Site Based Phenomena

by

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Halifax, Nova Scotia
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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled “Site Based Phenomena” by Andrew Hill in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Dated: March 20, 2012

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AUTHOR: Andrew Hill

TITLE: Site Based Phenomena

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ABSTRACT

With the perpetual advancements in technology and communication the focus and obsession of architectural critique has become surficially focused on building “image”. This focus on image of architecture has taken away from the true meaning and focus of what architecture is, space and experience. Although most talks today are focused on image, there are a handful of architects that push for a more phenomenological approach. In the design process, they think more of how a space will feel and stimulate the senses, enrich a viewer’s experience and strengthen the relationship of the space to the context beyond.

This thesis attempts to develop methods and concepts that focus on the study of site based phenomena. This thesis attempts to find design processes that will see buildings conceptually conceived from their sites rather than merely placed upon them. The development of these methods and processes is the primary concern of the thesis. It uses Peggy’s Cove, Nova Scotia as a laboratory for testing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone that has provided me with support in one way or another through this process. Not only in direct relation to this thesis but with my entire architectural education thus far.

I have to start with the most important people in my life, my parents. My mother and father have worked as hard as me through this process providing financial and more importantly, emotional support that has given me the strength to get through this demanding program. It seems impossible to me to ever repay them but I hope that I can make them as proud of me as a son as I am of them as parents. Love you mom and dad! Thank you so much and I hope I can someday support a child the way you have supported me.

Next I must thank Michael Zabinski and David Tyl whom have become two of the best friends I have ever had. The friendly competition and team mentality that we developed proved a successful mixture from B1 through our Thesis work. Not to discredit any of my professors but I am certain I have learned more from the two of you than anyone else. Thank You both so much and I hope we work and party together in the future.

Finally I must thank my supervisor, Catherine Venart and my advisor Susan Molesky who guided me through this last three months to produce a meaningful piece of work for my portfolio. I feel it has helped me grow a lot as a designer and this is a result of your guidance, criticisms and feedback. Thank you both and best of luck with your future work.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A Phenomenological Approach

In a time when globalization, advancements in technology and mass media have allowed for a worldwide transfer of knowledge and imagery, a return to architecture that is inspired by existing landscapes is essential in the maintenance of local culture and tradition. The study of the character, atmosphere and experience of place lies under the field of phenomenology. The phenomenological study of place looks at the characteristics/features/elements of a site that define it from others. These characteristics, physical and invisible, permanent and ephemeral, together produce the atmosphere of a place. The way a visitor approaches and interacts with these different elements shapes the way in which they experience and perceive a given site. Site experience is time and material based, as we move over a landscape, perception is plastic and malleable never concrete and fixed. “Experience presupposes nothing more than an encounter between “us” and “what is” (Holl 1996, 9). The key issue in any phenomenological approach is the manner in which people experience and understand the world. Phenomenology involves the understanding and description of things as they are experienced by a subject (Tilley 1994, 12).

The phenomenological approach pushes architecture away from the sculptural mass oriented avant-garde of the now, towards a more spatially focused art form. Architectural concepts and critique need to shift away from discussing build-

ings as aesthetic objects as if they are pieces of sculptural art. While it is a common reference in architectural talk, architecture is fundamentally at odds with sculpture, as Mies van der Rohe once said sculpture is mass and architecture is void. While architecture is an art form it is, or at least should be conceived of in a very different way than art. Architects have an ethical responsibility to the population their work will affect. Art is for the esthetic pleasures of an interested onlooker but architecture has a functional hierarchy that affects those that pass by and through the work. A painting on a wall can be taken down but a cathedral must function for hundreds of years. Architects differ from artists in that they must create work that marries the artistic with the useful (Ursprung 2002, 398). To produce architecture that is more meaningful over the long term and accepted by its users and fitting to its context, the focus must shift from a focus on the architectural container to the contents; space.

The image obsessed architectural discourse of today finds its roots in mass media. The advent of architectural publications like magazines and as of late online blogs present architecture in a way that proposes they can be experienced and understood through gestalt imagery. Architectural photography can only do so much to present a piece of architecture or a space, it fails because they present architecture in a static way, when architecture is meant to be experienced as a procession through a space, the senses being stimulated as one space folds into another, as light splashes off a wall or floor and as it pres-

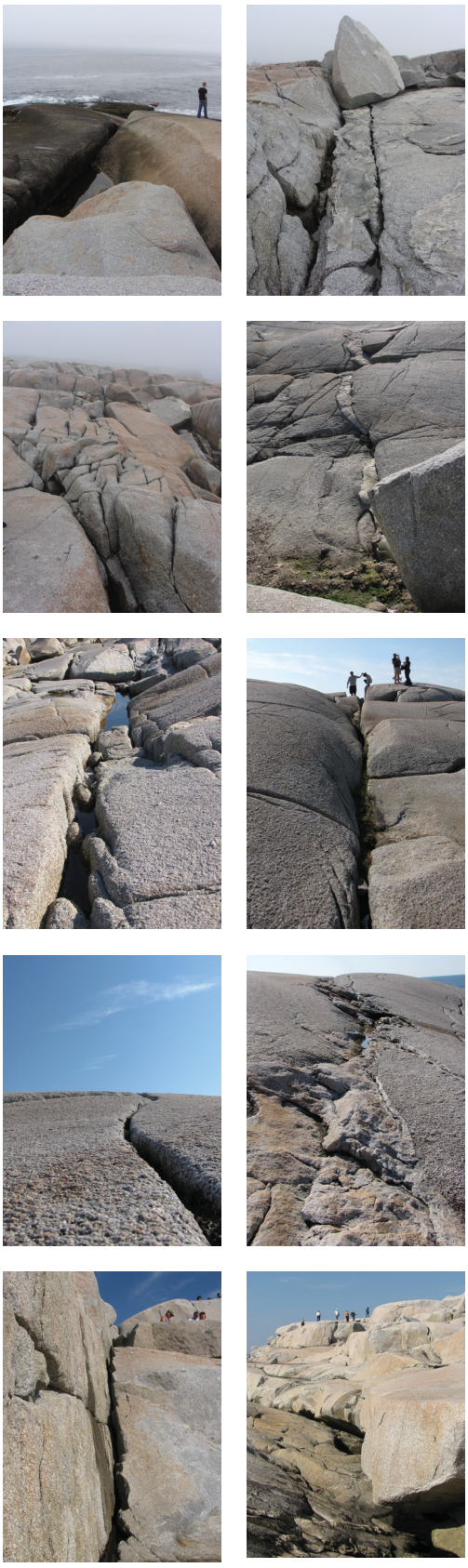
ents the surrounding context through a process of withholding and presenting views.

Summary

This thesis will attempt to look at the phenomenological characteristics of place as a way to find architecture. It will use inspiration from the landscape to conceptualize ideas about building placement, spatial organization and circulation as well as detailed ideas about structure and detailing. It is hoped that this will produce an architecture generated and connected to the phenomenon of place, i.e. that conceptually grow out of the landscape rather than being placed upon it. “Ideas cultivated from the first perception of the site, mediations upon initial thoughts, or reconsideration for existing topography can become the framework for invention” (Holl 1991, 9).

The thesis will attempt to use the human condition (how we relate to site phenomena at a 1:1 scale) and experience of a site as the initial point of departure for design. From these preliminary site observations theoretical assumptions about ways in which architectural design processes can be derived from phenomenological characteristics of place. This thesis hopes to add to the discourse on the phenomenological study of architecture, to produce a series of theories or methods that find their roots in site phenomenon as a design driver.

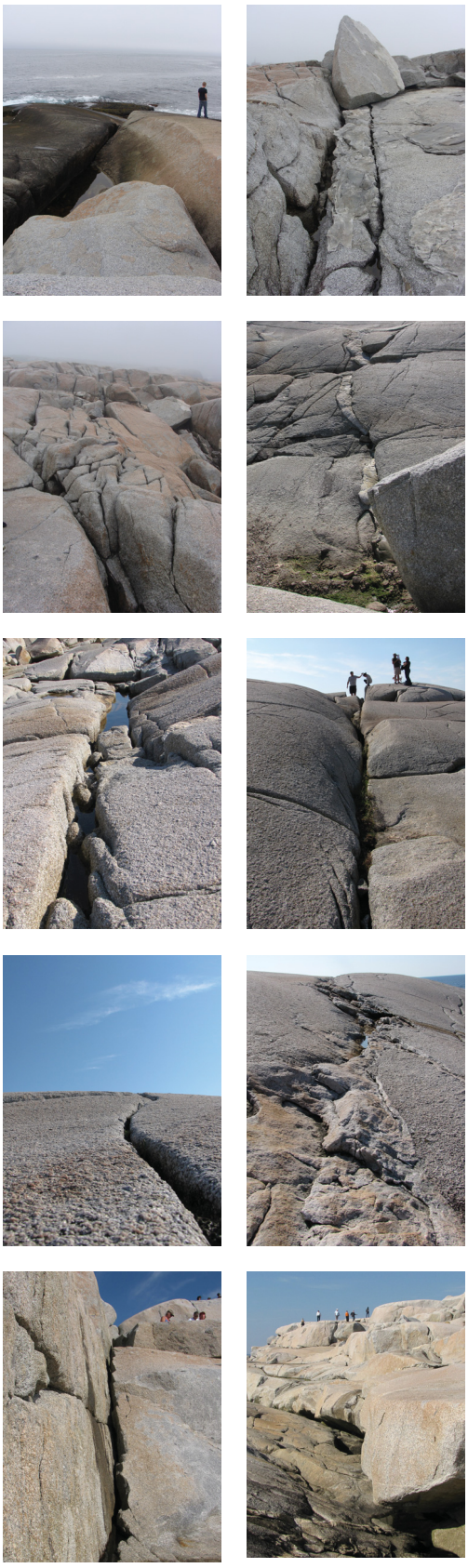
CHAPTER 2: METHODS



Overview

While the thesis work will be directed in relation to Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, the primary intention of the study is to develop theories, methods and or techniques for interpretation of place for enriching the process and the experiential relationships between the building, the landscape and the inhabitant. These techniques are thought of as in continual development, applied to new scales, sites and programmes. Inspiration is taken from Steven Holl's working method where ideas, concepts and themes are developed and tested in the real.

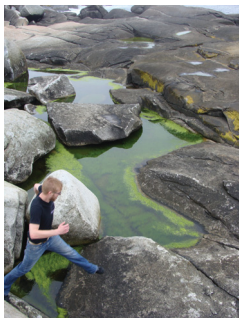
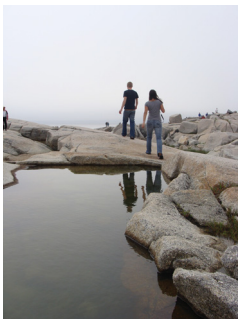
The phenomenological studies of Peggy's Cove are generated from aspects of site. Once a general method is thought to have been discovered it will then be taken out of the context of the site and generalized in a way that it can be used as a tool in design work. These eventually become a kit of parts to use depending on the site conditions and programme relationships of the given design problem. This method enables design tools and concepts to develop and be re-applied to the site context. Sketch applications are then developed to test its true validity, and spatial relationships of each are studied. As concepts are derived they are tested at different scales in an architectural proposition, to find a resonance between the architecture, programme and site.

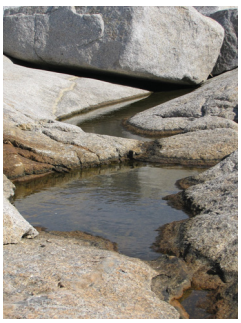


Isolation/Interpretation/Inspiration

Isolation

This first portion of the method was developed in an attempt to understand the elements that create the unique physical; and experiential relationships that we associate with the Cove. A photographic study that consisted of taking detailed photographs of specific characteristics of the place rather than the more common ‘postcard pictures’ which were taken as a way to isolate specific relational aspects of the place. Through isolation techniques such as this, the eye of the viewer is directed, which allows one to start to understand their meaning in terms of natural processes and their effect on the experience. Isolation of certain elements of a place leads to the naming of characteristics, formal and spatial qualities. “The naming and identification of particular topographical features, such as sand dunes, bays and inlets, mountain peaks, etc…, settlements and sites is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of their identity. Through an act of naming and through the development of human and mythological associations such places become invested with meaning and significance.” (Tilley 1994, 18) Fractures, faults and erratics, but also the naming of certain spatial experiences that occur on the landscape like the devils armchair, whalesback, halibut rock, dancing rock, black rock, five alley rock and Simons rock. (Choyce 2008, 15) People’s desire to name and mark the experiences that they have had on a site show that the cultural dimensions as it as-





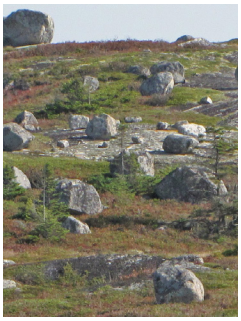
sociates with natural landscapes actually creates place from space. People use this process of naming to start to understand, define and categorize a site as a place; this produces cultural landscapes.

Interpretation

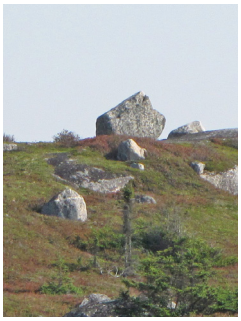
After a body of “data” has been collected using the isolation technique, the next step in the process is interpretation. At this point one must go through a process of understanding and interpreting how isolated elements of a place came into existence and identify how they affect the experience of a place.

It will help however to focus on the scientific aspects of many of these characteristics especially on a site like Peggy’s Cove where many are natural, landscape based phenomena. This scientific understanding would come from research into the process under which they came into being i.e. a study of the geology, climate and botany. This understanding of how a place came to exist, will enable the development of human scale relationships to this place. As humans we strive to understand our surroundings in an attempt to become comfortable with them. Looking at site phenomena before architectural pre-conceptions are formulated will help to inform and direct early design concepts that will link architecture with the phenomena of place. Architecture then acts as interpretations of its’ context, through its’ siting, construction and material expression.










Inspiration

The final step in the design process is to use the isolation data and what was learned through the interpretation step to develop architectural or spatial concepts. For example if a particular characteristic defines how one may walk across a site there may be an architectural idea inspired from this or, there could be a series of critical views that a project may want to frame as a viewer moves through ones building and the unraveling of space may correspond to these. The inspiration period can be abstract and used to come up with early conceptual ideas about architecture derived from the experiential qualities of a place. It can also be used at other points in the design process, for example when materials are being selected they may be sourced or at least referential to materials or textures that exist in the landscape or in the surrounding context, like vernacular buildings or a new quality or texture may be brought in, a new experience, over the years becoming part of this place.

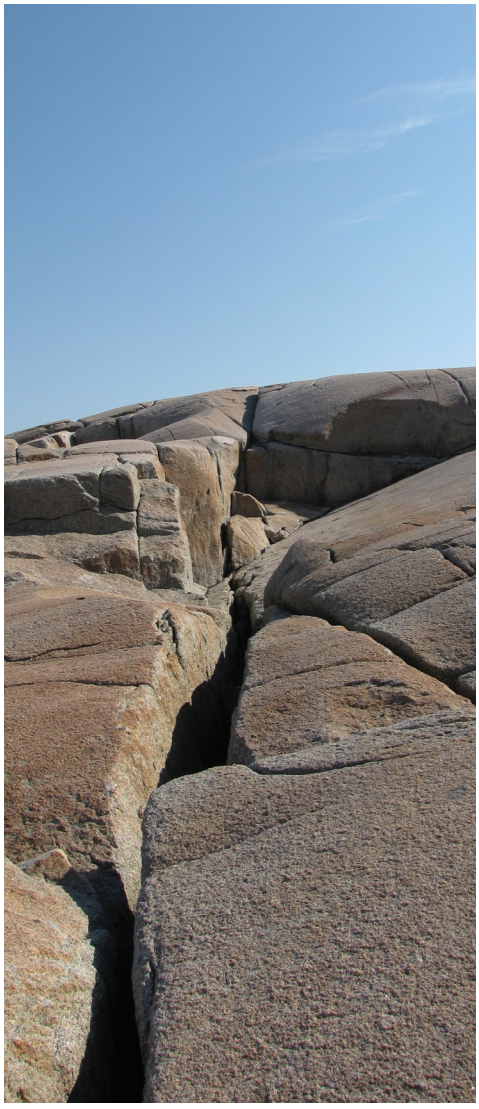
Site

Applying this design method in Peggy's Cove, a number of trips taken to the site, observations were made of the different characteristics that define Peggy's Cove as a place were recorded. A photographic study was undertaken focusing and isolating characteristics that seemed to be prominent on the site. Some of these photos were then manipulated to bring the isolation to the forefront showing specific characteristics

of the site. This was also done at a larger scale through the use of aerial photography were drawing out of the site any patterns, directionality, edges etc. that could lead to architectural inspiration.

The following characteristics became the focus of the site investigation, as they had the greatest effect on the way Peggy's Cove was perceived and experienced.

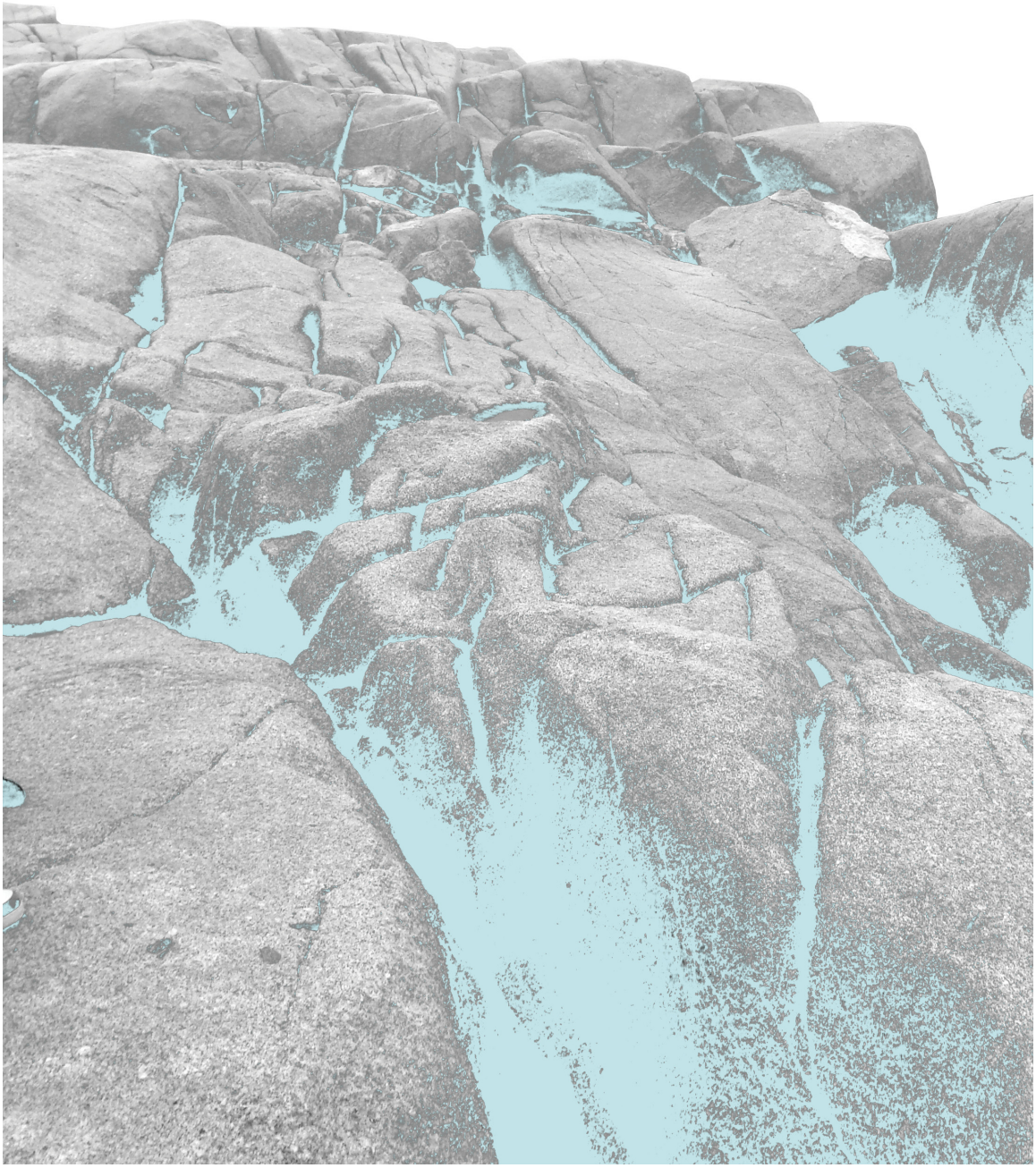
Fractures and Faults



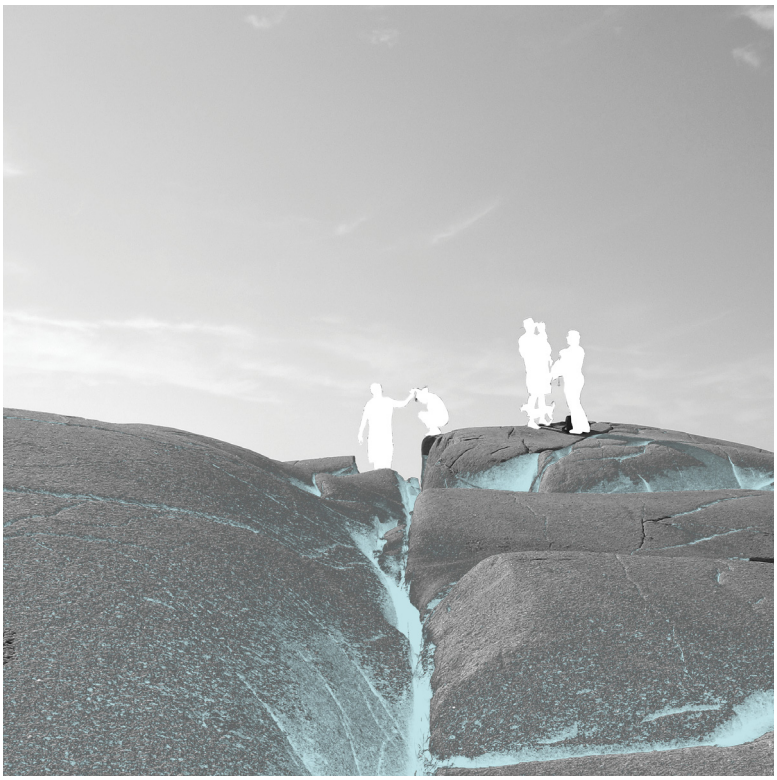
The surface of the rock with their fractures and faults that slice them are one of its most memorable characteristics of Peggy's Cove. The depth, length and width of these slashes or cuts in the landscape occur at various scales, resulting in them directing how one may experience the landscape. Many act as paths along which people walk, almost like implied walls in the landscape, defining one area from another. The fractures and faults act as the channels of this place, carrying water debris and people along them. The landscape shaped through erosion and deposition, plays a large role in the experience in terms of barrier and/or path.

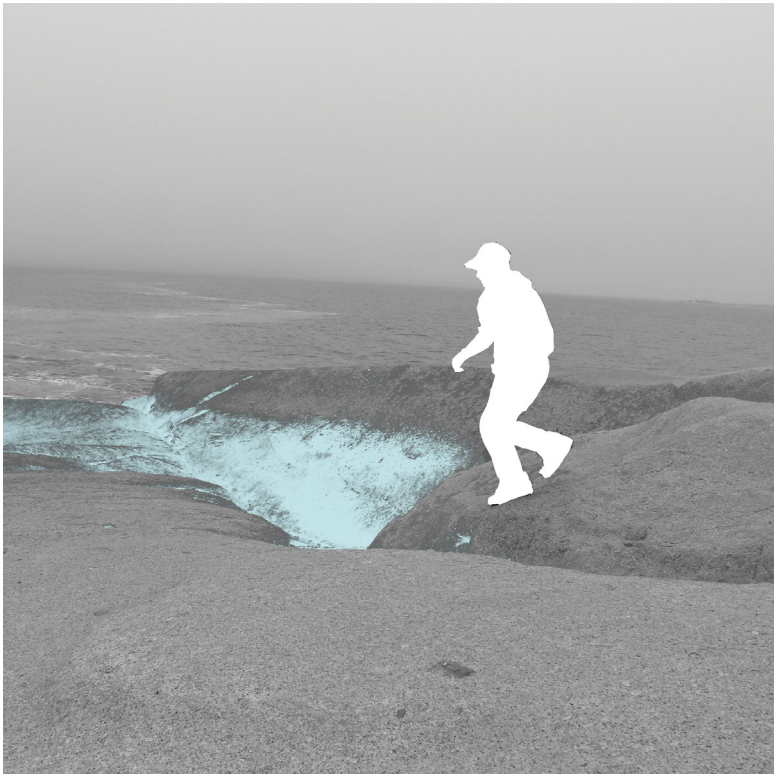
Through a careful mapping of the major fractures and faults it is possible that site directionality will be discovered, possibly implying a path along which a buildings circulation may occur in relation to its rooms. The presence of these "lines or arrows" in the landscape makes Peggy's Cove a destination about experience and movement rather than one of repose and gestalt viewing.

A proposed piece of architecture should take on this important phenomenal realization and play off and strengthen the experience of the place, possibly showing what exists in a new light.



Graphic isolation of fractures and faults on the Peggy’s Cove landscape: edited photo





Graphic isolation of fractures and faults on the Peggy’s Cove landscape: edited photo

Graphic isolation of fractures and faults on the Peggy's Cove landscape: edited photo

Pools

The small pools that reside within the groves and openings, between the smooth sloping boulders, collect the life, colour and darkness of this place. They seem to attract people as they experience the place, the connection between the permanence of stone and the ephemeral nature of the water. These pools owe their occurrence to the fractures and faults in the landforms along which water and debris is carried and deposited. They represent the natural thresholds of this place, becoming nodes of crossing, repose and investigation.

Within architecture the idea of threshold is important in the experience of a building; they also present places of crossing, repose and investigation. While people are in a room such as a gallery their path is not directly implied but as they move through a space thresholds collect a buildings population in physical terms and within our imaginations, as we wonder what lies beyond. How can the way we interact with these natural pools as thresholds influence the way we move from exterior to interior, room to room and wall to window in a piece of architecture. Is there a shift in scale with the size of openings? Do the walls and floor change in materiality? Is there a grade change in section that implies movement over the landscape?

Erratics

Glacial erratics are rocks that differ in size, shape and sometimes composition from the existing

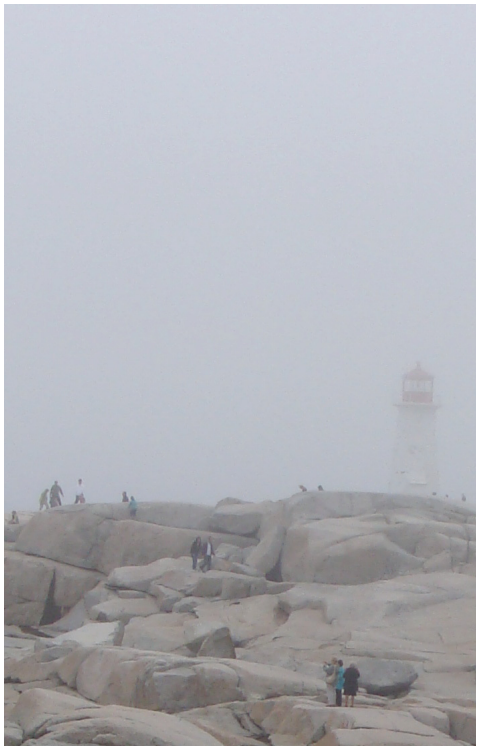
natural bedrock. They were transported to these locations by receding glaciers which picked up the large stones and dragged them across the landscape, and deposited them haphazardly across the landscape.

The area around Peggy's Cove has a number of these as a result of the rugged landscape that existed below the glaciers, which plucked boulders from the ice. They have much to do with the phenomena of this place; people find themselves gravitating towards them, defining and marking the landscape.

What architectural linkages can be made with these erratics, ideas about siting and meeting the ground, or perhaps a way of laying out building programme? Similar to a glacier scoring and depositing boulders (space makers) across the landscape, instead culture moves across it and deposited a series of programmatic spaces that themselves would act as spatial organizers of the site, providing new destinations and experiences on this dynamic landscape.

Fog

The type of climatic conditions that Peggy's Cove finds itself in are prone to fog. The coastal environment means that fog fronts move in and out of the area on a daily basis. While this characteristic is more ephemeral than the geological formation of, fractures and erratics it has a lot to do with how one perceives this place. I myself have been to Peggy's Cove numerous times over the years, on foggy and clear days but when I think



of Peggy's Cove I imagine it on a foggy one.

The light on a foggy day is a uniform grey-white that withholds moments on the landscape from the viewer until they get close. It entices one to continue and see what is beyond. It is one of the reasons this village exists, the lighthouse is here to warn ships on the many days when fog is present.

The quality of light that fog creates could be something beautiful to replicate in a building. This may be attainable through how light both natural and artificial are filtered into a space. The details or edges of how things come together are obscured, or hidden from some angles, reminiscent of the qualities of fog.

