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Museum and the politics of context

the case of MAMAC Liège

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MUSEUM AND THE POLITICS OF CONTEXT

THE CASE OF MAMAC LIEGE

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Contents

List of Figures

To my family

FOREWORD

I believe my question on Museum and the Politics of Context is a coming together of many lines in the past, but especially my master program experience in the Netherlands. As a stranger in a foreign place, I have come to instinctively appreciate the significance of context and the rich dialogue played out between the context and the content. Also, contemporary European architecture as a phenomenon draws heavily on its past context which strongly hosts many present decisions. MAMAC liege is also rooted in a specific context that is more than one place. It only seemed natural, then, to look into Museums for their context. I have been truly fascinated by all the phenomena that play out in the background of this seemingly innocent cube of space for art. This dissertation explores a few strands relevant within the immediate precincts of the museum in Liege.
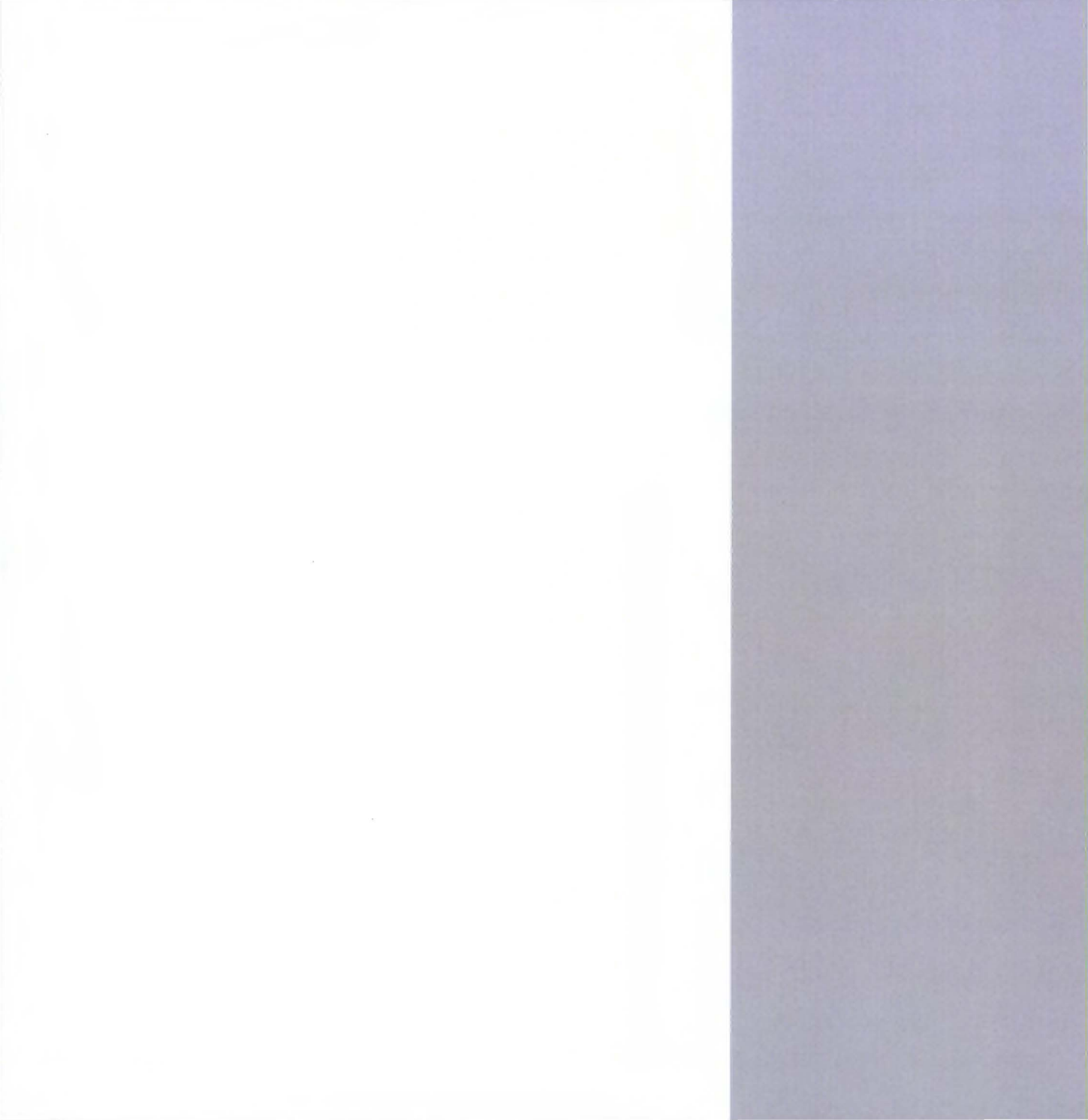
CHAPTER1
INTRODUCTION

The theoretical enquiry of this dissertation started as early as my first visit to the Musee d'art Moderne et d'art Contemporain (MAMAC) in Liege, Belgium. Certain paradoxes seemed acutely apparent. Here was a museum for modern and contemporary art housed in a conventional 19th century template for a museum – a neoclassical (albeit counterfeit) building set in a park. Gardens as setting for art structures are a European tradition that dates back at least to the 16th century – summerhouses in England, loggias, pavilions, grottoes etc., in Italy.[1] Therefore, this imposing old-world edifice as the site for contemporary art seemed a paradoxical yet intriguing ground of possibilities. Stepping into the Museum itself, the next paradox was the enigmatic curator running the show. Her starkly alternative, romantic disposition seemed an odd-fit for her undertaking. The transformation of MAMAC into CIAC, is an ambitious project in Liege's cultural agenda, one that was embroiled in political manifestoes and considerable bureaucracy. The curator in-charge of the task seemed to affirm an inexorable mixing of worlds. Brian O' Doherty in his influential compilation of essays 'Inside the white cube', comments on the erosion of identities in an increasingly corporate drift of the museum, 'the museum director, the most consistently persecuted member of the bourgeoisie becomes a gypsy with a tie and suit'.[2] Critic Paul Golderberger also comments on the curious roles curators, directors play in museum business today *'WANTED: CHARMING, erudite executive with the diplomatic skills of a foreign service officer, the financial skills of an investment banker and the social skills of a 1950's wife. Position requires the academic background of a serious scholar, with the willingness to let most of this knowledge go unused in favor of poring over budgets and staffing issues.'*[3]

These were only a few of the many paradoxes that seemed enmeshed in the fabric MAMAC's context. Geographically an island, a park poised strategically in the centre of the city, programmatically a quaint, almost suburban museum of modest means waiting to be the next Bilbao, historically an industrial city learning to foster a service economy in its shells, to point to a few others. The unique condition of the MAMAC in Liege rife with contradictions, made an inquiry into its context almost inevitable. A first attempt at expression of these differences was what manifested as initial schemes for the museum extension.

