

**If These Walls Could Talk:
Exploring Architecture as a Narrative Medium through the
Rehabilitation of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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at

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

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Dedicated to my great grandparents, my Zadie Mel, and Zadie Moishe who bravely immigrated from Eastern Europe to Canada.

And, to the one million who entered Canada through Halifax, Pier 21.

CONTENTS

Abstract	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Question	1
Narrative Modes	3
Narrative as a Threefold	5
Memory.....	8
Outlined by Culture	9
Narrative Experience	11
Narrative Devices	12
Devices Found in Experiential Art.....	13
The Museum as a Narrative Medium	14
Case Studies: Narrative in Architecture.....	15
Safdie’s Yad Vashem, Jerusalem	15
Majdanek Lublin, Poland	16
Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim, New York	17
Chapter 2: Context	18
Why is This Site Different From All Other Sites?	18
Global Context.....	20
Historic Context: Pier 21 Immigration Shed.....	20
Current Context: Halifax Seaport District.....	24
Canadian Immigration Museum at Pier 21: Existing Conditions.....	29
Exhibition Hall	31
Resource Centre.....	34
Chapter 3: Defining a Narrative	36
Narrative Mapping	36
Narrative Storyboard	45
The Storyboard	45
Chapter 4: Design: Narrating a Museum	50
Proposed Interventions.....	50

Framing Narrative Events.....	56
Departure.....	56
Travel.....	59
Arrival.....	61
Waiting.....	63
Immigration.....	65
Customs.....	68
Assistance.....	70
Exiting and Travelling On.....	72
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	89
Appendix: Individual Narratives.....	90
References.....	93

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how architecture, like literature and film, uses narrative techniques to tell a story. The museum exemplifies this concept of architecture as a narrative medium, as its social mandate is to articulate a topic and educate visitors.

Through the rehabilitation of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, this thesis aims to improve the museum's spatial qualities and configuration. A series of interventions are designed to frame spaces throughout the historic site, reflecting the historical events that took place there. These spaces tell the story of one million immigrants and Canadian military personnel who entered Canada at this site.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

If a building could speak, if its walls could whisper, then Pier 21 would have an incredible story to tell. It is a story of a million people who immigrated to Canada through Halifax between 1928 and 1971. One million lives, one million experiences – a country transformed. It is a story with countless variations, shared by the millions who have come, and continue to come to this country.¹

This thesis explores how narrative can be used in the design rehabilitation of a history museum. The museum, with its objective of conveying a subject and educating visitors, exemplifies this conception of architecture as a narrative medium through the organization of space.² Designing a cohesive narrative articulated throughout the museum will improve visitor's experience and understanding of the subject.

In 2009, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 received national museum status and became one of six national museums in Canada, and one of two located outside of Ottawa.³ Although the content of the museum deserves national recognition, the existing design of the museum space is inadequate. For this reason, this thesis aims to rehabilitate the existing museum. The intention is not to restore this historic place to a particular period of time.⁴ Rather, it is to rehabilitate the existing museum through a series of interventions that frame spaces within the historic site. The improved spatial qualities and flow of the museum coherently narrates the story of Canadian immigration.

Question

How can the built environment be designed to narrate a story? How can a museum be rehabilitated to narrate a historic place? How can the historic events inform a series of architectural interventions?

1 Pier 21 Exhibition Hall. "The Immigration Experience." Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. 1055 Marginal Road NS B3H 4P7. September 2011.

2 Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

3 "Halifax's Pier 21 designated national museum," last modified February 7, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2011/02/07/ns-pier-21-immigration-museum.html>.

4 Parks Canada, "The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada" (Gatineau, Quebec: Parks Canada, 2010), 16.



a story about love.



a story about hate.



a story about peace.



a story about war.



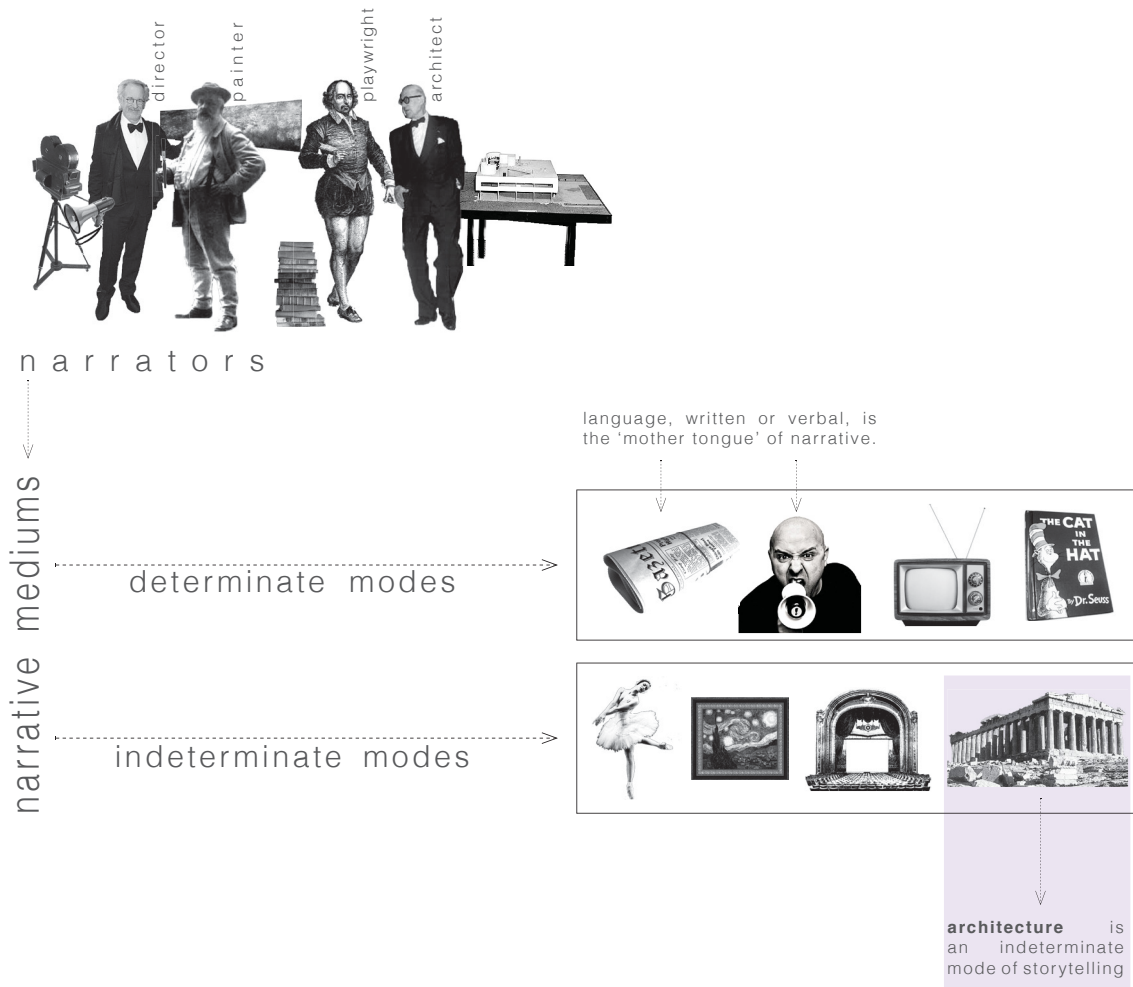
a story about freedom.



a story about captivity.

All buildings and landmarks tell a story. The story can be implied by its creators, or through its programmatic function. (concept from archiTEXT inc)

Other theorists have claimed “visual media lack the code, the grammar, and the syntactic rules necessary to articulate specific meanings”:⁸ the opposing argument is that narrative modes need not to be explicit or determinate. The determinate mode uses text to define and plot the story. The indeterminate mode suggests fewer points along the narrative to be ordered and interpreted by the user. ⁹ In the indeterminate mode of narrative the audience becomes “participatory” rather than “receptive.” The participatory mode allows the reader to engage deeper into the story as an active character following the plot. With this type of narrative, Ryan argues that there are stories better expressed through visual or audio mediums, than verbal narration. These type of narrative mediums should not be omitted from the study of narratology.¹⁰



Outlining determinate versus indeterminate modes of narrative.

8 Ibid., 10.

9 Ibid., 14.

10 Ibid., 12.

Narrative as a Threefold

All buildings maintain our perception of temporal duration and depth, and they record and suggest cultural and human narratives. We cannot conceive or remember time as a mere physical dimension; we can only grasp time through its actualizations: the traces, places, and events of temporal occurrence.¹¹

Some of the philosophers and writers who have explored narrative and memory directly link these two concepts, while others implicitly suggest that one is involved in the other.

Karl Simms's book *Paul Ricoeur* thoroughly examines the work of the twentieth-century French philosopher, including his lengthy work *Time and Narrative*. When decoding Ricoeur's work on narrative, the theory of time must be understood first. His framework begins with Aristotle's theory of time, which isolates the present as a series of points- a series of "nows." Aristotle's theory explains that the "present" is an infinitely small amount of time therefore can not exist in our human time. Once the present has been isolated, it is in the past. This theory of time is later developed by St. Augustine, who understood time as a "threefold present." Thus, time must be understood in three sequential parts: the memory of the past, the present and the anticipation of the future.¹²

Ricoeur develops the theory of time into his work on narrative by means of a threefold approach: *Mimesis 1*, *Mimesis 2*, *Mimesis 3*. This theory proposes that like time, there are three stages to narrative. The first is *Mimesis 1*, pre configuration, in which readers have preconceived ideas and memories of things before entering into the literature. *Mimesis 2*, configuration, organizes the ideas of the text, characters and plot in the mind of the reader. *Mimesis 3*, reconfiguration, is the point at which the reader is finished with the story and is able to reassemble their previous ideas with their new understanding of the text and its relation to the world.¹³

This theory of time and narrative as a threefold approach, pairs the viewer with the narrative during the second phase of the process, while employing our memory in the first and final phases. First, our memory is used to recall everything we know about the world. Once

¹¹ Juhani Pallasmaa, "Space, Place, Memory, and Imagination: The Temporal Dimension of Existential Space," in *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. Marc Treib (New York: Routledge, 2009), 19.

¹² Karl Simms, "Narrative," in *Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 2003), 82.

¹³ Simms, "Narrative," 85.

new information is presented, our brain then requires a process of reflection in order to comprehend it. In this process of “reconfiguration” there is an attempt to identify with the character or plot in order to make sense of the narrative.

The use of memory brings the subject and object together through the notion of mimesis.¹⁴ Neil Leach describes in his essay, “Mimesis,” that for Walter Benjamin the idea of mimesis permits identifying with the world. “It facilitates the possibility of forging a link between self and other. It becomes a way of empathizing with the world, and it is through empathy that human beings can- if not fully understand the other-- at least come ever closer to the other, through the discovery and creation of similarities.”¹⁵ Similarities are not to be understood as a direct imitation of the original, as reproduction requires more than simply imitating. In the processes of replicating an original, the new creator, reader, or viewer inherently inscribes their own hand in the replication; therefore, the reinterpretation differentiates it from the original.¹⁶ This is best explained in Leach’s writing as the way in which we learn language at a young age. First, we mimic the sounds and words of our native language, before we are able to use these words and phrases in our own personal expression.¹⁷ This notion of adaptation through mimicry can be thought of in the way we humans, and animals in nature, learn most things.

¹⁴ Neil Leach, “Mimesis,” in *Walter Benjamin and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

TIME

[the present] IS ∞_{small} does not exist.



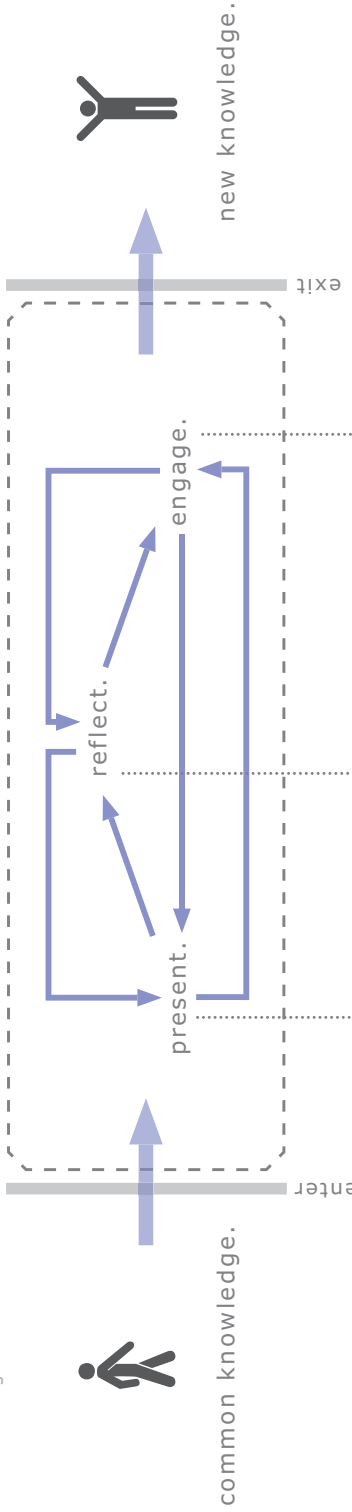
TIME = 'threefold present' = memory of the past + present + anticipation of the future

the present, 'now', is an infinity small amount of time that human time can not account for it, therefore it does not exist. Time then must be understood as a 'threefold present'.**

PREfiguration*

CONFIGURATION*

REfiguration*



the museum presents exhibits using facts, information, ideas, artifact, objects, installations, etc.

users process the material presented, making connections from their own experiences + knowledge. reflection occurs while viewing material, moving from one exhibit to the next, or in designated spaces.

users engage with interactive exhibits throughout the museum + in the resource/research center.

*based on Paul Ricoeur's theory of Time and Narrative: Threefold Mimesis
**derived from Aristotelian 'rationalist theory' & Augustine's notion of the 'threefold present'

Memory

Place, I repeat, is space that can be remembered – that you can hold in the mind and consider. It is this capacity for being held in the mind that allows places to accrue significances that are both intimate and public. They dwell in the minds of individuals, yet through incorporating elements of common experiences, they help in the development of shared conceptions that bind our thoughts together.¹⁸

Our memory is integral to our being. We remember through the use of “images” and “things.” These “things” do not emerge in white space: rather, they exist in our mind in a place, in the context of a story.

Ricouer’s theory of narrative suggests that the reader or viewer uses cognitive action, consciously or not, through a threefold approach. Narrative and cognitive action can further be understood in Frances Yates’s work *The Art of Memory*. Yates explains the ancient orators’ method of remembering through mnemonic devices. Again, memory is associated with symbolizing the material world. Through the use of images and things, these objects exist in our mind within an environment. When moving through space, walking through a place in the mind, one is able to recall the order of objects and their associated meaning to unfold a story. Here the human action of mentally walking through the space aids in recalling our memory. The objects in the space are used to link the sequence of the narrative.¹⁹

As stated previously, history museums aim to educate visitors, tell a story and recall historical events. A well designed museum does this by assisting visitors in recalling their own memory throughout their visit; connecting themselves to the story being told.

Additionally, when leaving the museum the use of objects and experiential exhibits will assist in recalling what they have learnt, felt, or encountered in their museum experience. It is here that architecture is able to go beyond its traditional function of providing shelter and is able to articulate, and resonate, ideas to it’s users.

¹⁸ Donlyn Lyndon, “The Place of Memory,” in *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. Marc Treib (New York: Routledge, 2009), 64.

¹⁹ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 3.

Outlined by Culture

We also judge alien and past cultures through the evidence provided by the architectural structures they have produced. Buildings project epic narratives.²⁰

If architecture is understood as a medium for storytelling, how is the story formed and articulated? Who is the author, screenwriter, director, or producer responsible for narrating our built environment?

Sophia Psarra describes in *Architecture and Narrative* that architecture is often used as a tool to communicate meaning and ideas to users.²¹ The meaning, or message, embedded in the architectural work is socially determined and thus defined by the culture in which it exists. Psarra suggests that “[a]rchitecture carries content through the arrangement of spaces, materials, social relationships and the cultural purposes with which it is invented. It is underpinned by agencies and the systems of thought that are involved in its production.”²² Psarra is not suggesting that architecture is society, but rather a manifestation of society’s ideals into an ordered set of built objects.²³

In *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*, Edward Linenthal discusses in great detail the process of building a public, federally funded museum and all the “struggles” endured. His writing follows each phase of the project and provides a kind of memoir of the museum’s inception. The ongoing question alluded through his writing was the struggle to properly define what to present, what to remember and who to remember throughout the museum. The question for the museum committee became: what is the preferred narrative to be used in the design of the museum? As a national museum, the narrative reflectives the cultural understanding of the subject. For this reason, the tone used to narrate the museum is significant.²⁴

The notion of a preferred narrative is further discussed in Alan Radley’s essay, “Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past.” Radley explains that collective memory, is a discursive action not only occurring in the mind of individuals, but through the discourse of individuals

²⁰ Pallasmaa, “Space, Place, Memory, and Imagination,” 17.

²¹ Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative*, i.

²² Ibid., 1-2.

²³ Ibid., 244.

²⁴ Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1995), 2-3.

discussing the past.²⁵ He suggests that remembering is associated with the material world, as “objects” or “things” have the ability to provoke an idea, or the memory of something else. The things in our material world can be understood to have different symbolic meaning for different cultures and generations. An object can be decoded differently when removed from its original function and context and experienced as an artefact.²⁶ The objects we choose to use as artefacts and the subjects they portray are a contrived action within society.

Furthermore, the order and grouping of artefacts in their new context creates another layer of narrative suggested by the creator. Interestingly, Radley suggests that the material world we live in, and parts of it that we create, often outlive us. As such, these objects take on a different meaning, interpreted and altered by subsequent generations.²⁷

In the essay “Mnemonic Value and Historic Preservation,” Jorge Otero-Pailos argues that, designation of a historic place represents the collective identity of the society it exists in. Collective identity is obtained through compiling several individual identities.²⁸ Otero-Pailos states that, “ultimately the memory that counts more in shaping collective identity is personal memory and less the recall of historical facts recited by tour guides or written on plaques.”²⁹ Individual memory, or individual narratives, play a vital role in the inception of museums and places of historic designation. Although, personal narratives gradually get lost in the process of historic designation and are thought to be subordinate to preservation theory. This results in a disconnect between the individual experience to the preservation of the historic place.³⁰ By designating a historic building, a society tells its citizens and others that this building has meaning to the collective whole. This process of historic designation is in fact utilitarian: “it names buildings and sites as historic resources, that is, as stocks or reserves to be drawn upon when necessary for the purpose of making history.”³¹

25 Alan Radley, “Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past,” in *Collective Remembering*, ed. David Middleton and Derek Edwards (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1990), 46.

26 Ibid., 57.

27 Ibid., 58.

28 Jorge Otero-Pailos, “Mnemonic Value and Historic Preservation,” in *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. Marc Treib (New York: Routledge, 2009), 242.

29 Ibid., 242.

30 Ibid., 244.

31 Ibid., 245.

Narrative Experience

A landscape or work of architecture cannot, however, create feelings. Through their authority and aura, they evoke and strengthen our own emotions and project them back to us as if these feelings of ours had an external source.³²

Architecture is an ideal medium to generate a narrative involving emotionally charged concepts, as emotions sometimes cannot be verbalized, only felt intuitively.³³ Psarra suggests that through movement, the abstract concepts behind the built environment can provoke the senses, enforcing a physical experience.³⁴

Psarra's lengthy work describes the notion of architectural spaces as two ideas; the *conceived* and the *perceived*. Psarra notes that Tschumi believes these concepts can not occur simultaneously, as "we cannot both experience and think what we experience."³⁵ Therefore, architecture can be thought of in two ways. First, as an abstract concept in its formal and spatial inception articulated by the architect.³⁶ Second, as a physical volume "experienced by bodies moving in space."³⁷

When perceiving space, movement can be understood as the primary device in which users experience spatial configurations and unfold architectural narratives. Psarra suggests that observers are able to hold only so many patterns in the mind at once. It is through movement, the change in spatial positions, that patterns are understood. This happens gradually, through a sequence of experiences.³⁸

Psarra's description of perceiving space through a sequence is similar in principle to Ricoeur's theory of time and narrative as a three-fold approach. Both theories suggest that a series of isolated points occur in succession to unfold an event, story, experience, or time. The theory of perceiving space runs parallel to the unfolding of time. Buildings must not be thought of as a single mass with a single encounter, but rather broken down as a series of spacial experiences. Thus, when designing a museum, the architect must

³² Pallasmaa, "Space, Place, Memory, and Imagination," 30.

³³ *Ibid.*, 236.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

design and detail for each encounter in a series of parts. Through movement the visitor encounters each part; connecting the isolated points into what will be comprehended as an experience.

Narrative Devices

Narrative enters architecture through the ways in which space is structured to achieve specific effects on our perception. Architects employ conceptual-formal patterns independently from viewer's experience, but also organize space from the viewpoint of an observer. The act of perceiving is linked with the sequential unfolding of information as our bodies pass through space.³⁹

If architecture is able to convey a narrative, what are the tools used by architects to generate concepts into inhabitable spaces? How does one design for a particular narrative?

Design principles and compositional techniques are used to stage each event in the narrative sequence. Architectural devices such as: site placement, ordering of spaces, scale, axes, symmetry, geometry, sightlines and materials are used to structure the narrative. These architectural elements are understood through movement, through the phenomenological experience of space.

Bernard Tschumi references this concept of movement as a series of "vectors" that activates space through the motion of bodies. His theories suggest that because we (users) experience space through movement, that space is then to be understood as a temporal entity.⁴⁰ Vectorized movement occurs through different modes of circulation and is conditioned by the configuration of "ramps, stairs, elevators, escalators, hallways, catwalks, bridges, and so on."⁴¹ These unprogrammed spaces are the "in-between" spaces that intersect and connect the programmatic elements of an institution.⁴² When circulation elements are plugged into static programs, the space is activated "through the motion of the bodies that populate them."⁴³

The motion of bodies through space is what charges architecture and creates a unique experience. This concept is exemplified when moving through and experiencing large

³⁹ Ibid., i.

⁴⁰ Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 13.

⁴¹ Ibid., 226.

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 226.

transportation hubs as train stations, airports, or an entrance lobby. These spaces are often out of scale to the human proportion, with high ceilings and large structural elements. When empty, these spaces feel large and overwhelming, but are transformed into dynamic spaces, through the motion of bodies.

In a museum, the in-between spaces can be designed as exhibition space, breaking out of the traditional rectangular gallery. Here, every opportunity is used to articulate part of the narrative. Thresholds, corridors and framed views, are programmed, and thought of, as experiential exhibits, provided both are designed for movement. As visitors activate the space they also become an active participant in unfolding the narrative.

The order and visual connectivity of these spaces provide another layer of narrative to the overall museum experience. The type of space one moves through influences the experience of each subsequent space. The juxtaposition of spaces, arranging tall and short, bright and dark spaces, along an axis ultimately affects the experience of each individual space. As well, the position of spaces in relation to the major axes creates spatial and visual relationships. This relationship is altered by the viewers position along the axes.⁴⁴ By offsetting each space from the circulation axis a different experience is generated than that of a shotgun house, where the axis cuts through the centre of each space.

Devices Found in Experiential Art

Experiential art, such as the work of Richard Serra, uses particular devices in narrating place. His work employs large-scale objects to generate a spatial experience. Viewers are required to explore the object and its surroundings in a way that is comparable to the experience of a building and site. An experience through exploration can be more engaging than gazing or reading a narrative from afar.

Museum and exhibition designers have begun shifting their design objectives to be more in line with Serra's work. These designers recognize that in our digital age, information is everywhere. Visitors no longer come to the museum to read the text on the walls, that same information can be found on the internet. Museums must now be designed

⁴⁴ Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative*, 227.

with a different approach, moving information from the walls to encompass the entire building, creating spatial experiences that speak to the visitor and encourages museum attendance. An experiential exhibition has the ability to provide a much more thought provoking experience and understanding of the subject than merely reading the facts.

Serra's work can be looked at as precedent when designing experiential exhibition spaces. He uses positive spaces (objects made of corten steel) to create negative spaces (the spaces between the objects). These negative spaces allow the user to enter and navigate around the work, inducing a sensory experience through movement. This spatial experience is similar to the intentions of hallways, corridors, and pavilions; spaces of habitation and exploration. The over-scaled steel objects can be thought of as walls or boundaries; such elements are used in defining and framing architectural spaces. These objects are simple in form, but when composed, create a complex set of negative spaces. Serra's work is often site-specific, making the surrounding negative space a vital part of the work and of the experience. Through spatial movement and navigation the work reveals its physical environment as viewers reinterpret their surroundings.

The Museum as a Narrative Medium

A history museum can memorialize a topic and educate its visitors through the means of storytelling. Exhibitions and non-programmatic spaces – the in-between spaces – can be designed to create a preferred narrative for museum visitors through the use of spatial configuration. Procession is used to suggest the narrative of a place and time. The order in which the story is told and information is received dramatically influences the emotional response of the story.

Psarra references the mandate behind museums, which is not only to develop the subject through the organization of artefacts, but through the framing and organization of the museum itself.⁴⁵

45 Ibid., 138.

Case Studies: Narrative in Architecture

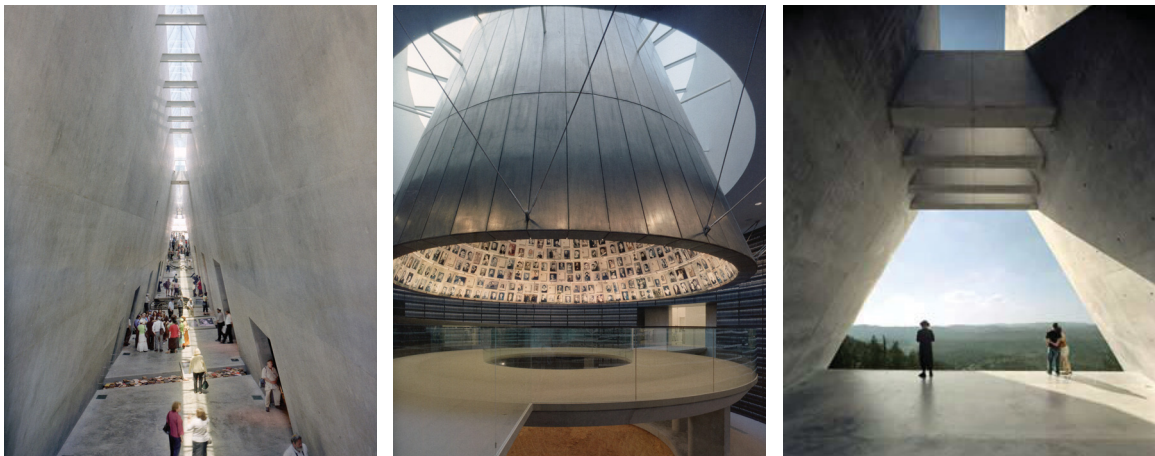
Safdie's Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

Yad Vashem, designed by architect Moshe Safdie, tells the story of the Holocaust. Designed as a campus plan, the administrative and exhibition spaces of the museum are arranged throughout the landscape. Safdie's design does not generate the museum as a black box, housing artefacts. Rather, the design of the building and exhibitions are an opportunity to further express the ideas behind the institution.

