

**Drawing from the Past:
The Role of Architecture and Art in Embodying the Everyday
Lives of People and Places**

by

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CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Relations in Architecture and Art	1
Contemporary Visual Culture	2
Thesis Question.....	4
Chapter 2 : Situational Composition	6
Magic Realist Painting	6
Colville	8
Guiding Principles.....	11
In-between Spaces	13
Visual Horizon.....	16
Chapter 3: Urban Composition	18
Movement.....	23
Chapter 4: Design.....	28
Site Composition	28
Building Composition	45
Chapter 5: Conclusion	53
Contemporary Visual Culture	55
Moments.....	56
Bibliography.....	63

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the analysis and interpretation of realist painter, Alex Colville and the relation of techniques used in architecture and art for representing and embodying the everyday lives of people and places. The thesis puts forth the idea that the notion of composition paired with situational thinking can provide a set of creative principles which articulate the architectural edges and contents of moments and settings while establishing the orientation of the design process. The architectural site to test this theory is the currently underutilized and unorganized site of the Halifax VIA Rail Station located along the waterfront of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The thesis will propose the adaptive re-use of the existing train station and various interventions to the surrounding site to re-configure and organize an architectural response to context and allows for the everyday lives of people to thrive within and without.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

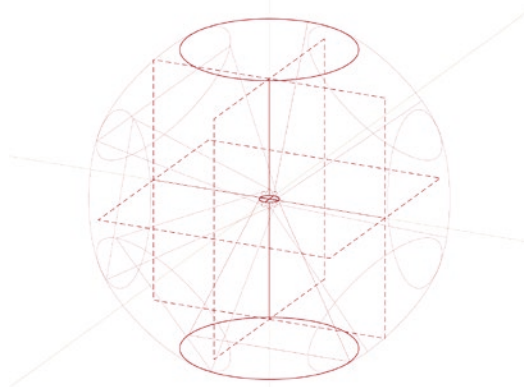
I would like to thank: Roger Mullin and James Forren for their support and guidance and always providing motivation and words of wisdom, helping me to finish. My parents, Ted and Wanda Sparkes, I am truly grateful for your love and support. Anita, thank you for your patience, love and helping me when I needed it the most. David, Kyle, Bards, Lucas and Alicia and all my amazing classmates for the most memorable times. Cheers.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Relations in Architecture and Art

The artistic dimension of a work of art does not lie in the actual physical thing: it exists only in the consciousness of the person experiencing it. Thus analysis of a work of art is at its most, genuine introspection by the consciousness subjected to it. Its meaning lies not in forms, but in the images transmitted by the forms and the emotional force that they carry. Form only affects our feelings through what it represents.¹

Architecture and art embody the lives of people and places and can be referenced as a type of cultural artifact. Both are an expression of human intelligence and complexity, and when we experience architecture and art, I believe we experience a compression of human history. Both have the ability to situate us within a historical timeline from which you experience and relate to the past and present simultaneously. Through this experience and interpretation we learn more about the people and places before us, therefore we learn about ourselves. Architect Aldo Van Eyck refers to this experience as *The Interior of Time* including that the awareness of duration (time/history) is an awareness of being and becoming which implies the awareness of place (a situated moment in time).²



Diagrammatic drawing of the compression of a moment in time.

- 1 Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter B. MacKeith, *Encounters : Architectural Essays* (Helsinki: Building Information, 2005), 449.
- 2 Robert McCarter, *Aldo van Eyck* (New Haven, CT ; London: Yale University Press, 2015), 119.

Contemporary Visual Culture

In today's digital age, contemporary and pop-culture is primarily defined by "social" media and digital networks. For better or for worse, these networks have perpetuated an infatuation with images, instantaneous information and shared digital resources which is resulting in a culture seeking more defined and authentic personal experiences. Coincidentally, in the current field of architecture, we cannot avoid this infatuation with the visual but we must avoid the assumption that the primary focus of architectural identity is a building's visual surface, especially its facade.³ Therefore, to accomplish the task of providing authentic architectural experiences, David Leatherbarrow requires that architects reconsider what it means to establish the limits of an architectural setting. Leatherbarrow asks "what can be used to define the conspicuous and inconspicuous edges of a room, building or urban ensemble and what kinds of settings result from these less obvious means of definition?"⁴



Model and drawing overlay. Undefined spaces.

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- 3 David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Surface Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 78.
 - 4 David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground : Architecture, Technology, and Topography* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 2002), 28.

Dalibor Vesely writes in the book *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, that these means of defining architectural settings and providing architectural experiences can be creatively engaged in the representation of conditions, situations and the possibilities of everyday life.⁵ He confronts the contemporary vision of the architectural discipline that is being treated as an instrument and commodity and recognizes the long tradition and role of artists and architects in embodying and founding culture.

One important figure whose work embodies Atlantic Canadian culture is artist / painter, Alex Colville (1920-2013). His work will help guide this thesis, acting as a reference in the search for relations and connections between art and architecture. Could Colville's approach to defining and depicting moments and situations have architectural implications? The depiction of mundane situations, which have been carefully composed and constructed through methods of ordering and structure have become the subject of analysis. A method of defining and articulating architectural settings will be explored by using Colville's work as the primary vehicle of design.

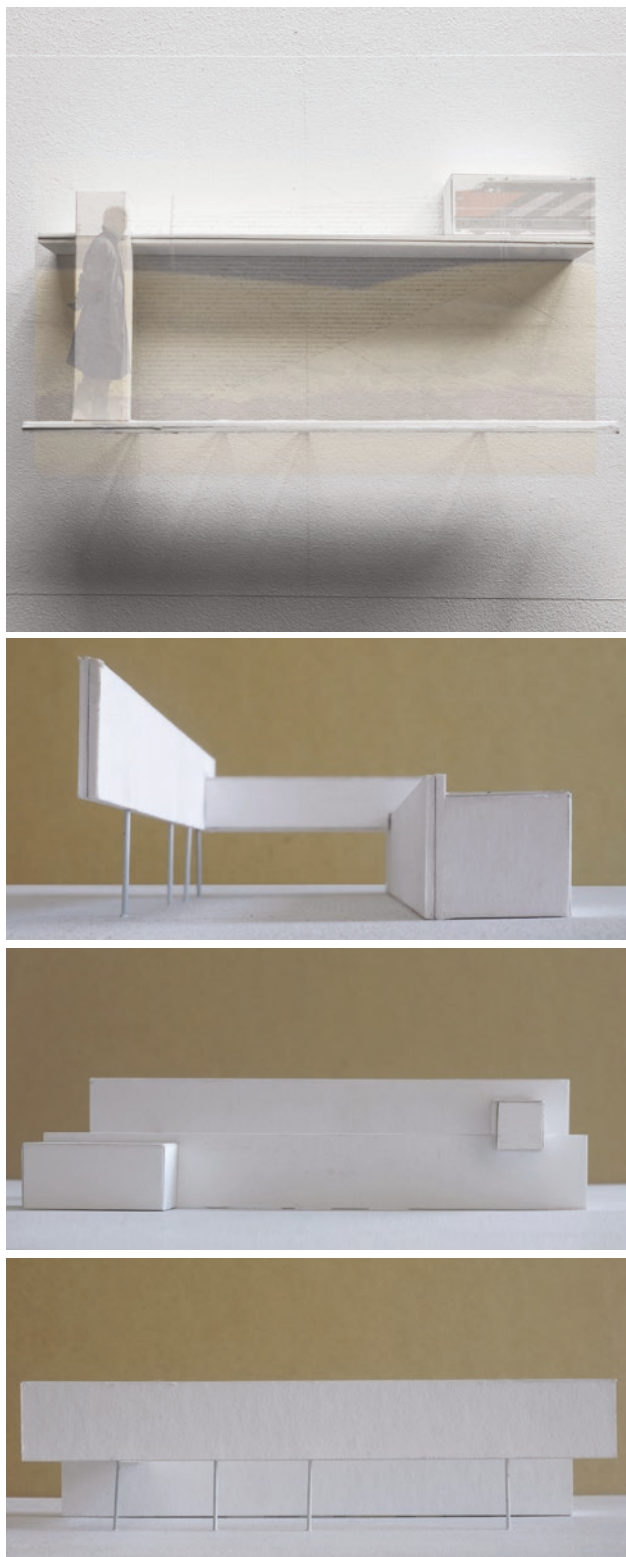


Collage of Colville paintings with fragments removed. Images from *High Realism in Canada*, 1974. 1: *Woman carrying Canoe*, 2: *January*, 1971 3: *Hound in Field*, 1958. 4: *Woman at Clothesline*, 1957.

5 Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation the Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 373.

Thesis Question

How do composition and ordering techniques define architectural settings and situations and help represent peoples experiences and relations to the architecture and landscapes of a specific place and moment in time?



A physical model of a Colville composition. Constructing the relation between ground and horizon planes, foreground and background. Model overlaid with Alex Colville's *Ocean Limited*, 1962.

CHAPTER 2: SITUATIONAL COMPOSITION

Magic Realist Painting

A significant contributor to the cultural continuity of Atlantic Canada is artist Alex Colville in his ability to mediate between the spectacular and ordinary and portray moments of everyday life within a specific cultural landscape as iconic artworks. Alex Colville's work epitomizes the artistic genre of narrative fiction called *magic realism*. It can be characterized as a type of representation or medium that expresses a realistic view of the world while adding and referencing conventions of allegory and myth. Colville shared this framework of magic realism with artists such as Andrew Wyeth, Frida Kahlo, Edward Hopper, and Vilhelm Hammershoi, among others, as well as fellow Atlantic Canadian artists Christopher Pratt and Tom Forrestall, both of which have a direct or associated connection with Alex Colville and his work.



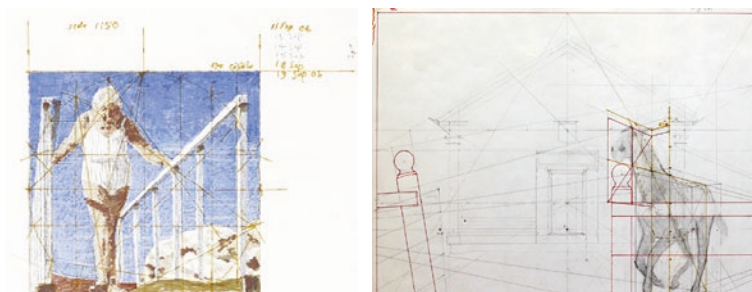
Examples of Magic Realist paintings. Above left: Andrew Wyeth. *Christina's World*, 1948; Above right: Frida Kahlo. *Tree of Hope*, 1946; Bottom left: Tom Forrestall. *The Diner Hour*, 2006; Bottom right: Christopher Pratt. *Christmas Eve at 12 O'Clock*, 1995.



Alex Colville, *Church and Horse*, 1964; from Montreal Museum of Fine Art, Montreal.



Alex Colville, *Ocean Limited*, 1962. Oil and synthetic resin on hardboard, 68.5 x 119.3 cm; from Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Halifax, Canada.



Left: Alex Colville, *Study for Woman Climbing a Ramp*. 2006. acrylic and ink on paper. 11 x 8 1/2 in; from Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto, Ontario. Right: Alex Colville, *Study for Church and Horse*, 1964; from Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto, Ontario.

Colville

Alex Colville once referred to himself as a builder.⁶ Prior to painting, sketches and drafting were essential for measuring and defining the space between the subjects and objects. The regulated order and underlying structure of his paintings were an important part of his process. It was said that when he painted, he ordered space, so composition and geometry were important to him.⁷ Colville's rigorous method was a way of probing his experiences and memories, as well as exploring existentialist themes and relations. Note, that Colville was beginning his professional career in a post WWII society which had experienced the risk and fragility of human reality, and the potentially negative dimensions of existence.⁸ Existentialism, which was a popular philosophical rhetoric of the time, emphasized the individual as free but responsible in an otherwise deterministic world.⁹ Therefore, the characters in Colville's paintings seem to be wandering free through land and seascapes for no purpose other than to invite the recollection of memories, personal reflections and relations to the world around us. ¹⁰ The figures appear to participate in the same space and events as the viewers.

Analysing the underlying composition of Colville's work is revealing but also familiar to both artists and architects. He dealt with the same architectural issues of space, composition and representing the everyday life of a region's culture.

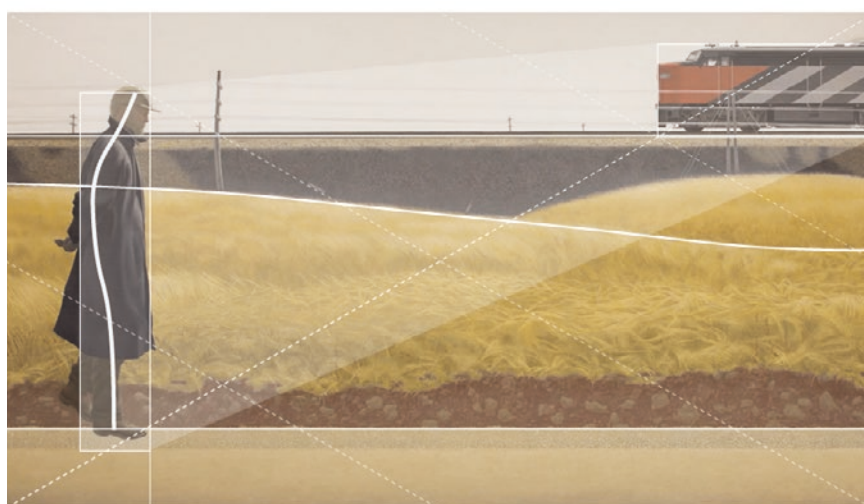
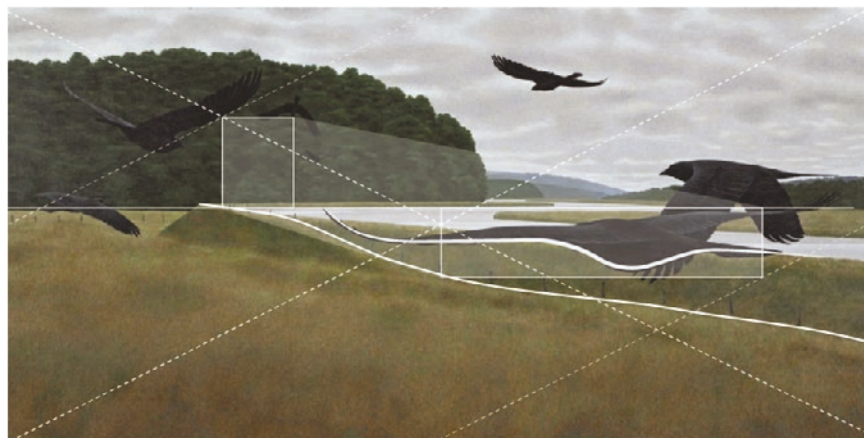
6 Don Hutchison, *Alex Colville: The Splendour of Order*, filmed 1984 (Youtube Video, 56:44. Posted 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yivF7UB7rw&t=2515s>.

7 Alex Colville, Andrew Hunter, and Art Gallery of Ontario, *Colville* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2014), 30.

8 Tom Smart, Alex Colville, and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, *Alex Colville : Return* (Fredericton: Douglas & McIntyre, 2003), 34.