Waves

The waves that crash the coastline along Peggy's Cove are partially responsible for the smooth rocks we traverse when we visit. The rugged boulders have been shaped over the millennia into what they are today. The ever present danger of being swept out to sea is very real and a number of fatalities have occurred, usually due to overly curious spectators getting too close to the roaring sea.

The experiential restraints that the extreme wave action and steep rock cliffs have on Peggy's Cove results in people rarely being able to experience the waters edge. One is never able to actually touch the water that has shaped this beautiful landscape. An architectural proposition

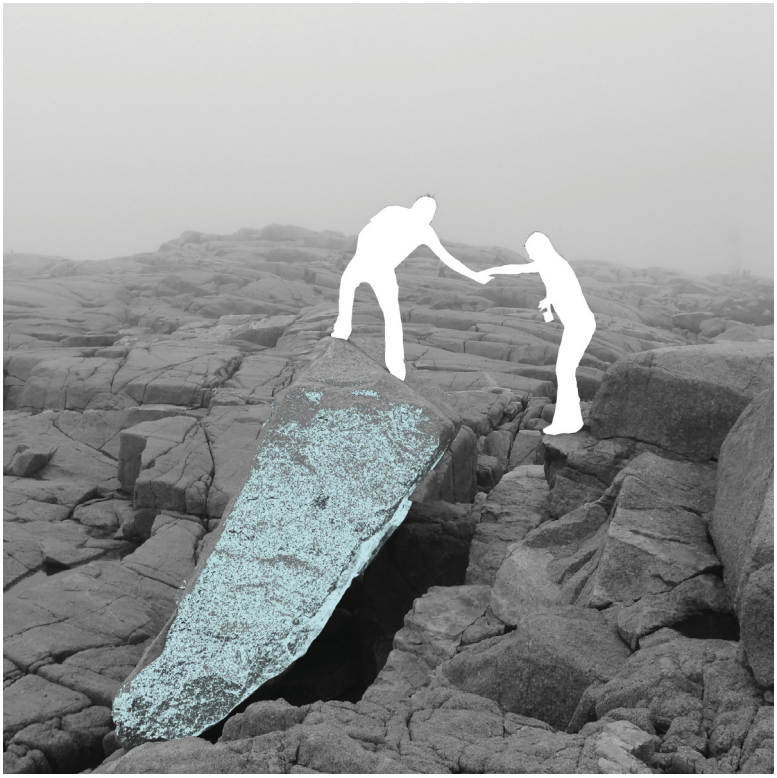
may allow people to become visually closer to this phenomena.

Wind

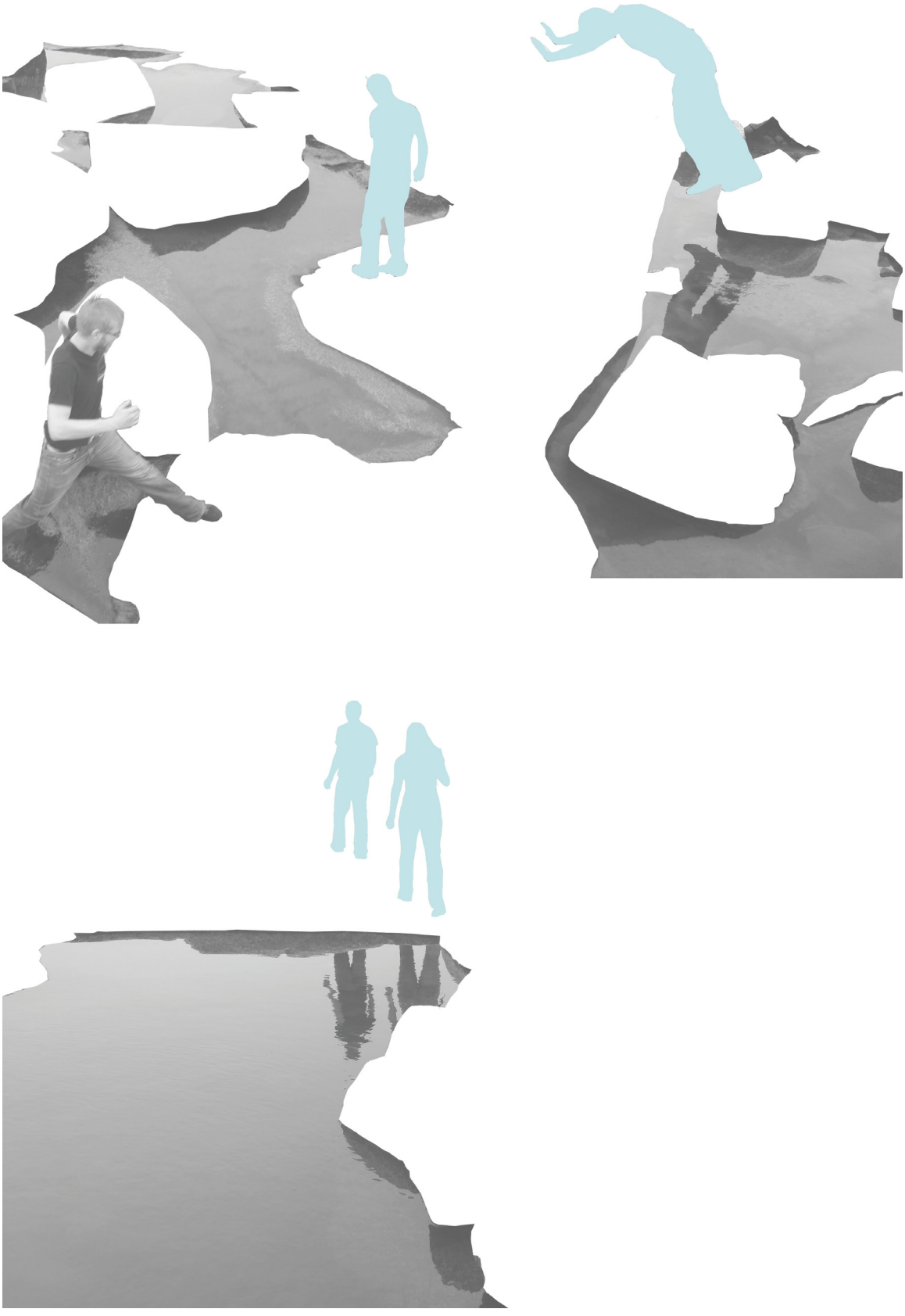
The wind at Peggy's cove is a felt ephemeral characteristic that has helped shape the landscape, creating waves that have shaped the rocks washing them free of sediment and vegetation. Peggy's Cove is a popular spot to come and view the incoming storm surge when a hurricane is approaching from the Gulf of Mexico all experiential drivers that stem from wind action.

The element of wind can be read through other senses other than touch. One strategy could be through the use of a material that is affected by wind patterns, analogous to the spectacle of wind blowing over a field of tall grass. Thus the wind is given a new sensory presence through material expression. Another strategy could be the manipulation of façade details that would have wind pass through them and create sound, again giving the wind a new presence on the site.

Graphic isolation of glacial erratics on the Peggy's Cove landscape: edited photo

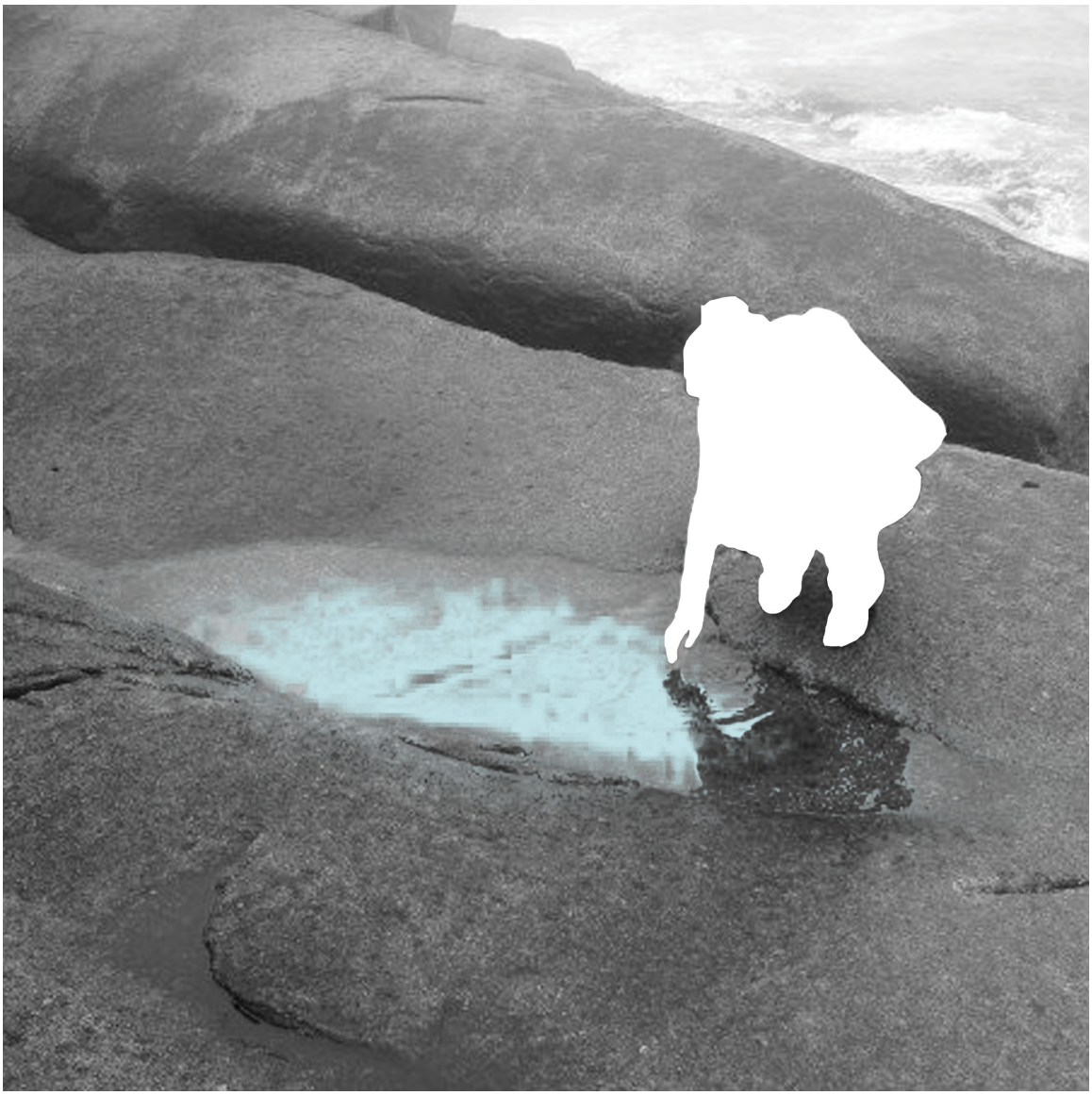


Graphic isolation of glacial erratics on the Peggy's Cove landscape: edited photo



Graphic isolation of pools on the Peggy’s Cove landscape: edited photo

Graphic isolation of pools on the Peggy’s Cove landscape: edited photo



Graphic isolation of pools on the Peggy’s Cove landscape: edited photo

Moment Connections

Erratic Moments

A walk over the rocks of Peggy's Cove is an experience of constant discovery, movement and repose. A number of the physical characteristics define the way in which one moves over the landscape. The fractures and faults within the rocks draw a visitor over the landscape directing them towards new vistas, cliffs and valleys. The pools draw people in for a closer look, gazing into the water at the vibrant green algae that develops in the deeper more permanent pools. The glacial erratics also entice a certain spatial movement, having people drawn to climb on top of or under these precarious elements.

The erratic nature of many of these spatial relationships could be a conceptual organizing idea in the design of spatial relationships. Conceptually walking the site, choosing a series of spatial relationships to be highlighted through architectural counterparts and interventions. The relationship between these architectural moments would most likely be quite random to each other, similar to that of the glacial erratics.

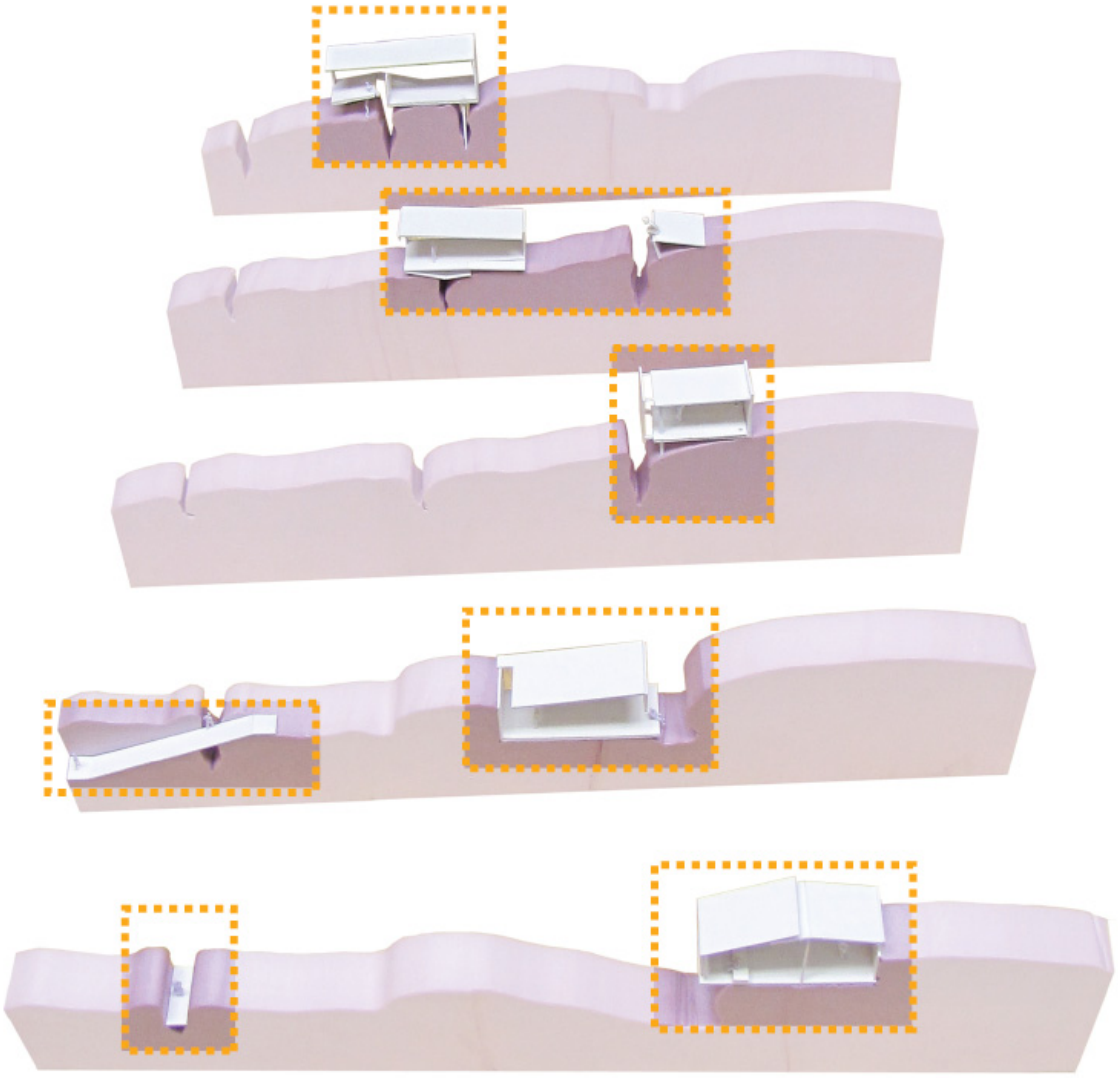
The technique of creating isolated architectural moments within the proposed architecture creates a deeply rooted reaction to the phenomenological characteristics of a place.

Moment Connections

The erratic placement of architectural moments on the landscape creates a conceptual idea

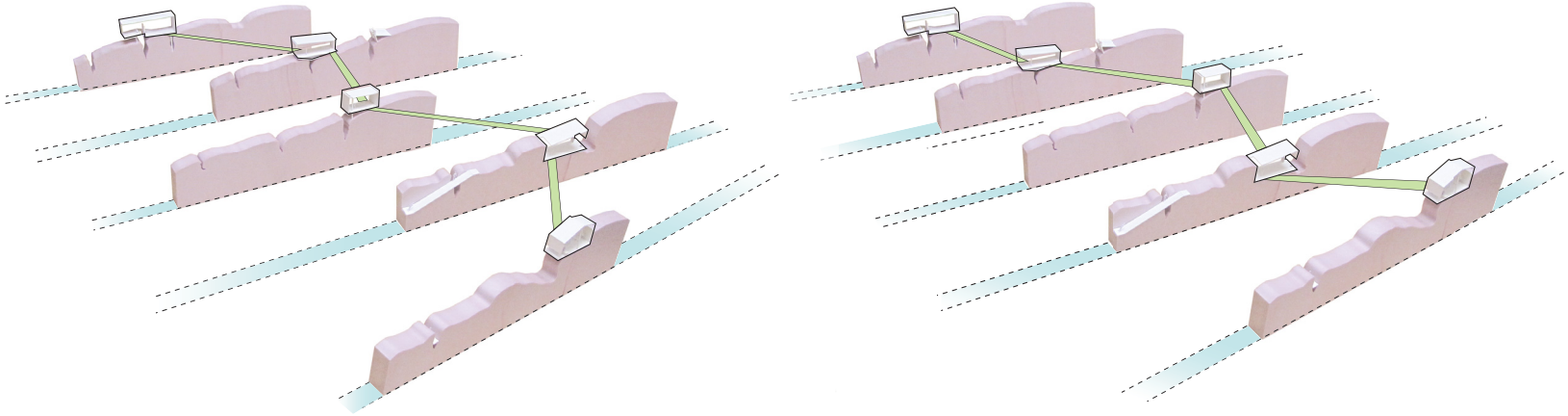
about connection or circulation. Spaces can be connected physically with corridors or exterior pathways, or spaces can flow into each other or have no implied path with the major spaces existing in isolation from each other. In this way a diagram for the flow from one space to the next is studied. Imagining the moments or programs as architectural identities occurring in an erratic fashion on the landscape. Connecting the critical spaces creates a spatial relationship that would lead a visitor from space to space, an experience that has linkage to the way in which one would traverse the rocks of Peggy's Cove, following the flow of the fractures and faults, producing a dialogue between landscape and architecture.

This strategy is rooted in experience of 'place', rather than focusing on sculptural form, the spatial sequencing and connection of the landscape was the root of the form. It is hoped that in this way the resulting building although potentially quite different than the vernacular architecture is accepted by the community for its connection to the landscape.

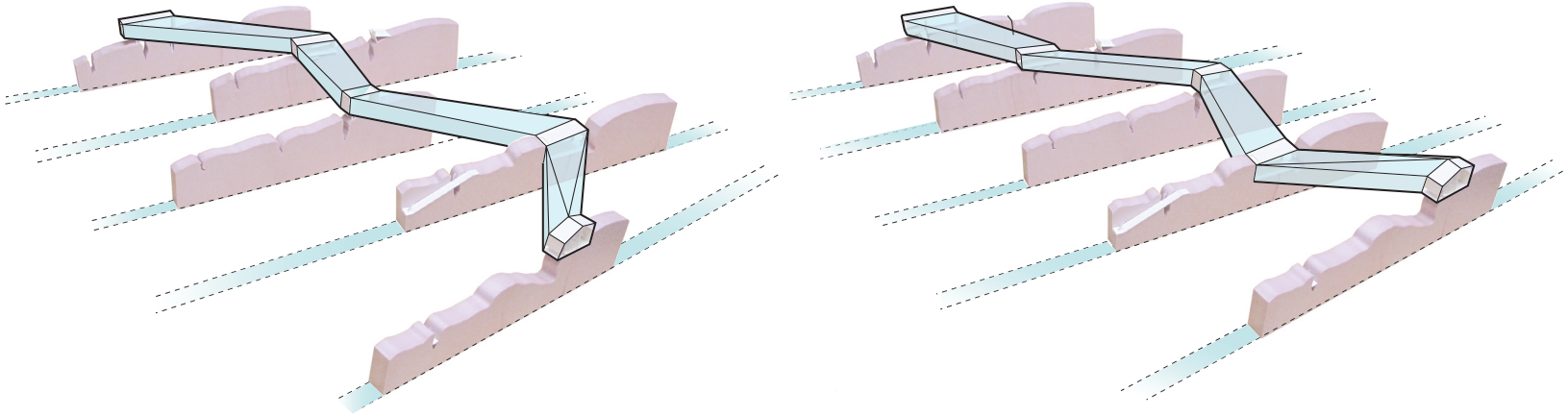


Diagramatic model of isolated ‘moments on a landscape’: foam and card 1:100

...form follows erratic spatial deposition



Moment connections diagram using paths

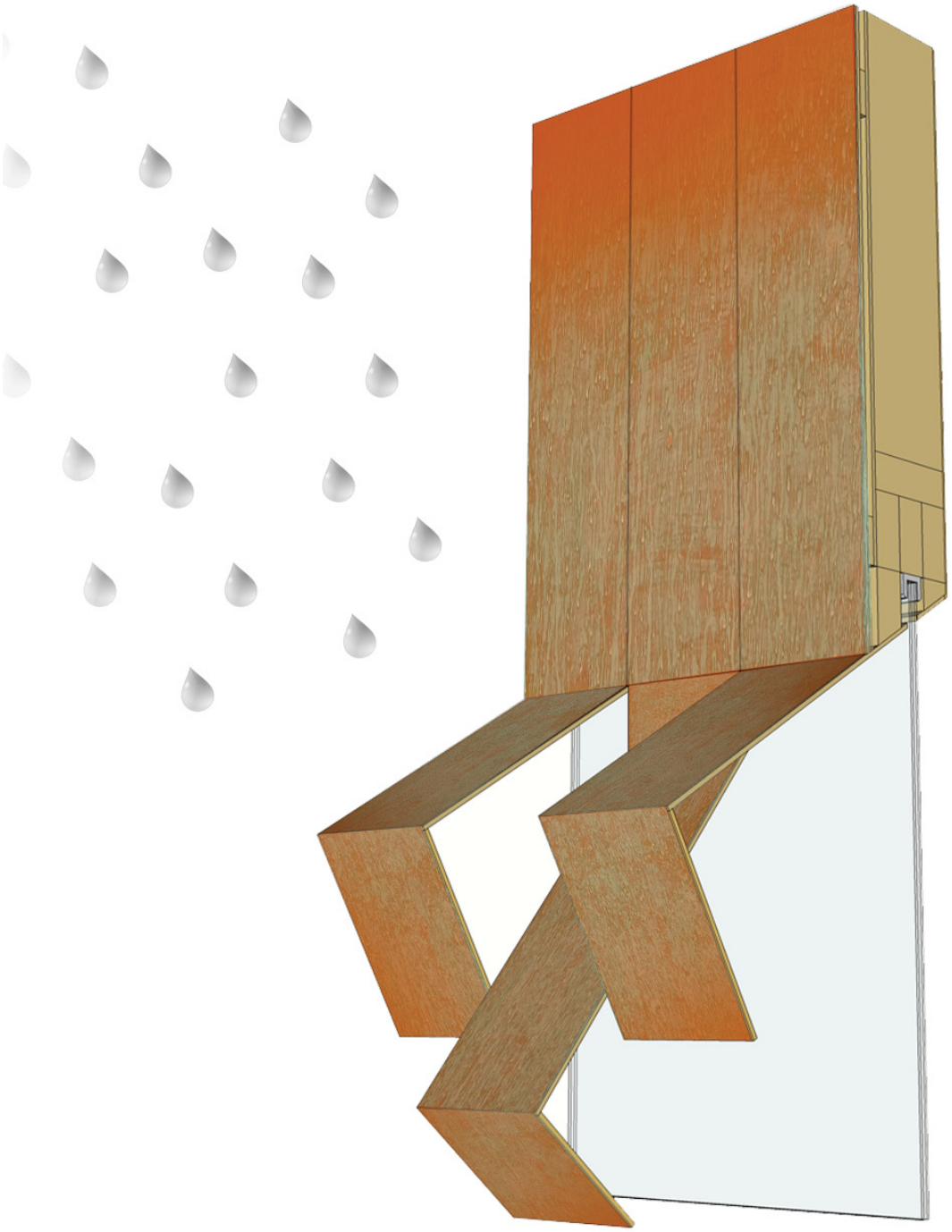


Moment connections diagram using corridors

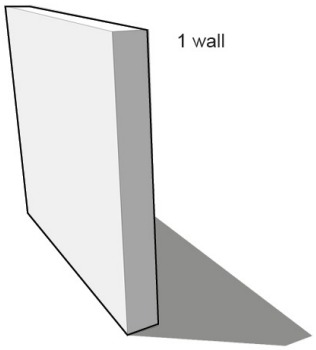
Material Mapping

Material mapping is a concept that has been developed through phenomenological observations of Peggy's Cove. In breaking my observations into physical i.e. glacial erratics, fractures in the bedrock, tidal pools and cultural forms like fishing sheds strike a viewer first because they are constant. These elements alone however do not portray the full experiential phenomena of Peggy's Cove, as in any given context there are characteristics that are less permanent or ephemeral, such as rain, wind, fog and light. Is it possible through architectures material expression, fenestration and structural relationships that as designers we can give these ephemeral phenomena a physical presence in a piece of architecture?

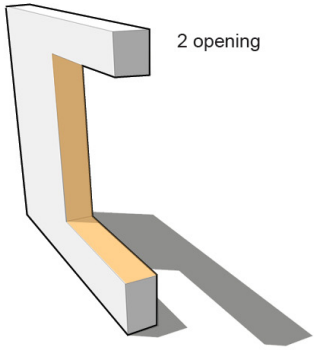
This method is called Material Mapping and it consists of the abstract mapping of the ephemeral through the use of material selection. Materials can be chosen in reference to certain site phenomena that don't have specifically permanent or visual presences. Materials that become affected by these characteristics i.e. rusting copper will thus give those phenomena a new presence on the site educating viewers in the process. This strategy is something that acknowledges site in a another way; allowing the building to be affected through time by climate and varying light conditions, thus, building and landscape, slowly merge over time.



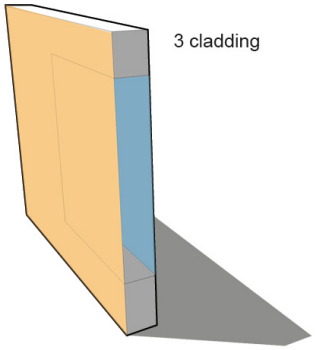
Early concept for copper detail that weathers and changes due to site conditions.



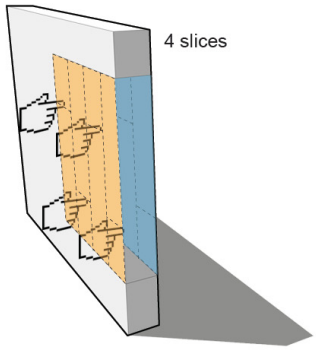
1 wall



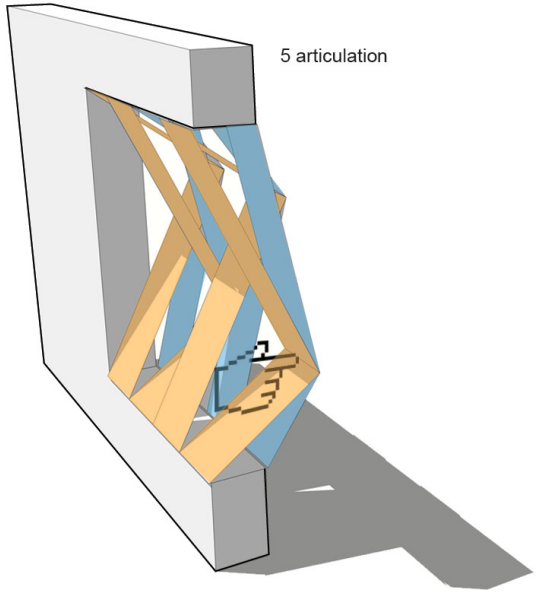
2 opening



3 cladding



4 slices



5 articulation

The concept of this detail is to produce a façade that reacts to one of the ephemeral characteristics of Peggy's Cove. Through the use of copper cladding the rain and moister associated with this place will be mapped onto the façade through the oxidation process. To emphasize this process the façade will be articulated in a way that different orientations will patina at different rates due to their contact with the moister and solar radiation. This will occur over opening in the building's façade and will act as gills that allow light to splash off the oxidized copper creating a colorful glow in the space. On the interior to create a seamless visual continuity from inside and out the interior cladding will seem as though it is sliding through the glass to the outside and then back in, as if the two layers of cladding, inside and out, were poked through where windows were desired.

CHAPTER 3: SITE STRATEGY

Summary

This thesis proposal is to be located at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, a small fishing village on the Atlantic Coast defined by a rugged granite landscape scored and shaped by the receding glaciers and a dynamic maritime climate.