The main building is designed as a triangular prism cutting through the hillside. A skylight runs the length of the building, letting natural light flood the main space. The main axis appears open, carrying sightlines to the opposite end of the building. The circulation is rerouted from the main axis with exhibition plaques and reliefs in the floor slab. Instead, visitors follow a snake-like path, swerving in and out of the main axis to adjacent exhibition spaces.

The final exhibition is designed with a reflective concave pool dug into the ground. When looking down the surroundings are reflected, mirroring photos and binders. The binders used in this exhibition act as a database, storing names and dates of those who have perished, and those who survived.

Exiting the museum at the opposing end of the main axis, visitors are confronted with a framed view of Jerusalem's forested hillside. The setting provides a place of reflection and reconfiguration, before moving on to adjacent museum buildings.



Interior of Yad Vashem. From Safdie, *Yad Vashem: Moshe Safdie- The Architecture of Memory*

Majdanek Lublin, Poland

It was the summer of 2007. I stood there in an open green field at the site of a former death camp, Majdanek in Lublin, Poland. My knees trembled after passing through a series of wooden bunkers, previously housing prisoners of war. The tour continued on to a series of concrete bunkers, previously used as gas chambers. Finally I stood in an open, empty, green, grassy field. Encompassed only by the individuals on my tour and from afar two sets of barbed wire standing several feet tall. Beyond that I could see numerous bunkers, identical to those previously toured, lined one after the other. The emptiness of the place fueled my response, the scale of the site, the large open land. I recalled history courses I took in school, teaching the terror of WW II. The gory pictures in textbooks, illustrating people in places like this. Videos dubbed with dreary music exemplifying the suffering and devastation of the time. As I stood there, out of my own free will, all I could imagine was the numerous people that once populated this place. And now, their ashes piled in a mass grave remains on-site several meters from me. This place was filled with prisoners of war, with desperation to survive, with hatred and with death. Now their stories are shared through the remains of the site.



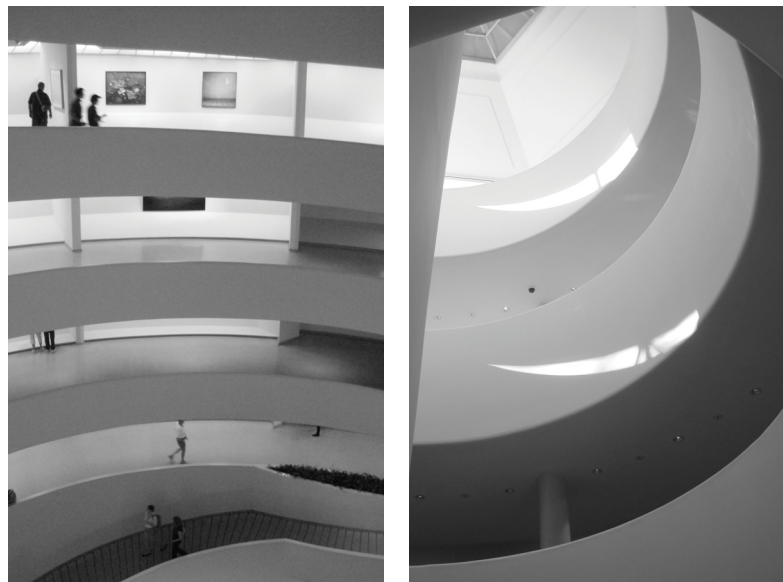
Inside gas chambers,
Lublin (2007)



Open field at Majdanek,
Lublin (2007)

Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim, New York

As I approached the Guggenheim I was in awe. The building's simple yet beautiful form did not match its surroundings, but yet fit in perfectly. I approached the building and entered through the front door. I proceeded through the lobby, flooded with natural light from the skylight above and toward the ticket counter. I had read the schedule wrong; it was my last day in Manhattan and the museum was closing in 15 minutes. In a rush I purchased a ticket, dropped my coat off at the coat check and headed for the elevator. With the museum guide in hand, I stepped off the elevator on the top floor and began my descent down the winding ramp. I remember a sculptural piece was centered along the ramp, causing visitors to stop and shuffle around it. As I continued down the ramp, my attention shifted from the artwork on the walls to the movement of museum visitors throughout the building. By the time I reached the middle level I could see the visitor above and below circling through the building. I was intrigued to see what other visitors had looked at and which pieces they skipped over. I was interrupted by museum staff, informing me the museum was closing in five minutes and I had to leave. In a scurry I began photographing each piece of artwork as I headed towards the exit. Museum staff followed behind me like a broom sweeping out the guest. As I reached the ground level I took a few seconds to look up and around. The building was incredible, and made even a fifteen-minute visit an unforgettable experience.



Interior of the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010)

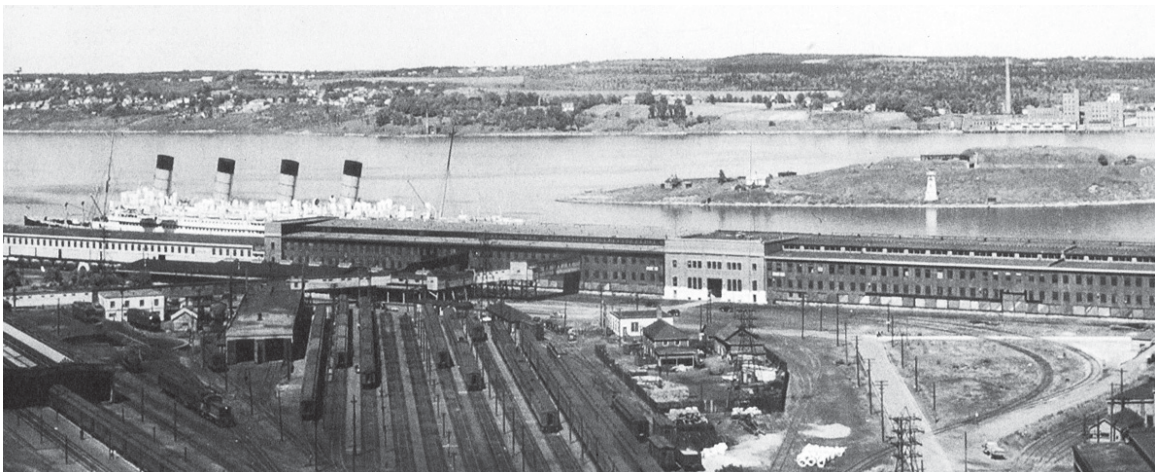
CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT

A building's setting can be as important to its interpretation and understanding of a historic place as is the structure itself.⁴⁶

Why is This Site Different From All Other Sites?

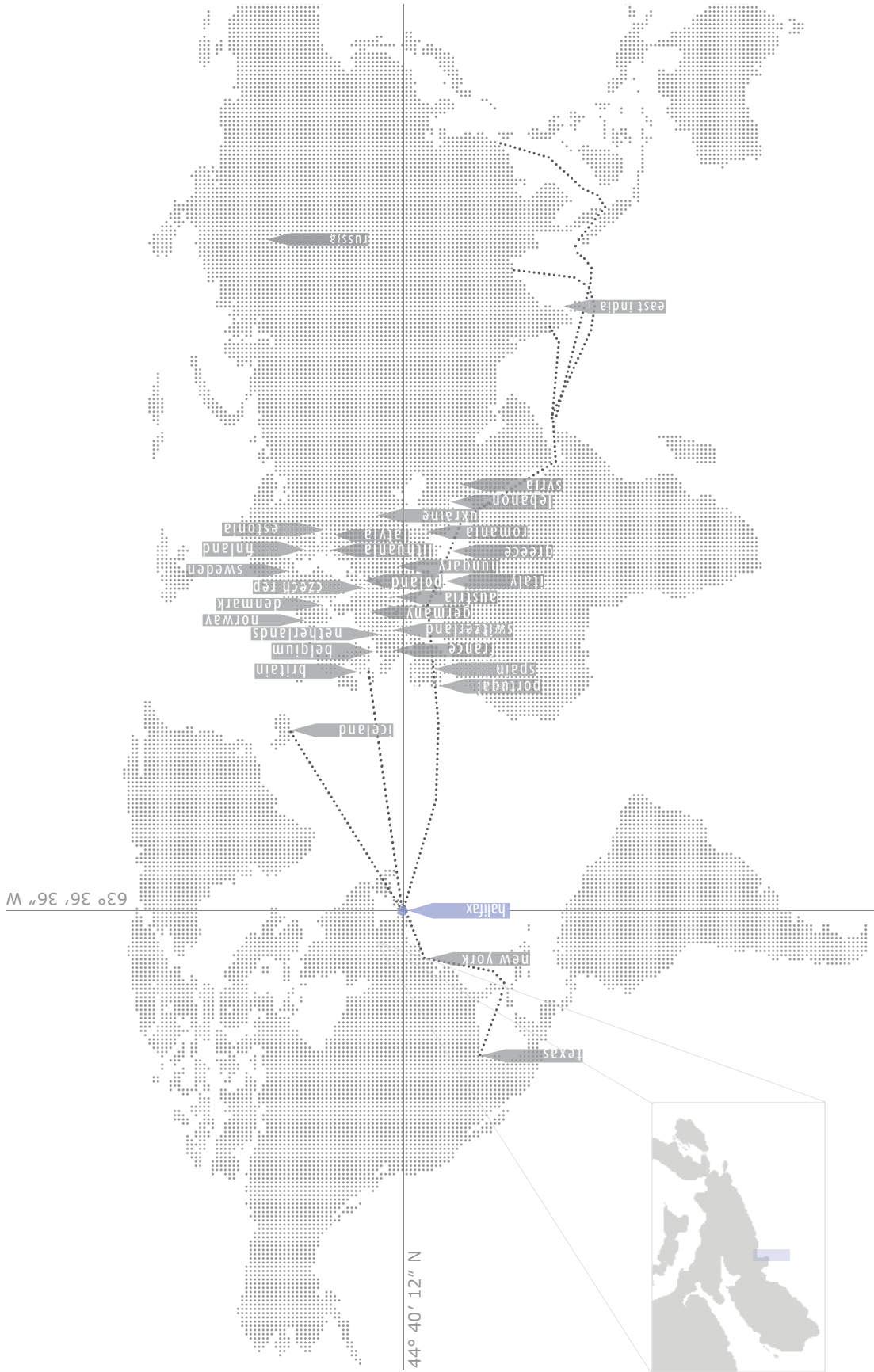
Pier 21 stands as the last remaining immigration shed in Canada. It is recognized as a national historic site for its contribution as the largest entry port during 1928- 1971. A large part of our Canadian diverse culture and nation building began with the one million newcomers who entered this country through Pier 21.

Pier 21 is more than another watershed along the harbour. It holds memories of place, culture, and history, transcending physical boundaries to tell a story of Canadian heritage and people. For this reason, this historic building functions as a document of culture. The collective memory has been retained through the previous adaptive reuse of a museum in 1999. Further rehabilitation of the museum and exhibition space provides a comprehensive understanding of the historic place and events that occurred there.



Halifax Ocean Terminal 1940s. From Granfield, *Pier 21: Gateway of Hope*.

⁴⁶ Parks Canada, "The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada", 127.



Global context: map illustrates the connectivity of the Halifax port to ports around the world.

Global Context

The Halifax Harbour is situated along the southeast coast of Nova Scotia and provides a major inlet of the Atlantic Ocean, stretching more than twenty-eight kilometres northwest.⁴⁷ It is the second largest natural harbour in the world. Previously it was described by the Mi'kmaq First Nations people as “the harbour ‘Chebucto,’ meaning ‘biggest harbour.’ ”⁴⁸

Halifax’s large harbour created an optimal entry port for immigrants arriving in Canada from the late 1800s until 1971. The port remains ideal due to its great depth, ranging from twenty to seventy metres. It is relatively ice-free in the winter months, which provides access for large ships year round. Today, this site continues to function as the largest port in Atlantic Canada, connecting the east coast globally to ports around the world. The north and south shore of Halifax provides major facilities for industrial, military and trade activities. Over the years, the waterfront ports have seen a booming demand for commercial and public spaces, accommodating local and tourist activities with a scenic Atlantic view.⁴⁹

Historic Context: Pier 21 Immigration Shed

In 1913, the Canadian National Railway began construction along the peninsula’s Northwest Arm stretching the existing railway from Fairview Cove to the south end of the peninsula. The rail required eight kilometres of Halifax slate to be blasted, creating a deep valley for rail transit. The rock blasted was used for infill in the harbour, creating the site of the Halifax Ocean Terminal, known today as the Halifax Seaport. This site was ideal for its deepwater piers and dockside watersheds. Not long after the Halifax explosion in 1917, the railway station was relocated from the north end to the south. The new location would connect the trans-Atlantic ocean passenger terminal, today Pier 21, to the extended railway.⁵⁰

47 Natural Resources Canada, “Where in the World is Halifax Harbour?” last modified 2007, http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/halifax/where_is_harbour-eng.php.

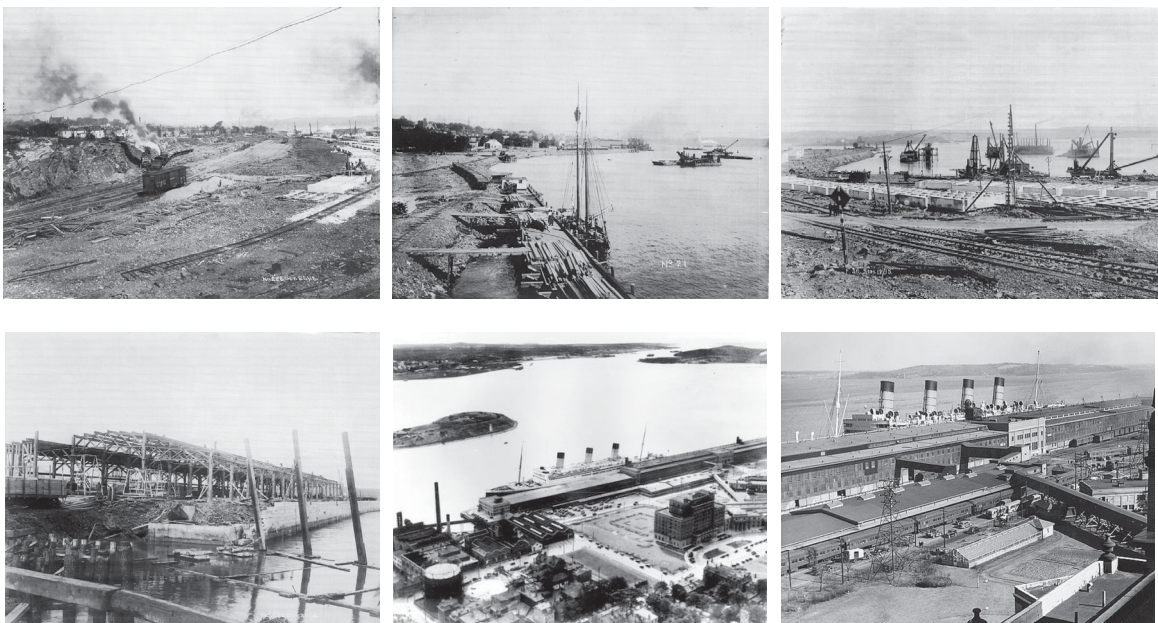
48 Anne Renaud, *Pier 21: Stories from Near and Far* (Quebec: Lobster Press, 2008), 4.

49 Natural Resources Canada, “Where in the World is Halifax Harbour?”

50 Halifax Urban Greenway, “Development of the Halifax Railway Cut (1912-18),” last modified 2004, http://www.halifaxurbangreenway.org/interpretation/railway_cut_short_history.htm.

A long set of watersheds were built in 1926, positioned parallel to the shoreline. This site became an important transportation hub and immigration facility during 1928–1971, moving goods and people both inland and out to sea.⁵¹ The past context of the site can be understood through a perpendicular axis to the shoreline. As one million passengers moved from ships, through the watershed and annex, out to trains. This axis was also used in the opposing direction during WW II, moving another half million military men through the watershed, to vessels docked along the harbour.

Evidently, the district was designed as a network of buildings, moving people into the country through an organized machine. This rigorous system set in place was pertinent to the industrial mindset and governing desire for people to populate the region during this period of time. The Halifax ports has become an iconic gateway to Canada and a symbol of nation building. For this reason this site holds heritage value of national historic significance.⁵²



Construction of Halifax Ocean Terminal. From Nova Scotia Archives

⁵¹ Canada's Historic Places, "Pier 21 National Historic Site of Canada," <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=7648>.

⁵² Ibid.



1900s



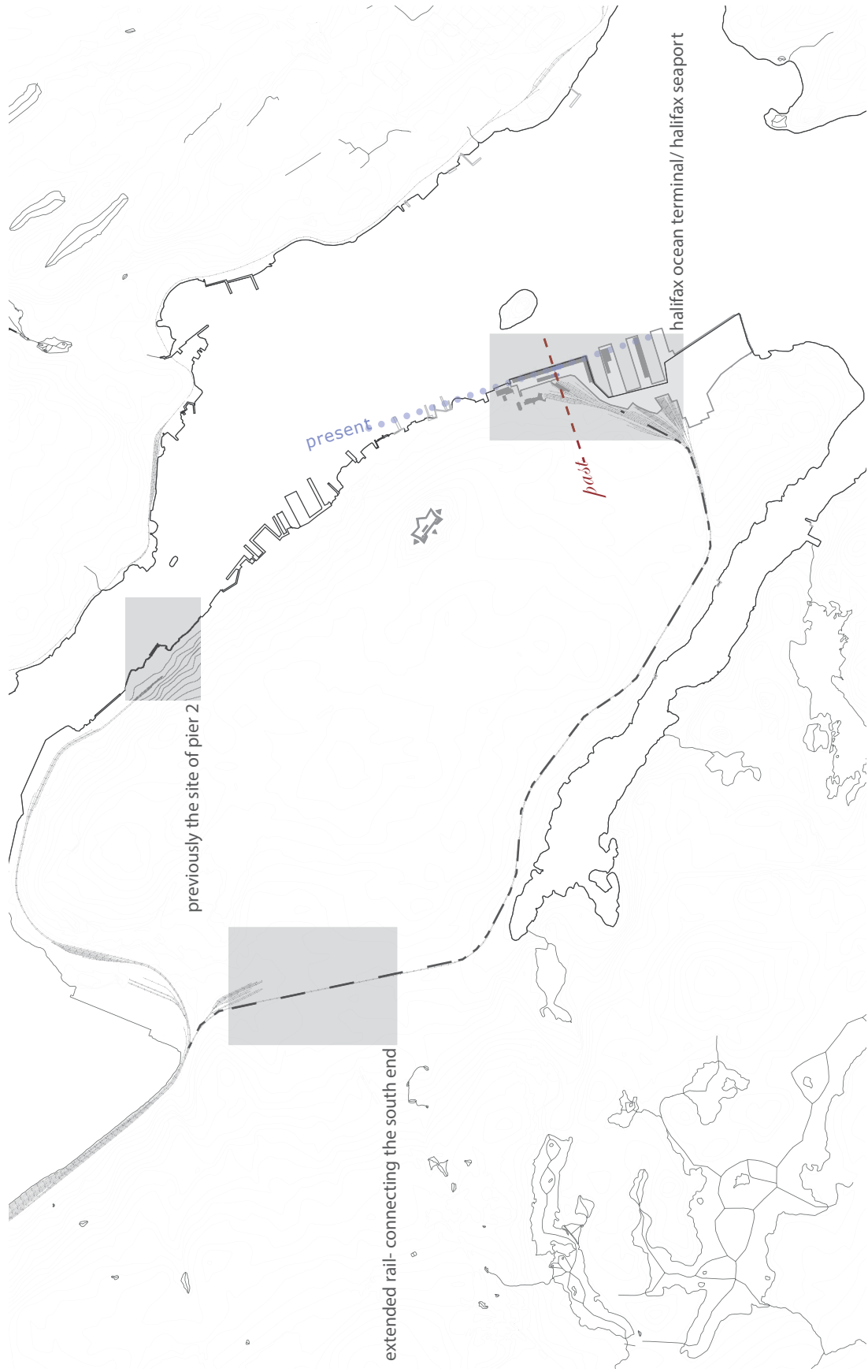
1950s



2000s



Evolution of the Halifax Ocean Terminal/ Seaport District. Top: From Nova Scotia Archives. Middle: From Granfield, *Pier 21: Gateway of Hope*. Bottom: From CCN Beacon; Panoramio.

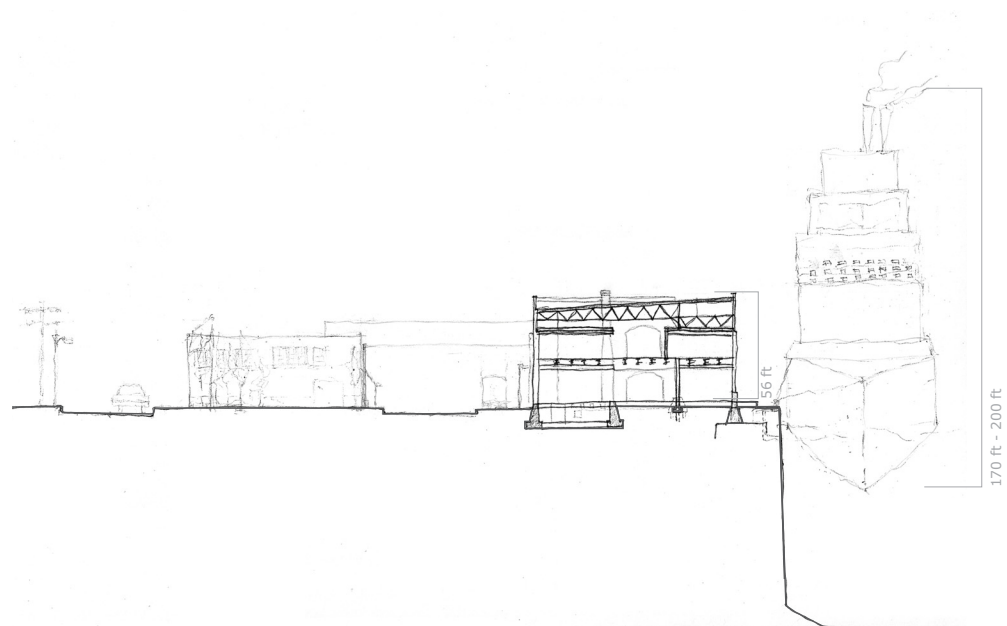


Historical context: map illustrates the Halifax Ocean Terminal/ Halifax Seaport in relation to the extended railway and the physical geography of the peninsula. The perpendicular axes address the site's change in function and circulation over the last several decades.

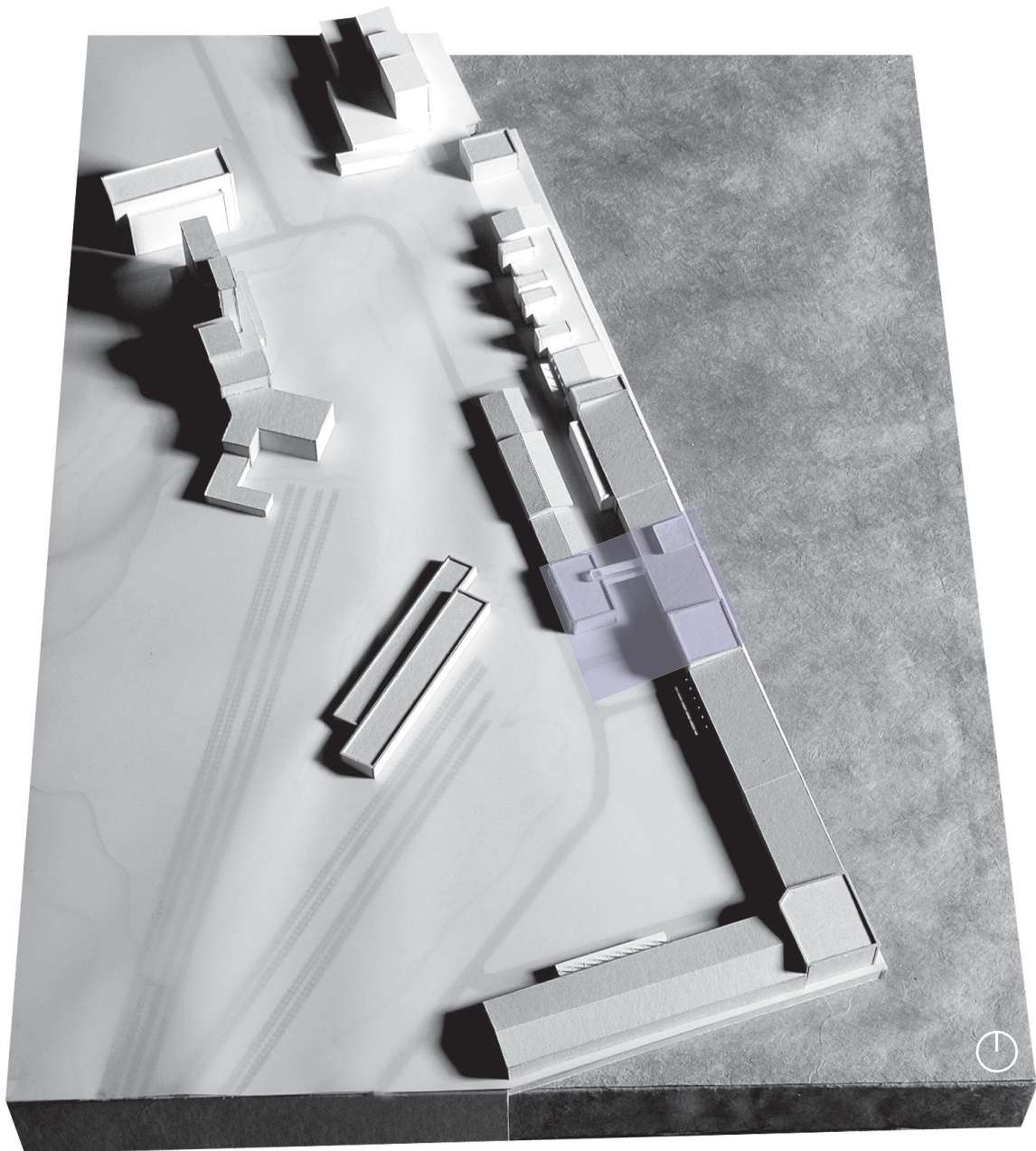
Current Context: Halifax Seaport District

The last century has seen a shift from the age of industrialization, to a consumer-based economy, which has changed the use of this district. The Halifax Ocean Terminal has developed into a highly populated commercial district, presently known as Halifax Seaport. Many of the watersheds have been repurposed to accommodate commercial and business needs. Numerous commercial, office, and studio spaces have created a vibrant community in this historic location.

