

project	report
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abstract

Theatre was once part of the city. In ancient Athens as well as Elizabethan London, it was embedded in public life and the streets surrounding it. Over time, it withdrew into an institution with a clear inside and outside, a front and a back, a public and a private. Today, most theatres open half an hour before curtain and stay empty the rest of the day.

This project takes that withdrawal as its starting point. It asks whether the lines that separate the theatre from the city are inevitable, or whether architecture can draw them differently.

By placing the theatre within an existing urban block in the centre of Delft, organising it around a public street that runs through its back of house, and exposing the processes normally hidden from view, the project attempts to make the threshold between theatre and city productive: an indoor street taking the passing resident behind the scenes, workshop windows framing the carpenter for the city and the city for the carpenter or the back wall of the stage opening onto the street.

The result is a building that does not present itself as a cultural destination set apart from daily life, but as one that tries to become part of it.

interweave: theatre in the urban fabric

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PART 01. INTRODUCTION

city stage design statement

During its early development, theatre was an open, public and accessible space. In ancient Greece and Rome, it was part of public life. Shakespeare’s Globe sat in the middle of London’s busy streets, mixing all kinds of people together. But over time, theatre became more separated from the city around it. Today, it’s widely perceived as a destination rather than a part of daily urban life.

This graduation project explores how a theatre can be woven into the existing urban fabric. Instead of presenting theatre as an isolated destination or singular architectural object, the project investigates how cultural architecture can operate from within the everyday city, allowing moments of performance, gathering, and anticipation to emerge alongside ordinary urban activities.

Introducing a large building into a small city like Delft raises the question of its versatility. By examining the spatial and technical requirements of a theatre, the project explores how the necessary structures and machinery can be used as flexibly as possible, to provide the town not only with a theatre, but also with a space where the residents of Delft can come together for a wide variety of events.

relevance

This graduation project engages with a real and complex urban condition, which requires consideration of existing buildings, stakeholders, regulations, and urban dynamics. This positions the graduation studio as a bridge between the freedom of academic exploration and the realistic framework of architectural practice.

By working with existing urban conditions and built structures through precise consideration of what should be demolished, transformed and kept, the project aligns with contemporary discussions on responsible building. Designing with the existing is not approached as a limitation, but as an opportunity. The project investigates how existing networks and players, historically developed urban conditions and built structures can inform a new architectural identity for the theatre.

Within the context of large-scale public building typologies in city centres, this project examines the closed and isolated nature of theatres. Using various architectural methods, the project aims to rethink the lines of demarcation between the city and the theatre and explore ways of bringing the city and the theatre closer together, whilst taking into account and reinterpreting the building’s functional requirements as well as working practices within theatres.

Through the exploration of possibilities for flexibility, this thesis examines how to address the overarching needs of a city within the constraints of a fixed building brief. The project investigates how a detailed analysis of the requirements and margins of the commissioned project can create opportunities to offer more and to respond, within a single building, to various deficits of a dense, small town such as Delft.

objective and motivation

The personal motivation for the project stems from an interest in working with what is at hand.

In terms of the built environment, this is reflected in an interest in how existing functions, buildings and urban networks can be adapted and woven into the design of a new cultural institution. The project aims to respect the latent qualities of existing buildings and urban conditions, such as scale, rhythm and materiality, and to integrate them into the design.

In terms of concept and programme, the project seeks to focus on the interpretation of the brief and the framework of a typology. The ambition is to investigate and understand how, within a fixed framework, arguments and architectural solutions can be identified and developed to address issues found through the analysis. To this end, the project seeks to utilise the requirements of the specific building typology to facilitate those solutions.

With these points in mind, the aim of the project is to design a theatre that is integrated into the existing urban fabric, responds to and makes use of its programmatic and material conditions, becomes part of everyday life in the city rather than shutting itself off from it, critically examines the scope of the brief and the typology, and capitalises on the resulting requirements and opportunities.

design focus and question

The central focus of this project is the relationship between theatre and city. The project investigates how a cultural institution can merge with ordinary urban functions and address the city's needs through architectural design, allowing theatre to become part of daily life. This leads to the following design question:

How can the theatre be interwoven with the city to bring them closer to one another?

In addition to that, it opens sub-questions for specific topics:

How can the theatre integrate into the existing urban block, aligning with the use, scale, and rhythm of its surroundings?

How can architectural and programmatic solutions contribute to break the border between city and stage?

How can flexibility be found and implemented to facilitate a variety of functions in a large-scale building within a small city?

These questions form the foundation for the design research and architectural exploration developed throughout the project.

scope

The project is based in the city of Delft, in the south of the Netherlands. The city aims to replace the existing 'Theater de Veste' and build the 'Theatre of the Future'. The new theatre is intended to build on the strengths of the old one whilst addressing its shortcomings. The aim is to create a building that closely links the city and the theatre, establishing a space that is accessible and relevant to all groups of society. The theatre should provide a venue for popular performances, whilst also accommodating unconventional and challenging themes.

The specific location for this graduation project is the Hema Block in Delft. It is located at the southern edge of Delft's historic city centre, at the transition toward the newer part of the centre. The site has a direct connection to the lively Beestenmarkt. At the same time, it connects to Bastiaansplein, a highly commercial area characterised by newer large building blocks and cultural institutions such as the library and cinema, that were built following the replanning in the 1950s.

The block itself is defined by shopfronts along all its edges, with housing units positioned above. Canals frame the site on the north and south sides, while pedestrian streets define its eastern and western edges. Together, these conditions give the site strong potential to function as a connector between the historic city centre and the newer commercial area to the south.



fig. 01: hema building
largest retail store on the site

PART 02. APPROACH

research and design approach

The approach of this graduation project combines design research, spatial experimentation, and precedent analysis. The project develops through a series of explorations that investigate how a theatre can be integrated into the existing city fabric.

Literature

To establish a theoretical framework for the project, literature is studied across several interconnected themes, including theatre architecture and public space. These texts provide conceptual grounding for understanding theatre not only as a building type, but as a cultural and urban institution embedded within the city.

Design exercise

As an initial design step, the project began with an exploratory exercise focusing on space as a theme. This exercise functioned as a testing ground to investigate the relationship between city and theatre without the constraints of a complete building programme. The goal of this method was to understand and work out conceptual ideas on how theatre and city could not only coexist but interact with each other. Through model making as a main tool, these ideas have been tested at 1:25 scale to limit the explorations to a specific moment.

Precedent studies

To get a deeper understanding of the history of theatre buildings as well as contemporary theatres, precedent studies have been examined. These precedents were analysed through research, re-drawing and spatial comparison. The studies helped to understand the complex processes in theatres and the spatial and programmatic interrelationships. Furthermore, historical examples provided an overview of the development of theatre and the role these buildings play within their specific contexts.

Visiting theatres

A crucial step in understanding the spatial organisation and urban role of theatres was the study of existing, running theatre buildings. Visiting theatres, capturing them through film and photography, and becoming part of the audience shaped the understanding of the experience through the eyes of the visitors. Throughout these visits, it became apparent that many theatres function as inward-oriented institutions, with limited engagement with their immediate urban surroundings and sometimes abrupt thresholds between city and stage. But once inside, theatres reveal a highly structured spatial organisation. Its spaces are typically divided into distinct spaces for audience, staff, and performers, each following a specific route through the building.

theoretical framework

Theatre has not always been the closed and inward-looking institution it is often perceived as today. In its earliest form, it was deeply embedded in the public life of the city. The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens was not a destination set apart from daily urban life but a civic space where citizens gathered as part of the collective life of the city. Attendance was a civic act. The theatre was open, exposed to the sky, and physically continuous with the city around it. Much later, Shakespeare's Globe occupied a similarly embedded position in the urban fabric of Elizabethan London. The venue was built in the busy streets of Southwark, mixing all social classes in a space that was as much part of everyday city life as the market or the inn. These two examples share a common quality: theatre as a genuinely urban institution, accessible and present in the daily life of the city.

This relationship changed as theatre developed into a specialised building type. Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became increasingly formalised as a space and social institution. The proscenium arch became the definitive spatial expression of this shift: a line dividing watchers from the watched, front of house from back, the public from the making of theatre. Peter Brook (1968/1996), identified this institutionalisation as a kind of cultural deadening. His concept of the 'Deadly Theatre' describes a theatre that has lost genuine contact with its audience and with the life around it. The spatial and institutional conditions he describes are architectural as much as they are performative, as the building itself enforces the separation.

In the Netherlands, this takes on a civic dimension. As Quirijn van den Hoogen (2020) has shown, Dutch theatre operates within a publicly funded framework that makes it structurally dependent on broad social relevance.

But its buildings and institutional habits often work against that relevance. Most theatre lobbies today only open half an hour before the show and stay empty the rest of the day. In that context, Andy Hales raised the question: „Why would you want to build all those square metres of space that are hardly used?“ in an interview with Kim Megson (2017). For the city of Delft and its considerations of building a new theatre, that raises the question about how public life and the theatre can be interwoven and what that building can offer beyond theatre performances in the evening.

This is where the question becomes architectural. Juliet Rufford (2015) argues in 'Theatre & Architecture' that the spatial organisation of a theatre encodes assumptions about who belongs inside it and where the boundaries between performer and public are drawn. Rethinking those boundaries is not only a programmatic or institutional question, but requires architectural decisions about thresholds, visibility, and the organisation of front and back of house. Richard Sennett (1977/2002) has described how the modern city progressively withdrew collective life into specialised and bounded institutions. The theatre building is one of many sites where that withdrawal has been spatially consolidated.

This project takes these arguments as its starting point and attempts to translate them into architectural form. Where Brook called for a rethinking of the relationship between performer and audience within the space of performance, this project asks what that rethinking might look like in the building itself, in the street, and in the ordinary daily life of the city. Rather than dissolving the lines of demarcation between front and back of house, the project concerns itself

PART 03. RESULTS

precedent studies

Theatre of Dionysus, Athens (5th century BC)
The venue was built right in the middle of the city on the slope of the Acropolis and was seamlessly integrated into the urban landscape. There was no physical boundary between the city and the theatre, so that one entered the theatre through the city and sat within it (Konings & Robertson, 2026).

The Globe Theatre, London (1599)
The timber construction sat right in the existing scale and grain of the city without any separation between the energy of the street and the energy of the performance. The venue allowed its visitors to be as loud, active and present as they were in Southwarks streets. Not only the public, but also the city itself seeped in with its smells, noise and weather (Gurr, 2017).

London Coliseum, London (1904)
The theatre is embedded in an existing city block on St. Martin's Lane. The building bleeds into the block, respecting the buildings around it. It does not rupture the existing urban fabric of shop fronts at street level and housing on top but becomes part of it with the back of house being absorbed into the block. (Living London History, 2025)

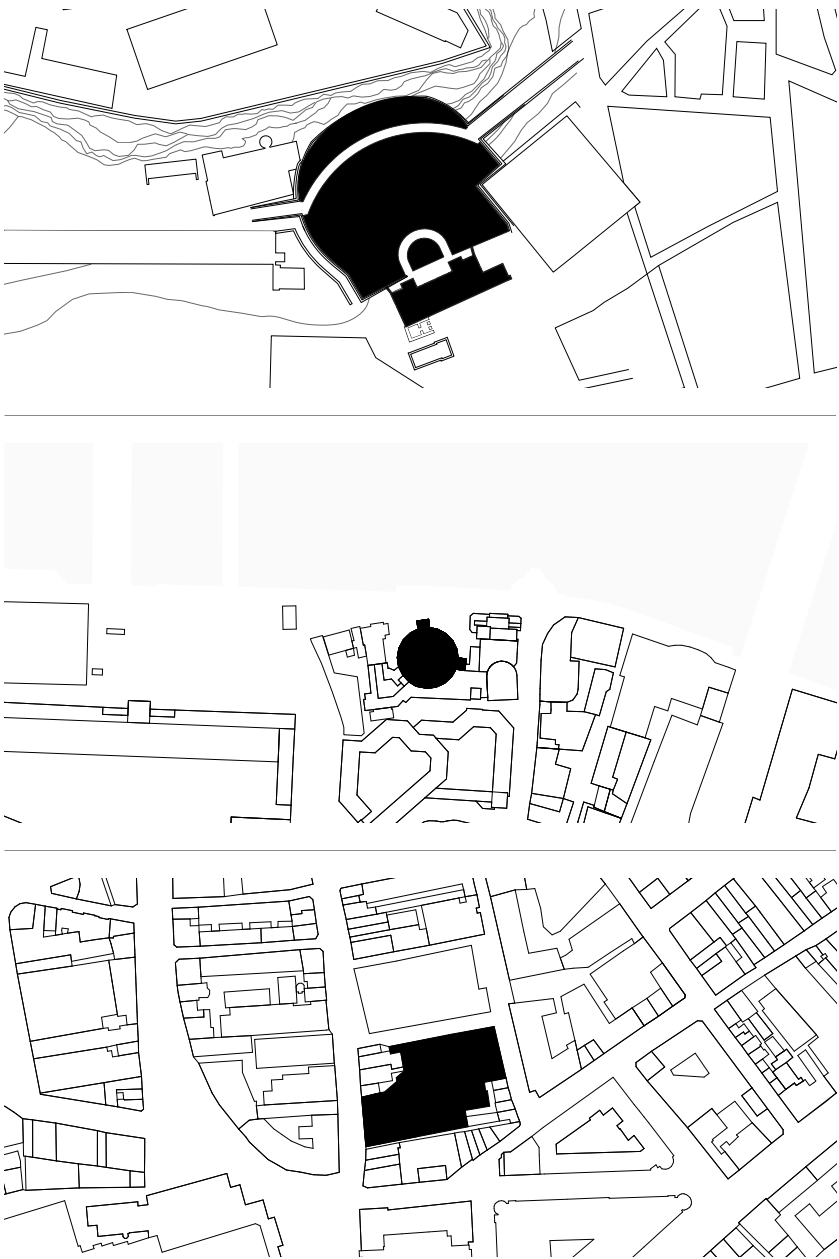


fig. 02-04: ground figure plans precedents
Theatre Dionysius, Globe Theatre and London Coliseum

precedent studies

Teatro Oficina, São Paulo (1993)

The long narrow building occupies a tight urban plot, with the stage running the full length of the building. The scaffoldings on either side of the building do not only serve as the seating for the audience, but also as rigging system for the technical infrastructure. The project challenges the traditional separation between stage and audience and offers shifting configurations (Andrade, 2019).

Polyvalent Theatre, Lille (2013)

The open floorplan of the project offers various configurations ranging from a 600-seat theatre, over exhibition set ups to standing events like festivals or concerts for up to 1,200 people. Lacaton & Vassal's approach of maximum flexibility keeps the building available to the widest possible range of uses and audiences (Lacaton & Vassal Architectes, 2013).

These precedent studies form the basis for the design: The role of theatres as open, accessible buildings that were part of everyday life, strategies and approaches for integrating theatres into the existing urban landscape, and performance spaces that challenge and rethink conventional theatrical conventions, offering possibilities for alternative set-ups, flexibility and an openness between the front and back of house.

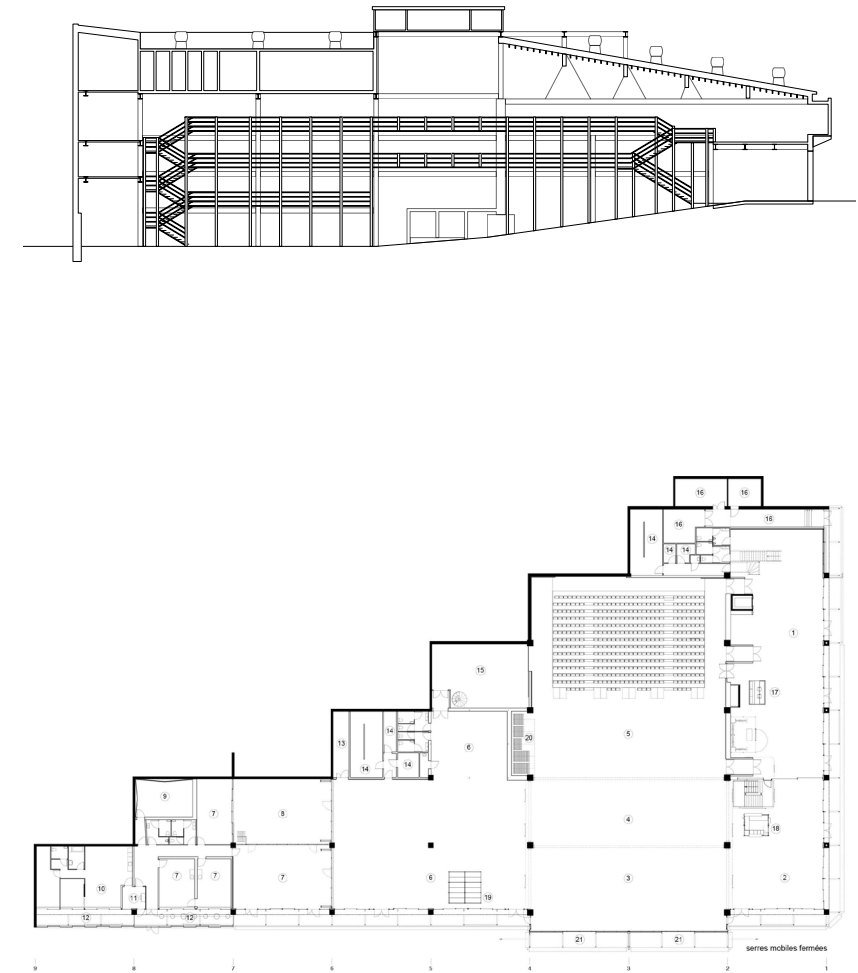


fig. 05-06: section and plan
Teatro Oficina and Polyvalent Theatre

design exercise: space

The starting point for this exercise was the open foyer. Instead of positioning the main gathering space of the theatre behind a closed façade, the exercise explored how this space could be integrated into the urban fabric. Using the typical Dutch urban perimeter block as a context, the proposal suggested to work with a negative space at the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam.

From the premise of the theatre becoming an ordinary part of the street façade, the project developed into an investigation of what that threshold could look like and how one could deal with the conditions of the context. The site of the former Theater van Van Campen became a testing ground for subtle interventions to frame everyday situations, direct movement and perception, and create moments of anticipation and discovery.

