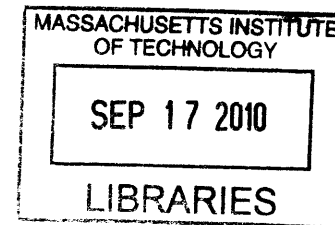


Library for the Future

Julie Hui-Guang Kaufman



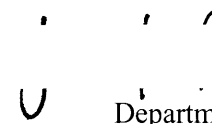
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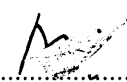
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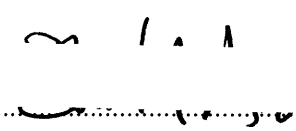
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May 20, 2002

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The public library is the principal means whereby the
record of man's **thoughts** and **ideas**,
and the expression of his creative **imagination**,
are made **freely** available to **all**

– UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1972



The library is intended to be an egalitarian institution for the dissemination of knowledge to the public. With the advent of the internet, information has been further democratized and the status of the library has been questioned. However, its status as a symbol of the city's vitality has not lessened. While the internet can speedily distribute kernels of information, books provide the means of realization. As an important cultural center of the city, the library takes on various roles in the quest to create a culture that fosters education. Thus, it is more important than ever to create a space that challenges the identity of the library as it is today and provides a forum for the interactions of the city. The work of this thesis examines the library's influence on the reader, the community, and the world at large.

“Libraries do many things. They collect, organise and preserve;
they make knowledge accessible

- not books -

but **knowledge.**”¹

The importance of occupying a library building rather than “remotely accessing” it must be understood. Finding factoids online is a solitary activity. Speed replaces the communal activities of searching, understanding and realizing, often replacing accuracy as well. The internet cannot simulate the feeling of the book, its weight, feel, and smell. Even the taboo food stains and pencil markings in the margins of a book trace the presence of the body, the mind, and the evolution of knowledge. The history of the book can be seen not only through the printed words, but within the markings left behind and the dates stamped in the back cover. Space, materiality, and activity must be emphasized in the library to underline the difference between information of the mind and understanding of the whole.

The need for interaction among patrons has led to a broadening of the term “library” and its uses. This word now refers to a cultural center intended for the spread of knowledge of all sorts. What once housed the source of man’s cumulative education written for posterity in books, now also serves as a source of understanding between people. This “secular cathedral” has merged the museum, the concert hall, and the community center, validating their lessons: What we know is not only fact, but feeling. The library touches our senses as much as our mind. The library has become a site of sharing experiences learned from study and learned from the World, brought together in one building. It is a physical manifestation of enlightenment.

“What do people want from their (public) library?

They are looking to libraries as more than a source of books

... they are looking for **human contacts.**”²



THE LIBRARY IS A BUILDING CONTAINING ALL
KNOWLEDGE

THEN, THE THRESHOLD BECOMES AN
IMPORTANT PART OF THE EXPERIENCE



The library is often considered figuratively to be the container of all knowledge. Though this is impossible, the library still remains the symbol of enlightenment in a city. Thus, the stacks can become a jewel box, displaying the books as an enticement for the public. Whether this takes the form of a transparent glass cube or a isolated, self-contained capsule, the stacks can be a beacon, guiding people towards education. The journey through the library to reach the books is important, as is the method of threshold through which they are revealed.

“On a more intimate level, users can see clearly that, throughout the library, **they are its justification;** that without them, the materiel [sic], what ever its value, would be lifeless.

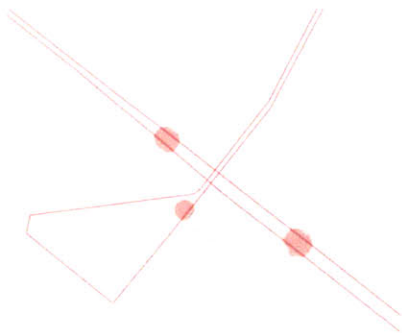
Light, sculpted views over the town,
ample means of finding one’s bearings
– everything is at the user’s service.”³

This project seeks to set an example for what a community building can be to a city by examining a site at the corner of Massachusetts and Western Avenues in Central Square, the heart of Cambridge, Massachusetts. This site, however, is vital for the municipality and would demonstrate the city’s dedication to the education of all its citizens. Several bus stops begin at that very corner and the Central Square T-stop is just a block away. The transportation and governmental infrastructure is present near the site and make it ideal for a community library. The City of Cambridge currently has plans to expand its central library, located near Harvard Square. There is also a small branch library a short distance off of Massachusetts Avenue.

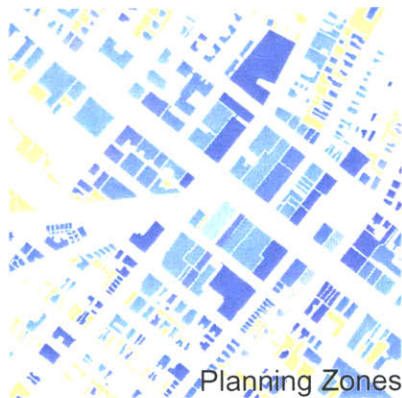
Central Square is a vital front on which the library could expand its readership. Currently this area of Cambridge is populated with what one might call “undesirables.” However, the creation of the library is an opportunity to attract these people to the joys of reading. Perhaps it begins as a warm place to rest, but the library should ultimately entice its occupants into the pursuit of knowledge within its walls, as well as outside of them.

The library must relate to its urban context in order to draw people in. Although Central Square appears to be very disordered, there is in fact a regular pattern of parcels which extends perpendicularly from Massachusetts Avenue. In addition, each block has two “fronts” which also create an axis. The library responds to the overlapping of these two perpendicular systems, allowing one of the grid areas to remain open as a plaza. The building is also striated by function, according to the fabric of the land.





