

CONSTRUCTING THE PHENOMENAL:

THE PROCESS OF SUBTLETY

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A Masters Research Project presented to the
Graduate School of Architecture at the University of
Florida in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Architecture, Spring 2017.

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"Itchetucknee Brimming Over," Margaret Ross Tolbert, Oil on Canvas (2008). Image accessed at <http://springseternalproject.org>.

CONSTRUCTING THE PHENOMENAL

THE PROCESS OF SUBTLETY

Constructing the Phenomenal addresses the importance of experience in architecture. This project mines the relationships between the act of constructing and phenomenal architectural qualities, addressing conditions of light, texture, material, detail, reflection, layers, and transparency. An indexical relationship allows for a collection of subtleties, each of which define a different spatial experience for an occupant. *The Process of Subtlety* alludes to the importance of small gestures in the architectural discipline, from the shadows of space to the textural detail that holds an experience.

An engagement with site provokes the relationship between space and place. An indexical correlation between site qualities and architectural qualities allows for deference in the act of making marks between ground and sky. The project seeks to acknowledge the nuances of site to develop an architecture that reacts and responds to the atmosphere of place.

Subtle conditions have an immediate engagement with the body, invoking memory, emotion, and visceral sensation. Constructing spaces through a process of phenomenal subtleties allows an architecture that communicates with the body, crafted to hold memories and structure identity.

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Architecture(al)

Architecture as a noun relies on the idea that architecture is an object, “a thing.” Architecture as an object brings a priority to the physical medium that composes architecture, the topography of the ground, the heaviness of a material, the role of that object in another noun – place. The word Architect from Greek *architekton*, “master builder, director of works” from *arkhi*– “chief” + *tekon* “builder” implies a leader, maker, author, and skill – all of which are substantially diminished with the addition of *-ure*.

The etymology of the word architect is important to recognize in relation to current practice of architecture and the larger social and political world. What architects think of architecture, and what a layman thinks of architecture may be completely different. The architect understands architecture as the synthesis of materials and systems that frames a thoughtful and intentional space. The interested layman understands architecture as an object, a certain style or form that has landed in *their* place. This distinction is made to recognize that, at a basic level, the way architects communicate plays a large role in how the profession is perceived. Often times, the functional and innovative solutions of a building are downplayed while public priority plays to formal and visual aesthetics.

Architecture as an adjective becomes the language for understanding architecture within and outside the profession. While architecture represents an object, a building, a place – the implications of that architecture are *architectural*, which becomes increasingly important to how society understands the profession of architecture. In this case, not everything is architecture, but everything is architectural. To say that everything is architectural is a method to understand architecture beyond its limited objective definition as an object. Everything as architectural implies relationships between separate things, a necessary in-between space to question, challenge, analyze, and frame as a design question.

To what end do we develop these questions? To say everything is architecture does not capture the non-spatial imperatives of the human emotion, it does not imply a relationship to the ground, to the sky, nor does it acknowledge the horizon that binds the two. To rethink the possibility of everything being architectural allows a speculation on what the qualities of architecture are. What is the relationship that makes *this* architectural? It might be the physical spatial relationship between a set of things, it might be the psychological implications of a place and its

shape, it might be the feeling one feels when moving from one location to the other – all have architectural qualities embedded and can be related to on a societal level. It is up to the architect to challenge and provoke these thoughts within people.

Architecture is the study of the built objective world between the subjective world – to say everything is architectural implies a seeking to find the architecture in everything.

Metaphoric Veil

Architecture maintains a phenomenological relationship with the body, evoking memory, unconscious action, and visceral sensation. To occupy a space relates to the necessity of construction – manifested through physical materials with elaborate joinery; to construct offers an opportunity to enhance the occupation, to challenge the line between rational material logics in relation to phenomenological consciousness. The opposition of construction logics (measured; objective) and human experience (empirical; subjective) provide an arena for research development that seeks a link between a construction framework and a phenomenological veil.

Traditionally, a veil is defined as a fine material worn to protect or conceal the face.¹ In this project, a phenomenological veil becomes a metaphor to objectify experience, to attempt to understand experience as a material instance. A veil alters the experience of something, while it conceals, screens, or separates the object of its use, it also screens the world of an immediate experience of the object. While it conceals, screens, and separates, the object is not entirely concealed, screened, or separated from its environment.

Much like a bride will wear a veil walking down the aisle of her wedding, she herself is screened and protected as she moves through the threshold of a life with a new partner, blurred to what is ahead. Her partner, seeing

¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003. <http://www.merriam-webster.com>

10 a familiar body covered in veil, is reliant on memories and emotions to reconstruct for that which they cannot see. This moment of screening allows each partner a reflection into themselves, to evoke memories of the other in the last moments of individual purity. In this way, a simple material allows ourselves a moment of perception to be held against, to measure perception against memory.

In an architectural realm, basic perceptual organizations are those of gravity, weight, balance, light, texture, material, detail, reflections, and transparency. Each of these perceptual experiences at moments rely on each other – we need light to understand material, or construction details to counter gravity and achieve balance. In this way, a set of construction logics create a framework for spatial experience. The veil in this instance becomes the synthesis of these phenomena – creating an experience for occupants to measure their perceptions against.

Robert Irwin is an artist who has taken interest in ideas of perception and experience in art. Undoubtedly, his work is spatial, constructed, and inherently architectural. The work of Irwin operates between Art and Architecture. Robert Morris writes in his essay “Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making:”

A certain strain of modern art has been involved in uncovering a more direct experience of these basic perceptual meanings, and it has not achieved this through static images, but through the experience of an interaction between the perceiving body and the world that fully admits that the terms of this interaction are temporal as well as spatial, that existence is process, that the art itself is a form of behavior that can imply a lot about what was possible and what was necessary in engaging with the world while still playing that insular game of art²

While art offers an experience to a viewer through painting, markings, sculpture, and many other mediums, the two-dimensionality

or fixed object of the work does not consider the temporality of the moving body through the space. In this way, Irwin utilizes the body as medium, creating subtle spatial works that allow the body a more direct connection to fundamental spatial perceptions. Through meditated material considerations, Irwin constructs spaces with a series of fabric scrims that distort, conceal, and hint at varying spatial implications between the space and the perceiving body. “Our senses continuously present us with an extremely complex tactile synesthesia of data...our perception gains the inner-relationships or inter-relationships by which the order or character of occurrences (recognizable dispositions of pattern and movement) will distinguish itself with or from its surroundings in tactile form.”³ The use of visual transparencies becomes a method for Irwin to allow visitors to understand their perception of vision, continually measuring what is perceived by the tactility of the constructed.

Transparency and Vision, The Perceiving Body

Transparency in architecture is present more than ever with the advent of structural glazing, curtain walls, and the social desire for open-plan space. In each of these movements there is a dominance of the visual sense in relation to architectural design. With the quickness of today's society, vision has suppressed other sense modalities and is creating an architecture that is empty of any metaphoric richness. In his book, *The Eyes of The Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa writes that “with the loss of tactility, measures and details crafted for the human body – and particularly for the hand – architectural structures become repulsively flat, sharp-edged, immaterial and unreal. The detachment of construction from the realities of matter and craft further turns architecture into a scenography devoid of the authenticity of matter and construction.”⁴ This addresses many issues that relate to methods of making, material qualities, light, detail expression, and their harmony as an architectural space. Current uses of transparent materials in



“Varese Scrim” (2103), Robert Irwin, Villa Panza, Varese Italy. Photograph from the Villa Panza archive © FAI FAI - Italian Environment Fund

- 2 Morris, Robert. “Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making” in *Continuous Projects Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press). 90.
- 3 Robert Irwin. Whitney Museum of American Art – 1977. 25.
- 4 Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Great Britain: Wiley-Academy, 2005). 31.

12 architecture are creating deception with the erasure of perception. With modern trends of floating spaces and material contradictions, architects are creating a world that does not reflect the scale and tactility of its maker, creating a disassociation between space and the body. "Symbols of this in architecture include, for example, the idea of endless divisibility of space, or the use of transparency as a means of expression, or when the facades of a building become a mirror, in which the corporeal substance of architecture disappears and surroundings reflect and measure themselves with the mute precision of specularity."⁵ This removal of the perceiving body withholds a perceptual understanding of a space in favor of a distant visual of deception.

This is not to say that the use of transparency leads to architectural space without meaning, but raises this question: *how can architects utilize the phenomenal qualities of transparency to create a corporeal architecture?* Embedded within transparent spaces is the possibility of methodical layering, utilizing the in-between of what is transparent. "A new architectural imagery has emerged, which employs reflection, gradations of transparency, overlay and juxtaposition to create a sense of spatial thickness...this sensibility promises an architecture that can turn the relative immateriality and weightlessness of recent technological construction into a positive experience of space, place, and meaning,"⁶ where the sense of vision (literal transparency or the ability to see through) is decreased in favor of a sensual curiosity between person and place.

It is important to mention the work of Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky in their essay *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal* which addresses the nature of transparent qualities both in material and in organization. Rowe and Slutzky make the distinction that "transparency must be an inherent quality of substance – as in a wire mesh or glass curtain wall, or it may be an inherent quality

of organization."⁷ The use of the word *inherent* in each example demonstrates that transparency must be resultant to a process, that it is embedded into a substance (material processing) or rooted in a method of organization (layering).

In this way, transparency becomes a phenomenological veil – a way to measure the body (oneself) in a space. Through the suppression of vision, architecture has the opportunity to heighten other sense modalities of tactility and auditory to develop a space that allows a deeper connection between space and the abilities of the perceiving body.

Cropped Views

While the camera has become a ubiquitous technology for artists, there is the larger question of its usefulness. Between documentation of construction and marketing of projects, the camera is undoubtedly a necessary tool for architects. Images today can be created instantaneously without regard to their use and content. This reality differs from the time when an image went through an intensive chemical process from film to paper and the author was confident that the content being developed merited the process. In terms of architecture, it is important that we understand the potential of the camera in the design process and conveying spatial qualities. There is a tendency towards vision dominant photography where "architecture has become an art of the printed image fixed by the hurried eye of the camera."⁸ In this way, "the photograph could be called sub- or pre-symbolic, ceding the language of art back to the imposition of things," deducing art or architecture to that of an object in place of experience.⁹

The camera offers an opportunity to challenge the conventions of the tool and capture the atmosphere of a space instead of the multiplicity of objects that compose a space. Architectural qualities of material, light, texture, reflection, transparency, and details

have an inherent necessity to crop the view to focus on a specific interaction between light and material, material joint, or a transparent image and adjacent opacity. This moment allows the author to capture the ambiguity of the space without concern for its objective reality. When speaking about the paintings of Agnes Martin, Rosalind Krauss writes of this cropped moment "where the ambiguities of illusion take over from the earlier materiality of a surface...and it is at this place that the paintings go atmospheric."¹⁰

The collection of photographs that isolate specific qualities of a space become an atmospheric index for which an architect can refer for precedent analysis or illusive speculation of what *could* be. This index speculates on relationships between each quality, provoking questions of perception and the spatial implications of a synthesis of varying architectural qualities. Fascinating qualities of light, shadow, and material exist in most every situation, focusing on isolating the multiplicity of stimuli that architects encounter offers an opportunity to focus and study specific phenomena that may be incorporated into the design process. Just as an architectural detail may embody the entire project, a cropped view may speak to the atmosphere of the entire space (INDEX 01)

Meditating Qualities, Mediating Matter

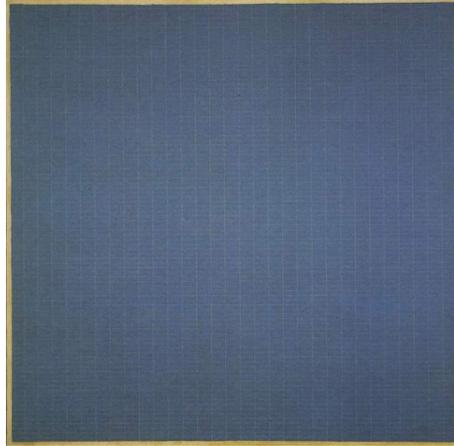
The scope of this study exists between understanding architectural qualities in the everyday, developing a way to consider sensory balance in the design process, and understanding the subtle qualities of light, material, texture, reflections, transparency and their detailed interrelationships. These relationships often unfold in the architectural detail, the moment where material decisions meet realities of gravity, and begin to objectify an architecture.

A recording of experience and an attempt to document a few of these subtle qualities in existing spaces are developed through a

- 13
- 5 Gregotti, Vittorio. *Inside Architecture*, translated by Peter Wong and Francesca Zaccheo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). 47.
 - 6 Pallasmaa, 32.
 - 7 Rowe, Colin with Robert Slutzky. *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal* (Reprinted as *Transparenz*, Basel: Birkhauser, 1968). Written, 1955-6. First published in *Perspecta*, 1963. 161.
 - 8 Pallasmaa, 30.
 - 9 Krauss, Rosalind. *Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977). 75.
 - 10 Krauss, Rosalind. *The Presence of Mies: The Grid, The /Cloud/, and the Detail* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994). 140.



(left)
Detail photo of *Night Sea* (1963) by Agnes Martin, photo by Spencer Alley (2010) accessed at <http://spenceralley.blogspot.com/2012/09/complexity-of-simplicity.html>.



(middle)
Agnes Martin, *Night Sea* (1963), atmospheric 'cloud moment' as referenced in Krauss' essay, *The Grid, The /Cloud/, and the Detail*. On display at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, photo accessed at <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/FC.459>.

series of axonometric studies that isolate fragmented moments. These fragmented moments become the "architectural synthesis of foreground, middle ground, and distant view, together with all the subjective qualities of material and light, form the basis of 'complete perception.'"¹¹ These drawings serve as articulations of experiential memory, a way to draw, speculate, and re-understand prior perceptions (INDEX 02).

The architect is faced with the challenge of weaving the subjective and the objective while maintaining a cohesive fabric of the original idea. With reference to modes of perception, tools for documenting, and ways of indexing experience, the next step becomes mediating material, place, and intentions in architectural making. *How does an architect construct and design perception?* While this writing has meditated on the qualities of architectural relationships, the following will begin to mediate the matter of architectural qualities in place and material. "The predicament, of course, is the result of the contradictory disciplinary mandates...to negotiate between technical and perceptual imperatives, which are at odds with each other."¹²

- 11 Holl, Steven, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Perez-Gomez, *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology in Architecture* (New York: William Stout, 2006). 45.
- 12 Tehrani, Nader. Foreward. *Strange Details* by Michael Cadwell (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).



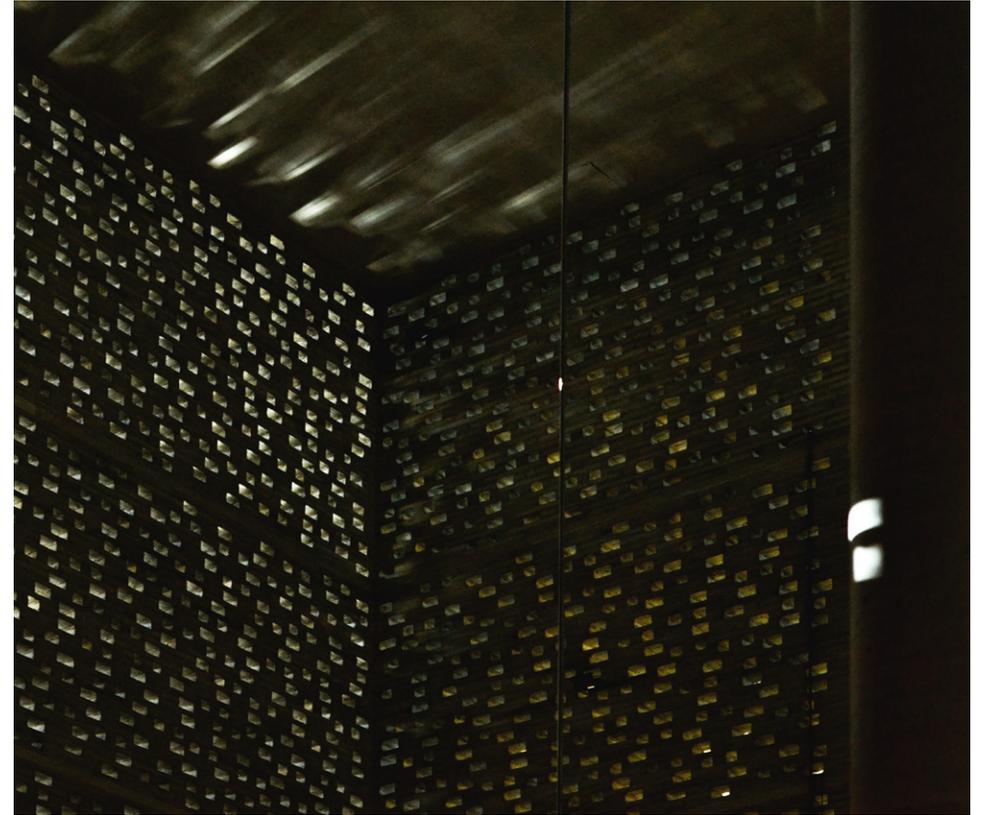
Castelvecchio, *Carlo Scarpa*
Verona, Italy. Photo by author.



Palladio Museum
Vicenza, Italy. Photo by author.

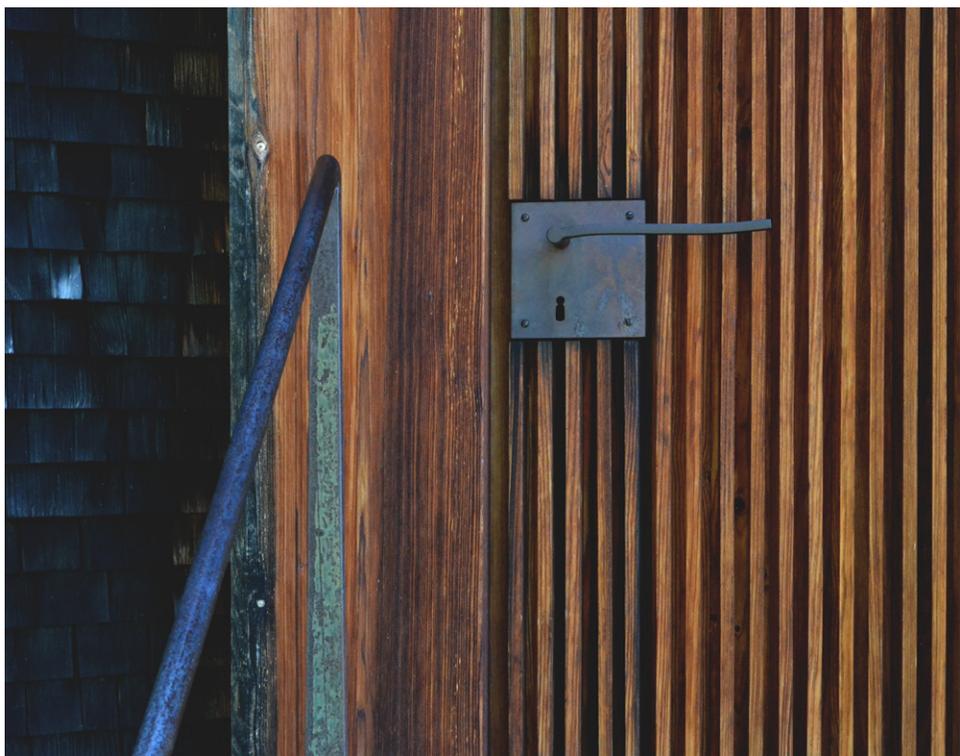


Notre Dame du Haut, *Le Corbusier*
Ronchamp, France. Photo by author.



