

LEBANON DANCE THEATER

THE BEIRUT MOSAIC
LEISURE / FRANCESCA
GUARNIERI
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Beirut Studio



complex projects

2022

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Beirut Studio
The Beirut Mosaic

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RESEARCH PLAN

1 RESEARCH PLAN

The October Revolution started in 2019 and exacerbated by Beirut's port explosion in August 2020³ voiced the need from the Beirut population to reclaim public space for mingling and personal expression⁴. In concomitance with the peaceful protests, Lebanese youth begun to reclaim with arts and performance public spaces and damaged buildings once used for artistic expression.

Local artists are requesting attention to the challenge that 'in a largely privatised Beirut, public spaces remain scarce (...)'⁵. With former public spaces now dominated by private structures, mainly owned by joint-stock companies that redeveloped Beirut following the Lebanese Civil War in 1990⁶, and thus inaccessible to most citizens. Similarly, the coastline is dominated by private beach resorts. With Ramlet al Baida beach, the only remaining public beach in Beirut, located on the south-west suburbs, under 'threat of encroachment by real estate developers, leaving people with limited access.'⁷

Moreover, high rent prices of private and city-owned theatres across the city centre have been causing, since the early 2010s, performers associations to struggle economically⁸. The situation was aggravated by the damage of the 2020 blast that left most traditional performance venues non-viable. With a new theatre season opening in December 2020, after the covid-induced closure of all performance venues in the city, artists have returned to perform no-longer only by means of illegal occupation of privatised spaces⁹. However, this has revamped attention to the challenge of unaffordable venues. The claim is that the current model of money-making theater doesn't accommodate for crossovers among artistic associations, due to a lack of affordable space for practice and encounter also with the public¹⁰. This situation calls for

a new model of non-commercial theatre to resuscitate the artistic and cultural life that Beirut was famous for before the War¹¹. One that is affordable and oriented towards artistic exploration and public dialogue across the diverse stakeholders of Beirut urban life¹².

Adjacent to the shore of Ramlet al Bayda beach, at the edge of the UNESCO ghost town developed by Solidare in the 1970s¹³ and the Mar Elias Refugee Camp established in the 1950s by Palestine refugees¹⁴. The project seeks to revive the last public beach of Beirut by providing an affordable space for artistic identity and encounter across the public and artistic associations¹⁵.

A preliminary research question emerging from the design interest is: "Can the theater foyer blur the barrier 'public-to-private' space in Beirut?" To answer, this research sets out to examine secondary sources withdrawn online and from Beirut local archives. The topic of focus being Theaters and Performance Institutes in the city of Beirut and their relation to the history of Theaters in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the research method includes on-site urban and architectural surveys, interviews with Beirut Urban and Architectural Institutes, interviews with Beirut Theater Companies and interviews with locals. Conversations with Beirut citizens studying at TU Delft provide insightful preliminary information and guidance on how to approach the context rather distant from the European reality.

¹ 'Mental Illness in Lebanon'.

² 'Beirut Theatre Retains Alternative Roots | Arts and Culture | Al Jazeera'.

³ '2020 Beirut Explosion'.

⁴ '17 October Revolution'.

⁵ 'Lebanese Youth Are Reclaiming Public Spaces with Arts and Dialogue'.

⁶ 'Solidere'.

⁷ 'Lebanese Youth Are Reclaiming Public Spaces with Arts and Dialogue'.

⁸ 'Beirut Theatre Retains Alternative Roots | Arts and Culture | Al Jazeera'.

⁹ 'Beyrouth retrouve le théâtre, Zoukak remonte sur scène'.

¹⁰ 'Beirut Theatre Retains Alternative Roots | Arts and Culture | Al Jazeera'.

¹¹ 'Beirut Theatre Retains Alternative Roots | Arts and Culture | Al Jazeera'.

¹² ADNAN, 'Interview with the Koon Theater Group'.

¹³ Bitar, 'Beirut's Last Public Beach Faces Creeping Privatisation'.

¹⁴ 'Mar Elias Camp'.

¹⁵ 'Beirut Theater - Google Search'.

'Throughout modern Lebanese history, theatres (...) across the capital hosted politically active Lebanese artists, (...) helped resurrect Lebanon's Hakawati (storyteller) tradition with shows on the heroism of Fedayeen (Palestinian fighters) and their resistance to the Israeli occupation, (...) allowed artistic expressions that reflected concerns on the streets. (...) Theatre becomes a mediator for interacting and influencing. Theatre is one of the rare places in Lebanon where people from all sects, regions, political views and colours mingle. (...) It is one of the rare places that is trying to put an end to the country's poor approach to the treatment of mental illness'.¹ The moment non-commercial theatres (...) cease to exist, is the moment Beirut's cultural image is erased.'²



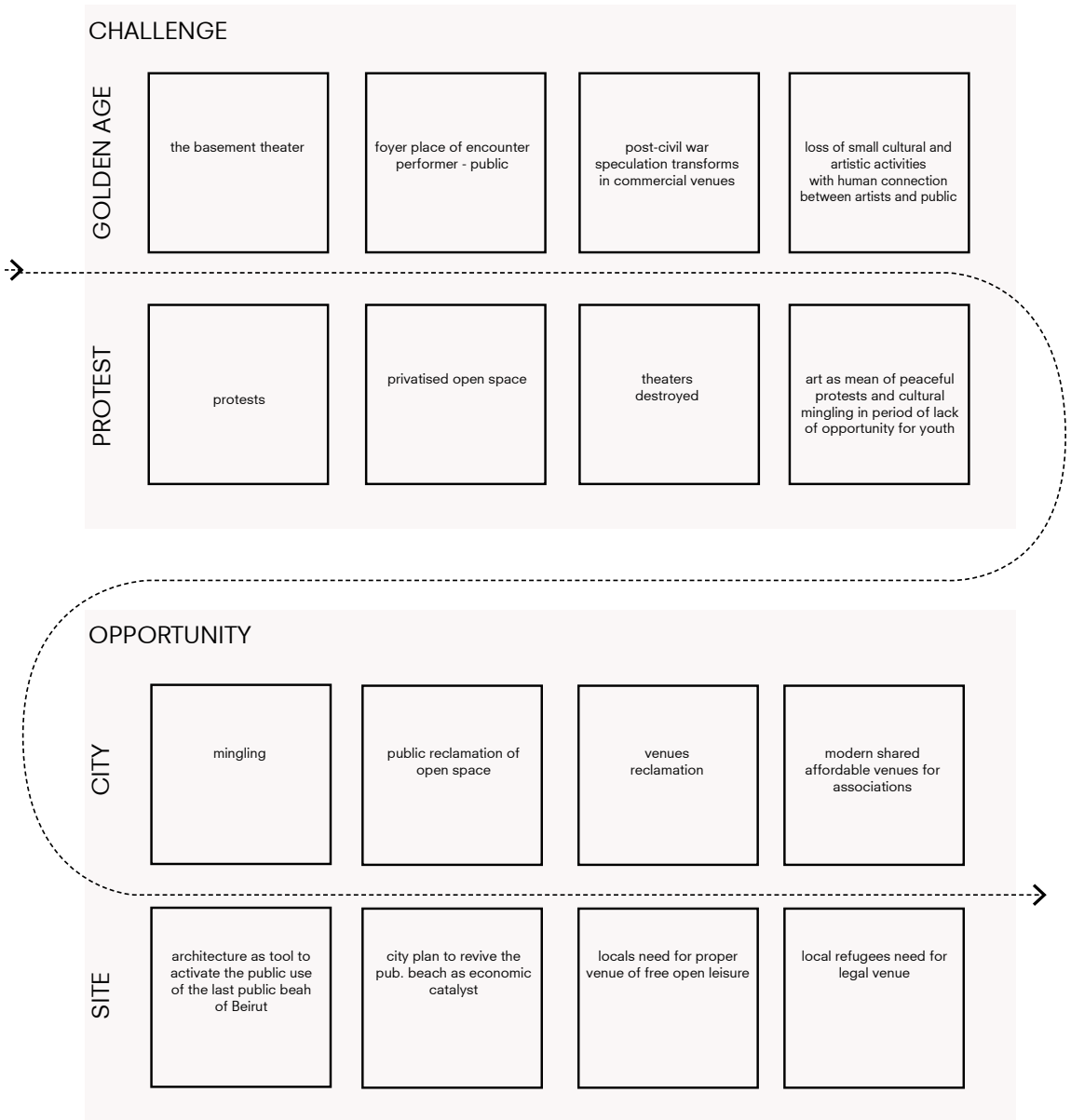
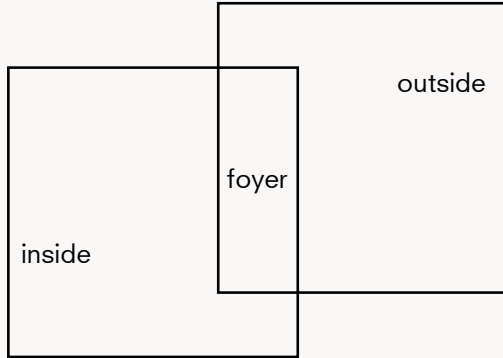
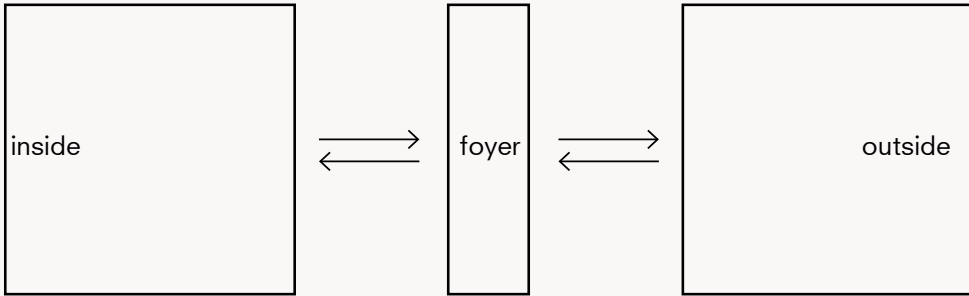


Figure: Diagram of the relevance of the problem statement.

OPTION1: BLUR THE BOUNDARY



OPTION2: DEFINE THE BOUNDARY



OPTION3: ...?

.....

Figure: The impact of the research question on the design: diagram of the possible relationship between public-foyer-private space.

How Does Catastrophe Impact The Development Of A City?

How Does The Explosion Impact The Development Of Beirut?

What Leisure Is Relevant In Beirut?

What Leisure Is Needed In Beirut?

What Leisure Is Successful In Beirut?

What Type Of Architecture Promotes Social Cohesion (In Beirut)?

What Type Of Architecture Do Protests Promote (In Beirut)?

Can We Use Public Space To Generate Revenue/Investment?

Can A Theater Reflect The Need For Public Space (In Beirut)?

Can The Theater Foyer Blur The Barrier 'Public-To-Private' Space (In Beirut)?

How can the foyer of a theater in Beirut blur / define the relationship between public and private space?

How to deal with the relationship of public-to-private space in the design of the foyer of a dance theater in Beirut?

What can a dance theater in Ramlet Al Baida learn from Beirut's Golden Age cultural life?



Q How to deal with the relationship of public-to-private space in the design of the foyer of a dance theater in Beirut?



T Surveying the way dance theater foyers deal with public-to-private space.

or

SQ Evaluating the way to deal with public-to-private space in the design of dance theater foyers



SQ Reviving the Beirut's Golden Age tradition of interaction between performers (private) and audience (public) by dealing with private-to-public space in the design of a dance theater foyer in Beirut.

METHODOLOGY

2 HOW: DESCRIBING THE RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 METHODOLOGY

Given the challenges posed by: the physical and cultural distance to the site of research; the limited information retrievable online; the limited literature and archival information retrievable on-site. And given the impact of the information gathered during the site visit, this project is fit for context-led research. Meaning that it allows the contextual research done on-site (emic research, i.e. from the perspective of the subject) dictate the research process and establish the hierarchy of the information retrieved non-on-site (etic research, i.e. from the perspective of the observer)²⁷. Hence, physical, social and historical settings are of primary importance²⁸. The goal is to use a mix of resources to sustain a 'future-proof' argument for the narrative of the project that should project architectural speculation into 2050.

The methodology includes primary and secondary sources to achieve a wholesome perspective on the topic and to ultimately establish a framework of design rules. Primary sources include on-site urban and architectural surveys like walking, mapping, sketching and photographing. In addition to interviews with Beirut Urban and Architectural Institutes, practicing architects, Dance Companies and locals. Visits of dance theaters and attending dance performances in the Netherlands also constitute a form primary source. This data is processed and archived in mind-maps which support site and program related decisions.

In terms of secondary sources, withdrawing information from Beirut local archives proved to be impossible given the

limited amount of time on-site and given that archival material is difficult to retrieve because in times of war it was not a priority to archive it or because it got lost through a history of catastrophes. However, from the beginning and at every stage of the research, key are secondary sources withdrawn online and mixed-media literature withdrawn from the BK Library at TU Delft. Both on the topics of the historical development of Beirut and on the design of dance theatres. These include maps, typological case studies and literature review. Compiling a catalogue of architectural references with a focus on the transitional space public-to-private will help inform the layout of the project's program.

Ongoing conversations with Beirutees studying at TU Delft provide insightful guidance on how to approach the context rather distant from the European reality. Moreover, conversation with members of the research group informs the advancement of the architectural topic.

Figure 2 and 3 propose the diagrams of the research structure, including argumentation and methodology.



Figure: Picture of the Grand Theatre, heavily damaged by a history of catastrophes and municipal negligence.

ARGUMENTATION

STUDIO TOPIC

Architecture in the post-catastrophe context

PERSONAL TOPIC

Leisure

PERSONAL FASCINATION (PROGRAM)

Ramlet Dance Theater

DESIGN CHOICES

Dance theater
Underground theater
Transition private-to-public
Public space activation

TITLE
Evaluating the way to deal with public-to-private space in the design of a dance theater.

SUBTITLE
Reviving the Beirut's Golden Age tradition of interaction between performers (private) and audience (public) by dealing with transitional private-to-public space in the design of a dance theater in Beirut.

RESEARCH QUESTION
How to deal with the relationship of transitional public-to-private space in the design of a dance theater in Beirut?

KEYWORDS
Beirut's Golden Age; performer; audience; private-to-public; dance theater; transitional.

DATA COLLECTION?

METHODOLOGY

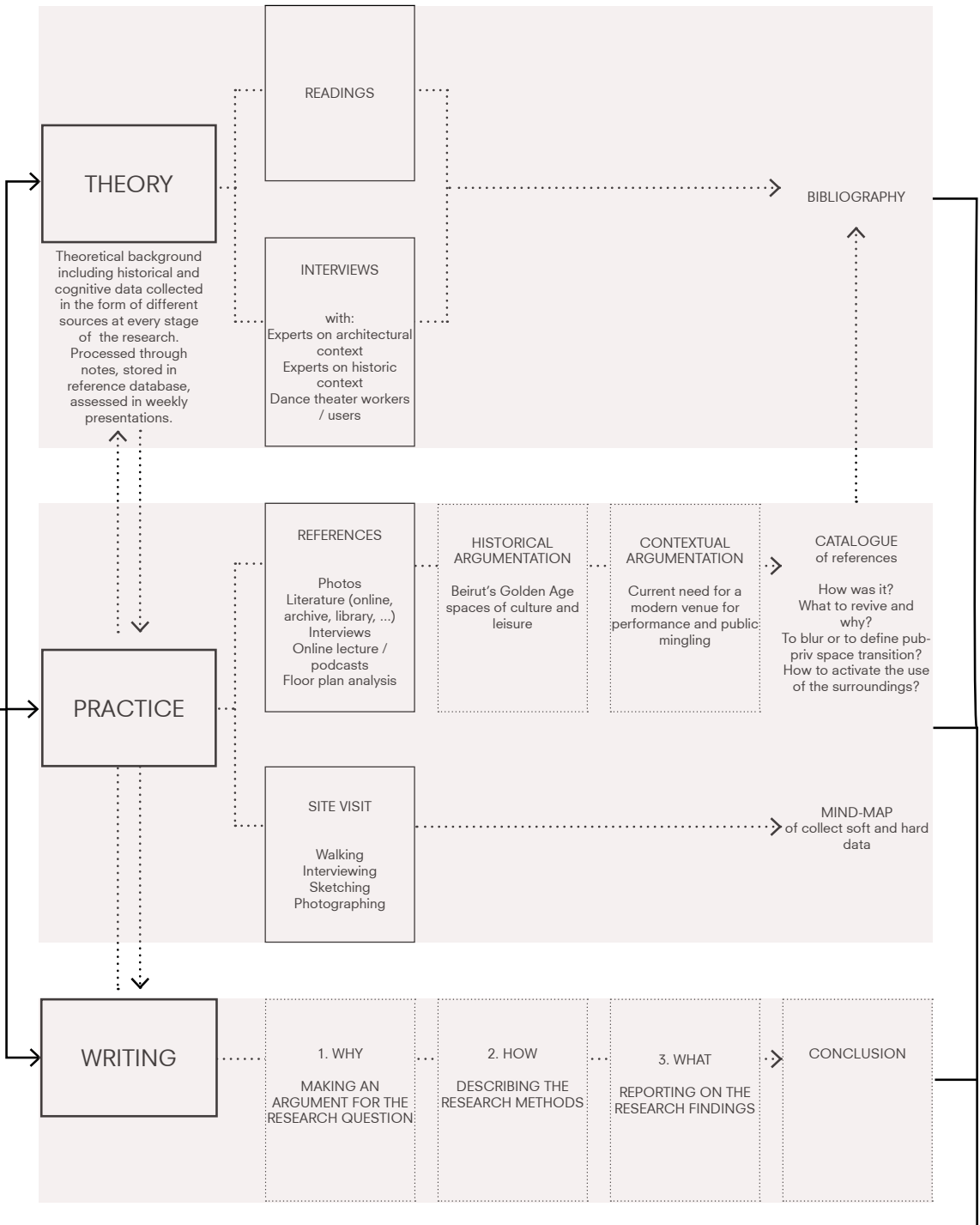


Figure 3: Diagram of the research structure.

3 WHAT: REPORTING ON THE RESEARCH FINDING

3.1 LITERARY FRAMEWORK

Besides the various sources cited so far in this research plan, the literary framework evolves around four points:

1. Urban literature to educate on the historiography of urban practices, particularly in terms of the changes in public spaces between the pre and post Civil War periods in sources like *Beirut Urban Design in the Arab World* by Robert Saliba²⁹, *Lessons in Post-War Reconstruction: Case Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War* by Howayda Al-Harithy³⁰.

2. Urban literature to inform good practice of urban design such as *Making Leisure Work* by Brian Lonsway³¹, *Insurgent Public Space* by Jeffrey Hou³².

3. Architectural literature to inform good practice of (dance) theaters such as *Theatre Buildings* by Judith Strong³³, *Theater* by Yukio Futagawa³⁴, *Buildings for the Performing Arts* by Ian Appleton³⁵, *The Shapes of our Theater* by Jo Mielziner³⁶, *Complex Buildings: Generators, Linkers, Mixers & Storytellers* by A+T Research Group³⁷.

4. Architectural references of dance theaters to understand the peculiarities that make a dance theater:

i. in Beirut, for the opportunity to inform culturally appropriate design, this includes

.Golden Age theaters, particularly looking at the 'basement theater' and its relationship with the

adjacent public space (walkways) and its places for interaction across performers and public, ex.: Caracalla Dance Theater and Baalbeck International Festival (figure 4);

.Contemporary venues for rehearsal and performance and their challenges to maintain independent dancers associations alive in Beirut, ex.: the Beirut Dance Company;

ii. in The Netherlands, for the opportunity they provide to visit them in person to better understand their spatial organisation, ex.: Luce and Amare Dance Theater in The Hague;

iii. Internationally, to contextualise decision of good practice.



Figure 4: Baalbeck International Festival within the ancient ruins of the Bekaa Valley in the 60s.