Movement

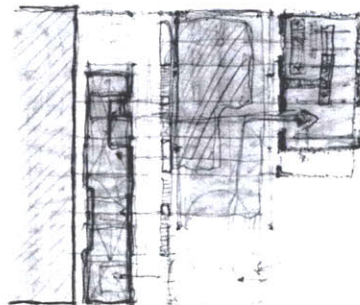
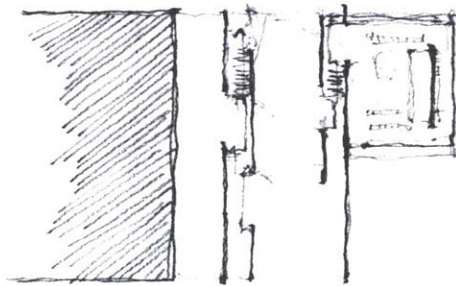
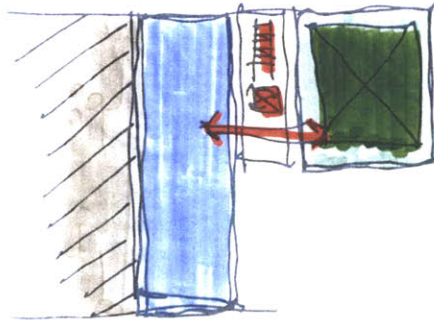


Planning Zones



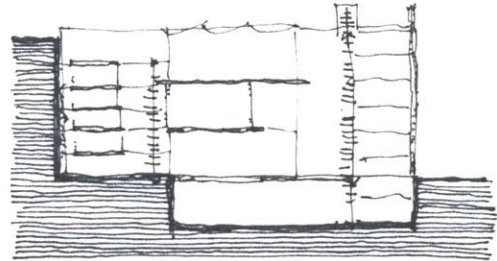
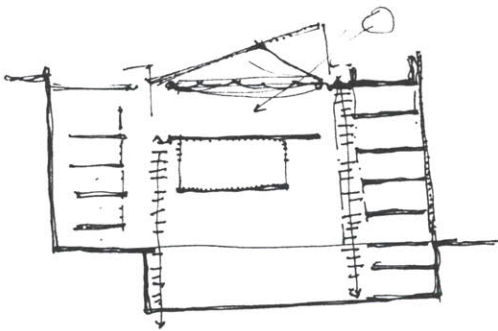
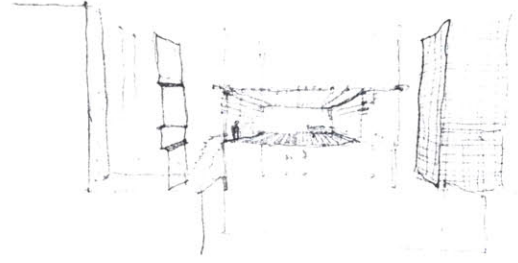
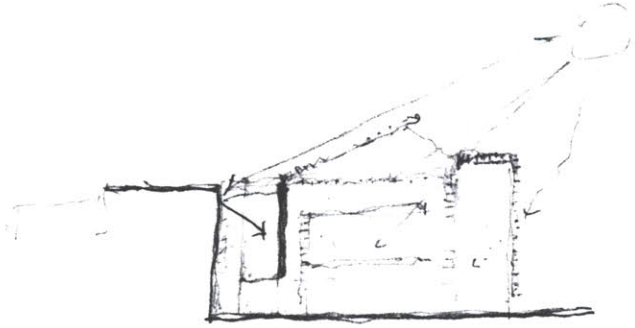
Public/Private





The library is composed of three bands: an office area, the reading rooms, and the stacks. A visitor enters on the northern corner off of the small plaza and into a spacious lobby. From the lobby one can see the stacks, but must travel through the library before entering them. A large staircase leads to the office areas and the reading landscape, a large open plane at the top of the building that can be used for reading as well as more interactive activities and classes. From this level, one can descend into the formal reading room, a warm, quiet, soft space for serious study and contemplation. Both reading rooms have access to the stacks which are located in three thick walls. The walls contain the books themselves in a regular grid that seems continuous in all directions. The only variation is in the area of each floor and the light coming through each window (modulated by undulating perforated metal screens.) Tying the whole building together is a large roof, given its specific form in order to allow light into the reading areas and the stair/light well.

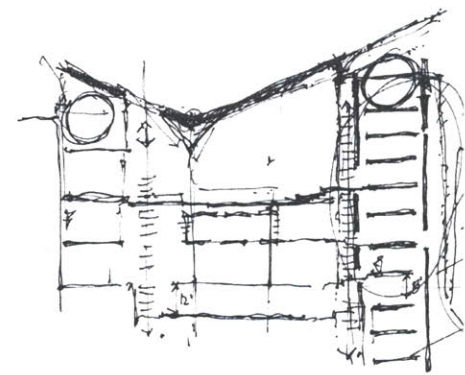
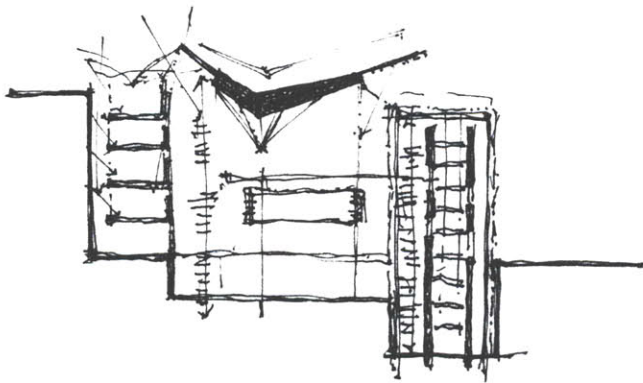
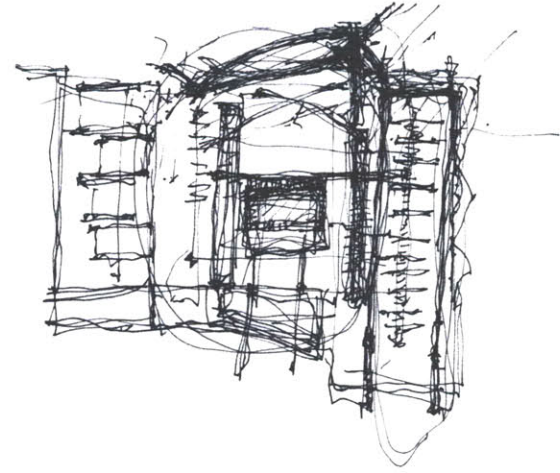
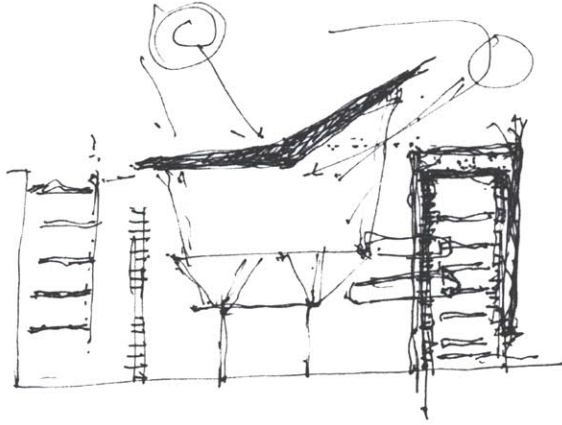
Process Diagrams

