



THE VERGE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

Where **community** returns, **bricks** remember,
and **curves** reclaim publicness in Canary Wharf.



convergence(v.)

1690s, “to tend to meet in a point or line,”
convergere “to incline together” from assimilated
form of com “with, together” (see con-) + vergere
“to bend, turn, tend toward” “to turn, bend”).

The Verge is an interior architecture project that reanimates the first four floors of a former universal office building in Canary Wharf. Through collective authorship and contextual analysis, it reclaims—or searches for—a truly public space within a landscape shaped by opacity, security, and privatization. The Verge hosts influxes: of people, of bricks, of stories. It transforms not through spectacle, but through the reuse of materials, gestures, and memory.

Rooted in collaboration with local community centres, the project emerges as a “people’s house” at the edge of the financial district. Reclaimed bricks from a soon-to-be-demolished site in Tower Hamlets are treated with care and dignity, assembled into arches that act as thresholds—both symbolic and real. These arches shout come on in, forming porous edges between inside and out in a place where such blurring is rare.

Outside, the road is reimagined and partially covered—an intentional challenge to the site’s previous planning logic. Where masterplanning once erased pedestrian life, The Verge restores the ground as a site of pause, gathering, and access. It draws from Siena’s layered slopes and social terraces, offering a space that invites arrival, encounter, and belonging.

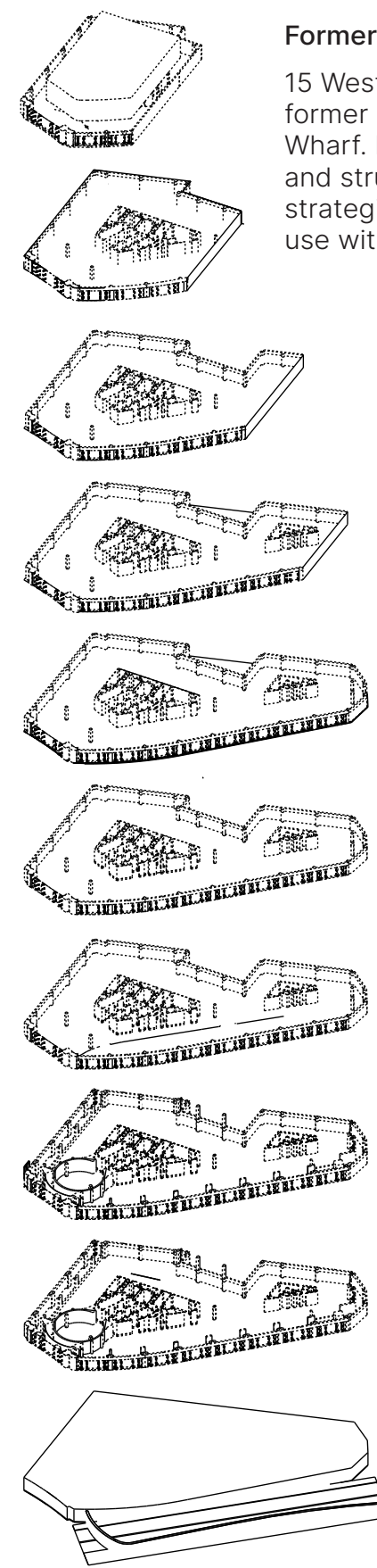


15 WEST FERRY CIRCUS sits at the edge of Canary Wharf—between the corporate core and the Thames. Originally designed as an office building, its structure reflects the priorities of its context: efficiency, separation, and control. By intervening here, The Verge reclaims part of this fabric for public use, testing how architecture might reintroduce informality, presence, and care into a space built for withdrawal.

Canary Wharf, developed in the late 1980s on the former West India Docks, is London's secondary financial centre. Defined by corporate architecture and controlled circulation, it prioritises movement over occupation. Public space functions as transition, not invitation. This analysis explores where informal activity persists—and what might allow it to grow.



The building is a former office



Former offices...
15 Westferry Circus is a nine-storey former office building in Canary Wharf. Its ground-level condition and structural regularity made it a strategic site for reimagining public use within a corporate context.

Activities are limited to basically five: Smoking, talking on the phone, walking and talking with co-workers, running, and using the building arches as passage.

Interesting outdoor spaces should gather a wide variety of activities.



In general, people come and people go in a short period of time: there isn't much staying time. There is sitting and there is standing, but a key word is staying. Edges, fountains, steps, usually increase staying time.



Differences in levels are a huge problem to pedestrians. Not only a practical but a psychological barrier.



Just standing is another important indicator: in good spaces people will just stand there - alone watching, living. Here, people normally only stand for a reason: a phone call, a travelling conversation.



People tend to spend time where there are good places to sit, and most of the times, these good spots are not even "for sitting" - steps, edges, secondary options. That's part of the charm.



This is not a bench to "sit on" - it is for pointing an image on architectural plans. People like to watch other people, not the passage of cars.

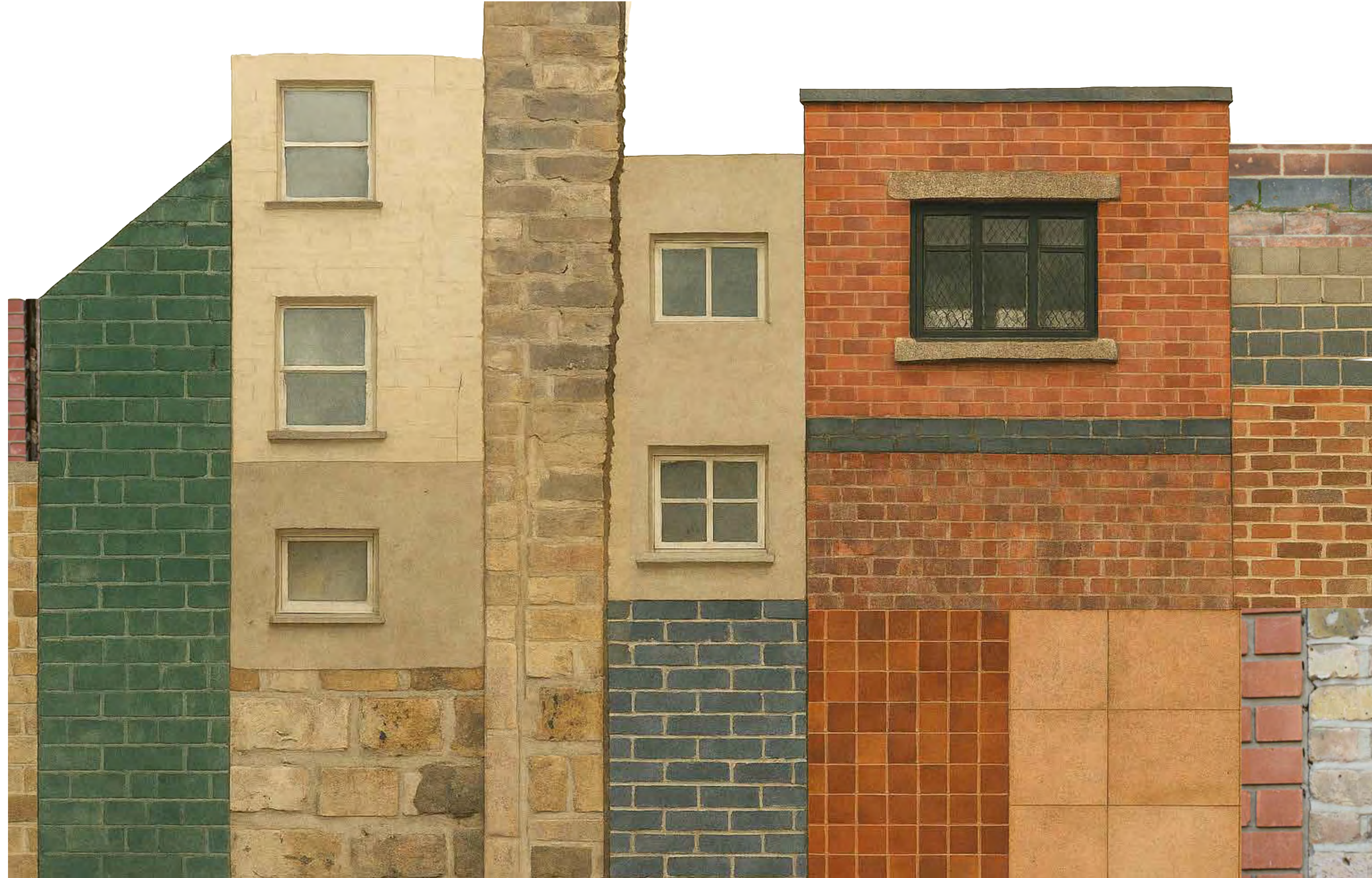
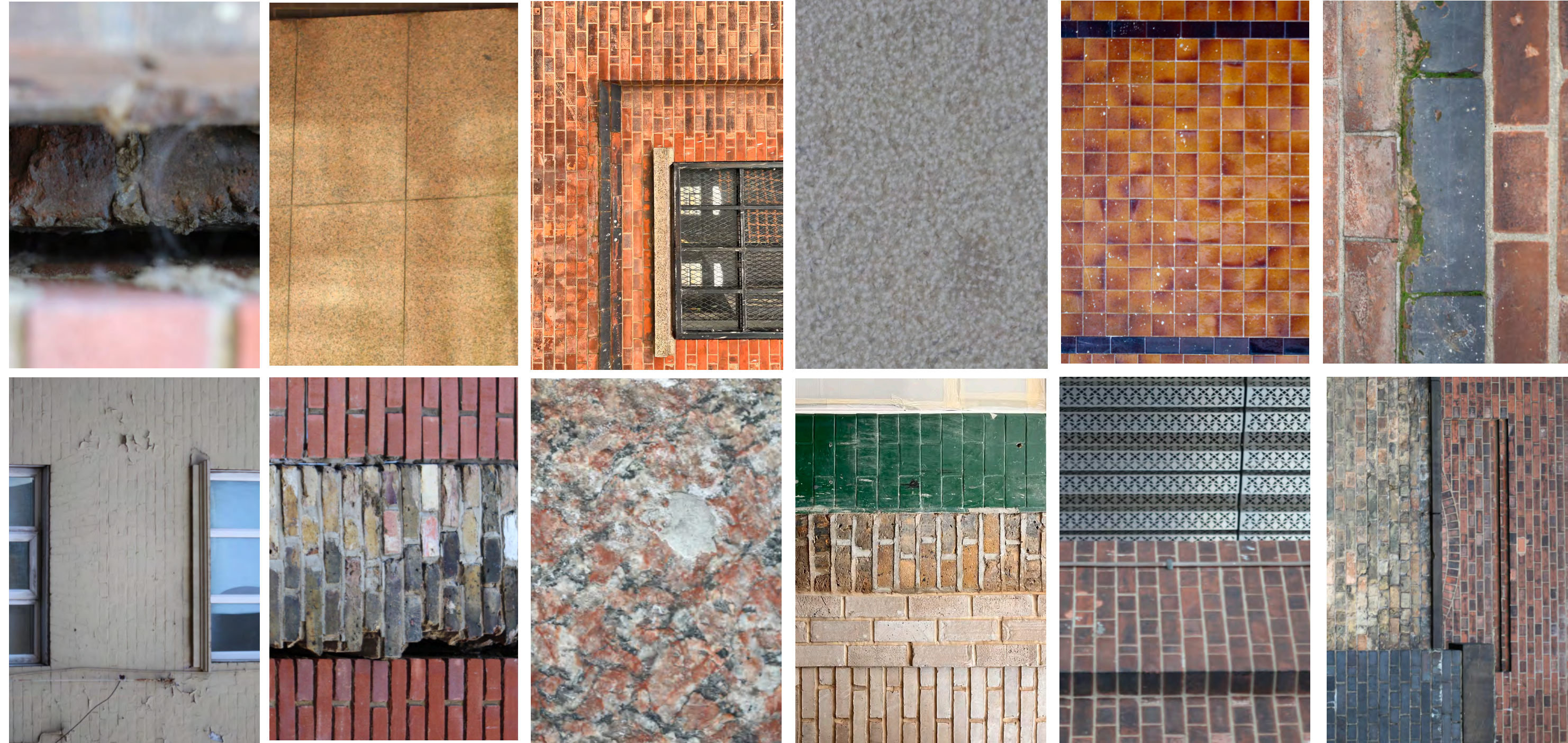
Benches in front of the river works better. People like to watch other people.



The real buzz in Canary Wharf is found in the sub-world: Street-like activities, getting your shoes shined, people-watching while sipping a coffee, are hidden on the underground.



A CLOSE READING of Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs reveals traces of a more human materiality—fragments of brick, tile, stone, and painted render that speak to a more tactile past. This collage gathers those overlooked surfaces, layering them into a facade that resists the polished anonymity of the financial district. It's a patchwork of presence, texture, and care—evidence that another kind of city has always existed underneath. A similar language is looked for at The Verge.



THE RESEARCH behind The Verge focused on both material and social influx. Reclaimed bricks speak to the material flows of the city, while workshops and interviews with local community centres revealed the social needs shaping the project. One workshop asked participants what they could learn from each other—and what they needed from a third space between home, work, and the community centre. Their responses directly informed the activities housed within The Verge, grounding the design in shared use and everyday life.

Apsley House

The bricks that form the arches of The Verge come from Apsley House, a social housing block in Tower Hamlets set to be demolished in 2027. Still standing today, the building holds traces of everyday life—textures, repairs, and rhythms that speak to a more human materiality. In doing so, The Verge continues the language of presence and care found in the overlooked surfaces of the Isle of Dogs.



Idea Store

"We are not a library, we are much more than that now. That's why we are still open, and expanding"

"We receive the 'loners' from all around".



Island House

"I would say there is a 95% psychological distance between us and Canary Wharf"

"We would love to have a space where different ages can learn from each other"



Cooking - I am good at cooking/making...

Doing more of... - What do you wish you did more of? Who do you wish you spent more time with?

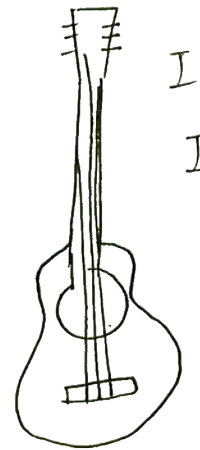
Three places - A place you love spending time at. A place where you feel more comfortable or safe. A place you find interesting but don't visit often.

Pin a red dot on the post-it's you relate to.

Magic Door - Imagine you are walking around your street or neighborhood and you find a magic door. You open that door and it leads to a fantastic space. What is that space?

Complete - "I'm good at _____, but I wish I was better at _____"

Bring a "beautiful object"



I wish spending more time playing music.
I wish spent more time with my brother.

