

# Cultural Infrastructure, Public Space, and the Contemporary Library in Toronto

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Thank you to my patient and thoughtful advisors, Erik Carver and Aaron Forrest.

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For my family.



# Can asphalt be a political territory?

(Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*)



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Toronto subway system



Major roads in surrounding area



Ryerson University:  
35,000 students

Yonge & Dundas Square  
(public plaza)

Eaton Centre Shopping Mall:  
52 million annual visitors

Toronto City Hall,  
Nathan Phillips Square

## I. Thesis Statement

Public space is an aggregate of differences, a place of exposure and adjacency to other lived social realities. The potential of public space is the confrontation or mediation of differences through interaction.

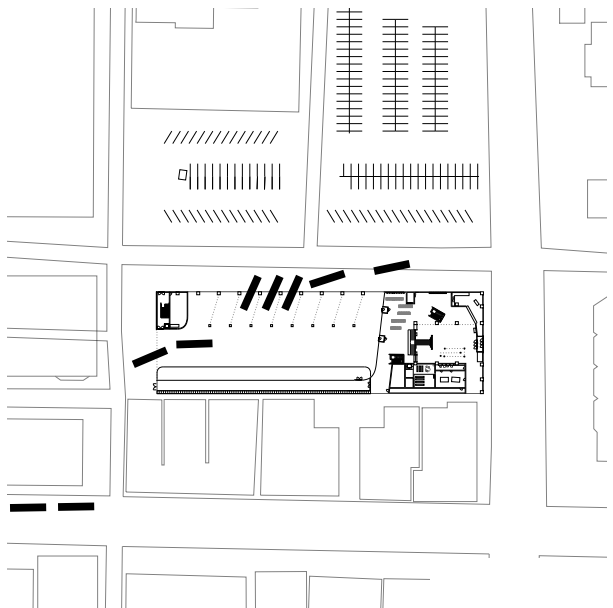
Public spaces are therefore about intersections and visual transparency between publics. Through architecture, we can create the conditions for contact with difference: with openness, transparency, density of program, and merging and splitting trajectories, we can work toward greater engagement in society.

As civic institutions, the bus station, an affordable method of transportation and movement, and the library, a crucial component of cultural infrastructure, can collide to create a space that sites this social exchange – centered around dialogue.

Busses are an inexpensive method of transportation, and are thus used by publics with little access to other means of more 'hermetic' travel. Similarly, libraries have evolved beyond an 'archive' model to a new type of node in an information network, a place where the dissolving components of knowledge and media are centrally accessible.



Above: the Greater Toronto Area as the site of this research. Right: the current architecture of the aging Toronto Coach Terminal. Right, a sketch model of Melnikov's 1926 Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage, the beginning of research into the passage and storage of busses and transportation.





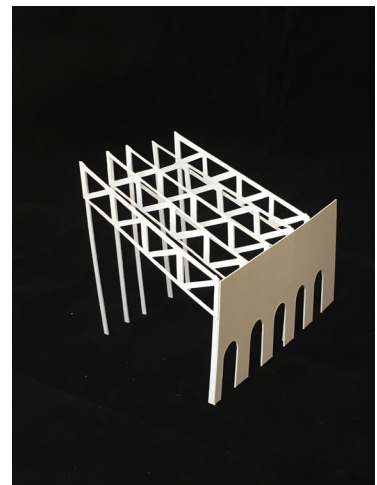
## II. Essay

### Cultural Infrastructure, Public Space, and the Contemporary Library

The library is an enduring institution. The *public* library as the typology we know today was born out of Enlightenment cafe culture; later, its growth was facilitated by the industrial revolution. The former resulted in a newfound faith in the intellectual potential of all male citizens, while the latter created the culture of production and consumption of information and media, which called upon new public capacities for literacy.

Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish railway tycoon, almost singlehandedly founded the public library-as- civic institution, the model that we recognize today in North American contexts. In his lifetime, Carnegie funded the construction of over 3000 public libraries in the US, Canada, Britain, and elsewhere – the most numerous public building project in North America<sup>1</sup>. In Canada, public libraries, like public education and healthcare, are jointly-funded partially at the metropolitan, provincial and federal levels, with provincial governments often providing the majority of funding. In Toronto, Canada's most populous city with 6.5 million inhabitants, over 100 public libraries exist. According to its website, the Toronto Public Library system is used by over 70% of the city's population.<sup>2</sup> In Montréal, Canada's second largest with a current population of approximately 4 million, there are 47 public library facilities.

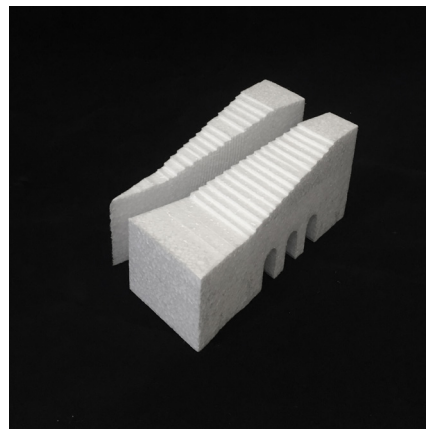
Yet outside of Montréal, illiteracy rates in the rural and smaller-urban areas of province are





Early work in this thesis compared the library and bus station as civic institutions central to public space in cities, both as intentional cultural spaces and as accidental ones.

Above: The Jose Vasconcelos library in Mexico City, by Alberto Kalach and TAX Arquitectos, 2006. This library typology, like some bus station typologies, favours a linear and efficient passage. Right: a foam model exploring similar formal principles.



surprisingly high (53%).<sup>3</sup> The provincial government invests a great deal of funding in culture and literacy in Quebec in an effort to stay economically independent and competitive through preserving the ‘uniqueness’ and autonomy of Quebecois culture (e.g. Quebecois ‘heritage’<sup>4</sup>). This results in large investments in literacy programming and library infrastructures, such as a \$1.2 billion recently invested in “cultural facility projects” (half funded by the federal Canadian government).<sup>5</sup>

This funding of culture, socio-politically strategic, indicates not only an altruistic fostering of social growth and belief in empowerment through education in the model of Carnegie’s philanthropic / humanistic project, but of the particular political ambitions of Quebecois political leadership and its economic desired distinction from Anglophone Canada.<sup>6</sup> Culture, in the form of the arts and production of knowledge and information, is a project of building identity. Quebec is useful as an example of arts and culture funding, or “cultural infrastructure,” as project that is inherently always economic and civic, and moreover as a touchstone for an understanding how publics are constituted by particular institutions.

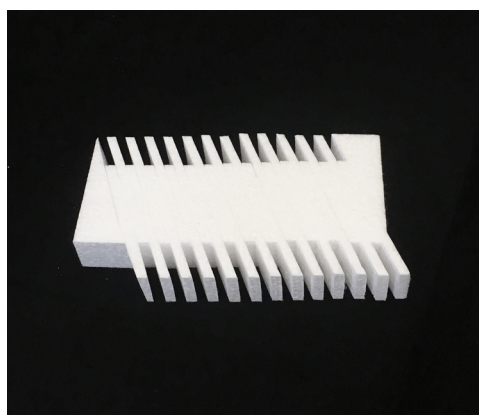
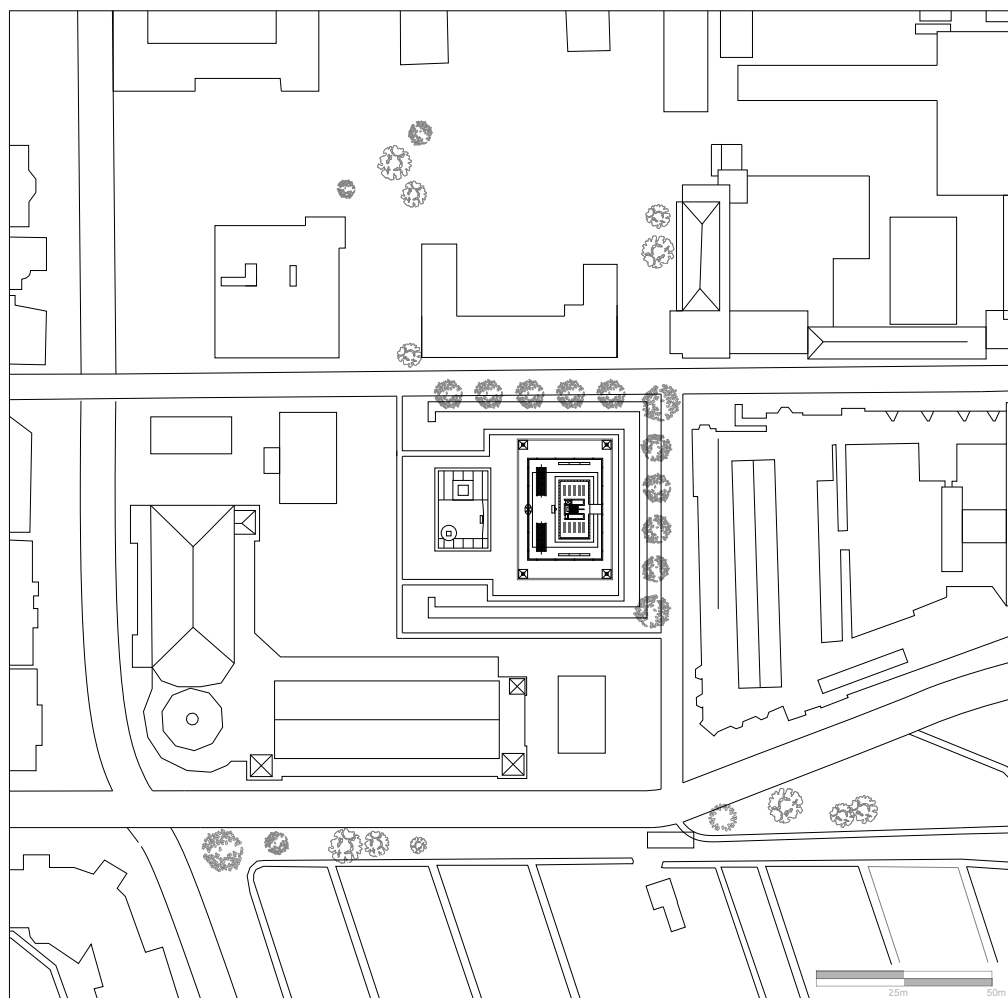
“Cultural infrastructure” is a phrase used to describe the institutionalized funding for arts and education, much like the funding for ‘hard’ infrastructure projects in urban space. Identifying arts and education funding with this phrase operates as a way for states and governing bodies to extend their material infrastructures into ephemeral cultural ones, towards the formation of urban, regional, or even more broad constructions of common(s), publics and identities.

Architects work within and between institu-

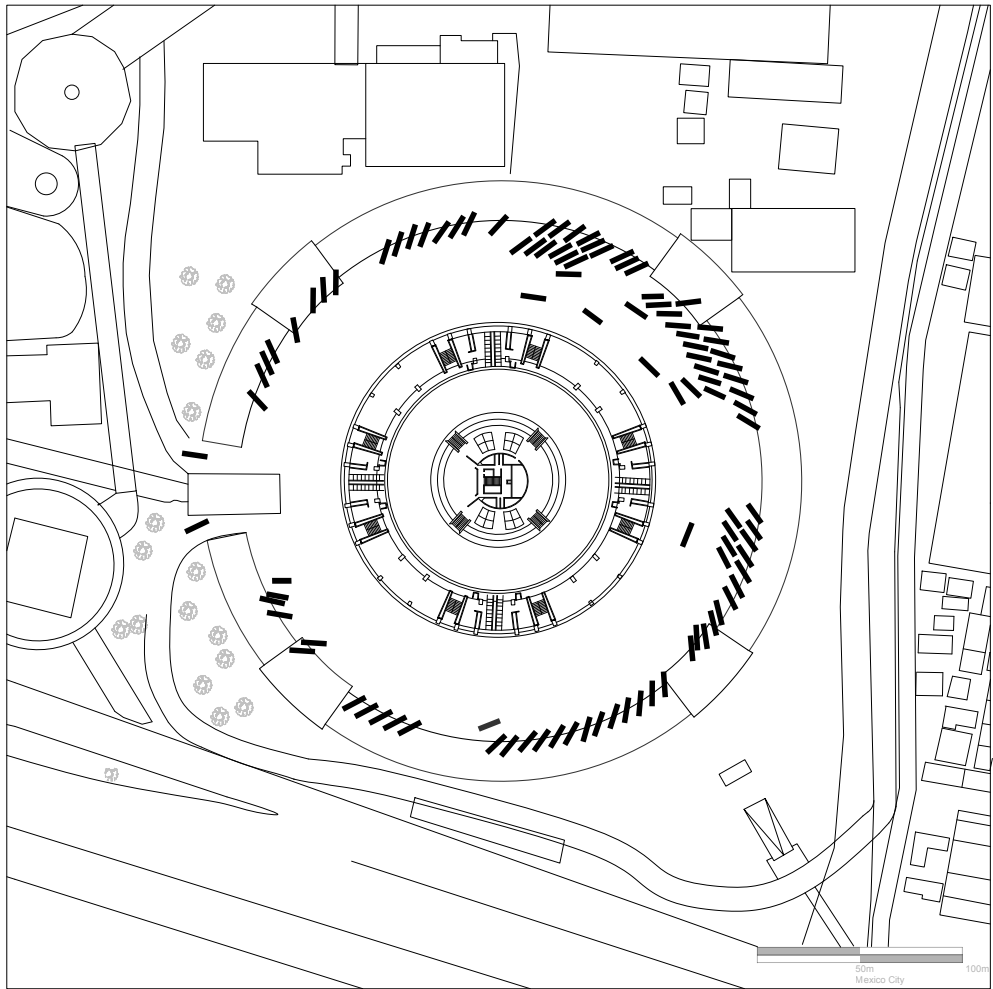
tions in the production of both culture (knowledge, ideas) and the production material manifestations of institutions and actors. Cultural infrastructure is seen as a public service mediating the state or capital and the ‘recipients’ of the opportunity for empowerment through culture, the political subject / citizen. In a 2010 conversation between Sarah Whiting and the Los Angeles-based architect Michael Maltzan, cultural infrastructure is framed as a means by which publics are created, both by governmental bodies and by smaller, informal publics. As Whiting explains,

You could possibly say there are cultural infrastructures and institutional infrastructures. [...] If the larger-scale cultural and institutional amenities are linked in some way, whether it is formal, economic, or through the politics of city boards, it could almost be even more powerful than a network of freeways.<sup>7</sup>

The ‘network’ of cultural infrastructure can be understood as a connector in cities, towards the construction of a public sphere “that isn’t purely seated within government,”<sup>8</sup> and is instead composed of private groups and institutions. As Maltzan points out, an understanding of cultural infrastructure as a civic network that exists both because of and beyond official administrative support “more accurately reflects the capitalist city,”<sup>9</sup> insofar as there exists space within such a network for the multiplicity of competing groups and interests which compose the public realm. Maltzan and Whiting go on to discuss the relationship between culture, mobility, (social and literal) finance, and class. Their conversation underscores the idea that public culture, particularly in major North American cities is driven by economic concerns as much



Above: Yale's 1963 Beinecke Library suggests void and circulation space around a dense core of books.



Above: plan drawing of Mexico City's Pasajeros de Oriente bus station, a rotational typology. This form echoes a typology of continuous parking and movement of vehicles. The model on the right references Pasajeros and also Michael Maltzan Architect's New Carver Apartments in LA whose form is derived in part by adjacency to the freeway.



as by ethical or humanistic ones.

Nonetheless, the potential of public culture – used here to refer to publically funded, free, or accessible institutions like schools, arts, and libraries – remains the possibility of empowerment and discourse among all members of society. As Whiting states, “If you understand the collective public subject as participating in a kind of conversation, the question would be: how does that work, and where in a contemporary city does that occur? [...] is it something that has to be created spatially?”<sup>10</sup> After all, cultural infrastructure as a state-led project is one of building architectures and frameworks for the “common” to occur. Cultural infrastructure and public culture is thus a question of public space. This is not because all cultural infrastructure is public, but because the conceit is towards the betterment of society as a ‘whole’ and therefore as a ‘public’ good.

Not coincidentally, spaces that could be categorized as cultural infrastructures also act as de facto public spaces in cities. The idealized potential for the role of culture in society runs alongside outdated imaginings of what the public arena is, exactly. Public *space* in cities relates directly to what definition of public society is being proposed -- it is an historically fungible and changeable thing. In Jurgen Habermas’ canonical definition of a ‘public sphere,’ members of society come together in a marketplace of ideas, particularly concerning social issues. Habermas’ relatively ascetic notion of social conversation as a model for democratic participation has long been denounced by those who point out its structural exclusion and naivete to power relations. Nancy Fraser’s critique is similar here. She writes: “the problem is not only that Habermas idealizes the liberal public sphere but also that he

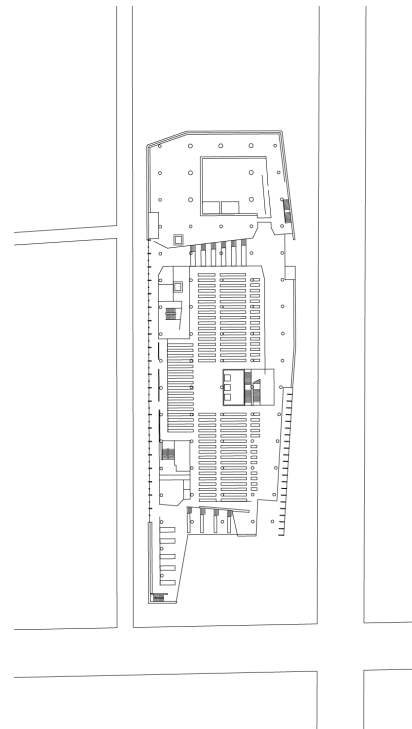
fails to examine other, non-liberal, non-bourgeois, competing public spheres.”<sup>11</sup> Habermas’ sphere, developed from a particular French-European ‘bourgeois masculinist’ historical experience, excludes not only other social actors (i.e. French women<sup>12</sup>) but other models of ‘public’ and even other models of democracy as well.