DESIGN BRIEF

4 WHY: MAKING AN ARGUMENT FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTION

4.1 GRADUATION TOPIC

Proposing the question 'How does catastrophe impact the future development of Beirut?', Complex Projects graduation studio 2021-2022 sets out to understand how catastrophe can impact the development of a city like Beirut. While requesting its students to develop a narrative that attempts at creating a frame of intervention for Greater Beirut in 2050¹. Accordingly, the following paragraph introduces the choice of the personal architectural topic by posing the question 'What is contemporary Beirut asking for its urban future?'

A quick browse on the urban challenges that Beirut faces today leads inevitably to the fact that private speculation driven by few powerful joint-stock companies like Solidaire² has been depriving Beirutees from the 'free and public' for decades. Resulting in civilian protests that challenge the widespread practice of 'public' consumeristic places inaccessible to most citizens³. Modern Beirut offers 0.8m² of public space per capita against the suggested norm of 9m² according to the World Health Organisation (WHO)⁵.

From here rises the interest for the architectural topic of leisure, for it can help support most of its population's (the non-super rich one percent who only can afford the private places of leisure⁶) 'right to the city'. While catalysing positive urban, social and economic change⁴. According to Henri Lefebvre, French sociologist that introduced the concept of production of social space, the 'right to the city' should aim "to reclaim

the city as a co-created space (...) detached from the growing effects of commodification and capitalism (...) over social interaction."⁷ Accordingly, the following paragraph introduces the personal fascination for a theater beginning with the question of 'What forms of leisure can support the 'right to the city' in Beirut?' and '(How) Can the design of a theater reflect the need for public space in Beirut?'

In the interview conducted in Beirut in October 2020, practicing Architect and Assistant Professor at the Lebanese American University (LAU) Roula El-Khoury retraced the dynamics of Beirut's Golden Age (1945-1975) picturesque buzzy streetscapes and abundant free places of leisure, numerous along the seashore and in the historic heart of the city. Which made Beirut a vibrant melting pot that never slept and welcomed the influx of cultural influences from international visitors. A vibrancy that elicits an interest to finding architectural inspiration in pre-Civil War social practices.

Roula then spoke about the loss of experimental performance venues in the redevelopment of post-Civil War Beirut, with the few venues that withstood the damage of the Civil War becoming commercial places like blockbuster cinemas. This erased the tradition of direct exchange between performers and public on the city street fronts and the theaters foyers. As a result, performers organisations have struggled over the past decade to find affordable rehearsal studios and venues to bring their performances to the public⁸. On top of this, the 2020 port explosion caused the damage of most of the then surviving theatres of Beirut, located in the historic centre in proximity of the blast.

However, in the 2019 protests, dance and music became means of peaceful manifestation⁹. Unifying the diverse population of Beirut that was reclaiming its right to leisure and to personal expression. This supports the notion that, although sometimes disregarded by the ministry of culture as a 'minor art', dance remains a popular tradition to watch in theatres and festivals in its folkloristic forms

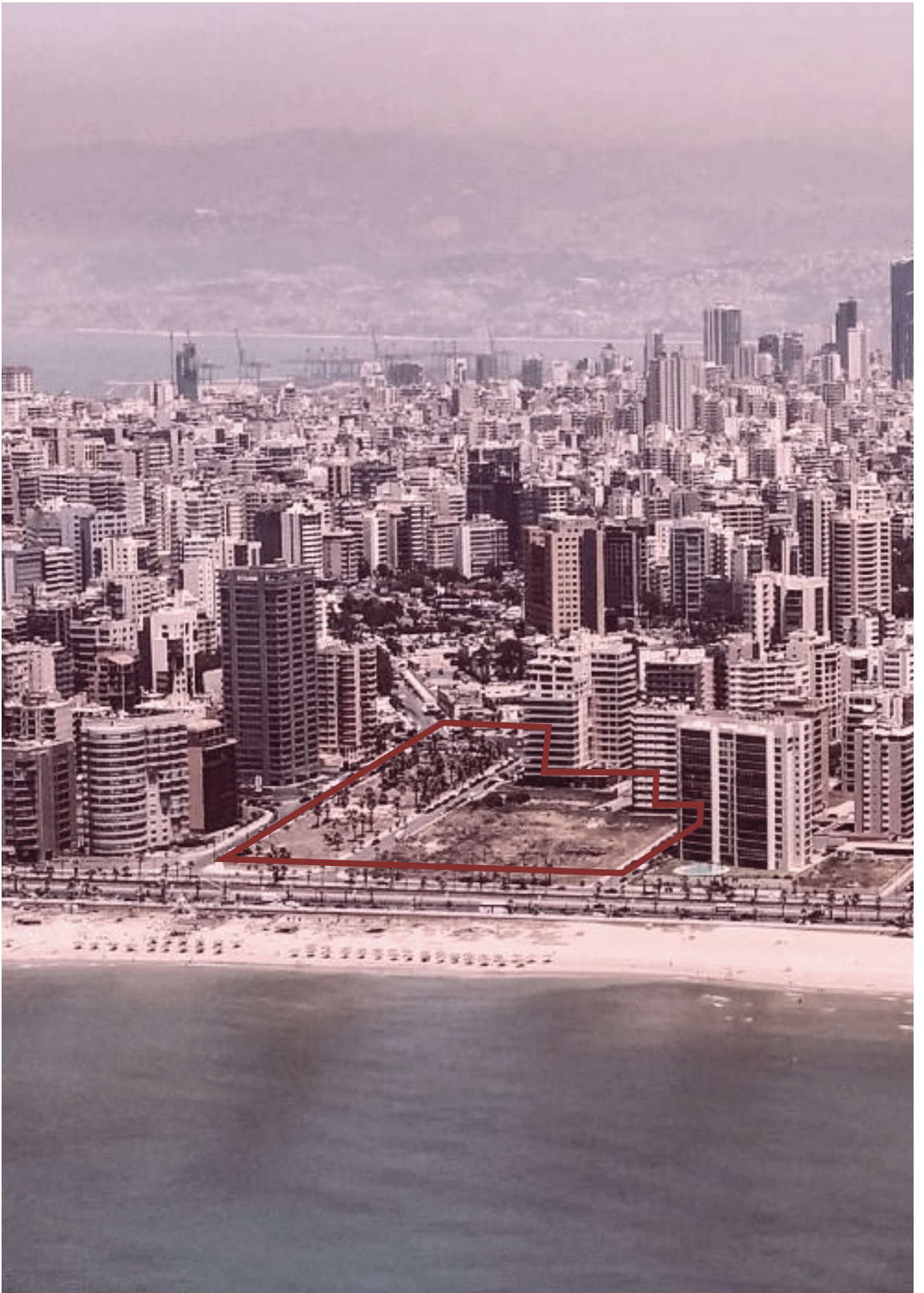


Figure: Aerial view of the project site.

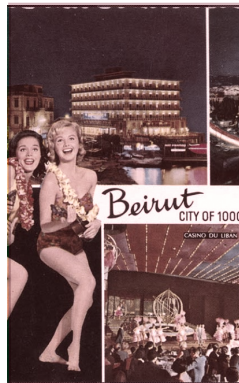
like the Dabke, and to perform as hobby in its more or less modern variations¹⁰. In family gatherings there still is plenty of music and dancing, with the public watching while smoking the water pipe or eating¹¹.

4.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Beirut of the Golden Age became known as the ‘Paris of the Middle East’ for its cultural scene of theatre, poetry, cinema and music. For instance, the Baalbeck International Festival, set within ancient ruins in the Bekaa Valley, was in its heyday¹². But the term ‘Paris of the Middle East’ today is seen as ‘aggravating cliché’ from which Beirut claims its own artistic identity while struggling to keep afloat its art scene.

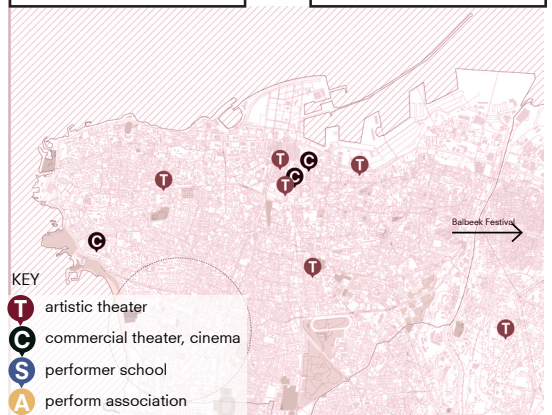
With some of its artists demonstrating unbreakable tenacity¹³ while other are forced to flee to keep their artistic passion alive¹⁴. With the new theatre season opening in December 2020, after the Covid19-induced closure of all performance venues, some artists returned to perform no-longer only by means of illegal occupation of privatised or abandoned spaces¹⁵. However, many artistic performances and festivals like the Bipod, traditionally performed live, are this year only streamed online for the lack of funds to take the performances on-stage. This revamps attention to the challenge of unaffordable performance venues. The claim is that the current model of commercial theatre doesn’t accommodate for crossovers among artistic associations, due to a lack of affordable space for practice and encounter¹⁶. This situation calls for a new model of affordable non-commercial theatre to resuscitate the artistic life that Beirut was famous for¹⁷.

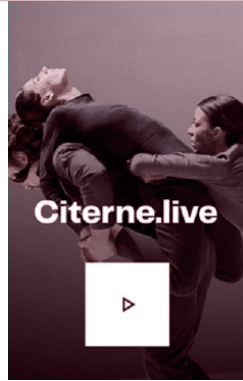
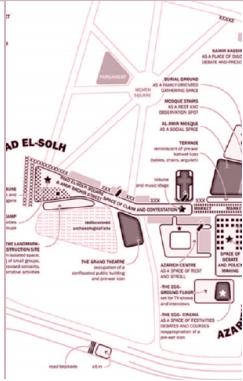
Lebanese performers have different views on what the process of dance contributes to one’s life. The majority of older institutions see dance as a way to keep the memory of the country alive while processing trauma. Most contemporary institutions find in performance a liberation from the gravity of daily life¹⁸. The common denominator is that theater is one of the rare places in Beirut where religious and cultural differences don’t interfere with professional relationships, and



Golden Age
1955-1975

Civil War
1975-1990





BEIRUT DANCE
THEATER &
PARK

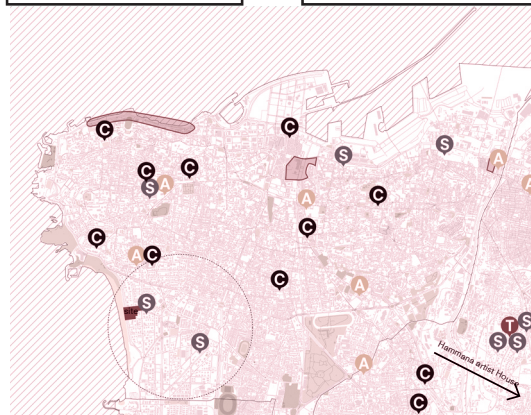
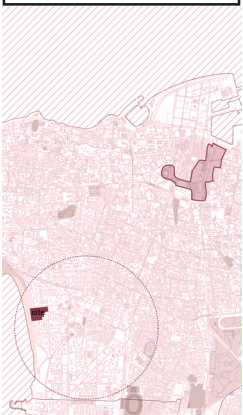
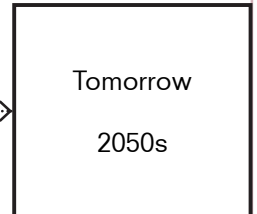
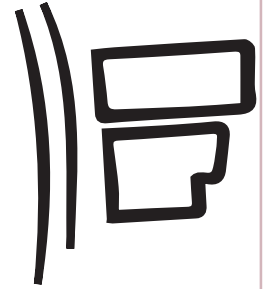


Figure 7: Diagram of the project historical relevance.

the only way they are allowed into the theatre venue is if by serving the development of a performance or of an artist professional growth.

Figure 1 propose the diagram of the project argumentation.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Triggered by this challenging context, the research questions how and where the reinterpretation of Golden Age Beirut's tradition of places of leisure and art can inform the addressing of a modern urban paradox. Namely the fact that the selected plot contains two of the largest free spaces of Beirut which however are largely under-used. Thus, the question rises of how public buildings can activate the use of large free-access open spaces like Ramlet El Baida Beach and Park. To test this idea in pragmatic design actions, the research focuses on the question "How can a dance theater in beirut define transitional public-to-private space?"

Expected key design principles to investigate are the spatial relationships diagram of the 'reverse dance theatre' or 'basement dance theatre'; its role in activating its surroundings and specifically the role of the foyer in dealing with the transition of public-to-private space.





Figure 2: History of performance appropriating and reclaiming public spaces with arts and dialogue.

5 WHAT: DESIGN

5.1 DESIGN BRIEF

For these reasons, the project for **Lebanon Dance Theater** proposes a 20,000 m² dance theatre and the refurbishment of the adjacent park and waterfront.

As inconclusively attempted twice in the past decade, the project takes up local dancers and choreographers' **ambition** to create an official institution for Lebanese dance, subsidised by the local government, supported by international NGOs and recognised internationally to house a diversity of forms of dance, of dancers and of audiences. It is a chance for Lebanese dancers to develop within their society, and from there expand to the world, without difficulties of fleeing abroad. A platform to present young artists' talent with the support of a recognised institution while preserving tradition and exploring innovation in affordable venues.

Thus, the **character** of the project is that of a national institution offering affordable rehearsal spaces and a set of open-air pavilions for amateur dancers where indoor and outdoor dance activates its surroundings. The social focus should be on the building approachability to facilitate the reaching of a broader audience, making dance a catalyst for connection across the diverse stakeholders of Beirut urban life.

The project **stakeholders** include:

- the newly founded Lebanese Dance Institute as client
- the City of Beirut as developer;
- International Cultural NGOs as extra funders.

Specifically, the **users** are:

- the Lebanese Dance Institute and the Partnership of Dancers Associations that constitute it;
- the amateur dancers;
- the audience who will attend the

performances;

- the 'passer-by' public interacting primarily with the open-air spaces.

The **architectural ambition** is of offering through design a fluid journey that the user navigates, reflective of the process of dance. Climate and tradition responsive, the resulting **deconstructed environmental monolith** composed of differently sized volumes clad in perforated stone facades, and sober urban terraces sheltered with perforated canopies that project 'dancing' shadows that the performers and audience interact with.

The **program** comprises:

- the 20,000 m² Lebanon Dance Theater with a ground coverage of approximately 4,000 m² which consists of:
 - o 3 theaters:
 - Proscenium Theater for larger, formal performances, with 1000 seats in tot. 1,300 m² (reflective of Casino du Liban Theater, Beirut);
 - Endstage Blackbox Theater with annexed bar for medium performances that seek encounter between performers and audience, with 400 seats in tot. 540 m² (reflective of Al Madina Theater, Beirut);
 - Multiform Theater for seminars, conferences and small informal performances, with 80 seats in tot. 150 m².
 - o Foyer, 4,000 m² open-air and sheltered 4,000 m² enclosed including restaurant with annexed immersive stage for informal and social dances, 150 people seated or 200 standing in tot. 200 m² (reflective of the Metro Al Madina Theater, Beirut);
 - o (affordable, rentable) rehearsal facilities;
 - o fitness rooms;
 - o administrative spaces;
 - o costume and scene workshops;
 - o storage spaces;
- the 16,000 m² terraced Ramlet



Figure 11: Concept collage of the Lebanese Dance Theater & Park.

Dance Park, including 3 sheltered Dance Pavilions of approximately 1,000 m² ground coverage each;

- the 3,000 m² Ramlet Amphitheatre to accommodate approximately 250 seats;
- the 1,500 m² Ramlet Dance Platform that protrudes in the sea to accommodate approximately 1500 seats.

The project **location** results of the group assignment to the suburbs of Beirut and the group decision to work on the neighbourhood of Moussaytiba (from Mastaba, meaning the intermediate level between low, the beach, and high, the mountain, levels¹⁹). The site is a rare empty urban plot adjacent to Ramlet El Baida beach (meaning 'white sand', Ramlet means 'sand' and Baida 'white'²⁰), the last public sandy beach of Beirut under 'threat of encroachment by real estate developers²¹'. And Ramlet El Baida park, Beirut's lost opportunity in space for a park²². Thus, the site presents opportunity to set an example for opening up the shoreline for public use via the punctuation of highly privatised ground with public buildings, which should motivate the City to invest in the accessibility, cleaning and comfort of the area with the promise of revenue from newly added commercial activities. The plot stands out amongst a variety of high-rise, high-income apartment towers of the 1970s UNESCO neighbourhood²⁴. And rests in the vicinity of the low-rise Mar Elias refugee camp, illegally established in the 1950s by Palestine refugees²⁵.

The plot BCR is 30% and FAR of 2, excluding the park of 8,000 m², the remaining 9,900 m² of building plot present a total buildable square footage of 19,800 m² and max. ground coverage of 5,940 m². Feasibility studies reflective of the architectural ambitions lead to **adjusted urban rules** of approximately 4,000 m² urban plane ground coverage, 7,500 m² underground theaters and open-air amphitheatres , 9,000 m² of raised floors.

The neglected **plot** overlooks the Mediterranean Sea from which it is divided by a 12m level change and secondary road

Rafic El Hariri, offering a view while sitting in a potentially public space. To maintain the idyllic view, Ramlet Al Baida Street accommodates pedestrian access to the pavilions and the Dance Institute's front of house. While vehicular access for public, crew and deliveries is moved to the secondary Ibtihage Kadoura Street. The view is most appealing to locals in the afternoon for satisfying their passion for watching the sun set over the sea²³ and enriches the performances as picturesque backdrop of the open-air dance venues. Allowed by their lack of need of natural light intake, the institute's theaters are underground to mitigate the disconnection between the beach and Moussaytiba in a modern reinterpretation of Beirut pre-Civil War 'basement theater'. Namely the tradition of locating theatres in the basement of large apartment and office towers, often seen as 'community theatres' for their modest dimensions and humble appearance²⁶.



Figure 8: Design proposal

REFLECTION

6 DESIGN

WHAT:

6.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

Early research showed that dance is ingrained in the local culture of leisure but a history of catastrophes has left Beirut today with close to no venues to practice and perform dance, causing dancers and choreographers to flee the country. However, when given the chance, dance remains a popular live art form to watch, characterized by moments of encounter between audience and performers. It is also an inclusive popular leisure activity with festivals dedicated to it, stimulating the audience to come together in public spaces. This situation calls for a new model of non-commercial theatre inclusive of affordable studio spaces for resident dance companies but also for the amateur public. To resuscitate the artistic life that Beirut of the Lebanese Golden Age (1955-1975) was famous for. While also reclaiming its artistic identity from the aggravating cliché that defines Beirut as 'Paris of the Middle East', through reinterpretation of the 'underground' theaters that used to populate the streetscape of Beirut. Twice in the past decade a proposal for an official Institute for Dance in Beirut reached discussion with local authorities. However, corrupted politics and a series of catastrophes have prevented the project from realization.

The project ambition for the Lebanon Dance Institute & Theater is to create an official institution for Lebanese dance, supported by the local government & recognised internationally to house a diversity of forms of dance, of dancers and of audiences. The urban ambition sees the Theater as a public building that acts as a catalyst in appropriating and activating the last public beach of Beirut and the derelict park along which it is located. Design focus is on the question of how to design the open amphitheatre and

foyer, which connect their surroundings, so that they can act as transitional public-to-private spaces that attract the wider public to the building. Making it a key activator space of the Ramlet Al Baida shoreline, inclusive of terraces for free sports to breakdown the topography of the sloping park. In return, the site provides the natural backdrop of the Mediterranean Sea to all the activities taking place.

The design substantiates extensive contextual, case-study and technical research. With a proposal that is both resolving complex users flows between the more and less public, between the front and back of house. And that never forgets to place dance as the core activator of its surrounding public and semi-public transitional space. (fig. 1)

6.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROJECT TOPIC, COMPLEX PROJECTS STUDIO TOPIC, ARCHITECTURE MASTER TRACK

The studio-assigned individual topic of Architecture of Leisure brought to attention that the Beirut citizens have access to less than 1/10th of public space than what recommended in the guidelines of the World Health Organisation. On-site findings on activities that still bring together on public grounds the fragmented Beirut population highlighted dance as one. Such notion leads to question how venues for dance can enable the citizens' Right to the City. Further reflecting the studio overarching question of how catastrophe can impact the urban development of Beirut, the project questions how catastrophe can impact the design of a dance theater in Beirut. The project proposes an official dance institution as a mean to provide and activate public space for leisure, by reviving Beirut historical and contemporary traditions of theater and dance. The research question is 'How can a dance theater in Beirut define transitional public-to-private space inviting people to use it freely?'