However, the peculiar context of the museum profuse with discrepancies, almost compellingly held my attention. These discrepancies and ruptures lend certain heterogeneity to the solution, which seemed far more appropriate than resolving the issues into either of the camps. Further enquiry into these seemingly paradoxical notions pointed towards issues that concerns museums in general, beyond the case in Liege.

What is a museum? In a simple definition, museum is a 'space' for art. The 'space' here, then can be understood, as the context in which art is assimilated. Thus, this granting of a context to works of art is a prime function of museum spaces. Which poses the question, what context? The process is by no means default or random. Museums today are national cultural icons. Museum spaces are carefully tailored for partisan advocacy. The museum's architectural significance, the relevance of its collection, the artful conception of exhibitions, etc, are all exercises at visual persuasion.[4] Beyond any connotation of art, museums are embedded in politics – organizational, cultural, social, representational etc. The context they supply therefore is also shrouded in a political agenda.

I argue that, today a significant proportion of this political agenda is derived from a contemporary context of super-modernism, where there is an erosion of boundaries between the aesthetic and economic. Art and popular culture overlap and results in processes of commodification that have placed museum alongside shopping malls, within realms of consumption and entertainment.[5] A less dichotomized breed of audience has also emerged in response – either cultivated or popular.[6]

I recognize this condition as a unique manifestation of the complex societies we are part of. I believe these paradoxes that blur into a grey territory of culture and commodity belongs to a social field that is much wider and global, of which the museum is only a part. Therefore, to try and resolve these discrepancies into an abstracted ideology would mean to take an artificial stand. I, therefore, adapt the condition as the theoretical apparatus as well as the framework for design of the new extension.

In the following discussion, I argue that historically politics has always lent the museum the context for its art. In a contemporary scenario, museum politics concerns itself predominantly with consumerism that is rampant in every aspect of modern society. In the new age, museums are no longer the arbiters of cultural value. Or culture no more the affair of the gentry. They negotiate between social institutions of culture and another sort of theme-park. They represent the tradition of public intellectuals pursuing hard questions, imparting critical perspectives as well as the lowest common denominator.[7] In a tradition of power and pedagogy, museum still strives to be educational, but rapidly slipping into matters of entertainment. One can notice this in the diverse venues the museum has been popping up in – from airports to casinos. It is also apparent in the wider range of experiences the museum offers, from Neon museums in Las Vegas with 8 pieces of art, no signage and no walls to the Burning man Museum in Nevada.[8] **Art is the new commodity and museum the new shop**. Under these conditions where the aesthetic and the commercial are increasingly meshed, the boundaries between art and popular culture have withered to such an extent museums and departmental stores have become interchangeable cultural spaces offering spectacular consumer experiences.[9]

I elaborate my stance using two key issues in museum theory. Firstly, I elaborate on the history of politics in museum and patterns of politics that has manifested as context for art. I attempt to historically trace these contexts manifested as museum typologies in architecture. Furthermore I use the case study of Guggenheim museum, Bilbao to argue that museum program and realization in a contemporary context is the outcome of special political as well as socio-economic circumstances.[10] I also use the case study to evaluate the museum in Liege in the context of political aspirations.

Secondly, I elaborate on the issue of commodification of art inside the gallery. I argue that museums in their fundamental make-up have borrowed ideologies from the shop and have logics of product and consumption intrinsically built into them. Far from a neutral, unassuming backdrop for art, gallery spaces are loaded with content, which as context for art 'sells' the idea of art. In a peculiar reversal, the object introduced into the gallery frames the gallery and its laws.[11] I attempt to historically trace this 'branding' metaphor in history of art applying Brian O' Doherty's theory as the signifier. I also attempt to find evidence for my hypotheses in history of architecture – in early museum architecture's allegiance with the departmental stores.

The two steps in which I attempt to unravel what is the context for art in a contemporary museum is also particularly significant. I posit that, the politics of museum have somehow come to signify as the extrinsic factors that has affected art museum typologies in general. It reflects upon the society the museum as an object is embedded in. Whereas, the culture of commodity that has penetrated the relationship between art and the gallery, intrinsically modify the representation and perception of art, and have evolved a typical anatomy of exhibition spaces. It reflects upon the politicization of art from within. Museums today are in between this double-edged contextualization of a system and are not by itself capable of affecting a meaningful difference in the field of art.
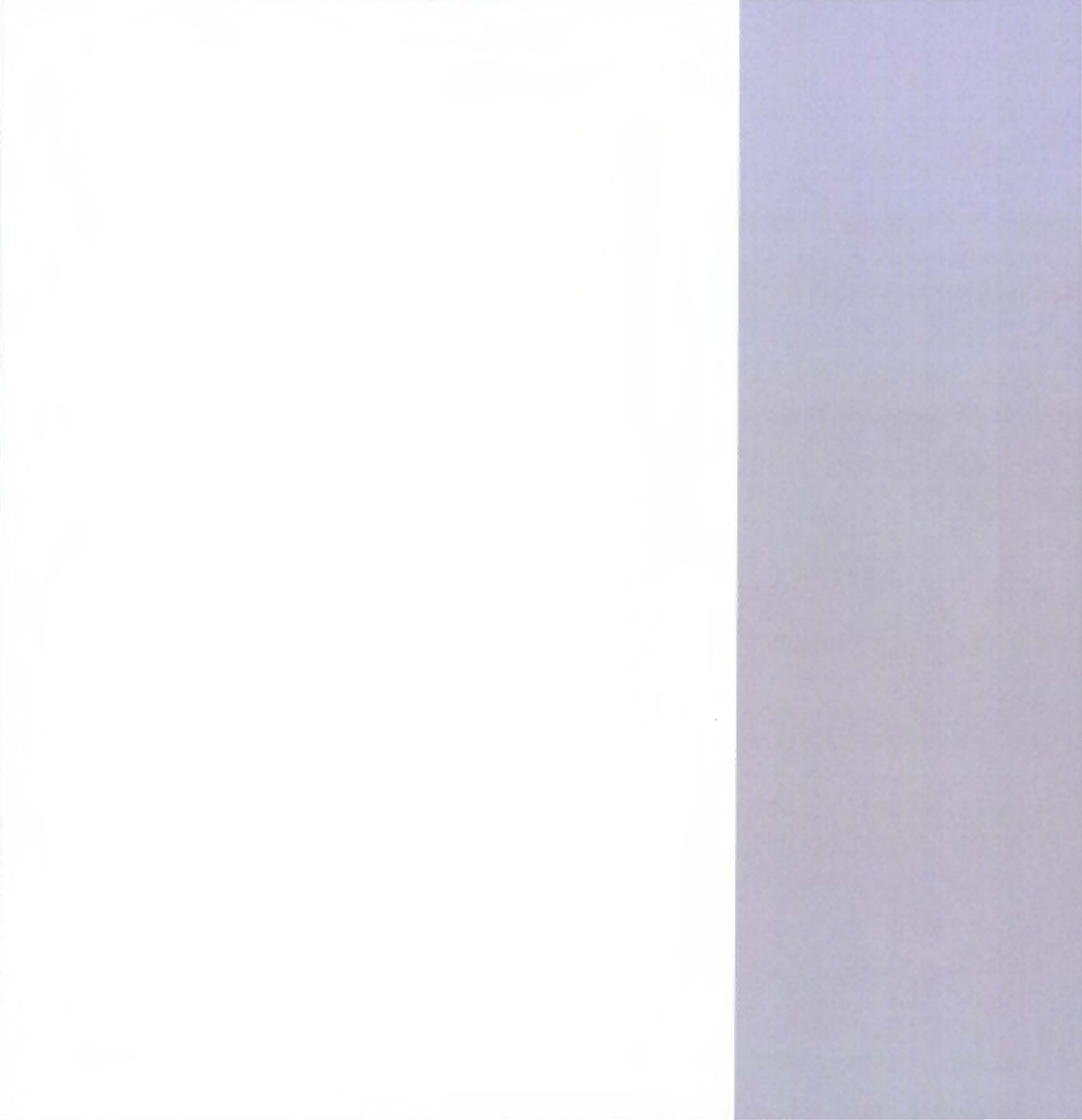
CHAPTER 2
MUSEUM AND POLITICS OF CONTEXT