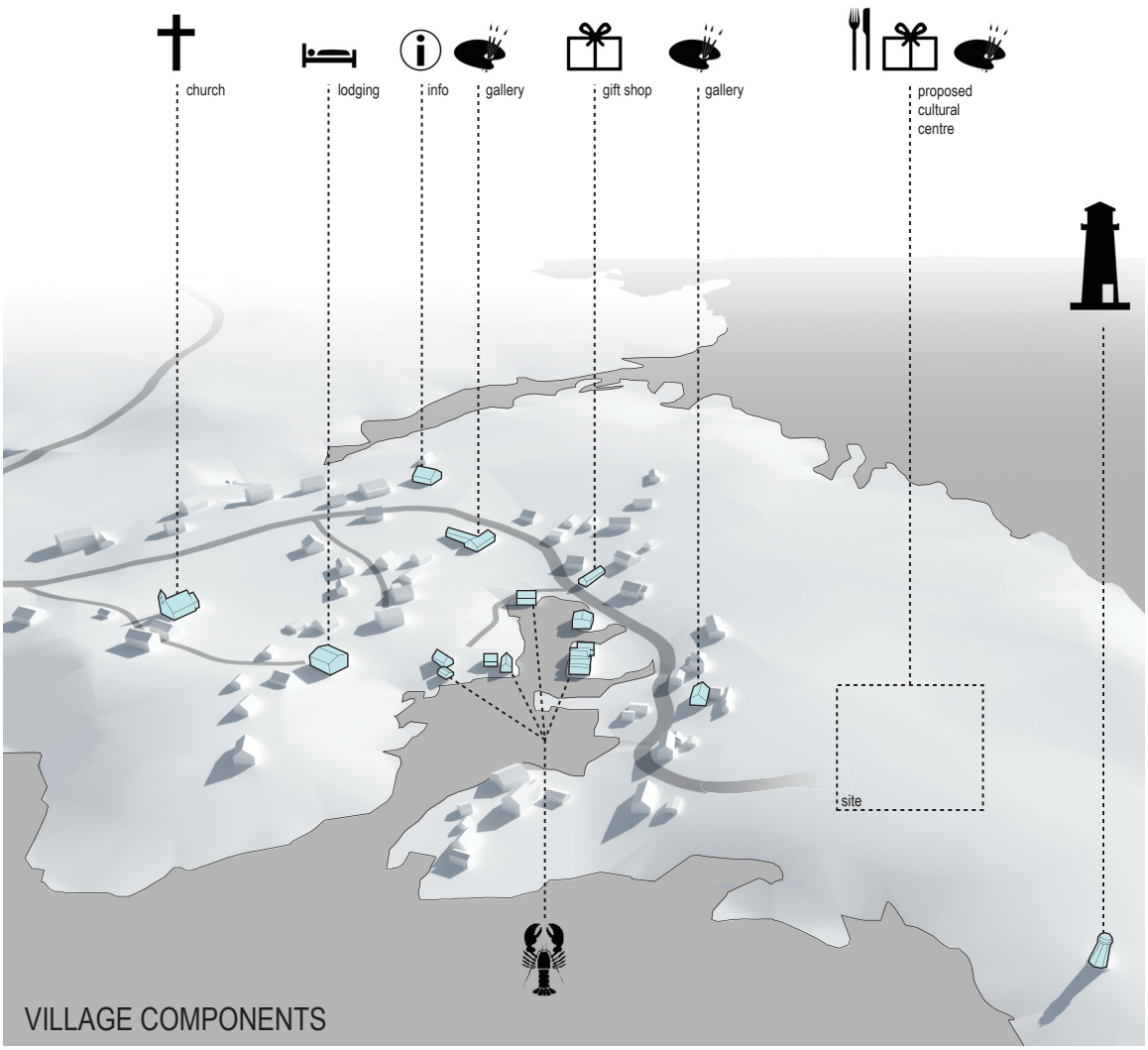
Peggy's Cove began as a small fishing settlement populated by those that preferred a quite isolation instead of the bustling centers of Halifax and Lunenburg. Its physical size and population stayed small because of the demanding landscape and climate. During the 20th century Peggy's Cove saw its most fundamental shifts in the way it was perceived and lived in. With the depletion of the fishing stocks off the coast due to over fishing, industry started to dry up and many other fishing villages like Peggy's Cove struggled to exist. Peggy's Cove was somewhat fortunate because at this time a shift in cultural perceptions towards rural settlements, landscapes and people was changing from one of disgust to adornment (McKay 2009, xix). Peggy's Cove with its unique natural landscape became an attraction on a global scale. Thousands of tourists, scientist and artists come every year to capture it's beauty. The tourism industry is now Peggy's Cove primary industry, and one that is critical to its continuing existence.

Extent

This proposal will be restricted to the barren bedrock outcrops which represents the quintessential experience of most people's visits to the

Cove.

The choice of this general area for the siting of the architectural proposition stems from a critique of the cultural experience in the Peggy's Cove village. While this site does represent the climax of both the cultural and village landscapes, with the unique bedrock outcrops and crashing waves the cultural component that greets visitors here is far from spectacular. A very large paved parking lot with a non-sensitive building that contains a restaurant and gift shop. The desire of the thesis is to present architecture that creates an edge to the view between interior and exterior, the village and the natural. A new cultural dimension on top of the Peggy's Cove rocks that adds in a positive way to the experience of the site.

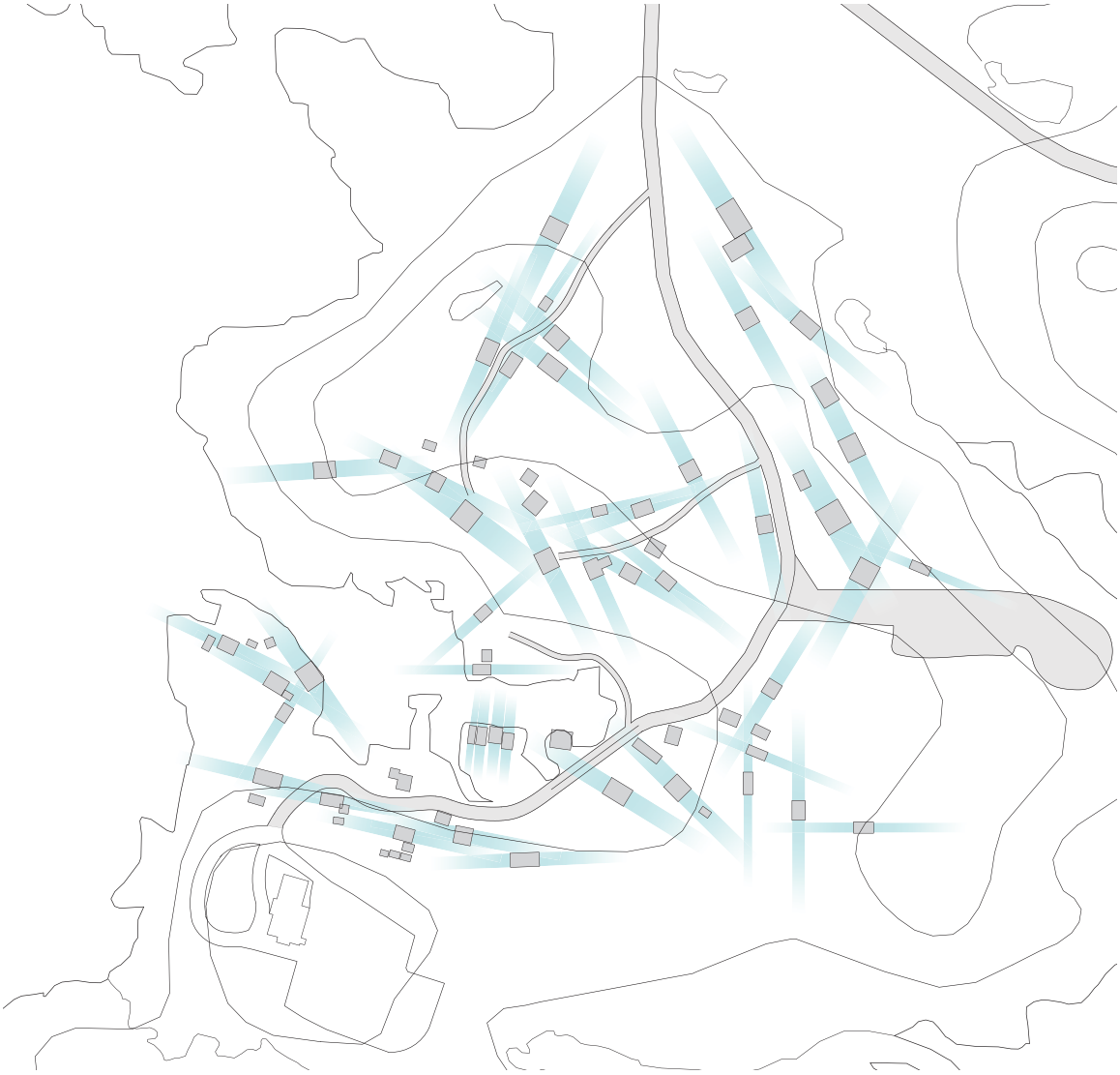

church
lodging
info
gallery
gift shop
gallery
proposed
cultural
centre
site
VILLAGE COMPONENTS

Building Erratics

After the initial phenomenological studies one of the major characteristics that affects the way in which we experience and perceive the landscape in and around Peggy's Cove is the presence of glacial erratics, which were left behind after glaciers receded from the landscape thousands of years ago. These erratics range in size from pebbles to massive boulders that are the size of small buildings. Many of them act as visual and spatial markers, defining one space from another across the landscape. The orientation and position of these erratics was dictated by the hard and unforgiving bedrock that the glacier was moving across. Undulations in the topography would pluck the erratics out of the ice sheet and this is why we sometimes see boulders perched atop hills as if they were placed by giants.

A study of the way in which the vernacular buildings are resting on the landscape was undertaken. A diagrammatic plan was produced that emphasized the orientations of buildings on the landscape and an interesting pattern was observed. Buildings seem to have found their resting spots in a way that is analogous to that of the glacial erratics. Perhaps this is due to the demanding topographic characteristics of the place in relationship to the light construction of the fishing huts and buildings, that they were forced to find a position on the landscape that was the most economical in terms of available technology at the time. Other factors, however lead to the

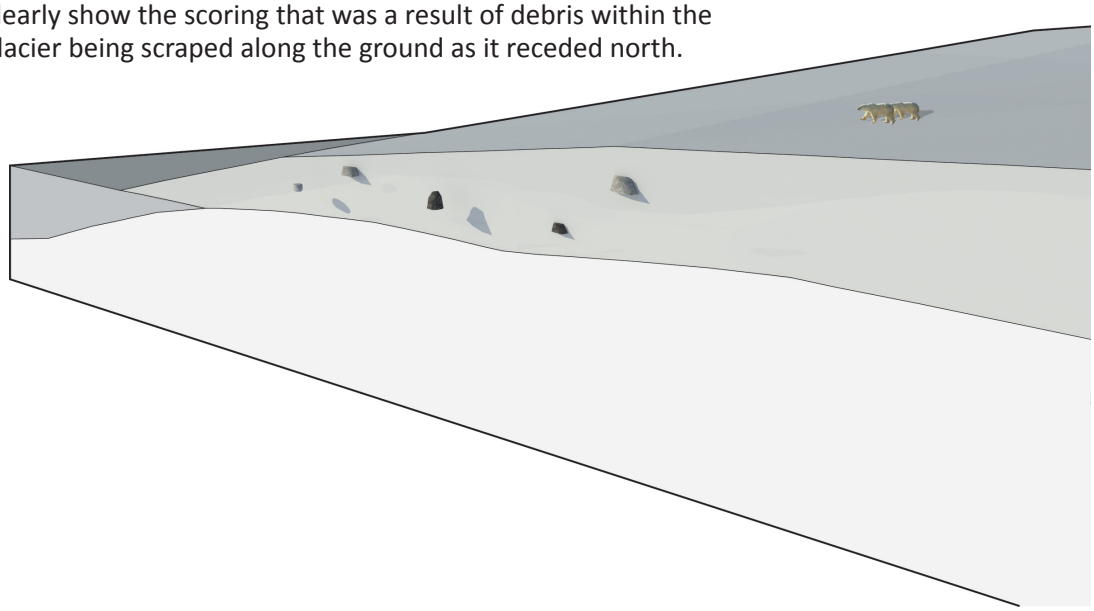
positioning of the buildings in Peggy's Cove but many of them still result in an erratic placement across the landscape. Things like sun, wind and view would have potentially resulted in a similar orientation for all buildings but factors such as the topography and availability of arable land produced an erratic urban pattern. This realization of how buildings find their placements on landscape and the associated characteristics of place gave reason for the initial placement of sitting for an architectural proposition that the community will accept.



Graphic diagram showing building erratics

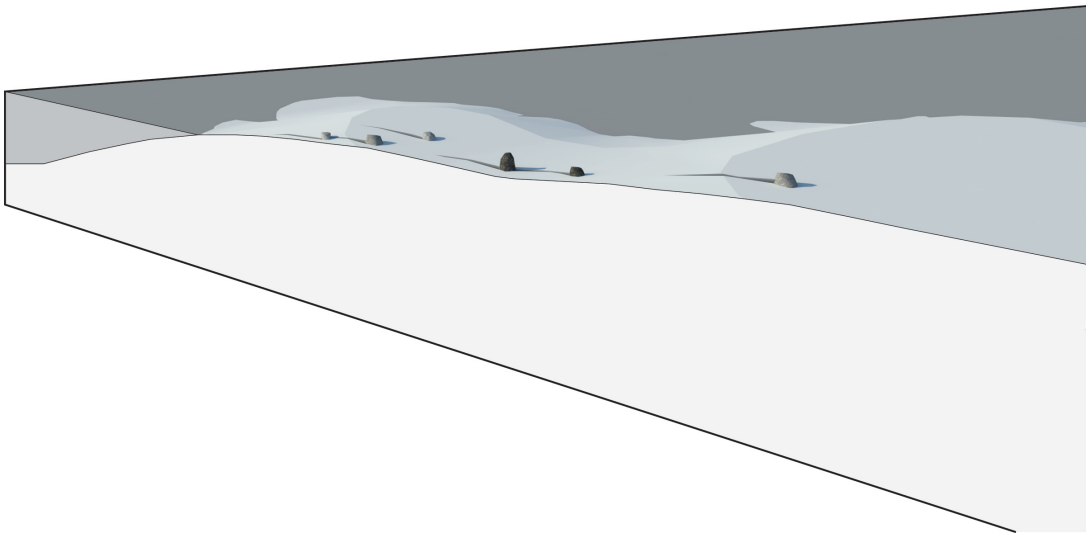
Glacial Recession

Between 10 000 and 70 000 years ago Nova Scotia was covered with kilometers of ice. The slow melting and recession of this ice sheet is largely responsible for the landscape we see today. It scored, deposited and melted into the faults, hills and lakes that define this coastal region. There are not many places that more clearly present these glacial affects than Peggy's Cove. Its barren bedrock outcroppings that are kept clear of deposition and vegetation because of wind and sever storm/wave action clearly show the scoring that was a result of debris within the glacier being scraped along the ground as it receded north.



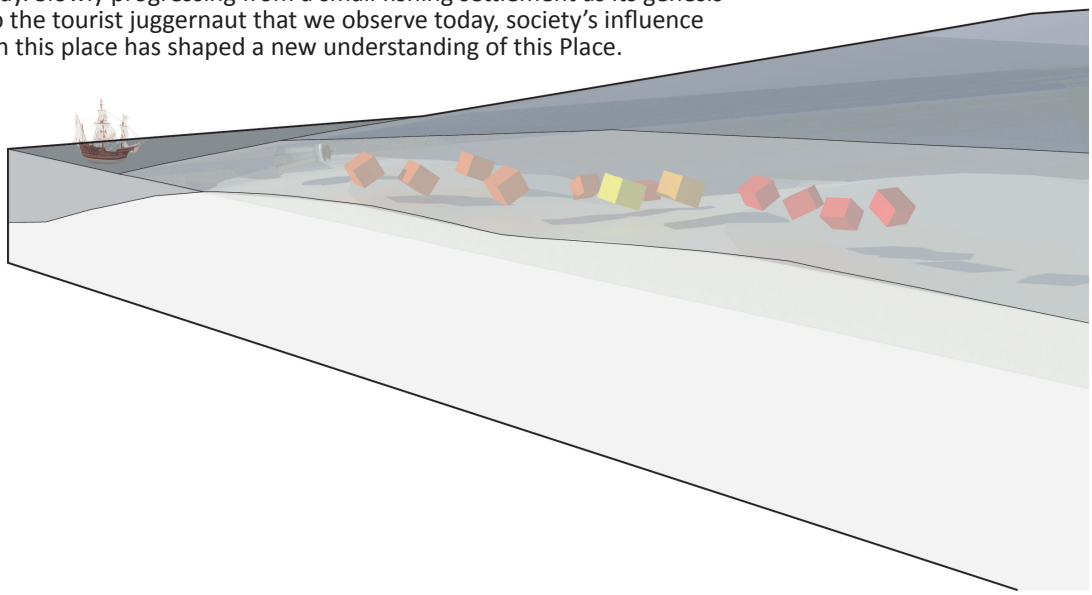
Erratic Deposition

When the ice sheet receded across the rugged landscape around Peggy's Cove it deposited numerous boulders that were being dragged across the land by the melting ice. These elements are significant elements in the understanding of the geological history of this place and they also define it. They define and shape the landscape in spatial terms; they represent points of destination and orientation. Known as glacial erratic's, they find their resting places due to the undulations in the topography and find the most comparable place to rest.



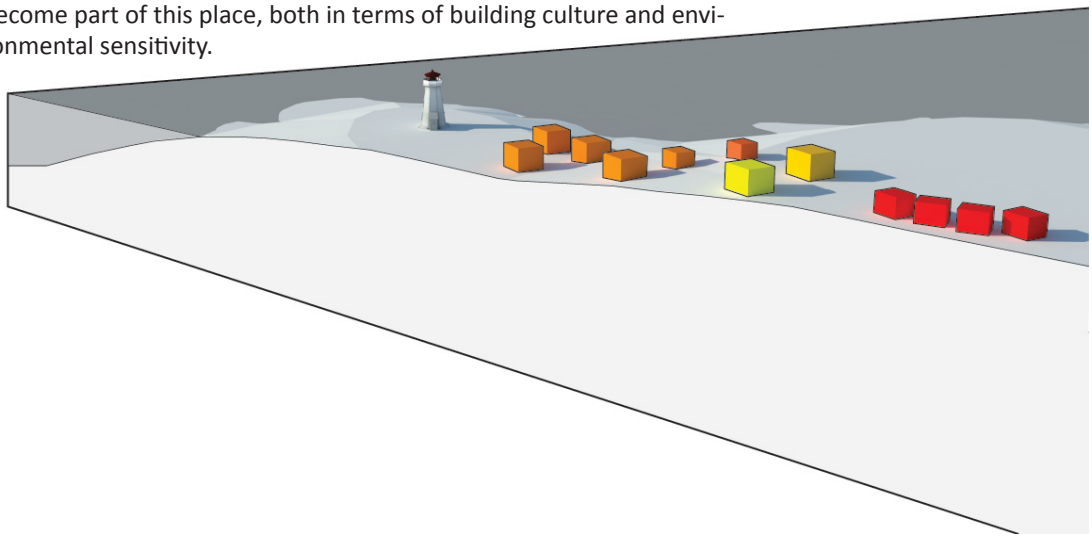
Cultural Progress

Conceptually let us imagine the progression of culture to places like Peggy's Cove as analogous to the glacial recession that occurred thousands of years earlier. On a different time and physical scale the sweep of human habitation of place shapes and defines it in a new way. Slowly progressing from a small fishing settlement as its genesis to the tourist juggernaut that we observe today, society's influence on this place has shaped a new understanding of this Place.



Cultural Deposition

A pattern can be observed between the way the glacial erratics found their resting places and the way in which buildings situate themselves on the landscape. Similar to the erratics, buildings have been sited in a somewhat erratic plan, a result from the demanding topography underneath that requires structures to find a comfortable relationship with the hard bedrock. A new architectural proposal should take this phenomenon into account when siting buildings if they are to become part of this place, both in terms of building culture and environmental sensitivity.



CHAPTER 4: PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Summary

The development of a programmatic strategy is secondary to the aims of the thesis work but it gives a base for the phenomenological study. While a proposal for new cultural interventions in this highly admired landscape would certainly be met with opposition, an argument can be made that if the project were to be conceived through the methods and concepts being outlined in this thesis it would enhance the experience of ‘place’. It would also provide an armature for all to experience the topographically demanding landscape. So what programmatic interventions would be appropriate for such a place?

Is it possible to produce an architectural proposition that provides “space” for all the user groups represented on the site? In this thesis there are four main user groups that could be addressed within any new architectural proposition.

User Groups

Locals

The current official population of Peggy’s Cove is under the 50 people, some of which are only seasonal residence, since they rely on the tourists during the summer months to sustain their businesses, they close them during the winter months. Thus only a handful of the Peggy’s Cove population is comprised of those living a lifestyle similar to those that originally settled there. So a new programmatic addition to the community

would most likely mean a new employment opportunity for those living in the community as the buildings would have to be maintained and/or curated on a daily basis.

Tourist

This is the reality of Peggy's Cove; while photos of the place depict it as an intact, quaint fishing village it is in fact closer to a living museum. The locals that still live off the land and catch fish no longer have to trek to larger urban centres to sell their goods; visitors from all over the world now clamor for their crafts, art and catch.

The strict by-laws that protect the area from new development have seen the village cease to grow as a community, no new development is currently allowed to make sure that 'the image' of the 'place' is not affected as it could be detrimental to the tourist industry.

When tourists come to Peggy's Cove it seems they do one of two things. Either they park at the lower lot which is about halfway up the road and walk through a portion of the village and finally reach the climax at the Peggy's Cove lighthouse or they skip the village and park in the back of the restaurant/gift shop and explore the granite outcrops and the lighthouse. A large number do the latter because this is the route of bus tours, of which there are a number daily.

The Peggy's Cove landscape benefits from being so rugged and unforgiving. If it were a softer environment like a forest or field the high levels

of pedestrian flow would deteriorate the natural landscape quickly, there the hard granite outcroppings are little affected by human footsteps. Reciprocally though, this hard unforgiving landscape makes it quite difficult or unsafe for toddlers, elderly or the mobile impaired to experience the site beyond the ‘Sou’wester’ restaurant parking lot. With a site that has become so ingrained in the culture and history of Nova Scotia and Canada to not have facilities that allow a universal experience of the place is unreasonable.

While Peggy’s Cove started out as a small fishing village the reality now is that it is a tourist attraction. While the tactic of restricting development all together can help prevent Peggy’s Cove from insensitive additions that could be detrimental to the success of the place, it is also important that there is room for it to change and culturally mature or it will not survive as a destination in the future. Through this maturity Peggy’s Cove will see a new demographic of visitors, mixing tourists with locals coming for a lobster meal, wedding reception or hikers taking a break.

Artist

There are currently a number of gift shops and galleries that display and sell work that has been inspired by this place. Artists from all over the world have been inspired by Peggy’s Cove and they continue to flock here to capture it and find inspiration. Through history artists have became so enamoured with Peggy’s Cove as their muse they made it their permanent home. Most notably

would be William deGarthe who's most notable work is actually carved into a rock outcropping which has become a museum/gallery dedicated to his life work.

In evolving Peggy's Cove as a destination for art tourism could enable similar to what has occurred on Fogo Island, Newfoundland. Where the Fogo Island Arts Corporation has a number of facilities that are being developed with art as there basis in an attempt to attract people from around the world to the community and develop a new facet in the local economy that will see it through the next century as the fishing industry dwindles.

Researchers/Scientists

The scored glacial landscape of Peggy's Cove tells a dynamic story of the landscape of Nova Scotia. It presents a natural classroom for geologists with its extensively barren bedrock formations and the surrounding landscape as one moves further inland presents an almost text book view of a glaciated landscape with extensive fields of glacial erratics and drumlins left from receding glaciers tens of thousands of years ago. As well there is potential to study marine biology within tidal pools and off shore.

Programme for this user group is general enough and emphasizes certain phenomenological features, which are primarily natural, they themselves would become abstract laboratories or classrooms or support for any scientific activity.

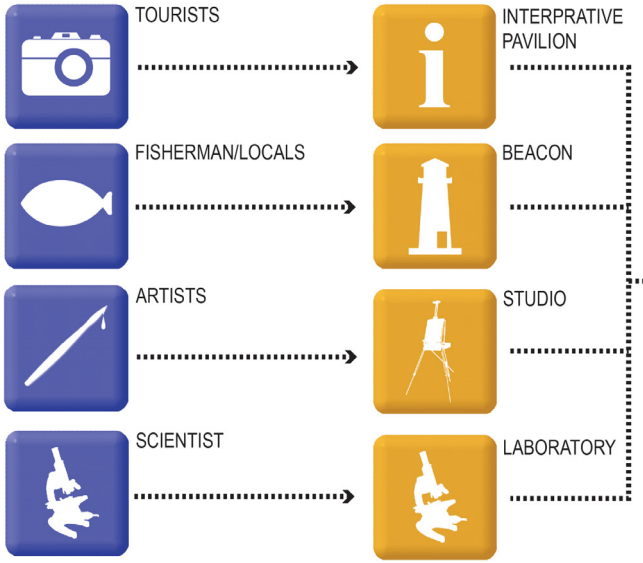
Representation of user groups at Peggy's Cove.

USERS

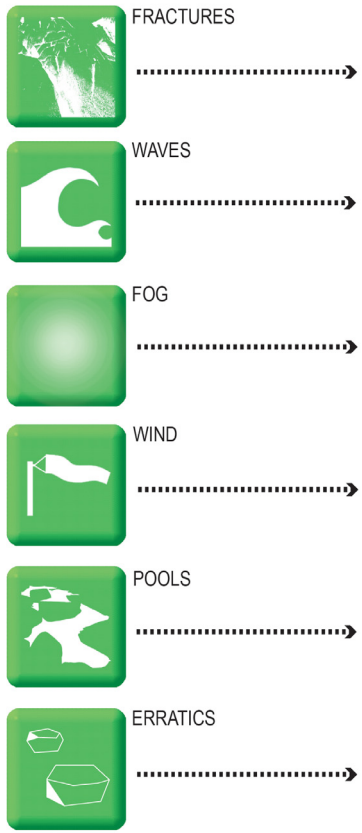
The user groups represented at Peggy's Cove comprise of tourists, locals, artists and scientists all of which are there to view, record and experience the landscape. It is possible to assume that the programme of any new spaces could be at first non-specific and would become defined depending on the users presence and actions within a space.

PROGRAMME

The user defined spaces would be arbitrary enough that they could be appropriated by various user groups to suit their needs. Essentially the project the proposal is a series of pavilions that become different things to different user groups, an interpretive pavilion for tourists, a studio for artist, a beacon for the locals and a laboratory for researchers.

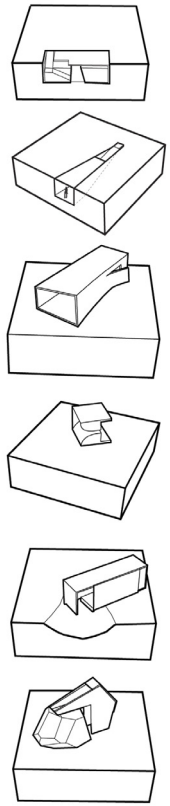


PHENOMENA



The variant between the pavilions will actually have to do with the phenomena of the place. Each space will be designed to isolate and focus on certain physical and ephemeral characteristics educating and furthering user's understandings of this place.

SPACES



First these spaces will be studied in isolation from each other, focusing on the human body's relation to each element. Some will be straight forward and visual, while others will link to certain characteristics through material expression or stimulus of difference senses.

User groups and associative programme

CHAPTER 5: DESIGN

Programme and Site Strategy

This proposal will be to re-think the existing programme that currently resides at the experiential climax of Peggy's Cove. Located on the line between landscape and village a new cultural centre that will house a small art gallery, gift gallery and restaurant will act as an experiential bracket to the landscape. The art will be displayed in a traditional institutional gallery setting and will not be for sale. The gift gallery as it is being called will have items for sale but the inventory will be curated just like the work in the gallery and is to include craft done in the local community or by artisans from other coastal communities. This ensures that a high level of authenticity and originality is withheld both with the art and craft that is displayed to the visiting public. The experiential unfolding of space, wall and window will focus a viewer's gaze towards specific site conditions, elements and phenomena, enlightening through experience.

