

**Designing Experience:
Towards an Empathic Method of Design**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between the physical environment and its influence on human emotion and thought. Through a series of design explorations, the project aims to establish an elemental understanding of the interpretation of experience. By translating the building blocks of experience into an architectural design language, the project explores the potential of architecture as a set of emotional cues. The work suggests that the experience of the inhabitant can be influenced by focusing on the organization and juxtaposition of inter/personal relationships, time, spatial reference, and sensorial stimulation during the design process.

The developed theory is tested against the conditions of a typical site: the urban parking lot. The project is an iterative exploration of design process. The resulting architecture is meant to engage us physically and emotionally, and, through the strategic organization of sequence and space, prompt a state of contemplation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Buildings and cities provide the horizon for the understanding and the confronting of the human condition. Instead of creating mere objects of visual seduction, architecture relates, mediates and projects meanings. The ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being. Significant architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings. (Palasmaa 2012, 11)

That the physical environment affects our moods, emotions, and state of mind is evident. We understand this intuitively. Using common sense and reflection, we understand that our interactions with the physical world influence the development of our personalities and frame what we find meaningful in life.

In fact, the relationship between one's self and the physical environment is embraced as a foundational point of existential philosophy. Jean Paul Sartre's idea "existence precedes essence" supposes that meaning, values, customs and behaviors are all developed through an individual's interactions with the physical world – "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards" (Sartre 2007, 26). For the study of architecture, this has massive implications. Since, the majority of our lives are spent inside and around built space, much of the value and meaning we assign to our lives is thus colored by the designs and constructions that we inhabit.

This realization has not been lost to architects, architectural critics and scholars. There is significant interest in the psychological effects of architecture, and the topic is thoroughly explored in theory and in practice. In *Atmospheres*, Peter Zumthor writes of the relationship between his buildings and their inhabitants. A similar pursuit, towards the understanding of an *emotional architecture*, can be seen in the theoretical, sculptural and built works of Mathias Goeritz. We also see a discussion towards stimulating consciousness through architecture in Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin*. In all of these cases, the focus is designing for the human experience.

This project attempts to focus the existing research, and through an empathic approach, develop a language of design that may purposefully reinforce and heighten one's emotional reaction and cognitive state while inhabiting a building. To focus the project and make this pursuit possible, it was first necessary to choose a type of emotional/cognitive state to

evoke. Out of personal interest, I chose to pursue the evocation of a state of contemplation: an architecture that prompts personal reflection and the development of meaning.

The research began with personal reflection on contemplative experience, and the deconstructive reading of contemplative experiences of others. In both cases, memories of contemplative experience were read in an attempt to identify their component phenomena. Through these design explorations I was able to compile a number of common factors that contribute to the formation a contemplative experience, and generate basic ideas about their sequencing and organization. According to the studies, feelings of otherness, connection (to people, the physical world and self), and a strengthened relationship with the passing of time seemed to be of particular importance to the formation of contemplative experience.

Importantly, these investigations show that there is an inherent difference in the degree to which, and direction that, an experience influences a person. From the beginning it was clear that, although this project is searching for universally applicable cues, it wouldn't be possible to design a project that guarantees a specific experiential outcome for every person all of the time.

The first attempt at an architectural translation was made with this series of sketch models. They explore the sequencing of tactile phenomena through different manipulations of space. They embody ideas of compression and release, the materialization of light, and rhythm.

Further architectural translation was attempted through the reading of site. This was done through photography and writing and engaged memory as a tool – this mirrors the strategy outlined in my first exercise. Using this method I was able to engage with the atmospheric qualities of site: what it felt like to be there, it's material essence.

After using this approach to evaluate a number of potential building sites, I chose to locate my design in a derelict urban parking lot. The site is fragmentary and surrounded by apathetic neighbors. It is L-shaped, and reaches around a corner, connecting two streets. Newly built condos line the street to the South; they are roughly 50 stories tall, and pragmatically made of concrete and glass. Anchoring the corner is a cheap restaurant. It's

two stories tall and clad with painted wood. To the North is an auto garage and a falafel joint. To the West sits a group of Victorian row houses (turned restaurant). Kitty-corner, is a condo sales center. The site is disjointed and overwhelming; to achieve the harmony and peace that is required to evoke a contemplative state amongst these conditions was a challenge.

The development of the method continues with the material sampling of the site – again this ties back to the phenomenal sampling done in the readings of contemplative experience. The exercise allowed me to develop and understanding of the didactic nature of the site, and the almost oppositional contextual phenomena that confront it along either axis.

Site studies conclude with an empathic reading of site diagrammed in storyboard format. The drawing is an exploration into the representation and consideration of tactile interactions around the site. It shows the dominance of texture-less reflective glass and brick in the environment. Through imagination, this experiment primes the act of design.

Architectural design began with a formal and material response to site. To achieve a sense of surprise for the building visitor upon entry, the architecture sports fairly banal street elevations. By proposing a plain, fitting formal continuation of the architectural language of the site, the building keeps its purpose and affect hidden from the street. In addition to amplifying the experiential impact for the building user upon entry, the unspectacular street fronts serve to mediate and unify the fragmented site and serve as a symbol.

To engage the imagination and enrich the empathic experience of design, a second storyboard was used as an inhabitational tool to breathe life into the schematic design. Using the storyboard to imagine the spatial and tactile qualities of the building proved to be a successful design generator. This step in abstraction acts as a form of concentrated design meditation, and greatly assists the designer in populating their scheme with experientially enriching architectural features.

Referring to my earlier design studies, the design was consciously populated with relationships that may act to prompt a state of contemplation. The scheme is organized to achieve a sense of otherness through the act of juxtaposition. Particular attention was paid to the relationship of building and the human body; the building measures the speed with which

one passes through it, and guides the visitor along an implied path. Materially, the building marks the passage of time; weathering and wear are celebrated and the process of making is monumentalized. Along both axes, the experiential climax of the architecture is attained in a static room where the visitor is invited to consider their relationship to the sky and the ground. The result is an architecture of cues that, within one hundred feet from either entrance, transforms the human experience from a hectic confrontation with derelict urbanity to an introverted consideration of existence and self.

CHAPTER 2: DESIGN

Deconstructing Personal Experience

This method began looking backwards. It began with personal reflection upon the development of meaning, tracing memories of meaningful and contemplative experiences. I did this for myself, to help develop a definition of contemplative experience and to give focus to the project. Recollection was a departure point. With thoughtful reflection and analysis I hoped that this exercise would provide traction, and a path for development.

I chose to study a personal experience with an accompanied visual record; I hoped that the images would act as cognitive prompts, keying memories of events or emotions. Looking through my collection of photographs, I stumbled across a roll of film I had shot along the Cape Cod national seashore. To fill you in: I was on vacation; after a day of cruising around Cape Cod Bay, myself and a friend decided to explore a grouping of sand dunes we had repeatedly driven past along the highway. It was late in the afternoon and the sun was beginning to set. The sand was still warm under our feet, and as we walked into the dunes most of the people we saw were leaving.

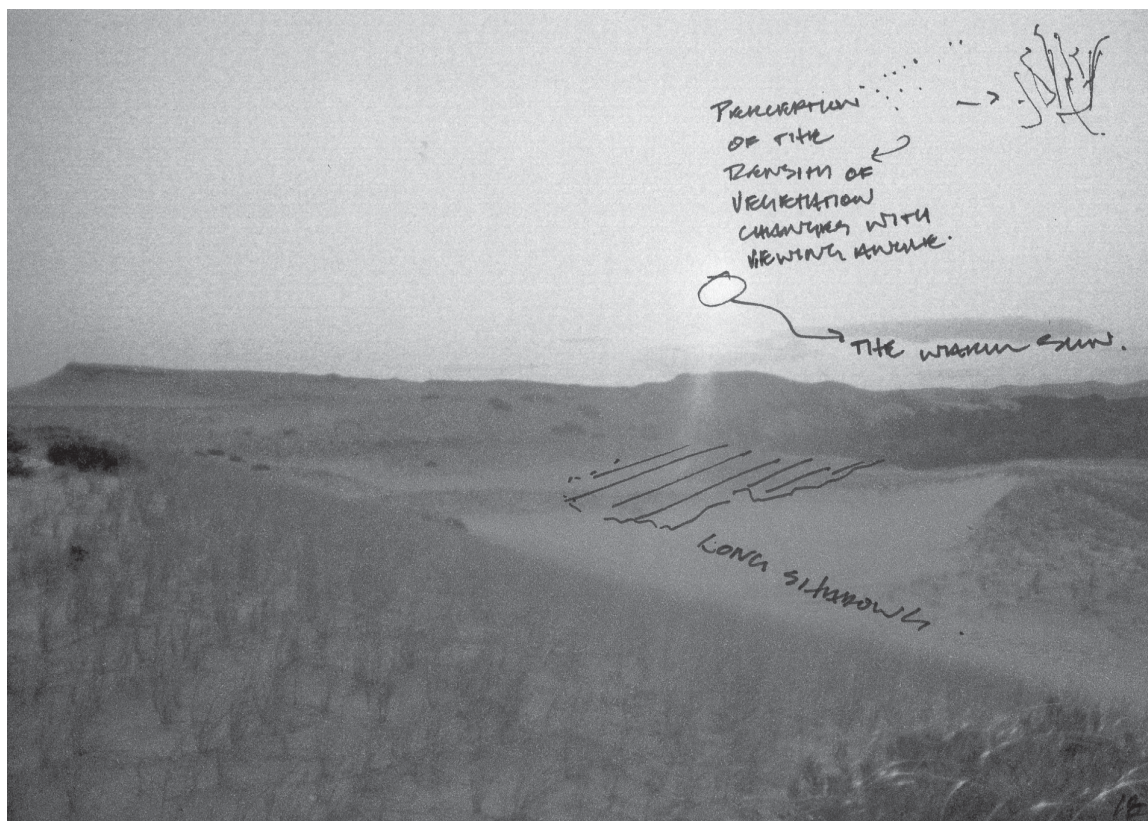
The experience was memorable, but as I retraced it in my memory the impact of the experience was heightened. I'm sure that the act of reflecting upon this hike has given it more meaning than it originally held. This in itself is a valuable finding, and could be prompted by architecture, or at least a discussion of an architectural experience... Nevertheless, through repeated tracing and self-reflection I began to focus upon and group the types of phenomena that made my hike memorable. The fact that I shared it with a friend, the warm sand, the smell of salty air, the unfamiliarity of the landscape and the emotional connections we witnessed all compounded to create an experience that was meaningful to us.

I consider this exercise a deconstructive reading of experience. Through self-reflection I was able to understand an experience in terms of its component phenomena: in terms of the in/tangible elements that combine to create it. As we begin to understand the anatomy of experience, we can begin to consider parts in their own right.



