

CONCEPT

The intention behind this endeavor is to materialize and spatialize the syntactic structuralist aspect of “Classic Arabic” poetry into an oragnizational archive that commemorates and preserves the legacy of “Classic Arabic” poetry, deemed the jewel of Arabic culture and a valuable legacy practiced by Arabs ever since pre-Islamic times.

“Classic Arabic” poetry has a unique structure that is based on a **mathematical scheme of melodic resonance and a measurable rhythmic pattern**. This structure is known as “**Prosody**,” a valid syntactical system that divides syllables, be them accentuated or not, based on time and rythm.

This prosodical scheme is manifested by 16 linear metres, each with a distinct structure represented with symbols (I: accentuated, 0: unaccentuated). These metres were known to Arabs ever since pre-Islamic times. Then, in the 8th century A.D. a Basran grammarian called “Al-Farahidi” classified them, name them, and systematized their usage to distinguish soud poetry from corrupt one.

Each metre is comprised of a set of units called “Feet.” These feet are themselves also composed of smaller units assembled to create it. They are called pegs, cords, and posts; Each of these is an element found in the structure of the “Hair Houses” built by Arabs at the time. Hence, Al-Farahidi extracted his assigned terminologies from the structure of Arabs’ tents.

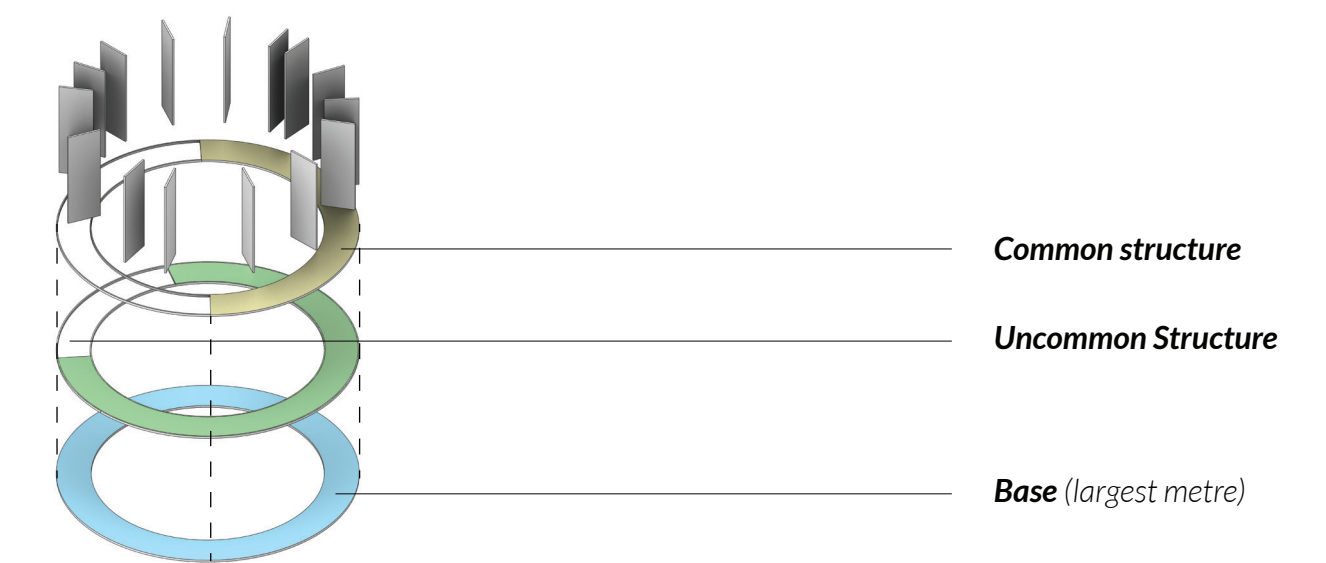
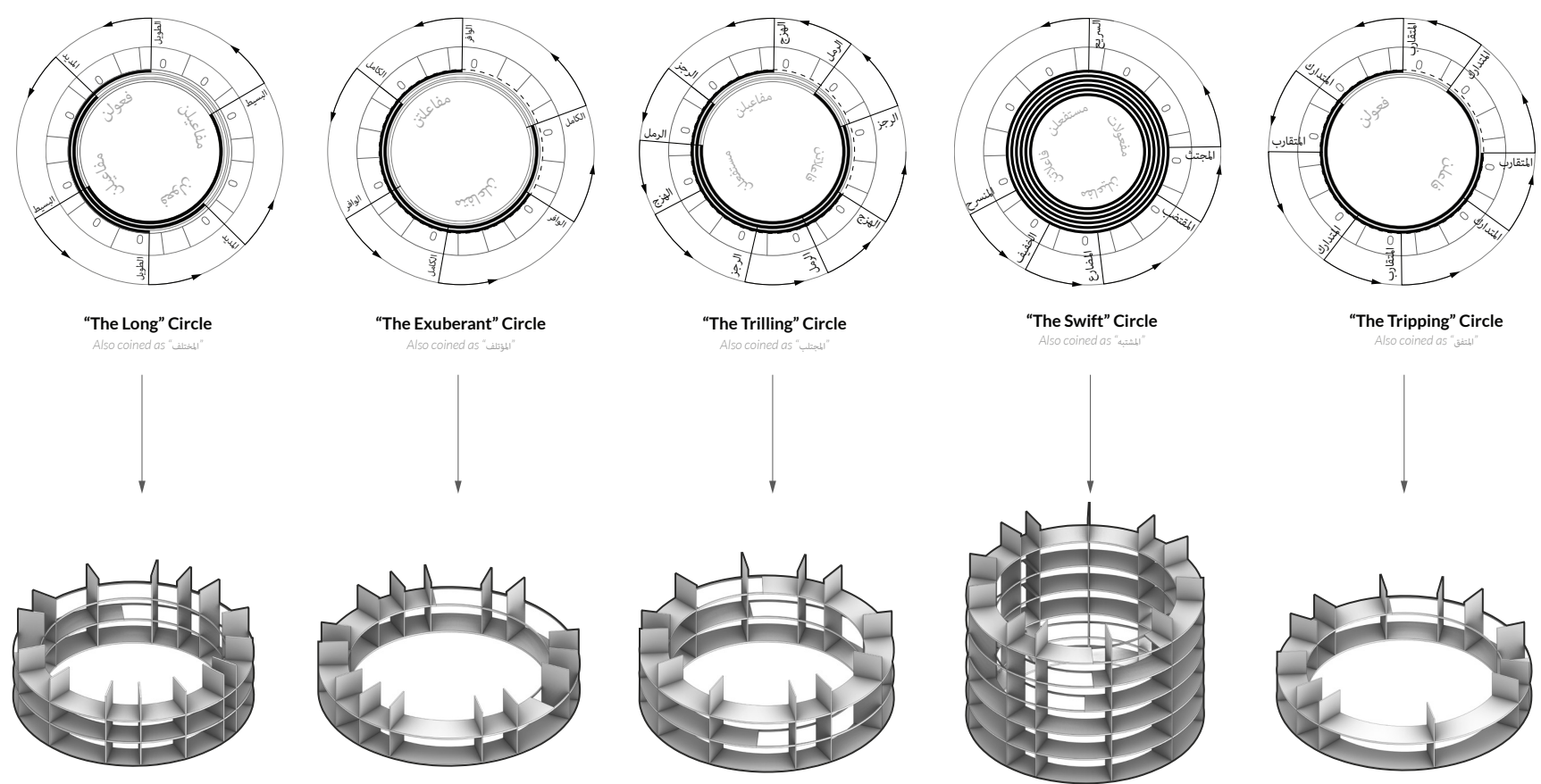
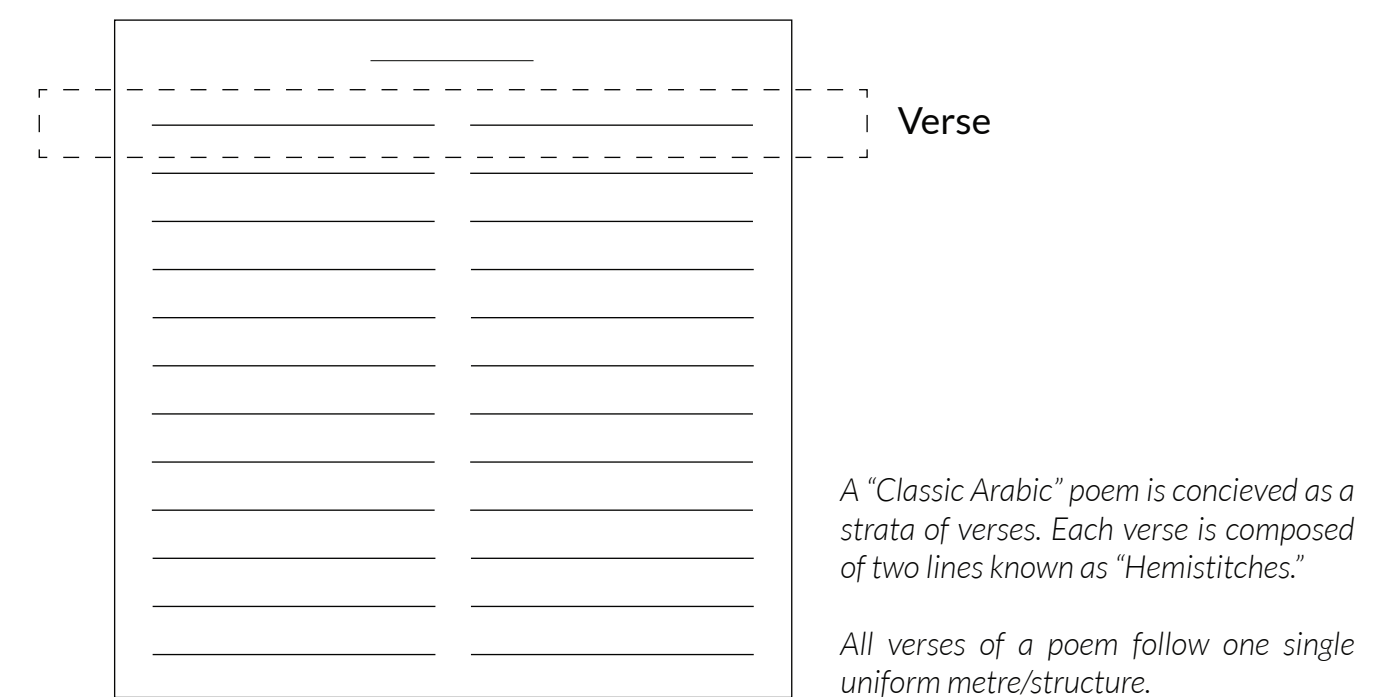
So, if “Classic Arabic” poetry made use of architecture in the first place, this project aims to look back at this approach and close the loop by materializing and architecturizing the very geometry of this poetry which terminologies are extracted from architecture.