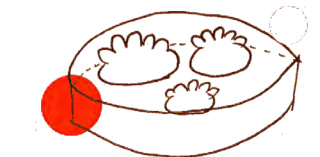
Did you find something else to learn?
Yes Dancing
No

Did you find a match?
Yes
No

Did you find something else to learn?
Yes KEY BOARD
No

Did you find a match?
Yes ✓
No

I like listening to musik.
I like walking in the park.
I want to spend more time with my family.



prawn
sesame oil
cabbage

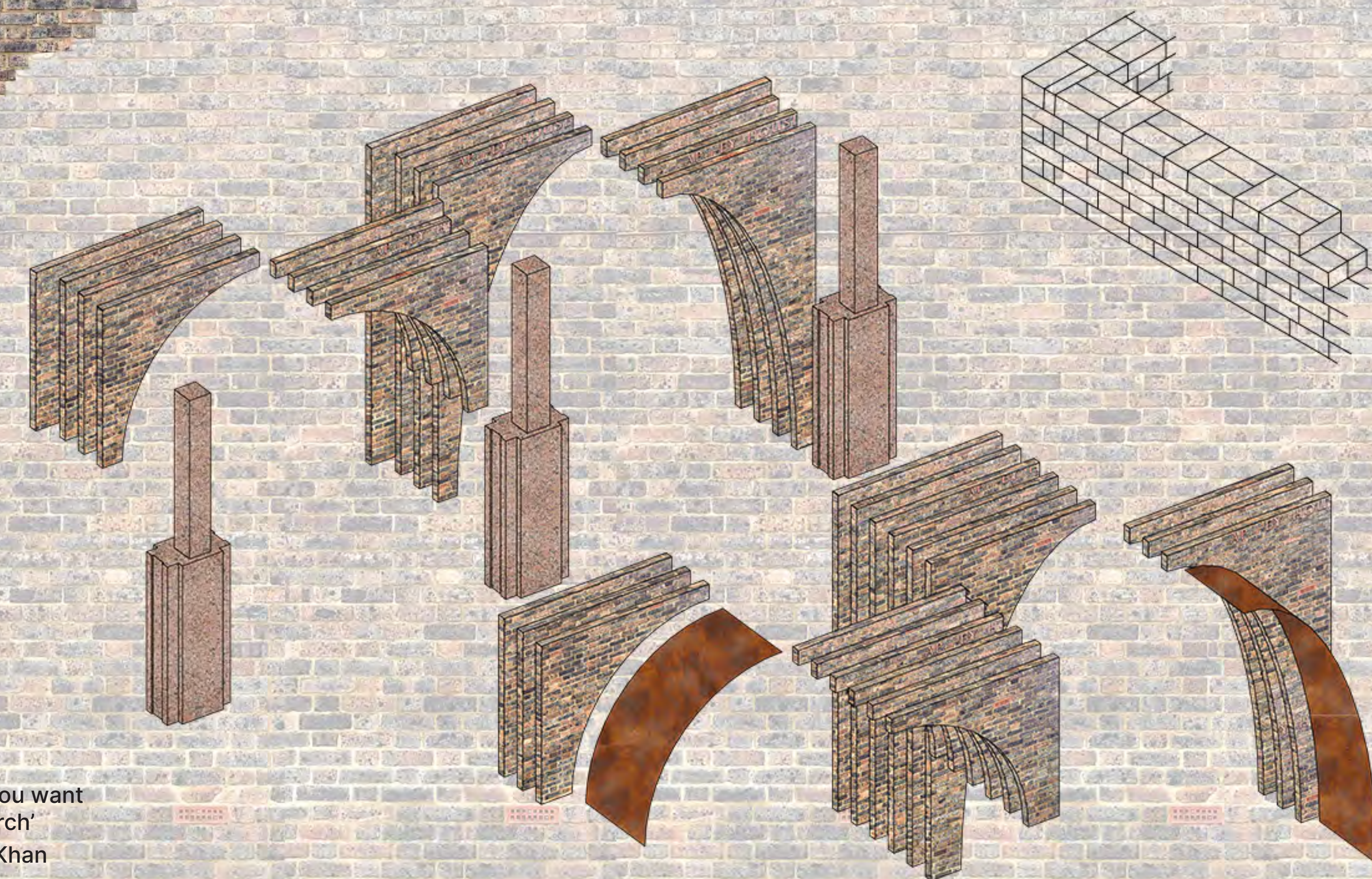
1. I wish I did more on photography.
2. I wish I spent more time with my family.



"I'm good at riding motorcycle, and I learned it from myself, but I wish I was better at driving".

"I'm good at swimming, and I learned it from school, but I wish I was better at ski".

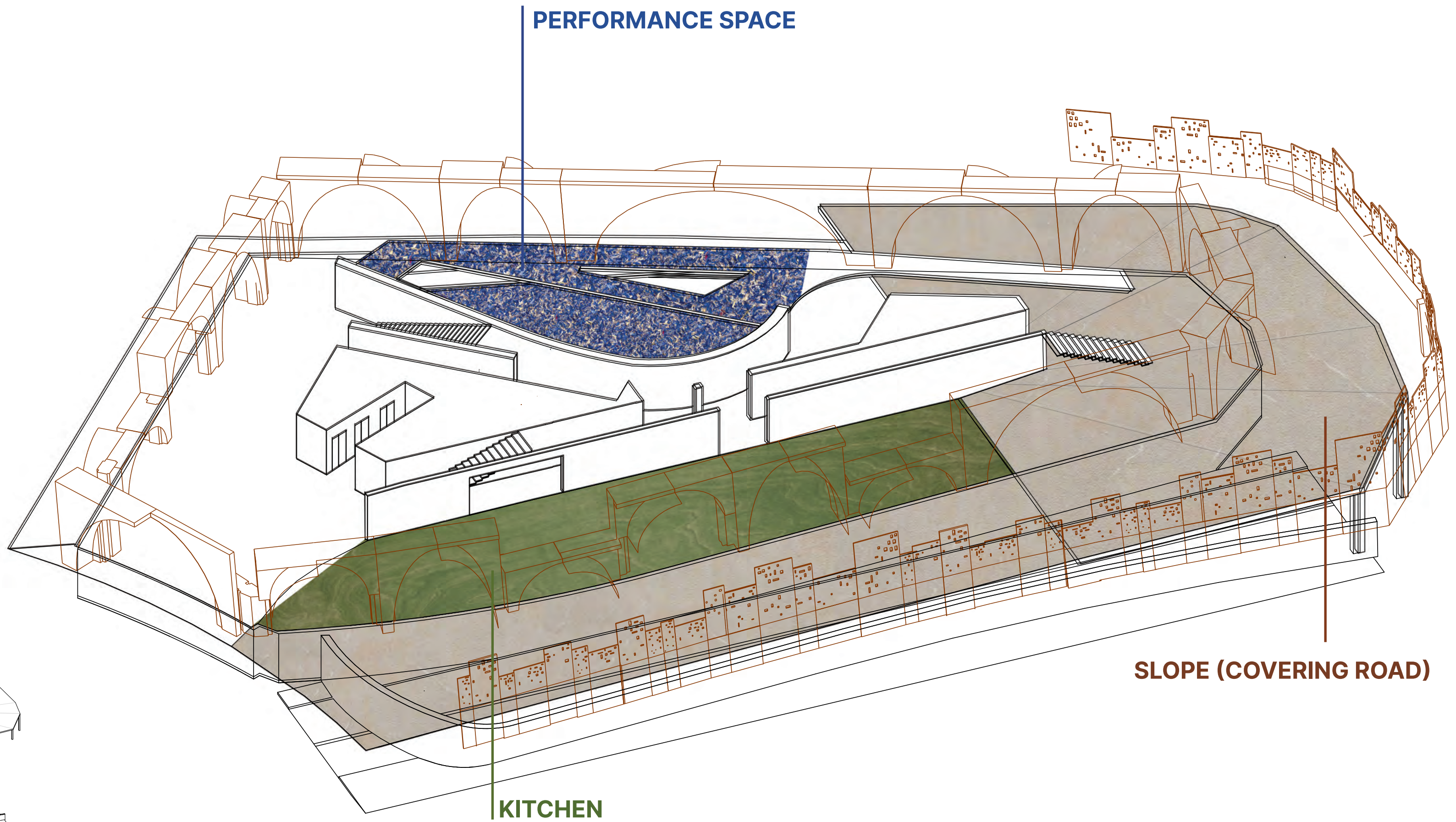
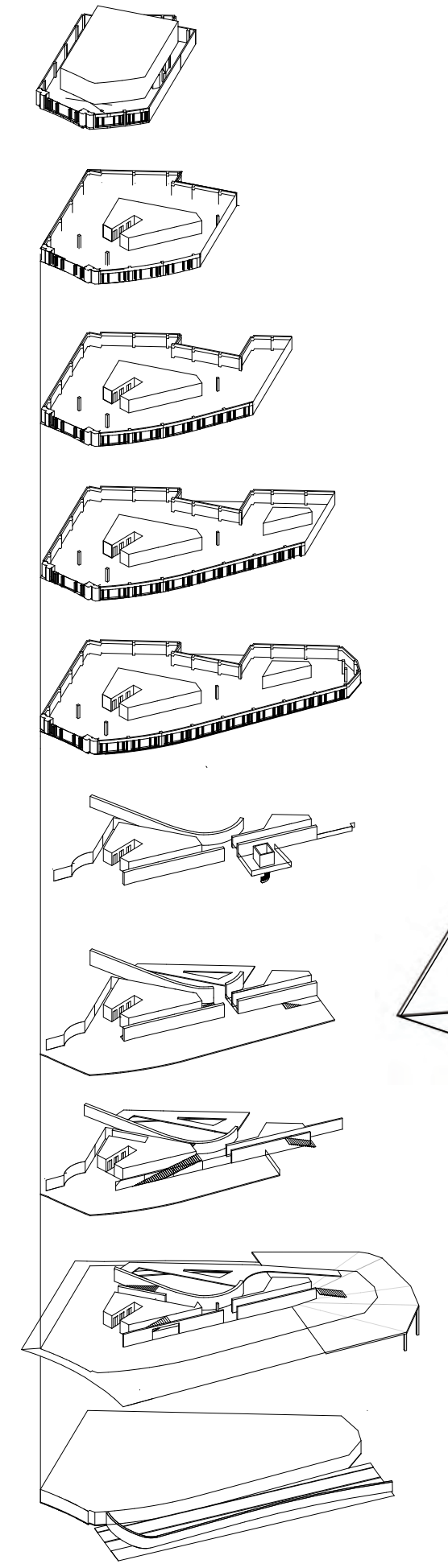
APSLEY HOUSE



