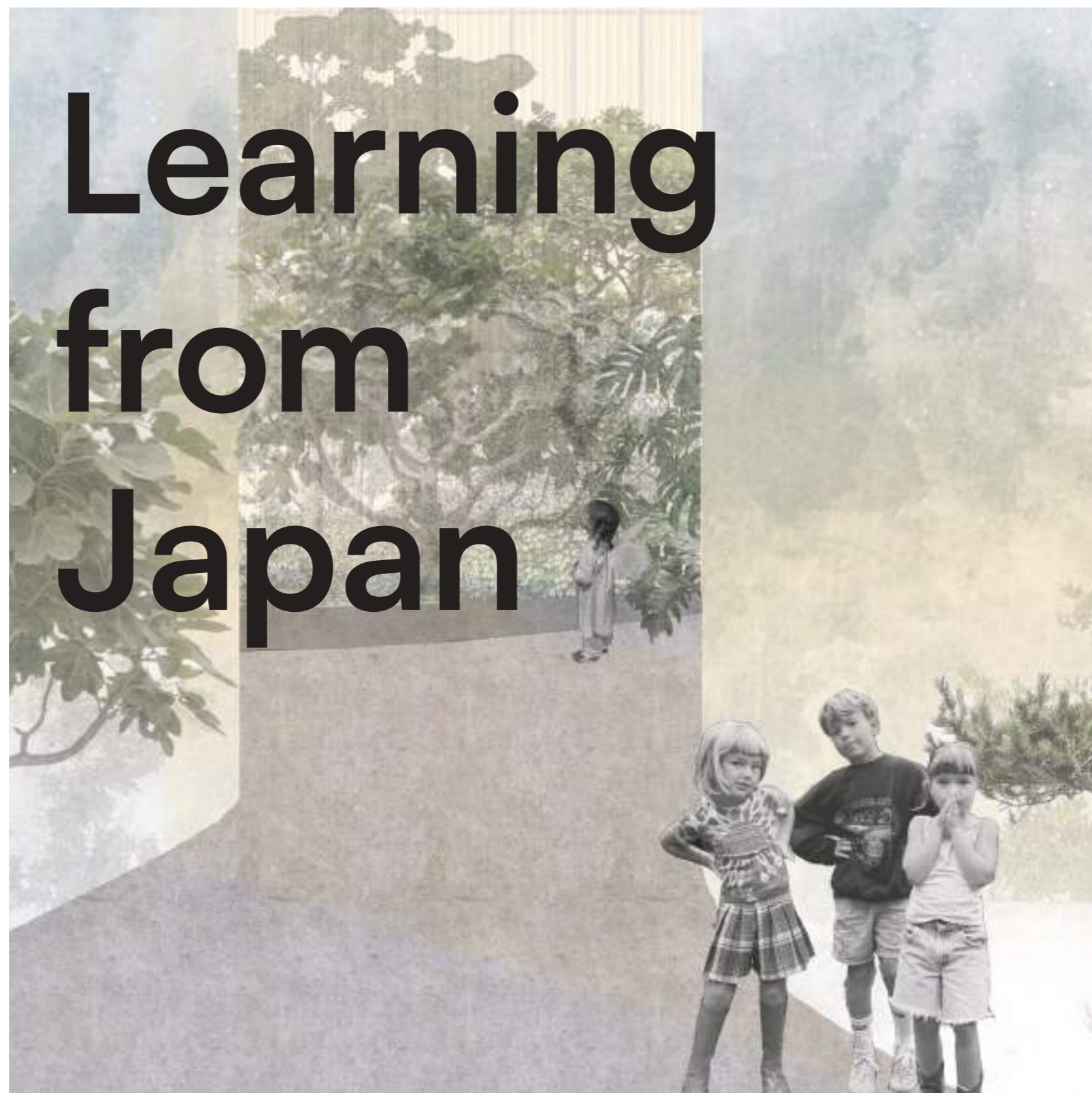


Learning from Japan

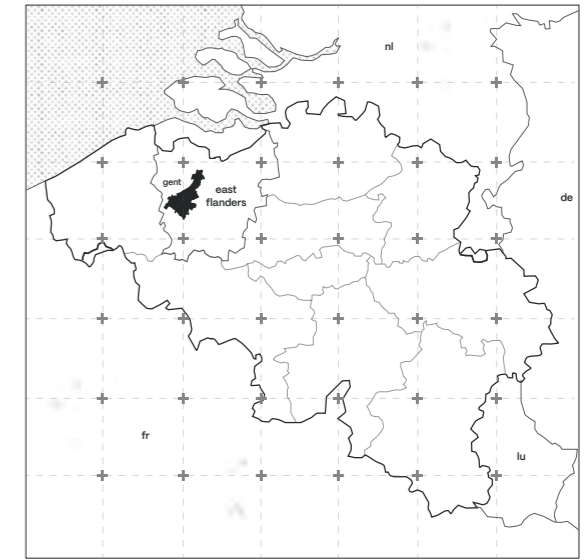


Layers of Discovery

Learning From Japan, Space For Encounter

LOCATION

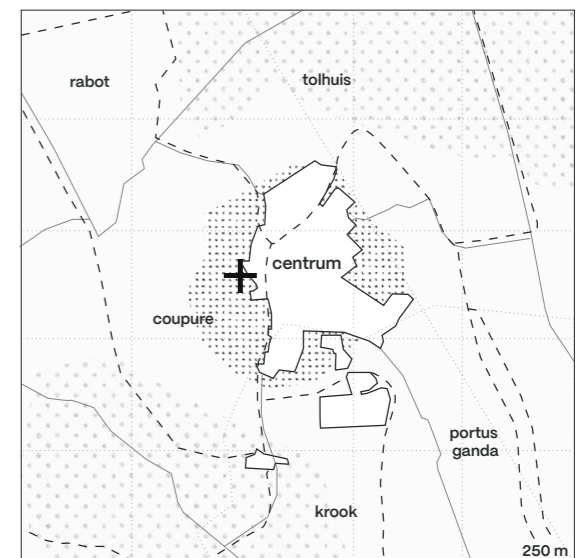
The ACV site in Ghent is located within the historic Poel area, a zone that originally consisted of marshland intersected by small waterways before the city gradually expanded. As urban development progressed, the landscape evolved into a residential neighborhood shaped by commerce and civic life. Noble townhouses once occupied this ground, later giving way to public and institutional buildings. Remnants of this layered history are still visible today, most notably in the preserved entrance gate that continues to define access to the site.



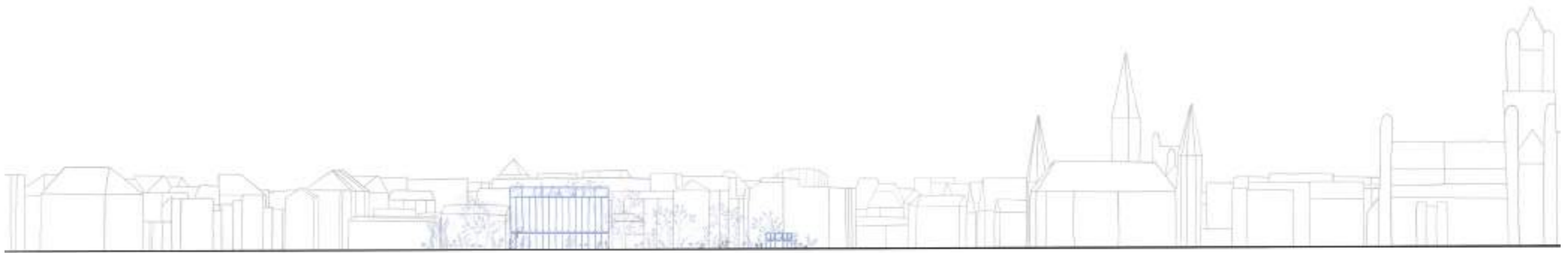
belgium



gent



city centrum



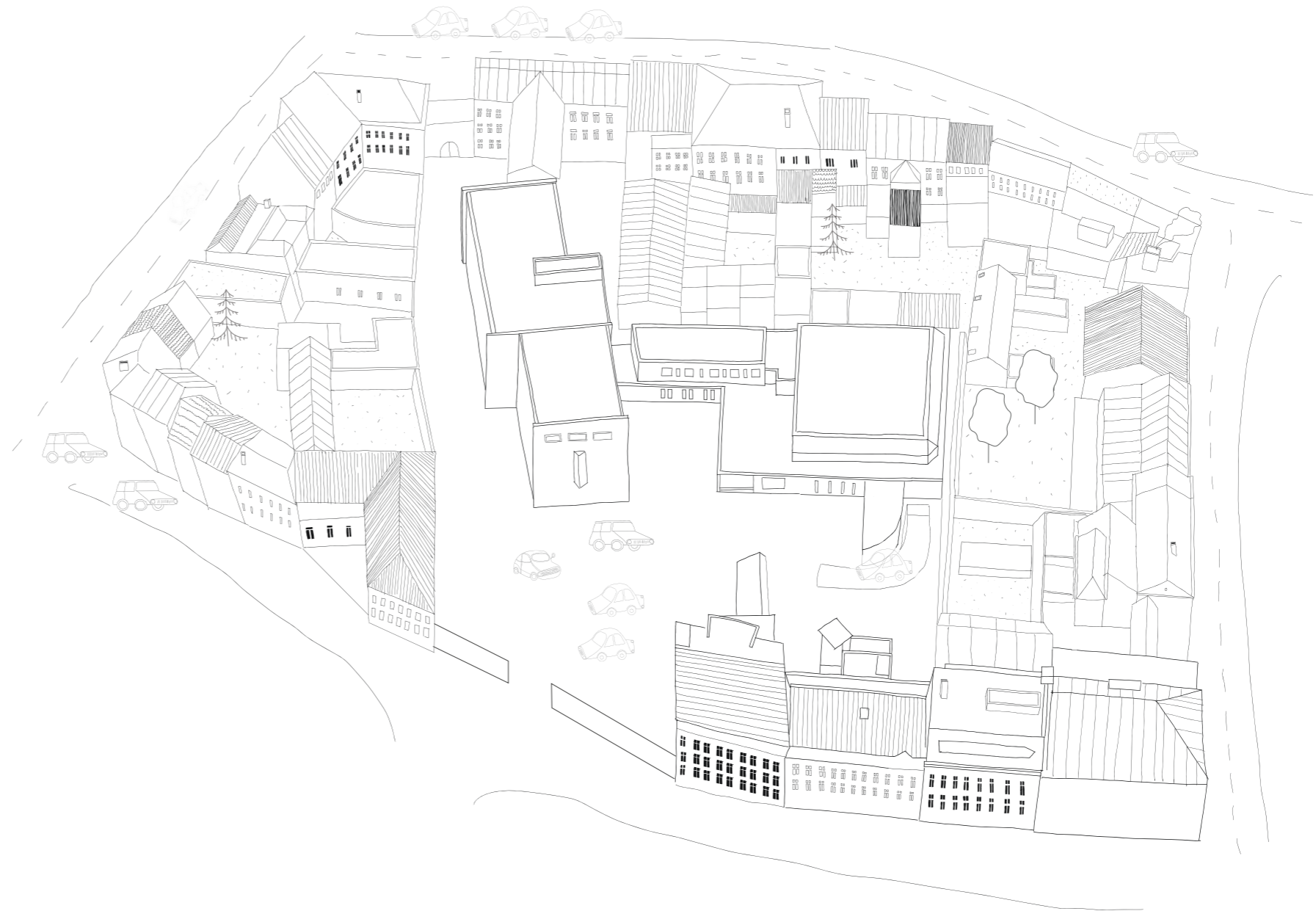
During the analysis of the area, we observed that this densely built environment has a strong need for a green space that encourages social interaction.

Through layers of nature, flexible use of open space, and the design of interior spaces, our goal was to create places suitable for spending time together.