After his death, a student of his, called “Al-Jawhari,” classified them based on the similarities between them and grouped them into 5 circles, each with a unique structure and number of metres.

To find where the metres intersect, they were overlapped in their linear format. The shared symbols denoting the feet are where they intersect and are colored. The parts left out in gray represents the uncommon structure. Besides each metre is shown its circular scheme.

Architecturally, the feet are the very structure of the unit, whereas the metres are the slabs. The parts emptied from the circles representing the metres denote the uncommon structure.

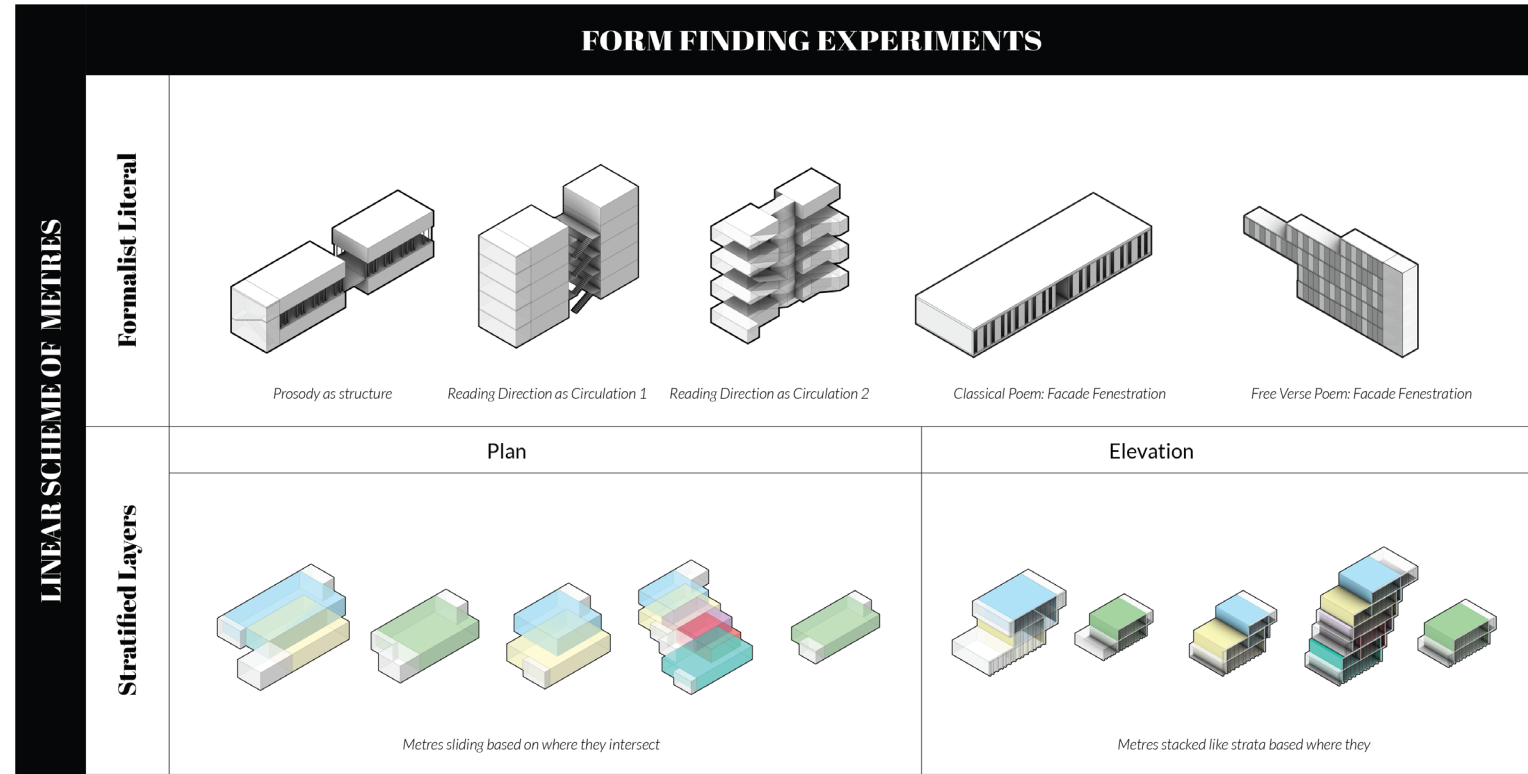
Meter	English Name	Mnemonics Pattern	Scansion
الطويل	The Long	فعولن مفاعيلن فعولن مفاعيلن	0//0// 0/0// 0/0/0// 0/0//
الكامل	The Perfect	متفاعلن متفاعلن متفاعلن	0//0/// 0//0/// 0//0///
البيسط	The Outspread	مستفعلن فاعلن مستفعلن فاعلن	0//0/ 0//0/0/ 0//0/ 0//0/0/
الخفيف	The Nimble	فاعلاتن مستفعلن فاعلاتن	0/0//0/ 0//0/0/ 0/0//0/
الوافر	The Exuberant	مفاعلتن مفاعلتن فعولن	0/0// 0///0// 0///0//
الرجز	The Trembling	مستفعلن مستفعلن مستفعلن	0//0/0/ 0//0/0/ 0//0/0/
الرمل	The Running	فاعلاتن فاعلاتن فاعلاتن	0/0//0/ 0/0//0/ 0/0//0/
المتقارب	The Tripping	فعولن فعولن فعولن فعولن	0/0// 0/0// 0/0// 0/0//
السرّيع	The Swift	مستفعلن مستفعلن مفعولات	/0/0/0/ 0//0/0/ 0//0/0/
المنسرح	The Flowing	مستفعلن مفعولات مستفعلن	0//0/0/ /0/0/0/ 0//0/0/
المجثث	The Amputated	مستفعلن فاعلاتن فاعلاتن	0/0//0/ 0/0//0/ 0//0/0/
المديد	The Extended	فاعلاتن فاعلن فاعلاتن	0/0//0/ 0//0/ 0/0//0/
الهنّج	The Trilling	مفاعيلن مفاعيلن	0/0/0// 0/0/0//
المقتضب	The Lopped	مفعولات مستفعلن مستفعلن	0//0/0/ 0//0/0/ /0/0/0/
المضارع	The Similar	مفاعيلن فاعلاتن فاعلاتن	0/0//0/ 0/0//0/ 0/0/0//
المتدارك	The Continuous	فاعلن فاعلن فاعلن فاعلن	0//0/ 0//0/ 0//0/ 0//0/