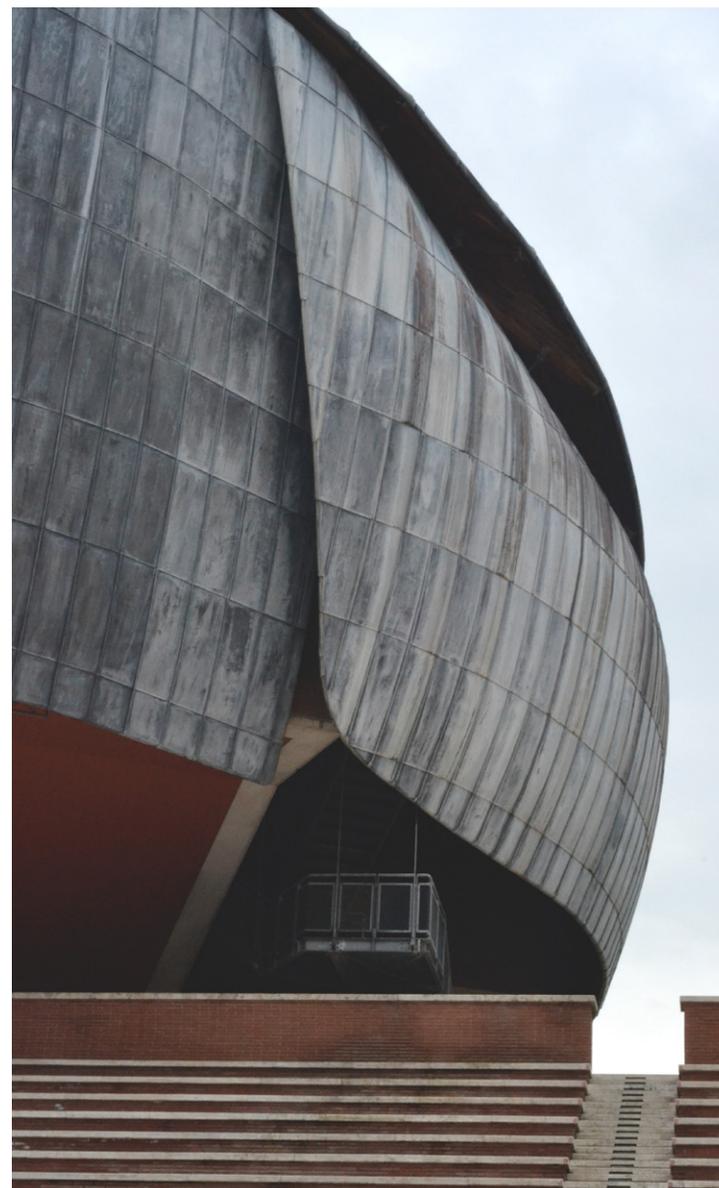
Kolumba Museum, *Peter Zumthor*
Cologne, Germany. Photo by author.

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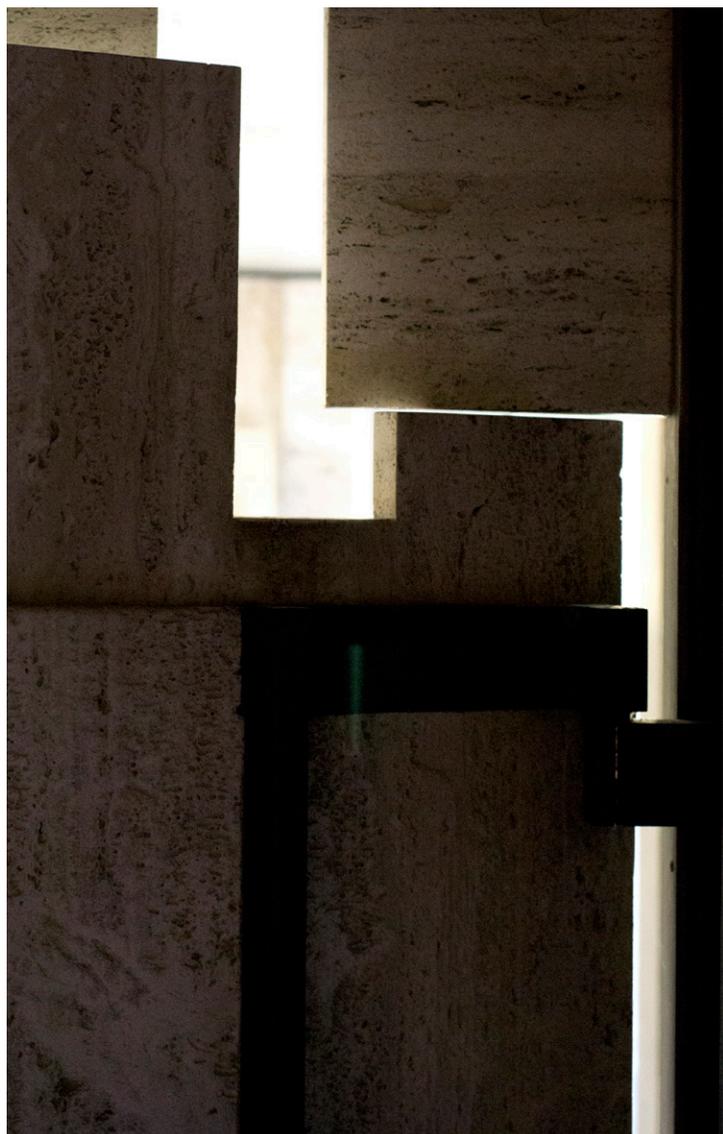
Saint Benedict Chapel, *Peter Zumthor*
Sumvitg, Switzerland. Photo by author.

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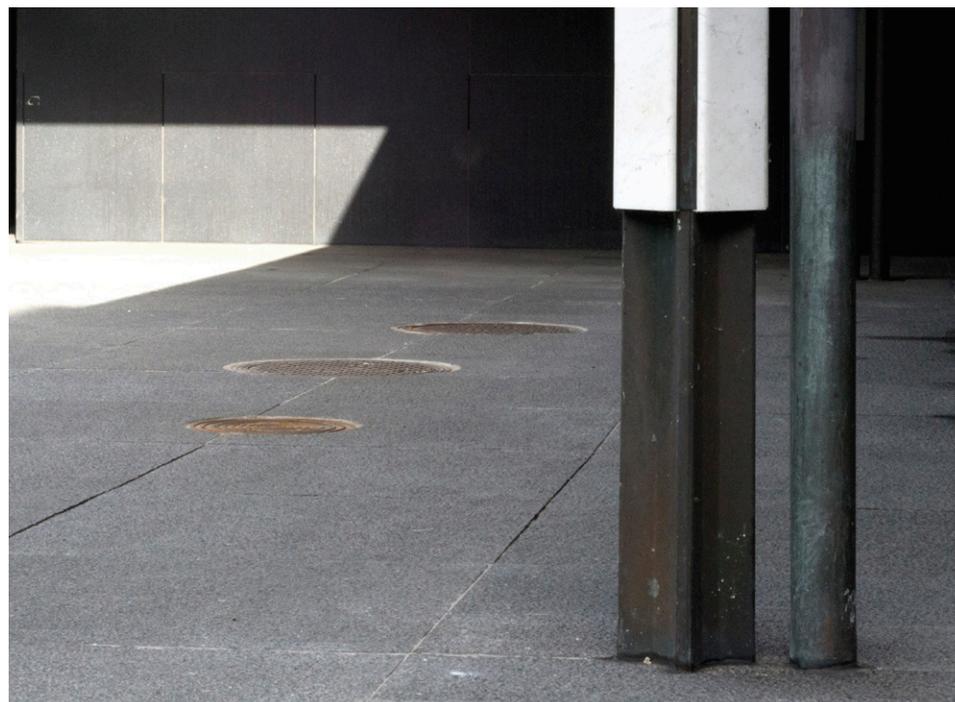


Index 01 / Fragments and Views / DETAIL

Parco della Musica, *Renzo Piano*
Rome, Italy. Photo by author.



Fondazione Querini Stampalia, *Carlo Scarpa*
Venezia, Italy. Photo by author.



Finlandia Hall, *Alvar Aalto*
Helsinki, Finland. Photo by author.



Bruder Klaus Kapelle, *Peter Zumthor*
Mechernich, Eifel, Germany. Photo by author.



Brion Tomb, *Carlo Scarpa*
San Vito d'Altivole, Italy. Photo by author.



Barcelona Pavilion, *Mies van der Rohe*
Barcelona, Spain. Photo by author.



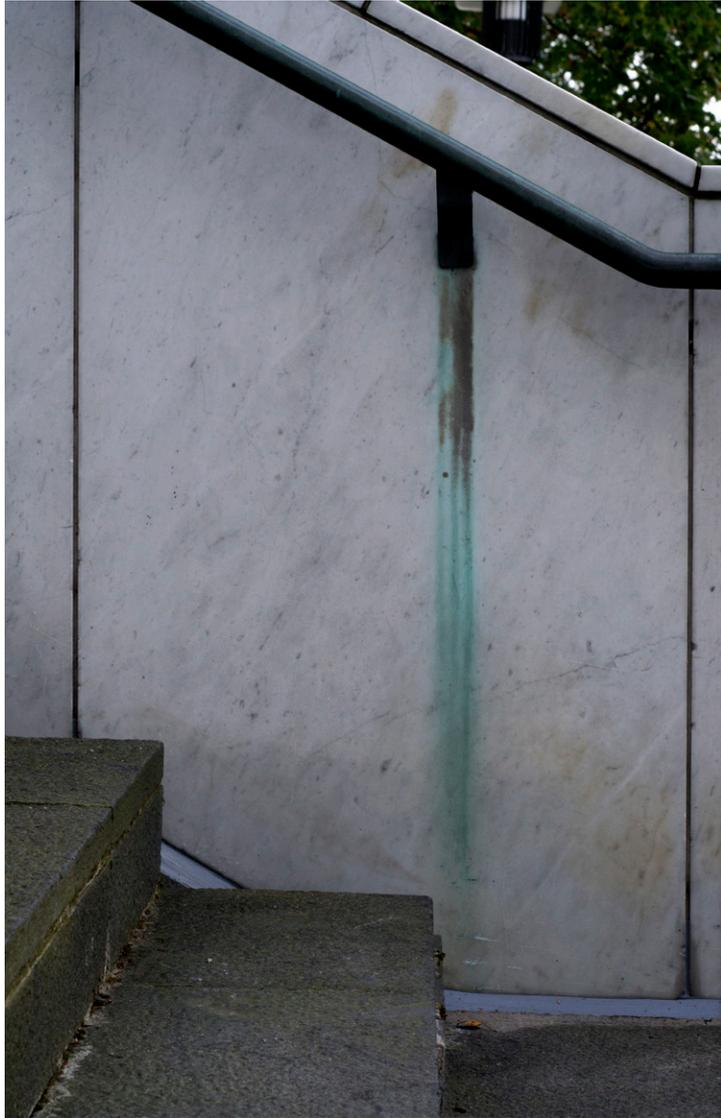
Barcelona Pavilion, *Mies van der Rohe*
Barcelona, Spain. Photo by author.



Castelvecchio, *Carlo Scarpa*
Verona, Italy. Photo by author.



Banco Popolare di Verona, *Carlo Scarpa*
Verona, Italy. Photo by author.



Finlandia Hall, *Alvar Aalto*
Helsinki, Finland. Photo by author.



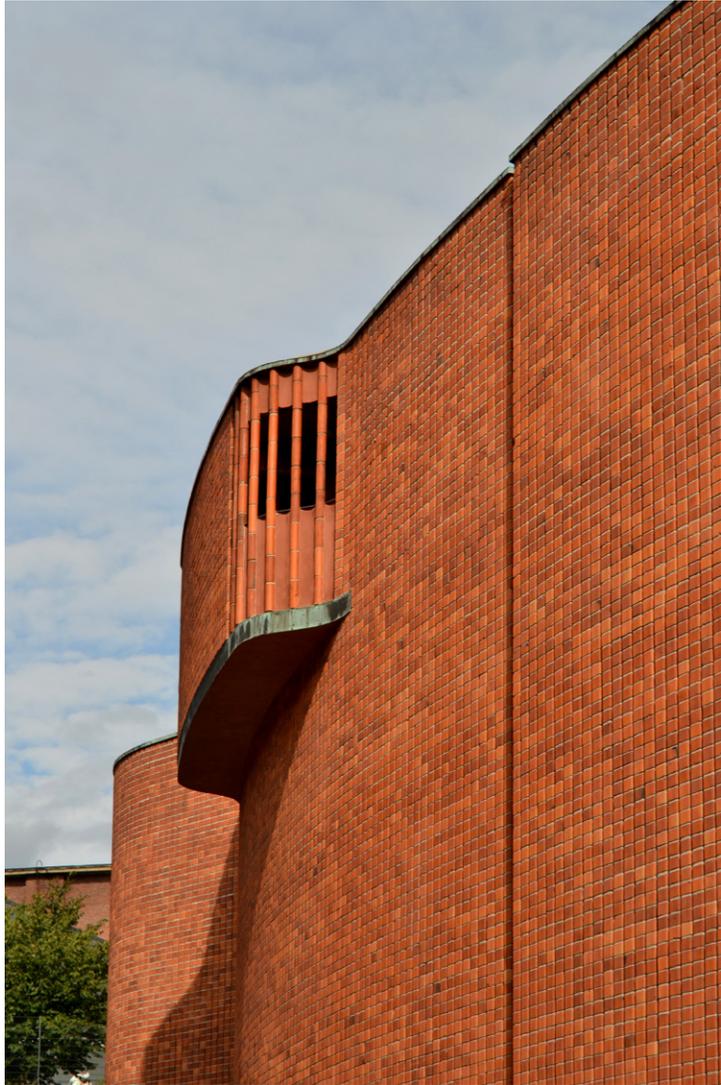
House of Culture, *Alvar Aalto*
Helsinki, Finland. Photo by author.



Kolumba Museum, *Peter Zumthor*
Cologne, Germany. Photo by author.



Castelvecchio, *Carlo Scarpa*
Verona, Italy. Photo by author.



House of Culture, *Alvar Aalto*
Helsinki, Finland. Photo by author.



VM Houses, *Bjarke Ingles Group*
Ørestad, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photo by author.



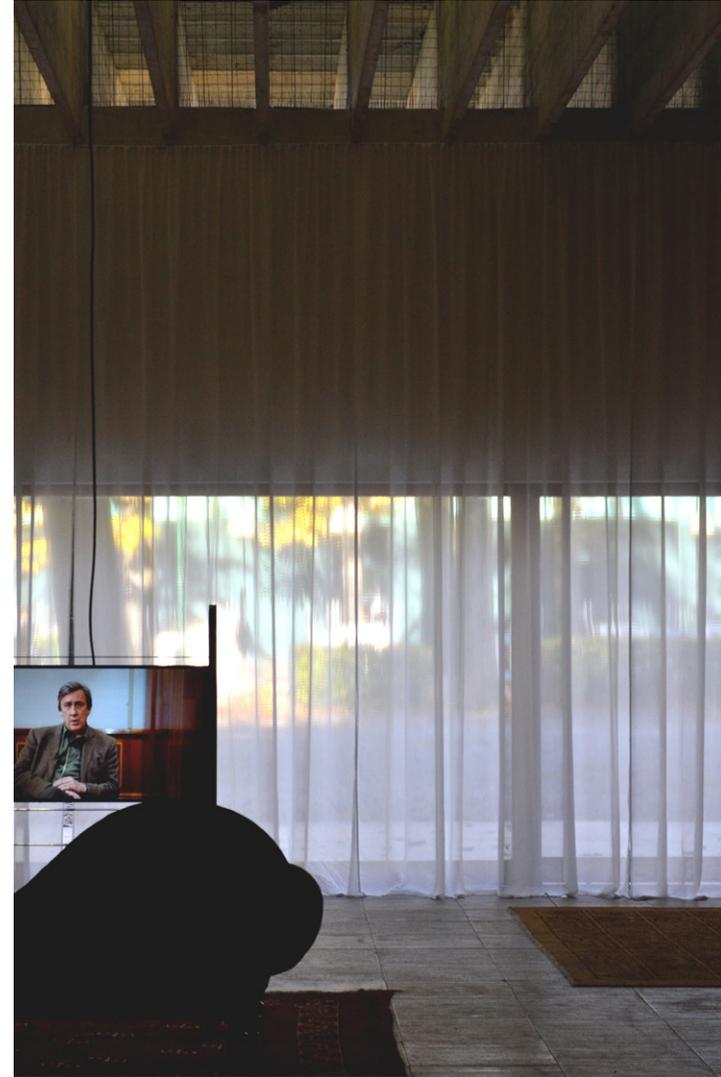
Kolumba Museum, *Peter Zumthor*
Cologne, Germany. Photo by author.



VM Houses, *Bjarke Ingles Group*
Ørestad, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photo by author.



