

Graduation Report

Methods of Analysis and Imagination

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Graduation Report

'Urban Encounters' **Methods of Analysis and Imagination**

by

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Reading Guide

The overall content arrangement is based on the requirements of the graduation report and is divided into four main parts. There is also a studio-specific addition: a logbook, which is presented in a separate format. The logbook contains weekly updates from the beginning of the studio until the A2 assessment.

The remaining four parts comprise an edited and comprehensive graduation report. Each of these parts addresses specific topics based on the objectives of each presentation. Part 3 (Results) elaborates on the project in two sections: the first covers the period up to A2, while the second section covers A3, which presents the project in its final version.

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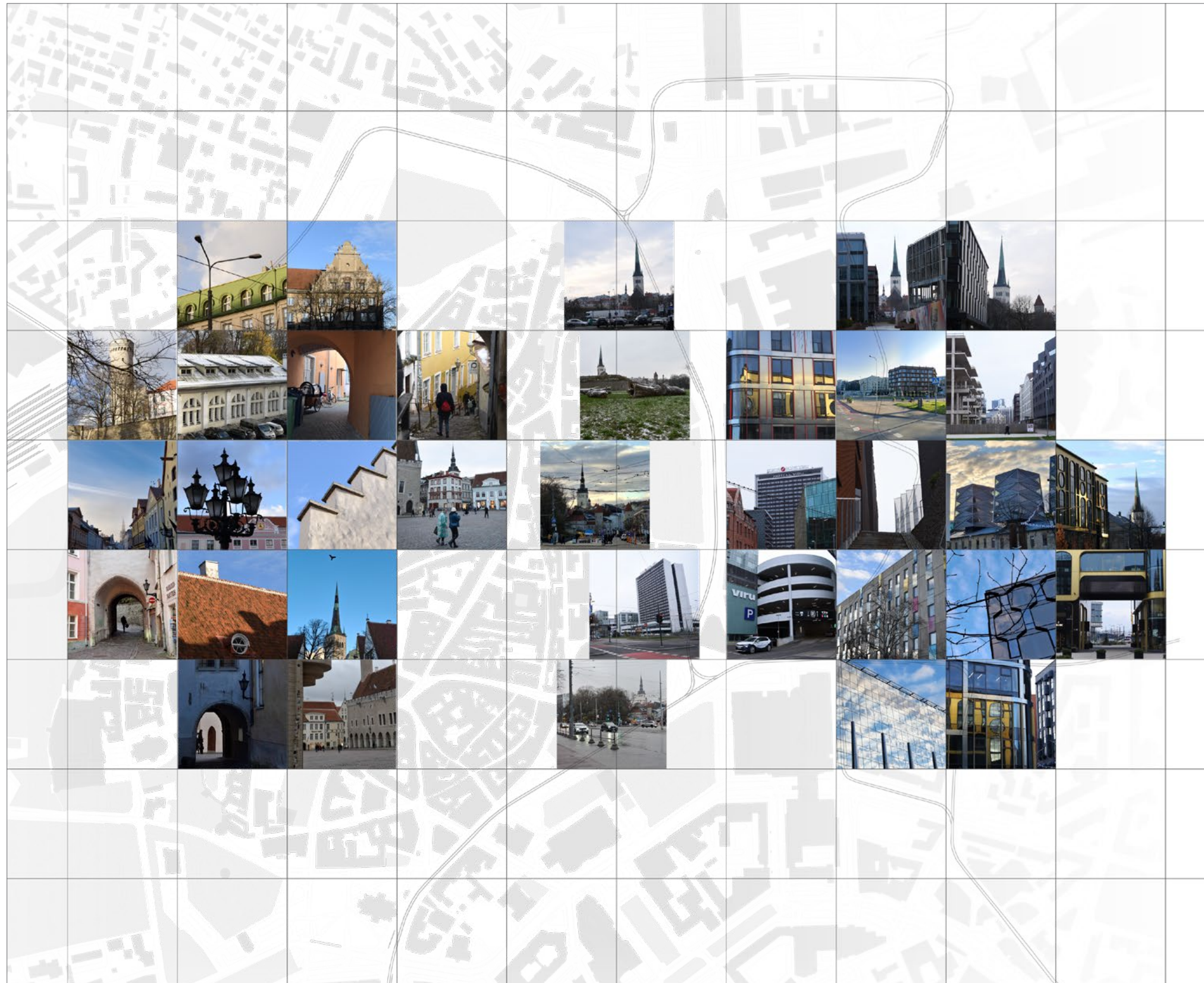
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Problem statement
 Relevance
 Objective and motivation
 Research and design questions
 Scope

Part 1. Introduction

Problem Statement

Reason, problem description and design assignment

As per the brief of the studio, the quality of life in European cities is inseparable from their human scale. It is in relation to the human proportions that we can understand and establish a hierarchy of spaces that are of a certain architectural and spatial quality. Therefore, the issue of the human body in an open, vast field, or an enclosed, intimate space is not just a proportional issue, but also affects how a person perceives their journey through the spaces. It becomes about perception and experience. The design question and subquestions tackled in this project are about the transition between different layers and scales in the city.

The spatial challenge, again, moves between different scales. Since the project is set in a street that leads to a rather big plot of land, with a global view, it seems to be closer to an urban project. However, “the battle for quality is won or lost at the small scale.”¹ In terms of spatiality, the challenge in the street would be to organize and make the visual elements such that the street does not feel like the backside of a neighborhood, and make the street such that the buildings belong to the street, and not vice versa. In the plot of land that the street leads to, however, the approach to spatiality does indeed take a more global view, to include different knots of the city, and connect and bind them better.

The site is set in the boundary between the old city and the Roterman district. Therefore, it has important urban implications and can play an important role as an activator of the street in the urban fabric. On the east side sits the architecture museum, and on the south-west side, there is yet another cultural center, which is a performing arts theater.

A cultural project with strong connections to the urban fabric can bind the other cultural buildings in the area and make this axis a

cultural hub, making it worthy of the significant location that it is in, and activate the threshold between Rotermann and the Old City in a meaningful, non-consumer-centric way. This is the overview, big scale concept.

The aspiration to connect the building to the street stemmed from the importance of this urban element in the layering of the city. This street is located at the edge of the old city, behind the bold and new Rotermann district, and connects to the harbour. The ambition to extend the limit of the building not only on the edge of the building but also 800 meters away at the beginning of the street came as a possible solution to this goal. However, as the project progressed, it became clear that the building could indeed open up and take in the street, without having to directly intervene in the street itself. in a meaningful, non-consumer-centric way.

Relevance

Contribution to profession and society

By focusing on the urban life between the two of the multiple ‘centers’ in Tallinn and making connections through culture, the project explores how such relations can be tied in a knot, and how influential that can be for the city. The research and results of the project can be a ground for further development of the city of Tallinn, in terms of the connection between its multiple centralities.

By establishing the project on three different scale levels, the very core question and fascination of the studio is addressed: What occurs when monumental scale is reduced to tactile, smaller dimensions? Additionally, how can a project succeed at the tactile, building, and urban scales?



Figure 1. Overview urban map

¹ Jan Gehl, Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011), 130.

Objective and Motivation

Architectural and technical ambitions

The project aims for a cohesive design proposal with varying levels of detail depending on the program. The motivation for this topic stems from my special interest in walking and city life. When I return and search my memory for urban images and moments, I have gathered the best and most memorable ones through walking and the everyday, small practices. Therefore, it is logical to focus my attention on such a topic as well, and bring my interest into the new context of Estonia, and work through the combination of factors that make this part of Tallinn city unique and interesting. These factors are as such: The threshold between two centers, one from the Middle Ages and the other from the modern era, and the fact that such a threshold is mostly dominated by cars, along with the severe weather conditions, which establishes a need for placing people in an interior space (i.e., shopping malls) are all noteworthy and challenging aspects of the project. Putting a cultural building would change the perception and experience of this street, and would activate the back alleys going to the harbour, the street itself, and the whole neighborhood. A cultural building would transform the perception and experience of this street, activating the back alleys leading to the harbor, the street itself, and the entire neighborhood. Additionally, in terms of “haptic appreciation,”² the project aims to create a sense of quality space on a small scale, functioning as an urban living room.

Design Questions

Breakdown of the design question

Main design question:

- How to activate an important car-heavy threshold in the city of Tallinn, so that this threshold becomes less of a barrier (or backside) and more of an influential pedestrian passageway and hub between two important centers of the city?

Subquestions:

- To fill the threshold, how can the function of a cultural center -music hall- have a strong connection to urban life and bring people together?
- How can the monumentality of a music hall function be combined with the accessibility and openness of quality public space?

Scope

Location and program

As previously mentioned, the street separating the Old City of Tallinn and the Rotermann district is significant. Its lack of spatial quality and heavy traffic present a valuable opportunity for urban interventions. There are three culturally significant buildings along this axis.

To define the program in more detail, and due to the proximity of the site to other cultural centers, a cultural building can bring the community together. There are many diverse music festivals in Estonia, particularly in Tallinn. Additionally, music, theater, and performing arts hold significant importance in Estonian culture.

This fact resulted in the choice of a music hall as one of the main functions of the building. Having a dedicated music hall that brings people of all walks of life together seems a suitable option for this site and an interesting design challenge. In addition to that, there will be public, non-commercial spaces, and a public hall that allows for spontaneous and casual experiences. If the concert hall brings gravitas to the project, then the public hall acts as the mediator between scales. It could be said that, despite the monumentality of a concert hall, it is in fact the public hall that is the main event.

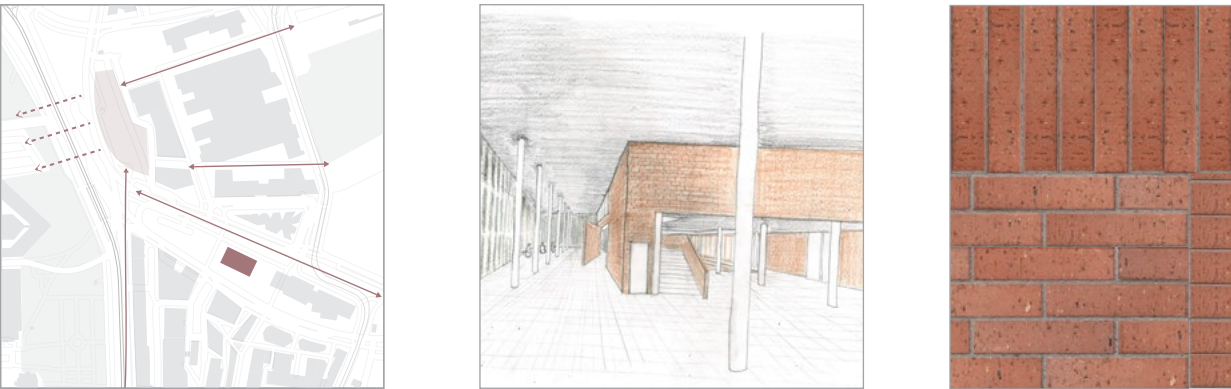


Figure 2. Conceptual diagram of “three scales”

² Laura Teston, “On the Nature of Public Interiority,” Interiority 3, no. 1 (2020): 73.



Methods
Theoretical framework

Part 2. Appraoch (How?)

Methods

Design and research strategy | Research techniques | Expected output

The design strategy differs from the conventional approach to designing a building. The starting point of this project was sparked by walking in the city of Tallinn, and a special interest in how the city is experienced on foot. Thus, the project is going from the outside in, from the urban fabric to the architectural solution, from the street to the building. The strategy then reflects that.

To understand the context, and as a way to record the perceived views and the cityscape, I used photography and categorized photos in different scales. This method helped with formulating the design concept and seeing the city in three different ways: on multiple scales.

Furthermore, I had to improve my understanding of a street throughout history and now, and reflect on the different ways a street and the buildings around it affect one another and shape the experience of pedestrians. Public space and private territory play an important role. To become more knowledgeable, I use the existing literature to define the meaning of terms that will be used throughout. Terms such as street, public realm, public space, urban life, and haptic appreciation.

Additionally, there is the experience of the street itself and how it is presented and evaluated. To capture and present this data, I mapped views along the path that leads to my site. The views are captured starting from Viru square, going north towards the intersection of Via Baltica street and Kai tn street. The way of illustrating these views is to abstract and simplify different objects in each view, drawing them with lines of different thickness to extract the most important visual elements. Thus, overall, the approach to analyzing the street is mapping views, extracting important visual elements, and drawing in abstract ways. Furthermore, due to the “outside to inside” approach of design, the context is especially

important and must be studied in terms of the volume, size, orientation, facade, pattern, and function. This is also done through abstract drawings.

