

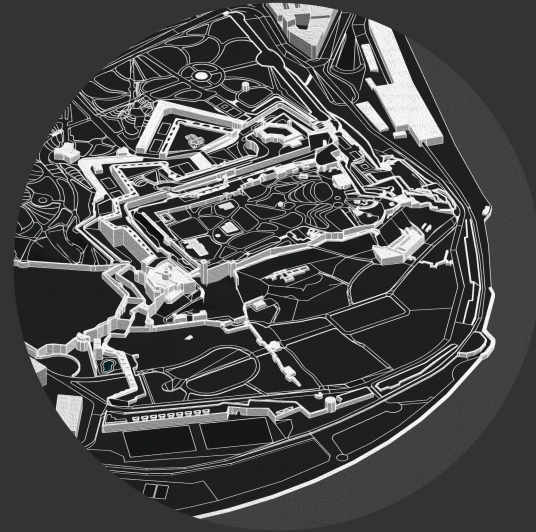
New Old Identity of Belgrade

Kalemegdan Natural Museum
Polina Minina

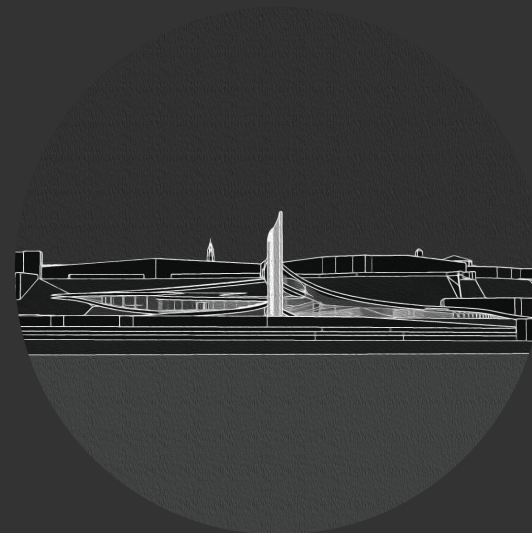
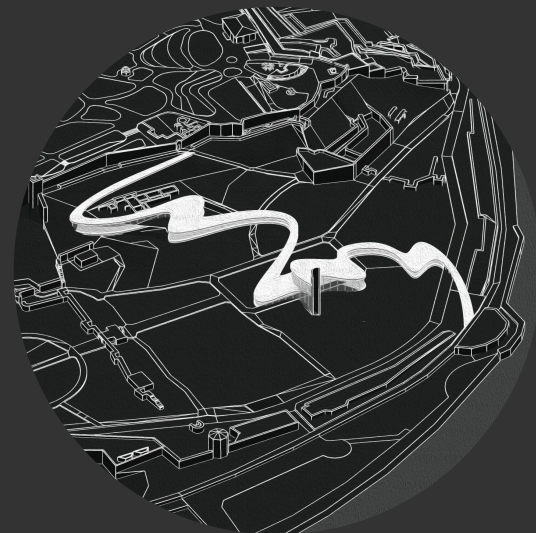
*Professors: Dejan Miletic, Hristina Meseldzija, Luka Vujovic
Studio Natural History Museum with Nature Research Center, 2024
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, Department of
Architecture*



