

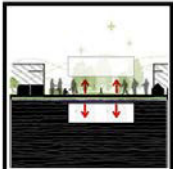
A WOODEN THEATER TROUPE DRIFTING GENTLY ON THE RIVER

... Echoes of *Cải Lương* resonate across the water, ... gently stirring the hearts of distant wanderers.
As the evening sun sets, light pierces through layers of wooden louvers,... ... shimmering on the lake's surface like streaks of light drifting from a singing boat on the river.



Function: Theater of Southern Vietnamese folk performance
Building Type: Urban - Cultural - Identity - Performance centre
Location: My Tho Ward, Dong Thap province
Advisor: Prof. Do Quoc Hiep | Prof. Le Thi Ho Vi | Prof. Hong Viet Duc | Prof. Nguyen Dang Anh Dung
| January 2025 - July 2025 |

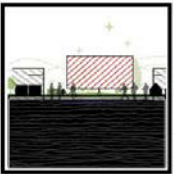
Sensing the poetic spirit of the site, **the image of a drifting *Cải Lương* troupe boat reflects the deep-rooted relationship between the people and the dense riverine ecosystem.** The honesty of the design is unified by the tectonic beauty of its structure and functional expression. The building roots itself in the context, initiating a dialogue with the tropical microclimate through its porous wooden frame



CONTEXTUAL INTEGRATION
UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL



IDENTITY OF "CẢI LƯƠNG"
MEMORIES



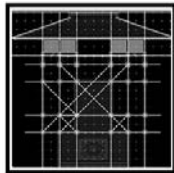
URBAN CULTURE



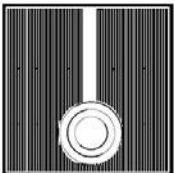
SENSE OF REFLECTION



POETICS OF WOOD



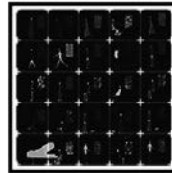
RHYTHM OF STRUCTURE



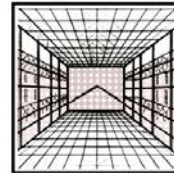
CONTEMPLATIVE SPACE



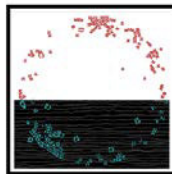
SENSE OF FLOATING



SPATIAL MODULE



FRAMED VIEW



COMMUNITY SPACE



SEMI-OPEN SPACE



DESIGN CONTEXT

The Mekong Delta spans over **40,000 km- with more than 17 million people**. Annually, the region hosts over **2,000 folk performances** at festivals, communal houses, and community gatherings. Yet, there is still **no specialized cultural space** dedicated to **preserving the identity and reviving traditional arts for the community**.

Mỹ Tho - the first urban center in the reclamation of the Southern region - was once known as the prosperous “**Mỹ Tho Đại Phố**” (**Great City of Mỹ Tho**), a thriving commercial and cultural hub. It is the cradle of **Đờn ca tài tử** (a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage) and **Cải Lương** art - which, to the people of the West (Mekong Delta), is not just pop culture; it has perhaps deeply permeated the very soul of our people in myriad ways...

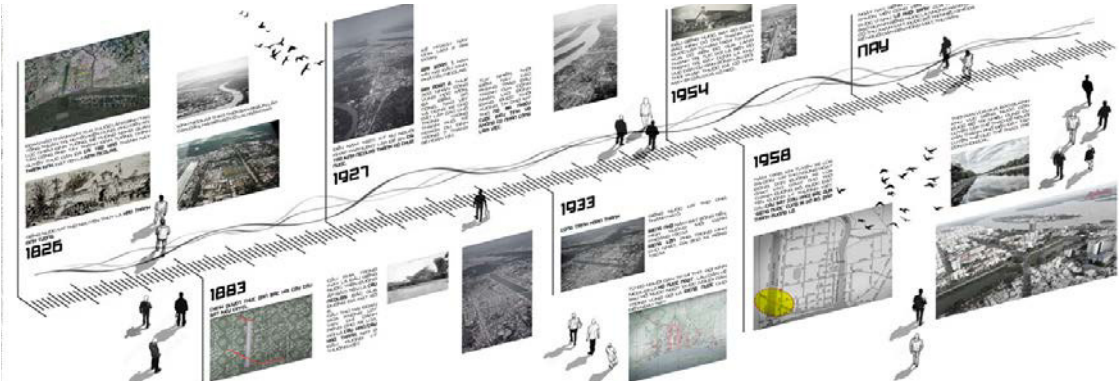
Why does a city with such a rich history and profound cultural potential lack an arts and cultural center for the urban public and for conducting research to **preserve intangible heritage?**

Envisioning a Theater that serves as both a cultural landmark and adapts to contemporary life - a bridge between memory and the future.