The footprints of the original watersheds remain intact, utilizing the formal layout of the site's previous function. Currently, circulation along the Halifax Seaport follows an adjacent axis to the past, running parallel to the harbour's shore. The change in function has allowed the district to reconnect with the downtown core by attracting civilians to the site, rather than isolating the industrial port from the city. With the Halifax Farmers' Market recently relocating and the number of docking cruise ships on the rise, this lively district will continue evolving over the next several decades.

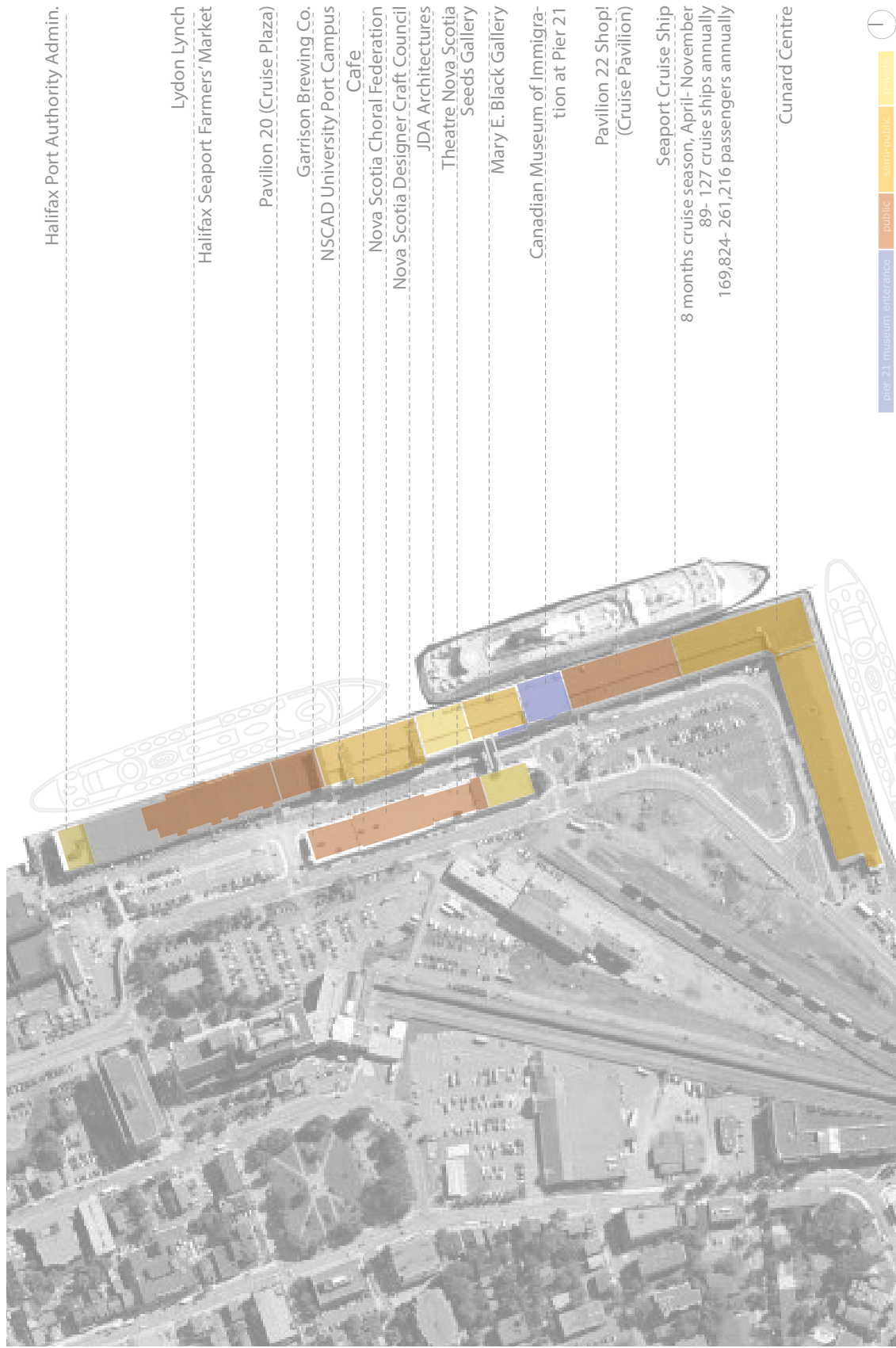


Site section: illustrates the relation of land to water and cruise ships' dramatic height.



- built before 1970
- built after 1970
- site of Pier 21 Museum

Site model: illustrates preserved footprint of original site



Halifax Port Authority Admin.

Lydon Lynch
Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market

Pavilion 20 (Cruise Plaza)

Garrison Brewing Co.
NSCAD University Port Campus
Cafe

Nova Scotia Choral Federation
Nova Scotia Designer Craft Council
JDA Architectures

Theatre Nova Scotia
Seeds Gallery
Mary E. Black Gallery

Canadian Museum of Immigration
at Pier 21

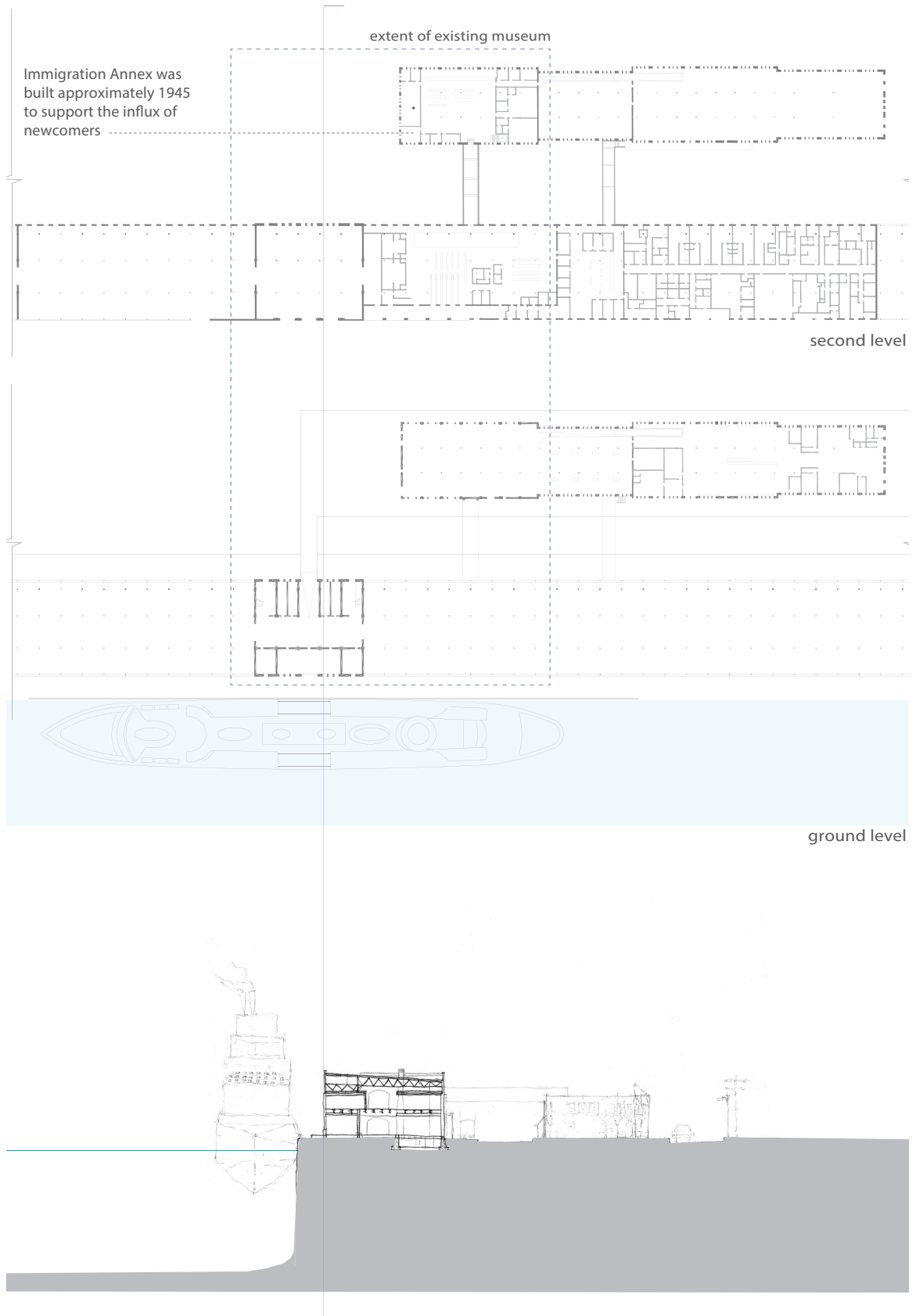
Pavilion 22 Shop:
(Cruise Pavilion)

Seaport Cruise Ship
8 months cruise season, April- November
89- 127 cruise ships annually
169,824- 261,216 passengers annually

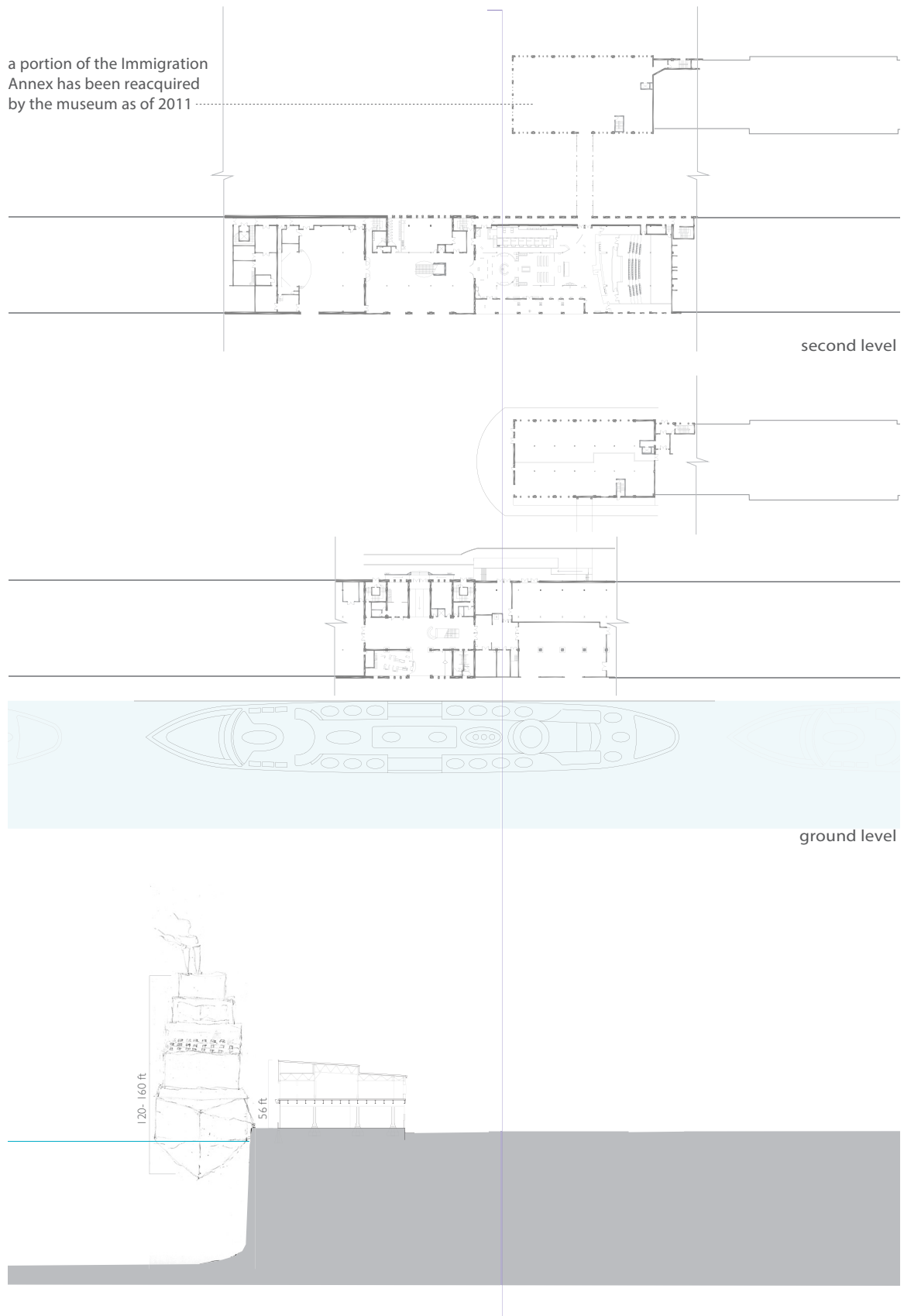
Cunard Centre



Site map: illustrates how the program of the site has been repurposed for commercial and business use.



1945: Transit shed 21 and Immigration Annex.



2012: Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

Canadian Immigration Museum at Pier 21: Existing Conditions

In 1999, Lydon Lynch Architects was the design team responsible for adapting the historic watershed into a museum, then called Pier 21. Nearly a decade later, the museum's subject gained national attention and was identified as the Canadian Immigration Museum at Pier 21. Recognized for its national historic significance as the entry port into the country, the building was designated as a national heritage site in the following year.⁵³

The current space is inadequate as a national museum, lacking experiential qualities and an effective design approach to recount historical events. The building merely acts as a container for artefacts. The design does not take advantage of the historic site it occupies; rather the museum's programmatic spaces have been arbitrarily inserted into the historic site. The team responsible for the rehabilitation project in 1999 published a design brief that states "Pier 21 is located along the Halifax harbourfront and is situated within an existing building..."⁵⁴ It is evident the initial design had no intention to focus on the historic site, missing a great opportunity to ground the story to its location.

As the museum has been nationally recognized, the Pier 21 Society and federal government are in the process of upgrading the museum's facilities and exhibitions with a budget of \$25 million dollars over the next five years.⁵⁵

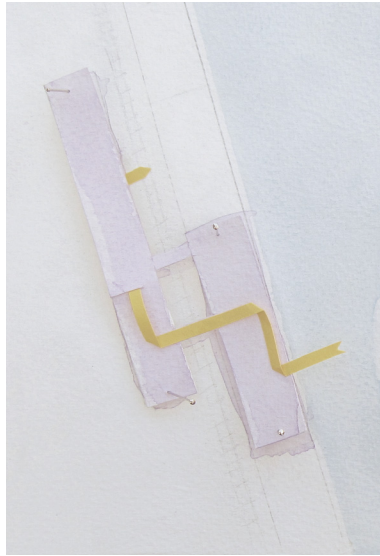


Exterior facade: photo comparison illustrates past and present conditions. From Canada's Historic Places, *Pier 21 National Historic Site of Canada*.

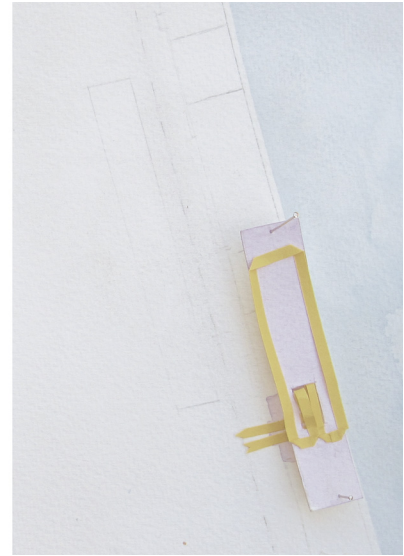
⁵³ Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, "About," last modified 2011, www.pier21.ca/about.

⁵⁴ Lydon Lynch Architects, "Work_Pier 21 Immigration Museum," last modified 2011, http://www.lydonlynch.ca/work/public#pier_21_immigration_museum.

⁵⁵ CBC News, "Halifax's Pier 21 designated national museum."

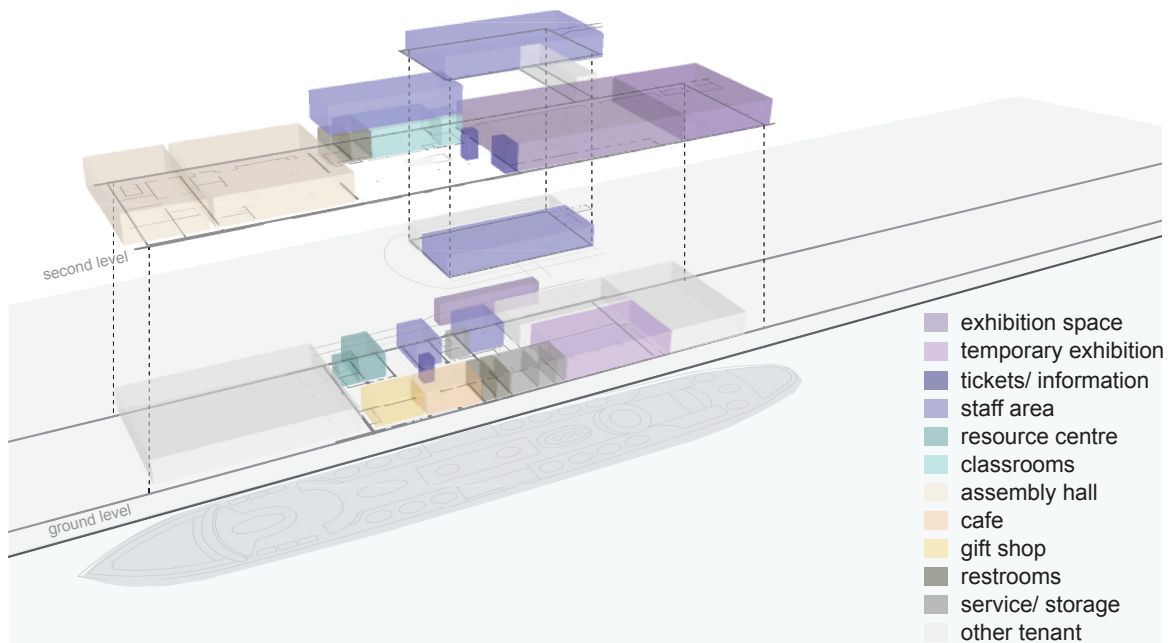


Immigration facility: 1928 - 1971



Museum: 1999 - current

Diagrams illustrate the change in procession over the years.



Existing museum program

Exhibition Hall

The current procession into the building and exhibition hall does not provide any indication of the immigration process that occurred on site. The exhibition space located along the second level provides a large collection of historic information, but lacks experiential qualities. Exhibition plaques create an island in the centre of the space with supporting artefacts around the periphery. Some of these exhibits are designed as interactive stations, in an attempt to engage museum visitors.

Pier 21 museum curators have carefully defined the major phases in the collective immigration process, and have organized exhibition plaques in this manner. The series of exhibits begin with the stories and places those have traveled from and the voyage they endured before their arrival in Canada. Plaques and objects are used to define these phases into three major exhibition spaces: Leaving, Voyage and Immigration. The large scale of the exhibition hall at Pier 21 is in need of interior partitions, more predominant than the existing plaques, in order to define and arrange space. Currently, museum visitors are able to meander between plaques and objects avoiding a particular route sequence. This lack of interior division causes the facts and stories to be lost in this rectangular warehouse space.



Interior photographs of museum's current entrance and exhibition hall, Halifax (2012)

Guided Tour

A guided tour of the exhibition space, provided by museum staff, provides a description of the immigration experience that is absent from the physical space. The stories being told are highly dependent on the staff's narrative ability, as each guide tells the story differently. This approach has been criticized as an audio guide, no matter how good it is, does not allow visitors to overcome the herding effect. As a result visitors lose the opportunity to read and experience the narrative at their own leisure. Simultaneously, an audio guide mutes all possible conversations and personal narratives that may have been overheard otherwise.⁵⁶

Pier 21 museum visitors are lead through the front half of the exhibition space to six locations where a different part of the immigration story is told. The arrangement of these nodes reveal no hierarchy nor any particular relevance to the events being discussed. The sixth location along the tour gathers visitors around a scale model illustrating the original layout of the immigration facilities. The detailed model provides a further understanding of how immigrants were processed through this space. The tour concludes with a movie titled *Oceans of Hope*, which provides six individual narratives of those who passed through Pier 21. The intentions behind the tour and of the model would be more affective for visitors if the physical space acted as the storytelling device.



Guided tour inside Pier 21's exhibition hall, Halifax (2012)

⁵⁶ Robert Storr, "Show and Tell," in *What makes a great exhibition?*, ed. Paula Marincola (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibition Initiative, 2006), 24.



Stamp stations along the self-guided tour, inside Pier 21's exhibition hall, Halifax (2012)

Self-Guided Tour

Museum visitors can purchase a “passport” at the ticket counter, used as a pamphlet to inform a self-guided tour. With the passport in hand, visitors are required to move through the exhibition space searching for the nine primary exhibition titles. Once located, visitors can stamp their passport at each exhibit and read the information provided. This creative attempt to provide a structured narrative is necessary because the physical arrangement of space lacks any indication of order or procession.

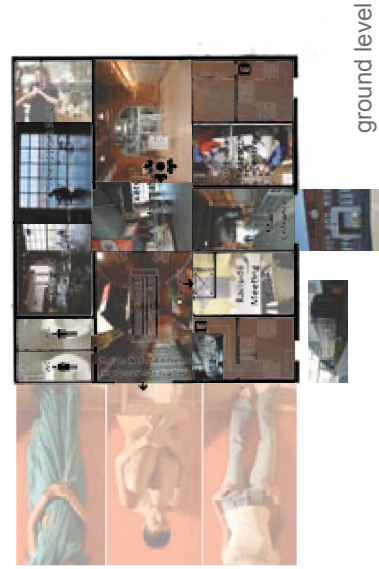
Resource Centre

The initial conception of Pier 21 was intended to be an interpretive centre used to emphasize the importance of immigration in Canadian society. Today, the small but thriving resource centre, located on the ground floor of the museum, is the realization of this intention for Pier 21 founders. The resource centre is an excellent interactive facility, however, the small space does not allow for a vibrant research environment. The facility holds a collection of books, four computer desks, and offices for museum staff.

The physical space of Pier 21 is nothing more than a rectangular watershed, which is why the current museum lacks any phenomenological experience: the space does little on its own to tell the story of the historic events that took place on site. It is the motion of bodies that passed through this space that created a dynamic transportation hub. The original layout of the building and the procession through this space is what tells a unique story of Canadian history. The physical place documents an important part of Canadian history and immigration. For this reason, the following work explores how to narrate this place through framing devices.



second level



ground level

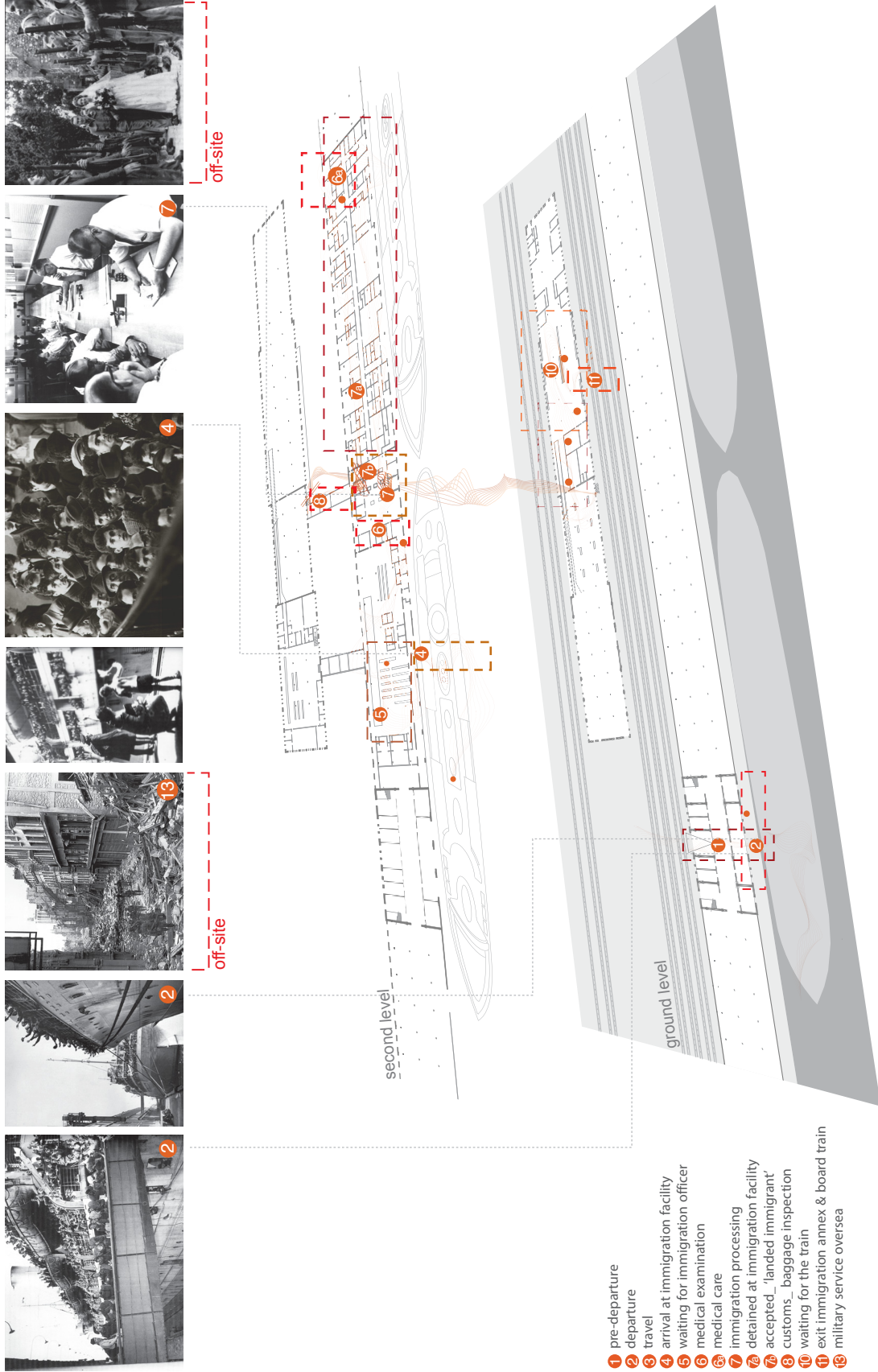
Existing museum: the collage documents existing spaces and exhibits found at Pier 21.

