

Shady Heritage

from



toward

Act III - Generation

an architecture of
Frictional-Empathy.

‘We [designers] feel a great sense of urgency for altering our current status quo in recognising that design has a role - one way or another - in accelerating our current trajectory toward mounting crises or aiding us on our search and developing of a new way forward. [...] Design will continue to produce objects that reflect dominant, hegemonic or oppressive social logics *unless* one begins to understand the complex set of relations design emerges from.’

Boelen, Jan and Kaehler, Michael. Social Design, Social Matter. Eindhoven: Valiz, 2020. [Emphasis added]

‘When someone reflects in action, he [or she] becomes a researcher in the practice context. He [or she] is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique but constructs a new theory of the unique case.’

Schön, Donald. Reflective practitioner - how professionals think in action. Basic Books, 1983. 69.

**Design Proposal for the Grand Palais des Histoires
& Survey of the Parc Chanot, Marseille, France.**

*From Shady Heritage toward
an Architecture of Frictional Empathy
Act III - Generation*

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Architecture

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Carola Hein (Research)
Jan van de Voort (Building Technology)

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The document was produced part of the graduation project *'From Shady Heritage Toward and Architecture of Frictional Empathy'*, and is situated in Act III - Generation

Site Survey

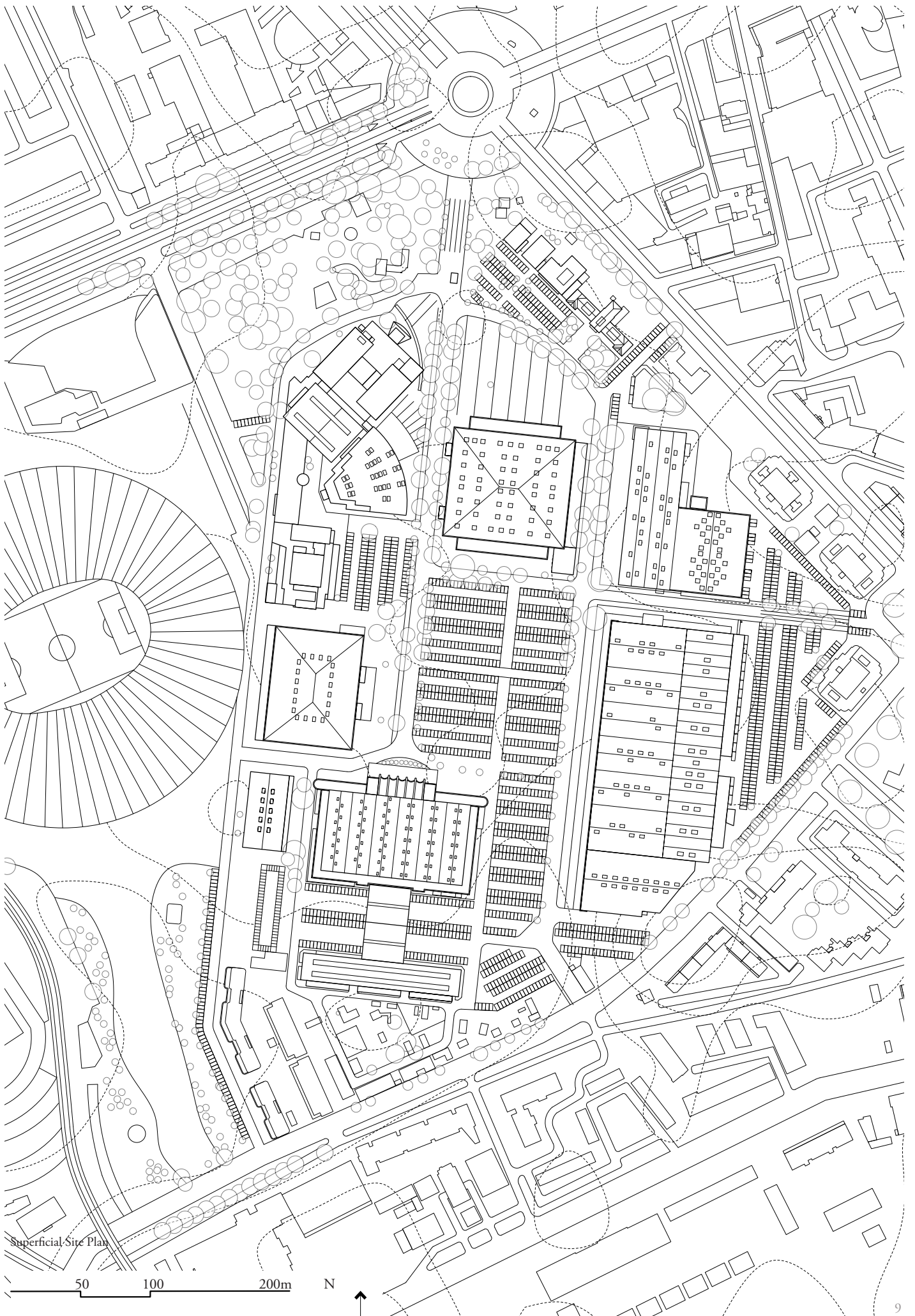
Chanot : A No-Place

Chanot's 17 hectares house seven exhibition halls, making up a total of 60k m² of usable space for exhibitions. These are served by 1800 parking spaces.

Chanot hosts over 340 events every year and draws an international audience. The site also hosts the Palais des Congrès de Marseille, regional TV headquarters, and the stadium of l'Olympique de Marseille.

However, the location is a non-place: disconnected and anonymous. It's urban grain is completely out of touch with the rest of the city. The site is covered in shed roofs and false facades, littered with cars, yet void of people





Chanot : A No-Place with a history

While it may not seem it, the Parc Chanot, a site dense in history, controversy and opportunity.

While initially used as a barracks for the regrouping of troops in transit to and from the North African front, this site became urban at the turn of the century. Indeed, in 1906, the Parc Chanot was founded to host France very first strictly colonial exhibition. However, this use was physically ephemeral in the fashion of the universal exhibitions, as all construction disappeared shortly after.

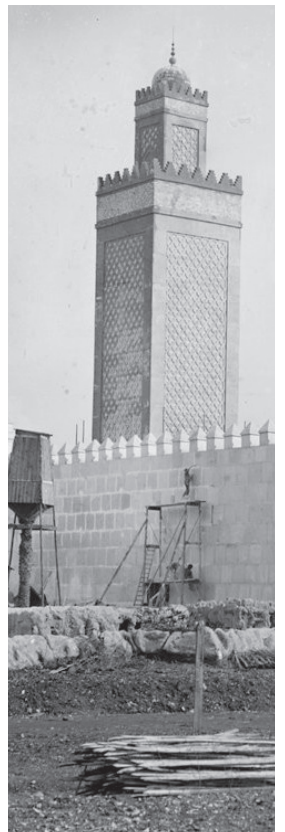
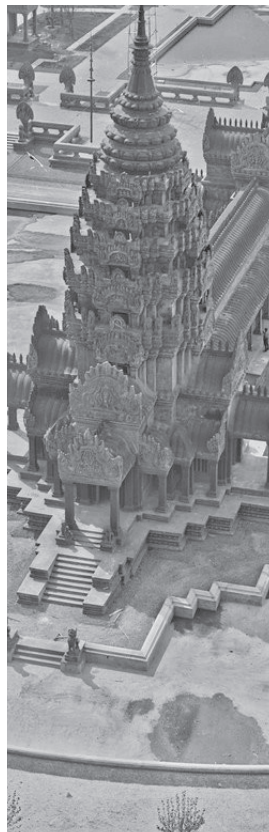
By 1922, the Parc hosted a second colonial exhibition that bears little resemblance to the former. Once again, all but the entrance gate vanished at the close of the exhibition.

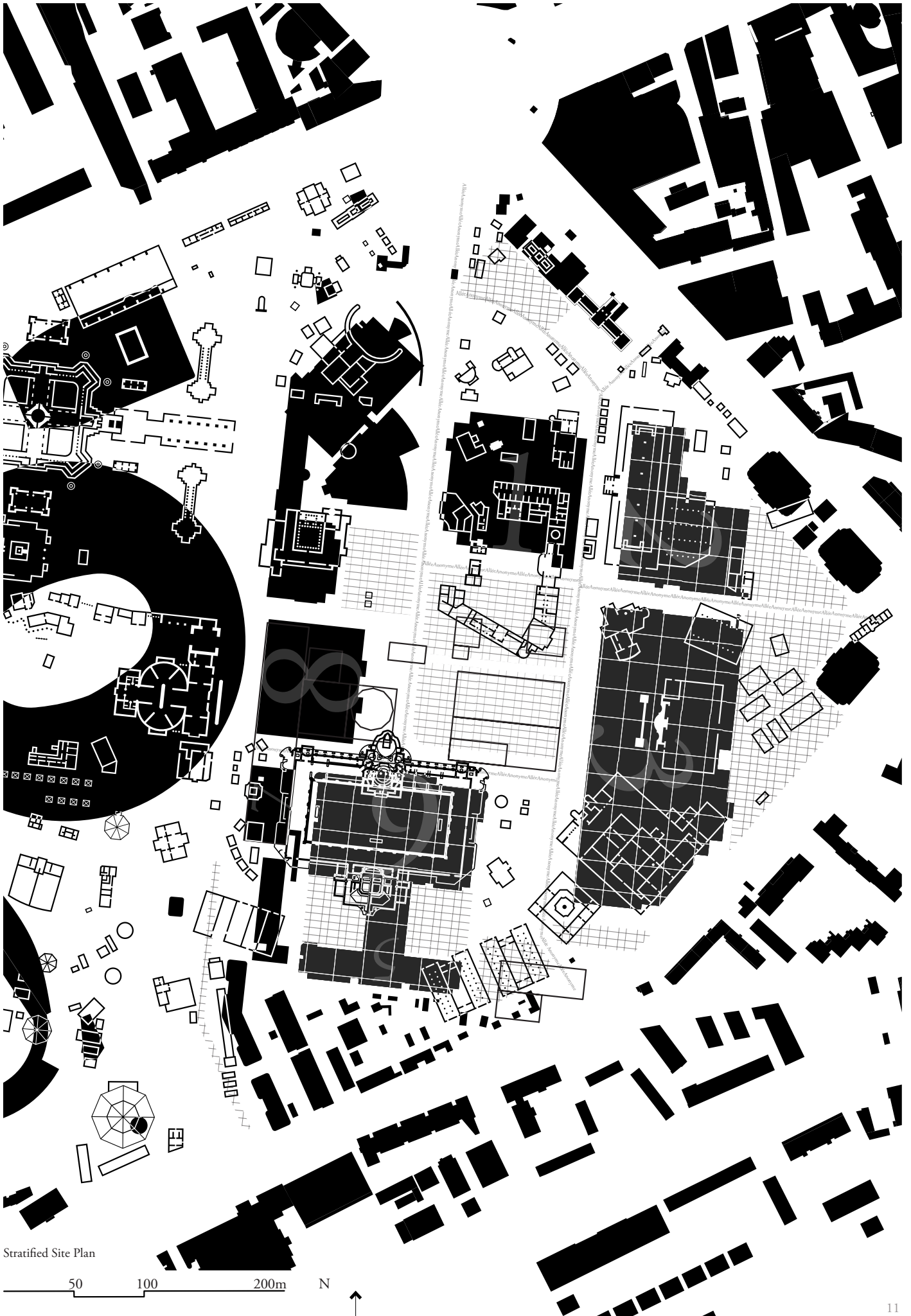
By 1950, most relics from the colonial exhibitions had disappeared, and their memory was only to be buried deeper. Indeed, in the 1960s, the entire site was razed and rebuilt, a

timeline coinciding with the end of France's so-called 'colonial empire', as Algeria became independent in 1962.

While this may be a simple temporal coincidence, I have reason to doubt it. Indeed, also in 1962 Marseille's colonial museum was emptied within a week in such a rush that botanical samples collection what thrown out windows. What transpires, is that decolonisation brought about a taboo which to this day can still not be fully understood as archives relating to colonialism aren't fully publicly accessible.

Today, there is very little that bears testimony to the reason why this Parc was created in the first place. The parc seems to have moved on from shadiness by attempting to erase a shunned past and overwriting human exhibits with hip hop concerts. However, the site's past has neither been acknowledged nor overcome, and it certainly isn't physically legible.





Stratified Site Plan

50 100 200m N

An opportunity to move beyond

The architectural oscillation between pride and grandeur of the first half of the 20th century, and the shame and anonymity of the second half tell the tale of the ambivalence experienced towards an unwelcome, yet undeniable past whose consequences linger.

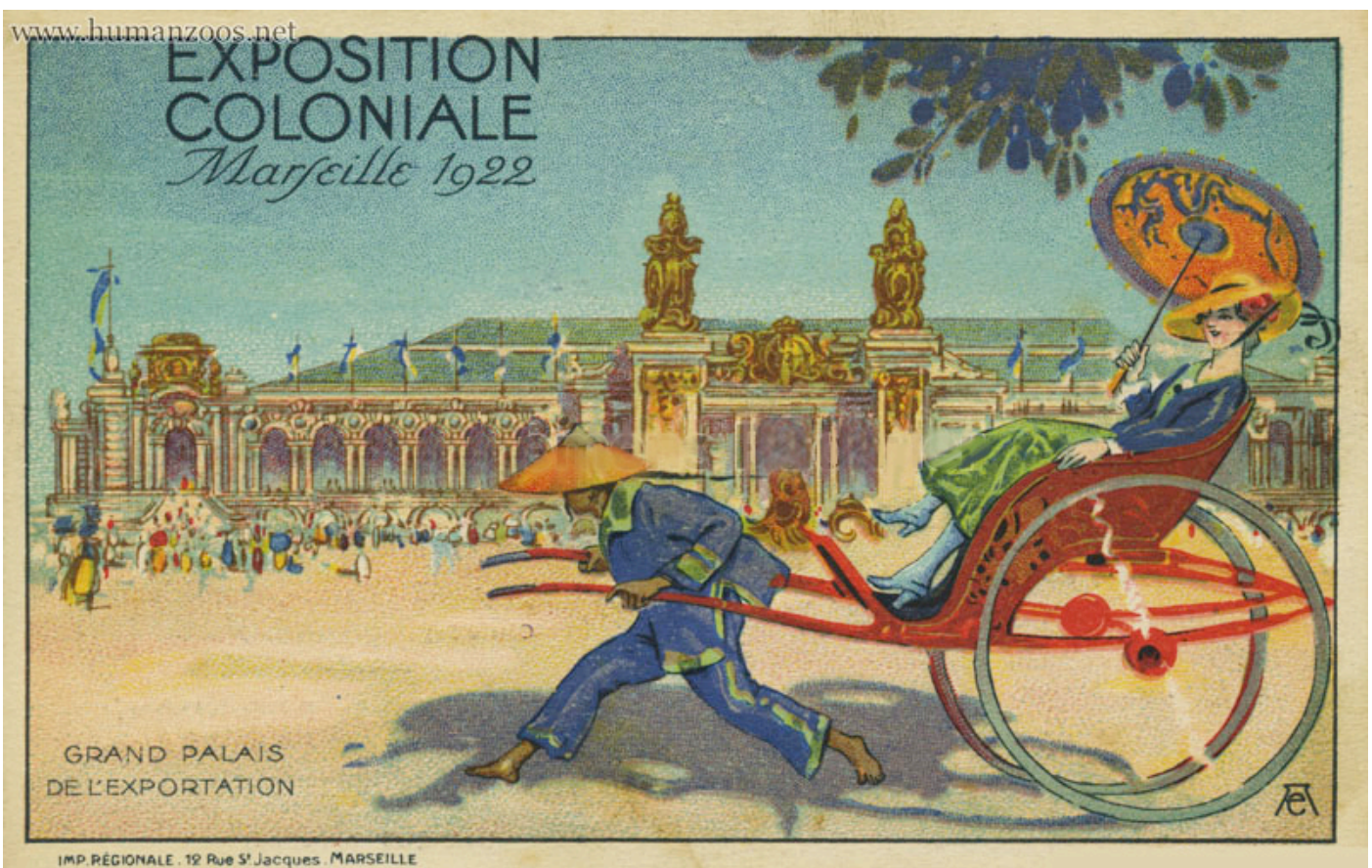
The poster below points to the importance of acknowledging the past of the site. Indeed, such exposition played a significant role in recruiting individuals for the colonies and forced public opinion, reinforcing notions of racial inequality and discrimination.

Interestingly, Marseille City Hall recently announced that ‘it is time to change century. [...] The city wants a place that is more open to the general public, more modern and more attractive.’

One may wonder, What does the 20th century mean for the parc? for Marseille?

While this overhaul may metaphorically and physically bury this taboo history further, I see here an opportunity to add a new, legible, layer.

I, therefore, delved into understanding a specific part of the site, better: the Grand Palais.



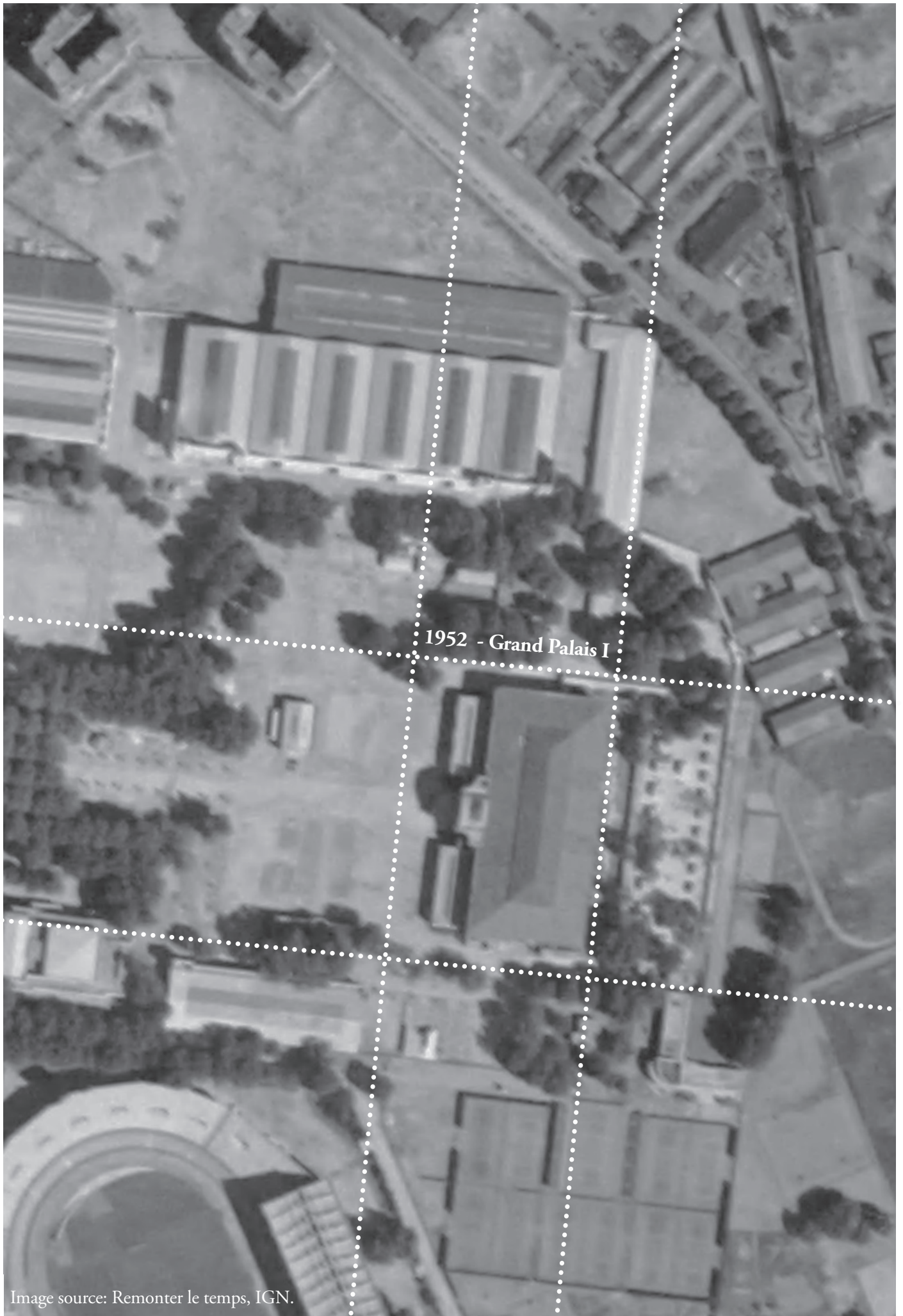
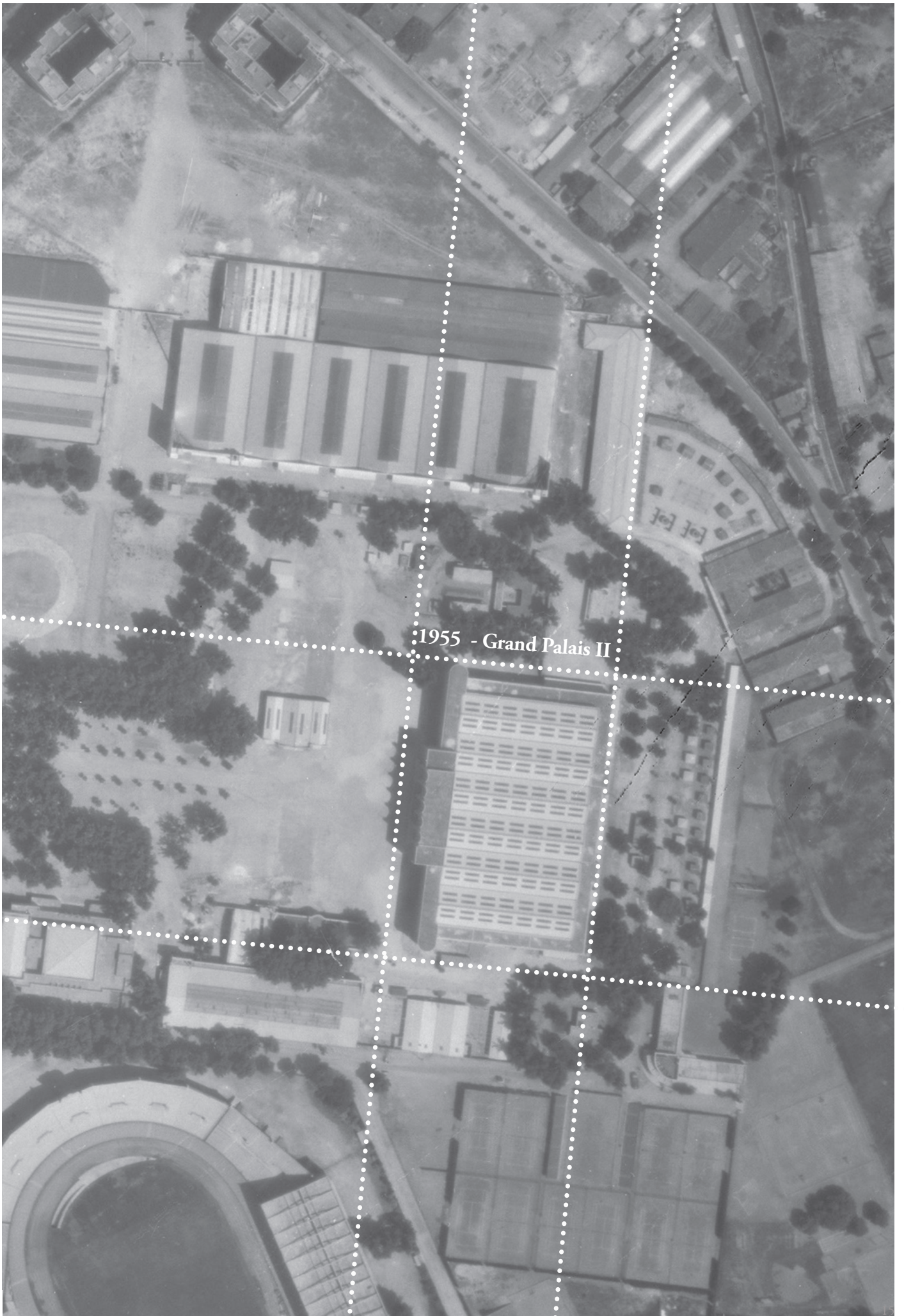


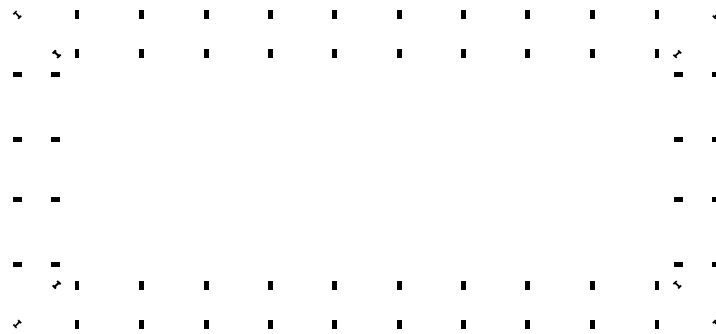
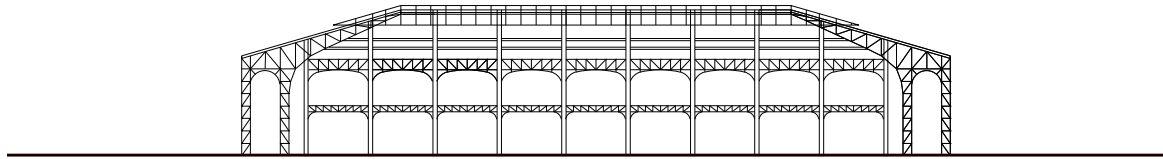
Image source: Remonter le temps, IGN.