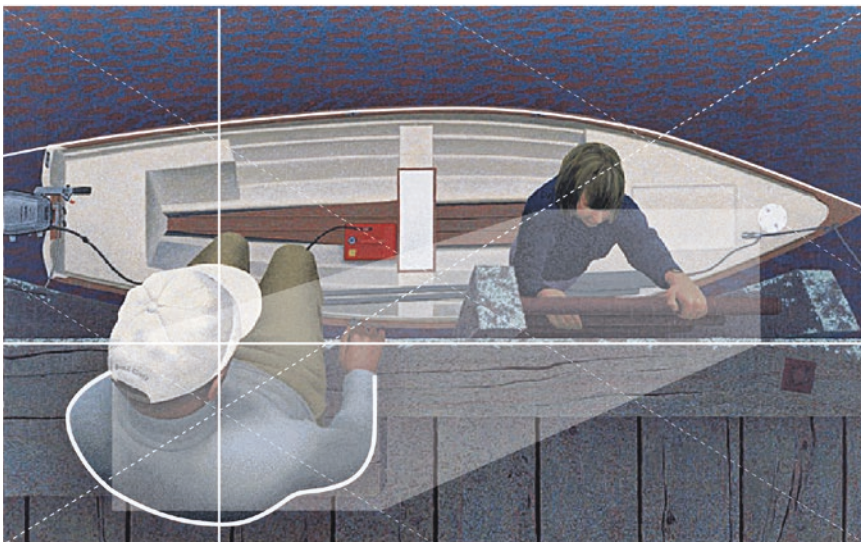
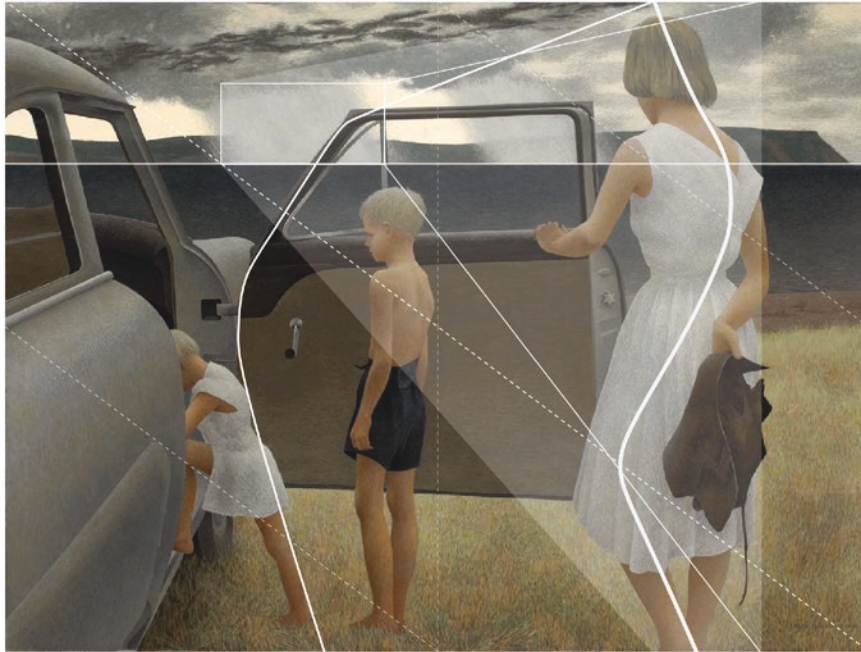
9 *Ibid.*,34.

10 *Ibid.*,55.



These drawings visualize the key elements of the underlying composition. It helps us better understand how Colville considered the visual hierarchy, determining how one reads the painting and informs how we come to understand the works narrative in relation to ourselves.

Top: *Seven Crows*, 1980. Bottom: *Ocean Limited*, 1982

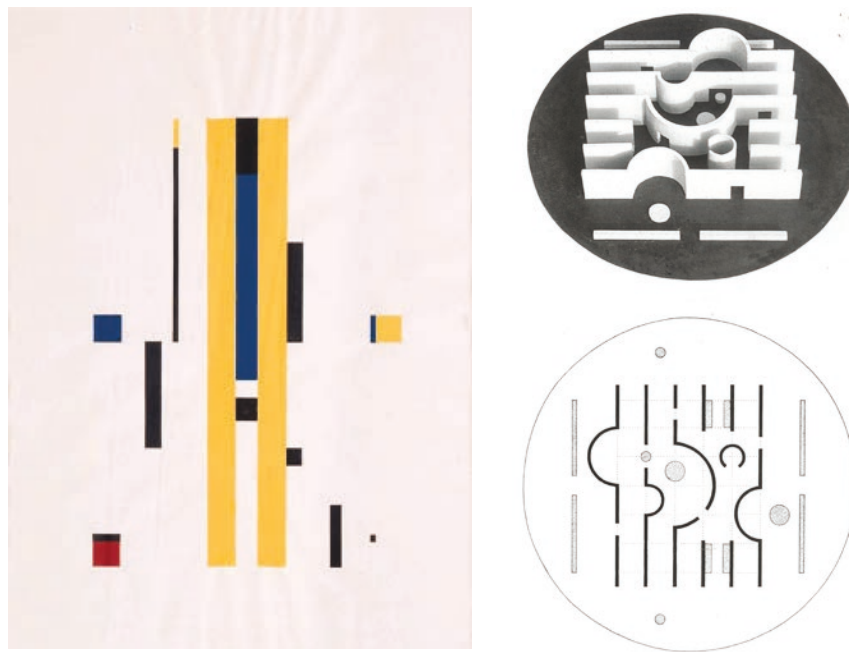


These drawings visualize the key elements of the underlying structure. It helps us better understand how Colville considered the visual hierarchy, determining how one reads the painting and informs how we come to understand the works narrative in relation to ourselves.

Top: *Family and Rainstorm*, 1955. Bottom: *Embarkation*, 1994.

Guiding Principles

One architect who worked with the notion that certain techniques of artwork held direct implications for architecture and urban design was Aldo Van Eyck. For Van Eyck the paintings of Richard Paul Lohse show that the spaces and relations between things were more important than the things alone¹¹. Van Eyck correlated that from these paintings and his findings in primitive native artifacts that the small and large numbers, individual and the collective, whole and fragments, two halves of the same entity were represented in such patterns and that these relations must be engaged in design¹². From his interpretations and readings of artists and artifacts Van Eyck was able to form his own principles of relations in design.



Left: Richard Paul Lohse, *Elemente zu 10 gleichen Themen*, 1950.
 Right: Model and Drawing of Aldo Van Eyck's *Sonsbeek Pavilion*, 1966.

¹¹ Robert McCarter, *Aldo van Eyck* (New Haven, CT ; London: Yale University Press, 2015), 54.

¹² Ibid.,55.



Seven Crows.
1980



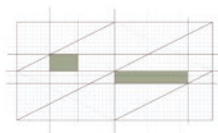
Ocean Limited.
1962



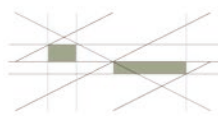
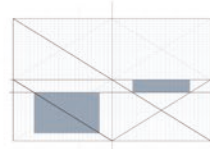
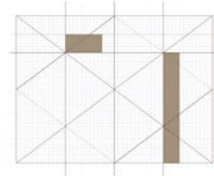
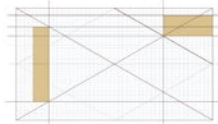
Family and Rainstorm.
1955



Embarkation.
1994



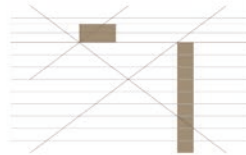
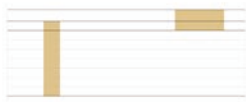
Structure



Composition



Horizontality



Projection



In-between

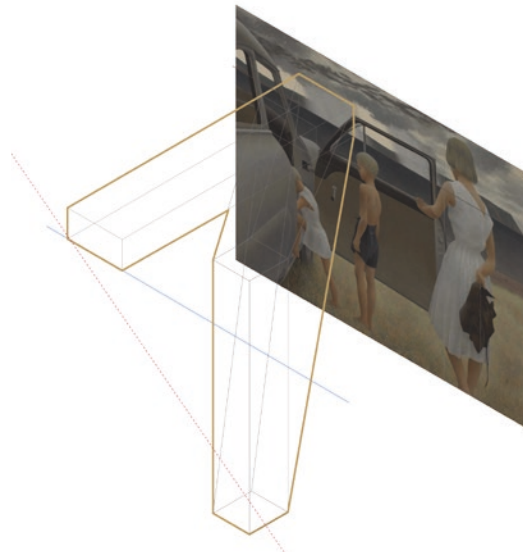


Grid of guiding principles based on Alex Colville's composition methods. 1: *Seven Crows*, 1980. 2: *Ocean Limited*, 1982. 3: *Family and Rainstorm*, 1955. 4: *Embarkation*, 1994.

In-between Spaces

In-between spaces are where movement takes place, between point A and B and implies a convergence of separated spaces. In the paintings of Alex Colville, figures are often depicted as though frozen in a moment of mobility. The inferred converging point of these characters and their surroundings are brought to our attention through both perspective and the consideration of the in-between spaces. In architecture, Aldo Van Eyck expresses that this type of space is a common ground for a collection of polarities such as subject and object, inner and outer, open and closed, two complementary halves of one of the same entity¹³. It is important that these moments be considered in the composition of architecture¹⁴.

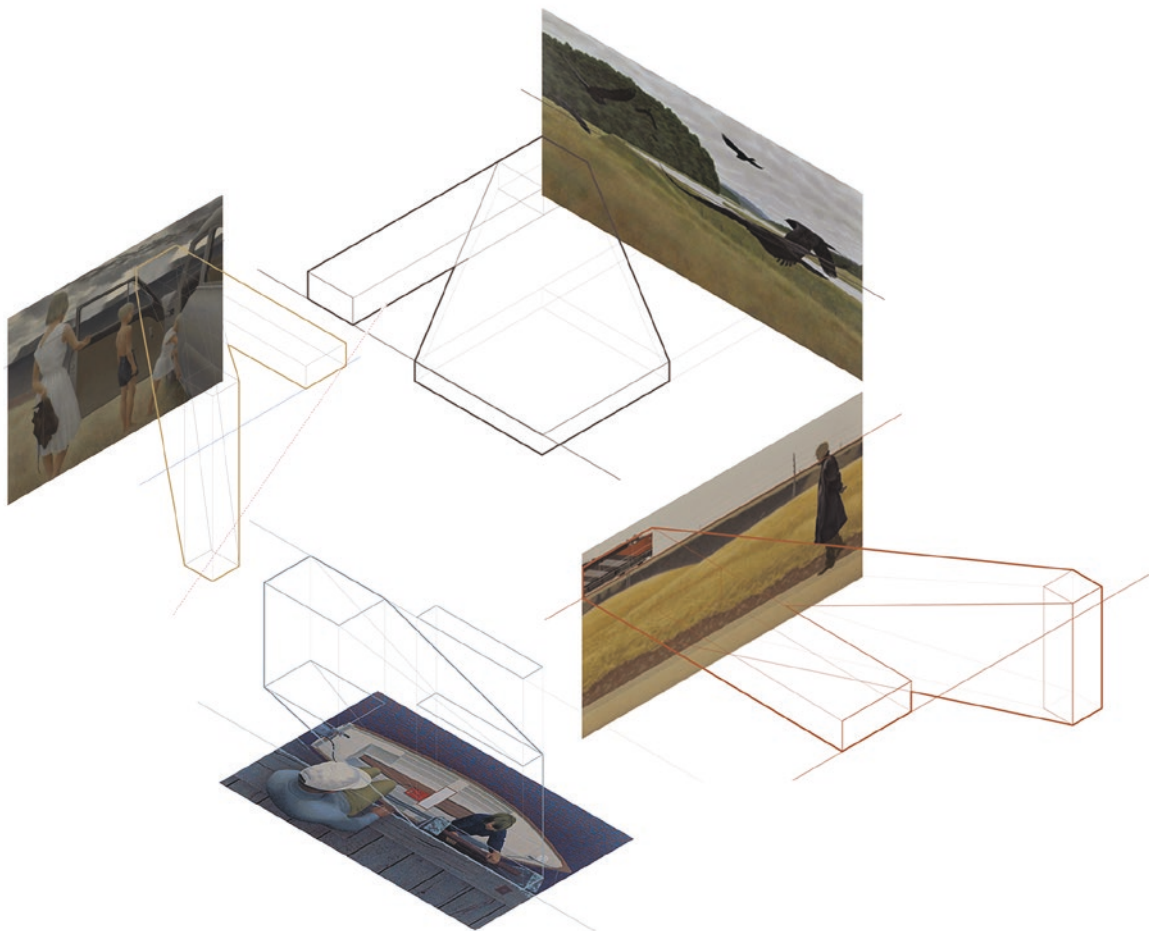
“Projections” from foreground to background help spatialize these in-between spaces of Colville’s paintings and form the visual and contextual relationship by minimizing the moment into a volumetric abstraction.



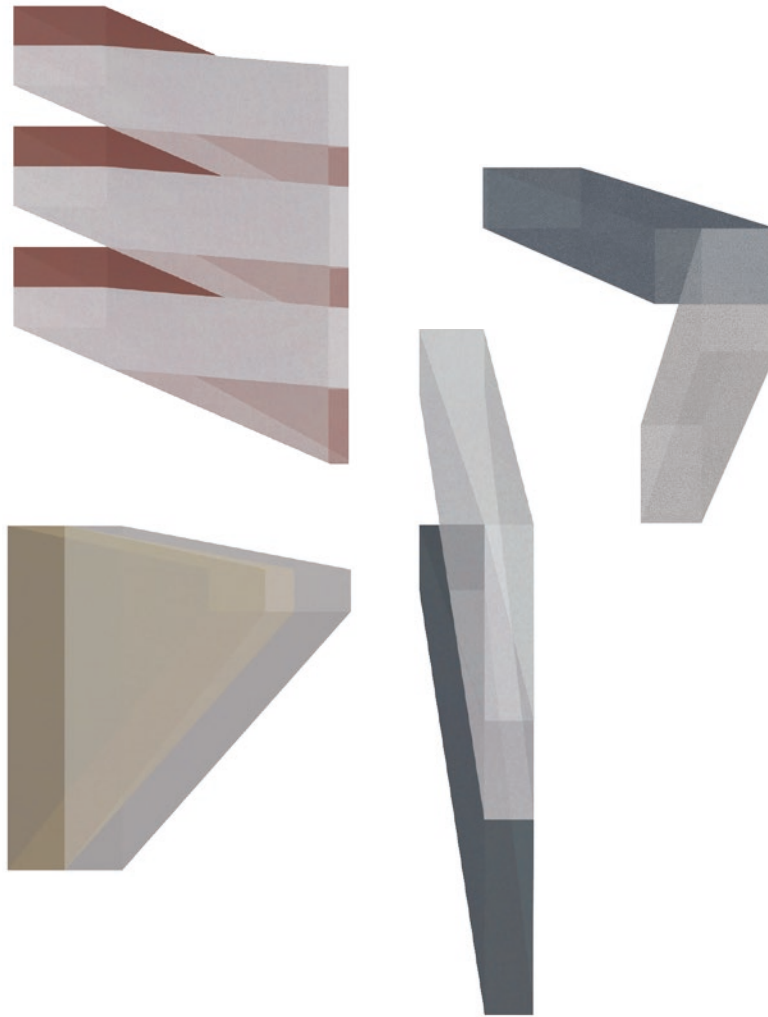
Isonometric projection drawing spatializing the in-between space.
Family and Rainstorm, 1955.

13 Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck -Shaping the New Reality From the In-between to the Aesthetics of Number* (2007), 15.

14 Enis Aldallal, Al Waer, Husam and Bandyopadhyay, Soumyen, *Site and Composition : Design Strategies in Architecture and Urbanism* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2016), 61.



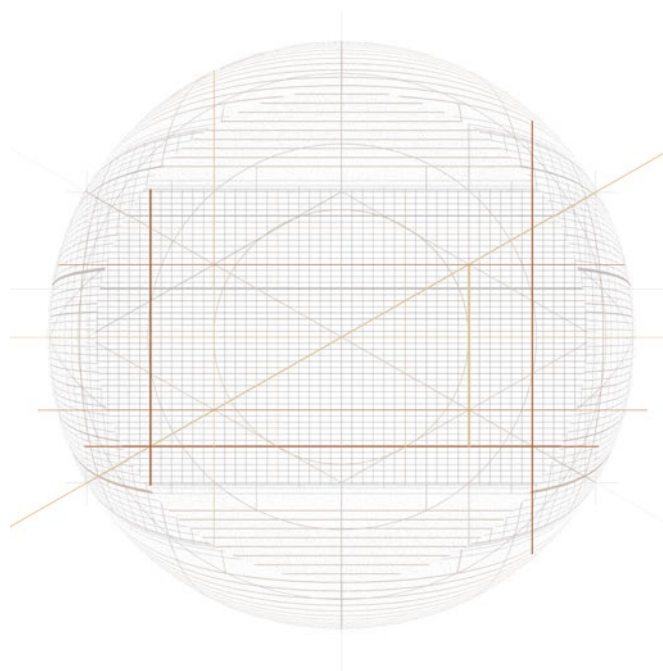
Extracting and giving form to the in-between spaces. Left: *Family and Rainstorm*, 1955. Top: *Seven Crows*, 1980. Right: *Ocean Limited*, 1982. Bottom: *Embarkation*, 1994.



