

# **An always open door**

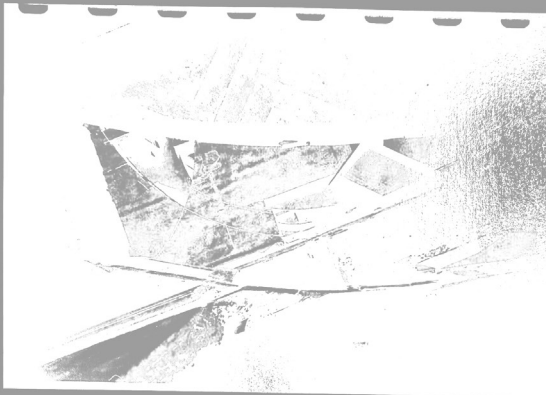
## The Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art

An architecture for art



## 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 iconographies 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 1940s, 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 Scheldt, 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 'sunshine 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, Wolter Davis, has commented that the transformation of the grain silo into a museum has 'resulted in a building that is, paradoxically, both formally indefinable 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 (FMKA). 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 'anarchitecture', 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

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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

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# Inside the White Cube

The Ideology  
of the Gallery Space

Expanded Edition

by Brian O'Doherty

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

art is exclusive

art is expensive

art is difficult

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**art is exclusive**

art is expensive

art is difficult





art is exclusive

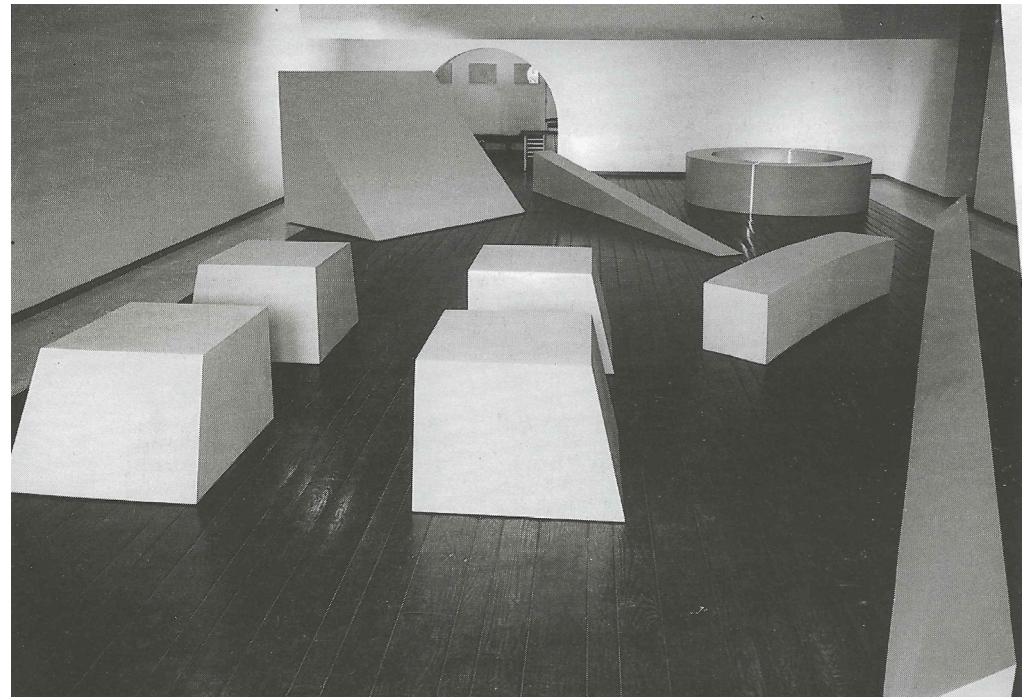
art is expensive

art is difficult



Banksy, Girl with balloon shredded

art is exclusive  
art is expensive  
**art is difficult**



Robert Morris, Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles (1966)

A collective and reflective space of study and discourse





Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities  
MSc3/4, 2022/2023

01

Eight Contemporary Art Museums

Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities  
MSc3/4, 2022/2023

02

Anti-Museum Spaces

Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities  
MSc3/4, 2022/2023

03

Urban History & Material Culture(s)  
Antwerp

Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities  
MSc3/4, 2022/2023

04

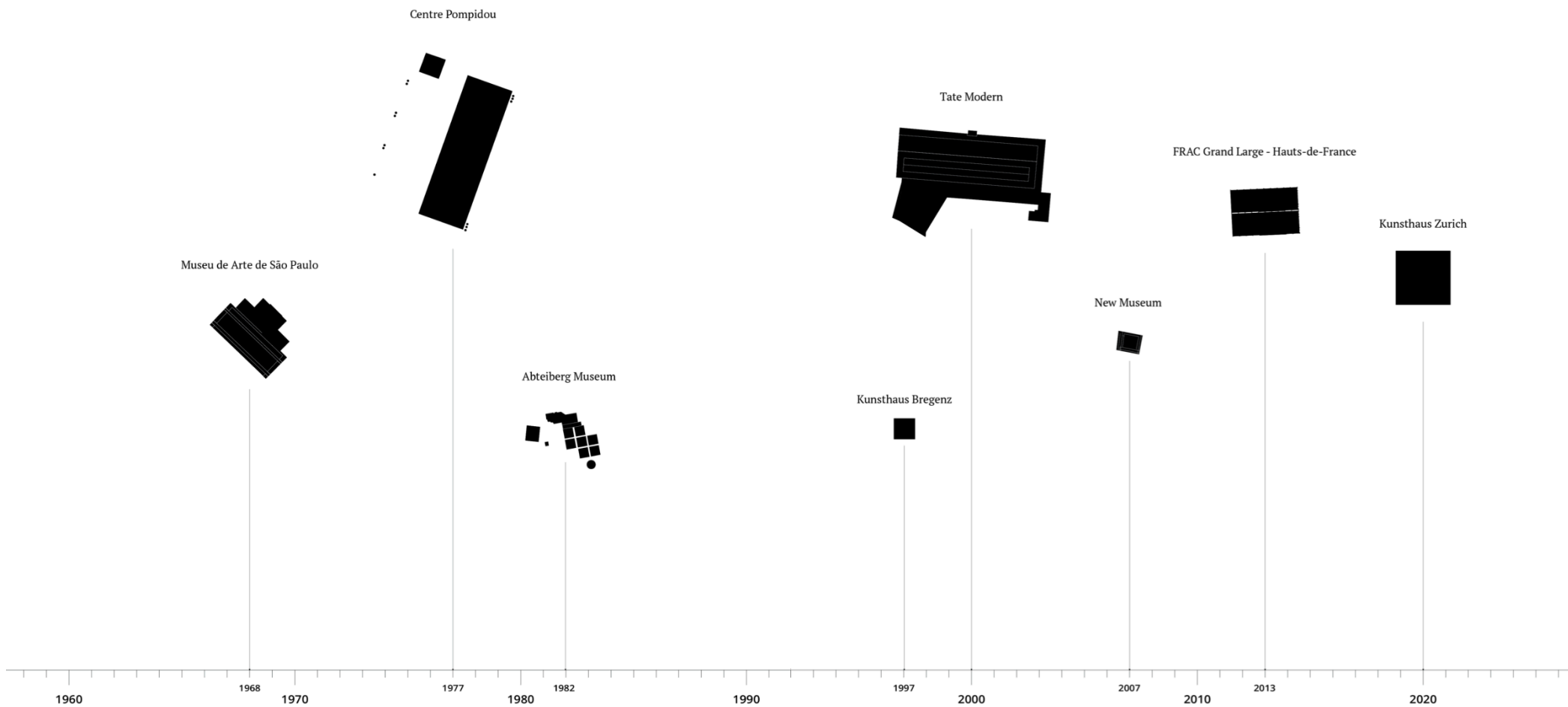
Spatial Ensembles

Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities  
MSc3/4, 2022/2023

05

Representing the Collection

## Eight Contemporary Art Museums

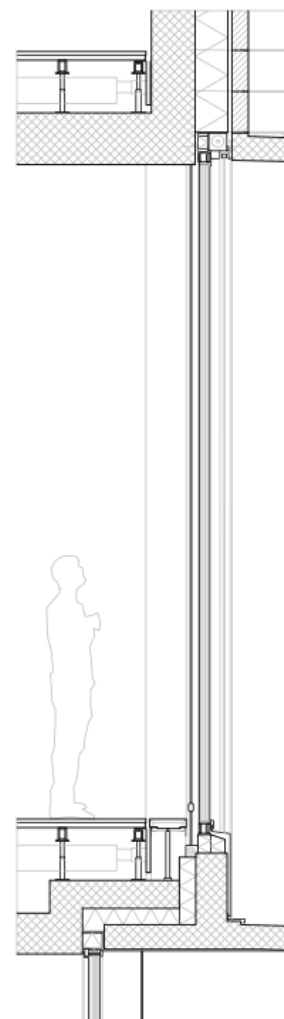
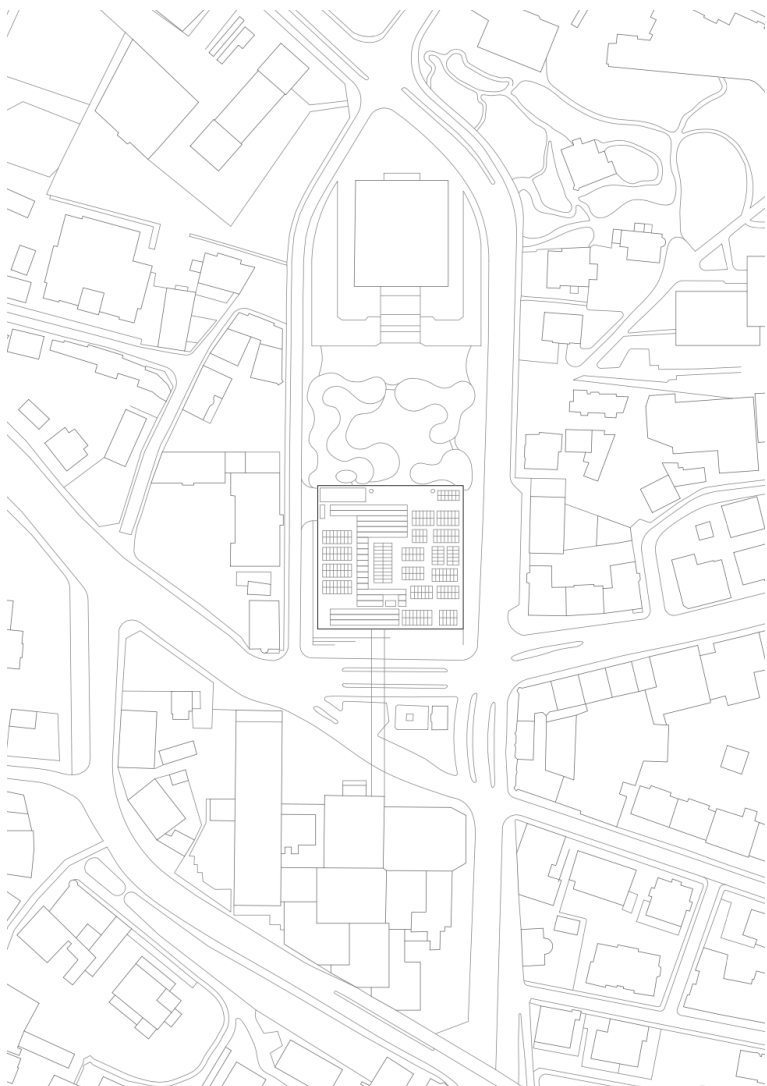


Zurich, switzerland

2020

David Chipperfield Architects





Looking carefully



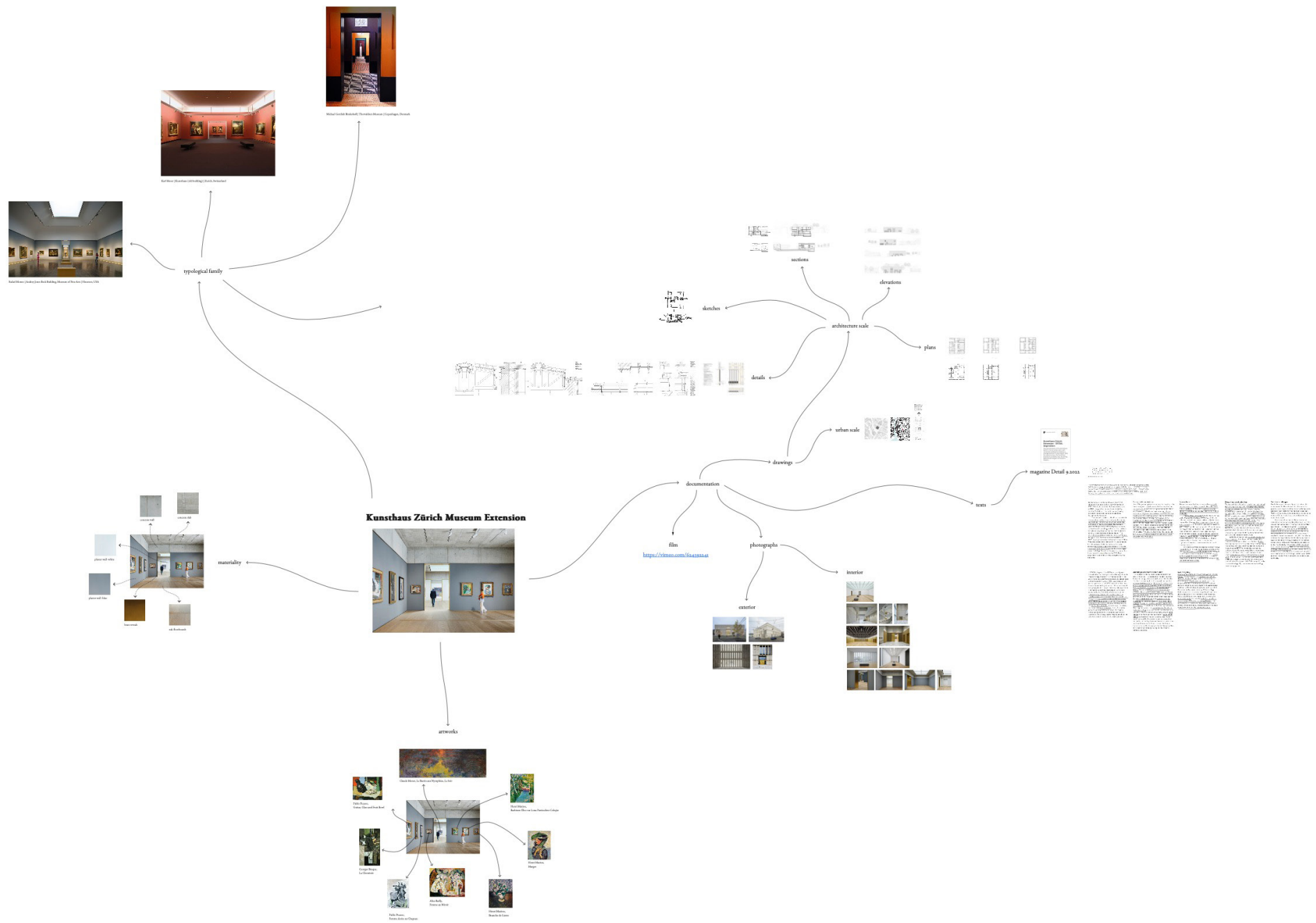






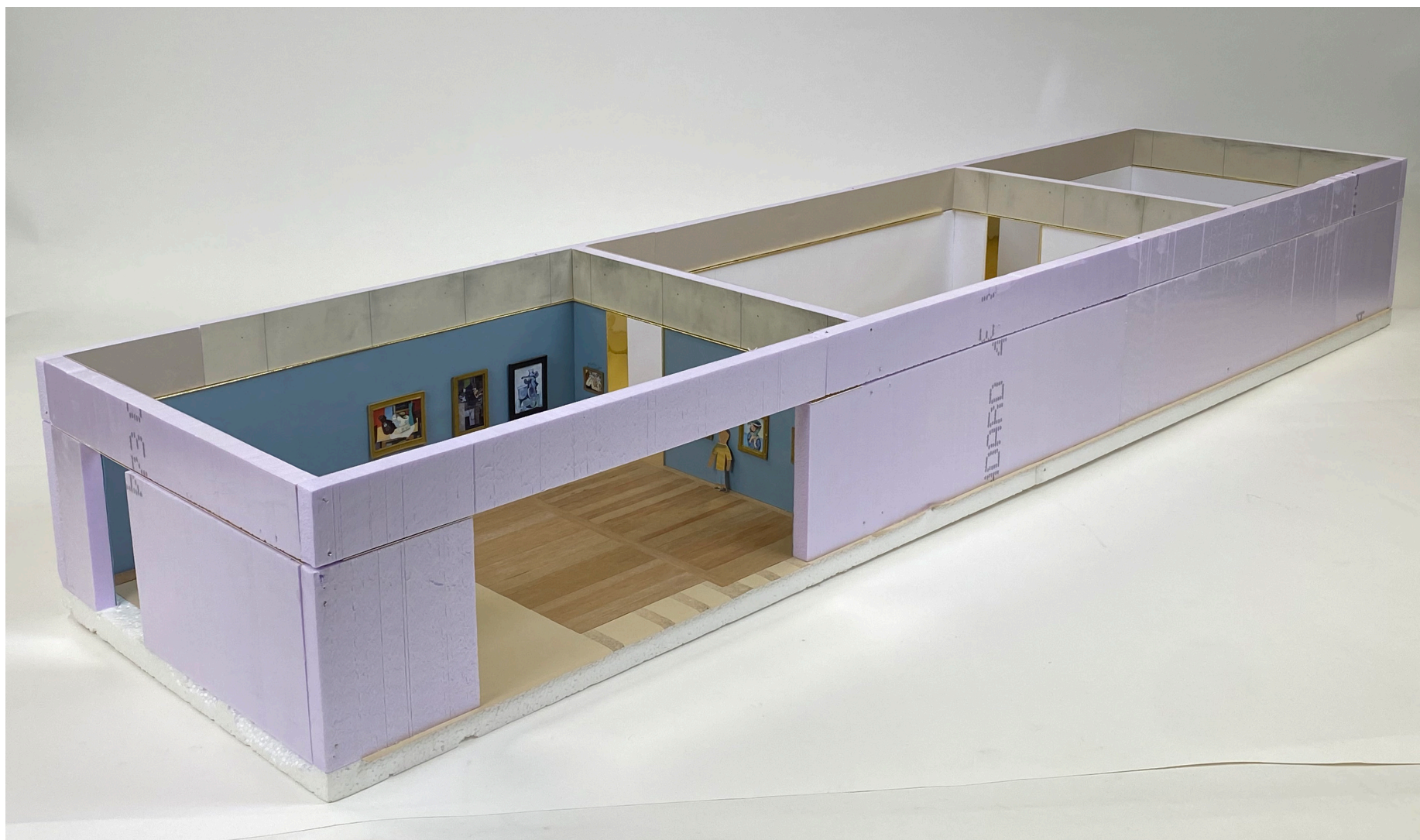
What do you learn from copying a photograph?













Original photo



Model photo

Spatial ensembles



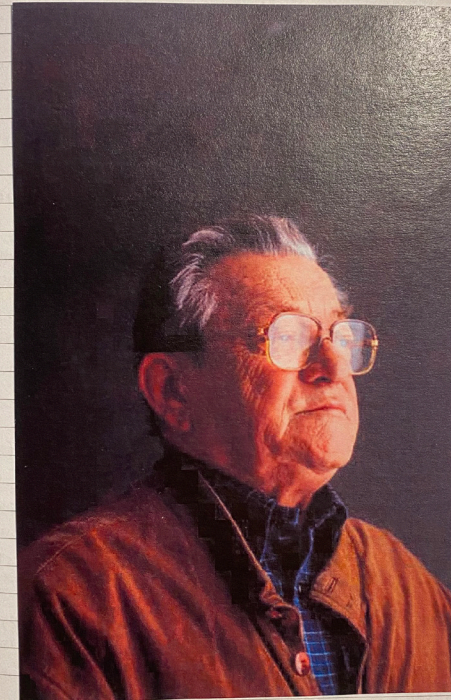


Ivan Kozaric

1921 - 2020

Ivan Kožarić

1921 - 2020





## The studio

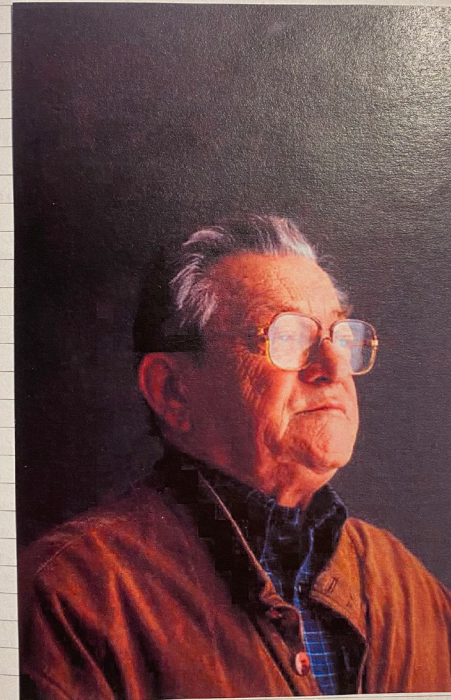


In 2007, the city of Zagreb purchased the complete studio with more than 6000 works and other objects.



Ivan Kožarić

1921 - 2020





## The studio



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



## 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.

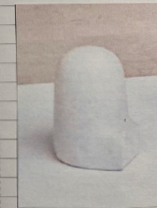
When studio Kizarić entered the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, another transformation occurred: once all of the sculptures had been removed and wrapped neatly in acid-free paper, Kizarić ecstatically decided to exhibit the sculptures while still wrapped, thereby rendering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

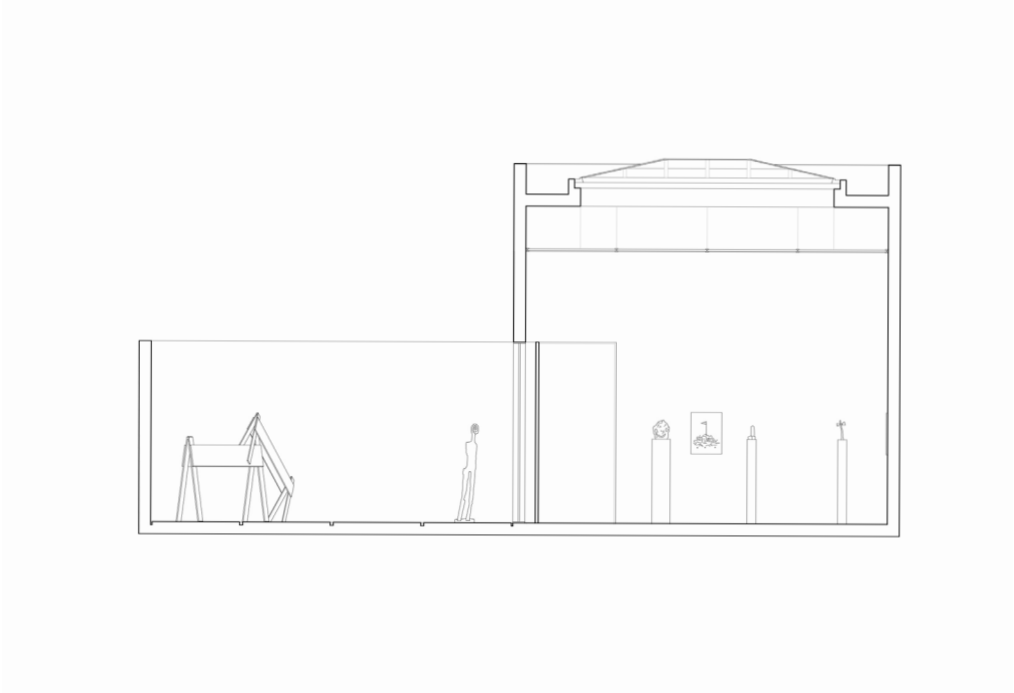
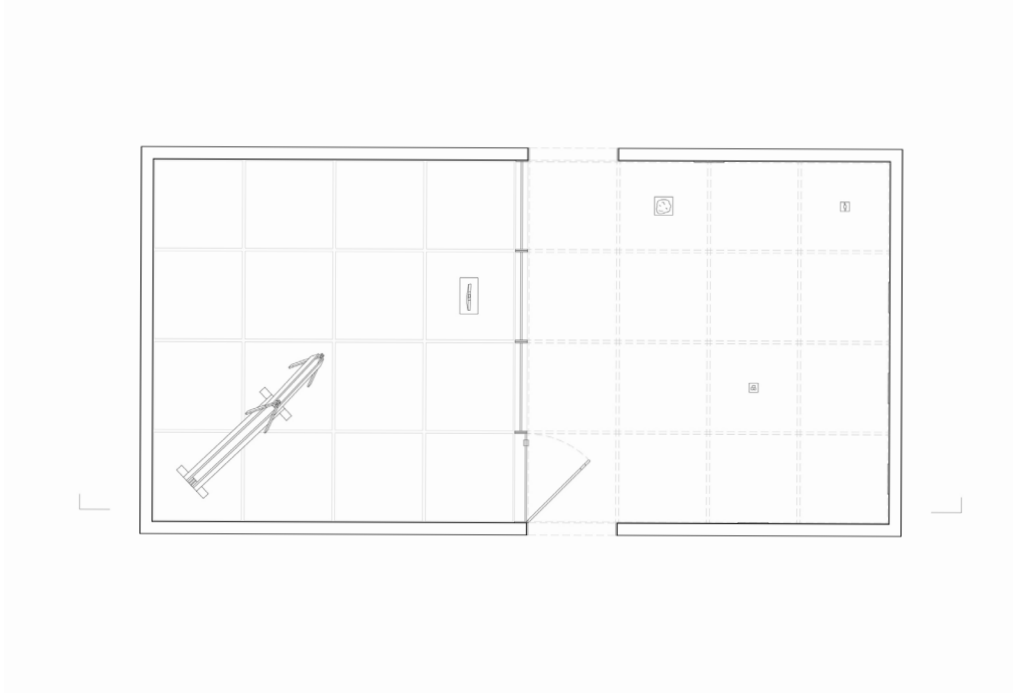
"If a work has an idea, it has everything, it has life"

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 degrading and annulling his own put in the name of what may 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.