Fraser extends her critique of Habermas’ supposedly cohesive public to the common left-wing separation between democratic discourse and economic-state power. She explains:

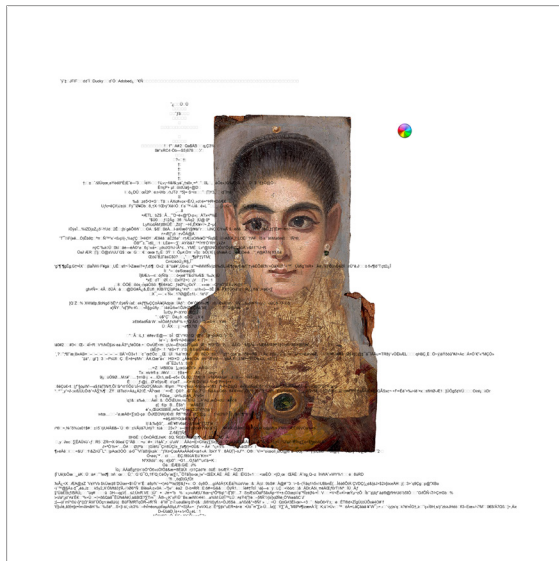
the conflation of the state apparatus with the public sphere of discourse [...] provided ballast to processes whereby the socialist vision became institutionalized in an authoritarian statist form instead of in a participatory democratic form. The result has been to jeopardize the very idea of a socialist democracy.<sup>13</sup>

Fraser’s comment can thus be turned into a demand for the state, to provide the framework for truly democratic conversations. That said, by Maltzan and Whiting’s definition, cultural infrastructure is as much the unofficial, unfunded places of the production of culture and discourse as well. It exists both within and beyond the traditional sphere of politics that includes the state.

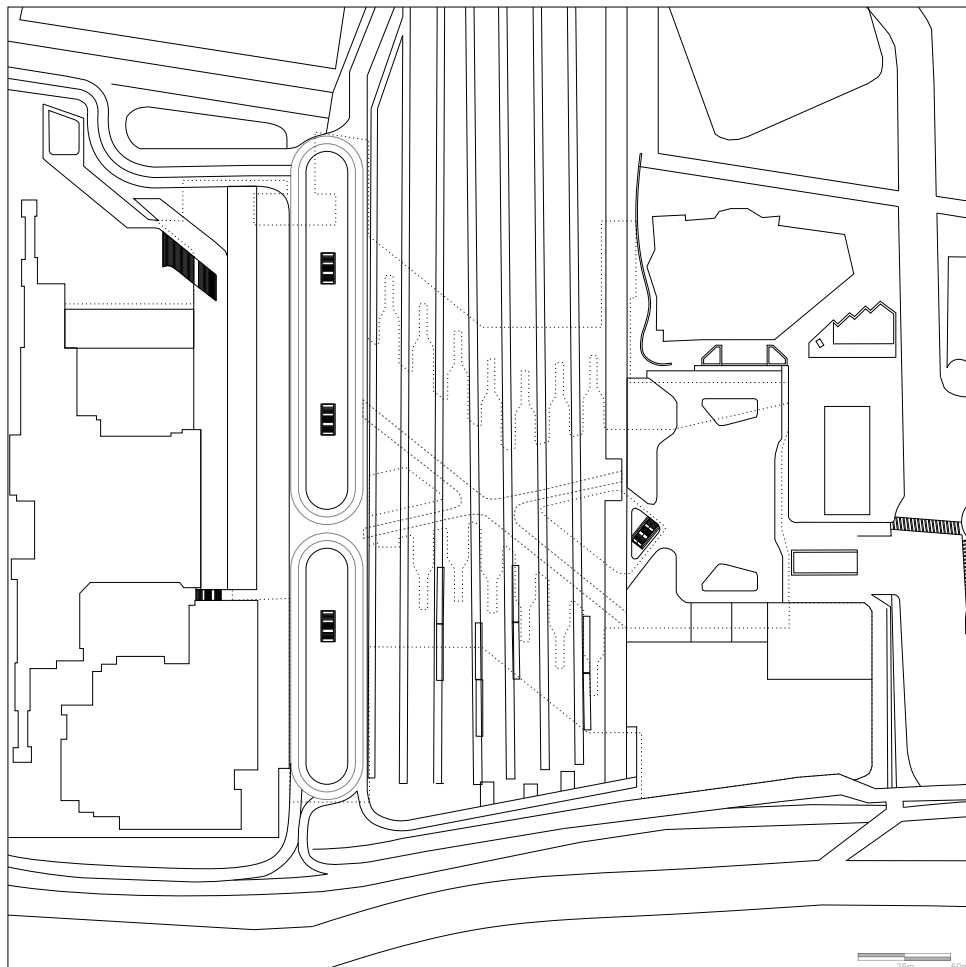
Instead of a hermetic and cohesive sphere, Fraser insists on the existence of counterpublics and competing publics, “aggregates of difference.” In his thorough essay on the historic definitions of ‘public’ and ‘commons’ (2013), Reinhold Martin points out that Hannah Arendt, writing in the early part of the 20th century, already questioned the construction of such publics to begin with, arguing instead that the distinct groups in society who compose the ‘public’ are only constituted by appearance

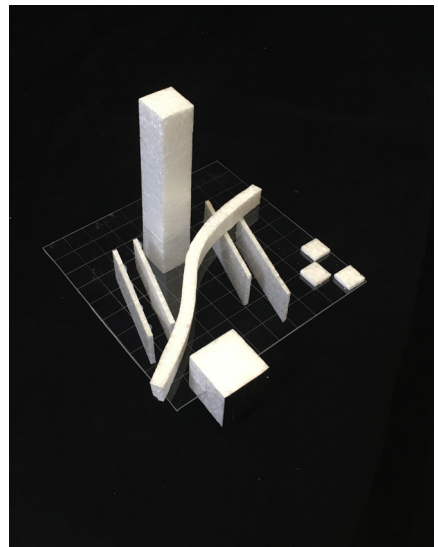
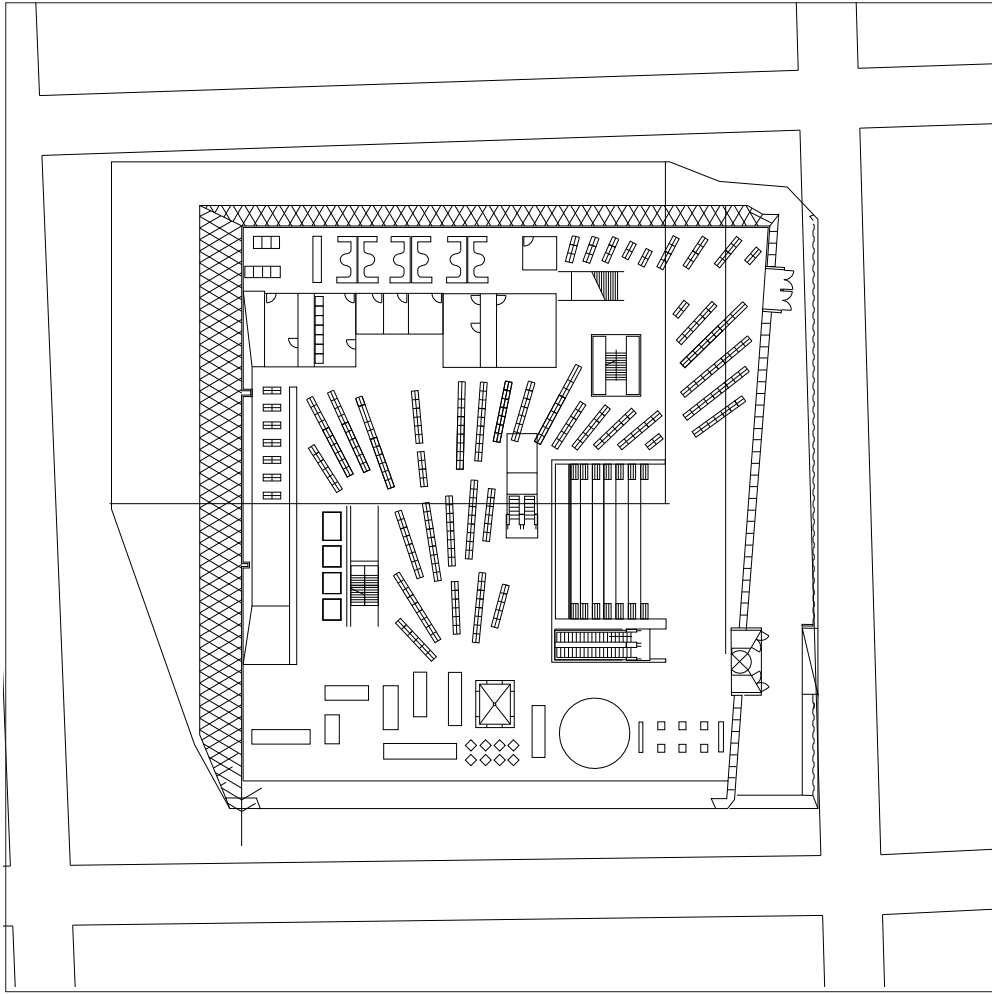






Clockwise from left: throughout the fall semester, four square collages were produced to express thinking about languages, codes, images, and compositions. In this collage, the linear script of HTML (of the painted image underneath it) echoes the linearity given to the stacking of trains and busses in a proposed transportation centre upgrade in LA (below) and stack organization (left) in Montreal's Bibliotheque Nationale.



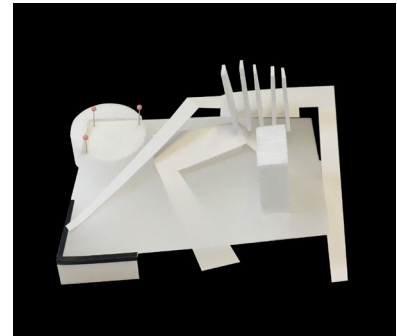


Above: OMA's Seattle Public Library, with its suggested continuation of the street and field of different objects inspired sketch models (right) that explored the adjacency of objects and pathways.

and “in the presence of others.”<sup>14</sup> The publics that make up this the common sphere are in in this way themselves shifting assemblages, never static. The public sphere is a composition of intermingling groups and actors, who have varying amounts of representation and power.

Such representations and performances of public exists partially in the form of cultural output and expression. There are other forces at play including economic ones. In this regard, Martin cites Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s writings on the connection between the terms “public” and “private,” which they cynically suggest are “two different means to the same end: the reproduction of capital.”<sup>15</sup> For Hardt and Negri, ‘the common’ is in part identified by “the products of social interaction, such as codes, languages, affects, information and other forms of knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> They argue for the use (or readaptation) of networks governing our cities towards both “revolutionary instruments and genuinely democratic institutions,”<sup>17</sup> which enables us to here argue that despite the hegemonic mission of cultural infrastructures, the central point of which is to reassert the domination of capital, in their reading, such and institutions can be both the state-funded library and perhaps become a place for critique and conversation.

This argument suggests that the formations of power and interest in actually-existing public spaces vary hugely, and that the creation of public cultural spaces is not the panacea to social ills, though it can be a site for the dissent and vocalization. Public space can be the contesting ground for, by Arendt’s definition, the shifting representation and expression of discrete groups. The place that holds and produces media, knowledge, and culture (here meaning the arts, broadly) is therefore intimately

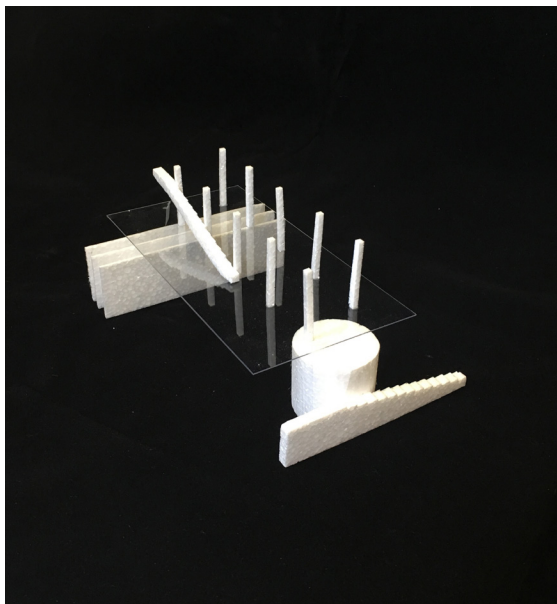


linked to conceptualizing what ‘public space’ is and can be.

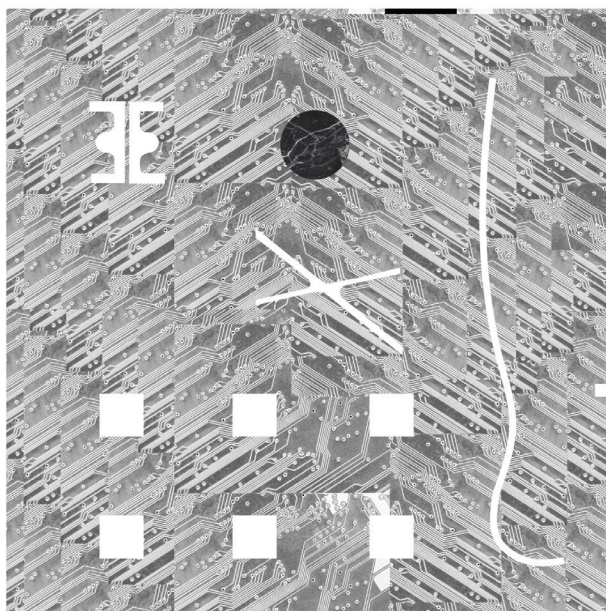
German architectural theorist Markus Miessen proposes a ‘critical spatial practice’ that “promotes and proposes a more agonistic form of [spatial] practice, one that values and nurtures the coexistence of different approaches and beliefs in common space,” or the simultaneity of a multiplicity of voices and publics.<sup>18</sup> Citing Chantal Mouffe, director of the Centre of the Study for Democracy at the University of Westminster, Miessen writes: “we should agree that we disagree, and learn to productively live and deal with this situation.”<sup>19</sup> The public space of conversation and exchange, then, is the place for mediation or confrontation.

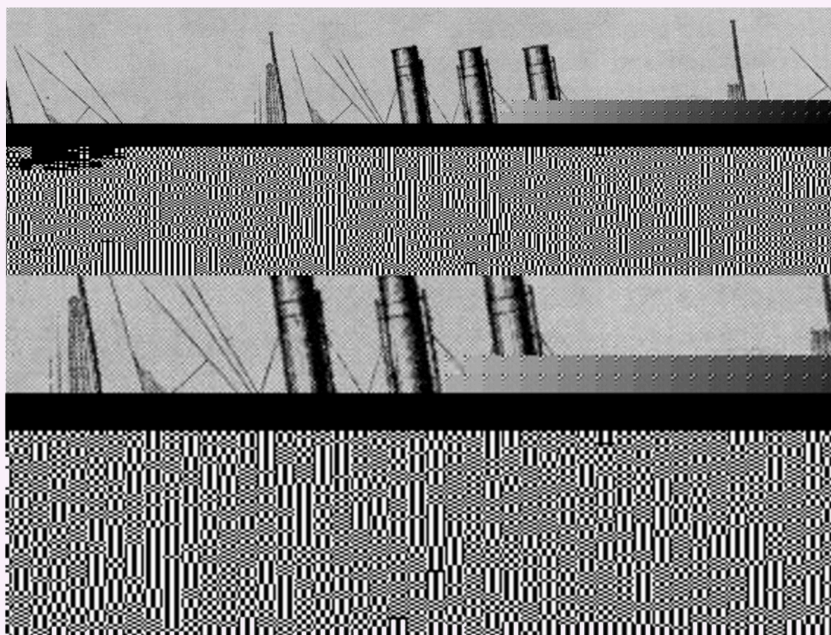
### Returning to the Library

Today, as in the recent past, the library is predominantly the curated repository of knowledge and so a constructed reflection of society. As Martin states of Étienne-Louis Boullée 1785 proposal for the *Bibliothèque du Roi*, the library can be understood as a “nonfictitious unit of rereadable information that, in this case, combines medium and message” in its monumentality and emphasis on the privileged but expansive “vaulted room for bourgeois readers.”<sup>20</sup> Retaining this symbolic function suitable to the social model of who the public ‘is’, the content of the contemporary library is now ‘global’ and composed of small multiplicities. The library represents one node in a network of “integrated, mutually reinforcing, evolving *infrastructures*,” home not only to archives and databases but technical, bureaucratic, and social resources.<sup>21</sup> The changing social role of the library is the result of the changes to its content, and the broader historical shifts into which it features. In their 1996 proposal for the

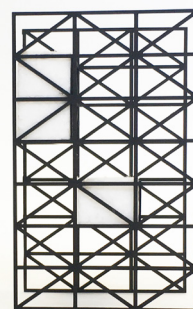


Left: more 'collaged' sketch models. Below: a second collage, composed of images of circuit boards reminiscent of city infrastructure networks and punctuated with objects.