Third is the understanding of the function. By researching and gathering information about cultural trends in Estonia and especially Tallinn, it is clear that the performing arts and music have an important place in the culture, which led to the choice of a music hall as one of the functions of the building. Analyzing case studies is the method by which I understood how a music hall functions. The elements analyzed in each case study range from the logic of the plan to how the building interacts with its surroundings, and how it affects the urban context in which it is situated. The chosen case studies are: Danish Radio Concert Hall, Lucerne Culture and Congress Center, Oslo Opera House, and Musis Sacrum. To understand the technical aspects of a music hall, I took key notes from a reference book on important considerations. (The notes can be found in the logbook.)

All in all, the research techniques and tools include photography, studying existing literature on the topic, mapping, drawing, abstracting, modelling, and analyzing case studies.

The output of the research includes a set of categorized photos that support the concept of the project and a summary of the terms and findings from the review of existing literature. Additionally, drawings illustrate the analysis of street elements and aid in better understanding the case studies and the context. Study models display the contextual analysis of the site, showcasing the buildings in volumetric form.

Theoretical framework

Literature and precedant research

The initial pre-design research in Tallinn started with walking, taking pictures, and recording voice memos as a method of fieldwork. Aligning the pictures on the map allowed for a general assessment of views and sequences along different paths when walking. During this phase of analysis, no specific street was the point of focus yet, and the purpose was to gradually become familiar with streets,

intersections, and public spaces in Tallinn. What the images reveal is the existence of many different architectural languages and the multiple centralities of Tallinn. Furthermore, many gaps and thresholds are undermined by a lack of organization and significance. One of these thresholds was then picked as the street and the site that this project will focus on.

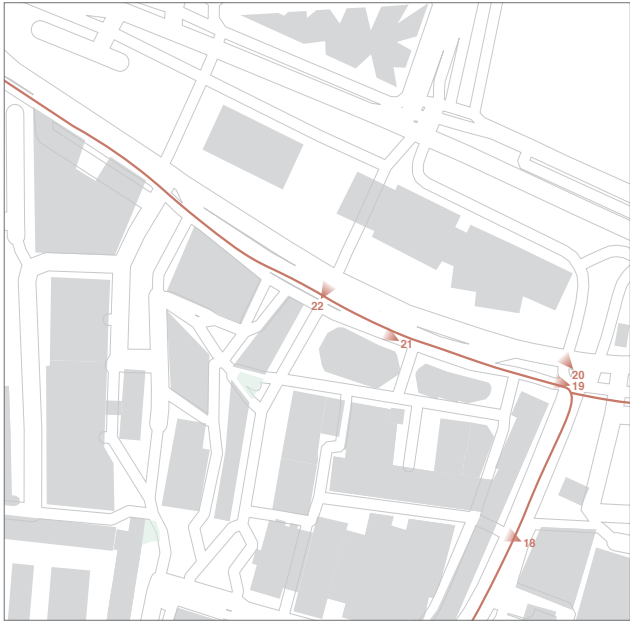


Figure 3. Mapping views 1/2



Figure 4. Mapping views 2/2



Figure 5. The harbour through Rottermann



Figure 6. Overlapping of different architectural languages



Figure 7. Saint Olaf church from Rottermann



Figure 8. Porto Franco Mall

The next step of research is studying the existing literature and expanding the understanding of terms.

The book 'On Streets: Streets as Elements of Urban Structure'³ is a collection of essays, each diving into different aspects of the street in current times.

The essay 'Buildings and Streets: Notes on Configuration and Use'⁴ by Thomas Schumacher delves into the walkability of streets based on their relation to the buildings around them, and how the buildings affect this perception.

The book 'Life Between Buildings'⁵ by Jan Gehl delves into different basic activities and the kind of space that accommodates them, and how, from the basic activities, further development of an urban space can occur.

In the essay 'Exterior Interiors: The Urban Living Room and Beyond'⁶ by Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, the notion of small-scale interventions can interact with the vast and complex space of the city. This essay questions the idea of public realm and public space, and how in the 21st century these do not necessarily align anymore, and how public architecture reflects that.

The essay 'On the Nature of Public Interiority'⁷ by Liz Teston dissects the taxonomy of public interiority, how certain factors that belong to the world of interior, when executed in the public realm, can make the space be perceived a certain way. In this essay, haptic appreciation and spatial proximity with others are important in perceiving a place out in the open as

enclosed and 'gezellig' for staying in. In order to analyze the Mere Pst (the street leading to the site), views were taken throughout and then abstracted. This was done due to the definition of the project consisting of two parts at the beginning. One part is the street, and the second part is the building itself. Despite the change being proposed later on, the views help in understanding the street in terms of a variety of elements and views.

The function of a concert hall brings about a whole new set of questions. In terms of the acoustics and layout. As mentioned before, the important acoustical considerations, such as reverberation time or formulas to count the number of seats and dimensions of the hall, are further elaborated in the logbook. The book 'Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture'⁸ was used as a reference for general calculations and additional case studies.

As for the study of layout, the plans and sections of case studies were drawn and studied in terms of their proportion and interior relation.

During the design process, study models were used to understand the volumes of the context, and also the building itself.



Figure 9. Street views drawn abstractly

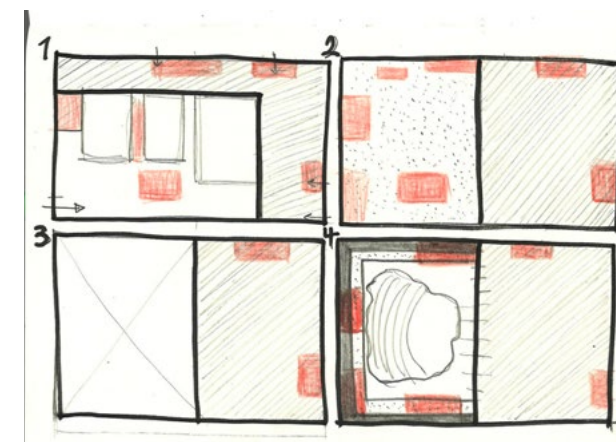


Figure 10. Danish Radio Concert Hall plans' analysis

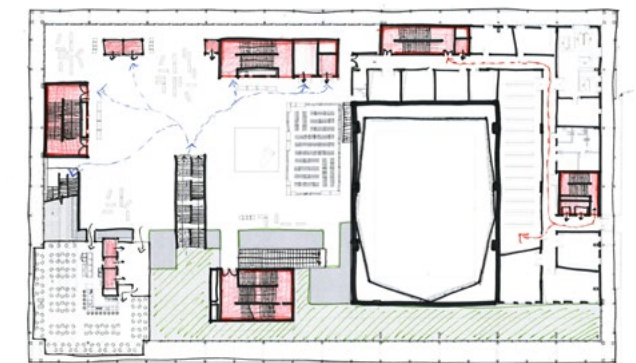


Figure 11. Case study plan 1/3

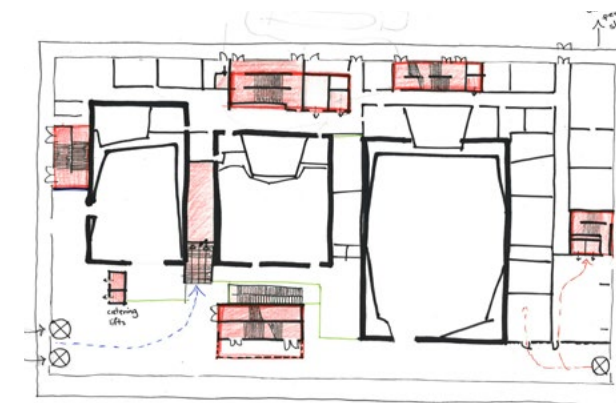


Figure 12. Case study plan 2/3

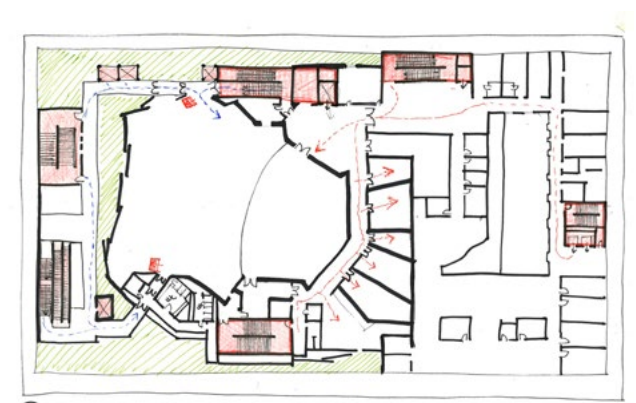


Figure 13. Case study plan 3/3

³ Stanford Anderson, ed., *On Streets: Streets as Elements of Urban Structure* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

⁴ Thomas L. Schumacher, "Buildings and Streets: Notes on Configuration and Use," in *On Streets: Streets as Elements of Urban Structure*, ed. Stanford Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

⁵ Gehl, *Life Between Buildings*.

⁶ Joanna Merwood-Salisbury and Vanessa Coxhead, "Exterior Interiors: The Urban Living Room and Beyond," in *Interiors Beyond Architecture*, ed. Deborah Schneiderman and Amy Campos (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁷ Teston, "On the Nature of Public Interiority."

⁸ Leo L. Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture* (New York: Springer, 2004).

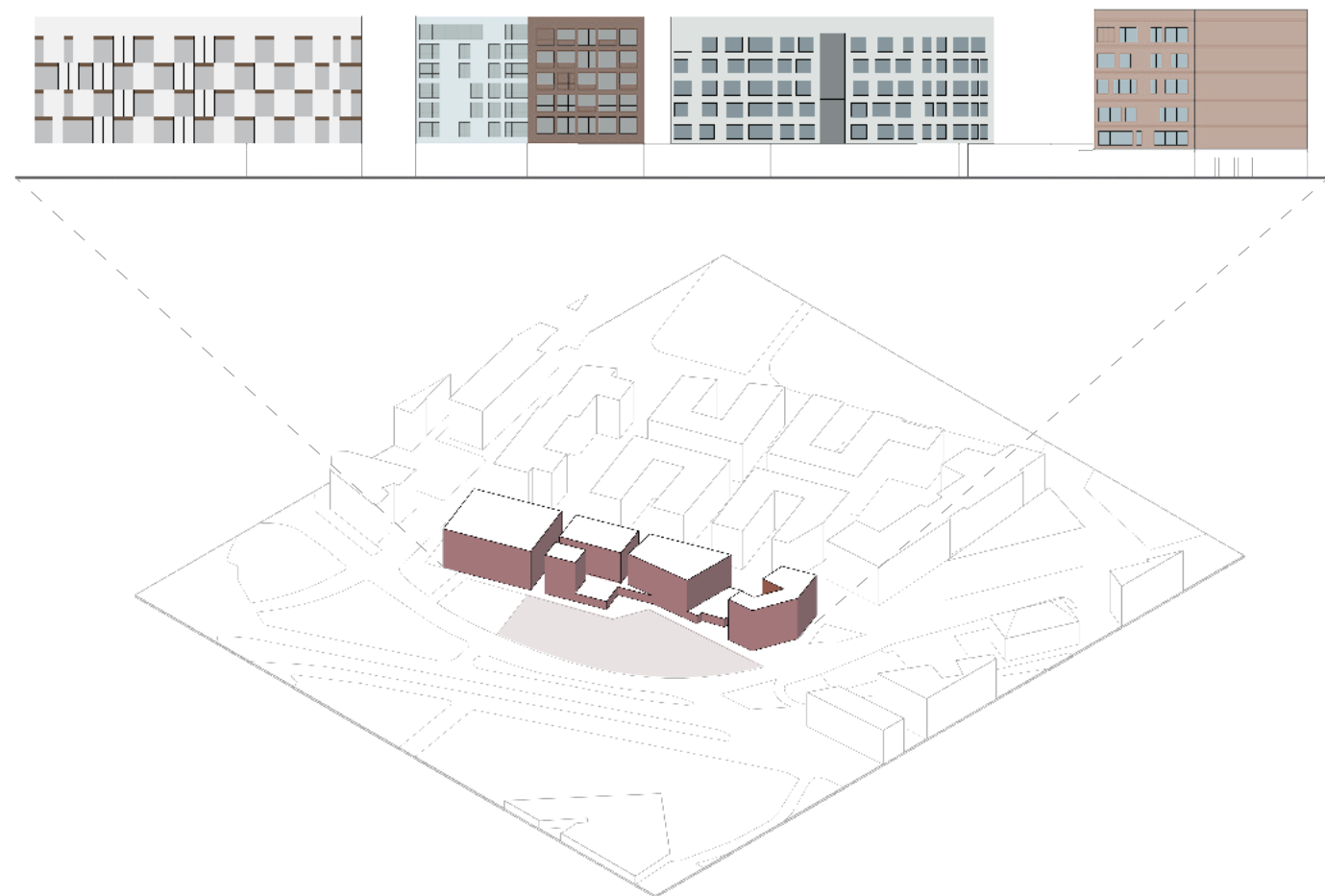


Figure 14. Facade studies of the site



Figure 15. 1:600 scale model of the site



Preliminary Design (A2)
Final design results (A3)

Part 3. Results

Preliminary Design [A2]

A summary of part C (Thoroughness)

The A1 presentation required the elaboration of the project in a program and a first idea of configuration and form. At the time, my first ideas for the form were as such: A unified (maybe monolithic), solid, and clean form that, despite being solid, is still light. So not heavy or solid in a sense that feels heavy to enter. There is a degree of transparency, semi-transparency, or perforation in the facade that allows light to get out, thus the building would maintain a certain character during dark hours as well. The reason

for this is creating a contrast between this building and all the surrounding buildings, which have repetitive and not interesting-looking facade patterns. This contrast adds to the building feeling different from everyday life and out-of-the-ordinary, without being too assertive. The initial ideas hinted at a 'sobriety' of form, though not fully concrete or well-sketched out.

