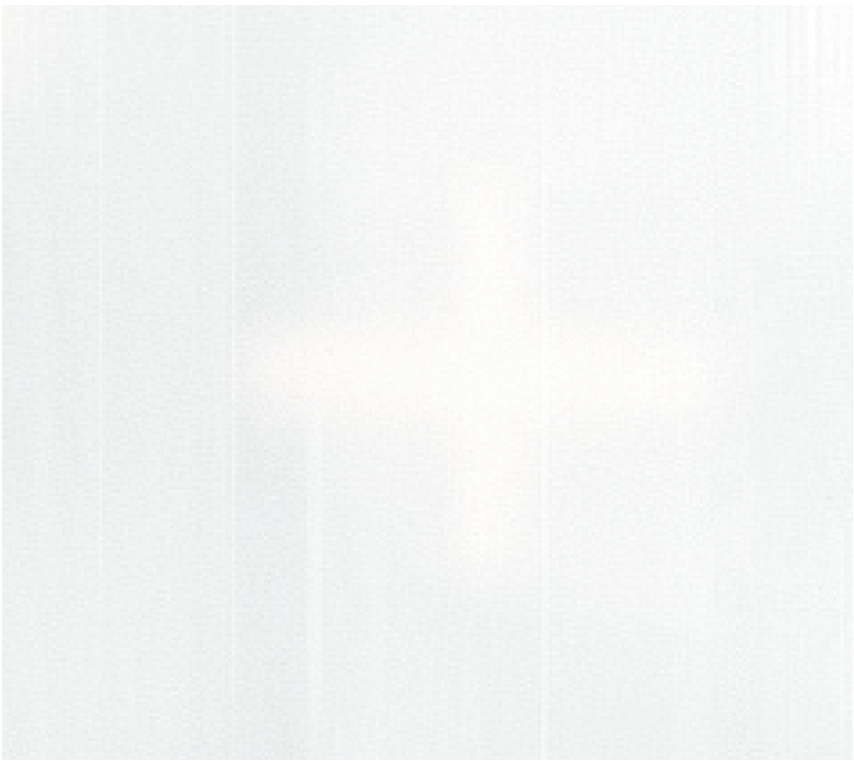


justin frank hager

material politics





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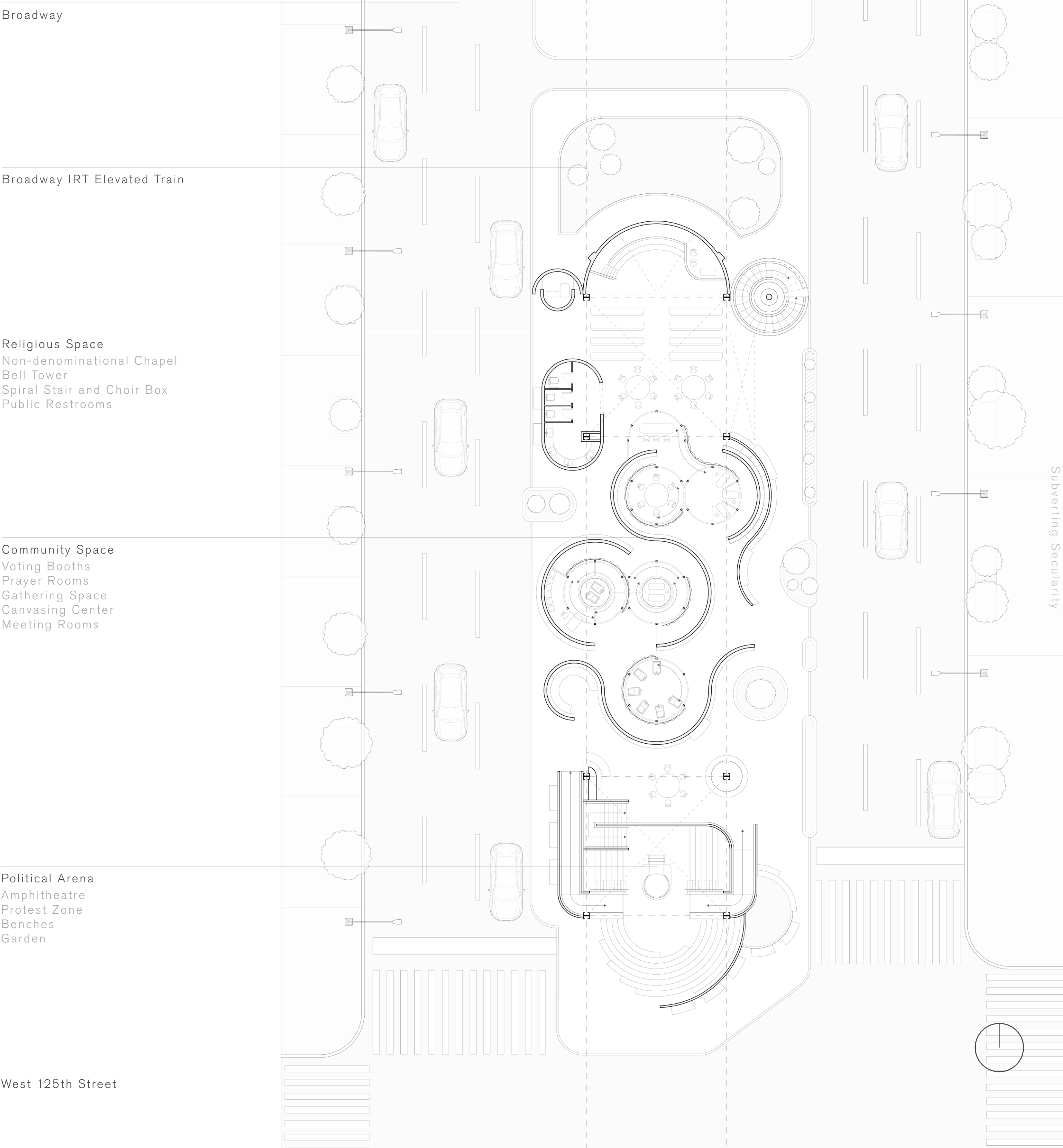
material politics

Architecture does not exist outside the political. Every structure, material choice, and spatial arrangement carries with it a latent or explicit position—about labor, land, visibility, power. Material Politics is a collection of six architectural projects that explore the capacity of architecture to intervene in, reflect upon, and reconfigure political realities through material expression. This portfolio does not treat politics as context alone, nor material as inert matter. Rather, it positions the two in active dialogue: architecture as an instrument that operates in the interstitial space between form and ideology. Stone quarried by precarious labor, concrete poured over contested land, metal cladding sourced through extractive economies: such choices are never neutral. In each project, the material palette is not only aesthetic or functional but is employed deliberately to encode, expose, or subvert political conditions. Materials become actors in the unfolding of spatial narratives. Sometimes as evidence, sometimes as provocateurs. Each of the six projects in this portfolio responds to a specific site shaped by local political tensions, whether through histories of resistance, contested ecologies, extractive economies, or systems of exclusion. Yet none of the proposals aim to resolve these tensions through closure or spectacle. Instead, they are designed as spatial frameworks that hold contradictions, amplify marginalized narratives, and propose new political potentials through the built environment. Architecture becomes a medium through which the spatial logics of power are made visible...and perhaps reimagined.

SUBVERTING SECULARITY
Core I Studio
Critic: Alessandro Orsini



Subverting Secularity is a response to a radical prompt. Entitled "Broadway Stories", the reimagined Core I program pedagogy attempted to introduce a bold, radically new political approach. It offered the graduate program the opportunity to question traditional forms and modes of architectural expression on a given site along Broadway Avenue in Manhattan. The tumult of 2020 influenced a new approach for the studio which emphasized embracing alternative views of society in the name of social and political change.



A new manifesto launched by the faculty, "Unlearning Whiteness", required a reorienting of top-down approaches to design, one that attempts to subvert the divisive forces of racial capitalism rather than acquiesce to its self-reproductive logic.



Left: community space
Right: political arena



This view begs the question, is architecture capable shaping the cultural landscape of contemporary society, or is it prisoner to reactionary forces leaving it unable to influence the social and political zeitgeist? **Subverting Secularity** undermines a dominant infrastructural site located on the avenue (Broadway IRT elevated rail) appropriating space to generate an architecture for and by the people, for a new collective.



interior view of non-denominational chapel

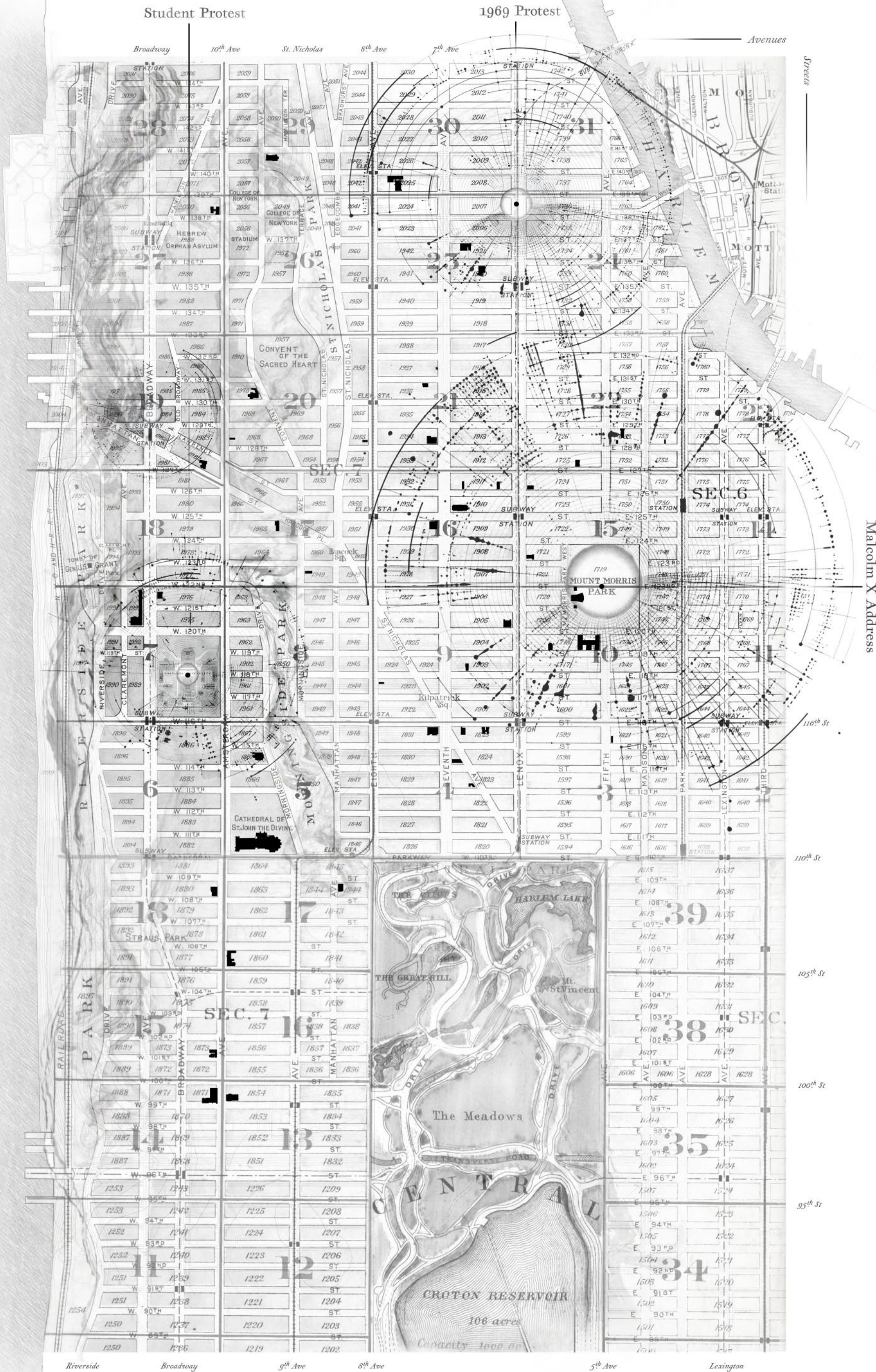


interior view of political arena



southwest exterior of non-denominational chapel and community center view along Broadway

The intersection of the two subverts traditional notions of secularity and undermines heirarchical determination of space. Curved sculptural concrete walls between the church and political arena contain shared community space that can be adjusted depending on use and program. Their form is inspired by the participatory sculpture of Richard Serra and aim to engage and stimulate the users into action. The polyrhythmic approach to space within the community center allows for open interpretation free from restriction, surveillance, and oppression. A non-denominational chapel and political amphitheatre became the primary drivers of the project as a form of hybridized program, a strategy essential to pedagogy of the studio. Despite the combination of the religious and political spaces being culturally taboo in American secular society, instances of such hybrids are quite common in Harlem and black communities across the United States. Houses of worship become political spaces and political spaces becomes those for worship.