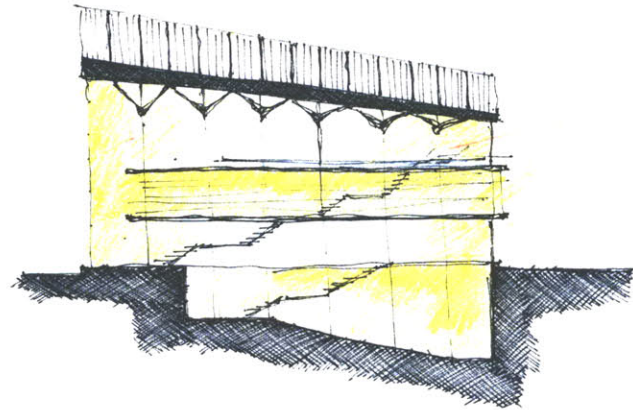
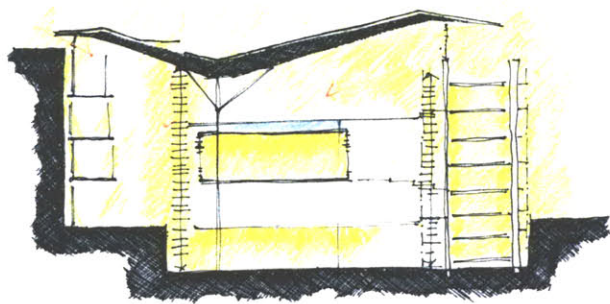
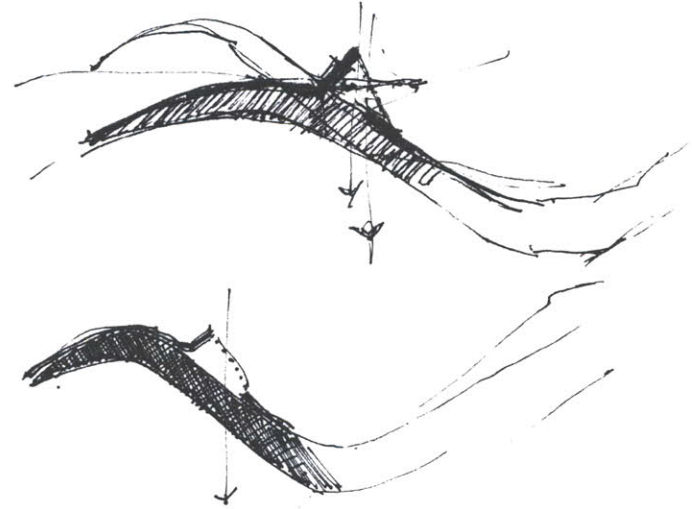
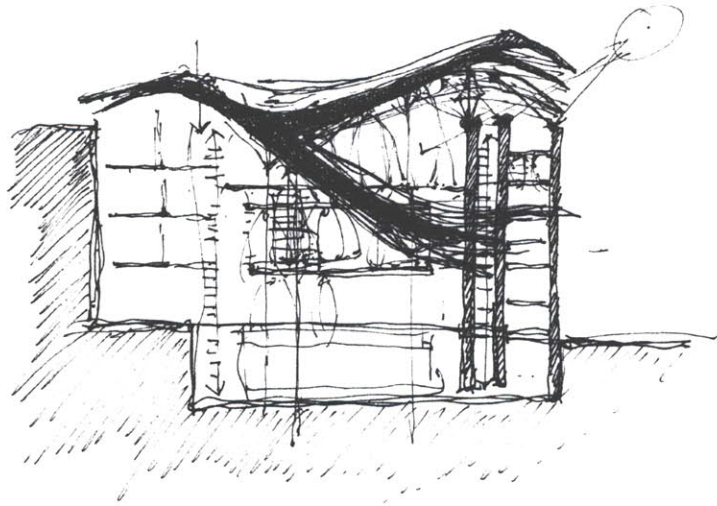


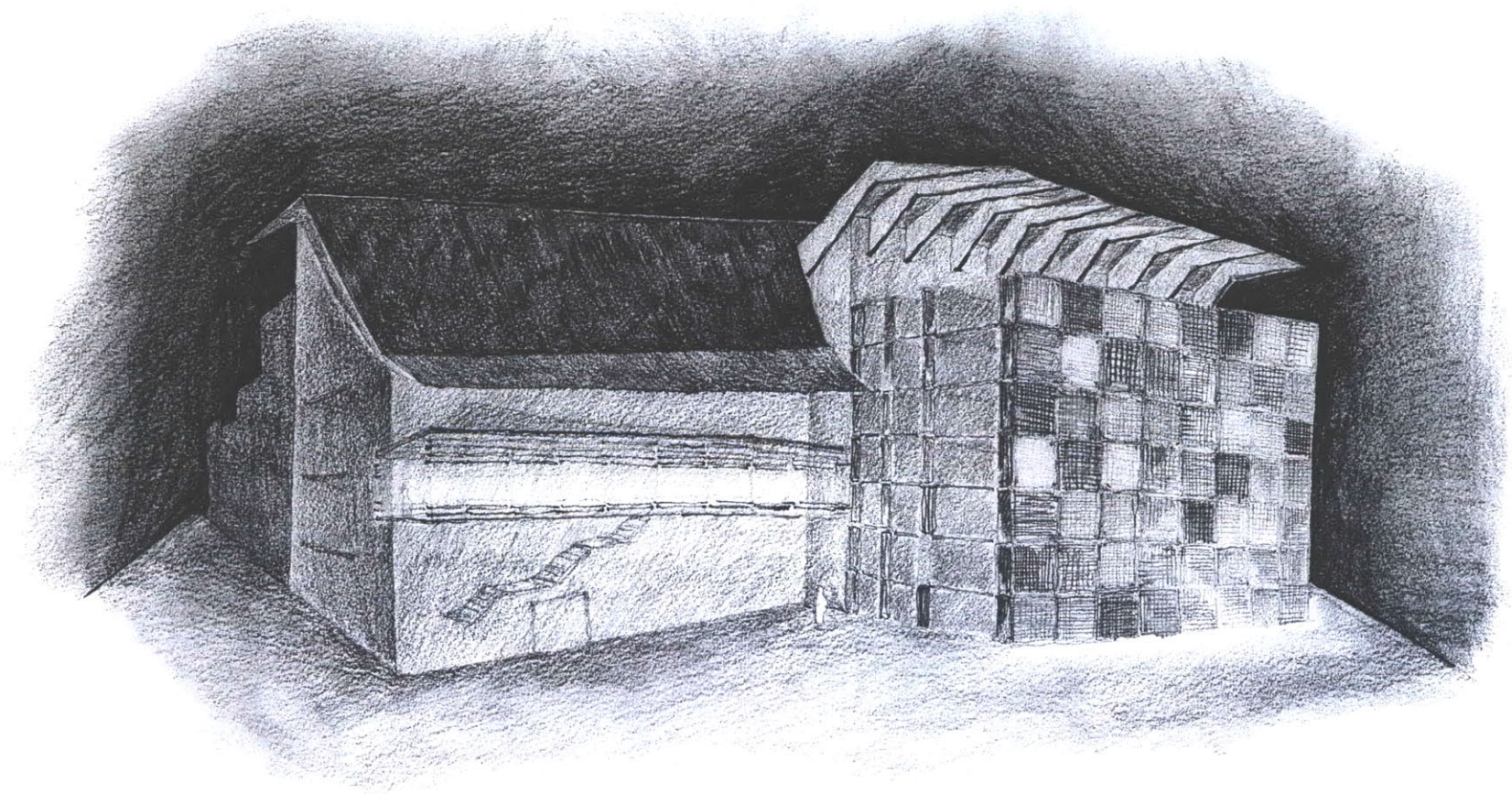
“Over the last 30 years, library work has evolved and library architecture must follow it. ...
It can also be a strong **landmark** in the town.”⁴

