

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ARTERY  
A PRACTICE OF SPACE SEALANT

by  
LEA FARID SAAD

An Undergraduate Architecture Design Thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture  
to the Department of Architecture and Design  
of the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture  
at the American University of Beirut

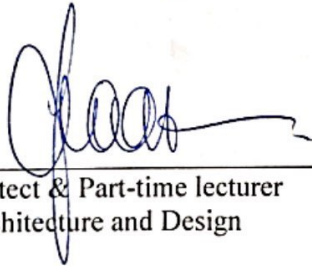
Beirut, Lebanon  
May 2021

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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A PRACTICE OF SPACE SEALANT

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Approved by:



Signature

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Department of Architecture and Design

Thesis Advisor

Date of project presentation: May 12, 2021




# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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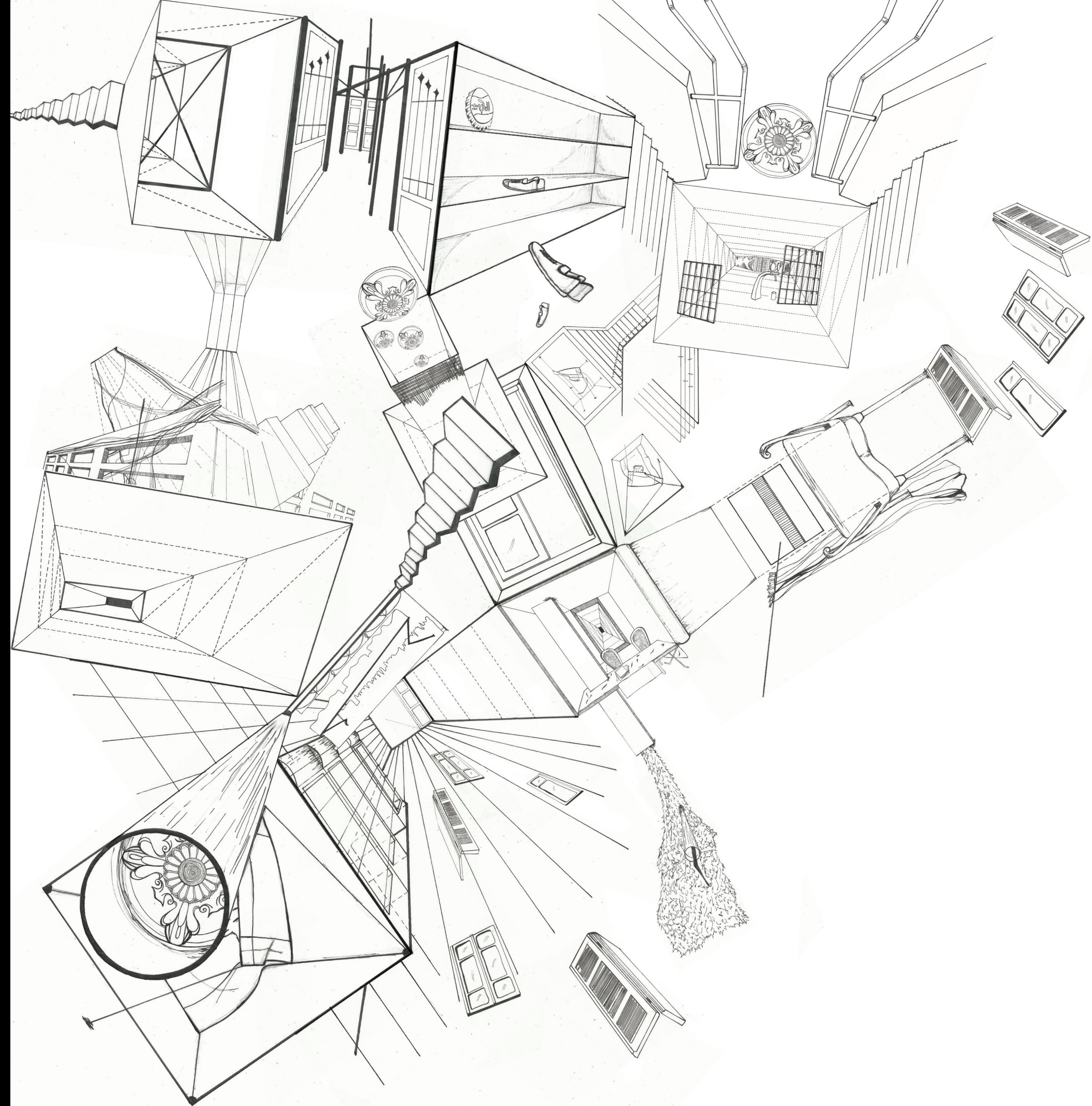
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# | ARtery |

A Practice of Space Sealant

American University of Beirut

| ARTERy |

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Architecture

Department of Architecture and Design

FALL 2020-SPRING 2021

[Advisors]: Rana Haddad - Joy Kanaan



# Abstract

Title: ARTery\_A Practice of Space Sealant.

Driven by the curiosity to explore how I interact with a given space and what makes me interact with it this way, my journey starts with a (mis)interpretation of the practice of space in Mar Mikhael.

In a context where the physical reconstruction of the strip is taking place, I started thinking that the spatial reconstruction of the strip goes way beyond just a physical one.

In order to explore the matter I decided to examine the shoreline cluster located in Mar Mikhael right at the edge between the port and the city. The site specific revival strategy consisted in turning the cluster into an adapted artistic hub that would be enhancing its past function while embracing what has become of it: ARTery.

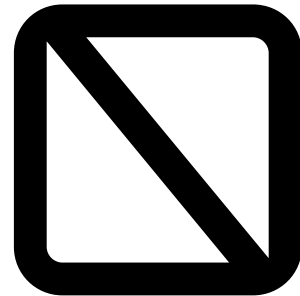
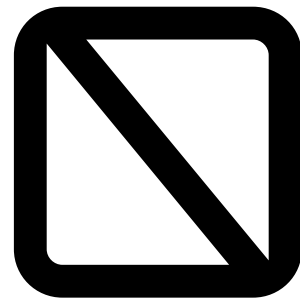
The project unfolded to become an example of how representation methods become an architectural design tool and answers the question of whether we can replicate the organic urban setting of the strip by using a structure that would hold the old while building the new.

ARTery is not about preservation but more about readaptation, it is about saving the last bits of buildings by looking at the existing architecture not from a nostalgic perspective but as something that can be manipulated and that can be intervened on.

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(Intrest)\_  
Defining and  
Understanding

“Every story is a travel story - a spatial practice.”

\_Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

place

space

Michel De Certeau distinguishes space from place in his influential text, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

He explains that a place is “an instantaneous configuration of positions.

It implies an indication of stability” whereas, a space “is composed of intersections of mobile elements”. (p. 117)

[space is a practiced place]

So, can the practice of a space be considered an activation of this space?

Practicing a space involves at least one if not more senses.

What we see, what we touch, what we hear, what we smell and what we feel (vision, hearing, olfactory, tactility, emotions, and memories) transport us into an experience.

This leads me to a sentence I read by Schrödinger “what you see enters the realm of reality through perception”.

[space only develops if there one to perceive it]

But if living elements can only exist in a given space, does this make one indispensable to the other?

[space and presence make one]



thought

space

“How one encounters reality is a choice. As soon as we have the thing before our eyes, and in our hearts thinking prospers”

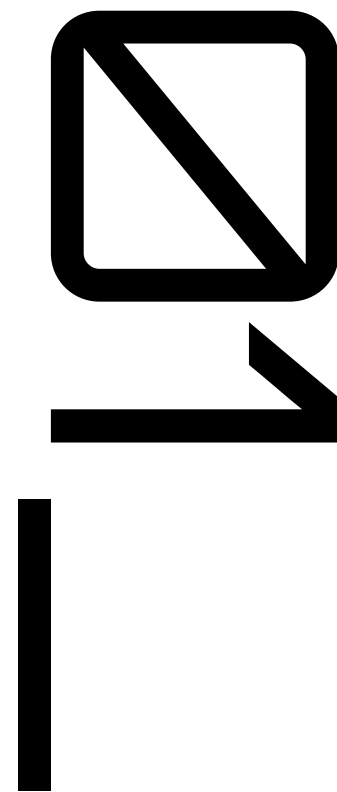
\_ Martin Heidegger

Dwelling mediates our relationship between thought and space. It is the primary way in which we, as humans, relate to our environments. It is, in other words, the way that we are on the earth.

*[space only develops if there one to perceive it.*

More precisely if there is a dweller to practice it]

So, can the reality of a space we shape as dwellers be reduced to what we see and how we see it?



[Intent]\_  
A dweller in the  
city

As a dweller in the city I come to analyze how I interact with a given space and what makes me interact with it this way. In other words,

## what makes a city?

Taking into consideration the impact of the Blast at an urban scale but also on a personal level, my research will be focusing on the practice of space in Mar Mikhael, a strip I have practiced for so long before the blast.



What you see on the traditional map

What is the reality doing to the feeling

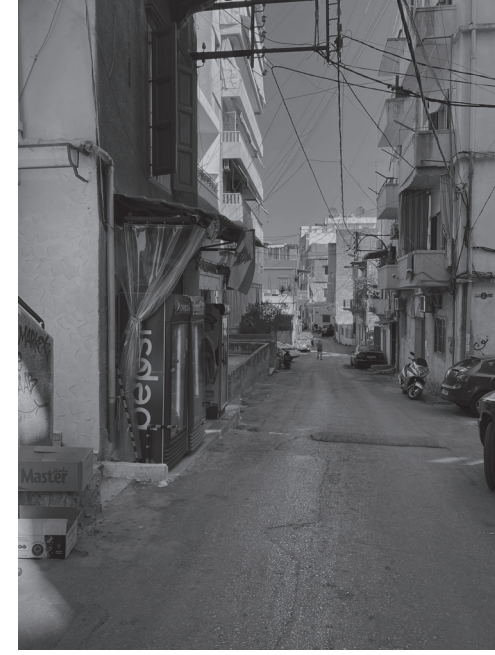
What you feel on the ground

||  
What is the feeling doing to the reality

Represent sense of reality



Emphasizing on the dilemma  
that the traditional  
geographic map doesn't  
represent the actual feel  
of space,



[Question]\_

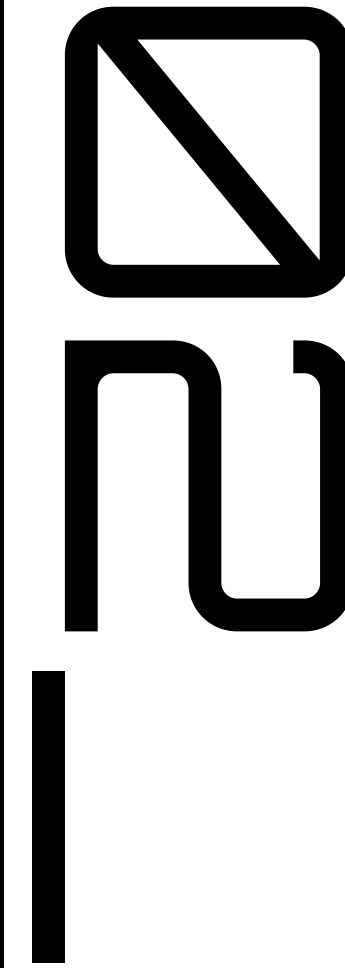
How can we explore the practice of space  
by embracing the profound efficacy of  
interpretation in shaping new realities?

what if an architectural language was articulated  
in order to uncover previously unseen or unimagined  
realities?



I am talking about a reflective interpretation of the different components that make Mar Mikhael.

I want to explore its implications through its different manifestations as well as the different components that make up for these lived experiences and see how they might shed light on underlying spatial potentialities.



[Exploration]\_  
A (mis)  
interpretation of  
practices

I started my intuitive exploration by examining the details that shape the spaces I am in; the spaces of interest are spaces I was already familiar with as well as new spaces that I didn't know before. I call them:

## Episodes of Life.

Since the studied strip is a complex urban environment which cannot be easily identified within common architectural vocabulary, a set of characteristics were extracted out of the scenes and were then treated subjectively.

After the Port Blast, a different type of 'practice of space' emerged in the urban composition of the strip. This post-blast urban condition presents new types of access in the city (visual, physical as well as mental; through remembrance), changing our relationship to a space (private, public, semipublic, semiprivate). It's a different reading of the city that is something I am looking forward to explore.

The following drawings aim to show and stress on the following:

-that the space my feelings occupy is as real as (if not more real than) the physical space I am in.

-that the physical space that we build and that makes our everyday is about triggering memory, archiving and leaving traces.

I am revealing the impact of the built on me.

I see this phase as, a loose assemblage of lived experiences that are not bound to the mere functionality of their physical attributes. This will reveal a broader understanding of space and what it actually consists of.



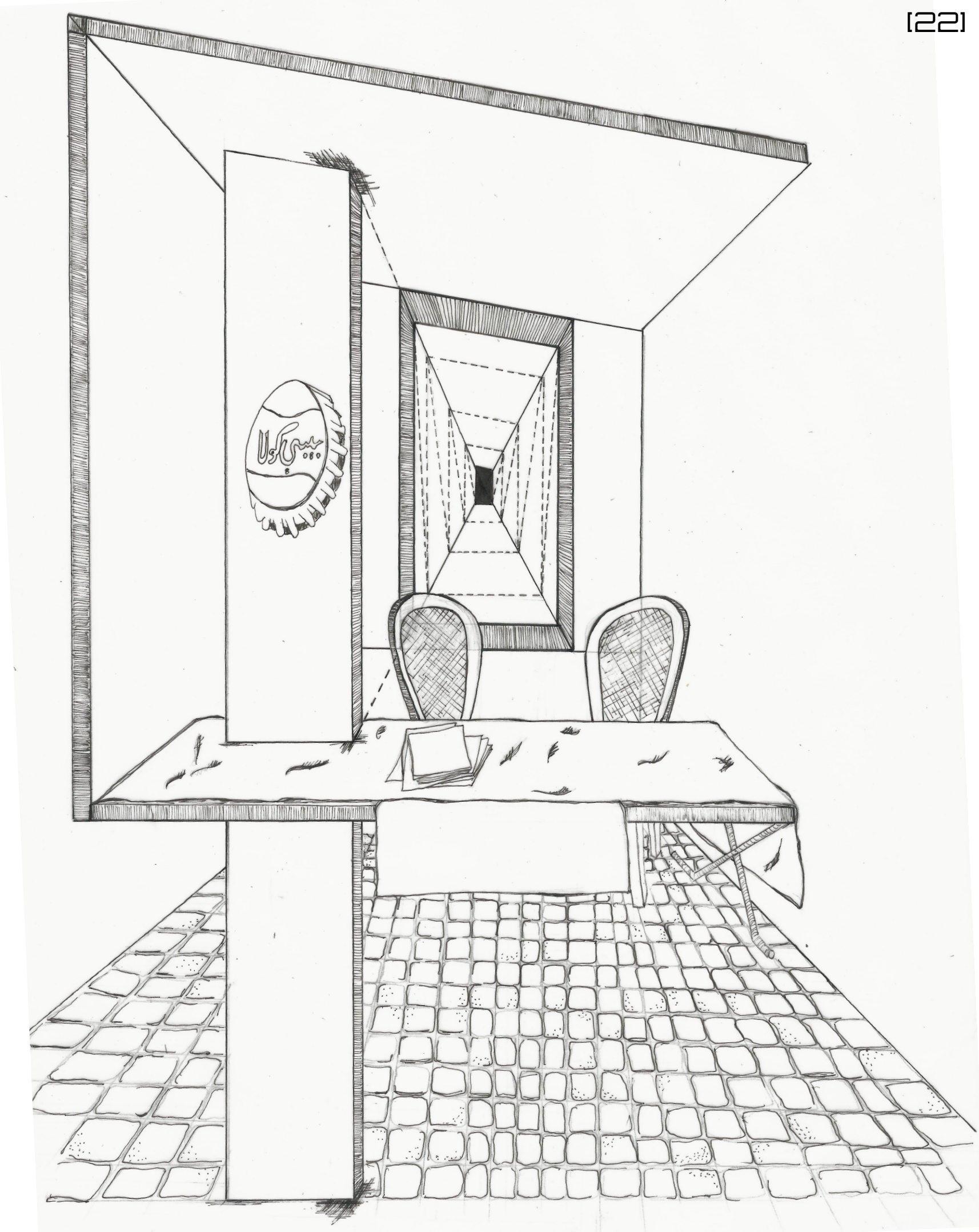
[Exploration]

side\_appropriation

- captivating logo
- two women sitting at a table on the sidewalk
- closed shop door
- shading tree



the perceived | the interpreted





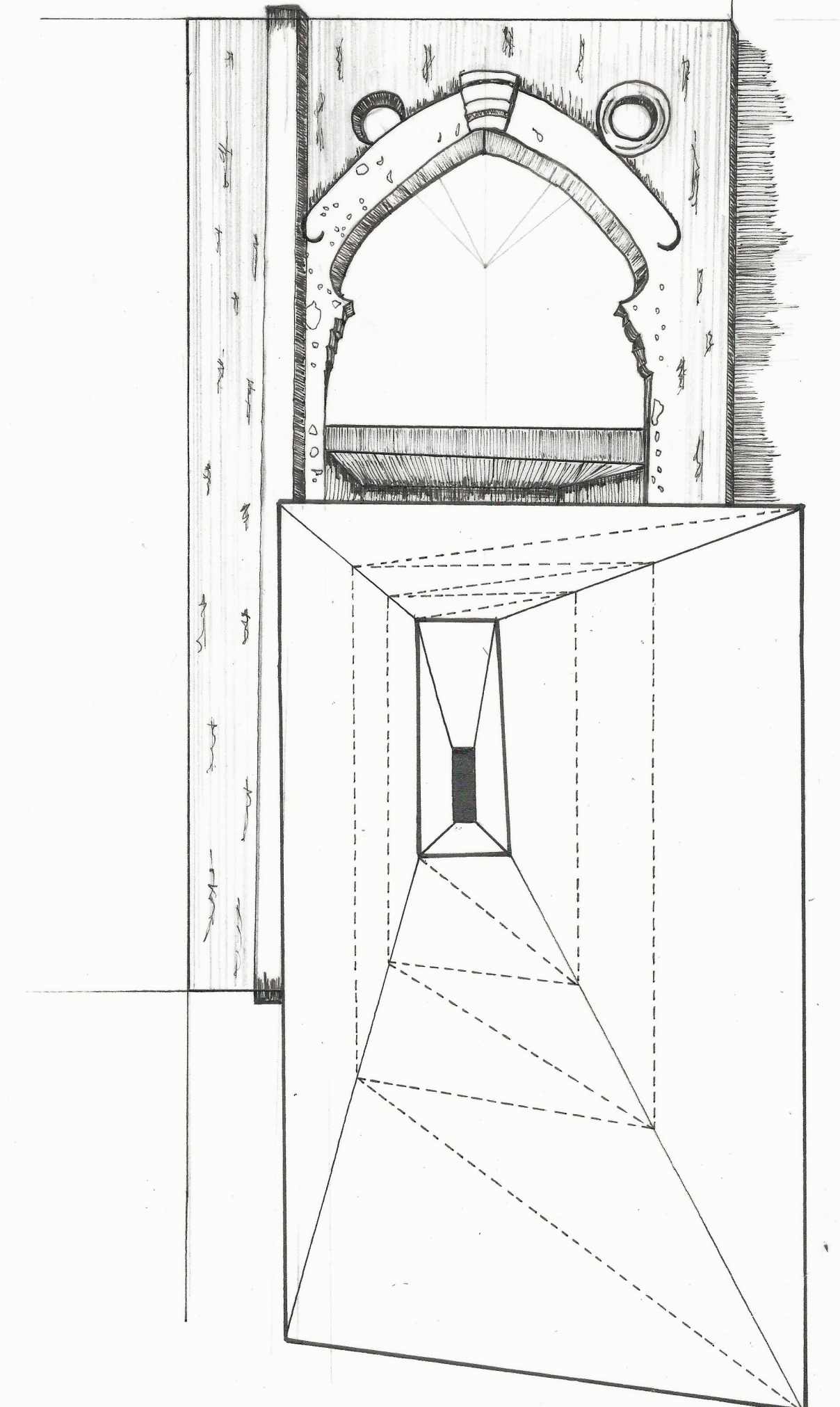
[Exploration]

deep\_reflection

- broken shop facade
- imposant arcade
- mirror in the back of the shop
- reflection of myself



the perceived | the interpreted



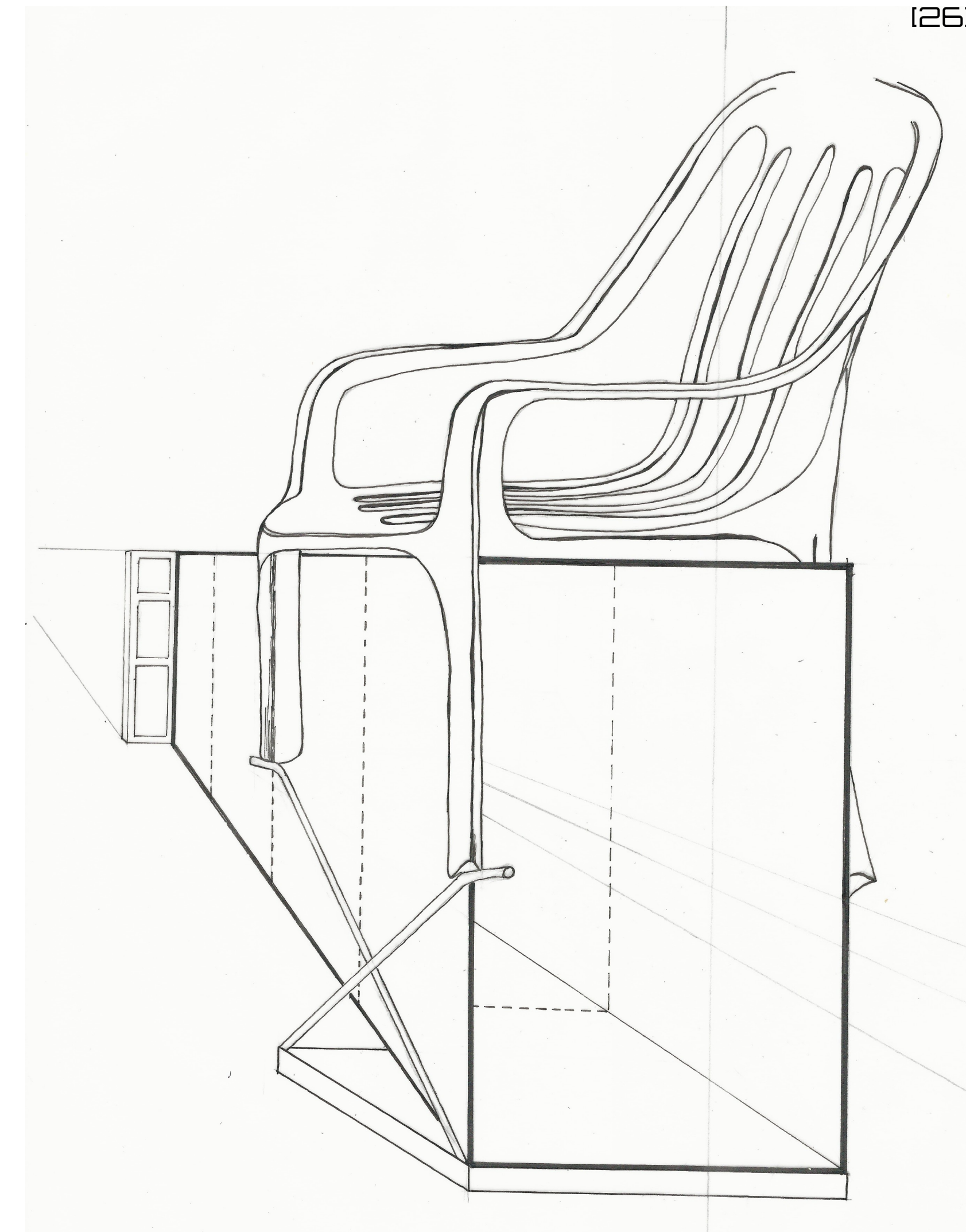


[Exploration]

street\_invasion

the perceived | the interpreted

-old man occupying the street in front of his shop  
-a chair and a table blocking the access to the inside



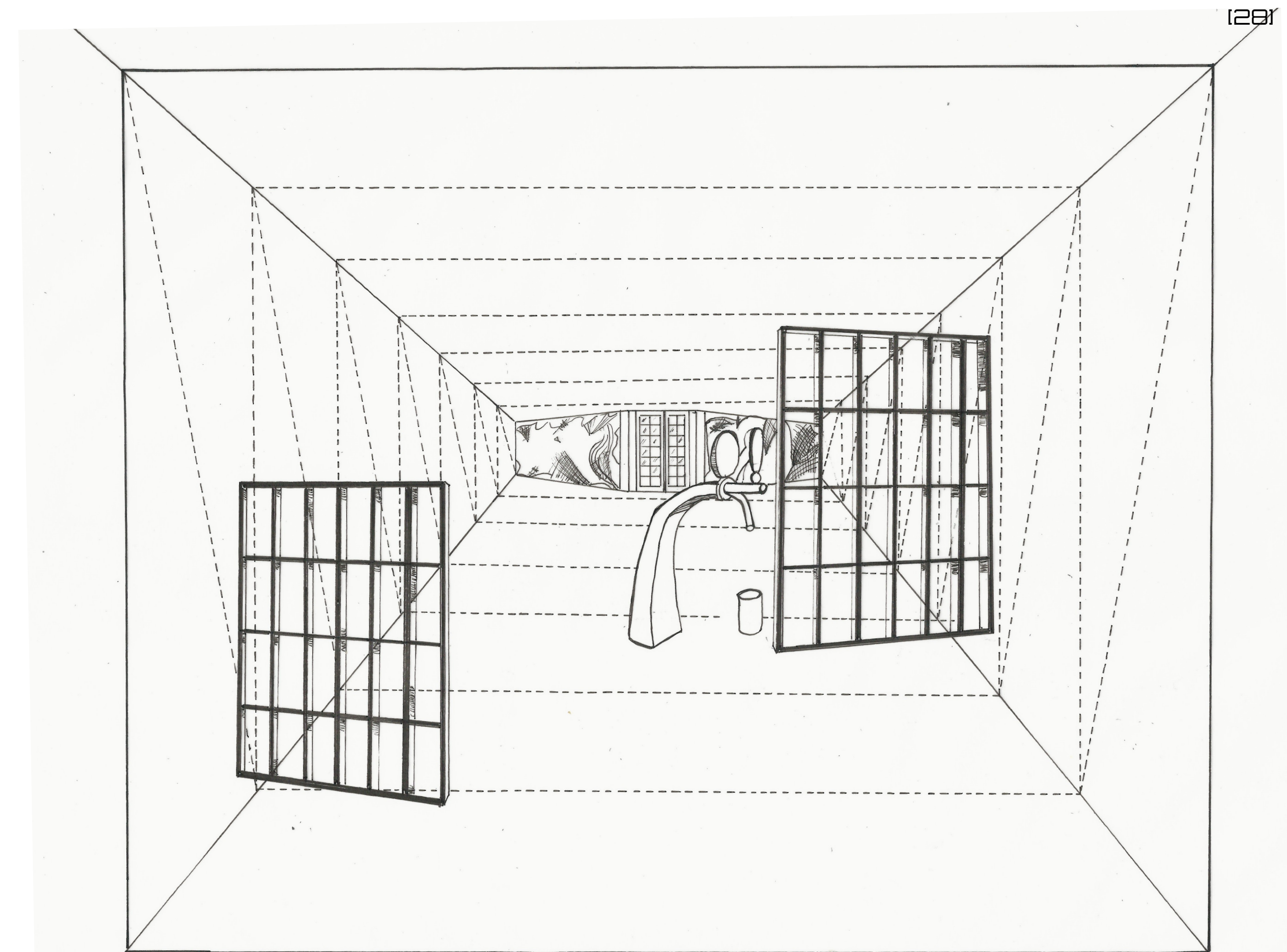


[Exploration]

memory\_induction

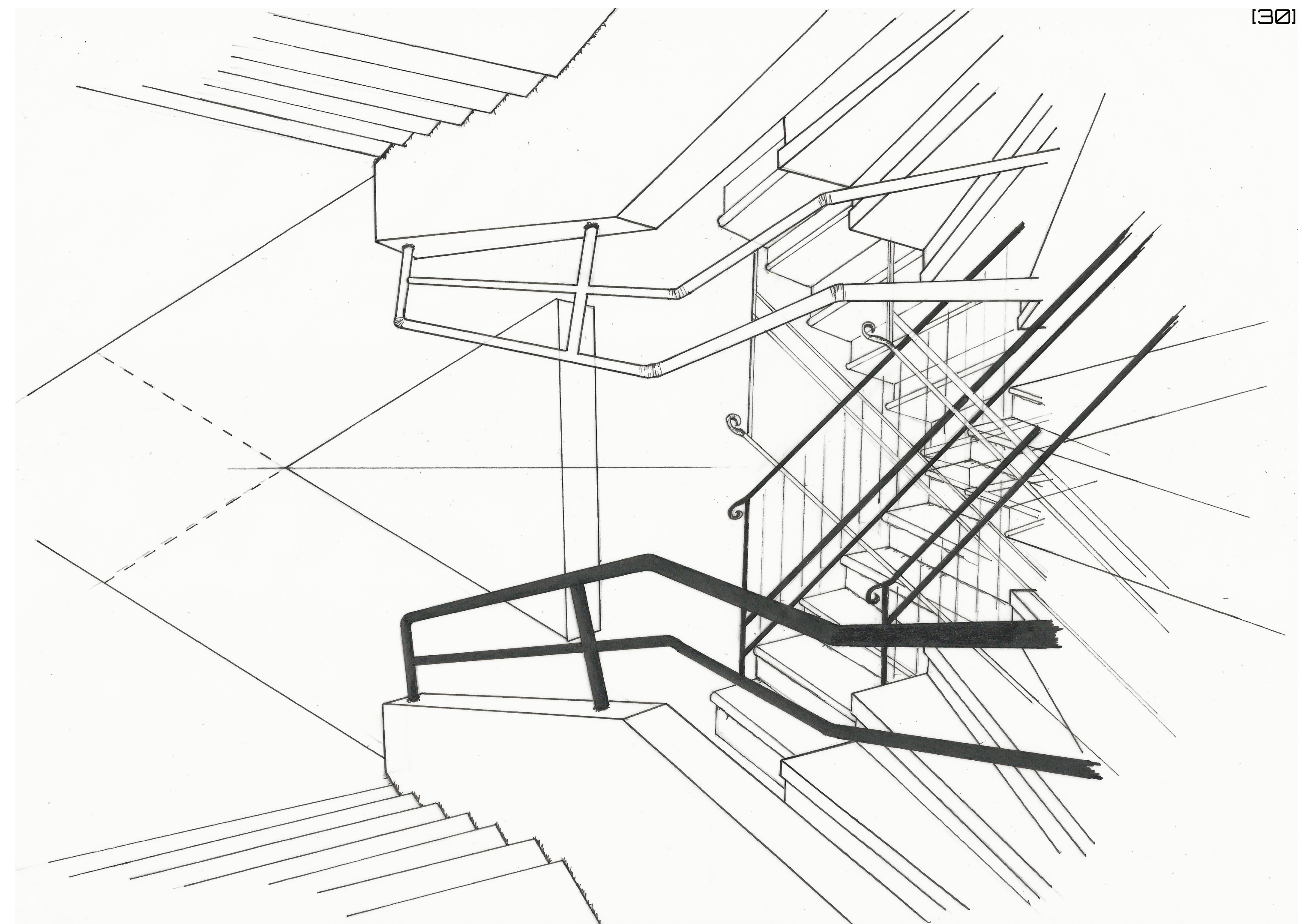
the perceived | the interpreted

- closed restaurant/bar
- broken glass
- memory of lived experience





-space innovation  
-children playing on public stairs





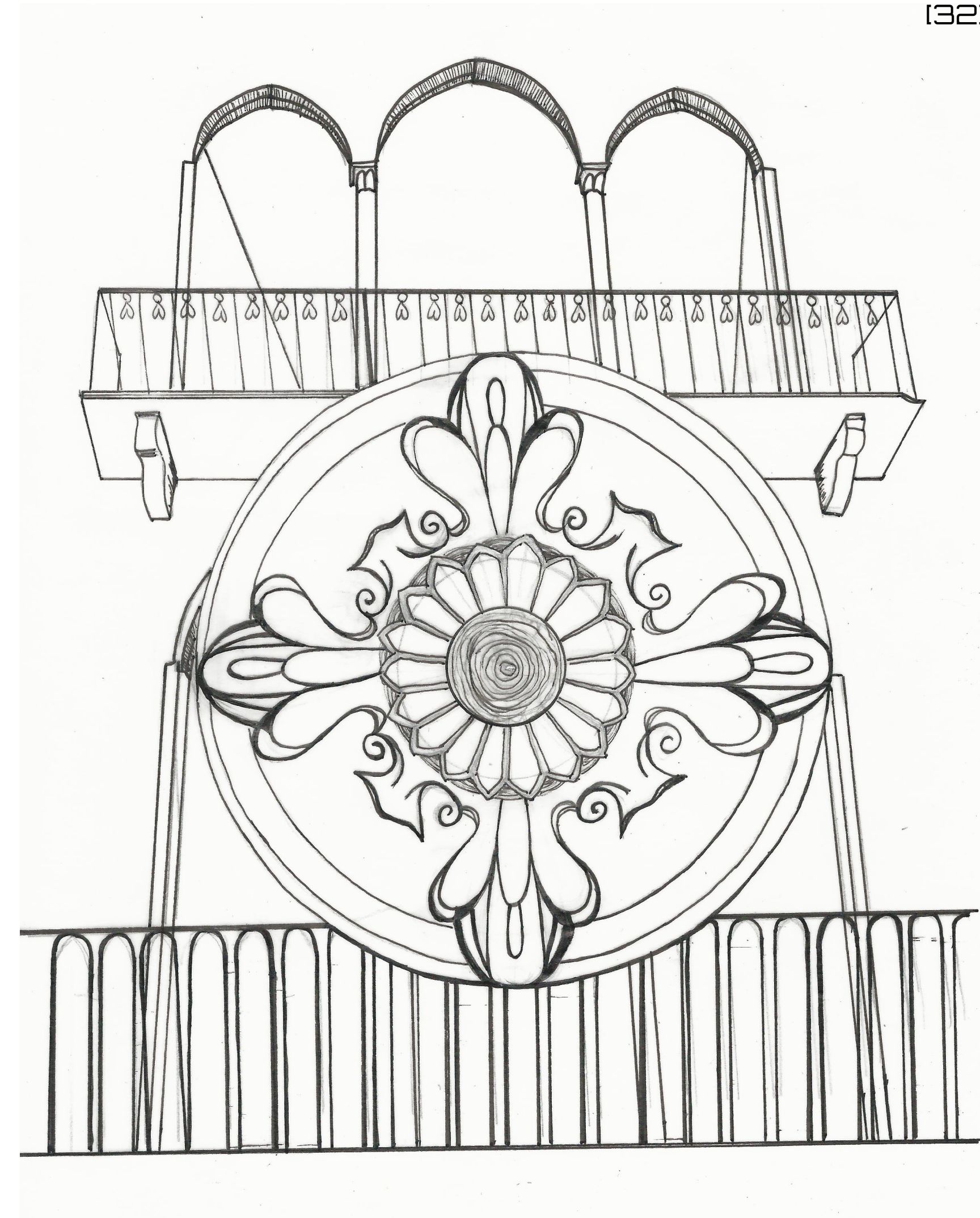
[Exploration]