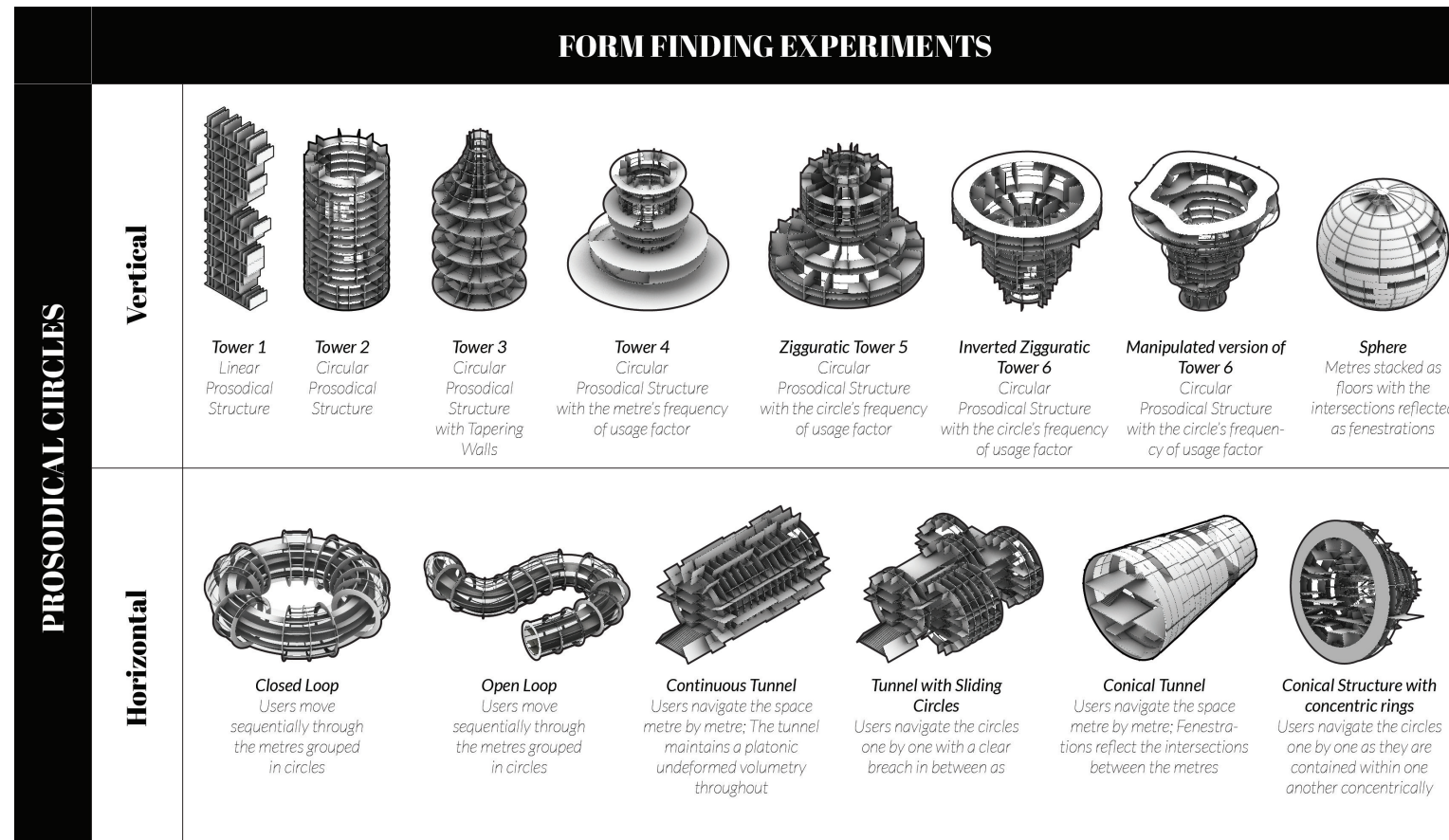
الطويل	The Long	فعولن مفاعيلن فعولن مفاعيلن 0/0/0//0/0//0/0/0// 0/0//	○
المديد	The Extended	فاعلاتن فاعلن فاعلاتن 0/0//0/ 0//0/ 0/0//0/	+
البيسط	The Outspread	مستفعلن فاعلن مستفعلن فاعلن 0//0/ 0//0/ 0//0/0/	+

DESIGN EXPLORATION

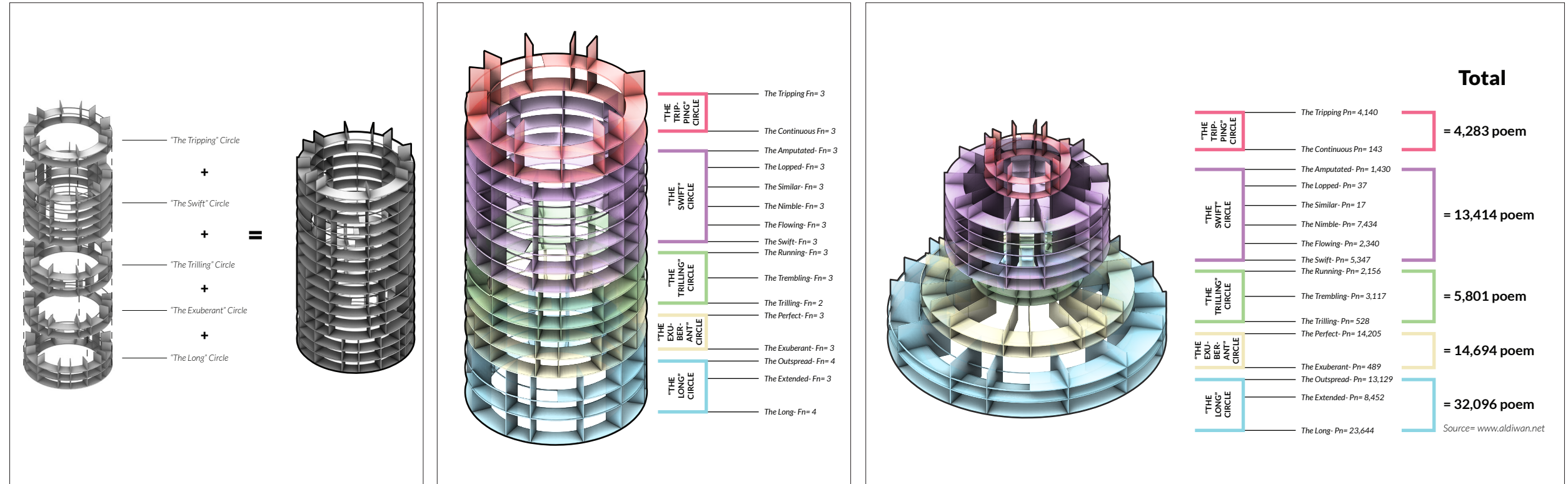
Multiple types of design experiments were conducted. Starting with the most immediate/literal ones all the way to organizational explorations that intended to fulfil the very main aim of this thesis, I have favored the second approach.