fortress



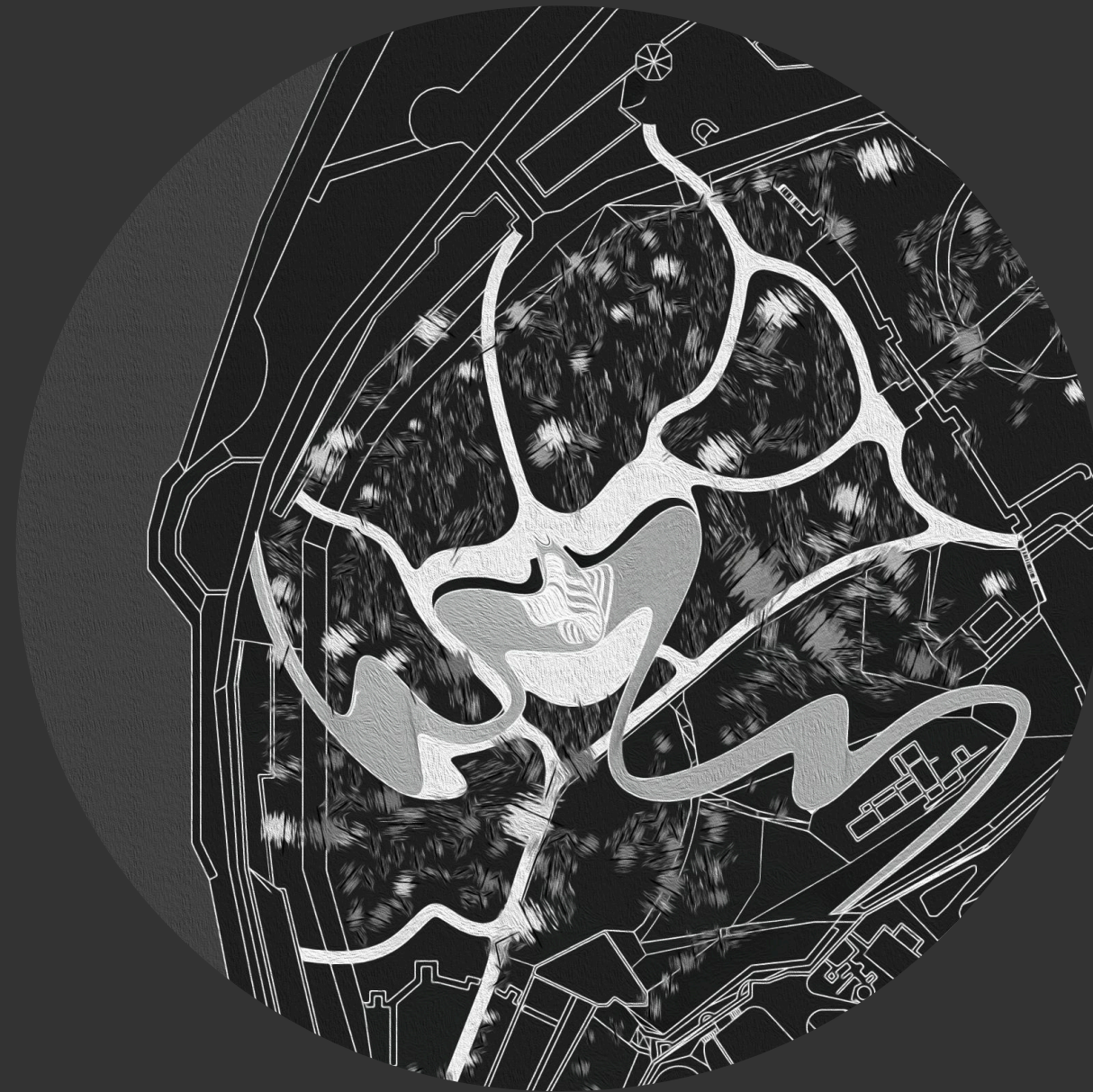
river



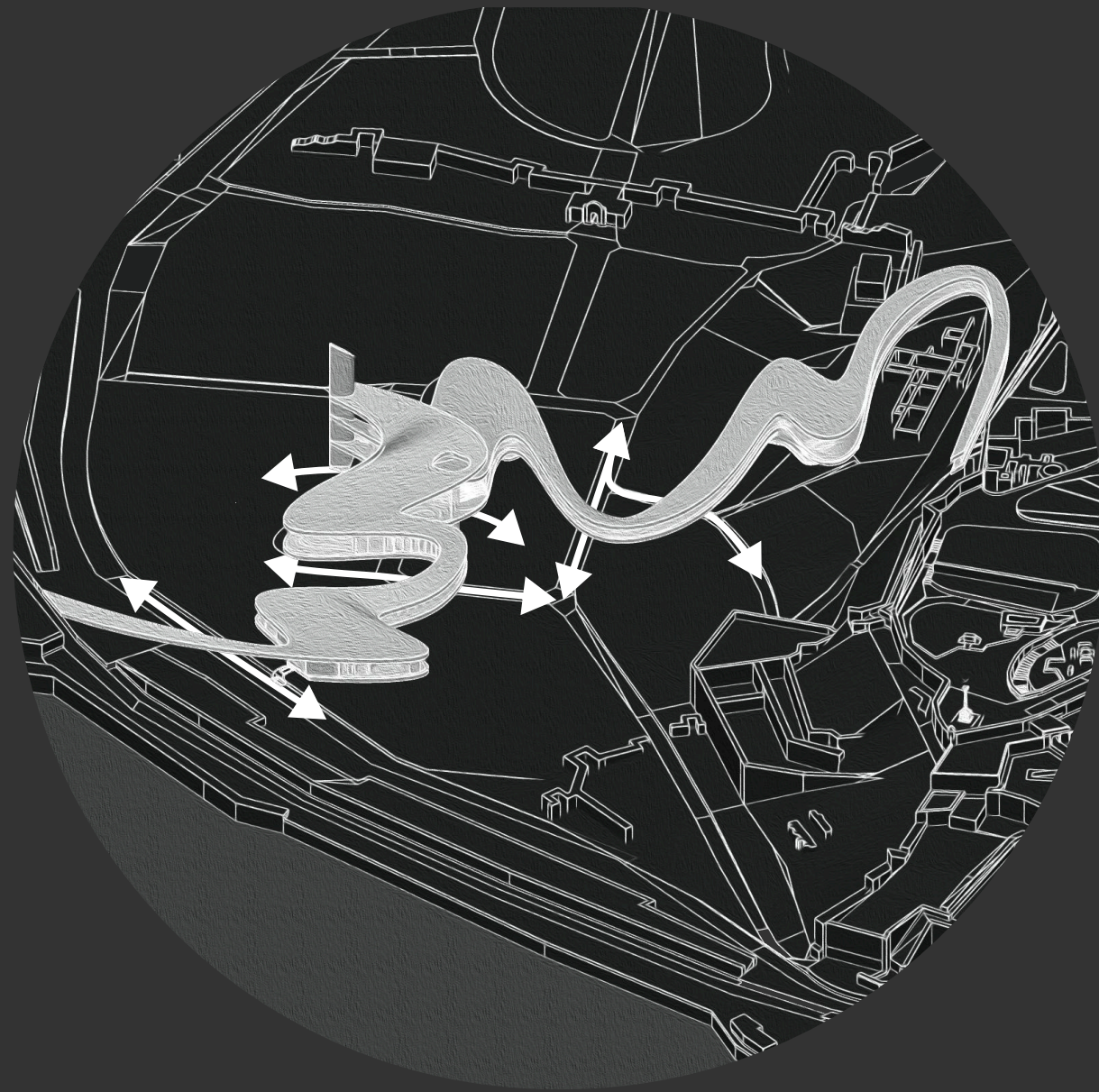
pathway

vertical

rivers connection

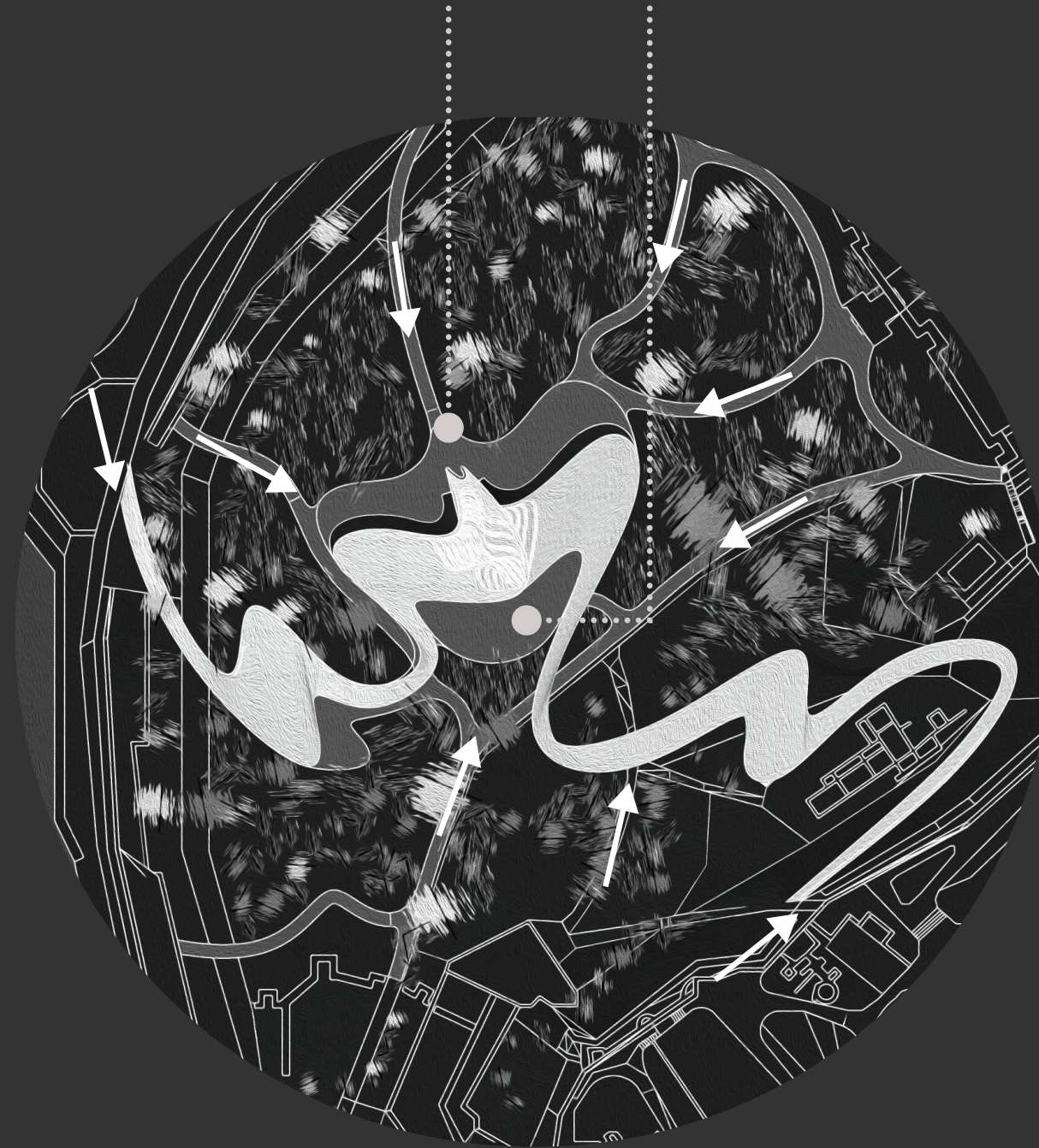