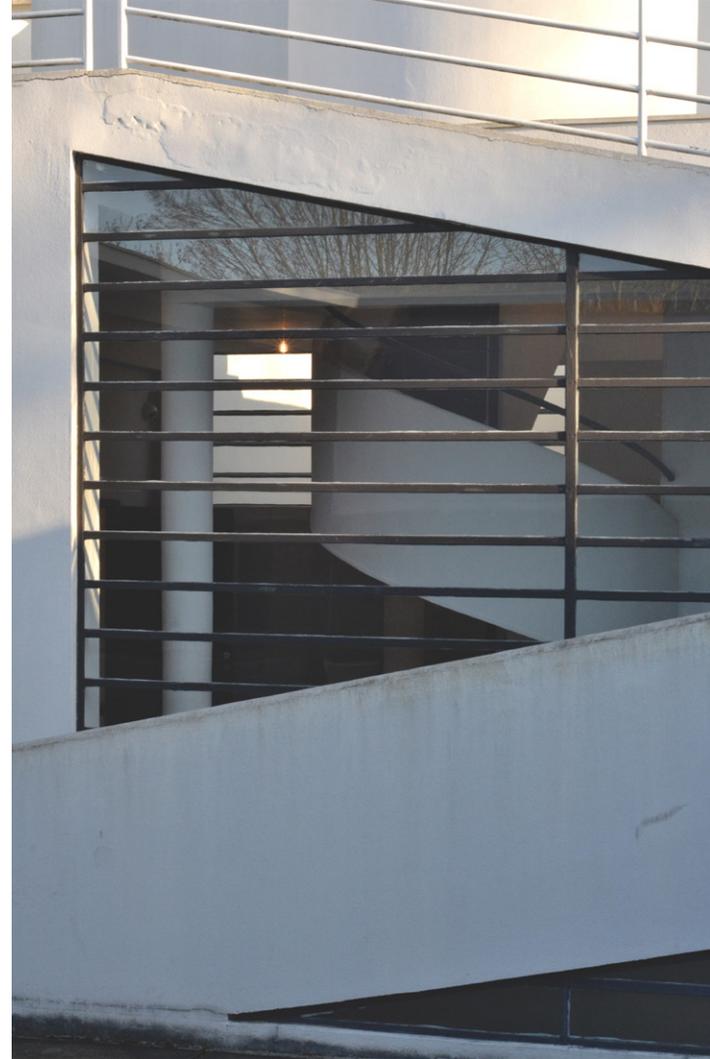
Sagrada Família, Antoni Gaudí
Barcelona, Spain. Photo by author.



Nordic Pavilion in Venice, Sverre Fehn
Venezia, Italy. Photo by author.



Vara Pavilion, Pezo von Ellrichshausen
Venezia, Italy. Photo by author.



Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier
Poissy, France. Photo by author.



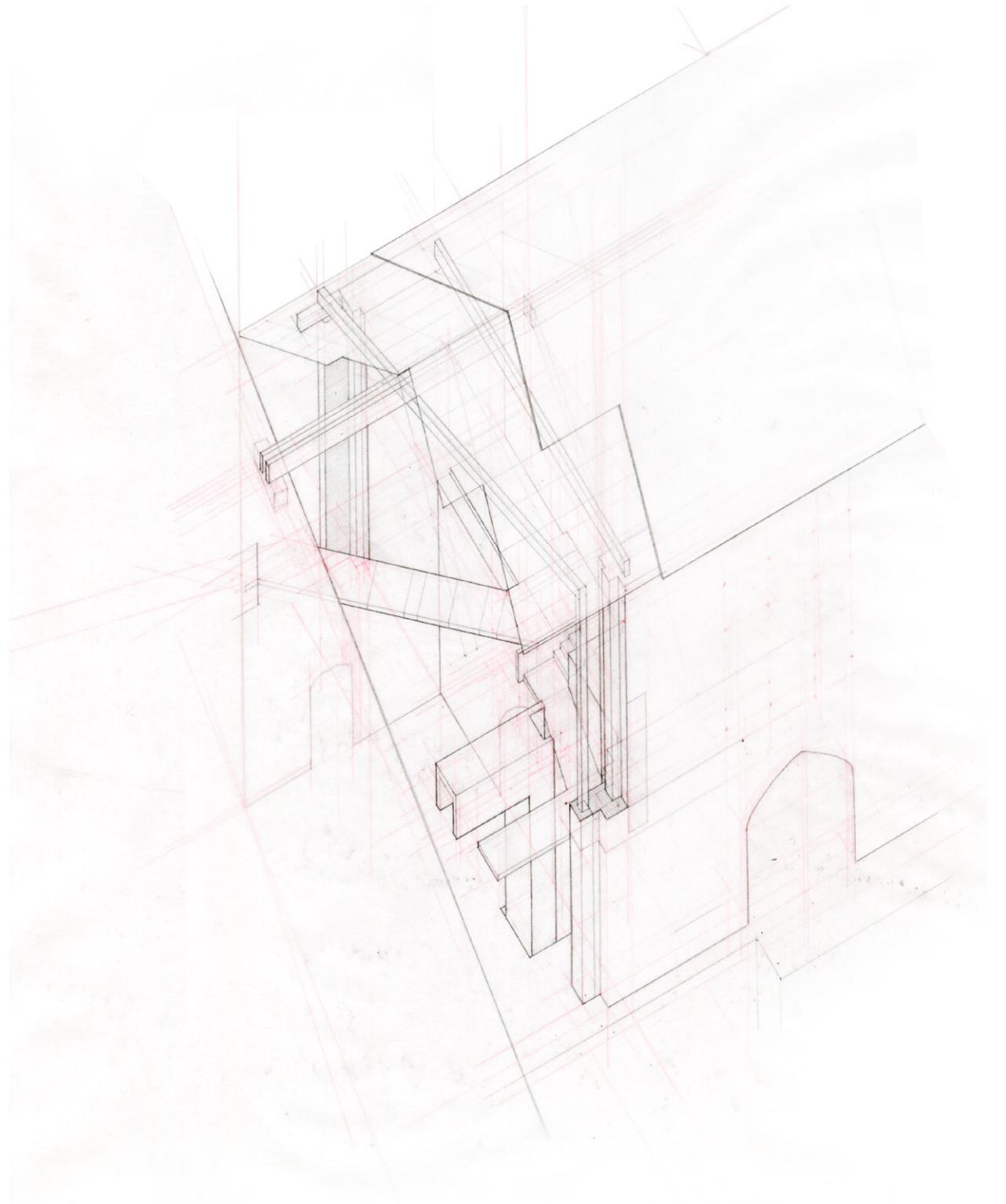
Sainte Marie de La Tourette, *Le Corbusier*
Éveux, France. Photo by author.



Notre Dame du Haut, *Le Corbusier*
Ronchamp, France. Photo by author.

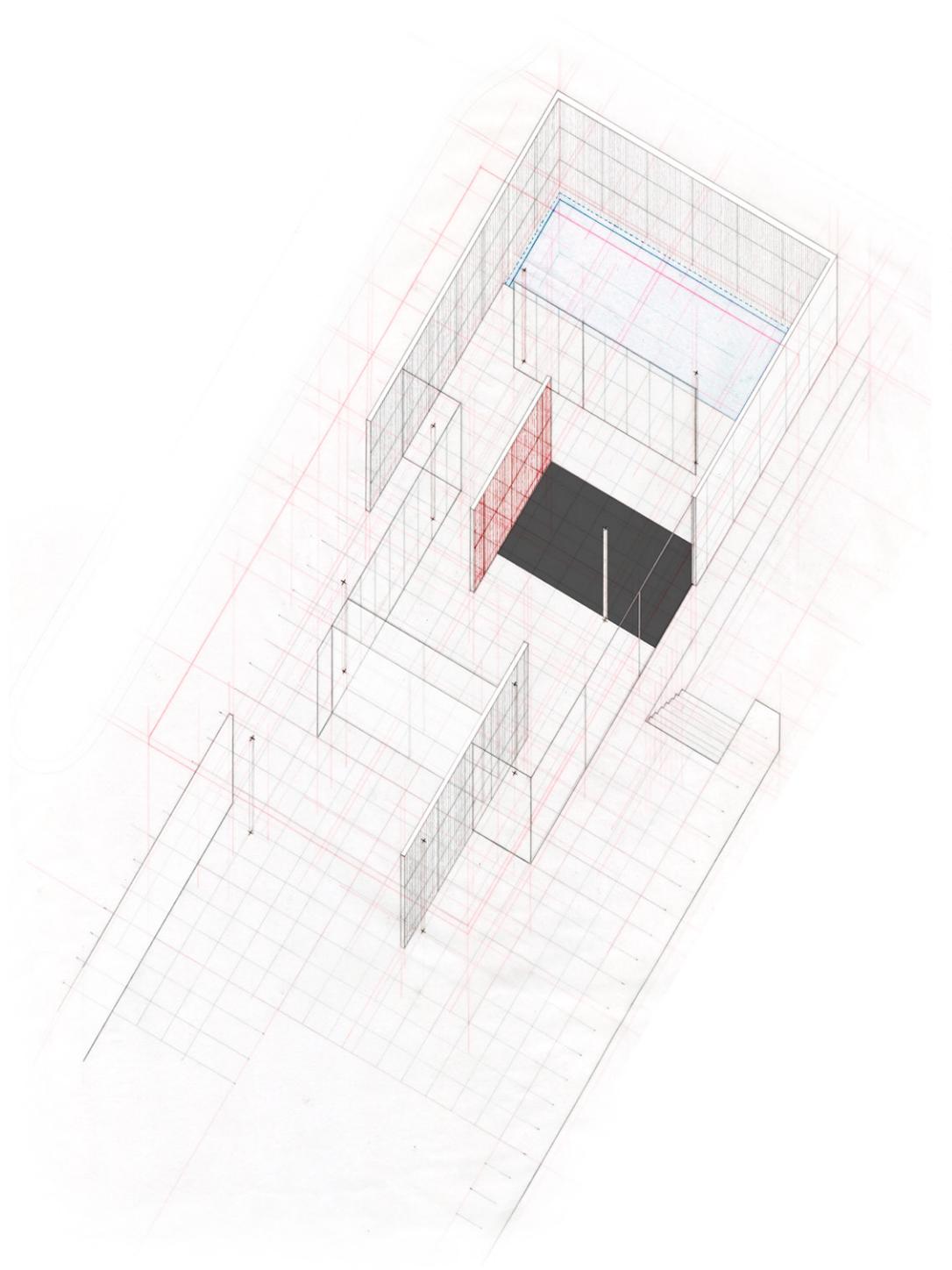


Castelvecchio, *Carlo Scarpa*
Verona, Italy. Photo and drawing by author.



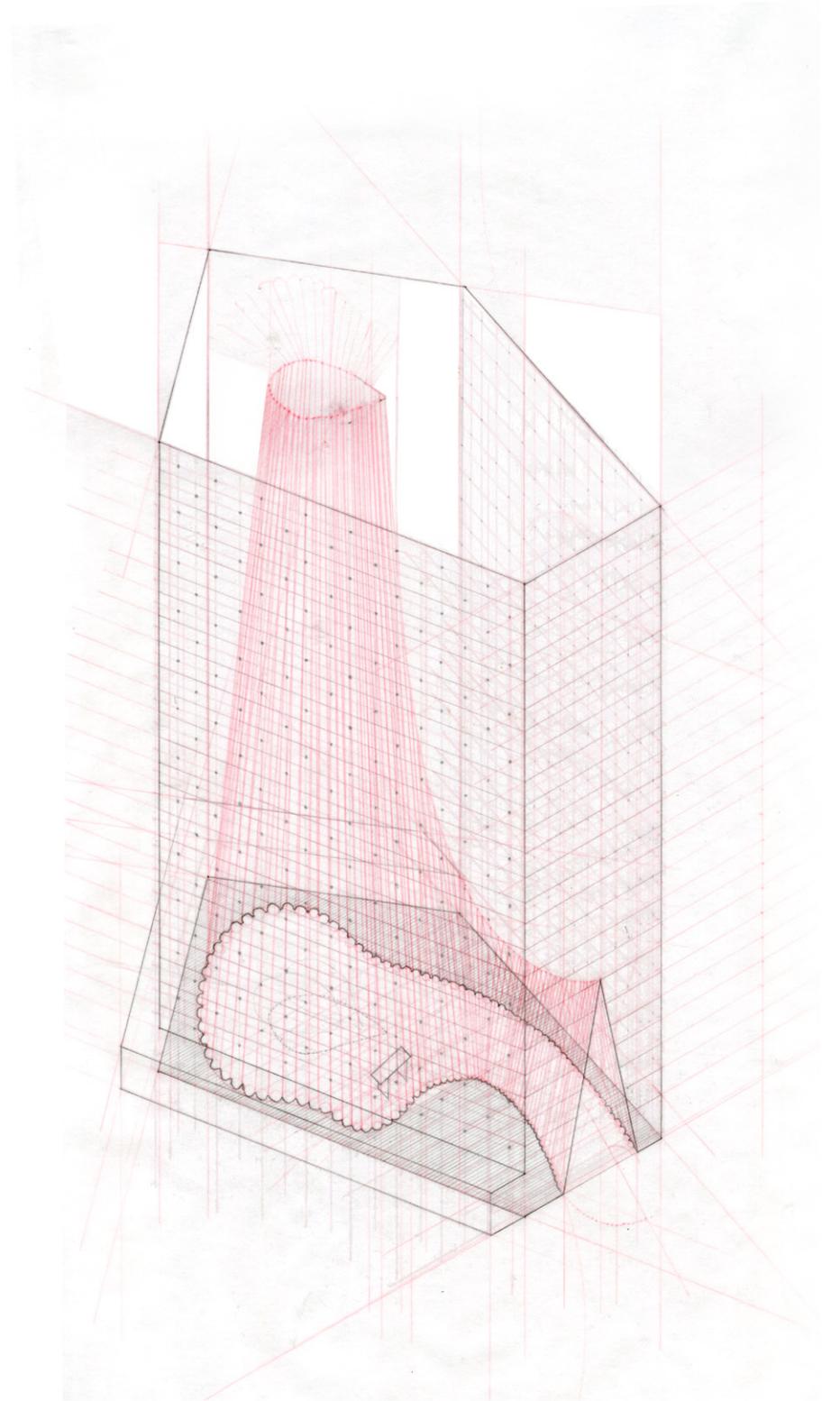


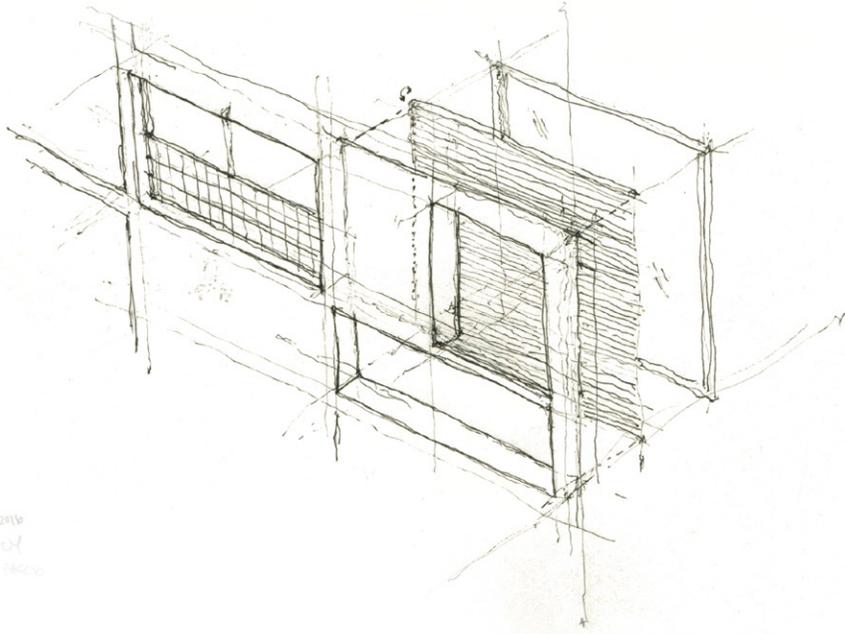
Barcelona Pavilion, *Mies van der Rohe*
Barcelona, Spain. Photo and drawing by author.



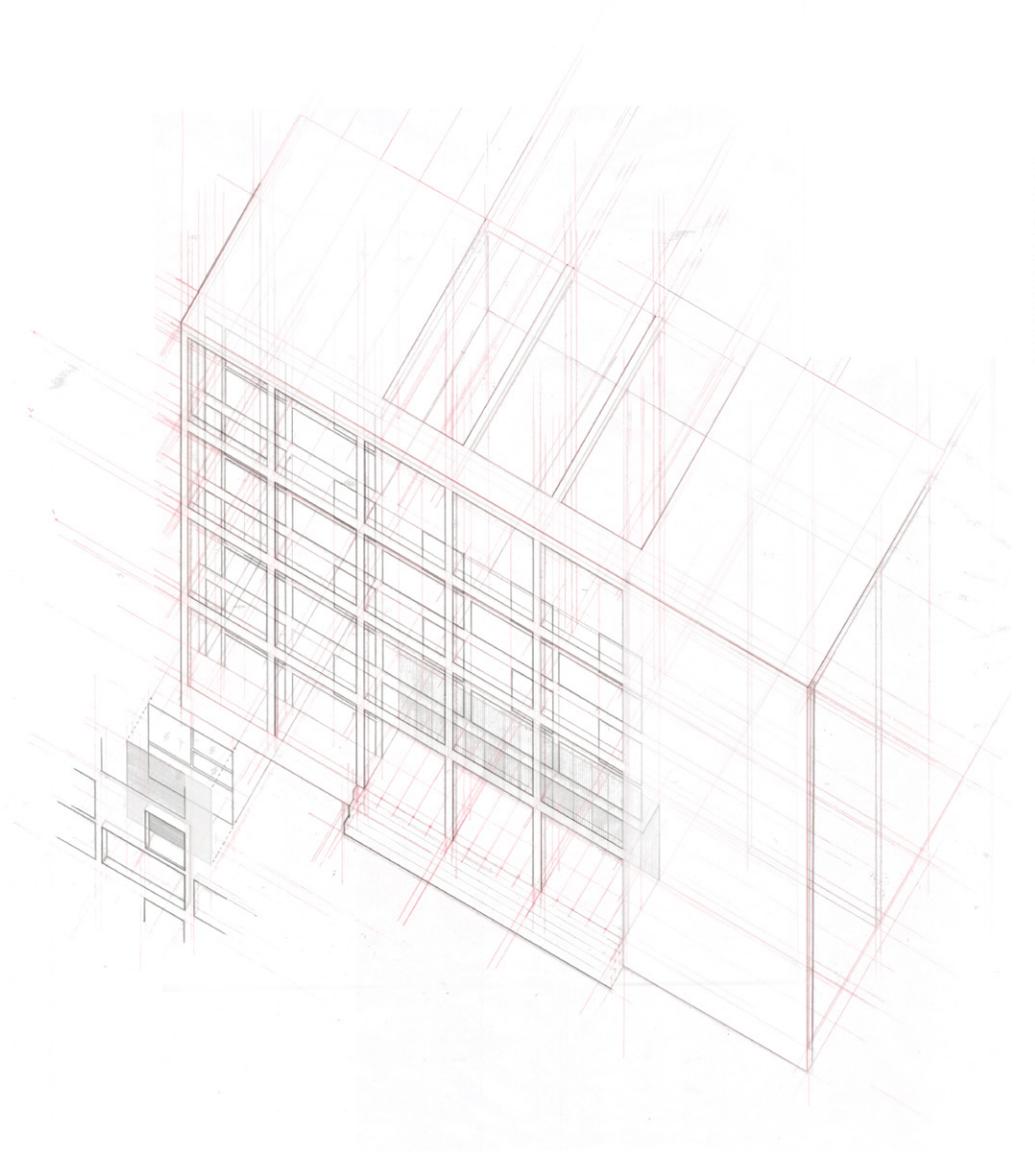


Bruder Klaus Kapelle, *Peter Zumthor*
Mechernich, Eifel, Germany. Photo and drawing by author.