Interpretative drawing. The arrangement of projections challenge our perception of which is foreground and background, creating a layered reading of spaces.

Visual Horizon

The relation of the visual organization of space and horizon is most clearly demonstrated in perspective, where the horizon helps generate the structure and holds together the individual elements within the visual field¹⁵. Juhani Pallasma speaks of architectural history being a visually dominated field of study. Where the *eye-as-camera* captures a moment, a passing condition of light and only a fragment of reality and experience¹⁶. Pallasma emphasized that our peripheral senses hold together our surroundings and shapes our vision, it helps to define our experience of atmosphere in an architectural reality. Therefore the periphery beyond the sphere of focused vision is as important to consider in architecture as the focused image¹⁷.

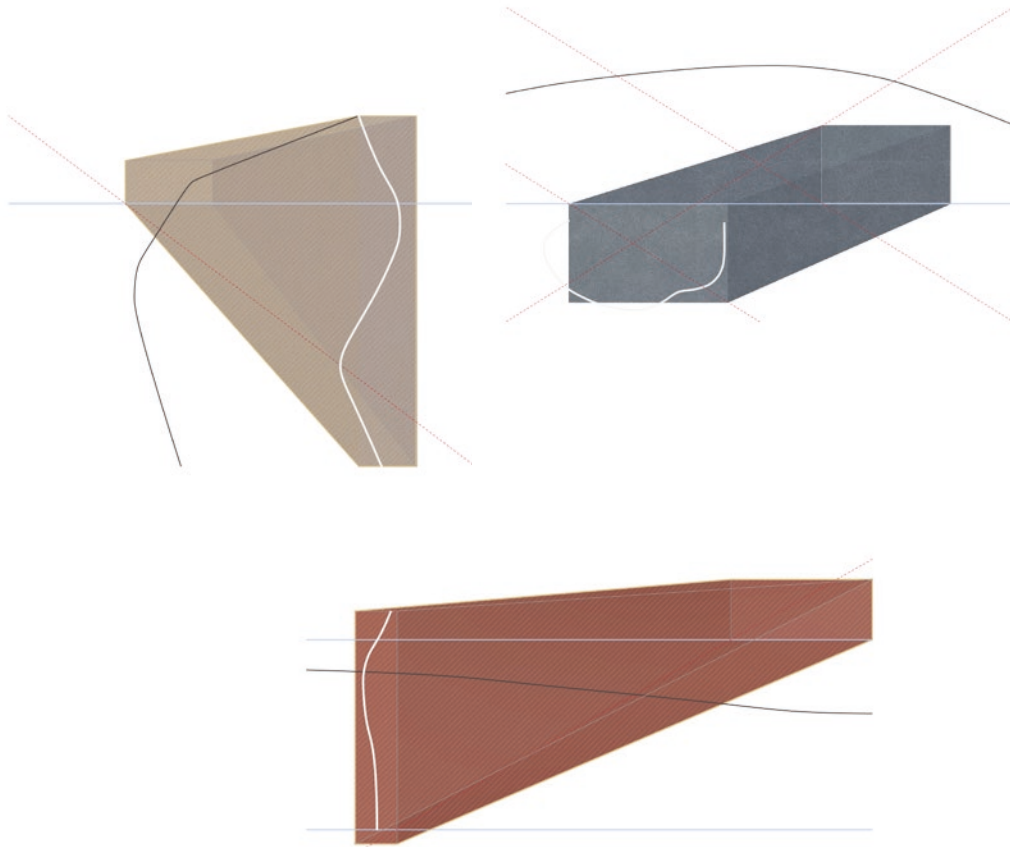


Interpretive drawing of the visual field

15 Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation the Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 382.

16 Gernot Böhme, Olafur El iasson, Juhani Pallasmaa and Christian Borch. *Architectural Atmospheres : On the Experience and Politics of Architecture* (Basel: Birkh Auser, 2014), 38.

17 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester, 2005), 12.



Interpretative drawing. Removing the painting and leaving the analytical structure which highlights the rhythm of lines, planes and forms.

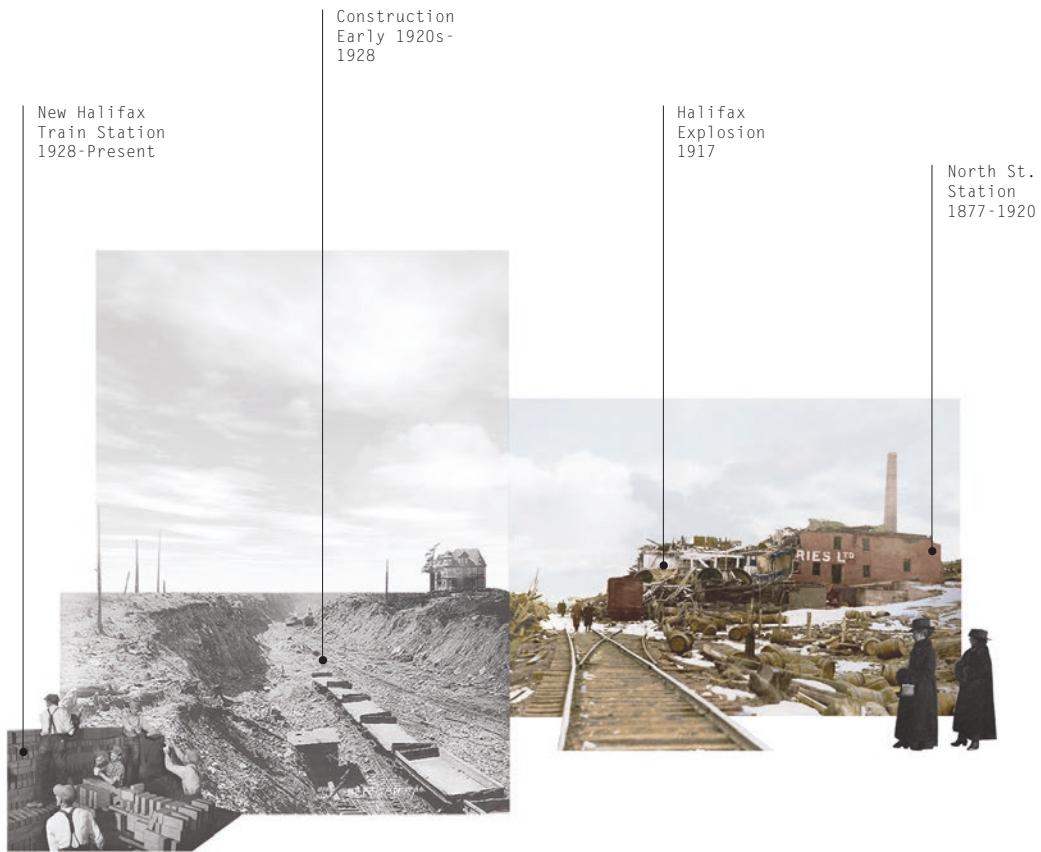
CHAPTER 3: URBAN COMPOSITION

Halifax's waterfront is the arrival and departure point of much of its history. It is on the fringe of land and water, the site of arrival and departure, the end and beginning of a journey. Terminal Road and the Halifax Station marks the end of a transcontinental railway and the beginning of the Atlantic Ocean. The market is the arrival point of local farmers produce and craft goods, Pier 21, now the immigration museum, was once the arrival port for many immigrants to North America. The cargo port facilitates the importation and distribution of products to and from Atlantic Canada. The craft and design college is situated within the historical narrative of the seaport. Breweries, crafters and designers all share and contribute to Halifax's culture and history. The embedded history of the site and these important relationships have not been given priority in the recent urban development surge of the city and much of the site lies dormant.

What was once an entry to the city has now become an overlooked and underutilized industrial landscape. There is potential in this location for revitalizing this important historical urban transportation infrastructure again into an accessible localised transportation system.



Current site condition. A latent landscape.



Construction

Destruction

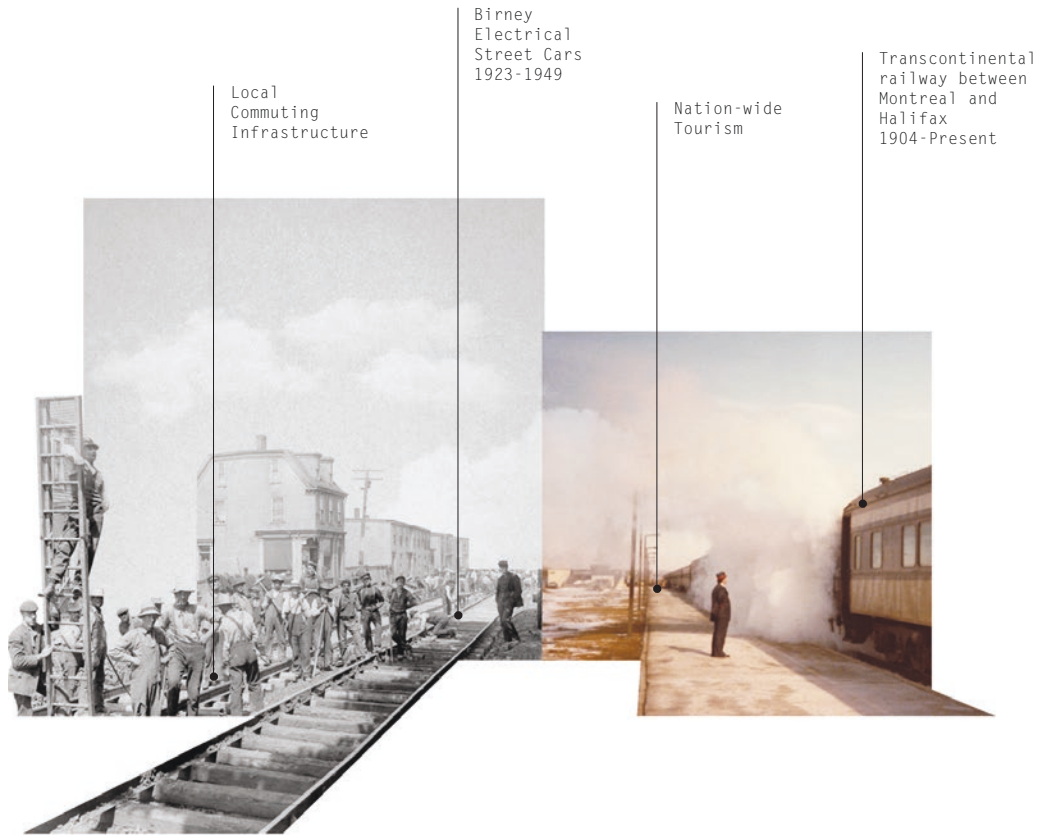
Collage depicting the transition between the destruction of the North St station in the Halifax explosion of 1917 and the desctructive nature of the blasting during the reconstruction of the new railway in the south of the peninsula (1928-present). Images from: *Nova Scotia Archives*



Arrival

Departure

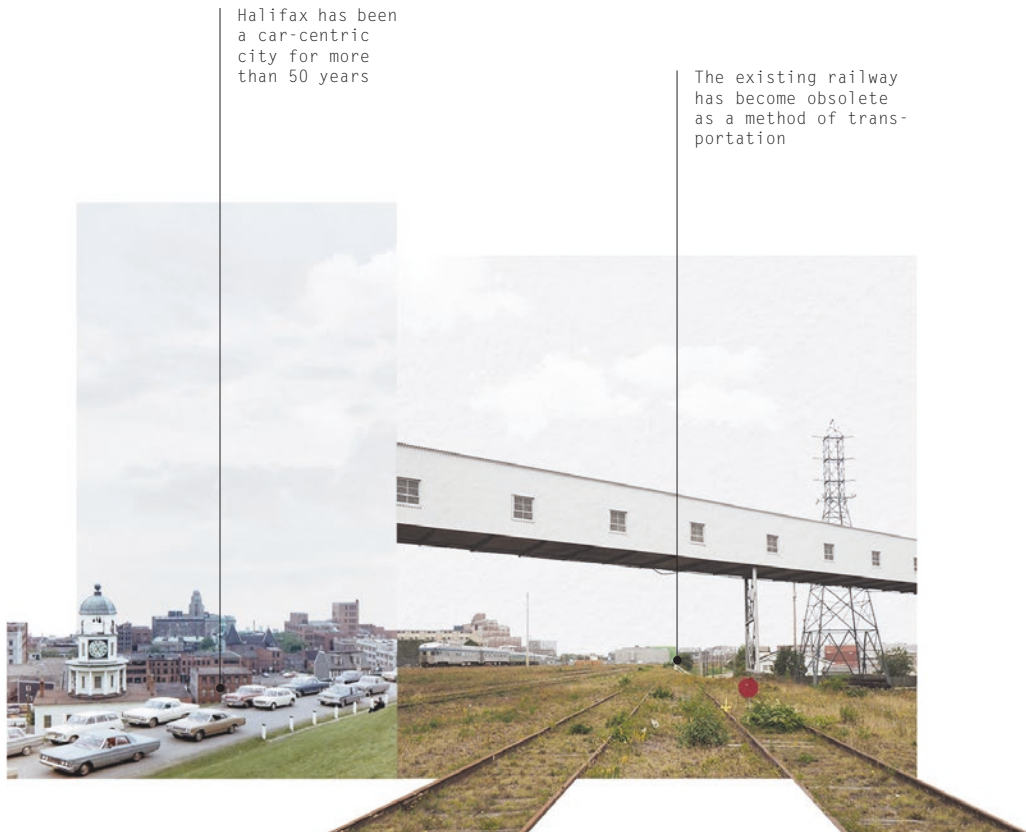
This collage relates the experiences of both immigrants and soldiers during WWII and the uncertainties they faced ahead in their lives. The train and station mediated their arrival and departure. Collaged images from: *Nova Scotia Archives*



Local

National

A street car rail system onced offered locals with everyday commuting oportunities. The transcontinental railway connects the west and east coast and brought nation wide tourism and travelling to Atlantic Canada. Images from: *Nova Scotia Archives*



Rise

Decline

Buses replaced the street rail system and the increase of automobiles and plane travel caused the decline of the railway as a means of long distance transportation. Images from: *Nova Scotia Archives*

Movement

In *Design of Cities*, Edmund Bacon describes the architecture of movement and rest as key fundamental elements in urban compositions¹⁸. Movement plays such a large role in our everyday lives and mobility is fundamental to how we experience and relate to our environments. It is more central to our understanding of the world than ever before¹⁹. This relation of movement and rest is fundamental in Colville's work. One act of movement which helps to shape our experience and relation to cities is the commute.

Commuting is the periodic travel between one's place of residence and place of work, or study. The key factor in this definition is that it happens between places. Tim Cresswell describes this area of mobility as a kind of blank space that stands as an alternative to place, boundedness, foundations and stability. Though it is just as spatial and central to the human experience as place²⁰. We form a relation to the city by the way we choose to move through it and the anticipation of arrival and departure. As we continue to transition into more efficient means and methods of commuting and moving through our cities, our relationship to our cities will change and transit stations will take on larger roles as open public spaces and will need to be re-interpreted with new meanings and functions.