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







#### IVAN KOŽARIĆ

Ivan Kozarić is a Croatian artist and architect. He is known for his work in the field of architecture and design. He has worked on various projects, including the design of buildings and the creation of architectural models. He is also a member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

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M HKA









The Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art

AGENTSCHAP  
FACILITAIR BEDRIJF

Department of Culture, Youth and Media

All-inclusive study assignment for the  
construction of a Flemish Museum of  
Contemporary Art

**OPEN CALL OO3702**

**PROJECT FILE**



 Vlaamse  
overheid

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//  
www.vlaan-13 of 116

The brief: open call for the new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art (VMHK)



M HKA is a museum of contemporary art based in Antwerp. Antwerp *Zuid* (South) is a vital residential area, located on the banks of the Scheldt, home to many restaurants, art galleries and other cultural institutions. M HKA is the only museum of contemporary art of the Flemish Community. The creation of a new **Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art (VMHK)** offers the exceptional opportunity to further expand the museum as an institution and to better position it internationally. The Flemish Community is taking this decision in accordance with the recent designation by decree of M HKA as a cultural heritage institution at an international level of excellence. The future project is based on the museum's institutional past, the existing collection, and its current profile.

Antwerp is strategically located in the Delta of the Low Countries. The port city forms a gateway to the European mainland and lies in direct proximity to Amsterdam, Paris and the German Ruhr area. The museum is moving to a site a stone's throw from its current location. The new construction is planned on the *Zuidersluis* (Southern lock) site: the location of the former Court of Appeal and Labour Court. The new building will be erected on the *Zuidersluis*, an underground construction that once was the entrance to the three *Zuiderdokken* (Southern docks) and has given its name to the museum quarter. The courthouse is centrally located between the planned city park *Dok Zuid* (Dock South) and the Scheldt quays, two important urban projects that are currently being developed. Owing to its position, the new museum will form a hinge between the two. The principal expects the construction of the museum to provide added value for the current developments. The project area is therefore envisaged more broadly than the current block. The preserved underground lock complex forms the connection between the Scheldt and the former *Zuiderdokken* and has an important heritage value. The museum wants to anchor itself in and connect with the city.

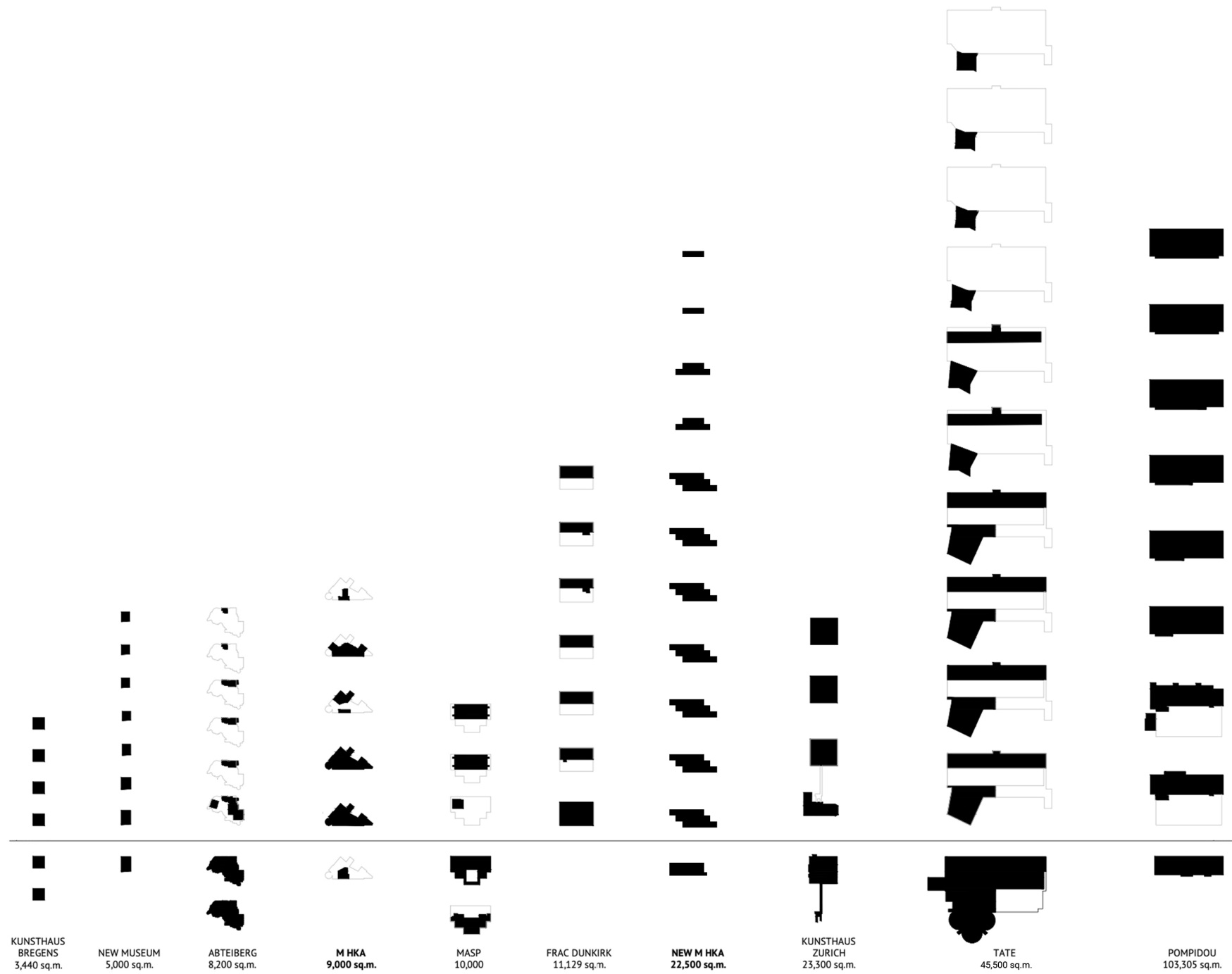












A new building for a new scale of art



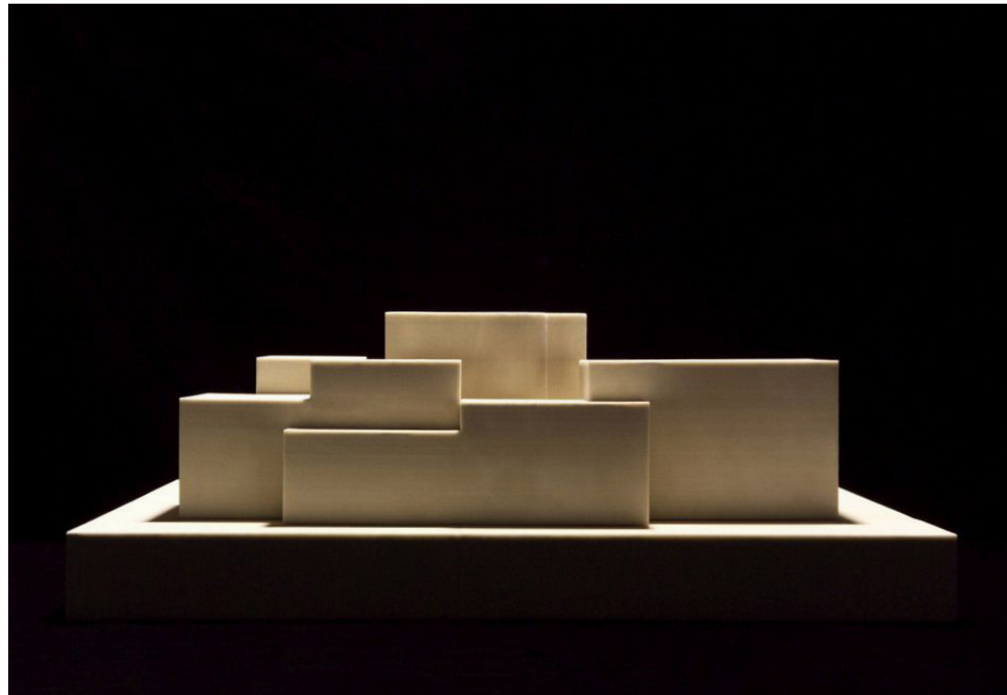
Gabriel Chaile, Venice Biennale (2022)

A new building for a new scale of art



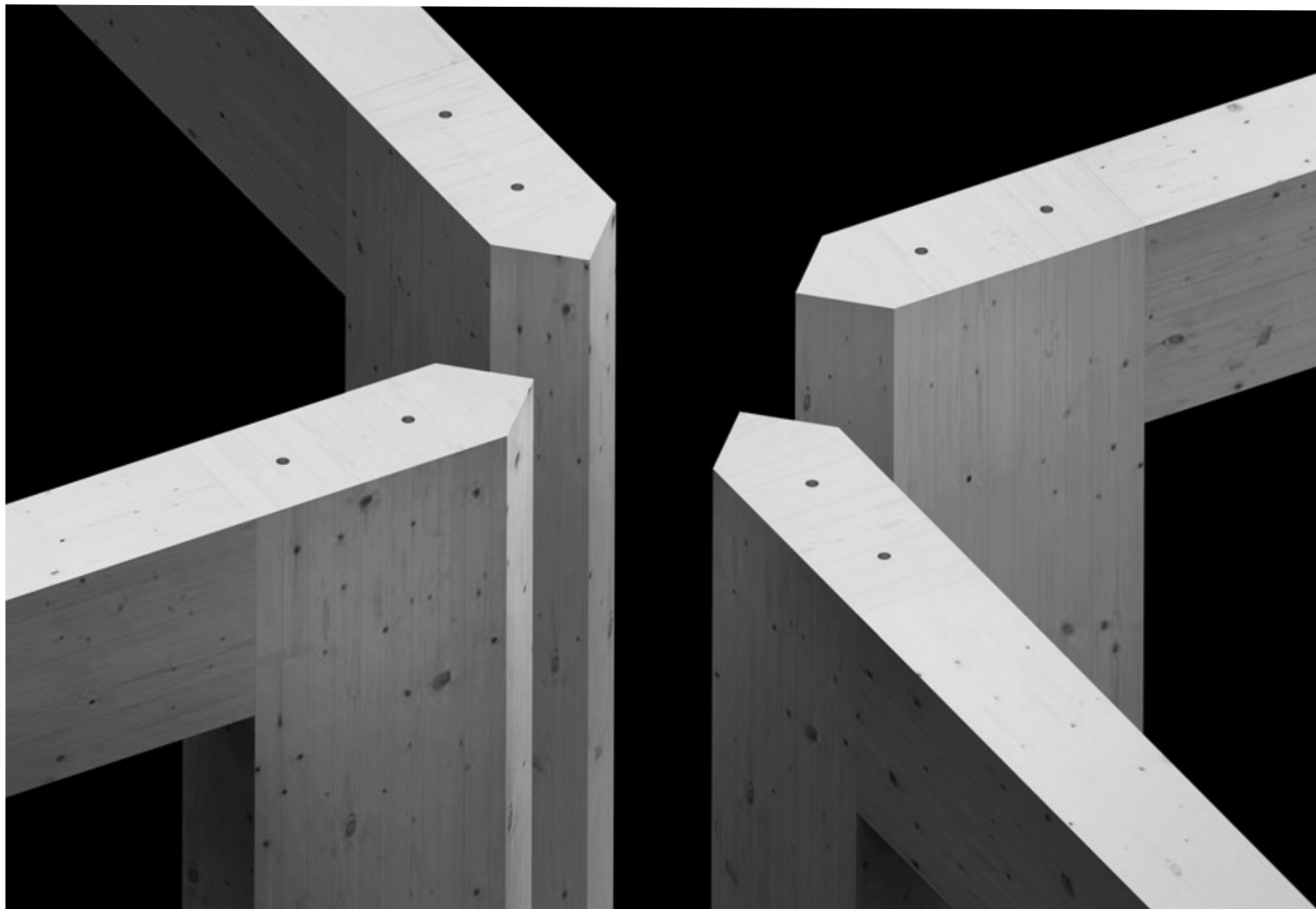
Olafur Eliasson, The Weather Project, Tate Modern, London (2003)



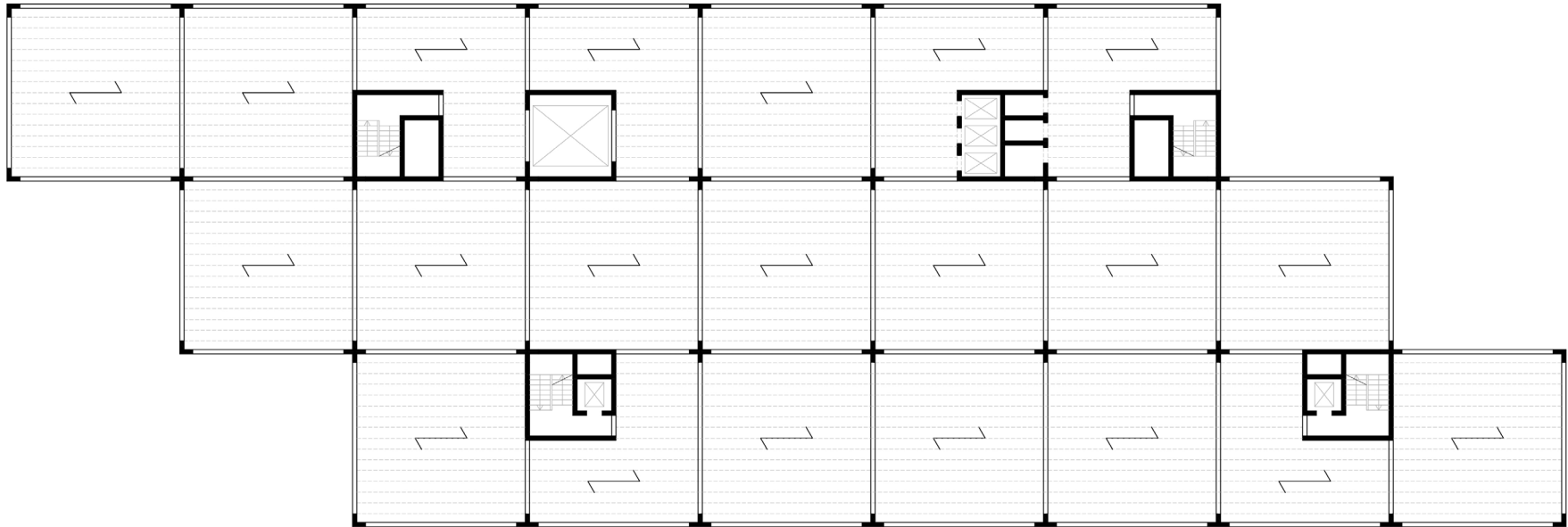


A large scale can be managed by decomposing and juxtaposing repeatable, similar elements

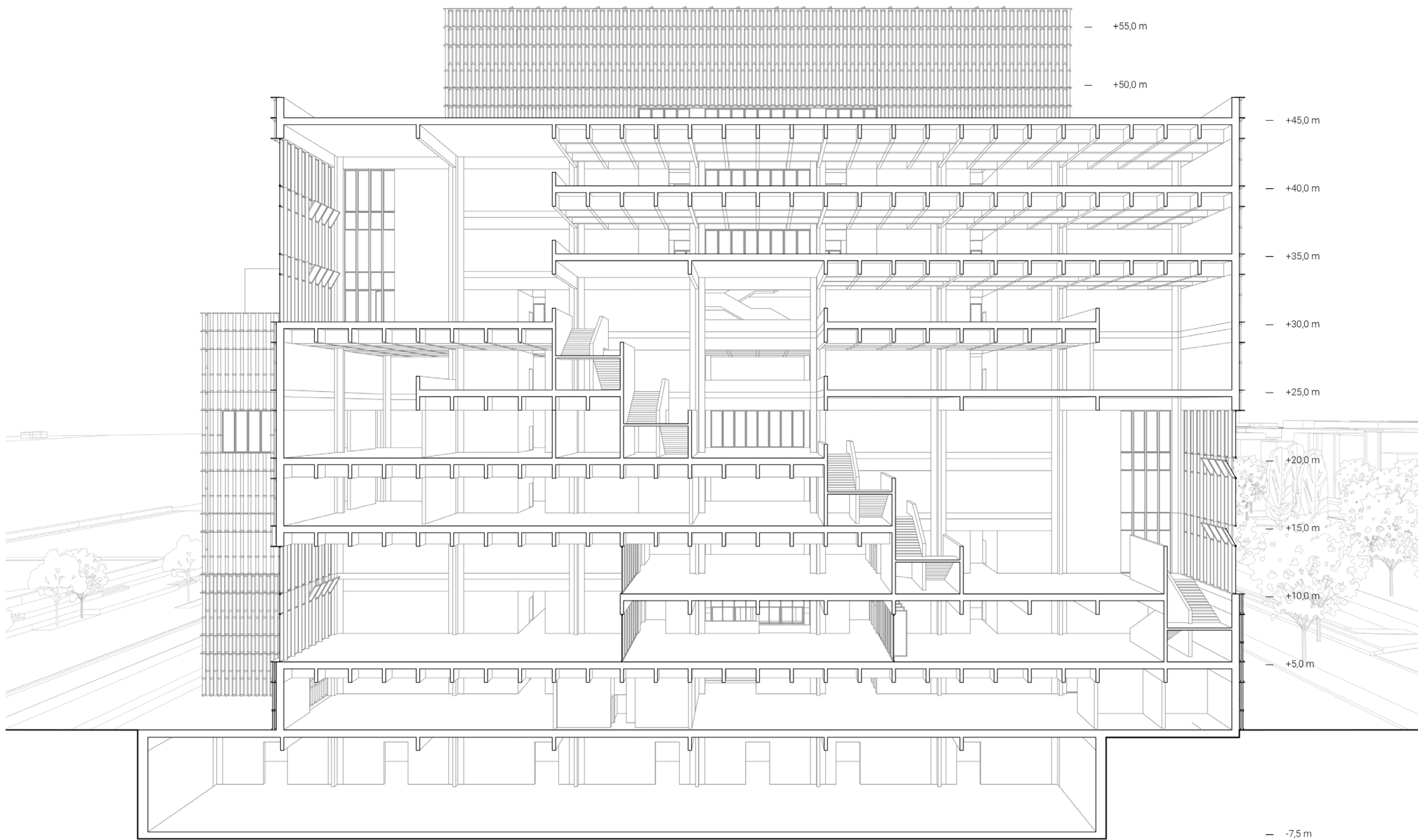


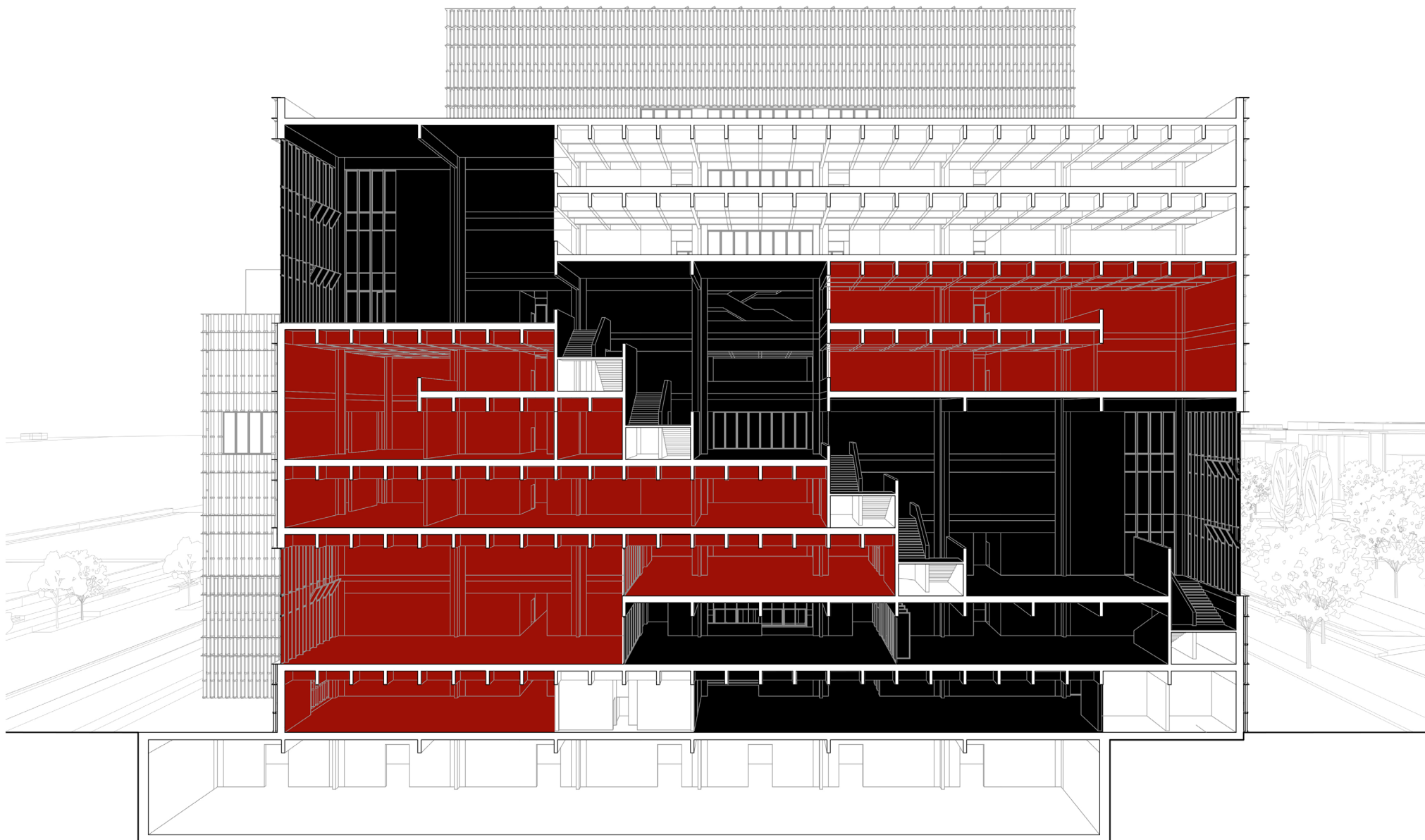


Carlana Mezzalira Pentimalli, Le déjeuner sur l'herbe  
New Governmental Buildings, Frauenfeld (2017)