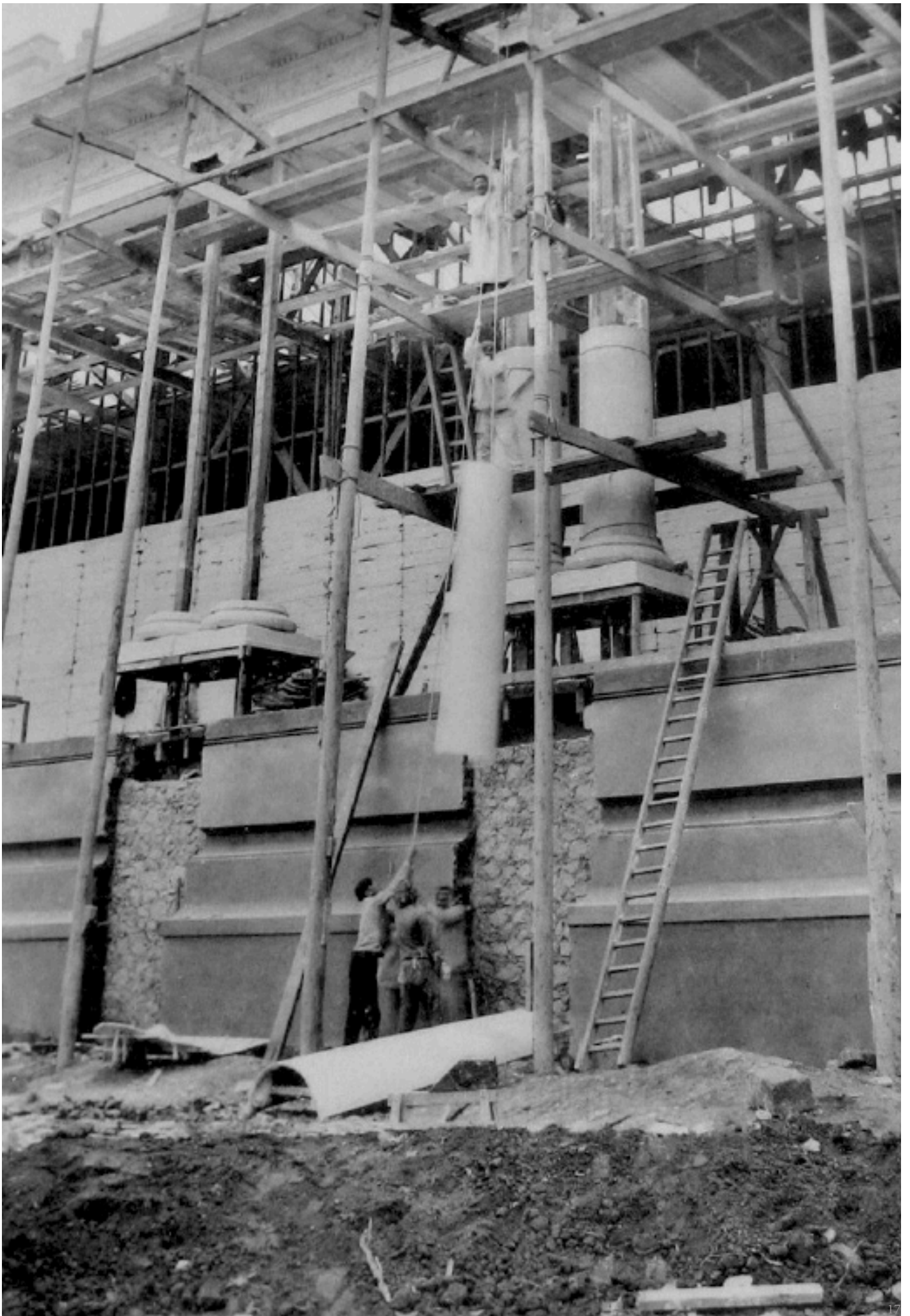
1955 - Grand Palais II

MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In 1905, the Eiffel company designed and built a low-iron steel structure which was to become the Grand Palais I.

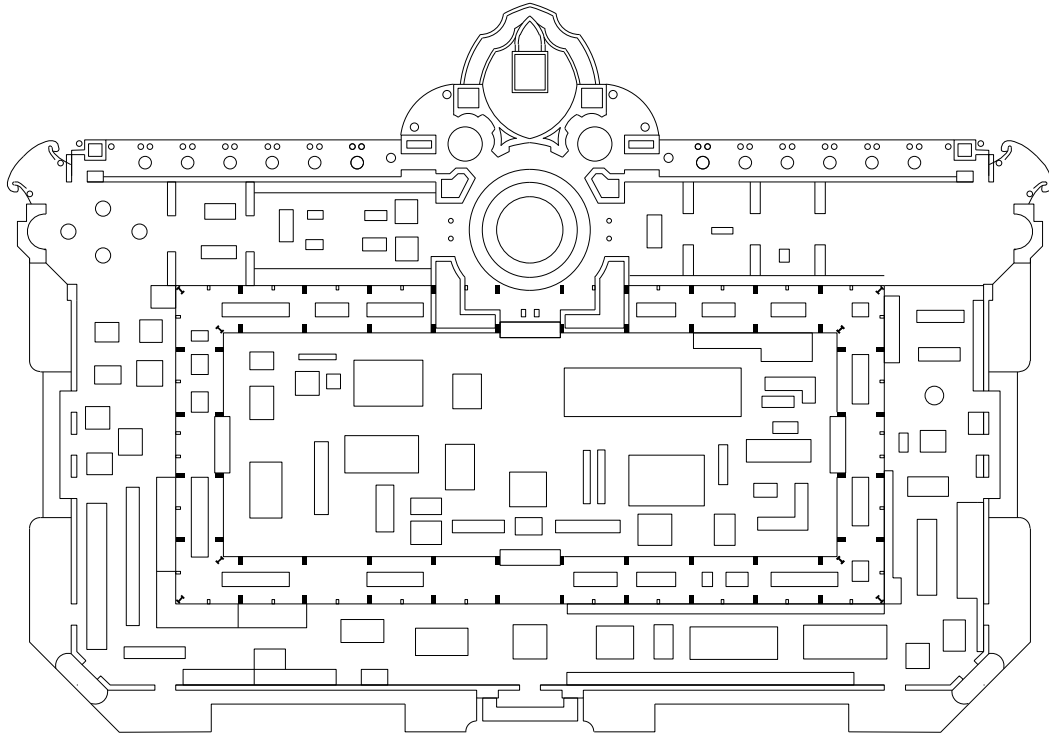
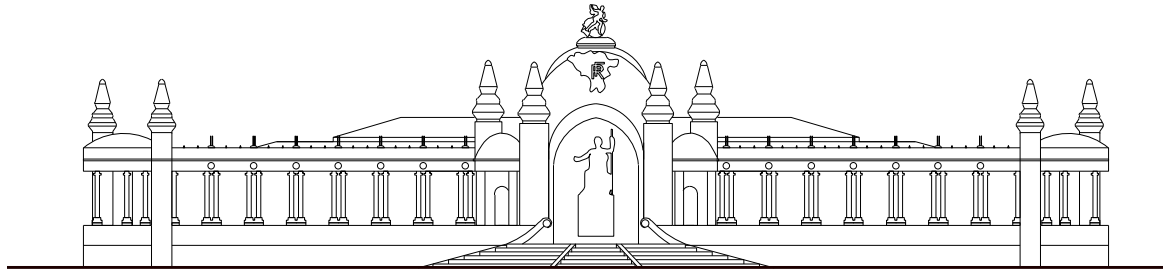


10 20 50m



MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In 1906, the Grand Palais I was used for Chanot's first colonial exhibition.

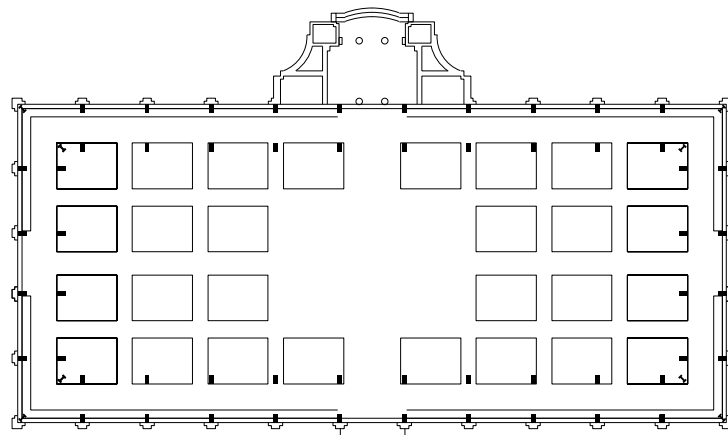
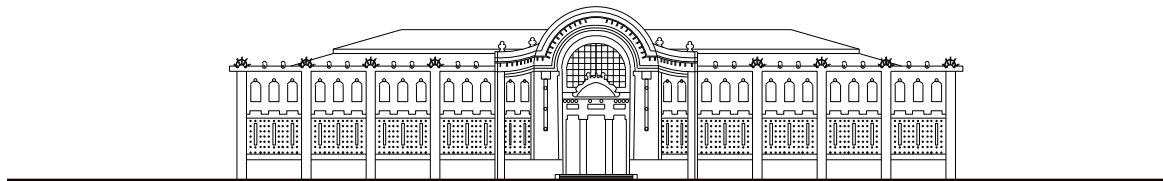


10 20 50m



MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In 1908, Chanot hosted the Electrical Exhibition. For this event, the Grand Palais I's facade was redesigned.

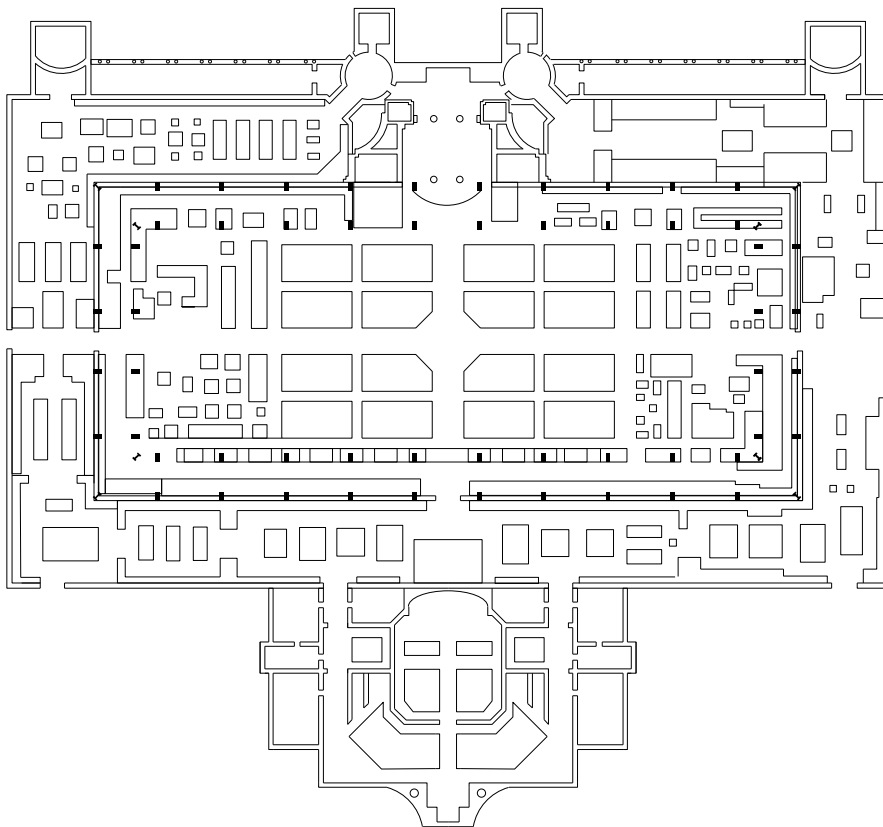
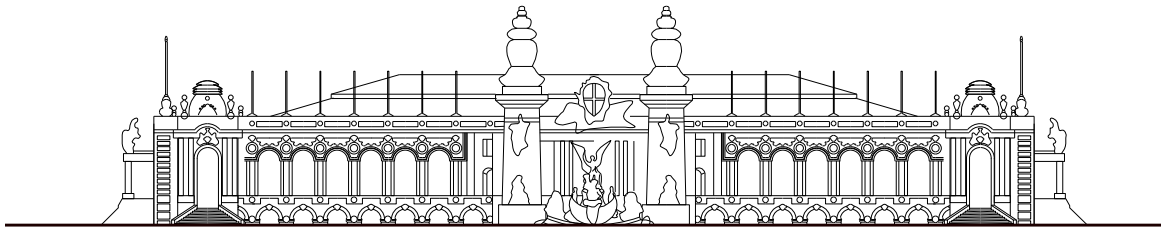


10 20 50m



MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In 1922, the Grand Palais I's previous facade was dressed up with a new layer for the second colonial exhibition.

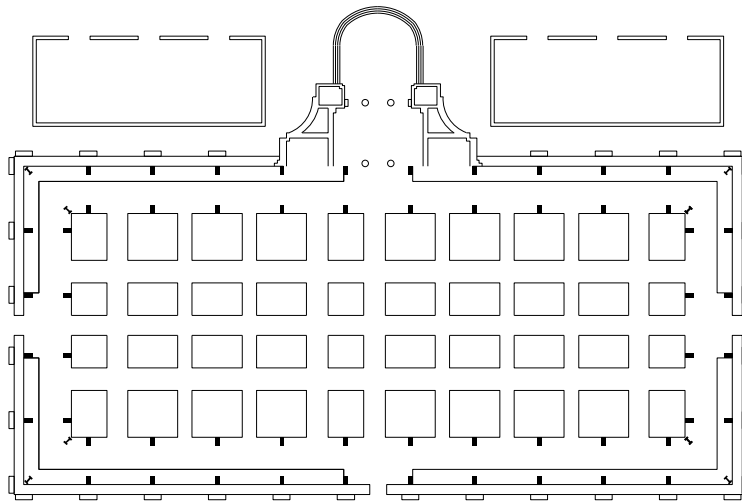
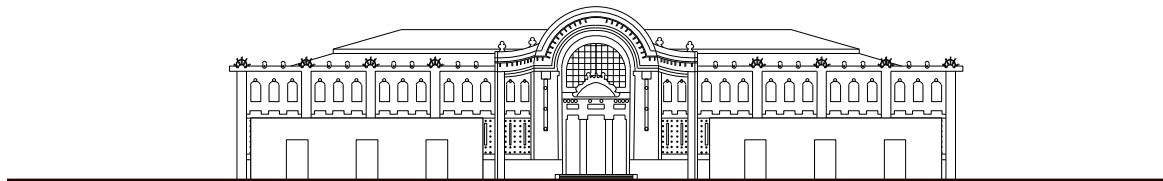


10 20 50m

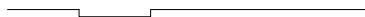


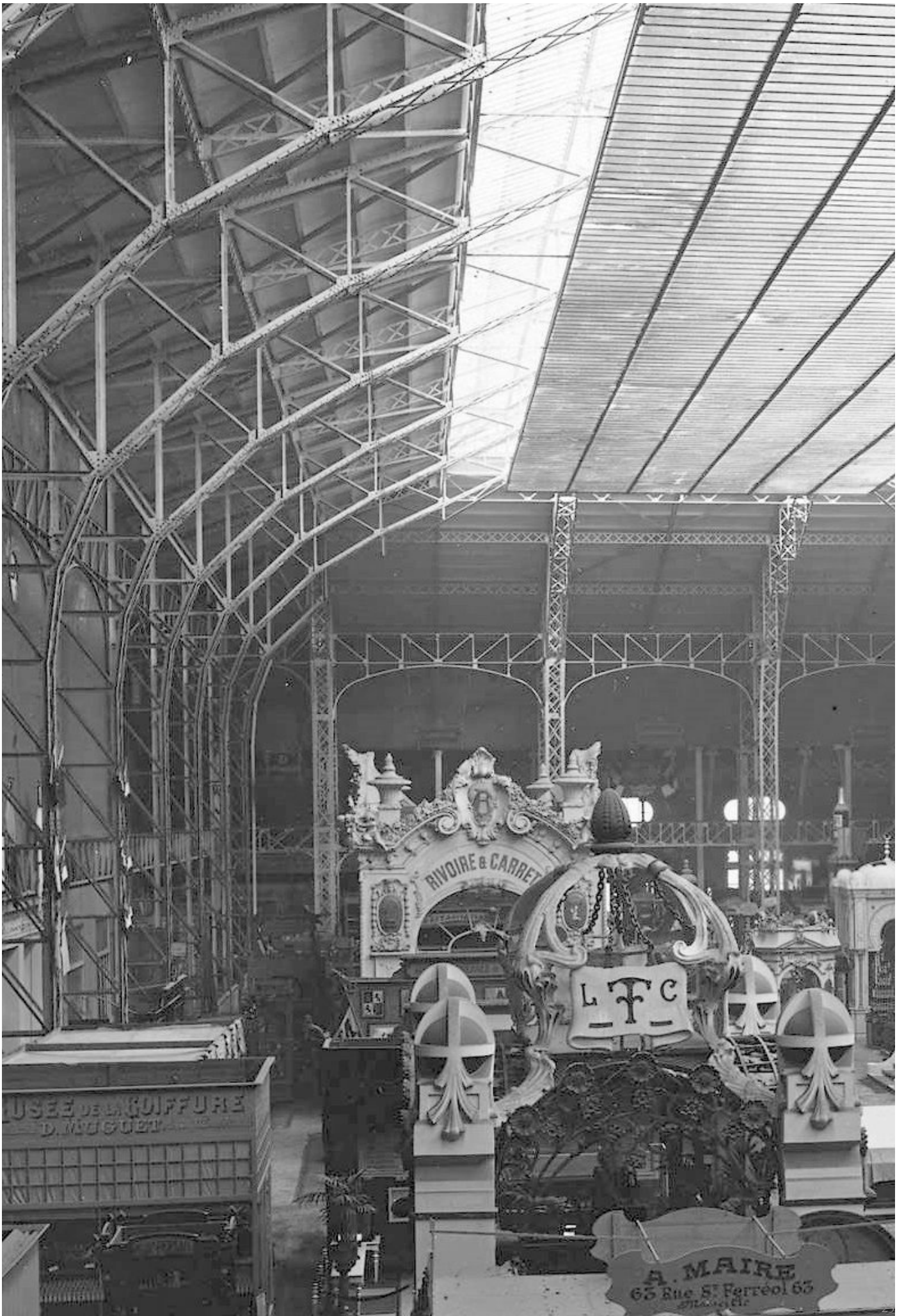
MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In the following years, the 1922 facade was stripped off and the building was used for fairs. In WW2 it then housed American, French and German troops.



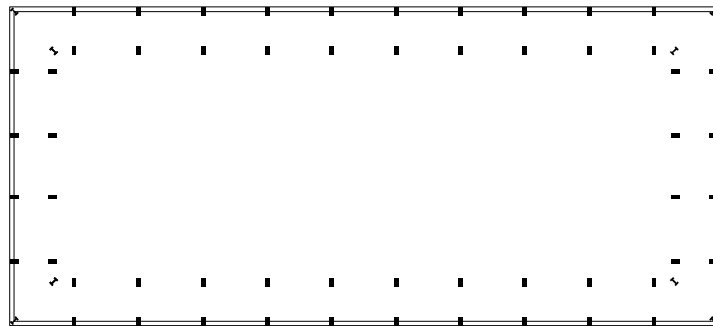
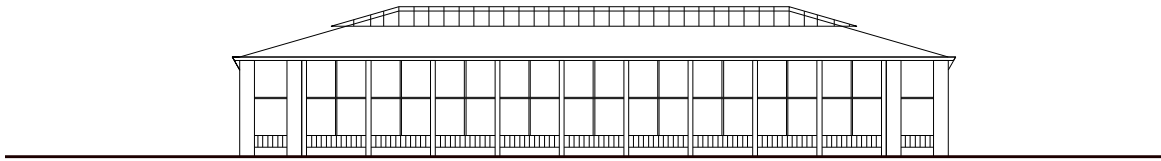
10 20 50m





ARLES - Ex-Lustucru
43.70368, 4.64296

In the 1950s, the Grand Palais I was in such poor condition that it was sold to an agricultural company, shipped to Arles and used as a rice storage warehouse.

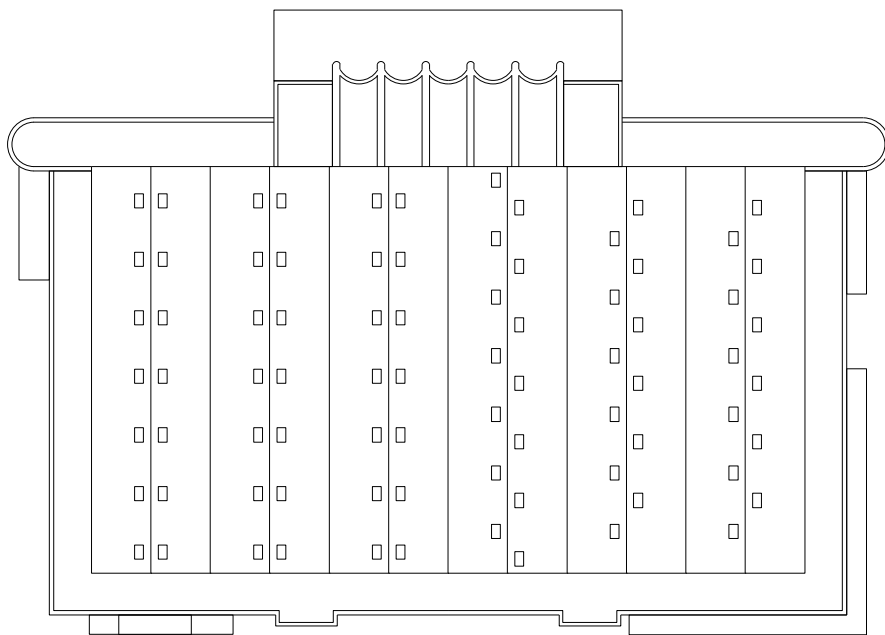
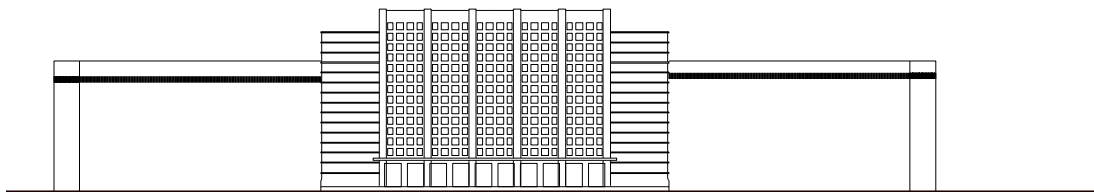






MARSEILLE - Parc Chanot
43.2727, 5.39474

In the mean time, the Grand Palais II took the place of the Grand Palais I. It still stands to this day, however, it is due for demolition.