FIGURE 1. COMMENTARY ON THE 'MCDONALDIZATION' OF CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUMS

2.1
HISTORY
OF POLITICS IN MUSEUM

Museums as social institutions were always concerned with politics. However, in the beginning they were deployed as governing tools. Museums along with other institutions such as the libraries, schools, lecture halls, baths etc were accepted apparatus in the government mandate to help improve, monitor the moral and cultural well-being of the population just as hospitals were government institution to protect the physical well-being of people.[12] Tony Bennett, in his book 'The birth of the museum' traces the development of museum as a protracted process that absorbed political as well social influences.

The public museum acquired its present form in late 18th and early 19th century when for the first time, in view of a more general set of developments in culture, museum that was originally construed as useful for governing was fashioned as vehicle for the exercise of new forms of power.[13] Consequently, through the 19th century high culture was consciously enlisted for the governmental task of civilizing the population. The proposition was intentionally more indirect, subtle almost sinister in it implication. It was no longer the government's affair to impart 'Culture' on the population with regulatory mission. New power systems were construed that would make people want to associate themselves with high culture. The government assumed as its mission what was envisaged by British reformers such as Sir Henry Cole and Ruskin 'museum would help a man *choose* a life characterized by moral restraint as preferable to temptation of both bed and the ale house'.[14] By end of the century, the idea was international currency.

Bennett here applies Foucauldian methodology of critique. 'The instruments of government, instead of being laws, have now come to be a range of multiform tactics'.[15] Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* aligns older practice of scaffold for punishment, with a 'display' of power of the sovereign whereas aligns penitentiary as a system that aimed to transform the recipient. Similarly, Bennett traces older forms of cultural apparatus - festivals, royal entries, tournaments, were means of displaying power on the populace, whereas politicization of high culture meant using the power to modify thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the populace in a lasting way.[16] Museum in its organization rather than only involving the population intermittently, introduced them as one of the actors who involved significantly in this new economy of cultural power. The system aimed at permanent, regular and repeatable effects from the execution of museum's cultural power.[17]

Bennett identifies three specific instances by which museums were gradually and permanently politicized as a model that is repeatable. The first concerned a deliberate refashioning of the museum as a public space. This meant to carefully renegotiate earlier connotations of private, restricted and socially exclusive forms of sociality. The second concerned nature of museum as a space for representation. Earlier connotations of museum as a space of wonder and surprise for the idly curious, were replaced by museum's representations of natural and cultural artifacts so arranged and displayed so as to secure 'the utilization of these for the increase of knowledge, culture and enlightenment of the people'.[18] The third and final transformation concerned the manipulation of the visitor. The museum was developed as a space of observation and regulation, so that the visitor's body can be taken hold of and molded in accordance with the requirements of new norms of public conduct.[19]

Thus museum as an achieved form of cultural institution came to exercise power and pedagogy. Over time, the model significantly developed an almost religious model, imbibing rituals, protocols and practices that were passed on. As the context in which art was presented, they controlled representation, the visitors and finally what was being perceived. In what follows, I trace political context of museum historically manifest as architectural typologies.

2.2
MUSEUM TYPOLOGIES : REPRESENTATION OF CONTEXT

Victoria Newhouse, in her book *Towards a New Museum*, typologically groups art museums according to their predominant architectural characteristics. I use the template here to illustrate how each of this typology has categorically evolved out of a certain specific political context and still retain the pattern of the original mandate.

Beyond the politics that religiously govern museum organizations, museums have religious connotations that dates back to Egyptian tombs, where precious objects found sanctuary along with the Emperor on his spiritual journey after death. The word museum also finds its origin in antiquity shrouded in religious metaphors, with the Latin word museum being derived from the Greek work *muoseion* meaning 'seat of Muses'. The *muoseion* was a temple dedicated to the nine muses, or goddesses, who were responsible for the welfare of astronomy, comedy, dance, history, poetry, music, love, tragedy and the epic. In both Greek and Roman times, the *muoseions* were mainly places of contemplation which were reserved for philosophical discussions. The most famous example of ancient era maybe is the *muoseion* founded by Ptolemy Stotor in 3rd century B.C. However, this maybe more appropriately considered a university prototype rather than a museum. Greek and Romans did however preserve hoards of votive offerings, selected for their historic, aesthetic or mystical importance. These were mostly housed in temples and used in times of war or public emergency. This may be understood as the earliest model of museum that thrived again in Medieval Europe.