In addition to gallery spaces dedicated to local work and artists. There will also be three work studios for artists in residence to come and produce work with Peggy's Cove as their subject. The orientation of these studios will be visible to guests so they may see the process behind the making in the same way they can see how their lobster is being caught down the road. These small studios will be flexible enough that they can become small laboratories for visiting sci-

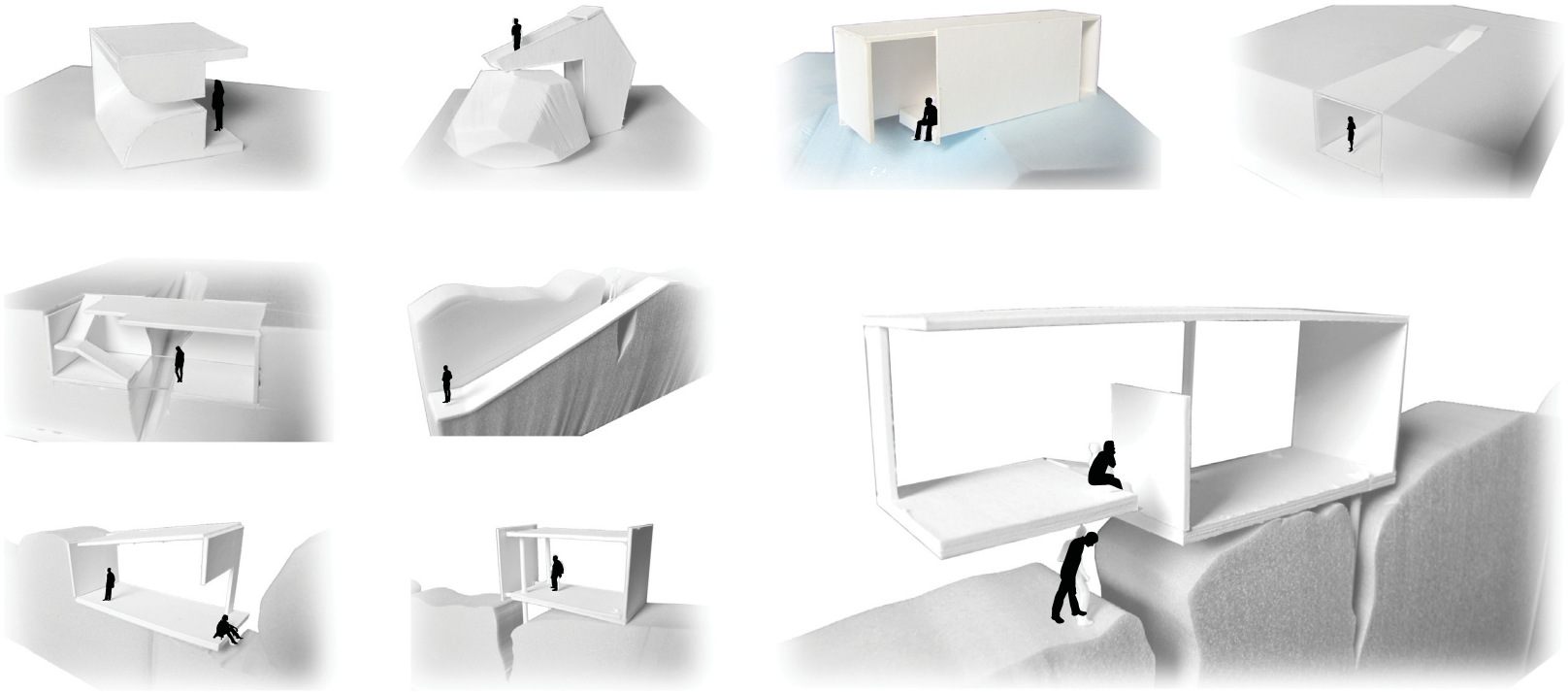
entist or classes that want to come and study Peggy's Cove.

The idea of having structures in the landscape acting as destinations along a small environmental research walk stems from the way in which Peggy's Cove is experienced. It is not a place that is experienced as one gestalt view or look off; but as a dynamic landscape, enticing visitors to explore. Visitors are enticed by the giant rolling rocks, traversing the landscape, drawn to discover what is beyond the next feature. The site unfolds through the act of traversing it. The site does not provide a prescribed path over the landscape nor does it have any interventions to allow for mobility impaired people to experience it.

The importance of walking as a tool for discovery and understanding is the root of phenomenological study. It is the study of relationships, between human beings and the objects of the surrounding world. As we move through space we develop an understanding of the place we are in. We start to associate meaning to them through this process. "Walking is a process of appropriation of the topographical system, as speaking is an appropriation of language. It is a spatial acting out of place, for example walls or other boundaries inhibiting passage" (Tilley 1994, 28). Through movement parts of the system-places or paths-are ignored, condemned to inertia, while others are activated through use or presence (Tilley 1994, 29).


1
2
3
4
5
6
1. prospect road/ highway 333
2. peggy's point rd
3. peggy's cove
4. clam pond
5. visitor centre
6. cultural centre

PEGGY'S COVE



Abstract models studying possible sensations an architectural experience could have with certain site based phenomena.

Experiential Axis

Two experiential axis were outlined that at together represent the essential movements of this place. A cultural axis which flows along the main village road that culminates at the focal landscape view and a landscape axis that flows parallel to the water's edge emphasized by the major striations in the bare bedrock. In aligning these two axes the building celebrates the meaning of this place. One inspired, protected and supported by the other.

Along these two axis a number of moments were chosen where certain spatial characteristics occur. This is where the building design started, from these points flowing towards each other. Once a basic spatial sequence was obtained the in between places were articulated in a way to draw a visitor from one moment to the next thinking about the floor wall and roof as new landscapes that enhance the experience of the existing.

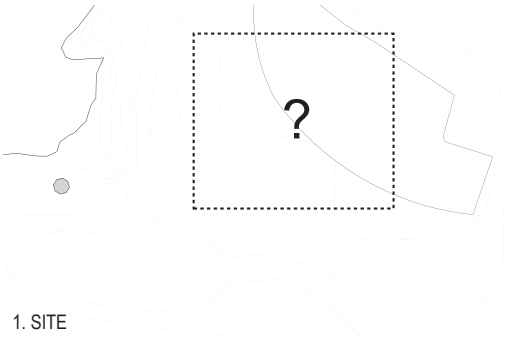
These moments along the path which present sensations inspired by ones in the landscape then have small studios that conceptually slide out of them and become positioned on the landscape near the phenomenological characteristic that inspired them. These small pavilions then become experiential interpretive panels that dialog through tectonics, space and fenestration with these characteristics to focus a viewer's gaze upon them in isolation; educating through experience.

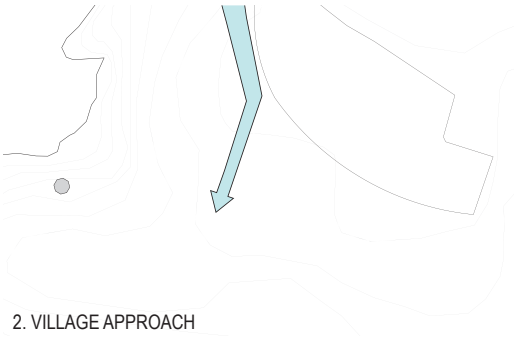
Associative Programme

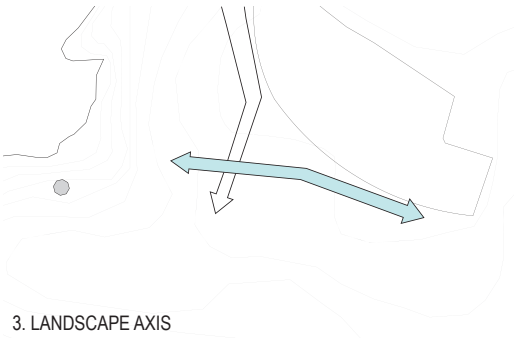
Associative Programming looks at these experiential lines and then associates' parts of the programme brief with experience. Placed along the cultural axis we have the entry court, which is a sort of town square for the building. It collects the public and disperses them either into parts of the building and acts as a threshold between the village and landscape experience. Within the building along the cultural axis we first have the art gallery which contains cultural relics that have been inspired by coastal landscapes showing how these places have inspired culture. Then the gift gallery which has a number of crafts produced locally that can be purchased by visitors supporting the village economy. Finally at the meeting intersection of the cultural and landscape axis there is the waiting pool which presents a spot to stop and view the lighthouse and surrounding landscape. This point in the building marks the intersection of these two axes but also it frames a view of the same, lighthouse and landscape. The lighthouse is probably the most important cultural relic of this place and it exists because of this rugged landscape.

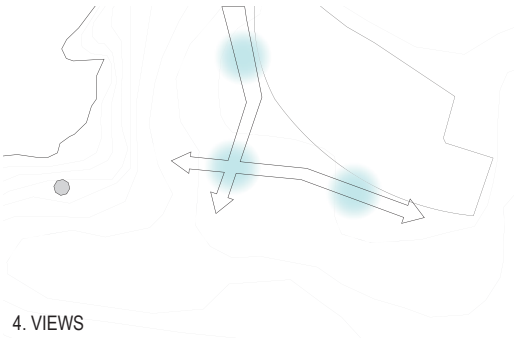
Then along the landscape axis the choreography between presenting and withholding the landscape becomes more dynamic. Allowing one to view the landscape through a variety of frames and sometimes diffusing the view and emphasizing certain ephemeral characteristics. The programme that is associated with this axis has to do more with the products of the land-

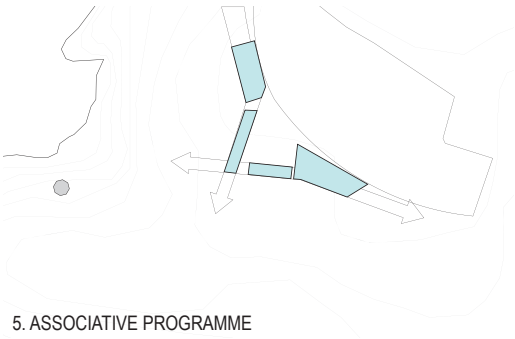
scape that we use as a cultural. In this case we have the lobster gallery, which presents the most important export of the village and a restaurant that serves food made from local ingredients by chefs in residence.

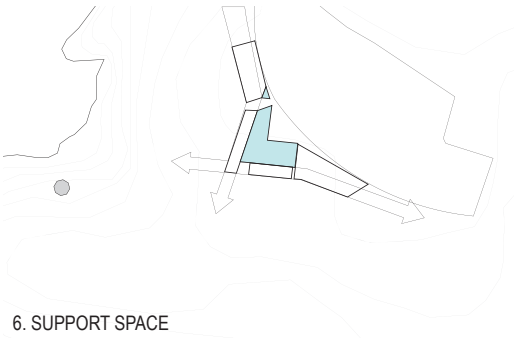




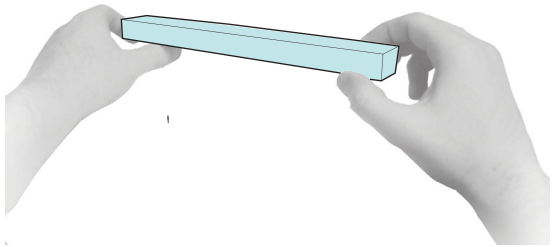




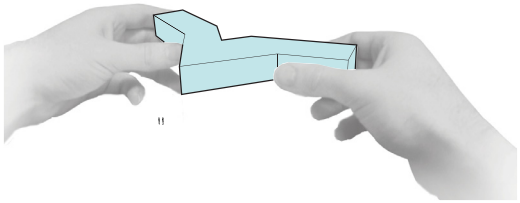




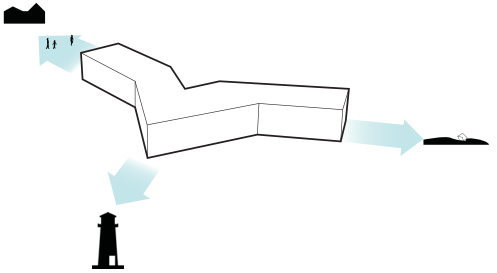
Site strategy diagram



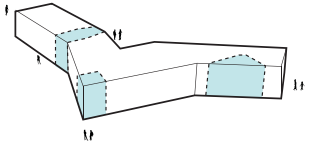
1. programme



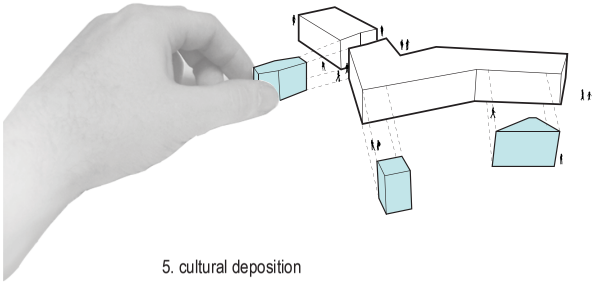
2. context manipulation



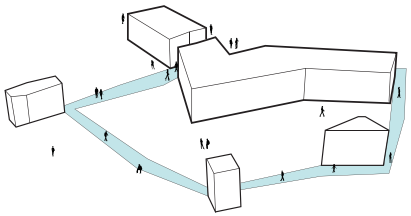
3. visual connections



4. erratic moments

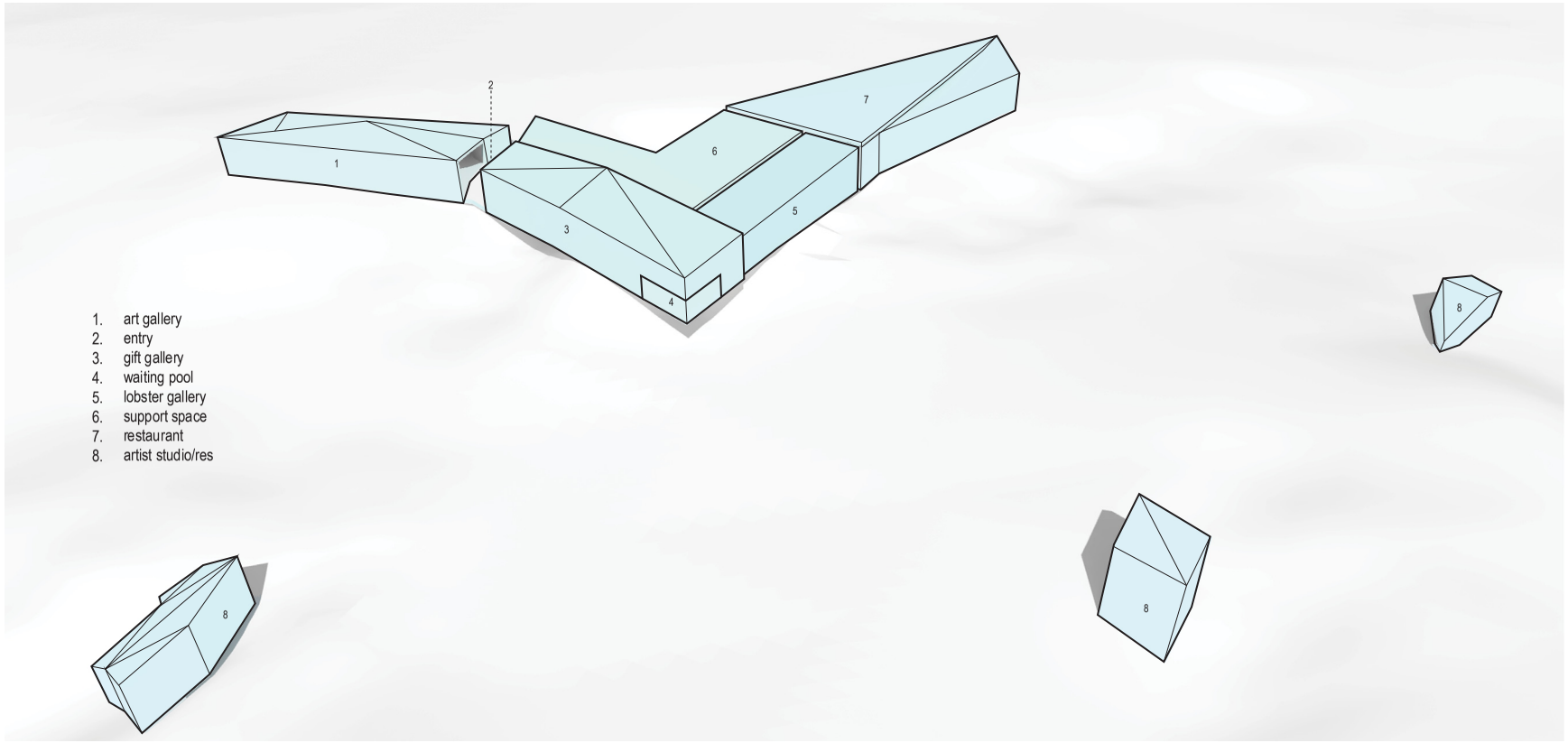


5. cultural deposition



6. moment connections

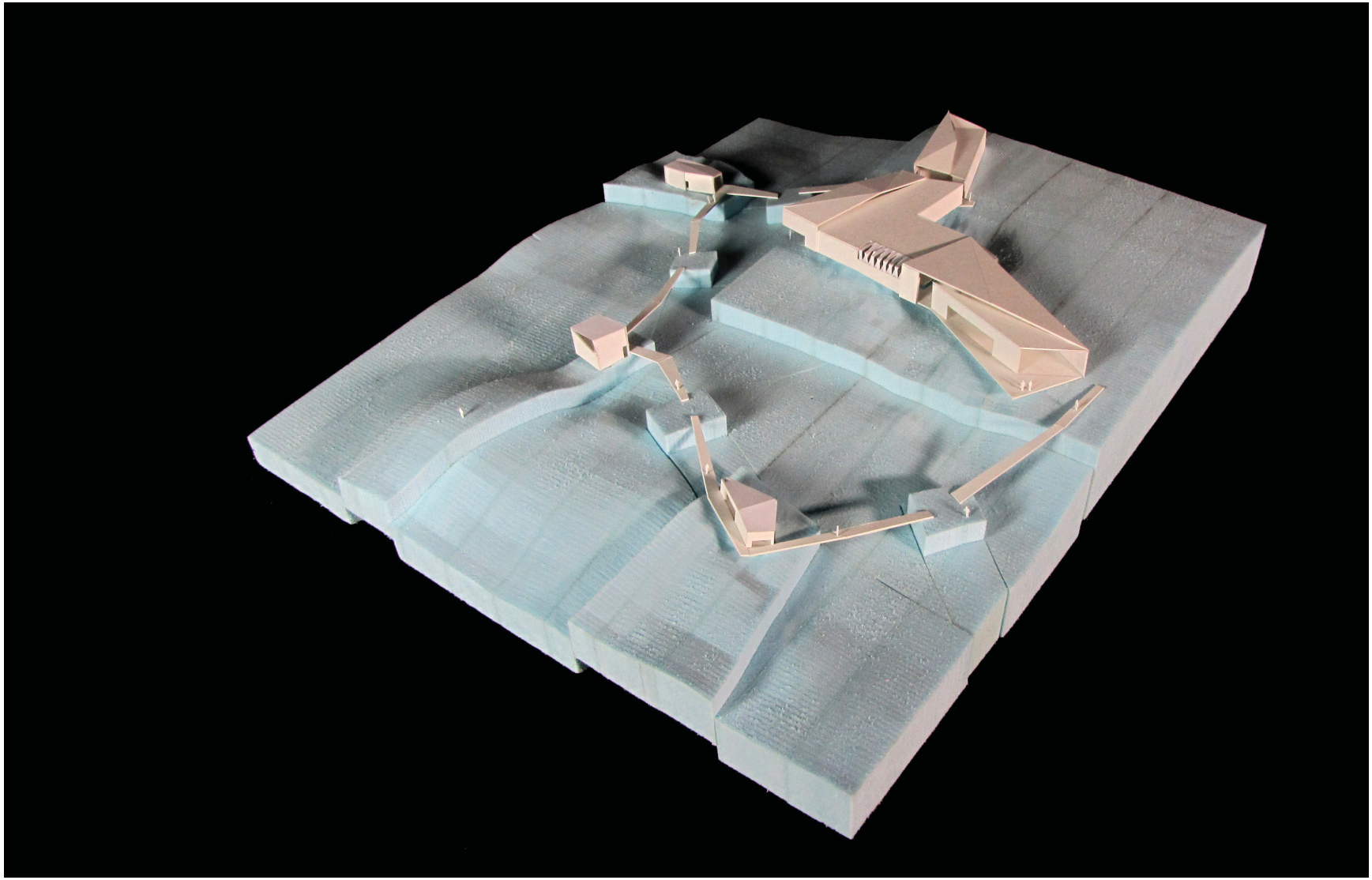
Architectural concept diagram.



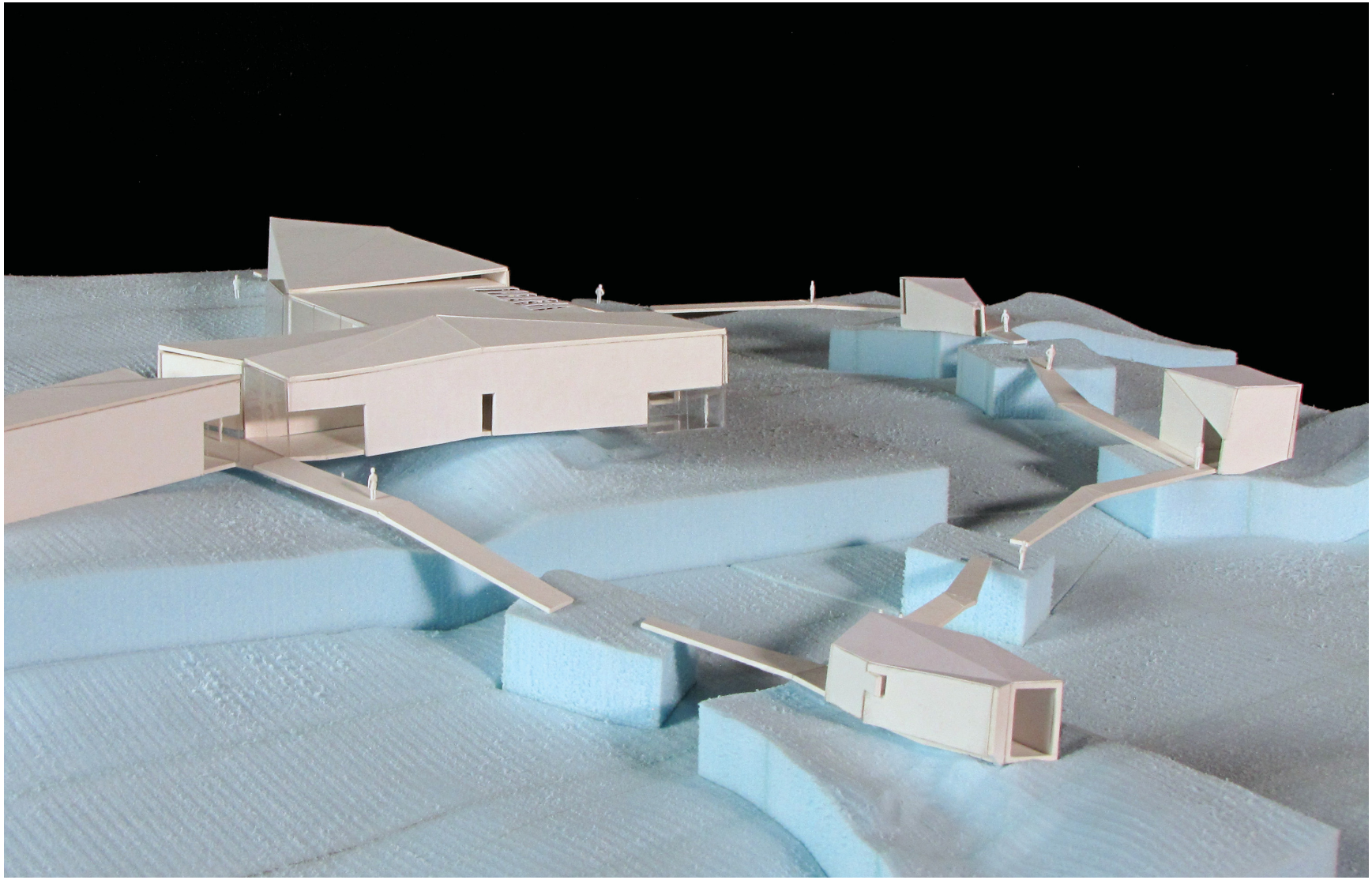
Programme diagram.


1. entry drop off
2. parking
3. art gallery
4. gift gallery
5. restaurant
6. walking path
7. tube studio
8. tower studio
9. shed studio
10. lighthouse

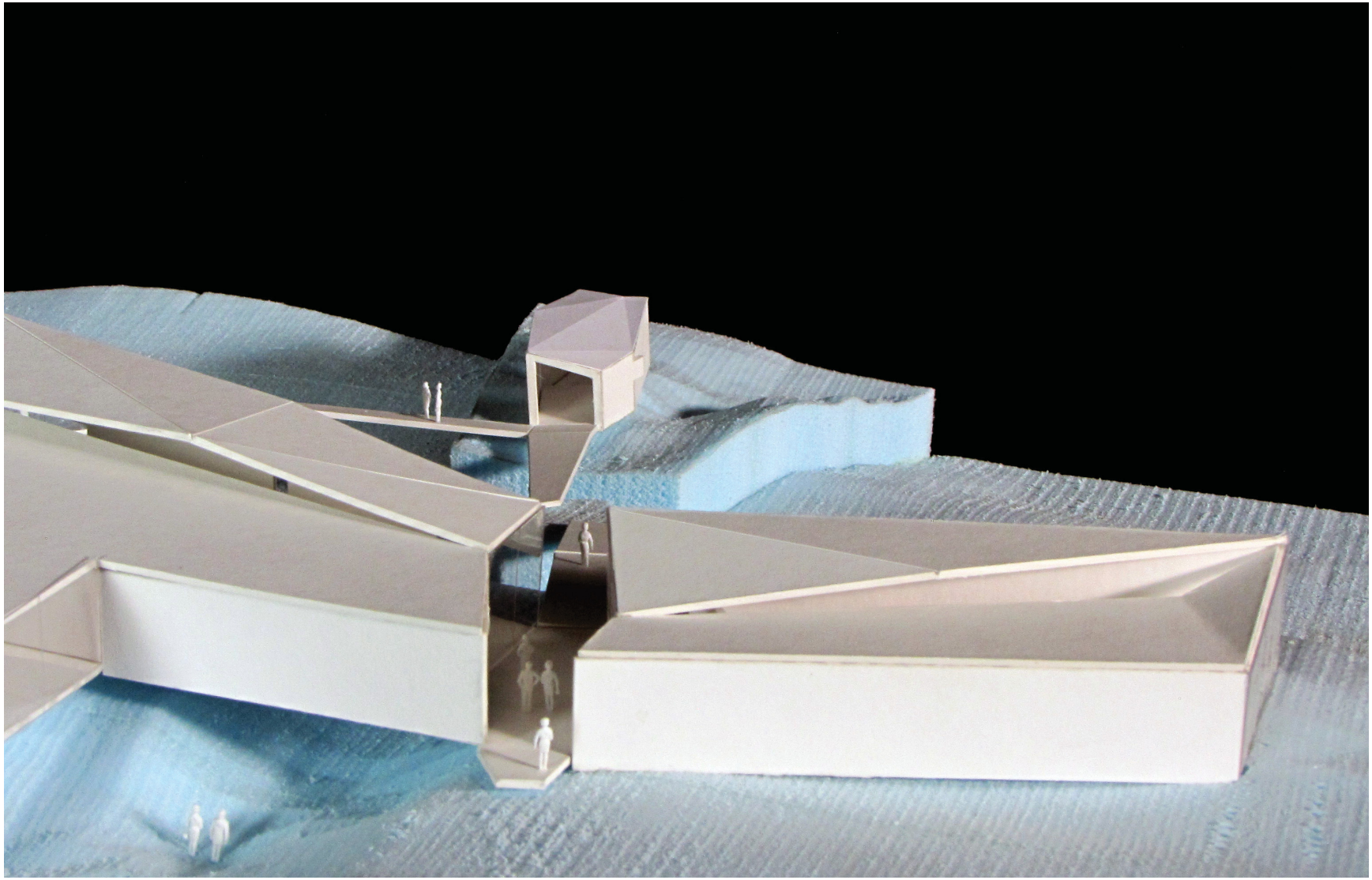
Site plan.