On this particular site, the tower of books begins to create a dialogue with the nearby church, further emphasizing the secular religiosity of a library as well as enlivening the intersection on which the library is located.



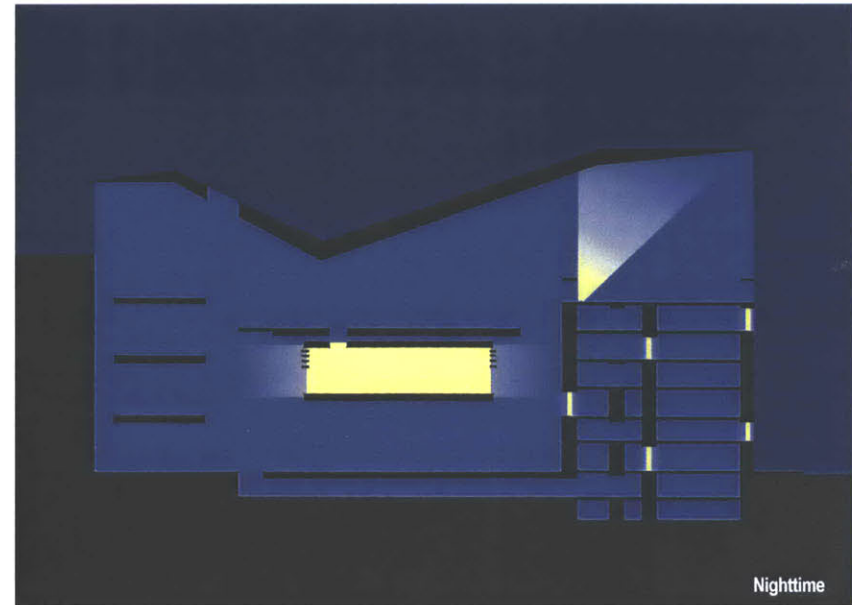
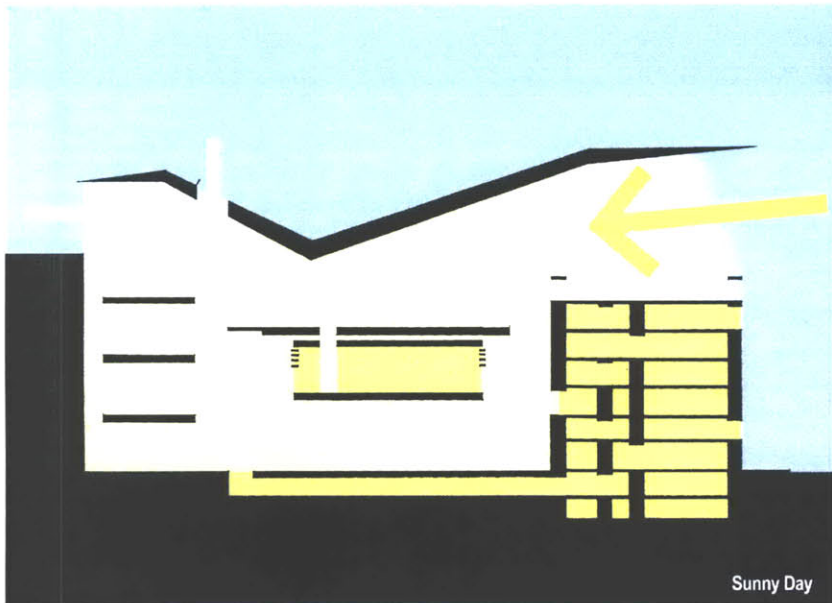
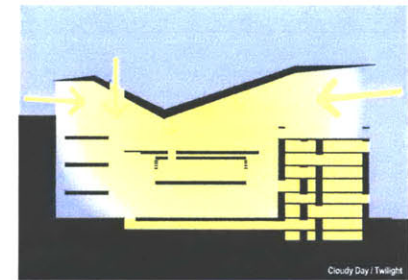