a. Immediate/Linear Exploration



b. Spatialization of the 5 Prosodical Circles



Step 1

Step 2

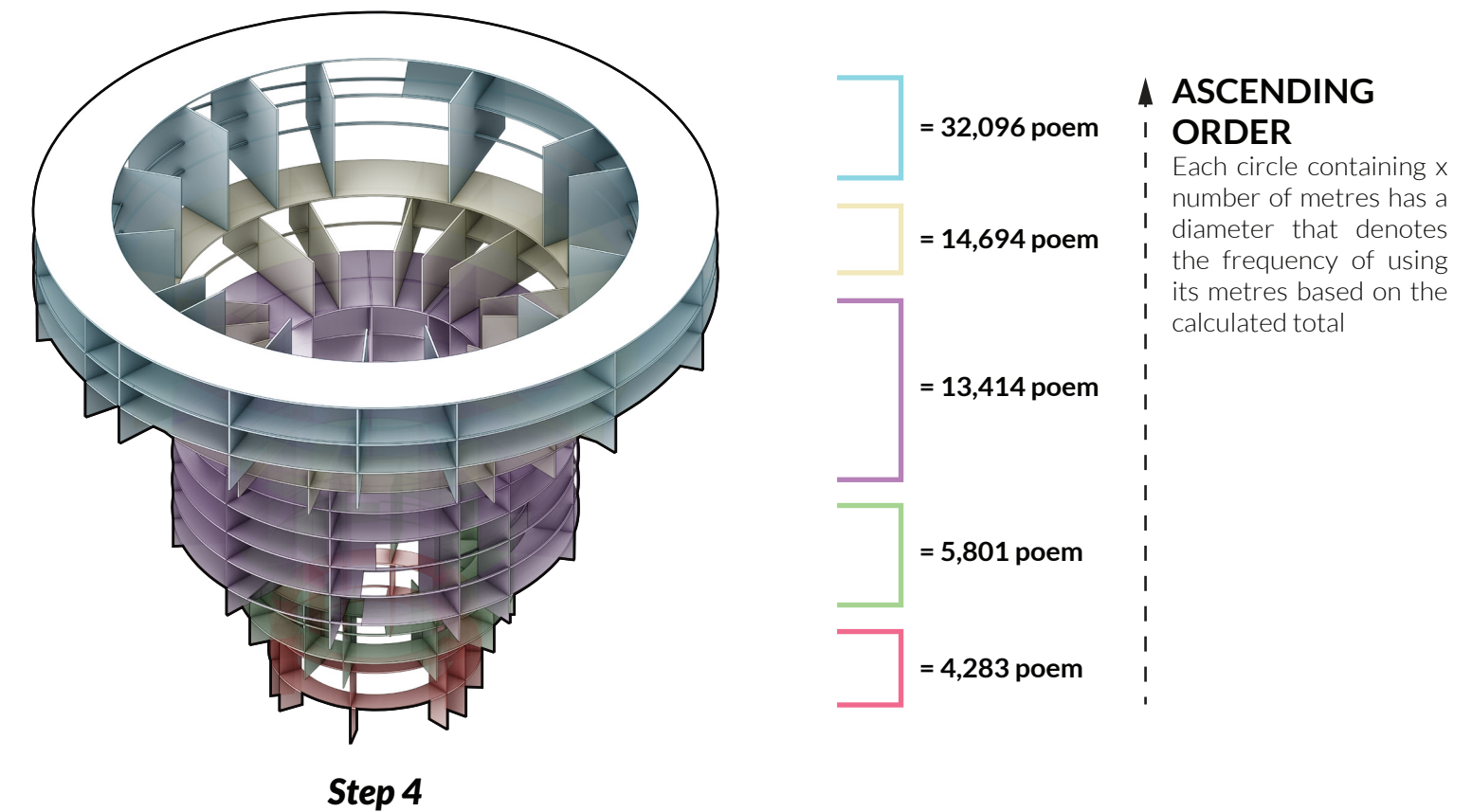
Step 3

Step 1: The 5 spatialized circular groups each with a distinct number of metres are stacked on top of each-other to end up with a cylindrical tower.