Revelation

-hollowed arcade  
-revealed ceiling



the perceived | the interpreted



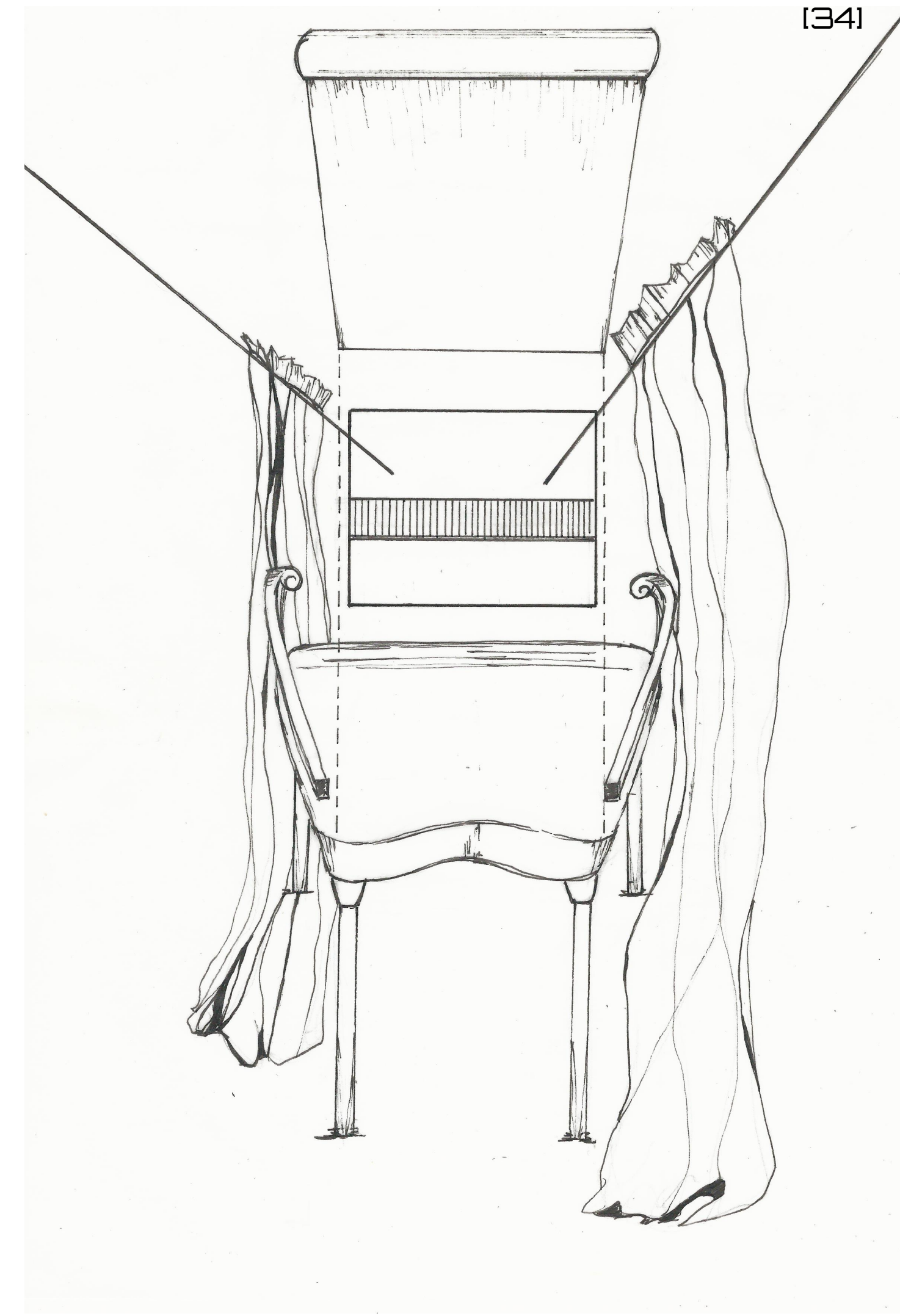


[Exploration]

Dislocation

the perceived | the interpreted

-indoor chair on the balcony





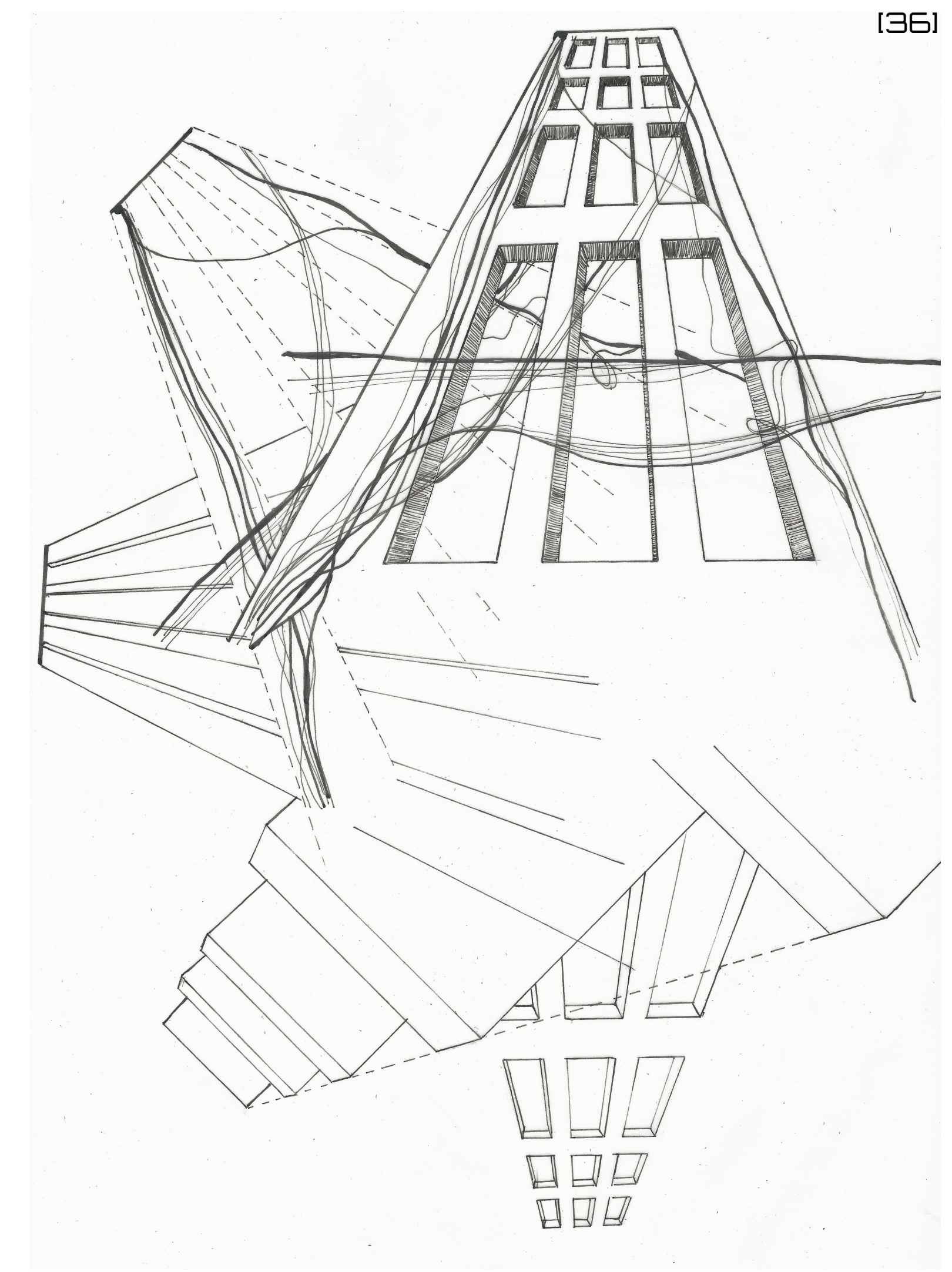
[Exploration]

\_superimposed

-overlaying on facade



the perceived | the interpreted





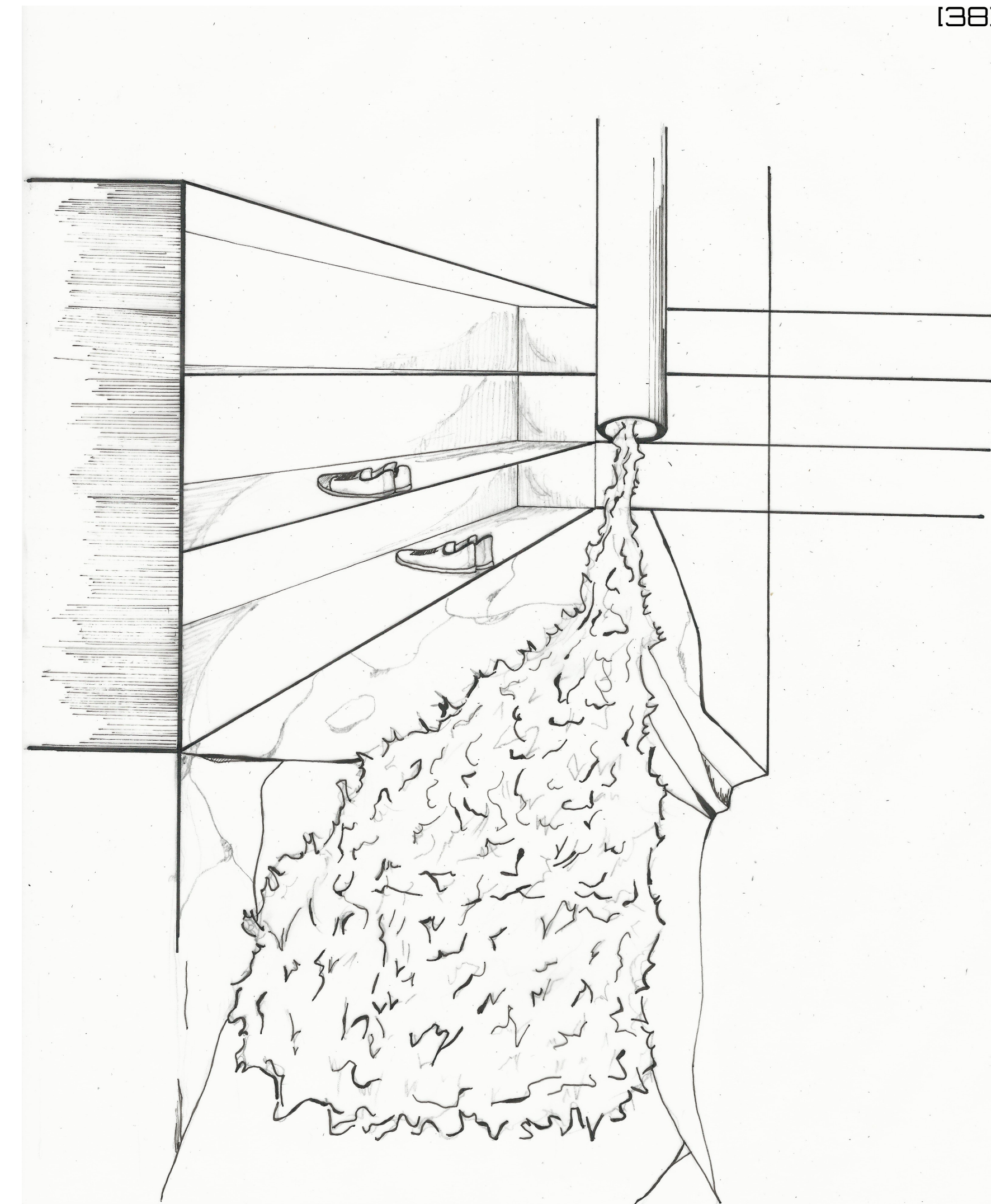
[Exploration]

Multipurpose slit

- peculiar spacing in-between buildings
- window bars serving as shelves
- drainage pipe irrigating some weeds



the perceived | the interpreted





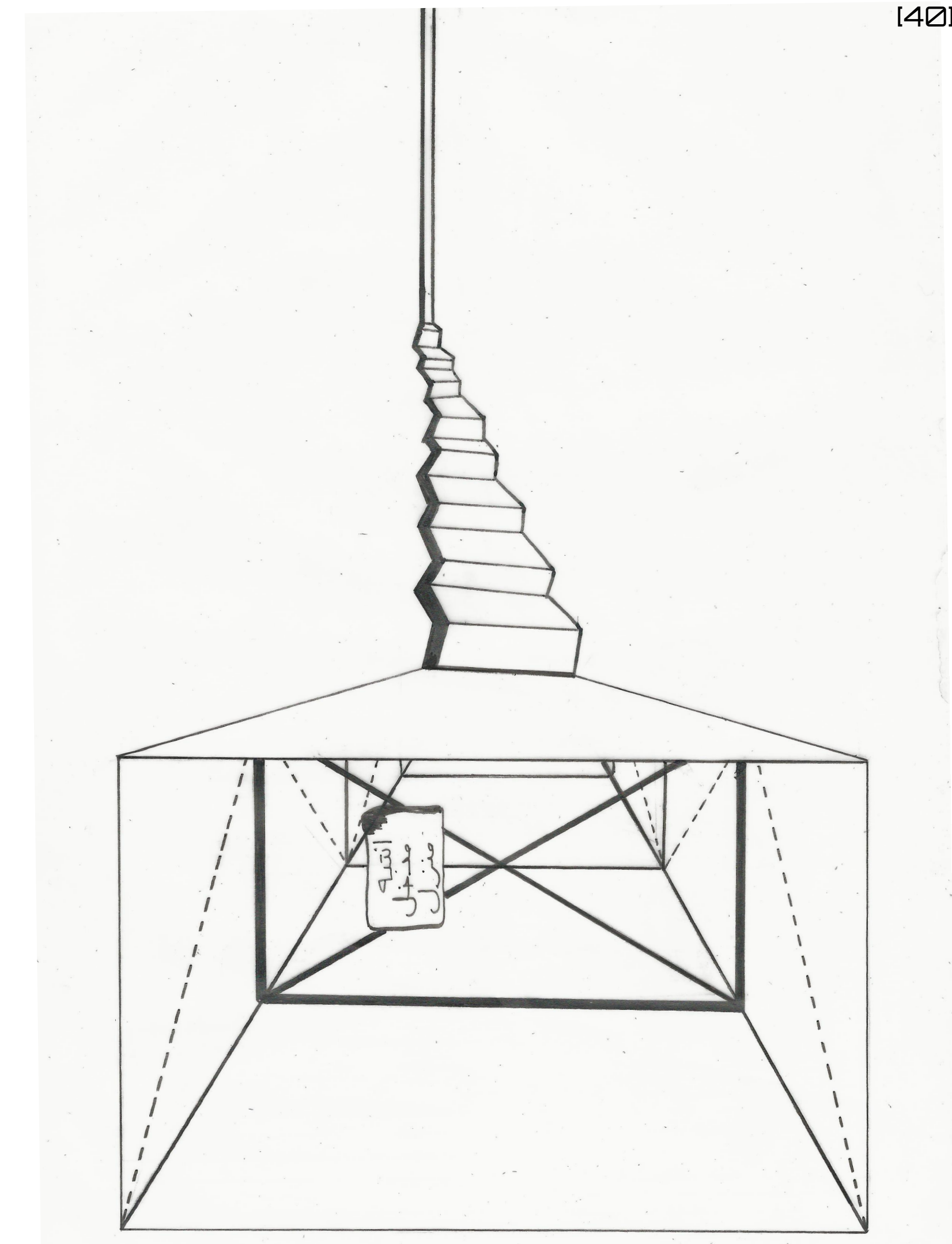
[Exploration]

entrance\_

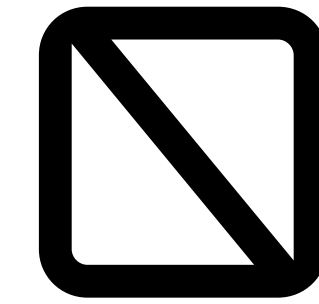
-open door to a private courtyard  
-unconventional stairs serving as a  
home entrance



the perceived | the interpreted







This reflective interpretation proposes conversations between ideas. It also facilitates the examination and expression of my architectural thoughts that are filtered through the unique conventions that are embedded within the modes and techniques of representation.

The latter will then be exploited as a tool to create hybrid spaces: a new way of mapping. The drawings become a tool of research about space.

[[Investigation]\_  
A manipulation  
of practices

As I went on, the hybrids started getting more complex and the clues that I am extracting from them create the story of how I was practicing the space at the moment, always in relation to the past.

In other words,

these hybrids highlight the overlap of two memories: the lived moment and the remembered social practice.

They also emphasize precarious intersections and tensions between different social practices, especially between the private and the public sectors. A trait that has always been part of the urban history of the strip, but that has increased after the blast as we feel like the boundaries lost their conventional function.

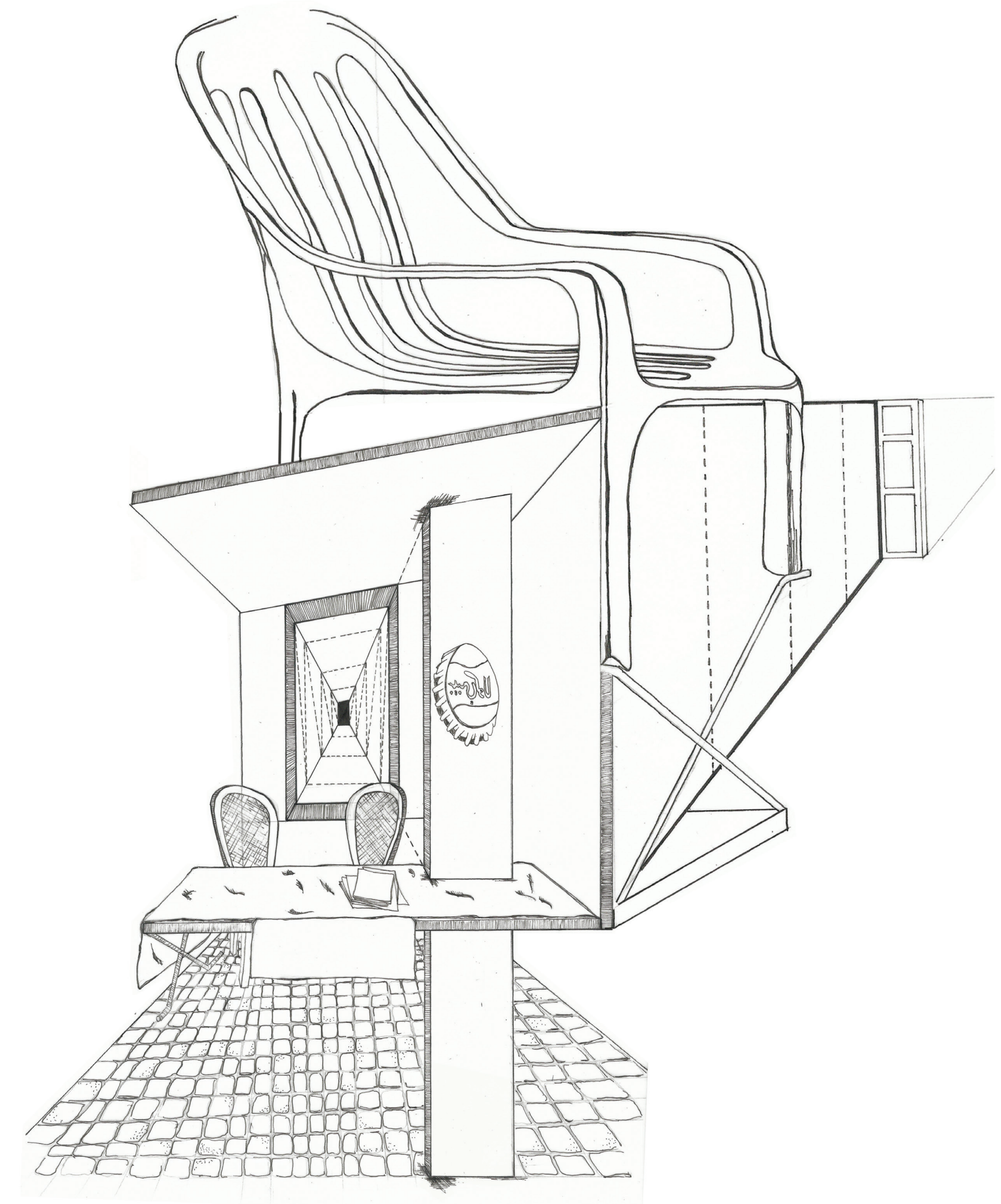
I wanted to go further in the investigation, so I started combining different drawings to extract even more meaning out of them...

[Investigation]

The hybrids

- memory induced perception
- chair of power
- questionable spatial syntax

blending, intersecting and reading



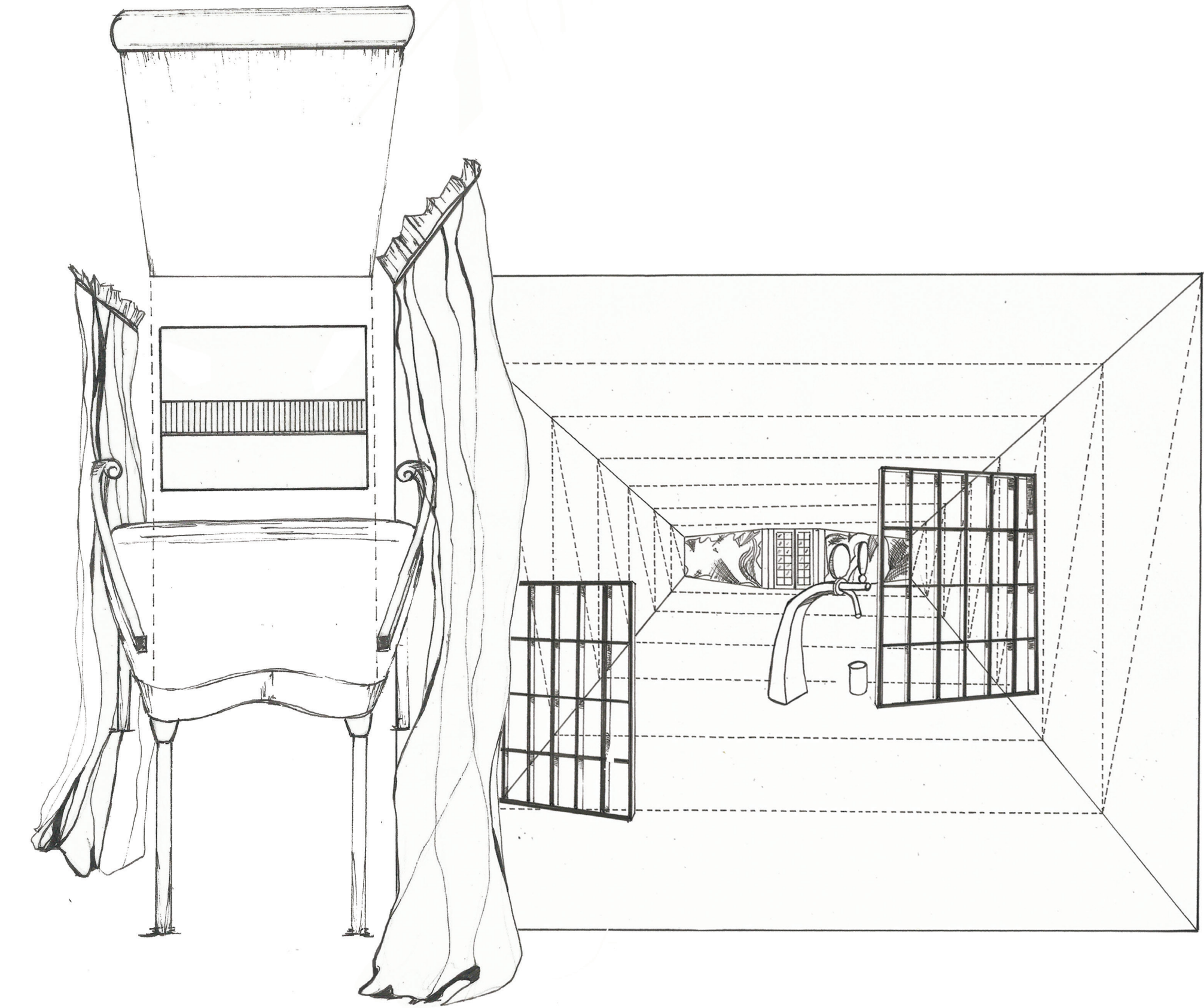


[Investigation]

The hybrids

blending, intersecting and reading

-juxtaposing intimacy and remembrance



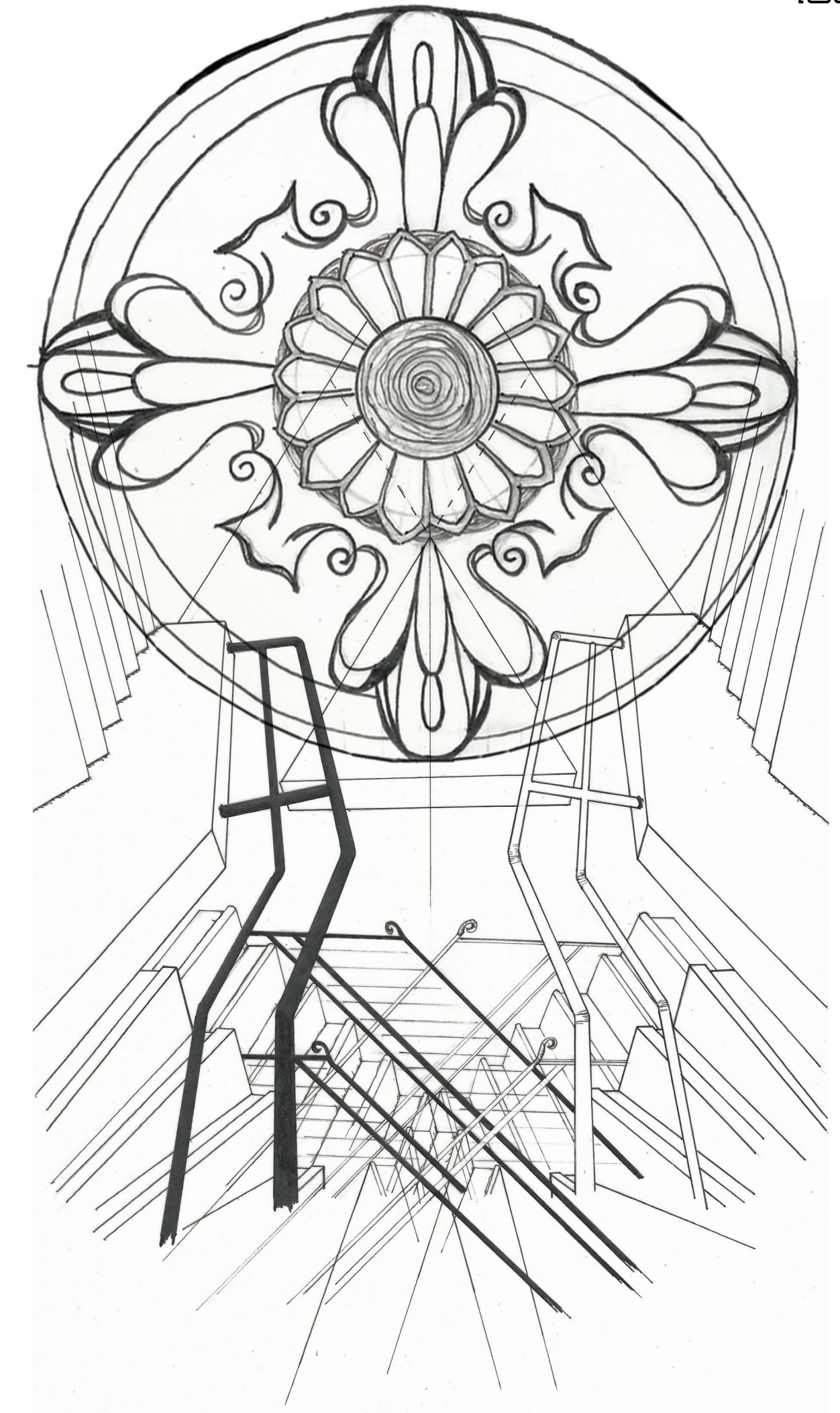


[Investigation]

The hybrids

-holding on to heritage

blending, intersecting and reading



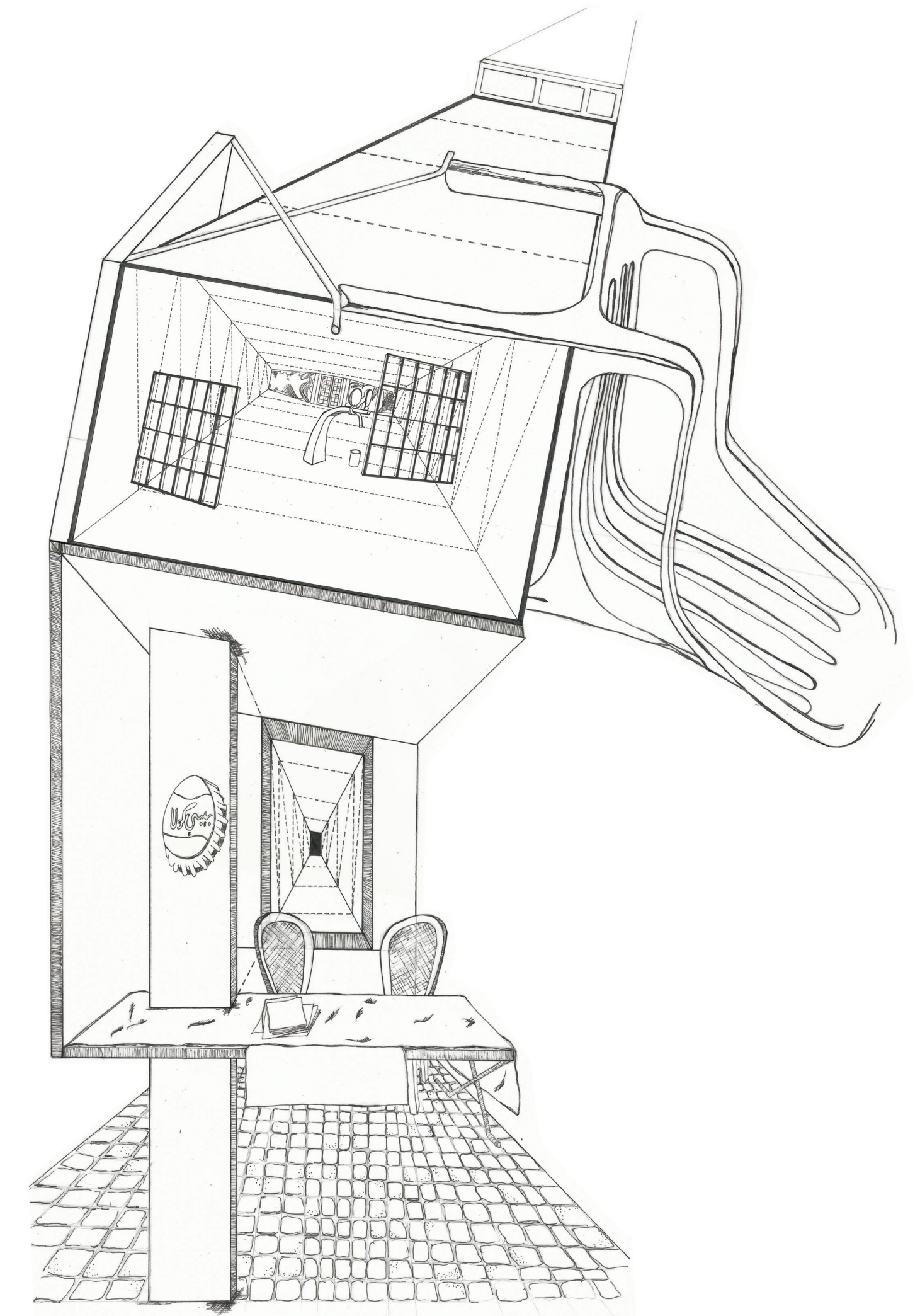


[Investigation]