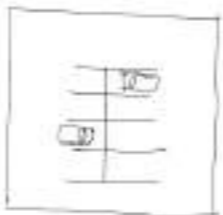
Area

The site presents several qualities that make it particularly suitable for redevelopment. Its existing concrete structure offers a high degree of flexibility, enabling new programs to be introduced with minimal structural intervention and ensuring long-term adaptability. Its central position within Ghent is another significant advantage, with convenient access from both Poelstraat and Ravensteinstraat. Being embedded in the city center also provides attractive visual connections to nearby historic buildings. Despite this centrality, the site remains relatively calm, as the surrounding buildings act as a buffer against street noise. Together, these aspects—adaptability, accessibility, visual quality, and tranquility—create strong potential for a functional and socially engaging environment.

At the same time, the site faces clear challenges. Green space is almost entirely absent, limiting natural rainwater infiltration, increasing heat retention due to extensive paving, and reducing the overall quality of the outdoor environment. The dominance of cars and the site's current use as a parking area further diminish its appeal. Additionally, the lack of a clear identity results in an uninviting atmosphere, particularly at the entrance along Ravensteinstraat. For both visitors and neighboring residents, the site currently offers little visual or social value.



EXISTING BUILDING FACADE



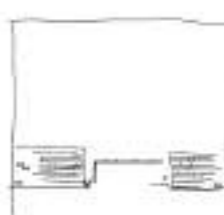
EXISTING BUILDING FACADE



CAR DOMINATED SPACE



LACK OF GREEN SPACE



POOR VISUAL CONNECTION



LACK OF VISUAL CONNECTION

existing area and its problems

Construction

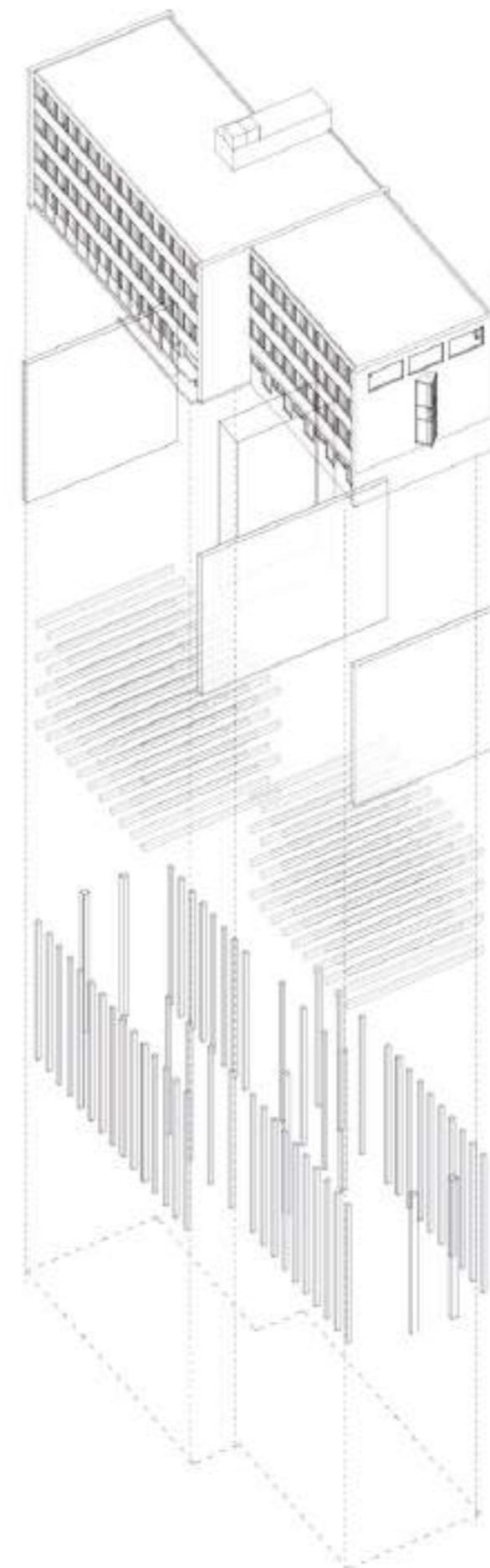
Over the centuries, the property transitioned through various owners and functions, moving from aristocratic residences to cultural institutions and ultimately to social organizations such as ACV and CM. This rich evolution is reflected in both the architecture and the spatial relationship of the site with the surrounding city. The openness toward Ghent's historic center allows framed views of the city's iconic towers, reinforcing a strong connection with the urban fabric.

screen

load-bearing walls

beams

concrete columns



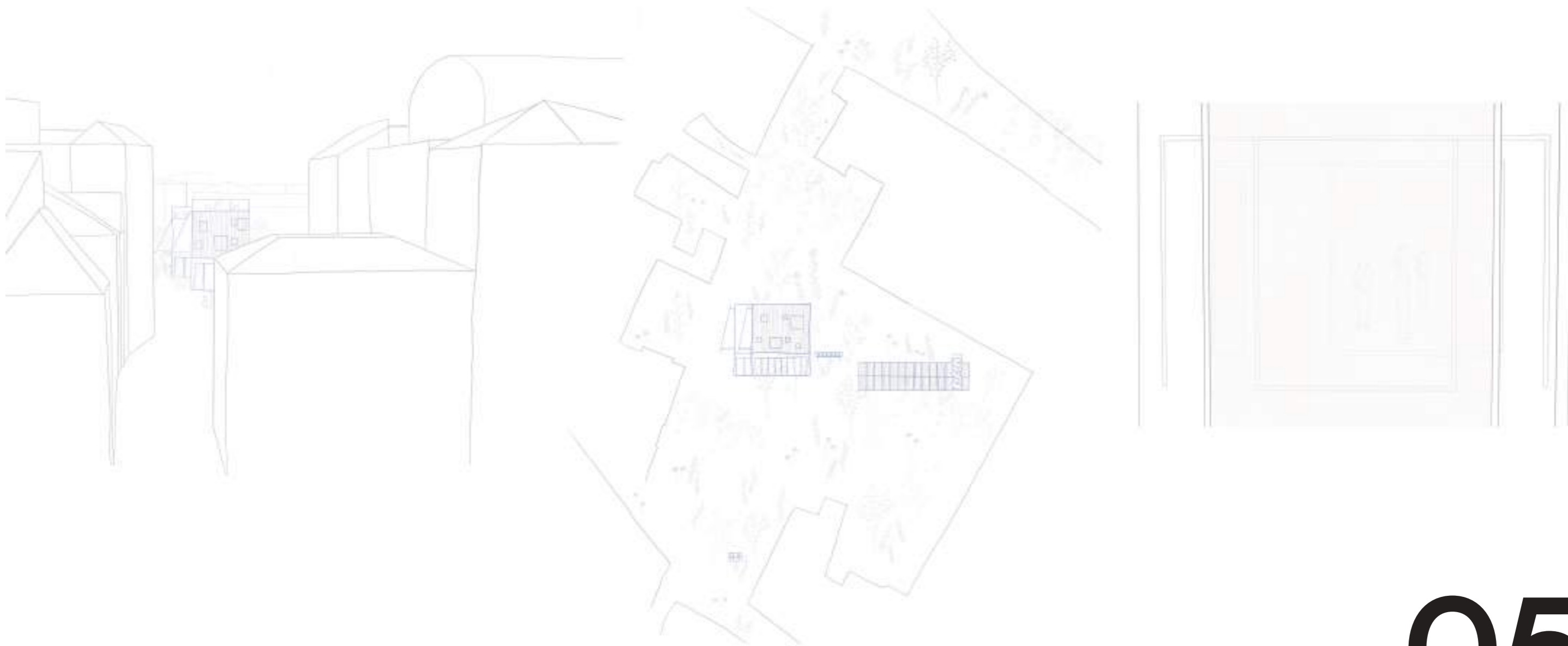
concept

CONCEPT

During our previous research on Japan, we were strongly inspired by the concept of DISCOVERY: continuous movement through space and constantly finding something new. Therefore, we wanted to place this idea at the center of our concept.

DISCOVERY

Discovery appears on the site on three levels: first through finding the location itself, then through exploring the garden and the buildings, and finally through movement within the interior spaces.



concept

LIGHT

The two buildings of the project represent different intensities of light.

The larger building, using the existing structure, employs targeted light sources to make the newly proposed spaces intriguing.

LIGHT TAKES ON A CENTRAL ROLE.

In contrast, the smaller building allows as much light to pass through as possible, EMPHASIZING THE SHADOWS cast by objects and plants.

Between the two buildings, polycarbonate creates a parallel, symbolizing the intermediate, the semi-transparency, completing the interplay of light.



ATMOSPHERE

The buildings and the surrounding landscape with minimal intervention, create a blank canvas.

The space allows users imagination to unfold, ENCOURAGES CREATIVE USE.

The rawness of the neutral colored concrete and polycarbonate is softened by nature.



FLOW

The structure of the spaces does not follow strict rules.

The functions are only suggestions, open to change over time.

There is no predetermined direction or fixed way of use.

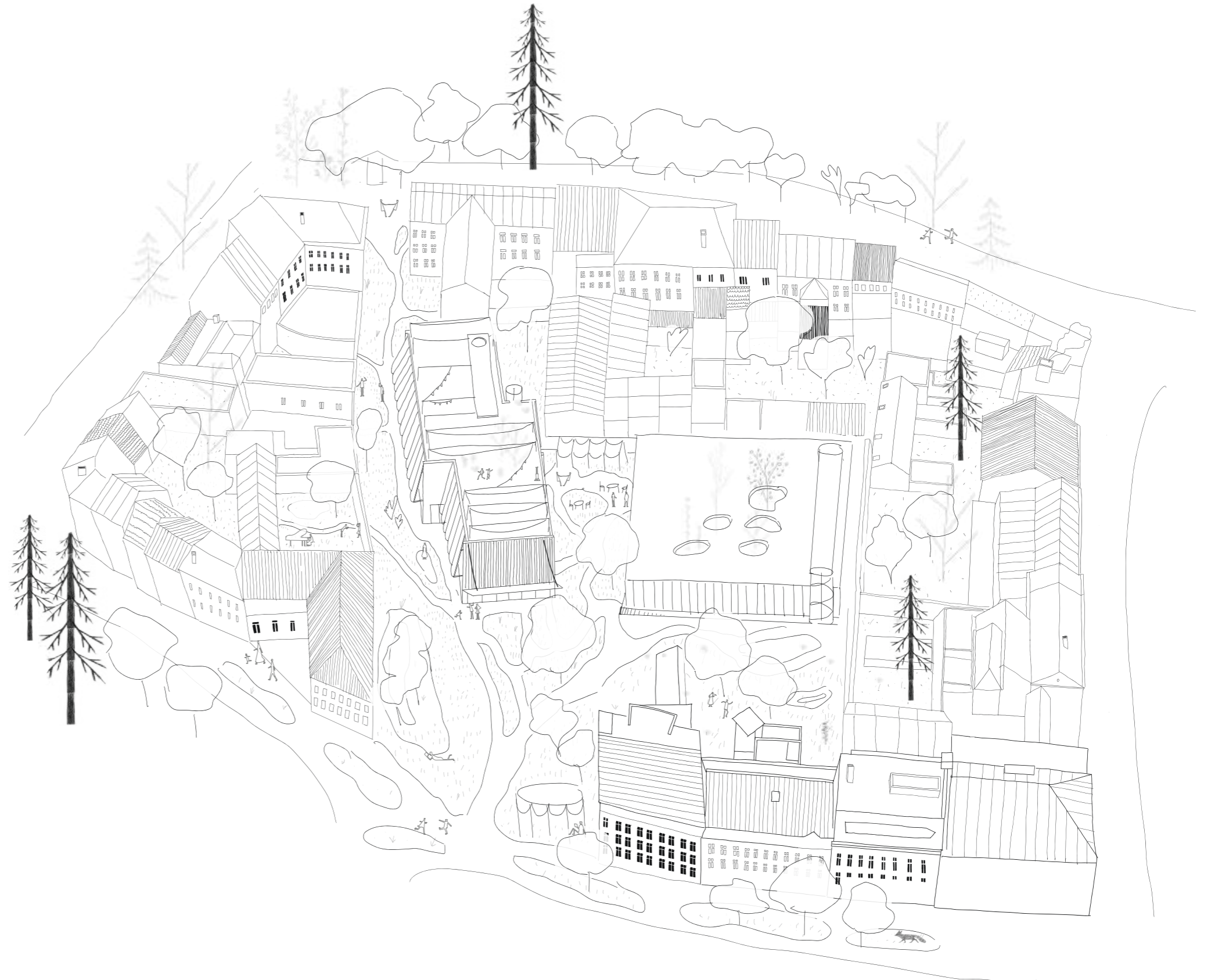
THE EMPHASIS IS ON DISCOVERY AND FREEDOM.



