

BEYOND BLUEPRINT

NEGOTIATING
JUSTICE
URGENCY
AND
AMBIGUITY

Preface

I conceive this book as a vital exercise to condense my journey through territories that, prior to arriving at GSAPP, were entirely unfamiliar to me. This is not merely a compilation of projects, but an attempt to map out a personal and professional transformation that has required me to fundamentally reconsider what I understand architecture to be, as a practice, and as a form of agency.

Beyond Blueprint is a reflection in progress. A perspective that was once invisible to me, but gradually revealed itself, fragment by fragment, through conversations, readings, critiques, and frictions both inside and beyond the studio. From that unfolding came a need to unlearn, to dismantle inherited certainties in order to make space for other ways of thinking, making, and inhabiting the world. **I discovered that architecture is not limited to form or built objects; it unfolds within a broader ecology, within historical silences, present-day residues, and materials waiting to be reimagined.**

This process led me to expand the domains in which architecture operates. Its strength lies not only in technical precision or representational clarity, but in its ability to weave relationships, expose injustice, and envision alternate futures. I encountered voices long excluded from dominant narratives, human and nonhuman, material and territorial, ancestral and emergent. **I came to understand that an anthropocentric view of architecture is not only insufficient, but irresponsible in the face of today's planetary challenges and uncertainties.**

I also discovered the sense of urgency that courses through the discipline, not as a superficial slogan, but as a structural condition: climatic, social, ecological, and political. I came to see architecture not only as a tool for reaction, but as a catalyst for anticipation, mobilization, and negotiation. In the context of crises, of land, water, labor, and memory, architecture can act as an agent of transformation if we unlock procedural bottlenecks, **build alliances with other disciplines**, and propose solutions that are both scalable and attuned to the local.

Amid this entanglement, I learned the value of ambiguity. Not as a lack of clarity, but as an expansive condition, a space where multiple truths, forms, and temporalities coexist. Where architecture does not close down meaning, but opens up possibility. **Where form is not imposed, but NEGOTIATED.**

Justice, in this context, is not an abstract ideal but a situated practice. In **Time CAPSUL-ING**, developed in collaboration with a partner, we speculated on a capsule that fills in historical gaps to produce anti-imperialist images of the present. Similarly, **The Post-Pine Landscape addresses the extractive logics of the Chilean pulp industry, proposing a new ecology of paper rooted in ancestral Mapuche claims and ecological restoration.**

Urgency also appears as a design method. In **Myco BAG**, we developed a regenerative construction system using fungal mycelium and agricultural waste. Conceived as a low-tech and decentralized infrastructure, the project explores how vernacular materials and local know-how can scale into global ecological solutions.

Negotiating the Act of Building is a theoretical case study on Atelier Bow-Wow's work in post-disaster Fukushima. It examines how architecture can respond through modest, participatory, and context-sensitive strategies—prioritizing spatial ethics over grand gestures.

Ambiguity is embraced as a productive strategy. In **Bridging on Buildings**, also developed in collaboration, we explored the adaptive reuse of Pershing Hall on Governors Island as a layered structure of memory, infrastructure, and future potential. In **Frictional Systems (On Possibilism)**, a reflection on Sarah Oppenheimer's work, architecture emerges as a choreography of forces, where each movement activates a network of dependencies and reactions. Ambiguity here becomes a condition of openness and resonance.

Finally, the **Theoretical Handbook for (Adaptive?) Reuse** outlines the political and conceptual foundations of adaptive reuse—not as a technical operation, but as an act of critical positioning.

This portfolio does not offer certainties, but negotiated positions. It is an invitation to think beyond the blueprint.

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Credits by Project.

**Who do these remains
correspond to?**

**Whose stories are
being told?**

Time CAPSUL-ING

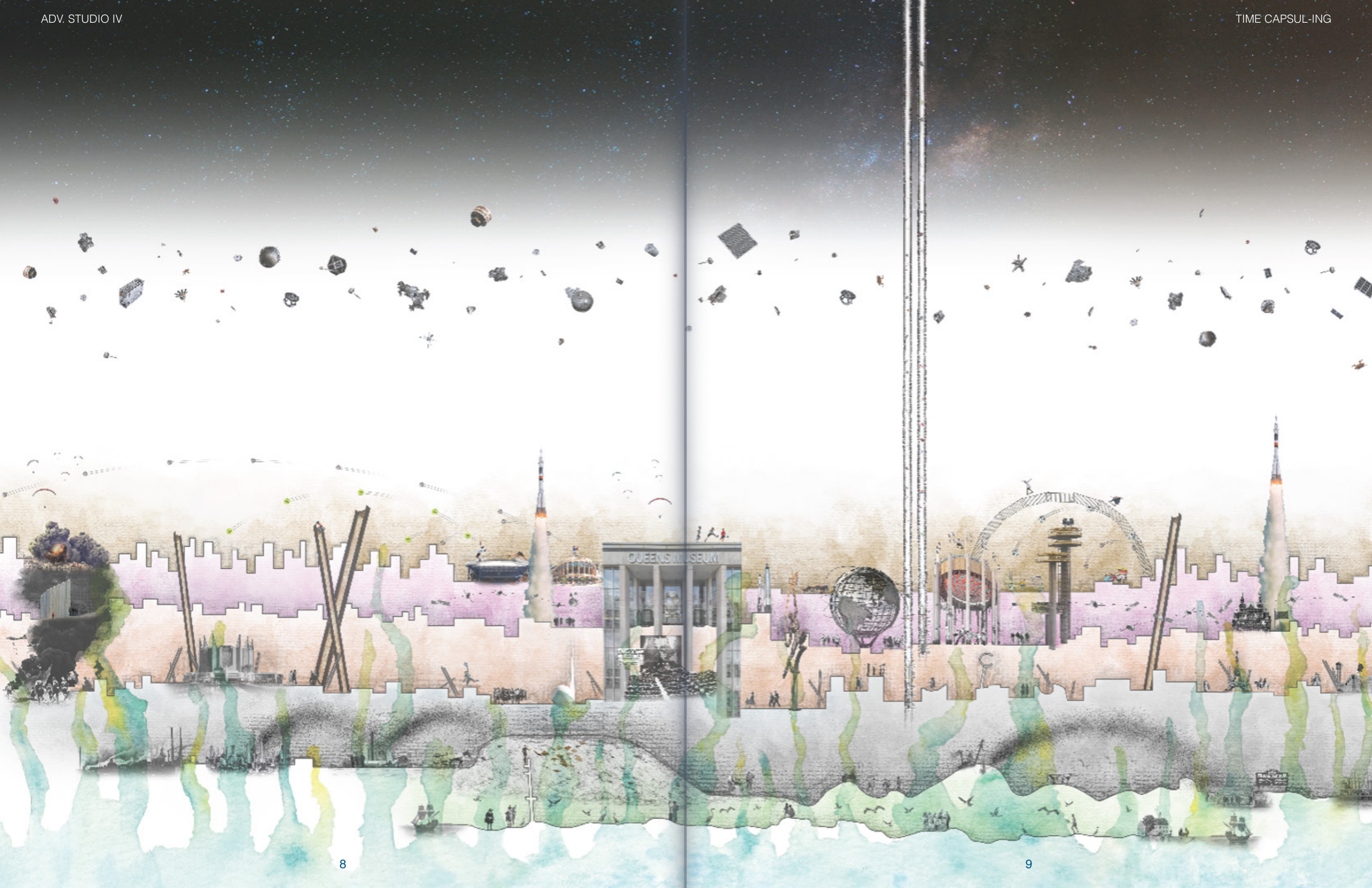
**Filling in the gaps for an anti-imperialist image
of the present**

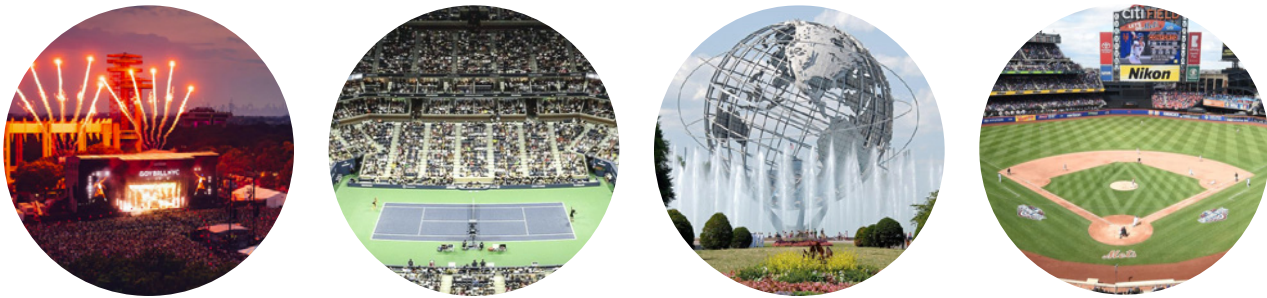
Advanced Design Studio IV
Toxic Land (Fills)-Flushing Meadows

Summer 2024

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park used to be the Corona Ash Dump; “the valley of ashes”, as described by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*. It was transformed to be the host of two World’s Fairs. During these fairs, two time capsules were buried. But, who decided the contents of the capsules? Which legacies were worth keeping?

This park is already a time capsule on its own. Therefore, we will continue time capsul-ing in two ways. First, instead of storing knowledge, we will be restoring the past by providing opportunities for the present. We will give space to the peoples excluded from the 20th century time capsules in the park. It will be a place for the use of the ones that were left outside. Second, we will continue land-filling this park. Bringing the material consequences of the future imaginaries buried in the site. Colonial and imperialist dreams that are the cause of the current poly-crisis: climate change, the biggest landfill in space, nuclear waste, etc. After centuries, the park will consolidate itself as a new landfill and the ashes will fill the park once again. And the time capsul-ing of Flushing Meadows will continue again. And again. And again.

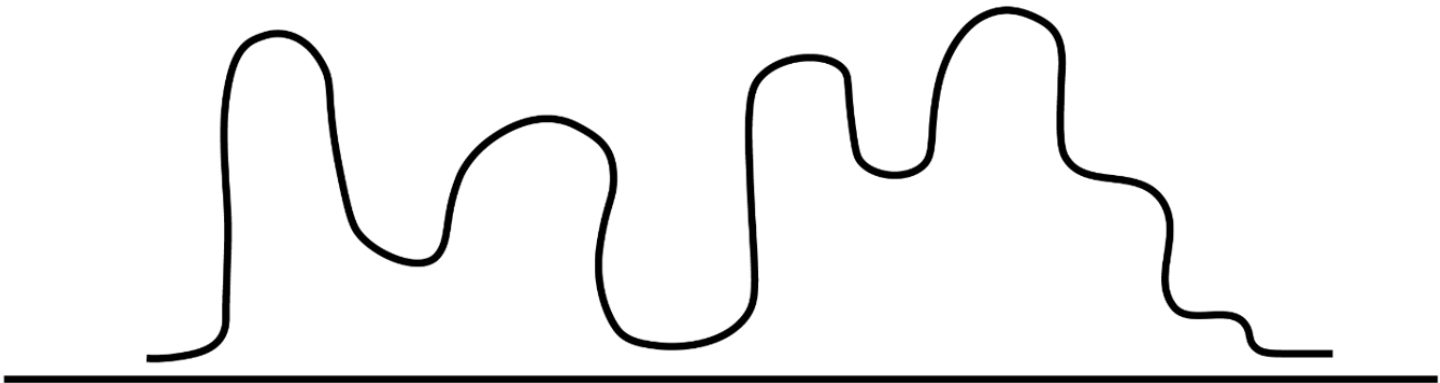




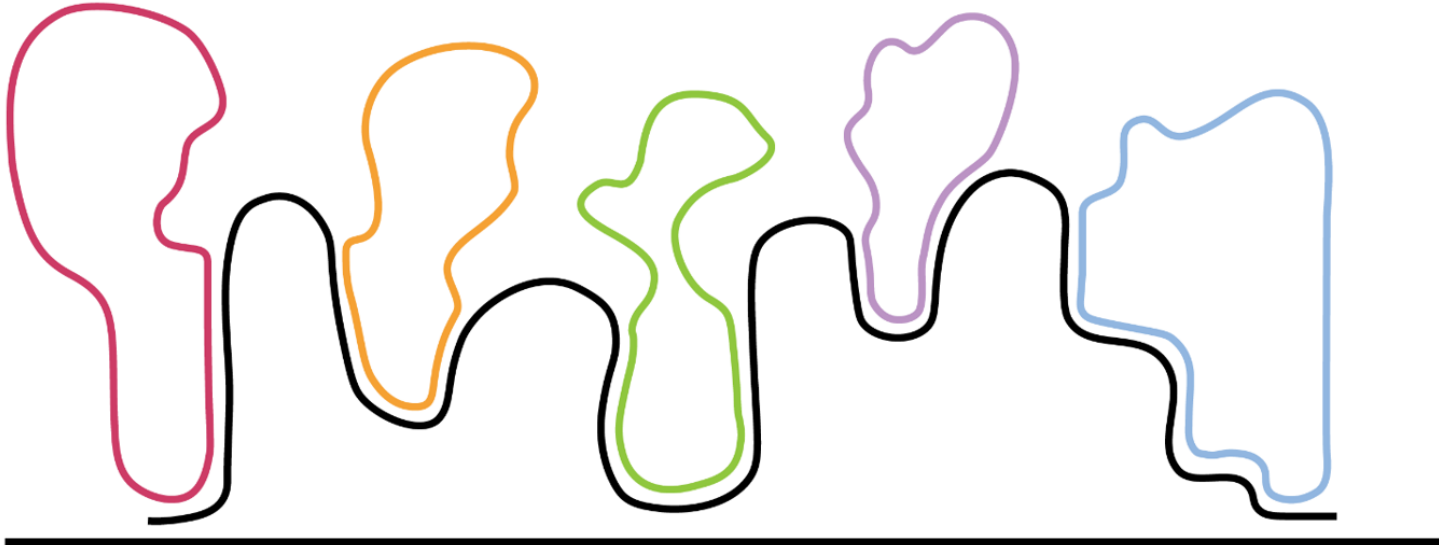
Whose histories were the ones selected for the “future” to see?
Which legacies were worth keeping?



