



ARCHITECTURE PORTFOLIO

MSAAD Graduation/ Ellie Nolan

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Across my work at GSAPP, I explored adaptability as a central architectural question, investigating how buildings and environments can respond to changing landscapes, users, programs, and sensory conditions over time. In ***Hudson Valley Institute***, I asked how architecture can embed itself within the landscape in a way that allows built form, light, and terrain to continuously shape one another over time, leading to a project that is carved into and extended from the earth itself. In ***Irish-American Heritage Museum***, adaptability was explored through adaptive reuse, questioning how historically fixed institutional buildings can become flexible spaces for cultural production, gathering, and public engagement. ***Connecting the Dots*** examined how architecture can adapt to changing relationships between movement, landscape, infrastructure, and human perception, revealing the constructed nature of “natural” environments. In the ***Daycare Facility***, I investigated how architecture can adapt spatial scale, circulation, and material experience to support children’s changing developmental and emotional needs through spaces calibrated to independence, comfort, and growth. Finally, ***Sensory ADA Toolkit*** expanded adaptability into the realm of accessibility and perception, asking how architecture can move beyond static standards of compliance to create environments that continuously adapt to diverse sensory experiences and modes of perception. Together, these projects shaped my understanding of architecture not as a fixed object, but as an evolving system capable of responding to changing human and environmental conditions.

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02 Hudson Valley Institute

Structure and Light: Embedded in Landscape

Location: Hudson, New York

Instructor: Steven Holl and Garrick Ambrose

Partner: I Lok U

Time: Spring 2026

Software: Rhino, AutoCAD, Photoshop

Type: Artist Residence and Museum

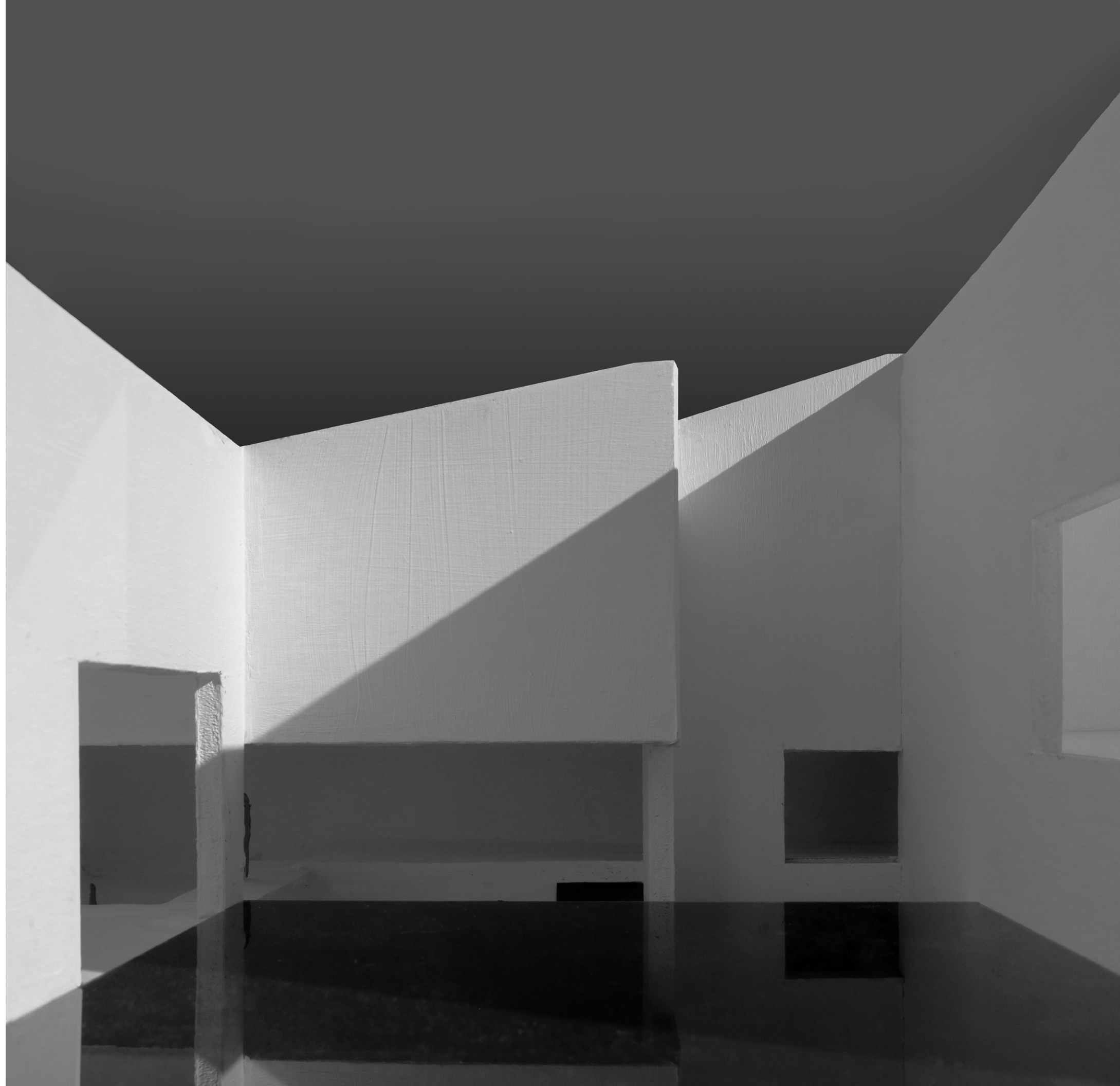
Size: 23,000 sf

Situated on the Olana estate, the proposed Berggruen Institute engages the Hudson Valley's distinctive landscape as a think tank and research campus for artists and scholars. Defined by rolling hills, layered vistas, and atmospheric light, the site presents a condition that is both expansive and immersive.

Drawing from Frederic Church and the Hudson River School of Painting, the project is informed by a sensitivity to light, composition, and the reciprocal relationship between landscape and architecture. Within Churches painting, architecture acts as an anchor within the terrain, minimizing its visual presence and allowing sky and light to remain primary.

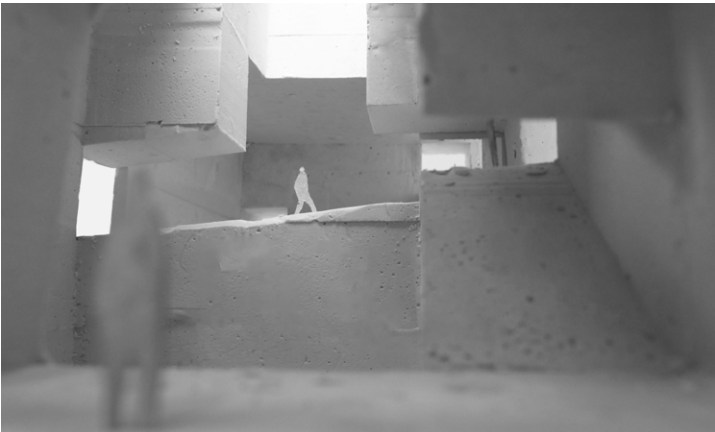
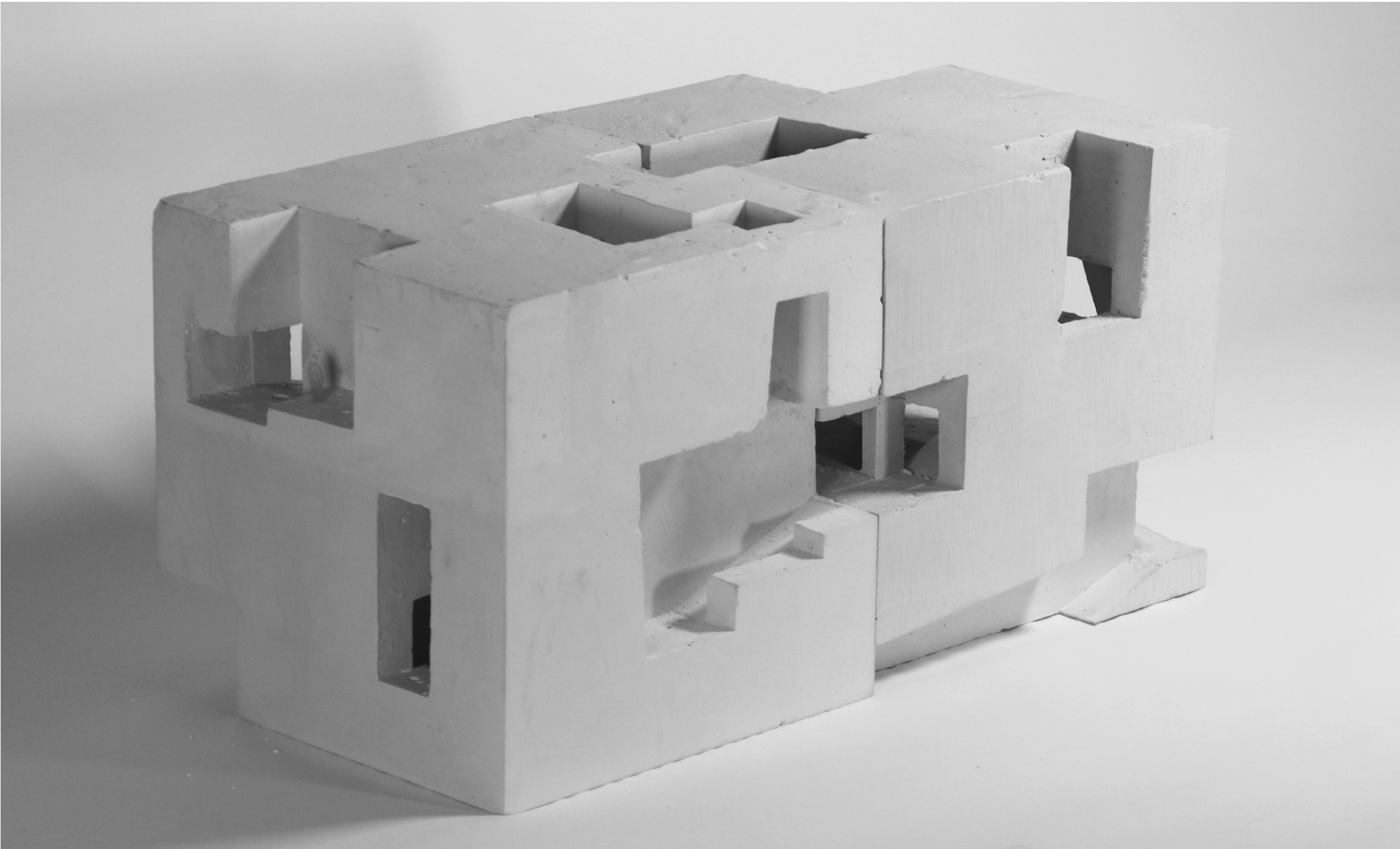
The project embeds itself within the surrounding hills, emerging through a series of subtractions and protrusions from the earth. A spatial sequence transitions from elevated to embedded conditions, carving two primary voids into the terrain before projecting outward once again into the landscape.