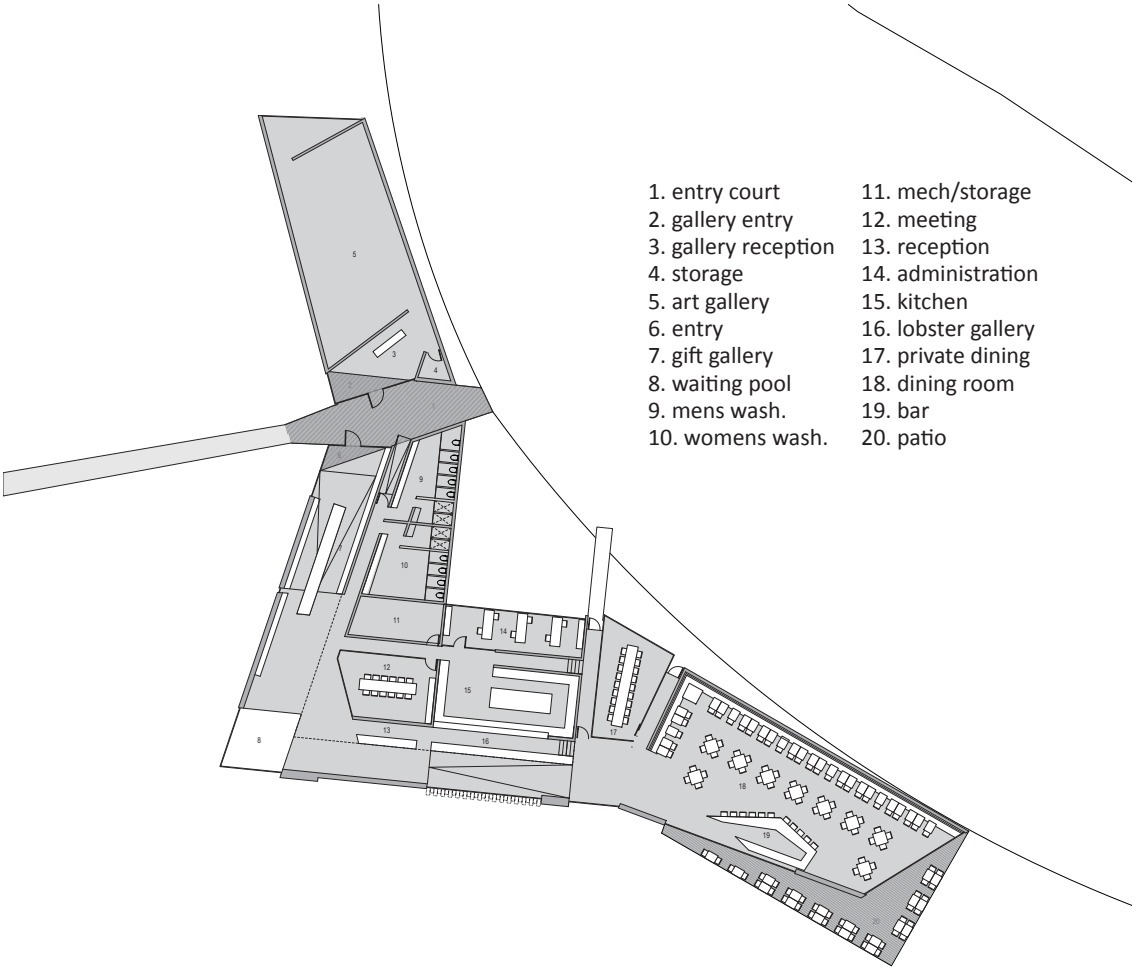
1:200 model of cultural centre and artist studios: foam, card, paper.



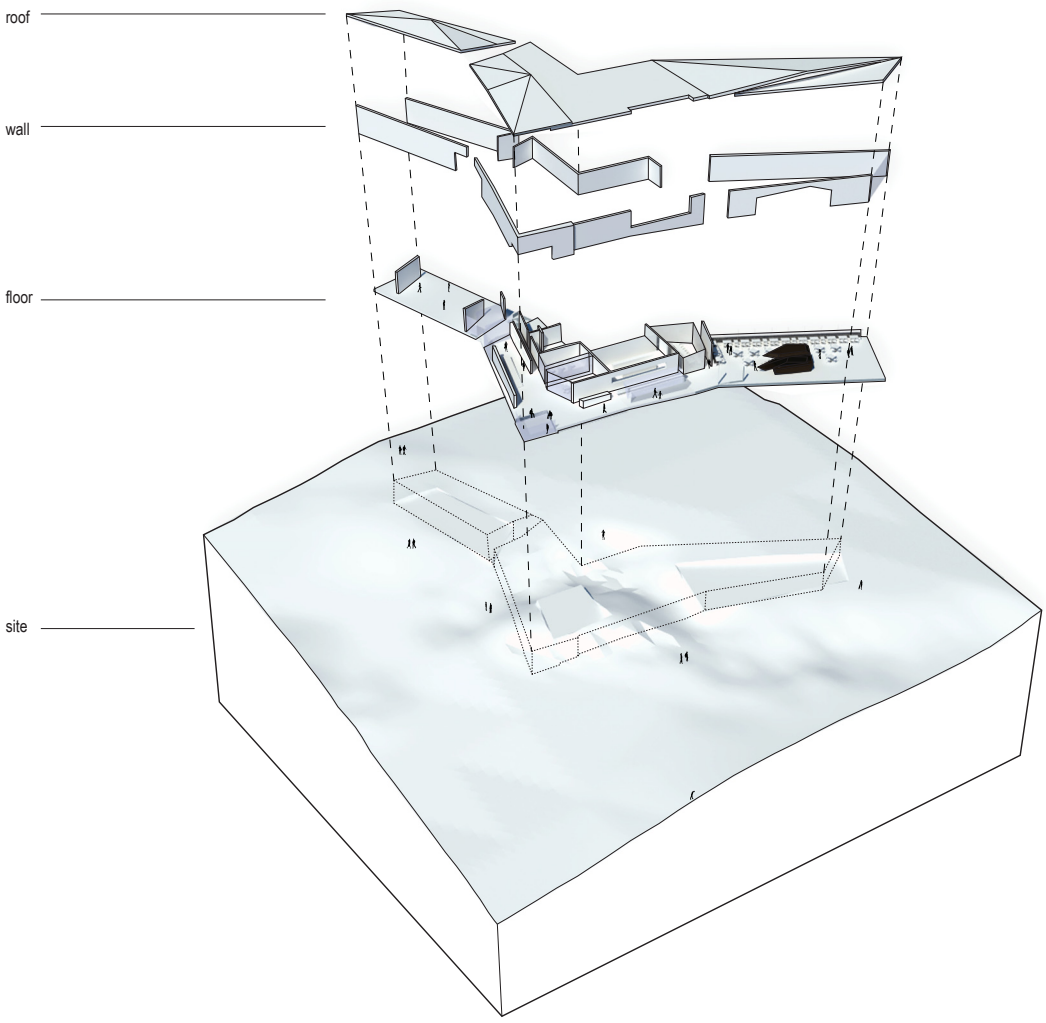
1:200 model of cultural centre and artist studios: foam, card, paper.



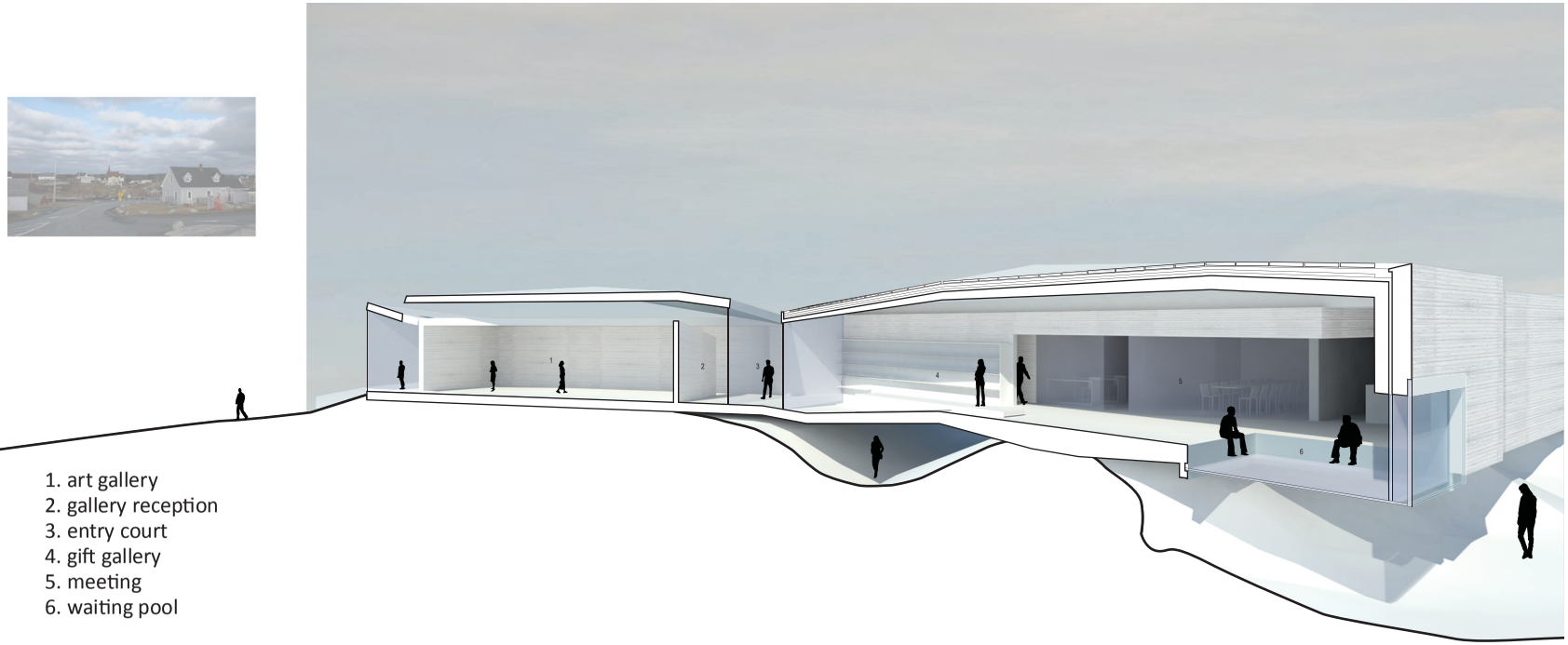
1:200 model of cultural centre and artist studios: foam, card, paper.



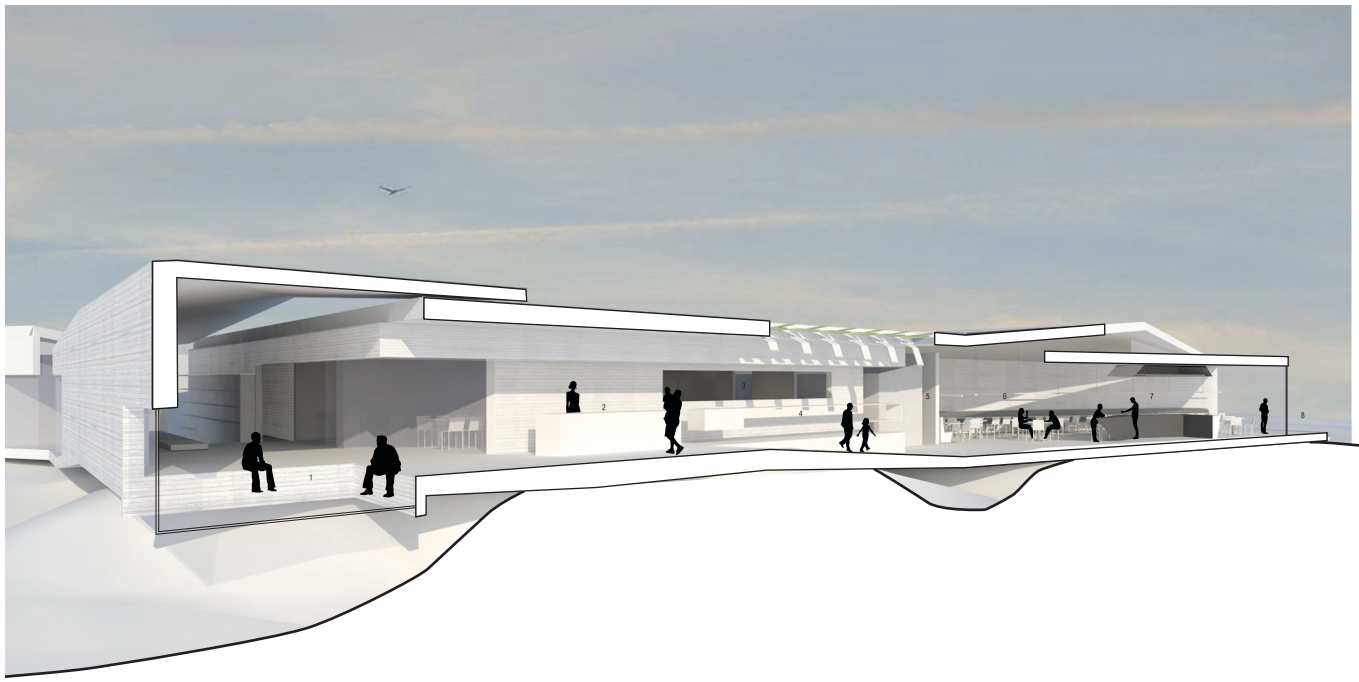
Main building plan.



Axo



Cultural axis.



1. waiting pool
2. reception desk
3. kitchen
4. lobster gallery
5. private dining
6. dining room
7. bar
8. patio

Landscape axis.

Exterior entry court.

Gift gallery.

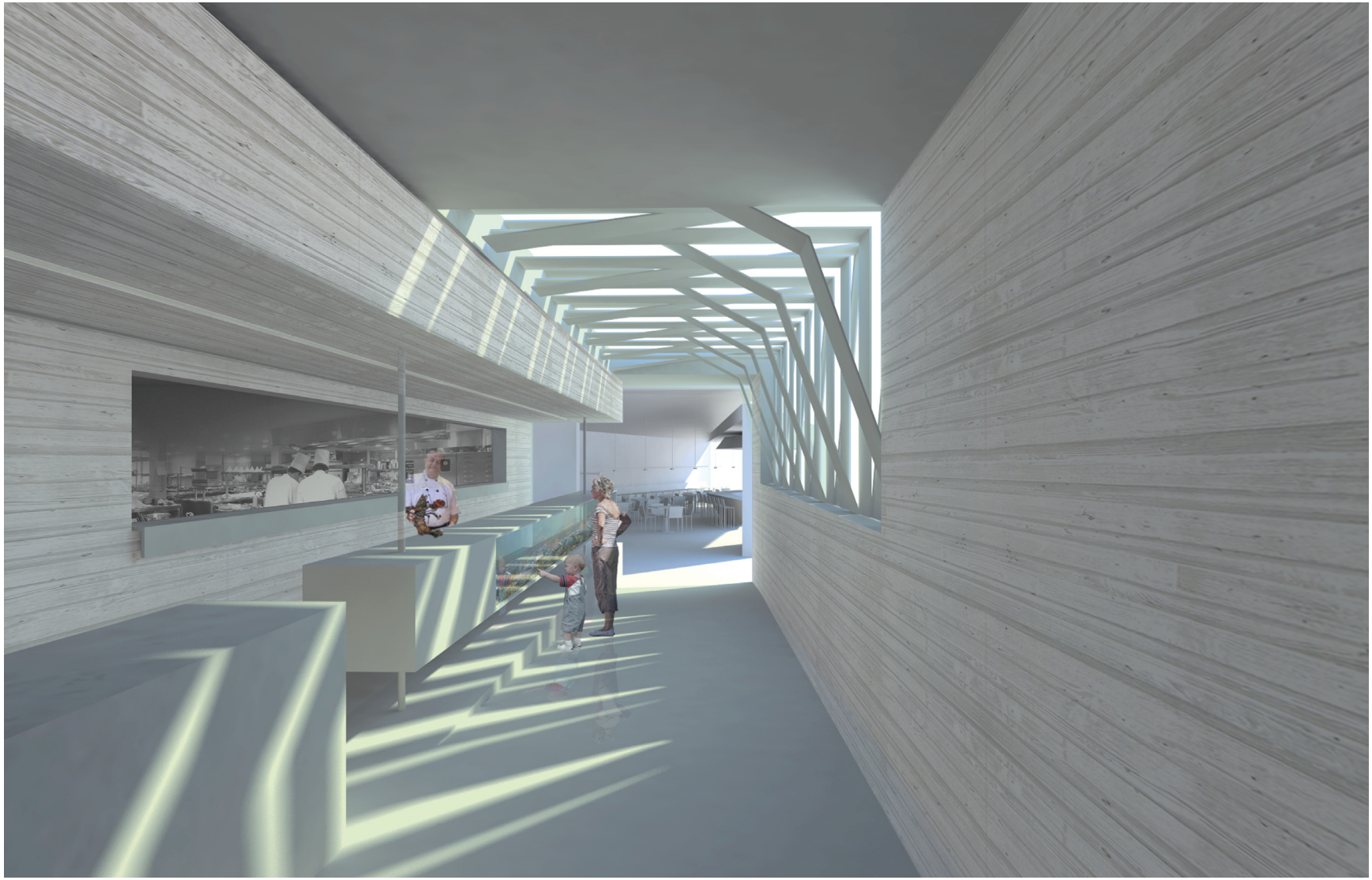
Details: Experiential Stewards

Using this experiential approach, details become linked to an experience of ‘place’ and are developed to reflect this. Instead of using standard industry components the details are pushed to emphasize the desired architectural sensations.

For example one detail in this project, the waiting pool area, which would be experienced as another point of view that would not exist without the building. Through this cutting away of the presence of the architecture you enable this. With this in mind we, as designers can have a starting point for the conceptualizing of the details as an extension of the architectural experience.

Another example would be the detail existing in the lobster gallery. This detail was conceived while thinking about how light would be brought into a space, presenting a new ephemeral experience that is altered daily by site phenomena.

Waiting pool.

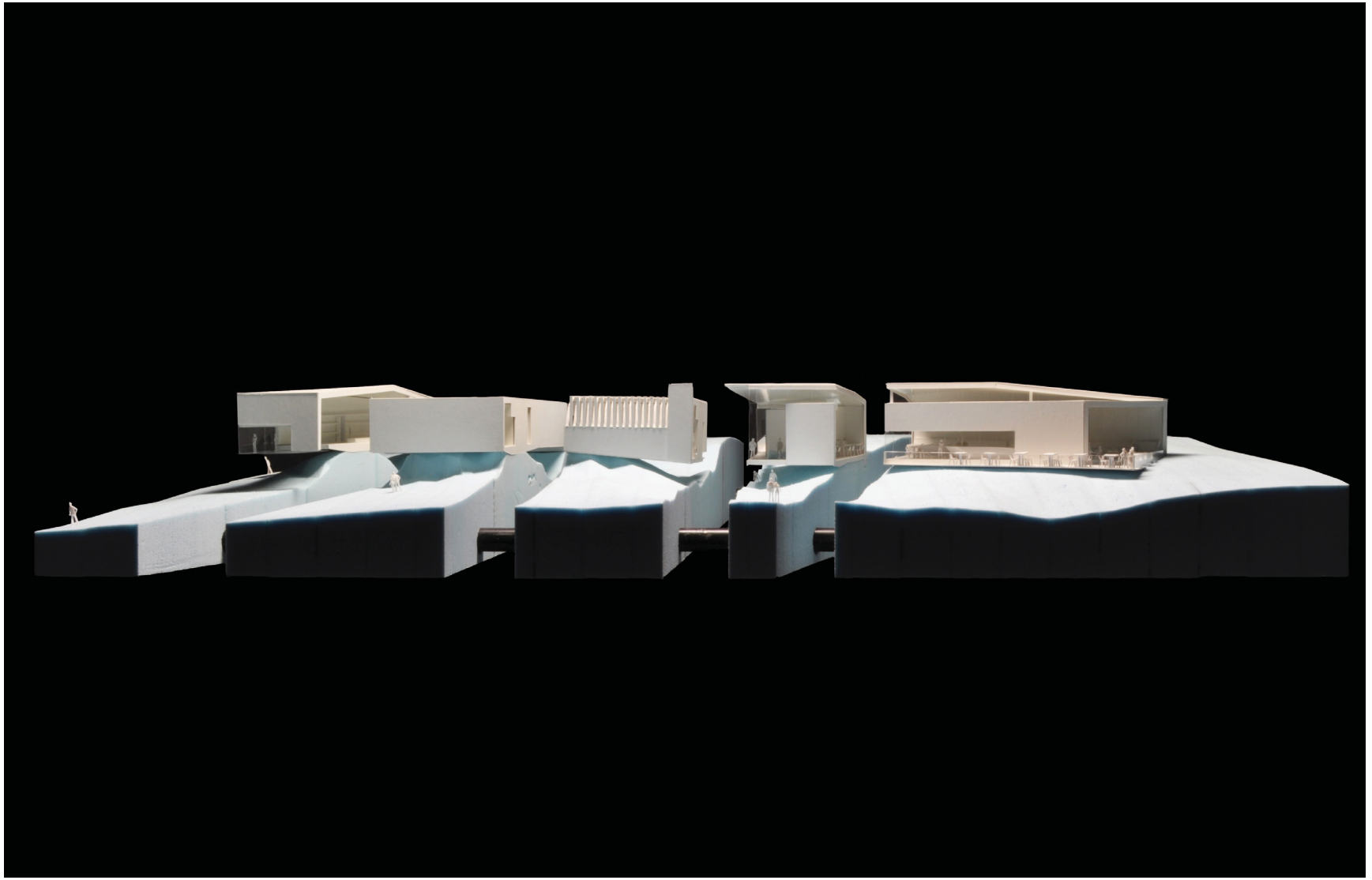


Lobster gallery.

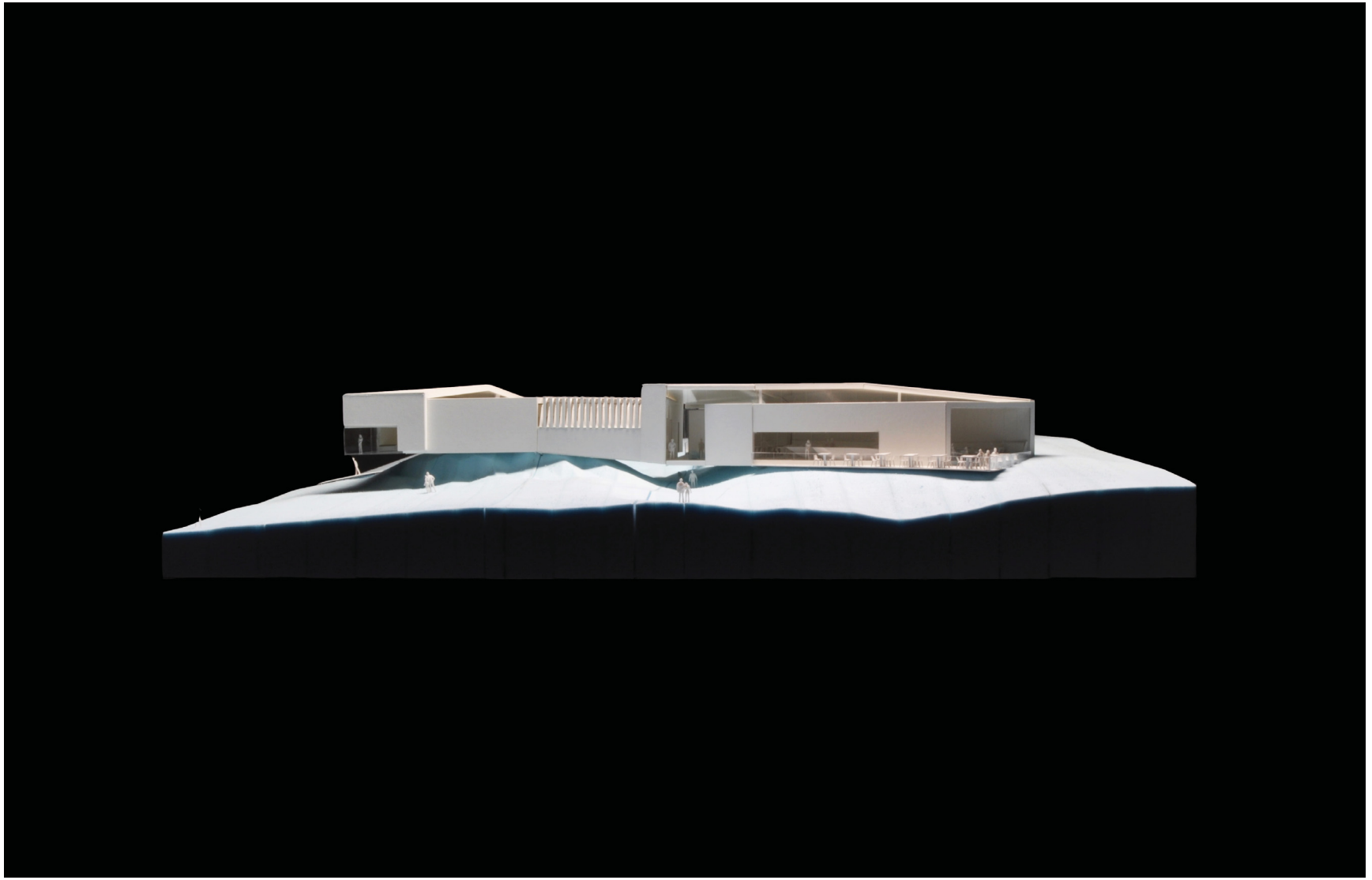
Dining room.

Art gallery.

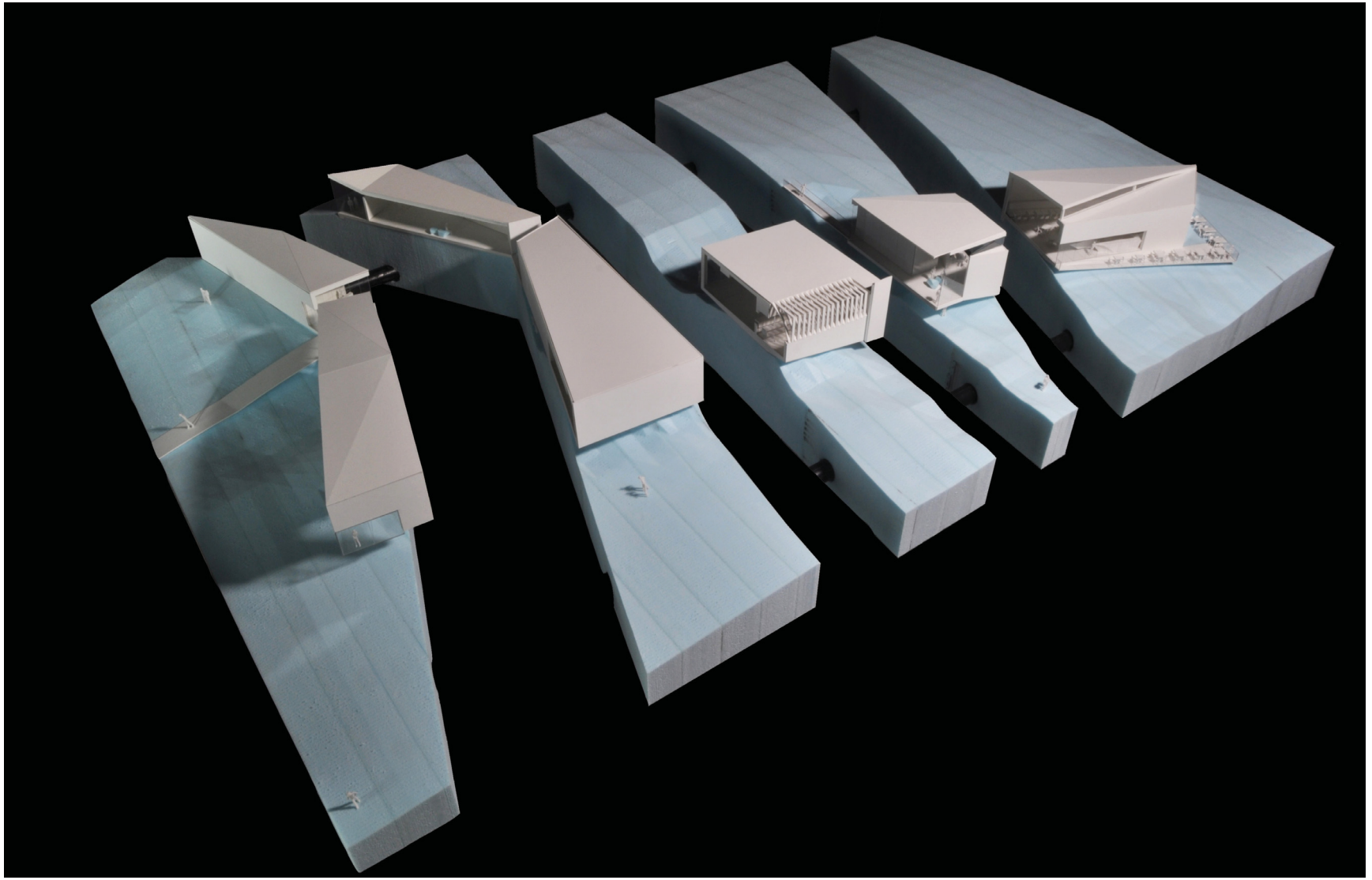
Exterior perspective.



1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.



1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.