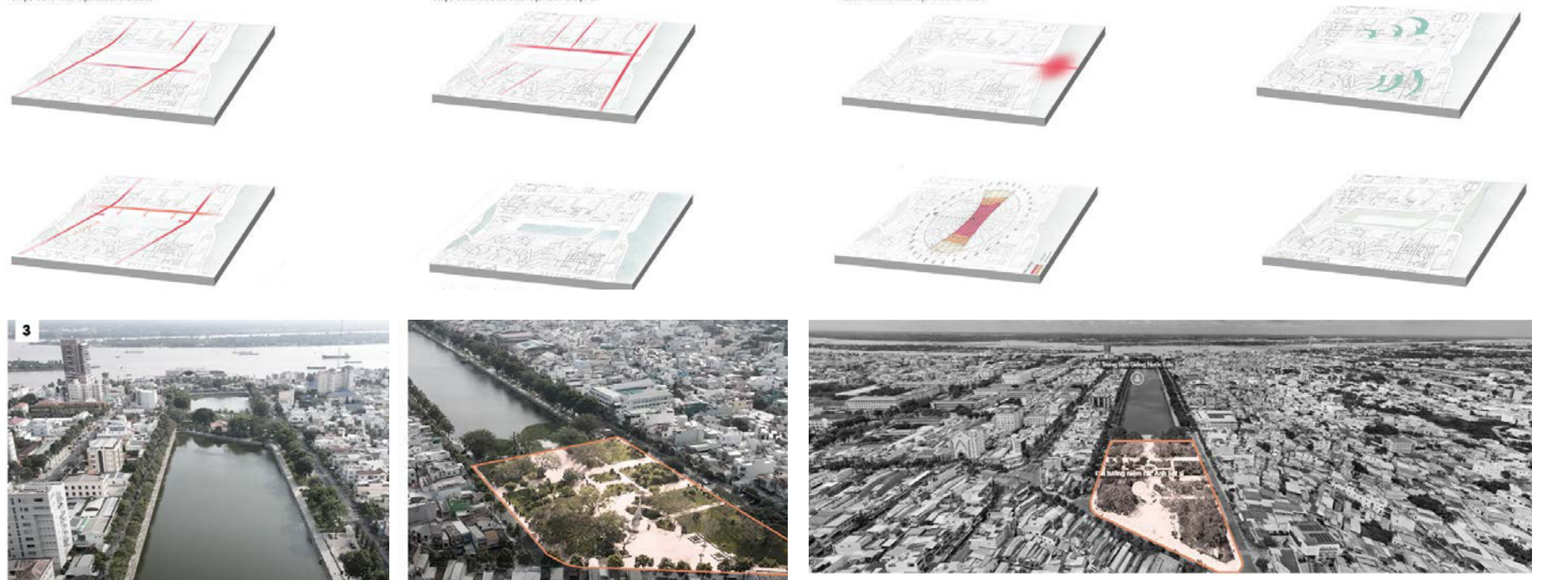
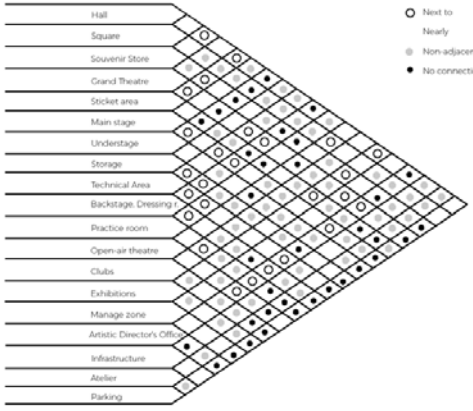
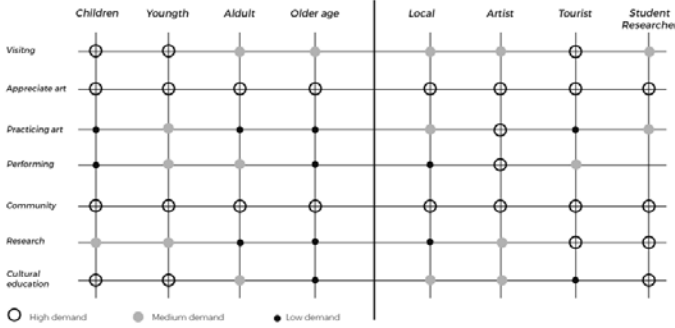
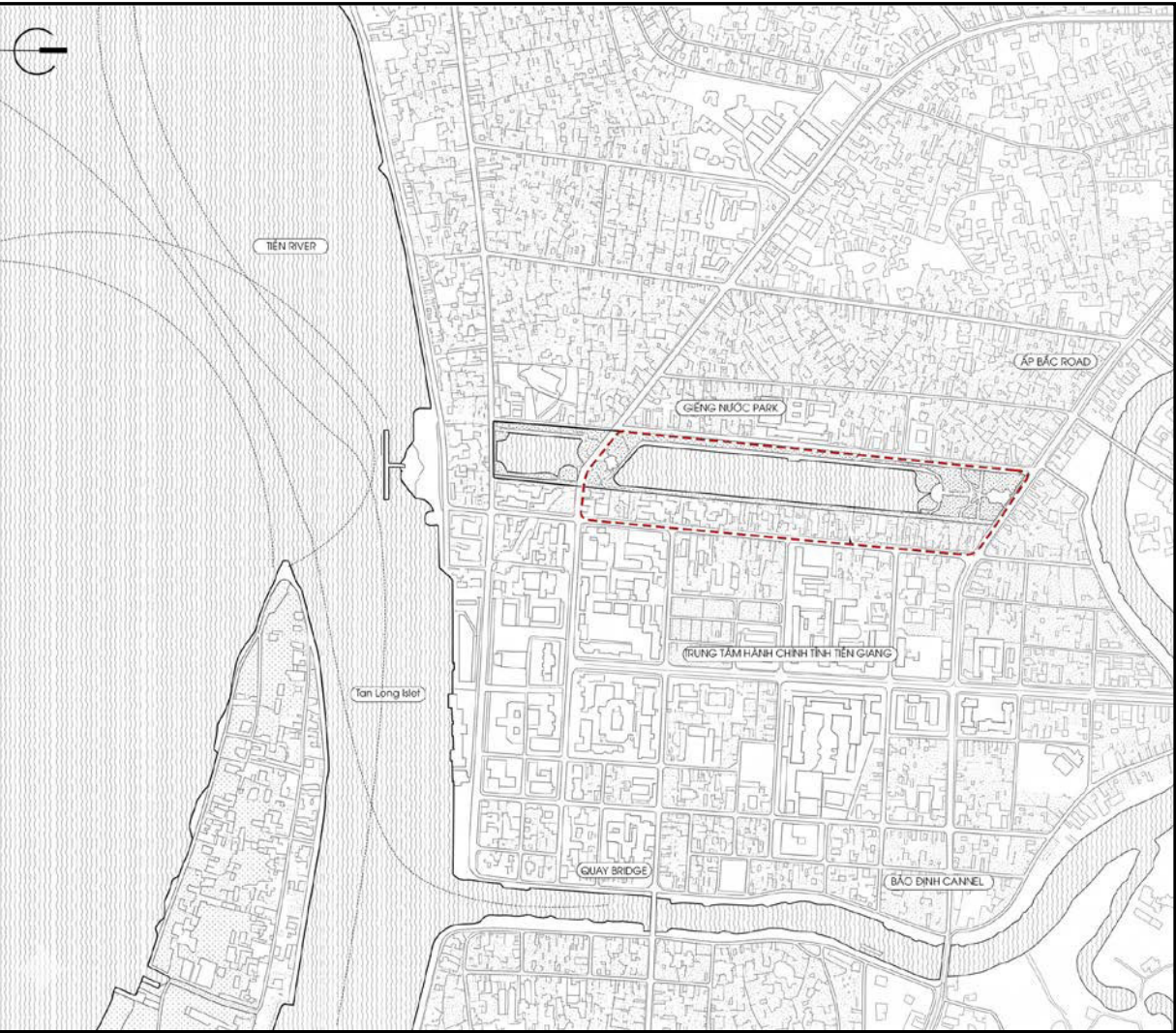
Gieng Nuoc Park boasts a central location, a landscape extending toward the Tien River, and a profound connection to the city’s urban memory. However, the “Gieng Nuoc Lon” (Large Well) lake remains an underutilized site, lacking vitality.

By reviving a forgotten landmark, Gieng Nuoc Park (Mỹ Tho) - situated in the **urban core and opening toward the river - becomes an ideal foundation for a new theatre: a space that honors memories, connects the community, and asserts cultural identity**. The project redefines cultural space within the city, while awakening collective memory and reconnecting people with the intangible heritage of Southern Vietnam.

Envision a theatre that serves as a landmark honoring memory and culture, while seamlessly adapting to contemporary life.



Despite being a significant milestone in Mỹ Tho’s urban landscape, this site has not been exploited to its full potential and lacks vitality.



How can a “wooden troupe” (gánh hát gỗ) be anchored into the park and the lake without compromising the landscape’s poetic essence?

The design’s focal point is the wooden frame floating on the water, transforming the theatre into a poetic “multi-tiered wooden square,” where memory, art, daily life, and nature intersect. It organizes three main open, permeable, and flexible spaces - turning each module from a mere repetition into a vibrant stage. Surrounded by open spaces interwoven within the wooden structure (exhibitions, gathering areas, performance spaces, and services), *the building interacts constantly with the park, ensuring it remains alive throughout the day even without scheduled performances.*

Organization of **3 Main Spaces**: Auditorium, Exhibition, and Community Area

1. Contextual Dialogue:

Instead of a massive building block, the design preserves the lake, creating an open wooden frame with voids directing toward the park and the river, generating a continuous spatial flow.

2. Evoking Memory

The facade draws inspiration from vintage “Cai Luong” banners and posters, translating them into dynamic panels that invite the public to step into the realm of memory and performing arts.

3. Local Identity

Timber, proportioned according to the “Thuoc Tam” (traditional Vietnamese measurement scale) and a 12.8m structural grid, shapes a deeply familiar spatial experience.

4. Floating Auditorium

The 1,200-seat auditorium is suspended within the wooden frame, becoming a striking focal point reminiscent of a drifting traditional boat (ghe bau lung lo troi).

5. Interwoven Cantilevered Floors

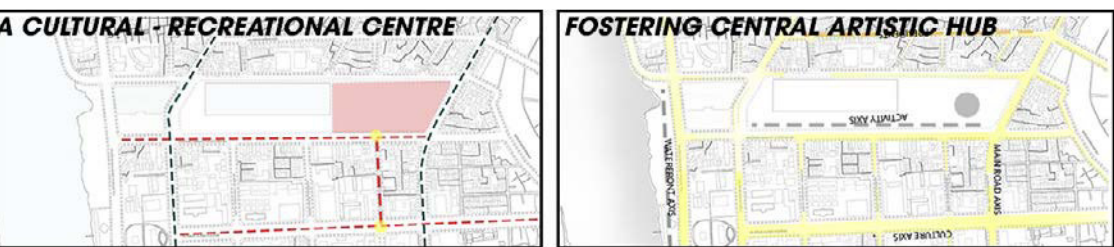
Appearing to “fly” and extend over the lake, the cantilever system interlaces with the frame to create semi-open, flexible, and diverse spatial layers. These multi-tiered, adaptable terraces accommodate public programs: workshops, exhibitions, performances, community gatherings, cafes, and souvenir shops - inviting daily use and sustaining an artistic atmosphere far beyond performance nights.