06

vision

The ambition for the future is to transform the site into a welcoming and memorable place—one that attracts people, encourages informal encounters, and supports social interaction. By creating a comfortable, inspiring environment, the site can become a destination in itself, where people enjoy spending time, connecting with others, and sharing their experiences with the wider community



masterplan



program



program



program

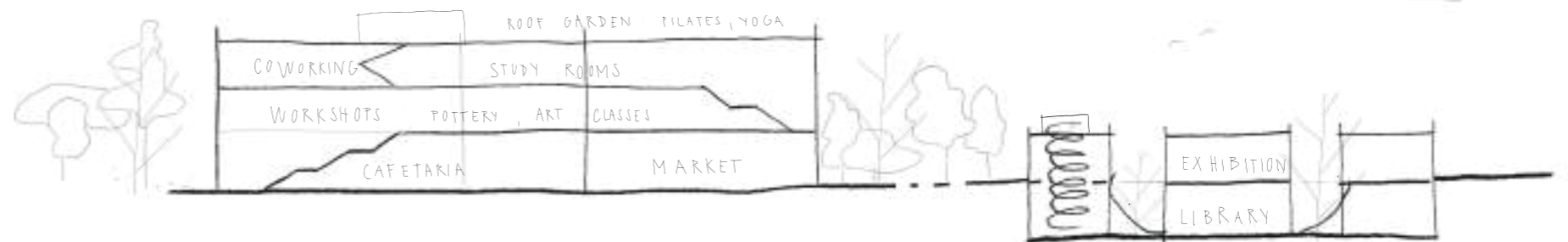
program

The building program is designed to encourage encounter by bringing diverse functions into close spatial relationship. Rather than separating activities, the program creates shared zones where movement, visibility, and overlap naturally lead to interaction.

Smaller building houses an exhibition space and an interactive library, both acting as public attractors that invite visitors in and stimulate exchange through changing content and participatory learning.

The ACV building focuses on everyday social life, with a marketplace and café as central, active spaces. These are supported by workshops, coworking areas, and study rooms, which allow for both collaboration and focused work while remaining connected to communal spaces.

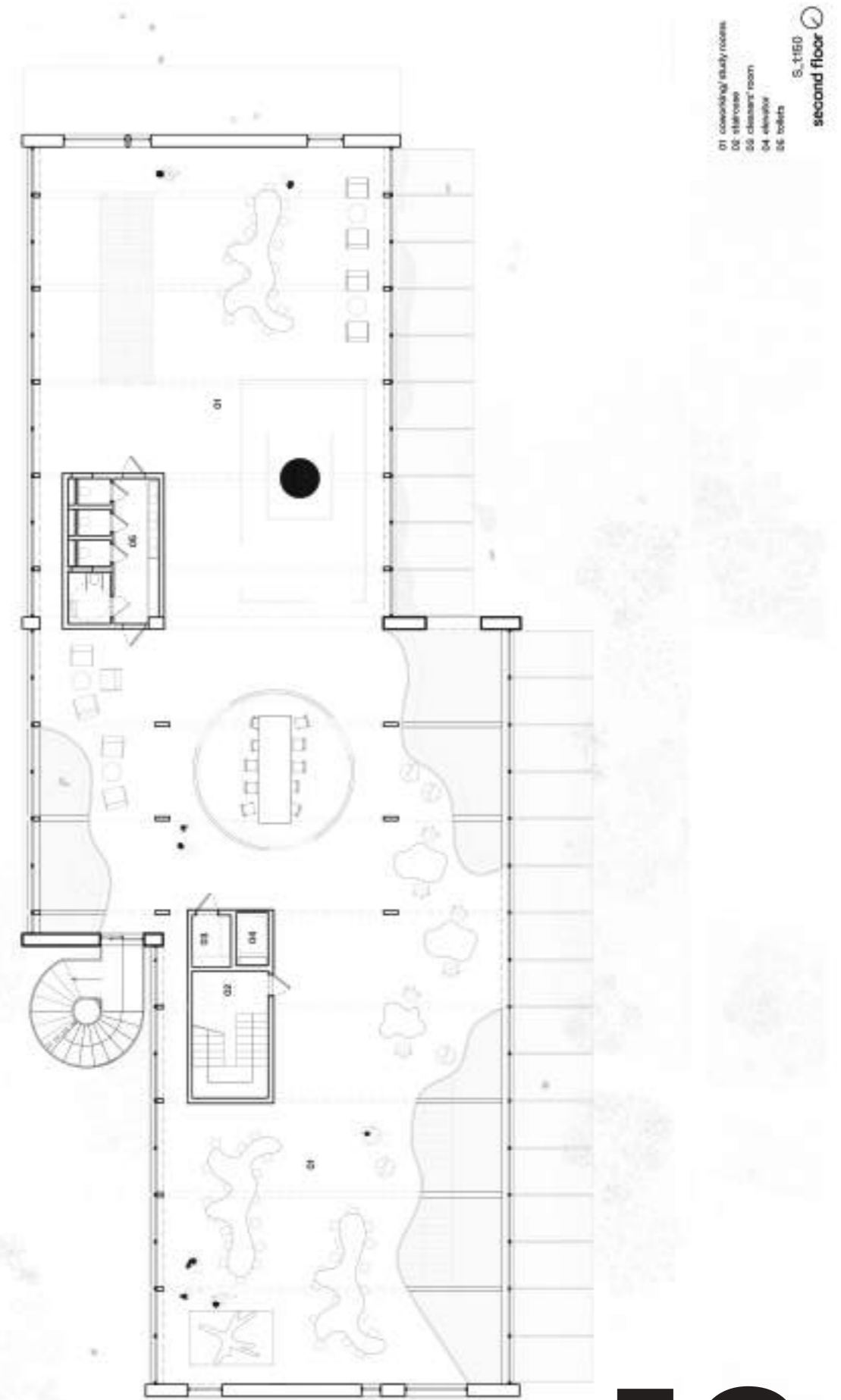
Together, the program functions as a social framework where learning, working, and meeting merge, transforming the building into a place defined by encounter rather than isolated use.



the first floor

The first floor is dedicated to workshops and builds further on the idea of discovery. Rather than being fully exposed, the workshops are arranged to allow glimpses into making and production without immediately revealing everything. Visual connections, framed views, and semi-open boundaries create curiosity while maintaining a focused working environment.

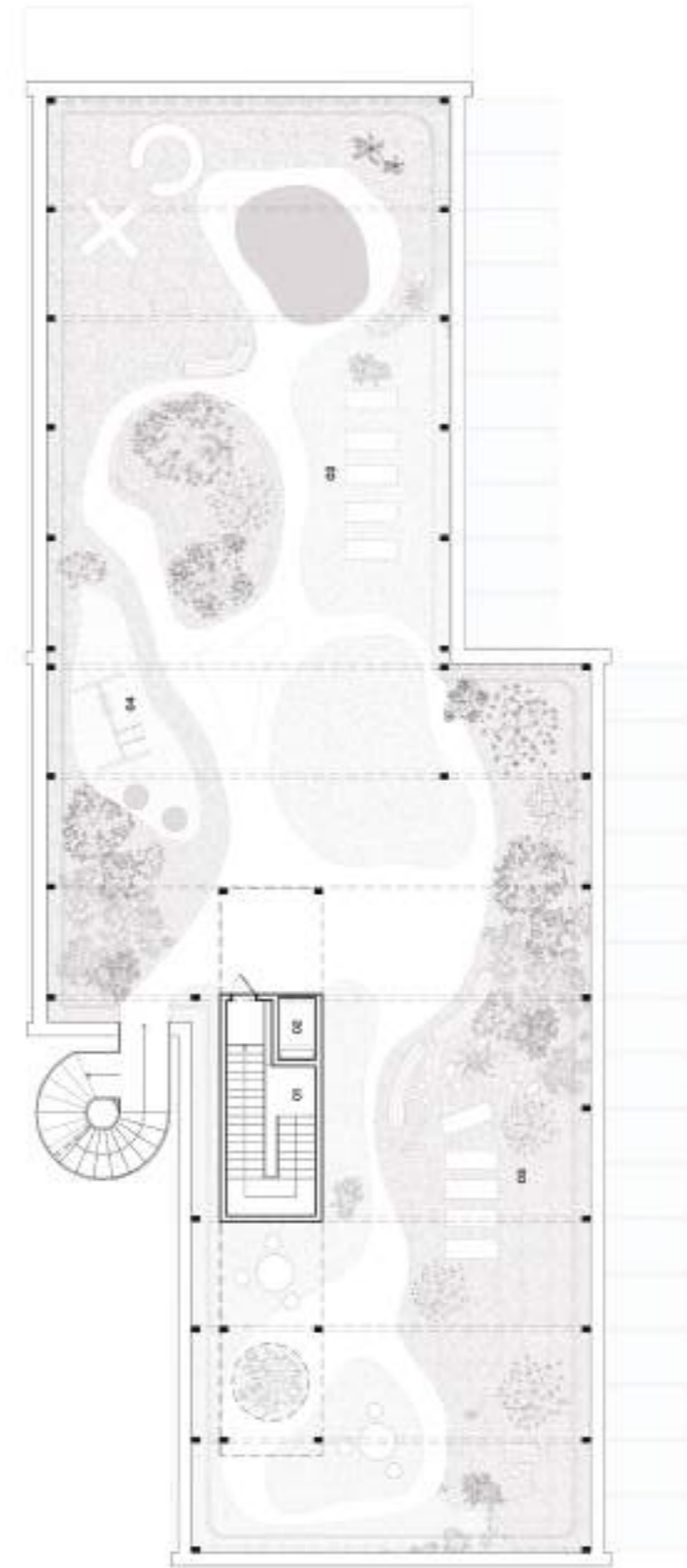
Movement through the floor is intuitive but exploratory, encouraging users to encounter different forms of activity as they circulate. This gradual revelation of spaces reinforces the building's overall concept: learning and creation are not presented as static functions, but as processes to be discovered through movement, observation, and participation.



Roof Garden

The roof is conceived as a quiet garden that offers space for outdoor yoga or pilates, as well as for informal walks and moments of pause. In contrast to the more active programs below, the roof provides a calm, open environment where movement slows down and the city feels more distant.