The exercise laid the foundations for the programmatic and architectural integration of the theatre in Delft with its surroundings. The idea of incorporating the theatre into the existing shop-front façade of the HEMA block sparked a process of reflection on which parts of a theatre could be made visible to the public and where the boundary between the front and back of house could be softened. The solution was to propose a producing theatre for the site and to integrate the workshops into the block façade. The making of theatre becomes an ordinary part of everyday life, as the project offers pedestrians to see and understand how the usually closed off institution works.

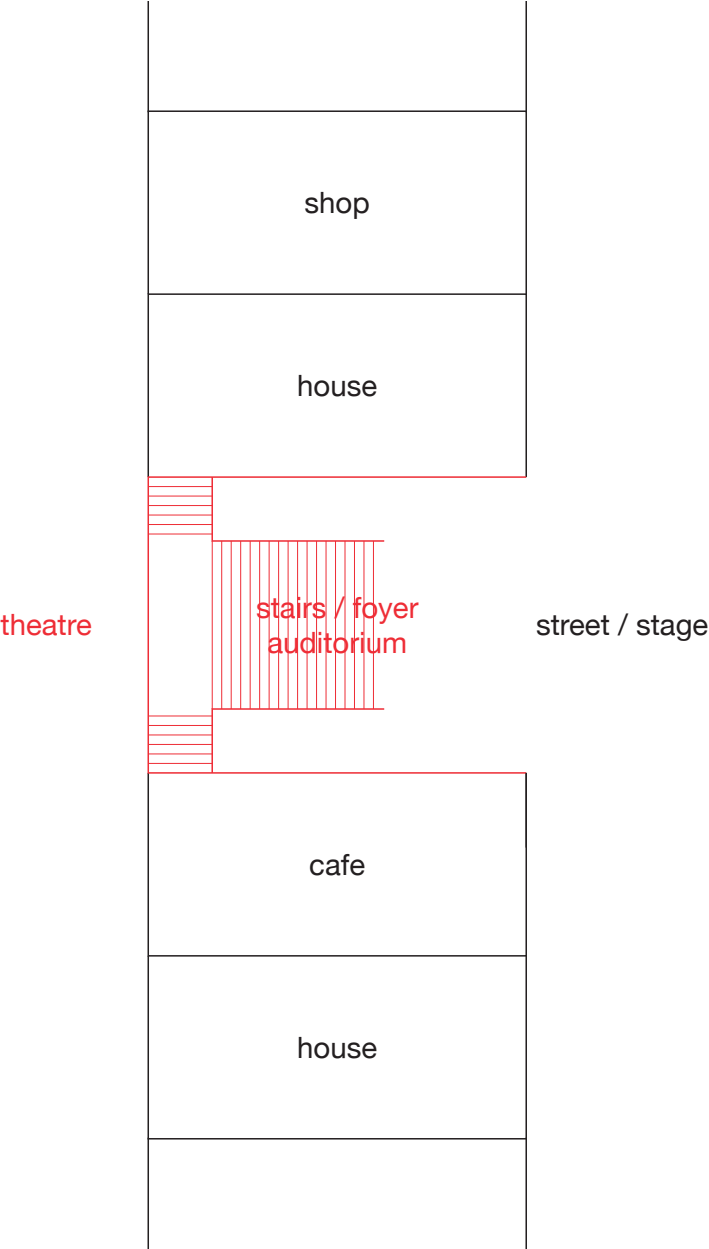


fig. 07: initial idea space exercise
diagrammatic floor plan



fig. 08: entrance theater van van campen
historic painting



fig. 09: framing and compression
extending the central opening

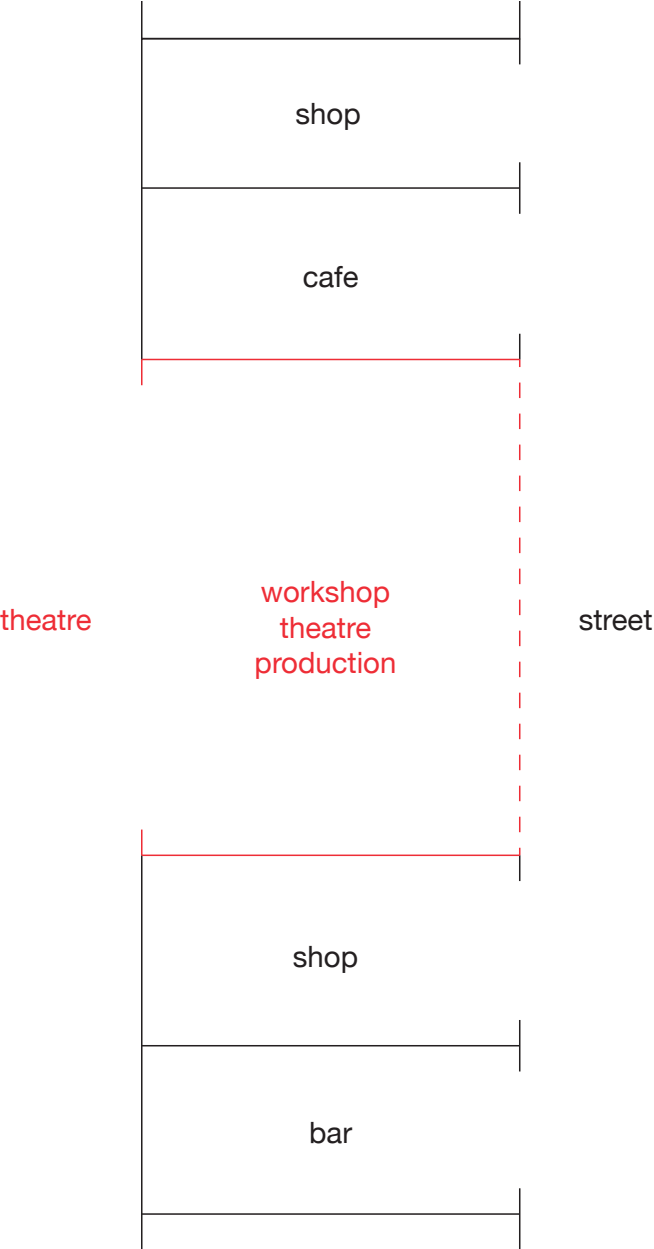


fig. 10: public production
diagrammatic floor plan



fig. 11: gasthuislaan public production
rendered view

site analysis

The location is central to the project’s ambition of rethinking the lines of demarcation between the theatre and the city. The HEMA block is part of an ensemble of post war buildings that have been constructed, after a part of the Zuidpoort area has been destroyed to facilitate the ‘1954 Structural Plan’ and the ‘Komplan 1956’ (Zoutewelle, 2017). The redeveloped area does not follow Delft’s fine grain of canal houses and mainly introduced large-scale blocks with commercial use on the ground floor. Despite the construction of these blocks, Delft still suffers from a lack of event spaces like a music hall or exhibition space.

The HEMA block sits right at the border between this newer commercial area and Delft’s historical city centre. It is a busy place where people pass through daily to get groceries, visit the market and go to cafes. An existing passage cuts through the block as a shortcut between streets. Small shops and cafes as well as larger retail spaces form the ground floor façade along the edge of the block. Two of the buildings have housing on the second floor. Placing the theatre here, naturally embeds it in everyday urban life.

To accommodate a theatre on site, the largest structure (HEMA building) requires partial transformation, reducing the retail footprint by approximately half. This shifts the store from a large- to a medium/standard format, a well-established typology within HEMA’s own network. In line with the current ,HEMA 100‘ strategy, a medium-sized HEMA of this scale is not only viable but arguably optimal, as the concept prioritises curated experience over floor area (HEMA, 2025).

The site’s position at the border between the historic centre and the post-war commercial area, combined with its existing passage and active street life, makes it the most direct opportunity to embed a new theatre into the daily life of the city.



fig. 12: ground figure plan
delft city center

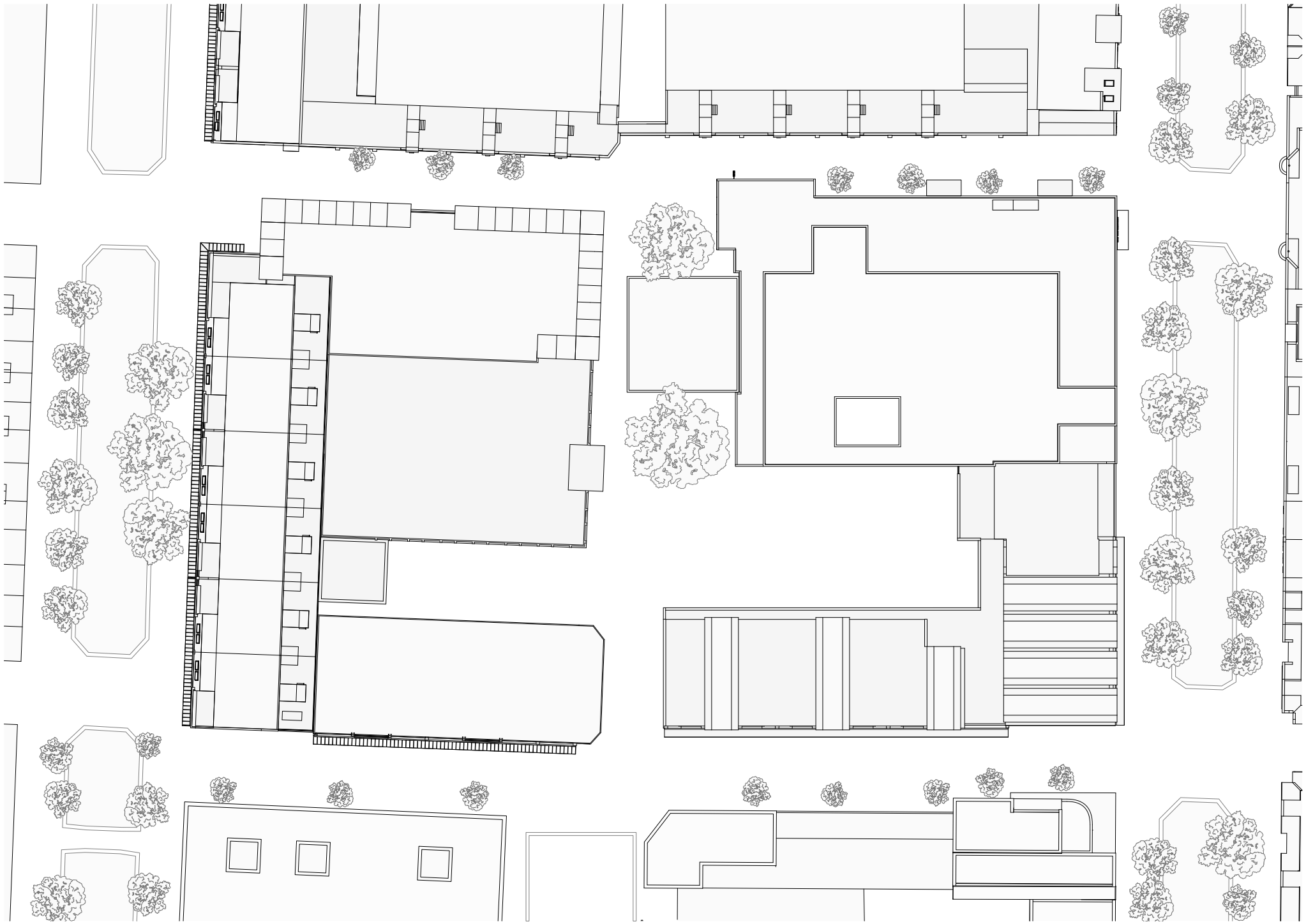


fig. 13: site plan
HEMA block



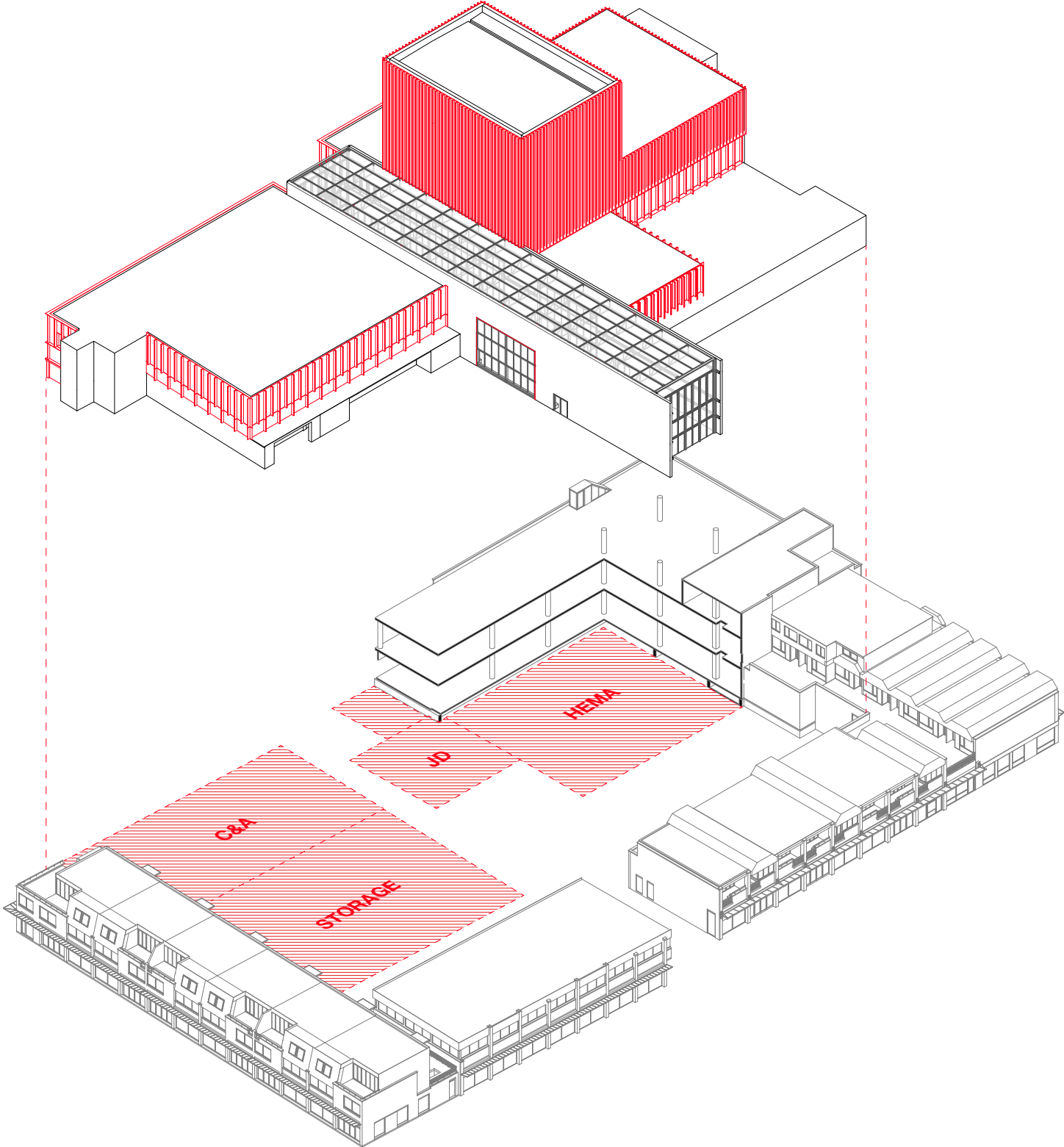


fig. 14: transformation plan
axonometric diagram

embedding

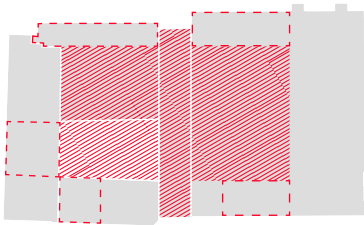
Instead of building a completely new facade, the theatre grows into the existing ensemble of shopfronts. Theatre-functions such as carpentry and painting workshops, or a cafe and foyer alternate with existing shops along the edge of the block, embedding the theatre into the existing network.

The façade along Paradijspoort on the south-west of the block extends the rhythm of the HEMA façade as a mullion-and-transom façade made of steel profiles and follows the height and logic of the other buildings in the area. The ground floor is characterised by shop front windows with a clear rhythm of vertical elements in between them. The concrete benches invite pass-byers to inhabit the façade by taking a break or drinking a coffee from the theatre café inside.

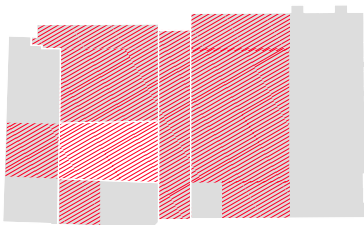
As one follows Paradijspoort towards the ,Theater de Veste'-sign, a void opens between the two building parts, suggesting the junction with a side street. Turning into it, one arrives at the entrance of the theatre street.



existing situation



growing into the ensemble



the theatre

fig. 15: bleeding into the urban fabric
subtitle



fig. 16: view paradijspoort
rendering

theatre street

The project is organised around a public indoor street replacing the existing passage through the block. It serves as the backbone of the theatre, functioning as a pedestrian shortcut, a delivery route, a gathering space before performances, and a daily crossing point for theatre staff and artists. The street belongs to the city as much as to the theatre.

On one side of the street sits the conventional public programme: an 800-seat auditorium, its foyer, the side stage, and artist facilities. On the other side is the production house: a production yard with workshops and rehearsal spaces, staff facilities, and a black box theatre with its own foyer that functions as a café at daytime.

The public follows the street. The artists and staff cross it. It acts as a mediator between artists and audience.