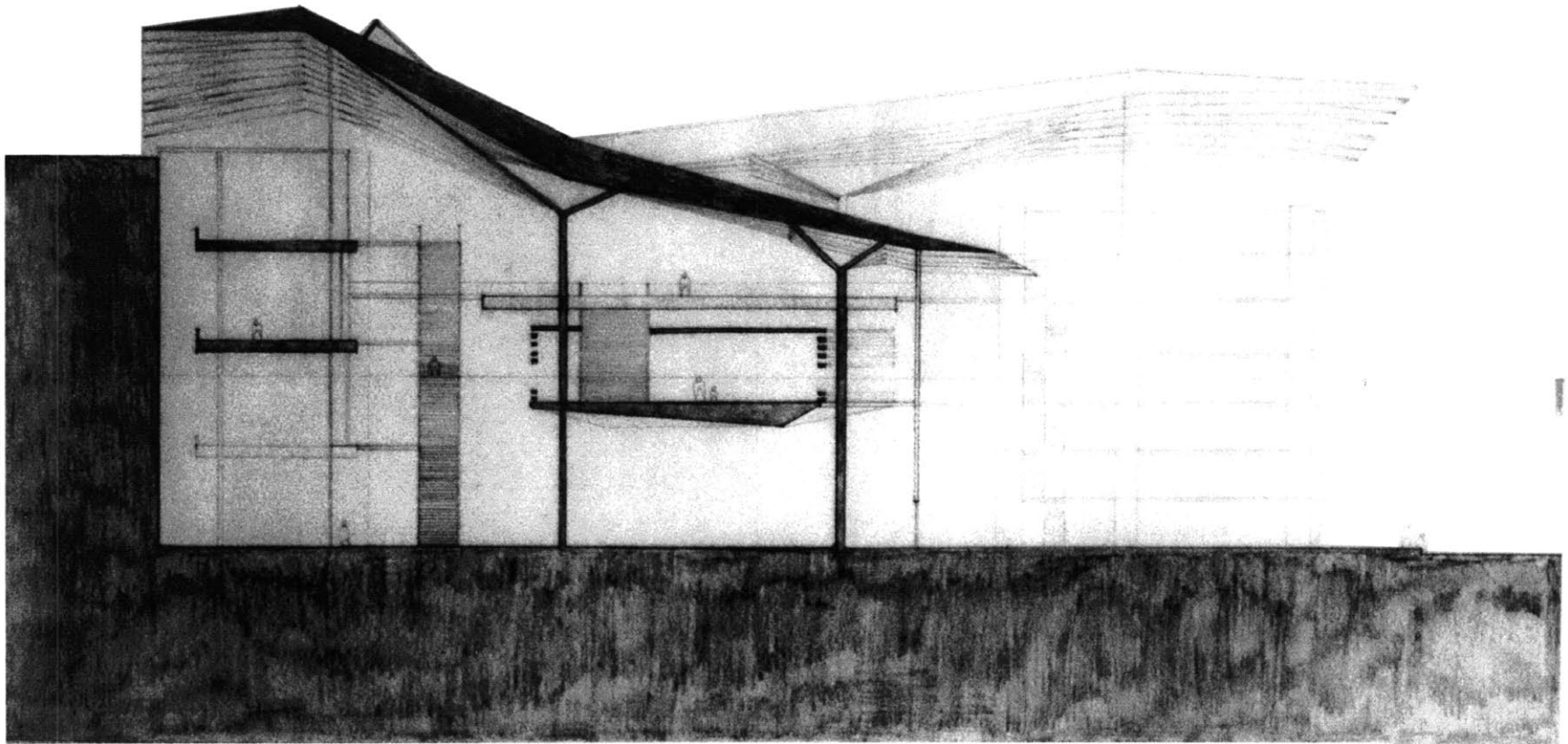




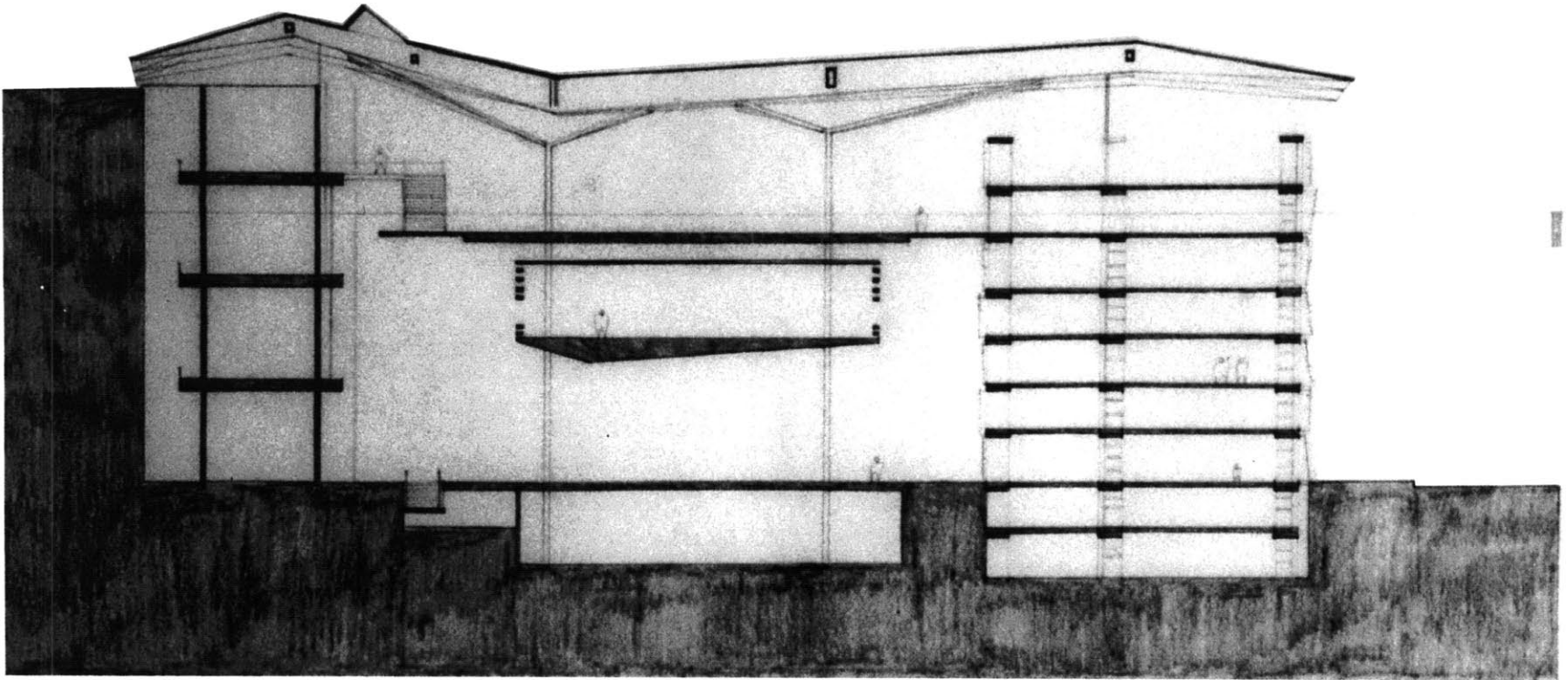
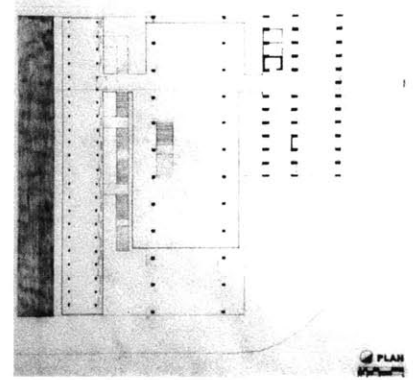
Light is very important in the library. Functionally, light is necessary to see and read, but it also a signifier of enlightenment and knowledge. During the day, the building must capture as much light as possible in the reading areas, while protecting the light-sensitive books. The light temperature also serves to create different atmospheres in the library. Especially contrasting are the two reading areas. One is spatially part of the whole library and takes advantage of natural light predominantly. The other is more closed off and warmer in feeling.

