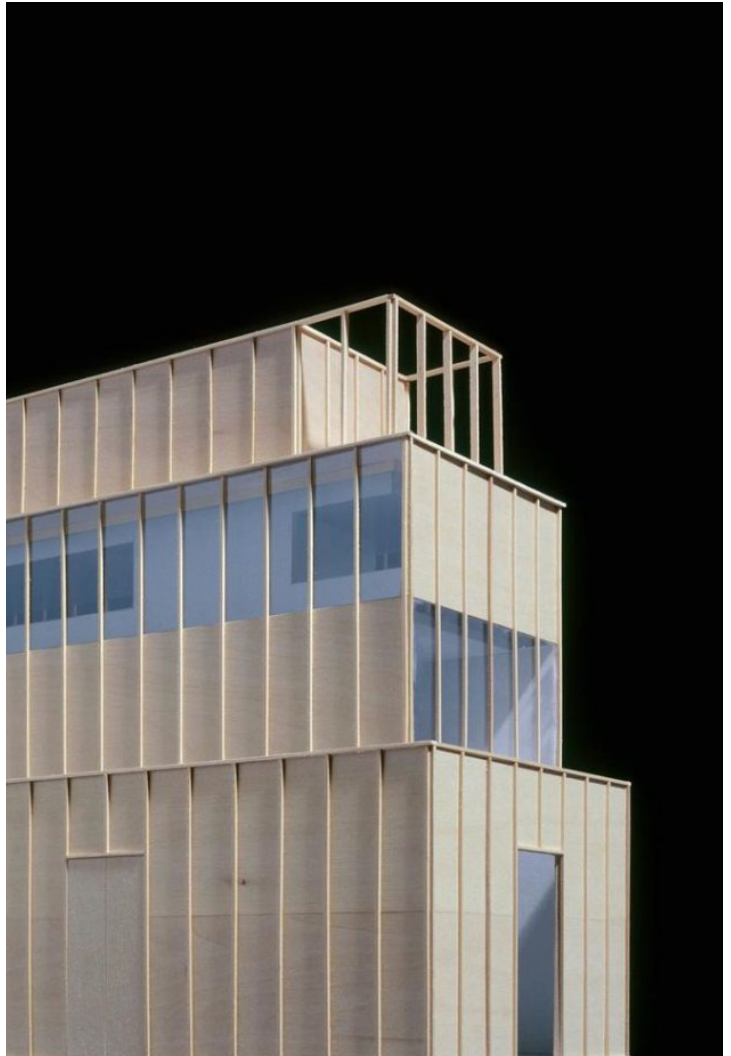




David Chipperfield Architects. Maquette,

Big scale

- 84 Through the new building, with an estimated total surface of maximum 22'550 m², Flanders wants to give a significant boost to cultural policy. How to deal with that? A large scale can be managed by decomposing and juxtaposing repeatable, similar elements. It is a strategy used by many architects. One of them all, David Chipperfield.



David Chipperfield Architects. Maquette,



The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art. Park side.





The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art. Park side.





The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art. River side.





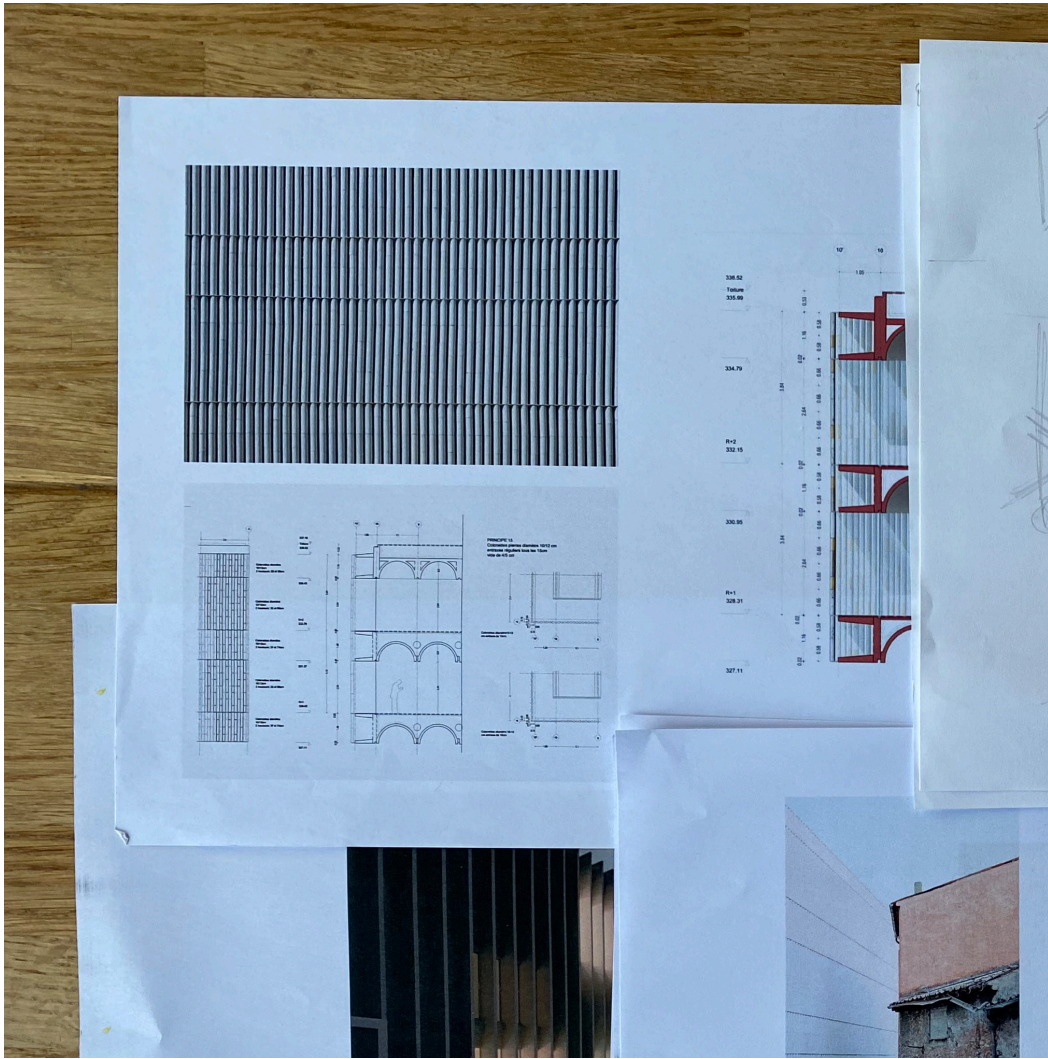
The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art. Aerial view.



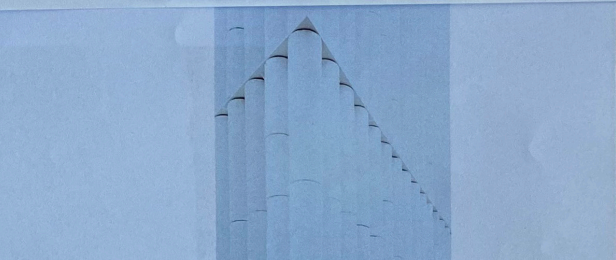
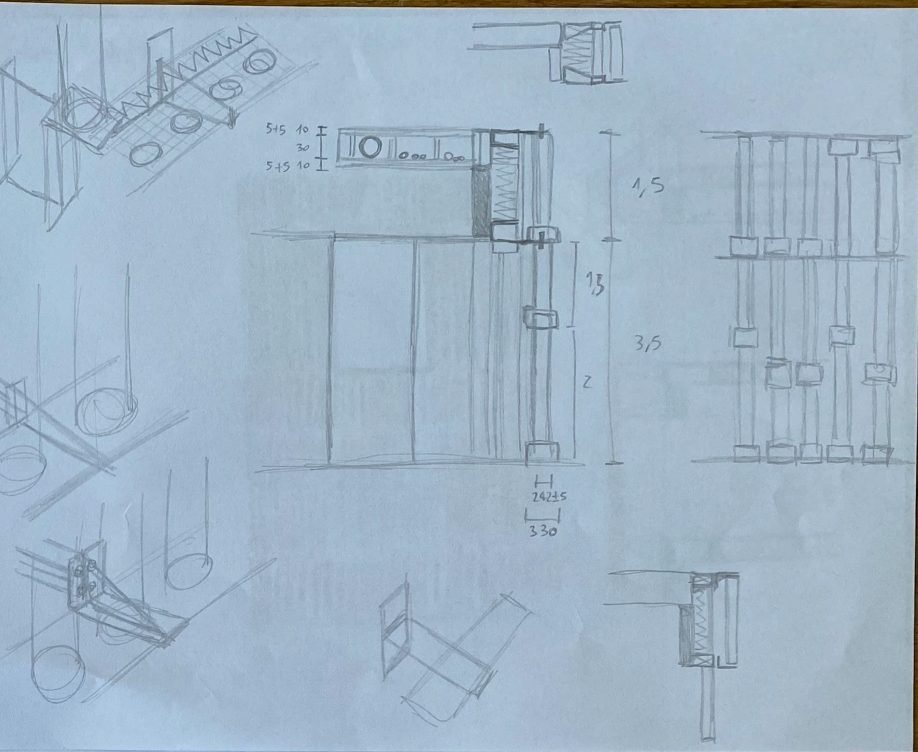
The Flemish Museum of Contemporary art gives new life to the Zuidersluis site. A space neither river nor land, where neither zone draws you, where you accept the pleasure of the in-between.

Façade

The idea of creating an abstract façade for the new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp stems from the desire to harmonize the building's size with the need to filter light, protect the artworks, and create diverse exhibition environments. Drawing inspiration from the Kunsthaus in Zurich, the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne, and the Mediatheque de Grasse, the façade composed of vertical cylindrical elements becomes a transformative feature that visually separates the galleries from the outside world while allowing light to permeate, thus providing an exceptional backdrop for the display of contemporary art.



A collection of sketches and references





@ Noshe

“The architectural identity is modelled on traditional stone façades, as found in the existing Kunsthaus and many other significant public buildings in Zurich. The new building combines tradition and innovation through slender vertical fins crafted from local Jurassic limestone with sawn surfaces and placed at regular intervals in the façade, embedding the building in its urban and cultural context in a contemporary manner.”
(Kunsthaus Zurich, n.d)



@ Noshe
David Chipperfield Architects, Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland (2008–2020)

100 Using the words of architects Barozzi and Veiga, *“the overall building façade is relatively hermetic. In order to protect the collections, the museum has a closed, introverted façade to the railway side, to the south. A more open, permeable and animated façade characterizes the north elevation, towards the public space.”* (Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne, n.d.)



@ Simon Menges
Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland (2011–2019)



@ Simon Menges



@ Fernando Guerra

“The media library is designed as a space that is permeable to light while preserving the coolness of the interior. This requires a new approach to the design of the facades. The reading areas receive subdued daylight, softened by the filter of columns that envelop the building. The claustra protect the recessed glass façade from the sun to allow cleaning. The presence of light is soft and discreet. The claustra theme is in keeping with Provençal tradition, extended on a grand scale.” (Mediatheque de Grasse, n.d)



@ Fernando Guerra

Beaudouin Architectes, Mediatheque de Grasse, Grasse, France (2011-2022)

104 *“An ordinary object (could be)
elevated to the dignity of a work of art
by the mere choice of an artist”*

Marcel Duchamp



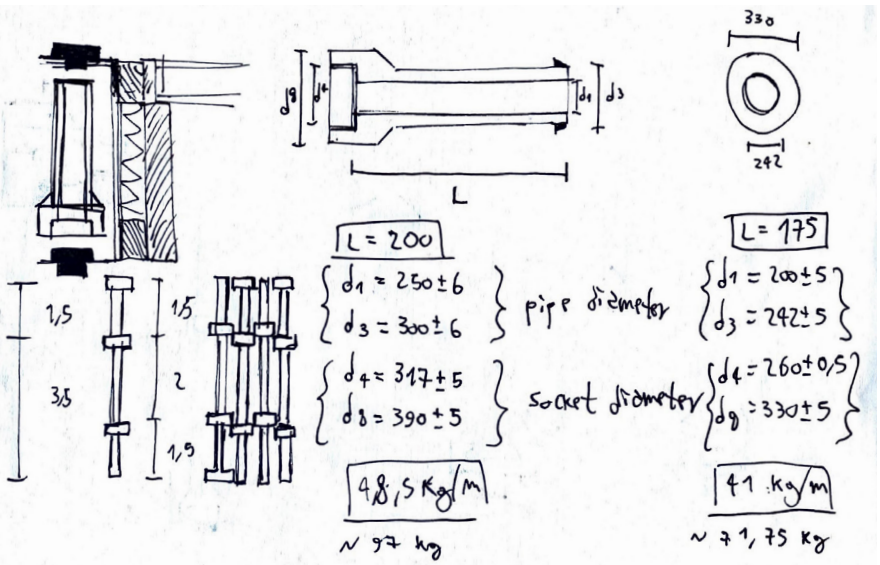
Marcel Duchamp, Bicycle Wheel (1913)

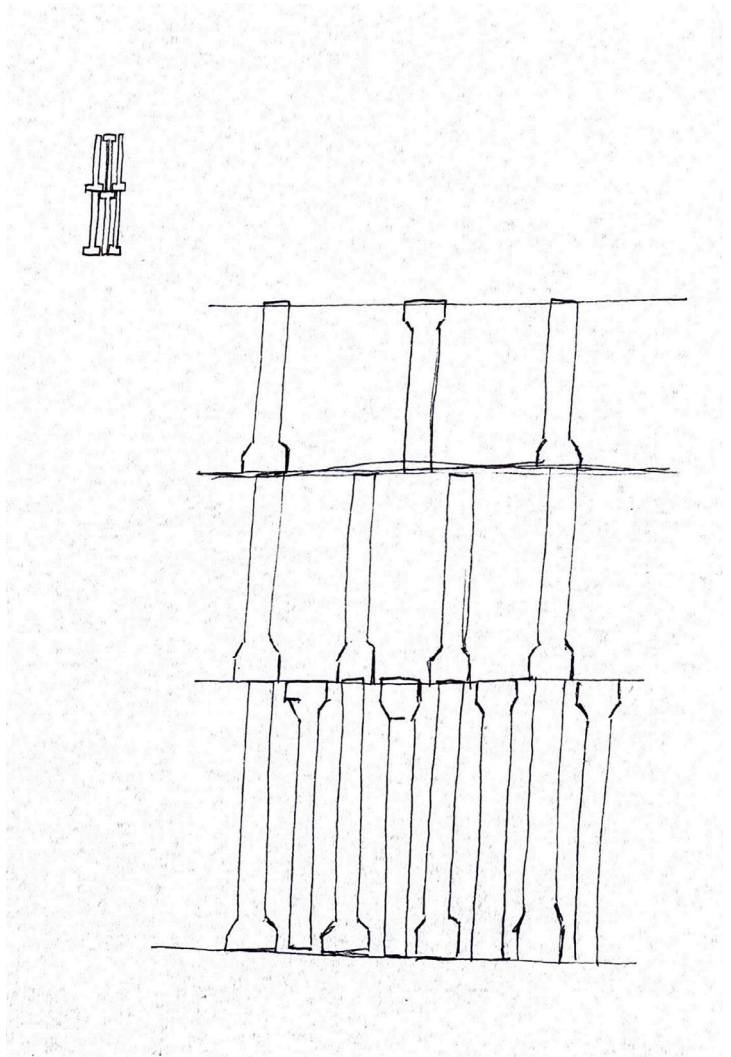
Initially, the façade of the building was characterised by simple cylindrical ceramic elements, such as in the Mediatheque de Grasse designed by Beaudouin Architectes.

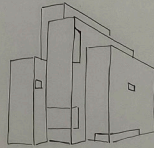
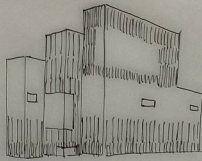
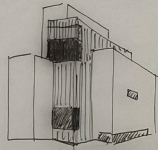
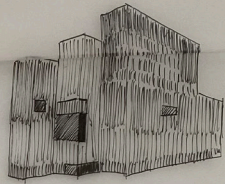
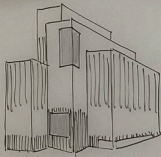
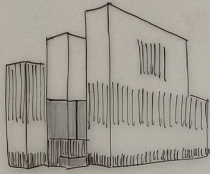
However, following the words of Castiglioni, I tried to think differently, I tried to do 'something else', something special. So I started looking for industrial products that could resemble these elements. For example, what if these cylindrical elements were actually sewer pipes? A solution that not only makes it possible to use an industrial product already on the market and thus reduce costs, but also to transform a simple façade into a play of light and shapes that can stimulate people's curiosity.

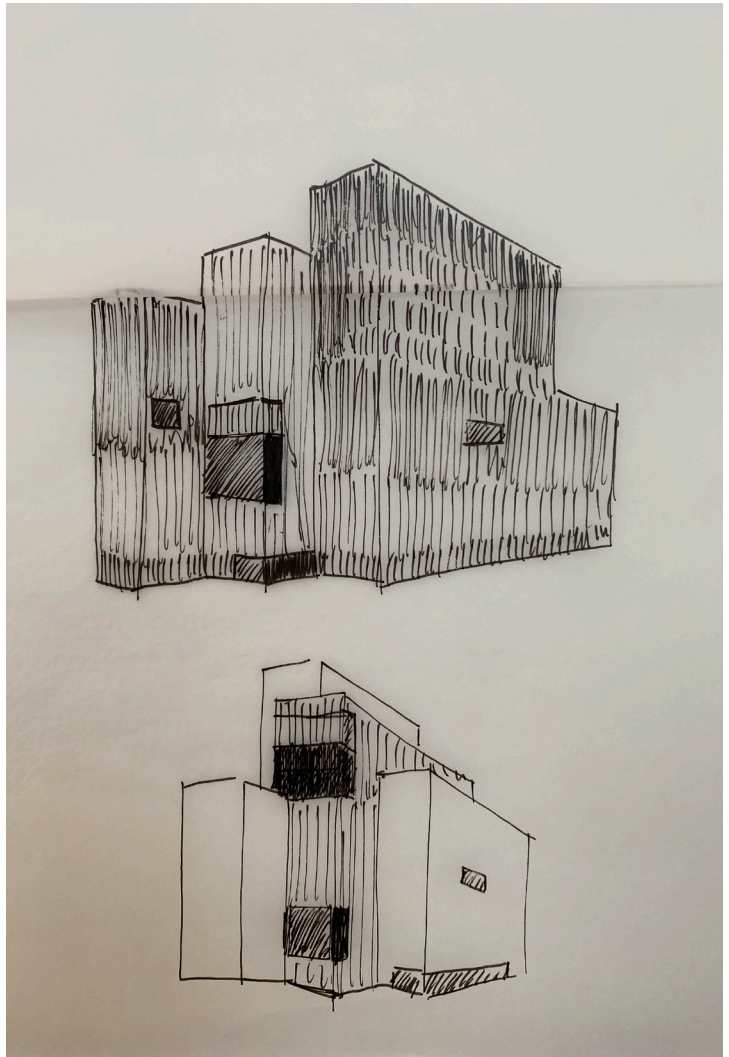


Ceramic sewer pipe (Steinzeug Keramo kera.base)



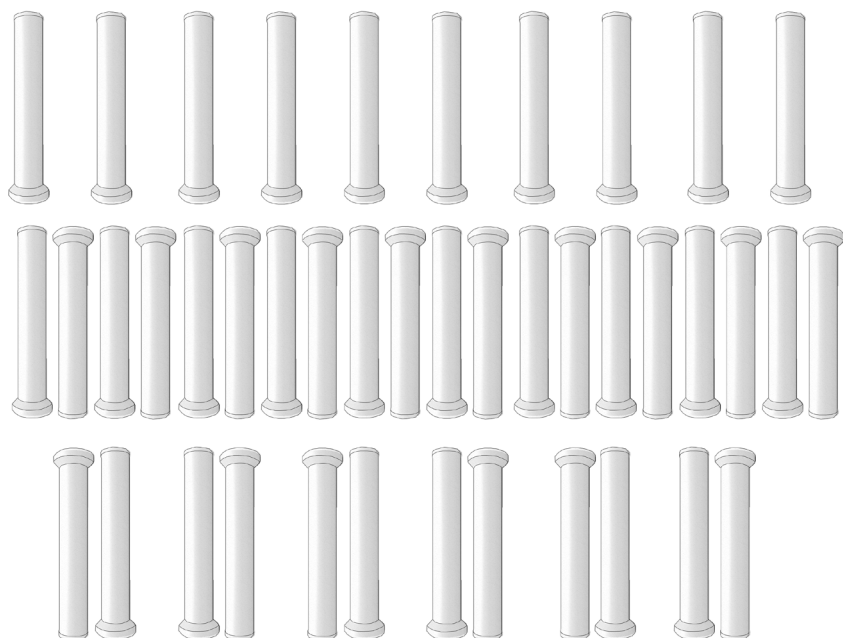


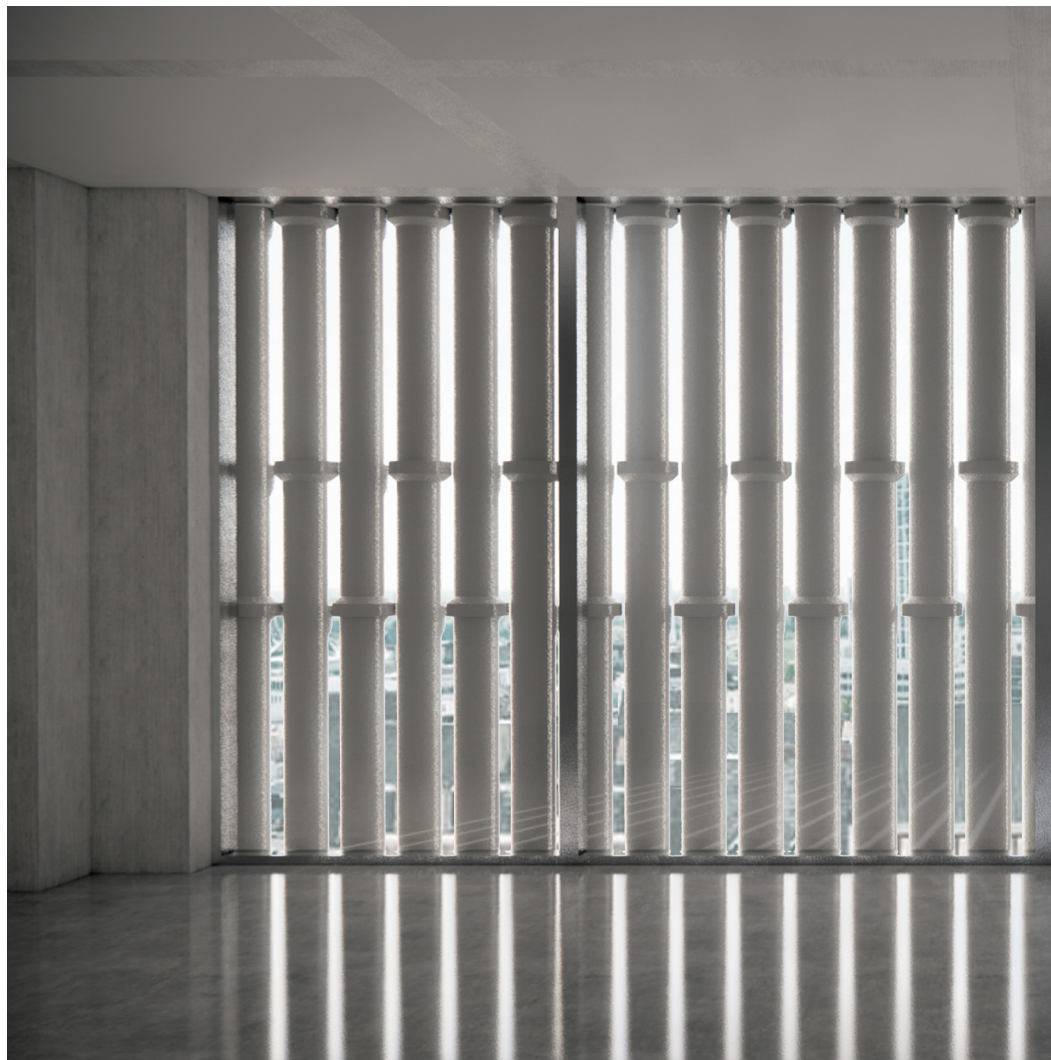




Façade studies

“They have the capacity to change and distort the building’s volumetric configuration and scale as well as add a recognizable character to the building, in the same way a floral dress alters the appearance and identity of its wearer.”