Memories of contemplative experience

Tracing Tangible Phenomena



Drawing sensorial inputs

It became very clear to me that the organization and sequencing of the physical world throughout my hike was influential to the development of meaning. For example, as I walked from my car towards the dunes I passed through a scrubby oak forest. The trees were stunted and old. Their branches reached far and held enough foliage to dim the sunlight. As we approached the dunes the ground rose, and our heads grew closer to the forest canopy with every step. At the threshold from forest to dune, my friend and I had to duck under the top branches of an oak tree! In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa stresses the importance of bodily interpretation of sensorial phenomena as a foundational element for the development of meaning in experience (Pallasmaa 1996, 11). I feel that this natural manifestation of compression and release heightened the importance of passing from forest to dune. It cued an emotional reaction. It acted upon my state of mind. It prompted an appreciation of experience, and an acceptance and readiness for contemplation.

The Influence of Subjective Phenomena



A mother and her child building castles in the sand bowl

My hike was made more meaningful by the events that preceded it. That I was on vacation, that I had just spent a wonderful day with friends, that I was in a novel landscape were all personal circumstances that had prompted me to find meaning in whatever I may have been doing. By extension, I believe it to be clear that we cannot universally prompt specific emotional reactions to experience for everyone all of the time. Our reactions to, and the ways that we process, meaning from experience is deeply subjective. There cannot be a universal emotional reaction to environment.

Reading Conversations on Contemplative Experience

Looking to support the ideas found in my reading of personal experience, I began to speak about the nature of contemplative experience with my friends and family. This allowed me to broaden my understanding of what other people consider contemplation to be, and the types of environments where they tend to seek it.

As a means of documenting and focusing the conversations towards architecture, I asked twelve people to describe a place that held particular meaning or significance to them. In addition, I asked about the emotional significance of the place and its physical environment.

I divided my study into the mapping of tangible and subjective phenomena. I assumed that some subjective and physical phenomena would be more commonly found in my reading than others. To simplify the exercise, I chose to represent just a few of the phenomena I expected to find: two subjective phenomena (otherness and privacy) and four tangible phenomena (connection to nature, presence of views, awareness of lighting, awareness of temperature).

In reading the conversations, it became evident that the subjective phenomena I listed were present in nearly every description of contemplative experience. This suggested to me that these particular subjective phenomena were strongly tied to the creation of spiritual experience. On the other hand, I found that the descriptions and mention of tangible phenomena were fairly varied. This suggested that although the awareness of our physical environment is important to the creation of contemplative experience, there are a number of combinations and sequences of these phenomena that can lend themselves to the creation of contemplative experience.

It was an extremely useful exercise. Before these conversations my understanding of contemplative experience was limited to contemplative experiences that I had lived: my understanding was entirely personal and highly subjective. In speaking with others, I was assured that the extent to which an experience may be considered contemplative depends upon the personality and lifestyle of the person experiencing it. The exercise also outlined an approach towards prompting a contemplative state.



Readings of conversations of contemplative experience

Immersed in Nature

Alone

↳ THIS EXPERIENCE

↳ SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

↳ Surrounding on Peaks

Respondent D.

1. Whistler Mountain - during the summer.
2. Since I've only been once, the mountain doesn't have much sentimental value but the feeling I had while hiking up with my sister on a clear sunny day was pretty euphoric. Having my sister there made it more meaningful. There were few people around which made the experience particularly peaceful and it felt as though we had been transported to another world! ↳ DEERES OF PAVAN
3. On the especially clear day that I was there we were surrounded by endless view of snowy white mountain tops, which were juxtaposed by the green space that we were hiking through. The volcanic rock formations, some covered by gigantic walls of clear, blue glaciers were also pretty spectacular to walk along. Fresh air, warm sun and the varied landscape made the experience !

No Personal Investment

Access to Views

Quantitative things

Qualitative things

Speed of Experience

Memorabilia

Quantities was
Measured:

- Climb
- Mountainous Valley
- Emotional Atmosphere
- Color
- Growth
- Temperature
- Sound of Running Wind

Delivered or Gratitude	1/4 social	1/4 Connection	Connection to Nature	Presence of Views	Attention or Transference
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Reading conversations of contemplative experience

Otherness, Connection to the Physical World, Self and Others



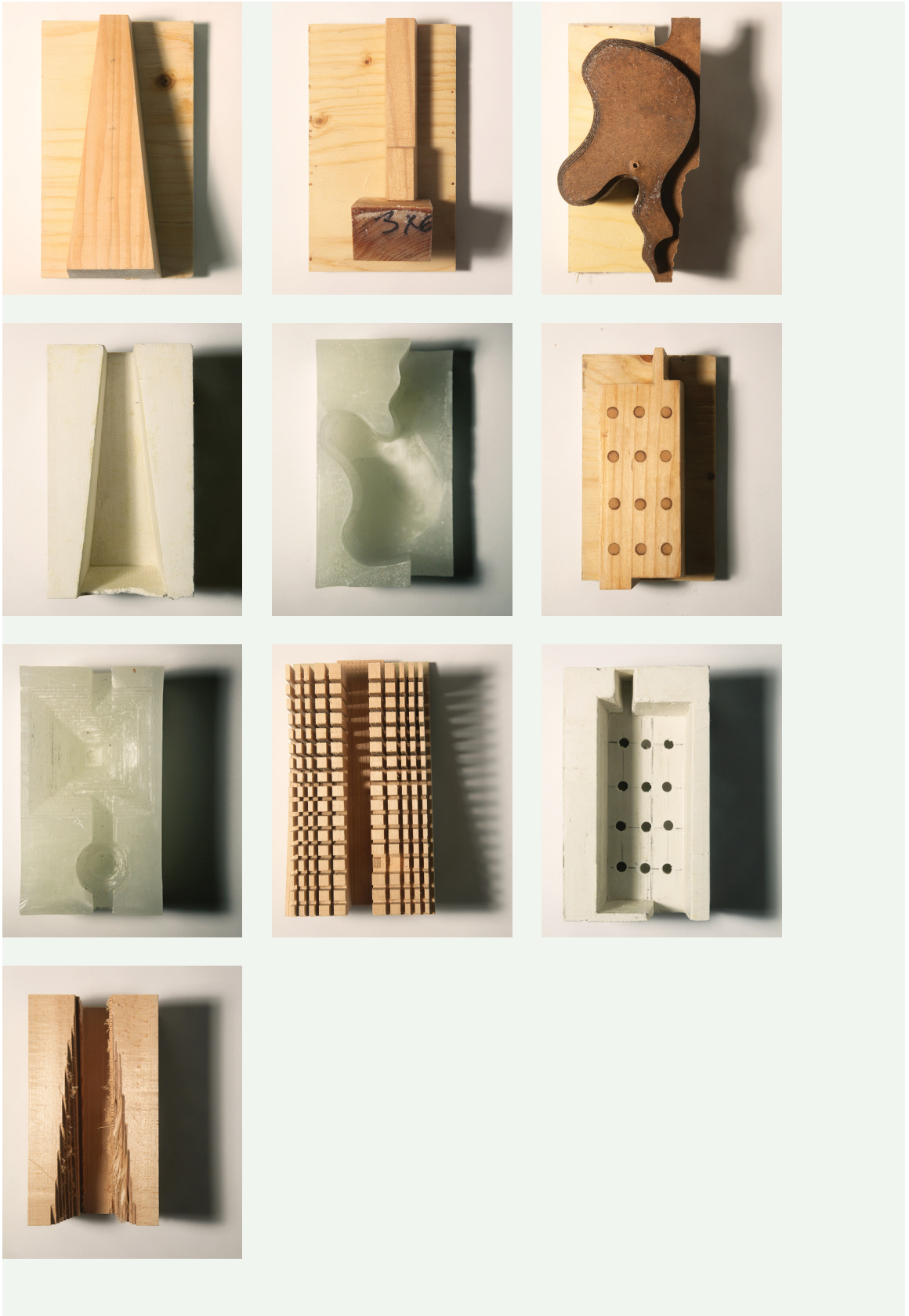
Juxtaposition used to establish a sense of otherness

From the readings it became clear that a strong grouping of subjective phenomena were interwoven into the formation of contemplative experience. Feelings of otherness, connection to loved ones, connection to the physical world, and connection to self all seem to be strongly associated with the development of a contemplative state. Knowing this, it is clear that for architecture to evoke contemplation in its users, it must be designed to provoke these feelings. My work attempts this by focusing on the use of juxtaposition, weathering, kinesthetics and tactility as design tools.

The readings suggest that in every case otherness is the most crucial component to the development of a contemplative experience. Otherness refers to a fundamental difference between one's state of being during a moment of contemplation and one's typical mode of being. It follows, that to establish otherness, one has to juxtapose a person's regular or previous experiences or conditions with new ones. Otherness can be measured in degrees, and some events may be more strongly influenced by this quality than others. It can be achieved in moments and through sequence. It can be scaled. Otherness is embedded in differentiations in material or sensory phenomena, as well as a total shifts in atmosphere or ecosystem. It can be found in differentiation from the daily grind, or in once-in-a-lifetime experiences. A reading of otherness is subjective and compares events throughout one's life in relation to the moment of experience.

To achieve a sense of otherness for the user of a building or device, the designer has to consider the sequence and quality of the experiences that the user has undergone before s/he engages with the designed object. Establishing otherness, then, first occurs at a building's threshold. It can be achieved through subtle differentiation or blatant shifts in the perceptible qualities of experience. The progression of otherness in an architectural experience can be treated as a storyboard, and can effectively be manipulated to induce the desired reaction at any moment, or throughout the length of that experience.

The readings also suggest that a personal connection to the physical world, other people and self are important components to the creation of contemplative experience. Architecture can work to establish these varying degrees of connection in a number of ways. Corridor or doorway width, for example, can suggest that one passes through a space with another person or alone. Similarly, the architectural act of framing views can establish a visual connection with and cognitive emphasis towards objects in the real world. That this may evoke a state of deeper contemplation makes sense, as being connected with the greater systems of nature may remind us of our place in the universe, and the in/significance of our existence. The emphasis placed on connection, then, may be reduced to the sub/conconscious relationship between one's environment, senses and state of mind.