PUBLIC SCHOOL 64 REDUX

Core II Studio
Critic: Lindy Roy



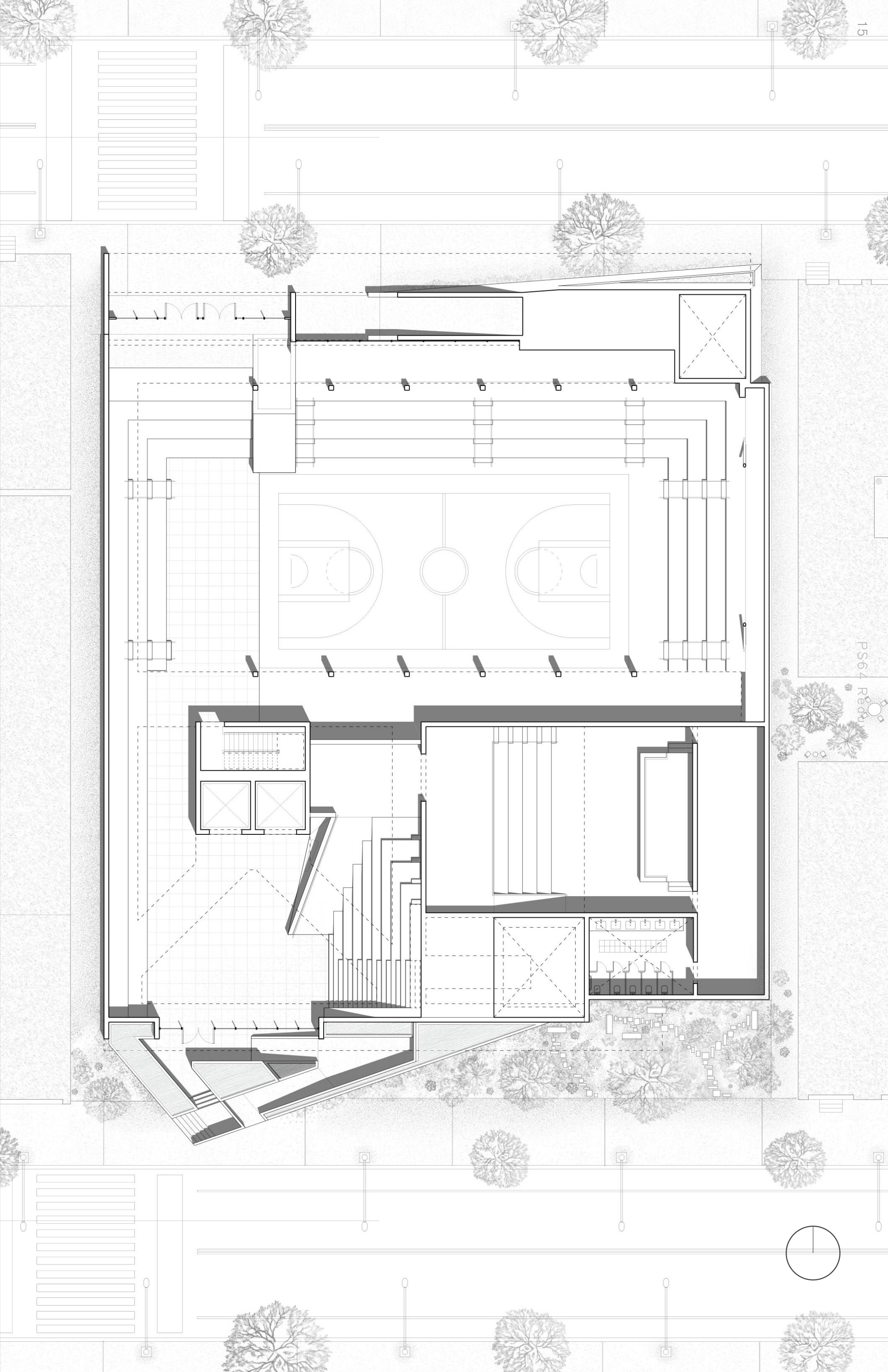
Public School 64 Redux is a reimagining of an already existing vacant school. This revised vision for the school was aimed at developing new modes of educational architecture that had the potential to influence a new pedagogy for young and adolescent students in urban environments. More specifically our studio investigated the intersection of human behavior, neurology, and architecture. Frustration with the ubiquity of steets and the lack of porosity suffocated by the ever expansive grid of New York City challenged me to explore opportunities that have the potential alter the dynamic and break the grid. The reimagined PS 64 weaves public space into the interior as a spatial means of evoking the volumetric urban atmosphere of Manhattan while simultaneously providing a testing ground for an alternative pedagogical approach. This approach would be specifcally targetted at middle school students finding their way, promoting a “street-smart” sensibiltiy as they navigate life, the city, and the building.

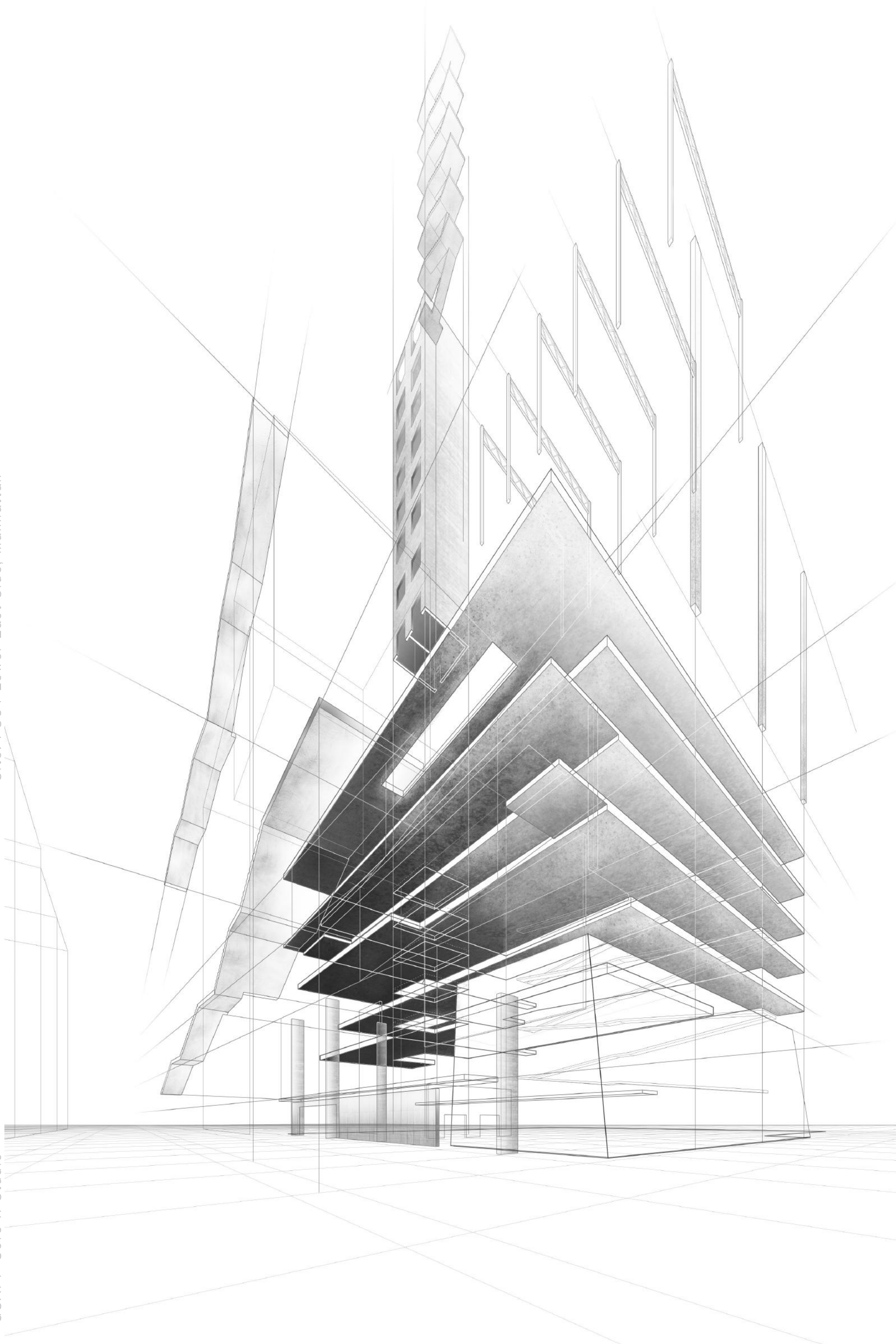
East 12th Street

Public School 64 Ground N
Gymnasium Vestibule
13th Street Stair Circulation
Gymnasium
Spectator Promenade

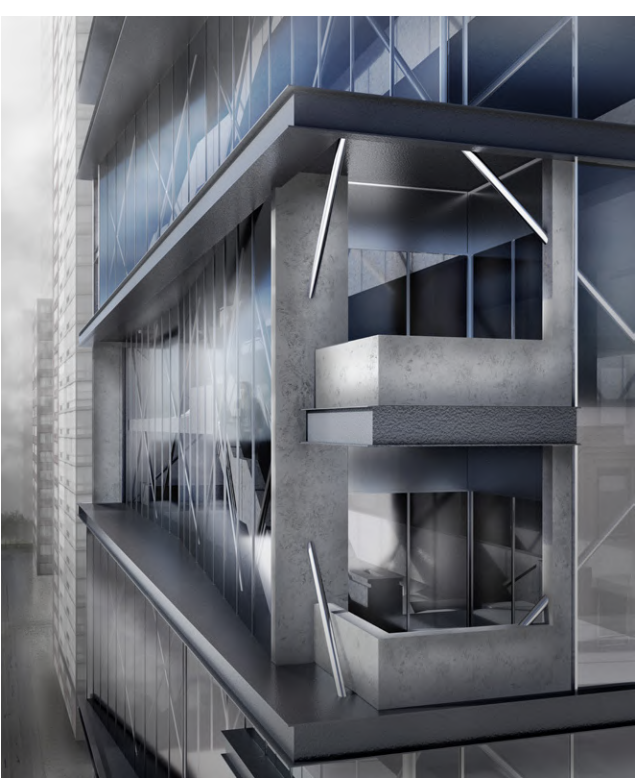
Public School 64 Ground S
Circulation Core
Grand Stair Study Area
Auditorium/Theatre
Dressing Rooms
Lobby
Front Garden