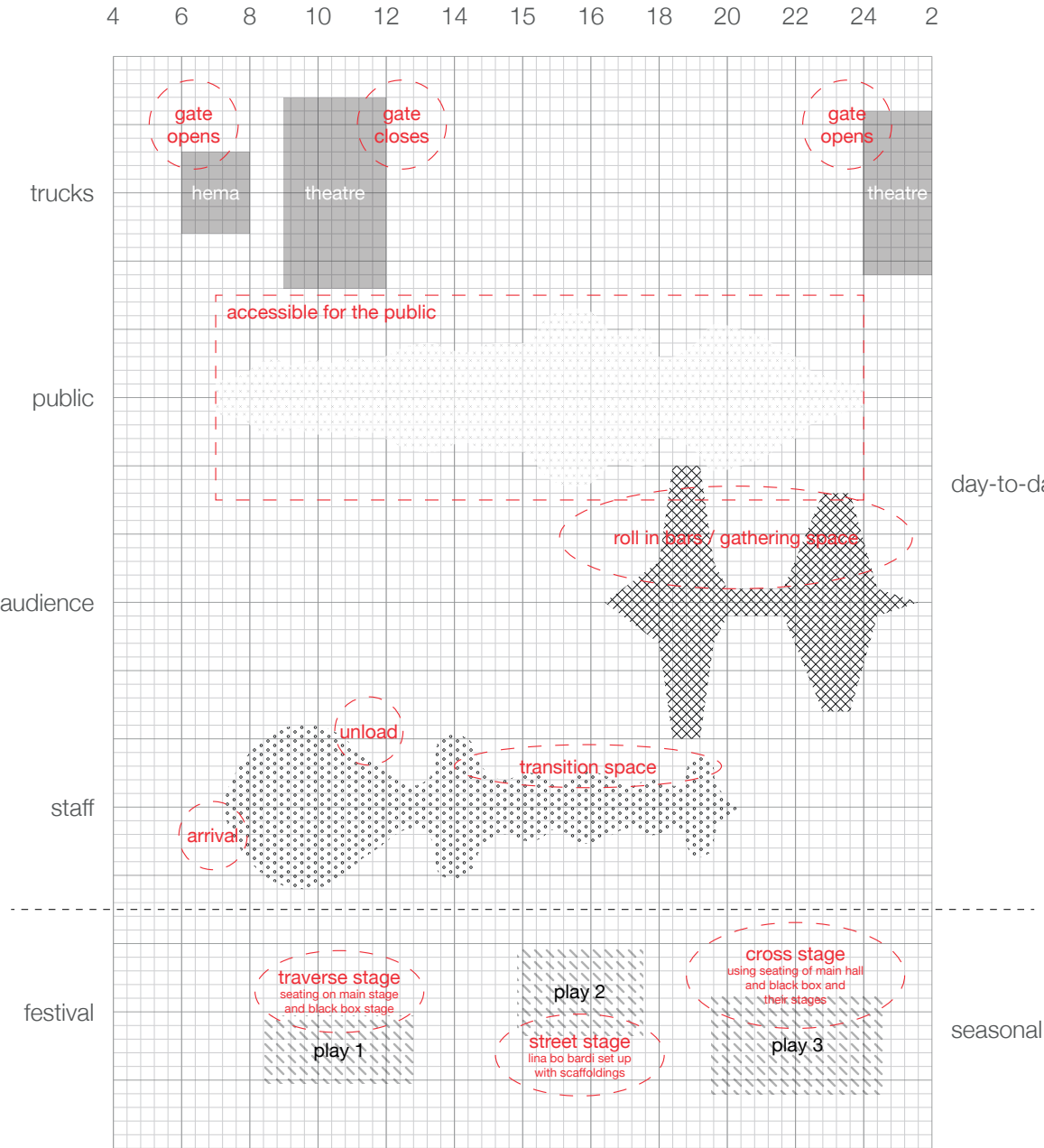
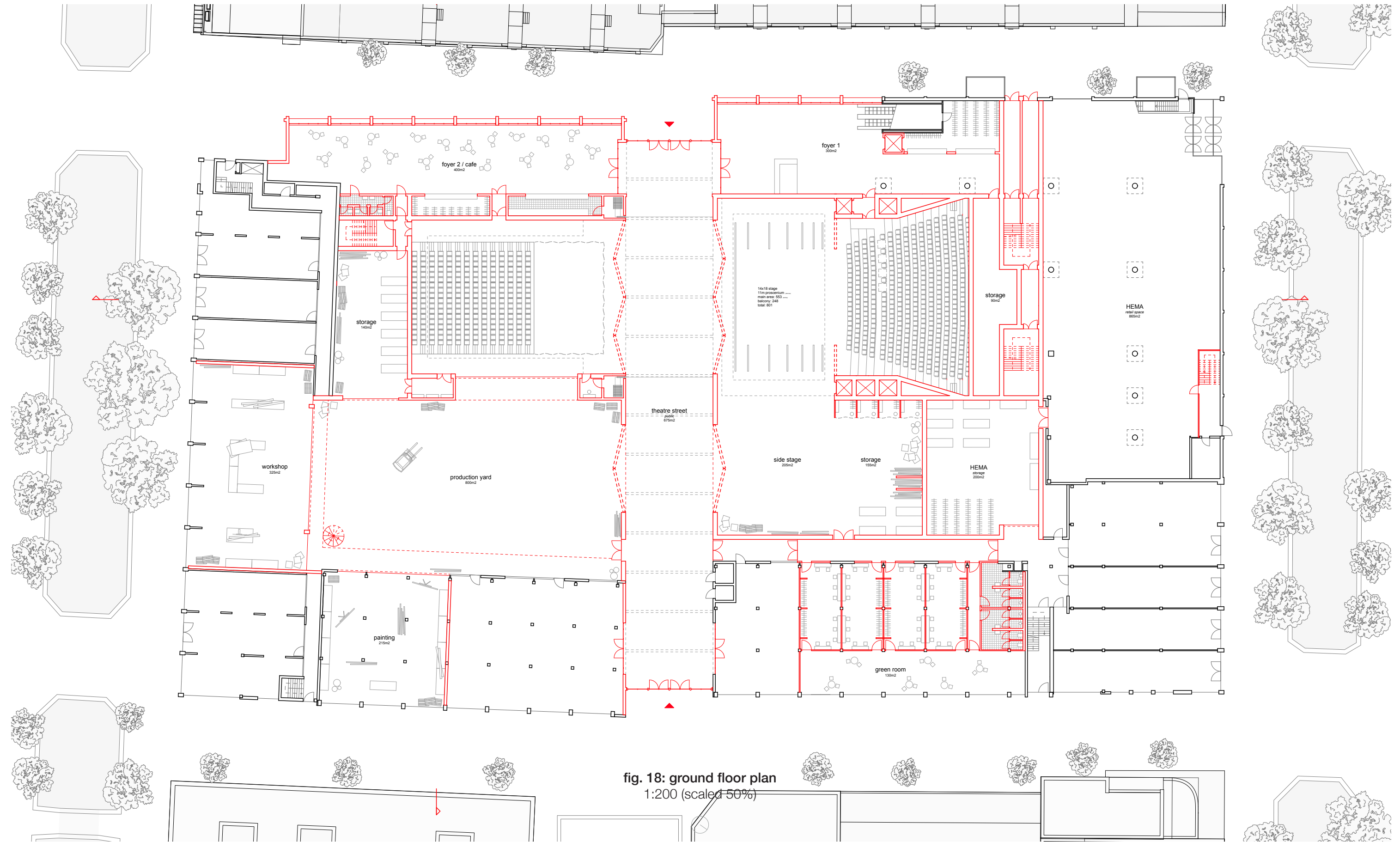


fig. 17: program of the theatre street
24 hours diagram



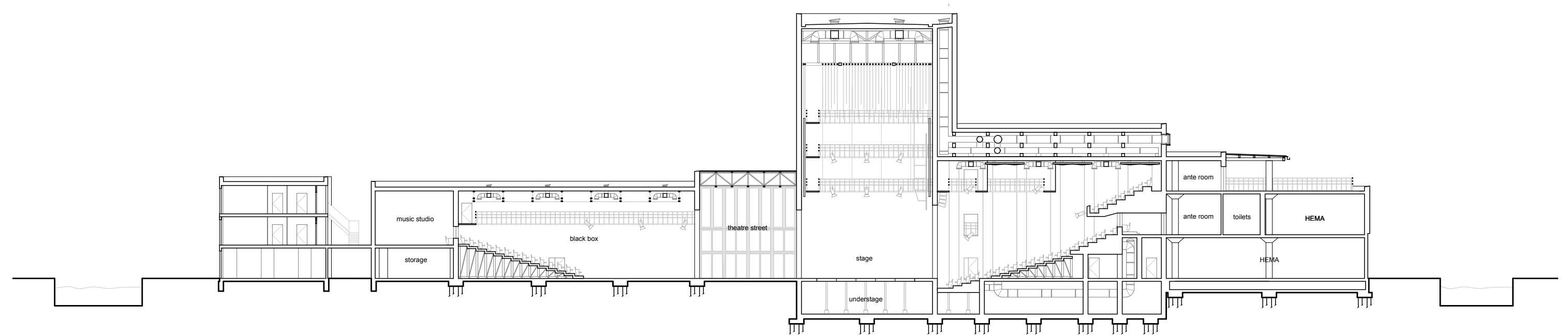


fig. 19: longitudinal section
1:200 (scaled 50%)



fig. 20: theatre street scenario truck arrival
rendering



fig. 21: theatre street scenario daily life
rendering



fig. 22: theatre street scenario gathering
rendering



fig. 23: theatre street scenario performance
rendering

breaking the line

Passing through the street as well as taking the route around the block offers various moments of connection. Workshop windows between shop fronts along the edge of the block expose the carpenter's bench, the painting booths and the set pieces in progress. The processes normally hidden in the back of house become visible to anyone walking by.

The framing works in both directions. For the carpenter looking out, the people passing by enter and leave the window like figures on a stage. The same happens at the large industrial gates along the indoor street: the public, glimpsing inside, becomes the viewed as much as the viewer.

The principle of exposure extends into the building itself. In the performance spaces lighting bridges and grids are left visible and structure is exposed. The technical reality of building and running an 800-seat venue is consciously shown rather than hidden. Theatre is presented as a collective, material practice rather than a seamless product



fig. 24: auditorium
1:100 model

technicalities

In addition to deliberately exposing the theatre's technical systems and structural logic to the audience, the theatre's technical requirements also influenced the design decisions themselves.

On a structural level, this is particularly evident in the two auditoriums specified in the brief. These large volumes require wide horizontal spans and column-free spaces. However, whilst the auditoria also create surfaces exposed to wind loads, they have the advantage of having a small number of openings. That offers the opportunity to use those walls for shearing loads.

Furthermore, a certain mass is required from both an acoustic and a climate perspective. For these reasons, the primary structure of the design consists of reinforced concrete walls and steel trusses, directly linking back to the aesthetic of the raw machinery.

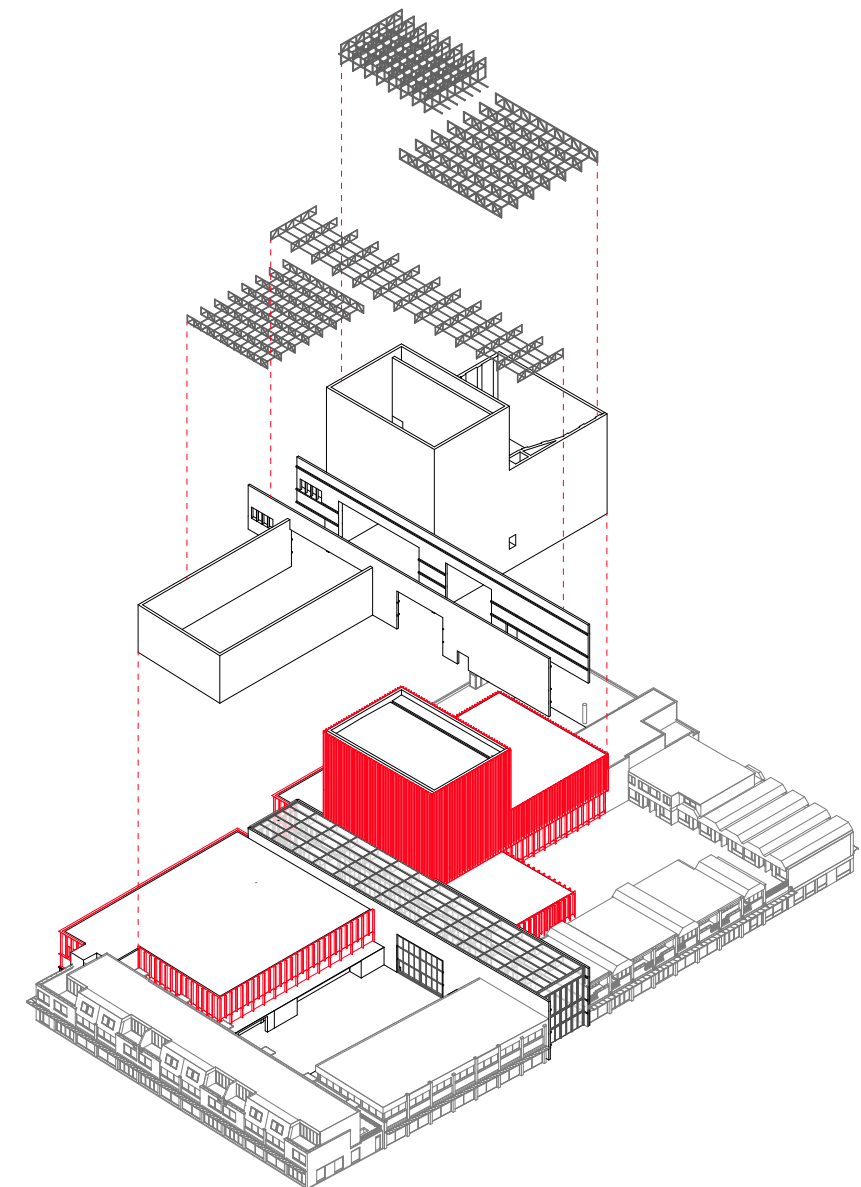


fig. 25: load bearing structure
axonometric view

technicalities

To meet the climate requirements of a theatre, a well-designed climate control system is essential. The design is divided into different climate clusters of individual zones, which distributes the workload across different systems. Each climate zone has an HVAC system that draws in outside air, cleans it, heats or cools it, and then distributes it through a system of ventilation shafts throughout the building parts. In the main auditorium, the dimensions of these shafts are particularly important to move the large air masses as slowly as possible, creating an impression of absolute silence.

Heat is supplied via an Eisspeicher system. The yard not only serves as a workspace but also plays a role in this system, as the Eisspeicher tank is installed beneath it. Clusters of individual climate zones operate using heat pumps that extract heat from the tank. As the system operates, the tank gradually freezes, releasing latent energy that the heat pumps use for efficient heating. The solar collectors on the roof of the black box constantly collect ambient heat, which prevents the tank from freezing completely and thus restarts the cycle.

The yard's double function is one of several moments in the building where technical necessity and programmatic use occupy the same space.

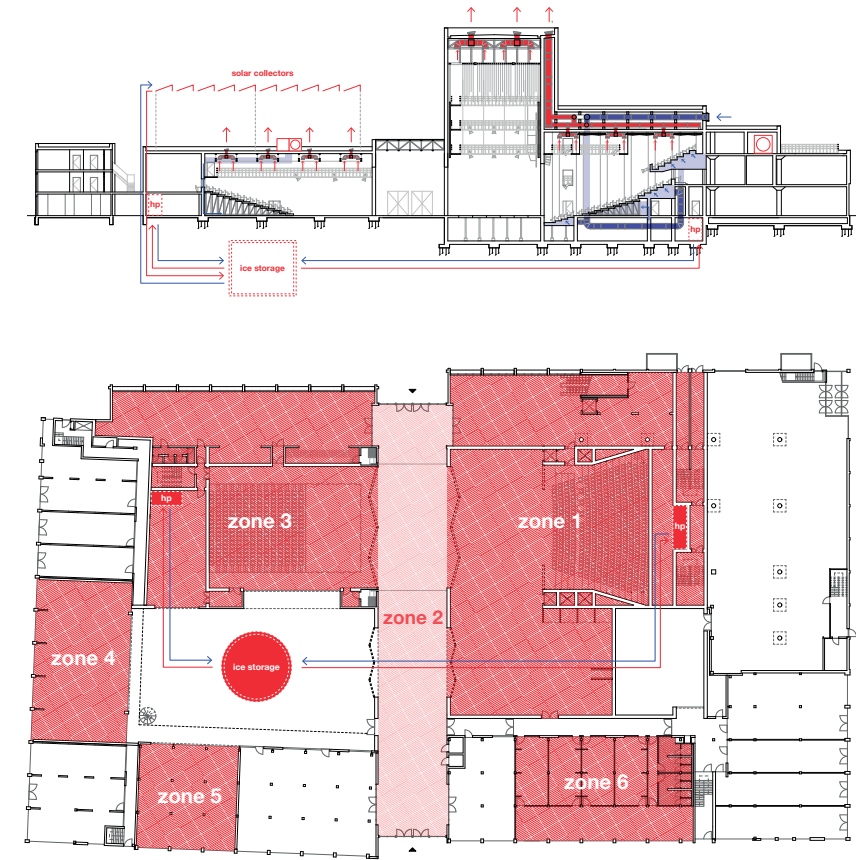


fig. 26: climate diagram
section and floor plan

flexibility

Introducing a large building into a small city like Delft requires it to do more than one thing. The project offers different theatre set ups, which attracts more groups and therefore a wider audience. But it also addresses the lack of big event spaces in Delft.

The two halls can function individually, but also together. Through opening the back walls of the two venues the stages at ground level become one with the street and create a thrust stage for experimental performances. Both halls have (partially) retractable seating and/or a flexible orchestra pit, which can create a long flat floor for exhibitions, balls or banquets.

The various set ups allow to facilitate performances such as dance and music, festive events like exhibitions, balls and ceremonies, but also events for cultural and technological exchange such as congresses, trade fairs and expos in a student driven city. These setups can extend into more parts of the building. The street itself can also be transformed into a theatre using the rigging system that its part of its roof structure. The work yard can serve as an event space itself, or connect to the black box and the street.