Diagrams exploring tactility, motion, materiality and juxtaposition

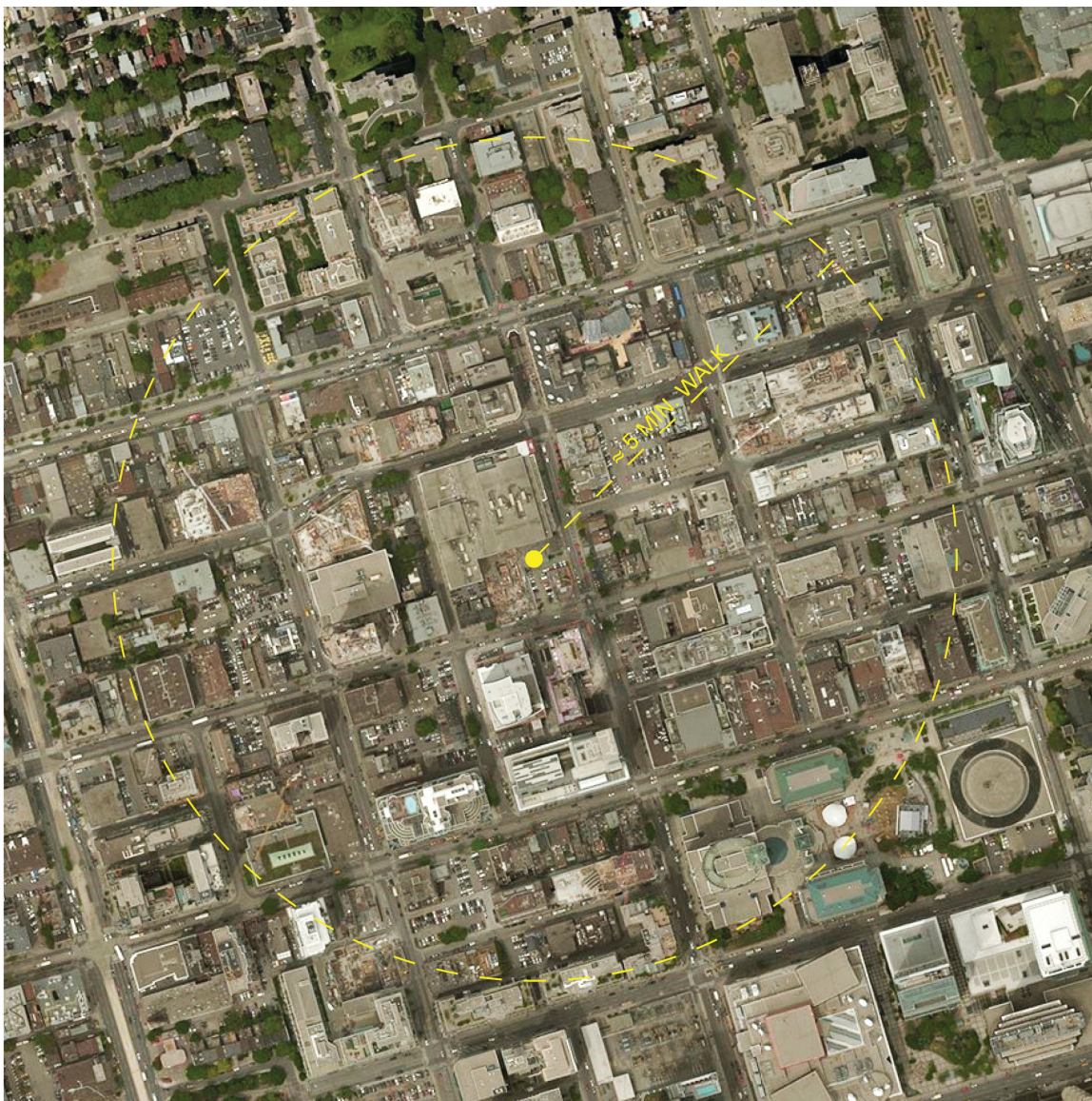


Diagramming sequence

As a further exploration of the previous exercise and in an attempt to develop designs that may embody the aforementioned qualities, I made a series of diagrams that were conceived with subjective phenomena as their driving design principles. The models explored ideas of motion, juxtaposition, materiality, and wear. Through combining and contrasting the diagrams, sketches of space began to emerge. Through the deliberate juxtaposition of materials and sequences I was able to create a sense of otherness, and provide varying degrees of connection to others, nature or self through an imagined experience of inhabitation.

The results of this exercise, however, were less productive and convincing than I hoped them to be. While I was searching for compositional rules for the creation of contemplative space, I stumbled across a few convincing spaces through intuition. Though this exercise was useful in its intuitive and architectural exploration of the spatial sequencing, it became evident that without designing for a specific set of problems that achieving a convincing space of contemplation would be difficult.

An Empathic and Material Reading of Site



Base data from Google maps; diagram showing site context and inhabitational scale

To explore the validity of my thoughts, it became necessary to test the theory in the real world. The choice of location for the site was somewhat unimportant. Since the ideas that I had been exploring are meant to be universal in scope, they should theoretically be able to be achieved anywhere. This led to some difficulty in justifying a choice of site, as one place should be as good as any other. In the end, I considered three sites. They were chosen intuitively for their richness in perceptible phenomena. The sites were explored first in person, and then through memory, writing and

THE VACANT LOT

What is the place? Where is it?

The site is an L-shaped lot that wraps around the corner of John St. and Adelaide St., downtown Toronto. It has evolved throughout the past forty years. Layers of history and development can be seen; it was once nowhere. Now, it sits surrounded by cheap condos and office buildings. --

What is its emotional impression? What kind of mood/atmosphere does it have?

The buildings around the site manifest the attitudes and growth of Toronto. Fifty story condo buildings juxtapose a 2 story Hooters, an old auto-garage and heritage Victorian style townhouses -- (now restaurants). The eclectic mix of architectural styles and program confuse the inhabitant. It has a persona comparable to the mid-life crisis of an eccentric, open-minded man. It is unsure of itself. It holds onto, and cherishes, the past

-- but, pushes forward in typically mundane style.

What is it made of? Materials. Spatially, Socially...

The details of the old Victorian homes give intimacy, a sense of human scale. On the other hand, the highly logical and massive repetitions of the texture-less steel and glass condos forgo the idea of human scale altogether. Somewhere in-between, the garage and Hooters are cheaply made, disposable buildings.

But they have a certain charm, and are definitely the most animated buildings on the site. They carve out a colorful and planar environment which the proposed building could react to.

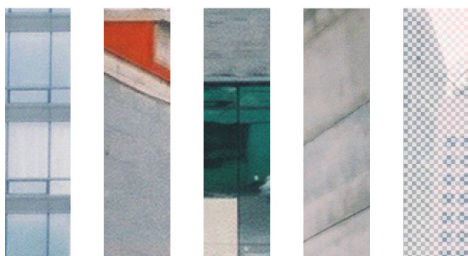
The corner is at odds. The garage is in a weird spot, and it's certainly outdated; a monument to cheap land! The corner of John/Adelaide is occupied by a trashy bar/restaurant, where, some pretty fun but, dubious things must happen... Across the street overpriced food is sold from six (more or less identical) buildings. Towering over all of this are housing units for hundreds of people. It's a weird mix.

Reflective writing, used to engage the atmospheric and emotional qualities of place

photography. This process mirrored the earlier exercise of reading contemplative experience, and deconstructing memory to understand experience in terms of its component phenomena.



Photographs of site



Material sampling of neighboring restaurant and condo

Of the three sites, I chose the parking lot. Through the exercises in reflective writing and photographic deconstruction it became evident that the parking lot was not only the most fragmentary, but also the most rich in phenomena. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity. On one hand there is a degree of difficulty that accompanies architectural proposals for derelict building sites. But at the same time, the abundance of on site phenomena provide a strong base for juxtaposition and connection.

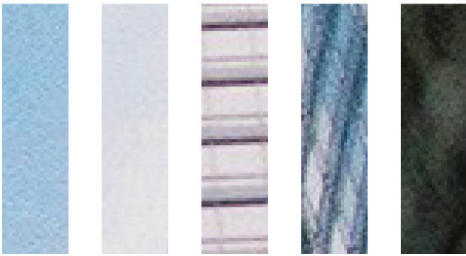
The site is located on both sides of a busy street corner. It is surrounded by apathetic neighbors. Along its northern edge is a 2 story auto garage and falafel shop. It shares its western wall, which is sixty feet tall, with a fifty story condo building. Along its South and West edges, the site wraps a cheap restaurant. The material language, just like the atmosphere of the site, is cluttered and disjointed. There is no attempt made



Material sampling of victorian row houses

by the new constructions to bridge the disharmony between old and new. It is at the cusp of development, while strongly representative of the past.

The material landscape is dominated by smooth reflective glass, pragmatically poured concrete and seventies era brick-work. The most texturally rich elements on the site are a row of old Victorian houses; they are rich with detail and celebrate their process of making. The site is anchored by a Hooters restaurant; it is covered in grey painted clapboard and smeared with advertisements. The walls of the auto-garage are made of a corrugated siding and are painted bright green. Kitty-corner to the site is another parking lot filled with cars. A temporary building meant to sell condos is squatting on the corner of John and Adelaide Streets. The site is materially dissonant. It has no direction, no sense of self.



Material sampling of neighboring condos and sky

Having found through my research that the material nature of environment has such a strong influence on our emotional and cognitive reactions , I knew that the material realities of my building site would have to be carefully considered. In the beginning, my architectural assessment of site was approached through typical means – I drew site plans, made massing models, drew site sections and street elevations. Without a material palette though, line and volumetric drawing methods failed to communicate the material essence of the site. Because I was aiming to engage with these qualities, confront them through juxtaposition and create moments of physical connection to place, I knew that I would have reassess they way I was representing the site.

I explored and documented the construction and textures of the building site using a material sampling. By applying different treatments and deconstructing photographs