CHAPTER 3: DEFINING A NARRATIVE

Narrative Mapping

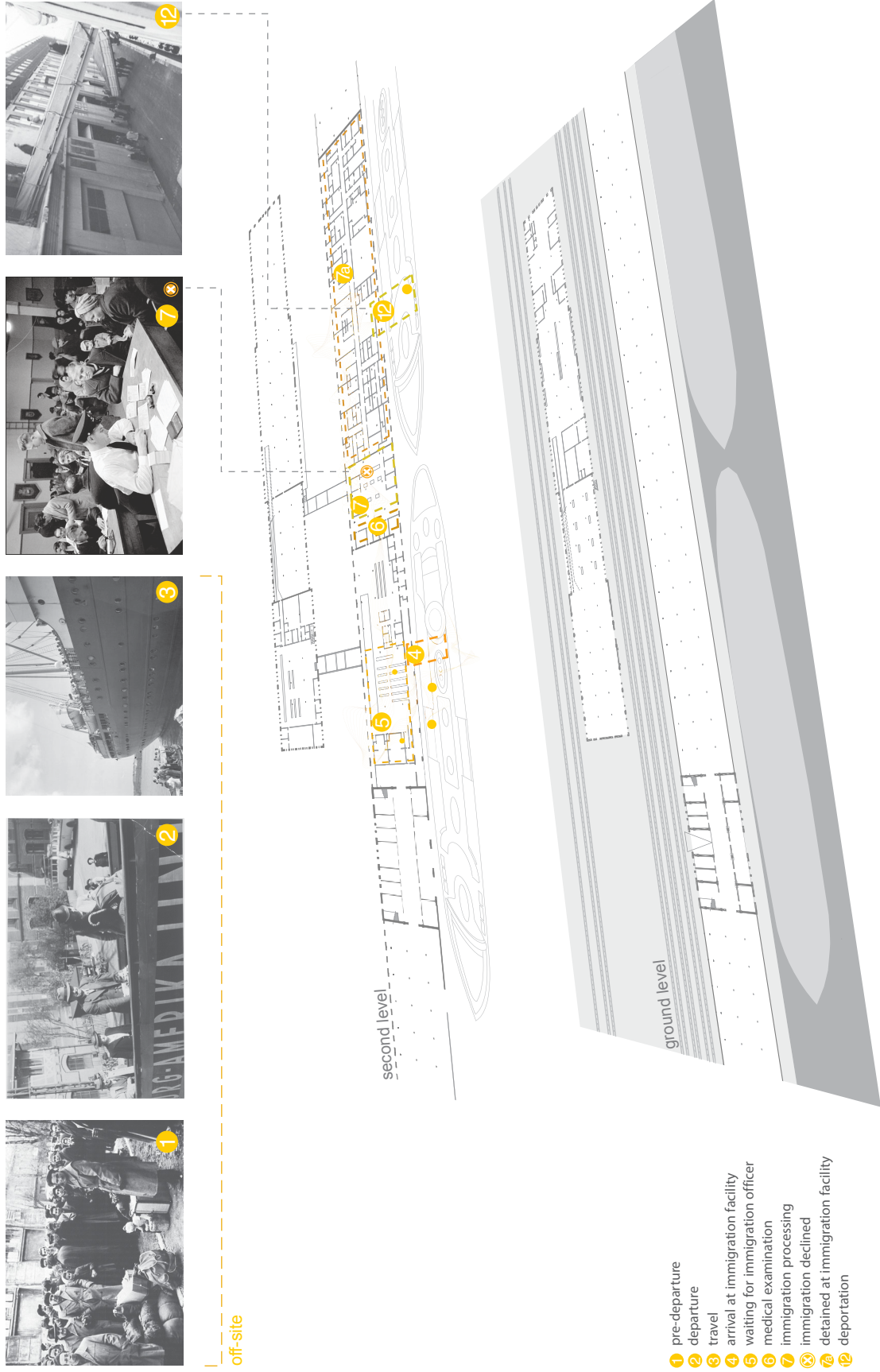
To articulate the story of Canadian immigration, one must first compile and define the stories to be told.⁵⁷ A series of individual narratives are mapped over the original floor plans to understand and illustrate how the building functioned as an immigration facility. The process of mapping defines a series of nodes where particular events occurred throughout the facility. Gestural lines are drawn to connect and order these nodes. The connection illustrates more than the circulation through the space, as movement from one node to the next may have been over a few hours or several days. Rather, the gestural lines suggest movement, speed and emotion of the individual. Through mapping, several events began recurring in each individual narrative. The recurrence suggests the importance and hierarchy of the event to the overall experience of this place. These recurring events provide a collective narrative of the immigration process. To illustrate the collective narrative the individual stories were layered over one another. From this layering, it became clear as to what story to tell where.

⁵⁷ Refer to Appendix: Individual Narratives, 76-79.

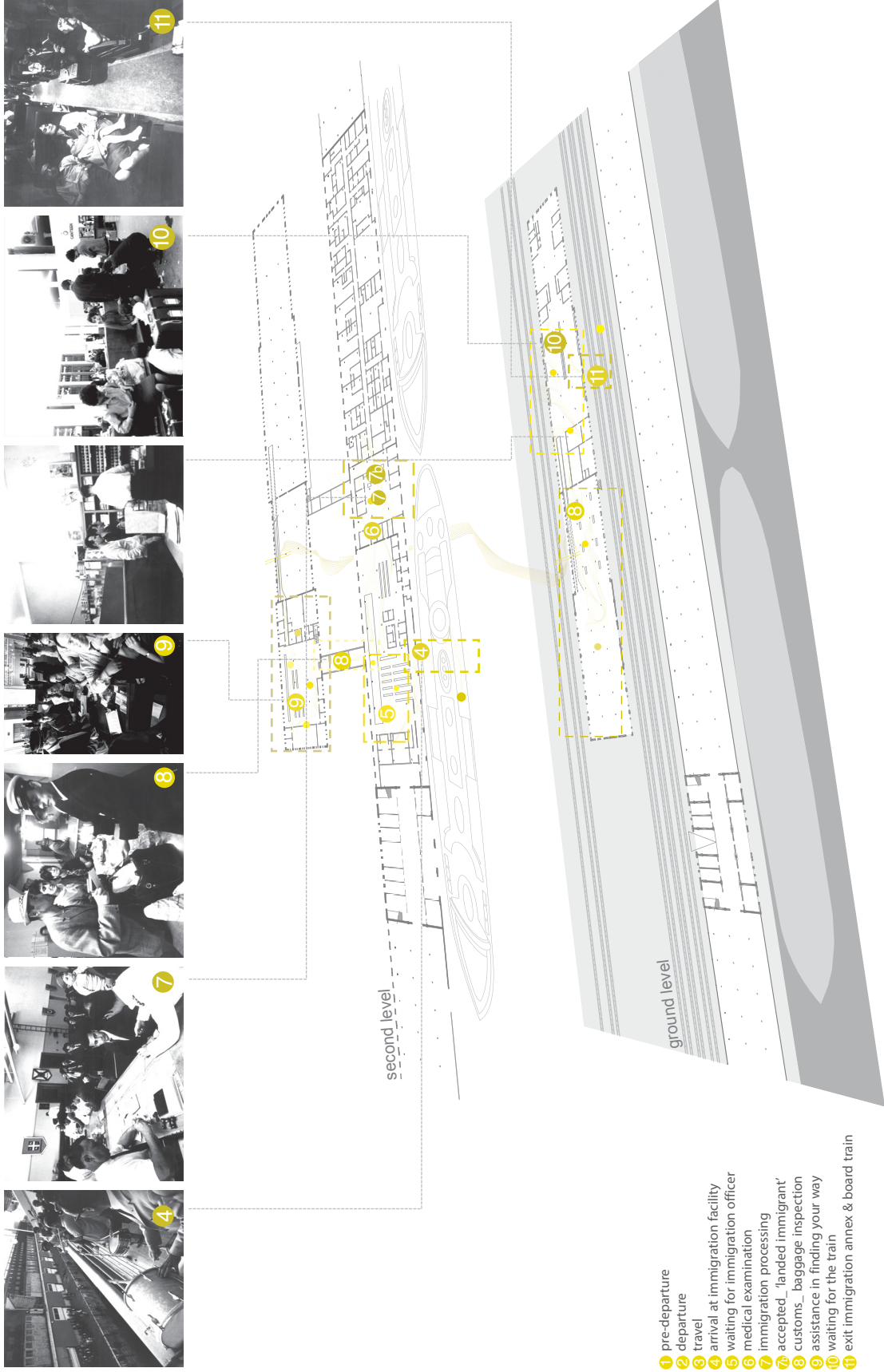


- 1 pre-departure
- 2 departure
- 3 travel
- 4 arrival at immigration facility
- 5 waiting for immigration officer
- 6 medical examination
- 7 immigration processing
- 8 detained at immigration facility
- 9 accepted 'landed immigrant'
- 10 customs_ baggage inspection
- 11 waiting for the train
- 12 exit immigration annex & board train
- 13 military service oversea

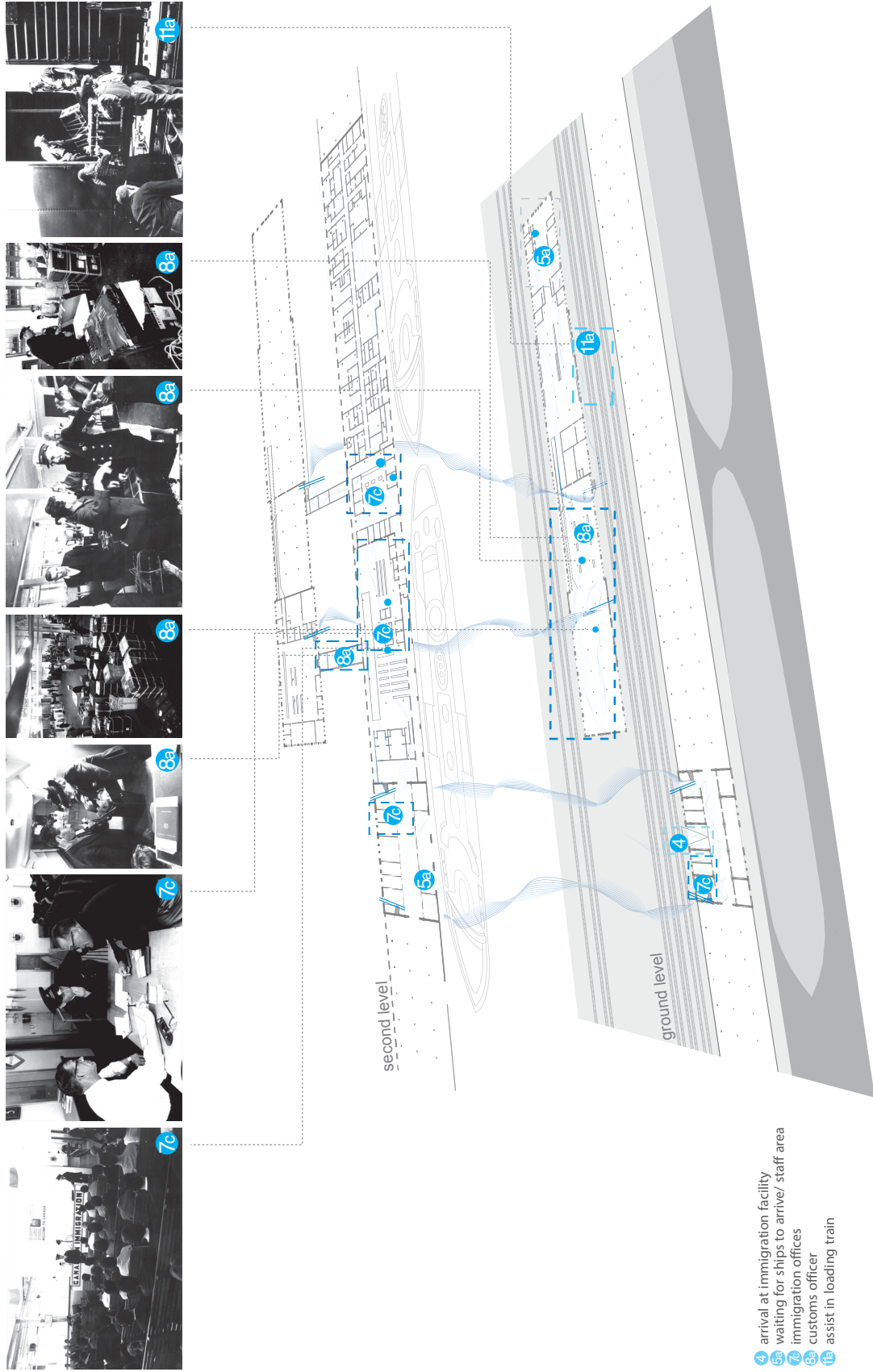
Mapping the narrative: WW II Veteran



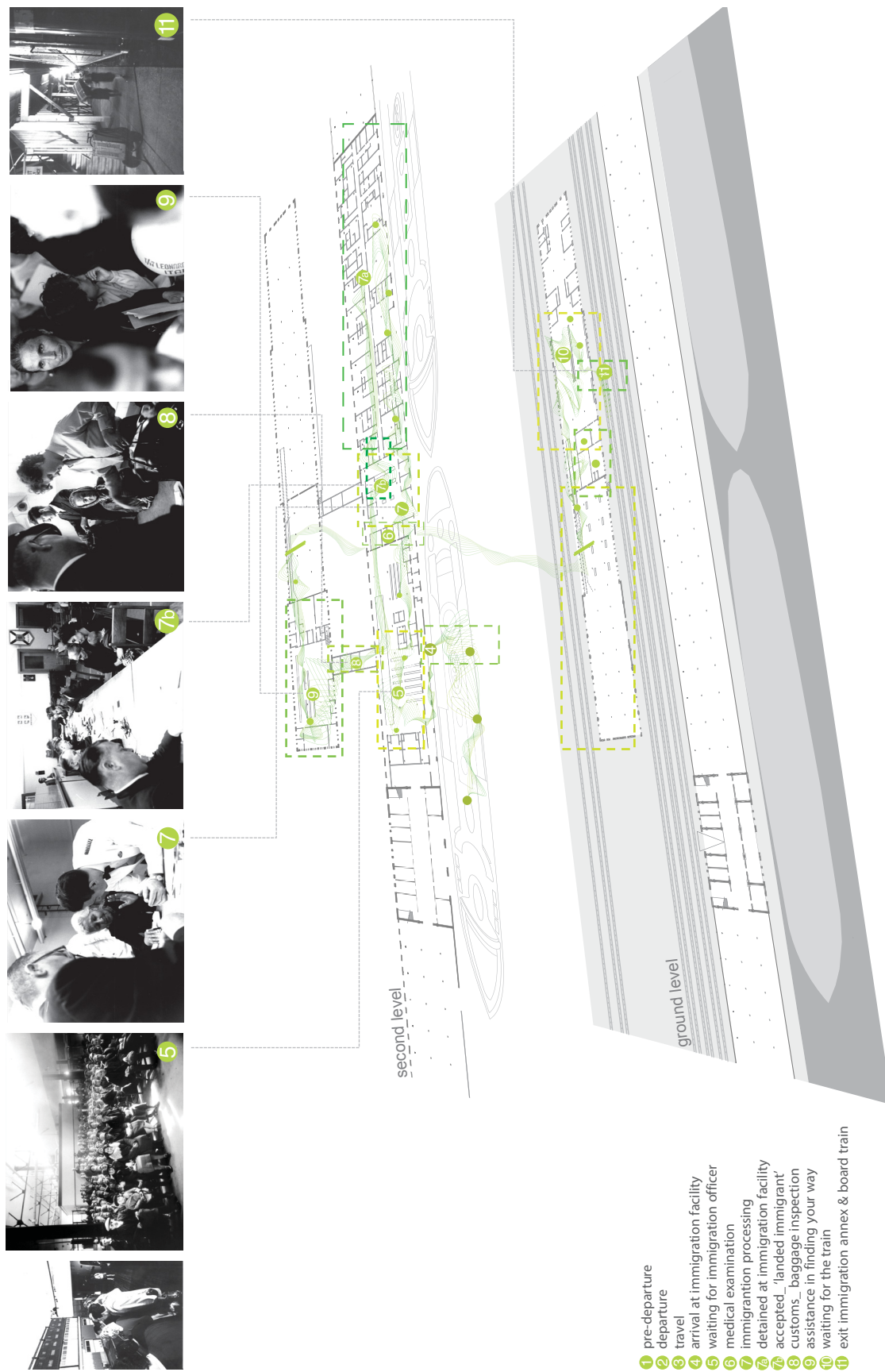
Mapping the narrative: Deportee



Mapping the narrative: British Immigrant

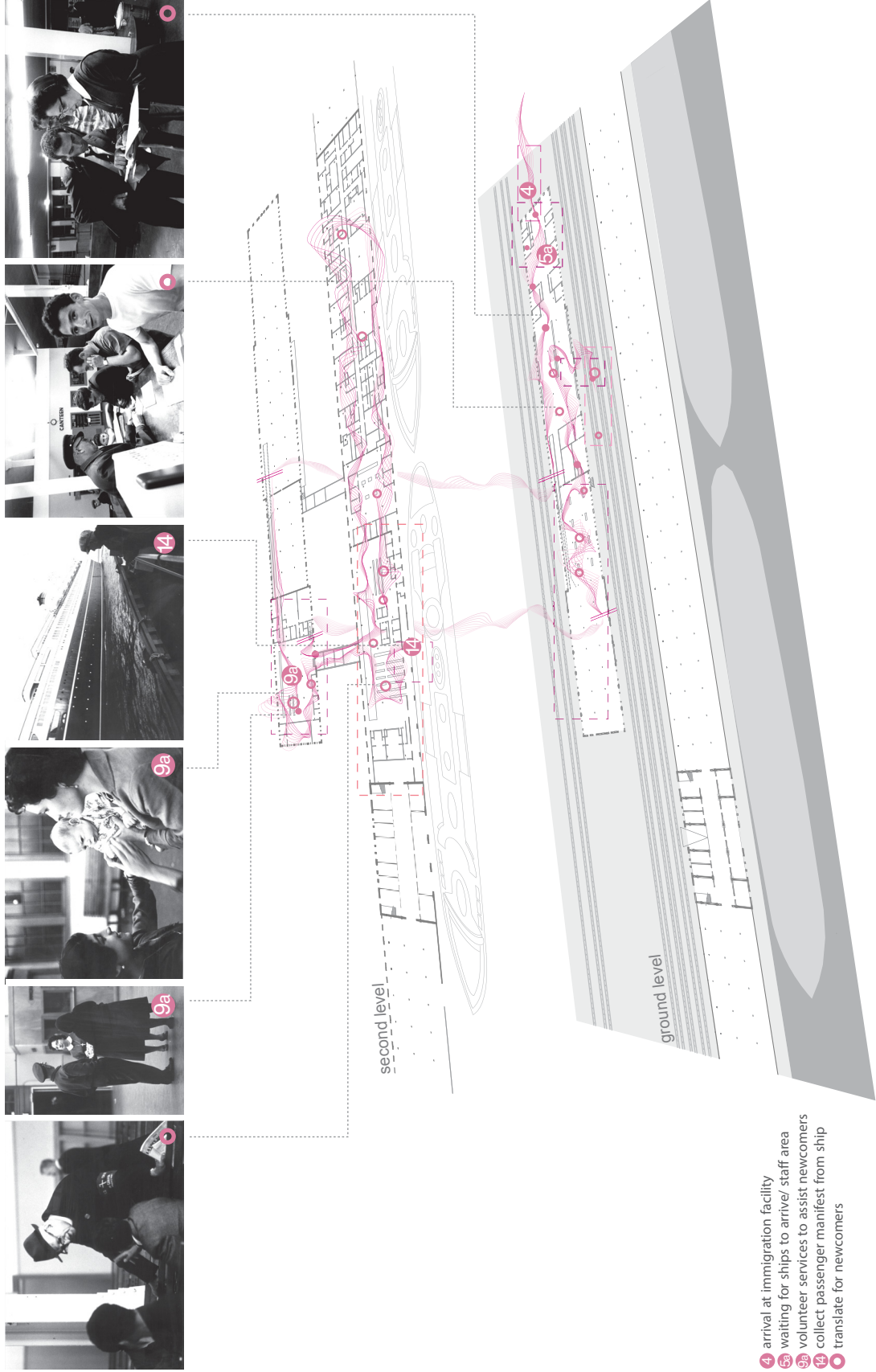


Mapping the narrative: Immigration Officer



- 1 pre-departure departure
- 2 travel
- 3 arrival at immigration facility
- 4 waiting for immigration officer
- 5 medical examination
- 6 immigration processing
- 7 detained at immigration facility
- 7a accepted, 'landed immigrant'
- 7b customs_baggage inspection
- 8 assistance in finding your way
- 9 waiting for the train
- 10 exit immigration annex & board train

Mapping the narrative: Polish Refugee

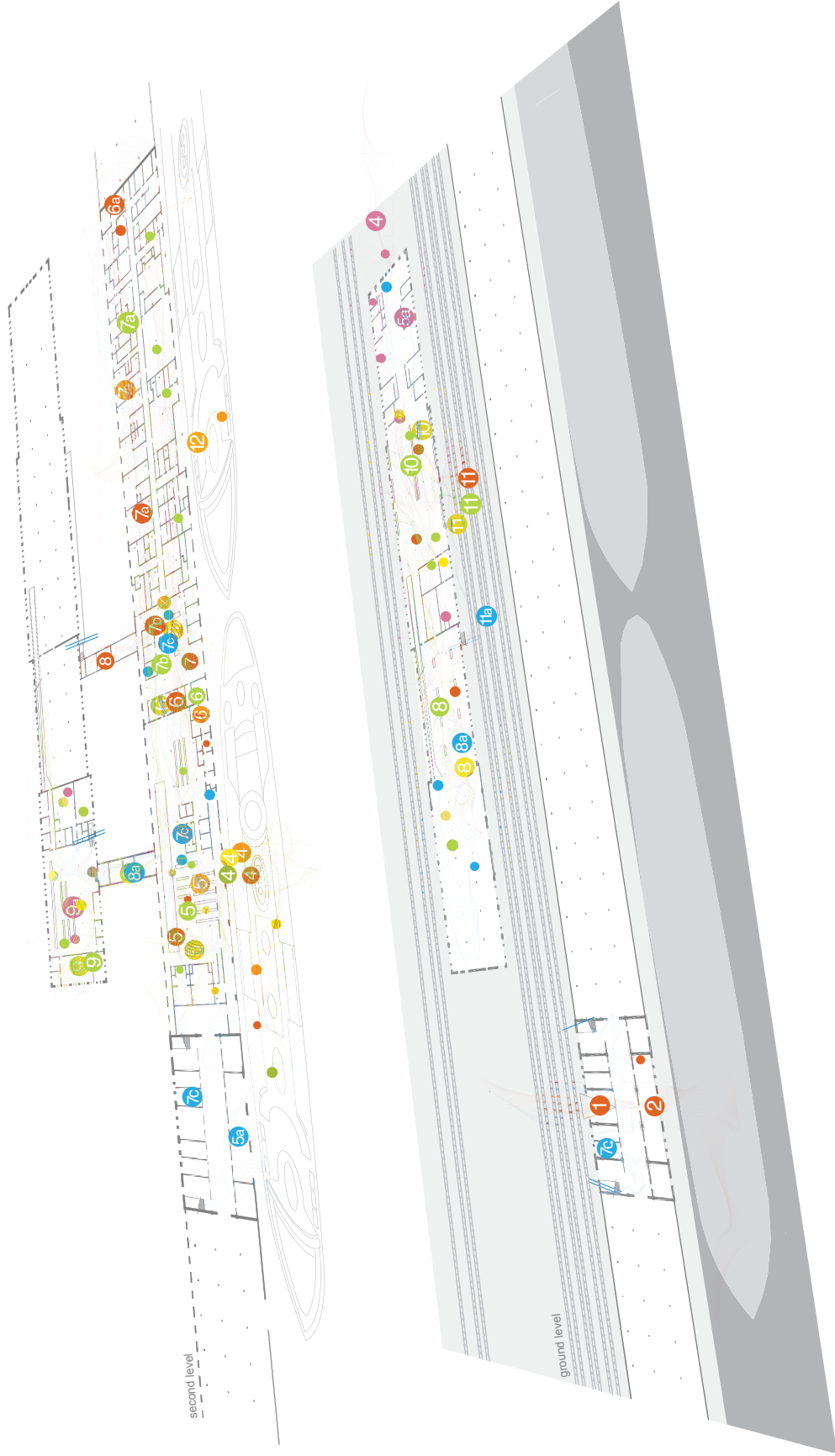


- 4 arrival at immigration facility
- 5a waiting for ships to arrive/ staff area
- 9a volunteer services to assist newcomers
- 14 collect passenger manifest from ship
- 14 translate for newcomers

Mapping the narrative: Sisters of Service

WWII Veteran	British Immigrant	Polish Refugee	Deportee	Immigration Officer	Sisters of Service	
1	1	1	1		1	pre-departure
2	2	2	2		2	departure
3	3	3	3			travel
					4a	arrival in Halifax via train
4	4	4	4	4	4	arrival at immigration facility
5	5	5	5			waiting for immigration officer
				5a	5a	waiting for ships to arrive/ staff area
6	6	6	6			medical examination
6a						medical care
7	7	7	7			immigration processing
						immigration declined
7a		7a	7a			detained at immigration facility
7b	7b	7b				accepted_ 'landed immigrant'
				7c		immigration offices
8	8	8				customs_ baggage inspection
				8a		customs officer
	9	9				assistance in finding your way
					9a	volunteer services to assist newcomers
10	10	10				waiting for the train
11	11	11				exit immigration annex and board train
				11a		assist in loading train
			12			deportation
13						military service oversea
					14	collect passenger manifest from ship
					○	translate for newcomers

Mapping the narrative: legend (highlights common recurring events)



Mapping the narrative: collective narrative

Narrative Storyboard

Each event or action (a singular moment of a ‘program’) can be denoted by a photograph, in an attempt to get closer to an objectivity (even if never achieved) often missing from architectural programs.⁵⁸

The major events illustrated in the storyboard define the collective memory of those who passed through Pier 21: departure, travel, arrival, waiting, immigration process (deported, detained, accepted), customs, assistance, exiting and travelling on.