10 20 50m



ARLES - Ex-Papeterie Etienne
43.67524, 4.61263

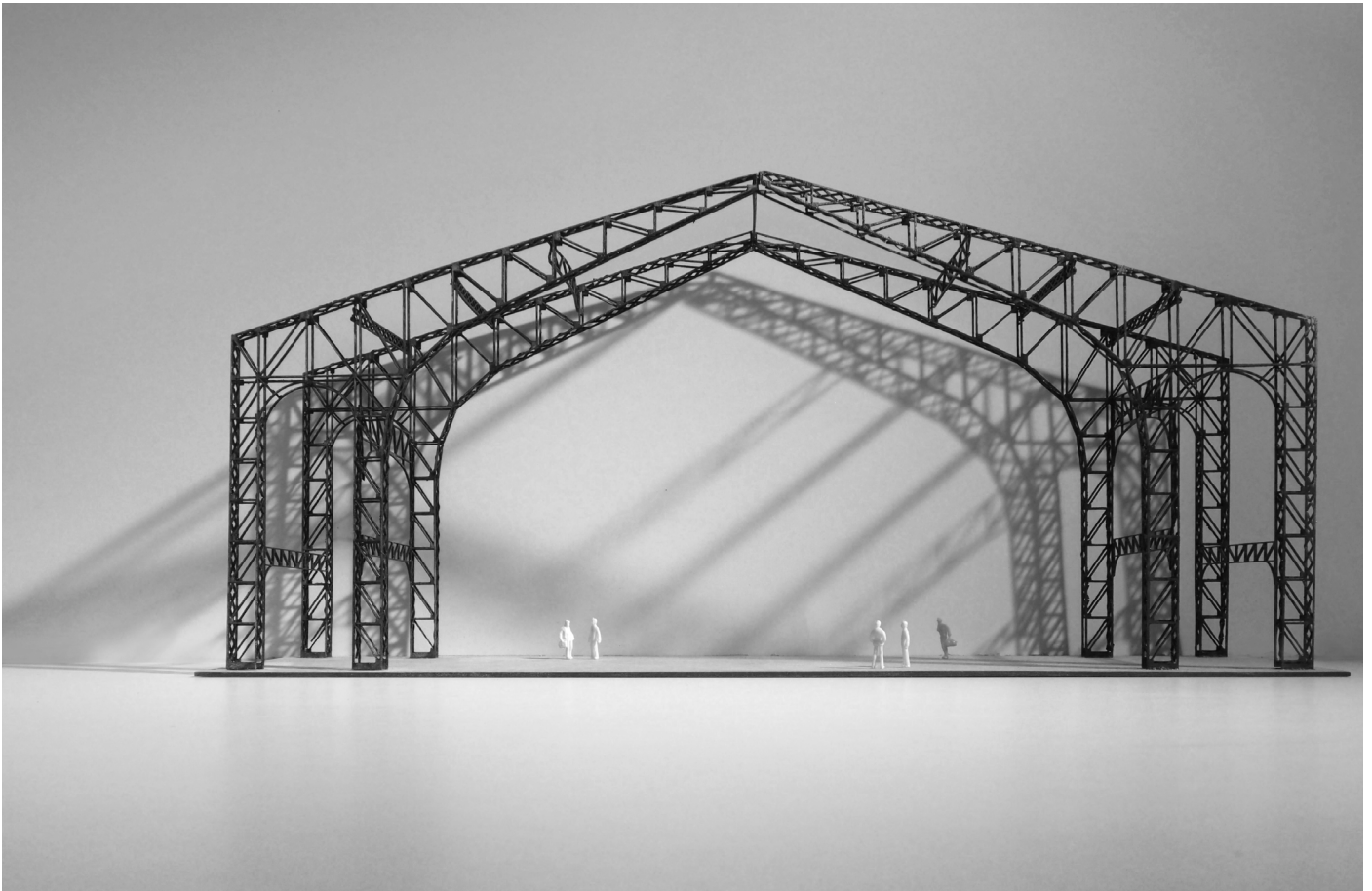
The Grand Palais I was recently dismantled after lengthy quarrels on its heritage value and it is degrading on a brown field site in Arles.





The following two models were made to familiarise myself with the structural and spatial qualities of the Eiffel structure. Structural stability is ensured by ring-beams on all four sides & foundations that anchor the trusses.

The structure is characterised by its structural rhythm and modularity, as well as its dual-axis symmetry. Two volumes are outlined in the structure: the main nave and aisles below the mezzanine. The most important feature consists of the shadows projected.



1:200 model of a bay

1:500 model of the complete structure



Design Intent

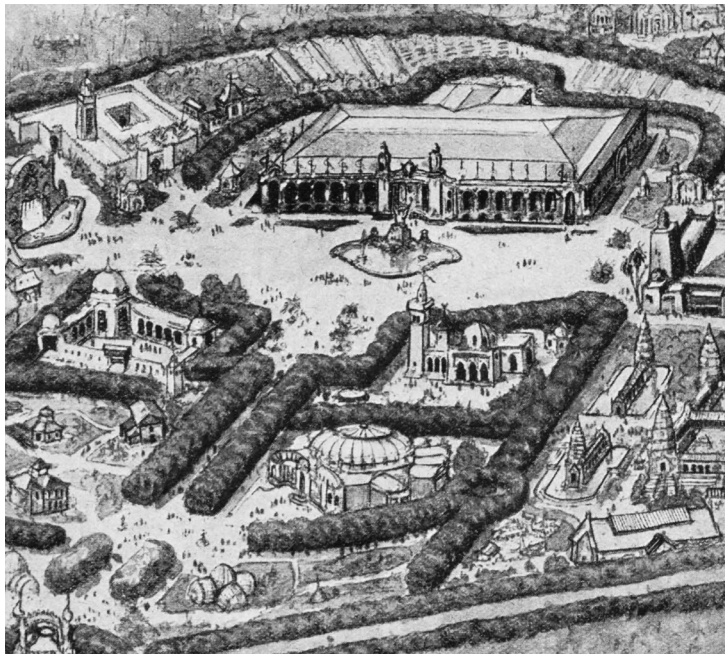
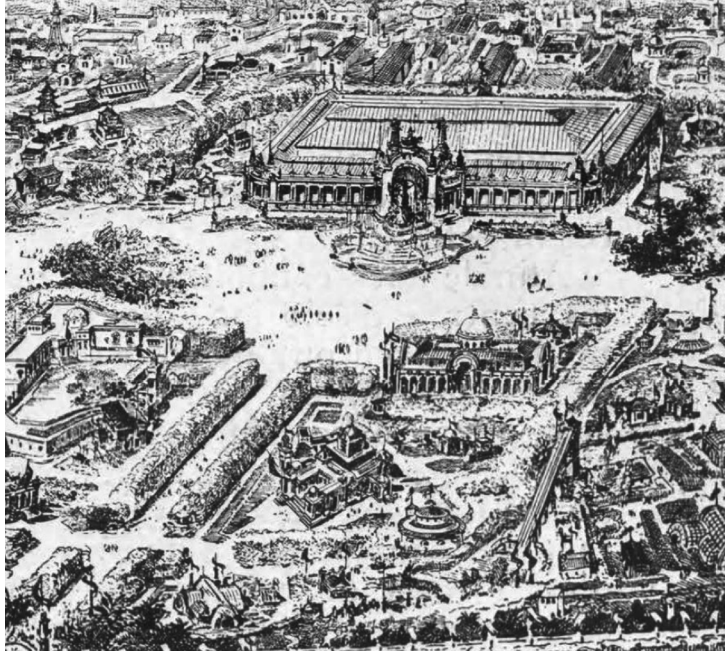
Le Grand Palais des Histoires

“I wish to design a place which creates a new unity, becoming an urban catalyst for empathy and communal reflection. I endeavour to weave (contested) memories back into the urban fabric by adding - rather than removing - a new architectural layer.

The proposal should make underlying narratives legible while allowing competing versions of the past to remain unresolved. The cultural and historic contexts of alternative readings should be enunciated. Here, specific storytelling, rather than overarching romanticisation, endeavours to nurture understanding and empathy. This will enable Le Parc Chanot to faithfully bear witness to the past and adapt to new interpretations as it becomes a living memorial.”

15th January 2021, P2.

This initial agenda led me to design the Grand Palais des Histoires, a building seeking to reduce the dichotomy between hegemonic histories and stories declared illegitimate due to their perceived lack of evidence.



Principle 1: Uchronia

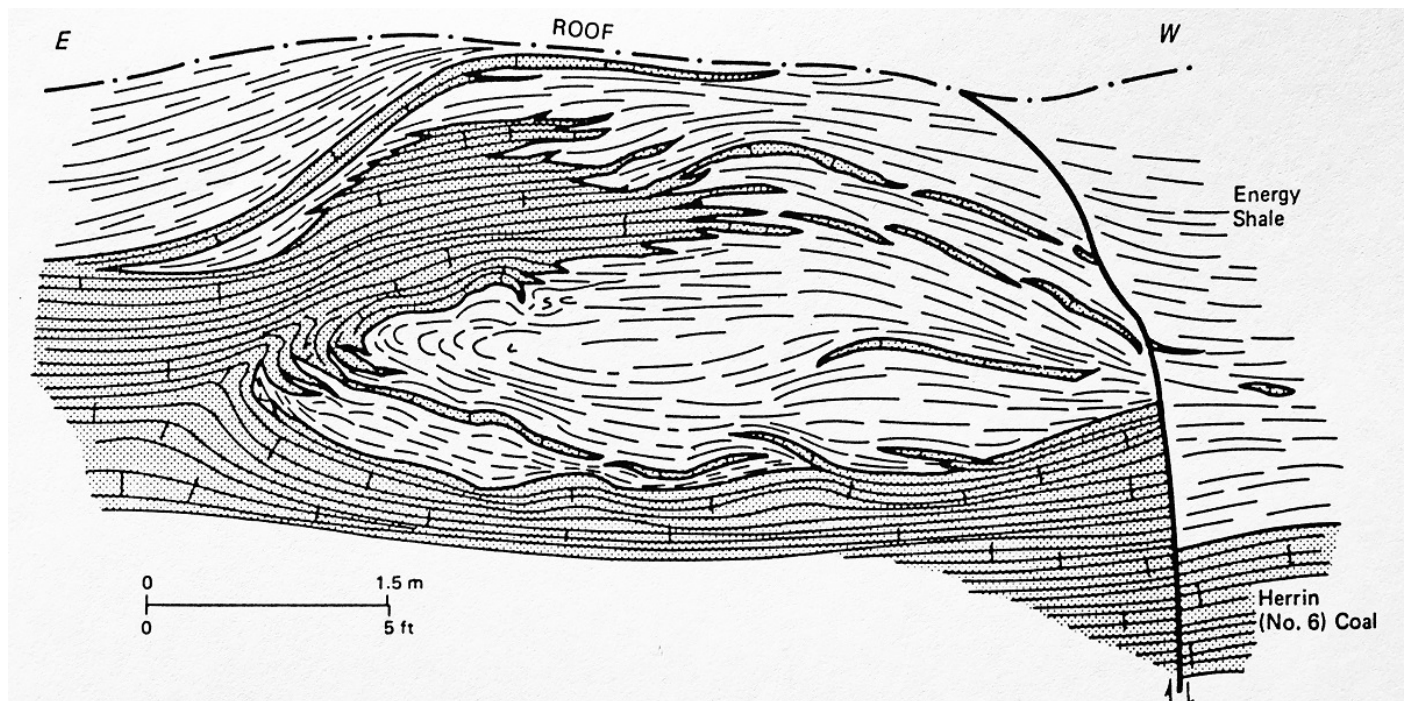
The first design strategy consists of creating a uchronia. The word is a neologism from the word utopia (Greek u-topos, meaning “no-place”), replacing topos with chronos (time). Such a strategy seeks to make the site’s redacted past visible.

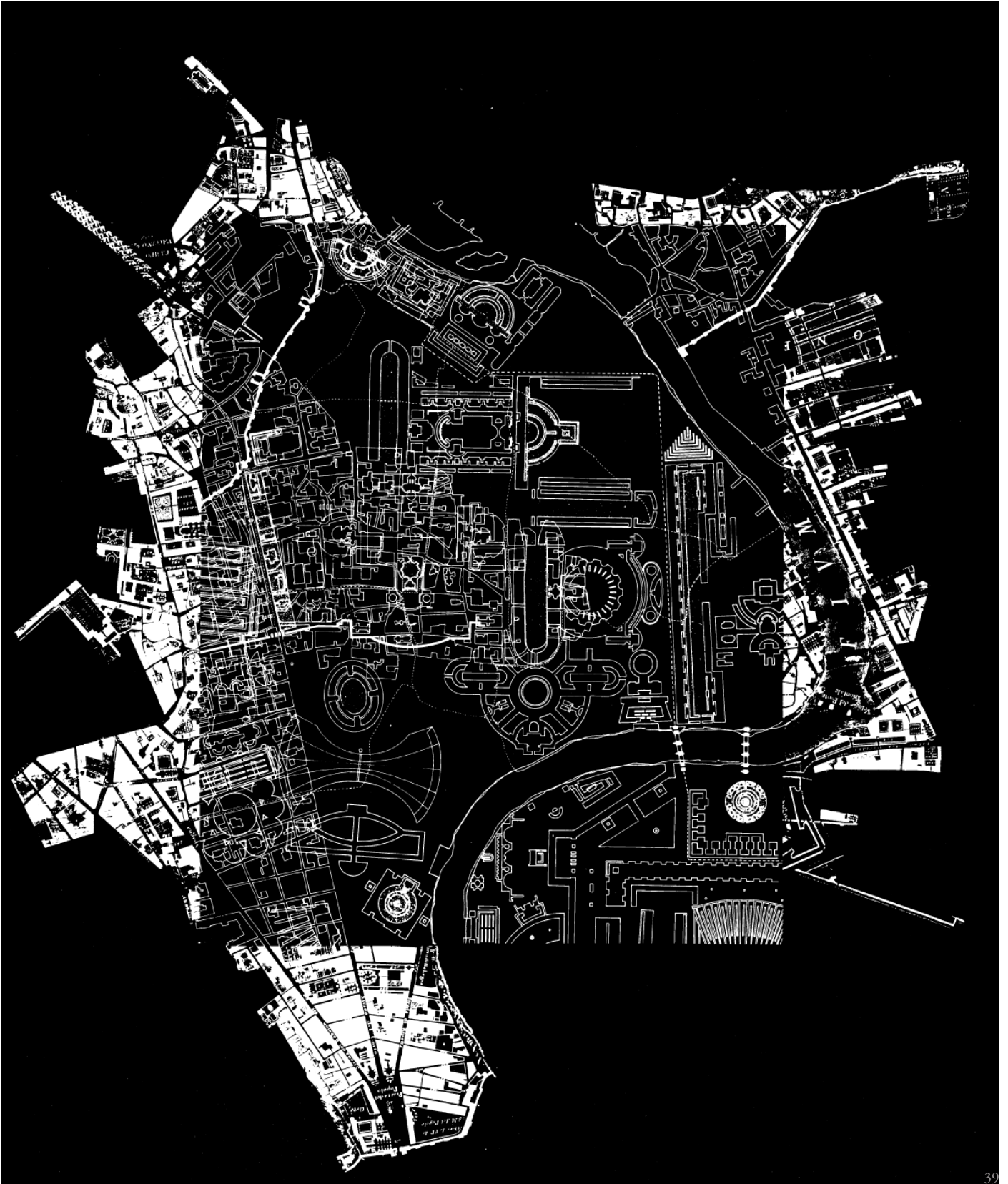
A key reference for this principle is Piranesi’s Campo Marzio project whereby he re-imagined Rome by layering buildings from various time periods, creating a new imaginary.

Similarly, the geological principle of discontinuities provides insight into how different (temporal) stratas can come into contact with each other, breaking linear temporalities by resurfacing.

This strategy seeks to weave contested memories back into the urban fabric by adding - rather than removing - an architectural layer. The aim is to make the past visible to enable one’s confrontation to it, and catharsis. Here, specific storytelling, rather than overarching romanticisation, endeavour to nurture understanding and empathy.

Stratigraphic drawing





Principle 2: Détournement

Détournement is a medium that has been used widely in the 20th century. Artists such as Banksy, Picasso, Magritte and Duchamp used it when seeking to provide a new reading of an existing idea or object. It is often used for critical means, sometimes presenting a cynical angle.

In art, détournement thus embodies subversive and transgressive design, and is a key means of reinterpreting the past of the site and unfolding the potential of Chanoir's heritage.

Furthermore, the medium of détournement - through which one intervenes in precise, legible gestures, is a suitable strategy to make a design acknowledge their agency and become more self aware of the decision making process.

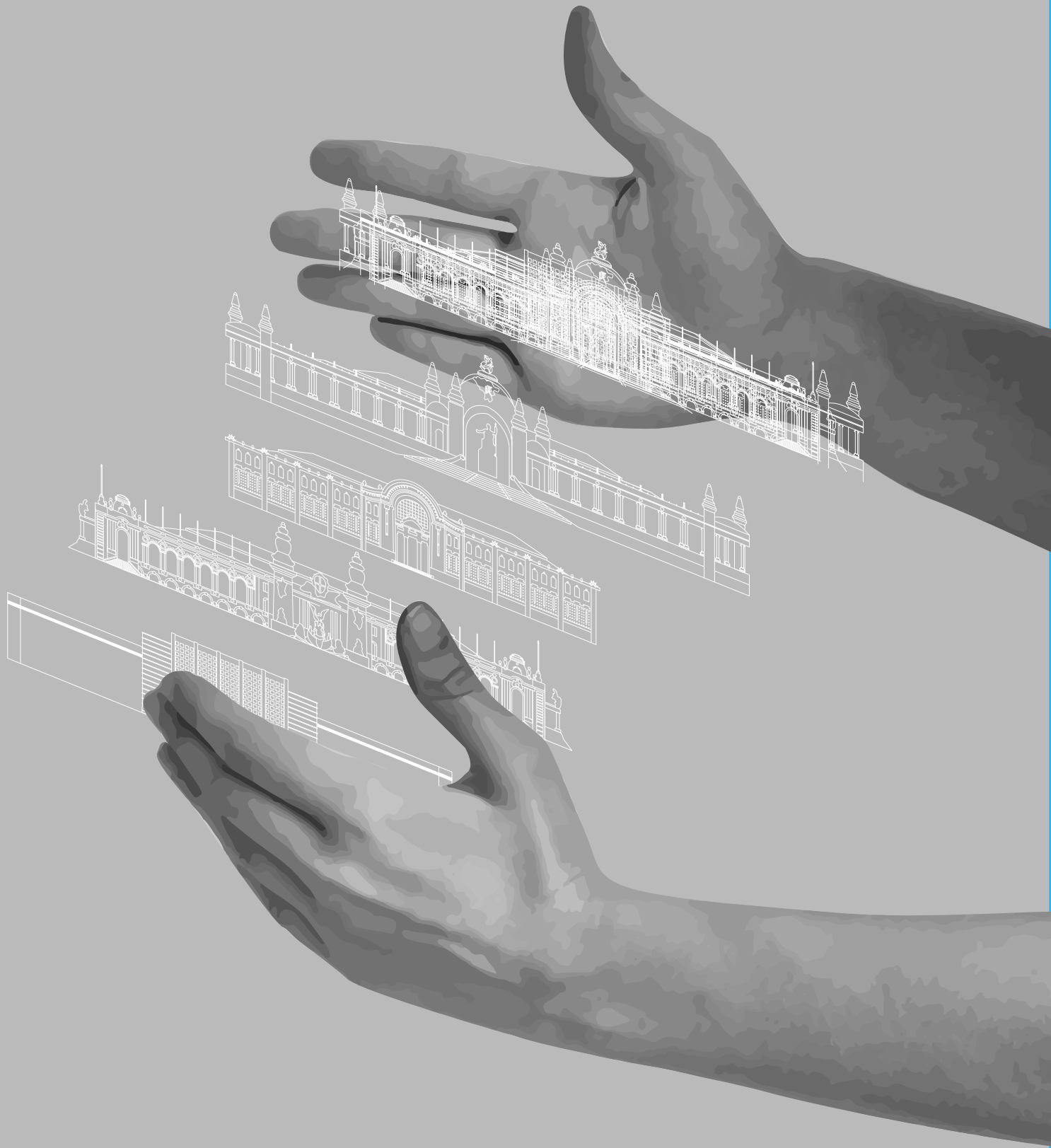
Picasso, Pablo. 1942. Bull's Head



Design Proposal

Gesture 1

Collapsing the facades



All facades were conceptualised as 2D objects and then reduced to their solid void language.

After having conceptualised each facade into a 2D image composed of solids and voids, I used digital tools to create cadavre exquis-like compositions. The chosen composition was then harmonised.

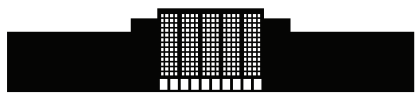
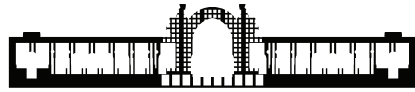
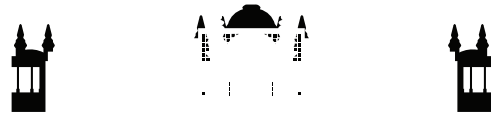
The composition process revealed interesting surprises, namely

creating a mucharabieh effect at the centre of the facade, incidentally harking back to the Arabic pavilions.

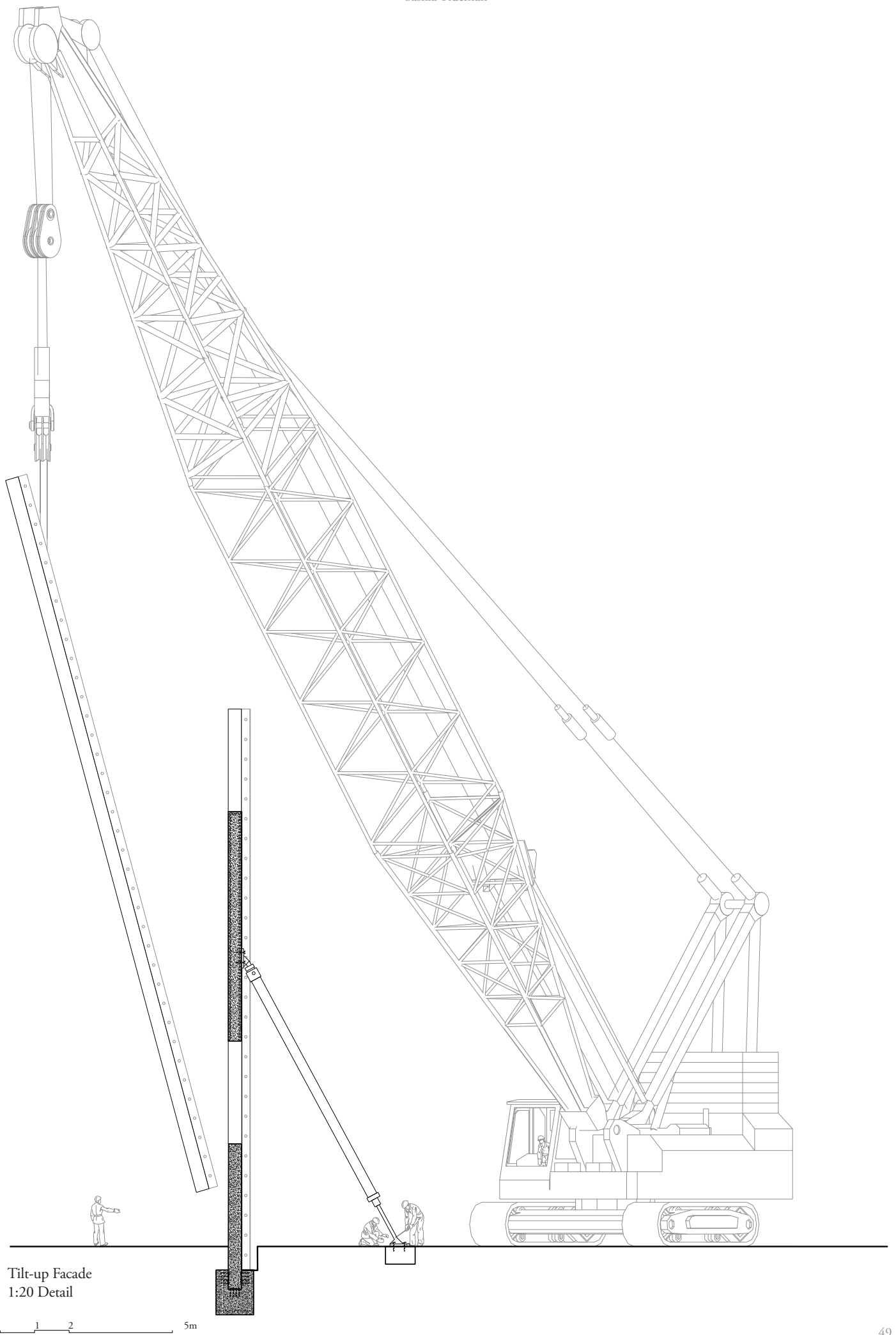
The resulting facade is ominous; by remaining faithful to the scale of the original facades, the proposed design is completely out of touch with the human scale.