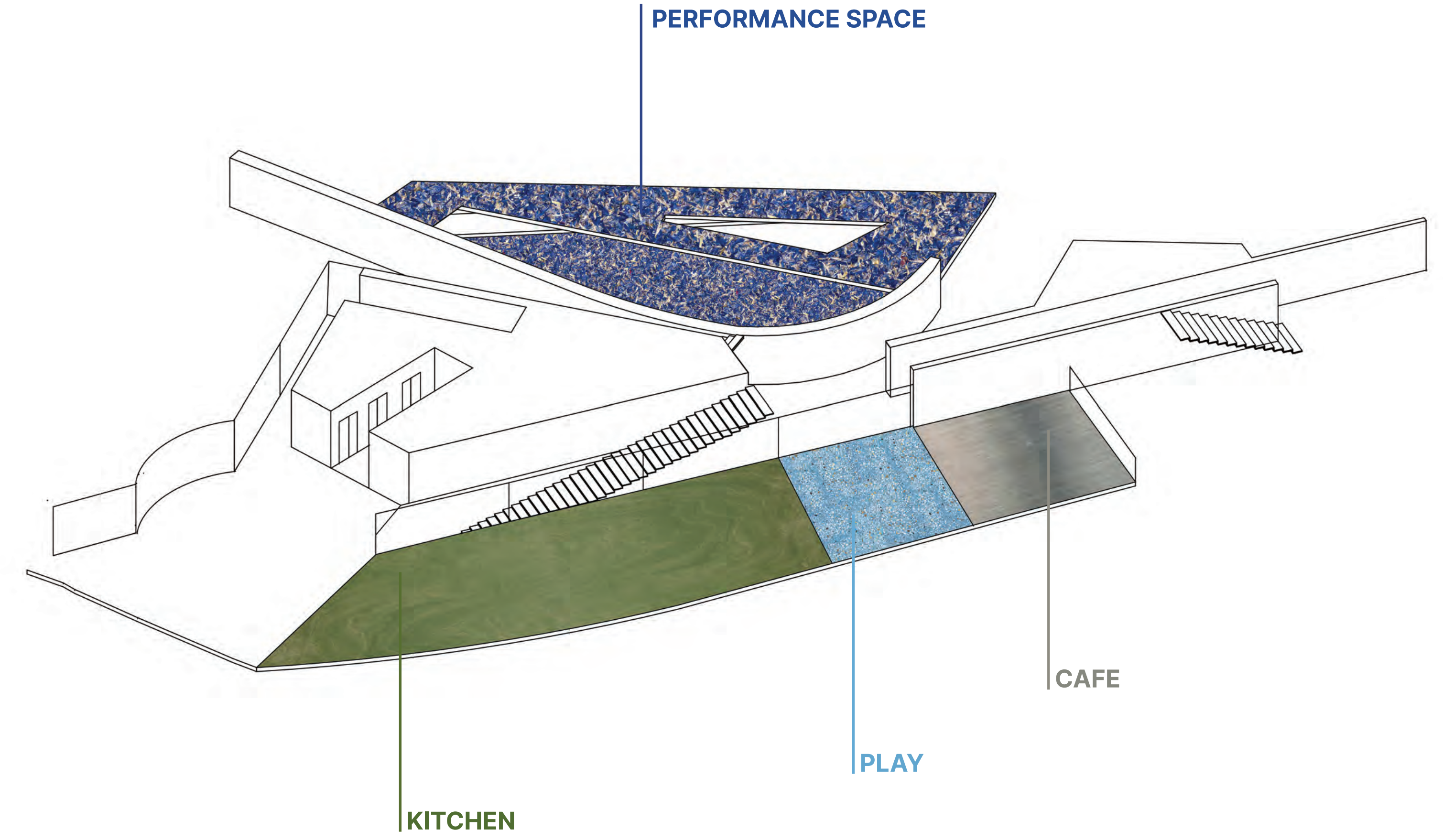
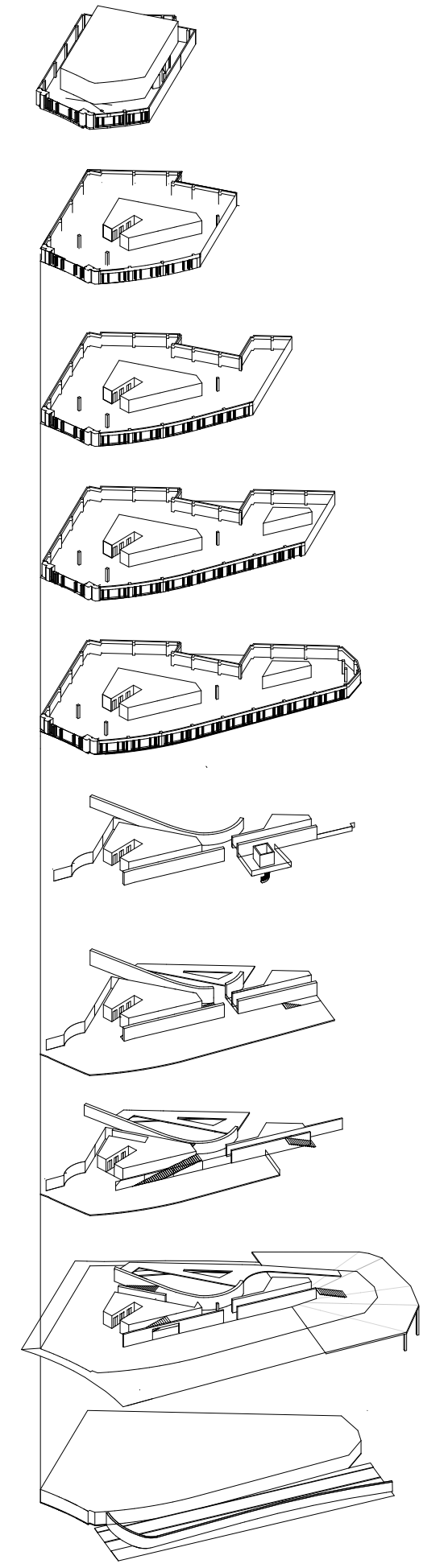
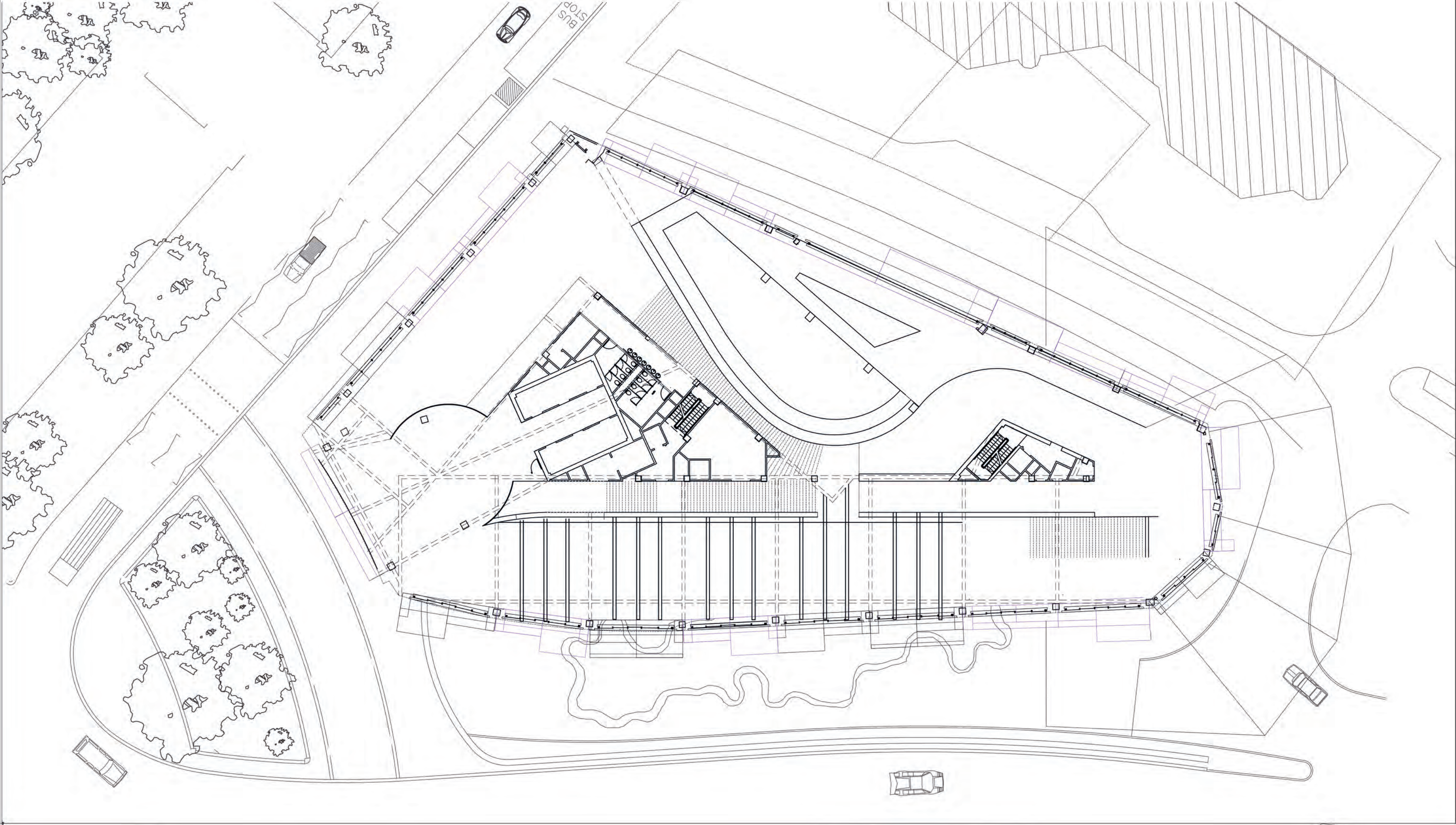
“You say to a brick, “what do you want brick?”... Brick says: ‘I like an arch’
Louis Khan

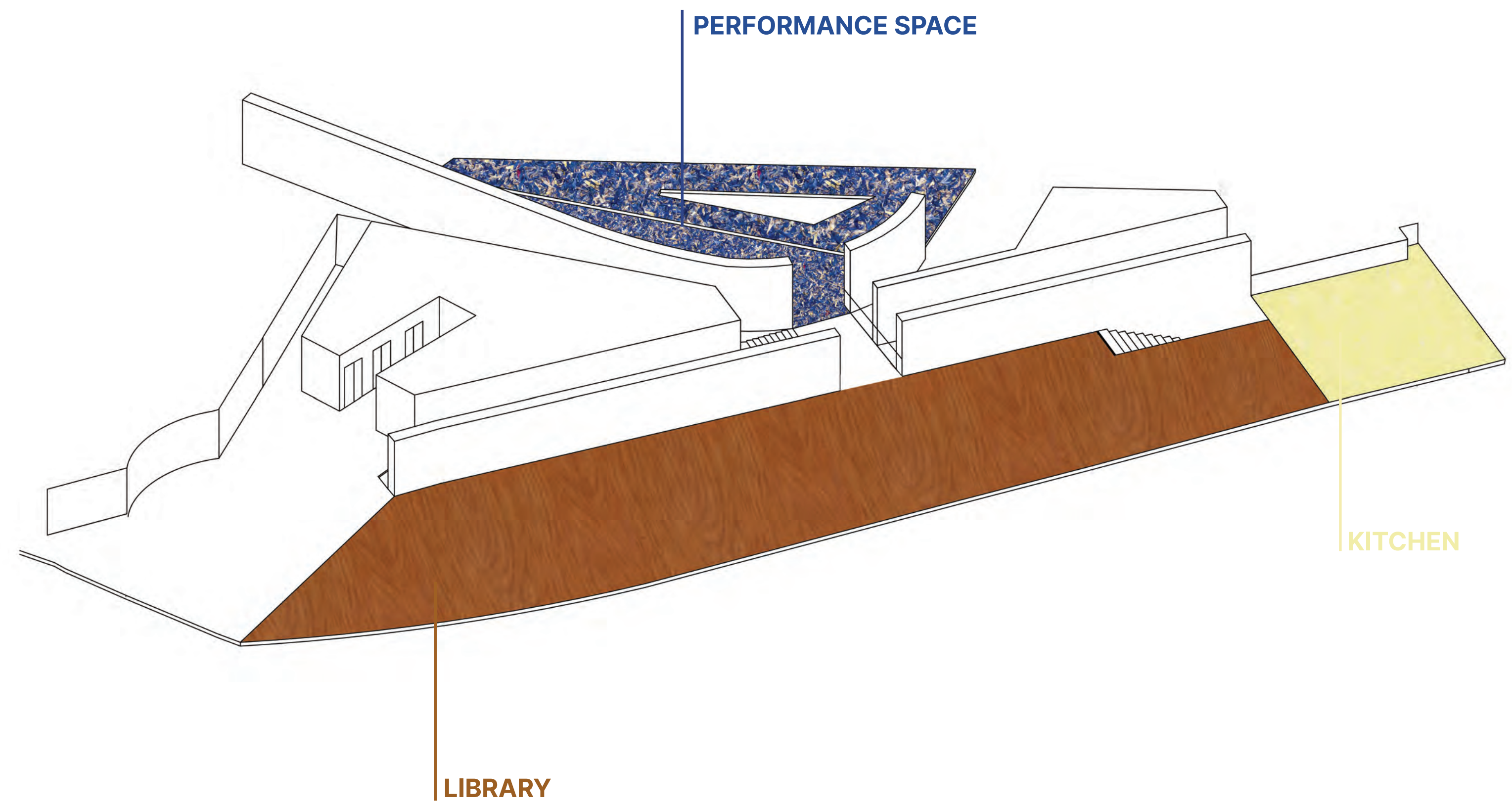
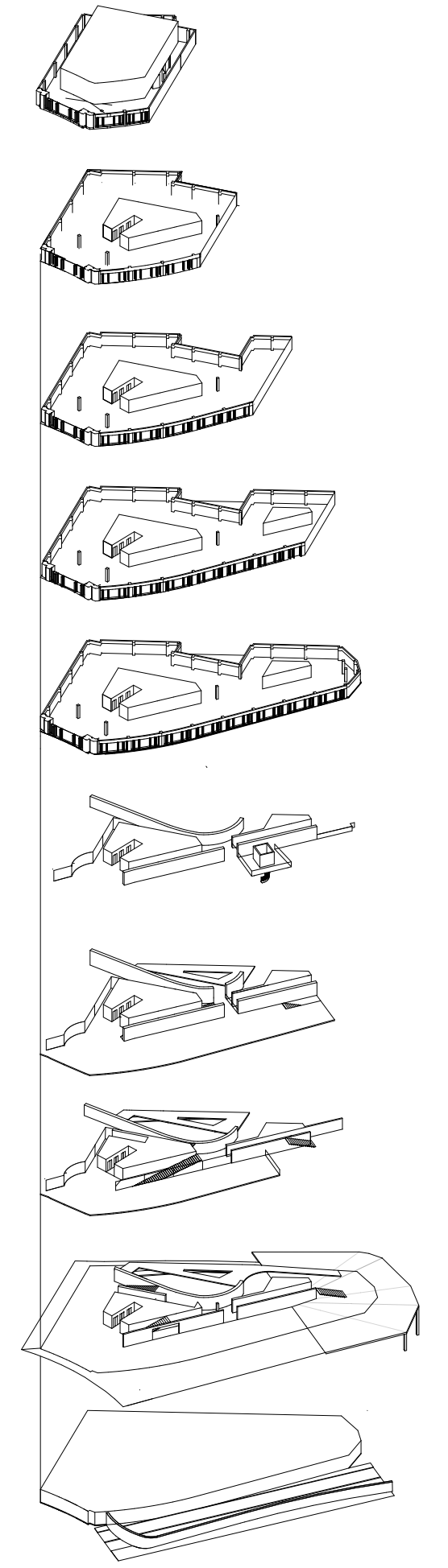
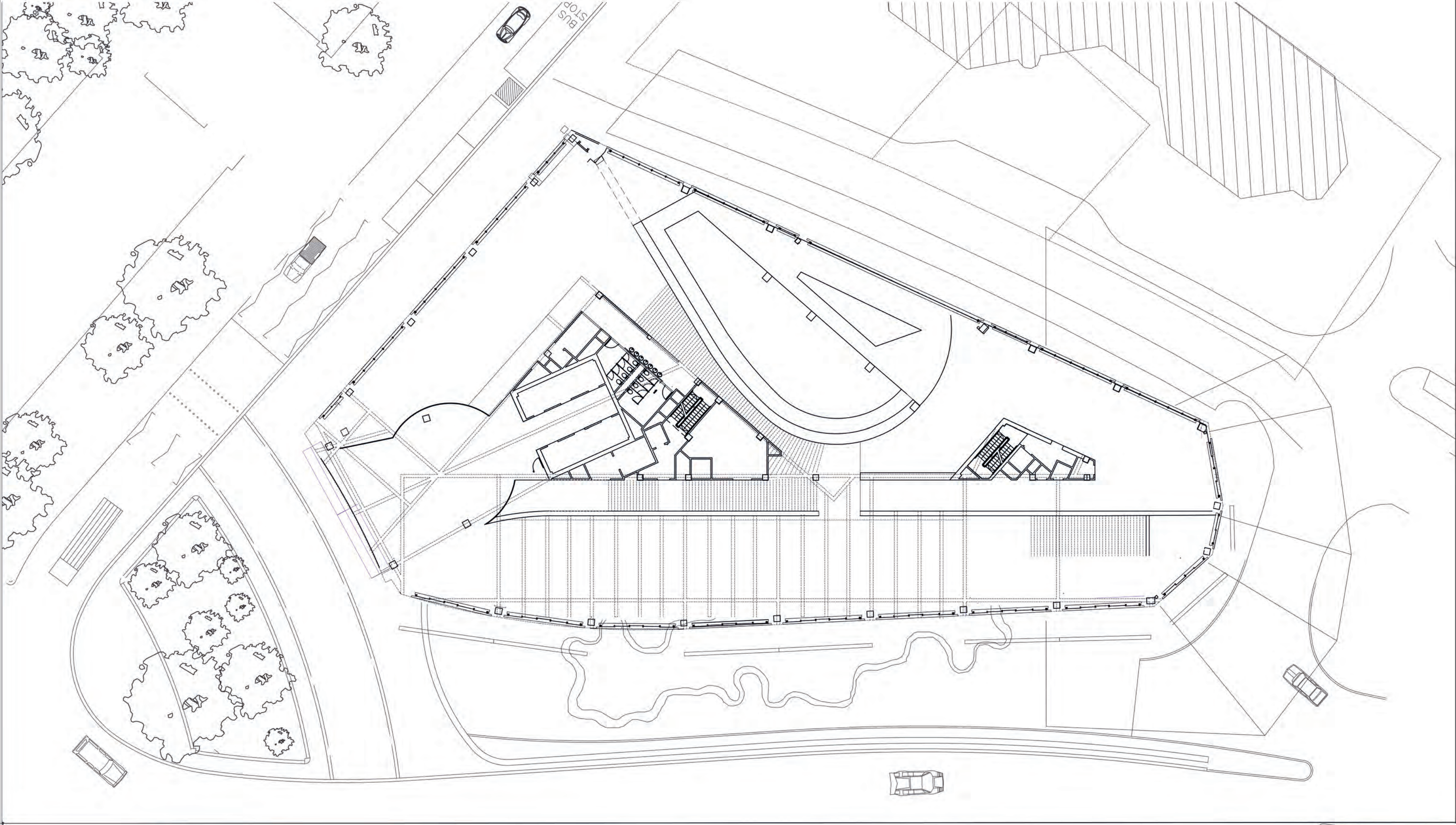
THE BRICKS FROM APSLEY HOUSE are Flemish bond bricks, which are (like any other brick) typically deconstructed one by one for careful reuse. At The Verge, however, they are taken down in rough chunks, prioritising not precision but presence. These uneven sections are reassembled into arches, where the break lines remain visible. Rather than masking irregularity, the arches celebrate it—letting the bricks speak in their original form. The result is a construction that favours honesty over exactness, and embraces the quiet humanity found in imperfection.