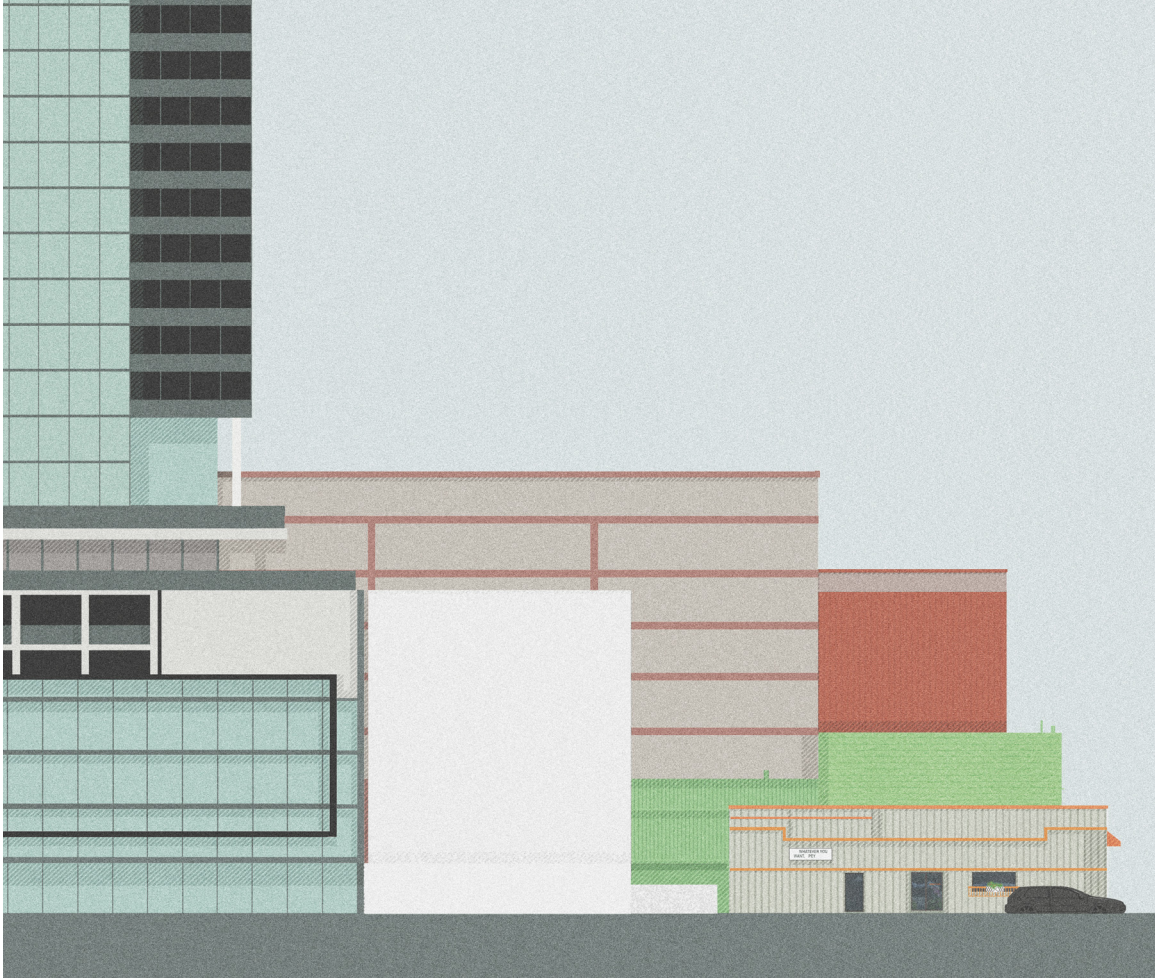


Material sampling of a patterned wall and sky

of the site, I was able to isolate pieces of material and texture that the building could connect with or react to. This material survey began to influence a deeper understanding of the place, and inform moments for architectural response.

Though this technique proved useful in establishing a fragmented material understanding of the site, or for moments, or from particular points of view, it did not allow me to fully engage with the material ecology of the place. For this, I needed to return to conventional architectural drawing projections.

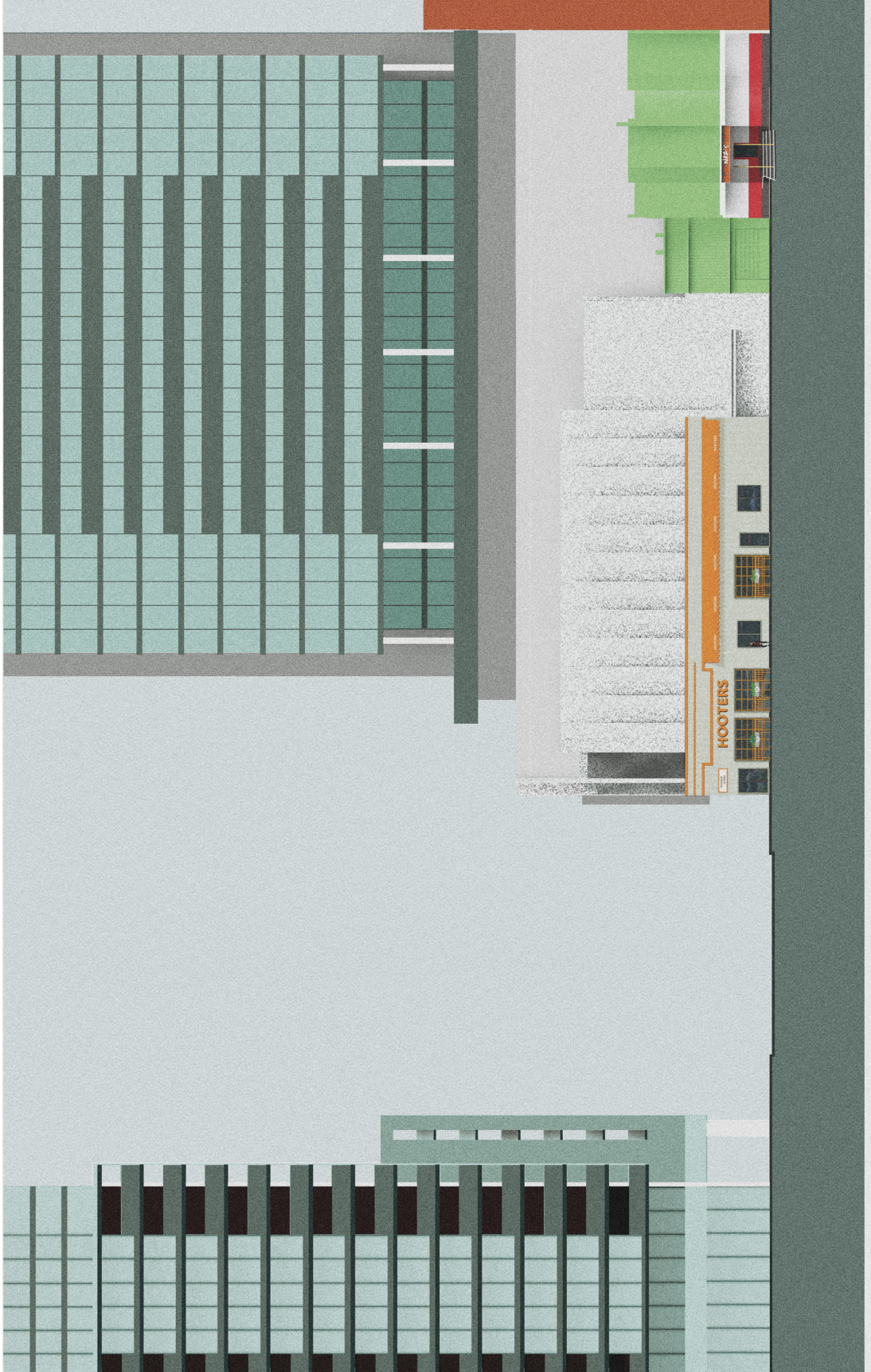
The abstracted information gathered through the material samples were painted onto street elevations and an axonometric projection of the site. Together, these drawings acted as diagrammatic references throughout the schematic design process. Having



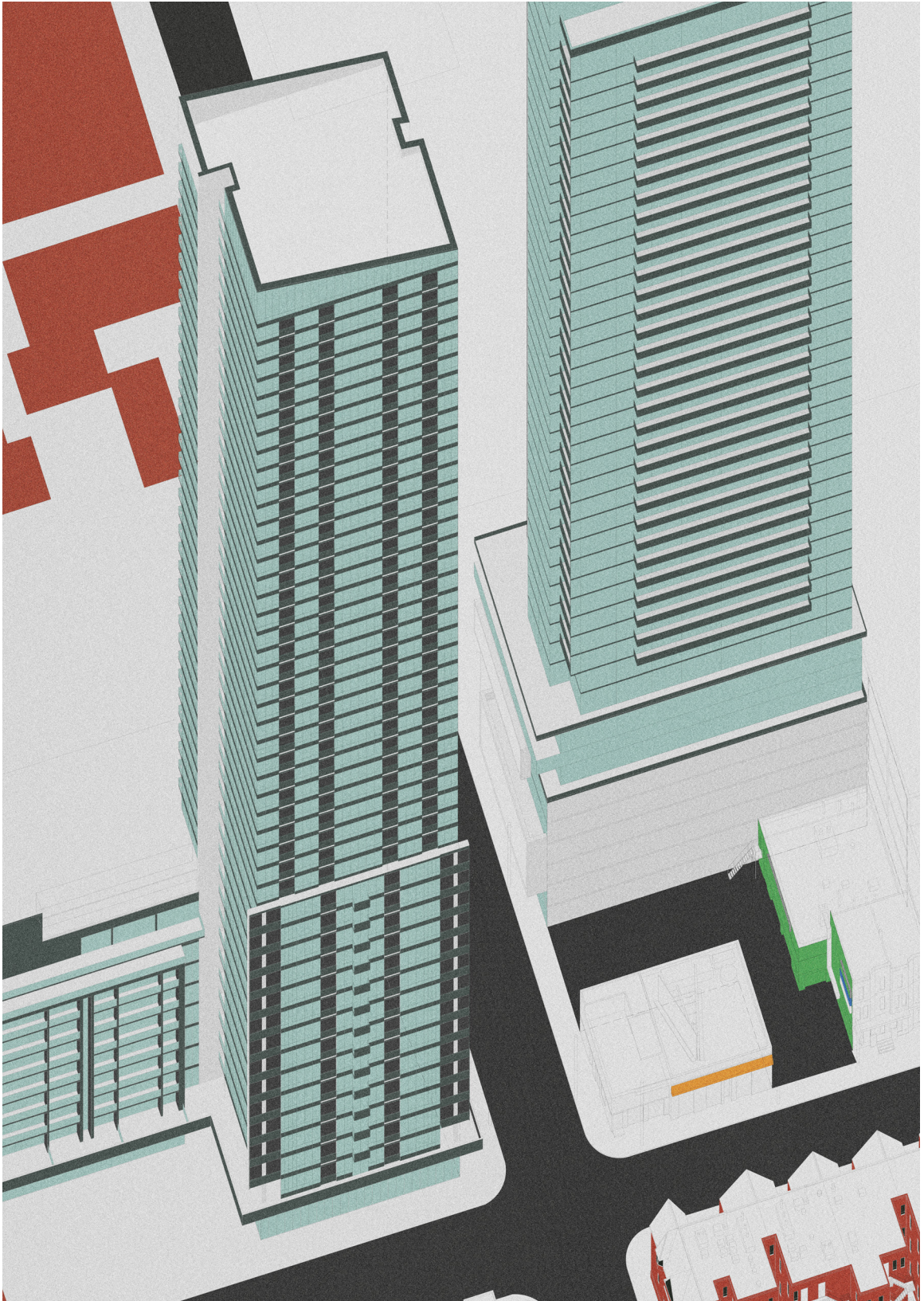
Adelaide street material elevation

a visual mapping for site materials aided in the process of making clear, logical design decisions. The drawings acted as material keys, and outlined the larger schematic decisions for the design. The drawings allowed me to understand the volumetric relationships of the site, while also considering the atmospheric composition and quality of its materials.

I suspect that this way of drawing could be of use outside the bounds of this project, and be applied by architects and students in their studies of site. Conventional modes of architectural representation are sometimes so distilled and abstract that they can betray our understanding of the real-world thing that we're designing. Referencing our drawings and models with texture, color and material would allow for a much more in depth understanding of the relationship of our designs to the real world.