6. Underground Space Utilization

Small auditoriums and festival spaces connect to the Yersin pedestrian axis, activating and utilizing the subterranean level. The Cai Luong Memory Museum guides visitors into a realm of light reflected through the magical, dreamy water - an immersive journey into the cultural depths of Southern folk performing arts.

7. Contemplative Space: “Echoes of the Past” (Hoi vong âm)

Concluding the emotional journey with a tranquil outdoor amphitheater set amidst the water, immersing visitors in the pure resonance of architecture, landscape, and memory.



1. Transforming the Mậu Thân - Giếng Nước Park axis into a vibrant, poetic, and culturally open public landscape axis.

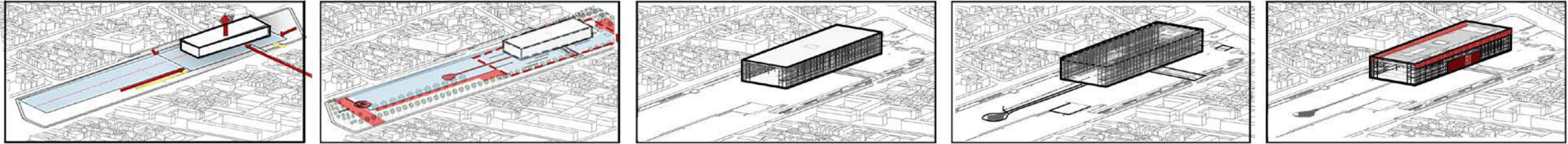


3. Developing a multi-layered spatial system linked to the local context - where diverse social groups can meet and interact.

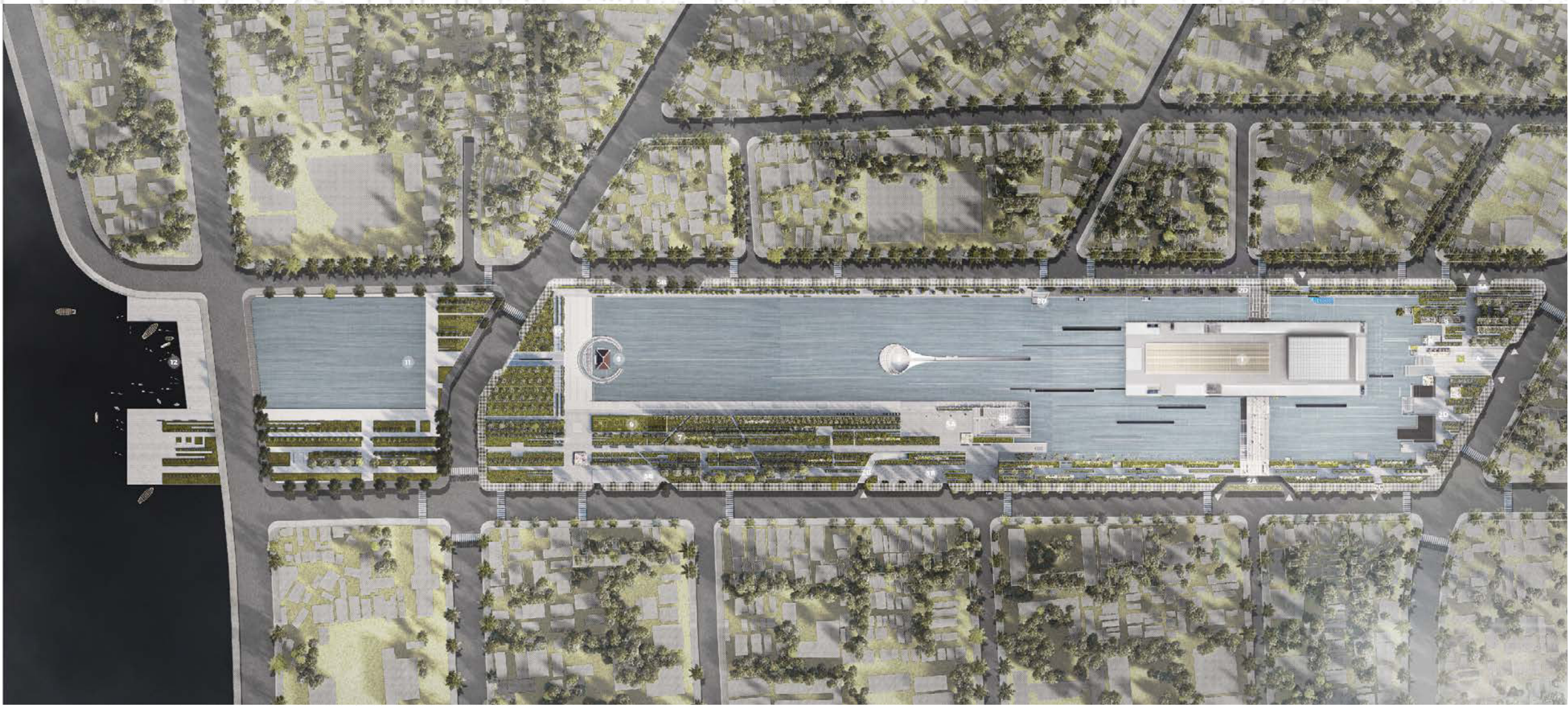
4. Attracting tourists through live performances, interactive community activities, and the direct participation of local residents alongside artists.

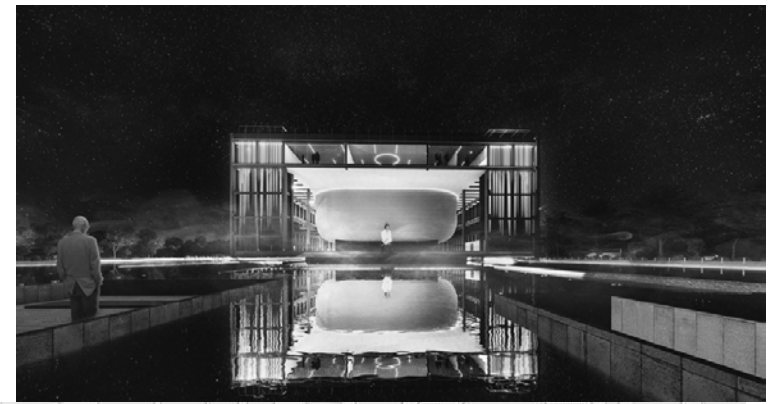
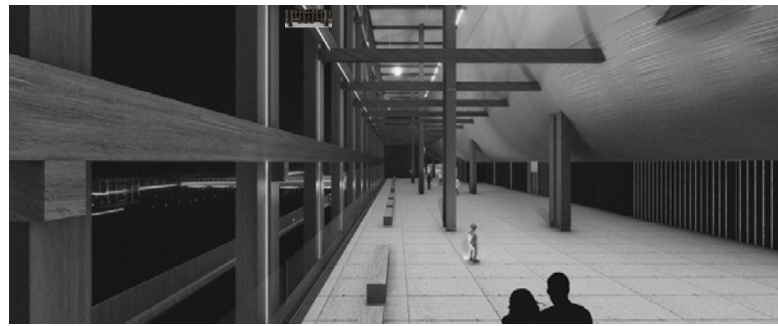
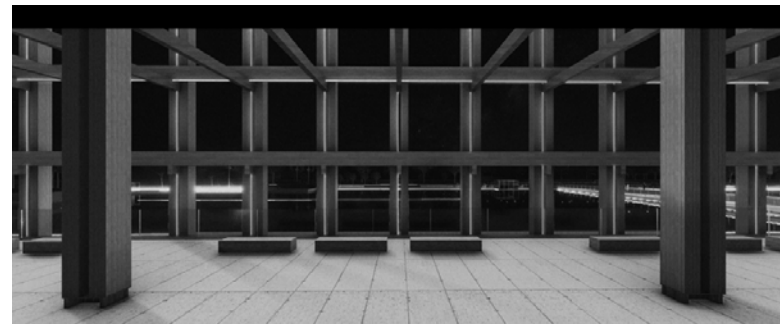
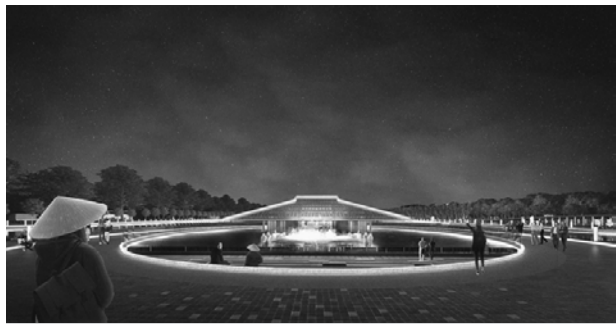