Actors and Legacy



Spatial Time Capsule



Giving space for the peoples who were excluded

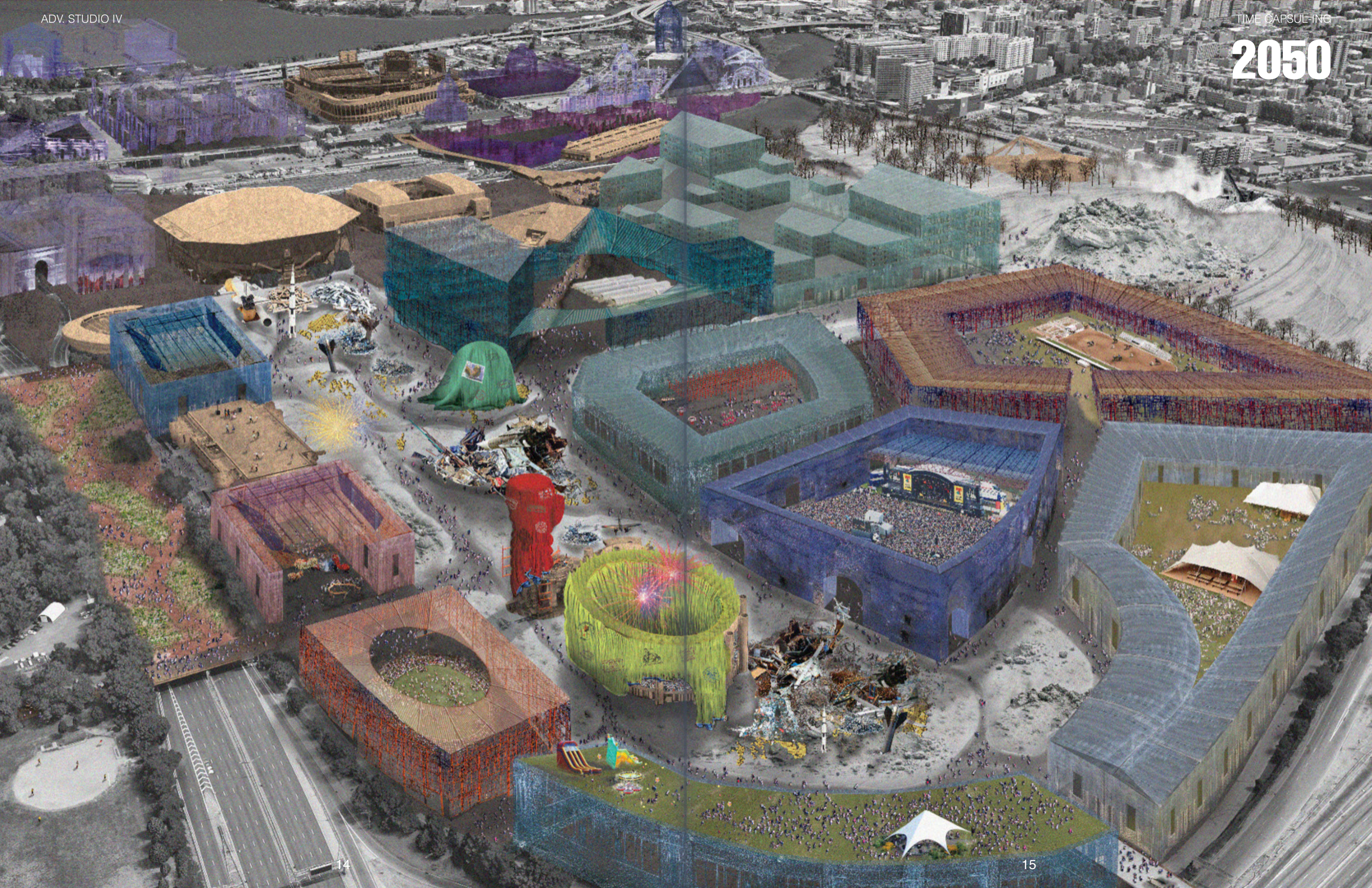


Landfilling with the consequences of the future’s imaginaries

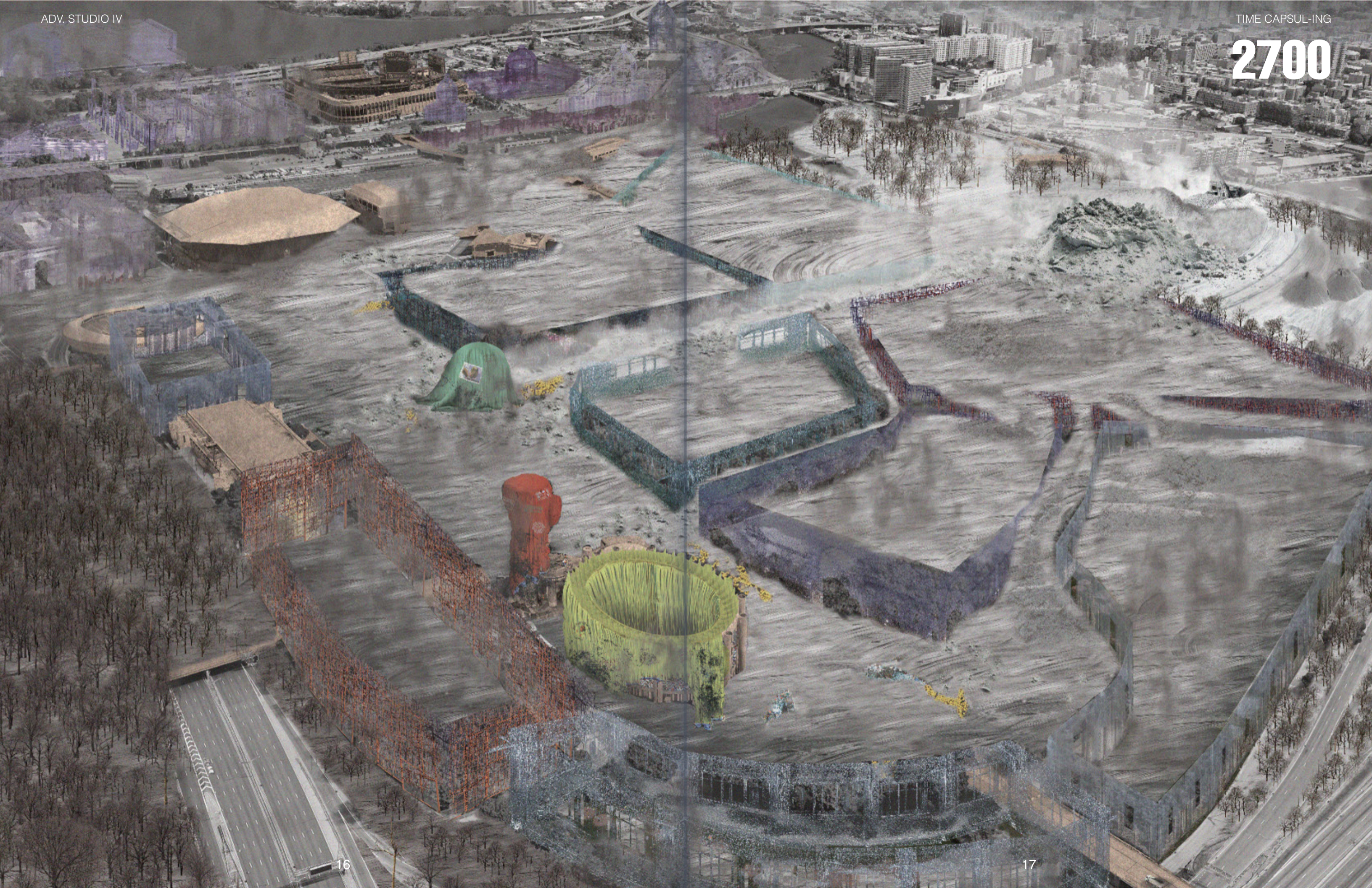
2025



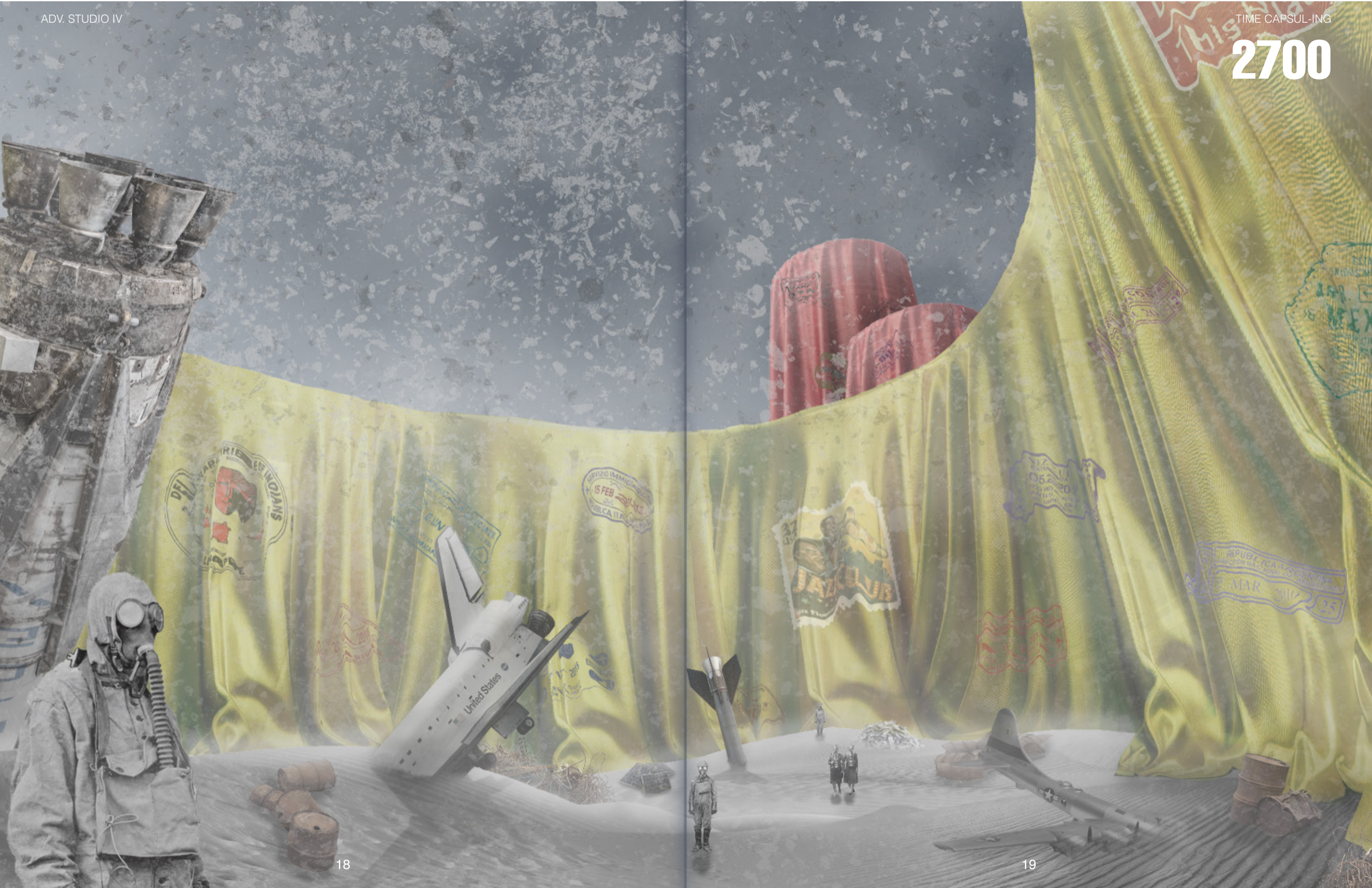
2050



2700



2700



3 Text

15 Quotes

1960s-1970s

Theoretical Handbook for (Adaptive?) Reuse

Tracing the Theoretical Foundations of Adaptive Reuse in Architecture

Advanced Design Studio V
Building on Buildings

Fall 2024

This research investigates the emergence of adaptive reuse as a theoretical topic within architectural discourse. While the act of reusing buildings has been present throughout history, driven by necessity, tradition, or cultural continuity, its recognition as a critical position in architectural theory is relatively recent. The outcome of this investigation is a book titled *Theoretical Handbook for (Adaptive?) Reuse*, which outlines three key milestones in which this practice begins to acquire theoretical substance.

Through the analysis of foundational texts and archival material, we identified three pivotal moments: Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), *New Uses for Old Buildings* edited by Sherban Cantacuzino (1972), and Rafael Moneo's *Life of Buildings* (1977). Each one redefines the role of existing structures, not as obstacles, but as active agents of meaning, continuity, and design possibility.

A core component of the research was an extensive review of the annual monographs of *Architectural Review*. Perhaps the most significant discovery was the identification of a complete issue fully dedicated to the topic of reuse: *New Uses for Old Buildings*, edited by Cantacuzino. This volume not only gathered European examples of programmatic transformations, but also marked a turning point in the editorial and theoretical recognition of adaptive reuse.

Together, these three texts frame the beginnings of adaptive reuse not just as a practical solution, but as a conceptual and critical lens in contemporary architectural thinking.

I Complexity and Contradiction

Robert Venturi

1966

I Architectural Theory

Critical interrogation of modernist principles, advocating for an approach that embraces ambiguity, pluralism, and historical context.

II New Uses for Old Buildings

Sherban Cantacuzino

1972

Intertwining Theory and Practice

Critical examination of building's (Mosque of Cordoba's) relationship with time, focusing on adaptability and contextual significance. Through the integration of theory and practice, he underscores the importance of human experience and sensitivity to site

II European Exemplars of Programmatic Adaptations

Issue dedicated to reuse and transformation of program in Architectural Review 1972

III Life of Buildings

Rafael Moeno

1977

1

I like elements which are hybrid rather than “pure,” compromising rather than “clean,” distorted rather than “straightforward,” ambiguous rather than “articulated,” perverse as well as impersonal, boring as well as “interesting,” conventional rather than “designed,” accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality. I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer “both-and” to “either-or,” black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and Workable in several ways at once.

Venturi

Rafael Moneo

Time gives more than a patina to buildings, and they frequently accept extensions, incorporate refurbishments and have their spaces altered and architectural elements changed.

10

Sherban Cantacuzino

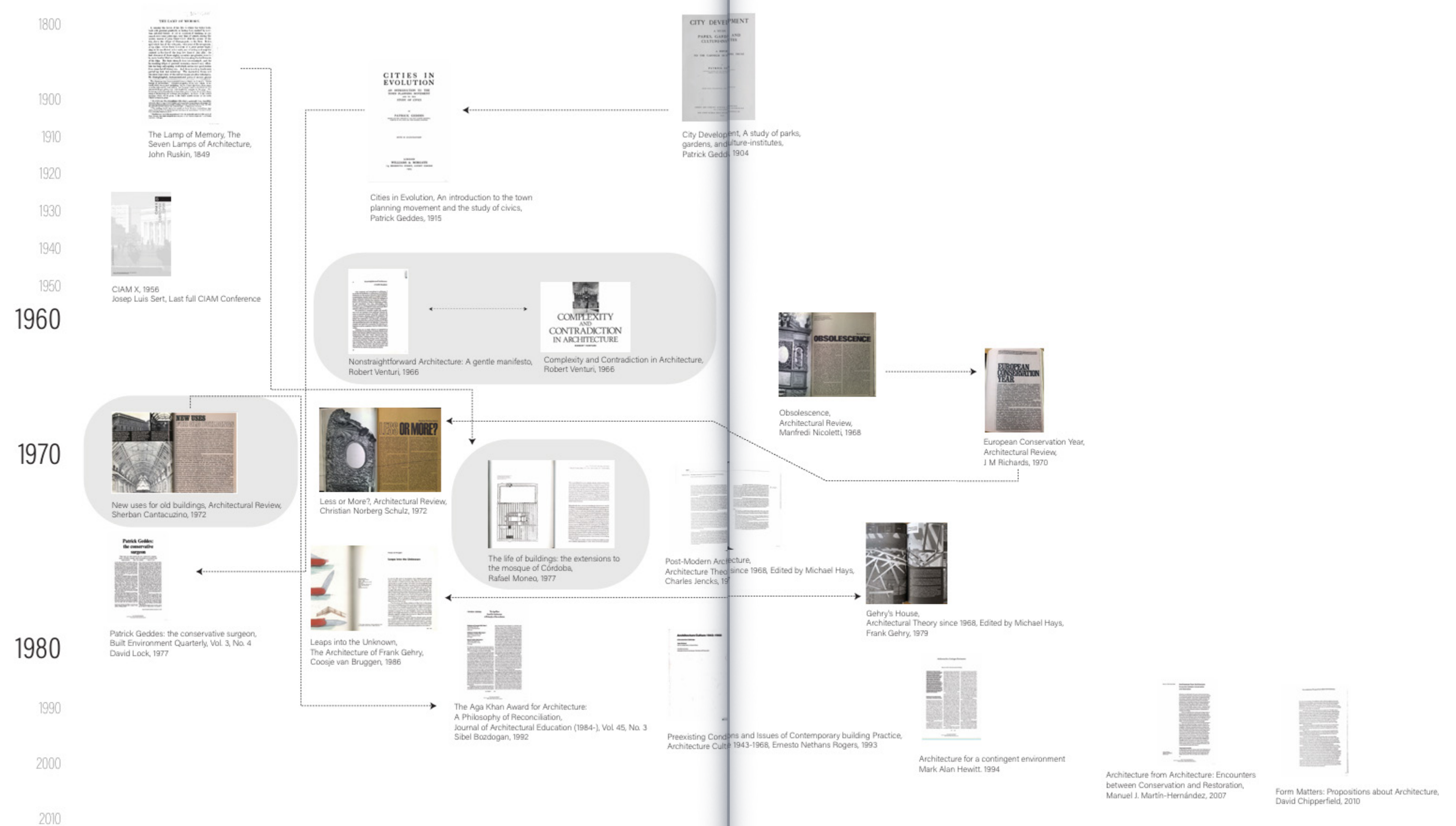
Because their structure tends to outlive their function, buildings have continuously been adapted to new uses- a fact which has enabled generation after generation to drive a sense of continuity and stability from their physical surroundings.'