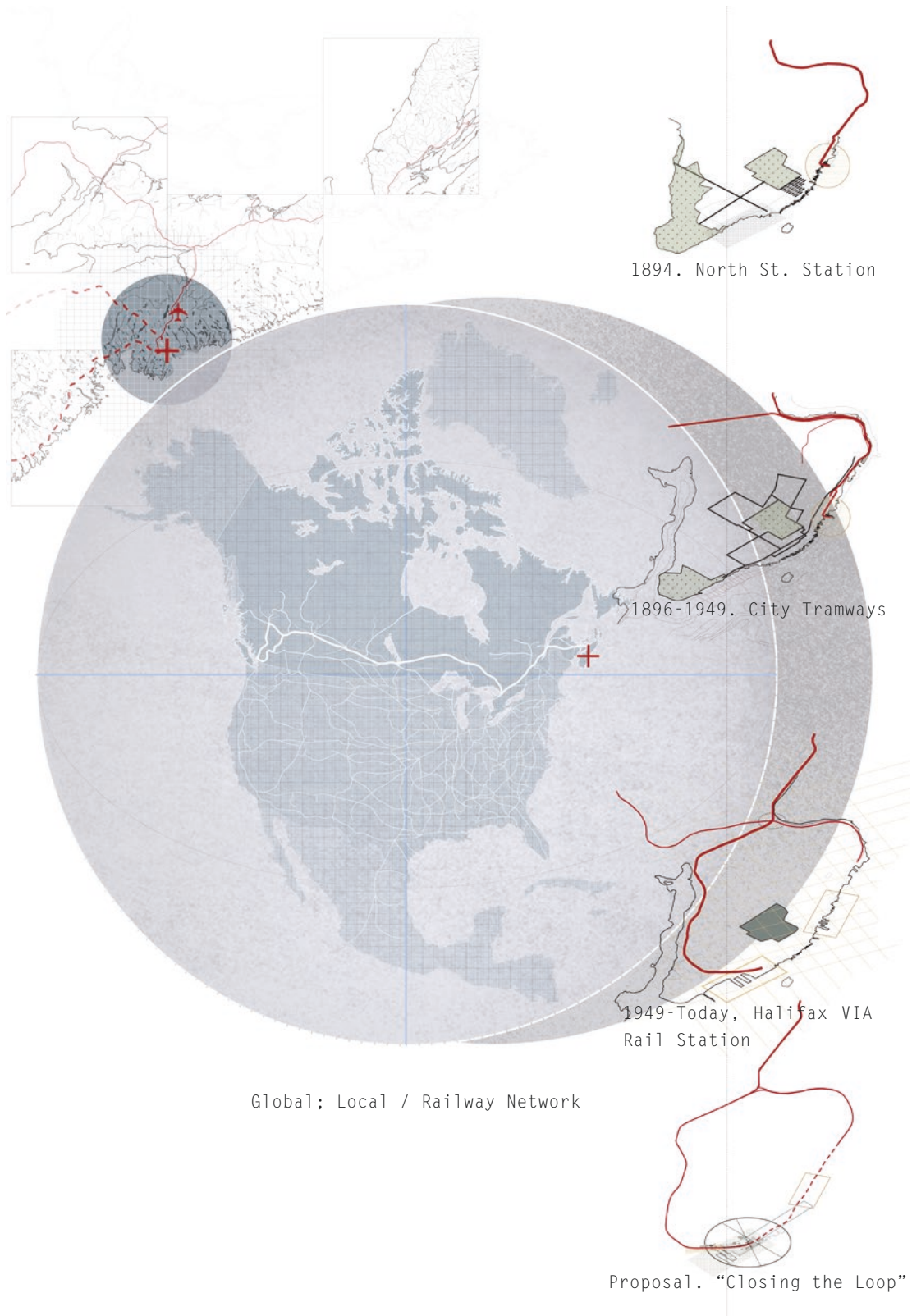


Commuting expressed horizontally.

18 Edmund N. Bacon, *Design of Cities* (Rev. ed. A Studio Book. New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 1974), 33.

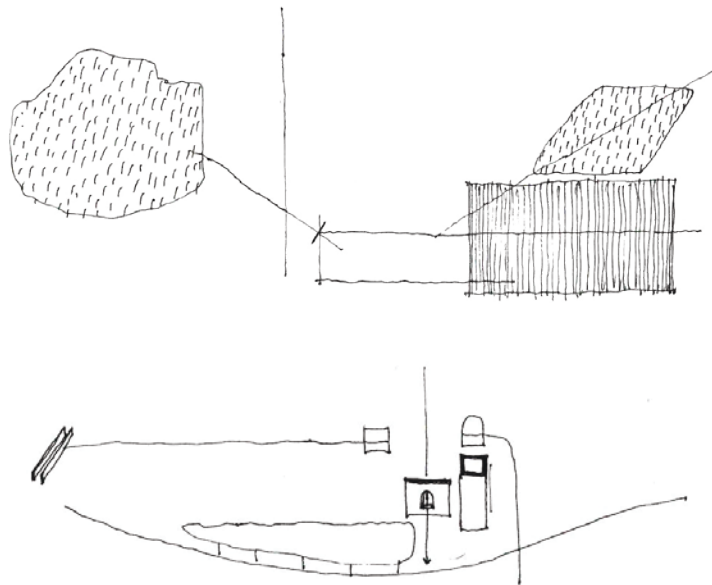
19 Tim Cresswell, *On the Move : Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

20 Ibid.,3.



Top left: a regional map highlighting the train station and airport location.
Center: continental railway connections. Left and down: the Halifax peninsula and its railway through history.

The issue that Halifax is currently facing is its car centric city model which has driven urban development and has disintegrated the public realm of streets in favor of surface parking and car lots. To alleviate commuting pressures and enhance public transit the current scenario of Halifax's existing train station and railway needs to be addressed. Its means of efficiency and as a viable method of transportation have become obsolete due to its declining passenger numbers and its inability to service local commuting for everyday use. This project proposes an addition of a commuter rail line and transit station to the cities composition; bounding the peninsula and facilitating the everyday use of the cities in-habitants. The existing station will then be re-interpreted and adapted to invite and promote activities of movement and rest. Adding public gathering spaces, working spaces for local businesses and students and a public thoroughfare to connect point pleasant park to the waterfront by re-purposing the old tracks to accommodate a walking and cycling path.

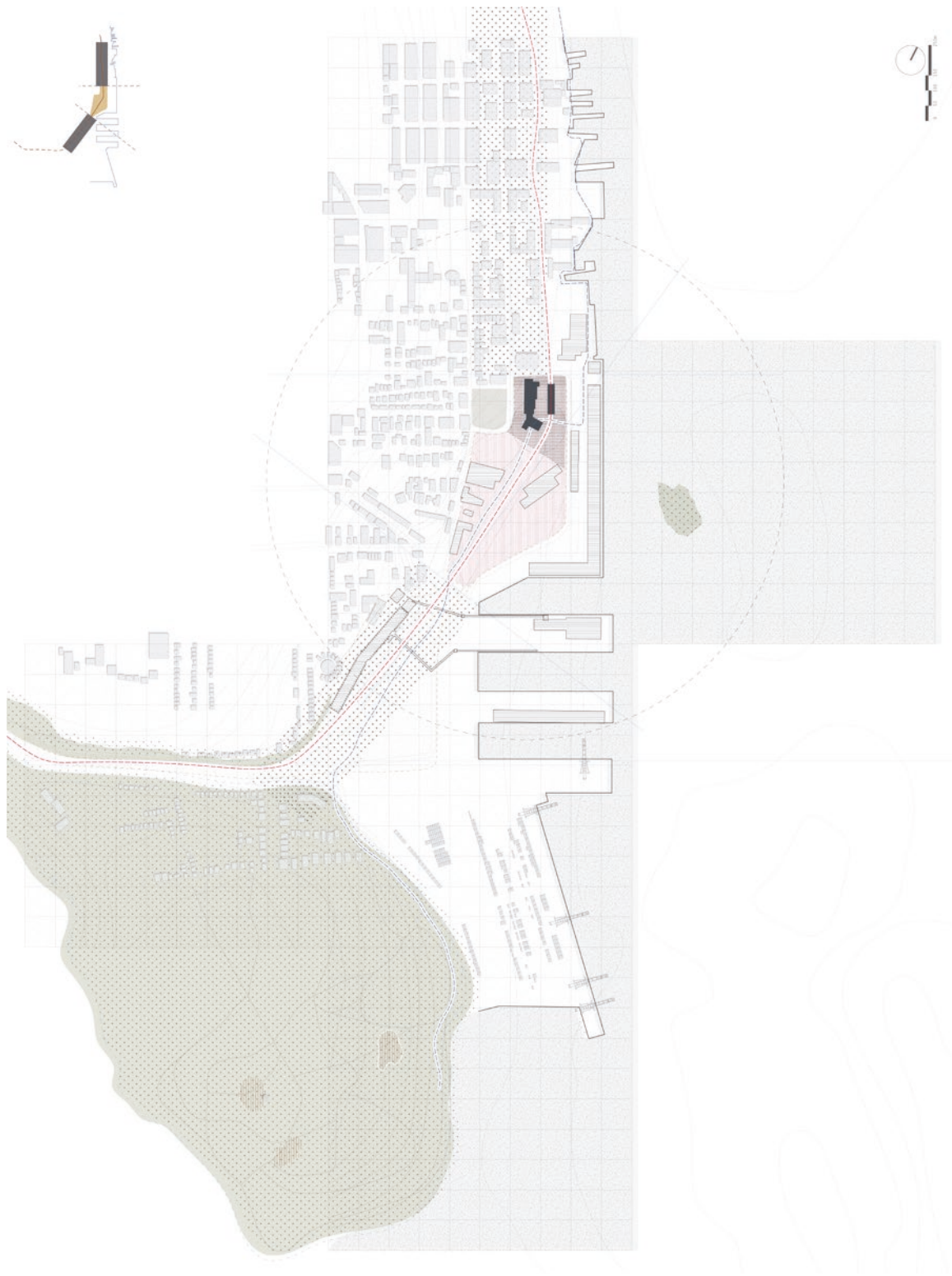


Top: sketch of urban composition. Bottom: sketch of site composition



There is a pleasant quality to the over grown state of the current railway. New activities such as cycling and walking can introduce pedestrians to the industrial landscape while keeping its resilient plant growth.

Top right: Colville, Alex. *Ocean Limited*. 1962. Bottom right *Cyclist and Crow*, 1981.

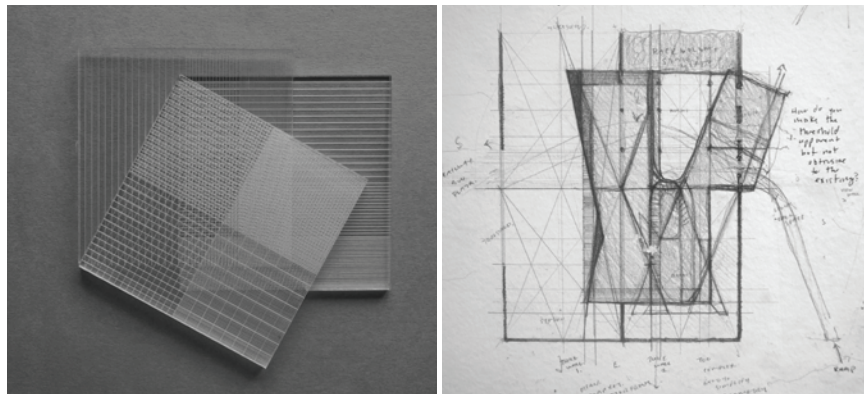


Site Plan and Diagram. The peripheral context gives the site its form and character.

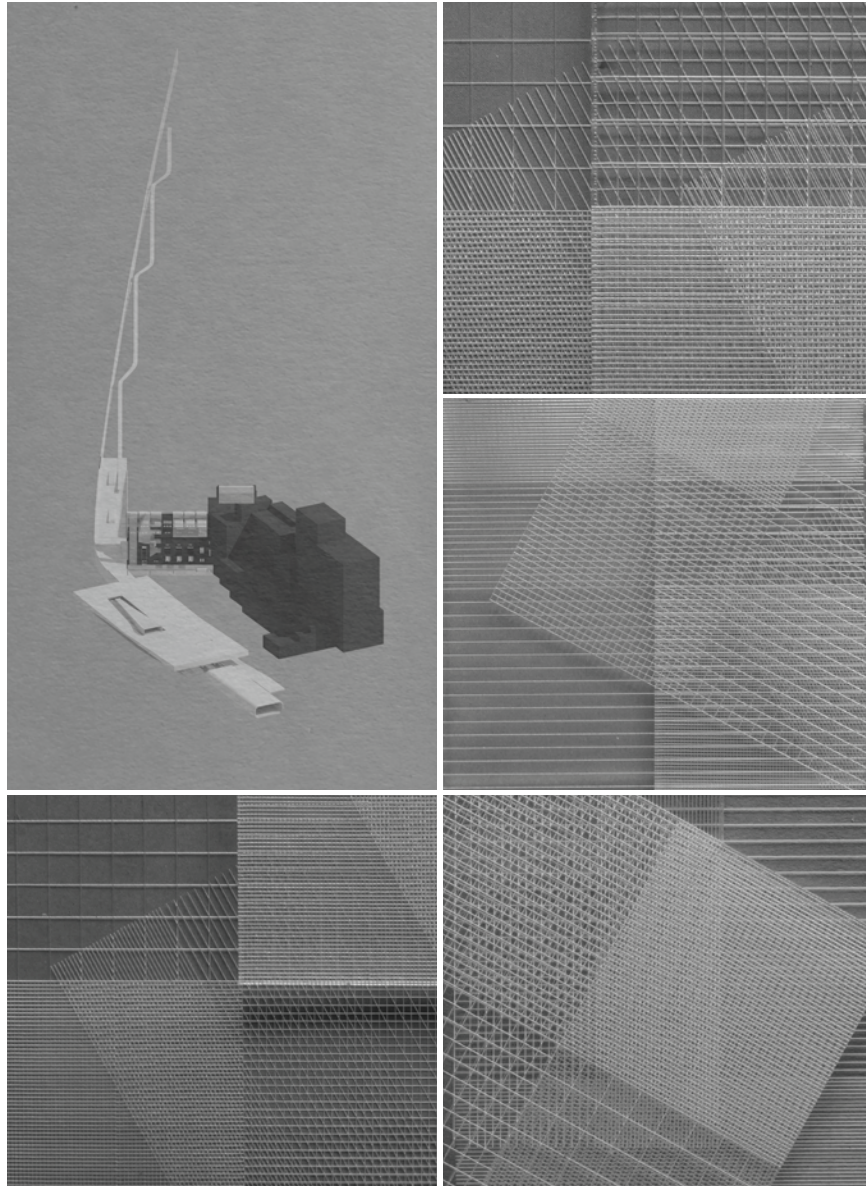
CHAPTER 4: DESIGN

Site Composition

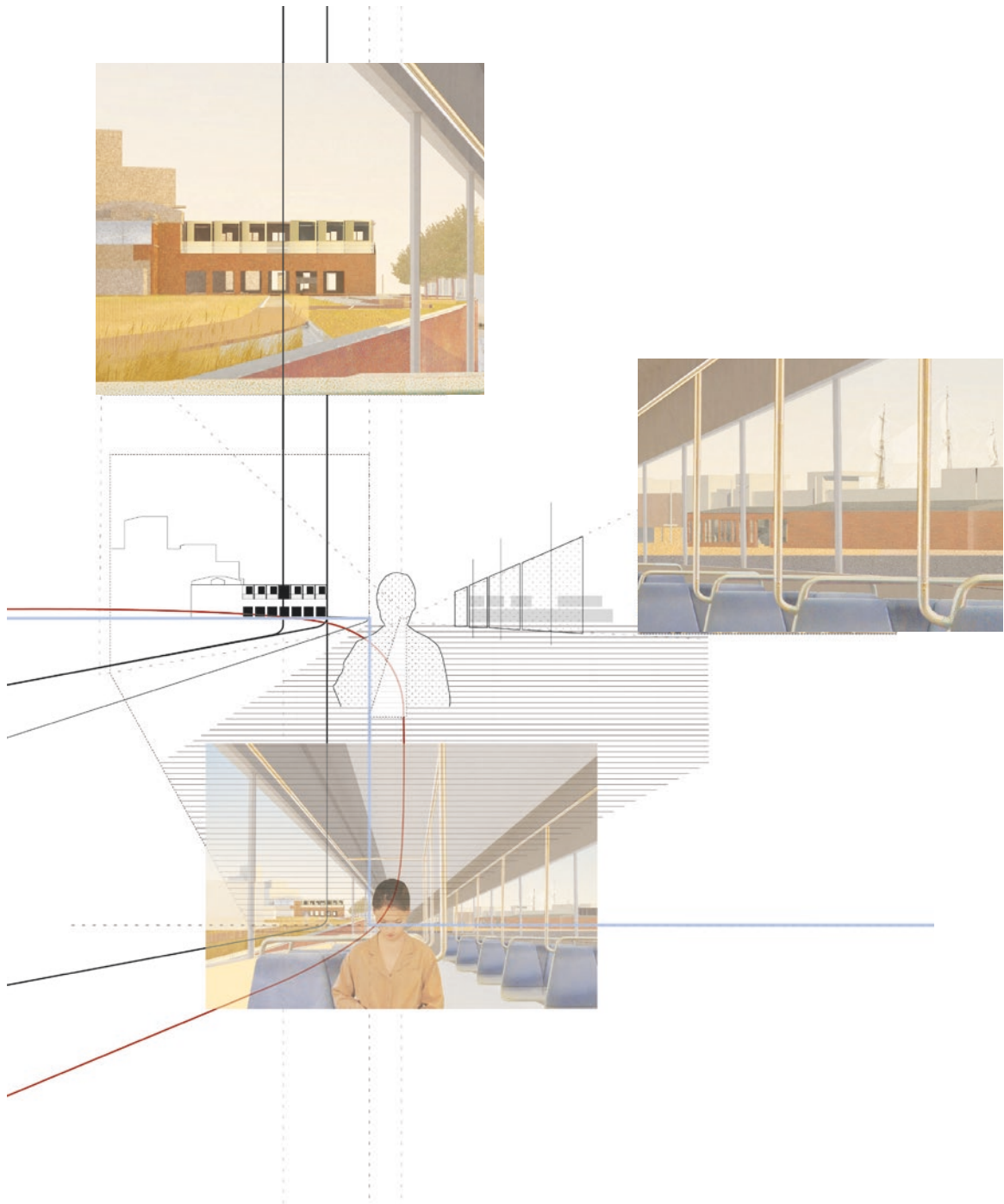
How to apply the principles analysed in Alex Colville's work into the architecture? Relating present and historical contexts, establishing the underlying structure and geometry of the site and existing buildings, delineating real and metaphorical horizons, defining in-between spaces (thresholds, open public spaces, thoroughfares) and how will movement change the way we experience and relate to these qualities? The design began with a reading of the site: establishing existing and potential horizons below, on and above grade. By delineating the furthest extent of the site and working inward, the peripheral, visual and experiential borders begin to inform the architecture and specific situations and moments. Similar to how Colville considered the relation and comprehensible distance necessary between two separate "things" within a specified frame, in architecture the frame we consider is much larger, three dimensional and is unique to the people experiencing these spaces.