permeability



museum square

museum yard



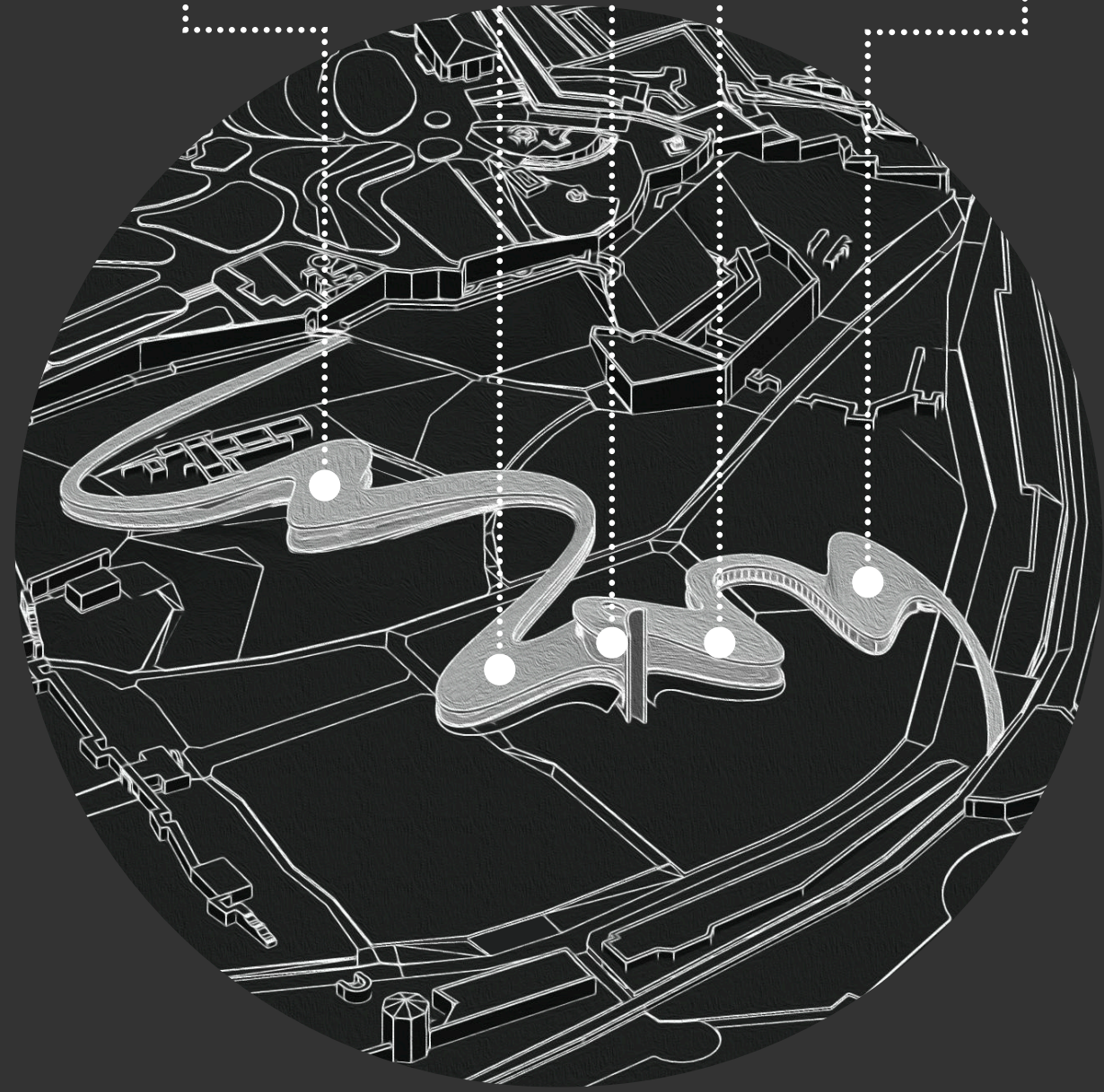
offices
amphitheatre
library
cafe

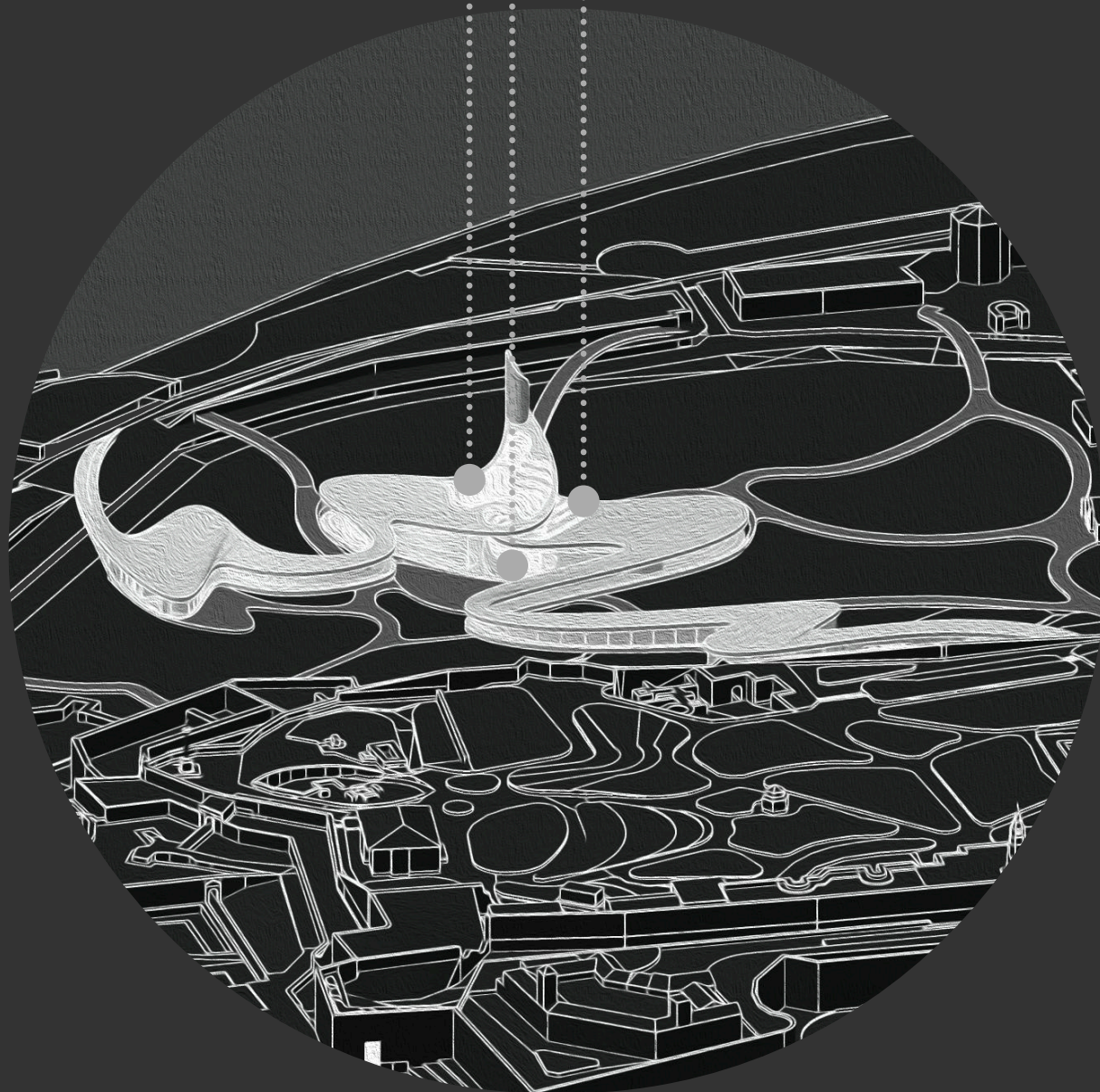