7

8

A church remains a monument whatever the spiritual or material loss from disuse. So the "review" makes no apology here for treating churches primarily as buildings of aesthetic and environmental value, for which new uses must be found if they are to survive redundancy





Footprint?
or
Less-Print?

Bridging on Buildings

Adaptive Reuse as Connection, Memory, and Future on Governors Island

Advanced Design Studio V
Building on Buildings

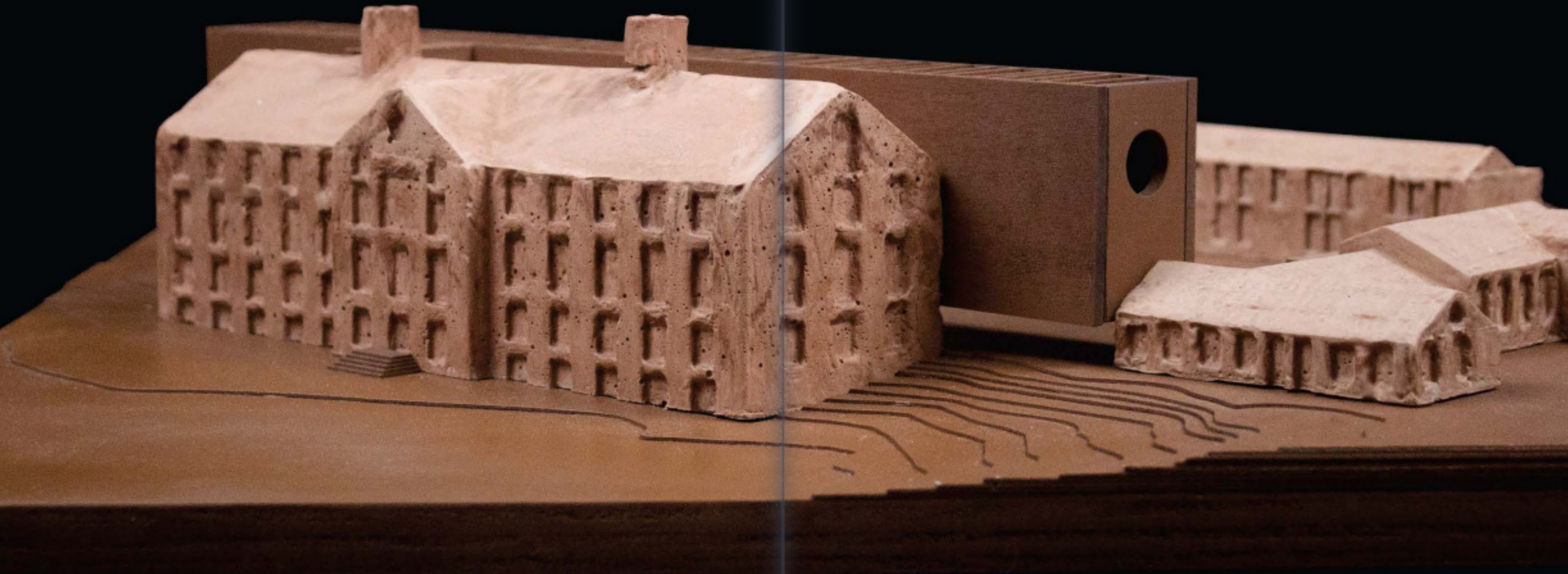
Fall 2024

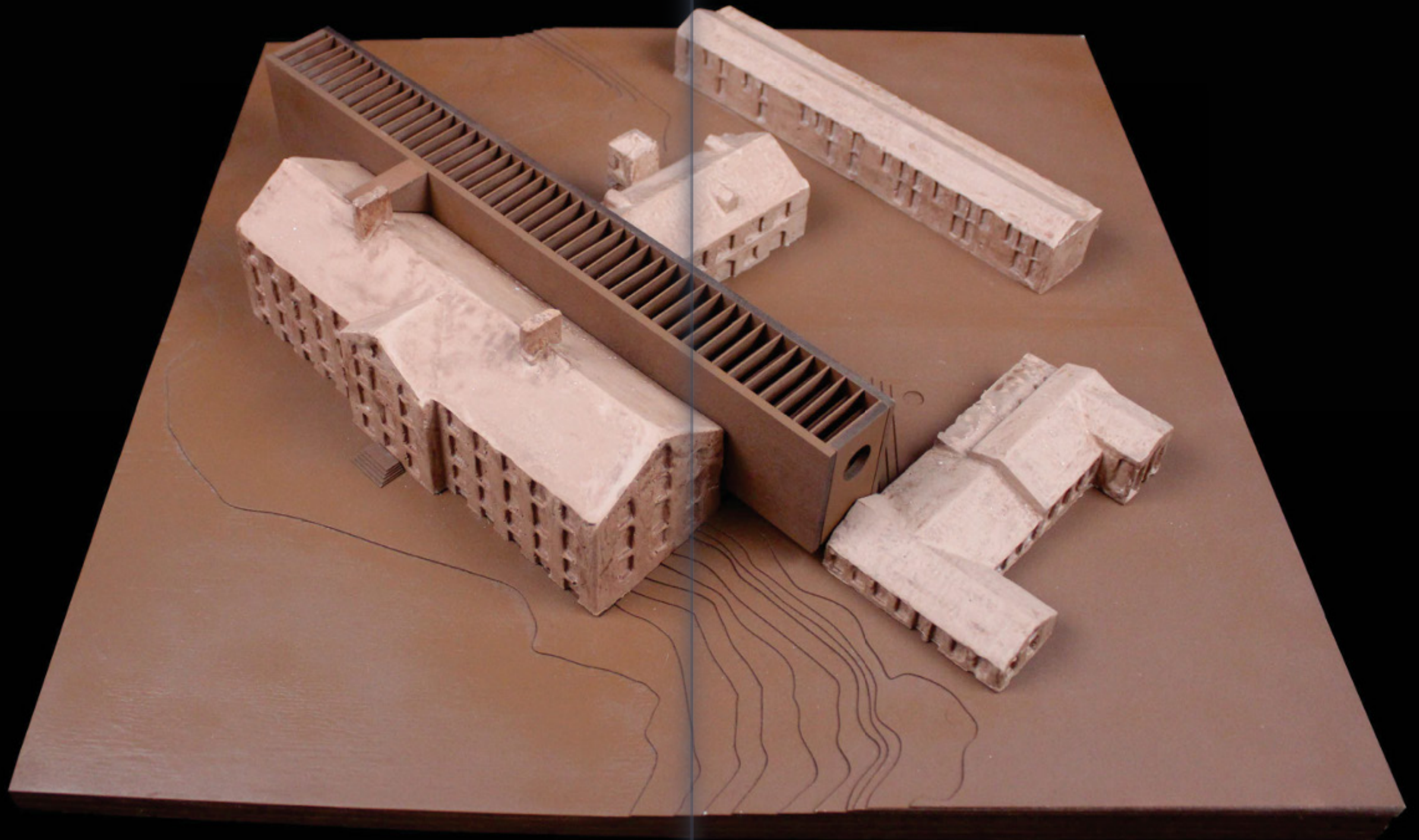
This project explores adaptive reuse as both architectural strategy and historical dialogue, through the transformation of Pershing Hall (Building 125) on Governors Island. Located in the island's northern sector, this former military headquarters unused since 2001, retains remarkable historical features, including panoramic Civil War murals by Johnson Loftin.

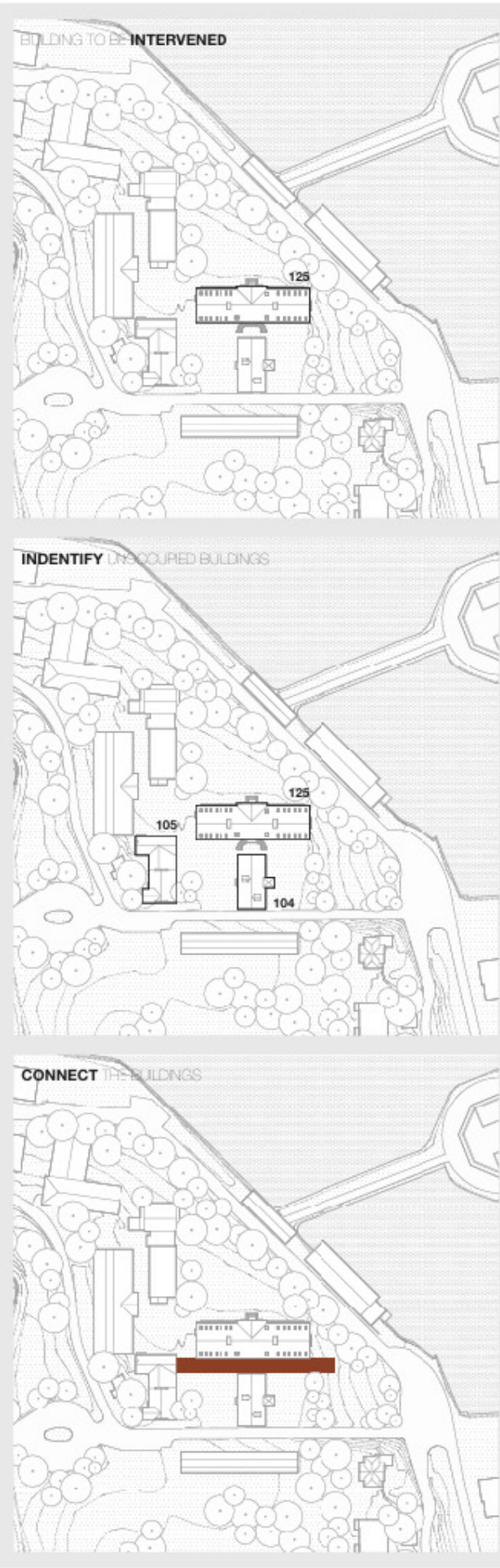
Titled Bridging on Buildings, the proposal introduces a single, slender new volume that connects three existing structures, Buildings 125, 104, and 105. This minimal-footprint building is shaped by the narrow in-between spaces left by the existing architecture. Its reduced ground occupation is a direct response to the nature of the island, where space is limited and preservation of open land is essential.

Rather than asserting dominance, the new structure carefully threads through the site, bridging across buildings to unify them physically and programmatically. It reactivates their dormant spaces by creating shared infrastructure for archives, restoration, public libraries, cafés, and exhibitions, totaling 6,000 m² in three phases.

Echoing the island's long history of spatial adaptation and layered reuse, Bridging on Buildings proposes a strategy of continuity and restraint. It reframes adaptive reuse as an architecture of precision and negotiation, where slenderness becomes strength, and connection becomes a way to build futures from what already exists.



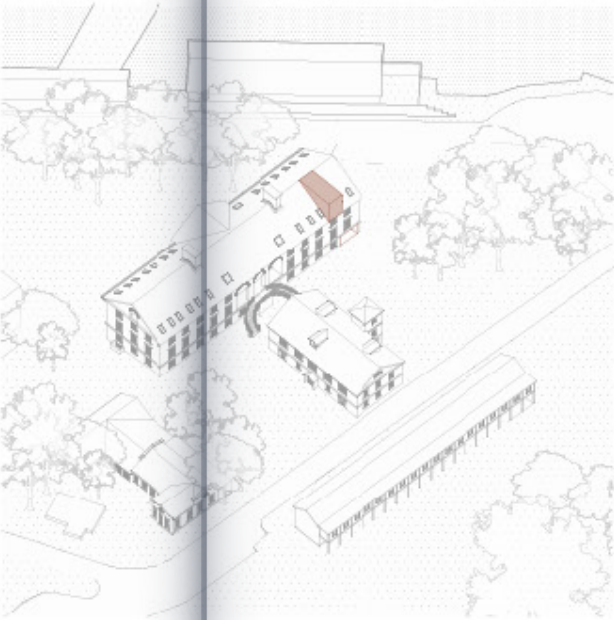
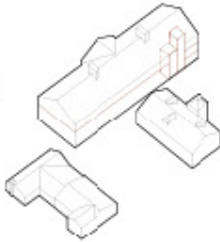




PHASE 01

The archives are located on the building's upper levels to ensure protection from flooding. An independent vertical circulation system provides secure, controlled access, prioritizing preservation and operational efficiency by isolating this function from the rest of the building.

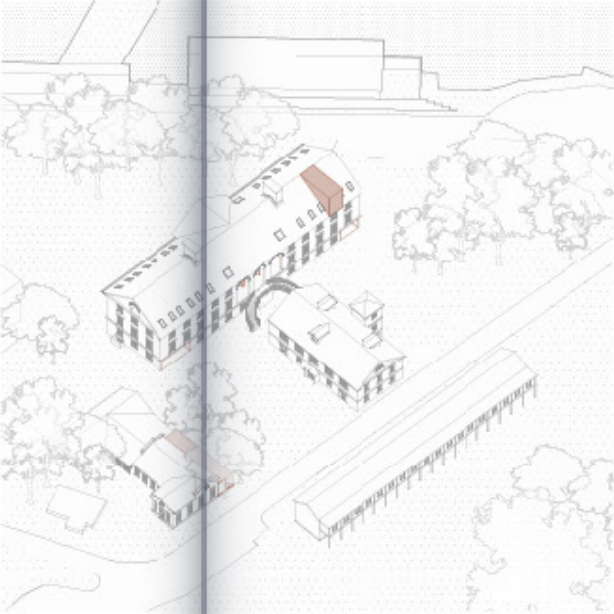
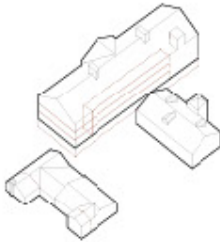
ARCHIVES
1500m²
+
RESEARCH OFFICES
& RESTAURATION
500m²



PHASE 02

Services and circulation are centralized along the southern facade to optimize space and efficiency. Double-height spaces bring natural light to the basement, improving the environment and reducing artificial lighting. Building 105 is repurposed as an independent cafe, enhancing visitor amenities and the island's offerings.