At night, the library should selectively project light outward, showing its function as the purveyor of information. In the stack area, fiber optics are run around the translucent glass in each cell so that at night the panes glow through the varying metal mesh. Light also shines from the enclosed reading area and onto the roof structure, accentuating the most important elements of the building

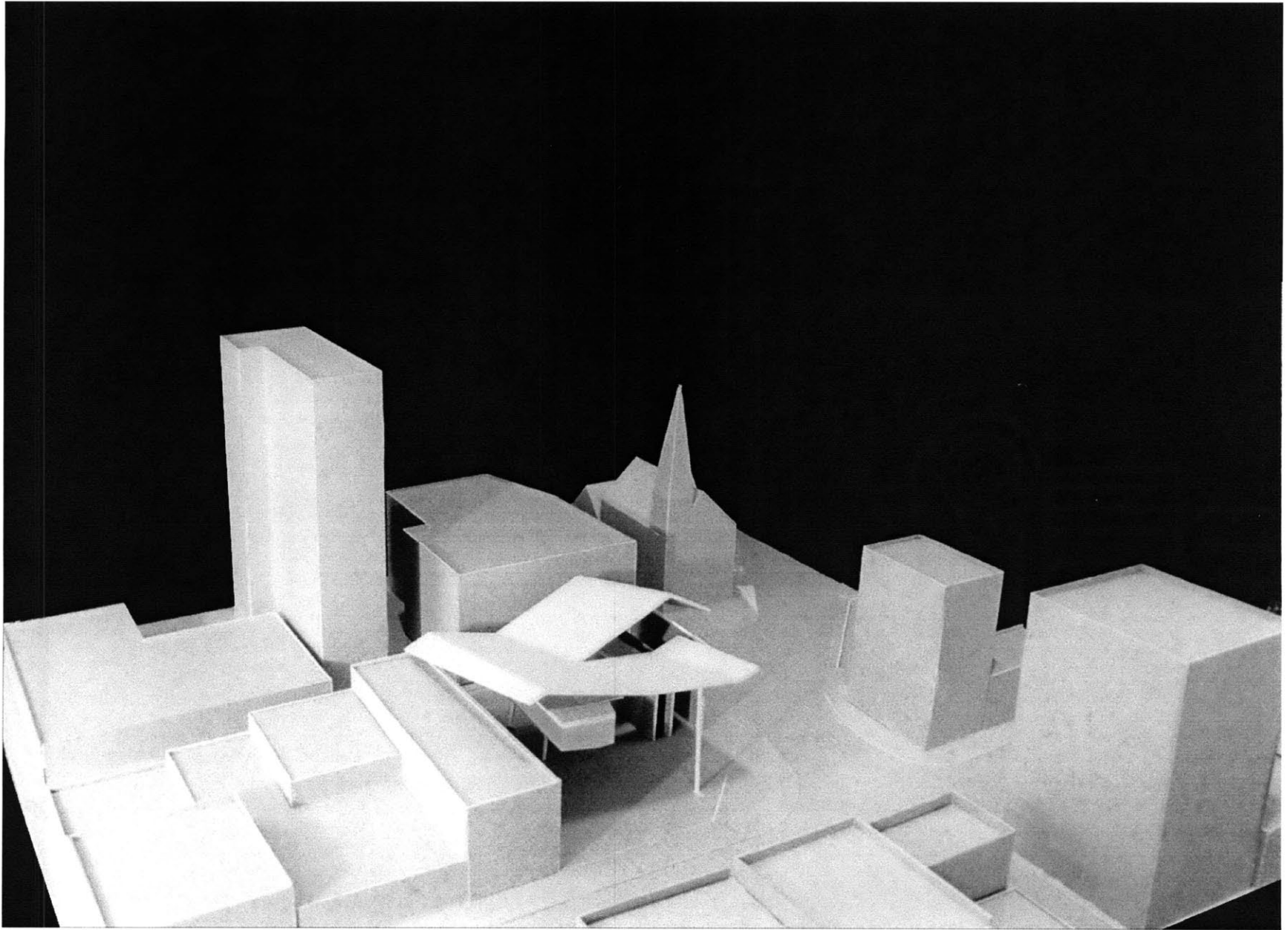


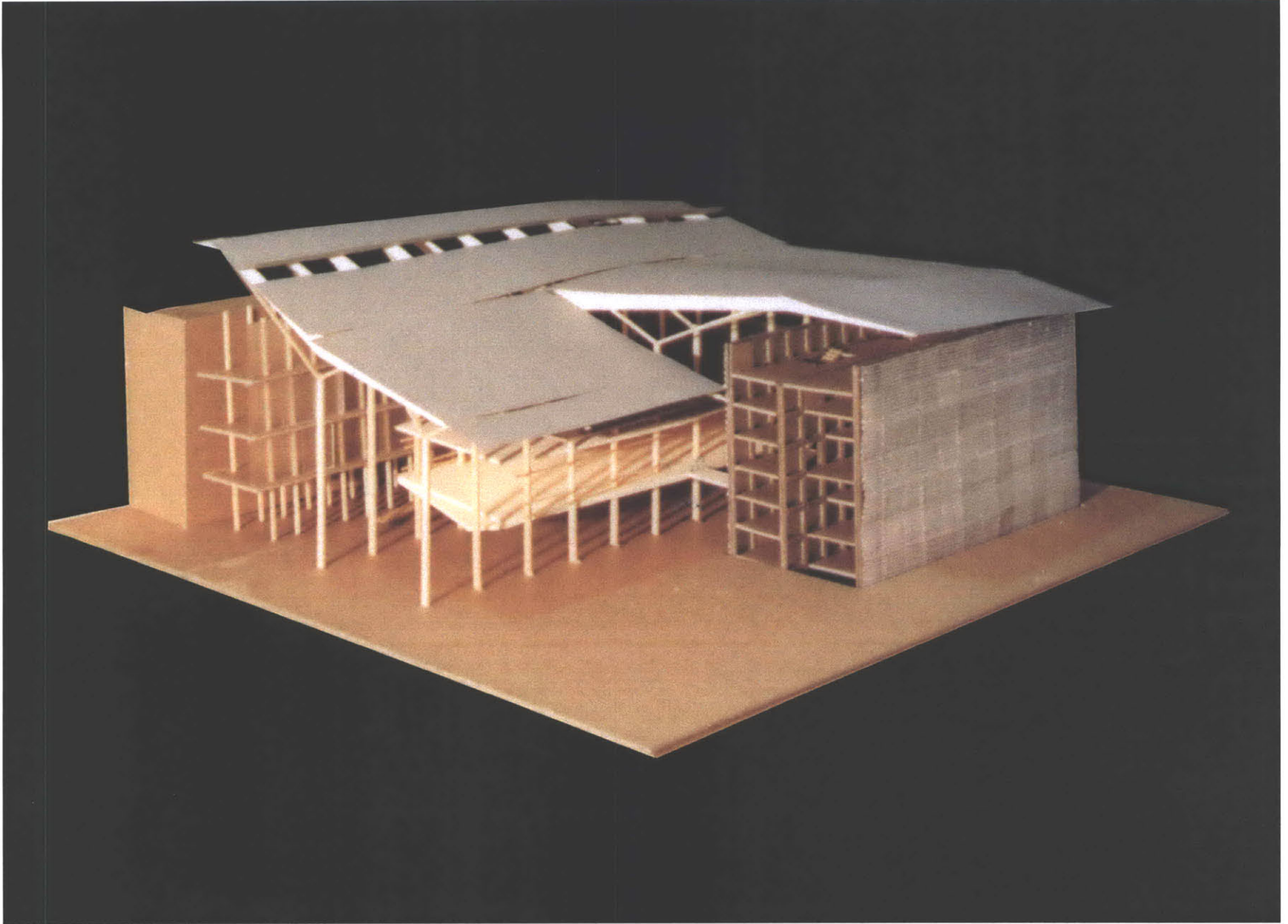


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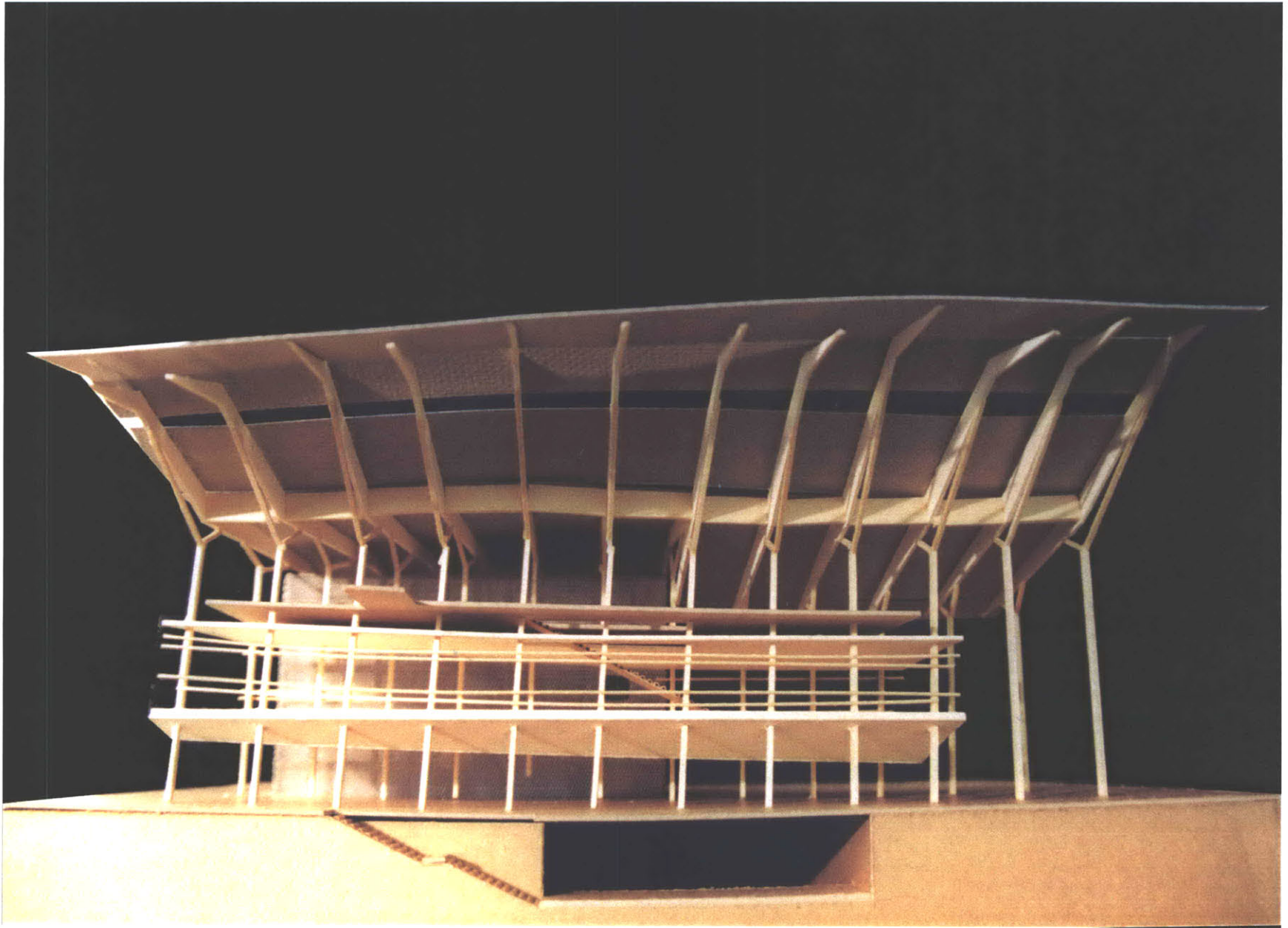