A deconstructed image (above) paired with a deconstructed architecture (left): foam blocks hold two (paper) braced frames together. The beginning of solid / void relationships, relevant to two programs that deal with storage of busses and books, but simultaneously of void, with the departure of those same items.





Kansai Kan library competition, for instance, the architects at OMA wrote “electronics effortlessly deliver the knowledge preciously “stored” in libraries to a public anywhere; they inevitably dissolve the apparent need for this knowledge to be embodied in a single physical space, in architecture, in “a” library.”<sup>22</sup>

From Boullée’s materialization of state hegemony, paired with a type of content and knowledge that was to be accessed by the few for the few, architectural examples well before the digital revolution of our era display the potential for the media of the library to support new, progressive, or radical understandings of ‘public.’ Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano’s Centre Pompidou, part gallery, part archive, part new media centre and part library, integrated the fast and abundant medias of the 1968 student protests in Paris towards the design of a space that reflected a desire for autonomous and simultaneous social expression:

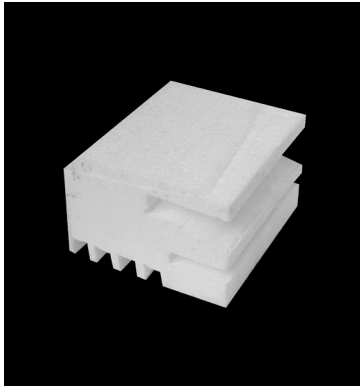
The news and mass media of communication that had been a central preoccupation of the Independent Group, and whose significance had been explored in the architecture of figures such as Banham, Price, and Cook, also found expression in the ‘media wall’ originally proposed for [the Centre Pompidou’s] main facade. “The building was conceived as a tool,” said Rogers and Piano in 1977, “whose exterior should have been the contact surface ... a surface of screens - TV screens, movie screens, written messages, newsreels.” The architects were eventually forced to abandon this feature of their design for political reasons. As they put it, “A center for free information that the students could have occupied and put to highly effective use was something very threatening.”<sup>23</sup>

As noted by OMA, the massive paradigm shift that the internet brought has dramatically changed the architecture of public cultural spaces. Public space is at once thriving in the digital commons of chat rooms, group texts, and social network platforms. Yet the miniaturization of publics that digital communities result in also exacerbates the separation of experiences of reality. Not only because information is customized and marketed to us separately but for the scale and physical shift in the location of that content: information is everywhere, and always elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> OMA later stated, about Kansai Kan, that in order “to remain relevant, architecture has to resolve this dilemma: to disappear into Cyberspace or to define what is public in a new way.” Libraries and public cultural institutions can thus be the site of new and shifting publics and political subjectivities, and above all the space for discourse.

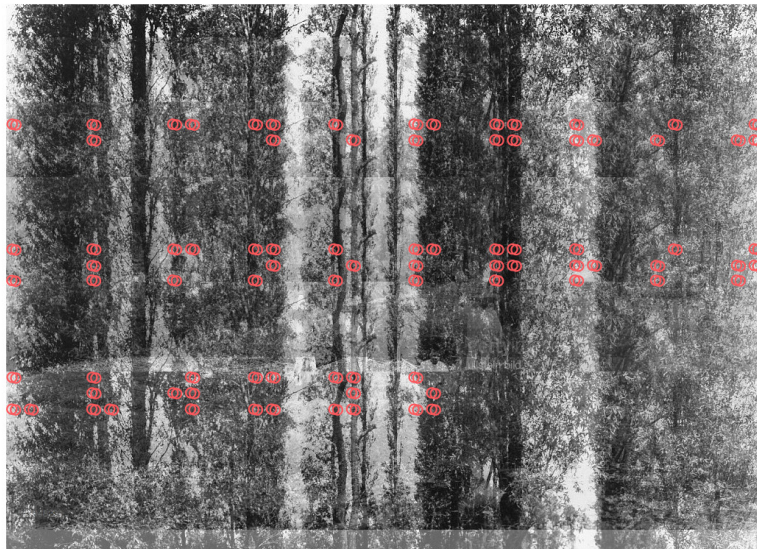
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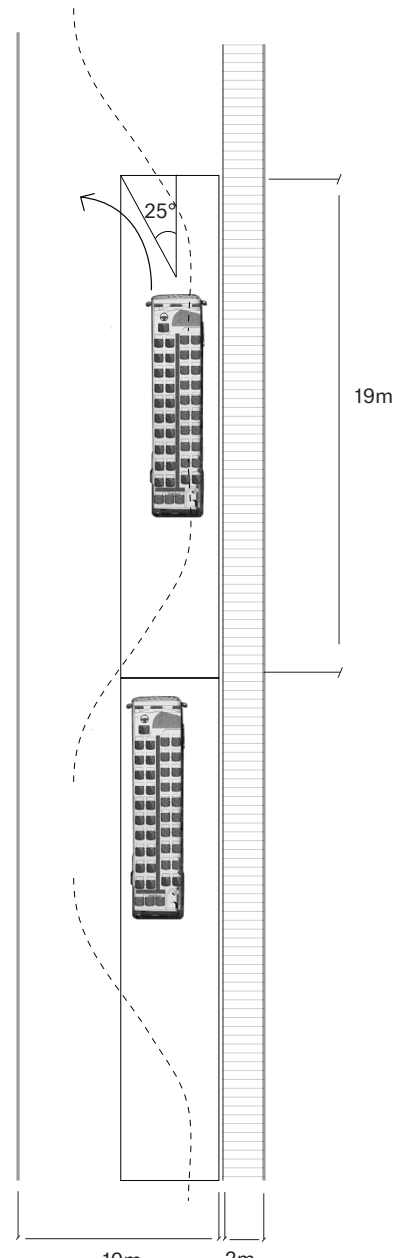
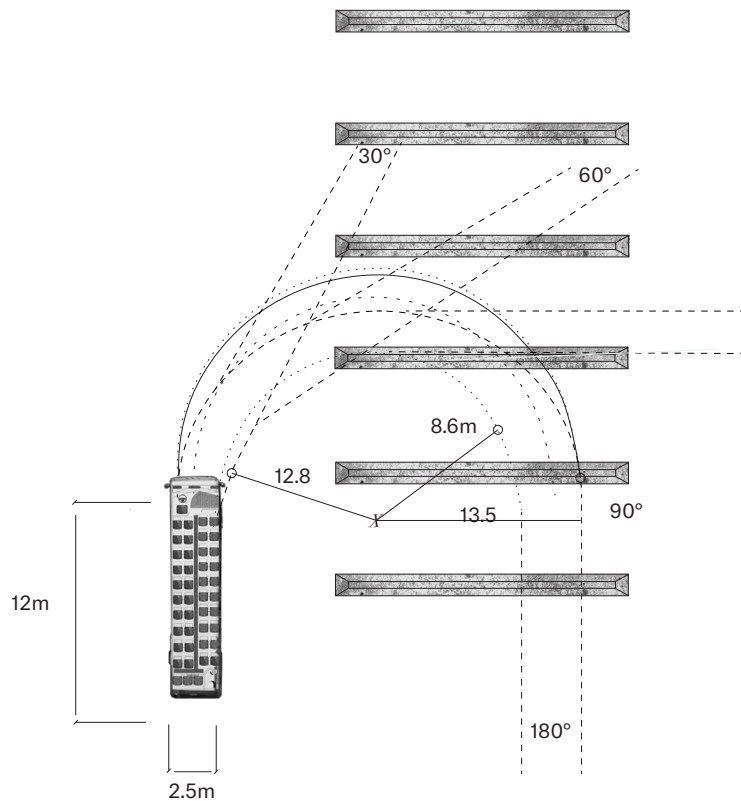
Markus Miessen, a German architectural theorist, proposes an agonistic space of public discourse centred on his understanding of ‘criticality.’ Describing his belief in interdisciplinary, he seeks to get past “forms of opposition,” to arrive at “alternative regimes of entry.” How does one manage to gain access to fields of knowledge and practices that one is usually not invited to take part in?”<sup>25</sup> The question of access returns us to Nancy Fraser’s initial critique of the public sphere. We can here take as a given that access to means of expression and representation is unequal, but argue nevertheless for the necessity of public spaces and cultural spaces that work towards evening out this asymmetry. Access to knowledge is power, and thus so is exclusion. As Paulo Friere states, “Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means





Left: a foam model that wonders if public space is a solid mass from which difference and identity is carved from a sense of 'whole'. Below: Braille alphabet makes the relationship between geometry and spatial organization explicit.





Bus turning radii and single-lane parking. The standardized and rigid dimensions of this aspect of the project's program enabled other design decisions. Single-lane bus loading in this manner (right) works effectively to avoid any unnecessary reversing. It is a way in which busses can simply flow through the site, parking for as long or little as necessary – suiting the multiple types (coaches, schoolbusses, transport vehicles) of buses using the site.

used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects.<sup>26</sup>

Access to fields of knowledge has obviously been transformed by the internet and related IT technologies, but, more pertinent to this essay, it also relates to the most banal physical paths that Whiting and Maltzan discussed earlier. In the same way that the library will always be needed precisely because it is static, unlike the rapidly moving content it now centralizes, the library that connects directly into urban infrastructures – subways, underground passageways, roads, and highways – embodies an attitude towards access.

Much has already been written about the speed of information today. In response to this, some suggest that the role of the library should be to “slow people down and seduce them with the unexpected, the irrelevant, the odd and unexplainable.”<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between state and speed is well established, as notably discussed by Paul Virilio in relation to architecture.<sup>28</sup> The ‘present shock’ induced by rapid and excessive information today has also been well documented.<sup>29</sup> It is with an understanding of these forces that one can argue for the necessity of the public cultural space to provide simultaneously the point of access to the fast pace of information and the slowing down of it. Furthermore, in the same way that some information should be opaque and some ‘publics’ should have private space for the definition of difference, some information should be still.

For the last several centuries cities have been designed our cities for the efficiency of the production and exchange of capital. Thus, particularly in North American cities where our highway systems keep us out of winding streets and bothersome pedestrian

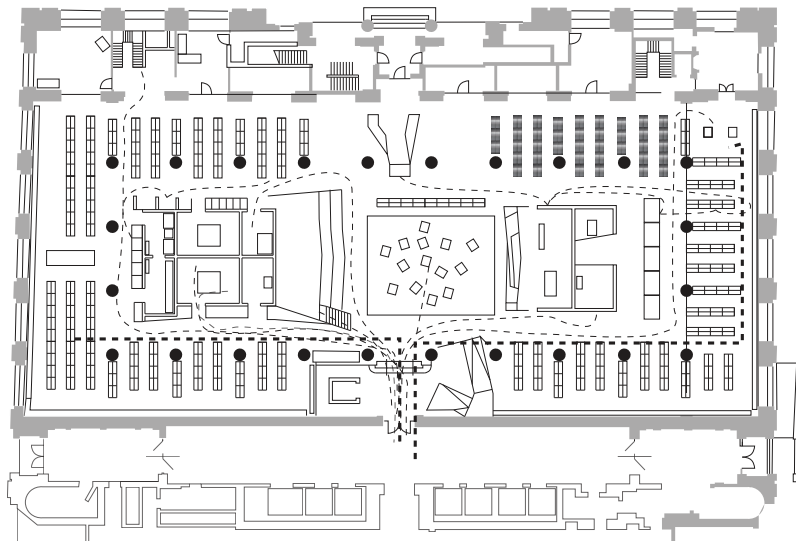
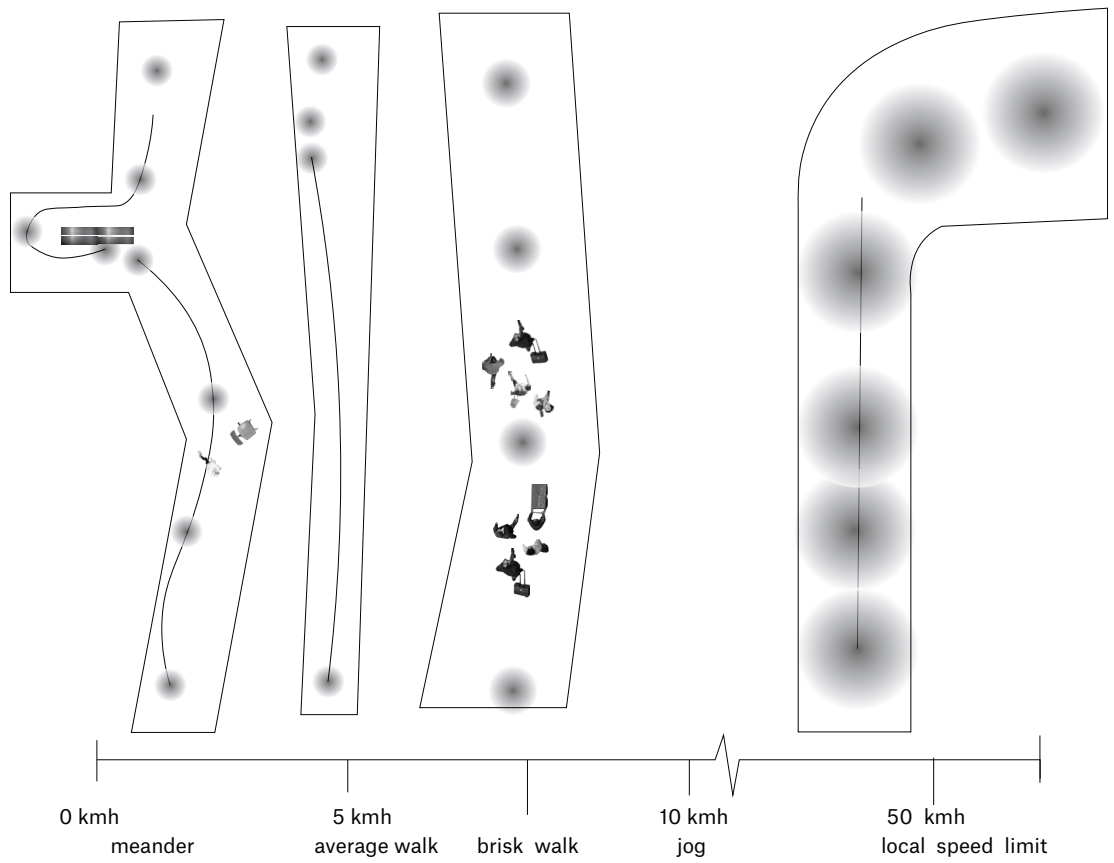
crosswalks as often as possible, literal transportation infrastructure is designed against shared space of individual citizens who compose the 'public.' (Loneliness is a common LA experience: alone, together, even in jammed bands of thousands of cars, there no shared ground) "Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement."<sup>30</sup>, <sup>31</sup> Roads are not defined as public spaces (though they can become them<sup>32</sup>), but frequent attempts at public place making in cities yield vacant planes that are, while not confining, are still alienating.

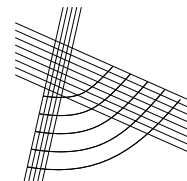
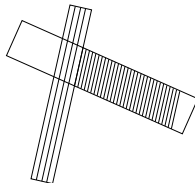
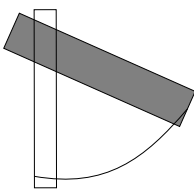
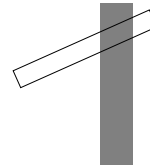
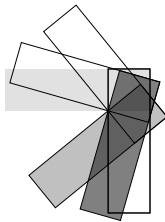
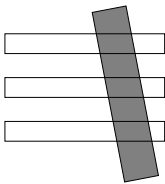
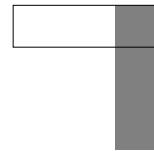
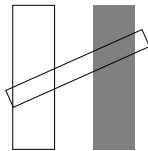
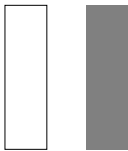
32 But the opposite of the confined path of a road may not be better: the plaza as typology for urban public space exalts emptiness / void. The flat plaza, whether the Publicly Owned Private Space (POPS) shadowed by Miesian towers or the open grassy lawn<sup>33</sup> certainly can successfully invite the occupation of great numbers. It's a delicate question of scale; such open plazas and parks can be just as intimidating as inviting. To foster engagement and entry, the public urban space should, through form, consist of the very difference it should nurture metaphorically:

To generalize, a field condition could be any formal or spatial matrix capable of unifying diverse elements while respecting the identity of each. Field configurations are loosely bound aggregates characterized by porosity and local interconnectivity. Overall shape and extent are less important than the internal relationships of the parts, which determine the behaviour of the field.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, the public urban space as a field condition should exist as part of a simultaneous, larger *urban* field condition, as a moment within that larger

Circulation Speeds and RISD's Fleet Library, as traversed by students.