The facade is built following tilt- up construction principles, enabling the large panels to be cast on site, into the palimpsest.



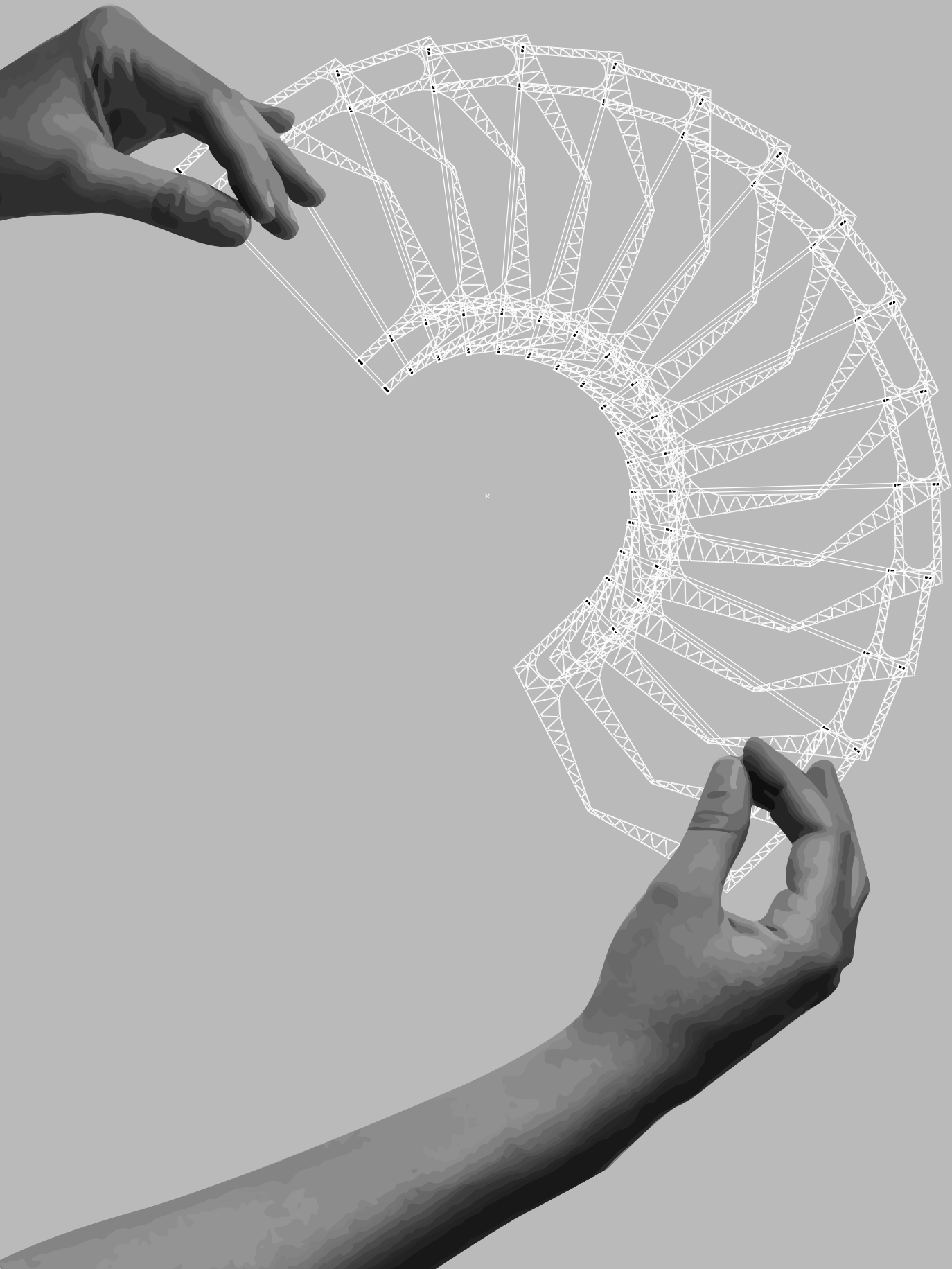






Tilt-up Facade
1:20 Detail

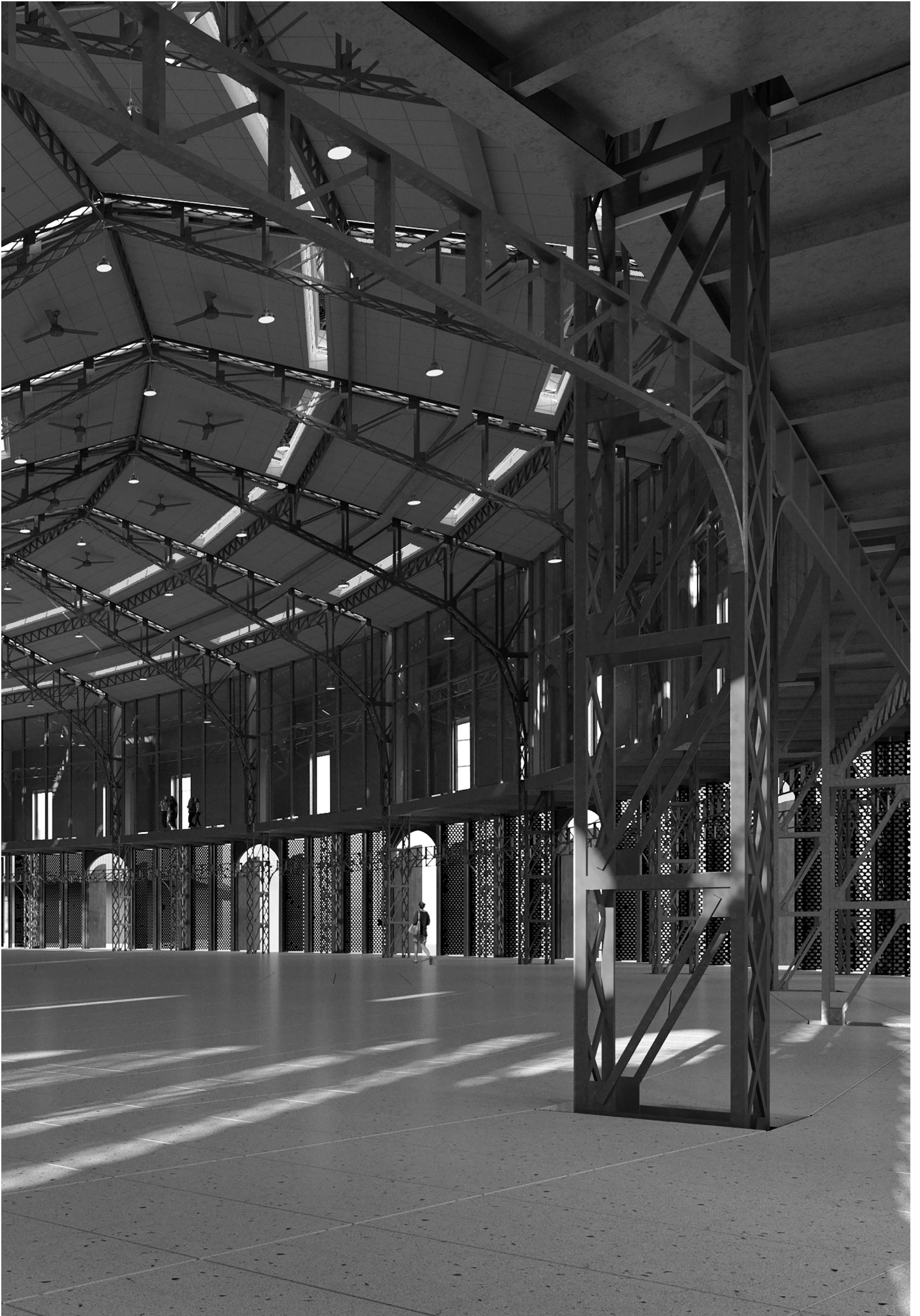
1 2 5m

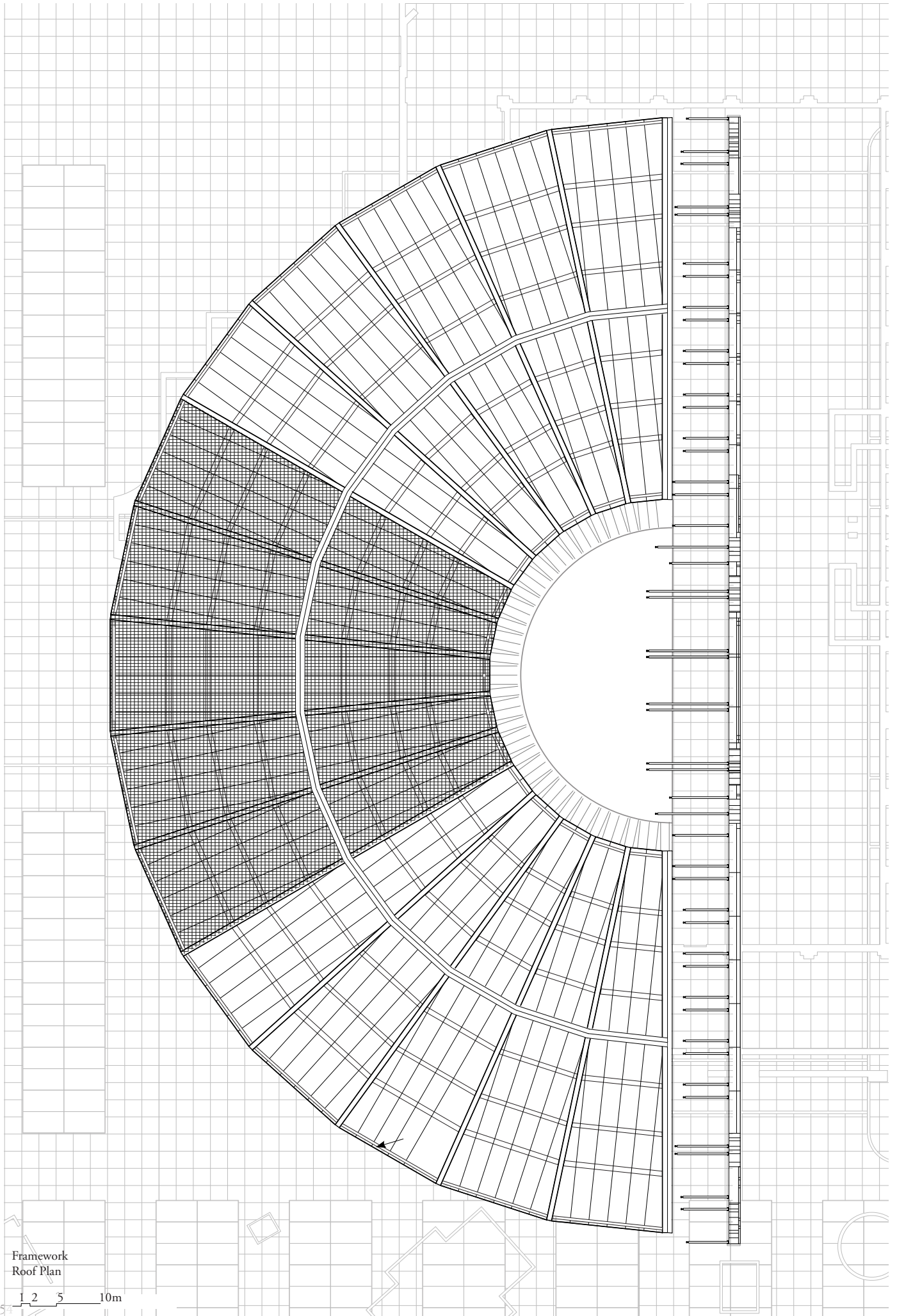


Gesture 2

Arraying the framework

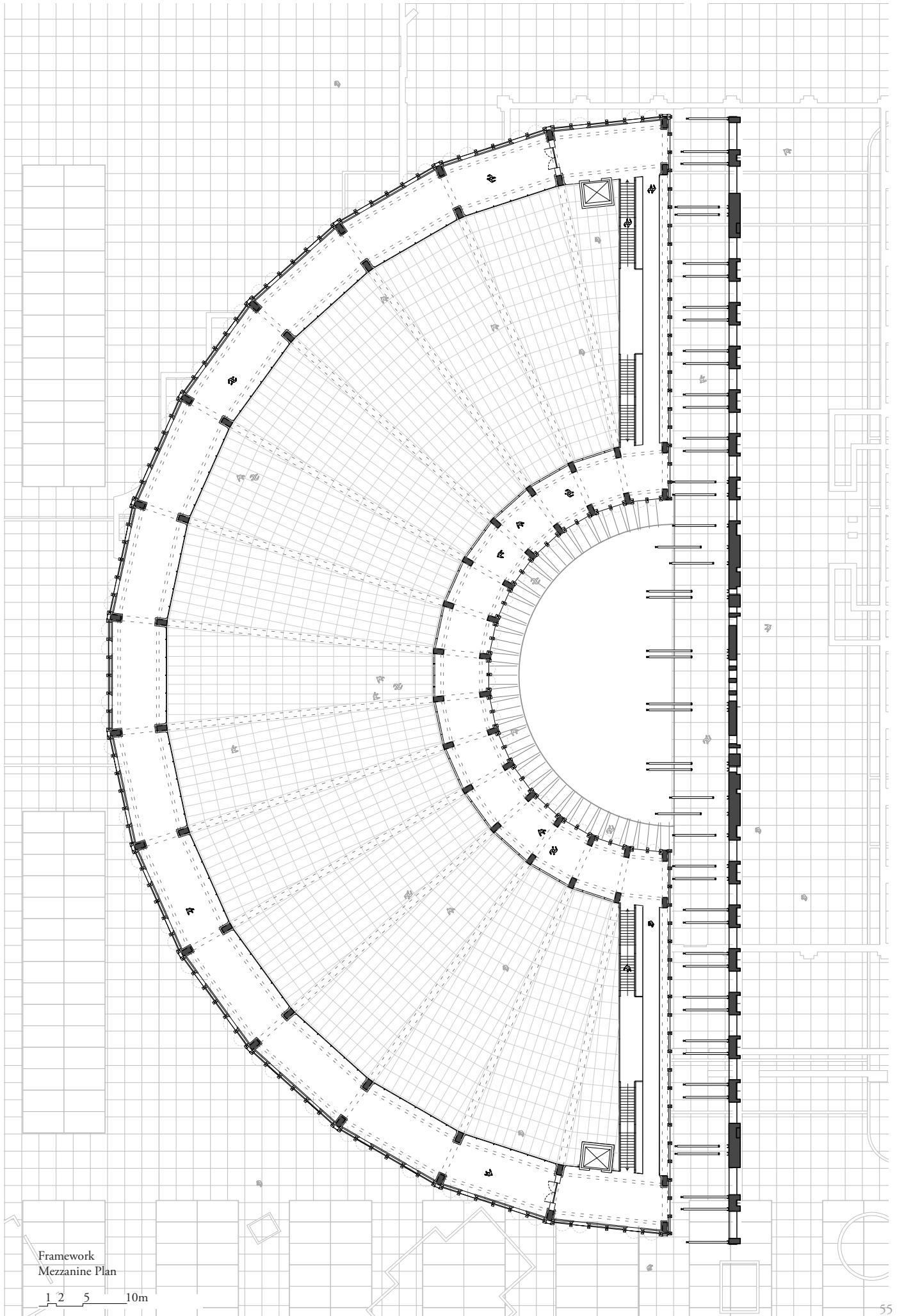


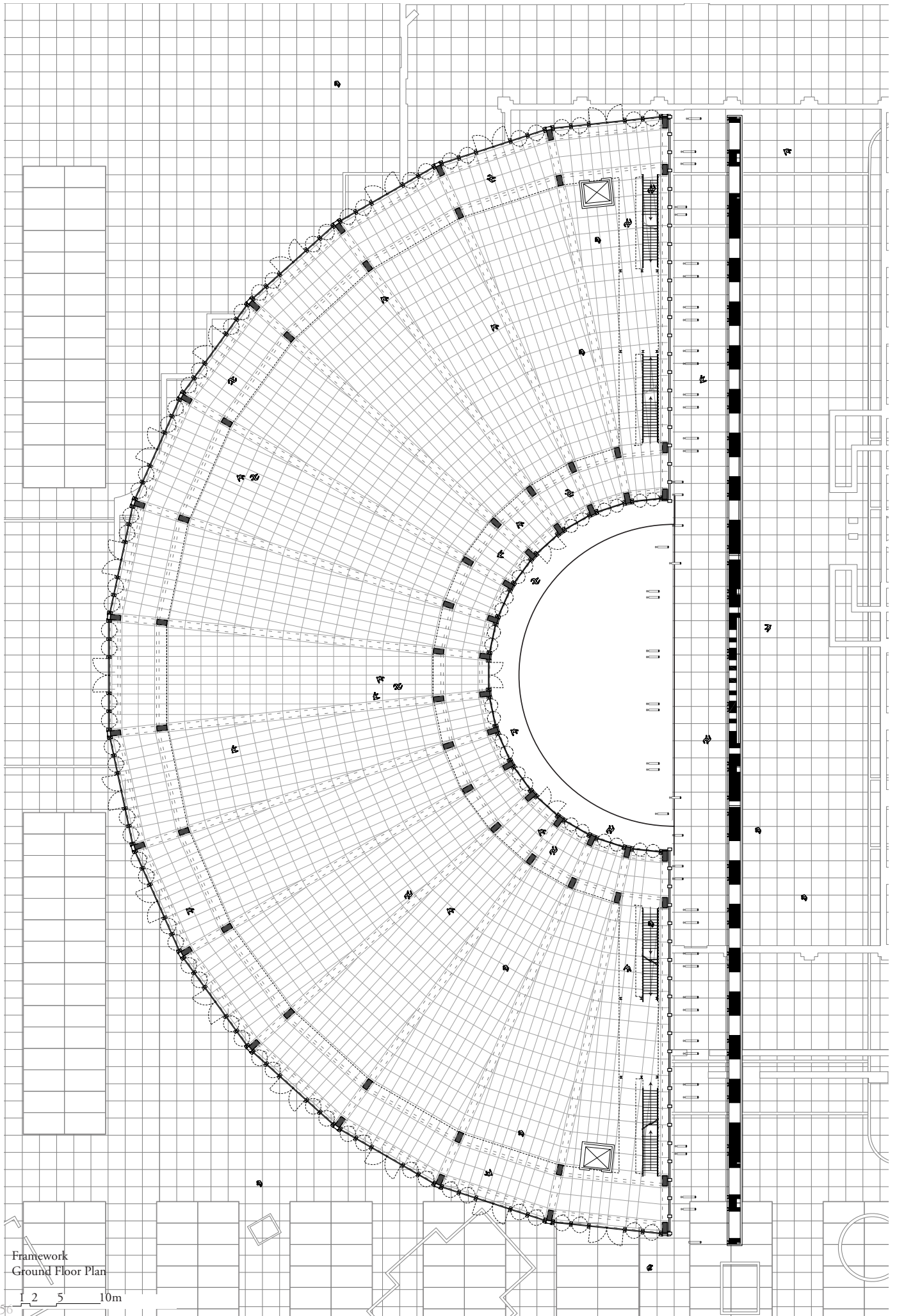




Framework
Roof Plan

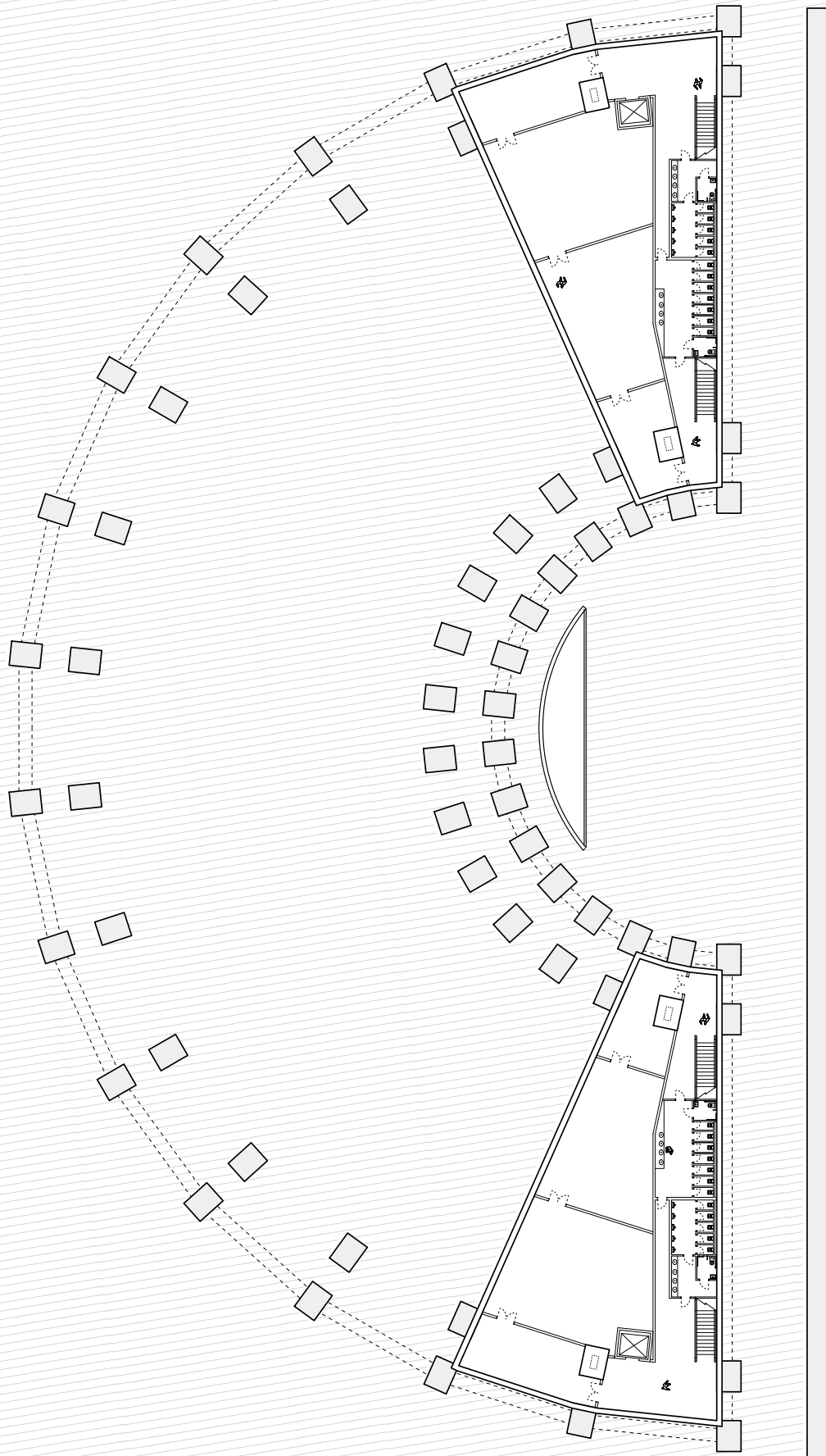
1 2 5 10m





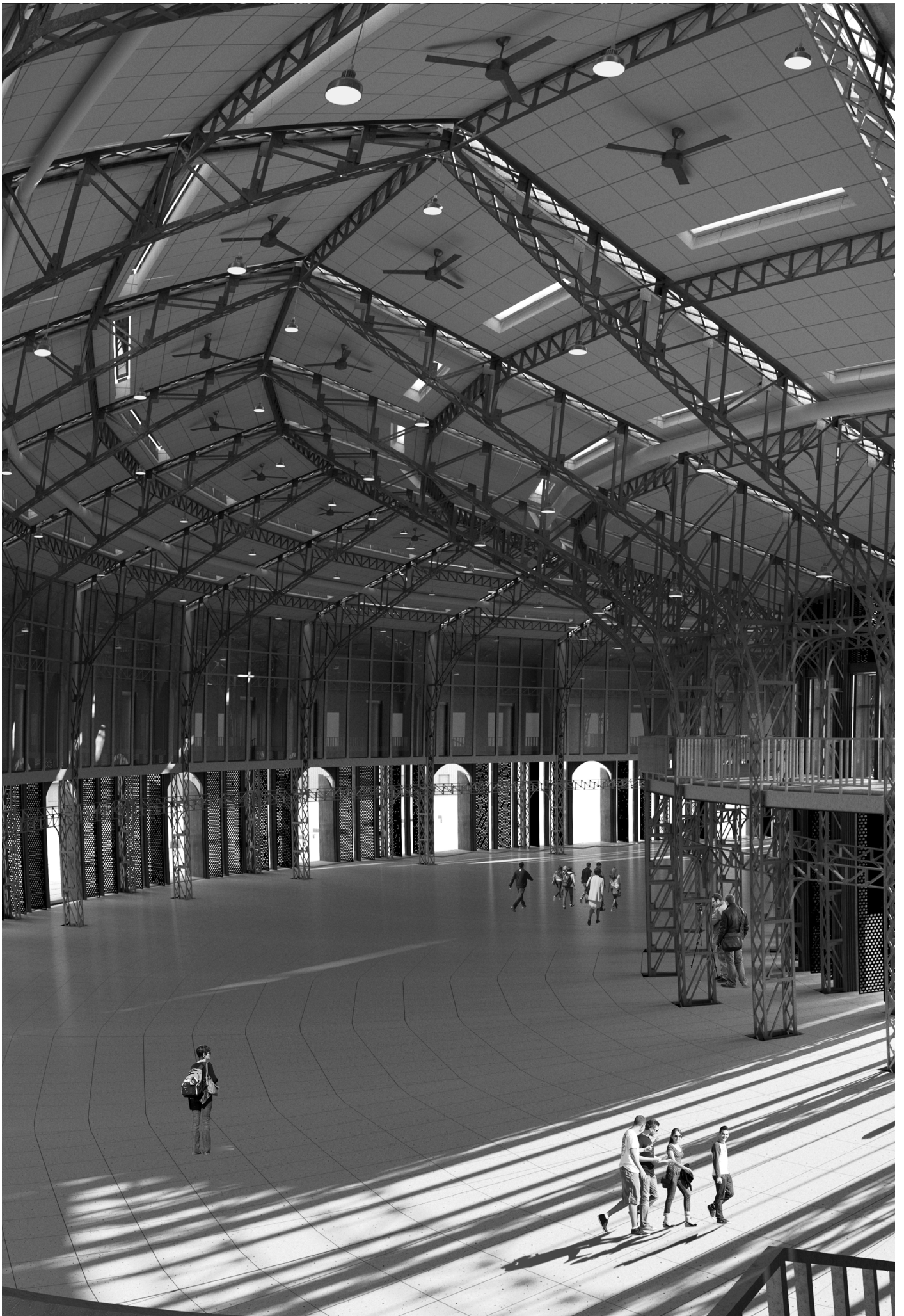
Framework
Ground Floor Plan

1 2 5 10m



Framework
Basement Plan

1 2 5 10m



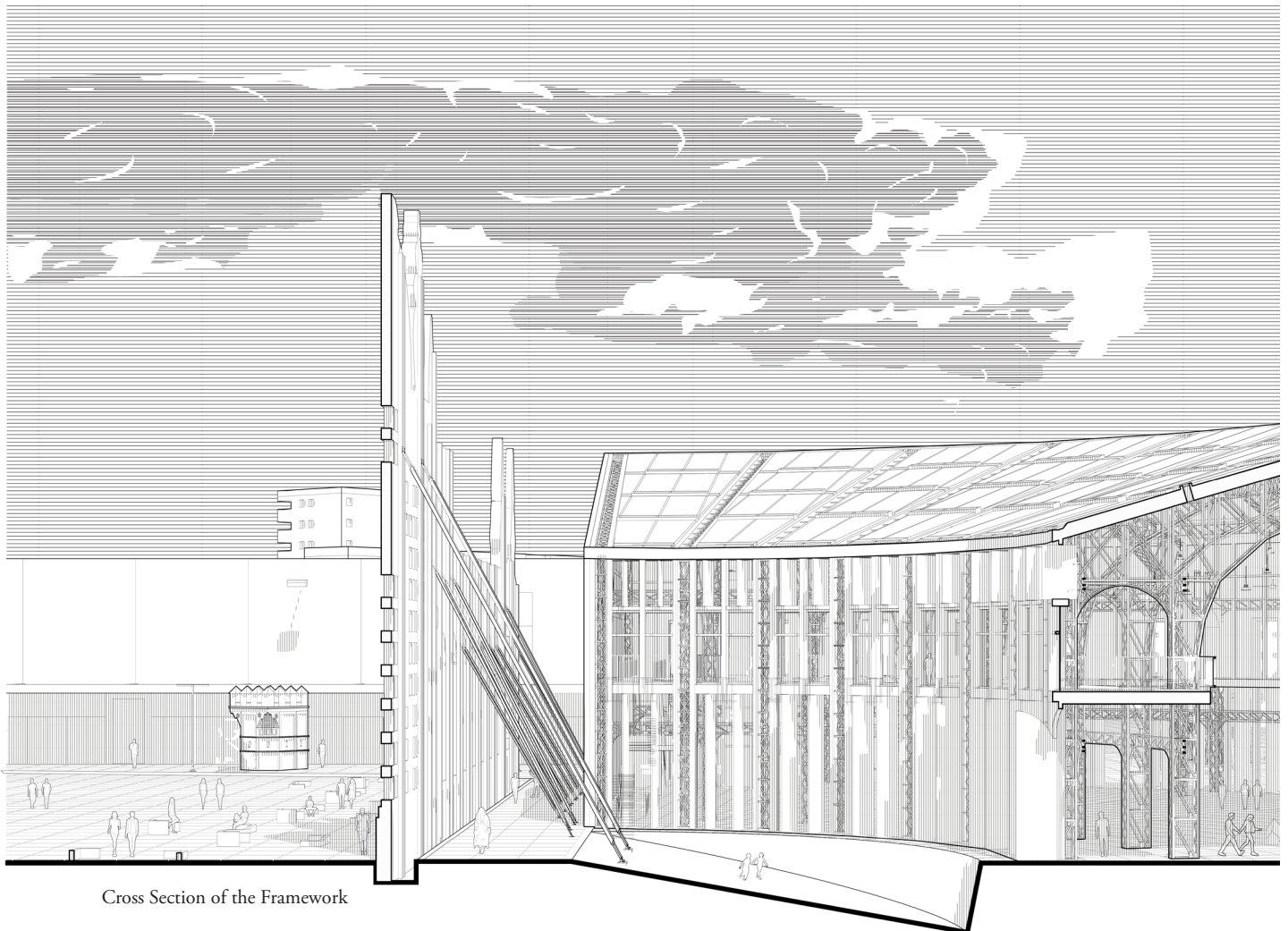


The Framework replaces the Parc's existing Grand Palais (II) which is due for demolition with the salvaged skeleton of the Grand Palais (I) from the first Colonial Exhibition. However, to give it new meaning rather than implicitly reinstating the colonial status-quo, the structure is reassembled in unexpected way, seeking to subvert the 1906 blueprint.

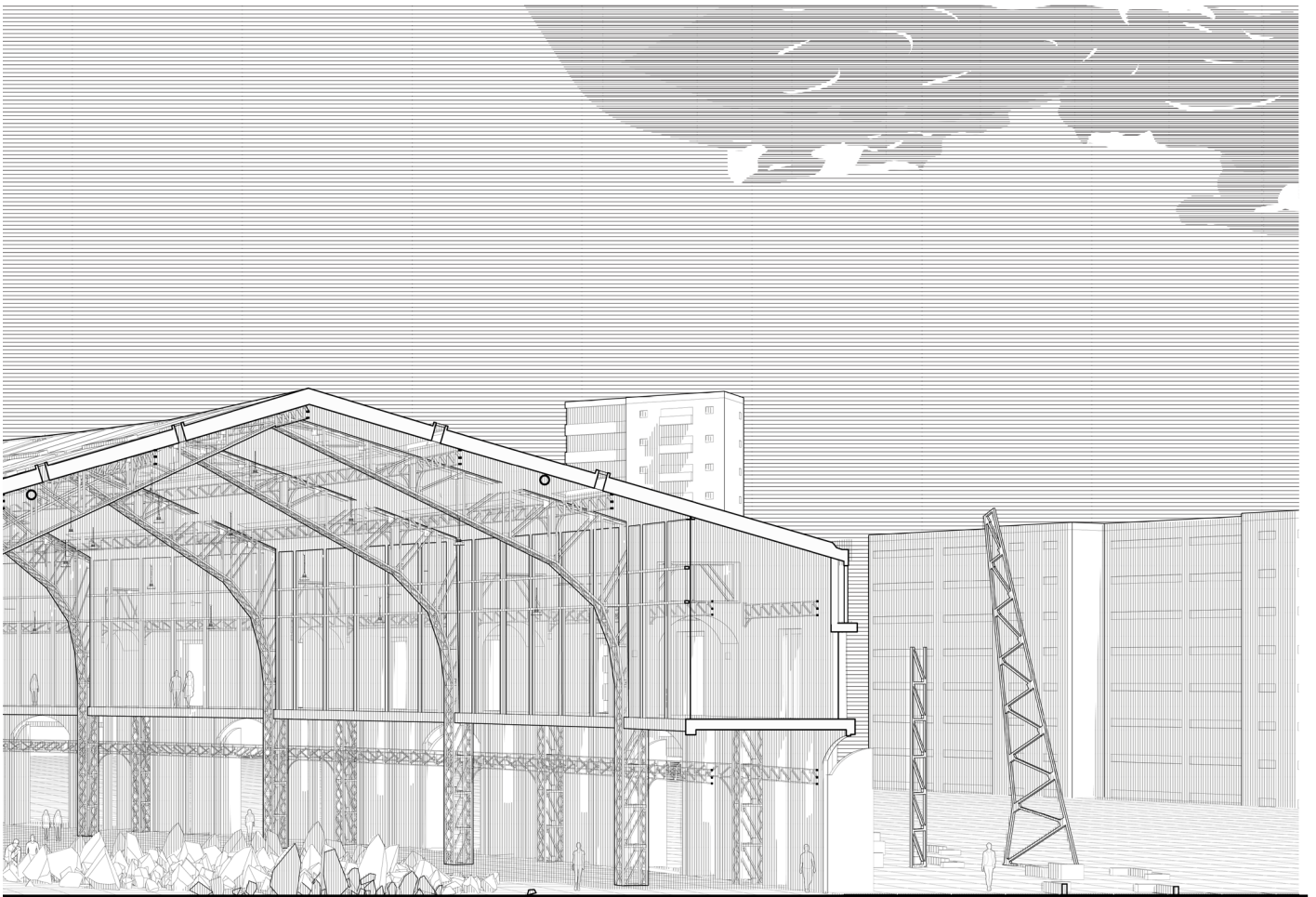
Treated such as an *Objet Trouvé*, the static geometry of the Grand Palais I morphs into a semi-circular amphitheater. This instates a new set of views and spatial relationships, enabling the past to be inhabited, yet rejigged.