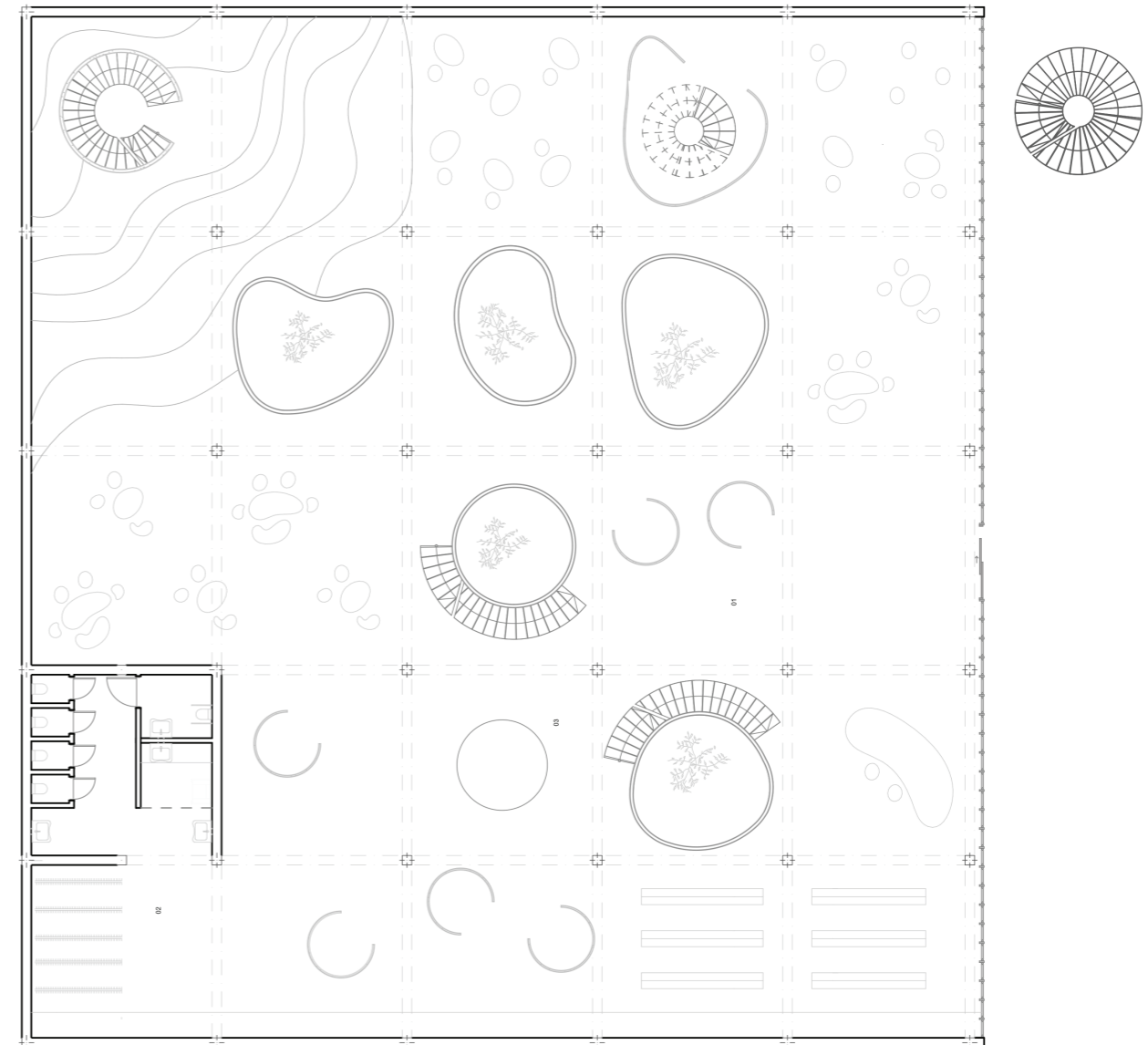
Following the theme of discovery, the garden is not experienced all at once. Paths, planting, and subtle level changes guide visitors through the space, revealing views and resting spots gradually. This creates a contemplative atmosphere where users can reconnect with their surroundings, their bodies, and others—whether through shared activity or solitary reflection.



Basement Library

The other building complements the ACV building by focusing on culture, learning, and reflection. It houses the exhibition spaces and an interactive library, forming a quieter yet intellectually active counterpart to the social programs of the ACV building.

The interactive library is located in the basement, transforming what is typically a hidden level into a meaningful destination. Descending into the library becomes part of the experience: light wells, controlled openings, and visual connections to upper levels prevent the space from feeling closed or isolated. The library functions as a calm, immersive environment for reading, research, and interaction, where knowledge is discovered through both movement and engagement rather than immediate exposure.



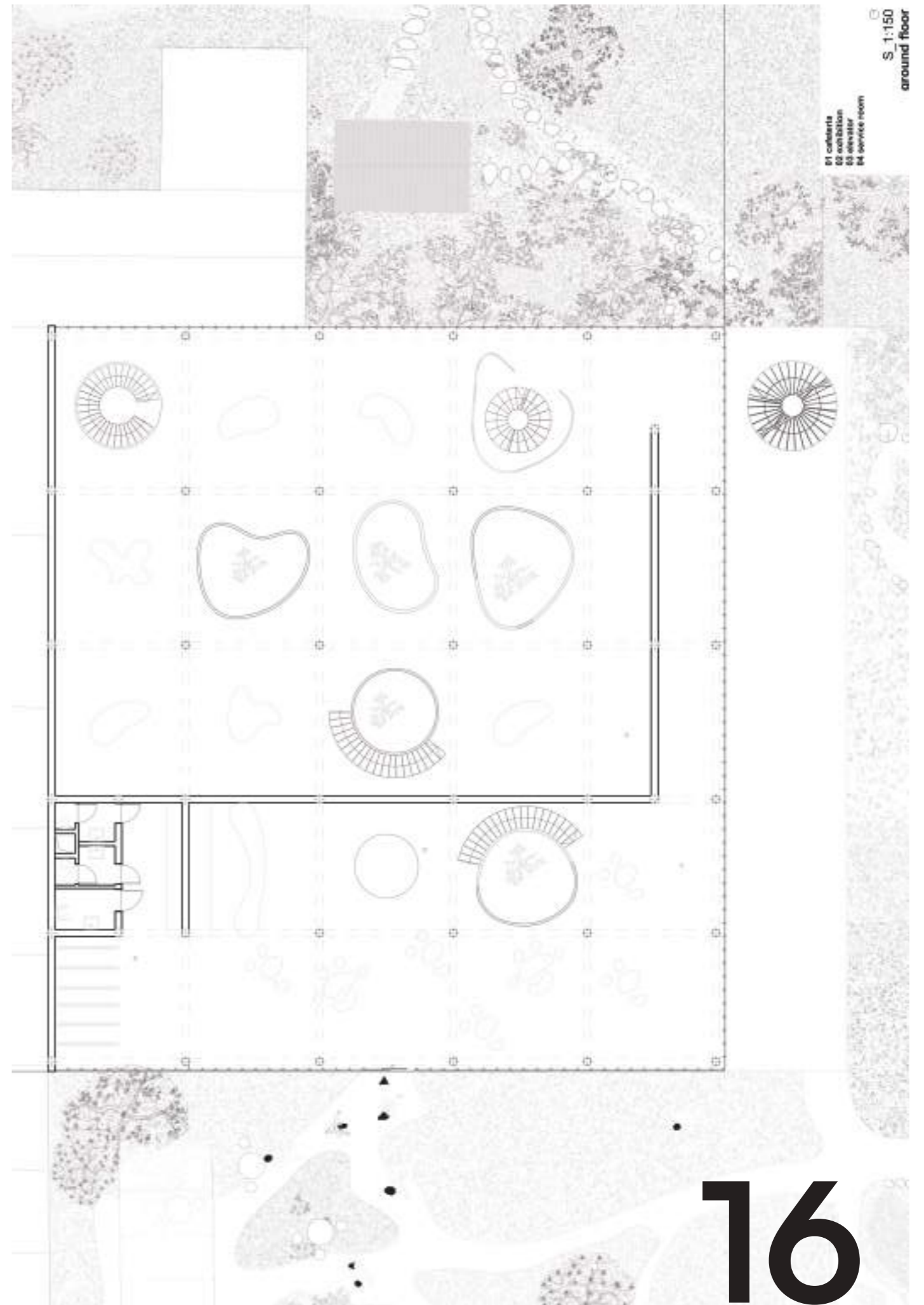
Exhibition

Space

Within the exhibition building, the exhibition spaces are organized around glass gardens—transparent, planted voids that bring light, greenery, and vertical connection into the interior. These glass gardens often contain stairs, turning circulation into part of the exhibition experience rather than a purely functional element.

As visitors move through the building, the stairs within the glass gardens guide them upward and downward while offering shifting views across exhibition spaces and planted areas. The transparency allows glimpses of other levels without revealing them completely, reinforcing the theme of discovery. Nature, movement, and exhibition content intersect, creating moments of pause, orientation, and anticipation as visitors transition between spaces.

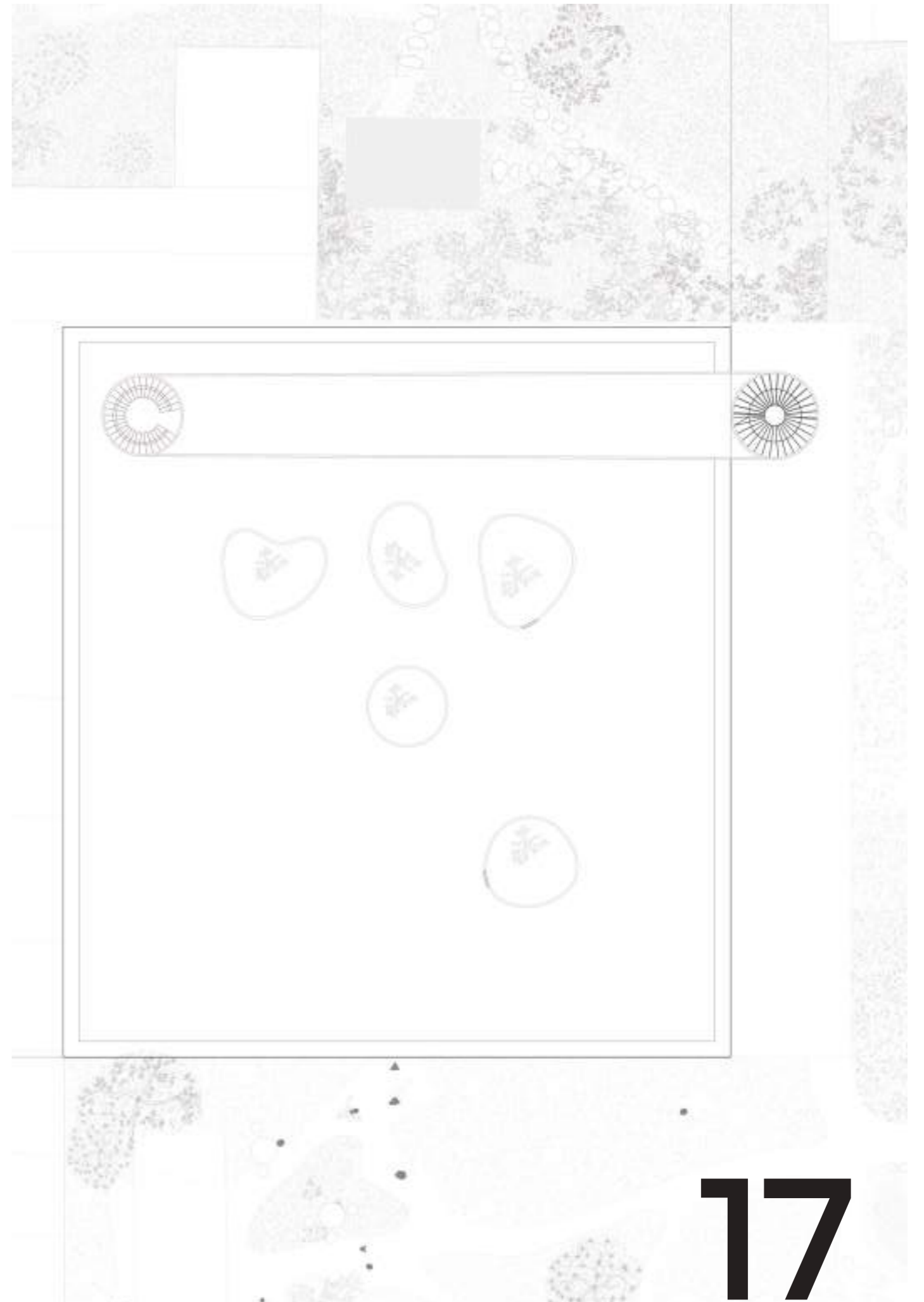
The glass gardens soften the exhibition environment, introducing calm and daylight, while also acting as spatial anchors that structure circulation and encourage exploration throughout the building.