Define the interaction axes of the building within the urban context. Position the building masses within the park masterplan. Leverage visual connections between water, urban fabric, and nature. Define the main access along the cultural axis and secondary entrances. Expand the water surface to articulate the architectural concept. Define the building volume based on massing studies. Define spatial layers of solid and void. Formulate the overall masterplan.



1. Xác định trục công trình - lối vào chính - trục kết nối hầm. Mở rộng mặt nước cảnh quan. 2. Masterplan - Transparency Bố cục tổng mặt bằng. Tỷ lệ công trình trong không gian đô thị. 3. Rhythm of structure Kiến trúc rỗng trong KG đô thị. Nghiên cứu tỷ lệ khung gỗ, nhịp điệu. 4. Spatial experience Phát triển hành trình trải nghiệm các KG nhà hát, khai thác không gian 5. Identity of Cai Luong memories Phát triển đặc trưng - đưa ký ức Cai Luong vào thiết kế kiến trúc.



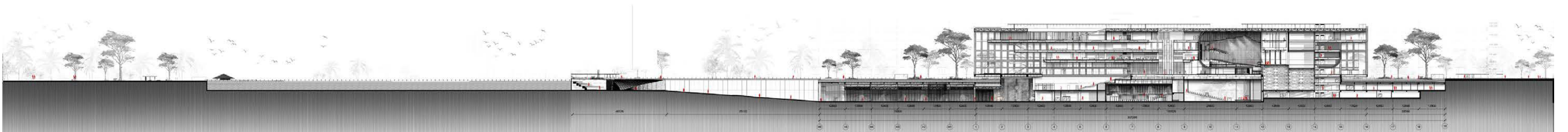
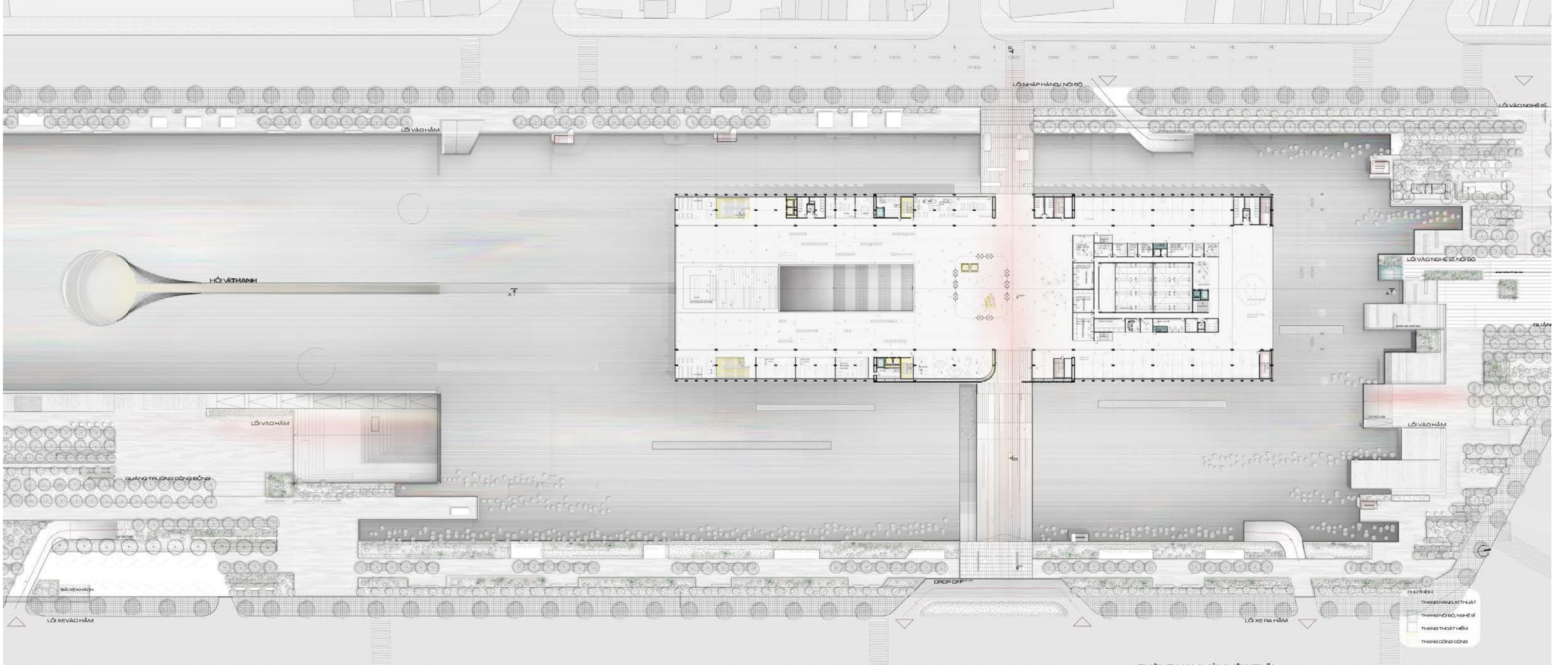


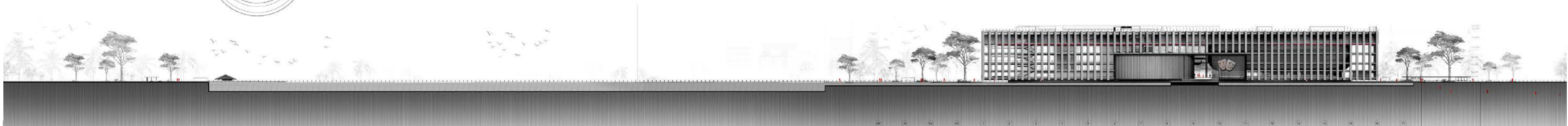
The project is envisioned as narrative architecture, where collective memory is awakened, and indigenous wisdom blends with contemporary techniques, honoring folk performing arts within the rhythm of modern community life. More than just a theater, the structure opens up a new model of cultural infrastructure - open, cohesive, and deeply rooted in the locale. It serves as a platform for cultural education, creative innovation, and introducing the river region's identity to the world.