I. TYPOLOGY I: CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

The tradition of grouping together precious objects thrived through Church crypts, the royal treasuries – the *Schatzkammern* – all sheltered such collection. The practice later also found favor with merchant and banking families that rose to prosperity in the 15th century. The purpose was possession and secretive storage. The logic of organization was comprehensiveness rather than a place or a building. The presentation of these objects, albeit for a private audience in the beginning marked the beginning of the museum. Beginning of 16th century saw *'galleries'* in English country houses and French castles. Long corridors with the walls on side flaunting portraits, introduced delight and surprise as functions of art. 16th century Italy saw an art oriented version of the *Schatzkammern* – the *studiolo*, a small study that was the privilege of few palaces. A variation of *Studiolo* found favor with more number of collectors and swept Europe in craze – the *Wunderkammern* or the cabinet of curiosities. In one of museum's earliest incarnations, hoards of natural and art objects were jumbled together on walls, shelves, drawers and cupboards of one or two rooms. The purpose was to entertain and amuse. The practice was so popular that even members of bourgeois – pharmacists, academics – borrowed the tradition.

The practice gradually developed and by the end of the century a number of aristocratic collectors had separated art from their other holdings, increasingly in exclusive structures, in what came to be known as the Kunstkammern. The private museums soon became a tradition, initiated by Hapsburg Archduke Ferdinand II and continued by others including the Hessian landgraves in Kassel, Emperor Ferdinand I in Munich, Emperor Rudolph II in Prague etc. As new collections were put together, architects were commissioned even by these private collectors. Gottfried Semper for Conrad Hinrich Donner near Altonno, Germany (1834) being one of the earliest examples. The building returns the association of sculpture and gardens by combining a neo-classical pavilion with a green house and orangerie. In another later example Glorietta (1937) – a gallery in lugano for Baron Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza by Giovanni Gerser – featured enfilades based on galleries on 17th century Italian palaces aimed at conjuring an ambience appropriate for the Old masters' that the gallery houses.[20]

These exclusive territories of art went by many names – museums, *studiolo, Wunderkammern, Kunstkammern, cabinets des curieux* etc. but essentially they fulfilled specific political functions – demonstrations of royal power, symbols of aristocratic or mercantile status, instruments of private

learning etc. They also revolved around an essential theme – private. These were socially enclosed spaces to which access was remarkably restricted – sometimes to only one person, the Prince.[21] Art therefore was represented confirming to the private party inclinations, taste and conditioning – context therefore again controlled by the politics of organization – here private. The context here is the collector. The typology is still relevant. Many private collectors establish their own museums or bequest the consolidated display of their collection, where the logic of representation and perception is hinged on the emphasizing the context which is the collector.

II.   TYPOLOGY 2: MUSEUM AS SACRED SPACE

The key principle that governed the previous typology, cabinets of curiosities, is aesthetic and the collection was meant to 'entertain'. The Enlightenment's campaign for reason put entertainment behind education. With knowledge, classification, specialization museums imbibed a didactic approach. Art was adopted as means to instruct rather than to please. Art was also believed to have the power to uplift humankind. In France, the French revolution gave the impetus for plans that were already under discussion, and in 1793 Louvre became the world's first national collection. As discussed earlier through the 19th century, museum developed as a formative tool of power. Museums were purpose-built that symbolized a particular way of thinking about art. No longer merely pleasurable or primarily didactic, art become a secular religion. Gradually, museums built for worship of art replaced churches built for worship of god.[22]

Architecture played party to power politics and reinforced the sacred message. Neo-classicism was the style of the moment and the dome, colonnade for a museum project in 1803 by French architect J.N.L. Durand established a typology for the exterior, as his gallery enfilades did for the interior. Soon Christian imagery of cathedral and church domes were added to a palette of Greek and Roman pagan imagery, for what was touted as 19th century temples of art. In the same note, like places of worship, museums were isolated in parks and views from the exterior sealed off, so that the eye and the mind do not stray.[23] Through 19th century picturesque architectural styles continued to treat architecture as secluded bastions of culture. Not surprising the fortress as a typology thrived for a while as in Wadsworth Athenaeumin Hartford, Connecticut (1844).

The influence of fortress as a typology may still be felt in Marcel Breur's Whitney museum of American art in New York (1966). The context here, art as the deity in the temple that is museum is also model that has particularly persevered. The alienation of art in the process of consecration in museum space has been repeatedly under criticism - from Quatremere de Quincy in 1796 to El Lissitsky to Brian O' Doherty more recently. Architecture in the beginning tried to imitate the original context of the art, elaborate details and Beaux-arts purpose-built museums. However, 20th century saw the fading away of these attempts and museum interiors became less and less contextual. The contextual model thrived nevertheless – museum as a sacred space. In 1939, Phillip Goodwin and Edward Durrel's Museum of Modern Art In New York abstracted the sacred space once and for all. In what seemed like an apartment building squeezed between commercial/ residential neighborhood, it even abducted the museum of its traditional setting the park or garden. The interiors were inspirational – loft-like floors, divided by unarticulated predominantly white partitions that exalted art as the 'supreme' resident. Mies van der Rohe, carried the abstraction of a sacred space for art further – universal, anonymous open space replaced any semblance of rooms.[24]

The analogy of museum space as the cathedral of 20th century meant a gradual ritualizing of the idea of museum. The politics that manifest as the context for art in this typology also concerned this Ritualizing. Carol Duncan in her book Civilizing Rituals, compares the role of the museum curator to with that of the Medieval high priest of art responsible for planning the iconographic program for the cathedral, 'just as images of saints were by example supposed to trigger in the initiated a quest for spiritual transcendence, so in the museum, art objects focus and organize the viewer's attention, by activating their form an inner spiritual or imaginative act.' [25] The liminality of space today is a commodity that is manipulated at will. Space here creates an ambience which holds content and meaning. Space is almost symbolically violent towards art that is displayed within in that it interferes with its exclusive meaning. After a thorough emptying out of the original context, the context that art most significantly adapts in this typology is the organization's will which is unconditionally served.

III. TYPOLOGY 3: MONOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

Criticism about the de-contextualization of art in the popular museum models instigated alternative solutions. The monographic museum may be recognized as one such trend. The typology dates back to at least the baroque period, with home-studio of artist-collector Paul Rubens. Conceptually these enshrine individual artists. However, adaptations have been careful not erase context in favor of a liminal space experience – for example Warhol Museum's renovated factory spaces, Nussbaum Museum's dramatic non-Euclidean geometry, the Brancusi museum with a formal pavilion and the Atelier Mimesis are all examples were context of the art has been carefully re-interpreted.[26] Even monographic museums that draw upon the sacred space model, still manage to retain a sense of context simply by the breadth of presentation of a single artists work that strongly relate to each other.