Facade elements seen from the inside. 1/2





Facade elements seen from the inside. 2/2



Forum

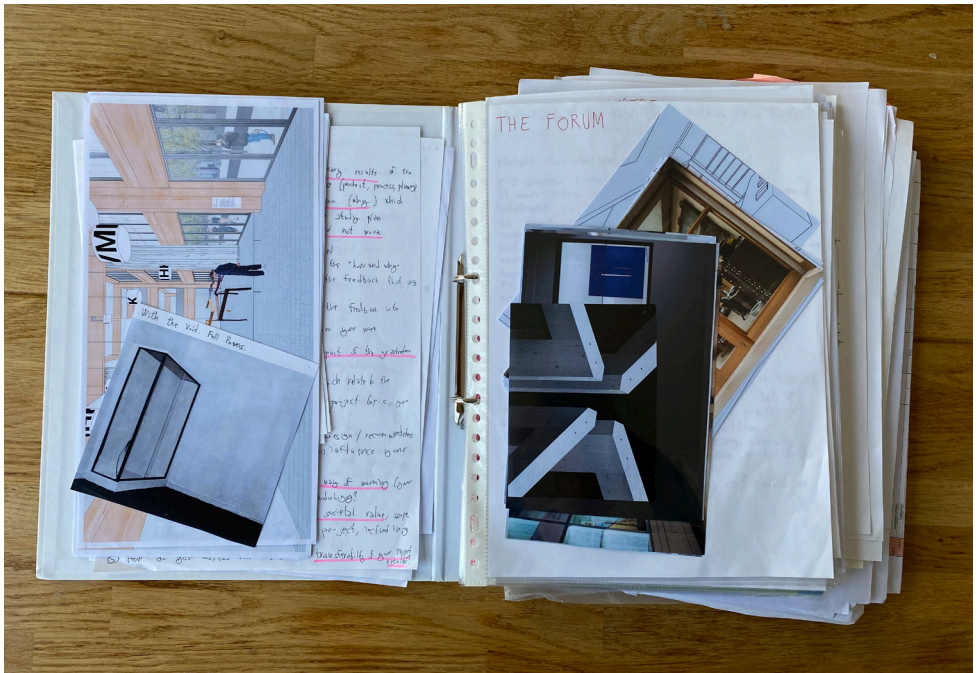
The museum of contemporary art has become a space where a more general and generic kind of leisure can be enacted, where browsing the bookshop, drinking a coffee, or amusing one's children might seem more immediately important than confronting works of art.

The competition brief recognises the central importance of this broader inhabitation in its idea of a Forum as an environment at the threshold between museum and city and which is capable of accommodating different scales and kinds of activity.

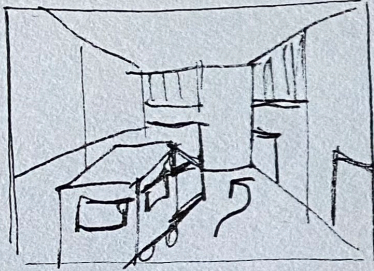


Collection of notes and reference images

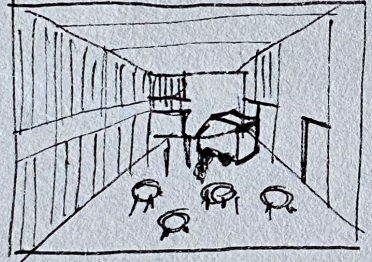
The design journey began with extensive research into the essence and function of a forum. I discovered that the true beauty of a forum lies precisely in its lack of predefined functions. This realization shaped my vision for a space on the ground floor that can effortlessly transform into a café, a gallery, or a venue for events and conferences.



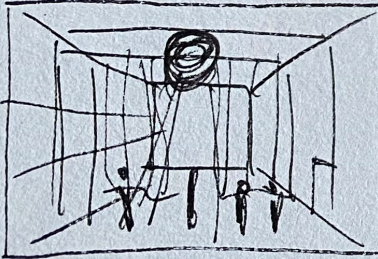
The project journal is the digital transposition of sketchbooks, notes, etc.



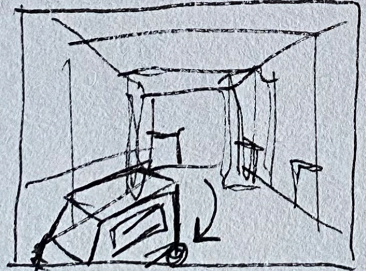
① street food truck



② bar

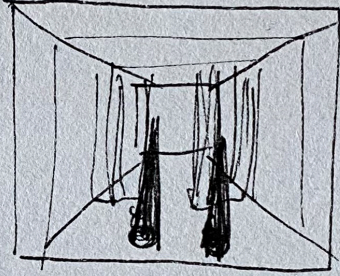


⑤ night club / party

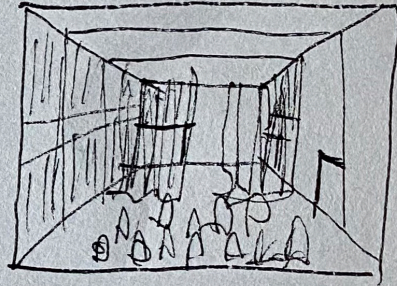


⑥ street food truck leaving

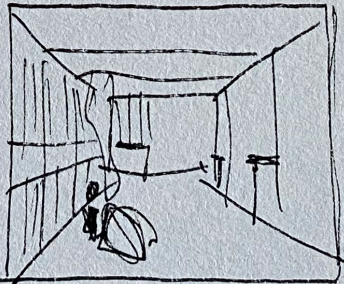
Stop frame animation of the forum space. Sketch.



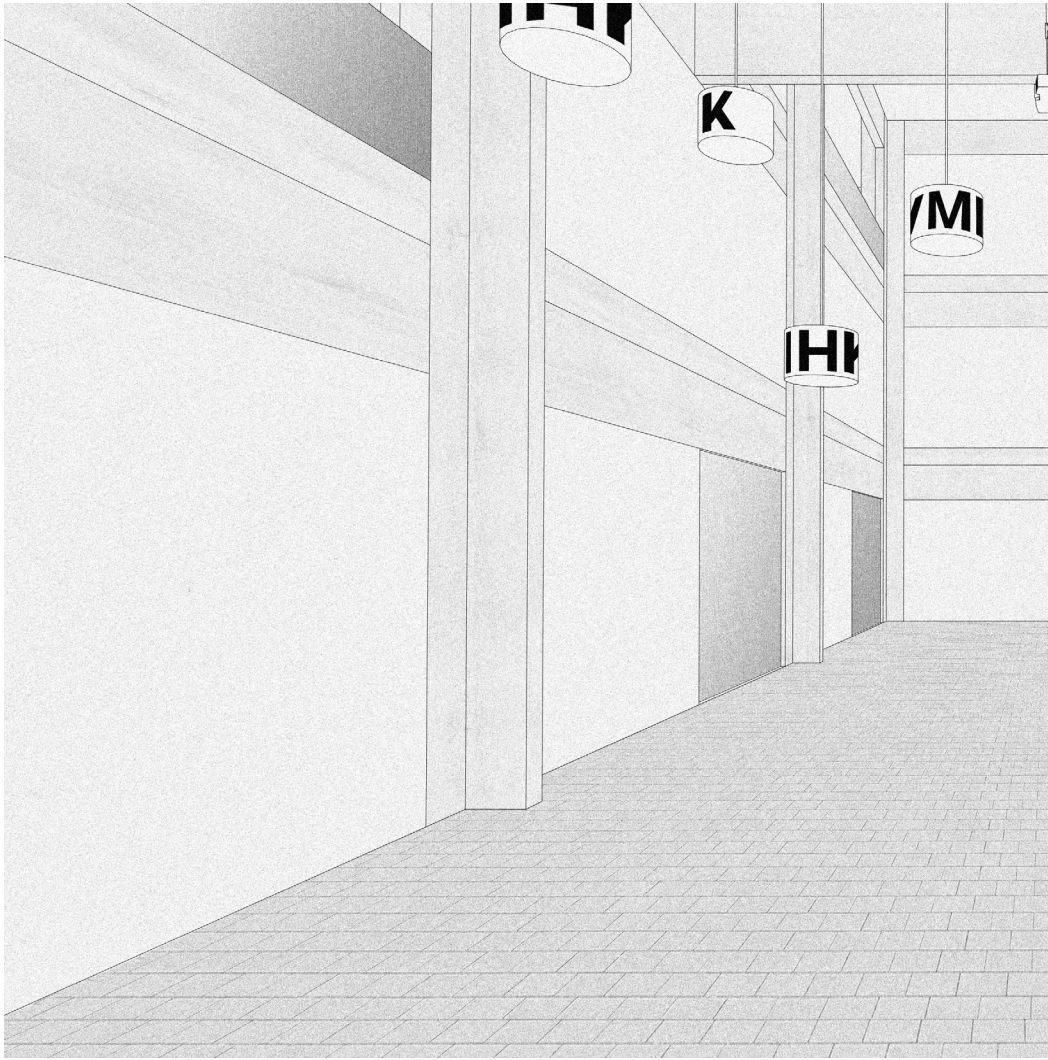
③ exhibition space



④ conference

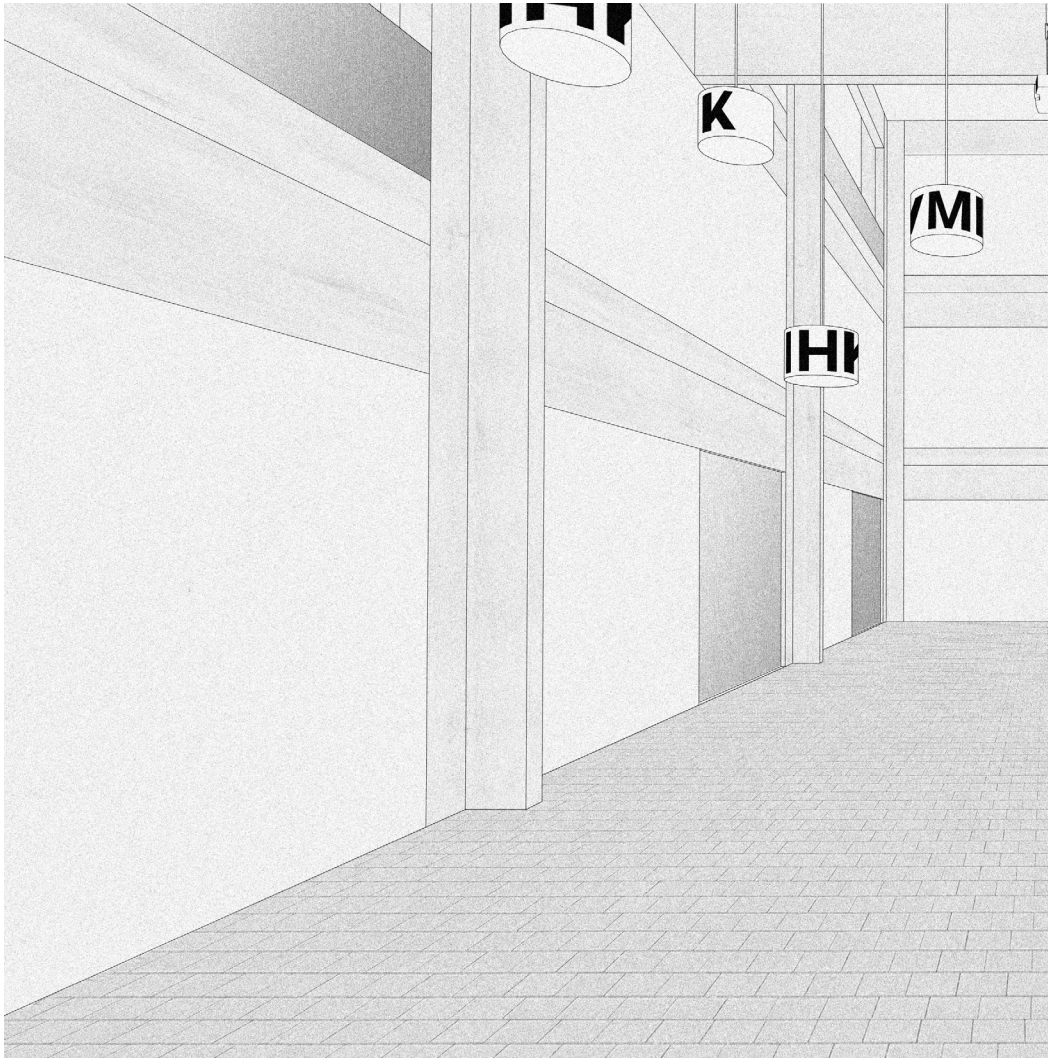


⑦ cleaning lady



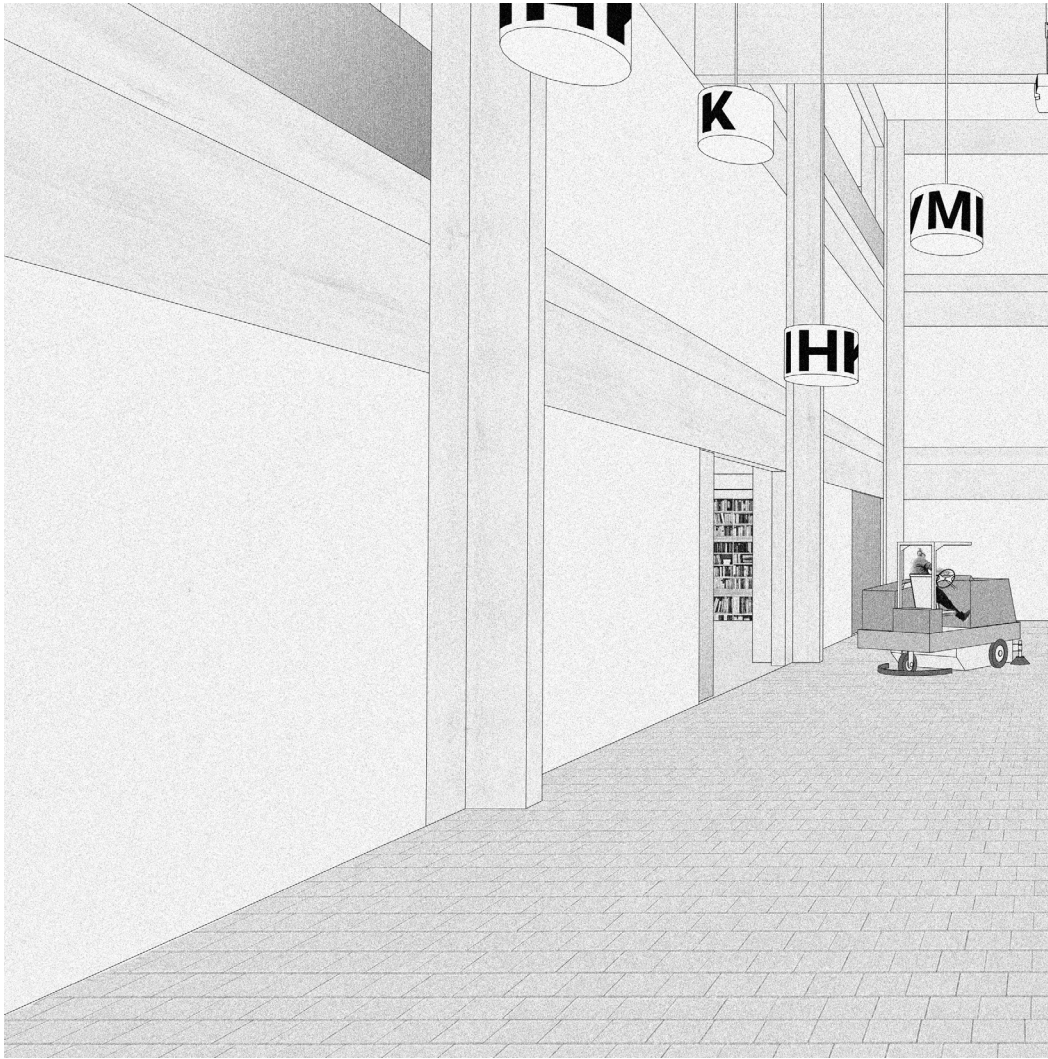
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 1/10





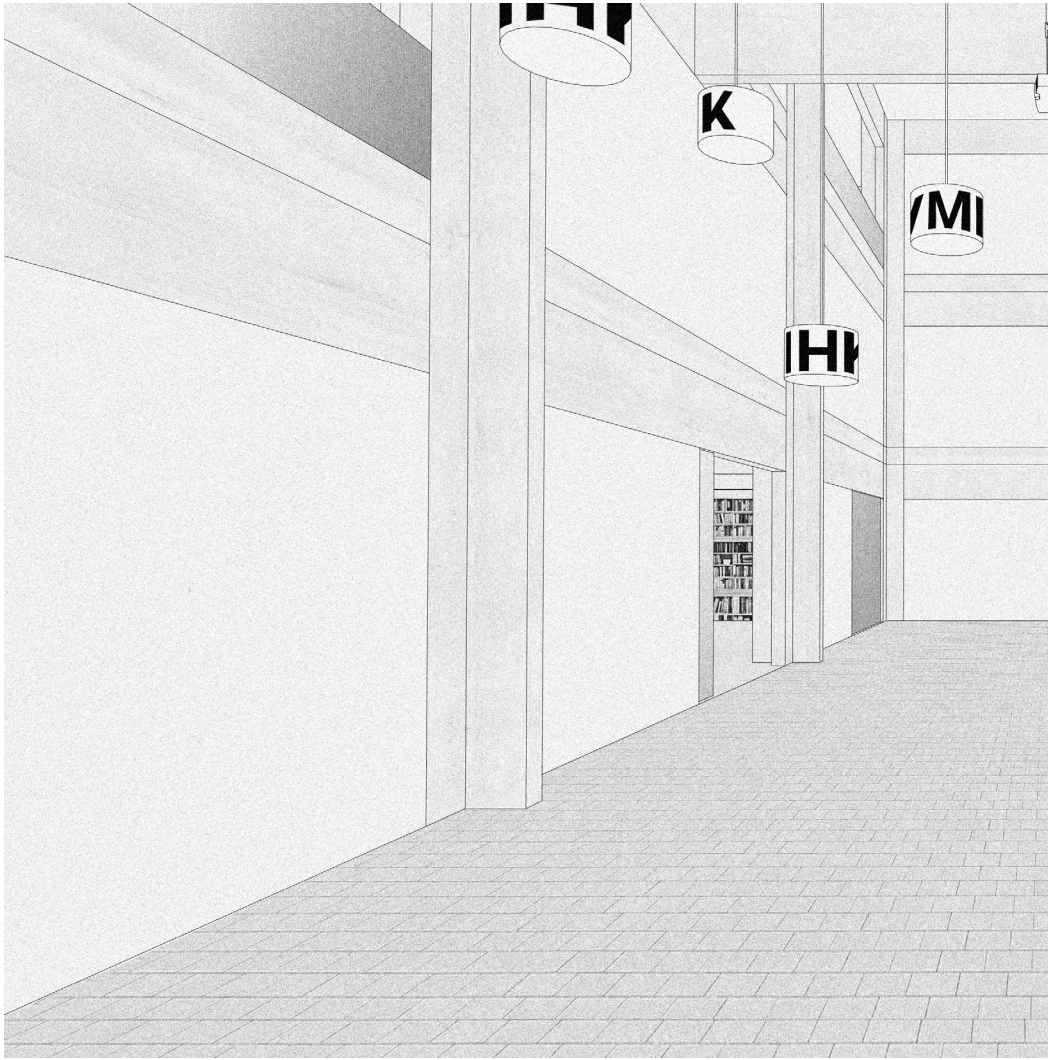
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 2/10





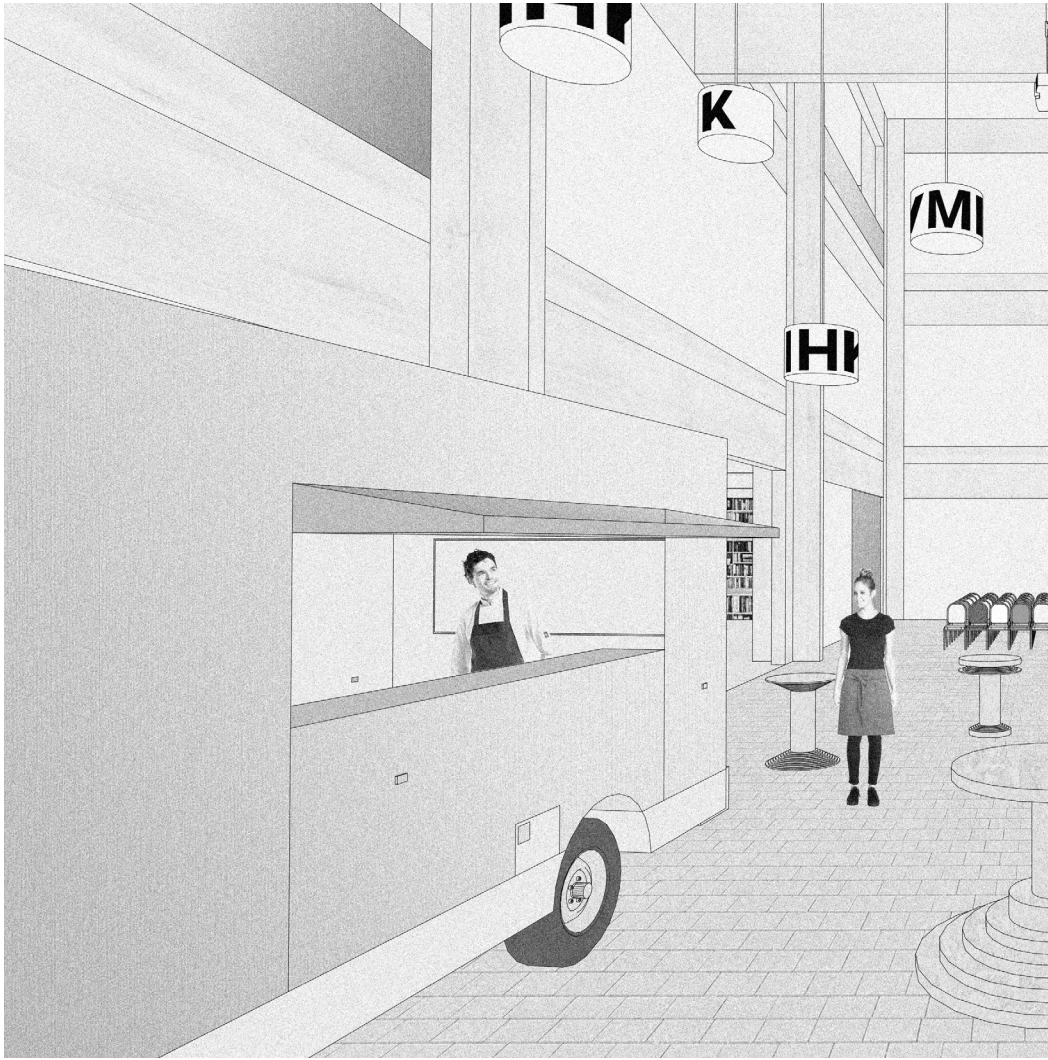
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 3/10





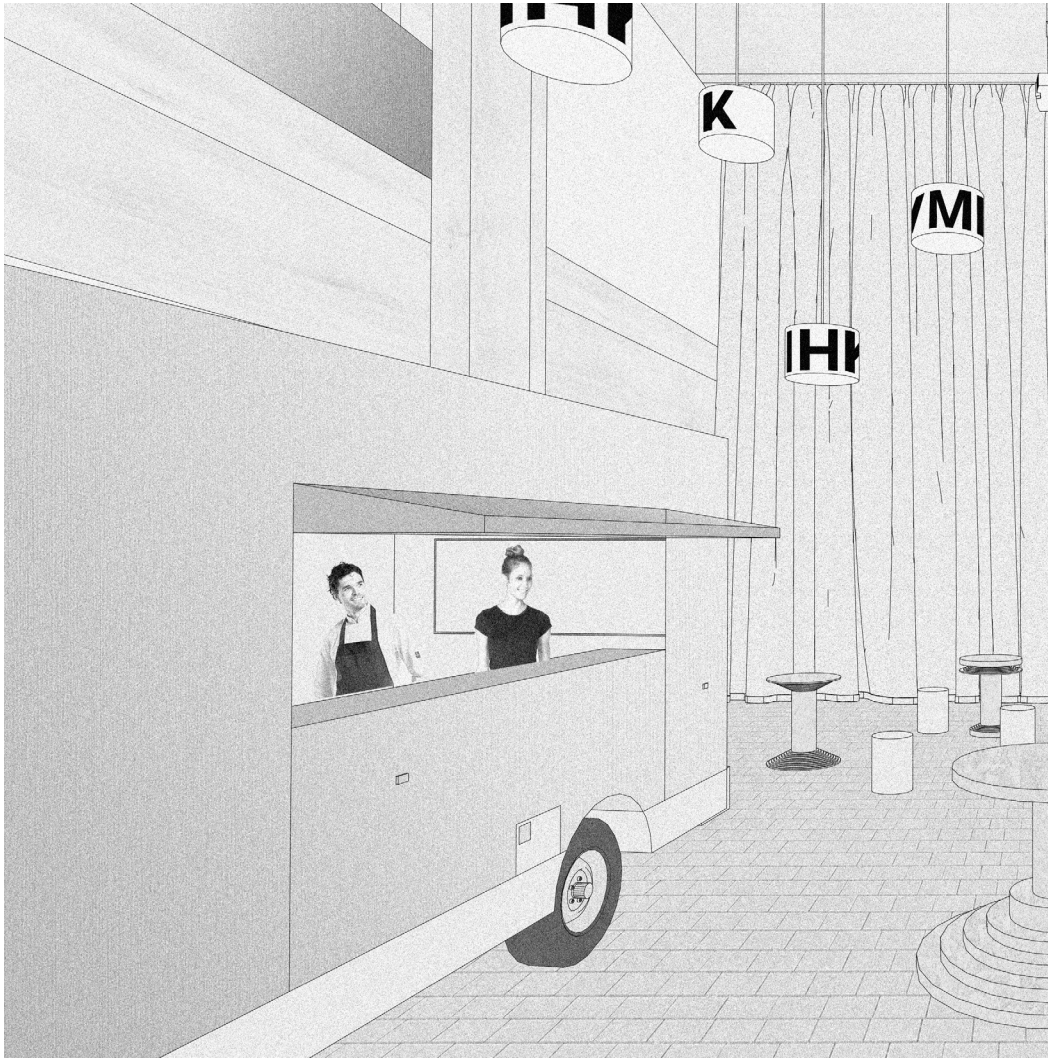
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 4/10