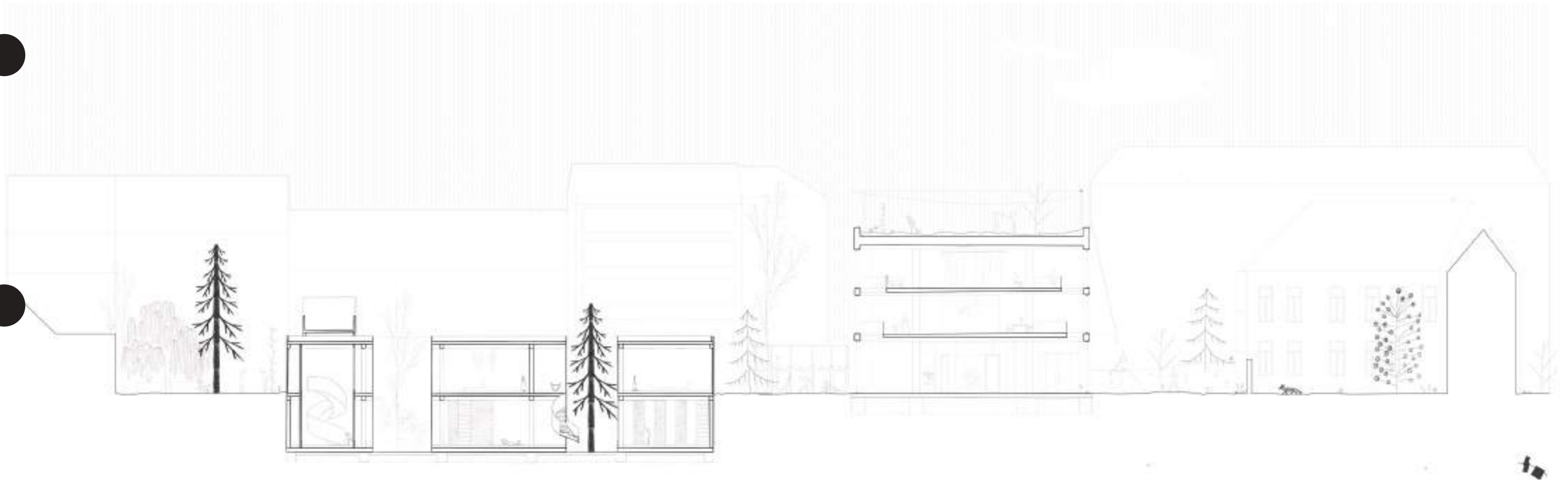
Roof

The roof of the exhibition building is conceived as a vantage point rather than an active program space. From here, visitors can look down onto the glass gardens, gaining a clear overview of the stair-filled, planted interiors below.

This elevated perspective turns the roof into a moment of reflection and discovery, where the layered organization of the exhibition spaces and the interplay of light, greenery, and movement become fully legible. Visitors experience the building in reverse—seeing the hidden paths and connections they previously explored from within—reinforcing the theme of gradual revelation and discovery that defines the entire project.



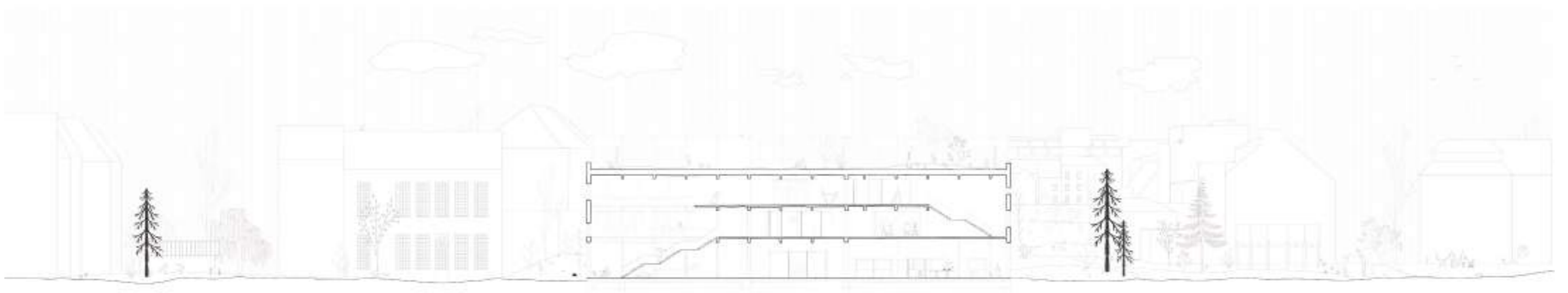
Section



Section

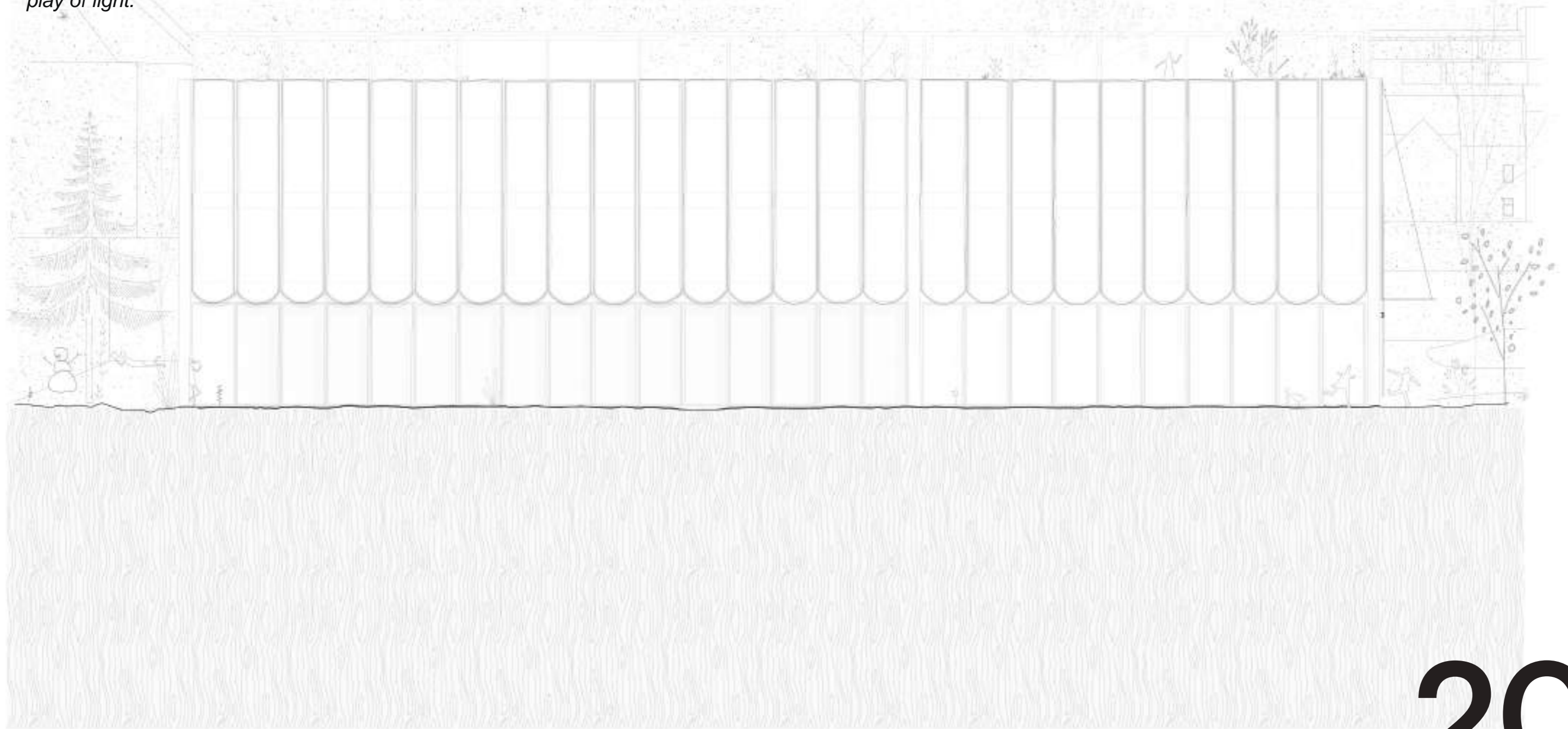


Section



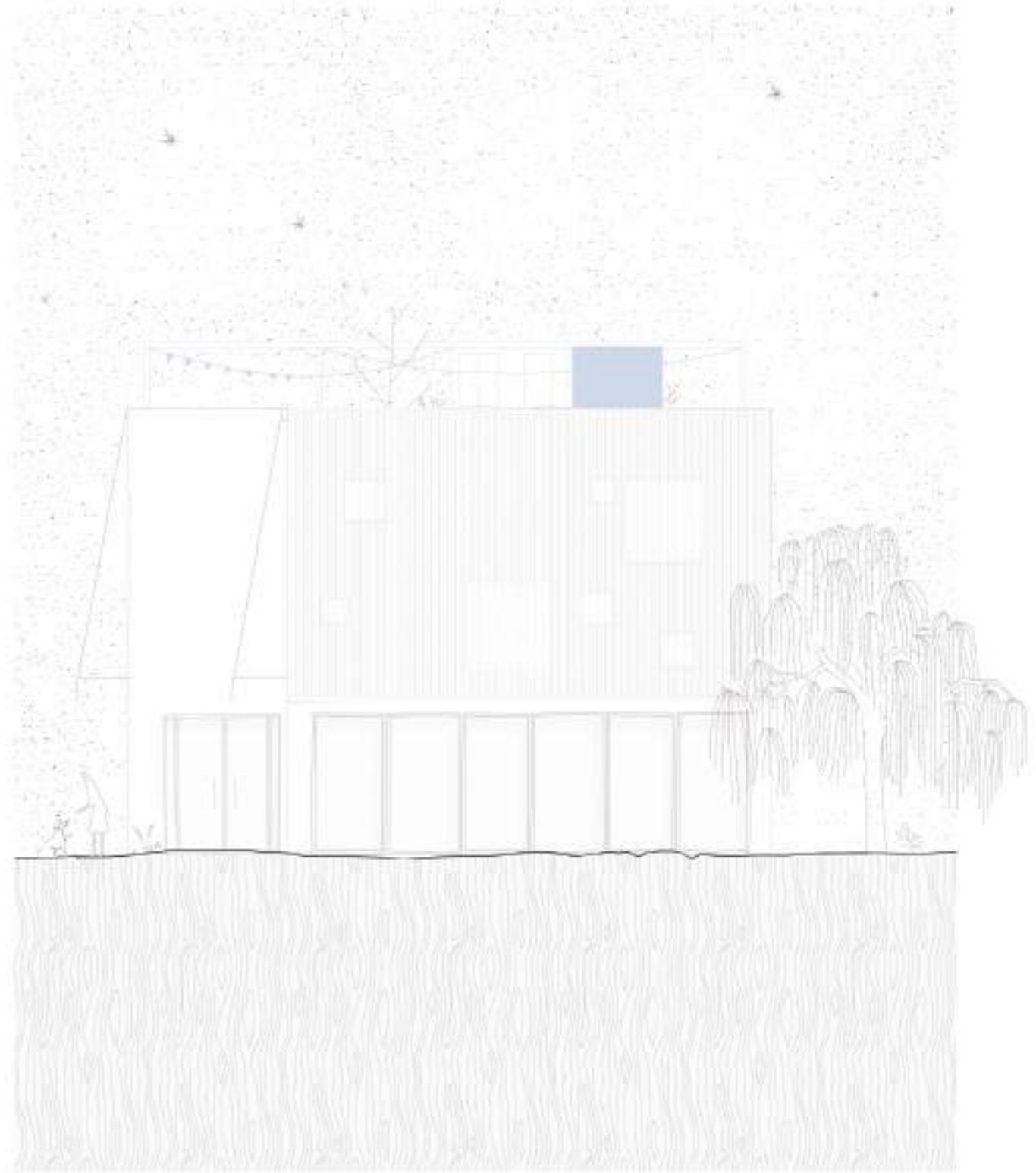
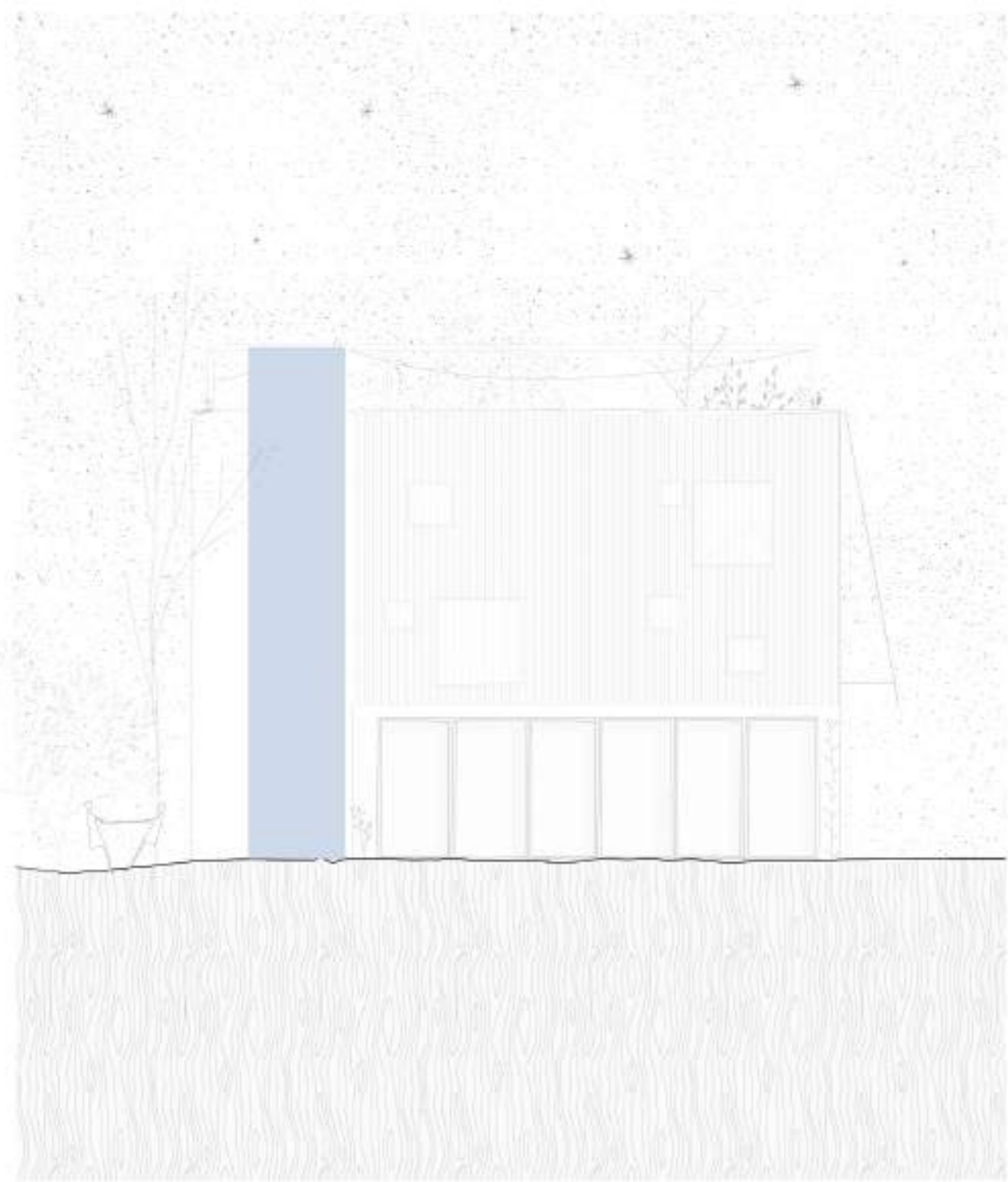
Facades