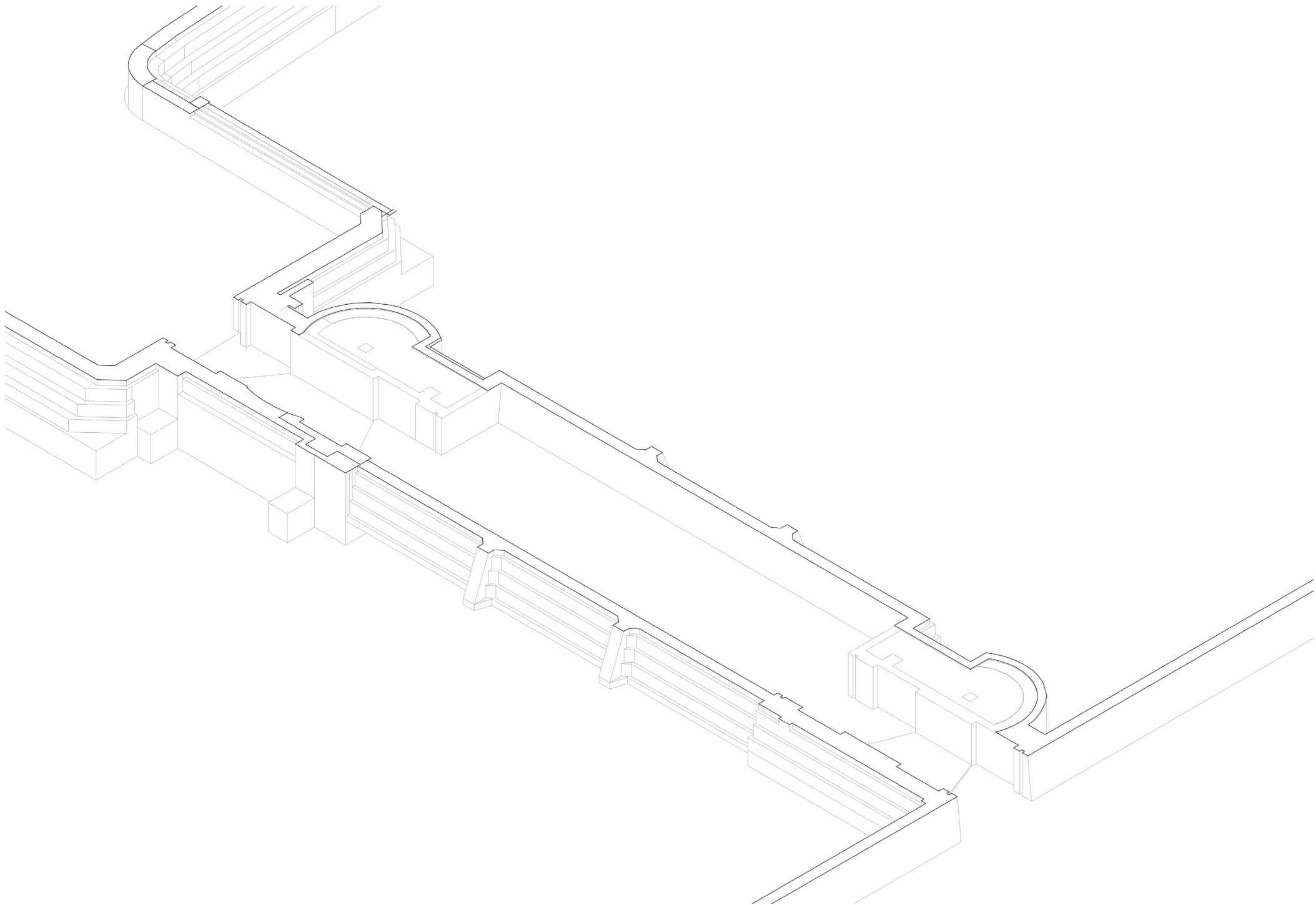


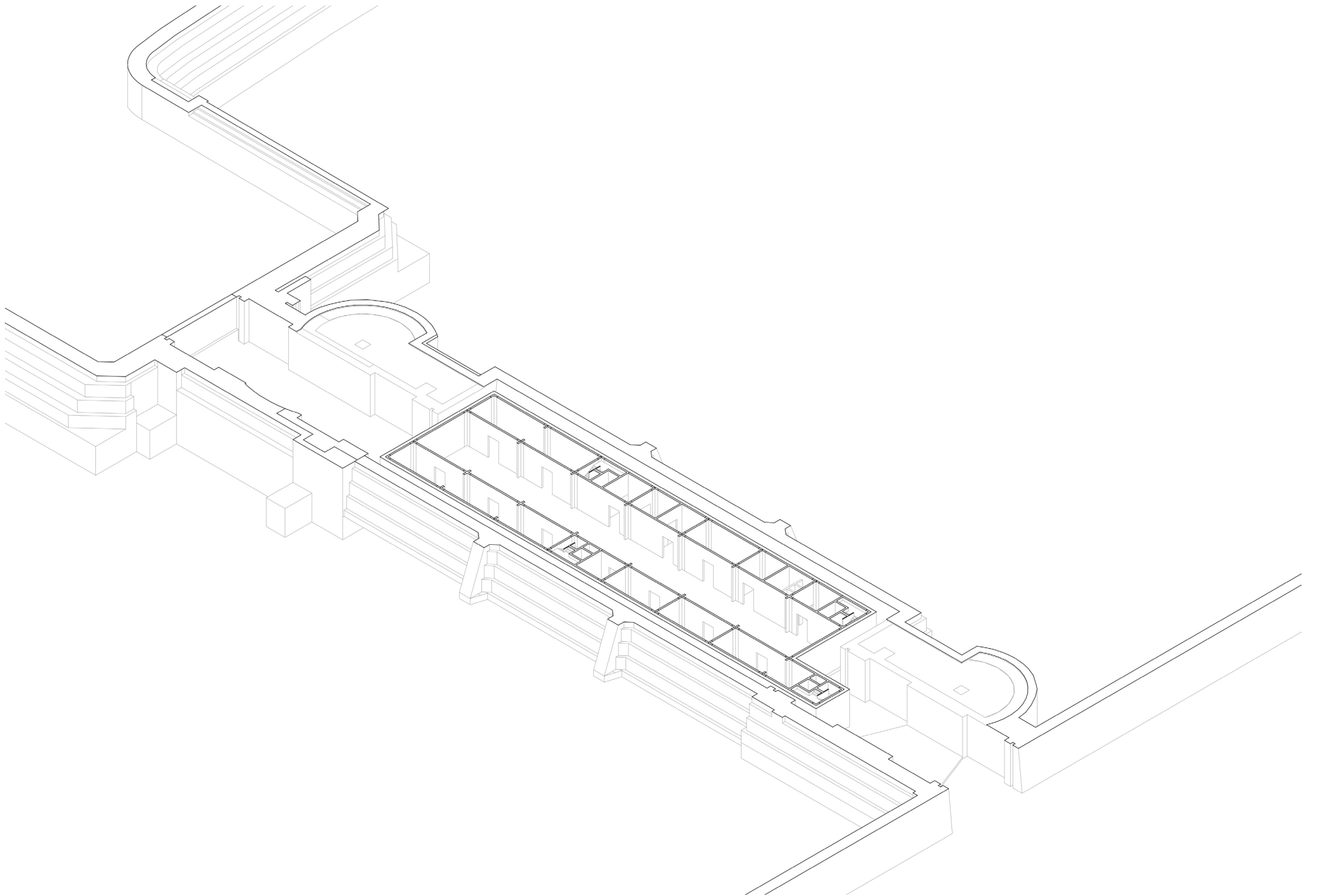




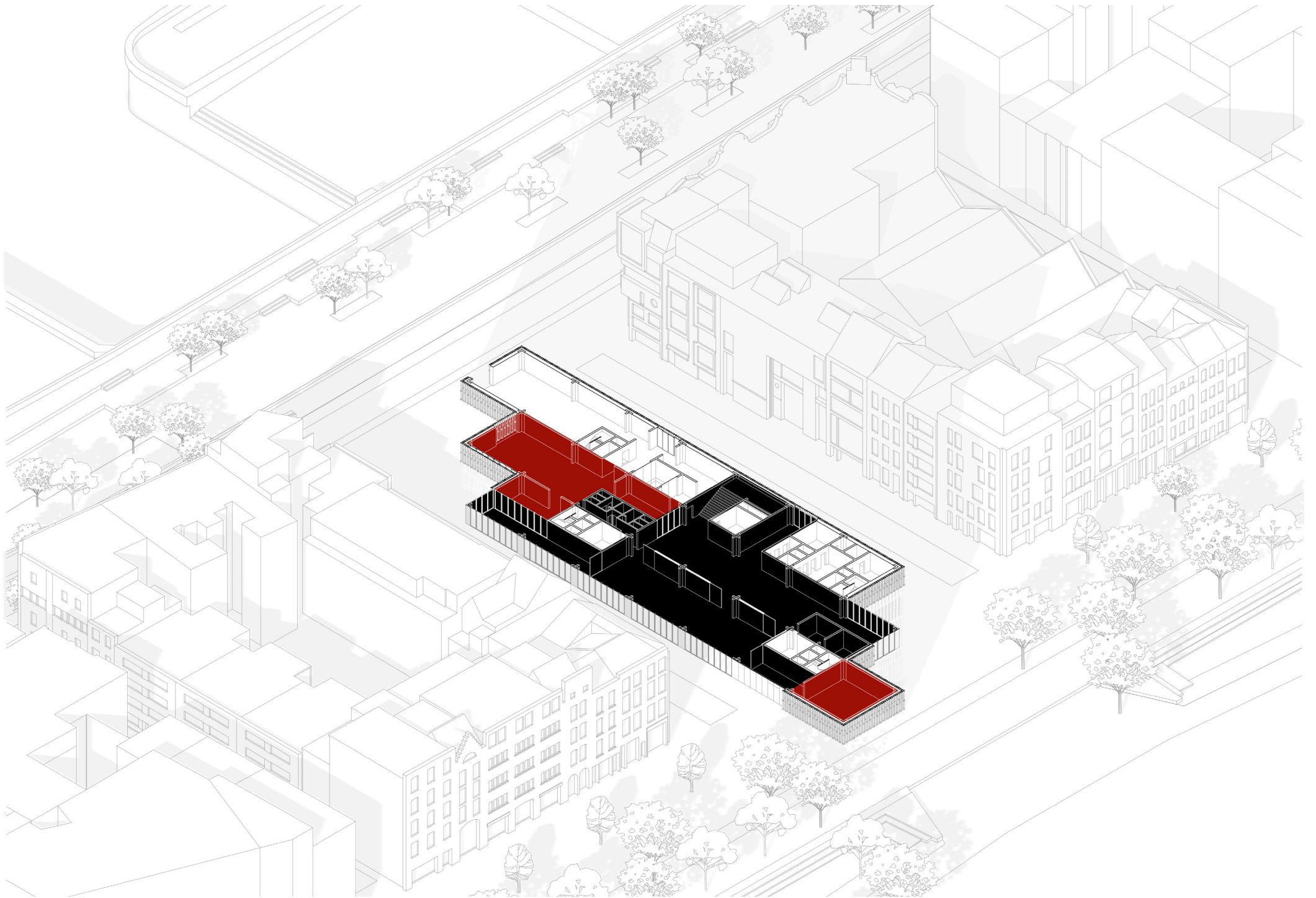


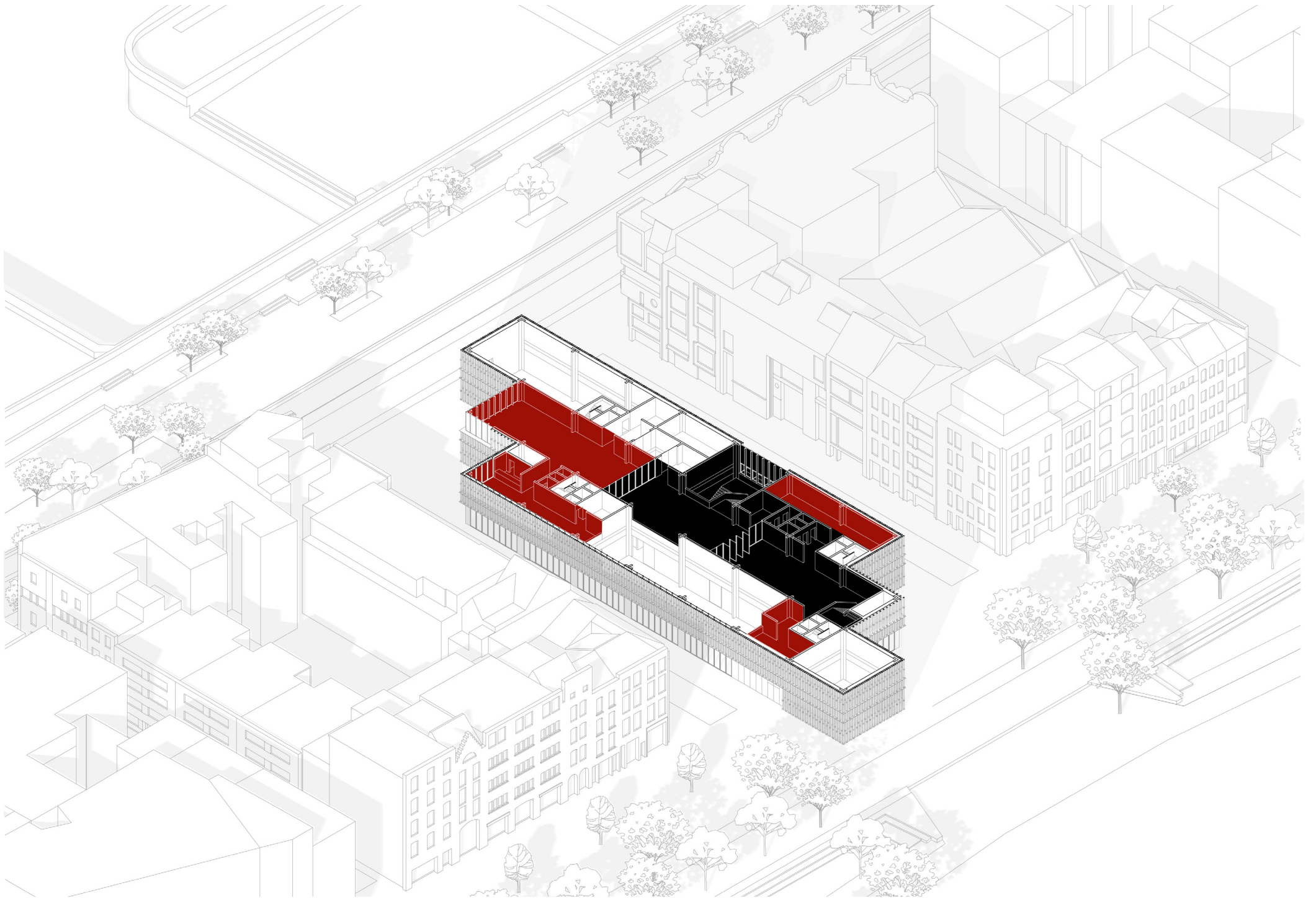
Section A | 1:250



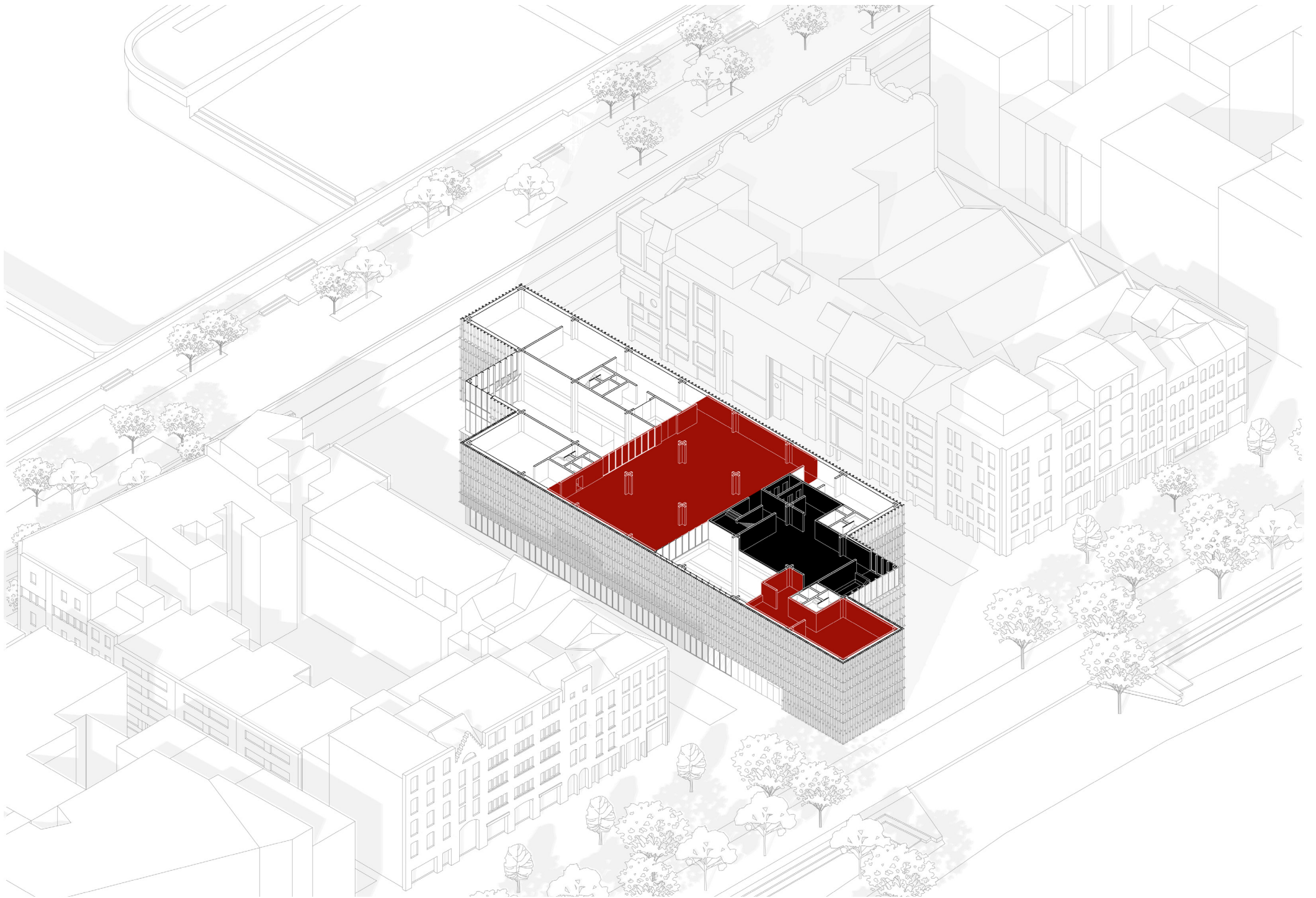


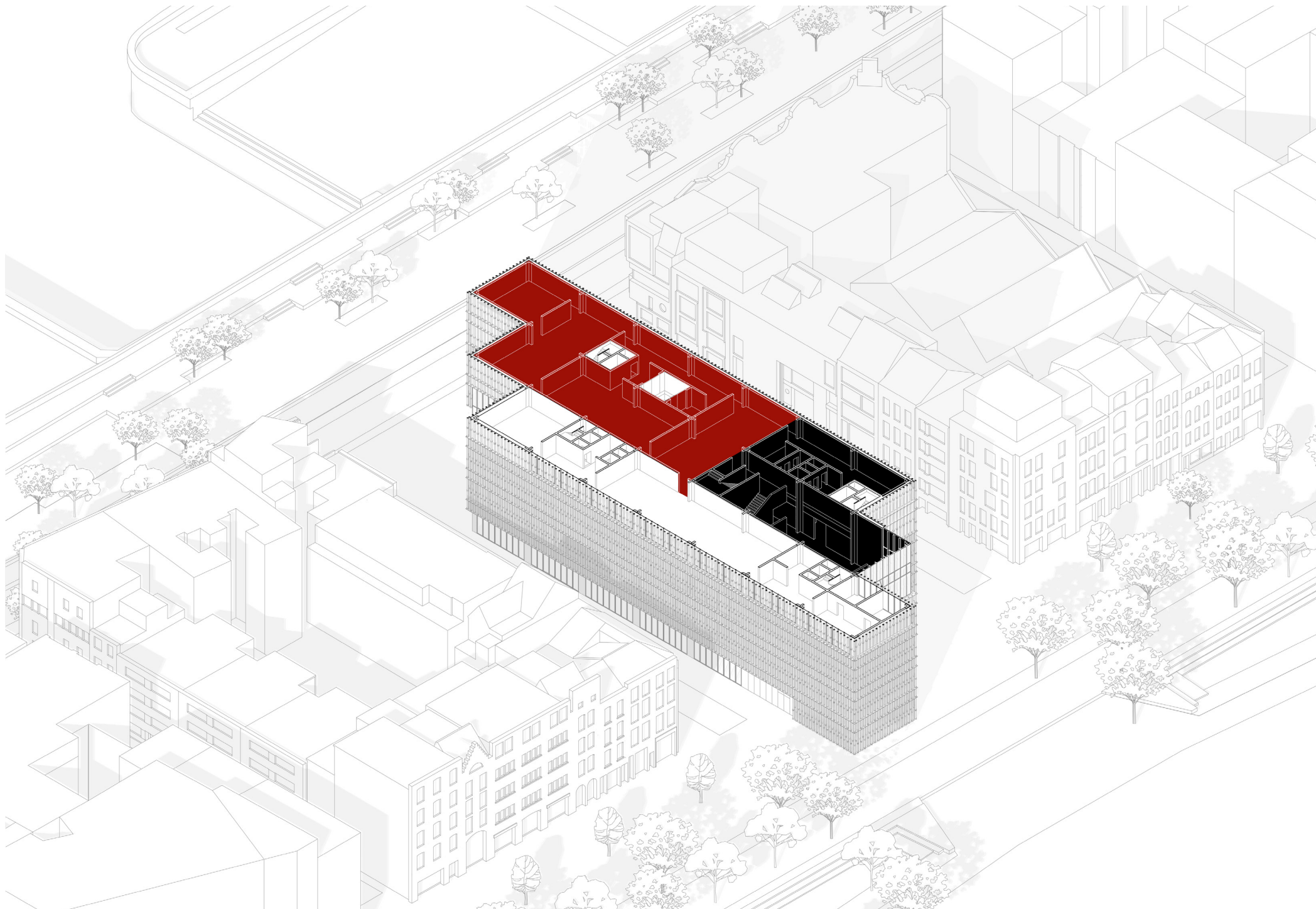




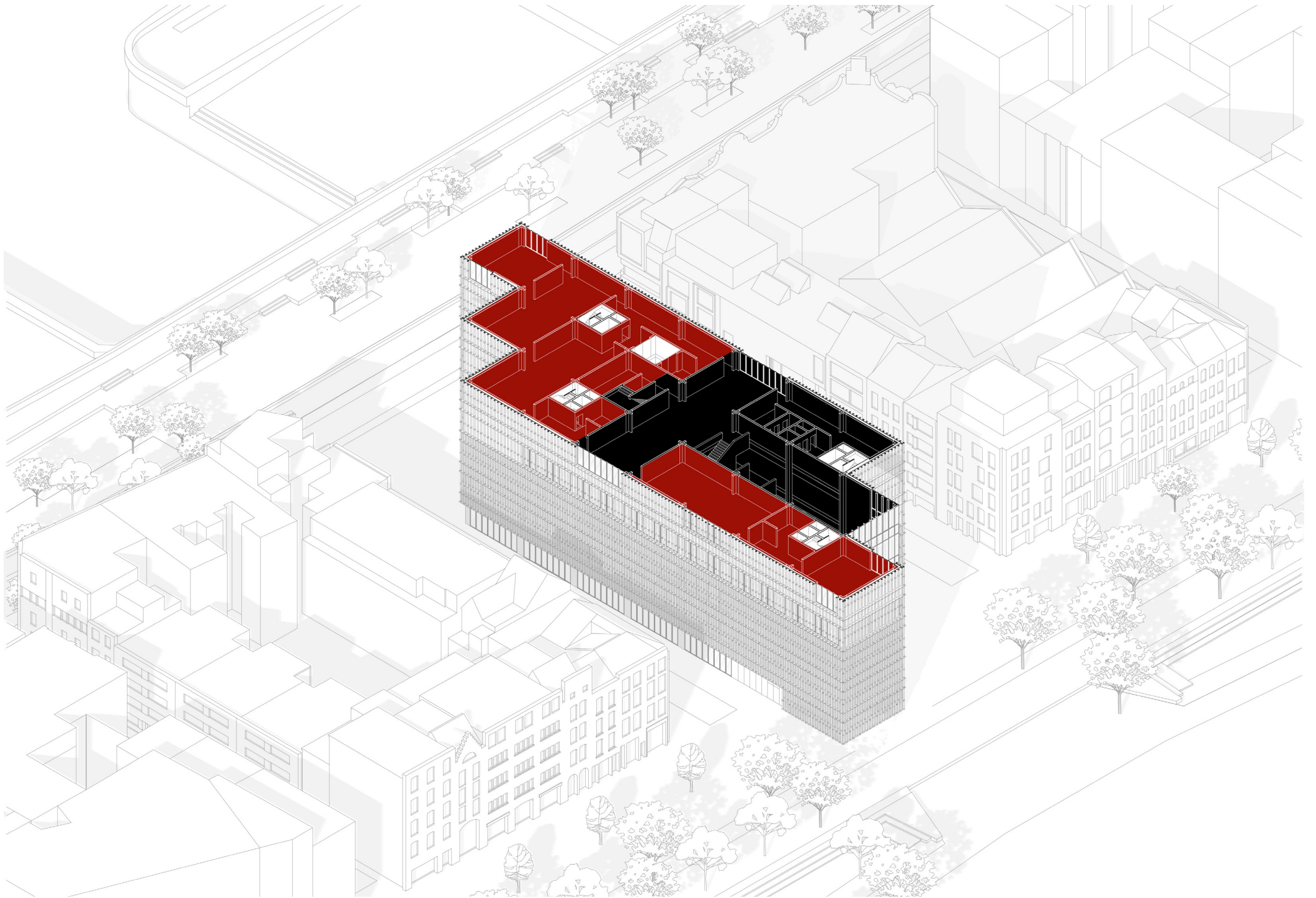


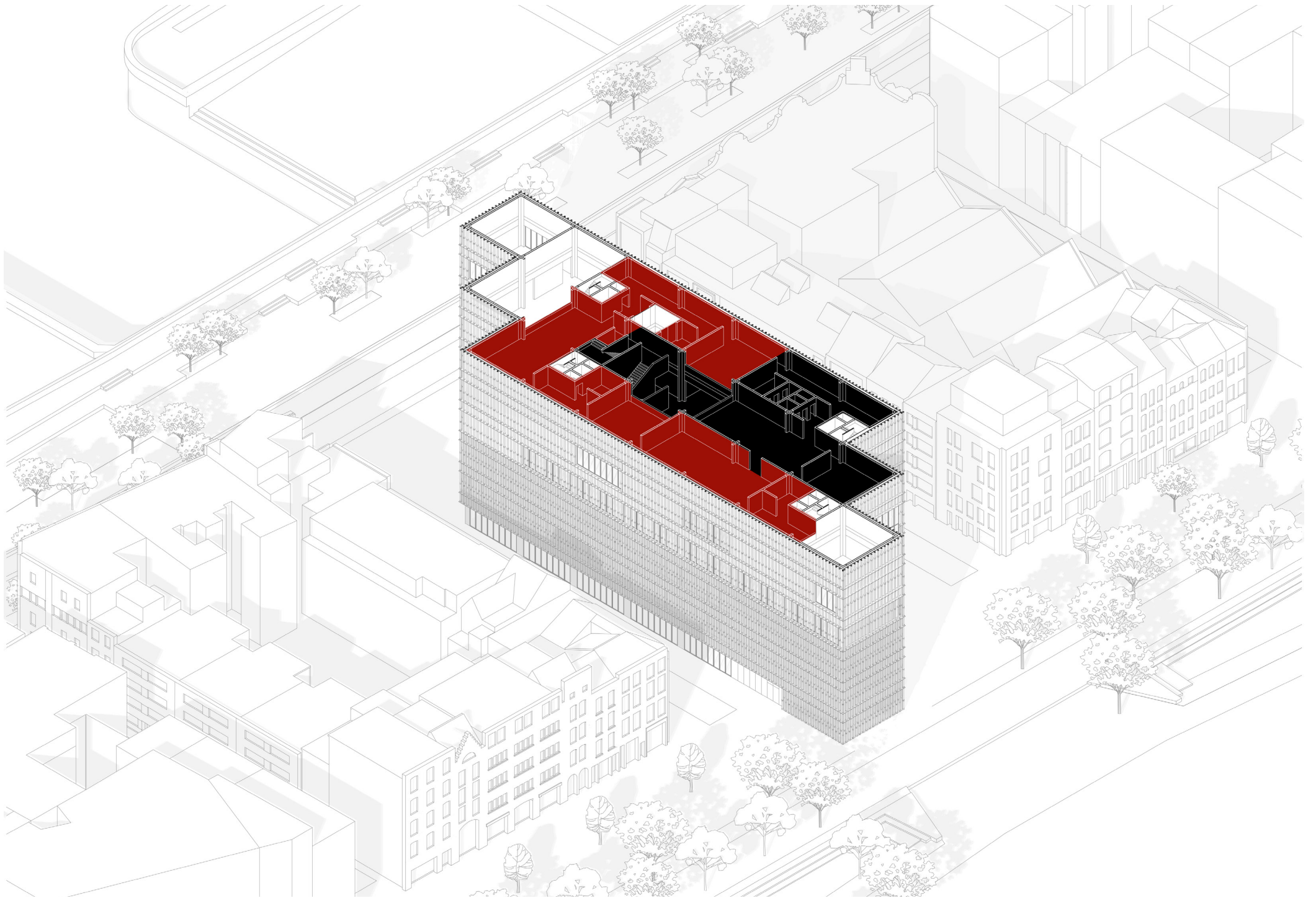




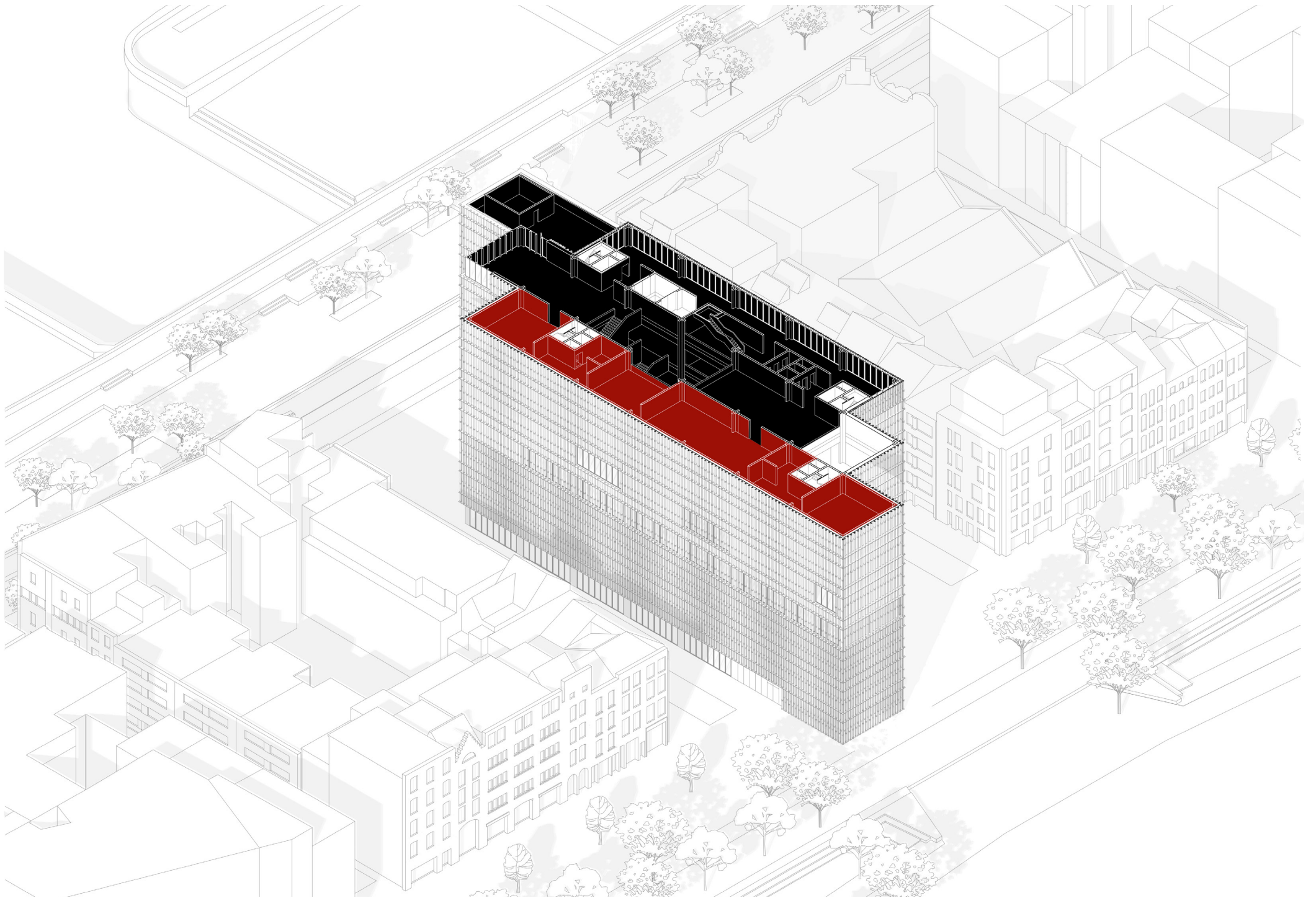


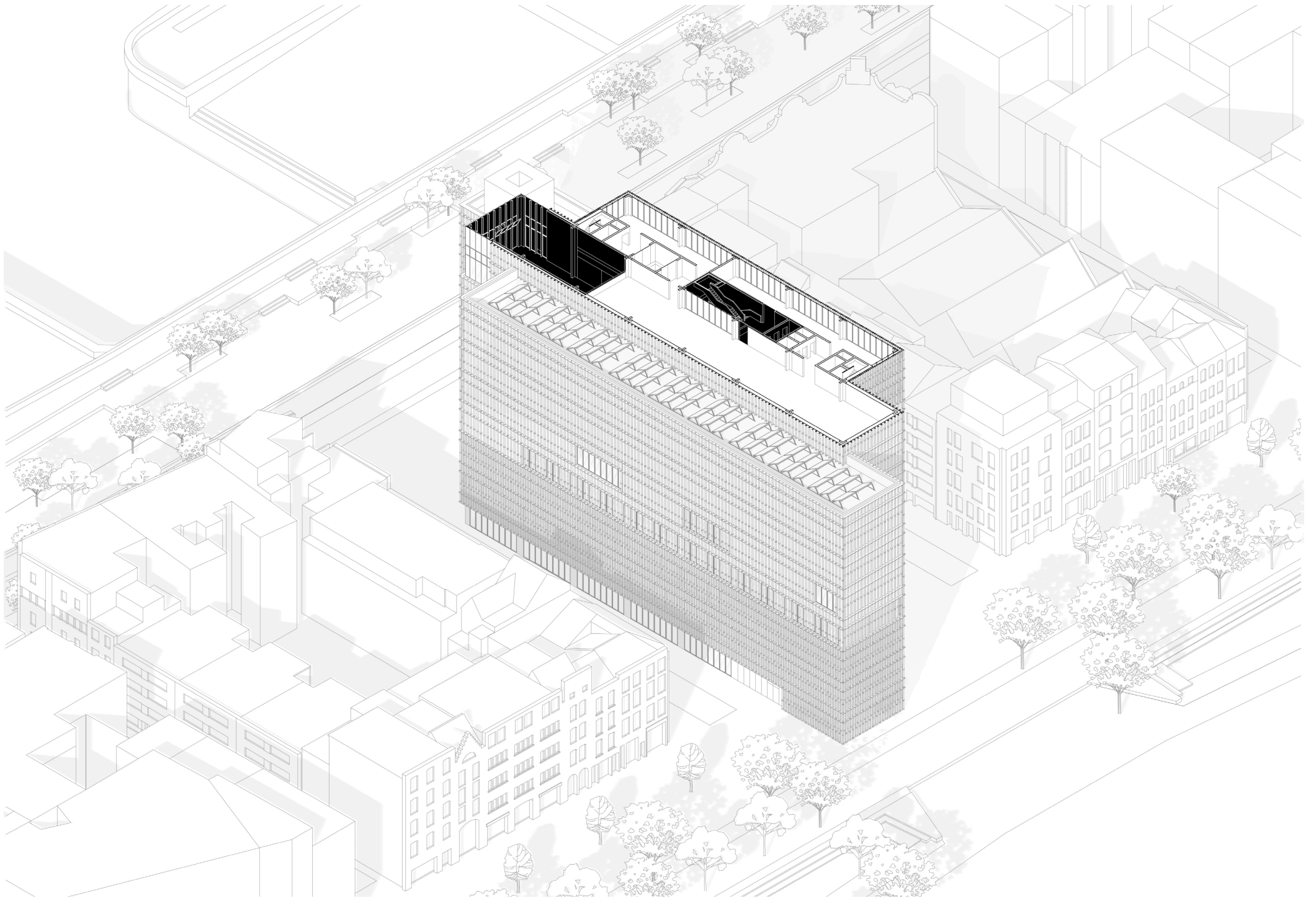