These carved courtyards draw natural light deep into the gallery spaces, while elevated volumes housing residences, studios, and offices extend outward to frame expansive views of the valley. The project operates simultaneously as excavation and extension, mediating between earth and sky, presence and absence.



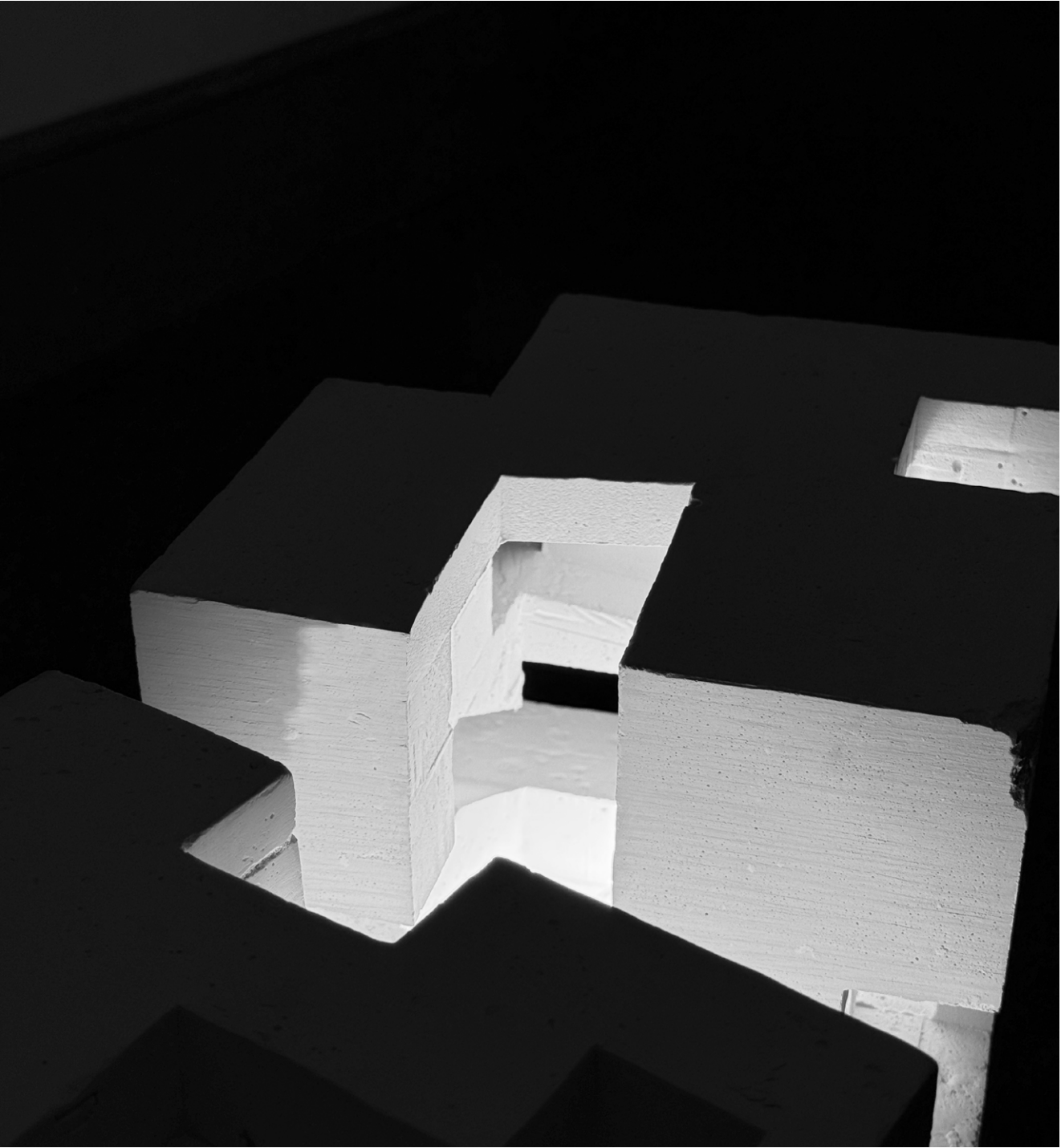
Language: Structure & Light:

Completed as the first project of the semester, this volumetric study explores the verb to carve through solid and void relationships that shape circulation around two central spaces. Inspired by Eduardo Chillida, two interlocking paths are impressed into the volume, creating layered spatial sequences through the poche.