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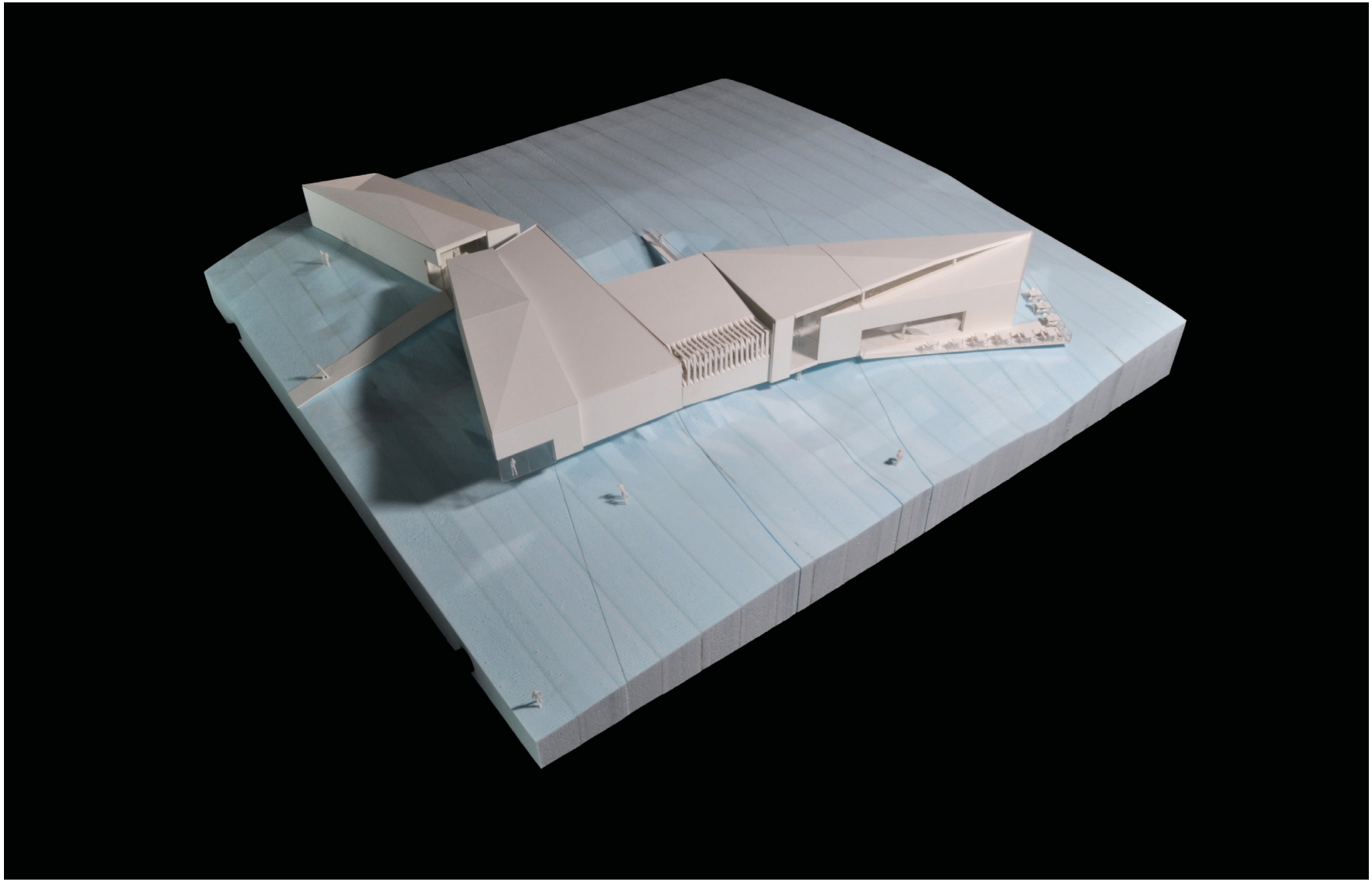
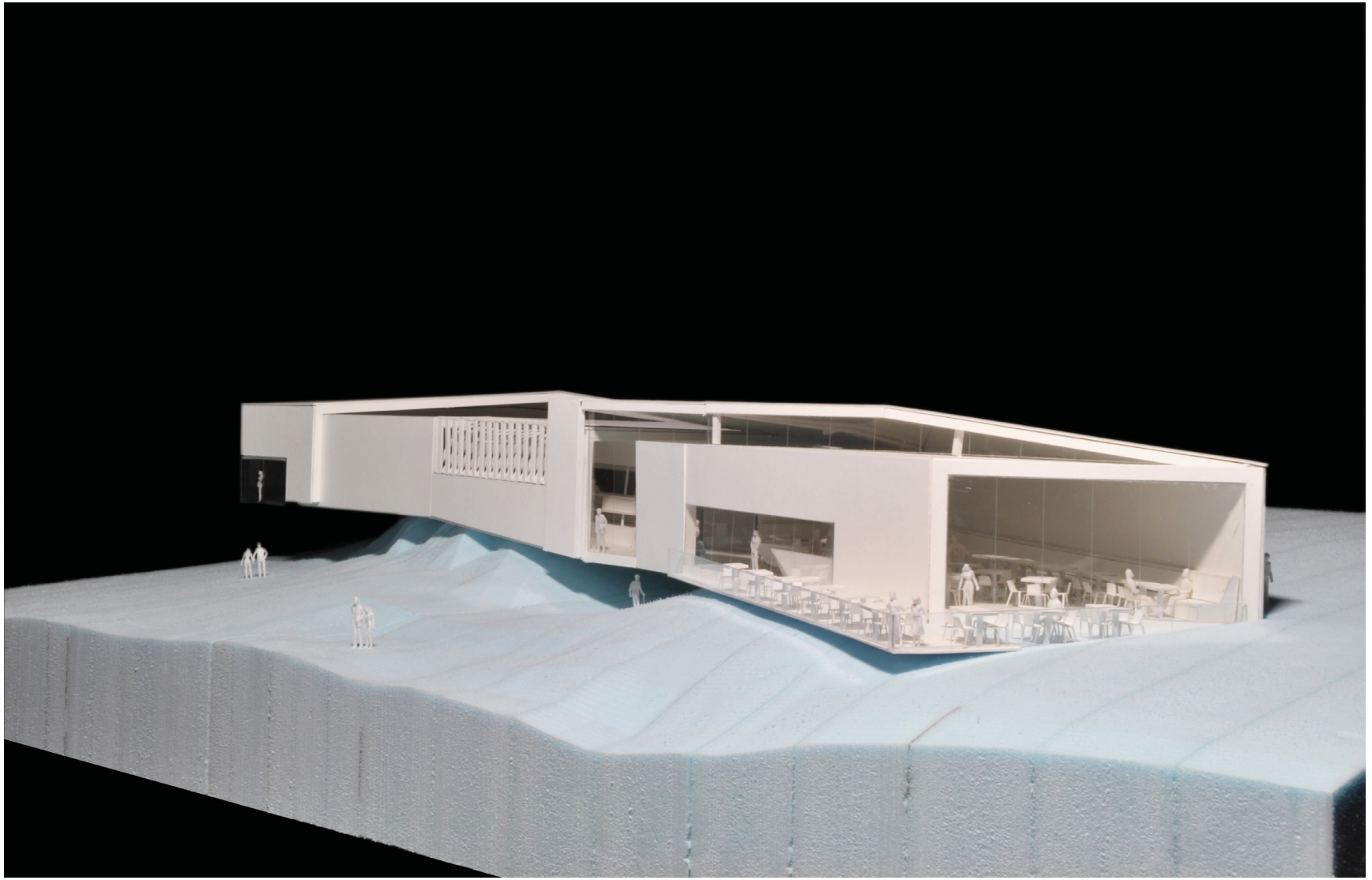


1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.



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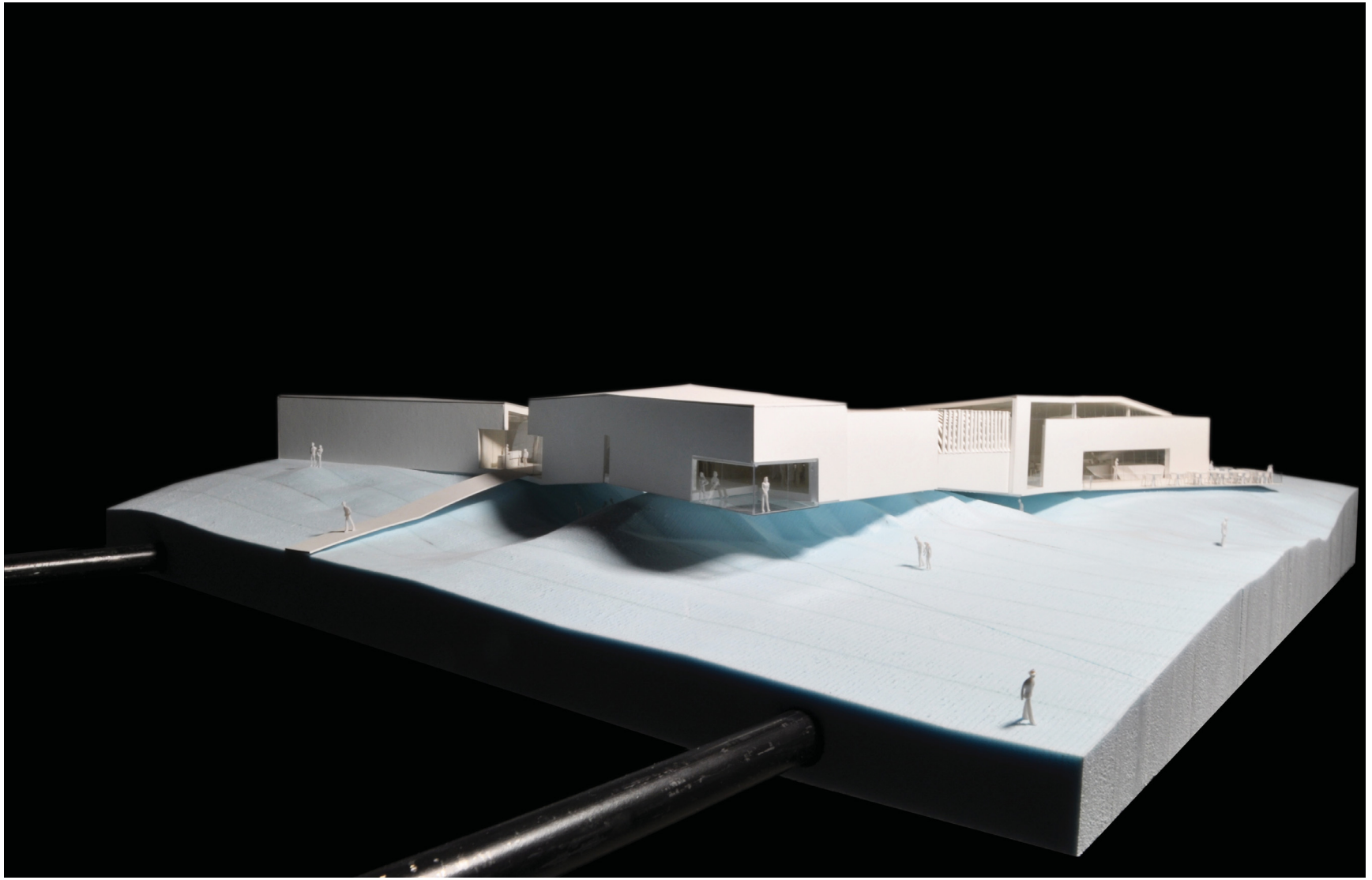
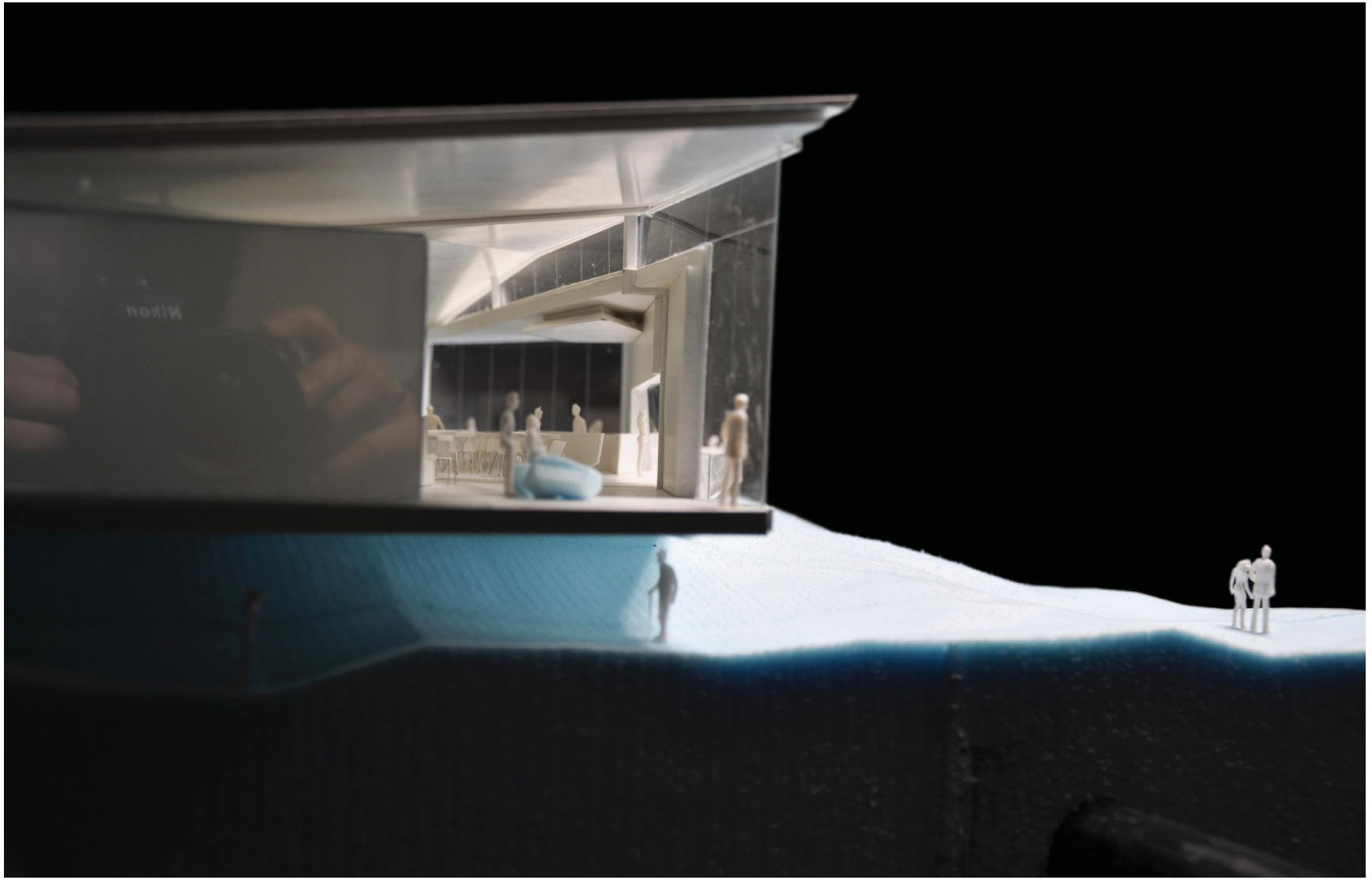
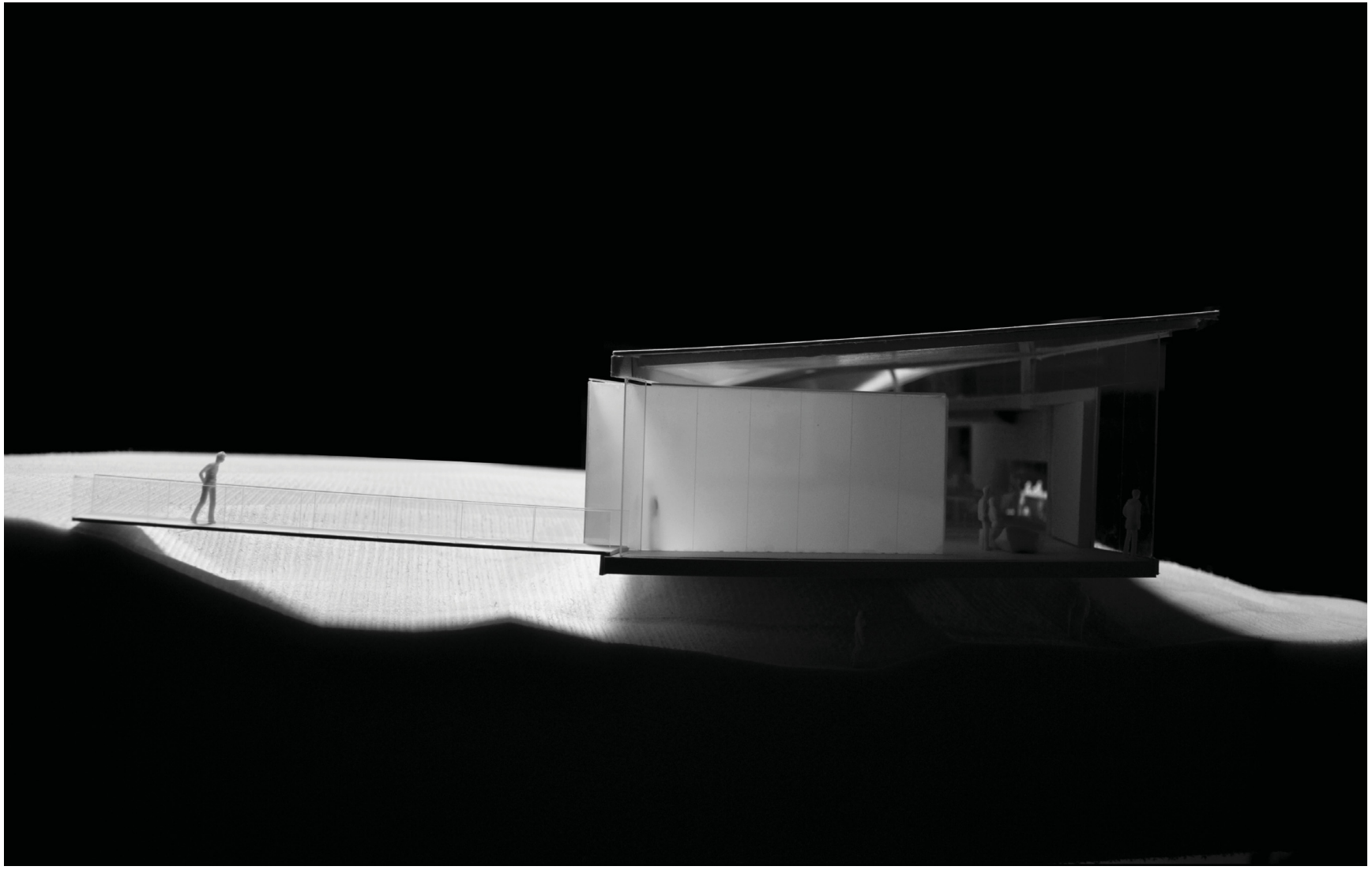


1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.



1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.



1:75 exploding sectional model showing key sections and spatial unfolding: foam, card, acrylic, paper.

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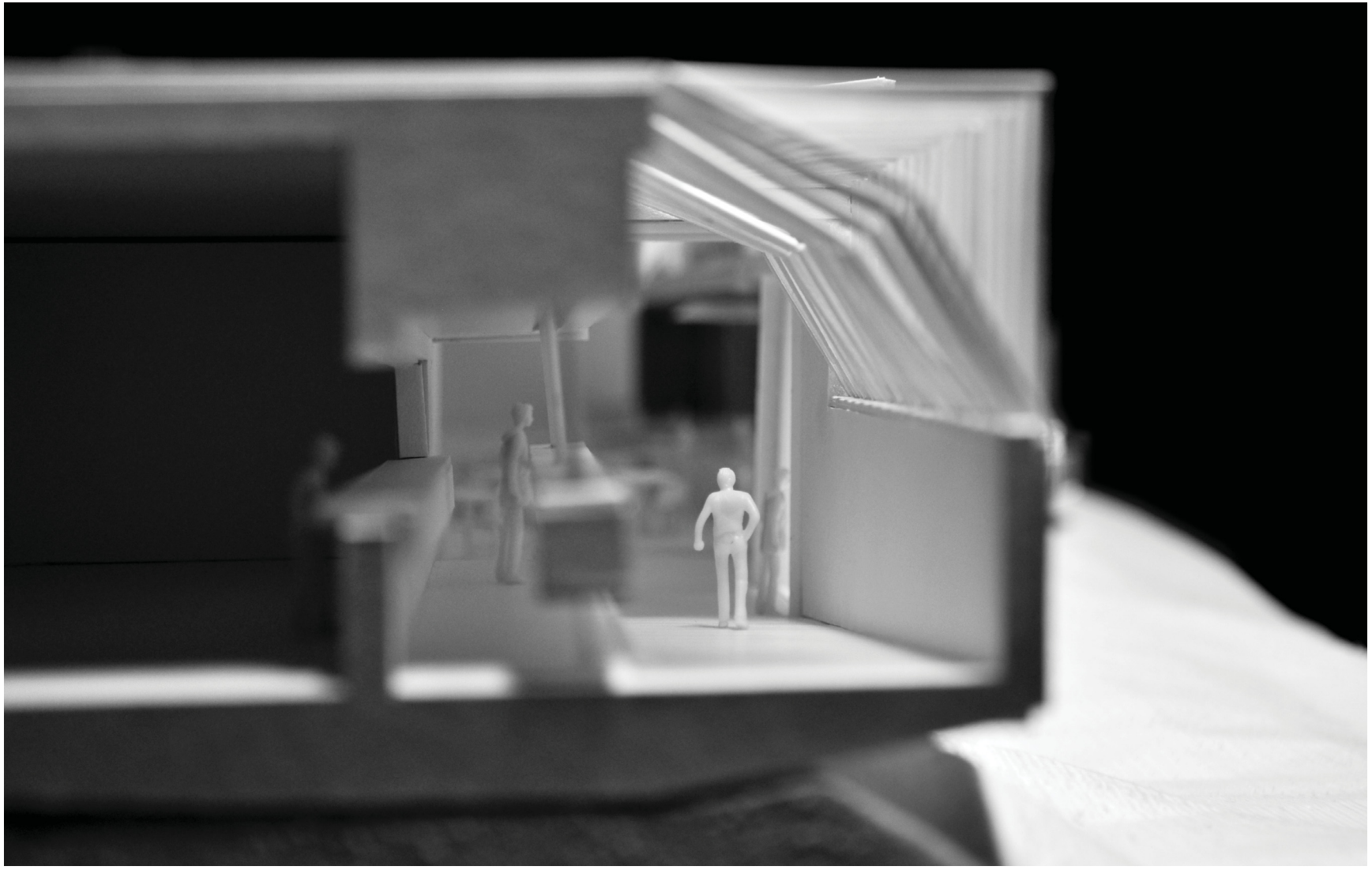

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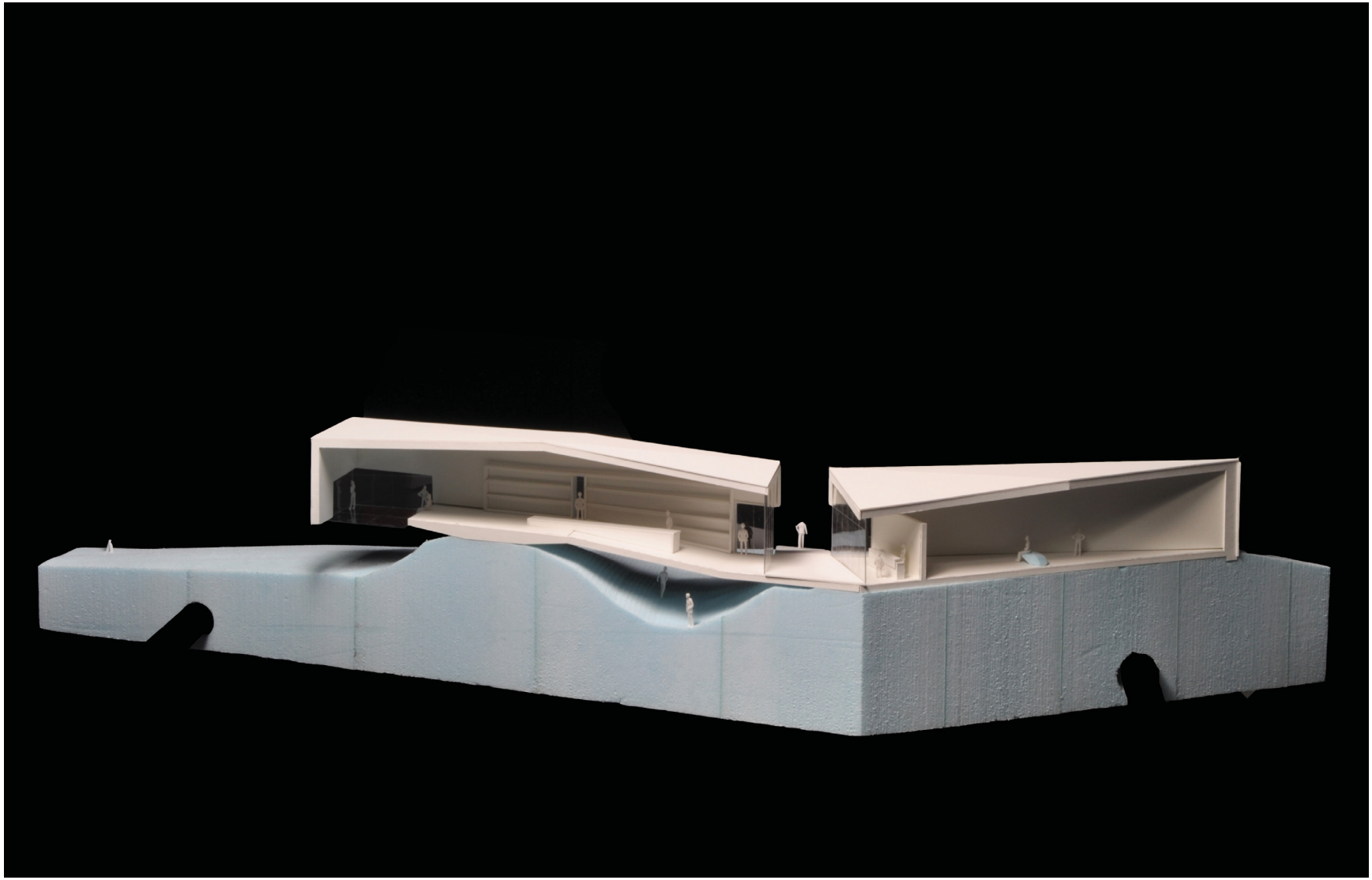

