

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF
ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN
PHILOSOPHY

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

In partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

Department of Architecture and Interior Design

By

SHUTING ZHAO

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2015

Advisor _____
Diane Fellows

Reader _____
John Reynolds

FINDING NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

SHUTING ZHAO
MIAMI UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The paper aims to provide potential narratives experienced through architecture from an eastern perspective of the aesthetic of absence. I ask- how can the aesthetic of absence in traditional eastern philosophy be considered in contemporary architecture and the built environment? I refer to the minimal aesthetic related to eastern Philosophies, mainly Taoism, Zen, and Wabi-Sabi, together with typical cultural phenomenon to illustrate how the minimal aesthetic is presented and appreciated in association with these philosophies. I focus on how to interpret this minimal aesthetic as well as apply it into architecture design. By reviewing related minimalism theories in architecture design from both eastern and western perspectives, as well as analysis of case studies of contemporary architectures—the following possible narratives from an eastern perspective are derived—emptiness, materiality, and uncertainty. These attributes of eastern philosophy, in particular, the aesthetic of absence, is considered in contemporary architectural space making.

INTRODUCTION

When I first saw the photograph figure1, I just thought that it was a piece of art made by western people. The incomplete geometric form drew my eye, for it had apparently an aesthetic of imperfection or absence. While at the same time, it reminded me of the Japanese wabi-sabi, which means the beauty of imperfection, for example the making of pottery, in which the carefully intended flaw is the metaphor of the aesthetic in the short life circle and beauty of the nature. However, to my sense, there is a big difference behind the two objects, even though I experience the pure aesthetic joy of absence from both pictures. I am attracted to their

different narratives. I have sensed there is something valuable and worthy of reflection concerning the differences beneath the eastern and western narrative for the beauty for their imperfection. The cut stone, with its simple and pure geometry form, even broken, has a connotation for its rationality and expectation. Even though something is absent, the absence is like the shadow under the sun—like a reality, which people will never fail to trace. While, for the Japanese pottery, it is much more mysterious, it is the shadow from the shadow. It has, if any, not so much to do with rationality, and it amuses me more with the unexpected and intangible, like the mystery of nature.



Figure 1



Figure 2

I appreciate more of the oriental aesthetic of absence, which is closely related to my own memory and experience in my early age—I would describe with the words: silence and emptiness—it is the whispering of the wind encountering the Bamboo, the singing of the birds, the talking among the insects, the mixed smell of the dirt and plants, the humid and fresh air in each morning, the expression and monologue of the old brick walls. I prefer to

continue the living style from my childhood, which bears, in my mind all the time, the memory of the austere, simple and natural. Architect John Pawson wrote in *Minimum*, which I believe best illustrates the motivation and desire for beauty of simplicity deep inside humans:

"The idea of simplicity is a recurring ideal shared by many cultures...minimal living has always offered a sense of liberation, a chance to be in touch with the essence of existence, rather than distracted by the trivial".¹

Memory and living experience are closely connected to the substantial space we live in, have shaped each one's understanding of his or her own culture in a philosophical and aesthetic sense, giving identity to their culture. In fact, it is a mutual process—either culture shapes the built environment and space or vice versa. I think the eastern asceticism has philosophical aesthetics of simplicity, which affects the way people live from both a practical and aesthetical sense. Reflecting on the eastern culture and philosophy, there are apparently clues lying in Zen aesthetics, Taoism and related cultural philosophy. So the idea of continuing this commonly appreciated philosophy of absence into living space in accordance with its cultural context is significant. Then how should this traditional philosophy of absence aesthetic be related to the contemporary built environment?

not literally considering the direct creation or application of the spirit of Zen or Taoism in architecture. What I mean here is to find out the possible narrative or focus of minimal aesthetic in architectural space by looking into the related philosophy of Zen and Tao. For it is the traditional philosophy that shapes the substantial living environment and gives identity and wisdom to the culture. So, this paper uses typical examples of related cultural phenomenon to illustrate the minimal aesthetic under eastern philosophy, mainly Taoism, Zen and Wabi-Sabi. The examples cover Landscape, Painting, Calligraphy, Literature, pottery and theater play, which is to better understand the minimal aesthetic in these philosophies and its association with the cultural context. For this part, I will generate some key words or categories related to the eastern minimal aesthetic that also could be possibly applied to architecture design.

Reviewing minimalism theory in architecture design from both eastern and western world, I find related supports for the eastern perspective. Here, I need to address my attitude towards the western minimal aesthetic. To mention eastern, I do not think it is conflicting with western; rather they could and indeed share parts in minimal aesthetic, especially for architecture. So I refer to good examples of design and theory from both eastern and western that can be adopted for building the eastern atmosphere and spirit. And my focus is Tadao Ando, Kazuyo Sejima, Peter Zumthor, and Louis Khan. For this part, examples AND review of history will be used as main methodologies.

Even though I am discussing minimal aesthetic in eastern philosophy like Zen and Taoism, I am

METHODOLOGY

EMPTINESS

EMPTINESS

"Moldings clay into a vessel,
We find the utility in its hollowness
Cutting doors and windows for a house,
We find the utility in its empty space
Therefore the being of things is profitable,
The non-being of things is serviceable"²
Above is Laozi's philosophical understanding of architectural space, very rudimentary and in depth. His Tao cast a discussion about the dialectical relationship between the substance and the space, the solid and the void, or the



Figure 3

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 3

presence and absence. In my view, he actually valued more of the absence aspect, which, in his thoughts, are the intangible things that creates the energy and forms the rule. So, the hollowness in the vessel and the emptiness in the house are defined as serviceable space, which creates more potential for growing and changing. While it is interesting as human psychology always draw people's attention on the "being", while overlook the power of "non-being" or "nothingness". However, often it is the "non-being" or "nothingness" that makes for the essence or creates the value. For instance, in Chinese painting, the empty space is even more important than the filled space, it leaves a space for imagination which means more potentiality and possibilities. Also from an aesthetical view point, the drawing gets more tension and dynamic than stacking everything together. Laozi found the philosophy of emptiness or "the power of nothingness" in his Taoism, and about five hundred years later, the Zen philosophy of Buddhism similarly came up with "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form". Laozi's idea of life and nature as interpreted by Amos Ih Tiao Chang:

"all things are spring from nothingness, growing from incompleteness toward their fullest maturities, and thereby becoming deteriorated. Aware of this eventual and inevitable deterioration and the invalidity of the absolute value of any tangible being in terms of names and appearance, he suggests affirmatively that the way to face reality is to be content to accept the negative side of being as well as the positive side, and to leave completion to nature."³

As is the truth, this ancient philosophy of power of nothingness or absence in Taoism has had very wide and deep influence on Asian culture especially for China and Japan, in which the absence carries both the aesthetical and philosophical meaning.

NARRATIVE OF EMPTINESS IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

"One of the most intense ways to experience the world in its fullness and emptiness may well be the meditative immersion into the garden of a Zen monastery, especially into a 'dry landscape garden'"⁴

The dry landscape garden originates from the spirit of yugen in Zen, which suggests a sense of mystery, depth, elegance, calm, profundity. It uses limited elements like stone, sands, moss and bush to emulate and reveal the infinite of the nature. The sands refer to the water in nature like waterfalls, rivers, creeks, even the sea. While the stone or gravel, suggests islands or mountains. By changing the texture of the sands and manipulating the position of the stone, it draws people into the contemplation, thus perceive more meaning of the sense. Its beauty generates from the deep meditation of Zen ideal and achieves the revelation of yugen, the elegant mysterious depth.



Figure 4 beauty generates from the deep meditation of Zen ideal and achieves the revelation of yugen, the elegant mysterious depth.

TADAO ANDO

Ando's use of concrete has unique character of smoothness, which makes it possible to resonate with the natural element—light and wind—in a poetic way. When the light encounters the smooth surface, it is partly absorbed, rejuvenating the wall with gentle warmth and soft luminosity. While, the rest is dispersed into the deep void of space, rendering

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 4

the emptiness. And the wind glides on the surface echoes a sound of whistling from the deep forest:

"It is only at this moment when the spatial emptiness transcends its abstract geometry and prosaic dryness, and becomes a space that is, in Ando's words, emotionally stimulating"⁵.

The space of emptiness is not somewhere out there from the beginning, but is 'born'⁶ at the moment in which the materiality of the walls vanishes into taut surfaces and further transcends its substantiality to reflect the world and to appear in a subjective fashion, or in 'as if'."⁷ Here emptiness is not about to fill, rather it is about rendering by calling for the instinct nature of related substances.

LOUIS KAHN

Emptiness speaks for Kahn's Order, in which, silence and light is the key.

"In speaking of Order, Kahn called which does not yet exist, Silence. That which exists, he called Light. Silence is the unmeasurable, the desire to be. Light is the measurable, the giver of presence. Between silence and light is a threshold over which movement takes place from one to the other. The language of this threshold, which Kahn called the Treasury of shadow, is art. Art is the means whereby something moves from silence to light."⁸

This is of so much similarity with Laozi's Tao of space in terms of emptiness. Kahn use the word Light to mean pure being, as yet without material quality. He observed that material begins where light stops. He said: "All of the material world is Light that has spent itself" "Light is of immense importance to architecture; it is the revealer of architecture".⁹

MATERIALITY

Wabi-Sabi¹⁰ the imperfect and transient beauty, is a Japanese traditional aesthetic under the influence of both Zen and Tao. It favors the idea that nature is imperfect, for it is uncertain and intangible, thus it is impossible to be perfect. So the natural beauty is asymmetry and incomplete, as is manifested in the pottery.

However, symmetry, regularity, complete would be considered as lack of appeal and deprived of imagination and potentials. Also in another sense, materials that age such as bare wood,



paper and fabric become more interesting as they demonstrate changes that can be observed over time. So the Japanese wood monastery doesn't pursue the immortality, on the contrary it favors those fading color and print of time. So as it in the tea ceremony, objects with the sign of history would always be chosen. Therefore, people appreciate a copper kettle of its molted stain, which dictates the coming and going of the world.

NARRATIVE OF MATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

PETER ZUMTHOR

Zumthor does not have a wide selection of materials, while he dose observe and research deep into their properties. In his design, each of the material hired gets fully developed and presented to its nature. In Therme Vals, Zumthor brought out the volume and sculptural beauty of the stone, giving beautiful logic between the material, the structure and the whole architecture. You can hardly see any coating or ceramic tile, painted wall, floor, ceiling, even the common bathing pool, rather you can see only a world of piles, piles of gneiss. All the details and techniques are in support of the architecture as a whole. The technique used in the transformation from floor to wall, wall to ceiling, is by adopting the same principle of stacking. Finally, the whole architecture only involve a few basic details, making the space pure and unified. The material is presented in a

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 5

very sensuous manner—stone shines receiving the ray of light, springs whispers gently between the stones, skin feels the cool and rough stone—all those lead people into the feeling of holy tranquility and relax.