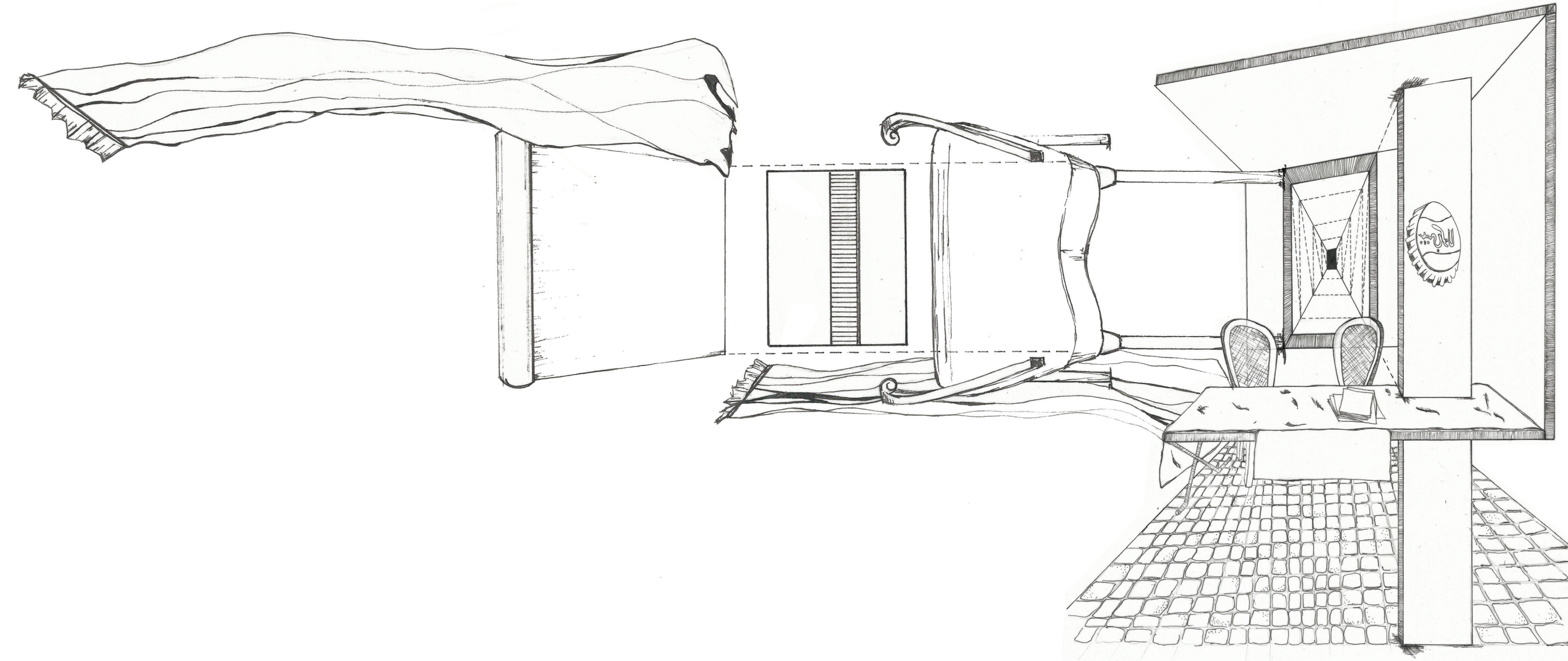
The hybrids

-reciprocal triggers: memory to  
<new> practices and <new> practices  
to memory

blending, intersecting and reading

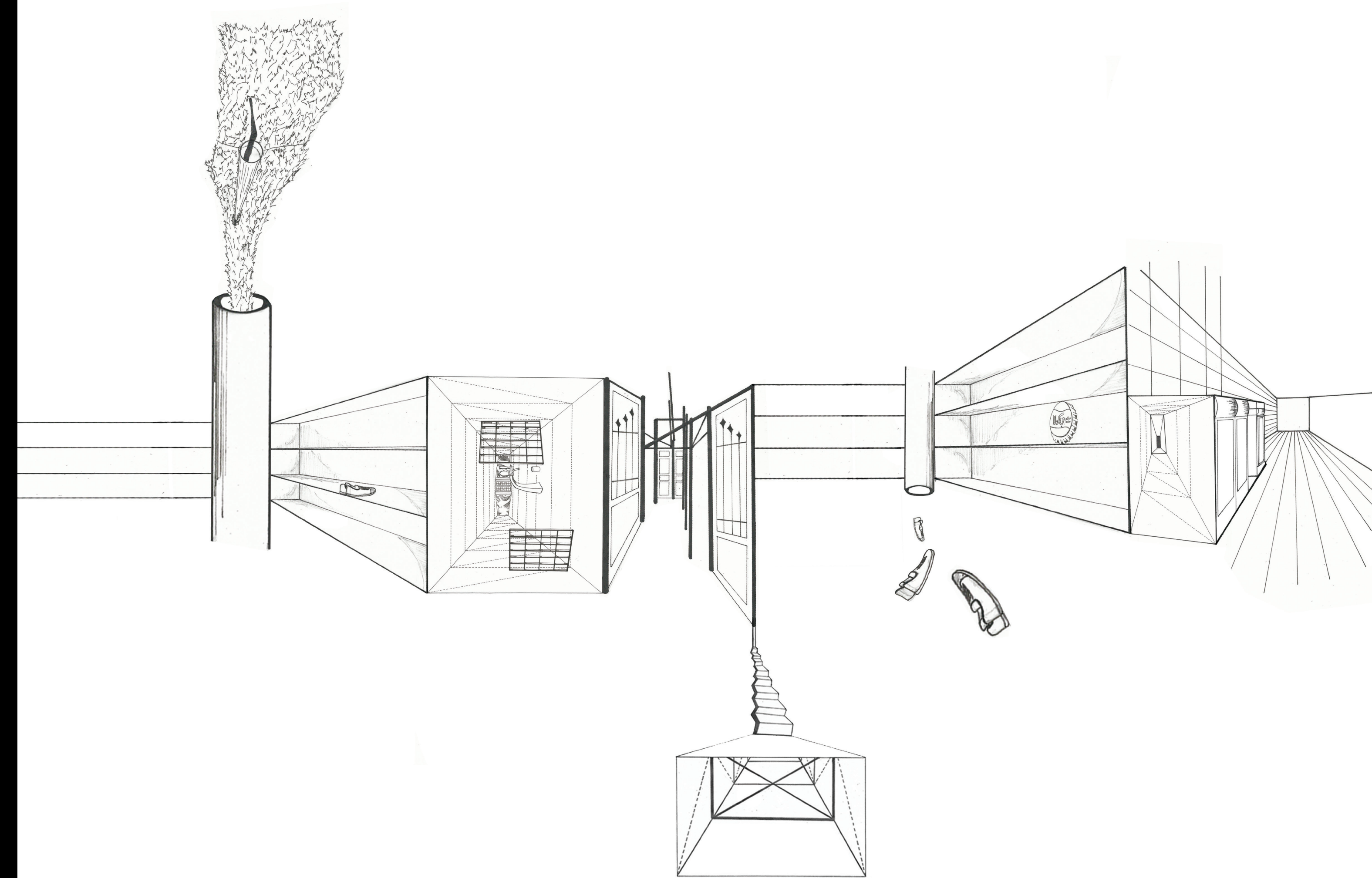


-past memory and volatility in  
contrast to lived memory





- public versus private
- intersecting practices
- infilled memories



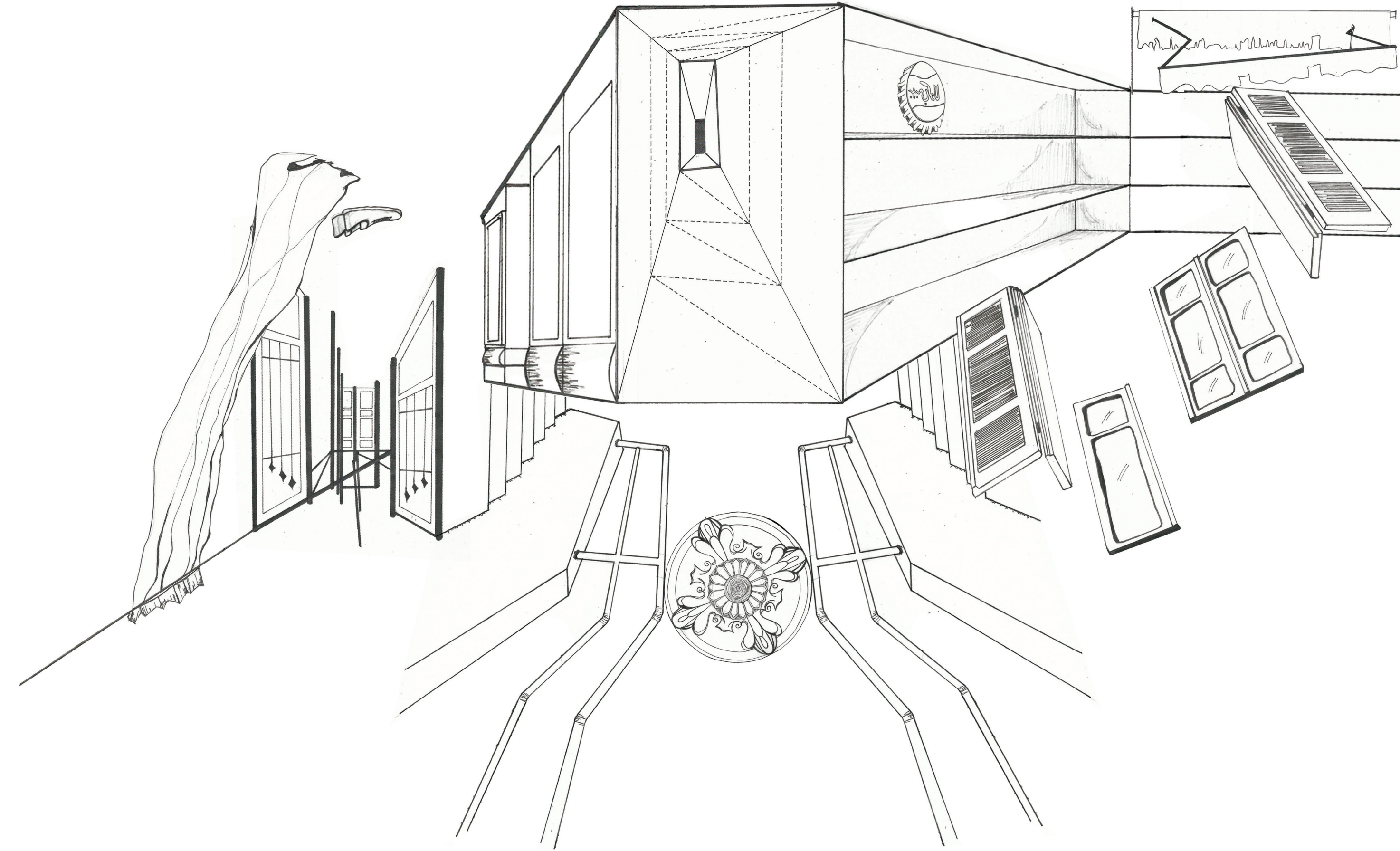


[Investigation]

The hybrids

blending, intersecting and reading

- lost conventionality of boundaries
- amplified intersection
- questioning connectivity



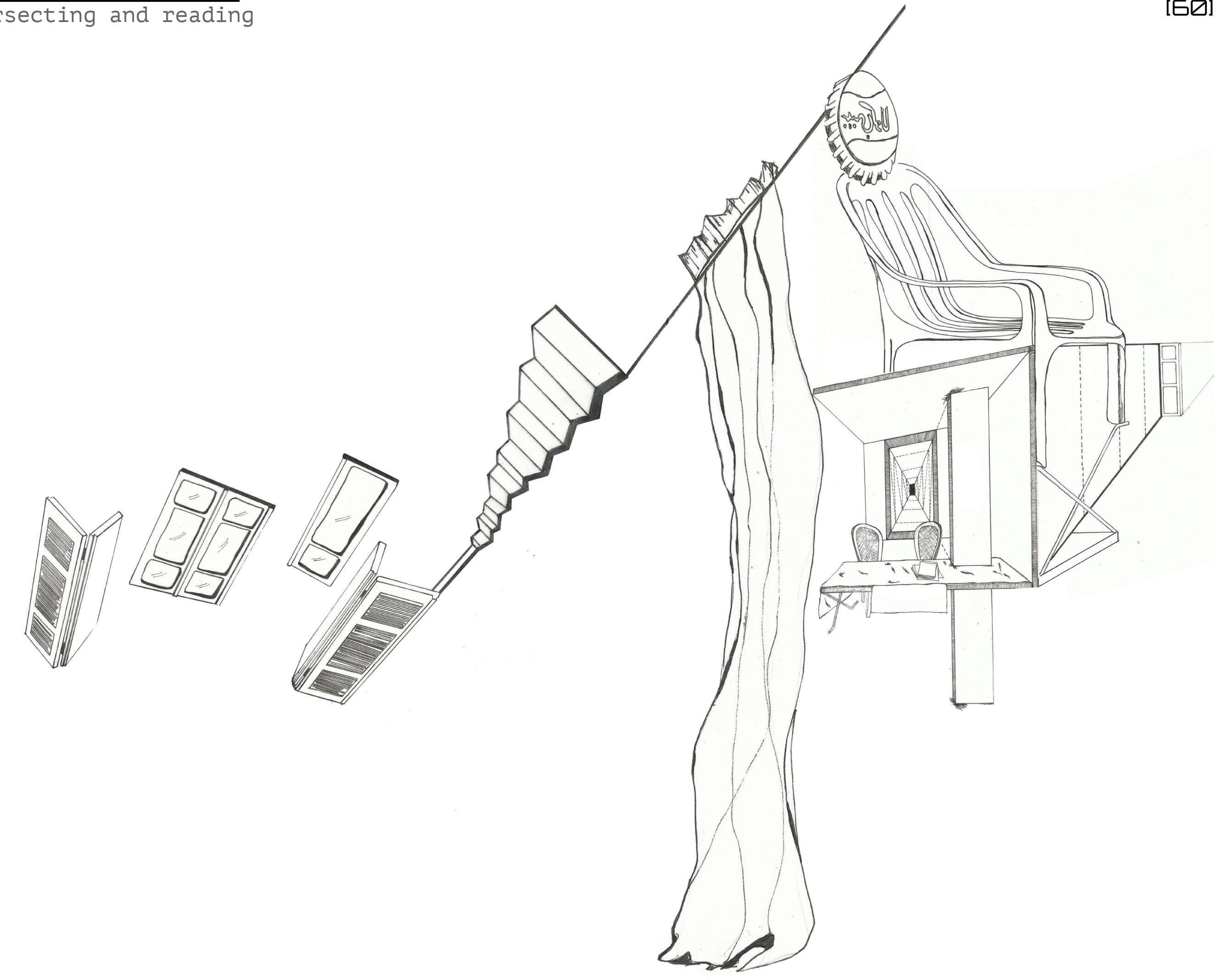


[Investigation]

The hybrids

-stripped identity through a  
composition of rudimentary elements

blending, intersecting and reading

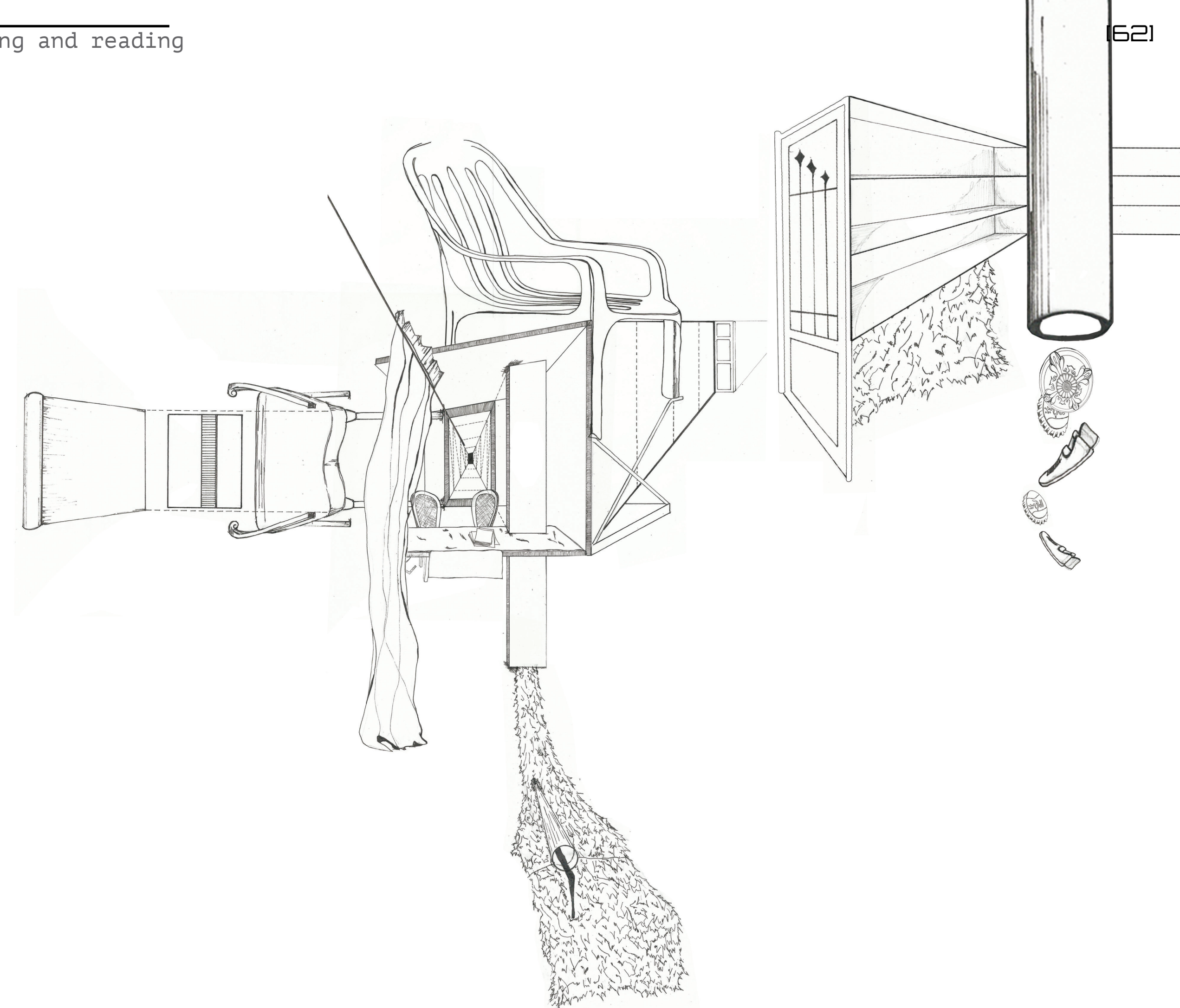


[Investigation]

The hybrids

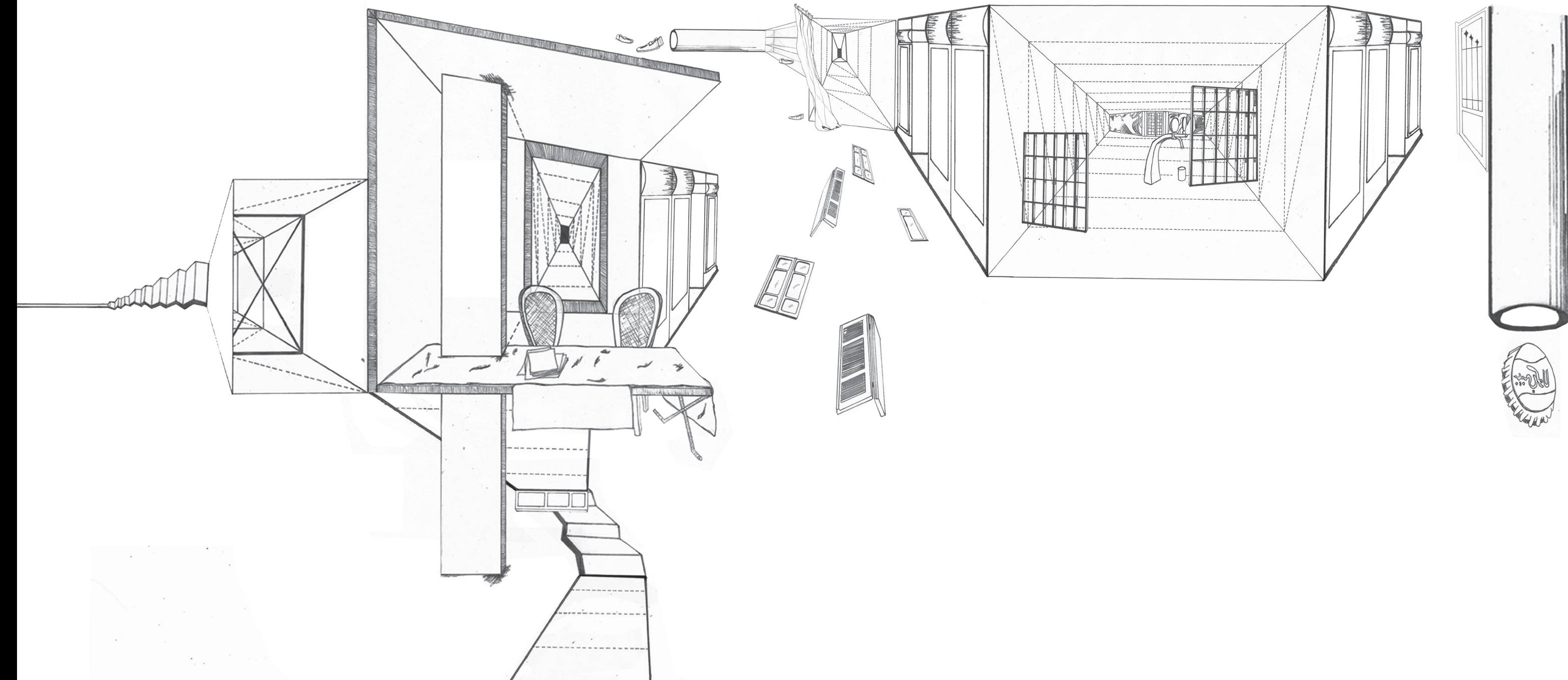
-revealed tensions between the public and the private, the indoors and the outdoor, nature and the built

blending, intersecting and reading



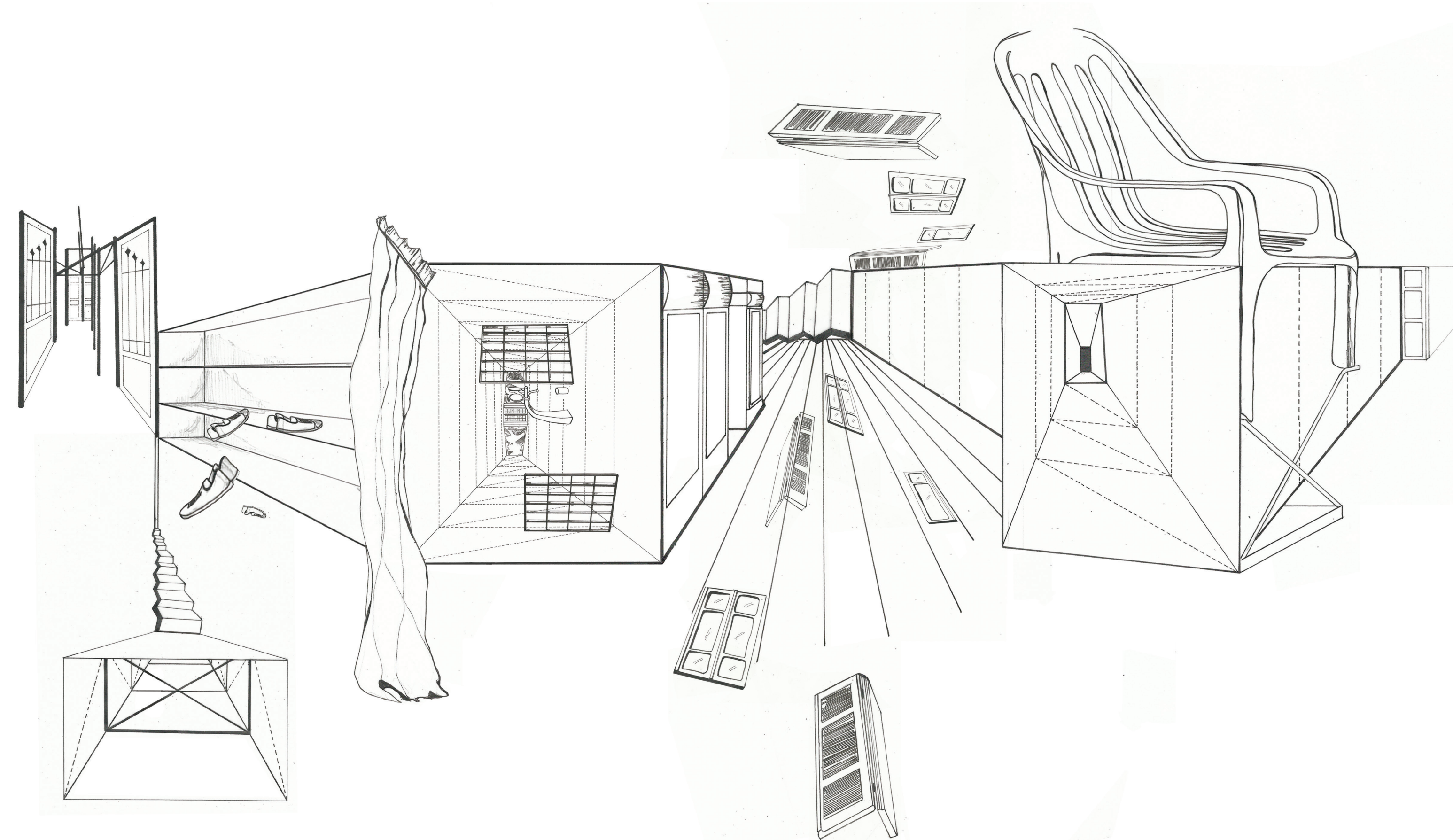


-power of memories over the present context

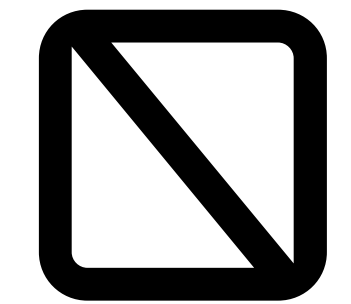




-accessible privacy and relived memories







4



[Conclusion?]  
The process  
doesn't end  
here...

## [Conclusion?]

The process doesn't end here

The hybrids are related to a line of thoughts and prediction.

Until now the drawings acted as a tool to formalize my thoughts; the different interpretations were constructed by various intuitive operations that followed my imagination. They aim to put forward the impact some of the spaces I practiced had on me when they were partially implemented or even when their use was partially disrupted and show how my imagination interacted with them.

Nevertheless, besides being subjective interpretations and distortions of space, the drawings ended up revealing more about the socio spatial practice of the strip as a whole.

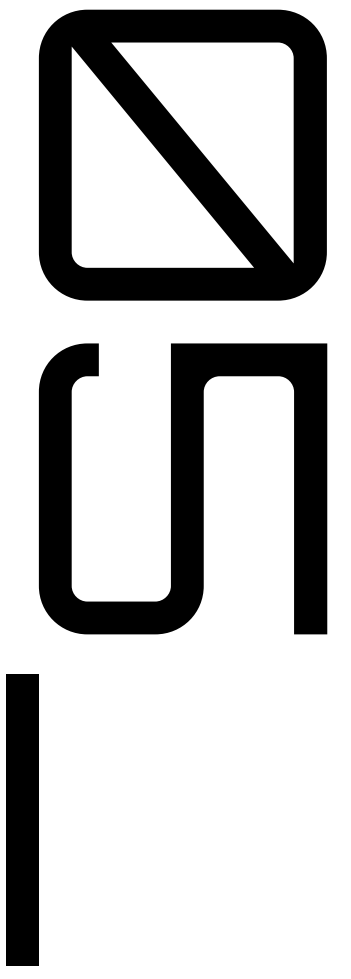
[But that's just one medium of representation and  
the process doesn't end here]

I am looking forward to explore different mediums for the interpretation of socio spatial practices in Mar Mikhael as I believe it would help me push my research into a thorough investigation of [non]physical construction and formalization of thoughts that might be participating in future unfolding:

By developping and exploring new ways to interpret the interrelationships and interactions that can be experienced along the strip, the drawings would become key elements for the [non] physical reconstruction of the strip after the port Blast as well as for the recovery of lost spatial and social processes.

In other words, I will be constructing of even reconstructing the socio spacial practice in Mar Mikhael through the exploration of different mediums of representation.





[Redefining]\_  
Where is the  
boundary?

Physical boundaries

Abstract boundaries

The socio-spatial nature of a physical boundary is manifested through the rituals and traditions and through perception: formation of the abstract boundaries.

Inspired by the previous drawings in which I was representing the essence of the spaces I was in while not defining specific physical boundaries, it became clear to me that the essence of a space is as, if not more significant to a space than its physical boundaries.

I refer to the essence of a space which comprises the practice of a space, the rituals, the traditions.. etc. as abstract boundaries.

After the blast many physical as well as abstract boundaries were destroyed which triggered a questioning of things we took for granted.

[Where is the boundary?]

[What really makes that boundary?]



Reconstruction

Reconciliation

A physical reconstruction doesn't always lead to  
a Reconciliation with space.

The latter comes from the way we relate to  
spaces, use them,...

In a context where the physical reconstruction of the strip is  
taking place, I ask myself if a physical reconstruction will  
necessarily lead to the revival of the abstract boundaries.

I started thinking that the spatial reconstruction of  
the strip goes beyond just a physical one.

[A physical reconstruction can be done while not  
reconstructing the essence of a space.

*But can we say the same of the opposite?]*

# 06 |

[Site]\_  
Shoreline  
cluster



In order to explore the matter I decided to examine a cluster that was heavily impacted by the blast on a structural as well as on a socio spatial practice levels. I am talking about the shoreline cluster located in mar mikhael at the edge between the port and the city.



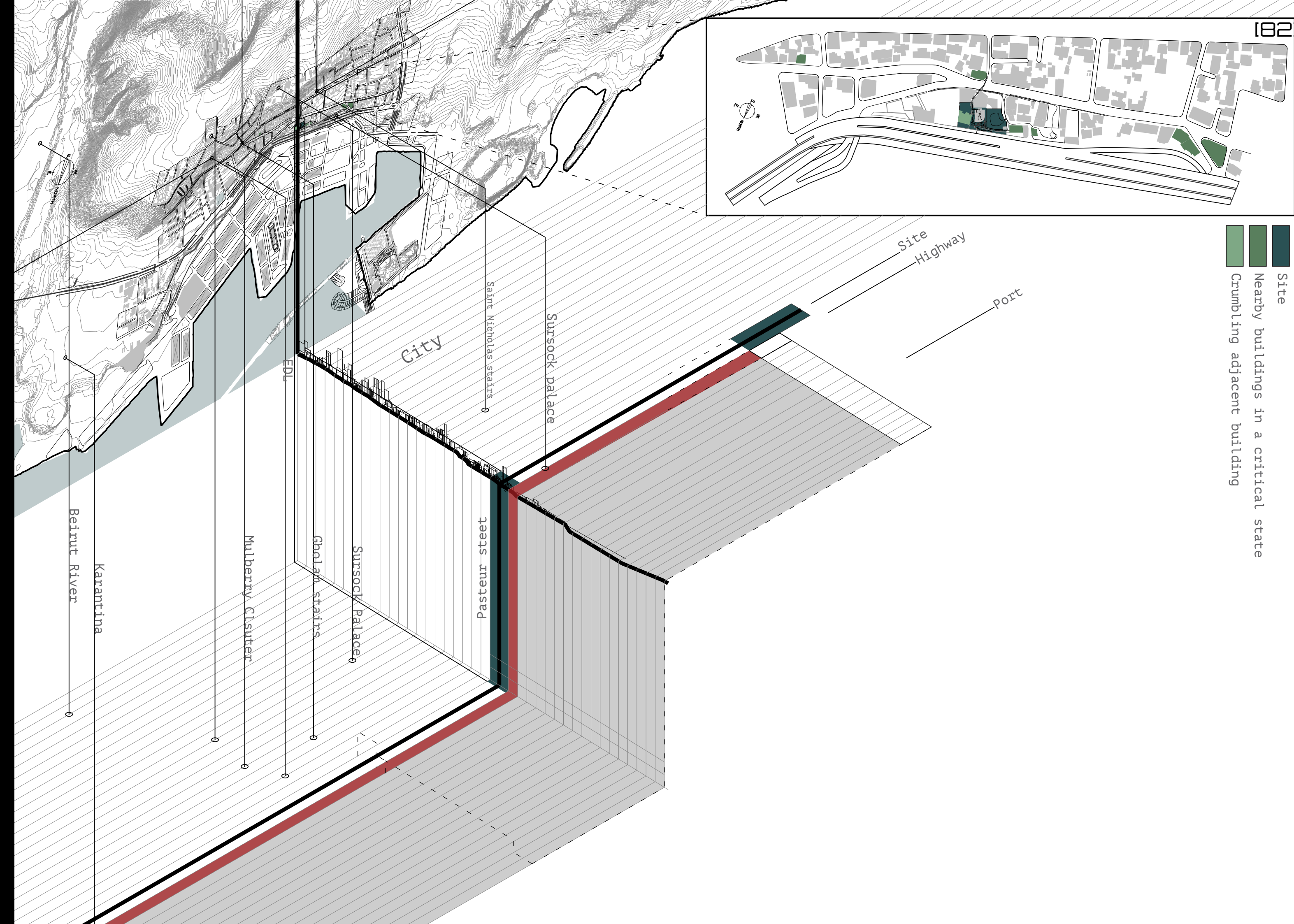


# [Shoreline cluster]

Macro\_Location

I started by studying its geographical location by defining its main physical boundaries at a macro level and comparing scales. I also highlighted some of the nearby buildings that were heavily affected by the port blast and so where the practice of space was affected as well.