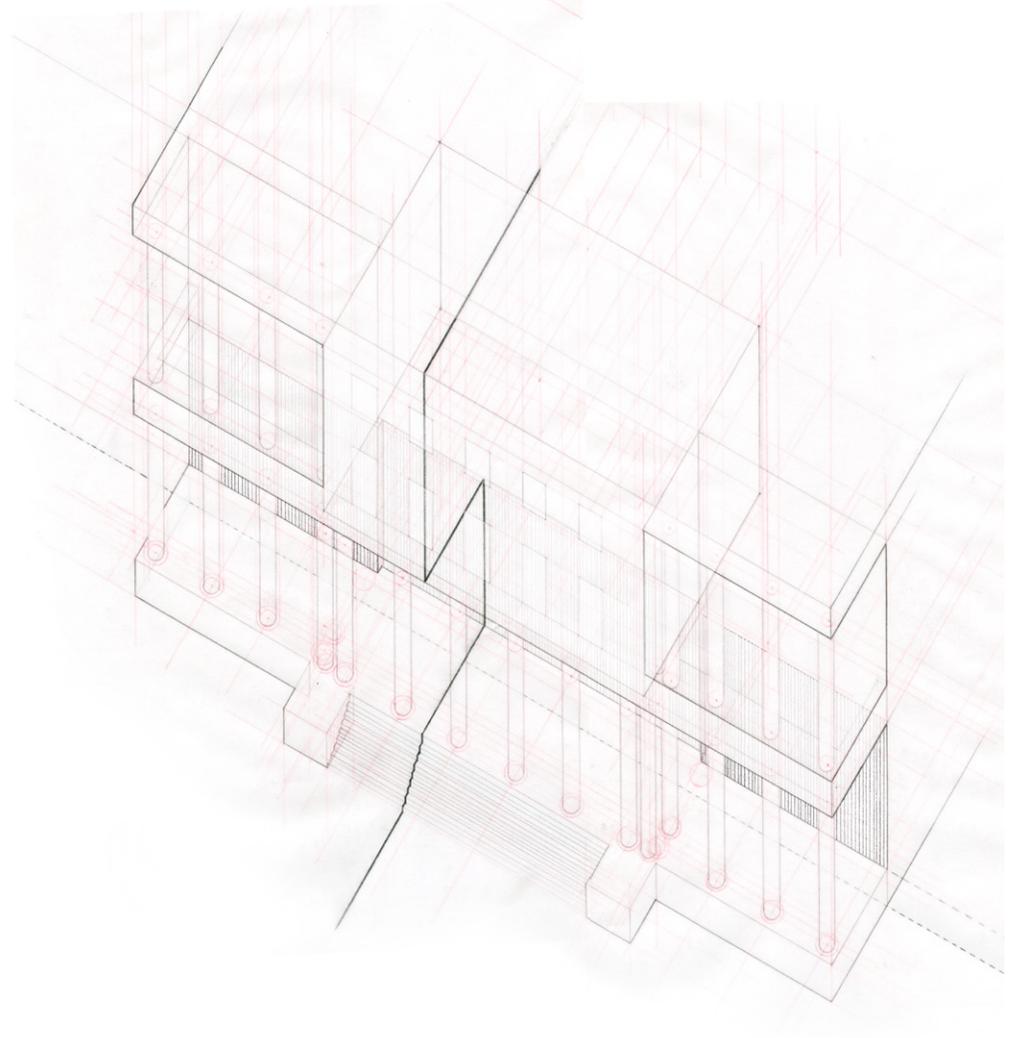


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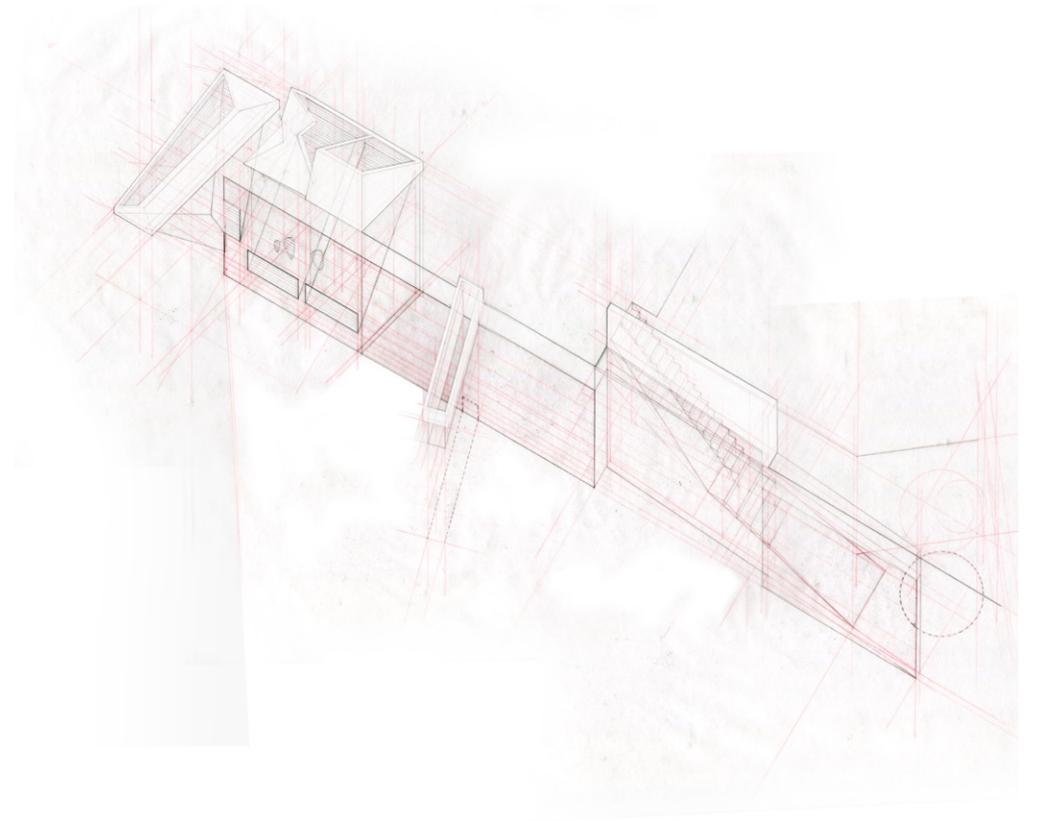


Palazzo Chiericati, *Andrea Palladio*
Vicenza, Italy. Photo and drawing by author.



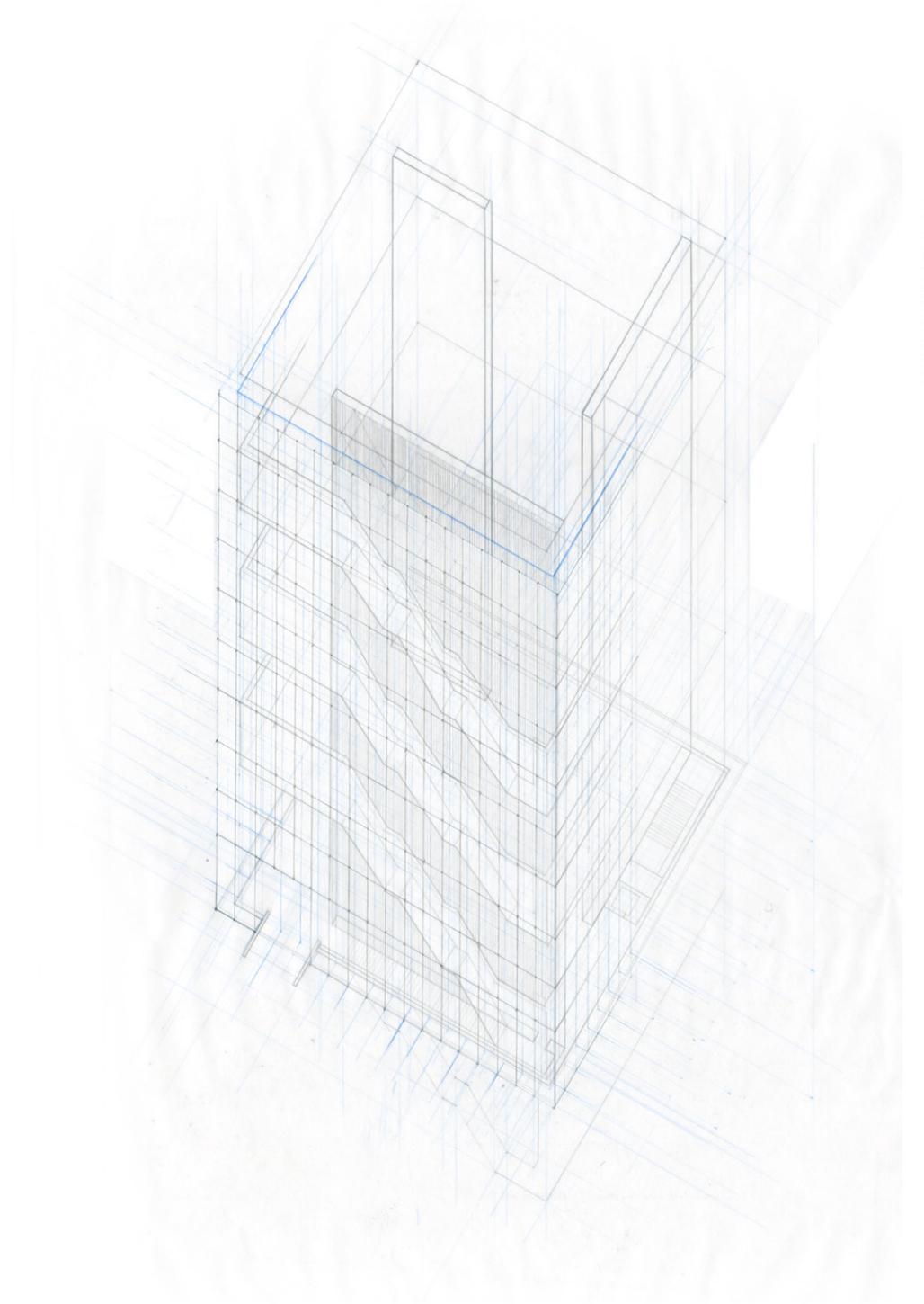


Igualada Cemetery, *Enric Miralles*
Igualada, Spain. Photo and drawing by author.





Kunsthhaus Bregenz, *Peter Zumthor*
Bregenz, Austria. Photo and drawing by author.



DRAWING SPACE, MAKING PLACE

Between Ground and Sky

We occupy a relatively thin line along the surface of the earth. Between ground and sky we socialize, think, develop, and dwell. The complex compounds of the earth below provide a surface that meets layers of air molecules that veil our existence from the vacuum beyond. To mark the ground of this place requires a reflection on the delicacy of our situation and creates the responsibility of imagining a place that will reflect our necessity to live, to create, to feel, and to dwell.

Site

The introduction of site serves as a point of reference to specific site qualities and is not limited to a specific area or topographical region. Paynes Prairie State Preserve outside of Gainesville, Florida is a landscape that offers charged phenomena to provoke architectural making in relationship to place. Located in Alachua county, Paynes Prairie holds the Alachua Sink. During periods of heavy rainfall the prairie will flood and block existing canals that allow movement of wildlife species, before receding into the Florida aquifer.¹³ Paynes Prairie State Preserve provides a natural Florida condition to begin to draw from, draw into, and draw out architectural speculations. An objective site provides qualities and conditions for an

architect to engage: textural relationships, wildlife implications, specific grounds, shifting horizons, thick skies...

Architecture has the opportunity to make present the invisible. Any site offers phenomena for the architect to respond to. Just as basic perceptual givens of gravity, up, down, light, texture, balance apply to a body in a physical space, these perceptions exist at the scale of the site. Perceptions of horizon, surface, ground texture, sky condition, atmosphere, weather – all become basic perceptual givens in the design problem. A design problem suggests a design solution, however, any design solution is only one subjective answer to a multitude of potential design problems that stem from these same basic site variables. This suggests that an architect has an opportunity to define a problem that may heighten the importance of a set of variables, while other variables become quiet.

Paynes Prairie contains a walking trail that follows the canals towards the center of the prairie. The trail terminates with an observation tower – a two-hundred square-foot platform elevated nine feet off of the ground to provide panoramic views to the phenomena of the flat prairie all around (INDEX 04). Stemming

from the interest to develop an architecture that suppresses vision in order to elevate other sensual interactions, an *observation place* becomes the design proposal for the project, charged in its minimal and vague title – *observation place*. The existing observation tower is exactly that, a tower that allows a higher acuity of visual connection with the site. If we consider the words separately, observation, to observe – is suggestive of view, however does not distinguish against the possibility of observation through listening, touching, feeling, or tasting. The word tower, to climb – is suggestive of a movement skyward, charged with historical underpinnings of reaching a higher point to observe below. The two words together embrace a visual dominance in the experience of the space. The moment that something is named “the task of design is frequently established and default assumptions rooted, relegating design to what is already known...these projects are 75% complete before the process of design actually begins.”¹⁴ *Observation place* serves as a design title to work against the perceptual variables of the site, to consider how a set of spaces – a place, might react to ground, the horizon, or the sky.

Non-Site

The question becomes: *how does an architect begin to work in a site? How does an architect mark the ground, speculating on spatial interactions with regards to place without working primarily in that place?* An architect, in other words, speculates a design proposal while at a desk in an office that might be miles removed from the actual site. In this way, it is crucial to reference Robert Smithson’s essay: “A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites.” While photography, writing, and drawing all becomes methods to developing a sense of place, Smithson notes that these are only two dimensional “logical pictures”, which “differs from a natural or realistic picture in that it rarely looks like the thing it stands for.”¹⁵ Smithson continues to reference an earthwork

13 Taylor, Laura B. “Romance of Paynes Prairie” in Beautiful Florida. Accessed at <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pkyonge/alachua/rpp.html> on April 17, 2017.

14 Perry Kulper. “Five Small Practices.” *Oz: Volume 36, Article 14* (University of Michigan 2014). 82.

15 Robert Smithson. “A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, Ed. Jack Flam (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996). 364.

project that provokes the in-between space of an actual site and a non-site:

The non-site is a three-dimensional logical picture that is abstract, yet it represents an actual site in N.J. (The Pine Barrens Plains). It is by this three-dimensional metaphor that one site can represent another site which does not resemble it – thus The Non-Site...between the actual site in Pine Barrens and The Non-Site itself exists a space of metaphoric significance. It could be that “travel” in this space is a vast metaphor. Everything between the two sites could become physical metaphorical material devoid of natural meanings and realistic assumptions.¹⁶

This “in-between” space becomes critical to the project and to the architect. In developing the observation place, questions regarding materials of the site, water conditions, site textures, horizon, surfaces, and atmosphere become implemented into a series of painting studies that begin to speculate on these subtleties (INDEX 03). Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky allude to methods of analytical cubism of the early 1900’s as “frontality, suppression of depth, contracting of space, definition of light sources, tipping forward of objects, restricted palette, oblique and rectilinear grids, propensities towards peripheric development.”¹⁷ The value of painting allows for large gestures to be marked with a dimensional medium. Through methods of analytical cubism and a series of layers that involve different levels of analysis and speculation, the overlapping of marks yields unforeseen transparencies that relate to the qualities and conditions found on Paynes Prairie formatted into a ‘three-dimensional logical picture.’ This study of site subtleties allows for consistent backdrop to test and speculate, becoming a quiet ritual at one moment, and a useful starting point at another moment.

Listening, Marking, Making (Horizons)

Sitting in a place without the everyday distractions of modern society it is possible to *feel* a place. Through listening, observing, smelling, looking, and feeling, it is possible to feel the atmosphere of place, not in the way that you are permitted to reach out and touch it, but that it invades your body, your thoughts, your emotions. The question is: *how can architecture enhance this presence of atmosphere?*

Architecture allows a framing of a site phenomena, providing a physical shelter from the distractions of humankind. A constructed space becomes a physical marking of solitude. In his essay “An Intent of Constructing: Constructing an Intent,” Coleman Coker writes that “through constructing I remain rooted to the earth, I am attached to its horizontality. As constructing makes a location; it marks a spot and, in making that mark, as a place it gathers together the things of the earth in order to grant me a place...I come to sense my relationship to earth.”¹⁸

An index of photography, models, mock-ups, drawings, and film all aim at the intention of documenting atmosphere. In relation to one another – each of these documents become part of a collection that make up ‘Non-Site’ in that they are of the site, but not actually the site. Through these collections, an understanding of site is developed that can influence architectural making, allowing a deeper relationship between the body and earth (INDEX 03 - 06). As precedent analysis for an observation place the film became a crucial document in revealing the acoustic properties of the site. While the film, a sequenced set of images, captures subtle movements of foliage, surface water movement, horizon shifts, animal life, and people moving. However, while each frame reveals a different visual and textural aspects of the site, the audio plays a stream of continuous ambience. Sand hill cranes break the breeze and pause only to allow the stream

of water its acoustic presence. While each shot was edited using its original audio from that moment, a listener would not distinguish the frame jumps aurally. The sound from the video provides a common thread that binds the collection of visuals together into a synthetic experience.* While conventional formats of models, drawings, diagrams, and writing provides an idea of place, film (two dimensions) + audio (one dimension) provide a ‘three-dimensional logical picture’ that can become a useful tool while working within the metaphoric in-between of site and non-site.

Constructing Deference

While an *observation place* serves as a way of thinking about a space to be constructed on Paynes Prairie, it does not question the seemingly simple question: *Why construct?* Through documentation of site, an architect can understand that a spatial void exists and that an intent of constructing will enhance or frame a site phenomena and define a new experience of place for the prairie. Defining this spatial void is defining the critical reason for the project, “the notion of project oscillates between the opposition of meanings of domination and liberation, of control and unfolding of differences, of prevision and prediction, of opening toward what might emerge and planning for it.”¹⁹ The difference “between the desire to fill a space and fill with space is more than the distinction between an article and a preposition; the former connotes an imposition and a conceit, while the latter implies a kind of an alliance, if not deference.”²⁰ Intentions in marking ground with space requires a respectful questioning and unfolding of place.