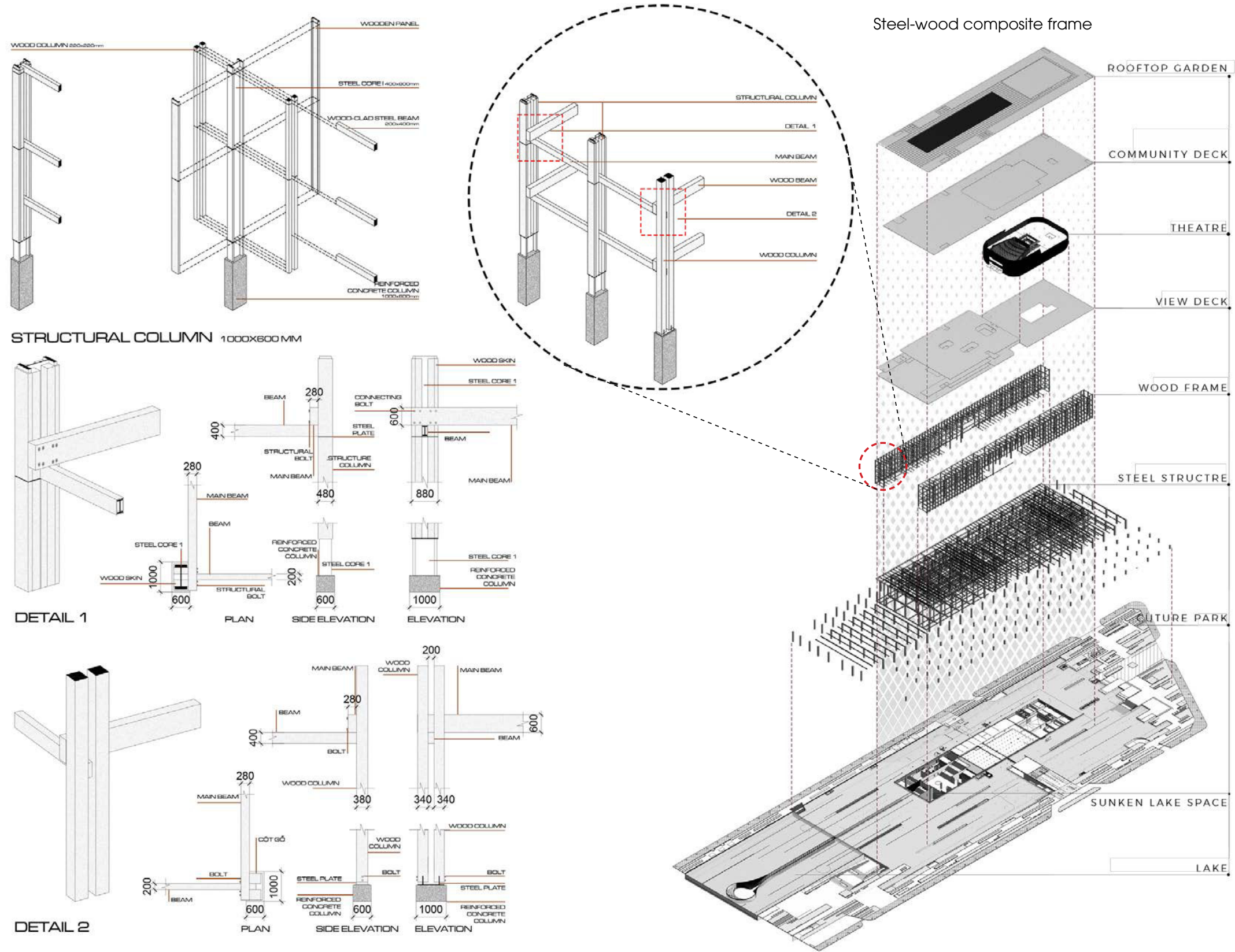
The theatre is strategically arranged along the Gieng Nuoc Lake, directing its **views toward the park** and the Yersin pedestrian street. Instead of a closed, solid volume, the architectural form is reinterpreted, highlighted by **a porous wooden frame system and open spaces facing the water**, appearing to dissolve and blend into the urban landscape. It acts as a living entity, welcoming artists, audiences, locals, and distant travelers who gather to share, contemplate, and weave new narratives - creating a continuous, rhythmic interaction with the park.

How to make a massive structure feel as intimate and familiar as the theater troupes of the past?

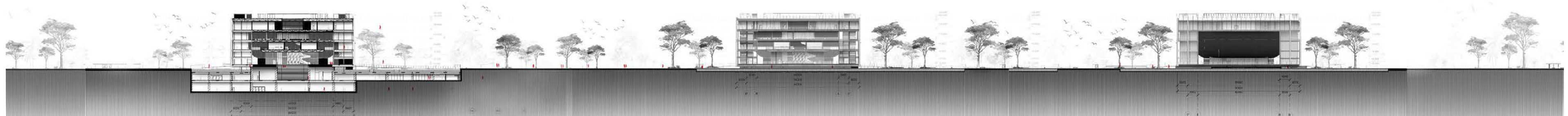
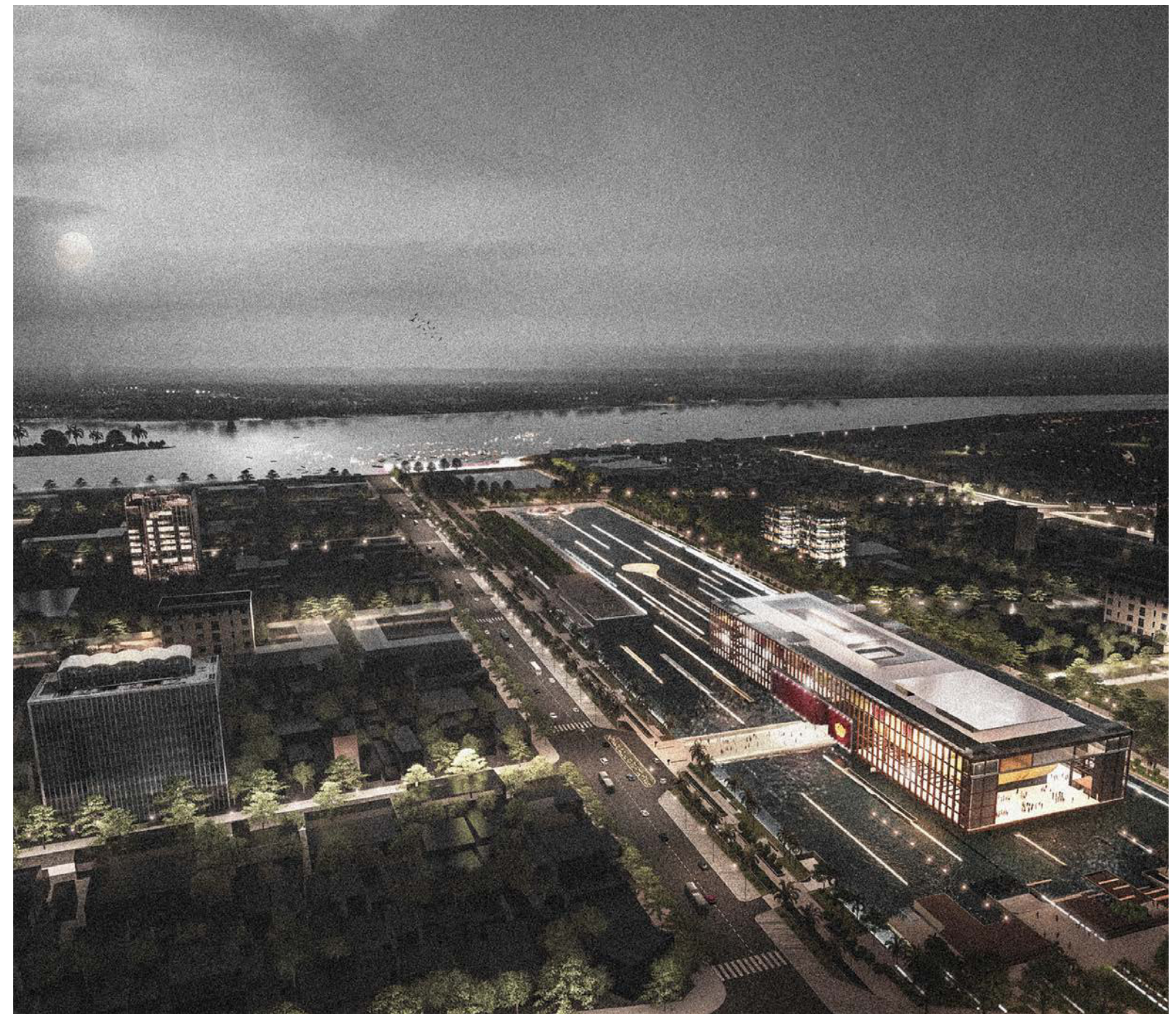
The building mass (192x24x60) breaks down a large space using a 12.8m spatial module grid. The interwoven wooden slats form a transparent wooden frame with calculated column spacing: evoking the rhythm of traditional houses, providing a friendly feel through proportion and human scale, and creating a well-fitting, cozy space. The foundational wood material creates a sense of closeness and attachment to the Southern riverine community. Combining steel and glass ensures modernity and sustainability, expanding the space while maintaining the overall spirit of the porous wooden mass.