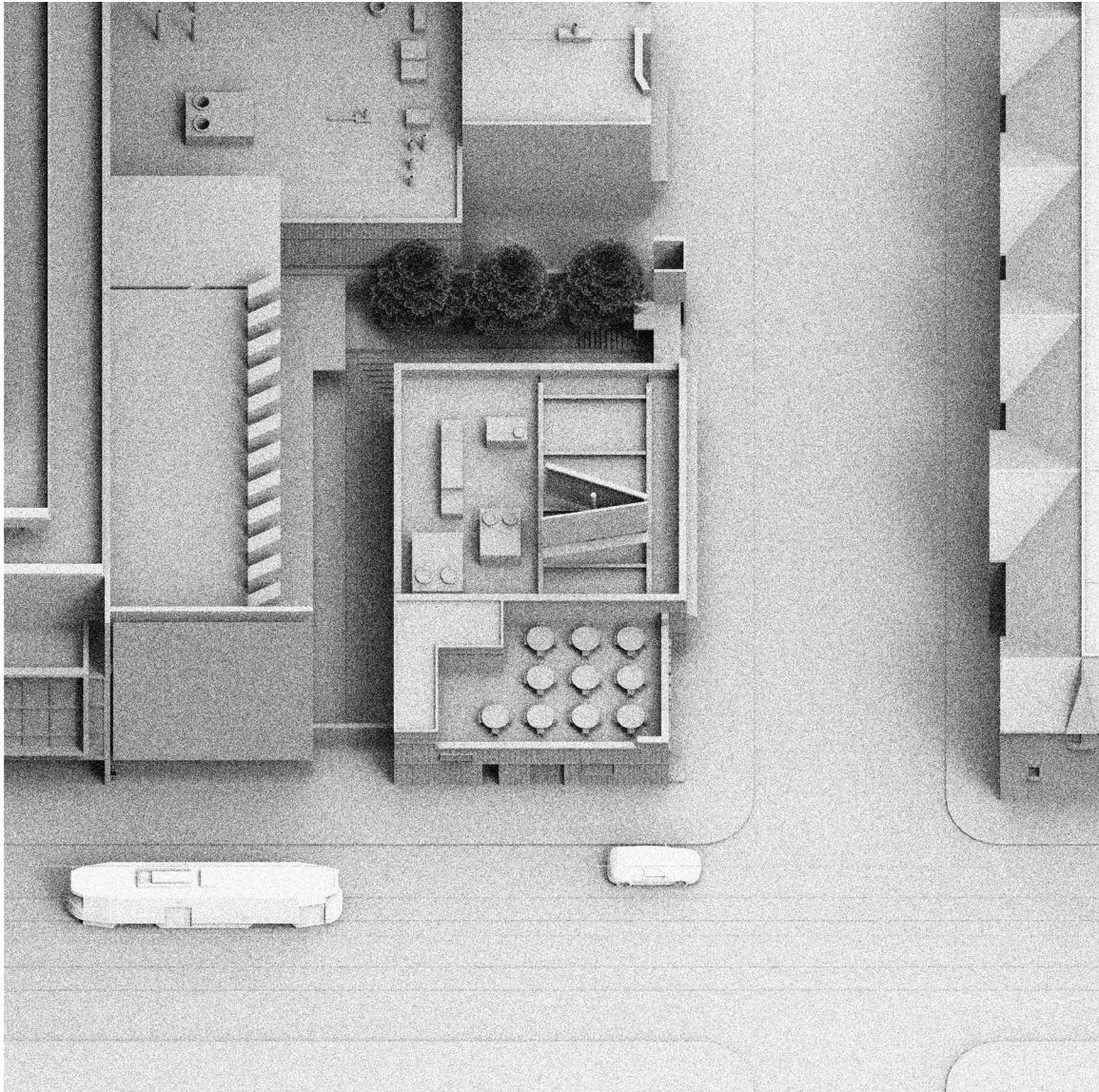


John street material elevation



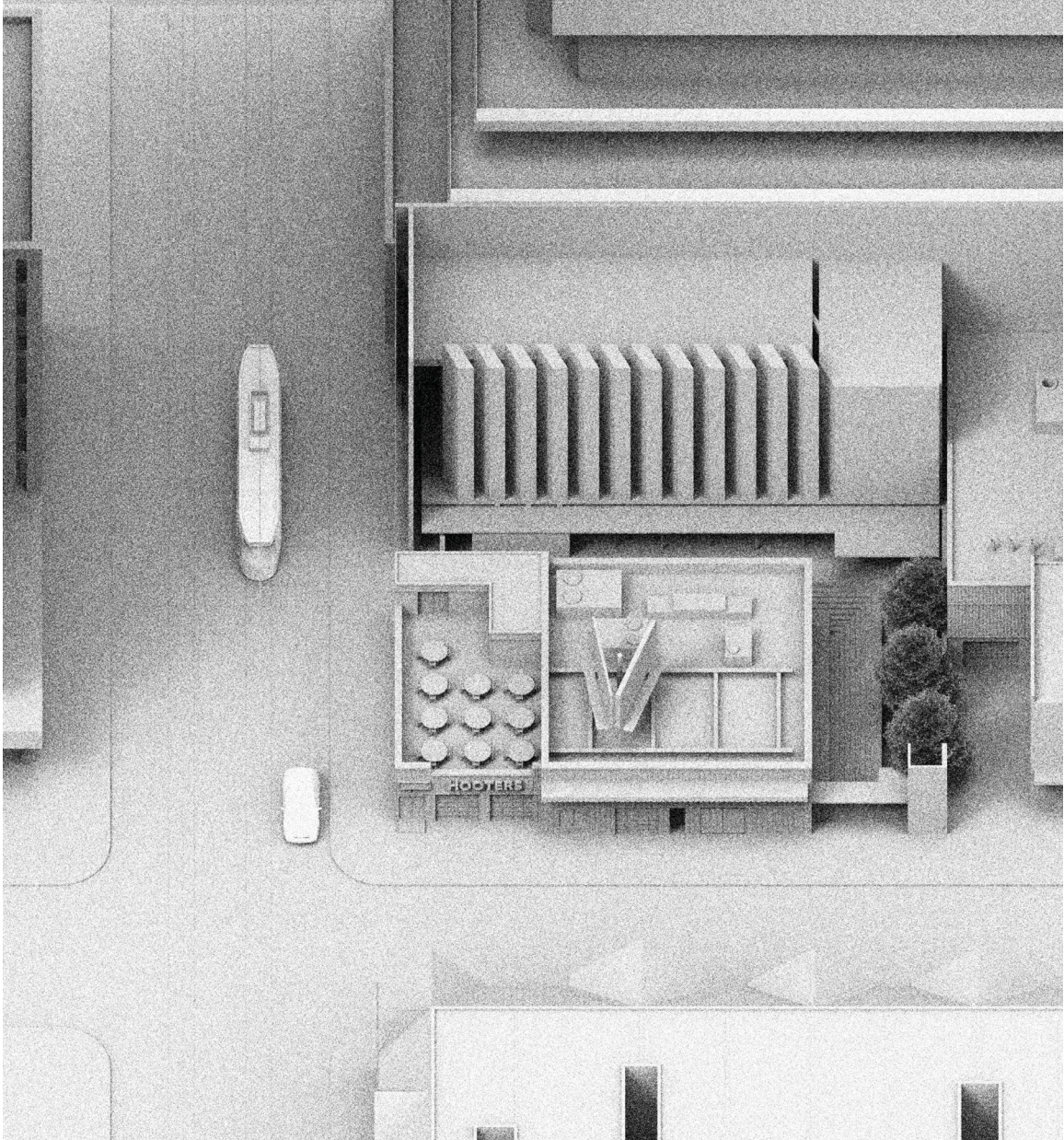
Material diagram of site

A Material Response to Site



Adelaide street axonometric view

The form of the building has been informed by the material reading of site. To establish a sense of otherness, the building is conceived as a mediating relationship between inhabitant, the sky and the ground. This emphasis placed on the inherently oppositional relationship is meant to provide a framework for architectural design moves, and a poetic theme of contemplation for the building inhabitant. The schematic design and intentions we based on what the material reading of site allowed for. To create a sense of distinction from the surrounding urbanity, both sides of the site



John street axonometric view

have been walled in. This creates a visual and acoustic barrier. Both axes engage the body, they demand motion and action. This kinesthetic engagement of the body seeks to establish a physical connection between building and inhabitant. Special attention has been paid to light and shadow and texture. The building is meant to engage our consciousness of the periphery and detract from the importance of focused perspectival vision. The building may be thought of as a series of extended thresholds that act to connect the inhabitant with themselves.