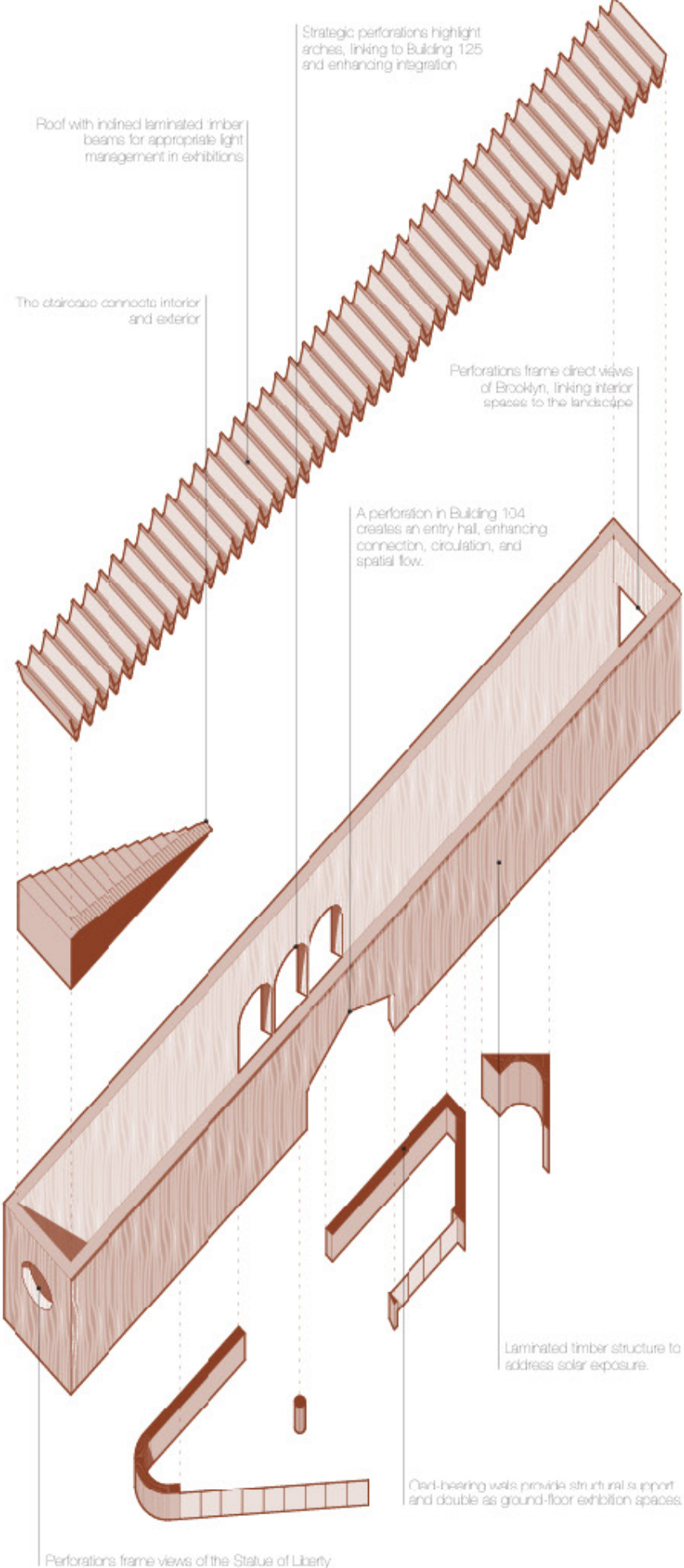
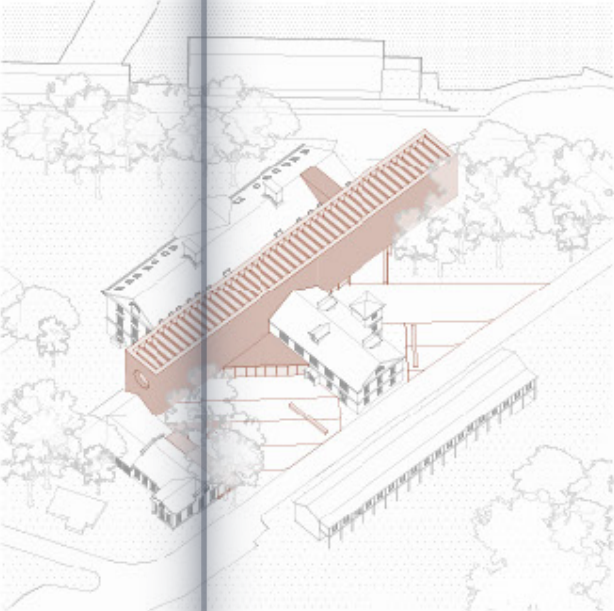
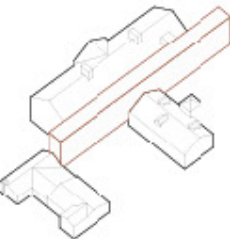
PUBLIC LIBRARY
& STUDY CENTER
1500m²
+
CAFE
500m²

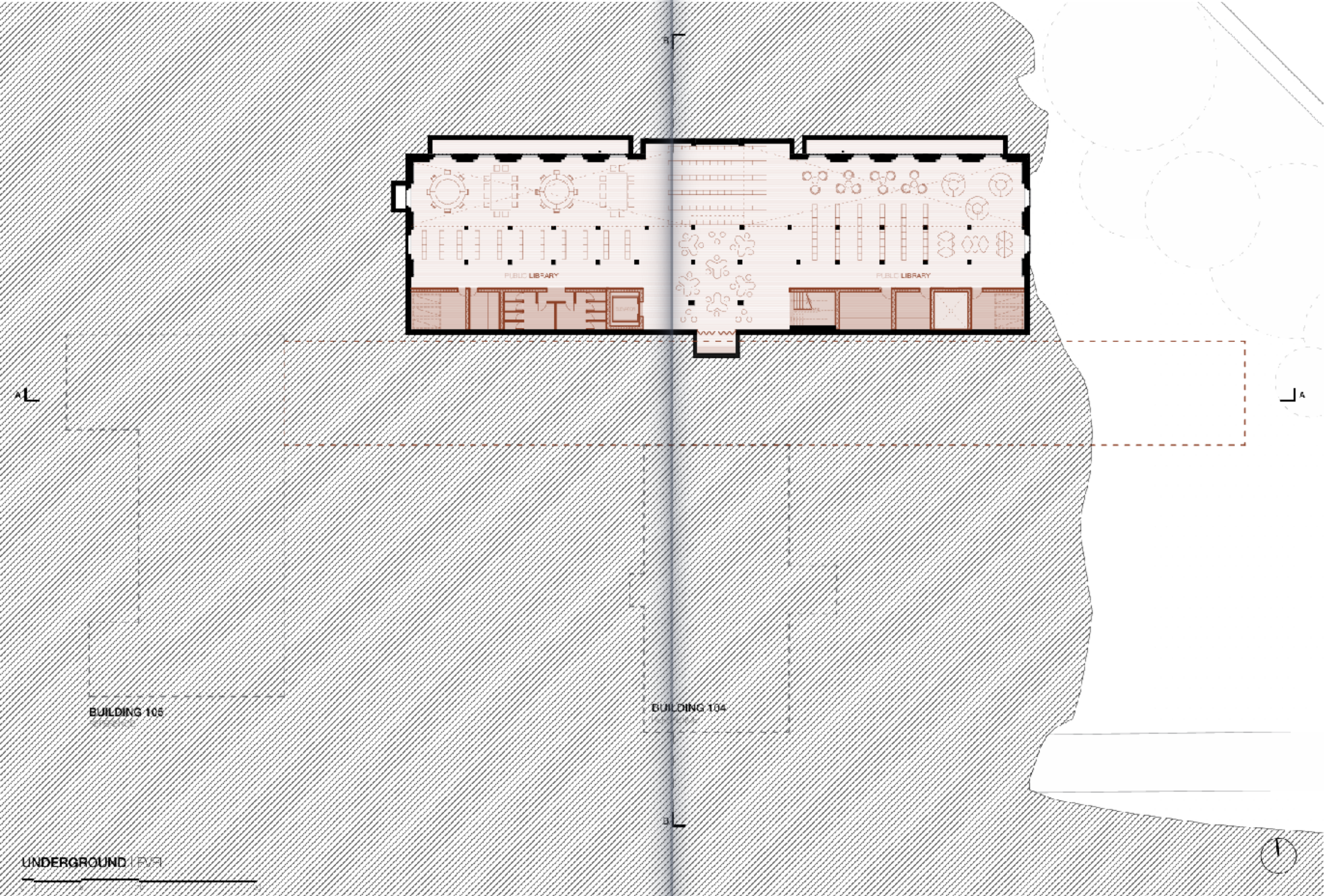


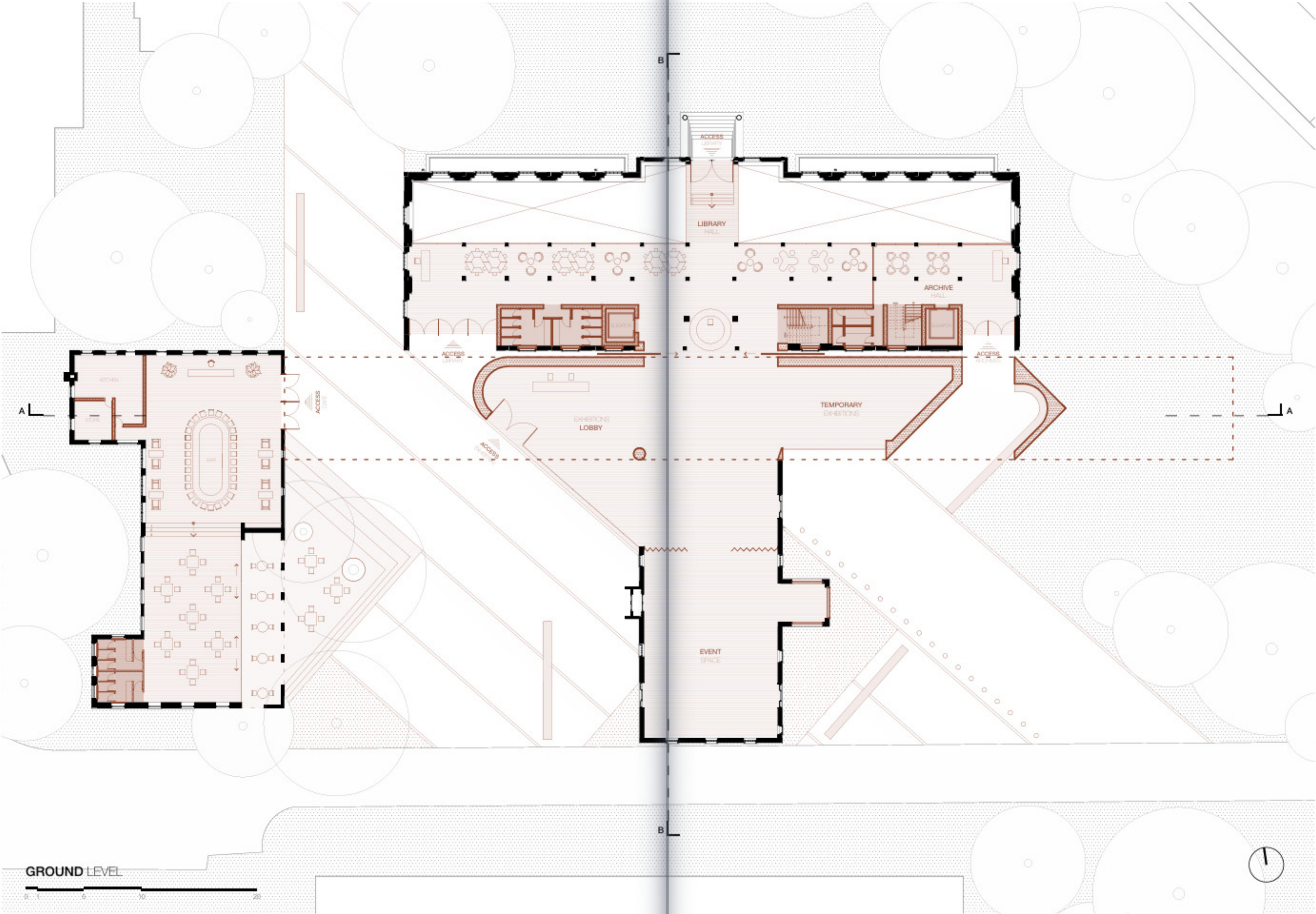
PHASE 03

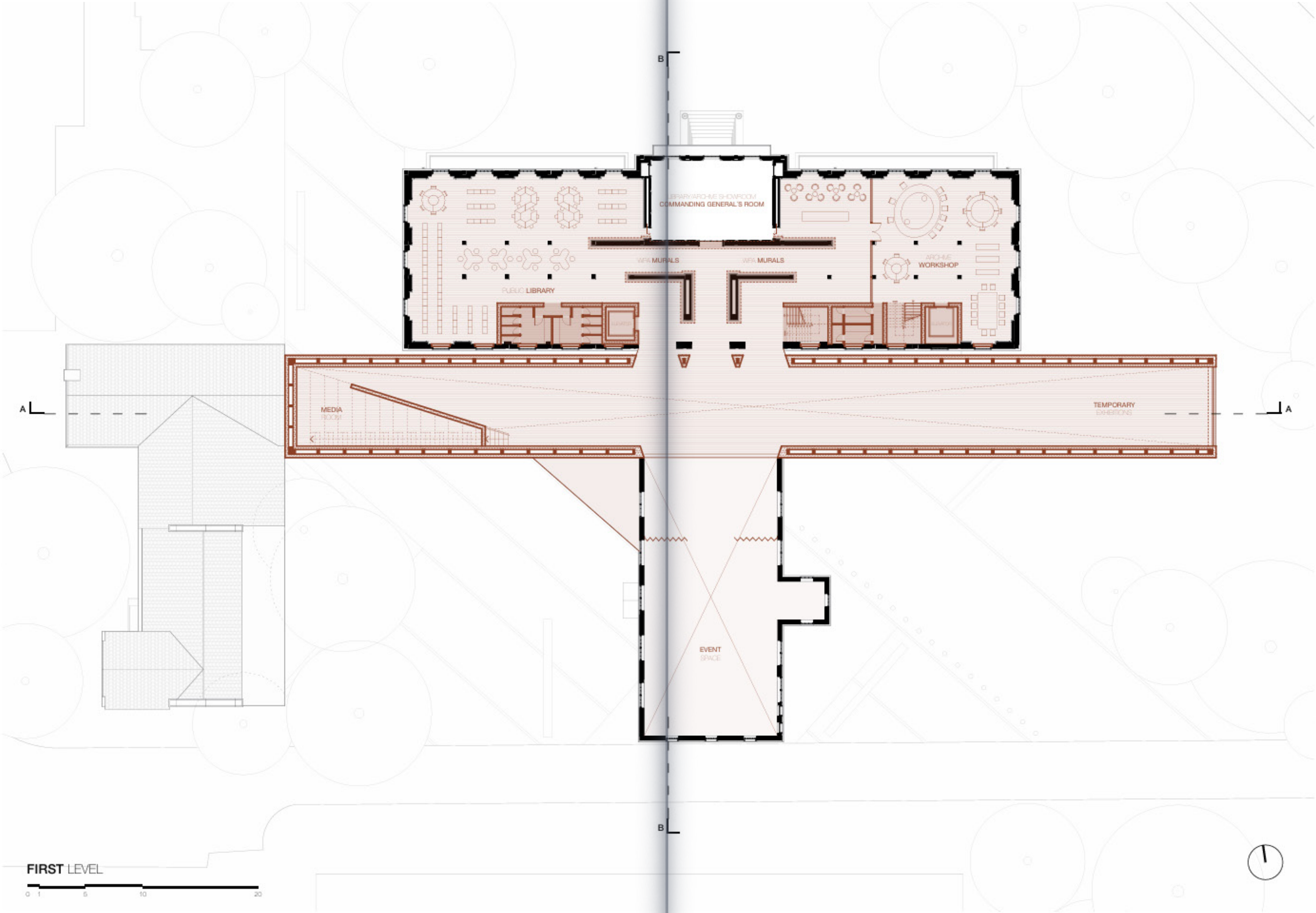
An elongated volume is added to connect existing structures at ground level, enhancing circulation and spatial integration. Linked to Building 125 via the earlier vertical circulation system, it ensures seamless access. Carefully controlled sunlight creates an atmosphere suited for exhibitions, balancing illumination and preservation.