FIGURE 2. ANTONIO CANOVA GIPSOTECA, POSAGNO BY FRANCESCO LAZARI (1836) INTERIOR
SOURCE: *TOWARDS A NEW MUSEUM*, MONACELLI PRESS 1998

Newhouse argues that three museums acted as template for this typology of museums. As also one of the first monographic museum, Francisco Lazzari's Gipsoteca Canoviano (1836) was dedicated to the neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canovo, built shortly after Canovo's death in 1822. An initiative of Canova's half-brother and heir, he envisaged a space for the works set in background of preparatory materials, plaster casts, clay models etc to provide a context for the finished works. A museum of neo-classical style in accordance with Canovo's own style was built in the garden of Canova's house in Possagno. A sky-lit rectangular room nearly 100 feet long, attenuated by a raised niche at the end with coffered-vaults and three small partition walls housed the collection. Later a 1500 sq.ft expansion by Carlos Scarpa was added to the same. The second example is the studio museum built in Copenhagen for Danish Sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. The king offered his former coach house next to his 18th century palace as the site, in appreciation of Thorvaldsen's gesture of donating all his works to the state. Architect Gottlieb Bindesbøll added barrel vaulted porticoes at the front and back of the building and enclosed its courtyard. The polychromatic exterior and interior of his building also highlight Thorvaldsen's white sculptures. The third example is the transformation of the top two floors of symbolist painter Gustave Moreau's Paris Townhouse into exhibition spaces in 1893. Newhouse argues that this could one of the earliest examples towards the institutionalizing of the studio.

FIGURE 3. GUSTAVE MOREAU GIPSOTECA, PARIS TOWNHOUSE
TURNED EXHIBTION SPACE LAZARI (1895) INTERIOR
SOURCE: *TOWARDS A NEW MUSEUM*, MONACELLI PRESS 1998

FIGURE 4. THORVALDSENIANUM, COPENHAGEN BY GOTTLIEB
BINDESBOLL (1848) INTERTIOR
SOURCE: *TOWARDS A NEW MUSEUM*, MONACELLI PRESS 1998

Newhouse posits that the Gipsoteca built posthumously, the Thorvaldsenianum an existing building adaption according to the artist's specification and the Moreau's institutionalized studio established three basic typological formats that are still imitated.[27] In the case of the monographic museum, it can again be argued that a context for the art is carefully put in place. However, the context is closer to the premise of the art itself and therefore is capable of a meaningful relationship. Nevertheless, the museum space does not provide the proclaimed neutrality for the works of art to fill with meaning but is already loaded with a specific meaning that the art comes into relationship with. The space generated context here is the artist.

IV. TYPOLOGY 4: ALTERNATIVE SPACES

It can be said that the alternative spaces are museum models that emerged singularly as a reaction against the politics and institutionalizing of art. In 1818, Louis XVII founded a museum for living artist in Palais du Luxembourg in Paris. This prompted Theodore Gericault and later Eugene Delacroix to make huge canvasses intended for this space. Later in 19th century, artist rebelled against the culture of a prime venue for contemporary art, as promoted by the Salon. These government-sponsored annual and biennial exhibitions were controlled by a jury. Lasting for several weeks, they were housed first in louvre's Salon Carre, then the Grand Gallerie, and then moved to Palais de l'industrie that was later replaced by the Grand Palais in 1900. The Salons were a powerful factor in determining the fate and career of an artist. The submissions always far exceeded the space available.[28] After being rejected by the Salon twice, Gustave Courbet in protest built his own pavilion outside the Salon in what may be considered the first example of artist-desgned alternative spaces. Later Eduoard manet followed suit.

The practice was later adapted when Russian constructivists Vladimir Tatlin, Aleexander Rodchenko and Georgy Yakulov built fabrications in wood, metal and cardboard for Café Pittoresque in Moscow (1917). Kurt Schwitters, Merzbau (1923) can also be understood as an attempt at distinguishing art in a unique space free of implications, designed by the artist. The same can be said for Mondrian's many efforts to sync space/ architecture with art. Approximately at the same time El Lissitsky and Fredrick Kiesler applied the idea of three-dimensional interactive space to exhibition rooms. Perhaps the most comprehensive criticism of the century on the institutionalizing of museum and art came from Marcel Duchamp when he designed his Boite-en-valise, a self-contained, conceptual museum carried in a briefcase.[29]

The typology persisted through 20th century as a commentary against the institutionalization of art and museum politics. In the 60s with penetration of different formats of art like video art, site-specific installations etc., invented altogether new venues for art in warehouses, industrial sites etc. The pattern persisted in an almost standard typology when industrial looking architecture are sometimes the preferred style for museums, with regard for the industrial looking studio spaces where art is sometimes conceived. The alternative space as a typology is itself a reaction against the politics of a museum organization and therefore acutely recognizes the issue of artificial contextualization of art in museum.

V. TYPOLOGY 5: WINGS

Expansion of existing museum in wings that attach to the former museum is a typology that has evolved recently along with growth and branding of museum identities. Old museums need more space and cannot afford to lose the meaning associated with the existing site itself. More than any single typology the construction of wings is acutely representative of museum politics. New curators, trustees, director that undertake museum organization seek to leave a lasting imprint of their tenure and physical expansion is usually the chosen road. The typology is also reflective of funding realities. It is normally easier to procure money for an exciting new project than restoration of an existing building.

Paul Golderberg commenting on wings as representation of museum politics remarks, 'Many become caught up in a frenzy of growth that had something other than the democratization of art as its goal. Building museums became a badge of success for cities (…) New blood, often newly rich blood joined museum boards. Museums got bigger and more difficult to maintain, which inturn required them to find ways of keeping attendance high to pay mounting bills. Many seemed victims of their own success, caught in a spiral of expanding audiences, expanded facilities and the need for ever more money to support them'.[30]

Wings as space for art compromise architectural integrity, even in museums that stand for highest standards of art preservation and connoisseurship reflect unwittingly on politics of museum organizations.[31] As the context for art, these spaces comment on bigger cultural and social field that has penetrated working of museums.