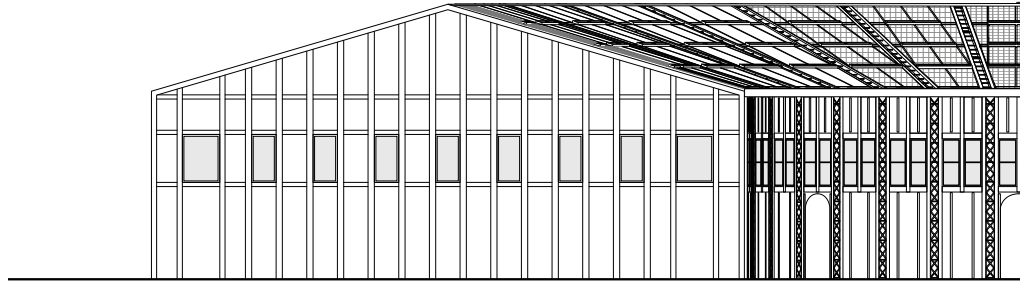
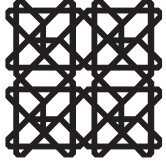
The curvilinear volume at times reveals or hides other from view. Space is left unscripted, leaving room for interpretation and appropriation as a user is invited to take on new roles, acting or viewing, talking or listening.

The difference between the original trusses and new additions is ambiguous, with the intervention not putting more emphasis on the present than any other period, whether past or future. The steel trusses are erected in their raw condition, featuring labels from dismantling, gaps left from material-samples refuting the presence of asbestos and the rice-powder coating from its days as a warehouse.

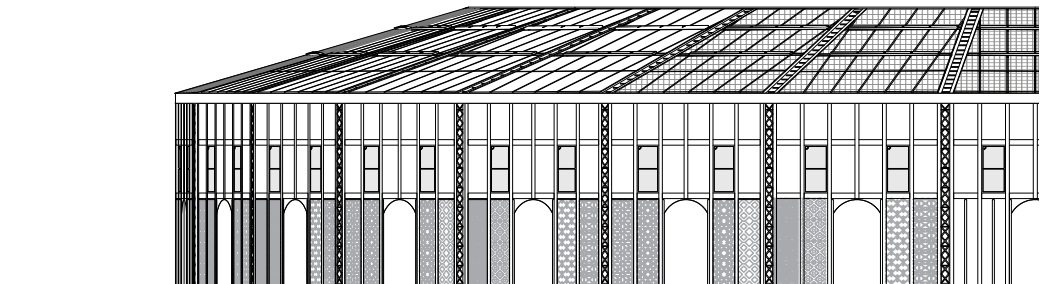
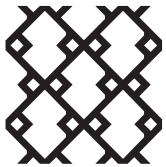
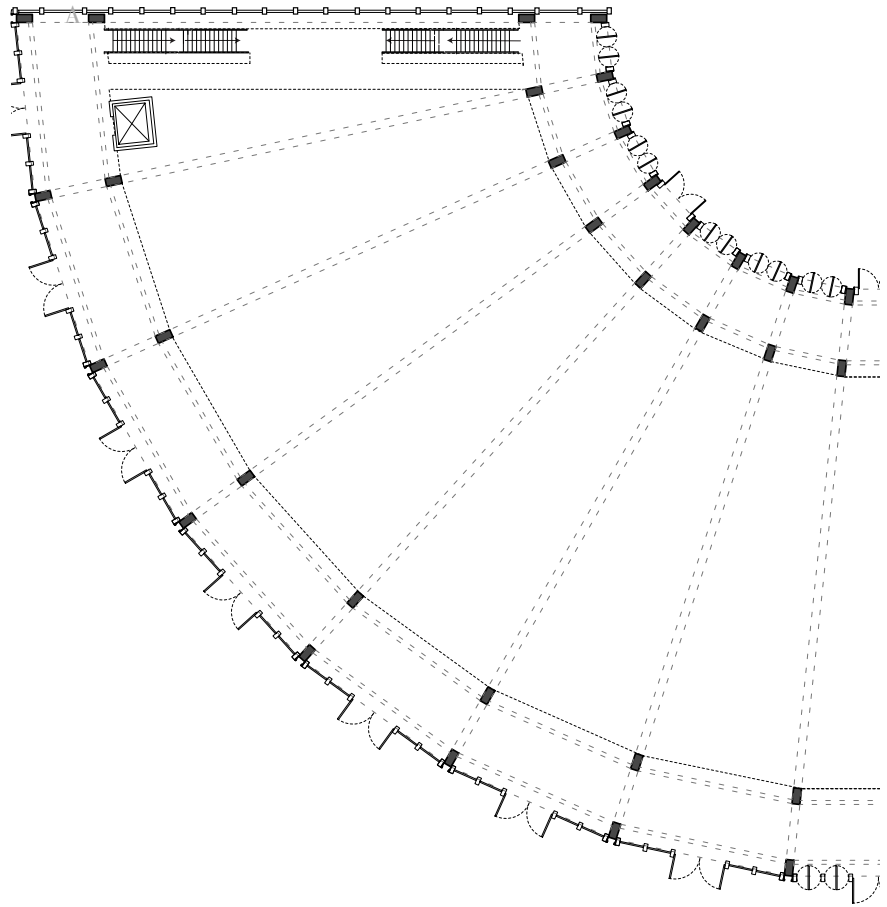
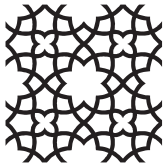


Cross Section of the Framework





A

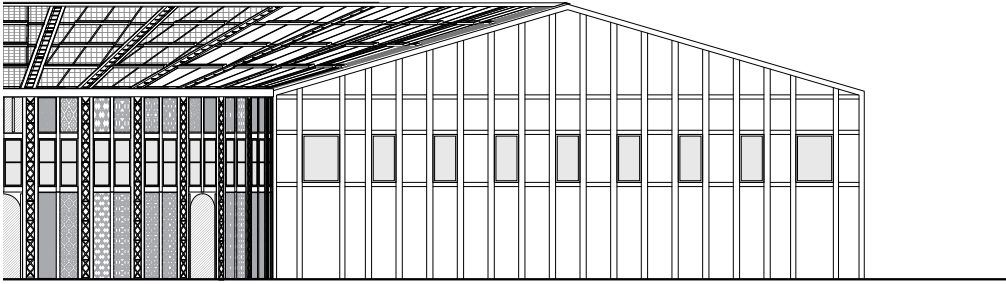


Framework Skin on a hot summer day, 12:00

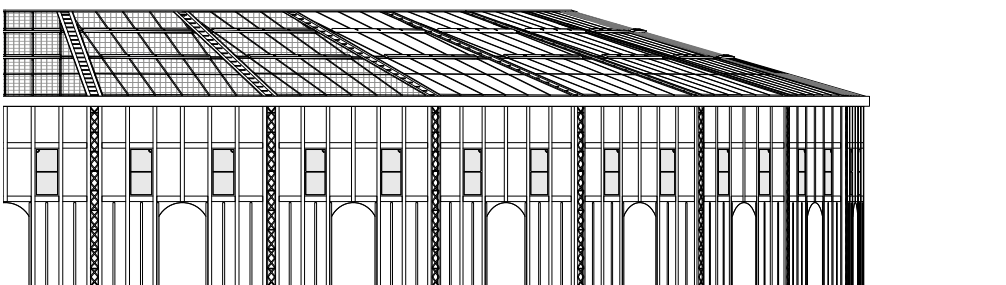
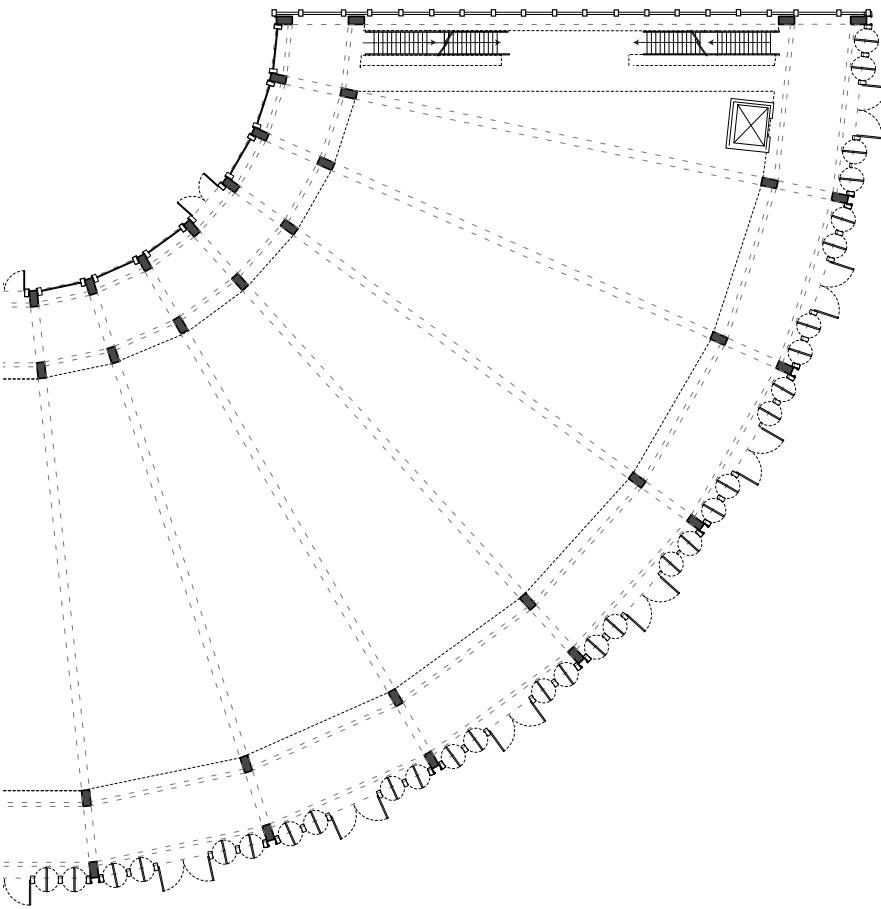
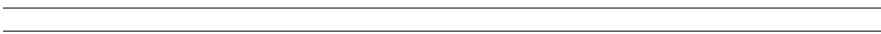
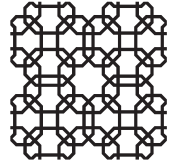
A