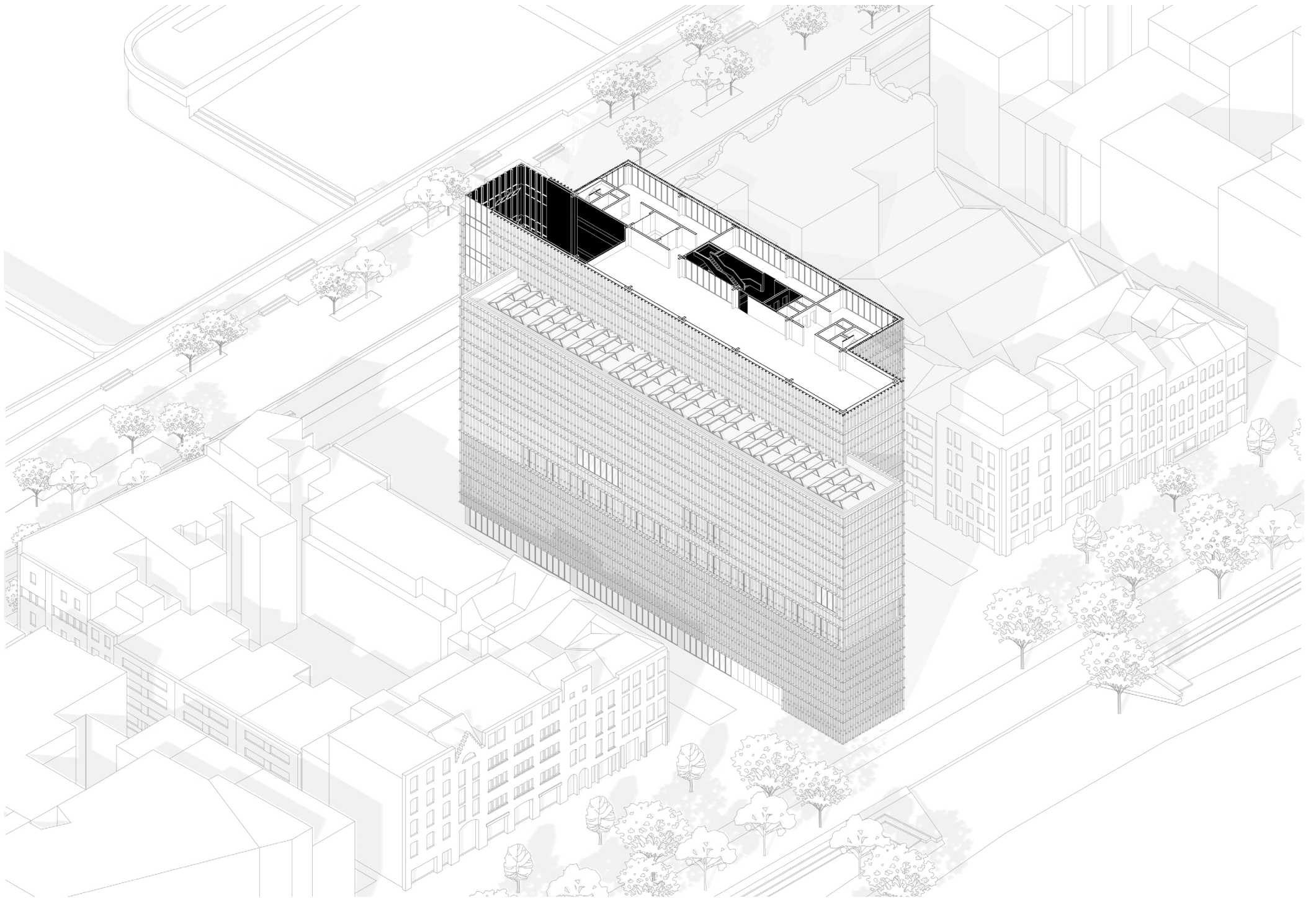


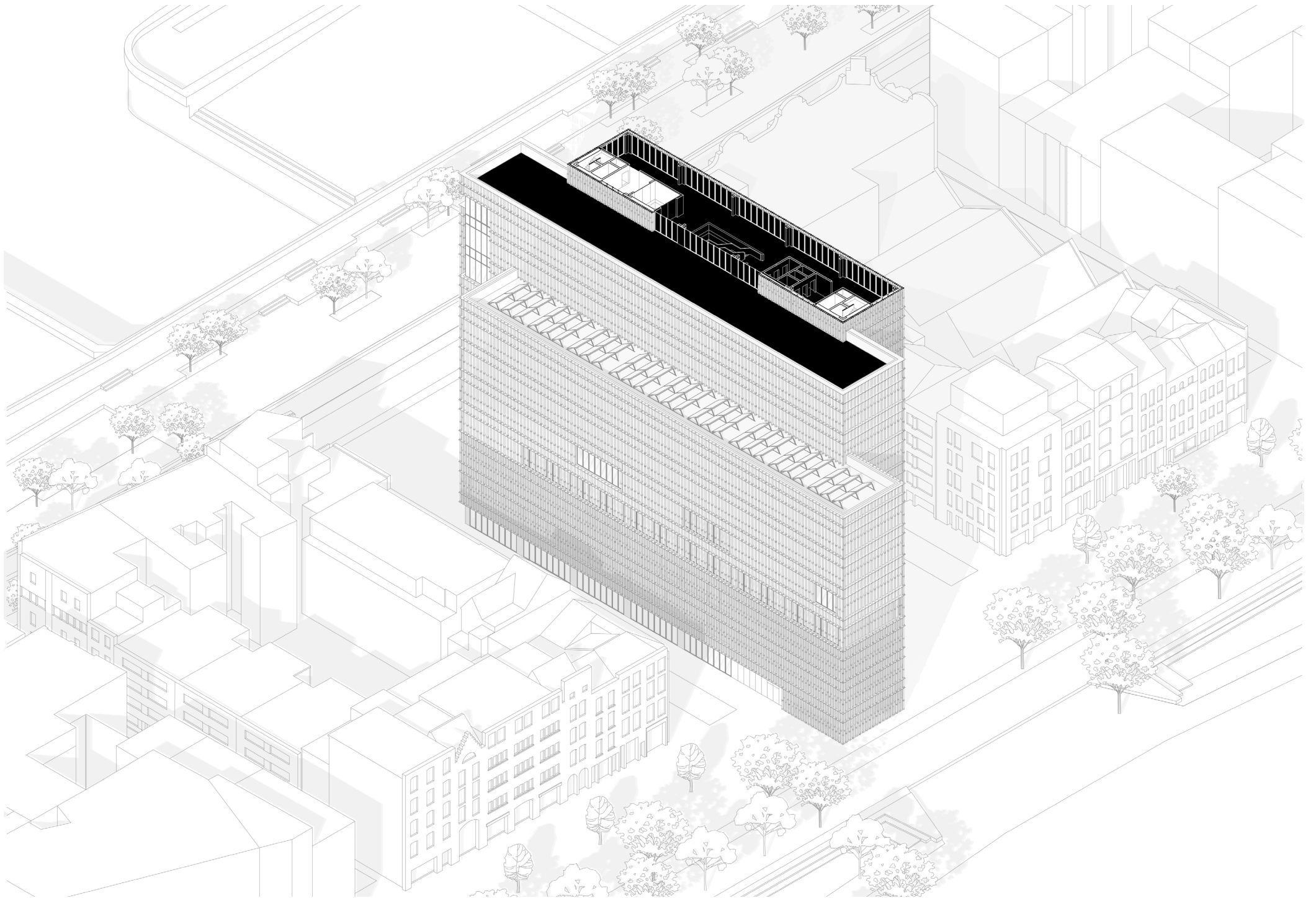


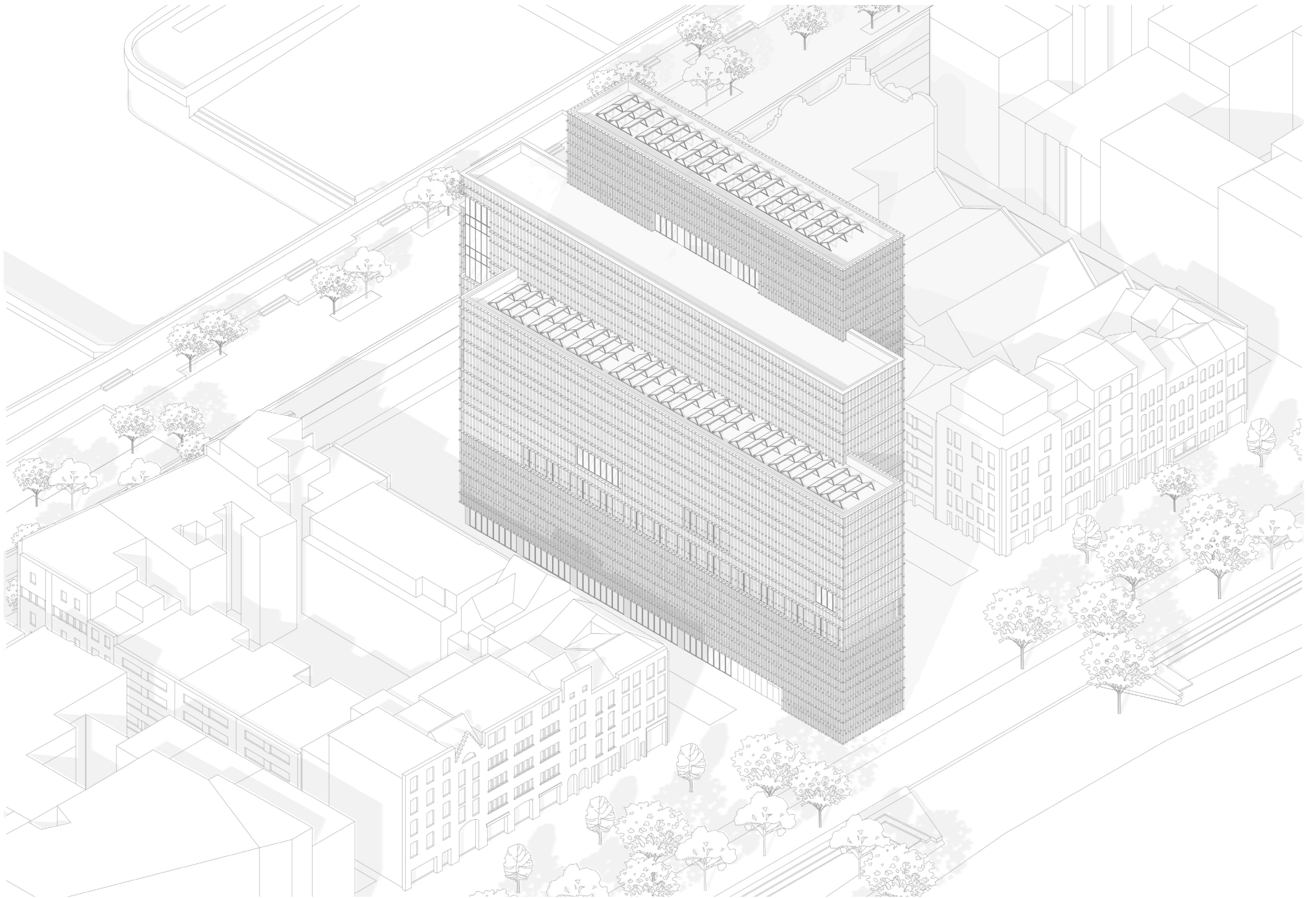




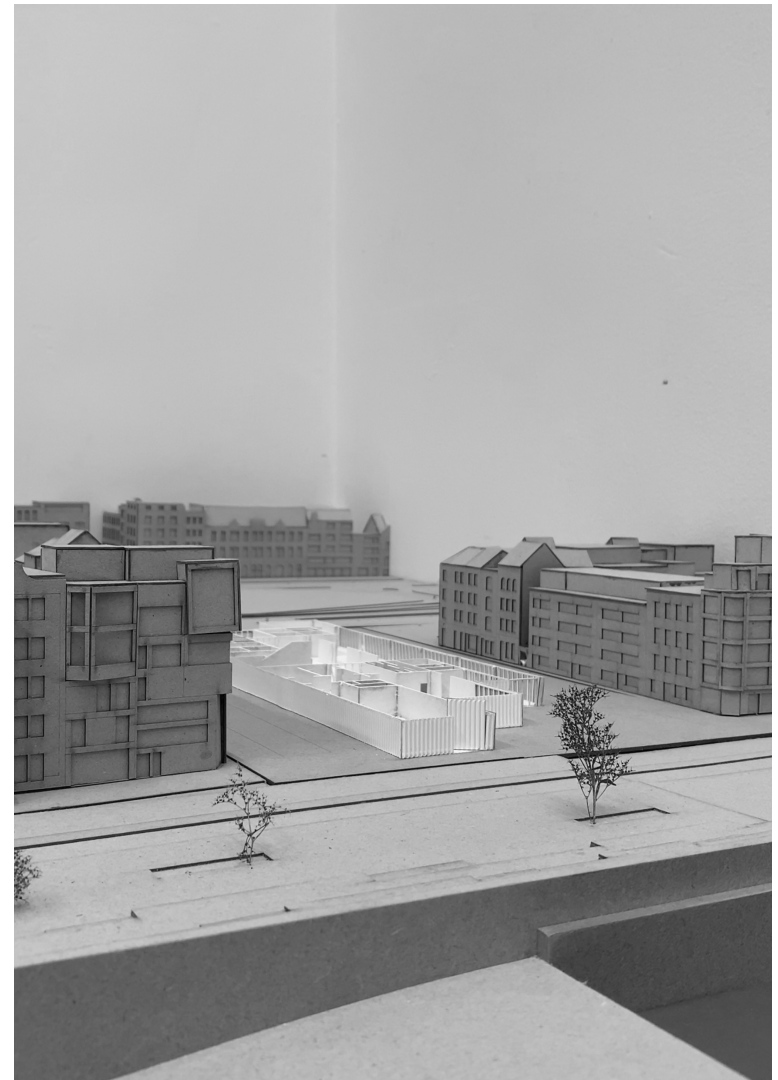








Section-model 1:200

















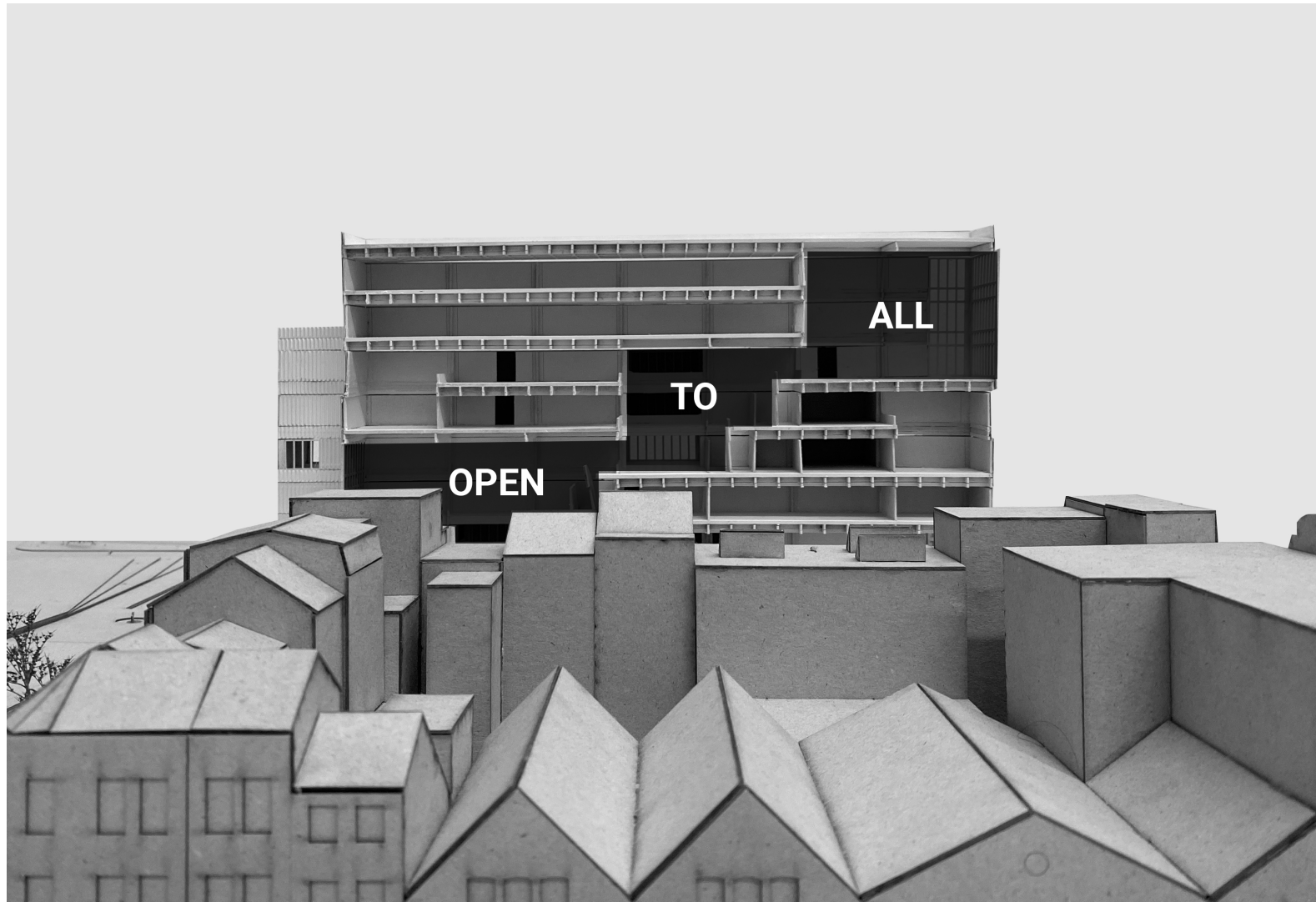




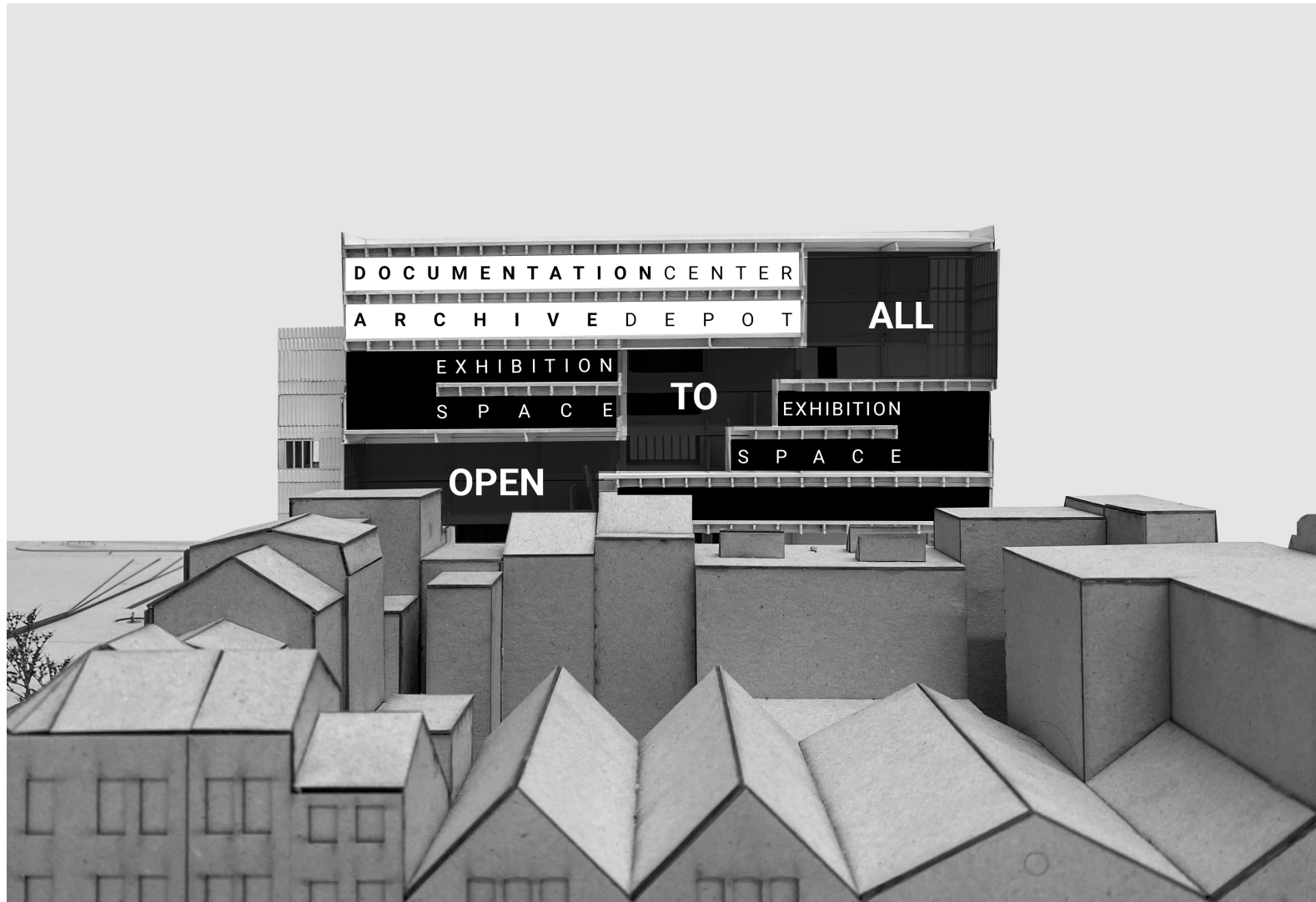










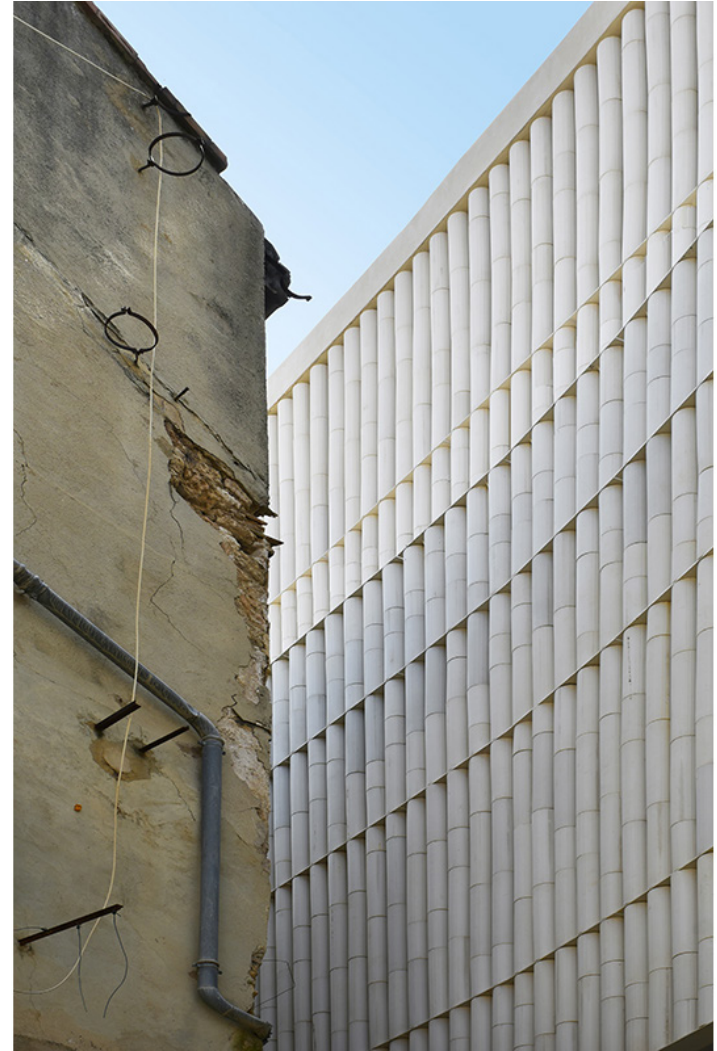




Façade



David Chipperfield Architects, Kunsthhaus Zurich (2020)