Diagrams of the formal evolution of the project. The notion of intersectional space as central to the urban experience literally becomes the form of the building, which finally has three axis, multiple points of entry, and three detailed moments of multiple publics. (See pp. \_\_)

Right: the extensive underground passage network that this project ('X') connects to.

network. Using Keller Easterling's identification of the 'disposition' of infrastructures, or the "unfolding relationship between potentials," the possibility for one moment in the field condition – one multiplier, to use her term – to alter other moments in that field. This can offer an optimistic reading for the potential of the architectural intervention. Easterling writes:

A designer who intervenes in the repetitive fields of suburban space with a single house will have little impact. But designing something to be multiplied within a population of houses has the potential to recondition the larger suburban field of hack the suburban software."<sup>35</sup>

While the design of a single architectural object within the city, however connected to trajectories and pathways, represents only an attempt at the former, there is a possibility for the latter potential if such an architecture is explicit in other ways to reconstitute the latter field. This is a particular type of socio-political choreography, wherein local moments in one architecture can extend (especially given the cultural, informational nature of the program of that library) to what Allen later described as other "sequences of events."<sup>36</sup>

It is therefore, possibly, the tactical-spatial gesture that can work towards engendering relationships in the public realm that work towards greater social equanimity and inclusion. The space for knowledge sharing and production is especially the site of such work. To build form towards one particular politics seems impossible, but open or flexible and beautiful space can be adapted by whoever needs it. As Allen concludes, this is an architecture that exists "amidst change, accident, and improvisation. It is an architecture not invested in durability, stability, and certainty,

but an architecture that leaves space for the certainty of the real.”<sup>37</sup>

During a spring 2017 lecture at RISD, Jeannette Kuo of the office Karamuk Kuo, described the potential for effective public space through architectural form as simply depending on *interesting* design, using the curving undersides of SANAA’s EFPL Zurich building as an example. While the undulating floor of the EFPL makes for a strange ceiling at ground level, it is unique and interesting enough to become a popular place for skateboarders and teenagers to simply hang out.

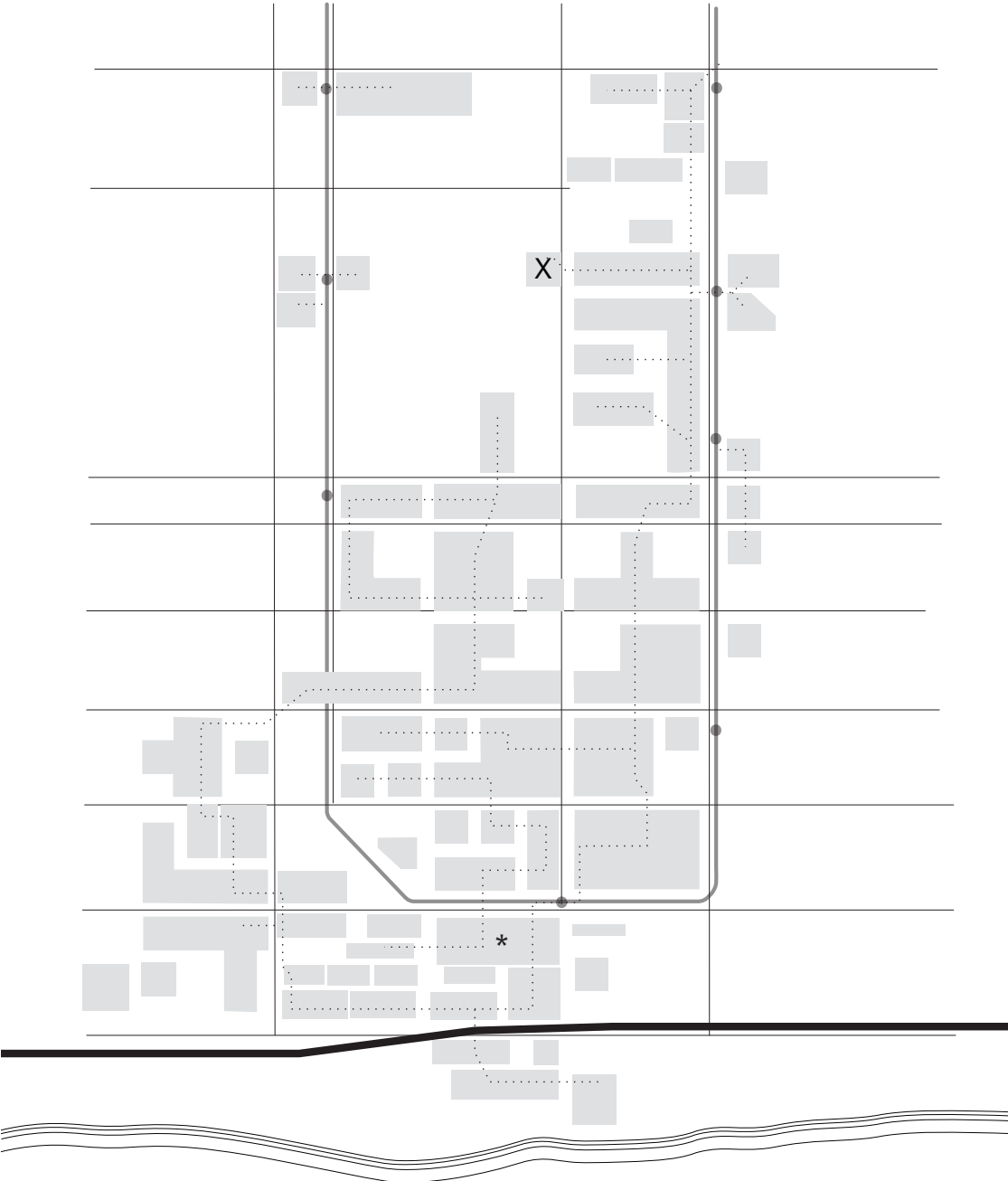
The project of building cultural infrastructures as armatures towards greater social cohesion, critical spatial practice, and inclusion will happen at scales other than the architectural alone. Michael Maltzan speaks of the ‘web of relationships’ that architecture and the city can both be a part of, a project of creating concurrent ‘architectures’ that cradle and foster social engagement.<sup>38</sup> The possibility is towards space for spontaneity, for politics as celebration and festivity,<sup>39</sup> and for the simultaneous flourishing of the everyday life of multiple publics.

## Endnotes

1. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to all: Carnegie libraries & American culture, 1890 – 1920*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), xix.



PATH Network: Downtown Underground Pedestrian Walkway



Below Grade PATH Space.  
Total Floor Area of the network: 371,600 m<sup>2</sup>; (4 million sq. ft)

Gardiner Expressway

\* Union Station / GO Transit: Inter-city trains and light rail to suburbs

2. Toronto Public Library homepage, accessed online at <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/media/key-facts/>
3. Celine Cooper, "The High Cost of Functional illiteracy in Quebec," *Montreal Gazette*, October 9 2016. <http://Montréalgazette.com/opinion/columnists/celine-cooper-the-high-cost-of-functional-illiteracy-in-quebec>
4. Spaces where the uniqueness and history of Quebec is preserved in the form of 'national' archives and French-language databases.
5. Caroline Plante, "Quebec announces \$20 million for literacy," *Montreal Gazette* December 2 2016. <http://Montréalgazette.com/news/quebec/quebec-announces-20-million-for-literacy>
6. A 2010 article titled "The "Neoliberal Turn" in Provincial Cultural Policy and Administration in Québec" (*Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol 35 No. 2, 2010) explores this further.
7. Michael Maltzan, *No More Play: Conversations on Urban Speculation in Los Angeles and Beyond* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California School of Architecture, 2011), 63.
8. Maltzan, *No More Play*, 64.
9. Maltzan, *No More Play*, 64.
10. Maltzan, *No More Play*, 82.
11. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, No. 25 / 26 (1990) 56 - 80.
12. Chris Kraus states: "To be female in 19th century France was to be denied access to the apersonal." *I Love Dick* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2006), 197.
13. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 56.
14. Reinhold Martin, "Public and Common(s)." *Places Journal*, January 2013. Accessed online at <https://placesjournal.org/article/public-and-commons/> 2013
15. Martin, "Public and Common(s)."
16. Martin, "Public and Common(s)."
17. Martin, "Public and Common(s)."
18. Markus Miessen, *Crossbenching: Toward Participation as Critical Spatial Practice*. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2016), 48.
19. Miessen, *Crossbenching*, 24.
20. Martin, "Public and Common(s)."
21. Shannon Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure," *Places Journal*, June 2013. Accessed online at <https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure/>
22. Office for Metropolitan Architecture, project site. Accessed online at <http://oma.eu/projects/kansai-kan>
23. Douglas Spencer, *The architecture of neoliberalism: how contemporary architecture became an instrument of control and compliance*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 112.
24. Douglas Rushkoff proposes a theory of 'presentism,' aka 'present shock' to explain the paralysis and social alienation that results from the immensity of information and communication platforms we encounter every day. *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now*. (New York: Current / Penguin Group, 2013)
25. Rients Dijkstra, *The architecture of knowledge - the library of the future* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitg., 2010) 112.
26. Dijkstra, 66.
27. Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure."
28. Virilio discusses the relationship between automotive / transport technologies and the Fascist state. The Fascist mass spectacle 18BL, a choreography of armoured trucks, would be another relevant touchstone for this study.
29. In his 2017 documentary *Hypernormalization*, director Adam Curtis deftly traces the ways in which the onslaught of information acts as a political veil, part of a discussion that many others like David Harvey, Naomi Klein, and numerous cultural

theorists have addressed.

30. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 6.

31. And, ironically, are not so efficient after all: As Keller Easterling writes, "Highways, first promoted with stories about freedom and uninterrupted movement, possessed an organizational logic that actually cause congestion." Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*, (London: Verso, 2016) 71.

32. See Justin McGiurk, *Radical Cities* (New York: Verso, 2016); Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

33. In Paris, many manicured grassy lawns are in fact dotted with small signs that read "pelouse interdit" - forbidden grass! No sitting allowed.

34. Stan Allen, "Field Conditions" in *Points and Lines: Diagrams and projects for the city* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, Second Edition 2012). Accessed online.

35. Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*, 74.

36. Allen, "Field Conditions"

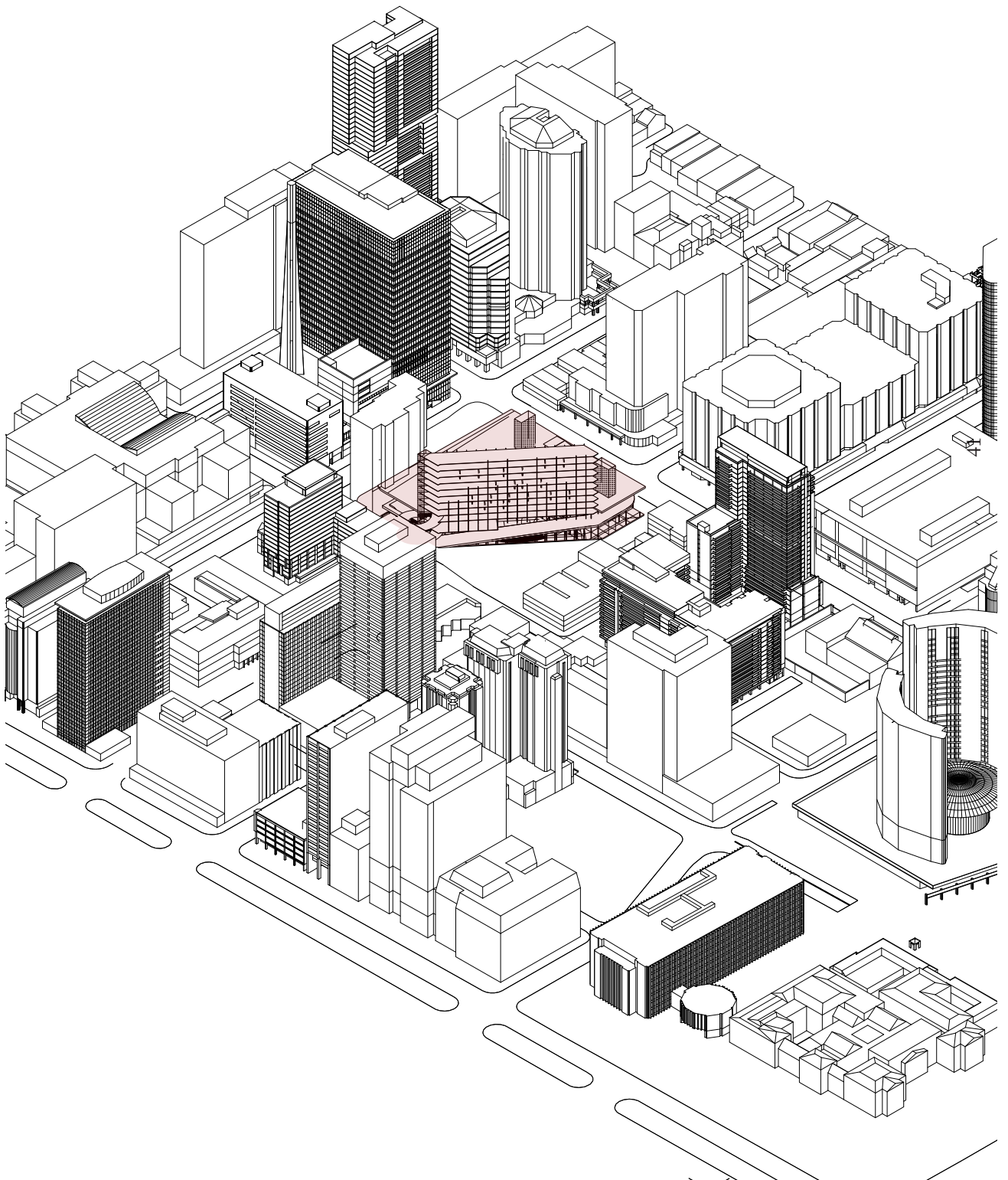
37. Allen, "Field Conditions"

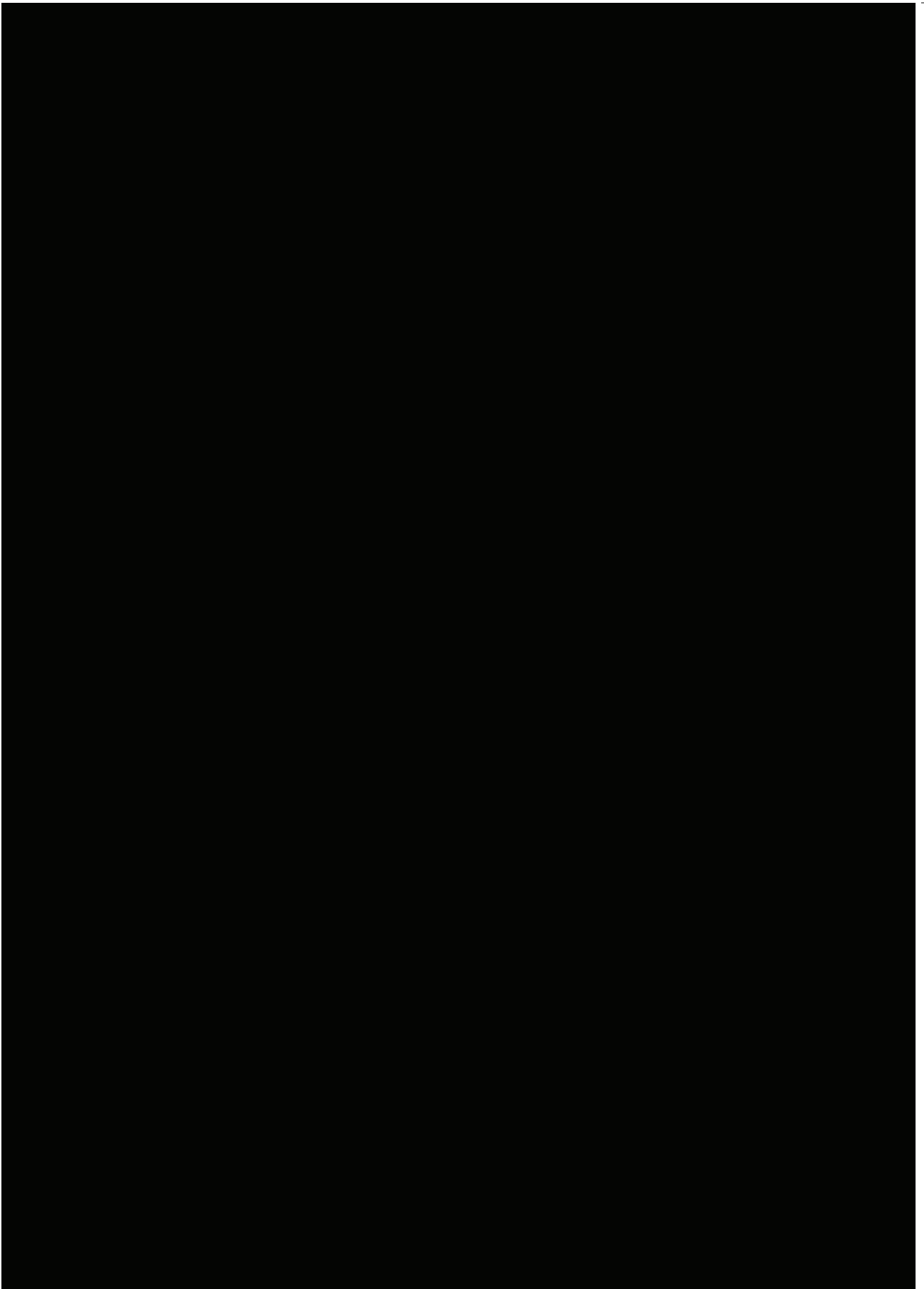
38. Ritts, Zoe. "Interview with Michael Maltzan." February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

39. Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2006) 14.