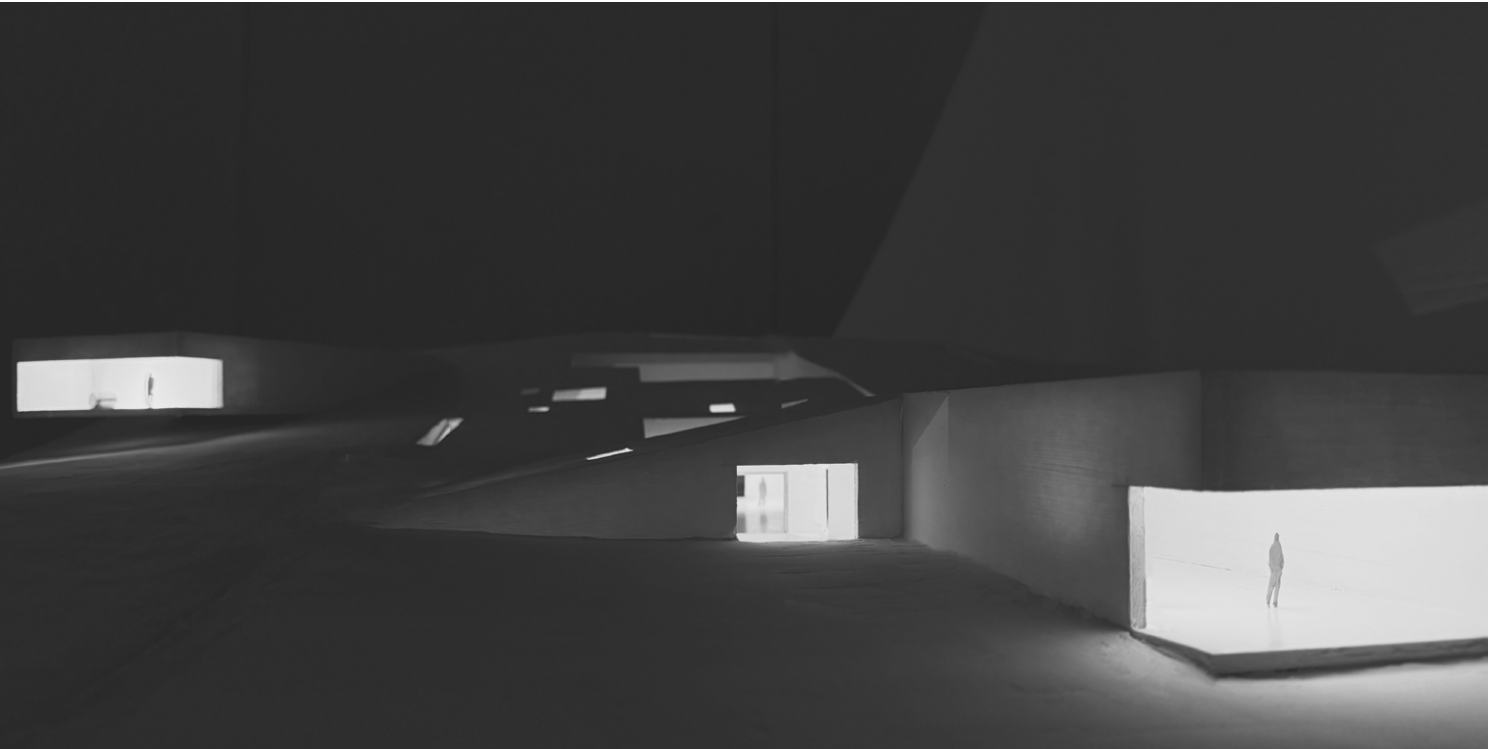


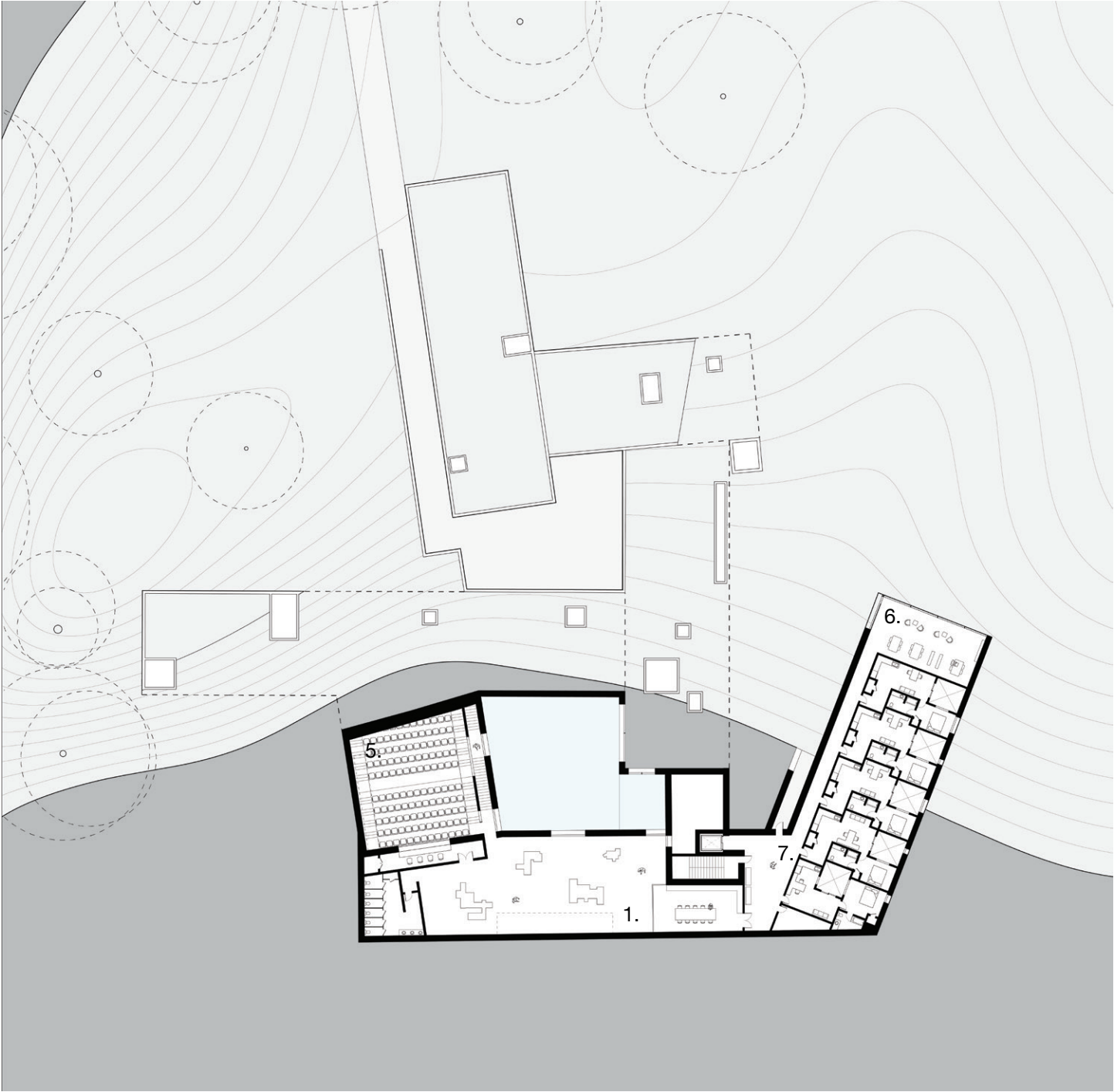
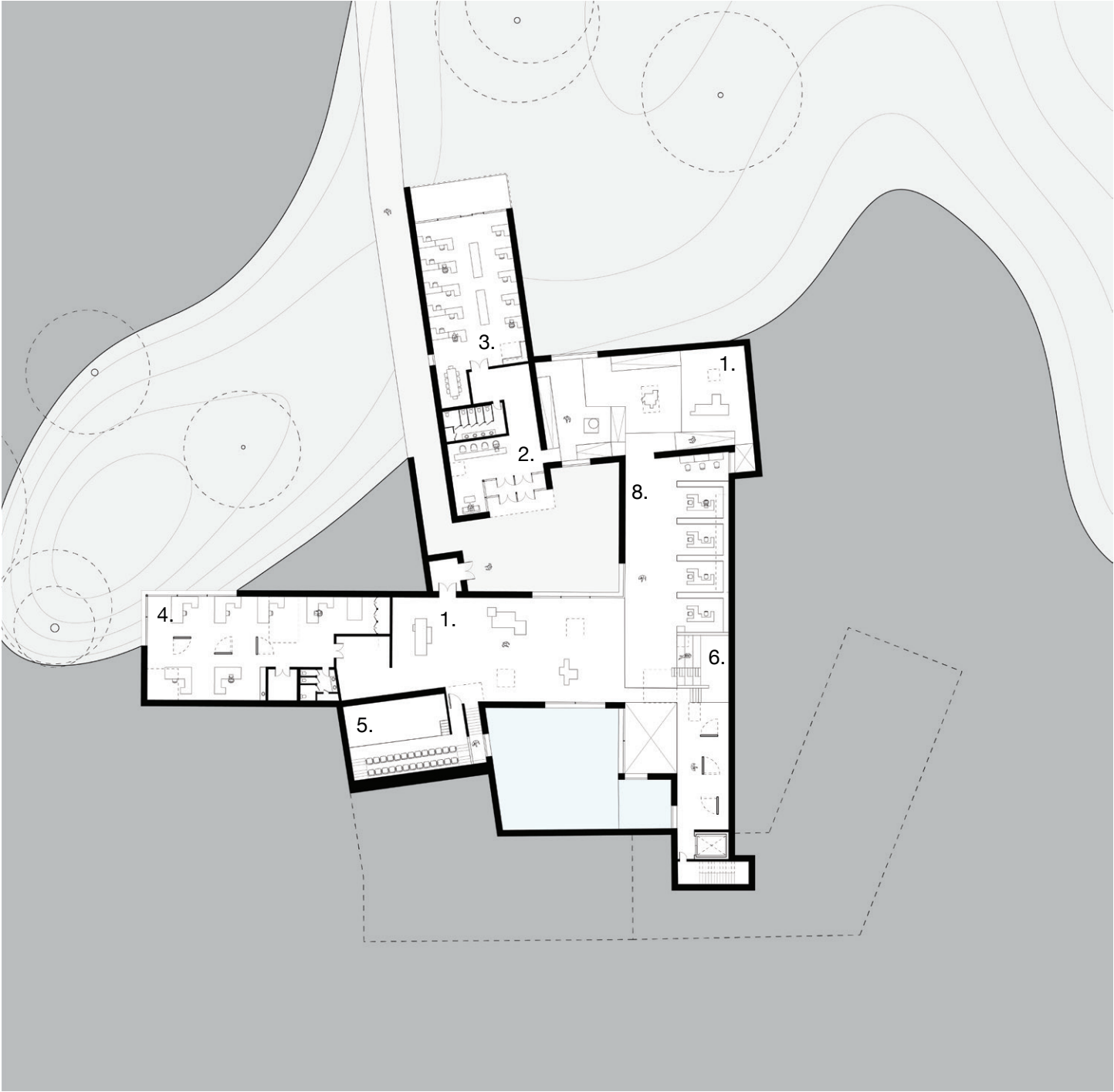


Model Study: This model study explored how the models could become a source of light rather than simply shaped by it, shifting from light as a carving tool to light as something emanating from within.

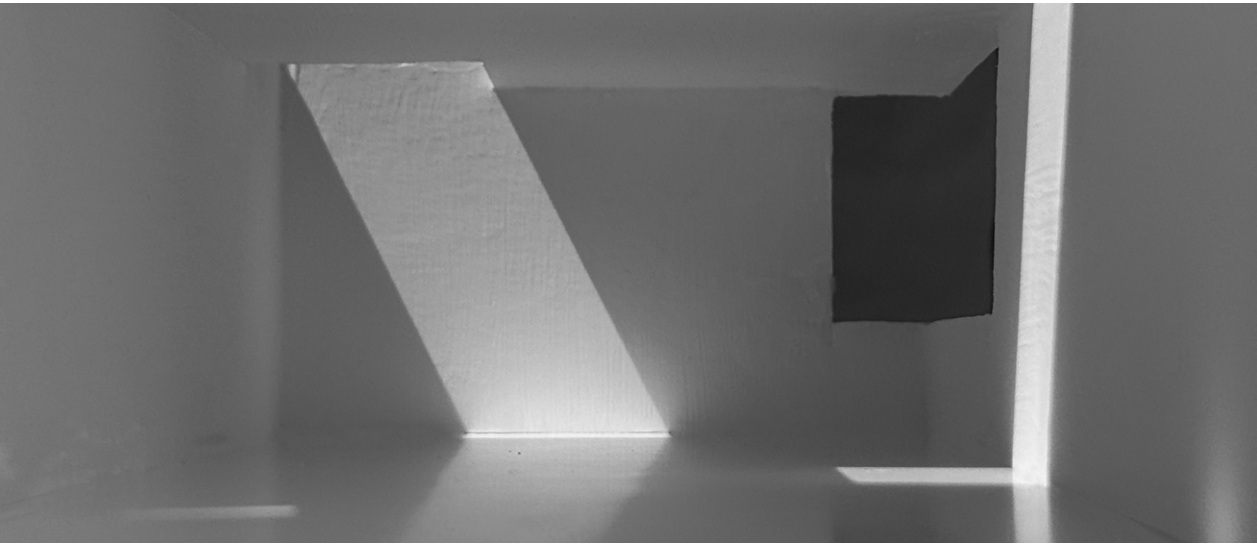
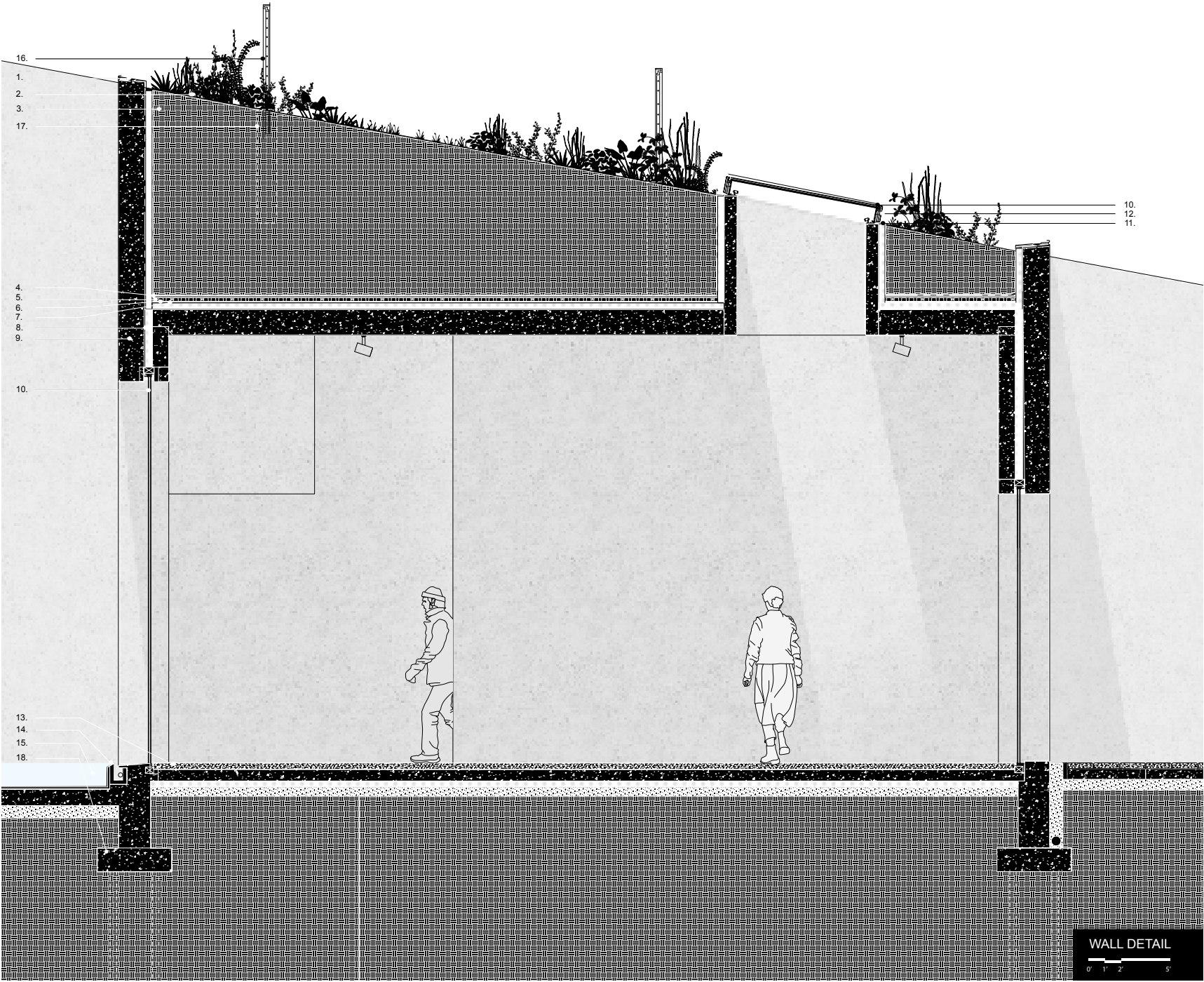