Such process corresponds the understood will of Complex Projects Studio to propose simple architectural solutions to complex contexts of globalization and cultur-

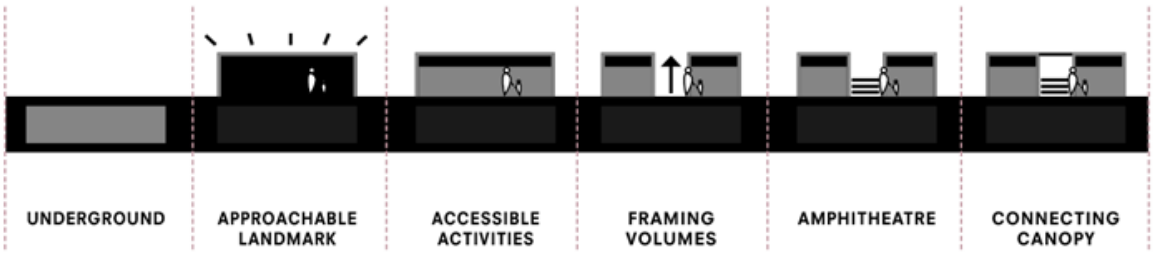


Figure 1

al diversity in the design of buildings that activate their urban surroundings. The process also reflects the TU Delft Architecture Master track aspiration for its students to create strong narrative behind a project's concept. Which should arise from comprehensive multi-disciplinary research (design, physical and social sciences, technology, engineering) and group-work to create integrated and innovative design solutions.

6.3 RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH IN RELATION TO THE COMPLEX PROJECTS STUDIO METHODOLOGICAL LINE OF INQUIRY, REFLECTING ON THE SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE OF THE WORK

Given the challenges posed by the physical and cultural distance to the site of research; the limited information retrievable online; the limited literature and archival information retrievable on-site. In addition to the findings of the one-week group site visit of October 2021, the project is fit for context-led research. Meaning that it allows the on-site emic research, i.e. from the perspective of the subject, to establish the hierarchy of the findings of non-on-site etic research, i.e. from the perspective of the observer. Hence, physical, social and historical settings become of primary importance. The goal is to use a mix of resources to sustain a scientifically relevant, 'future-proof' argument for the narrative of the project that projects architectural speculation into 2050. The figure below proposes the diagram of the research structure, including argumentation and methodology. (fig. 2)

Scientific relevance resides in the possibility of the project becoming a theoretical case study when intervening in Lebanese theater projects as a prototype of reinterpretation of the Beirut's Golden Age traditions as a culturally appropriate design tool through the lens of today social practices. It also aspires to inform design of the last public sections of Beirut shoreline while generating income for the city to boost further revamp of the area. For it embodies transferable historical and contextual research on Lebanese dance theater, Ramlet al Baida, Bei-

rut outskirts and specially the diverse neighbourhood of Moussaytiba. The figures below show the project site and propose a diagram of its possible transferability. (fig. 2, 3)

6.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GRADUATION PROJECT AND THE WIDER SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK, TOUCHING UPON THE TRANSFERABILITY OF THE PROJECT RESULTS

The general dilemma of this work is its architectural speculation within the context of the Beirut Studio that has at times neglected the gravity of the situation that Beirut experiences today. Economically speaking, this situation implies that the city has limited funds to invest in the building of new structures, with the last planning permissions largely dating back to the pre-protests period of 2020. Implying that the city's focus is, or should be, on the provision of structures for the vital needs of the greater part of its population. However, the positive outcome of this approach is that students are encouraged to imagine a more positive narrative for what Beirut will look like in the coming thirty years. Moreover, this poses an exciting challenge in the postulating of what new models of funding might work for the proposed projects.

Similarly, the individual dilemma of the project relies in the decision-making of designing a theater imposed by topical coordination with the rest of the graduation studio. Which presents the question of whether designing for performance should be a priority in the catastrophic context of Beirut. However, initial research appeased the ethical dilemma. From an early interest towards the possibility that architecture offers in the psychological healing of a community, the project attempted to avoid the 'cheesy and delicate narrative of healing', as suggested in studio reviews sessions, by proposing the program for a theater. Fascination that arose, on the one hand, from the awareness that the 2019 revolution articulated the need for places of personal expression and mingling for Beirutees. On the other hand, from the notion that artistic performance is affirming

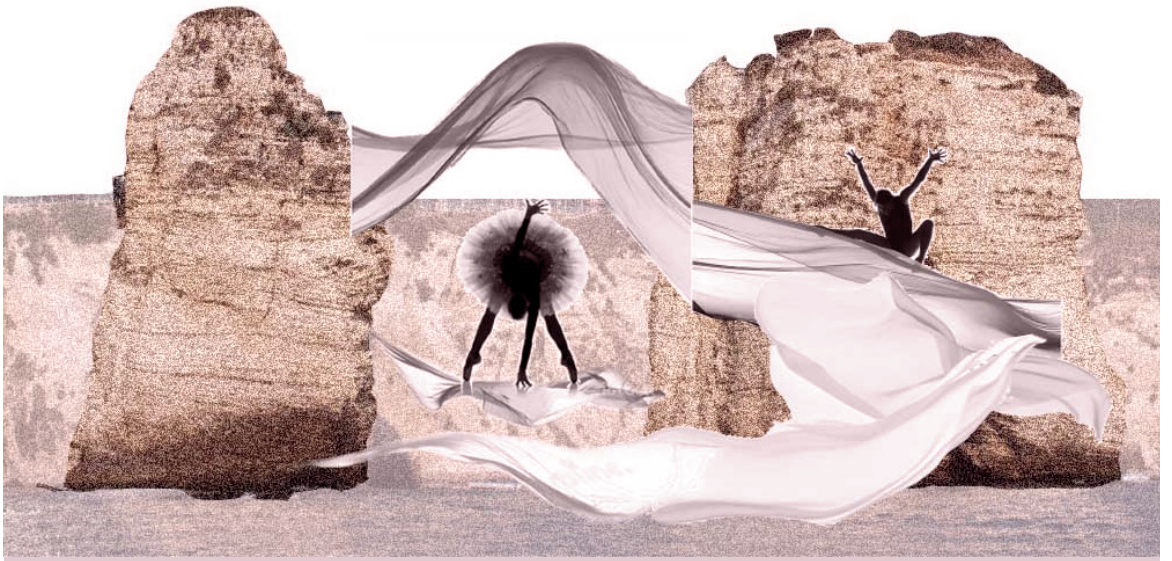


Figure 7: Concept

as a tool for psychotherapy in Beirut, where psychotherapy is still often seen as a taboo despite the high level of trauma that the citizens experience.

Furthermore, the limit of the research resides in the incomplete nature of the data collected on-site due to the time exigency of the site-visit. Which is aggravated by the scarcity of information retrievable from the Netherlands on Beirut's urban aspects. Nonetheless, the work that results from such constraints presents potential for value beyond this graduation thesis, for it could act as a model for future intervention in the city. Furthermore, the many constraints eliminate distraction and allow delving extremely into the one selected research topic.

6.5 ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS IN DOING THE RESEARCH, ELABORATING THE DESIGN AND IN THE POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS IN PRACTICE

1. Approach: On architectural global practice and appropriateness

Global architectural practices are ever more common in the ever more globalised world, and often lead to inappropriate results. The decision of partaking in Complex Projects - Beirut Studio begins with a personal interest in reflecting upon questions of appropriateness in global architectural practices. The result of this work is a deeper understanding of the key role of context-led research in informing architectural choices that are culture appropriate. The design decisions made for this project are direct manifestations of such research. The studio framework and tutoring have supported distancing from romanticised programmatic choices, particularly valid in the context of 'catastrophe', while encouraging a deeper consideration of existing urban imposed constraints. Mentoring and research have also encouraged abstraction of local historical and natural language to avoid the shortcomings of personal interpretation.

2. Concept: On the architect's position in a saturated architectural context

Bernard Khoury's reflection on intervening in the over-saturated and de-humanising architectural context of Beirut inspired early conceptual and volumetric decisions in the design of the Lebanon Dance Institute & Theater. According to Khoury, "(...) when you can't choose your context, you can choose the position you take towards it and contrast it". Accordingly, the projects' concept aspires to counteract the site's surrounding architectural praxis of alienating verticality of apartment towers with a low-rise horizontal public building that invites its free appropriation. As a result, design preoccupation shifts from the volumes to the void in-between. Where the nearby Raouché cliffs, a landmark familiar to all Beirutees, inspire the two limestone volumes, and a slim textile canopy provides shelter over the void in between to welcome the passer-by in comfortable open transitional space.

3. Sustainability: On integrated circularity

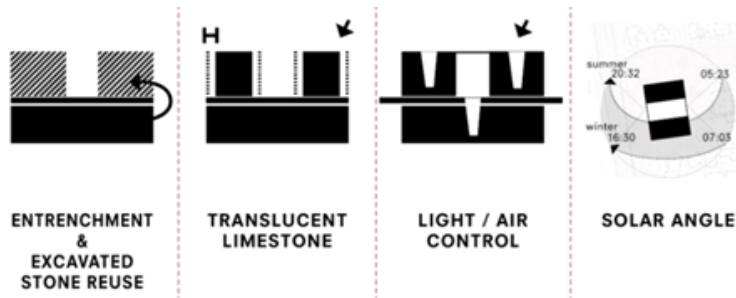
Structure and materials of the project reflect the current global preoccupation on urban future-proof strategies. Part of the building is underground, with a basement excavated in marine limestone terraces, meaning that the excavated material can be collected and sourced to the nearby stone manufactories. Which in return can source the limestone panels that render the project's facade. So integrating local materials and expertise. Moreover, considerations on the building life-cycle and circularity inspire technical detailing that avoids as much as possible adhesive products and allow for future dismantling. Finally, the extensive environmental design strategy is incorporated in a way that does not disrupt the purity of the original architectural concept. (fig. 5)

4. Moving Forward

Systemic feedback implementation from design mentoring in programmatic and organisational decisions set a solid basis for the project. Technical mentoring substantially helped to rationalise the project vision. Overall, the mentoring process allowed to learn

more pragmatic and confident 'optioneering' and decision-making to achieve a building that is more comprehensive in its social outreach. The chosen methodological process brought to light the support that is achievable from contacting technicians with specific expertise in the chosen field of architectural design. Specifically, technical directors and choreographers for a dance theater and studios. Contact with local expertise has proved fundamental to choose an architectural topic that is contextually relevant, i.e. Dance Theater. A building that is also reflective of site-specific forms of spatial appropriation and use, particularly important in the design of a public building.

From this point on, work will focus on further resolution of technical details; softening of landscape elements; more dynamic and engaging graphics and presentation style; drafting of printouts including posters and booklet; a simple lit-up 1:500 model to be placed in the site model.



REFERENCE LIST

7 REFERENCE LIST

5.1 LIST OF REFERENCES

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5.2 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-9, 11: image by the author.

Figure 1: "Le Grand Theatre des Mille et Une Nuits, Beyrouth, Liban," Synaps commons (October, 2019)

Figure 10: Imad Creidi and Tom Perry, "From golden age to war and ruin: Lebanon in turmoil as it hits 100," Reuters (August, 2020).