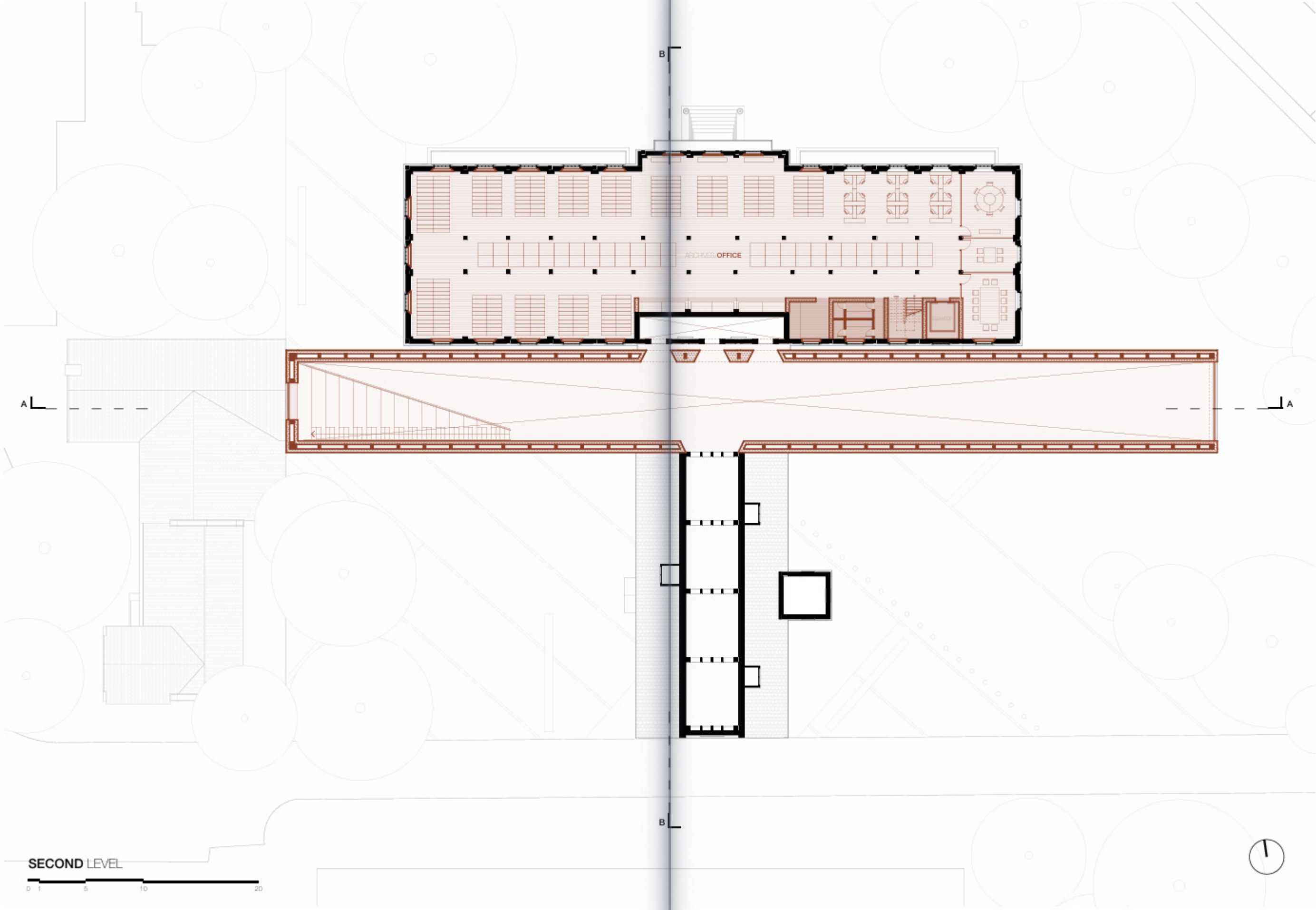
EXHIBITION SPACES
1500m²
+
EVENT SPACE
500m²

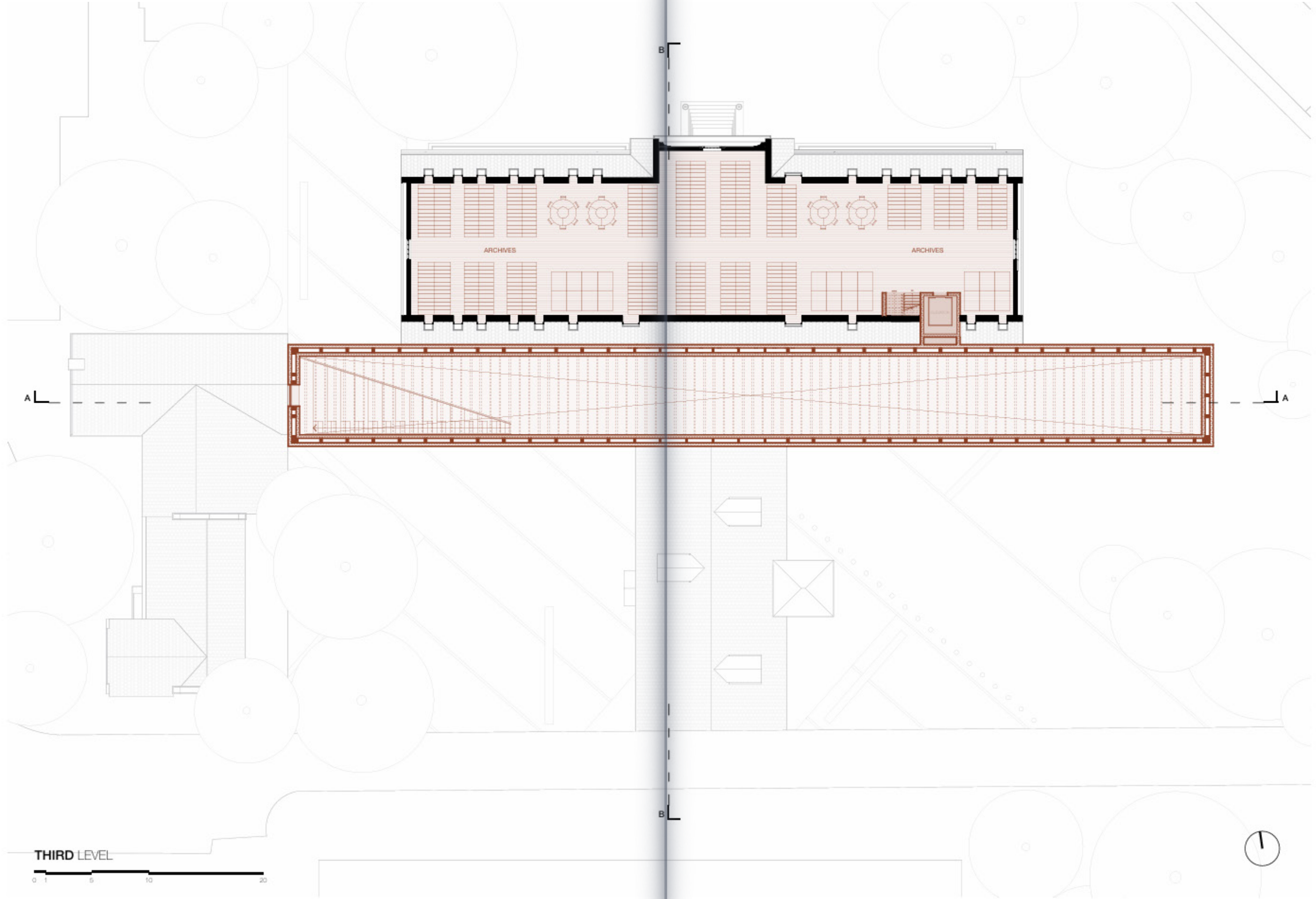


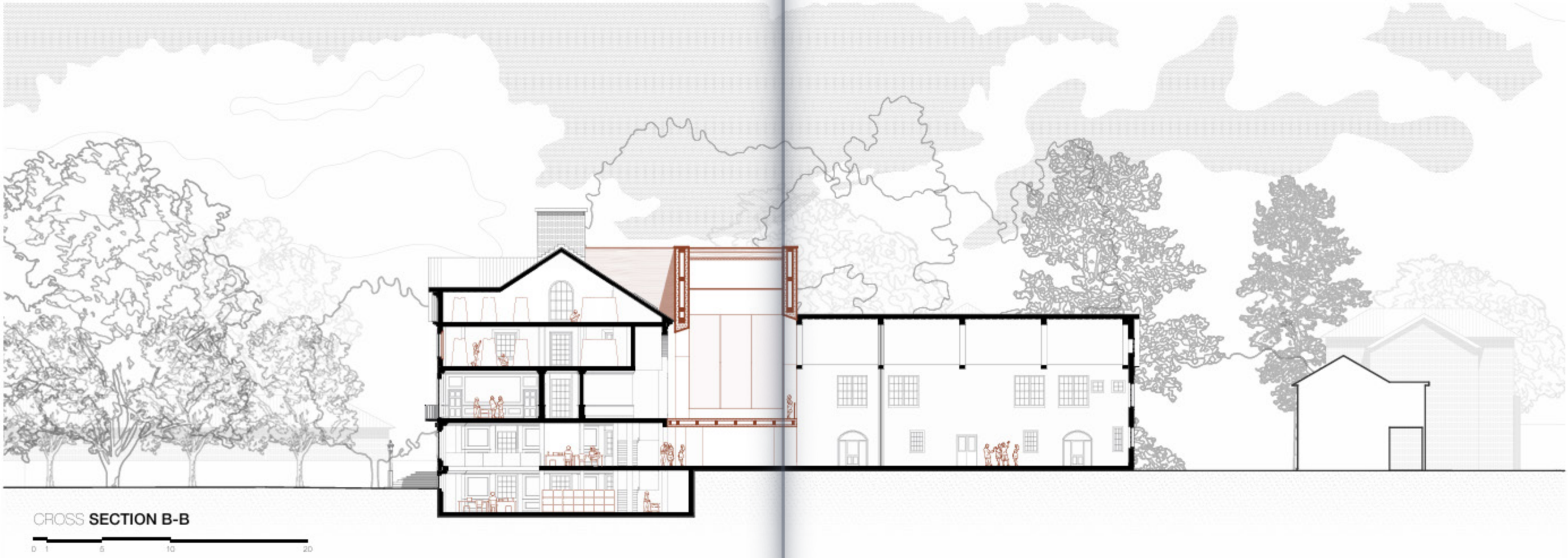
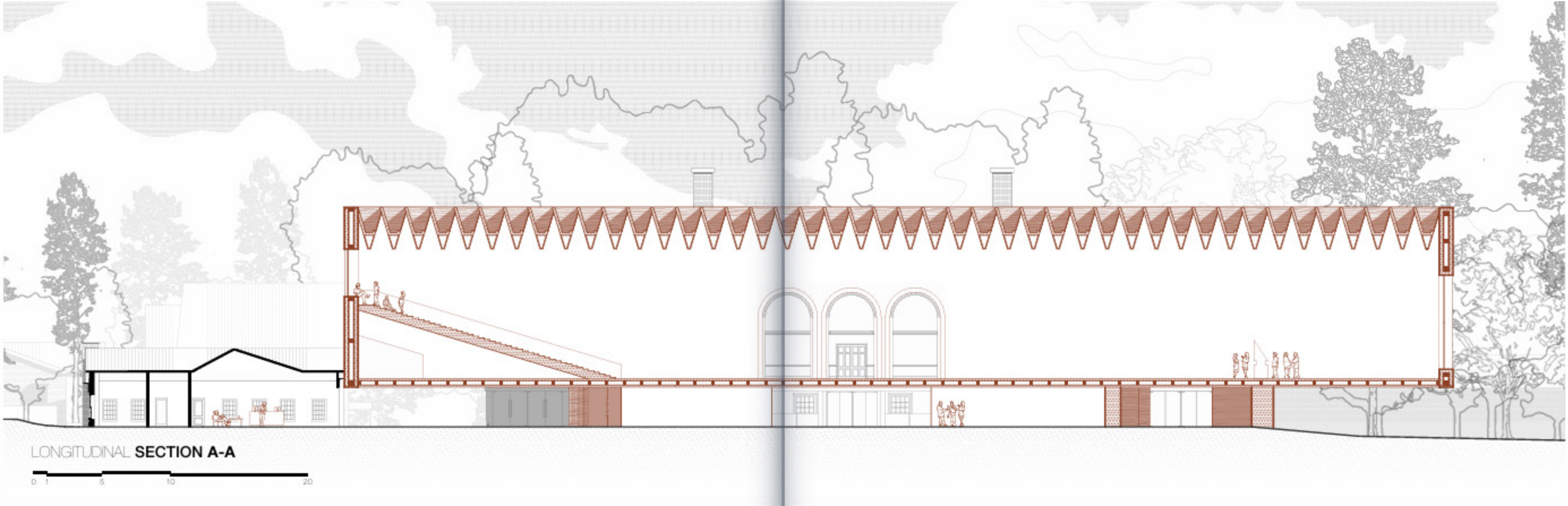