East 13th Street



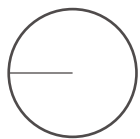
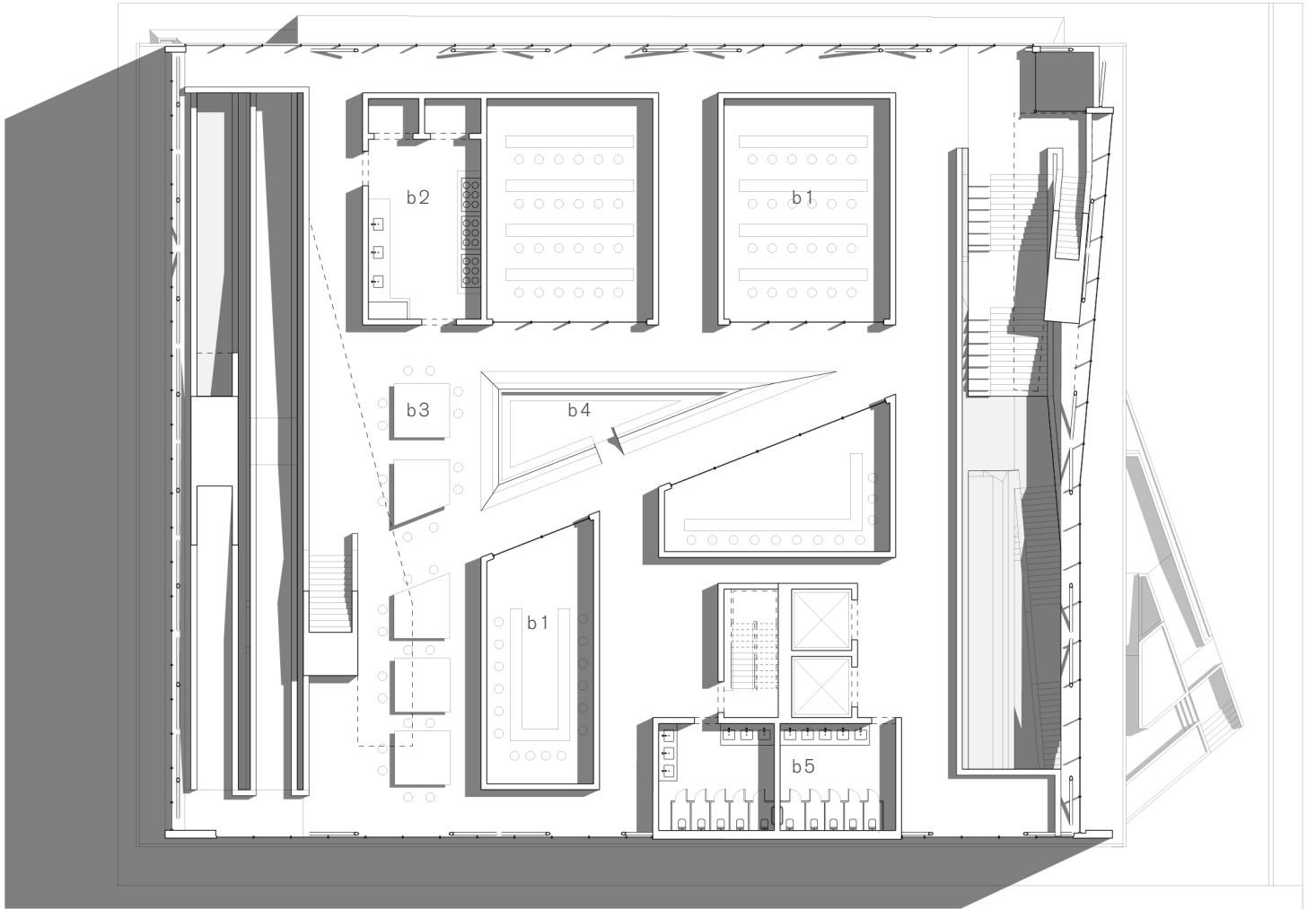
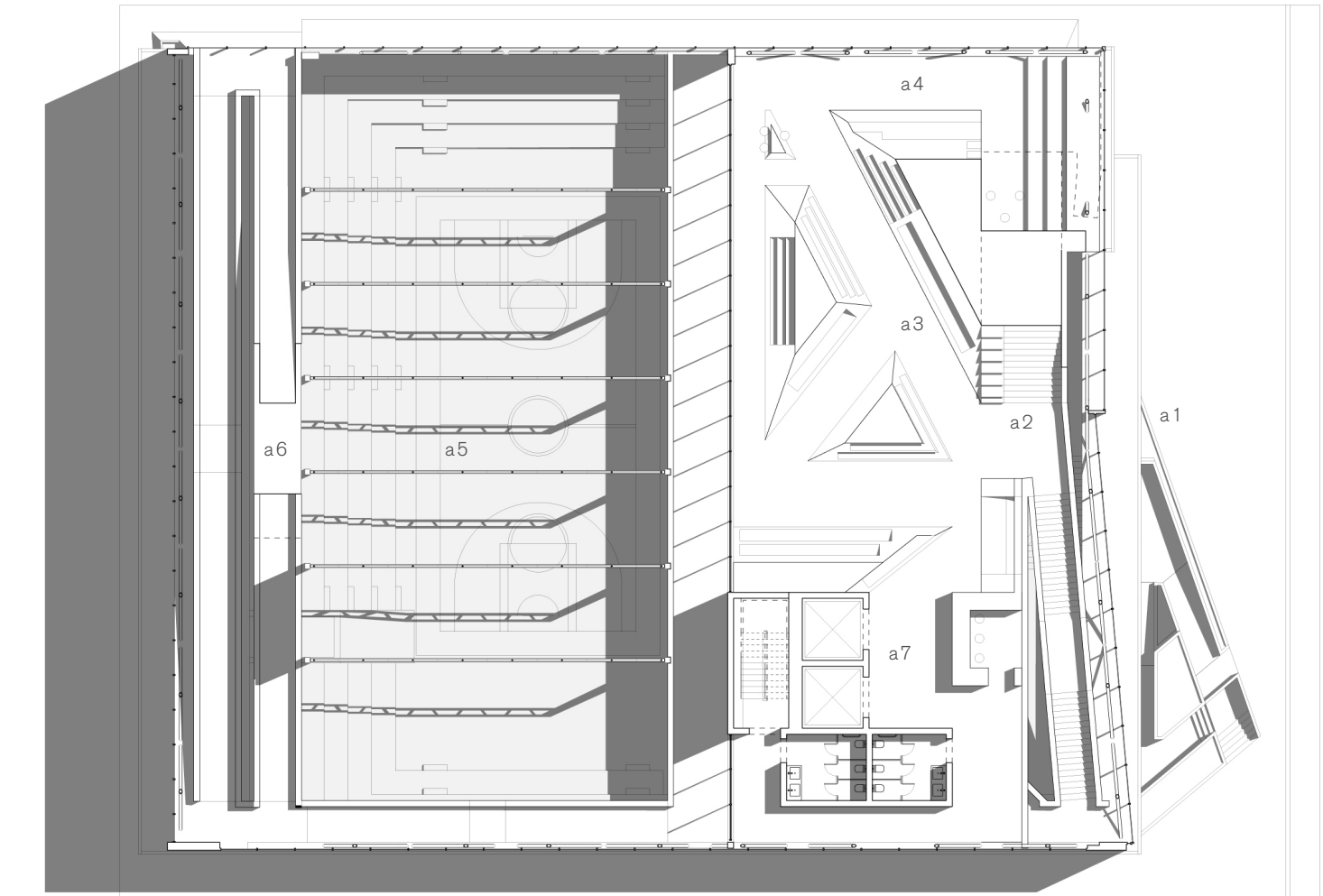


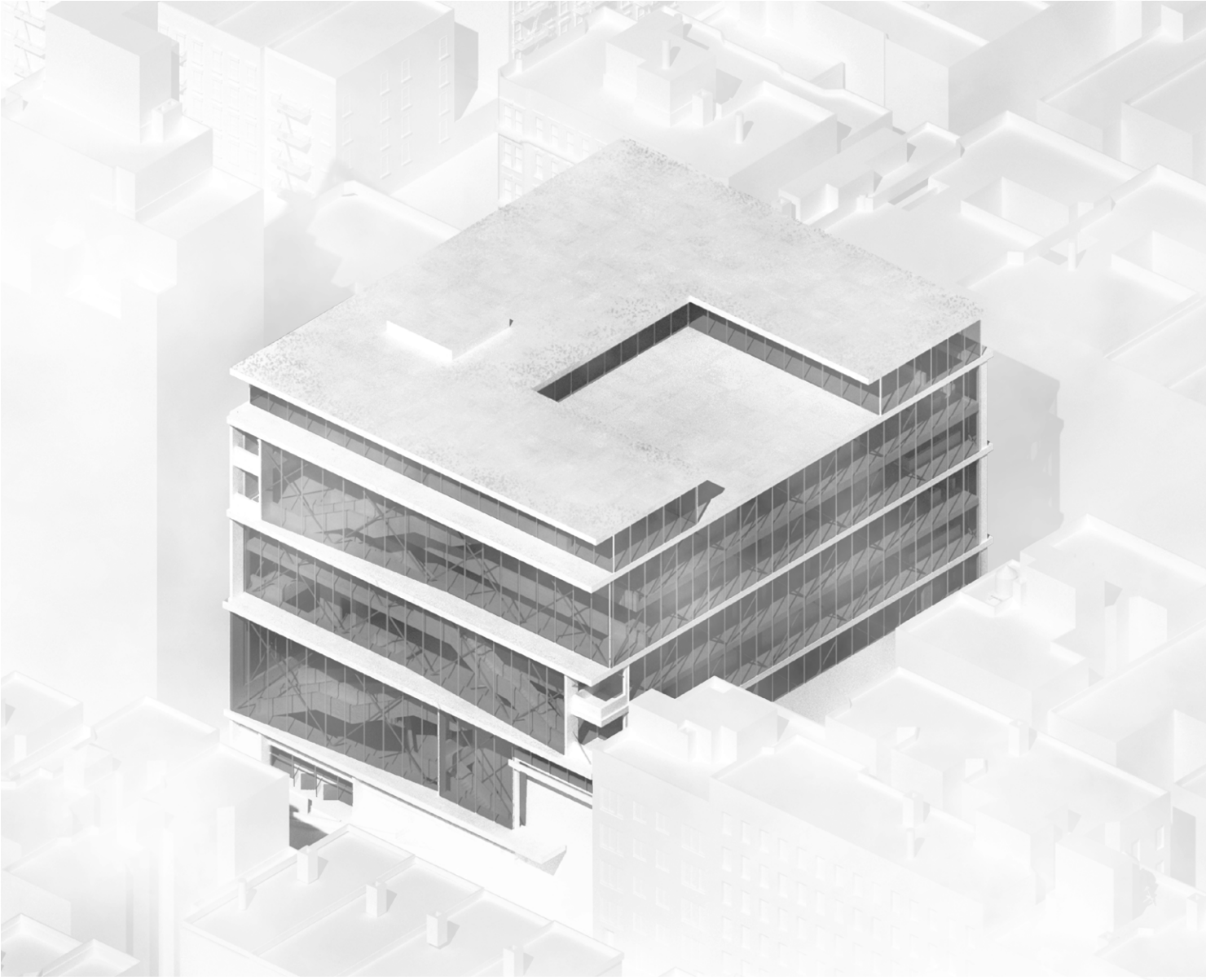
Left: material axonometric
Top Right: exterior view of south facing balcony
Bottom Right: exterior view from east 13th



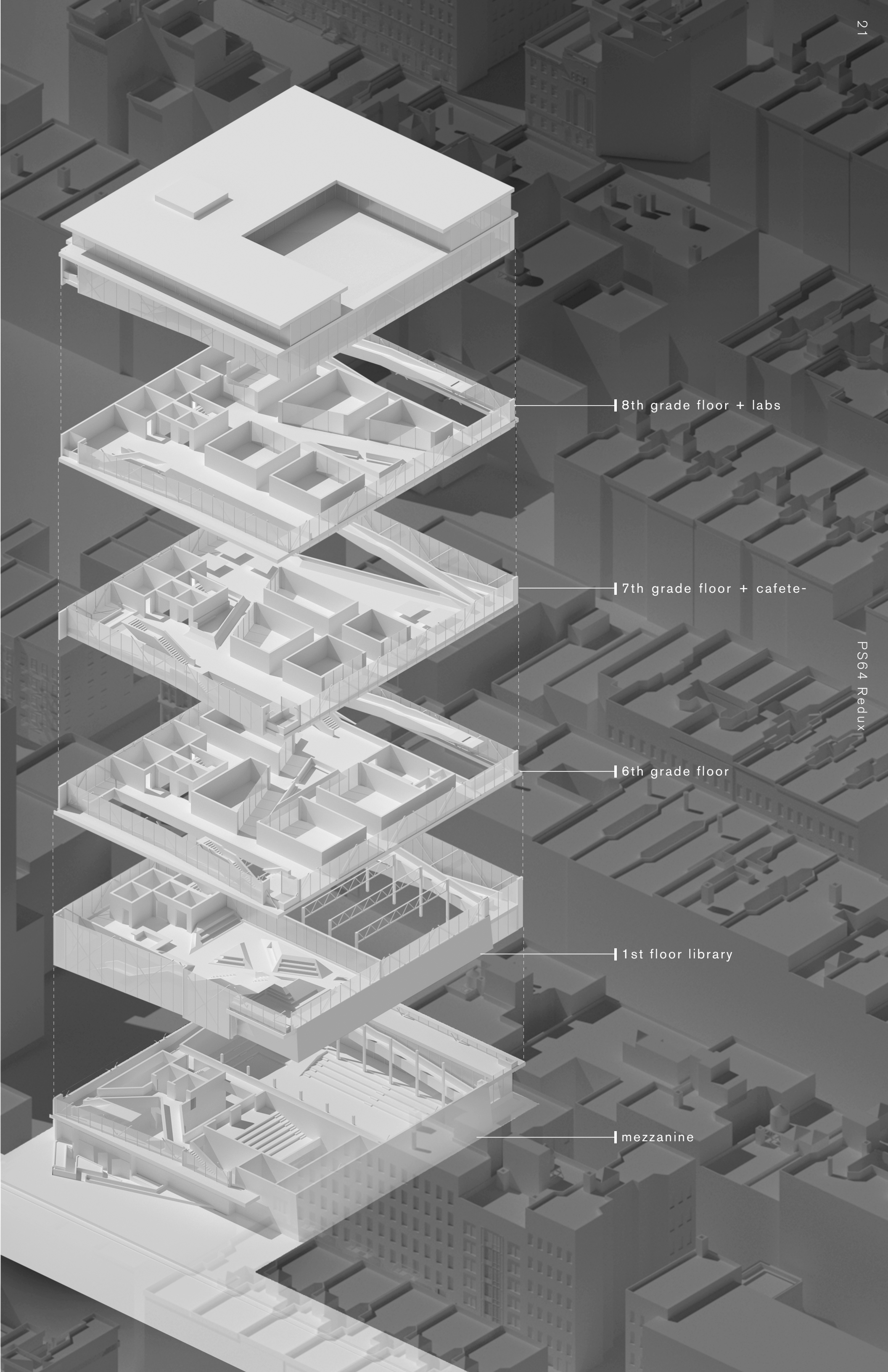
The street-facing sides of the school each have a series of stairs and ramps - south and north respectively - that operate as extensions of the street into the school. These extensions take advantage of diagonals, which offer various affordances for the human body, mimicing the multiplicity latent in urban environments. Drawing from research on the body, mind and its response to space and its affordances drove the geometry of much of the social space. The geometries become integral to the library which treats bookshelves as places to lean, hide, read, study.