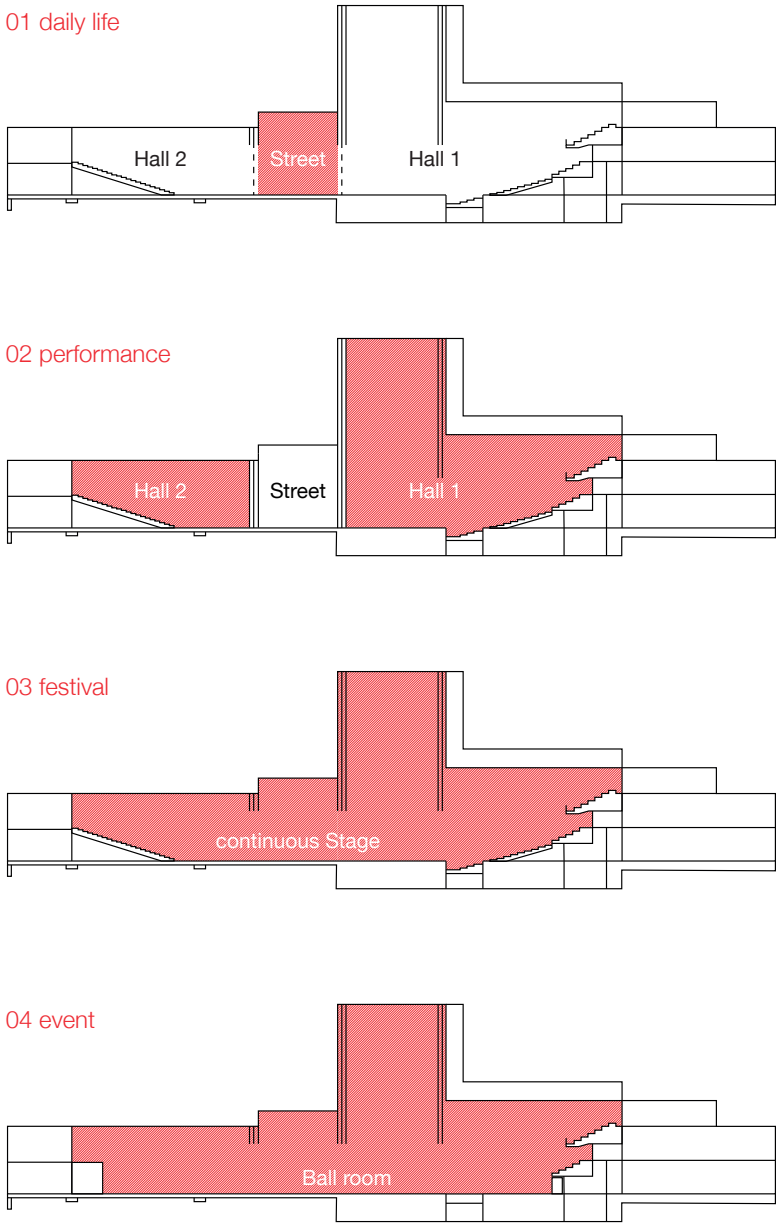


fig. 27: scenarios in section
subtitle

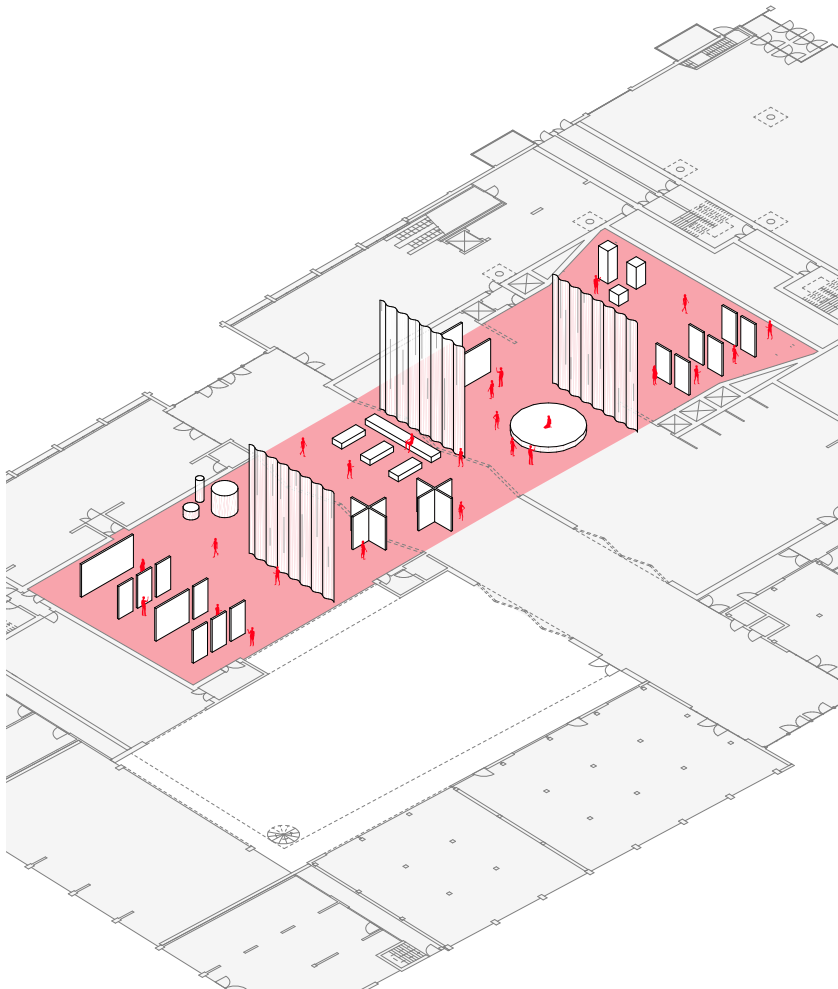


fig. 28: scenario exhibition
axonometric diagram

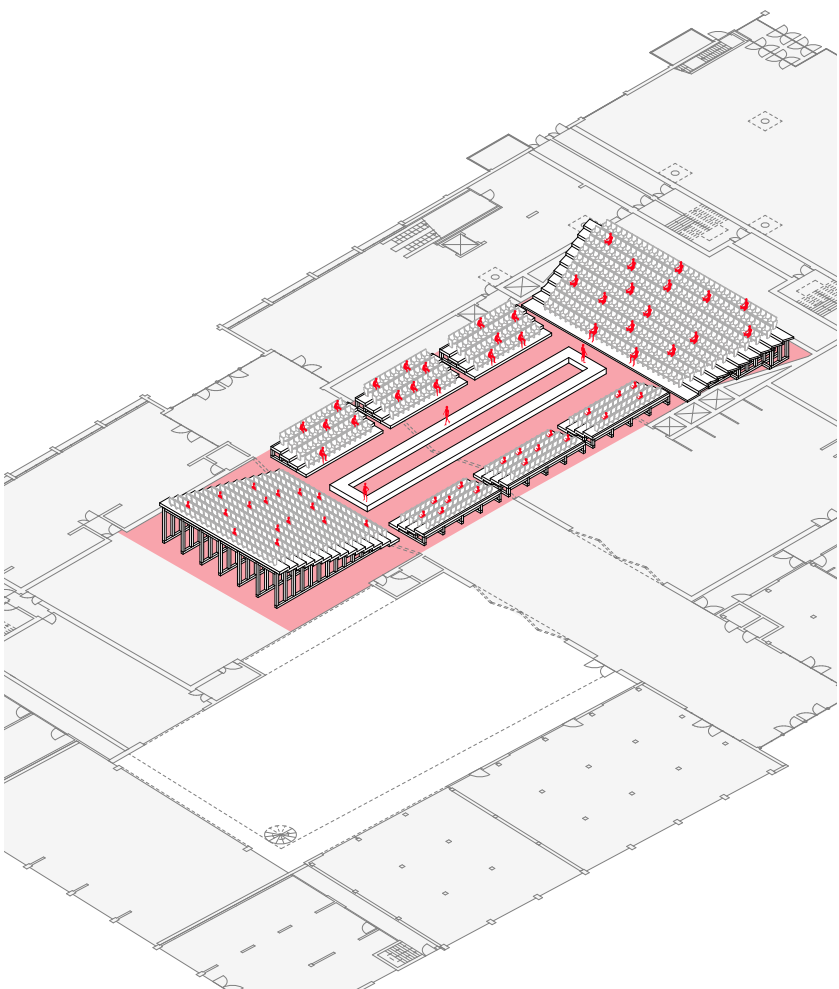


fig. 29: scenario walkway show
axonometric diagram

flexibility

In theatres, spaces are transformed with light structures, like curtains or panels hanging from rigs. Therefore, the street and the two halls all have these systems. To be able to close the glazed roof of the street, a system of sun protectors is implemented into the trusses. But as the theatre mainly has to function with two separate walls, large industrial doors with internal insulation separate the stages from the theatre street.

This flexibility across different scales of the project is not just a practical consideration. It follows from the same logic as the rest of the project: the more people can find a reason to be here, the more the boundary between the theatre and the city dissolves.

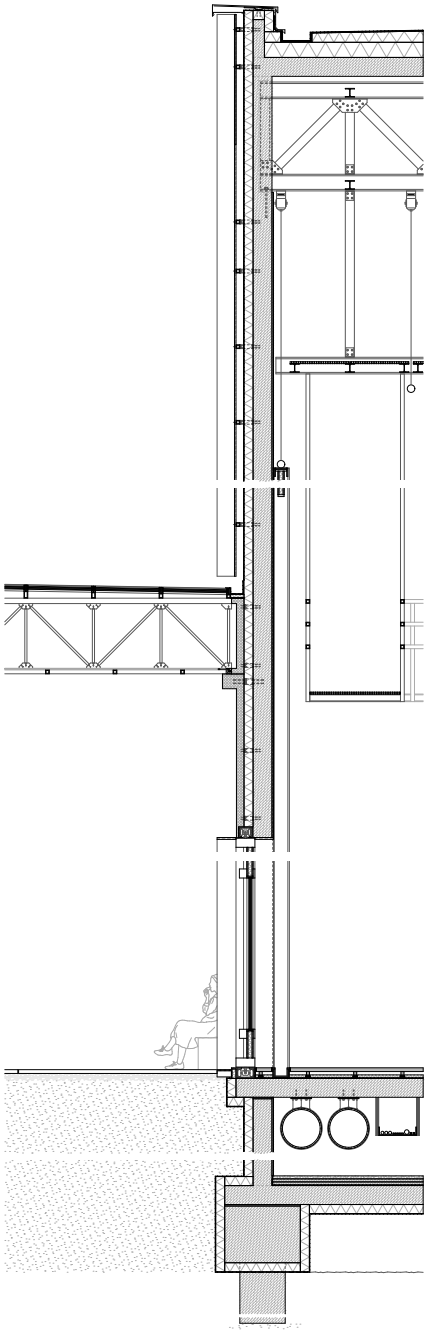


fig. 30: facade section
detail 1:20 (scaled 20%)

Roof window

Triple glazing, aluminum frame, protective translucent acrylic (PMMA, 5 mm), integrated flush as continuous weathering surface, 2% slope towards gutter

Steel connector

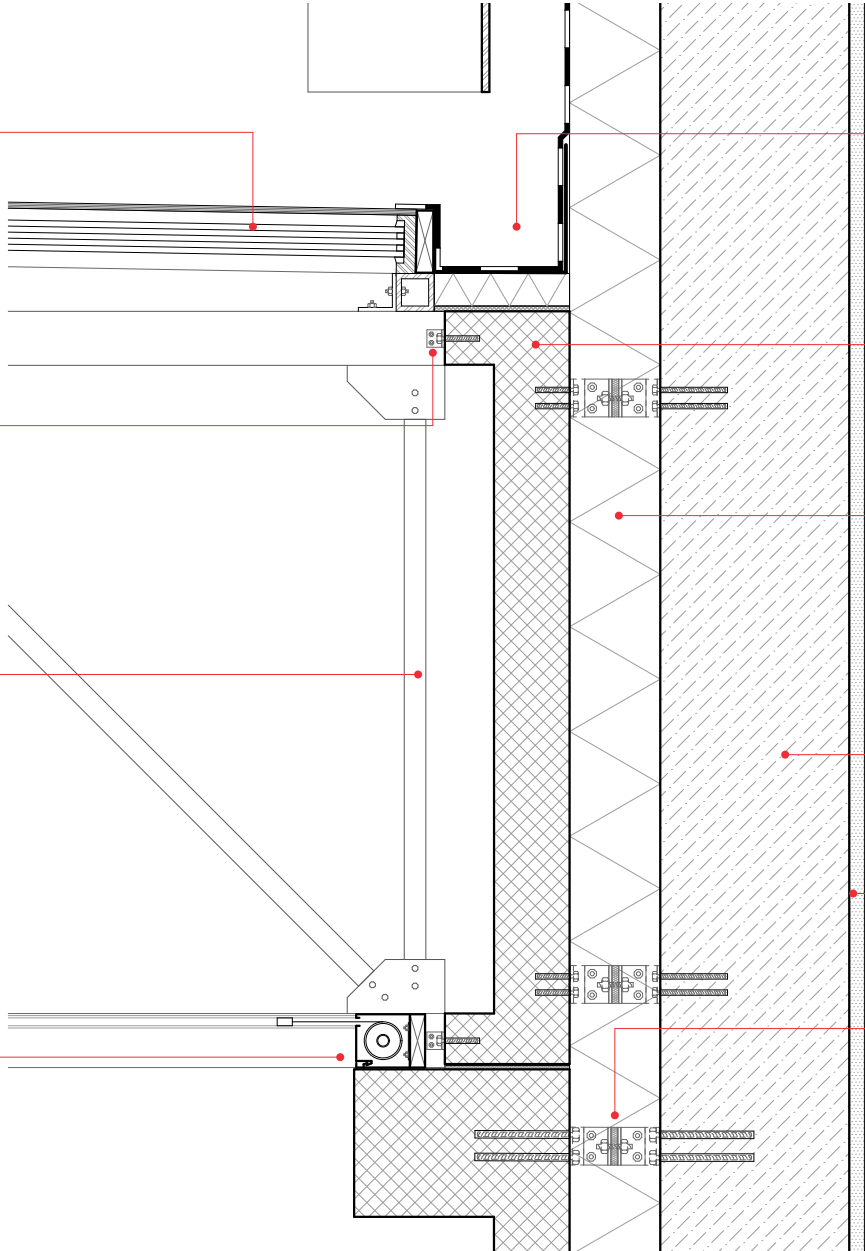
L-shaped steel angle bolted to top chord, connected to pre-cast concrete element with Ø4 mm x 50 mm bolts

Steel truss structure

Top and bottom chords: square hollow section, RHS 75 mm; diagonals and posts: circular steel sections, Ø30 mm; connection nodes: steel plates welded to top and bottom chords and bolted to diagonals and posts

Motorised shading system

with blackout fabric (1 mm), 100% light-blocking, running on rails along the bottom chord to darken the performance area on the theatre street



Gutter

2 mm steel profile lined with waterproof membrane, overlapping

Wall panel

100mm, precast reinforced concrete

Insulation

140mm, system cassette made of sheet steel, folded, corrosion-protected, with hemp insulation in between

Reinforced concrete wall

260 mm, load-bearing

Base and finish plaster

5 mm, black

Facade anchor

two-part injection anchor, L-shaped profiles screwed together, with sound-insulating rubber for sound decoupling, secured with Ø6 mm x 125 mm bolts

fig. 31: theatre street and fly tower wall
detail 1:5 (scaled 50%)