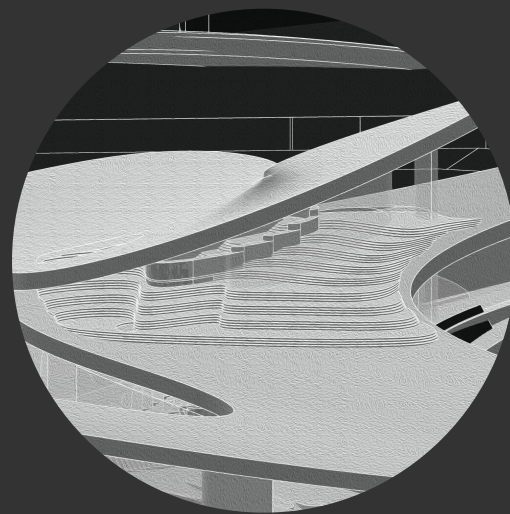
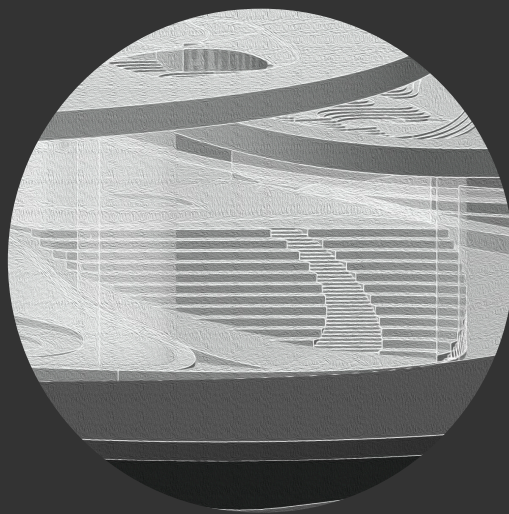
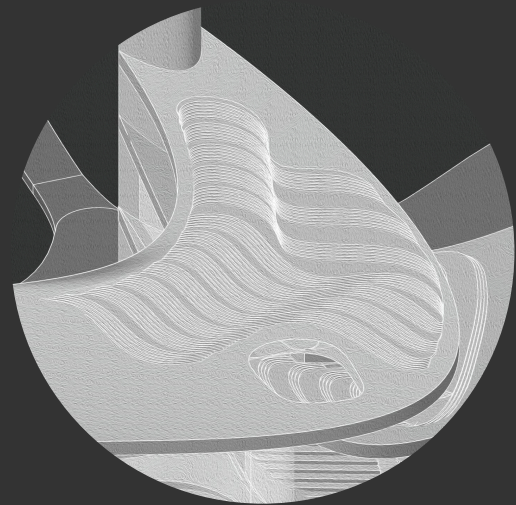
permanent
exhibition