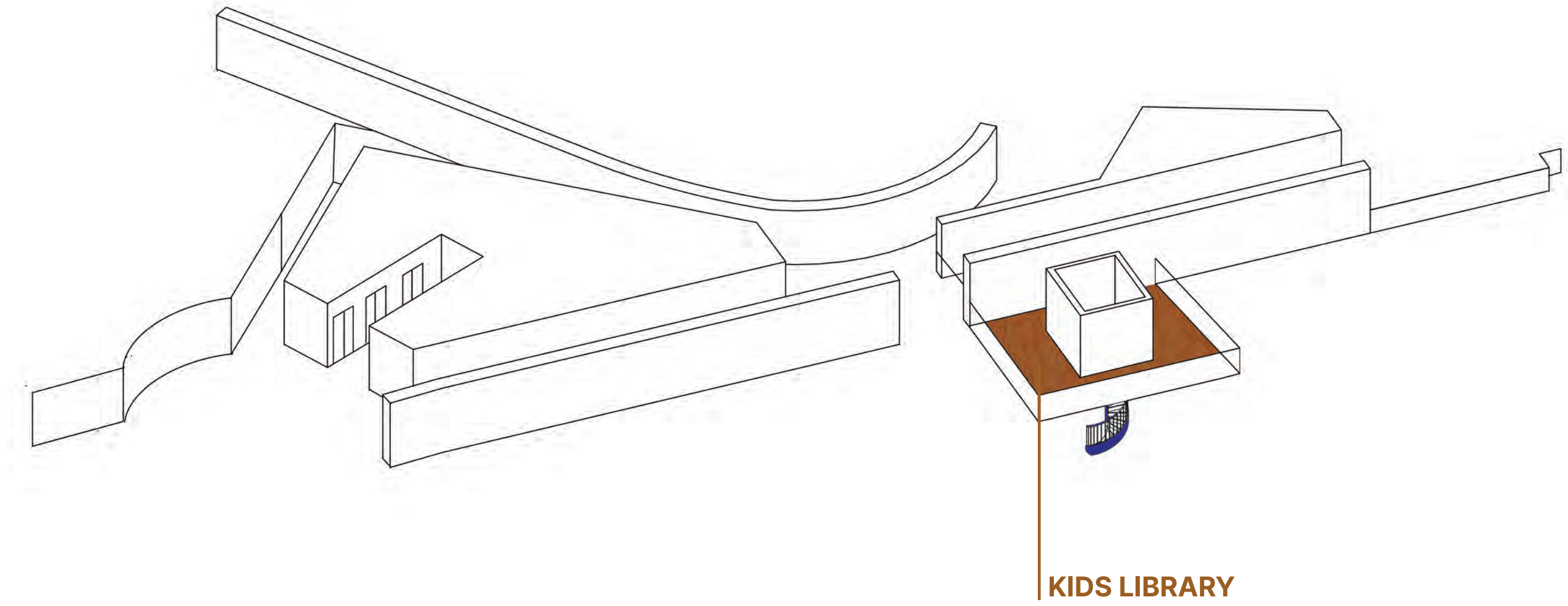
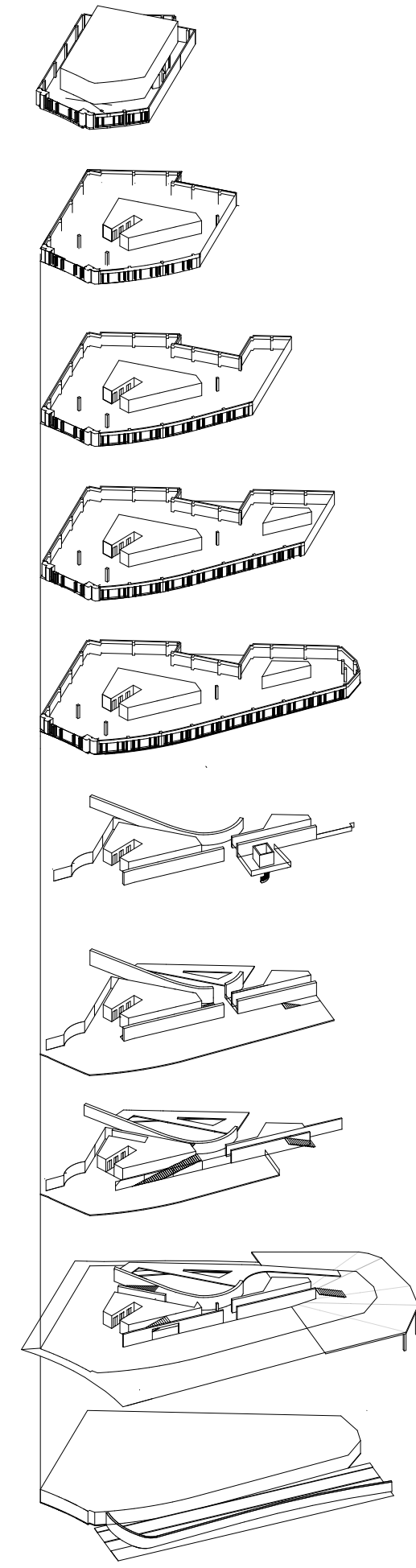
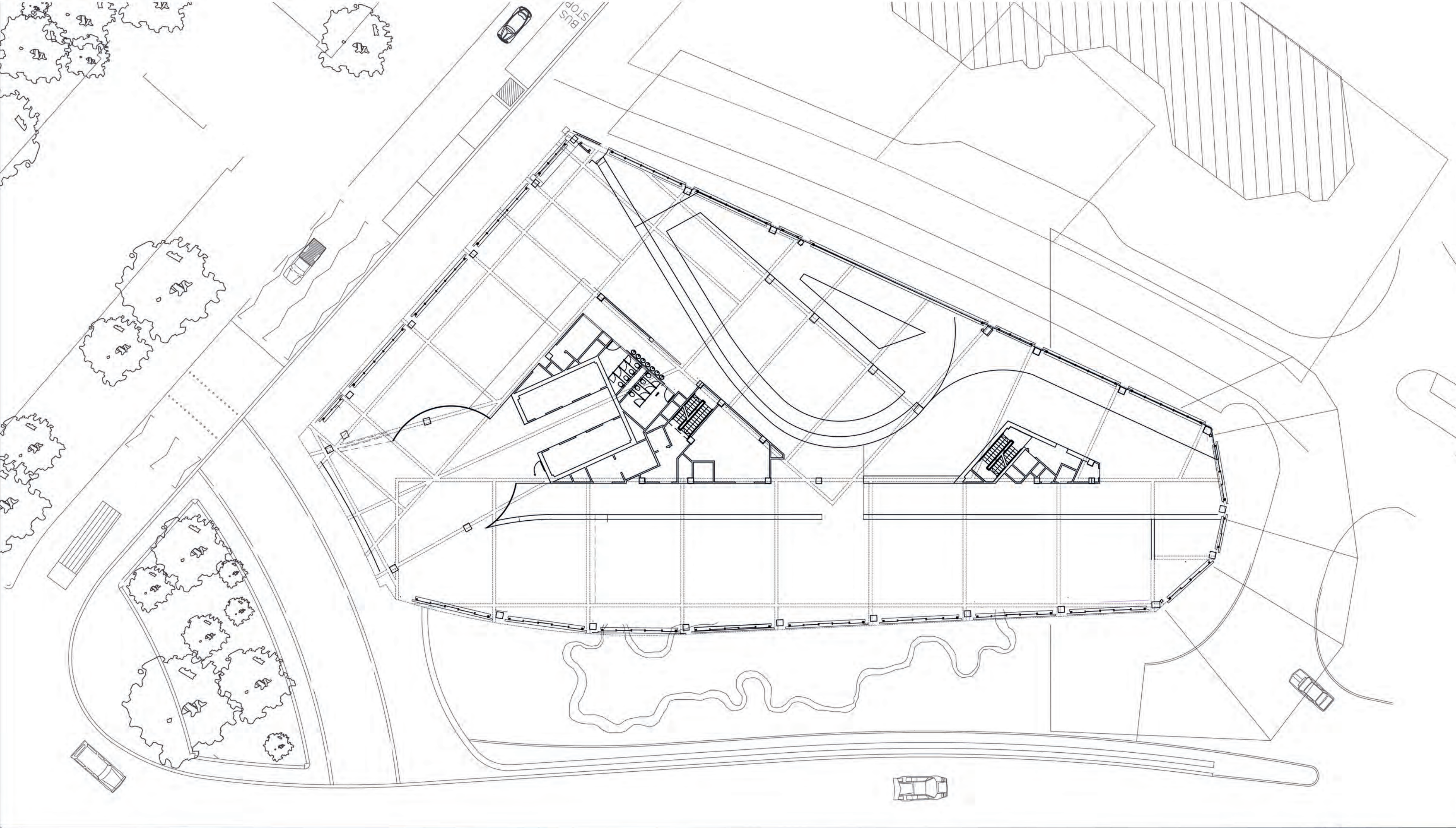




LGF + GF



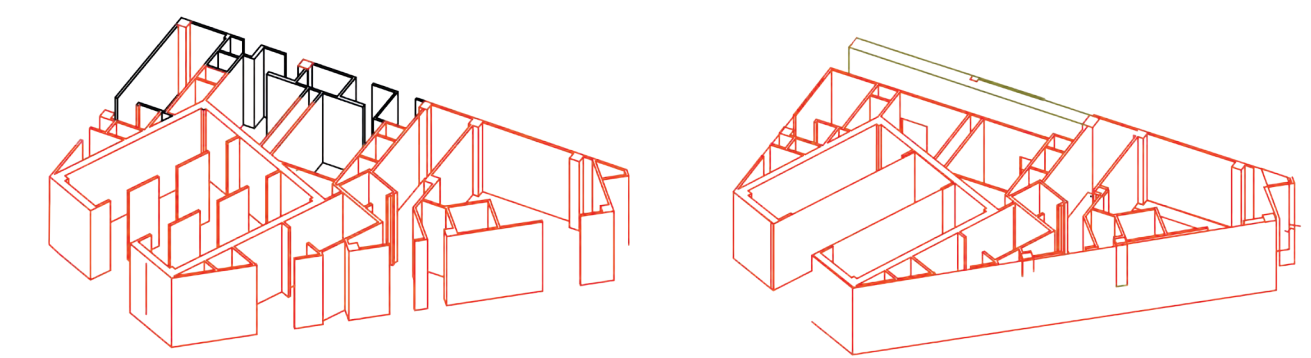




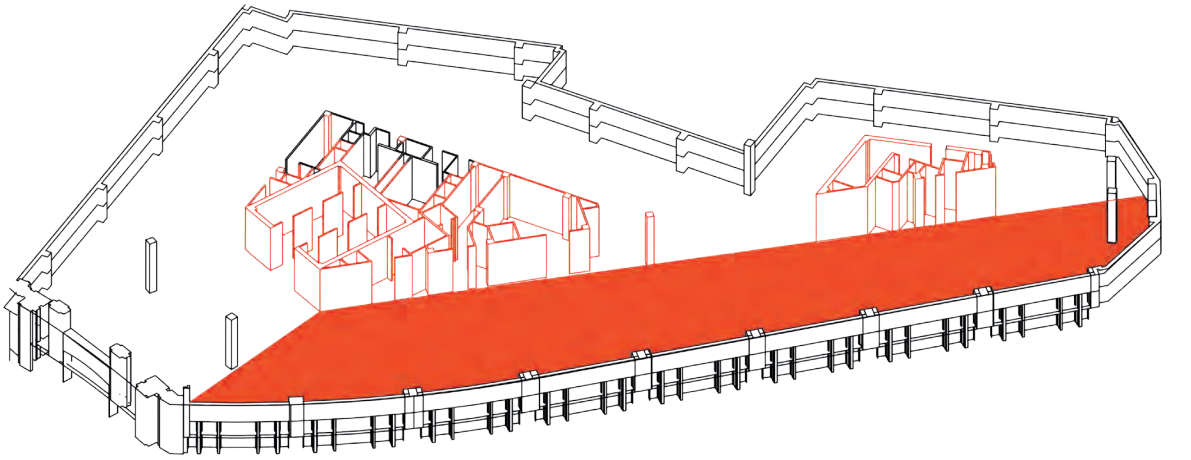
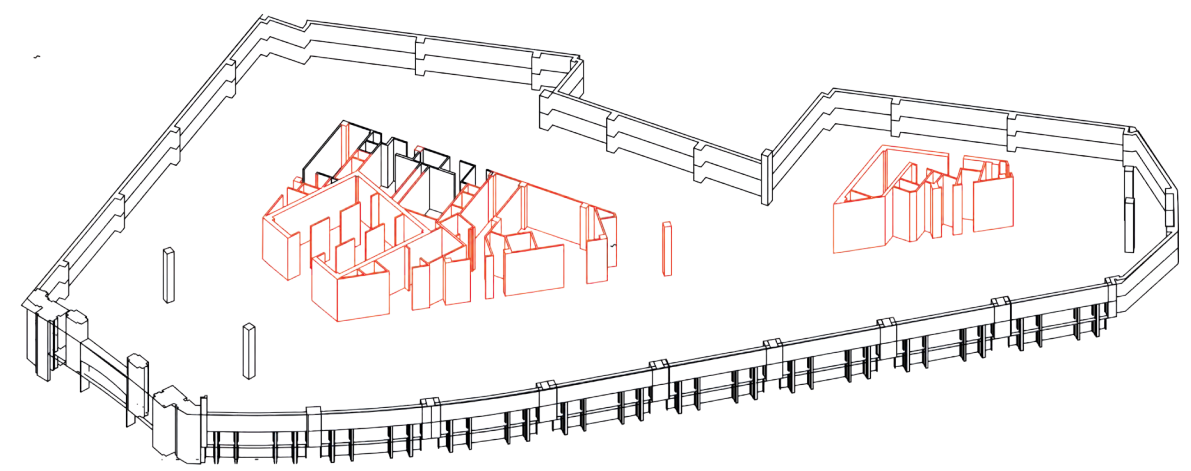
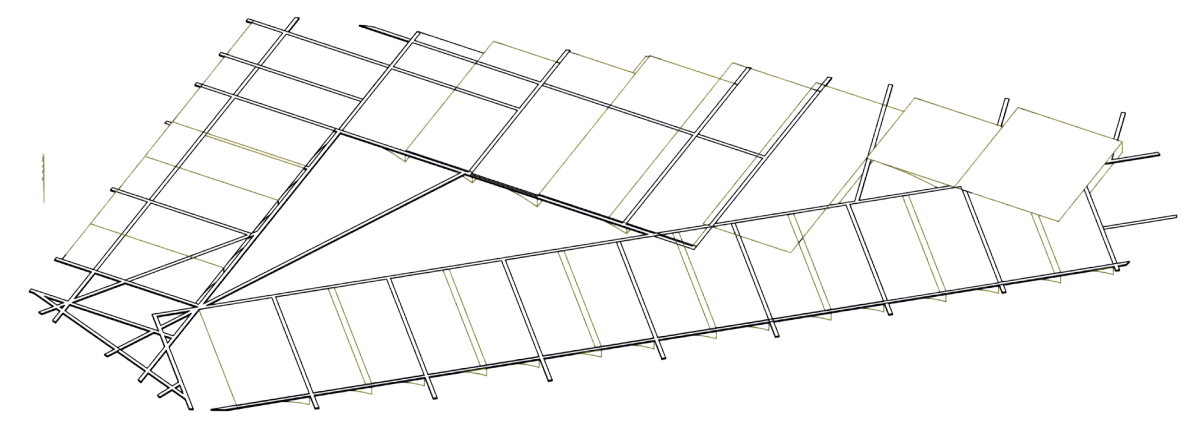
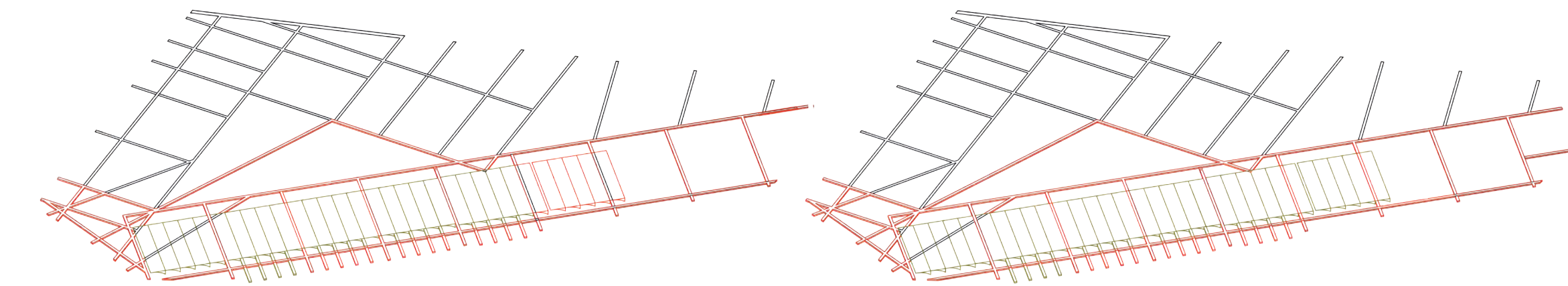
KIDS LIBRARY