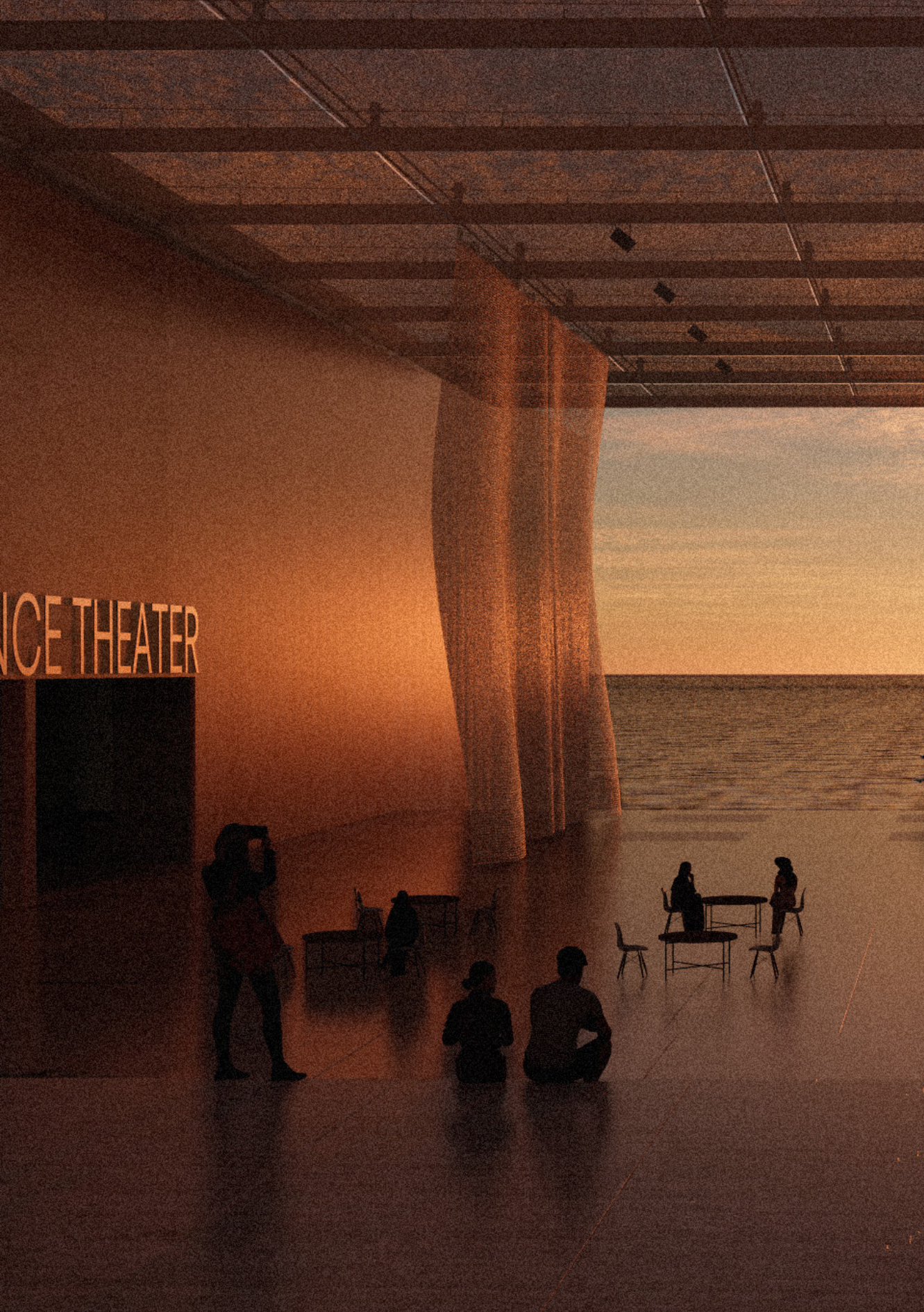
DRAWING SET

ICE THEATER





ANCE THEATER



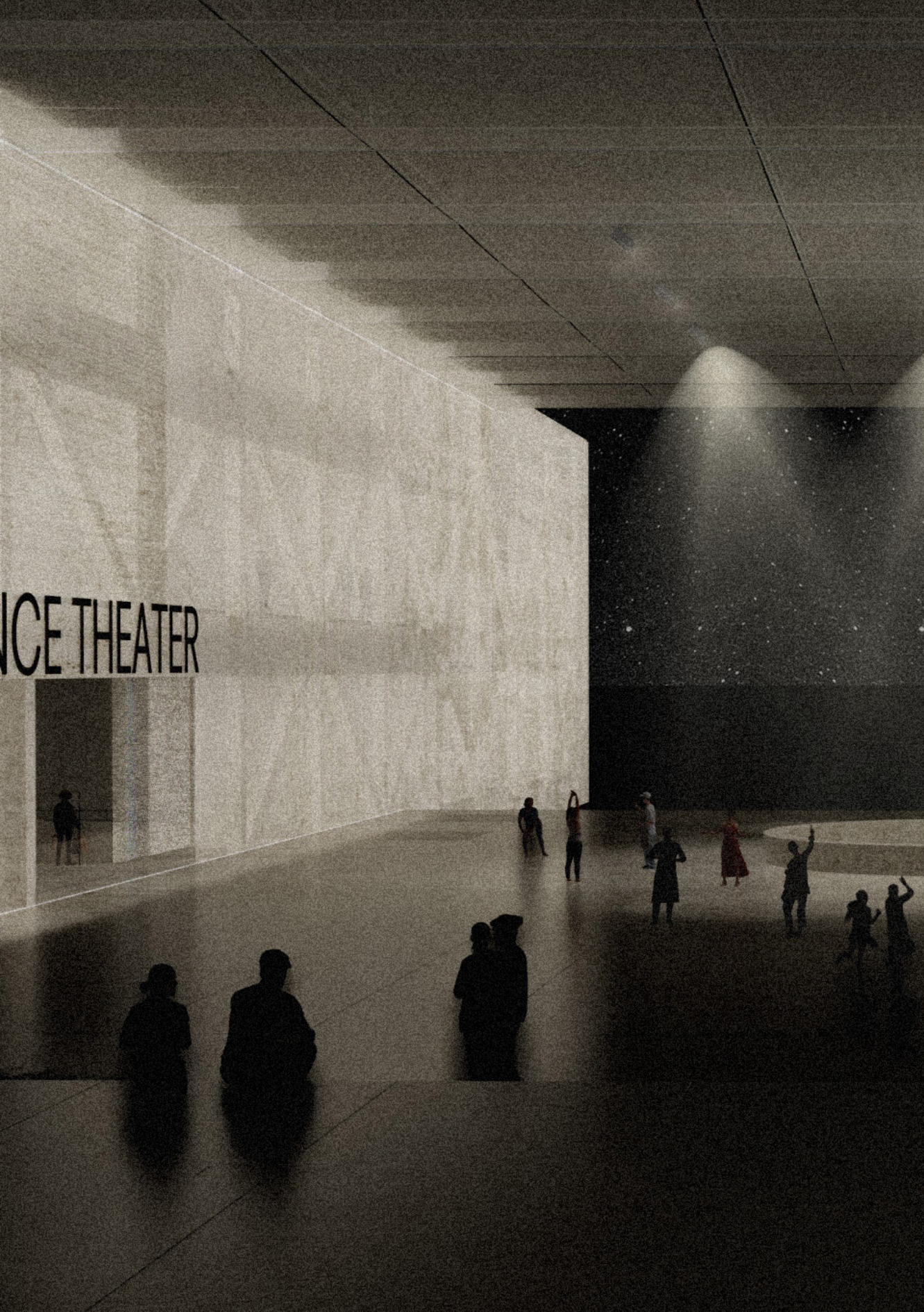


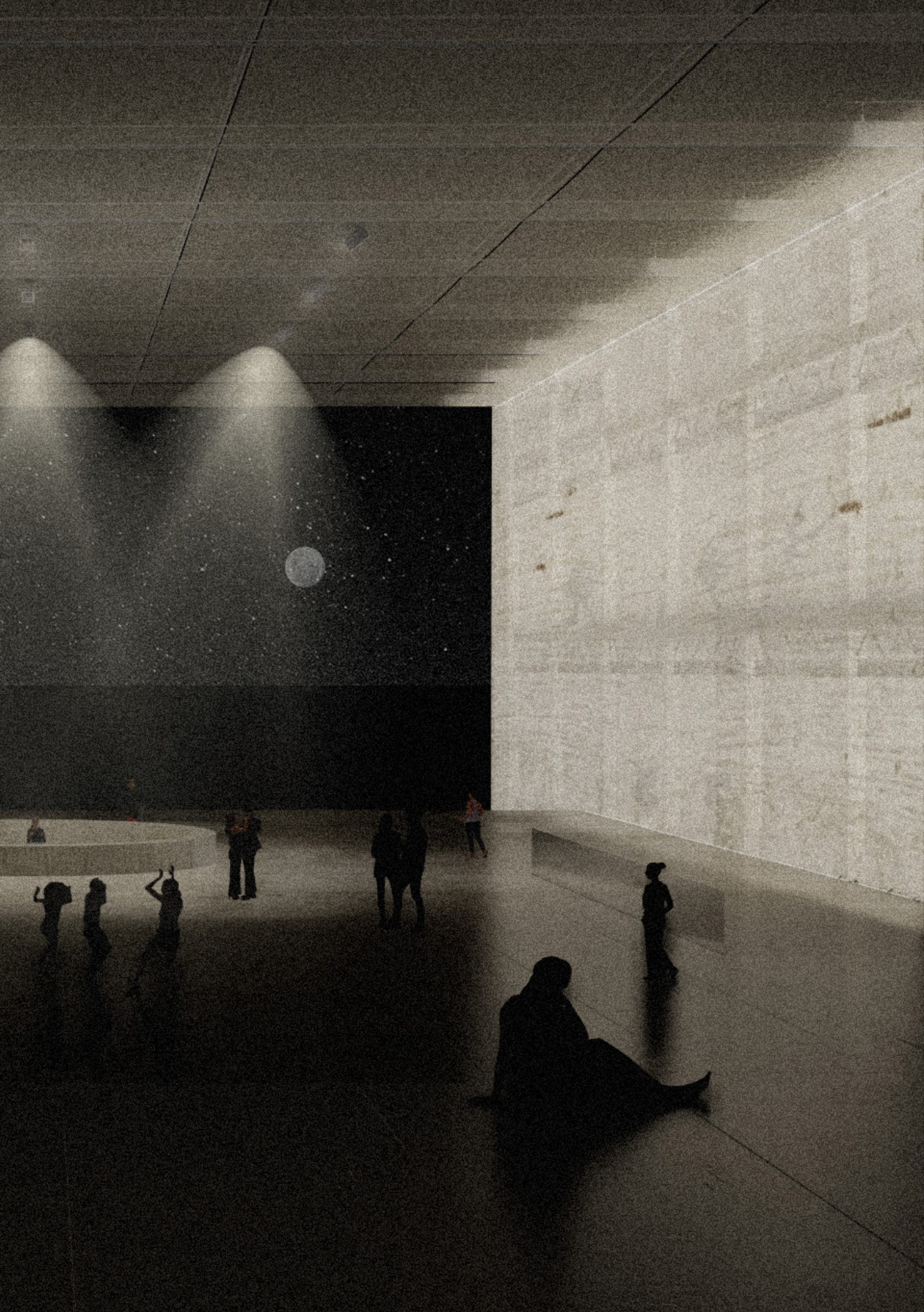
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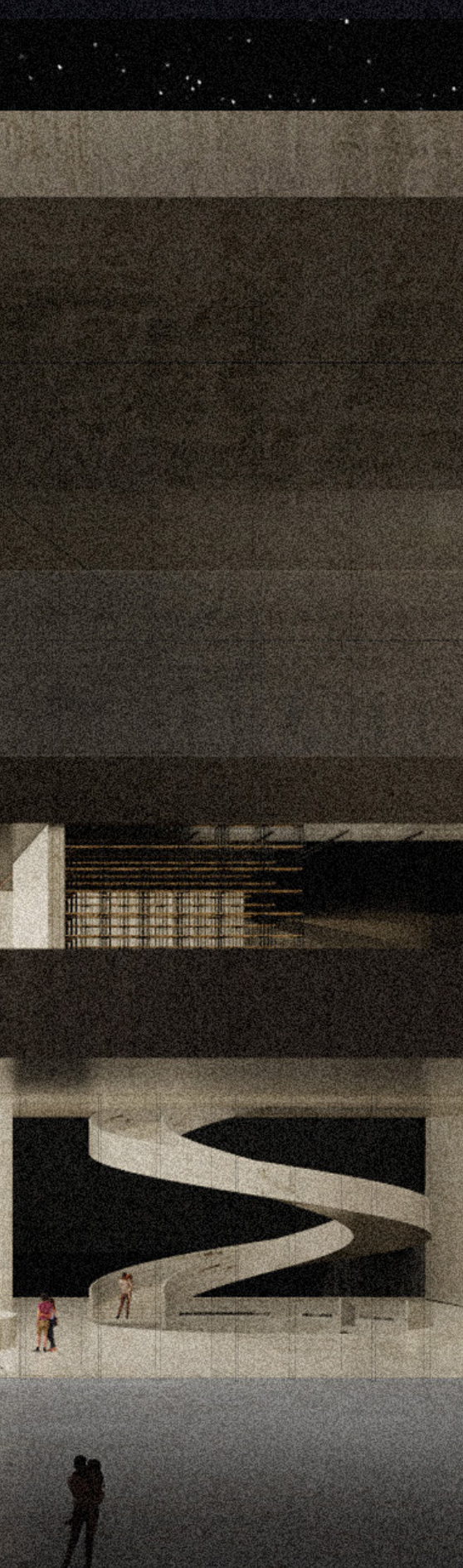






























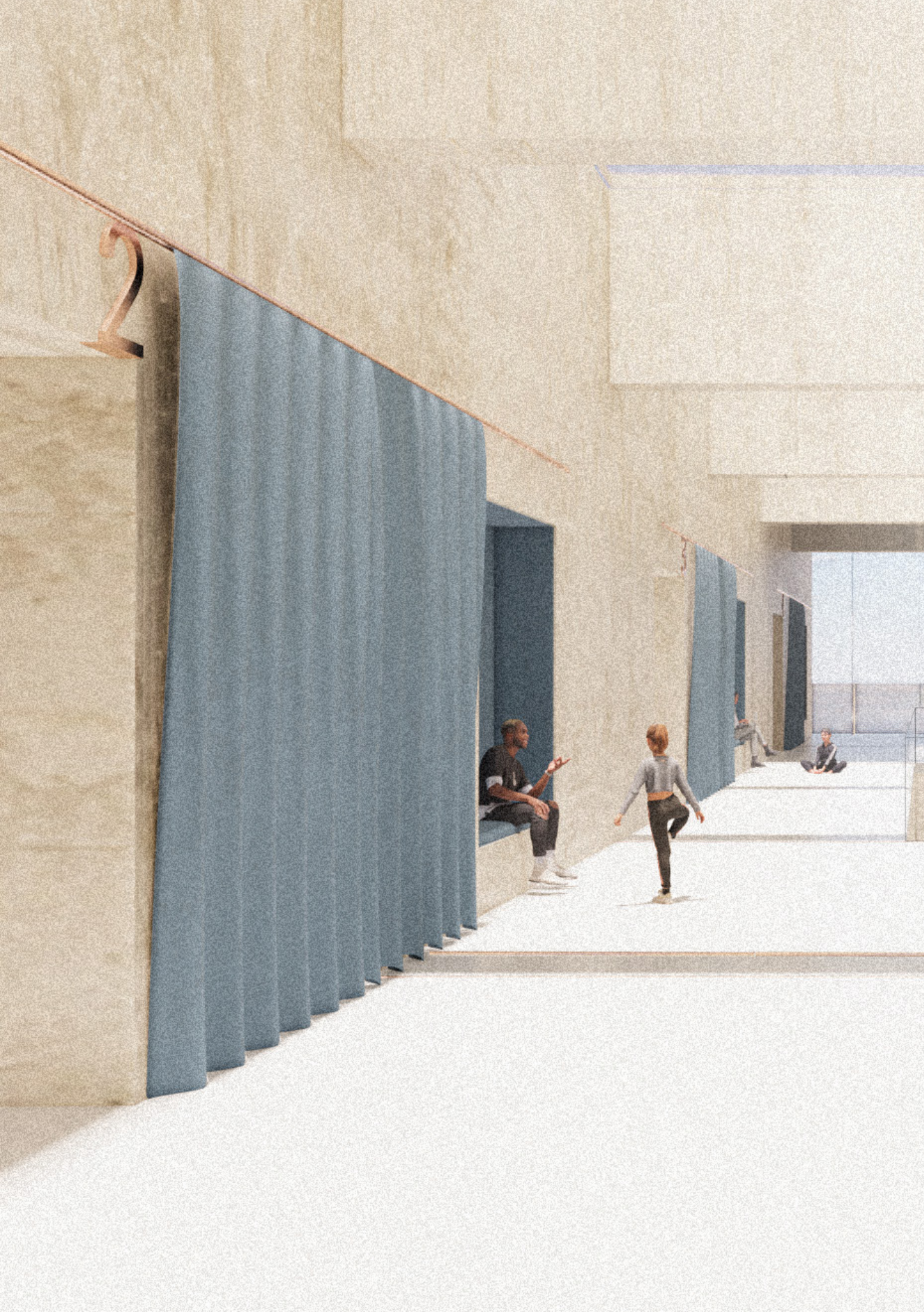










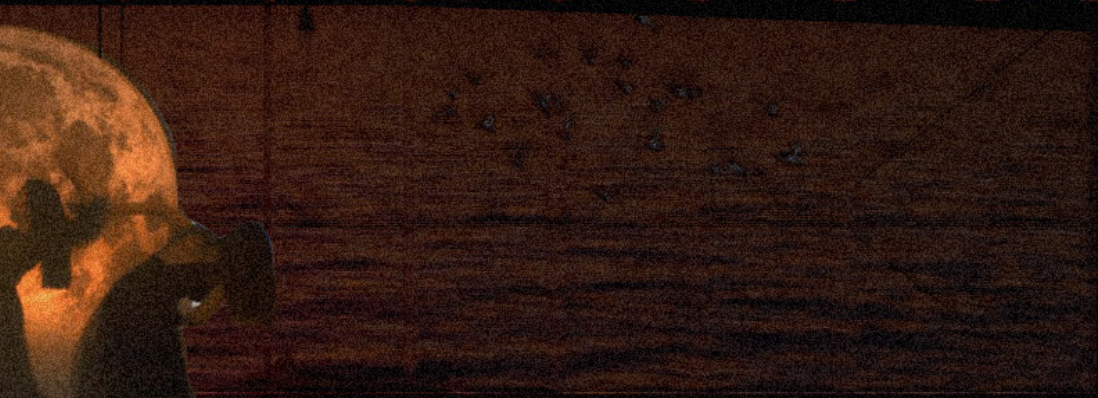


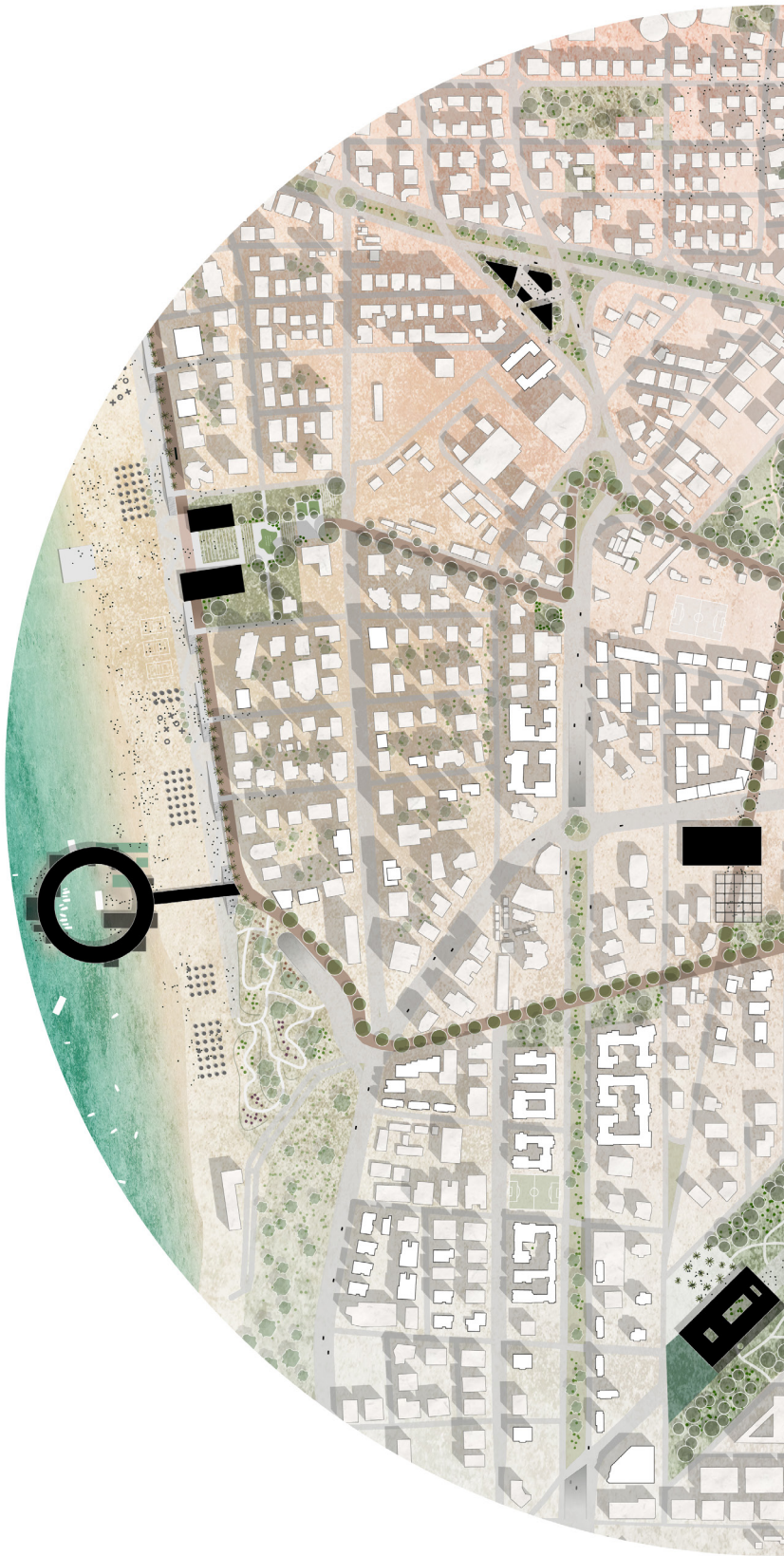


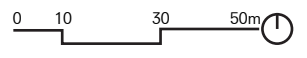




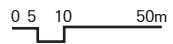
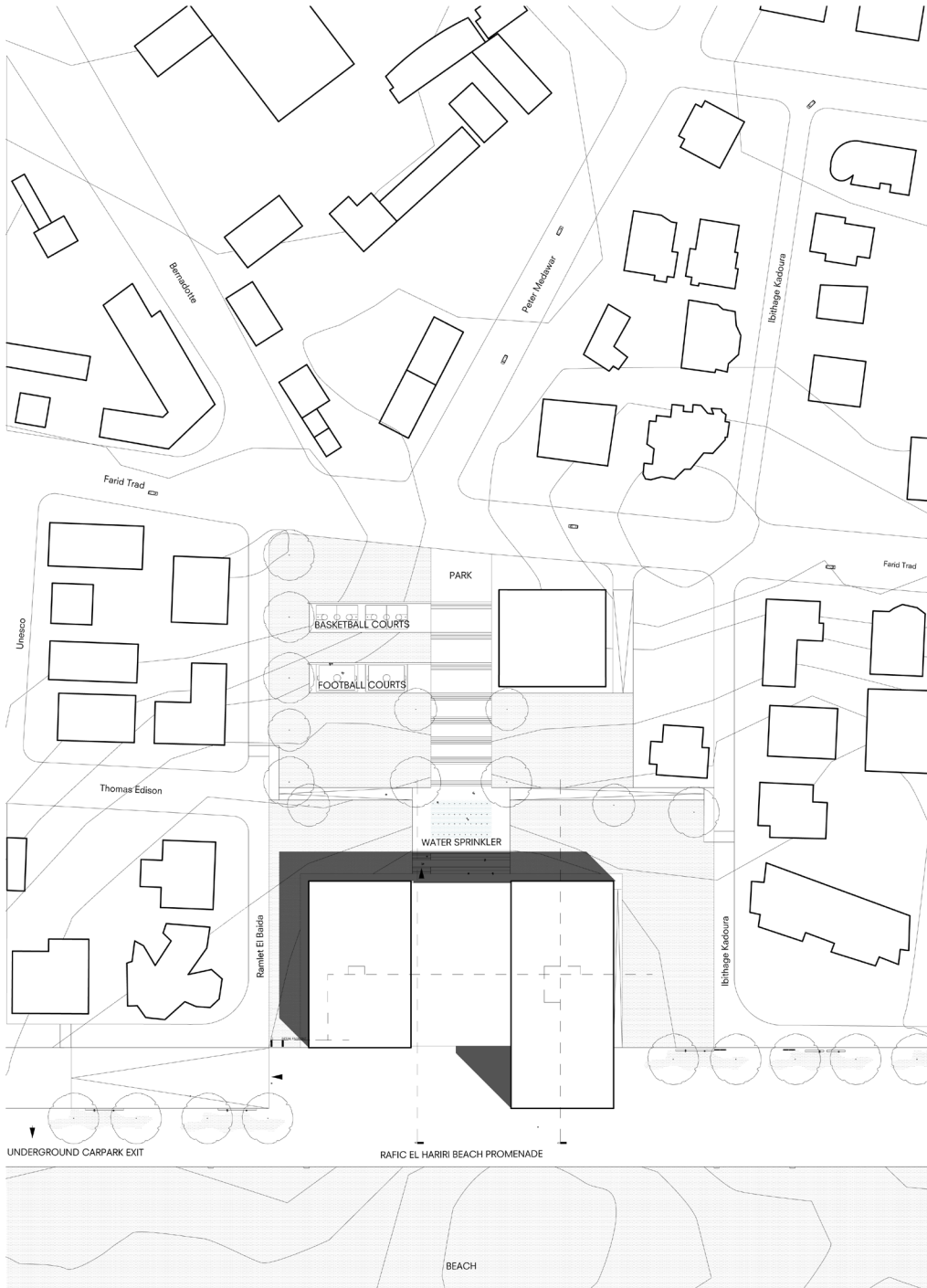