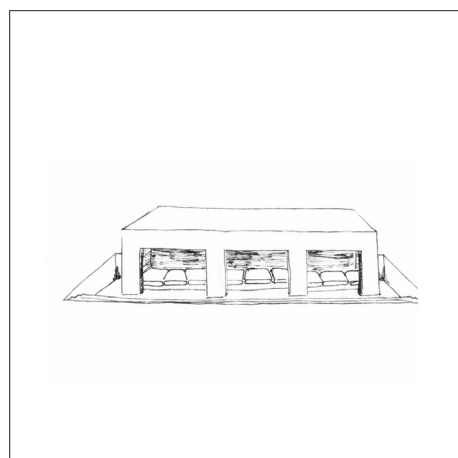
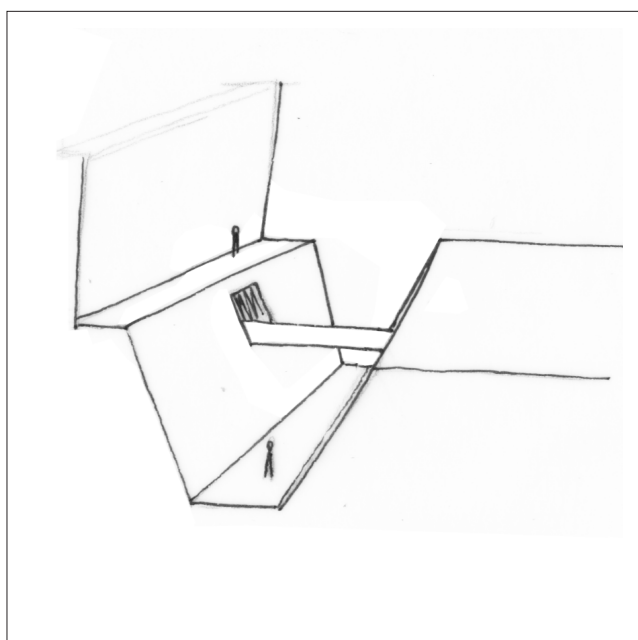
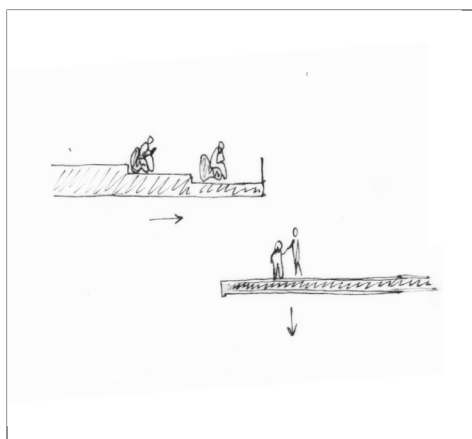
Right: An axonometric drawing from the South-west sees the project nestled in the urban fabric. At the lower right edge of the drawing, Finnish architect Viljo Revell's 1958 Toronto City Hall (Above) as two curving volumes that cradle the seat of municipal government.





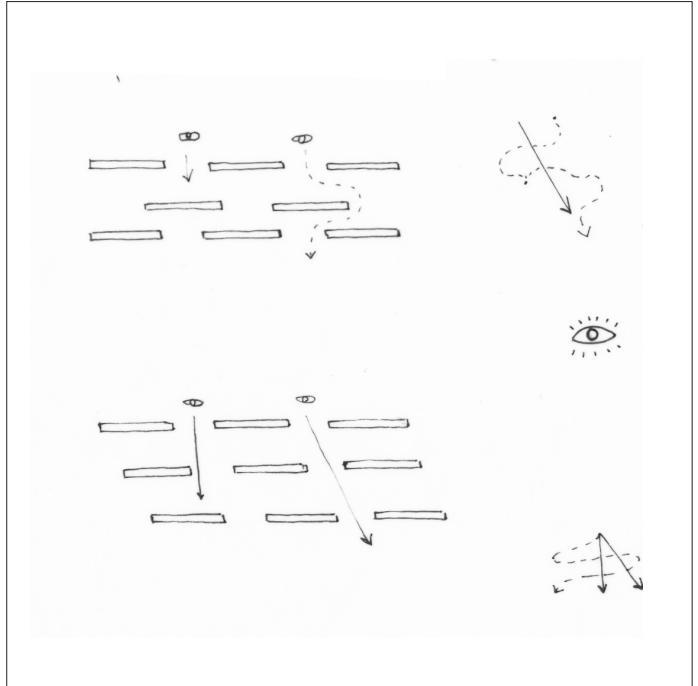
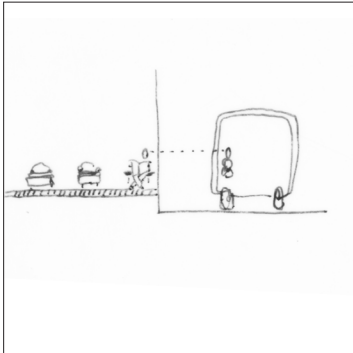
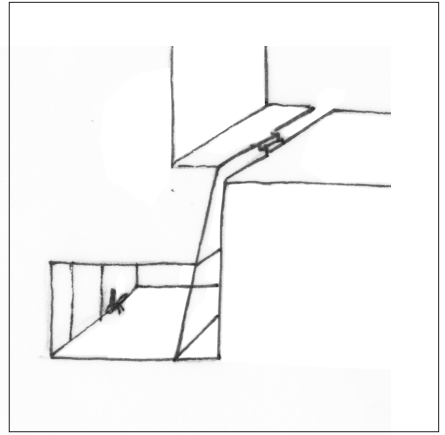
“A space is left  
for the tactical  
improvisa-  
tions of future  
users...It is an  
architecture  
not invested  
in durability,  
stability, and  
certainty, but an  
architecture that  
leaves space for  
the uncertainty  
of the real.”

(Allen, “Field Conditions”)



Choreographing behaviour and interaction. Many of these thumbnail sketches later found their way into the project design.

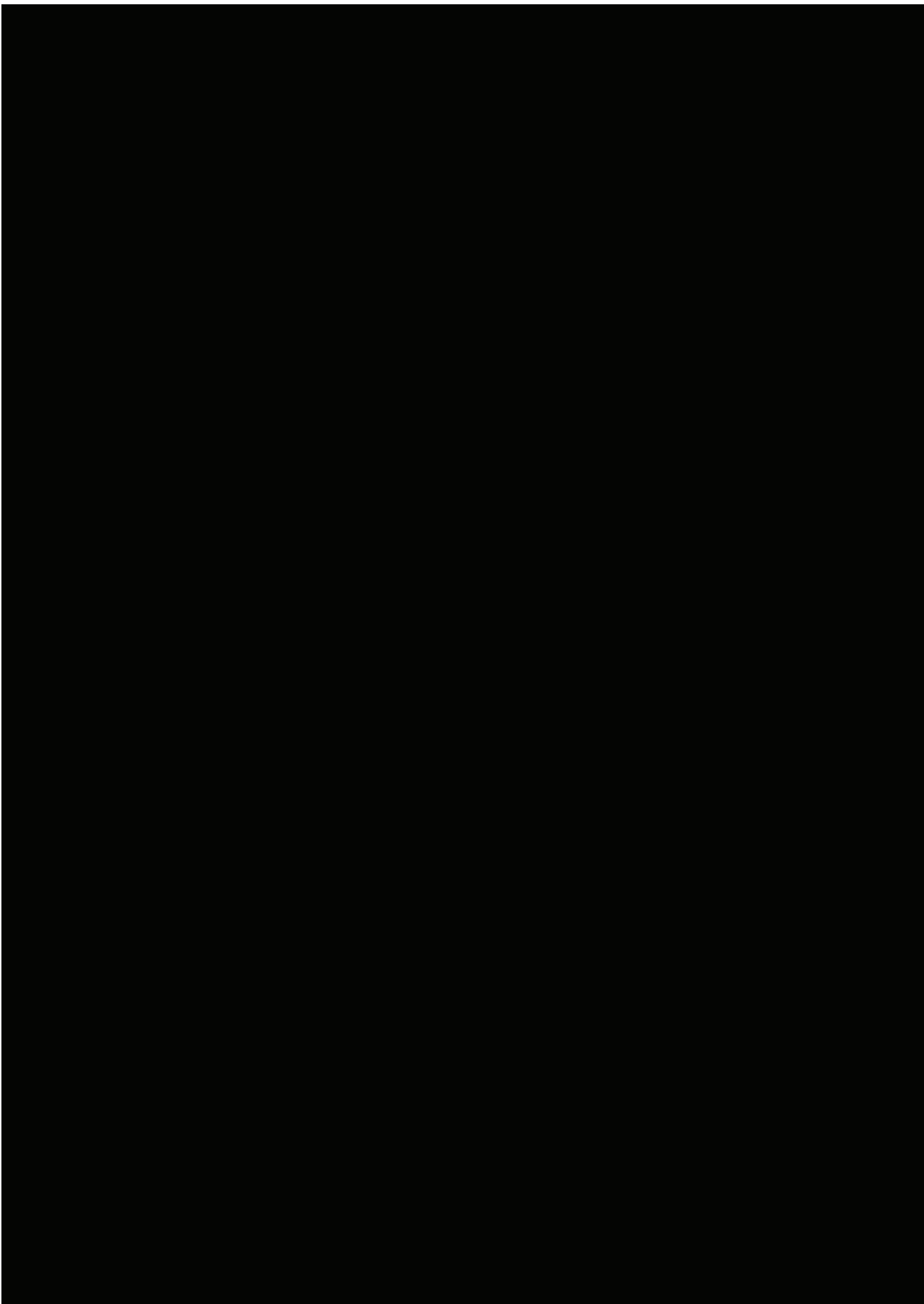






“To remain relevant,  
architecture has to  
resolve this dilemma:  
to disappear into  
Cyberspace or to  
define what is public  
in a new way.”

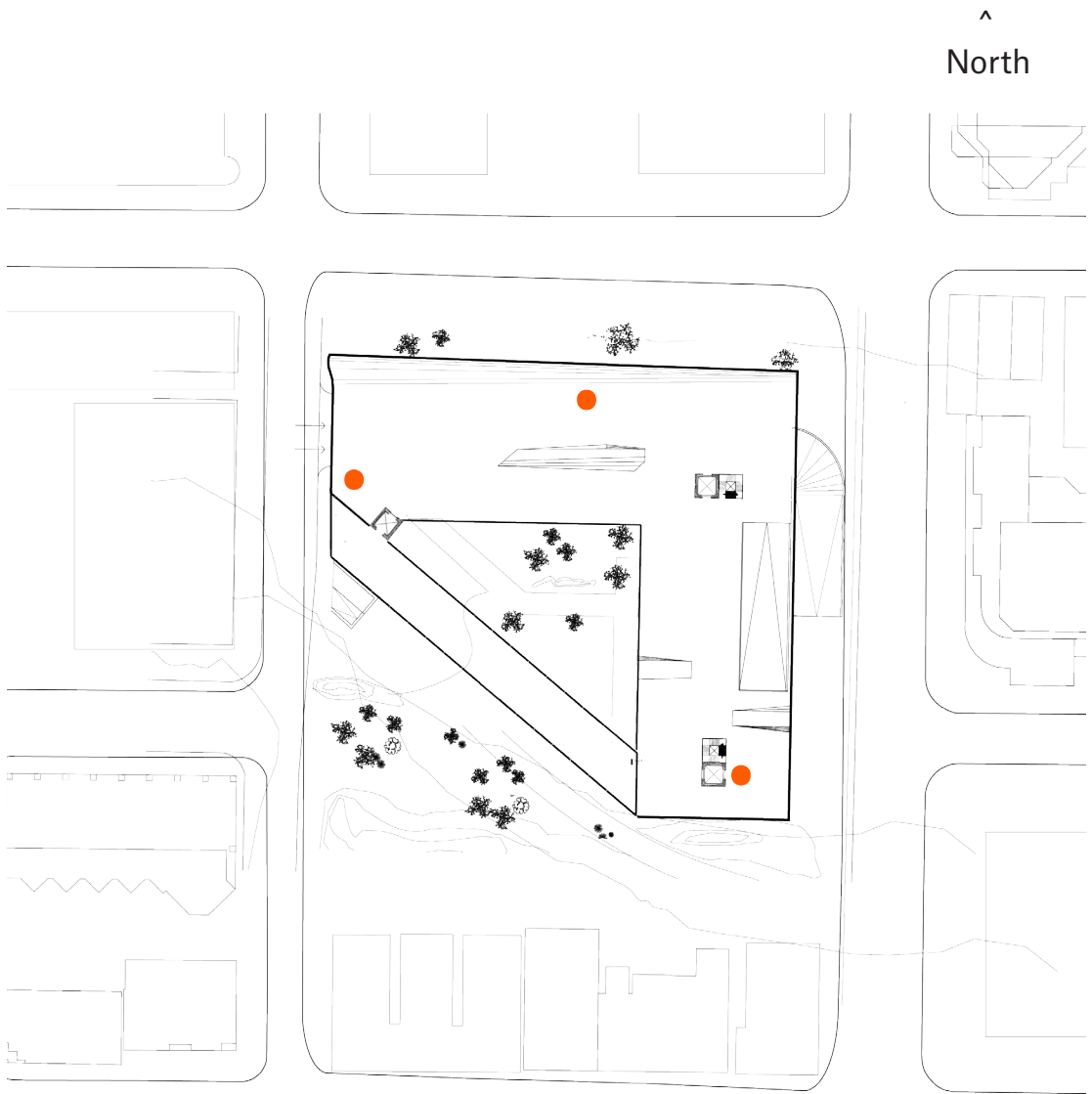
(OMA, Kansai Kan project competition)





### Site Plan

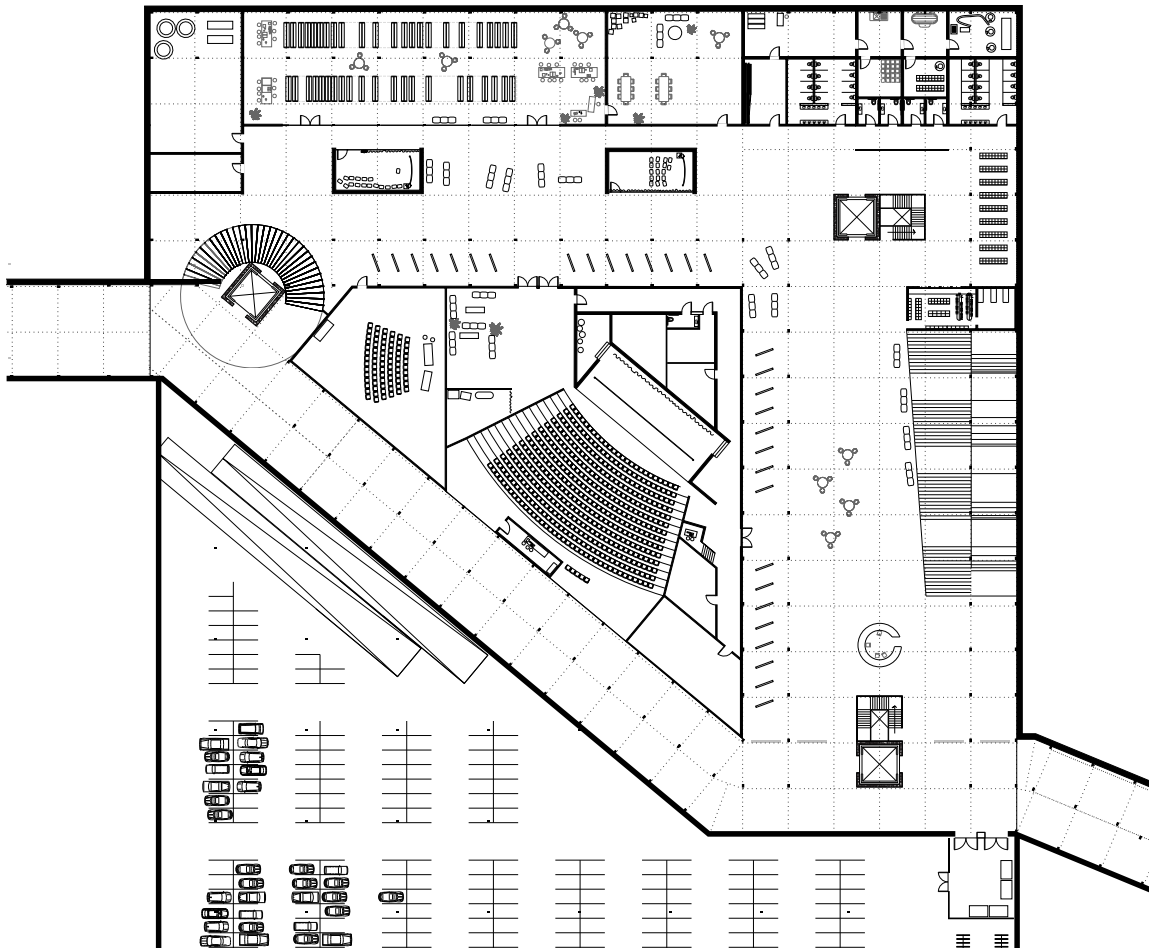
The three axis are along the North edge, where most large-scale busses enter; Along the Eastern, Bay Street facade, and the diagonal South-West Axis. Three orange dots mark the 'publics' drawn on pages 68 - 73.