*Sandwiched between the port and the city  
I see its location very significant to the  
scope of my research.*





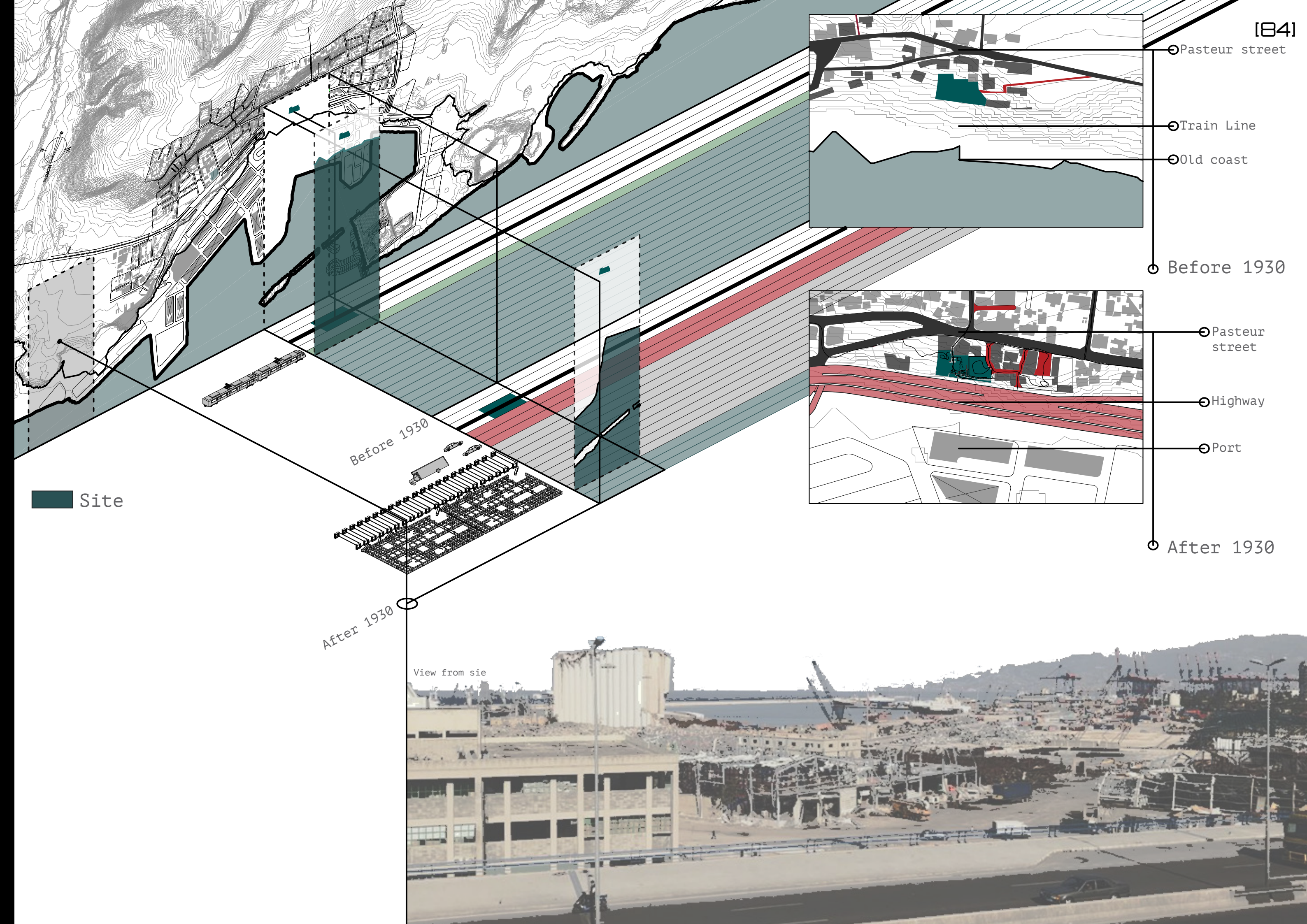
[Shoreline cluster]  
Macro\_Coast analysis

Being part of mar mikhael, the site's urban composition as well as programmatic functions were transformed across time,

*but that's not the only thing that changed here.*

The coast line's transformation after the expansion of the port and the construction of the highway affected the site's exposure to the sea:

As the drawing shows, before the transformation, the site was located right at the edge of the water. After the landfills addition the site was totally blocked behind the highway and the port.





# [Shoreline cluster]

Micro\_Typologies

The site's transformation at a micro level in terms of street and passages is really interesting because with time the divisions created more room and intricate spaces for diverse socio practices to infiltrate.

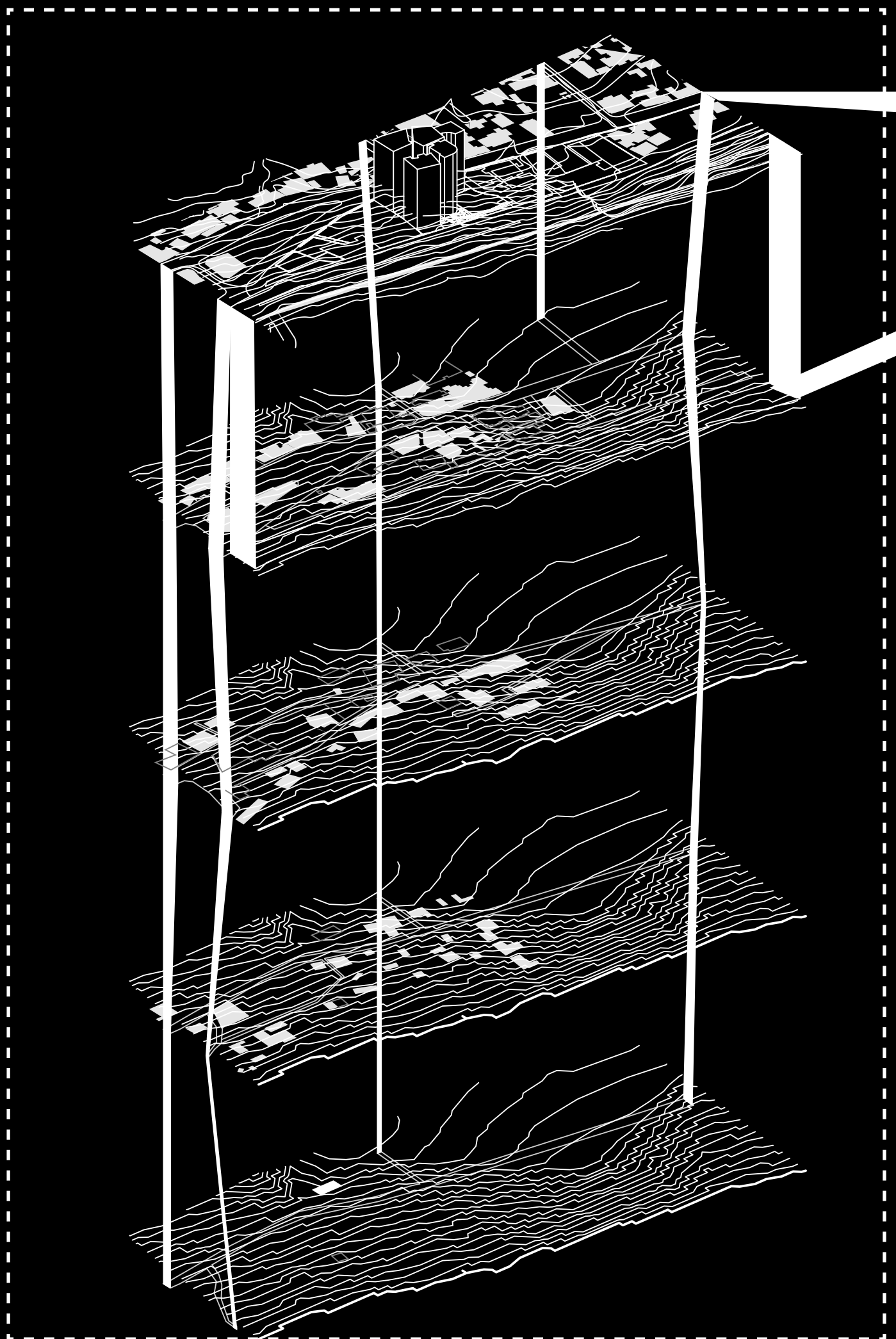
Now

1960

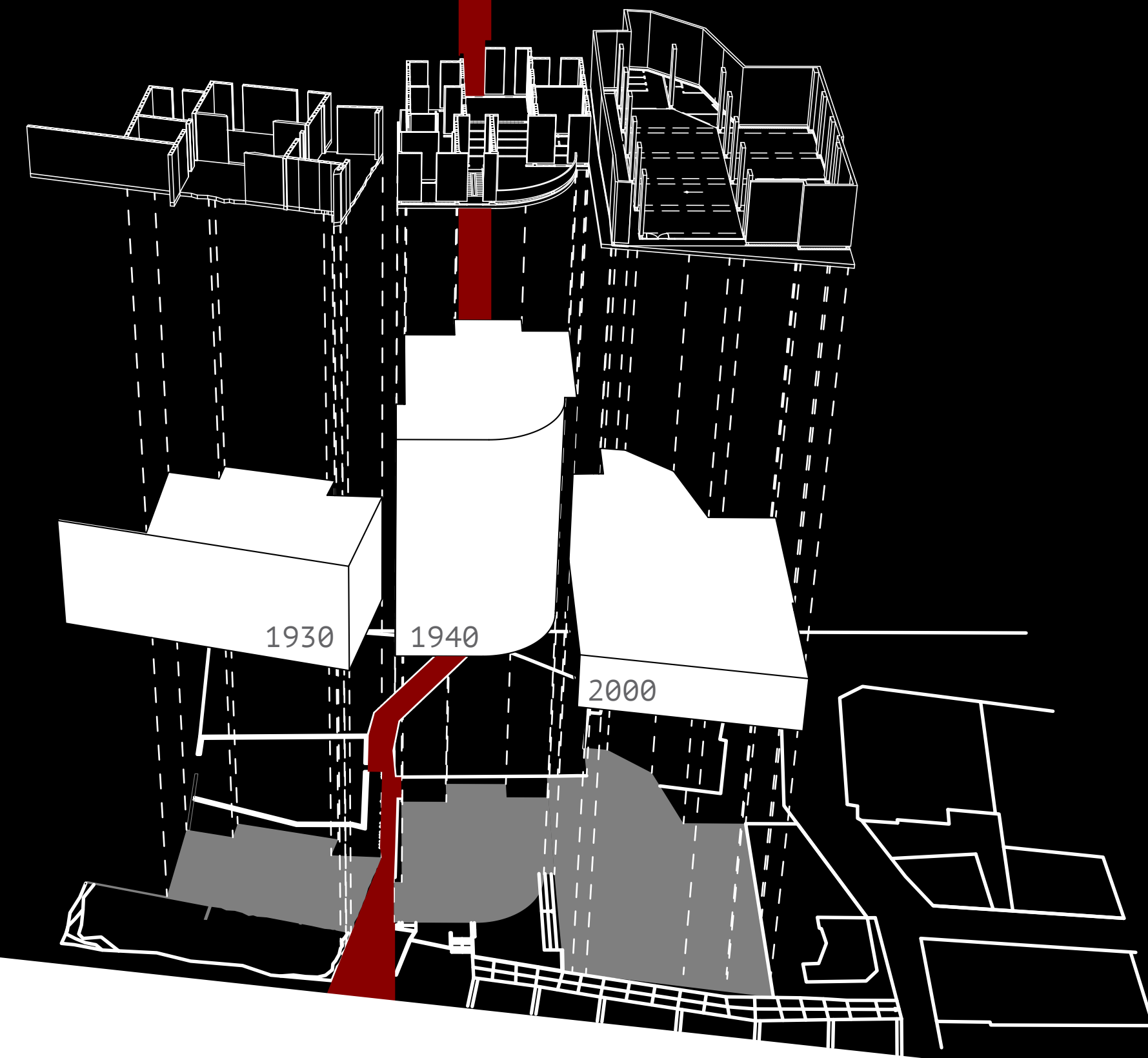
1925

1876

1841



Pasteur Street



Charles Helou Highway

After these gradual urban alteration, the cluster is mainly composed of two central halls buildings of different times separated by stairs connecting the Main Pasteur Street to the Highway and the Charles helou station, an annexed structure tucked in under a concrete slab as well as infiltrated intricate outdoor spaces between the 3 structures.



Relating to the beginning of the research where I represented the practice of space with no specific physical boundaries. It is important to note that in this cluster, the functions that take place aren't predicted by the created boundaries but rather by the changes in the society's rituals and cultural patterns.

[It's the way the space is practiced that creates the boundaries  
rather than the boundaries that dictate the practice].

Practice ————— Boundary

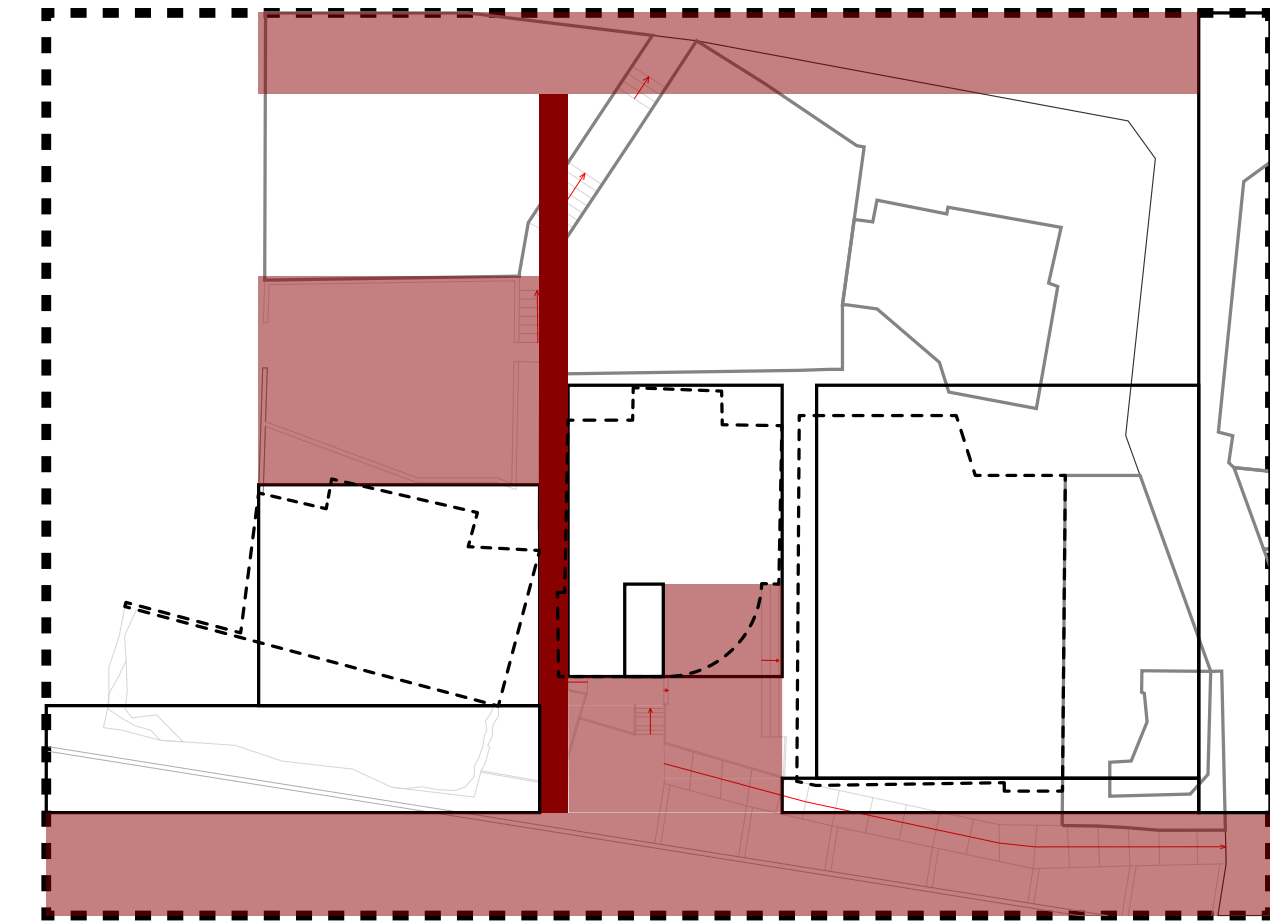
Some of the spaces that were created host hybrid and adaptable programmatic functions. I refer to them as *functional connectors*

because of the overlap of the different usages and the difficulty to label them under a specific function.

Having experienced the site myself, one thing I noticed was that it is the presence of these functional connectors that make for the richness of the site's programmatic layout and circulation.

This site specific quality played a catalytic role in turning the cluster into a hub to the young artistic crowd of the city.



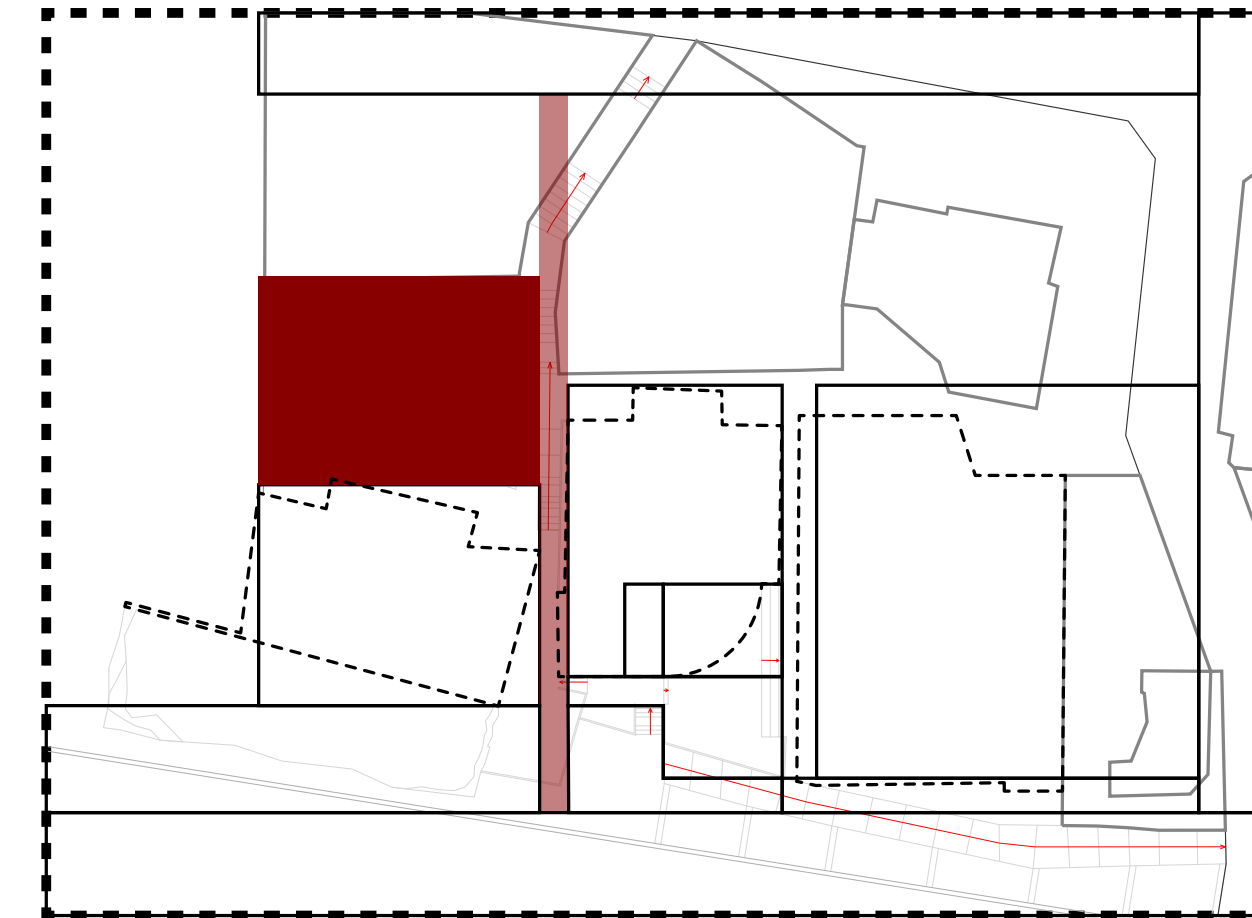


Narrow stairs cutting through the site from Pasteur street to the highway and feeding into several spaces, such as green areas acting as informal sitting areas and playgrounds.



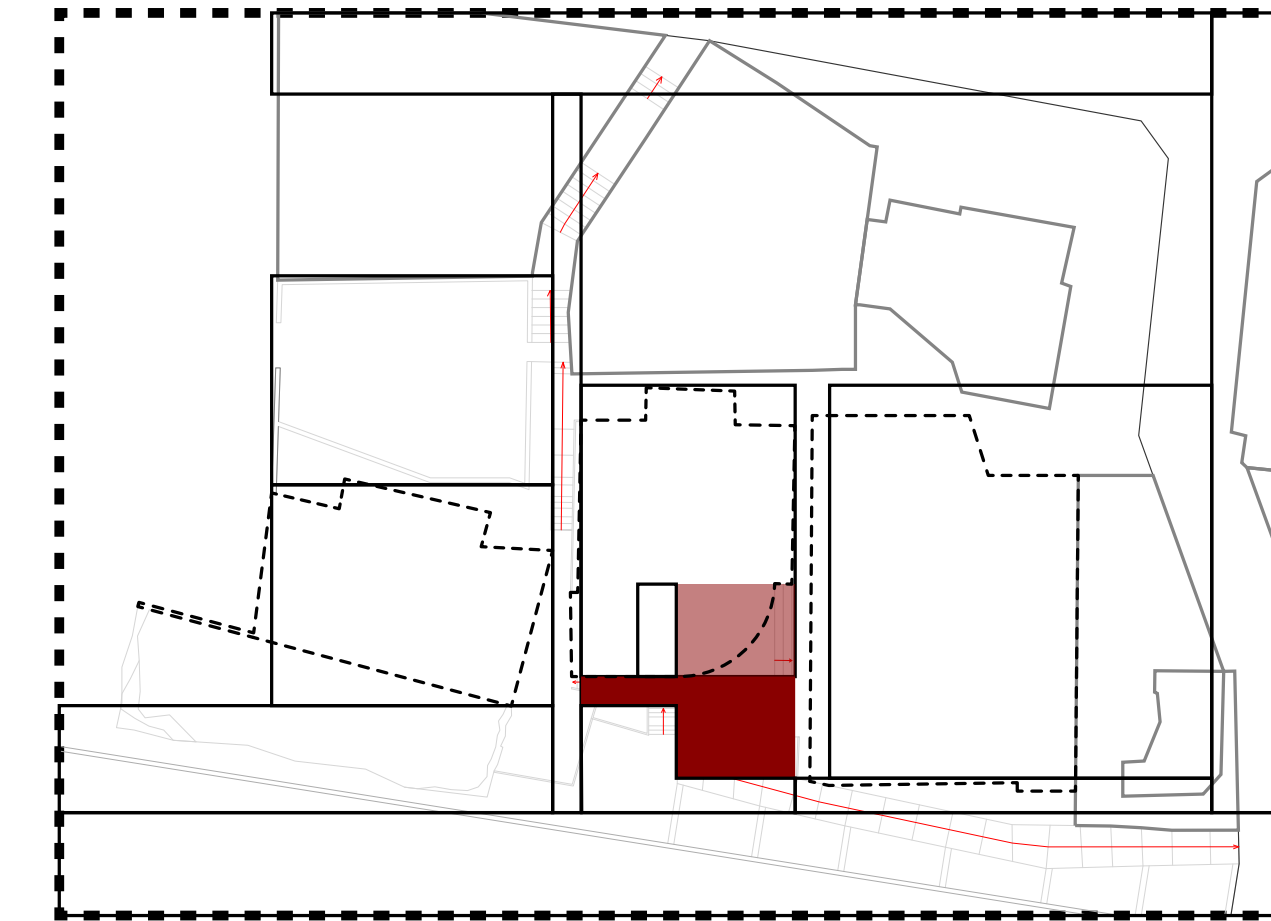


An outdoor area that is used as a playground and connection between the cluster and the adjacent parking lot.





[Shoreline cluster]  
Micro\_Functional connectors

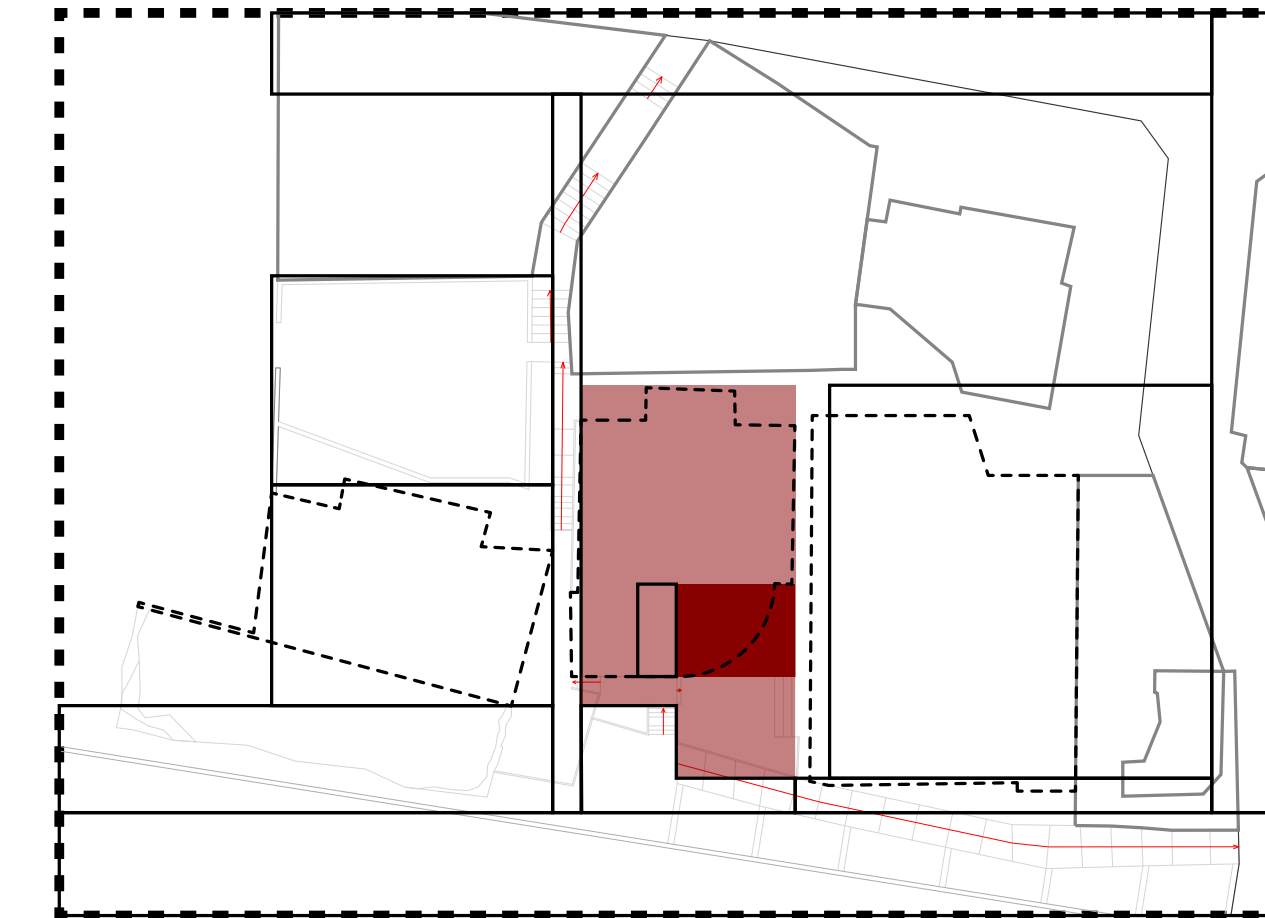


A restaurant terrace that is overlooked by the upper balconies.

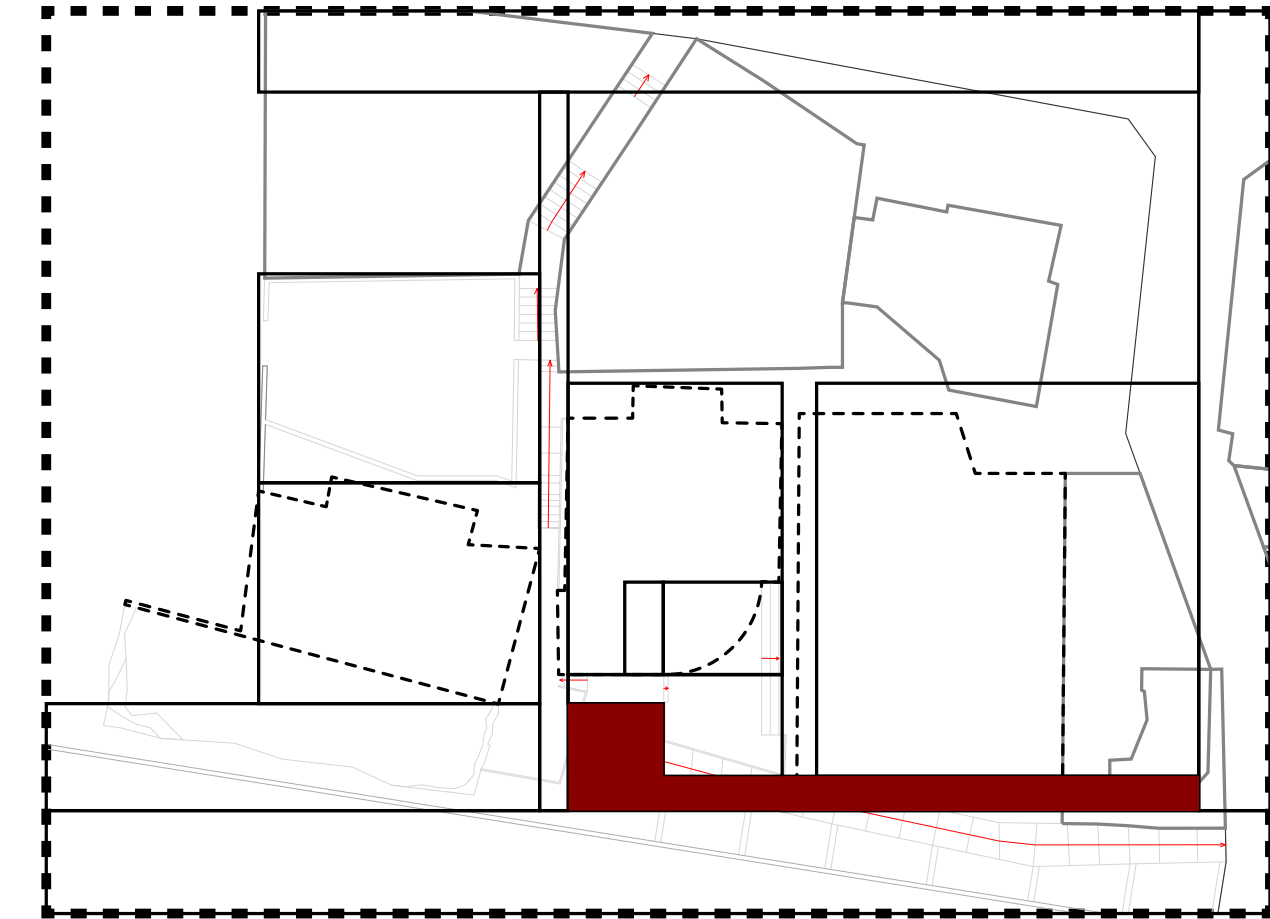




Balconies used as sitting areas for the airbnb or sometimes as an extension to the restaurant.





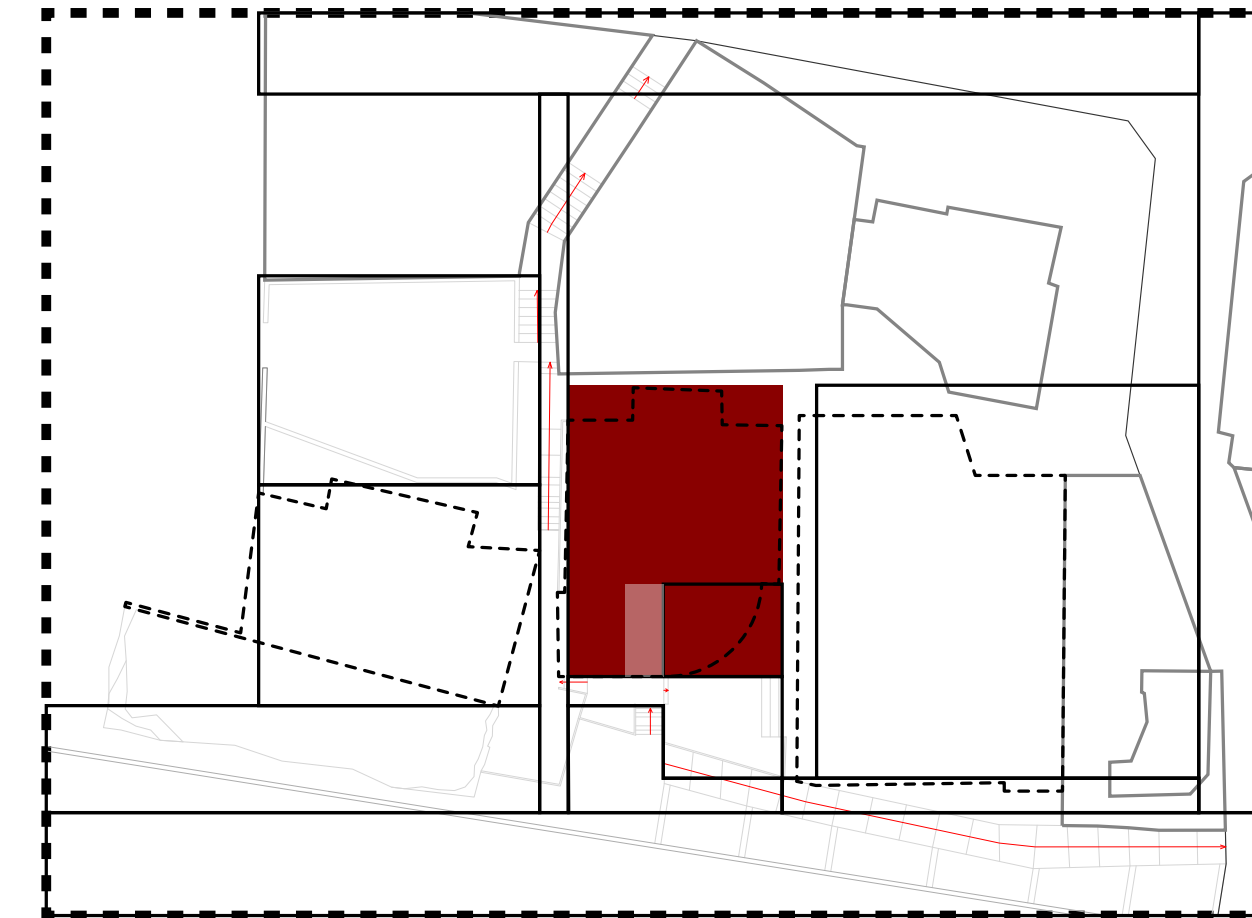


A lower garden used as an informal sitting area, and another staircase that closes the loop back to the Pasteur street and that is used both as a connector and an unconventional stepped terrace to provide more seating area.