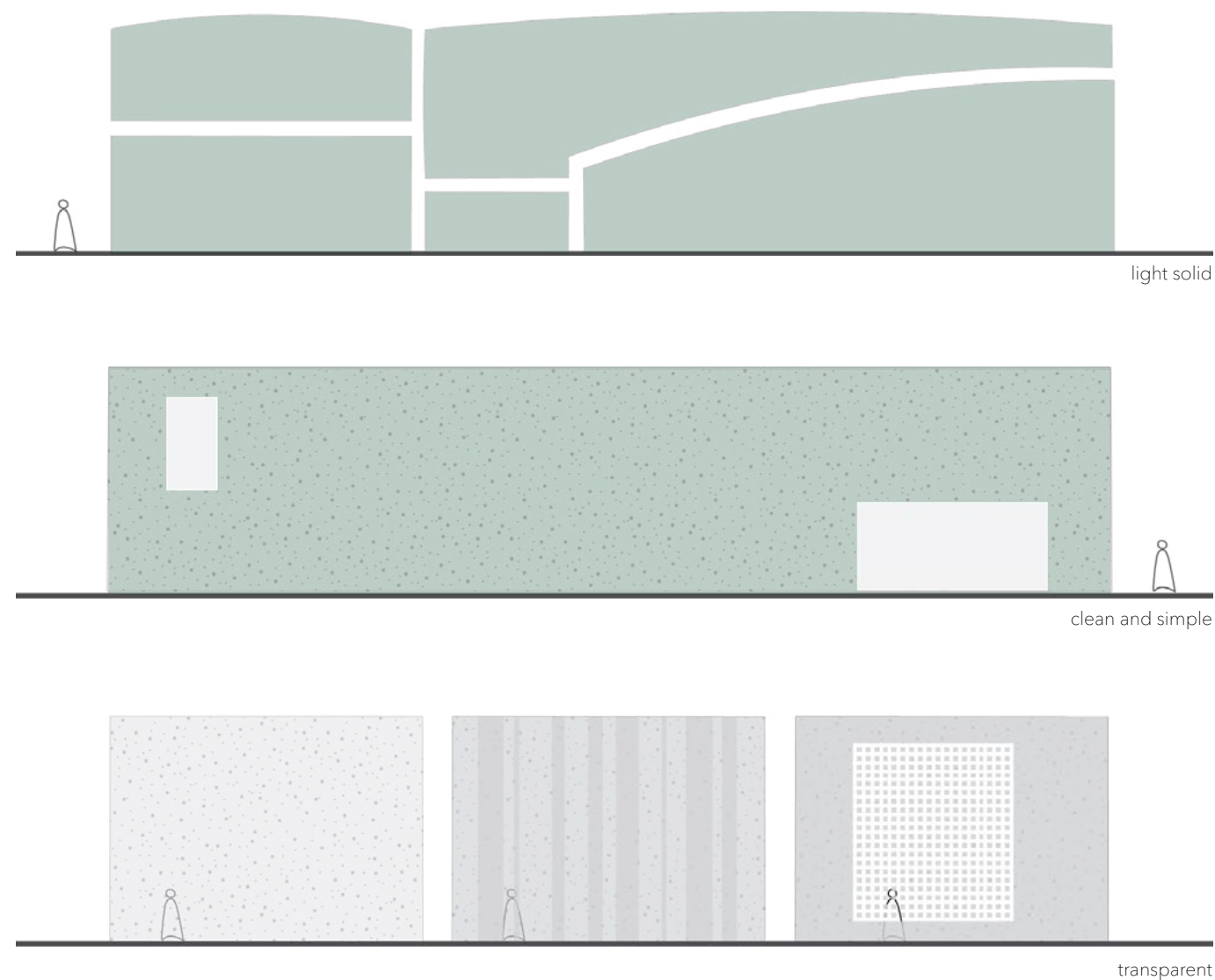


Figure 16. Facade concepts

After the A1, I entered the design process in small details from the beginning. Trying to solve questions such as how you enter the building, what you see when you enter, and how you experience the space as you walk towards different areas.

At some point, this question was raised by my tutor: "But what is this building?"

At first, this question was confusing. To me, this building was a sum of its functions, and now I was trying to figure out how it is experienced. What are the in-between spaces? What do you see in between these functions? The answer to such questions was how I was figuring out the building's shape, form, and configuration. The most important function of the building is the music hall, so that is how I would answer the question. It was as if I had a magnifying glass and was zooming in on a single cell, without being aware of what this whole organism is.

So, there was clearly a jumped step in between,

though at the time, it wasn't so clear to me. The step of clarifying what this building is with an overarching concept, and something that can hold the whole project together like a strong, all-encompassing glue. And this goes beyond the program and functionality. It's about how you can define what your building is, in and of itself and also in its context. So, taking a step back was necessary. Form finding needed to happen before picking up the magnifying glass and jumping into the plan in detail.

So, I started to work with grids as a way to help me find the configuration and clarify the concept. There was already something there on the page; it was just that my understanding of it was not razor-sharp. Working with different grids and then combining two of them gave me this opportunity that I don't think I could've achieved otherwise. Separating the grids opened up the space between the structures, allowing the street to come in, and dividing the project into boxes, surrounded by one shell. However, still, what existed was one monolith.



Figures 17, 18 & 19. First grid, second grid and third grid (combination of a tilted and a straight grid)

One structure consists of parts inside it. Such a monumental whole is perhaps not the most suitable solution as a public space for a city like Tallinn. It brings up the question of scale. Therefore, another important step was to understand the typology of this building, and what different types of such a building exist: the hybrid. I studied the subject in Pamphlet Architecture magazine⁹. Once I did a study of types, the project was not one whole building anymore, but two different ones, connected in between with a roof. Slowly, what the building is also started to emerge and become more concrete. Two boxes, one formal and solid, used for music performances, and the other, informal, accessible, and engaging, as a quality public space for the city of Tallinn.



Figure 20. Schematic sections corresponding to grids 1/2

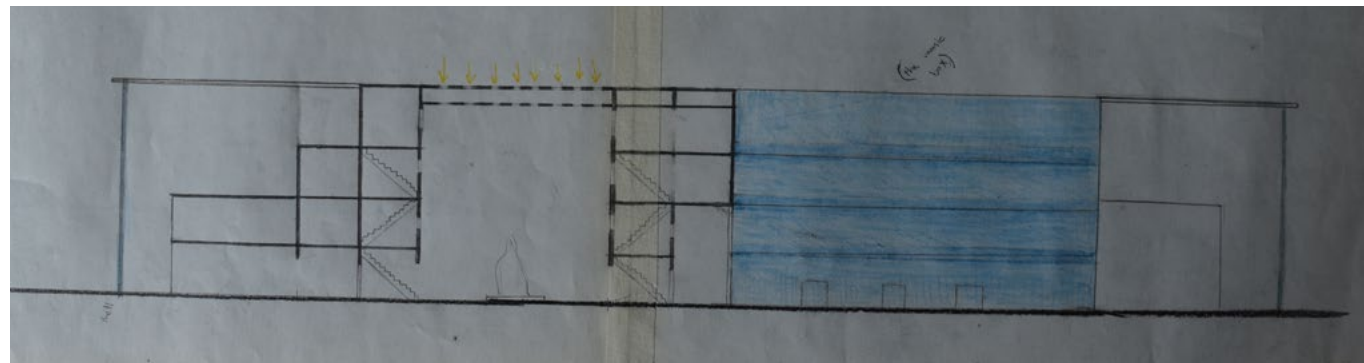


Figure 21. Schematic sections corresponding to grids 2/2

After clarifying that, I worked on plans and sections in 1 to 500 detail. The gradual shift from schematic grids to 1 to 500 scale and then 1 to 200 drawings was an organic and natural way of working on the project, which helped me clarify things step by step. Had I stuck to working from 1 to 200 from the beginning, I don't think that my project would look the same way, or have the clarity in concept for myself that it does now. A key lesson for me was to have patience and avoid jumping too far ahead in thinking about the project and its design. Taking a step back proved to be very helpful.



Figure 22. Monolithic volumes corresponding to grids

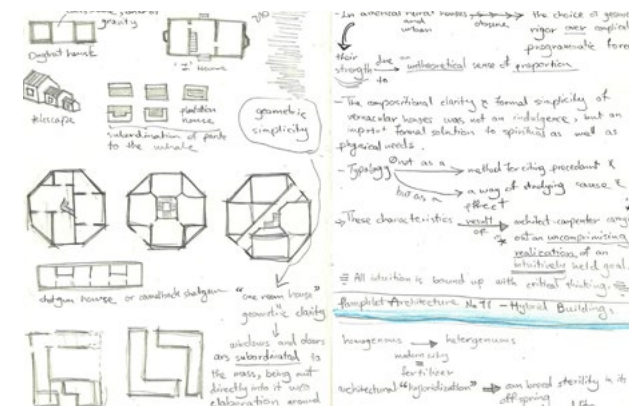
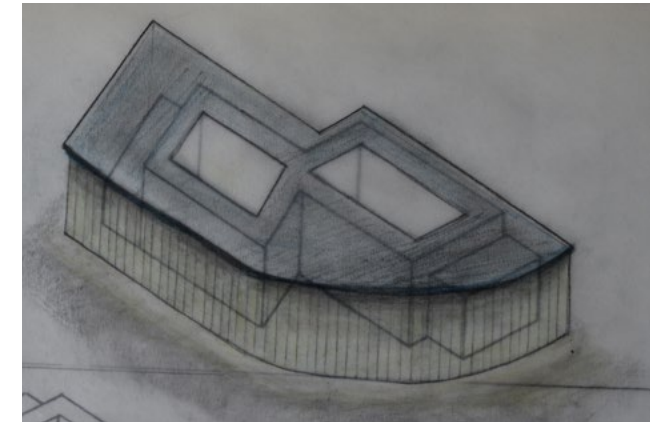


Figure 23. Outtakes from the study of types

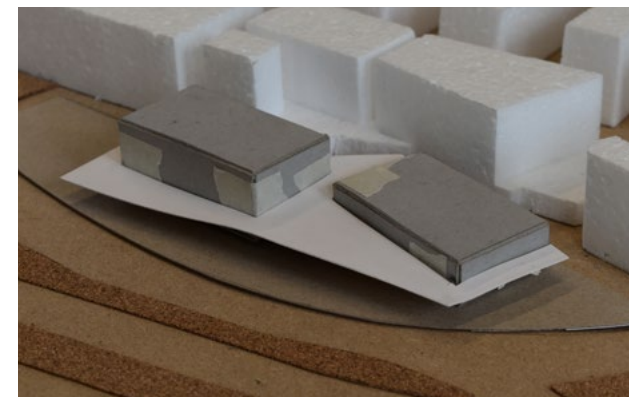
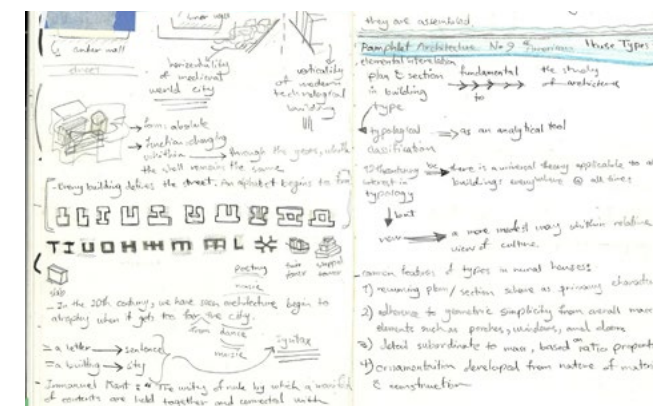


Figure 24. Form finding through models 1/2

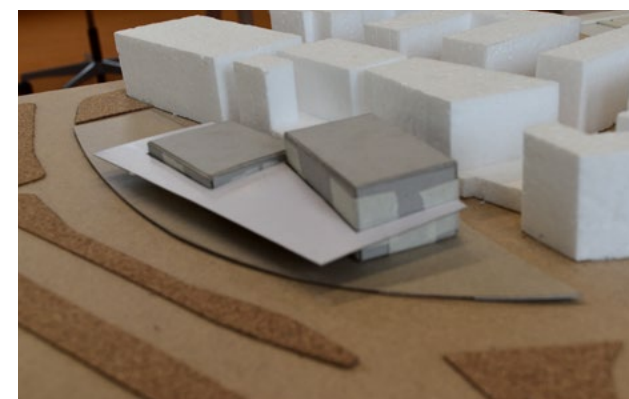


Figure 25. Form finding through models 2/2



⁹ Steven Holl, *Alphabetical City*, in *Pamphlet Architecture 1-10* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); Steven Holl and Charles W. Moore, *American House Types*, in *Pamphlet Architecture 1-10* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); Joseph Fenton, *Hybrid Buildings*, in *Pamphlet Architecture 11-20* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011).