TADAO ANDO

Tadao Ando's architecture of reinforced concrete evokes a world of light and shadow, which is closely related to the feeling for nature rooted deeply in the Japanese traditional aesthetic. Tadao Ando's work can also be related to the Japanese aesthetic of "Ma" (space in between) and nothingness. While Ando himself denied he sought intentionally to express these concept of "Japan-ness", if he has, it is something subconscious sensibility. His unique way of using concrete gives his space the property of a mysterious emptiness as well as experience of natural elements such as light and wind, which evoke people's memory of traditional Japanese architecture. And Tadao Ando writes in *From Self-Enclosed Modern Architecture towards Universality*:

In the traditional Japanese house, the wall does not actually exist. Of course walls were used. But the main aim was to express the simplicity of the wood, paper, earth, and straw of which they were made. According to the traditional Japanese interpretation, architecture is always at one with nature and attempts to isolate and freeze at a point in time nature as it exists in its organic metamorphoses. In other words, it is an architecture reduced to the extreme of simplicity and an aesthetic devoid of actuality and attributes that it approaches theories of Ma, or nothingness. Further connection with nature are effected by the subtle transformation caused in part by delicate contrasts of light and shade. In all these connections it is the wall, made as light and thin as possible, that permits or more accurately evokes—space.¹¹

Through Tadao Ando's understanding of the wall from a traditional aesthetic view, I see very unique minimal aesthetic concerning materiality in Japanese traditional space, which is poetic and natural and associated closely with life and nature. The simple and austere materials used in traditional building have interaction with the natural surrounding as well as with human

sensory, as in the case of Shoji paper that are used for partitions and openings. The Shoji paper gives "a certain feeling of warmth, calm and response" and it "seems to take in light, to envelop it gently, like the soft surface of a first snowfall" also, "it is quiet and pliant to the touch as the leaf of a tree" Inspired by the Shoji, Ando paid attention to the tactile quality of the concrete:

Just like Shoji filter and the diffused light throughout the interior, concrete surface used by Ando absorb the light and return only part of it, thereby draining color from the space; along with different levels that contain the voids, all the elements of the design cohere.¹²

LOUIS KAHN

When I first heard about the story of Kahn's famous ask: "what do you want, brick? Brick says: I like an arch." I felt suddenly enlightened as if listening to the conversation between the Buddha and his followers. And in fact it is a typical example that Kahn used to illustrate his concept of Order, which have great similarity with eastern philosophy of Tao from Laozi, as well as the existential philosophy of being from Martin Heidegger. And to define the Order is hard, even Kahn stopped at the point: Order is. While, we can still interpret as understood and recorded by John Lobell:

" Order is the principle behind all things and is expressed in them as an existence-will, a quality things have in their beginnings outside of time, which Kahn liked to call Volume Zero...it is the way things come into being...Order pertains not only to things that are, but also things that are not yet...There is an Order of all things: of wind, of materials, of our being"¹³

Returning now to the story of brick, indeed Kahn was suggesting the significance of the Order between architecture and materiality. So he asked the brick again: Arches are expensive, and I can use a concrete lintel over an opening. What do you think of that, brick? Brick says: I like an arch.¹⁴To his understanding, brick is a beautiful and live material that has been used by three quarters of the world where it is the only logic material to use. He said" the beauty

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 6

of what you create comes if you honor the material for what it really is"¹⁵I gain a better understanding of the Tao philosophical aesthetic of the natural and austere by reading a western based architect. While reflecting on traditional Chinese and Japanese building, they do have great respect for materials and achieve the materiality of the architecture, which is apparent just by a glimpse of such clear logic lying between the wooden structure and the enclosure. It seems to me everything is used and placed in the way it supposed to be, the great beauty comes along in a sense that no redundancy nor waste occurs, also in the sense that things are brought out their best. And maybe, this is when the aesthetic of absence under philosophy of Tao or Kahn's Order happens.

UNCERTAINTY

Zen—an important philosophy influenced by Taoism. As described by Helmut Brinker:

"Zen art requires of the beholder tranquil and patient absorption, a pure and composed hearkening to that inaudible utterance, which yet subsumes in itself all things, and which points to the absolute Nothingness lying beyond all form and color(Chinese: wu, Japanese: mu)"¹⁶

And as discussed in his book, Zen emphasis on "the original and natural act of insight into the nature of being", and it favors the "wordless teaching" instead of any "intellectualization of their teachings" To better grasp the idea of 'nature' and 'nothingness' in Zen, here is an example concerning the relationship between the artist, bamboo and the calligraphy, as is written by D.T.Suzuki:

To become a bamboo and to forget that you are one with it while drawing it—this is the Zen of the bamboo, this is the moving with the 'rhythmic movement of the spirit' which resides in the bamboo as well as in the artist himself. What is now required of him is to have a firm hold on the spirit and yet not to be conscious of the fact.¹⁷

From the description, we can see clearly the significance of 'Nothingness' or the 'wordless' in Zen ideal. In the art of calligraphy, Zen leads

one into the state deprived of influence by consciousness or the influence of outside world, so that the calligrapher could "become a bamboo" and create a motion of strength and spirit in his writing. In this sense, moved of the 'being' of constraints and put into the nothingness, the artists would have much more freedom and potential to achieve their genius through the practice of Zen ideal. The state of one's mind would be reflected in the art piece, which is why Chinese for thousands of years, like to refer to the term of 'verve' or 'romantic beauty' to judge the work of artists, especially in painting and calligraphy.

NARRATIVE OF UNCERTAINTY IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

Toyo Iyto with his Metabolism design philosophy is one of the most important architects that to influence the trend of architecture in Japan, even in the world. Iyto acutely grasped the essence of the information age in a postmodern western society) and came up with his own architectural solution and design philosophy. The information age to his observation is like this: The internet has blurred the edge of the real world and the virtual world, thus changed the communication and organization of space. People lose their sense of belonging and memory due to the mobility. It is like they're living traveling. Everything is in the come and go trend in the consumerism society. Countless symbols are consumed and replaced. The cities are changing so much that every 20 years most of the architecture will be removed and rebuilt.¹⁸From all above, Iyto has come to his conclusion that the main character of postmodern society is about uncertainty. And from here, he built his architectural philosophy. At first, his uncertainty was the mimic of the wind and in architecture it was about lightness. While later, he turned to preference for semi-transparency and developed his deep understanding for the meaning of lightness, fluid and transience in architecture. He handed his thoughts to his student—kazuyo Sejima, and she put it to an even higher level and developed her own philosophy of uncertainty based on Iyto's influence and the Japanese culture.

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 7

KAZUYO SEJIMA

When speak of SANNA and Sejima, the words minimal, transparent, precise, delicate, calm, fluid, lightness...will always come into my mind. Sejima's architecture has a sense of ambiguous beauty, like the novel by Yasunari Kawabata in which Time seems to be frozen by the silence. And the "Japan-ness" impression is strong in Sejima's work. Without a doubt, it is related to her living experience of traditional Japanese culture, in which the atmosphere is about semi-transparent, transparent and lightness, as she recalls. She imbeds her own unique understanding and develops the sense of pure and spiritual in her space which is like Zen. And from the view of Zen aesthetic, everything is not constrained and is of great potential. This is also the traditional philosophical aesthetic of Wabi-sabi in Japan. As a native Japanese architect, Sejima apparently got influence from those philosophies in Japanese culture. In her work, the material is always transparent or semi-transparent, which is good for weakening the stiffness caused by using of simple geometry. She put great effort in research about the optical property of the materials. Even if she uses wall, she will try to adjust the wall to be brighter and lighter to minimize the feel of heaviness, which gives a sense of immobile or deprived of potential. Similarly, we can see why she likes to use the dense while thin columns inside and reduce the thickness of the floor slab and the roof, so as to achieve the feel of lightness. In her building, daylight penetrates through the transparent or semi-transparent glass, softly diffused in the space. The white or light colored materials continues to reflect and diffuse the light, making it a "sea of light", which renders the uncertainty of the era and fused with the virtual world of electronic media.

Sejima inherited the philosophy of Uncertainty in visual quality from Iyto, while she got the inspiration of the functional Uncertainty from Rem Koolhaas, who preferred in a macro level to break down the existing function units and recombine them. However, without the lens of the Japanese Zen aesthetic, Koolhaas would never expect Sejima could be the extension of his thoughts. In fact Sejima already turned the functional Uncertainty from the macro to the

micro level—she based her design on analysis of people's basic desire and daily life, which goes deep into the humanity.

FINDING THE POSSIBLE NARRATIVE

As architect Michael Benedikt writes in *For an Architecture of Reality*, architecture should have its "direct esthetic experience of the real"¹⁹, and it can be independent meaningful without being symbolic. Also, Peter Zumthor implied the same concern "Architecture is not the symbol nor icon for other things. That's not the intrinsic essence of architecture."²⁰Rather, from Michael Benedikt's understanding, the reality or essence of architecture is about qualities or the real tangible elements that manifest the 'presence', 'significance', 'materiality' and 'emptiness' of architecture.²¹To be aware of this reality is important to carry on my research. For when I refer to the aesthetic of Zen and Tao, it indeed has symbolic aesthetical and ethical interference. While, I am though, focusing on its potential to contribute to the reality of architecture. So, instead of putting up a Zen painting on the wall to indicate this is the tea house, I would rather focus on selecting the right finish materials with aesthetic of Wabi-sabi, and give it the presence as a tea house. Reading into the eastern philosophy of aesthetic of absence from the cultural phenomenon together with analyzing the thoughts of related architects, I suggest that the aesthetic of absence under eastern philosophy in contemporary built environment could be pursued as Materiality, Emptiness and Uncertainty.

Figure 1: <http://www.maddoxarts.com/exhibitions/past/presence-and-absence/>

Figure 2: <http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/zoomObject.cfm?ObjectId=1250>

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY 8

Figure 1: <http://mindfuldiscipline.blogspot.com/2013/05/traditional-chinese-ink-wash-landscape.html>

Figure 2: <http://guiheadz.com/functional-fixedness-and-zen/>

¹ Pawson, John. 1996. *Minimum*. London: Phaidon.pg.12

² Laozi. *Tao Te Ching*. Chapter 11

³ Chang, Amos I. T., Laozi, and Amos Ih Tiao Chang. 1981. *The Tao of architecture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Pg.4

⁴ Brinker, Helmut, and Hiroshi Kanazawa. 1996. *Zen: masters of meditation in images and writings*. Zürich: Artibus Asiae. Pg.80

⁵ Ando wrote "Geometry as such gradually recedes from awareness, and the space alone provides emotional stimulus" Ando, "Light, Shadow and Form", P.458

⁶ Tadao Ando, "light", in Dal Co, Tadao Ando *Complete Works*, P.471.

⁷ Baek, Jin, "Shintai and the Empty Cross: Tadao Ando's church of the light"

⁸ Lobell, John. 1979. *between Silence and Light Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Pg. 64

⁹ Co, Francesco Dal. *Tadao Ando 1995-2010*. Pg. x

¹⁰ Wabi now connotes rustic simplicity, freshness or quietness, and can be applied to both natural and human-made objects, or understated elegance. Sabi is beauty or serenity that comes with age, when the life of the object and its impermanence are evidenced in its patina and wear, or in any visible repairs (wikipedia n.d.)