Through studying the phenomena of the Paynes Prairie, iterative documentation yields the presence of an exciting atmosphere (INDEX 04). Architecturally, there is an opportunity to propose a place that will capture, reframe, and represent the known in and unknown way allowing a deeper connection to place.

16 Ibid. 364.

17 Rowe, Colin with Robert Slutzky. *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal* (Reprinted as *Transparenz*, Basel: Birkhauser, 1968). Written, 1955-6. First published in *Perspecta*, 1963. 162.

18 Coleman Coker. “An Intent of Constructing: Constructing an Intent,” in *Mockbee Coker: Thought and Process*, Ed. Lori Ryker (Princeton Architectural Press 1996). 69.

19 Gregotti, Vittorio. *Inside Architecture*, translated by Peter Wong and Francesca Zaccheo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). 21.

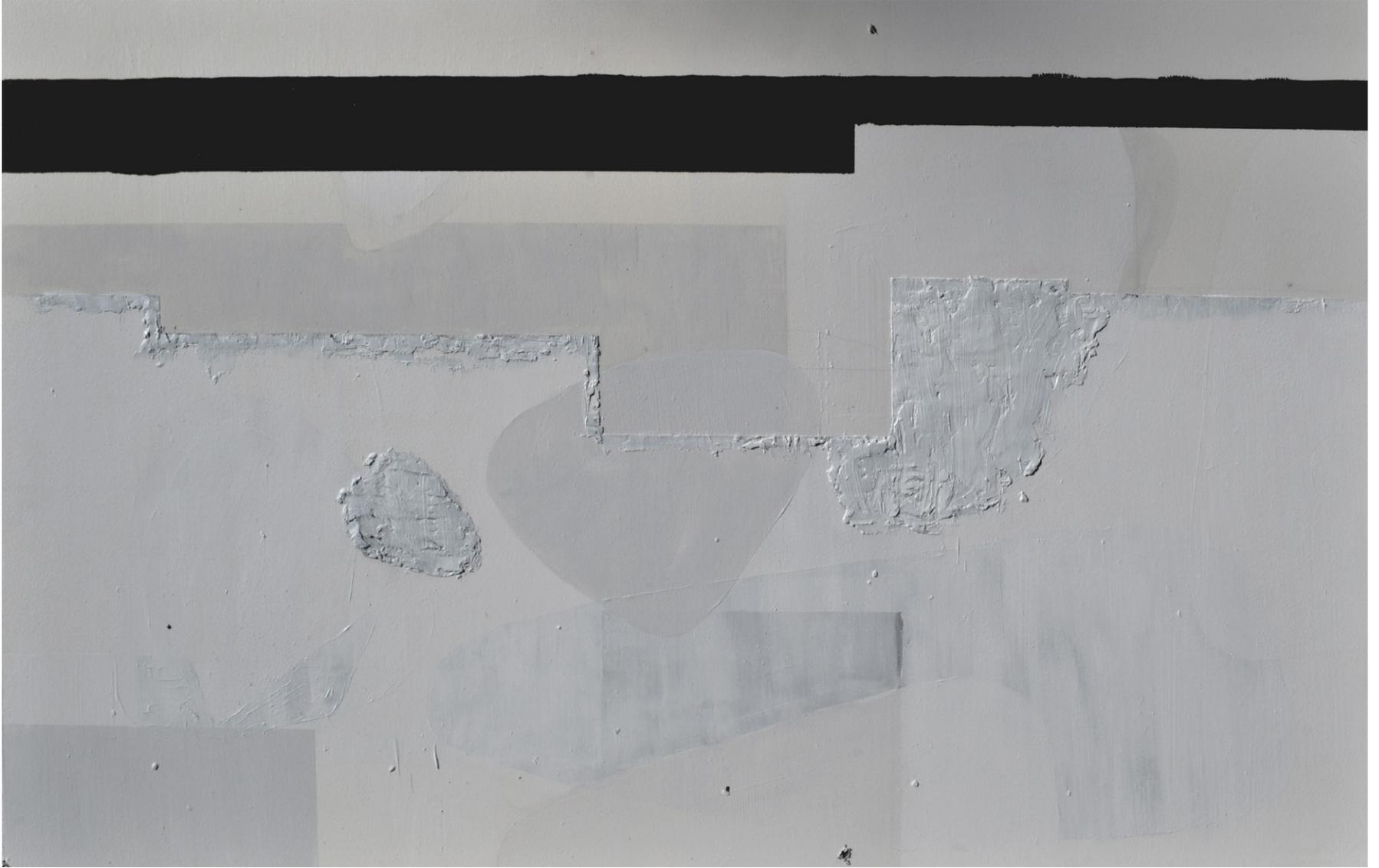
20 Birdsong, Judith. “Defining Context: Chasing the Horizon” in *Vorkurs, Volume 01* (University of Florida, 2017). 55.

Note:

* Video available with the University of Florida library, *The Process of Subtleties, Atmospheres of Paynes Prairie*, Published 26, April 2017.

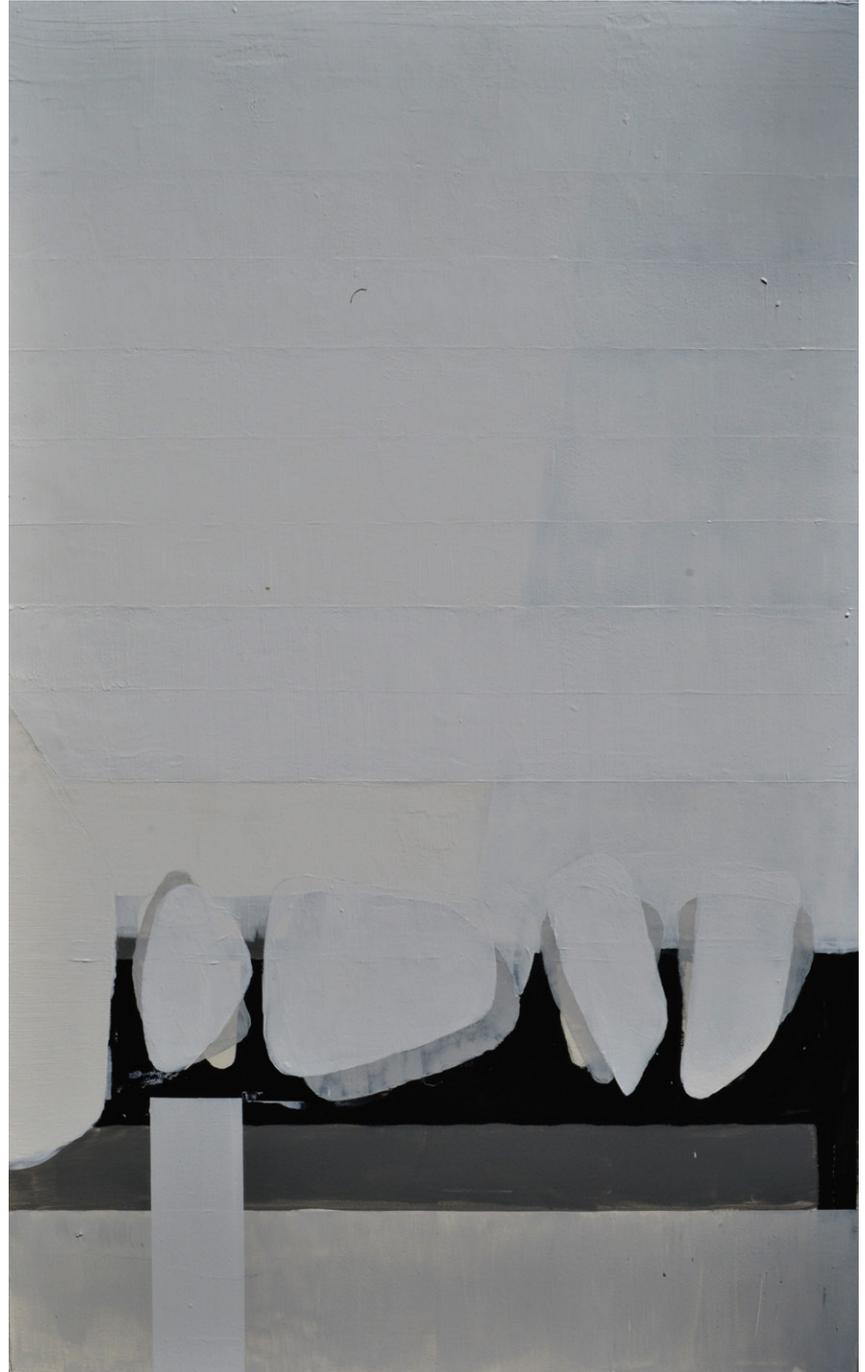


/re-marking on ground, marking ground





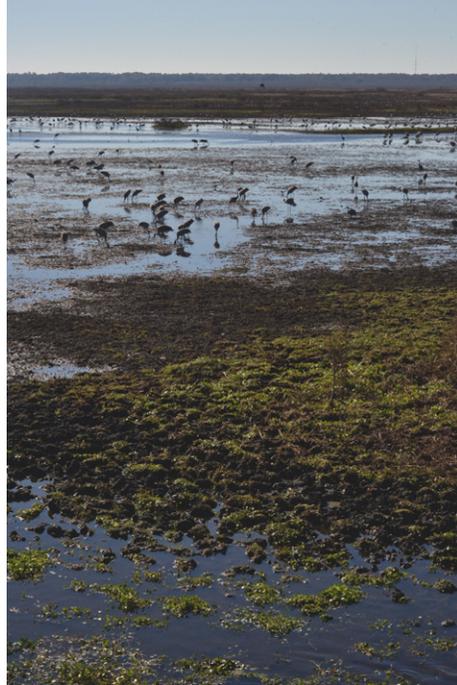
/immensities of sky, shifting horizons





/questions of site, cover/uncover







Horizon / Edge / Texture



Artifact / Screen / Movement



Path / Procession / Itinerary



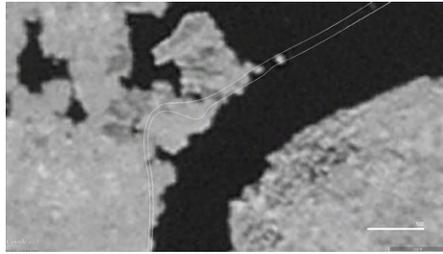
(above)
existing observation tower marking
an endpoint to La Chua trail. Photo
by author.

(below)
existing observation tower
during flooding of Paynes Prairie,
photograph accessed at Lake
Alachua Trail Outlook, Paynes Prairie
Preserve Statepark.

- 01. La Chua Trail Parking
- 02. Sweetwater Overlook
- 03. La Chua Trail Learning Pavilion
- 04. Paynes Prairie Service
- 05. Alachua Sink Overlook - North
- 06. Alachua Sink Overlook - South
- 07. Speculative Site
- 08. Lake Alachua Overlook
- 09. Paynes Prairie Observation Deck



February 1994



January 1999



December 2001



December 2005



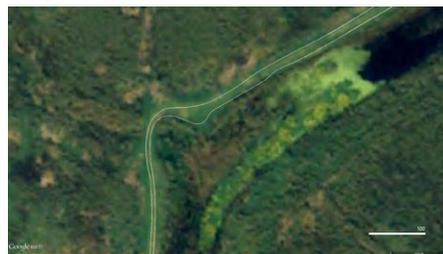
November 2005



February 2006



August 2006



November 2007



January 2008



January 2010



December 2010



January 2011



January 08, 2012



January 18, 2012

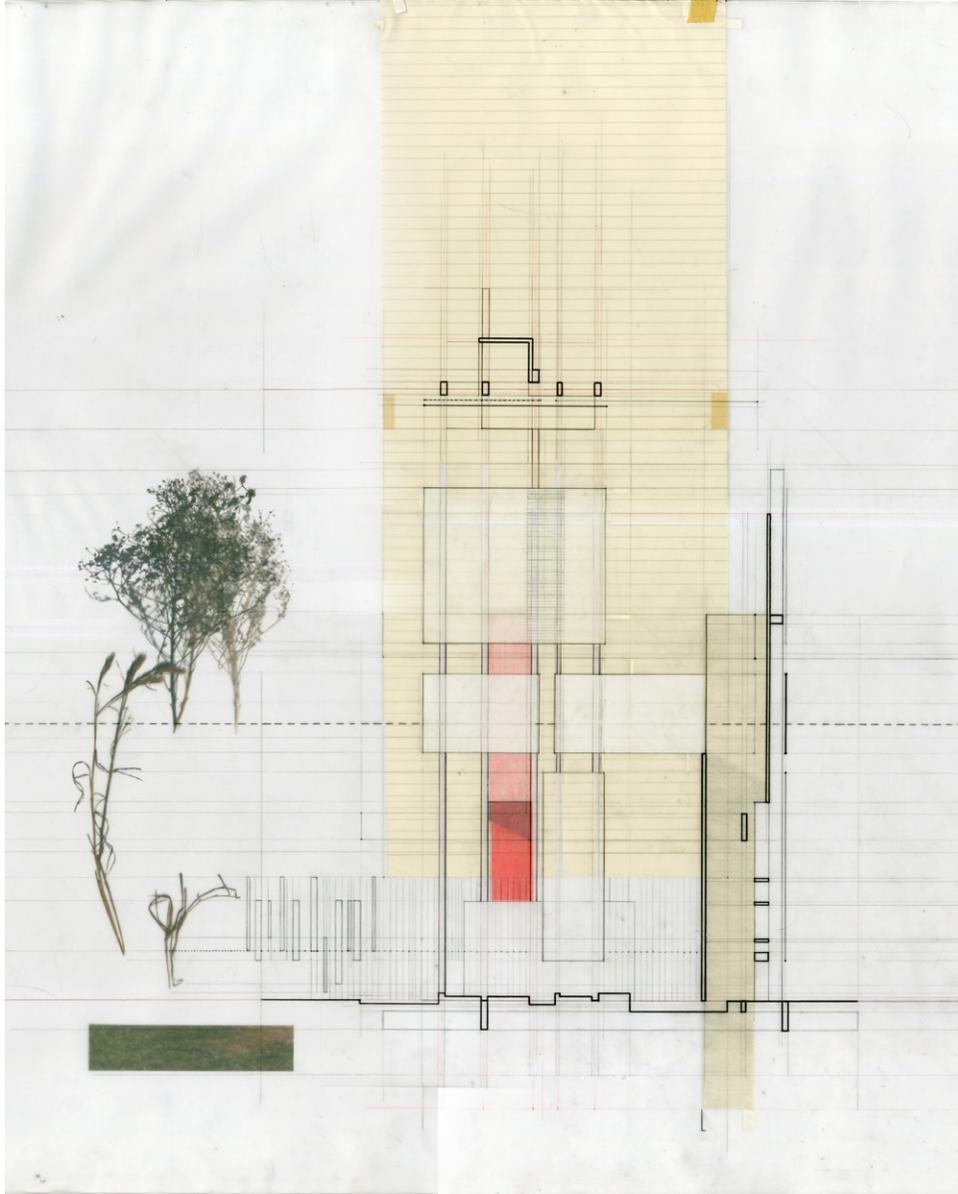


November 2015



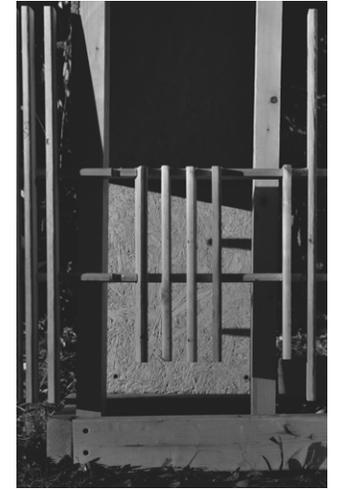
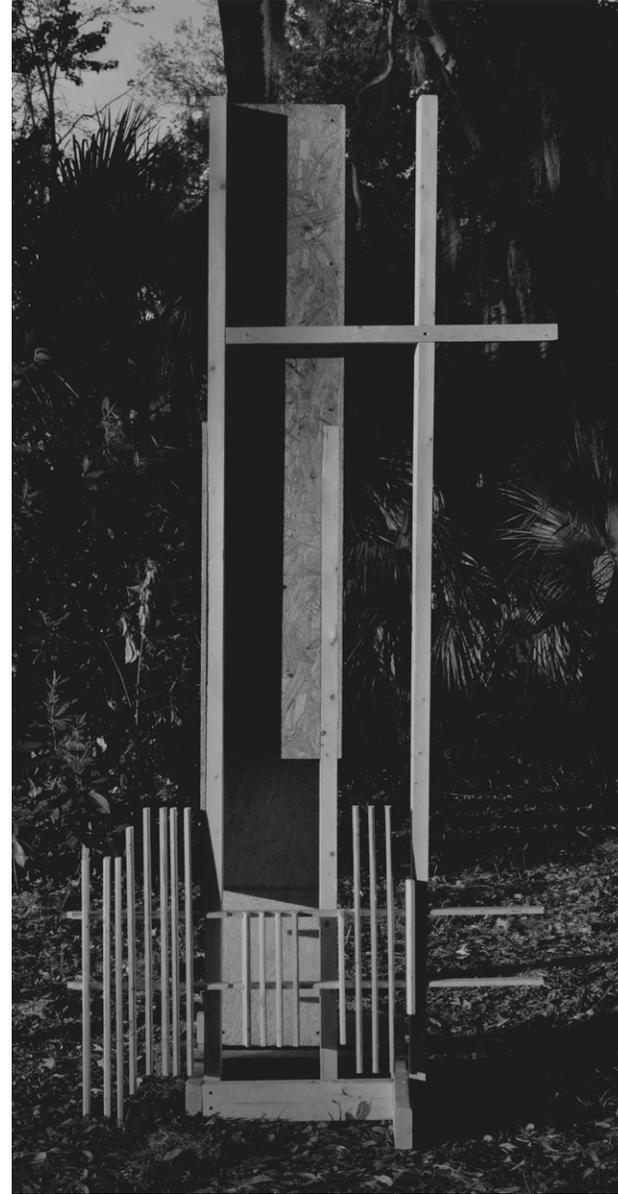
November 2016