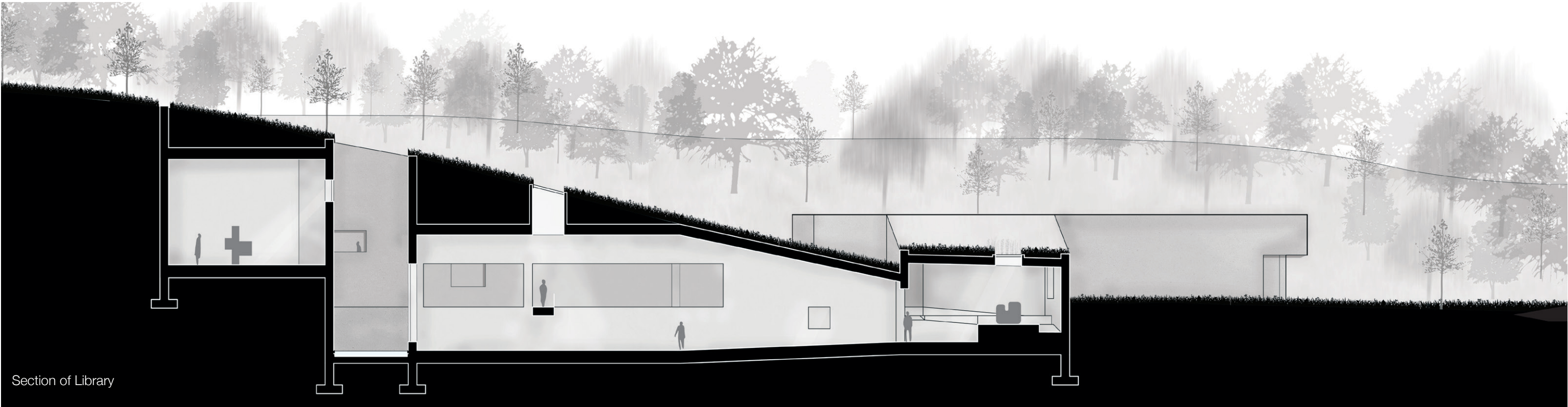
Second Half:
Submerged within the landscape, the project is experienced through a sequence of carved subtractions and emerging protrusions from the earth, creating a dialogue between terrain, light, and space.



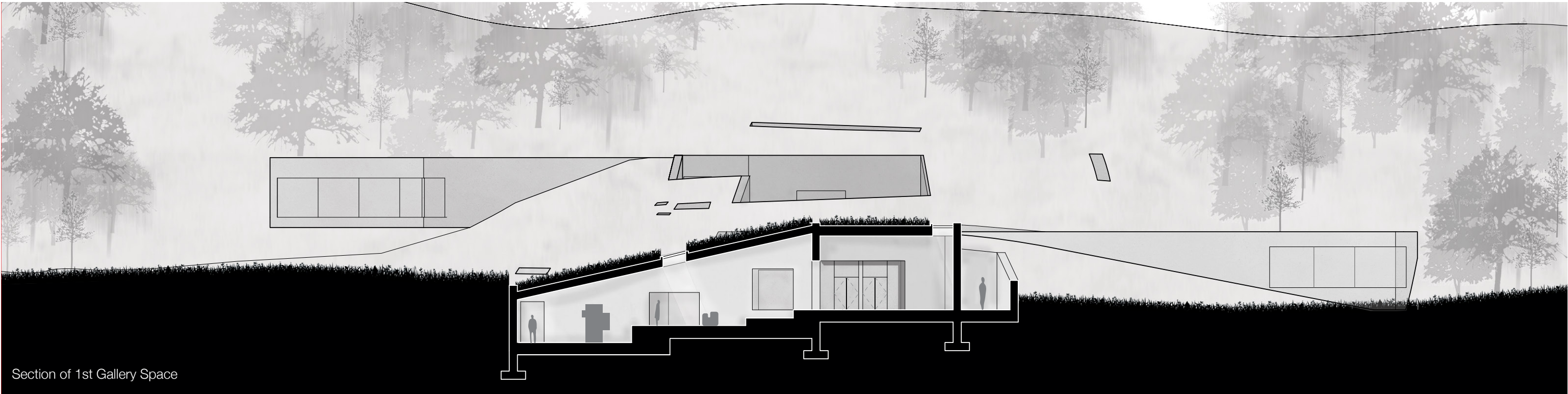


- 1. ALUMINUM COPING
- 2. VEGETATION
- 3. EXTENSIVE ROOFTOP BLEND
- 4. FILTER FABRIC
- 5. ROOT BARRIER
- 6. DRAINAGE LAYER
- 7. WATERPROOF MEMBRANE
- 8. RIGID INSULATION
- 9. CONCRETE STRUCTURE
- 10. INSULATING LAMINATED GLAZING
- 11. SILICONE SEALANT
- 12. LIGHT GAUGE SILL FLASHING
- 13. TERRAZZO FINISHED CONCRETE
- 14. WEEP SCREED TYP.
- 15. REFLECTING POOL
- 16. GUARD RAIL
- 17. RAILING FOOTING
- 18. CONCRETE FOOTING

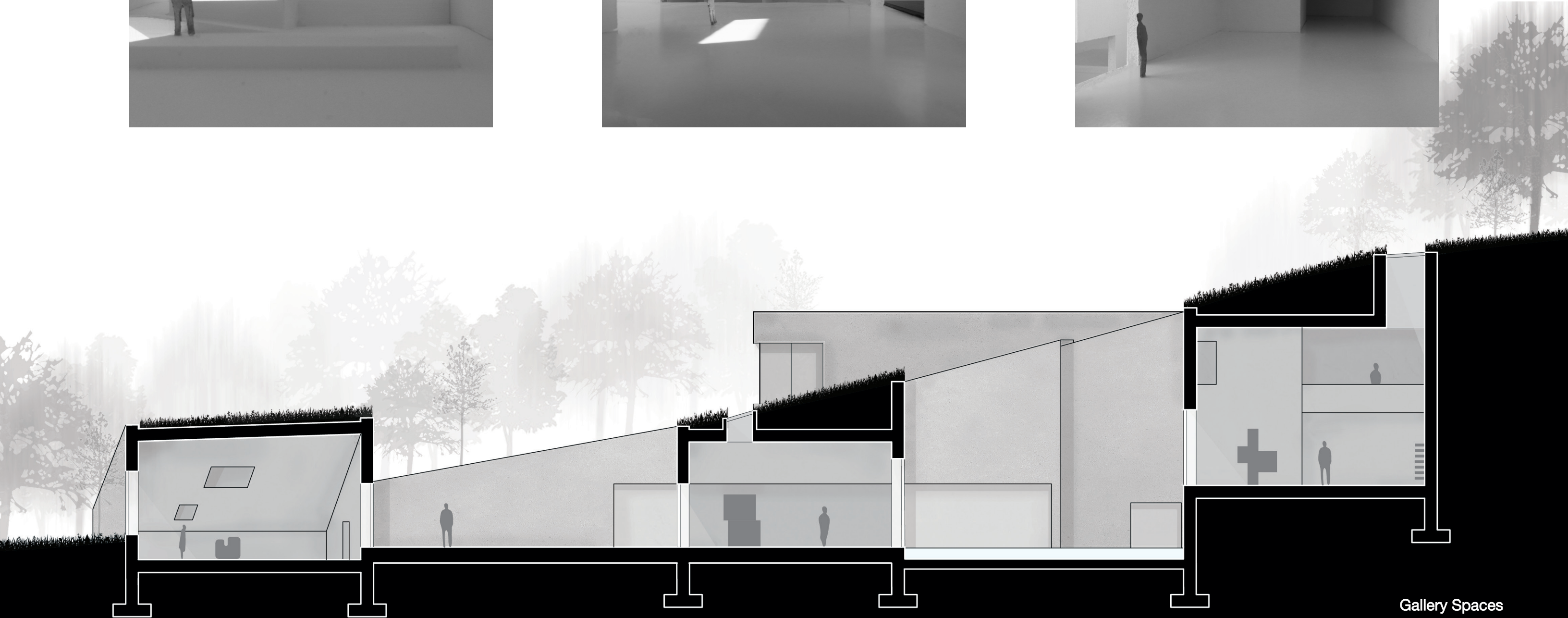
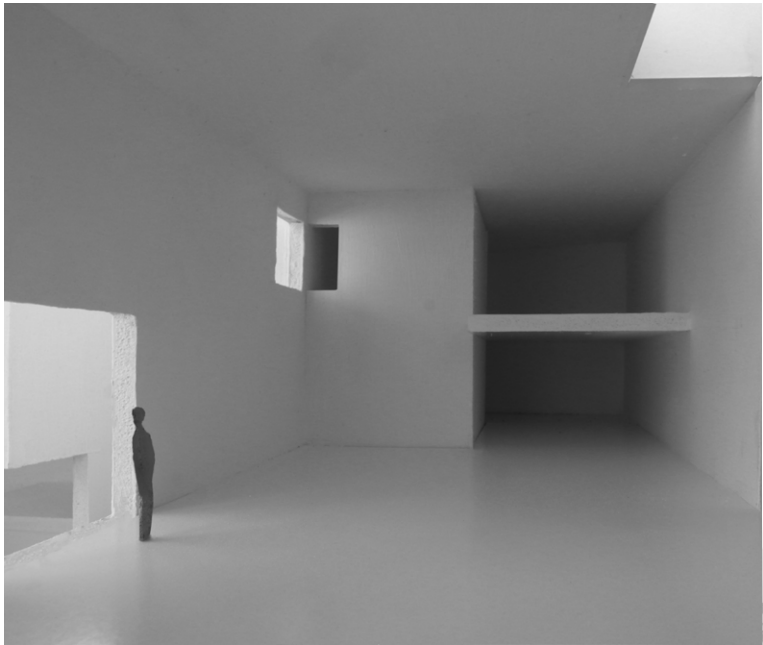