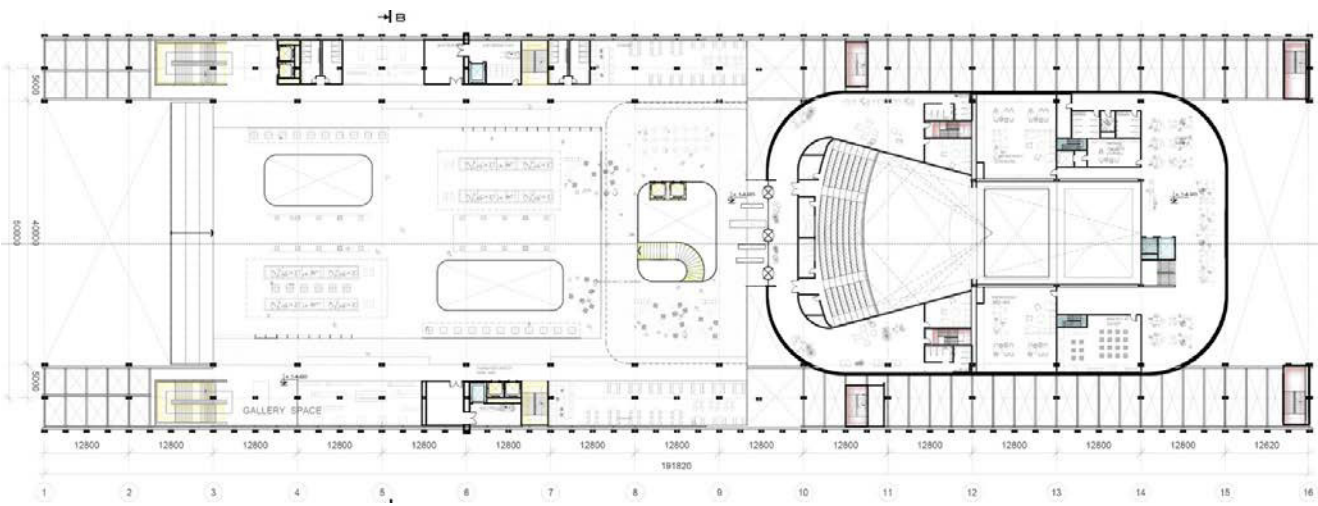




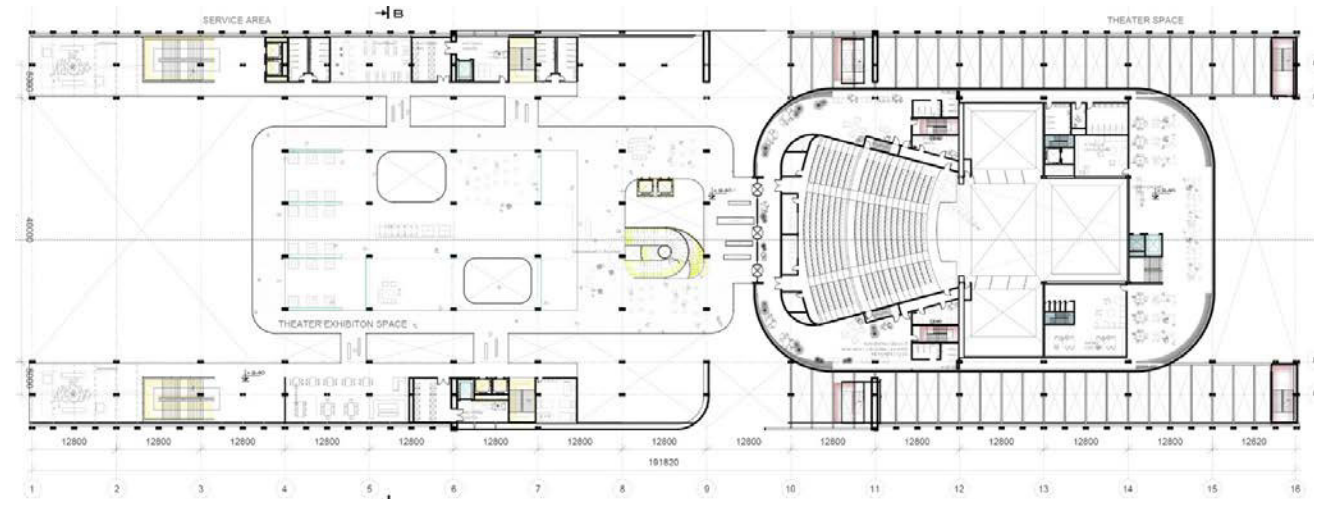


Structure Diagram

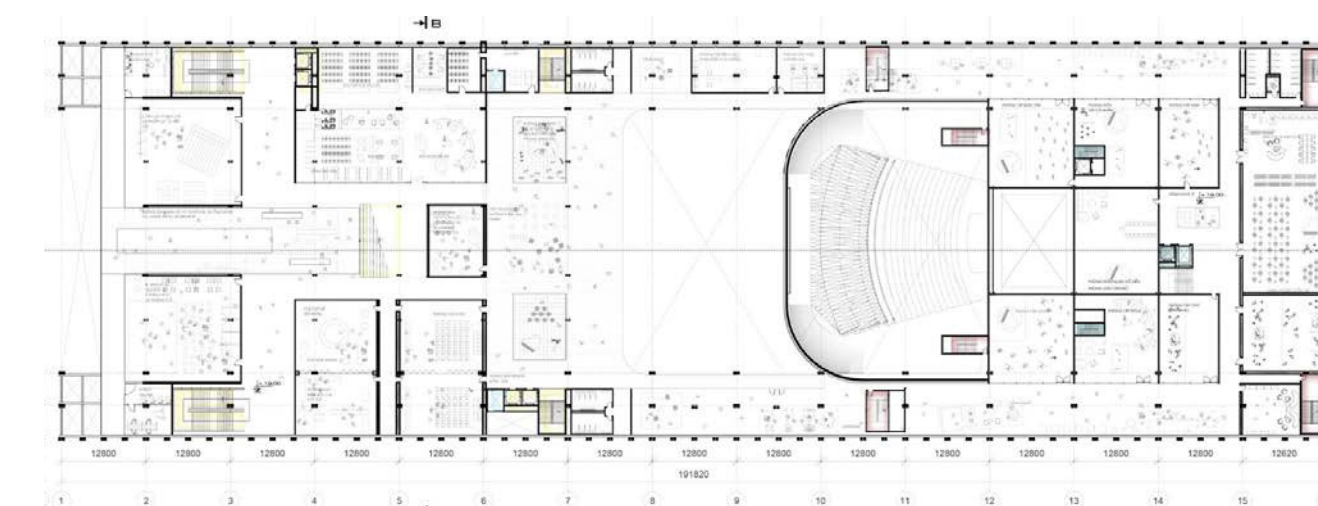




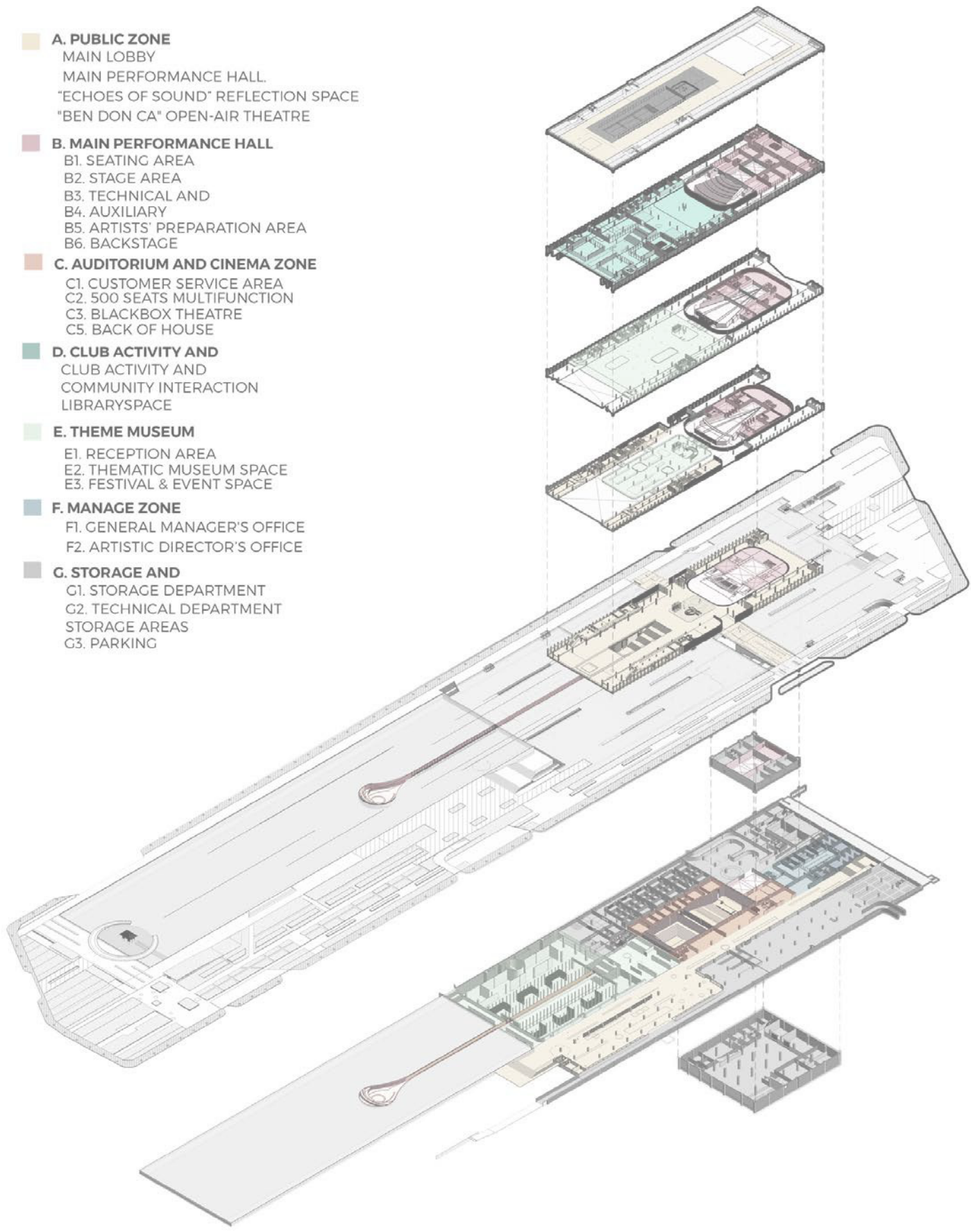
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