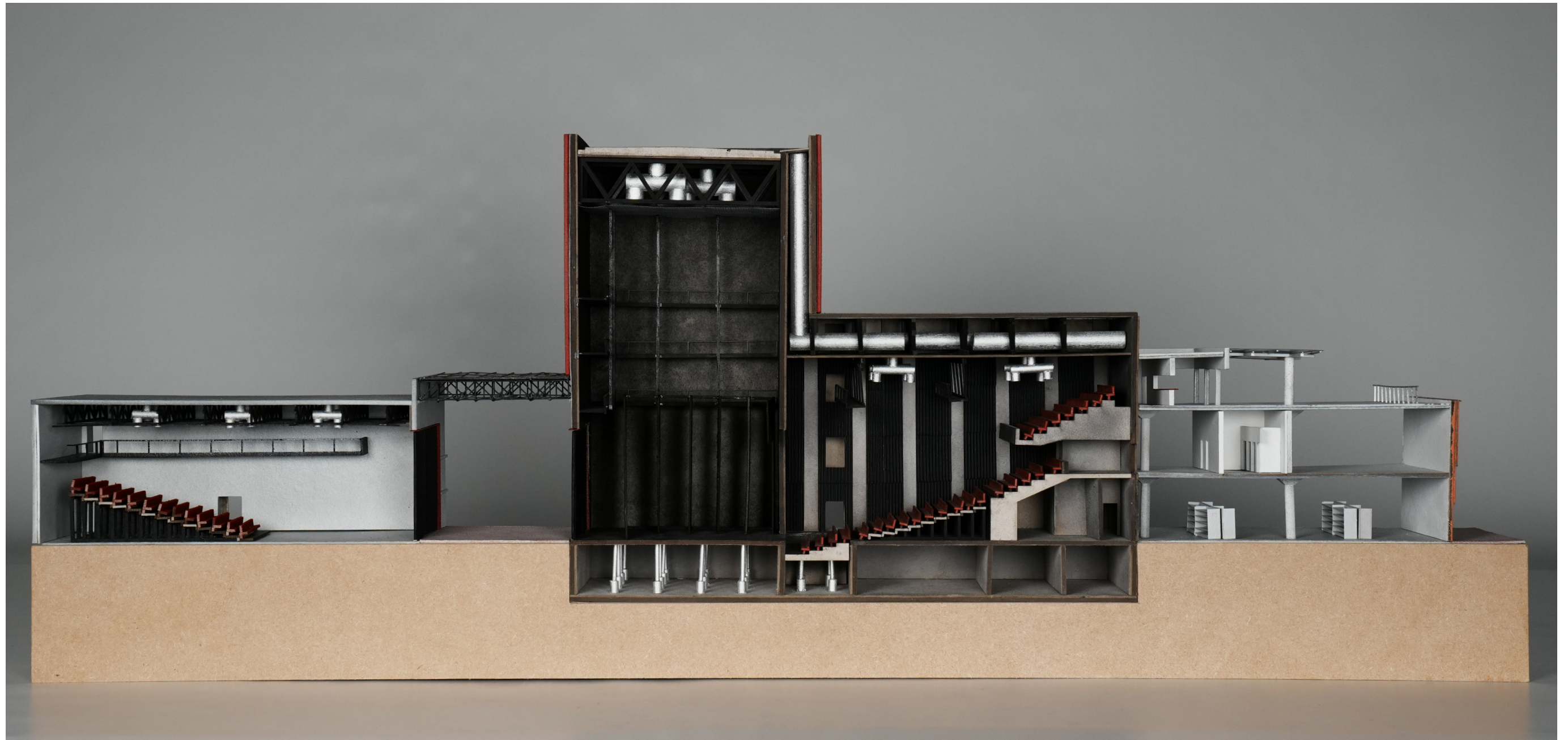


fig. 32: theatre set up
1:100 section model

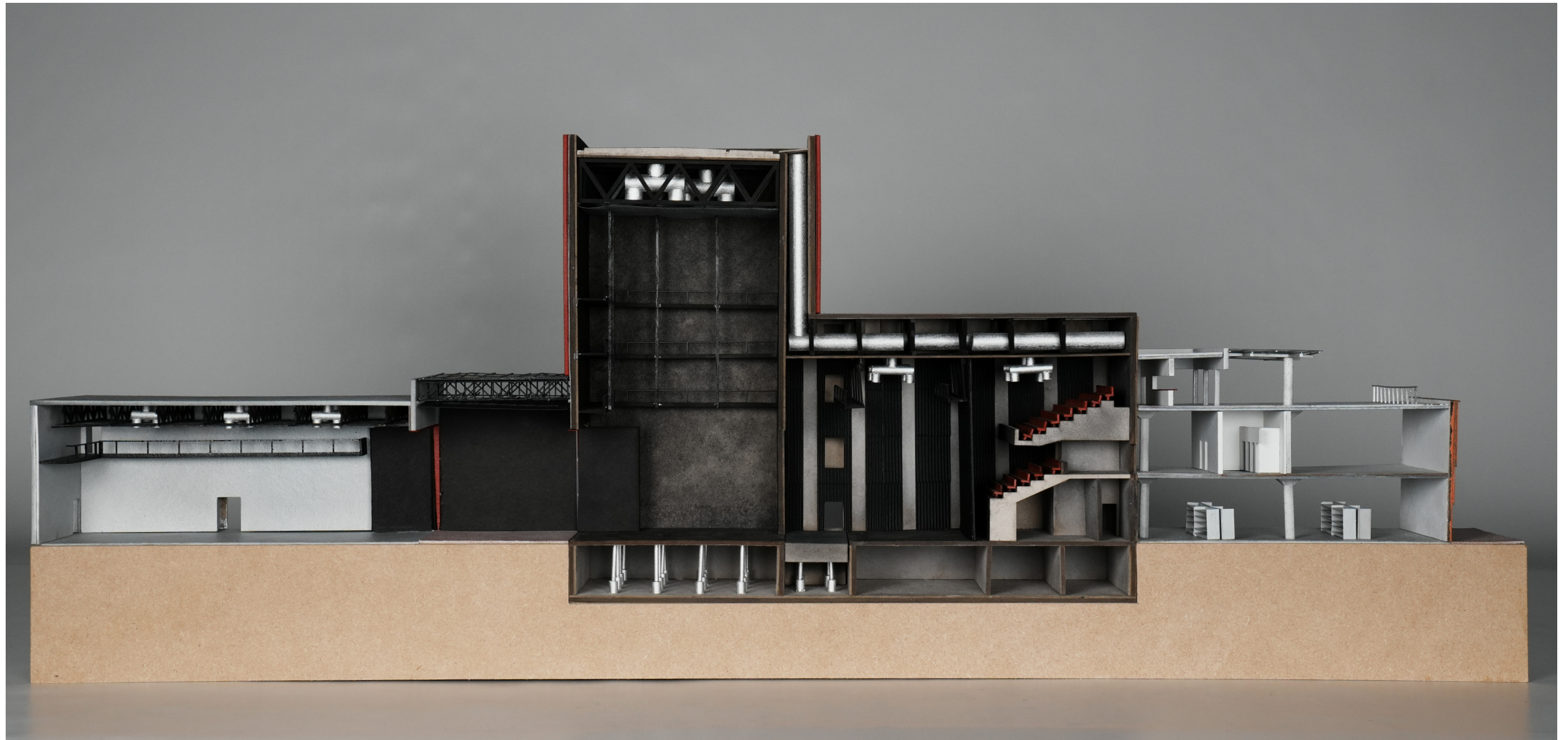


fig. 33: flat floor set up
1:100 section model

PART 04. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

conclusion

The theatre is brought closer to the city not through a single gesture but through a series of overlapping decisions: a location that is already part of daily routes, a street that blurs the line between what is city and what is theatre while taking the public behind the scenes, and a building that shows rather than hides what it takes to make theatre.

The three design questions that guided the project were addressed at different scales but follow the same logic. The integration into the existing urban block was achieved by working within the found conditions. The theatre grows into the existing ensemble of shopfronts, continuing the rhythm and scale of its surroundings. The existing passage through the block becomes the theatre street, extending a movement that was already there.

The border between city and stage was addressed both programmatically and architecturally. Introducing a producing theatre on the site means that the making of theatre becomes part of what the city sees every day.

The logic of exposure, running from the workshop windows on the street edge through to the visible structure and technical infrastructure inside the building, makes that argument architectural rather than merely organisational. The threshold between maker and citizen is not dissolved but made mutual: both sides are framed by the other.

Flexibility was developed through the openness of the scheme and the technical and spatial decisions around the main hall, theatre street and black box. The two venues facing each other across the street, with their back walls opening onto it, mean that the street itself can become a stage. The various configurations, from conventional performance to exhibition, congress or banquet, follow from the same spatial logic rather than being added on top of it.

One tension that remained throughout the project was between the ambition to work with the existing and the pragmatic necessity of partially removing buildings on site and transforming the HEMA building. Cutting the retail footprint in half to accommodate the main auditorium was a considered decision, but it sits in some friction with the stated aim of respecting the latent qualities of what was found. This is addressed further in the reflection below.

implications

The questions this project concerns itself with are not only specific to Delft or to this brief. The relationship between a large publicly funded building and the city around it is a question that applies to theatres, concert halls, museums and civic institutions more broadly.

In the Netherlands, where cultural buildings are largely funded through public taxation, there is an argument that those buildings owe their citizens more than an evening programme. Making the processes visible to show where the money goes and what it produces, could foster a sense of ownership and identification that purely destination-based institutions rarely achieve. Sparking interest through daily exposure and making theatre part of ordinary routes rather than special occasions, is one way of addressing that.

These remain explorations rather than fully resolved answers. The project stakes out a direction and develops it architecturally, but it does not claim to have solved the relationship between theatre and city. It offers one way of thinking about it.

reflection

Designing a theatre in Delft was process as demanding as it was rewarding. Introducing a building of this scale into a small city came with complications at every level: understanding how theatre works technically, finding a red thread that tied the concept to the programme and the detail, and navigating the reality of an existing site with its own constraints and stakeholders.

One of the most important things the process taught me was the value of diving deep into a specific programme. Theatre touches on an unusually wide range of disciplines, such as theatre technicians, acoustic engineers, climate and structural designers and urban historians. Getting in touch with all of that in a relatively short time was only possible through collective effort. Working within a studio where that knowledge was compiled and shared made it possible to get to the level of resolution the projects required. That collective dimension was a very significant part of the graduation.

The design process itself was iterative in a way that I had not fully anticipated. Reiterating the plans, the concept, the facade and the detail again and again was at times frustrating, but it was also where the most important decisions were made and refined.

The precedent studies and the design exercise were important drivers. Looking at where theatre comes from historically, and how contemporary and alternative projects shift its conventions, gave the project a grounding. The space exercise in particular laid a quiet foundation that resurfaced during the design phase.

That move from conceptual exploration to real site is something, I would have liked to spend more time on. Going deeper into analysing the existing structures and evaluating more carefully what to keep and what to transform, is something I would do differently in retrospect. In particular, I still believe there was potential in keeping the HEMA building more intact and working with its qualities more fully, rather than cutting it in half to insert the main auditorium. The decision was justified, as it kept the fly tower as far as possible from the housing on site and made the flexibility concept possible, but it sits in some tension with my own ambition to work with what is at hand. Given more time, I would have pushed that question further.

appendices

PLANS

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Sections p.05
Elevations p.09

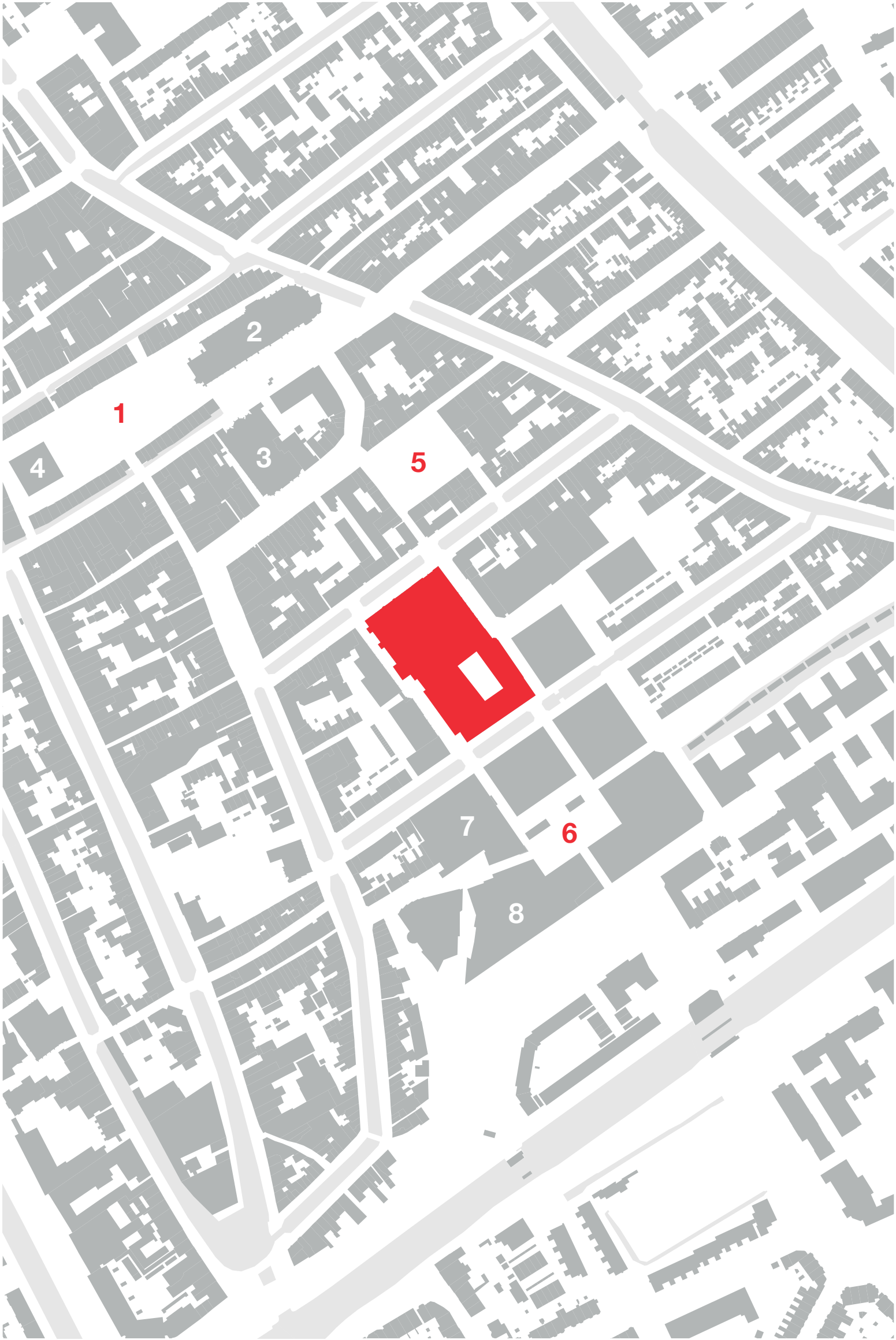
TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

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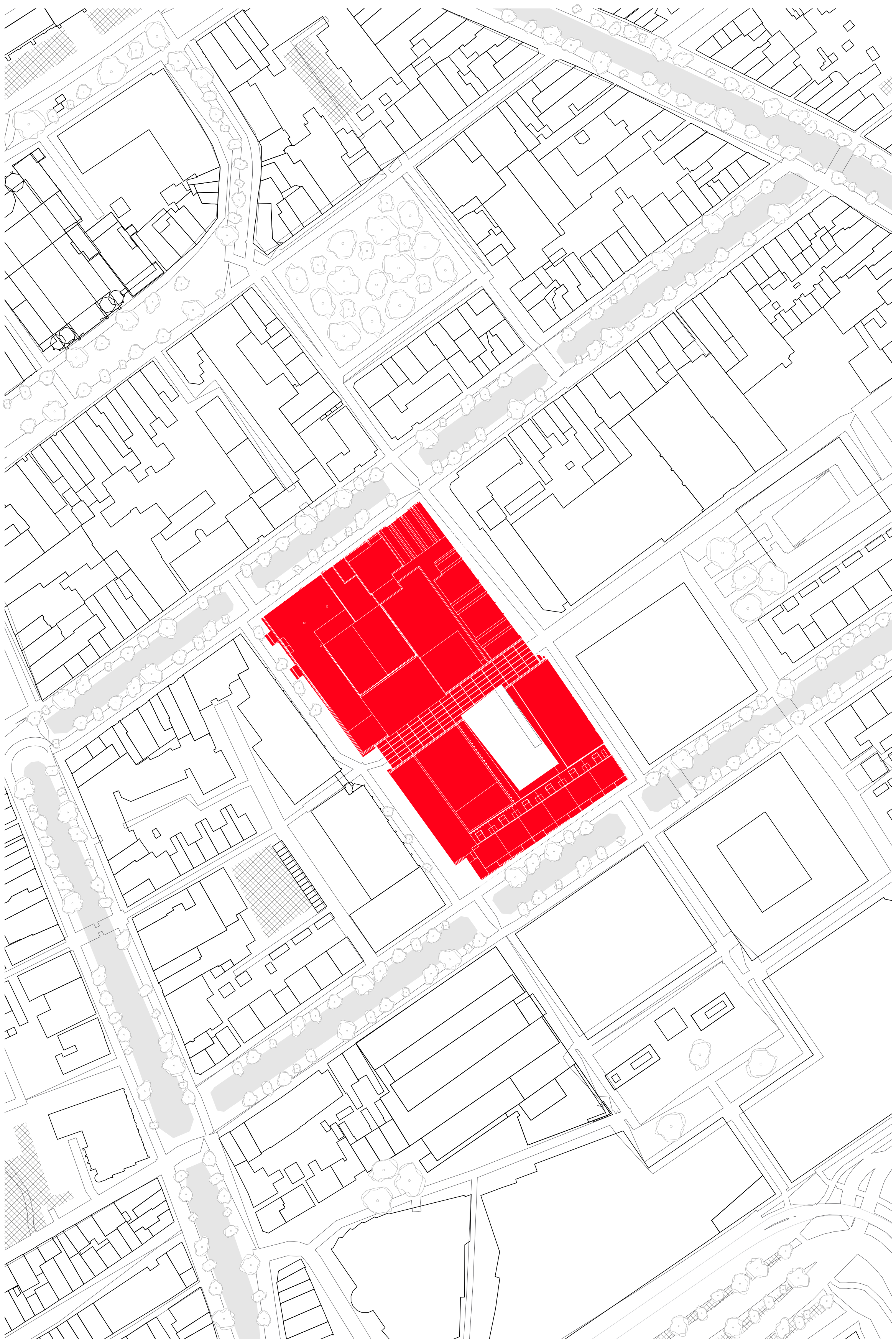
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PLANS



- 1. grote markt
- 2. nieuwe kerk
- 3. maria van jessekerk
- 4. stadthuis
- 5. beestenmarkt
- 6. bastiaansplein
- 7. library
- 8. cinema