Figure 3: <http://7junipers.com/log/category/mediums/paintings/>

¹¹ Dal Co, Francesco. Tadao Ando. 2000. *Tadao Ando: complete works*. London: Phaidon Press. Pg. x

¹² Co, Francesco Dal. *Tadao Ando 1995-2010*. Pg. x

¹³ Lobell, John, and Louis I. Kahn. 1979. *between Silence and Light Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Boulder: Shambhala. Pg. 63

¹⁴ Lobell, John, and Louis I. Kahn. 1979. *between silence and light: spirit in the architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Boulder: Shambhala. Pg. x

¹⁵ Lobell, John, and Louis I. Kahn. 1979. *between silence and light: spirit in the architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Boulder: Shambhala. Pg. x

¹⁶ Brinker, Helmut. 1987. *Zen in the art of painting*. London: ARKANA. Pg.118

¹⁷ D.T.Suzuki. 1959. "Zen and Japanese Culture". *Bollingen Series LXIV*, pg.31

¹⁸ Citation needed.

¹⁹ Benedikt, Michael. 1987. *for an architecture of reality*. New York: Lumen Books. Pg.4

²⁰ Zumthor, Peter, Maureen Oberli-Turner, and Catherine Schelbert. 2006. *Thinking architecture*. Basel: Birkhäuser.

²¹ Benedikt, Michael. 1987. *for an architecture of reality*. New York: Lumen Books.

FINDING NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL SPACE OF AESTHETIC OF ABSENCE UNDER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

SHUTING ZHAO
MIAMI UNIVERSITY

ADDENDUM

I believe architect's social role is to build to dwell people to their existence. Thinking about existence it comes to time and memory, people's perception towards the reality of architecture, and the way people dwell inside. So I appreciate those architects who seeks solutions preserving culture and identity, who talks about those instinct aesthetics in way of build, who cares about place making and tries to make people aware of their existence as well as their surroundings. And this is what I'm seeking for in architecture, a phonological way of thinking the Presence of Absence of time and memory, reality about architecture, and people's existence.

I learned of my thesis more from the juries' input on my presentation. The narratives in architectural space of presence of absence relates to aspects of Experience, Materiality, inside and outside, Structure, Ambiguity.

Experience: would be the first thing I consider. Experience of the miracle day light and landscape conditions in Finland, through careful consideration of building's direction and relation to the climate and urban context, including the water edge and Green Park and further the frame of costal views.

Materiality: speaks for architecture. The warm touch of wood speaks for the Finnish traditional way of build. The white concrete is the panel for painting of the colorful sky which is changing all the time, also it creates a sense of lightness and floating which is very distinct from the traditional enclosed and heavy buildings. The

Transparency of the glass creates the ambiguity of space and creates more visual interaction. Also reflection of the environment through the glass and water edge. The translucent concrete suggests things happening behind. Reflection: the reflection in the water of the building. Reflection of the environment on the glass curtain wall. Reflection of the changing sky in the white concrete panel.

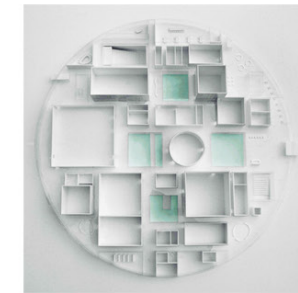
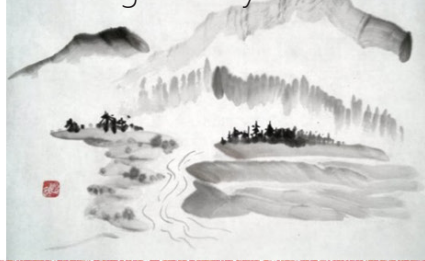
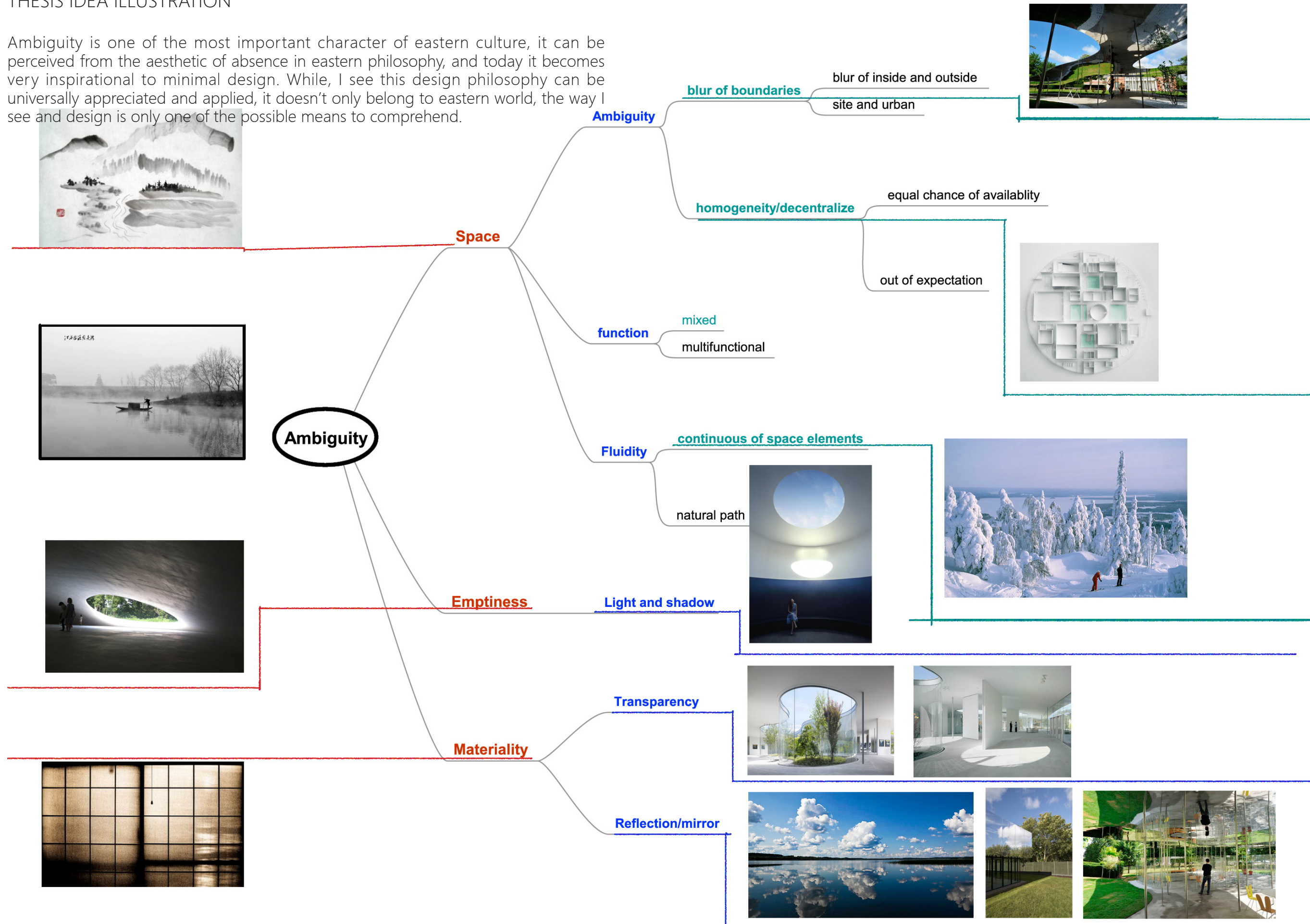
Inside and outside: as people move through, they will be aware of what's happening outside from the light and shadow casted in the building, as well as from the views related to outside. While architectures in Finland traditionally are enclosed and heavy, they may not have enough gaps for people to breath and experience the outside world from inside. So I propose to break up the one giant massing into several, so to capture and bring in the light and views of outside landscape.

Structure: The hidden structure behind the white translucent concrete panel is revealed in the evening. The aesthetics and structure works together

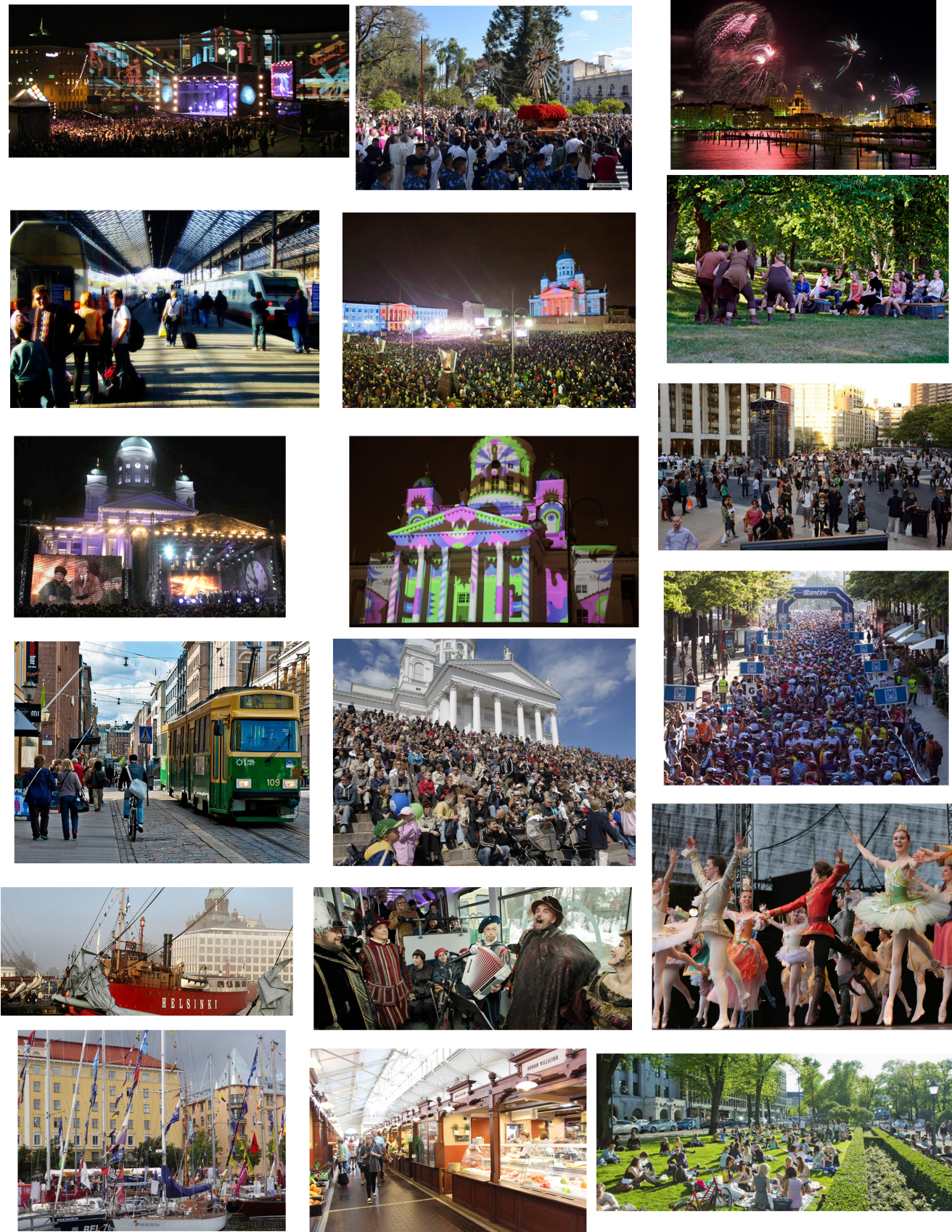
Ambiguity: through the irregular direction of space, different edge conditions, the transparency of the glass that creates the boundary less public space on the first floor. All of which is to create more interaction between people, architecture, and environment.