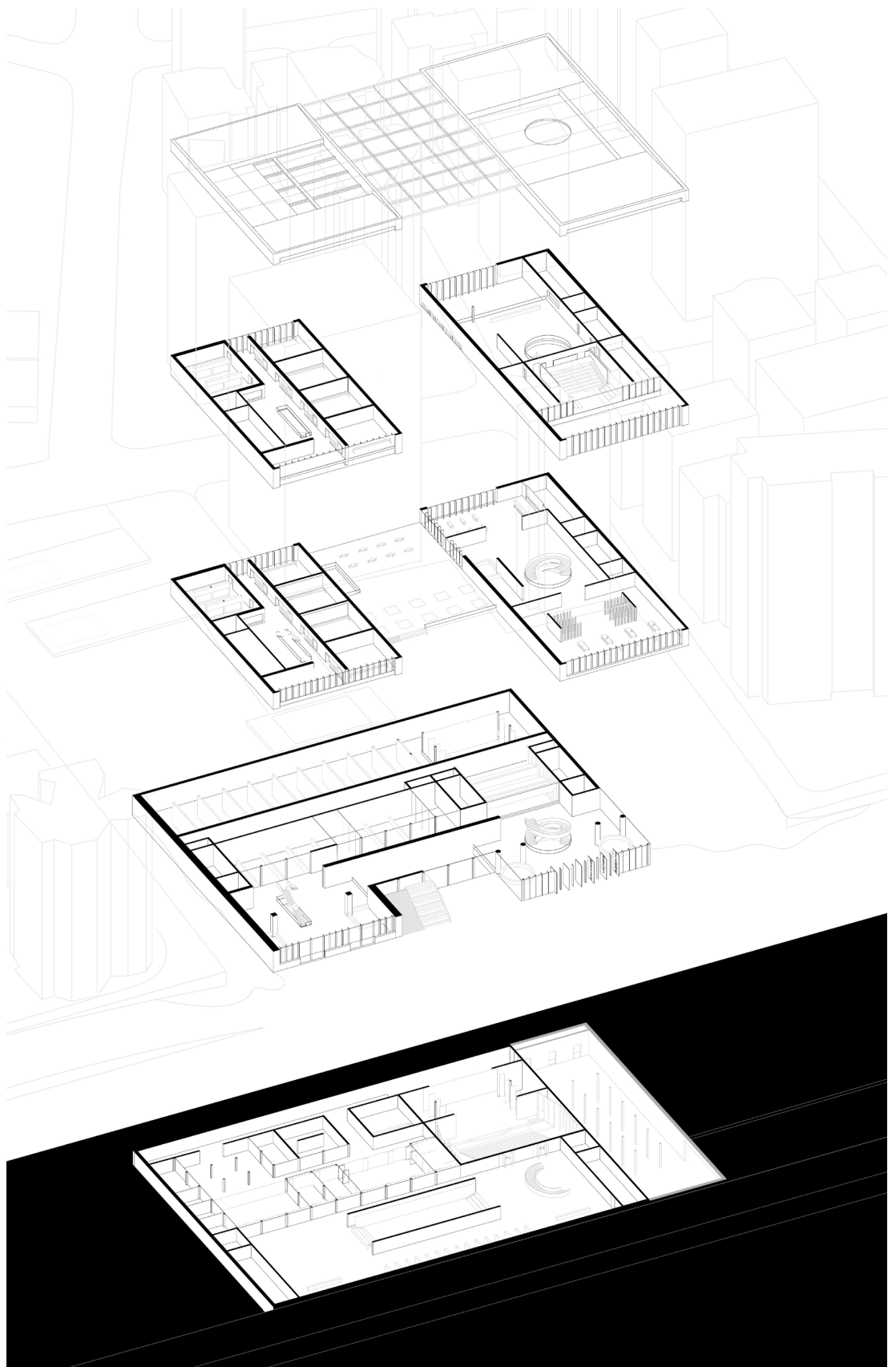




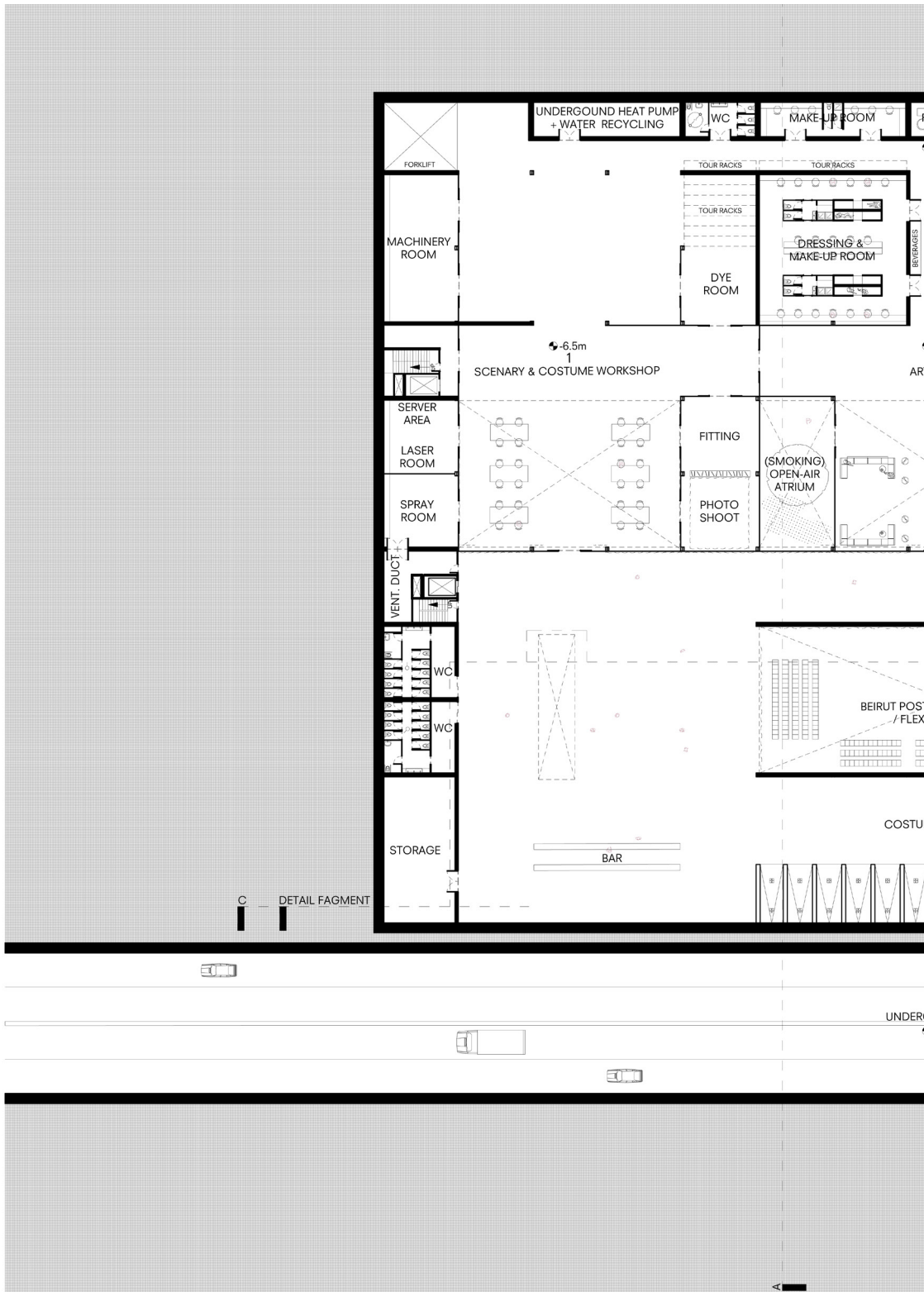
GROUP SITE PLAN



SITE PLAN

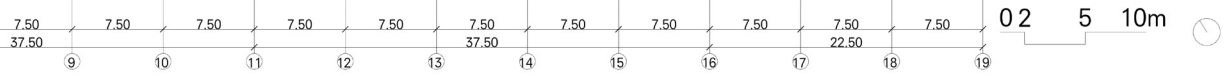
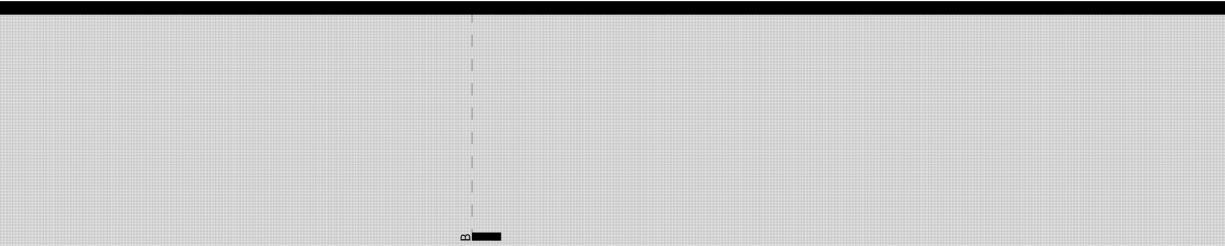
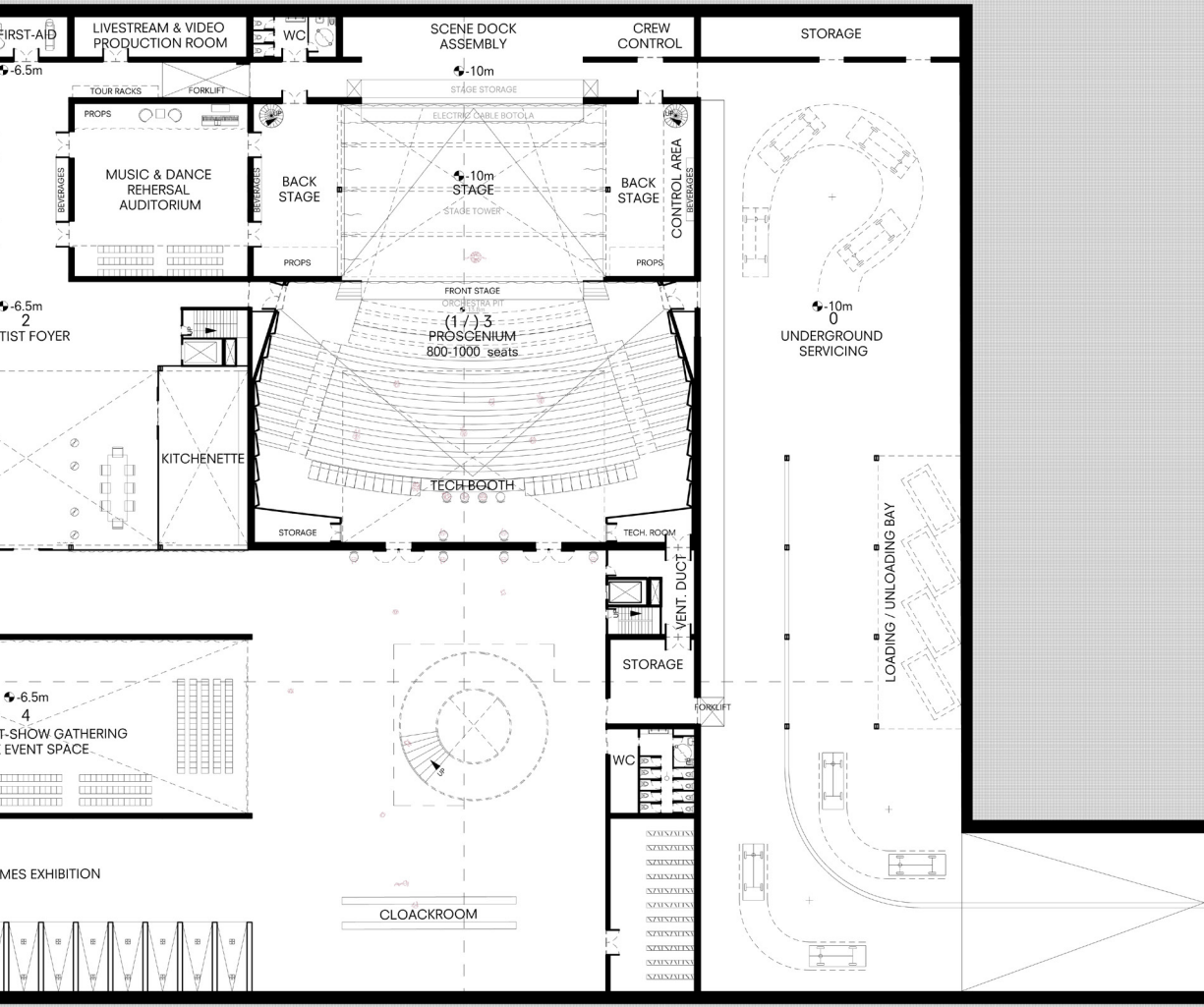


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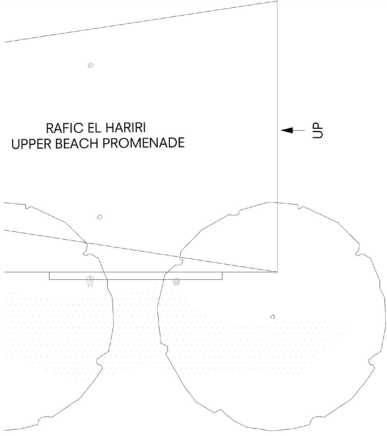
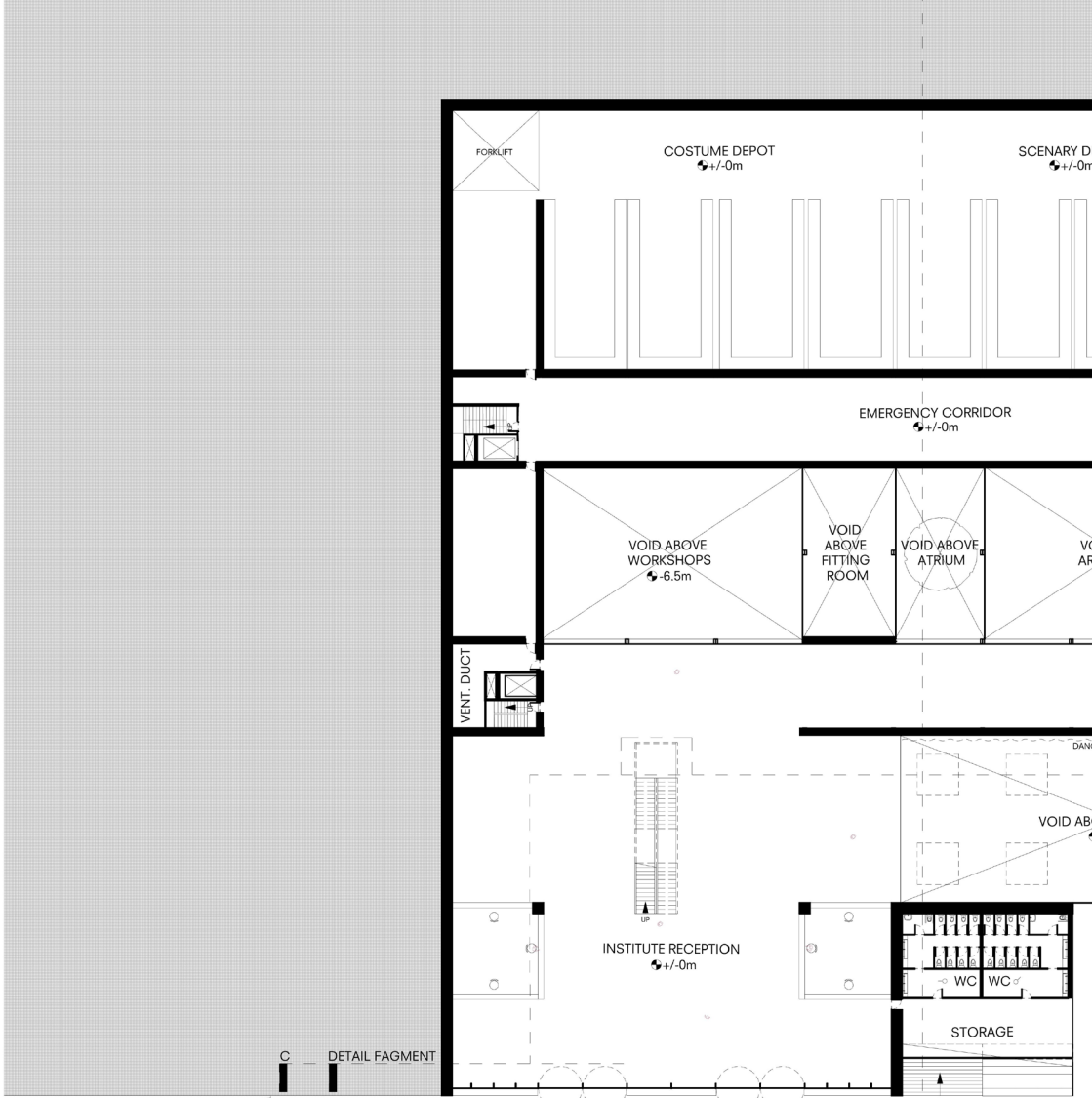


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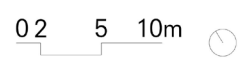
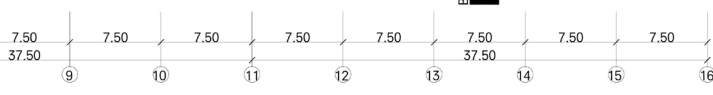
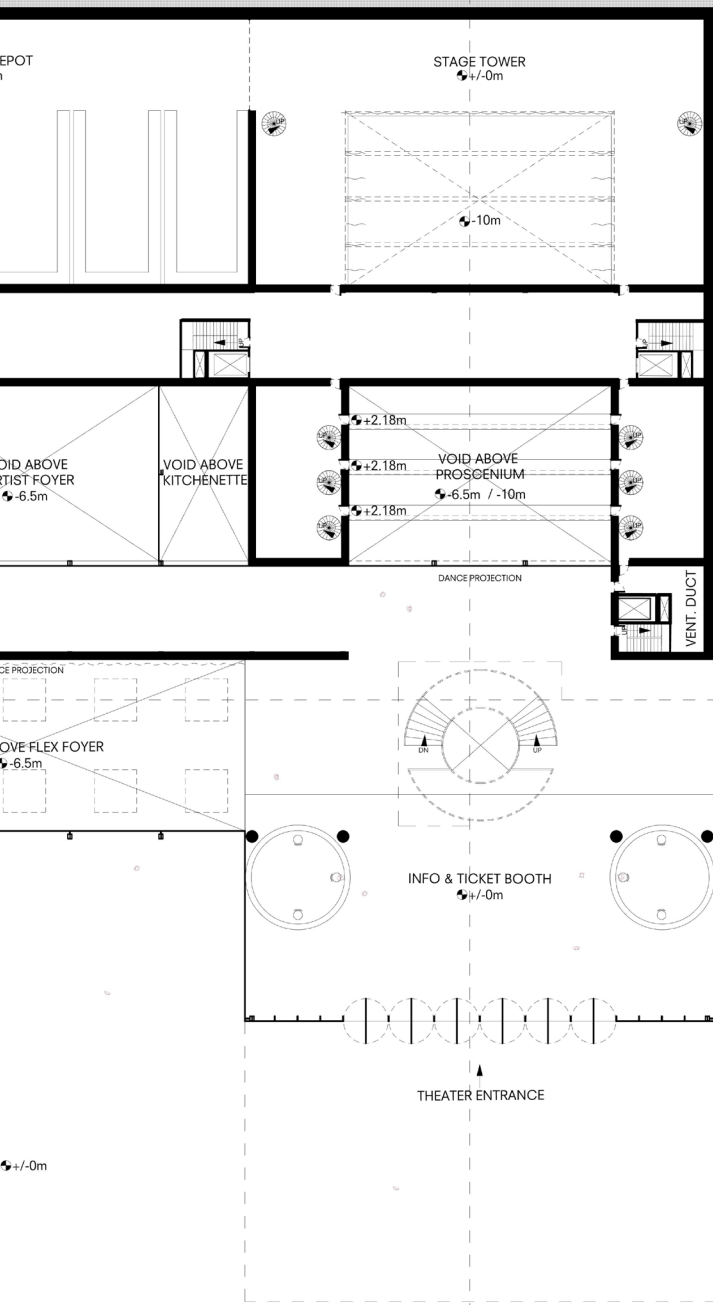


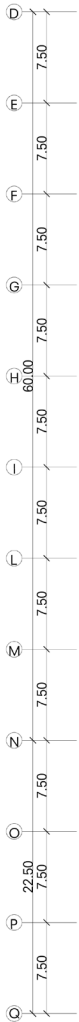
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① ground floor
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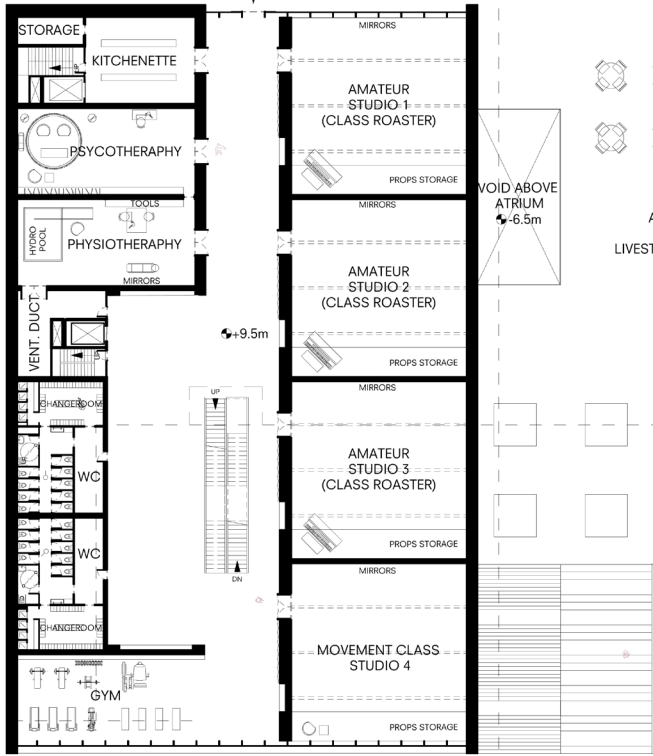