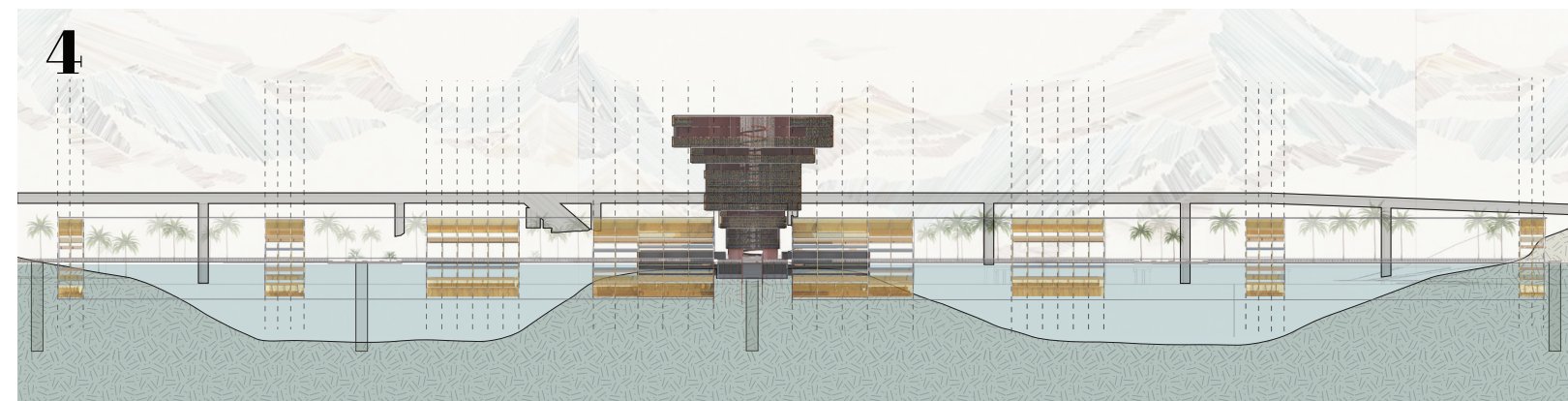
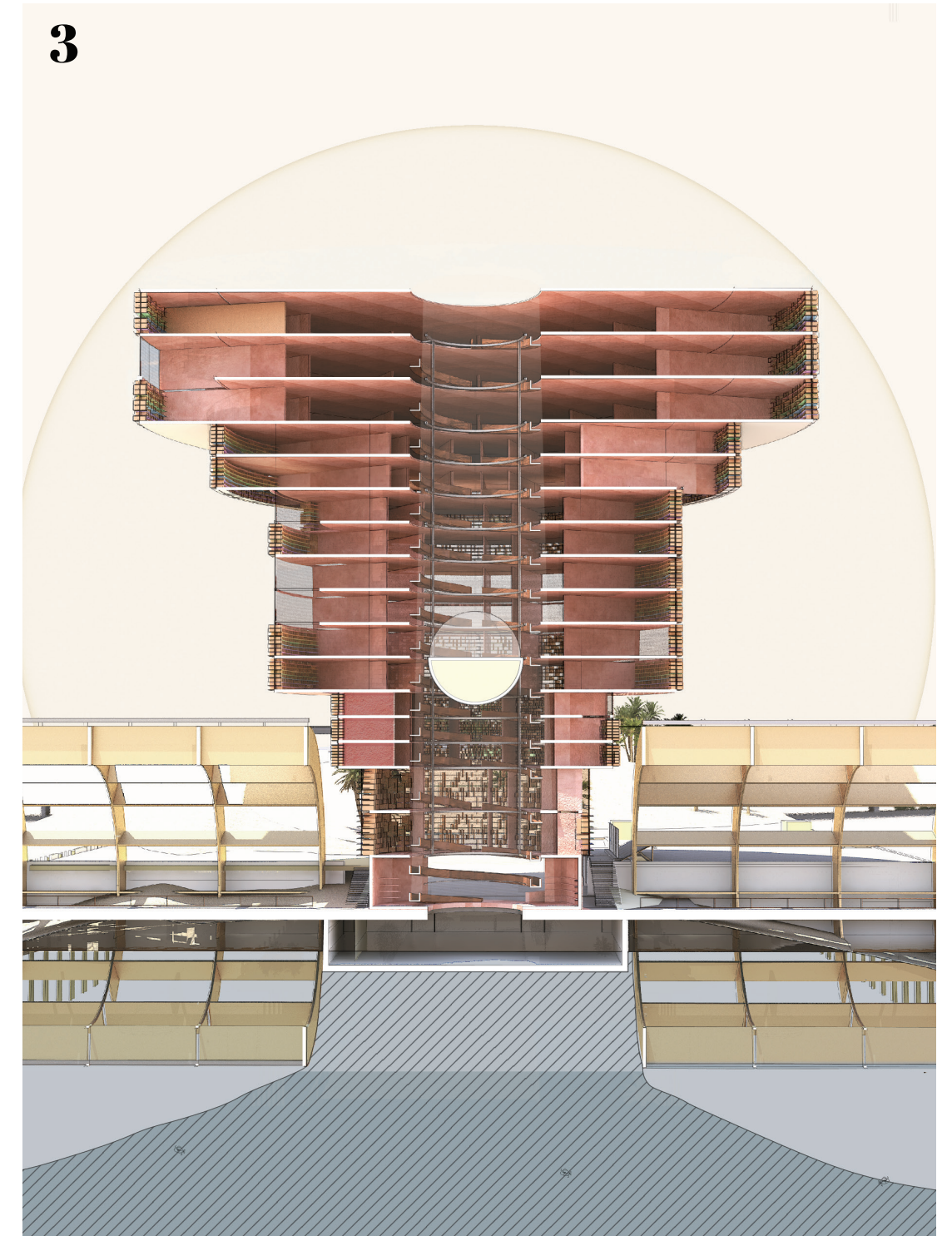
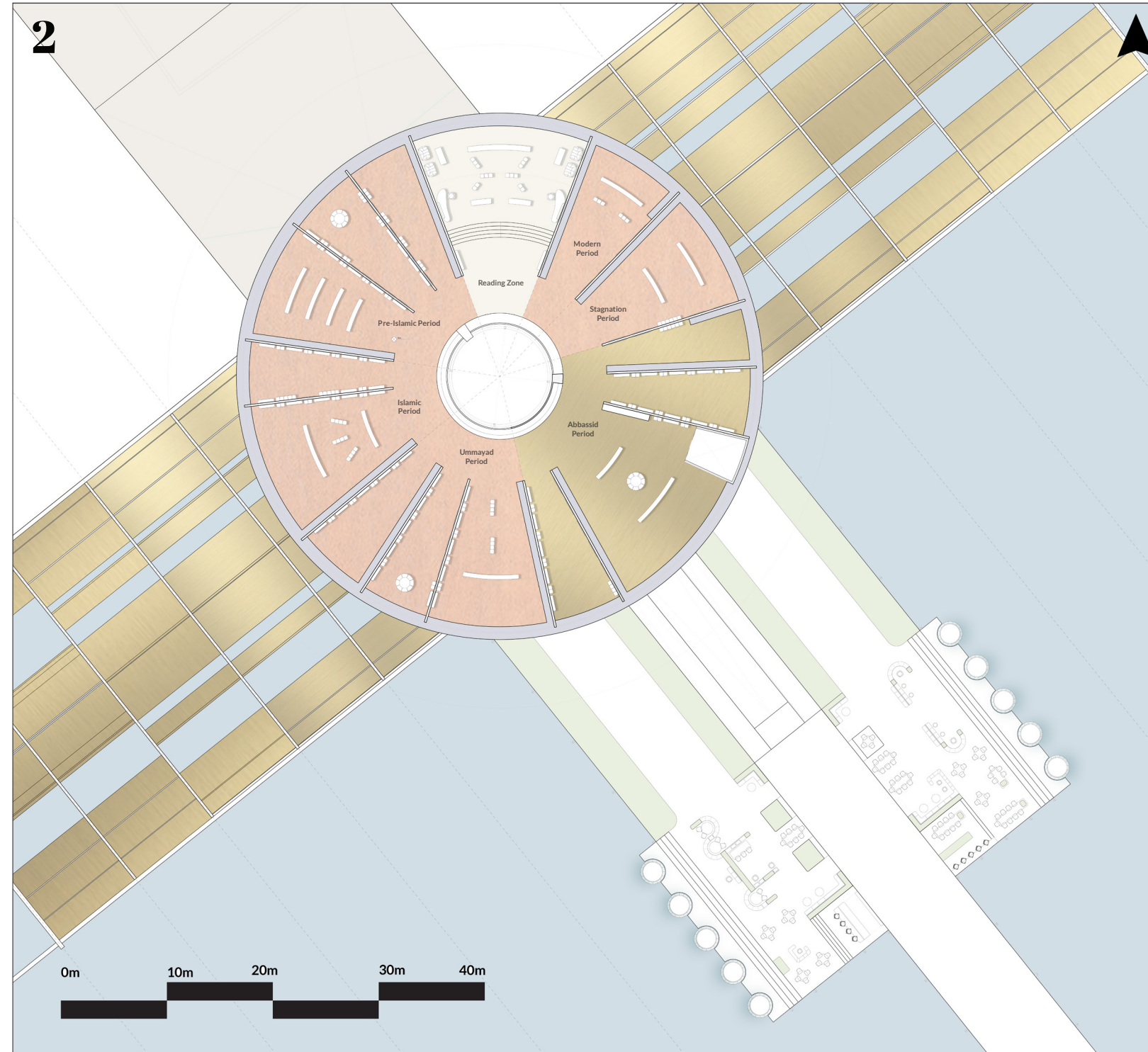
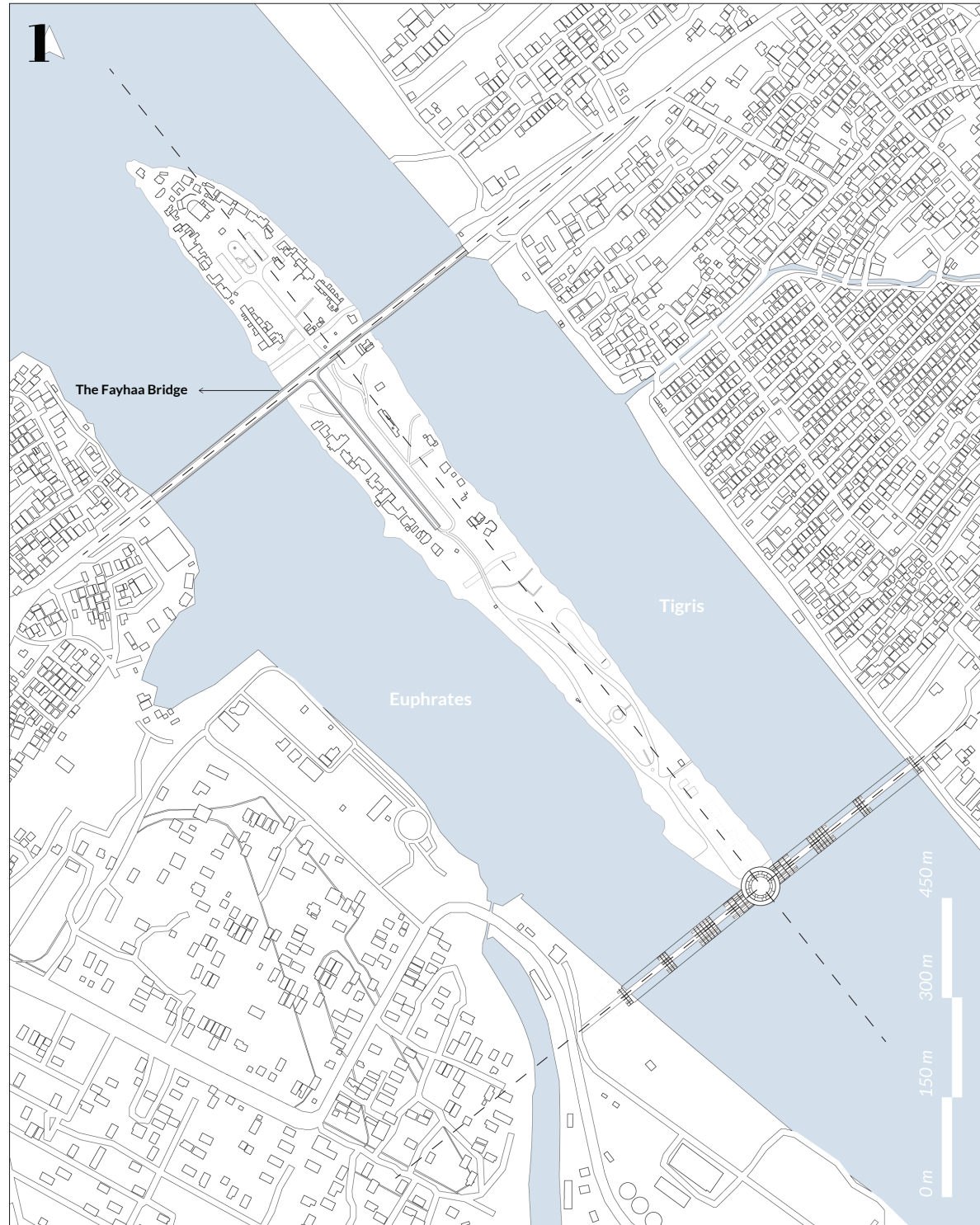
Step 2: To sophisticate it more, a further dimension was materialized by differentiating between the metres based on the number of feet each contains. So, if a metre has 2 feet, the unit materializing it is 2m high and so on.