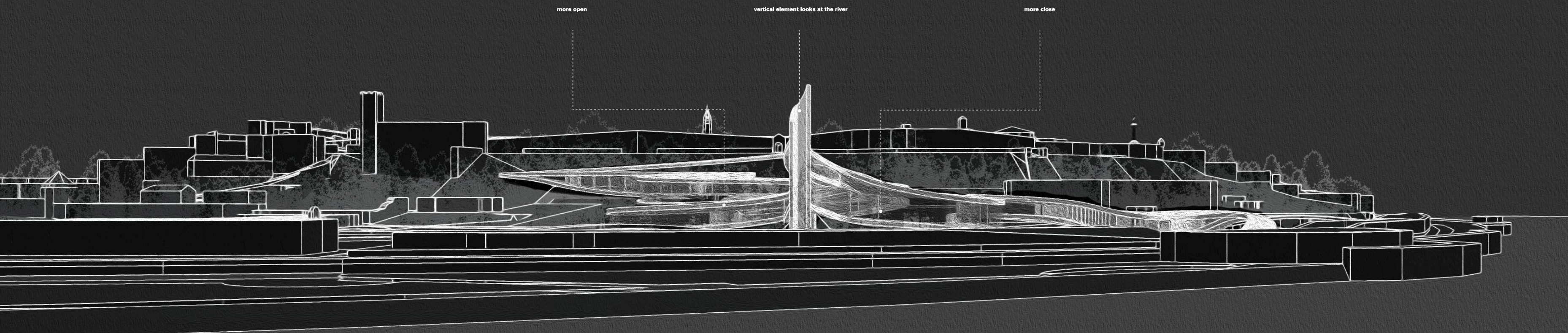
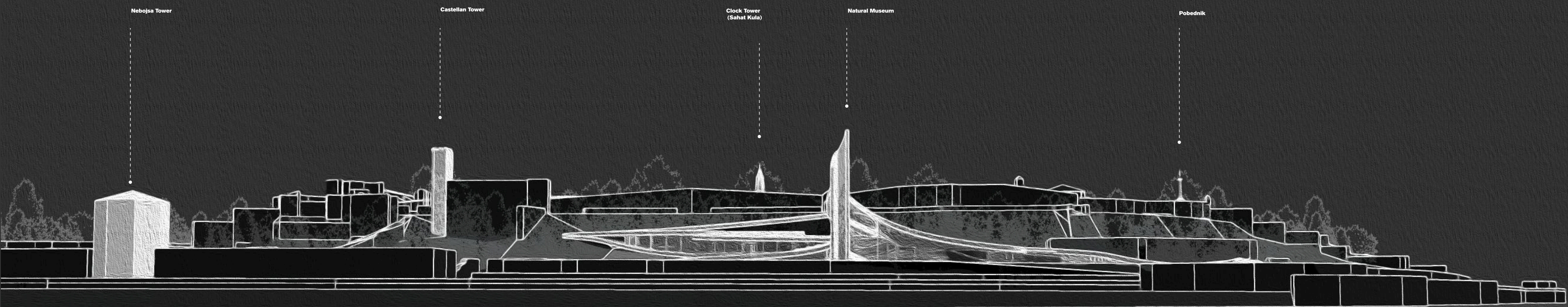
public
space