Section of Library



Section of 1st Gallery Space



Gallery Spaces

02 Irish-American Museum

Adaptive Reuse of John Johanson's US Embassy

Location: Dublin, Ireland

Instructor: Jorge Otero-Pailos and Mark Rakatansky

Partner: Valentina Lizcano

Time: Fall 2025

Software: Revit, Rhino, AutoCAD, Photoshop, D5

Type: Adaptive Reuse

Size: 50,000 sf

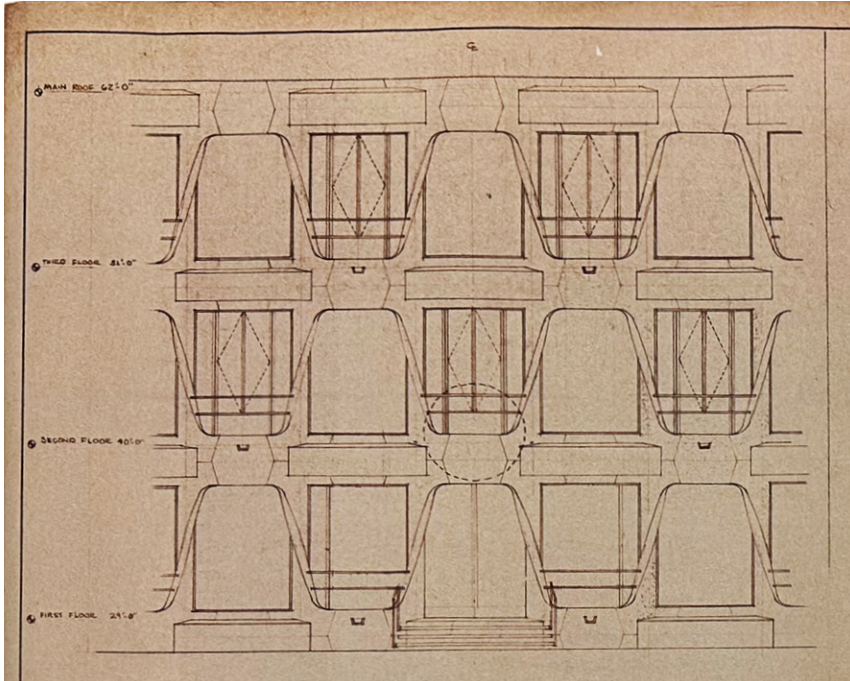
The Irish-American Heritage Museum reimagines John Johansen's 1960s U.S. Embassy in Dublin as a living monument to migration, labor, and resilience. Through adaptive reuse, the project transforms a former site of diplomacy into a public space for reflection and creation. Developed collaboratively with equal design input, I produced the plans, sections, and detail drawings, while my partner developed the perspective renderings.

Visitors move through a sequence of galleries exploring immigration, material, labor, and the future, expressed through shifts in light, texture, and sound. Thick concrete walls organize reading rooms, workshops, and gathering spaces, while a copper stair weaves through a central light-filled void. Upper floors host workshops and classrooms that extend the museum into an active, revenue-generating artist collective, positioning architecture as both cultural institution and site of making.

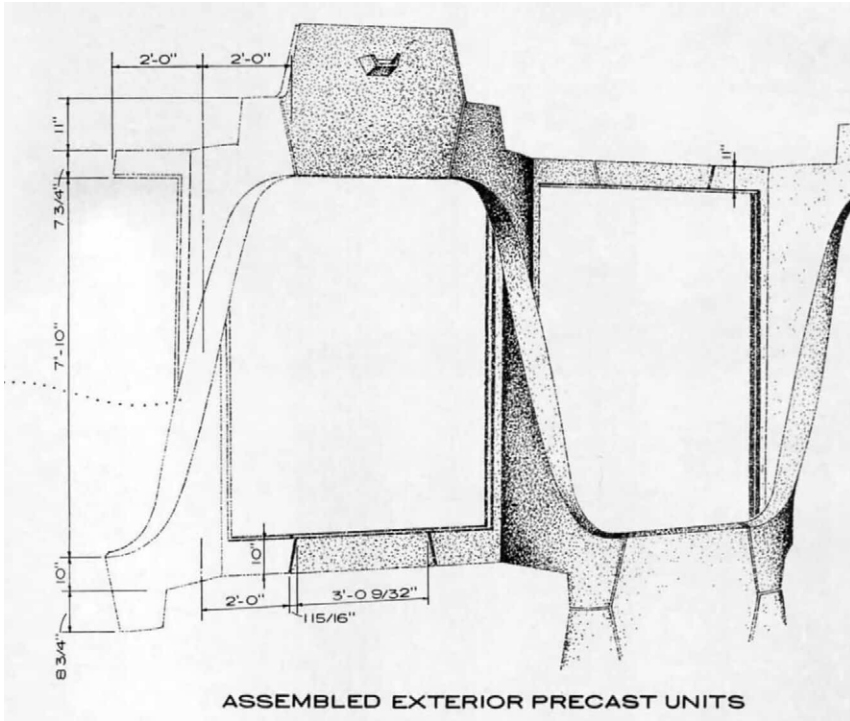


Facade:

John Johansen’s U.S. Embassy in Dublin is a landmark of mid-century brutalist design, defined by its distinctive schokkabeton facade, a technique in which concrete is shot or pneumatically applied to create a rough, textured surface with extraordinary depth and materiality. The result is a building that feels simultaneously heavy and expressive, its exterior reading almost like a geological formation, with layers of accumulated matter rather than a smooth, resolved finish. This quality made the facade a central reference point for our project, as its raw, extracted character directly echoed the material logic of mining, and preserving it became both an act of architectural respect and a way of grounding the new intervention in the weight of what was already there.



Elevation by Johansen



Facade Detail by Johansen



Embassy in 1964



Facade Collage:
The layered stone facade reveals the building's material logic, shifting from smooth to rough like an exposed geological cut, preparing visitors for a descent into the museum where stories of extraction are uncovered below ground.

Museum

The studio included a curatorial component, requiring each object in the museum to be carefully selected and researched. The museum begins with Immigration, where visitors descend beside the embassy wall, surrounded by famine artifacts that speak to loss and departure and set the stage for the Irish journey to America. In Material, rough stone, board-formed concrete, and timber walkways ground visitors in the physical world of extraction, while objects such as copper samples and mining picks trace a lineage from ancient craft to industrial labor. The Labor, Resilience, Religion, and Future galleries continue this narrative of endurance, faith, and transformation, honoring those who turned struggle into solidarity while looking ahead to renewal through education, making, and the preserved presence of Johansen's original façade.