# [Shoreline cluster]

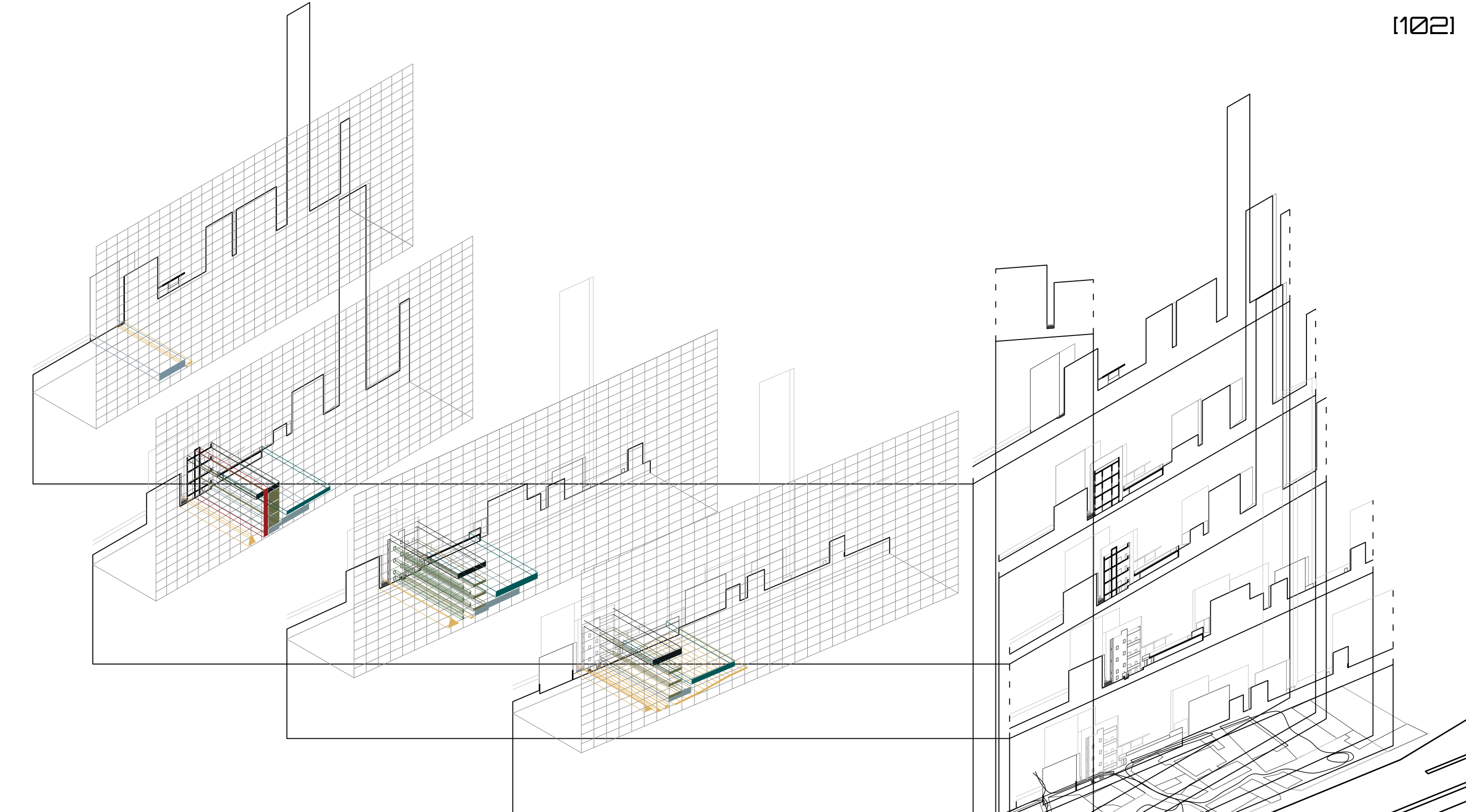
Micro\_Functional connectors



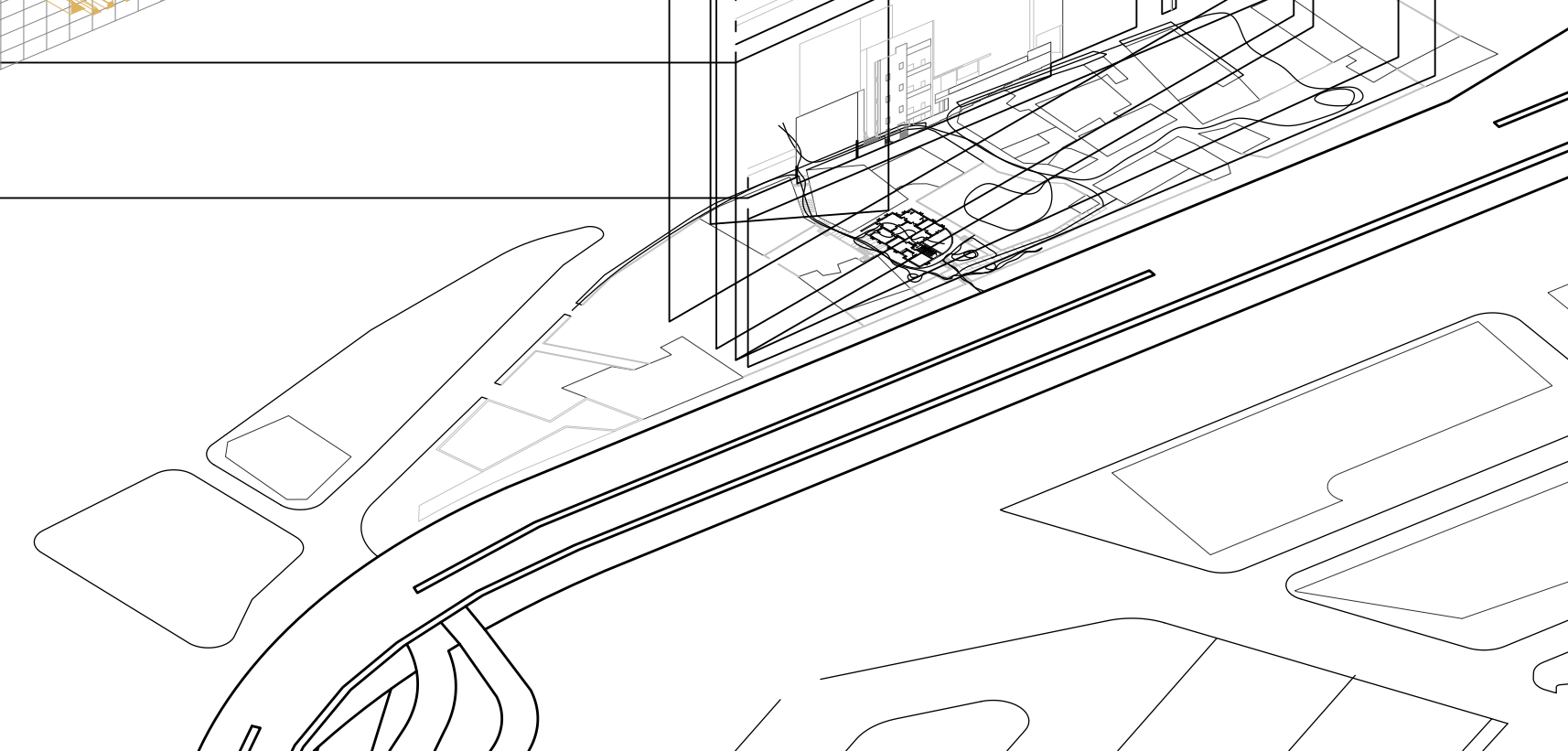
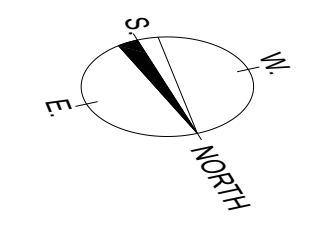
The roof of the building is only accessible through the building itself by taking the only stairs that pass by all the hotel floors (relating to the notion of tension between the public and the private sectors that was represented previously).

[Shoreline cluster]

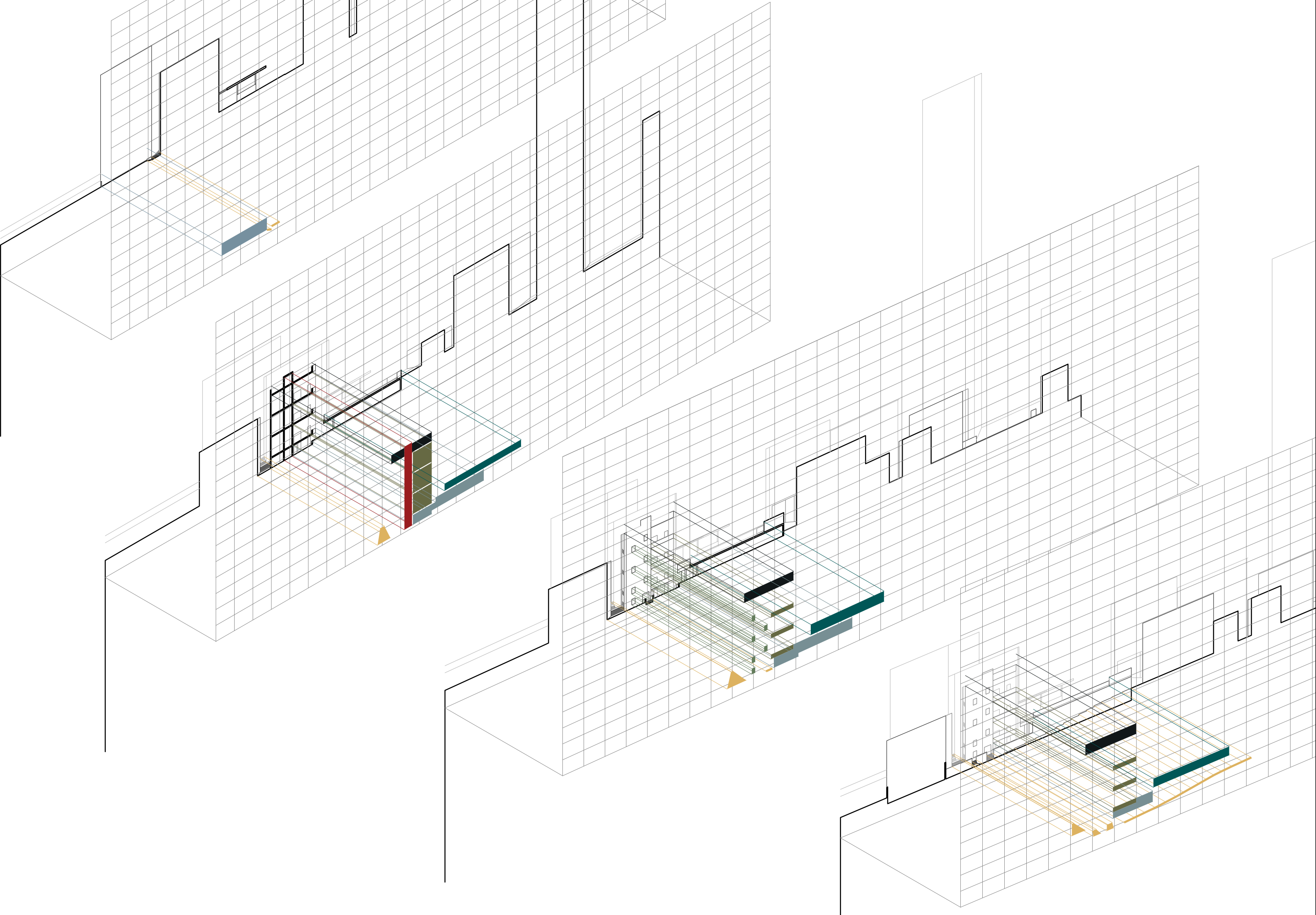
Micro\_connectors as catalyst to program versatility



- uncovered concrete slab
- Emm nazih expansion
- balconies
- Vertical connection
- Roof
- Connecting stairs







I decided to highlight these connectors, which are actually elements I represented in my previous interpretations such as stairs, balconies, terraces, gardens.. And extruded them from the sections|facades in order to see how they overlap and relate.





TODAY, After the blast  
socio spatial practices  
that used to take place  
in the cluster might never  
happen again the way they  
did before.



[Shoreline cluster]  
Micro\_frozen socio-spatial practices



[108]

Additionally one of the  
three structures is in a very  
critical state.

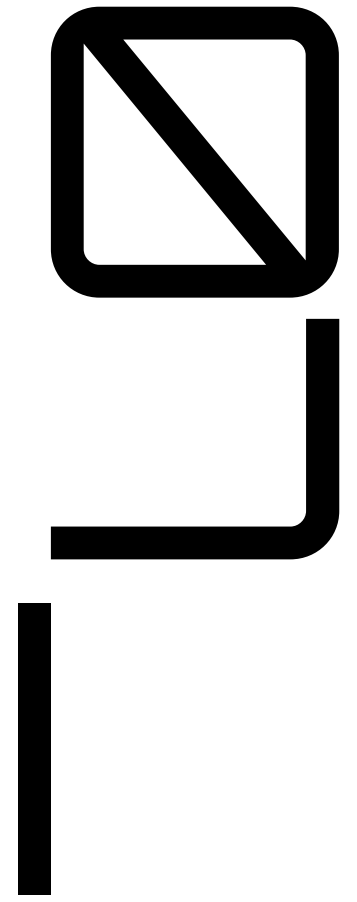




Since I am dealing with a site that was heavily damaged and right at the epicenter of the blast, I see it as a remedy that I am looking forward to revive through

*a catalytic and adaptive kind of intervention rather than a reconstruction or traditional preservation kind of one.*





I see my intervention on this cluster as a socio spatial practice revival strategy.

*BUT HOW can I reenergize these three buildings and create a landmark of the new transformation of the site while preserving the last bits of these buildings?*

[Site]\_  
Impressions

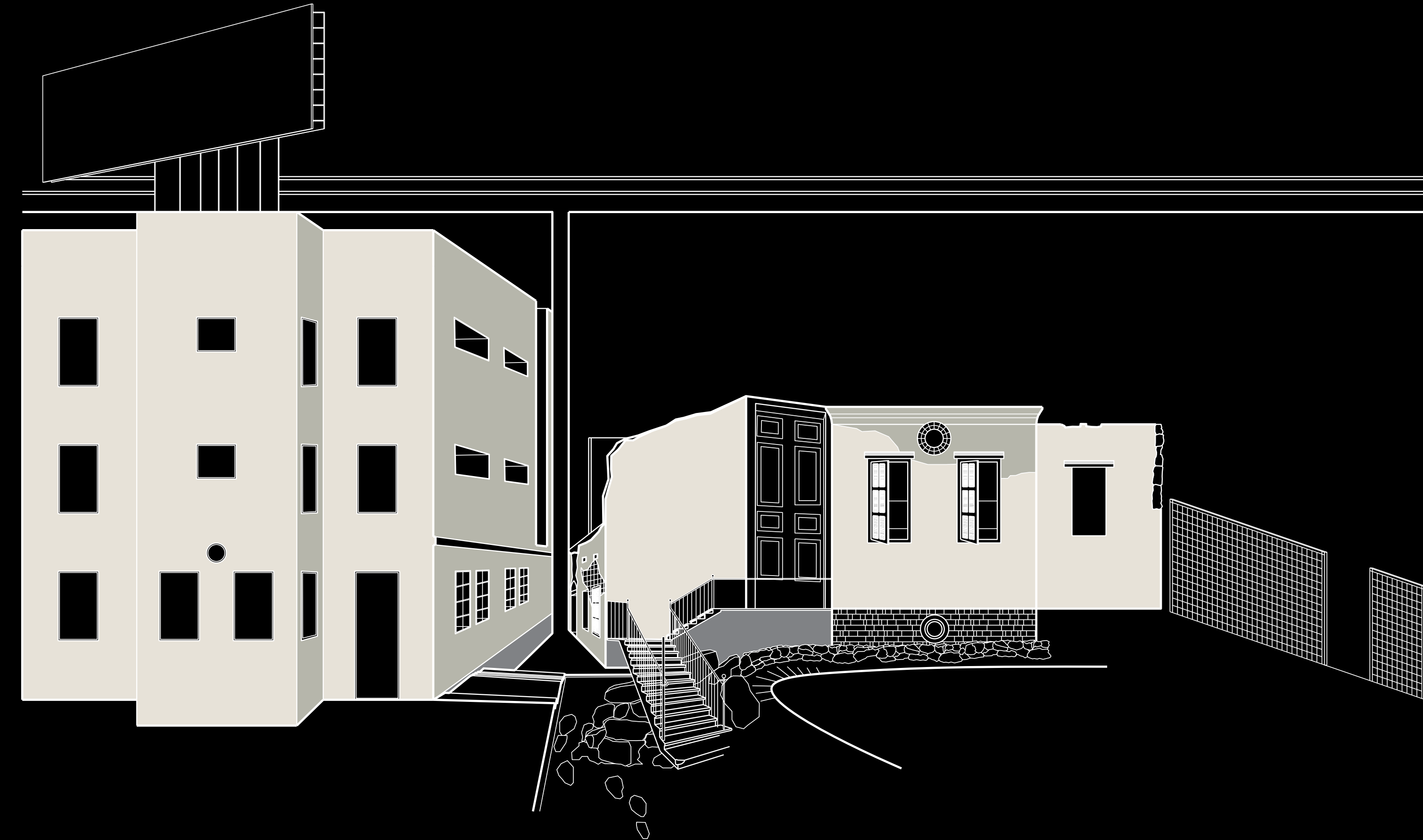
# [Shoreline cluster]

Micro Impressions

After observing the site closely, and linking to my previous interpretations, I started by drawing 3d impressions of my understanding of the site which gradually started to guide me into a logic of a site specific strategy for the revival of the cluster.

(Impression looking from the Pasteur street towards the highway)

Two central halls separated by narrow connecting stairs with facing openings on their adjacent sides.





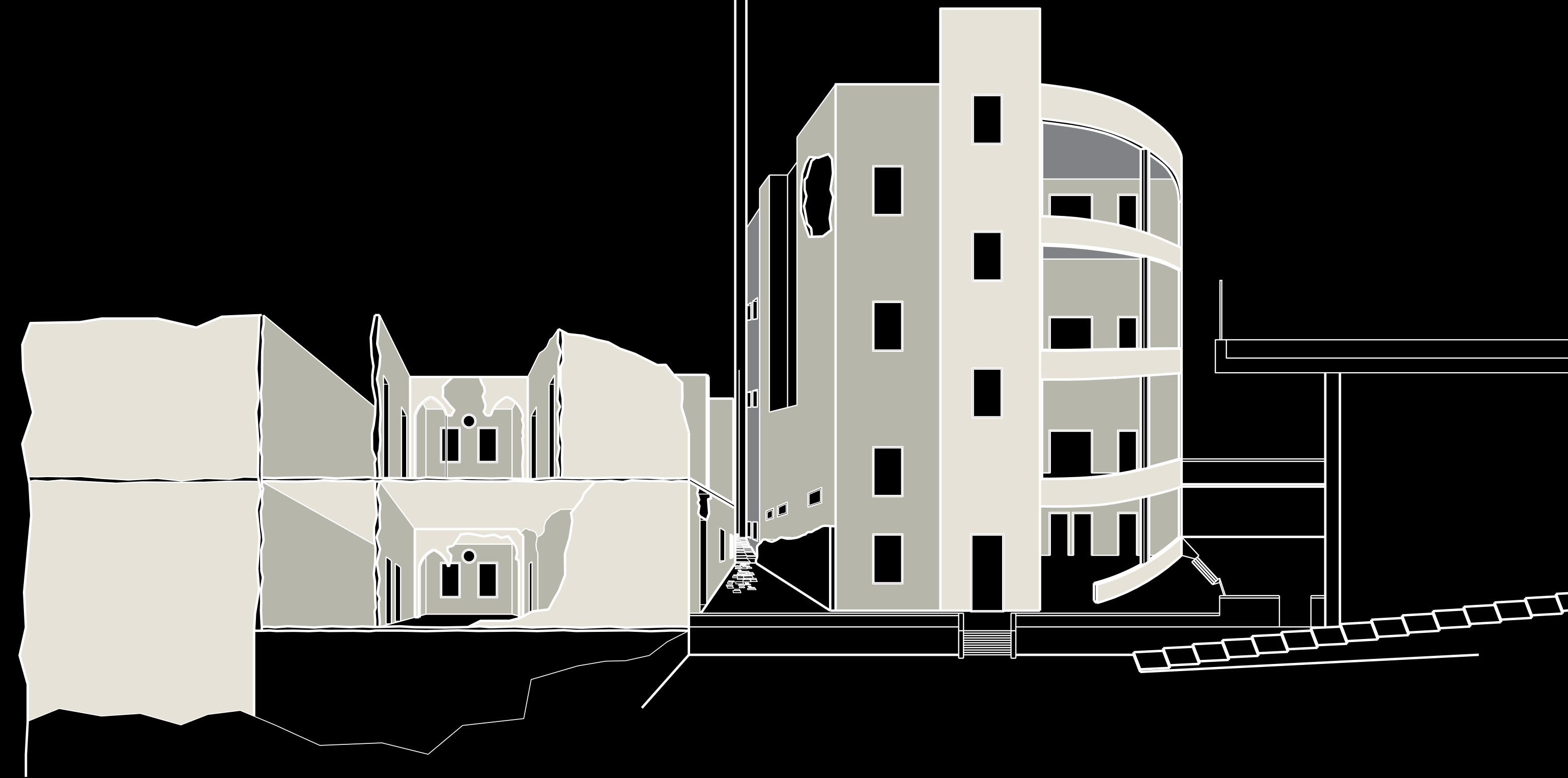
(Impression looking from the Pasteur street towards the highway)

Emphasizing on their interior and exterior connectors and seeing how they relate. (side rooms openings, interior openings, interior configuration)



(Impression looking from  
the highway)

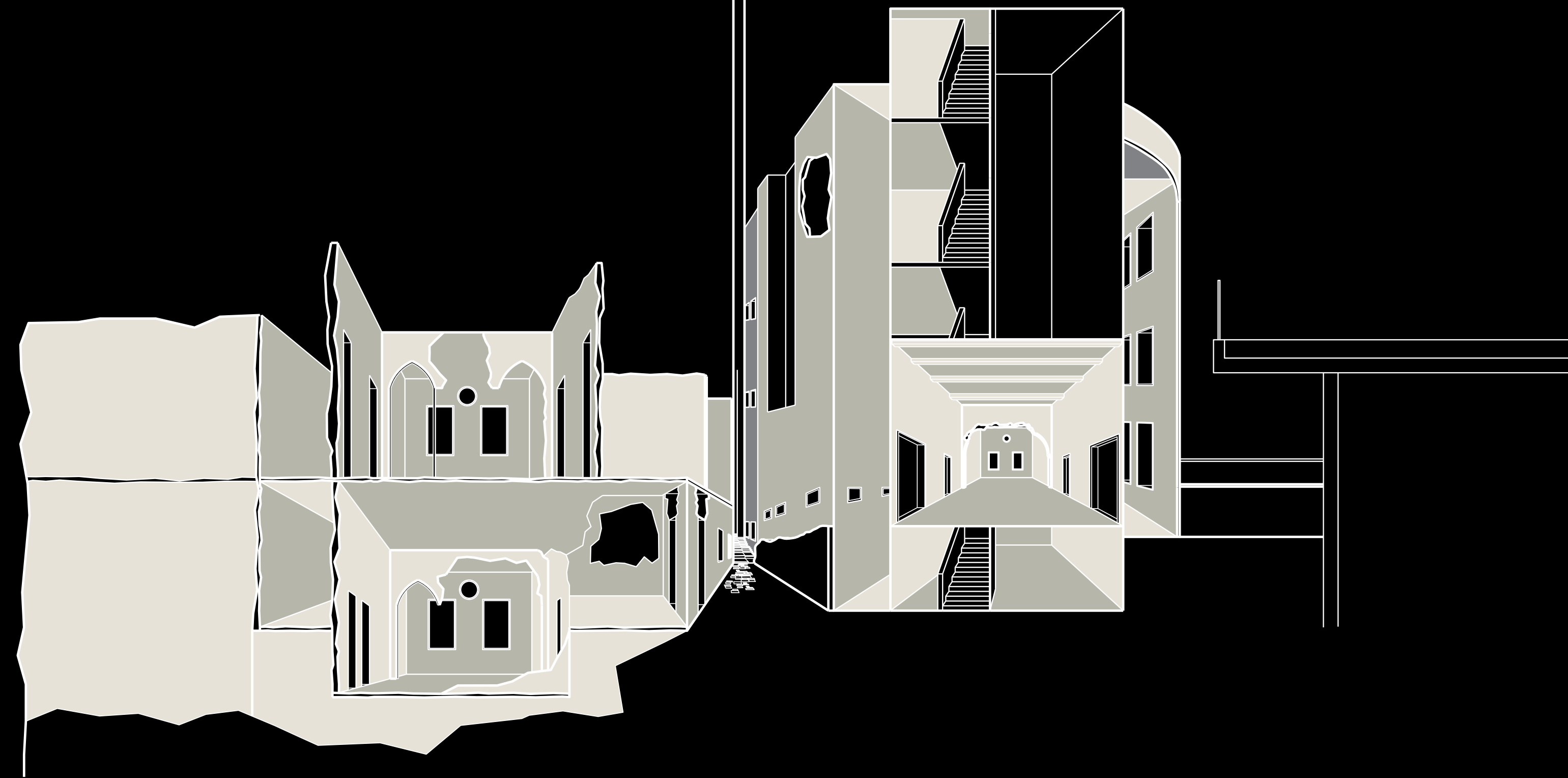
Two different types of  
central halls and in  
different conditions  
after the blast. The  
older one on the left is  
in a critical state and  
the other is partially  
destroyed.



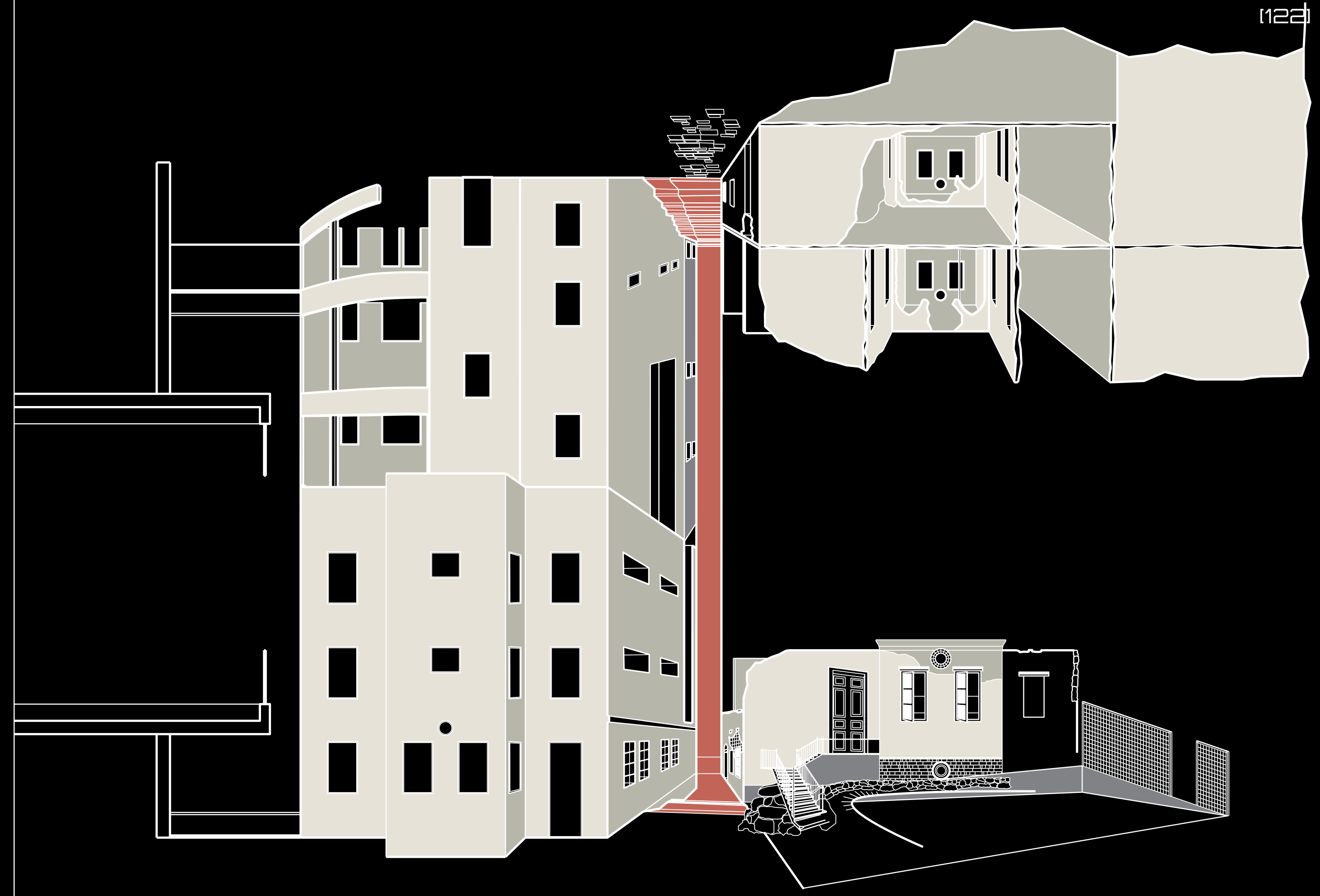


(Impression looking from  
the highway)

Emphasizing on their  
interior and exterior  
connectors and seeing  
how they relate. (side  
rooms openings, interior  
openings, interior  
configuration)



These impressions show  
the existing conditions  
of the site.  
And highlight the  
importance of the central  
stairs to the cluster.