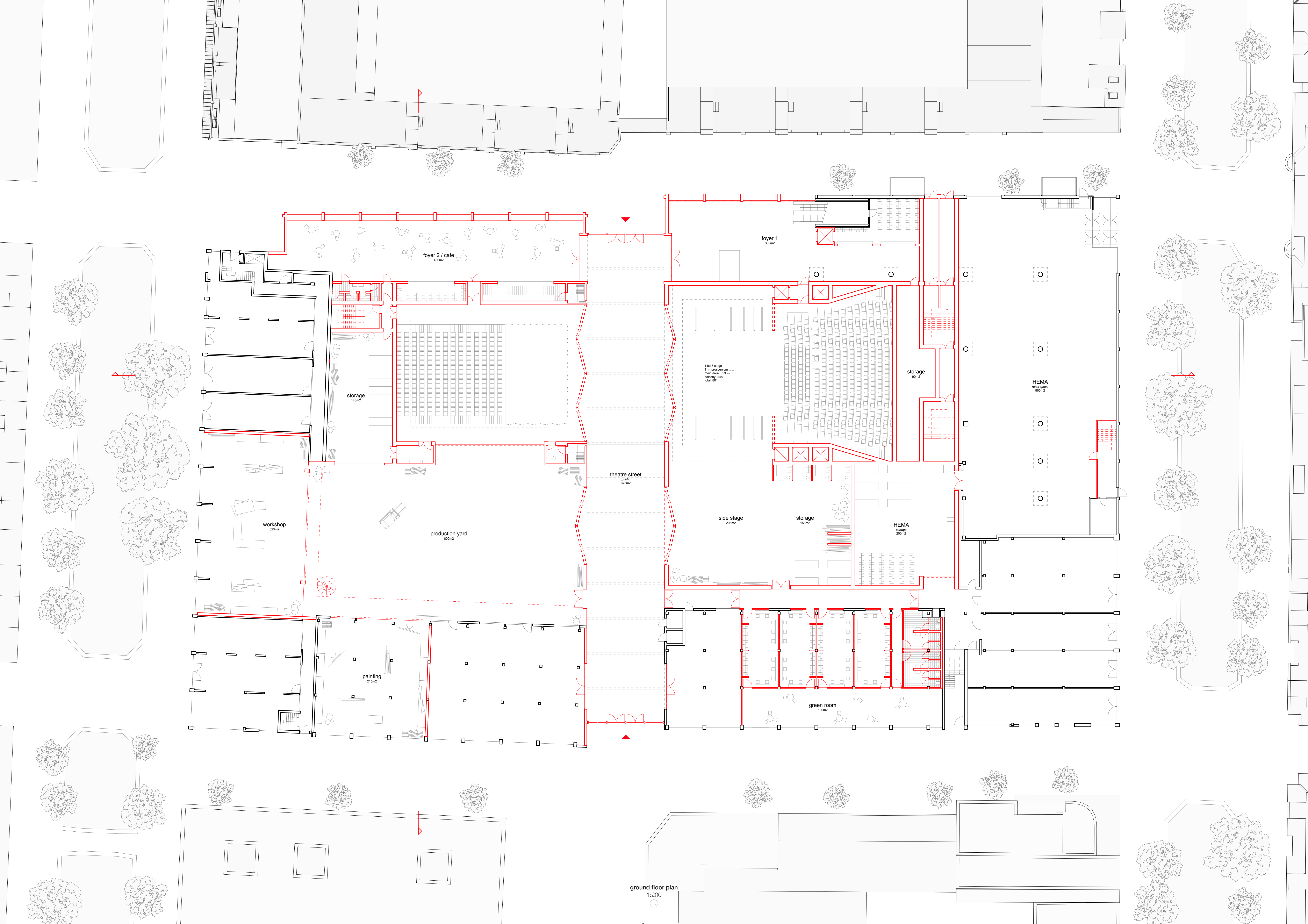
urban embedding
1:5000



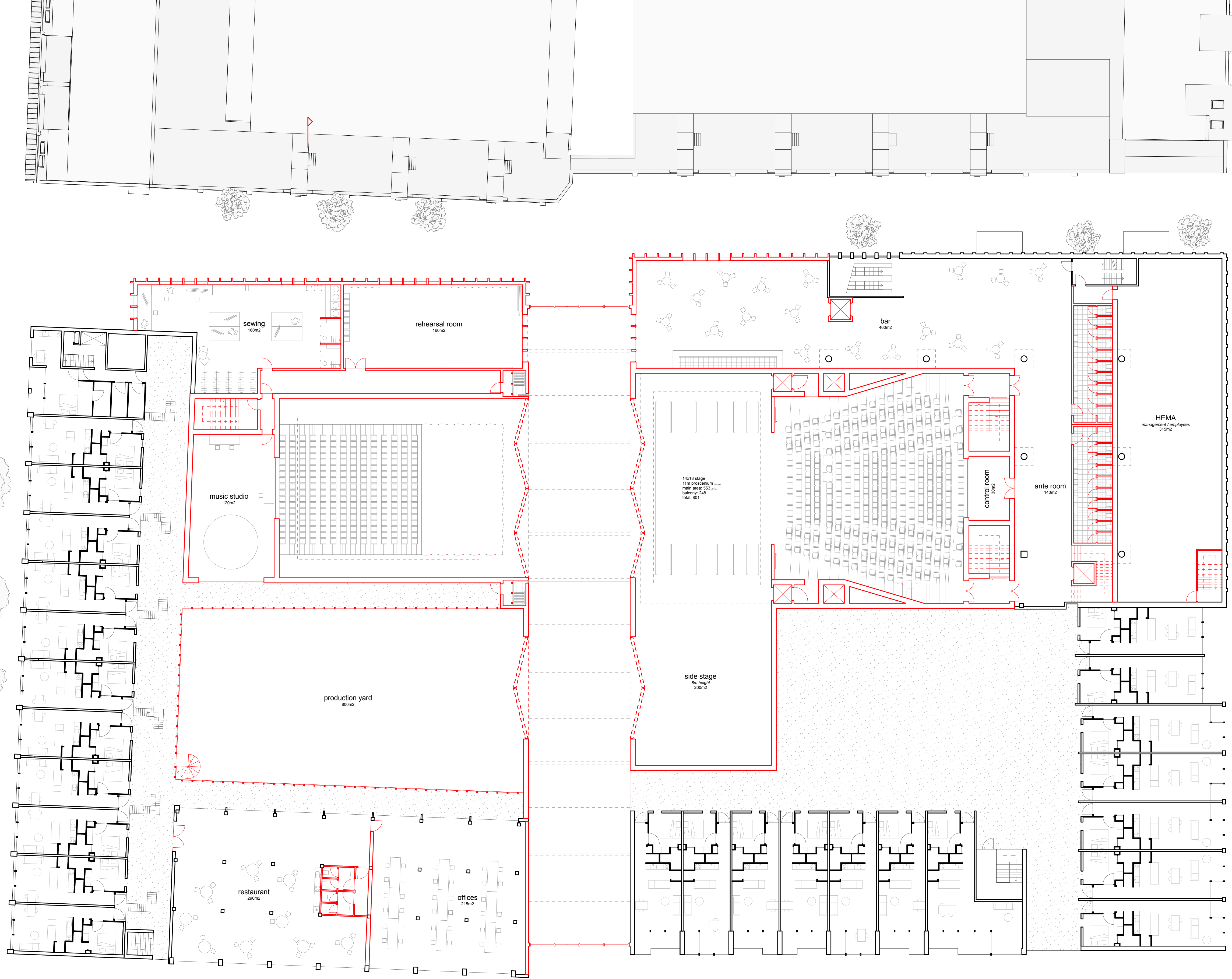
urban embedding

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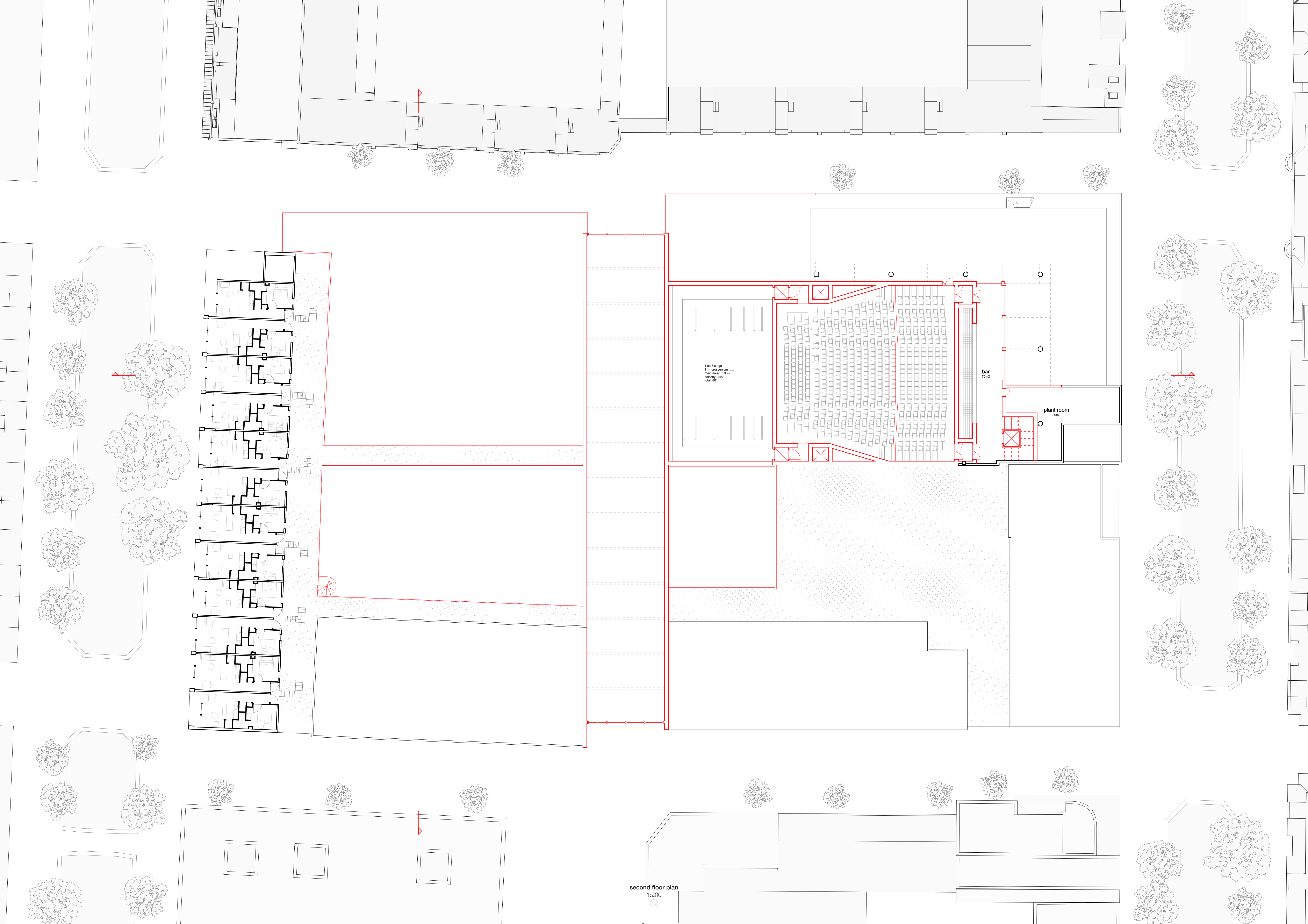




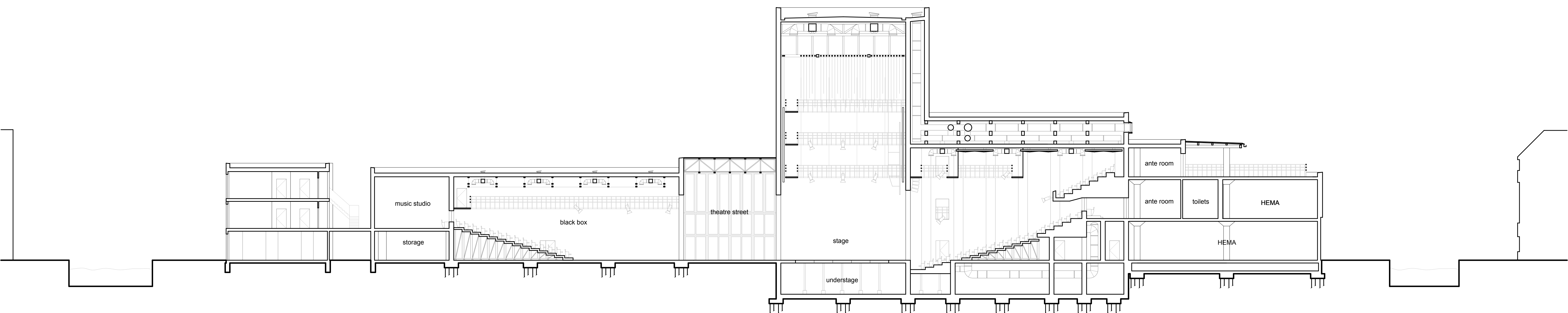
ground floor plan
1:200

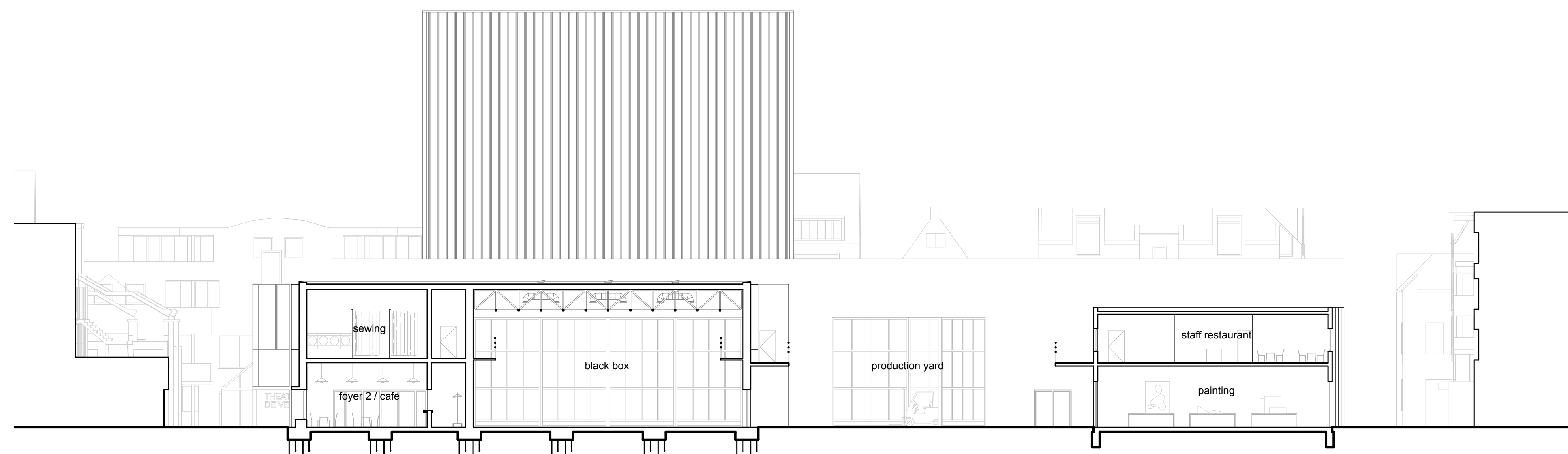


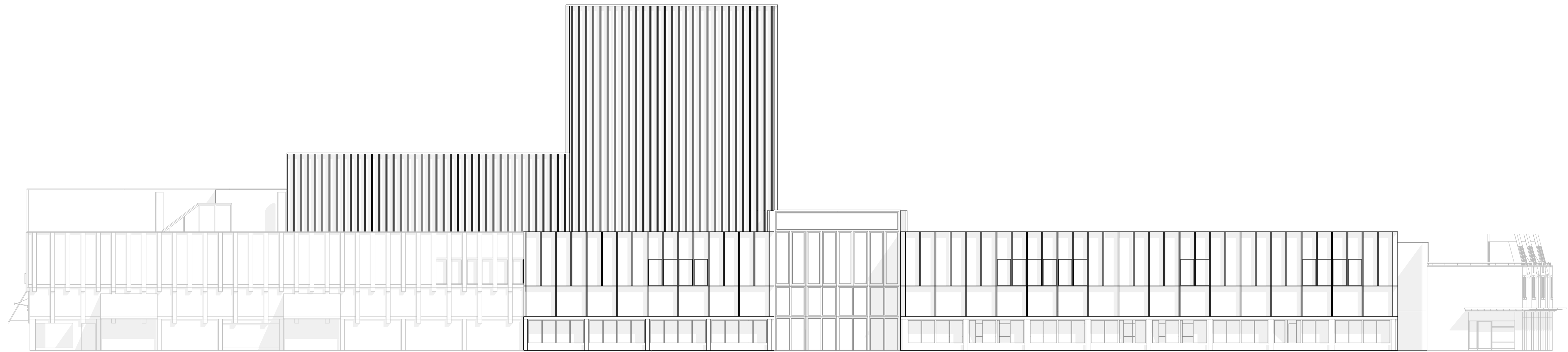
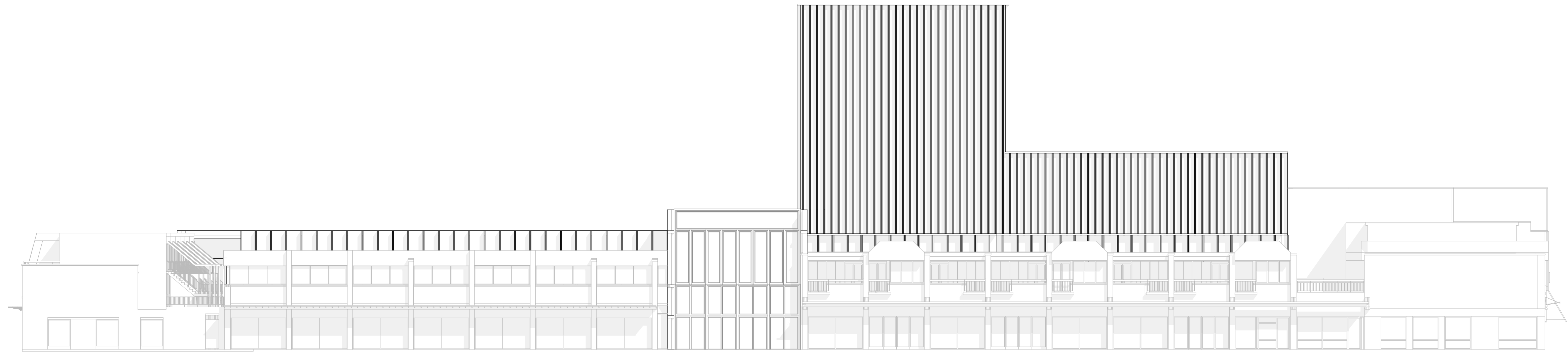
first floor plan
1:200