Beaudouin Architectes, Mediatheque de Grasse (2022)

*"We 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"*

Achille Castiglioni

## REVERSE PERSPECTIVE

*Wim Goes &  
Volkmar Mühleis*

*"An ordinary object  
[could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art  
by the mere choice of an artist"*

Marcel Duchamp



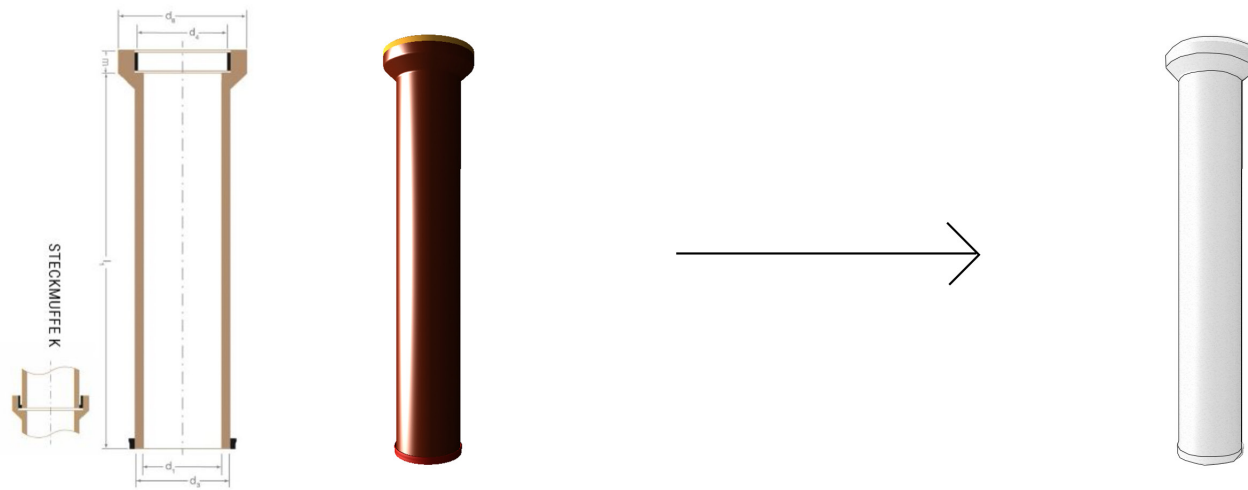
Marcel Duchamp, Bicycle Wheel (1913)



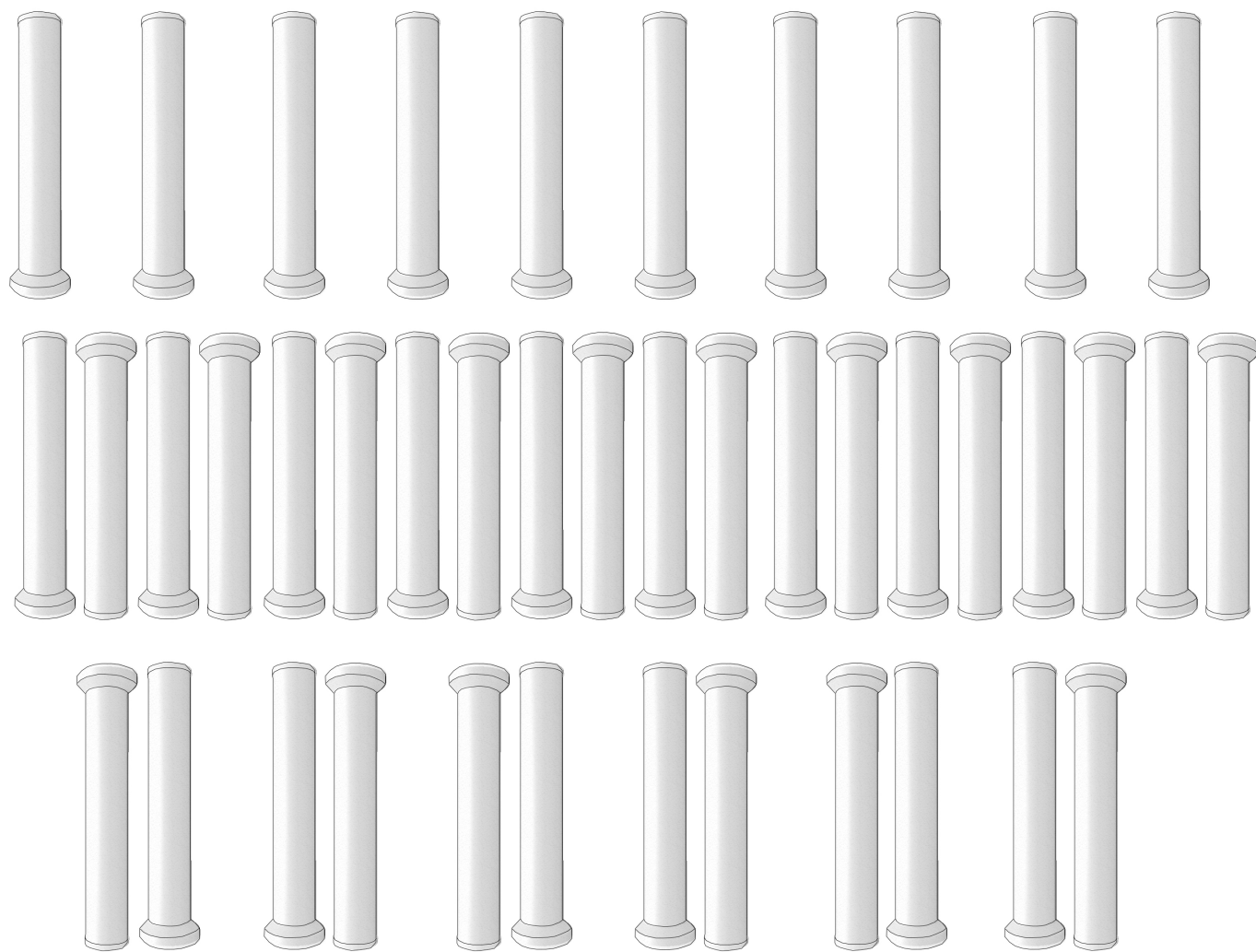
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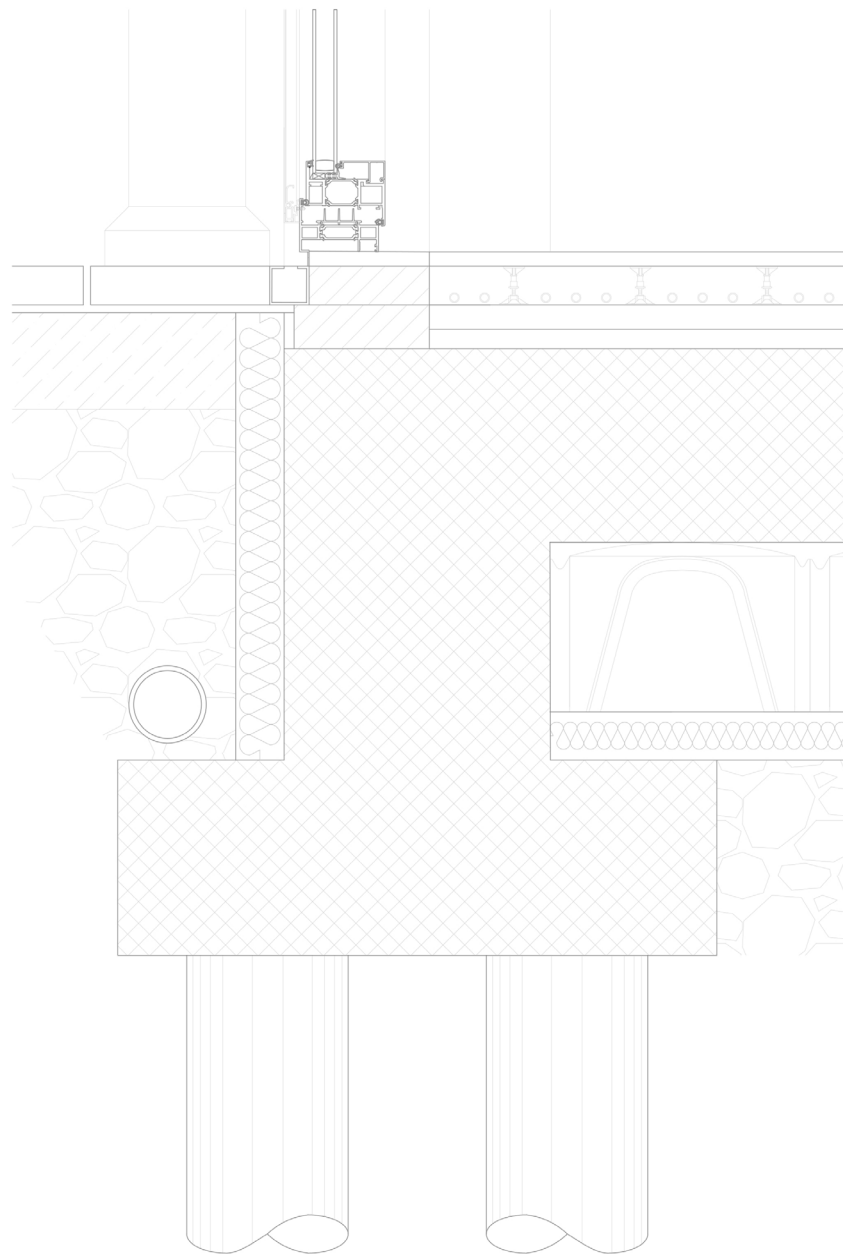
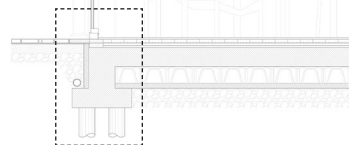
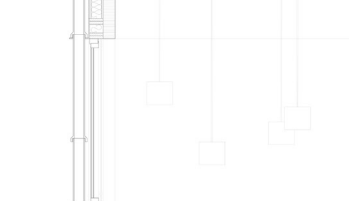
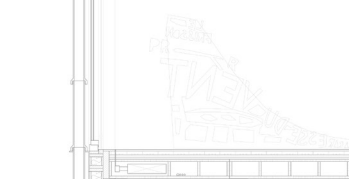
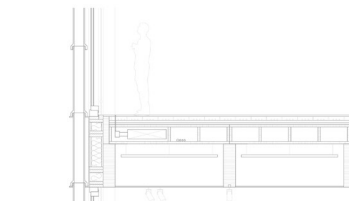
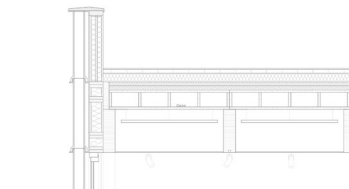
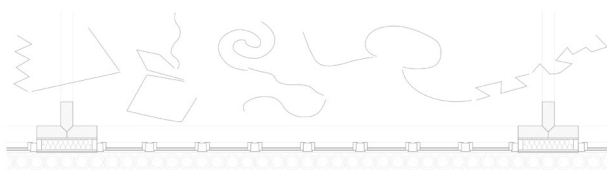
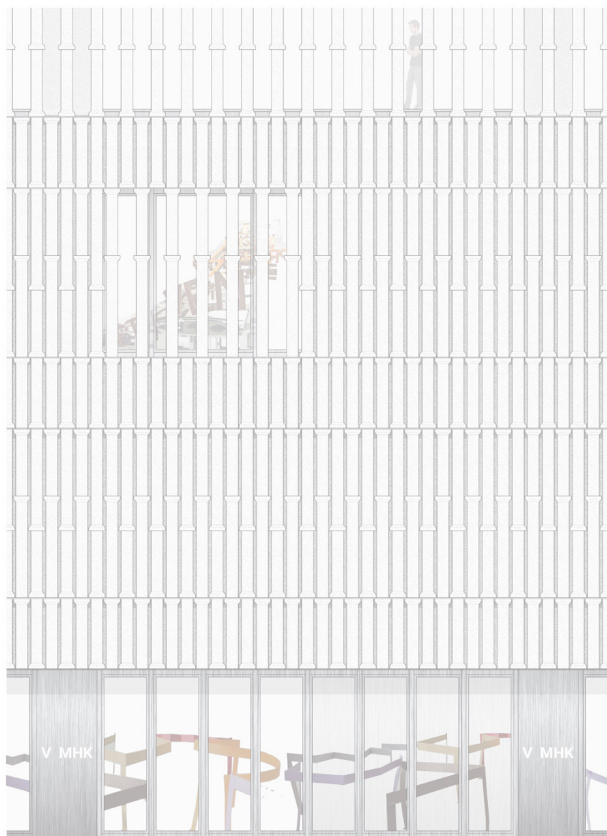
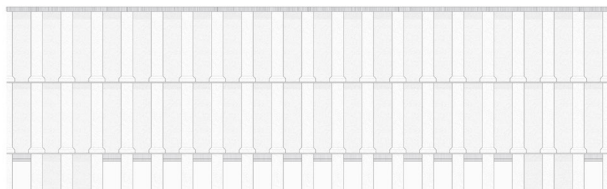




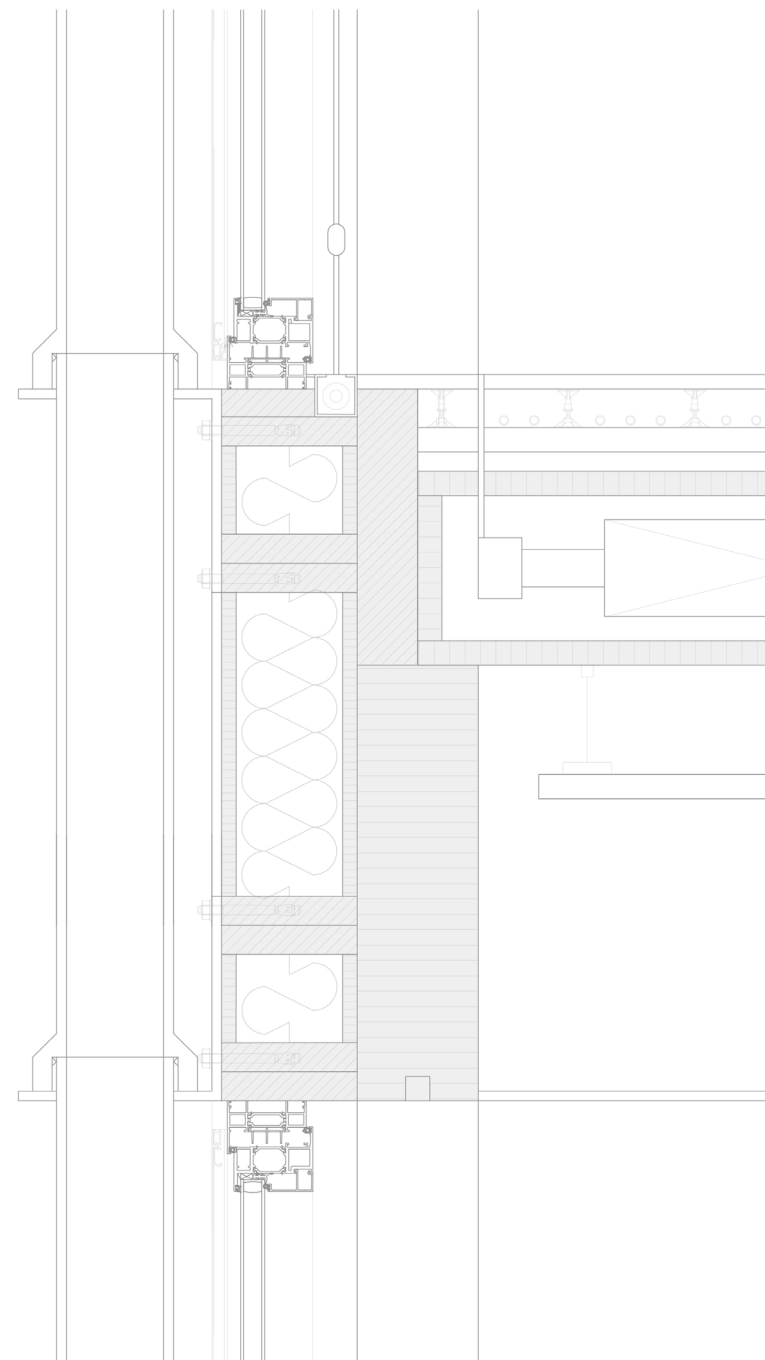
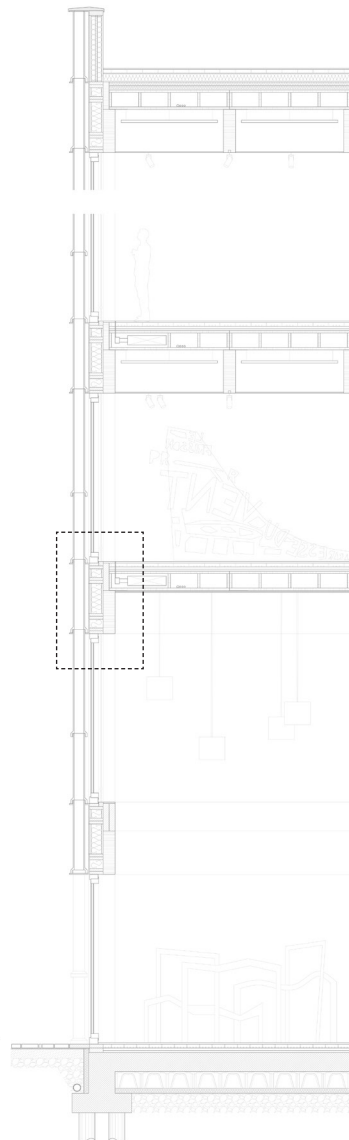
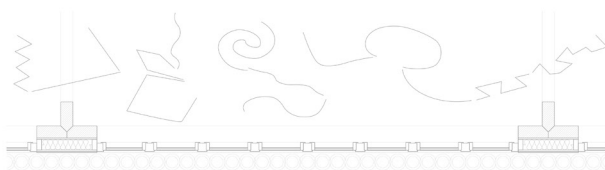
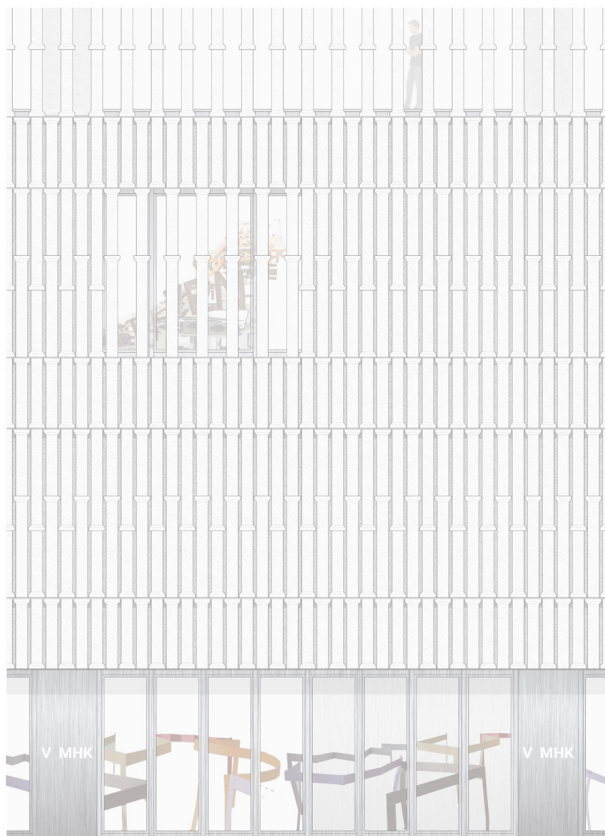
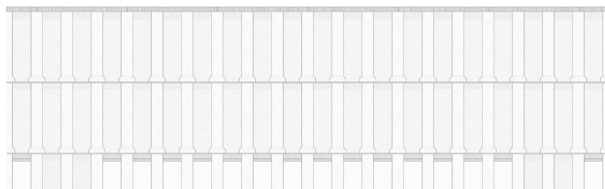
Ceramic sewage pipes