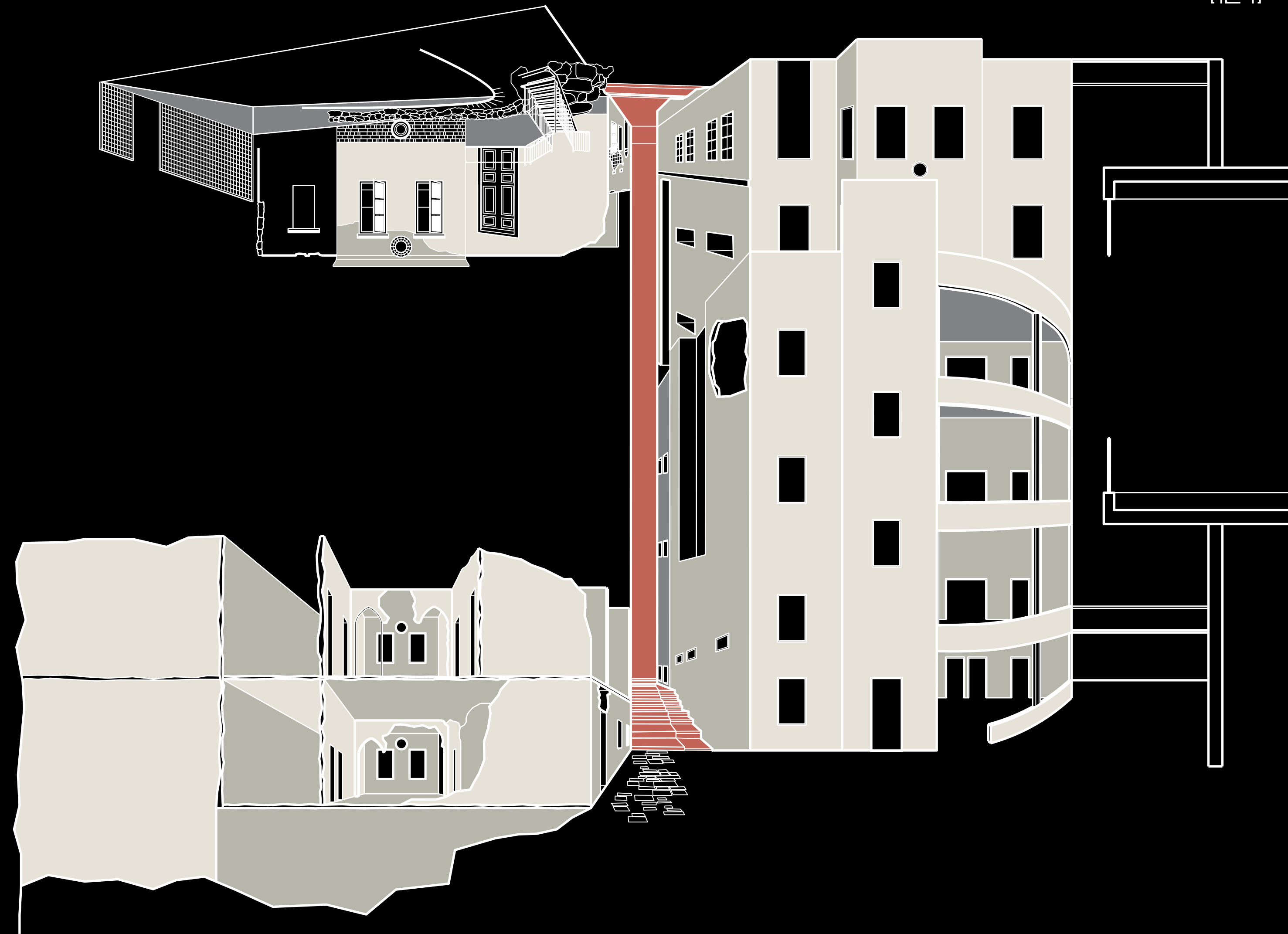




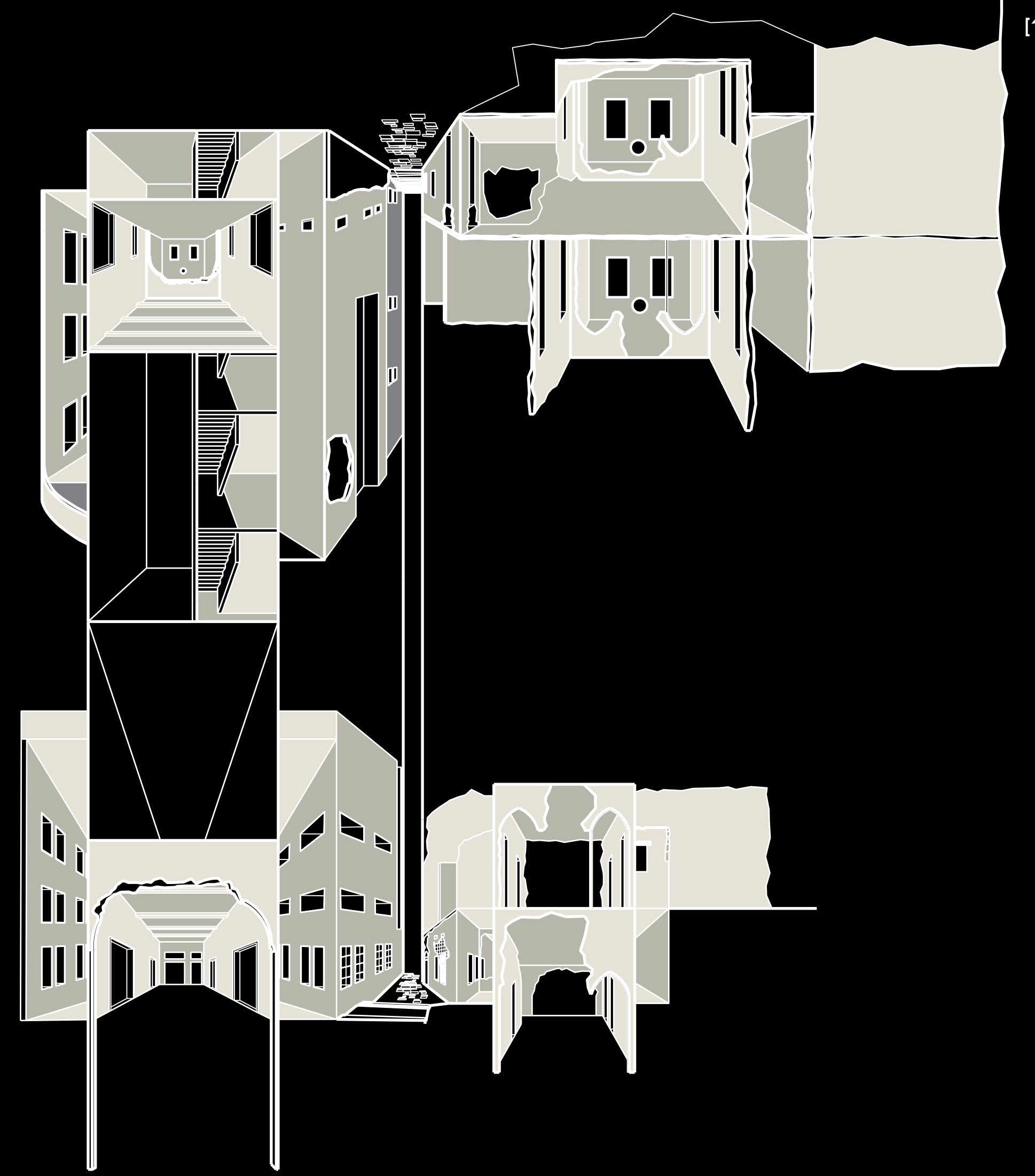
[Shoreline cluster]

Micro\_Impressions

Mirroring the two levels,  
emphasizes the central  
stair connection which  
connects the two sides of  
the cluster as well as  
the two levels.

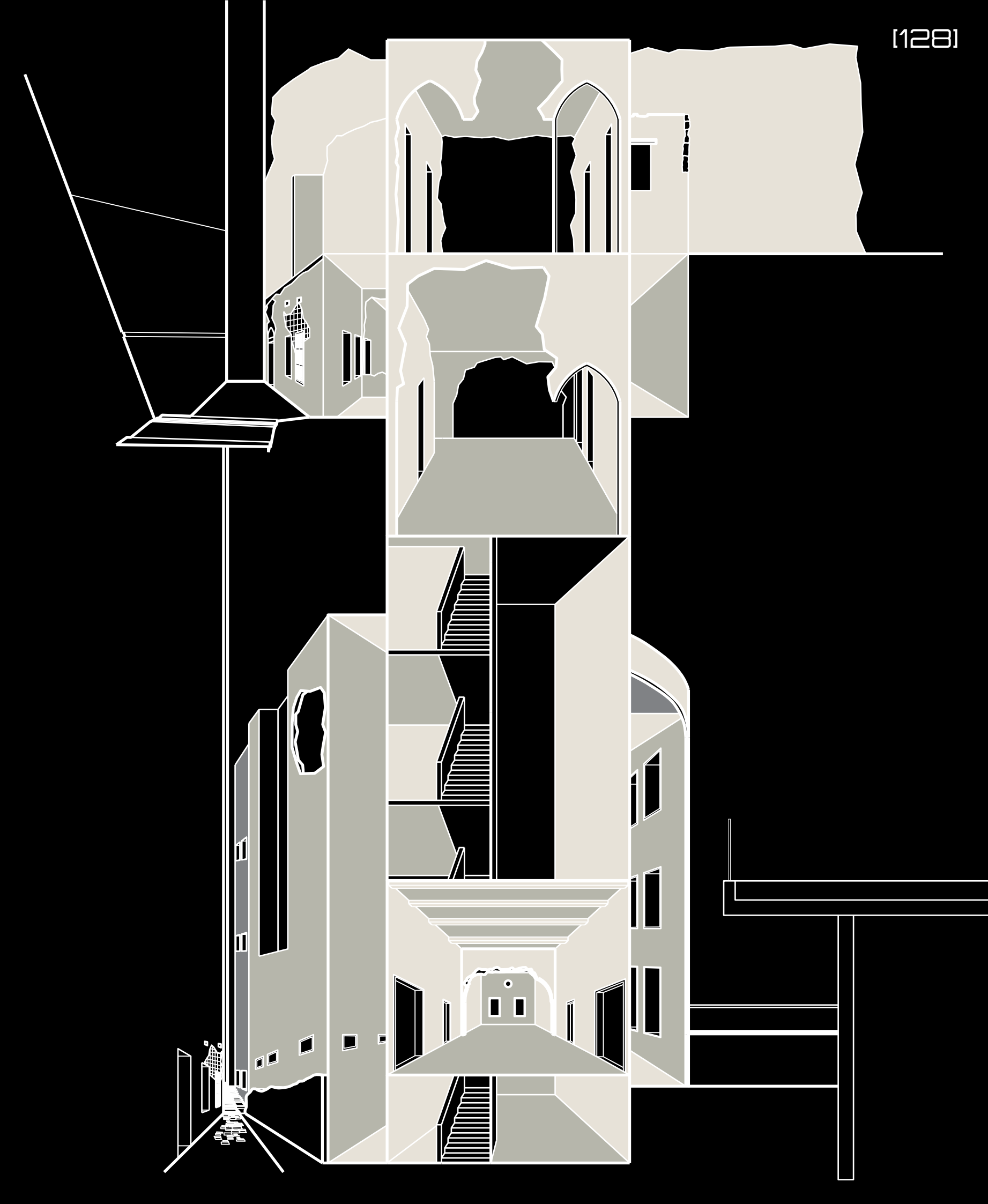


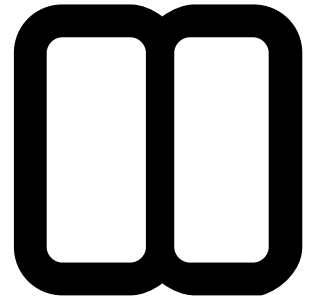
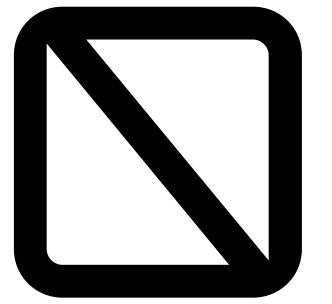
The stairs are present in all the impressions and act as an anchor to the site. I noticed that I was using them as a reference to represent the two adjacent central halls.





Flipping directions allowed me to see the building that is in better shape (lot 115) as a support to the other one (lot 114).





Seeing the stairs as the anchor of the site and the 114 building as one that cannot subsist on its own made me to look at the agglomeration in a different manner in terms of intervention strategy.

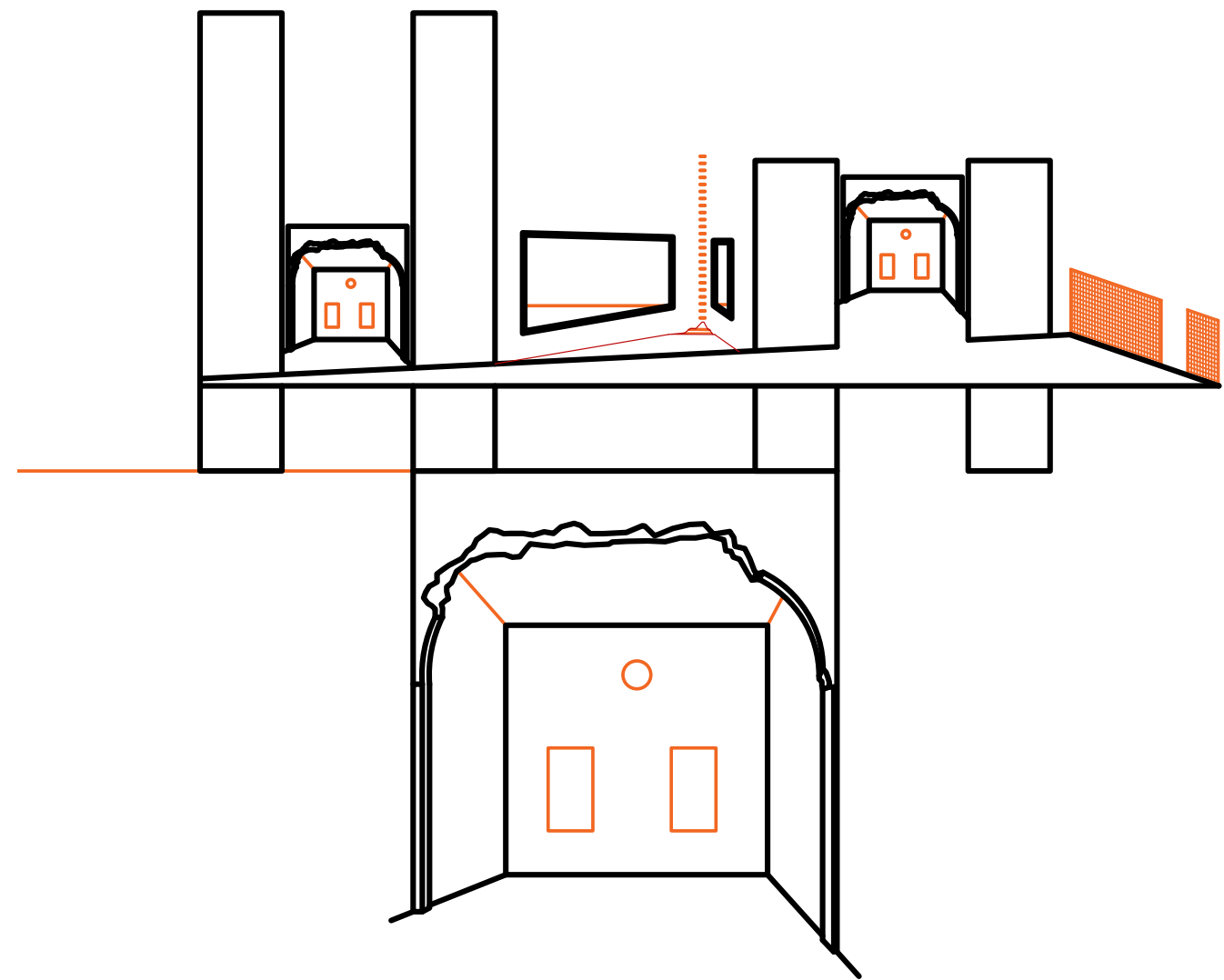
*Since the 114 building is in a bad state how can I salvage what is left of it and allow it to subsist without going into a preservation kind of approach?*

[Strategy]\_  
Decentralizing



## [Strategy]

Decentralizing



I want to embrace the fact that these buildings were affected and that they are forever transformed by regenerating life and injecting functions in them while not going into a traditional preservation kind of approach.

*And since there is this strong connection between them Why not reinforce it?*

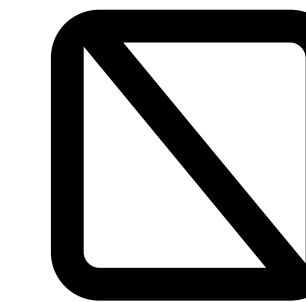
*One way to salvage the damaged building (114) is to annex it or adding it to the other structures.*

I am proposing a site strategy that would consist in bridging the gap between the three structures so that they become supported while decentralizing the existing compositions to

*“a third new central space”*

composed of the connecting stairs and the outdoor spaces which become the main space and whatever was existing becomes secondary. In that sense it becomes the new center of gravity of the cluster.

*The three structures become virtually one entity.*



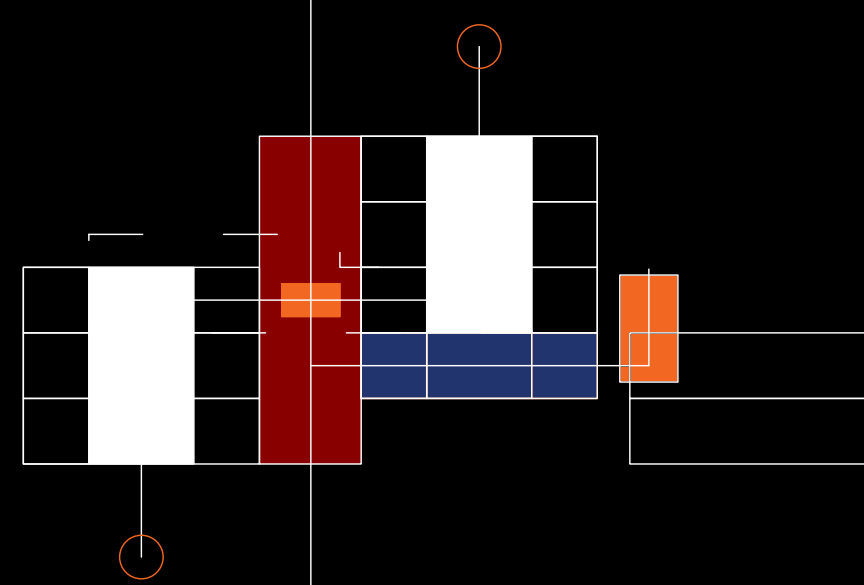
It is important to note that initially built on the shore, the buildings have been transformed programmatically several times following the construction of the highway and the expansion of the port and its infills. Additionally, before the blast the cluster had evolved into becoming a hub for the artistic youth of the city.

So now I am once again proposing an adaptive programmatic transformation that consists in turning the cluster into an adapted artistic hub that would be enhancing its past function while embracing what has become of it after the blast.

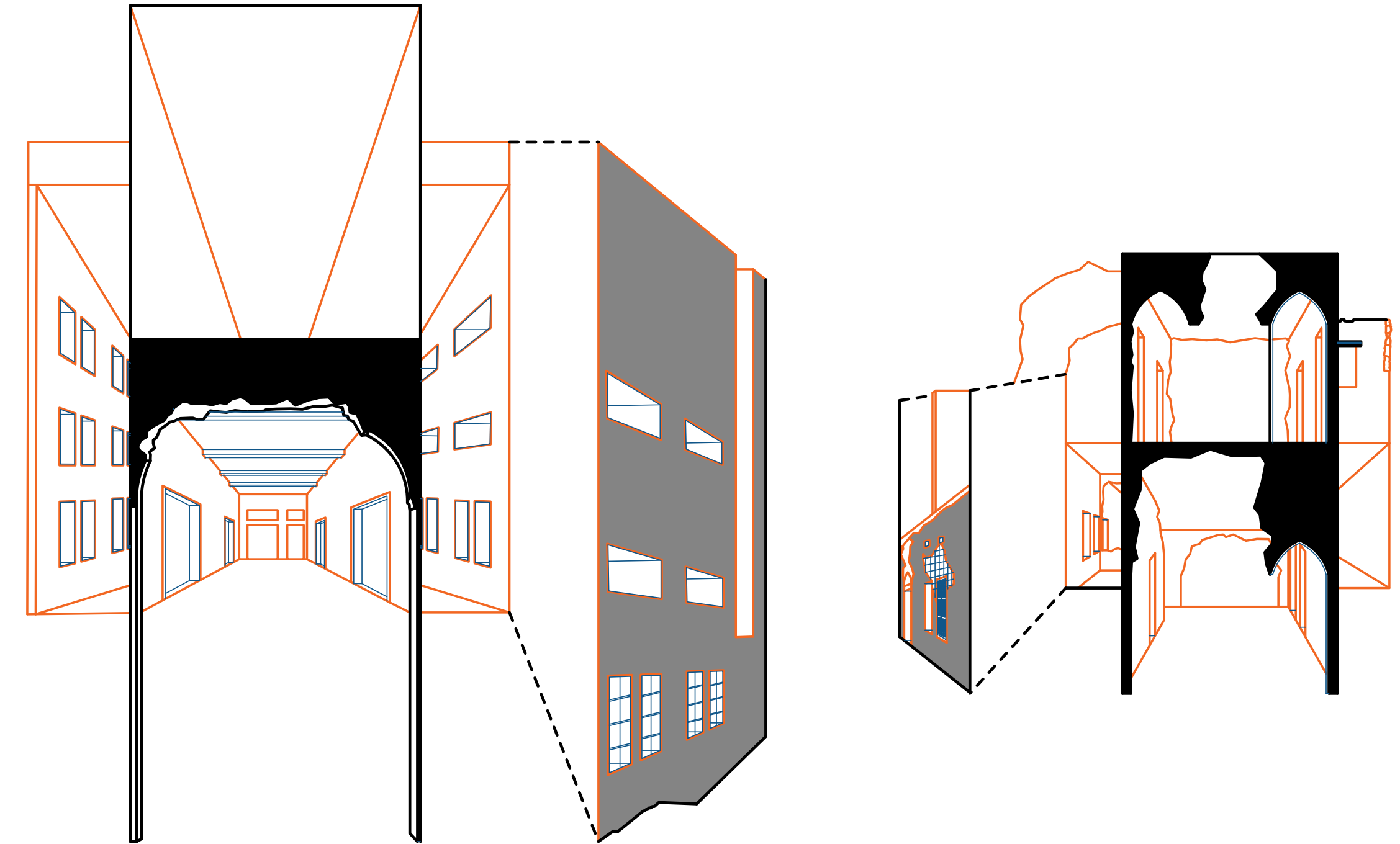
[Intervention]\_  
ARTery  
A Practice of  
Space Sealant.



Since I am almost modifying what we perceive as a sacred space in these buildings, I investigated into the central hall activities and composition to see how I can apply them to this new outdoor central space I am creating so that it becomes as substantial as the original central halls.



I see the main space acting as the main chore and connection that will infiltrate into secondary central halls where we will have more confined programs. The latter will repose on the new central space while allowing it to become the adapted main social space of the composition. In that sense, the facing sides of the present buildings become porous more like permeable boundaries that will allow for a direct access from the new main space.



# [ARTery]

A practice of space sealant

Getting inspired by the processional logic of the central hall and adapting it to the new central space, allowed me to create a new experience out of the same components but through different connections.

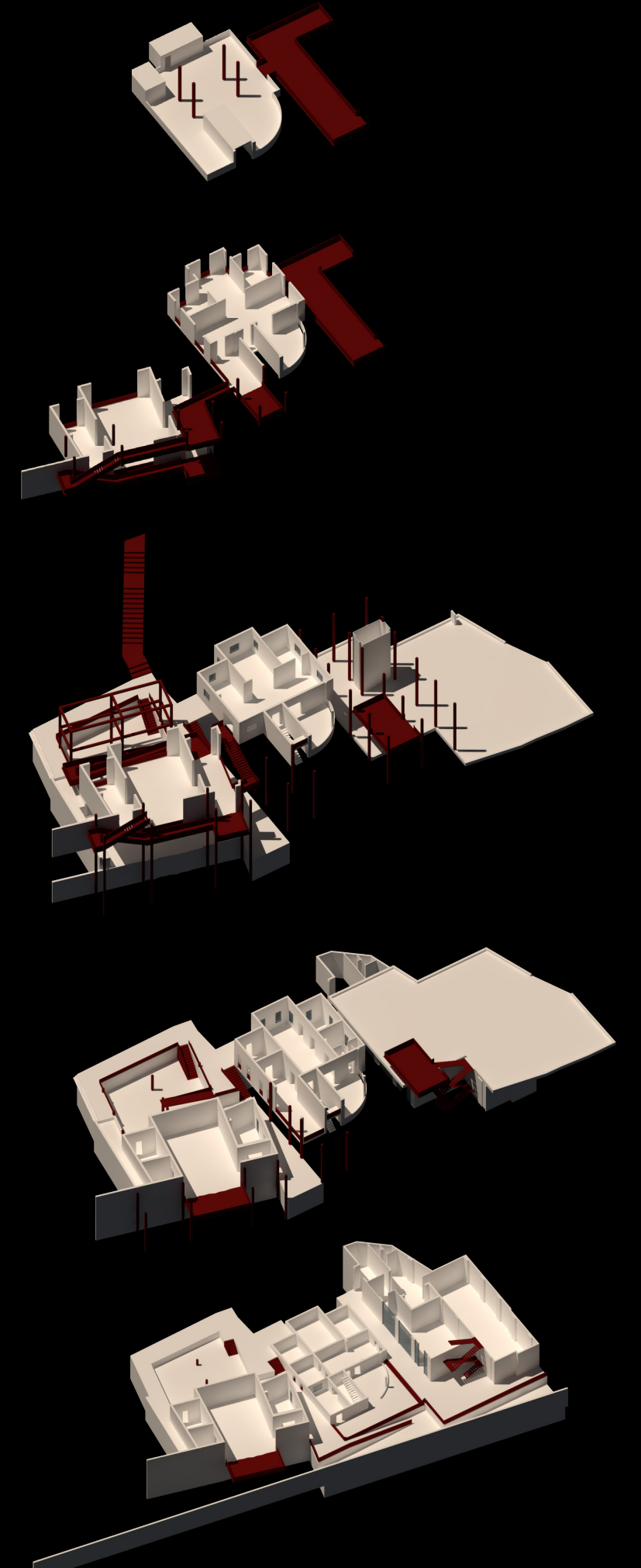
The latter would involve creating overlapping and intersecting spaces that still hold their typological essence while being injected with new life that would complement the new centre.

I started to think horizontally and vertically to create shared spaces as key intersection points between the buildings by getting inspired by the typologies of the site specific functional connectors that are found on site.

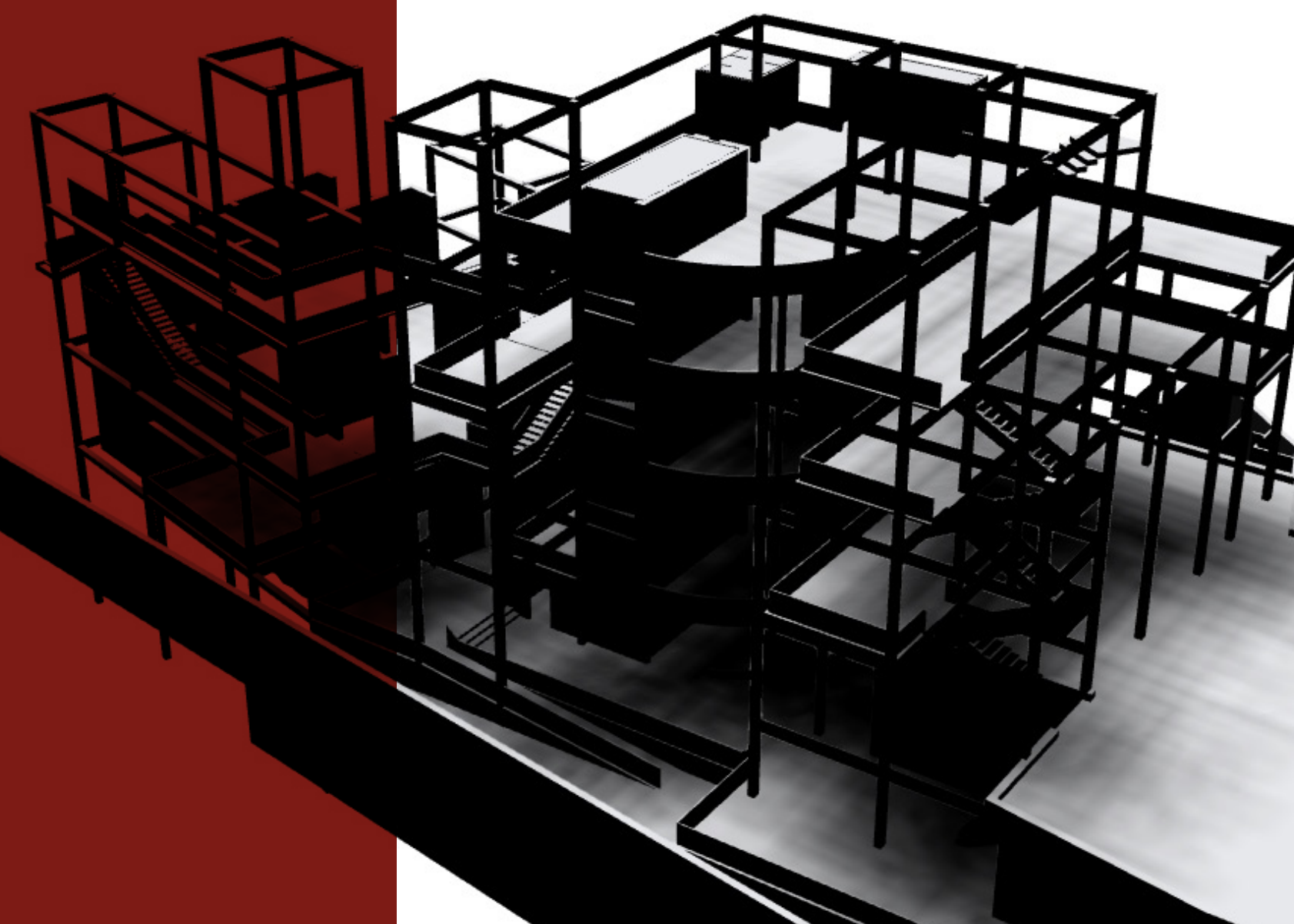
Nevertheless, even if I am introducing new functions and usages to the original spaces, a lot of spaces will remain the same in specificities.

*It's a social shift more than a physical one that I am proposing.*

- Roof Annexed exhibition space
- Second Floor Private exhibition area  
Annexed exhibition space
- First Floor Temporary exhibition space  
Studios/working area
- Ground Floor Projection room/performance space  
Artists hub
- Basement Emm Nazih Cafe  
Hybrid space  
Projection room/performance space

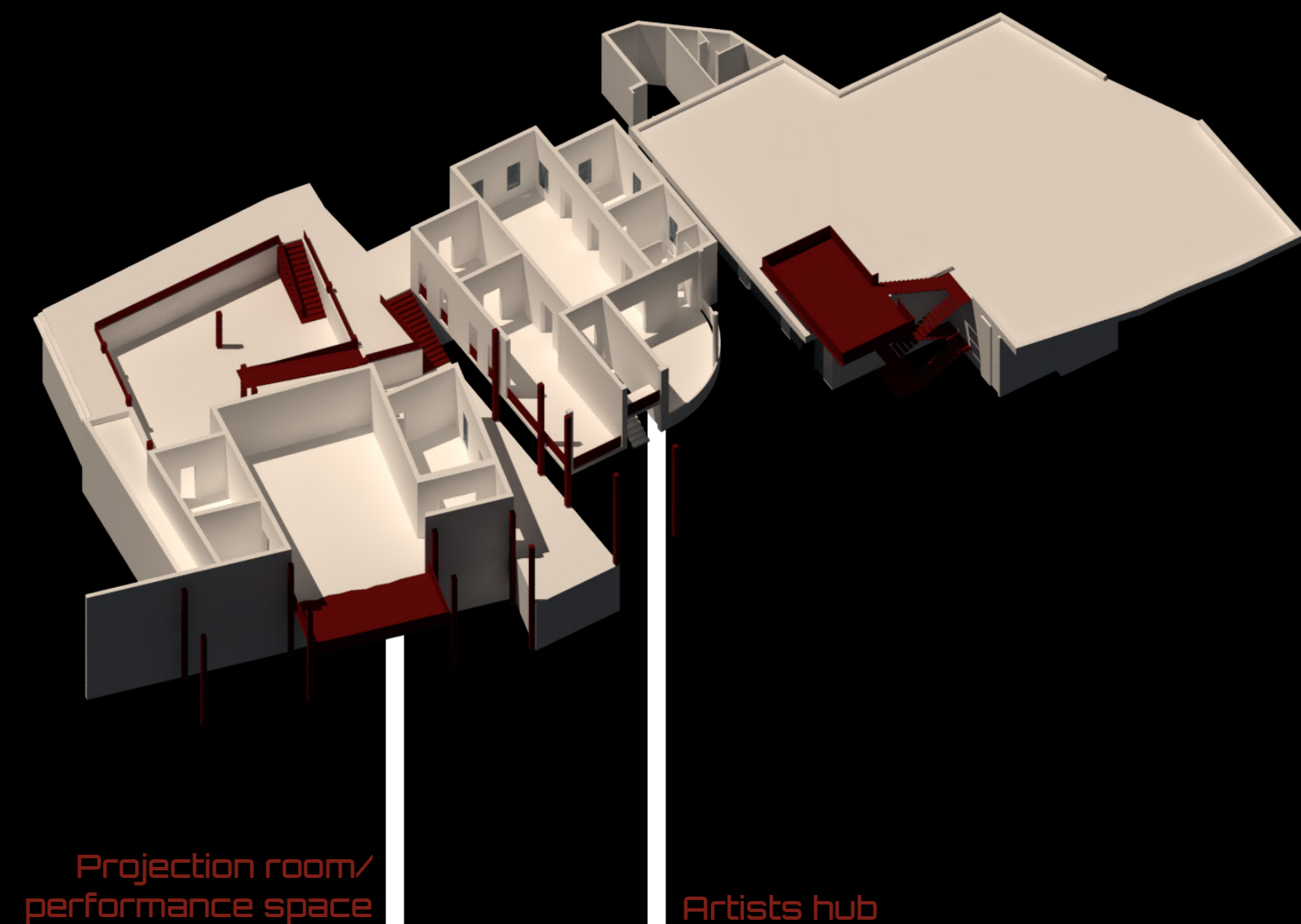


The service areas that are in between will have a double function. They had some kind of privacy level that is now compromised through the exhibition of some of their private spaces to the outside and through the change of the type of functions that they will be hosting which is no longer private but semi-private.