THESIS IDEA ILLUSTRATION

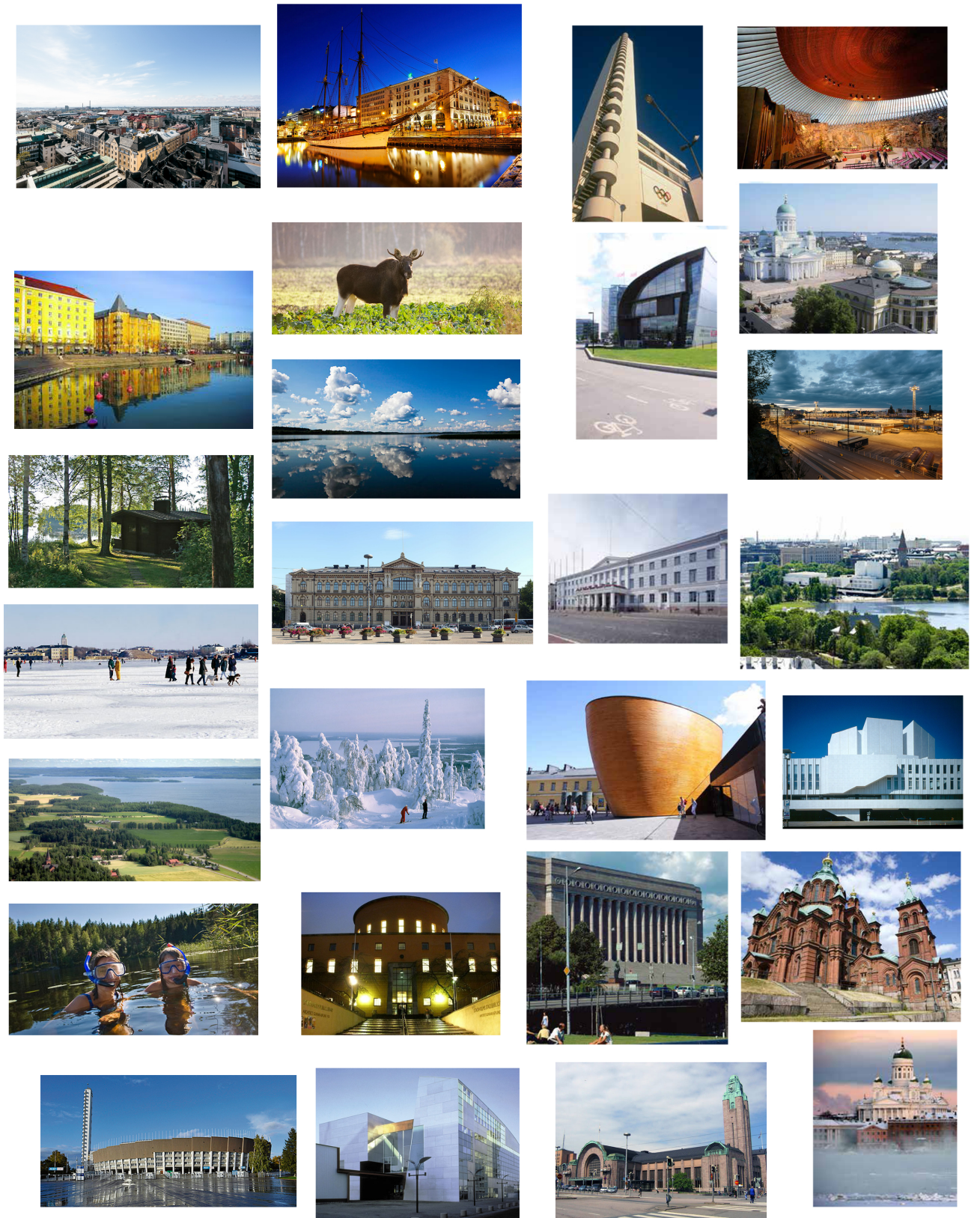
Ambiguity is one of the most important character of eastern culture, it can be perceived from the aesthetic of absence in eastern philosophy, and today it becomes very inspirational to minimal design. While, I see this design philosophy can be universally appreciated and applied, it doesn't only belong to eastern world, the way I see and design is only one of the possible means to comprehend.



Public Life in Helsinki



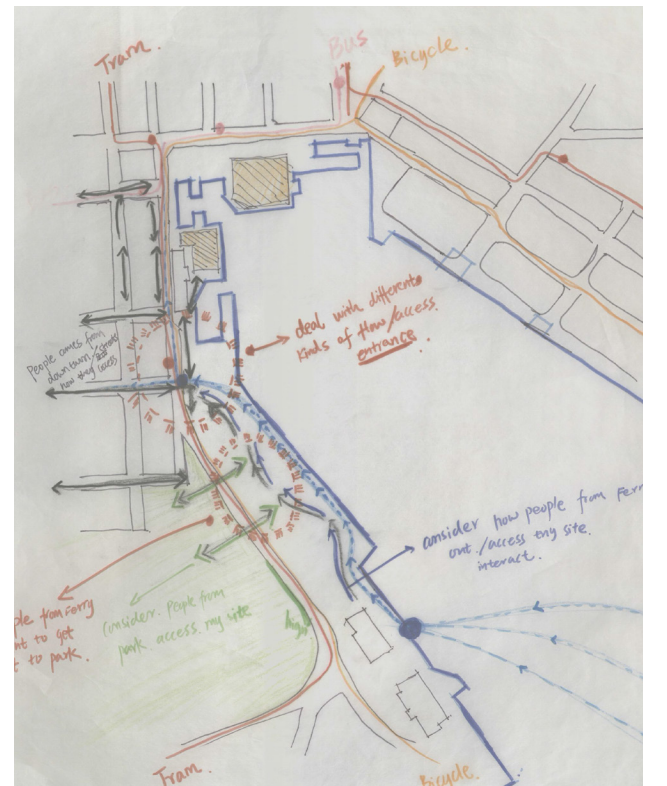
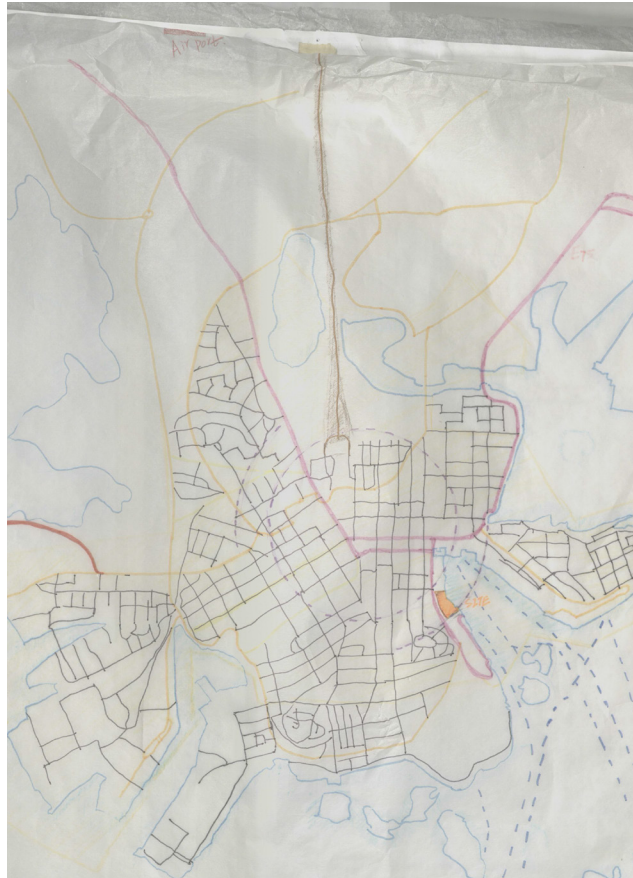
Finland Landscape