VI. TYPOLOGY 6: MUSEUM AS ENTERTAINMENT

Perhaps a more relevant typology that comments on penetration of other fields within the precincts of museum and culture is the 'Museum as entertainment'. Museums today figure in cultural agenda of policy makers as tourism generators. The most successful as well as bold attempt that embraced this new reality is Richard Rogers' and Renzo Piano's Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Historically this is a turn to other precedents for the museum. Conceptually, it is embracing museum's early function of pleasure rather than pedagogy – 'To think of art in terms of entertainment is simply a return

to the astonishment and delight associated with first Private Renaissance museums: a sensuous thought provoking discovery quite different from the dutiful didactism of most large contemporary institutions, where visitors spend more time reading about art than looking at it'.[32]

The entertainment model is probably most reflective of bigger realities of society that resonates with museum presentation. Culture no longer holds the exalted status through which it exerted control over people. Today it is chipped in as part of service industry – in service of the people. A 1990 article in the journal *Museum News*, describes how Disneyland offers challenges to decision makers to take stock of display techniques and audiences 'Theme parks (...) propose a new vision for education and exhibition, one based not on a literal or historical vision of archetypes and community consensus history. They speak a new language: multisensory, entertainment-based, three dimensional, symbolic'[33]. The equating of museums with theme parks is again a historical throwback. Theme parks derive from a tradition of International exhibitions and world fairs which developed around the same time as the museum. Museum model in its formative years imbibed typological references from these and still retain some of these traces distinctly. Infact, the science museum model is a direct derivative of International exhibitions.

Museum as an apparatus of entertainment reflects on economic, cultural and social realities of contemporary societies, where fields mix to hold the audiences' interest. For the art displayed in these commercialized space is a certain commodification of its meaning. Commodification of art has always been a byproduct of other museum typologies as well that yield in to museum politics. Here, however, the commodification of art directs to fields outside those concerned with art itself and therefore the shedding of meaning in the process stands in stark representation of the society itself.

VII. TYPOLOGY 7: MUSEUM AS ENVIRONMENTAL ART

The last typology according to Newhouse's classification responds directly to architecture's role as the container or art. It responds to the question whether architecture should be an active or a passive container for the museum's contents. Although architecture as the physical manifestation of the museum space has been regularly touted as the neutral black box, more often than not architecture has been enlisted to make statements for the sake of the museum and its politics eclipsing the art in the process.

However, some of these gestures have also meant a new relationship established between art, architecture

and the audience. One of the first examples was Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim in New York. The reinvention of museum's traditional typology of grand stair and central dome in spiraling ramps that carried the visitors through the exhibits revolutionized architecture role. Wright's model for phenomenal museum structure has been repeatedly challenged through 20th century from Corbusier's Philips Pavilion for Brussels expo or the National Museum of Western art in Tokyo to Koolhaas' Kunsthal.

For art itself, the typology meant new possibilities were sometimes explored that challenged traditional methods of perception of the content in the container. However, more significantly it meant architecture is the new adversary that eclipsed an entirely art-oriented mandate. It also meant a certain politicization of the field expressed exclusively through the architecture. The architectural relevance sometimes entirely preempts any artistic significance. The context here then becomes architecture itself.

2.3
THE CASE OF GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is particularly significant with the contention of this dissertation. It reflects the decisive shift in economic, cultural and social patterns of contemporary society, where museums are no more exclusive cultural institutions. Museums, especially Modern art museums figure now in the governmental policies as magnets of tourism. They are now an integral part of urban regeneration plans that enlist cultural sector to revitalize the economy. Despite the fact that these museums are not expected to deliver urban regeneration in their own right, they have nevertheless come to be considered a *sine qua non* of every self-respecting regeneration plan.[34]

The last quarter of the 20th century saw the decline of many formerly industrial western economies struggling through crisis. In order to re-invent themselves in a new reality, these economies almost inadvertently turn towards the tertiary sector. Services, in a rapidly and perpetually changing world facing the challenge of globalization, have now come to be of an unquestionable value, which the post-industrial economies seem to have set to reinforce and sustain to their own benefit.[35] Urban regeneration plans resolutely enlist services to salvage their economies and museums figure squarely in urban regeneration plans.

FIGURE 5. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO, BY FRANK O. GEHRY
SOURCE: www.aliekatierandha.blogspot.com

I. BILBAO: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bilbao is a seven hundred year old city in Northern Spain, by the banks of river Nervion. It is believed to be founded by Diego Lopez de Haro in 1300. Bilbao, the fourth largest city in Spain, is the capital of of Bizkaia, one of the three regions of the Basque region along with Alava and Guipuzkoa. It has an urban population of half a million and a metropolitan population that includes 30 towns and cities around covering a land area of 412 square kilometers with a total population of one million.[36]

Bilbao was already a significant port city by the 16th century and came to be a point of reference for industrialization and development of the entire Iberic peninsula in the 19th century. Thriving industries in steel, shipbuilding and chemicals made Bilbao the economic and social capital of Basque country, a position it still held by the end of the 20th century.[37]

Following General Franco's death in 1975, Bilbao fell in a social and economic crisis as an effect of decline in city's industries. This is mainly attributed to the fact that Franco had based many of these industries on a domestic market and closed on international markets – a position severely criticized by European Economic Community.[38] The service sector was poorly developed at that time and along with a severe industrial decline, the recession caused a general decay in the environmental and social character of the city, emigration and marginalization and a general disillusion with the population.[39] Unemployment was the worst of consequences the city suffered.

II. POLITICS AND POLICIES

There were four main political actors who put the phenomenon of Guggenheim Bilbao in motion.

Actor I: Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)

The Basque Nationalist party (PNV) was the first and the main instigator of the political setting that made Guggenheim Bilbao conducive. At the turn of the Nineties Bilbao was also facing a political crisis. After Franco's death, Bilbao faced a political scene in 1977 with the collapse of oligarchy and the prevalent terrorist activity of ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, 'Basque country and freedom'). When the Basque Nationalist party (PNV) took control in the beginning of 80s, it had to work for the city's resurrection as well to retain the city's voters. The party's loss of hegemony in the Guipuzkoa in the autonomous election

of 1986 and of control in the cities of Vitoria and San Sebastian had rendered Bilbao a matter of political urgency.[40]

In turning towards the tertiary sector for Bilbao, PNV was only following an international trend. The development of cultural polices was as an important means for diversifying local economies attaining higher level of social cohesion, attracting investment, advancing different interest, and regenerating civic and individual pride.[41] The Glasgow experience, nominated as the *European city of Culture* for 1990 provided the framework for Bilbao's urban regeneration ambitions. Also, Bilbao in its industrial past already had a precedent as a site for trade fairs and exhibition centre.