The storyboard suggests the order of exhibition spaces and intended qualities of that space. The story serves as the guiding principle for the architectural program and its sequence, with each space articulating part of the narrative.⁵⁹

This method of translating frames has been explored through Bernard Tschumi’s architectural work – specifically, his urban project La Villette in Paris, which uses a series of frames, each intended to define a garden positioned in the landscape.⁶⁰ Tschumi suggests that through this process each frame “can be turned into a single piece of work.”⁶¹

The series of events in the storyboard are mapped out over the existing building, defining the primary axis and sequence route of museum visitors. This narrative axis becomes the framework for the interior organization that will define the exhibition spaces and break down the large rectangular volume of the historic watershed.

The Storyboard

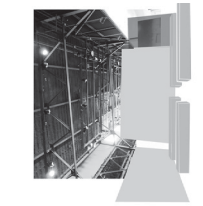
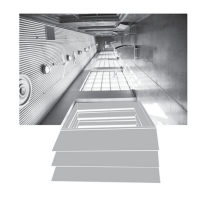
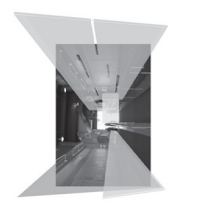
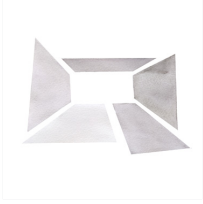
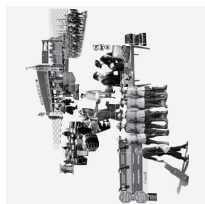
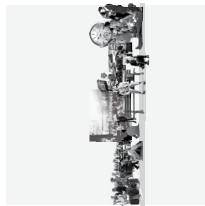
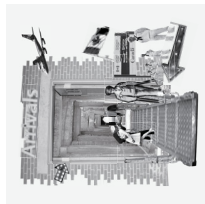
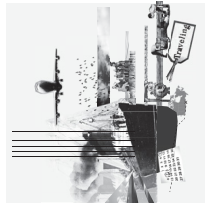
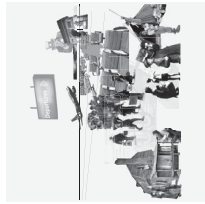
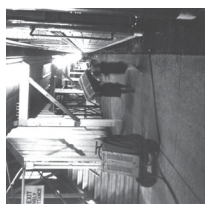
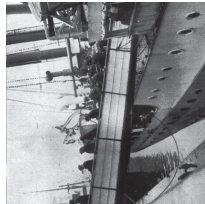
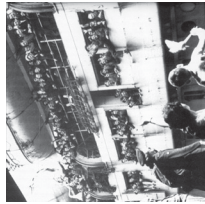
Each event is illustrated with a historic image, from the Pier 21 Image Collection. Each event is further analyzed through a collage series. The collage series deconstructs each event to find the key concept to articulate. The concepts and initial ideas of each events are again translated into a series of paintings. The forms explored in these paintings are then superimposed on photographs of the existing building. This allows for a further understanding of the particular location of each intervention.

⁵⁸ Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 23.

⁵⁹ Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative*, 131.

⁶⁰ Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2*, 70.

⁶¹ Ibid.



departure

travel

arrival

waiting

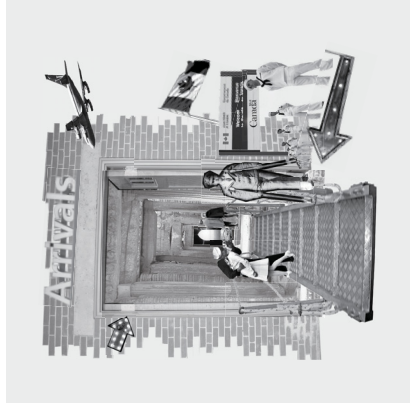
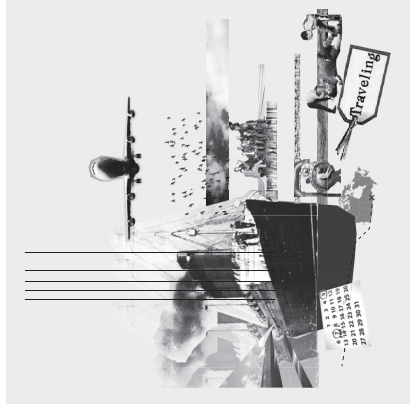
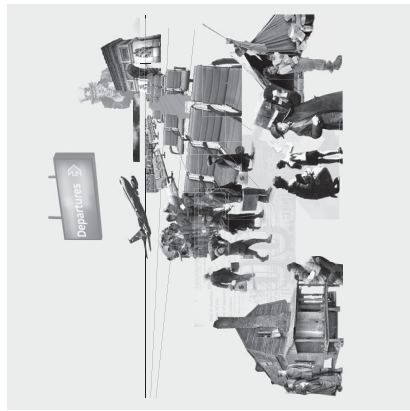
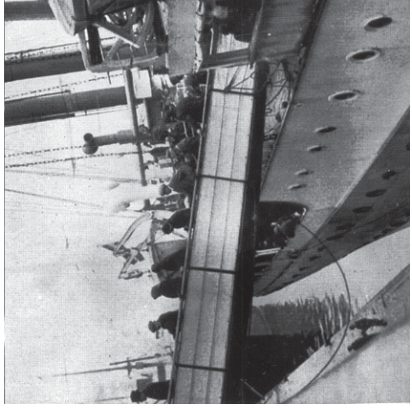
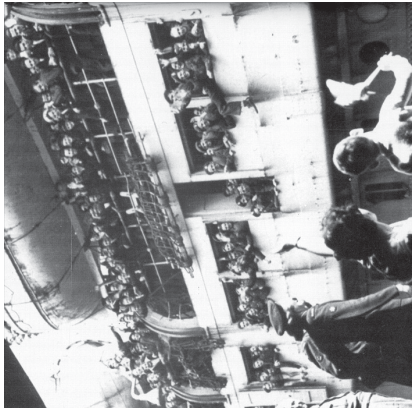
immigration process

customs

assistance

exiting and travelling on

The storyboard: thumbnails denote the storyboard series. (Top to bottom: historic photographs, collage, painting, photo collage.)



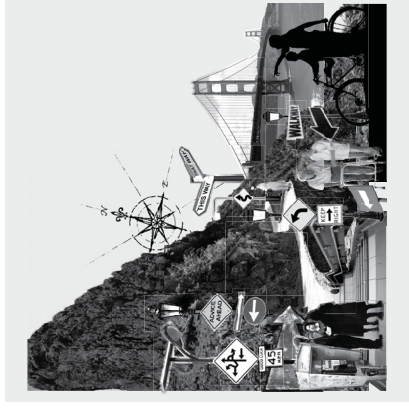
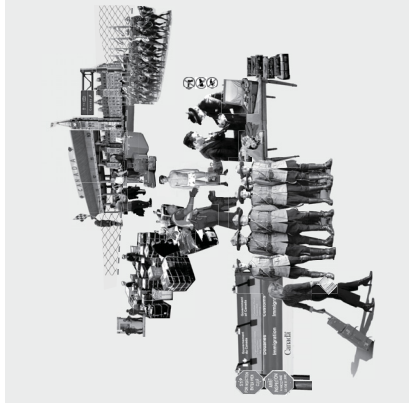
departure

travel

arrival

waiting

The storyboard: historic photograph and collage



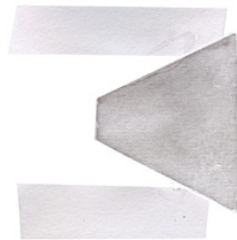
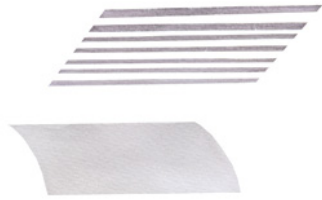
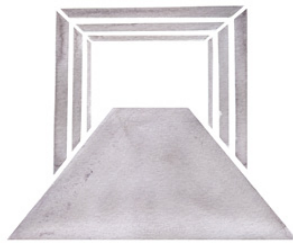
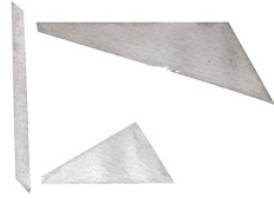
immigration process

customs

assistance

exiting and travelling on

The storyboard: historic photograph and collage



CHAPTER 4: DESIGN: NARRATING A MUSEUM

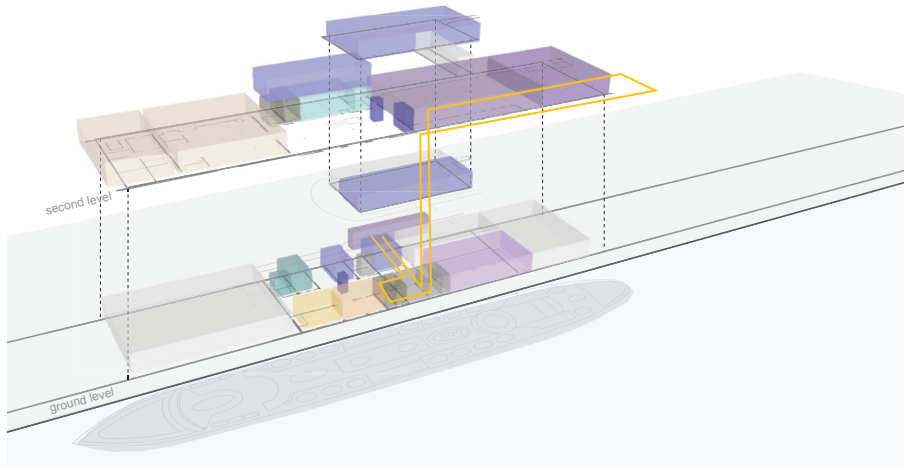
The purpose of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 is to explore the theme of immigration to Canada in order to enhance public understanding of the experiences of immigrants as they arrived in Canada, of the vital role immigration has played in the building of Canada and of the contributions of immigrants to Canada's culture, economy and way of life.⁶²

Proposed Interventions

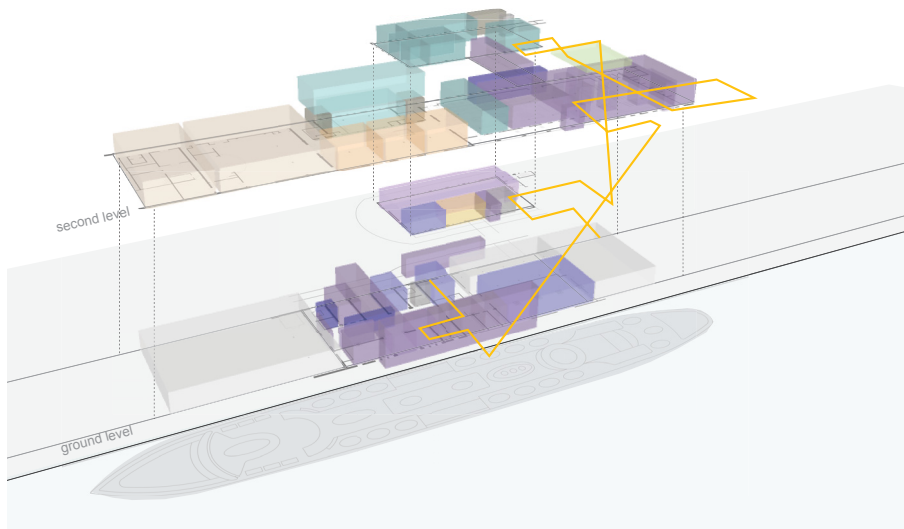
This thesis explores how narratives can be used in the design of a history museum, to frame historical events and experiences into spatial configurations. Through the process of defining a collective narrative, a series of historical events have been identified and positioned throughout the building. These events set the framework for each proposed intervention. These interventions communicate to visitors the place the historic event occurred. The interventions act as exhibition space, strung throughout the building in sequence to the narrative being told. This method of design rehabilitation inserts a series of interventions throughout the building. Exhibition space is removed from the typical rectangular gallery and inserted in-between the programmatic elements of the museum. Here the museum no longer becomes a building with exhibition space, rather the building itself becomes the exhibit.

Visitors move through the site in a similar order immigrants did historically. Through mimesis, visitors are able to put themselves in the "footsteps" of a newcomer and become participatory in the process of narrating this place.

⁶² Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, "About."



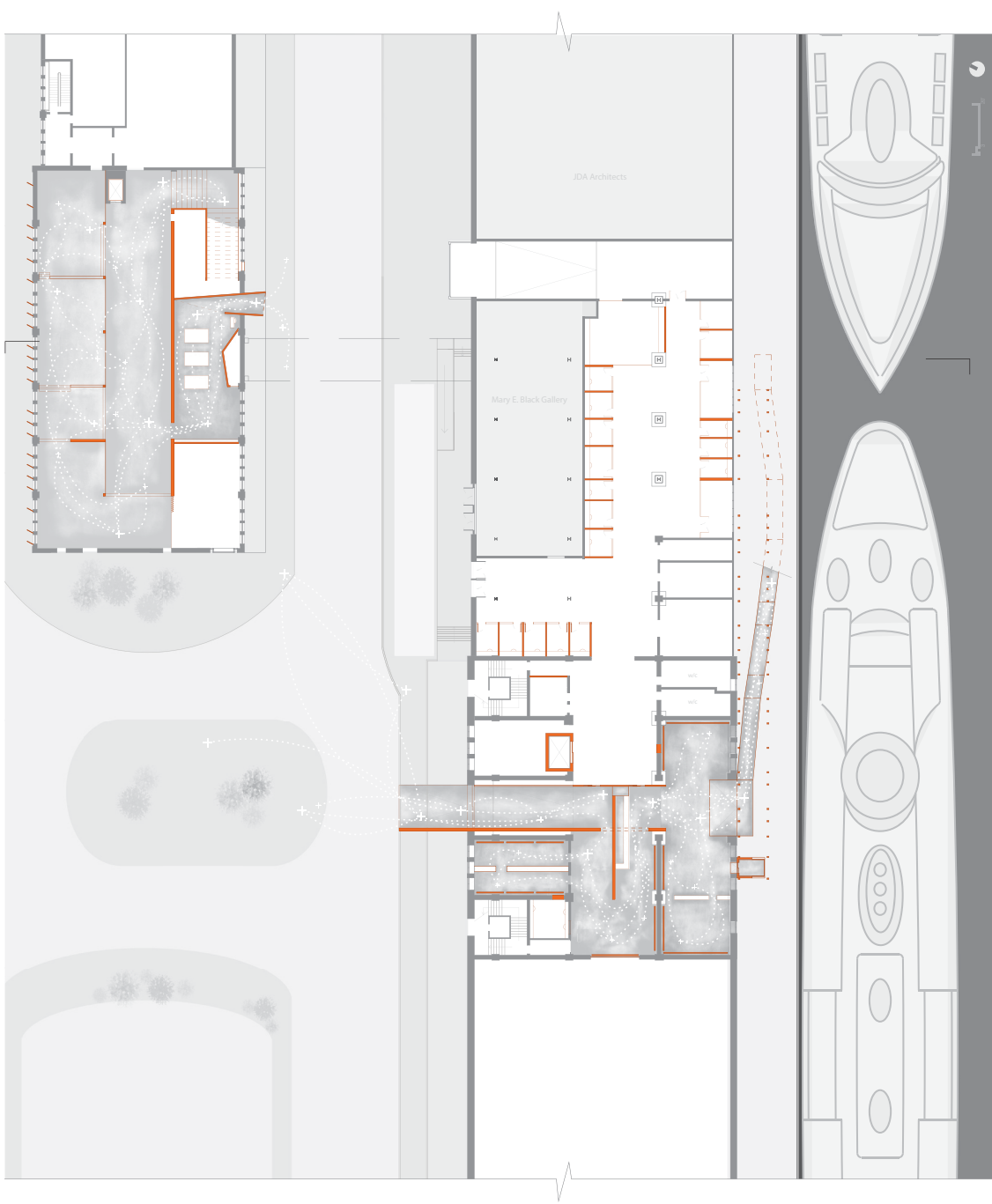
Existing program



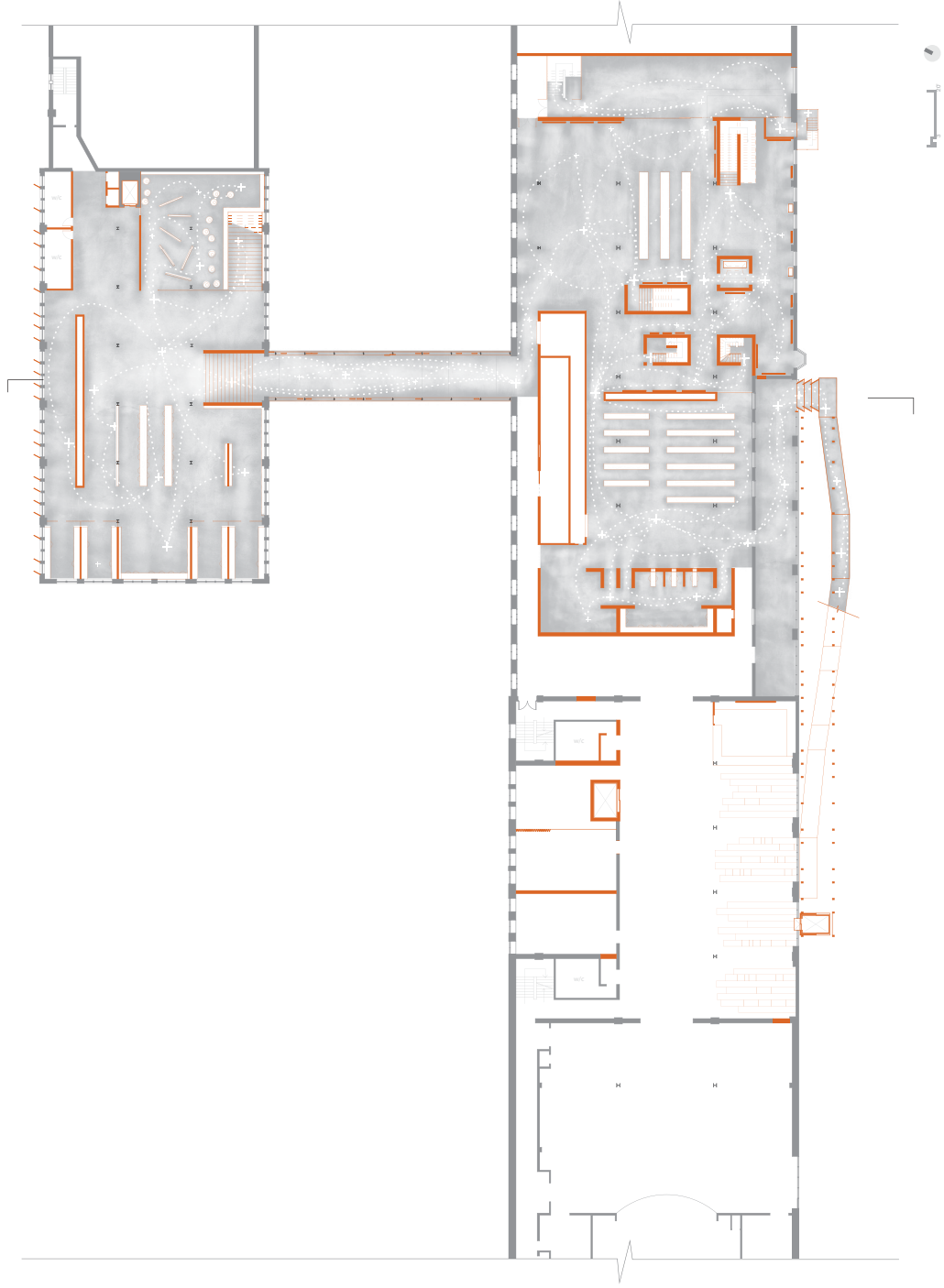
Proposed program

- exhibition space
- temporary exhibition
- roof terrace
- tickets/ information
- staff area
- resource centre
- classrooms
- assembly hall
- cafe
- gift shop
- restrooms
- service/ storage
- other tenant

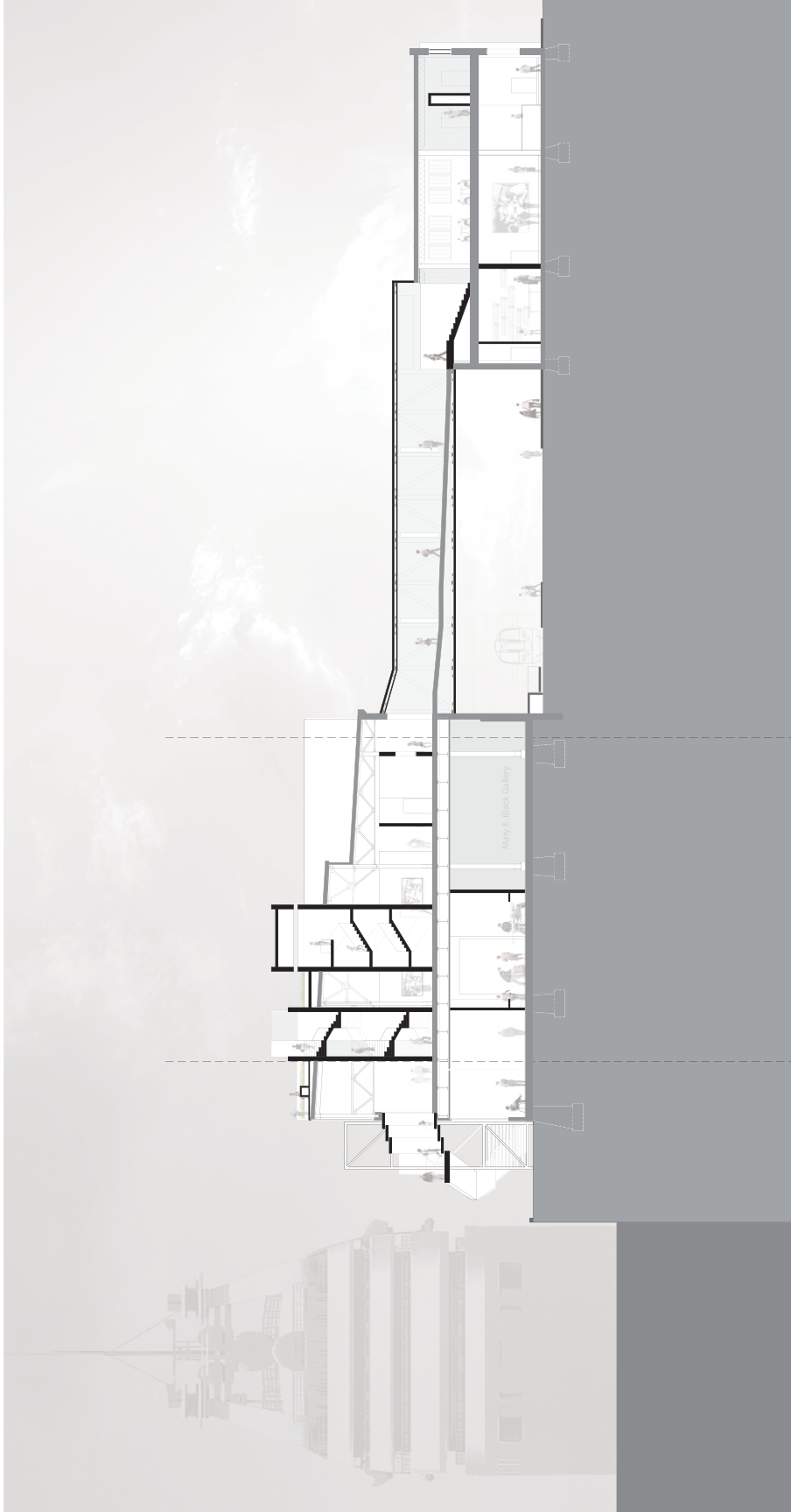
Museum program diagram: comparing existing program with proposed program. The proposed program moves exhibition spaces from the rectangular gallery and inserts exhibits throughout the building.



Proposed floor plan (ground level): highlighting interventions (orange) and museum visitor's route.



Proposed floor plan (second level): highlighting interventions (orange) and museum visitor's route.



Section

Framing Narrative Events

The following interventions frame the location of each historic event within the immigration facility. These interventions are not intended to be literal, mimicking what the space was like historically. Rather, these interventions are derived from the events, actions and movements that occurred on site historically. The design of each intervention is exaggerated in form, articulating the notion of the event back to museum visitors.