THE REUSED sections of the building were revealed gradually as the design unfolded. Existing columns were retained, while beams were adapted: kept on the ground and first floors, and removed on the second to create a double-height space for the library. The green ceiling detail seen in the renders follows the original beam pattern, creating a textured overhead landscape. The building's core was slightly modified to open a passage toward the bathrooms and a communal wash basin. Most of the original flooring was removed, except for the sections in red.

- Reused
- New
- Removed



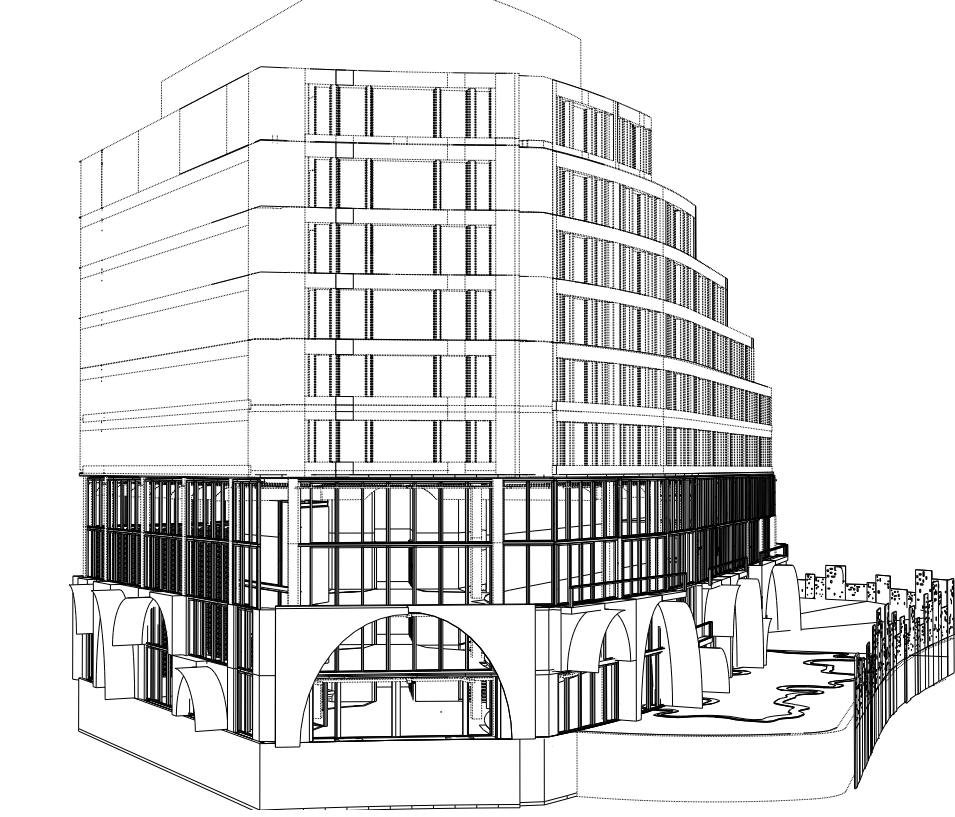
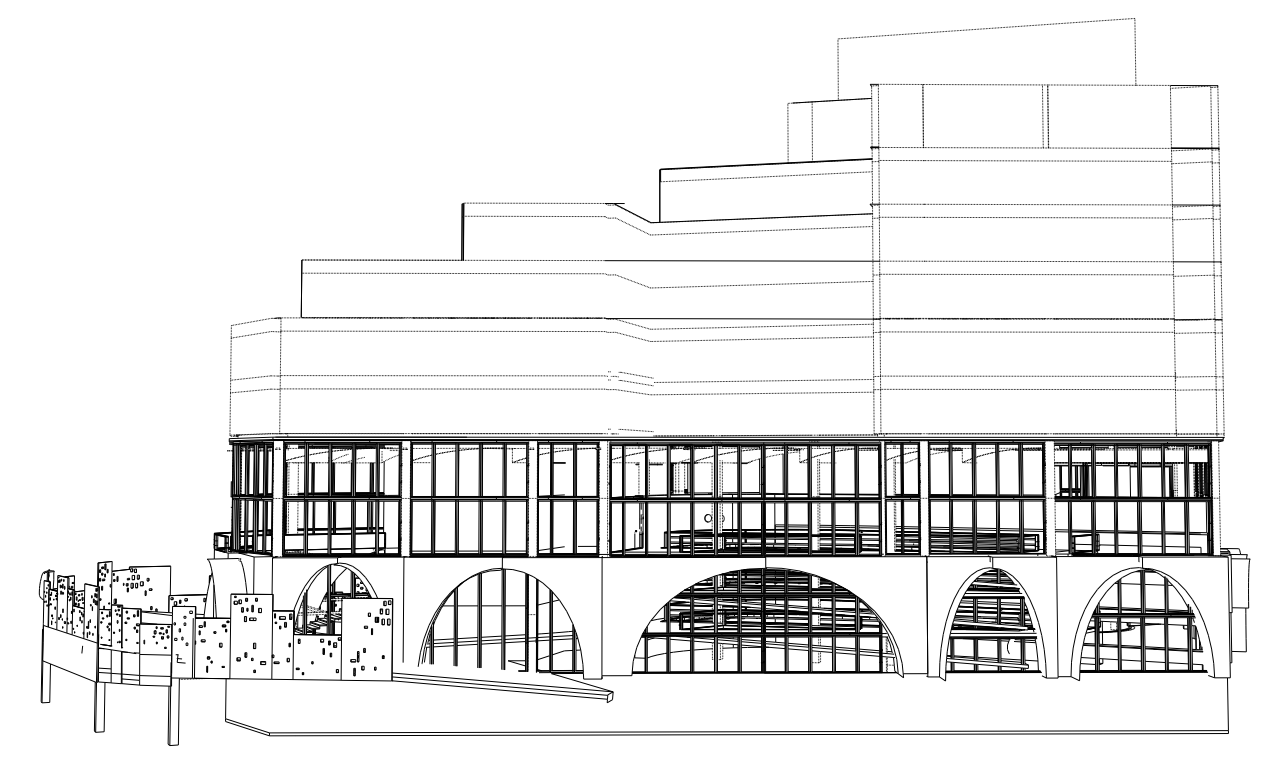
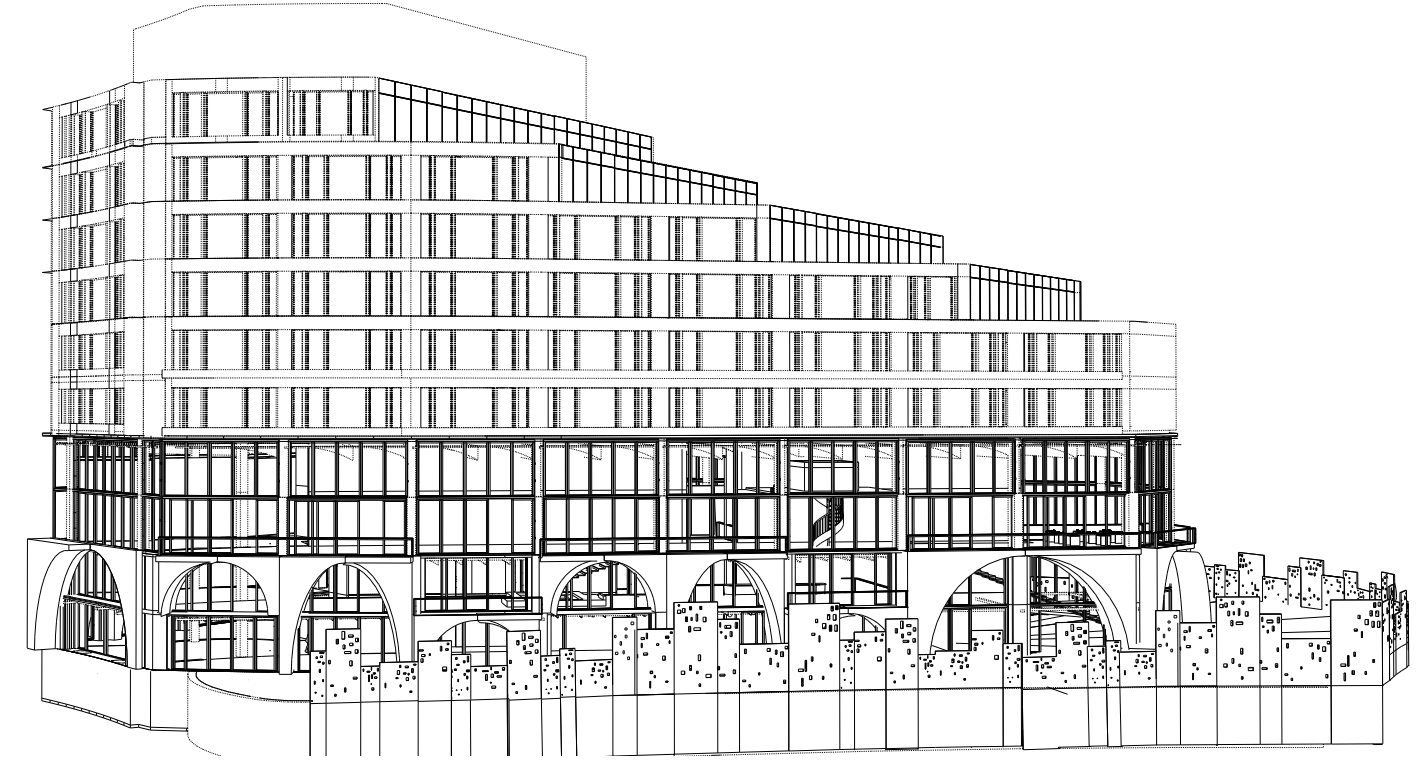
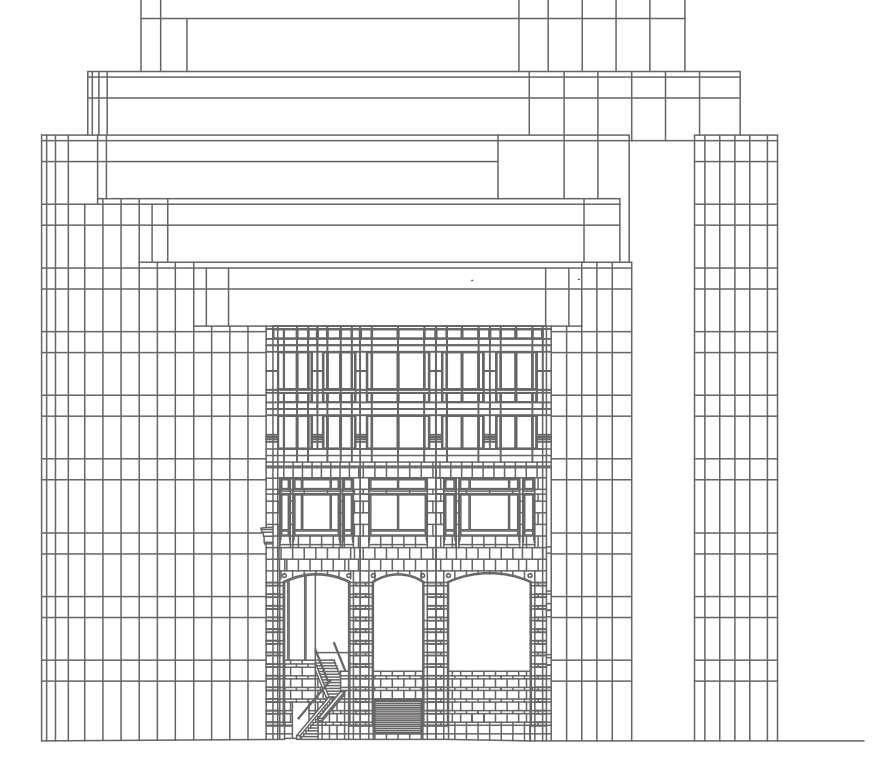
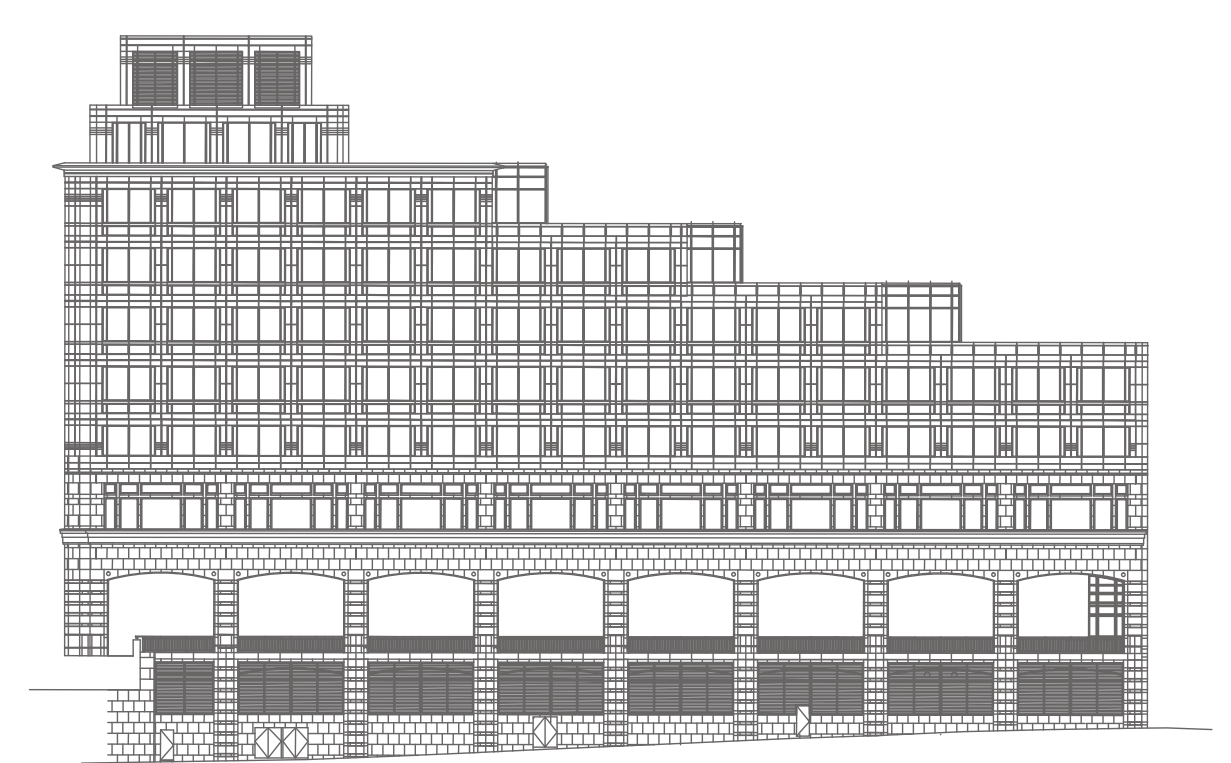
original core adapted core