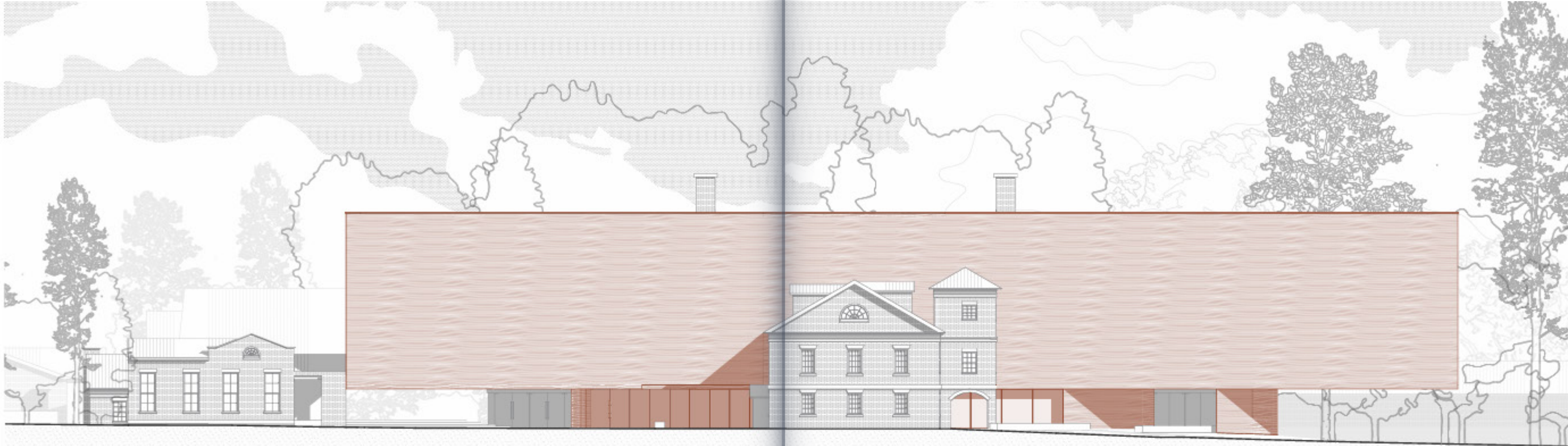




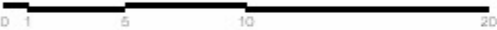








SOUTH ELEVATION

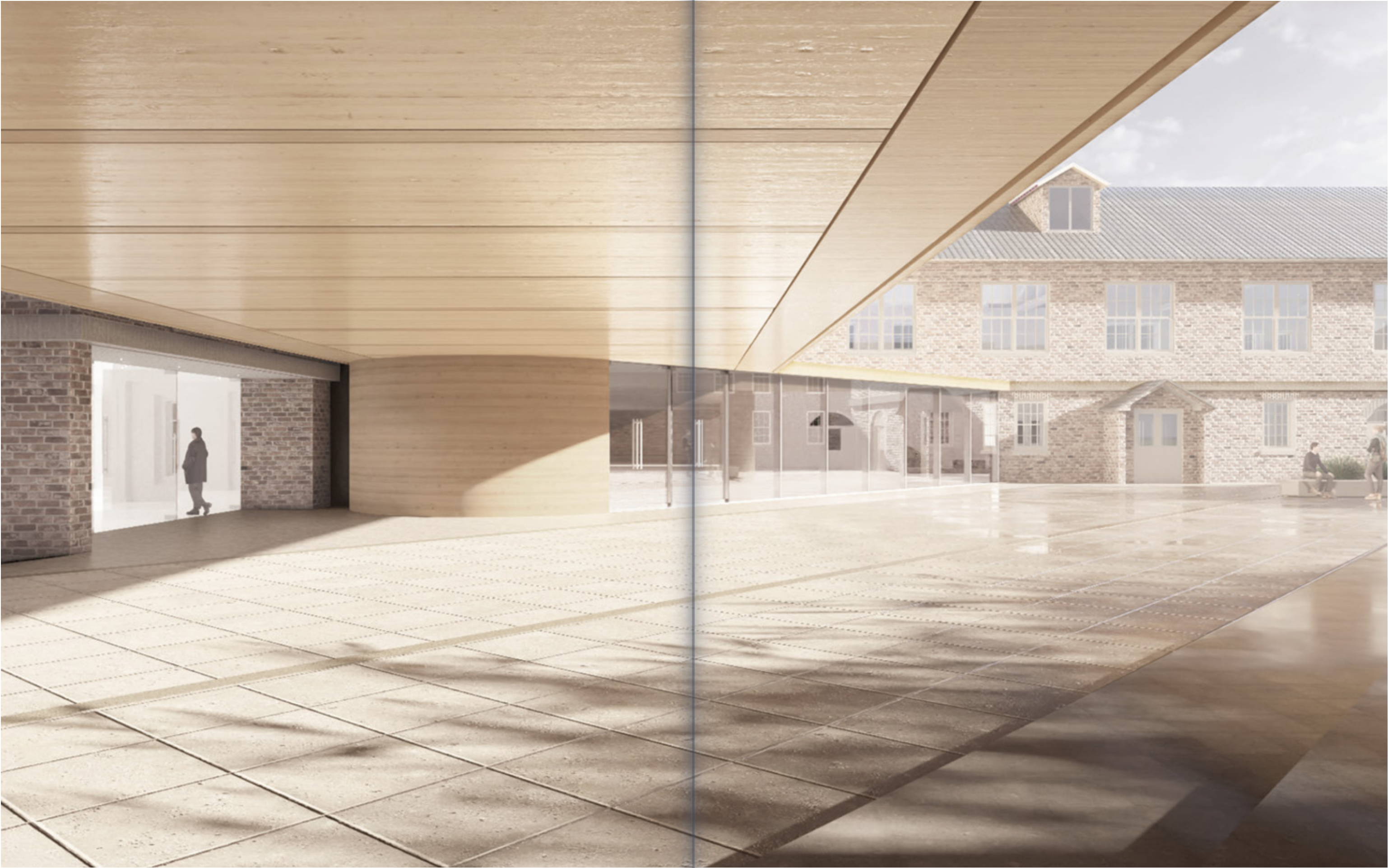


EAST ELEVATION











Regenerative

Low-Tech

Scalable

Carbon-Negative

Myco BAG

LOW-TECH, HIGH IMPACT, SYSTEM FOR A REGENERATIVE FUTURE

Advanced Design Studio VI
Vital

Spring 2025

Each year, the world produces over 4 billion tons of agricultural waste, corn husks, straw, and stems, most of which is burned, releasing black carbon and greenhouse gases. This project challenges that destructive cycle by reimagining agricultural waste as a valuable building resource through a low-tech, ancient tool: the bag.

By combining agricultural residues with mycelium, the root system of fungi, we create Myco-Bags: a moldable, carbon-negative material capable of forming structure, bonding without synthetic adhesives, and even self-repairing. The growing process occurs inside perforated bioplastic bags, which retain moisture, give form, and add strength and weather resistance to the resulting bio-composite.

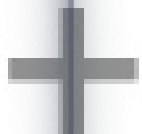
The alliance between mycelium, straw, and bioplastic allows each component to compensate for the other's weaknesses. We developed and tested various formats of bags, some sealed with heat, others layered with breathable fabrics, and experimented with natural finishes like shellac and plaster. These bags allow for rapid, scalable deployment without the need for molds or complex tools.

Our first pilot implementation takes place in Hansali, a rural village in India. There, families collect straw directly in lightweight bags, mix it with mycelium, and allow it to grow into architectural elements. A closed-loop, self-sustaining material economy emerges, simple, accessible, and regenerative.

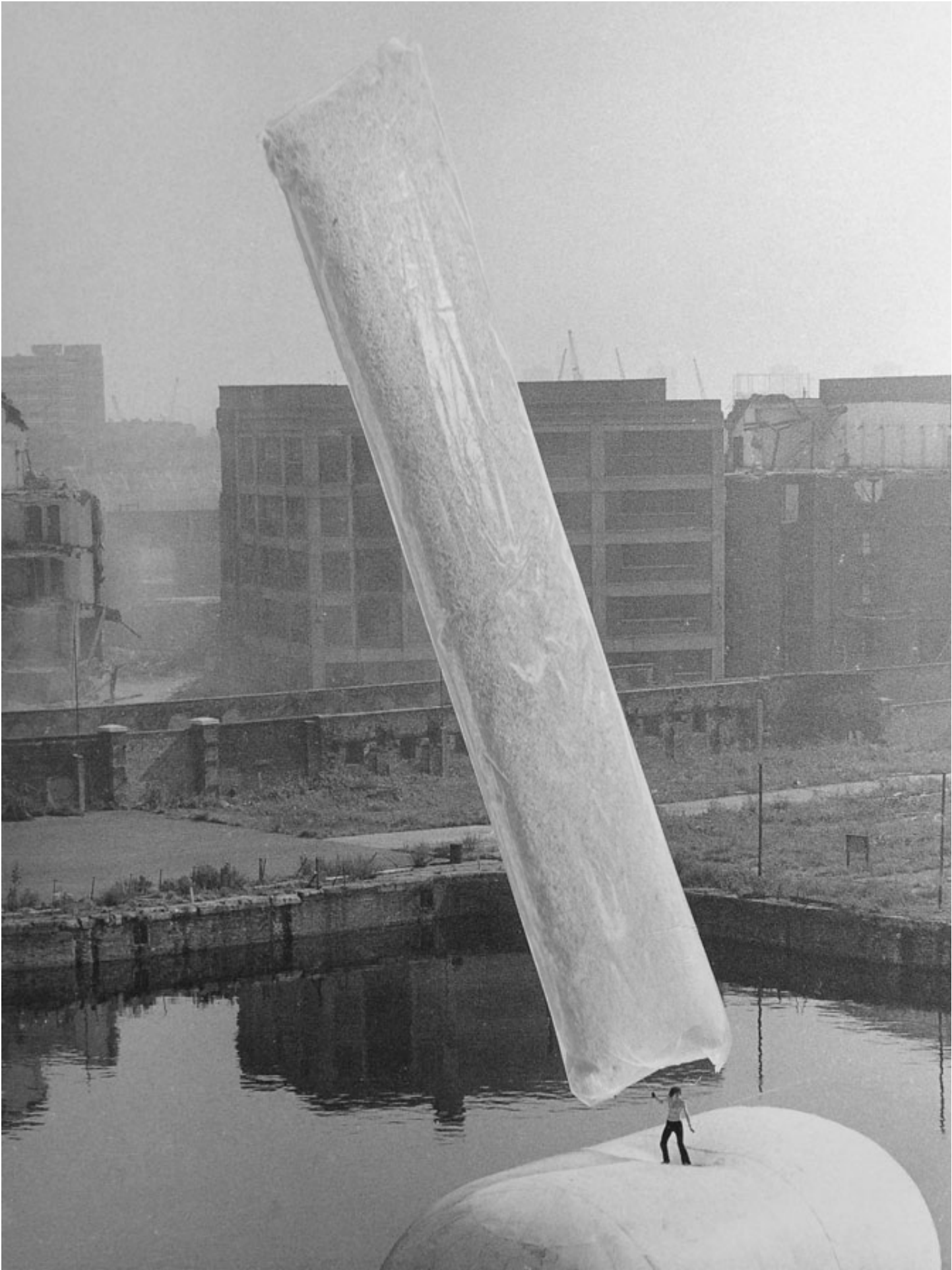
This project envisions a future where buildings are not extracted, but cultivated. Where material production is localized, emissions are reversed, and construction becomes an act of stewardship. It all begins with a bag—light, ordinary, and powerful enough to grow the architecture of tomorrow.



MYCELIUM



REINFORCEMENT



TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

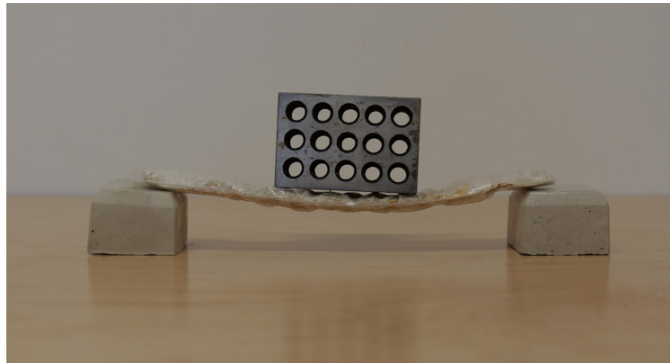
FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT



TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT

BONDING

FINISH

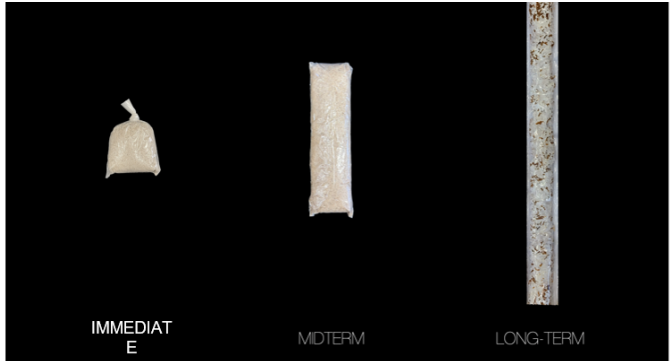
FORMAT

TENSILE

BONDING

FINISH

FORMAT



FORMAT

IMMEDIATE

MIDTERM

LONG-TERM



FORMAT

IMMEDIATE

MIDTERM

LONG-TERM



FORMAT

IMMEDIATE

MIDTERM

LONG-TERM



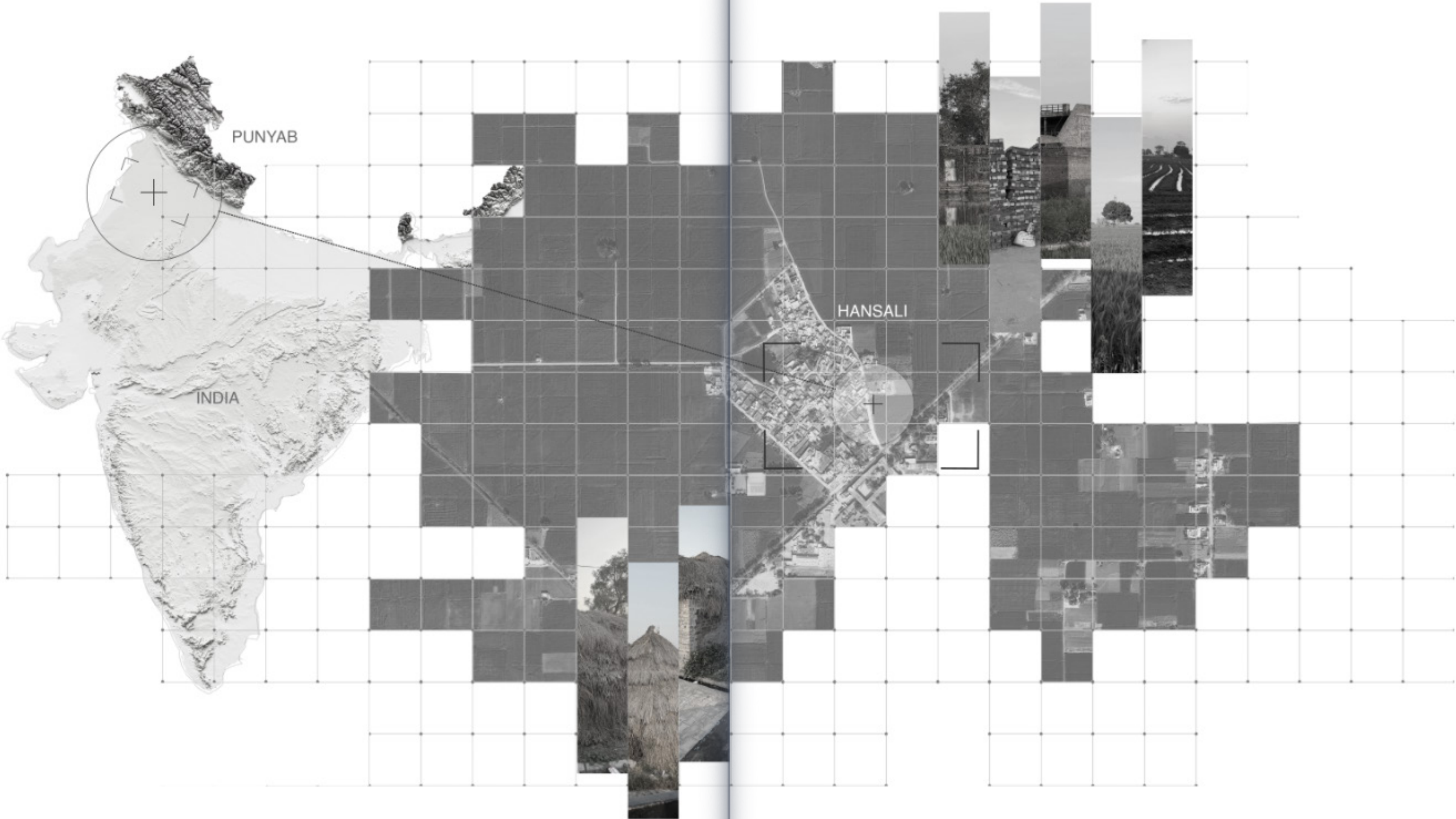
FORMAT

IMMEDIATE

MIDTERM

LONG-TERM







GRAB

Collecting agricultural waste becomes a simple, everyday act. With straw often found just across the street, anyone can gather it by hand and place it into a lightweight bag. No tools, no machinery, just local material and a few minutes of effort. This quick and accessible step makes use of what's already available.



MIX

Once the bag is filled with straw, a small amount of mycelium is added directly inside. Then, water is poured in to create the right environment for growth. The mixture stays inside the bag—no special equipment needed. It's a low-tech, hands-on process that activates the transformation from waste to building material.



DOWEL

After the bag is fully colonized and firm, it's ready to be assembled. Each bag is doweled to the next, creating stable joints without the need for adhesives or fasteners. As the mycelium continues to grow, it naturally binds the bags together, forming a solid, unified structure. Stability emerges not from force, but from connection.

An aerial, isometric view of a village model. The scene is divided into several distinct areas. In the upper left, there are several buildings, including a large one with a circular roof and a smaller one with a spiral roof. A large, circular, sun-like structure is visible in the center. To the right, there are more buildings, some with flat roofs and others with more complex shapes. In the lower right, there are agricultural fields with yellow and brown patterns, and a tractor is visible. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, browns, and yellows. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

GROWING THE VILLAGE

We envision Hansel as a living model of rural regeneration, where the village becomes a closed-loop system of material production, rooted in local knowledge and collective action. From the agricultural fields to the home, the community reclaims its resources, transforming agricultural waste into a carbon-negative building material cultivated with mycelium. This process is not outsourced; it is lived.

Villagers simply cross the street to collect waste in lightweight bags, inoculate it with fungal spores, and, together, grow the very components that shape their homes. In doing so, they don't just construct buildings; they cultivate autonomy, resilience, and a shared future.

What begins as a simple act, filling a bag becomes a tool for climate action, cultural continuity, and collective empowerment.

Since 2011, following the disaster in Fukushima, Japan, Atelier Bow-Wow, a prominent Japanese architectural firm, began collaborating with rural communities to help them rebuild their homes, neighborhoods, and facilities destroyed by the earthquake. They discovered the complexity of the built environment, specific behaviors, and practices. They delved deeply into the local culture. By integrating the communities from the beginning, Atelier Bow-Wow addressed ongoing issues in rural lifestyles and urban areas, which face different challenges². In this parallel process, Atelier Bow-Wow reshaped perceptions of rural life and the built environment by questioning the meaning of “progress” and challenging the notion that progress is solely related to urban areas while positioning rural lifestyles as its antithesis. Through their ongoing work in Fukushima with local communities, Atelier Bow-Wow addressed the issue of timber. They examined the entire process extraction, manufacturing, transportation, and observed how various actors were intertwined, shaped by the connection between natural resources and the relationship between city and countryside³. However, this connection is not just as it is normally seen as an extraction-exportation relationship; instead, this development of how they cultivate the natural resources, how they manage them, and so forth, has created unique community, with highly particular cultural practices, which are reflected in their built environment and who the inhabit their spaces. Like Momoyo Kaijima says in an interview to about their work “Historically, the development of architecture has always been tied to industrial development. We’re interested in how changes happening in rural Japan can be both reflected and supported by architecture. So that is why we investigate history, agriculture, and so on. Everything can be read as a spatial condition, as a design issue. So maybe our work can be a reaction-one legible to the people living in that location”.⁴

In his lecture at GSAAP AAD 2024, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto explores this practice by showing how the community directly participated in constructing a community center in a rice plantation. He illustrates the collection of tools required for building and expands on this by explaining that these tools represent more than mere equipment. They embody a living heritage and legacy that reflects the complexity of rural life and environment, which has not been recognized as progress or evolution like other contemporary developments. Additionally, he emphasizes how they sought to replicate the space’s use as locals do, such as the absence of furniture for eating; in Japan, people eat and sleep on the floor, maintaining direct contact with the building’s materiality.⁵

Should architects reevaluate the weight of relations between human behavior and the built environment? Atelier Bow-Wow in some way is approaching this issue in their work in Fukushima developing diverse approaches, resulting on project far from architectural trends. The Rice Plantation showcases this by designing from and with the people. Atelier Bow-wow projects are about crafting an interesting distance between what they make and the preexisting context, one that can promote some type of betterment without overbuilding.

1 Atelier Bow-Wow, “Architectural Ethnography”. GSD Harvard University. 2017.
<https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/exhibition/architectural-ethnography-by-atelier-bow-wow/>

2 Sunil Bald, “Atelier Bow-Wow” Bomb Magazine (Article) August 21, 2019. Accessed July 18th, 2024.
<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2019/08/21/atelier-bow-wow/>

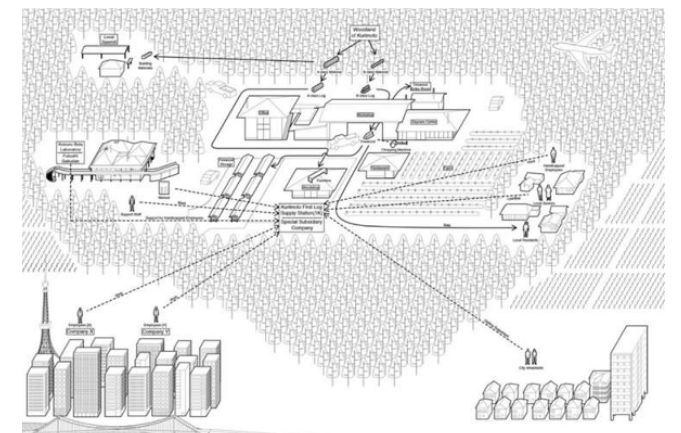
3 Sunil Bald, “Atelier Bow-Wow” Bomb Magazine (Article) August 21, 2019. Accessed July 18th, 2024.
<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2019/08/21/atelier-bow-wow/>

Negotiating the Act of Building

How Much Is Enough?

A case study on architectural restraint, community participation, and spatial ethics in rural Fukushima.

Transcalarities- Essay
 Summer 2024



4 Sunil Bald, “Atelier Bow-Wow” Bomb Magazine (Article) August 21, 2019. Accessed July 18th, 2024. 8th answer of Momoyo Kaijima.
<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2019/08/21/atelier-bow-wow/>

5Yoshiharu, Tsukamoto. “Arguments Lecture Series”. Columbia University GSAPP. May 30th, 2024..

I found it deeply compelling how Sarah Oppenheimer, through her work, establishes a precise and poetic connection between the observer's perception and the movement of physical structures. Rather than offering closed interpretations, her installations open a space for imagination and awareness, highlighting how every action initiates a chain of reactions, where each movement resonates and triggers responses in other bodies, forms, or systems.

During her presentation, Oppenheimer showcased a performance in which a person interacted with a dynamic array of metallic structures connected through tension elements. Some components glided horizontally with the help of wheels, while others were activated vertically via taut wires and pulleys. The entire setup operated like a choreographed system, where the performer's movement subtly transformed the spatial configuration. This orchestrated mechanical response reminded me of Alexander Calder's mobiles, but with a deliberate renunciation of their playful, ornamental beauty. Instead, what captivated me was the rawness of the exposed mechanics and the way the work revealed structural forces, mutual dependencies, and the delicate balance between freedom and constraint.

As I reflected on this piece, my thoughts turned to climate change. Today, many proposed solutions, particularly in design and public policy, often feel driven more by branding than by true systemic change. In my view, there is no single, clean solution to climate change. Any human activity that supports population or economic growth inevitably generates friction with the natural world. Every choice creates ripples, some visible, others not, and these often impact non-human ecosystems in profound and lasting ways.

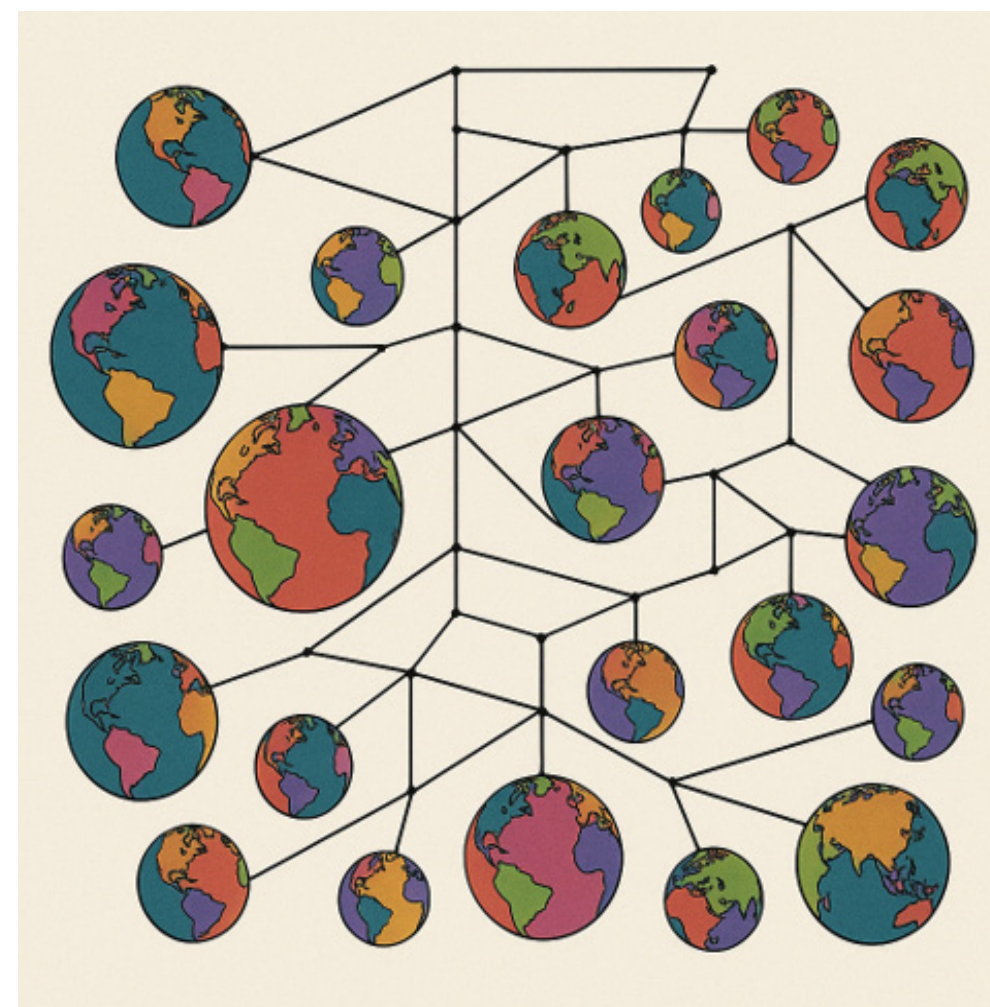
Oppenheimer's work resonated with these ideas. It made me think about architecture, urbanism, and the broader systems we engage in how our buildings, infrastructures, and cities not only reshape landscapes but frequently perpetuate extractivism, displacement, and socio-environmental imbalance. Her work, without offering a literal message, becomes a subtle yet potent metaphor for the entangled and often invisible relationships of cause and effect. It invites us to look closer, to notice the connections, and to reconsider the consequences of our movements in the world.

Frictional Systems

Architecture, Agency, and the Ethics of Movement

On Possibilism
Reflection on Sarah Oppenheimer's Lecture

Spring 2025



In the shadow of Chile’s cellulose industry, vast pine monocultures stretch across the south silent, ordered, and deceptively green. Yet beneath this appearance lies a history of displacement of native forests, rich biodiversity, and the ancestral Mapuche communities whose lands have been systematically transformed.

This project investigates the spatial, ecological, and political consequences of Chile’s cellulose production model, where fast-growing pine plantations have supplanted complex native ecosystems and reconfigured the landscape in service of a global export economy. While the industry has contributed to national economic growth and reduced certain inequalities, it has also left behind depleted soils, dried riverbeds, and communities severed from both land and memory.

This proposal seeks to reimagine the extractive infrastructure of cellulose through an eco-systemic and reparative lens. It explores the use of agricultural waste, an abundant and underutilized byproduct of Chile’s agricultural industry, as an alternative to pine-based pulp. Simultaneously, it proposes the relocalization of cellulose production to urban peripheries, where treated wastewater and proximity to urban resources could support more circular and environmentally just economies.

Through fieldwork, cartographic analysis, and speculative design, the project negotiates a new ecology of paper, one that restores ecosystems, returns land to Indigenous stewardship, and envisions a post-extractive, regenerative future.

The outcome will be a speculative architectural prototype: a conceptual, site-responsive design for a post-pine micro cellulose factory. This prototype will distill the research into a tangible spatial proposition that merges architecture, infrastructure, and ecological repair. It will be presented through architectural drawings, material studies, and narrative diagrams, serving not only as a critical design artifact, but as a tool to spark public dialogue in Chile around the future of cellulose production and land restitution.