The buildings play with light. The main building uses the original structure and, with less but more targeted light, makes the spaces interesting. LIGHT TAKES ON A CENTRAL ROLE. In contrast, the smaller building allows in as much light as possible. HIGHLIGHTING THE SHADOWS CAST BY OBJECT AND PLANTS. The two buildings are brought together by polycarbonate, symbolizing the intermediate, completing the play of light.

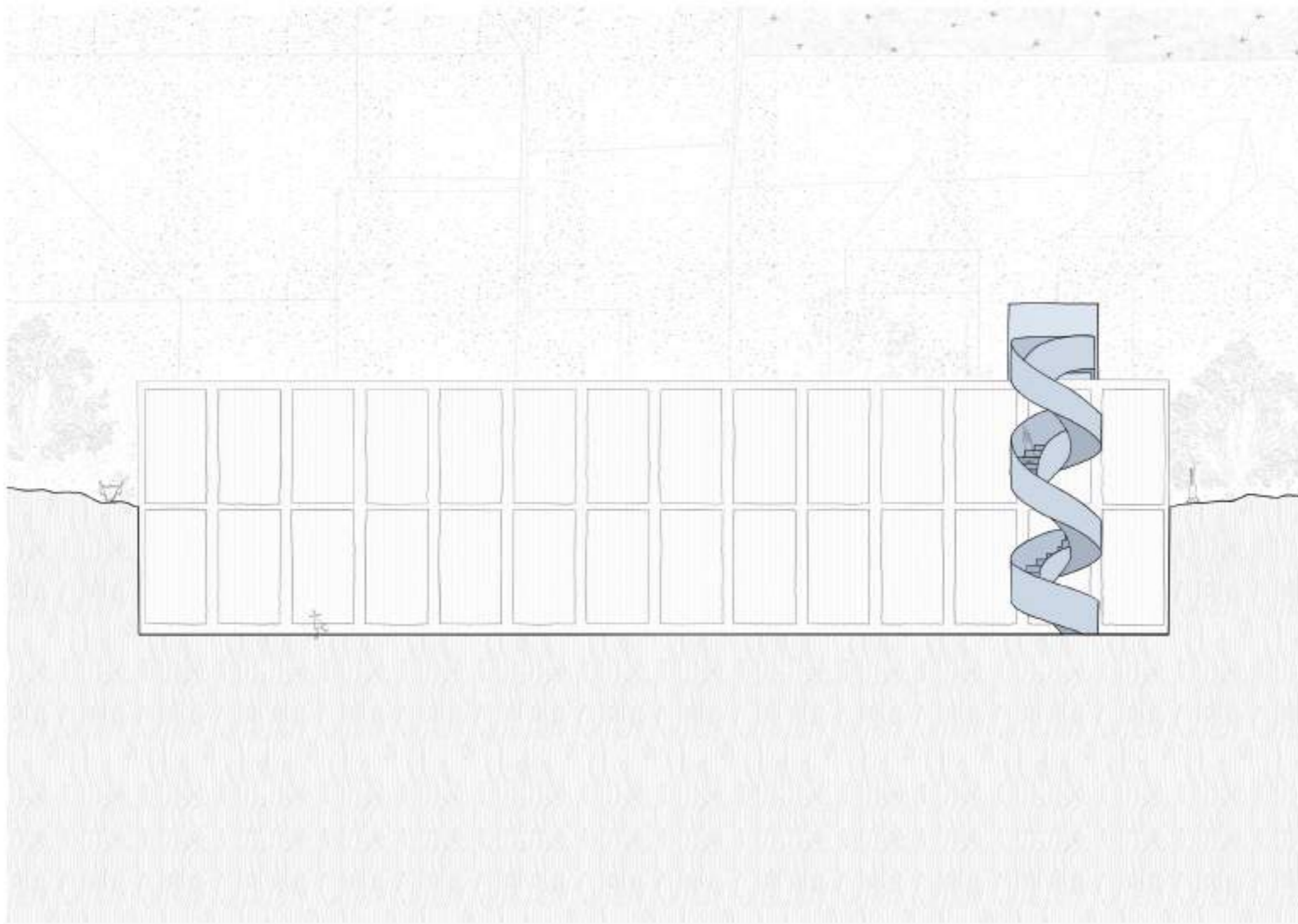


Facades

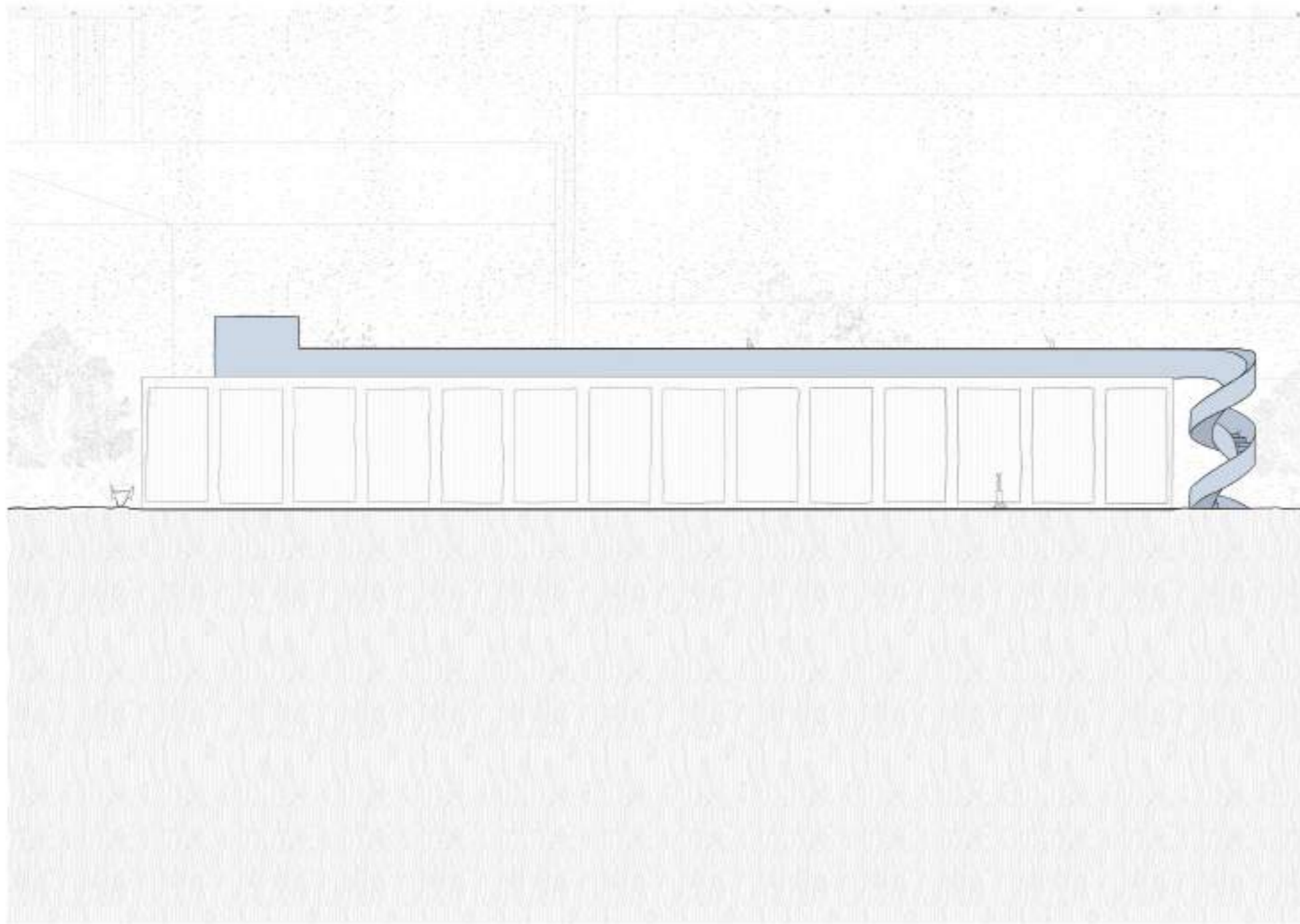
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Facades