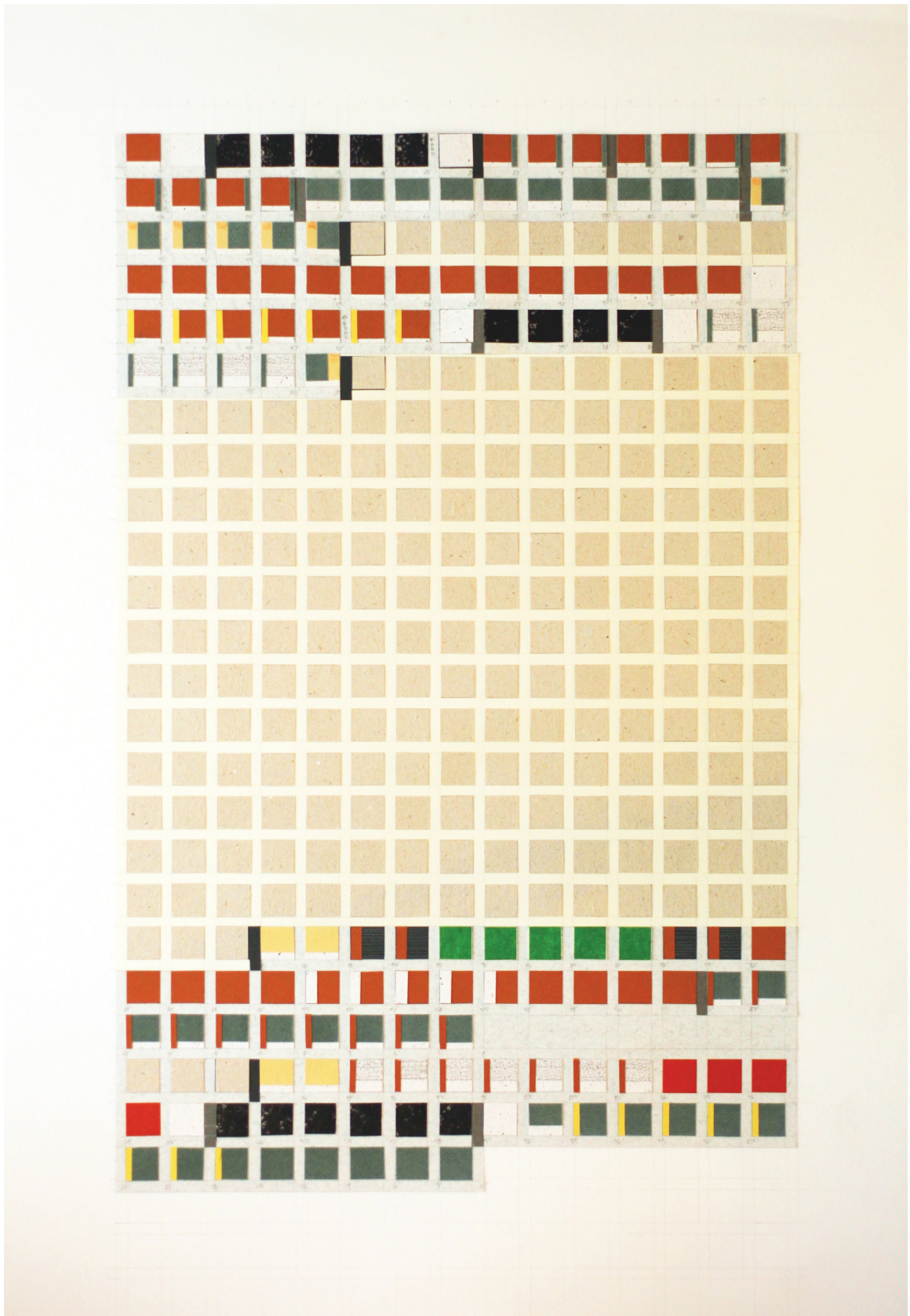
Sequence and Experience

The procession of inhabitant through the architecture was the main focus of this design. This is how a person perceives the qualities of a space, and the environment defined by the architecture, itself and in relation to its surroundings, is what influences a person's emotions, thoughts and state of mind. In this project, procession through the building acted both as a design driver (through recollection and imagination) and as a means of representation for the design.

To breathe life into my schematic design, I made a pair of storyboard diagrams. The diagrams were designed to represent a person's tactile interactions with environment over time. Each square represents three feet, which is equivalent to one pace, or one second of time. The swatches represent one's material environment.

One drawing maps the four possible approaches towards the building site. The diagram shows the dominance of reflective glass, brick, concrete and asphalt. The other diagram was used as a design tool. I used the drawing to record my thoughts as I imagined myself passing through my design. This empathic process allowed me to consider the experience of my proposal, and ameliorate or adjust it to emphasize or diminish key experiences within the design. It served as a kind of parti for design development.

The design ideas proposed in the storyboard diagrams are represented in a bi-axial sequence of images. Drawings A through D describe ones journey from John St. to Adelaide St., and drawings 1 through 4 describe the passage from Adelaide St. to John St. Along both paths, the inhabitant reaches a space for contemplation at the climax of their trip, the experience of this room is represented in drawings S and G. The architectural qualities of the building have been represented in a series of section drawings; there is a section cut through both axes looking towards the room for reflection and a section cut directly though the contemplative space.



Tactile interactions mapped along the approach from street to site

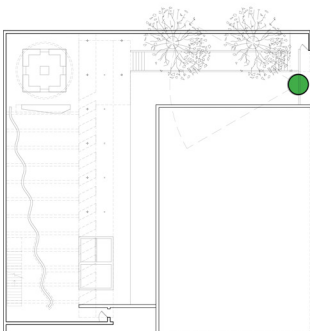


Tactile interactions mapped from both entry thresholds of the building showing the approach towards the room for reelection



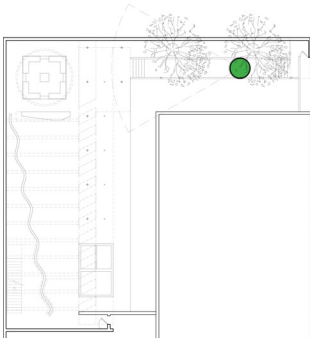
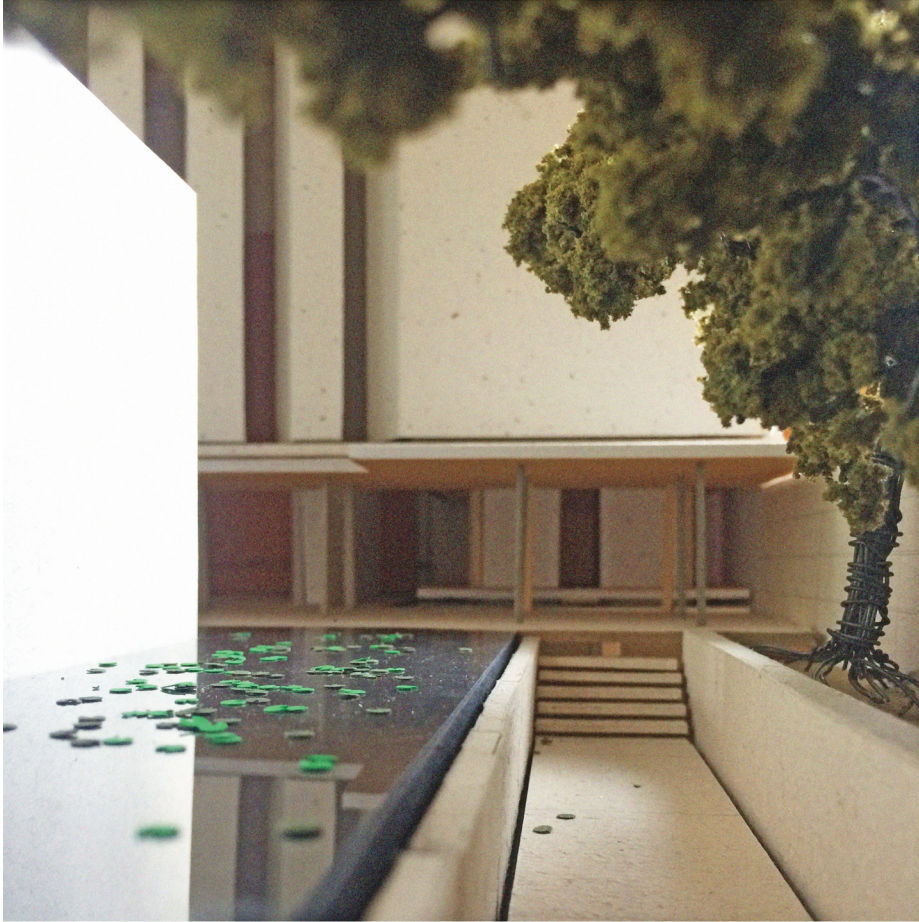
Approach from John street