- a: 1st floor plan
- a1: accessible entrance
- a2: social stair
- a3: library
- a4: reading room
- a5: gymnasium
- a6: accessible ramp
- a7: reception
- b: 3rd floor plan
- b1: classroom
- b2: kitchen
- b3: cafeteria
- b4: study pod
- b5: restrooms





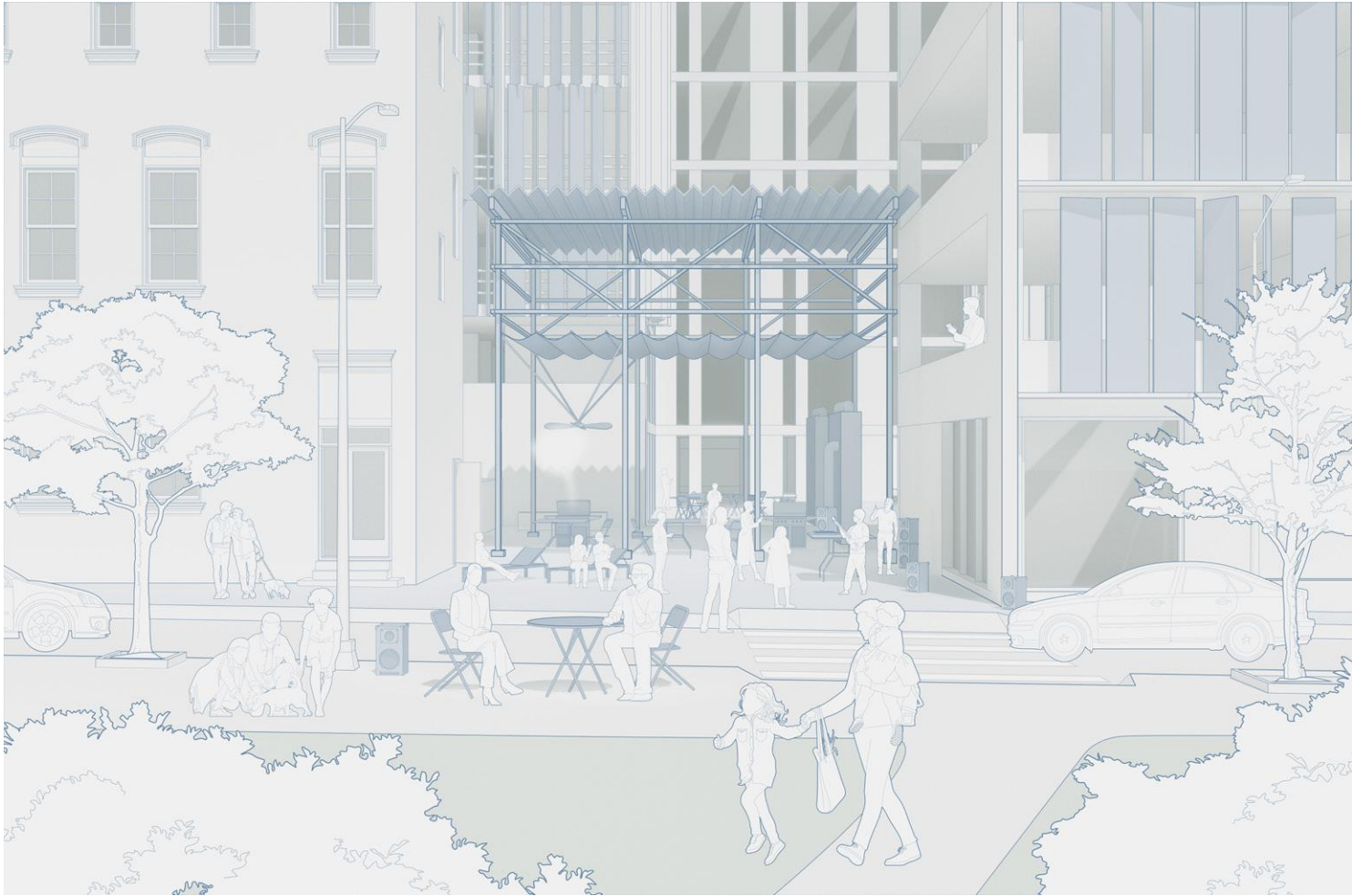
Each floor is dedicated to a specific grade within the intermediate educational program spanning 6th to 8th grades. These fundamental years are woefully neglected by contemporary American education leaving many in an uncertain realm as they enter high school in an increasingly complex and competitive society. At the top, the 8th grade floor prioritizes laboratories while the 6th and 7th grade floors become woven through a double-height cafeteria on the south side. The street woven into the school is meant to evoke psychological responses as if one were learning, studying, socializing on the streets of the city. The floors have ample social space directly adjacent to these streets as if alleys between large blocks. Chance encounters simultaneous to classrooms open to the hallway have the potential to radically alter educational practice.



LIBERATING THE CORRIDOR

Core III Studio
Critic: Esteban de Backer
Partner: Marcus Chan





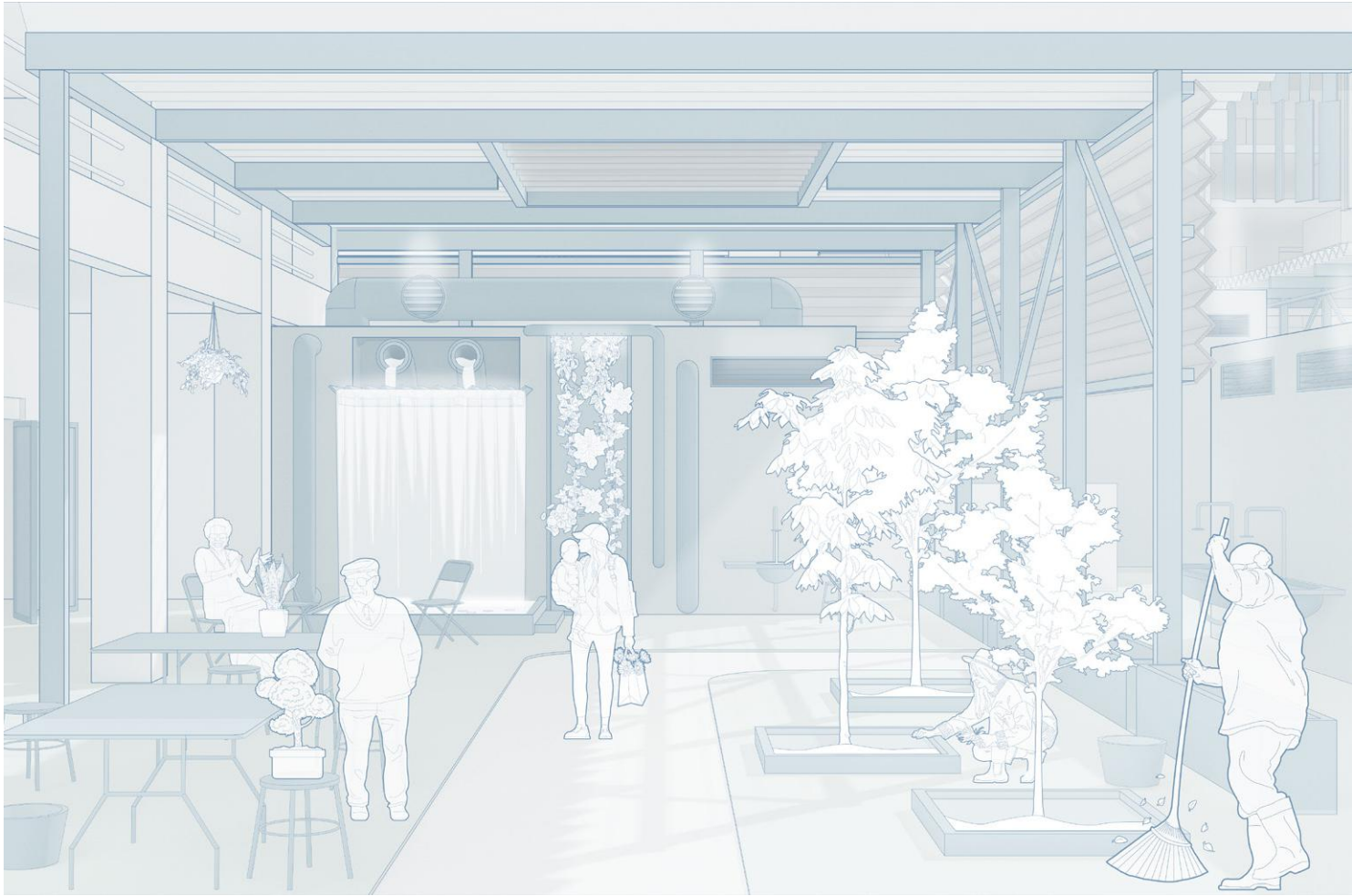
exterior view of summer block party



exterior view of summer water park



exterior view of winter art fair



interior view of winter garden

MNEMONIC FRAGMENTS

Advanced IV Studio
Critic: Robert Marino



This project began as an exploration into the sensorial experience of the coast and how that could be enhanced by space. The synthesis of light, air, texture, and form collectively generate an existential experience that elicits immensely emotional responses. The intent is to facilitate these responses not only for personal satisfaction but as shared mnemonic opportunities.