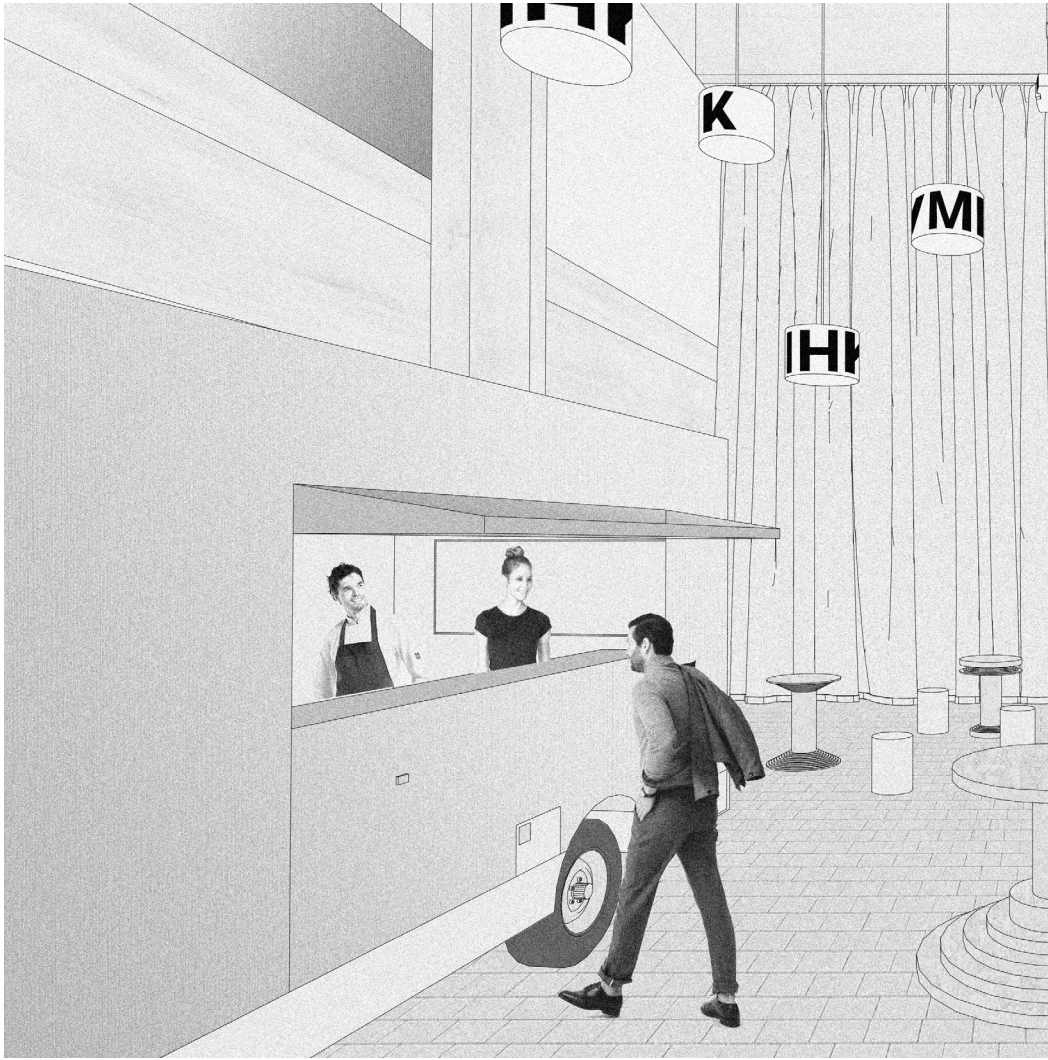
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 5/10



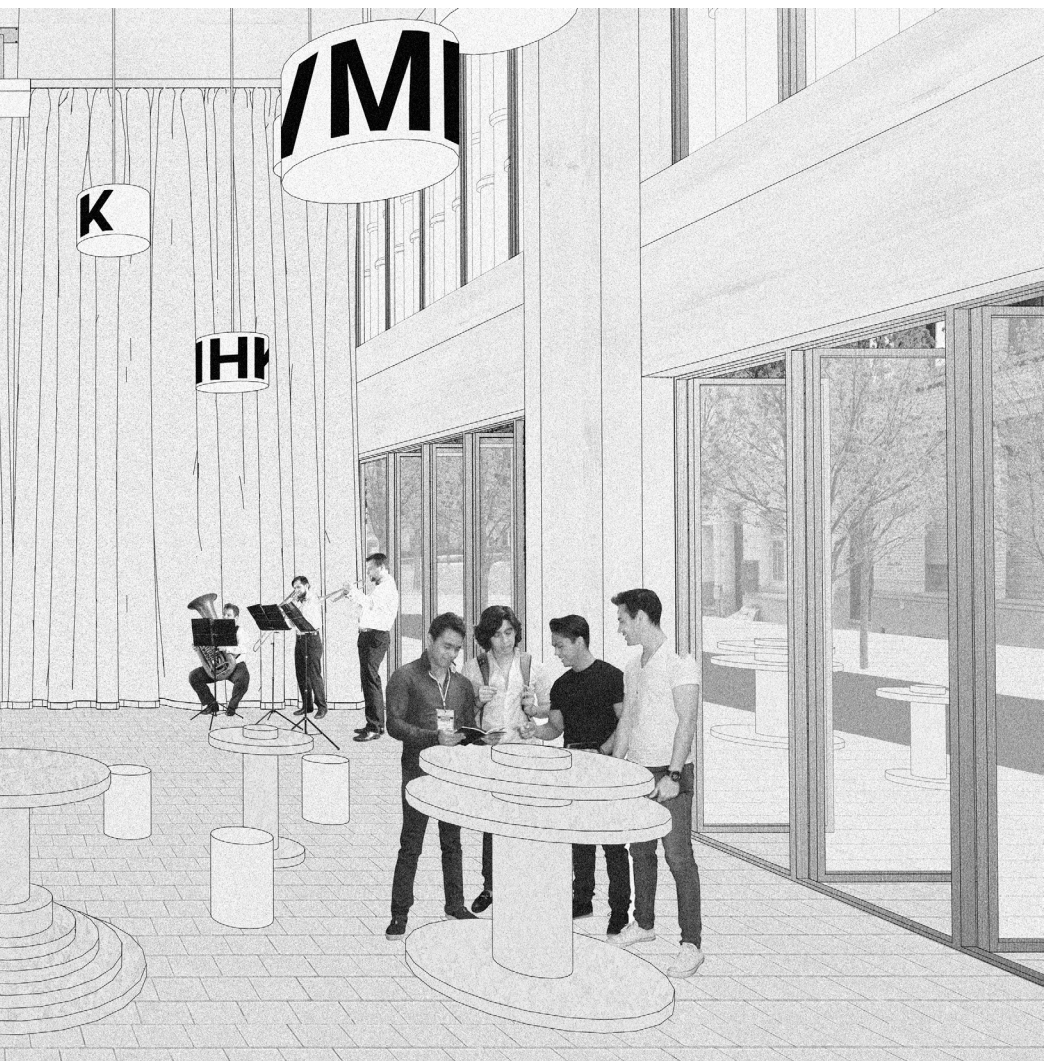


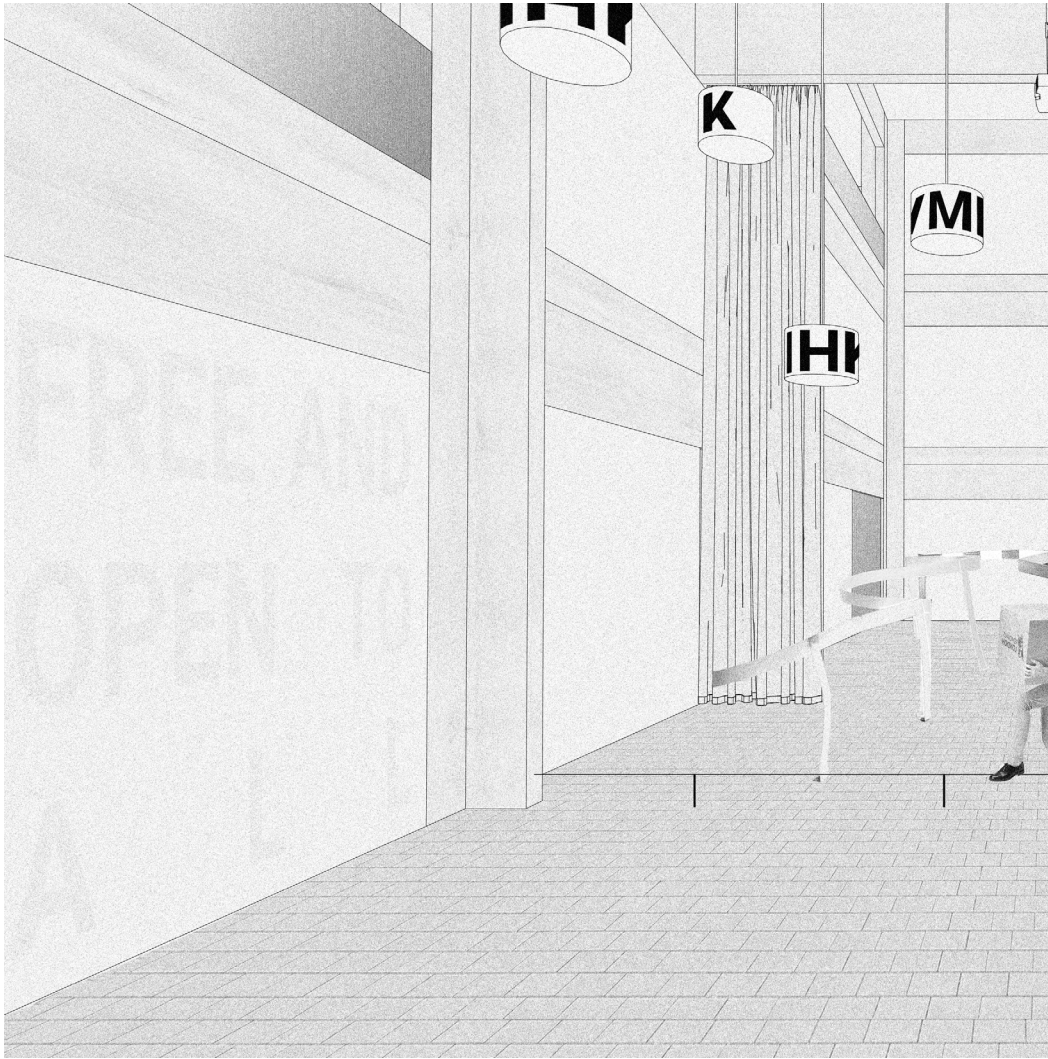
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 6/10



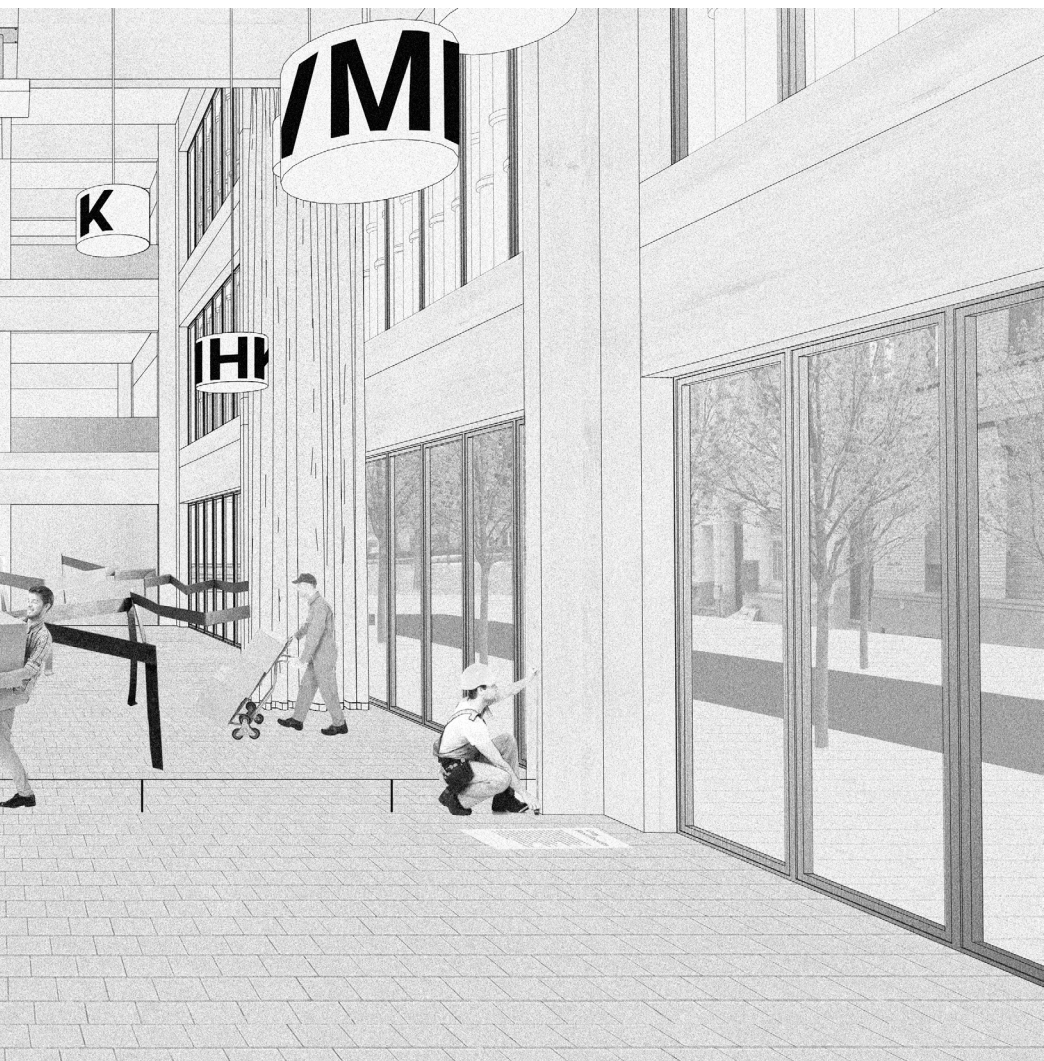


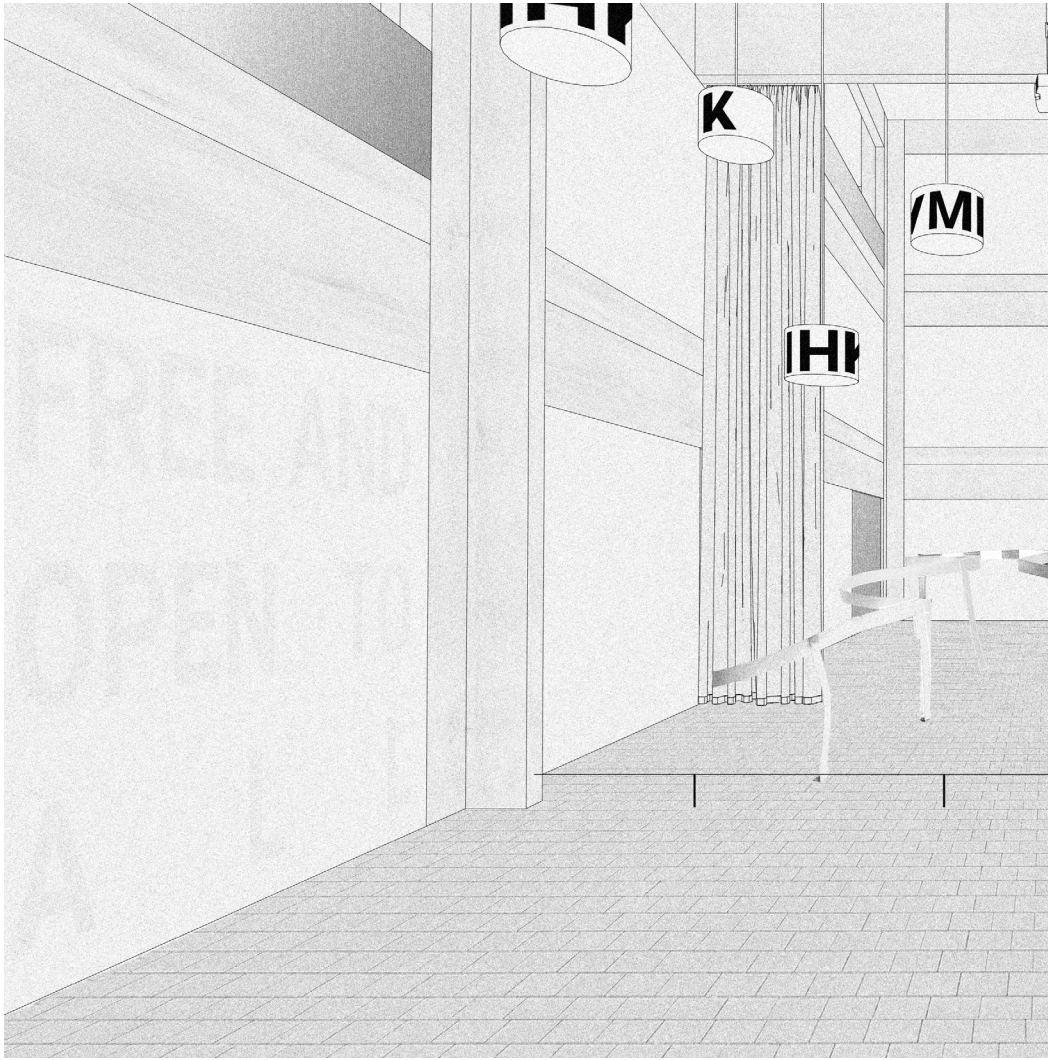
Stop frame animation of the forum space - 7/10





Stop frame animation of the forum space - 8/10



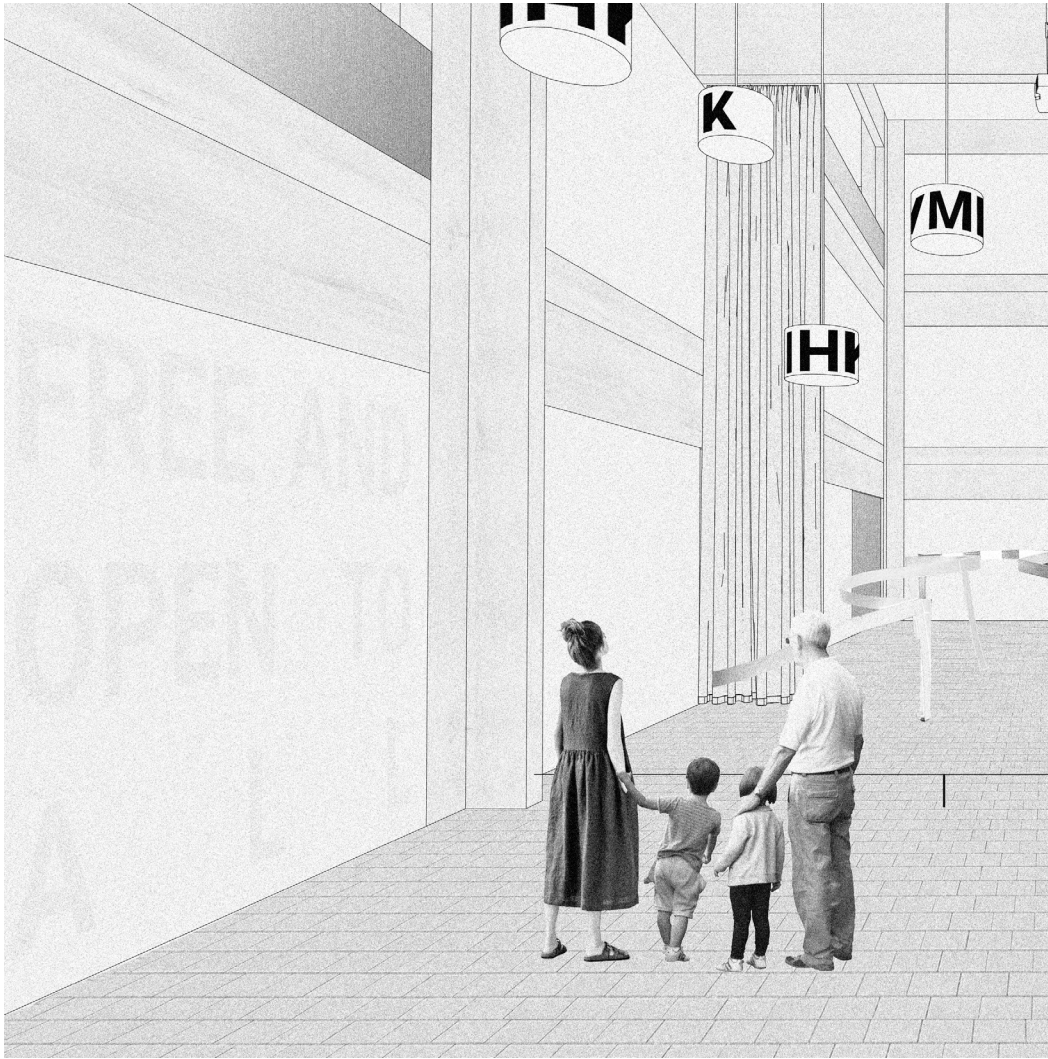


Stop frame animation of the forum space - 9/10



**Guy
Rombouts**

1964, Brussels, Belgium
1988-1991, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
1991-1994, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
1994-1997, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
1997-2000, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2000-2003, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2003-2006, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2006-2009, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2009-2012, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2012-2015, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2015-2018, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven
2018-2021, Architectural Institute of the University of Leuven

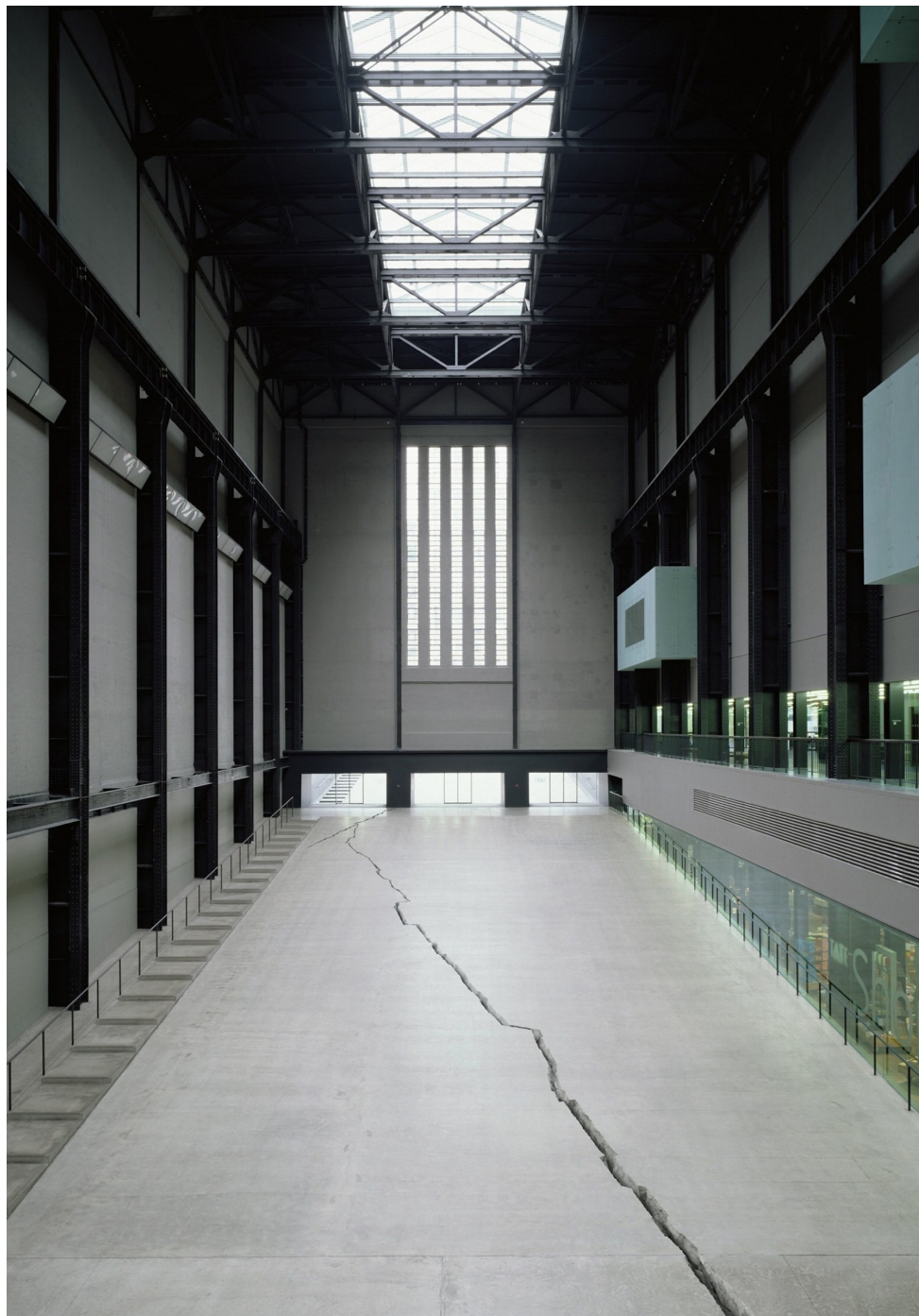


Stop frame animation of the forum space - 10/10



Guy
Rombouts

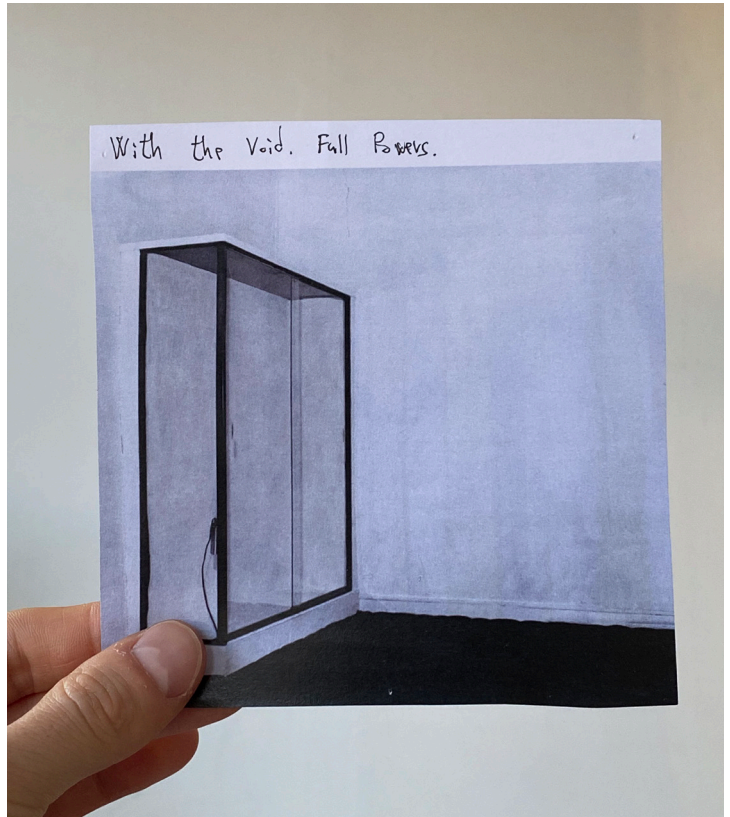
144 One notable inspiration is the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern in London. This iconic space demonstrates the power of repurposing and adaptive reuse. The vast and open expanse of the Turbine Hall showcases the beauty and potential of a space that does not prescribe a singular function. It invites visitors to interpret and engage with the space in their own unique ways, transforming it into a dynamic platform for artistic expression and public engagement.