1 2 5 10m





B



B

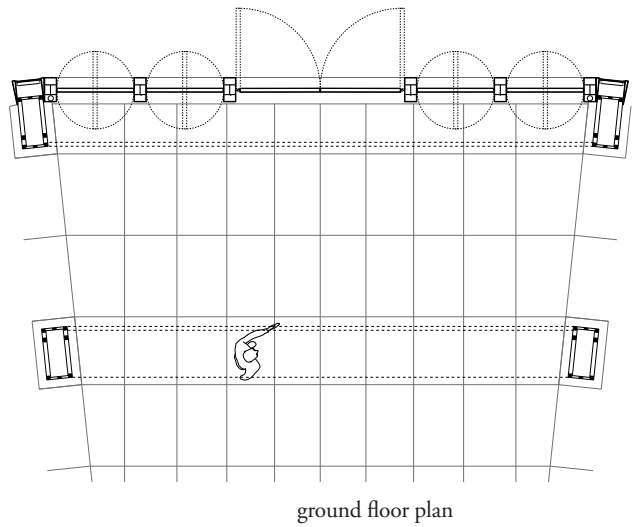
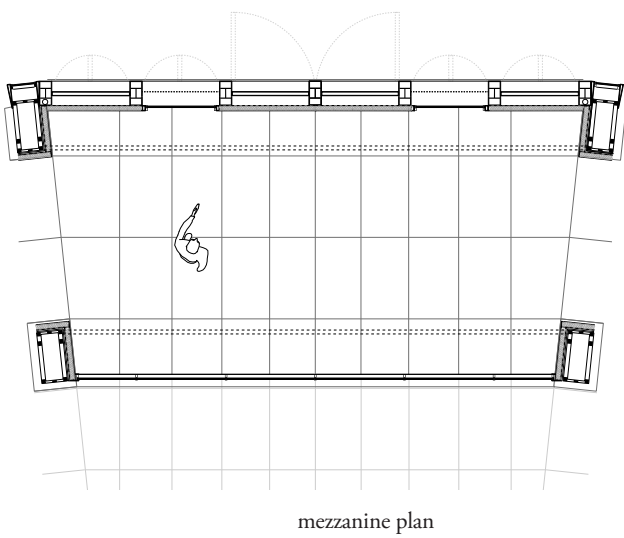
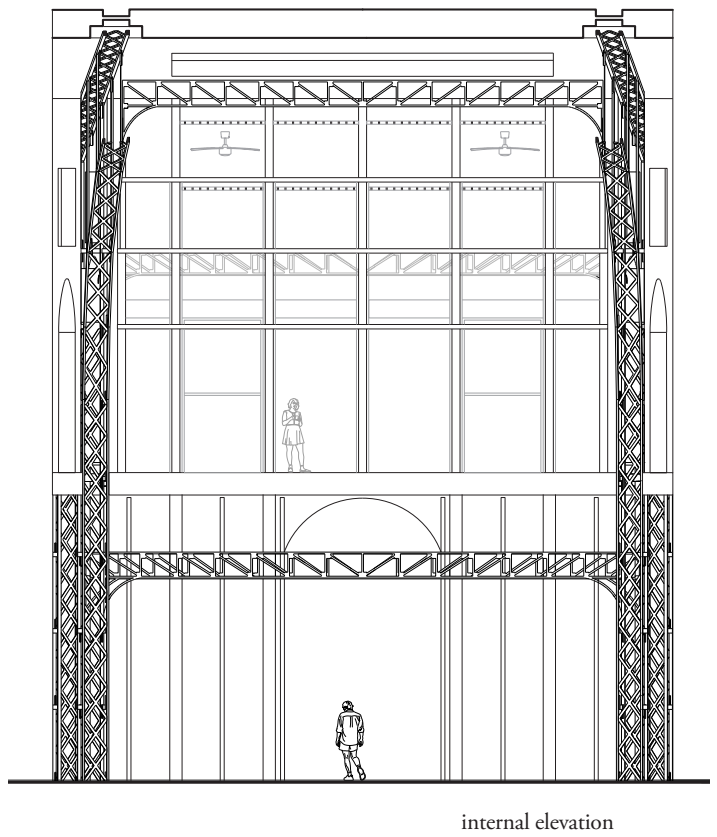
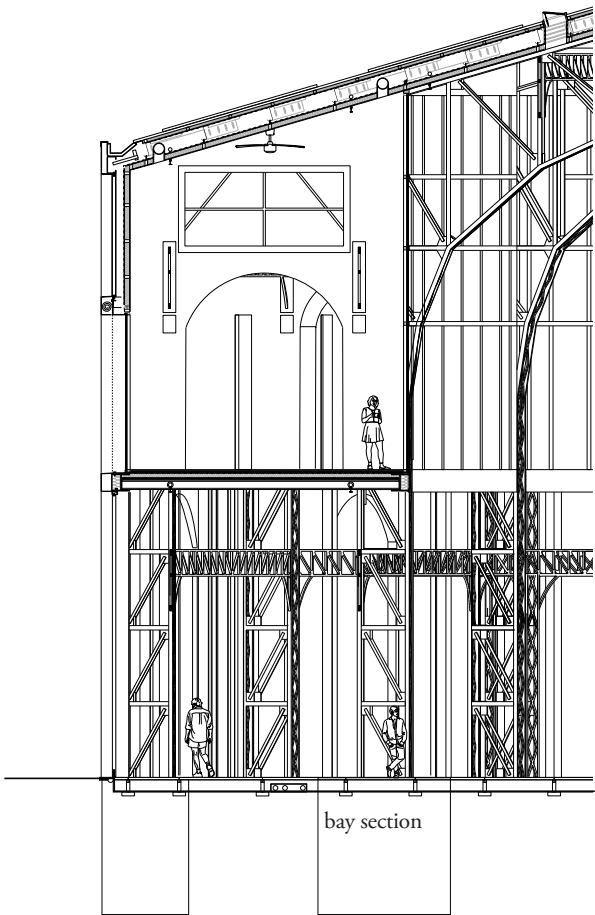




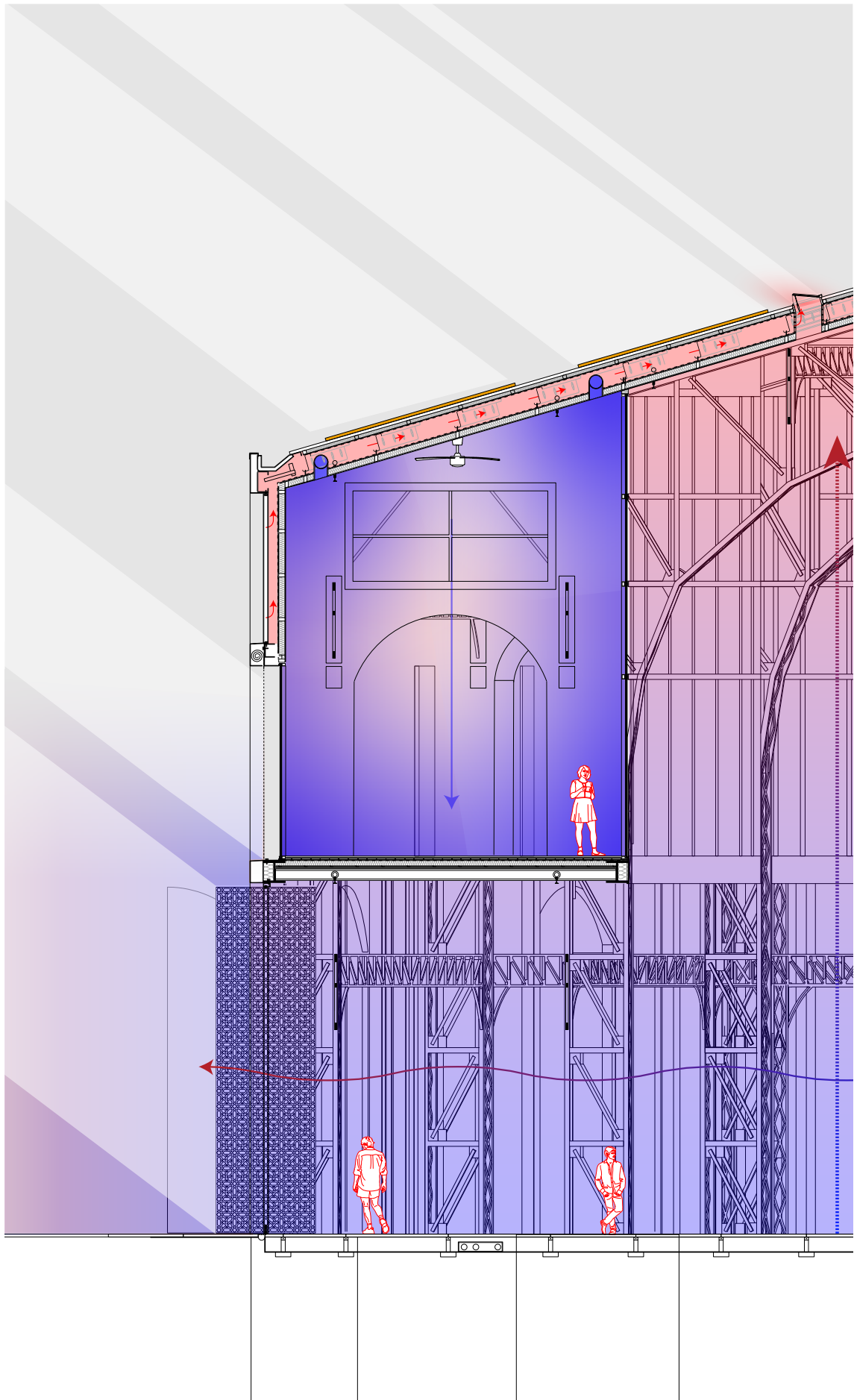
summer

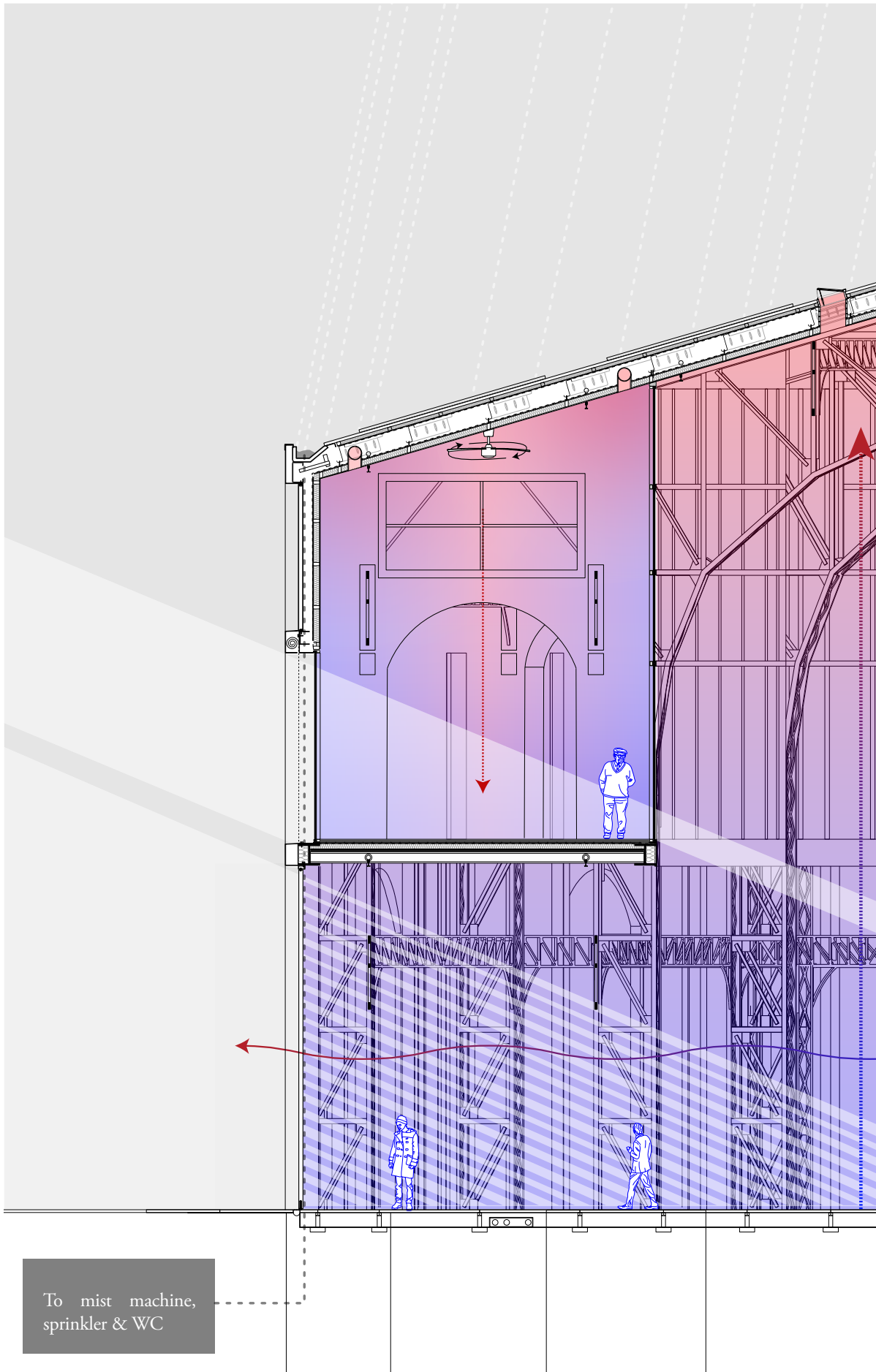
bay elevation
winter, + 2 years

1:20 Detail of Framework Skin
64 0.5 1 2 5m



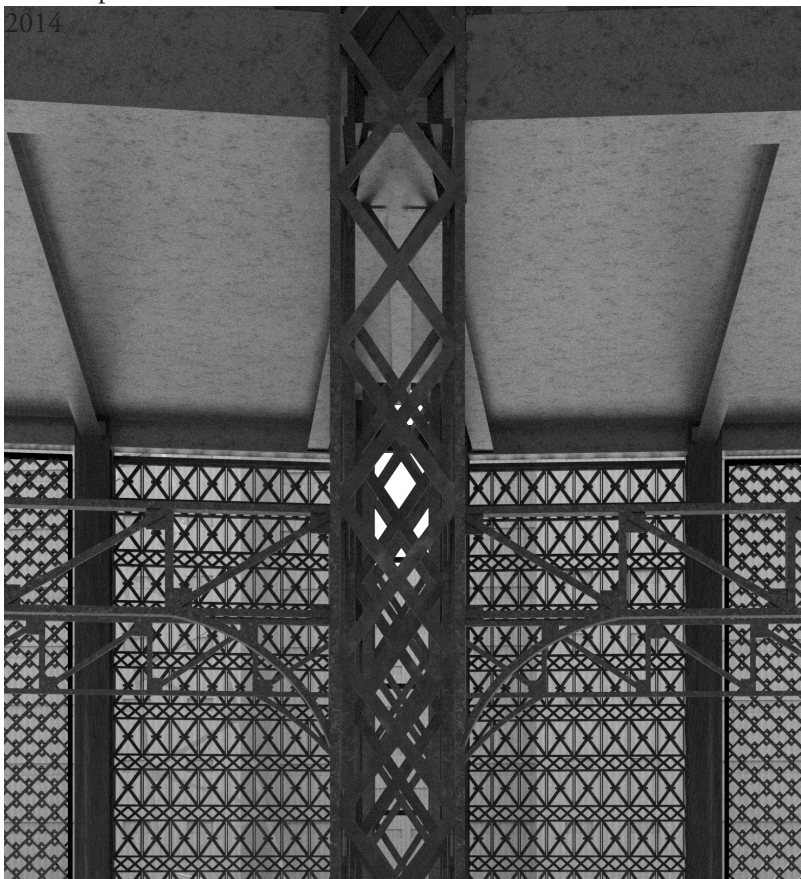
1 2 5m



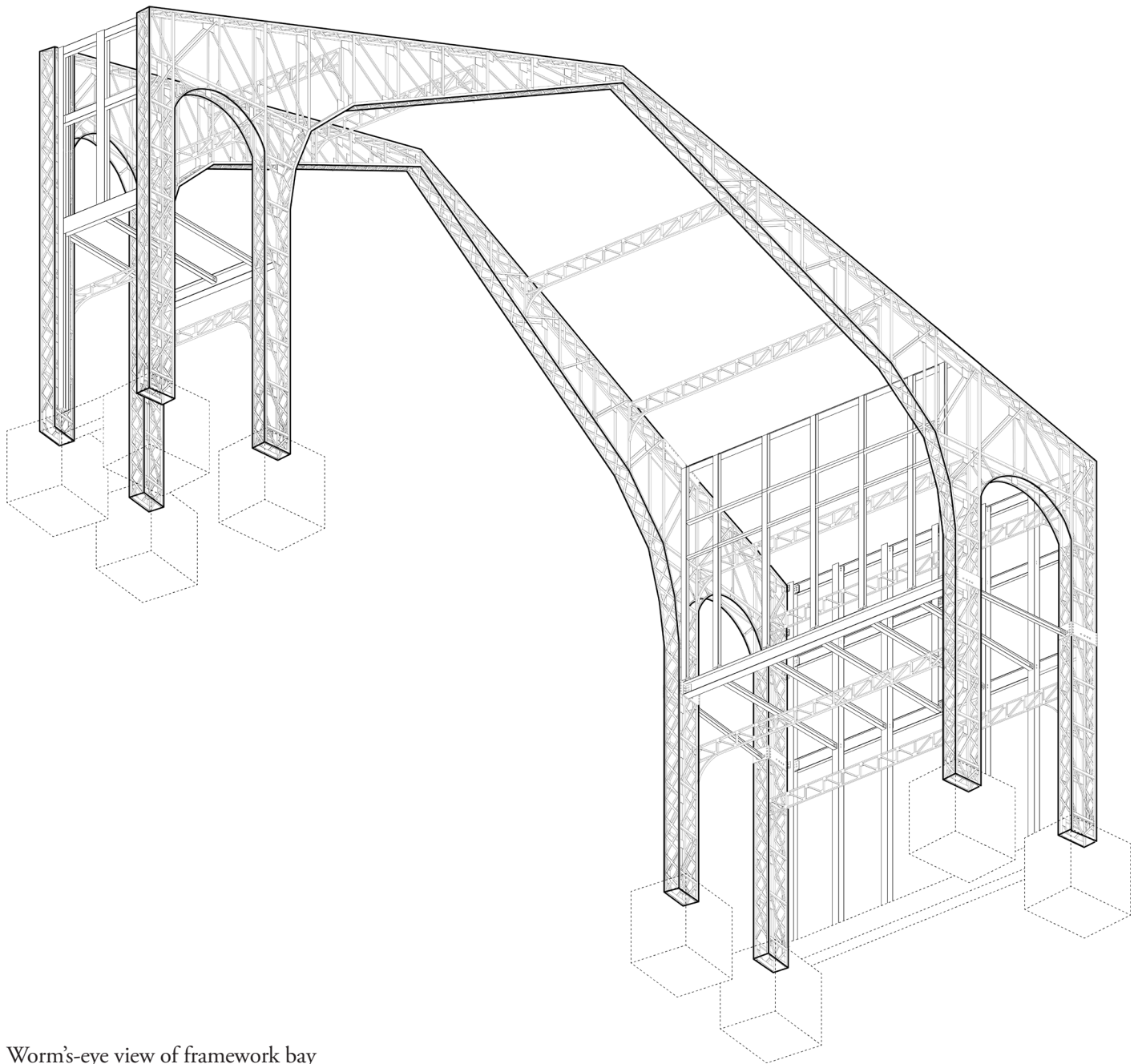




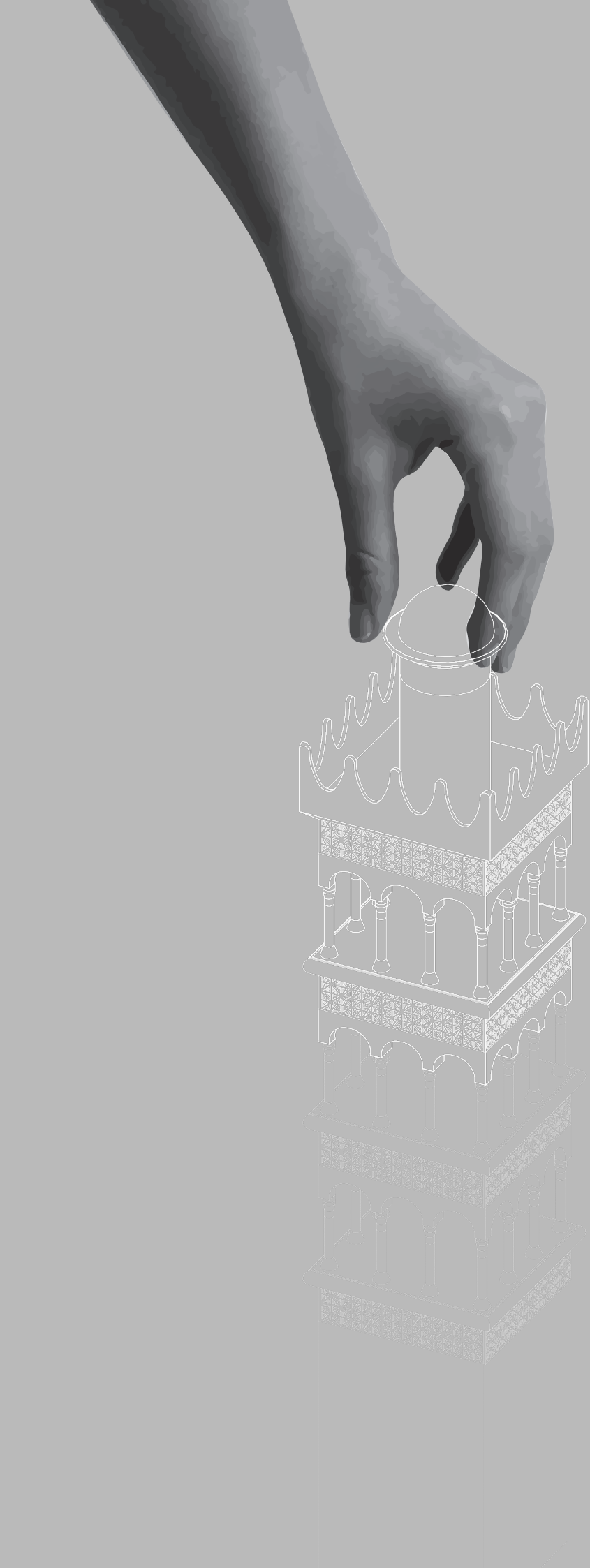
Archive photo, la Halle Eiffel in Arles,
2014



Proposed tectonic language



Worm's-eye view of framework bay



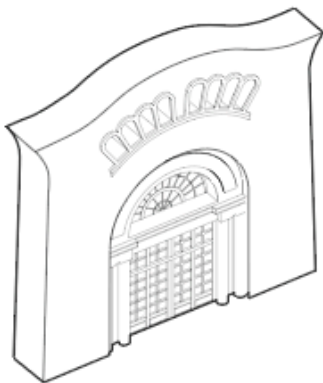
Gesture 3

Resurfacing past pavilions

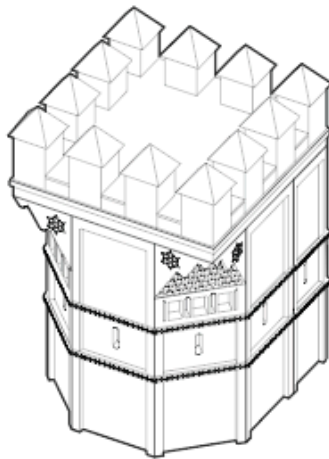
The Follies consist of fragments from each colonial pavilion from the 1922 colonial exhibition. They are anachronistic objects of contemplation dispersed in the site, which act as aide-mémoires, reminding passer-by's of what occurred, as well as what was chosen to be forgotten. Indeed, each fragment represents, through a synecdochic operation, an entire pavilion.

Through the détournement of the architectural language of the colonial expositions, the follies resurrect old meanings and conjure new ones. These images are voluntarily scaleless as each fragment is sunk into the ground.

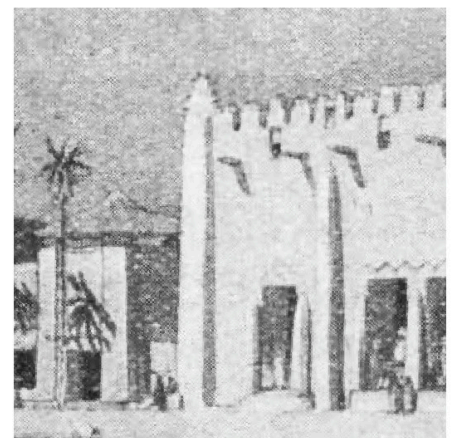
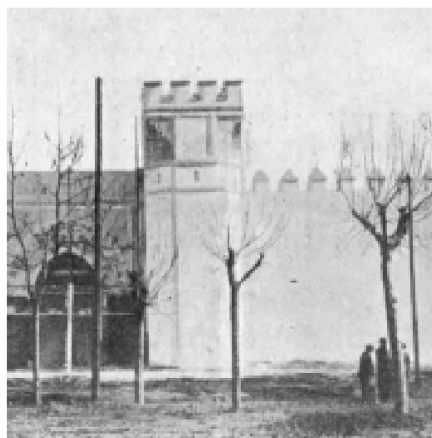
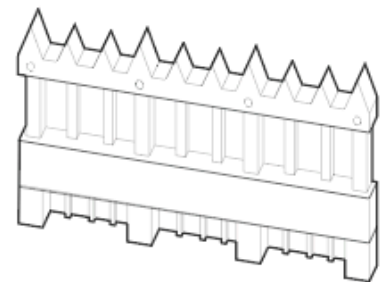
Pavillon de Madagascar



Pavillon du Maroc

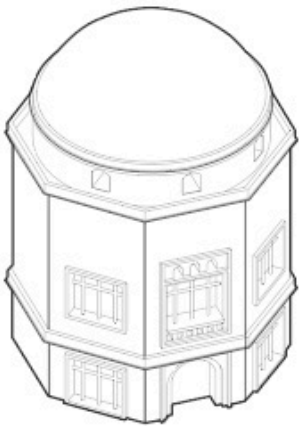


Afrique Occidentale Francaise

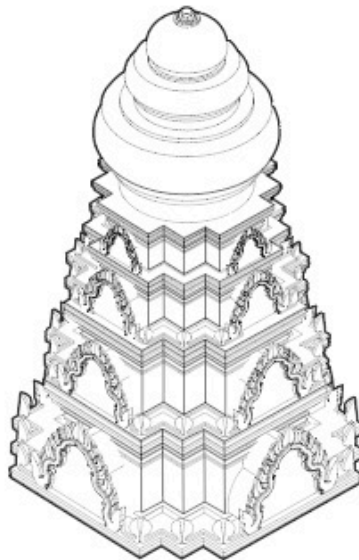


Rebuilding fragments from each pavillon for the 1922 colonial exhibition.