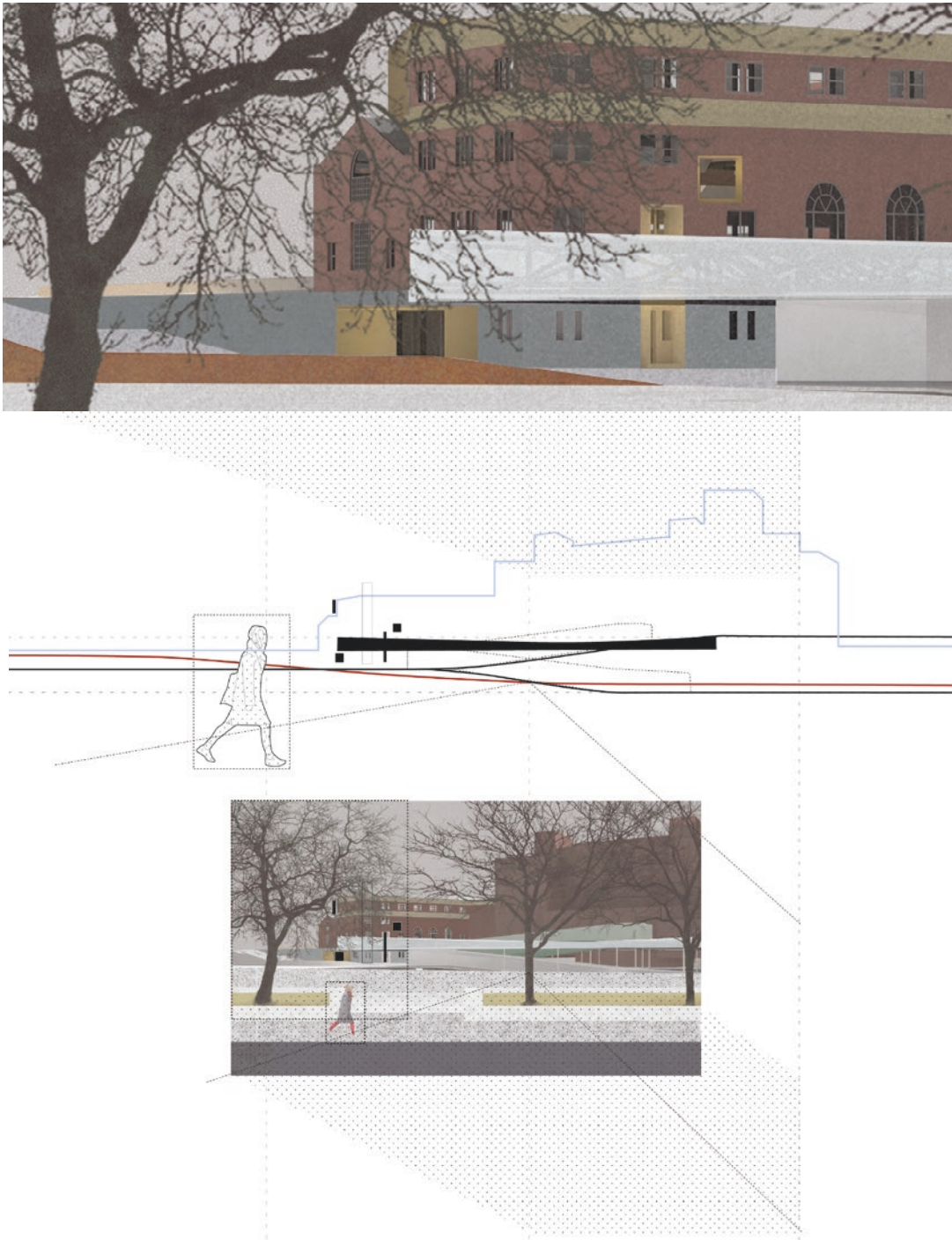
Acrylic model with etched site axis and an early floor plan sketch. Layering of these models brings into question various relations and alignments between the existing and proposed architecture and site conditions.



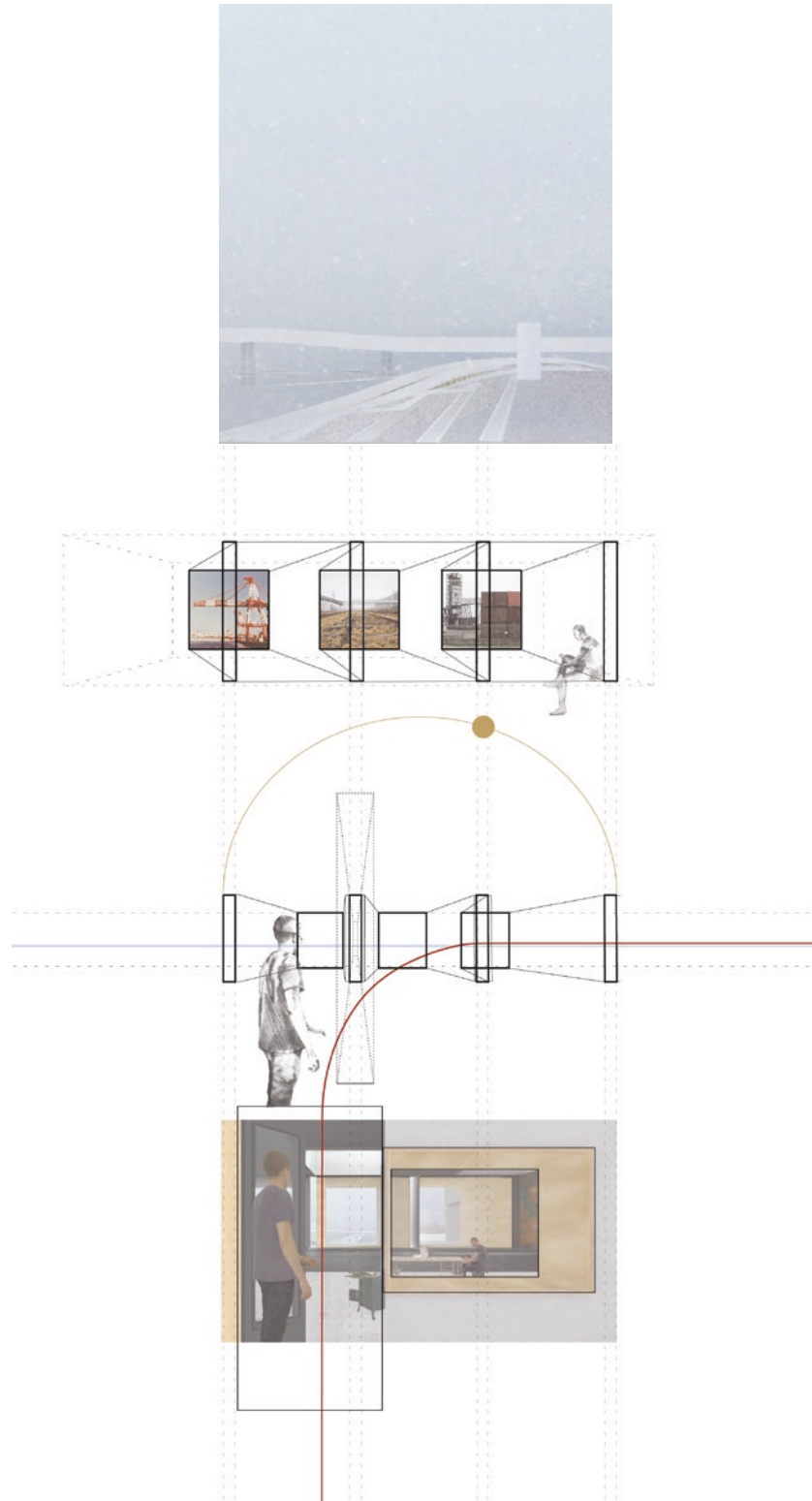
The layering of existing site axis brings into question how the architecture can mediate and align with the existing and proposed site conditions and forms. Shaping how we move through and experience both.



Morning Commute interpretive drawing and analysis.
Relating moment to surroundings.



Interpretive drawing and analysis. Relating moment to surroundings.



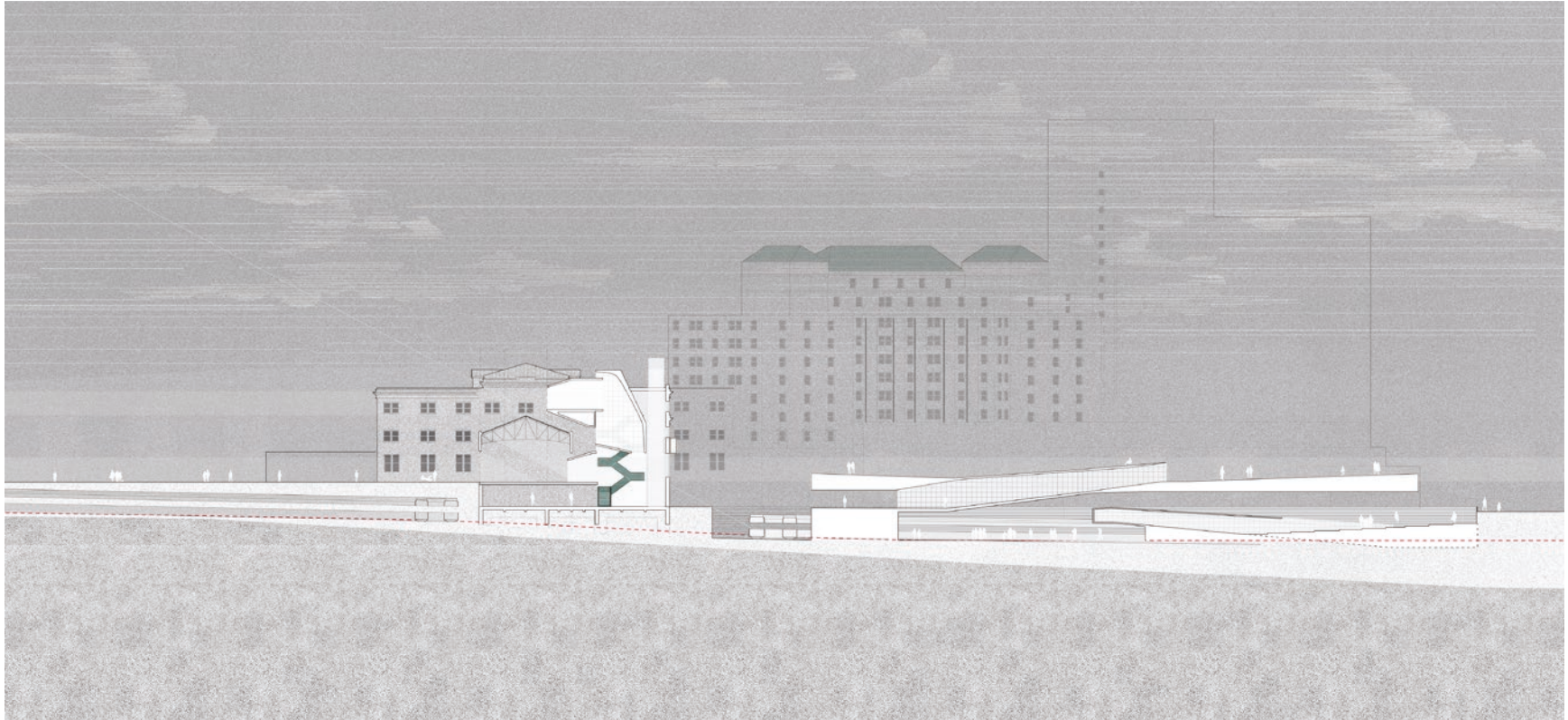
Entry interpretive drawing and analysis.
Relating moment to surroundings.

The site is uniquely expansive, a type of urban industrial field spanning between point pleasant park and the cities waterfront. The entirety of the site is a human construction. The fill and excess bedrock make-up the sites foundation, which was deposited along the shore during the construction and blasting of the railway cut in the post Halifax explosion period mid 1920's. Access to the peninsula's southern tip would provide a more accessible seaport by train and ship and was heavily utilized during and post WWII as a port of deployment and immigration. Alternatively, this new buffer zone between the grade and bedrock helped inform the design decision to embedd the proposed commuter rail and station into the site and reveal this sectional quality.

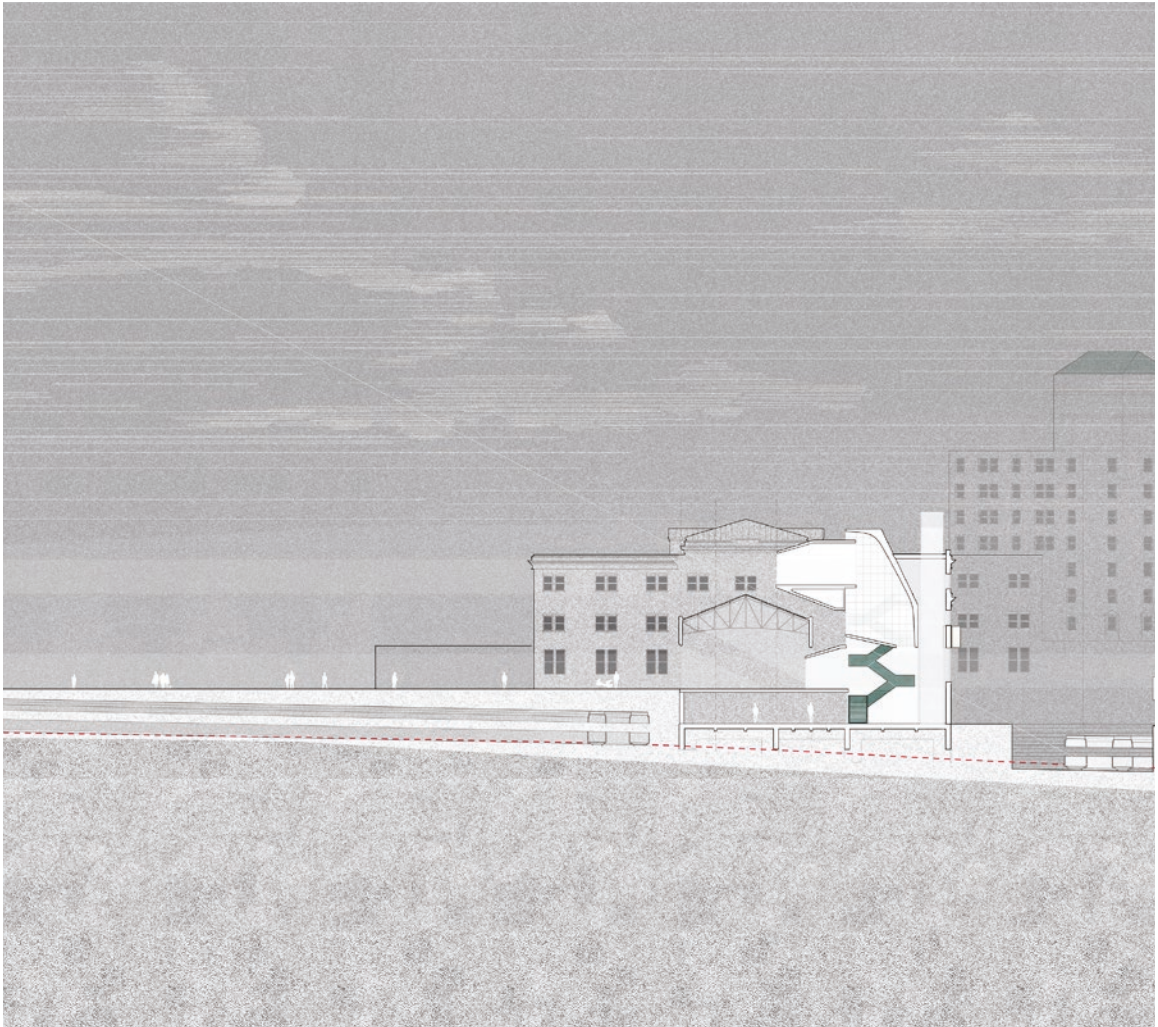
The subterranean station does not add an excessive building voume, but subtracts from the site and provides a low lying roofscape for public services and events. Accessing the roof terrace by ramps animates the buildings form and public mobility. The ease of movement through these platforms brings pedestrians to new elevations. The oceans' horizon and the rising sun to the east, the train line moving horizontally across the expansive site from the south and continuing north into "downtown" Halifax. Floor and roof planes, plazas and pathways help frame and provides space and distance to comprehend and relate our experiences to our surrounding historical context.