The governing PNV always had preservation and promotion of Basque national identity high on it mandate, expressed for example through the high investment on retention of Basque National language and cultural heritage.[42] Besides, the governing PNV held the ministry of culture portfolio although it was governing with the socialist party. Therefore it was a calculated maneuver in PNV's political mandate, reacting to stressful economic and political circumstances. As a result the *Plan General* (Strategic Plan for the revitalization of the Metropolitan Bilbao), was initiated at the request of Basque government and Bizakaia council in 1989 and completed by 1993.[43]

Actor II: Bilbao Metropoli 30: Public-Private sector partnership

In the trend of many Spanish cities, a Public-private sector partnership was formed, the Bilbao Metropoli 30. This was a unique political actor that helped the process of realization of Guggenheim, Bilbao. Bilbao inherently had a tradition of public, private and voluntary sector partnerships, especially in mandates of Culture. The metropoli 30 was responsible for execution of the *Plan General*. The Plan was responsible for eight critical issues among which were 'Urban regeneration' and 'Cultural centrality'.

As far as the urban regeneration plan is concerned, the plan features among others the following elements - infrastructure and collective equipment, various emblematic buildings 'which contribute to foment social and cultural centrality of the metropolis and to improving its external image and appeal", a zone of planning and management, the recovery of damaged urban infrastructure 'through the exploitation of abandoned industrial spaces', and an estuary 'the vertebral axis and integrated element of the metropolis as well a distinctive factor of metropolis Bilbao's attraction'[44] The ambitious project under the Urban regeneration

mandate include , the creation of a new subway system by Sir Norman Foster, the reconstruction of Bilbao airport and the construction of Uribrtarte footbridge over river Nervion, by Santiago Calatrava.[45]

Under Cultural centrality, the plan aspires among other things, to attain a cultural dimension for Bilbao rendering it a point of reference in cultural circuits and industries, giving it private initiatives and infrastructure. The planned cultural infrastructures included Guggenheim Bilbao, Euskalduna Concert and conference hall, and the Cultural centre which will eventually form a cultural complex in the central area of Abandoibarra on the Estuary, covering an area of 345,000 Sq.m.[46] The plan aims at the so called phenomenon of 'cultural quarters' promoted in many European and American cities. The area will become a 'leisure, culture and business area' embellished with green spaces.

It can be observed from above that the two clauses of the *Plan* – Urban regeneration and Cultural centrality – have been developed to interrelate and complement each other. Infrastructures in both the cases are aimed encouraging private initiatives and the emblematic buildings along with the estuary's attractiveness aimed at creating a new image for the city at an international level, which will make these undertakings financially viable options for the investors.[47] The public-private sector partnership of *Bilbao Metropoli 30* has been quite successful that has tied in, for different purposes, the local government developmental agencies, property developers and organizations representing local commercial interests.

Actor III: Guggenheim foundation - The Collection

The most viable option that Bilbao possessed if it had exploited an existing museum was the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao (Fine Arts Museum of Bilbao), with its famous collection of Old masters as well as contemporary artists of the European and Basque region. However, the museum could not have made it as the centerpiece of the city's cultural development. The Basques did not have an internationally renowned collection for the new cultural centerpiece they were going to create, nor did they have expertise to run it, which made them turn to the Guggenheim Foundation.

It was Carmen Gimenez, former Director of National Exhibitions for the Government of Spain and the current Curator for 20th century art in Guggenheim Bilbao, who brought the Basque government in touch with Thomas Krens, Director of the Guggenheim foundation. Krens was at the considering a venue for their collection, but Bilbao ranked last in their list of possible sites after Tokyuo, Osaka, Moskow, Vienna and

Graz. It was the quasi-unconditional surrender of Bilbao government to the will of Guggenheim foundation that made the difference. Krens made a tall order of demands – a 35000 Sq.m building at a cost of $150 million, at a prominent site of the foundation's choice, a subsidy of the region to the foundation for 8 -10 years, an obligation to develop a collection from the part of the Basques besides the core collection of the Guggenheim foundation and a good will investment $50 million initially from the Basques for that purpose and finally a closed three week competition for the architectural design inviting Arato Isozaki, Coop Himmelbalu and Frank .O. Gehry, each given a $10,000 as participation cost and no requirements for the presentation. Through the execution of the building proposal, the Basques were only considered as cost estimators and contractors, not intervening in the design at all.

The Basques allowed a very high degree of intervention of the Guugenheim foundation, which probably is the factor that helped this private-public participation to work, in conditions that were very favorable to the foundation. In the museum today, only a third of the exhibition space has been occupied by the foundation's collection, which is quite controversial if seen against the foundation's initial reason for building the museum was to put on show as many of 8000 artworks.[48] As a result the foundation managed to retain much of its collection for other franchising opportunities in the future.

Nevertheless, the brand of Guggenheim Foundation helped a city that was in upheaval reach its target by using their internationally famous collection. Another important contribution by the foundation, albeit indirect, is the Architect and his emblematic building.

Actor IV: Frank .O. Gehry – Architecture as an emblem

It was Thomas Krens who invited Frank O.Gehry to Bilbao first, in order to get a second opinion on the choice of site. This was no less than a subtly imposed involvement of the famous North American architect, who had already worked for Krens in 1988, on the conversion of Sprague Technologies in North Adams, Massachusetts into Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary art (MASS MoCA). Quite unsurprisingly Gehry was the one to suggest the site by the river.[49]

The somewhat imposed involvement of Frank O.Gehry, nevertheless, managed to satisfy both Basque authorities for a building of great emblematic and market potential as well Krens vision for a construction with effects analogous to Chartres Cathedral of 14th and 15th century.[50] The architecture of Guggenheim

Bilbao was a crucial actor in the branding of the museum as an international cultural icon that generated the desired attention for Bilbao.