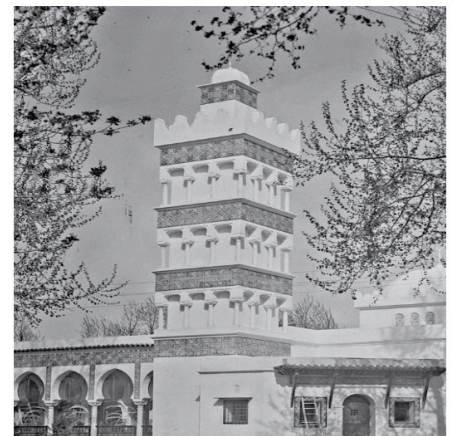
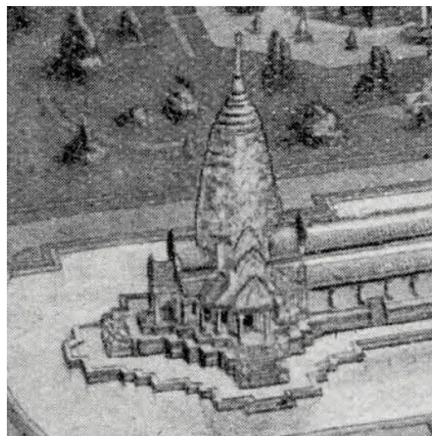
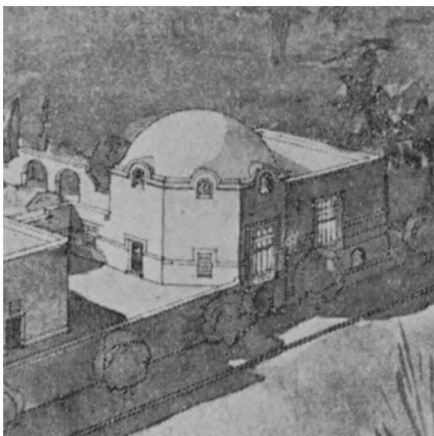
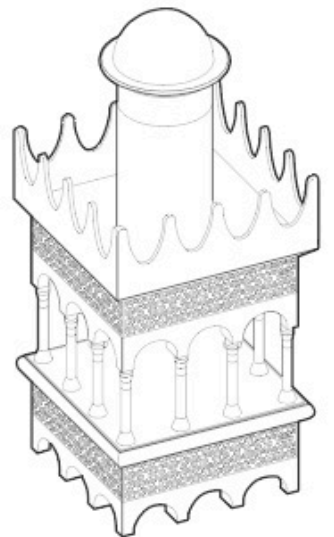
Afrique Occidentale Francaise

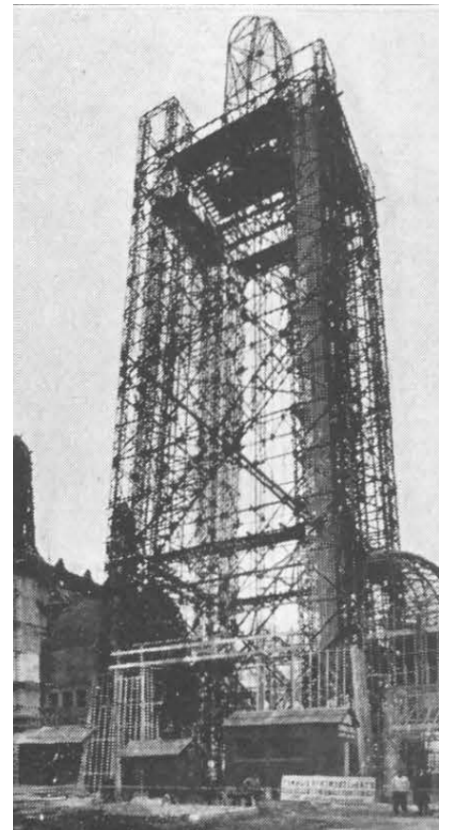
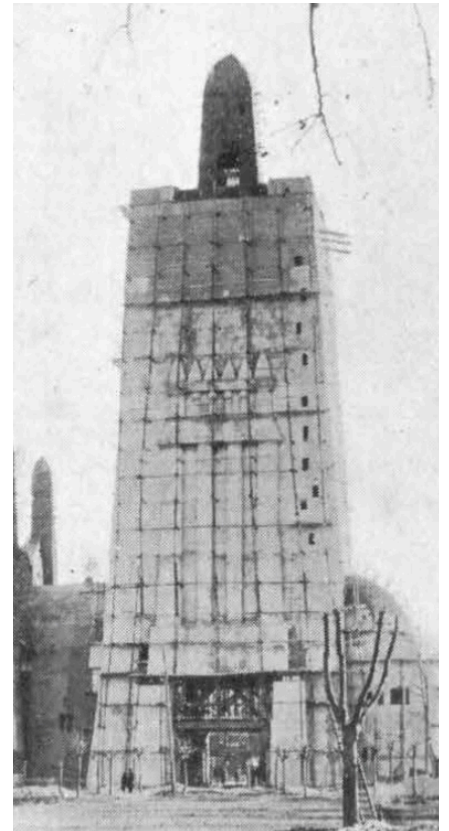
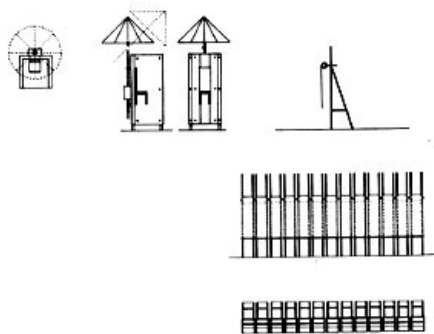
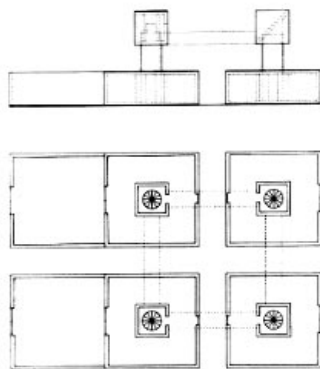
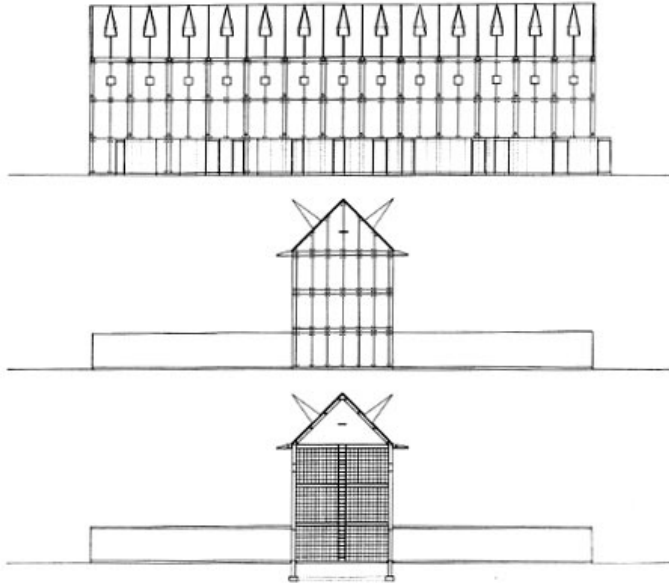


Pavillon d'Indochine



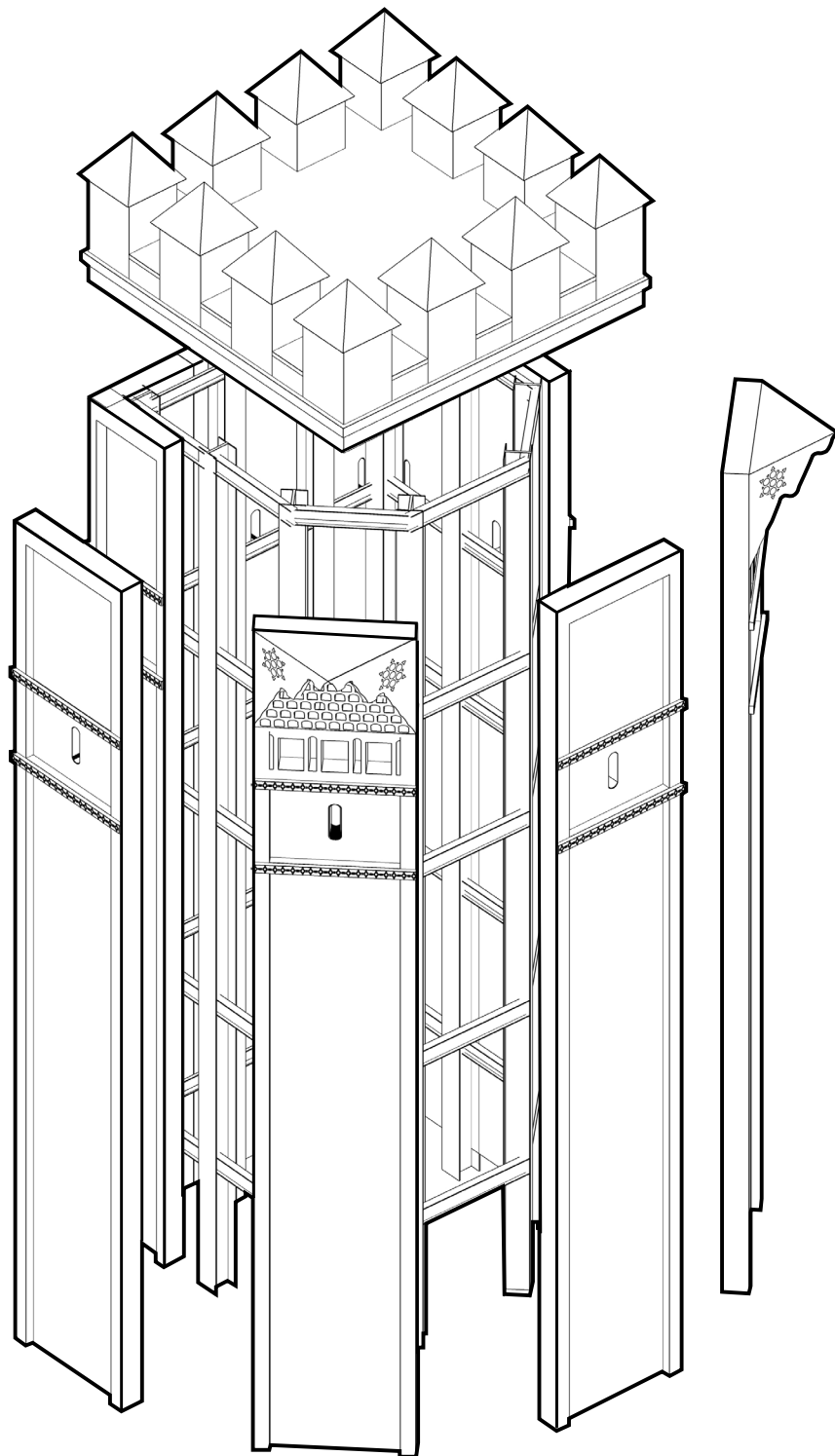
Pavillon d'Algérie

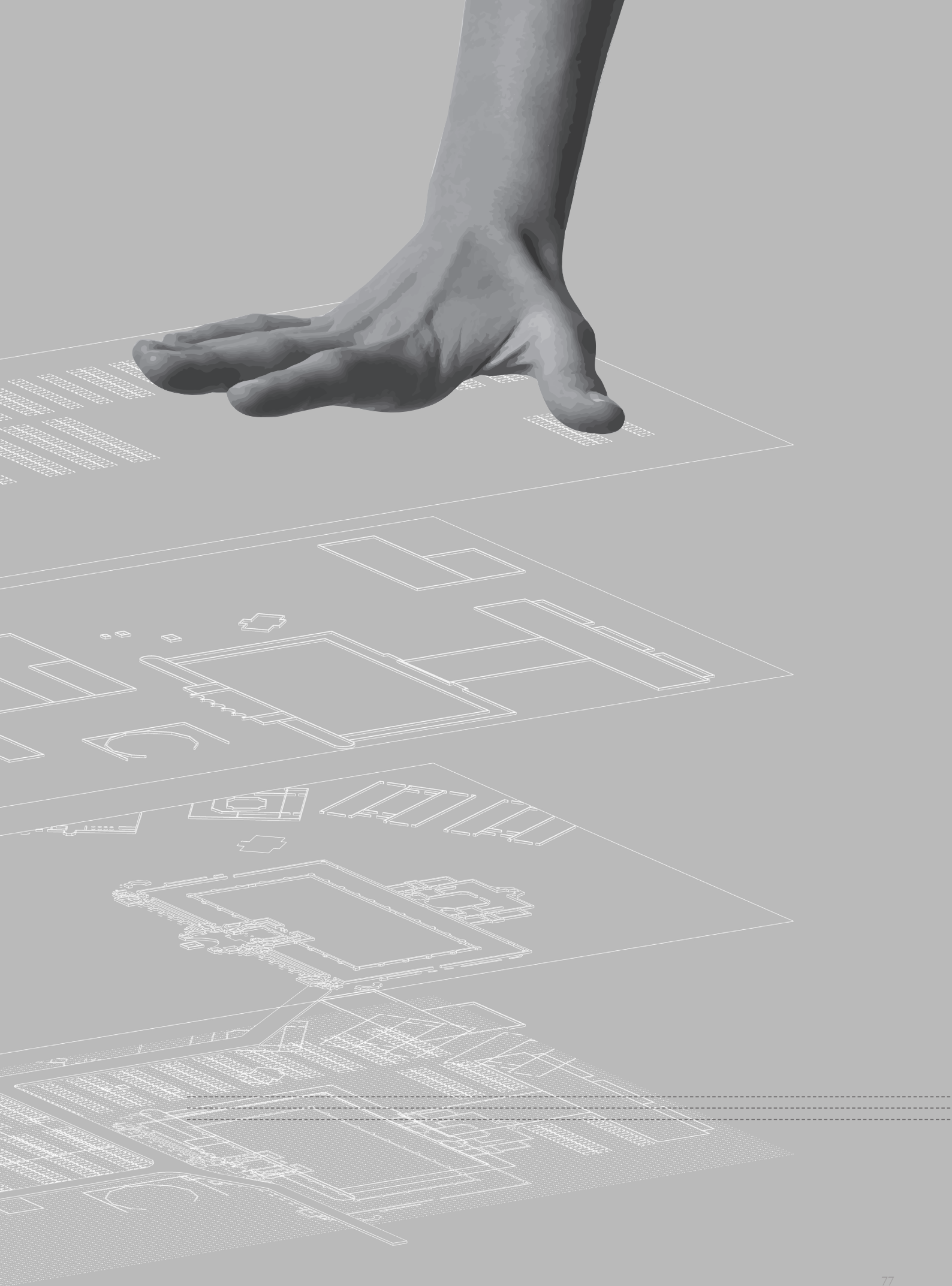




Reference: Hejduk, Victims

Following Chanot's lineage of Potemkin construction



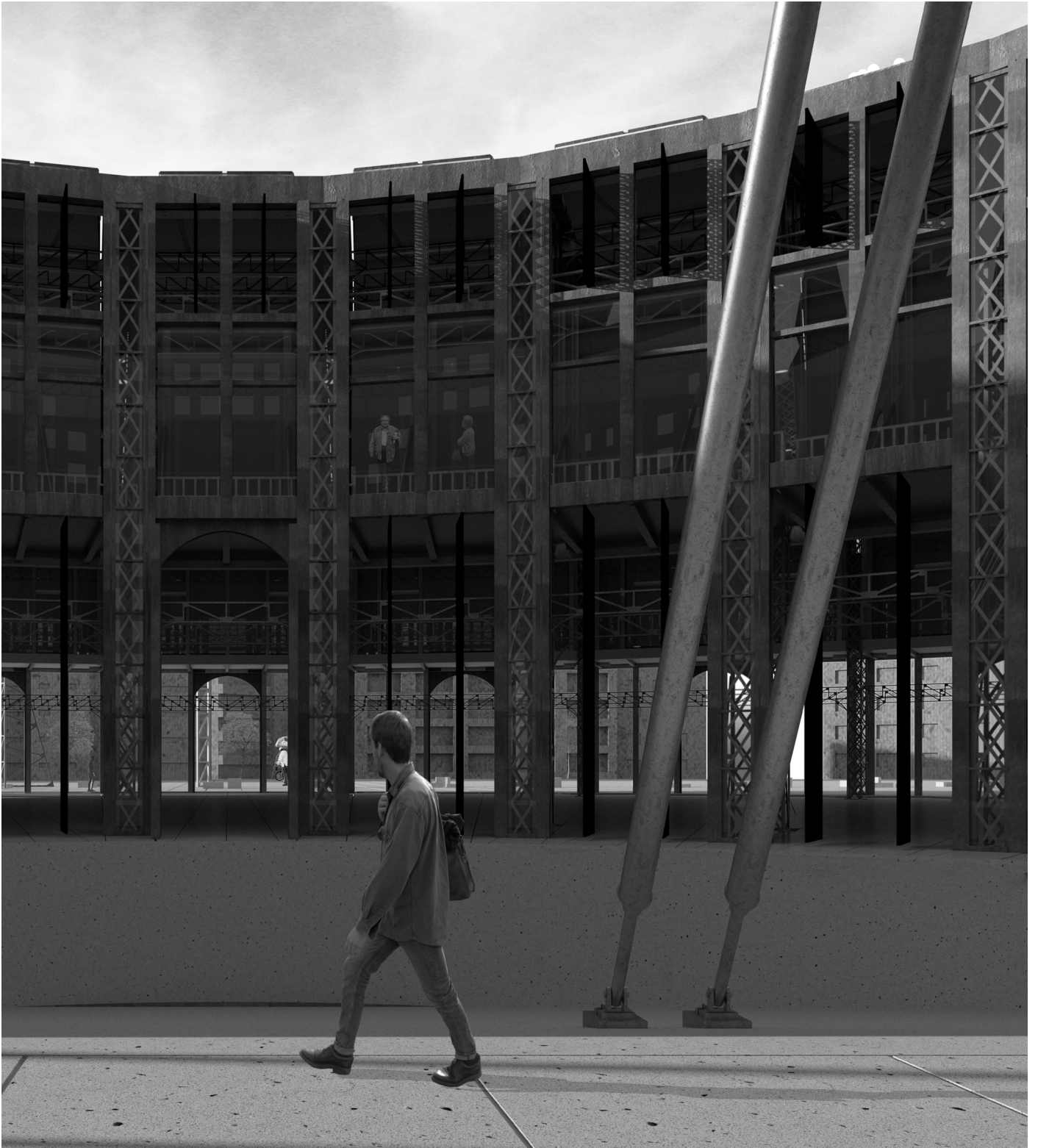




Michel Heizer - Displaced/Replaced Mass

Anish Kapoor - Venta Black

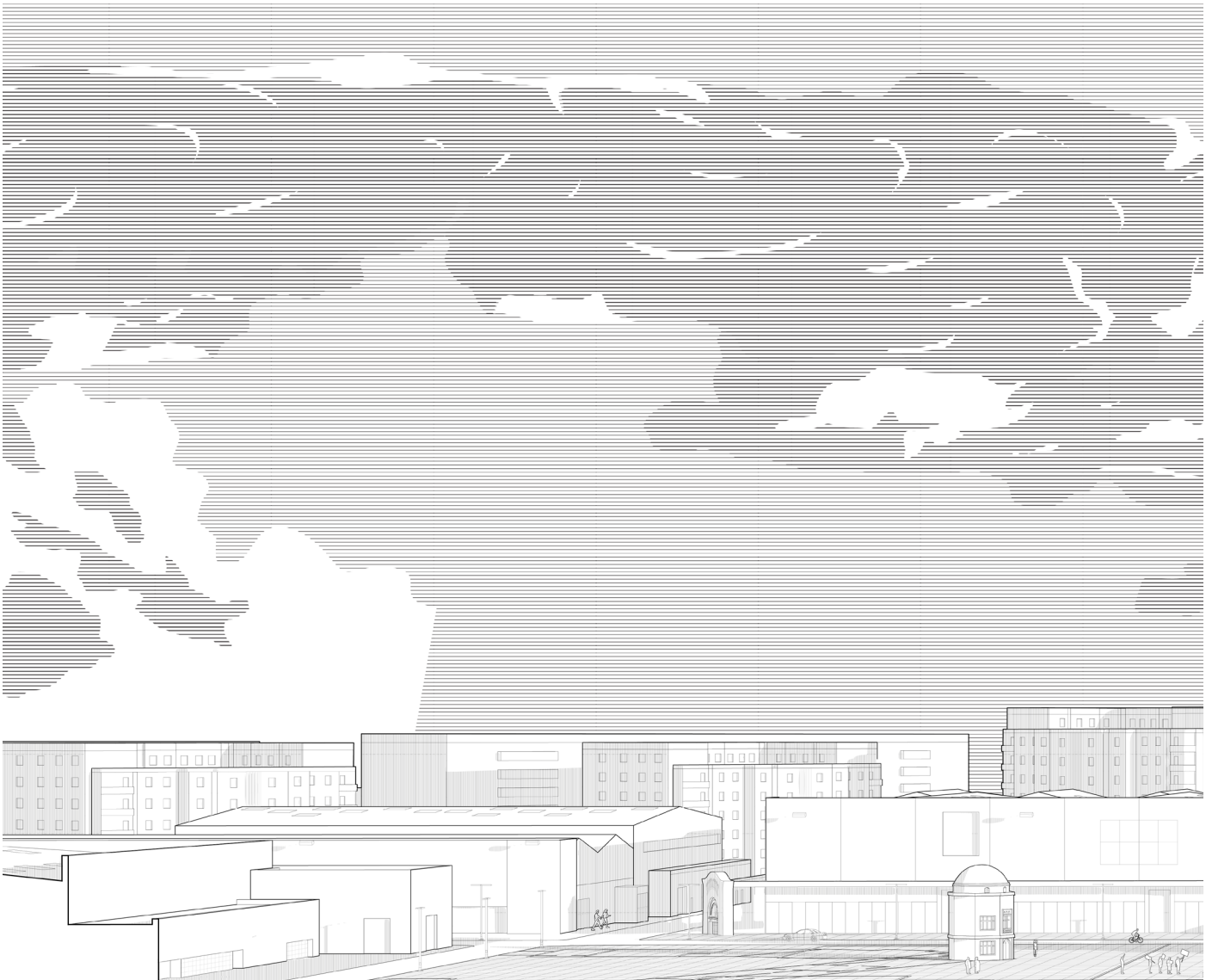




The Fabric's role is to establish a literal and figurative common ground, making up a tiled carpet that reaches into the palimpsest and exposing the long-lost outlines of past buildings alongside the traces of a parking grid. Through the incision into the ground plane, passers-by can experience the void left from redaction.