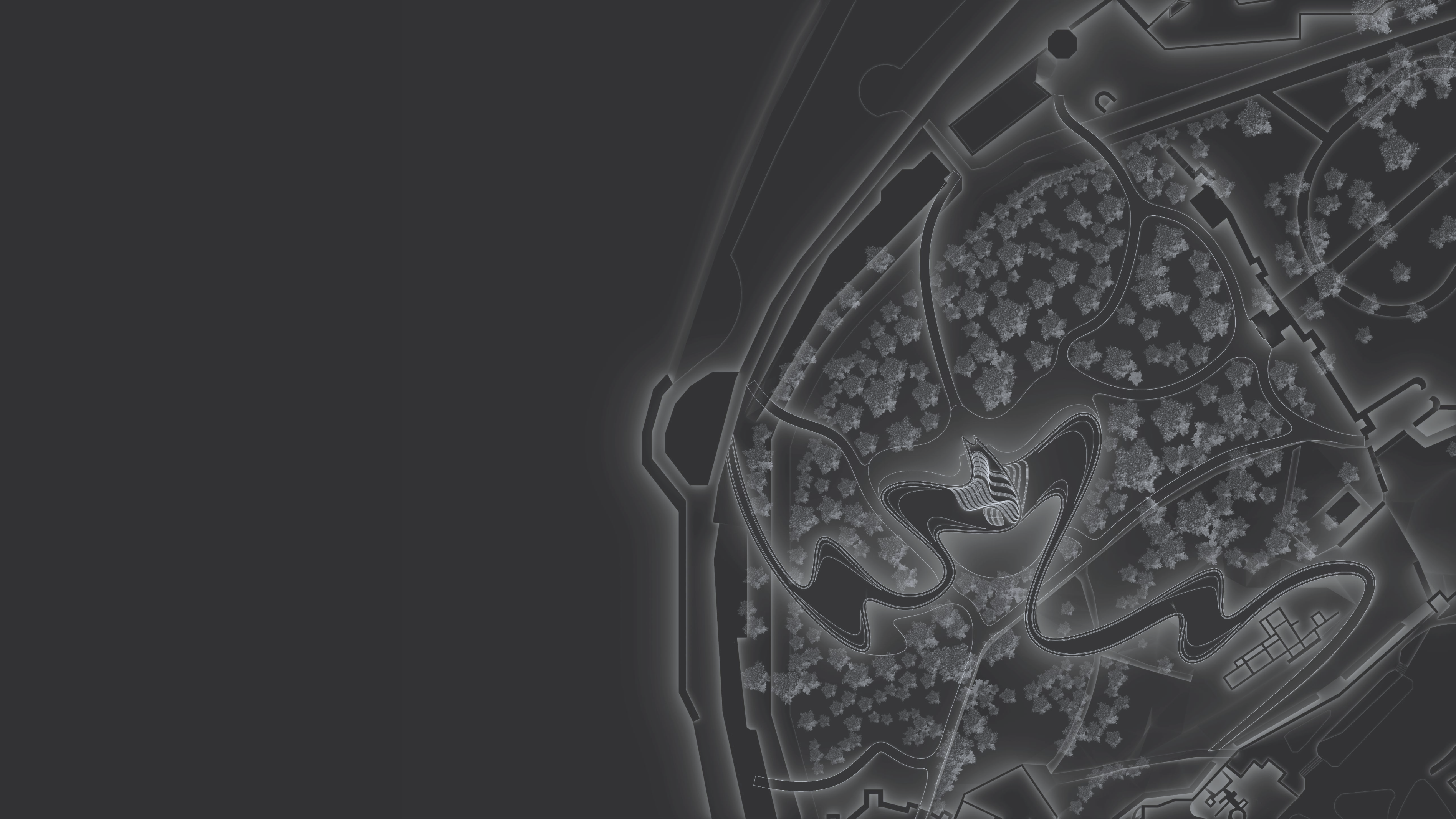
temporary
exhibition

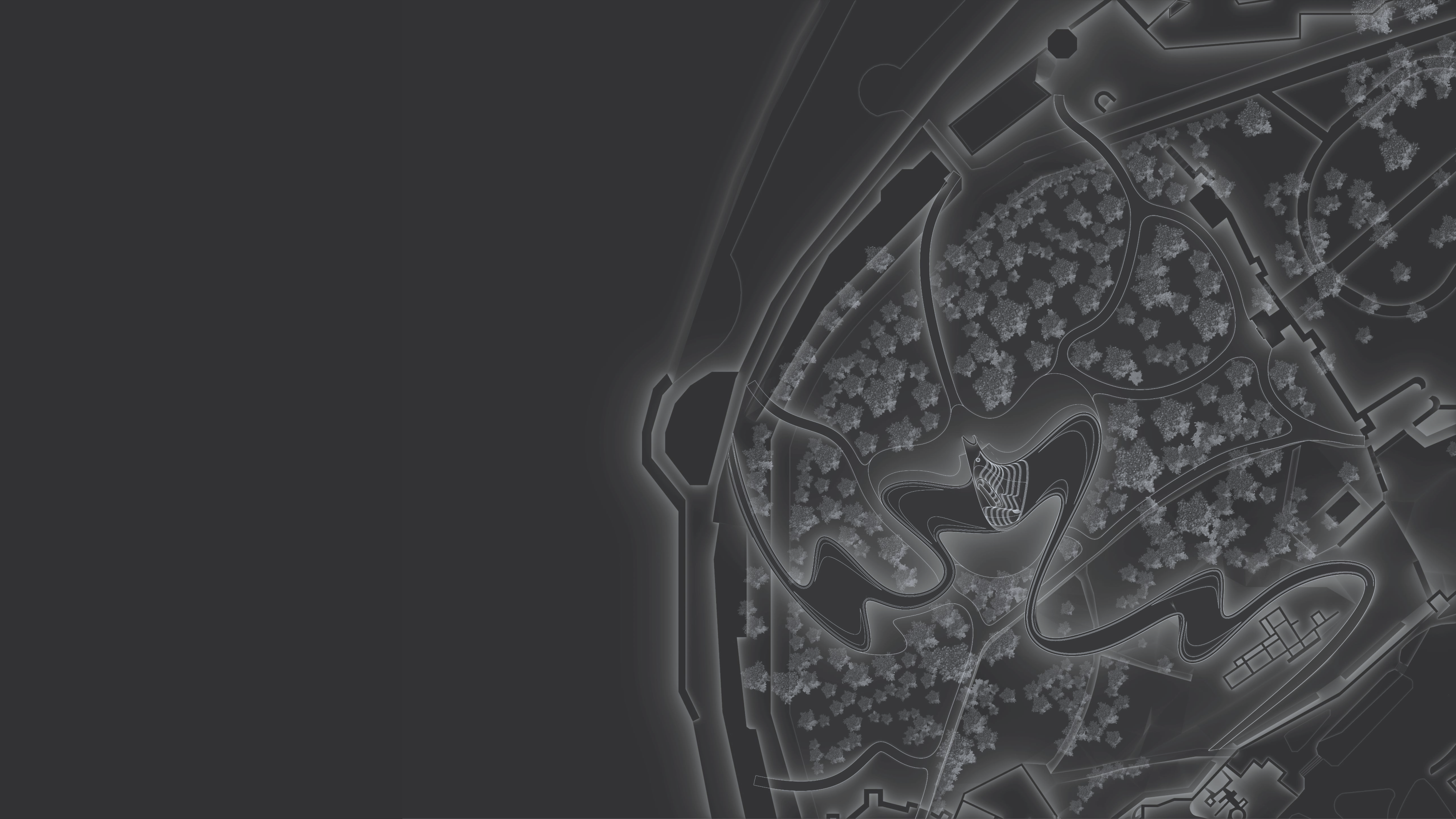
unloading
depots
laboratory







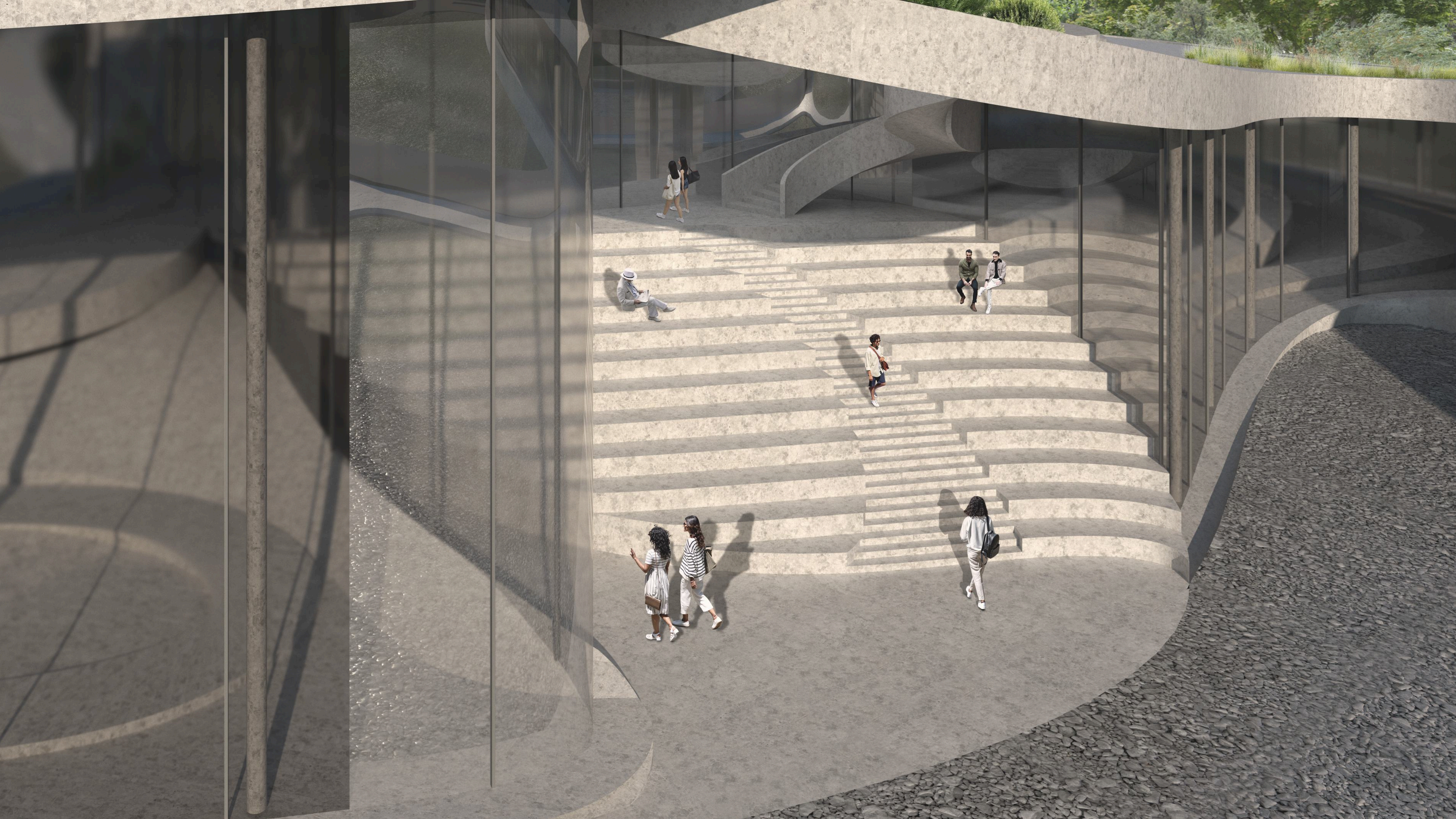








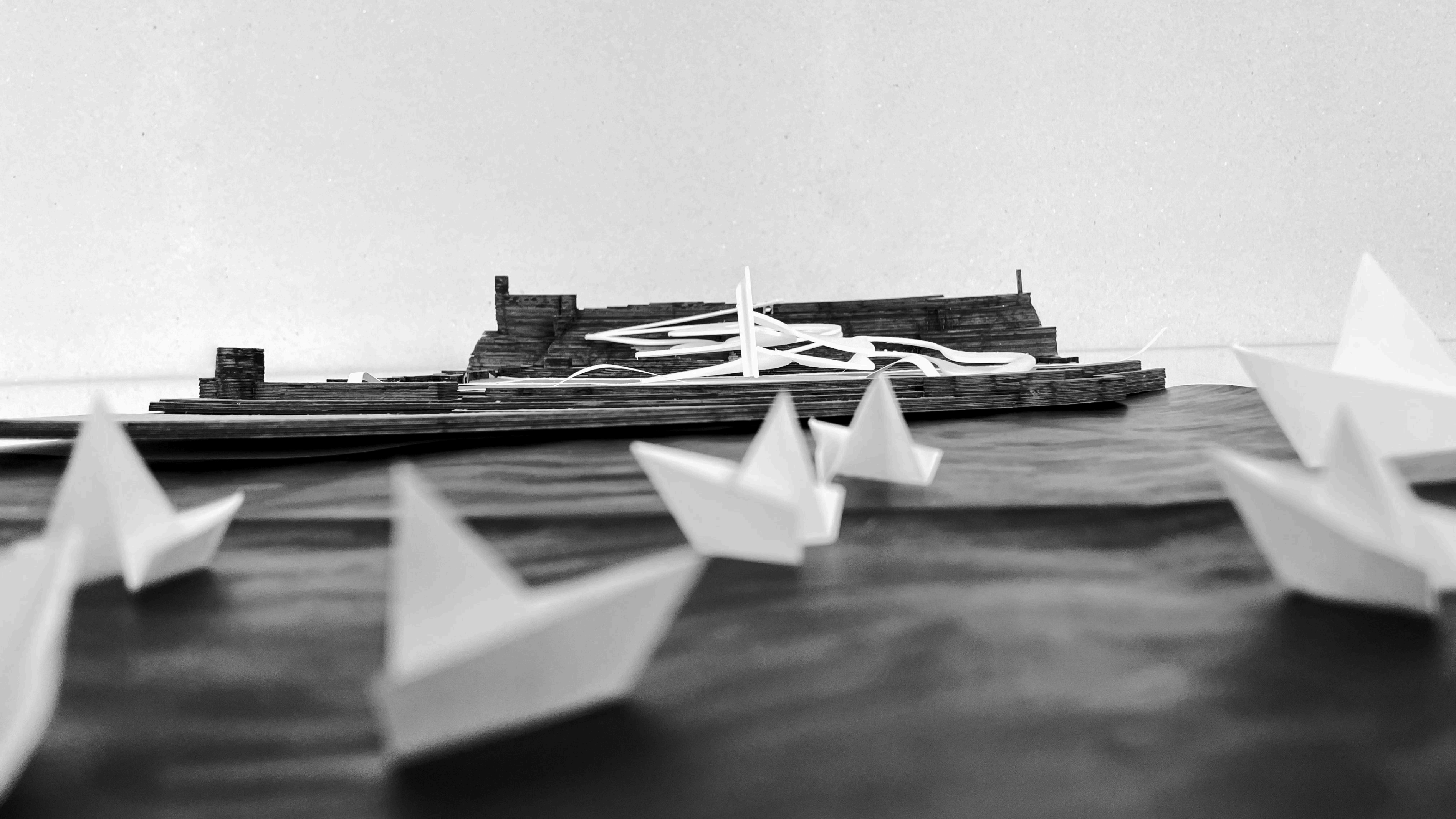












Kalemegdan as a symbol Belgrade identity

Abstract

Within the studio project an interesting fact related to the identity of Belgrade was found. This paper will analyze some historical facts that may have influenced the current situation. It will partly analyze the assumption that historical and political instability, global and internal twists and turns may have caused the fragmentation of the city's identity. Of course, the phenomenon of identity itself will be analyzed, and in particular its manifestation in contemporary Belgrade. The fundamental ideas of the National museum project, which served as its basis, will be analyzed.

Location

Throughout its history, Belgrade has been a tidbit of many states. This could not but influence its complicated history, and also could not but influence its architectural embodiment. The architecture of this city is diverse and heterogeneous. The adjoining of buildings from completely different eras is a common situation. We cannot ignore this multi-layering because it gives us a very specific context. We have a wide range of diversity in which it is very difficult to identify a single leitmotif. The absence of a single architectural embodiment directly affects the integrity of the image of the city. In such a situation, it is very difficult to distinguish the image of the city.

Kalemegdan