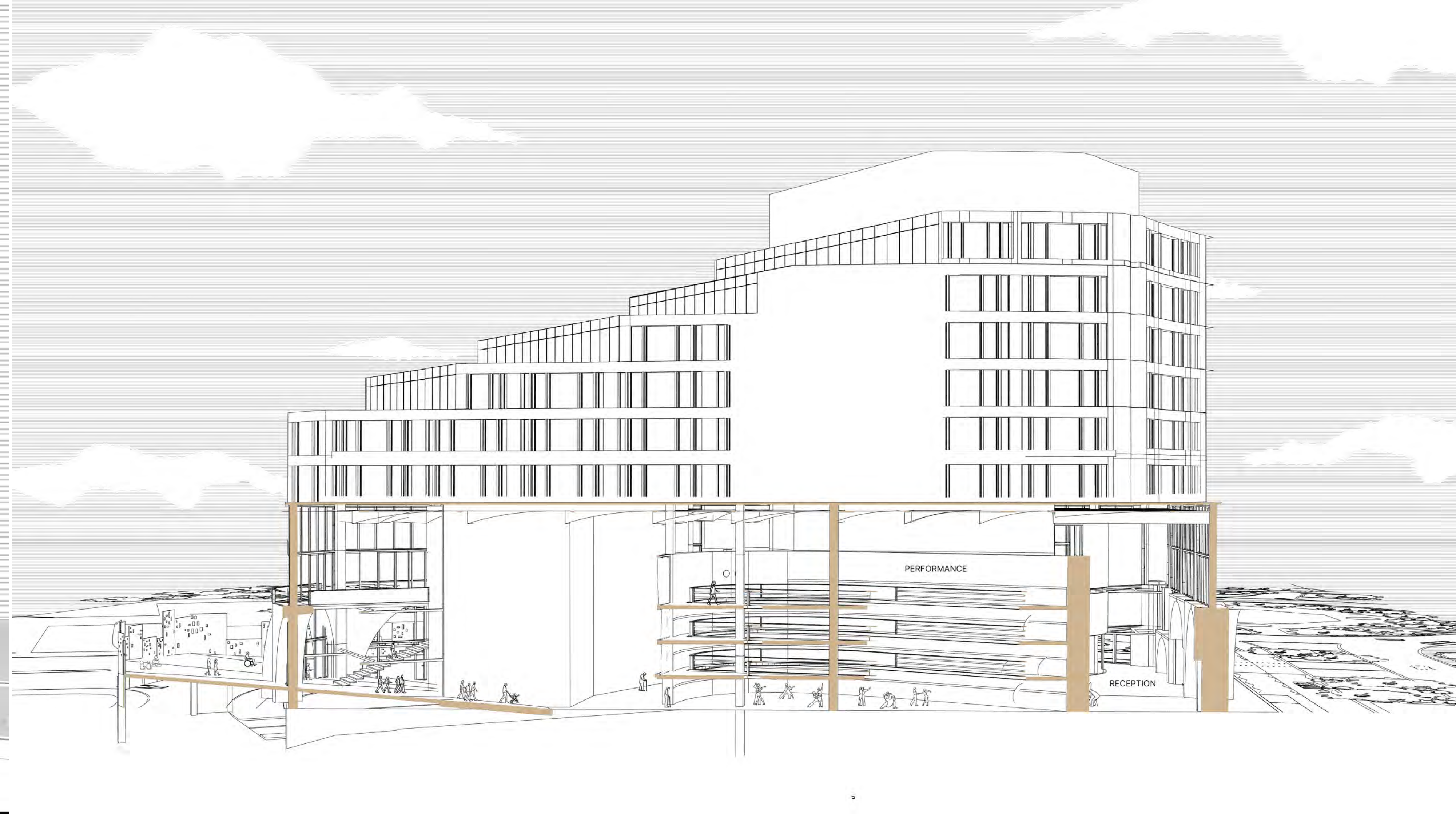


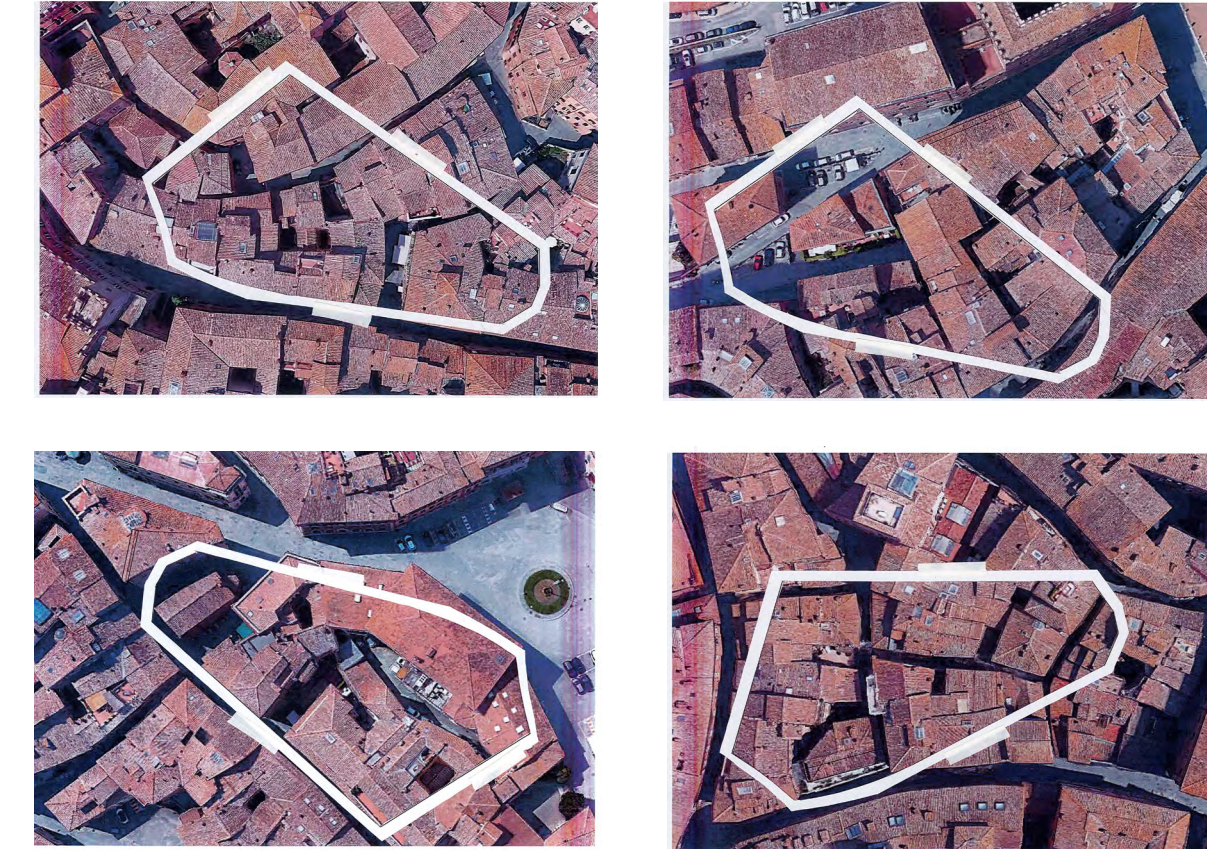
GF

F1

F2-23

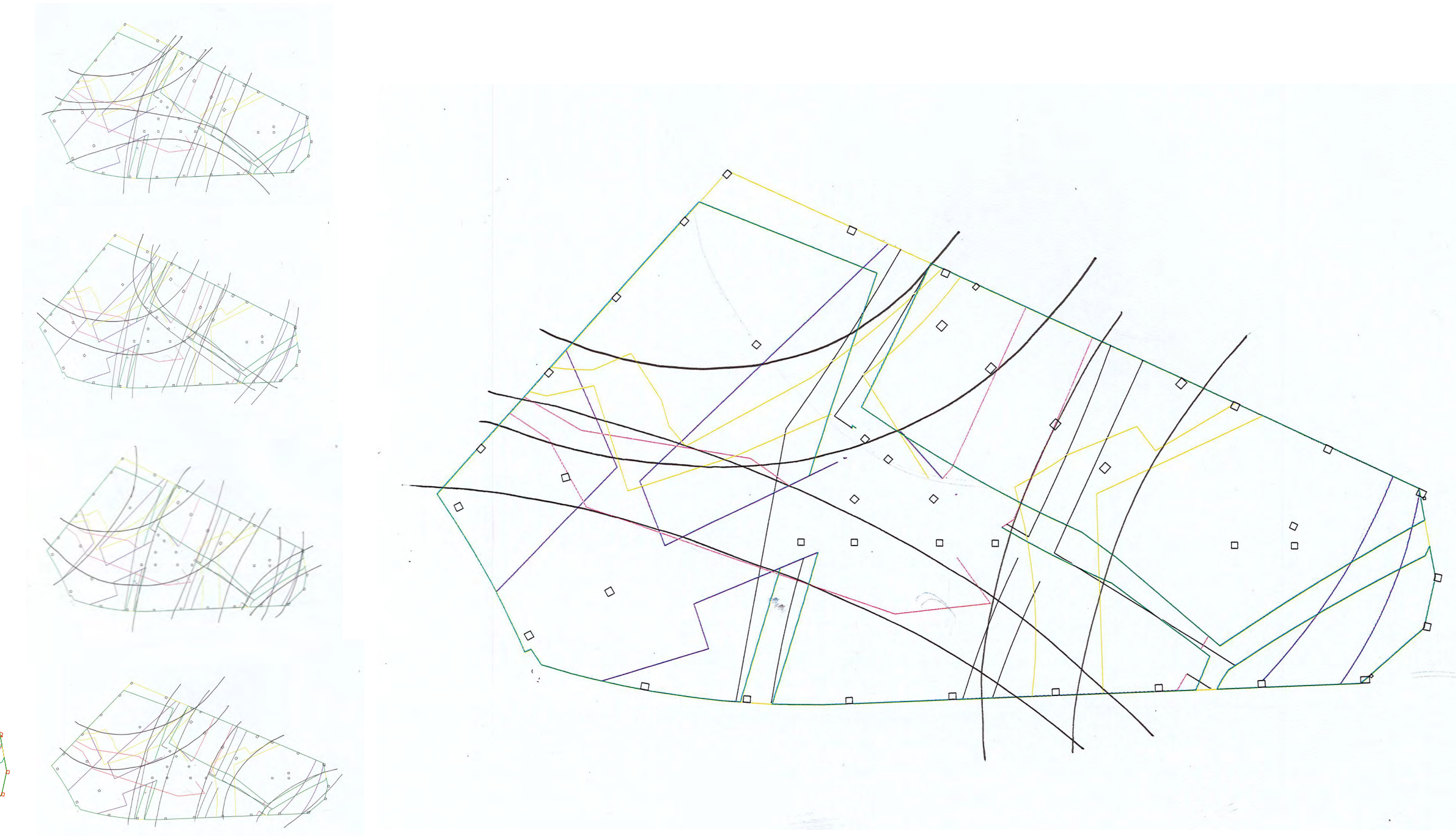
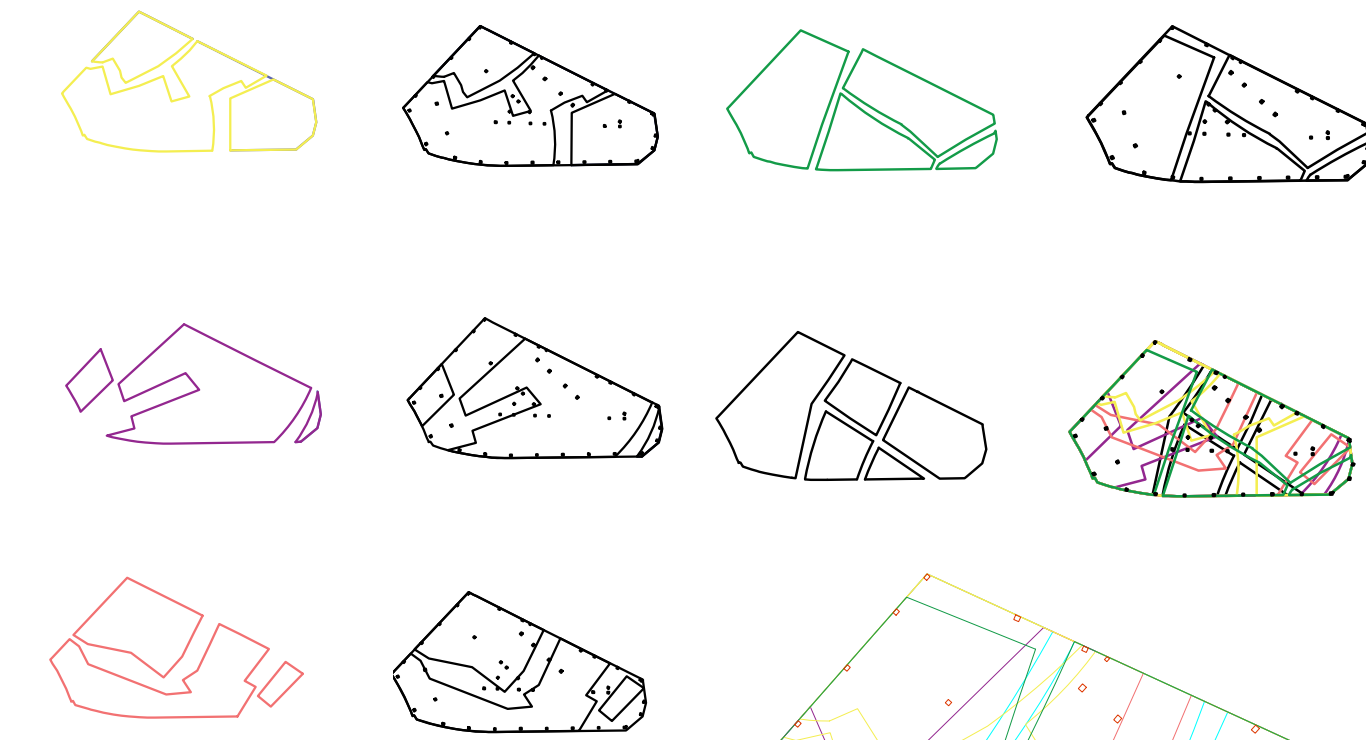






THE MEDIEVAL CITY OF SIENA became a reference for its medieval urbanism—streets shaped by walking, gathering, and the rhythms of everyday life. Its layered topography, human scale, and irregular plots offer a kind of spatial intelligence that resists rigid planning. Studying Siena was a way to learn from a city where design follows use, where pause and encounter are built into the ground.