Atlantic Double Dunes

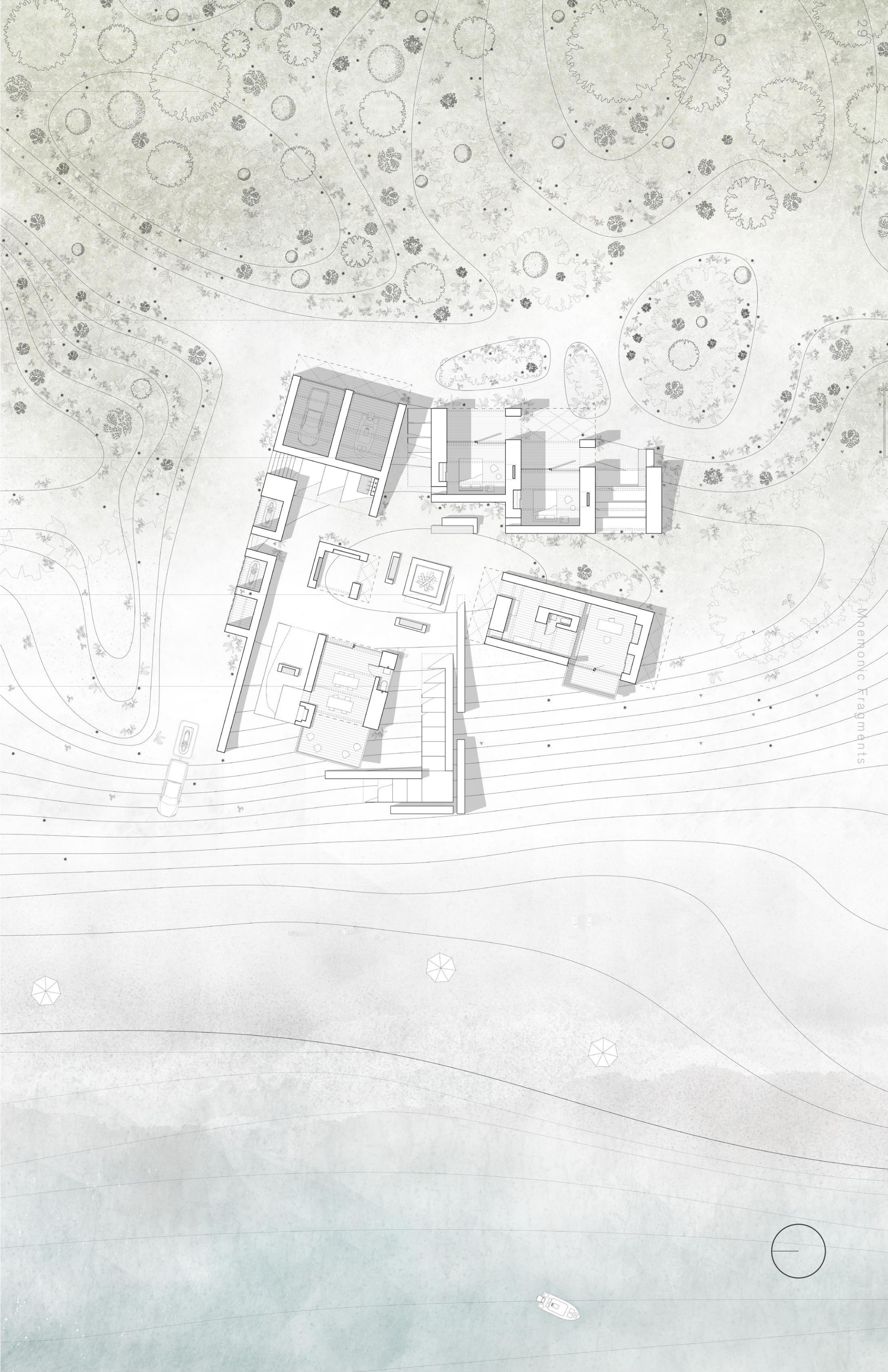
Access Road

Leeward Side
Garage
Jet Ski Storage
Boarding House
Sand Garden

Fire Pit

Windward Side
Office
Administration
Training Center
Beach Access
Observation

Amagansett Beach



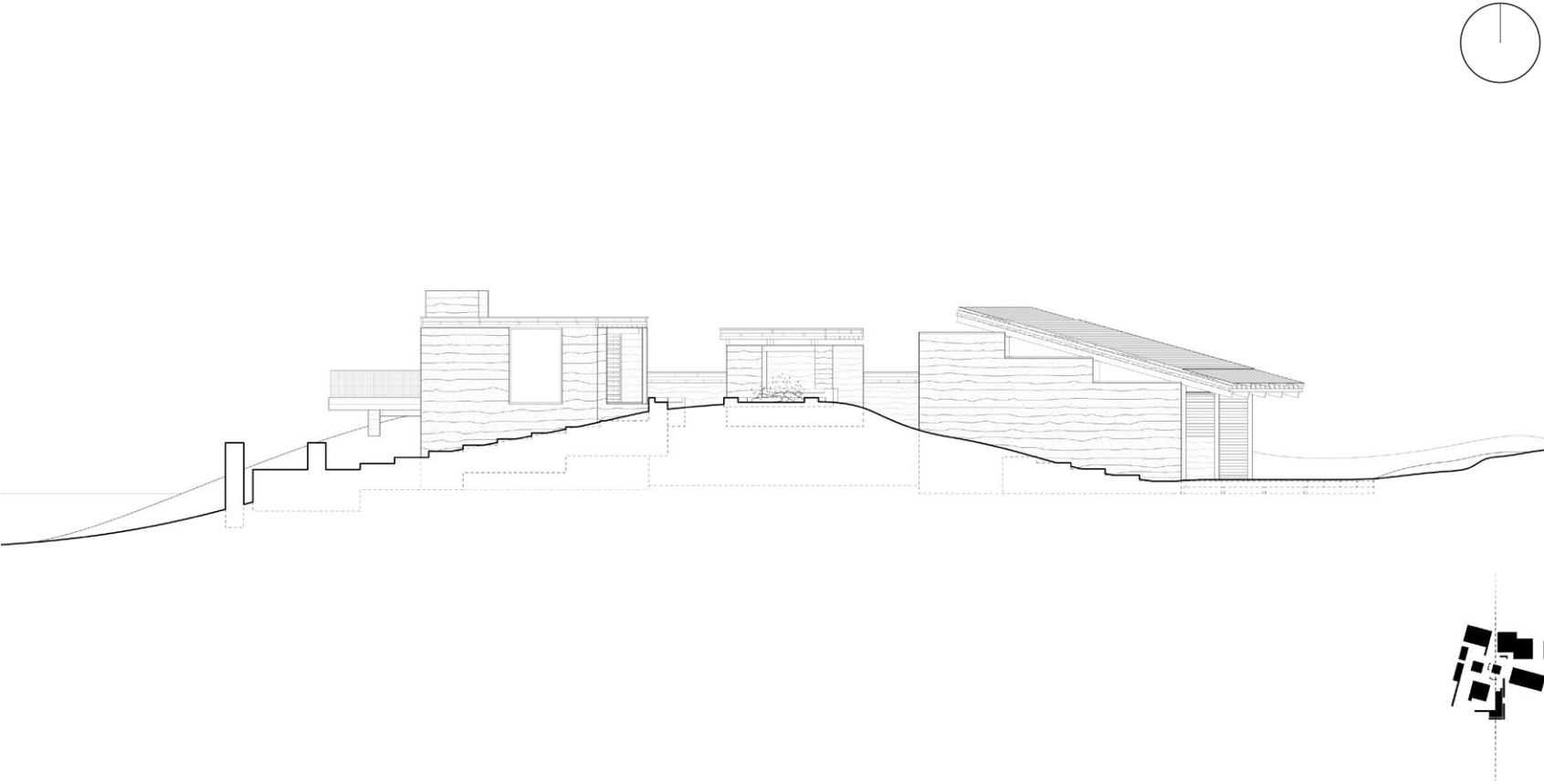
At the site, I found bits of charcoal and burnt wood buried in the sand, and thought a bonfire - potentially many - had taken place there. I thought about all the different memories created and shared in that place. The beach acts as chora for infinite phenomenological experiences...while the bonfire is an isolate trace of memory, solitude, solidarity, refuge. The proposal for a new lifeguard facility, training center, and boarding house became about restoring the spatial and sensorial fragments of that lost bonfire.



interior view of lifeguard training center

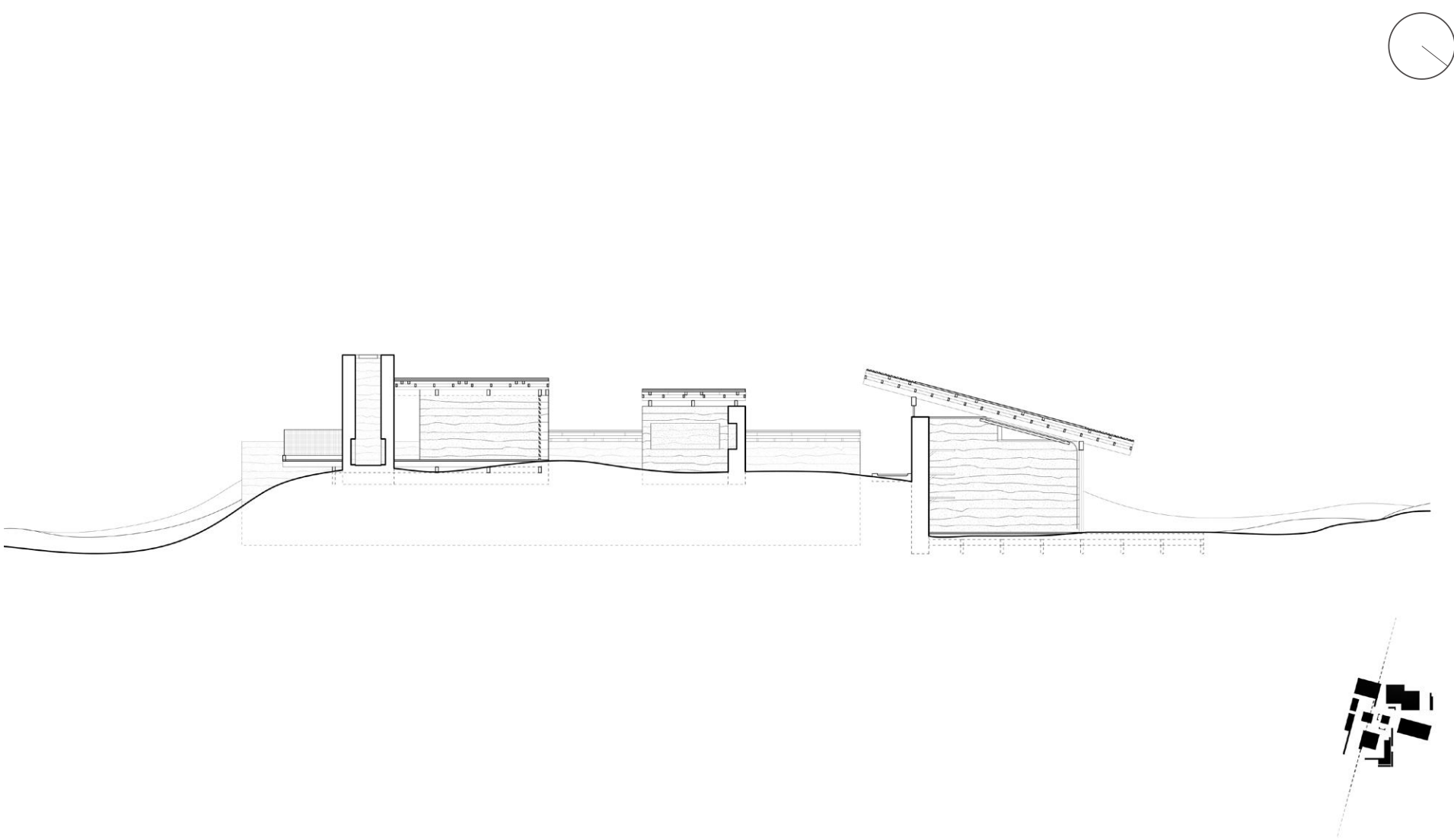
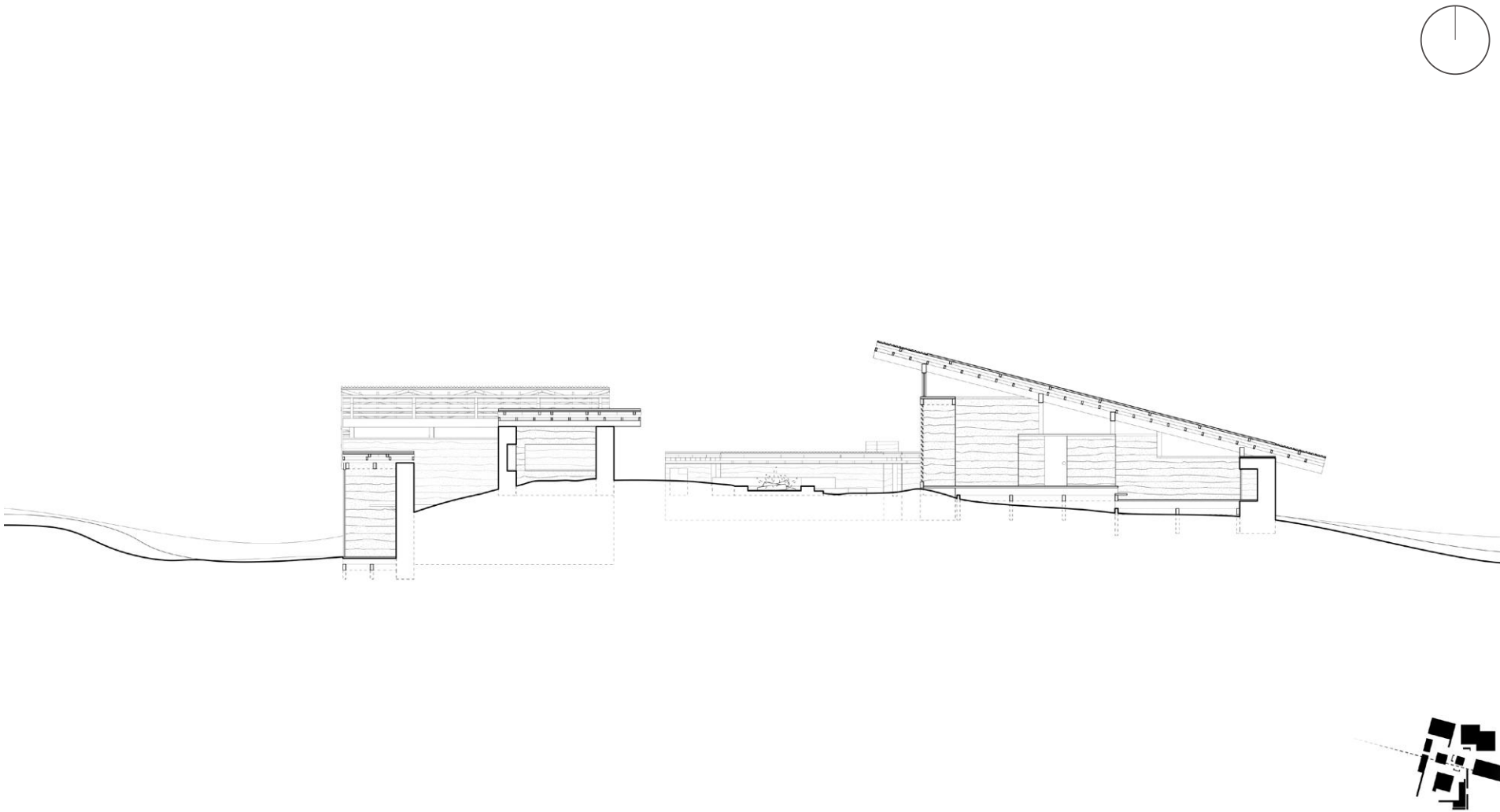