The history of Kalemegdan is even more complicated and tragic than the history of Belgrade itself, although of course the fortress was the entire city at some periods. Here, the layering of different eras is even stronger. Passing from empire to empire, the fortress has accumulated a baggage of completely different characteristics, which are now difficult to separate from each other. They create an amazing, but difficult to realize image. Speaking about the history of Kalemegdan, it is impossible not to emphasize the fact that it came into Serbian possession only in the second half of the 19th century. But even after that, it was bombed and occupied twice. This is important for us, because the frequent change of state ownership, although it has made Kalemegdan a hidden place in Belgrade, still casts a shadow on the awareness of this place. This is not helped by its diverse architectural heritage, parts of which are not always perceived positively.

Problematic

By studying historical maps, old engravings and images, it was found that Kalemegdan used to be always depicted from the river. The city several centuries ago had a clear image, which is now lost. We will not look for the exact reasons why this happened, but simply note the fact that it happened. Now if you want to find modern photos of Kalemegdan from the river, you will find literally one panorama on Google maps and that's it. Being quite large, the fortress is not visible in the city as a whole. The park and the river literally hide the fortress and the only places where you can get a glimpse of Kalemegdan are Branko's Bridge and the opposite bank of the Sava River in New Belgrade, but from there we can only see it from the side or in the gap between the rafts. Kalemegdan has literally disappeared as an image or as a symbol.