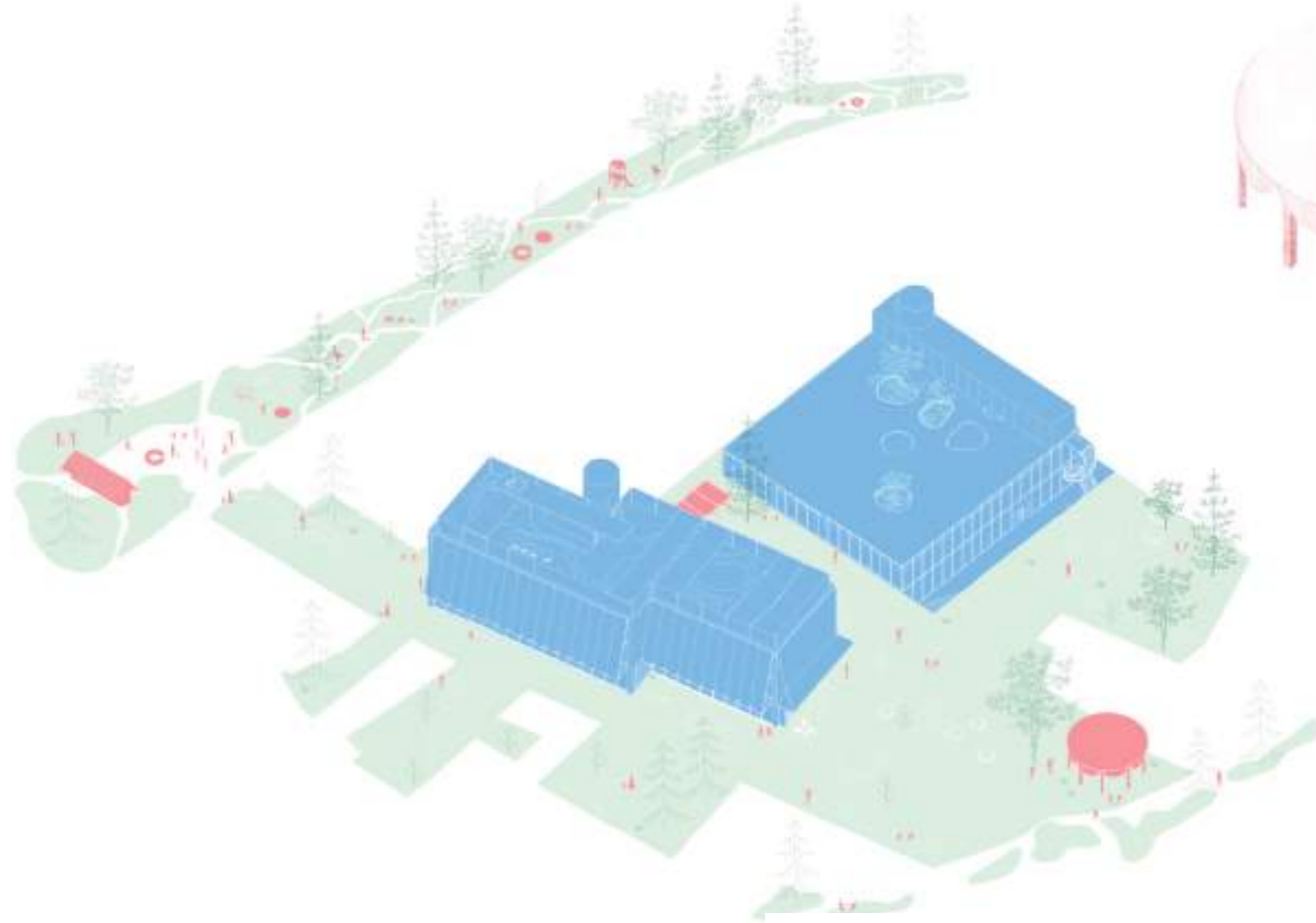
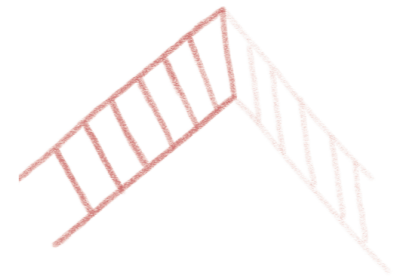
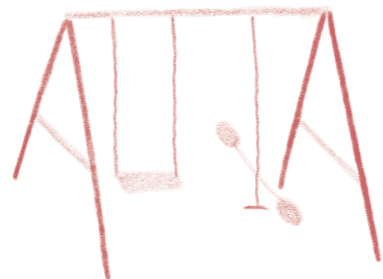
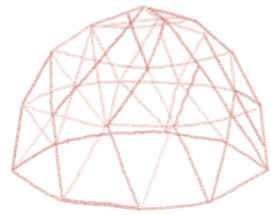


Facades

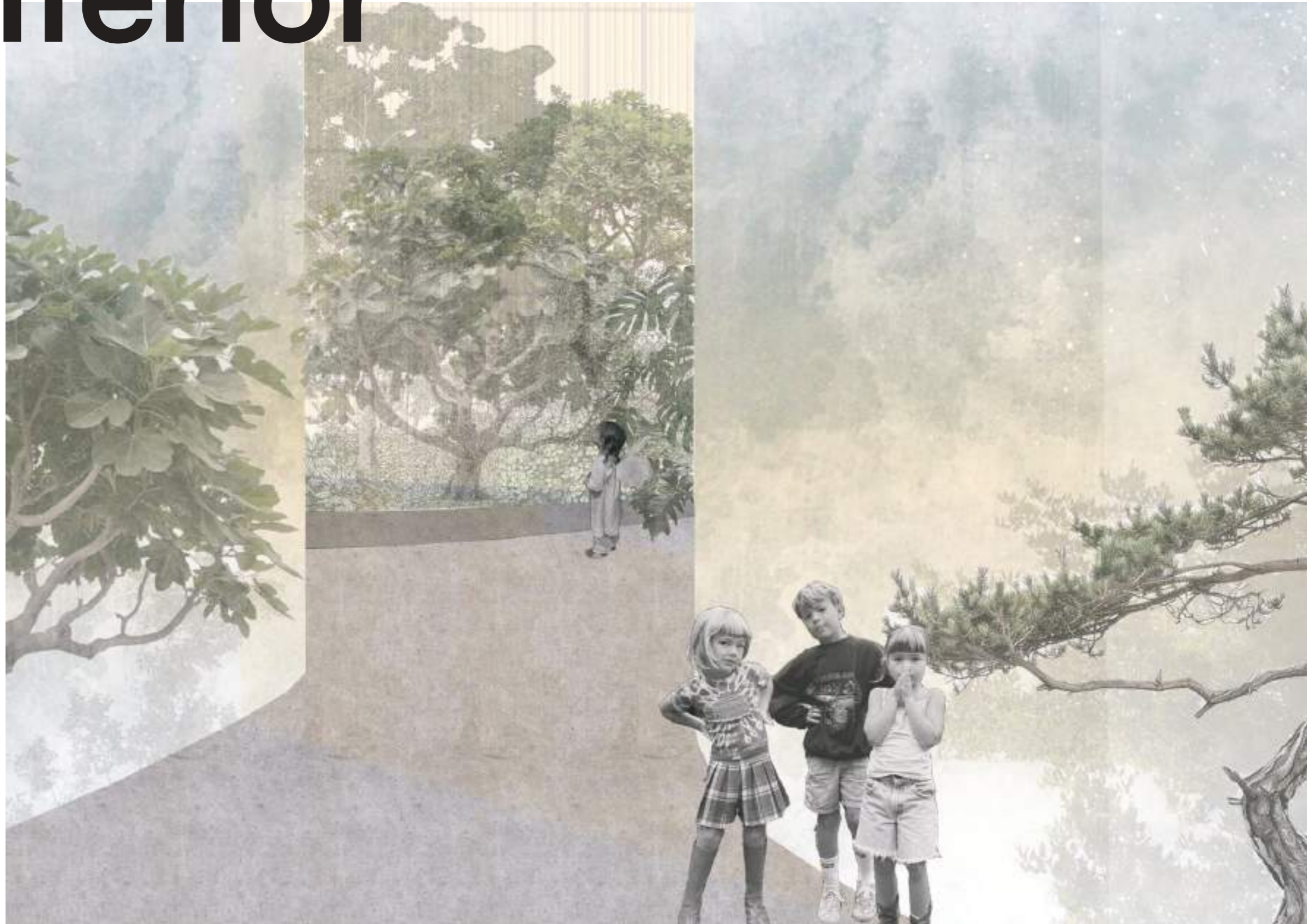


Axonometry

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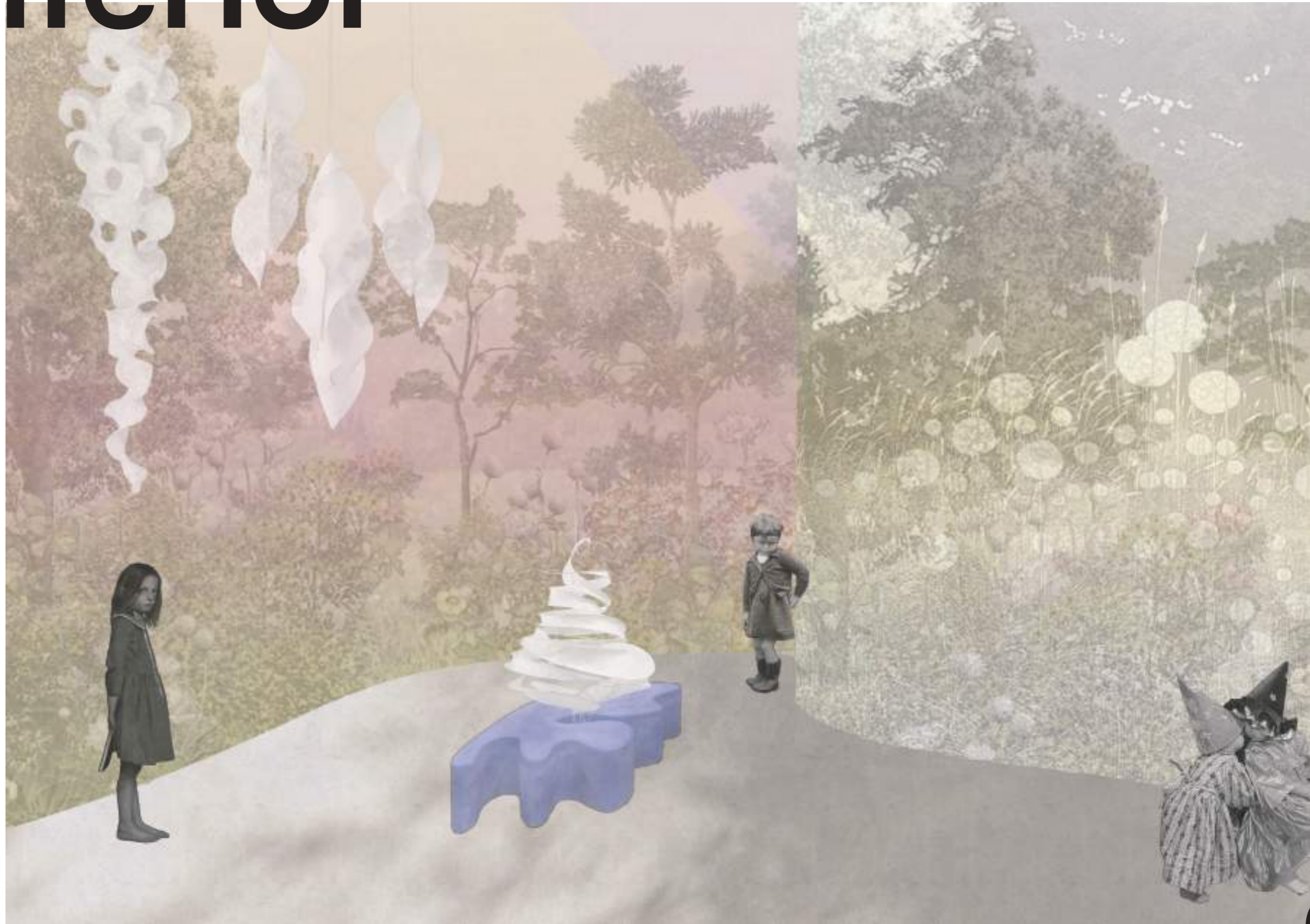


Interior



The interior atmosphere is shaped by the presence of nature, which softens the raw character of the neutral-toned concrete and polycarbonate. Greenery and natural light introduce warmth and balance, creating a calm and inviting environment that contrasts with the building's robust materiality.