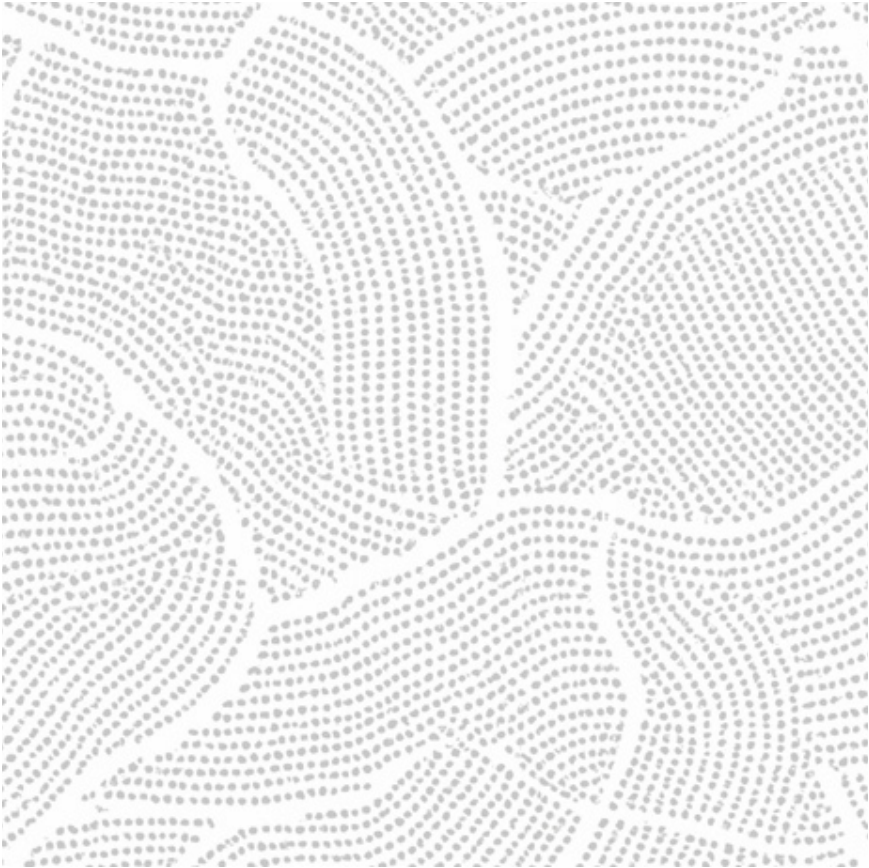
The Post-Pine Landscape

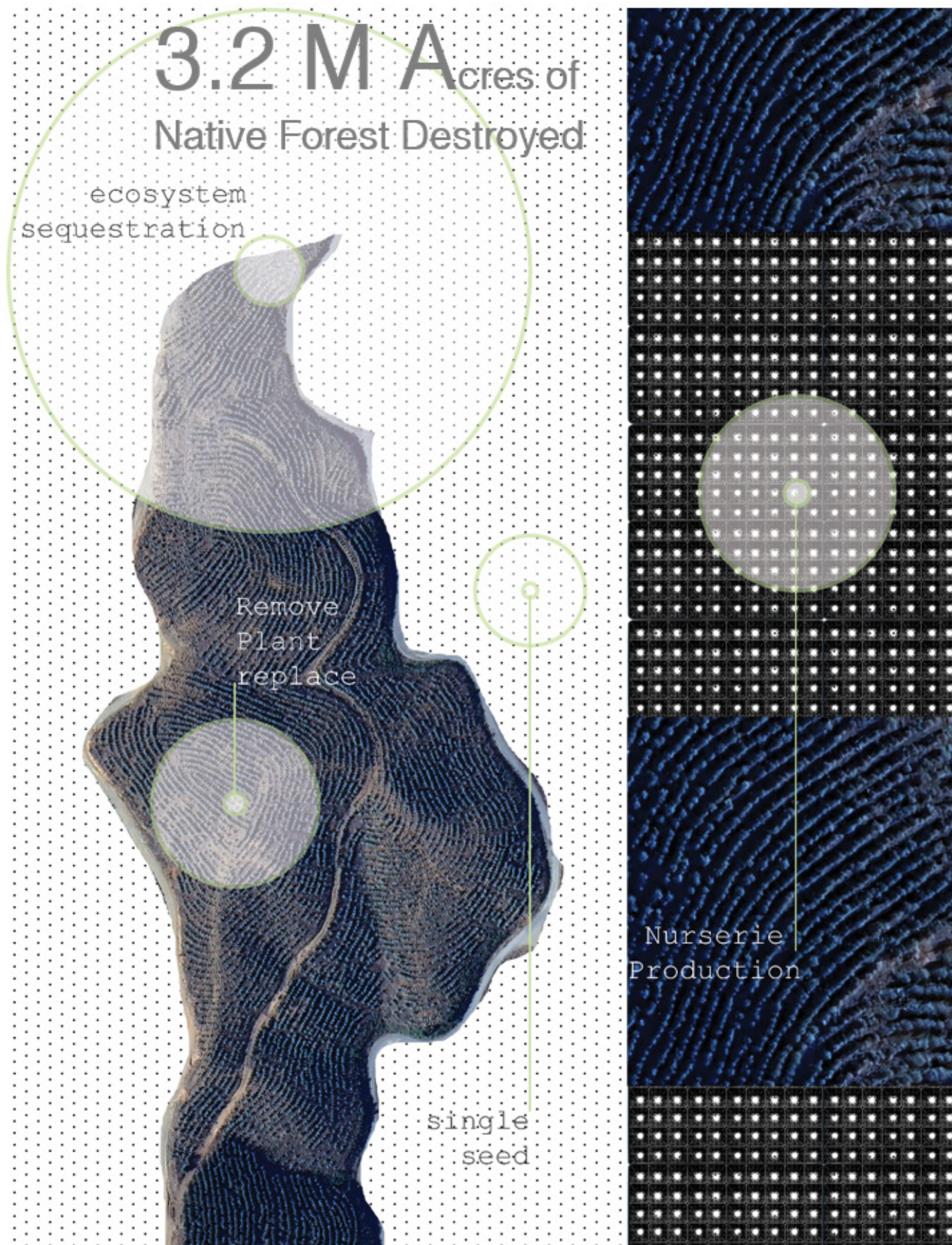
A New Ecology of Paper

Negotiating Ecologies, Industries, and Ancestral Claims in Southern Chile

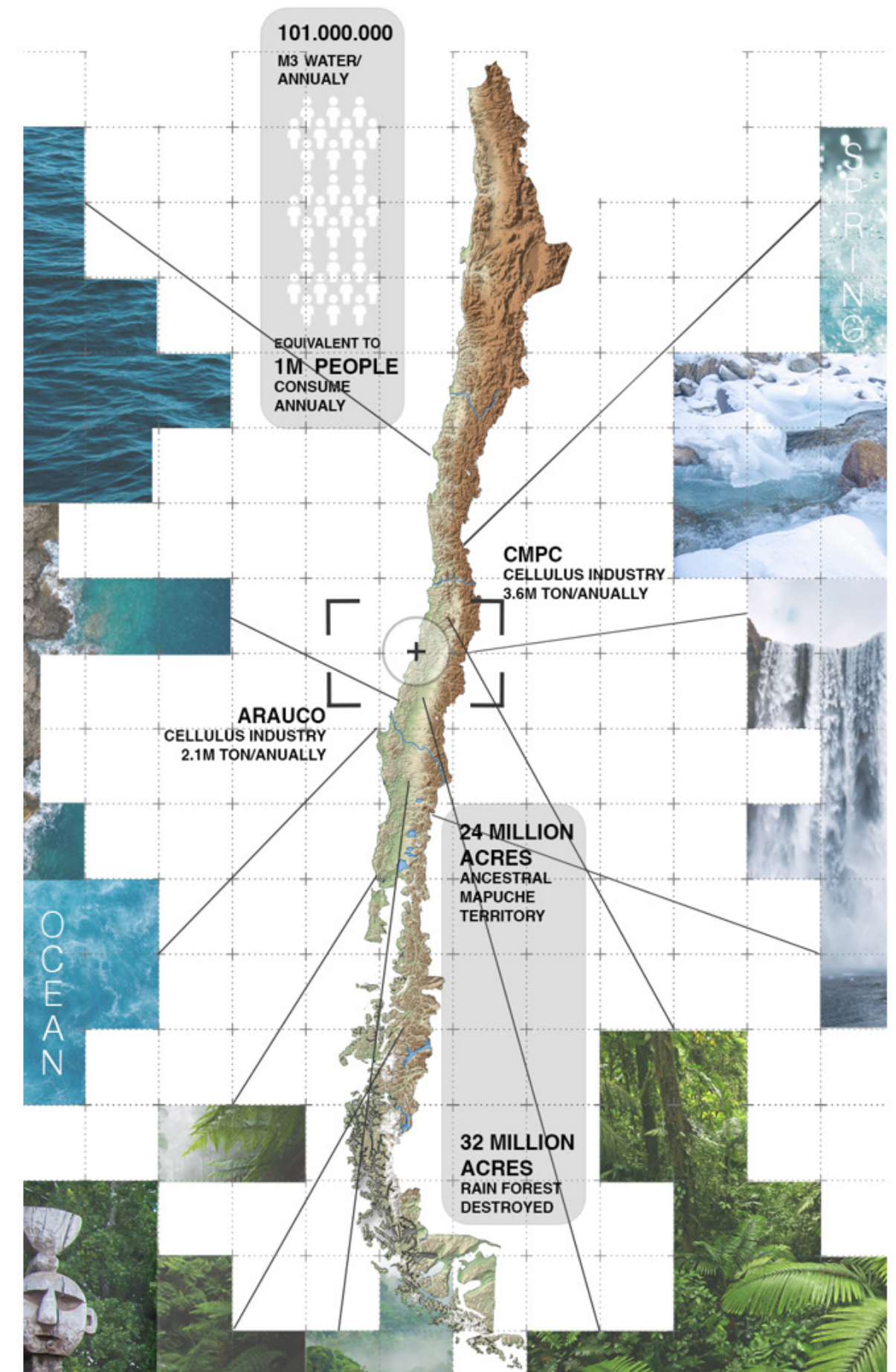
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Spring 2025

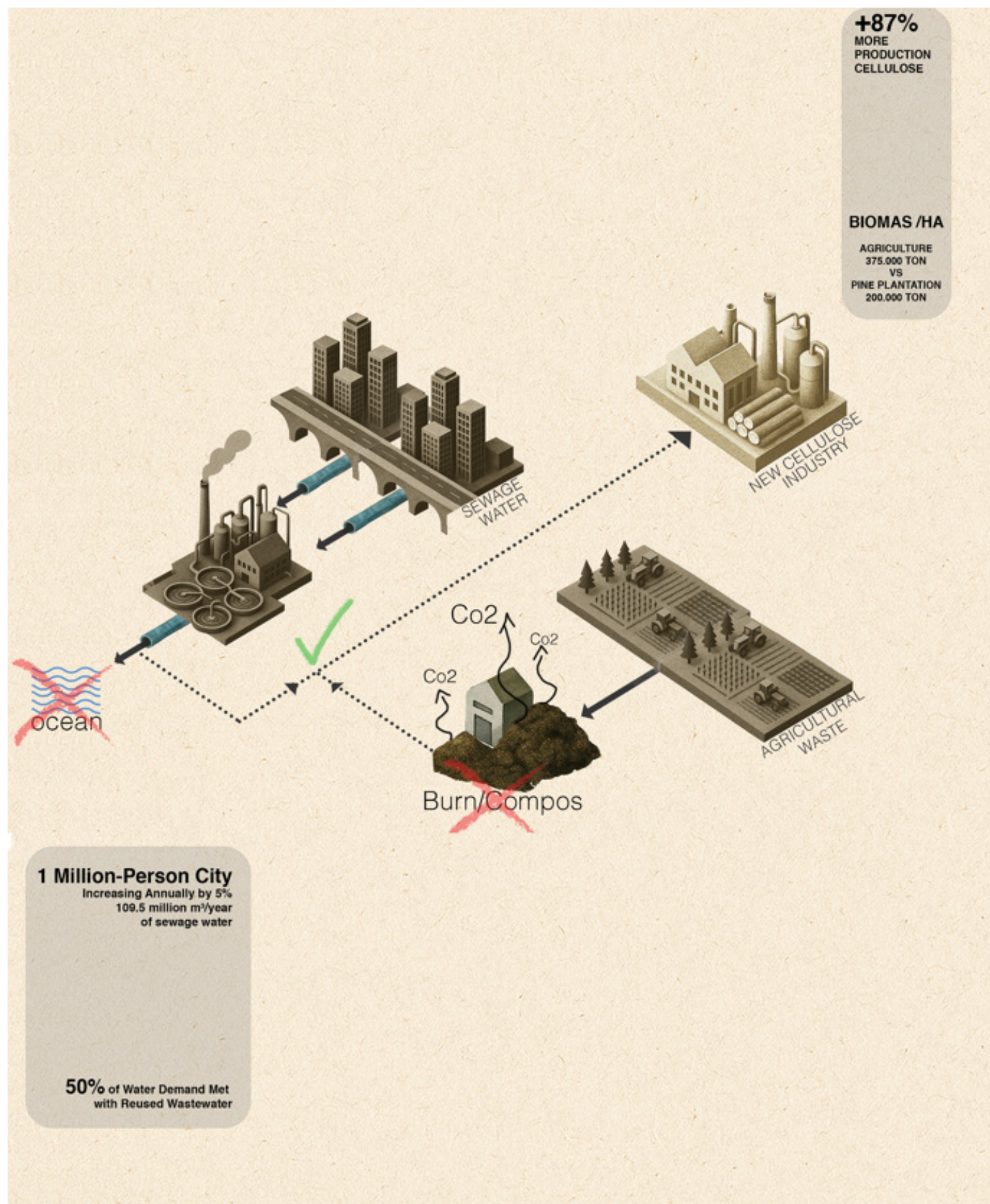




3.2 Million Acres of Native Forest Replaced by Pine Plantations in the Biobío Region, Chile.



Industry Consumption.



By reusing treated city water and local agricultural waste, we can eliminate the need for pine plantations, relocate the industry closer to urban areas, and restore degraded Indigenous territories. This shift reduces transport, saves 50% of water, and boosts production by 87% thanks to the higher yield of agricultural biomass.



By relocating the pulp industry to peri-urban areas, minimizing its spatial footprint, and maximizing its efficiency, we could open space to heal Mapuche territory and restore an ecosystem that has long been held captive. Historically displaced communities could begin to reclaim their land and rebuild their connection to it.

CREDITS BY PROJECT

Time- CAPSUL-ING.

Advanced Design Studio IV.
Proyect-research.
Authors: Andrea Zamora- Esteban Martinez
Year: 2024

Theoretical Handbook for (Adaptive?) Reuse.

Book - Research- Adv Studio V
Authors: Flora and Esteban
Year: 2025

Bridging on Buildings.

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Authors: Sebastian Dominguez- Esteban Martinez
Year: 2024

Myco Bag.

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Authors: Sebastian Dominguez- Esteban Martinez
Year: 2025

Negotiating the Act of Building.

Transcalarities
Authors: Esteban Martinez
Year: 2019

Frictional Systems.

On Possibilism
Authors:Esteban Martinez
Year: 2024

The Post-Pine Landscape.

Kinne Fellow
Authors: Esteban Martinez
Year: 2025

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