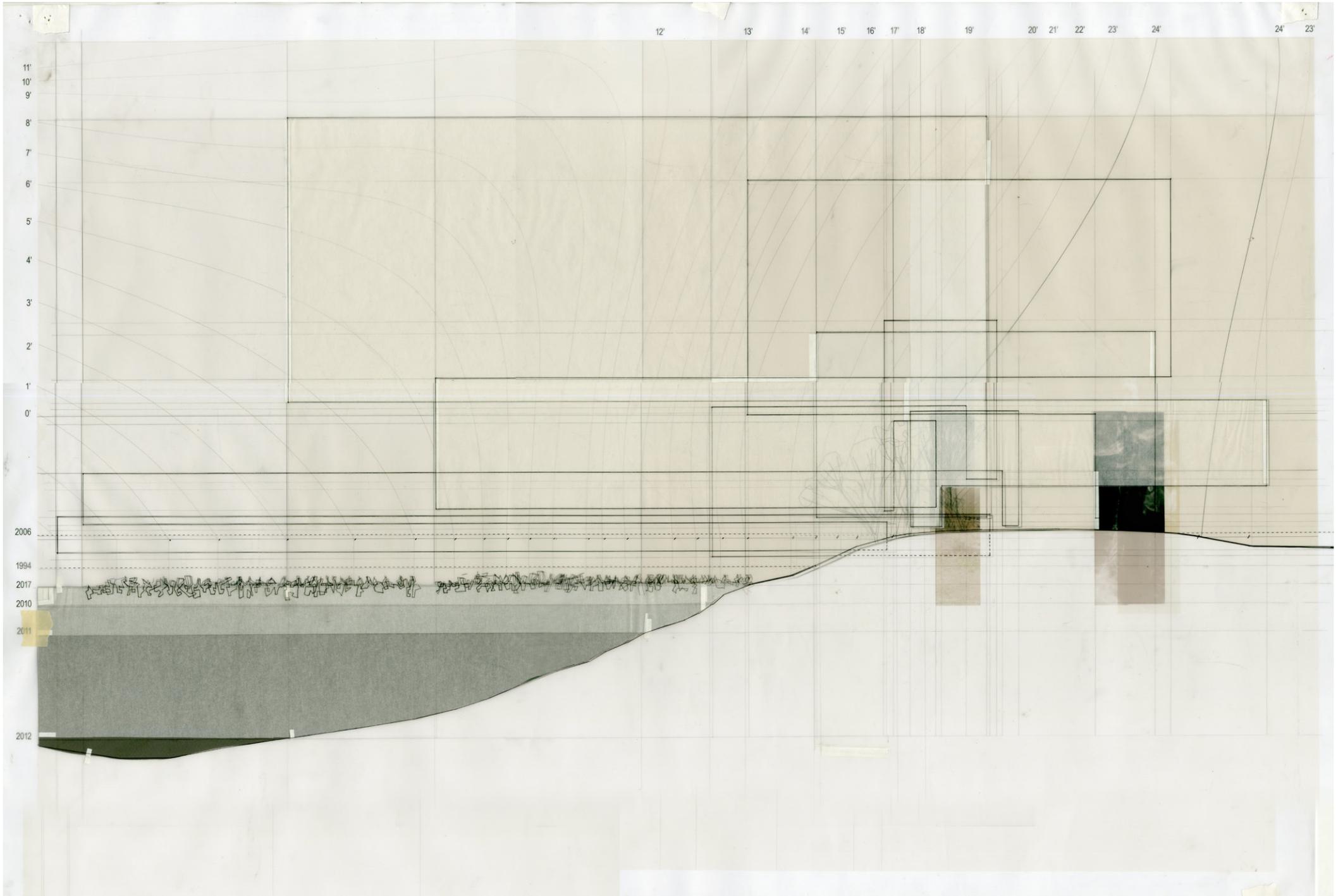
shifting surfaces - aerial imagery throughout twenty-two years articulate the subtle and drastic changes in water level along La Chua trail. Images generated through Google Imagery (Digital Globe).



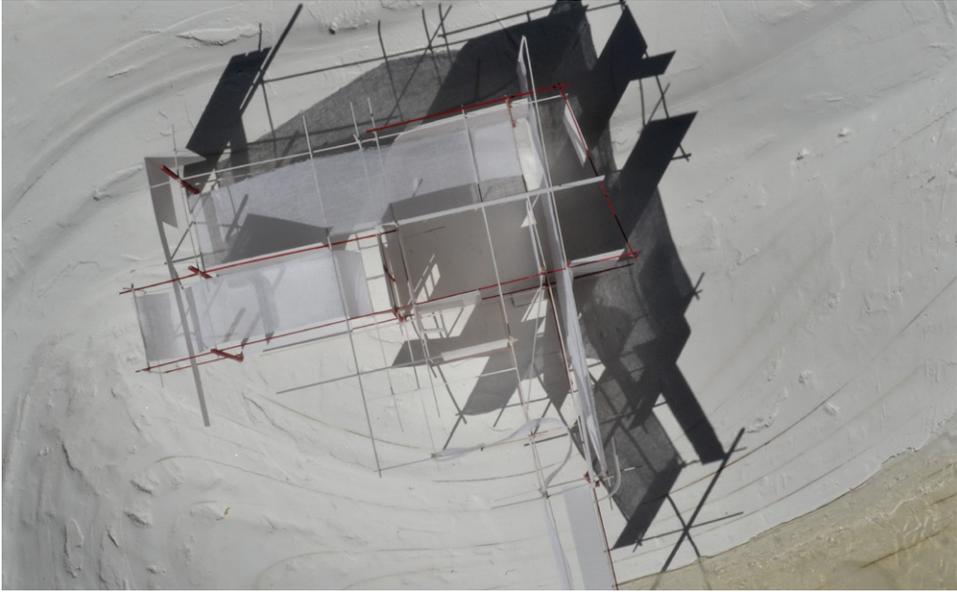
(above)
site materials become abstracted into architectural elements, speculating on construction, opacities, filtering and tectonic assembly.

(right)
photographs of incomplete fragment, abstract site construction - literal interpretation of the qualities of the site

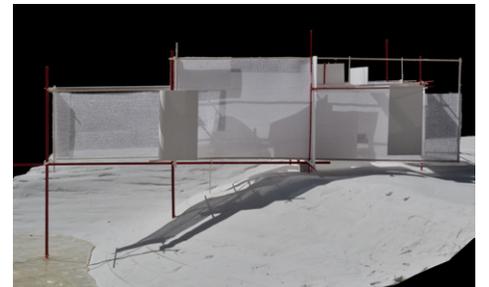
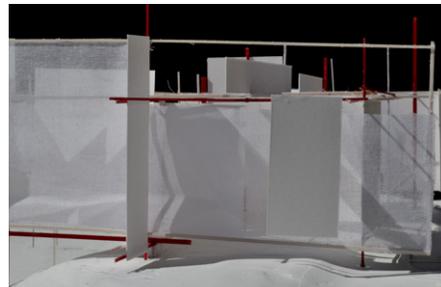
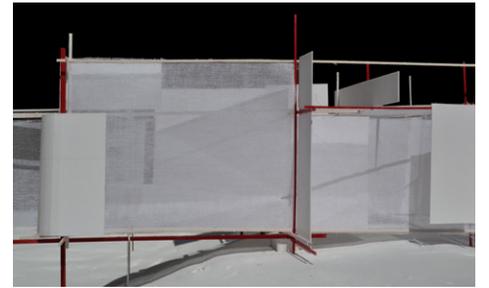
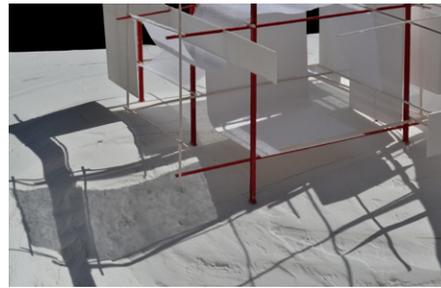
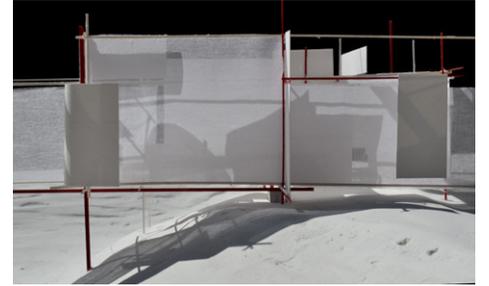
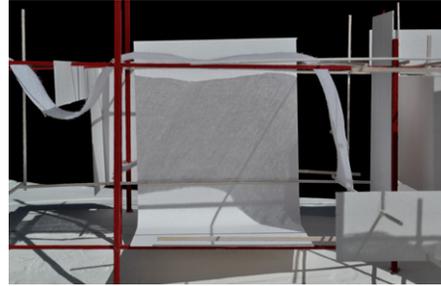
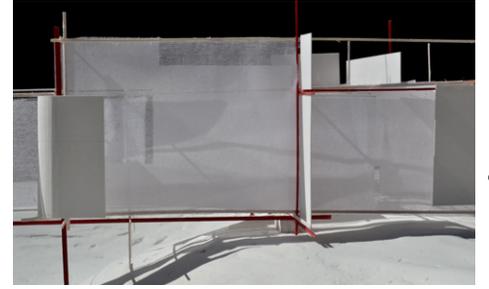
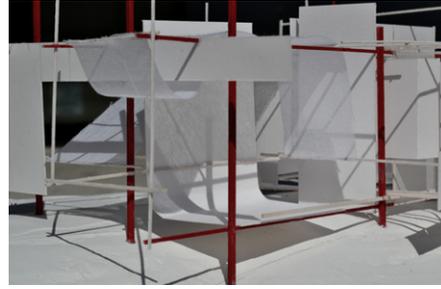
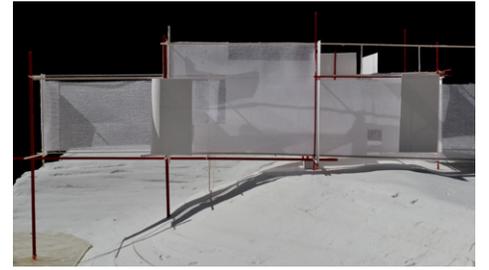
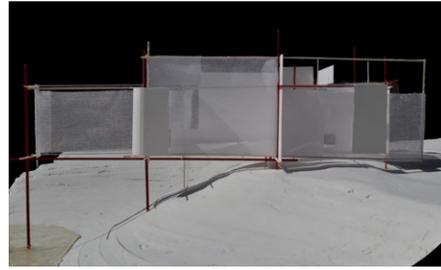


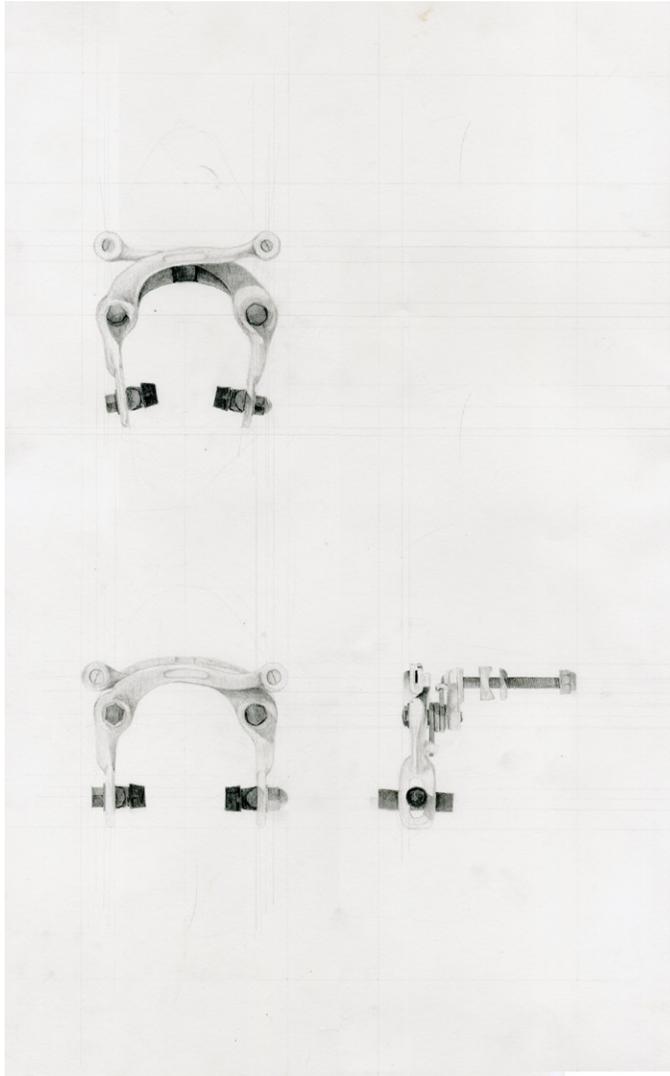


breathing edges - sectional analysis
of site conditions, marking water
levels, atmospheric edges, and
surface conditions.



breathing edges - 1/16" scale model of site, addressing quality of 'breathing edges' of atmosphere, varying layers of opacity, structural speculation, and shifting water surfaces.





(left)
Artifact of bicycle brake as drawing, demonstrating contour, edge, depth, surface, and texture.

(right)
Artifact of bicycle brake articulates the in-between space within the drawing, probing fields of latency, speculative movement, axial alignments, and analytical use of the object.



space for sky



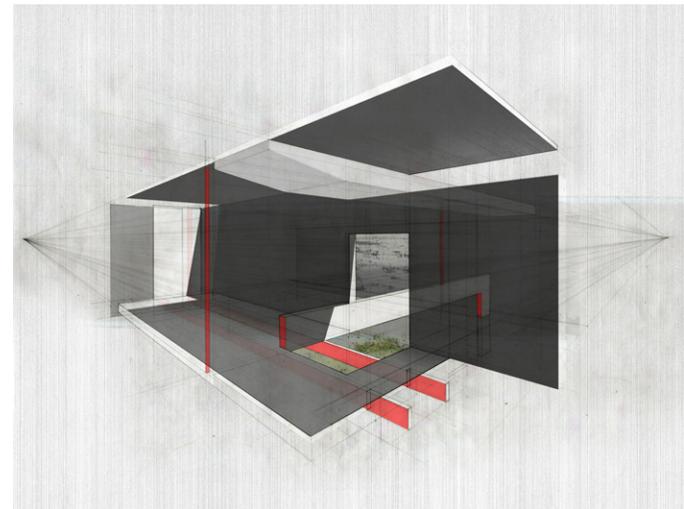
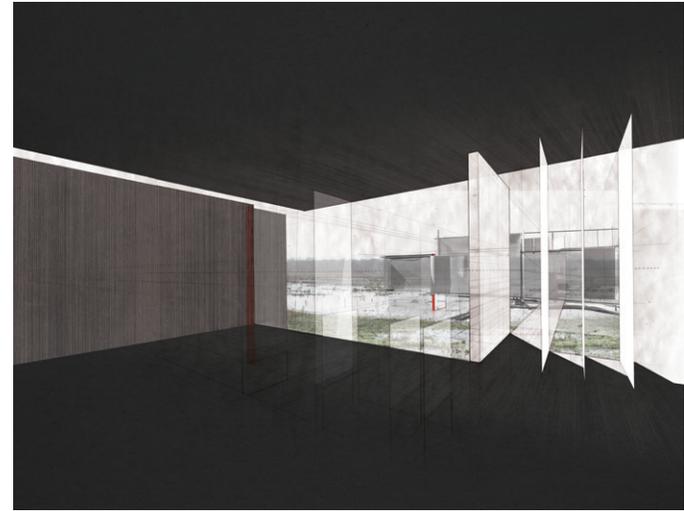
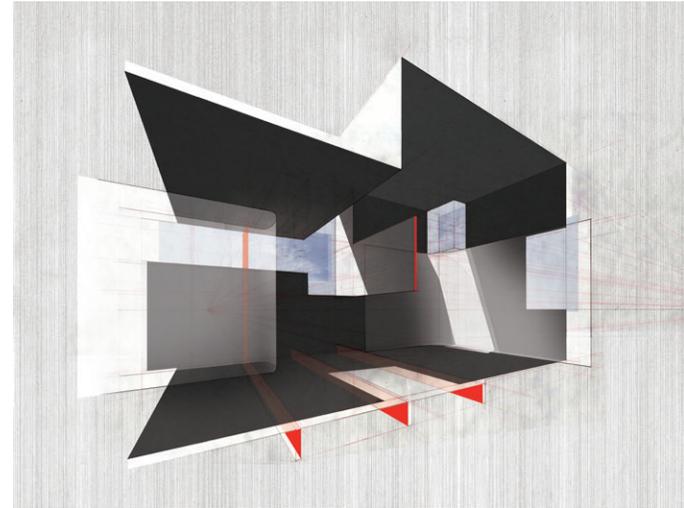
space for horizons



space for ground



Still images from a video sequence taken at Paynes Prairie that demonstrate the shifting qualities of ground, sky, and horizon. Treated as an artifact, the suggestive spatial drawings seek to capture the latent qualities hidden within the stills - reinforcing moments of transparency (sky), ground shifts (horizon), and surface conditions (ground).



Constructing an Index

Through photographic studies of material qualities, a collection of images is created that begins to draw out relationships within a material and between materials. This process, stemming from an interest in constructing a moment from a suggestive spatial vignette addresses the issues of architectural making. In constructing the material detail, the transition from two-dimensional drawing to three-dimensional representation destroyed the intended quality of the fabric construction (Figure 1). Because fabric requires a larger framework for intended use, the framework consumed the project and eliminated the intended architectural quality. To focus on architectural qualities, a study of materials and their inter-relationships is documented by photograph material qualities independent of a larger framework. As a parallel study, the introduction of planar opaque elements form a neutral lightbox to test the same materials within. These photographs become spatially suggestive while still articulating material qualities without preconception to programmatic function. These synthetic conditions speculate on the haptic and visual qualities of basic human perceptions. (INDEX 08)

Separating the methods of constructing the framework from the intended architectural qualities allows for an indexing of material conditions unaltered by the realities of construction. "The methods for joining different parts of the construction system become the elements requiring the most effort, and are often the points at which the application of specific inventions becomes most critical...gothic architects transformed materials into architectural facts; we assemble products."²¹ In an attempt to move away from architecture as a product, an object, an architectural index of material qualities allows a speculation of many hypothesis and questions the process of constructing that condition rather than the condition as resultant to the assembly process.