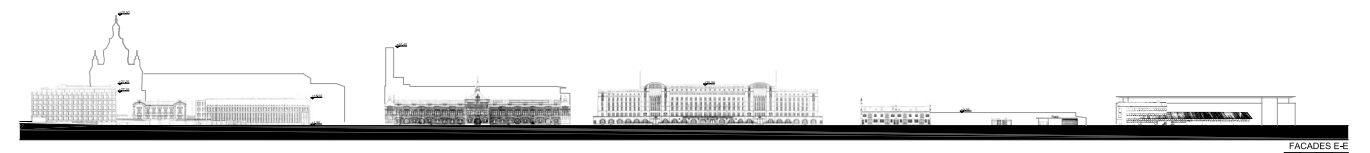
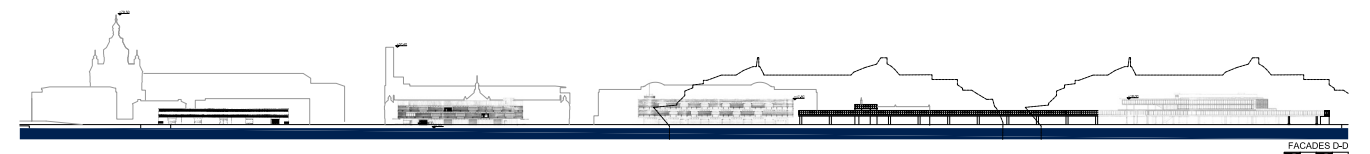
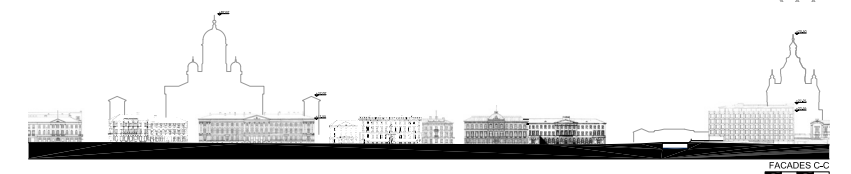
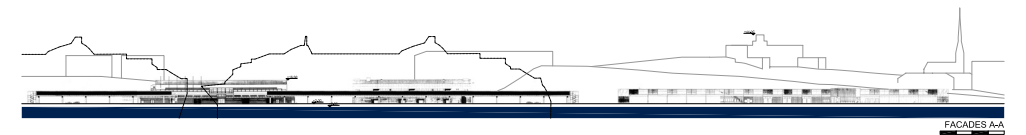
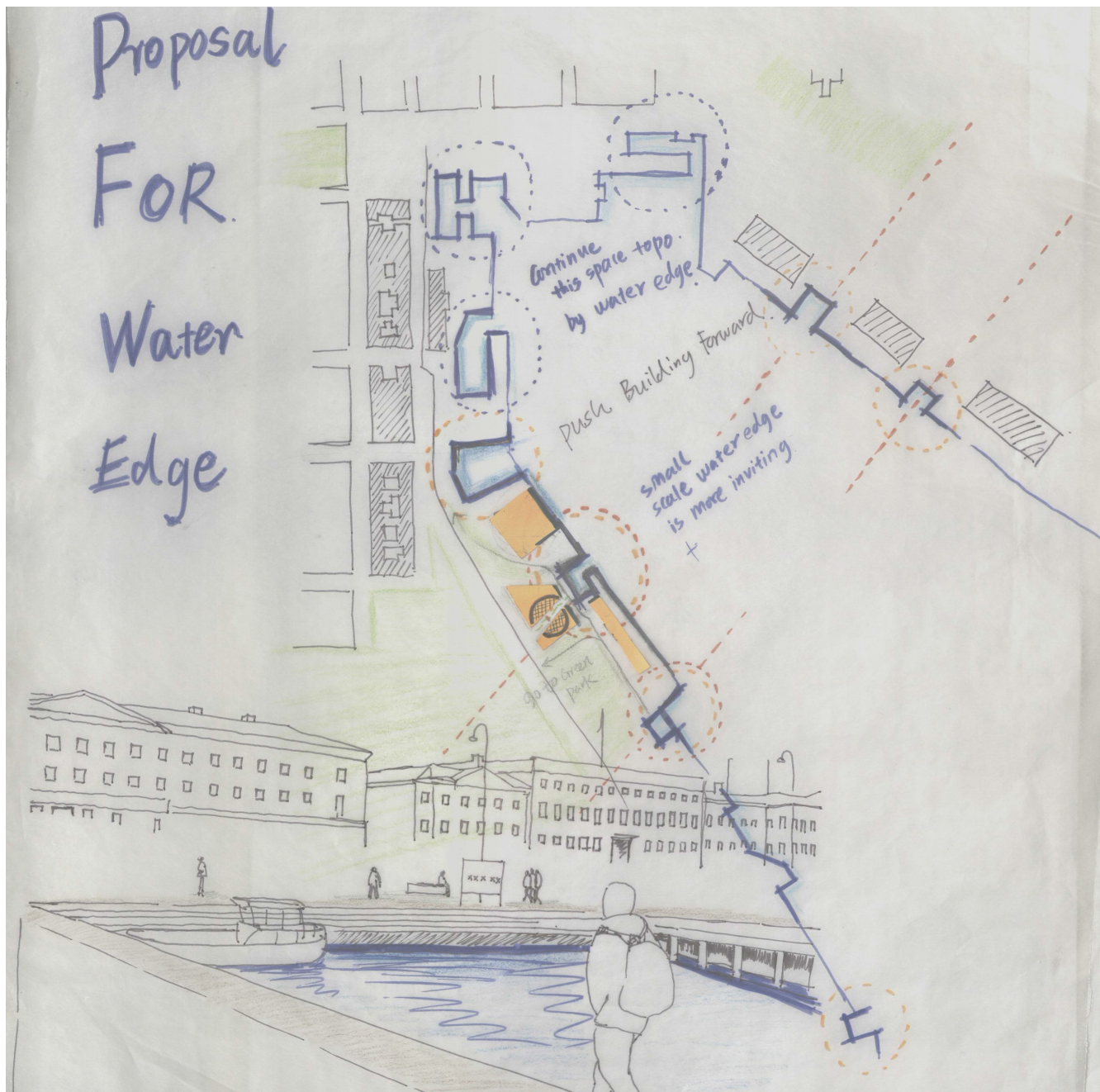
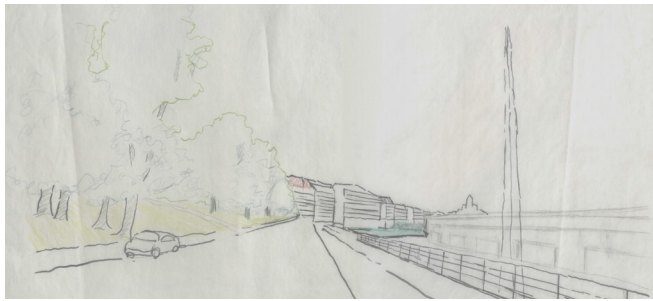
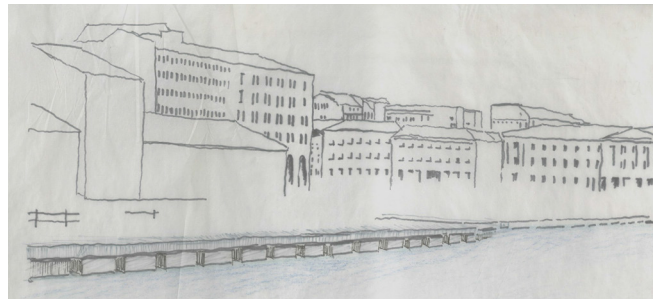
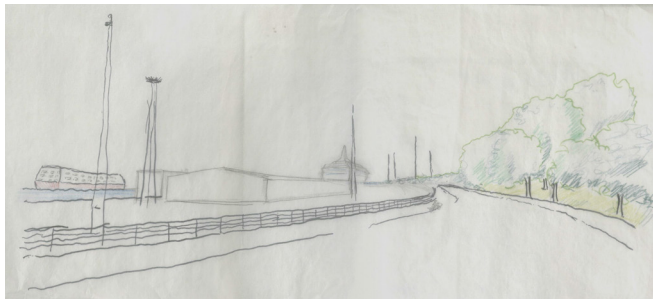


Site Surroundings

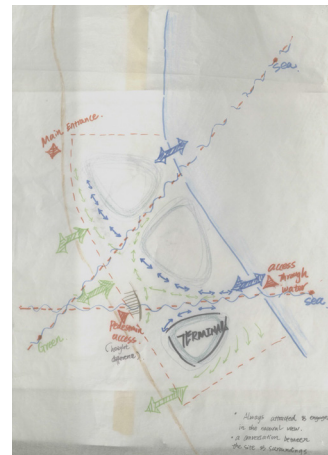
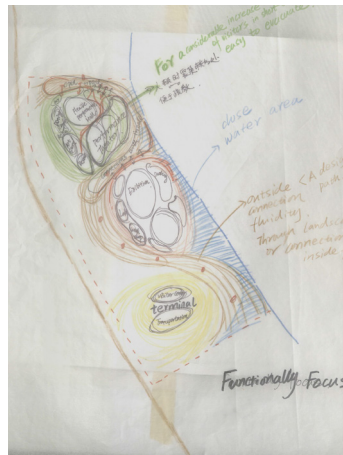
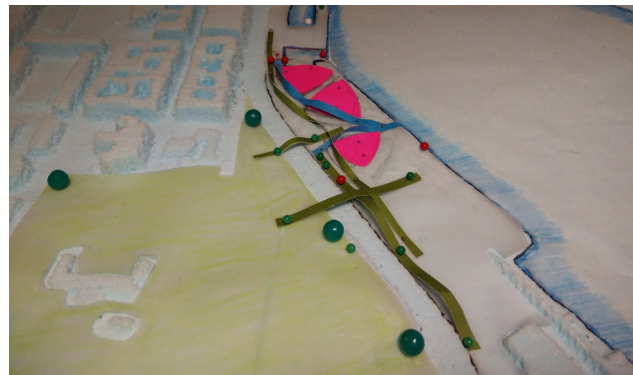
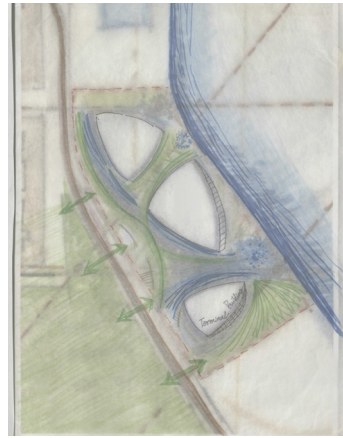