sand garden adjacent to boarding house



west elevation showing bonfire

Top Right: section
Top Left: section
Bottom Right: site plan



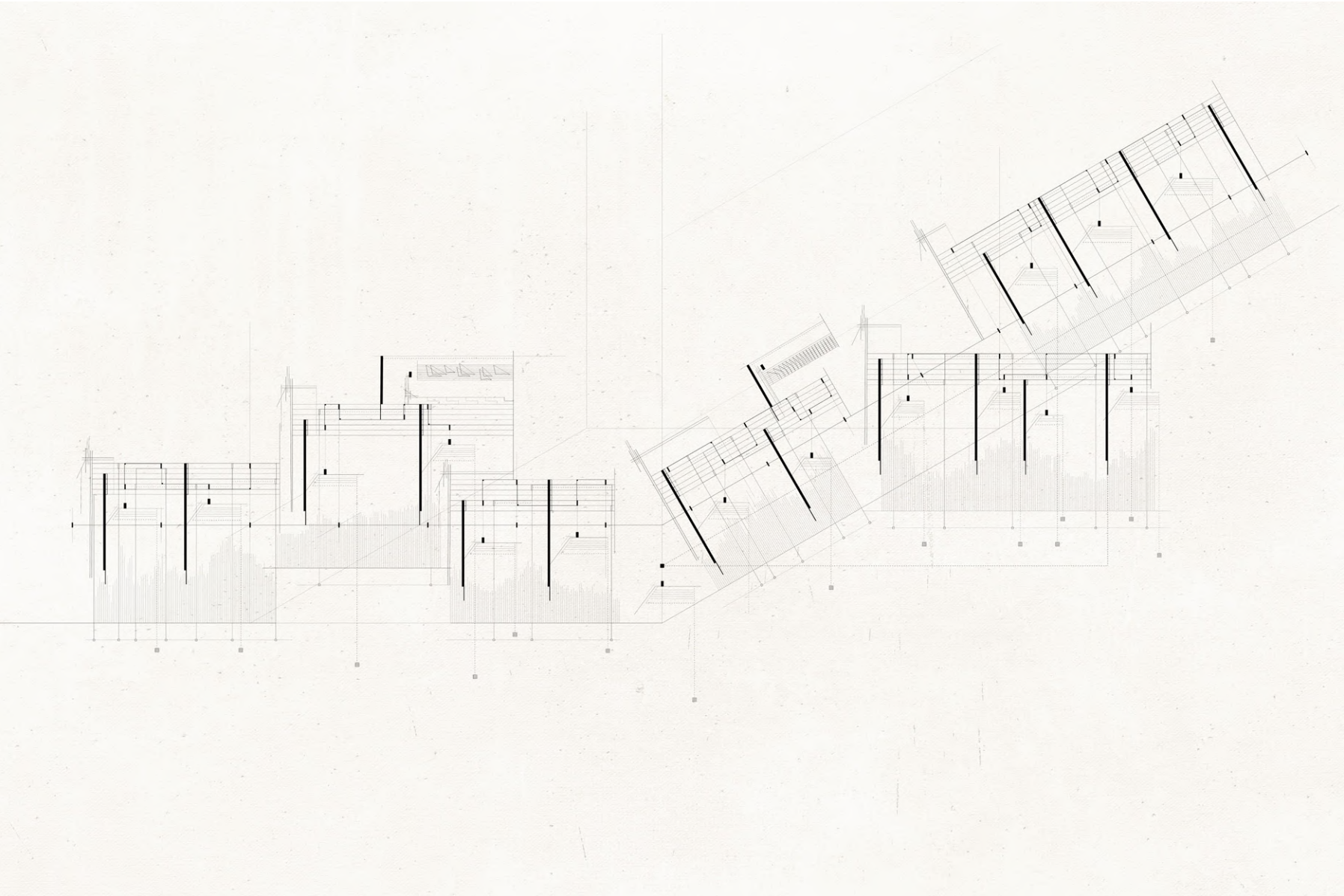
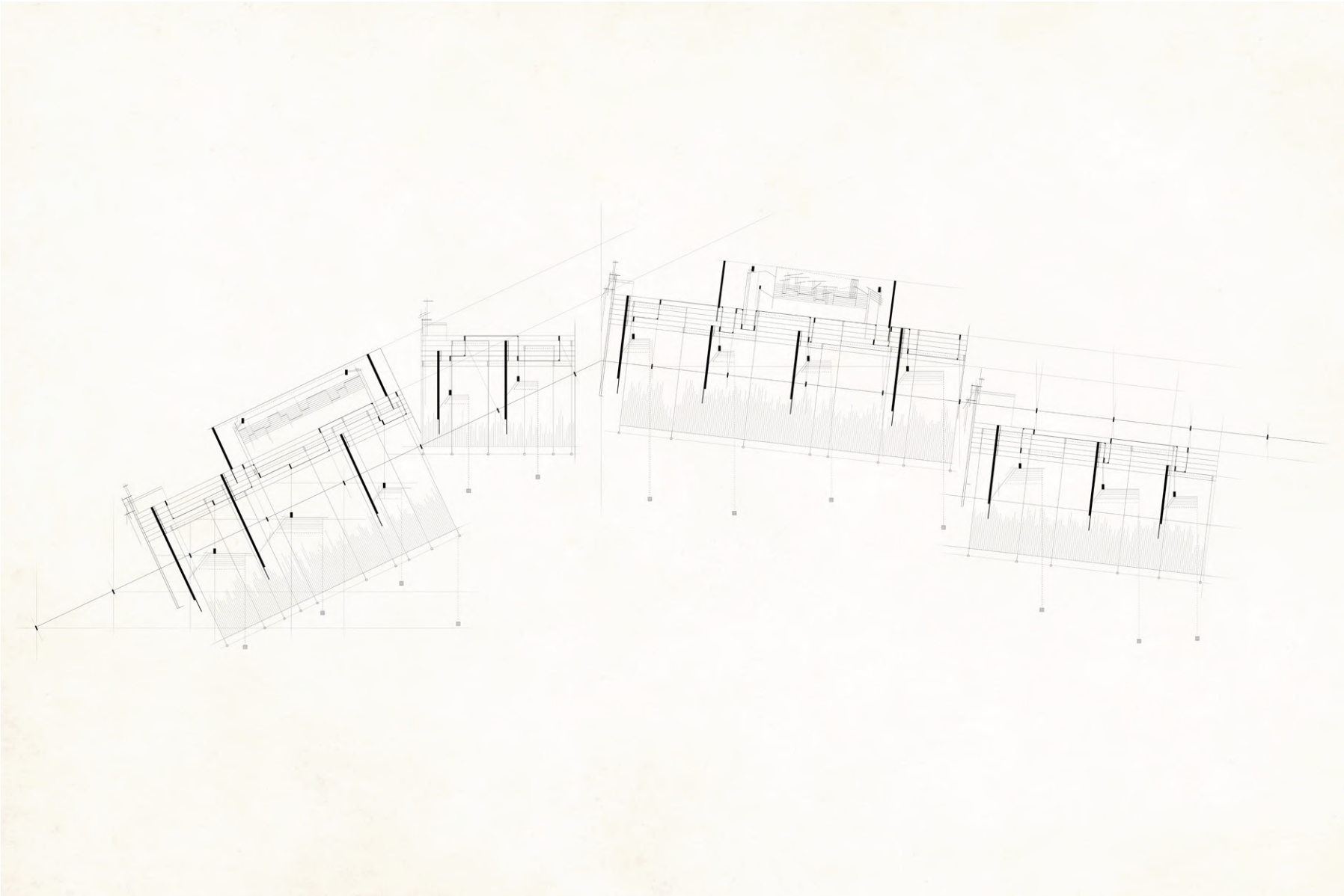


the fragments in the dunes at sunset

RESONANT WILL

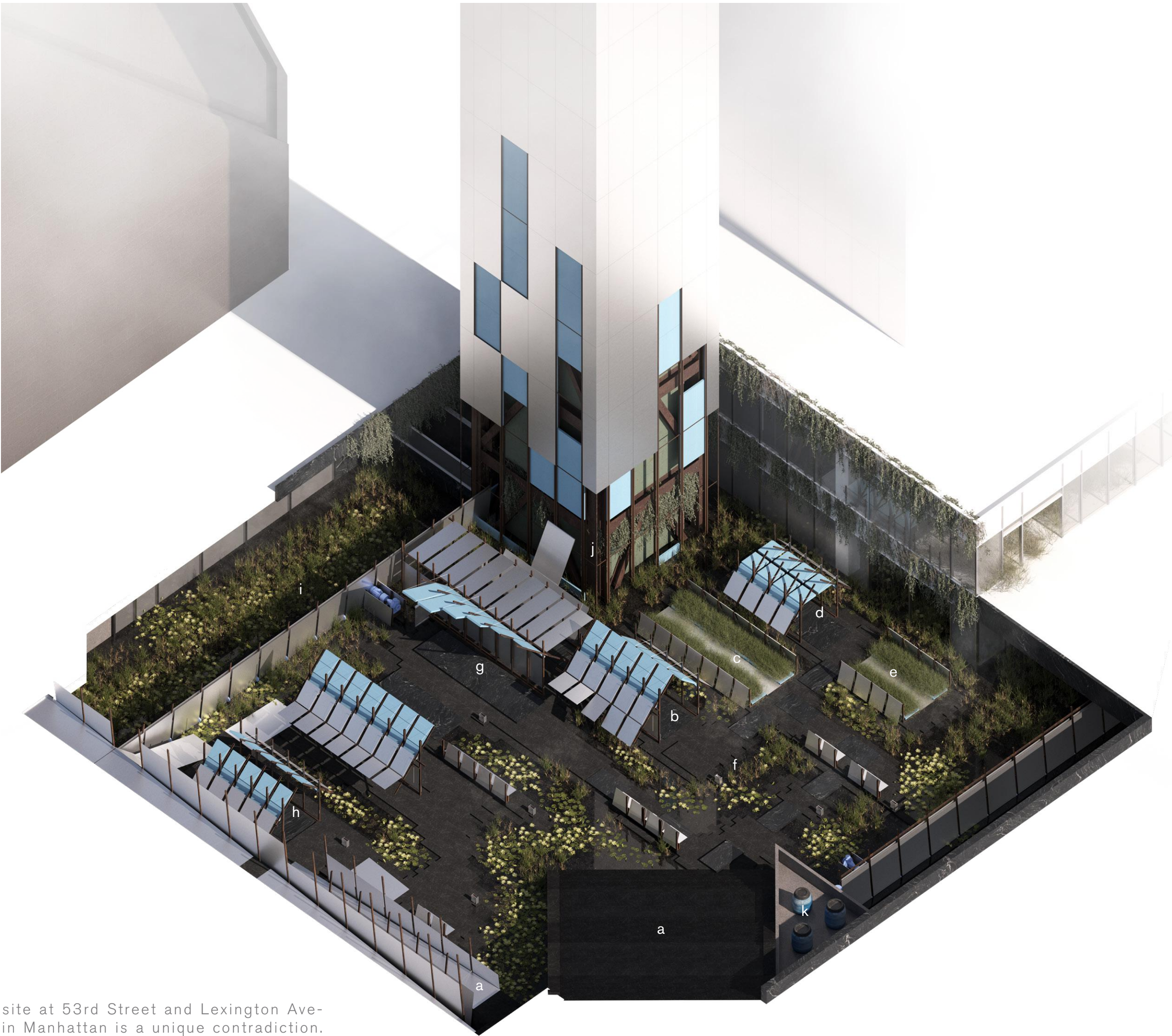
Advanced V Studio
Critics: Mario Gooden and Raven Chacon



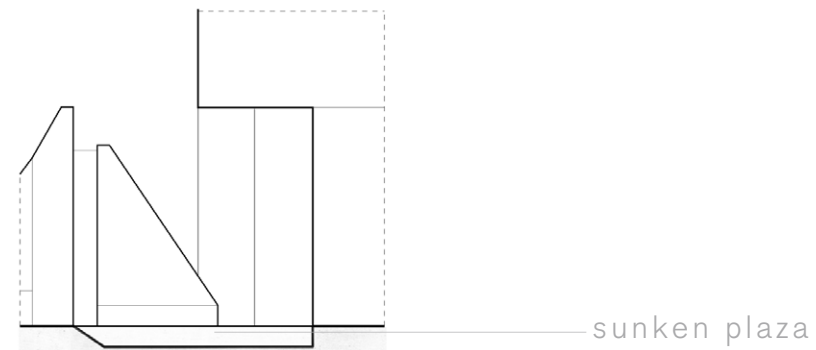
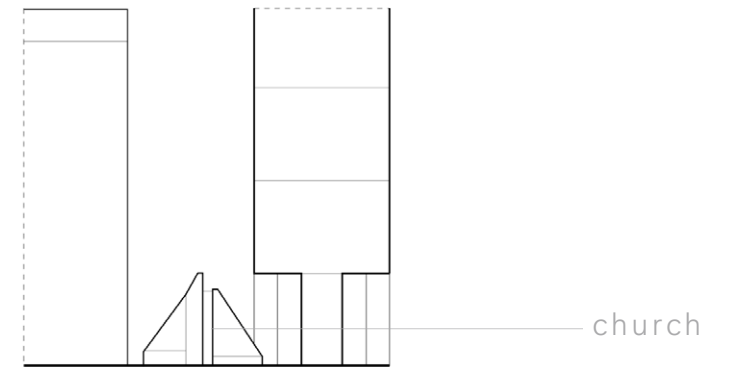
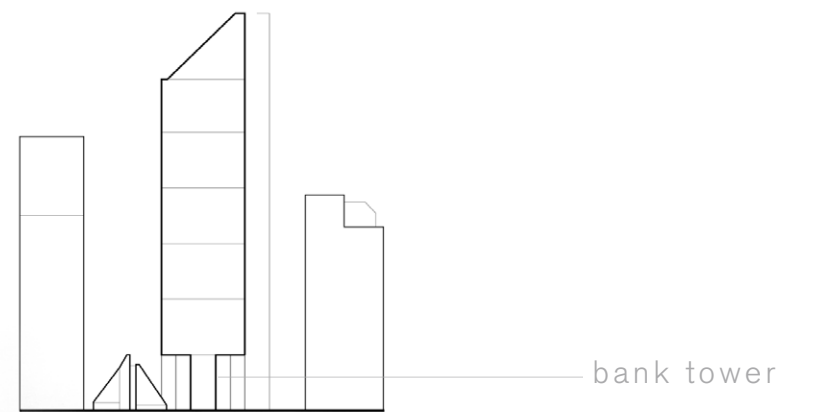


Top Left: waterfall score
Bottom Right: column score

Resonant Will began as a synthesis of architecture and musical composition. Our studio collaborated with Pulitzer Prize winning composer and MacArthur Fellow Raven Chacon to develop a series of musical compositions and drawn scores. Through recordings of sites across New York state and city, we each collectively pursued projects that transformed deep listening into radical architecture. What came from these scores would ultimately be a decolonial form of practice that engages the public and becomes a new form of building for the people.