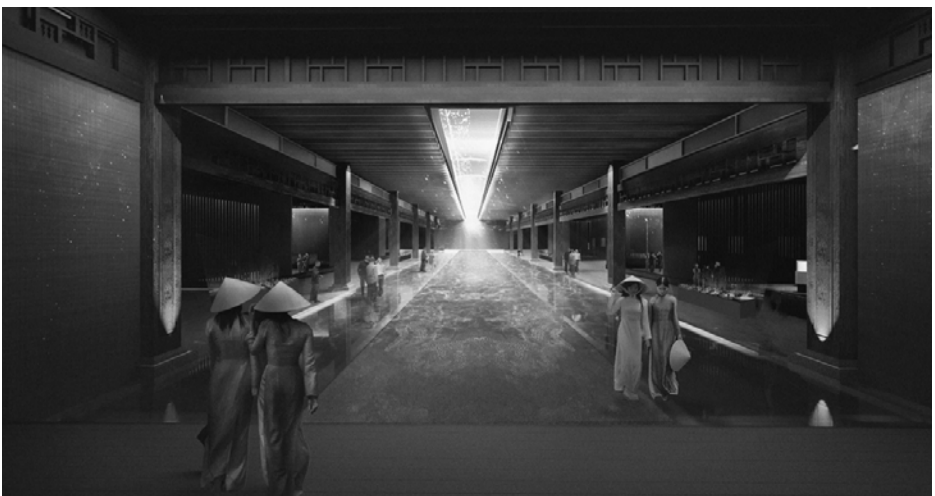
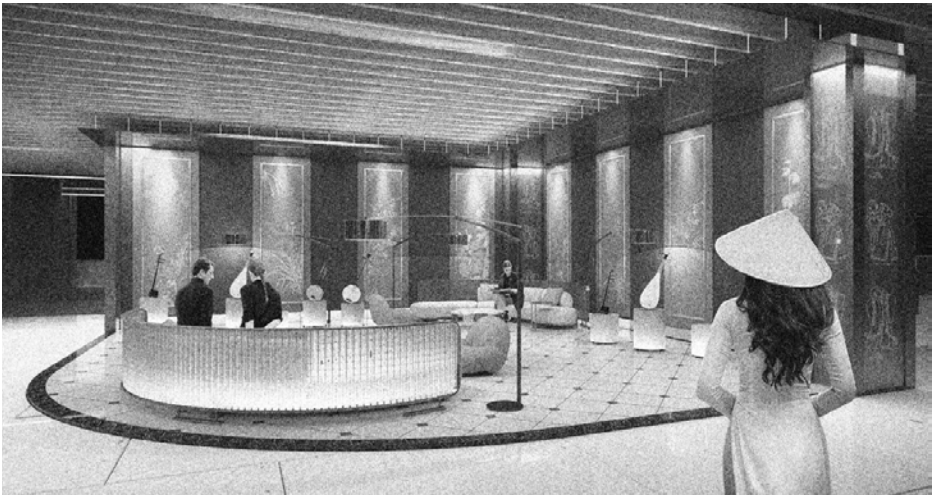
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

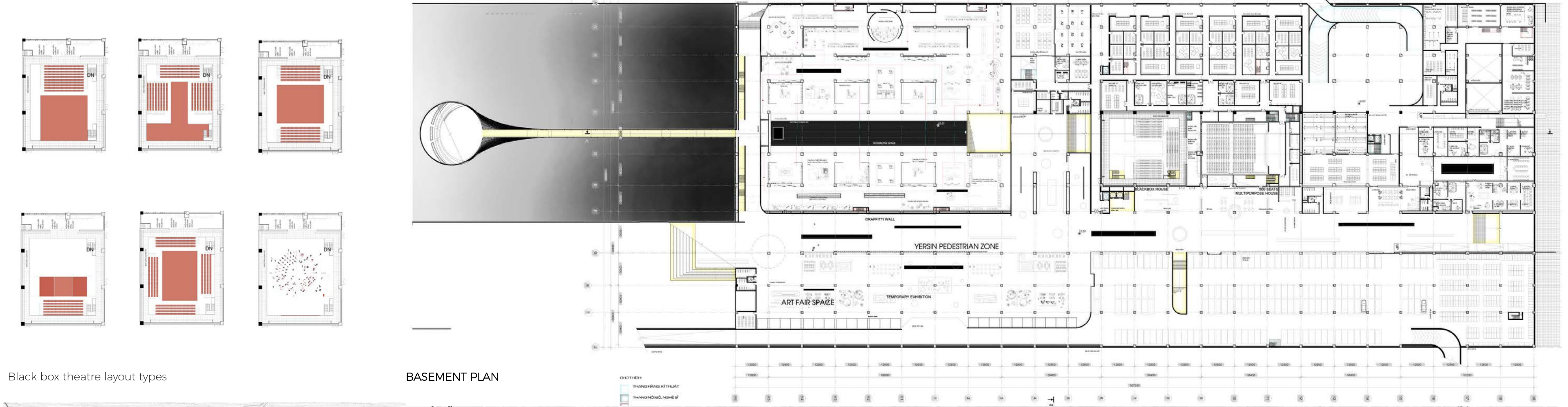
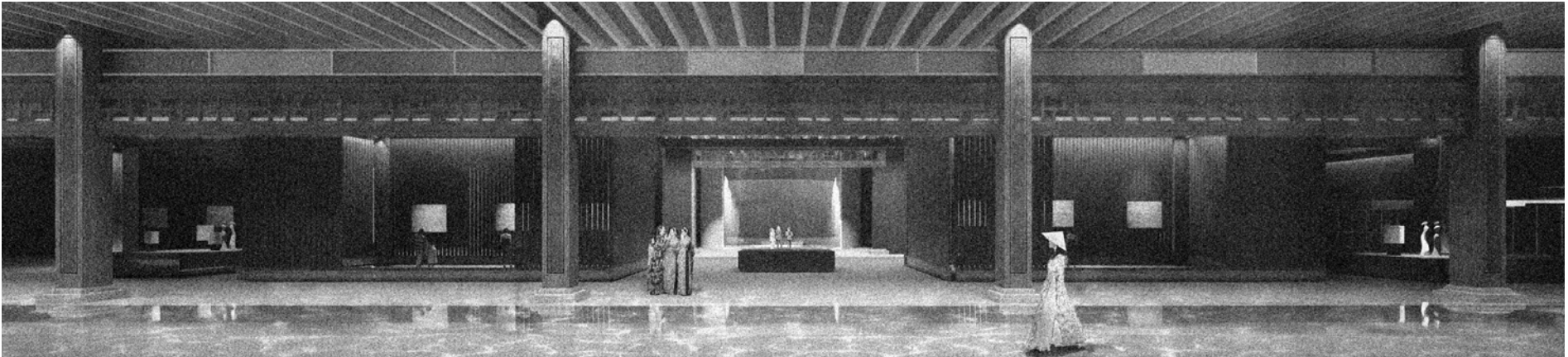


FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



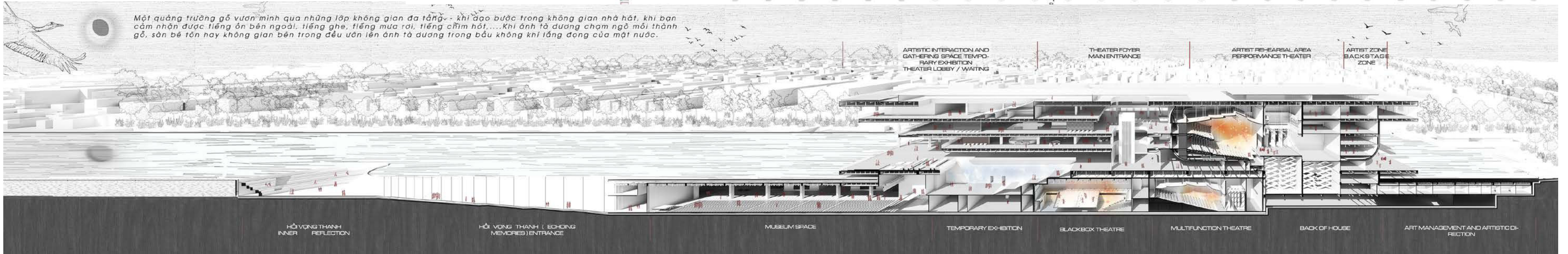
FUNCTION DIAGRAM





Black box theatre layout types

BASEMENT PLAN





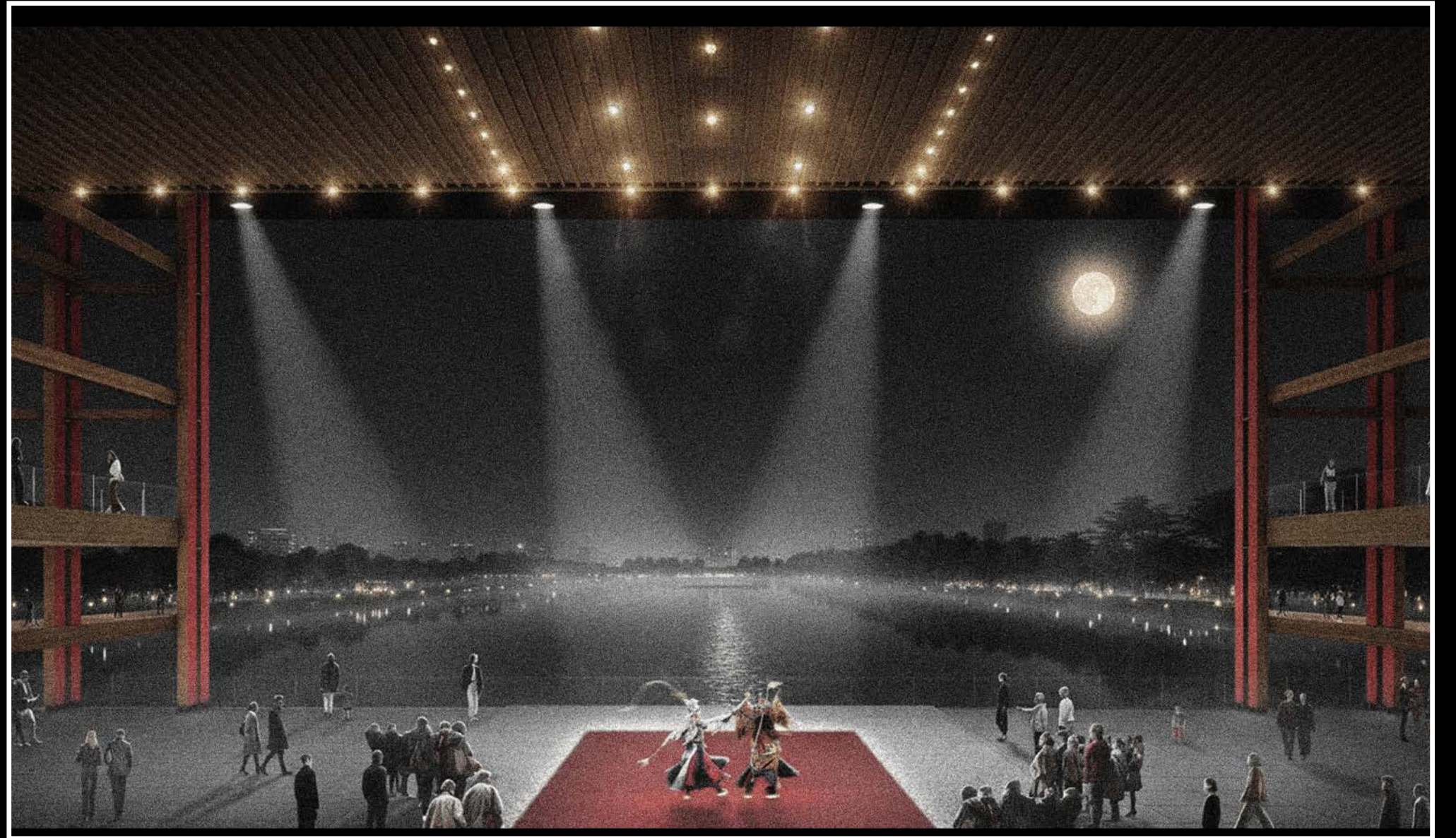


5. Can a wooden theater troupe truly bring “Cải Lương” memories back to contemporary life?

The theater is envisioned as **a brilliantly colorful Cải Lương troupe**, borrowing familiar imagery from this art form to take the public back to their **memories of “going to watch Cải Lương”**.

These color blocks are placed right at the main entrance, acting as a welcoming greeting for the public to **unfold the performance space of their memories**.

As night falls, light shines through the wooden louvers and the facade reflects onto the lake, transforming the theater into a “streak of light drifting on the water,” recreating the **festive atmosphere of the Southern river wharves**.



Strolling through the theater space, one can feel the outside noises, the sound of boats, falling rain, and singing birds... When the sunset touches every wooden beam, the concrete floors and interior spaces all bask in the evening glow within the tranquil atmosphere of the water.