Identity of place, but not identity of symbol

This assumption is supported by the research presented in the article "Urban Identity of Belgrade: perfect chaos, imperfect balance" (Spasic & Backović). The authors identify several types of identity: material, discursive, personal, behavioral, emotional, gastronomic and sign. We will of course be most interested in the manifestation of identity in the material and symbolic aspects. The material manifestation of identity is the geographical location of Belgrade at the junction of two rivers. This unique natural environment has always influenced the city and is still perceived as significant. Kalemegdan is also included in this material identity, they are perceived as a whole and the fortress is as if inextricably linked to the confluence of the rivers. Of course, this is not surprising, as this geographical specificity was the reason for the founding of the city. And of course, even physically it is difficult to separate one from the other, not to mention the visual component.

Of course, we cannot argue that Kalemegdan is an important part of Belgrade's identity. There was even a resounding phrase in the survey: "Symbols change, Kalemegdan is forever" (Spasic & Backović). Kalemegdan is both the historical heart of Belgrade and the emotional heart of Belgrade. But how is it actually perceived? The image of Kalemegdan seems to be expressed more when we are in it and see that confluence of rivers mentioned above. That is to say, in the case of Kalemegdan, its visual component does not matter. It is the identity of Belgrade as a place. The park, the embankment, the individual buildings or sculptures of Kalemegdan – each will present its own. The fact that the fortress has an identity of place is not a bad fact. Identity as a socio-cultural phenomenon begins to form when society actively interacts with something. We can see that society is very actively interacting with Kalemegdan and besides emotional and historical identity, spatial (material) identity has emerged. But Kalemegdan does not have the meaning of a symbol, it has lost it.

Finding a symbol of identity in Belgrade is difficult. Because of the great chaotic layering of historical and stylistic layers, the city is so rippled that it is difficult to identify anything in particular. One can even frankly admit that the city does not have its own symbol. It may be made up of many significant structures, but we cannot single out one. In the survey by Spasic and Backović, the most potential candidate was the Pobednik monument. And it is very fascinating that it is located in Kalemegdan. This monument commemorates the victory in the First World War and was installed just under a hundred years ago. So you could say that it is quite young compared to its neighbors. But perhaps that is its potential strength? Compared to its complex historical component, Kalemegdan Pobednik is a very understandable symbol. It represents victory over those powers that have taken over Kalemegdan.

It symbolizes the strength and formation of the new Serbia. Also, we should not forget its specific location. As it is not just located in the fortress, it is located on the observation deck. So we can rightly assume that its location also plays a key role, and that perhaps the respondents were not quite accurate in their answers and their material identity was mixed with the symbolic one.

Urban identity in a scientific context

case, the term "urban identity" has many similarities with "social identity". But when we talk about urban identity there is a shift from object to subject. We kind of animate the city by making it a living being. Of course, we realize that this is not true, but this process actively shows us that this type of identity has a fundamentally different character. This identity has not only a social denominator, but also a spatial one. In this respect, urban identity is very similar to geo-cultural space, which is understood as the outcome of the joint creative process of nature and the individual, i.e. a unique artistic work that has been shaped by multiple generations and interpreted by them as their own place of development (Ermakova & Sukhovskaya). The city manifests itself in identity as a set of symbols that society is ready to identify with itself. But not all potential symbols can become them as such. Symbols of identity are reservoirs of accumulated and meaningful experience of community, which are expressed in tangible and intangible forms of culture (Soldatova).

If we go back to Kalemegdan, the first definition can answer the question why it did not become a symbol. Because of the frequent occupation, we cannot call the fortress a place of development for many generations of Serbs. Apparently, it takes more than a century and a half for the formation of identity. We should also realize that in order to become a symbol, we need a cultural justification. In the past, when people were actively using rivers for transportation, the image of Kalemegdan was familiar to everyone, because people saw it from the river. Nowadays we do not have this cultural component. As a result, Kalemegdan, for all its potential, has remained stuck at the level of a hidden place, but has not developed into a symbol of identity.

Project

The National museum project has more of an urban planning sense and its architectural realization is more of a tool. It is based on Critical Regionalism, which relies on national characteristics. The project can also be called utopian, because the main goal lies far beyond the architectural manifestation and can actually be achieved without architecture. Here again it acts as a tool.

The main idea was to return Kalemegdan to its visual image, to give Belgrade back its symbol of identity. According to N. Fairclough there are two kinds of ideology, one created by power, the other created by society. Of course, we are not talking now about the symbols of power itself in architecture, but about the fact that sometimes these symbols are created without the active participation of society, it only receives the result. And this mechanism is working, which we can observe for example in Paris with the Eiffel Tower or in Hamburg with the Elbphilharmonie. So, following this logic, active involvement of people is not always necessary and it is possible to make decisions in a directive way. In order to change the cultural dimension it is necessary to include the community in the interaction. Right now it is already actively interacting with Kalemegdan, but the nature of that interaction is clearly not helping it become a symbol. To do that, it is necessary to change its character, it is necessary to give people an incentive to change it.

Of course the main goal can only be achieved if people can see Kalemegdan from the water, if they want to see it from the water. And in order to achieve this goal it was decided to go a bit contradictory and create a new symbol to help Kalemegdan become a symbol. But on the other hand all the analysis shows that Kalemegdan's symbolism is at best not working, and may not even exist at all. In any case it needs to be reinterpreted, and for that it needs an intervention appropriate to modern society that will affinity the fortress with them. In order to make people want to see Kalemegdan from the river it was decided to put a vertical element. In order to have a unidirectional relationship with it, this element is an architectural sculpture. That is, we cannot climb to the top of this element. Its design is inspired by the Spomenik aesthetics of the post-World War II period. The other two elements are "ribbons" that descend from the top of the fortress to the waterfront, connecting them. This solution was necessary to unite the Donji Grad structure cut by the road, as well as to connect Kalemegdan with the river, bringing back the original integrity.

Conclusion

The identity of a city is a dynamic phenomenon, it changes from generation to generation and from era to era. As a social phenomenon, we can note that the absence of a symbol of identity may indicate that the society is in the process of establishing its authenticity. This is an important process for any community and must be handled sensitively. But we can influence this process. In psychology, there is a principle that a psychologist cannot evaluate their own feelings, problems or conditions and in case of problems they should consult another psychologist. This is done in order to achieve the greatest objectivity and to deal with the problem situation more effectively. In this sense, architects can act as psychologists in a kind of capacity and help urban society solve their pressing issues. Of course, architecture always influences the community and we should not limit ourselves to just iconic objects when talking about this type of interaction. Having the opportunity to influence we should remember our responsibility and be guided by the principle of doctors: "do no harm".

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