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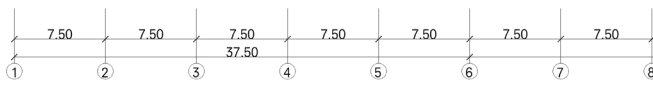
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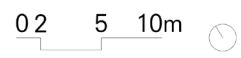
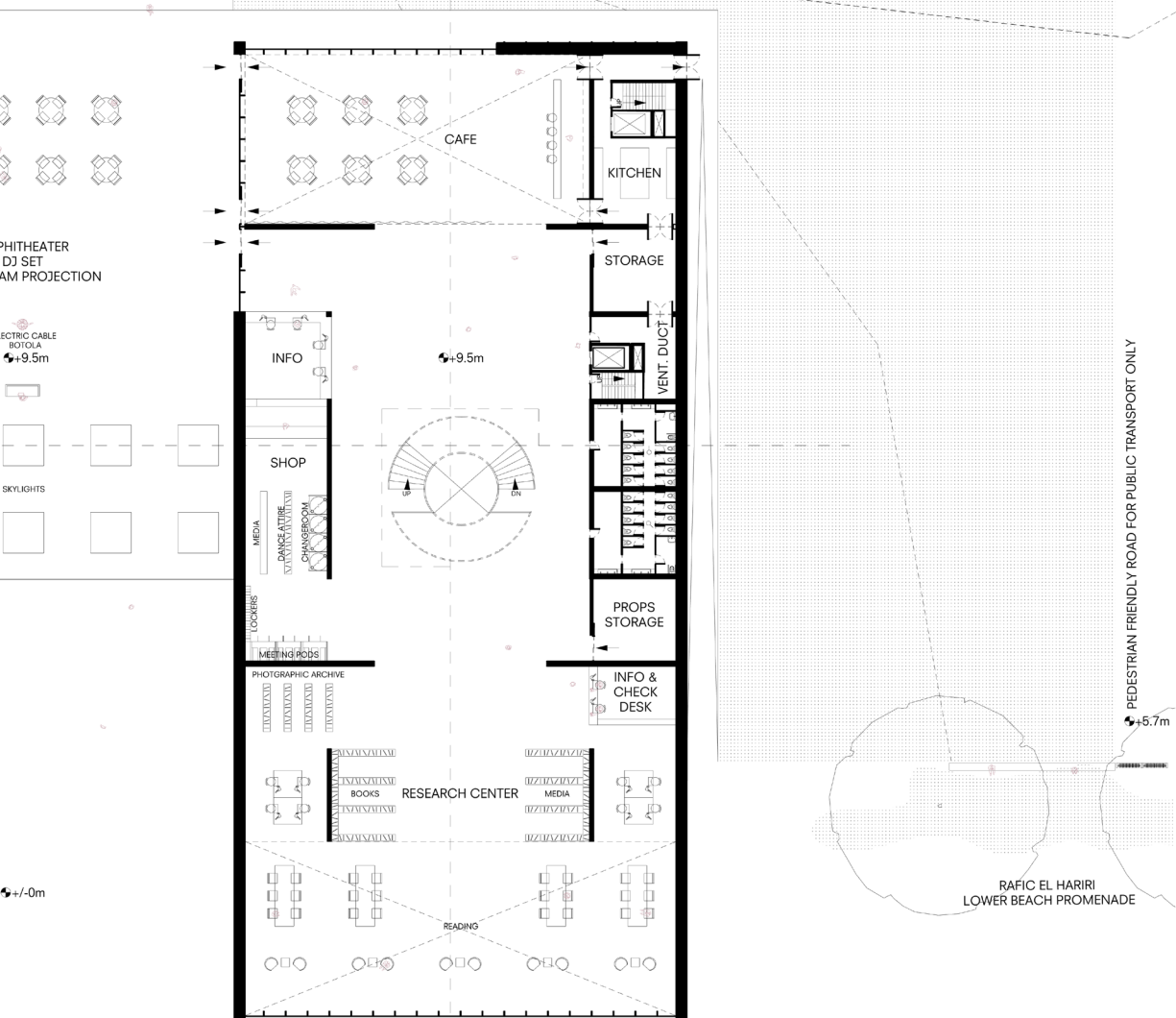
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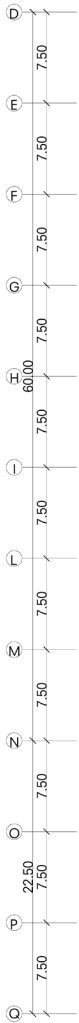
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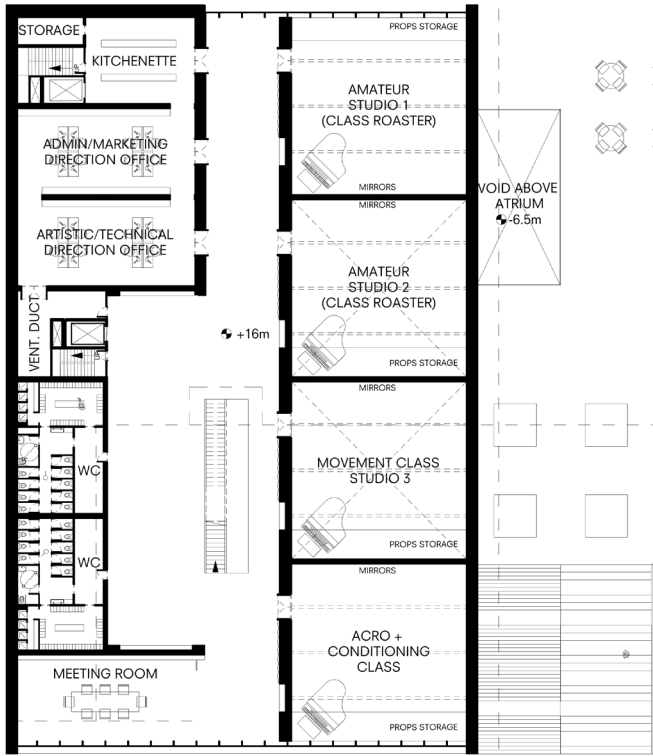


RAFIC EL HARIRI
UPPER BEACH PROMENADE

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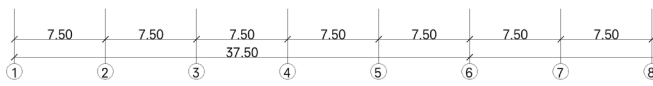
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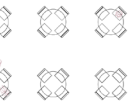


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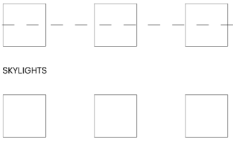
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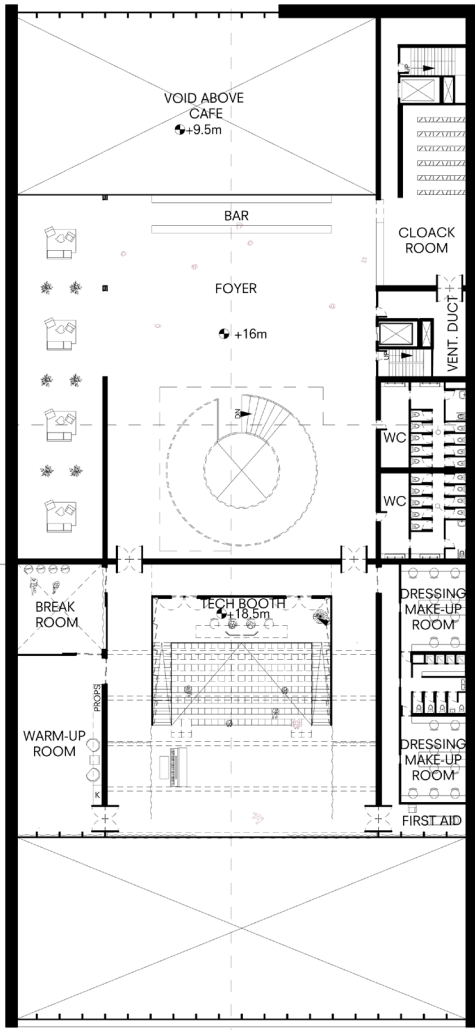


+9.5m



SKYLIGHTS

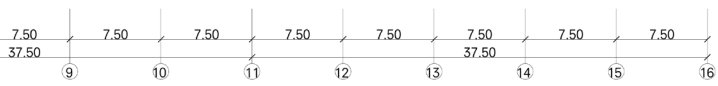
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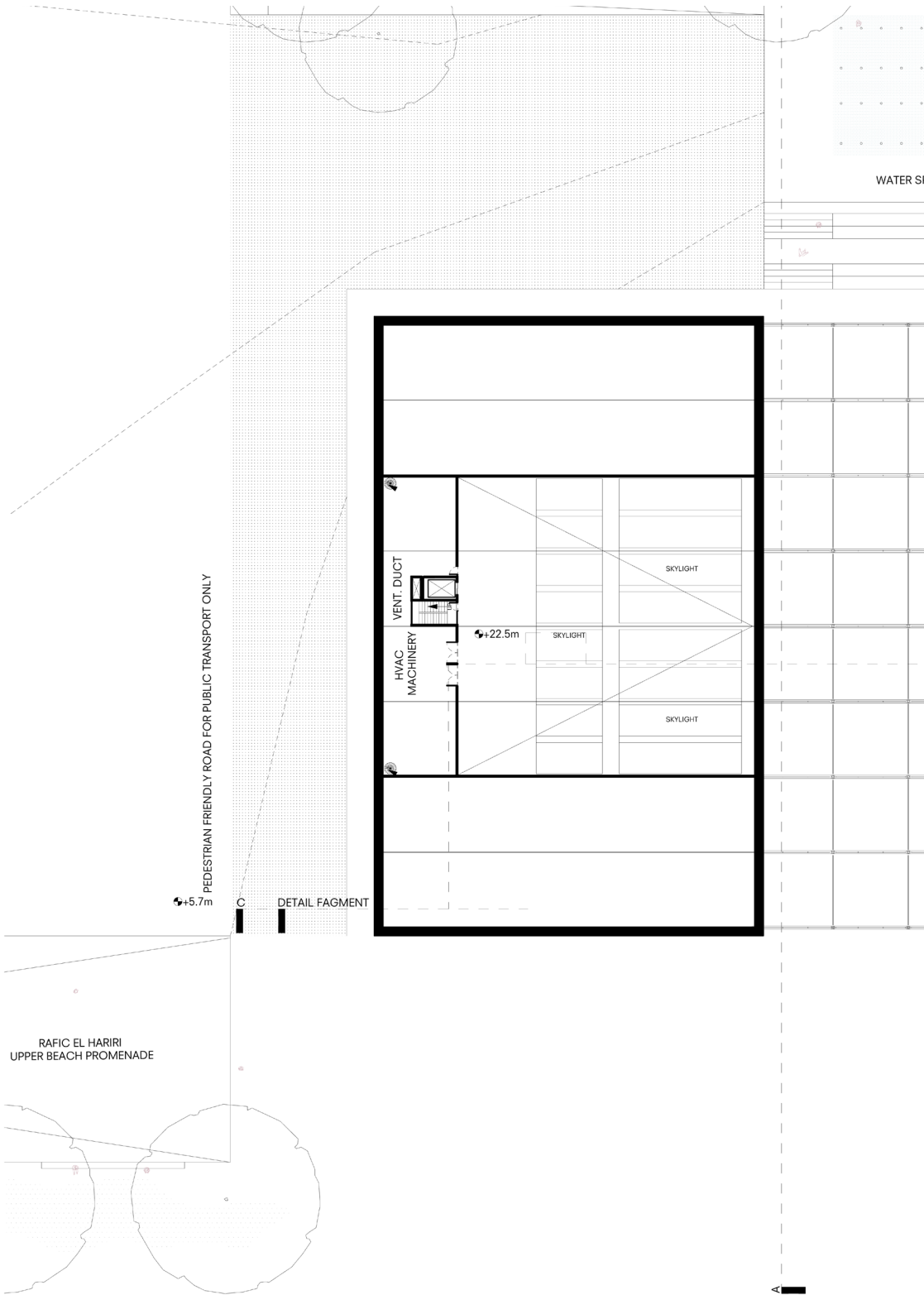
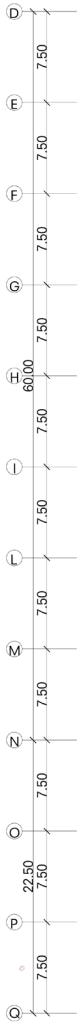


PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY ROAD FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT ONLY

+5.7m

RAFIC EL HARIRI
LOWER BEACH PROMENADE

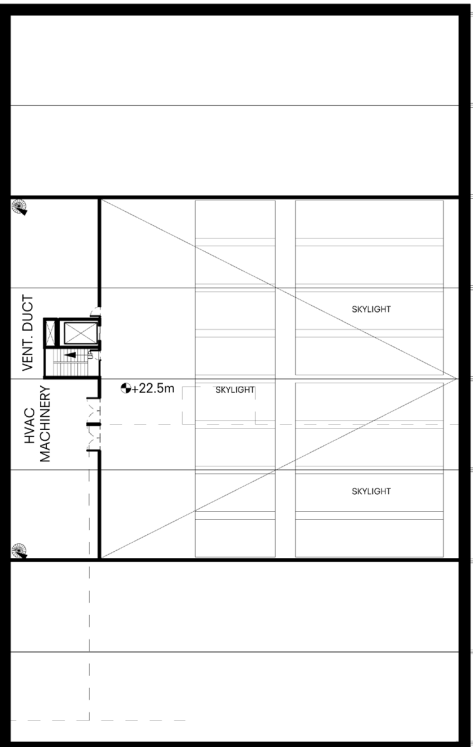




PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY ROAD FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT ONLY
 +5.7

DETAIL FRAGMENT

RAFIC EL HARIRI
 UPPER BEACH PROMENADE



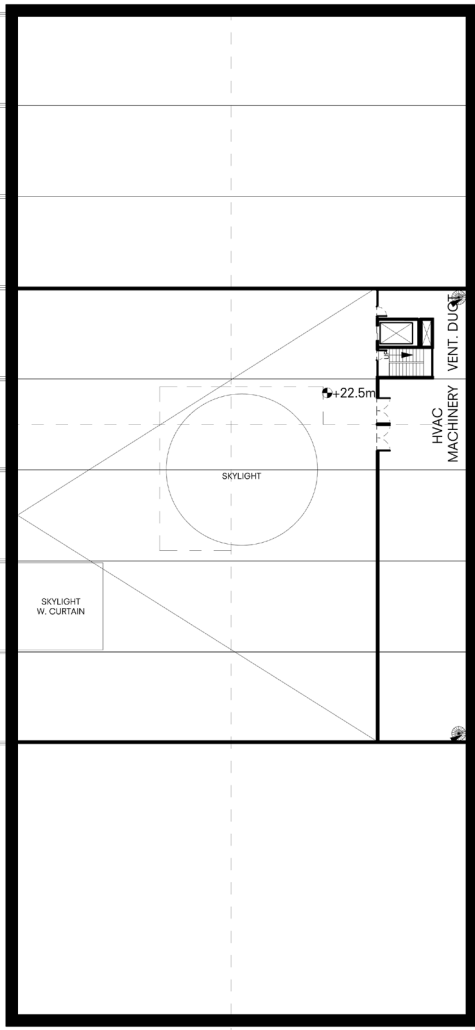
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WATER SP

SPRINKLER SQUARE
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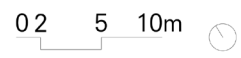
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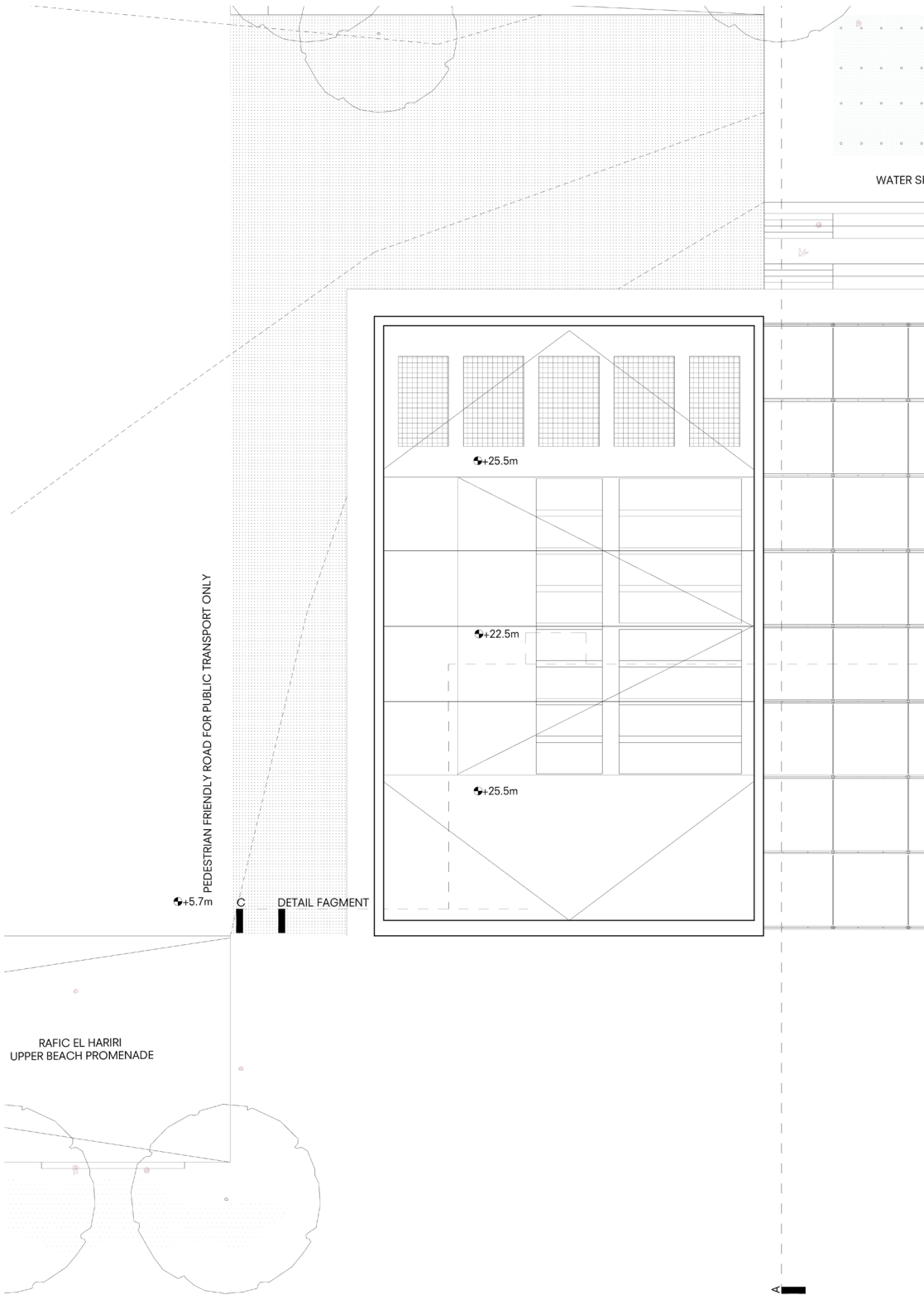
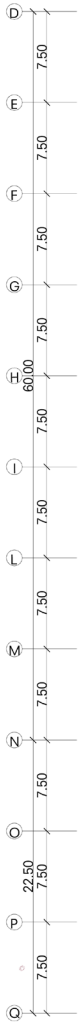