A Tribute to the Irish Community
Amanda Jane Graham
1916–1919, Butte, Montana



Perspective A

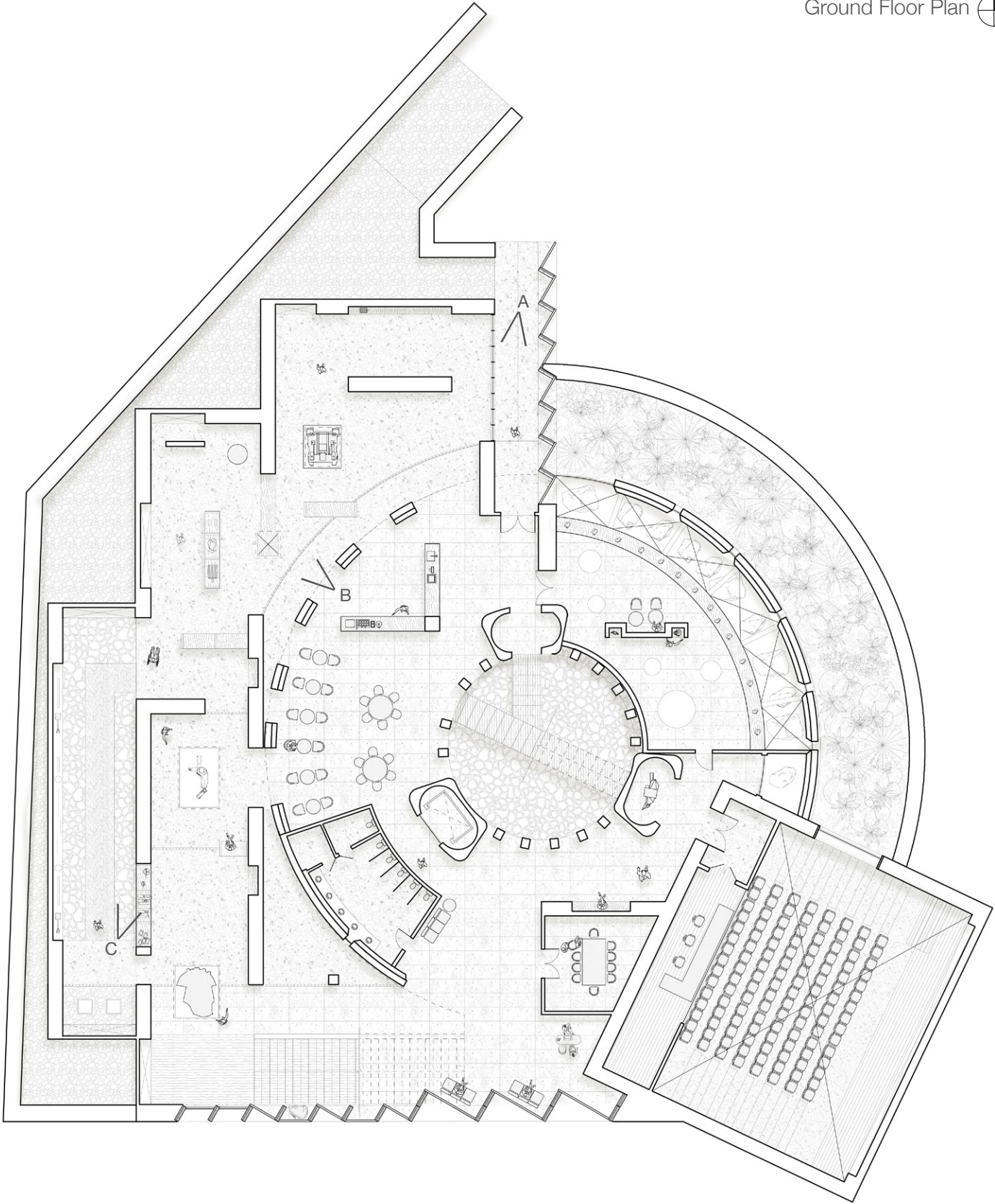


Perspective B



Perspective C

Ground Floor Plan



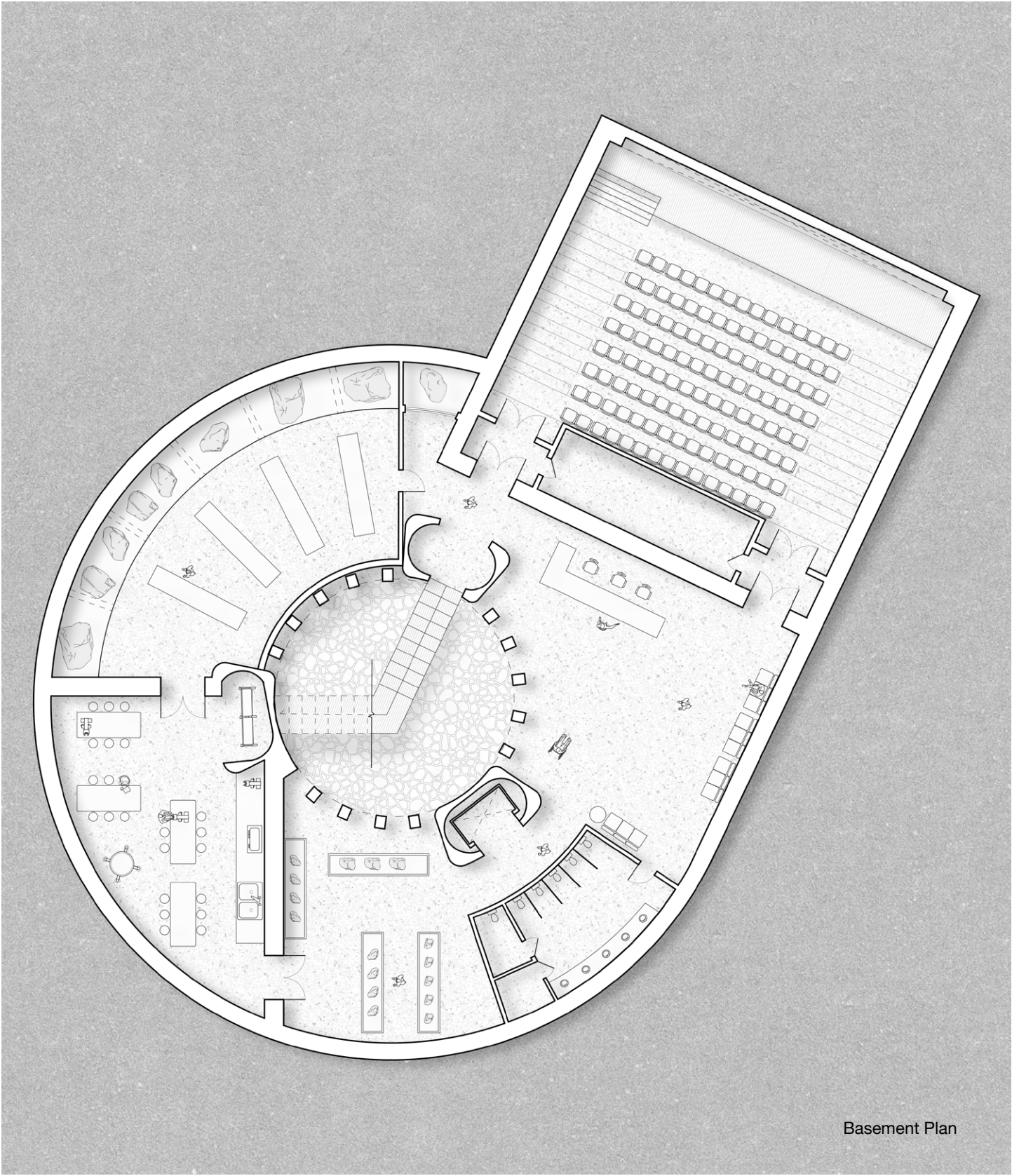


Original Atrium Space



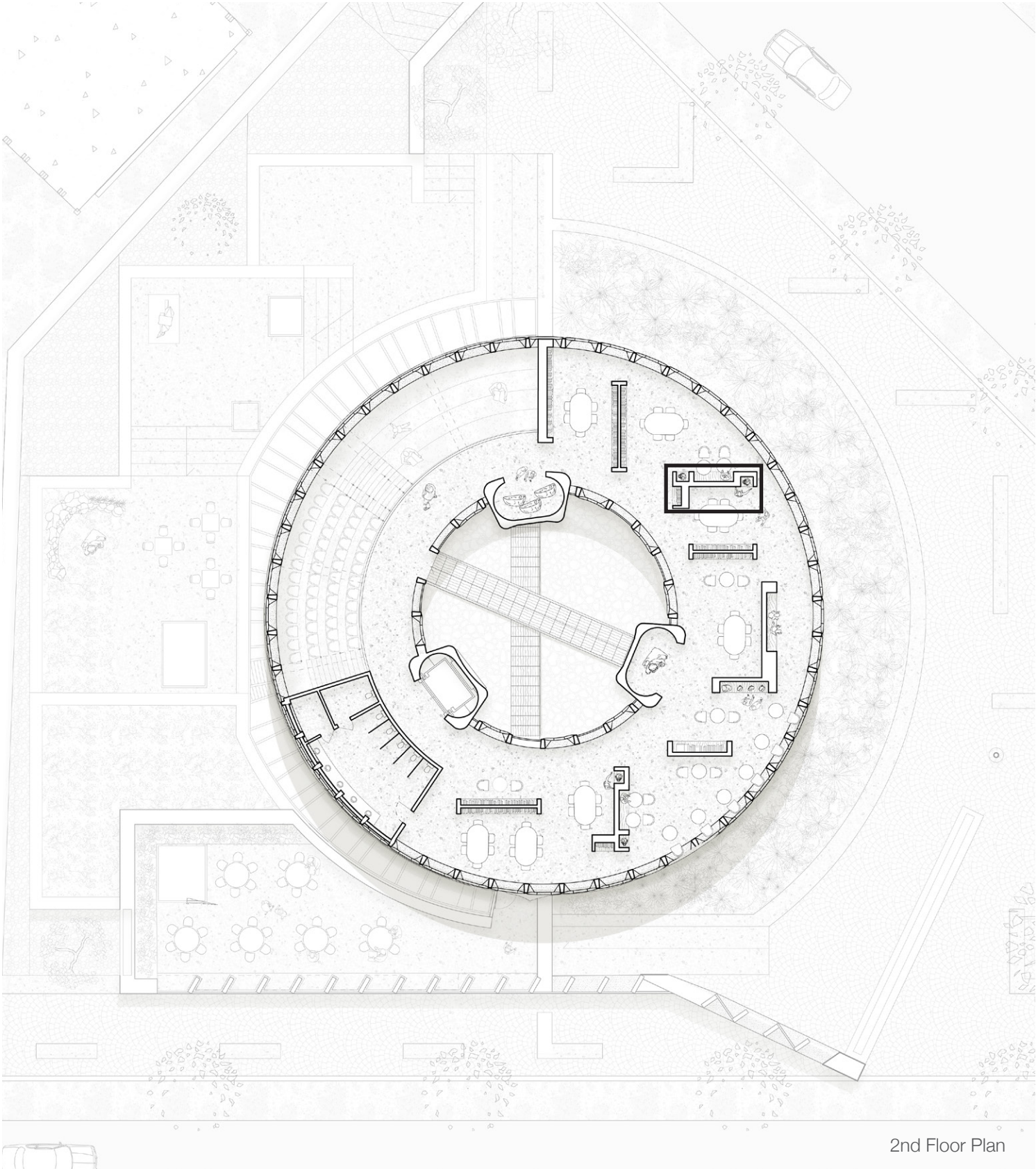
New Atrium Space

From the museum, visitors rise through a central atrium, a vertical vein of light that anchors the building. A copper stair winds upward through the embassy's internal façade, linking the museum, library, theater, and workshops. As sunlight filters through the clerestory, movement becomes a spatial narrative where ascent itself feels like illumination.



Basement Plan

Upper levels are organized as a revenue-generating maker space, combining workshops and archival areas to support research, fabrication, and public use.