Step 3: A 3rd dimension was added in this step whereby the frequency of usage of the metre is accentuated as in how big the diameter of the circle is. Thus, we would end up with a ziggurat-like upsurge of masses or a tower of Babel.

Step 4: The same volumetry is manipulated through recursive manipulations and further organization by arranging the units in an ascending order based on the diameter of each group of circles. Hence, the resultant looks like a tower of Babel or an inverted ziggurat in volumetry.



DRAWINGS



For a myriad of factors, and most importantly Iraq being the cradle of the “Golden age” of poetry and literature during the Abbassid period, the chosen site was Iraq, and specifically Basra, south-east Iraq, where the rules of prosody were systematized by Al- Farahidi. The project is then placed at the very tip of the Sinbad island in Basra, at the very center of “Shatt al Arab waterway,” marking the confluence of the two rivers “The Tigris” and “The Euphrates.”

Hence, the central archive is anchored at the tip while a bridge extending from the brink of one river to the brink of the other establishes a parallel axis parallel to the sole overland access which is the “Fayhaa” bridge. And the units dispersed along it are the circular metres grouped in circles as in the initial cylindrical tower created by

1. Mass Plan
2. Plan cut at 32 m
3. Section AA looking North-West
4. North-West Elevation

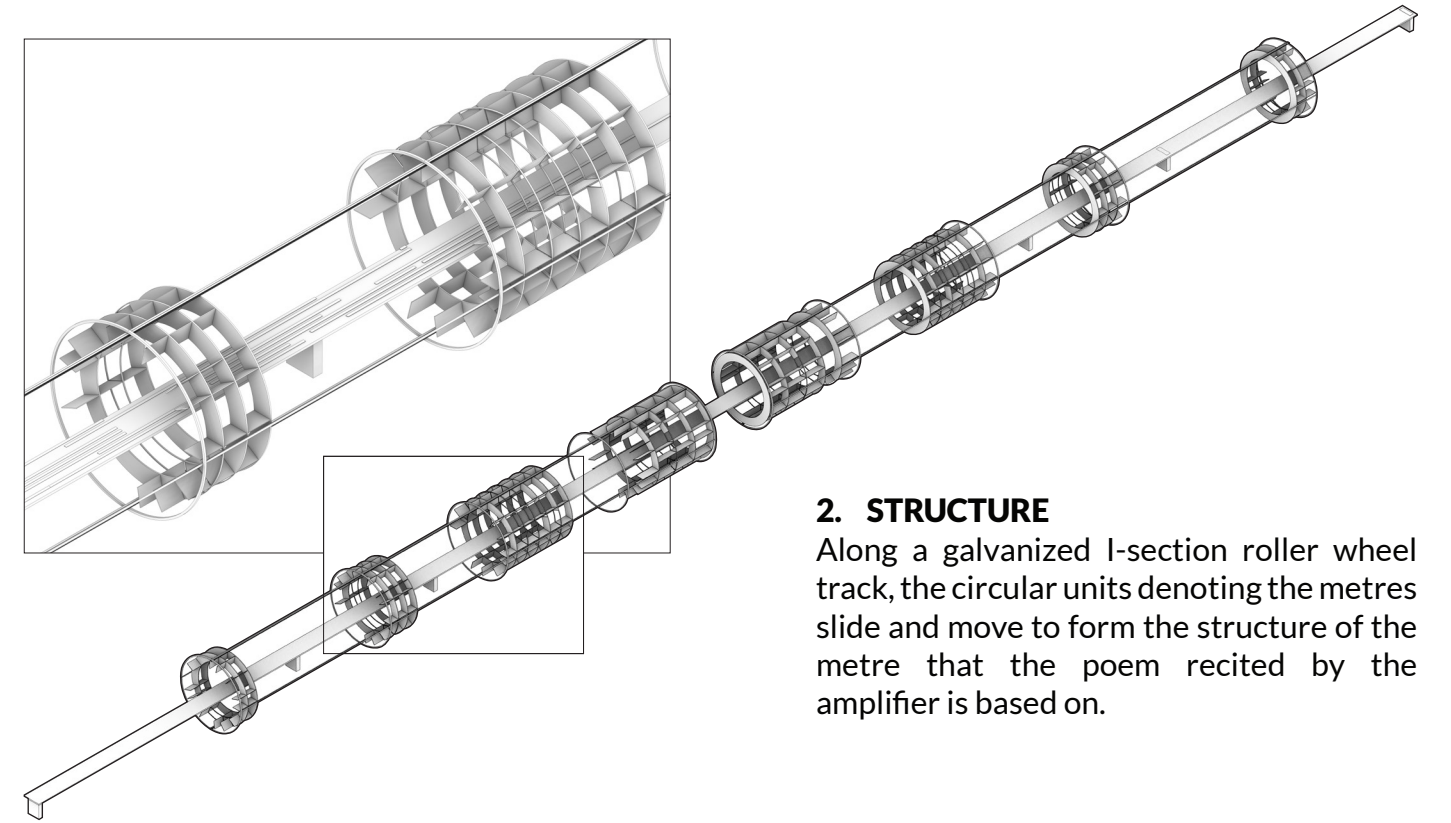
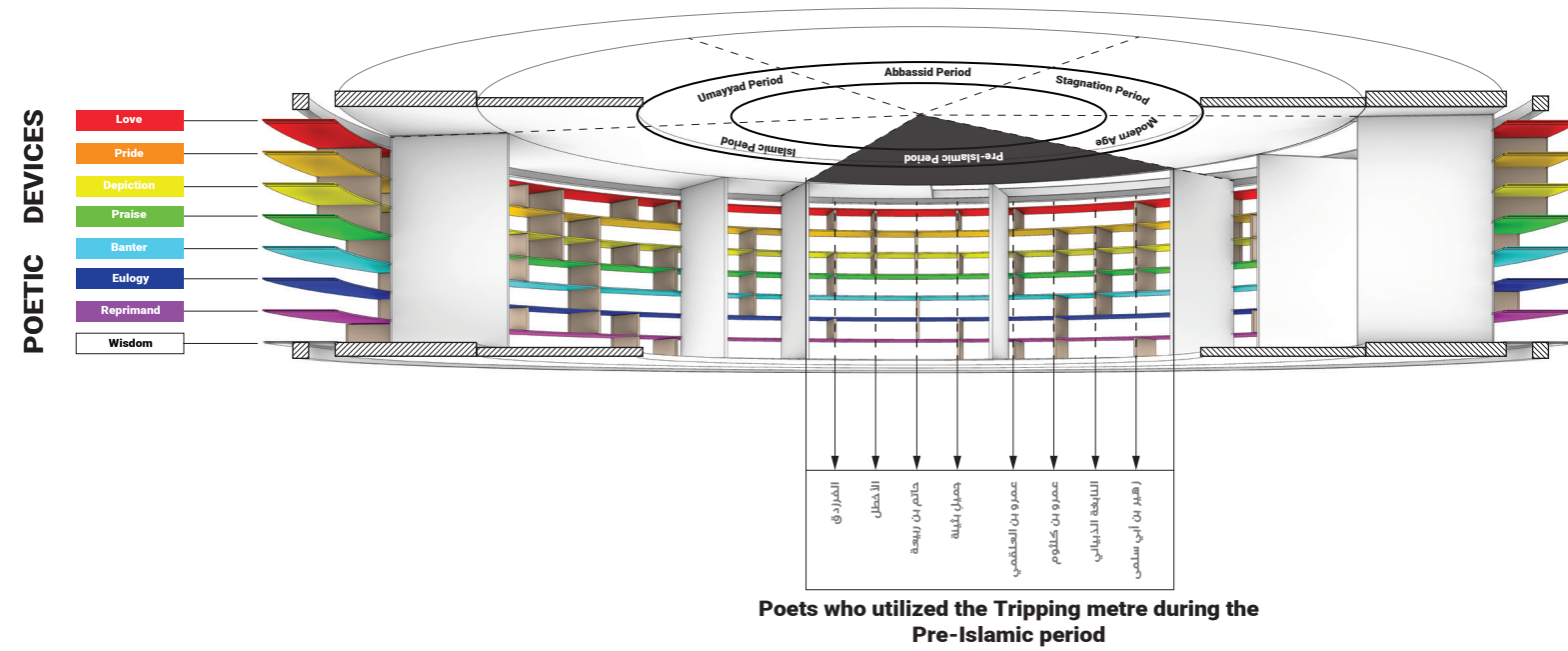
MATERIALITY & TECTONICS