Departure

Historically

A large opening along the central bay allowed people, cars and cargo to move in and out of the watershed with ease. Military personnel moved through the watershed and onto military ships departing for sea.

Intervention

Visitors enter the museum off of Marginal Road. The architectural intervention inserts a long horizontal plane through the entrance corridor, guiding visitors into the museum lobby. The extension of this plane beyond the building's façade intends to extend the threshold, removing the distinction between in and out. Similar to the opening of a garage; a large opening allows users' eyes to enter into the space before their body has moved through the door frame.

Once visitors approach the long horizontal plane there is an initial feeling of entering or making contact with the building. Visitors are guided along the plane into the lobby. A series of slits cut the plane horizontally revealing the original brick wall behind. By framing the brick wall through a series of openings the building is introduced to visitors as an archive of the immigration story. The building is initially exhibited as an object like an artefact in a display case.

A perpendicular plane intersects the entrance axis, interrupting the initial vector movement. An opening along this plane allows visitors to see into the next space and beyond to the harbour. A reveal in the ground surface refrains visitors from moving along this visual axis. The intersection of planes forces visitors to pause and redirect their movement around the

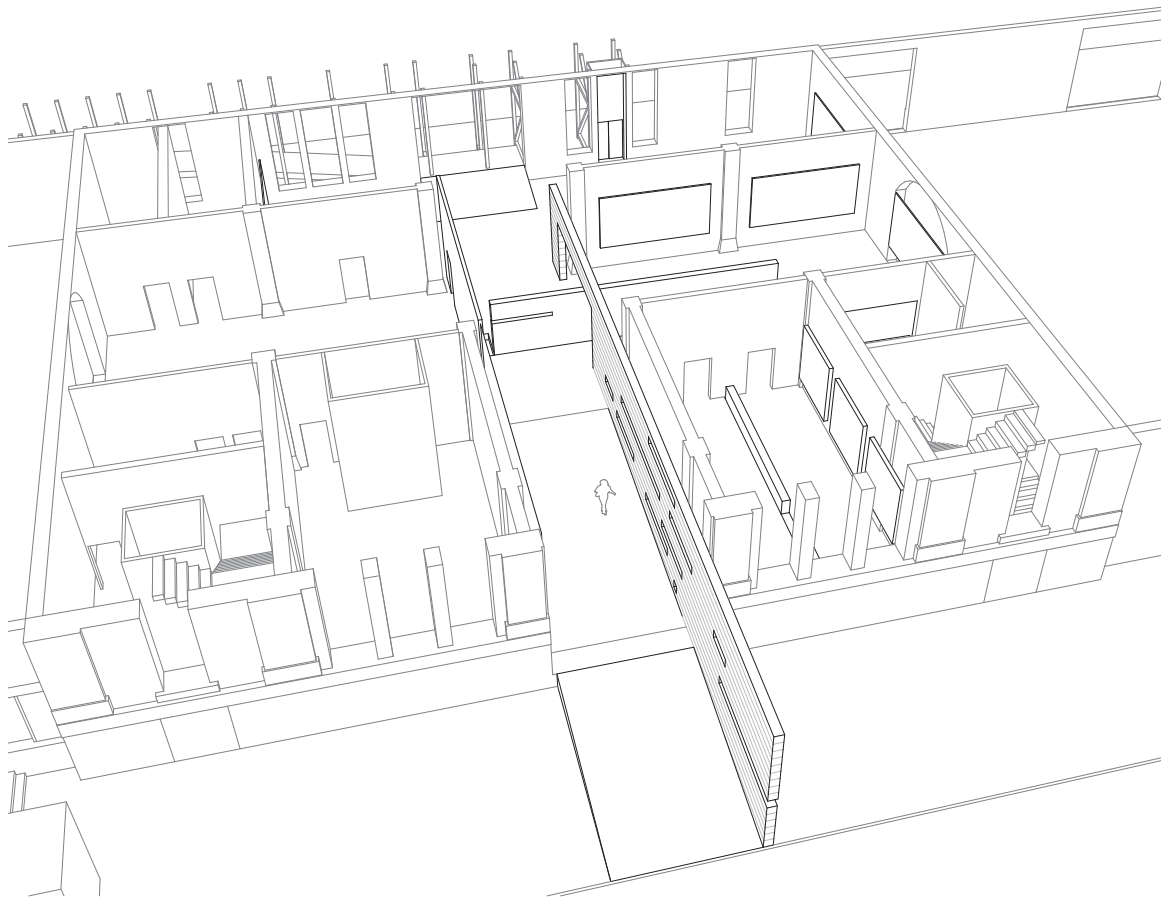
secondary plane.

A secondary plane sits parallel to an existing brick wall, previously providing interior division between the large corridor and customs offices. The customs offices have been reconfigured into exhibition space. A short plinth is inserted along the centre of this space, articulating where a wall previously existed. The plinth divides the large space and provides a place to curate. After exploring the customs offices, visitors move along the opposite side of the secondary plane to the ticket counter.

Once tickets are purchased, visitors move through an adjacent exhibition space. The “Departure Gallery” is curated with photographs of military personal who departed from this location. A wide ramp intersects the exhibition space and extends out of an opening in the east elevation towards the harbour.



Storyboard event: departure



Line drawing of intervention: departure

Travel

Historically

Newcomers traveled the Atlantic Ocean for five to twelve days to arrive at Pier 21. Some traveled in the lower levels of the ship, while others sat on the top deck exposed to sounds of the ocean below.

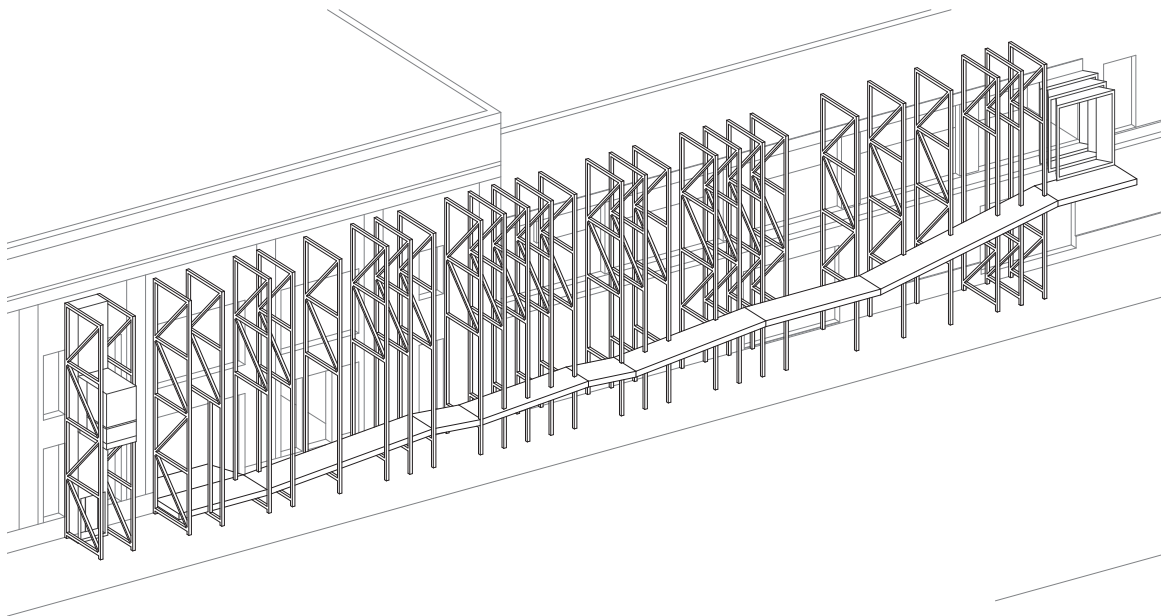
Intervention

A series of twenty-eight steel frames, 40 feet tall, line the east elevation of the historic watershed. The frames are anchored to the concrete landing below, situated perpendicular to the existing building and the harbour edge. A long ramp stretches out of the “Departure Gallery” intersecting the frames. The 140-foot long ramp is broken into a series of linear segments following the tangents of a curve. A straight ramp running parallel to the building would open views from the starting position directly to the end of the ramp, leaving no anticipation of the journey ahead. Rather, this intervention uses a series of linear segments to create a nonlinear path. The geometry of the ramp obscures endless sightlines of the path ahead. Instead, views are directed between the steel frames, out to the harbour. The frames act as a point of reference along visitors’ procession. The frames are positioned in a series of intervals to amplify the speed of motion. Longer intervals simulate a lower speed. Where as, frames positioned close together suggest a faster speed with shorter, more frequent intervals. The change in pace along the ramp mimics the rhythm and motion of a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.

The structure is not fully enclosed exposing visitors to the elements and sounds of the ocean below. Extending the new structure from the existing creates a viewing platform of the historic place.



Storyboard event: travel



Line drawing of intervention: travel

Arrival

Historically

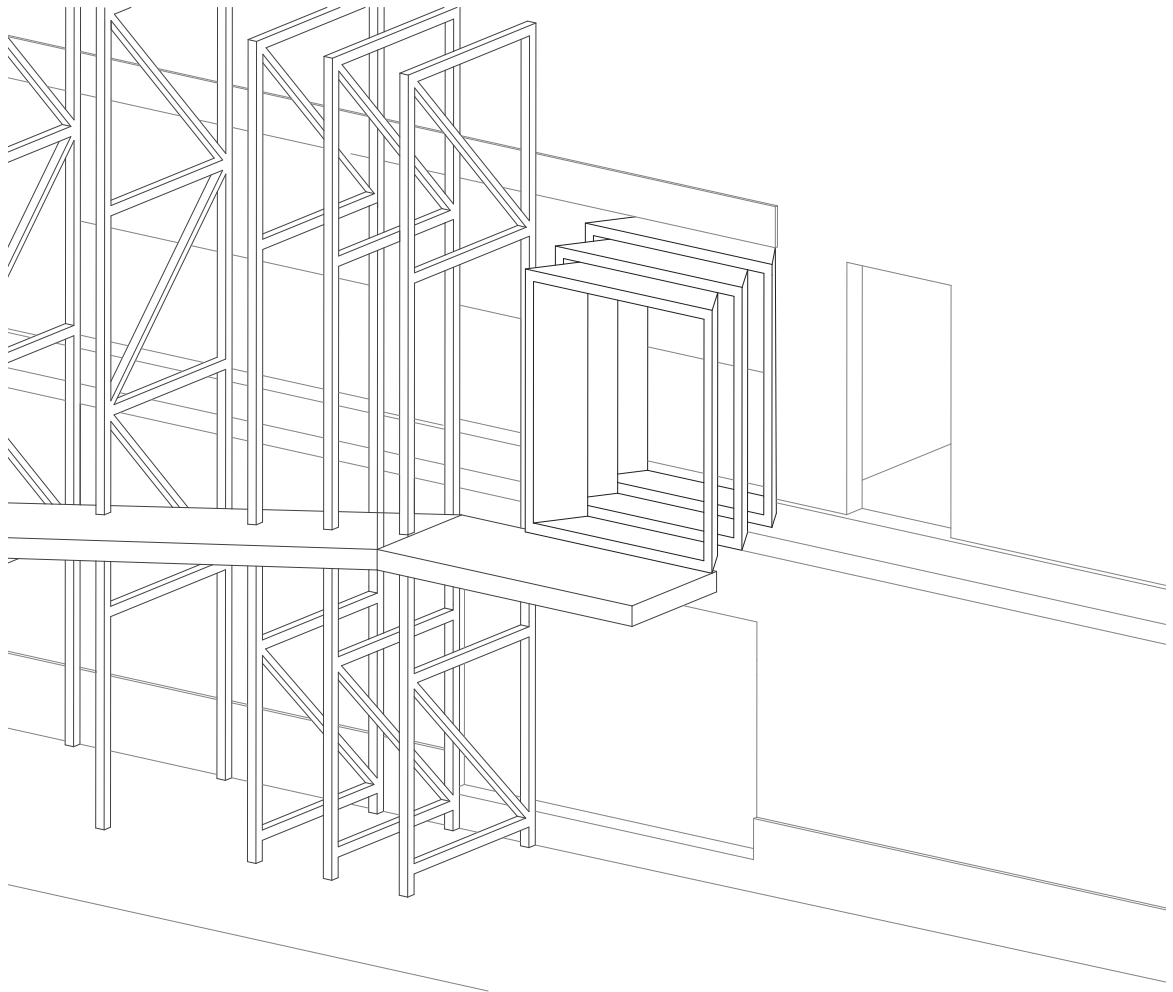
Once the voyage was complete, ships docked along side the immigration shed. Newcomers would move from the ship over a suspended gangway onto the arrival deck, located on the second level.

Intervention

The path turns, guiding visitors to re-enter the building through a series of frames, arriving at the second level through an extended threshold. Stepped up, the bottom horizontal plane of the frame creates stair treads, moving visitors through the space. The orientation of the vertical panels are angled at sixty degrees, obscuring the view to the north, simultaneously directing visitors to move forward. It is not until visitors turn their head that a view to the harbour is again revealed. Once inside, visitors move along the arrival corridor to the waiting lobby.



Storyboard event: arrival



Line drawing of intervention: arrival

Waiting

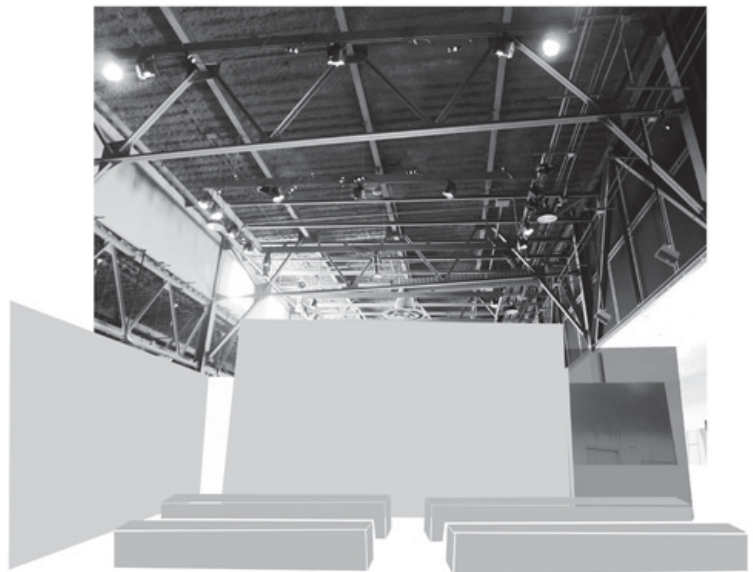
Historically

An immigration officer stood in front of a long desk, facing groups of newcomers seated in benches row after row. Newcomers sat closely together anticipating their turn to meet with an officer. Once their names were called, they would move from the waiting area, past the desk, to immigration offices and medical examination rooms in the adjacent space.

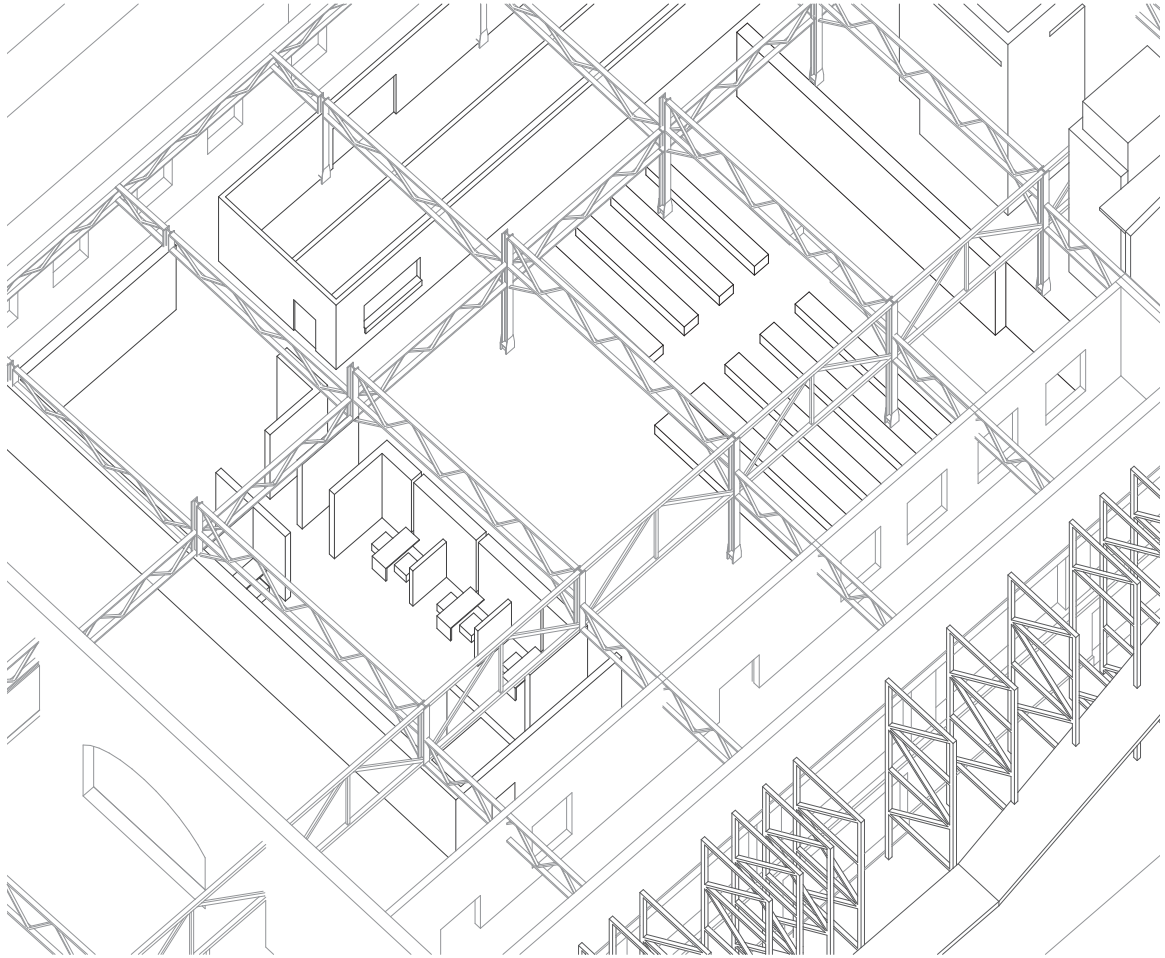
Intervention

A long totemic wall creates a physical boundary between the waiting lobby and the permanent exhibition space. The design mimics the historic waiting area with a series of benches and exhibition plinths along the front side of the dividing wall. Visitors linger and wait in this designated area before engaging with adjacent museum programs.

While in the waiting lobby, visitors are able to get a glimpse into the exhibition space through the adjoining glazed wall, looking through to the “immigration towers.” As visitors pause in the waiting lobby a visual cue with lack of physical access creates a sense of anticipation to move beyond the physical boundary, into the adjacent space.



Storyboard event: waiting



Line drawing of intervention: waiting

Immigration

Historically

The second level of the immigration shed was arranged as a matrix of offices, desks and medical examination rooms. The interior space was organized with a series of boundaries and zones in order to process and detain newcomers in the large facility.

Officers sorted through immigration documents to determine newcomers' fate. Those who met all the requirements received a stamp with the seal of approval, "Landed Immigrant." While others were detained on-site for days or months at a time, waiting for their documents to be approved. Other newcomers were examined and refused entry into the country due to mental illness or disease. Those not accepted would be deported from Pier 21, sent on a ship back to the old country. During harder times ships were denied docking rights and forced to leave the Halifax harbour.

Intervention

Five "immigration towers" are positioned within the exhibition space, similarly to the location of immigration offices and examination rooms. Each tower stretches the height of the space, cutting through the roof plane above. Depending on the order and exploration of the individual visitor, they will encounter each tower with an unmarked opening allowing entry into the space.

Detain

The first tower carries visitors up three flights of stairs to a large landing. The tall space is lined with a narrow opening positioned nine feet above the landing. The opening allows daylight to penetrate the space, but denies visitors a view of the harbour. Detained in this enclosed space, visitors are forced to retract their steps, down the stairs and back to the exhibition hall.

Landed

The following tower carries visitors along a winding staircase that penetrates the roof plane. The tower is capped with a glass structure allowing daylight to flood the staircase below. An opening in the glass structure grants access to the roof terrace. The terrace

provides an open space with expansive views of the harbour. A second tower positioned west of the terrace provides an exit, carrying visitors down to the exhibition space. These two towers provide access to the roof terrace and can be experience in either order, as an entrance or an exit.

Deported

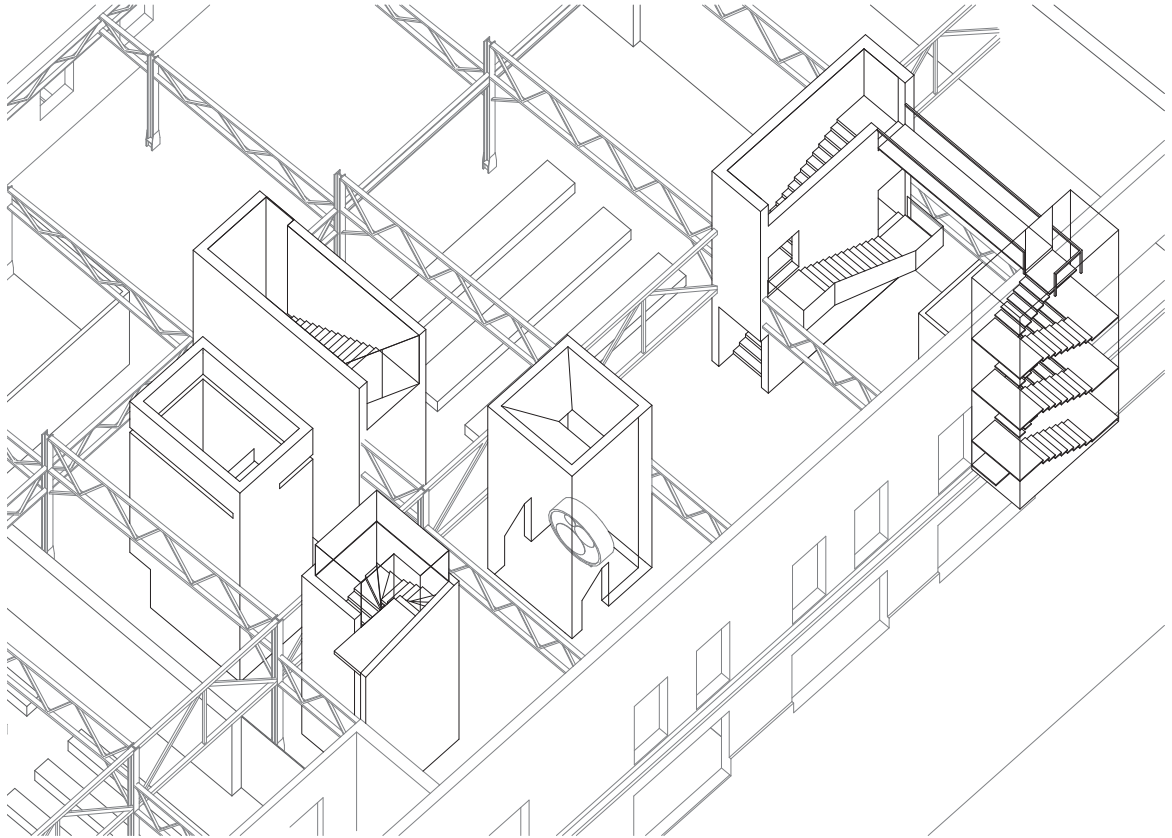
A fourth tower is positioned at the far end of the exhibition space. The narrow tower holds a long climbing staircase. Each flight of stairs wraps up and out of the tower, exposing visitors as they move upward. Once visitors reach the roof plane they are forced along a narrow path to a second set of stairs. This minimal staircase descends down the east elevation of the building, like a fire escape- escorting visitors out of the museum and to an adjacent corridor.

Denied

The following tower stretches the height of the space, but does not provide vertical circulation. Rather, two opposing doors allow visitors to pass through the space in a horizontal direction. A skylight is positioned off-centre to this axis, designed to refract and intensify daylight onto an existing exhibition piece, “The Wheel of Conscience” designed by architect Daniel Libeskind.



Storyboard event: immigration



Line drawing of intervention: immigration process

Customs

Historically

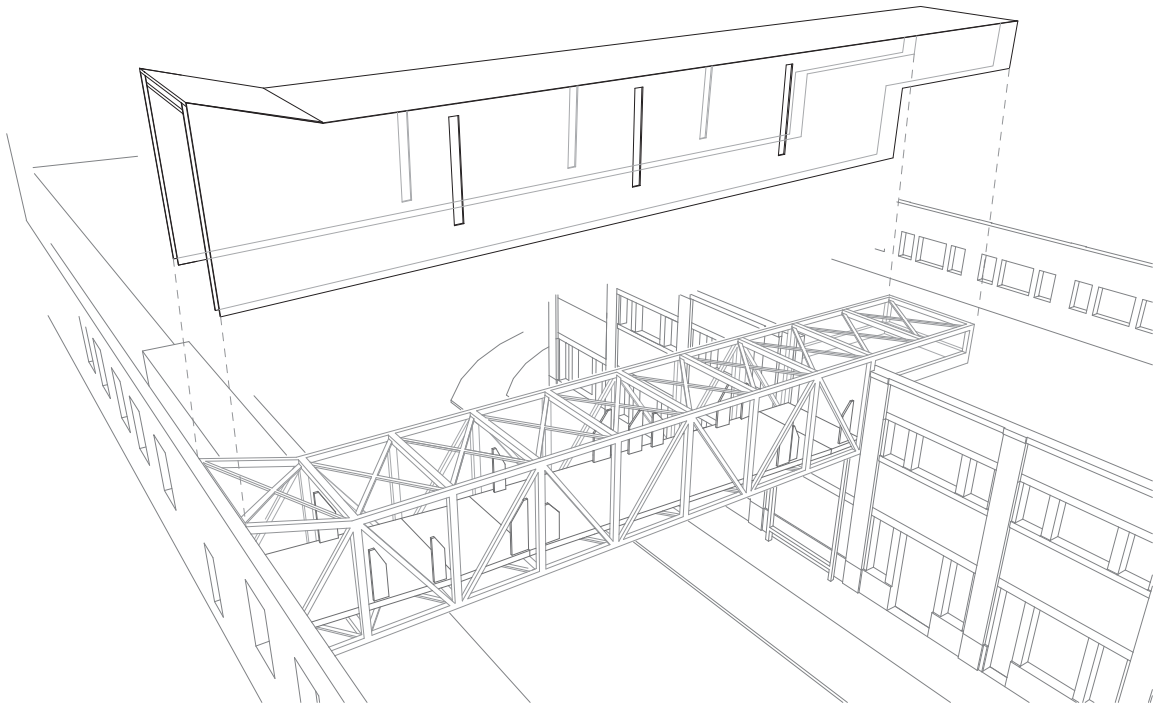
Newly accepted immigrants collected their hand luggage from a storage area and proceed to the immigration annex. The two buildings, shed 21 and the immigration annex, were connected along the second level by two pedways. Inside the pedway, customs officers searched newcomers' hand luggage before entering the country. Their items would be examined and sifted through for contraband. Newcomers would attempt to smuggle in food and kitchen items from their old country. Officers reported women hiding sausages in flower bouquets and in their underwear.