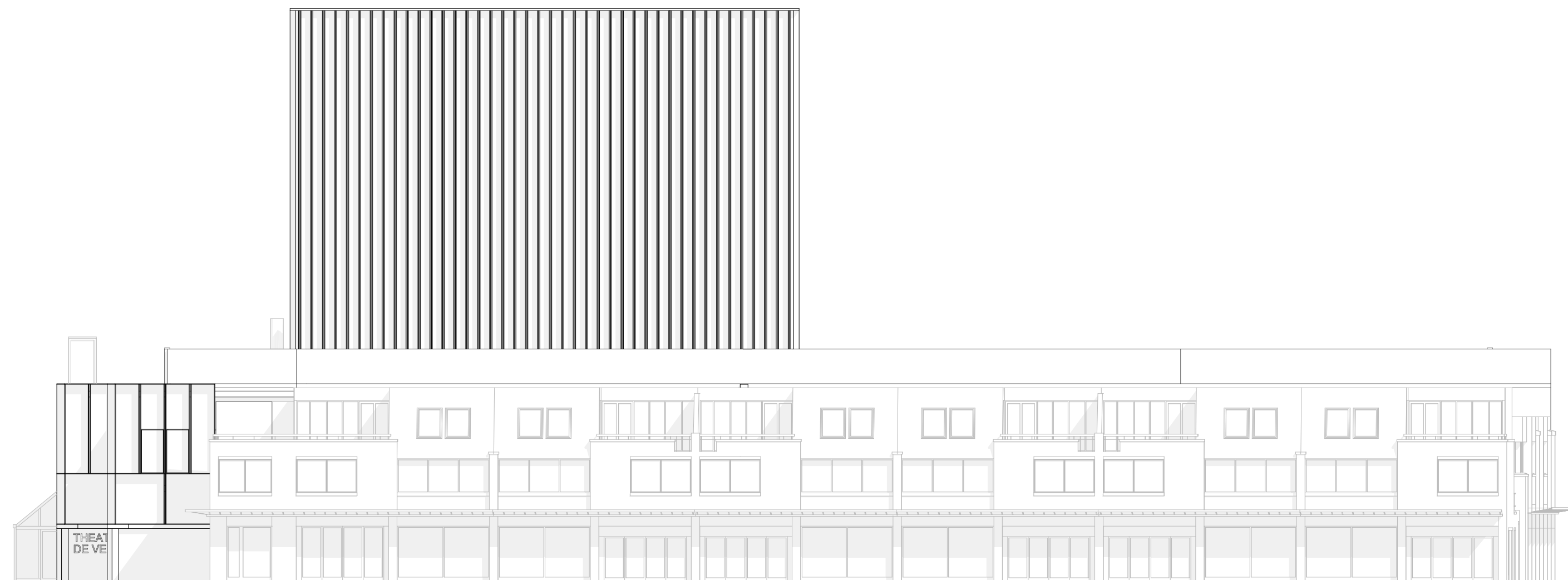
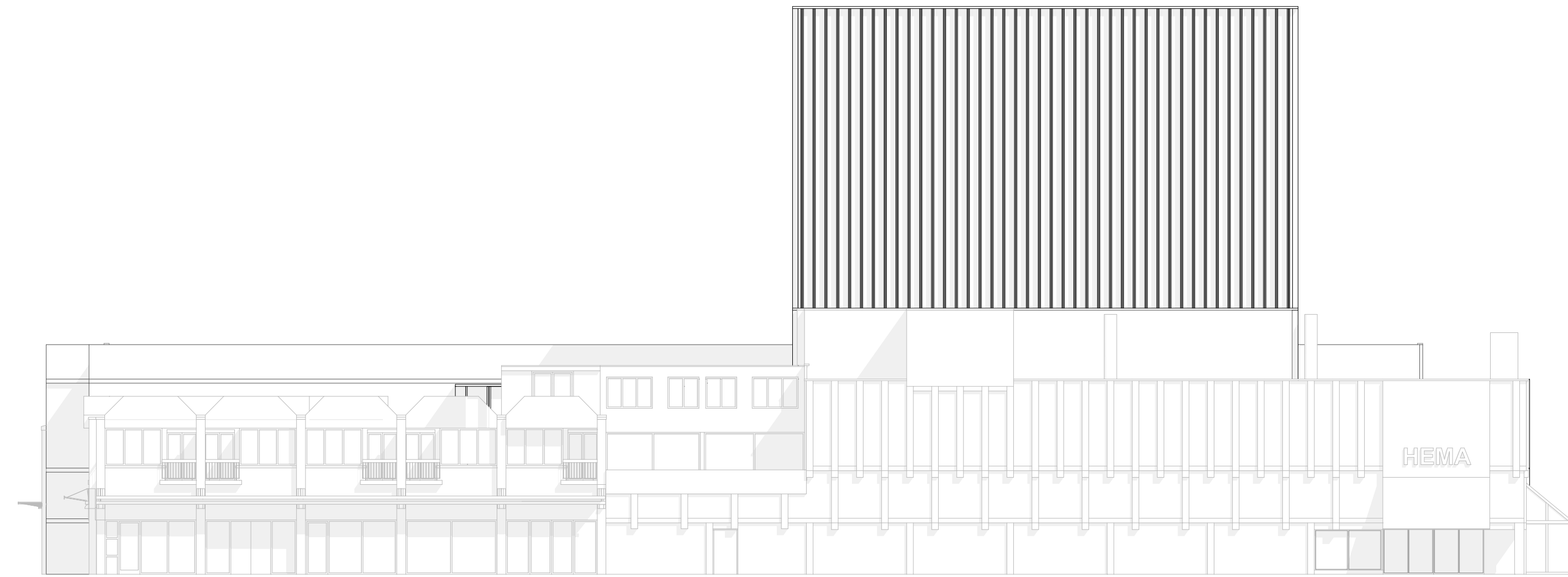


second floor plan
1:200

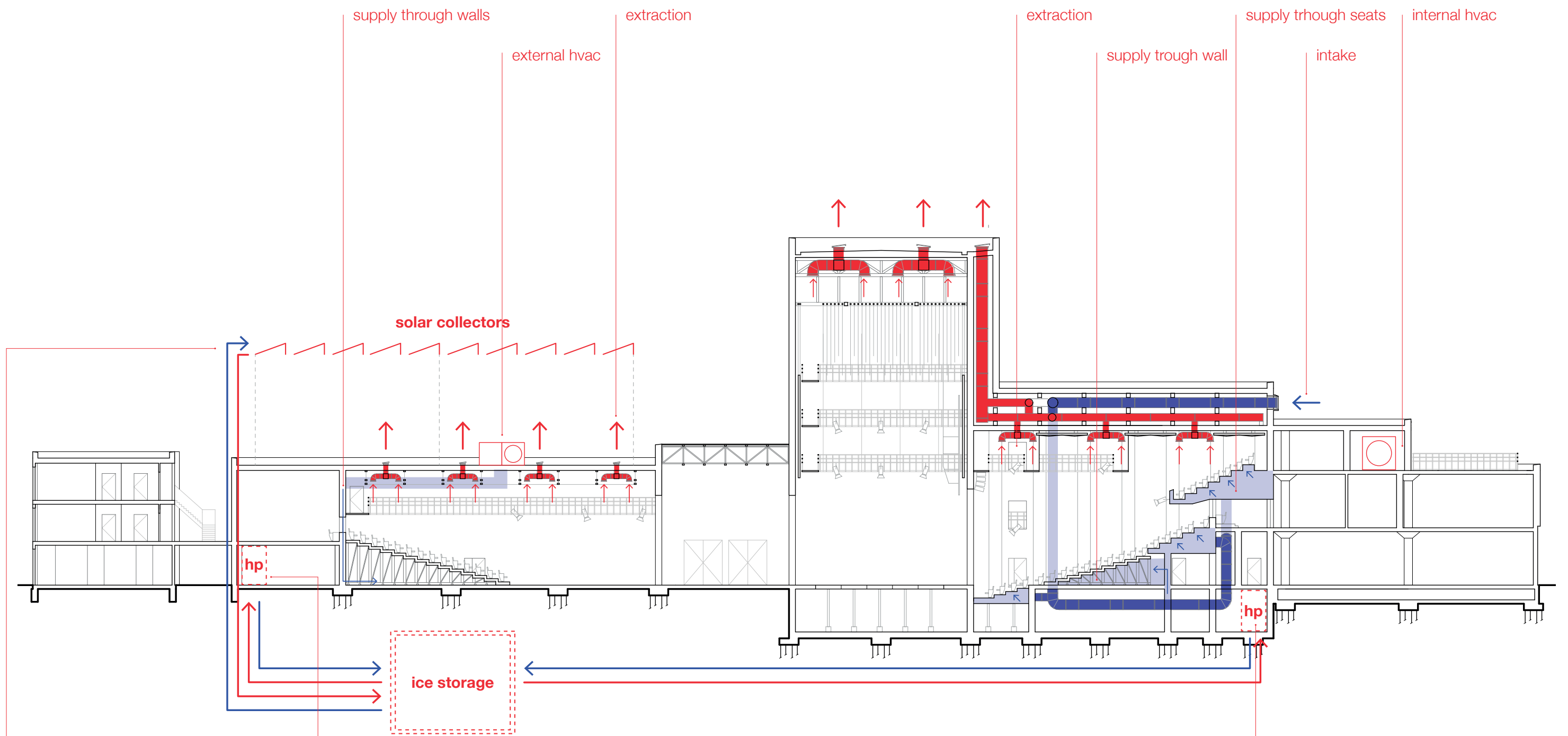








TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

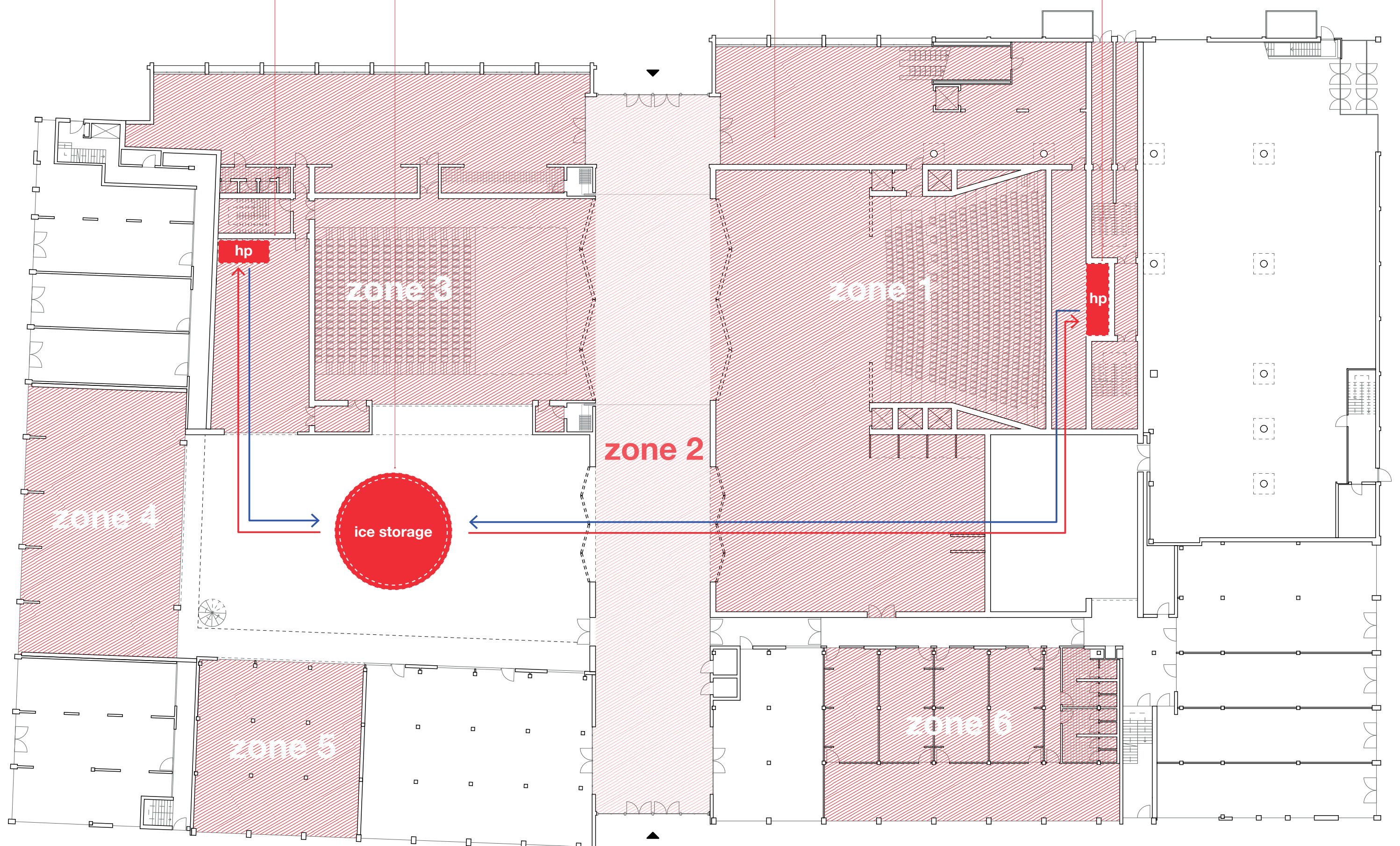


solar collectors link
constantly collect ambient heat, preventing the tank from freezing completely and thus restarts the cycle

ice storage tank
uninsulated, buried tank filled with water, serving as a massive thermal battery, absorbing warmth from the surrounding soil

climate zones and clusters
the project is divided into different climate clusters of individual zones, which distributes the workload across different systems

heat pumps link
extract heat from the tank and raises it to a temperature high enough to heat the space; utilise latent energy from freezing process in the tank for efficient heating



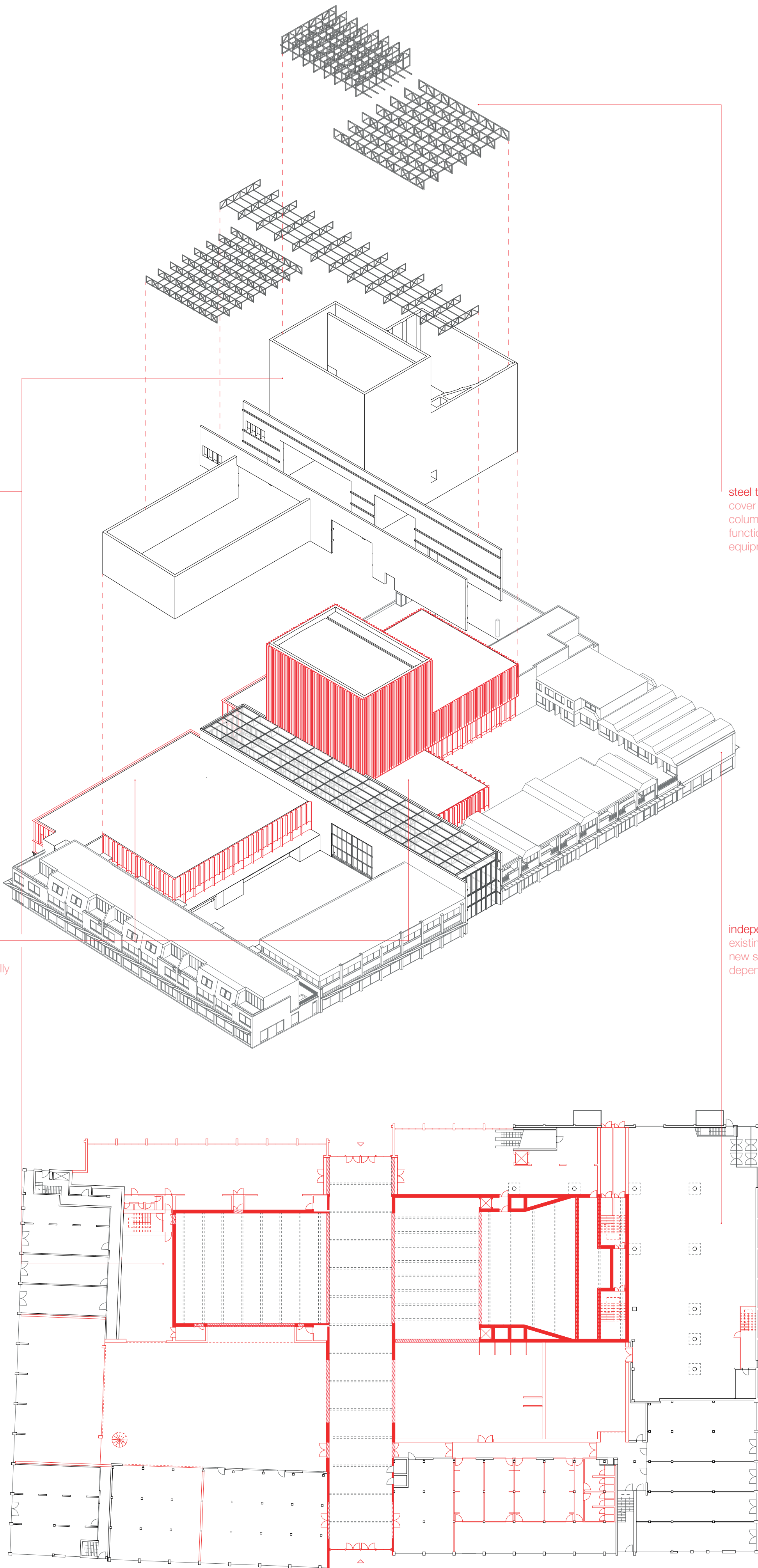
climate diagram
section and floor plan

reinforced concrete walls
the almost unperforated walls of the auditoria act as shear walls to withstand horizontal lateral forces such as strong winds and earthquakes

steel trusses
cover required wide horizontal spans and column-free spaces for the auditoria and function as rigging systems for theatre equipment

secondary structural elements
constructed from reinforced concrete connect to the main volumes, acoustically separated by sound-insulating spacers

independent systems
existing, transformed buildings and the new structures function as separate, independent structural systems



load bearing diagram
axonometric view and floor plan

Attic
folded, clamped to the flashing; flashing sheet bolted to reinforced concrete; extended attic sheet, folded, leading to gutter

Roof fly tower
EPDM roof membrane, two layers, welded homogeneous, extended up the attic under attic sheet
Foam glass panels, 2-layer, laid loosely, 125 mm sloped insulation with a min. gradient of 2%, second layer 200 mm reinforced concrete, 260 mm

Truss
top and bottom chords: HEB 220
diagonals and posts: RHS 120
connection nodes: steel plates welded to top and bottom chords and bolted to diagonals and posts
horizontal connectors: HEB 100

Grid
vertical posts: RHS 120, suspended from the truss via L-profiles bolted to bottom chord
horizontal main beams: HEB 220
horizontal connectors: HEB 100
walking surface: 25 mm grating

Facade fly tower
metal facade: 2 mm thick U-profiles, powder-coated in red, hung on facade anchors via an horizontal flat lock seam
facade anchors: two-part injection anchor, L-shaped profiles screwed together, with sound-insulating rubber for sound decoupling, secured with Ø6 mm x 125 mm bolts
rear ventilation: 100mm cavity
water-bearing layer: 2 mm membrane
insulation: 140mm, system cassette made of sheet steel, folded, corrosion-protected, with hemp insulation in between
structural element: reinforced concrete wall, 260mm

Guillotine door
construction: 2 layers of 2 mm thick steel panels with 50 mm of sound insulation in between
suspended using a fly bar system; head section fitted with sound-insulating rubber on all sides
running on both sides along vertical HEB 220 rails
floor rail flush with the floor, fitted with sound-insulating rubber on all sides