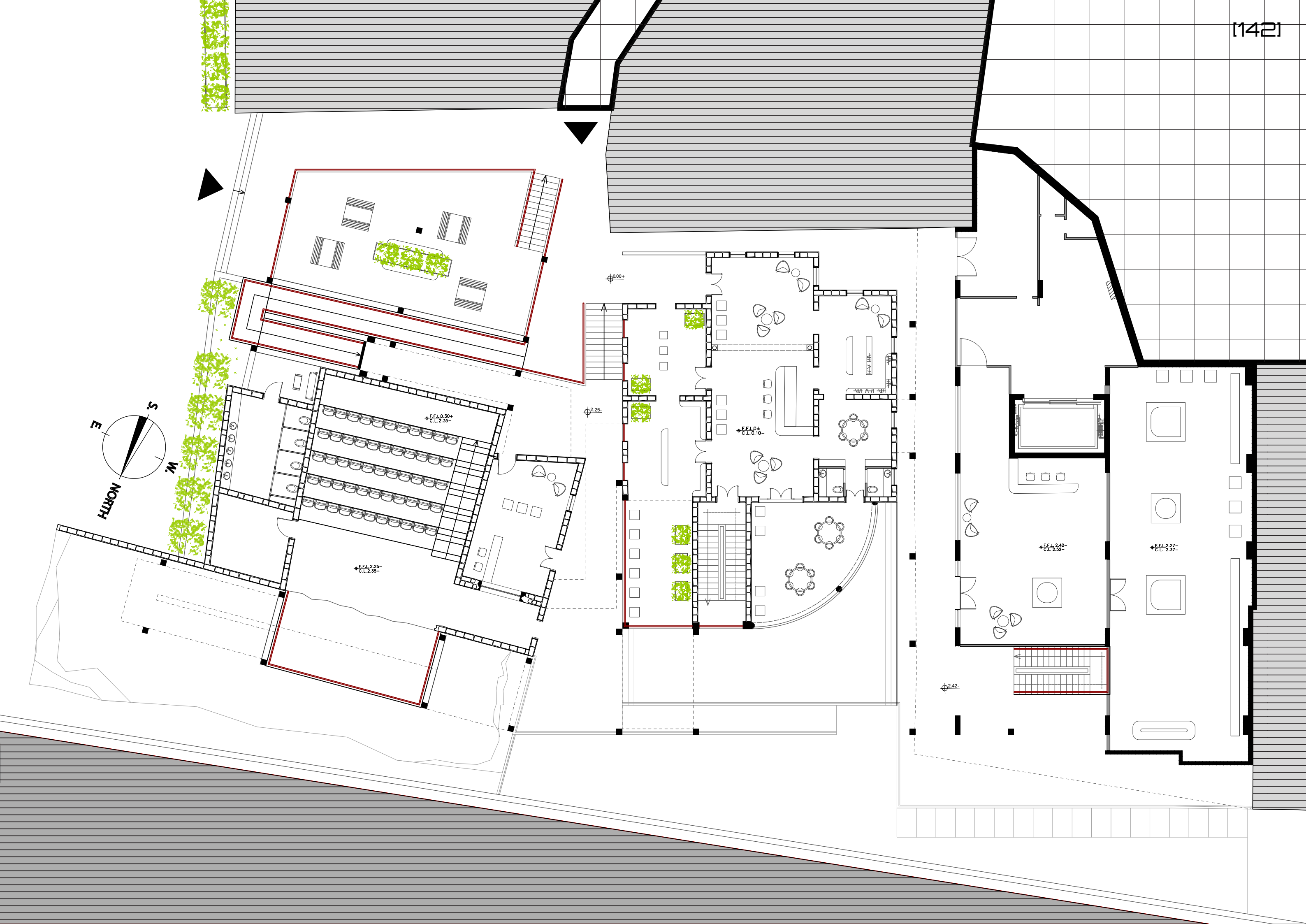
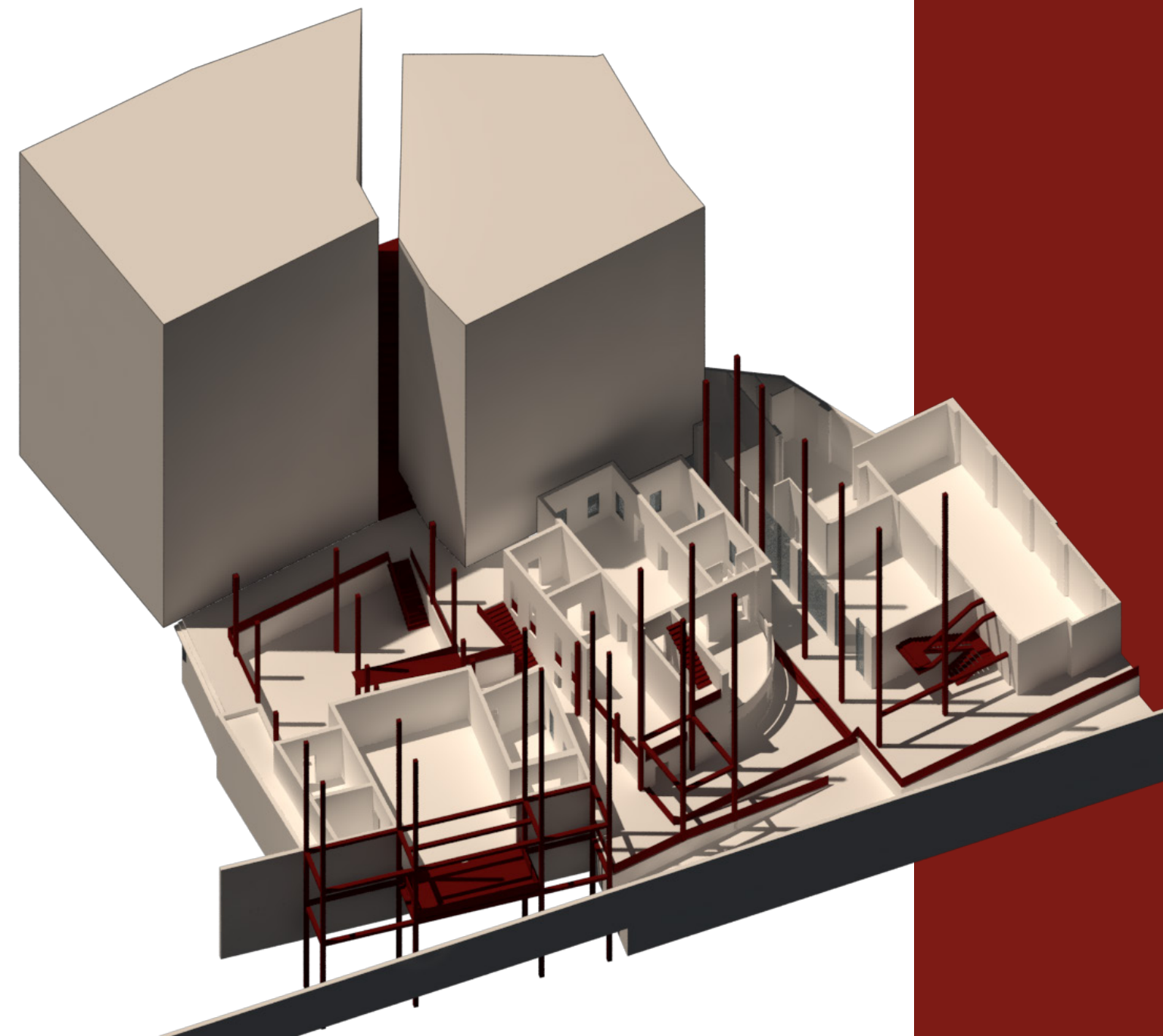


The site is accessible through the main stairs coming down from the Pasteur Street or from the adjacent parking lot. The ground floor gives access to an artist hub and leads to several connections. The main stairs breaks into two stairs going down to the basement level as well as a ramp that goes up to the first floor.



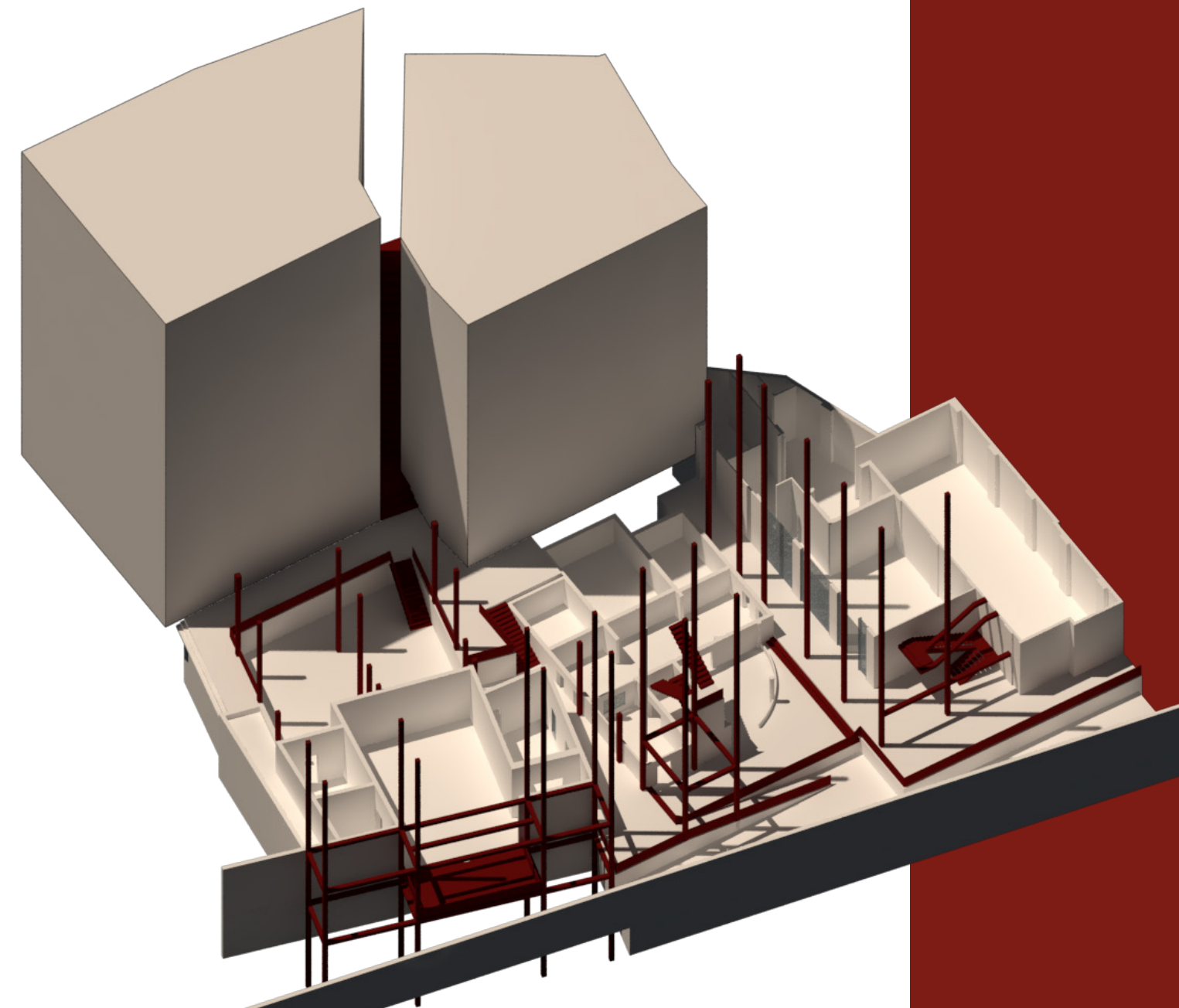
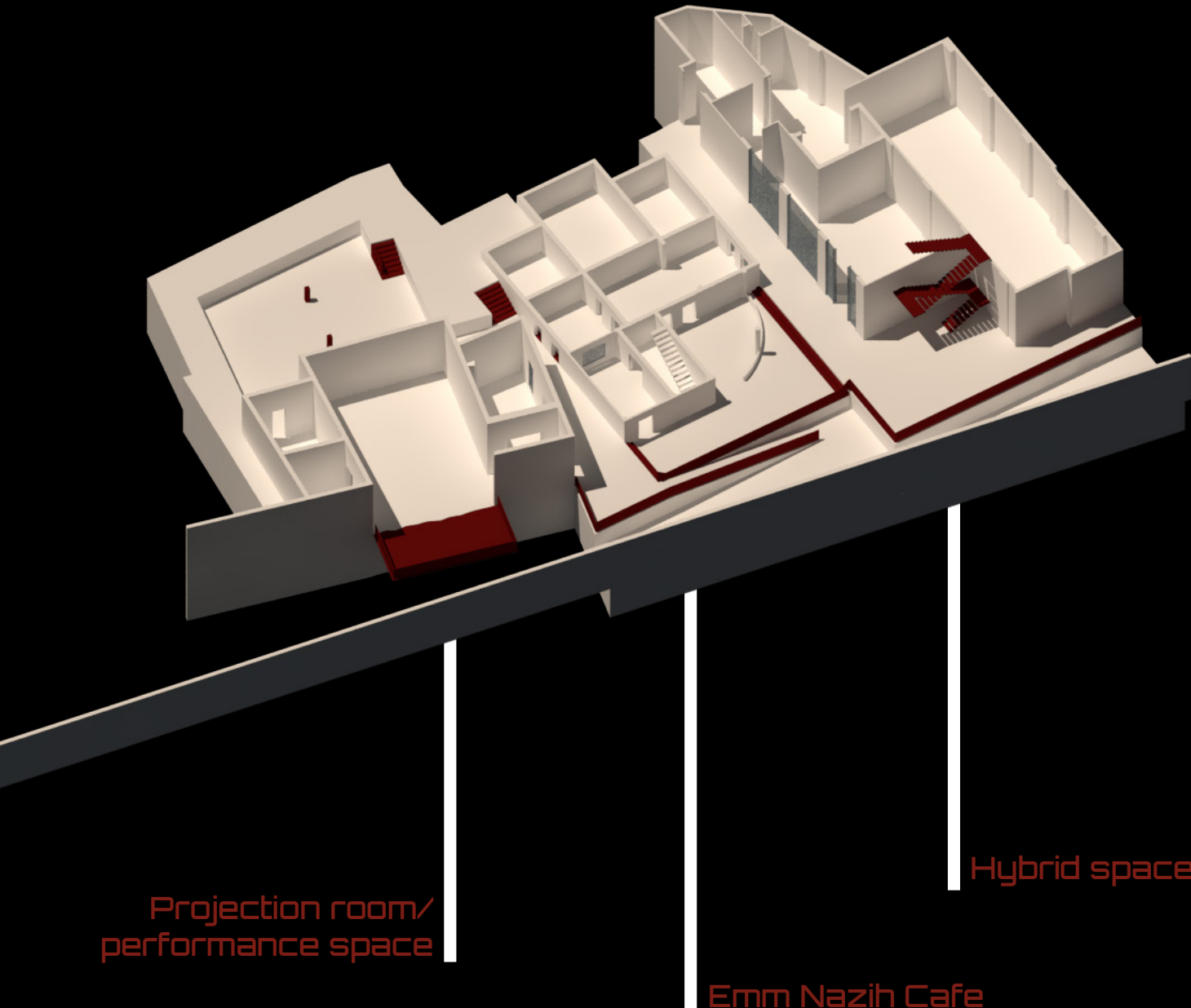
Projection room/  
performance space

Artists hub



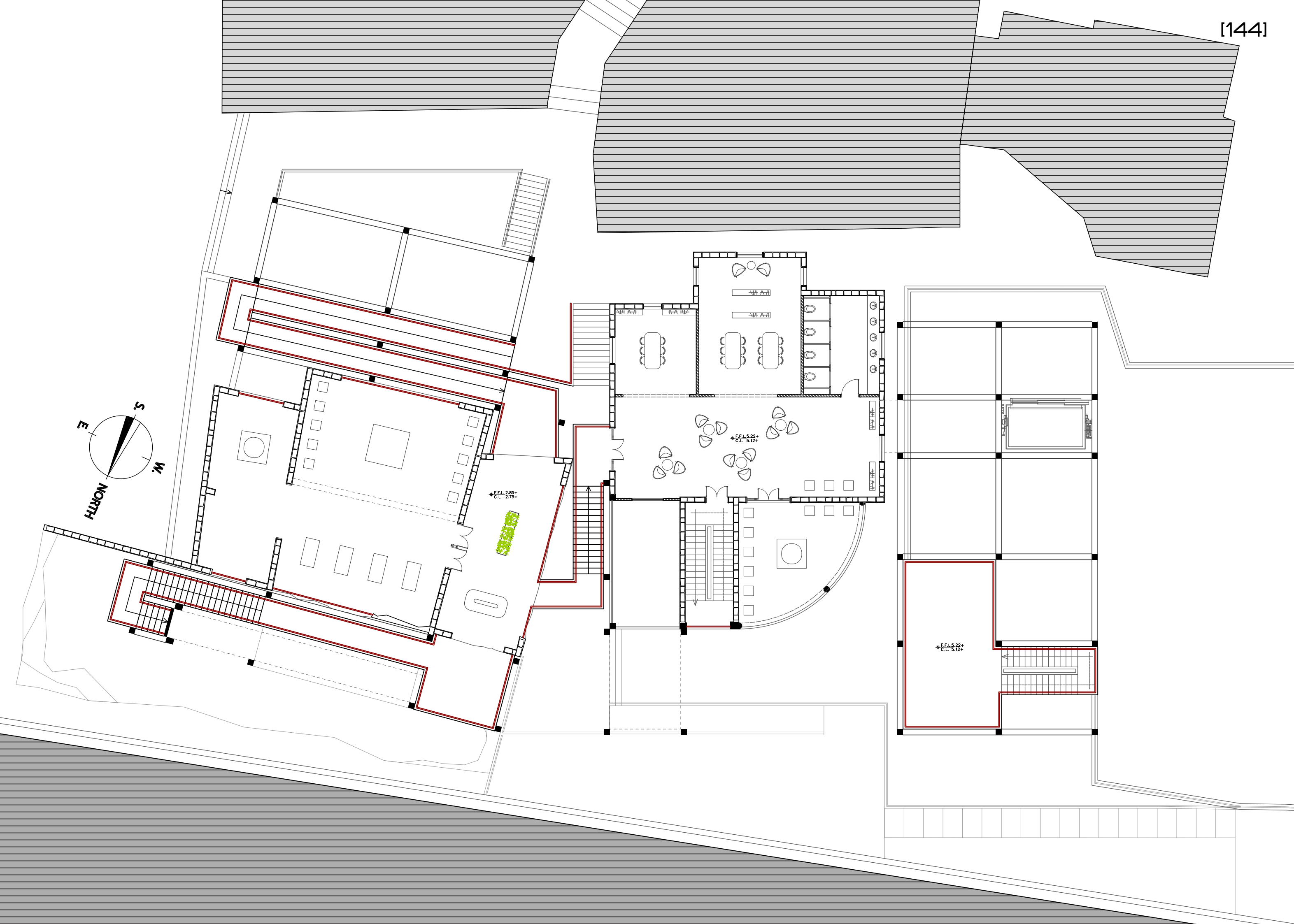
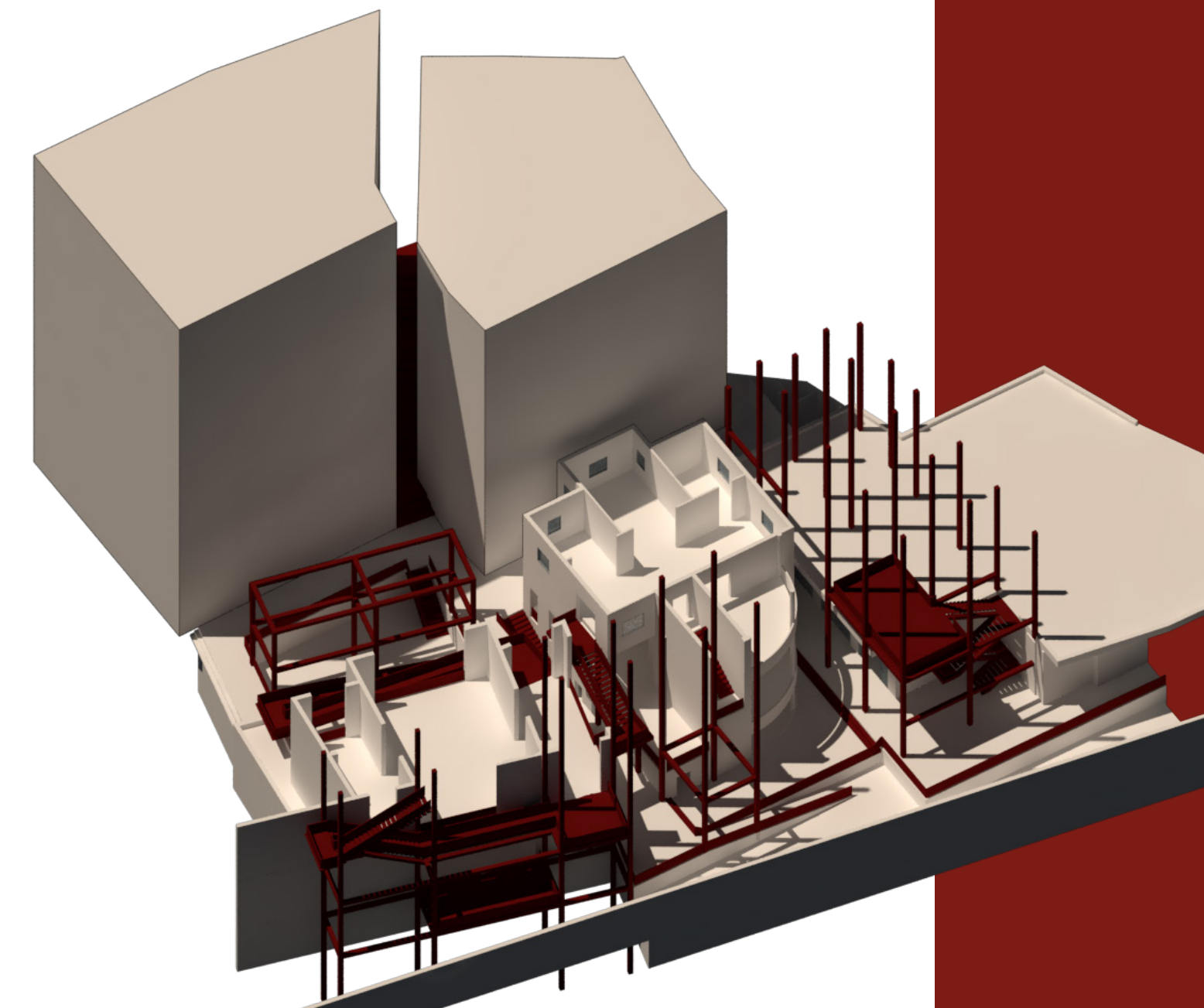
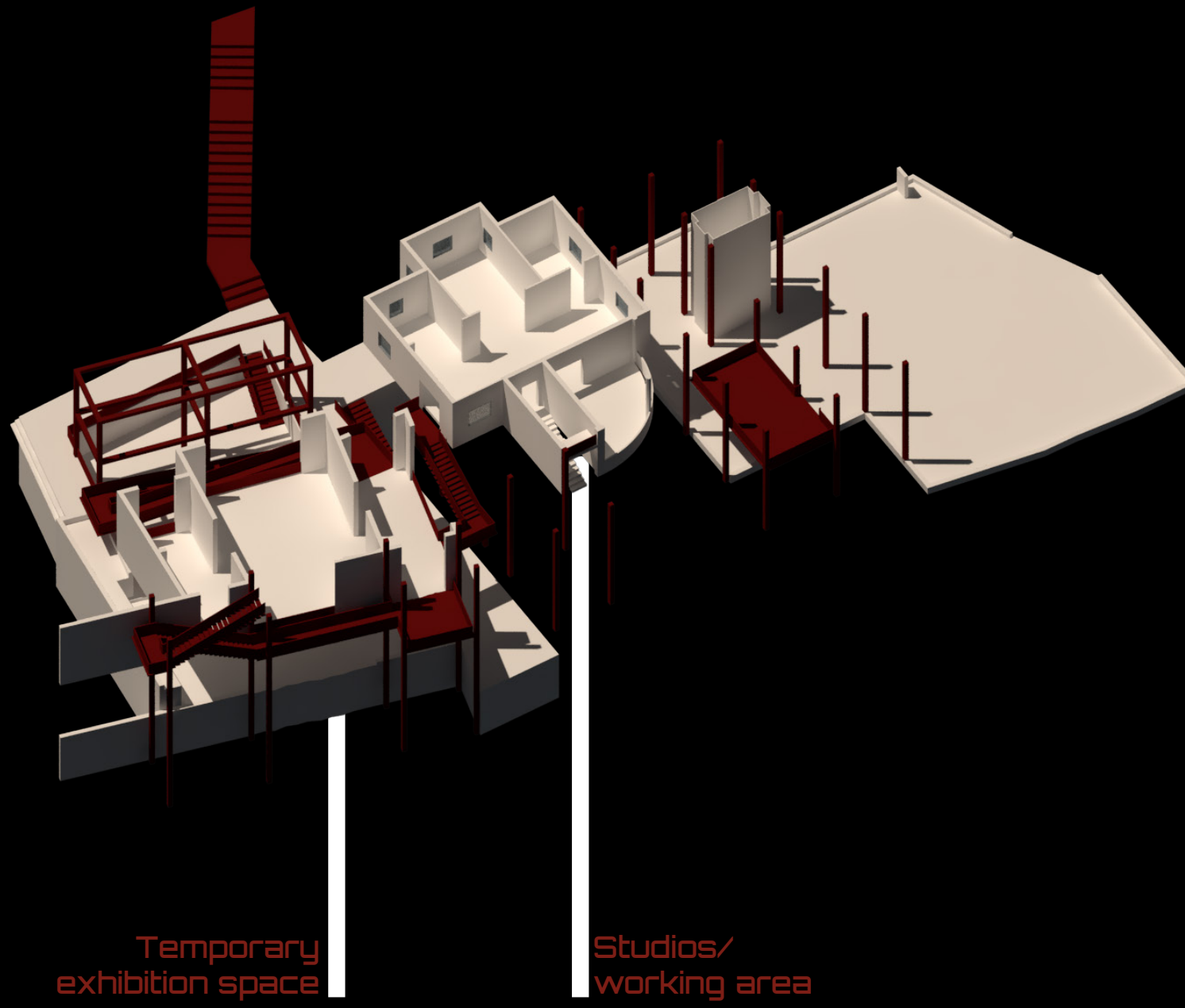


The basement floor mainly hosts informal sitting areas, and gives access to a projection/screening room, the Emm nazih café terrace and a hybrid space that would host diverse functions according to the occasion.





Taking the ramp to the first floor gives access to a temporary exhibition area and connects laterally to a common working area as well as vertically to the second floor level.

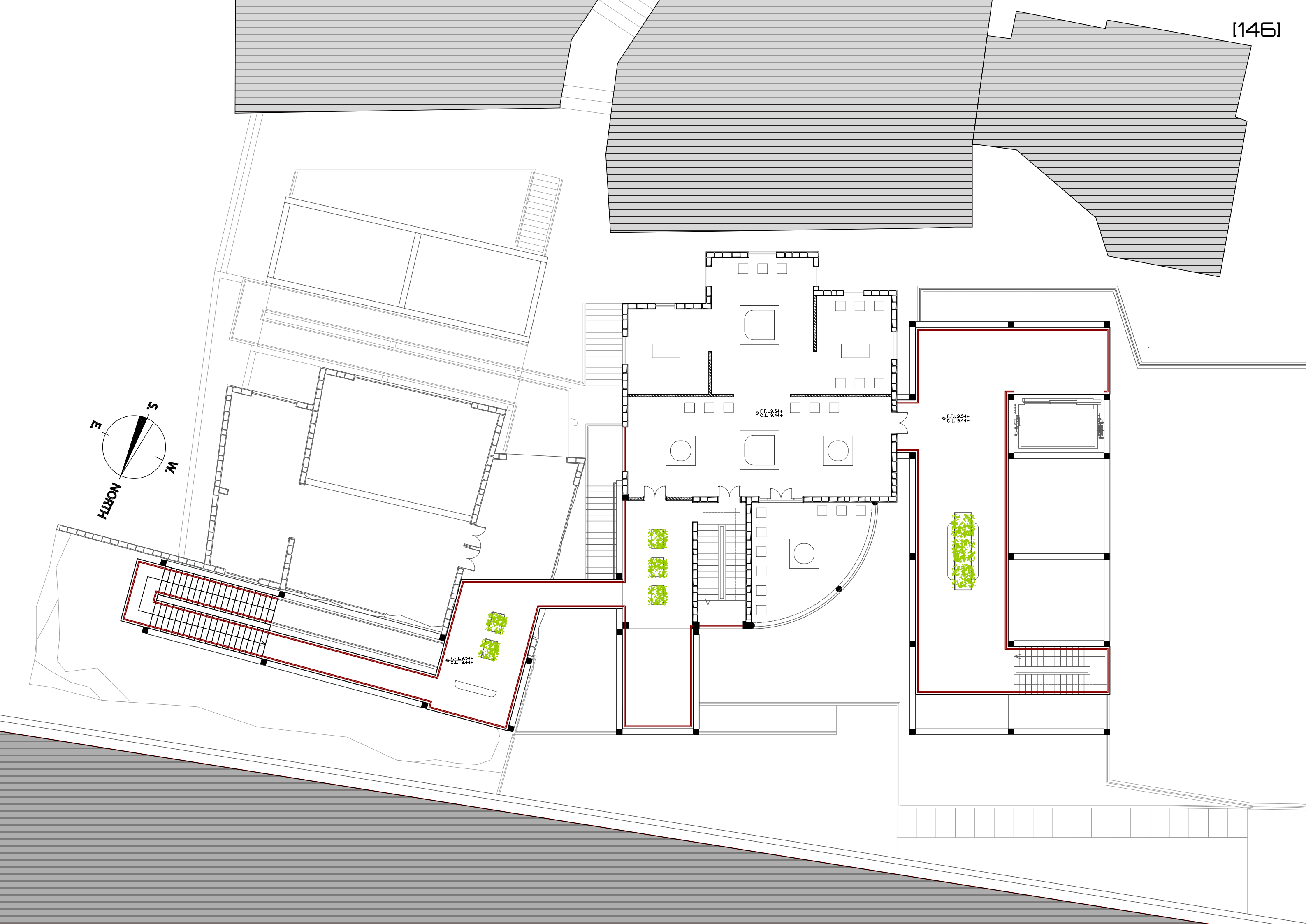
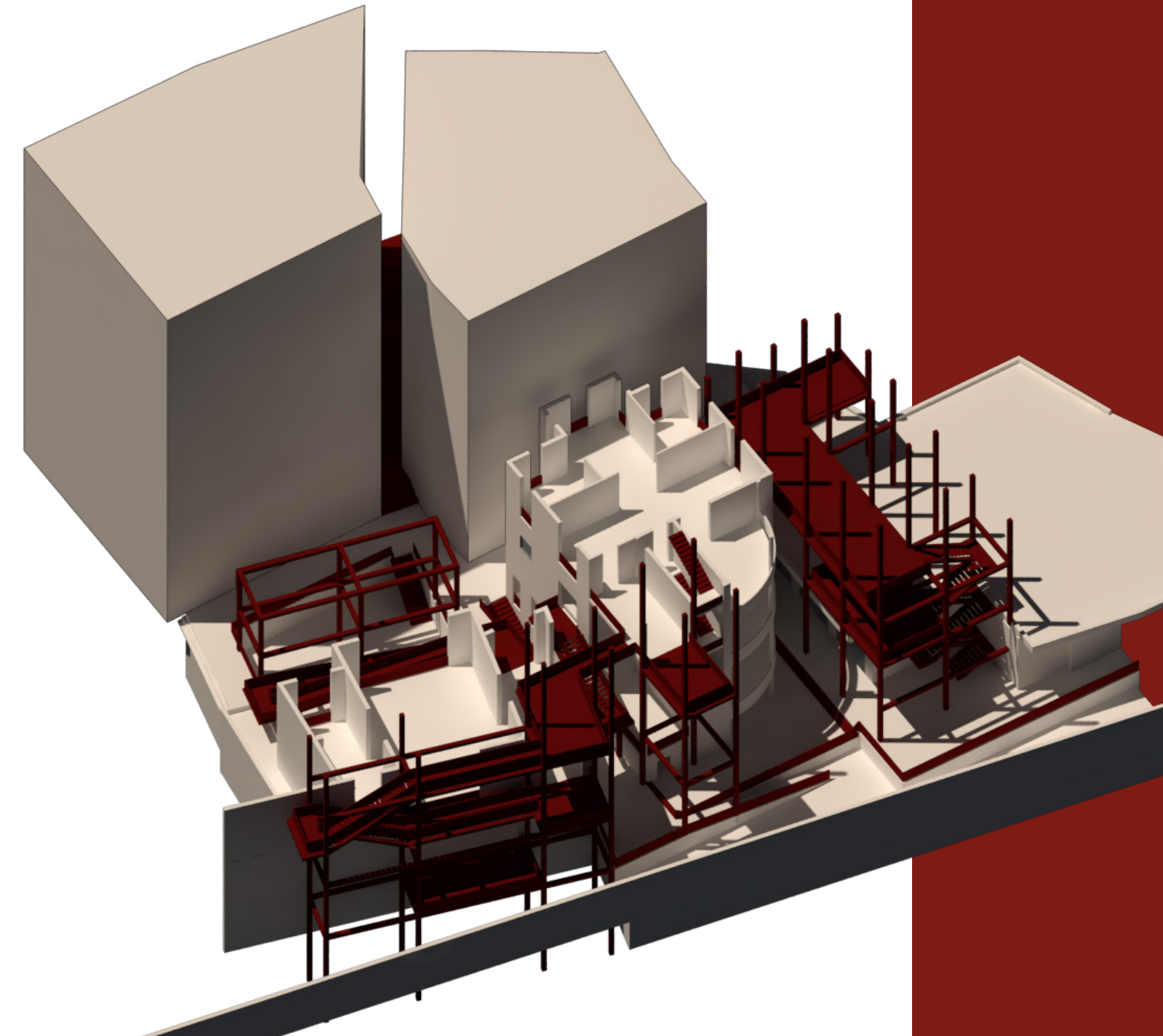
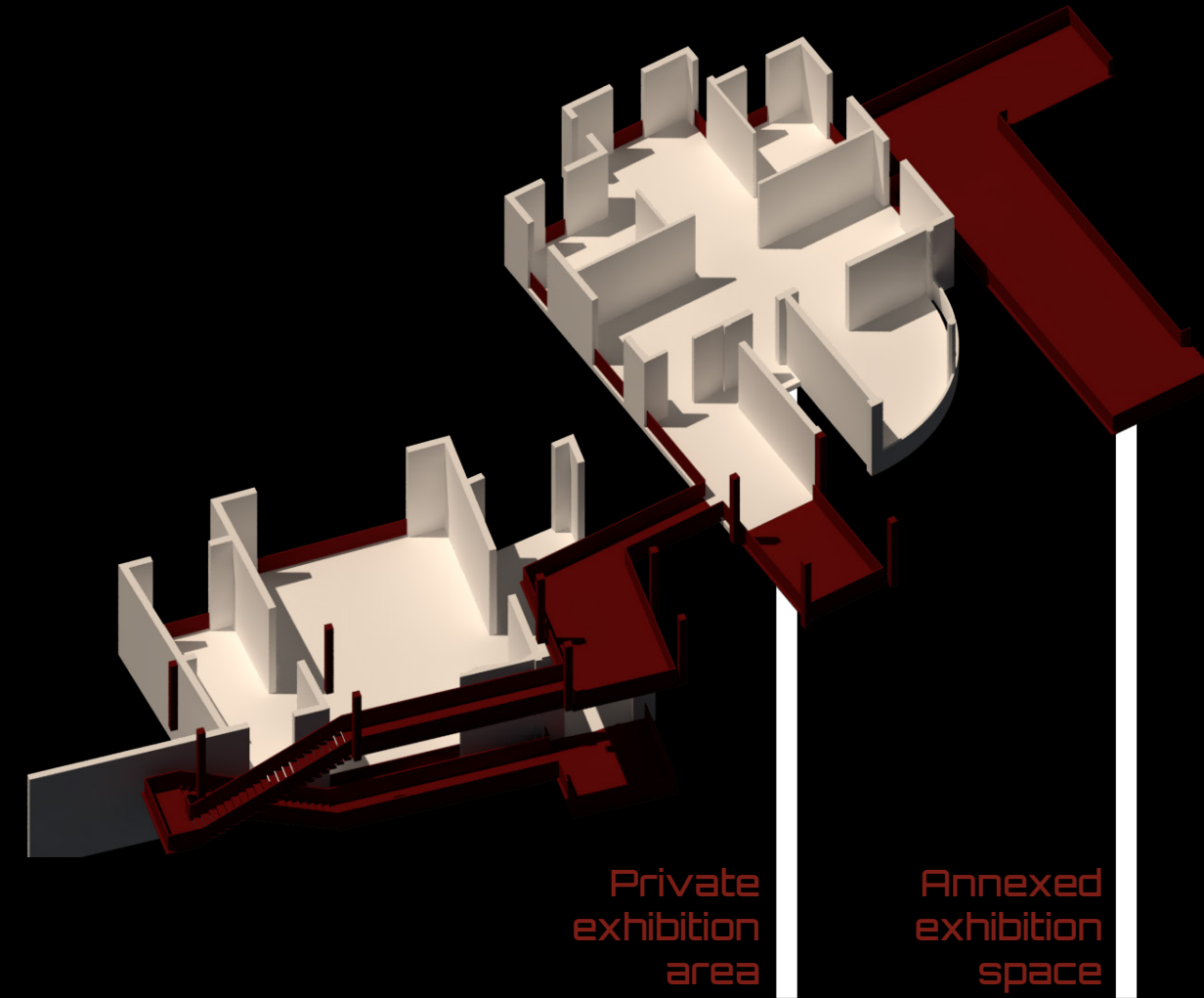




# [ARTery]

Second floor level

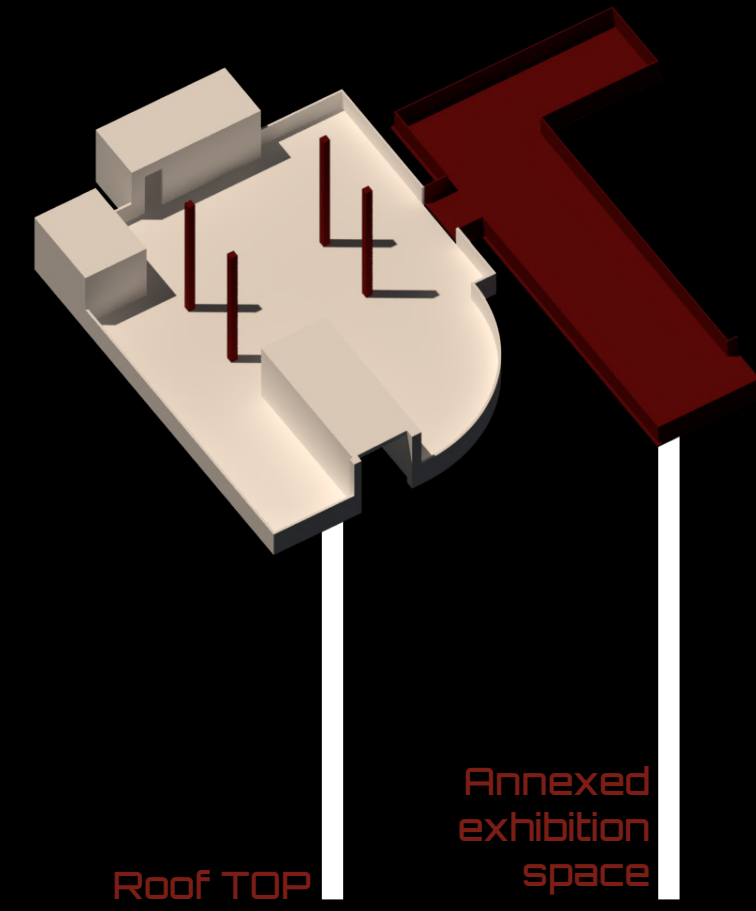
The second floor level hosts a private exhibition area and acts as a programmatic and circulatory node of the composition as it is also accessible from the vertical extension of the hybrid space that is open to the public from the other parking lot.