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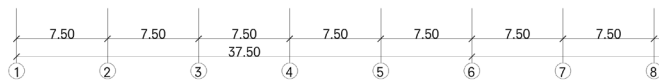
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RAFIC EL HARIRI
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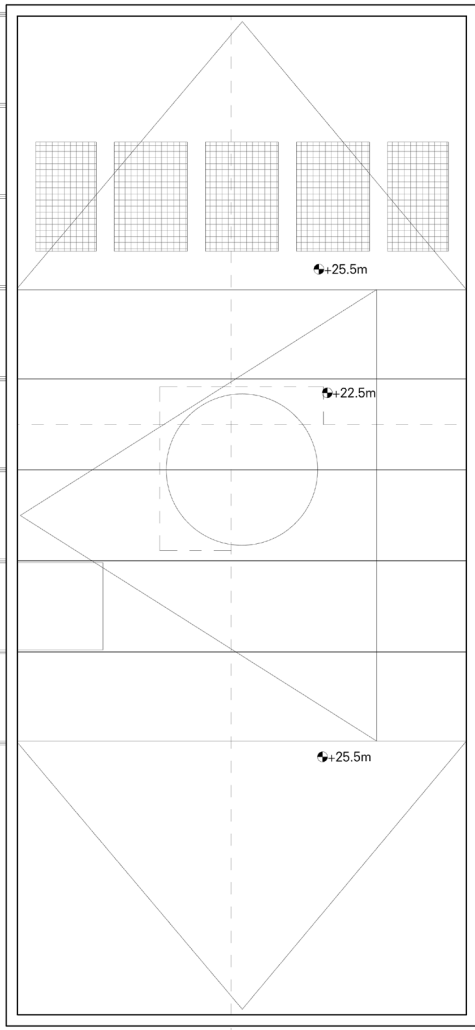


① roof plan
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SPRINKLER SQUARE
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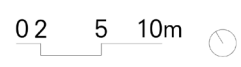
±/-0m

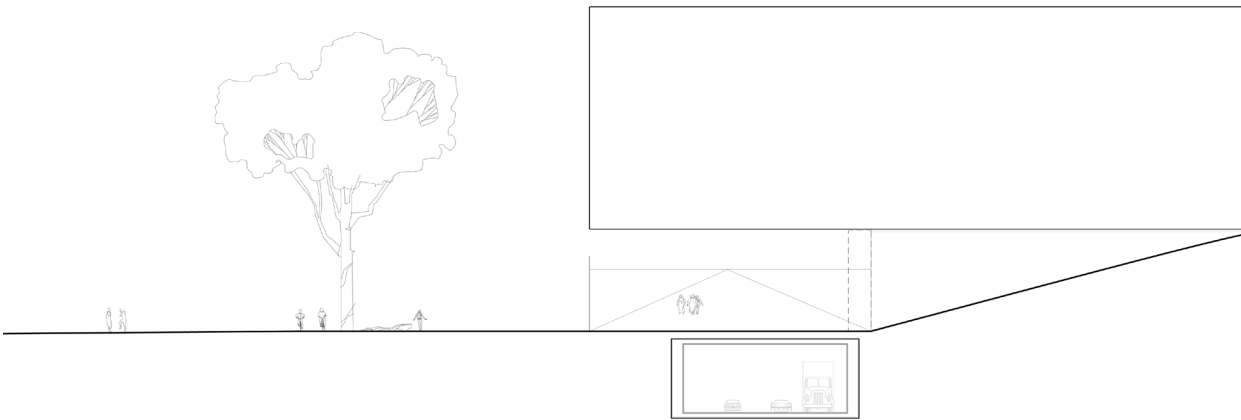


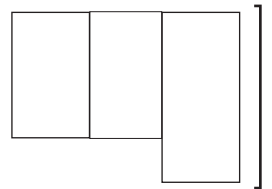
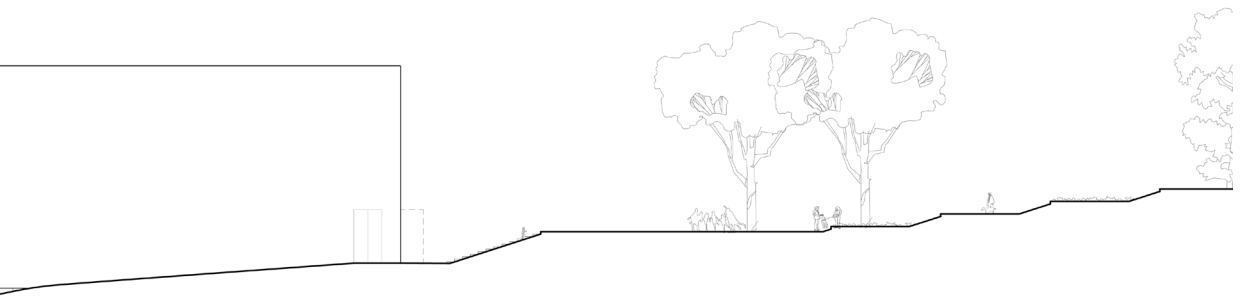
PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY ROAD FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT ONLY

±5.7m

RAFIC EL HARIRI
LOWER BEACH PROMENADE

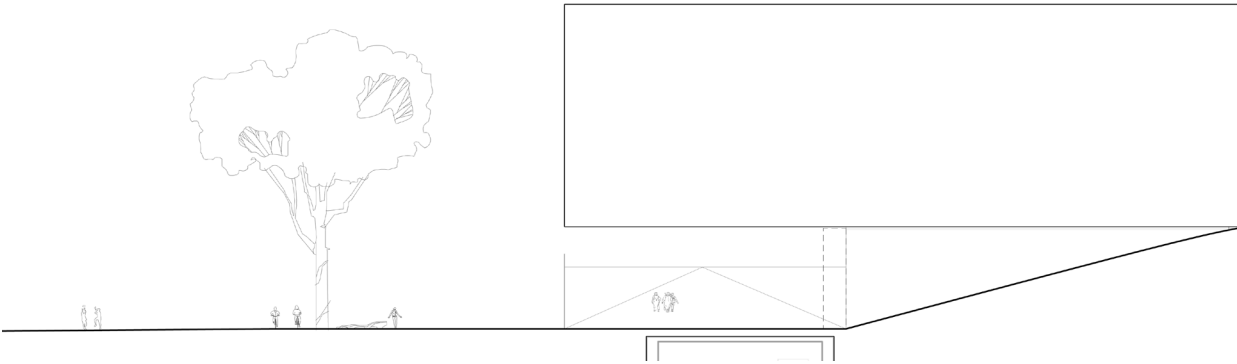


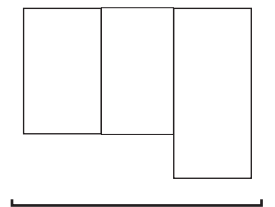




0 2 5 10m

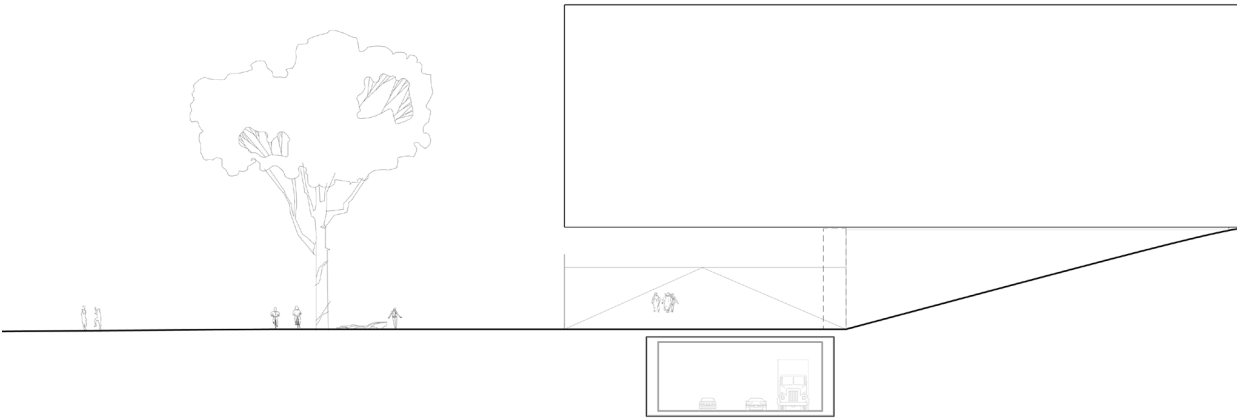
SOUTH ELEVATION

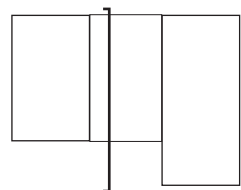




0 2 5 10m

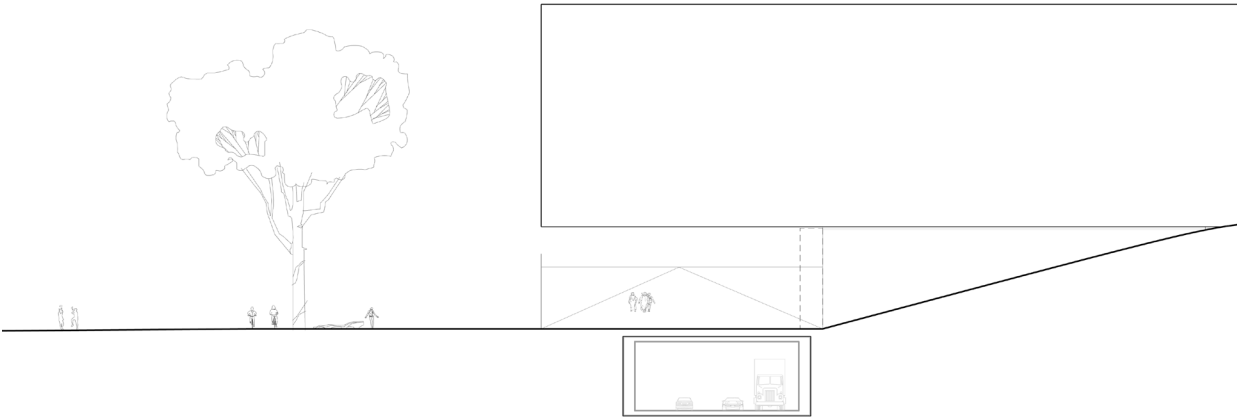
WEST ELEVATION

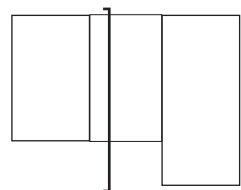
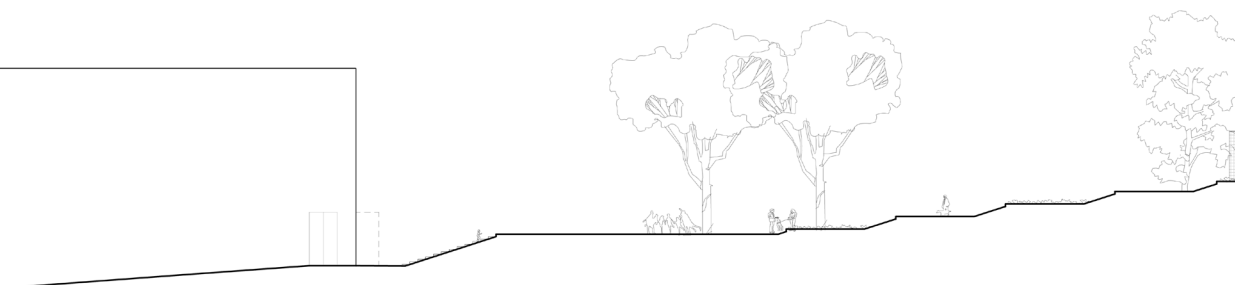