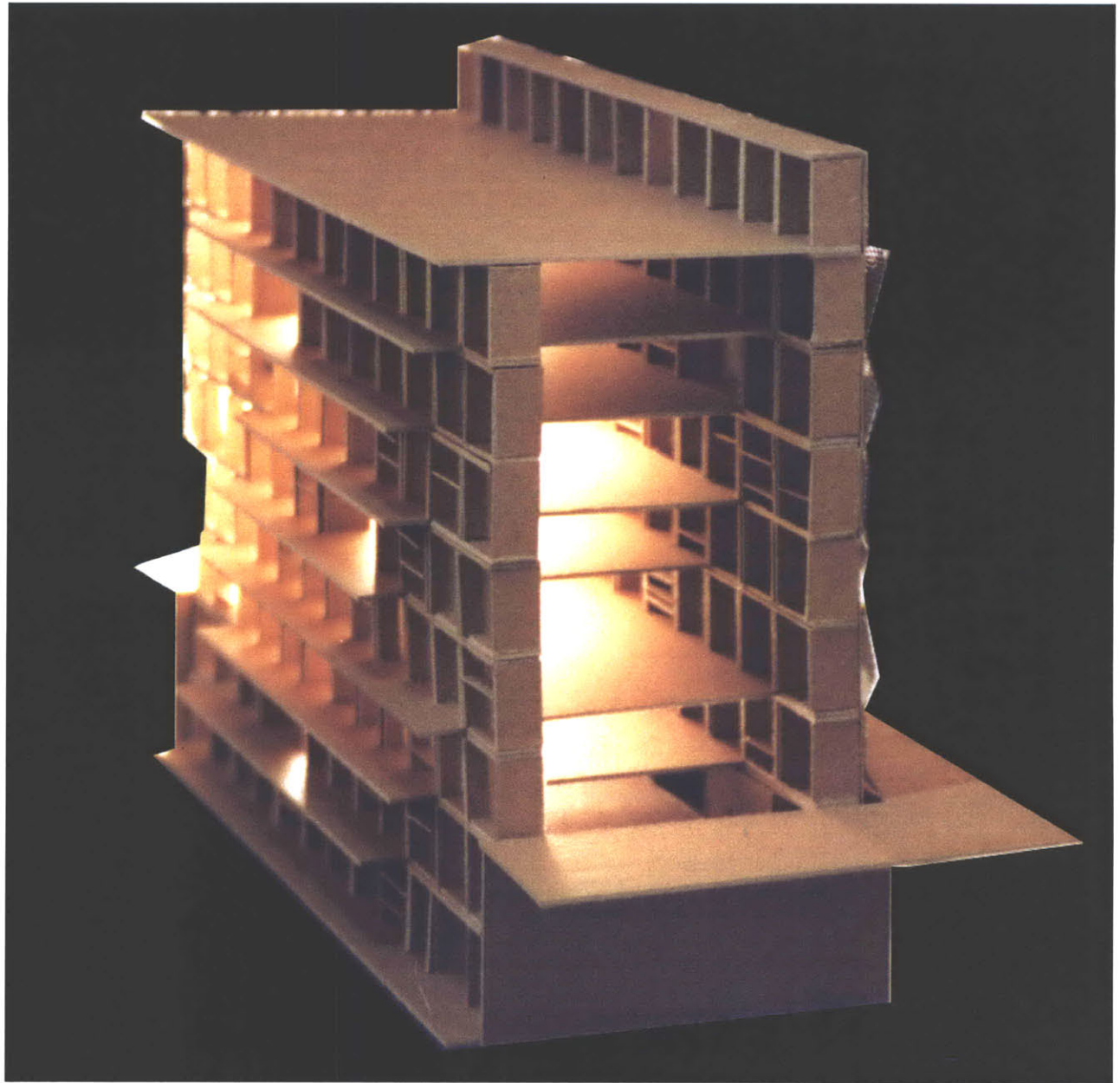
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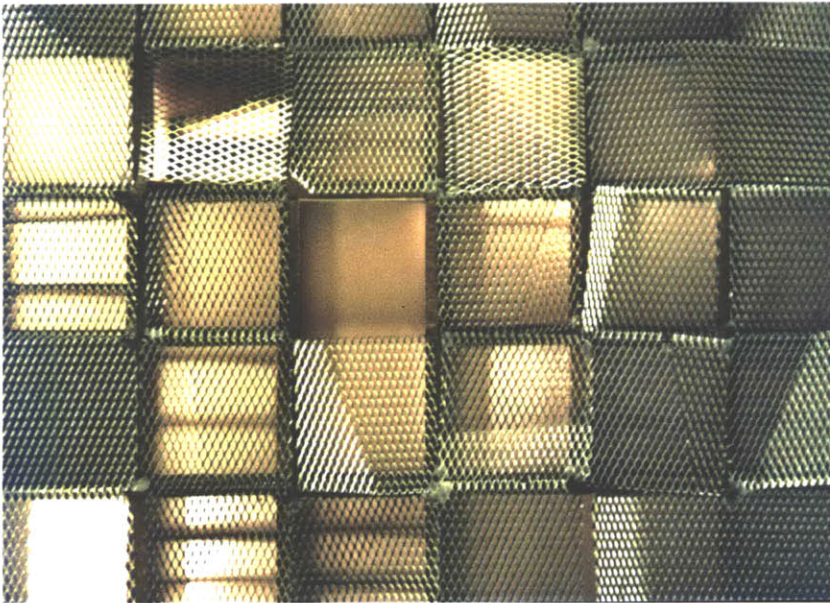
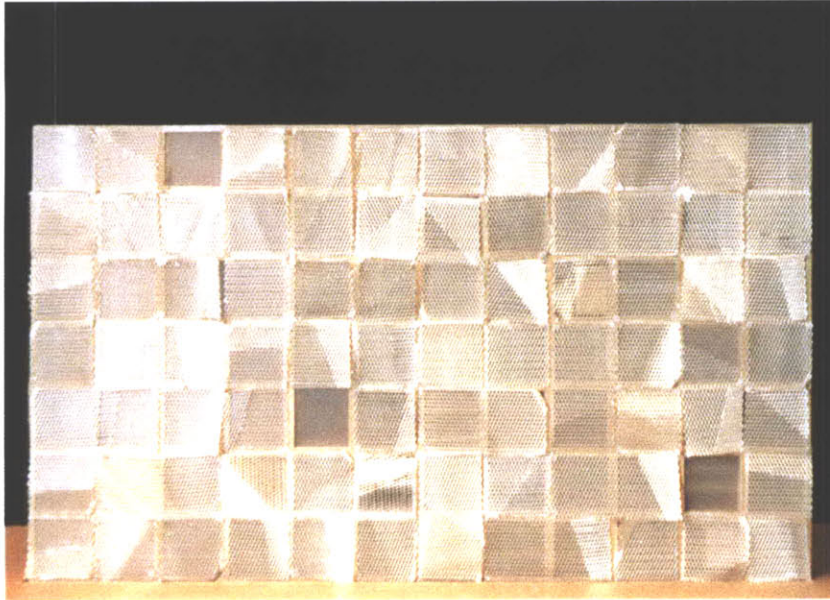












This project has both faults and merits. As an evolving design, the concept of the tower of books has been diluted. The idea of an over-reaching roof which envelops small pods of function has also not had time to come to fruition. Thus, the building at this point hangs in limbo between two strong concepts without being completely convincing in either direction. In addition, the use of the city grid within the building has been unsuccessful urbanistically because the building lacks a solid façade which can relate to the buildings around it. The regularity of the structure, especially in the reading areas, is also a detriment.

There have been several successes with the building. The variety of spaces and experiences, while not necessarily concrete in concept are vibrant and interesting. A visitor would enjoy the spaces which are appropriate in scale for their functions. The circulation through the building and the arrangement of the spaces feel right. The procession from one place to the next is also successful. Most importantly, as a community building, the library is curious and attractive, and would draw the public in to begin their journey.

- 1 Mason, Marylyn Gell. "The Yin and Yang of Knowing. In: *Daedalus*, Fall 1996, 169. qtd. Renes, Wim. "The Central Library of the Hague In the Most Prominent Place in the City," *Intelligent Library Buildings*, Ed. Bisbrouck, Marie-Françoise, et. al. (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1999) 39.
- 2 Renes 39.
- 3 "Architecture as a tool: BMVR, Montpellier," *Techniques & Architecture* June-July 2001: 35.
- 4 Bisbrouck, Marie-François, qtd. "For the University," *Techniques & Architecture* June-July 2001: 79.