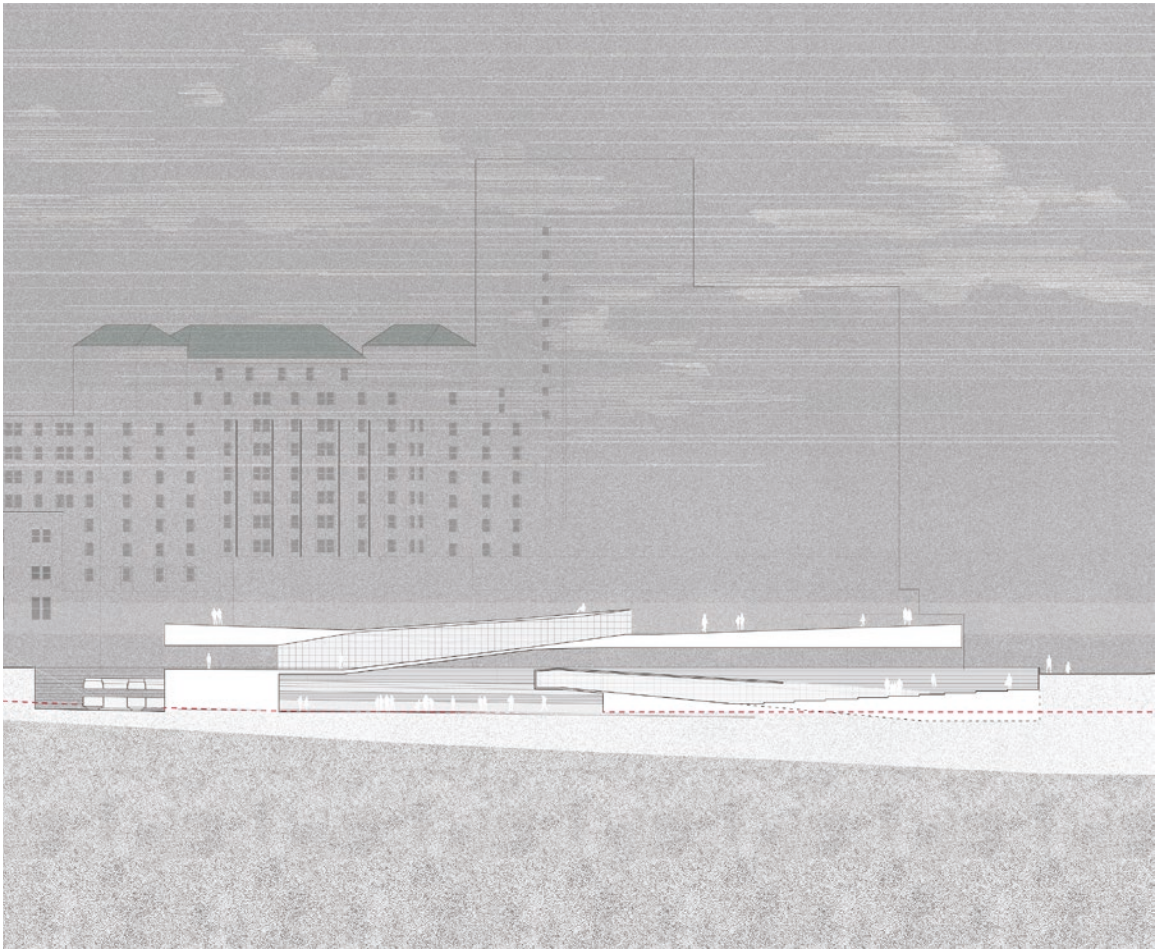
Image of the railway "cut" being blasted, and the from the same perspective 60 years later. Images: *Nova Scotia Archives*



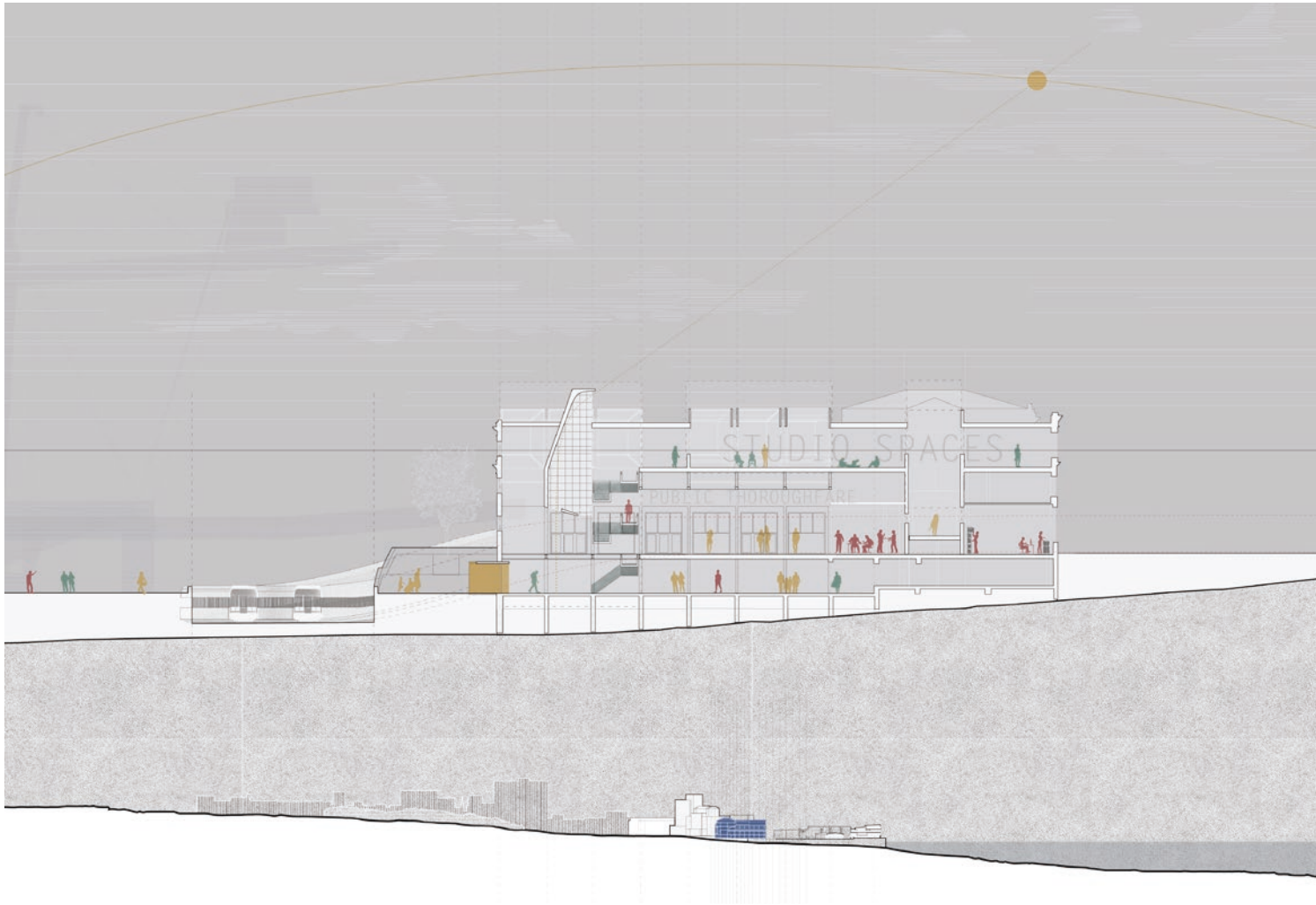
Section through existing and proposed stations.



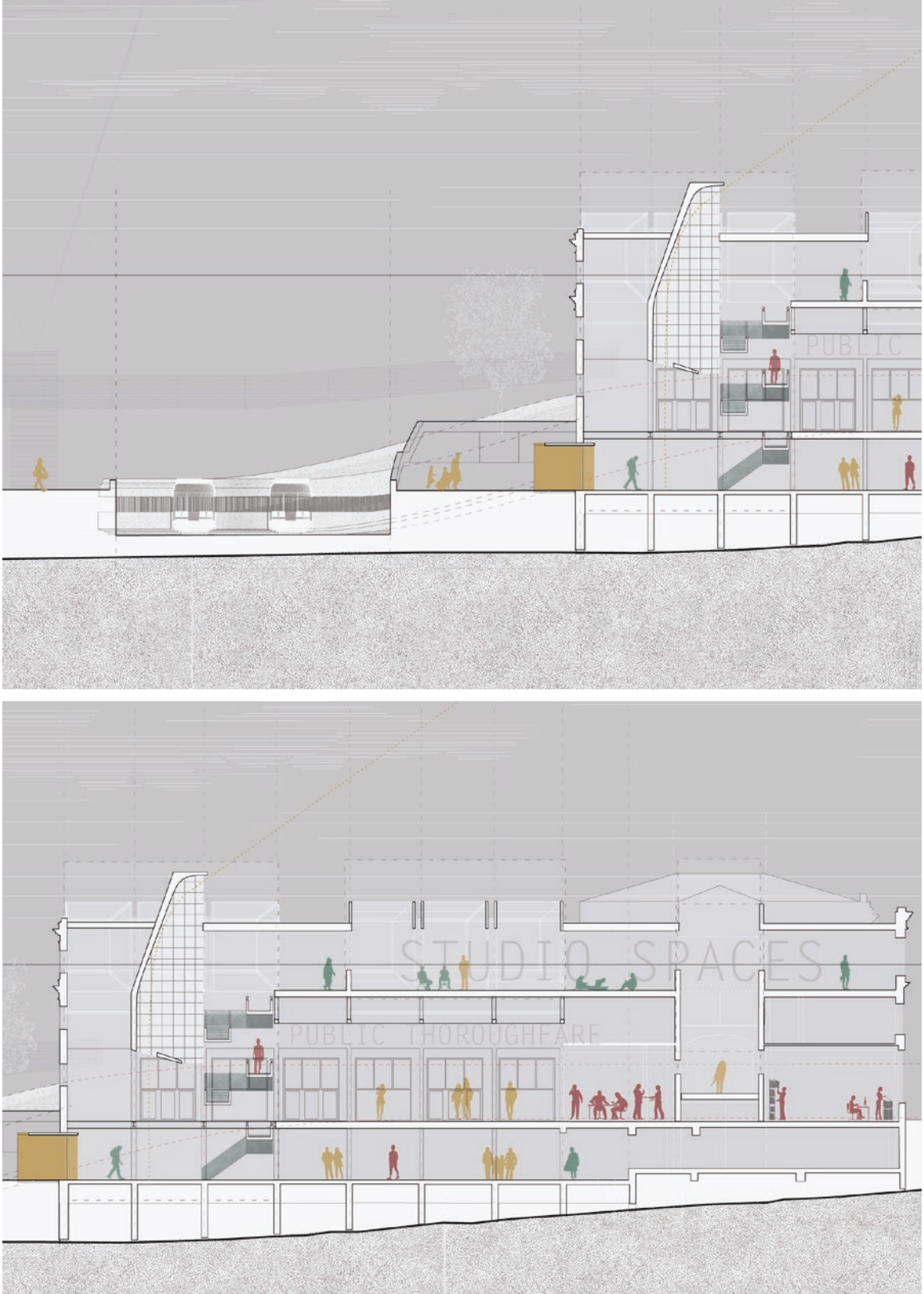
Building and site section 2/2.