The curves of The Verge come from drawings made by tracing Siena's streets—lines shaped by movement, pause, and enclosure. These curves were brought into the building's layout, where tall walls follow their path closely, creating spaces that hold and guide rather than divide. Instead of imposing a new order, the form responds to a rhythm already found elsewhere. In the strict grid of Canary Wharf, these soft, bending lines offer a quiet contrast—carrying the memory of another city into a new context.







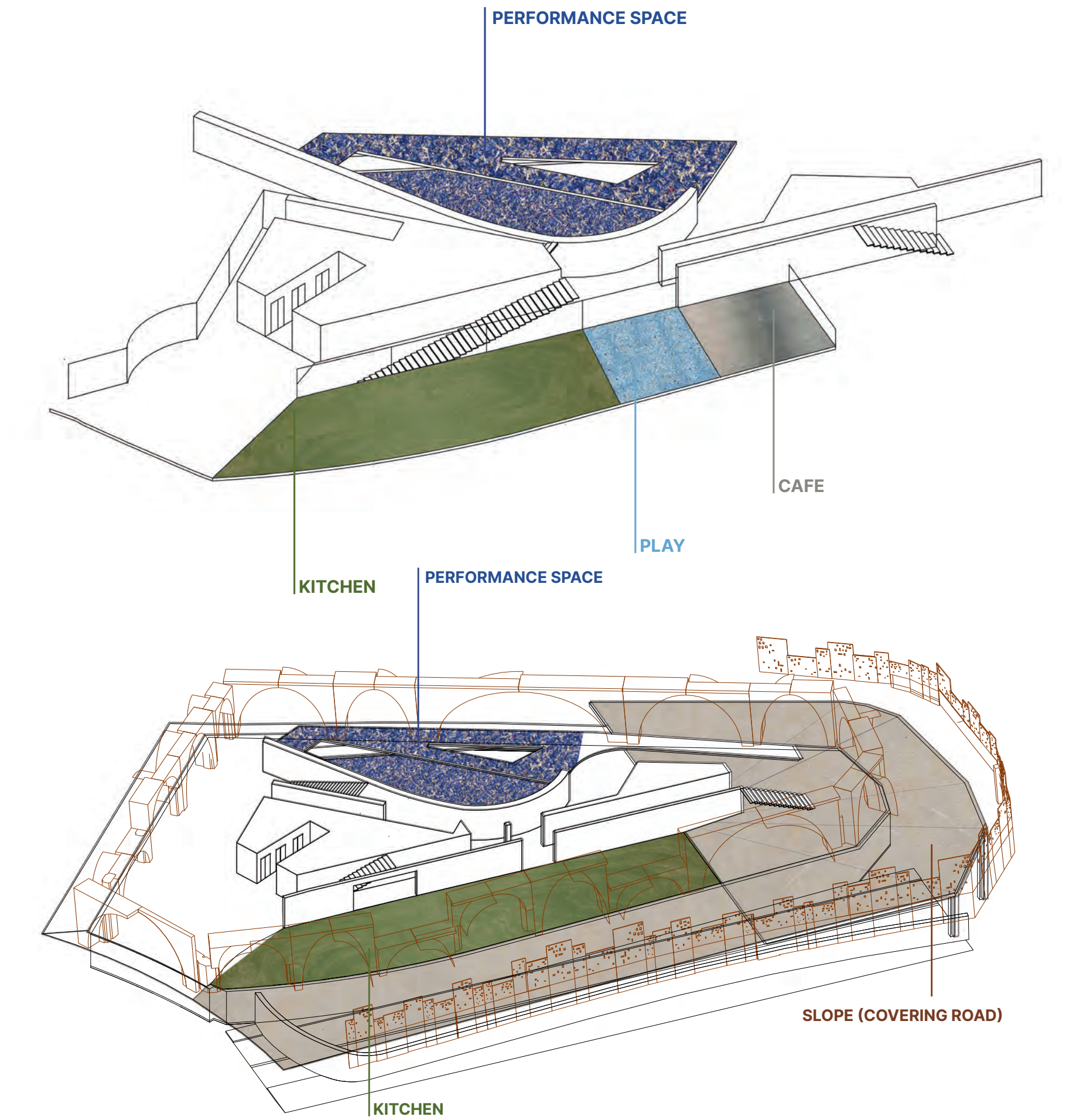
THE SLOPE at The Verge draws directly from the gentle inclines of the Piazza del Campo in Siena, echoing a topography shaped for pause. With the same gradient found in the Italian city, the limestone floor extends uninterrupted from outside to inside, softening the boundary between them. The slope covers what was once a road, challenging the imposed logic that ignored the pedestrian narrative.

Sliding doors blur the line further, making the threshold feel momentary rather than fixed. By carrying the same materiality—warm limestone—across both realms, the slope is an unifier. The people shown here were photographed on film in Siena this April. Later collaged into The Verge, they seem to settle naturally into the new slope—as if their rhythms, their pauses, their presence were always meant to belong to the atmosphere and opportunity a slope can hold.



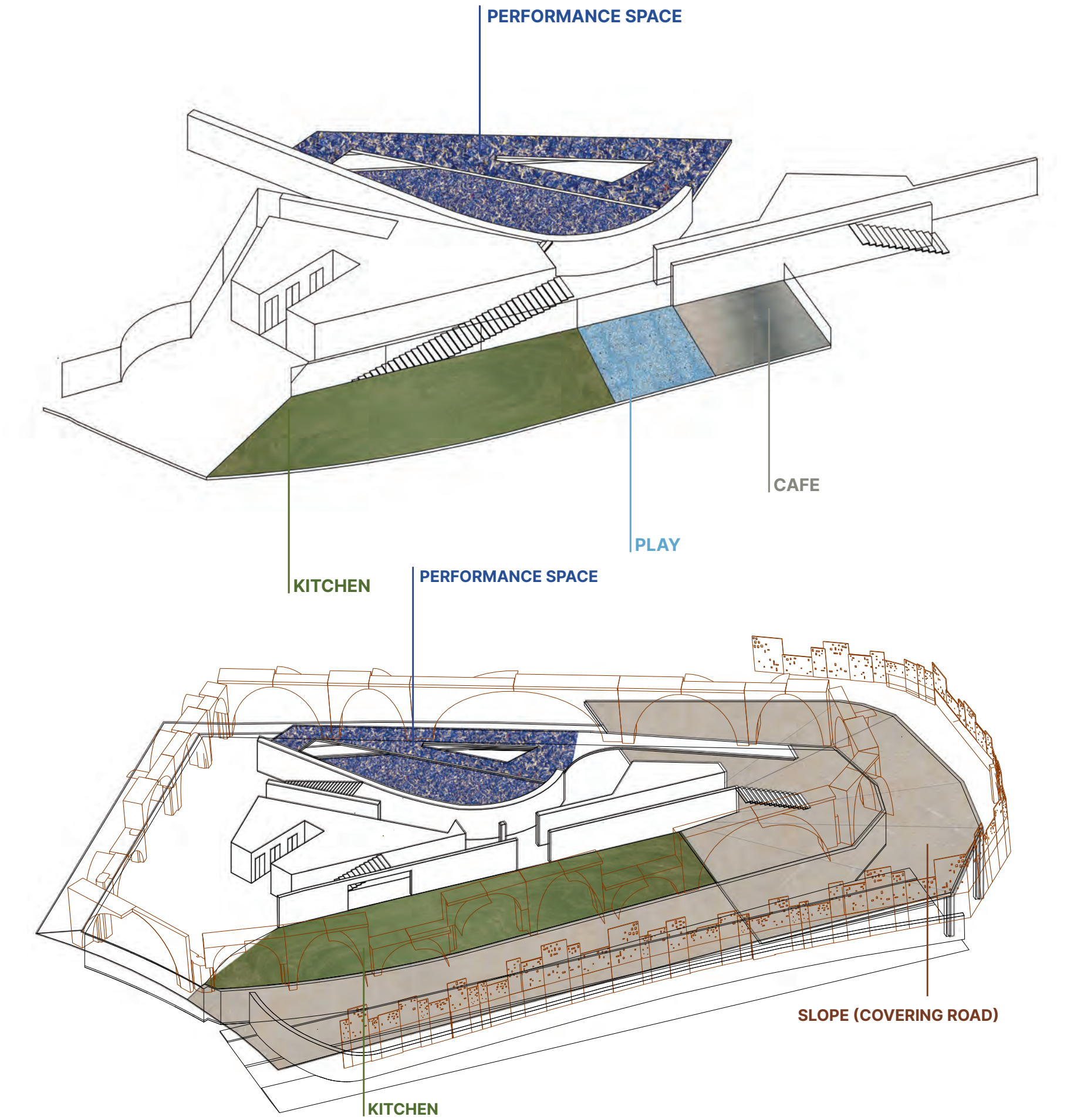


THE KITCHEN emerged from interviews held at local community centres, where a need for a shared cooking space became clear. Located across the first and second floors, it is accessed through the slope, stairs, or elevator—making it visible and open to all. More than a functional space, the kitchen invites gathering through smell, sound, and curiosity. Designed for collective use, it turns cooking into a communal ritual—blurring the line between public and domestic, and fostering everyday moments of exchange.



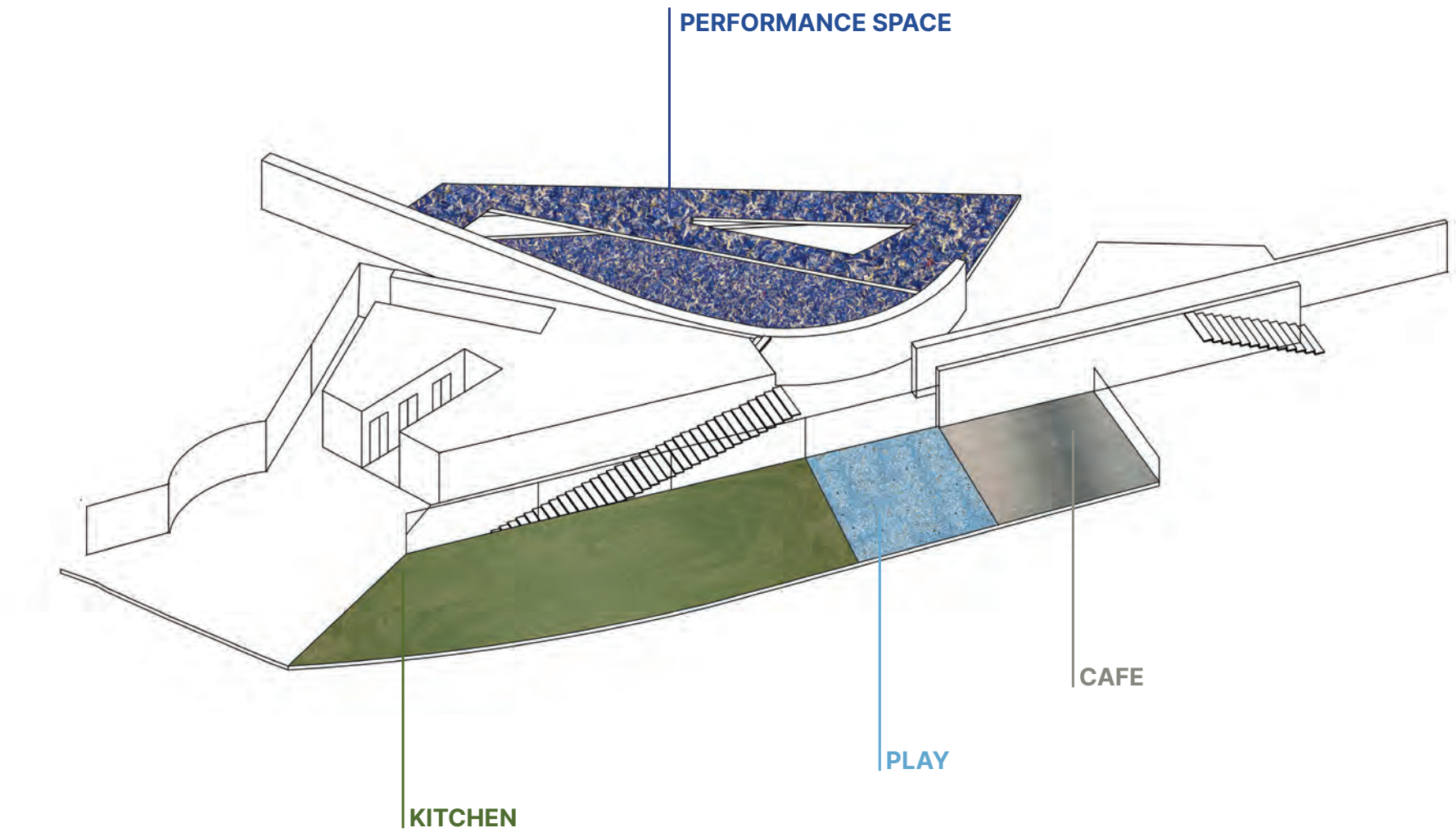


FROM THE SLOPE to inside The Verge, a layered view unfolds: the café opens up to one side, the kitchen reveals its warmth just above, and the stairs cut through it all—connecting movement, activity, and encounter in a single glance - a goal since the start of the project.