Figure 26. Ground floor plan drawn in 1:200 detail



Figure 27. Second floor plan drawn in 1:200 detail

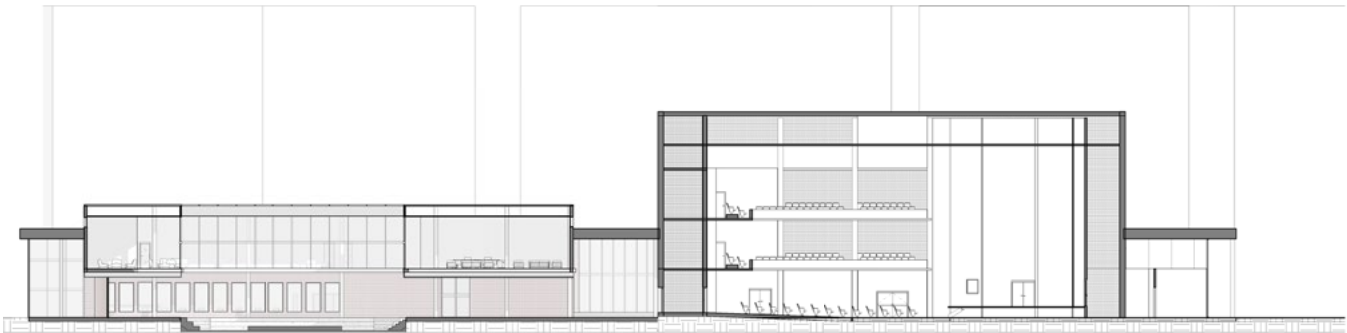


Figure 28. Longitudinal section drawings in 1:200 detail



Figure 29. Lateral section drawing in 1:200 detail 1/2

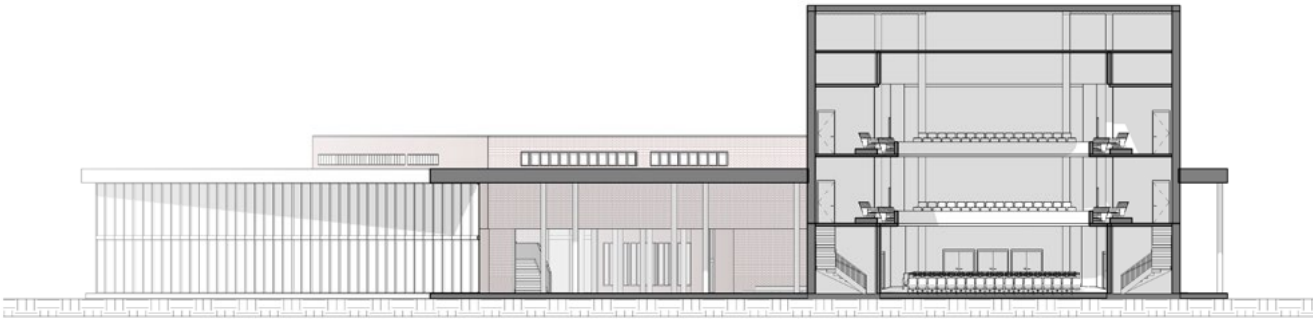


Figure 30. Lateral section drawing in 1:200 detail 2/2

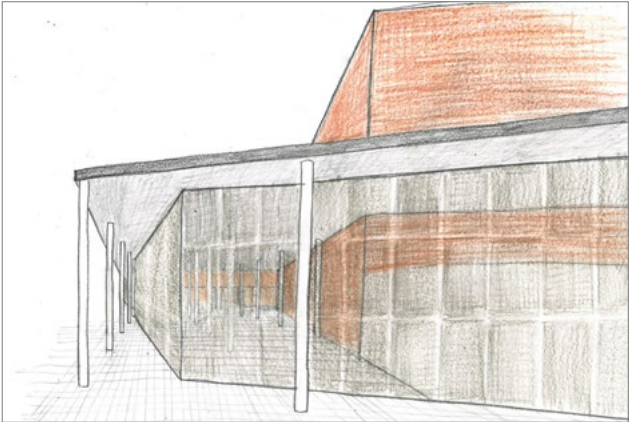


Figure 31. Perspective of the entrance

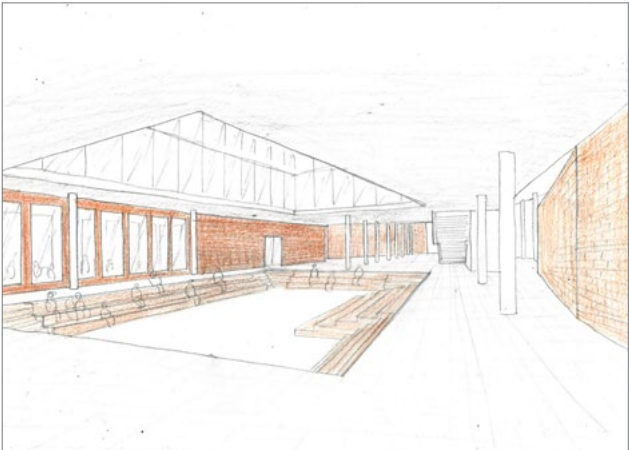


Figure 32. Perspective of the public hall

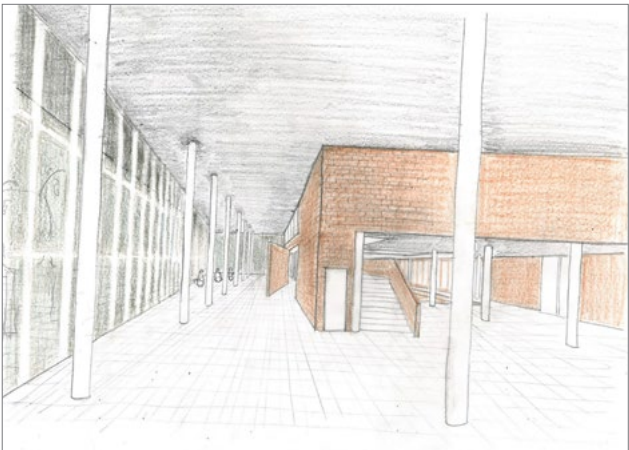


Figure 33. Perspective of the foyer



Figure 34. Perspective of backalley

Final design result (A3)

After tackling different design challenges in the first version of plans and sections, there was time between A2 and A3 to further polish the plans.

The project itself is characterized as two boxes. One is formal, solid, and used for orchestra and choir performances. The other is porous, permeable, and accessible as a quality public space for the city. Performances can still happen here, but the setting is informal and free to use. The first box brings a sense of monumentality and gravitas as a large concert hall to this project, while the other makes it possible for the public to engage with it daily, without being a commercial public space. The two are connected by a transparent shell that brings the street in and acts as a foyer to the concert hall.

The foyer of the music hall was a big open space without anything to break it apart, except columns. In keeping with the theme of the project, and going to the origin of it, I wanted to bring the street in by using the same floor finishes as the exterior and using simple furniture that could also be used in the street. The first ideas for the combination of furniture, planters, and lighting fixtures brought out the particular sensibility of the project, but there was room for progress. I could use these elements not simply as random objects in space, but with a certain logic behind them to make them as concrete as the structure. In this version, every lighting fixture and planter is placed in relation to the column, and they guide the viewers' gaze towards certain spaces.