1. SKIN

Two aspects were taken into consideration during this materialization of "Classic Arabic poetry," one being the grammatical aspect represented by the structure itself (slabs and walls) which are built with concrete dyed red to emulate the looks of the "Tower of Babel" which was allegedly red in color. As for the second aspect, it is the semantic value portrayed by 8 poetic devices in "Classic Arabic" poetry. And, since each device conveys a specific emotion, each shall have a color representing it. Coincidentally, the rainbow colors are 7 and white would be the resultant which makes them fit to adopt.

To elaborate, the tower consists of 16 round floors. Each floor is a spatialization of a metre. Within each metre we have 7 zones. 6 of these zones are dedicated to different poetic eras which are 6, whereas the seventh segment is a lounge allocated for reading. Within each era, we have 8 shelves, each with a color denoting a specific poetic device. Intersecting with these shelves are vertical elements denoting the authors who produced poetry written within a certain era

and a specific poetic device. So, the skin becomes like a matrix archiving the production of "Classic Arabic" poetry based on metres, poetic devices, authors, and chronology.



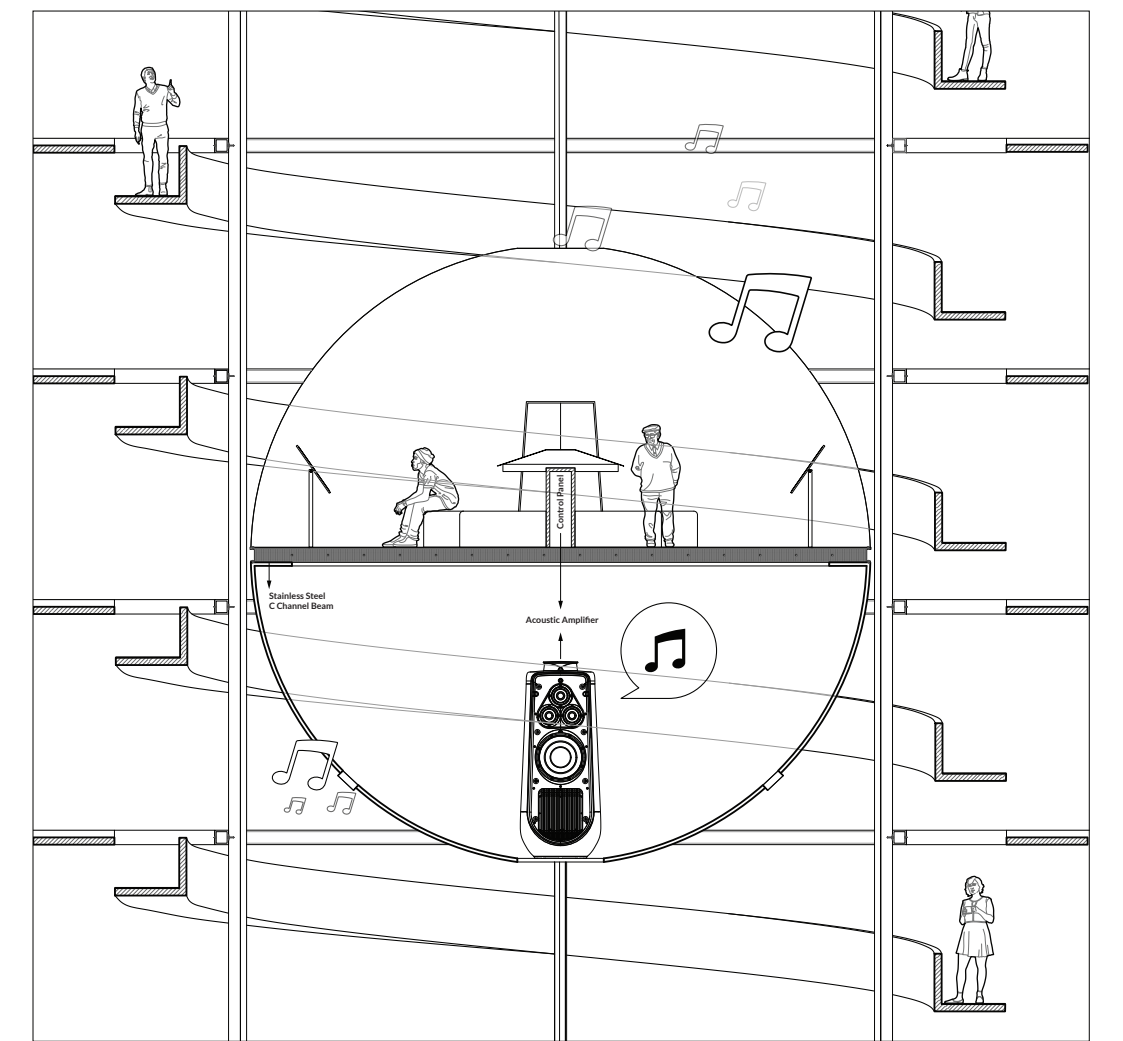
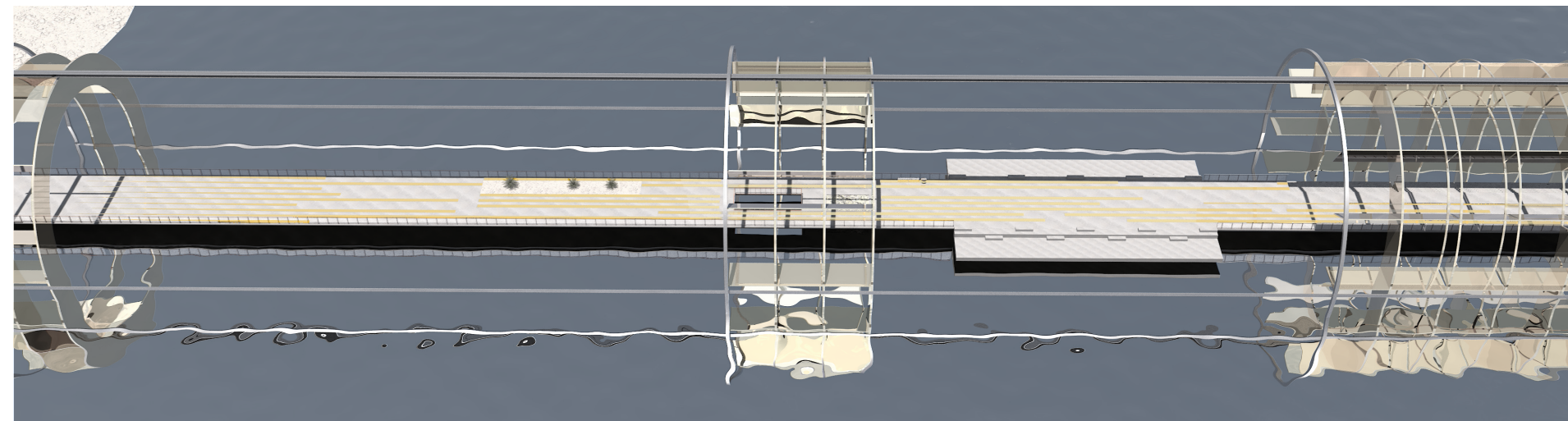
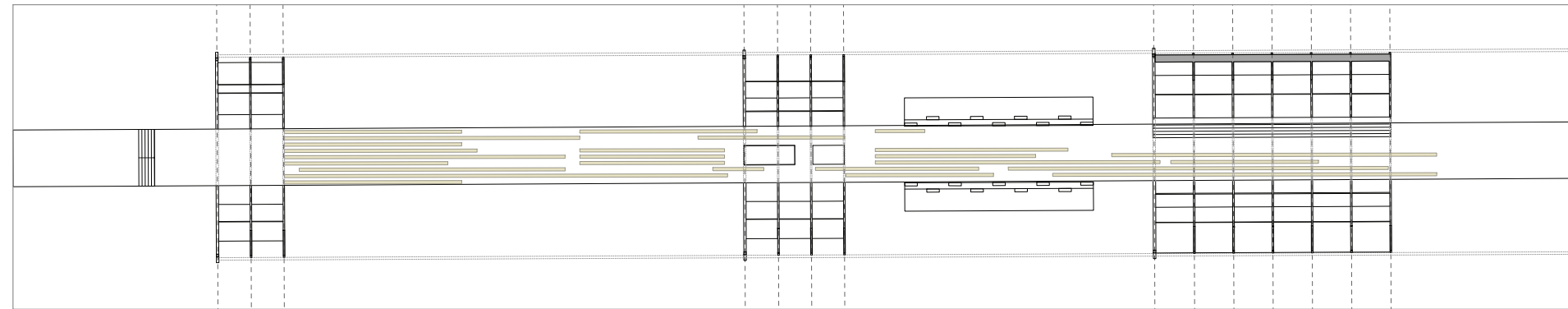
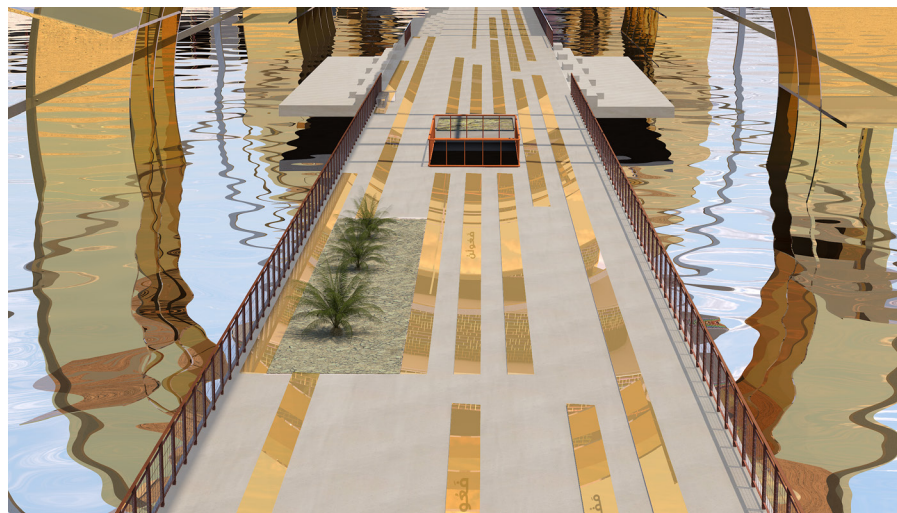
2. STRUCTURE