2nd Floor Plan



Section Perspective highlighting program stacking

- Basement: material archive and theater
- Ground Floor: museum
- 1st-3rd: classrooms and workshops

03 Connecting the Dots

Human Imprints on Dartmoor's Landscape

Location: Devon, England

Instructor: Elise Misao Hunchuck and Marco Ferrari

Partner: Jason Li

Time: Summer 2025

Software: GIS, Photoshop

Type: Speculative Environmental

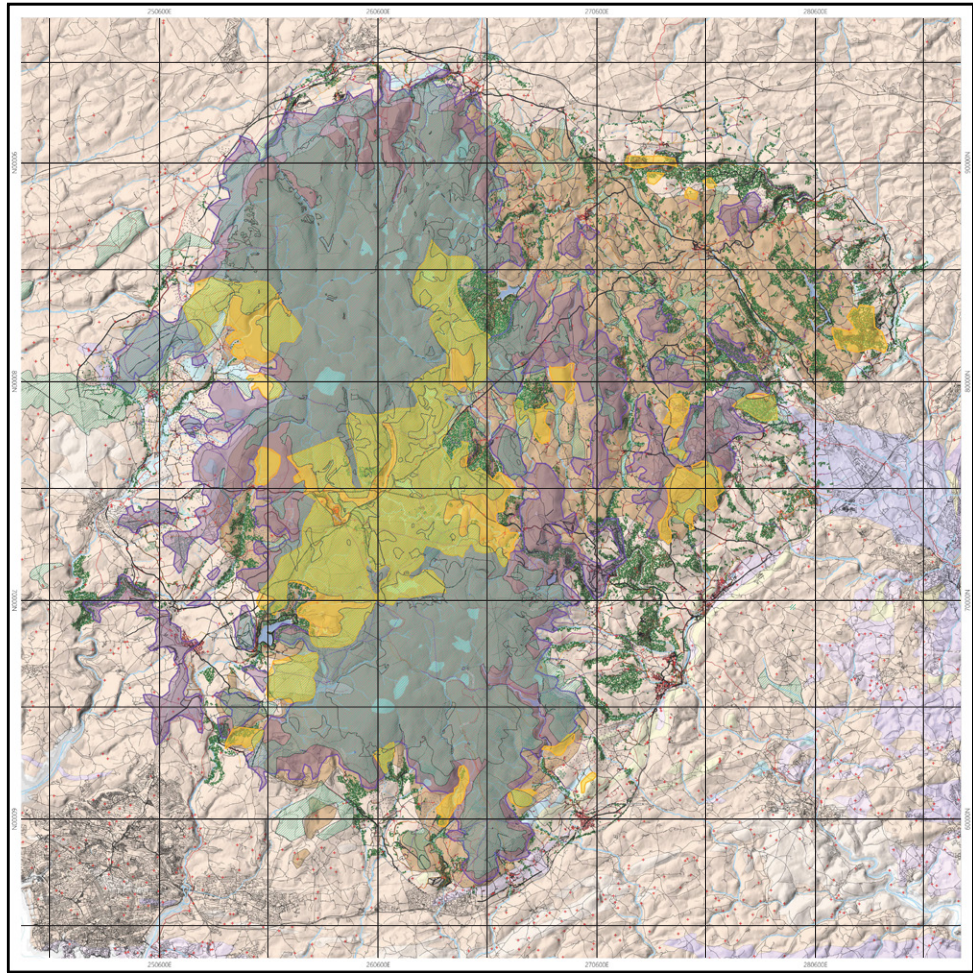
This project examines Trail Markers by Nancy Holt to reveal how subtle interventions shape the perception of “natural” landscapes. Documenting a trail in Dartmoor, the work highlights how movement, access, and environmental management construct what we understand as nature. Developed collaboratively at the conceptual level, I focused on the design and fabrication of the physical model, while my partner led the mapping and graphic production.

The project extends this inquiry through models and visualizations that explore how architecture mediates movement and balances coexistence with control. Peepholes frame curated views, while a layered map reveals hidden systems of extraction and infrastructure.

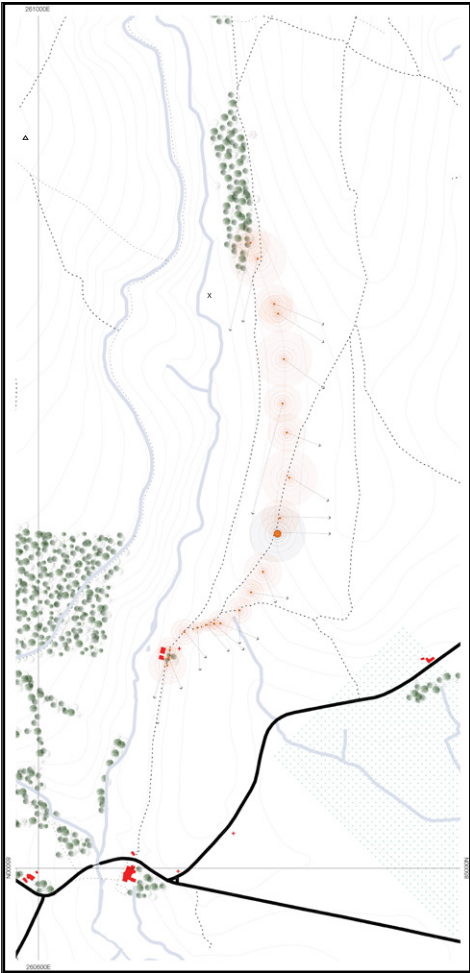


The two maps show Dartmoor National Park as it presently is and how we see the landscape in 2025. This isn't just a navigational tool, it's an interpretive lens. We've layered official hiking paths with historical traces of land use such as medieval farmsteads, abandoned mines, sheepfolds, military zones, and archaeological remains. It also includes ecological overlays including areas of degraded heather moorland, damaged peatlands, Molinia dominance, and trails impacted by overuse.

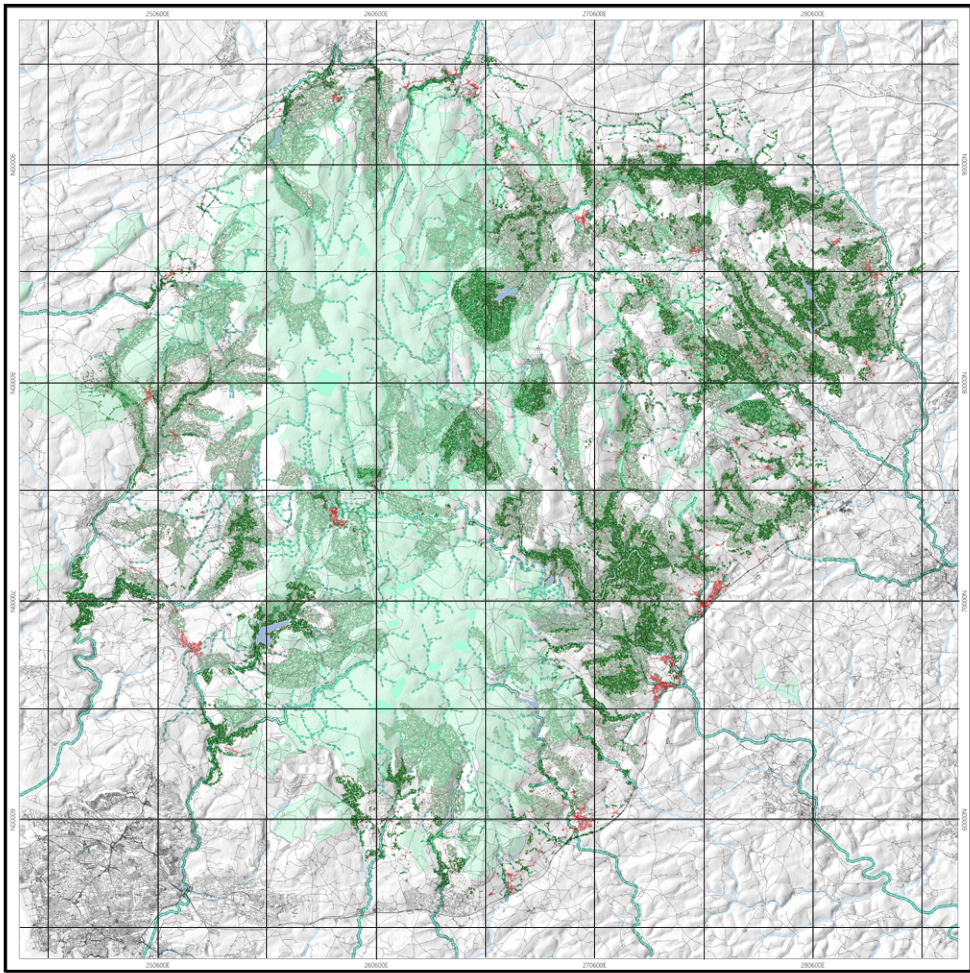
We draw attention to how accessibility through tourism and the right to roam creates both connection and strain on the land. Paths erode and habitats shift, yet these movements keep Dartmoor alive in the cultural imagination. The landscape remains adaptable, continually reshaped by human movement and ecological change as it balances access and preservation.



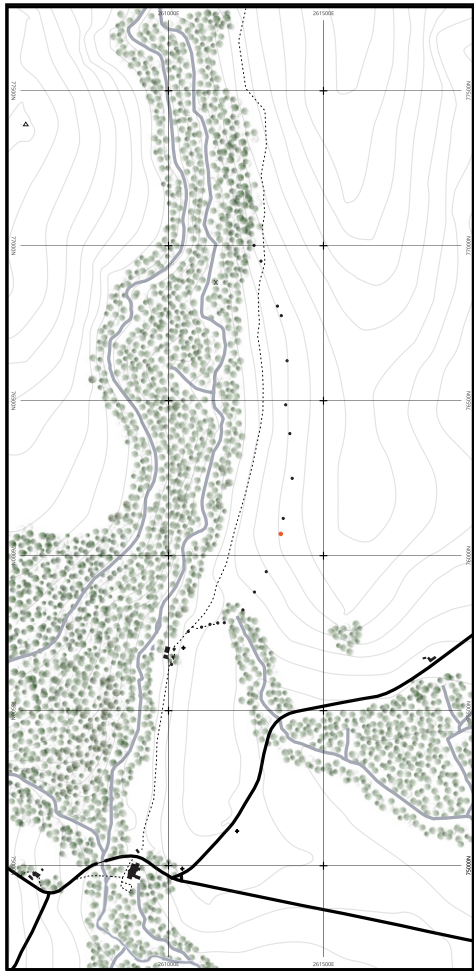
Map of Dartmoor National Park - 2025



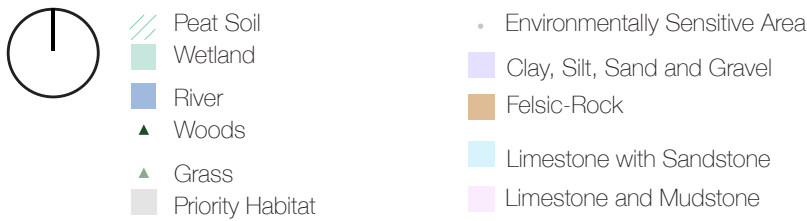
Map of Wistman's Wood Trail - 2025



Map of Dartmoor National Park - 2050



Map of Wistman's Wood Trail - 2050



FUTURE:

We envision Dartmoor once again flourishing as a vibrant, biodiverse landscape, rich in woodlands, grasslands, upland heaths, blanket bogs, mires, and meadows, alive with a diversity of plants, trees, insects, birds, and mammals. Our vision for a balanced Dartmoor includes natural grazing, peatland restoration through re-wetting, and reforestation, creating conditions that support the return of beavers, wild boar, and other vital ‘ecosystem engineers.’ Restored woodlands would help rebuild natural habitats, address biodiversity loss, and mitigate climate change.