@ Doris Salcedo
Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London

Doing nothing

- 146 The design for the forum space revolves around the idea of doing nothing, which is itself a significant architectural endeavour. Doing nothing does not imply a refusal to take action; rather, it represents a thoughtful and deliberate approach to the practice of architecture. It challenges the notion that architecture is solely about constructing physical structures and prompts us to reevaluate the purpose and meaning behind our built environment.



Yves Klein, Le Vide, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris (1958)

The exhibition 'Le Vide' by Yves Klein at Galerie Iris Clert in Paris serves as another source of inspiration. This exhibition, featuring an empty gallery, invites contemplation and challenges preconceived notions about art and space.

148 Architects Lacaton & Vassal have consistently embraced the idea of doing nothing as a fundamental approach to their architectural practice. Their projects, such as the FRAC and Palais de Tokyo, exemplify the transformative potential of this design philosophy.



Anne Lacaton (Milano Arch Week 2022/23)

Public lecture by Anne Lacaton during Milan Arch Week 2022/23

“Our project is to do nothing. Doing nothing is a project. It doesn’t mean that you refuse to do. But it means that it’s a right way of doing practice of architecture. It’s not building for building. It’s looking at the situation, evaluating, observing, analyzing, comparing with the program, with the brief and at the end give your opinion. Should we build this? or something else? Should we build something?” (Lacaton, 2022)



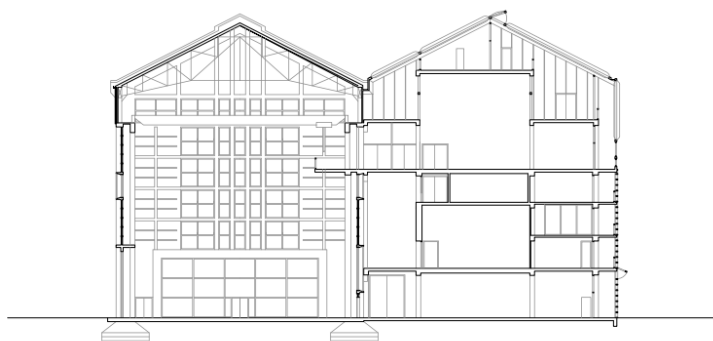
Lacaton & Vassal, Place Léon Aucoc, Bordeaux (1996)



Lacaton & Vassal, FRAC, Dunkirk (2013)

150 In the case of the FRAC Dunkirk, Lacaton & Vassal preserved the existing industrial building while creating a new addition that complements it. By adding a new building next to the old one, they were able to leave the original structure completely empty, allowing it to serve as an open canvas for future use.

This deliberate decision to leave the old building empty has multiple advantages. First of all, it offers flexibility for future adaptations or transformations, as the empty space can be reimagined and repurposed as needed.



Section. Lacaton & Vassal, FRAC, Dunkirk (2013)



Outside view. Lacaton & Vassal, FRAC, Dunkirk (2013)



The forum is an empty space





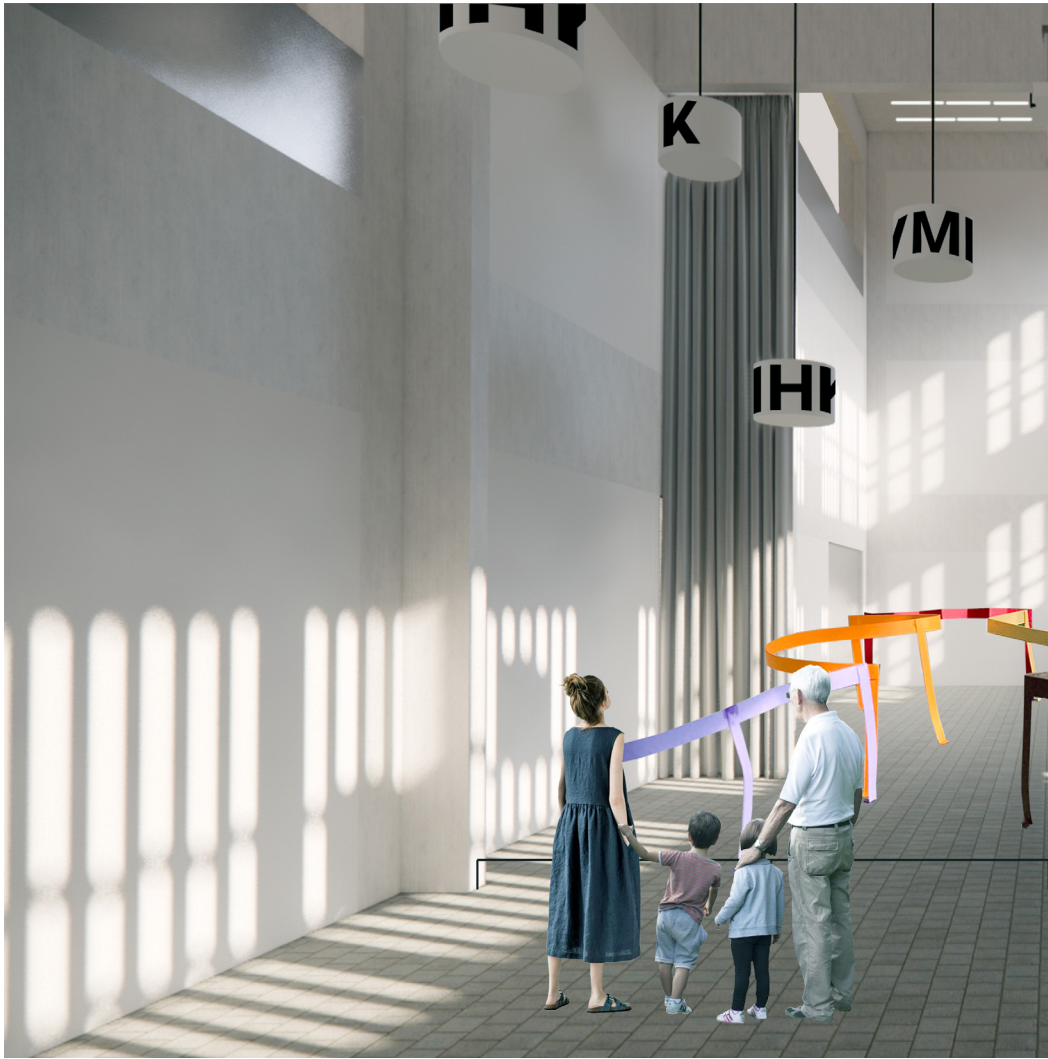
The forum is an auditorium





The forum is a cafeteria





The forum is an exhibition space

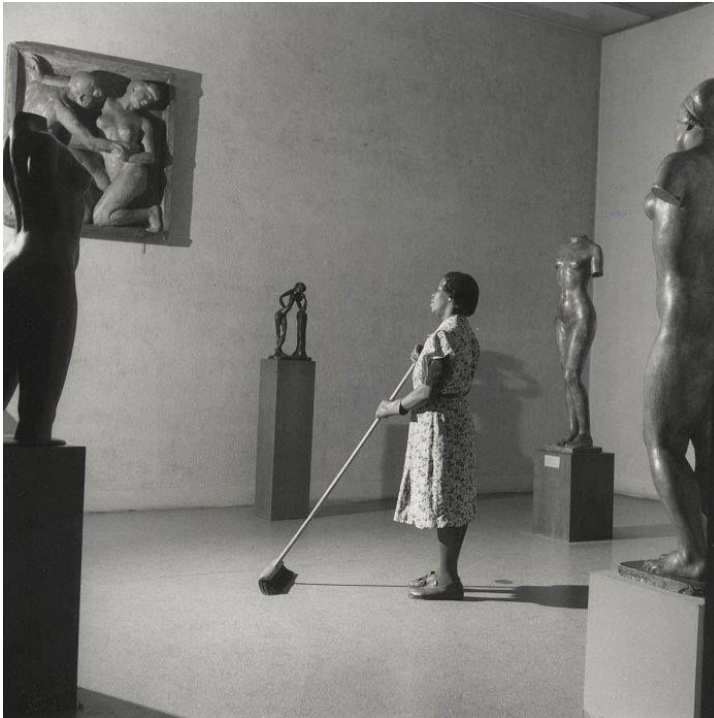


Gay Rombouts
Rombouts is a Dutch architect and interior designer. He is known for his minimalist and functional designs. He has worked on various projects, including residential, commercial, and institutional buildings. He is also a member of the Dutch Design Council and has received several awards for his work.

Workshop

The museum is not only an exhibition space but also a work environment, where different employees carry out their daily activities in a comfortable manner. These everyday working environments 'behind the scenes' are often as important as the spaces 'front stage'. The staff's well-being and comfort are central in this work environment, regardless where they are working. After all, an interplay is sought between the components of the museum, the internal activity of the institution and the museum as a back-office environment.

162 A museum is a complex machine fed by many figures: curators, collectors, benefactors and visitors. But also cleaners, archivists and receptionists. All these figures together represent the actual 'engine' of the museum. An engine made up of people without whom the museum machines cannot function.



@ Fritz Henle
Cleaning Lady in Museum of Modern Art, NYC (1948)



Back-office administration, M HKA Antwerp (2022)

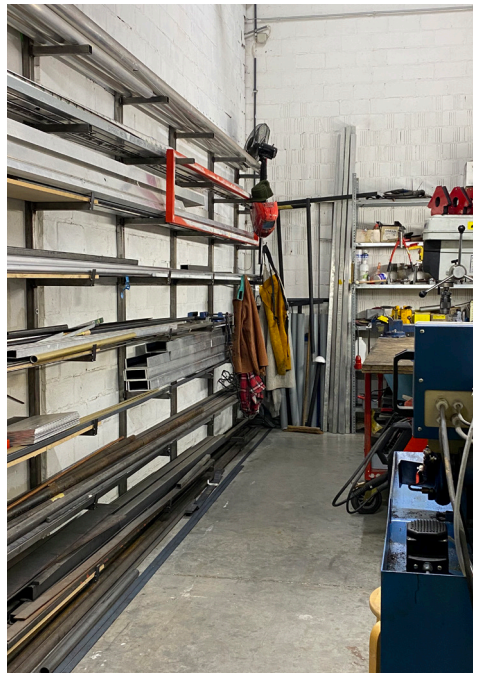


Back-office administration and library, M HKA Antwerp (2022)

Little attention is paid to spaces for workers. In which spaces in the museum do these people spend their time? When can the back-office area be shown and when should it be hidden from visitors? Or where is the cleaning storage space hidden?

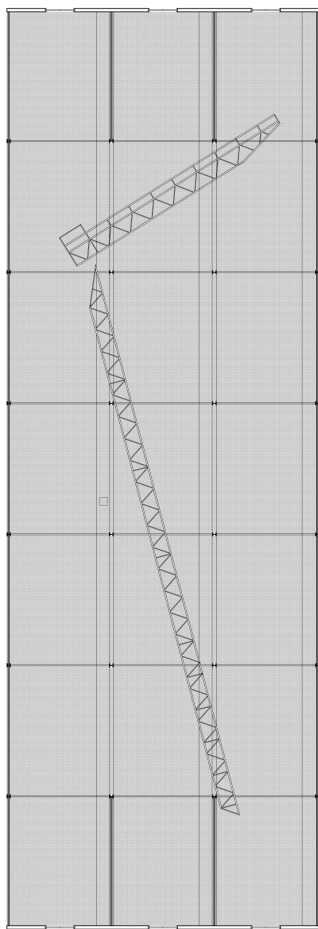


Art depot, M HKA Antwerp (2022)



Metal workshop, M HKA Antwerp (2022)

166 **Montevideo, Antwerp, 1981-84**



Plan of the exhibition 'Schaal en Perspectief', Montevideo, Antwerp (1981)

A huge harbour warehouse in the old port of Antwerp dedicated entirely to the art world and beyond. The flexibility of this space made it possible to organise performances, fashion shows, concerts, dance, theatre and cinema.

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Montevideo warehouse in Antwerp. View from the outside.



Annie Gentils, one of Montevideo's founders



Exhibition 'Schaal en Perspectief', Montevideo, Antwerp (1981)

Architectural character

- 168 *"In the winter of 1981, the impressive exhibition Schaal en Perspectief (Scale and Perspective) by Luc Deleu took place; a lying crane engaged in spatial dialogue with the specific architectural character of the Montevideo space."* (Hanssens, 2009)

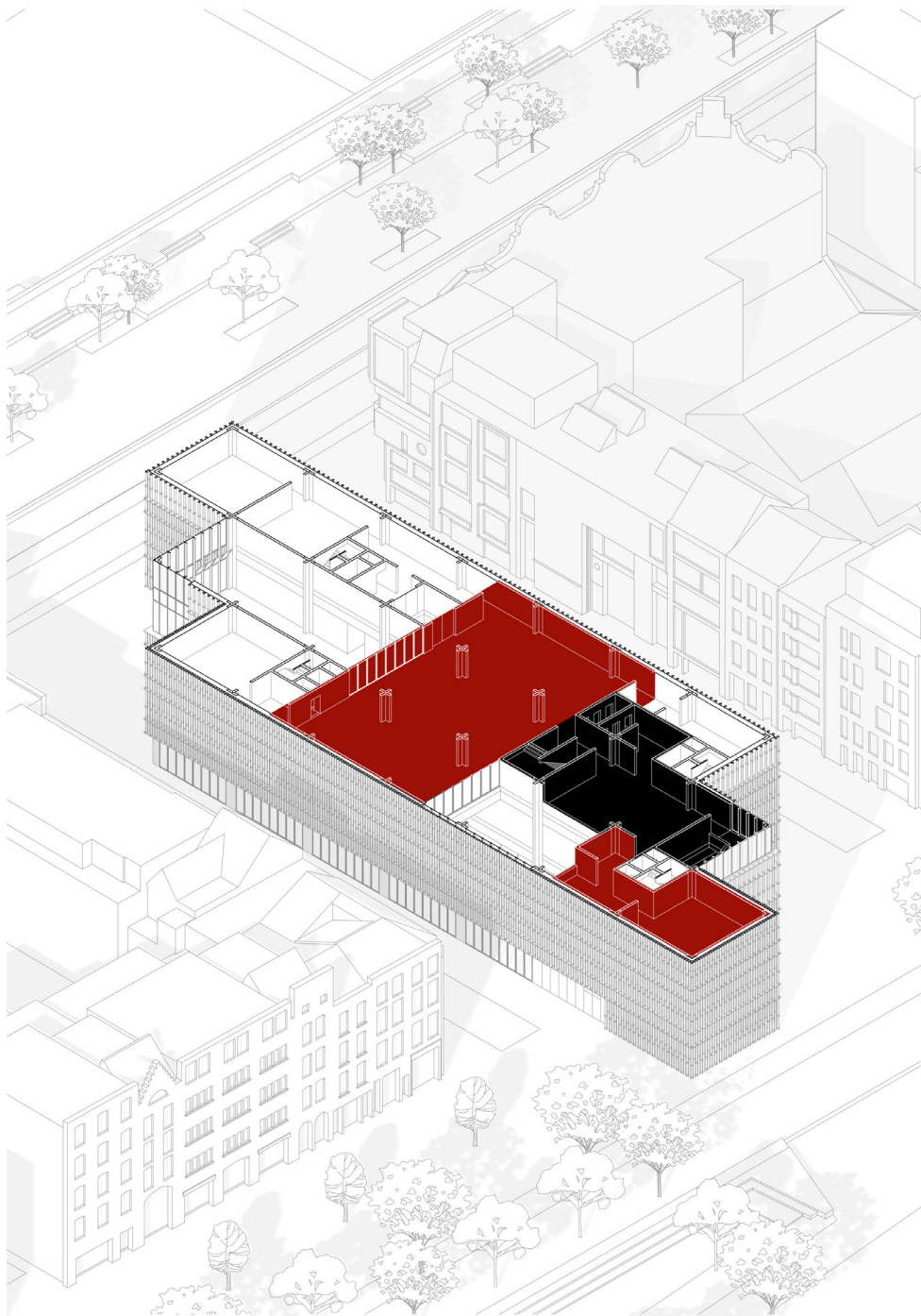


Spatial freedom

Exhibitions with lying cranes and shipping containers. The large exhibition space in Montevideo provided artists a rare spatial freedom. The current M HKA building in Antwerp has no such large space.

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170 The workshop spaces in the new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art are located on the second floor, featuring one of the largest exhibition rooms within the museum. Inspired by the iconic Montevideo harbour warehouse in Antwerp, the space exudes an industrial charm. Its defining feature is the prominent presence of cruciform columns, which contribute to its aesthetic appeal and structural integrity. Columns can be utilized to divide the big open space into smaller sections, allowing for adaptable configurations and various uses. The workshop area serves as a flexible environment that can be closed off for exclusive use by museum staff, providing a dedicated workshop space for experimentation and the meticulous preparation of new exhibitions. Alternatively, it can be opened to the public, transforming into an engaging exhibition space.



Axonometry, second floor.

In black the spaces open to everyone, in red the workshop and the paid galleries.



The workshop





The workshop open to the public





The workshop space can be turned into an exhibition space



Exhibition space

One of the most critical aspects of a museum is the arrangement of the artworks. Indeed, in the words of Georges Didi-Huberman, even simply “moving an object makes a montage. And a new montage is like a new sentence: it means something else” (Taddio, 2020).

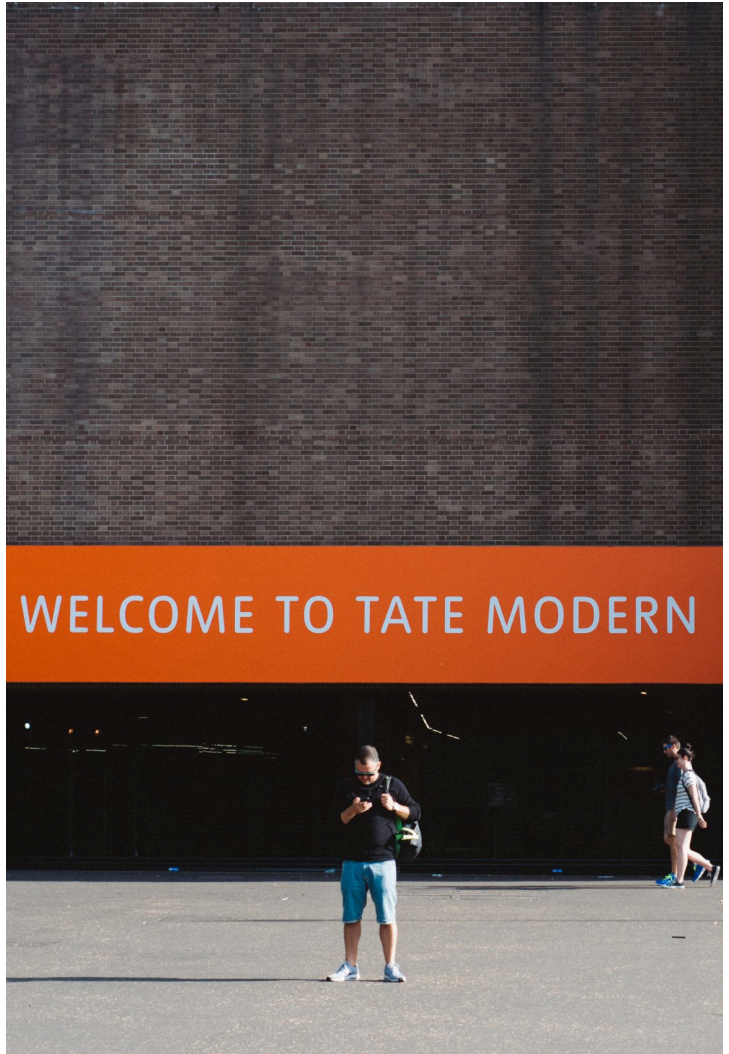
179

Especially inside a museum of contemporary art, where usually exhibition spaces are characterised by a neutral character that aims to create a more intimate relationship between the observer and the works of art. Inside the white cube, every smallest gesture brings about big changes. The architect must therefore leave aside any delusions of protagonism and leave space for the real protagonists of the museum, i.e. the artworks.

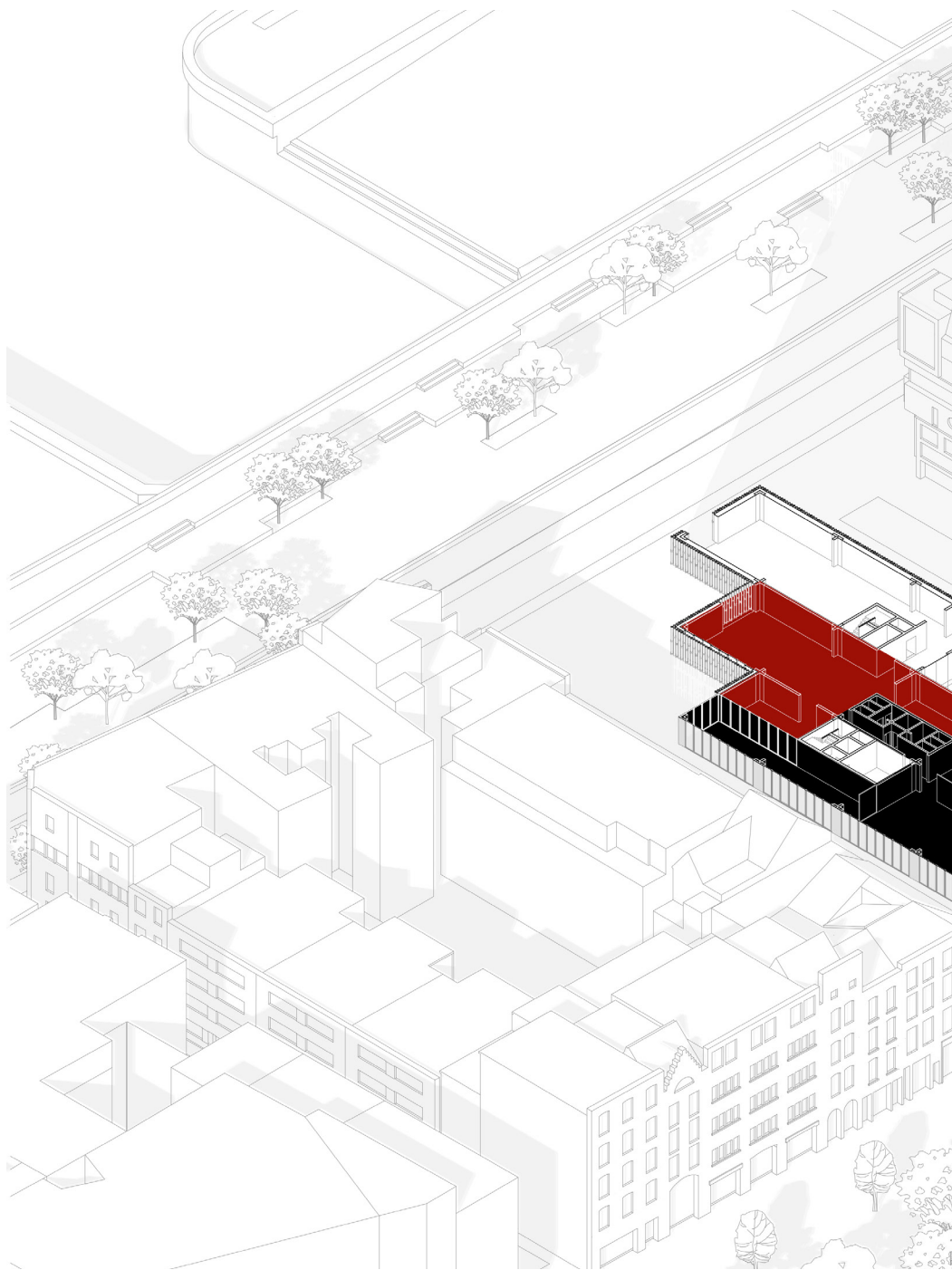
A museum open to all

180 As specified in the brief, it must be possible to hold at least one large and several medium-sized exhibitions at the same time. In the current building it is difficult to set up smaller exhibitions.

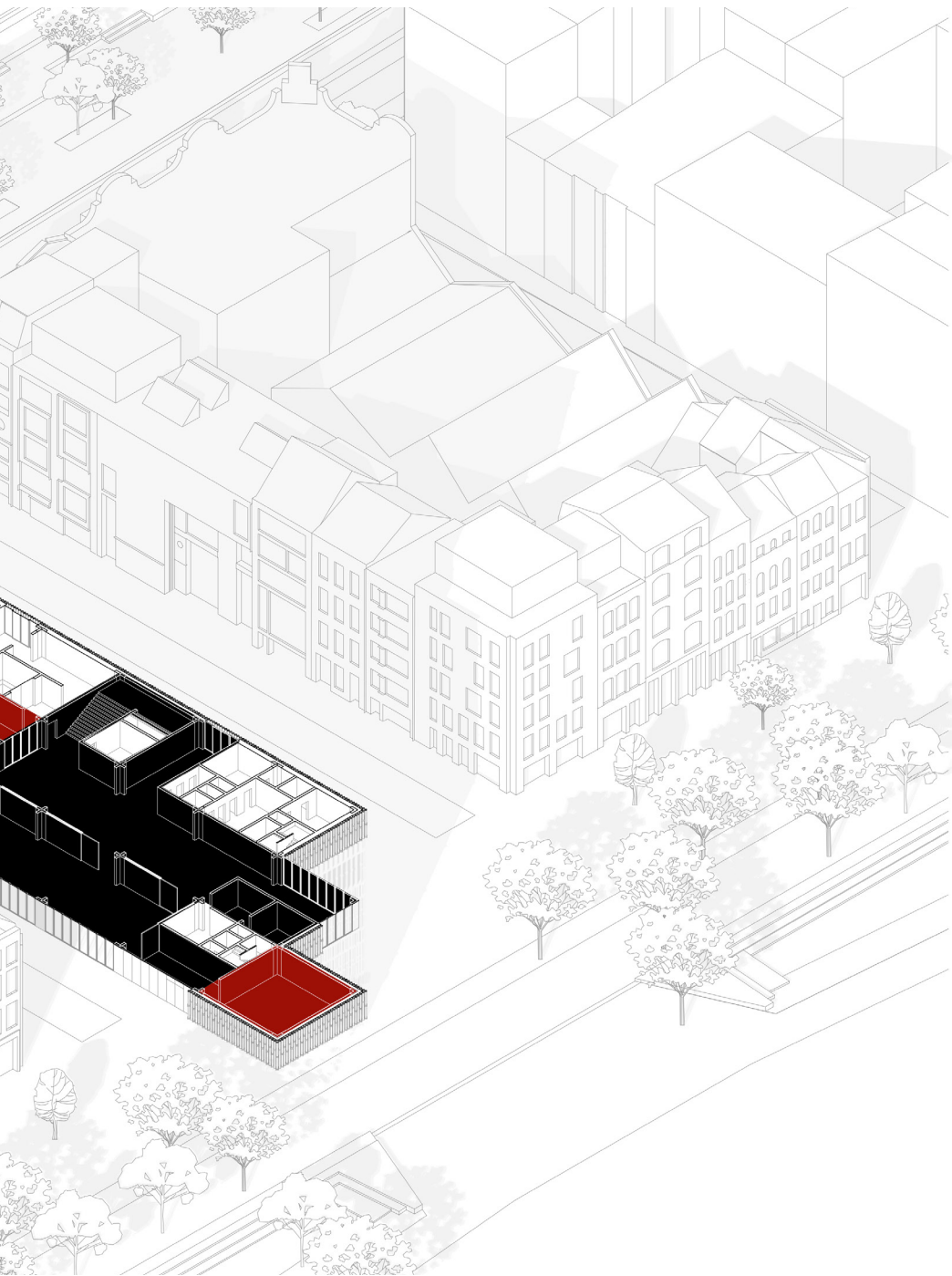
To address the need for staging multiple exhibitions of varying sizes simultaneously, the design of the museum should focus on providing flexible exhibition spaces. Taking inspiration from the Tate in London, which offers a diverse range of galleries with both free and paid entry, the new museum can adopt a similar approach. The layout can include large exhibition halls capable of accommodating sizable displays, alongside smaller galleries that cater specifically to medium-sized exhibitions. By offering a mix of free and paid entry spaces, the museum can ensure accessibility for all while also generating revenue to sustain its operations. This approach enables the museum to create a dynamic and inclusive environment for showcasing diverse collections and engaging visitors of different interests and preferences.

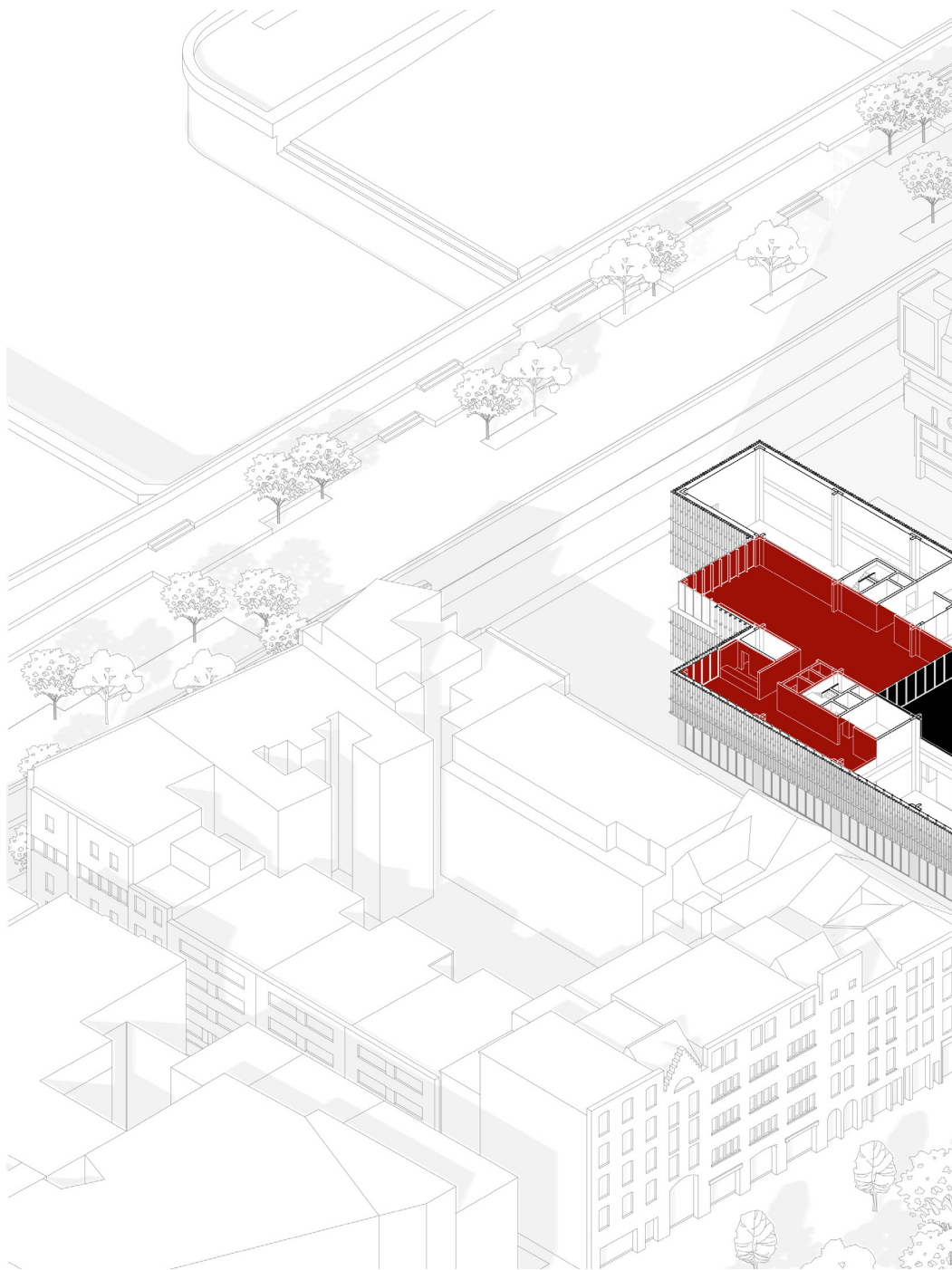


Entrance, Tate Modern, London

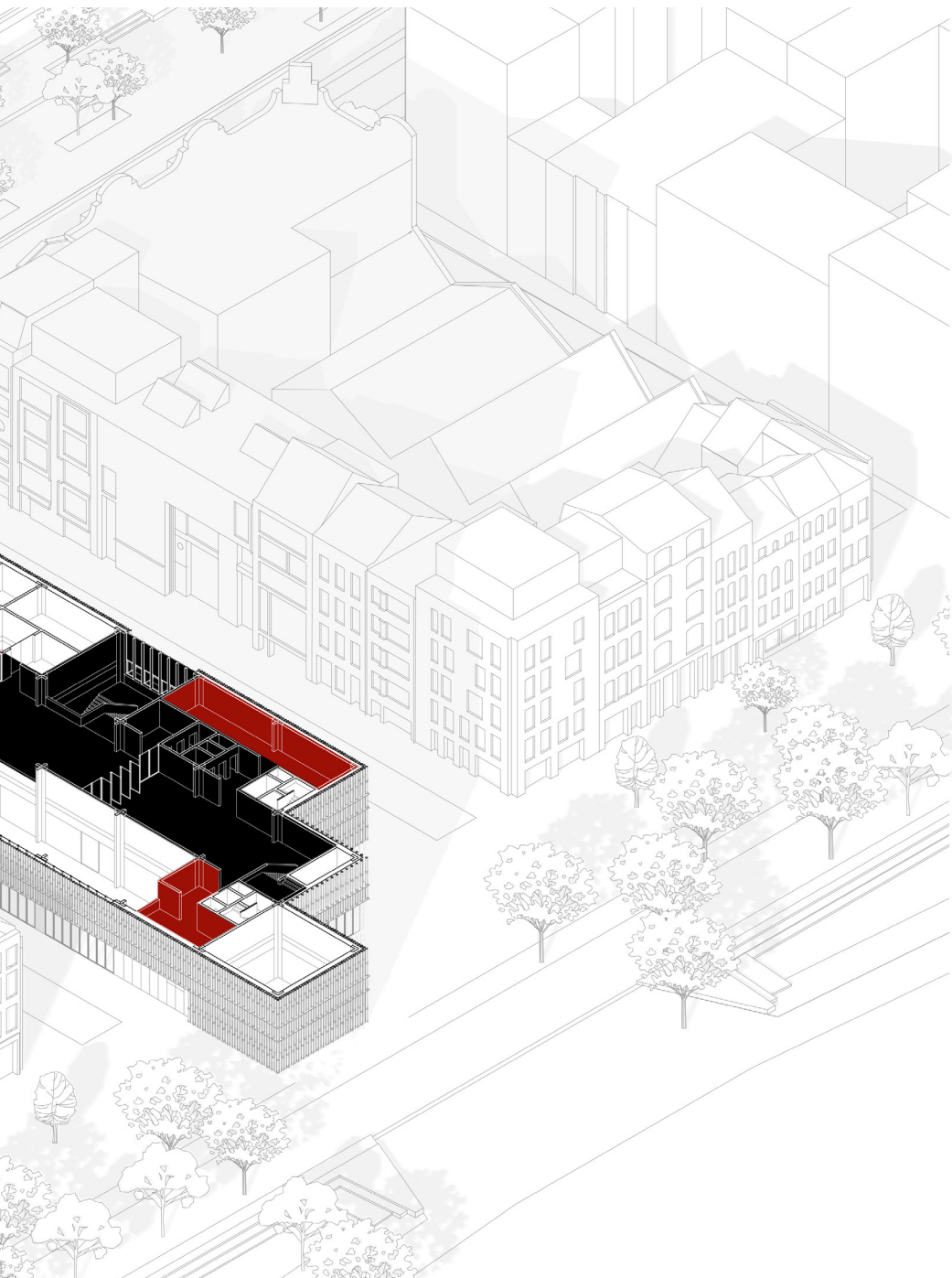


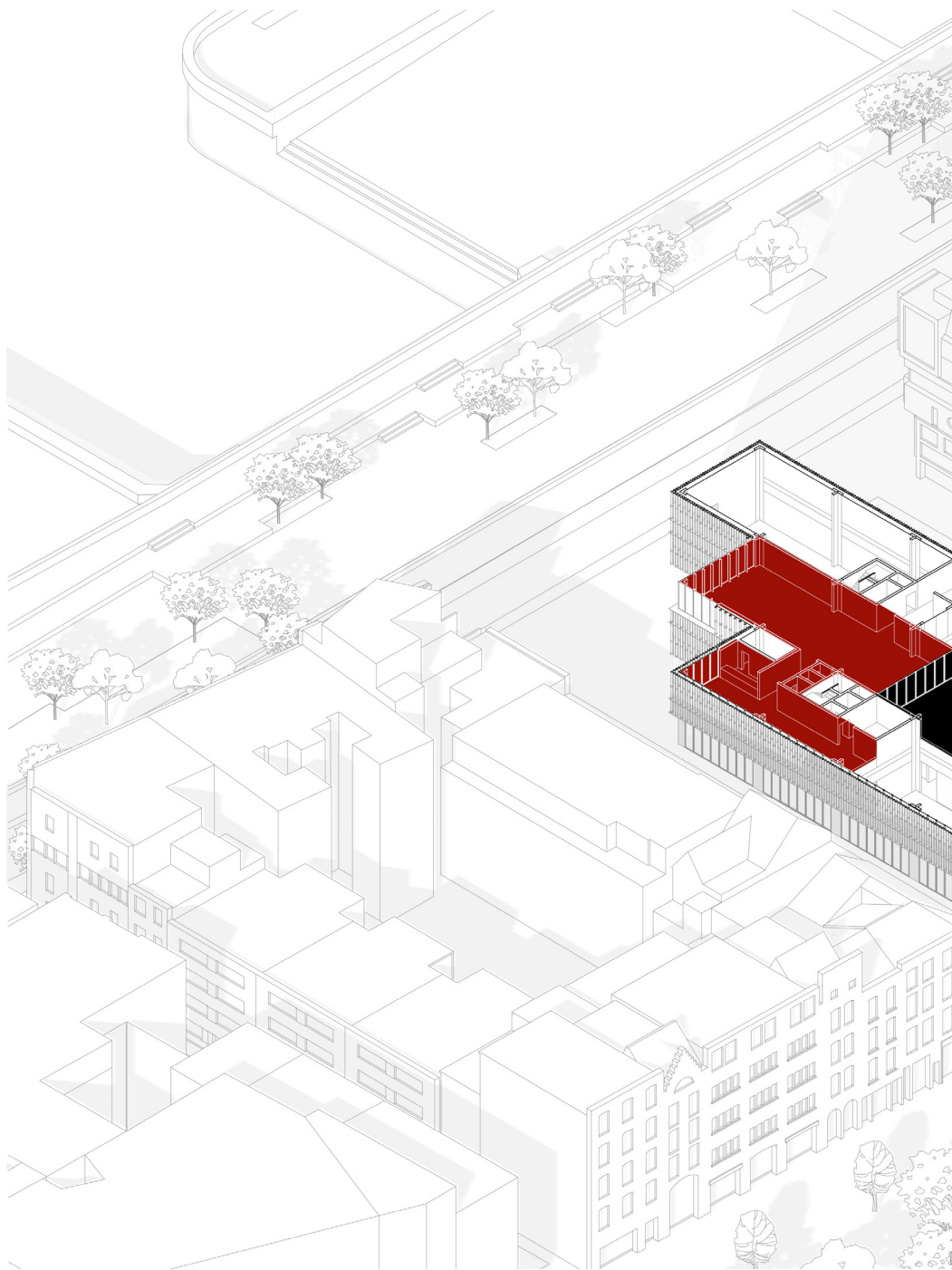
Axonometry. Ground floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



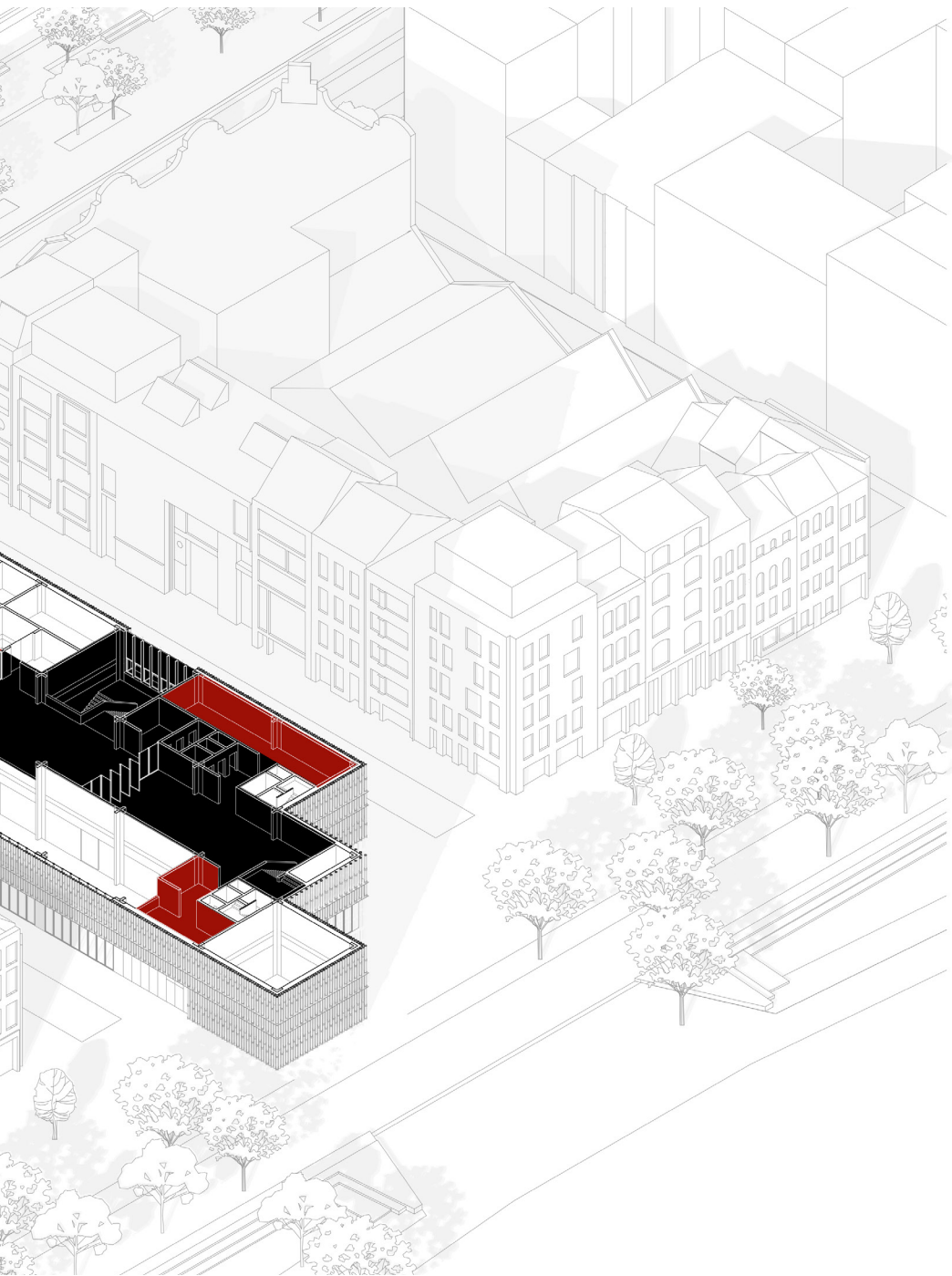


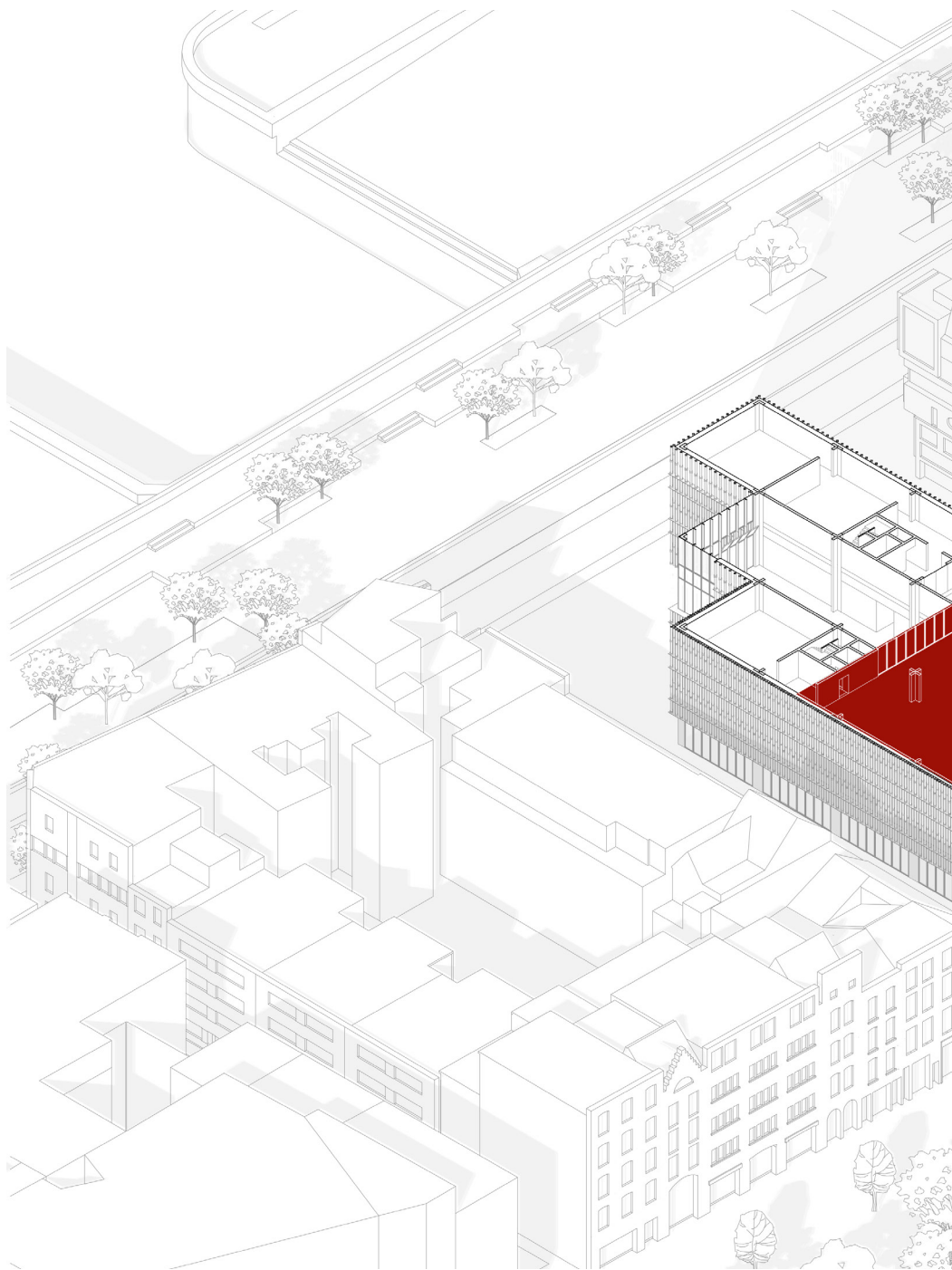
Axonometry. 1st floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



