

Super Ordinary

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

A B S T R A C T

Ordinary life oscillates between dichotomies:
from work to leisure, from reality to fantasy,
from private to public. These are the distinct and
definite ‘floating worlds’ that bring order to the
chaos of experience; their boundaries contain
what philosopher James Carse calls finite games.
As we move from game to game, we find our-
selves in perpetual motion.

SUPER ORDINARY explores Carse’s other type
of game—the infinite game. It is an architectural
investigation of its potential to transcend the
serious and experience the truly playful, an at-
tempt to manifest a place without boundaries in
a world defined by them.

Lamport Stadium, in the Liberty Village neigh-
bourhood of Toronto, is the setting for this
journey. It is a floating world: on its field of play,
we enter a space of defined roles, rules, and time.
Its games are finite: we are open to possibility
and chance, but only as means to end the game,
rather than to continue play. Our experiences are
limited to the boundaries of this finite theatre.

However, where we truly play, we liberate per-
sonal narratives from finite games. Architecture,
rather than categorizing experience, is instead
redefined through experience. Ergo, rather than
the site of finite games, SUPER ORDINARY
imagines Lamport Stadium as an infinite game.

The dichotomies of finite play—field and
bleacher, player and observer, inside and out, and
so on—are dissolved, and the stadium becomes a
place of possibility and adventure; here, we can
at once submit to the ecstasy of the place while
forging our own narratives.

It is a building that is never quite finished, but
always open to our imaginations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My advisor,
Val Rynnimeri,
and my committee members,
Anne Bordeleau,
Rick Haldenby,
and
Jeff Lederer,
for their guidance, diligence, and
support.

Maria,
for being a welcome distraction.

My friends in 3014—
but especially
Lisa,
for introducing me to Carse,
and
Alex,
for reminding me that no one plays
the game alone.

Thank you.

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To my play-mates

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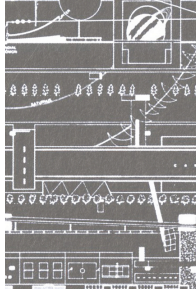
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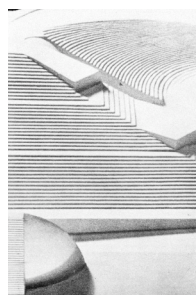
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SUPER





ORDINARY

To be horizontal is to deny boundary, to submit to forces beyond our vision.¹ It is the recognition of myth, of a story that never stops being told. *Those who live horizontally are always in passage.*²

This is the journey of the infinite player.

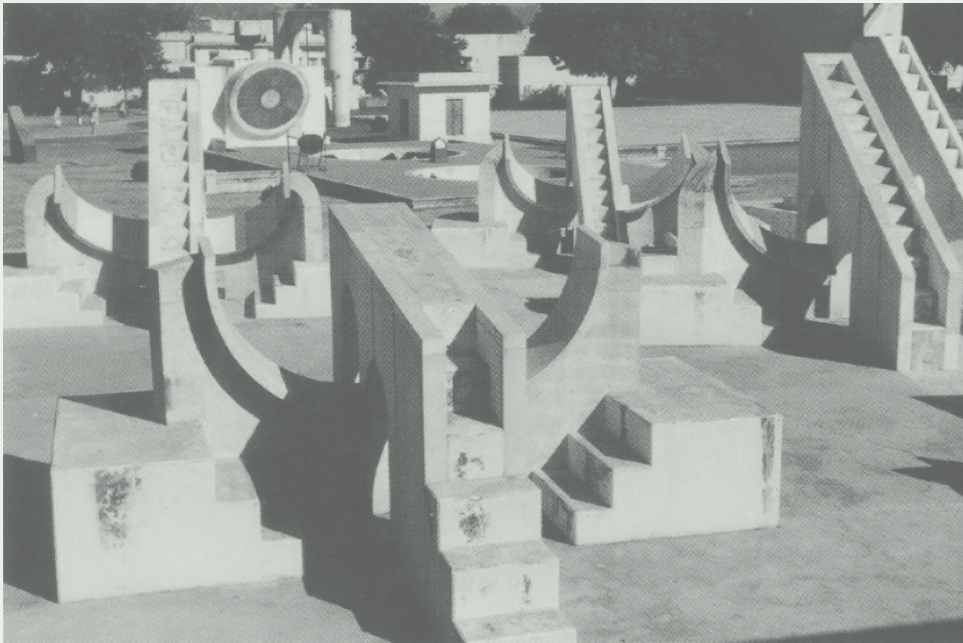


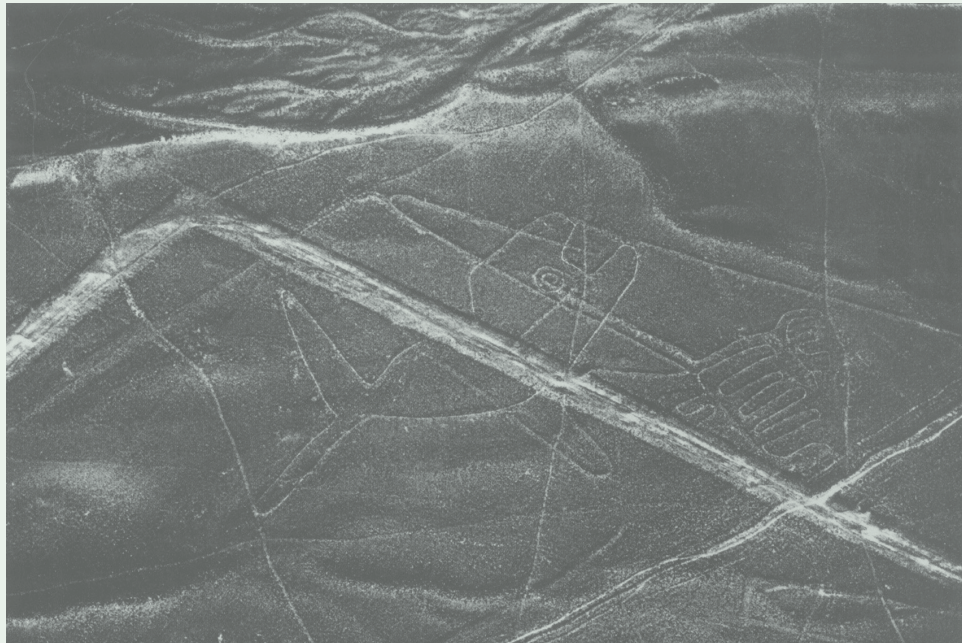
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FIG 09 Above: Grand Plaza, Cahokia.

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*THE
INFINITE
GAME*

Play is a fundamental human need; it is in the arena of games that our inclinations to act, generate narratives, and assert ourselves creatively can be fulfilled.³ Games are the stages of experience, providing the possibilities and reciprocalities to transcend impulses and scripts: where, through play, we can assert ourselves as spontaneous, creative, and free beings.

“The world is elaborately marked by boundaries of contest, its people finely classified as to their eligibility.”⁴

—James Carse

Ergo, games are boundaries imposed upon the chaos of experience, a system for simultaneously ordering and perpetuating the unpredictability of ordinary life. These boundaries define what philosopher James P. Carse calls *finite games*: finite in that they are bounded by space and time and governed by rules, and games in that we play them freely⁵. Finite games offer momentary suspension, but once their limits are exhausted—the performance ends, or time runs out in the match, or assigned tasks are completed—the lights come on again, and the dream is over; we leave that game, and move onto others.

In that sense, finite games are largely illusory, and as such all finite games require some degree of acting from its players. In order to play the game to the best of their abilities, the players must intentionally forget the inherently voluntary nature of their play.⁶ As a performer, the finite player illustrates the crucial reciprocity of the finite game and its audience. The audience, existing outside of the field of play, provides the player with a reference for understanding themselves in space and time; in turn, the player provides the audience with a game (and eventual outcome) that defines it as a floating world. While the finite game is still played freely, we veil ourselves from this freedom and play *seriously*. The veil divides us against ourselves; divided, even the physical presence of an audience becomes incidental. Like the game itself, it may simply be a mental construct, a device for self-motivation.⁷ Consequently, as both player and audience, we can only be satisfied with the illusion of games when winners and losers are conclusively determined.

FIG 12 *Children's Games*, by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1590). An ecstatic representation of typical children's games.





When we *truly play*, however, we play another type of game: the *infinite game*, a game played for the purpose of continuing the play. The infinite player recognizes the potential and possibilities beyond the limitations imposed by finite games; according to Carse, they “embrace the abstractness of finite games as abstractness”⁸—in other words, they recognize the illusory nature of finite play. Thus, where the finite game is theatrical, the infinite game is *dramatic*: open, surprising, and unpredictable. Its spatial, temporal, and numerical boundaries are fluid, rather than fixed: the infinite game plays *with* boundaries, not within them; its time is created within the play itself, and cannot expire; and

persons.”¹¹ In other words, we are compelled to keep moving, for it is through movement that we create and make new, and according to sociologist and psychiatrist Donald Winnicott, it is only through creativity that we can discover who we truly are.¹² If games define our humanity, then creativity defines our individuality. Through our playfulness, we erase the boundary of the self, and engage in open reciprocity with others.¹³

This relativity characterizes our humanity. “No one can play a game alone”; existing in relation to others, we are inescapably fluid.¹⁵ At the same time, the world is marked by architecturally-defined boundar-

*“One must create; one must manifest one’s own creative capacities and summon to creativity those who are inert, in order that life within the art of architecture should be in a state of maximum movement.”*¹⁴

—Rem Koolhaas

its rules are in flux, ensuring the continuity of the game and the participation of new players.⁹

If a boundary is a “phenomenon of opposition”, of pitting competitors against one another in the context of games, the infinite game is *horizontal*, a “phenomenon of vision.” The horizon is unreachable, describes no place, and is therefore potentially limitless. As such, infinite players are constantly moving and changing, creating new visions and possibilities through passage.¹⁰ To Carse, “only that which can change can continue”, and it is that change that is “the very basis of our continuity as

ies of contest: the factory, the theatre, the stadium. These are the floating worlds of our everyday lives, where the dichotomy between player and world is manifested physically so that finite games may be played. Indeed, we do not act independently, but in concert with the environment around us¹⁶; space is the medium through which we plot our paths and journeys. Yet, the “essential fluidity of our humanness” is “irreconcilable with the seriousness of finite play.”¹⁷ It demands a medium as fluid as we are, an indeterminate space of improvisation and possibility—an architecture for the infinite game.

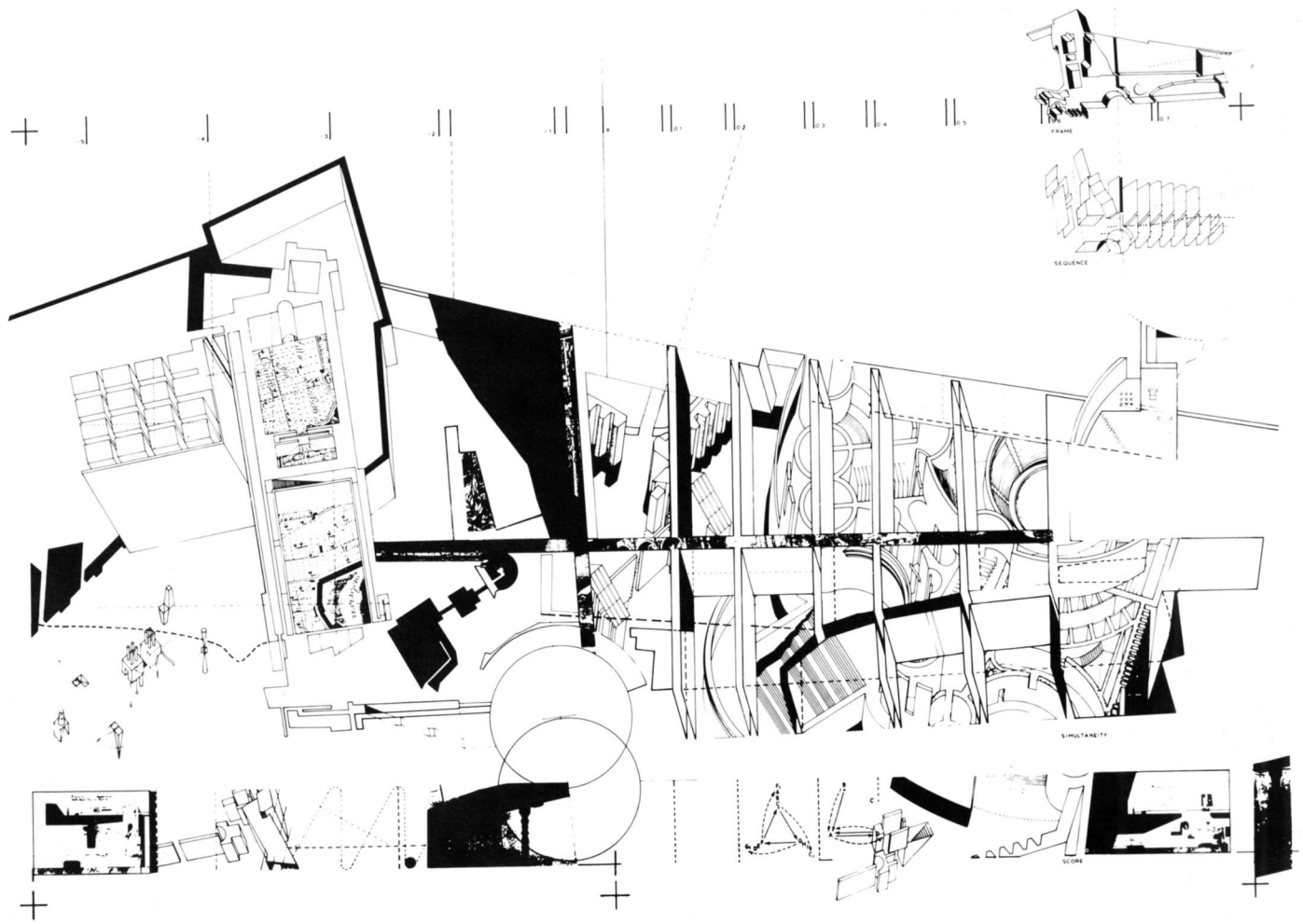


FIG 13 Stanley Allen's 'explosive' interpretation of Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* reveals a montage of events and sequences.

An infinite game cannot be played within a finite game. Consider the stadium: its purpose is to circumscribe the field of play with an audience, thereby establishing a floating world. Its games are finite, existing as occasional spectacles and separated from others by its boundaries. An infinite game, however, is horizontal, relational, boundless—how do we reconcile the physical and static nature of architecture with the ambiguity and fluidity of the infinite game?

Still, the finite game remains essential to the context of everyday life. The challenge of the infinite game, then, is to contain those finite games within it.¹⁸ This thesis investigates the definition of that ‘container’ architecturally, where to ‘contain’ is not necessarily to enclose with Cartesian planes—ceilings, floors, walls, and columns—but, paradoxically, to

space and time are made meaningful by the experience of their users; Piranesian space is not defined by its boundaries, but by their relation to other spaces—relationships established by the authorship of personal narratives. This creative force reveals the inexhaustibility of architecture. In this context, space is perpetually *redefined* by the flows of people moving through it (“in a state of maximum movement,” as Koolhaas would say); it is the interval, or the medium of flow, not an abstracted container distinct from those flows. Through the lens of experience, edges become blurred.

The *super ordinary* is a recognition of a realm beyond the ordinary, yet distinctly un-*extraordinary*. It is an elusive quality found in an architecture of the infinite game, a space defined not by singular

“Even what the hero is searching for vanishes before the obstinacy of his pursuit, his trajectories, his movements; they alone are made apparent, they alone are made real.”²¹
—Alain Robbe-Grillet

be geometric and ludic at the same time, becoming a “shifting, indeterminate plane”¹⁹ like Piranesi’s *Campo Marzio*. There, the “internal consistency of a work authored all at once is absent”; Piranesi is the ‘recorder’, rather than the ‘author’. As a result, two games emerge simultaneously: a set of rules that “[supercedes] the subjectivity of a single author” establishes the finite game, which in turn provides the framework for its “inverse corollary,” the infinite game.²⁰

Inherent in the infinite game is a crucial duality. It must recognize the boundaries of the finite games suspended within it, yet allow for chance and possibility beyond them. At Campo Marzio, fragments of

experiences, but an inexhaustible number of superimposed potentialities. A *super ordinary* space is a multiverse in which the dichotomies of finite games—order and chaos, inside and outside, player and audience—are dissolved. In that liberated space, one submits to possibility and chance, becoming free to pursue one’s own narratives. As infinite players, our play is not a sequence of moves that we review at the end of the game; it is a perpetuation of the present moment, where past and future become irrelevant. By denying the absolute, the *super ordinary* celebrates our relativity: it is a place where every world becomes a world of our own.

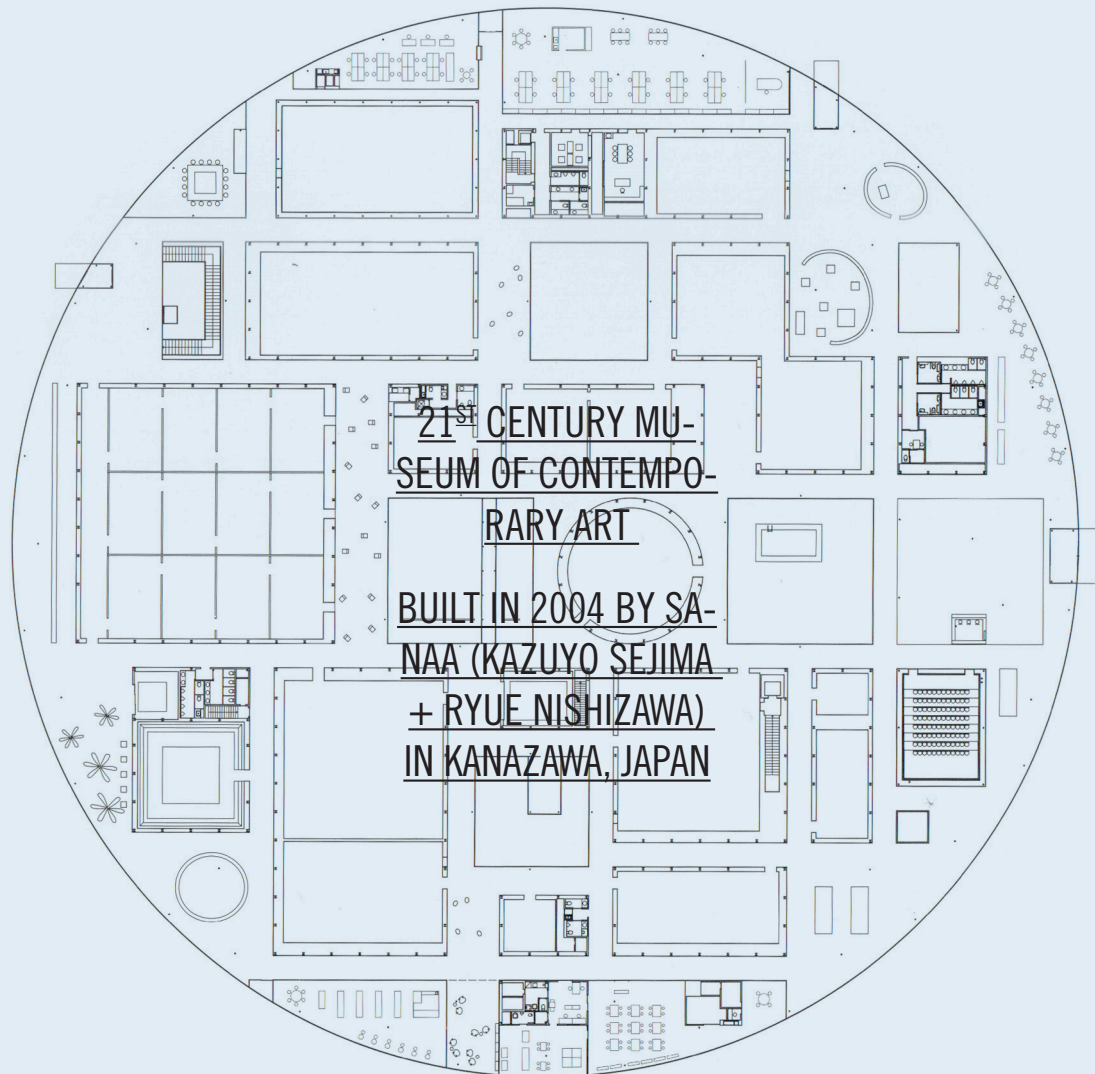


FIG 14 Above: a plan without hierarchies—whether a volume is gallery, circulatory, indoor, outdoor, pristine, or messy is unclear.

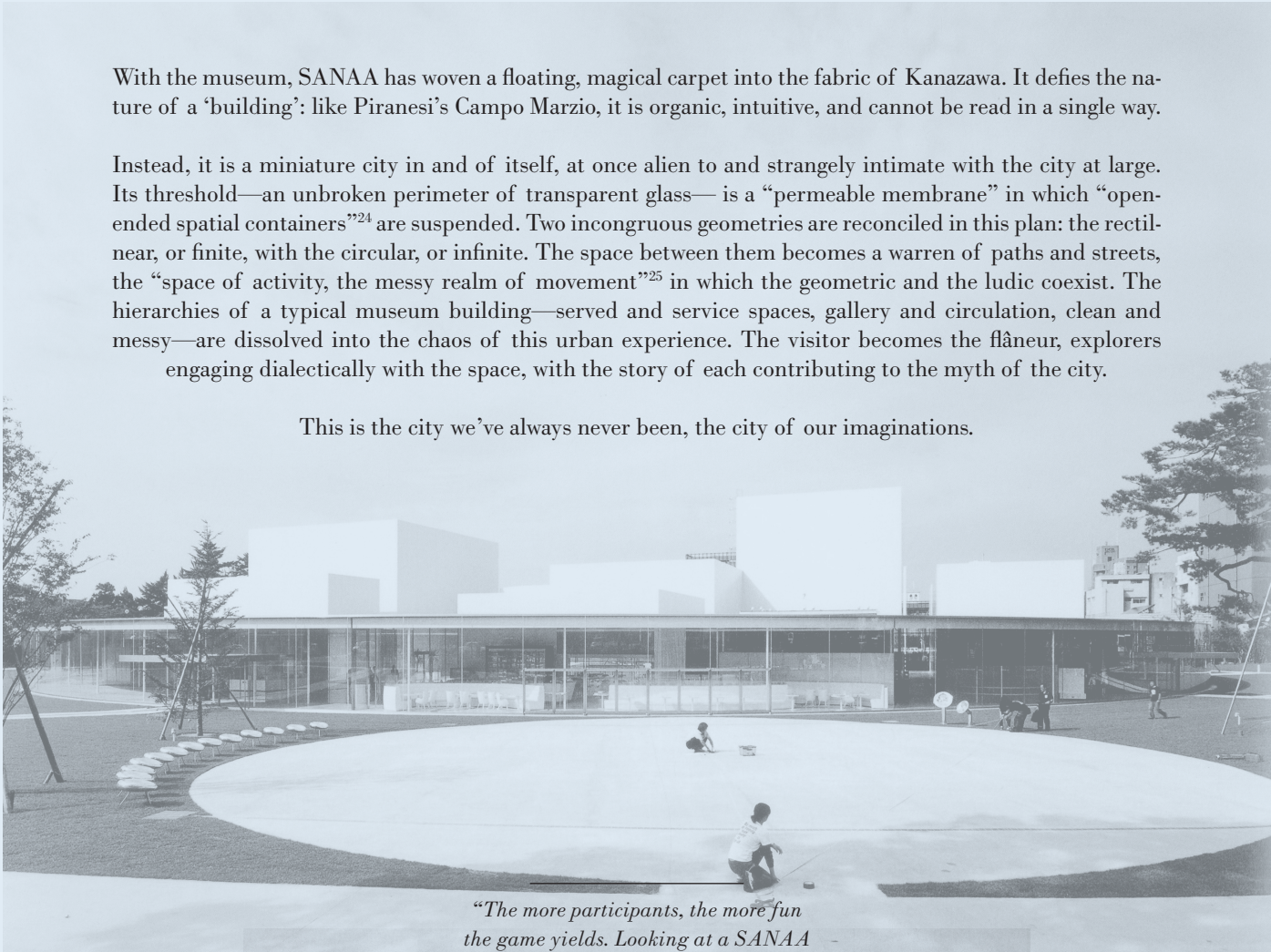
FIG 15 Overleaf, top: the museum as a microcosm of the city.

FIG 16 Overleaf, bottom: the pool in one of the courtyards is a surprising and playful revelation.

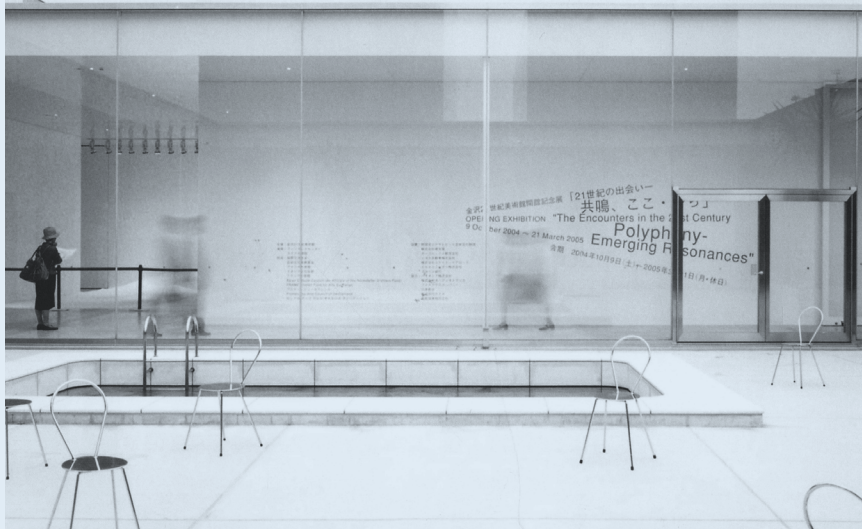
With the museum, SANAA has woven a floating, magical carpet into the fabric of Kanazawa. It defies the nature of a ‘building’: like Piranesi’s Campo Marzio, it is organic, intuitive, and cannot be read in a single way.

Instead, it is a miniature city in and of itself, at once alien to and strangely intimate with the city at large. Its threshold—an unbroken perimeter of transparent glass—is a “permeable membrane” in which “open-ended spatial containers”²⁴ are suspended. Two incongruous geometries are reconciled in this plan: the rectilinear, or finite, with the circular, or infinite. The space between them becomes a warren of paths and streets, the “space of activity, the messy realm of movement”²⁵ in which the geometric and the ludic coexist. The hierarchies of a typical museum building—served and service spaces, gallery and circulation, clean and messy—are dissolved into the chaos of this urban experience. The visitor becomes the flâneur, explorers engaging dialectically with the space, with the story of each contributing to the myth of the city.

This is the city we’ve always never been, the city of our imaginations.



“The more participants, the more fun the game yields. Looking at a SANAA building is like looking at a pool on a hot day.”²²³



“A structure that subsumes its own externalized ‘noise’ has already ceased to be a defined structure. For once released from interior-exterior, order-chaos dichotomies, that which was structure itself becomes infused with ‘other-than-structure.’ A happy ‘confusion’, as it turns out, precipitating entrance into an unrestricted diversity as divertissement; a play world in every sense of the word, where to see is simultaneously to be seen to appear, where to observe is at once to be observed in action. And architecture sets the double stage, replete with signs as visible to the world outside in the same instant it provides opera glasses through which to look out on that world as an ‘open object’.”²²

—Kisho Kurokawa

Within the city are extraordinary places in which we can escape the realities of cosmopolitan life. These are the realms of the amusement park, the theatre, the tea house...

The Japanese woodblock prints and paintings known as *ukiyo-e* have their roots in the accelerated urbanization

FLOATING

of Japan in the Edo period (1600-1867) and the pleasure-seeking lifestyle that it cultivated. This was the *ukiyo*, or “floating world” culture—the evanescent and impermanent realm of entertainment and pleasure, removed from the mundane and the ordinary. *Ukiyo-e* are the pictures of this floating world.²⁶

*“... Living only for the moment, turning
our full attention to the pleasures of
the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms
and the maple leaves; singing songs,
drinking wine, diverting ourselves in*

WORLDS

*just floating, floating; ... refusing to
be disheartened, like a gourd floating
along with the river current: this is what
we call the floating world...⁹²⁷*
— Asai Ryoï



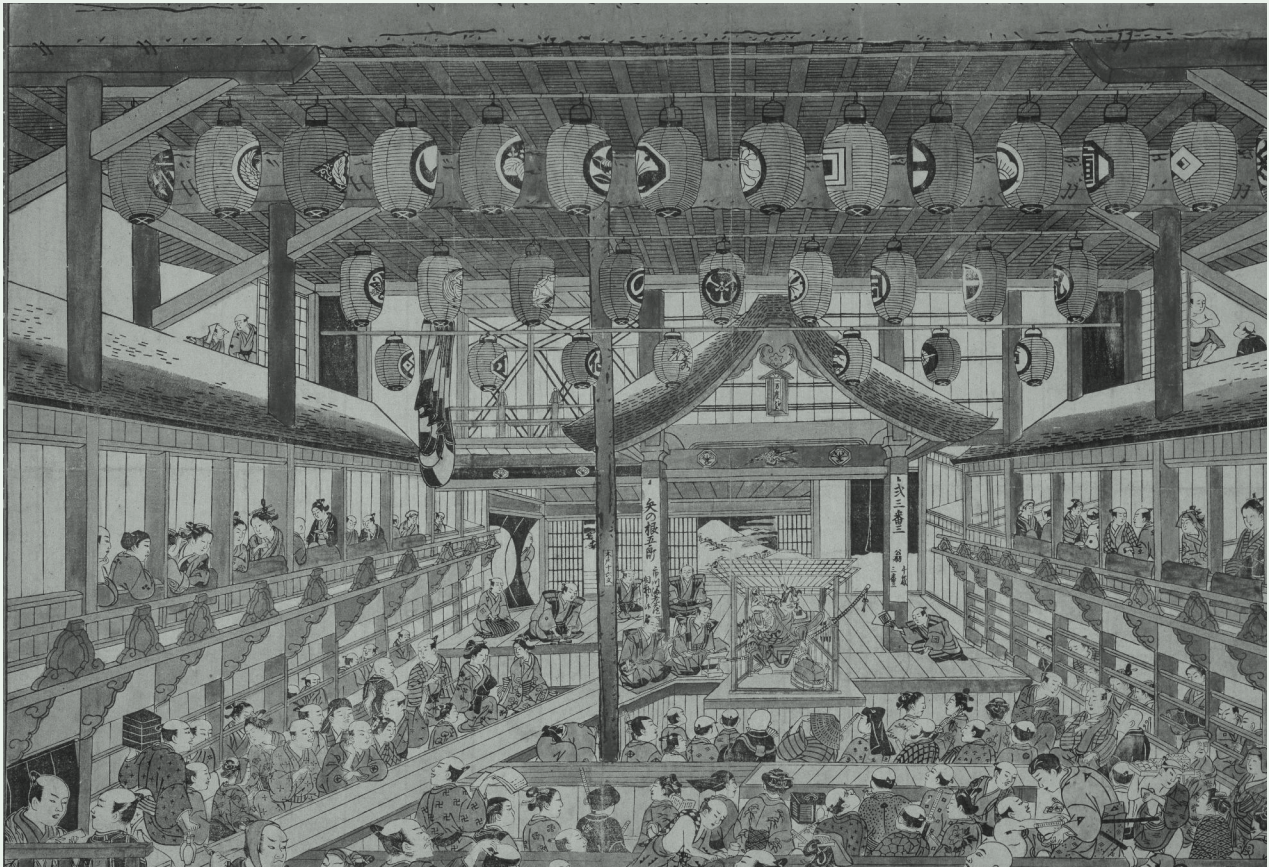


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FIG 20 Opposite page, bottom: "Bathhouse Women", by Torii Kiyonaga (ca. 1780).

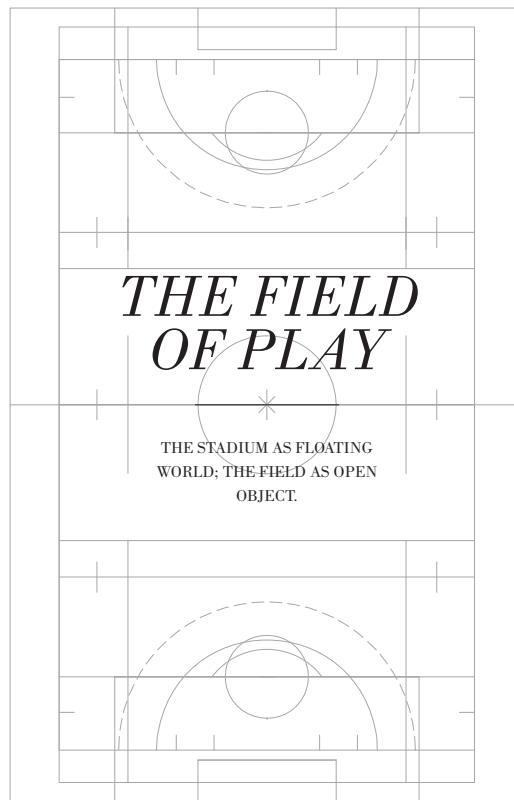


FIG 21 The layered games of the existing playing surface at Lamport Stadium.

FIG 22 Opposite: View of Lamport Stadium from King Street West.

*A finite game occurs within a world*²⁸—and there is, perhaps, no structure that describes a world better than the stadium. There, the illusion of finite games are manifested physically: there are clear boundaries on the field of play, an organized audience, a device to keep score and time, and limited means of entry. The stadium contradicts the city at large so that its games can resist those of the world outside it. When we step on to the field of play, we understand that we have left the everyday realm and entered a distinct, floating world.

We are in perpetual motion, and the stadium is the theatre in which our movements are made real. The contests, camaraderie, drama, and outcomes of ordinary life are compressed into sixty unscripted minutes; during the course of play—despite our rehearsals and preparations—we are at the mercy of chance. Lost in the moment, we *truly play*. It is only at the end of play, when we can credit a sequence of moves to the victor, that we realize the finite nature of sport.

In the context of the infinite game, however, there is a paradoxical reciprocity between floating world and the world at large: the experiences of floating worlds must contradict, yet remain analogous to those beyond them. In other words, in order to play freely despite our self-veiling, we must simultaneously be conscious of a larger space, longer time, and other players beyond the boundaries of the game.

LAMPORSTADIUM

Lamporstadium, in the Liberty Village neighbourhood of Toronto, is the relic of an unrealized dream. Originally constructed to capitalize on the growing

popularity of soccer in North America in the 1970s, the city soon discovered there was little interest in professional soccer in Toronto.²⁹ Without long-term marquee tenants, the stadium has remained in a state of limbo for decades.

Instead, it has become the home of field hockey teams, frisbee clubs, and amateur soccer leagues—uses that have little need for the stadium’s ability to seat 9,000 spectators. Its only professional tenant, the Toronto Nationals, field lacrosse club, had an average attendance of 3,079 during 2010³⁰—and have since announced their move to Hamilton for the 2011 season.³¹ Unsuitable even for its only professional tenant, it has become obvious that the bleachers are largely irrelevant to the amateur and community users who make use of the playing surface.³²



As such, alternate plans for the Lamporstadium grounds have been proposed since 1986, when the city considered demolishing the stadium barely a decade after it had been built.³³ In 2007, the Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Corporation (PLEDC) identified the site as an opportunity to accommodate the influx of new businesses and residents to the area. Their proposal was threefold; first, they proposed a multi-purpose recreational and community centre for the site, as well as a “creative enterprise” building for incubating entrepreneurship and providing flexible office spaces (PLEDC would be granted office space to manage the complex). Secondly, a large park would take the place of the stadium grandstands; this would address the current condition of the site, in which there is effectively no green space and an under-used children’s playground. The park would retain the existing turf field, but make it more easily accessible, and supplement it with additional tracks, courts, and even an outdoor stage. Thirdly, the parking lot on the southern third of the stadium site would be expanded in

moderate the influx of new businesses and residents to the area. Their proposal was threefold; first, they proposed a multi-purpose recreational and community centre for the site, as well as a “creative enterprise” building for incubating entrepreneurship and providing flexible office spaces (PLEDC would be granted office space to manage the complex). Secondly, a large park would take the place of the stadium grandstands; this would address the current condition of the site, in which there is effectively no green space and an under-used children’s playground. The park would retain the existing turf field, but make it more easily accessible, and supplement it with additional tracks, courts, and even an outdoor stage. Thirdly, the parking lot on the southern third of the stadium site would be expanded in

FIG 23 Below: Time-lapse photomontage of Lamport Stadium during Scotiabank Nuit Blanche 2010.

FIG 24 Opposite: Visualization of Steven Gerrard's movement from 2010/08/15 match vs Arsenal, based on heat map data provided by ESPN. Sport is always dramatic during the course of play: he starts in central midfield, but ranges all over the pitch during the course of play.





an effort to alleviate some of the parking and traffic concerns that have arisen with the neighbourhood's revitalization.

Since then, however, little progress has been made. The only changes at Lamport Stadium—increased community access and an upgrade of the pitch to a more modern “Dol Turf” artificial surface³⁴—was a result of changing BMO's surface to natural grass. BMO Field was partially subsidized by taxpayers in exchange for year-round community access to its surface; when BMO's marquee tenant, Toronto FC, decided to change to natural grass, they maintained the access by upgrading the surface at Lamport.

While the efforts of the PLEDC have largely been for naught, their proposal was an attempt to harness the inherent playfulness of the stadium in a neighbourhood that had become too ‘serious’. Lamport Stadium had become a place where players and games could converge—even now, the field is marked with boundaries for several different sports, emphasizing their fictive nature. By opening up the boundaries of the field, the PLEDC proposal was a first step toward a truly playful place, a recognition of the evolution of the site from a place of otherness to an important urban hub.

A LEGACY OF OTHERNESS

Despite its revival as a creative district and proximity to the centre of Toronto, Liberty Village remains aloof, a tear in the continuum of the city. Entering it is unlike entering any other Toronto neighbour-

hood; confined by railways and highways, the transition is at once prolonged and abrupt. Yet in this other world, with its different architecture and strange streets and estranged history, is a story of play that remains forgotten today.

Present-day Liberty Village was originally part of the vast military reserve known as Garrison Common, a swath of land at the fringes of the city that remained largely unused. Barracks and forts were established at the shores of Lake Ontario, but inland were thick forests, wild game, creeks, and salt springs. Because of this available land and its location at the periphery of the city, Liberty Village—then known as the King-Dufferin area, or some variation thereof³⁵—soon became the place where the city's “otherness” could be stowed away. The Provincial Lunatic Asylum and Industrial Exhibition grounds were established there in the 1850s, and soon joined on the other side of the railway tracks by the Central Prison and the Mercer Reformatory for Women. Even rail corridors appeared to want nothing to do with this hinterland, bisecting them on hasty diagonals, leaving the two great scars that still contradict the city's street grid. The otherness was overwhelming: plans to introduce housing to the area, evident in the 1890 fire insurance map of Toronto, never came to fruition.³⁶ Who could live in a neighbourhood that had been excised from the city?

While it was unsuitable for residential development, the next century saw industries and manufacturers relocate to the area, especially as the city

INFINITE CITY

Every map leaves something to the imagination; no map includes all the data we could possibly include.

Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City* is ostensibly an atlas, but is really an anthology of stories—the events and experiences that elude conventional mapmaking. Describing the city as “many worlds in one place,”⁵⁶ Solnit explores the obscurities and curious juxtapositions of San Francisco—implying that the personal narrative of each citizen can map the city in infinite ways.

It is a nostalgic return to the cartographer as explorer of uncharted territories—where, left to our imagination, “every place is if not infinite then practically inexhaustible.”⁵⁷

reorganized itself after the Great Fire of 1904. It had become imperative to sequester industrial land uses for the sake of the city's well-being, and the King-Dufferin area was the obvious choice, already the rug under which the city's undersirables were swept. As it evolved to become a bustling industrial quarter, its boundaries were never more apparent, keeping a ferocious cluster of estranged buildings and people at bay.

However, as the city continued to evolve and expand, the growing proximity of the King-Dufferin area to the city's consciousness became uncomfortable. Amid rumours of brutality as well as financial and labour problems,³⁷ the Central Prison was decommissioned in 1915 and demolished in 1919; the inmates were removed from the city, to the Ontario Reformatory in Guelph. Its sister institution, the Mercer Reformatory for Women, was beset by similar problems; in 1964, a grand jury was convened to investigate allegations of torture, beatings, and experimental drugs and medical procedures.³⁸ By 1969, the reformatory was closed and condemned; as with the Central Prison, the inmates of the Mercer Reformatory were moved to an institution outside the city, the Vanier Centre for Women in Brampton. A few years afterwards, with no public support to preserve the building,³⁹ it was torn down, and the city eagerly built the Lamport Stadium in its place—still yet an 'other' place, but acceptable within the boundaries of the city. Only the warden's house remains of the original reformatory.

Industries met a similar fate. In its peak during the Second World War, the King-Dufferin area

employed nearly 18,000 people; by the 1960s, the area was a mere shell of its former self. The last remaining holdouts—neighbourhood pillars Toronto Carpet, Inglis, and Massey-Harris—all closed their doors by 1991, effectively signaling the end of an era. Canada Bread, the last remaining manufacturer, moved out in 2010.⁴⁰

Though one of the neighbourhood's newest buildings, Lamport Stadium quickly became a monument to the area's decline. Forgotten and largely unused, it was an empty theatre, waiting for new games to provide it with new meaning.

GENERIC CITY

Architectural theorist Lieven de Caeter described everyday life as "a movement, using transport capsules, from one enclave or capsule, home for instance, to another, campus, office, airport, all-in-one hotel, mall, and so on..."⁵⁸

Smooth, serene, and above all, efficient, the capsule shields us from the fear of the unknown.

In the Generic City, order prevails over chaos; life here is predictable, sterile, and safe. Don't worry—nothing could possibly happen to you.

The Generic Citizen embraces what they already know, finding comfort in the belief that history always repeats itself. It is Koolhaas' vision of an eternal future: "the post-city being prepared on the site of the ex-city."⁵⁹

A PLAY GROUND EMERGES

After institutions had crumbled and industry had left, the King-Dufferin area was adrift. For a time, it had become forgotten, invisible; one former resident described the place as "a scary area [...] when I walked down the street at night, there was nobody, absolutely nobody."⁴¹

Implied in this void, however, was a freedom—a "certain magic"⁴²—to draw one's own boundaries, to create something new on one's own terms. This is the potential of abandoned places: in the words of urban planner and theorist Kevin Lynch, "the release from a sense of immediate human purpose allows freer action as well as free mental reconstruction."⁴³ Our finite impulses to order, classify, and separate are instead dissolved by the fluidity of true play.

The King-Dufferin area had become a loose and indeterminate space, its boundaries at the mercy of its inhabitants. This was an urban frontier—an

open haven for artists, attracted by studio space and affordable rent offered by the growing stock of vacant industrial buildings. The abandoned factories and overgrown, almost pastoral meadows were open fields that invited exploration, playful revelations among serious worlds. For these artists, these were places where they could feel free to play and create.

Of course, it was only a matter of time before it attracted the attention of speculators, developers, and eventually, the municipality—parties with a vested interest in order, homogeneity, and predictability, contradicting the looseness that existed in the area. But this was a valuable opportunity to reintroduce the neighbourhood to the consciousness of the city; instead of replacing one with the other, there was the potential for a dialectical relationship between ‘looseness’ and ‘tightness’, an ongoing process where our explorations through ‘loose’ space could inform changes to the rules and meanings manifested by ‘tight’ space.⁴⁵ Carse distinguishes between a *society* and a *culture* in a similar fashion; a society imposes boundaries in order to isolate and therefore create an identity for itself, whereas the participants of a culture both enter into and simultaneously change its context through their own experiences.⁴⁶

It became clear the King-Dufferin area had reached the threshold of change, about to rejoin the city as cultural centre or establish itself as an industrial society. By the 1990s, gentrification was inevitable, even necessary—but could the artistic milieu that had been cultivated be capitalized while maintaining its playfulness? Here, Carse’s “unavoidable challenge” of true play had come to a head: *how could we keep our finite games in infinite play?*⁴⁷

THE THEATRICAL PRESENT

On paper, the transformation of the King-Dufferin area to Liberty Village appears to have been successful. The neighbourhood is now the centre of an upwardly-mobile and creative demographic, home to a wide range of creative companies, ranging from

architects and designers to professional consultants to industry giants such as Sirius, Nelvana and YTV. Restaurants, cafés, grocery stores, boutiques, and fitness centres have sprung up to accommodate them; just east of Liberty Village, new condominium projects are being constructed to meet growing demand.

Despite these ingredients, there is something lacking in the experience of the neighbourhood. While acknowledging its successes, Toronto Star architecture critic Christopher Hume describes Liberty Village as lifeless, as a place that isn’t “genuine”, a place of unrealized potential. Hume argues that the successes of Liberty Village have come in spite of the city’s involvement, and that it remains a far cry from the exciting neighbourhood that had carried so much promise.⁴⁸ Indeed, the freedom and playfulness that had once existed was preserved only in its new name.

City policy since the deregulation of land uses in 1994 have only reinforced the notion that Liberty Village is a theatre of industry, a stage for the serious realm of work.

The city designated the neighbourhood as an Employment District, one of only two that are in the downtown area. These are intended to create jobs and concentrate businesses, and are predominantly industrial parks or warehouse districts. Residential and retail uses are generally forbidden, seen as destabilizing forces in these clearly-defined commercial centres. But this separation of uses is anachronistic, a concession to Liberty Village’s past as an industrial hinterland. The separation of uses was necessitated by the foulness of turn-of-the-century industry, but urban planner Donald L. Elliott contends that today’s knowledge-based industries require no such separation.⁴⁹ In fact, he suggests that our contemporary paradigm is moving towards increased flexibility in zoning.⁵⁰ We yearn for the potential and possibility of a ‘loose’ place with diverse peoples and lifestyles.

At the same time, the city also designated Liberty

Village as a Business Improvement Area (LVBIA). Typically, BIAs are associations of retail businesses along main streets with the mutual interest of increasing customer traffic—a model that contradicts the Employment District designation. As a result, the LVBIA is unique: it is the first non-retail BIA in Canada, comprised instead of local property owners whose objective is to increase real estate values.⁵¹ This is a script for future growth, at the expense of openness in the present: “the post-city being prepared on the site of the ex-city” (see “Generic City,” page 25). The narrative value of the area’s industrial and artistic past is merely leverage for, rather than reciprocal to, the ultimate goals of the neighbourhood.

With the ending already written, the anxiousness of the city precludes genuine playfulness. True play requires a liberative environment that “offers us ambiguous experience [...] we play by interpreting for ourselves and experimenting with its possibilities.”⁵² Instead, Liberty Village has become predictable. If to play is to encounter and engender newness—to surprise and be surprised—the opportunity for it in Liberty Village has been limited by the inflexibility of physical and political boundaries. Like the self-veiling of the finite player, Liberty Village undergoes a process of self-marginalization to establish itself as a theatre of industry.

A new neighbourhood has emerged around Lamport Stadium, yet in its nostalgia, it yields to history. The stadium, as the theatre of fictive reality, becomes a fertile ground—where, through the realization that only our movements are truly real, we can transcend the spatial and temporal limitations of finite games.

THE TRANSCENDENT FESTIVAL

Each fall, during *Nuit Blanche*, Toronto’s “free all-night contemporary art thing,” Lamport Stadium undergoes a curious transformation. As its spaces and surfaces are re-interpreted by artists and visitors, it becomes a loose space of potential and possibility, and ordinarily banal spaces take on new life.⁵³ We are surprised to discover that Lamport is no longer a ‘stadium’; instead, freed from spatial and temporal conventions, we “impose [our] own fantasy on the environment.”⁵⁴ For one night, the stadium is not the theatre of finite games, but instead a truly playful place.

It is through the festival that Lamport Stadium can return a revitalized Liberty Village to an ‘open field’—where order and boundaries can be reconciled with the playfulness of loose space. The stadium becomes an event to be experienced, reminding us that its boundaries are merely fictive constructs of our playfulness.

But the experience of *Nuit Blanche* is fleeting; the quality of the festival fails to transcend the festival itself. At its conclusion, the exciting looseness of Lamport Stadium vanishes... boundaries become real again, and the stadium is returned to its ordinary, one-dimensional state.

To become a truly liberative environment, then, the transcendental qualities of the festival must be extended to the experiences of the everyday. The stadium, rather than theatre of predetermined experience, must challenge the user to generate his own experience: Lamport Stadium must become the site for the Super Ordinary.

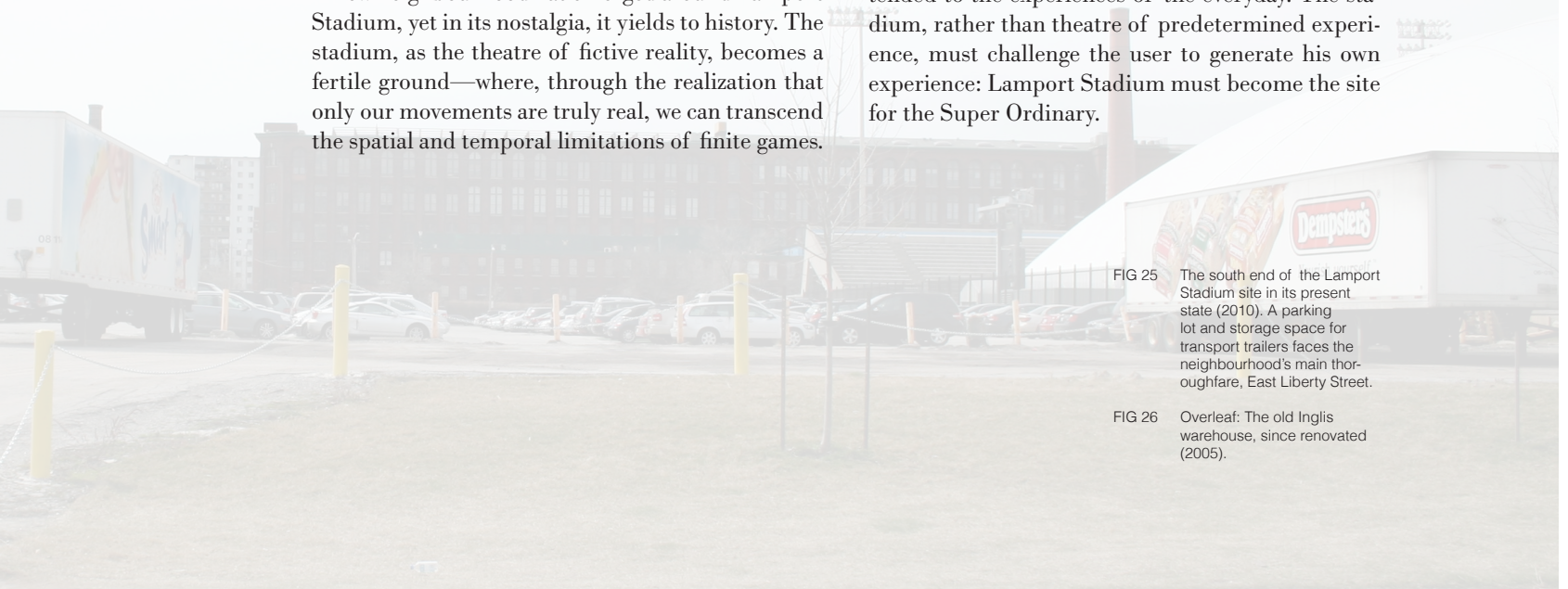


FIG 25 The south end of the Lamport Stadium site in its present state (2010). A parking lot and storage space for transport trailers faces the neighbourhood’s main thoroughfare, East Liberty Street.

FIG 26 Overleaf: The old Inglis warehouse, since renovated (2005).

“Crawling through dense undergrowth, scrambling over walls and under fences, leaping over hurdles and across gaps, kicking debris of various qualities along the floor,



throwing rubble at chosen targets and dancing and sprinting across stretches of flooring generate a rekindled awareness of the jouissance of gymnastic, expressive movement.”⁴⁴



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN
(THEATRE SQUARE)

BUILT IN 1996 BY
WEST 8 URBAN DE-
SIGN AND LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE IN
ROTTERDAM, THE
NETHERLANDS

FIG 27 Above: Children play at the Schouwburgplein during a summer carnival.

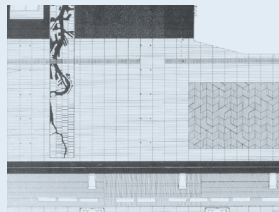
FIG 28 Overleaf, top: aerial view of Schouwburgplein.

FIG 29 Overleaf, middle: detail from diagram of surface treatments.

FIG 30 Overleaf, bottom: night view of Schouwburgplein. Note the operability of the light masts.

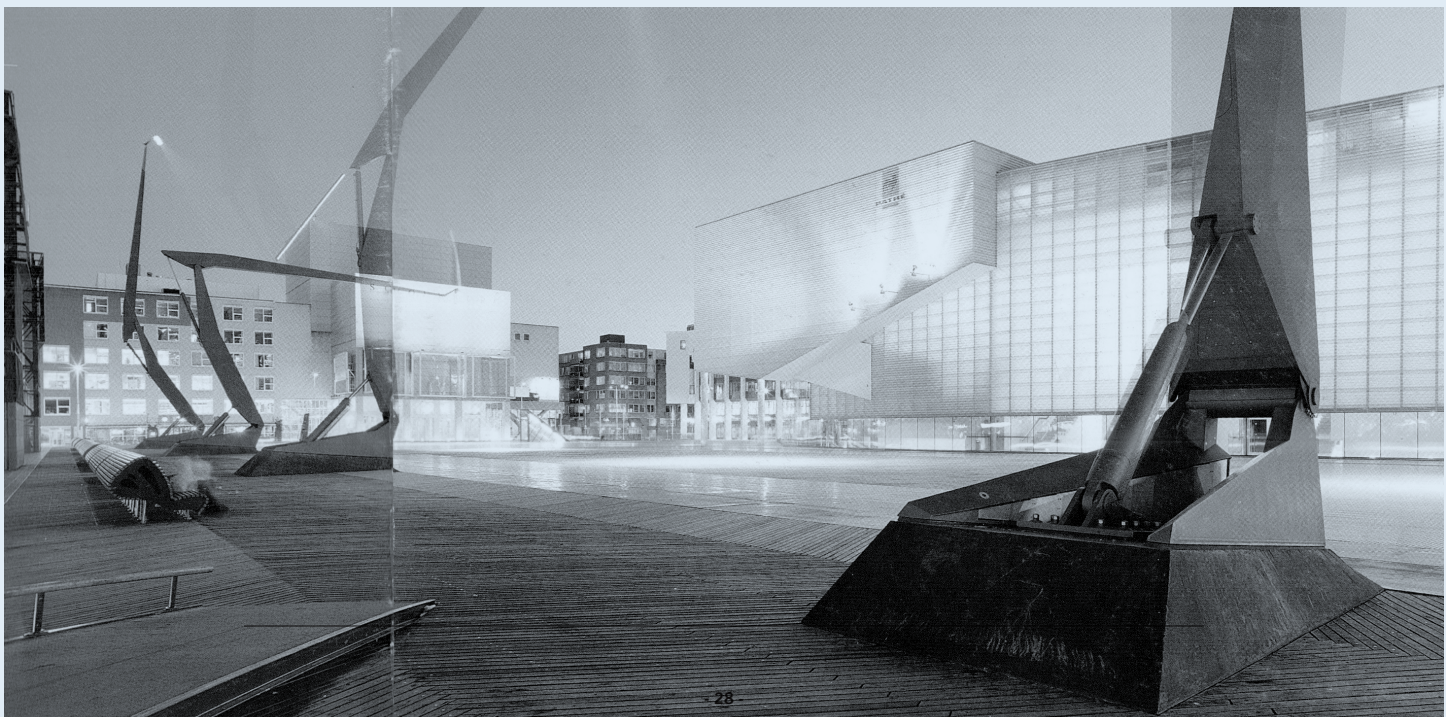


Starting with the premise that the modern city-dweller rejects the illusory nature of pre-packaged environments—of theme parks, shopping malls, and stadia—West 8 conceived of an urban space of “self-discovered sensations,”⁶⁰ a space that could challenge and provoke its users to become aware of their own generative potential. “The square is from another planet [...] and has to be conquered by the user.”⁶¹



At first glance, the square is a vast and empty open space, but it is a pregnant nothingness, brimming

with expectant scenarios. The surface of the square is finished in a variety of tactile experiences—wood, steel, granite, epoxy, and rubber—each suggesting and engendering different activities. Integrated into the floor are fountains, lights, and a plug-in system for special events, further expanding the possibilities for new and different uses. Even the audience plays an active role, able to control the four 35-metre cranes to change the focus of the scene before them. Always changing, the square is without boundary; here, the city dweller regains their fantasy and identity.⁶²



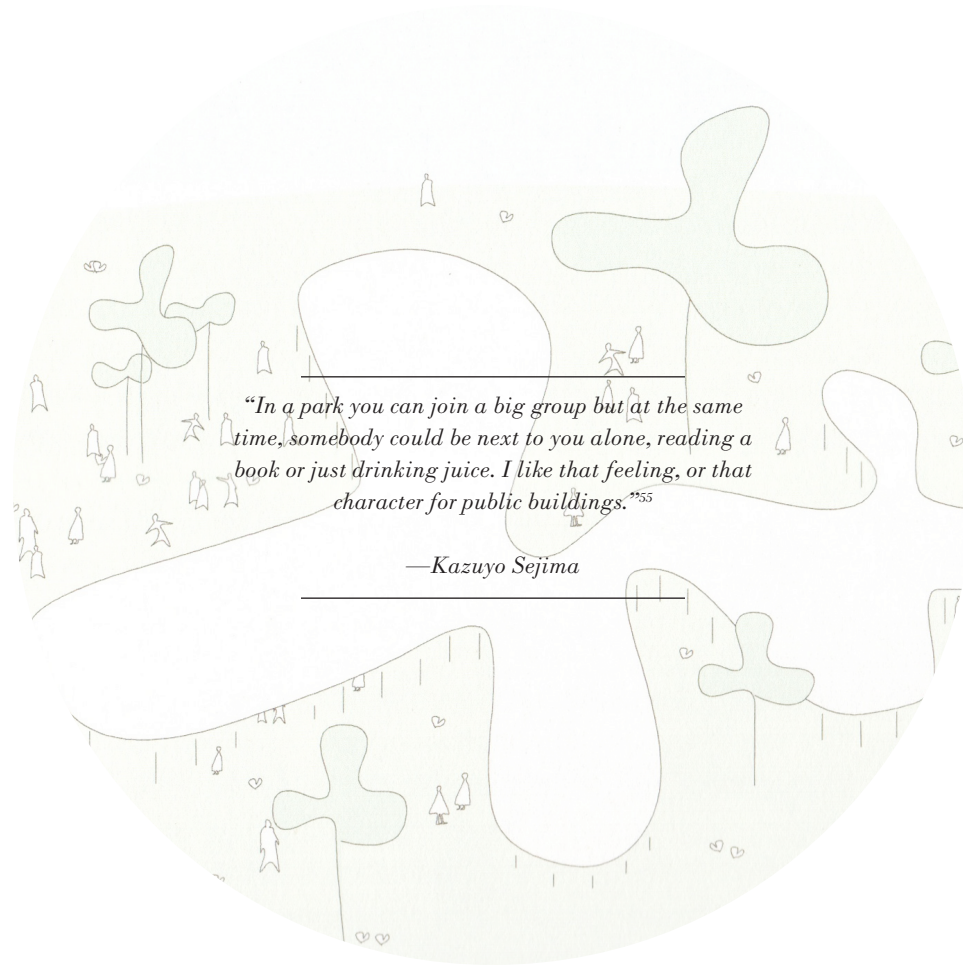


FIG 31 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion
2009. Sketch by SANAA.

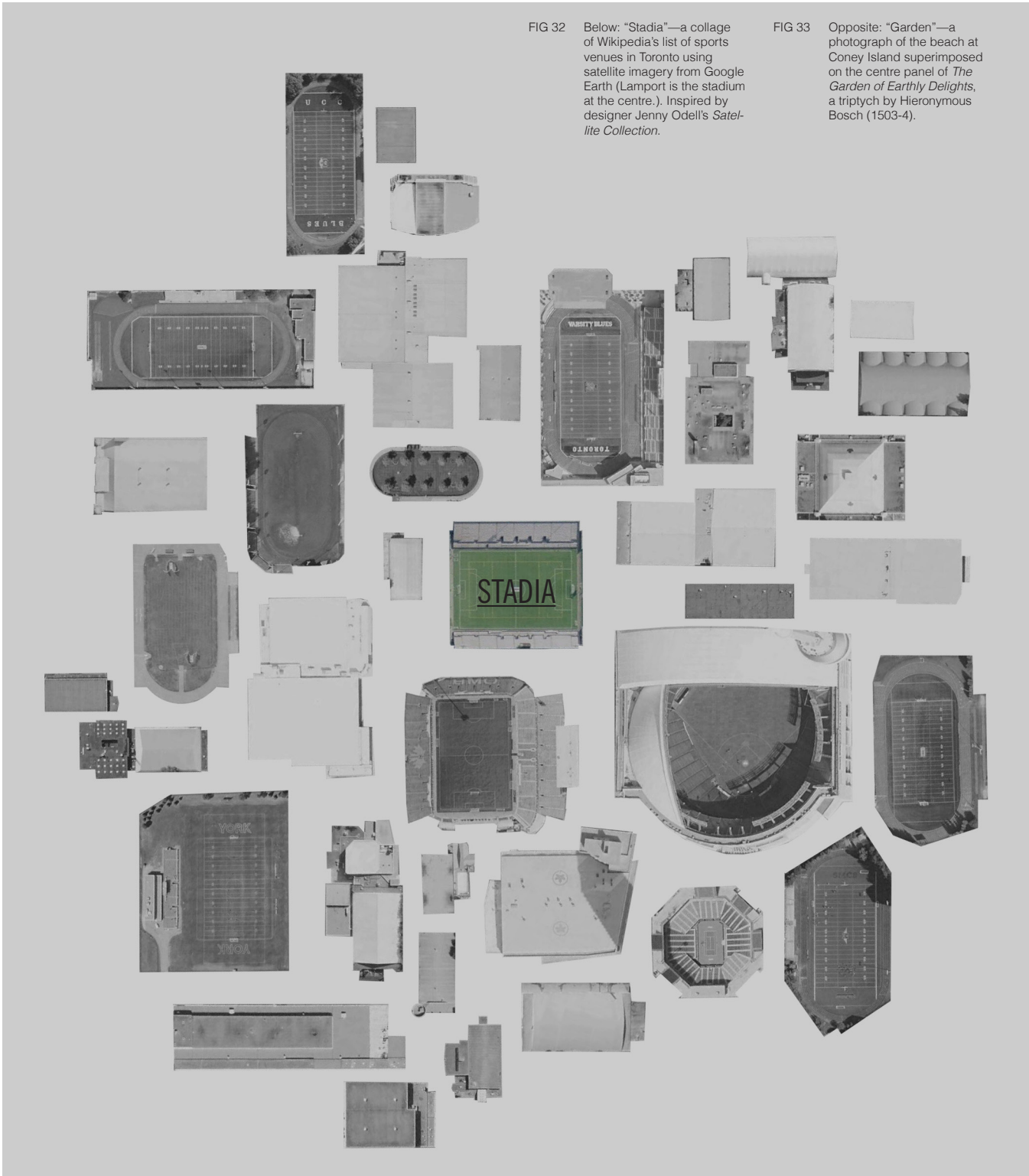


FIG 32 Below: "Stadia"—a collage of Wikipedia's list of sports venues in Toronto using satellite imagery from Google Earth (Lamport is the stadium at the centre.). Inspired by designer Jenny Odell's *Satellite Collection*.

FIG 33 Opposite: "Garden"—a photograph of the beach at Coney Island superimposed on the centre panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, a triptych by Hieronymus Bosch (1503-4).

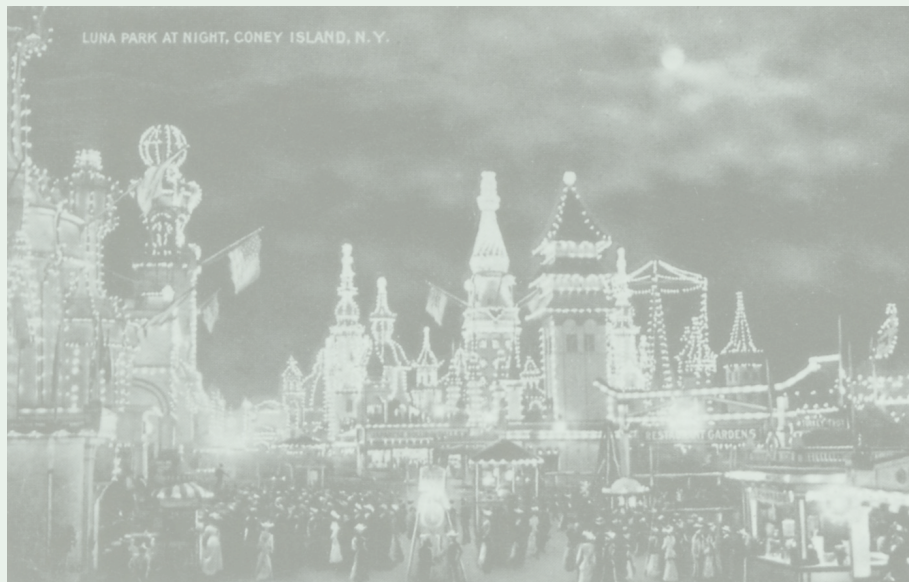


*THE
ETERNAL
PRESENT*

*“If Paris is France, then Coney Island,
between June and September, is the World.”⁶³*

*—George C. Tilyou,
founder of Steeplechase Park*

FIG 34 Luna Park, Coney Island



The dichotomy between the floating world and the city at large is essential to metropolitan life. In *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas describes Coney Island as the antithesis of the emerging metropolis of Manhattan, a resort in which its citizenry could re-establish an equilibrium.⁶⁴ Coney Island provided an “escape,” a floating world where the city could be forgotten.

FIG 35 "Creation", Dreamland, Coney Island



To facilitate the oscillations of Manhattanites between city and resort, railroads were laid and the Brooklyn Bridge built—and Coney Island became oversaturated. No longer able to function as a virginal escape, it underwent a forced mutation, embracing a vulgarity that could “counteract the artificiality of the new metropolis with its own Super-Natural.”⁶⁵ Coney Island became a place of intensified experiences and heightened sensations.



FIG 36 Still from a video by artist Helmut Smits, in which a package of football highlights is used as a greenscreen for advertisements. Smits implies that the space and time beyond the stadium is becoming indistinguishable from the space and time contained by the stadium. Increasingly, stadiums are not merely a simple dichotomy between player and audience, but part of a backdrop for greater audiences beyond. The game is incidental to a greater cultural experience.

The attractions of Coney Island, in their exaggerations, compressed time, and therefore distance:

In a single day on Coney Island it is possible to “experience” the San Francisco earthquake, the burnings of Rome and Moscow, various naval battles, episodes from the Boer War, the Galveston Flood and (inside a Classical Greek temple decorated with a fresco of a dormant volcano) the eruption of Vesuvius...⁶⁶

Coney Island became an orgy of spectacle, of epic histories retold with the latest technologies, of “places not of this earth,”⁶⁷ of visions of the future. In this whirlwind, the notions of ‘past’ or ‘future’ were figments of the imagination, at the mercy of the present moment. Like Piranesi’s Campo Marzio—by his time an unremarkable neighbourhood in medieval Rome—Coney Island became a palimp-

sest of personal narratives that transcended space and time, a “composite created by our fantasy.”⁶⁸

By flouting the laws of ordinary time, Coney Island contradicted reality and censored the ordinary consciousness the city. In an effort to establish its surreality, their experiences confused and discredited the world beyond its boundaries⁶⁹; Manhattan was farther away than the canals of Venice, or even the Moon.

Yet, the world of entertainment can only “skirt the surface of myth.”⁷⁰ These are not the stories that we experience, but an experience delivered by a story. As the audience for entertainments, we exist as finite players. But myths, as defined by Carse, do not distinguish between audience and player; they resonate with our own experiences.⁷¹ A truer experience, then, lies in a space that submits to the vicissitudes our everyday lives.

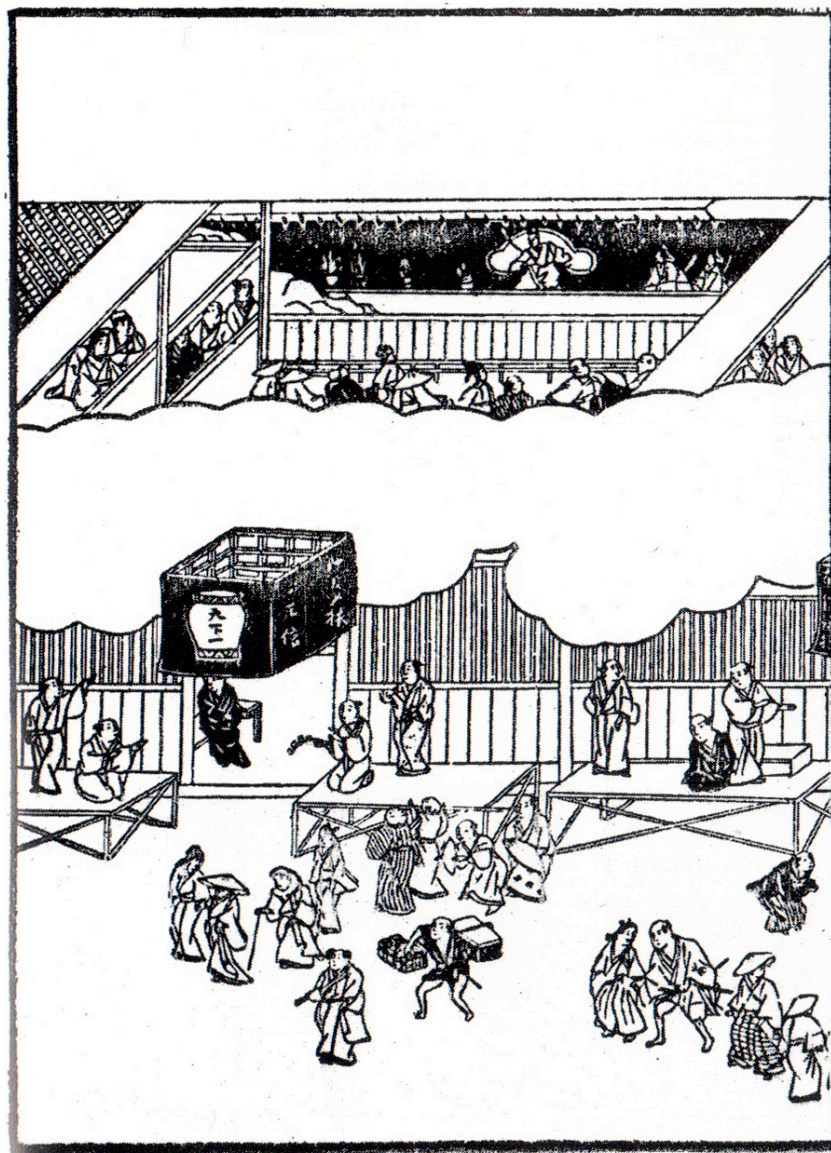
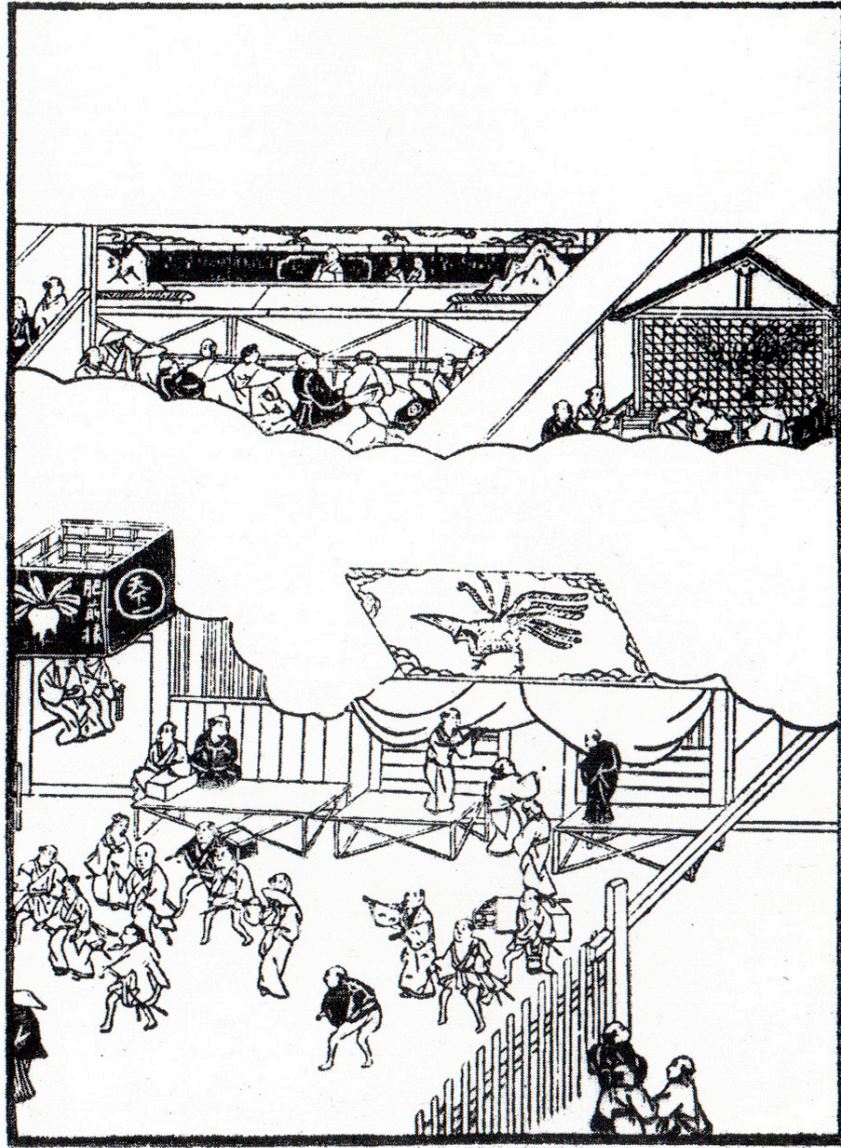


FIG 37 Above, opposite: the presence of clouds in this diptych allude to the "moving, changing, ephemeral condensation"⁷² of Shinto deities, and consequently the mutability of Japanese space.



In his research of the civic spaces of Japanese villages, Fred Thompson, professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo, discovered that public spaces there do not exist as the squares or plazas of the West, but are instead “intimately bound up with sacred festivals.”⁷³ At festival-time, a procession delivers the spirit, or *kami*, from mountain shrine, through village shrine, to the field shrine, realizing an axis that allows the parts of the village to be understood as part of a greater and elusive whole (see FIG 41).⁷⁴ Here, space and time do not exist separately, but as a single, multivalent entity.

The reciprocity of space and time represents the essential indivisibility of the traditional Japanese mentality, and traces its roots to the triads of ancient Chinese religion (heaven, earth, man) and Buddhism (existence, non-existence, ‘void’). Distinctions between one thing or another are dissolved into a transcendental third space beyond both, and it is this intermediate space that allows for the co-

*“In Japanese composition ... harmony
or balance is always accentuated not
through its robustness or stability...”*

existence of disparate entities⁷⁵—implying that, despite their opposition, they must be held in relation to each other.

On the other hand, dichotomies typify the Western sensibility. Something is either one thing, or its opposite, classifying its role or purpose in an organized society. Kisho Kurokawa traces this process of taking chaos and rationally refining it to the ancient Greeks—established by the three elements of Aristotelian beauty, *taxis* (order), *symmetria* (proportion), and *horismenon* (restriction).⁷⁶ The resultant duality is evident in Descartes’ distinction between matter and spirit, which contrasts the Buddhist understanding that “matter and spirit are manifestations of something more fundamental than either.”⁷⁷

And so, the space of the West is a Cartesian system, defined by walls, columns, and grids—a sys-

THE SPACE



FIG 38 Moon-viewing platform at Old Shoin, Katsura Villa, Kyoto.

tem for defining space through its boundaries and edges. For instance, the Nolli plan of Rome depicts public space as negative space enclosed by poché, static and secure in its definition (see FIG 39). Each space, thus defined, exists in a satisfied opposition to other spaces, and it is from this phenomenon of resistance that each space derives their identity.

Japanese space is much more ambiguous, defined instead by a concept of interval, or *ma*. It is that intermediate ‘third’ entity that exists between dichotomies, facilitating an understanding between disparate elements. It is sometimes a temporal interval; in music, “*ma* allows the performer a space to improvise according to his own individual mode of expression.”⁷⁹ It may be represented as blankness; in painting, it is this blankness that “stimulates and stirs the imagination of the viewer”⁸⁰ (see FIG 37). It can be spatial, such as the *engawa*, the veranda that manages the threshold of the Japanese home, mediating between interior and exterior.⁸¹ In

*...but rather through a fragile
choreography; it is shown to be at most a
temporary resolution...⁷⁸*



OF

INTERVAL

any case, it is not simply a ‘void’, but a meaningful potentiality, a space filled by the imagination more than by some thing.⁸²

This ambiguity is evident in the *kaiwai*, the places of ritual and festival. But, as Thompson discovered, *kaiwai* is unlike the Western plaza; it cannot be precisely mapped, yet a shared understanding of them exists within the collective consciousness. Isozaki suggests that the virtuality of *kaiwai* is derived from religious rituals of Shinto. Gods, or *kami*, are ephemeral energies that exist in nature. Accordingly, there is no permanent altar; instead, a sacred evergreen tree (*sakaki*) is placed in a temporary altar to invite the *kami* inside an austere garden (*niwa*). At the end of the ritual, the *sakaki* is removed, and the gods, too, are gone again. After many such events have accumulated, the *niwa* must be re-emptied and purified, a repetition that blurs and re-blurs the edges of *kaiwai*.⁸³ Hence, the

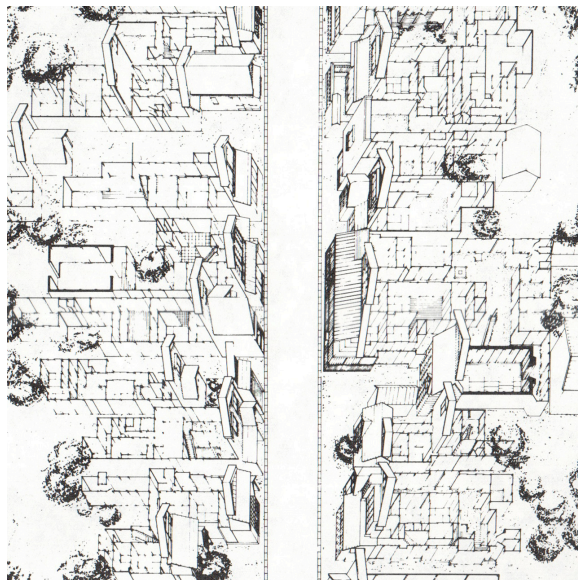
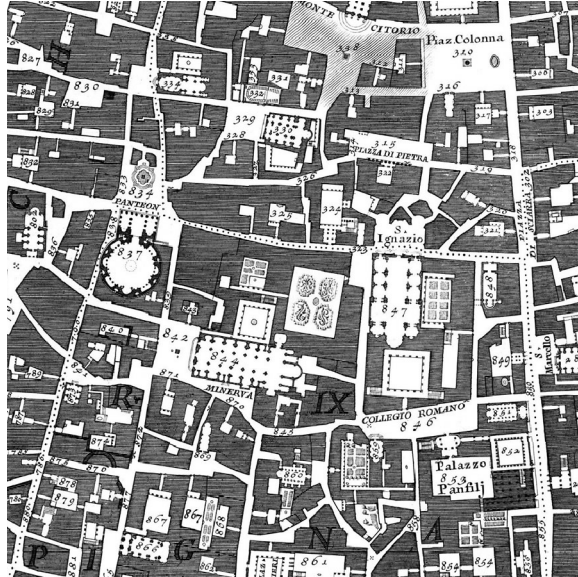
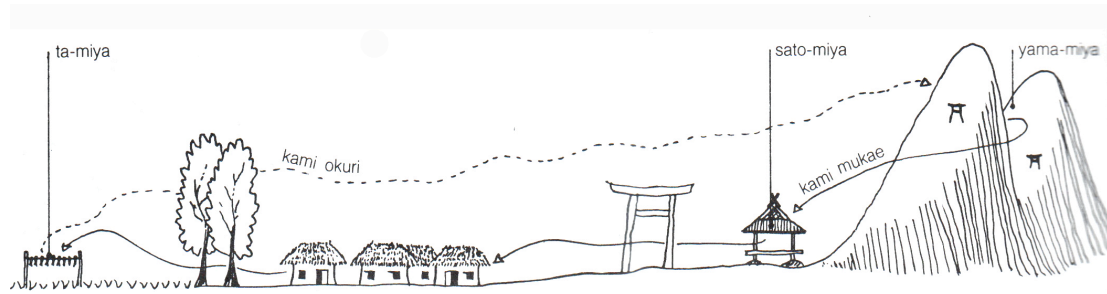


FIG 39 Top: Detail from *Pianta Grande di Roma* by Giambattista Nolli (1748).

FIG 40 Above: Diagram by Fred Thompson depicting a Japanese village during "The Days of Ke."



street—mediating between public and private, an interval space to be moved through—becomes the public space of the Japanese city (see FIG 40), reflecting the belief that “life is seen as a process of ebb and flow, rather than a series of events; it changes metamorphically just as nature metamorphoses from season to season.”⁸⁴ This process of renewal and impermanence is particularly evident at the Ise Shrine, which continues to be rebuilt every twenty years—with inevitable and gradual changes to its details. In this evolutionary process, an understanding of the “invisible sensibilities” that transcend architectural form is cultivated.⁸⁵

“Inside the shrine is no altar, no
image of worship, only a space in
which to feel.”⁸⁶

The constant movement of *kami* in Shinto ritual echoes the Buddhist concept of transience—that “all aspects of the universe are constantly changing”⁸⁷—confirming the syncretic dualism of Japan. In this culture of impermanence, “we recognize the absolute relativity of all things”, that “the world is emptied and filled anew in each moment.”⁸⁸ Awakened to the intangible and ephemeral, the interval spaces of *ma* become anticipatory, where we sense “the moment of movement.”⁸⁹ *Ma* implies a sensual awareness that expands the present moment, in which “past and future, time and space, are collapsed into the present”⁹⁰:

It is an opening or emptying of oneself into the immediacy of the ever-changing moment beyond distinctions and in between the “this and that” world. It is a

world in between subject and object.⁹¹

In this context, space and time are neither precisely distinguishable nor truly tangible. But through the productive ambiguity of *ma*, space becomes “the thing that takes place in the imagination of the human who experiences these elements.”⁹² Isozaki agrees, suggesting that “space appears only in the time that humans perceive.”⁹³ Space, understood in the context of the interval, is defined by phenomenology, and is as ‘temporal’ as it is ‘spatial’.

The Cartesian coordinate system introduces three axes—*x*, *y*, *z*—that extend in perpetuity, establishing a homogenous and infinite plane.⁹⁴ To abstract spaces within this system means to resist the realms beyond their boundaries, to declare an ‘us’ against a universal ‘them’.

The concept of interval allows us to recognize the illusory nature of such finite games, revealing the horizons of the infinite game beyond them. Thompson describes *ma* as a “spatial current, a combination of spacing and timing as a constant flow of possibilities, a tension between things allowing for different patterns of interpretation.”⁹⁵ Understood in the context of the interval, space is interpreted experientially, and is therefore mutable, evolving, and unable to be abstracted. This is an architecture of fluidity, of infinite players: *ma* space “deconstructs all boundaries as mind-created constructs and orders imposed on the chaos of experience.”⁹⁶

FIG 41 Above: diagram illustrating the comings and goings of *kami* at festival-time in a small Japanese village.

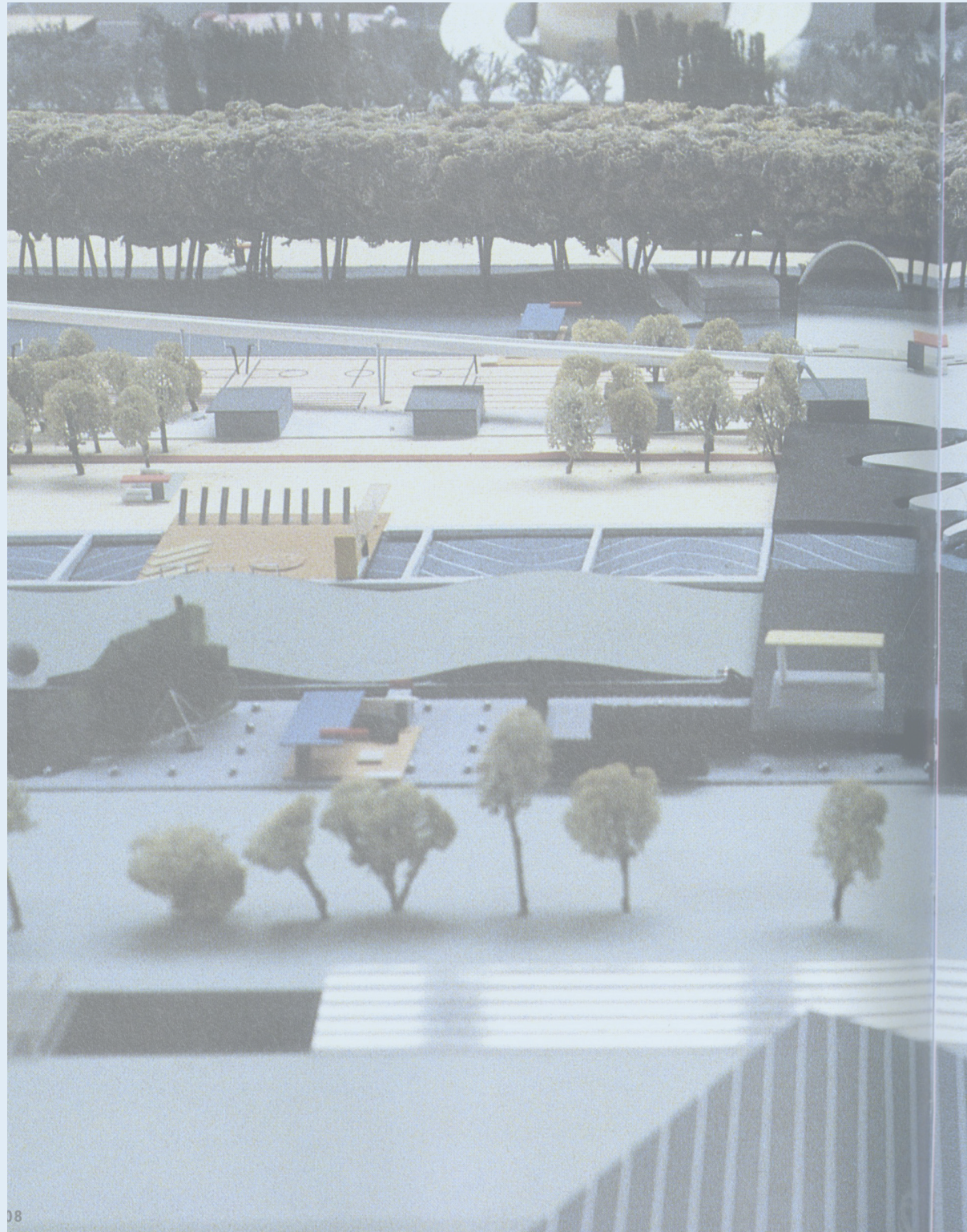


FIG 42 The ideogram for *ma*. "It is made up of two elements, the enclosing radical meaning gate or door (*mon*) and the inner character meaning either sun (*hi*) or moon (*tsuki*). The visual image or character, therefore, suggests a light shining through a gate or door."⁹⁷

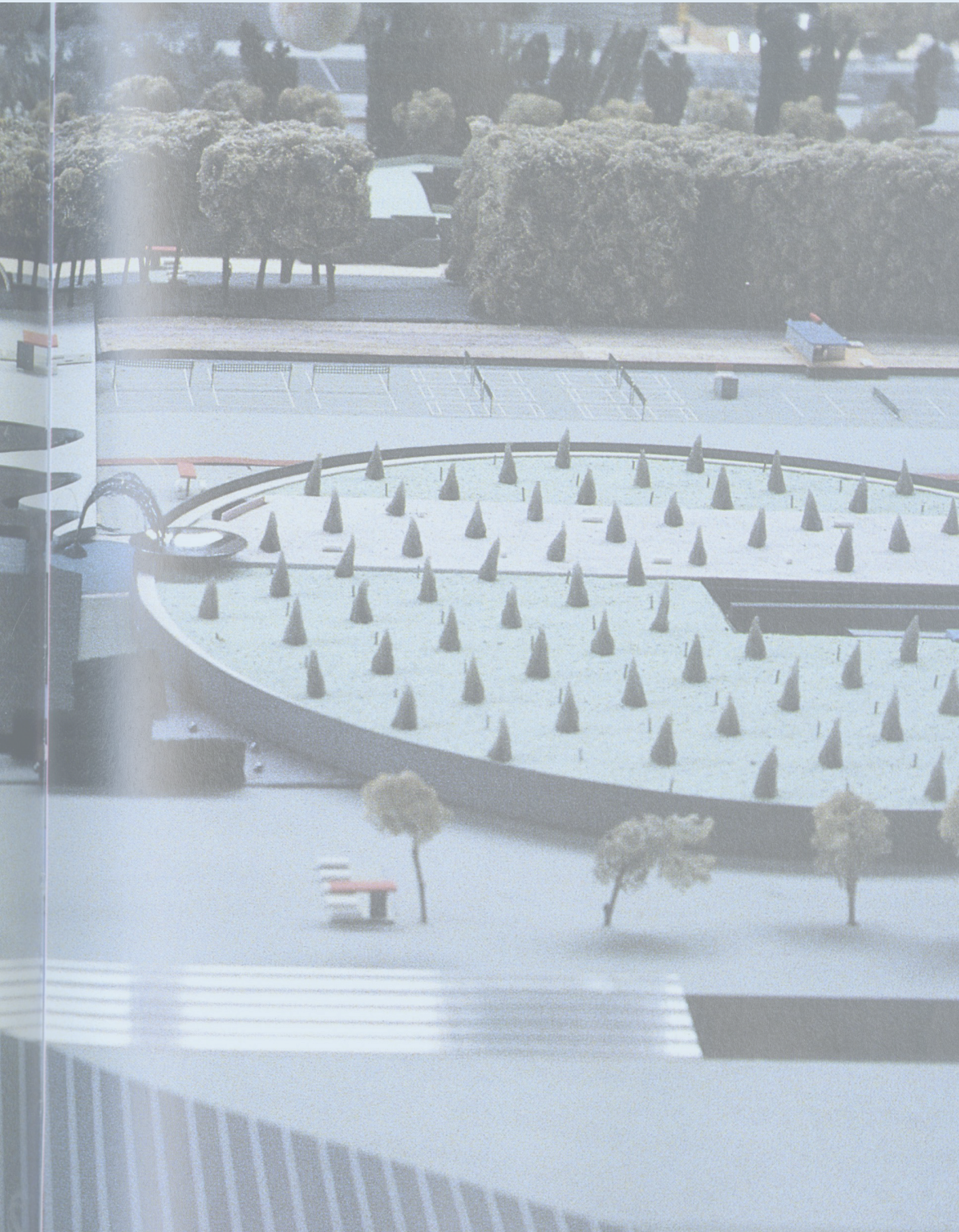


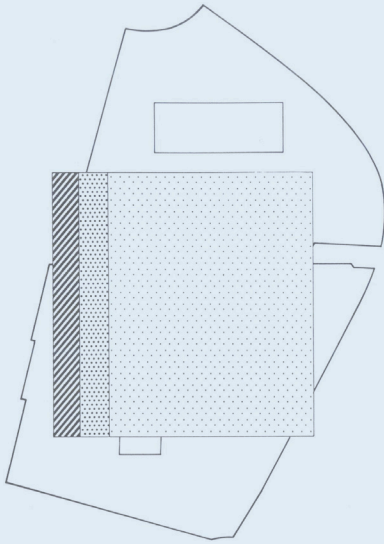
FIG 43 Above: an inexhaustible multitude of experiences are available to the urban explorer.

FIG 44 Overleaf: model of competition entry.



08





*"We have confined ourselves to devising a framework capable of absorbing an endless series of further meanings, extensions, or intentions, without entailing compromises, redundancies, or contradictions. Our strategy is to confer on the simple the dimension of adventure."*²⁹⁸

Rem Koolhaas

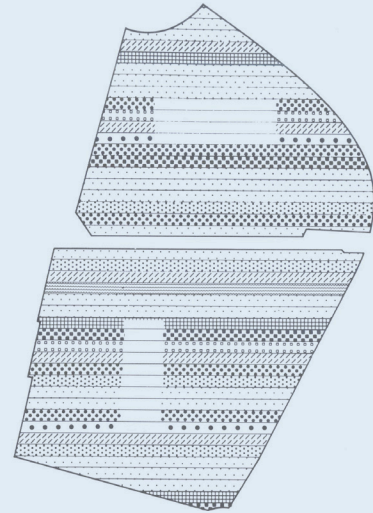
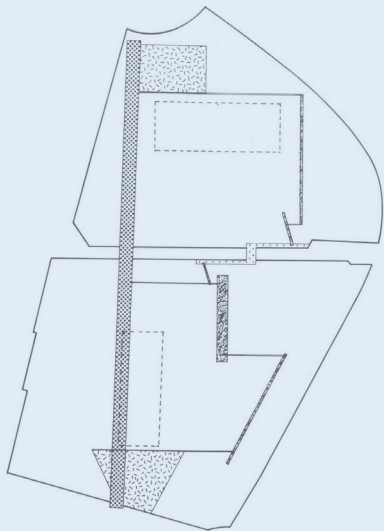
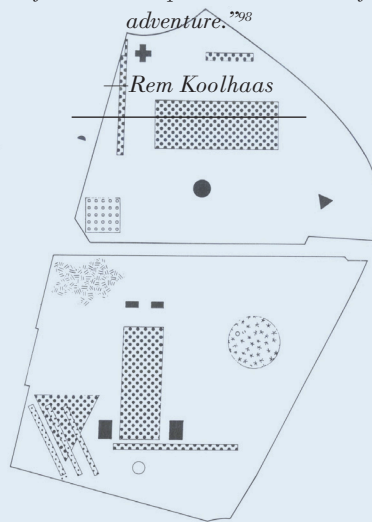


FIG 45 'Initial Hypothesis'—the incompatibility of site and programme.

FIG 46 "Confetti"—small-scale programme are arranged on independent but overlapping grids.

FIG 47 "Strips"—major programmatic elements are arranged in bands; their long borders encourage permeability between them.

FIG 48 "Access and Circulation"—boulevards and paths intersect strips at right angles, creating nodes of heightened interest.

FIG 49 "The Final Layer"—while the other layers are a function of mathematical rigour and randomness, the "Final Layer", comprised of existing and new "unique objects", are arranged intuitively; kinetic potential is evident in that contrast.

FIG 50 Top/left: Plate XIV from *Carceri d'invenzione* by Piranesi (ca. 1760). Allen calls it the "second state" of the Carcere, the exploded frame.(90)



FIG 51 Bottom/right: *Carcere Oscura* (Dark Prison) by Piranesi (1743).

*AN
ASSEMBLAGE
OF FRAMES*

ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE
LENS OF EXPERIENCE

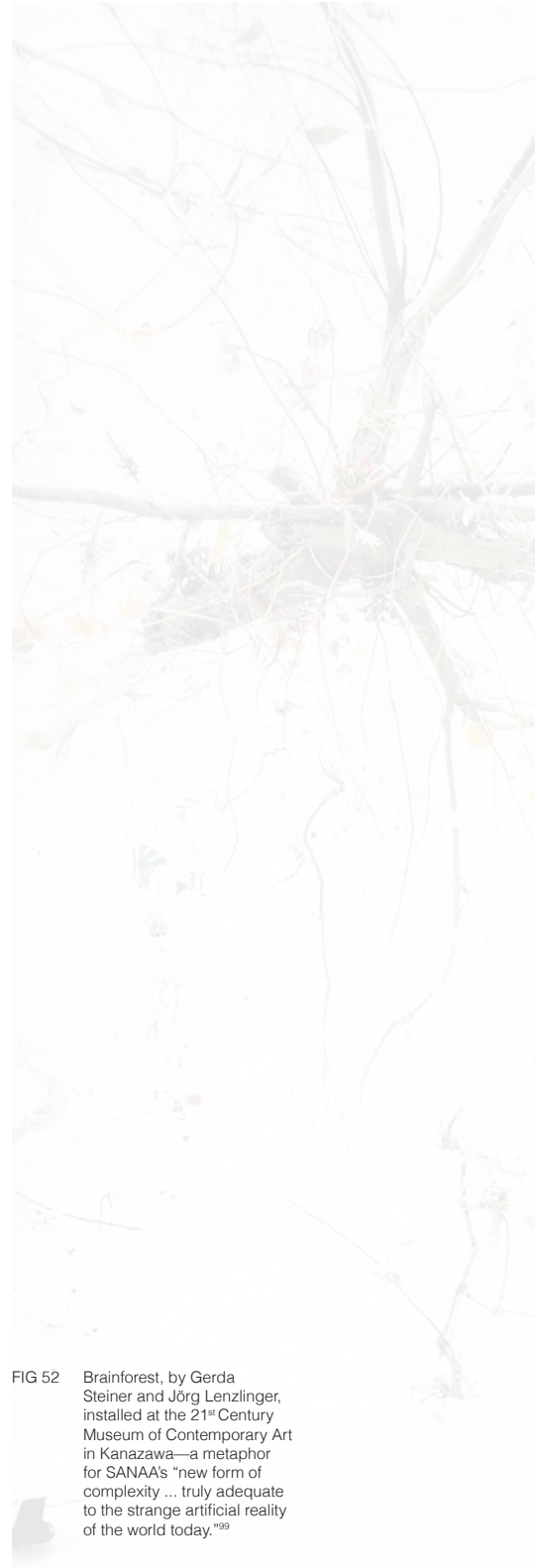


FIG 52 Brainforest, by Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger, installed at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa—a metaphor for SANAA's "new form of complexity ... truly adequate to the strange artificial reality of the world today."⁹⁹

J.G. Ballard described the world as an “enormous novel”: a place “ruled by fictions of every kind,” of prescribed sensations that “[preempted] any free or original imaginative response to experience.”¹⁰⁰

In recognizing the fictive nature of boundaries, the world becomes a place where only the movements of the hero are truly real, where conventions of ordinary time and ordinary space are suspended in our imaginations. Consequently, continuity and sequence are discredited; instead of being presented with a linear narrative, we navigate a sea of floating adjacencies.

This is analogous to filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s concept of montage. In the “discontinuous fragments” of Piranesi’s *Carcere Oscuro* (see FIG 51), he saw a tension that could “explode” the frame—apparent in Plate XIV of the *Carceri* (see FIG 50), “the first one exploding in ecstatic flight.” Montage was a phenomenon of vision, a recognition of the infinite possibilities in a single frame.¹⁰¹

To Stan Allen, this suggests a rewriting of the ‘closed text’ convention—where the story is already written, packaged, and delivered—to one of openness, “a system in which the apparent order conceals the arbitrariness of its foundations and rules—fictions of order that can be reread and reordered.”¹⁰²

The finite game serves as a framework in which the infinite game can be discovered; freed from its closed conventions, the infinite player realizes an experience of his own design.

Architecture, then, acts as the assemblage of frames through which space is interpreted, rather than a container in which space is already defined. Through the frame, space becomes a function of experience; despite finite boundaries, it could potentially be *framed* in infinite ways. For instance, the adjacencies introduced by OMA in their proposal for Parc de La Villette (see page 45)—open fields, screens of trees, and natural islets (Koolhaas borrows from the lexicon of Eisenstein, describing them as “fragments exploded from the traditional romantic park”¹⁰³)—combine to create an open-ended *mise en scène*. OMA provides the visitor with a multivalent framework in a clever manipulation of the field of vision. Amidst the layered geometries of the park (see page 48), order is subverted, and it becomes impossible to locate ourselves absolutely. Our movement can only be measured relatively; confronted with these changing horizons, we lose track of boundaries, and feel free to explore and *play*.

The work of SANAA is similarly positioned between the geometric and the ludic. Their architectural drawings reveal an underlying rigour that is ob-

*“The only true voyage would be not to
travel through a hundred different lands
with the same pair of eyes...”*

scured—‘exploded’, perhaps—by the intuitiveness of their plans. No obvious axes are revealed, only a constellation of spaces held in relation to others, creating a tension, a readiness to act or move.¹⁰⁴ In their scheme for the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa (see page 11), programme is redefined: more than a catalogue of containers, it is a dynamic force, establishing a loose choreography and inviting players to join a “freely defined board game.”¹⁰⁵ This looseness establishes a productive austerity. We are drawn in by the transparency of boundaries—do they even really exist?—and are encouraged to explore the depths of its ambiguity. Architecture becomes the “frame for the mundane realities of everyday living,”¹⁰⁶ the stage for our creative actions. These concepts are explored further at the Rolex Learning Center (see page 53), a place more like nature than architecture. It is the opening of a closed system, a re-interpretation of the building as park. SANAA, by subverting hierarchies and imposing no order, create open games that allow for the revelatory movement of its liberated players.

Eisenstein described the explosion of the frame as “ecstatic”, a play upon the etymology of the word (from the Greek, “to go out of oneself”).¹⁰⁷ In ecsta-

sy, we transcend the boundary of self and recognize the possibilities beyond our own frame of reference. To be ecstatic is to realize our creativity—but only by releasing ourselves to our play-mates in open reciprocity. This is what Carse calls the “paradox of genius”: that we can only have what we have by relinquishing it to others. Once surrendered, every experience becomes new; every action, both our first and last.¹⁰⁸

Through creativity, “we do not look, but see.” When we look, we restrict ourselves to the limitations of what we look at. We place the subject within boundaries, in a finite game. But when we see, our imaginations are not restricted to boundaries but are able to create those boundaries themselves in infinite play.¹⁰⁹

An architecture of the infinite game frames the journey of the ecstatic hero. It provides no destination, only an inexhaustible faith in our ability to forge our own narratives.¹¹⁰ The environment must challenge his creativity, and resonate with his experience, but remain open to his interpretive touch.

Ballard wrote that “the fiction is already there.” The task of the hero, then, “is to invent the reality.”¹¹¹

*...but to see the same land through a
hundred different pairs of eyes.”¹¹²*
—*Marcel Proust*

FIG 53 (see note for FIG 52)

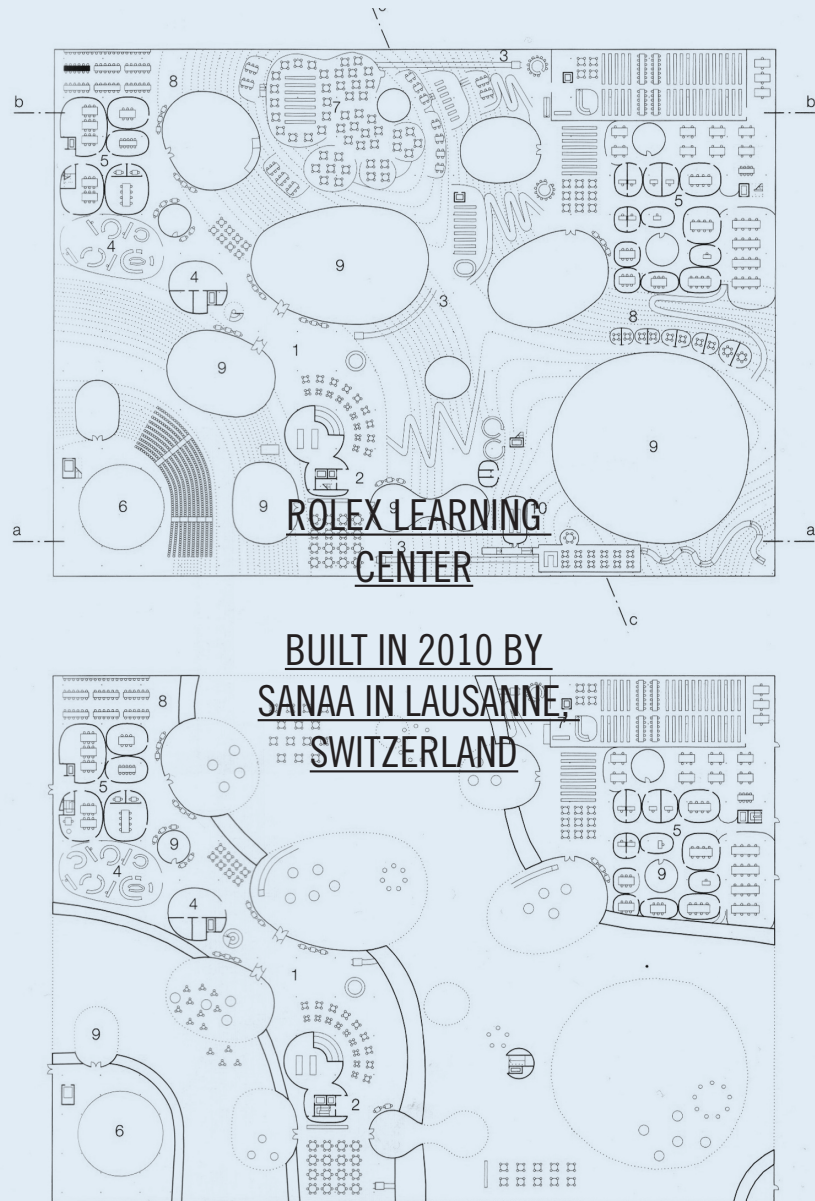


FIG 54 A map of the heroic journey...

FIG 55 Below: a child embarks on a journey through a strange landscape...

FIG 56 Right: a snake-like passage winds its way into the distance...

FIG 57 Opposite, bottom: an oasis emerges...

FIG 58 Opposite, top: our heroes clamber towards an inviting dale...





“We are looking forward to finding out what different ways the users will come up with to appropriate the unconventional spaces. We hope that the openness fosters contact and interaction, and stimulates new activities.”¹⁴

—Ryue Nishizawa

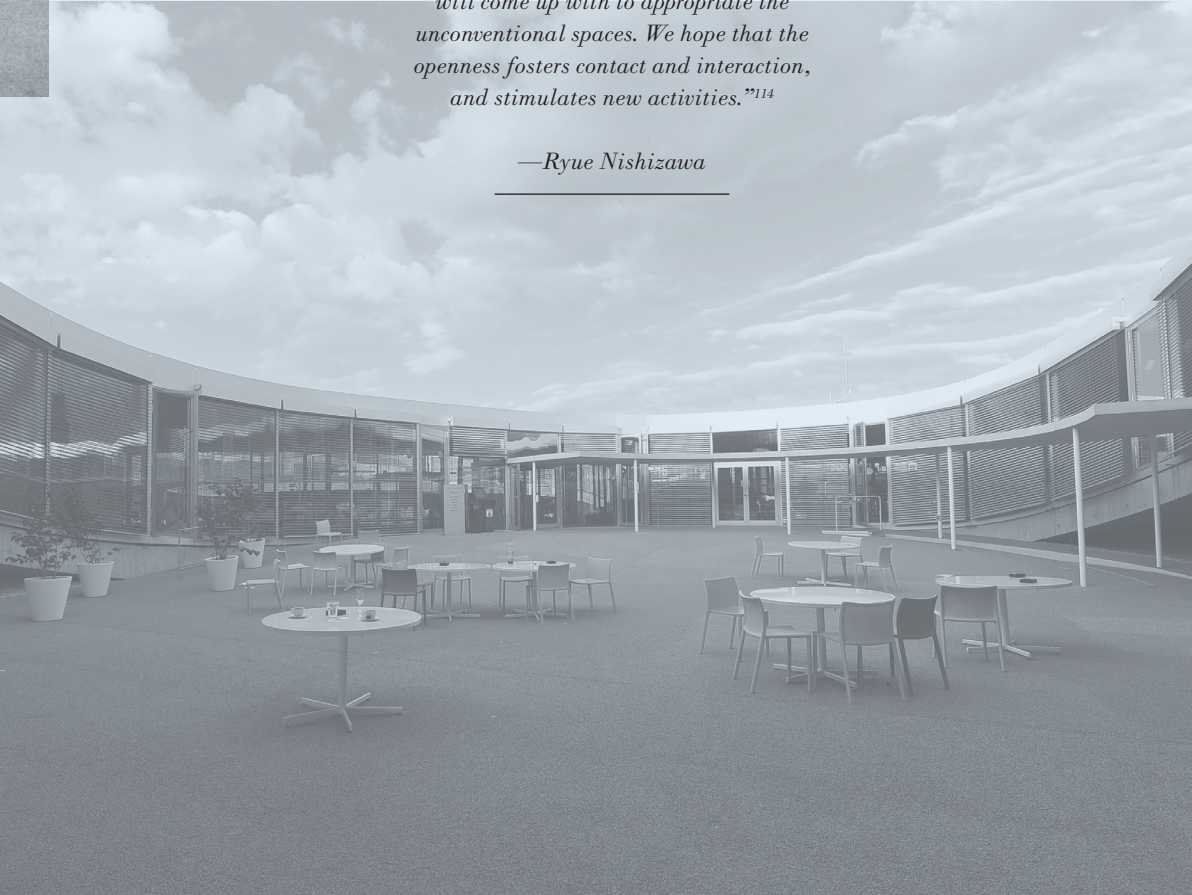


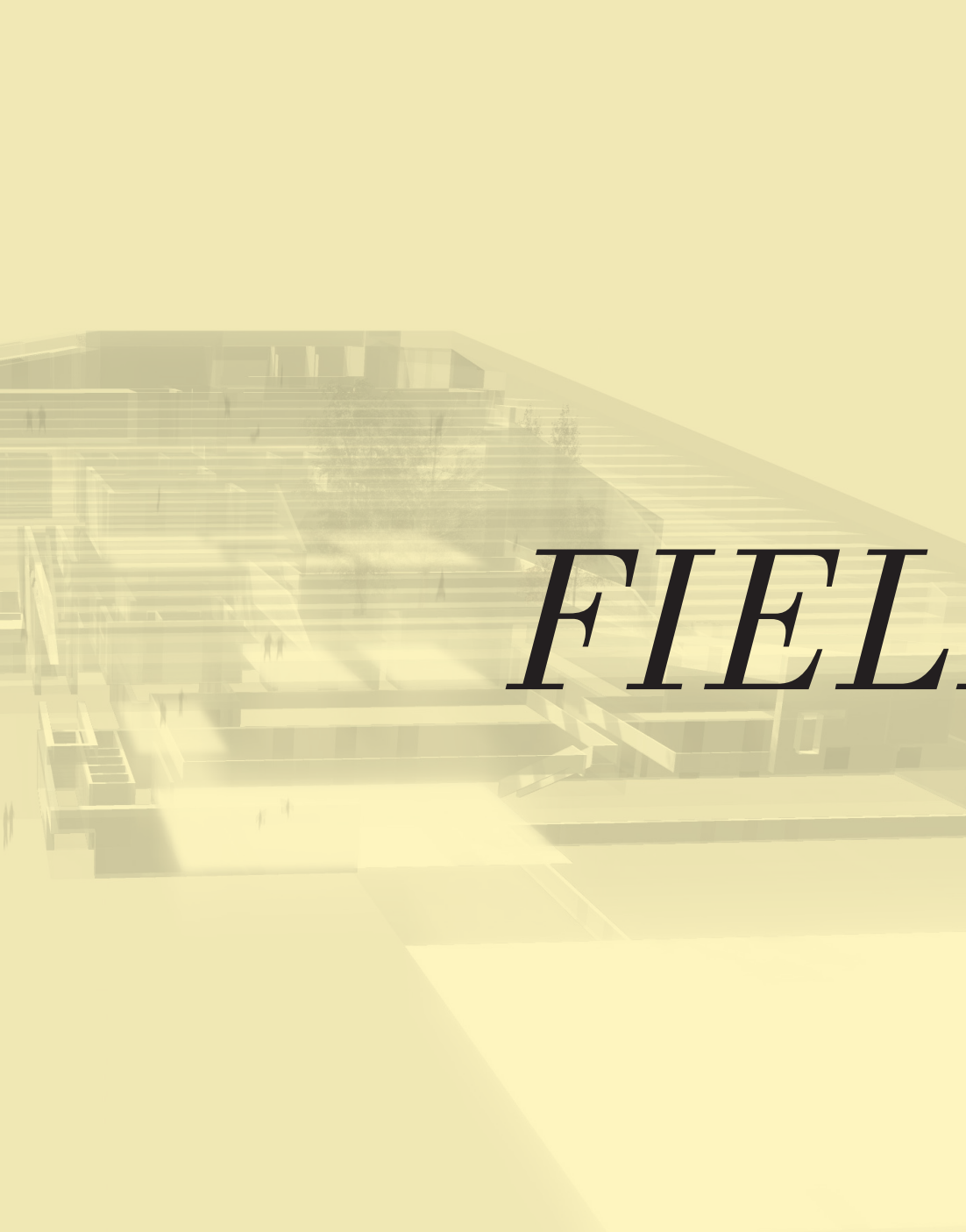
FIG 59 Architecture as a fluid, open game, the confluence of building and landscape.



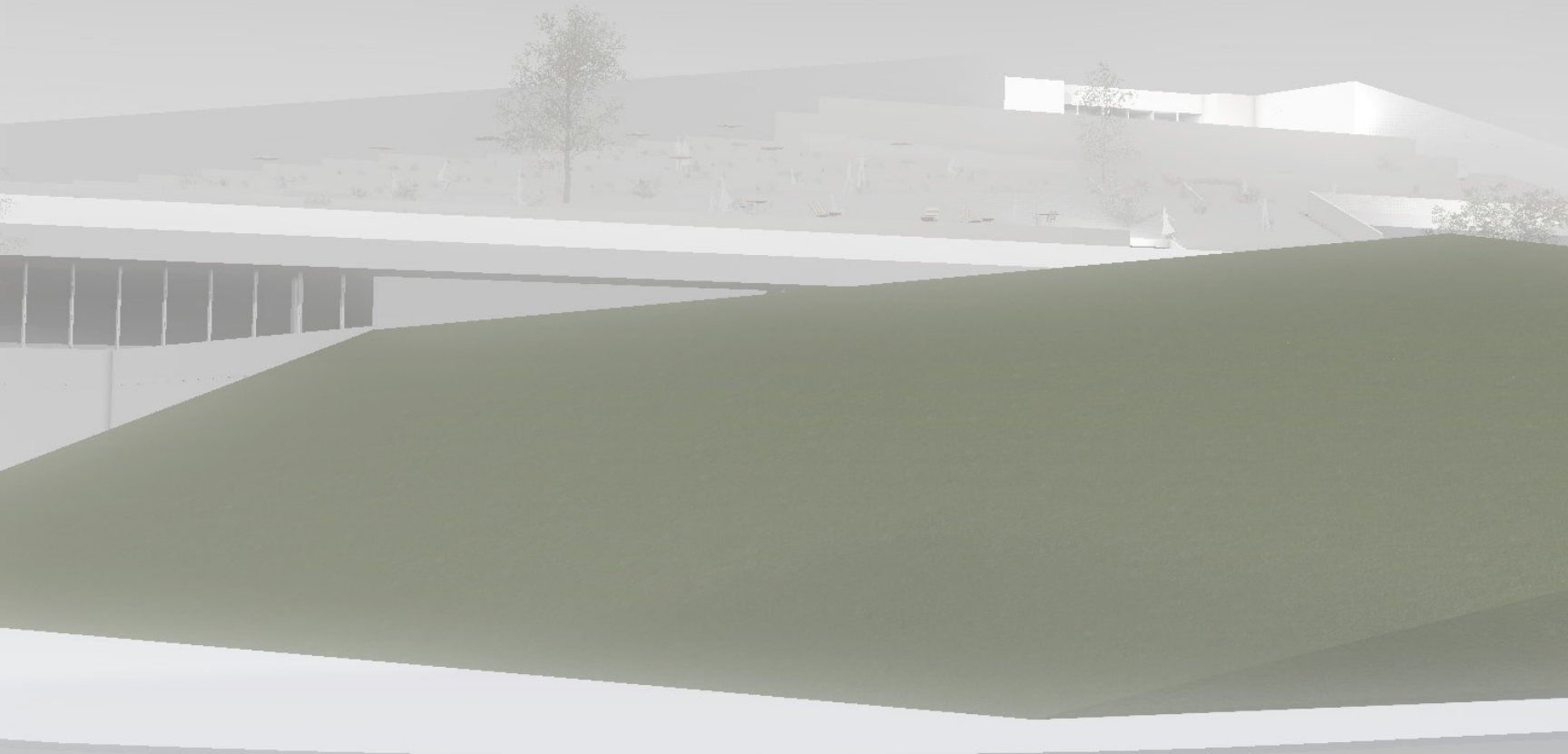
*“SANAA and Koolhaas submit
fully to the ecstatic character of
contemporary life ... the architecture
opens itself to the unplanned chaos
of contemporary urban life.”¹¹³*



LAMPOR



FIELD



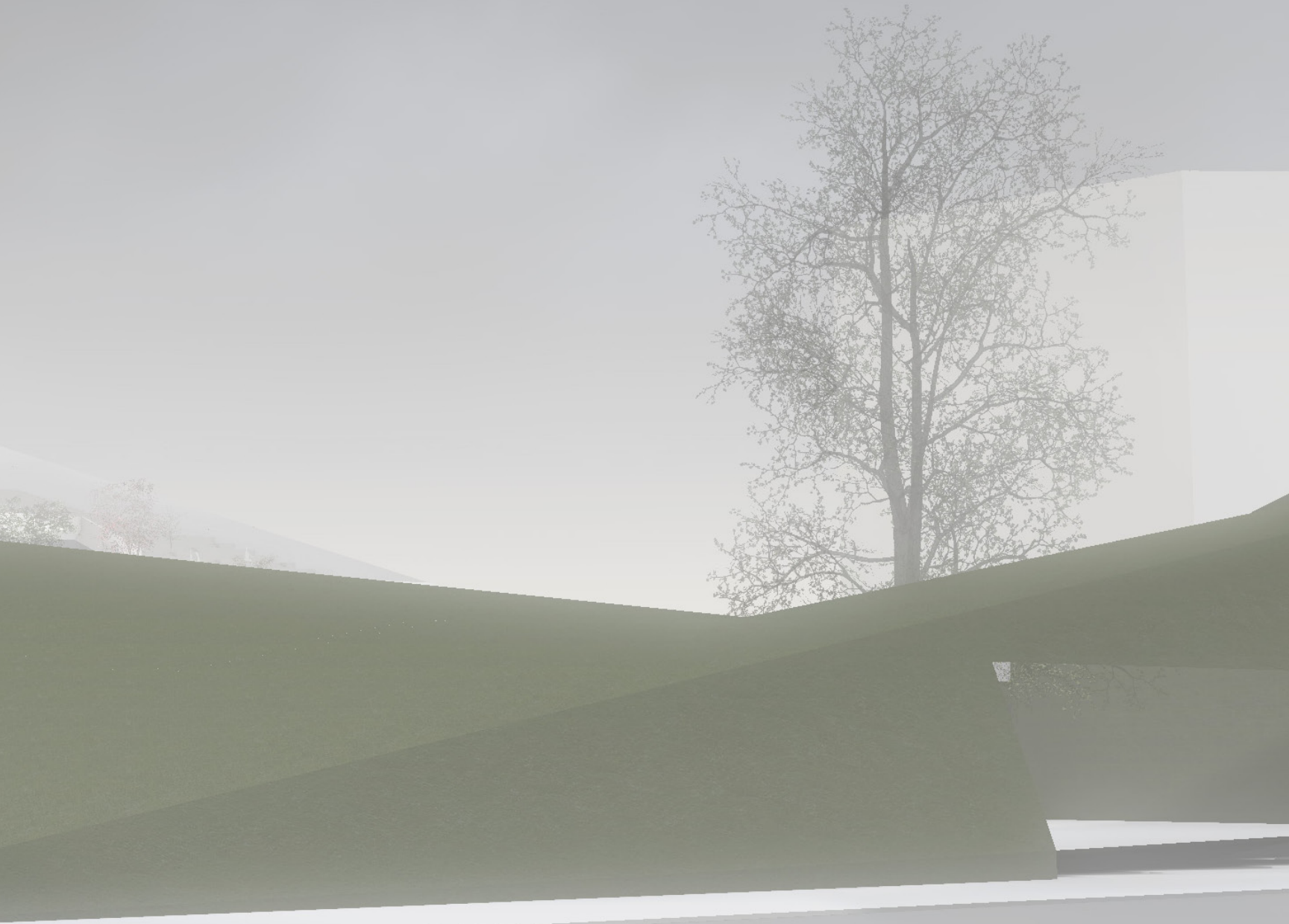


FIG 60 Previous spread: Lamport Field is an imaginary landscape, awaiting the heroic journeys that make them real.

FIG 61 This spread: the building can be read as part of the landscape before it; simultaneously, the geometric form of the landscape allows it to be read as part of the architecture.

“Architecture should ...

*... be like a landscape.*²¹⁵

LAMPORSTADIUM becomes LAMPORSTFIELD. The hard edges of architecture are re-interpreted through the soft edges of nature: bleachers become mountains and hills, fields become plateaus and valleys. It is a setting that imposes no order, but encourages us to discover the patterns of a greater order on the scale of nature.

The distinction between architecture and nature is analogous to Carse's distinction between the machine and the garden. The machine is rational, a sequence of operations that delivers an expected result. It is the most important weapon in the arsenal of the finite player; indeed, the best players are those who can predict the moves of, and therefore outmanoeuvre and defeat, their opponents. The garden, on the other hand, is "a place of growth, of maximized spontaneity," where we "design a culture capable of adjusting to the widest possible range of surprise in nature."¹¹⁶ While the machine plans for every situation and every contingency, in the garden we understand that there will always be much lying beyond our vision.¹¹⁷ It is the realm of the infinite player, where the game is played in order to continue play.

Lampport Field, then, is a departure from the building as a machine for living, a device so attuned to a specific goal that surprise and possibility are eliminated. In its effort to control the unknown, the building as machine must establish dichotomies: inside from out, order from chaos, and so on. Instead, Lampport Field is like Carse's garden, that elusive place between the geometric and the ludic, where—as Ryue Nishizawa puts it—our experiences realize the latent potential embedded in every surface and every line.¹¹⁸ The crucial difference is that the building, as machine, harnesses our movement to realize an ideal, whereas the building, as garden, engages and perpetuates our movement in a process of self-discovery.



FIG 62 Right: The model as experiential section. Programmatic elements are modelled as open frames of experience...

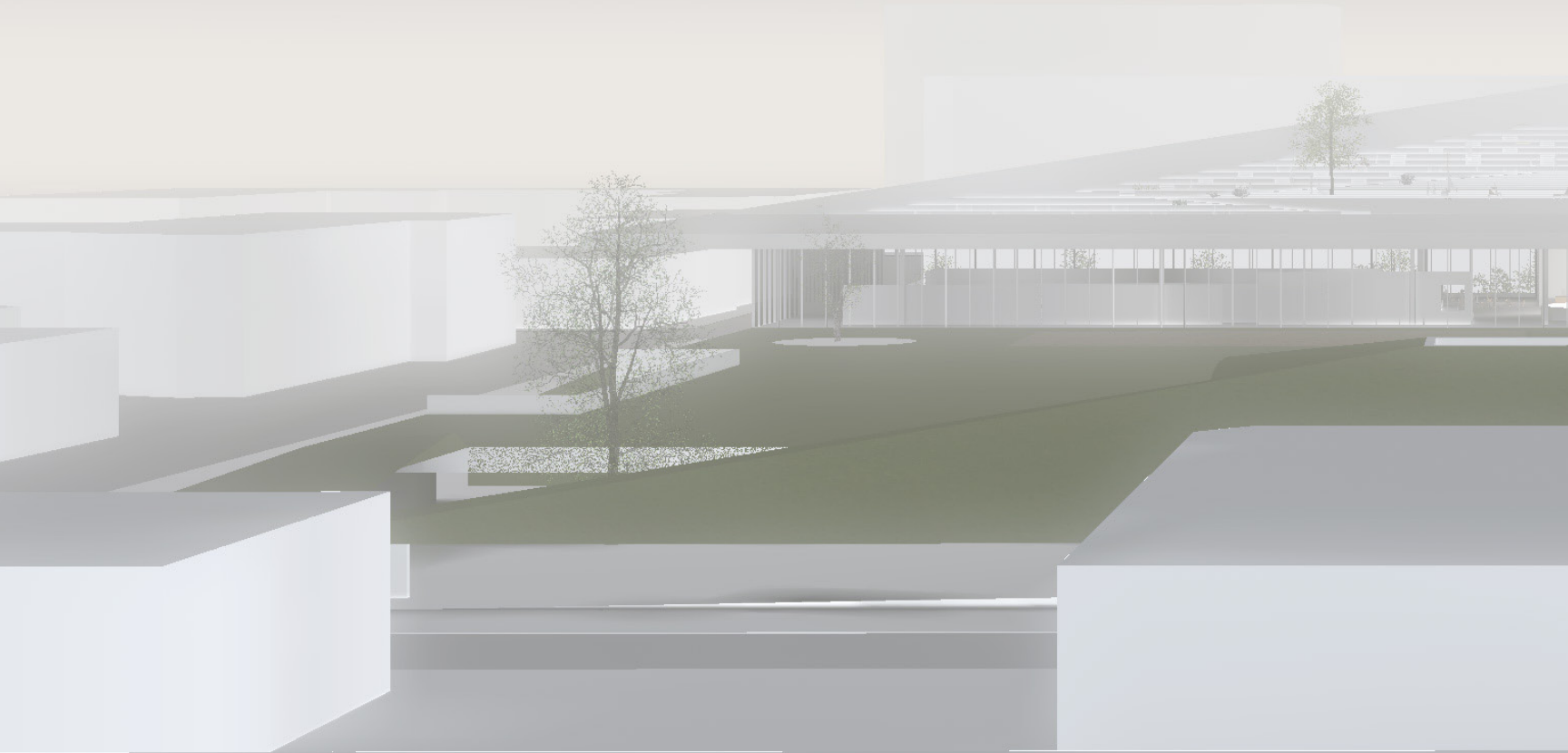
FIG 63 Following spread: ...which are ordered and re-ordered by the journey of the user. The possibilities embedded in each frame deny a singular reading of space.

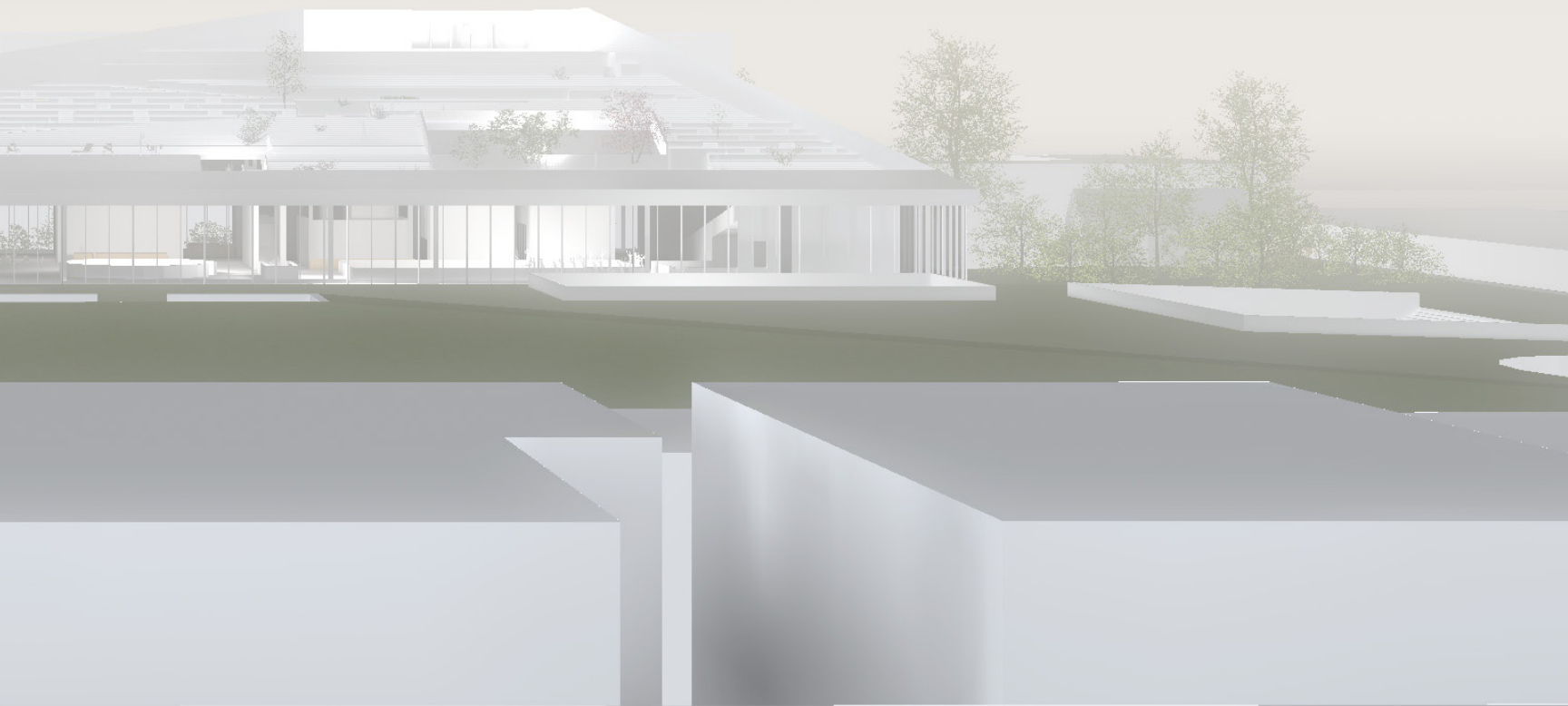






FIG 64 An ambiguity between building and landscape is cultivated through their continuity.

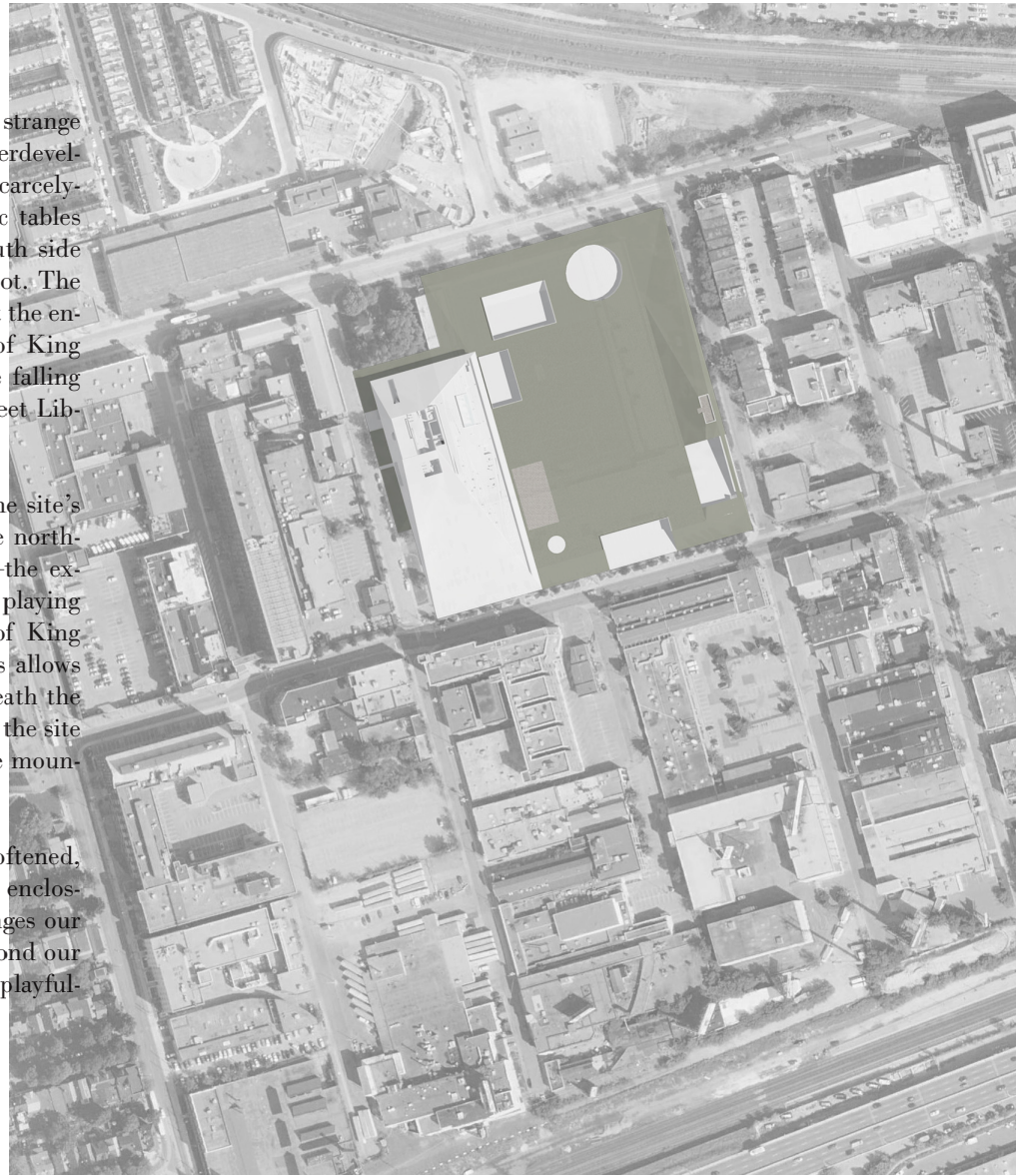




Lamport Stadium, in its existing state, is a strange island that floats in the middle of an underdeveloped block, surrounded on three sides by scarcely used lawns (dotted sporadically with picnic tables and playground equipment) and on its south side by a busy and profitable city-run parking lot. The field of play is sunken, but for the most part the entire block is plateaued just below the level of King Street West, its northern boundary, before falling rather awkwardly at its southern end to meet Liberty Street.

In order for Lamport Field to work with the site's natural slope—a descent of 3.0m from the north-west corner of the site to the southeast—the existing stadium is demolished so that the playing surface can be raised 1.5m above the level of King Street, rather than about 1.0m below. This allows for another level at Liberty Street, underneath the field above. The floating field is anchored to the site by courts and games at street levels and the mountain-like building on its south-west corner.

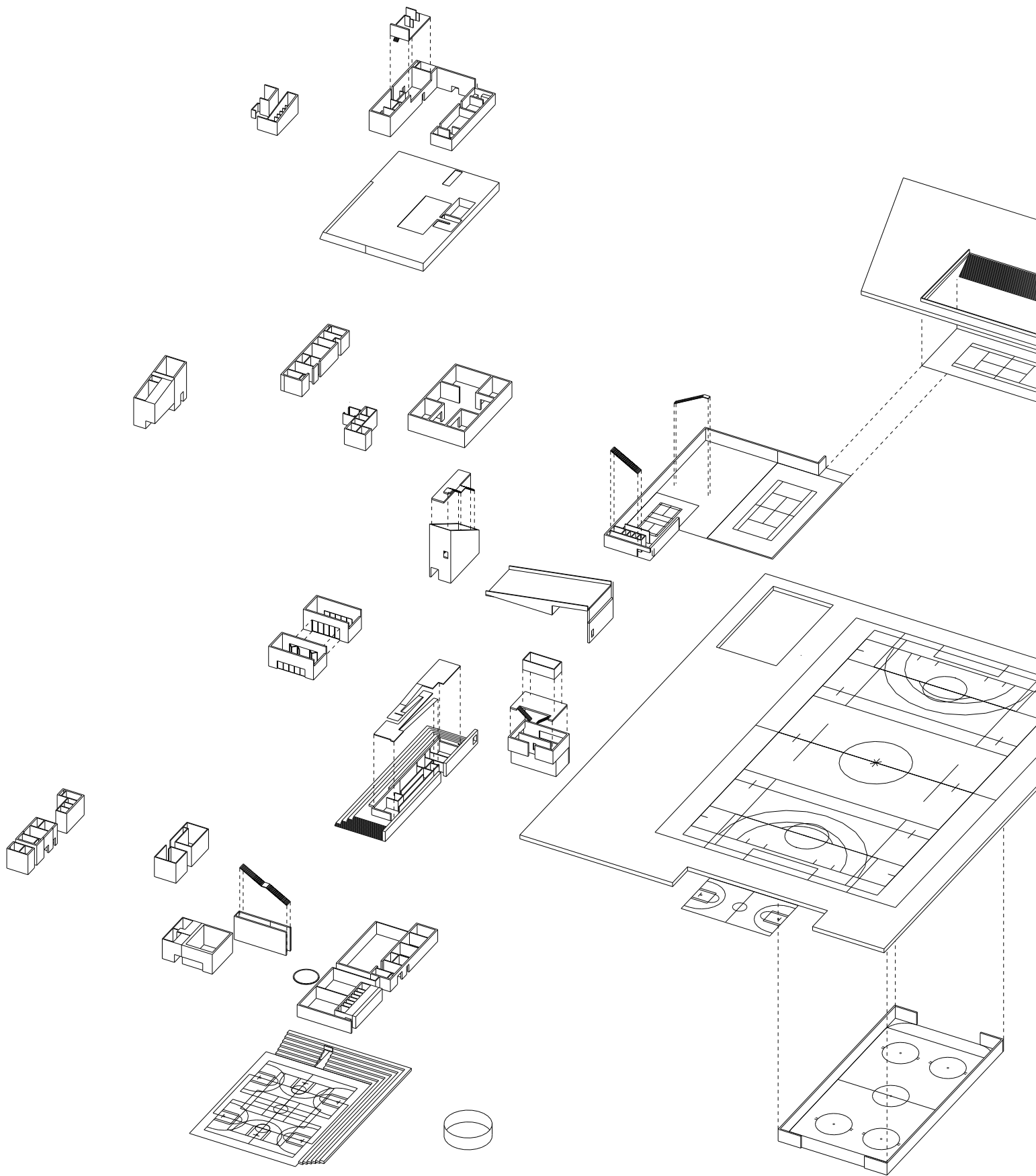
Now on a plinth, the edges of the field are softened, no longer a fenced-in, hard-bordered entity enclosing a finite game. The ascent subtly challenges our curiosity, keeping the field of play just beyond our vision, yet firmly within reach. It invites the playfulness of new players.

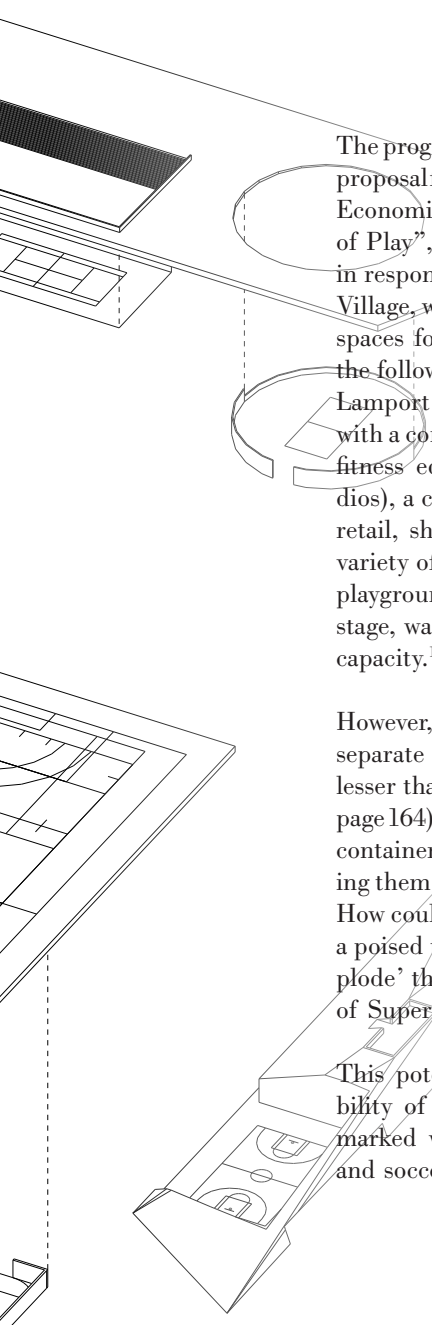


LAMPORF FIELD



FIG 65 Lamport Field on the site of Lamport Stadium. The field is opened; the games that surround it participate in the loose vernacular of Liberty Village.





The programme for Lampport Field is based on a 2007 proposal for Lampport Stadium by the Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Corporation (see “The Field of Play”, page 18). The PLEDC created the proposal in response to the ongoing gentrification of Liberty Village, which demanded community and recreation spaces for the 15,000 new residents expected over the following three years.¹²² Their scheme called for Lampport Stadium to be demolished and replaced with a community centre (gymnasium, sport courts, fitness equipment and facilities, and activity studios), a creative social enterprise building (at-grade retail, shared office spaces, business incubator), a variety of green spaces (soccer field, running track, playground, sport courts, picnicking area, event stage, wading pool, ice rink) and increased parking capacity.¹²³

However, the sequestering of the programme into separate buildings resulted in a whole that seemed lesser than the sum of its parts (see “Appendix B”, page 164). In the PLEDC scheme, each programmatic container existed independently from others, limiting them to the singular experiences of finite games. How could they be opened to one another to suggest a poised tension, a tension with the potential to ‘explode’ the frame, revealing the infinite possibilities of Super Ordinary space?

This potential is evident in the compelling instability of the existing multi-sport playing surface, marked with lines for field hockey, field lacrosse, and soccer. Boundaries are realized only through a

specific engagement of the space; its layered games are capable of framing a multitude of experiences that adapt to the fluidity of its players.

Lampport Field explores that ludic potential of sport to transcend boundaries, a perpetuation of the unpredictable movements during the course of play. Rather than imposing boundaries on the chaos of experience, Lampport Field encourages a journey that reveals order naturally. The over-programmed green spaces of the PLEDC scheme—separate areas for picnics, performances, running, skating, playing—are reduced to an open field in which all of those activities could be superimposed. The office spaces were retained and integrated into the sport complex (with the exception of the retail spaces, already of adequate supply around the site). By bringing the office programme together with the sport programme, the realms of work and play, mental and physical, are not differentiated, but suspended in a middle ground that relates one to the other to encourage new uses and experiences.

A productive tension is cultivated between the containers of programme, and Lampport Field, like the Japanese space of interval, becomes a place of intuited balance between opposing forces, a fragile constellation in which a sense of completion is denied.¹²⁴ It appeals to our curiosity, compelling us to explore the unknown, to reconcile the opposed, to make sense of that residual space. In the course of that journey, the building reveals the possibilities beyond its constituent parts.

FIG 66 The constellation of play-objects at Lampport Field.

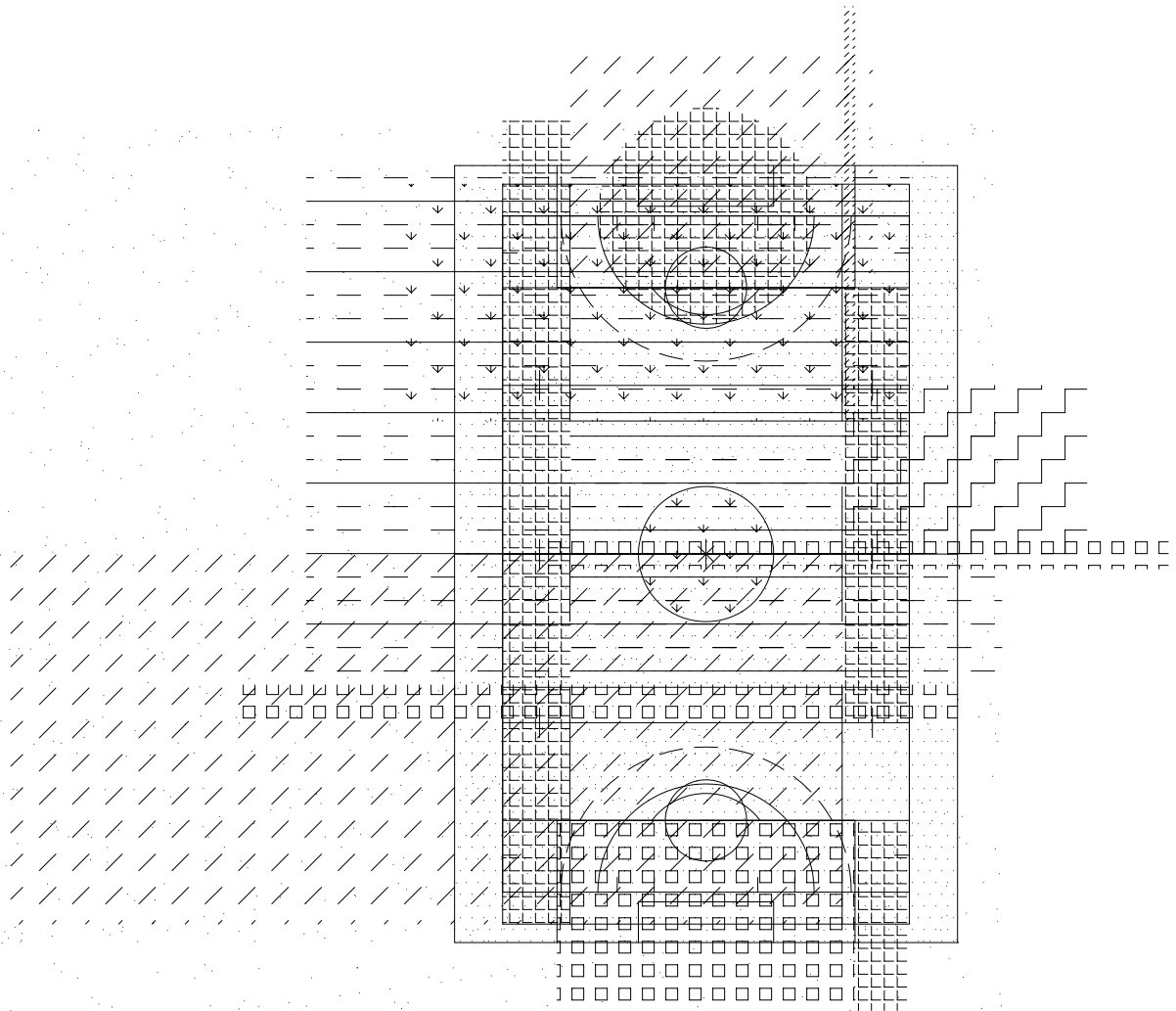


FIG 67 The layered games of the existing playing surface imply superimposed fields that exist beyond the ordinary definition of games.

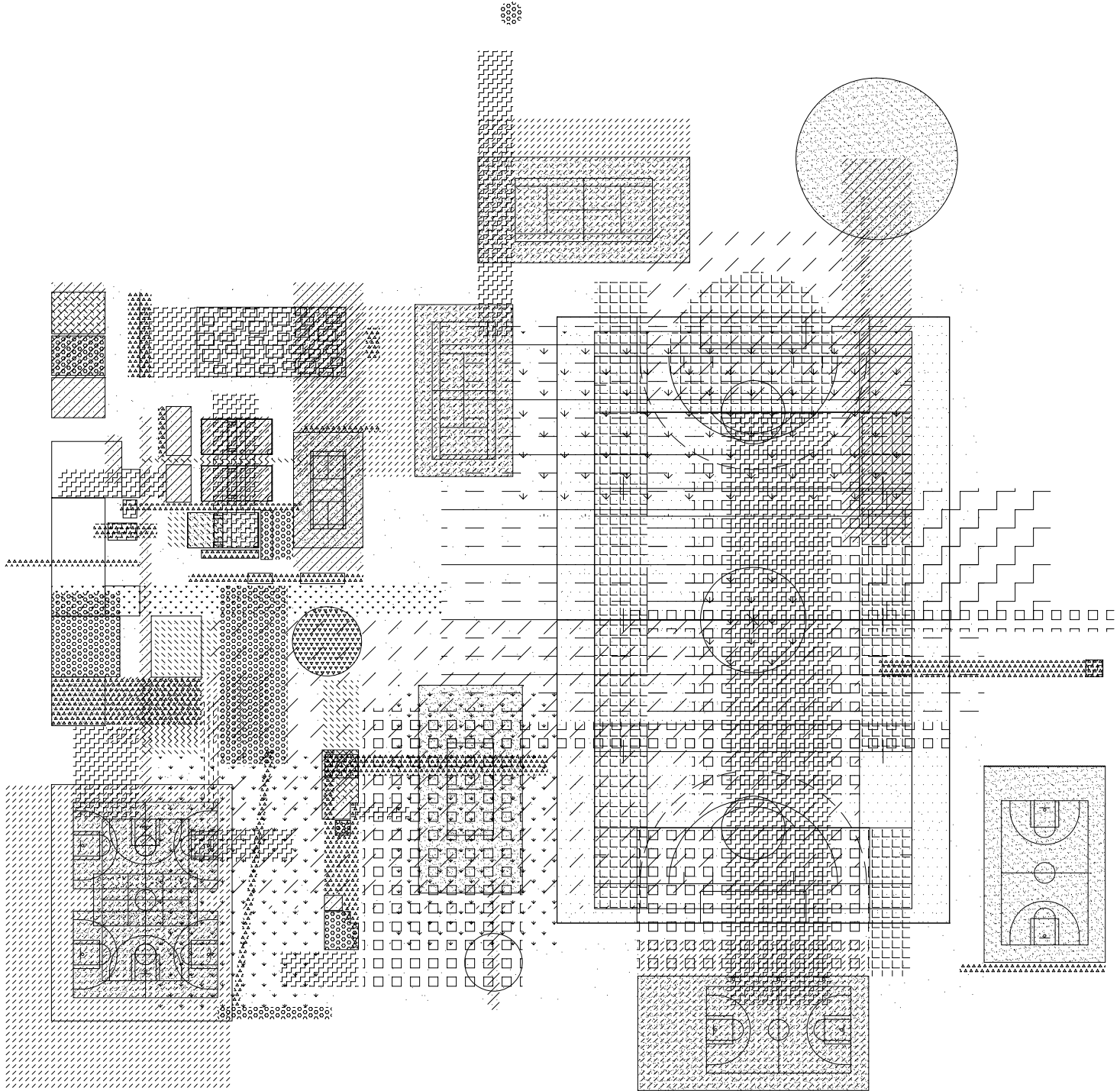
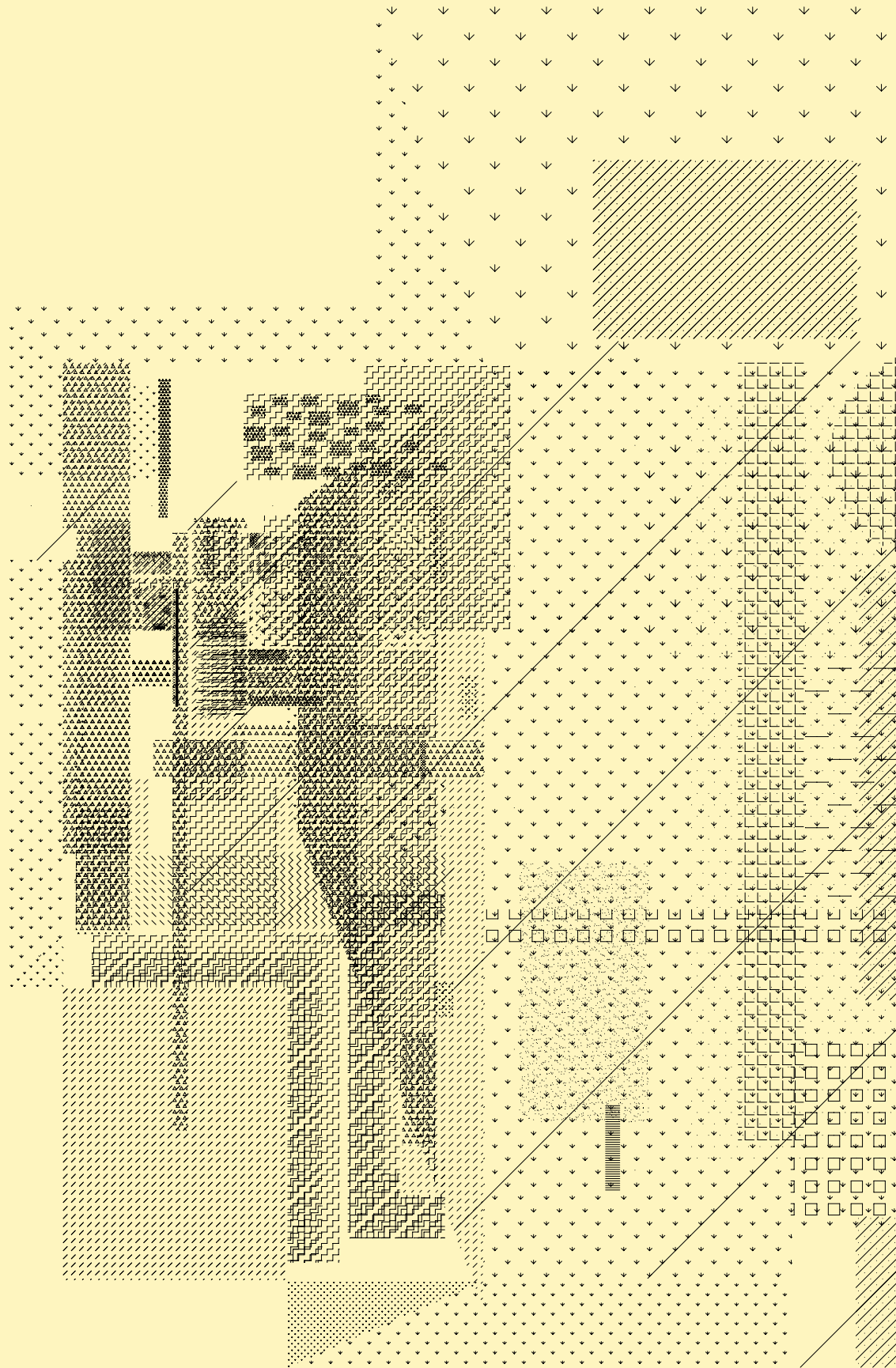


FIG 68 Bounded finite games represent only the "primary state"; in "ecstatic flight," alternate states and new games are revealed.



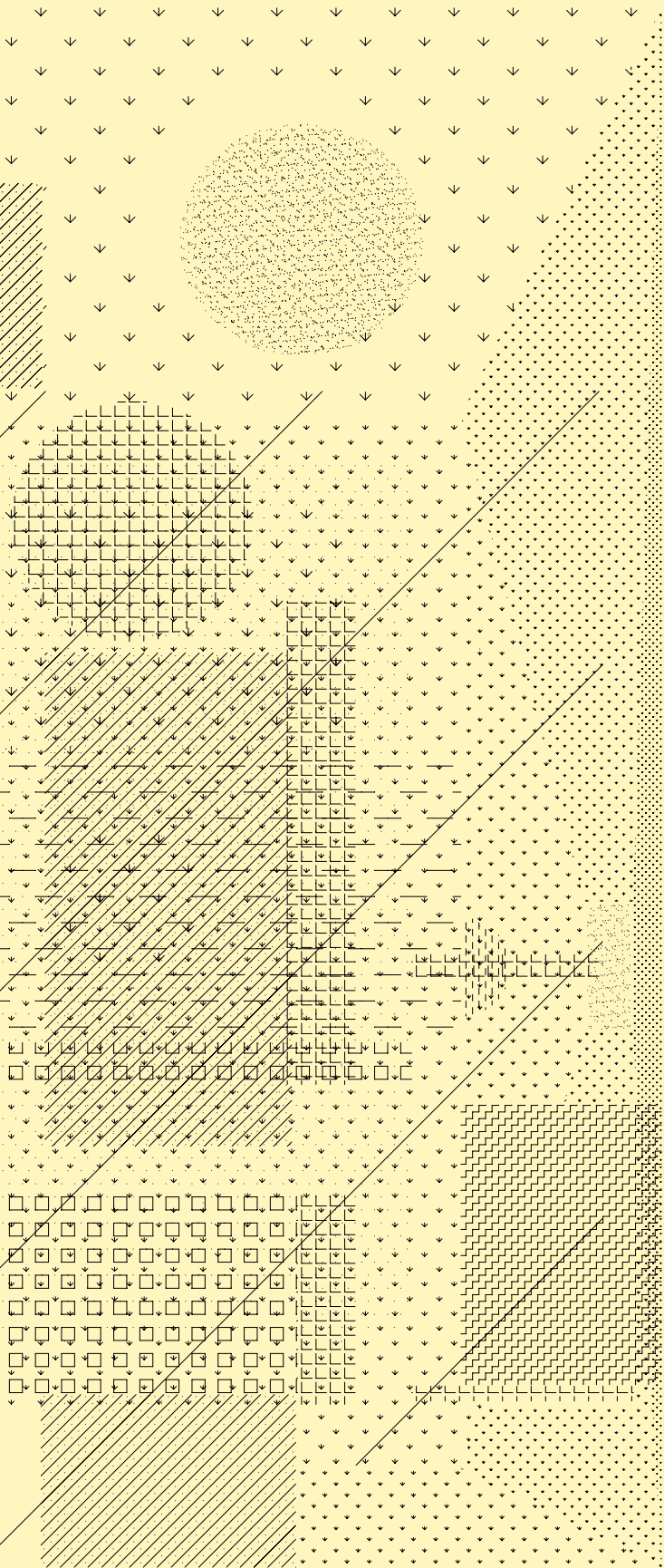
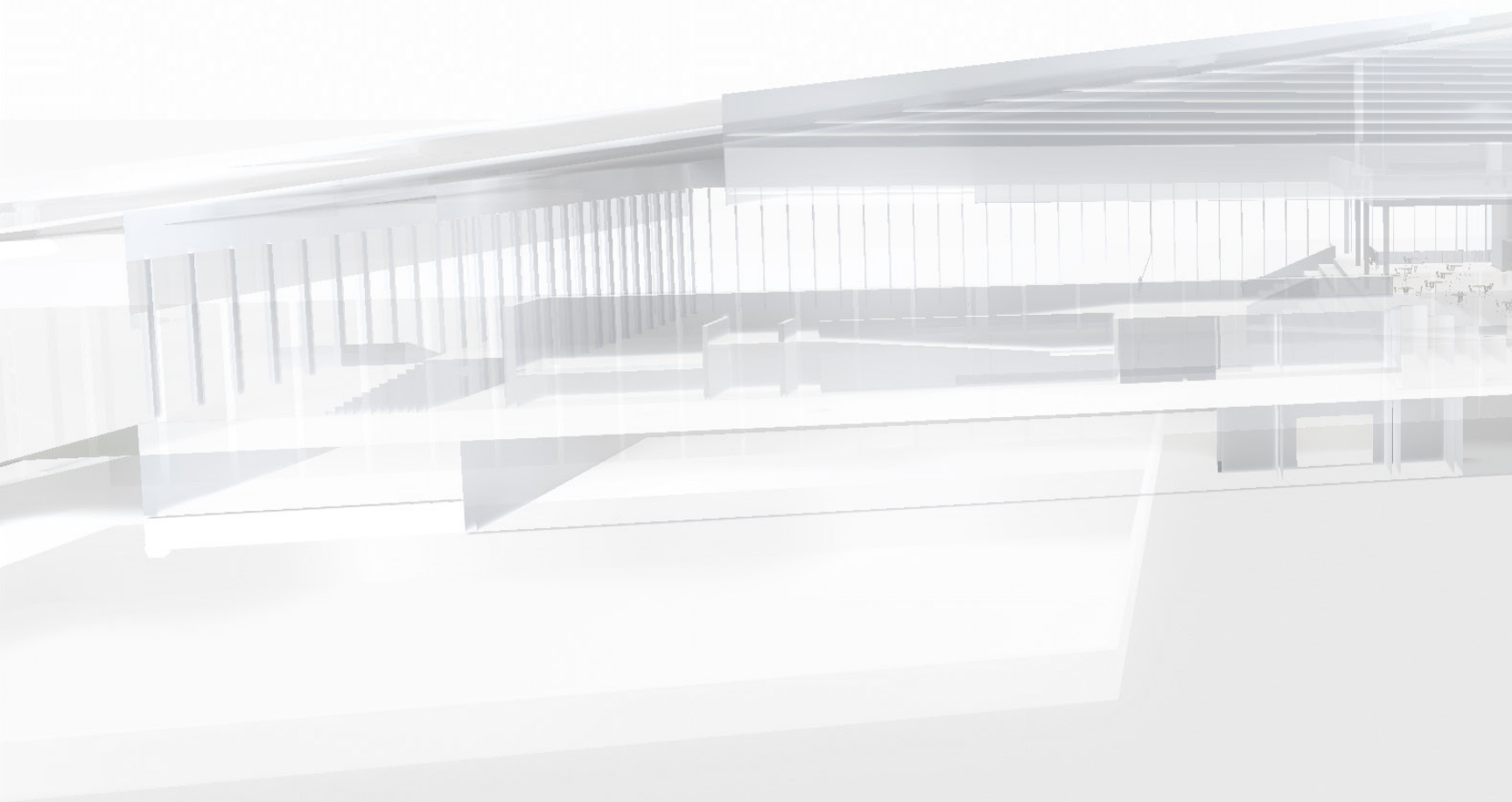
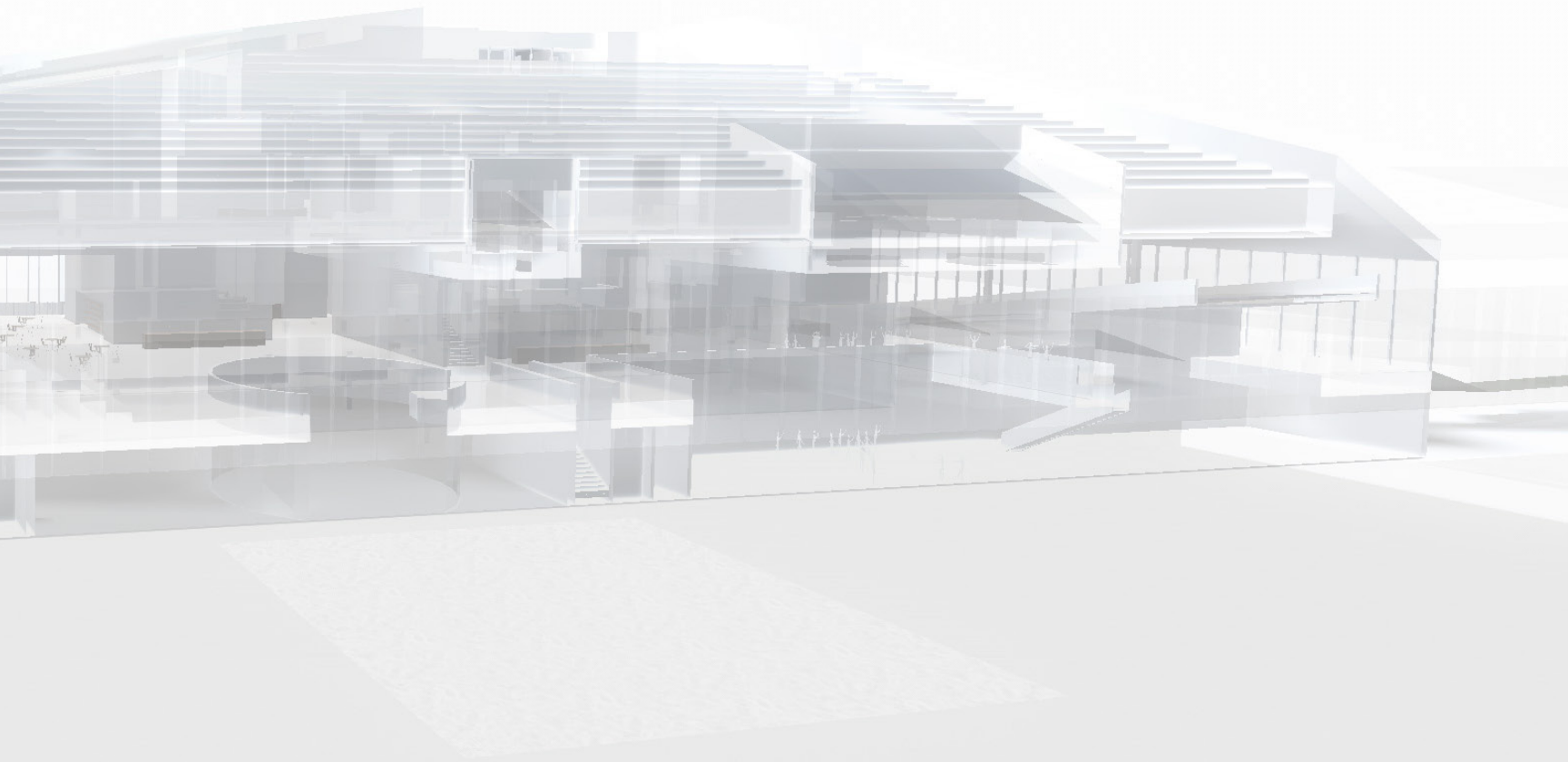


FIG 69 Super Ordinary: the fields of play that emerge beyond finite games.

FIG 70 Sectional view of building reveals its embedded possibilities.





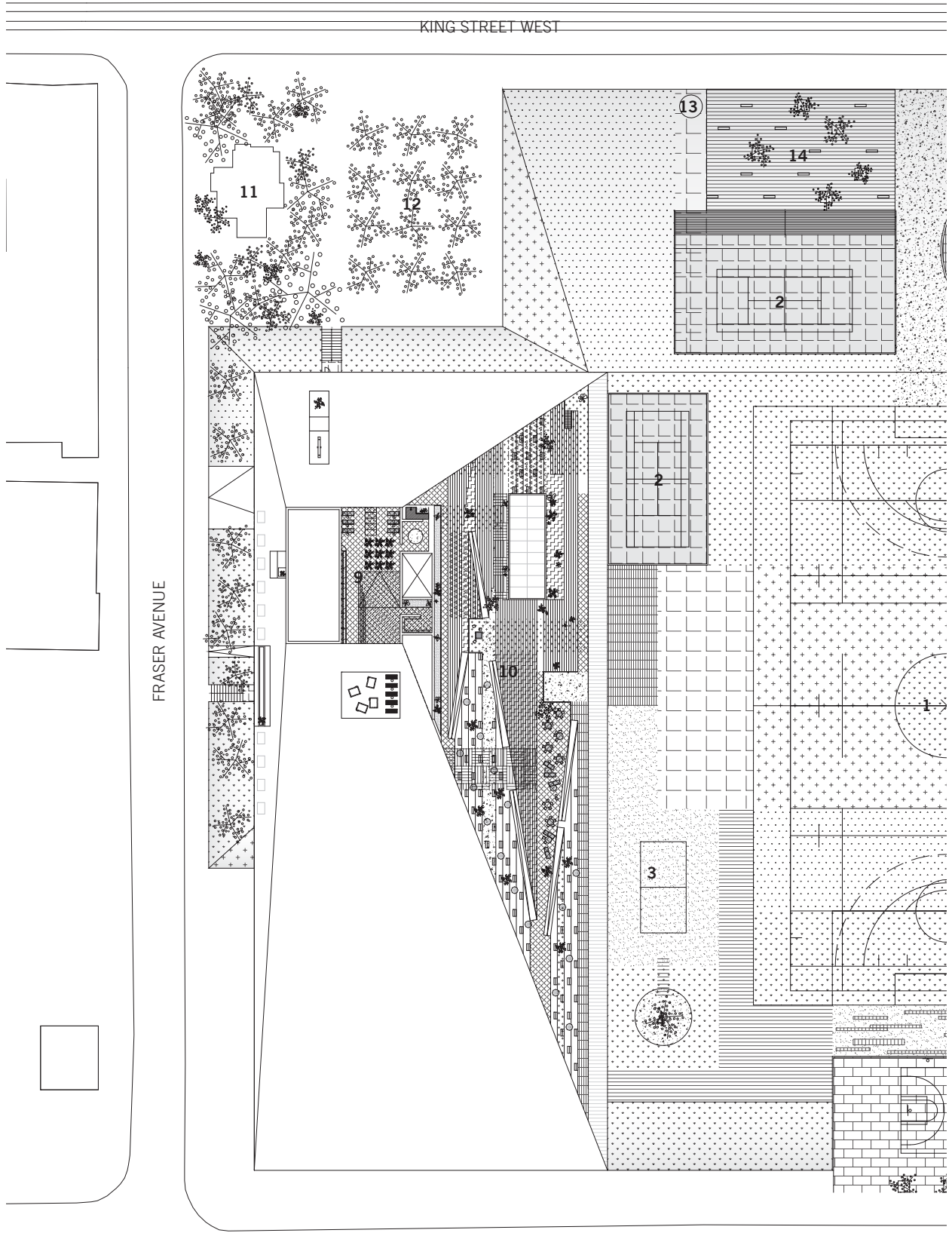
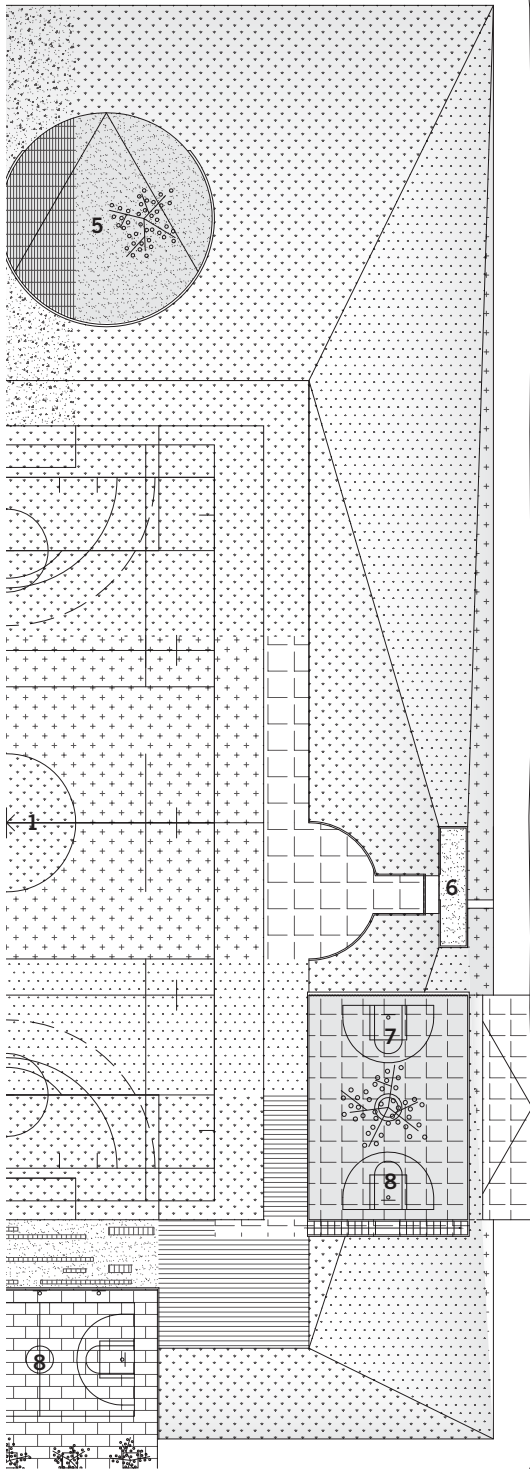
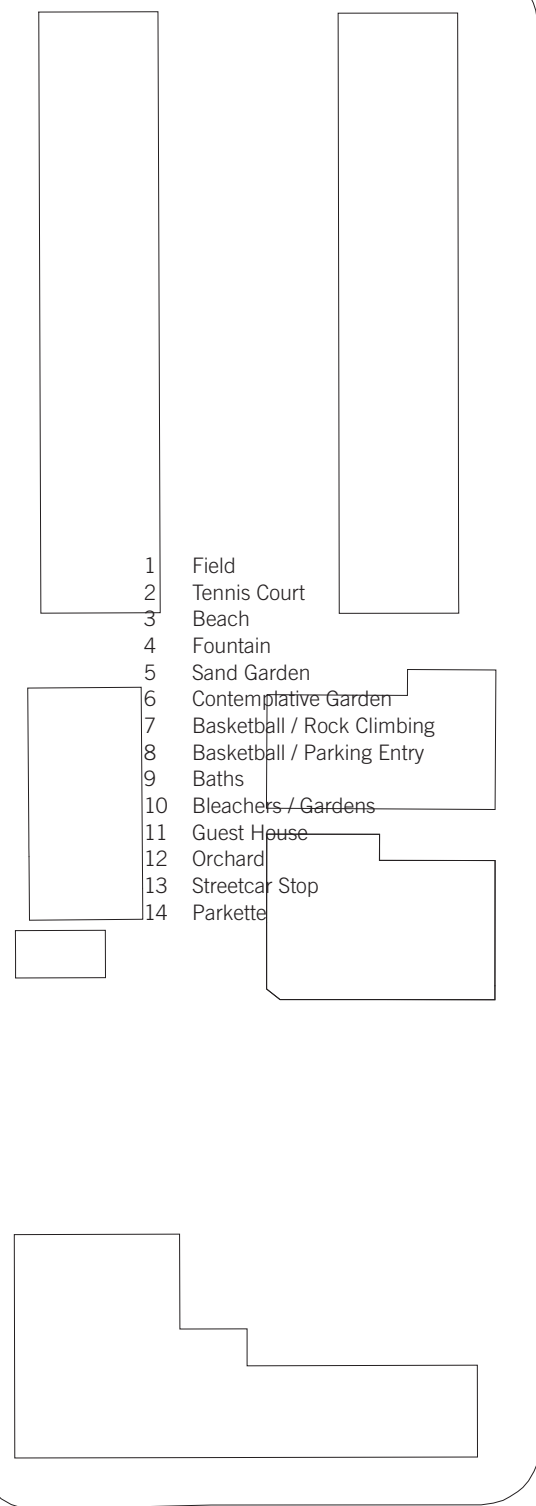


FIG 71 Site plan of Lamport Field.



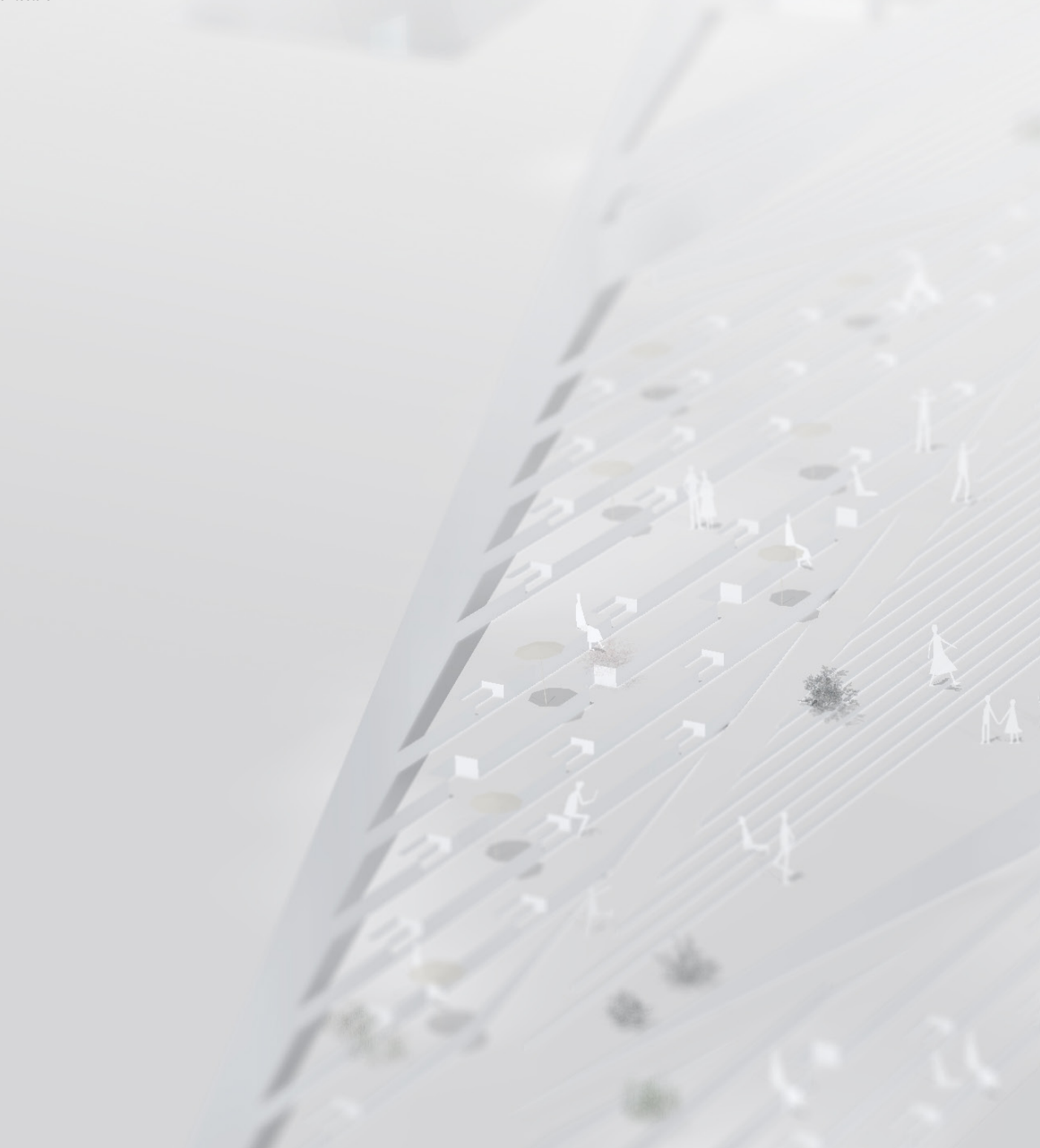
LIBERTY STREET

JEFFERSON AVENUE



- 1 Field
- 2 Tennis Court
- 3 Beach
- 4 Fountain
- 5 Sand Garden
- 6 Contemplative Garden
- 7 Basketball / Rock Climbing
- 8 Basketball / Parking Entry
- 9 Baths
- 10 Bleachers / Gardens
- 11 Guest House
- 12 Orchard
- 13 Streetcar Stop
- 14 Parkette

FIG 72 The playfulness of the field is extended to the building itself. Inside and out, it is an object to be played with, where narratives emerge from the possibilities embedded in the architecture.



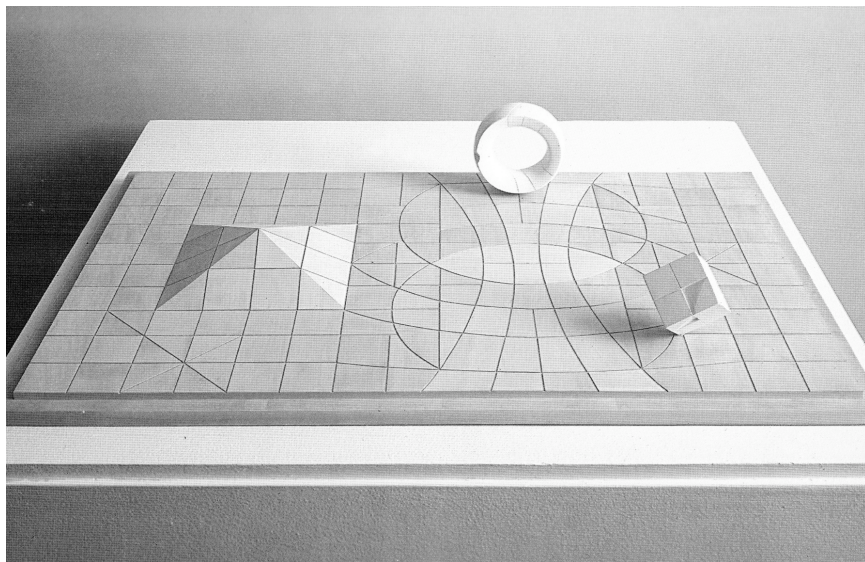
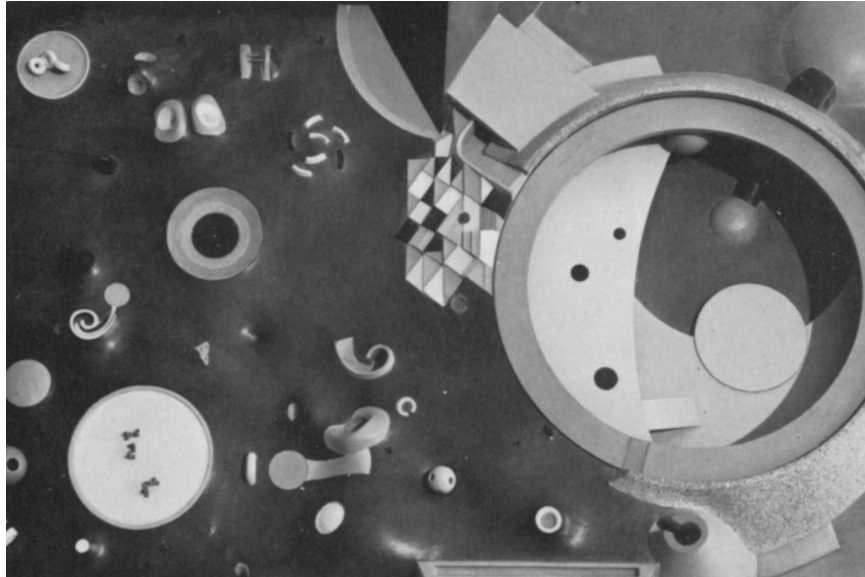


The building and field work as a unified landscape whose boundaries are constantly in flux. They meet at a completely transparent facade, mediated by a deep overhang that spans the face of the building—creating a porch, or *engawa*. The layered games of the field are continued inside; the building is uncharted territory, whose interpretation perpetually changes with one's movement through the space. A narrow stair creates a fjord-like cut to levels above and below; the gymnasium sits in a valley, surrounded by hills of bleacher seating, extending its playfulness to Liberty and Fraser Streets. Cavern-like passageways invite spelunkers to plumb its depths; walls become cliffs, and beckon to be scaled. The bleachers, mountain-like, rise upward, challenging us to reach its peak. Yet, these are games with no ultimate goal. Games beget games; they do not end, but encourage us to continue play. At the apex of the mountain, we realize that the journey we undertook to reach it is more meaningful than the apex itself.

Set into motion, our experiences define independent frames of reference. Lamport Field becomes the game in which they are held in relation, where the order that underpins the architecture is obscured by playfulness. Here, rather than “accomplishing an ideal in an imperfect world,”¹²⁰ we look to the inexhaustible possibilities of natural order. Hierarchies typical of stadia—for instance, the primary ‘performance’ spaces, such as the pitch or gymnasium, versus the secondary ‘audience’ spaces, such as bleachers and galleries—are dissolved into a layered space that anticipates spontaneous performances. As we move through the ‘dual stages’ of this unfamiliar terrain, we roll the die and submit to chance.

FIG 73 Opposite, top: Isamu Noguchi, “Abstract Moonscape” (unrealized, 1968). Noguchi proposed an otherworldly playground for the U.S. Pavilion at Expo '70 in Osaka, demonstrating his desire to create spaces that were engaging and could be engaged with.

FIG 74 Opposite, bottom: His garden for the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University distilled his playful vernacular to three forms—the pyramid, the geometry of nature; the sun, for energy and nothingness at once; and the cube, representing chance and man's imitation of nature.¹²¹ The curvature of the grid suggests the interdependence of space and time, alluding to the curvature of space-time continuum in Einstein's theory of relativity. The universe knows no bounds.



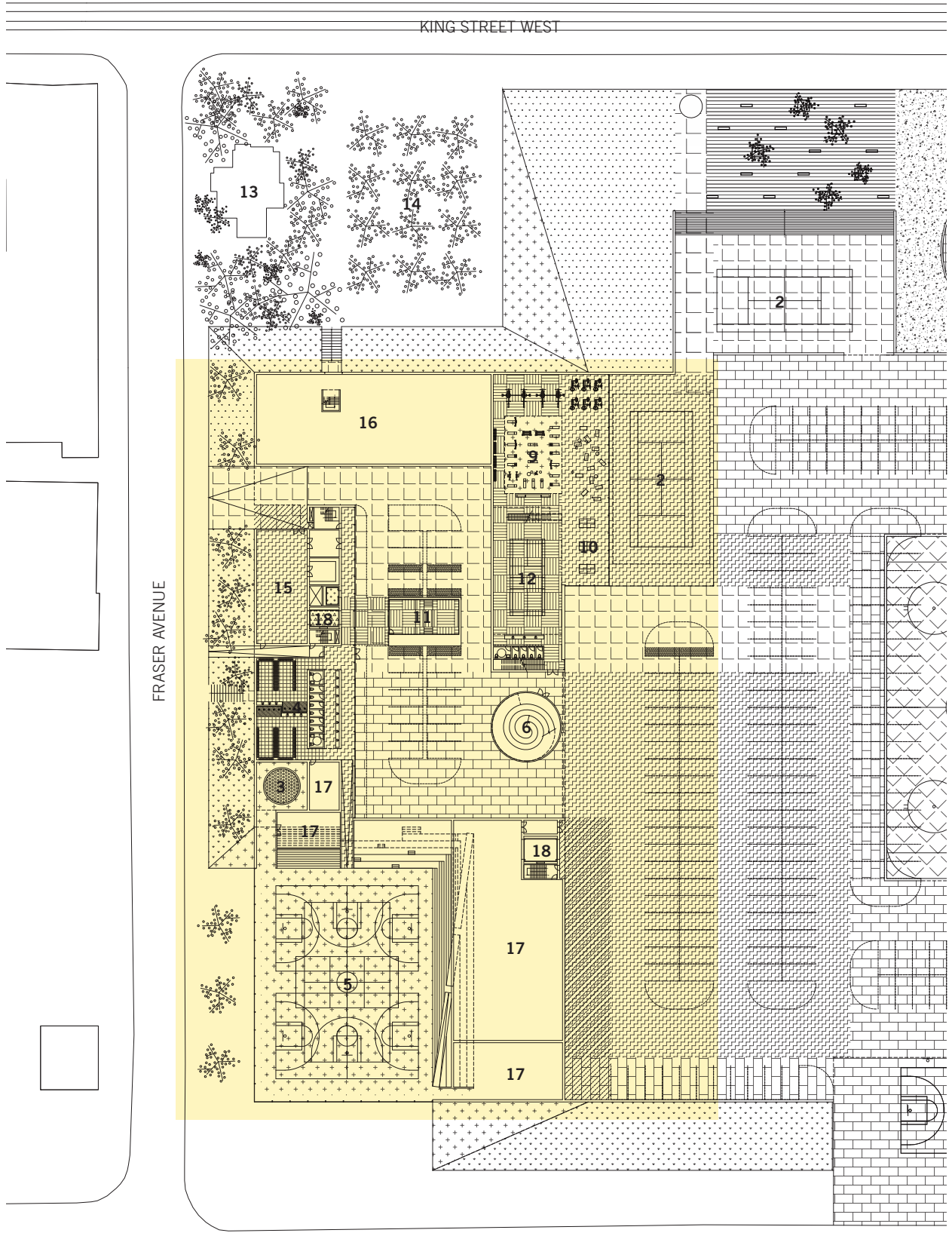
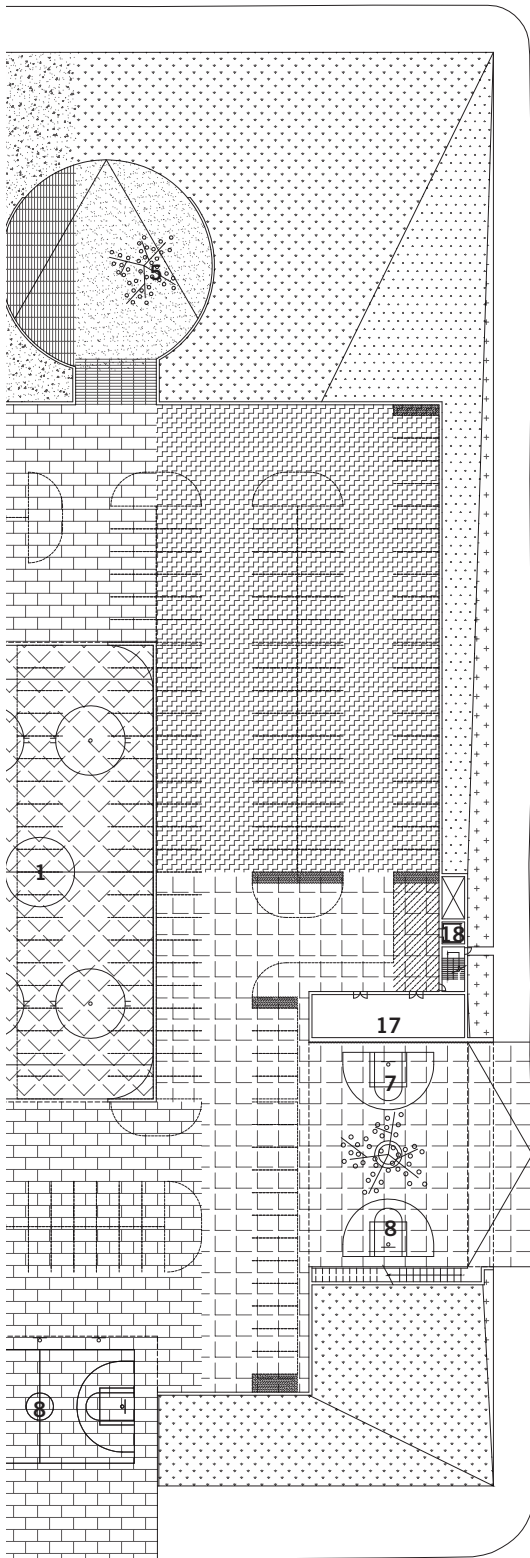


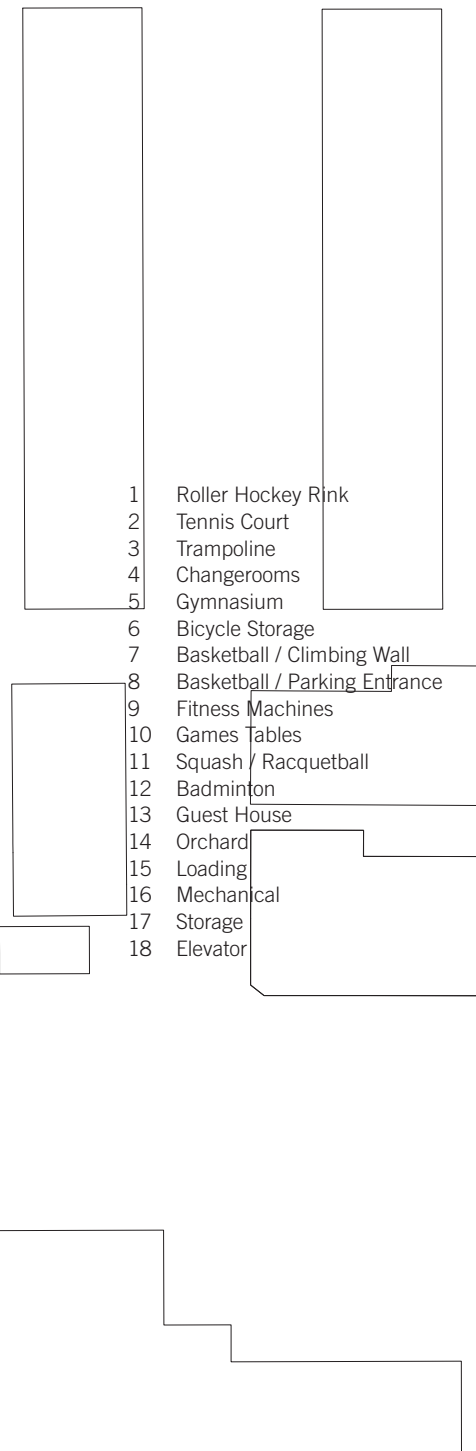
FIG 75 Plan at Liberty Street level.



LIBERTY STREET

JEFFERSON AVENUE

- 1 Roller Hockey Rink
- 2 Tennis Court
- 3 Trampoline
- 4 Changerooms
- 5 Gymnasium
- 6 Bicycle Storage
- 7 Basketball / Climbing Wall
- 8 Basketball / Parking Entrance
- 9 Fitness Machines
- 10 Games Tables
- 11 Squash / Racquetball
- 12 Badminton
- 13 Guest House
- 14 Orchard
- 15 Loading
- 16 Mechanical
- 17 Storage
- 18 Elevator



- 1 Field
- 2 Tennis
- 3 Beach
- 4 Fountain
- 5 Gymnasium
- 6 Bicycle Storage
- 7 Dining Area
- 8 Commercial Kitchen
- 9 Studio Kitchen
- 10 Library
- 11 Squash / Racquetball
- 12 Badminton
- 13 Fitness Ramp
- 14 Doctor's Office
- 15 Climbing Wall
- 16 Classroom
- 17 Day Care
- 18 Castle
- 19 Creche
- 20 Holding Area
- 21 Administration
- 22 Elevator
- 23 Lockers

FIG 76 Detail of plan at field level.

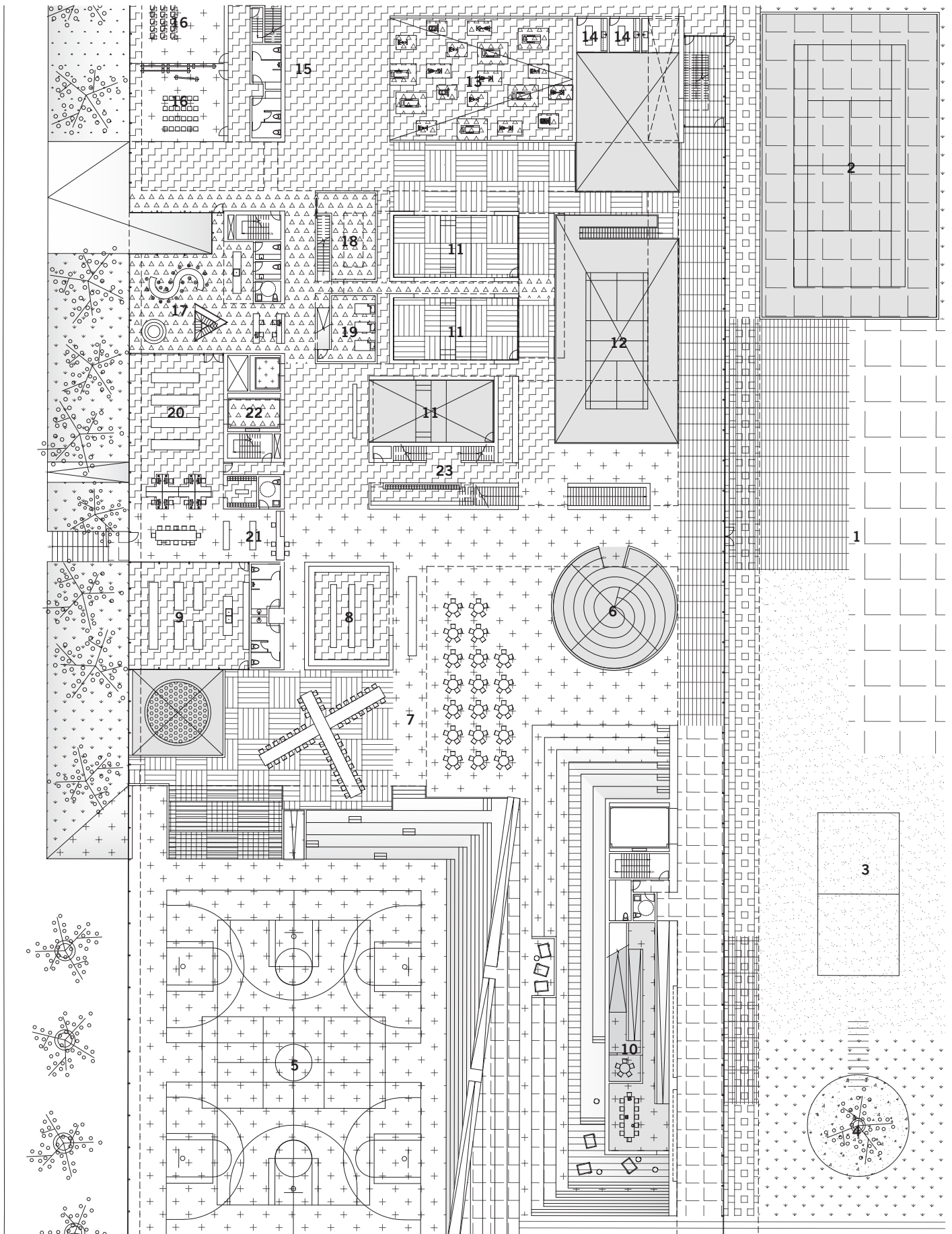
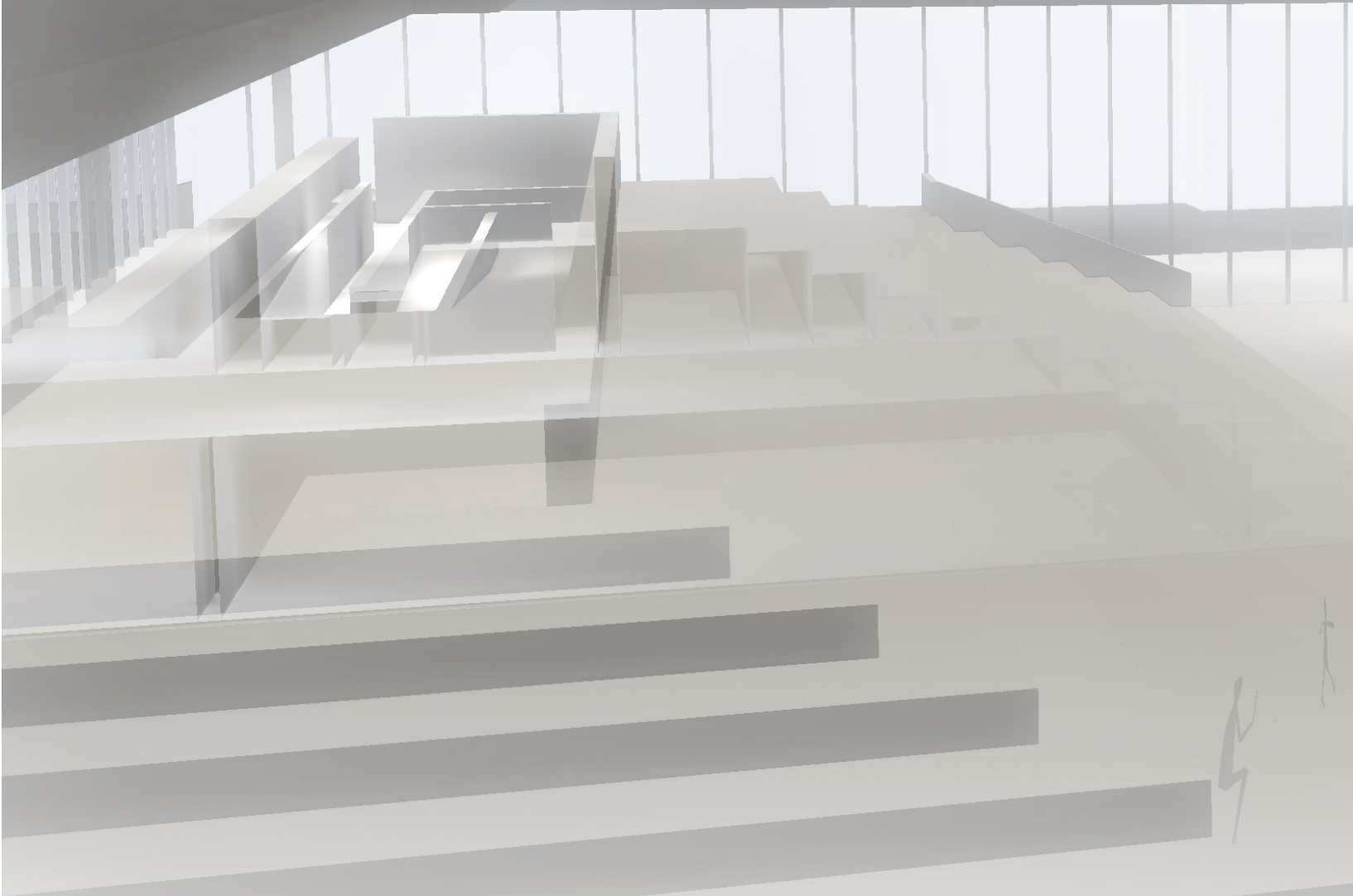




FIG 77 Lamport Field is a stadium without an audience/player dichotomy. Undivided, it is a double stage, an assemblage of stories, the place of myths.





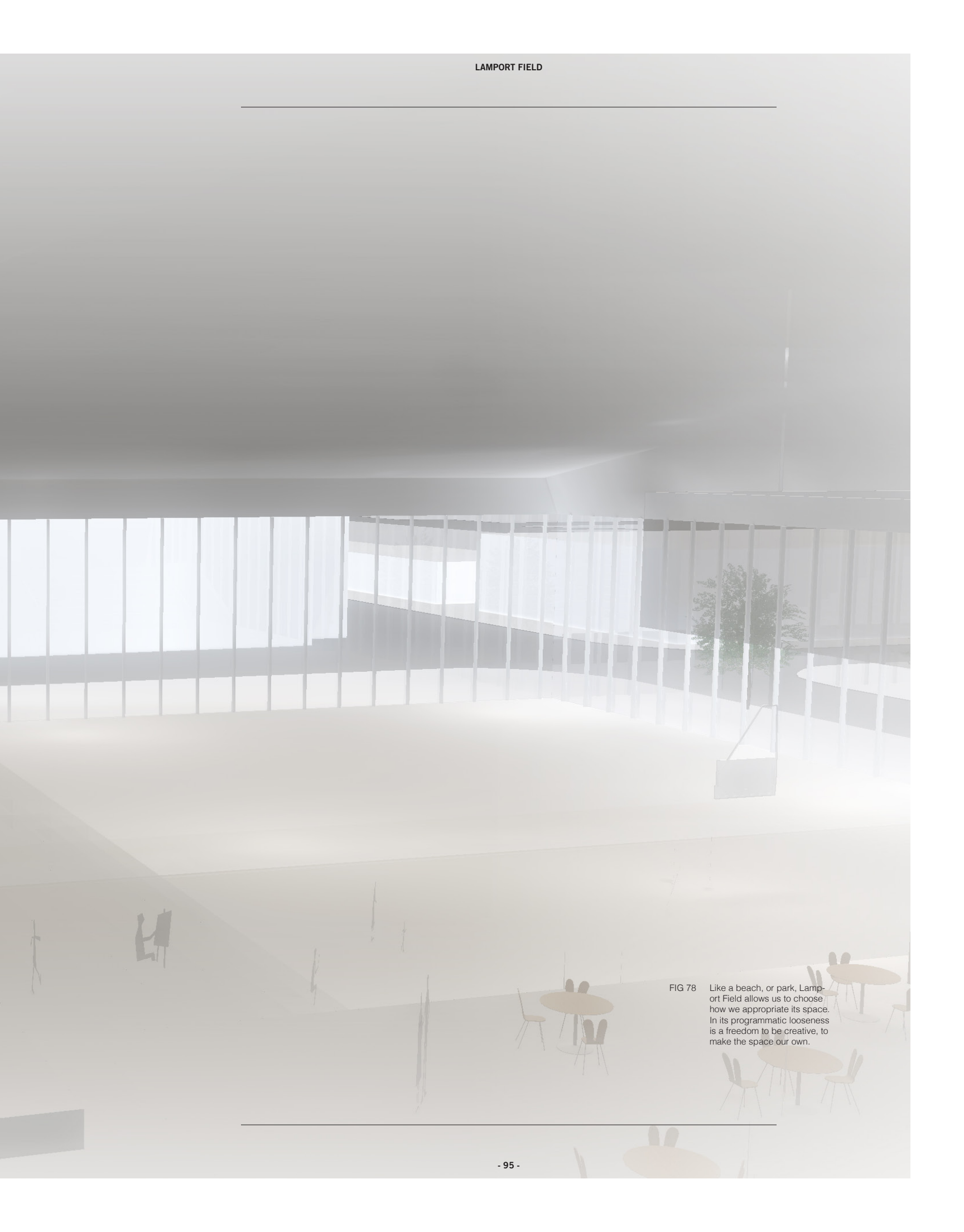


FIG 78 Like a beach, or park, Lamporf Field allows us to choose how we appropriate its space. In its programmatic looseness is a freedom to be creative, to make the space our own.



FIG 79 The clear hierarchies of the architectural machine—floors, walls, stairs—are ambiguous in the architectural garden. Stairs are pulled and stretched to become seats, stages, counters; walls are engaged, even climbed.



- 1 Bleachers
- 2 Bridge
- 3 Greenhouse
- 4 Greenhouse Storage
- 5 Garden
- 6 Seesaw
- 7 Classroom
- 8 Offices
- 9 Mail Room
- 10 Copy Area
- 11 Hot Desks
- 12 Kitchen
- 13 Lounge
- 14 Studio
- 15 Workshop
- 16 Elevators

FIG 80 Detail of plan at bleacher level.

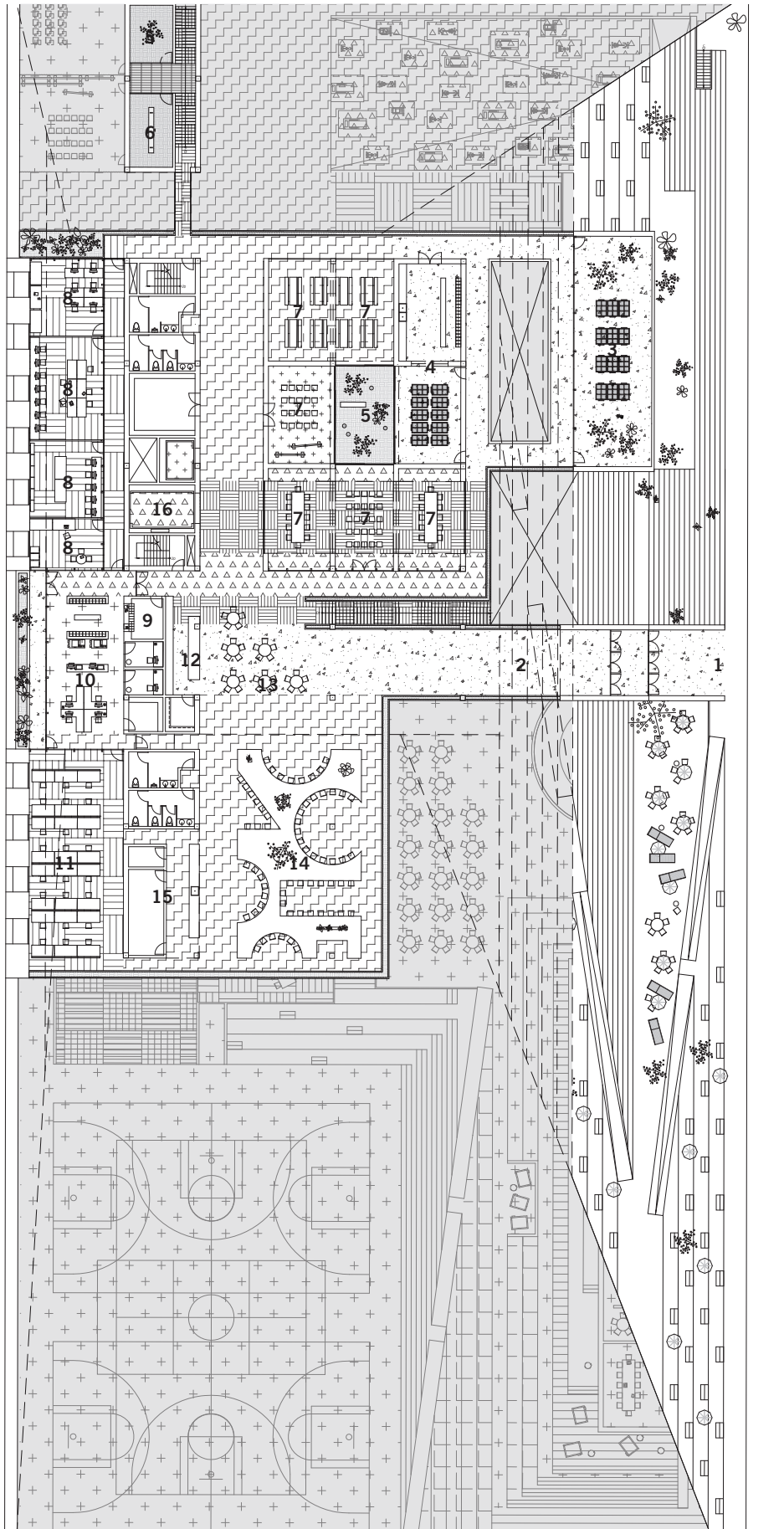




FIG 81 If the field level is like a landscape, then the level above it—for studios, classrooms, and offices—is like a cloud, architecture eroded and mediated by the surprises of nature.



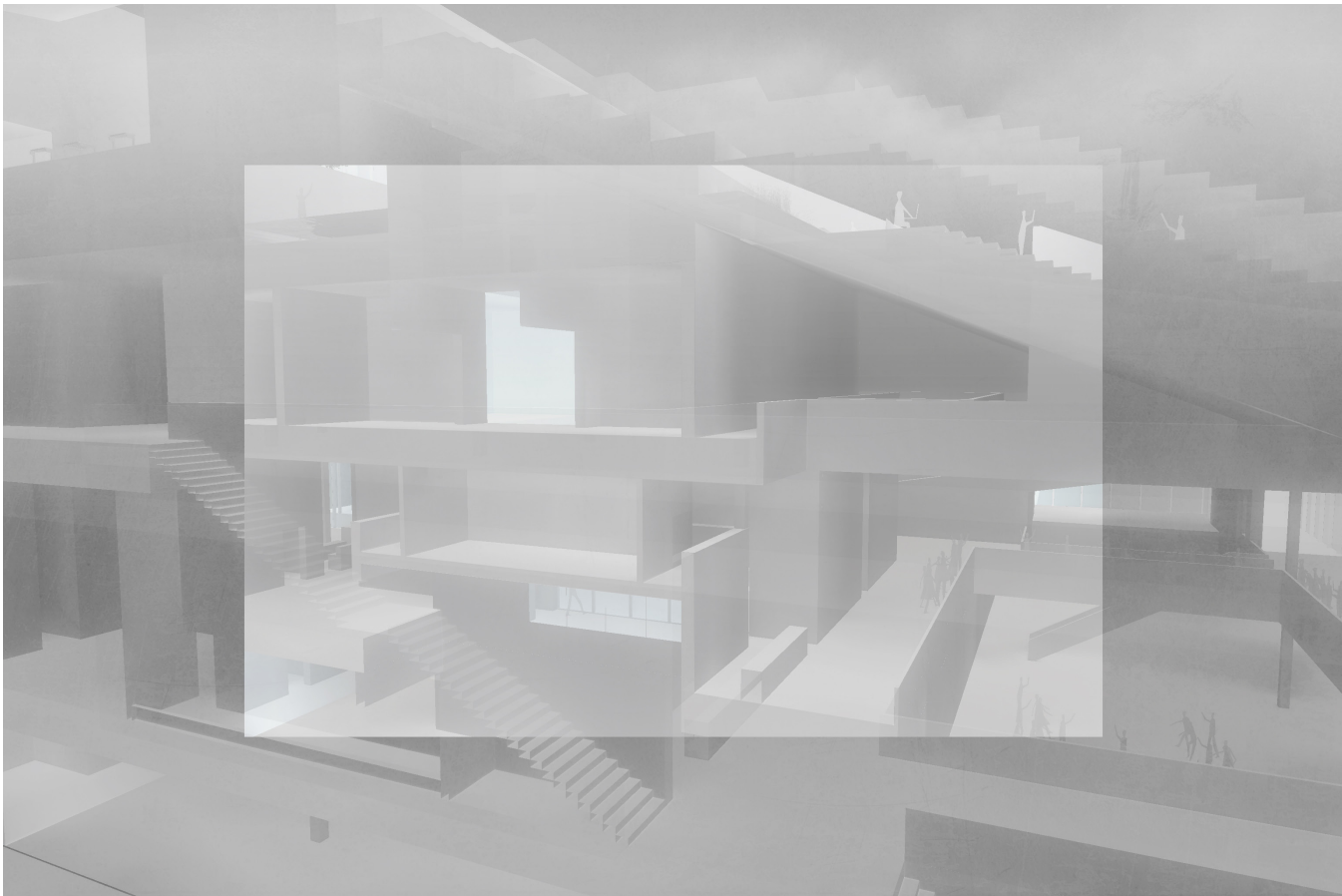


FIG 82 A system of apparent order that can be ordered and re-ordered: here, the section cut reveals a secret garden between the classrooms on the second level and a squash court behind the main stair.

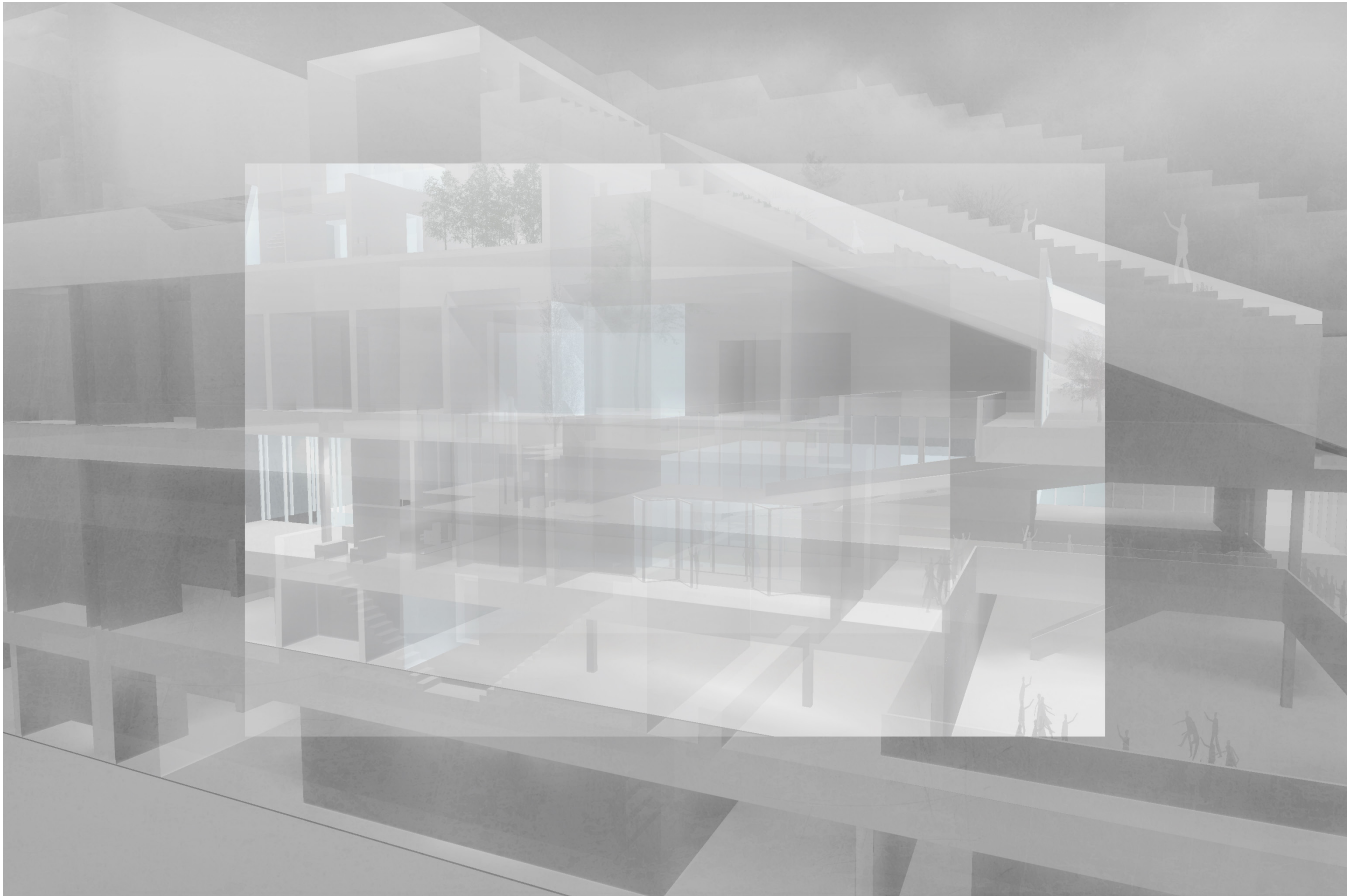
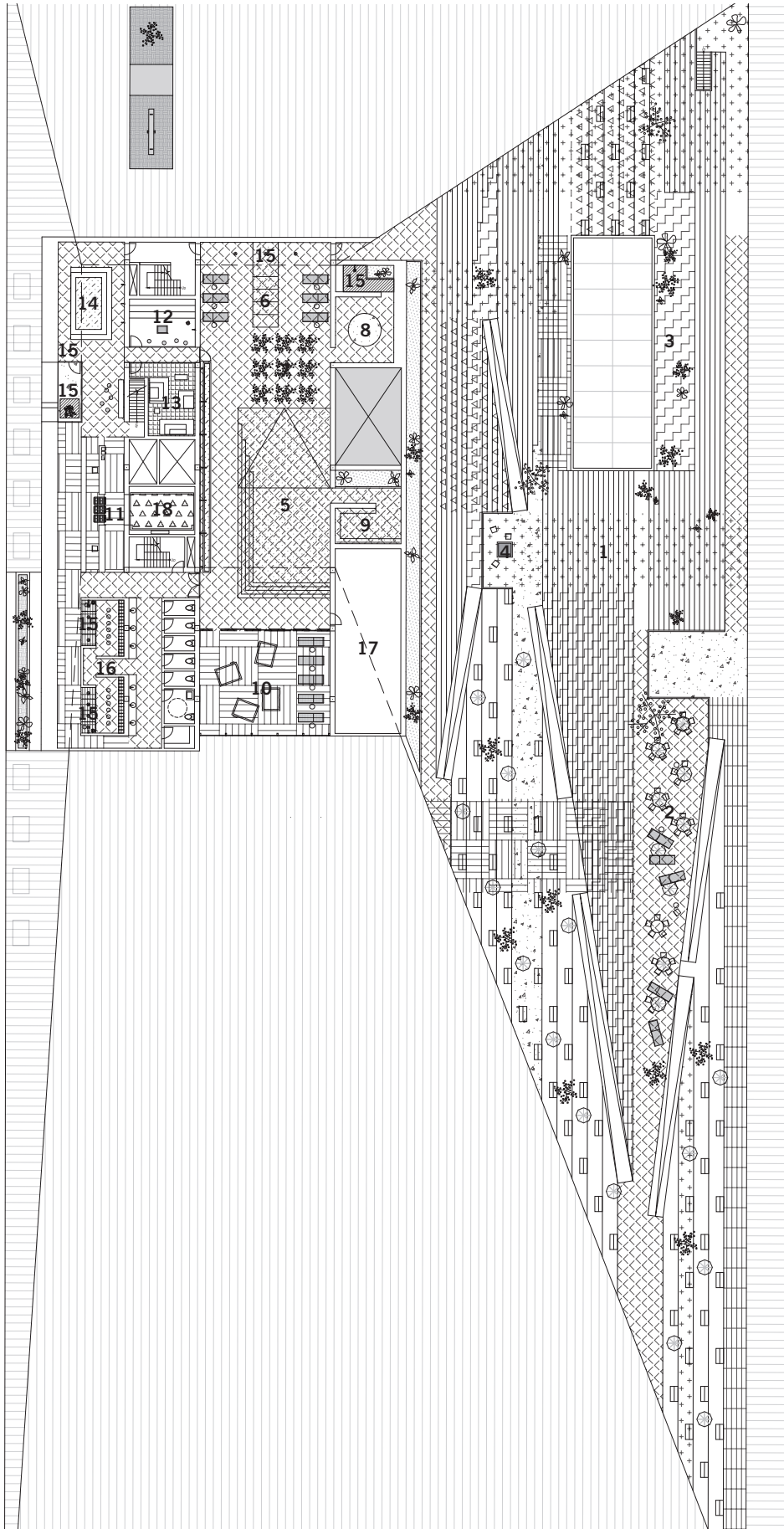
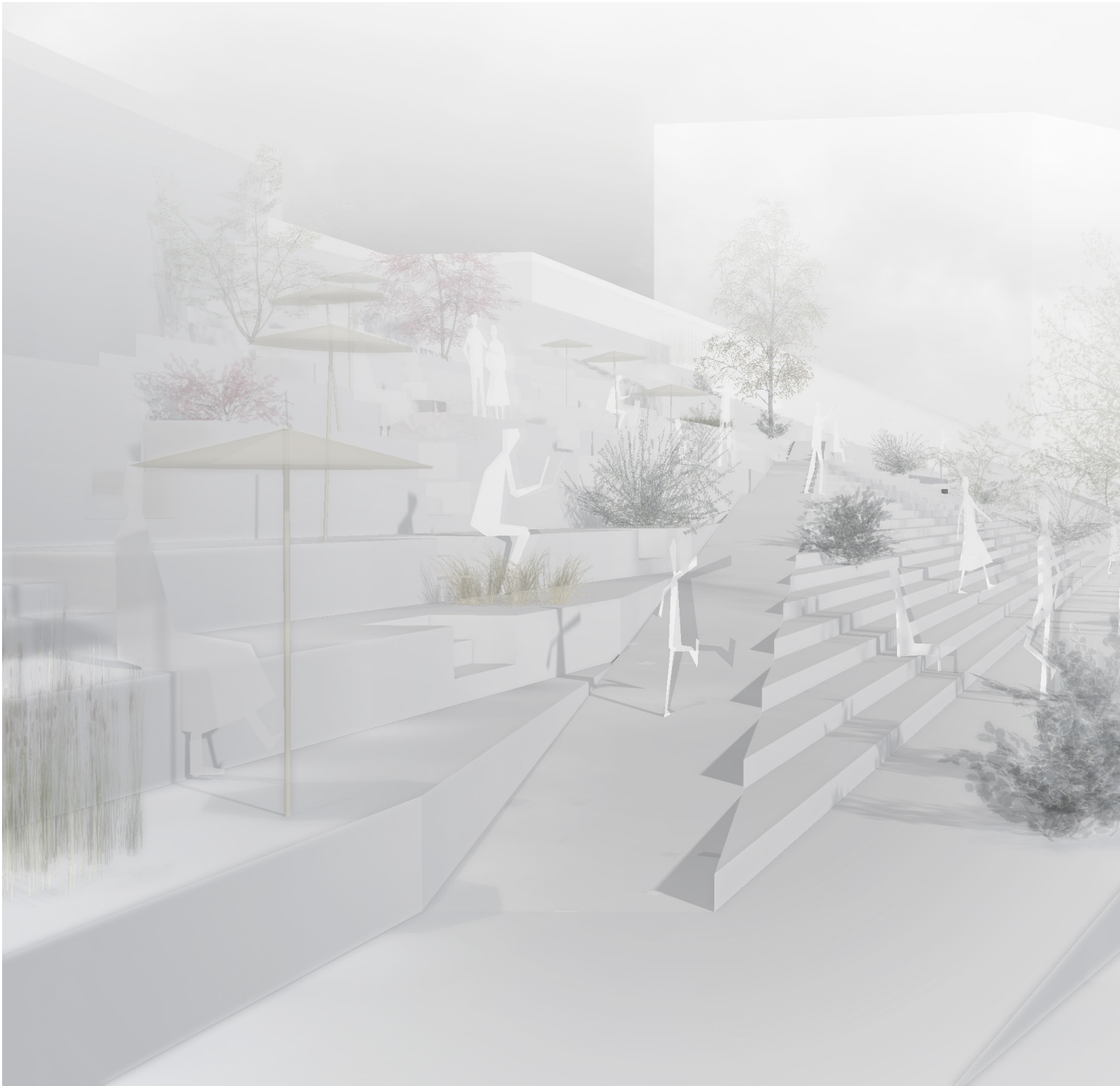


FIG 83 Lamporf Field assembles its games such that no game exists alone, but in relation to others. The building is a montage of frames, its games connected through the experiences of its players.

- 1 Bleachers
- 2 Patio
- 3 Garden
- 4 Fire Pit
- 5 Warm Bath
- 6 Cold Bath
- 7 Bosque
- 8 Hot Stone
- 9 Waterfall
- 10 Sun Room
- 11 Anteroom
- 12 Sauna
- 13 Steam
- 14 Medicinal Bath
- 15 Shower
- 16 Changeroom
- 17 Mechanical
- 18 Elevator

FIG 84 Detail of plan at bath-house level.





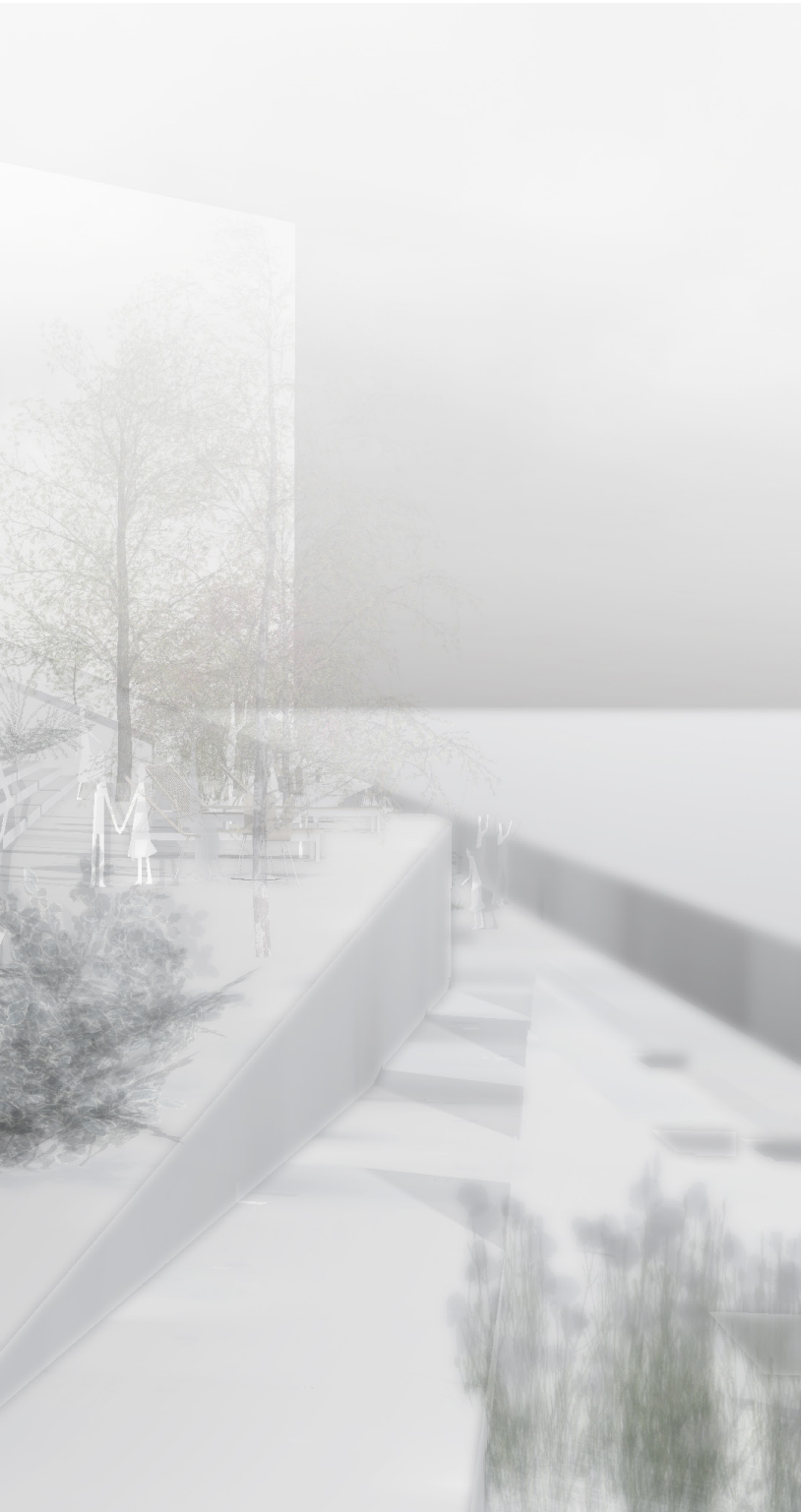


FIG 85 With the addition of gardens, patios, ramps, and patterns, the bleachers are transformed into a mountain to be scaled and explored. The singularity of stadium bleachers are opened to the possibilities cultivated within the building.

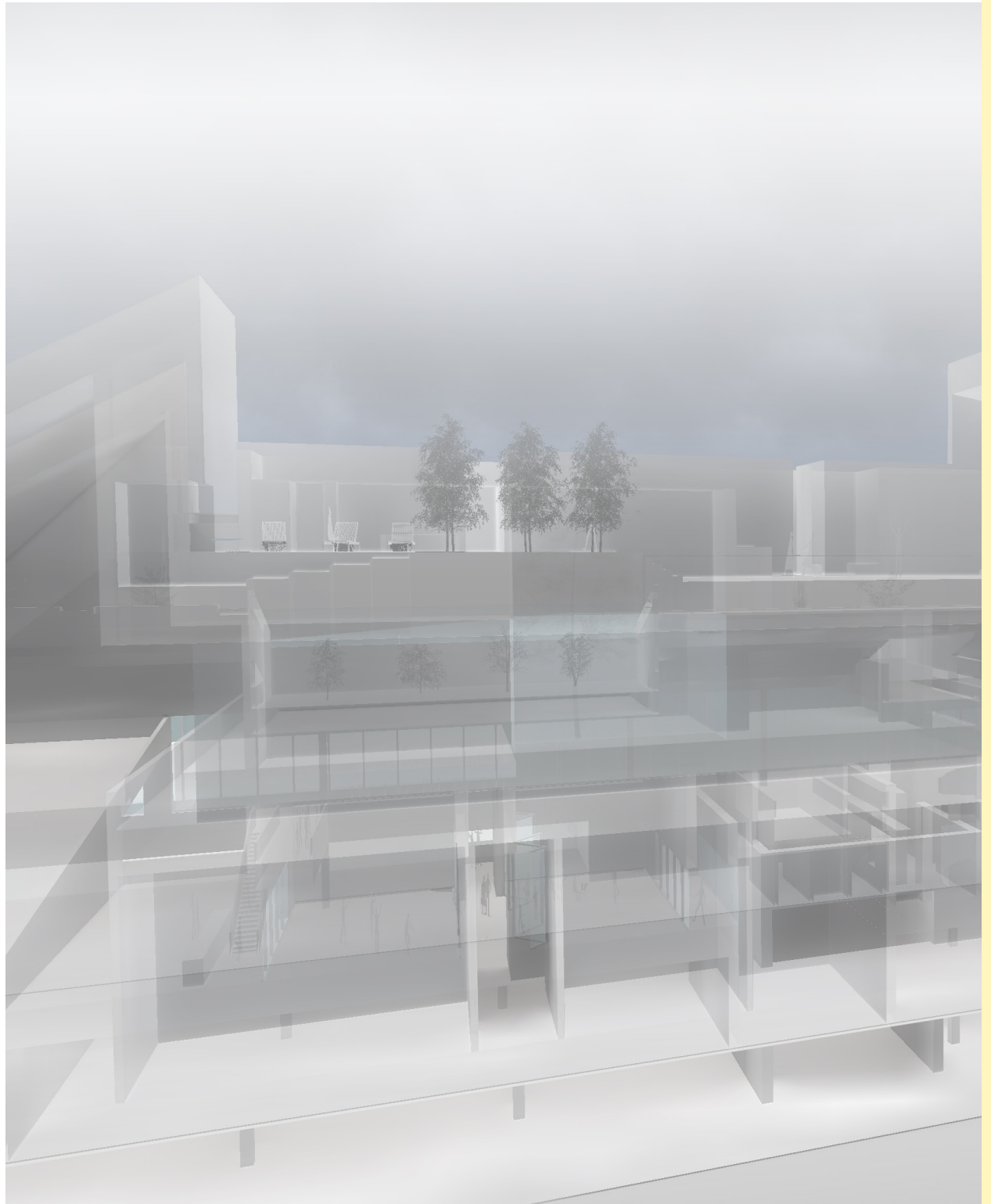




FIG 86 The baths release the tension between opposing forces: hot and cold, wet and dry, indoors and out, social and contemplative.

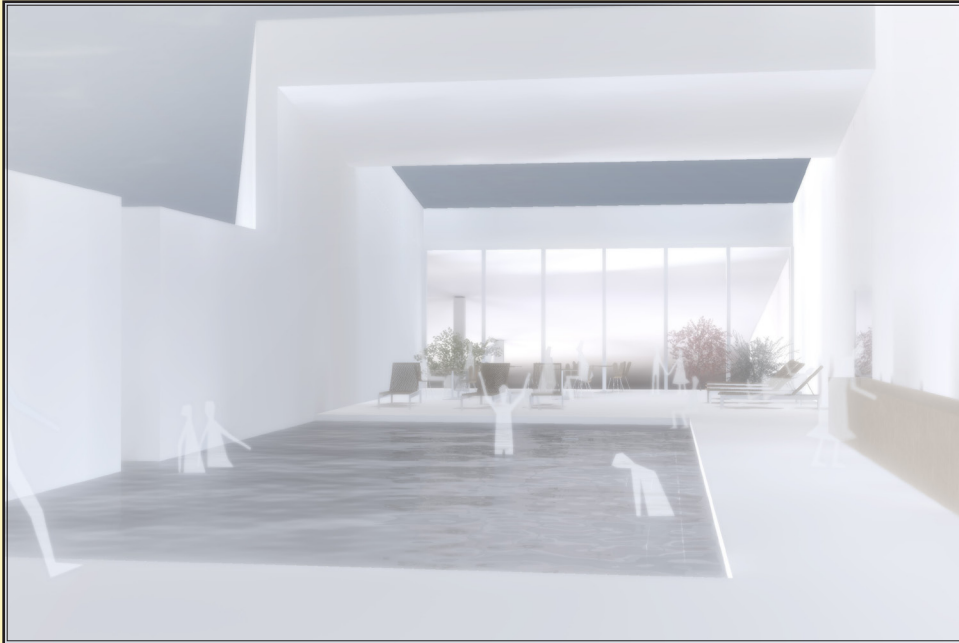


FIG 87 Warm bath and sun room,
overlooking the gymnasium
below.

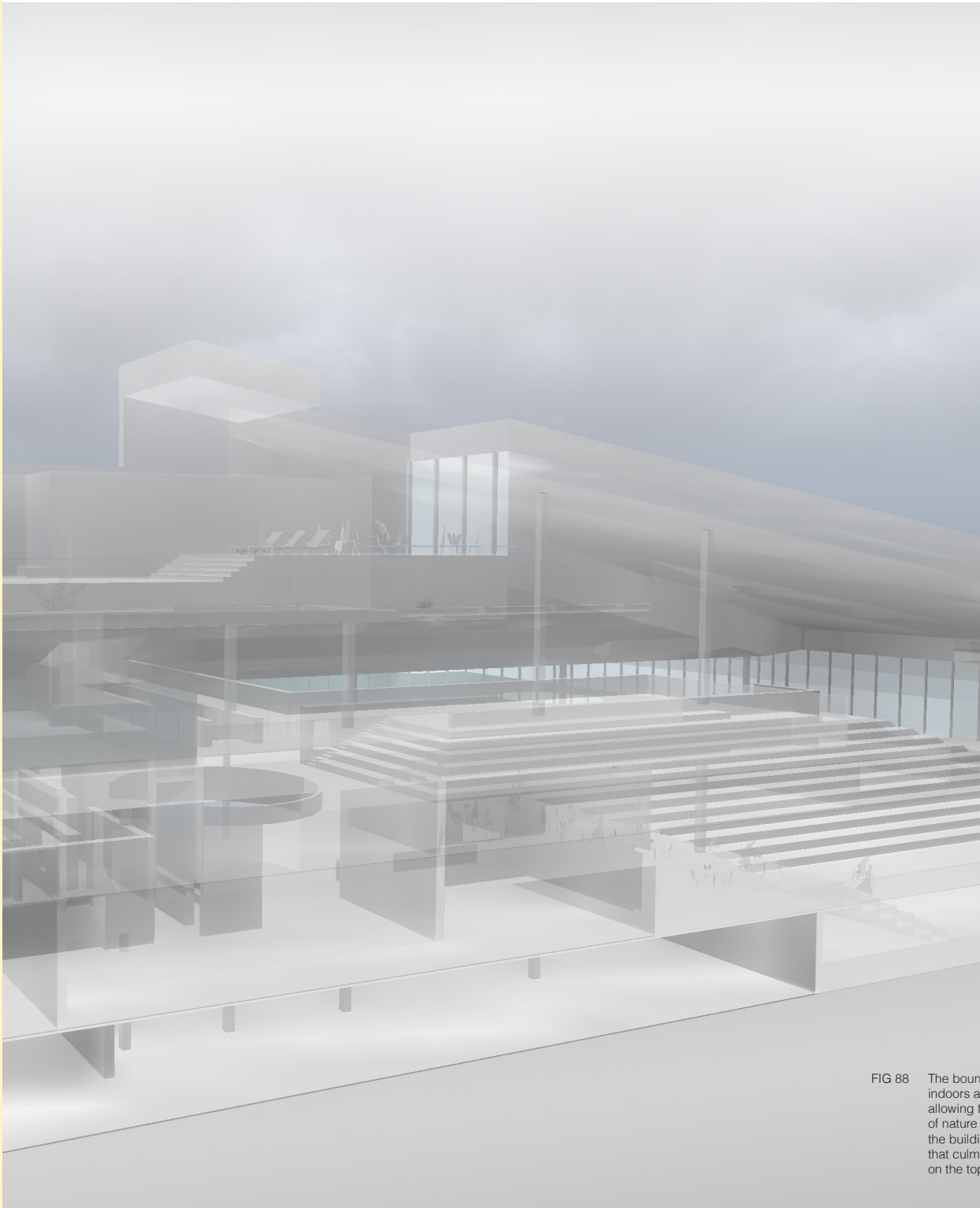


FIG 88 The boundary between indoors and out is blurred, allowing the open-endedness of nature to permeate through the building—an experience that culminates in the baths on the top floor.

Super Ordinary is the spatial quality of quantum superposition: a space of multiple configurations embedded into a single frame, a game that reciprocates our inherent playfulness. Instead of being objective, an architecture of the Super Ordinary is, as Isozaki described it, “spatial and performative,”¹²⁵ a place whose infinite possibilities can only be collapsed into something real through the experience of the user.¹²⁶

At Lamport Field, the stadium becomes the garden in which the Super Ordinary is cultivated, where, embracing spontaneity and surprise, we constantly discover we are somewhere else, where travel is not “a sequence of changing scenes” but the understanding that we, ourselves, are persons in passage.¹²⁷

By catalyzing our heroic journeys, Lamport Field becomes a place of uncertainty. We can no longer measure our movement against the absolute boundaries of the finite game, and submit instead to the relativity of the infinite game. As such, its architecture is scalar, not bound by the planes or lines of vector architecture but reduced to its essential play-surfaces. It is a fractalline assemblage of games—the field, the court, the table—that themselves play with (and against, and off of, and on) one another, for “it is in leading the eye into a recognition of infinite minutiae that the room is most cultivated to the implication of infinity.”¹²⁸

With no end in sight, our stories are allowed to flourish.

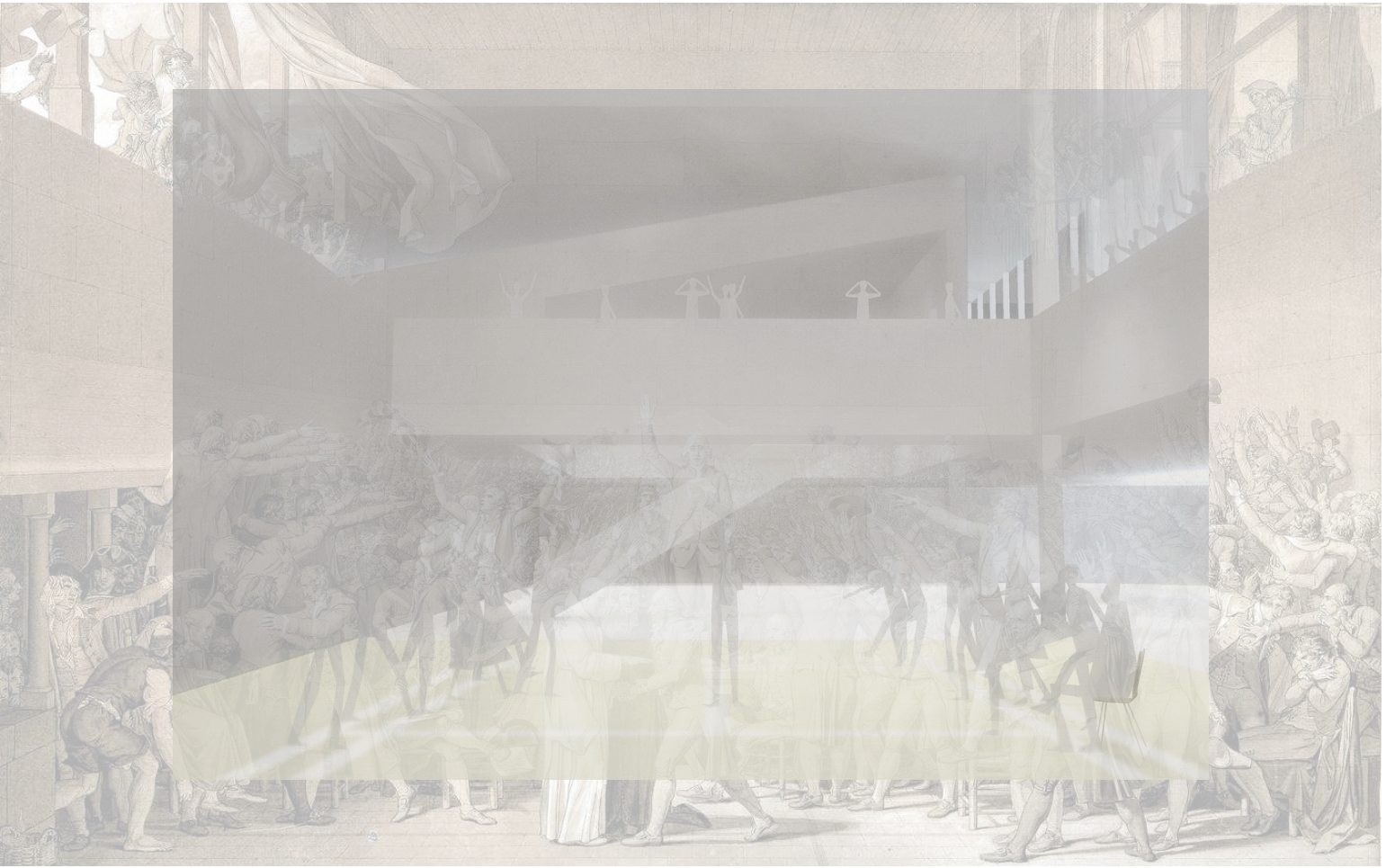


FIG 89 The badminton court recalls David's sketch of the "Tennis Court Oath". The distinction of the space as "badminton court" is dissolved into the immediacy of the moment..

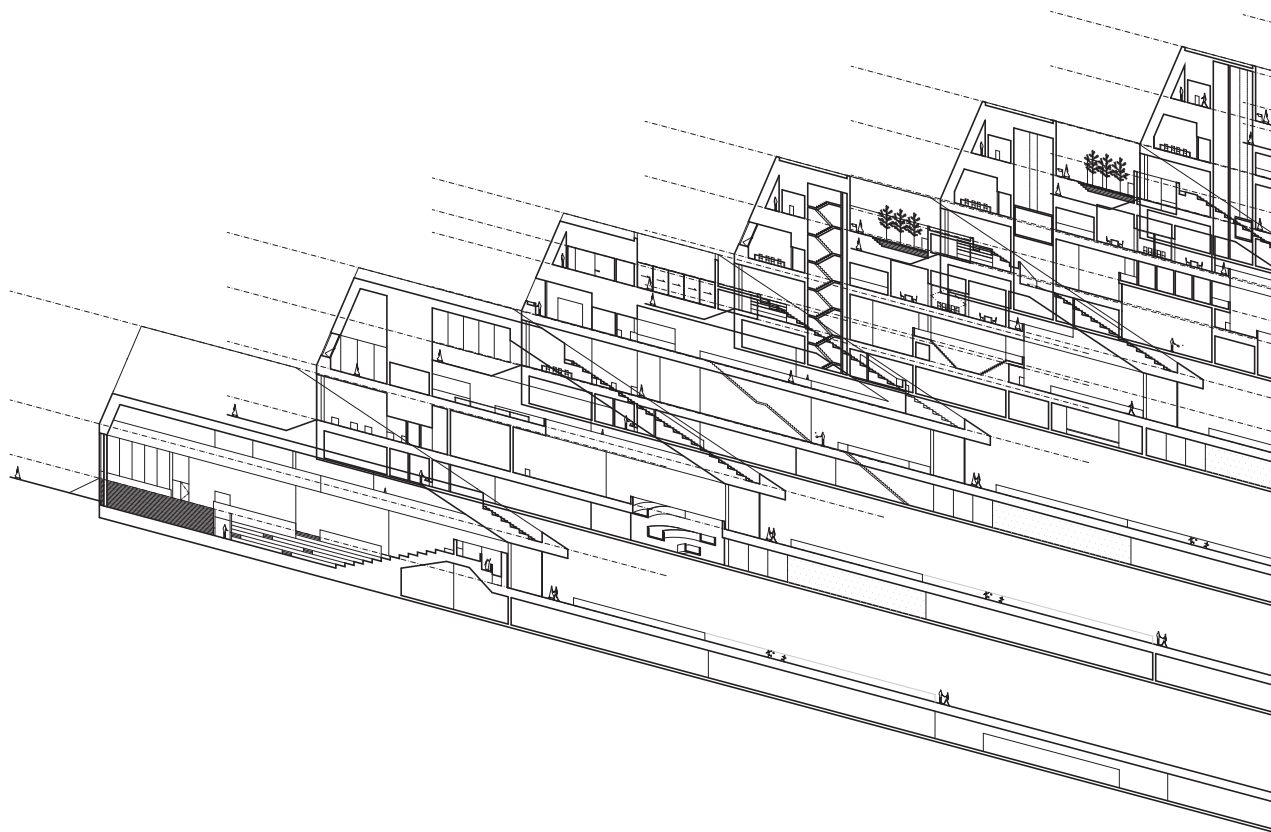


FIG 90 In an architecture of frames, our imagination overcomes the gaps, relating spaces to one another...

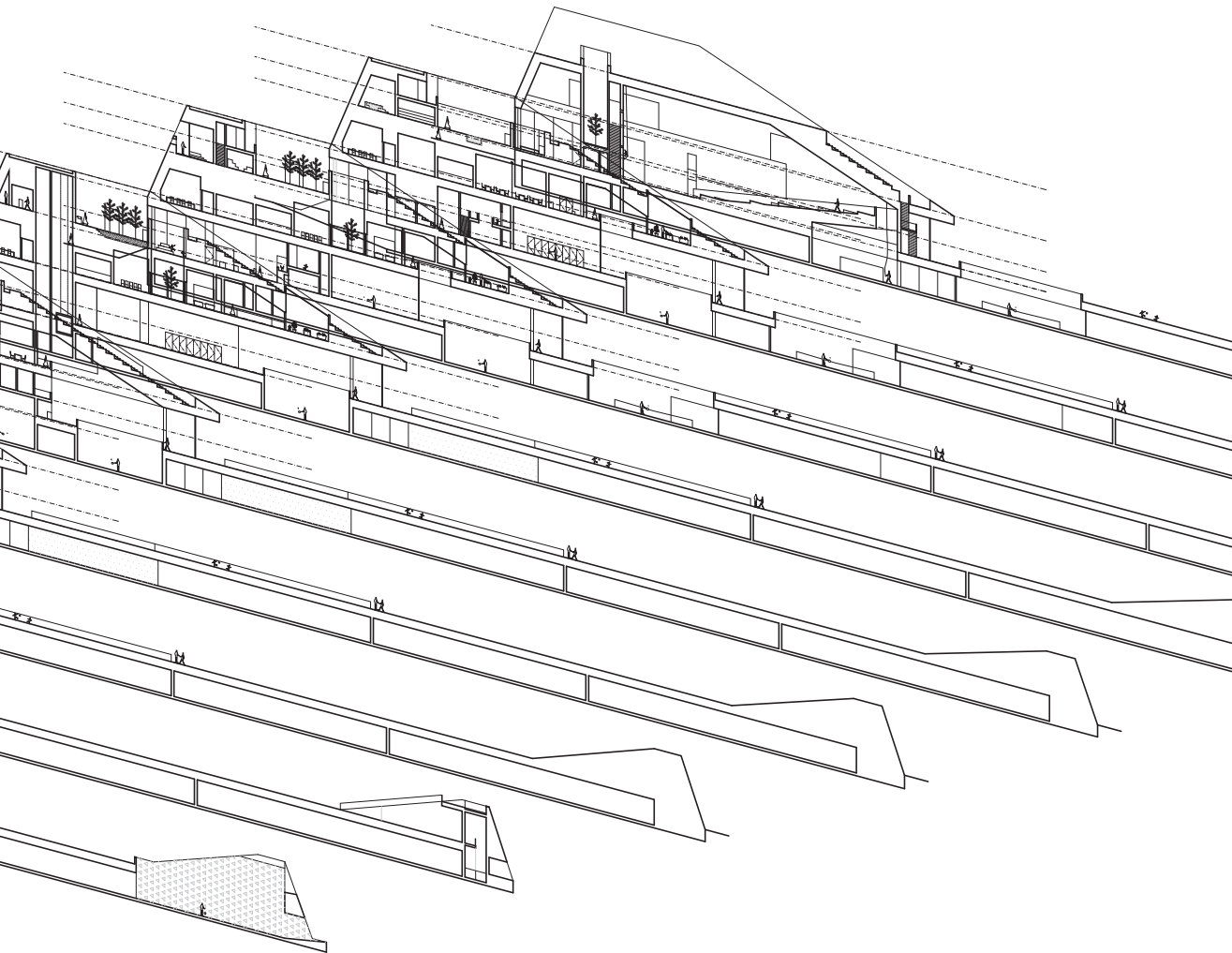






FIG 91 Overleaf: Super Ordinary—
the quantum superposition of
architectural frames.

FIG 92 Below: Folded perspec-
tive could be read either as
squash court (top/bottom) or
as studio space (left/right)—
or as both.

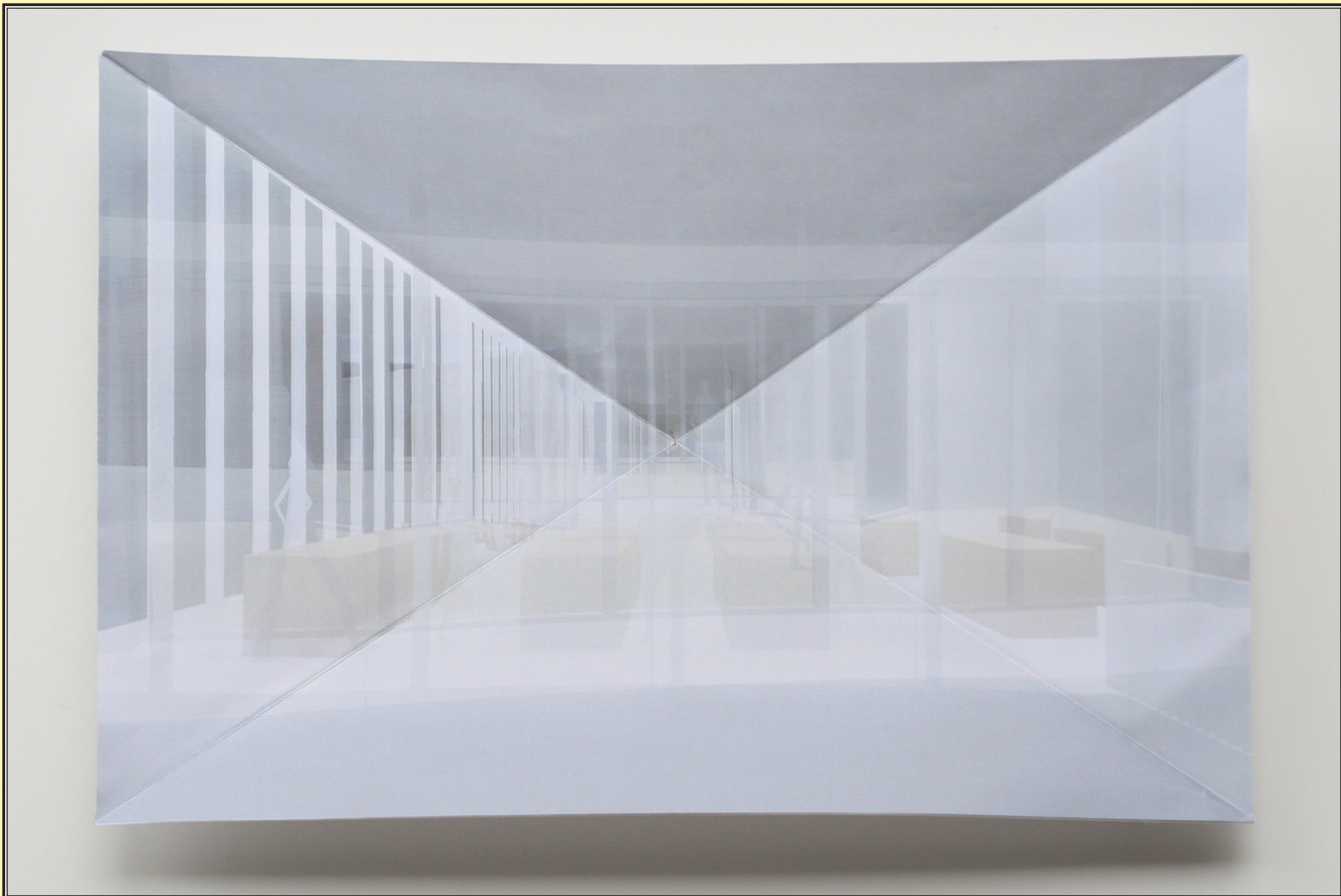
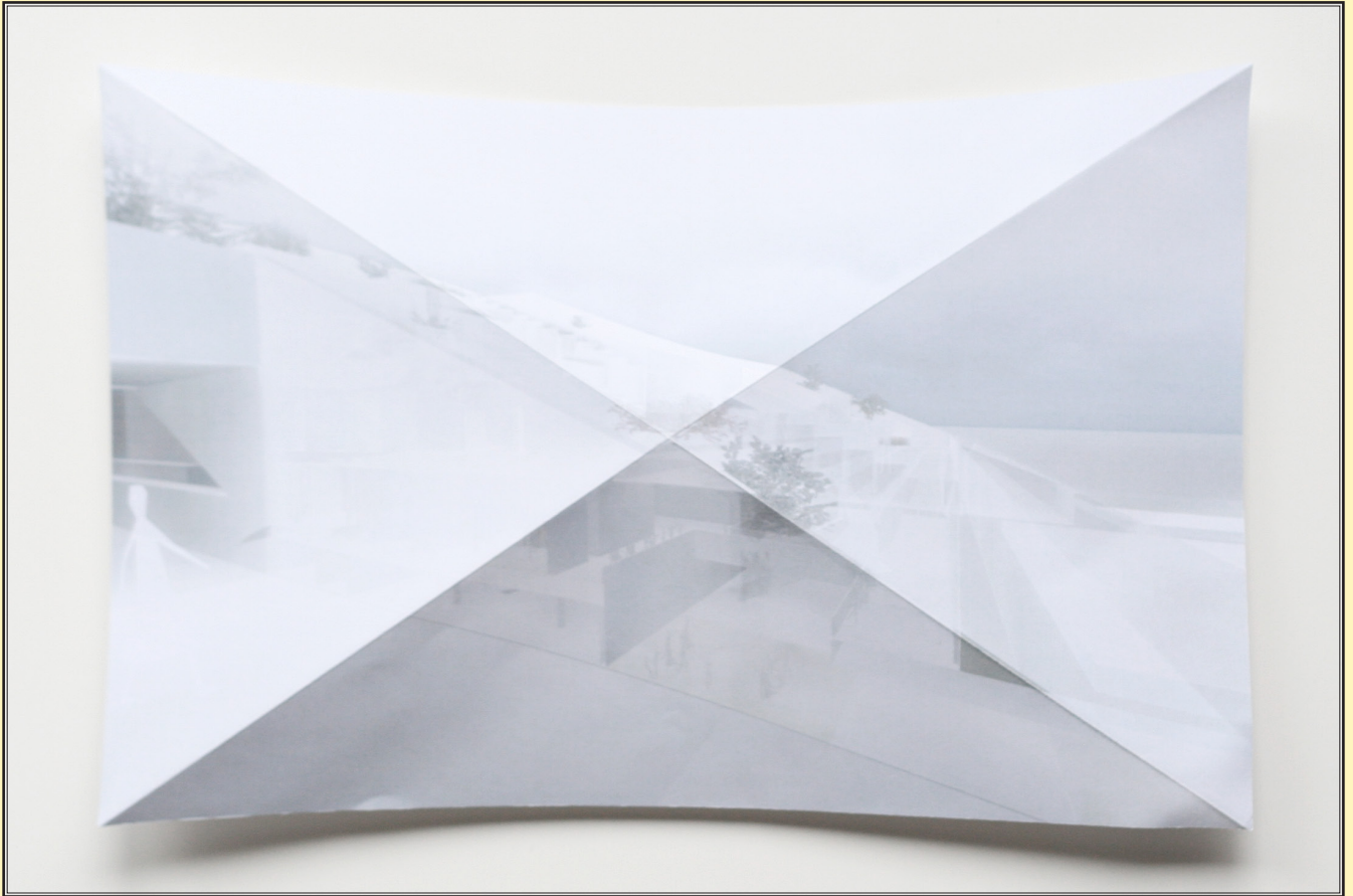


FIG 93 The act of folding suggests that space is only interpreted through our own actions. Space and time are not independent but co-dependent in a shared continuum.



*THE
ARCHITECTURE
OF
MYTH*



FIG 94 Burial mounds at Gyeongju,
South Korea.

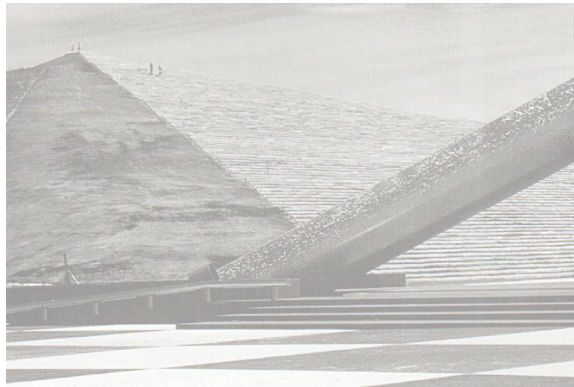
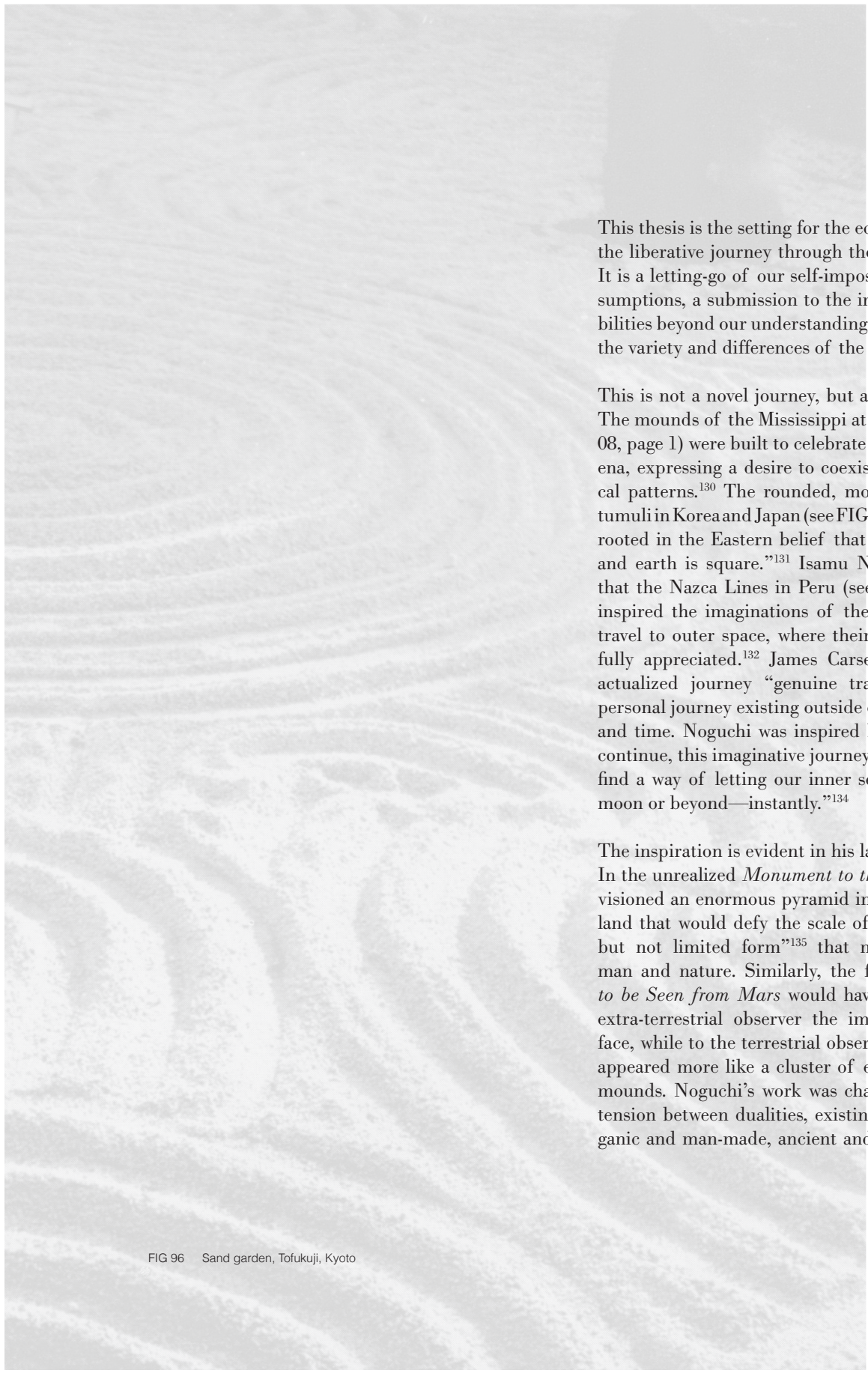


FIG 95 "Play Mountain" at Moere Numa Park in Sapporo, Japan, Isamu Noguchi's last commissioned work. Many of the concepts he explored in his unbuilt playground schemes for New York City were realized in the park.



This thesis is the setting for the ecstatic experience, the liberative journey through the Super Ordinary. It is a letting-go of our self-imposed orders and assumptions, a submission to the innumerable possibilities beyond our understanding, an acceptance of the variety and differences of the infinite game.¹²⁹

This is not a novel journey, but a timeless journey. The mounds of the Mississippi at Cahokia (see FIG 08, page 1) were built to celebrate celestial phenomena, expressing a desire to coexist with astronomical patterns.¹³⁰ The rounded, mound-like form of tumuli in Korea and Japan (see FIG 94, page 122) were rooted in the Eastern belief that “heaven is round and earth is square.”¹³¹ Isamu Noguchi suggested that the Nazca Lines in Peru (see FIG 11, page 1) inspired the imaginations of the Nazca people to travel to outer space, where their images could be fully appreciated.¹³² James Carse called this self-actualized journey “genuine travel,”¹³³ a deeply personal journey existing outside of universal space and time. Noguchi was inspired by, and sought to continue, this imaginative journey: “one day we will find a way of letting our inner selves travel to the moon or beyond—instantly.”¹³⁴

The inspiration is evident in his largest earthworks. In the unrealized *Monument to the Plough*, he envisioned an enormous pyramid in America’s heartland that would defy the scale of man, a “definite but not limited form”¹³⁵ that mediated between man and nature. Similarly, the fanciful *Sculpture to be Seen from Mars* would have projected to an extra-terrestrial observer the image of a human face, while to the terrestrial observer, it would have appeared more like a cluster of enormous earthen mounds. Noguchi’s work was characterized by the tension between dualities, existing between the organic and man-made, ancient and modern, Ameri-

FIG 96 Sand garden, Tofukuji, Kyoto

can and Japanese.

At the same time, he wanted his work to be accessible, and in the everyday context. “You don’t have to go all the way to the moon to do something,” he said. “You can do it right here.”¹³⁶ His enigmatic forms provoke and move our imaginations; they are not objects to be put on pedestals, but environments to be interacted with and immersed within,¹³⁷ allowing a journey to take place within the participant. To Plummer, true play emerges from this spatial dialectic:

...abundant in unfixed opportunities, being plural rather than singular, suggestive rather than literal [...] it is within this margin of excess and superfluous space that people are liberated to make their own personal moves and gain some control over their own experience.¹³⁸

Playgrounds, in particular, allowed Noguchi to create imaginary landscapes within the city. The ludic sensibilities of children made for ideal ‘clients’, and he revelled in creating miniaturized topologies for “the more intense experience of childhood.”¹³⁹ For instance, his scheme for *Play Mountain* was similar to *Monument to the Plough*, but designed to fit within a New York City block. The mountain was a response to the fenced-in playgrounds that Noguchi abhorred; instead, Noguchi intended to imply a journey “outward beyond the boundaries of the park.”¹⁴⁰ The bandshell that faced the front of the pyramidal mountain created a ‘dual stage’ relationship between the two, while its other faces were quarried to create natural slopes on which children could climb, slide, or jump into a large pool. This was an object without pretensions, open to the playfulness of its users—a “laboratory of experience.”¹⁴¹



The games of adulthood, on the other hand, are less playful. The adult world is, as Carse described it, “marked by boundaries of contest,”¹⁴² the boundaries of finite games. As competitors, we cannot truly play, only *play-act*; we convince ourselves that play is serious, the means to an end that is demanded by an audience. Our play is restricted to the theatres of games by our own self-veiling. Thus veiled, we limit our own creativity.

Architecture, as the setting for these finite games, is often itself a closed game, whose rules, codes, and classifications are efforts to preclude the possibility of surprise. In the play-grounds of adulthood, everything is a game, but in the playgrounds of childhood, the game *is* everything.

Despite this, there are architects that practice truly playful architecture, open-ended frameworks for infinite play in a world ruled by finite games. Significantly, they cannot profess to control the destiny of their creations, but submit instead to the possibilities of new interpretations. Rem Koolhaas described his scheme for Parc de la Villette (see page 45) as “a framework capable of absorbing an endless series of further meanings.” SANAA, at the completion of the Rolex Learning Centre (see page 53), looked forward to how its users would “appropriate the unconventional spaces,” only hoping that their design would “[stimulate] new activities.”¹⁴³ Truly playful spaces are, like the playgrounds of Noguchi, the laboratories of experience, where personal narratives can be forged.

Architecture, as an open game, assumes the quality of myth. To Carse, myths are those stories that are told solely for the sake of being told: “great stories cannot be observed, any more than an infinite game can have an audience.” As open-ended architecture becomes myth, myth becomes open-ended architecture; our stories emerge from a dialectical engagement with the space. “Once I hear the story I enter into its own dimensionality. I inhabit its space at its time.”¹⁴⁴ While closed systems, or ideologies, repeat a story, myths *resonate* with our personal experiences, relating them to one another as the infinite game suspends finite game within it. “Their strength as stories lies in their ability to invite us into their

drama [...] a drama that contains an entire history of voices, sounding and resounding from a thousand sources in our culture.”¹⁴⁵ An architecture of myth must appeal to the dramas and myths of our culture while simultaneously providing for the quantum possibilities of the Super Ordinary. Therefore, at Lamport Field, the consistency of a single author submits to the “irrepressible resonance”¹⁴⁶ of a greater cultural myth: the sacred mound, where we have long sought to reconcile our existence with the vastness of the universe. As a myth that challenges and provokes us, Lamport Field becomes the place of emergent stories.

Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy wrote that “the space of play and the space of thought are the two theatres of freedom.”¹⁴⁷ But the drama of true play is found in their elusive intersection: where the game meets the imagination.

Lamport Stadium is the site of a closed, and therefore *finite* game, a place whose experiences are defined by the end of the game, when winners and losers are defined. Lamport Field, on the other hand, is an open, and therefore *infinite* game, a place whose experiences resonate with the playfulness of the field itself. The stadium becomes the playground, where we rekindle our imaginations to recognize the possibilities that we “[know] to be there but cannot apprehend at once.”¹⁴⁸ The suggestive ambiguity of its formal language, the juxtaposition of programme, and the superposition of possibilities form the mythical framework for the heroic journeys of infinite players, a “story that continues to originate what they cannot finish.”¹⁴⁹

The veil is lifted; we discover the world anew.

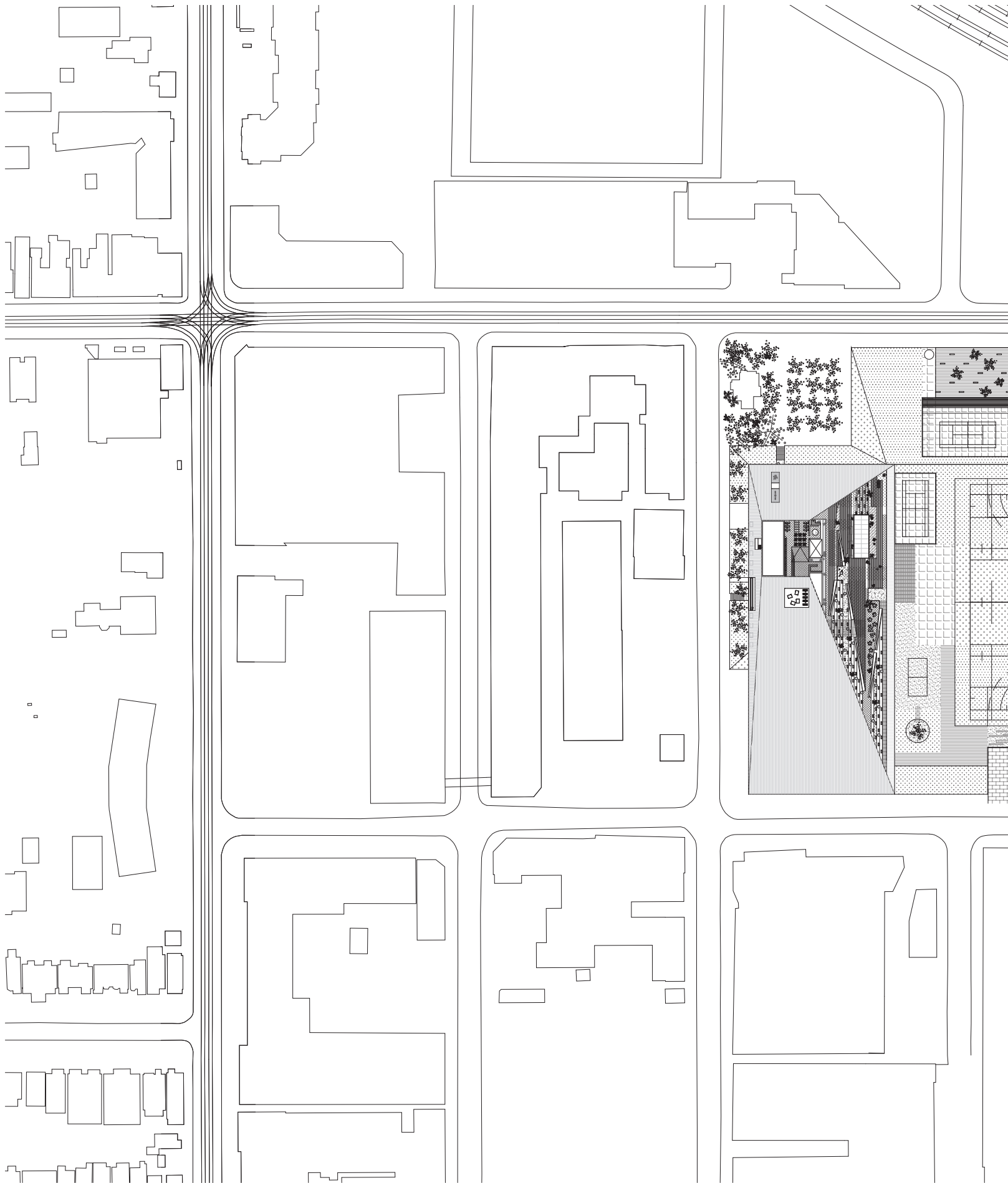


FIG 97 Isamu Noguchi, "Contoured Playground" (unrealized, 1941).

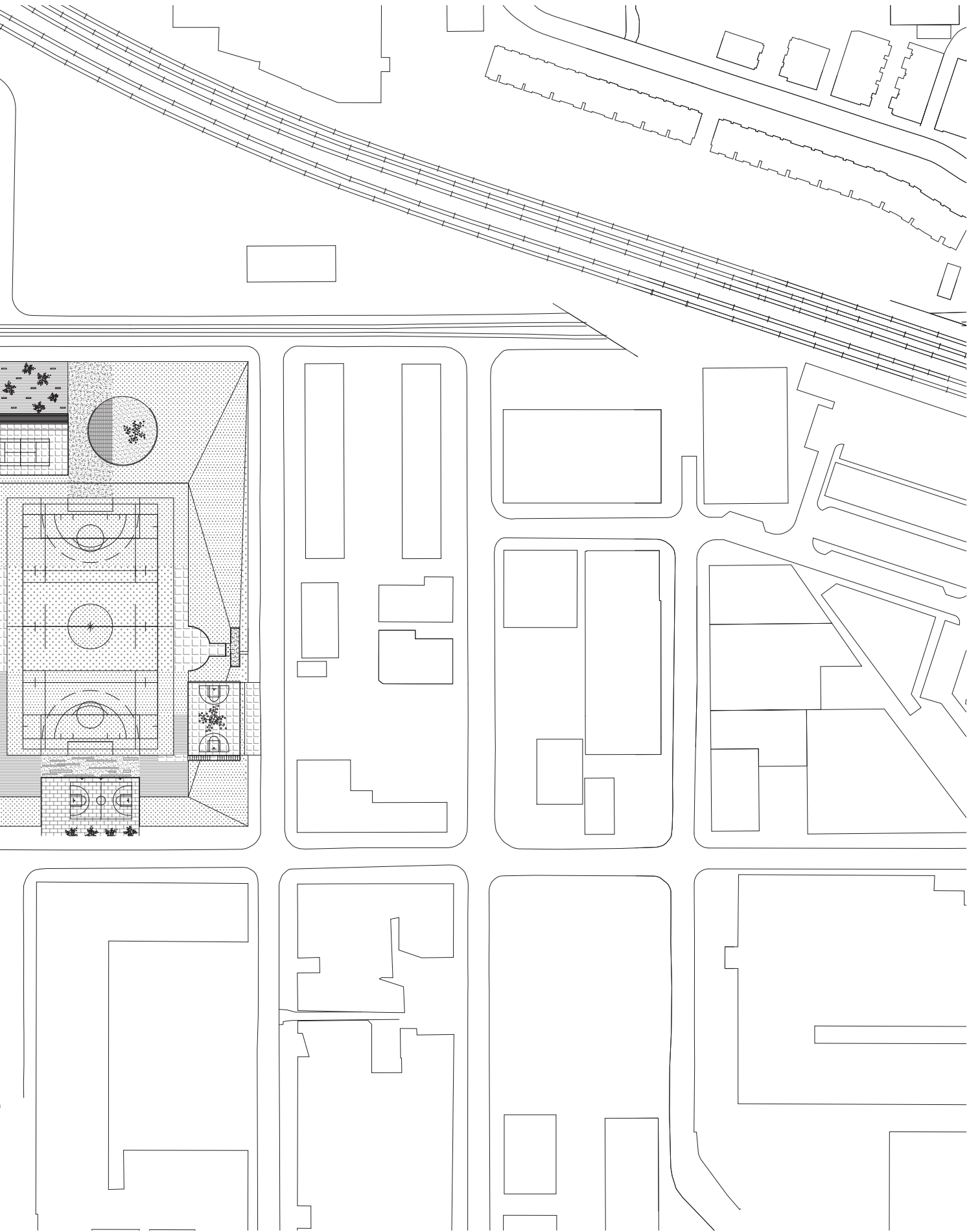
FIG 98 Overleaf: Forest at Gyeongju.
The journey continues...

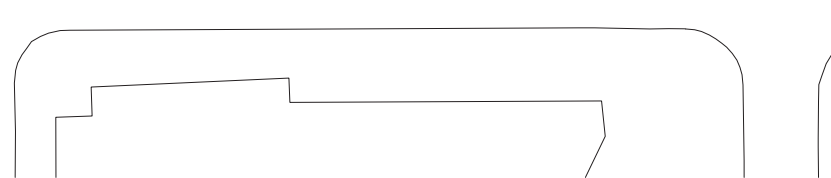
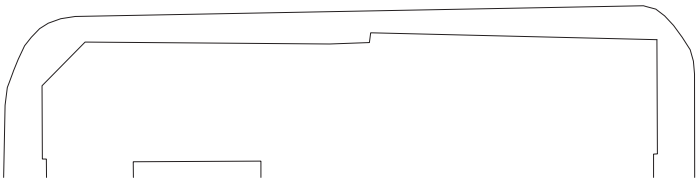
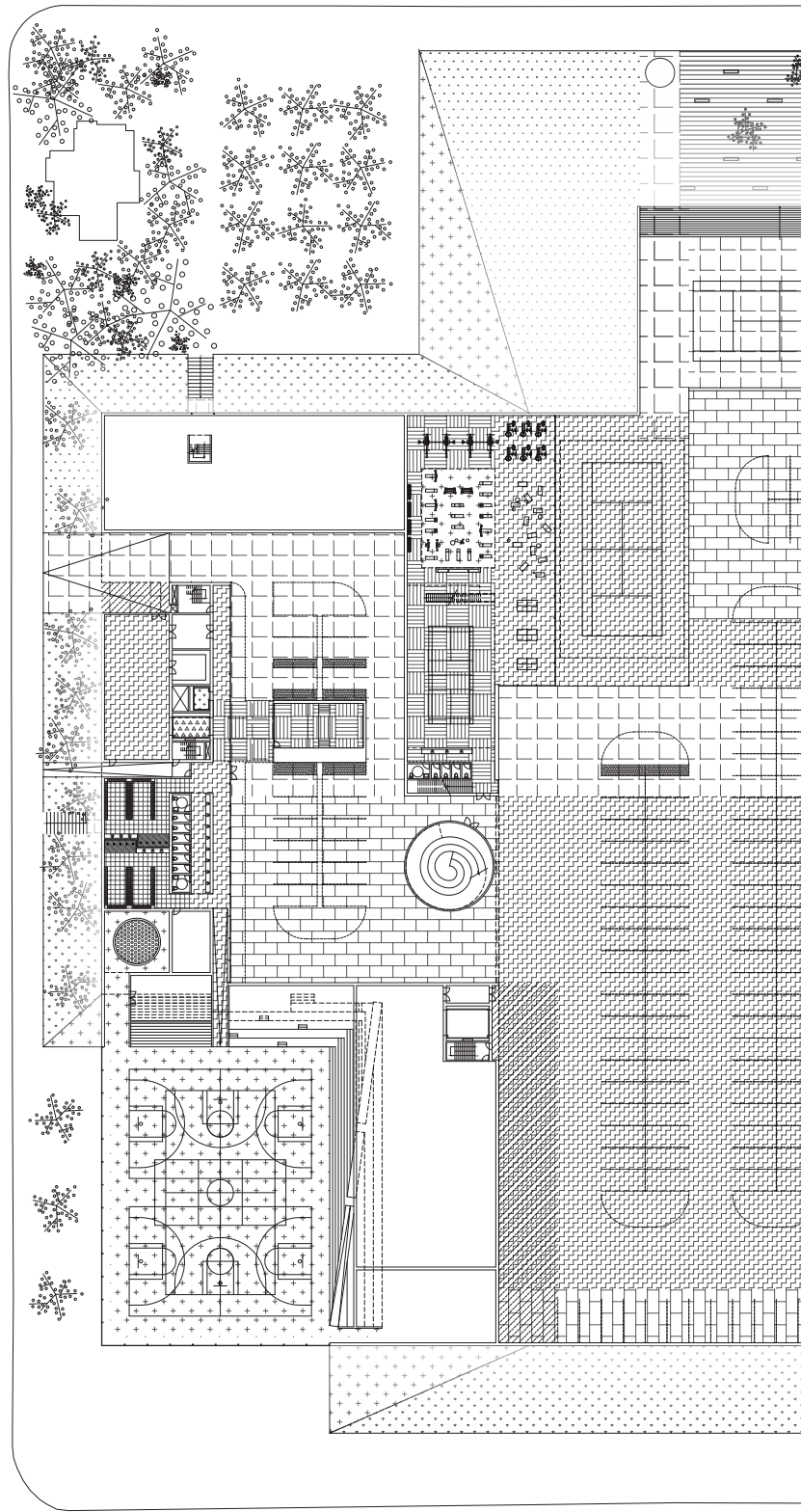
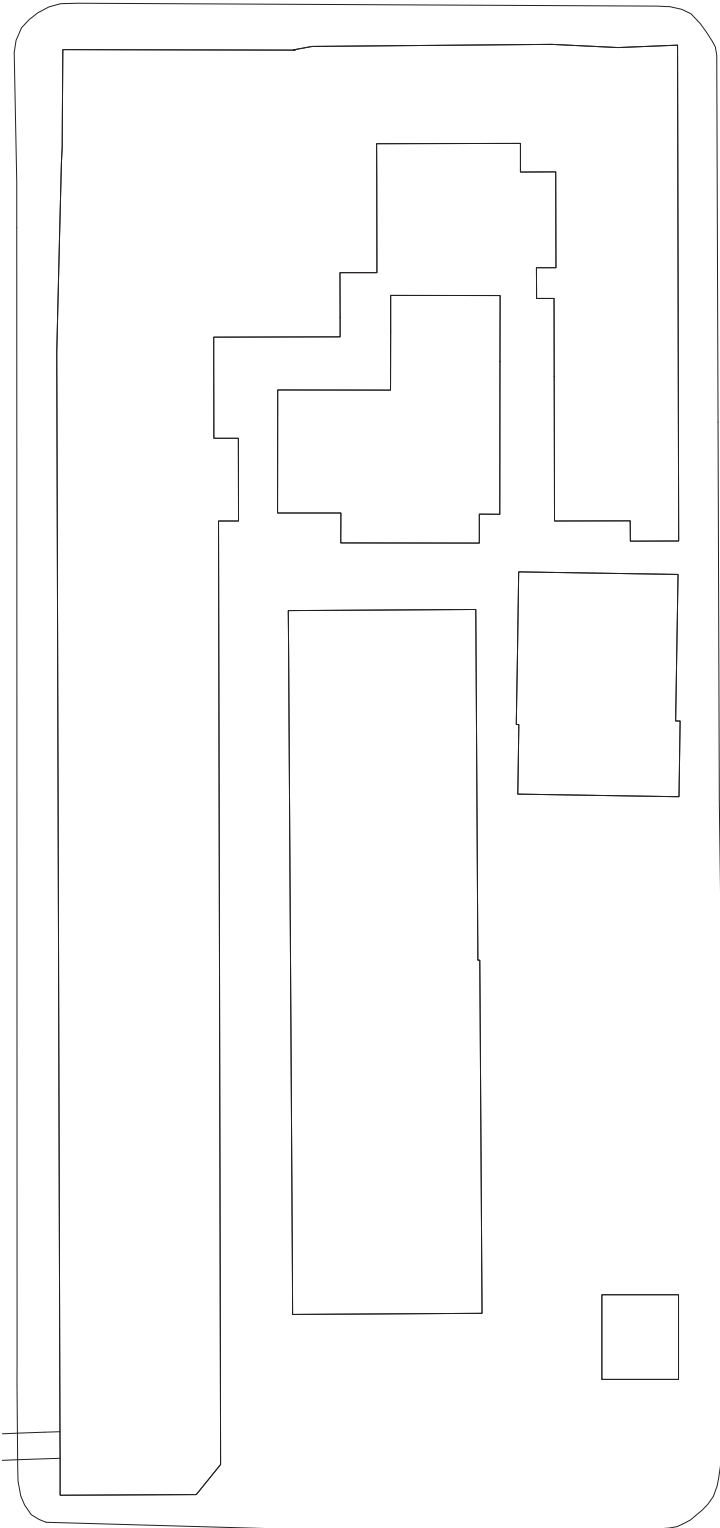


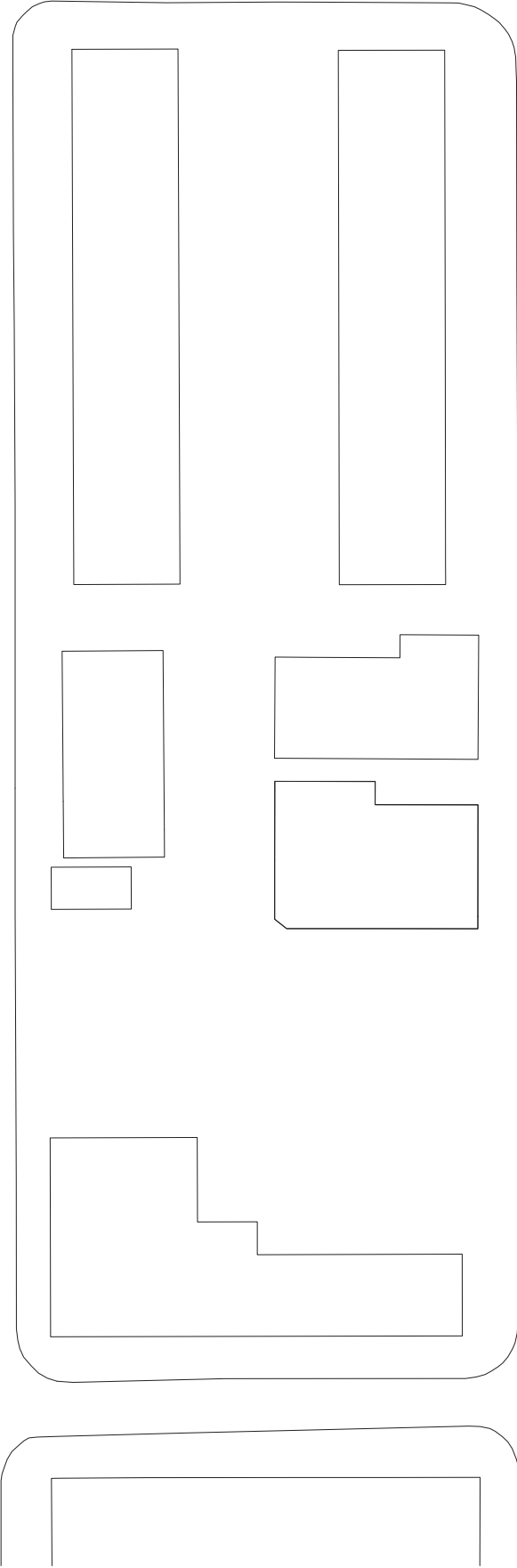
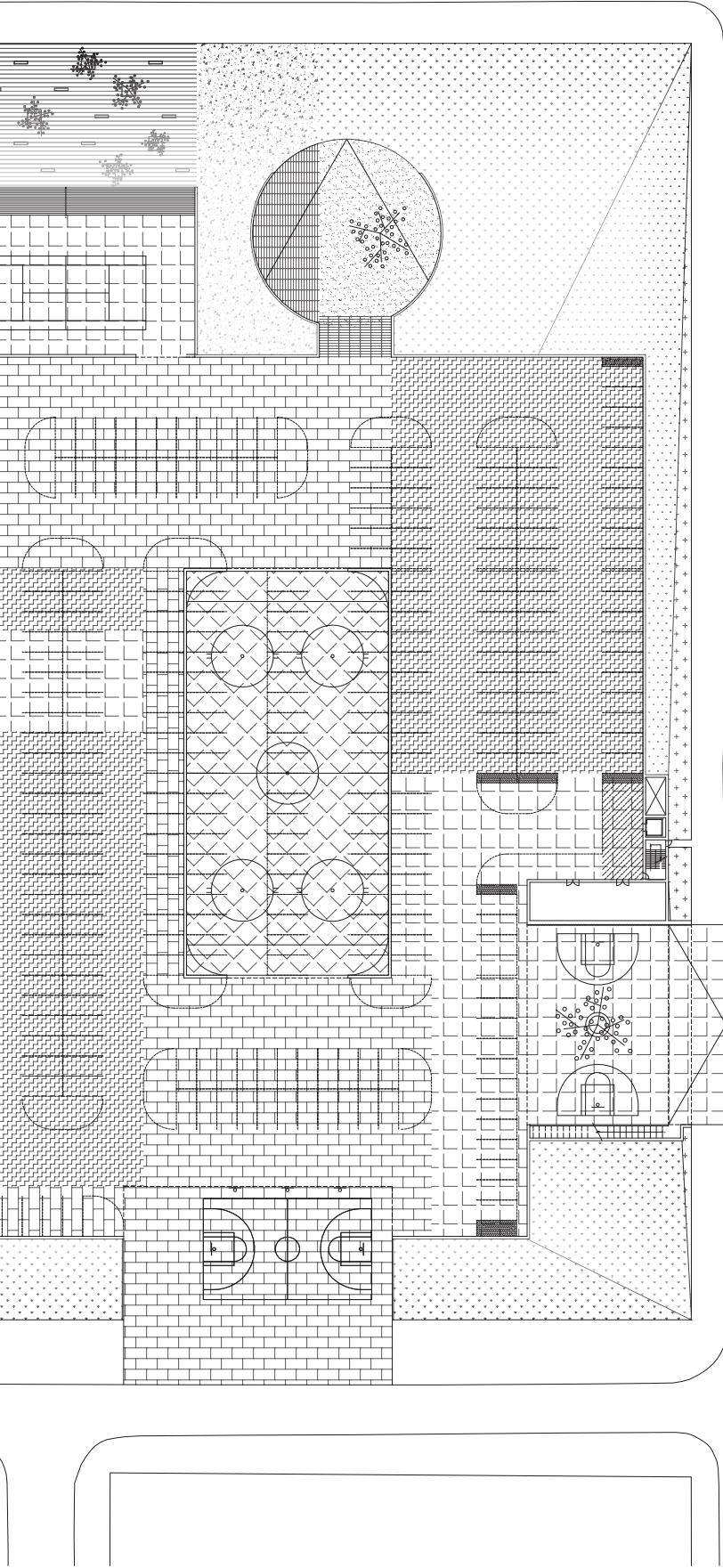
APPENDIX A
LAMPORT FIELD
DRAWING SET

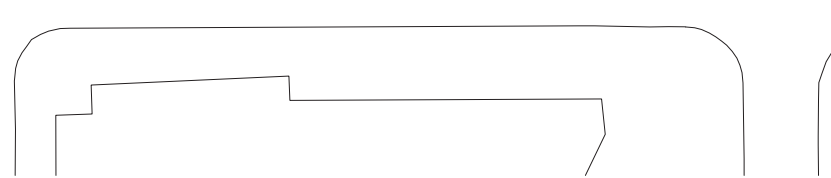
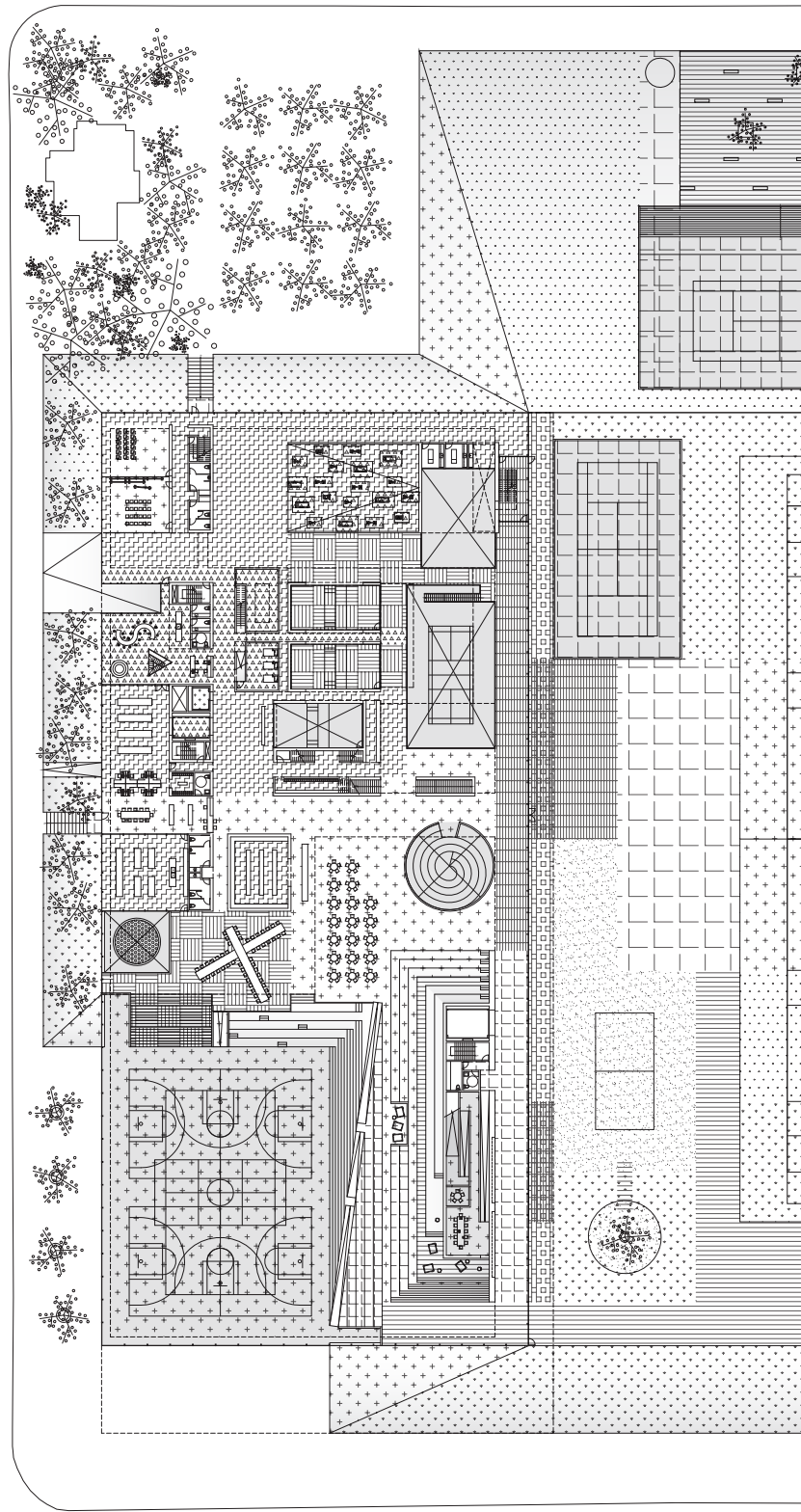
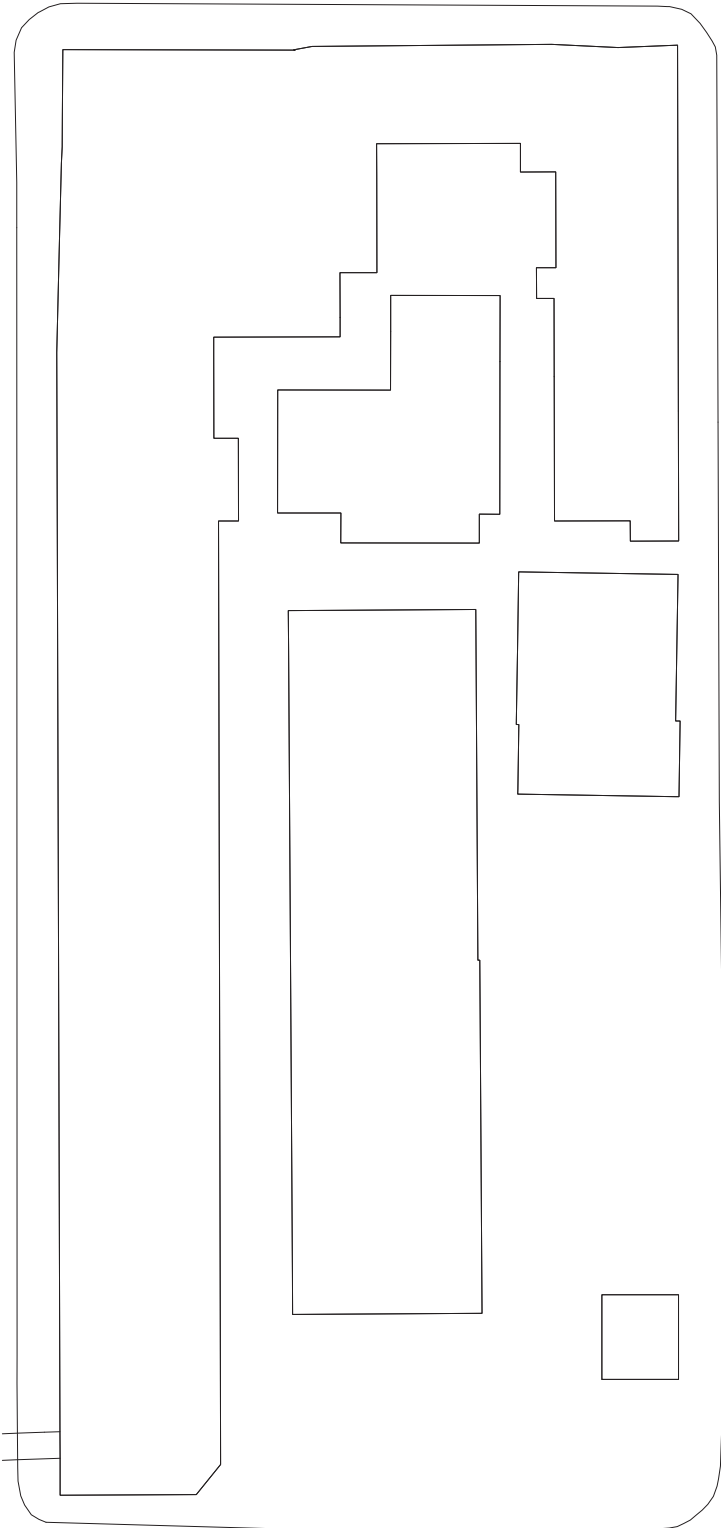


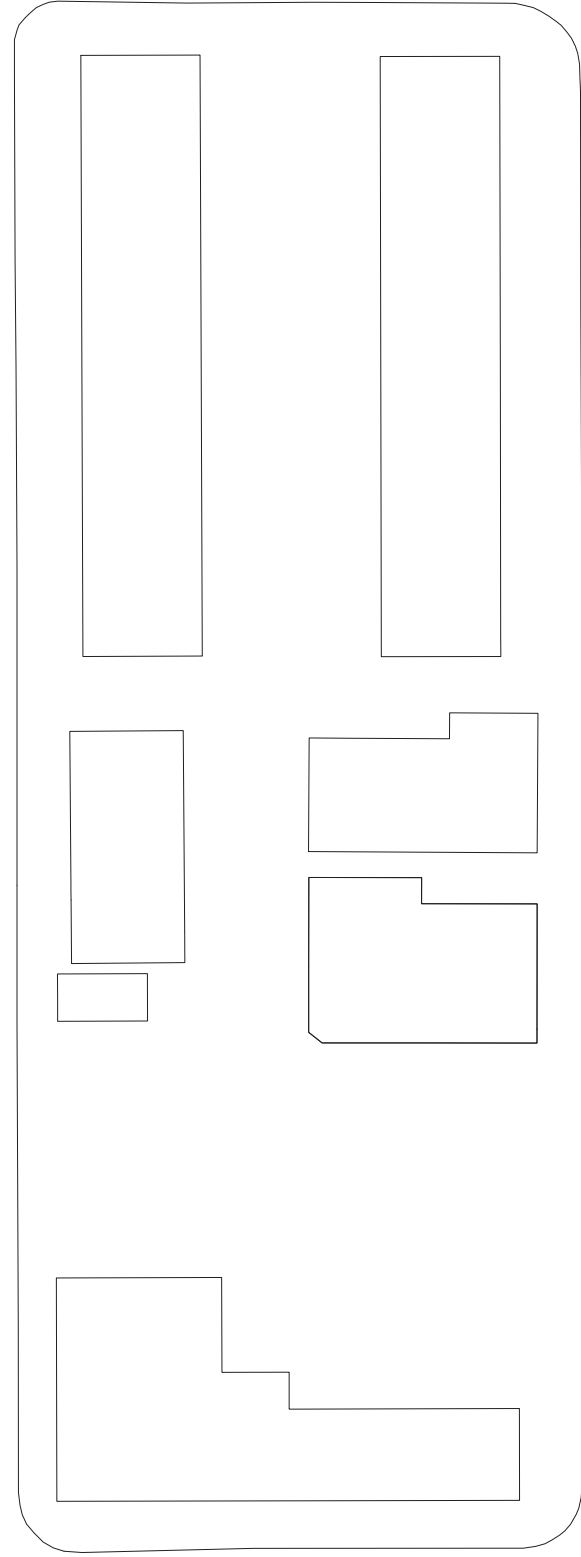
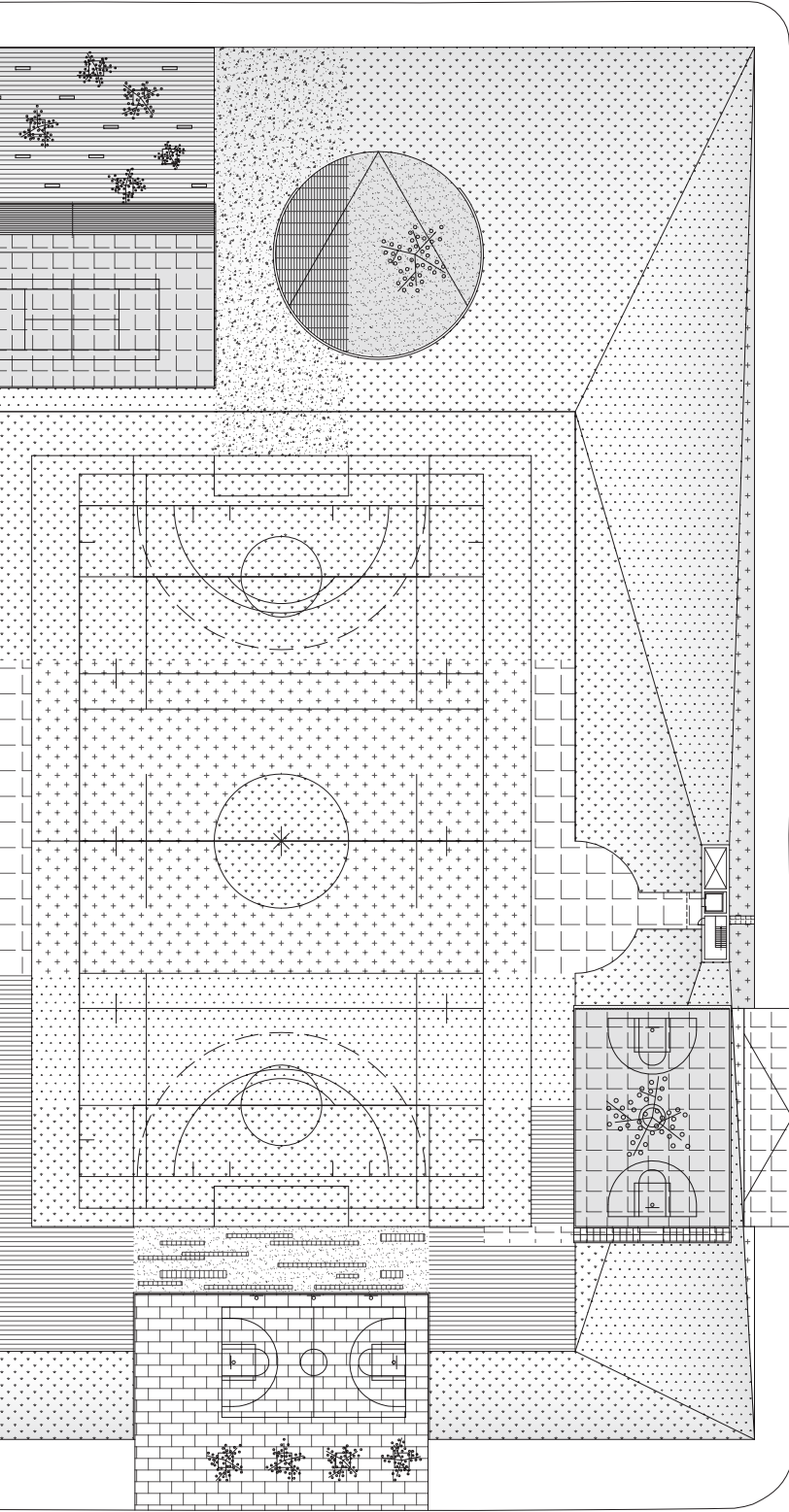
APPENDIX A



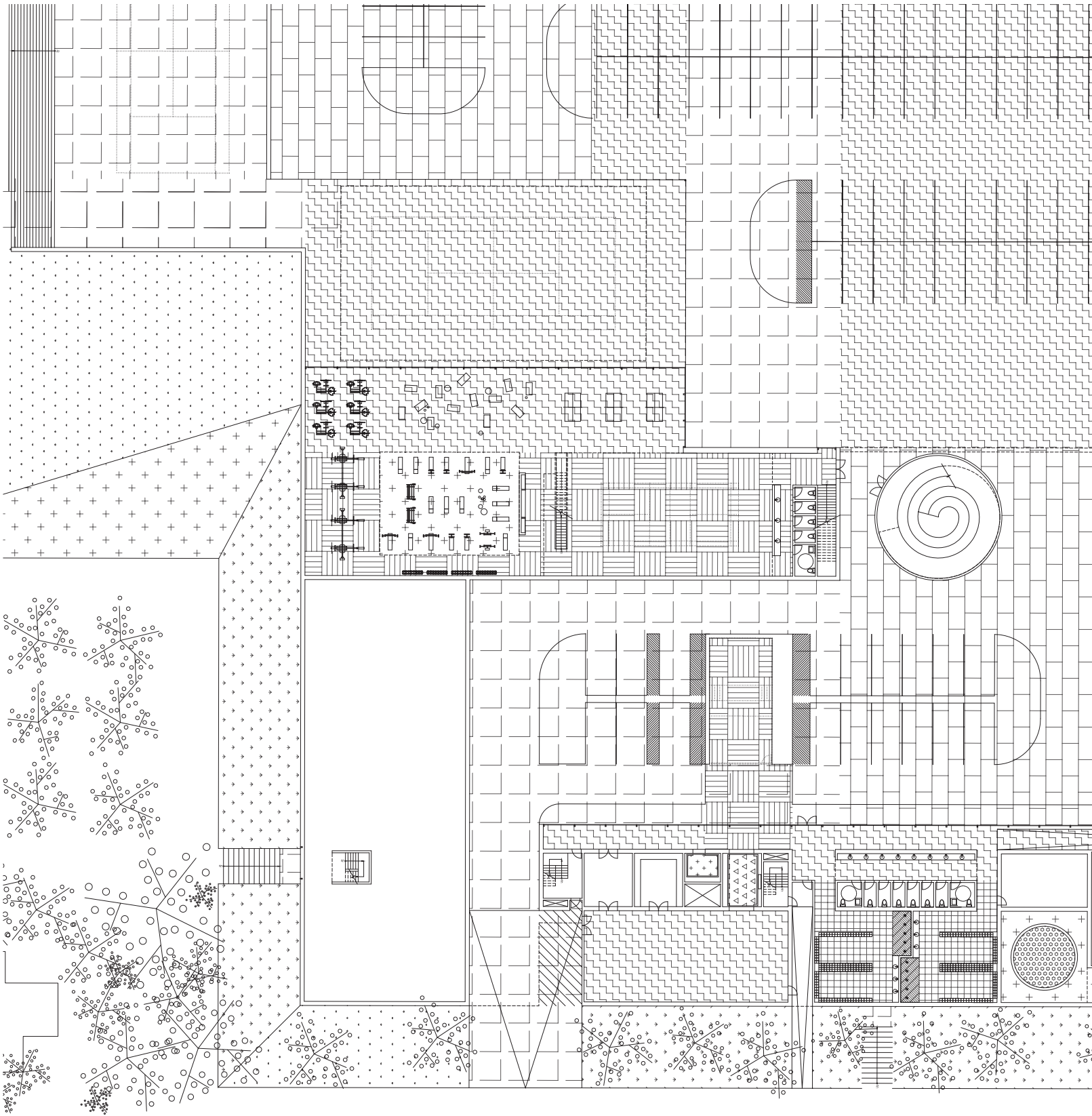




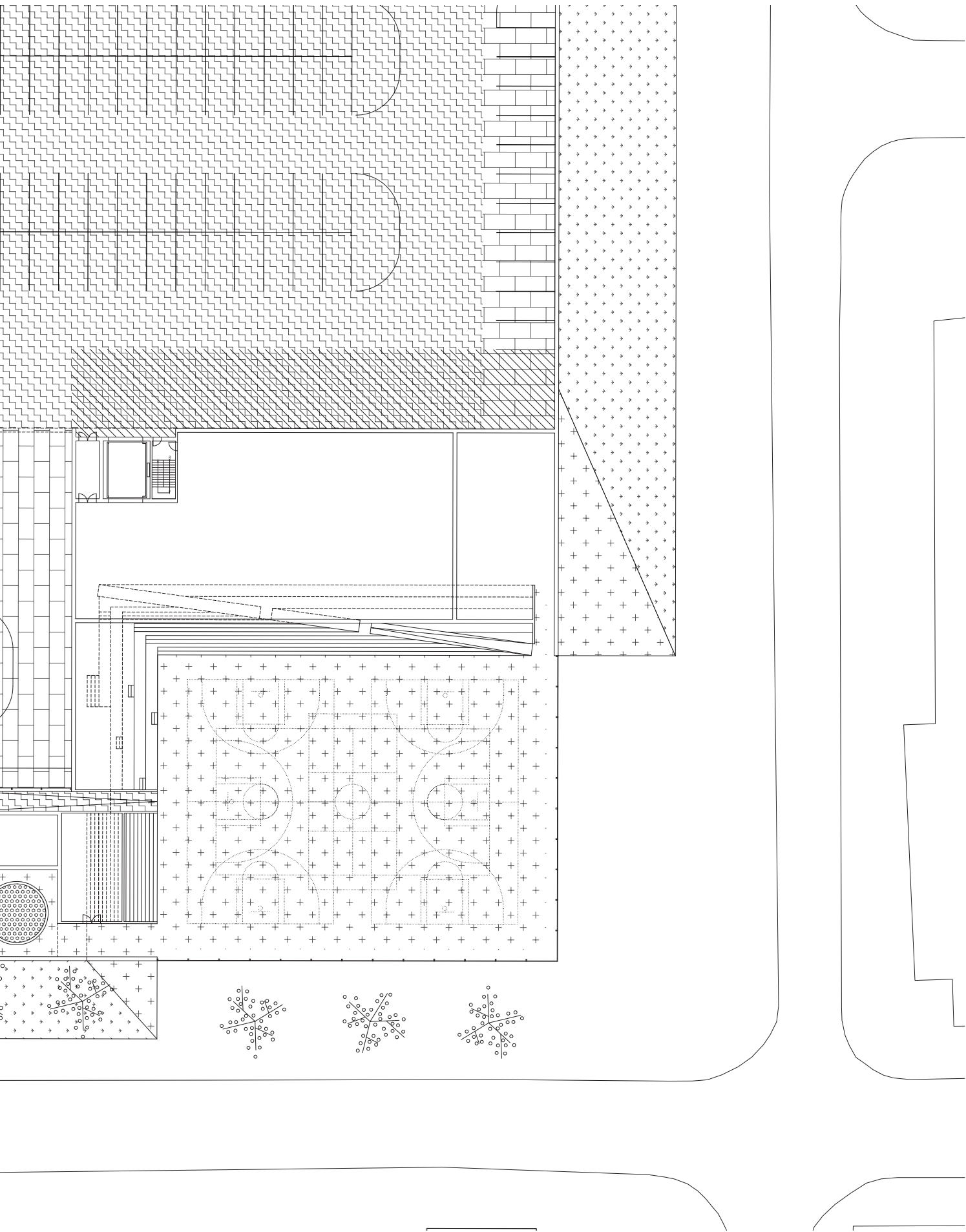




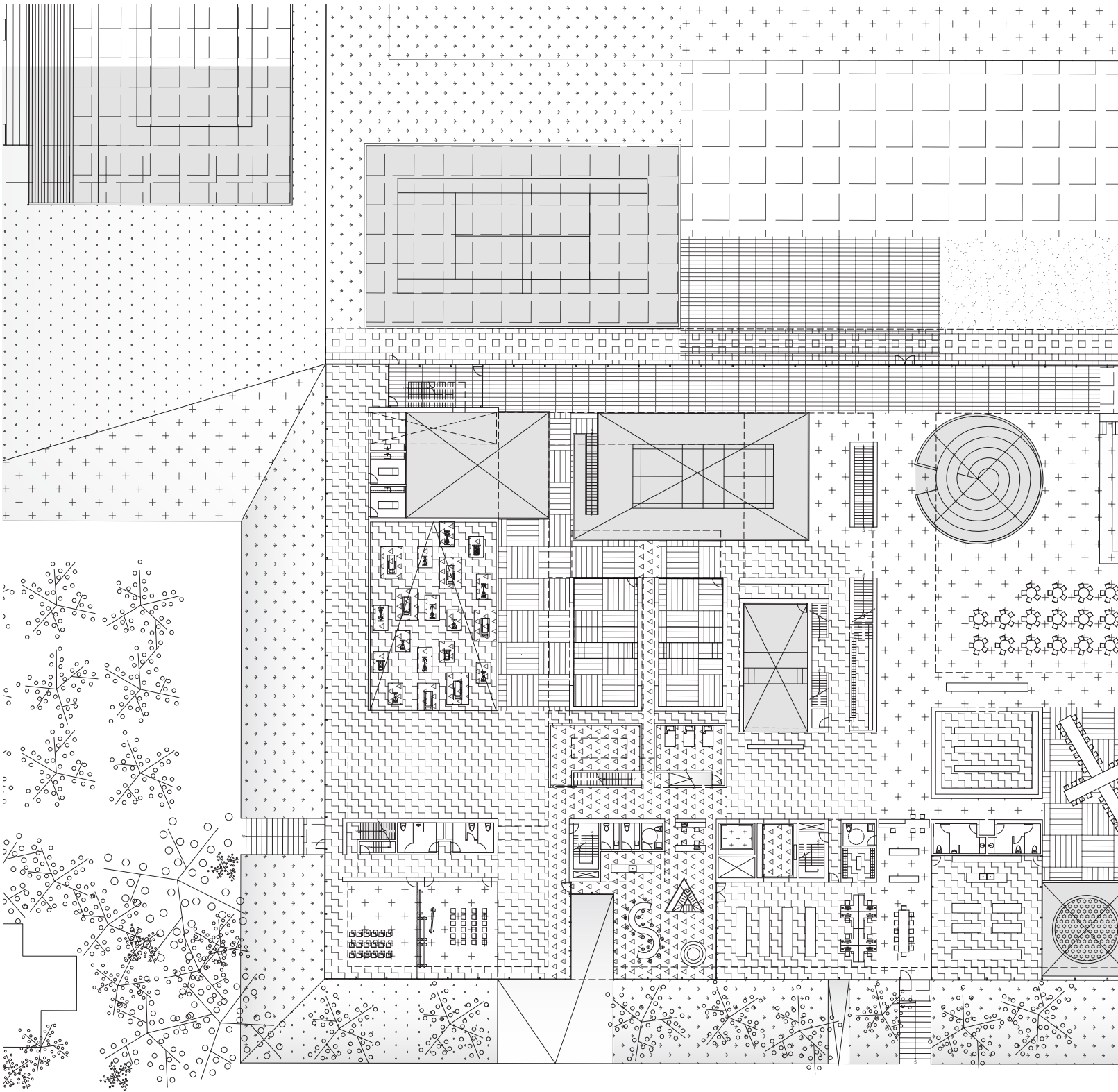
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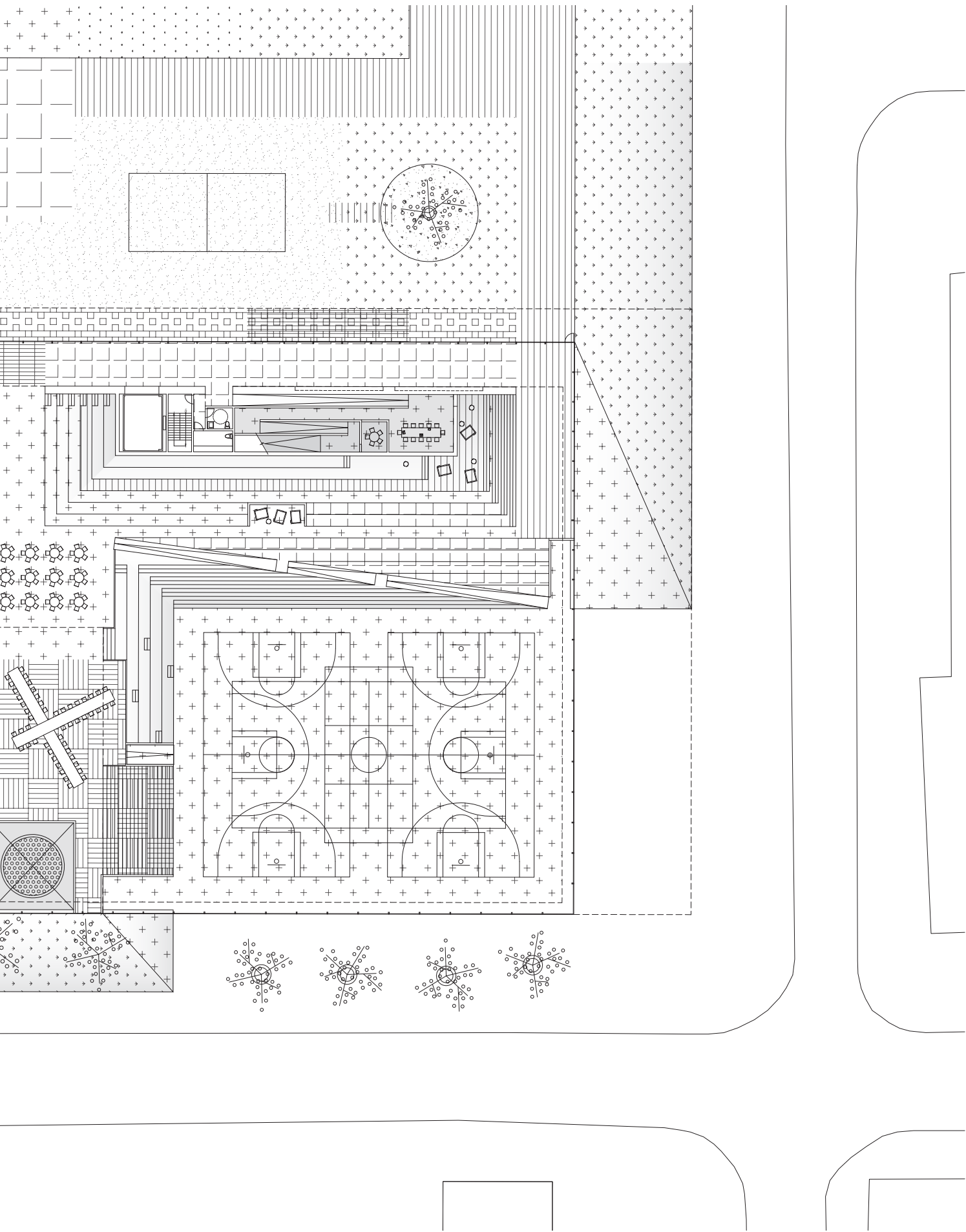


APPENDIX A



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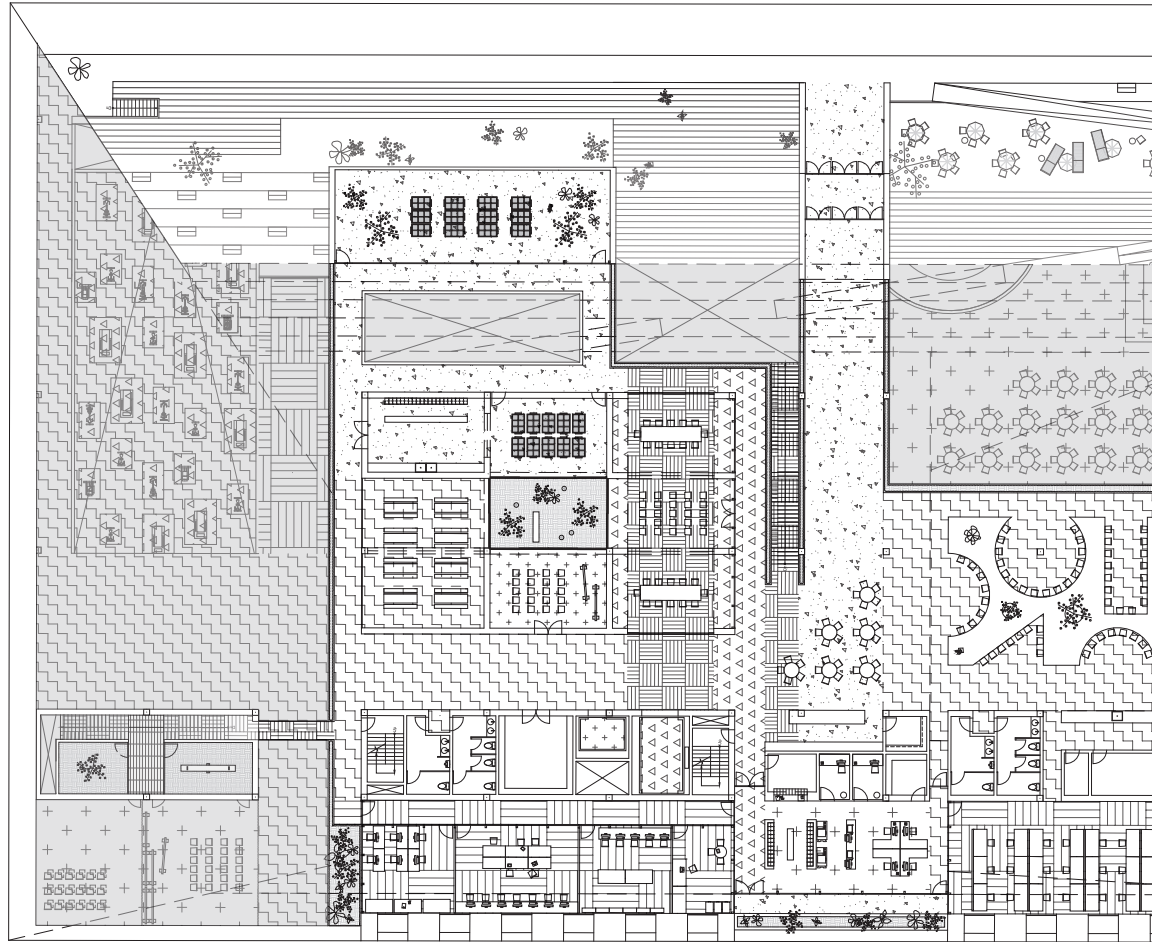
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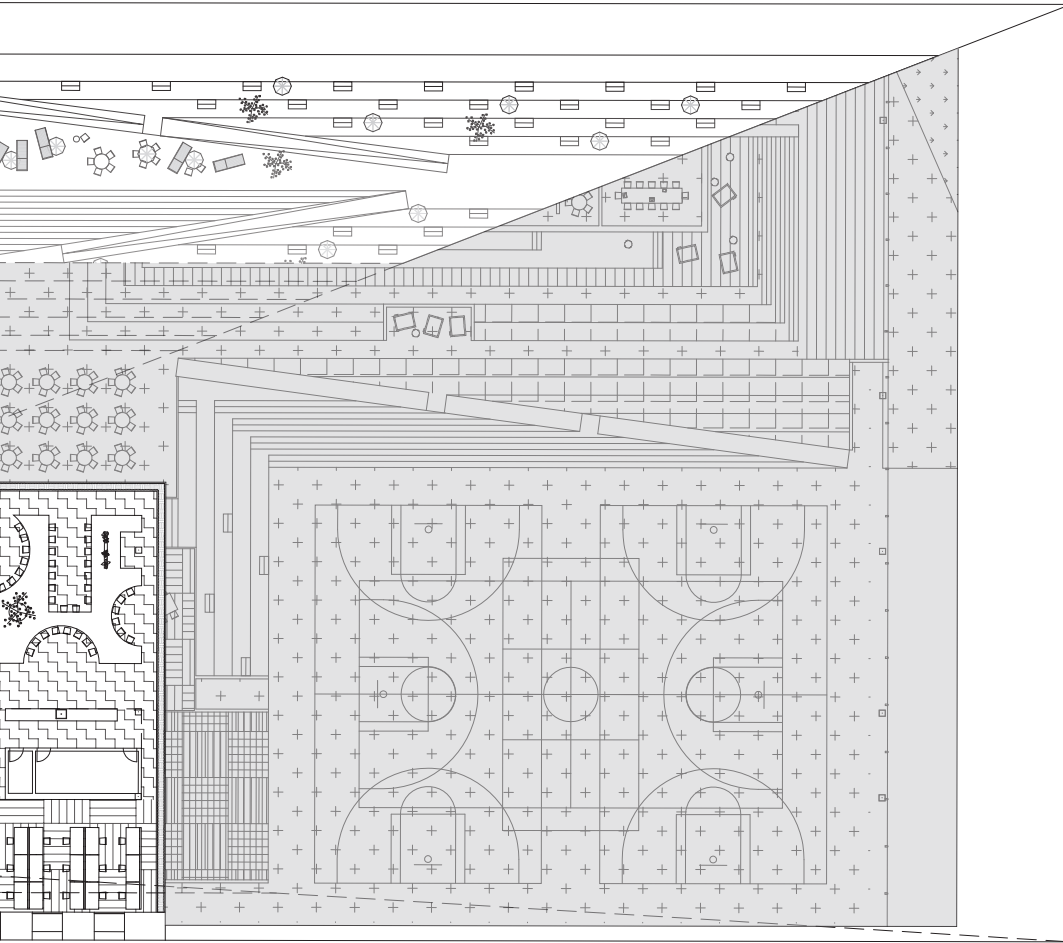
Super Ordinary
Lamport Stadium, Toronto

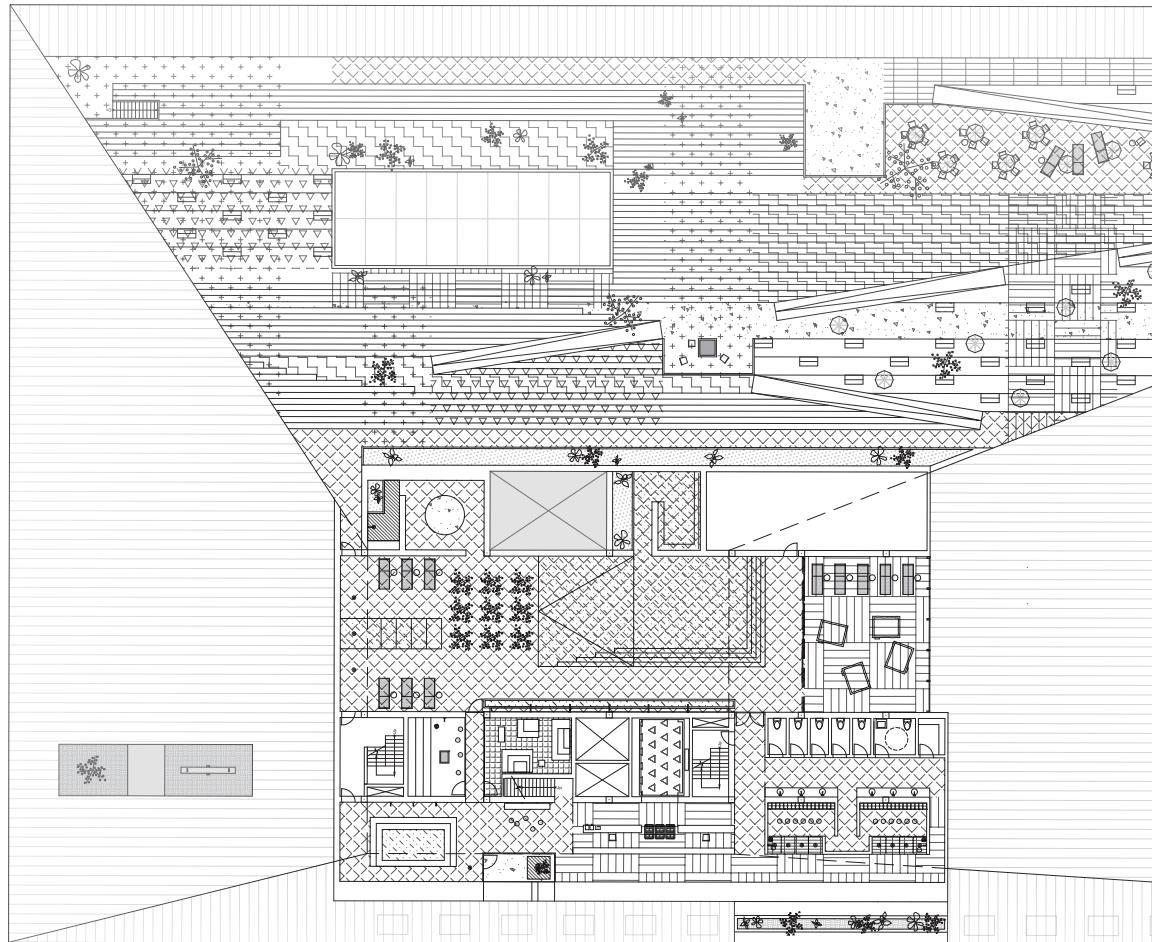
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shiftoperations.net

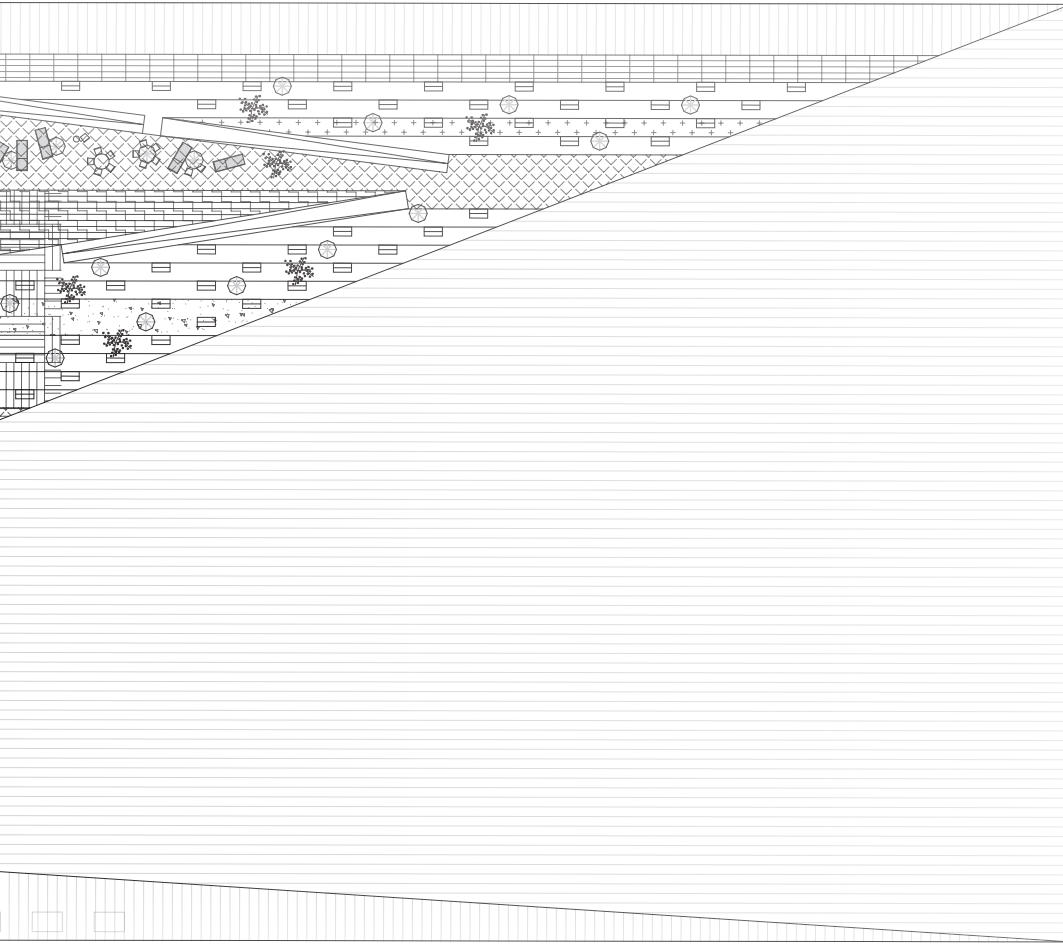


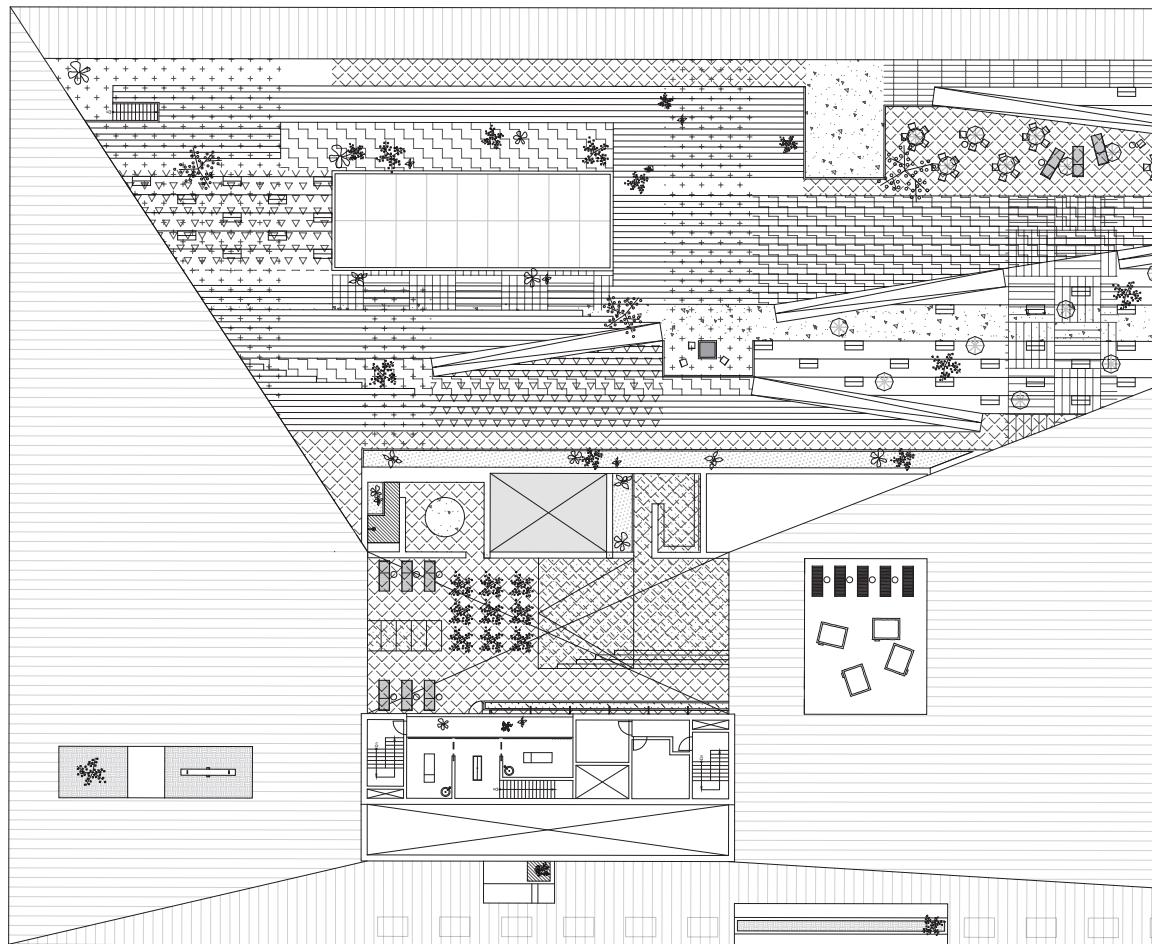
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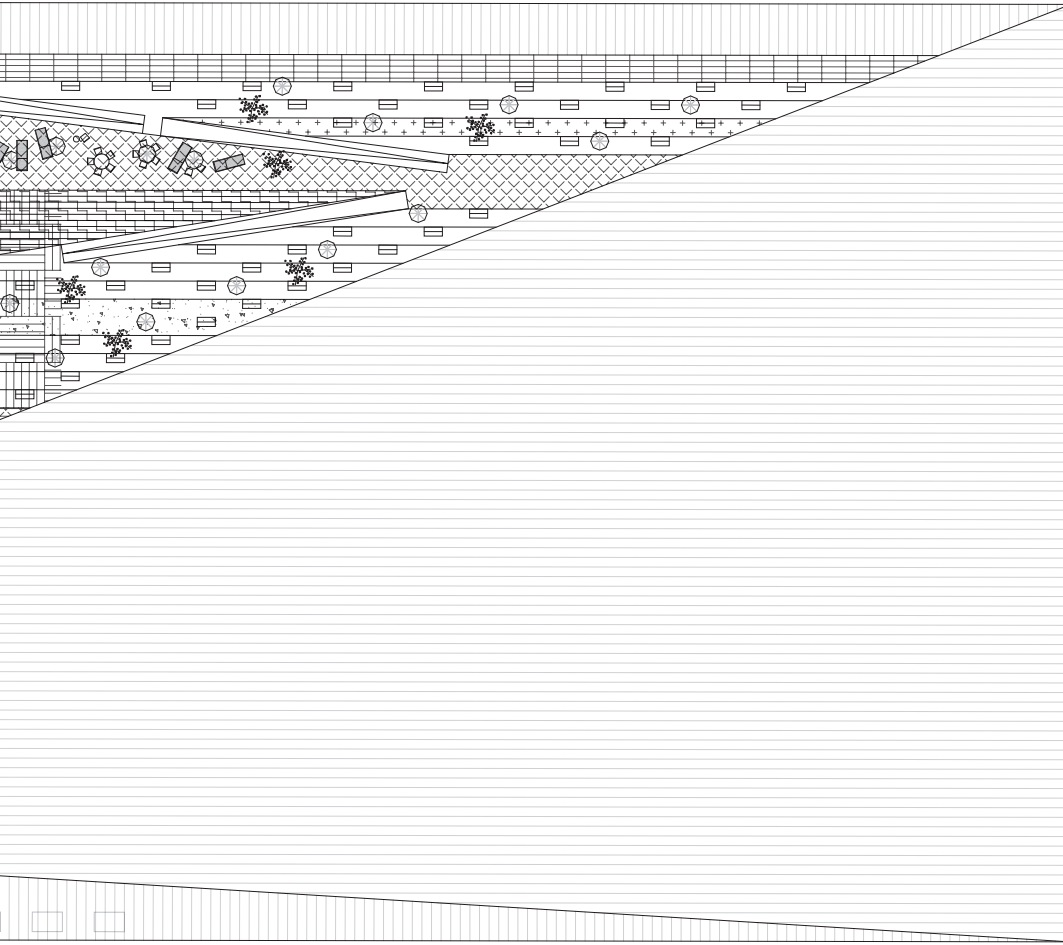


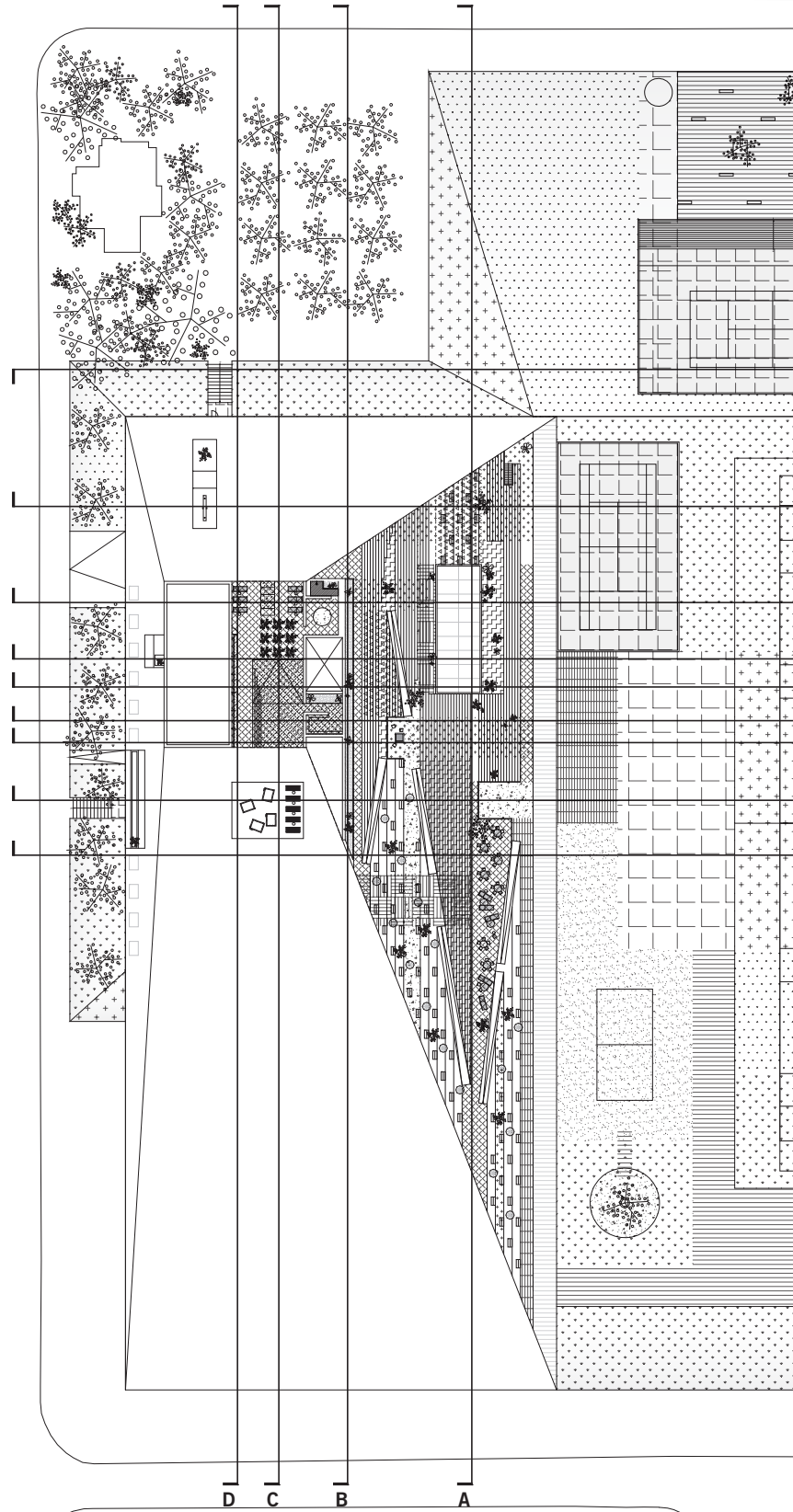
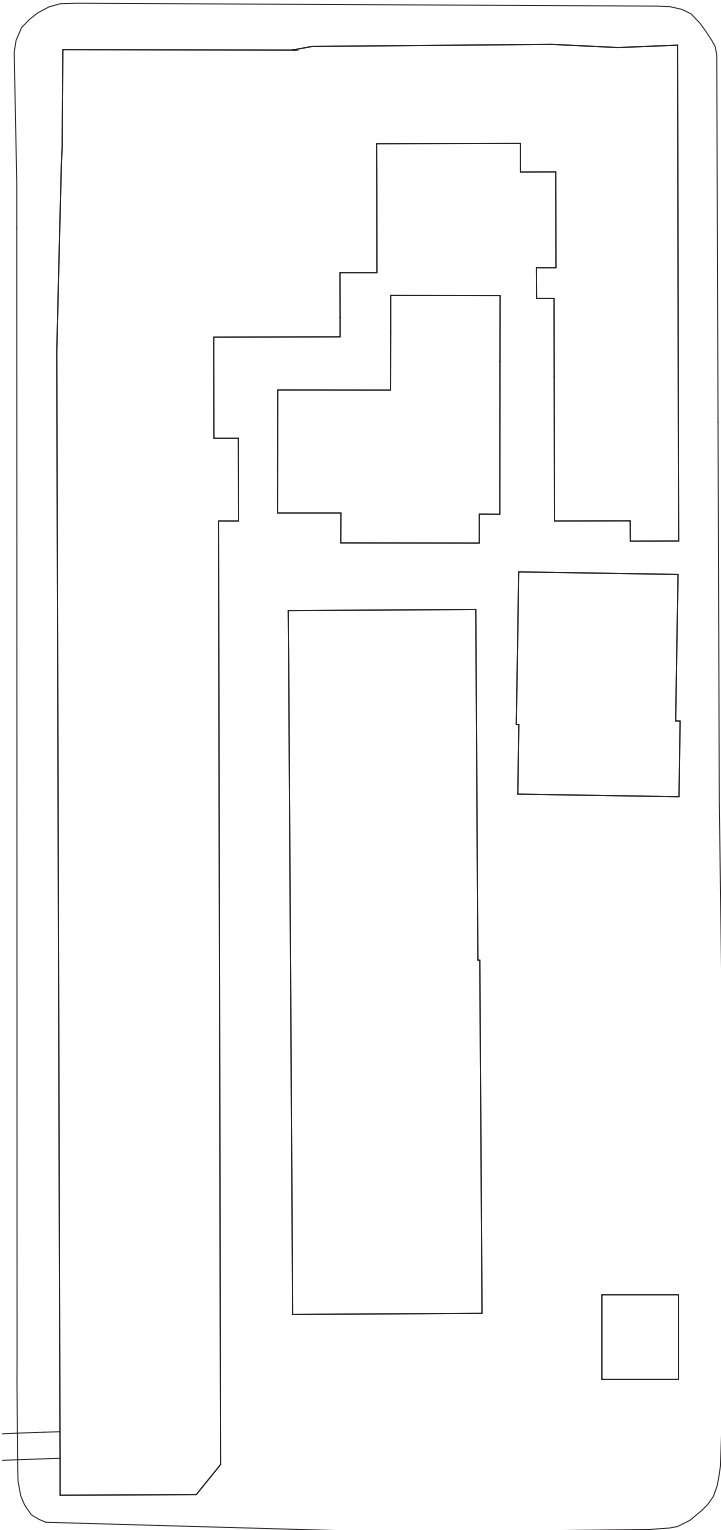




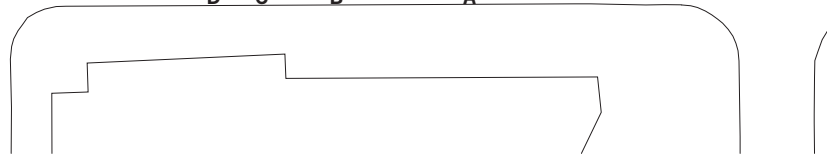
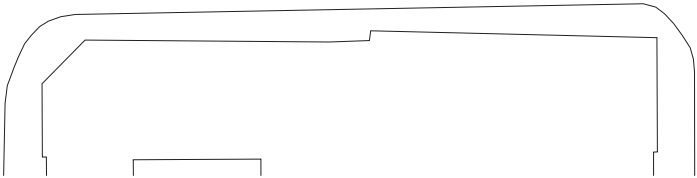


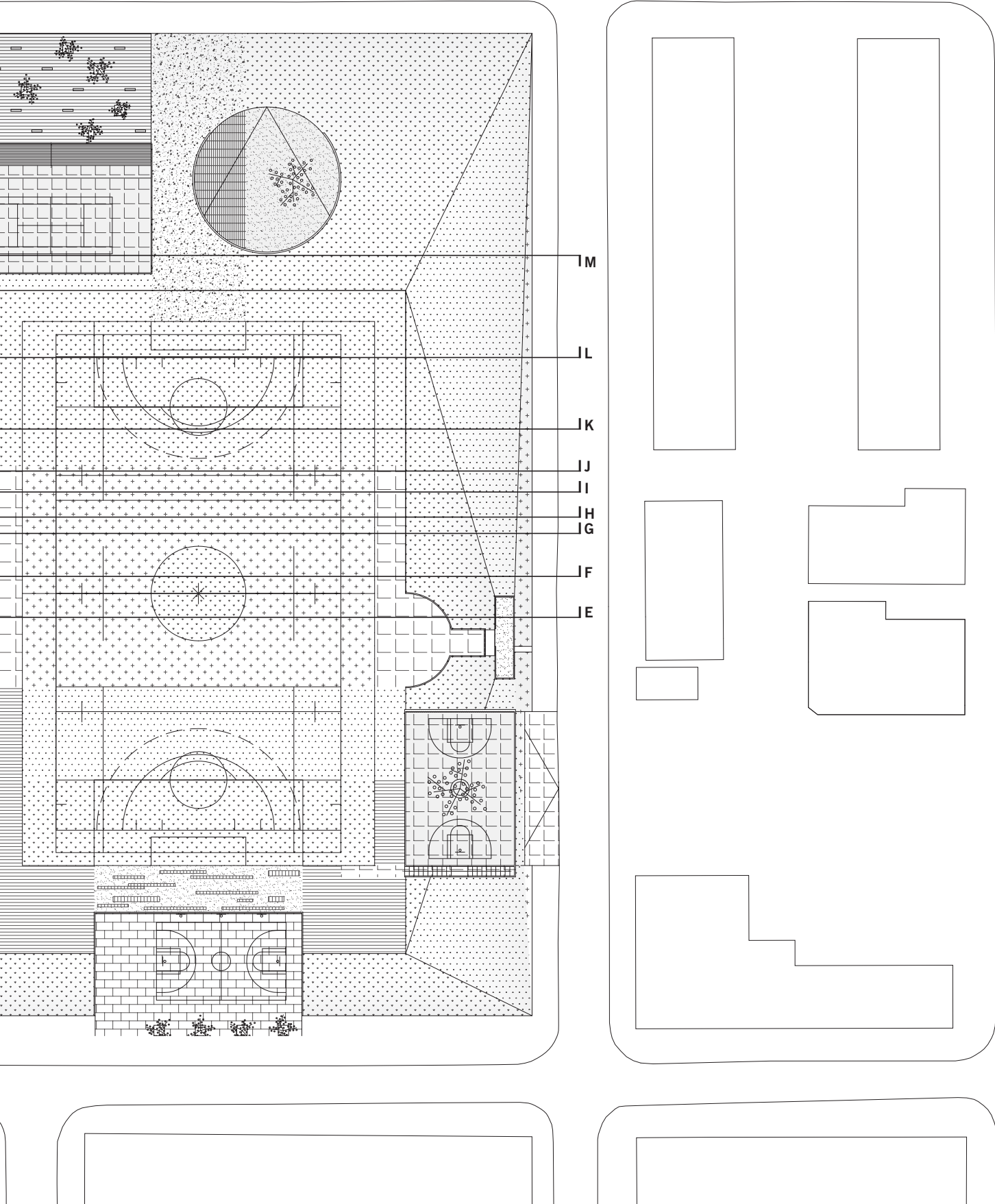




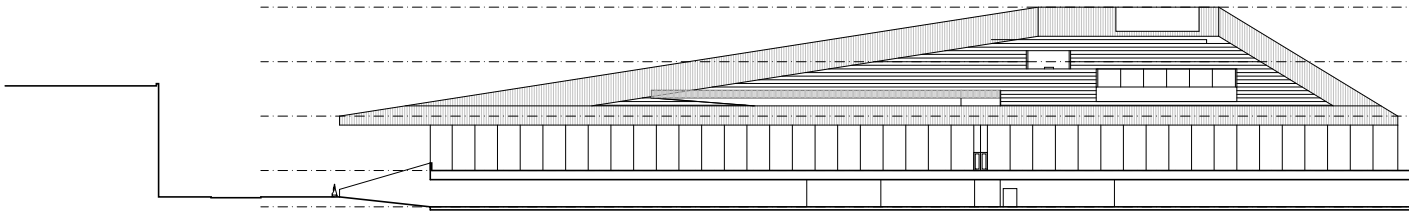


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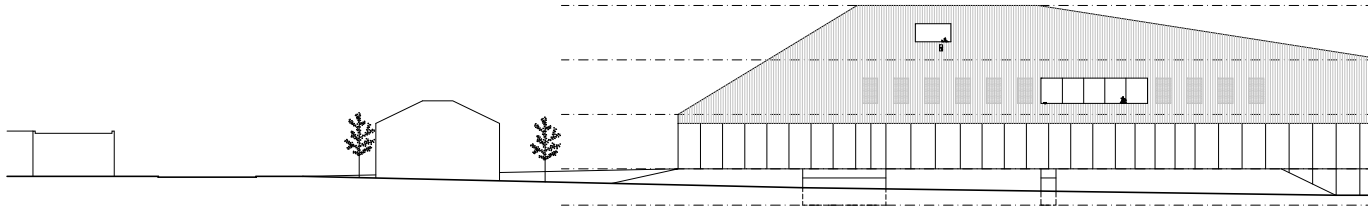




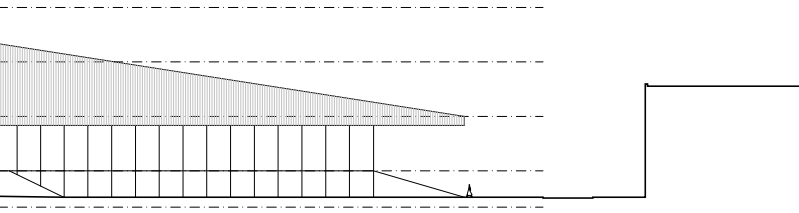
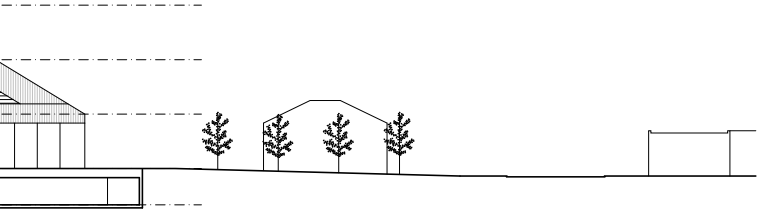
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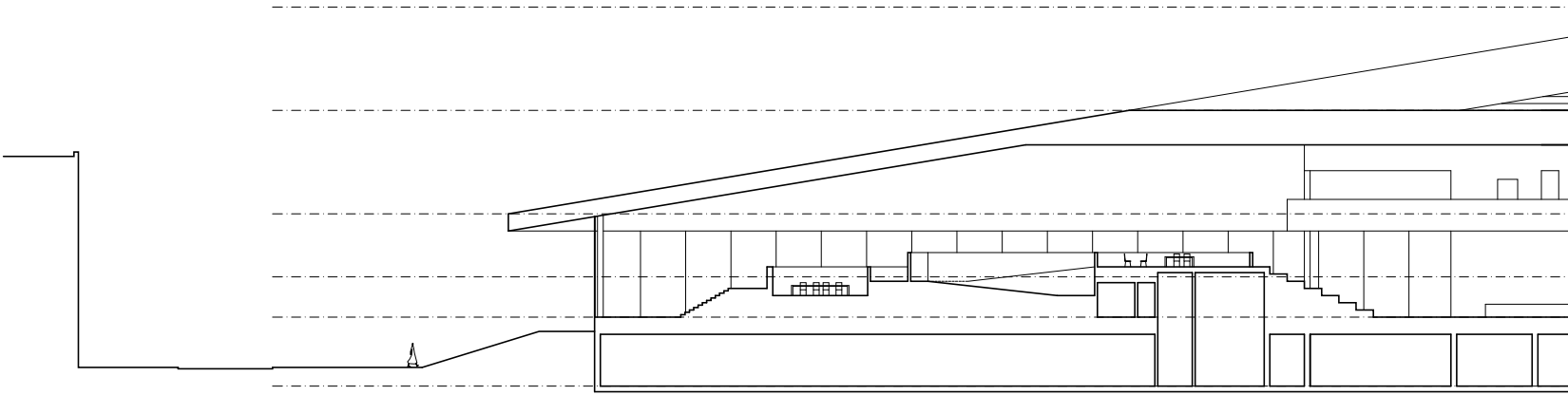
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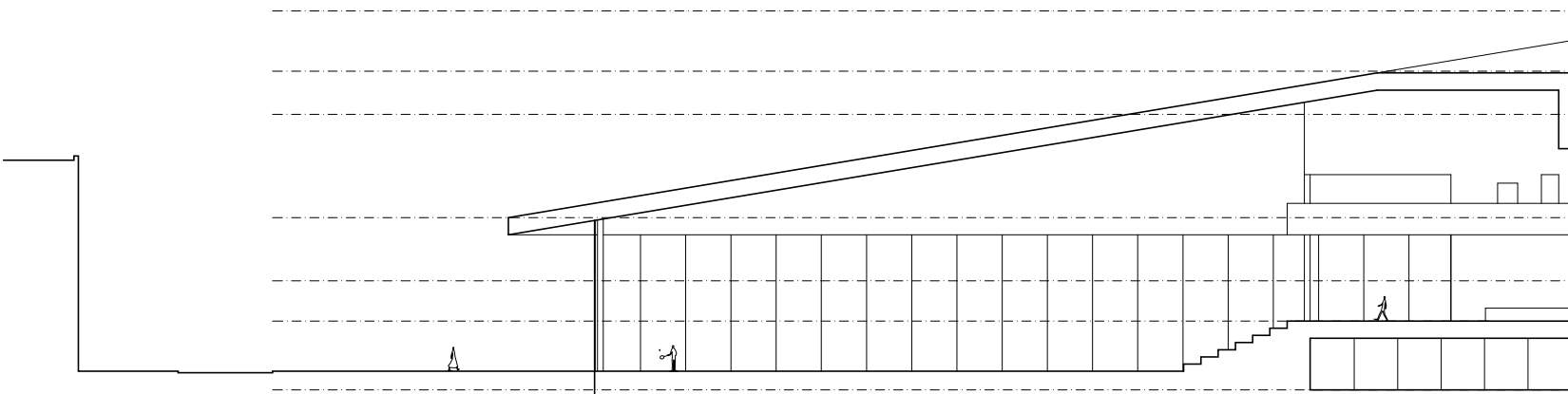
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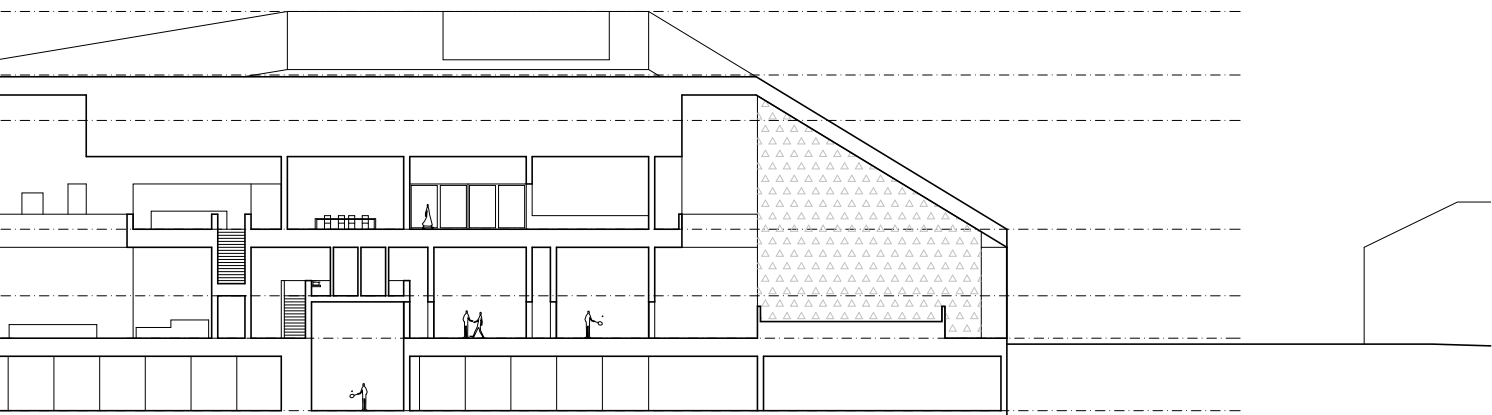
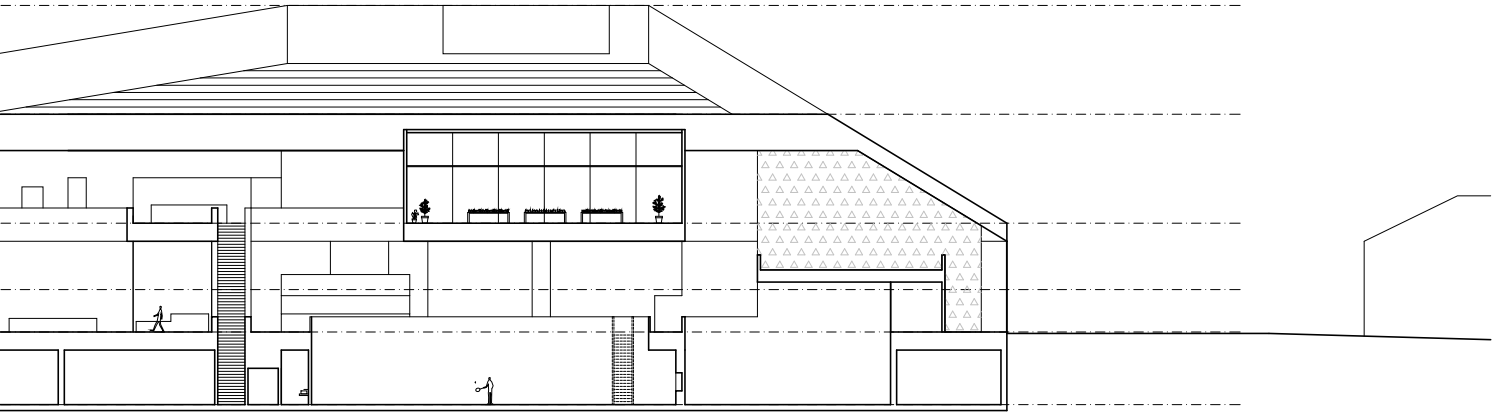
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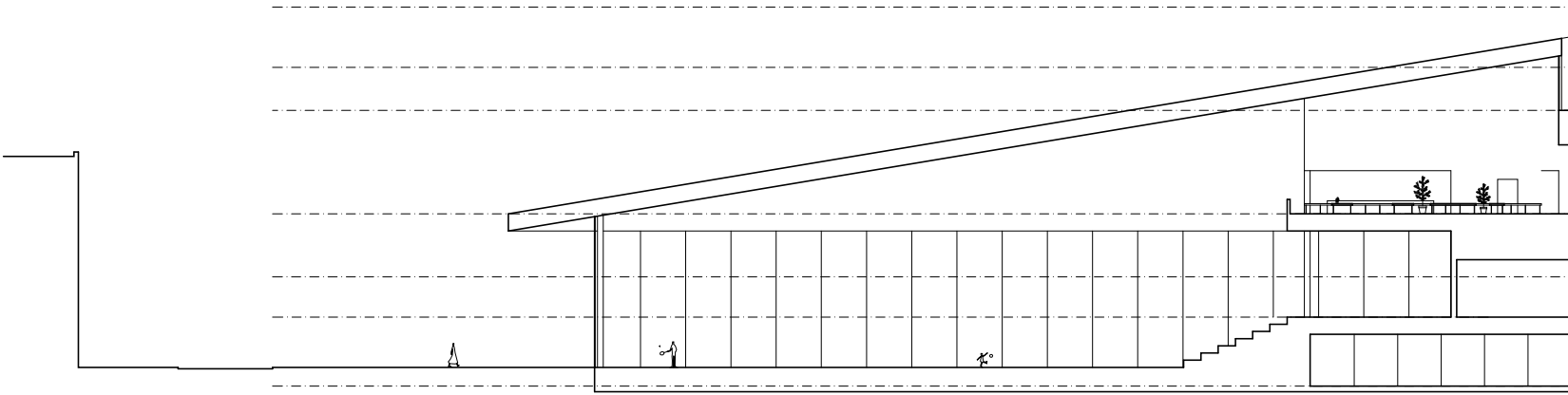
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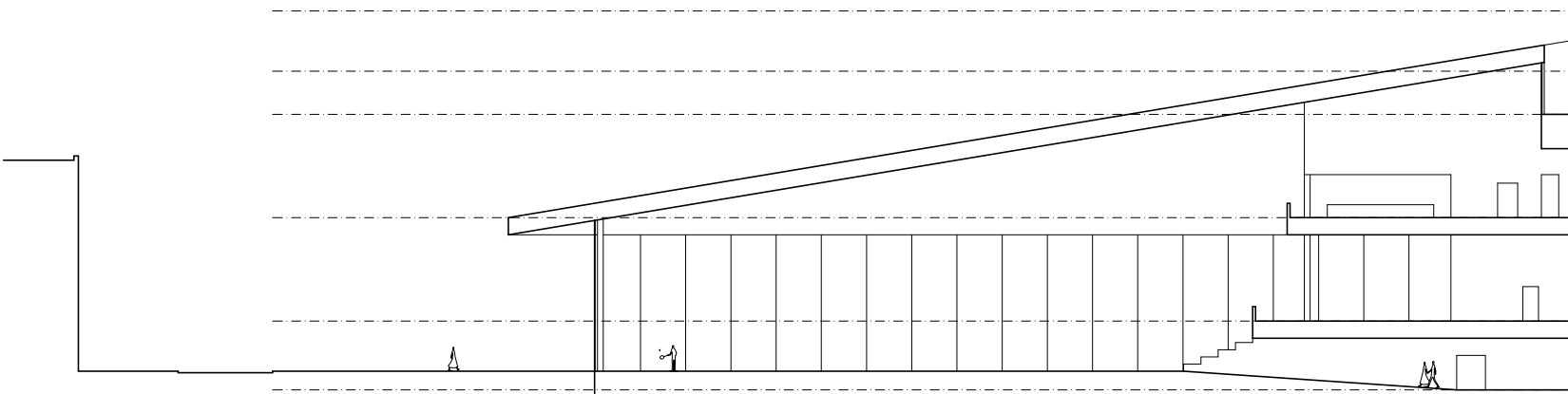
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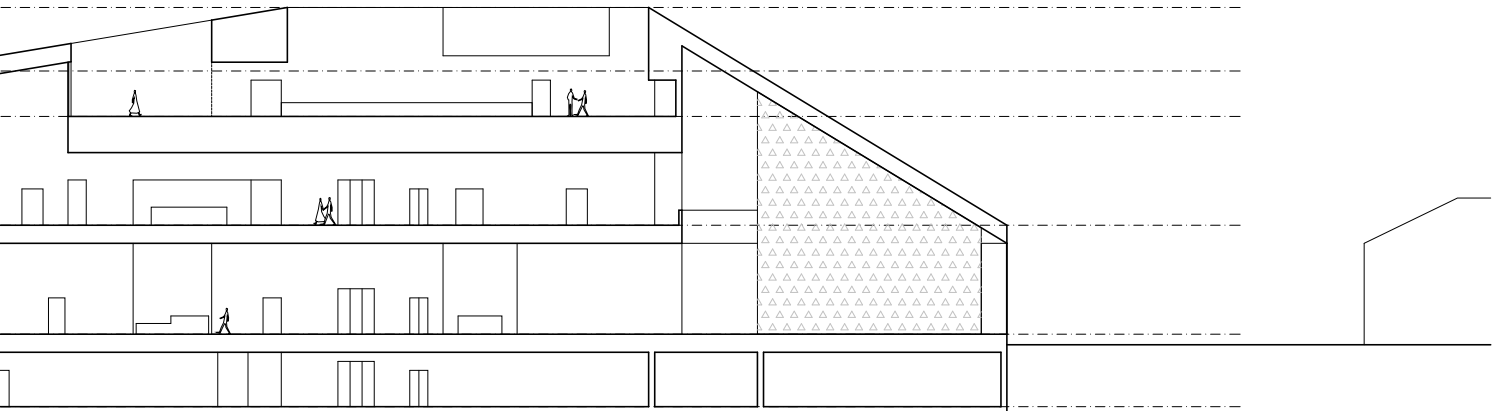
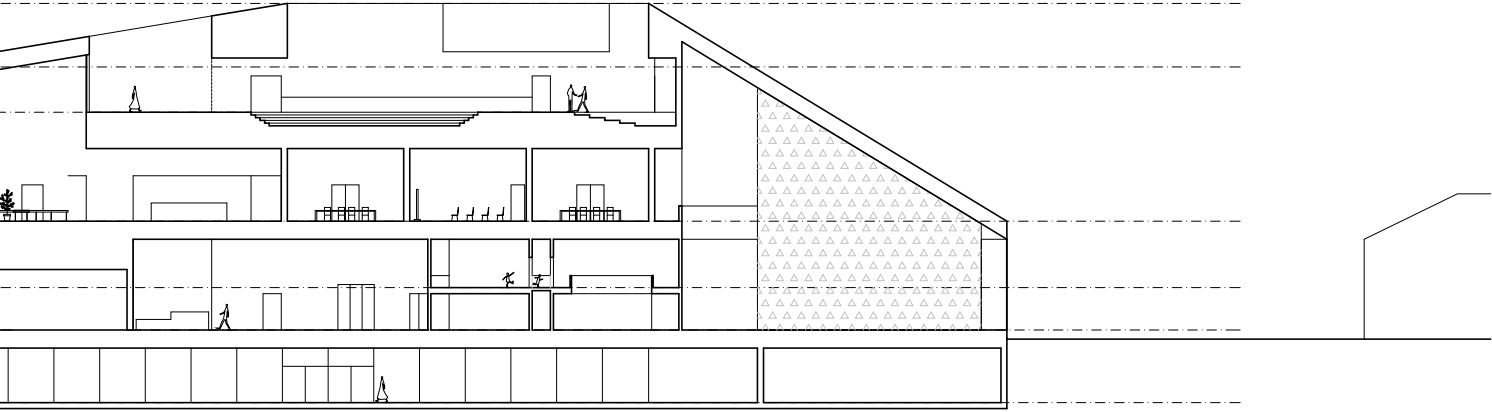
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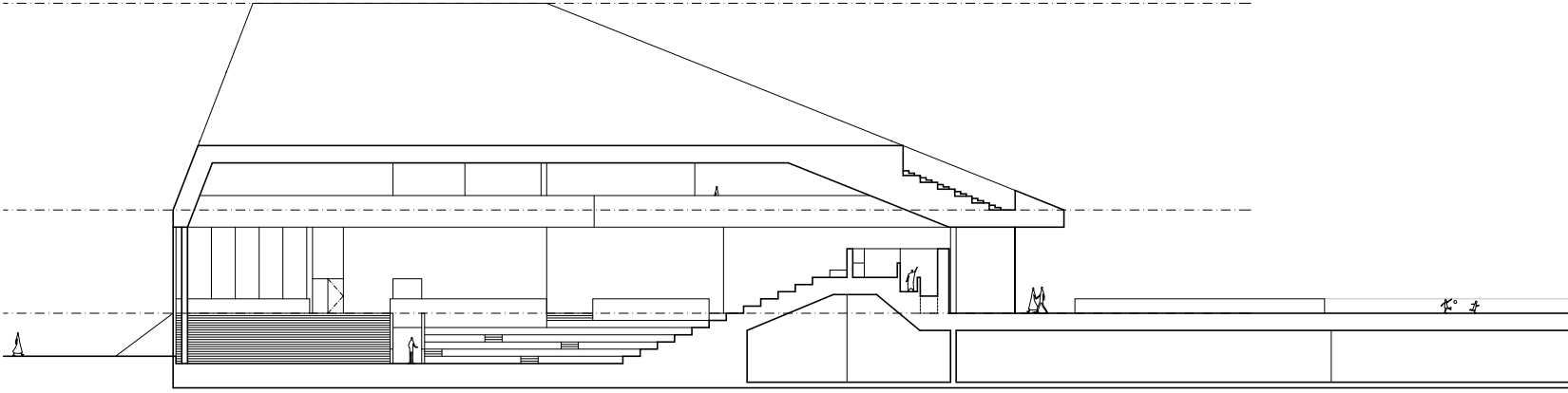
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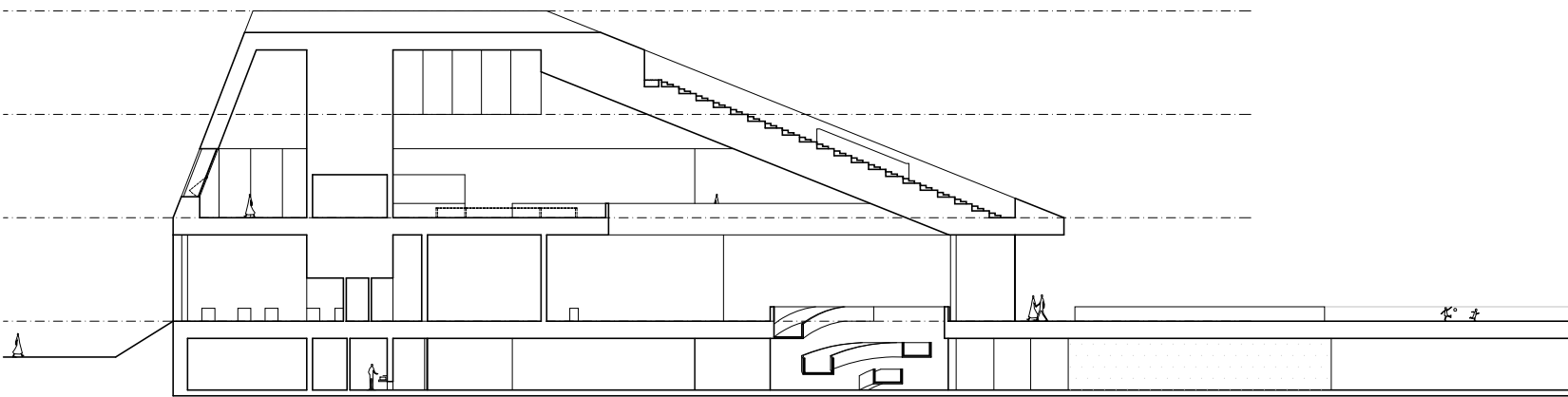
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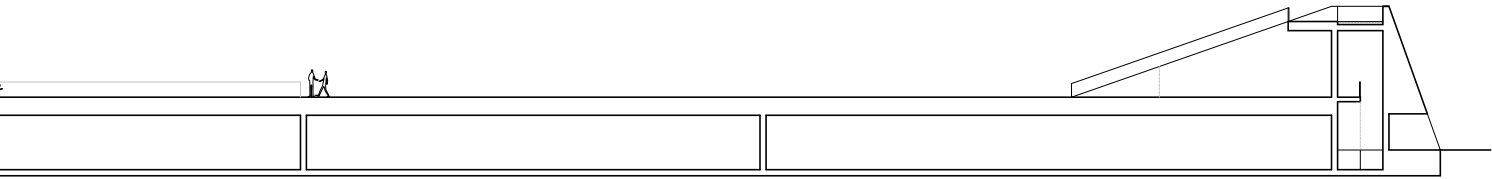
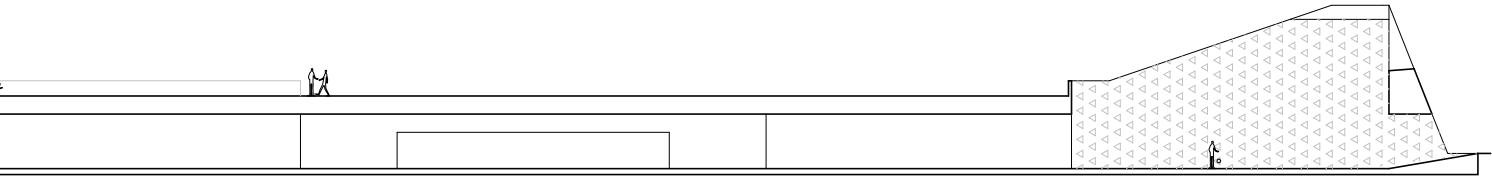
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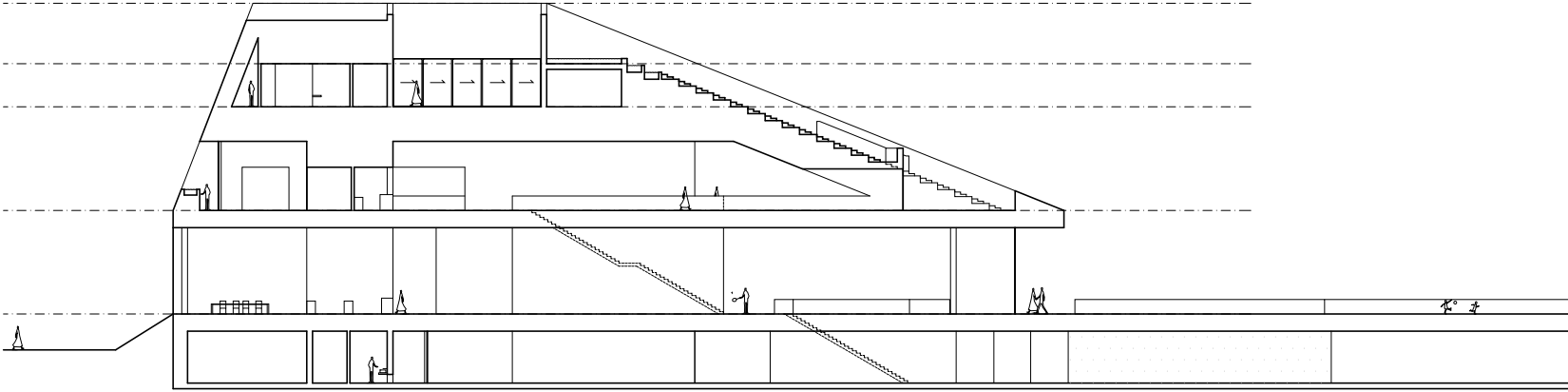
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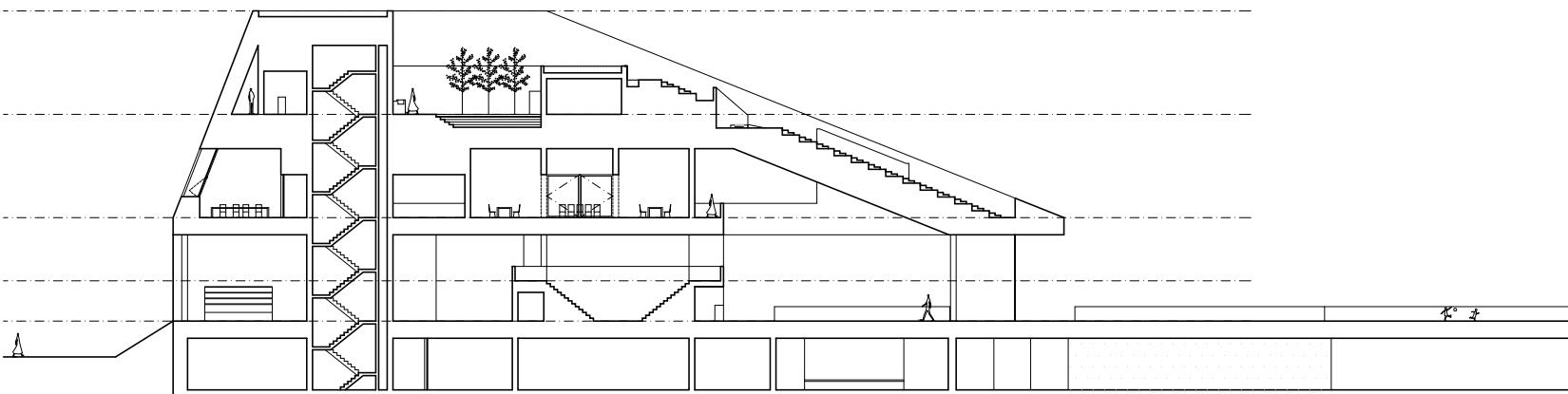
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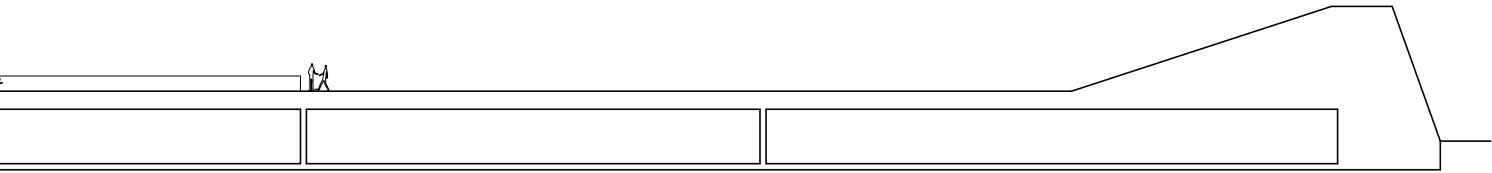
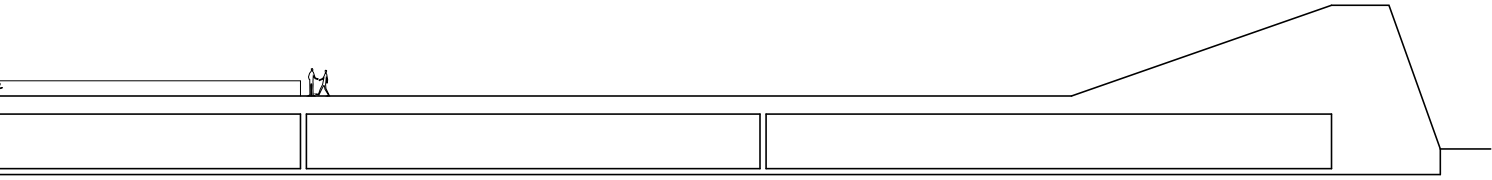
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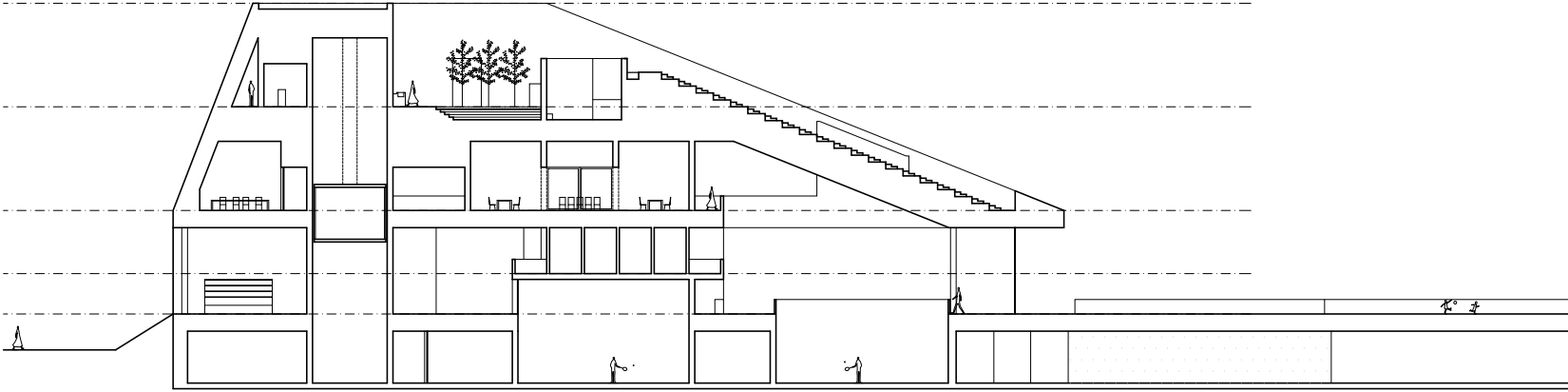
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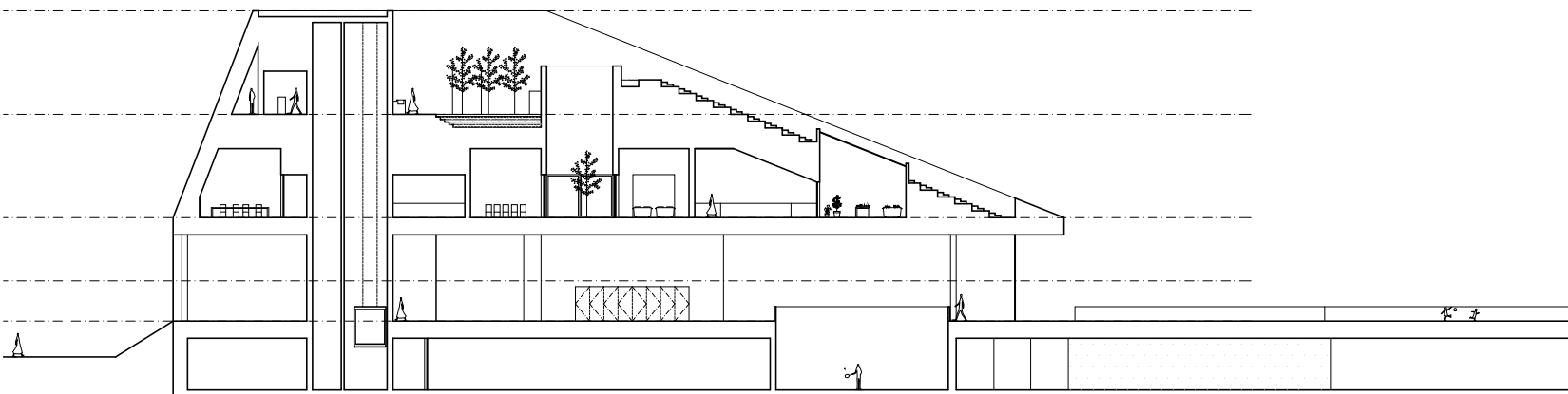
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1:500



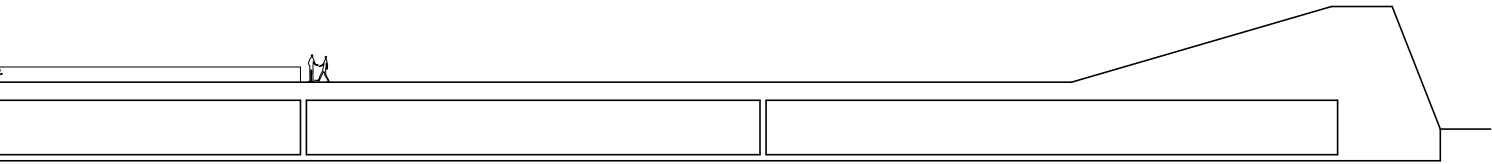
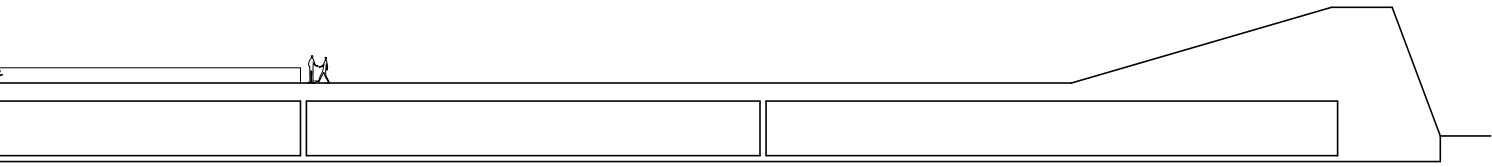
SUPER ORDINARY

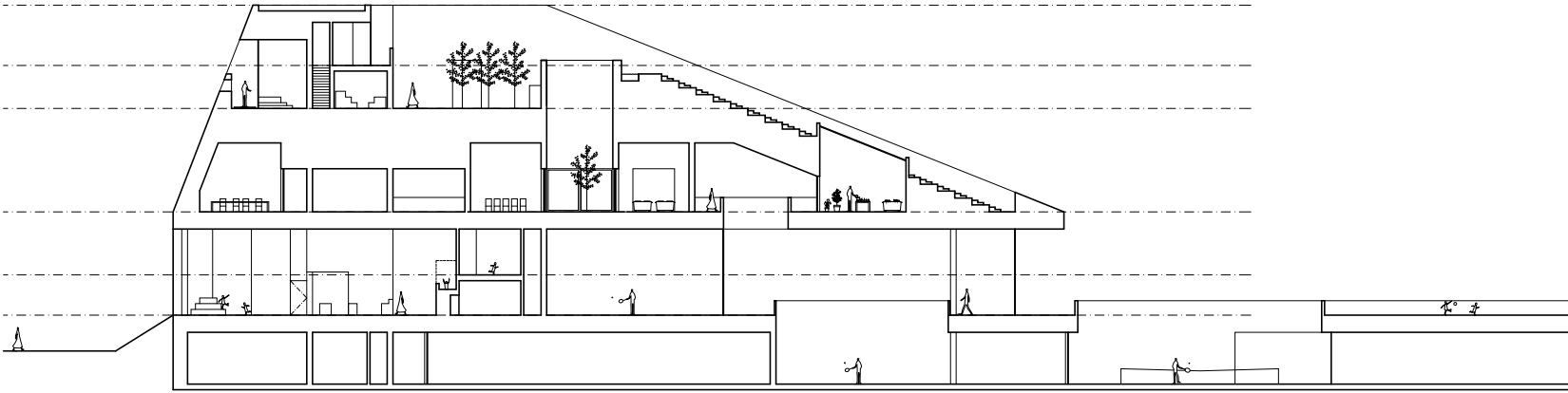


1 Section I
1:500

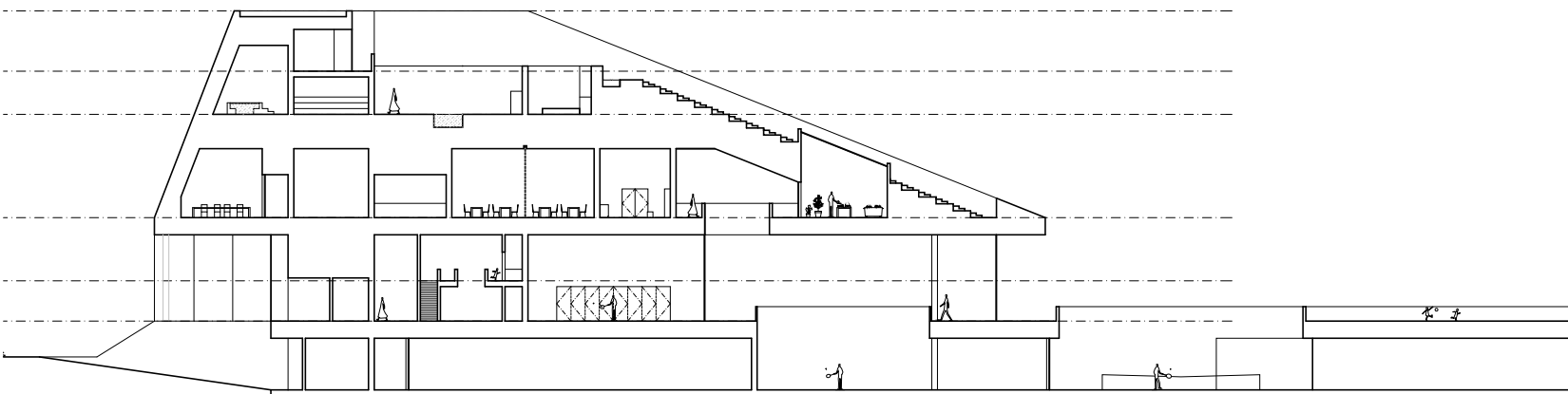


2 Section J
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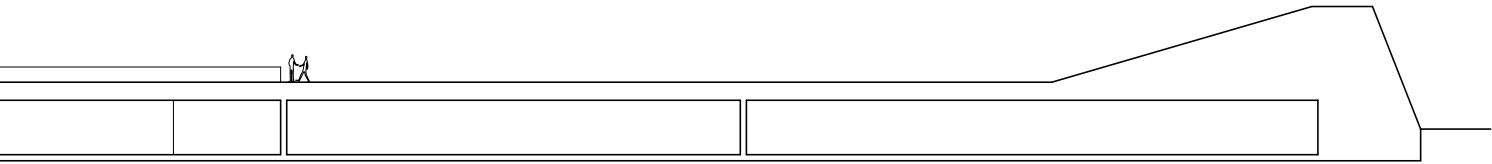
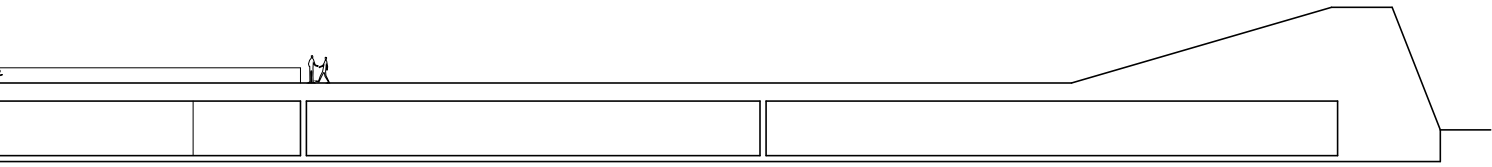




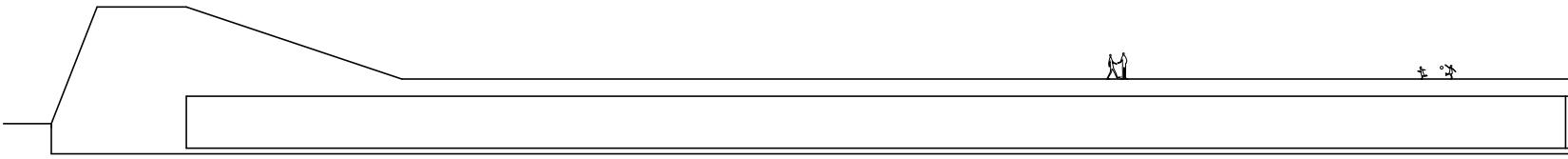
1 Section K
1:500



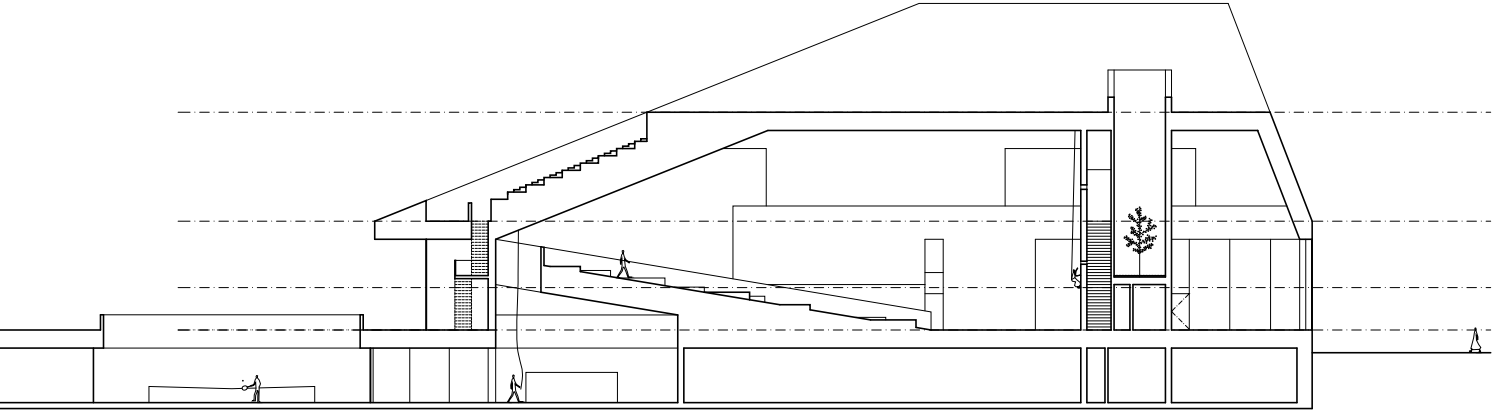
2 Section L
1:500



SUPER ORDINARY



1 Section M
1:500



APPENDIX B
PARKDALE LIBERTY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
PROPOSAL FOR
LAMPORT STADIUM



FIG 99 Artist's rendering of PLEDC scheme for Lamport Stadium.

APPENDIX C

SPORTS -
“EVERY WORLD IS A
WORLD OF YOUR OWN”

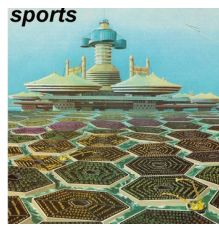


FIG 100 Album art for "Every World Is A World Of Your Own" by Sports. If viewing digitally, click to open browser and stream song [Bandcamp.com].

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