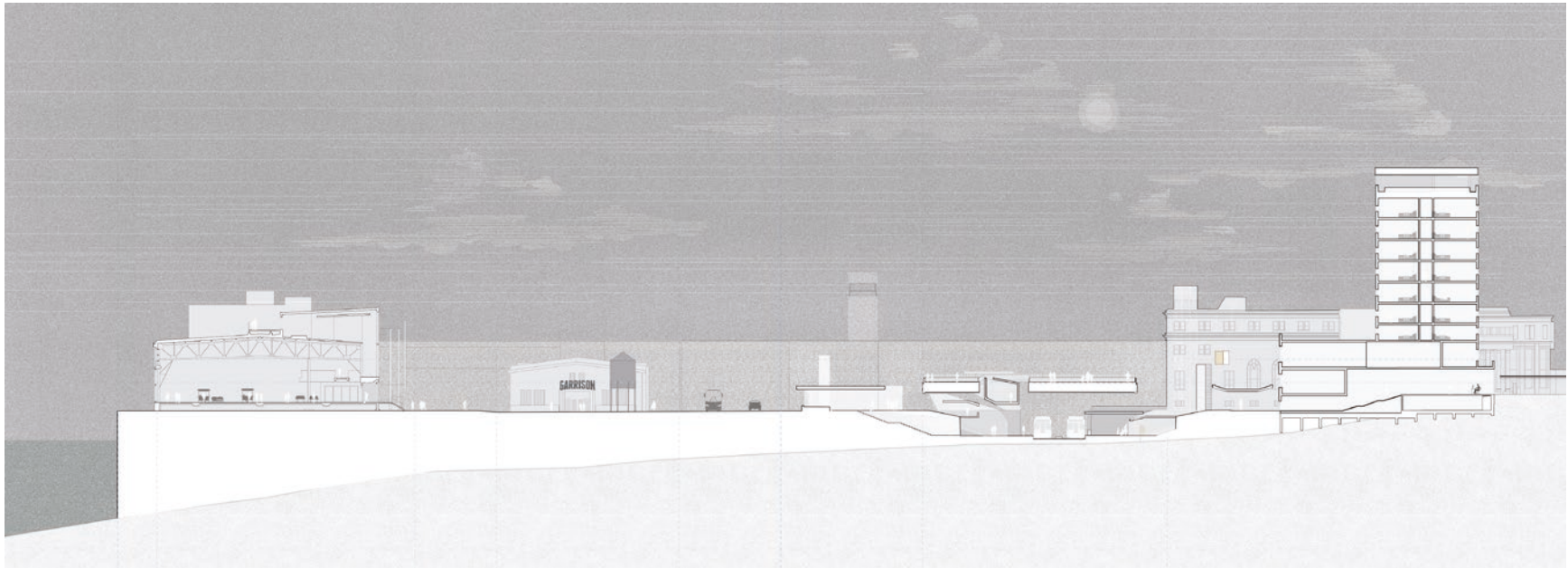
The proposed Transit Station



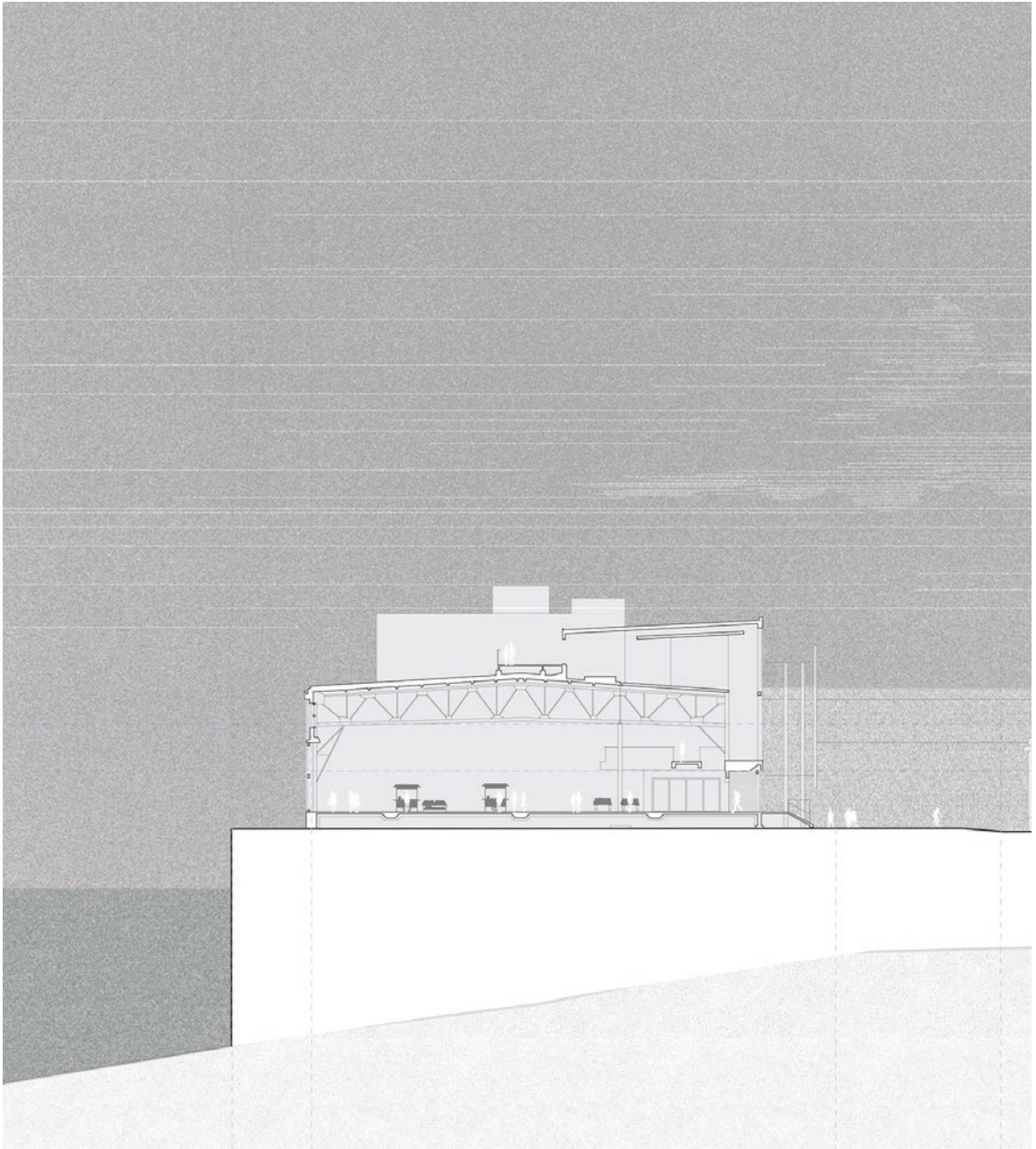
Section drawing showing the new commuter rail approaching the site at a lower elevation. A public path is between the rail and building. A lightwell brings light to the studios and spaces below.



Section drawing showing the new commuter rail approaching the site at a lower elevation. A public path is between the rail and building. A lightwell brings light to the studios and spaces below.



Cross section through proposed transit station. Embedded into the ground the station roof forms a low horizon line with the open plaza space between the market and station (left) and covers the new public path (right) leading up to the adapted existing station.



Cross section through the Halifax Seaport Market.



Cross section showing the Halifax Seaport Market (left) and the beginning of the Transit Station Plaza. (right)



Cross section through the proposed Transit Station.



Cross section showing the relation of the
Transit Station to the Nova Scotian Hotel.

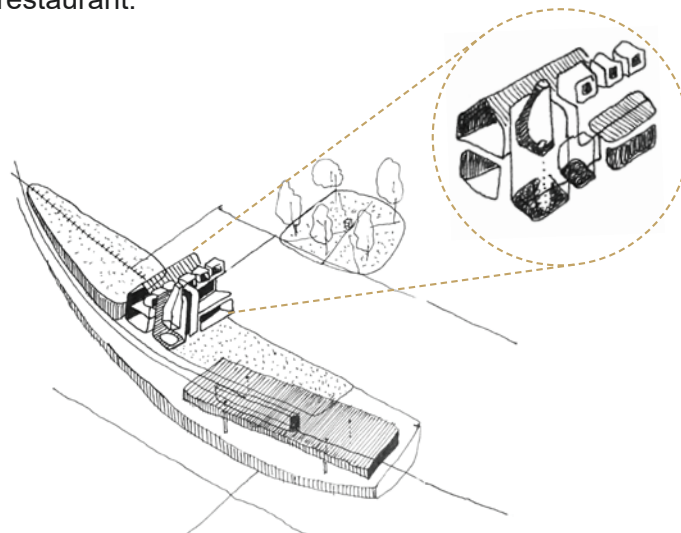


Cross section showing the relation of the Transit Station to the Nova Scotian Hotel.

Building Composition

The existing VIA rail station represents an early era in Halifax's history, a cross continental railway during the time of a slower but gradual precession through the world. The adaptive re-use of this relic mediates between the past and present, and has the opportunity to formalize this gradual and slow movement as an inherent quality of the buildings architecture and site. Integrating the old railway bed into a new public walking path, the site's inherent and latent qualities can be better appreciated and celebrated by allowing access to a unique historical landscape, providing a safe environment for runners and cyclists and a new route connecting the Halifax boardwalk to Point Pleasant Park.

In contrast to its counterpoint, the commuter rail now situated within the same site, the VIA rail station is conceived as a series of introspective spaces. New programmes and spaces will facilitate moments of contemplative work, relaxation and gathering to help balance the spectrum of public life and activity of the site and surrounding context. Where people will come to learn and find refuge in their own quiet working spaces, studios for artist and students, exhibition spaces for community needs, as well as cafes and a restaurant.



Sketch depicting the series of spaces within the station.

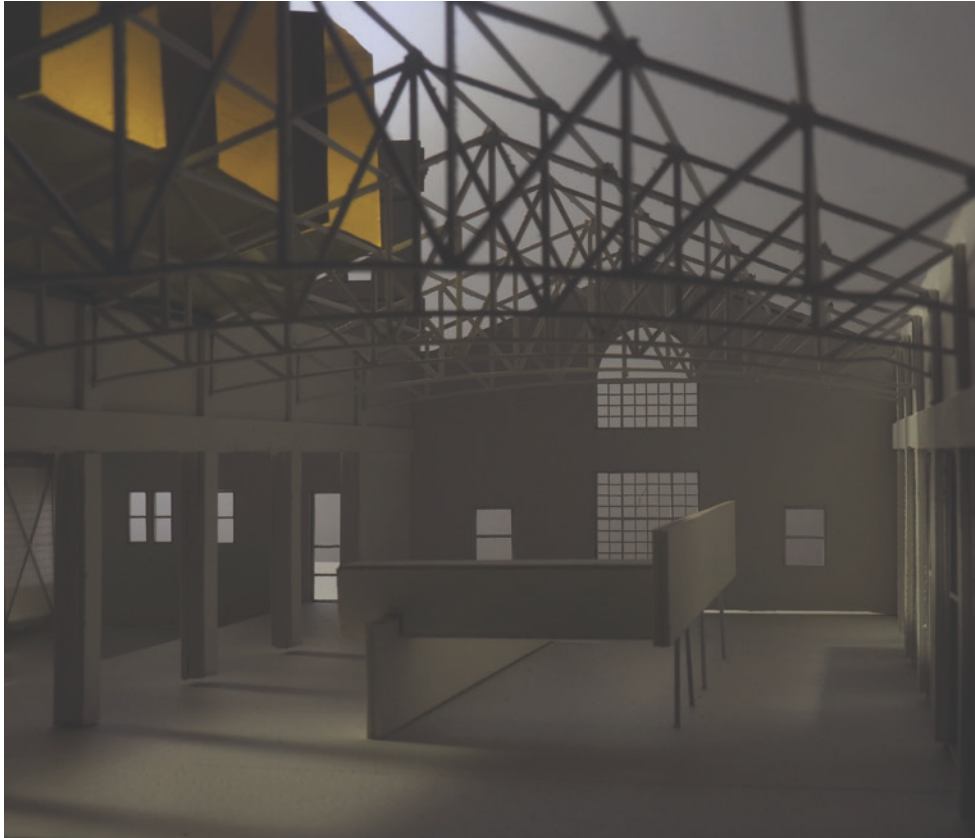


Exploded axonometric of the adapted station and its design interventions.
Thresholds, lightwell, central stair, studio volumes and elevator.

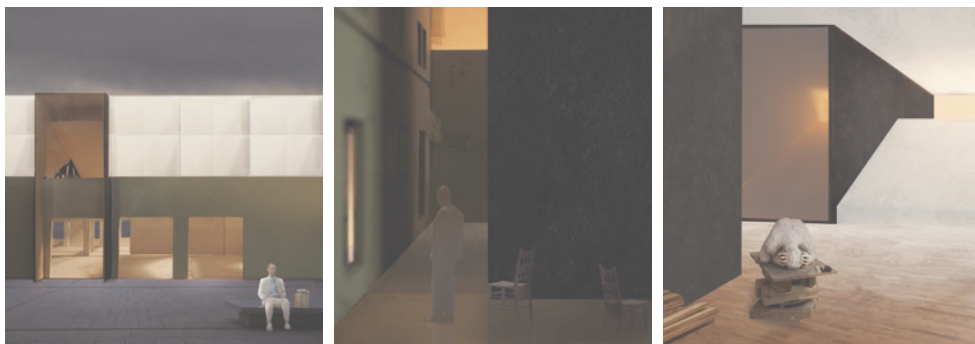
The station and its new interventions are in relation to one another and takes cues from the site plans' axial shift which signifies a new orientation. Wood cladded volumes have been added to the building overlooking the roof of the old waiting area below. The studio wall intervention acts as a device for orienting the view and light, focusing it's volumes on the ocean's horizon and overlooking the railway. Movement and circulation is mediated and engaged with varying platforms, ramps, stairs, lifts and means of traversing the new and old landscape of building and site and providing the freedom to navigate as one pleases. Therefore new circulation paths became important to the building and act as transitional in-between spaces for chance encounters. One focal point within the building was the central stair. To emphasize the vertical axis, the central stair ascends from the atrium alongside the monolithic lightwell. The stair is constructed of rolled steel which amplifies the footsteps and gives the movement of people and the stair a presence within the space.



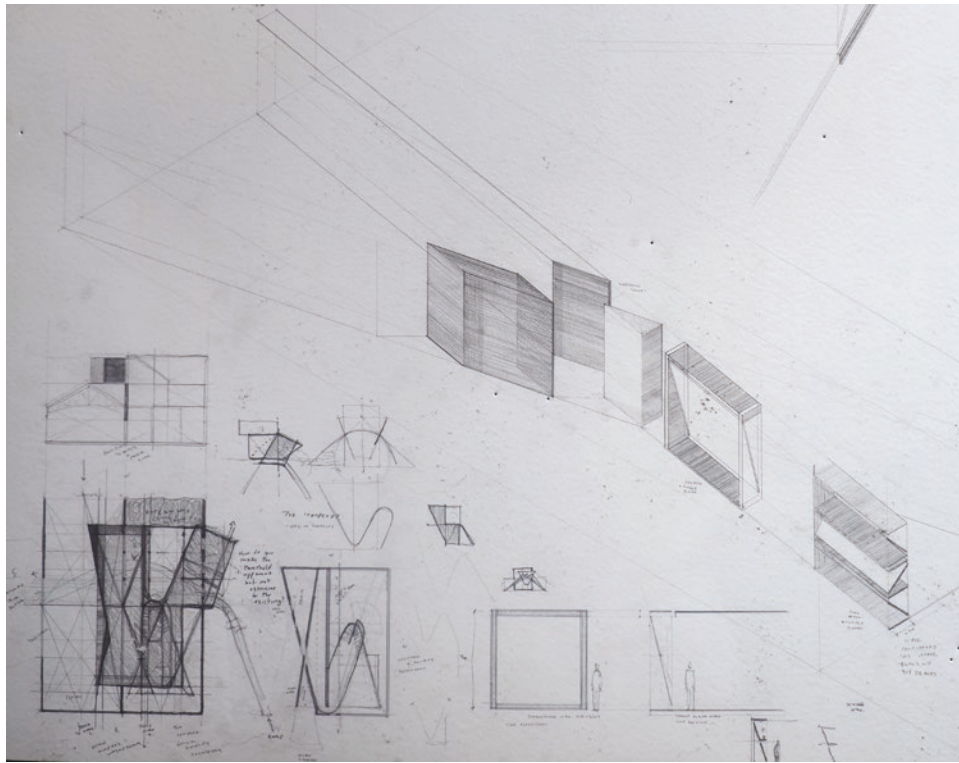
The empty waiting hall of the existing station ca.1980's. Image: *Nova Scotia Archives*



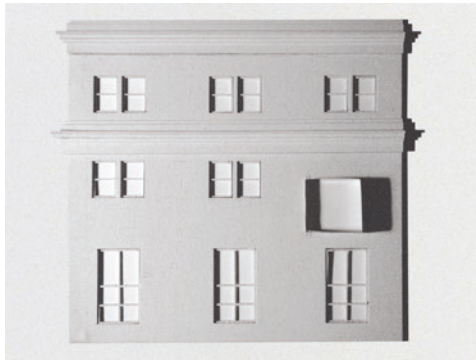
Interior of model. Showing the existing station as an exhibition space and public room and the studios for students and artisans lighting from above.



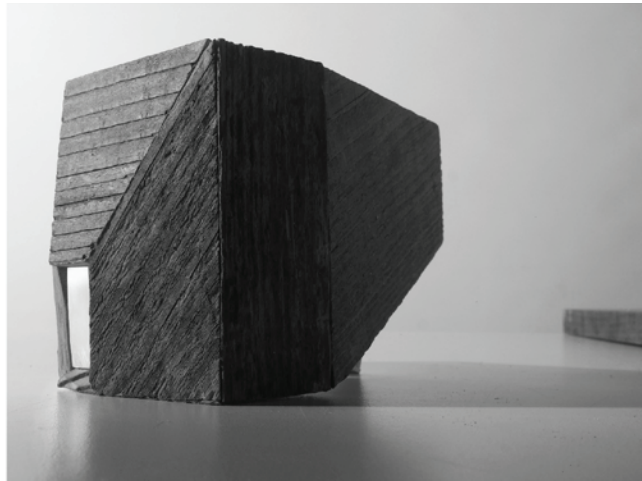
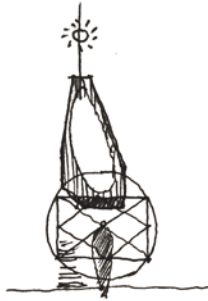
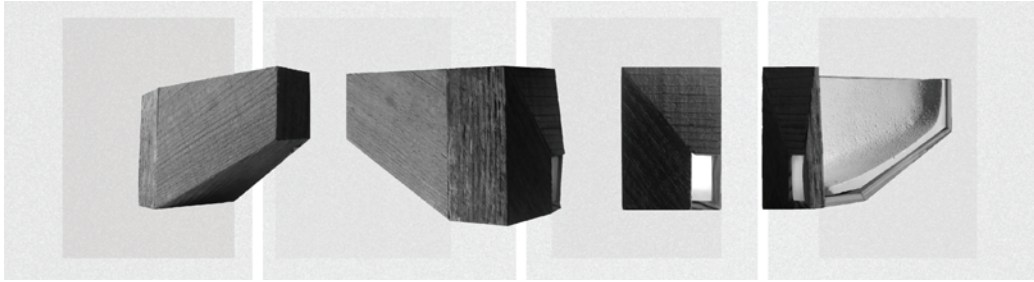
Early concept collages. Thresholds, lighting, introspective spaces and studios.