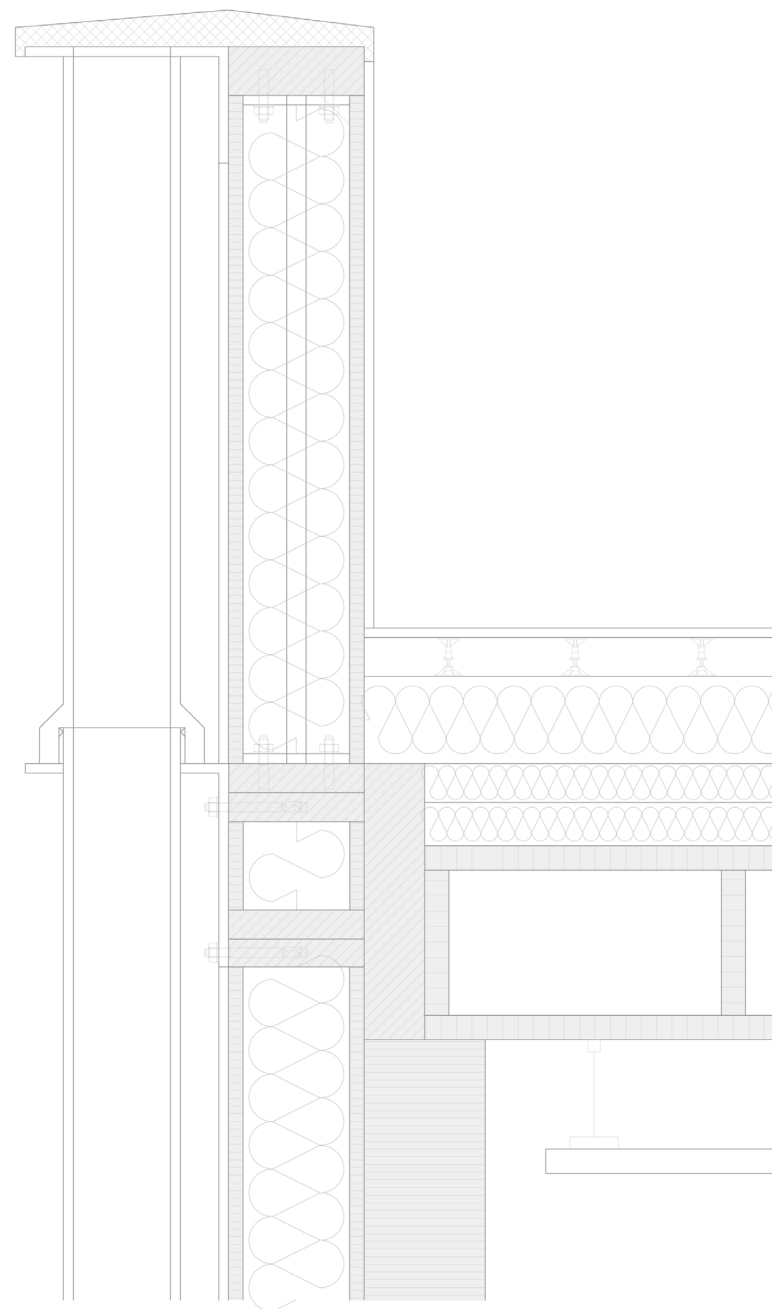
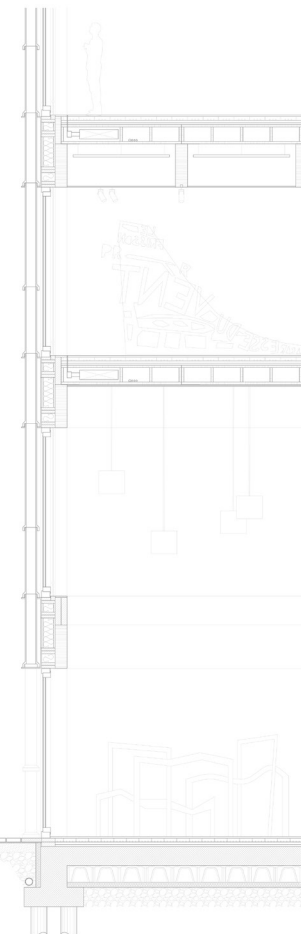
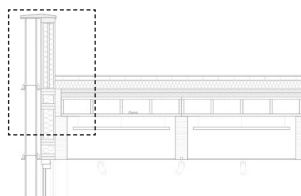
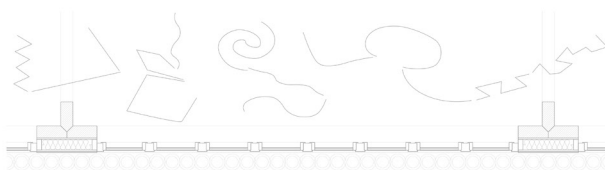
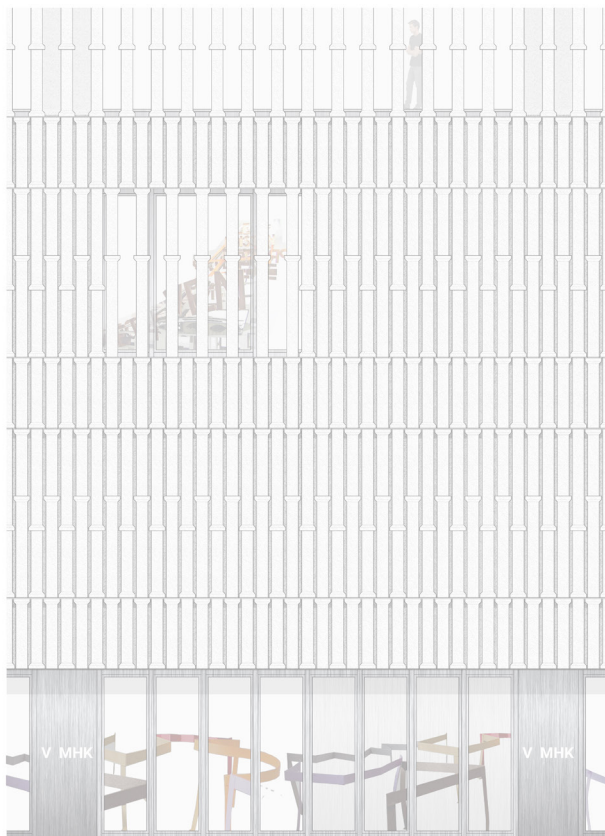
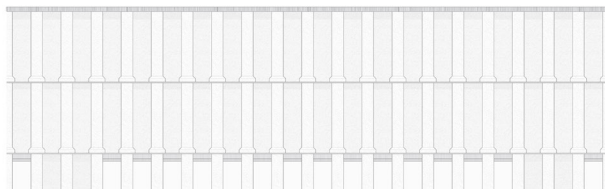


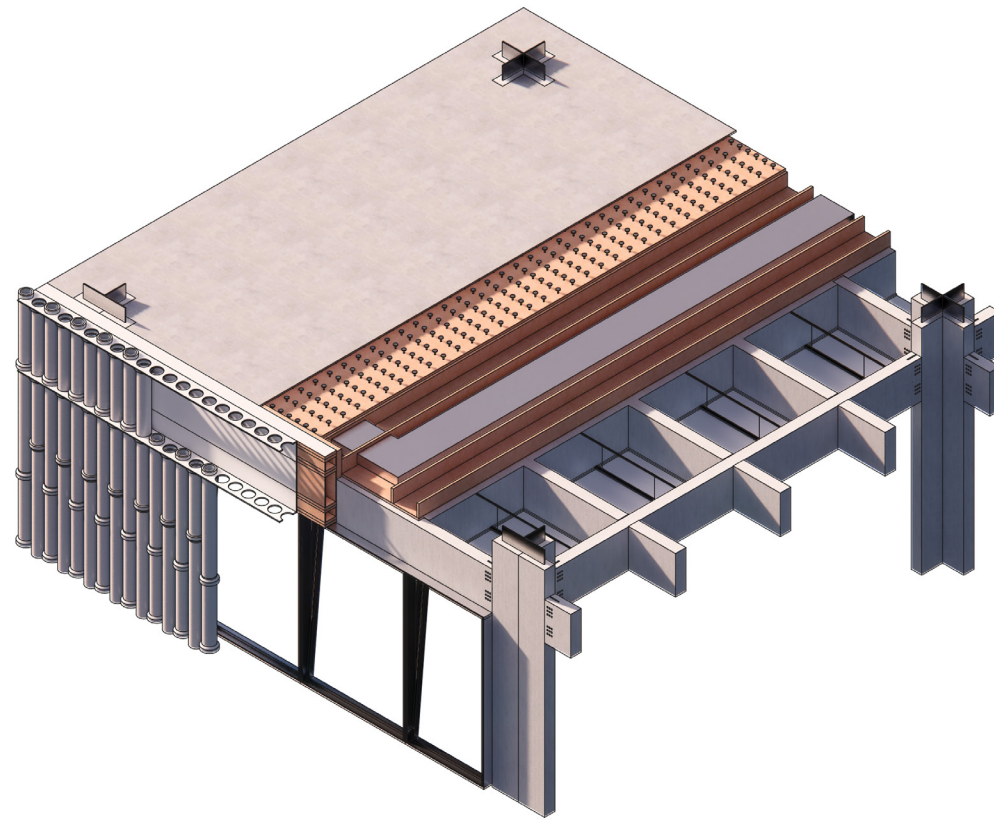
Different configurations: pattern and identity