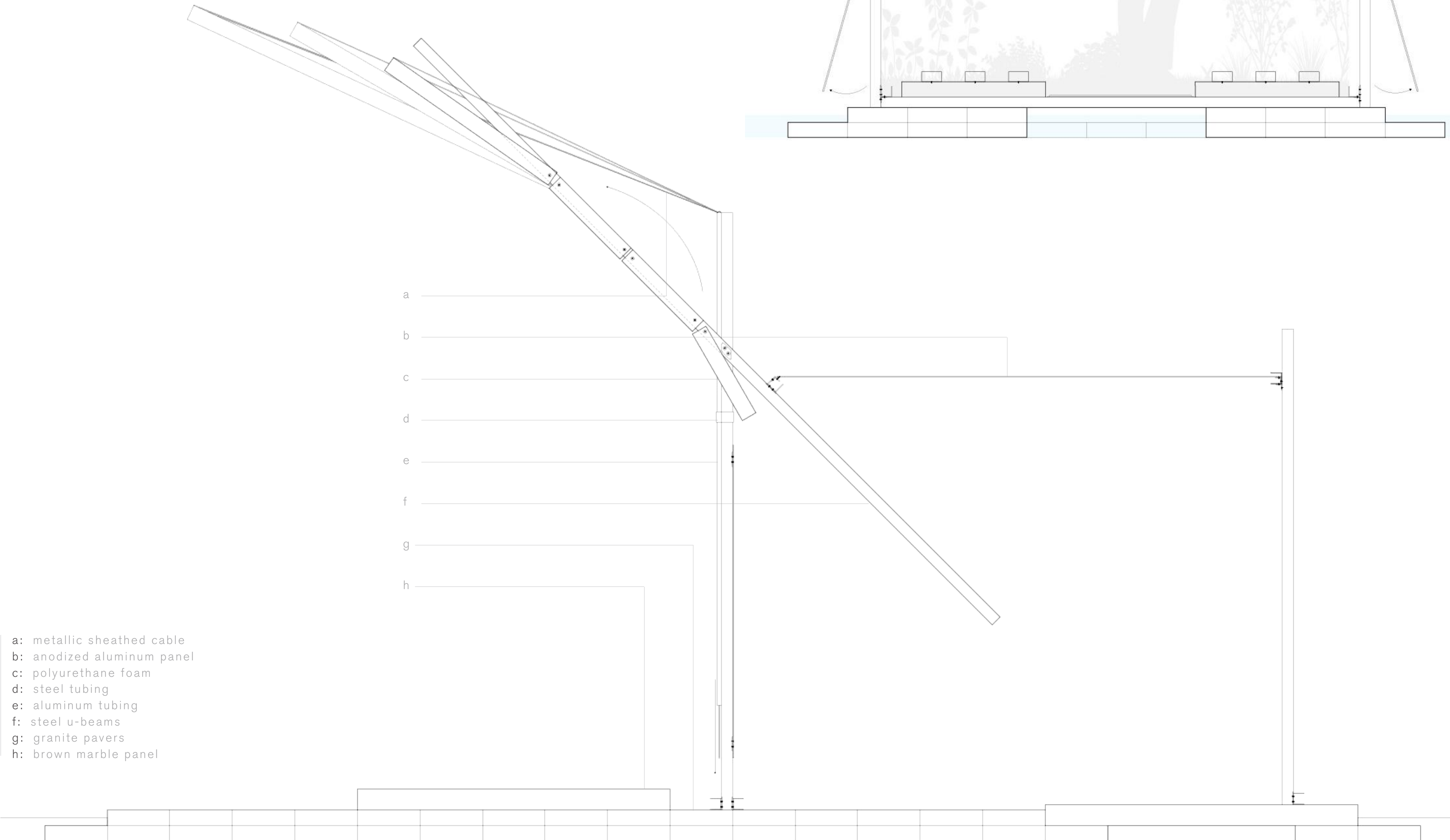


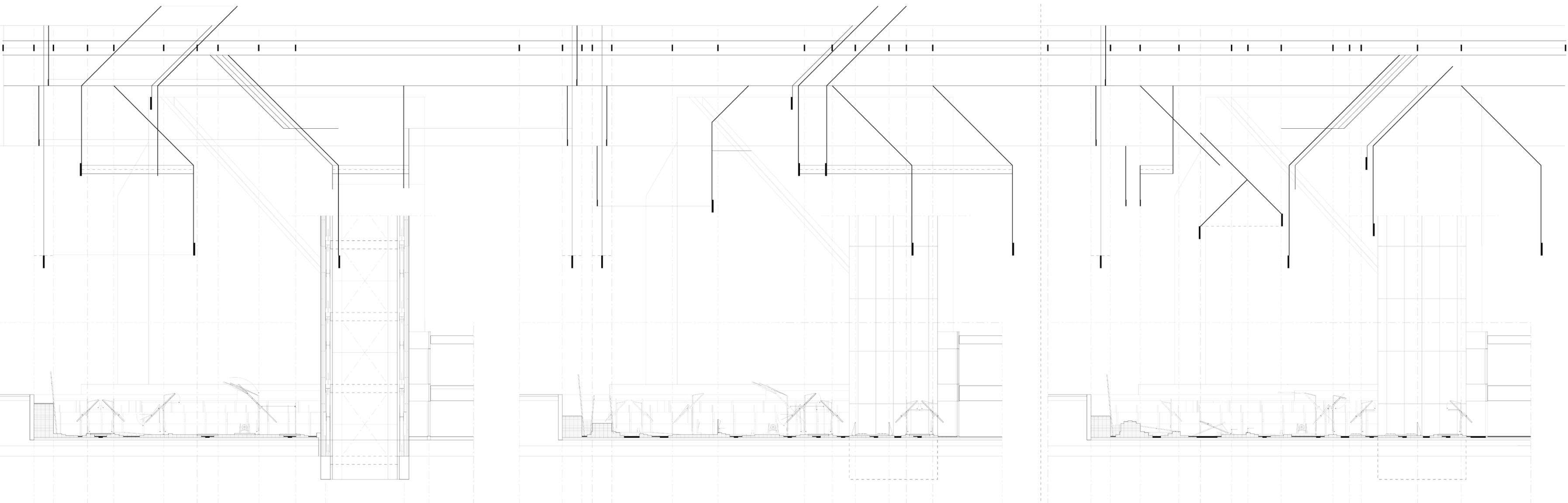
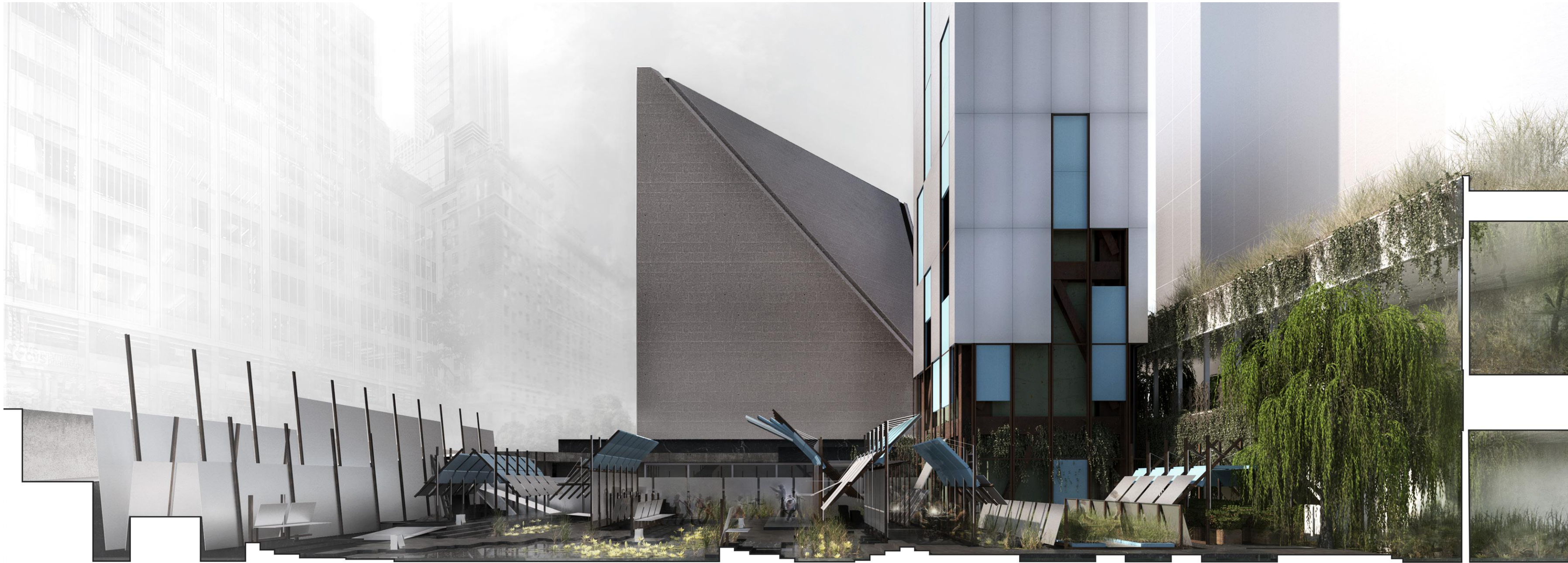
The site at 53rd Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan is a unique contradiction. On the same block a **Tower** and **Church** stand side by side. One - the banking tenant of the Tower - financed the other - St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Materials extracted from the ground to construct the Tower, a Church and a sunken plaza in the shadows of the city become the tools with which I forge a new landscape. A new terrain that forms, deforms, and transforms generating resonant experiences, multiplicitous, improvisational, and unfixed. Pavers, panels, cladding, steel and stone temporarily are returned to the ground to produce impermanent space at all scales. This practice unveils interstitial space negotiating between nature and urban, built and unbuilt, land and water.



a: plaza entrance b: workshop c: farm d: storage
e: nursery f: water garden and benches h: band-shell and stage h: visitors center i: hydropower
j: material extraction point k: waste management

Left: bandshell detail
Top Right: community farm detail





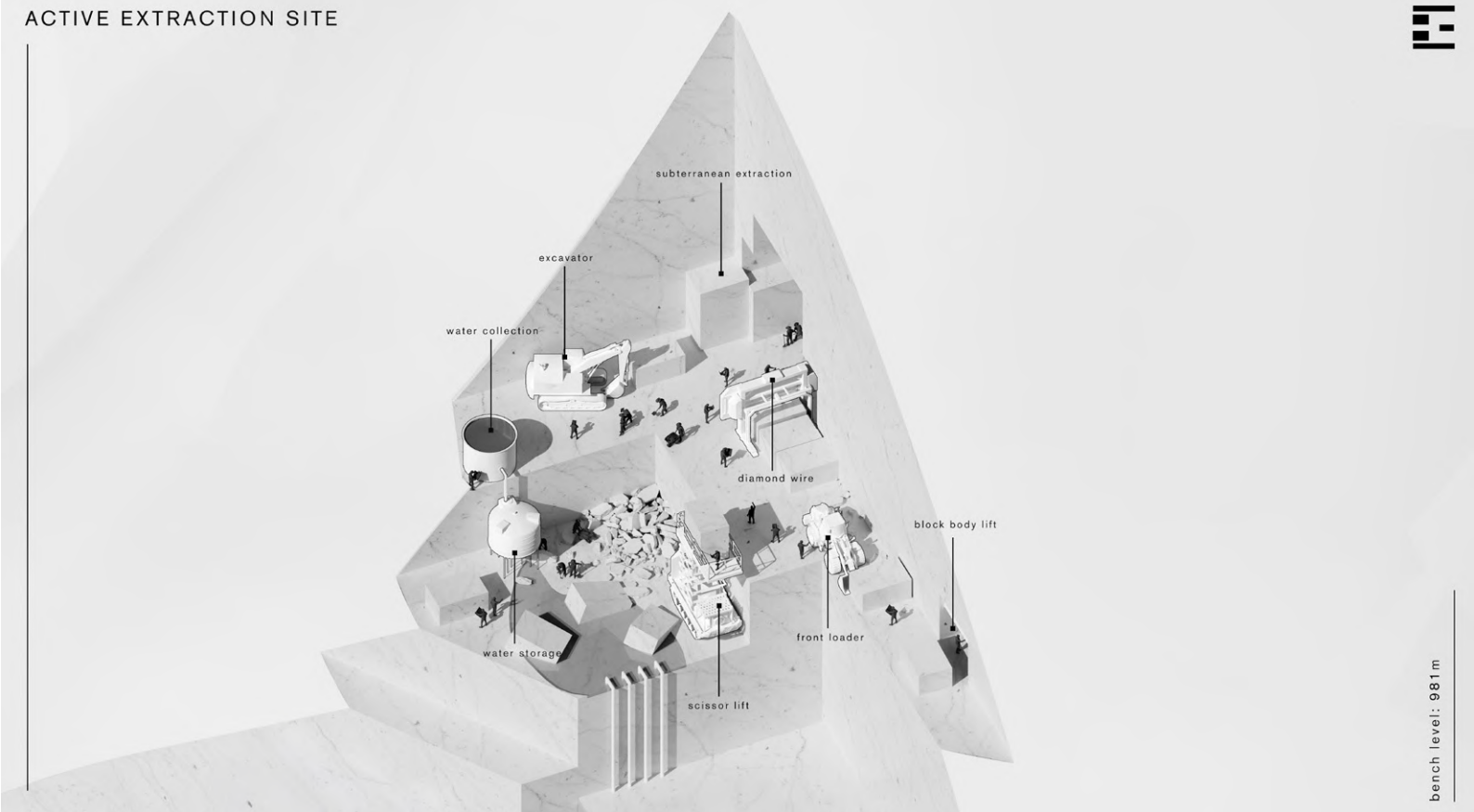
Top: perspective section
Bottom: sectional scores