0 2 5 10m

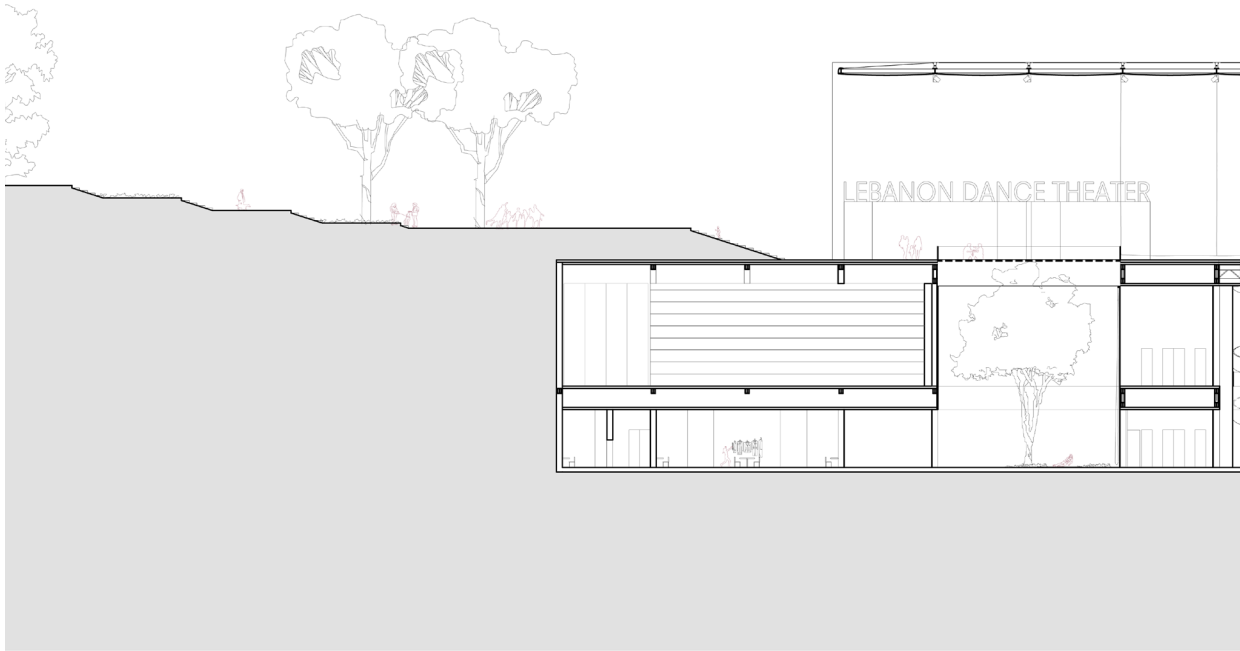
EAST ELEVATION

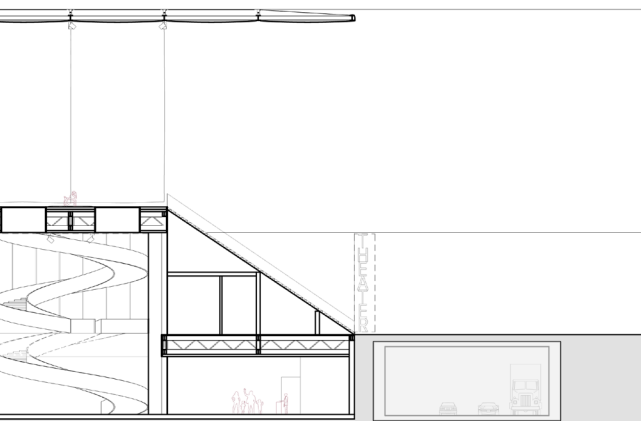




0 2 5 10m

NORTH ELEVATION





ROOF COVER ▼
+25.5m
ACCESSIBLE ROOF ▼
+22.5m

BLACKBOX FOYER ▼
+16m

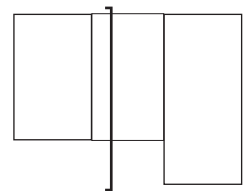
CAFE / RESEARCH CENTER ▼
+9.5m

ENTRANCE ▼
+7.0m

PROSCENIUM FOYER ▼
-6.5m

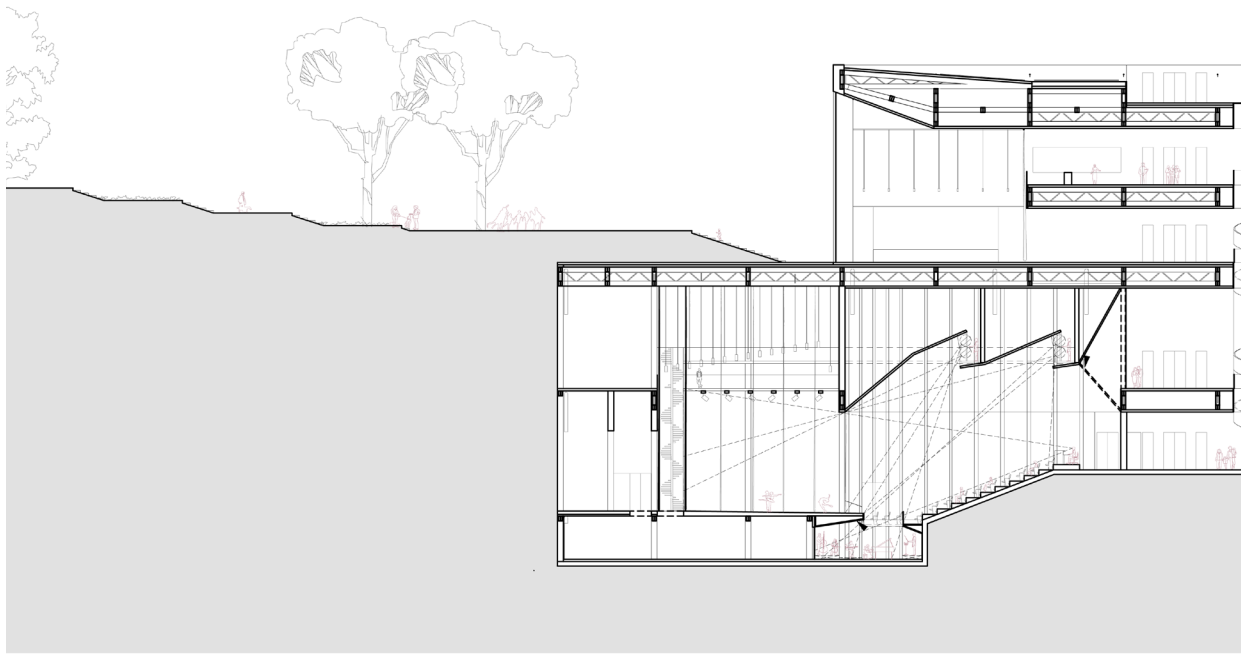
PROSCENIUM STAGE ▼
-10m

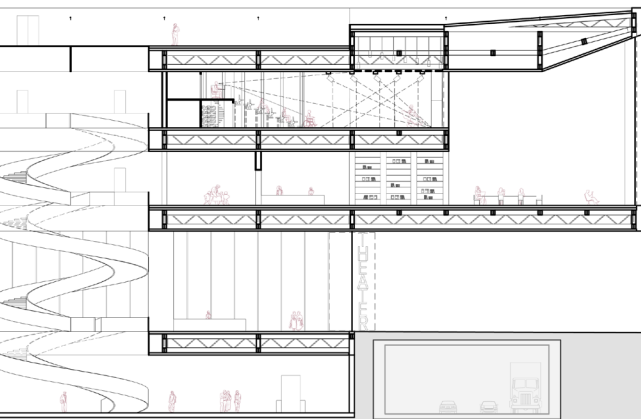
PROSCENIUM BOTOLA ▼
-13.8m



0 2 5 10m

AMPHITHEATRE SECTION





ROOF COVER ▼
+25.5m
ACCESSIBLE ROOF ▼
+22.5m

BLACKBOX FOYER ▼
+16m

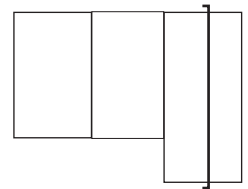
CAFE / RESEARCH CENTER ▼
+9.5m

ENTRANCE ▼
+7.0m

PROSCENIUM FOYER ▼
-6.5m

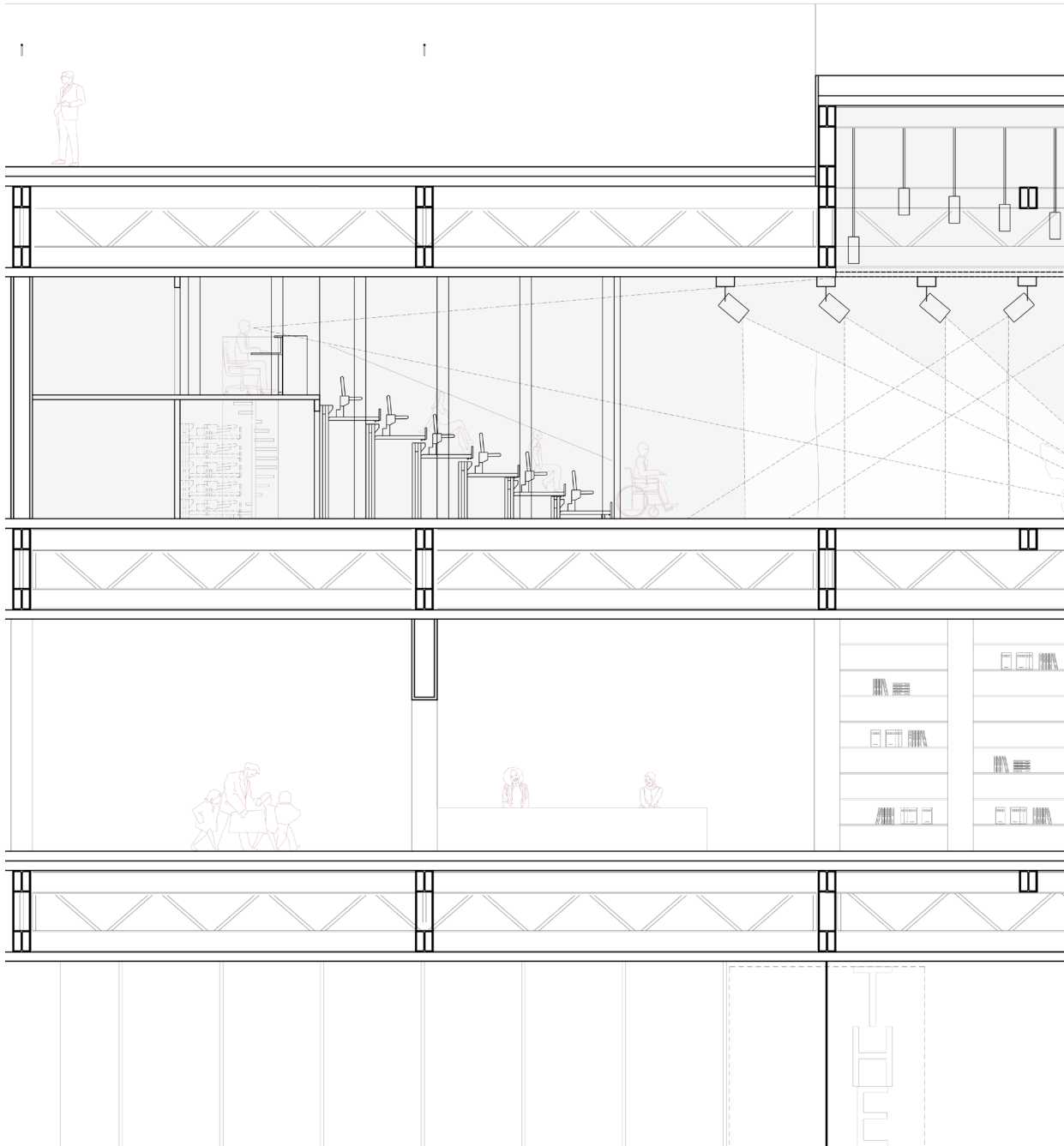
PROSCENIUM STAGE ▼
-10m

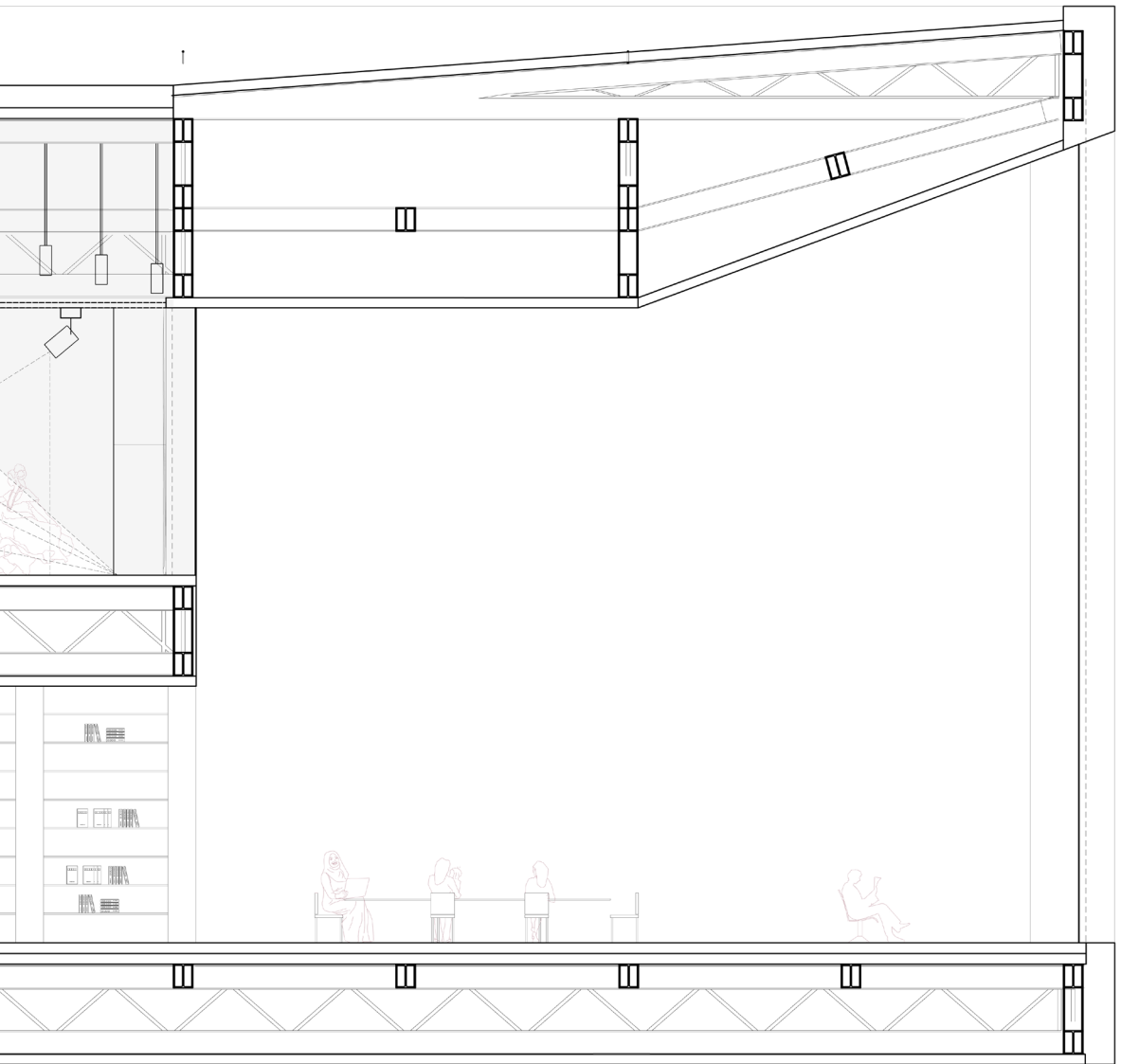
PROSCENIUM BOTOLA ▼
-13.8m



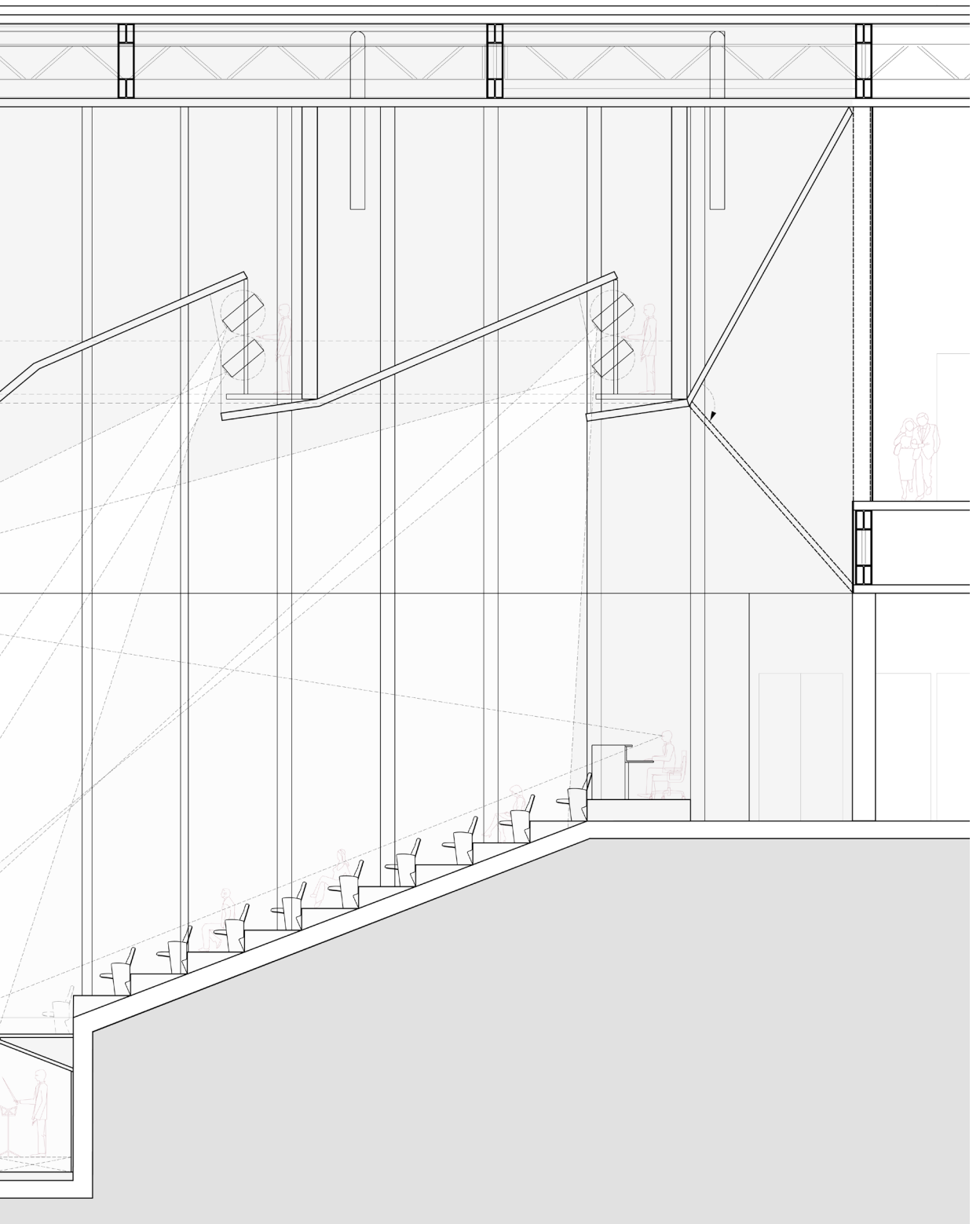
0 2 5 10m

THEATER SECTION

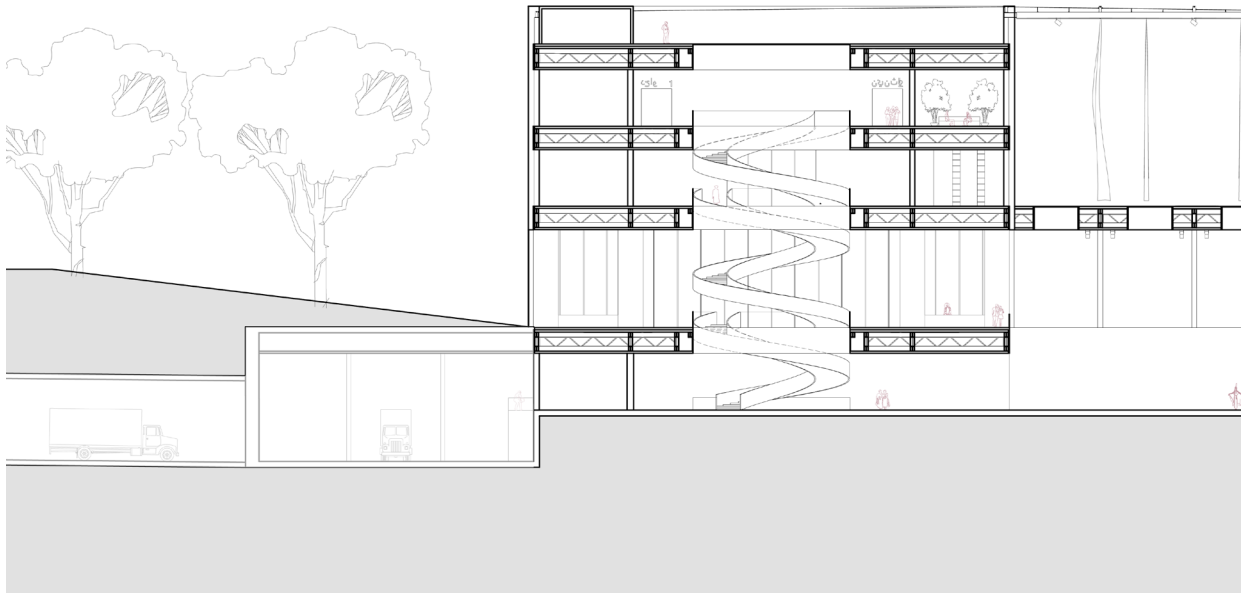


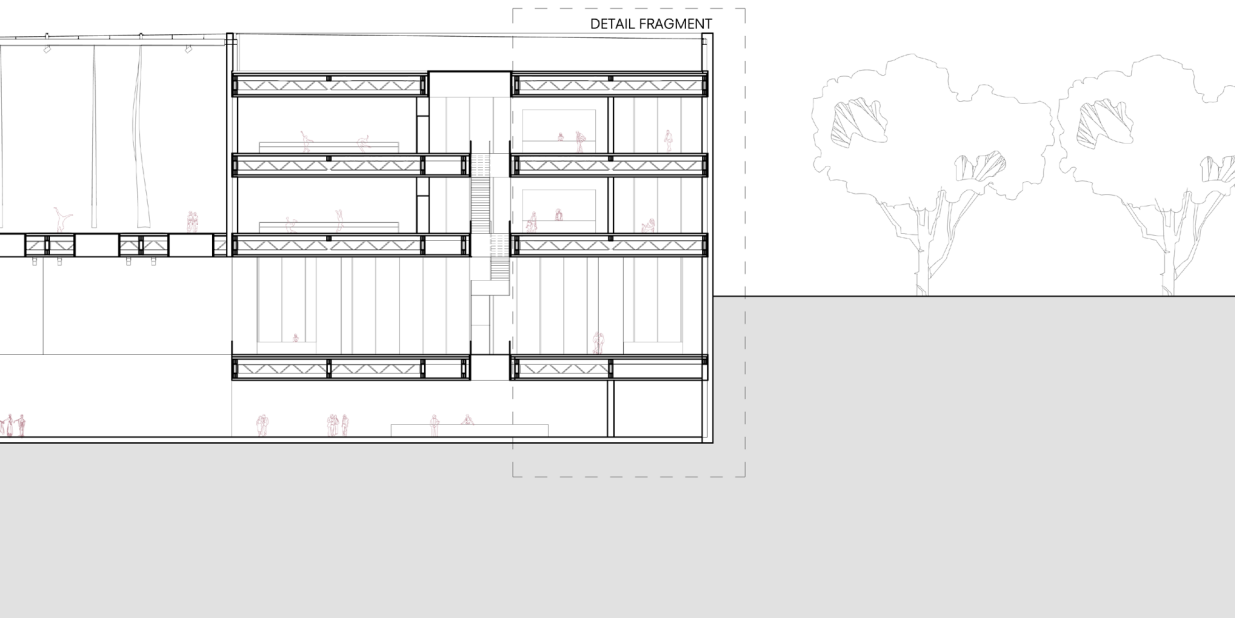






PROSCENIUM FRAGMENT





CROSS SECTION

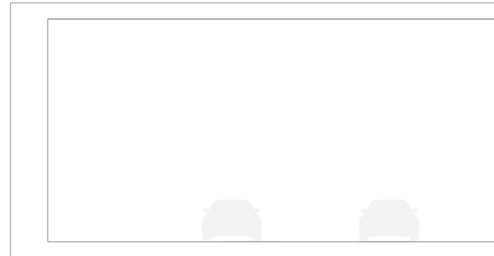
②



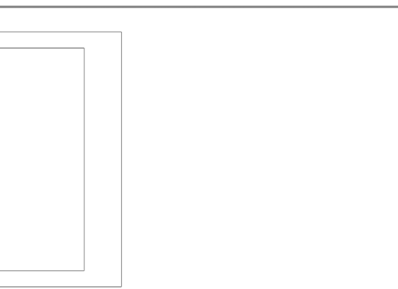
③



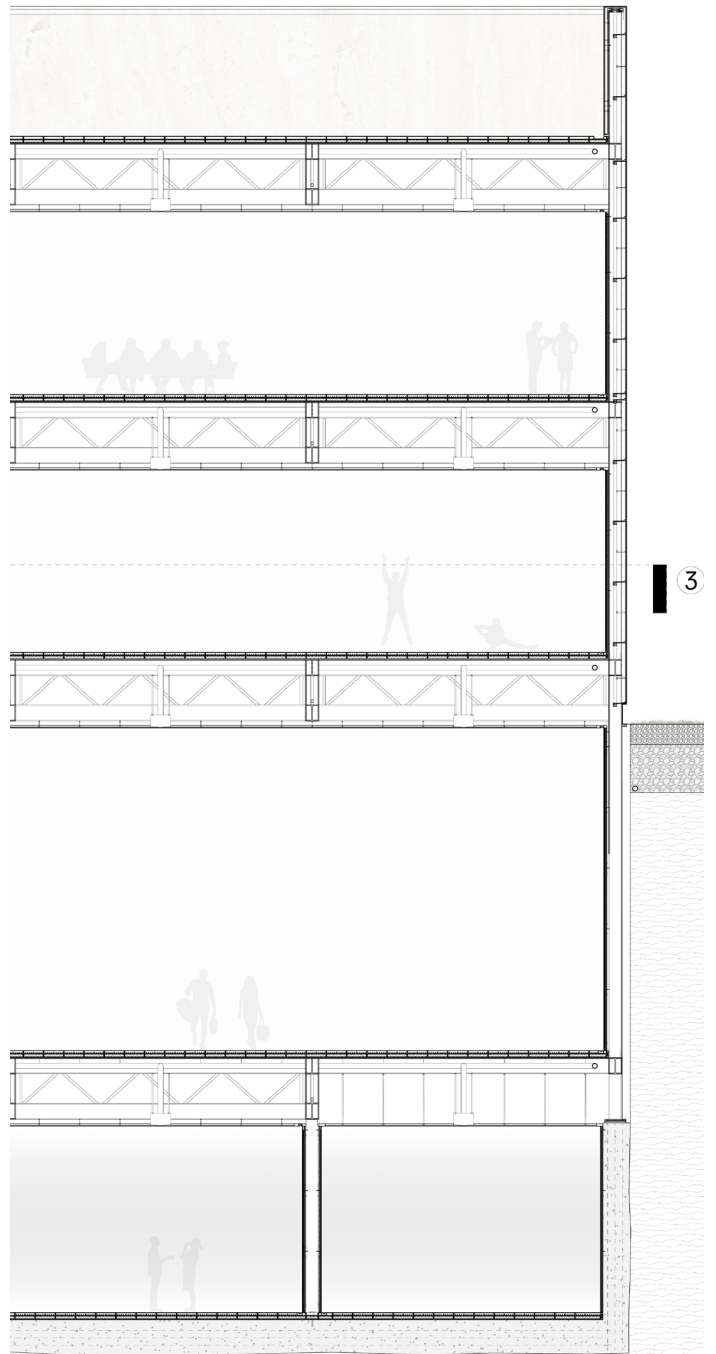
THEATER



① facade fragment, elevation
1:150



0 1 2 5



2 facade fragment, vertical section
1:150

0 1 2 5m

THANK YOU