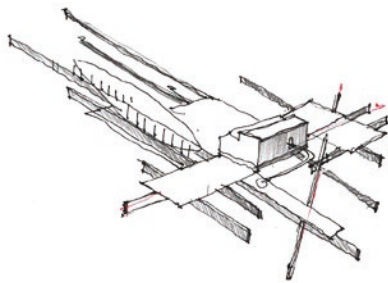
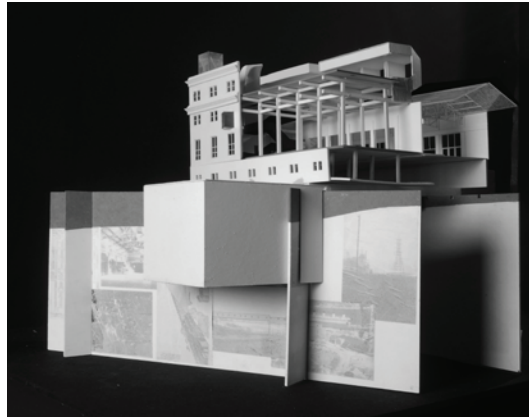
Above: process of studio design. Below: entering the studio spaces.



Top left: physical model of the northern facade and fenestration composition. Right and down: physical model collages of the central stair procession.



A lightwell. Encapsulating light in its monolithic form and pouring it into the spaces below.



Right and down: physical model showing the proposed intervention as fragments to a whole. Top left: Studio volumes orientates view and lighting. Bottom left: a sketch for the model concept of intersecting planes and volumes.

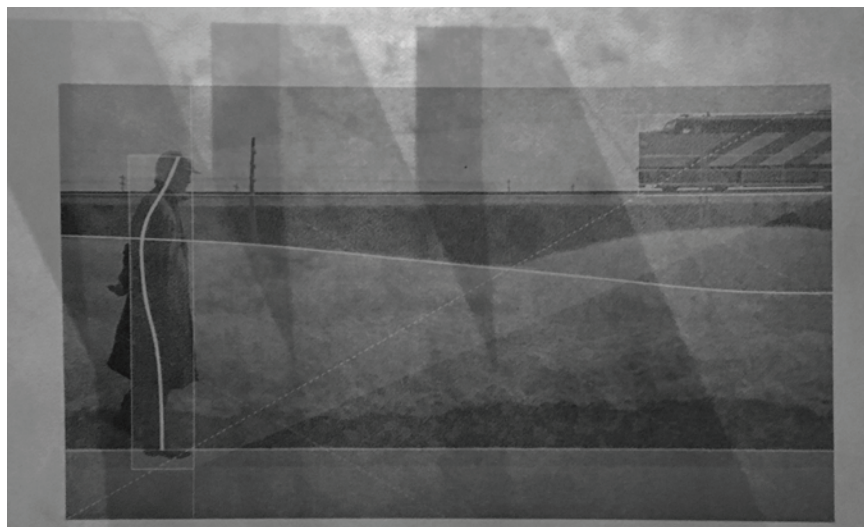
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis began from a personal reflection on contemporary visual culture and our infatuation with images and sought after experiences we add to our collection of photo album memories. My intention was not to question the validity of this current age, nor suggest an alternative future, for perhaps it couldn't have been any other way than what it currently is. My intention was to reach back into recent history and rediscover for myself, the relationships between painting and architecture, linking aspects of a visual and experience oriented culture. Alex Colville was not a modernist painter in the abstract sense, but perhaps modernist in his ability to distill a scene into primary elements, ordered by composition techniques but then hiding it all in the landscapes and relationships of the people and places he depicted. What differentiated Alex Colville from other painters during his time was his relentless commitment to the tradition of perspectival painting. Following in the footsteps of 15th century Italian figurative painters Masaccio and Piero Della Francesca, whose legacy he inherited.



The *Flagellation of Christ* by Piero Della Francesca (c. 15th century).

Terms that have become second nature to architects and designers; underlying structure, in-between spaces, composition, projection, horizontality, perspective, elevations and the human scale have been taught to us during our education but rarely are we taught of the binding relationships between architecture and painting and that these terms were and still are used by painters. Once one starts to find these same principles in another discipline aside from architecture they begin to take on a deeper meaning and understanding. Besides the familiar techniques and architectural language, what I have learned from Alex Colville and his work were of human relationships. The importance of movement and stillness, acceptance, patience, honesty, death, and fear and how these are shared in the mundane and ordinary events of our lives. Moments do not need to be spectacular to be registered worthy of memory because it is our everyday lives that are truly spectacular. Painting can give human emotions a tangible presence and not as often do I encounter architecture that is able to do the same. Therefore, I do not see this pursuit into the image as a superficial kind but more of an attempt to uncover for myself, how to properly make an image and architecture together. In hopes to strengthen the relationship between people and the world we live in.



Printed Colville analysis lit from the back. Revealing a transparent over/underlay, front and back.

Contemporary Visual Culture

It seems that we no longer live in the age of arts. Art forms such as theatrical plays, symphonic music, operas, poetry and painting which held such long lines of cultural significance and continuity are now of interest to fewer and fewer people. However, it is believed that we do live in an aesthetic age and an unprecedented era of total design in which, design has superseded art, reaching to all areas of the world²¹. This current age combined with our ability to access and store digital information and images instantaneously, perpetuates our infatuation with aesthetics and design. Therefore, in the current field of architecture, we cannot avoid this visual culture but we must avoid the assumption that the primary focus of architectural identity is a building's visual surface, especially its facade.²²

I began with referencing David Leatherbarrow's, *Roots of Architectural Invention* and *Surface Architecture* and deciphering the requests he makes of contemporary architectes. David Leatherbarrow asks that we reconsider what it means to establish the limits of an architectural setting? What can be used to define the conspicuous and inconspicuous edges of a room, building or urban ensemble and what settings result from these less obvious means of definition? At that time, I understood this as a pursuit into defining architectural settings ie. situations and moments. Taking an inside-to-out approach and using moments, similar to Alex Colville, as design drivers. Backed by Dalibor Vesely's *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation* and Alex Colville, I began to draw from the past the tradition and role of architects and artists in embodying and founding culture through the possibilities of everyday life.

21 Mark Grief, *Against everything: essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2016), 237.

22 David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Surface Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 78.

Moments

Working through Alex Colville's techniques of painting and depicting everyday life, I was able to establish the means of defining moments but wondered if these means could define the architecture? In fact they could, it is not unlike architects to draft perspectives and elevation compositions but the challenging bit was maintaining the relations between the moment and setting using these techniques. A chicken and egg scenario began to emerge, which comes first? Was the moment influencing the architecture or the architecture influencing the moment? It feels as though it all must happen at once but it cannot.

Design is more of an oscillating process, shifting between urban and building scales, inside and outside, and finding the relations between past and present. Only then do moments begin to present themselves. Two such moments that are inherent to Halifax's history are those of arrival and departure. but what about its future? To help ensure the cultural continuity of Halifax's seaport, this thesis proposes the adaptive re-use of the existing train station, the addition of a commuter rail station and various interventions to the surrounding site conditions to allow for the everyday lives of people to thrive, within and without.



Fragments to a whole. Cropped to show vertical and horizontal relations.



Entering the studio spaces.

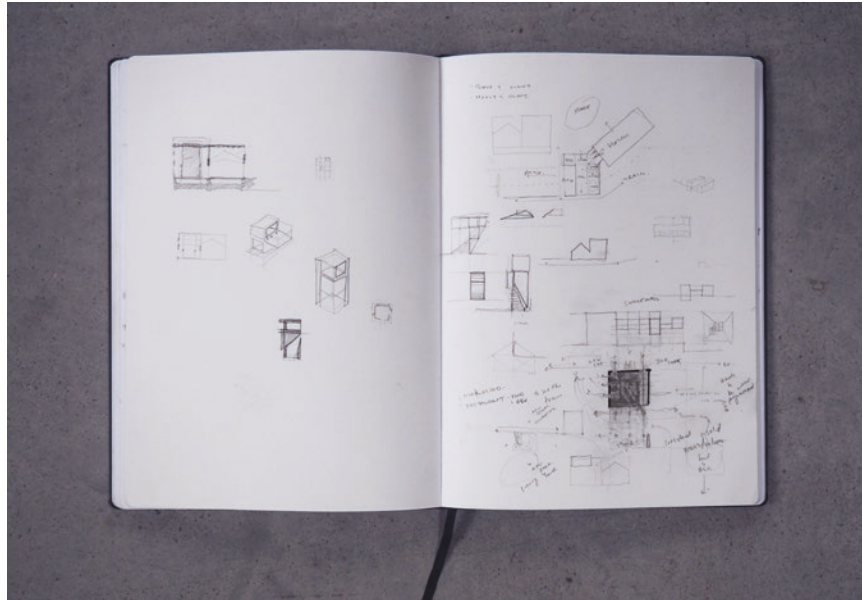


Approaching the station from the market.

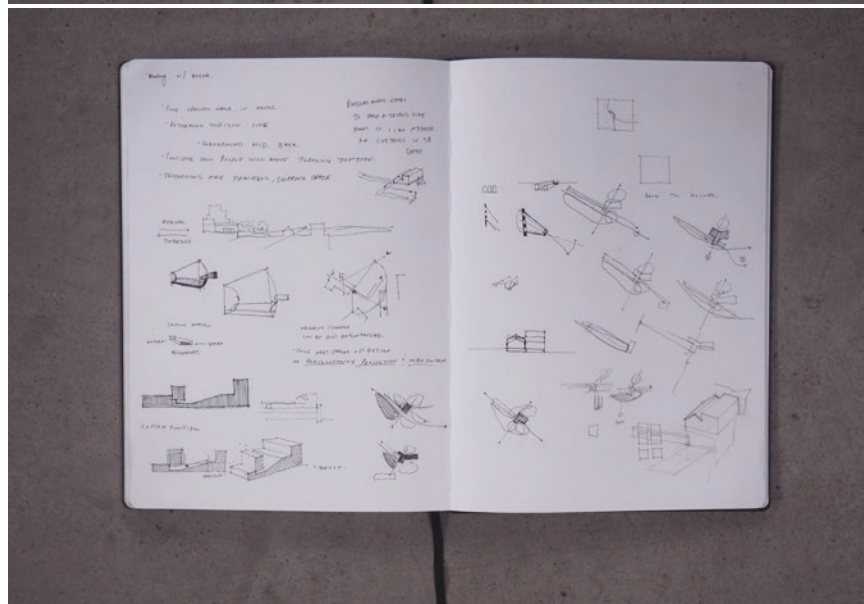
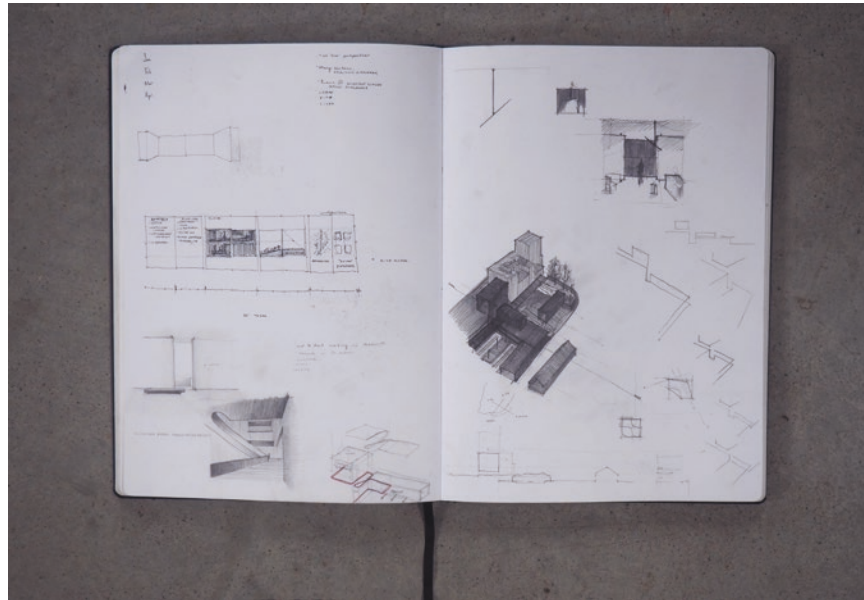


Arrival to the comuter station.

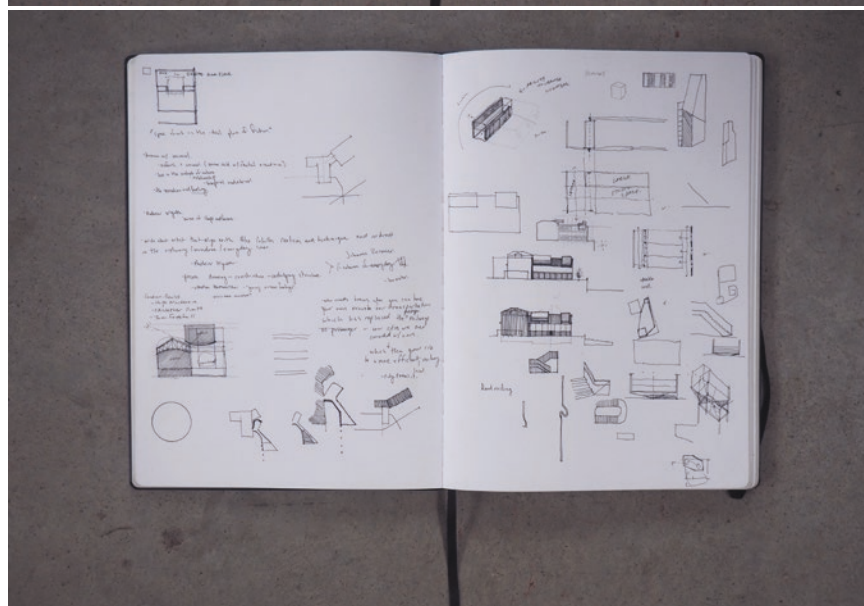
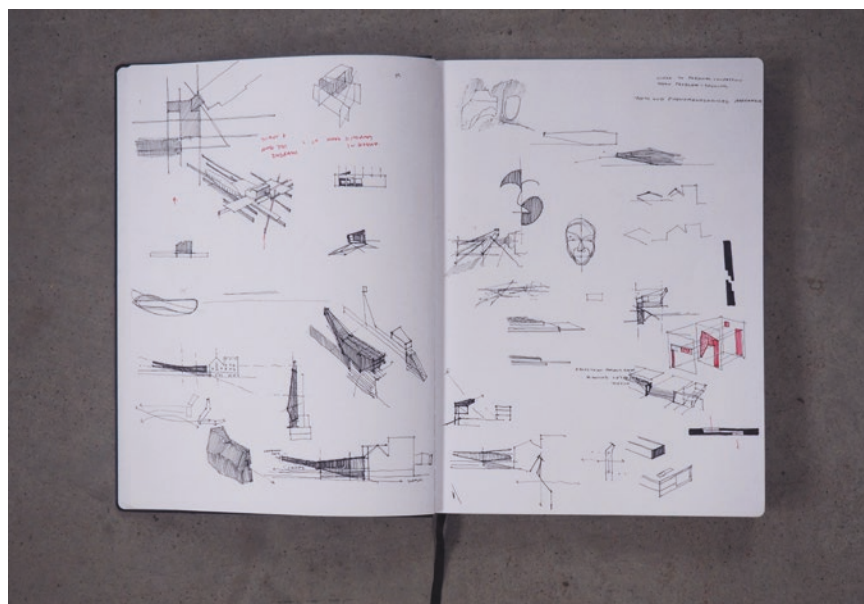
One may read this thesis and find nothing of value to themselves but know that you too may find yourself in a similar position I was prior to this thesis. Asking, what moves me? Why? How can I get it into my work? Thus begins the process of self reflection and discovery, finding yourself in others ideas and relating these to your own experiences. This is only the beginning of a longer dialogue between a master painter and student. A student; I will gladly call myself.



Sketchbook excerpt



Sketchbook excerpt



Sketchbook excerpt

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