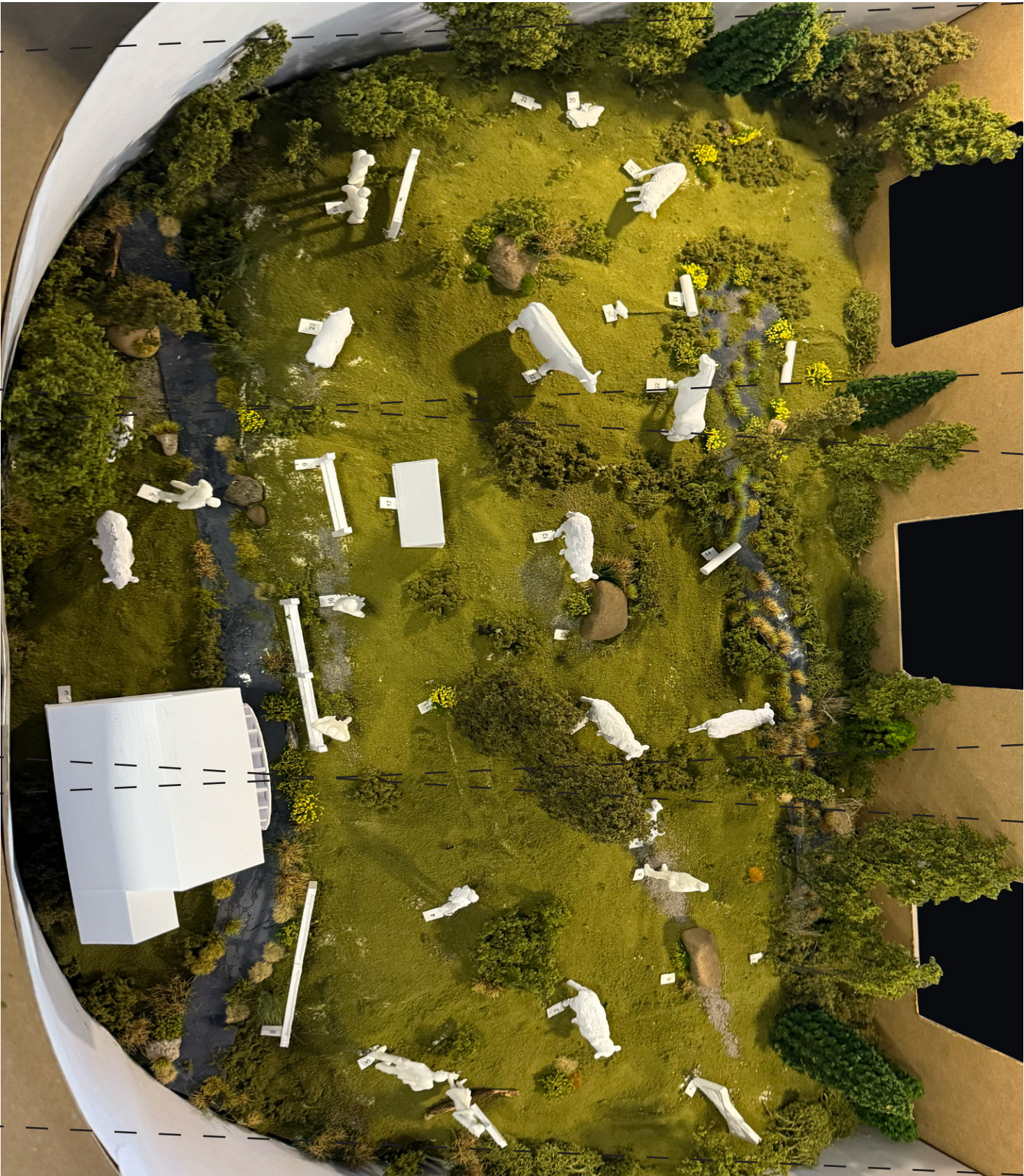
PRESENT:

Dartmoor today is a living landscape of contrasts where human use and natural processes continuously intersect. The moor’s open expanses, granite tors, and rolling heaths attract walkers, farmers, and conservationists alike, creating a space where recreation, agriculture, and ecological restoration coexist. It faces ongoing challenges such as overgrazing, soil erosion, and pressure from tourism, yet it remains a crucial habitat for rare species and an important carbon store. Current conservation efforts aim to balance these competing interests, promoting sustainable land management while preserving the cultural and ecological richness that defines Dartmoor.



PAST:

We envision Dartmoor once again flourishing as a vibrant, When Nancy Holt created her Trail Markers series in 1969, Dartmoor was undergoing change. The National Park had recently opened the moor to more visitors while farming and military use continued. Increased sheep grazing after the war had begun to reshape the land’s ecology. Holt’s orange trail marks revealed Dartmoor as both a site of ecological transformation and a cultural construction—an environment shaped as much by human decisions as by geology and weather.



04 Daycare Facility

A Montessori School Designed For Kid’s Needs

Location: Metuchen, New Jersey
Instructor: Anna Knoell
Partners: Amara Leazer, Ridhi Sawhney, Eugenia Lopez Valdes
Time: Spring 2026
Software: Rhino, Photoshop
Type: Educational

This project was developed as part of an elective class focused on designing for children, exploring how architecture can be thoughtfully adapted to meet the physical, emotional, and developmental needs of young users. The building is shaped by a cluster of pitched roof forms that break down the overall scale into smaller, child-friendly volumes, with clerestory gaps drawing soft daylight into a central double-height atrium that serves as the social heart of the school. The surrounding program is organized by age and energy level, with contained, quieter classrooms for younger children and more open spaces for older ones. Every decision is calibrated to children’s proportions and needs, from lower ceilings in the nap room dotted with star-like perforations, to deep window sills that double as reading seats, to circulation and furniture all sized to encourage independence and self-directed movement. Materials reinforce this throughout, with exposed wood structure, cork shingles, and color used programmatically so that yellow promotes focus, blue encourages calm, and pink energizes the central atrium.



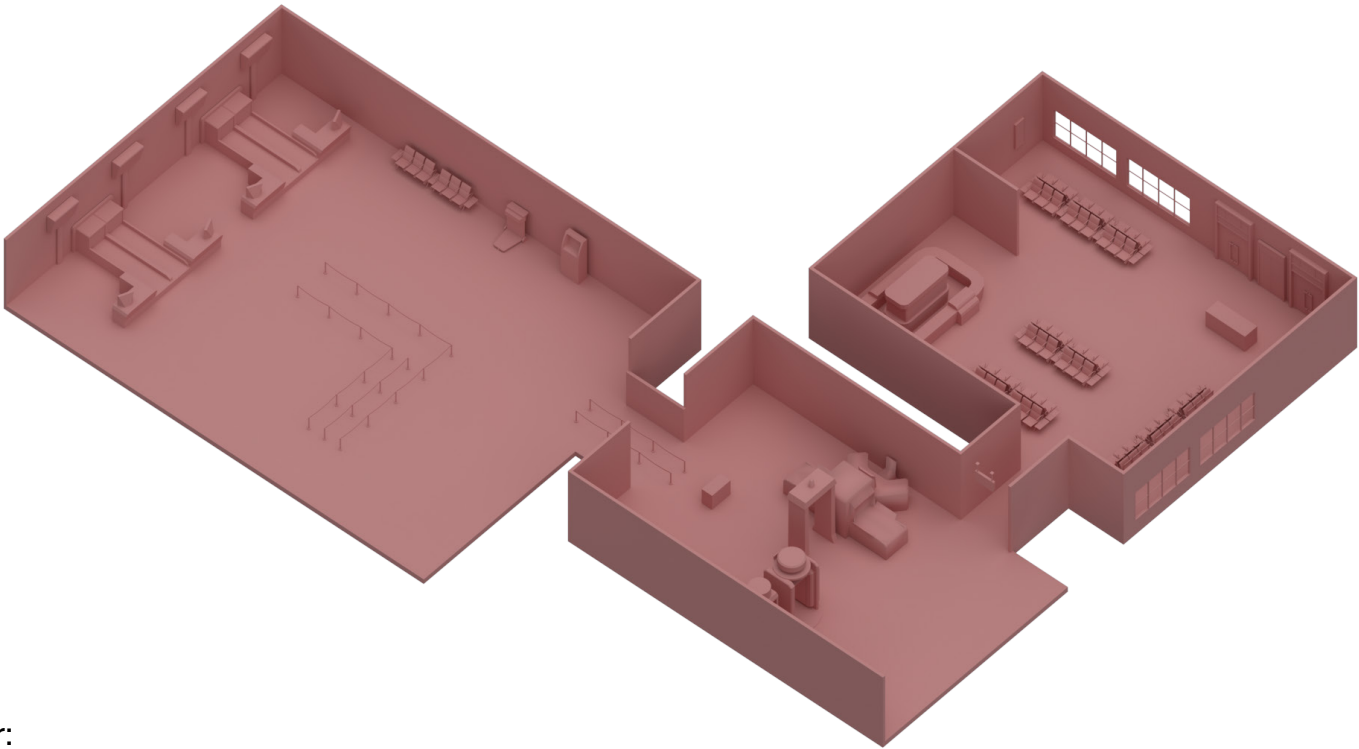
05 Sensory ADA

A Toolkit For Sensory-Friendly Design

Instructor: Zarina Farmer-George
Partner: Khalid Abunayyan
Time: Fall 2025
Software: MidJourney, Rhino, Photoshop
Type: Toolkit and Airport

This class explored how spaces can be redesigned to be more sensory-friendly and inclusive for all users. We developed a Sensory ADA Toolkit, a framework that expands accessibility beyond physical compliance into an affective and perceptual experience, built around the idea that good design must be adaptable, responding and flexing to the full spectrum of human sensory needs through light, texture, sound, and circulation. To put these adaptive principles into practice, we then applied the toolkit to airport spaces, redesigning terminals with features like colored light corridors, tactile flooring, calming lounges, and digital wayfinding to show how spaces can continuously adapt to be more navigable, comfortable, and welcoming for everyone.

Before:



After:

