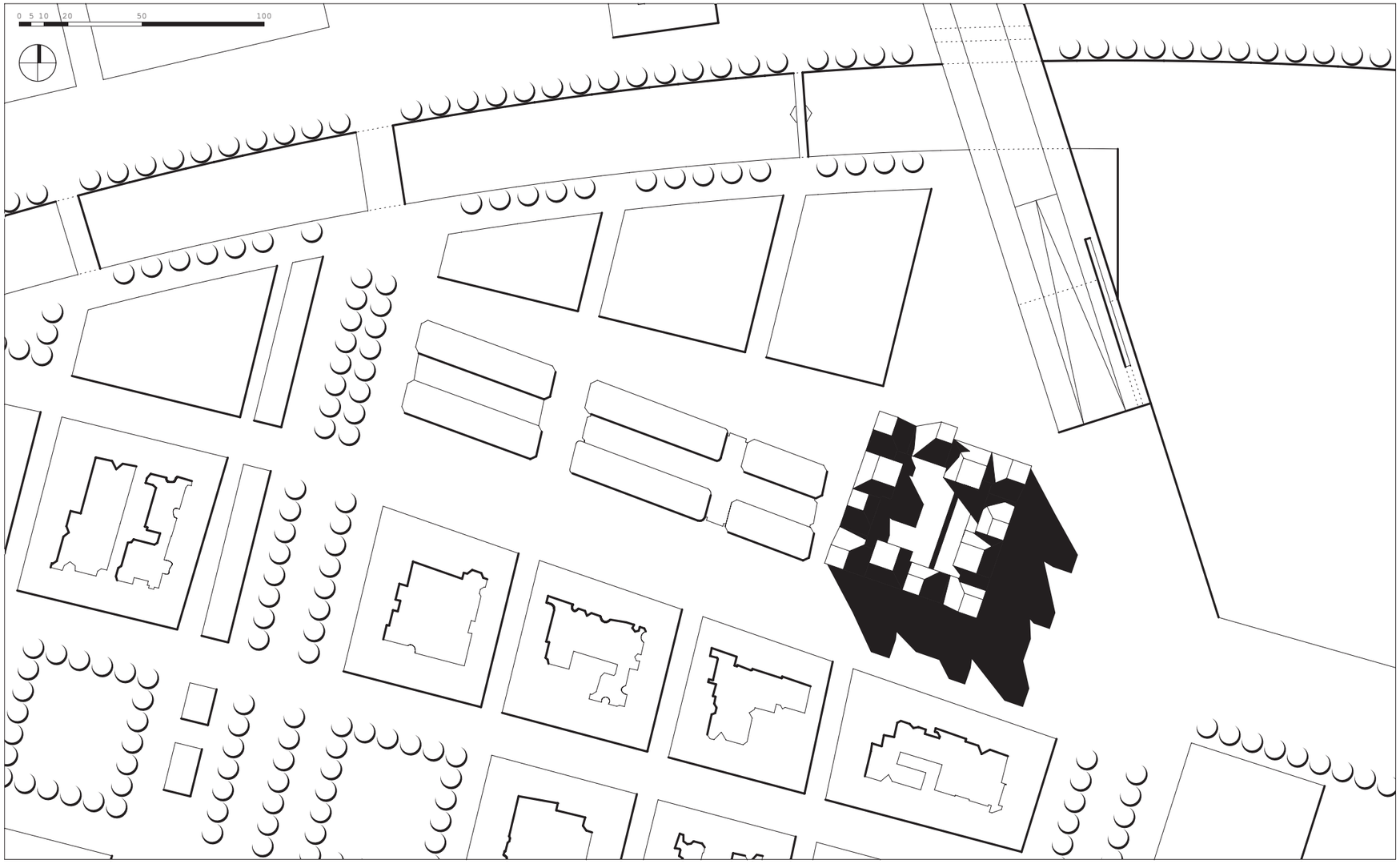

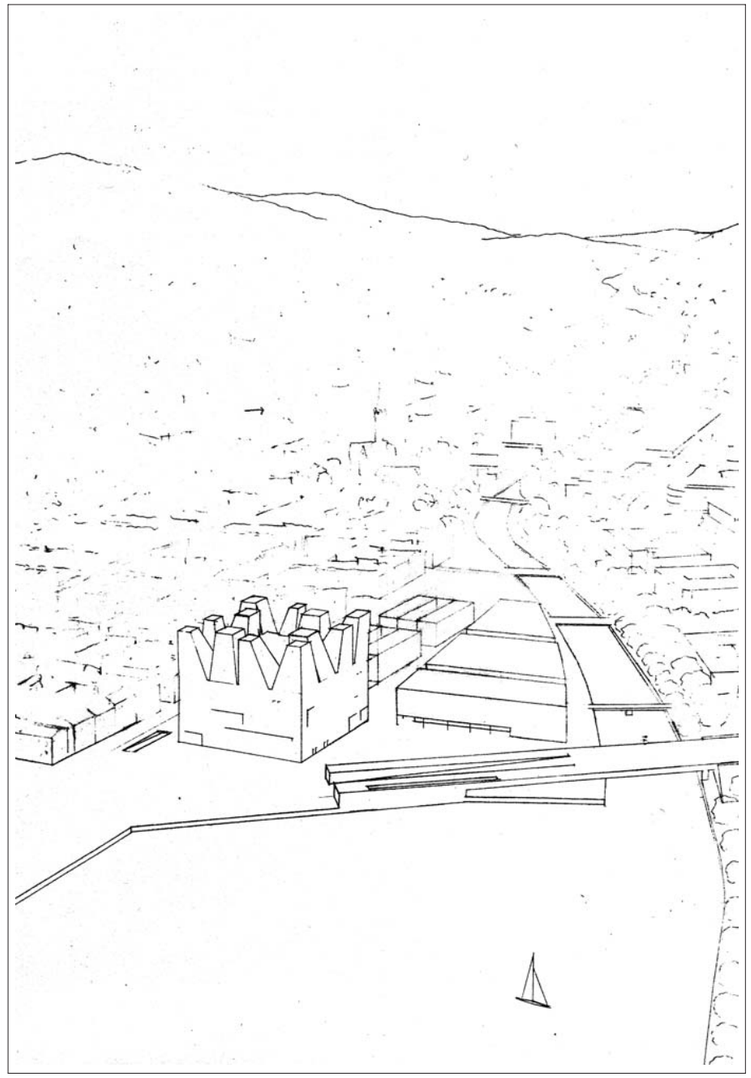

Expression and Identity

The new Theatre/Arts Centre of Sundsvall will be a centre which provides space that the city needs for its cultural activities; beyond this important functional aspect, there is another sense in which the new building will express Sundsvall's identity and image: The area for this new building is
- situated at a focal point within the urban and geographical structure of Sundsvall, at the crossing of a major highway going to the north of Sweden and the Selangersan River, which adds meaning both nationally and regionally to the location,
- well visible from great distances, from the mountain range as well as from the sea and from the proposed new bay bridge,
- and thus ideally situated to provide an architectural landmark that will offer a chance to promote Sundsvall's internal and external identification.

Many cities in the world have been using their own seafronts and riversides to send out, through dominant public buildings, clear messages of their own cultural heritage and ambition: Oslo through its City Hall, Sidney through its Opera House, Bilbao through its Guggenheim Museum, and San Sebastian through its Kursaal, to mention just a few. By constructing a new Theatre/Arts Centre in this eminent site, Sundsvall has a unique chance to give itself an unmistakable architectural and cultural identity, to lift itself to a bigger role and meaning within its regional, national and even international context.
The Project does, however, not just want to propose a shape that is merely „curious" or unusual; the idea is to propose a shape that refers to the cultural and natural identity of the city and the region, a shape that radiates the serenity and the melancholy of Edvard Grieg's and Jean Sibelius's music, the lightness of Astrid Lindgren's books, and the depth of Henrik Ibsen's plays. It alludes to a culture of trolls and myths, of homeliness and endless wilderness, of arctic nights and northern lights, and to the majesty of the Scandinavian landscape. The idea is to propose a "building-figure" in which each Sundsvallian finds something of his or her inner self, some cultural affinity, a building from which each visitor will get an sense of the region's and the city's culture, nature and mentality. The building has to tell stories and inspire fantasy. It must by no means be a global project that could be placed in any other place.

Urban interweavement and context

The new Theatre/Arts Centre will need to be set within a lively and active urban context. At the same time, the new building will have to be able to „radiate" urban life into its urban surroundings. Until now, the Kulturmagasinet had cut off from Stone City the area between itself, and the river, leaving this area marginal and deserted, while the Kulturmagasinet itself has so far had a front side to the south and a back side to the north. The intention is to create a new part of the city between the Kulturmagasinet, and the river, which will result in the Kulturmagasinet having two front sides and lively urban spaces all around it. Kulturmagasinet will be a central and no longer a marginal building. This will justify the decision to keep it's architectural integrity and identity as it is and to not directly unite it architecturally with the Theatre/Arts Centre. The visual connection between the two buildings will however be very strong. An inner passage will be the functional connection between the two institutions. The proposed Theatre/Arts Centre building will be a separate architectural entity that takes a central role in the composition of the surrounding buildings and in the sequences of the urban spaces around it, while at the same time overlooking the Baltic Sea and the new E 4 Boulevard. All new urban spaces around the Theatre/Arts Centre and the Kulturmagasinet would have to be mainly for pedestrians and cyclists, apart from traffic for deliveries, emergencies etc.
The three new blocks between the Kulturmagasinet and the river would have to be of mixed use in order to guarantee a continuous urban liveliness, and could be commercialised in order to raise additional funds for the construction of the Theatre/Arts Centre. In the same way, the "sixth warehouse" could be built and commercialised, completing, together with the proposed new blocks west of Stengaten, a compact new urban neighbourhood that will "absorb" the Kulturmagasinet and the new Theatre/Arts Centre. The northern edge of this new neighbourhood would have the privilege of directly facing the river.
The building for the new Theatre/Arts Centre has to be very dominant in order to fulfil its role as a landmark that is not only visible from great distances but also from as many points as possible within the city. It has to have a strong presence in order to become the city's pride and joy. Ideally, it has to accomplish what the Eiffel Tower has done for Paris.

The new Theatre/Arts Centre building

The building for the new Theatre/Arts Centre is compact and at the same time rich in visual relationships and connections with its surroundings. The vertical organisation and extension of the important inner spaces and the stereotomic interplay between light and masses are the generating elements of the character and the atmosphere of the inner space sequences. Vertical and horizontal light traps create a multitude of different episodes of a "promenade architecturale" that winds itself through all the parts of the volume. The inner spatial and functional structure is that of a compact and complex "scene machine". Preferably various parts of the programme were not split into separate buildings or parts of buildings; instead it seemed more appropriate to unite all functional elements under one roof and into one "house".
Access will be across a linear atrium that extends along the western side of the building, allowing easy and independent access from the side of the Stone City as well as from the important public spaces beyond the Kulturmagasinet.
The horizontal inner connections are guaranteed by revertible escalators and by elevators for the disabled. A strong system of escape ways will ensure a rapid evacuation in the case of an emergency.
The restaurant/café is situated on the northwest corner of the building, opening towards the adjacent squares so one could enjoy the evening sun from the west.
An additional „sky lounge" in the upper part of the building will offer very impressive views of the Baltic Sea, across the "stets" on top of the other side of the building.
There are about 360 parking spaces on the first level under the ground; additional parking spaces could be attained by adding a second underground level. It is possible to reach the inside of the theatre directly from the garage, as well as offering access to the outside areas around the building. There is easy access from the parking spaces to the Kulturmagasinet as well. Access for cars to the garage entrance ramp will be from the new E 4 roundabout, in order to avoid interference with pedestrian and bicycle traffic as much as possible.

Colours and Materials

The bearing structure of the new Theatre/Arts Centre building will be made out of reinforced concrete; all non-bearing parts will made out of lighter materials.
The outside of the building will be covered with greyish-brown bricks. The cement joints between the bricks will be flush.
The inner walls and ceilings of the public spaces will be mainly in white stucco, with the exception of some parts that will be in a light beige marble.
Floors will be in tan wood parquet; some floors in proximity to exits and entrances will be in grey stone.
Fixtures and details like handrails will be in brass.
Light fixtures will be mostly inbuilt or hidden.
The inside cladding of the two big auditoriums will be in wood.

Sydney, Opera House

San Sebastian, Kursaal

Bilbao, Guggenheim Museum Oslo, City Hall

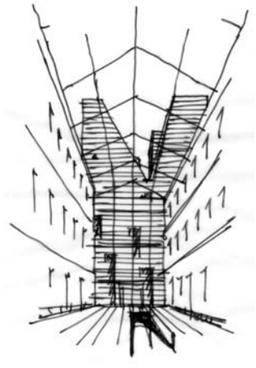
Fig.1 Visual connection between Kulturmagasinet and Theatre/Arts Centre

Main materials and colours

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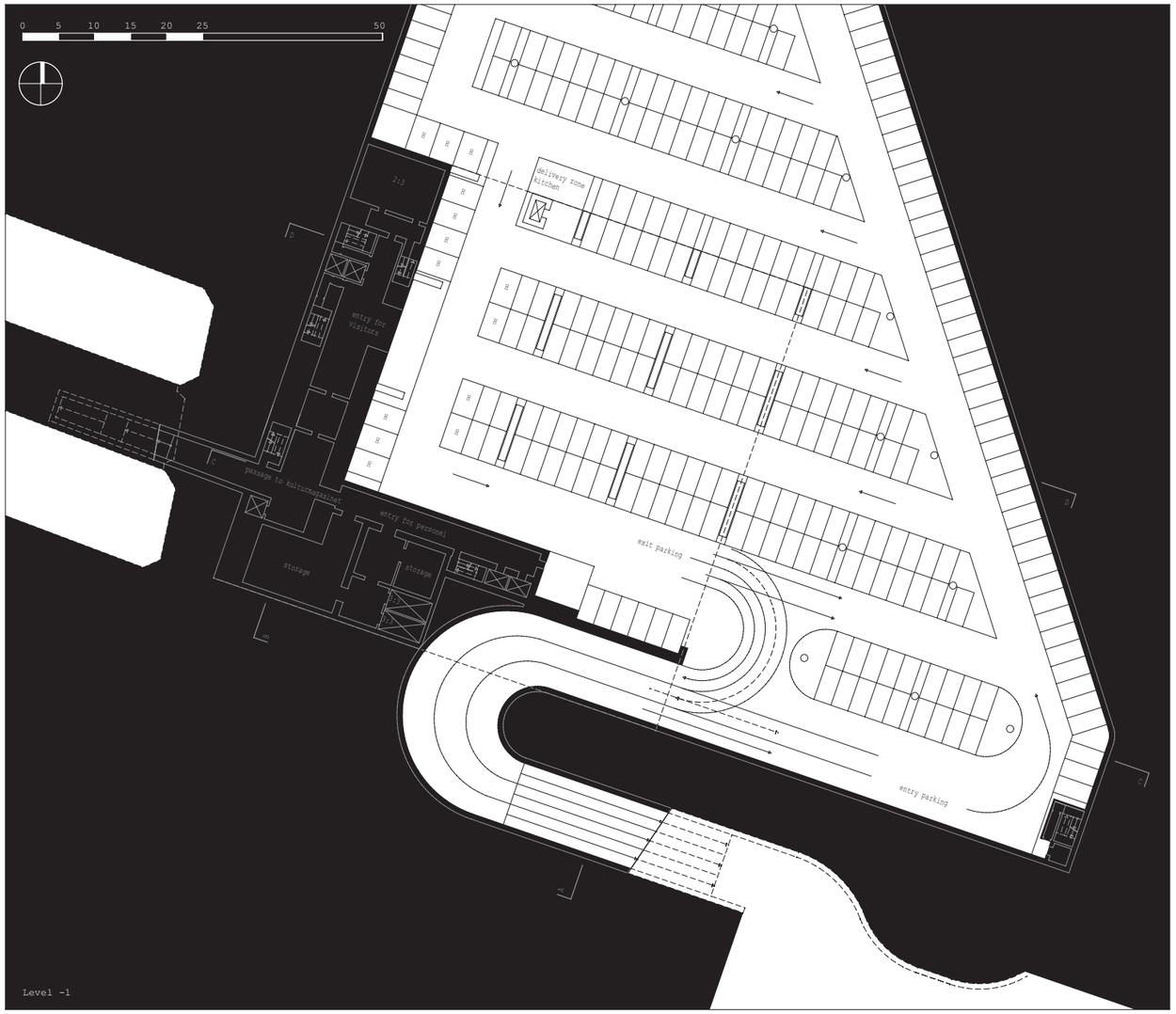
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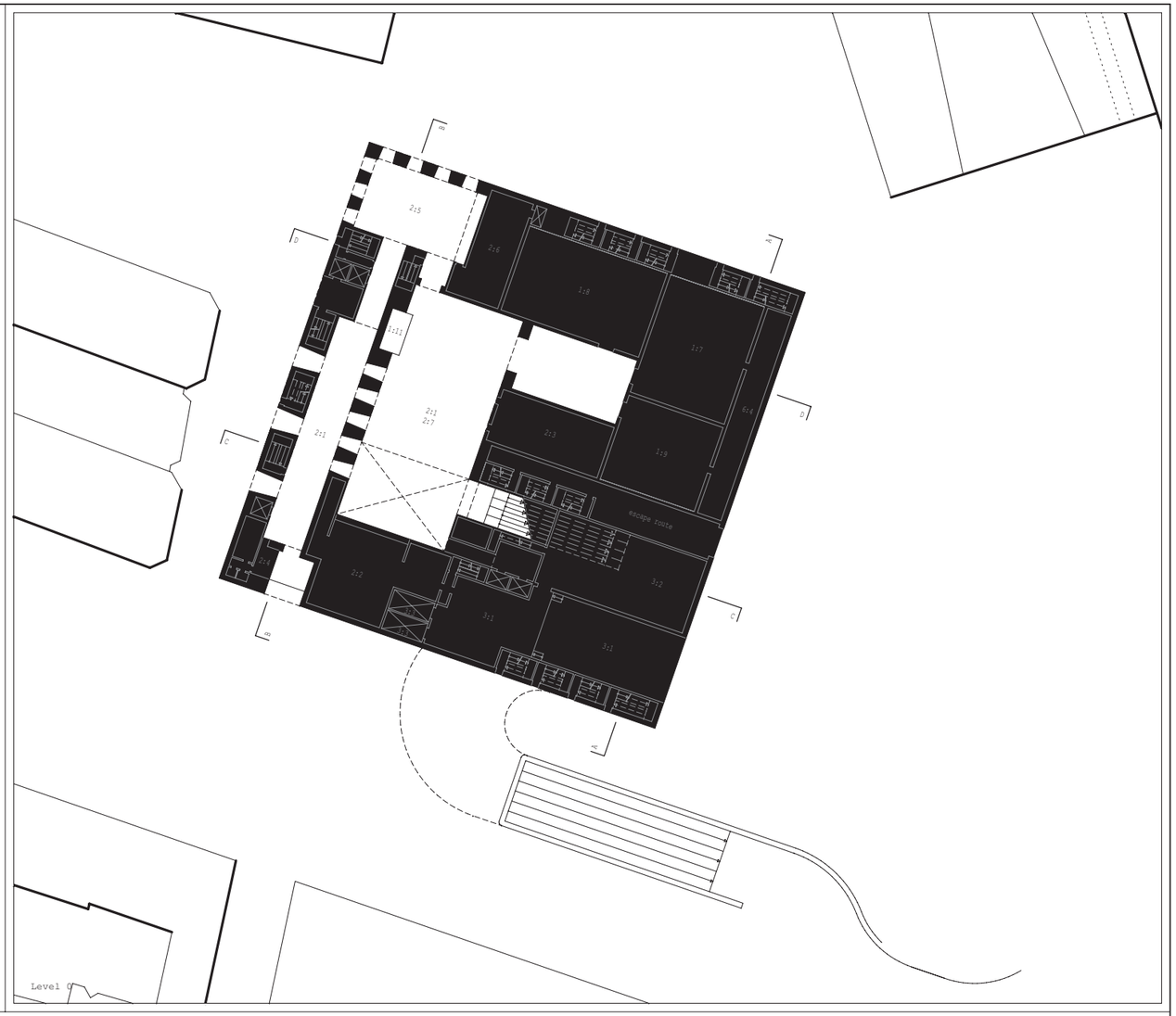
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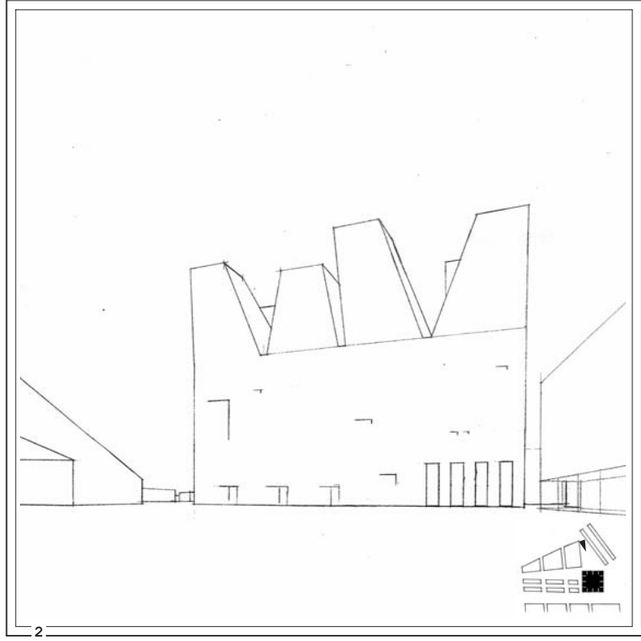

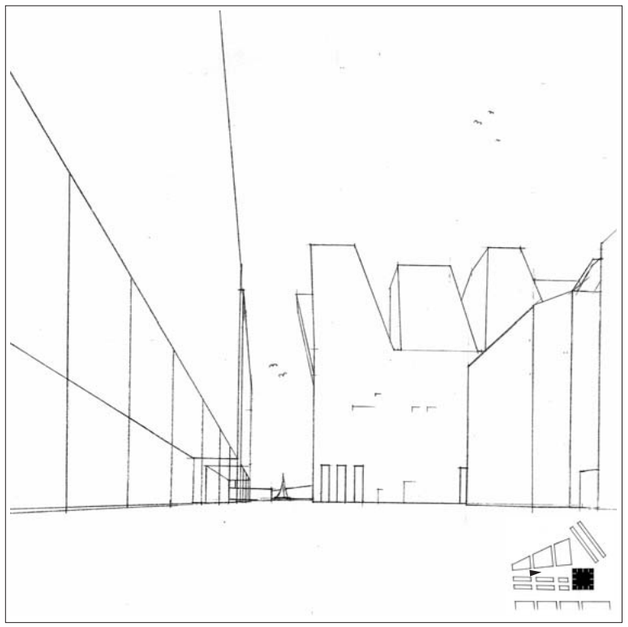

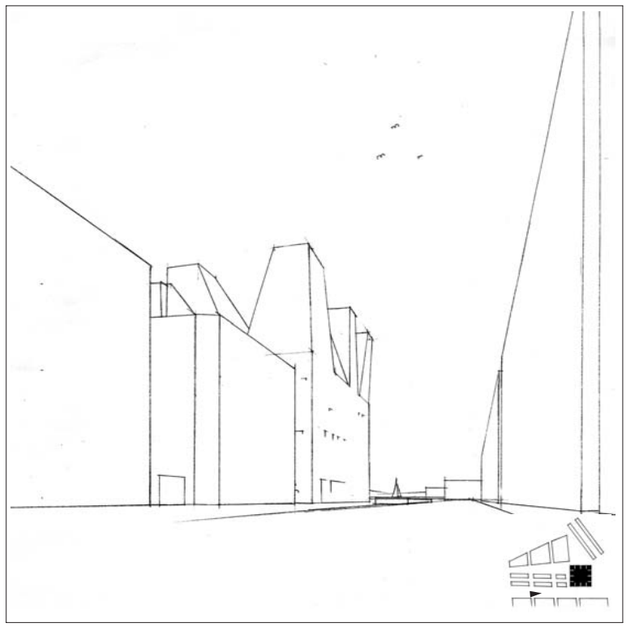

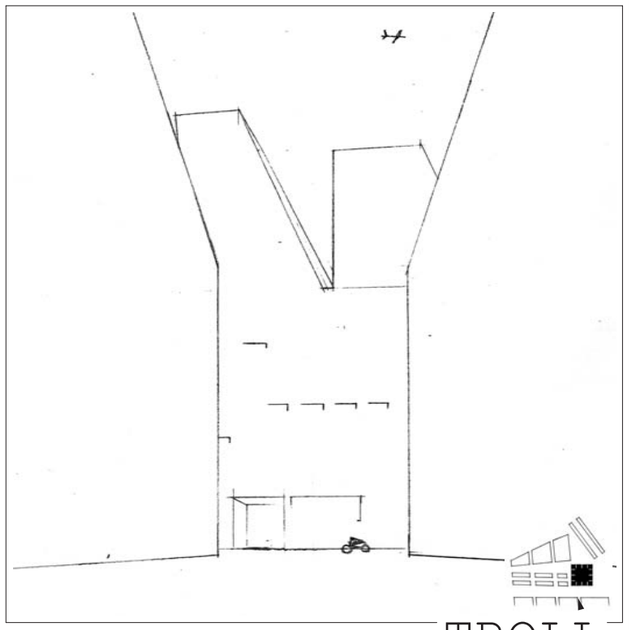

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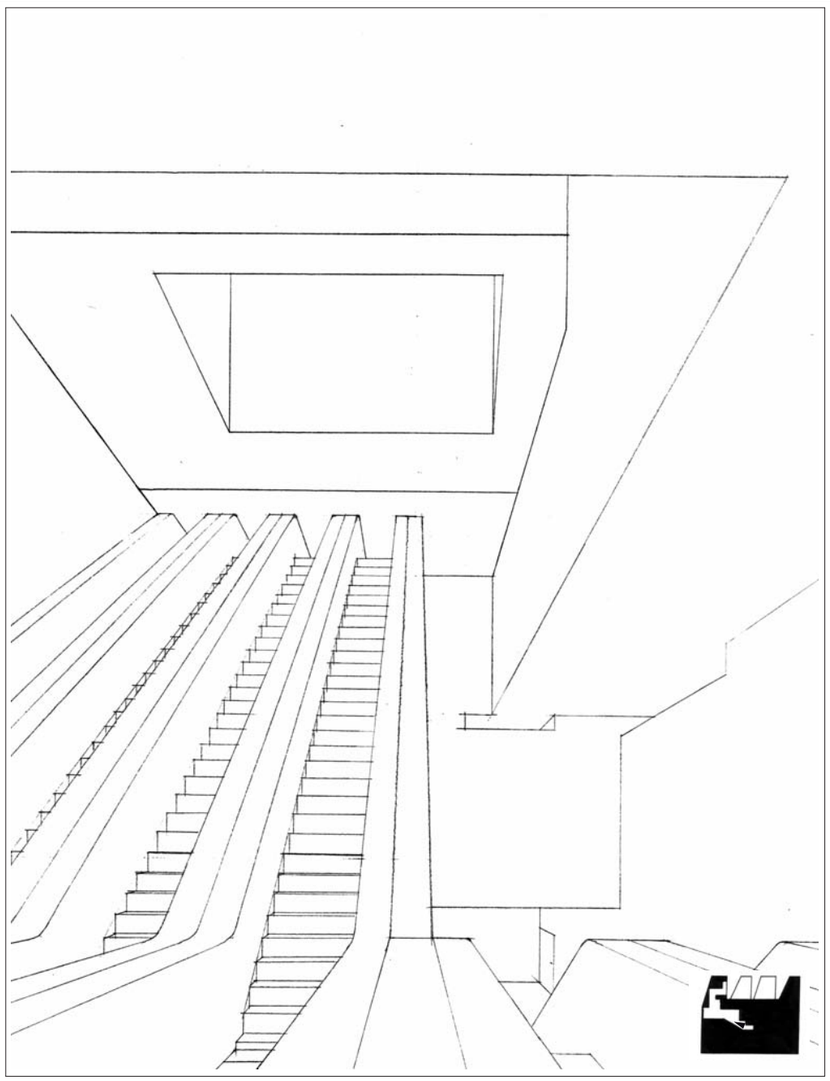
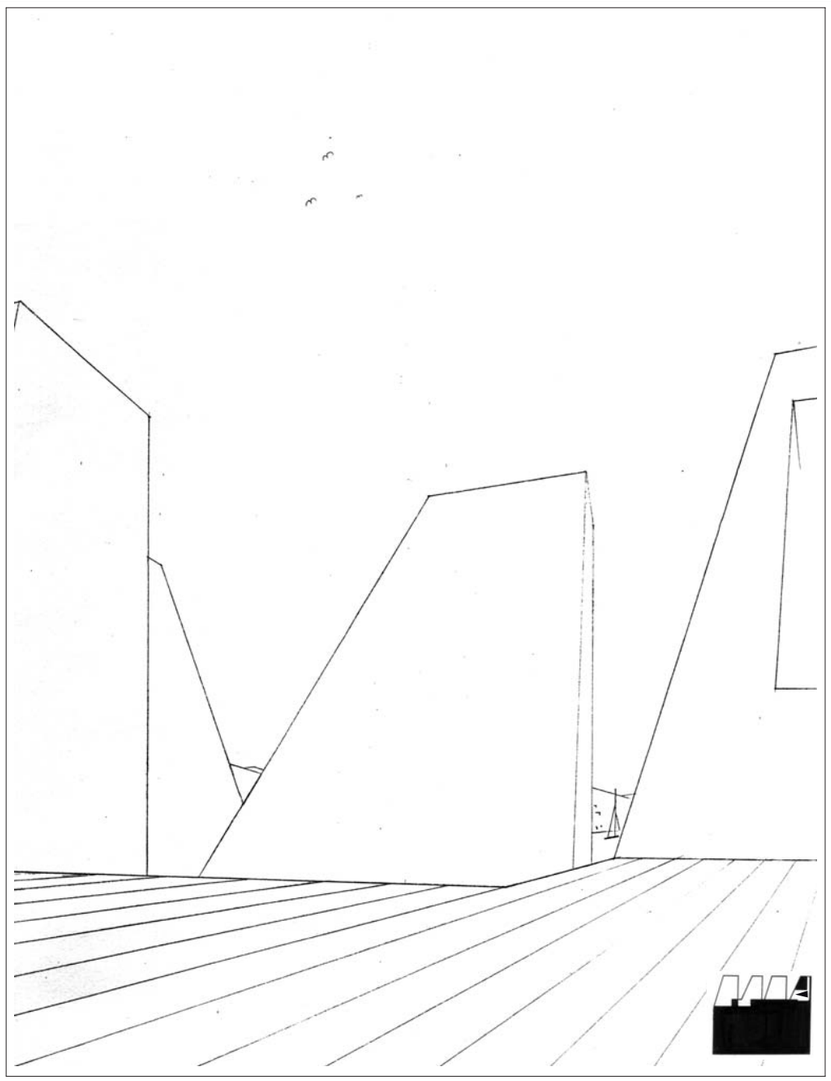
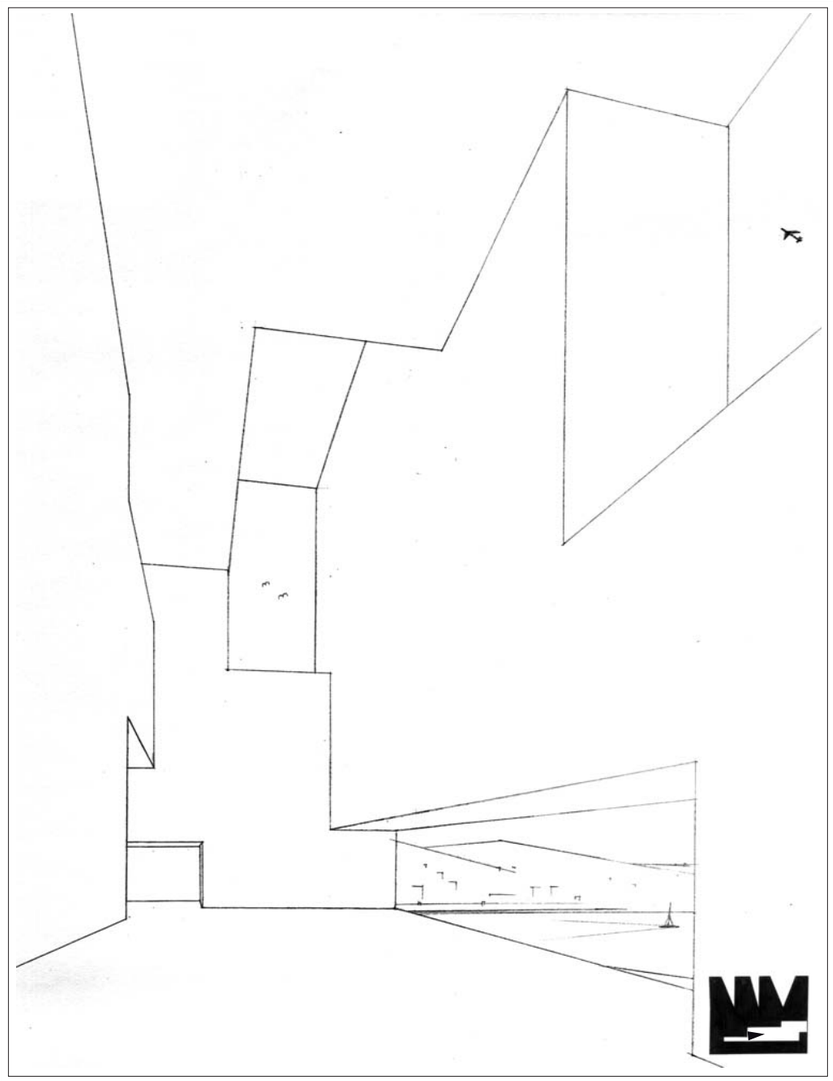
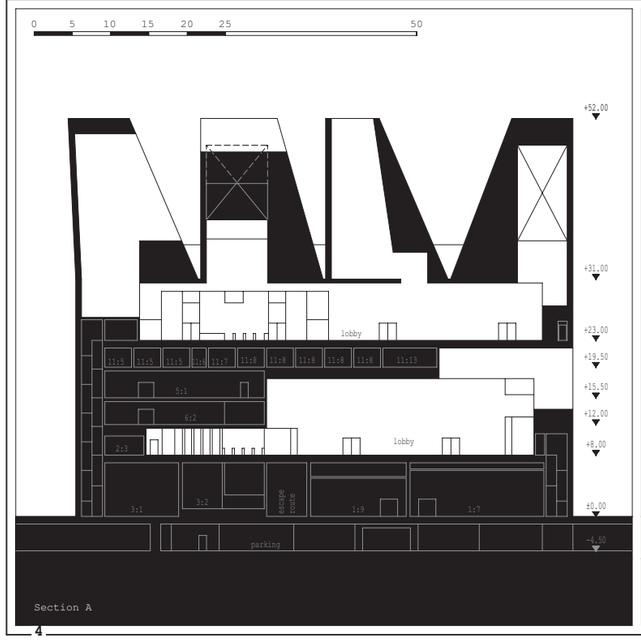


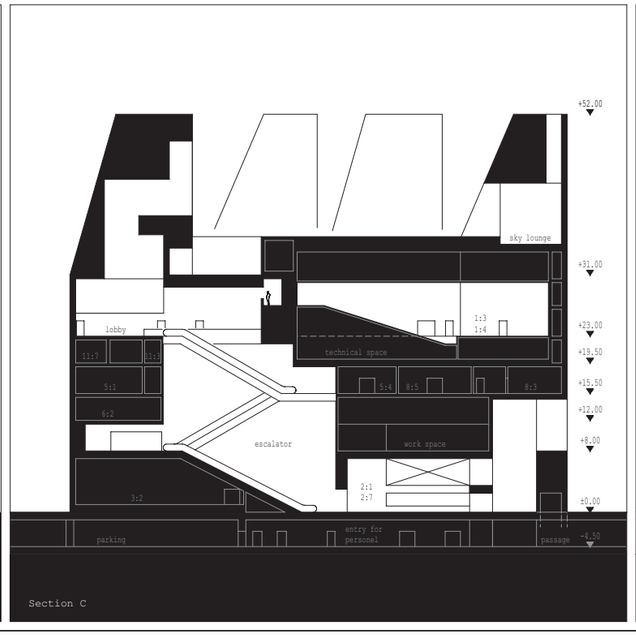






Section A

Section B



Section C

Section D

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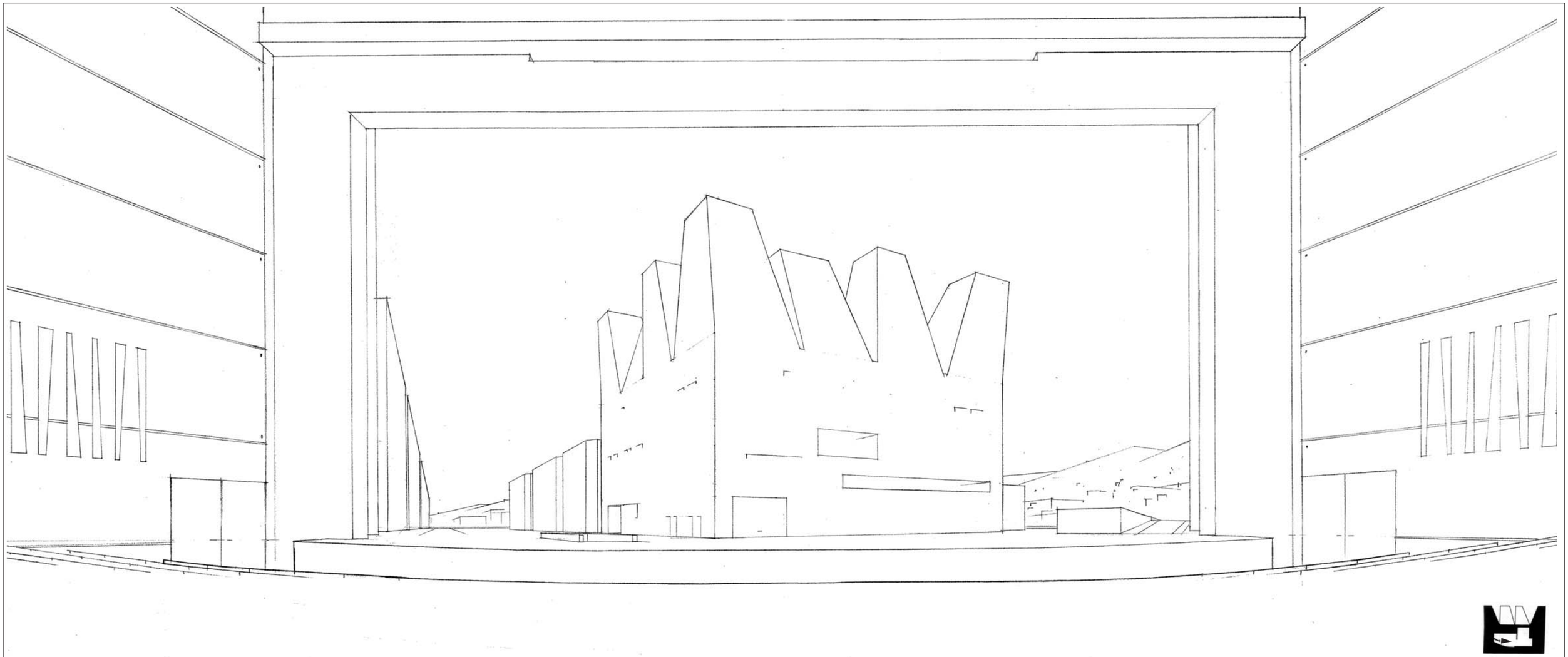

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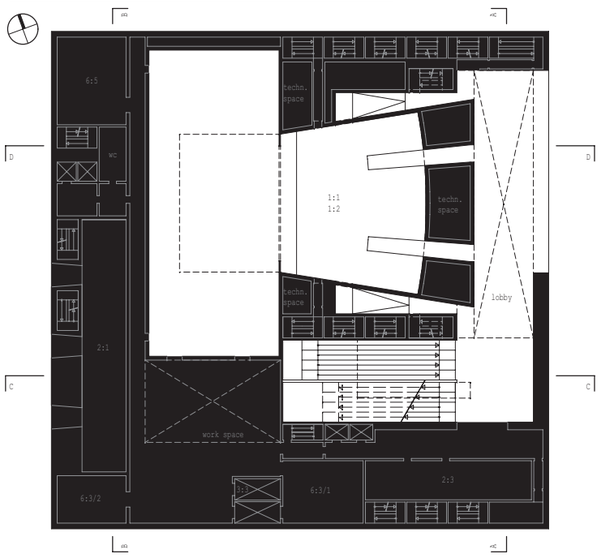

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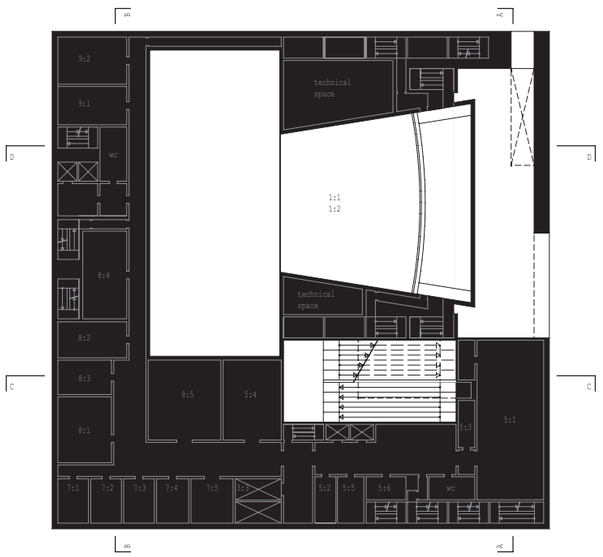

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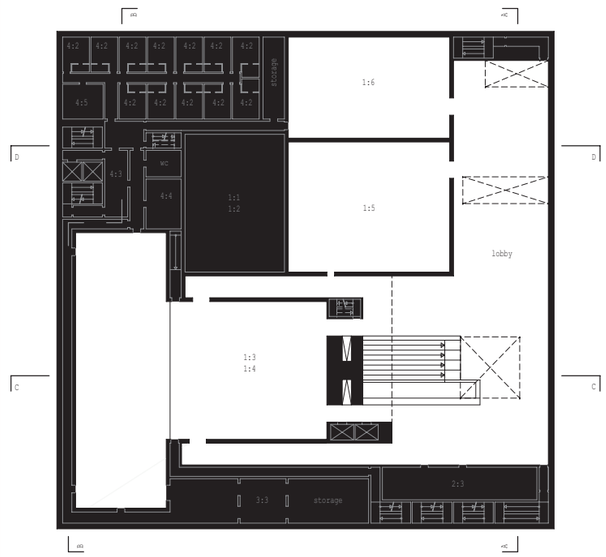

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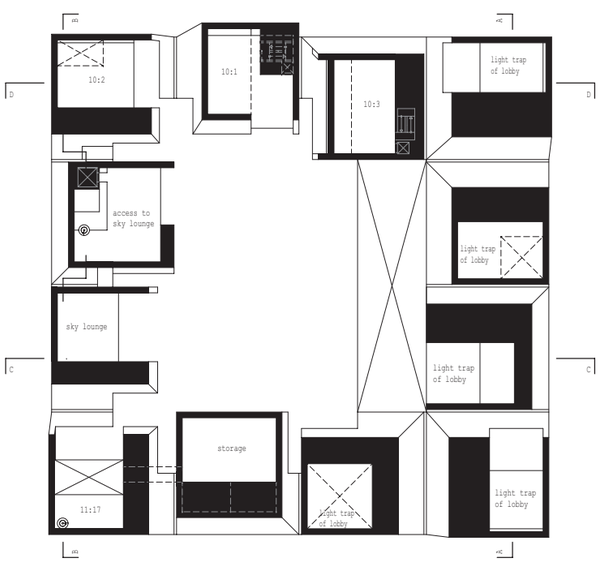

Level 4

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