The way we imagine space is dependent on the tools at our disposal and familiarity – photography, drawing, modeling, diagramming (indexed articles). At the moment a less familiar method is developed, the project develops a new depth of clarity – a moment for the architect to reevaluate intent through an unfamiliar process. The audio developed from Paynes Prairie created a method of suggesting

space that is seemingly unconventional (INDEX 10). Listening with eyes closed, the audio merges the haptic and visual into a spatially suggestive document. Keeping the eyes closed while listening to the audio from Paynes Prairie provides a direct suppression of vision. This allows a deeper connection to memory and personal experiences of what each sound reminds the listener of, "the sense of sight implies exteriority, but sound creates an experience of interiority...sound approaches me, the eye reaches, but the ear receives."²² The audio track takes advantage of sound qualities in the prairie – a muffled sound; an echo. Each listener, while suppressing their vision, becomes immersed in the sound qualities and reflects on the haptic memories of what each sound suggests.* This allows the architect an opportunity to speculate on sound and ask the questions: *how can this experience be constructed? How can 'that' quality be made?*

The role of making becomes increasingly valuable in developing a spatial experience. While the index of images serves as a starting point for constructing a meaningful space, "an architectural work is not experienced as a collection of isolated visual pictures, but in its fully embodied material and spiritual presence."²³ An architectural index provides a reference to test the methods and process of spatial construction. While the process of constructing a space is outside the scope of its architectural index, the intentions of atmosphere, material, and spiritual presence should not be forgotten.

The Permanently Incomplete

Fragments, gestures, and subtleties form the depths of indexical architecture. The project addresses architectural qualities as way to understand architecture, to analyze site, and to develop space. Gestures are a form of communication, the presence of gestures in language, music, painting, walking, sexuality, are only a few instances from the everyday. A subtle gesture with the eyes can inform a

- 21 Gregotti, Vittorio. *Inside Architecture*, translated by Peter Wong and Francesca Zaccheo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). 52.
- 22 Pallasmaa, Juhani. Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Great Britain: Wiley-Academy, 2005). 49.
- 23 Ibid. 44.

world of emotion. Human relationships are a collection of fragmented gestures that form a permanently incomplete perception of who we are. The relationship between the body and architecture is the same – fragmented gestures form incomplete perceptions of spatial experience. It is important to distinguish between an architectural index as a collection of materials, drawings, models, diagrams – the materials of non-site, and the human index of memories – experiences altered into memory. The third moment, which is where this project lives, is the experience of the architectural index as a method of spatial speculation – a fragmented understanding of a multiplicity of spatial provocations. In his essay “Weak Architecture,” Ignasi de Sola-Morales addresses this experience of the fragmentary as “constructed by means of pieces that may ultimately touch; that approach one another, at times without touching; that draw nearer to one another yet never make contact; that overlap, that offer themselves in a discontinuity in time whose reading as juxtaposition is the closest approximation to reality at our disposal.”²⁴

Our perceptions of space are continually growing as new experiences reform into memory. These subtleties get applied to our sensual perceptions and shape the gestural relationship between, “architectural meaning derives from archaic responses and reactions remembered by the body and the senses”²⁵

Translations

Italo Calvino states that “in trying to account for the density and continuity of the world around us, language is exposed as lacunose, fragmentary: it always says something *less* than the sum of what can be experienced.”²⁶ In language there exists an idea: to truly understand a text you must read it in its purest original form, that through translations we experience a loss, a subtle inflection that could change the entire text. The colloquial “lost in translation” emerges out of this idea. Often times, what we are trying to say is beyond

the ability of language to capture it, we are required to understand each other beyond language. We are able to do this through our constructed experiences – the collection of fragmented subtleties that allows us to communicate perceptions.

Architecture can be a form of communication, in his book *The Hidden Dimension*, Hall dedicates a chapter to “Perception of Space: Immediate Receptors – Skin and Muscles” in which he attributes Frank Lloyd Wright’s success as an Architect in his ability to personally involve people with the surfaces of the building.²⁷ Hall continues to reference the communicative aspects of space in Japanese and European architecture. In *A Praise of Shadows*, Jun’ichirō Tanizaki communicates beauty in the Japanese house which “depends on a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows – it has nothing else... and from these delicate differences in the hue of the walls, the shadows in each room take on a tinge peculiarly their own.”²⁸ In *Strange Details*, Michael Cadwell states that the glazing on Kahn’s Yale Center for British Arts plays a shifting role:

Sometimes the glazing is opaque, sucking us into black holes of infinite depth; sometimes it is transparent, teasing us with glimpses of the galleries inside; and sometimes it is reflective, throwing us cinematic fragments of surroundings that seem coherent from a distance – all these impressions register fleeting atmospheric conditions and our changing point of view.²⁹

Architecture is a way of communicating culture, emotion, atmosphere, comfort, among memory and experience. It offers the opportunity to communicate and understand our relationship to earth, ourselves, and each other beyond language. The function of architecture is to make space that enables an experience for the body, recognizing the vast and subtle qualities that compose individuality. Architecture enables us to structure our self-identity, to place ourselves in the “shapeless

flow of reality and, ultimately, to recognize and remember who we are.”³⁰ The thoughtful reflection of atmosphere woven with the complexities of context provide a collection of subtleties that compose an indexical architecture, a continually changing self-reflective collection of the bodies’ enigmatic relationship to place.

24 Ignasi de Sola-Morales. “Weak Architecture” in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998). 621.

25 Pallasmaa, 60.

26 Calvino, Italo. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, translated by Geoffrey Brock (New York: Mariner Books, 2016). 91.

27 Hall, Edward. *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1966). 51.

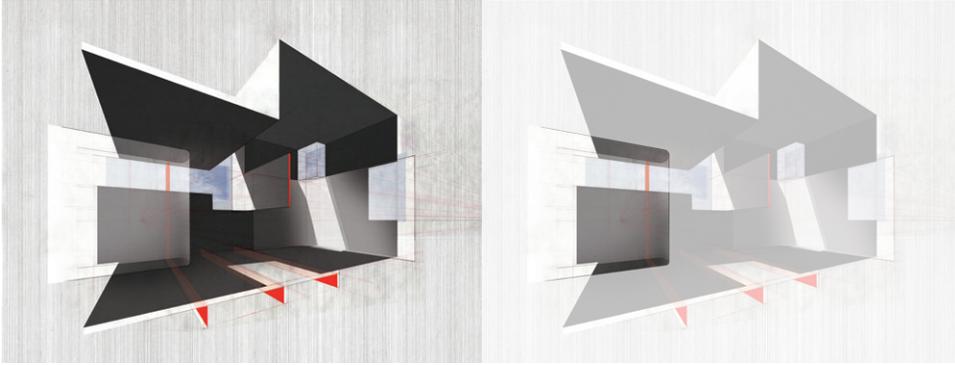
28 Tanizaki, Jun’ichirō. *In Praise of Shadows* (Leete’s Island Books, 1977). 18-19.

29 Cadwell, Michael. *Strange Details* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007). 148.

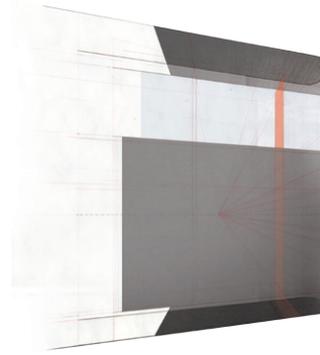
30 Pallasmaa, 71.

Note:

* Audio available with the University of Florida library, *The Process of Subtleties, Sound Narrative*, Published 26, April 2017.



(Figure 1)
 Demonstration of component isolation
 within drawing constructed into three-
 dimensional study of the fragment. Two
 photos side by side articulate the loss in
 experience between dimensions.





(left)
Barcelona Pavilion, *Mies van der Rohe*,
photo by author.

(middle)
Farnsworth House, *Mies van der Rohe*,
photo by author.

(right)
Bregenz Art Museum, *Peter Zumthor*,
photo from Avery/GSAPP Architectural
Plans and Sections (Columbia
University), accessed at
www.library.artstor.org.



(left)
Toledo Museum of Art, *SANAA*,
photography by Iwan Baan.

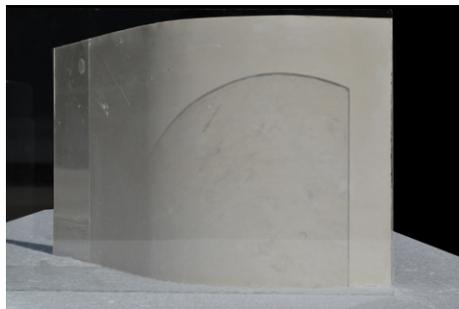
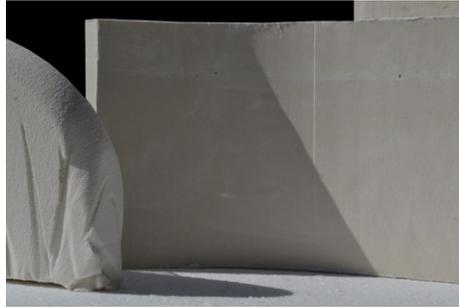
(middle)
Notre Dame du Haut, *Le Corbusier*, photo
from Avery/GSAPP Architectural Plans
and Sections (Columbia University),
accessed at
www.library.artstor.org.

(right)
Vitra Fire Station, *Zaha Hadid*, photo by
author.

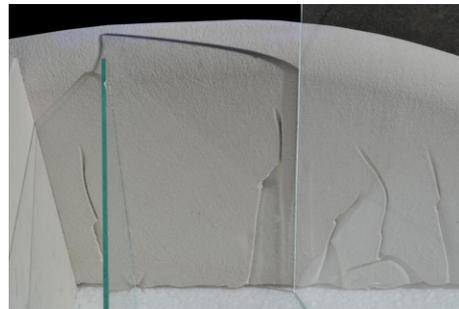
- /glass
- /xray
- /basswood
- /foamcore (neutral)
- /cotton
- /bristol
- /glass cast concrete
- /osb cast concrete
- /plaster
- /fabric formed plaster
- /curved plaster
- /rayon fabric
- /glycerin
- /curved concrete



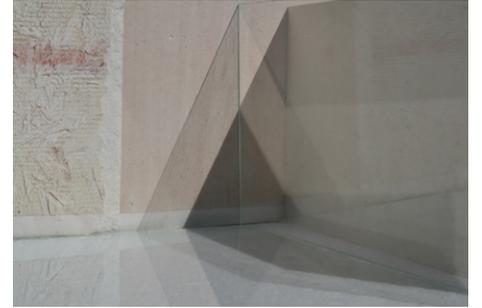
shadow / reflect / slip / refract / curve



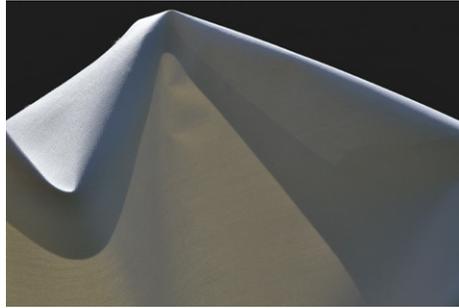
folds / crease / reflect



reflect / shadow / duplicate / layer



fold / bunch / stretch / crease / rotate



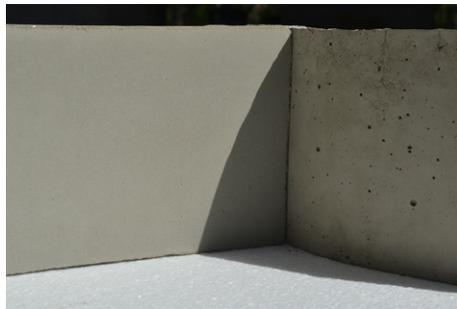
rest / shadow / drape / backlight



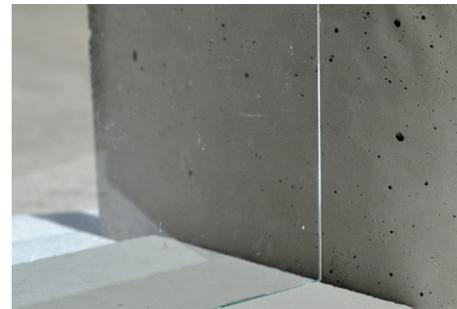
stretch / fold / crease / twist



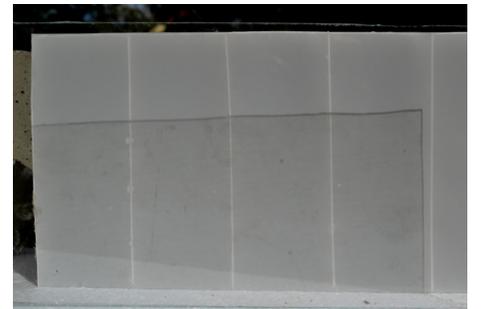
reflect / slip / texture / opacities / corner



opaque reflection / curve shadows

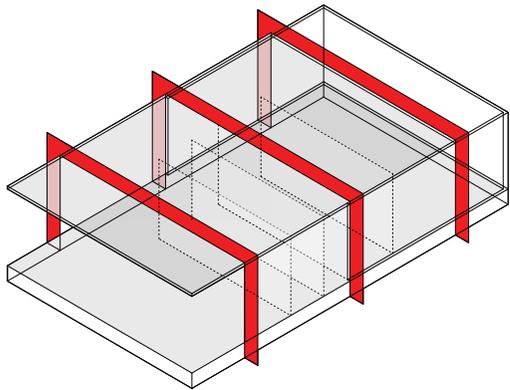


duplication / overhead / corners / translucent / transparent





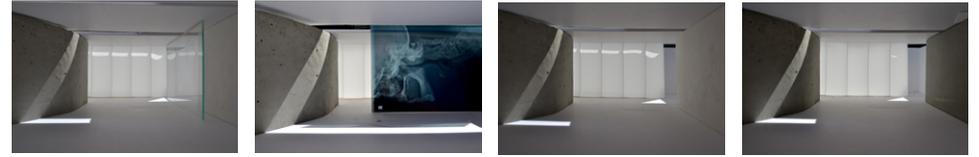
process of photographing qualities



frame diagram

Speculation on frame allows a study into the importance of the horizontal in defining architectural space (INDEX 07). A neutral foam core box abstracts qualities of frame to hold materials and allow spatial suggestions through material qualities.

concrete / plastic / plaster / xray / glass / backlight / direct light



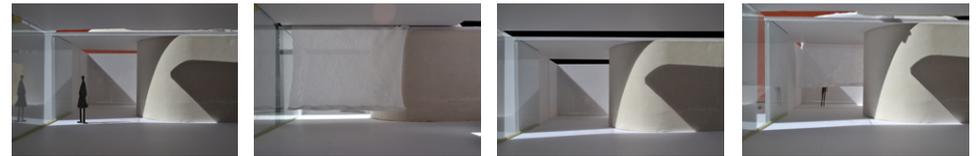
plaster / glass / parallel light / curve light / reflections / direct light



plaster / plastic / glass / backlight



plaster / glass / fabric / curved light / direct light



plaster / plastic / glass / backlight / direct light / curved light

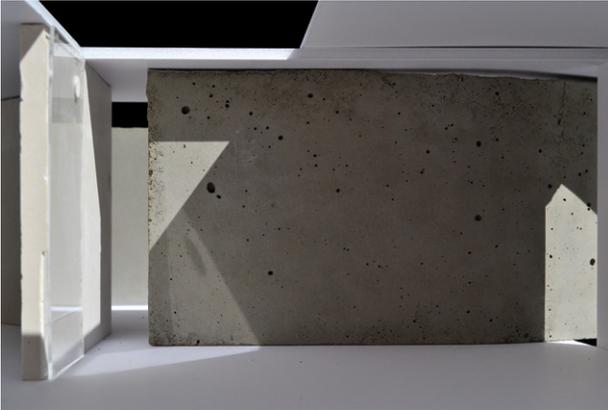


plaster / plastic / concrete / fabric / glass / direct light / reflections





suggestive space 01



suggestive space 02

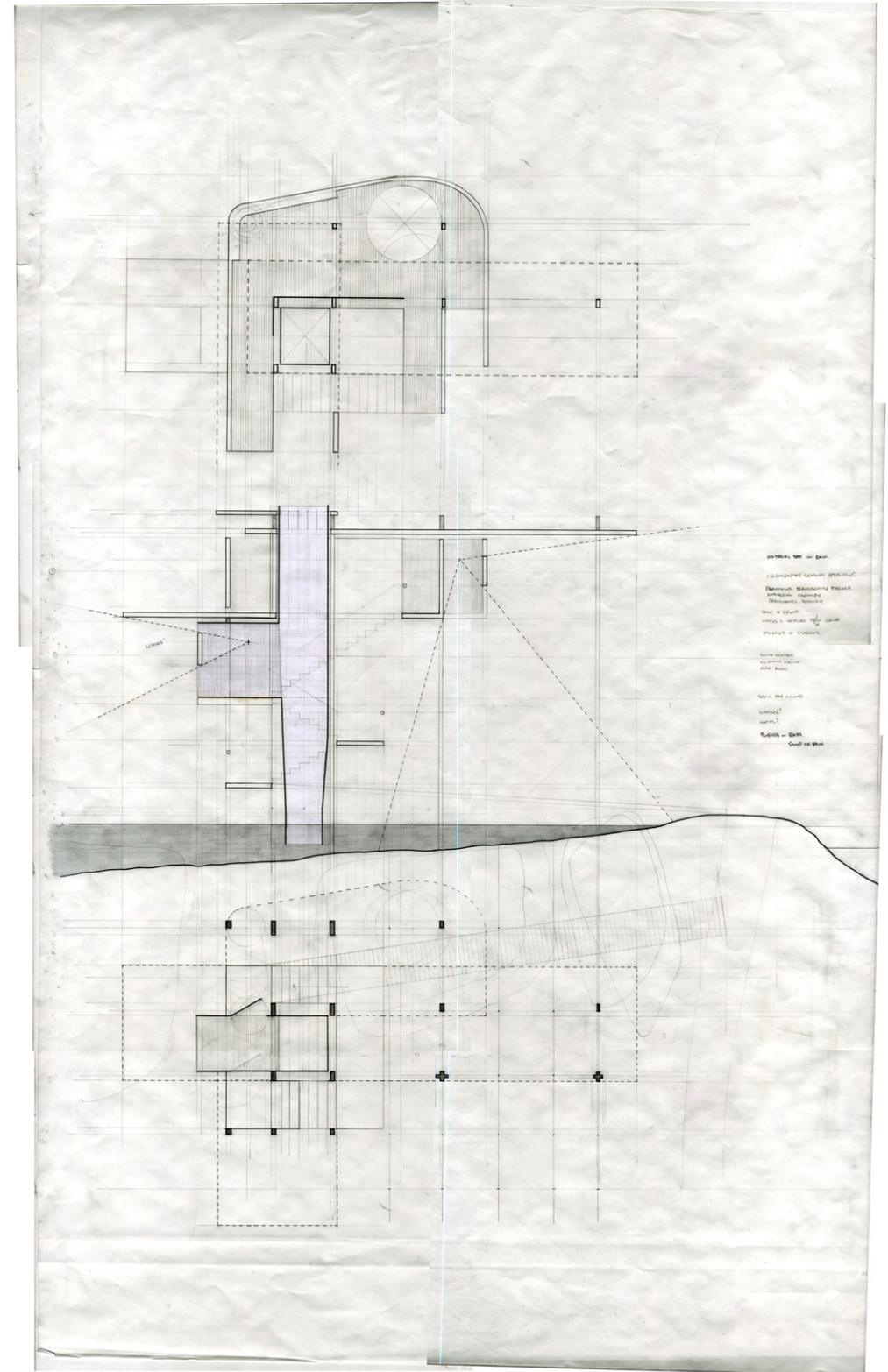


suggestive space 03

Following the development of the material suggestive spaces, a proposal for Paynes Prairie is considered. The observation place utilizes a vertical orientation to remove the occupant from the ground, wrapping around an acoustic chamber that heightens the experience of a Florida rainstorm. The proposal restricts views and allows an occupant a visual connection with only the ground or sky, allowing a physical removal while maintaining a visual connection between the body and the ground.