Site Analysis

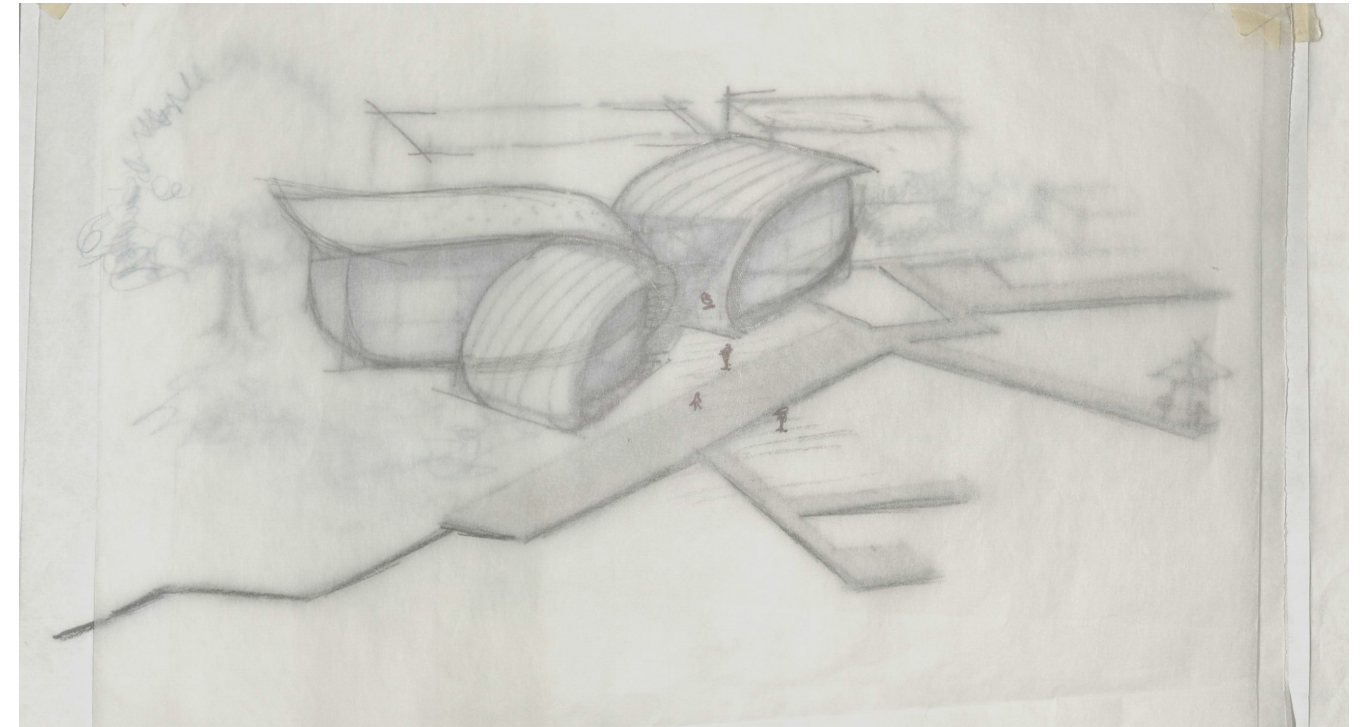




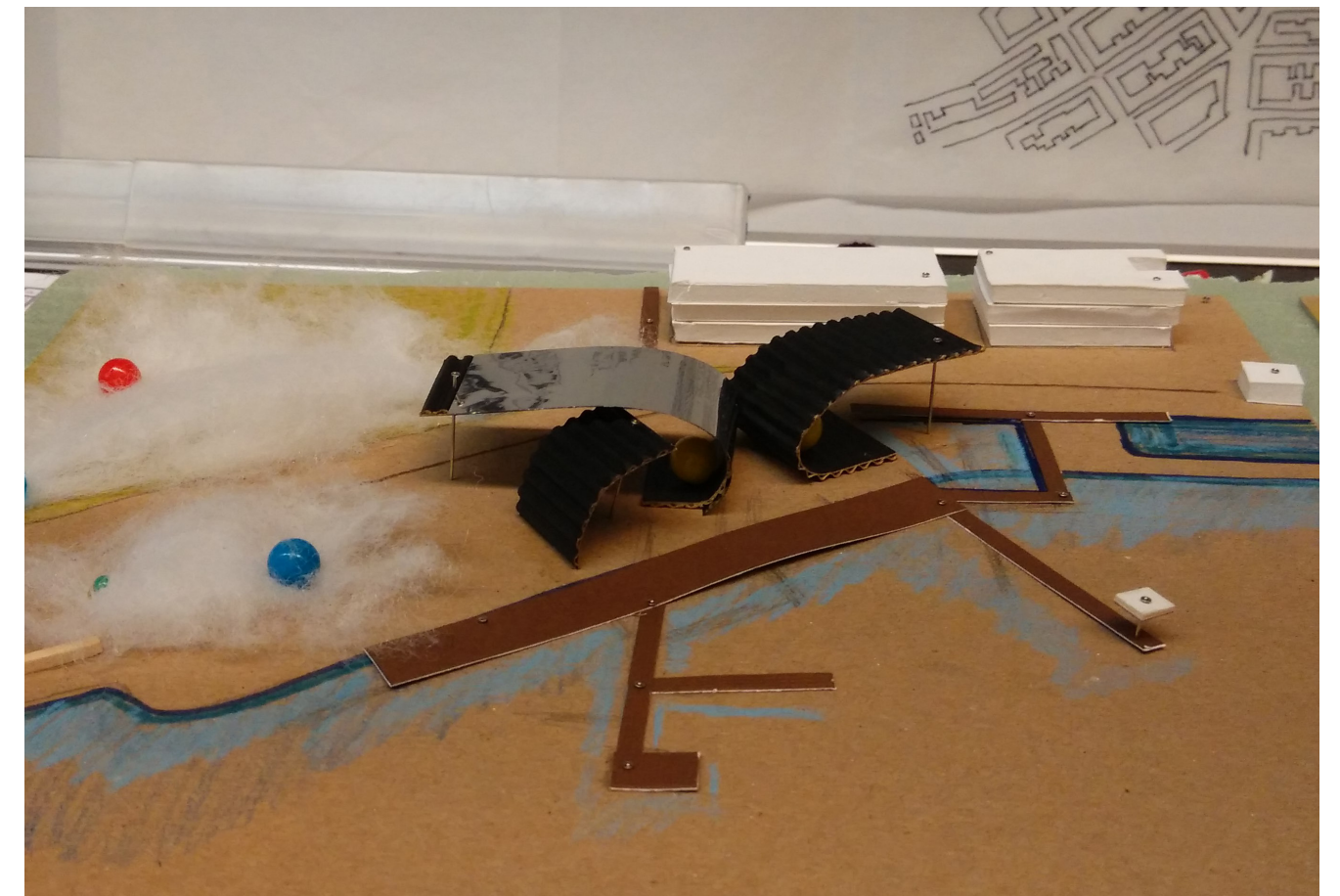
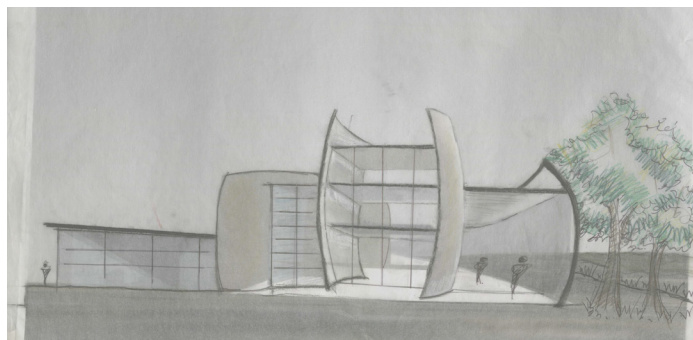
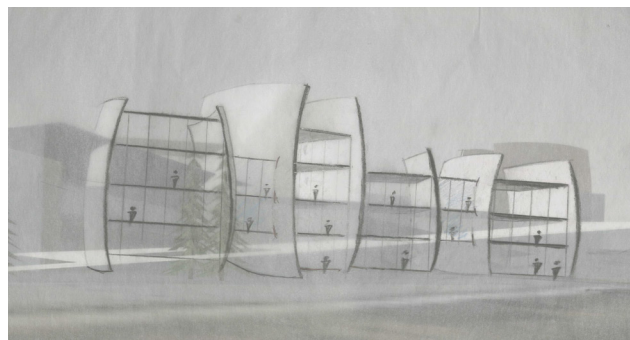
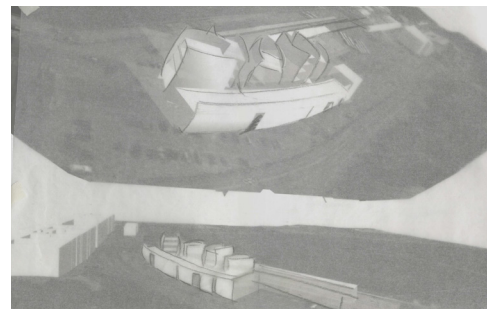
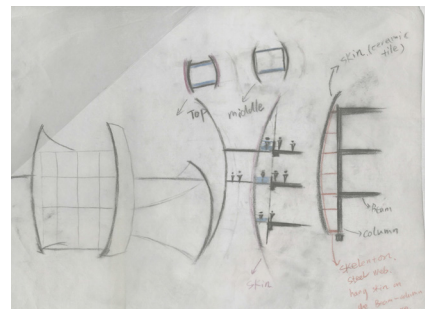
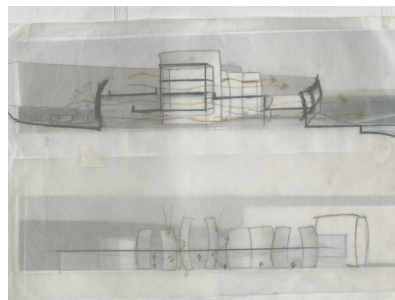
Proposal One