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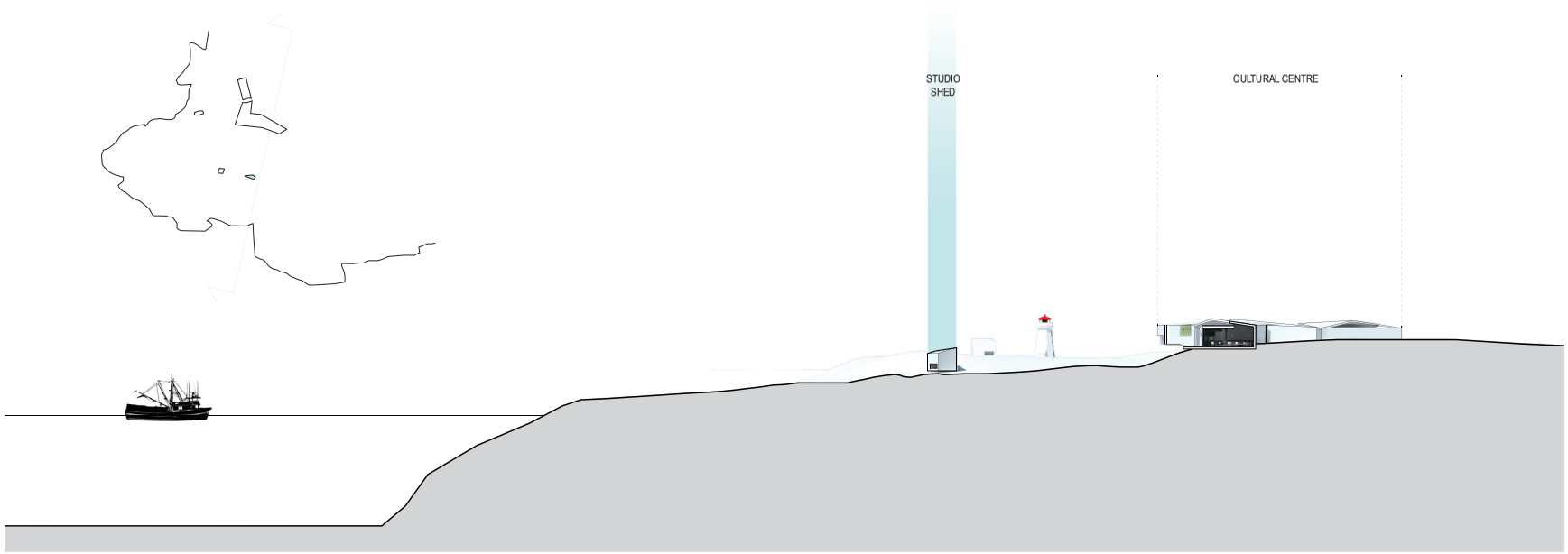
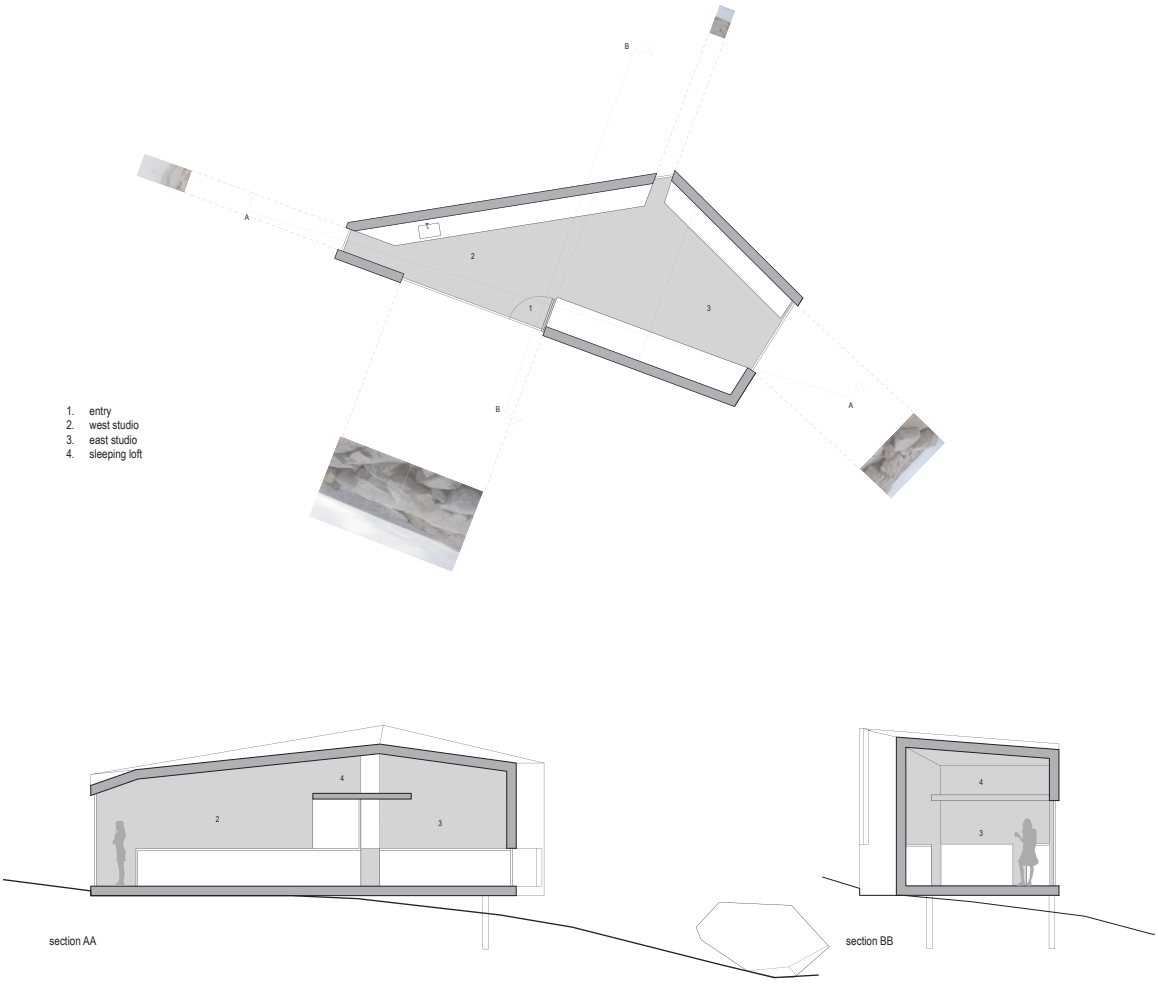
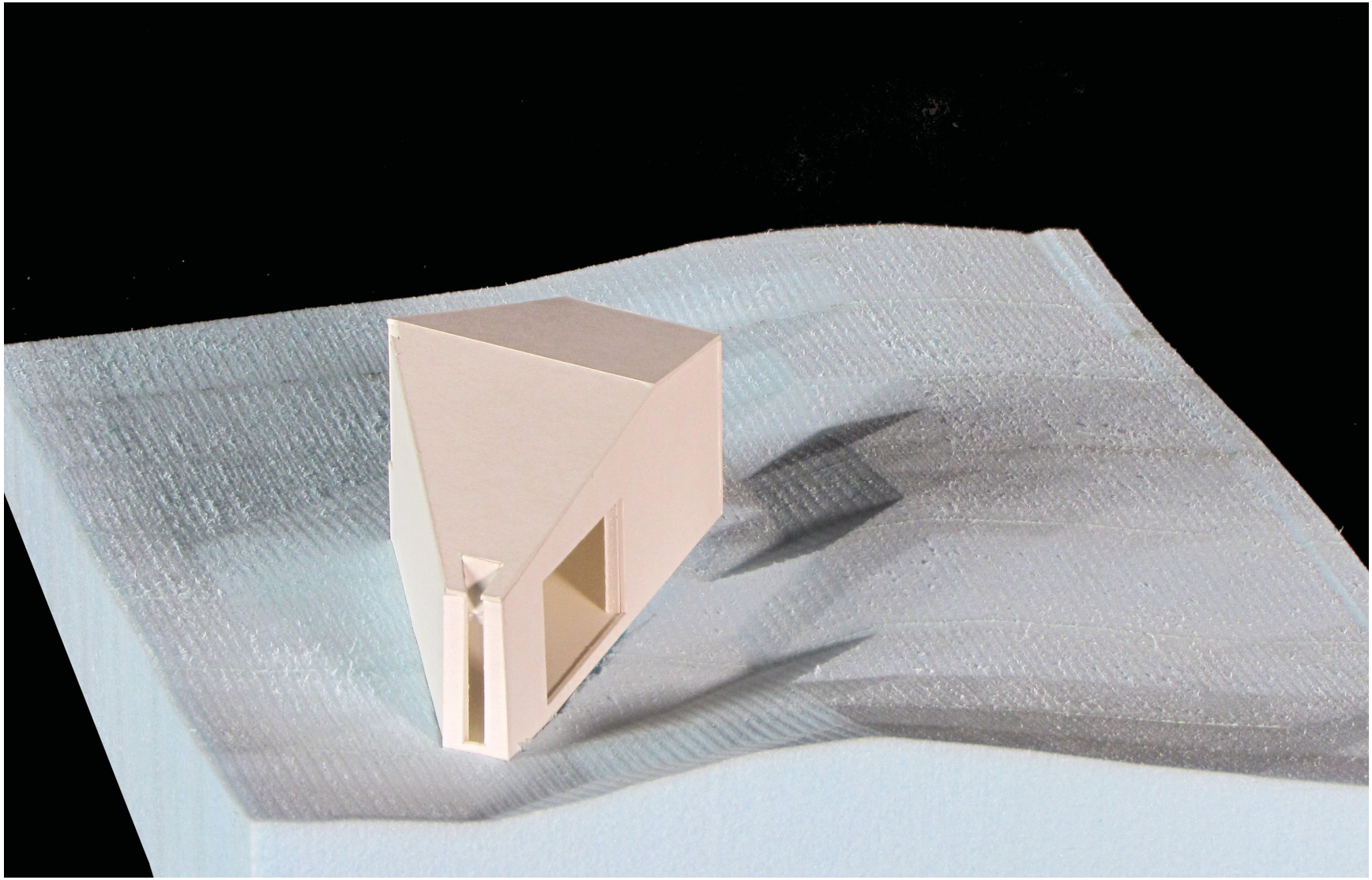


Section showing relation of main building to the shed studio to the water.

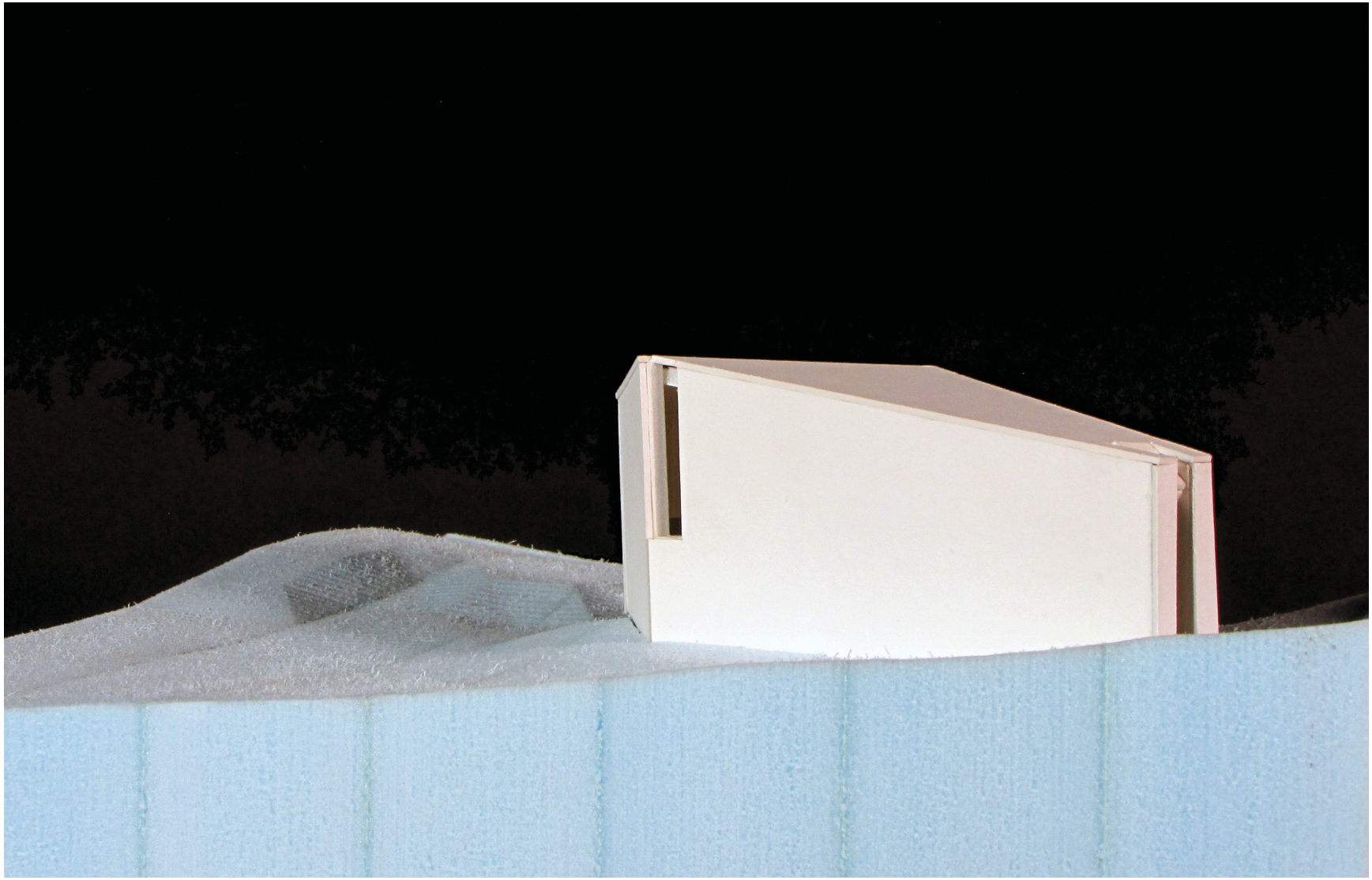

1. entry
2. west studio
3. east studio
4. sleeping loft
A
B
section AA
section BB

Studio Shed

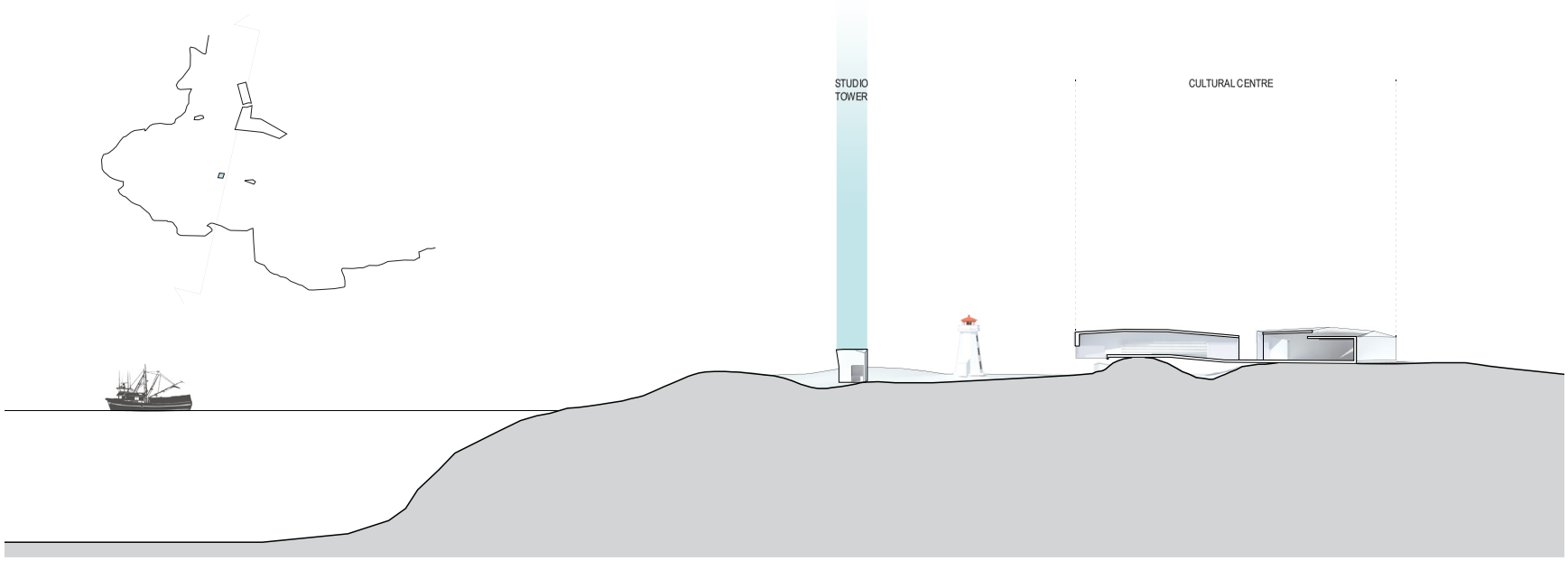
Shed interior.



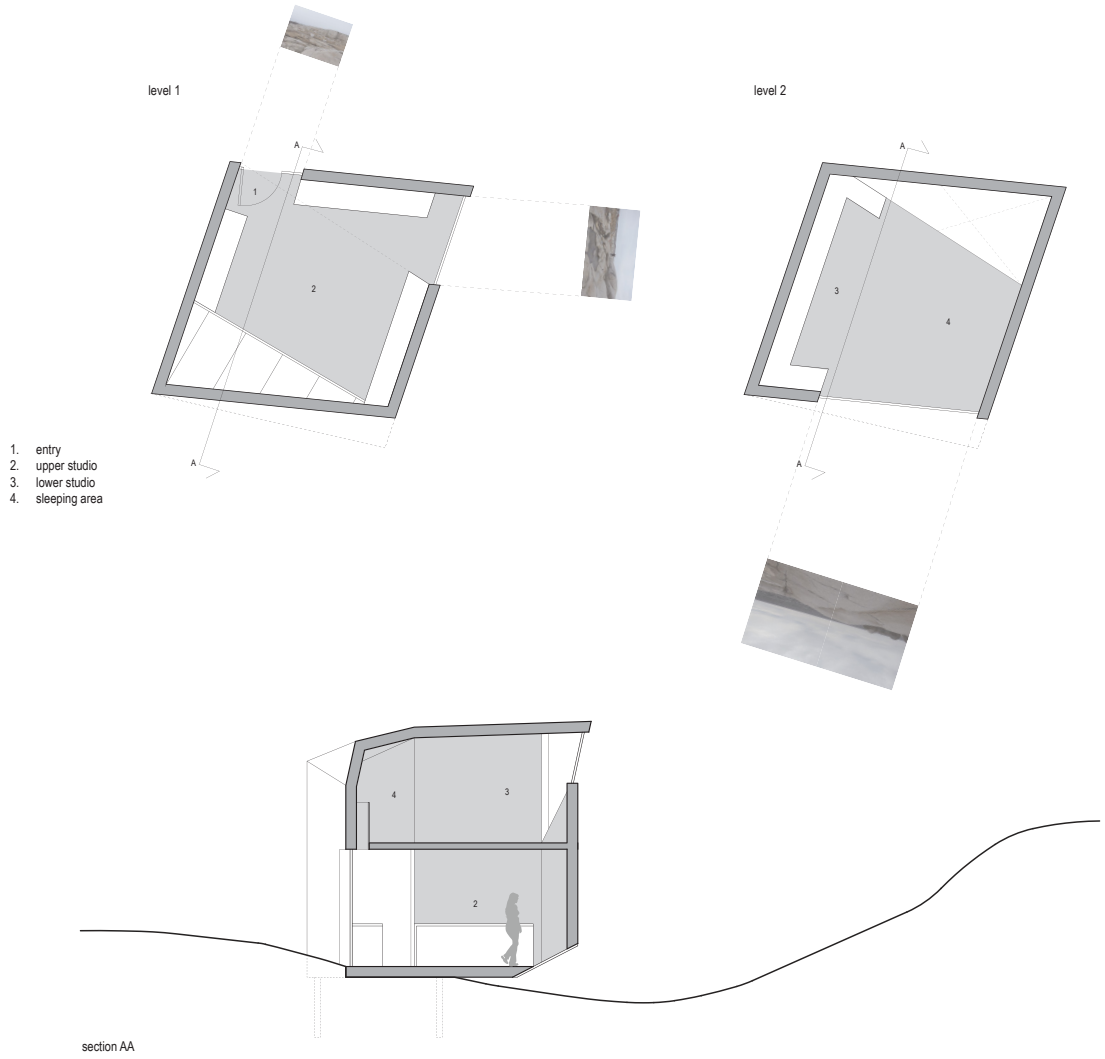
1:75 model of studio shed



1:75 model of studio shed

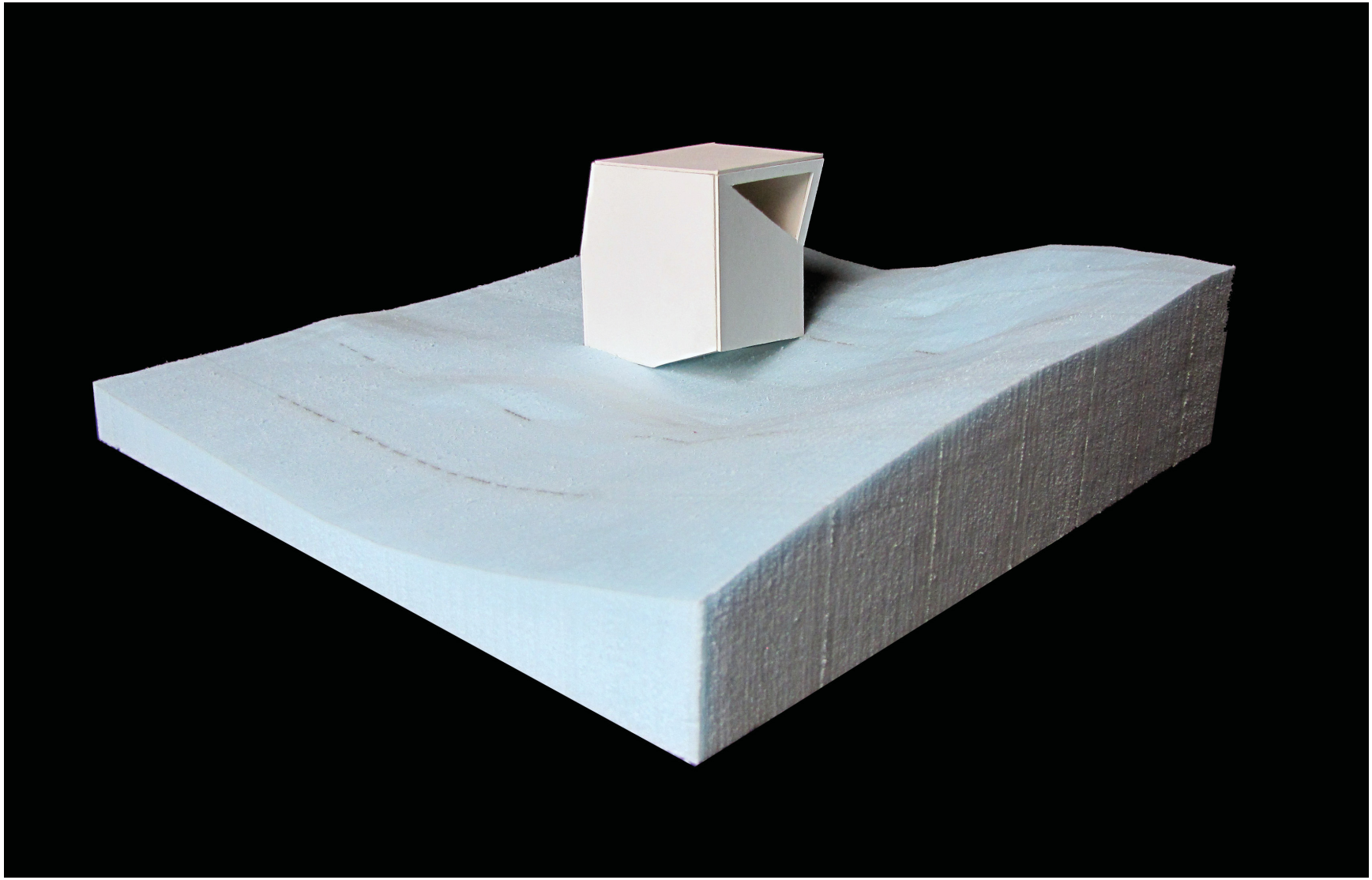


Section showing relation of main building to the tower studio to the water.

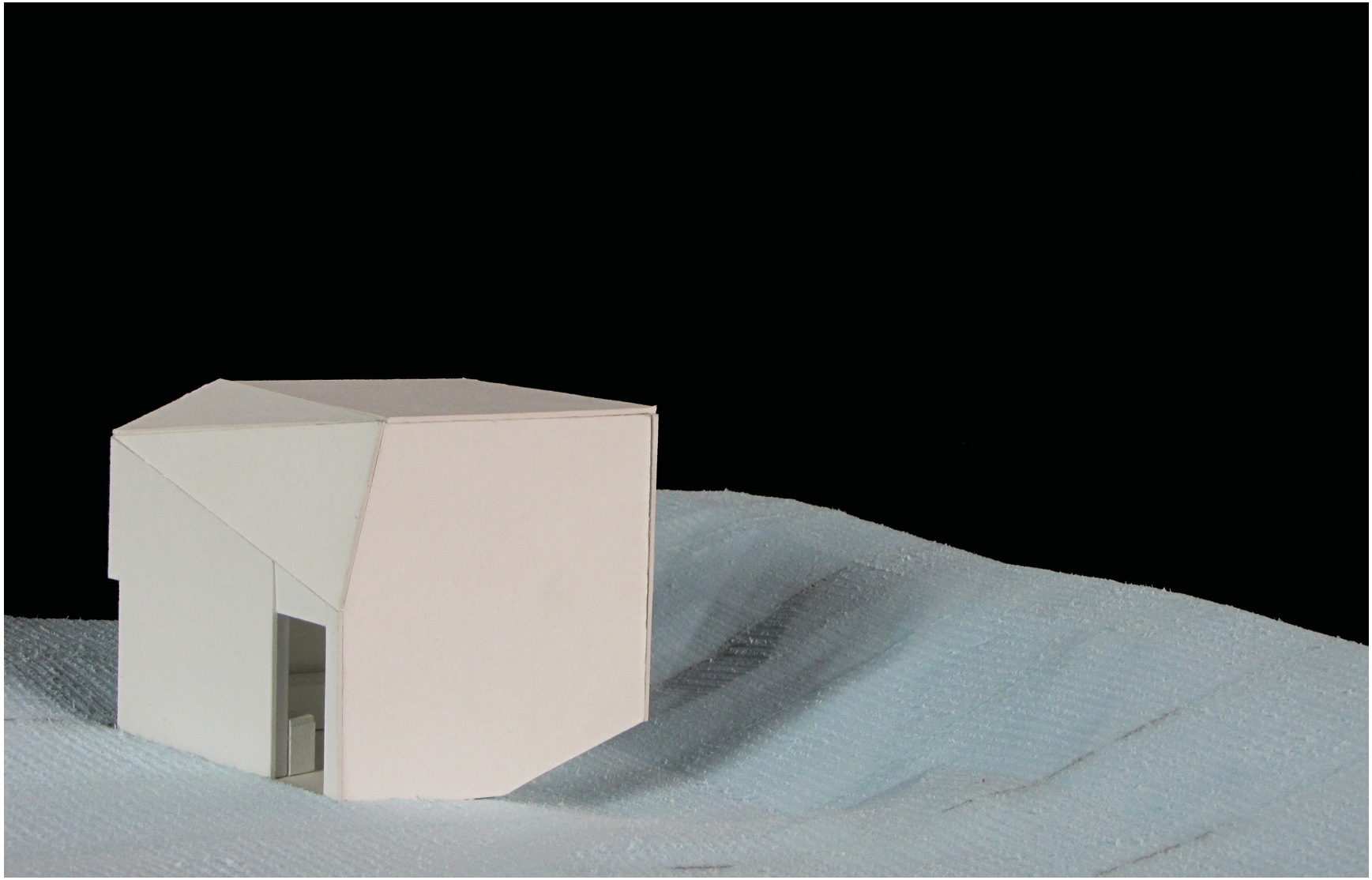


Studio tower.

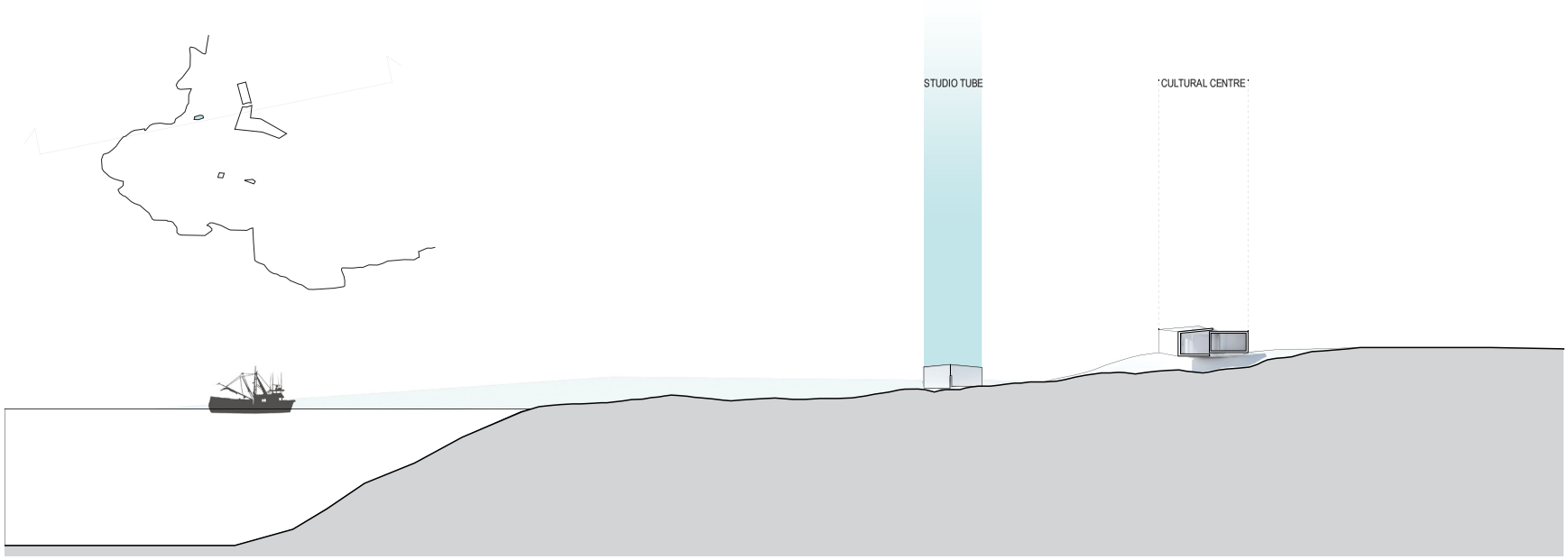
Tower interior.



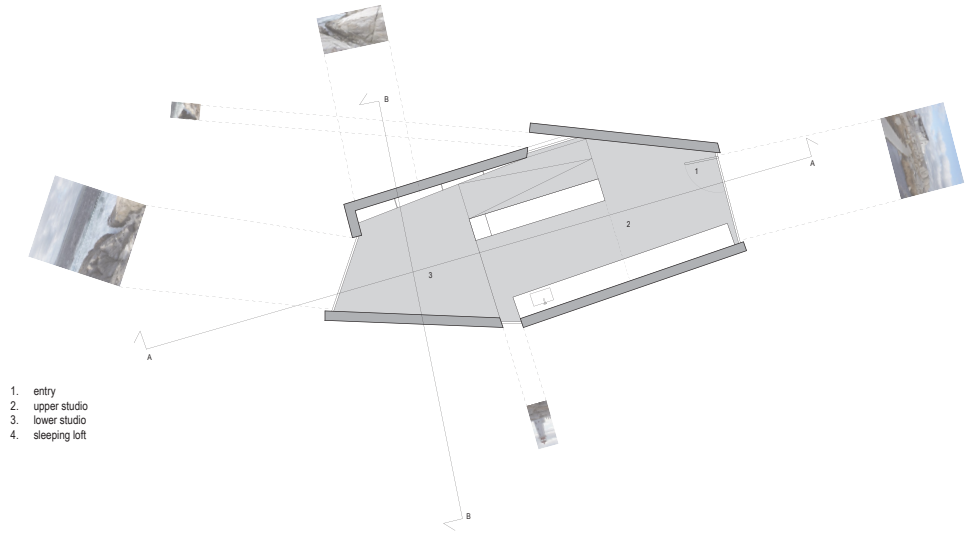
1:75 model of studio tower.