Along a galvanized I-section roller wheel track, the circular units denoting the metres slide and move to form the structure of the metre that the poem recited by the amplifier is based on.

DIDACTIC PERFORMATIVE ASPECT

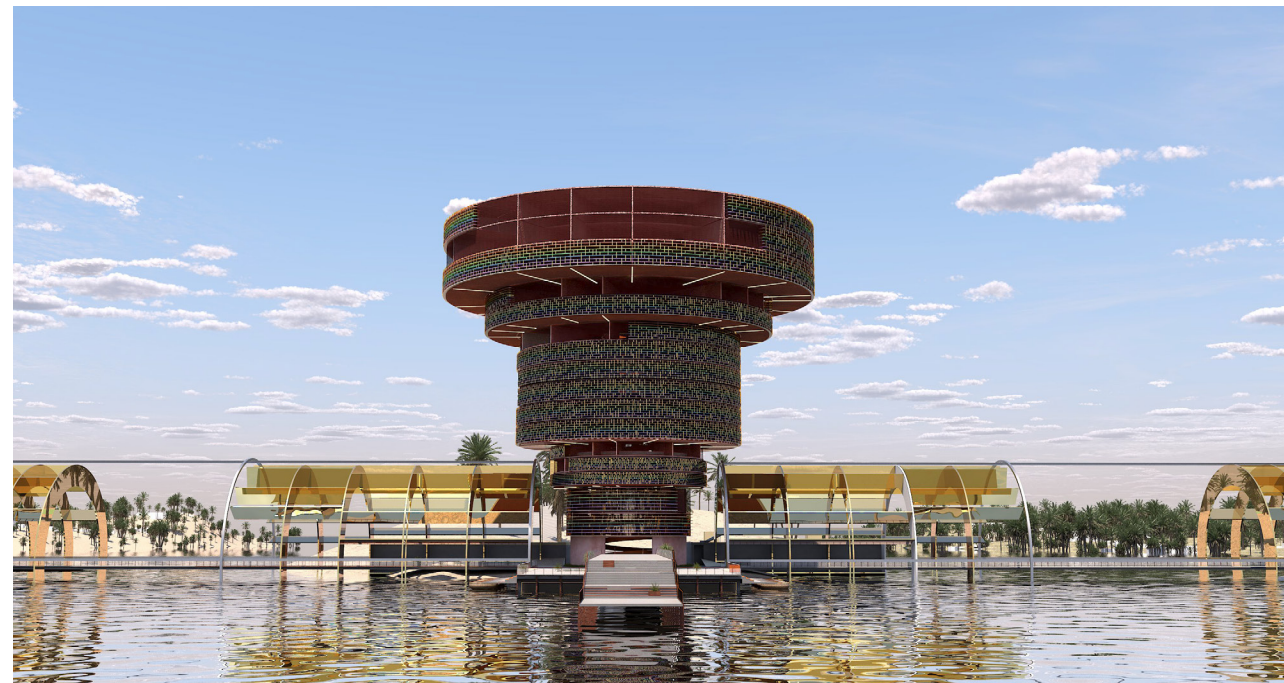
Since "Classic Arabic Poetry" is inherently related to music through melody and rhythm, then this relation must be fulfilled through materializing this aspect into an experiential scheme.

Hence, the extending bridge was conceived as a musical scale that functions like the scale of a piano or the fretboard of a guitar or any other musical instrument with scales and chords considering that they are quite similar to how the feet of a metre function as repetitive elements.



This device is experienced both from within and without. Those viewing the building from afar would see the circular elements moving along the track to form the structure of prosody, while those inside would see the elements moving based on the planar units embedded within the bridge's surface representing the feet as they hear poetry recited by an amplifier within the lower part of the sphere.

Section cutting through the spherical lift encased by a continuous spiral ramp



South-Eastern view of the museum



Dock with berths for coracles



Interior of the 16th floor (The Long Metre) with signs for guidance