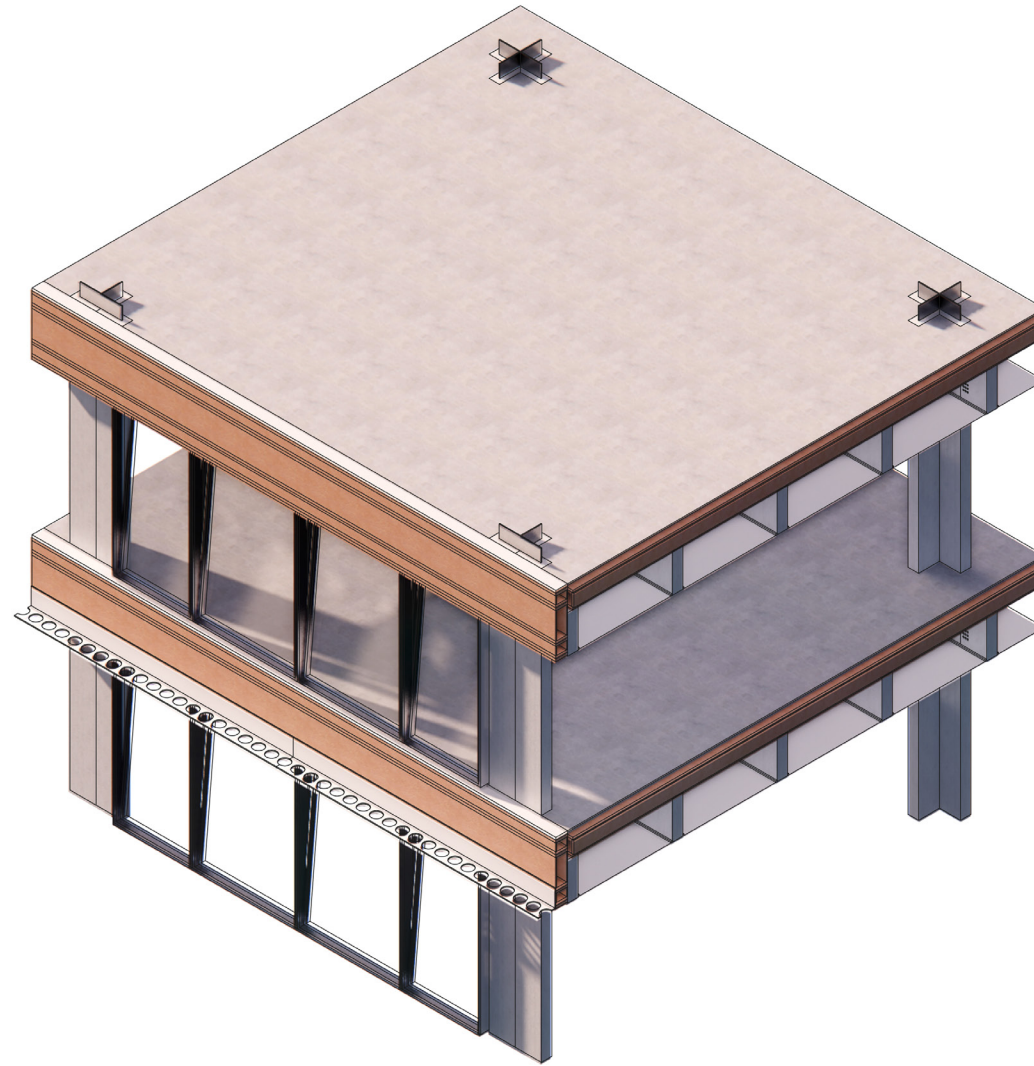




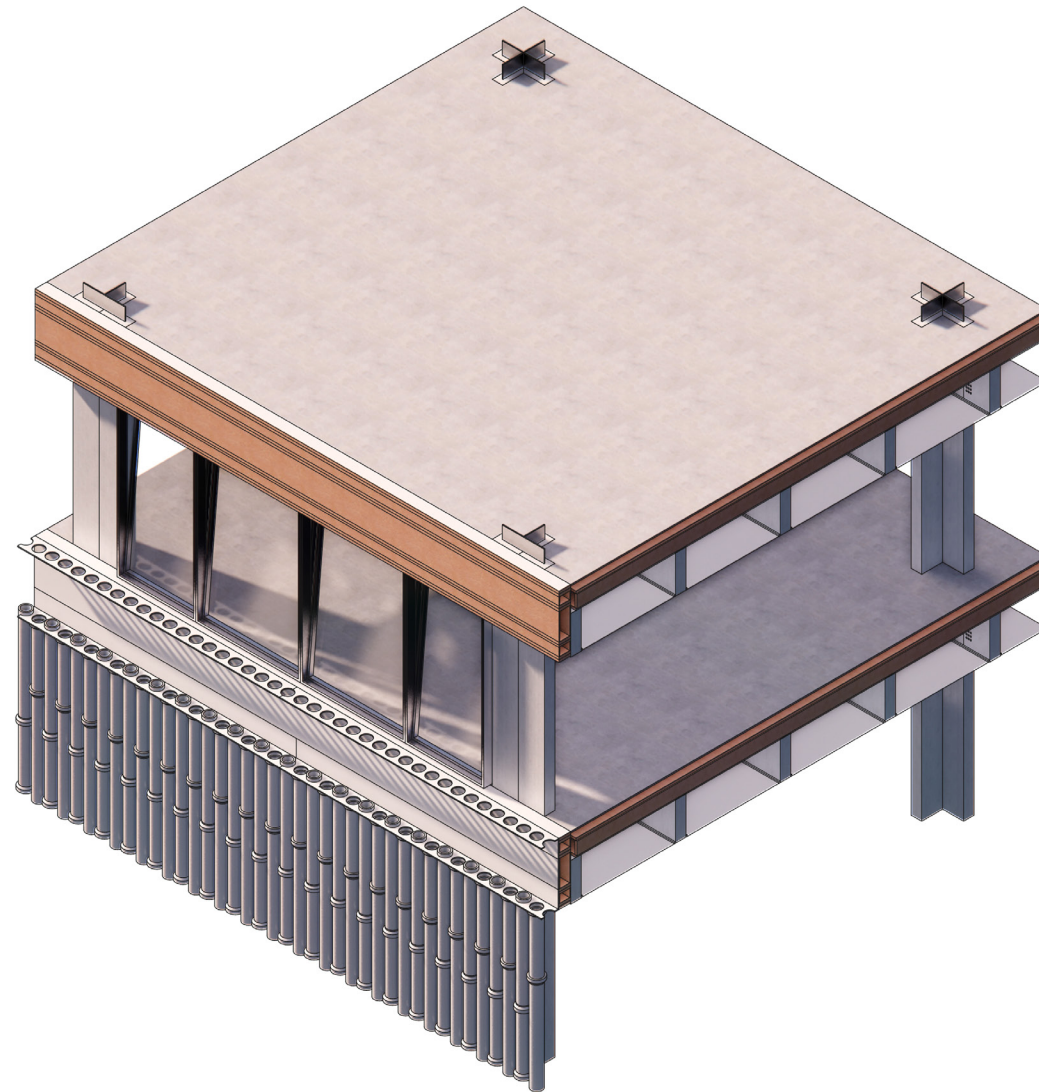


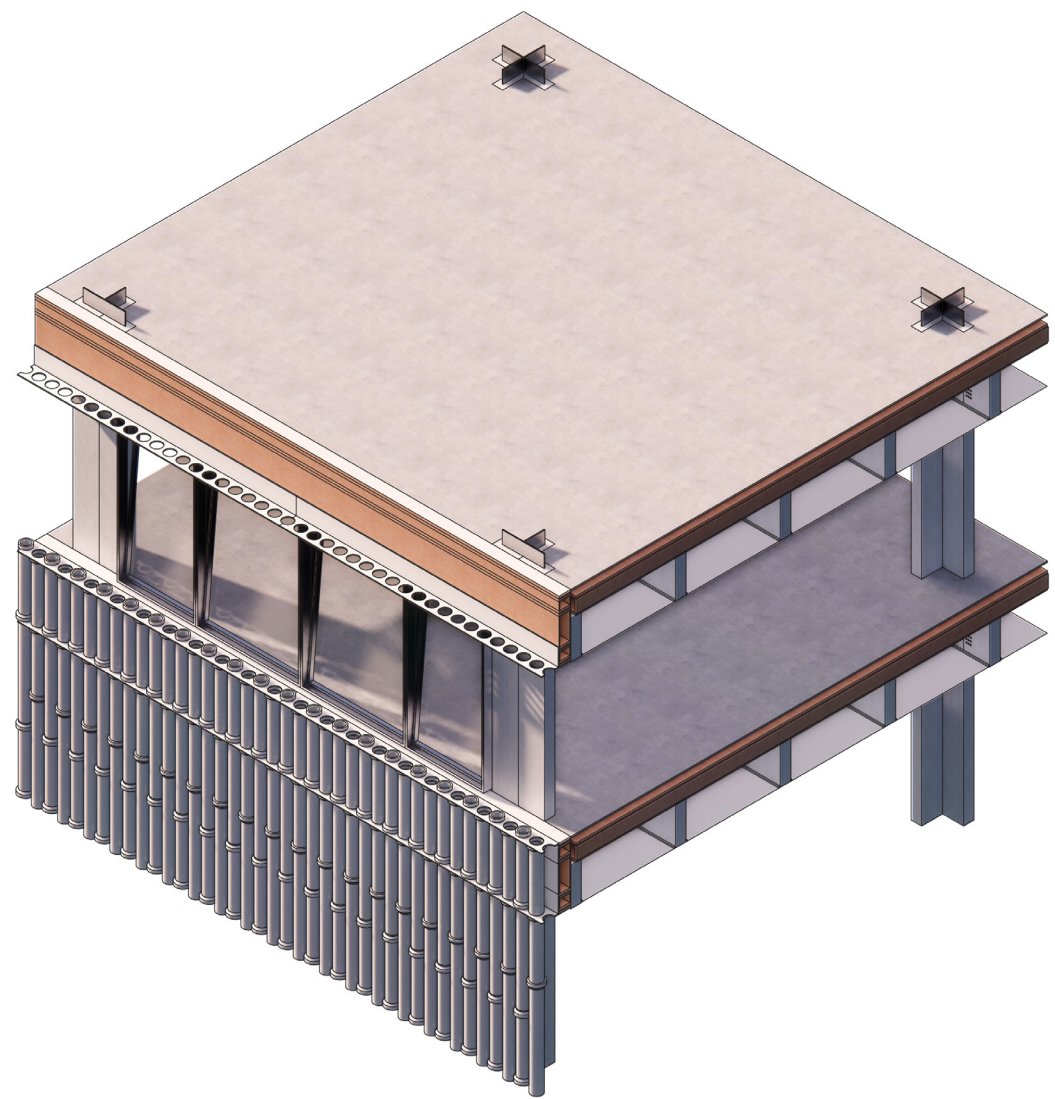


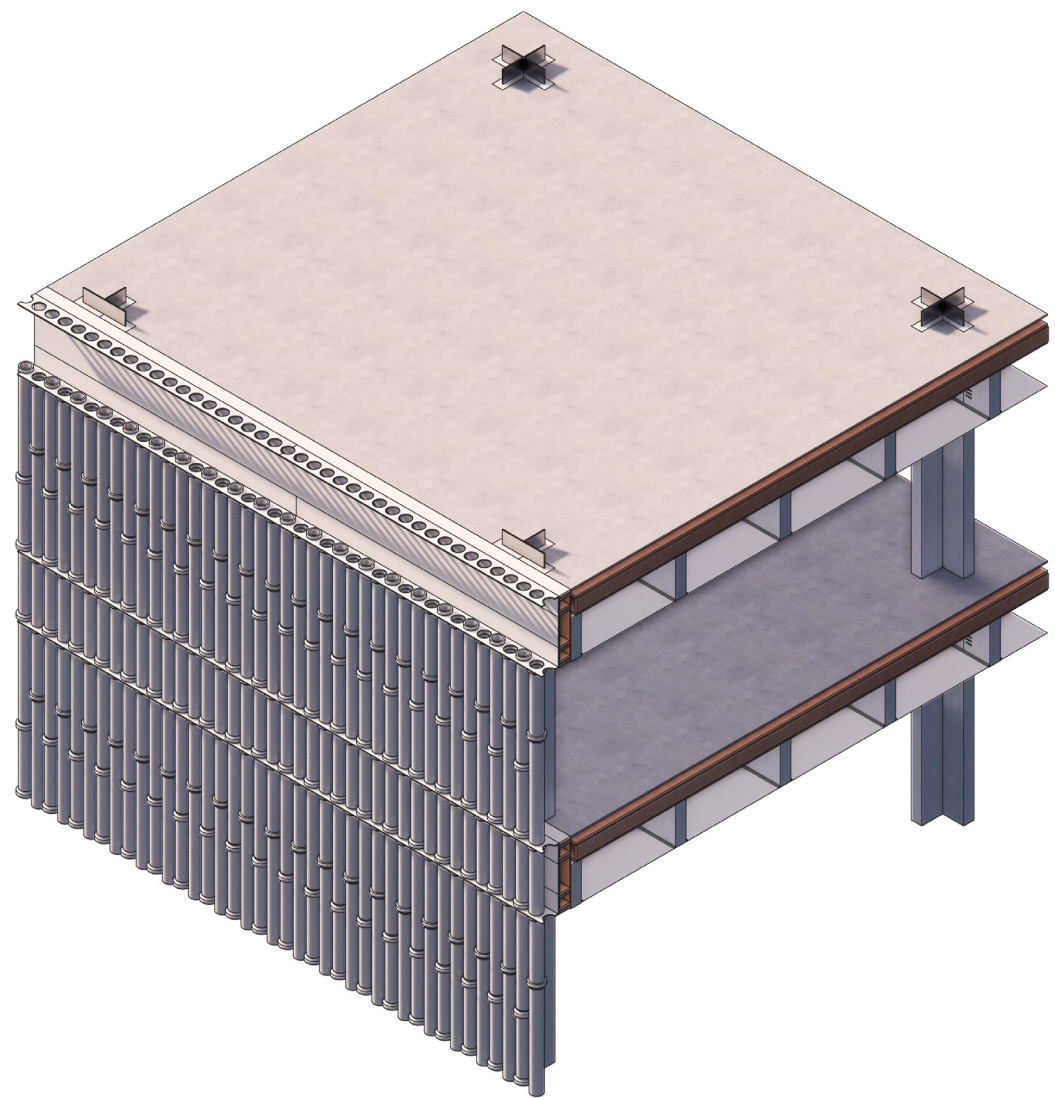


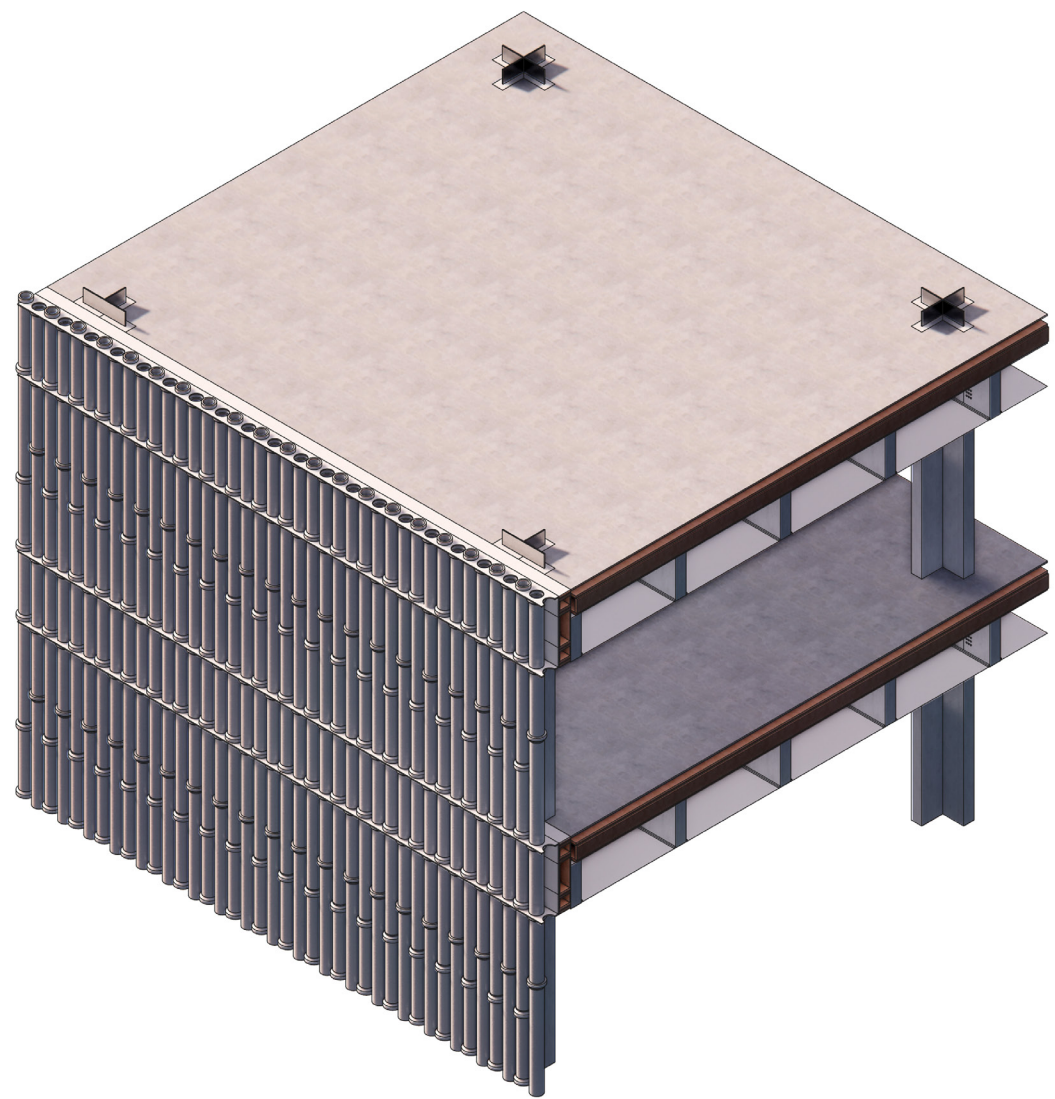




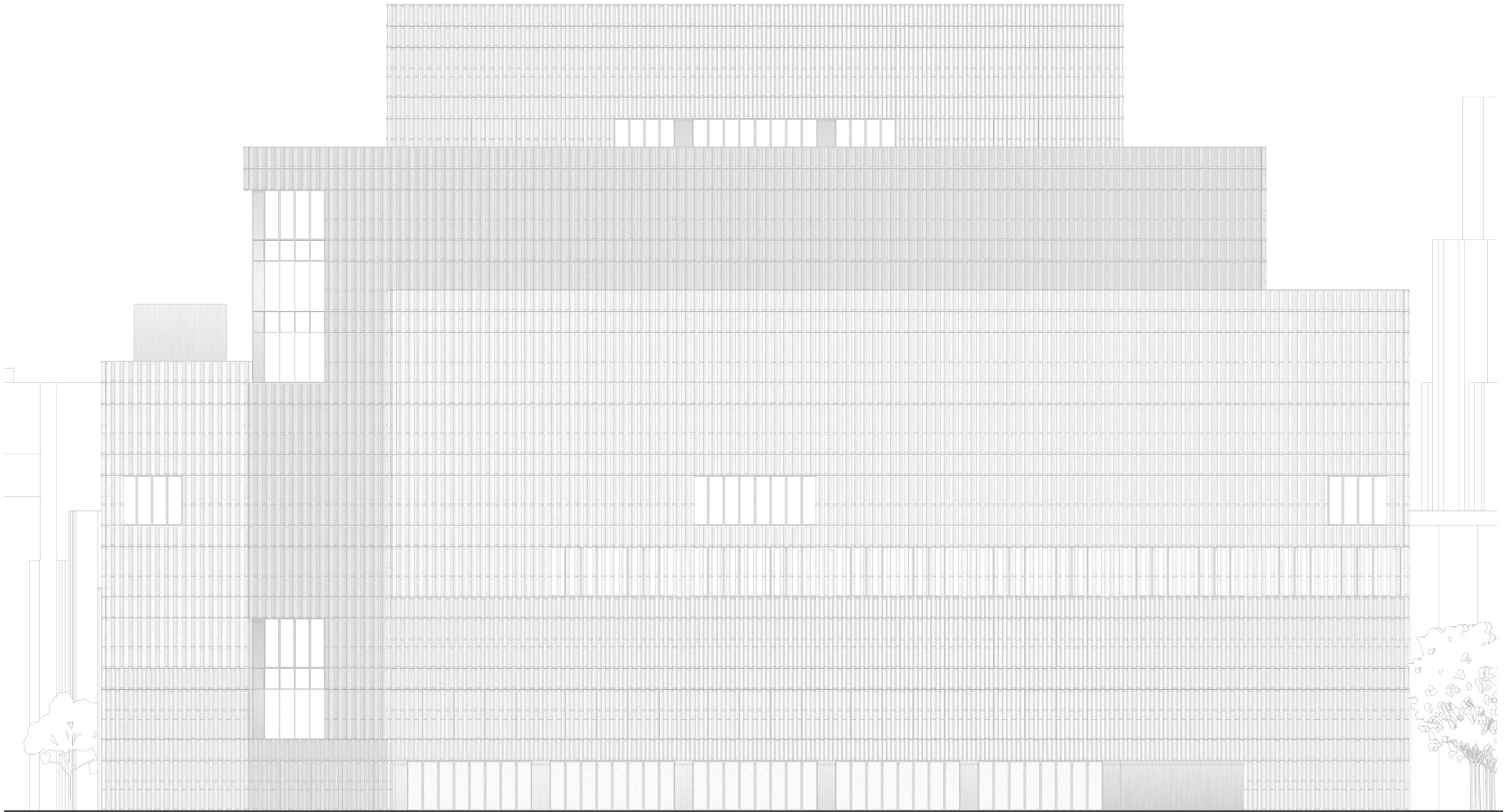




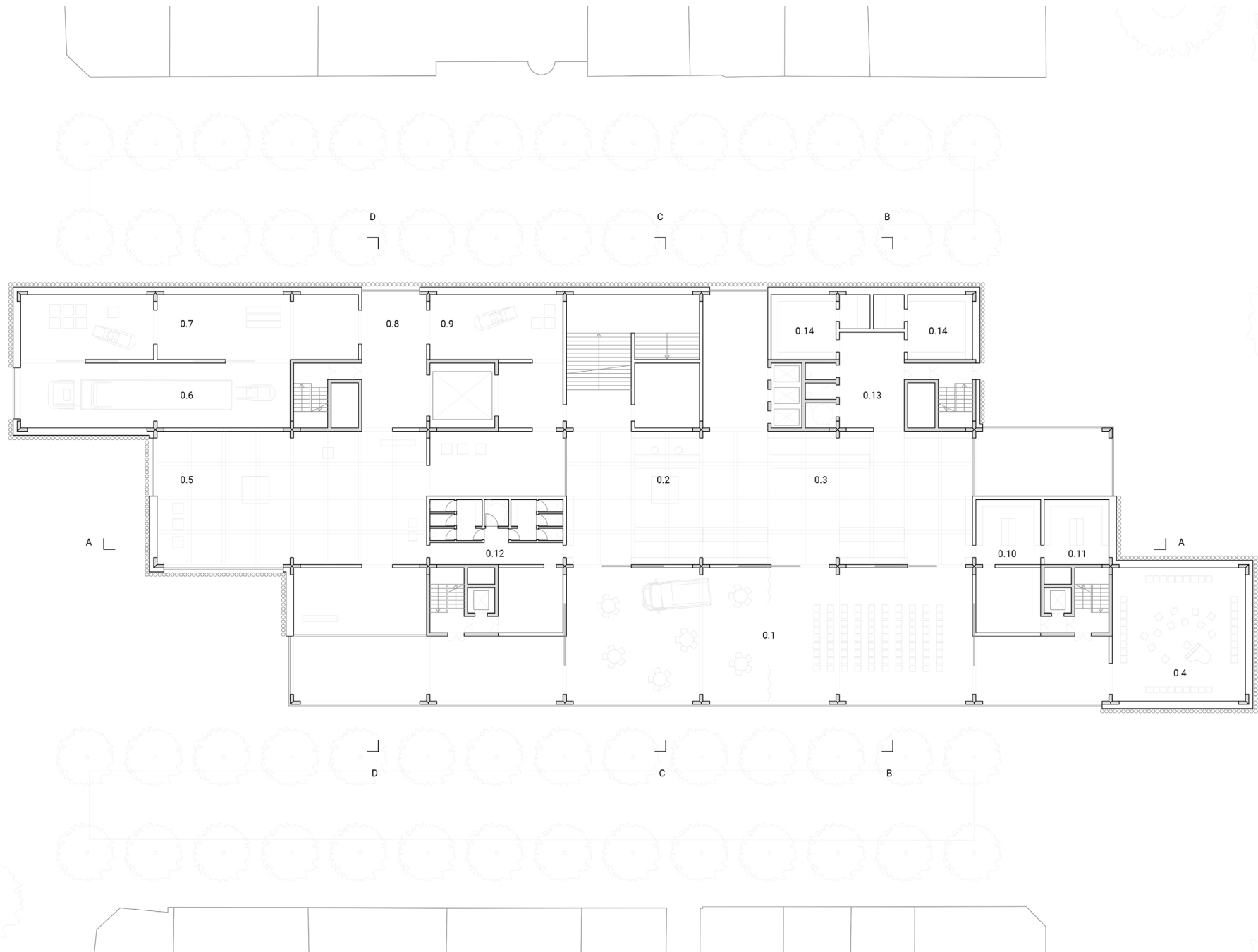






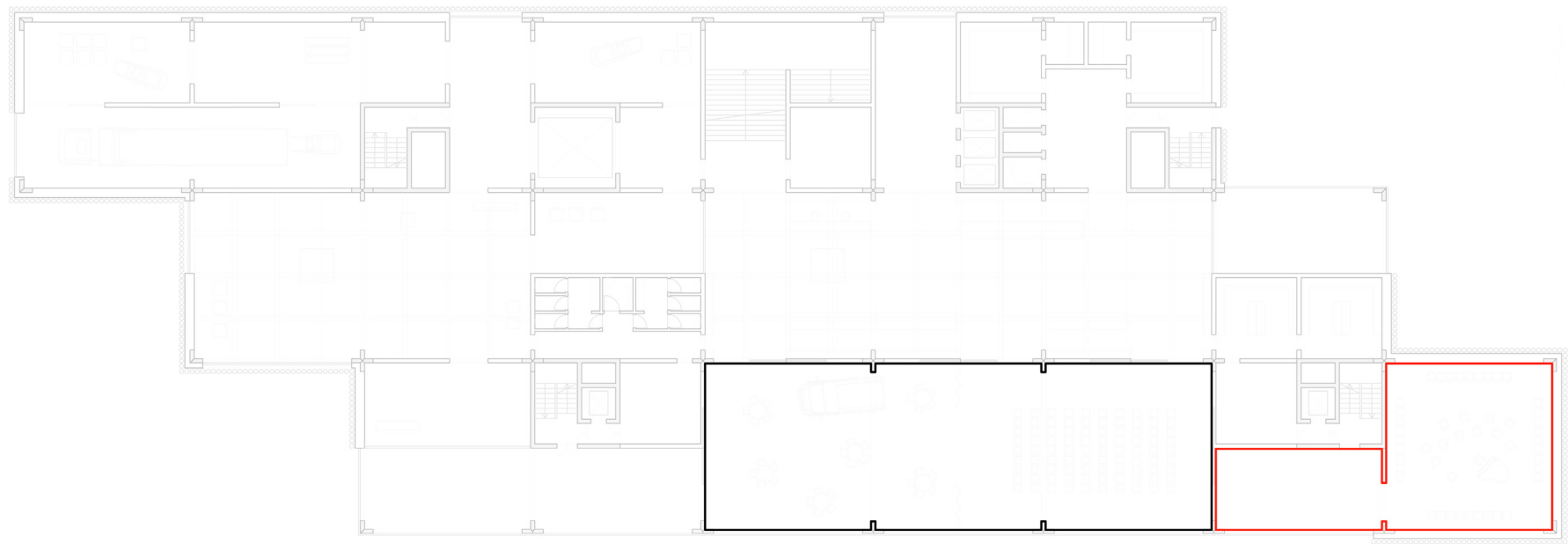


west elevation



Ground floor | 1:250

0.1 forum | 0.2 lobby | 0.3 museum shop | 0.4 kleintheater | 0.5 educational space | 0.6 lock | 0.7 loading and unloading zone | 0.8 transfer space | 0.9 logistics | 0.10 cloakroom | 0.11 locker room | 0.12 sanitary visitors | 0.13 sanitary workers | 0.14 changing rooms







The kleintheater





The kleintheater





The kleintheater





The kleintheater





The kleintheater





The kleintheater





The forum



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



The forum





Lacaton & Vassal, FRAC, Dunkirk (2013)



The forum





The forum



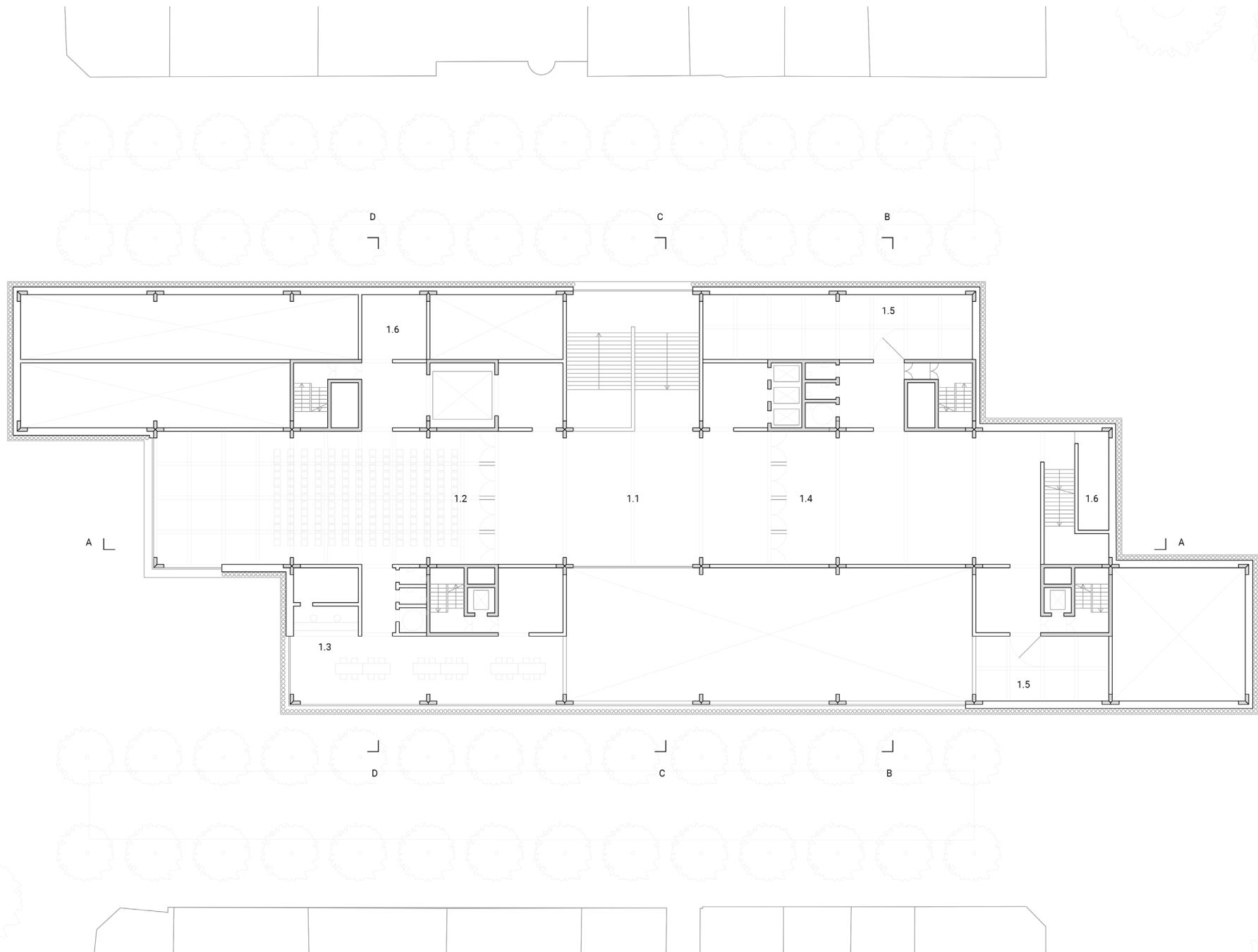


The forum





The forum



1st floor | 1:250

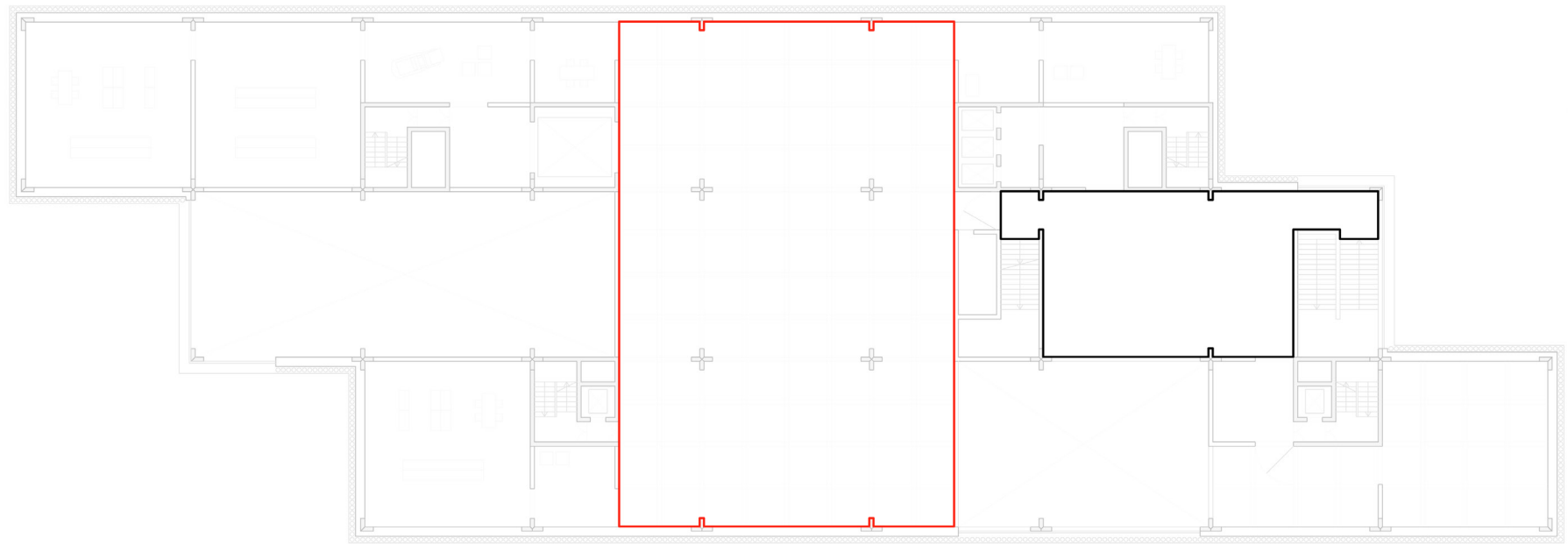
1.1 foyer | 1.2 auditorium | 1.3 catering-canteen | 1.4 exhibition space (open to all) | 1.5 exhibition space (with ticket) | 1.6 storage





2nd floor | 1:250

2.1 exhibition space (open to all) | 2.2 exhibition space (with ticket) | 2.3 wood workshop | 2.4 metal workshop | 2.5 paint workshop | 2.6 audio and video room | 2.7 storage













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





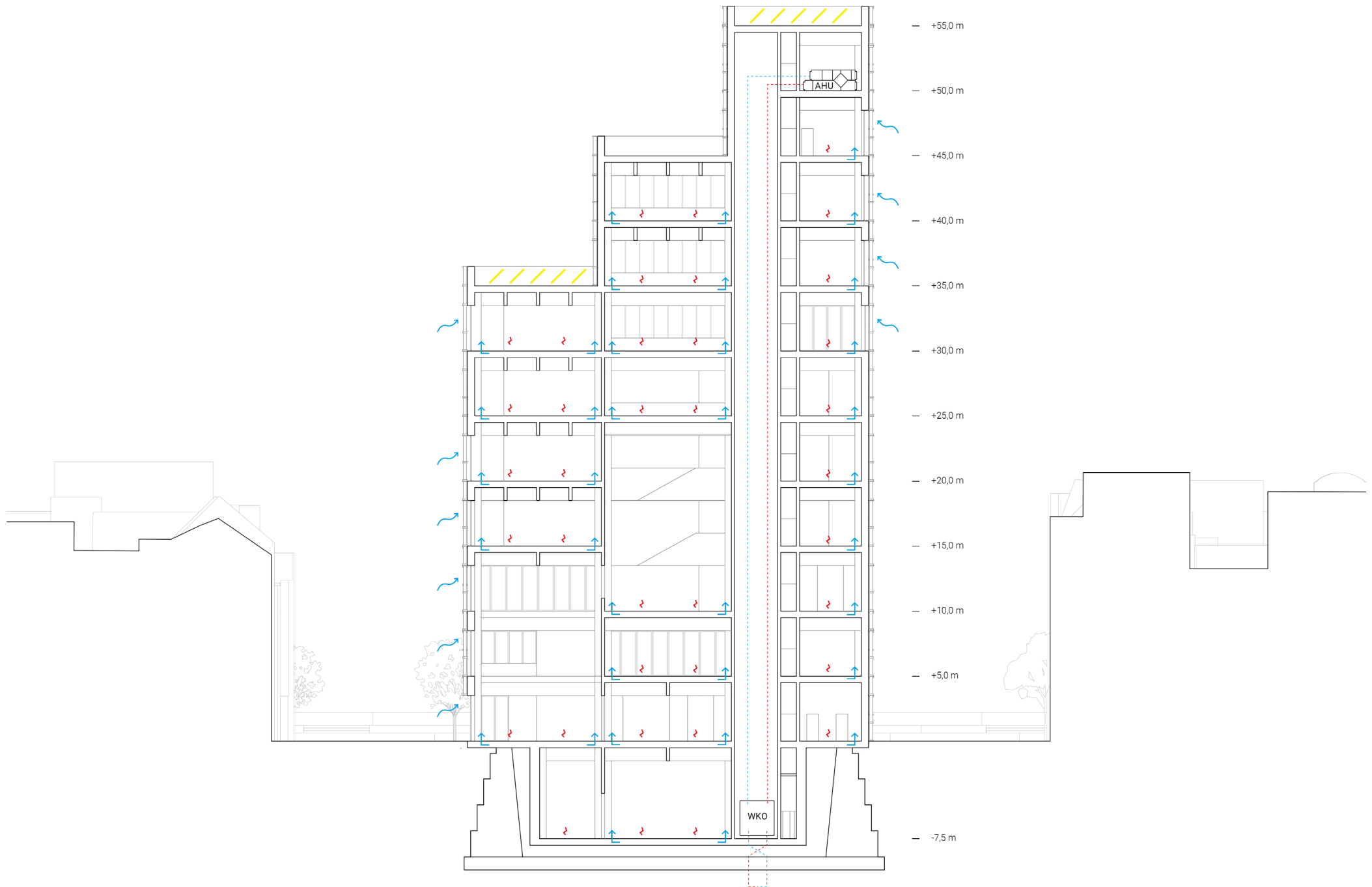
Michelangelo Pistoletto working with the museum staff, Castello di Rivoli (2023)











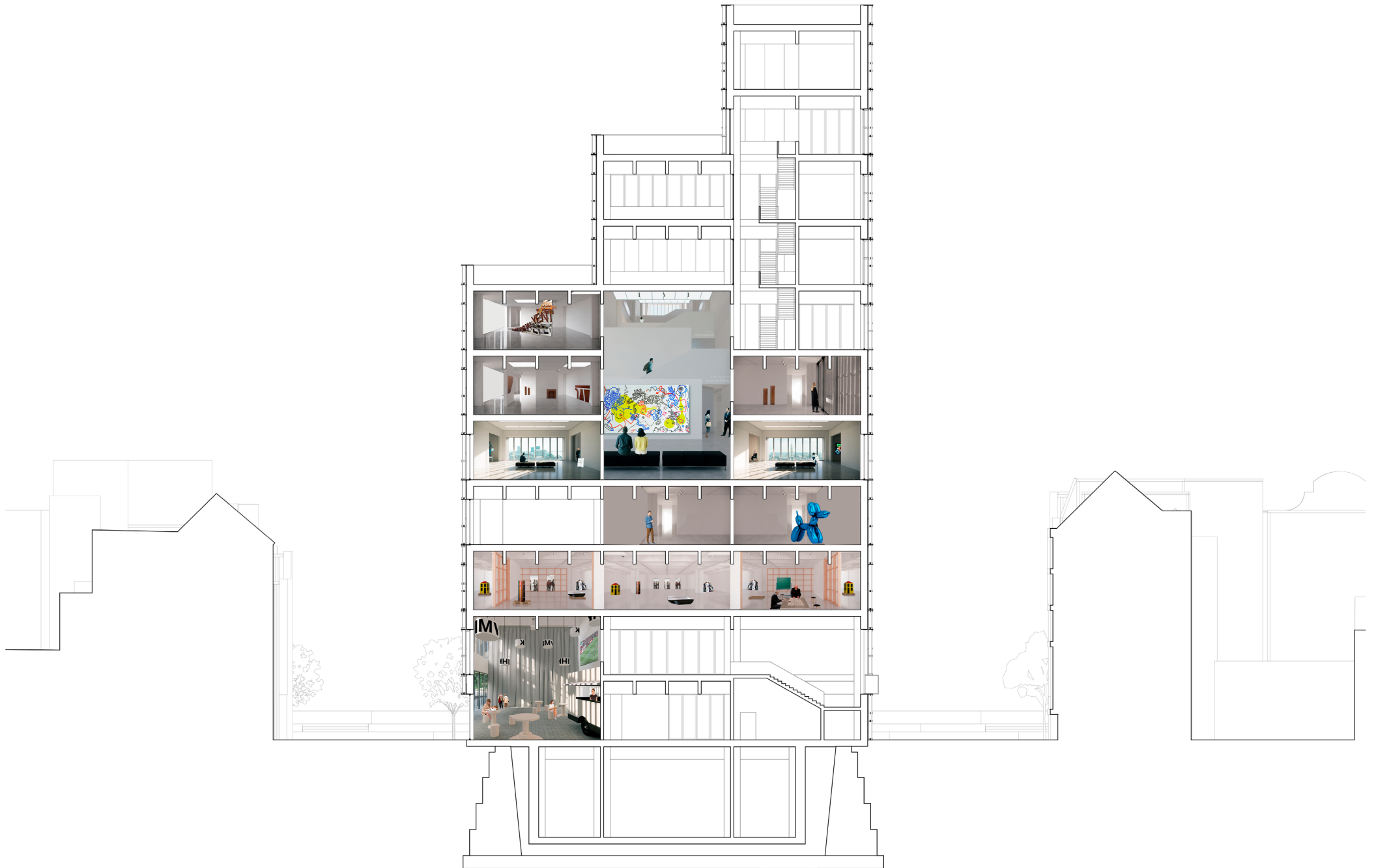
Section B | 1:250

/ solar panels 
 ~ low temperature floor heating 
 ↑ air outlet through joint between wall and floor 
 AHU (air handling unit) 
 WKO (heat and cold storage) 
 ↑↓ geothermal energy