This study provoked an investigation into the qualities of sound on the prairie and leads into developing a sound narrative through the series of previously suggested spaces, asking: *what does this space sound like?*

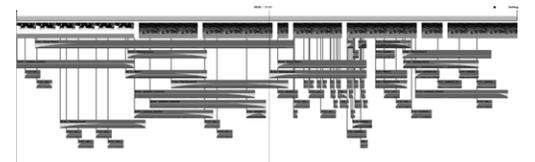
/intervention
/questions of sound
/rain
/weather
/reaction



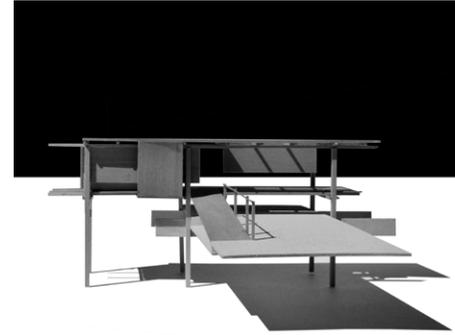
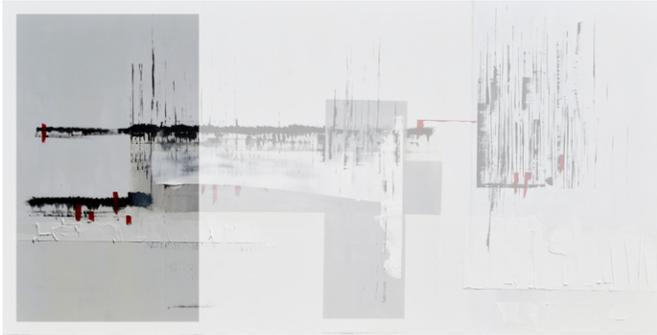


(above)
sound diagram of composed sounds from the prairie.

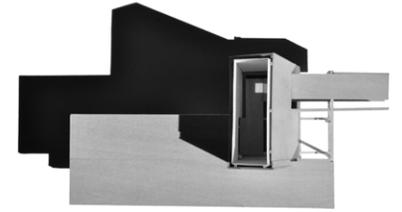
(right)
layers of sounds, composing the sound narrative from the
prairie as a visual diagram from editing software.



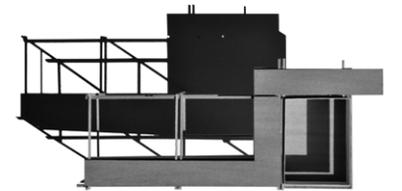
110 /interior
/exterior
/threshold
/transition
/procession

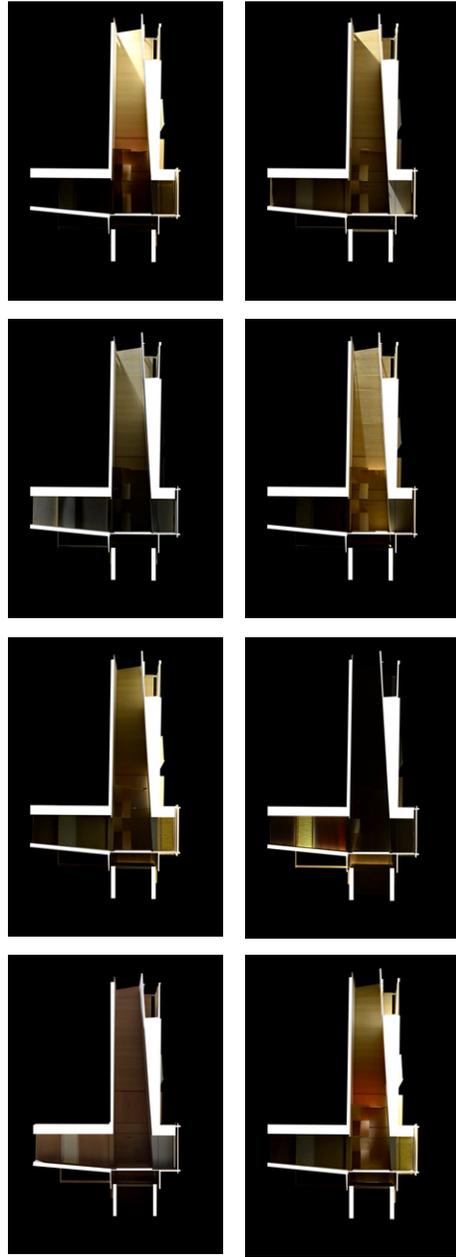


/muffled
/echo
/suggestive tall
/wet
/humid
/rough



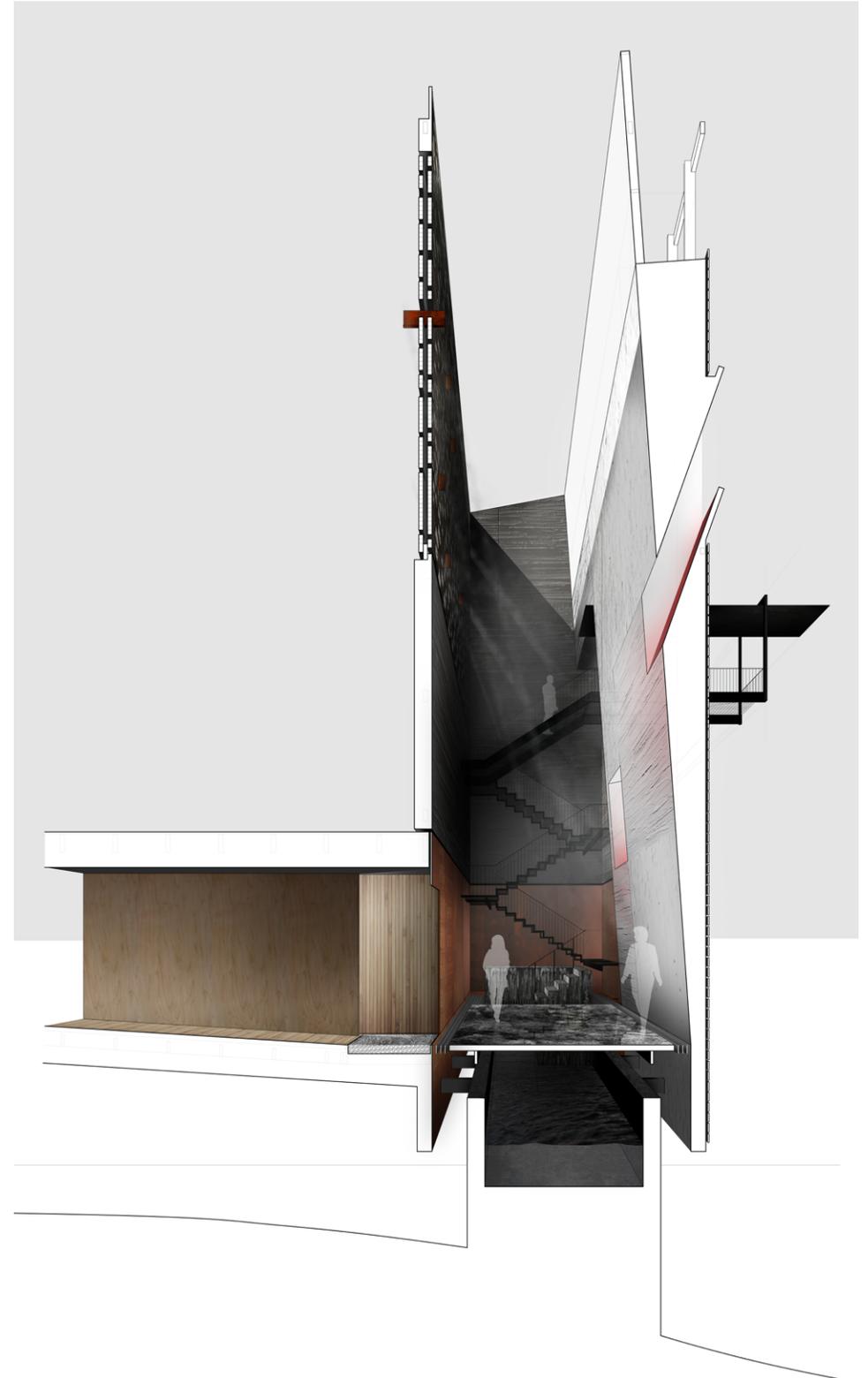
/exposed
/open
/rainfall
/bright
/visual placement

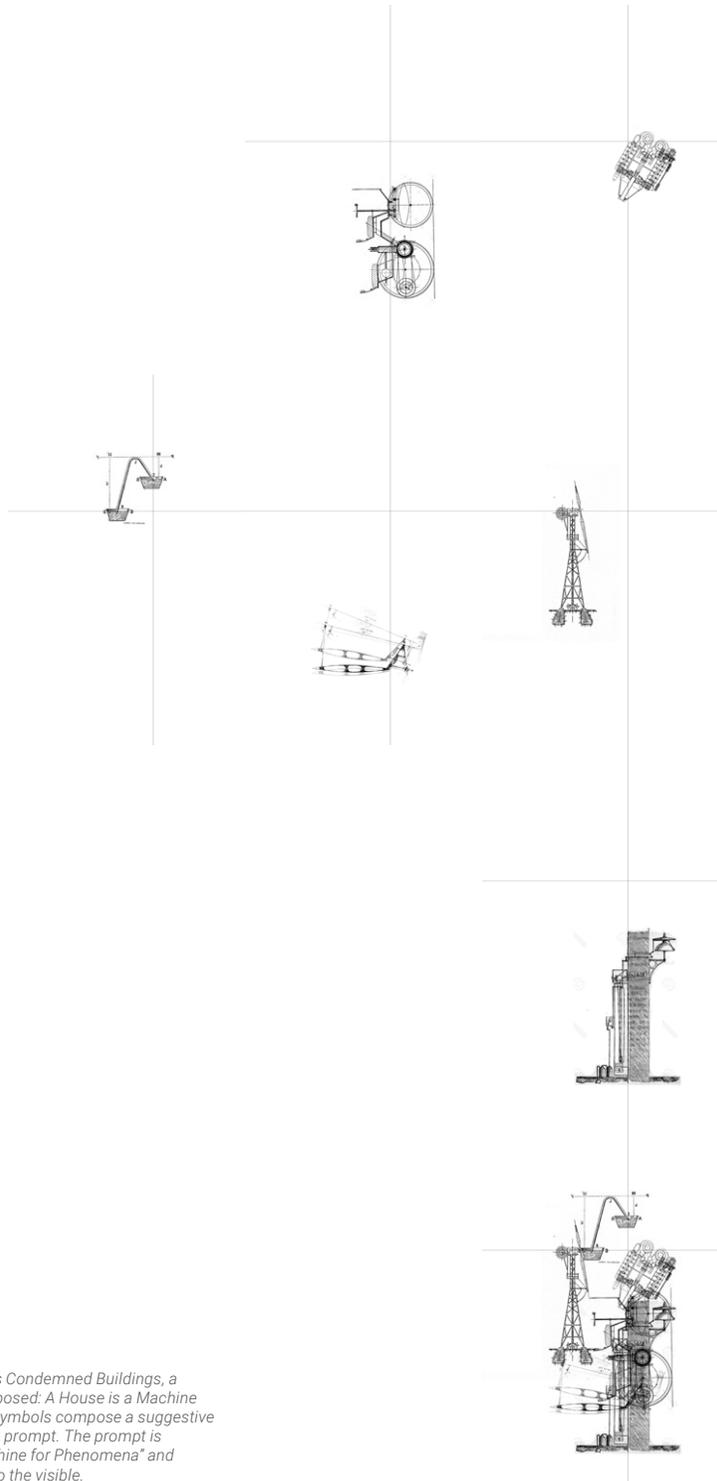




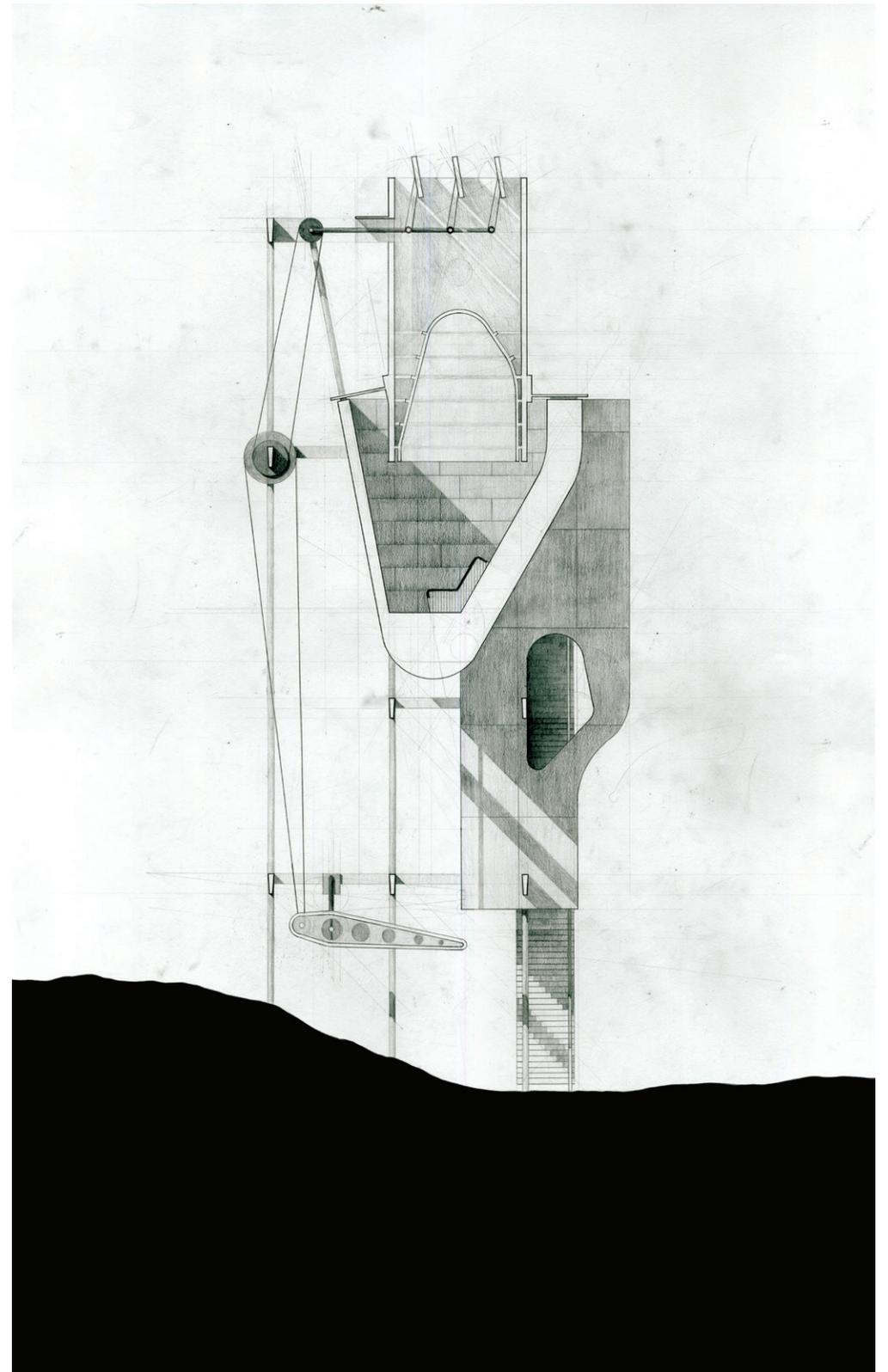
(above)
1/4" physical section model allows testing of light qualities within the *observation place*, a further iteration of a spatial investigation stemming from the sound diagram.

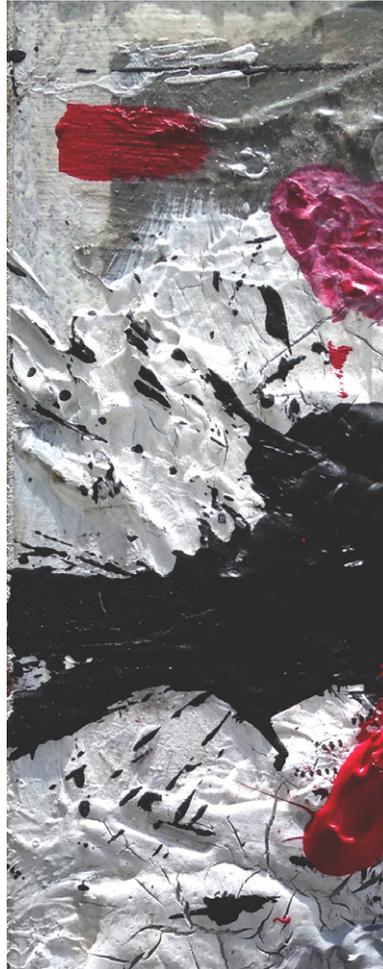
(right)
Detail section perspective that suggests a synthesis of subtle qualities within the *observation place*. An occupant experiences layers of sound, light, materials, and atmosphere that allows a rich connection to the prairie beyond.





Stemming from Douglas Darden's *Condemned Buildings*, a simple architectural canon is proposed: A House is a Machine for Living. A series of allegorical symbols compose a suggestive section in which to respond to the prompt. The prompt is reframed as "The House is a Machine for Phenomena" and seeks to translate the invisible into the visible.





To Bradley Walters for your continuous mentorship through honest and insightful reflections;

to Lisa Huang for your unending encouragement to challenge the conventional;

to Nina Hofer for your lessons in clarity;

to Charlie Hailey for your generous advice and patience;

to Donna Cohen for your lessons in pedagogy;

to Mark McGlothlin for your delightful irreverence and critical thought;

and to Jason Alread for your constant support towards the University of Florida School of Architecture,

Thank you.

I am humbled by your individual thoughts and confident through your collective support.

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