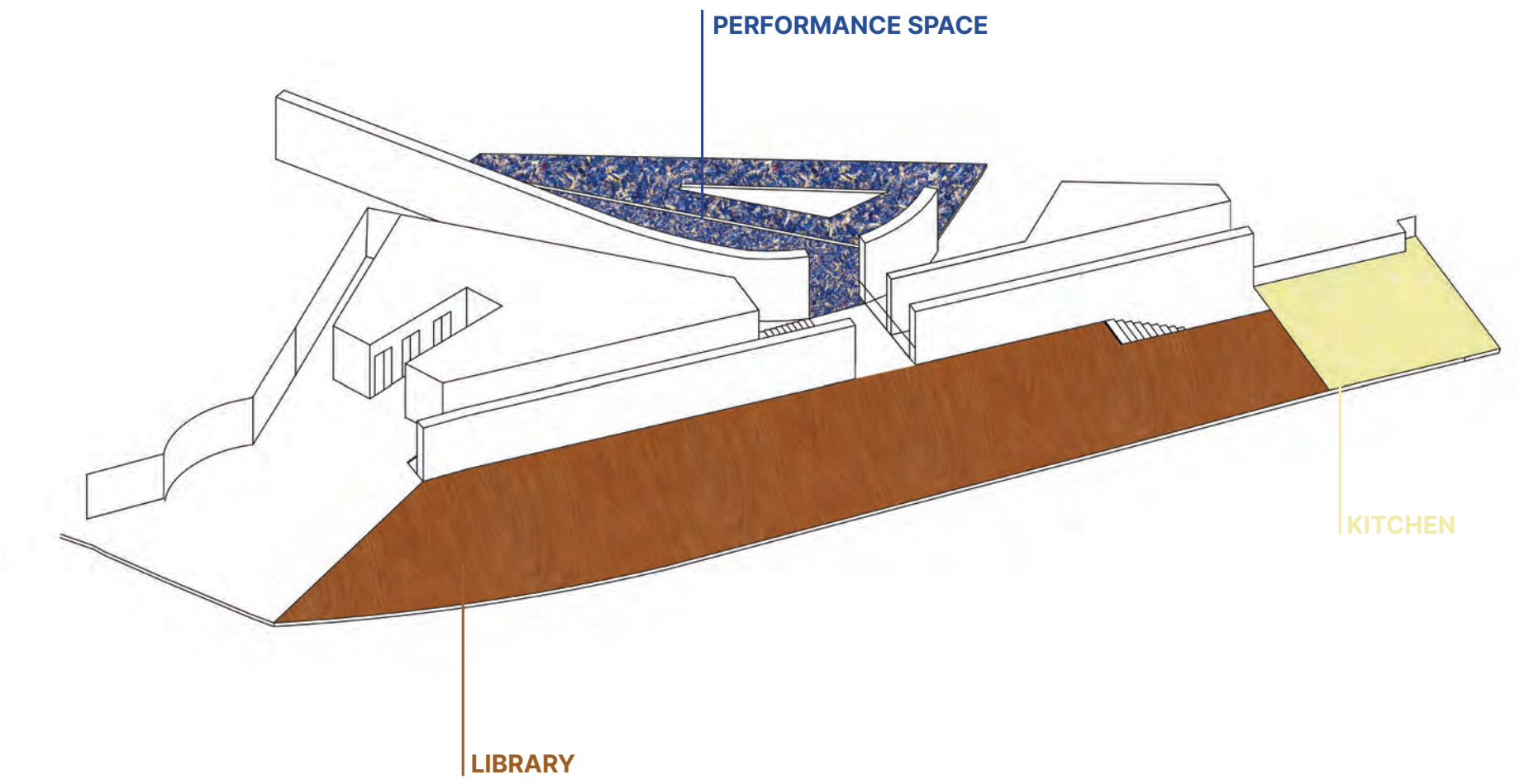


KITCHEN, PLAY AND CAFE are mixed with the second floor of the Kitchen: the kitchen counter in the foreground, a sunken play space at the centre, and just beyond, the café and stair coming into view. The architecture offers both openness and moments of retreat—arched balconies line the façade, offering space to step out, take in the view, and return. It's a space of movement and pause, interaction and quiet observation, all held within one continuous section.



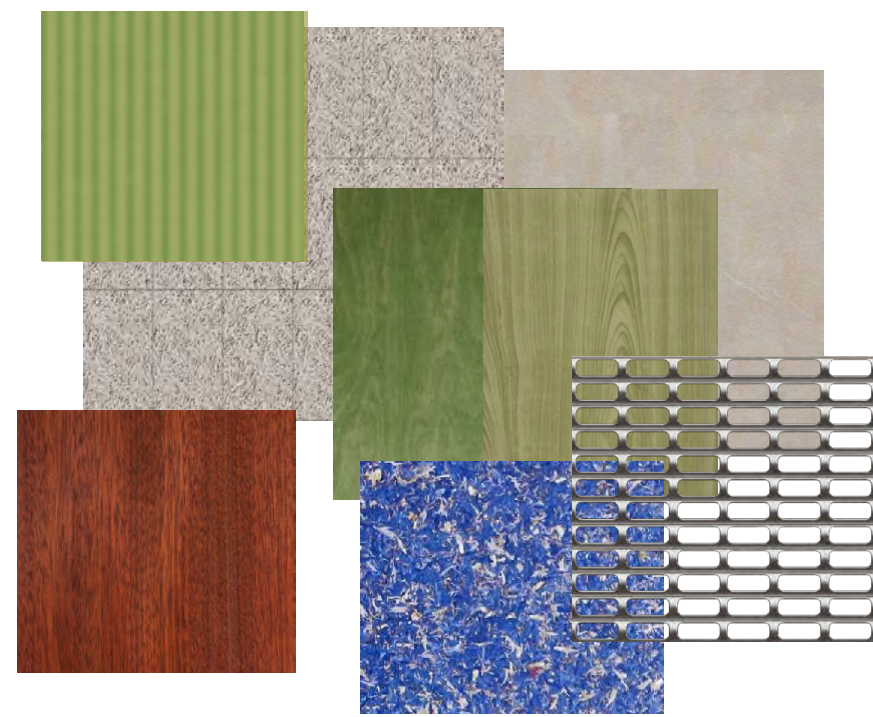
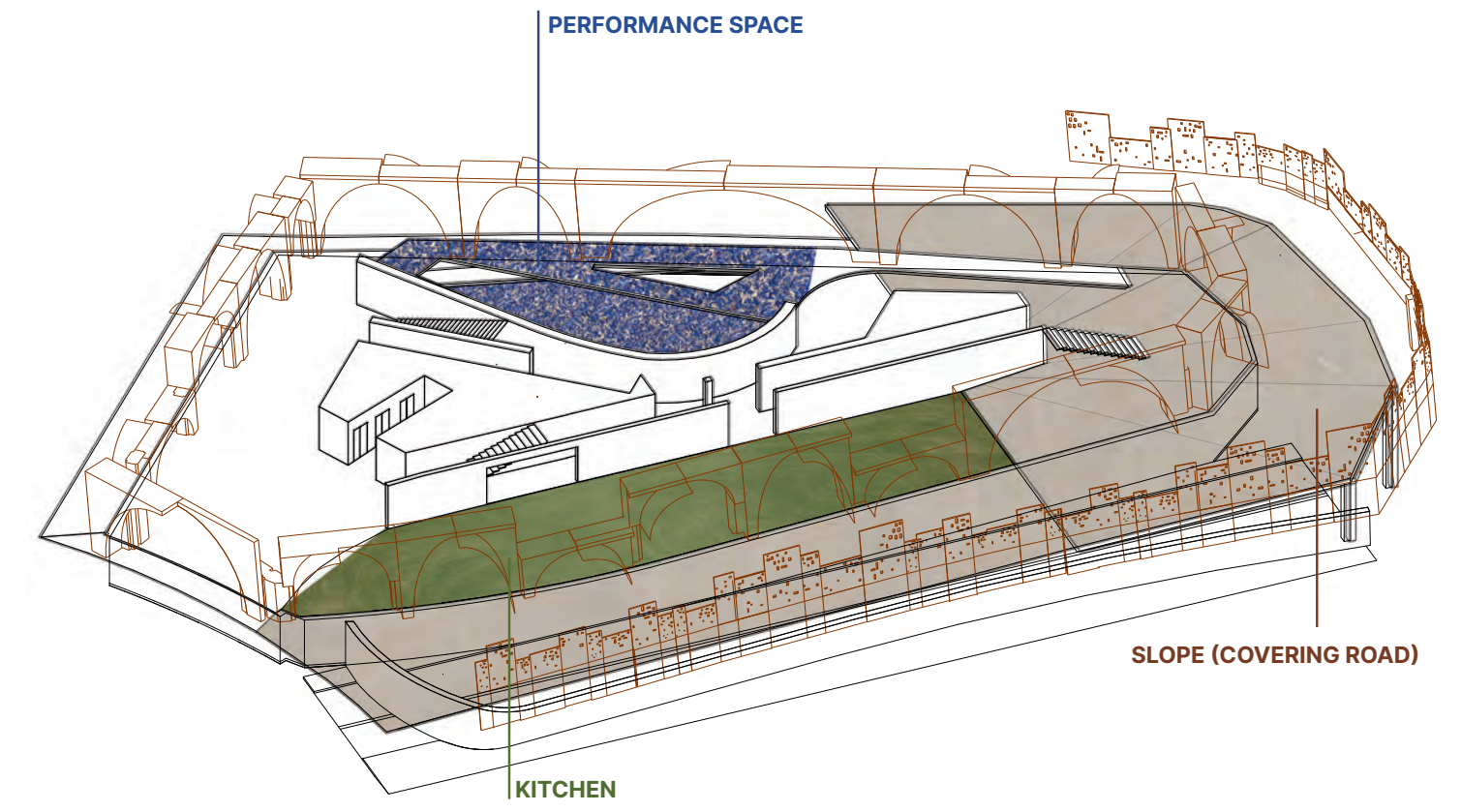


LIBRARY AND CHESS spaces at The Verge are not a quiet space, but a lively one—designed for reading, playing, and being together. At the front, the children's area features a ladder and stepped seating that invite movement and curiosity. Toward the back, the atmosphere shifts to support adult activities like reading or playing chess. It's a space for shared attention, where learning happens alongside interaction.



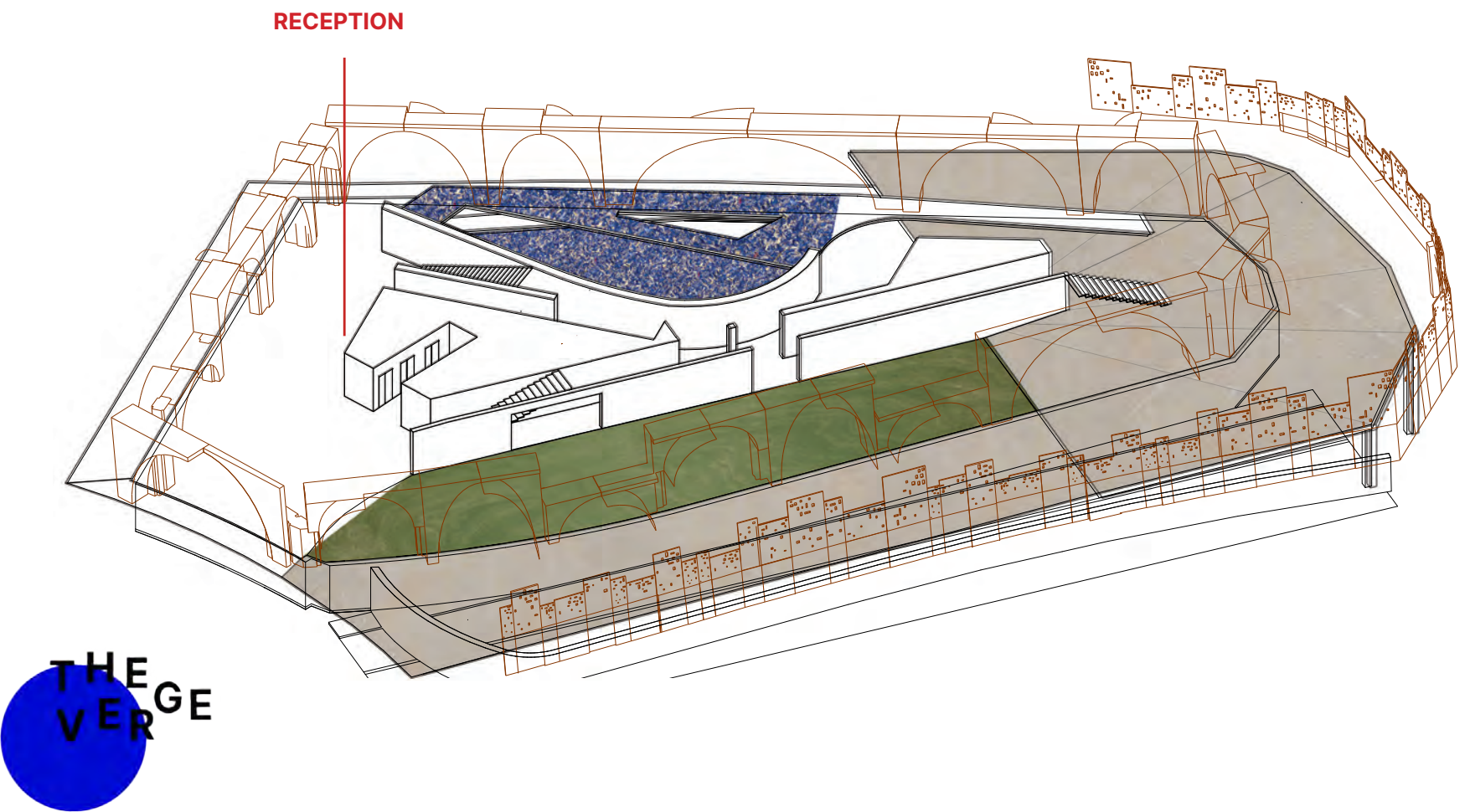


THE PERFORMANCE space is inspired by Lina Bo Bardi's Teatro Oficina—a place where audience and performer share the same ground. Designed for openness and adaptability, it invites use throughout the day and night. Whether for rehearsals, informal gatherings, or public events, the space remains accessible and visible, encouraging participation rather than spectacle. It's a stage without hierarchy, embedded in the everyday.





DETAILS happen as the core of the building is slightly modified to better support shared use. Near the entrance to the performance space, a textured brick wall adds depth and tactility as you move up the stairs. The reception is split: one side welcomes visitors to The Verge, while the other provides access to the office space above. The bathrooms remain enclosed but are fully accessible by elevator, while the washbasins are partially opened to the corridor—making them more visible for children and practical for nearby activities such as painting or workshops. These subtle adjustments create moments of flexibility and care, supporting both movement and everyday use.



Modelmaking

Inviting the Ground Back

The physical model explores how spatial thresholds, material reuse, and public programs interact across the first four floors of the site. Referencing the layered ground conditions of Siena, the model tests scale, circulation, and the porous character of reused brick arches—inviting moments of pause, play, and gathering at the pedestrian level.



Thank you!