## Floor Plans

This basement plan shows a heavily active area, drawing visitors from the diagonal axis that connects to the subway and expansive underground PATH network into the library-station. This floor also features an auditorium, archives, mechanical and operational facilities for the transport hub, lockers and luggage check, gallery space, and ample space for sitting and reading.

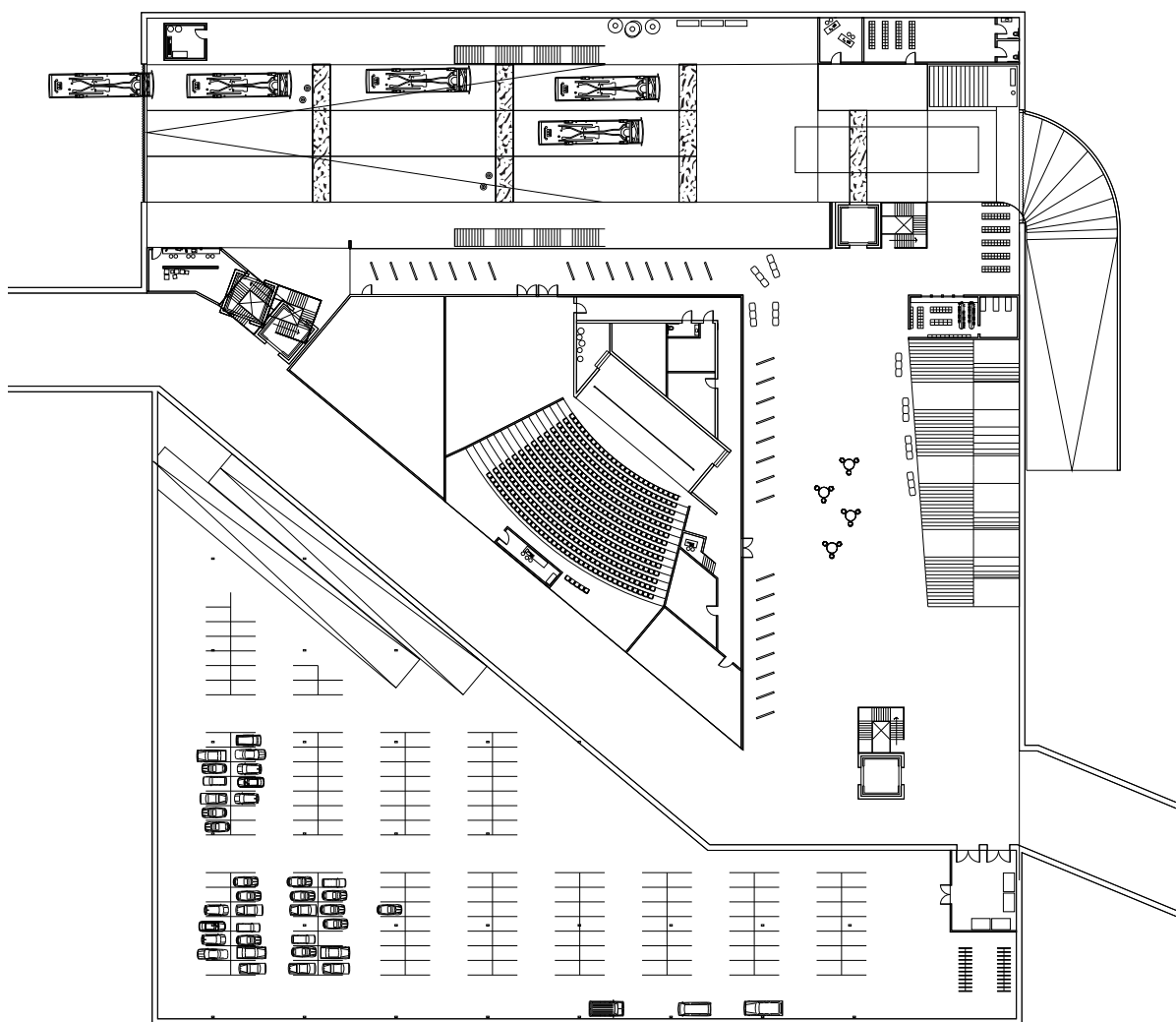




Subway

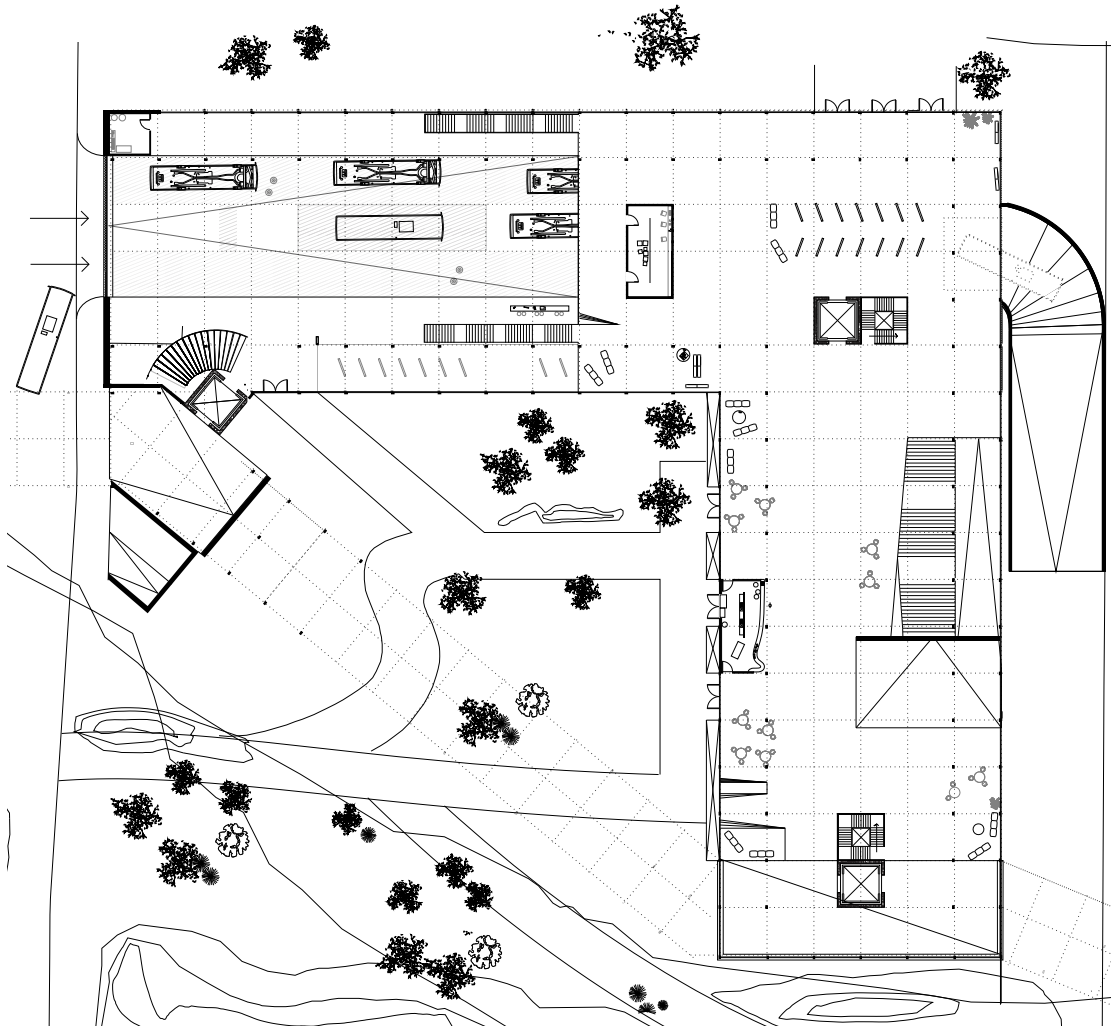
Basement (Subway level) Plan  
-9m

Bus level parking plan. Compare to the section cut on p 67. The bus parking level slopes gently from the West of the building, pulling busses down into the building and rerouting them out along the major road, Bay Street.



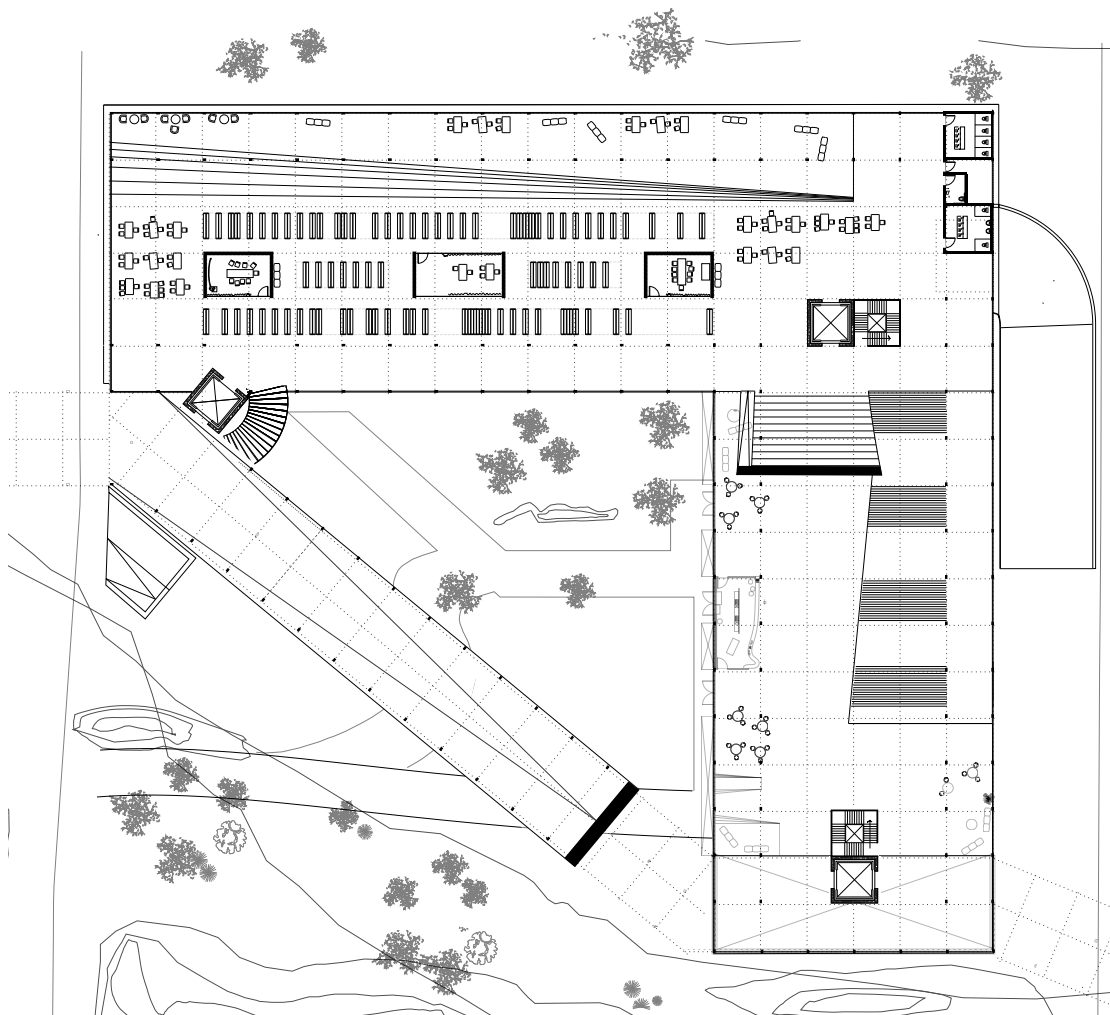
Bus Parking Level Plan  
-5m

The ground floor is more field than plaza, a large mostly open area with a view of busses, the courtyard, and glimpses to higher and lower floors. Cafe, ticket sales, display boards and information.



Ground Floor Plan  
0m

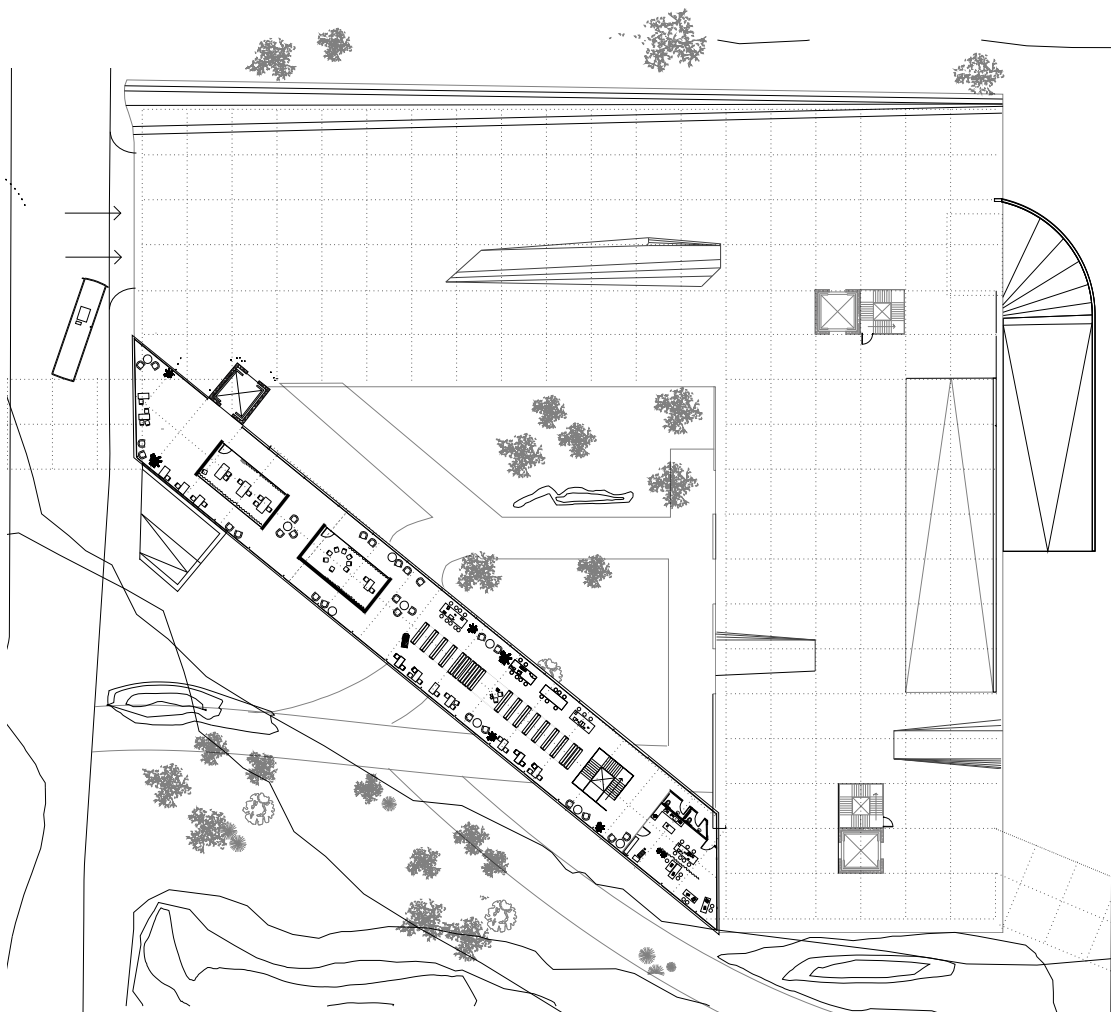
One of two library floors of this scale (smaller areas in the 'tower'), this floor shows the relationship between the private opaque rooms and the open book stacks (on tracks for potential reconfiguration of 'rooms'. Shared tables, small groupings of chairs and study spaces. The larger stair passageways along the East are seen below or cut through. These are both efficient passageways and half sloping curves, undulating surfaces for sitting and resting.