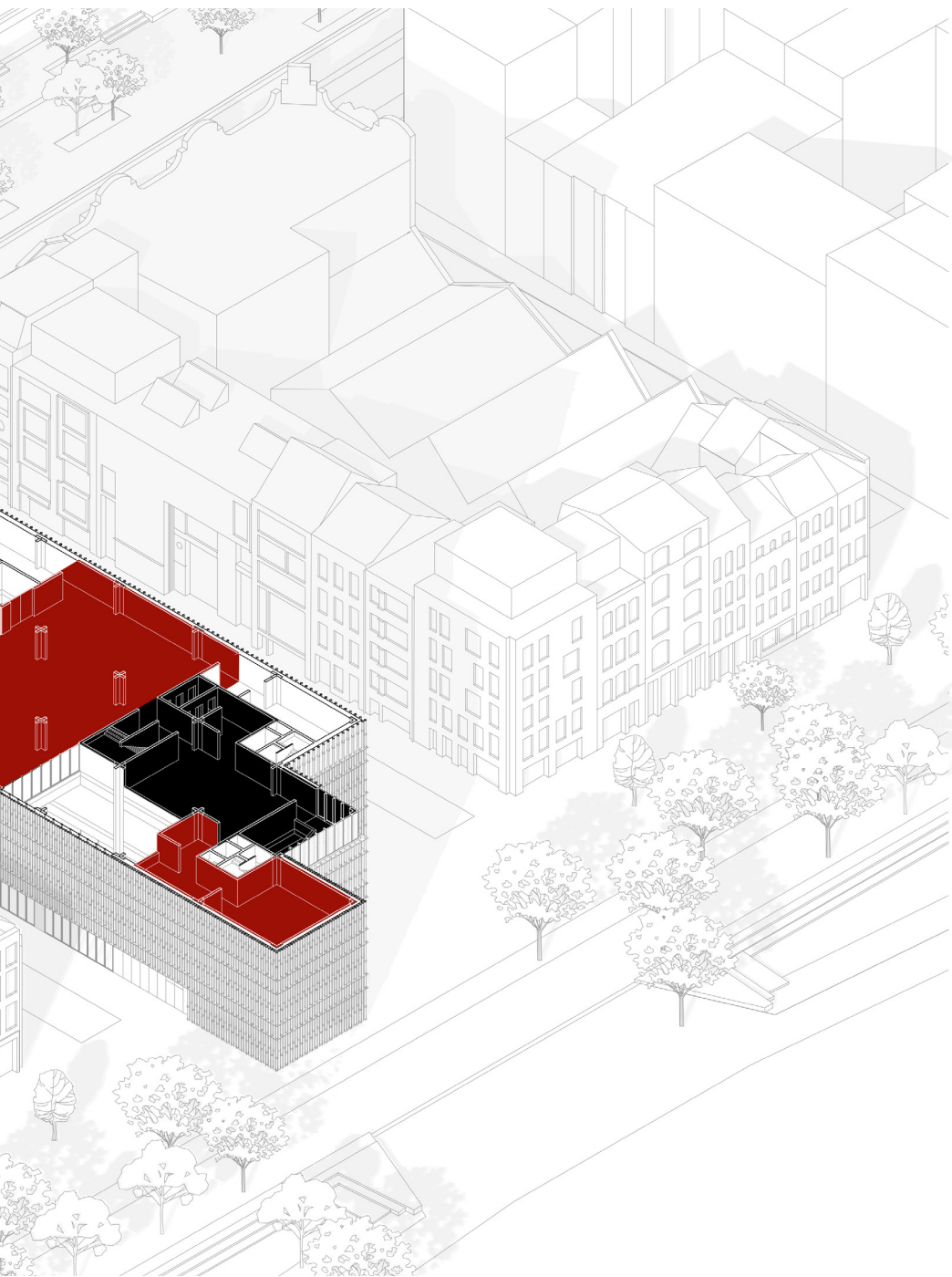


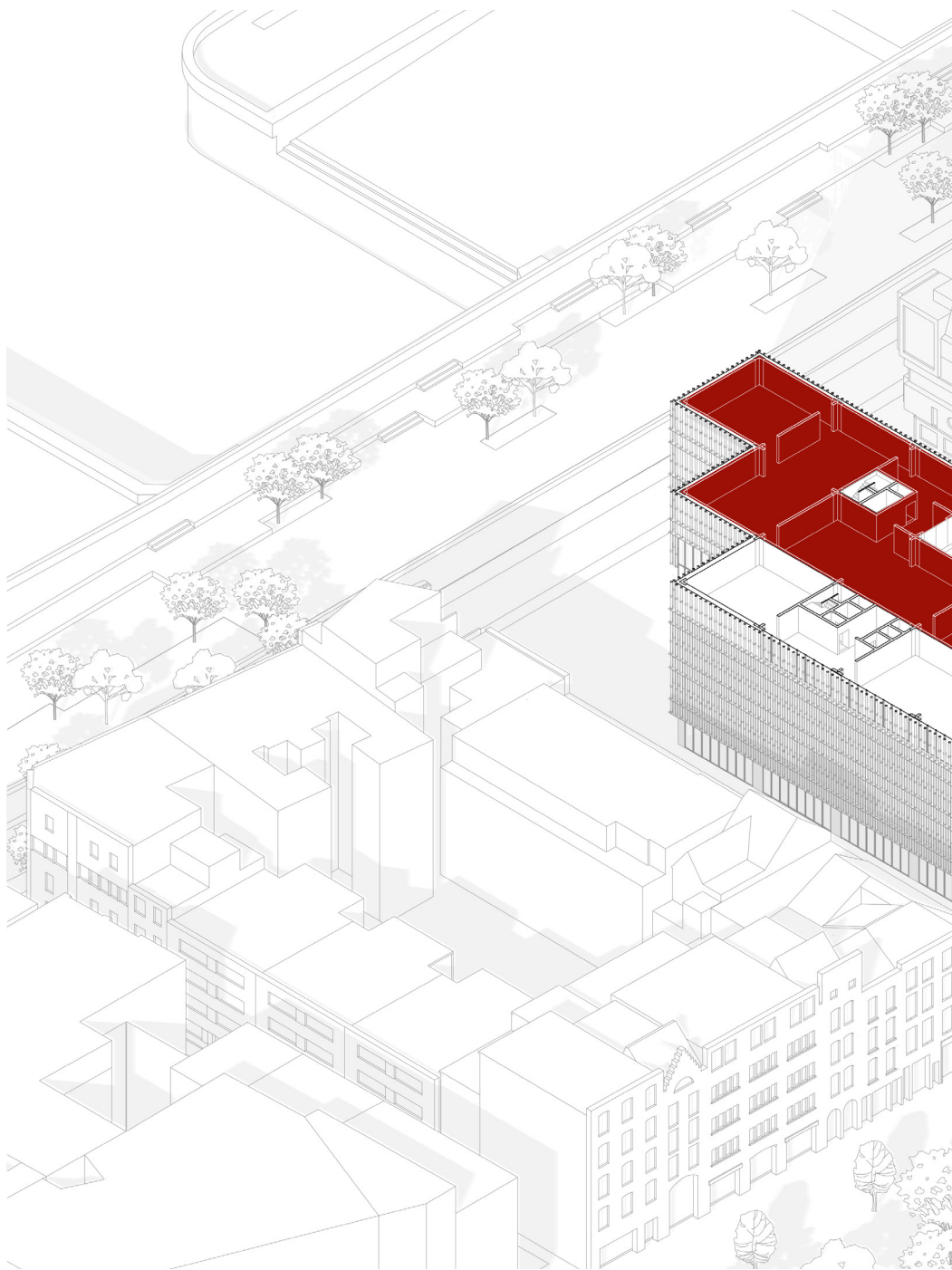
Axonometry. 2nd floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



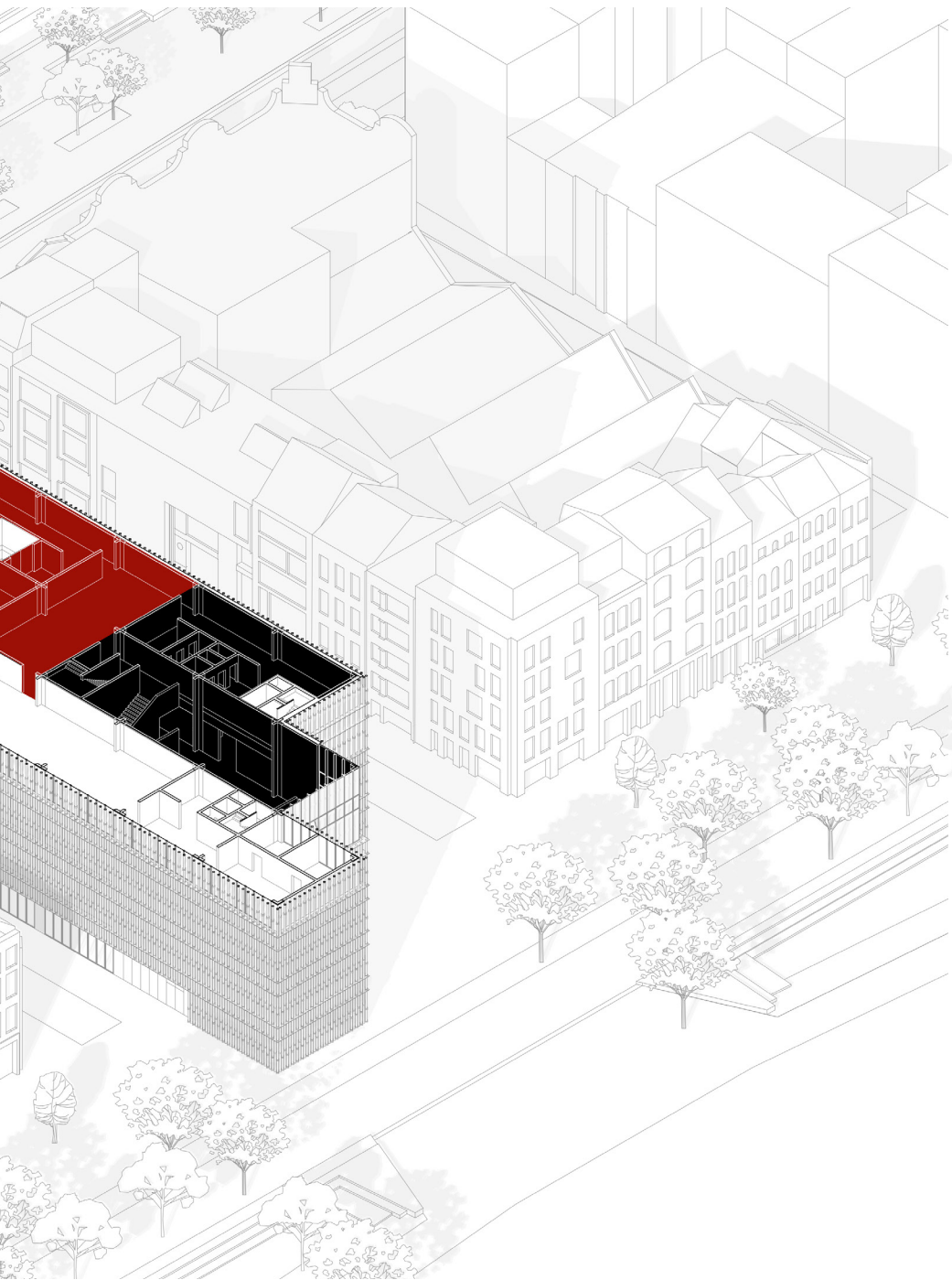


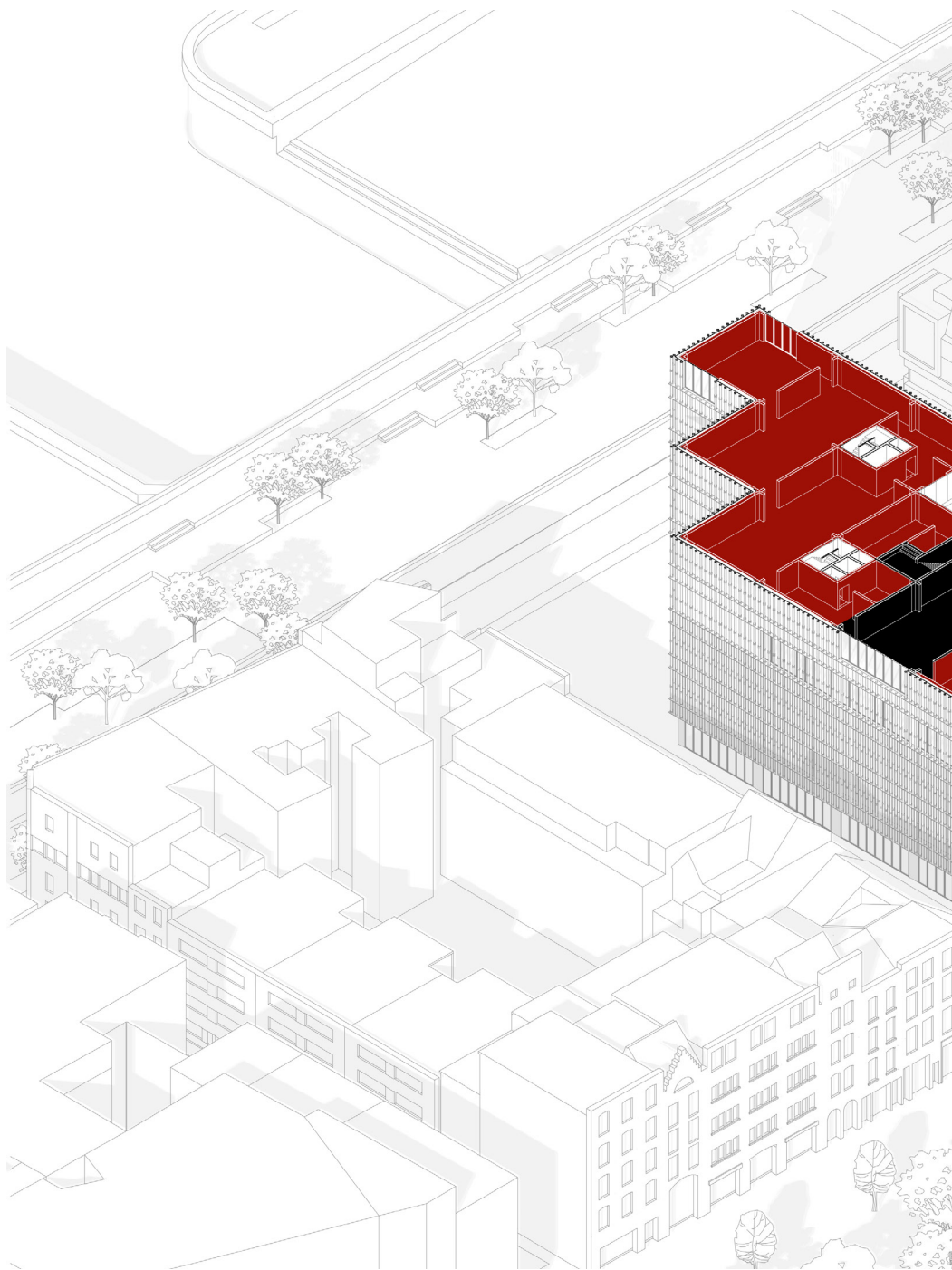
Axonometry. 3rd floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



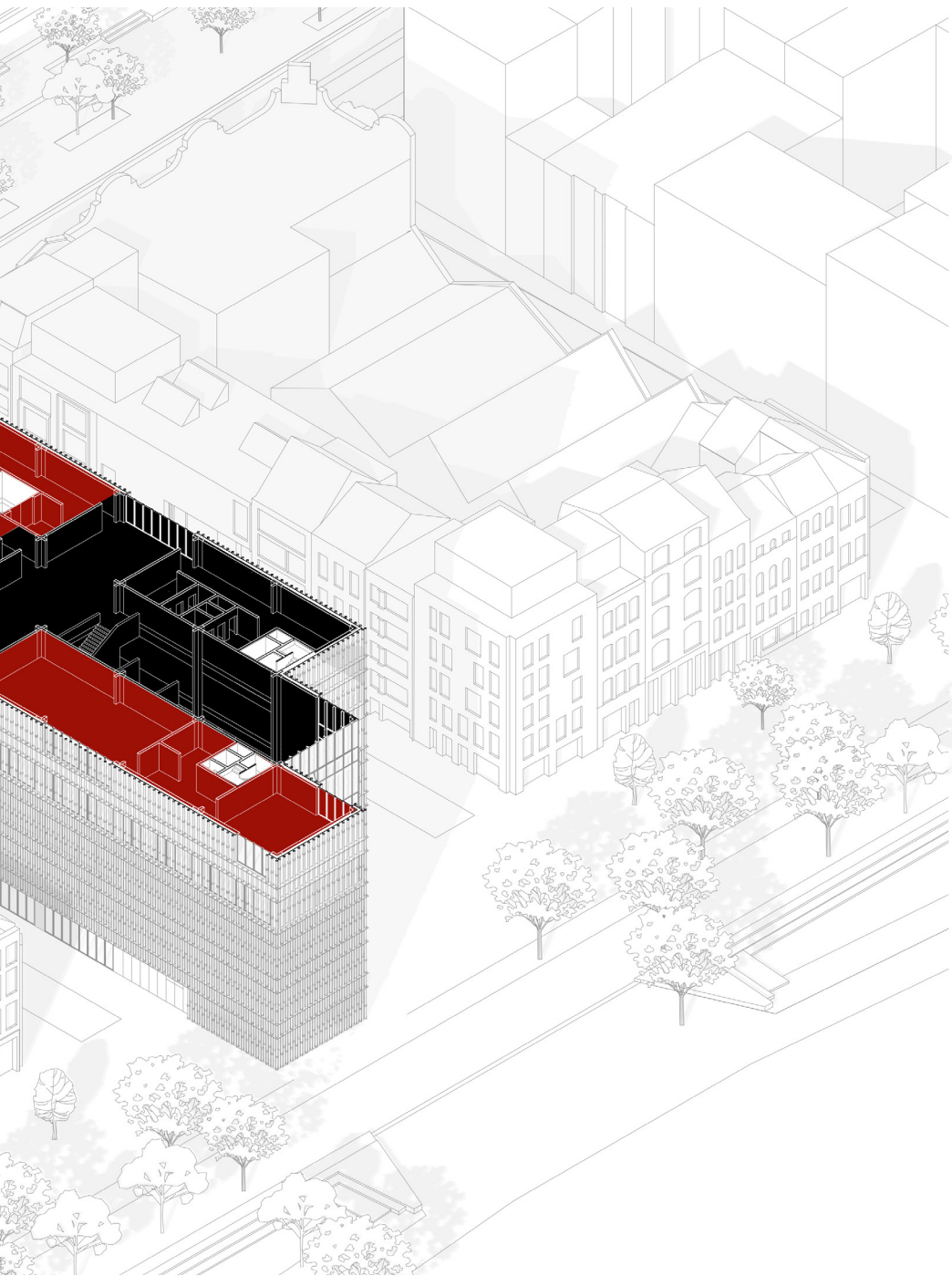


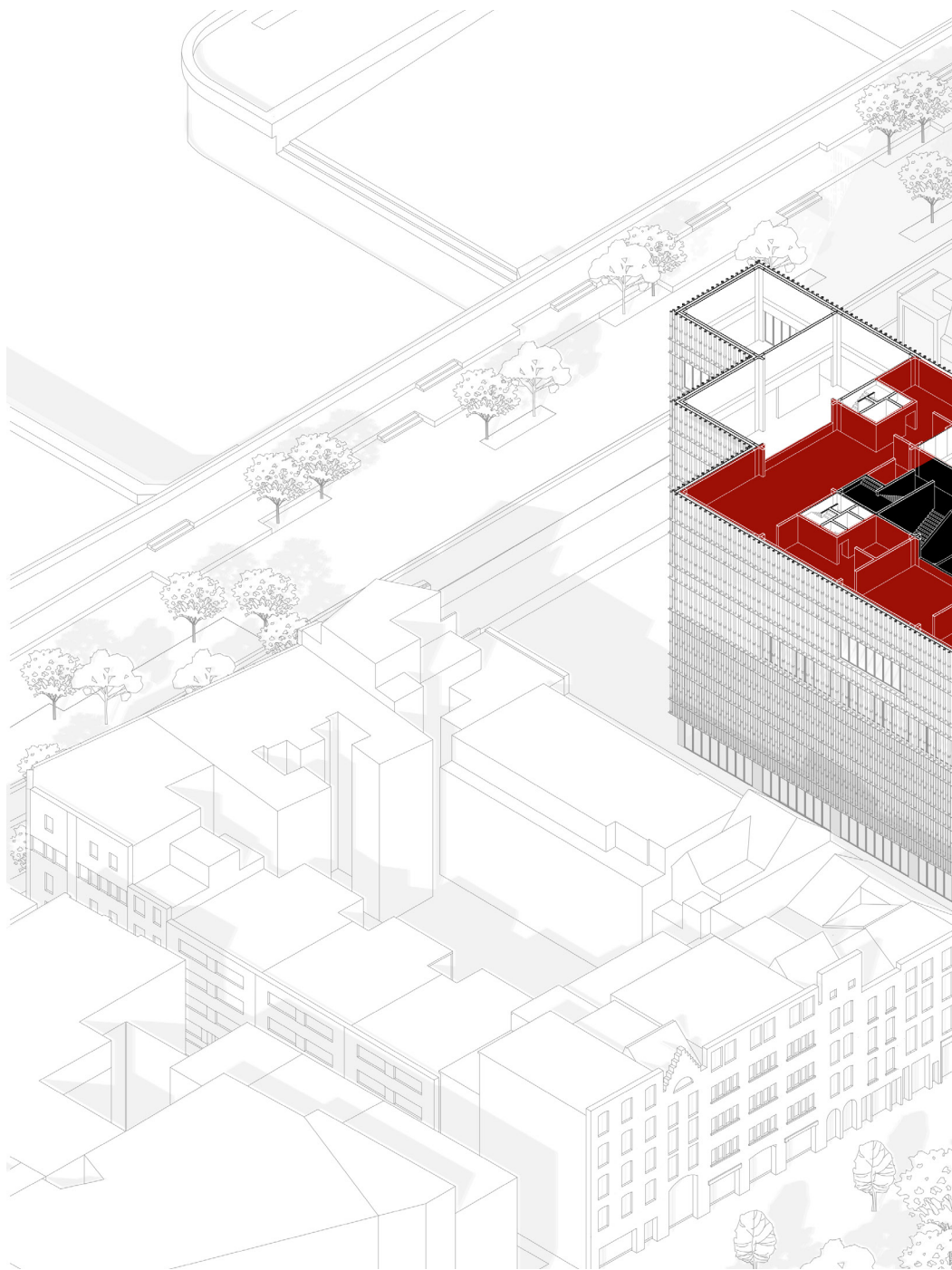
Axonometry. 4th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



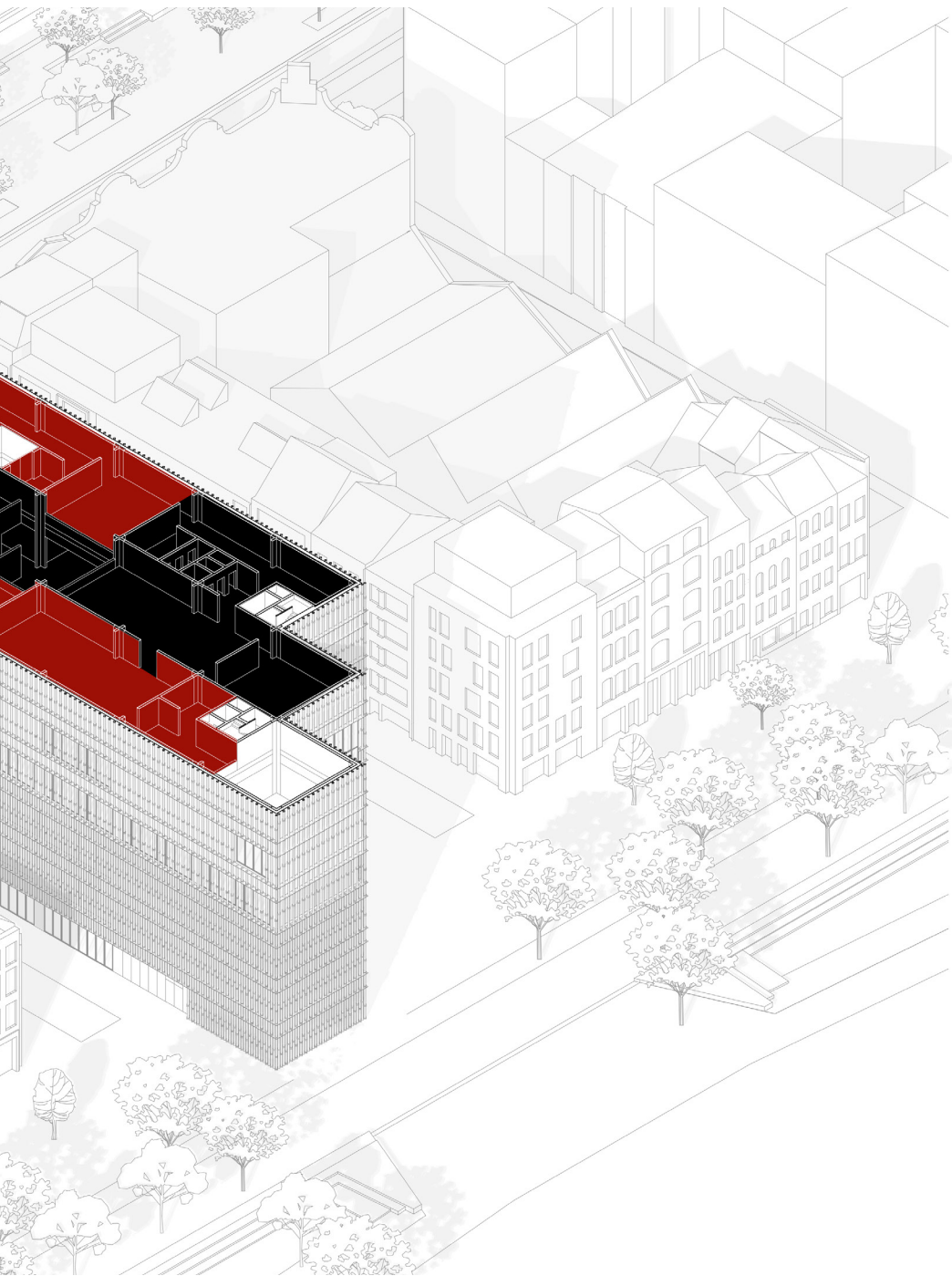


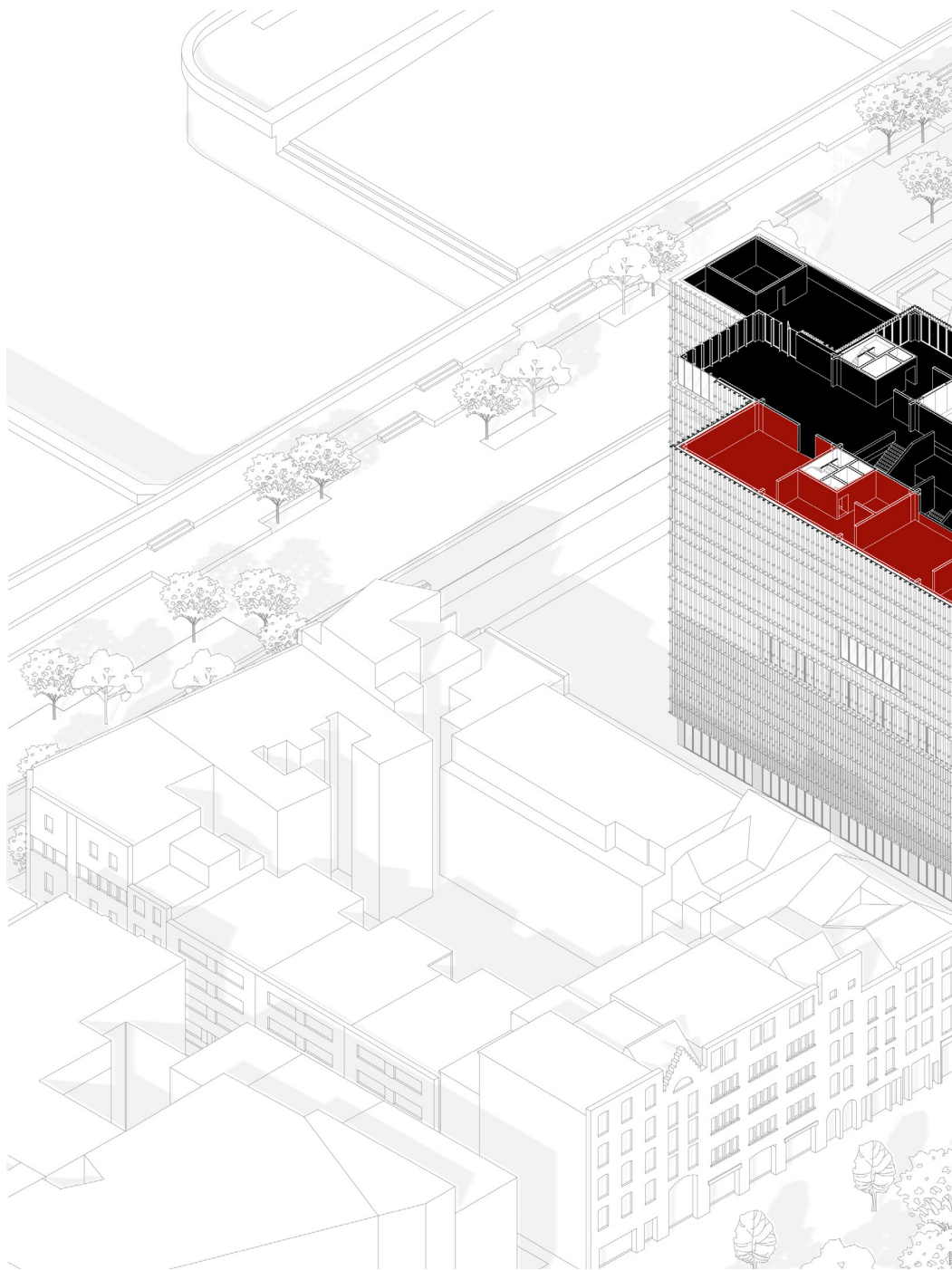
Axonometry. 5th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