Proposal Two



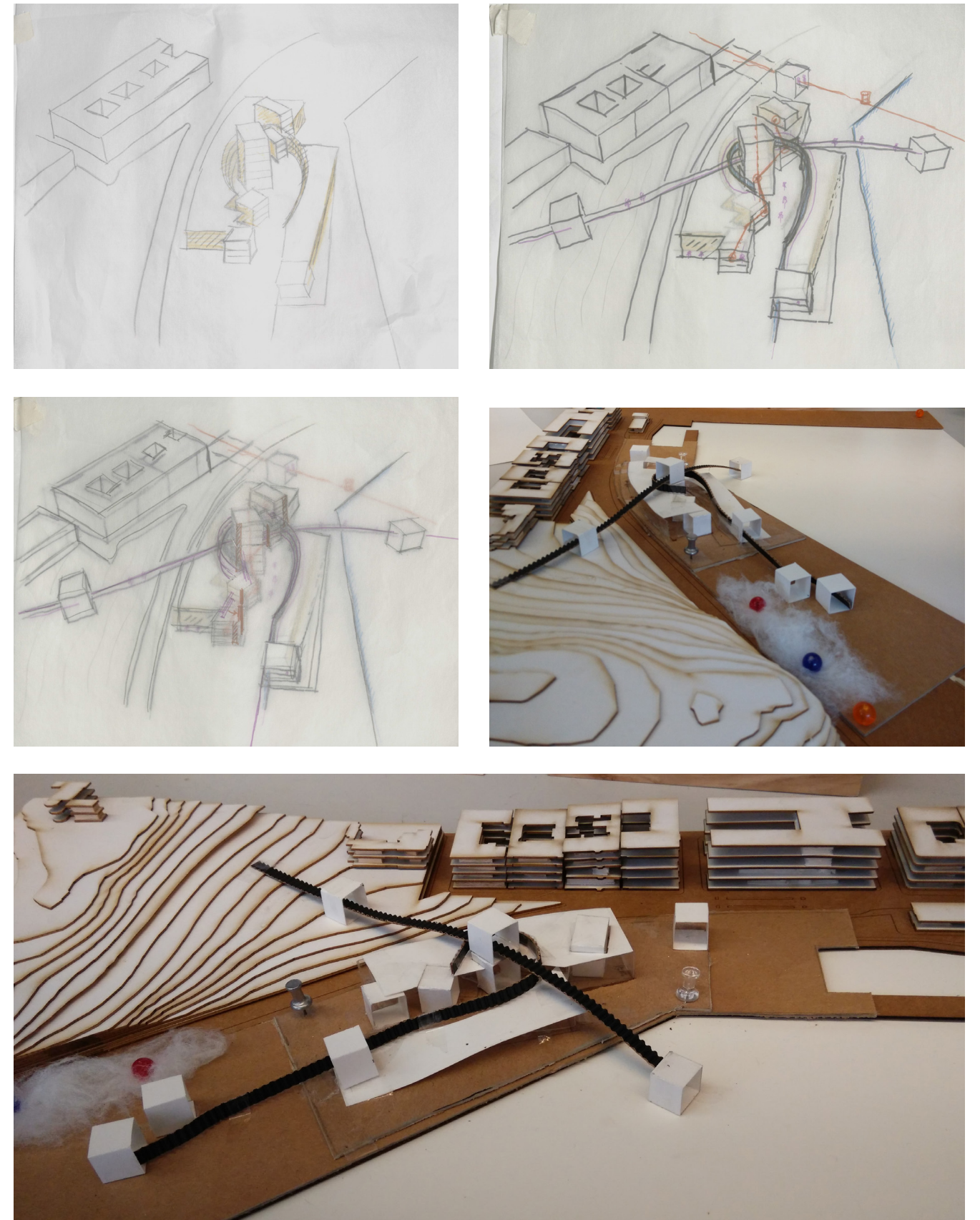
Proposal Two



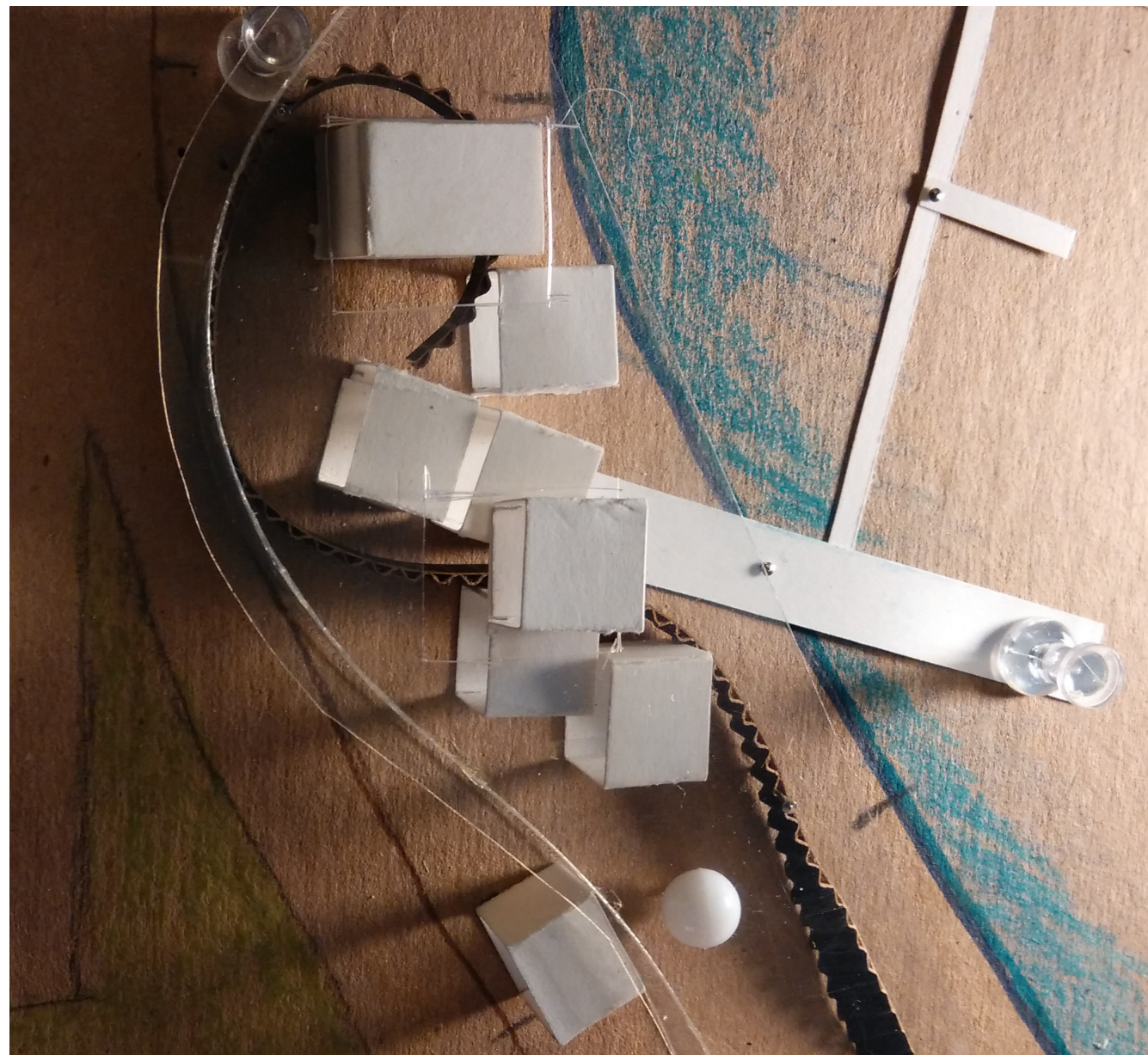
Proposal Three



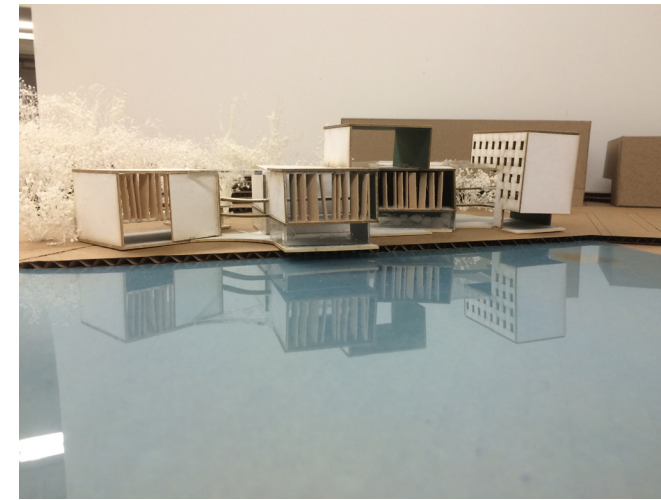
Proposal Four

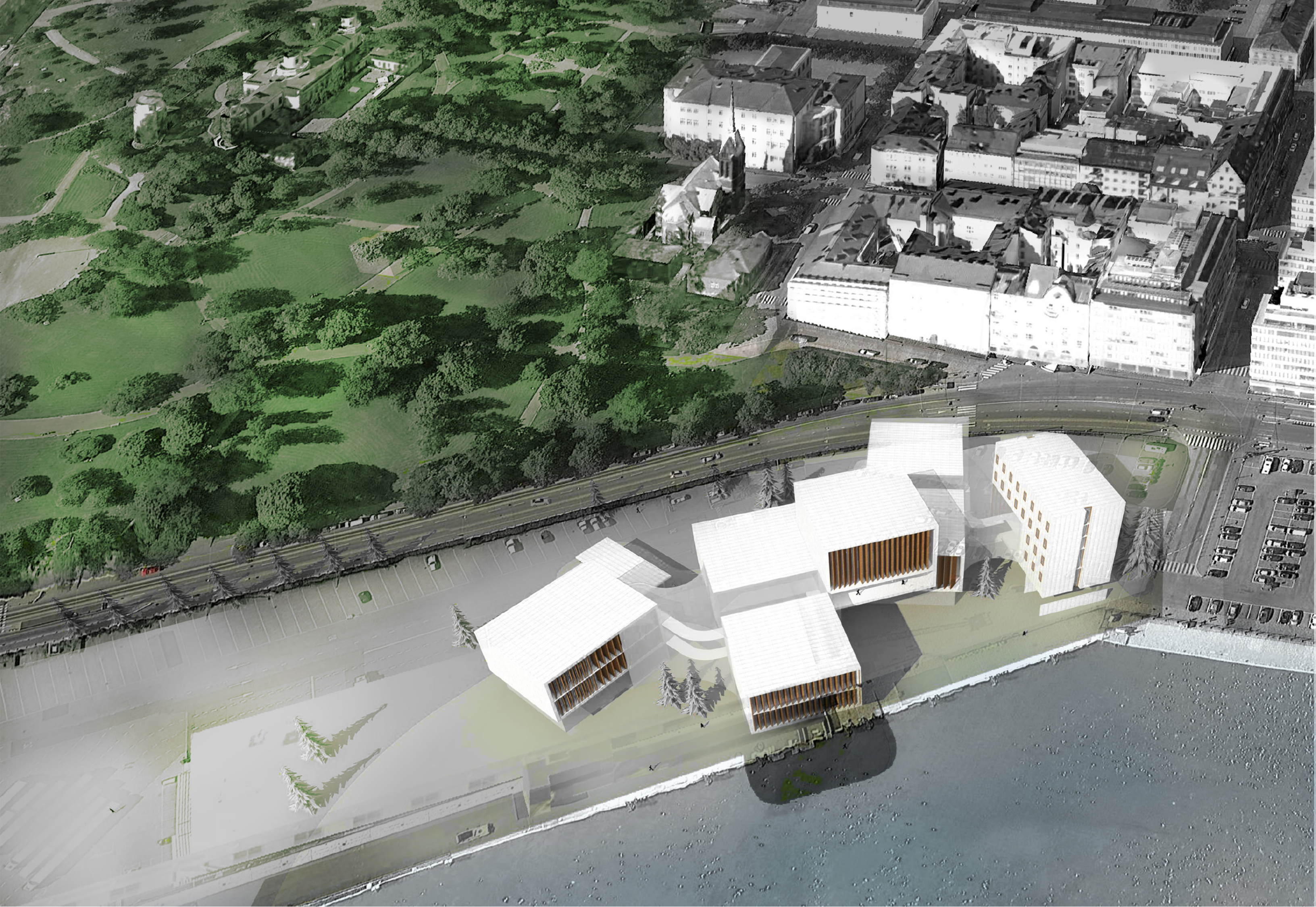


Proposal Five



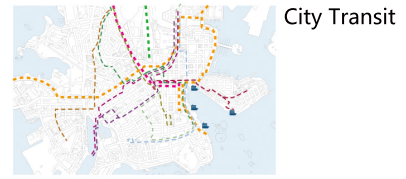
Final Proposal





Helsinki City

Helsinki City



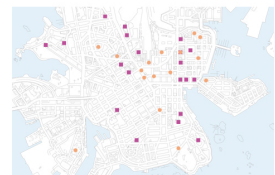
City Transit



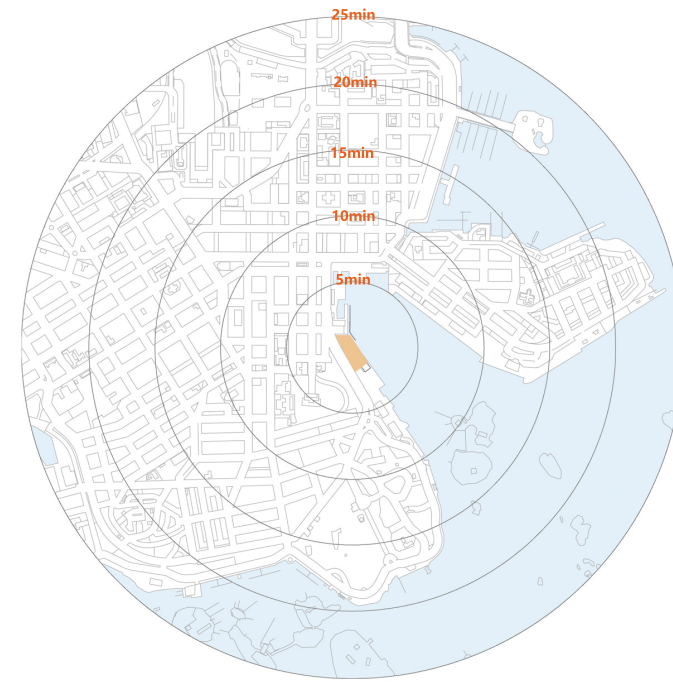
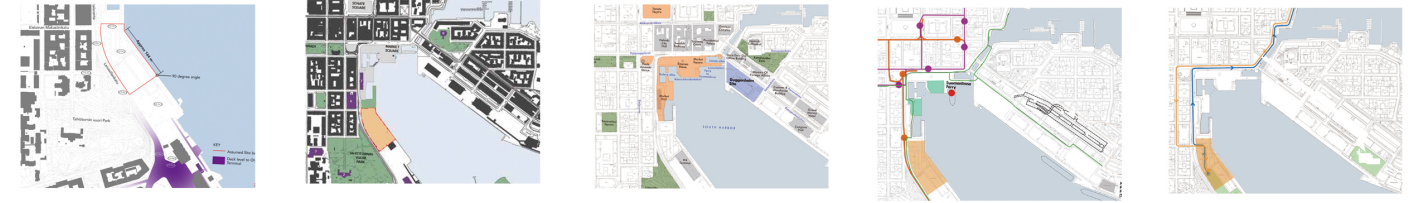
City Core