Intervention

The intervention proposes to remove the exterior cladding along the pedway to expose the original steel box truss. The cladding is replaced with a translucent double-skin along the exterior and interior of the steel structure, with a series of sculptural figures sandwiched in between. The southern daylight illuminates silhouettes of the ghostly figures, while casting shadow patterns along the interior space. The shadowbox affect creates a unique haptic experience for visitors inside the museum, while creating an iconic element of the museum to pedestrians in the Halifax Seaport District. After sunset, the pedway is lit from the interior, illuminating the sculptural figures and pedway.



Storyboard event: customs



Line drawing of intervention: customs

Assistance

Historically

Newcomers entered the immigration annex through an adjacent pedway. Here, various religious and social organizations provided assistance. The periphery of the space was occupied with offices and ticket booths. Newcomers purchased trains ticket, exchanged money, or found refuge for their young ones in a nursery or with Red Cross services.

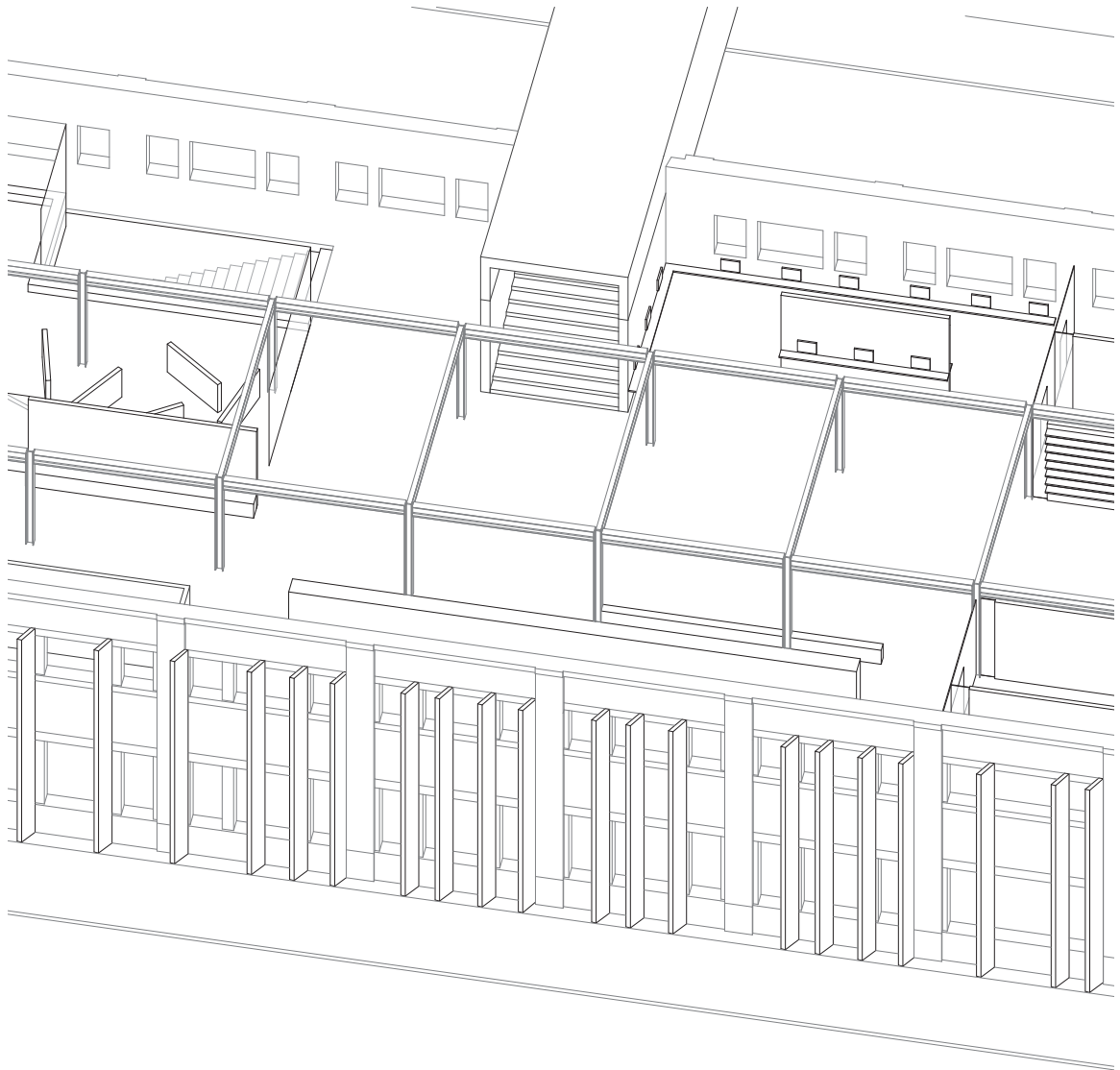
Intervention

This space has been repurposed into the resource and research centre. The south wall is lined with four, double occupant offices for research staff and historians. A small library and public workstations are centred between the offices. Additional public workstations are located along the southeast wall, with a series of computer screens for individual research or viewing a feature film. A large interactive media wall runs parallel to the west wall, providing numerous videos, databases and information graphics for multiple visitors to engage simultaneously. A series of vertical fins line the exterior of the west wall, diffusing the western daylight into the space. Two long tables are arranged in the middle of the resource centre providing a public work space for individuals or groups.

A children's zone is sectioned off with a glass wall and a bookshelf running the length of the northern wall. A series of colourful partitions provide a place for curation and imagery directed towards a younger audience. Benches and movable seating fill the periphery of the children's zone, providing a place of refuge, and a place to read a book with young visitors.



Storyboard event: assistance



Line drawing of intervention: assistance

Exiting and Travelling On

Historically

Newcomers proceeded to the ground level, where they searched the annex for their baggage. Once baggage was cleared they lingered in a waiting area. Here, they purchased food and beverages from the canteen before exiting the facility to board trains.

Intervention

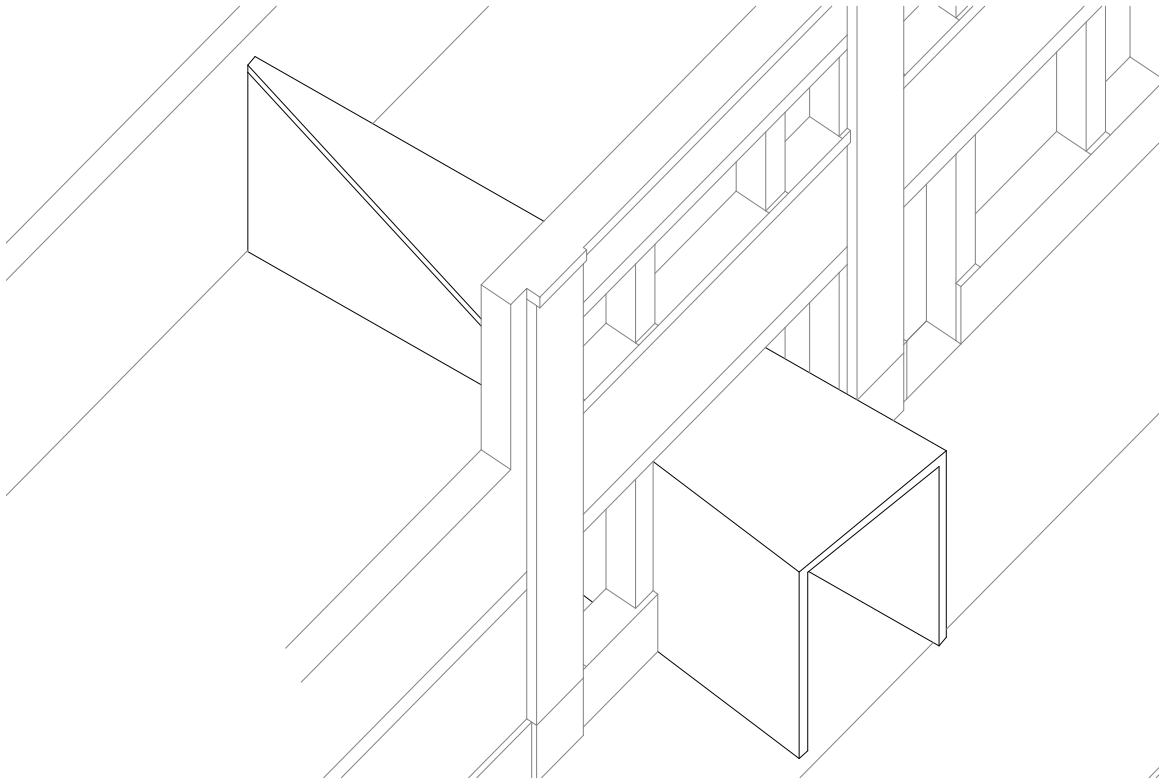
A wide set of stairs carry visitors to the temporary exhibition gallery, located on the ground level of the annex. The initial volume of the annex is broken down by a series of stage plinths used for curating. The ground surface along the corridor and stair treads to the exhibition spaces are treated and hollowed, reverberating the sound of foot steps as visitors move across the space. The exaggeration of sound intends to mimic the herding of newcomers through the immigration facility.

The temporary exhibition hall provides a venue for museum curators to design and initiate travelling exhibitions to move from Pier 21 to museums across Canada.

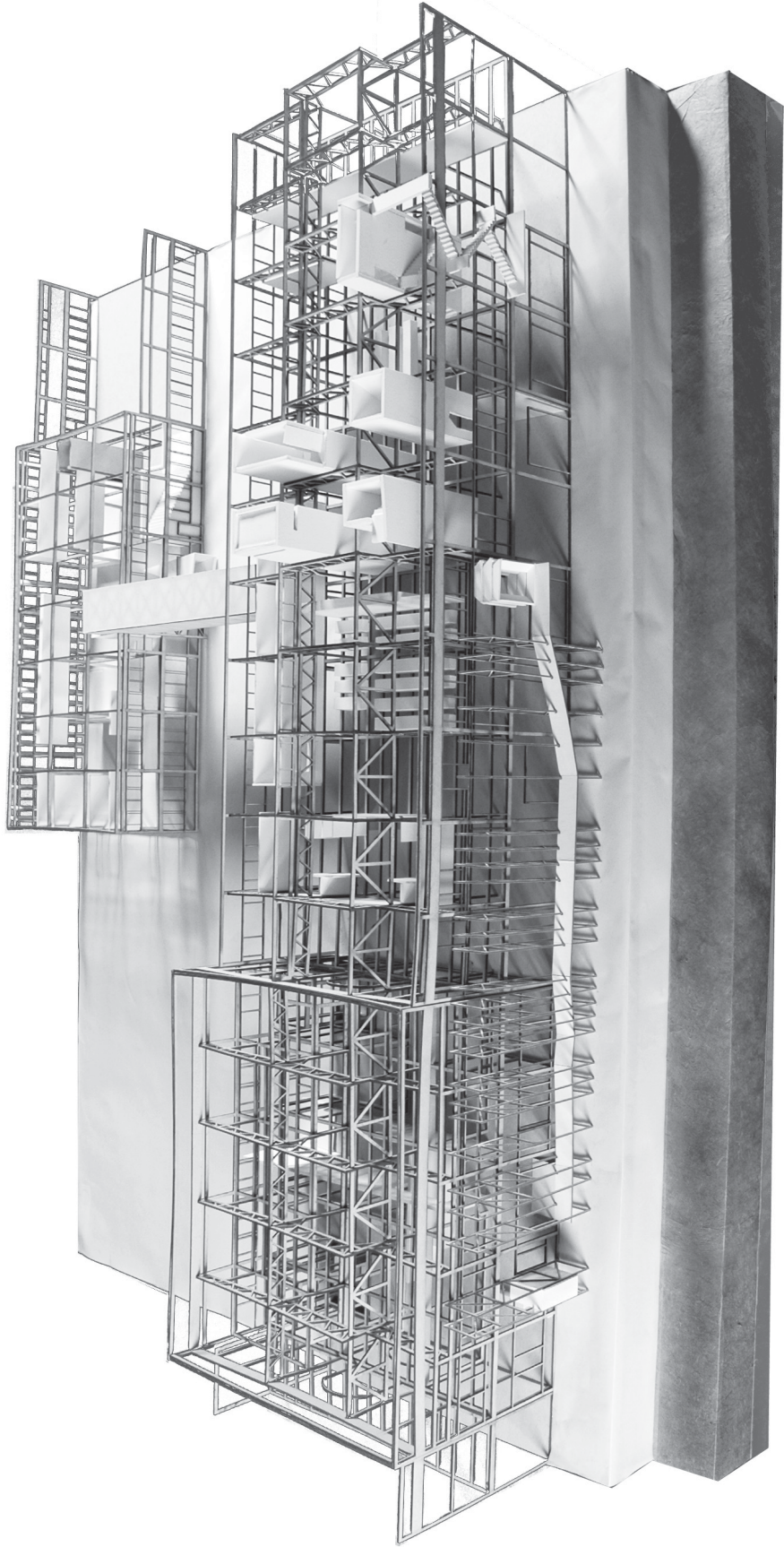
A wall runs the length of the ground floor, separating the temporary exhibition space from the gift shop and adjacent service spaces. After exploring the temporary exhibition space, visitors proceed through the gift shop in a parallel axis to the dividing wall. A second structure interrupts this axis at the end of the gift shop, turning visitors in a perpendicular direction, through a short angled tunnel and out to the city street.



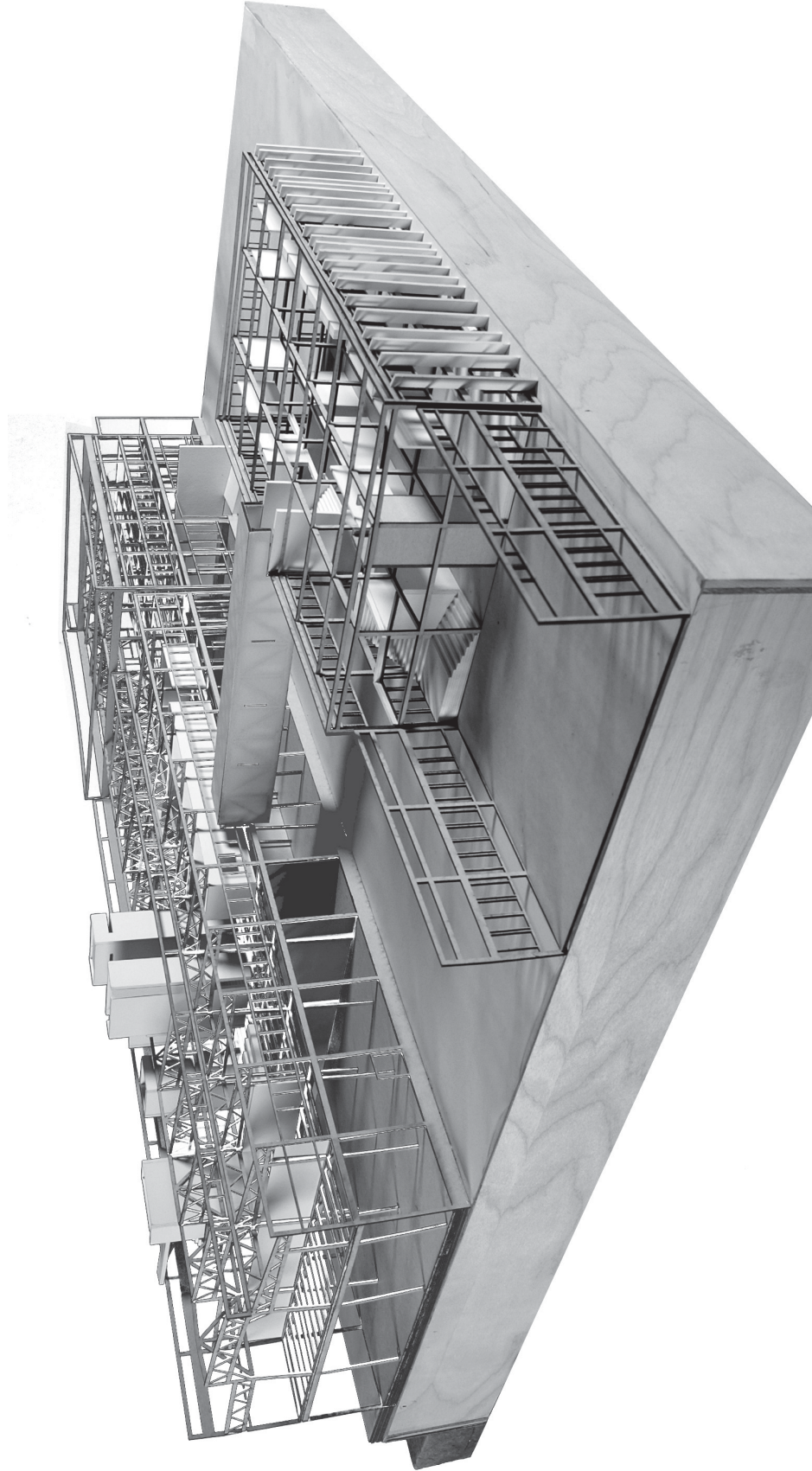
Storyboard event: exiting and travelling on



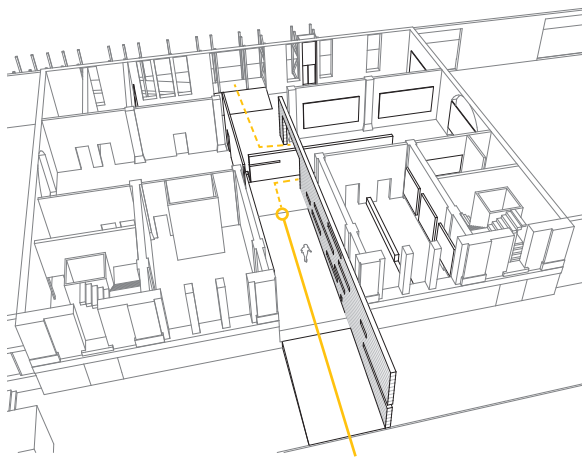
Line drawing of intervention: exiting and travelling on



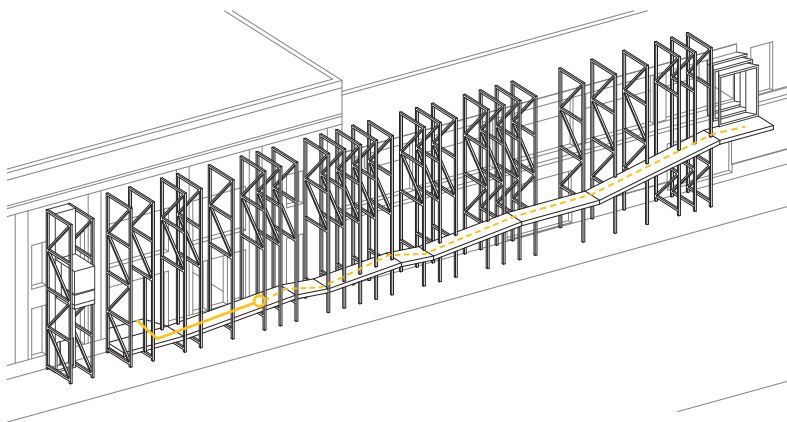
Model: places interventions (white) throughout the historic building (grey).



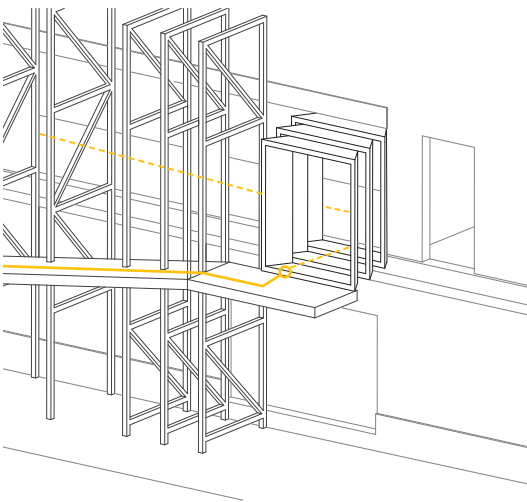
Model: places interventions (white) throughout the historic building (grey).



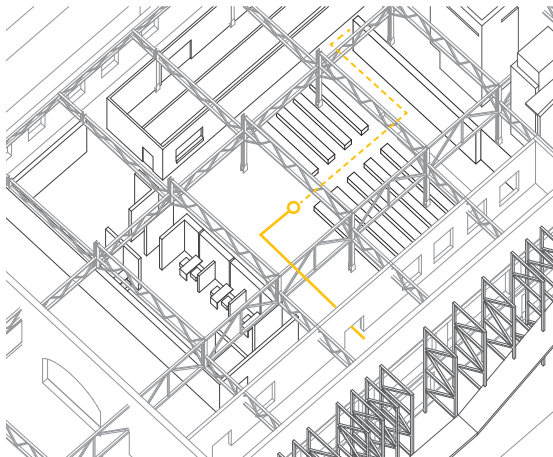
Material drawing of intervention: departure



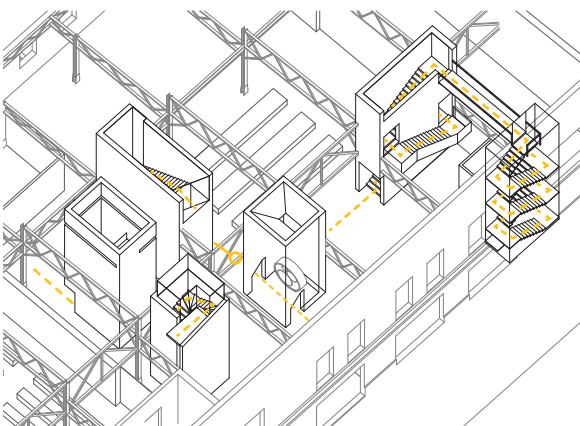
Material drawing of intervention: travel



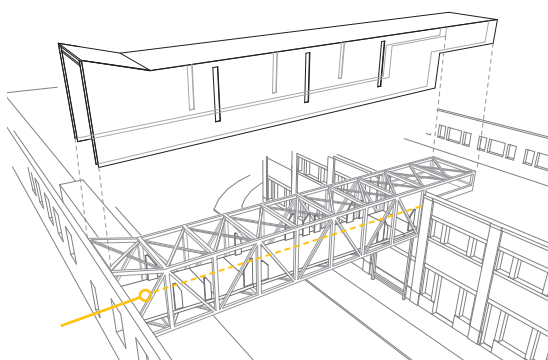
Material drawing of intervention: arrival



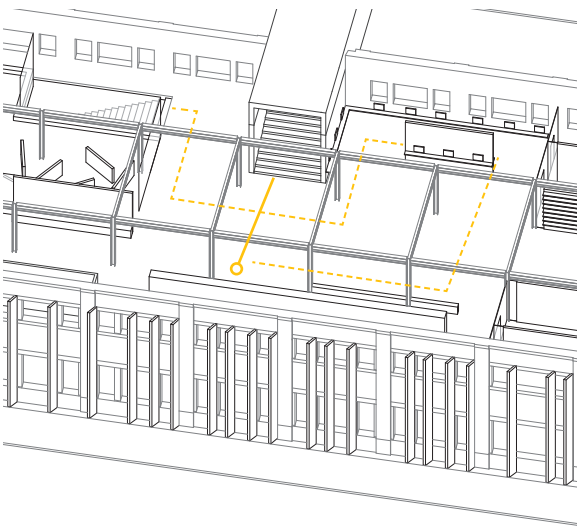
Material drawing of intervention: waiting



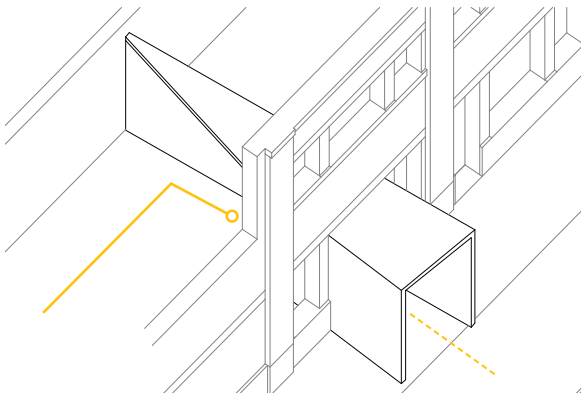
Material drawing of intervention: immigration process