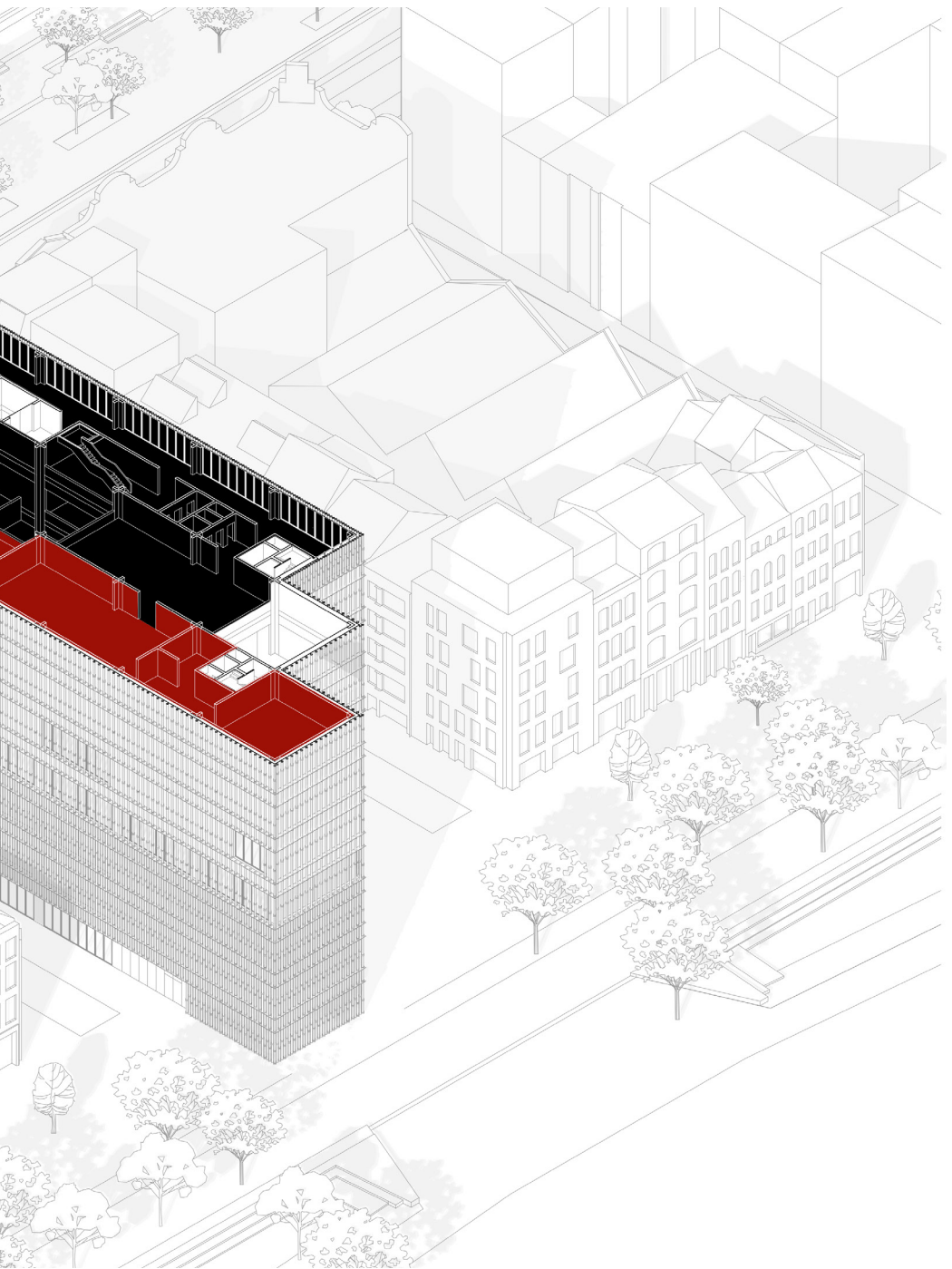


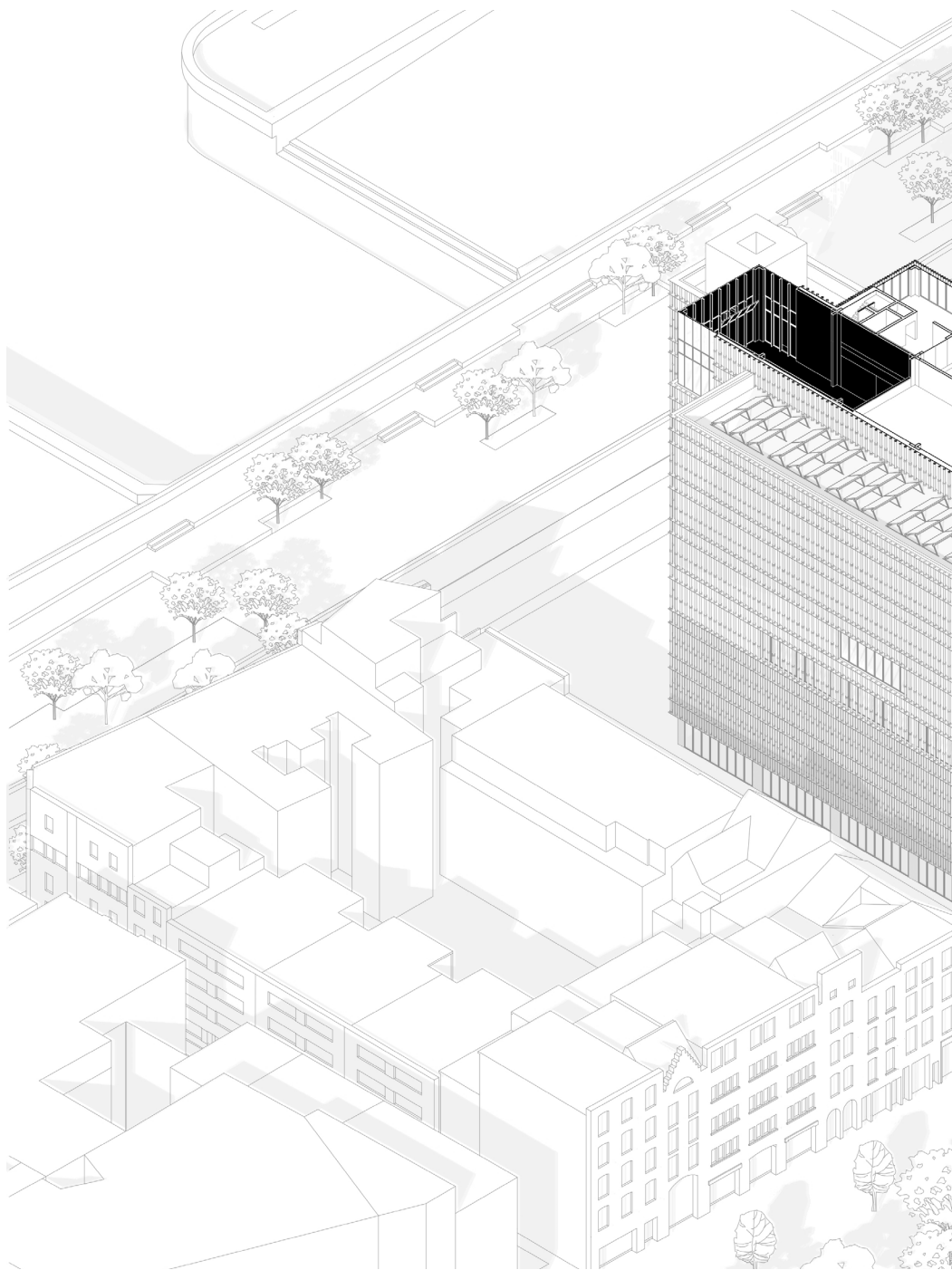
Axonometry. 6th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.





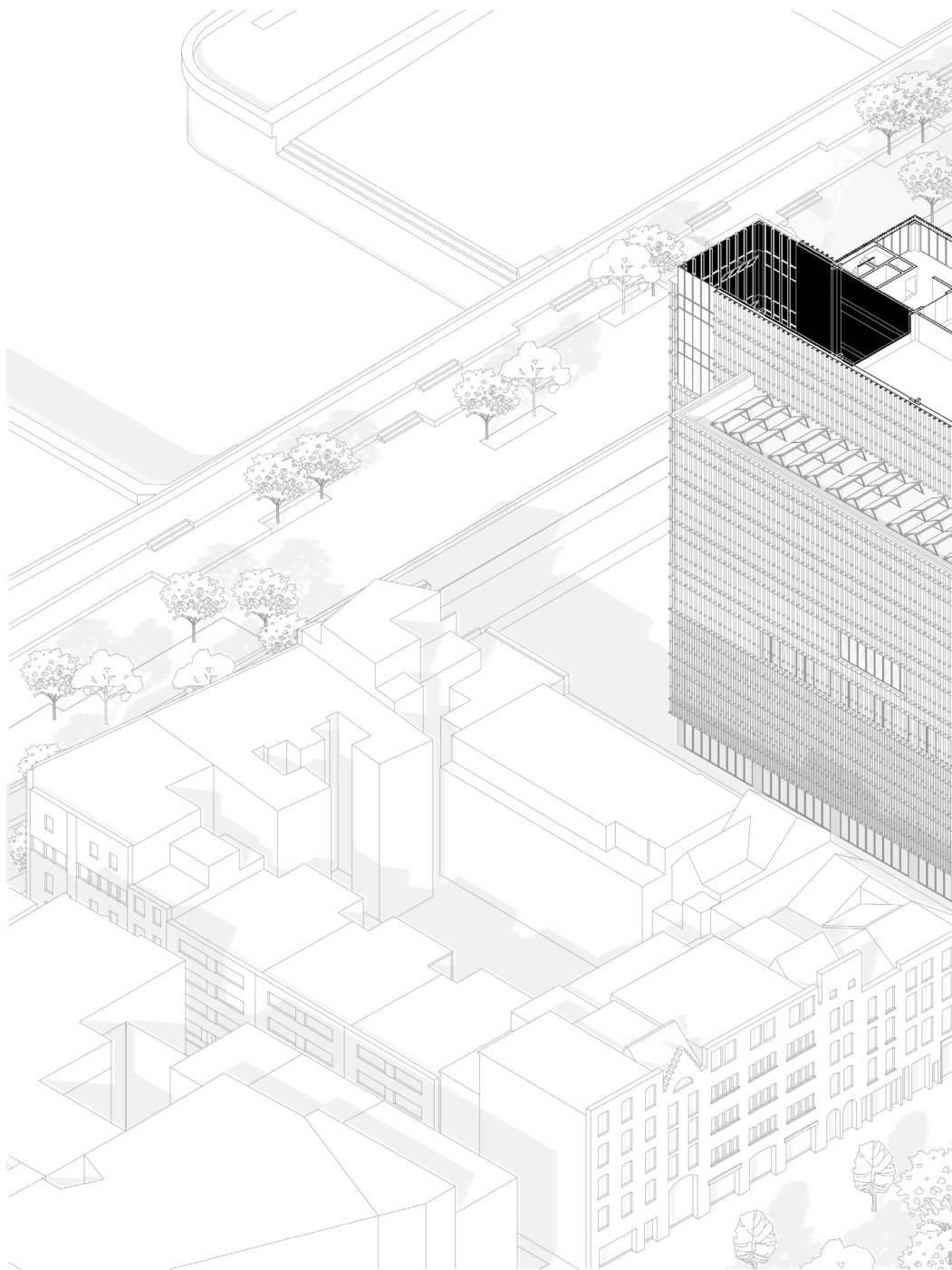
Axonometry. 7th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



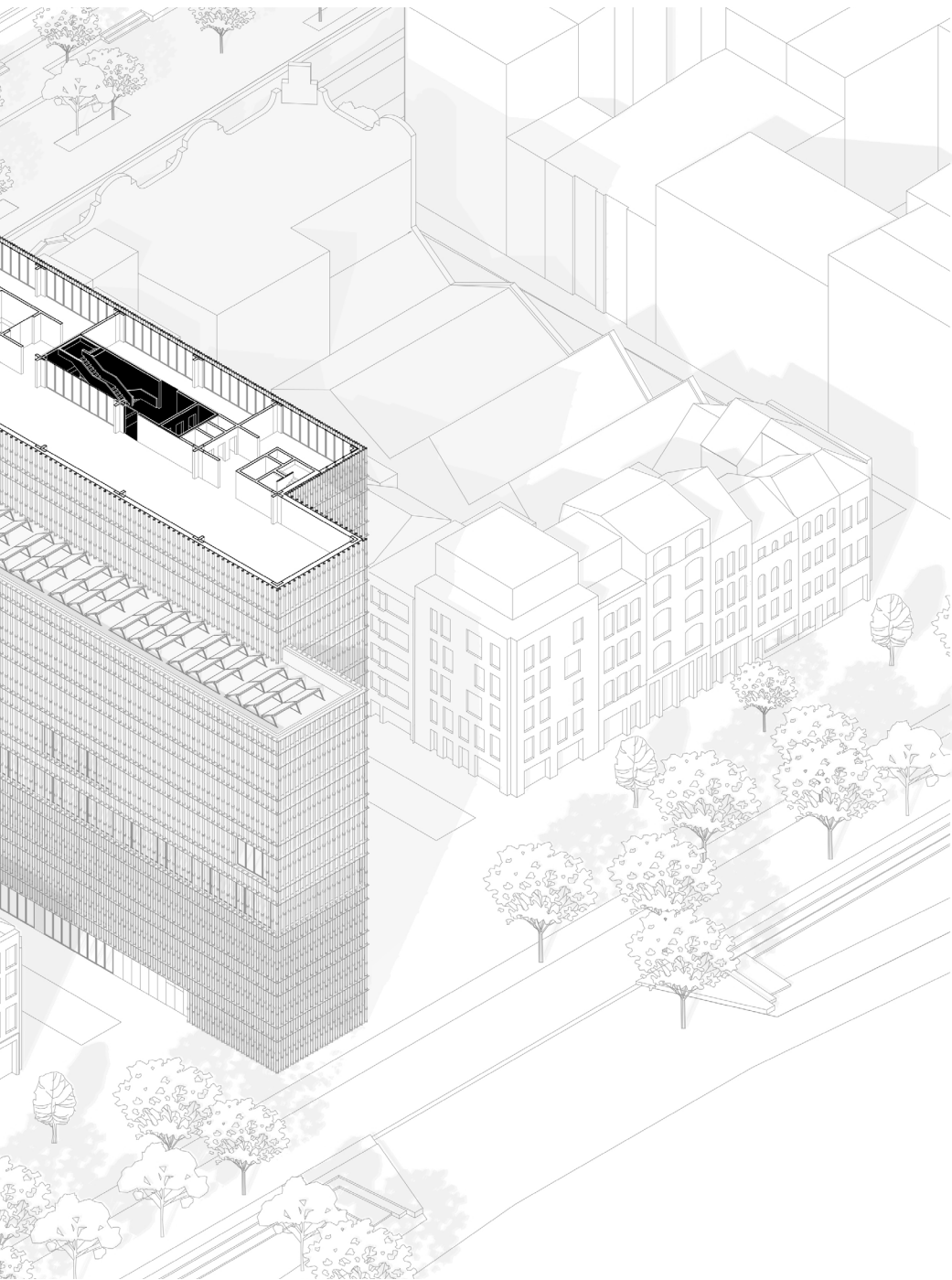


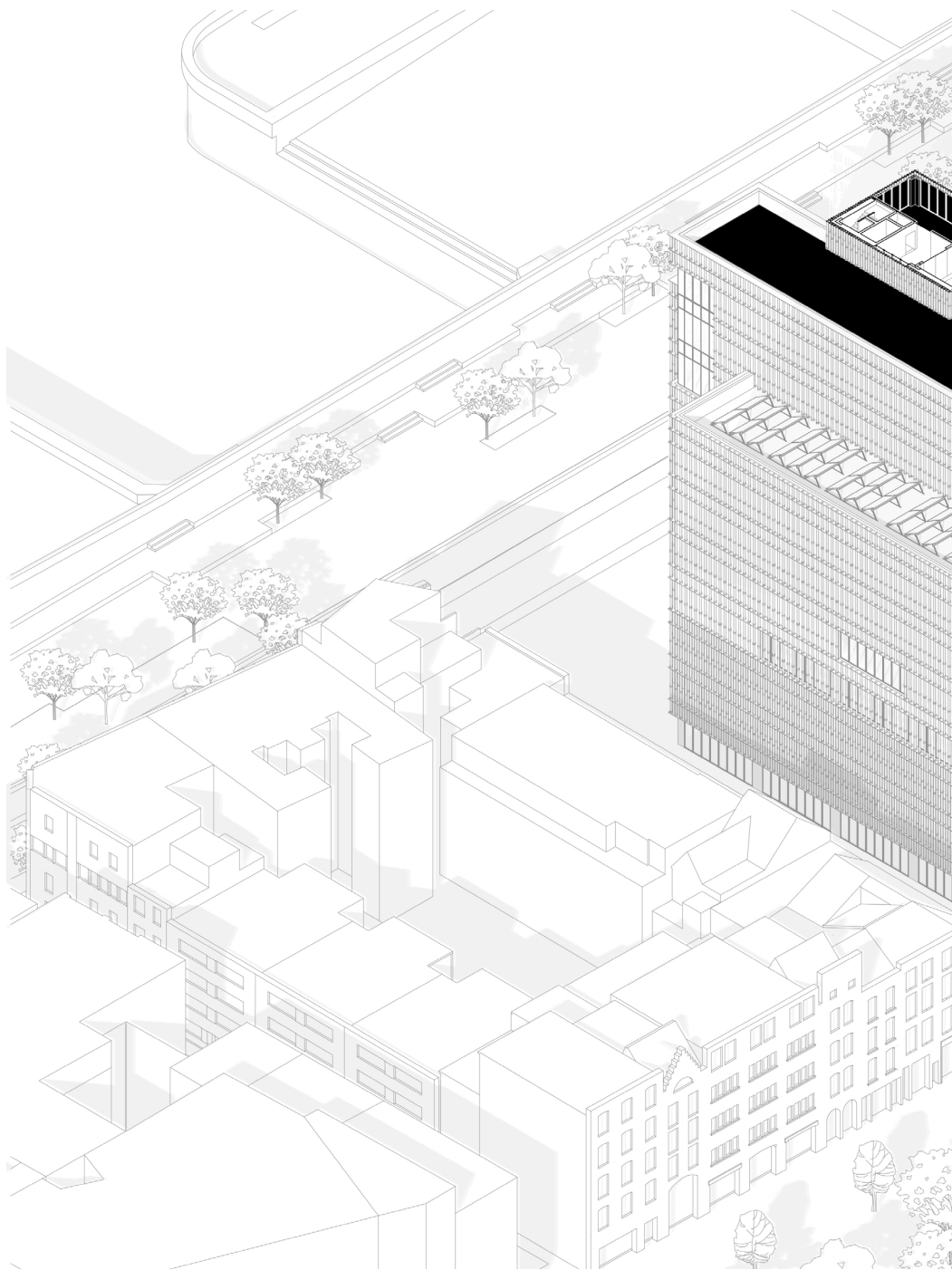
Axonometry. 8th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