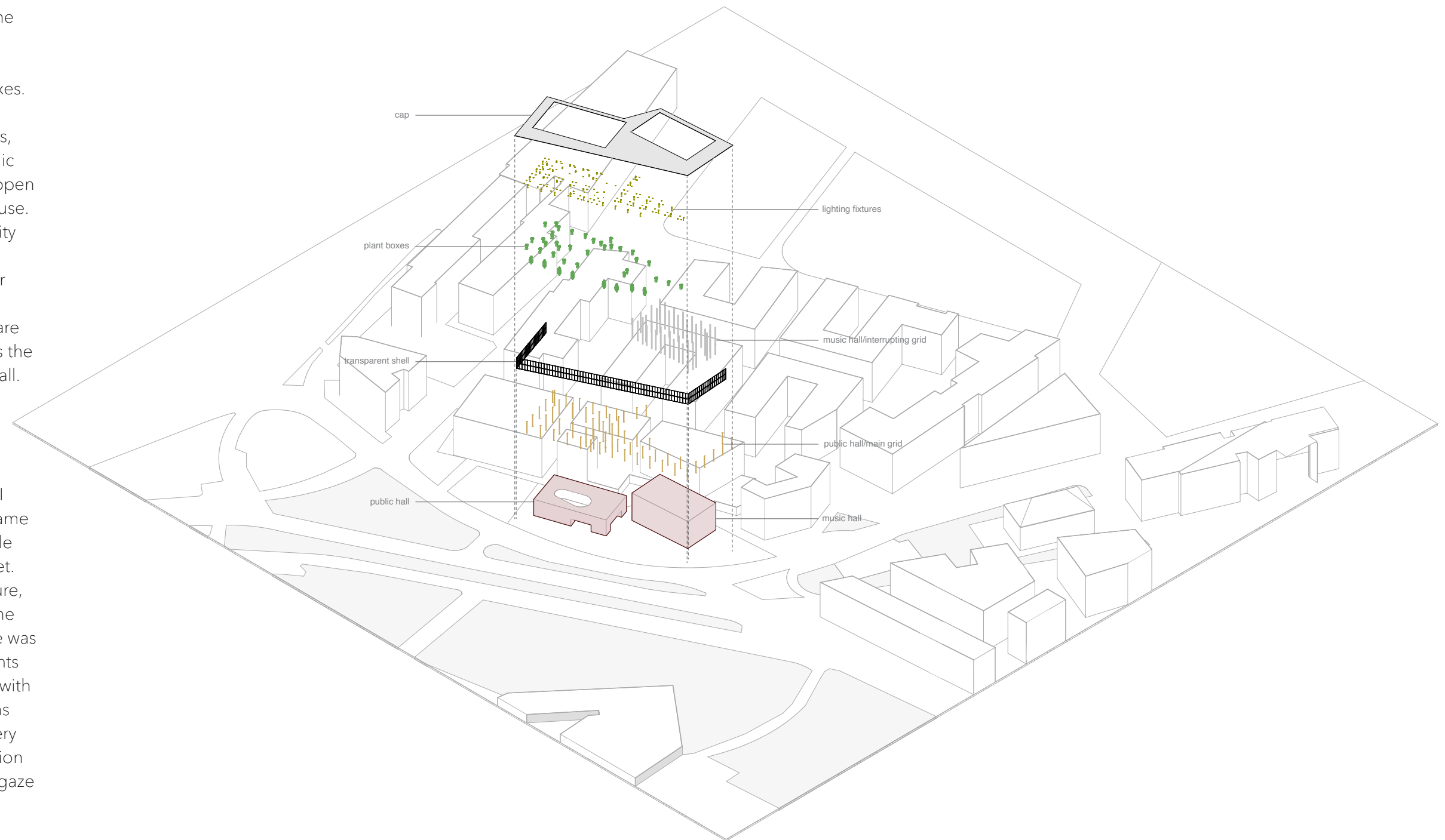


Figure 35. Conceptual axonometric drawing

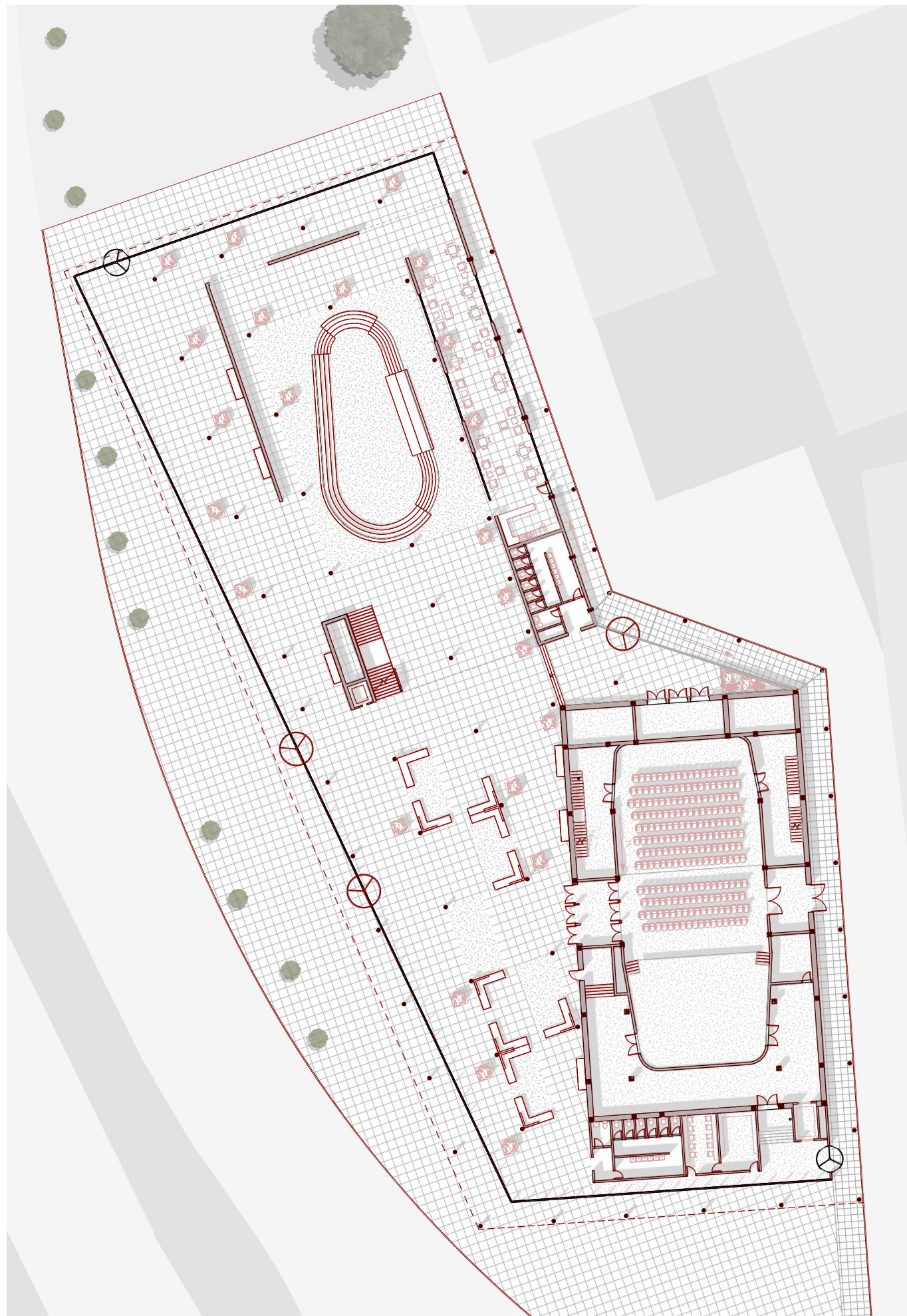


Figure 36. Ground floor plan drawn in 1:200 detail

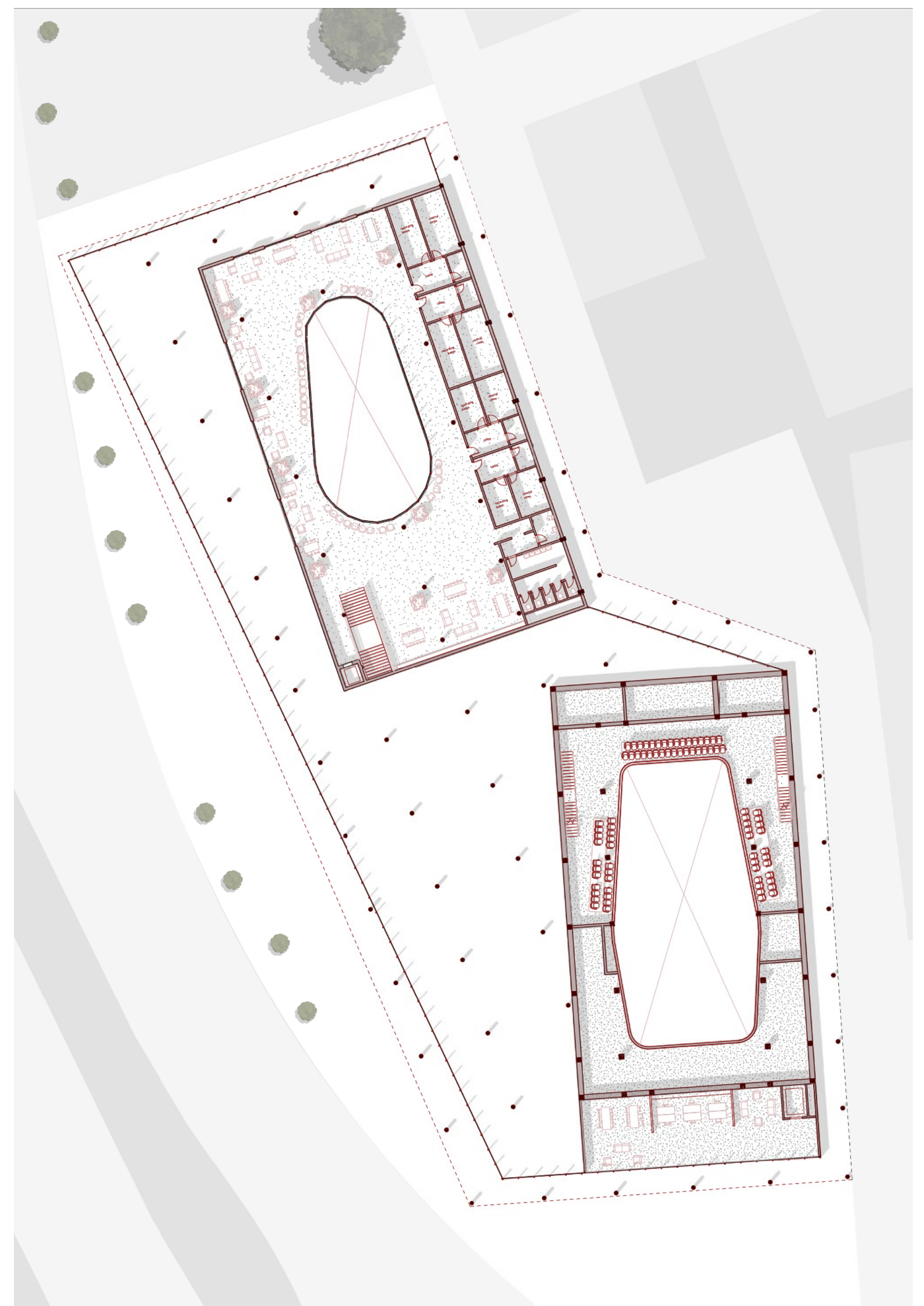


Figure 37. Second floor plan drawn in 1:200 detail

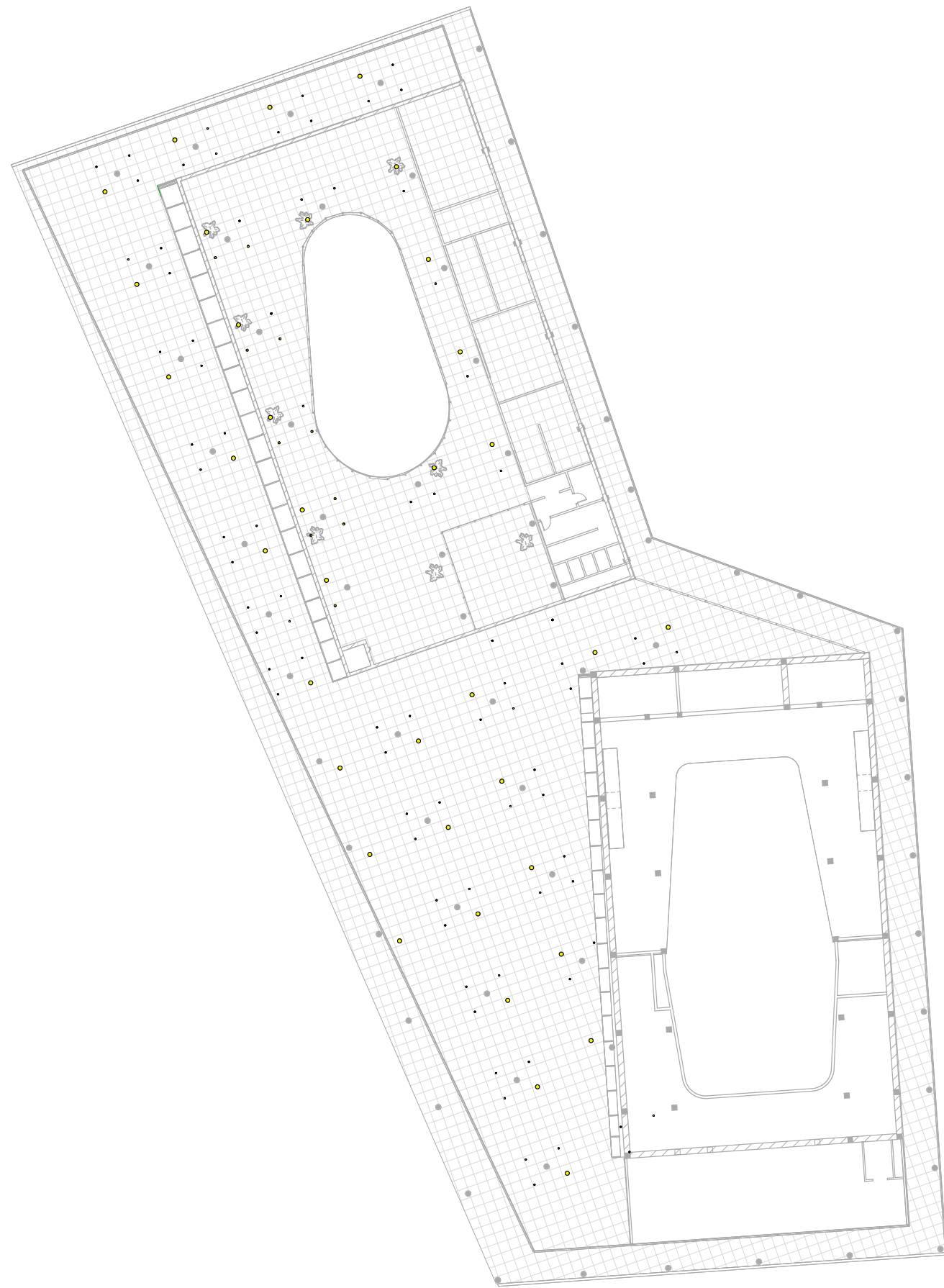


Figure 38. Ceiling Plan of foyer drawn in 1:200



Figure 39. Lateral section of the public hall drawn in 1:200 scale

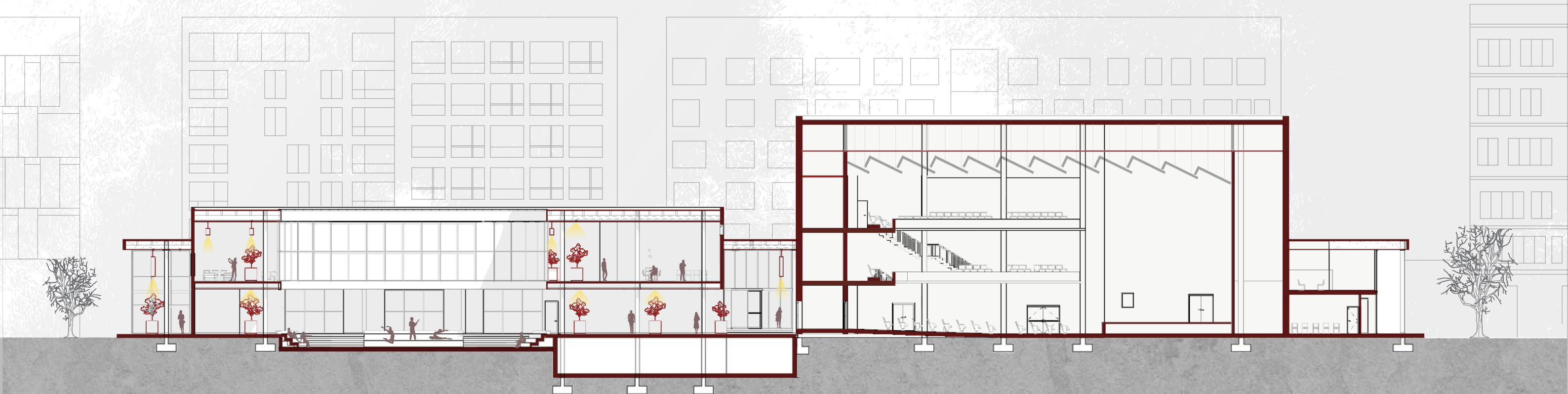


Figure 40. Longitudinal section drawn in 1:200 scale

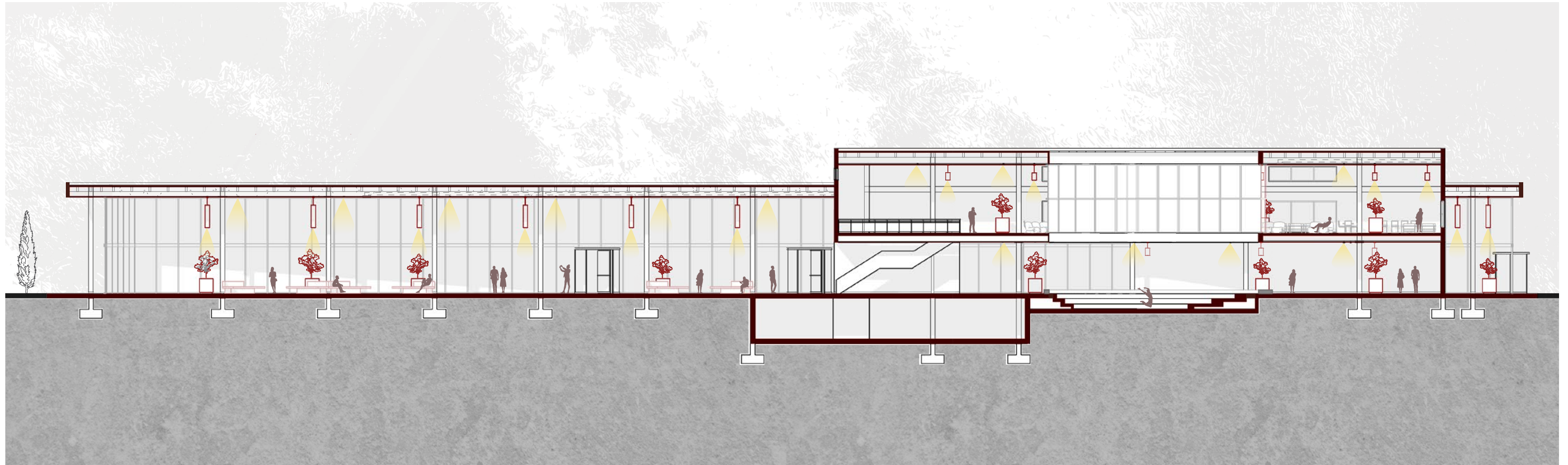


Figure 41. Longitudinal section drawn in 1:200 scale

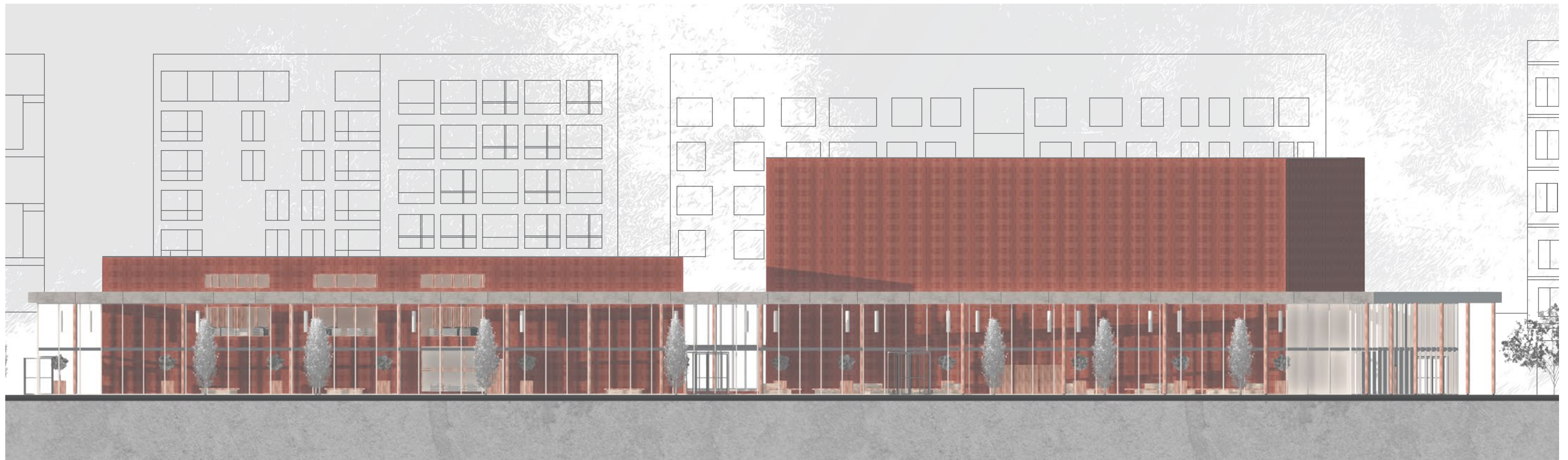


Figure 42. West Elevation drawn in 1:200 scale

In keeping with the theme of 'haptic appreciation' and the importance of materiality and detail in creating quality public space, different brick patterns were chosen and experimented with. The uniformity of brick and its timelessness separate the project from the shiny, outspoken projects of the Rotterman district. The formal and architectural language of the project is such that it announces its presence without being too loud or seeking attention, which separates it from both Rottermann and the Old City.

Both 'boxes' are materialised with brick, which itself is composed of different brick patterns, namely stack and Flemish bond. The innate difference in the boxes manifests itself in their closeness versus porosity. The thin glass shell in the middle brings transparency and makes the public character of the building stronger. All the elements are brought together by a 'cap', a monolithic roof structure that extends outside the glass veil and covers part of the sidewalk, and protrudes around the boxes. The structure in the public hall is made of light wooden columns and beams, while the concert hall is made of concrete, making it appear heavier and stronger; with the different building logics applied, it keeps with the theme of the project.