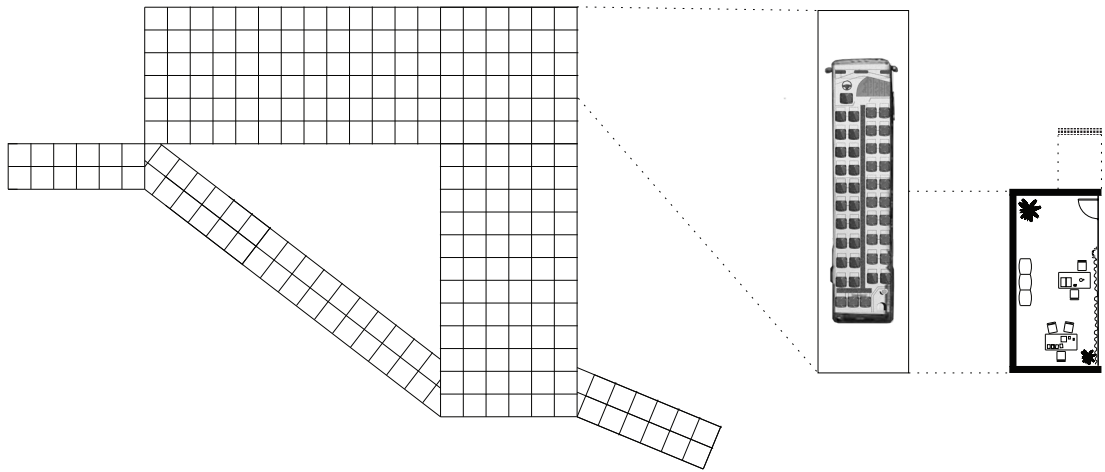
Average 'tower' floor. Of the 10 floors in this elevated area, most of them are for similar library programming: offices, classrooms, opaque study rooms. The tower faces both the occupiable roof and the city beyond, enabling views and inhabitation at new heights.

Thick curves on the roof plate create ilots for sitting and facing the tower and the city. The roof, accessible by bus or by foot, thus becomes another usable space for large groups or seasonal events.





Average Tower Floor Plan,  
Library & Other Services  
+16m

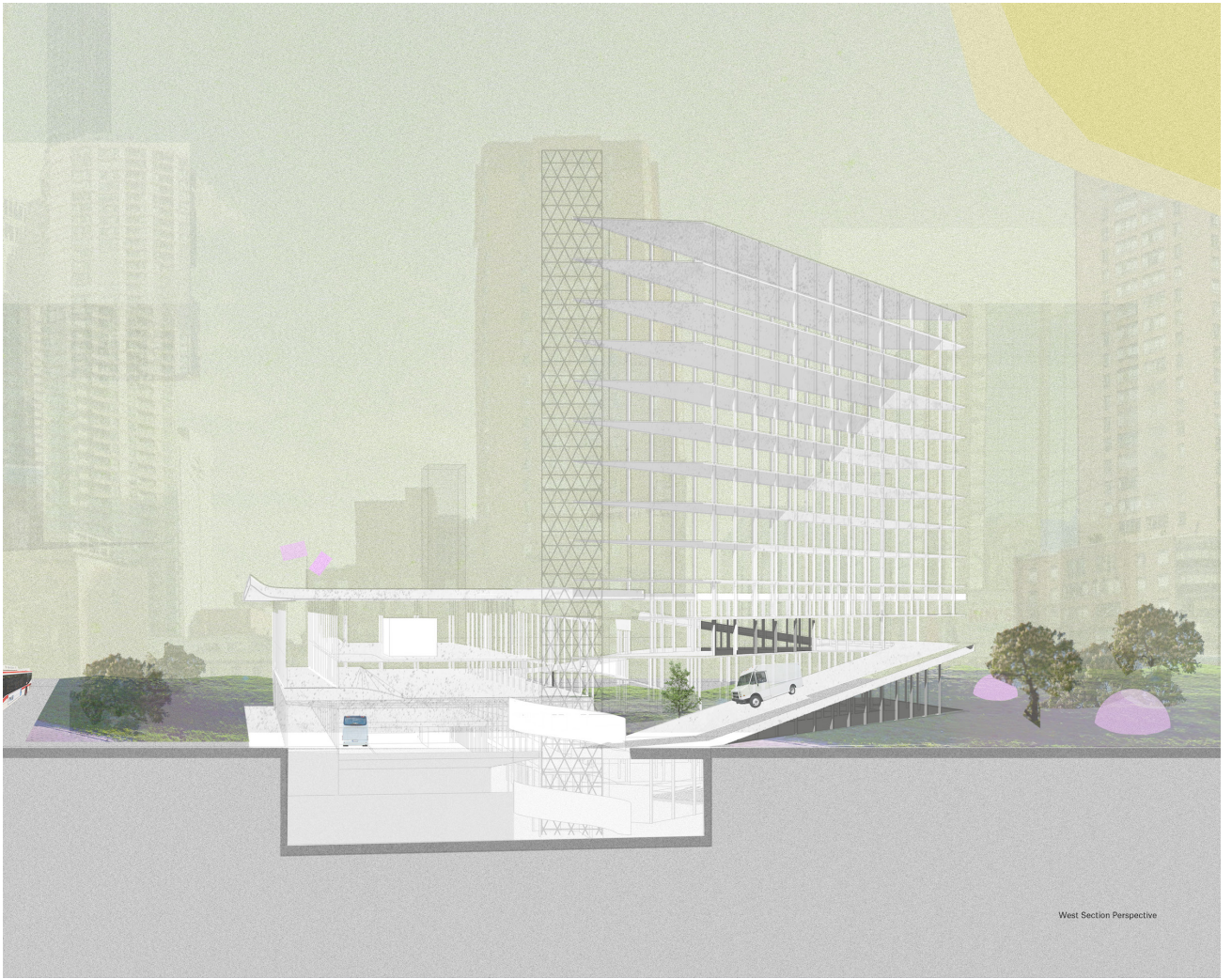


Above:

A 5m x 5m grid organizes space throughout the project. This grid is marked by two rows of columns, only along the exterior walls of the project. These 5 x 5 column bays construct a colonnade and insinuate intimate spaces and 'rooms'.

A bus parking spot takes up four 5 x 5 bays, or 20m x 5m. This is in proportion to the dimension of the average coach bus, approx. 15m or three 5 x 5 bays. Smaller study rooms, which double as shear walls in the large floorspan areas, are modeled on half the size of a bus parking bay. Finally, even the bookshelves are dimensioned to this proportion at 2.5m wide.

Right: a perspective from the West of the building looking in.



West Section Perspective



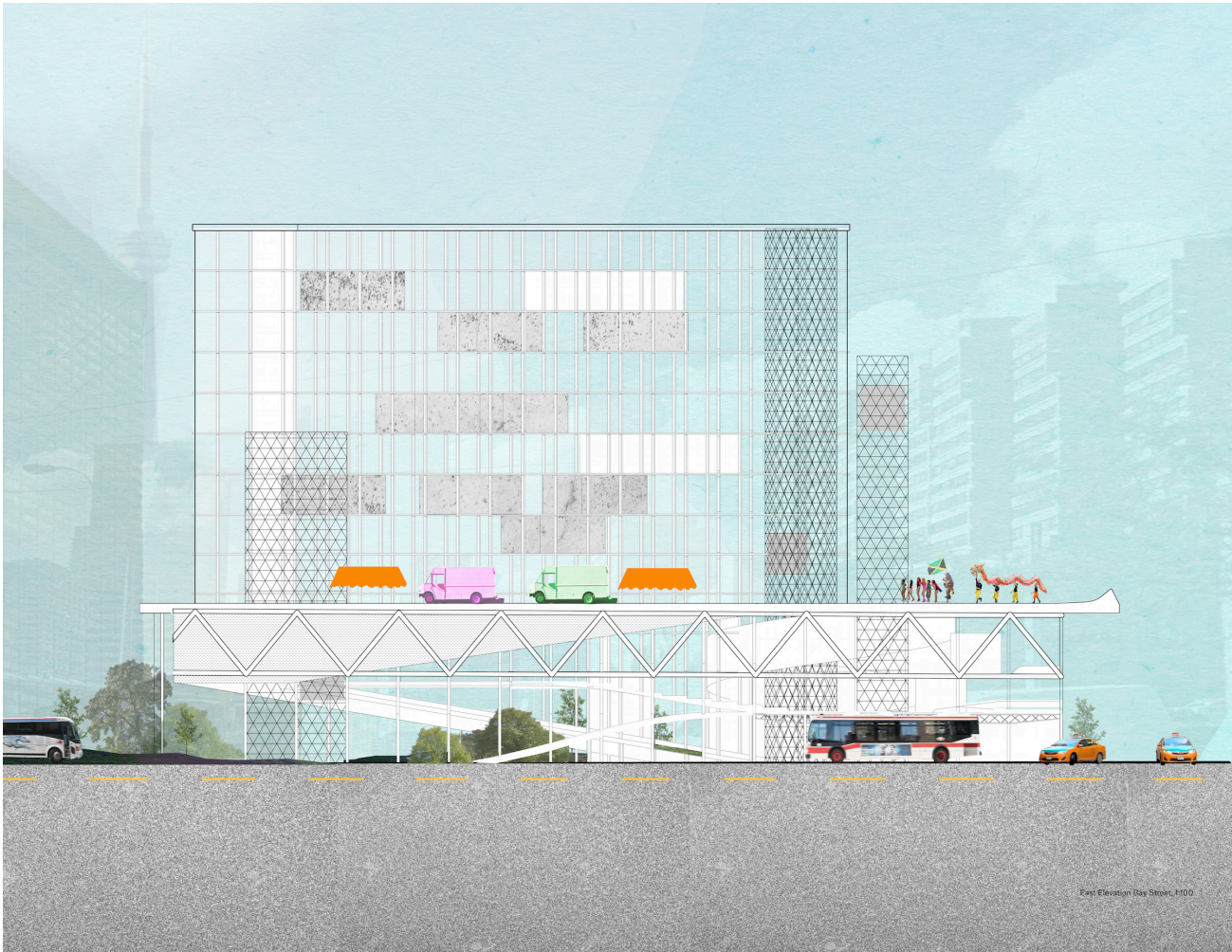
Detail:

At the centre of the rotating circulation vectors, there is an open courtyard. Access to the courtyard is unobstructed from the adjacent park, so pedestrians can enter on foot underneath the elevated bus ramp.

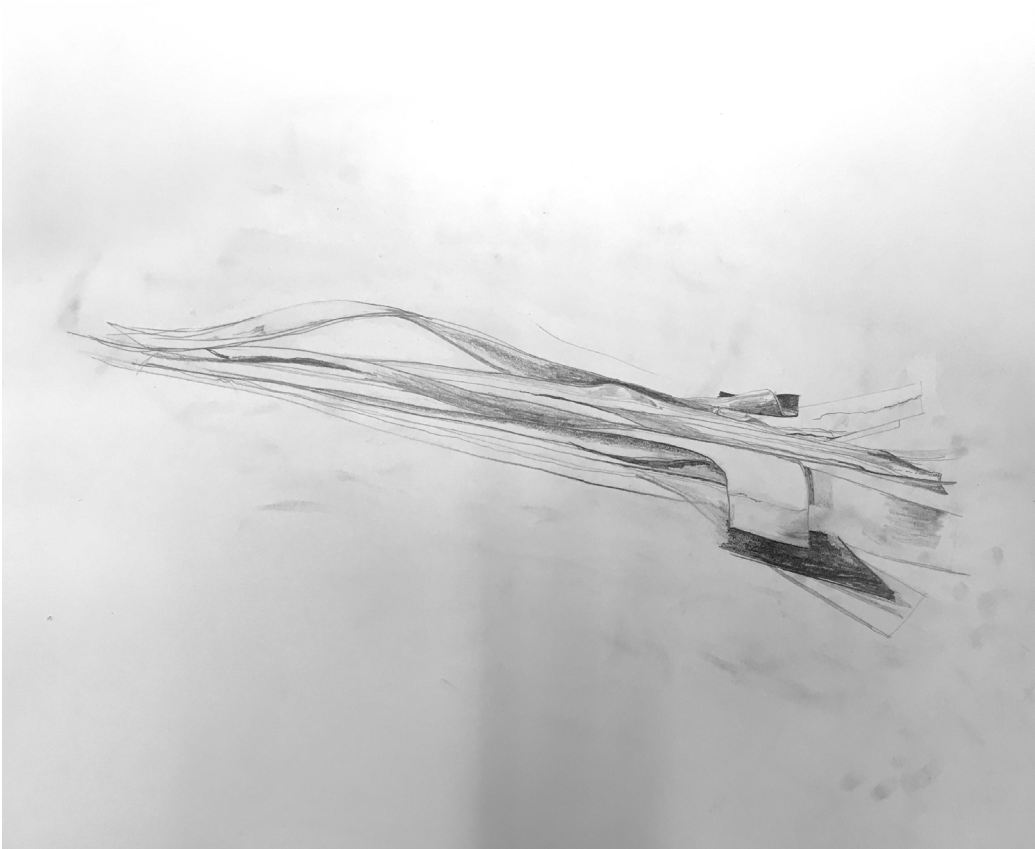
The courtyard condition is another way of creating a suggested and potential public space, related but not exclusive to the autonomous building.

Right: The Eastern elevation, with an occupied roof and private study rooms visible in the library tower behind.





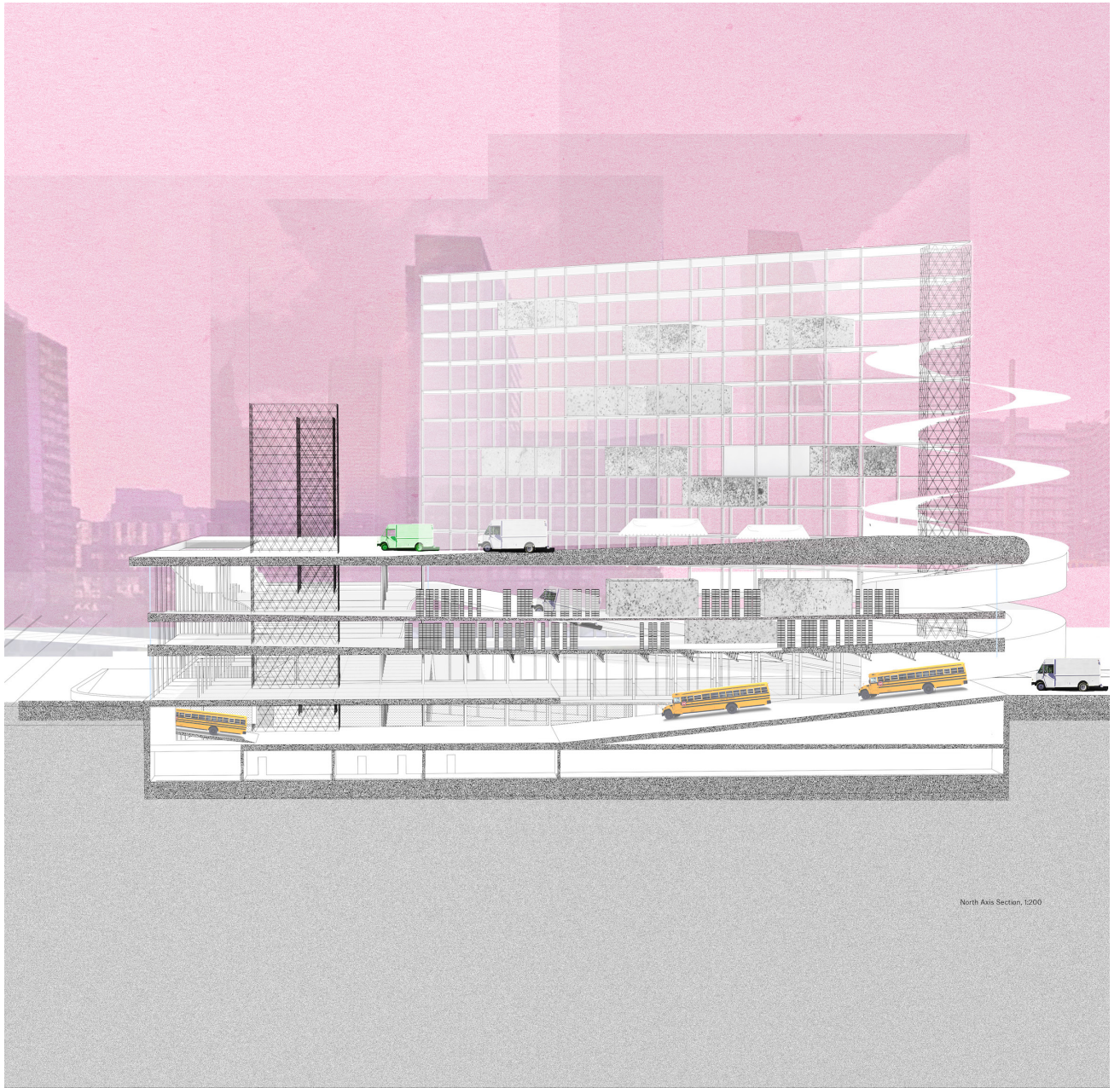
East Elevation (Bay Street, F100)



Detail: This pencil drawing helped clarify the formal intent of the design, namely to suggest a place of fast movement and compression. The project's sloping floors and fast / slow pathways were developed further as a result of hand sketches such as this one.

Right: A section-perspective that cuts through the North axis, showing busses folding in from the West and exiting through the East. Library stacks and study rooms as on p \_\_\_\_\*





North Axis Section, 1:200

#### Publics:

The following three drawings illustrate the density of use and experience, referenced with orange dots on the site plan (p \_\_\_\_).

This moment is taken from the North axis. Busses enter below as visitors look down, while private study rooms and stacks in the floors above make space for intimate conversation and interaction to occur.