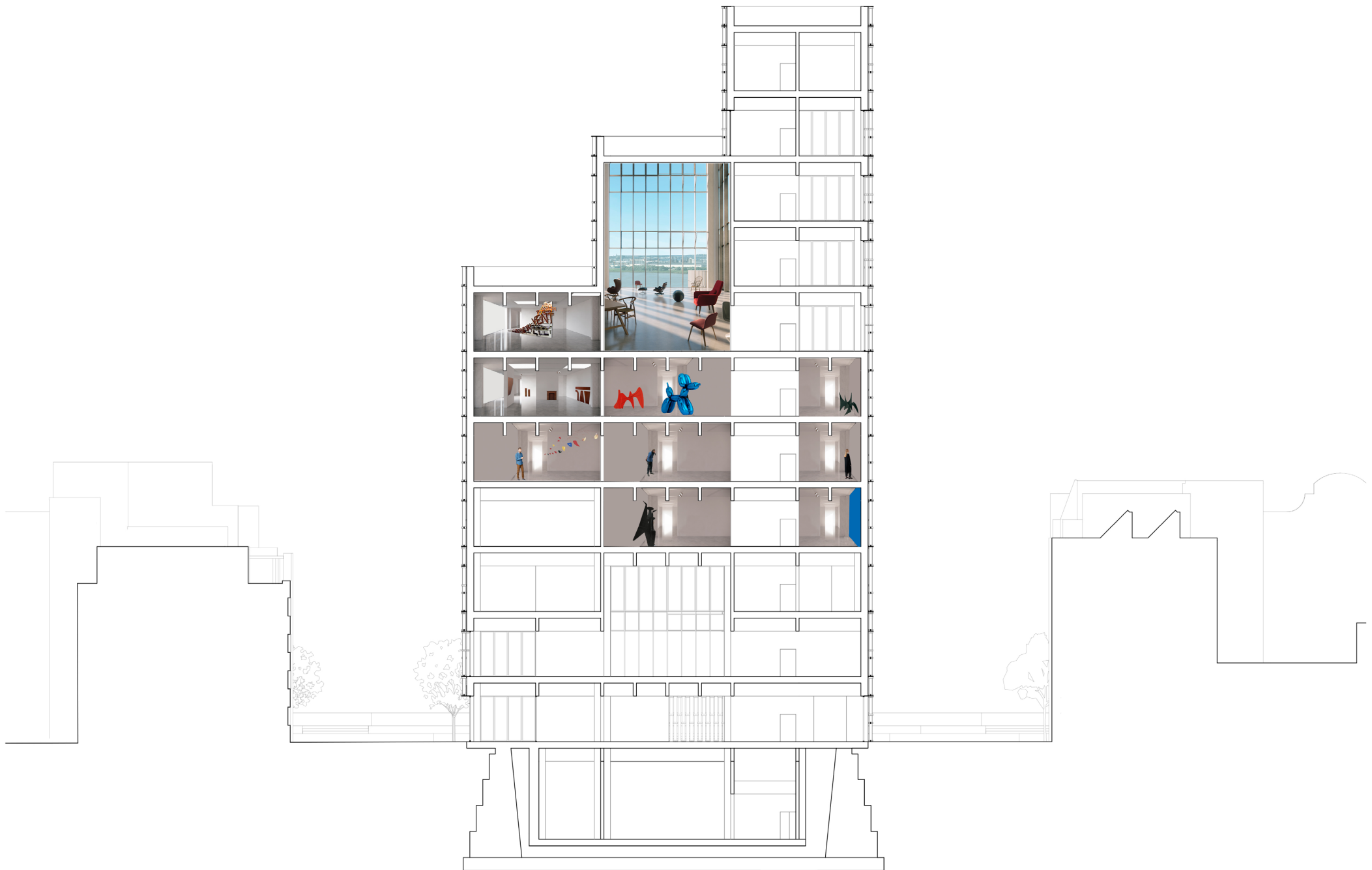


Section B | 1:250

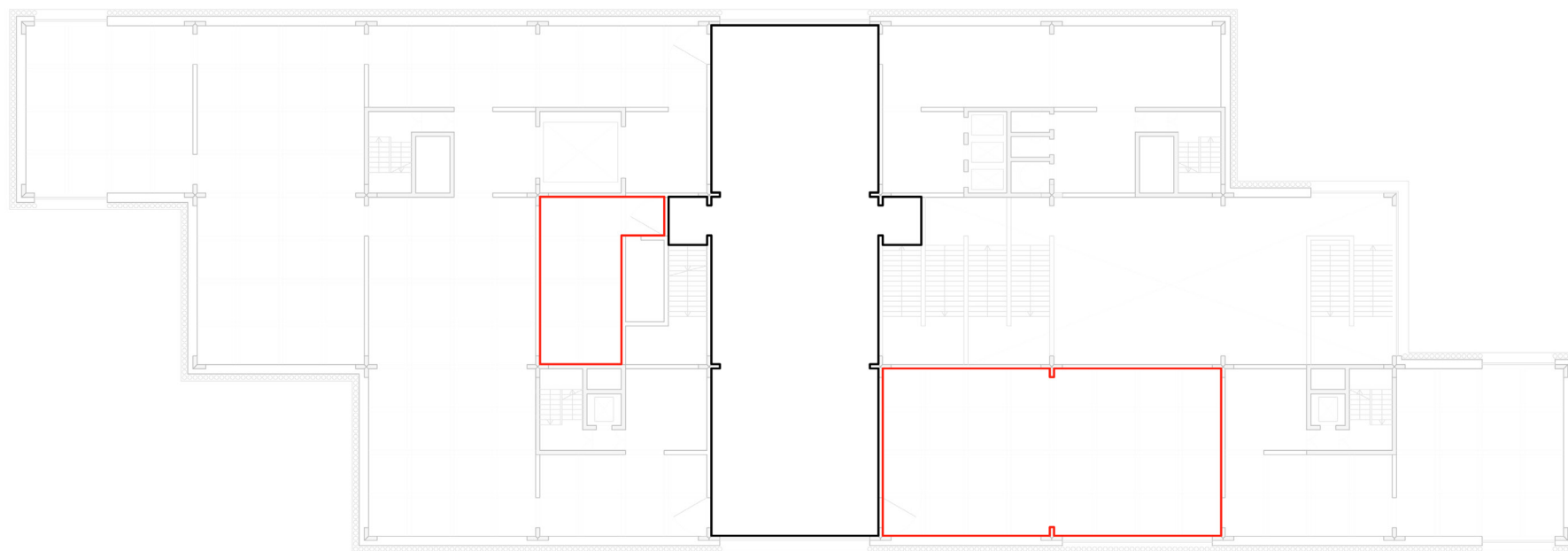




Section C | 1:250





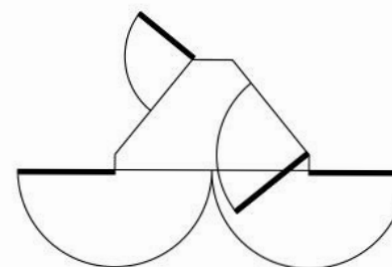




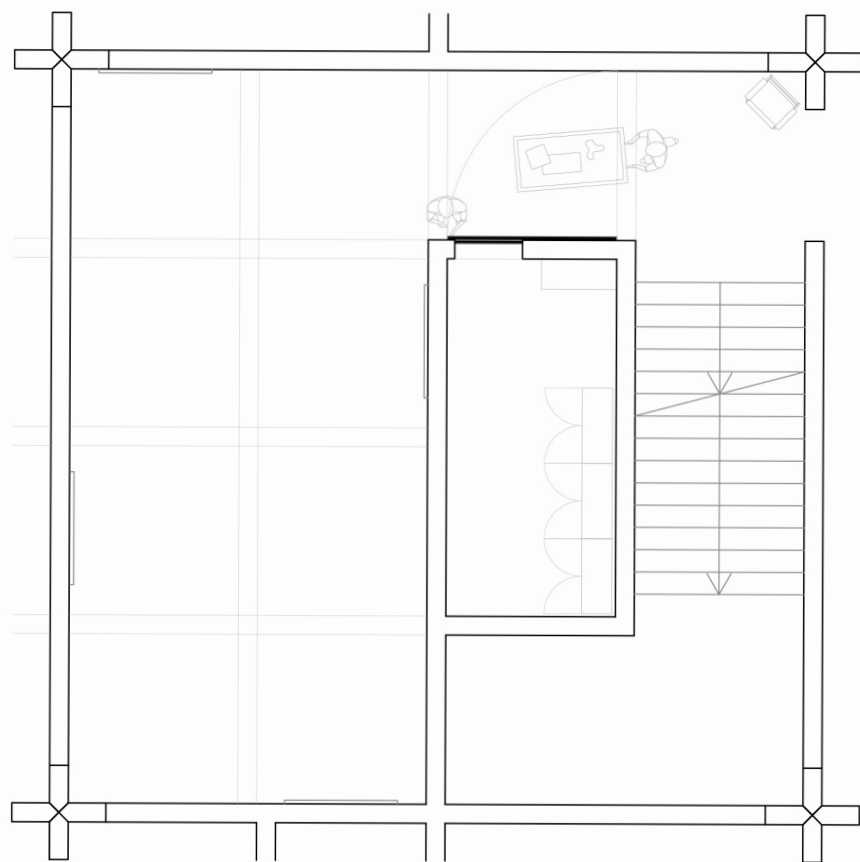


Yves Klein, Le Vide, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris (1958)

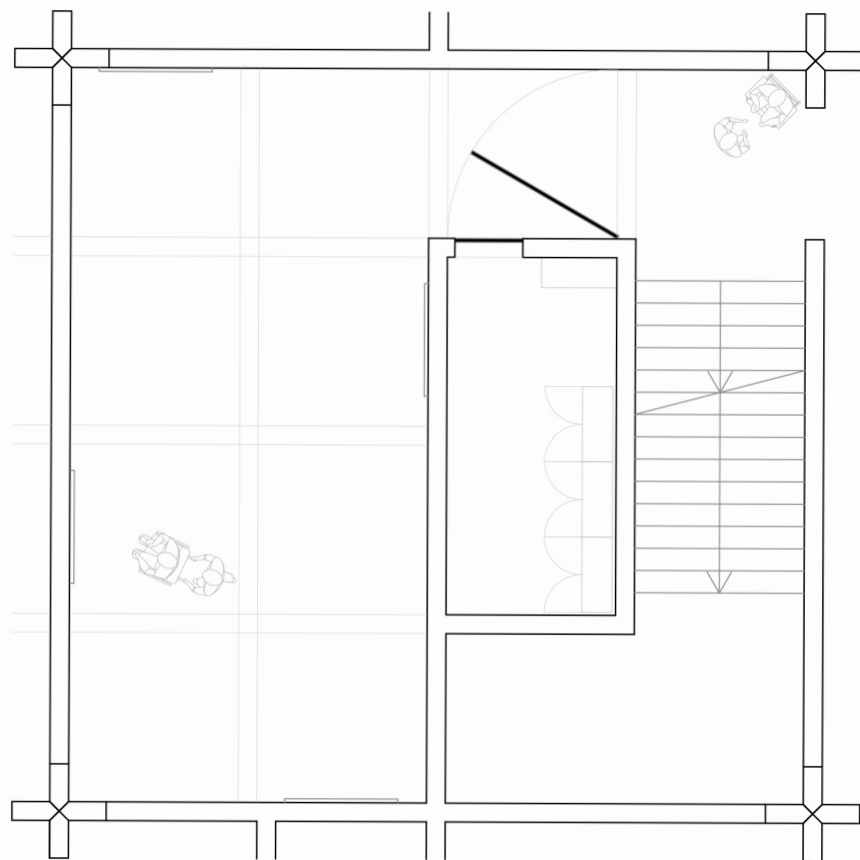




Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Villa San Valerio, Albiate (1957)

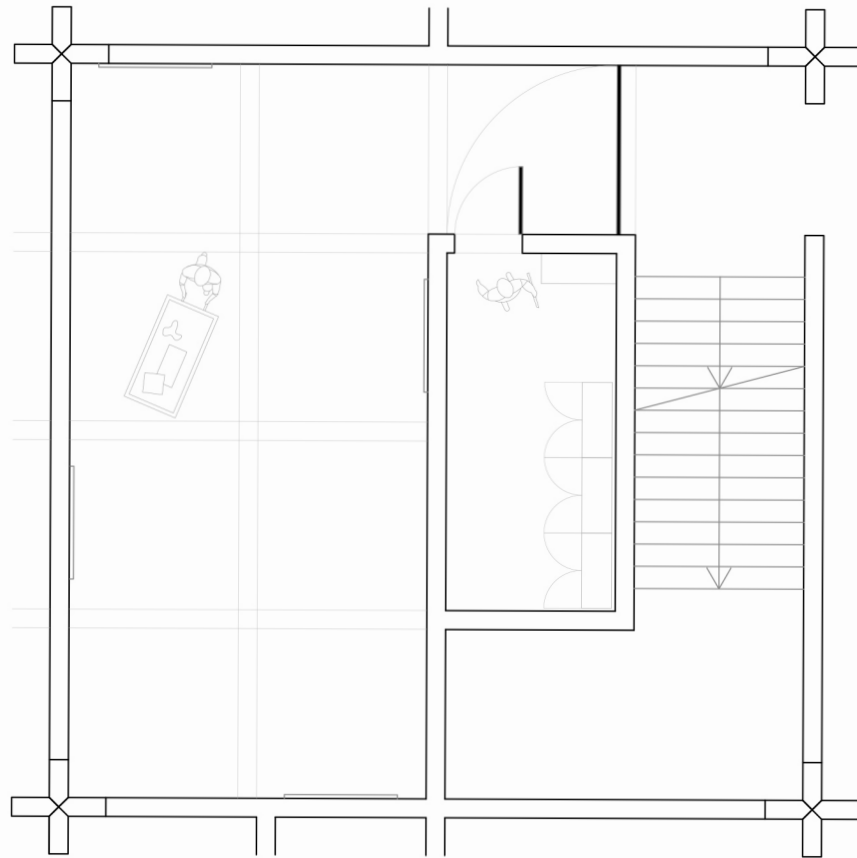


Door open. Free exhibition.



Door ajar. Paid exhibition.





Door closed. Rehang.













VMHK talks

Art is exclusive  
Art is expensive  
Art is difficult

14:00 - 16:00







Richard Baquiè, Dérive, MHKA, Antwerp





Richard Baquiè, Dérive



Jan Vercruysse, Atopies (VIII)



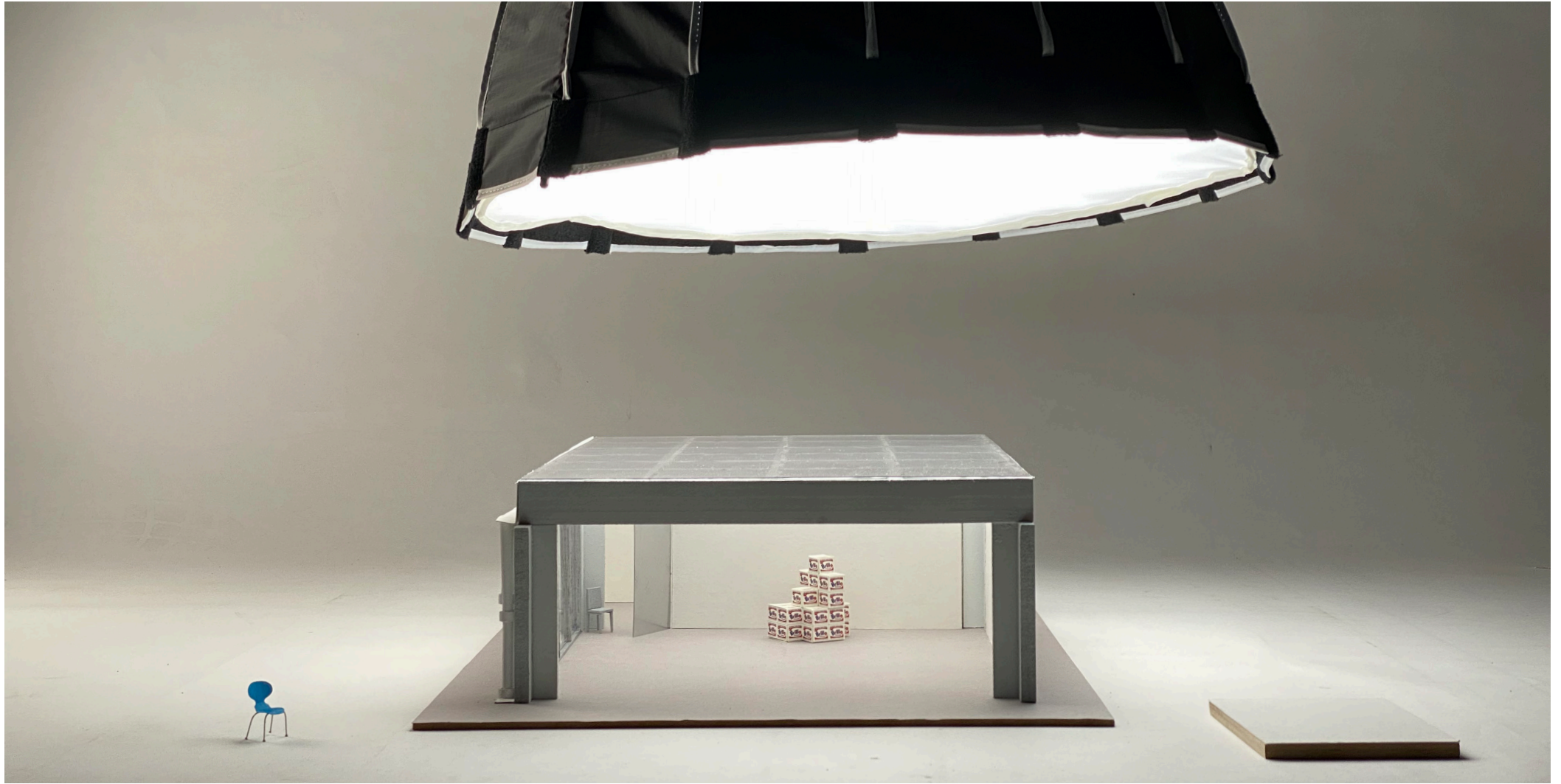


Jan Vercruysse, Atopies (VIII)











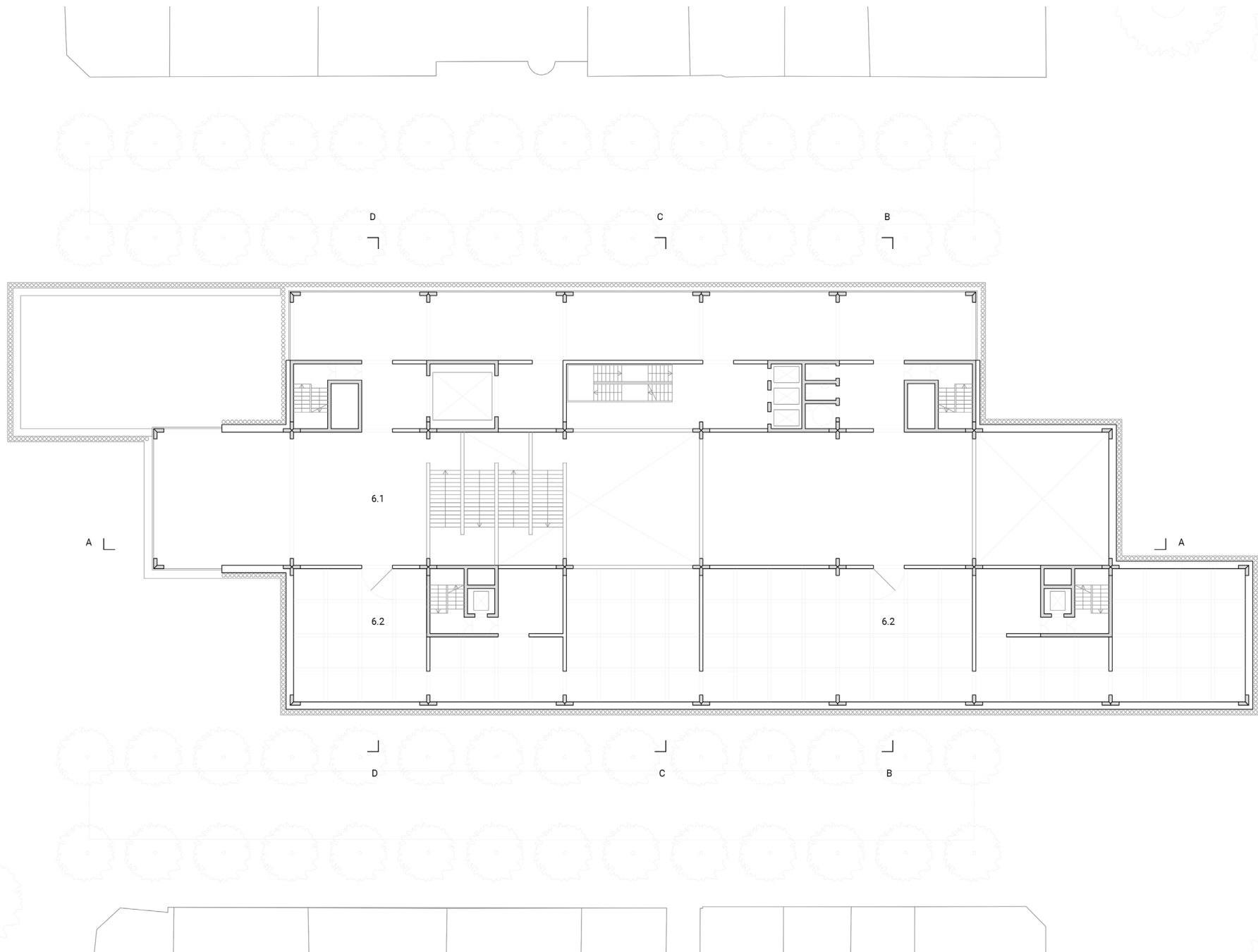


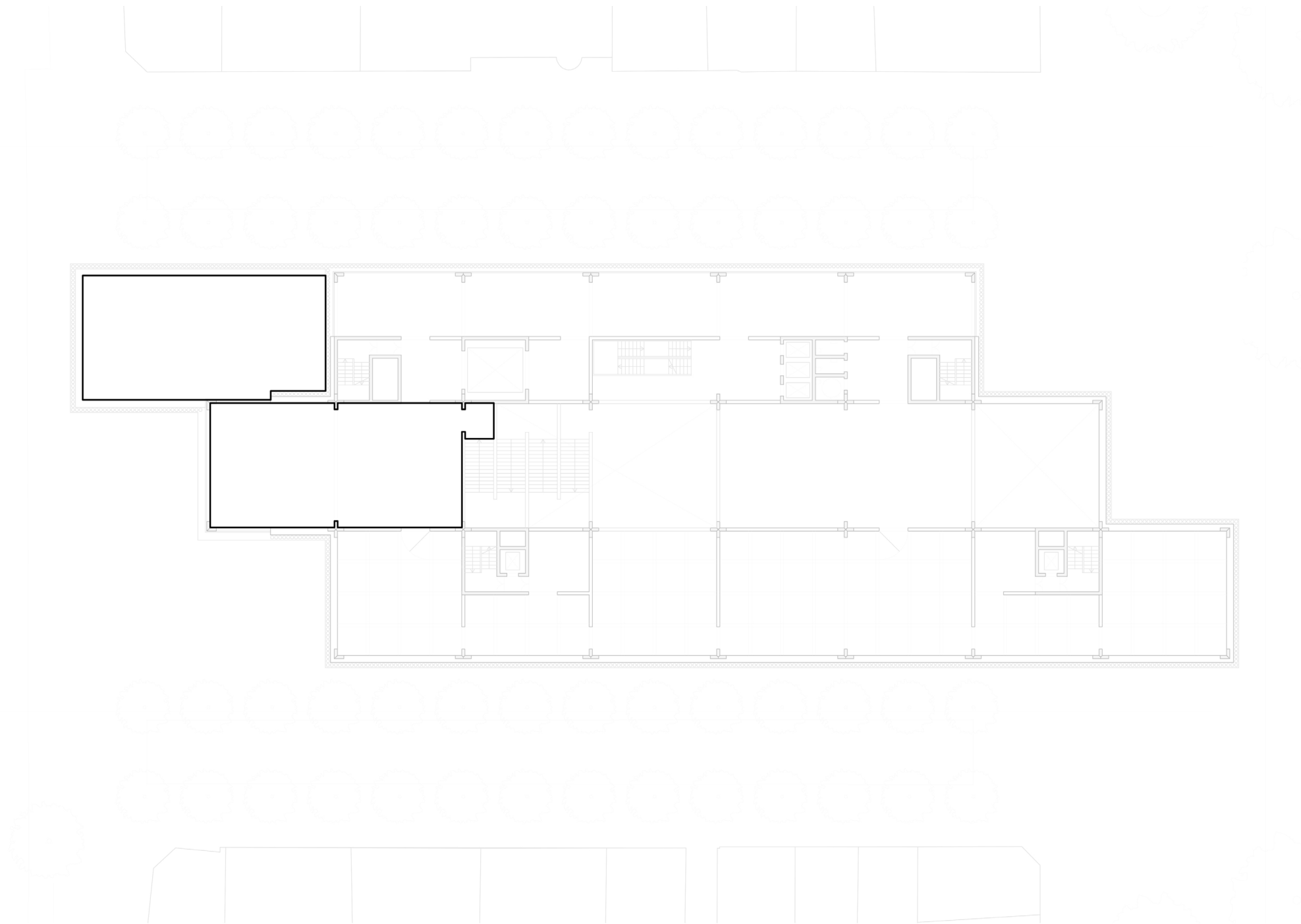
















Haegue Yang, Vip's Union

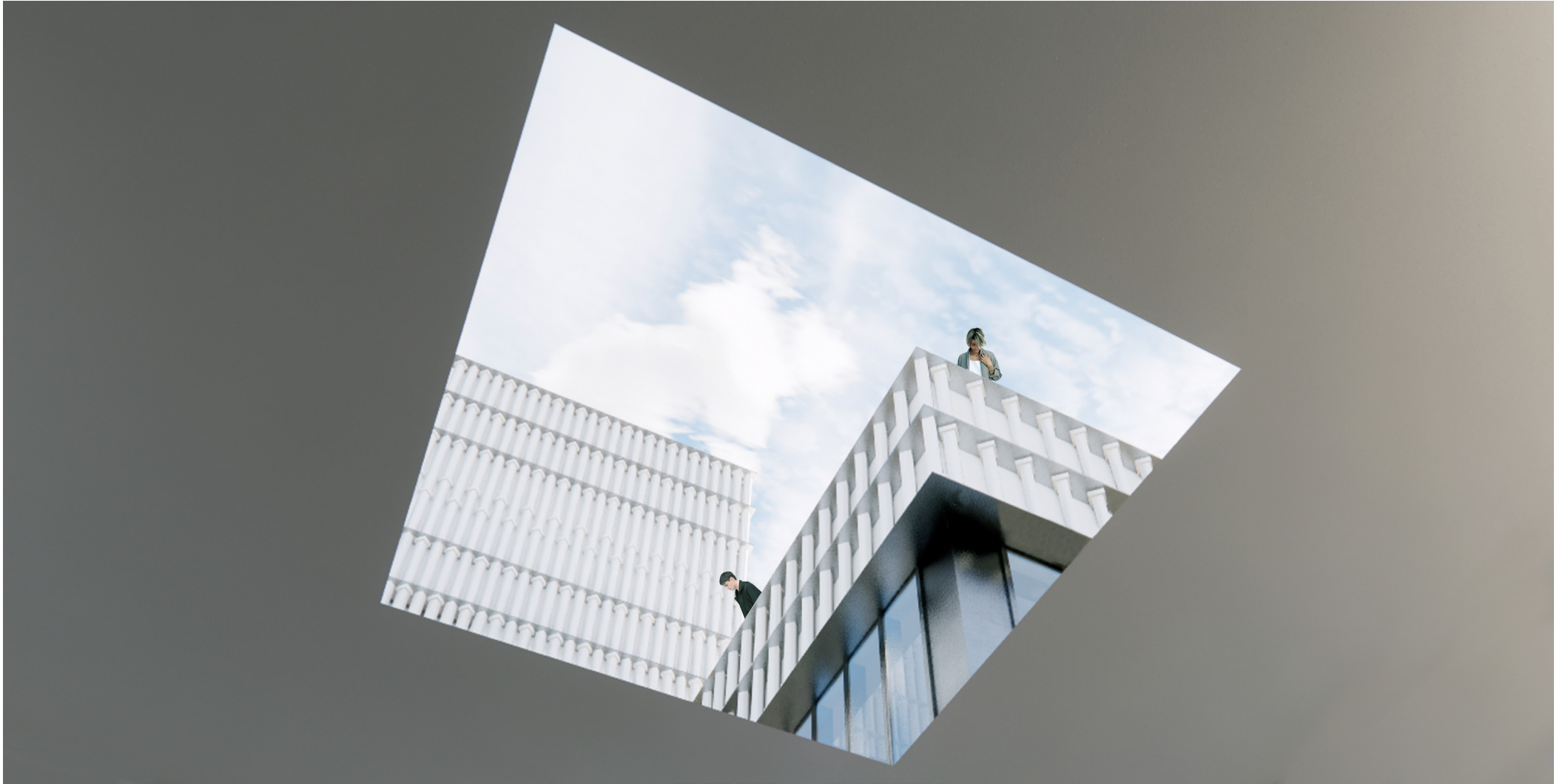


Haegue Yang, Vip's Union





James Turrell, Skyspace



James Turrell, Skyspace