A



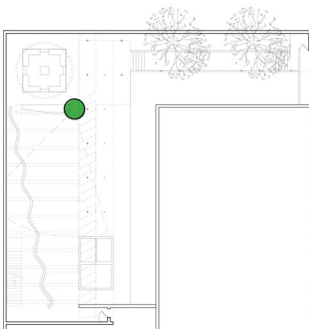
John street entrance

B



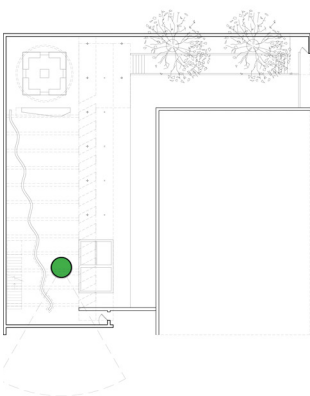
Lily pond and garden

C

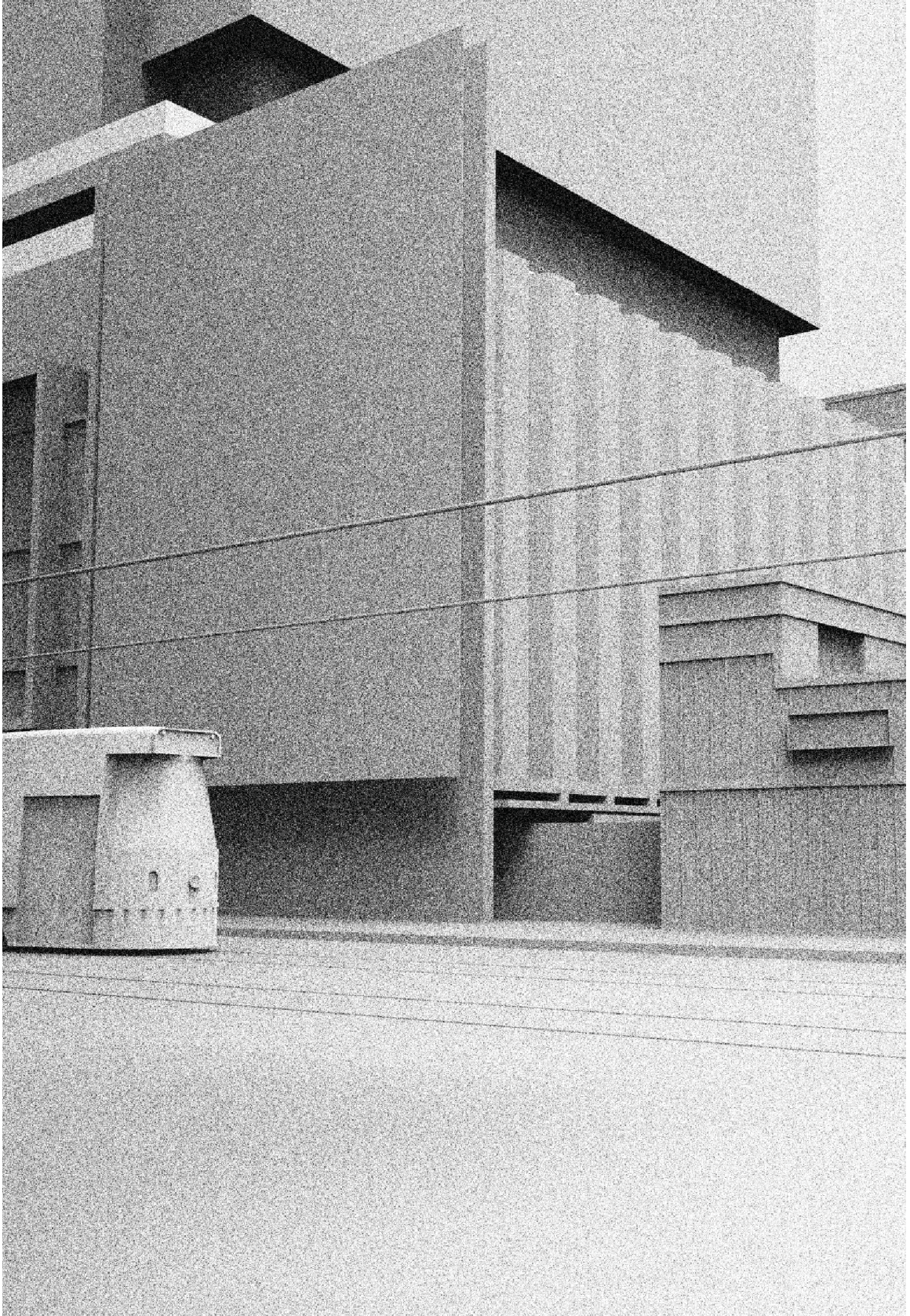


Sculptural wall and threshold beyond

D

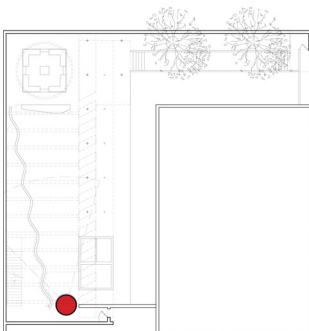


Exit to Adelaide street



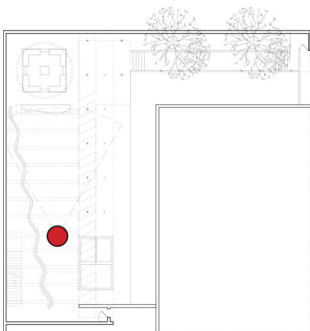
Approach from Adelaide street

1



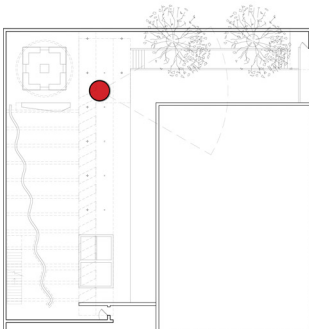
Adelaide street entrance

2



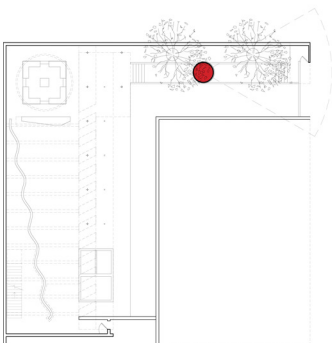
Scultural wall, standing stone and fins

3



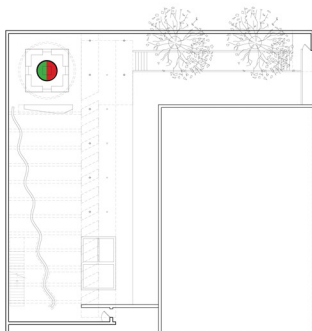
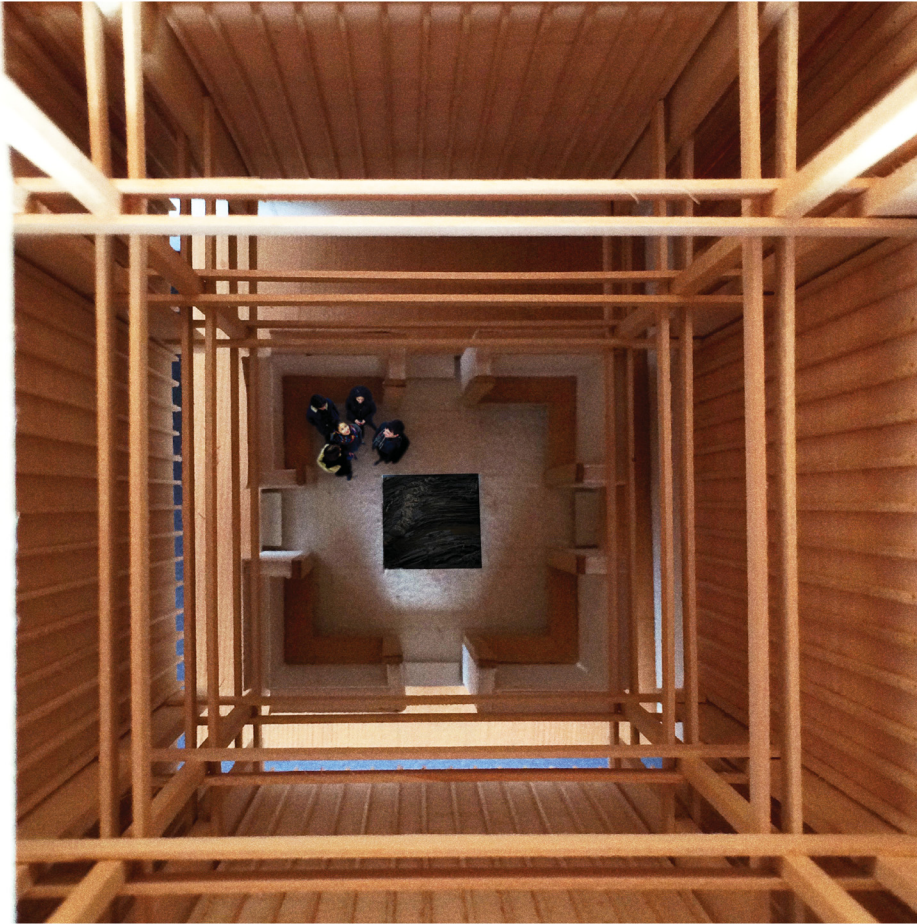
View through garden towards John street

4



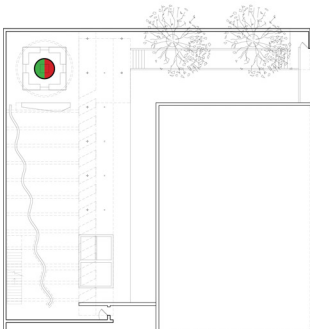
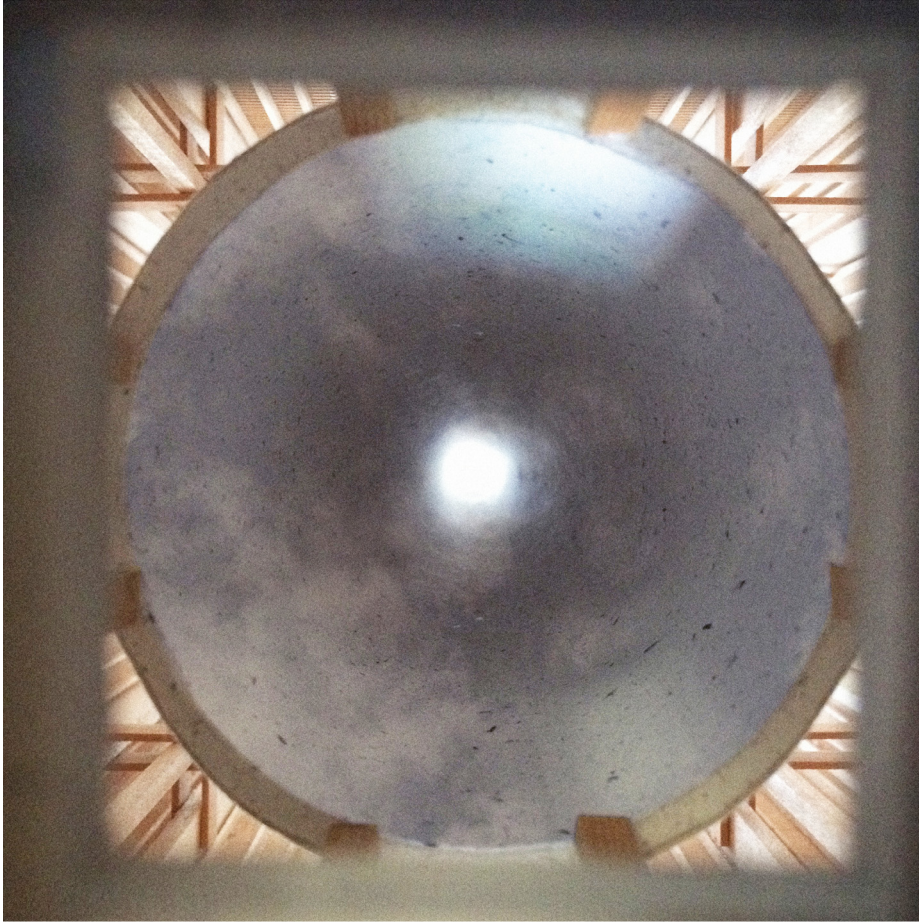
Threshold beyond and exit towards John street