Interior



Interior



Interior



Interior



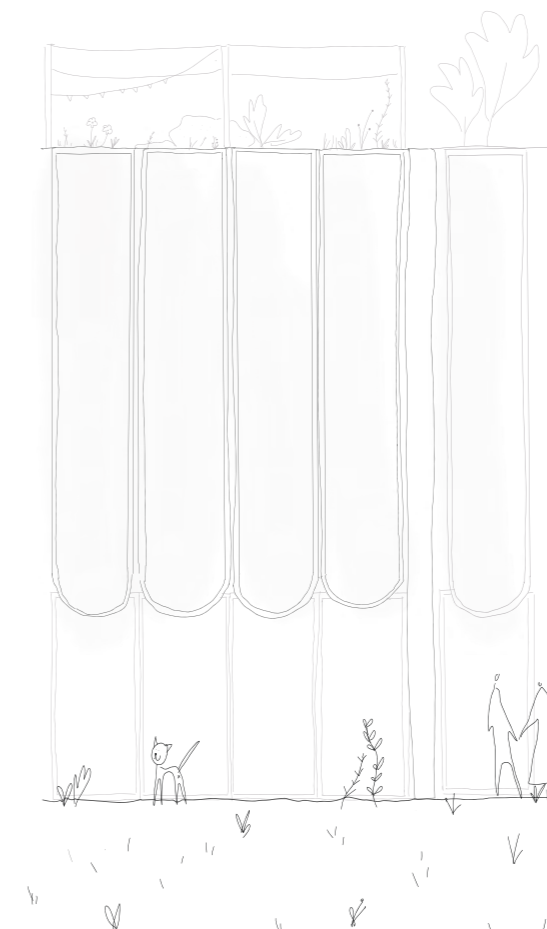
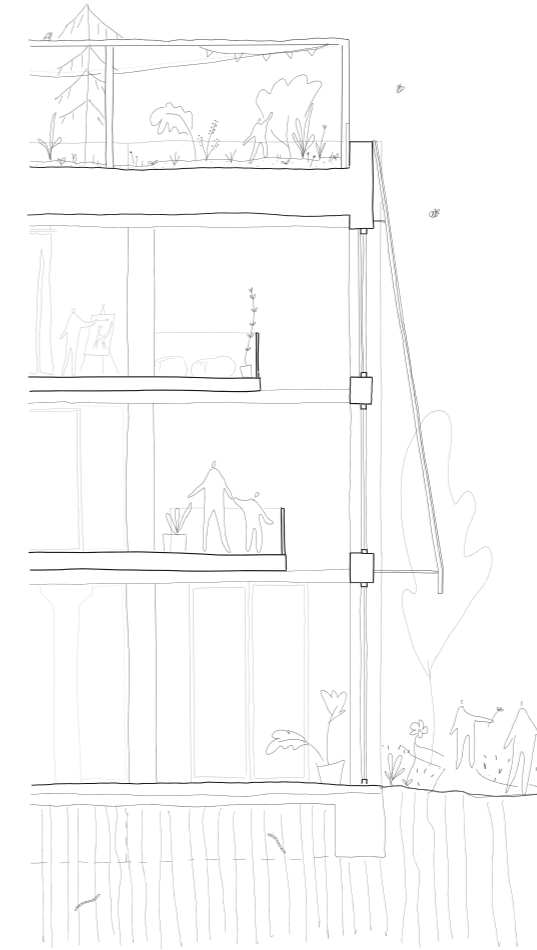
Fragment

The perforated metal roof was chosen as a filtering element between interior and exterior, between shelter and openness. It is neither fully enclosed nor completely open, but rather creates an in-between space, which is especially important in architecture focused on encounter and gradual discovery.

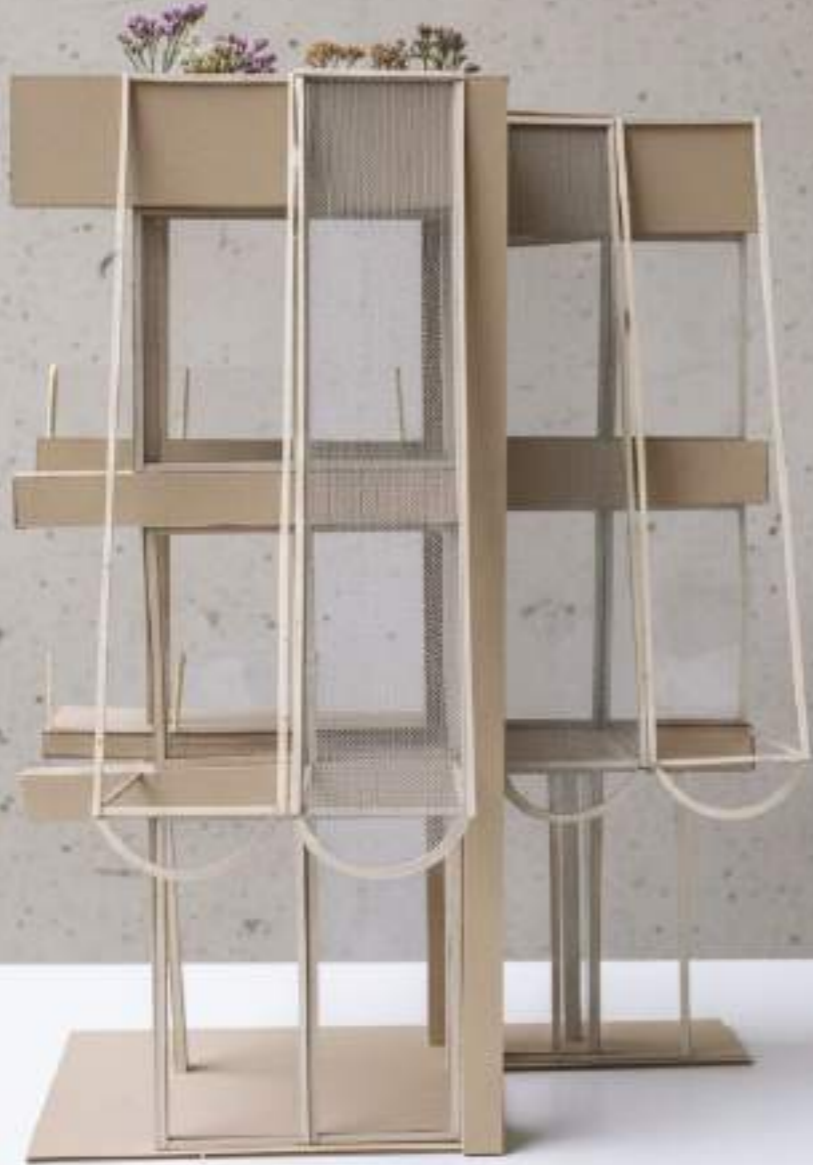
In Japanese architecture, similar principles often appear through semi-transparent layers (such as shoji or engawa), which do not separate spaces abruptly but instead softly mediate between them. The perforated metal functions in a comparable way: it allows light, air, and visual connections to pass through while still providing shade and a sense of protection. The light filtered through the perforations changes throughout the day, creating a dynamic and constantly evolving atmosphere.

From the perspective of the place for encounter, the roof supports lingering and social interaction. It creates comfortable conditions for people to meet—offering protection from direct sunlight or rain while maintaining a strong connection to the surroundings. Users feel neither fully exposed nor completely enclosed, which encourages spontaneity, longer stays, and informal encounters.

The perforated roof is therefore not only a technical solution but an architectural tool that strengthens the themes of discovery, transition, and encounter. It creates a space where people naturally gather, observe their surroundings, and form connections—both with the architecture and with one another.



Fragment





Visualisation

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Visualisation

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Visualisation

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Visualisation

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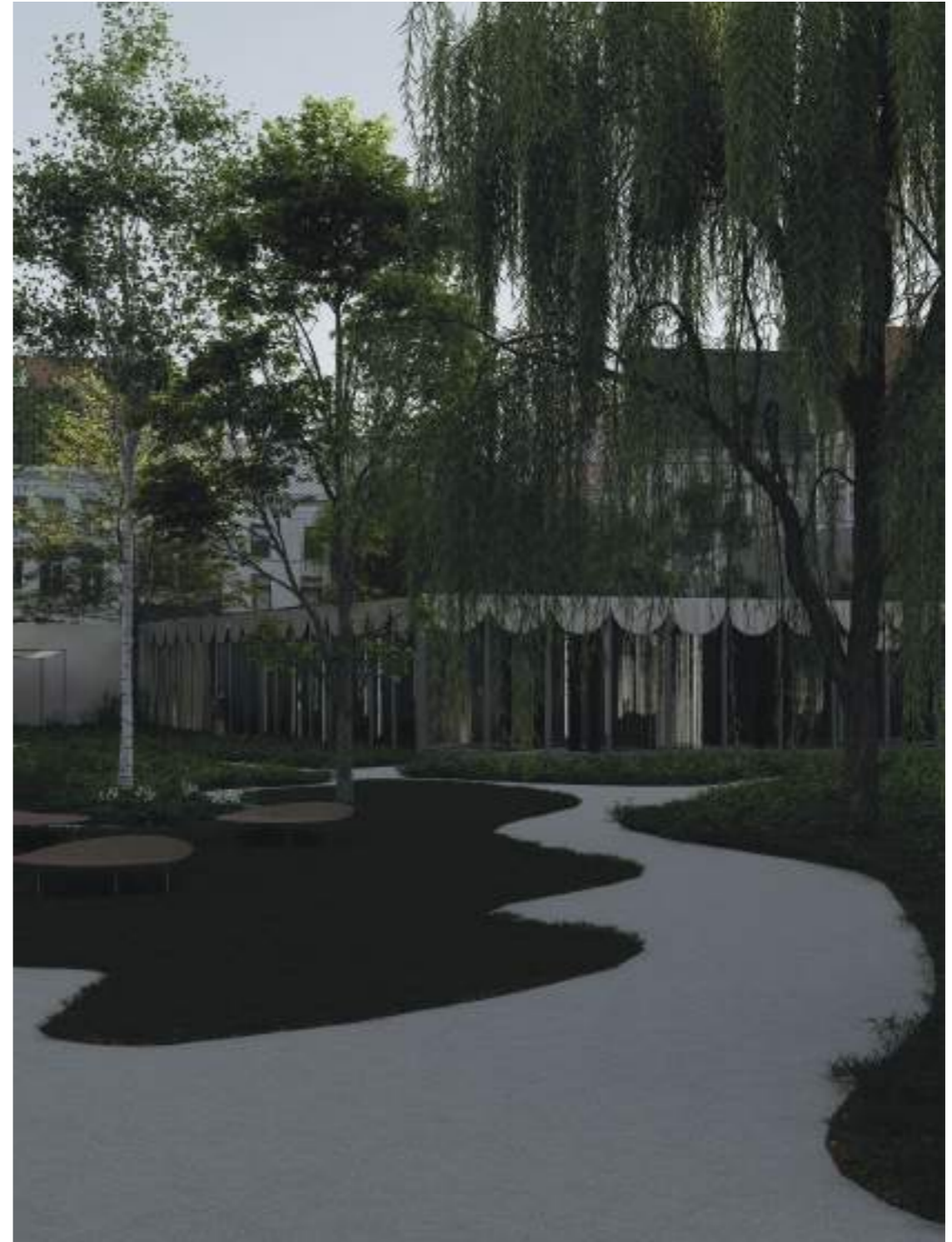
Visualisation



Visualisation



Visualisation



Visualisation



sketches