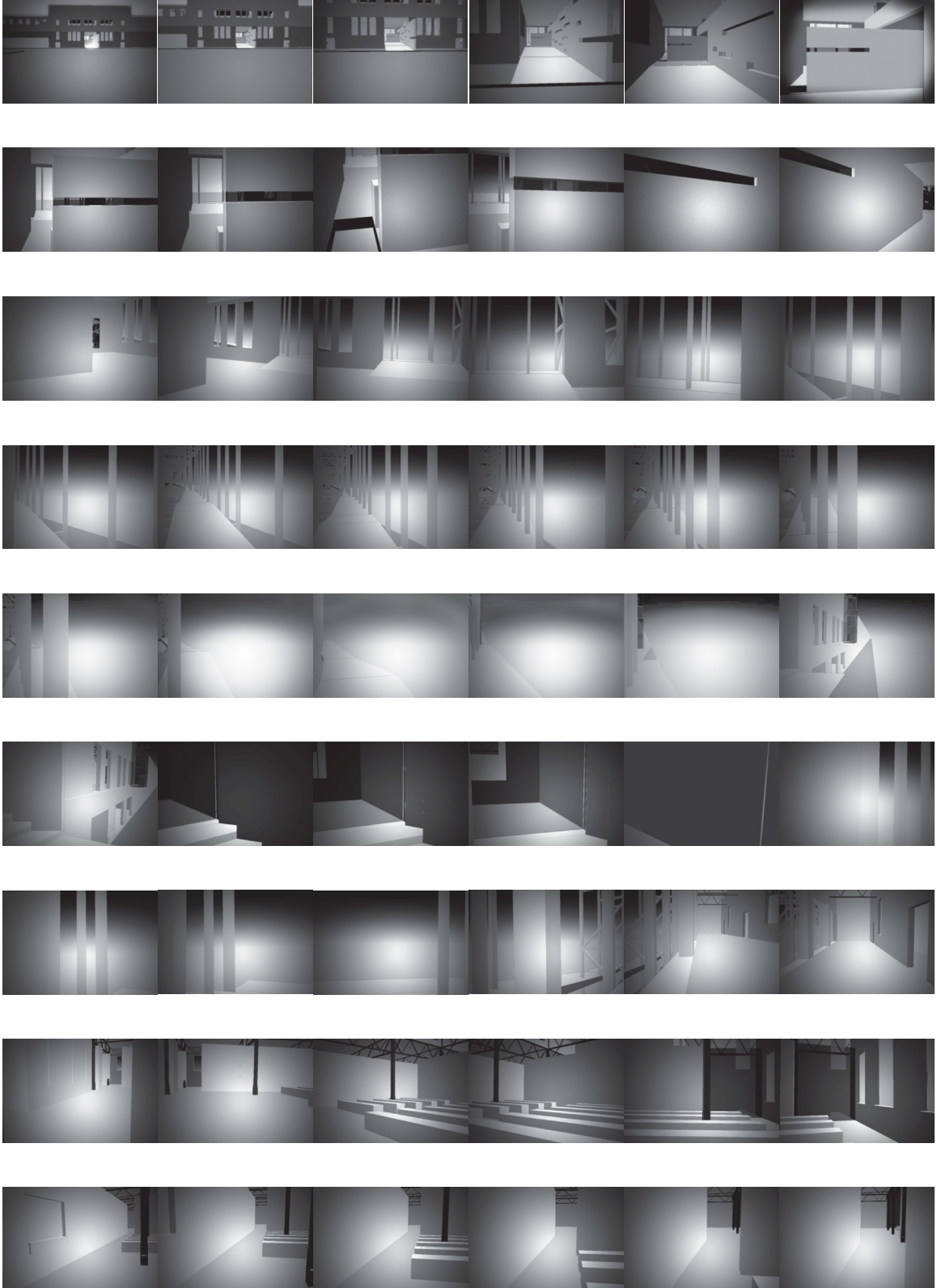
Material drawing of intervention: customs



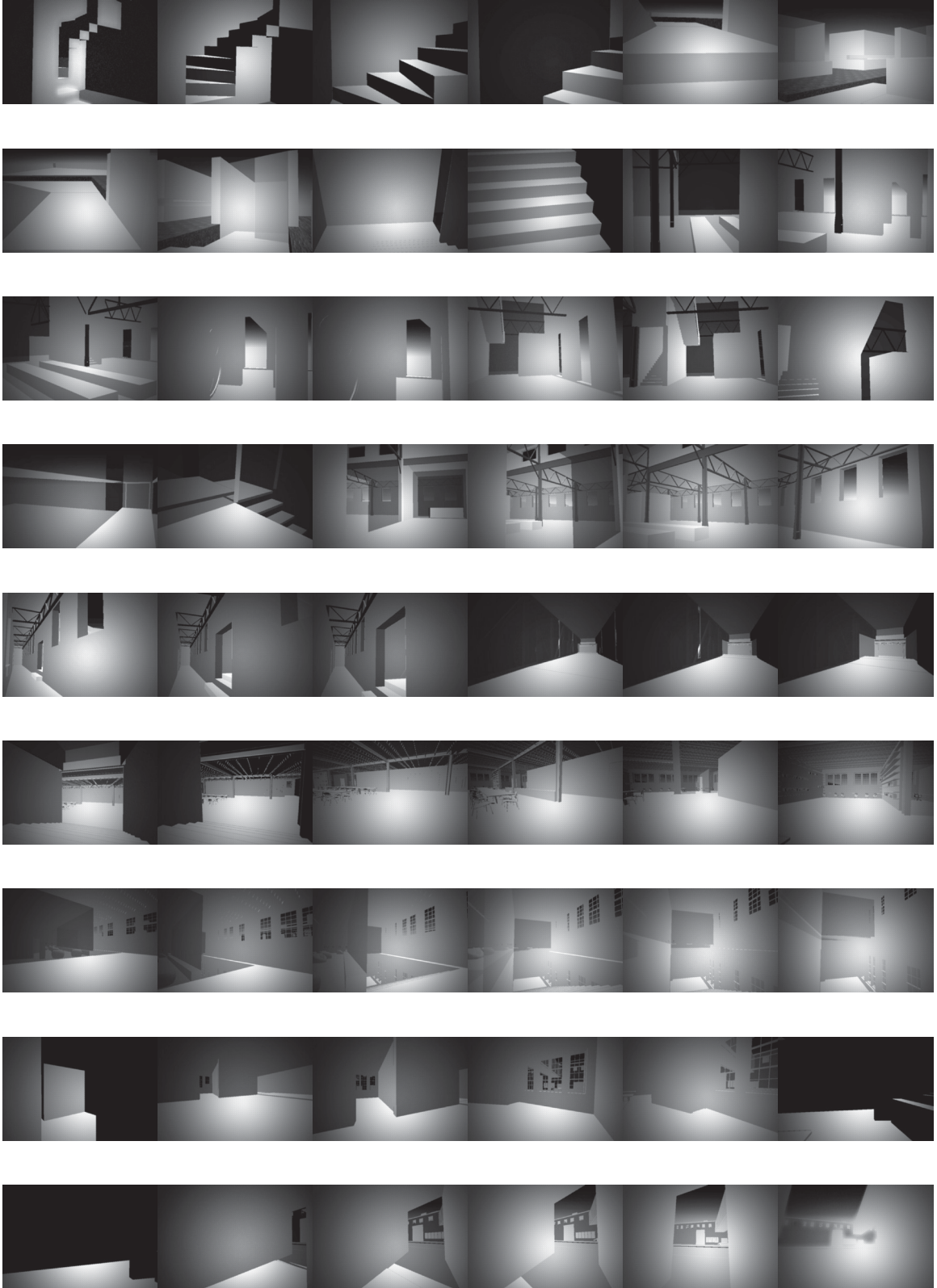
Material drawing of intervention: assistance



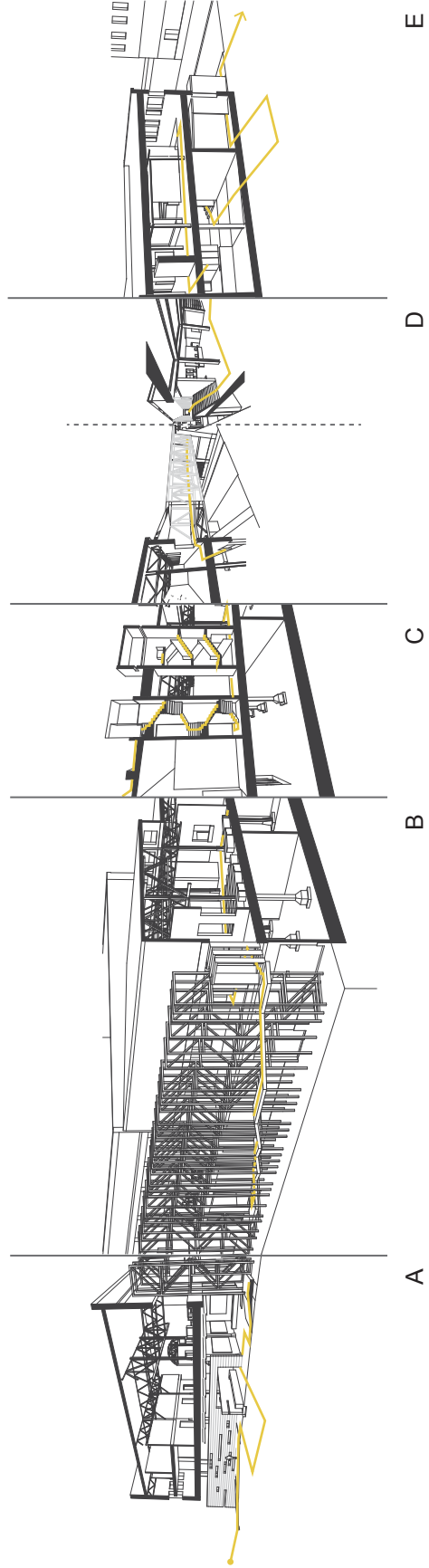
Material drawing of intervention: exiting and travelling on



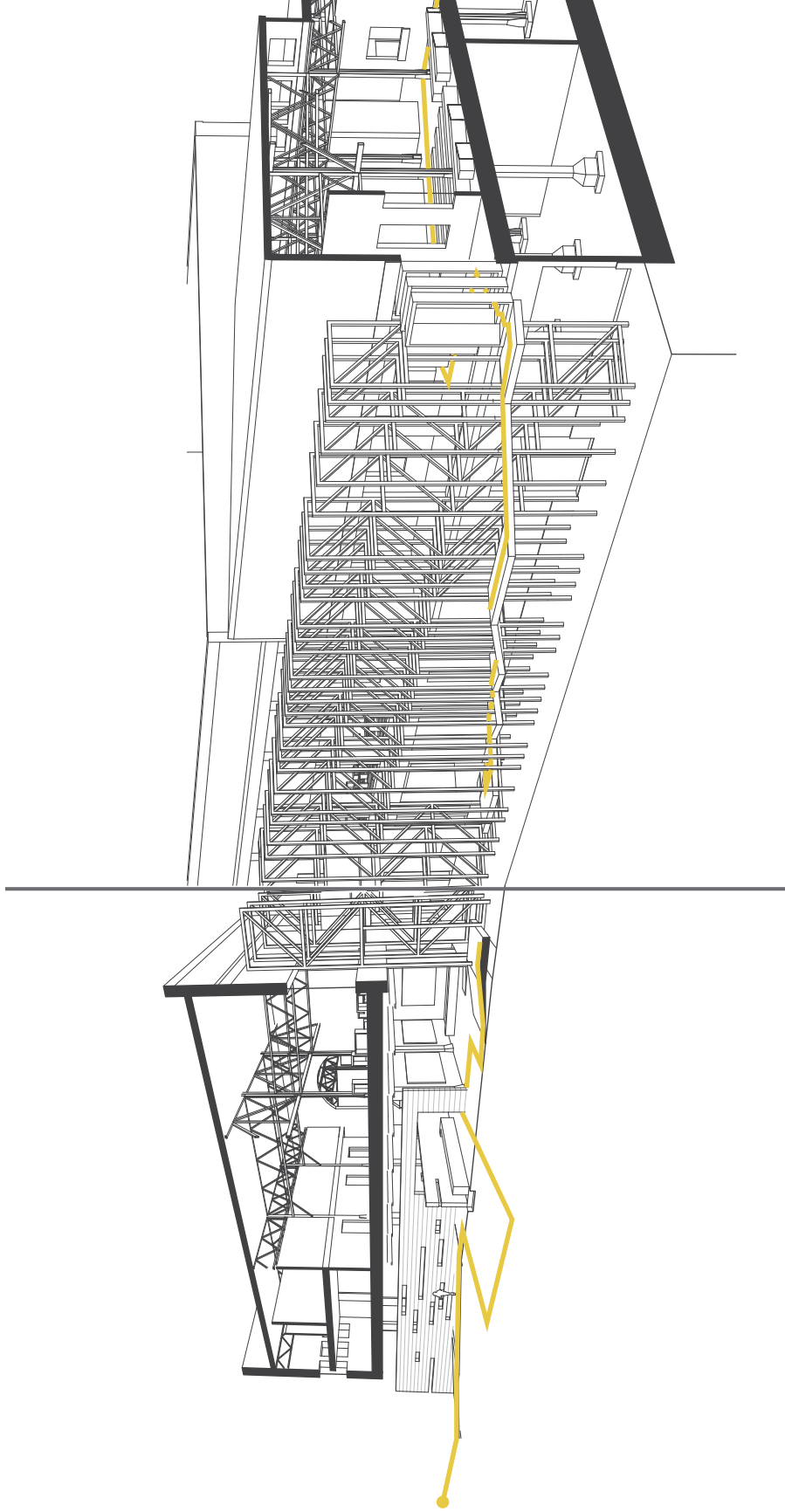
In motion: still frame series illustrating the narrative sequence (part 1)



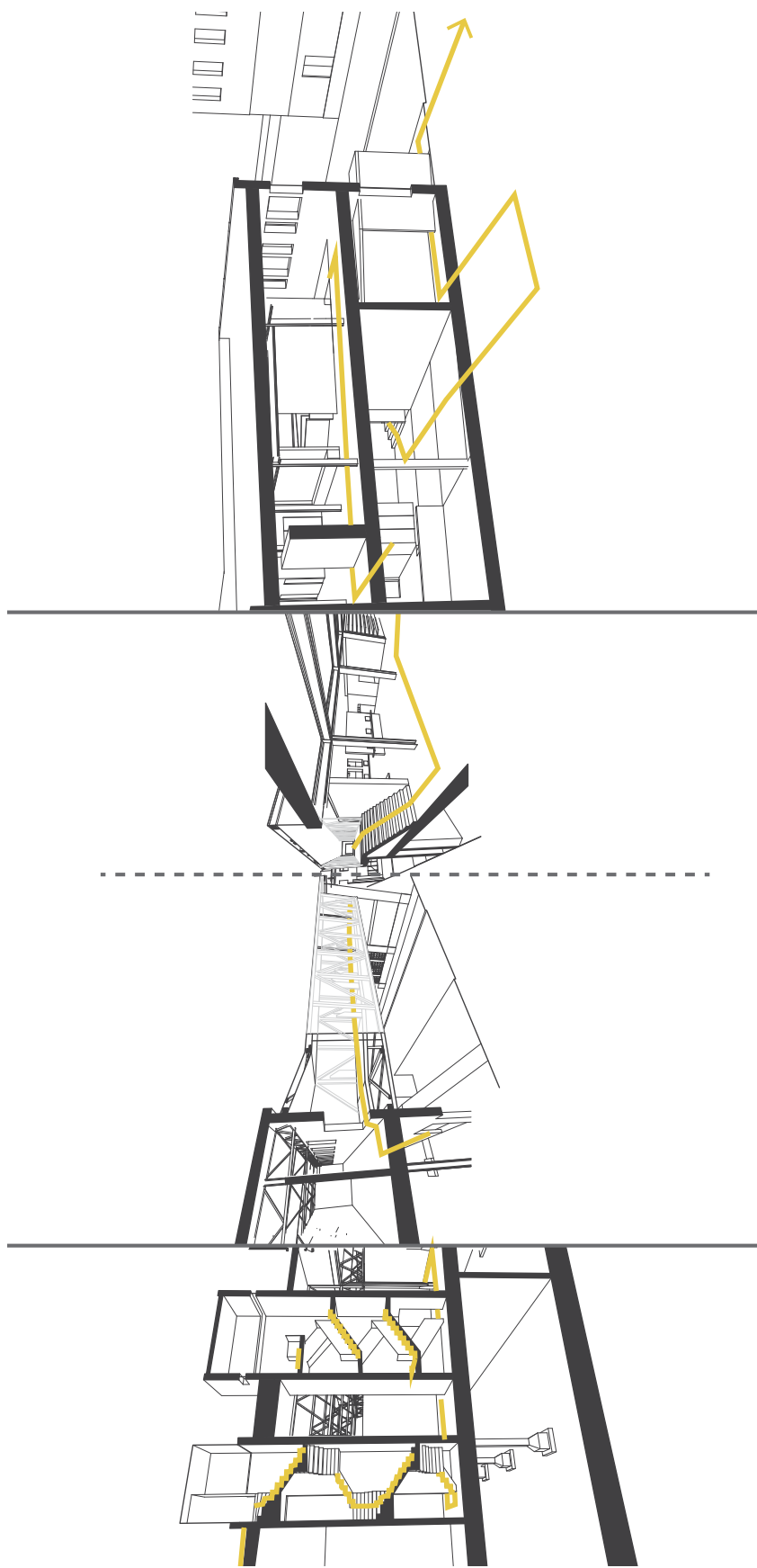
In motion: still frame series illustrating the narrative sequence (part 2)



Section perspective: illustrating the narrative sequence



Section perspective A and B: illustrating the narrative sequence



Section perspective C, D and E : illustrating the narrative sequence

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Architecture, like literature and film revolves around an event. When narrating an event, in any type of medium, a physical space or setting is articulated in order to conceptualize the actions, or plot, to the audience. A physical space acts as the backdrop to the event. Writers narrate a scene through text, describing the qualities of a space. Filmmakers narrate a scene through audio and visual media, manipulating and layering a space to illustrate a particular quality related to the event. Architects narrate a space through physical forms and spatial configuration; these gestures suggest an event or action for its users.

Through this thesis, a series of architectural interventions were used to narrate a historic place. Similar to the intentions of a monument, these interventions highlight particular place along the narrative sequence. Through this study, sequence and movement was evidently the means of narration.

It was also evident that architecture does not literally communicate the story. Rather, the hierarchy and order of space encourages visitors' exploration. A well designed space, or set of spaces, will stop its visitors and have them question and consider their physical surroundings.

This quest for architecture to communicate or engage its users does not stop at the museum, but applies to all of the built environment. Through narration architects are able to solve design problems and cohesively communicate the ideas, events and stories back to the user.

APPENDIX: INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES

The following individual narratives are a sample from the millions of stories Canadians have associated with Pier 21 and the immigration process. The stories presented here are a sample of individuals that processed and worked on site.

Jack Bedford WW II Veteran Aquitania 1946

In 1942 I was in a regiment in Vancouver and we were told that we would be sent to England as reinforcements for the Seaforth Highlanders. We were loaded onto antique rail cars with wooden seats with no ventilation and five boring days later we arrived in Halifax. We stood around for hours and eventually were loaded onto the most decrepit English troop ship and allocated places in troop decks away down near the propeller. Of 140 soldiers in our deck, at least 100 were smokers so the air was blue all night long.

In the group with me were Fred Mallet, Reg Arnold, Dick Haggerty, Pete De Ruiter and we stayed together for some time in England and I was a driver in Haggerty in Italy.

In 1946, I left England on a beautiful ship, the Aquitania and the voyage took only four days. We were supposed to work for our passage but a friend and I had very little work to do so we spent most of our days playing cribbage.

After the poor accommodations on the previous voyage, we were disappointed to see Halifax so soon. We left Pier 21 in a very short time and spent a day in Montreal before boarding the train which took us to Vancouver.⁶³

Mariette Doduck, Jewish War Orphan, Aquitania, 1948

The Voyage - We went from Brussels to London. I was so seasick. We were put in another orphanage that was like a castle to me. It was very drafty, very cold. No one spoke French, only the people looking after us, and I remember I was trying to find paper and no one understood that papier and paper were the same thing. I had wanted to leave a note because everywhere I went I left notes. You learned to leave notes at the underground train station, the bus station - places I knew Sara, my oldest sister, and any family would eventually go and look. In London we took a ship called the Aquitania, and it took us to Halifax. I was so sick the whole time. I was in the sick bay practically the whole trip, but my sister, Esther, said that if you don't get up they won't let you off the ship.

Arrival - What they put us through in this country was terrible, really it was. They treated us terribly. They tried to examine me like I was a prostitute. I saw this building with bars on the window. It looked like a prison to me, and I thought, what did I do? I am going from one prison to another type of prison.

They said Canada was a free country and we would be welcome, but we were guarded like we were in a camp. Wearing a card with a safety pin on it (name tag) doesn't help much. Also the border patrol and the customs officers took everything we had, and we were too afraid to mention this to anyone. I still had a little diamond ring that my sister Sara had given me and I had managed to hide it. Throughout the entire war I had saved my ring. They took the diamond out of it and my money and loose coins. In all these years I've never said anything about it and I think those people took advantage of us, of all the people who came. We didn't want to rock the boat, to make trouble so none of us ever reported these

63 Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, 2011.

things and we have never discussed it among ourselves. After we were examined we were put on a train to cross Canada. I had no expectation about what Canada would be, none. The only thing I knew is that I wanted to hide who I was. So, the only expectation I had when I came to this country, and I remember it today, and it's been 50 years, as I didn't want to be with any other survivors. I did not want to be pointed at.⁶⁴

Sol Messinger, M.S. St. Louis, 1939

Sol Messinger was just six years old when, as one of 907 German Jews aboard the M.S. St. Louis seeking a place to escape persecution, the ship was shunned first by Cuba and then by America. He remembers sailing along the Florida coast as Miami's city lights disappeared into the dusky distance.

Canada did not want the refugees traveling on the vessel either — “none is too many,” an immigration agent would say of Jews such as those aboard the ship in May, 1939. The St. Louis was within two days of Halifax Harbour when Ottawa, under pressure from high-ranking politicians within, refused to grant the Jewish families a home.

“Nobody wanted us,” Dr. Messinger, now 78 and a retired physician in Buffalo, N.Y., said in an interview with the *National Post*. “We were Jews, we were expendable ... It was terrible — terrible, terrible — of Canada and the United States, of all countries, to not let us in.”

Turned away thrice, the ship had no choice but to journey toward an uncertain fate in Belgium. Dr. Messinger, then just a boy, would celebrate his seventh birthday en route back to the very land his parents feared spelled disaster for their only son.

Dr. Messinger said the German crew had treated the passengers “as human beings,” even offering them “big breakfasts, and ice cream with mini umbrellas pegged in the scoop.” Canada, though, would offer the family nothing.

He and his parents managed to survive the Holocaust — thanks to a “series of miracles,” he said — but 254 of the Jews turned away by the Mackenzie King government would not.⁶⁵

Elizabeth Wood, English Immigrant, Homeric, November 14, 1956

We left from England to come to Canada on a dull, overcast day leaving Southampton at about noon. I remember a few of my parent's friends came to see us off! Being almost seven at the time, I did not fully understand the momentous decision to go to Canada, the land of my Father's birth, but I do remember being very excited about going on a big ship.

Well the ship was huge!!! I was small. There was a movie theatre and a fully equipped playroom, I remember the adults playing Shuffleboard and sitting in the deck chairs. I know we were also fortunate to have travelled “First Class” . Our family cabin had two portholes and we were on the top deck. I recall one storm at sea when the waves were so high they covered those portholes!!

I know I was a sailor, no seasickness for me, but my older brother did not fare so well. Our parents were fine too but I recall for years after my mother said the day after the storm everyone looked a little green around the gills. The trip lasted one week and we stopped in Halifax to let some passengers off and then the ship continued on to Quebec City. More passengers disembarked there and we sailed on up the St. Lawrence to Montreal. I can

64 Ibid.

65 Kathryn Blaze Carlson, “None is too many’: Memorial for Jews turned away from Canada in 1939,” *National Post* (January 17, 2011), <http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/01/17/none-is-too-many-memorial-for-jews-turned-away-from-canada>.

clearly re-envision the sight of the sailors and crew members being lowered on scaffolding to scrub the sides of our ship before we docked and all passengers leaning over to watch this operation.

Canada, our new home, was so beautiful and modern and large. I have often heard my mother say everything seemed so much bigger in this country.

Now this is forty-three years later and I am a Canadian Citizen and very proud to call Canada my home.⁶⁶

Reverend J.P.C. Fraser, Volunteer from United Church

Our special concern was the immigrants. First, we scanned the passenger list. Then the workers had a little gift ready when the passengers came to our booth. Each one received a little bag (we called it a ditty bag) which contained eight or ten articles such as soap, face-cloth, towel, tooth-brush, Kleenex, pens, life-savers, colouring books for children, and other selections from an unpredictable variety of donations. These donations came from all parts of Canada. ...

The Greek children were evidently trained to kiss your hand if you gave them a gift. Some of the chivalrous young men were equally appreciative. My wife's hand received many such expressions of appreciation everyday we had Greek passengers. ...

When we came to the Port, we received very few donations for gifts. When a box came in, I wrote a thank you letter, commenting on anything special in the box, and telling the sender how much they were welcomed by the strangers. ... The busiest months, November and December, brought in approximately 90 cartons each. It was not a small undertaking to open and list the contents of these containers. Then all this collection of material had to be systemically piled on our storeroom shelves. Then began the work of filling the ditty bags.

... It was only after I went on full-time in 1963 that the increase in donations began. ... When Miss Ratz retired in 1963 my wife Anna went to Port with me on a voluntary basis. As the work increased other helpers came in occasionally notably the Fisher girls. Often Anna and I went down to the Port after supper, when a liner was unloading passengers at night, getting back home at 2 a.m. Sometimes a ship would dock at midnight. Five or six hours later, the boat train would pull out for Montreal. ... More than once another ship would be docking at 8 a.m. Recalling all this now, we wonder how we managed.

As time went on, our work among the detainees in the accommodation upstairs became very important and demanding. These men jumped from their Communist ships to seek asylum in Canada. They were clad only in their working clothes. Immigration provided only food and shelter. The United Church Social Workers provided most of the clothing, etc., these men needed especially in the winter. ... Our efforts on behalf of the nine Poles whom the Immigration Department was determined to send back to Poland was exhausting and expensive. Mr. Walter Goodfellow, a prominent lawyer, was so concerned for these men that he took on their case with no guarantee of any remuneration. Eventually he won for these men the privilege of staying in Canada under a Minister's Permit.

By 1971 practically all the European ships had ceased coming to Halifax. It was air-travel now. ... Thus ended eleven years for whose opportunities we shall be forever grateful.⁶⁷

66 Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, 2011.

67 Ibid.

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