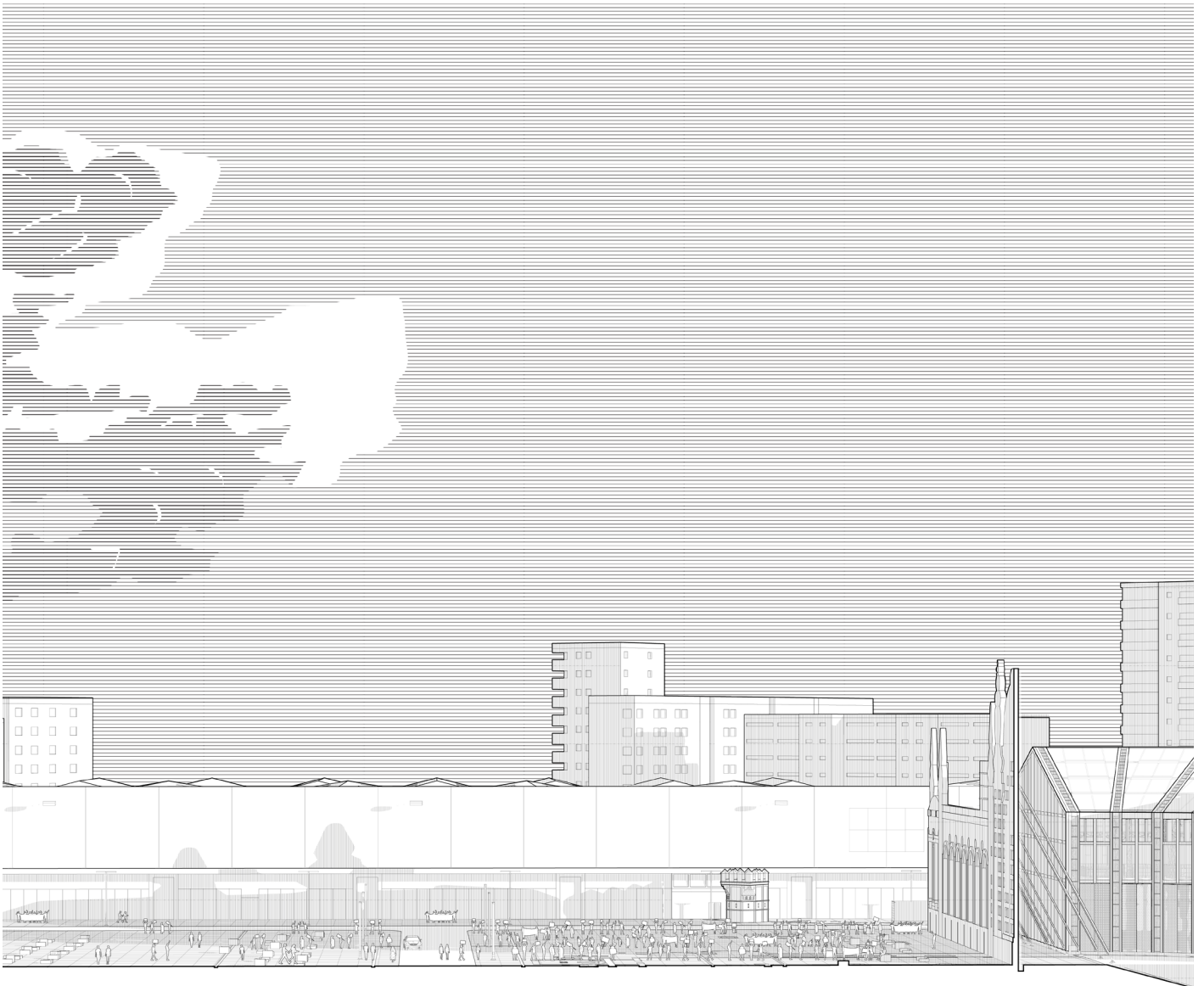
The Fabric interweaves all the elements of the design, unraveling the fabric of the city. The large esplanade in front of the facade is left as a part blank, part annotated canvas, ready to accommodate protests, fairs, shows or outdoor exhibitions.

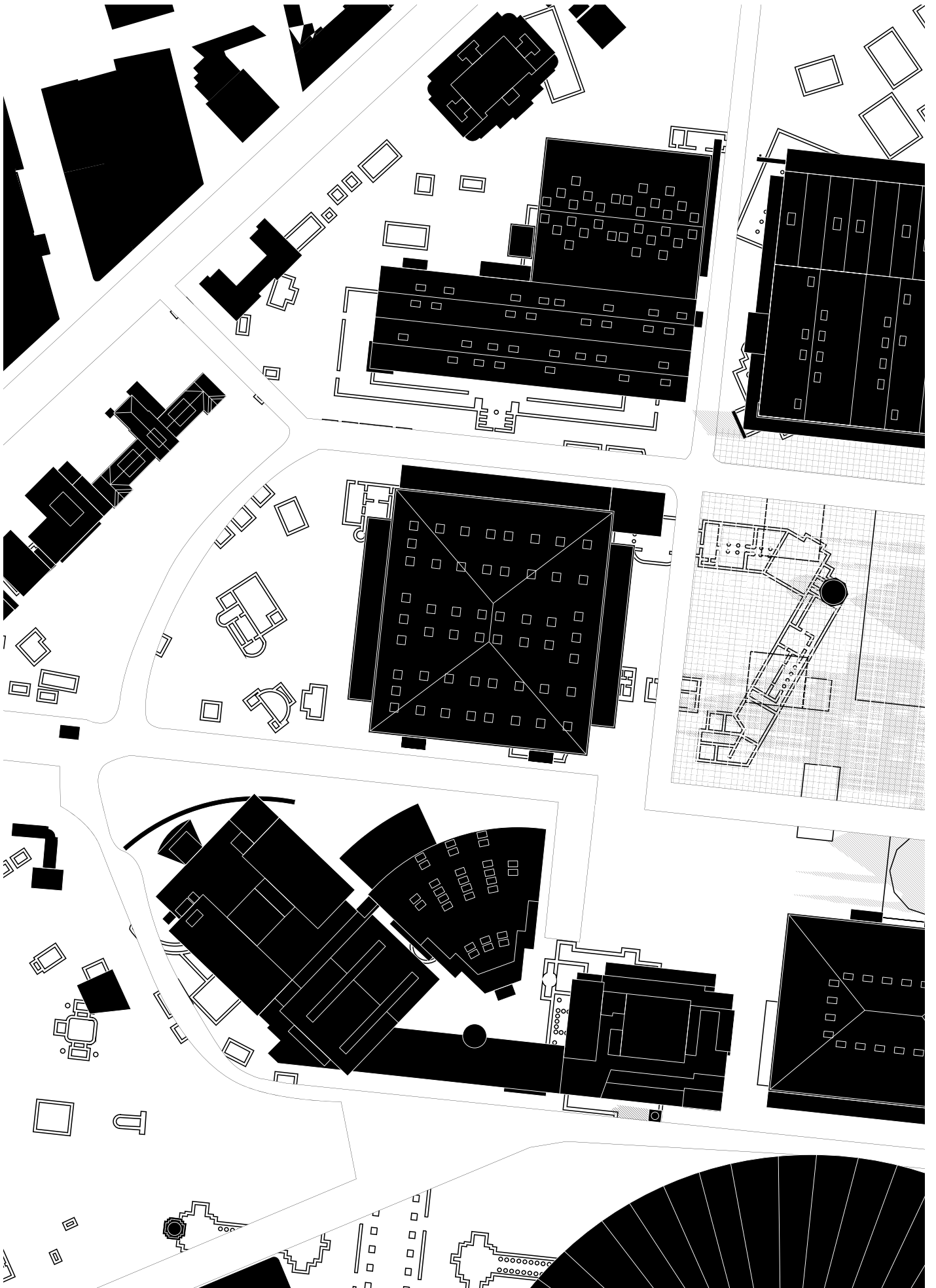
The parking is made visible due to its role in having replaced

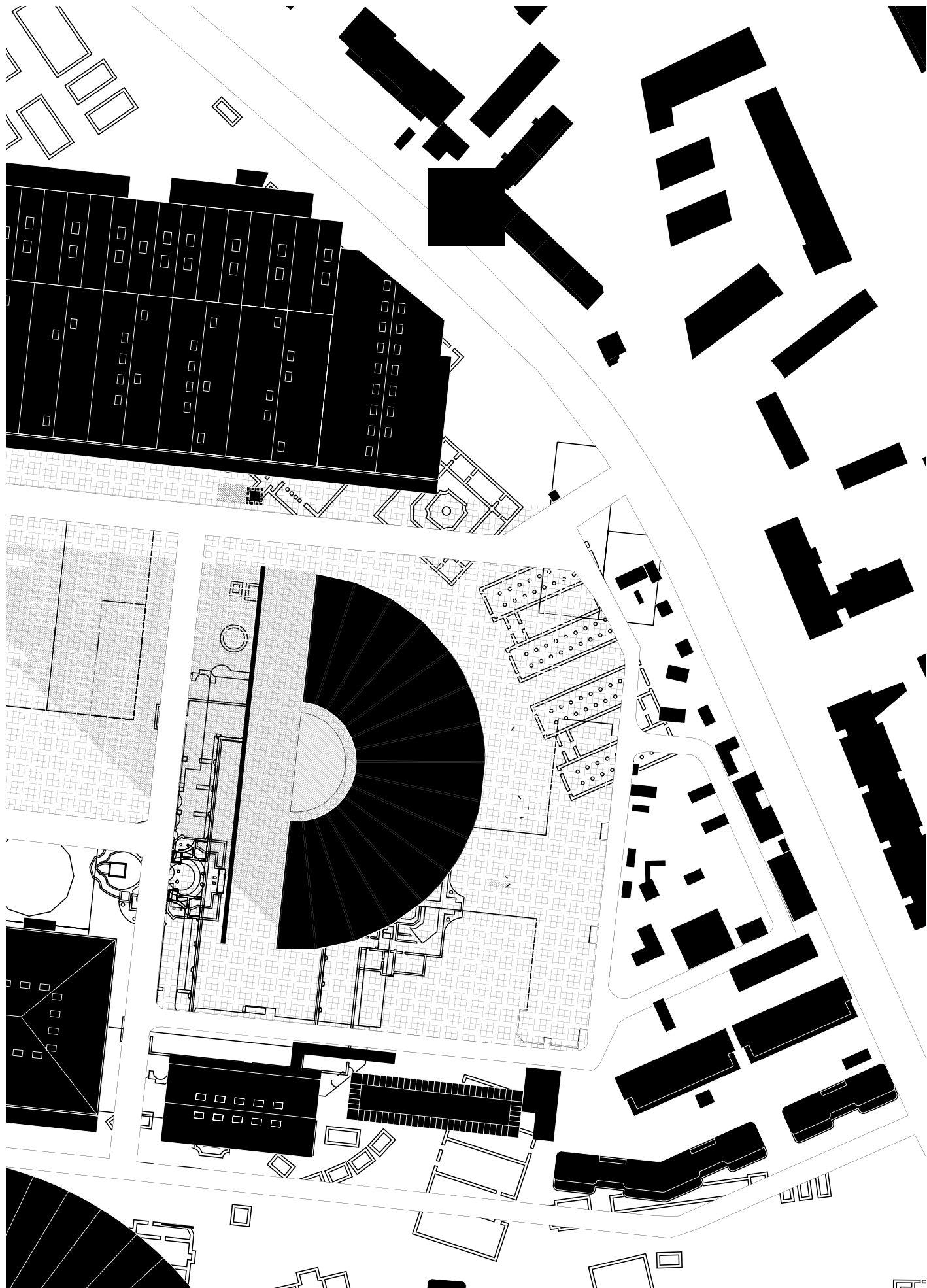


what preceded and therefore contributing to the site erasure and anonymity.

The void in the forecourt of the framework marks all the pasts we are unaware of. Conceptually, it is therefore akin to tombs for lost soldiers.



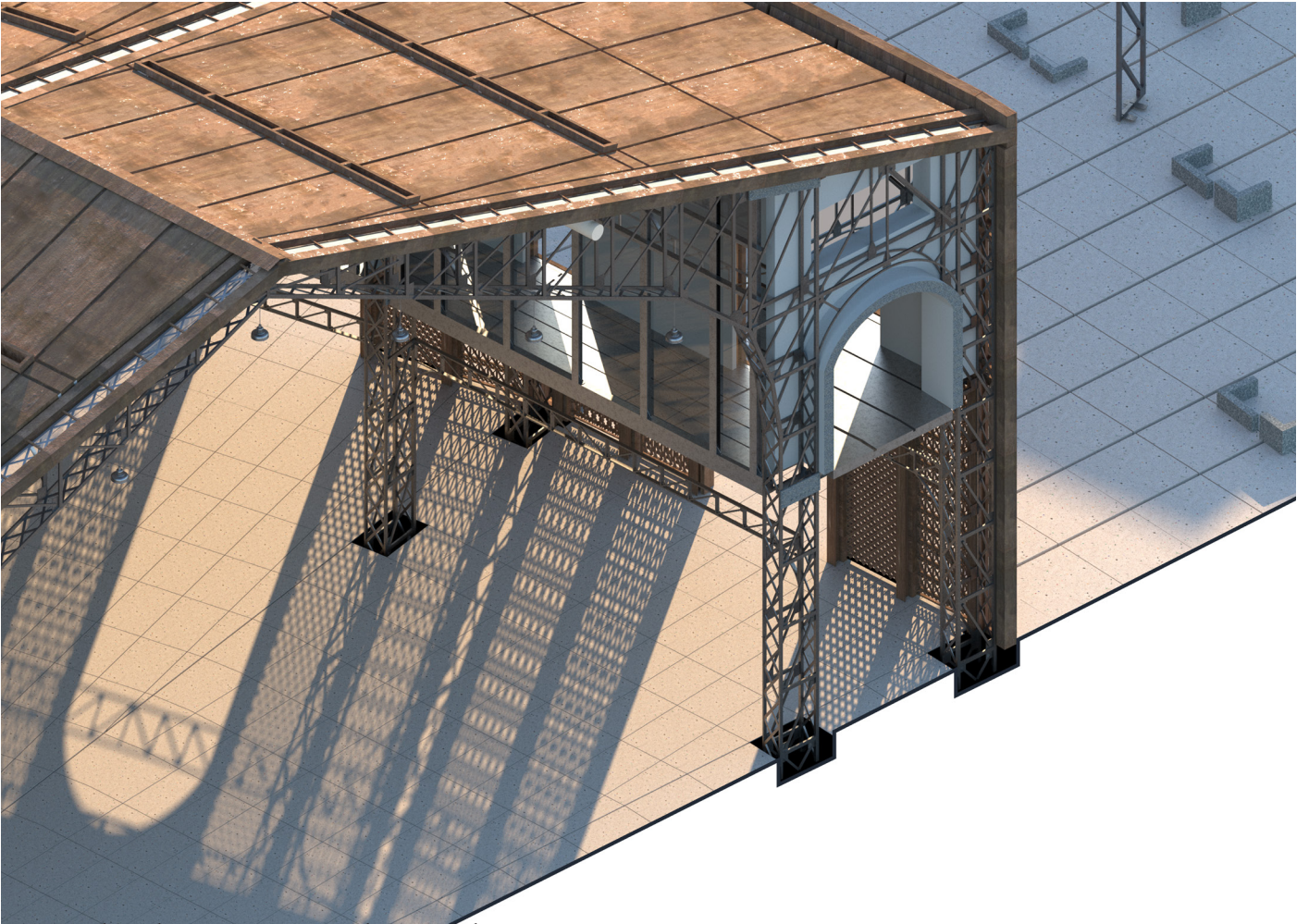




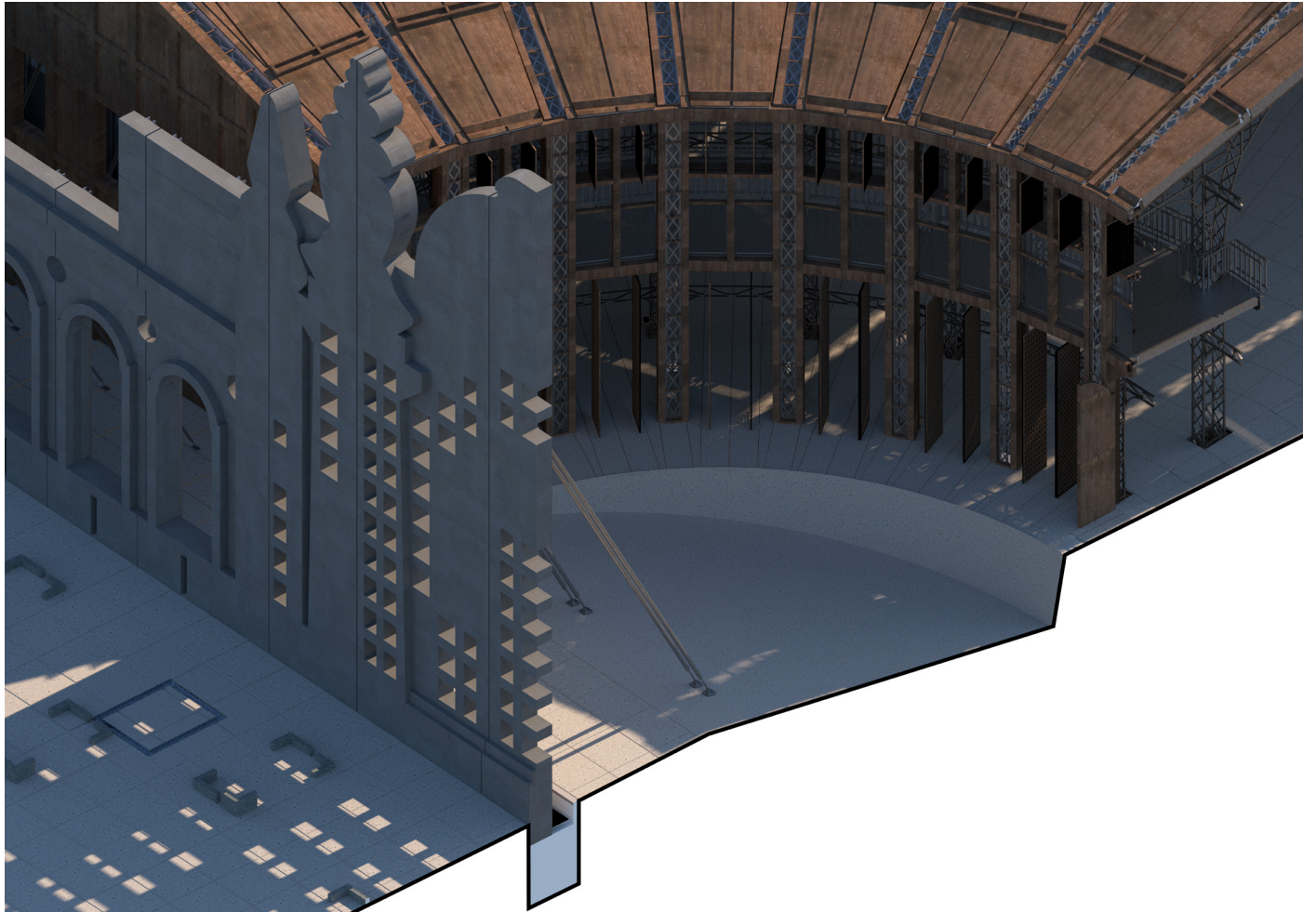
50m

100m

200m



Meeting the palimpsest - Framework meets Fabric



Meeting the palimpsest - Facade meets Fabric

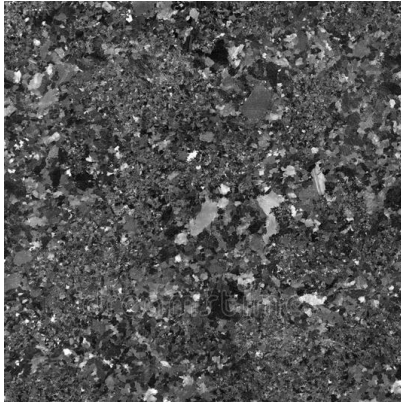
Pre 1922
Sandstone



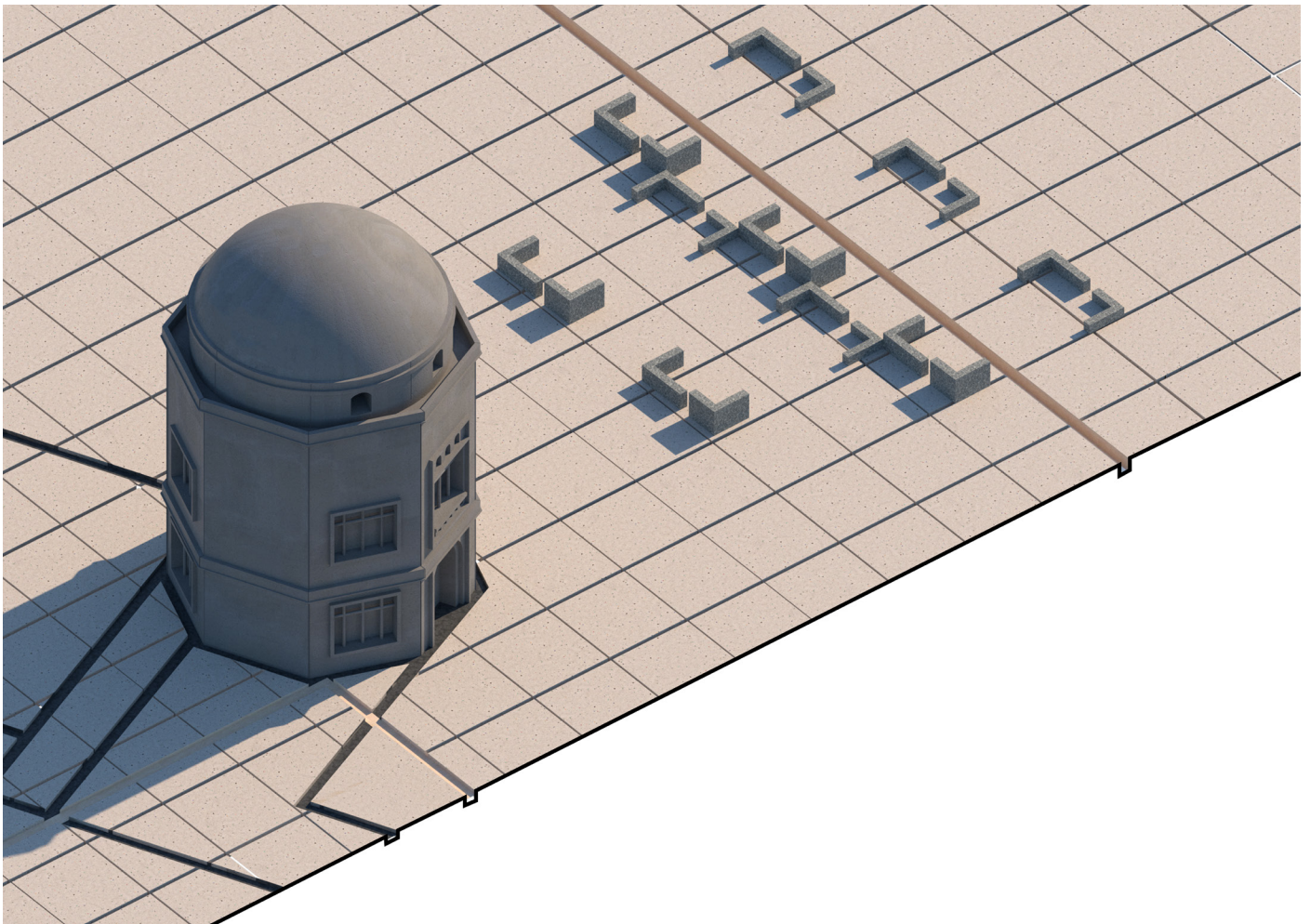
Since 1922
Slate



Parking
Granite



Datum Grid
Terrazzo



Meeting the palimpsest - Folly meets Fabric

“The city has been opened up, with its historical entanglement exposed. Here, multiple narratives unfold, exposing parallel conditions, resisting linear histories and hierarchies among them.”

Santoyo-Orozco, I (2019) Sites of Entanglement