ANARCHIST MARBLE
Advanced VI Studio
Critic: Mark Wasiuta

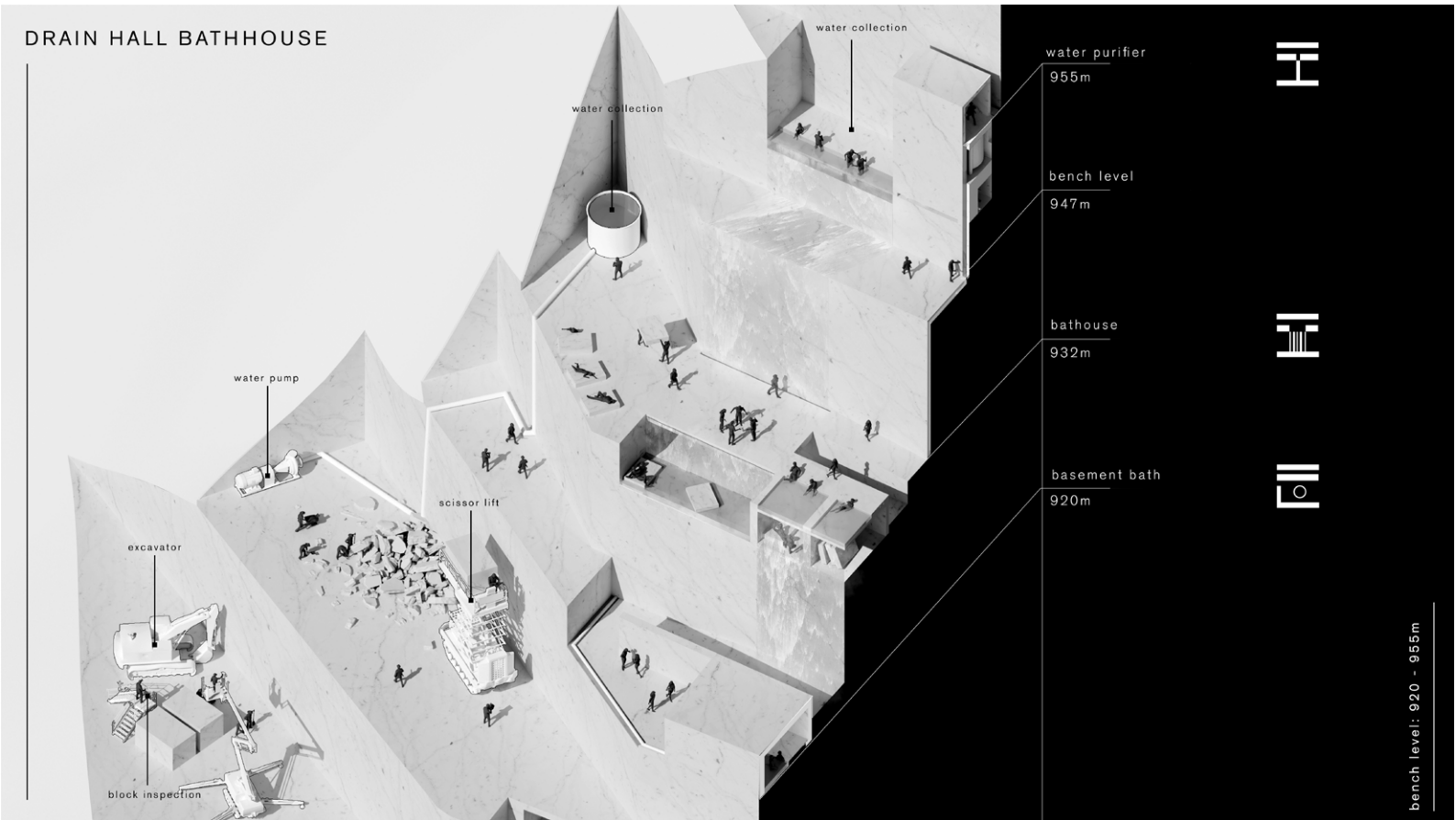


Despite the first mining guild being established in 1450, intense work, low pay, and dangerous conditions all led to frustration and discontent amongst the cavatori. Protests and labor based uprisings, most notably the Lunigiani Revolt of 1897, would persist well into the 20th century. The entire district and the resources within it became sites of resistance, and tools of rebellion. When faced with occupation by the Italian government, Carrara's quarrymen used the rugged topography of the hill and extracted blocks - the product of their labor and toil - to barricade and defend local autonomy. Memorials and monuments to this movement continue to scatter the quarries and villages. The area's many organizations, publications, and sites of resistance are evidence of a thriving concentration of labor-based anarchism deeply rooted in history. The strong, fervent desire for not only bodily autonomy, but political and cultural independence would make Carrara a singularity point for collectivity and extraction. The centri sociali or social centers of Italy also began to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s as self-managed, often squatted spaces rooted in anarchist and autonomist political traditions. These centers rejected hierarchical authority and capitalist structures, instead functioning as experimental zones of direct democracy and collective ownership much like the quarry ground at Carrara. Often occupying abandoned buildings, they became hubs for political activism, music, art, education, and mutual aid — resisting state and capital control. As urban commons, their programs were deliberately plural: combining concerts, social spaces, studio space, and housing under one roof. This multiplicity reflected their core principle — that politics and daily life should be inseparably entangled.

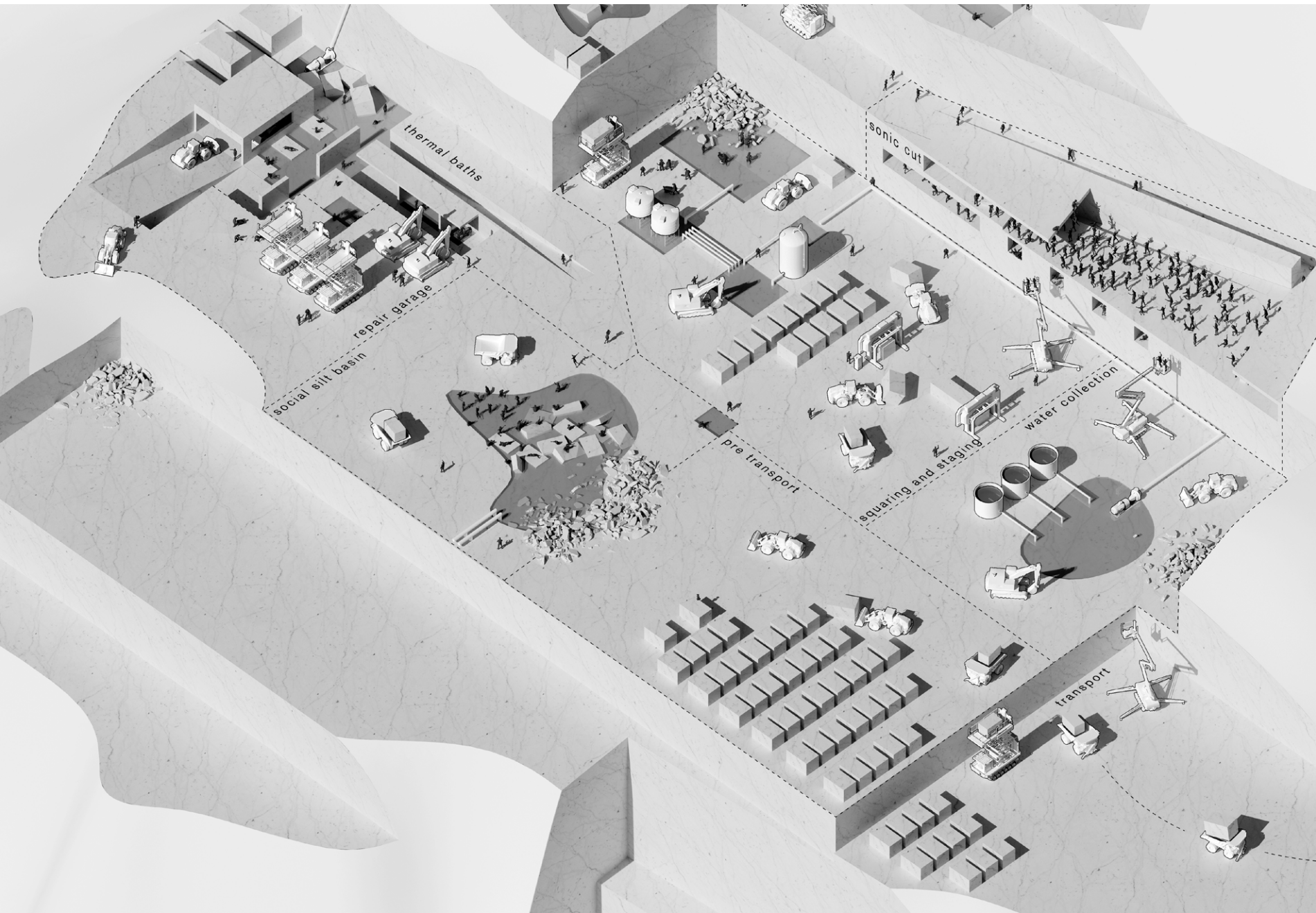
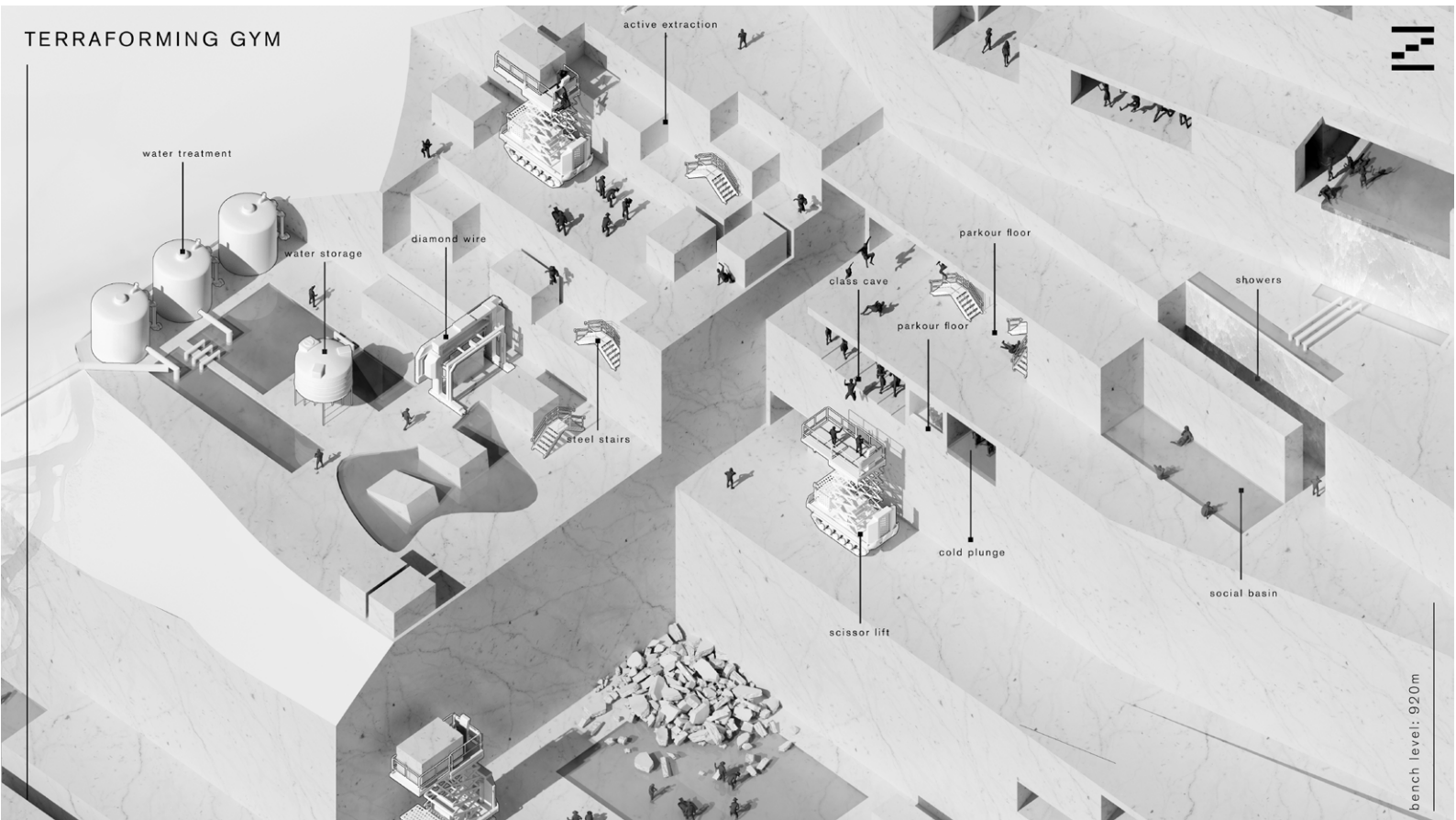
ACTIVE EXTRACTION SITE



DRAIN HALL BATHHOUSE



TERRAFORMING GYM



Top Left: active extraction site axon
Middle Left: bathhouse section
Bottom Left: terraforming gym axon
Top Right: free play zone axon map



exterior view of free play zone pool



exterior view of terraforming gym



exterior view of sonic cut music venue

As a site of collective tension and expression, the Carrara quarry becomes the perfect place to reimagine the social centers of Italy. A spatial confluence where the laboring body, political expression, and industrial technology meet rock. A socio-cultural landscape of simultaneity. Through a radically alternative form of terraforming and intense acceleration of extractive practices, the project excises new space from the rock. I'm proposing a series of liberated zones and interstitial baths within and on Monte Serrone, like a centri sociali networked on the hill.