Landscape



Attractions

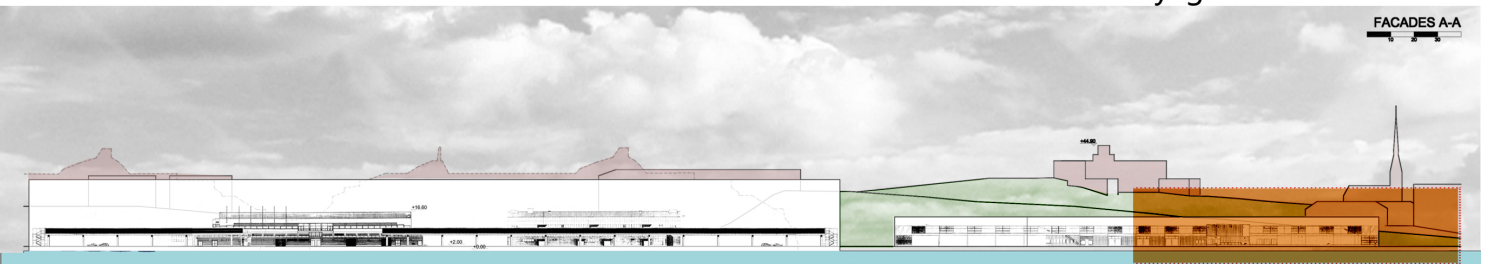


Site Section Analysis



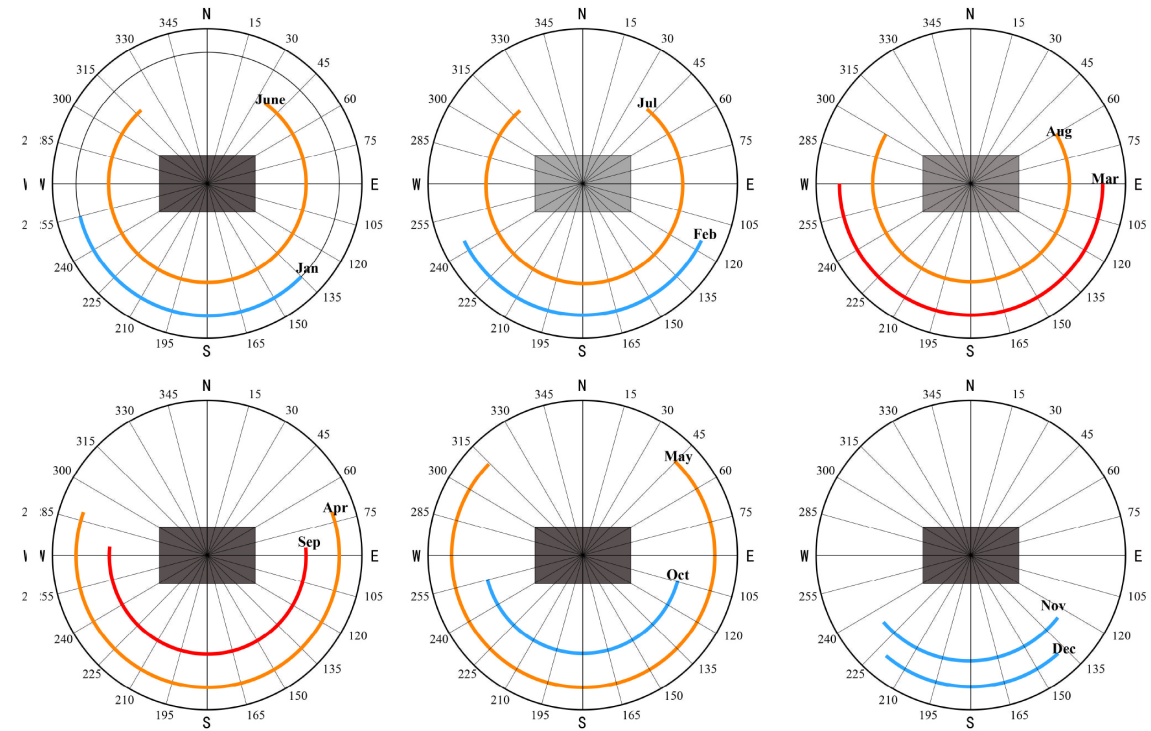
FACADES B-B

Facade Daylight Analysis



FACADES A-A

Helsinki Daylight Study

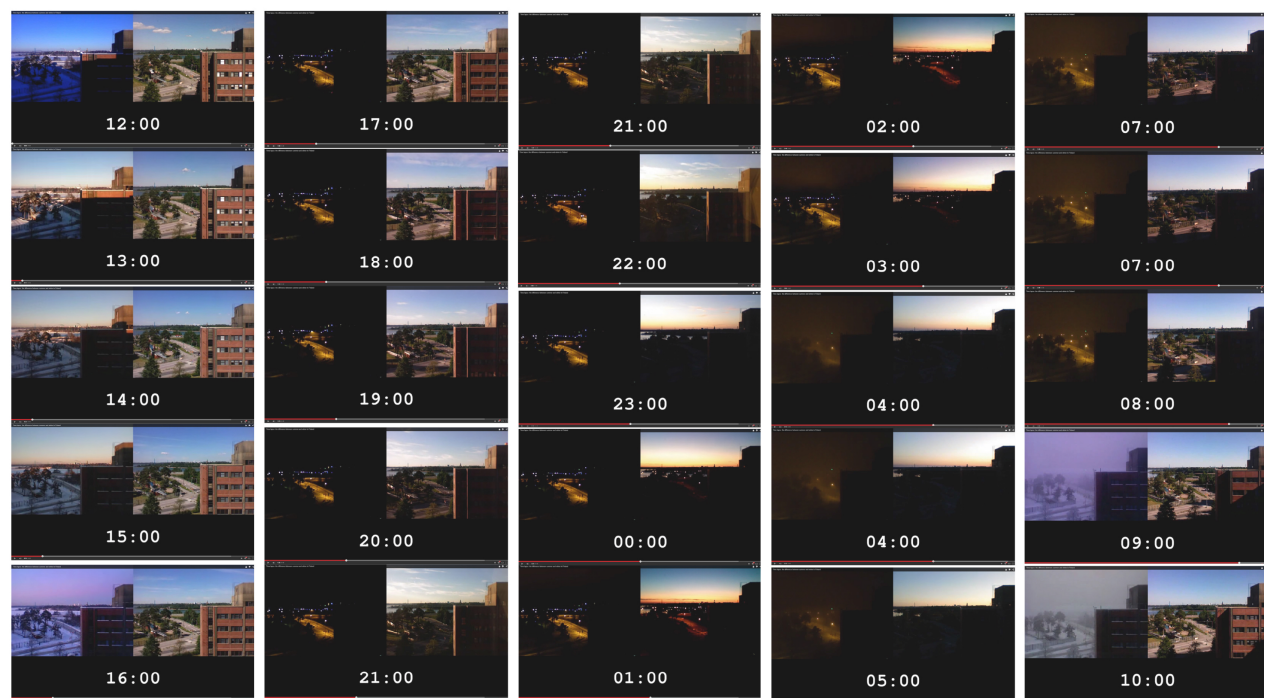


Year round Daylight Azimuth

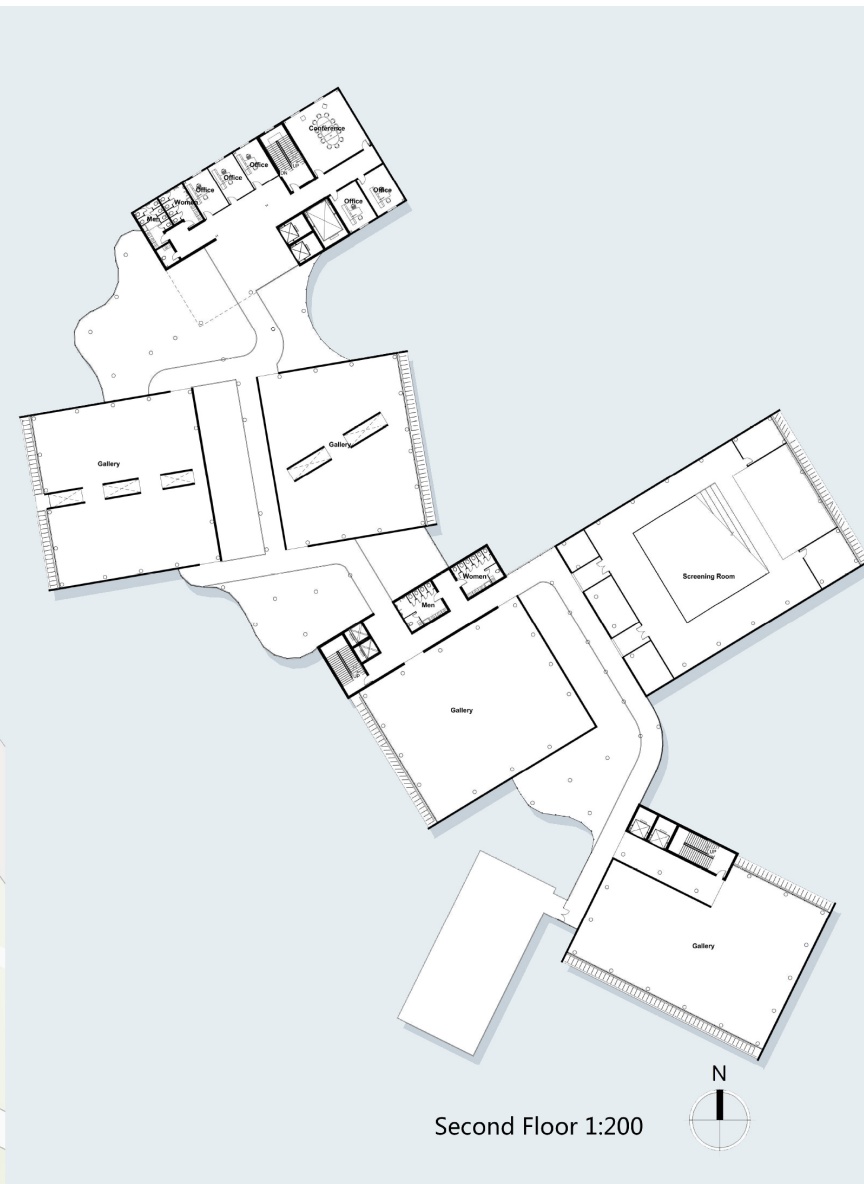
Light and Messing Study

Light and Massing study

- Office: 450m²
- Storage: 1838m²
- Retail: 516m²
- Party: 430m²
- Workshop: 1052m²
- Temp Gallery: 529m²
- Gallery: 4433m²
- Screening Room: 643m²
- Service: 2127m²
- Total: 11590m²









Section 1-1 1:100



Section 2-2 1:100



Section 3-3 1:100