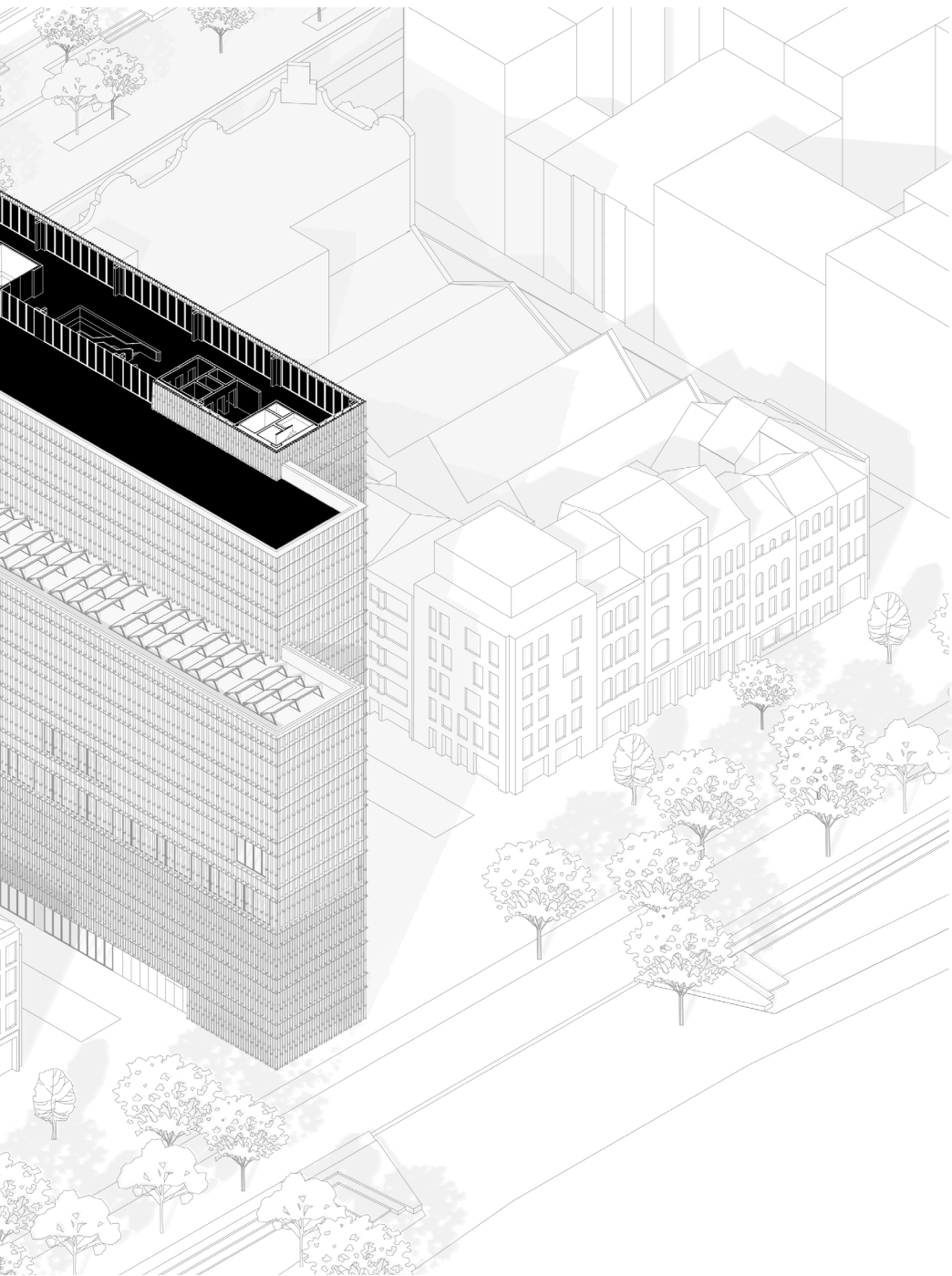


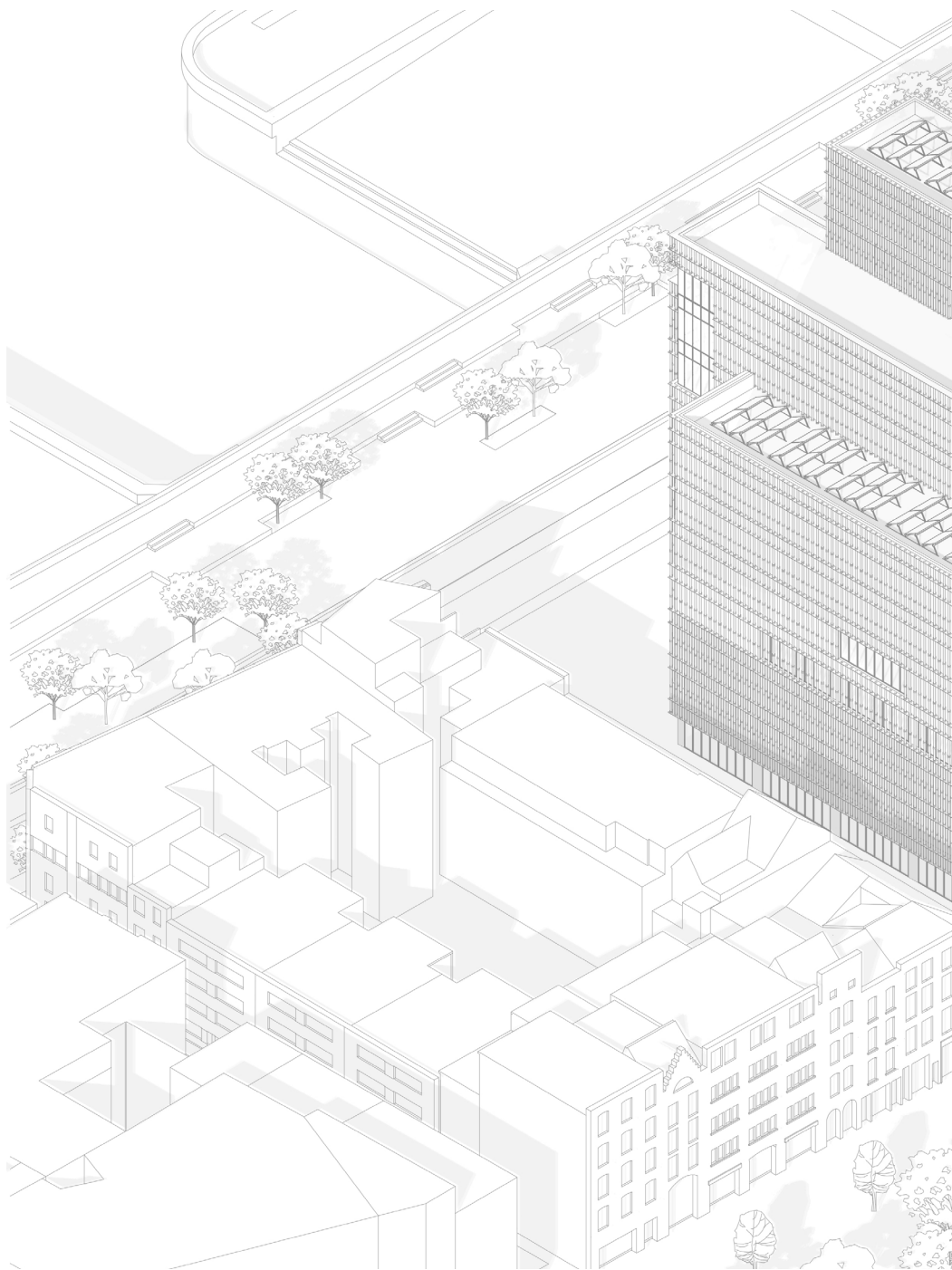
Axonometry. 9th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.





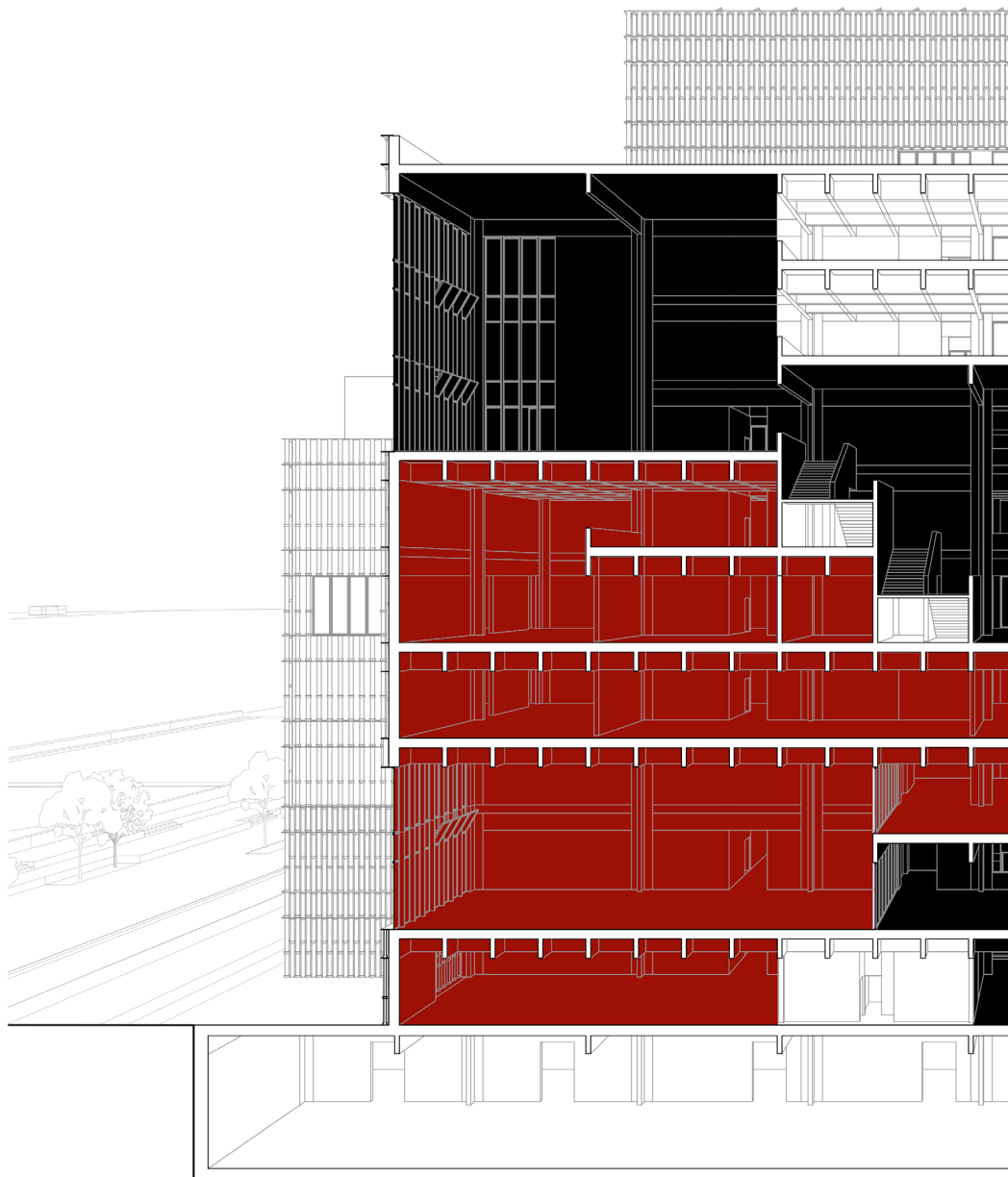
Axonometry. 10th floor.
In black the spaces open to everyone.



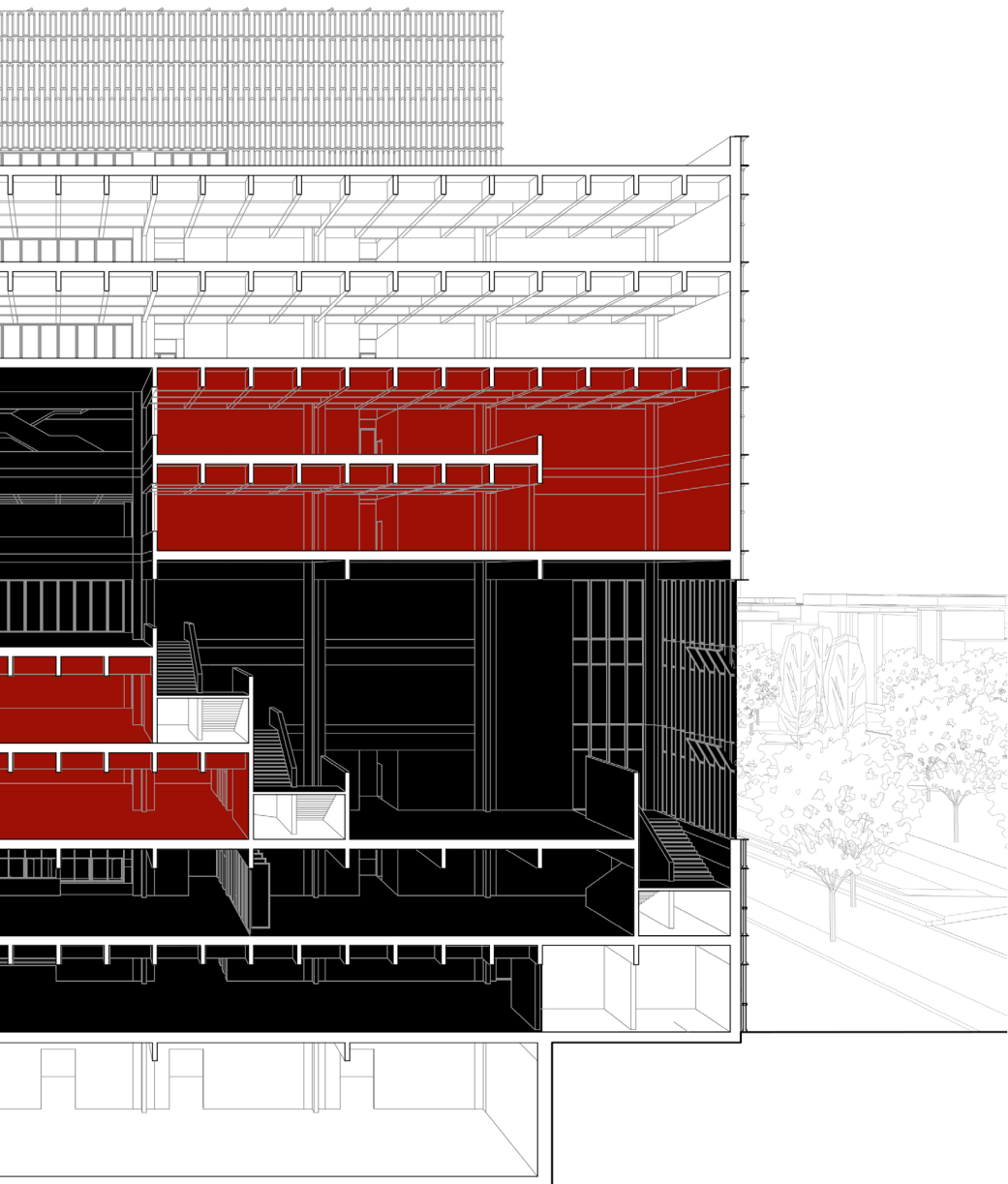


Axonometry. The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art.





Section. The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art.
In black the spaces open to everyone.





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





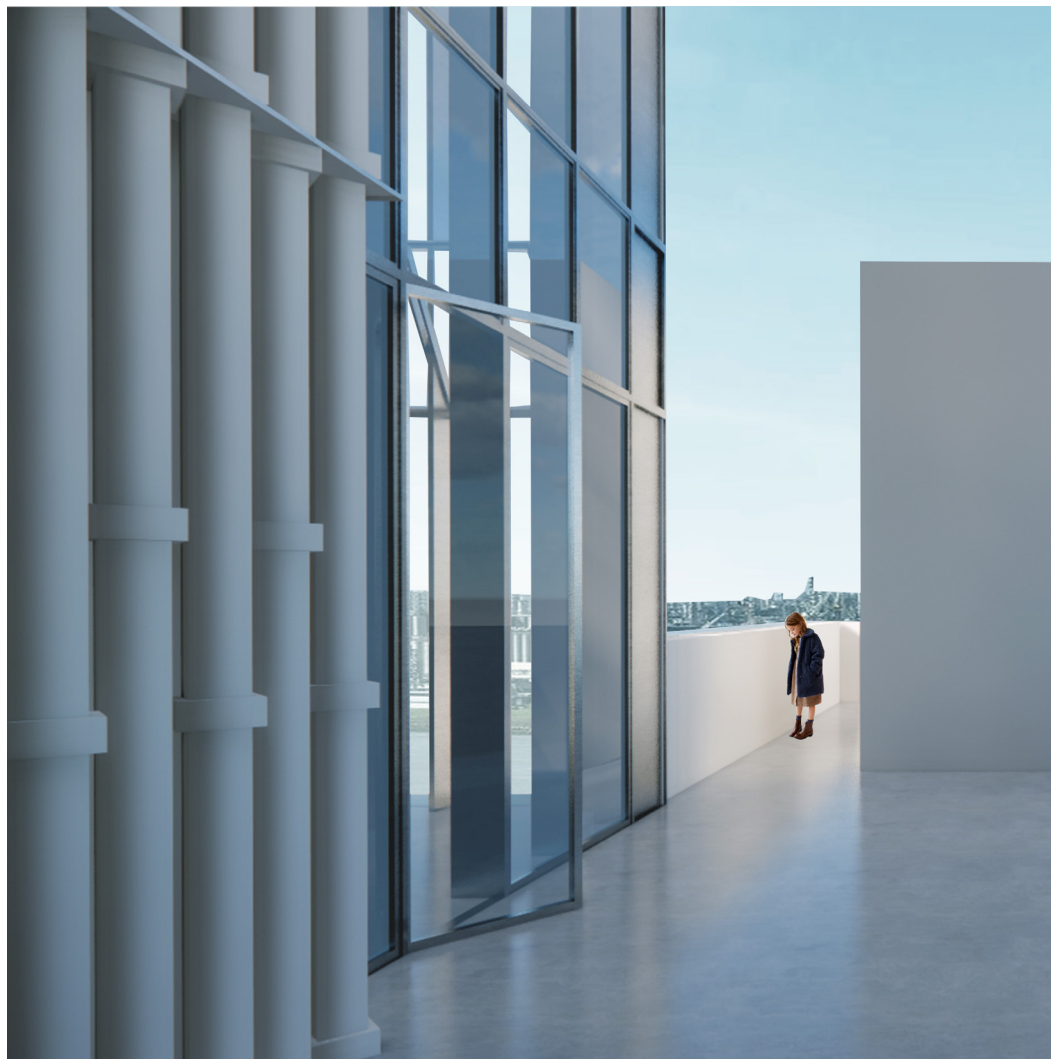
Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all





Exhibition space open to all

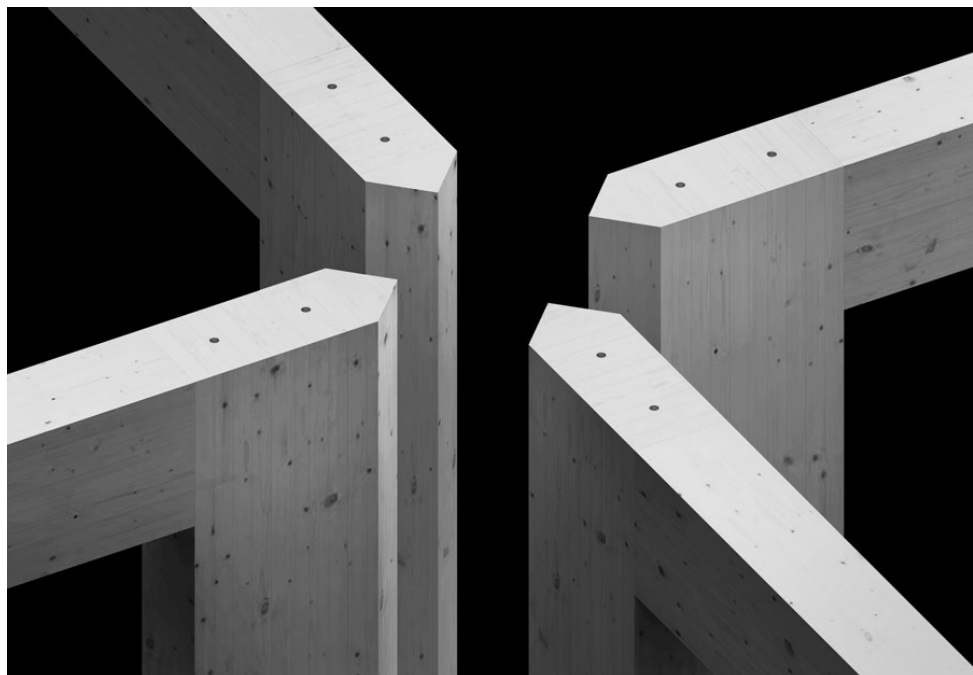




@ Simon Menges
David Chipperfield Architects, Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri (2005-2013)

A flexible structure makes it possible to experiment with different exhibition formats.

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Carlana Mezzalira Pentimalli, Le déjeuner sur l'herbe New Governmental Buildings, Frauenfeld (2017)



Exhibition space





Exhibition space





M HKA, Antwerp (2022)

Square lights

In the current MHKA the square lights adds visual interest to the space, creating a dynamic interplay of light and shadows.

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Richard Baquiè, Dérive, M HKA Antwerp



Exhibition space



An always open door

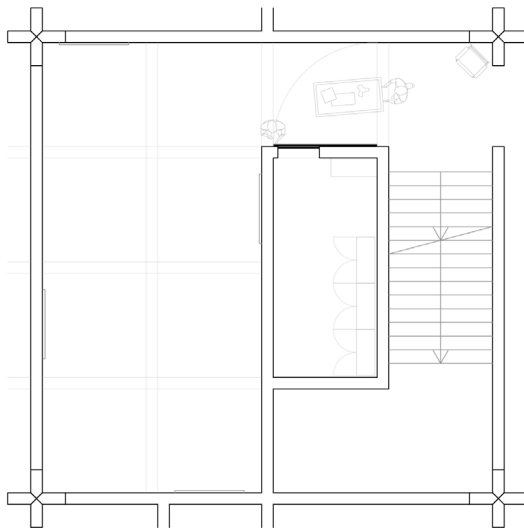
- 238 An eye-catching metal door, meticulously designed to capture attention and evoke a sense of intrigue. The door stands as an unmistakable and distinct element, serving as a visual anchor that guides visitors into the artistic realm. It stands as an inviting entrance. The door's significance lies in its three distinct states (open, ajar and closed).



Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Villa San Valerio, Albiate (1957)

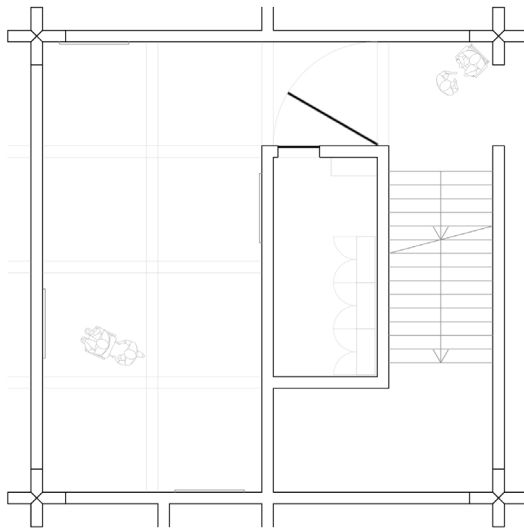
When fully open, it signifies free access to the exhibition, welcoming visitors to explore and enjoy the displays.

239



Door open. Free exhibition.

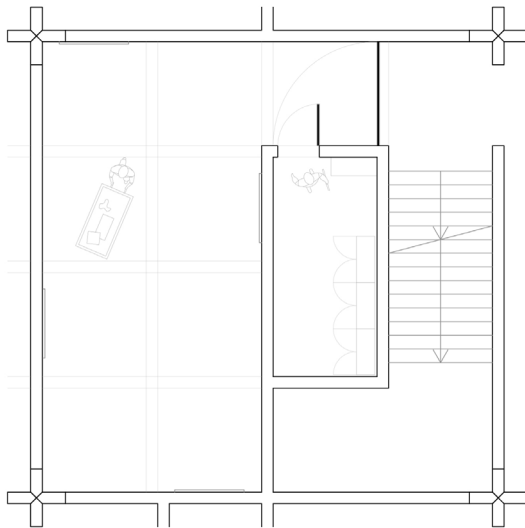
240 When slightly ajar, it indicates that admission is chargeable. Its ajar position allows glimpses of the gallery beyond, inviting anticipation and curiosity while preserving an element of mystery.



Door ajar. Paid exhibition.

When closed, it acts as a barrier, allowing museum staff to reorganize the exhibition experience.

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Door closed. Rehang.



Door open. Free exhibition.





Door ajar. Paid exhibition.





Door closed. Rehang.





Model 1:33

Door closed. Rehang.



Model 1:33

Door ajar. Paid exhibition.



Model 1:33

Door closed. Rehang.



Model 1:33

Door ajar. Paid exhibition.



Model 1:33

Door closed. Rehang.



Model 1:33

Door ajar. Paid exhibition.

Reflections

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In the book 'Among Others: Blackness at MoMA' written by Darby English and Charlotte Barat, at one point they talk about how human beings have difficulty changing habits, prejudices, way of working, and so on.

The 'Interiors Buildings Cities' approach to research and design was a novelty for me. A novelty that required a lot of work and adaptability, sometimes slowing down the progress of the project. Although the various assignments, readings and debates were very useful in enriching my knowledge and helping with some design choices, they did not always directly inform the project. For instance, I spent months drawing plans, sections and elevations of the Kunsthaus in Zurich, I made a maquette that faithfully replicated the photography of a gallery space, I designed an exhibition space for an artist's oeuvre and much more. All this required a lot of work, but it did not directly concern the design of the new building. After months of hard work, I still had no drawings for the new museum building. It was almost like starting from zero again.



Maquette of an exhibition room. Scale 1:33



I consider the maquette a very useful tool.
This is why I particularly appreciated that the
exercises carried out during the year often re-
quired the creation of a model.

258 Now that the graduation year is over, I understand all the benefits of this approach. The various exercises and assignments required a lot of time, but nevertheless provided me with a knowledge base that was very useful throughout the course. To better assess this, I tried to ask myself: what are the most important lessons I have learnt this year through this approach?



@ Charles Wilp
Yves Klein in the “void” room of his *Sensibilité Picturale Immatérielle*, 1961, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany

‘Doing nothing’ is a lot of work. This is an important lesson that I take away from the ‘Interiors Buildings Interiors’ graduation studio. One of the most critical aspects of a museum is the arrangement of the artworks. Inside the white cube, every smallest gesture brings about big changes. So the architect must leave space for the real protagonists of the museum, i.e. the artworks.

Another important lesson I learnt this year is the importance of changing perspective. In other words, to think beyond the box. But how can one change perspective, and why is it important to do so? According to Italian designer Achille Castiglioni, one should look more carefully at “the street, the cinema, the TV...” as “places where one learns to critically observe obvious gestures, conformist attitudes, predictable forms.” To discover what? “To discover that you can do something else”. Castiglioni plays with the idea of reversing something and showing it from another point of view. A kind of reverse perspective. An approach that is used especially by artists, but sometimes also by writers and architects.

Orian Brook in her book ‘Culture is bad for you’ uses a similar method. People are used to thinking that culture is good for society. In the book this preconception is reversed to make us think. Indeed, while culture educates and enriches people, both humanly and financially, it is also the cause of profound inequalities. This is an approach that may not directly provide solutions for architectural design, but it can help to go beyond the inequalities and injustices that continue to mark the history of art institutions. That’s why this way of working played a very important role in the development of my project.

The new VMHK (Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art) is not intended to be just a museum, but an attraction open to all. A place where people can go to see an art exhibition, grab something to eat, read a book, etc. Mies van der Rohe once said that “the first problem is to establish the museum as a center for the enjoyment, not the interment of art.” Accomplishing this task means removing all kinds of barriers between institution and community. Only in this way do art and culture truly become a ‘social lift’. Indeed, how can a museum think of positioning itself internationally if it cannot even open its doors to its community? The new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art is an always open door. A museum open to all.

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