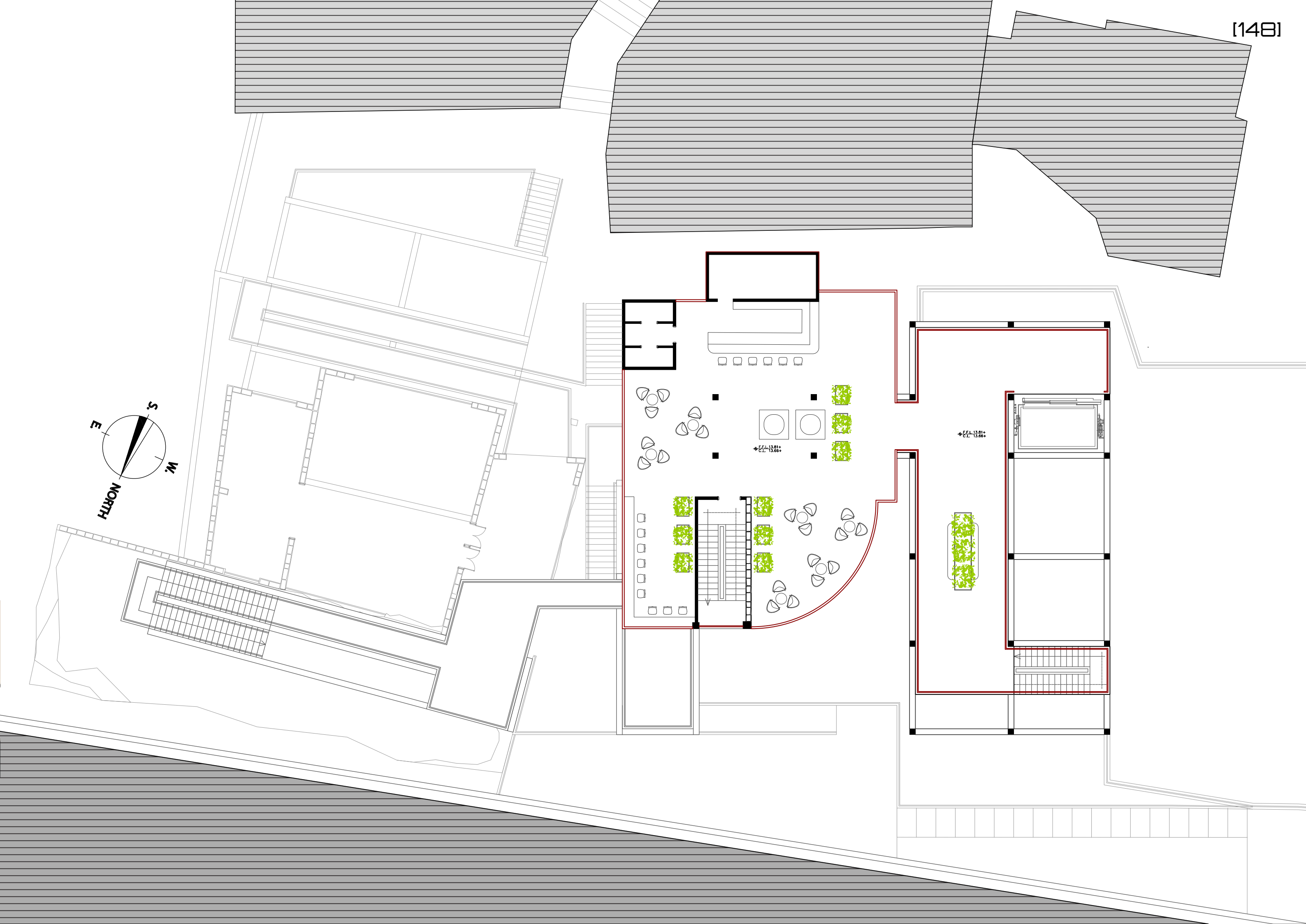
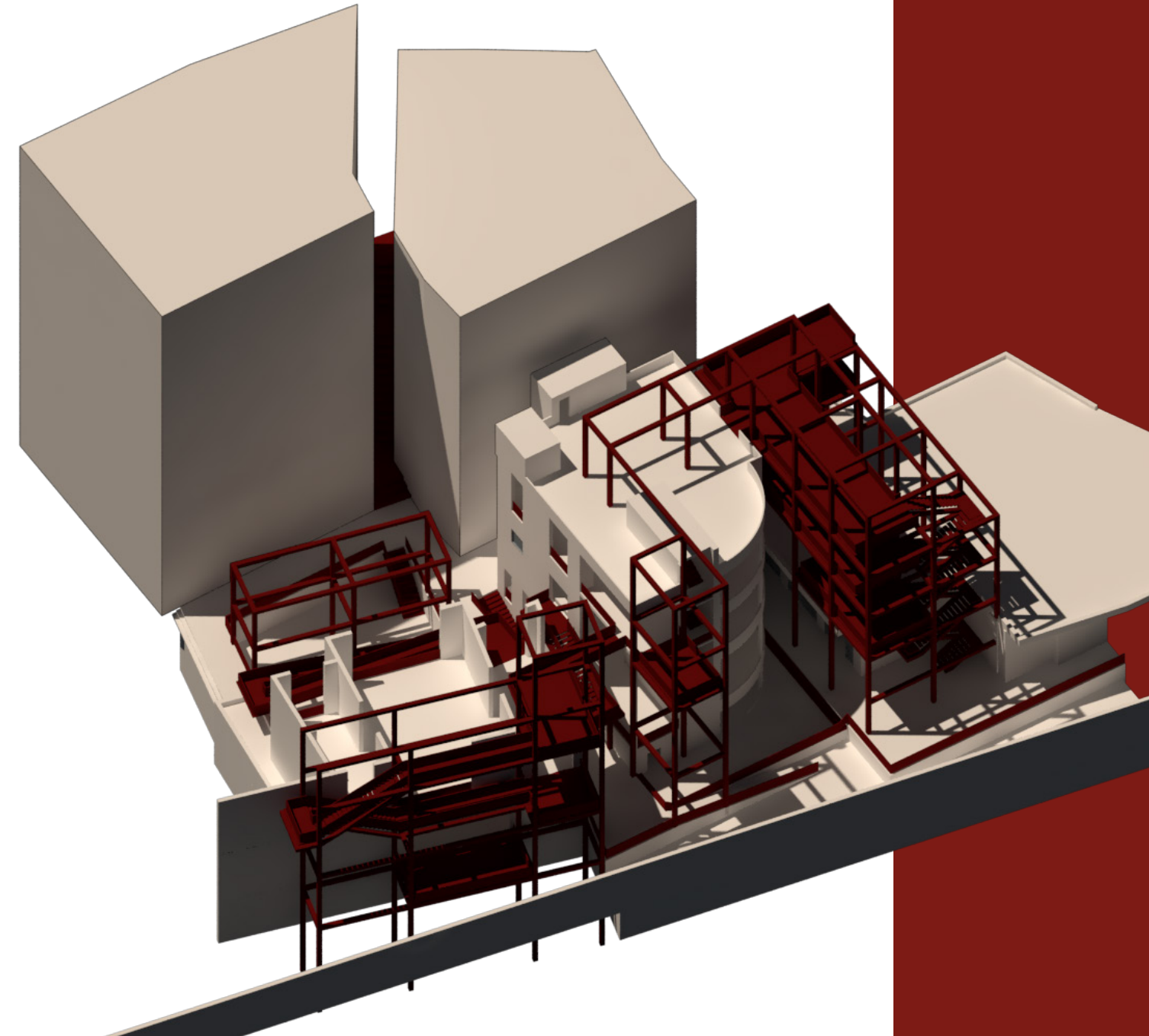


[ARTery]

Roof floor level



The last floor, is the roof top. It is accessible through the annexed exhibition space, and through the main stair case of the central hall.

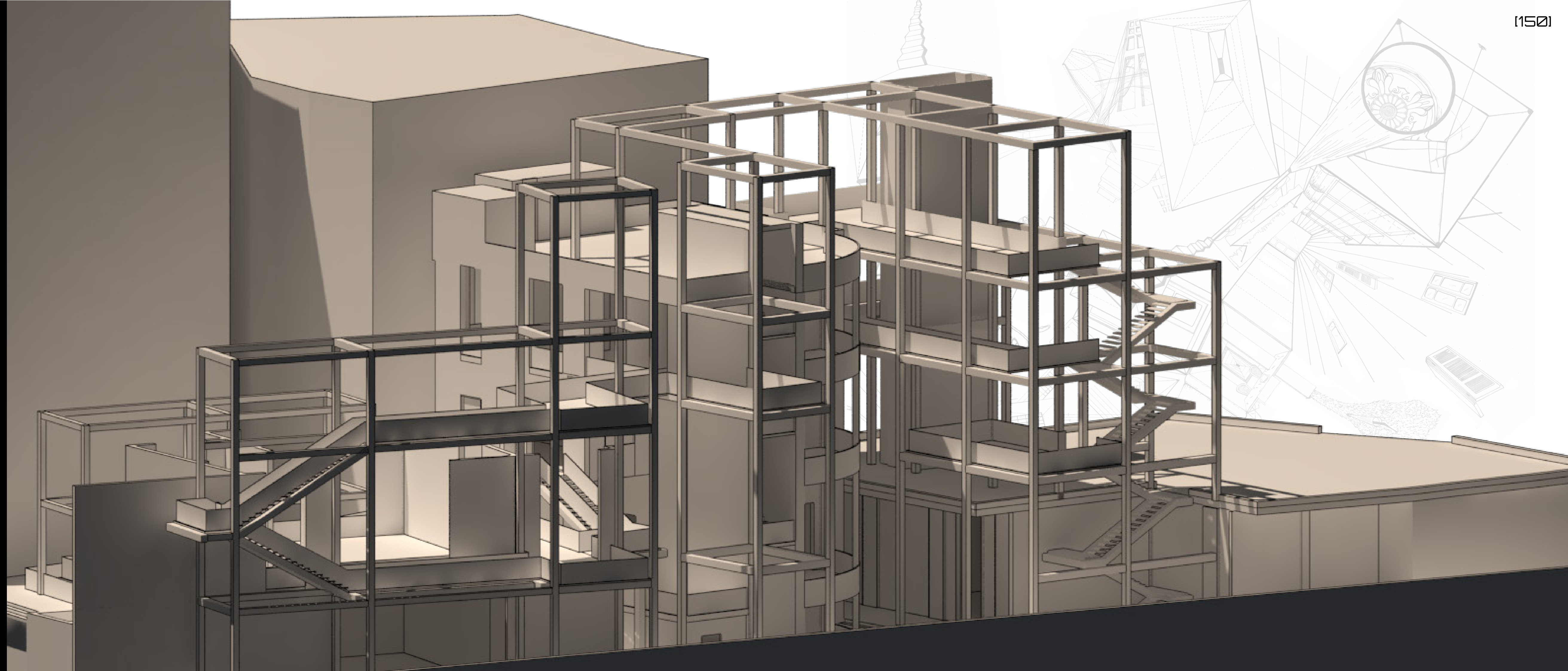




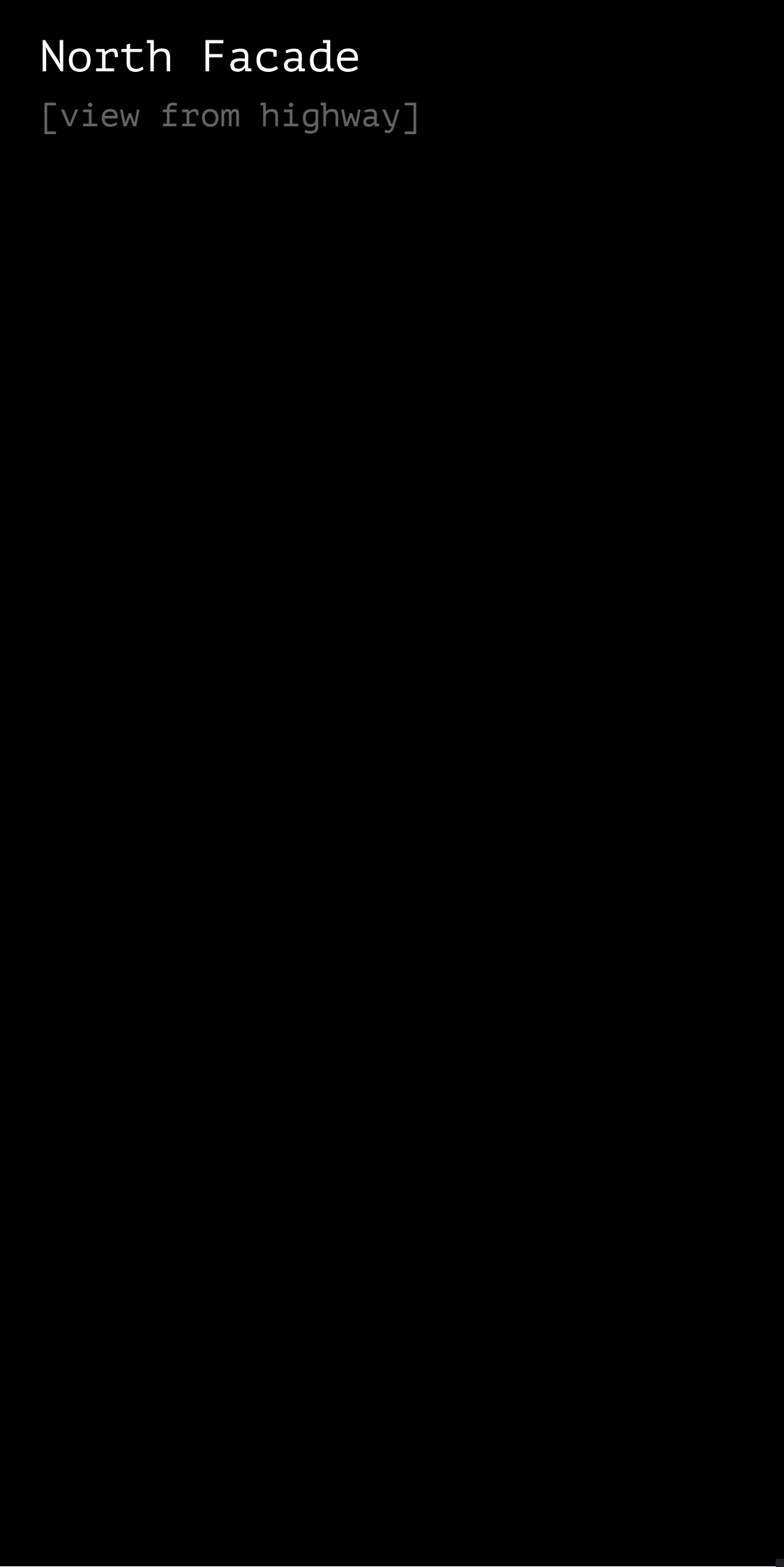
## North view

[view from highway  
going towards beirut]

In terms of materiality and overall appearance, the new addition aims to be a light open steel structure that would be performing programmatically as well as structurally as a subtle connector between the three structures: It would be bracing the old structures while serving the new programmatic transformation.





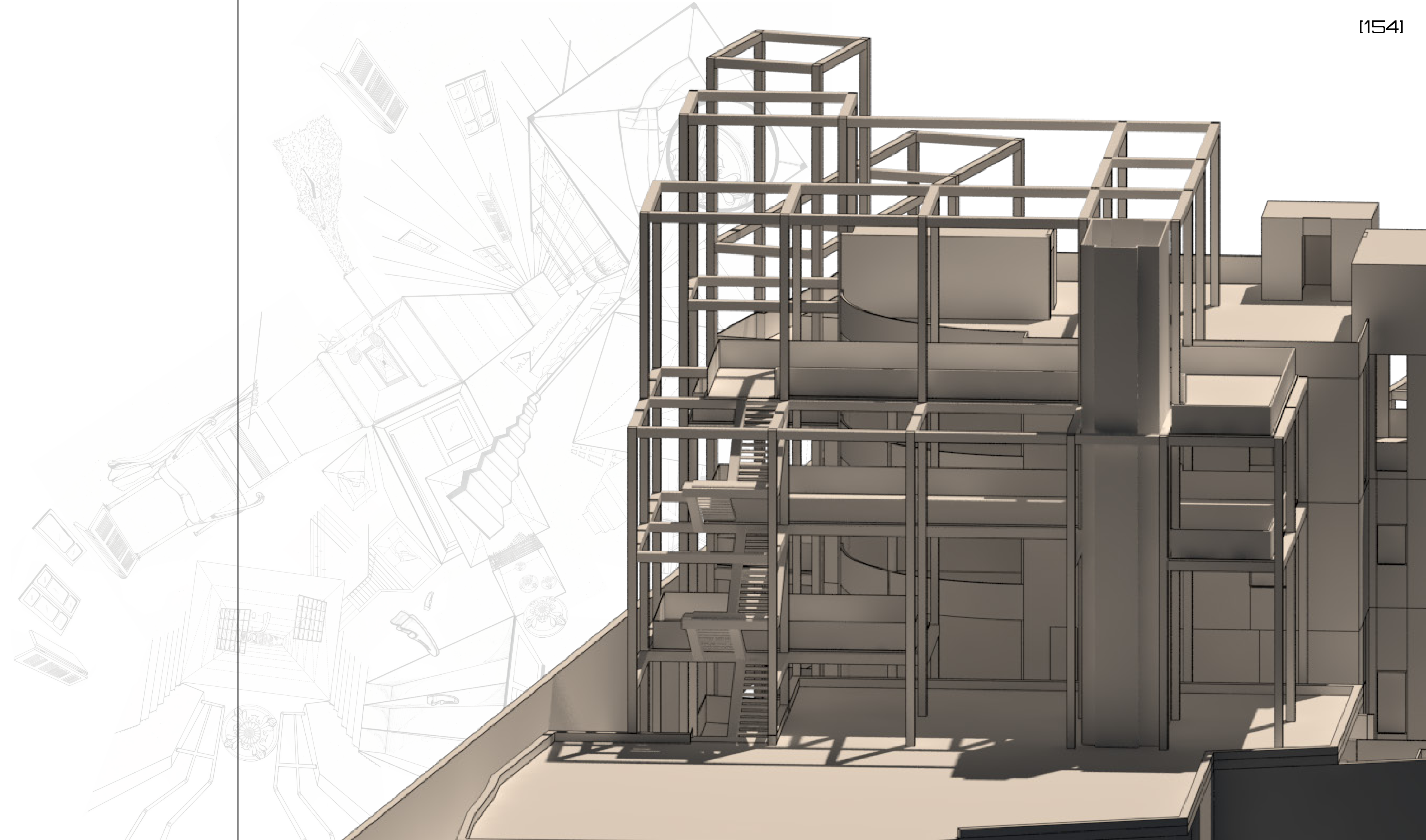


North Facade  
[view from highway]



West view

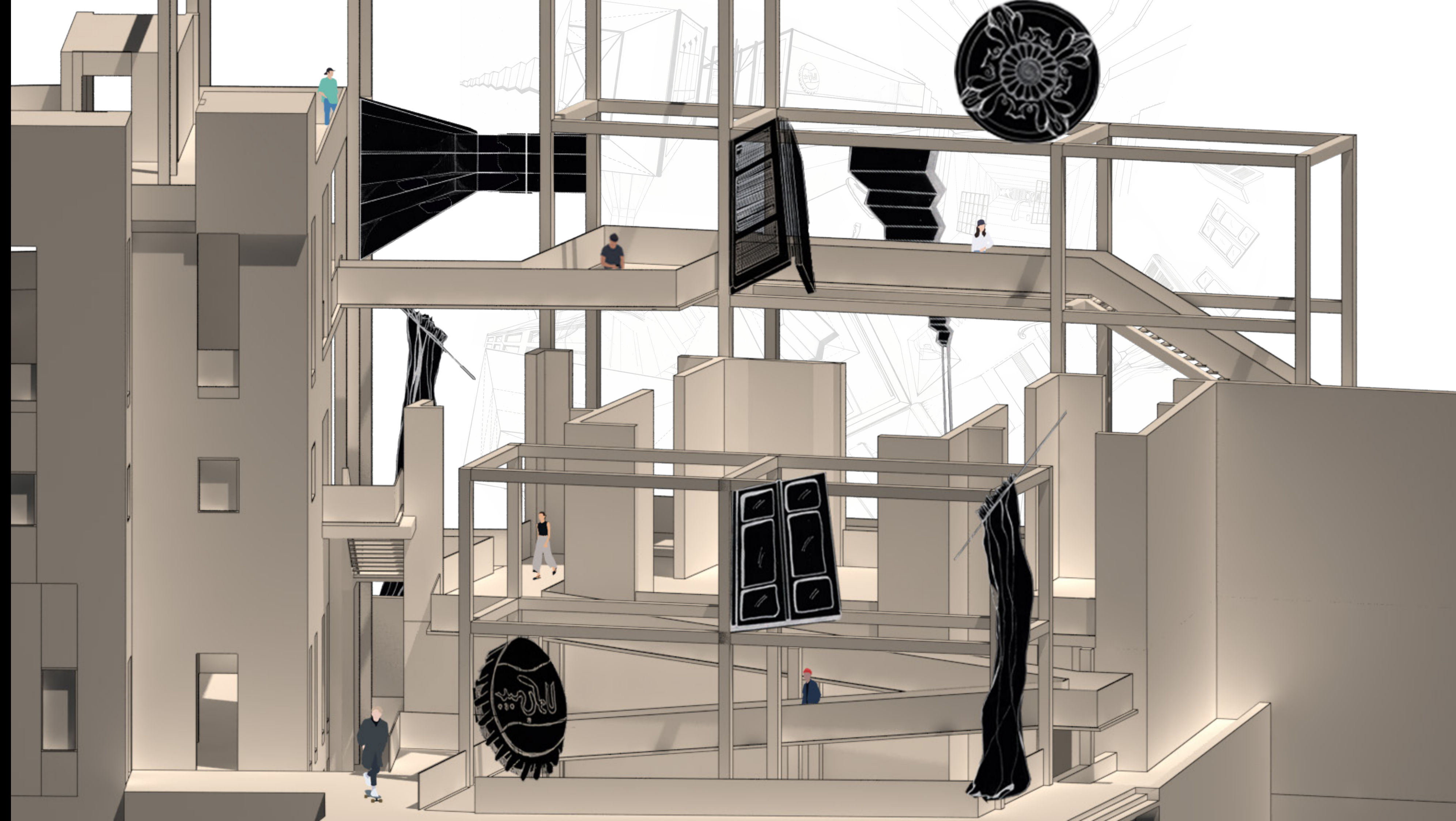
[view from highway  
going towards Jounieh]





# South view

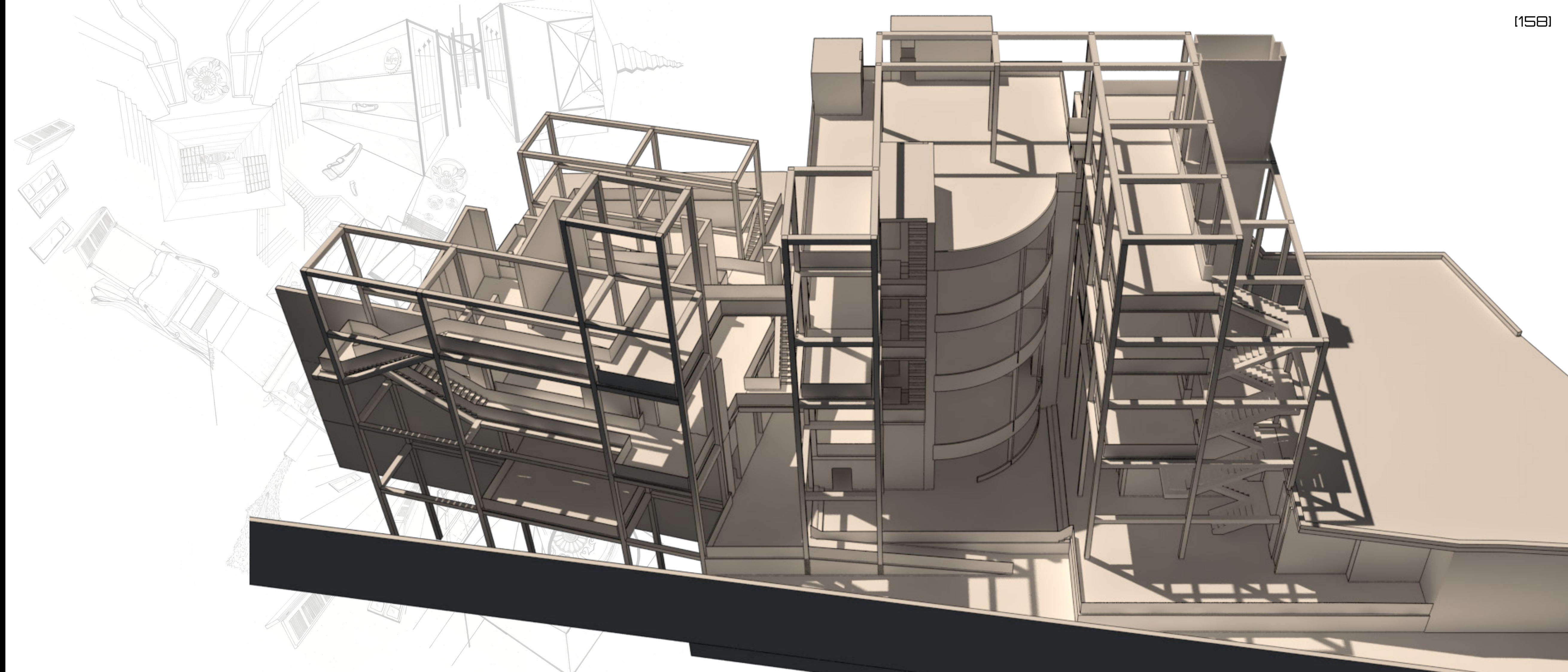
[view from the stairs  
going down from Pasteur  
Street]



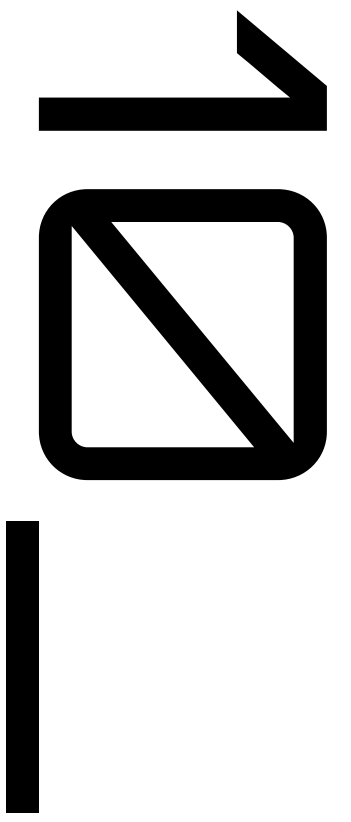
Eventually artistic  
installations would  
start to occupy the  
structure and turn  
the composition into a  
vibrant complexity of  
art.



North Bird's eye view  
[view from highway]







I see ARtery reflecting the period we are going into and make the users as well as the people of the city look forward to a new beginning while the scars are there. We have to acknowledge their presence but it has to be on a positive note.

[Conclusion]\_  
Landmark  
of the new  
transformation  
of site.

I see ARTery as a case study and not as an end in itself. The logic of merging and annexing two buildings in order for them to subsist is something that could be applied somewhere else where we have bldgs that are crumbling and that we are planning on destroying.

That could be a solution, a way to salvage what is left of them by annexing them, joining them, supporting one to the other.

I see this experiment as a potential from which lessons could be learned from so that it could be applied and tested elsewhere in the context around in the aftermath of the blast.

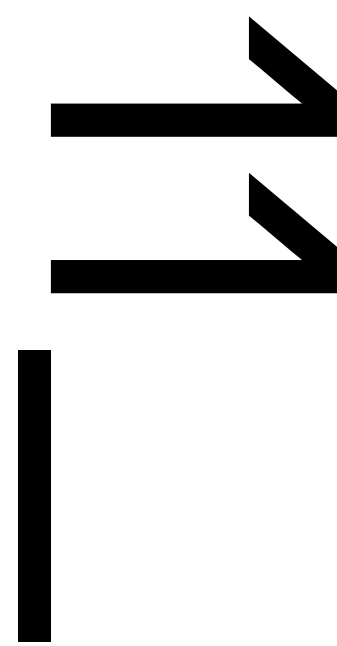
The project unfolded to become an example of how representation methods become an architectural design tool and answers the question of whether we can replicate the organic urban setting of the strip by using a structure that would hold the old while building the new.

*ARTery is not about preservation but more about readaptation, it is about saving the last bits of buildings by looking at the existing architecture not from a nostalgic perspective but as something that can be manipulated and that can be intervened on.*

The cases of some buildings that are in a bad shape and that are deemed to be destroyed:

*Do we remove them? Or do save what's left and annex them to more sturdy buildings? and by attaching them we provide them with a new life?*





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URL: <https://thepublicsource.org/why-socio-spatial-practices-matter-urban-recovery>