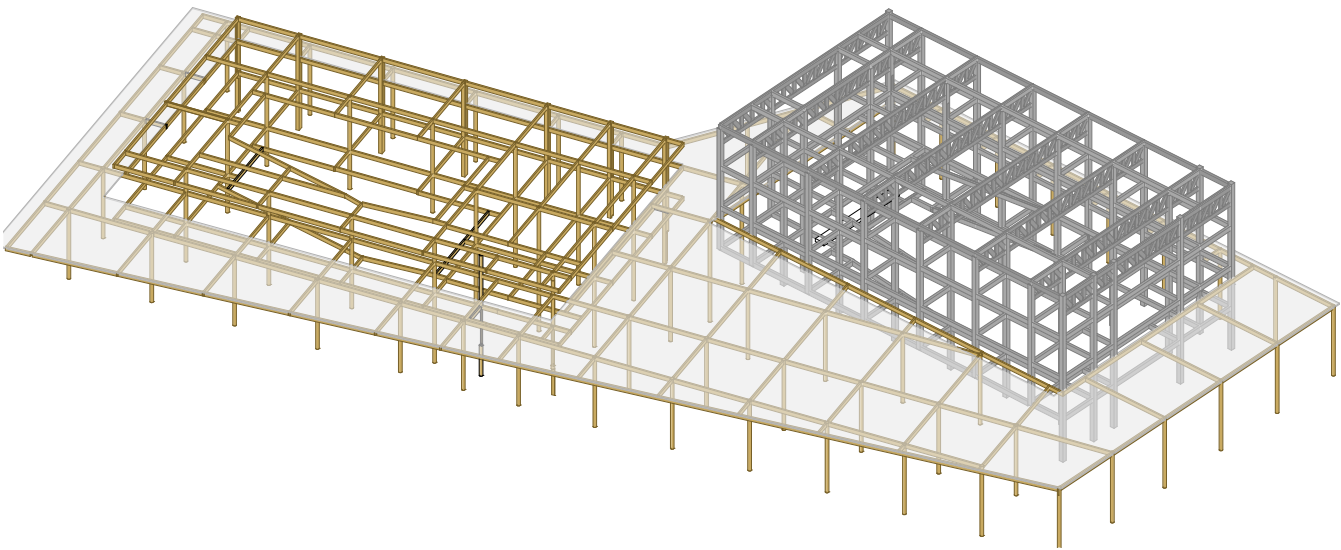


Figure 43. Structure diagram

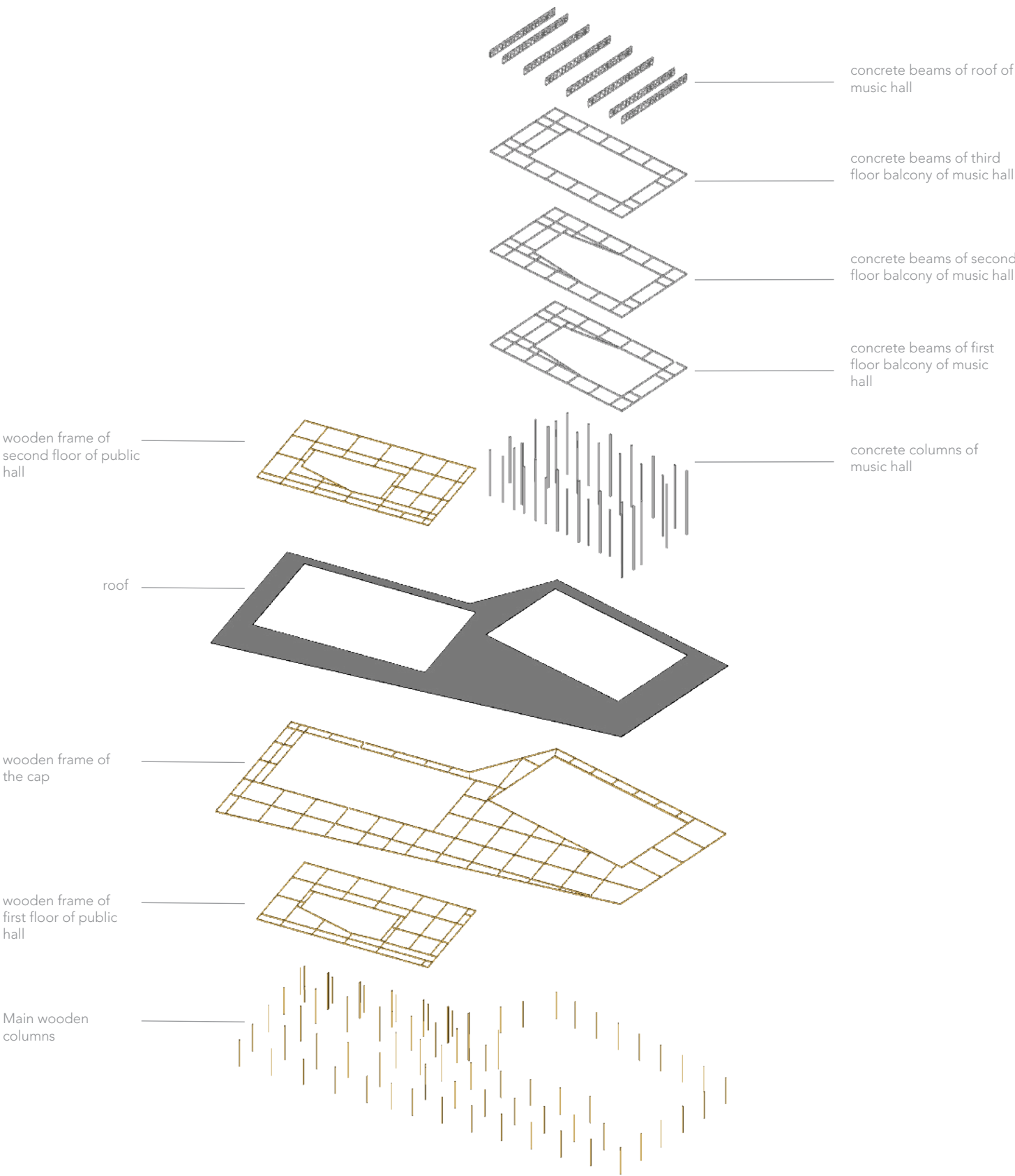


Figure 44. Structure diagram exploded

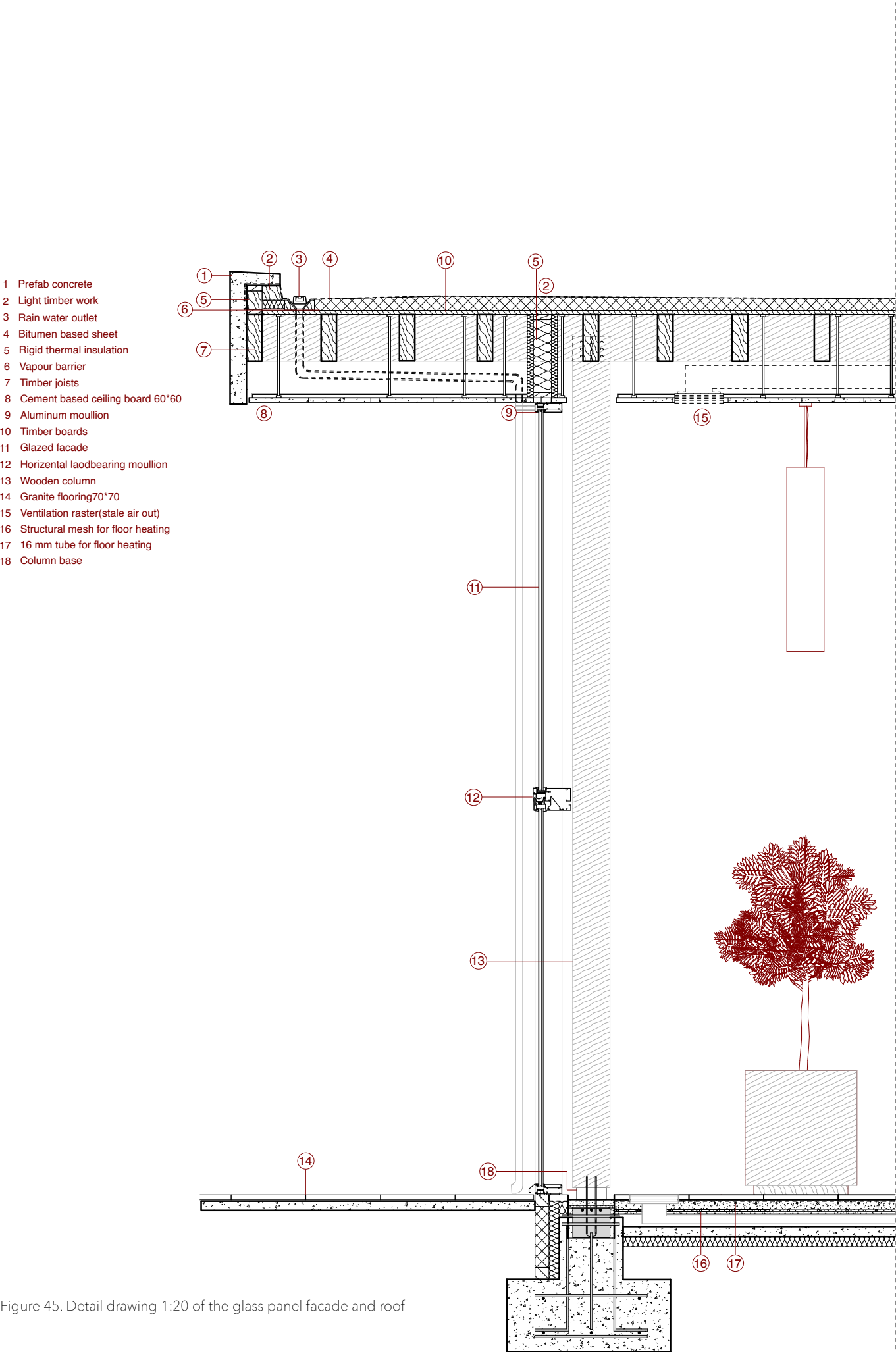


Figure 45. Detail drawing 1:20 of the glass panel facade and roof

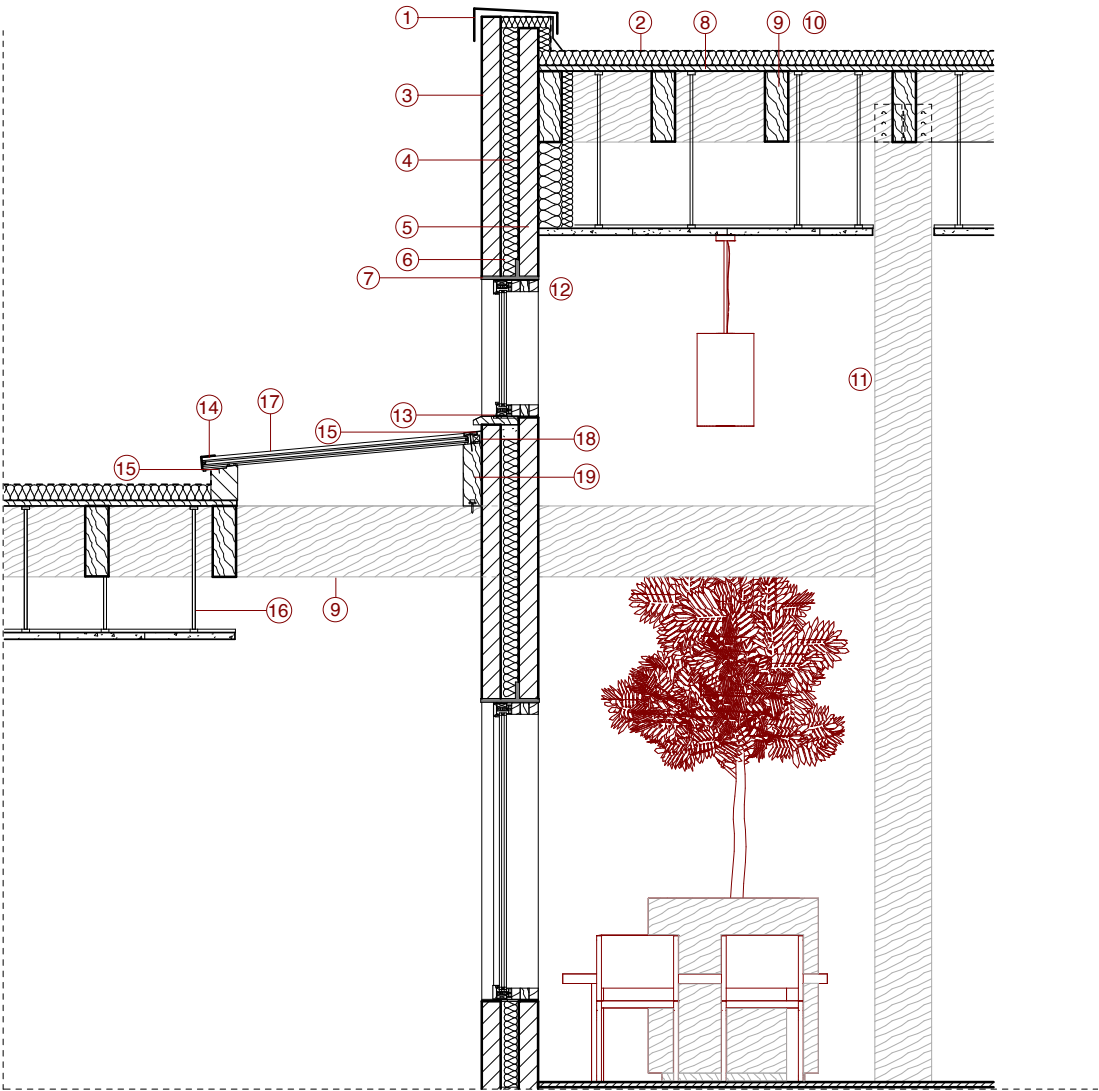


Figure 46. Detail drawing 1:20 of roof connection to brick wall

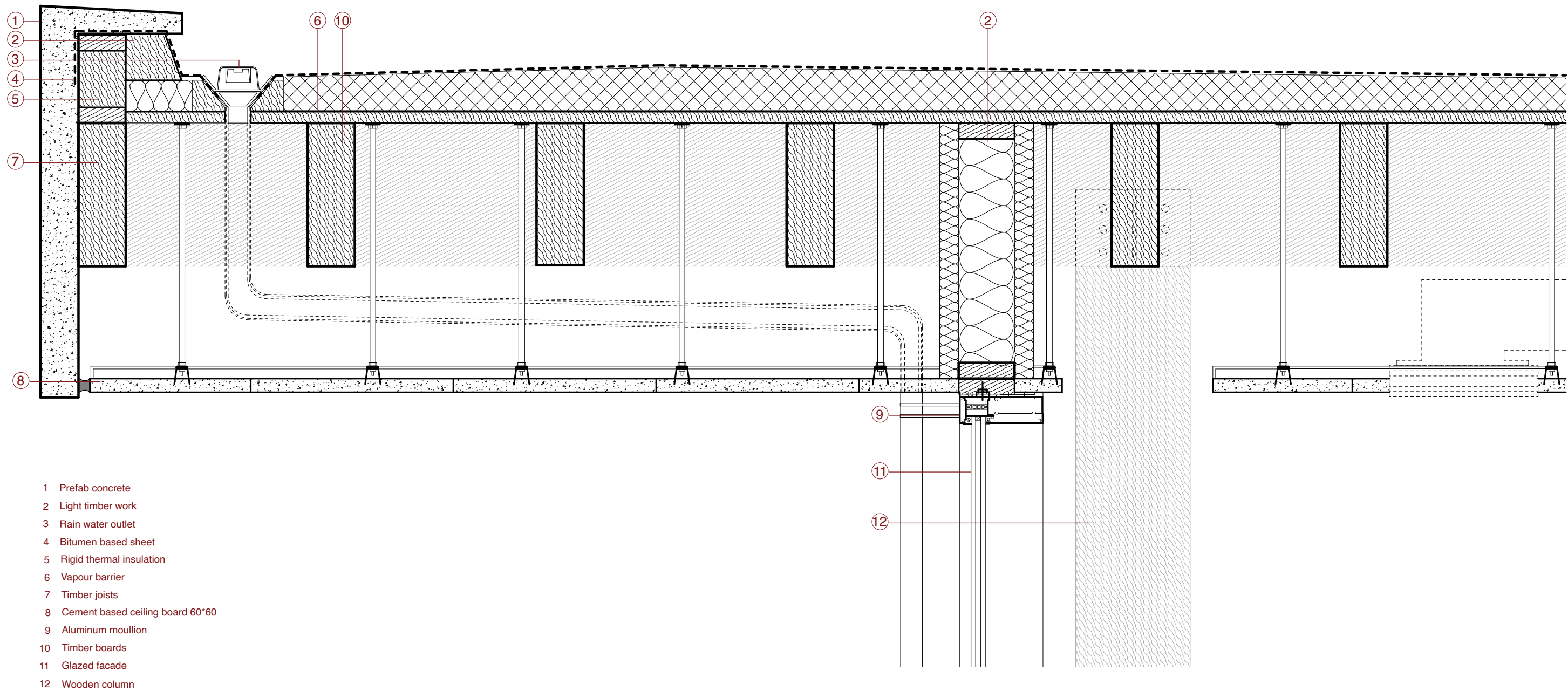


Figure 47. Detail drawing 1:5 of the glass panel facade and roof



Figure 48. Axonometric view



Figure 49. View of the building from the south



Figure 51. Interior perspective of lichthoff

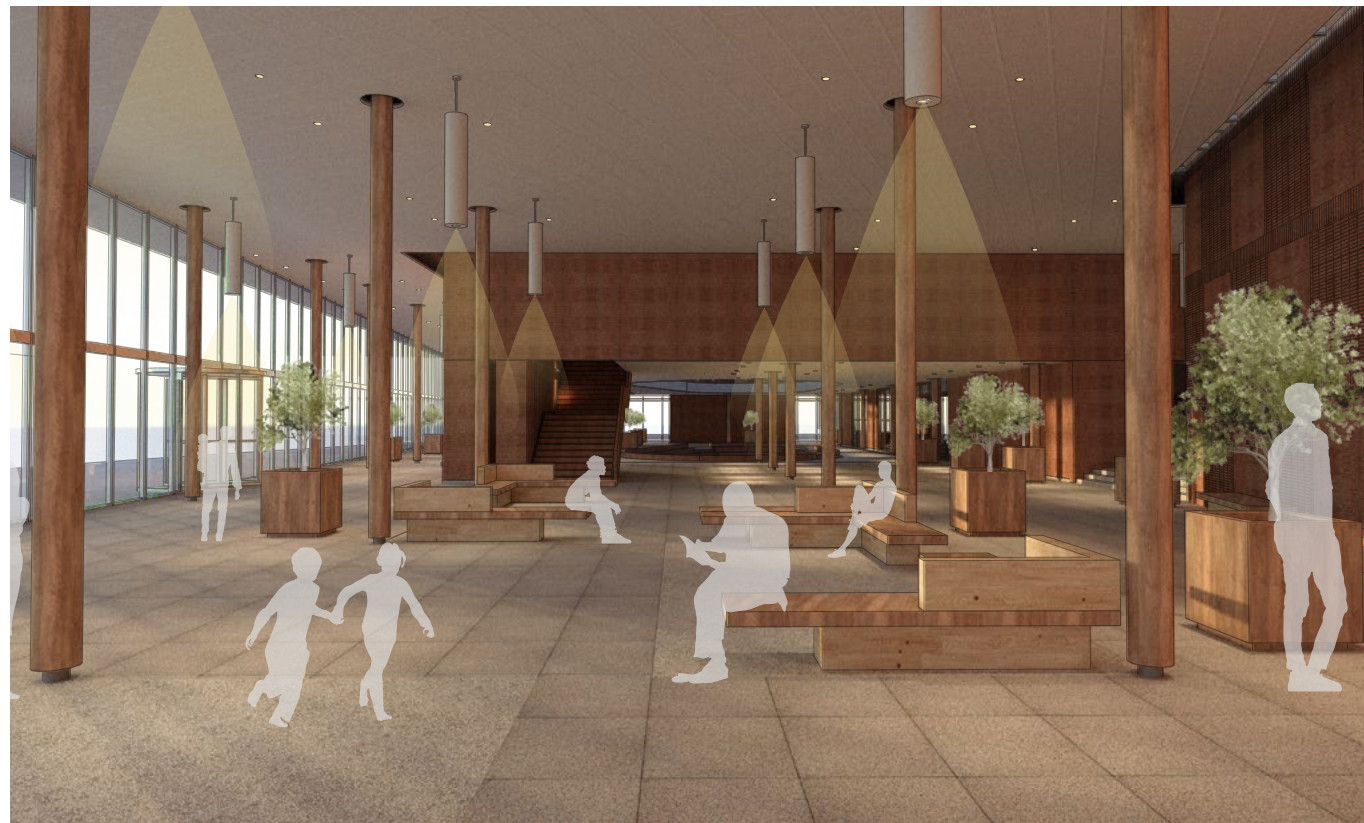


Figure 50. Interior perspective of foyer



Figure 52. Interior perspective of the public hall



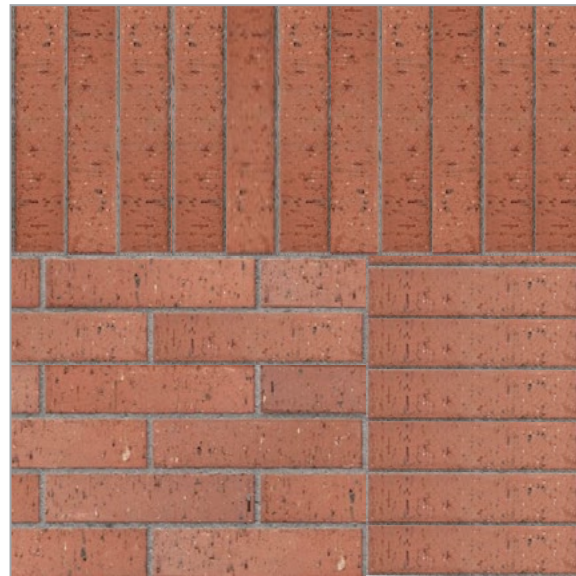
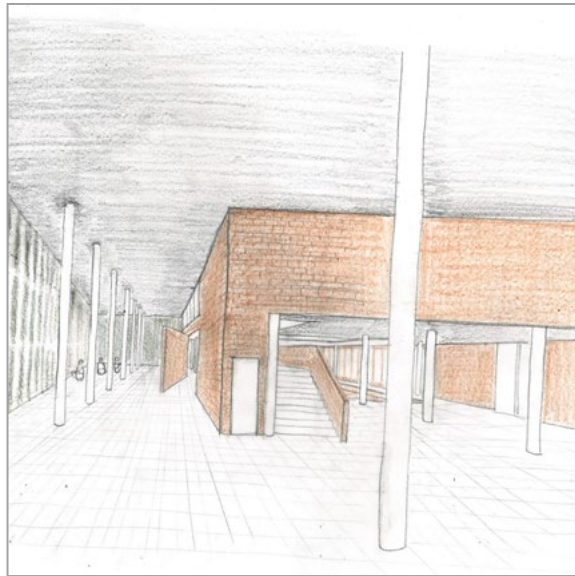
Figure 53. Interior perspective of the public hall second floor



Figure 54. Interior perspective of the foyer



Figure 55. Interior perspective of the public hall



Conclusion
Implications
Reflection
Acknowledgements

Part 4. Conclusion

Conclusion

Answers to the design assignment

.To conclude, I must go back to the initial fascination and origin of the project. The main design assignment was to change a car-heavy and non-pedestrian-friendly street in Tallinn into a pleasant and walkable passageway. The street in its current state is a barrier (and a backside) to the Rottermann district and the Old City of Tallinn. To recognize the multiple centralities of the city, and make this threshold less of a barrier and more of a center of its own. The final design addresses this question on three scales.

First, the urban scale. By way of its location and functionality, the building solidifies the cultural cluster that exists in the area (There are three other cultural centers or performing arts theaters in the close vicinity). Furthermore, the building sits in the distance of two monumental, massive malls–commercial and low-quality public spaces. On an urban scale, it aims to achieve what they fail to do: offer the city a public space of high quality, without demanding people to spend money on goods, and without overtaking the surroundings, sucking them in like a black hole. Add to this the importance of this threshold and the multiple centralities of Tallinn. The building sits in between, strengthening the boundary of two of these centers.

Second is the medium scale. In using photography as a tool, we are met with the ‘in-between’ scale, not quite zoomed in. The views that guide you to move ahead. Architecturally, the project focuses on establishing itself through the sobriety of form, and creating perspectives that guide and provoke curiosity. When viewed from the south, the way the building ‘sits’ on the ground is as if it has something to say, but it doesn’t shout it. This is on par with the separation of the project from the shiny and outspoken buildings of the Rotterman district (given that the site is directly accessible through alleys from Rotterman, and is essentially situated on its backside).

The third and final scale is the most zoomed in. What was gathered from analysis and readings was that what actually determines the quality is the treatment of detail in a project¹⁰. The ‘living room’ quality of the project could be expressed here, through the materiality. One of the reasons behind choosing brick, a warm and solemn material, was to contrast the harsh and cold exterior climate, and also the glossy and polished look of Rotterman. Furthermore, composing brick patterns allows playfulness and variety in appearance, and that is something that can be better appreciated up close, even by touch. In a cold, gloomy atmosphere, the building, in bright, warm reddish brick, stands out more as an inviting living room.

All in all, on the premise of urban influence, the project is influential on multiple scales, which goes back to the very core of the studio’s theme and focus. That has been achieved through the synthesis of analytical fieldwork results, namely photography and abstracting views, and correlating those results to form a coherent project.

Implications

Reflections on the design for the profession

This project shows that architecture can contribute to the city beyond the boundaries of the building itself. Rather than functioning as an isolated object, the proposal addresses a neglected urban threshold and explores how architecture can strengthen connections between different parts of a city. In doing so, it highlights the role of architecture in improving the quality of public space and supporting pedestrian life within the city. As an idea for a future project, the exact life in that street can be focused on through the materiality of the sidewalk, furniture, etc, to further elaborate the threshold.

Similarly, the building can expand its scope to a multidisciplinary project because urban relationships, spatial sequences, and material details were considered as interconnected design questions rather than separate issues.

Finally, instead of competing with its surroundings through iconic form, it seeks to establish its presence through materiality, atmosphere, and the quality of its public spaces. As such, its design philosophy reflects an architectural approach that prioritizes long-term civic value and human experience over visual spectacle, which can be debated and discussed among other design philosophies. Such discussions contribute to the understanding of architecture and how there are many routes one can follow to achieve something.

Reflection

Reflections on the process, methods, and tools