G

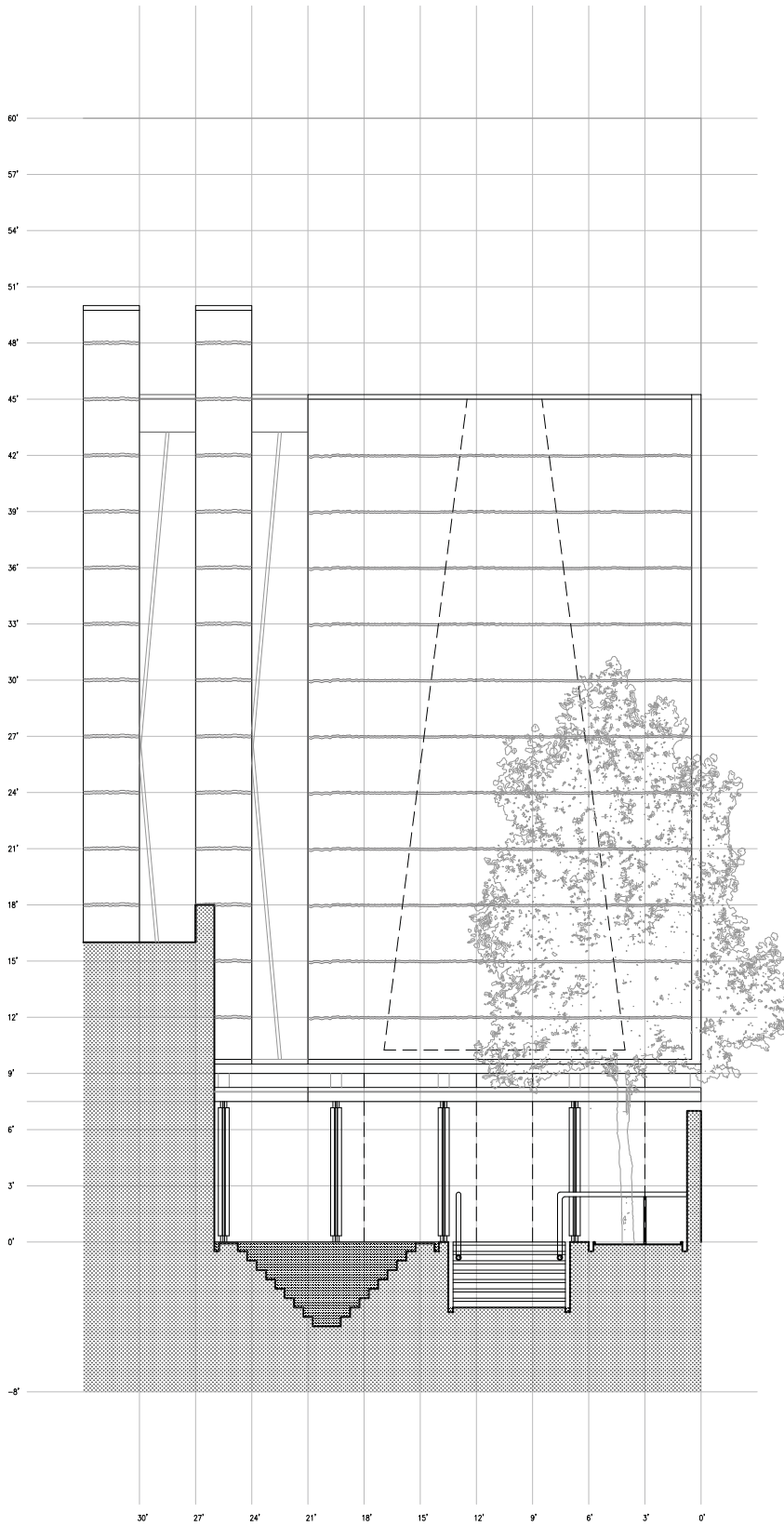


Bird's eye view of room for reflection

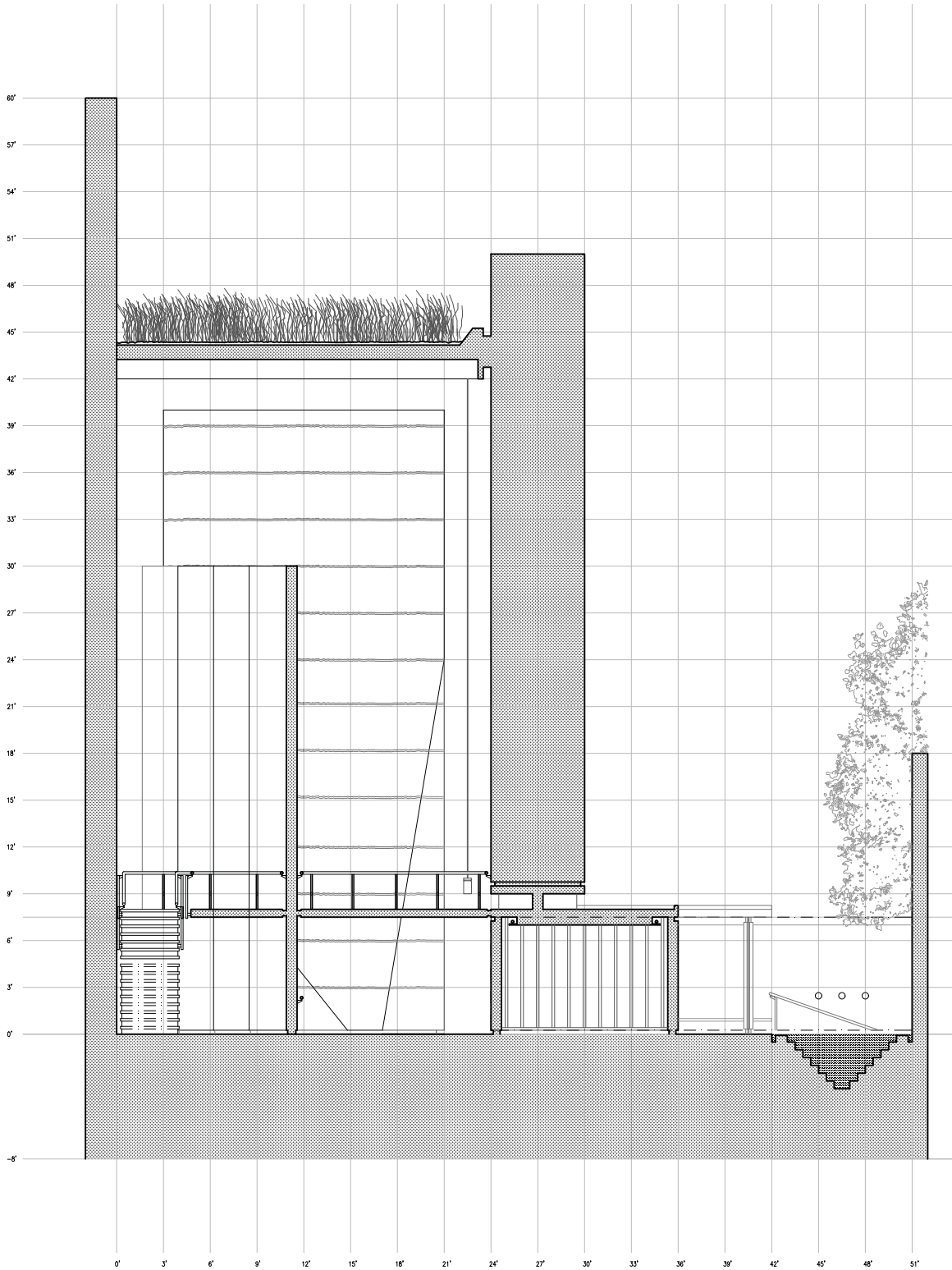
S



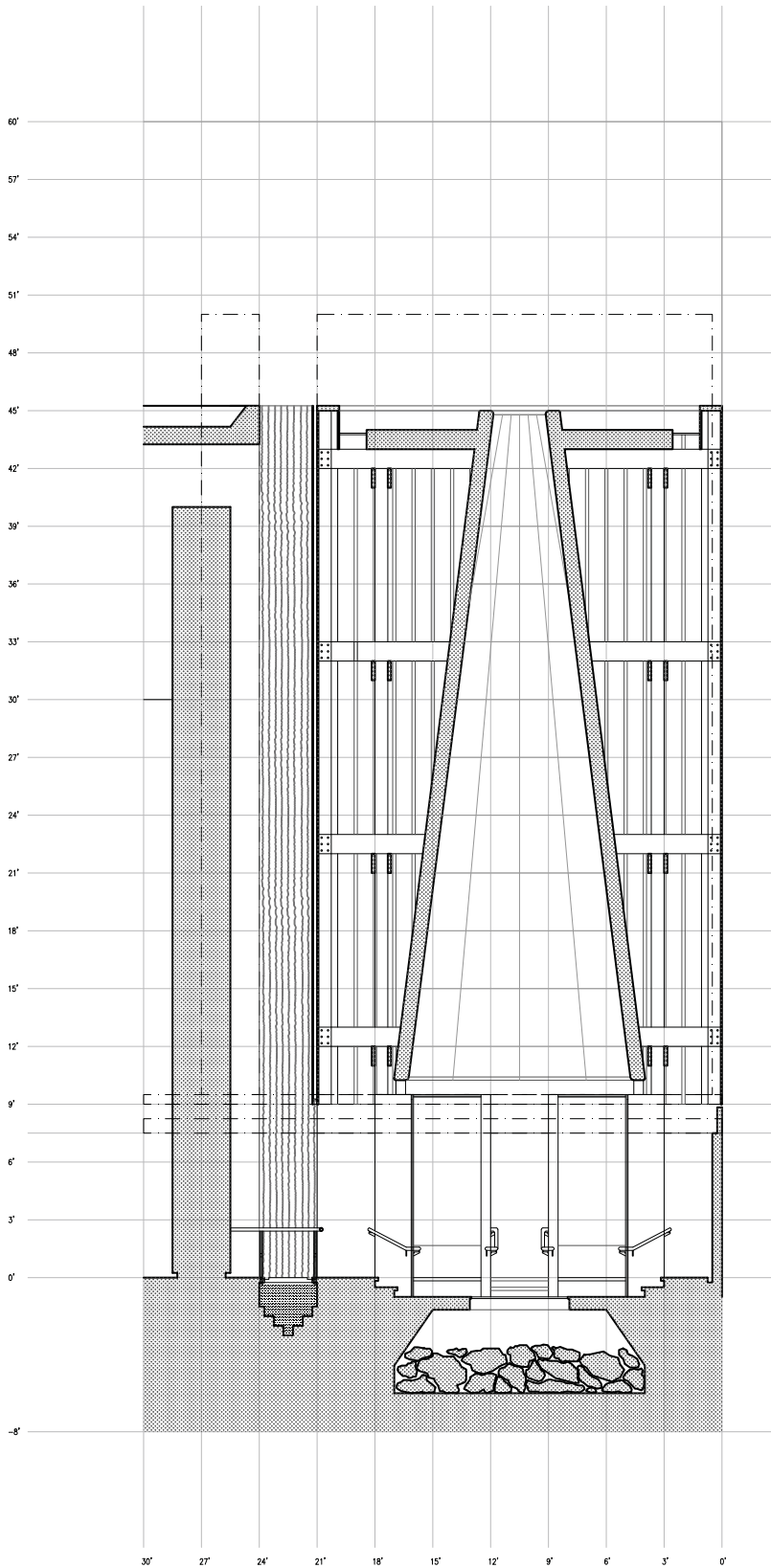
Worm's eye view of room for reflection



Transverse section taken through the John street axis



Transverse section taken through the Adelaide street axis



Transverse section taken through the room for reflection

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

It would be inappropriate to conclude this thesis with definitive statements. Since the beginning, this project has grown in scope and the answers that I've been seeking have become ever more distant, ambiguous and vague. If nothing else, through my design explorations I've learned that to identify, qualify and organize an approach to an emotionally impactful architecture is no easy task!

Early on, it became evident that evoking a sense of contemplation for everyone through architectural cues was an impossible task. Intuitively I suspected this as my work began. Being reassured in this assumption, however, and having had the opportunity to explore the degree to which the subjectivity of the human experience influences a person's emotional reaction to their environment has been interesting and informative. Although this work has found that a piece of architecture cannot evoke a specific emotional reaction from all people, all of the time, I do believe that the project has stumbled across a number of ideas to be considered while we design to ameliorate the relationship between architecture and inhabitant.

Architecture that embodies its process of making and monumentalizes time, that kinesthetically engages the body, registers and rewards movement, architecture that frames thoughtful and provocative views, that curates whole-body sensorial stimulation, that recognizes the power of a threshold and uses juxtaposition to instill a sense of otherness is existentially exiting! To know whether or not the combination of these design principles actually leads towards the creation of a contemplative space has become less important as the project has developed and is surely impossible to know without actually building and inhabiting the space. If we reflect upon the design explorations documented in this thesis work, the drawings and models suggest that we may be getting close.

The approach outlined in this project could easily be translated and used in professional architectural practice. It is a fundamental concern of architecture to consider the interactions between building and inhabitant. To me, the curation of this relationship is the primary concern of our discipline. Juhani Pallasmaa writes:

The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretize and structure our being in the world. Architecture reflects, materializes and eternalizes ideas and images of ideal life. Buildings and towns enable us to structure, understand and remember the shapeless flow of reality and, ultimately, to recognize and remember who we are. (Pallasmaa 2012, 71)

It's time for us to consider the psychological, emotional and cognitive influence of our designs upon the people who use them. It is possible for us to build a world with buildings that go beyond their pragmatic use and provide us with a rich environment that fosters personal growth and the development of meaning. To do this, it is necessary in practice to exceed what the profession demands of us today. We must design with empathy.

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