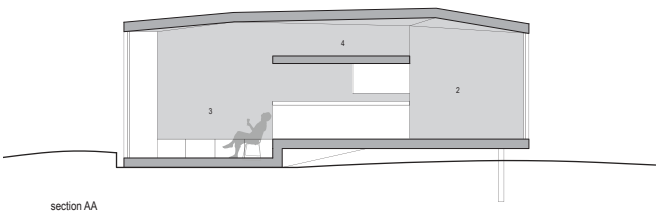


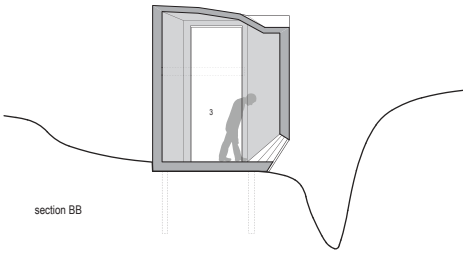
1:75 model of studio tower.



Section showing relation of main building to the tube studio to the water.

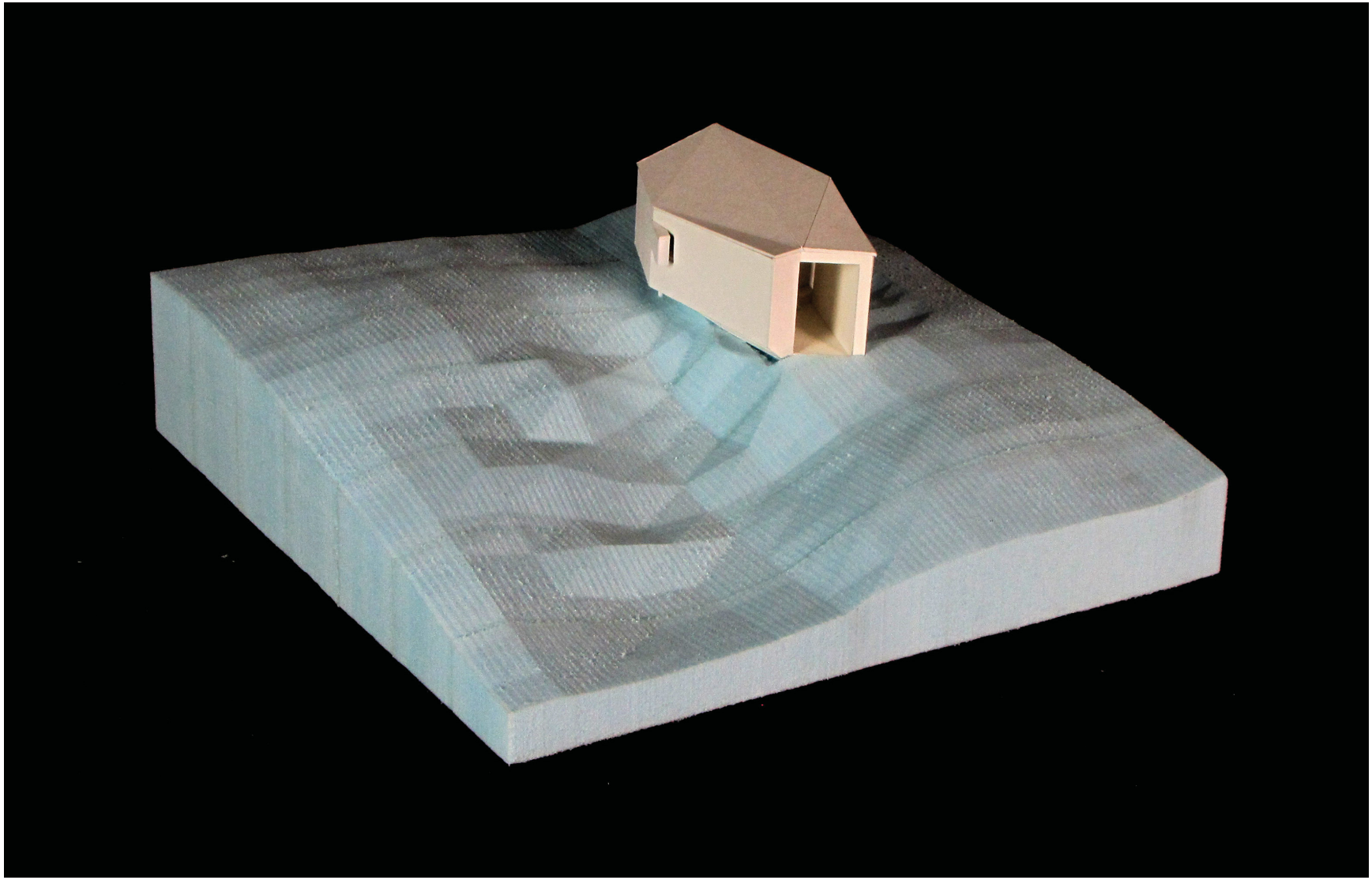

1. entry
2. upper studio
3. lower studio
4. sleeping loft


section AA

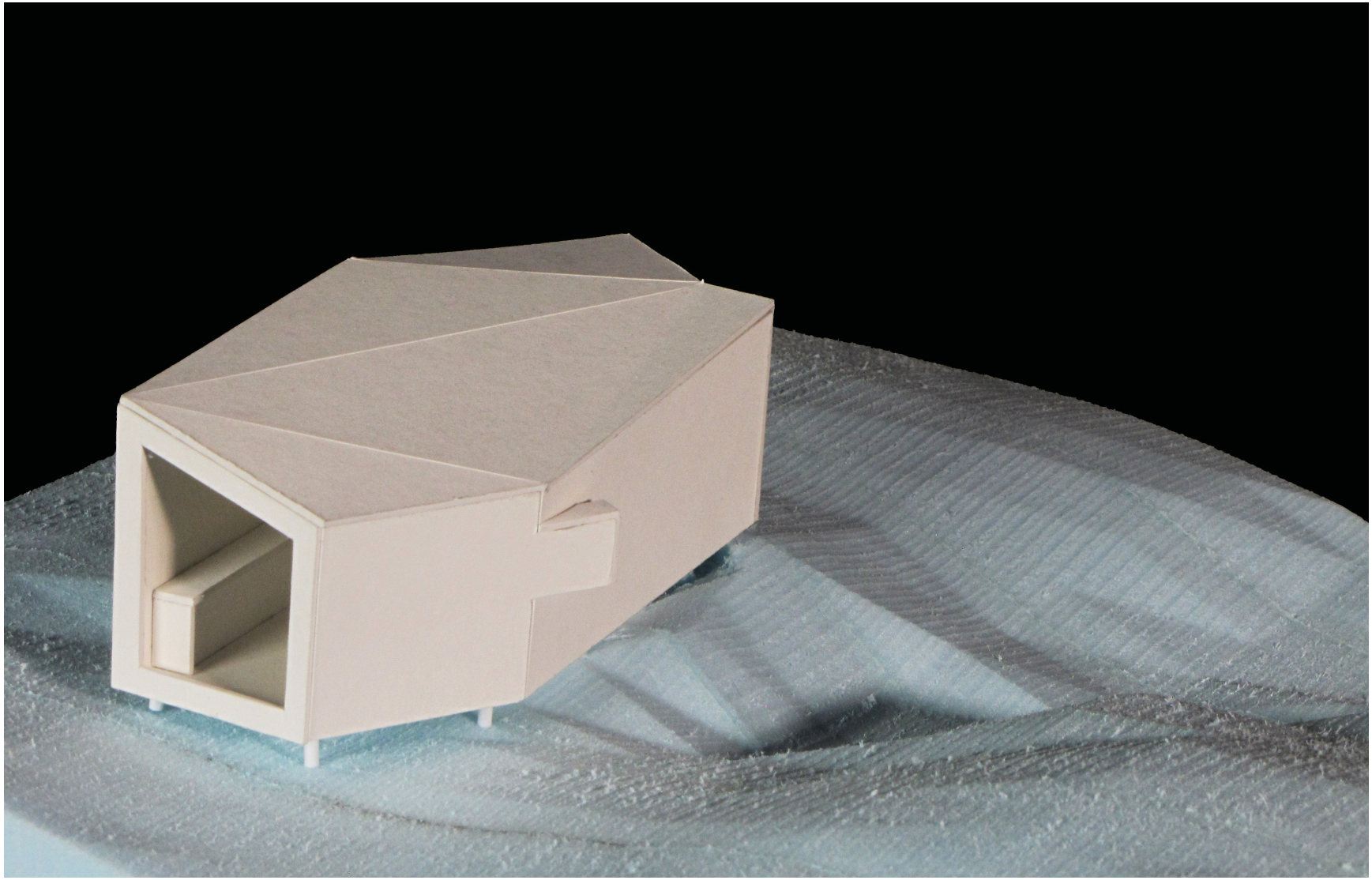

section BB

Studio tube.

Tube interior.

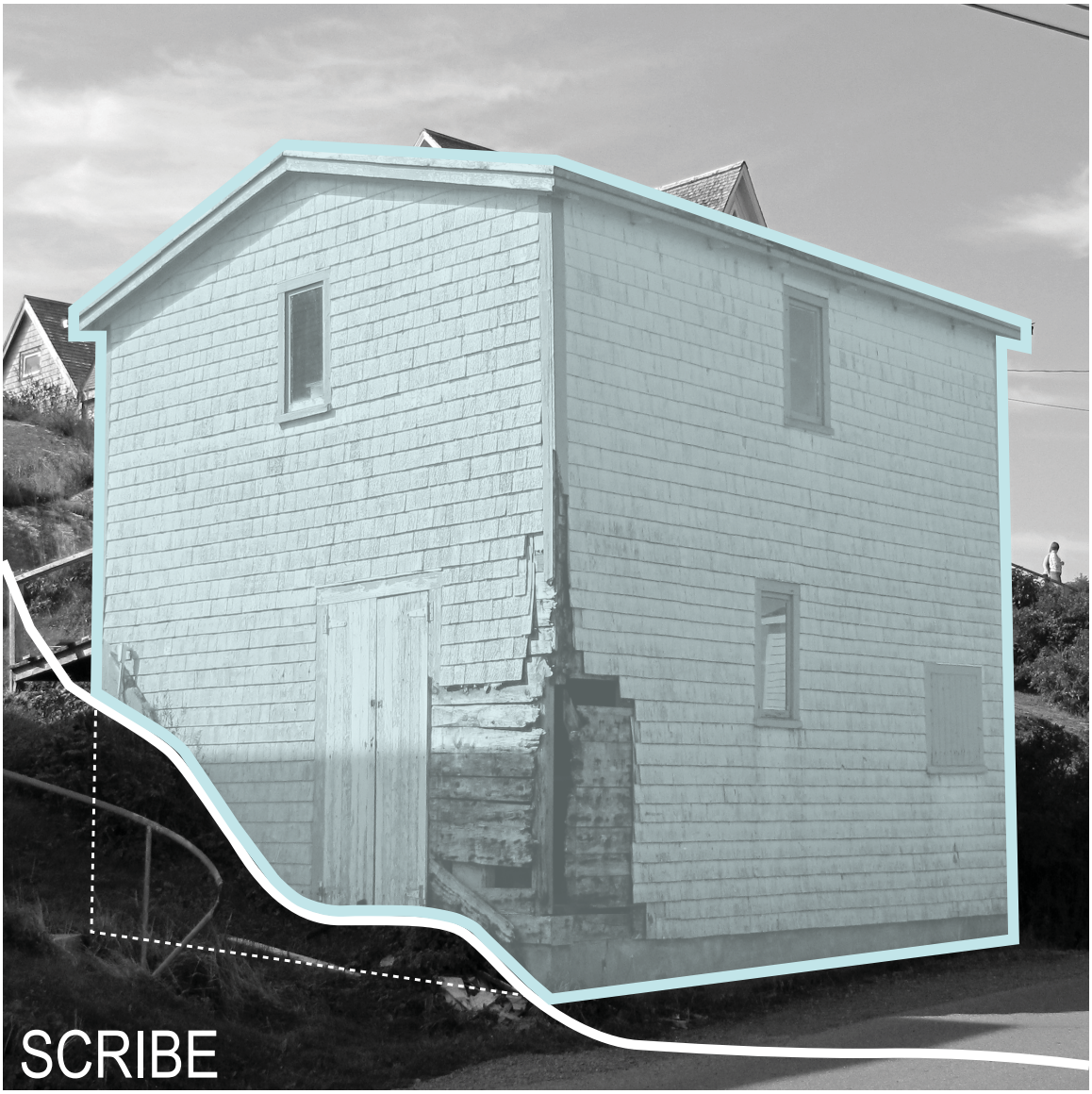


1:75 model of studio tube.

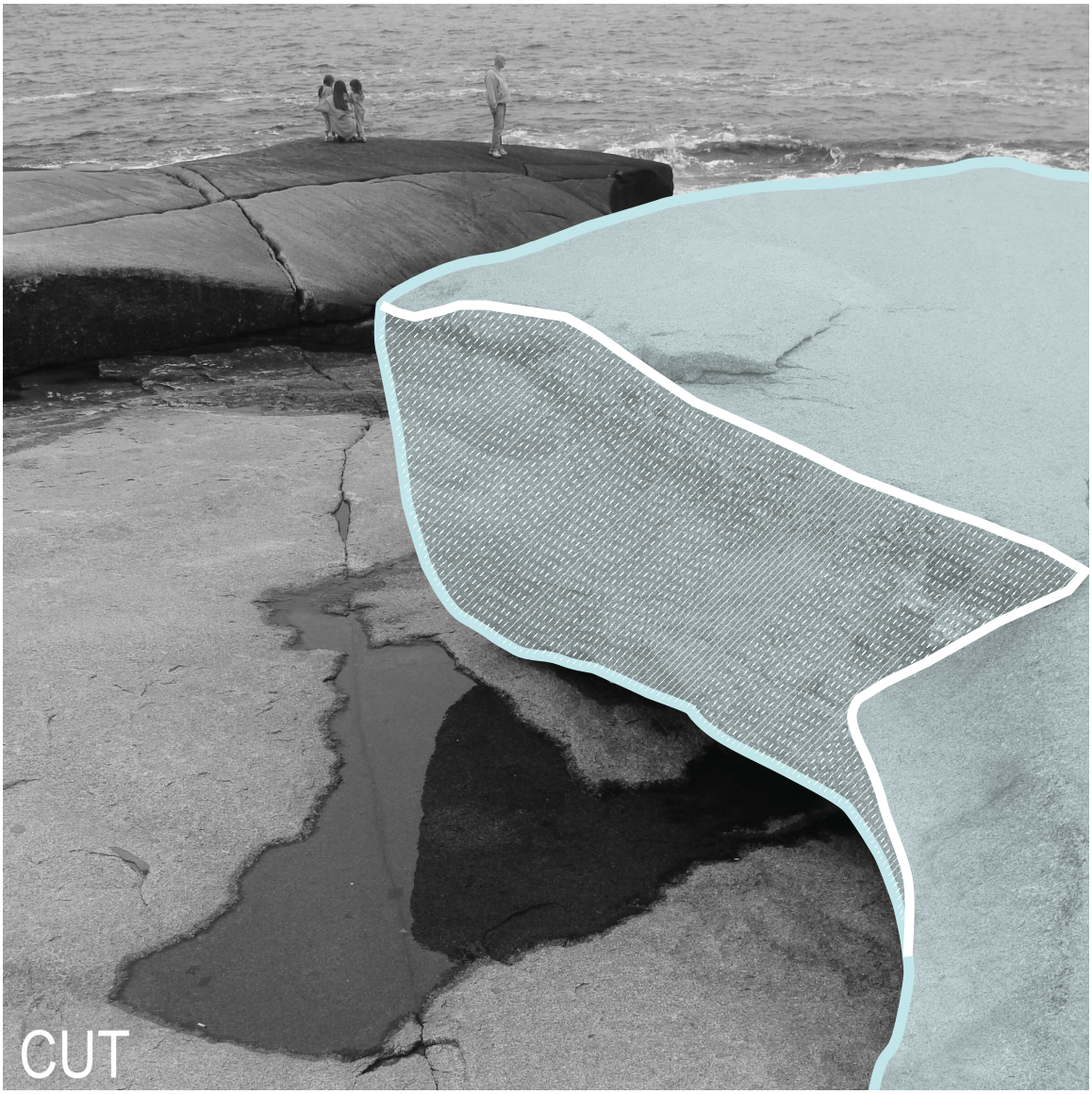


1:75 model of studio tube.

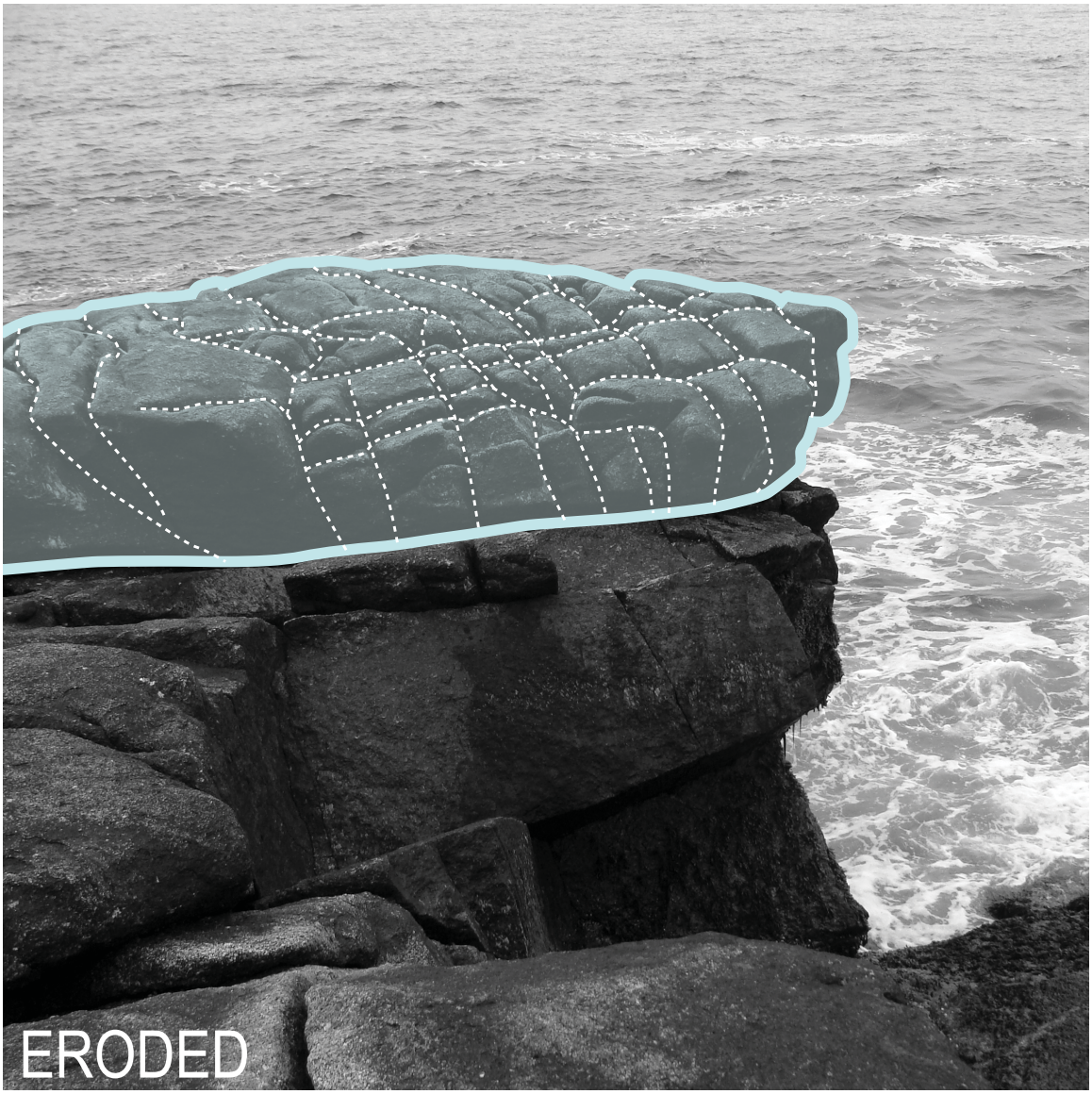
Site based tectonic inspirations.



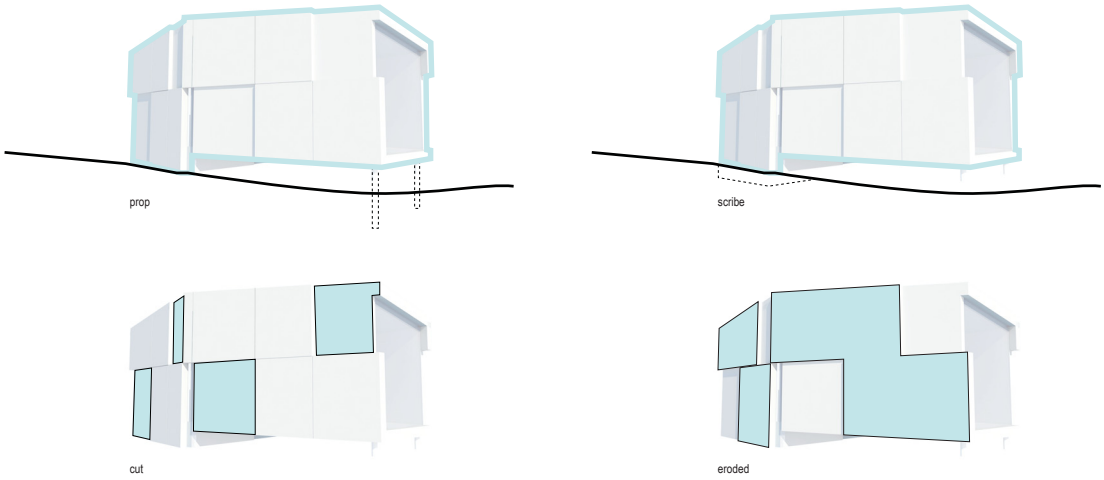
Site based tectonic inspirations.



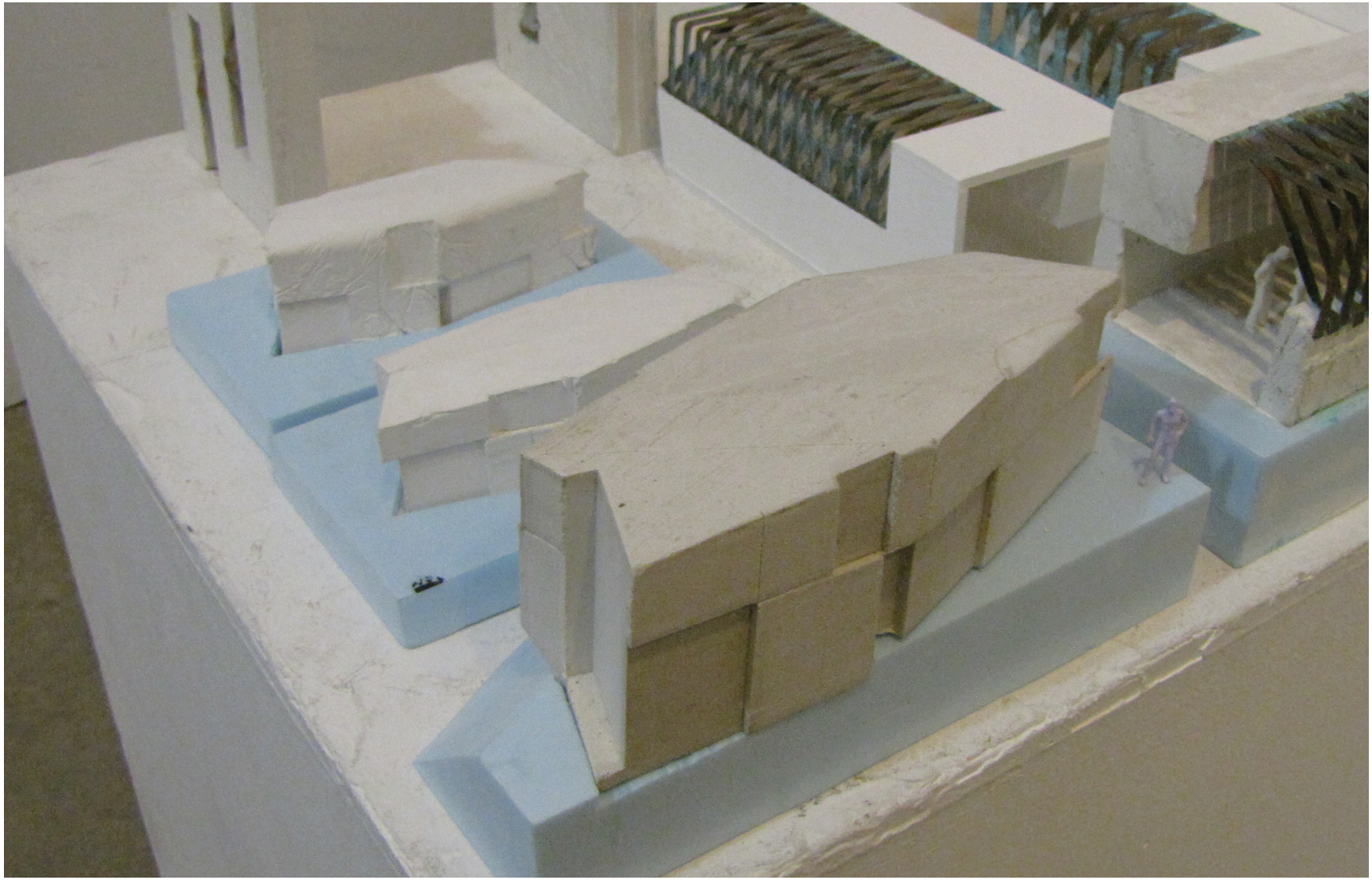
Site based tectonic inspirations.



Site based tectonic inspirations.



Tectonic Strategy



Tectonic study models.

1:50 study models of copper screen.

1:50 study model of copper screen: plaster, copper.

Exterior perspective.

CHAPTER 6: ALTERNATE TOPOGRAPHIES: NEW SENSORY LANDSCAPES

This thesis started out as a critical response to current trends within the architectural profession. Architectural concepts and final buildings seemed to place their rigor in the production and articulation of shape and building image. In shifting conceptual methodology towards building experience in relation to its context as well as its conceptual strategies the architectural product is enriched.

As the site was rural with a very dynamic and interesting landscape much of the research looked at how this landscape as an experience could influence architecture of it. The design work became focused on understanding the landscape conceptually so that inspiration could be found at all scales of the architectural process. Looking more at the movement through a space and how it connects to the landscape, let's light in and feels rather than how it looks. The work became interested in how space entices certain actions or sensations, i.e. how space may imply certain human actions, how a space carries a user from room to room and a room to a window. Architecture is an art form yes, but it is easy to make the mistake that it is purely visual and mass oriented when it is really about time, smell, temperature, sight, movement and void.

This realization has lead to a new understanding of what the physical elements of a piece of architecture i.e. floor, wall, roof, both in terms of articulation and materiality really mean. The con-

clusion of this thesis work proposes a new way of thinking about these elements. They are not just things that contain space or shelter one from the elements but rather they are new landscapes experienced not only by our feet but by our eyes, ears and hands.

Conceiving of these elements in an architectural proposal in this way will ensure that they are thought about in terms of how they will affect the human experience of the building. If one conceives first of the building from the inside to the outside and in these terms it will result in a form that then can be altered after the interior experience has dictated it.

The floor of a building is experienced by the feet, the way the floor plate crawls over a landscape or leaves the ground to create an altered experience to that of the ground beneath heightens ones experience. This can be enhanced through its visual connection back to the landscape with windows and even openings in the floor plate. The material is also important to this sensory experience, as certain comfort levels can be obtained with softer materials. As well the way in which the material is oriented or patterned will emphasize directionality or could be uniform to entice a free undirected movement through a space.

The walls of a building of course dialogue with the floor plate. The composition of fenestration should also be conceived first from the inside out, making sure windows heighten ones experience, choreographing a sequence of withhold-

ing and presenting the surrounding context in an artful way that allows one to understand it better. The walls are experienced as topographies not by the feet but by the hand. Depending on the material people will run their hands over a wall. Sleek flat materials verses soft warm ones will trigger the senses to feel certain ways, influencing how one experiences, inhabits and reacts to a building.

Finally the ceiling or roof of a project is also another important topography to consider when thinking about atmosphere. This can draw in indirect light creating different moods of a space. It can shift and break to entice certain types of movement drawing the eye and eventually the feet from one space to another. Again the material composition of this topography will also affect ones experience. A designer must not only consider material but also articulation, lighting placement and orientation of all the elements that are expressed in the ceiling plan.

In looking at the basic architectural elements as sensory landscapes, will result in an architecture that is conceived with experience in mind. The objectified architectural critique will only be interesting in terms of how it is a result of a spatial and material rigor that enhances and shapes atmospheres rather than objects.

While ‘Alternate Landscapes’ is the conclusion of this thesis is presents itself as a new beginning for future design work. A new approach that releases the disciplines current obsessions with image and form and pushes the work towards a

deeper ethical stance. While the public may be enamoured by work that is formally expressive it is the role of the architect as a professional to know that the buildings that just look good do not last. In an attempt to get back to the essentials of architecture a way of conceiving of architectural components as new sensory landscapes will produce an architecture that has experience in mind and is only interested in form as a result of that approach.

Final presentation. March 20, 2012

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