Roof theatre street
glazed roof: triple glazing, aluminum frame, protective translucent acrylic (PMMA, 5 mm), integrated flush as continuous weathering surface, 2% slope towards gutter
gutter: 2mm steel profile on both sides, lined with water-proof membrane, overlapping
substructure: from RHS sections, widening towards the centre to create a 2% gradient
steel truss: top and bottom chords from square hollow section, RHS 75 mm; diagonals and posts from circular steel sections, Ø30 mm; connection nodes from steel plates welded to top and bottom chords and bolted to diagonals and posts
horizontal connectors: RHS 50, dual function as a theatre grid for hanging various objects in the street
motorized shading system: with blackout fabric (1 mm), 100% light-blocking, running on rails along the bottom chord to darken the performance area on the theatre street

Wall theatre street
wall panel: 100mm, precast reinforced concrete
insulation: 140mm, system cassette made of sheet steel, folded, corrosion-protected, with hemp insulation in between
structural element: reinforced concrete wall, 260 mm
base and finish plaster: 5mm, black

Galleries fly tower
construction of RHS 50 profiles, hung from fly tower truss
walking surface: 25 mm grating

gate theatre street
construction: two layers of 2 mm thick steel panels with 50 mm of sound insulation in between
runs on top and bottom rails, flush with the wall and floor
snap-in sound seal when closed
triple-glazed windows in the lower section

seating element
500 mm x 450 mm precast concrete element, separated from the facade by insulating tape

floor stage
wooden floorboards, 50mm
structural elements from solid timber profiles, 40x60mm; insulation, 40mm; sound-isolating spacers, 20mm; membrane, 2mm
reinforced concrete slab, 250mm

technical installation understage
ventilation ducts and electrical cable trays suspended from the reinforced concrete ceiling, using steel connectors separated from load bearing structure through sound-insulating spacers

foundation
reinforced concrete foundations resting on drilled piles

+ 26,70m

+ 26,35m

+ 25,75m

+ 24,25m

+ 26,70m

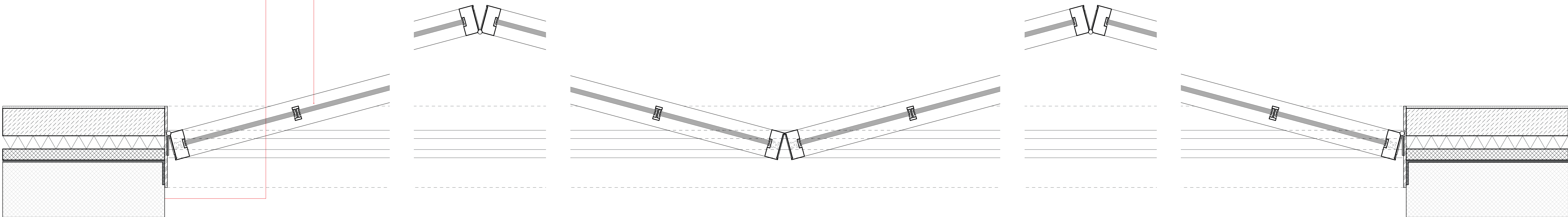
+ 10,50m

+ 09,25m

+ 07,00m

+ 00,00m

- 03,75m



Roof window
Triple glazing, aluminum frame, protective translucent acrylic (PMMA, 5 mm), integrated flush as continuous weathering surface, 2% slope towards gutter

Steel connector
L-shaped steel angle bolted to top chord, connected to pre-cast concrete element with Ø4 mm × 50 mm bolts

Steel truss structure
Top and bottom chords: square hollow section, RHS 75 mm; diagonals and posts: circular steel sections, Ø30 mm; connection nodes: steel plates welded to top and bottom chords and bolted to diagonals and posts

Motorised shading system
with blackout fabric (1 mm), 100% light-blocking, running on rails along the bottom chord to darken the performance area on the theatre street

Gutter
2 mm steel profile lined with waterproof membrane, overlapping

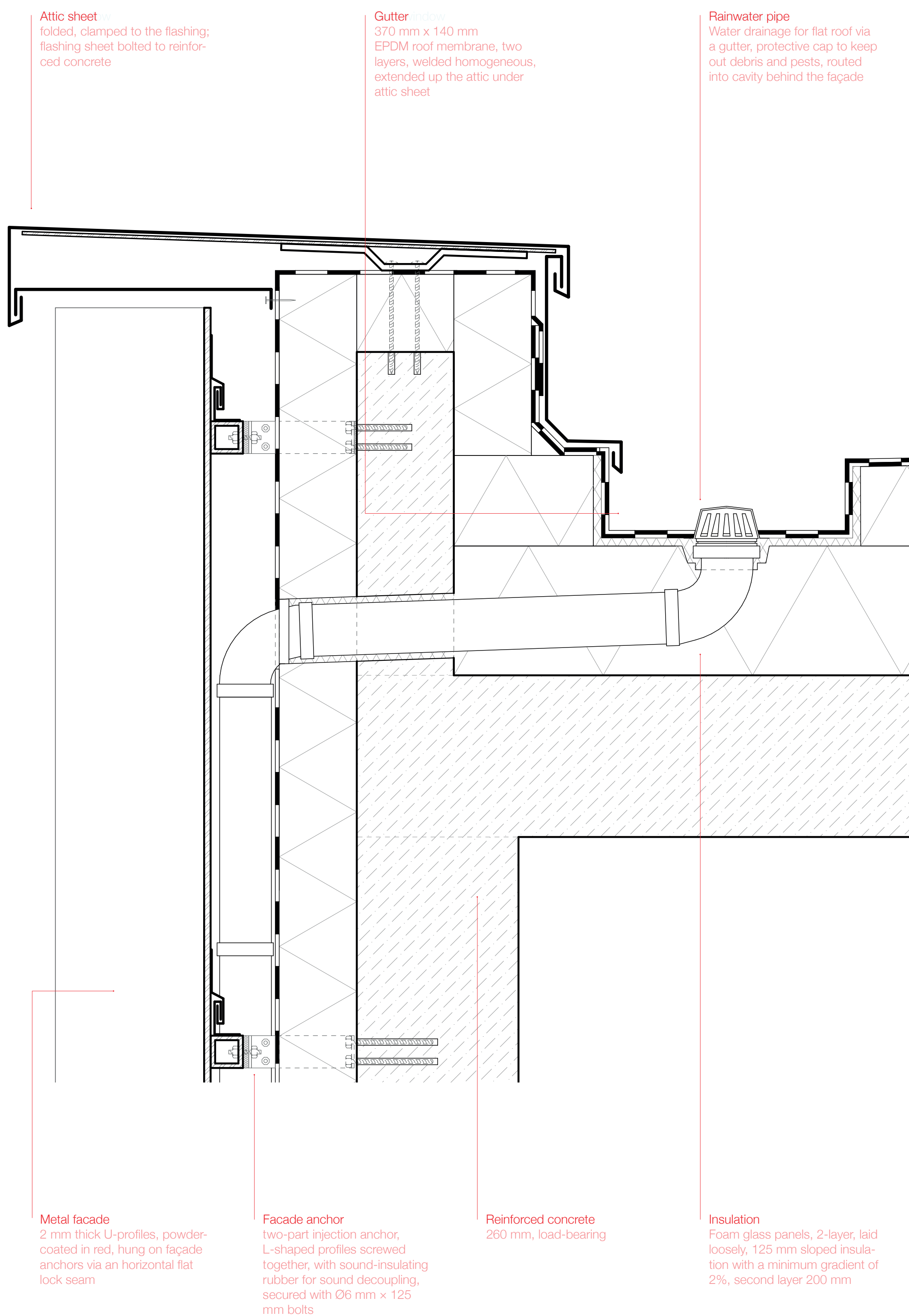
Wall panel
100mm, precast reinforced concrete

Insulation
140mm, system cassette made of sheet steel, folded, corrosion-protected, with hemp insulation in between

Reinforced concrete wall
260 mm, load-bearing

Base and finish plaster
5 mm, black

Facade anchor
two-part injection anchor, L-shaped profiles screwed together, with sound-insulating rubber for sound decoupling, secured with Ø6 mm × 125 mm bolts



attic flytower with water drainage system
detail 1:5

PHOTOGRAPHY



hema site
photography



hema site
photography



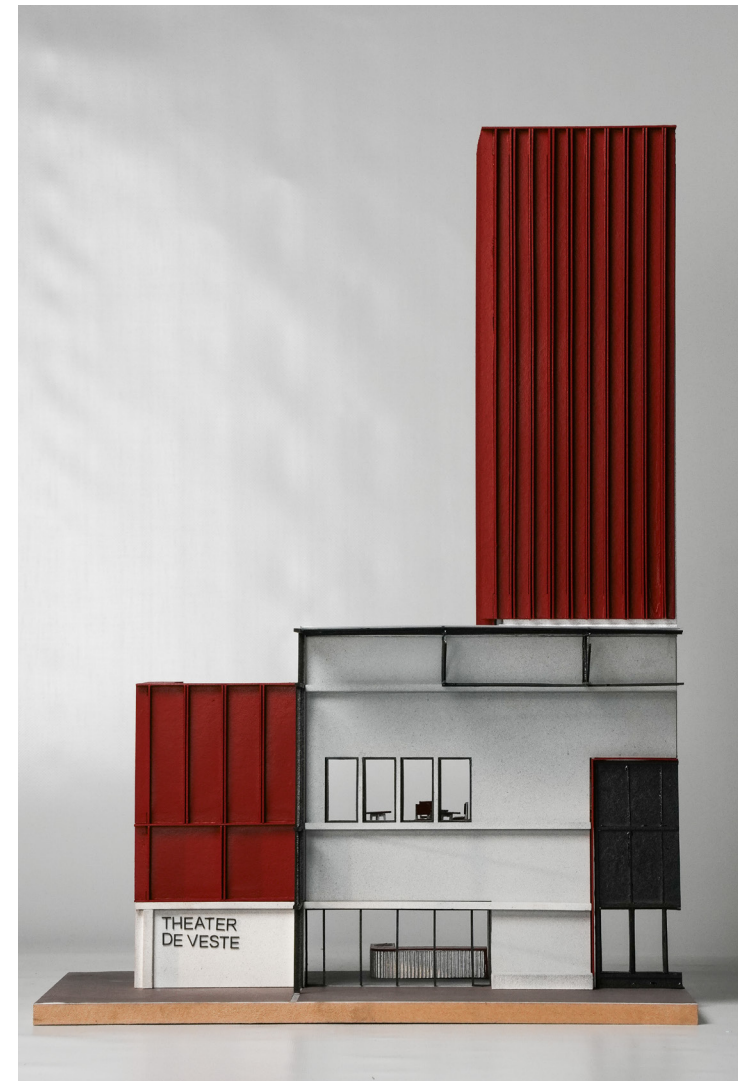
hema site
photography



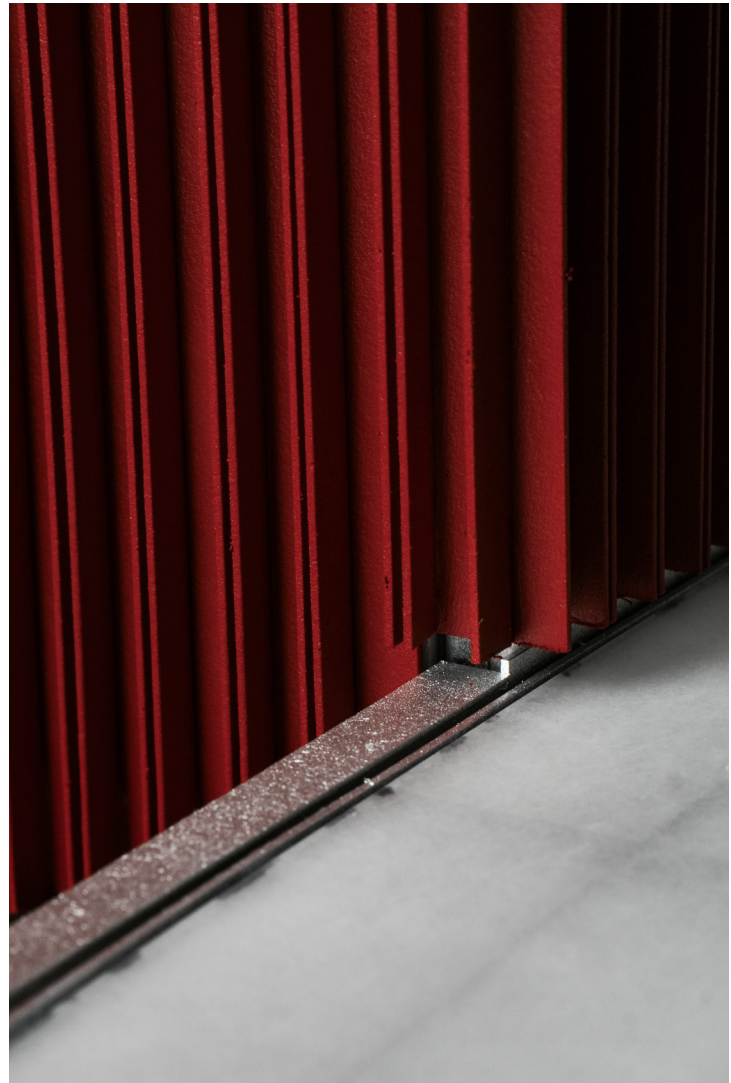
1:100 model
photography



1:100 model
photography



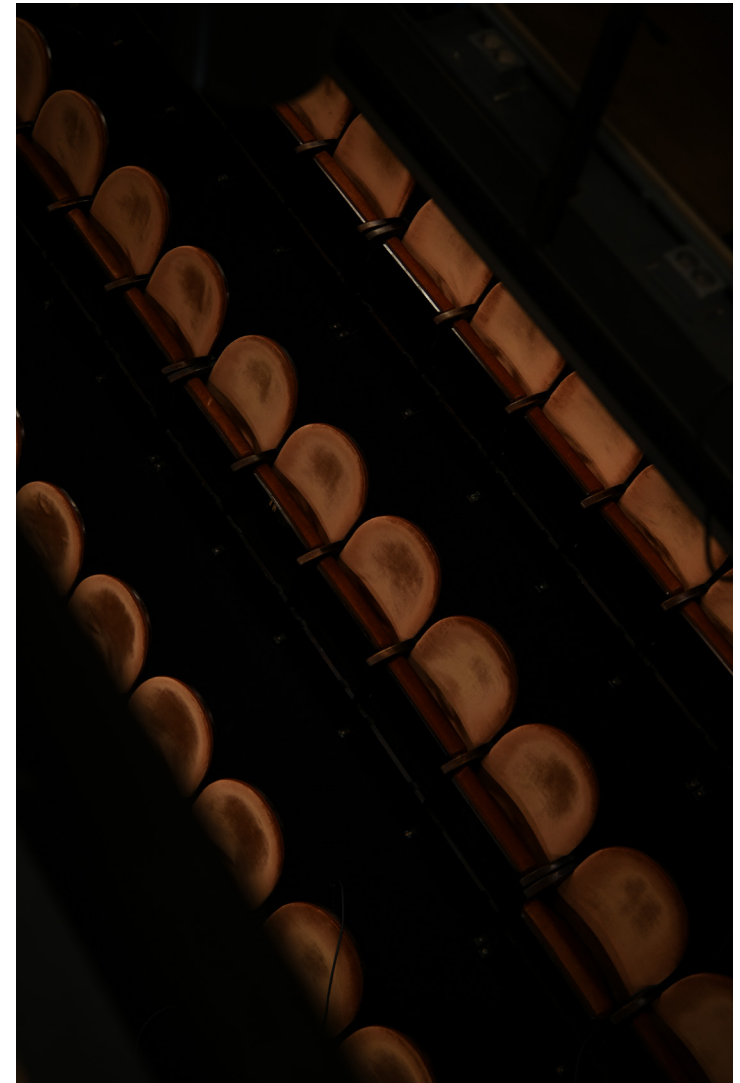
1:50 model
photography



1:50 model
photography



theatre visits
photography



theatre visits
photography

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figures

All photographs and diagrams are created by the author unless otherwise stated.

All image marked with the Label ^[ai] have been created with softwares using Artificial Intelligence.

figure 01: HEMA building

figure 02: Ground figure plan Theatre Dionysius
Konings, S., & Robertson, D. (2026). Dionysian Theatre Ground Figure Plan. In Theatre Precedents, Graduation Studio Palace.

figure 03: Ground figure plan Globe Theatre
Witte, G., & Zeng, O. (2026). Globe Theatre Ground Figure Plan. In Theatre Precedents, Graduation Studio Palace.

figure 04: Ground figure plan London Coliseum
Averbeck, L., & Ewen, N. (2026). London Coliseum Ground Figure Plan. In Theatre Precedents, Graduation Studio Palace.

figure 05: Section Teatro Oficina
Lücking, E., & Stevanov, M. (2026). Teatro Oficina Section. In Theatre Precedents, Graduation Studio Palace.

figure 06: Polyvalent Theatre
Lacaton & Vassal Architects (2013). Plan rez-de-chaussée. Divisare. Retrieved February 17, 2026, from <https://divisare.com/projects/280021-lacaton-vassal-architectes-philippe-ruault-polyvalent-theater>

figure 07: Initial idea space exercise

figure 08: Entrance Theater van Van Campen
Schouten, H. P. (1658). Voormalige Schouwburgpoort aan de Keizersgracht 384, Amsterdam. Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved January 19, 2026, from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schouwburgpoort.jpg>

figure 09: Framing and compression

figure 10: Public production

figure 11: Gasthuislaan public production ^[ai]

figure 12: Ground figure plan Delft

figure 13: Site plan HEMA block

figure 14: Transformation plan

figure 15: Bleeding into the urban fabric

figure 16: View paradijspoort ^[ai]

figure 17: Program of the theatre street

figure 18: Ground floor plan

figure 19: Longitudinal section

figure 20: theatre street scenario truck arrival ^[ai]

figure 21: theatre street scenario daily life ^[ai]

figure 22: theatre street scenario gathering ^[ai]

figure 23: theatre street scenario performance ^[ai]

figure 24: auditorium

figure 25: load bearing structure

figure 26: climate diagram

figure 27: scenarios in section

figure 28: scenario exhibition

figure 29: scenario walkway show

figure 30: facade section

figure 31: theatre street and fly tower wall

figure 32: theatre set up

figure 33: flat floor set up