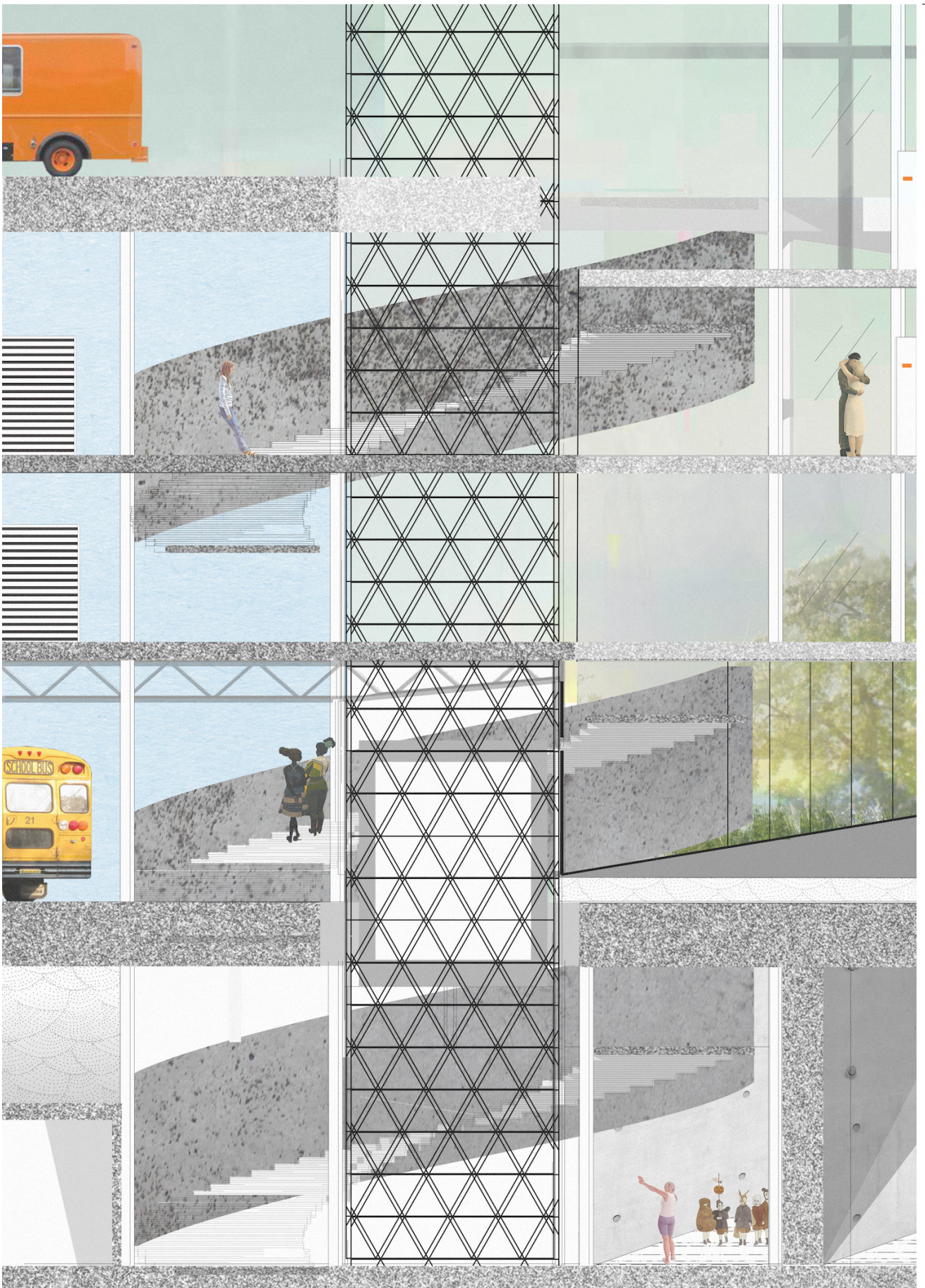
These illustrations include figures painted by: Kerry James Marshall, Marlene Dumas, Marcel Dzama, Peter Doig, Margaux Williamson, and Alex Colville.





At the West edge of the project, a spiral stair pulls people from the diagonal PATH axis (lower right) up and into the library. In this case as in others, there exists a tension between efficient, fast, mass passage and circulation and slower, constricted, discursive movement.





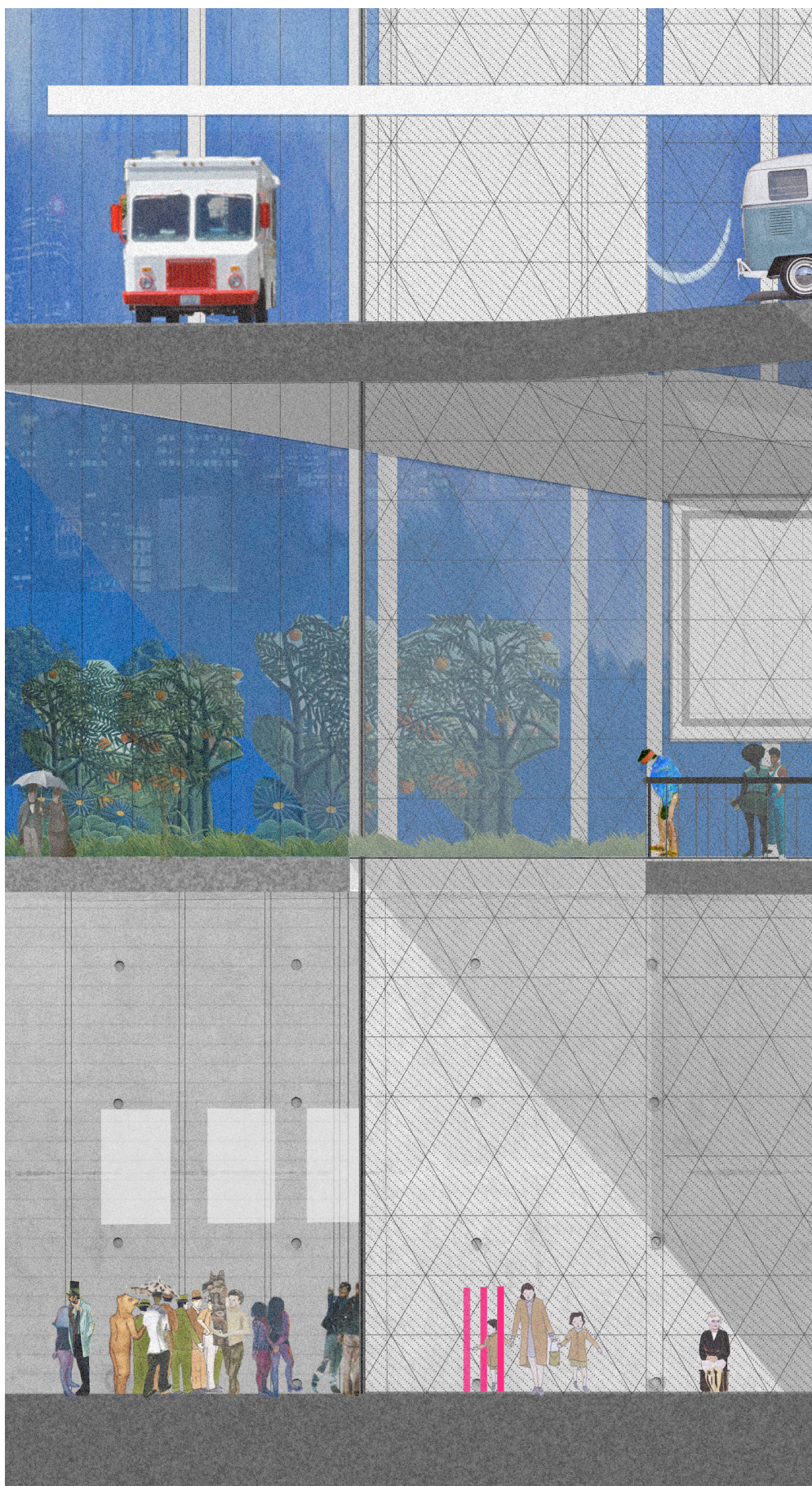




Right: Where the diagonal axis meets the Eastern axis, the first floor plate is cut to the 9m subway level below. In this way there is a moment of revealed juxtaposition, of multiple publics glancing up / down and seeing each other.

Above: final model.







## IV. Addendum

Interview with Michael Maltzan, Parts I & II





Michael Maltzan Interview I.  
14/02/17  
MMA Office, Los Angeles

**Zoe Ritts** My first question has to do with your engagement with public space and access, the 'social' component of practice and your work on cultural institutions. You've built projects like Regen Projects as well as Inner City Arts. How do you conceive of cultural architecture and those pursuits in addressing social concerns?

Michael Maltzan In the most expansive way, the kind of largest part of that for me – for my relationship to architecture and what I think architecture can be – has to do with my sense that architecture as a discipline has the ability to cover a great deal of territory. It has the ability to be expansive in the types of programs and the types of engagements it gets involved in. The types of buildings, the types of building programs that it gets involved in. And the more, as I've described it in the past, elastic architecture can be, the more ground it can cover and the more versatile it can be with the way that it works with the widest range of program, the greater role it has in culture. In that sense, it's a very simple equation.

**ZR** Right, it's kind of inherent to the discipline?

MM Exactly. And if it's a cultural institution or if it's a housing project, if it's a house, a school, any of those things: one of my goals is to continue to prove that the discipline of architecture, the thinking of architecture has the ability to develop a portfolio of ideas that can address design problems across the widest spectrum.

So in that sense I don't think of Regen Projects and Inner City Arts and Star Apartments as actually being all that different, as an architect. They're different programmatically, there are different people who are using them, but in terms of the architectural ambition and the approach, it's not that different. I don't start a project any differently if it's one category or another. If you push that question along a little bit further, I do believe that ... Well, one of my strong interests and one of the strong interests in the office is to use architecture as a way to develop ideas about the city. And that relates a little bit to public space. Public space certainly doesn't only exist in the city, the question of public space exists in many different settings. The city, especially contemporary cities and especially cities like Los Angeles,

MM have a very complex, ongoing conversation about what public space is. What the role of public space is, what public space is physically, how it's manifest. Many of the projects that we've been involved with here or in other cities, for me, are questions of how the architecture can be seen either as a building block or, in some cases, as a complete microcosm of the city.

And each one, in a way, is another experiment. Another examination of how you can envision the city, the metropolis, using architecture as the primary tool.

**ZR**

It does get at public space. That's a very contentious debate, be-

MM cause I think it really depends on what you think public space really is. Is public space completely open, accessible, all-encompassing, non-controlled space in which any conversation can happen?

**Right, if that even exists.**

Yes, it's questionable whether that exists any more, physically. Maybe it exists more digitally. Certainly over the past months you've seen that you can tell the truth or you can tell a lie, and they have, in some ways, equal weight. In that form of media. But I don't think you need a puritanical attitude about public space to address how you might make space which can support a public conversation. I'm more willing to accept that the public conversation and the idea of publicness is a fraught one and complex, and impure, and that's OK. It's not so much a question in my mind of producing the pure form of public

**ZR** space. In my mind, it's a question of having as much of as many versions of it as you possibly can, at many different scales.

You can either say this over here is the public space, or you can say public space is more democratically broadcast across a larger field, and that all buildings have a piece or part of that, and that's as valid an approach.

MM

**Do you see your project of making "forms that represent the city" - do you see your project on that scale as a way of engaging in this discourse about public architecture, about these social questions, through having a variety projects that together form a conversation around L.A.?**

It's interesting that you ask that, because I draw a diagram sometimes - I may have even done this at RISD, and I just use L.A. because it's easier to see - there's a map of the different projects, primarily the housing projects. If you start to draw lines between all of them, you can begin to formulate an idea about creating this web

MM of relationships and that that interconnected web of relationships changes the map of the city. If those buildings have in some way an aspiration of being a part of a larger public conversation, then I think it's reasonable to say they are all literally voices in that public conversation, distributed through the city. They're not mute, and through their form, try to insist on their presence in the city. In that way it's not so much that I think the forms represent the city, I think the form represents their presence in the city, if that makes sense. The connection to the city when I talk about buildings being more a microcosm of the city is more in the types of relationships that get set up in and around those buildings that get either choreographed or create a... type or set of spaces that more informally allow for or support a kind of set of public or semi-public relationships to take place.

I do think there's a distinction between form and space, and it's not just a formal idea. What they're capable of, in architecture, and what you as an architect can do with them as two very different tools to have an effect is an important thing to think through. The distinction is an important thing to think through. I haven't talked about the form really being a representational tool. It says something about the intentions of that building, the characteristics of the community or the ambitions of that community that relate to that building. But it's really, for me, important that those forms also work to create relationships across space, to start to activate space, and it's within that space that they form and activate, that the powerful effect can really be felt. That is where the public conversation actually does take place. In a sense the forms are the lightning rod that attracts the public conversation, but it's the space that supports it.

79

**ZR Would the New Carver apartments be a good example of that, where there is a clear relationship between the freeway and the form, of a project that engages context and complex programmatic and community demands through both form and space?**

MM Yes, absolutely. There was a technical reason that underpinned that form, as well, and had to do with acoustics, but literally simultaneously, the ambition to create a form – that circular form, because it's unusual on the highway, because of its proximity to the highway, because the serrated design of that circular form connects to the way the building feels like it almost spins as you drive by it, those were all very intentional ways of saying 'this community is here, it exists here.' And that it's not separate, it can't be separated from the city as a whole. So in that case, the form has a strong visual representational, iconographic quality. But it's within the building, and within

MM the courtyard primarily, that the majority of the work takes place to produce a community. Literally. Which is what the goal of that was. It's a term [community] that's almost a cliché, it's used too much. But there, taking a group of formerly homeless individuals who have lived by themselves, on the street, one of the biggest ambitions of the work of the [Skid Row Housing Trust] is to find a way to produce some beginning linkages of relationships to re-form a sense of community for those individuals, because they've lost that ability. They don't come to those buildings equipped, it's like it's been erased from their personalities somehow.

**ZR Or that you need space to engender those types of social relationships.**

MM Yes.

**ZR In your work on housing now, what is the driving force in that series of projects as it relates to this larger, urban-series-scale of working, and as individual projects?**

MM It's weird, because housing has become a big chunk of our work. I didn't start by saying that housing was going to be a big part of our architectural life. Housing had always been really interesting to me, since school. Everybody has a housing studio. I studied, like many people, in history, and the full range of what the modernists did in their work, and housing as we think of it was arguably an invention of the modernists. I always just expected that it was just one of the types of projects I would do, and for years I couldn't get a housing project. Nobody was hiring architects like me to do housing, especially in this city. It was surprising when we got the first project. It seemed to just fall out of the sky. In my mind, it started not as trying to take on these larger urban or social or community type of questions. It was: I get to work with a fundamental modernist typology, so I was interested in completely historical and formal terms. How do you think about that in this moment, in a contemporary way, with that long history?

We've pursued housing to a certain extent, but it hasn't been like we've said 'OK, this is one of the business sectors we're involved in.' I think one, we started doing it, but it's been a cultural shift, a social, attitudinal shift that multifamily housing, affordable housing, housing in general has become one of the most pressing cultural and social concerns out there. It is having a huge effect on the political conversation, the social conversation, economic questions. And that has meant that our interest, our experience, has grown in parallel to

MM a particular cultural phenomena. On one hand, we've continued to accept that as a big part of the work that we do, but I think it's also, to a large extent, been that we've been fortunate to connect to a type of work at a time when it's a very prominent part of the cultural conversation.

**ZR Yes, about L.A. specifically you mention densification often, so it seems that, in relation to housing in this city, is really important right now.**

MM Right. It's really right at the sharp tip of many of the biggest challenges that the city is facing, and some of the most contentious and emotional challenges that the city is facing. How to deal with density and affordability and housing and community and issues that are issues for the contemporary city at this point and into the future. You're not seeing most cities becoming less dense. You're seeing more and more pressure, not only in this country but in other countries, on urban environments, and these questions are not completely transferable, culturally, but they relate to a larger groundswell of concern.

Michael Maltzan Interview II.  
11/04/17  
Telephone conversation

Sadly, this interview was lost due to a technical error.  
This conversation picked up where the previous one left off, concerning the difference between form and space.

Maltzan began by clarifying that there need not be a distinguishment between the two, describing both as the architect's distinct tools. Form could be understood as a representational tool that can work across space to activate it. In essence, Maltzan stated, form can attract while space can support. Like the title of his recent GSAPP transcript on housing, we spoke of social transparency, and that it is of course *in* space where the most important social issues are visible and occur. Related to his long-term investment in Los Angeles as a site, Maltzan sees the large temporal scale of his practice as an important component of the equation, wherein architecture has to evolve and work iteratively with the city. We spoke of the relationship between movement and architecture, both in the spatial context of certain MMA projects and their proximity to freeways, and for the internalized (and materialized) relationships to movement and perspective. As an example, we discussed the 2009 Pittman Dowell residence about which Maltzan expressed his design intent to "choreograph the approach" (and thus perception and experience of) such an architecture. Maltzan extended his interest in this choreography to the imagined lines that connect MMA projects around Los Angeles, especially in Downtown and Skid Row. He spoke of the productive tension between controlled space and enabling discursive movement, and of the web of relationships that architectural work - whether autonomous constructions or a body of projects - found in Los Angeles. He described the concern with figure-ground and the formal gestures of Richard Serra that had informed his own RISD thesis. We ended our conversation with a few shared thoughts on the goodness of RISD Professor Jim Barnes.

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