Throughout the design process, I often found myself jumping a couple of steps ahead when I shouldn’t have, underestimating the fact that there are many decisions in the middle. Especially after A1, I went immediately into the scale 1:200, without defining and realizing what the building is on a smaller scale, and in an overview. The concepts were blurry and languid in my mind, and working on plans, if they can be called that, was very unproductive. That did not lead to anything. One of the key moments was taking a couple of steps back, zooming out, and seeing the project in its overview. This way, I was able to come up with a concept that was clearly and easily defined. Another important moment was realizing and acknowledging the lines I’m drawing, and the ‘things’ I’m doing all have some form of a precedent, and recognizing those precedents, and naming them correctly is very helpful. This might seem very obvious, but I had a tendency to work in a vacuum and not use the many sources available to me. Sometimes, with the help of my tutors, I realized that I had to stop the process to go back and see what type of building the current project belongs to, and that helped a lot.

On a more practical note, ‘going back to the basics’ always proved helpful. I tended to use digital tools a lot more, thinking that they’re faster and more productive. But the easily available results and tools in Revit, for example, took away from the intentionality that comes from drawing every single line. Especially at the beginning, the slow and sometimes meandering hand-drawn processes resulted in many good decisions that, had I stayed with drawing only digitally in Revit, would not have happened.

In terms of the culture of working within the studio and with other peers, My design and process were always affected by cooperating and discussing decisions with other students, as much as they were by talking with my tutors.

¹⁰ Gehl, *Life Between Buildings*, 131.

As the project is situated in the larger context of Scandanavian and Baltic architecture family, a reflection on the stance of the project in this setting is important. The project itself maintains simplicity and legibility in form. Its functionality as a concert hall – keeping the concert hall simple to fit the rather narrow site and fit the acoustic quality – allowed for exploration of geometric forms and furthered that throughout the entire design. This use of simple geometry allowed the project to have clean lines and spaces that are very legible. In that sense, it could be said that it is borrowing principles from the architecture of its sister country, Finland. The use of a big transparent facade and playing with lights through skylights allows for an innate warmth that is in keeping with that architecture, at least from afar. Moving closer and looking at things in detail, the surface becomes more textured, and it becomes clear that details have been treated with an attitude that might not be in keeping with that minimalist approach.

To explain this, I have to go back to the initial concept and discuss the context and its importance in what has emerged. The concept on which the project is built is closely related to the city and public life in the urban realm. The project is situated at the threshold of two of the multiple centralities of Tallinn, two hot centers for tourists and for locals, but it is not intended to belong to either; instead, it is trying to revive this gap, activate it, and create a link. Therefore, the architectural language is particular to the project itself and not characteristic of Rottermann or the Old City Center. The importance of the details becomes clear here: the public life of the building and its experience in an important urban node are closely tied to the beauty of the smaller pieces that make it up. Otherwise, it can only aim to attract locals on an urban scale, but in actuality, it would fail to do so in its experience and atmosphere. This is more evident, particularly in the foyer wall and the interior. Though the interior is not maximalist per se, it goes beyond a simple, clean aesthetic. The furniture is still simple, and in keeping with the theme of bringing the street in, is also used on the plaza outside of

the building. The other elements that make up the foyer– e.g. planters, lighting fixtures and the building’s structure– hint at a style that is not minimalist, but neither is it so overtly filled or occupied. In that sense, I see the project fitting into the overall Scandinavian family, while having its own particular deviations that relate to the context.

Acknowledgements

Personal Reflections

Throughout the whole year, there were many times when I felt that my design skills were lacking. My previous education trained me as a functionalist designer, but throughout this project, I realized the shortcomings of such an approach. Learning to do things in a new way, of course, is an ongoing process, and there are many things left to learn, but I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to change and grow through this project. I’m also grateful for my tutors who have always been very keen to help me achieve what I want in my design, and were very acute and thorough in the things they taught me, and their criticism.

On a personal note, I should mention that the past year was not an easy one, and I’m thankful that I could use this project as a way to distract myself, though I acknowledge that everyone copes with their challenges differently. I’m also very grateful for the understanding and empathy of my tutors in such moments.

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