III. SUPERMUSEUM AS AN INTERVENTION IN THE SOCIETY

The establishment of what has come to be known as 'Supermuseums', as can be observed in the case of the Guggenheim Bilbao, is an integration of various fields beyond the premise of museum and art. Supermuseums stem from economic and cultural aspirations. Supermuseums are brand ambassadors for entire cities, sometimes nations that assure economic and even political stability. Supermuseums aid in the phenomenon of cultural tourism – a section of tourism that focuses on the provision and exploitation of cultural site and facilities.[51]

In case of Bilbao, it can be convincingly claimed that the museum did manage to honor most of its economic and cultural obligation to the city and the region, in terms of urban renewal and cultural centrality. In the process, it should be noted that it intervened in the life of the people, artists in more ways than one, which can also be attributed to the Supermuseum phenomenon. Implanted in an area that had no experience with such institutions, the museum has taken upon itself the social responsibility of educating the people on matters of art. A startling 42 educational programs with 200,000 beneficiaries have penetrated Bilbao through the museum. For the artists however, the intervention has meant overshadowing of local artists and art in favor of a certain internationalization of art. The local patterns of art are threatened in the process. In that respect, it can be argued that Guggenheim Bilbao has failed in its obligations of an art museum to provide moral and practical support to artists under its immediate area of influence.[52]

IV. CONCLUSION

In a unified Europe, cities are becoming more important than nations and culture is enlisted to put the face of a city in an international platform. The establishment of cultural facilities today is aimed at generating new images for the city and help aid the process of transformation of many western cities from a industrial to post industrial era.[53]

The Guggenheim Bilbao is a unique phenomenon with very strong political aspiration that stemmed from these conditions of local context as well as contemporary trends. The process of its realization also elaborates the significance of political actors and the importance of responding to new realities that have taken over old models of interaction with the society. From an ideal standpoint, one can criticize the Basque authorities for exploiting a cultural facility as an emblem for the city, tourist attraction, magnet for investment and marshalling point for development. One can also criticize the Guggenheim museum for franchising art in what has come to be known as the 'Macdonaldization of art'.[54] However, the Guggenheim model has positively responded to a certain explicit conditions in local as well globalized reality.
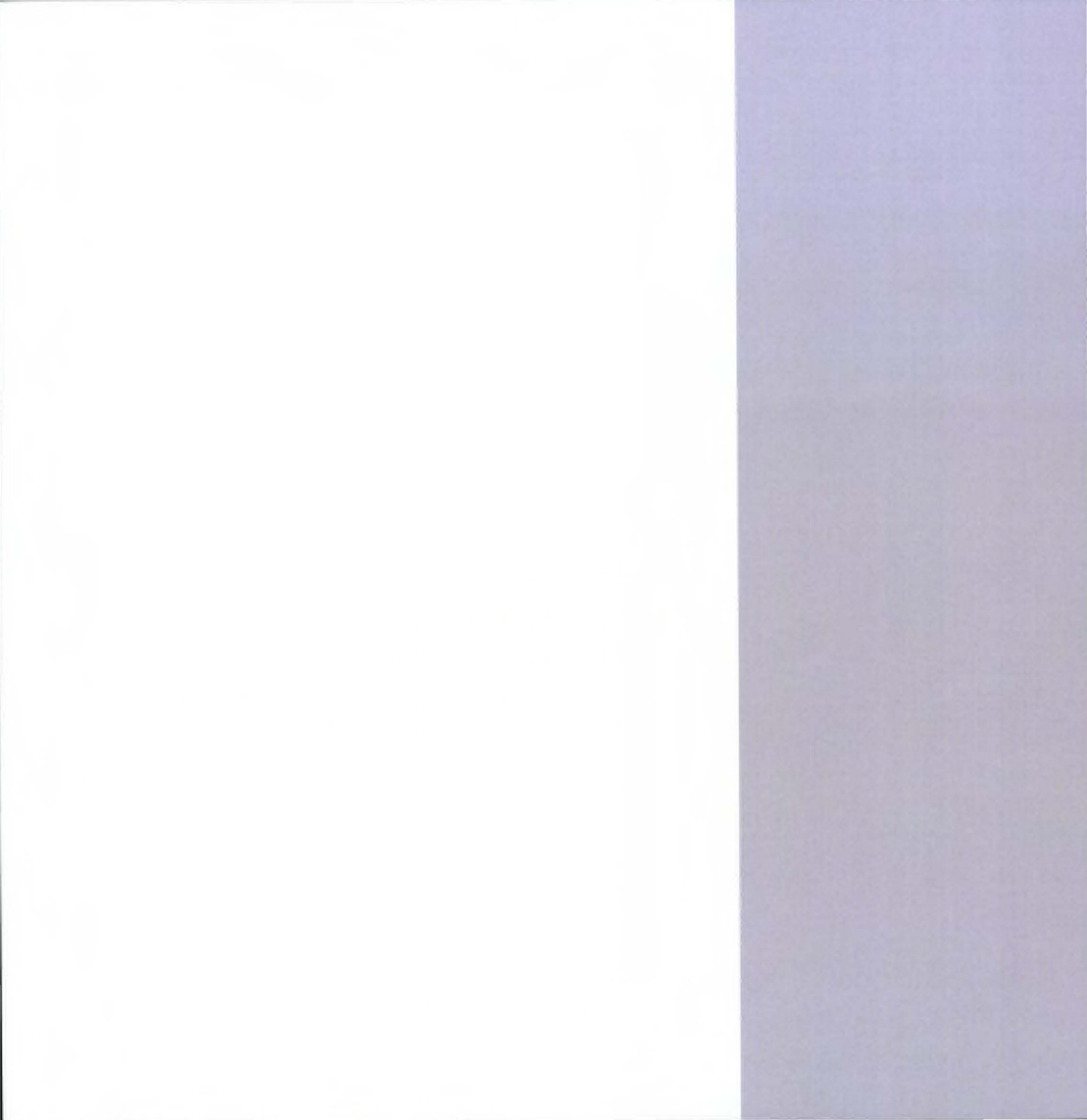
CHAPTER 3
POLITICS OF CONTEXT COMMODIFICATION OF ART

FIGURE 6. COMMENTARY ON THE COMMODIFICATION OF ART IN MUSEUMS

3.1
GALLERY AS C⃝NTEXT

The previous section attempted to clarify the various political players within and outside the field of art who establish a certain context against which museums function. These players also significantly control the medium and enlist architecture as one of the means to administer art. Museums that had previously assumed connotations of education and later connotations of religion, in a contemporary society, has assumed the template of entertainment. The players now manipulate the field based on economic interest. Politicization of art has placed it in an economic field and has implied interest in art as commodity.

This section attempts to unravel this phenomenon of commodification of art. It can be argued that while the metaphor has become more explicit recently, it is only a consequence of politicization of art and has always been inherently part of the discourse. A unique relationship gradually evolved between the architecture space container – here the museum module, gallery – and the contained art that can be traced, interestingly, through the history of contemporary western art. In the process, over time, the space has assumed more and more content and has come to lend an overwhelming context that almost purges art of any inherent meaning.

In his influential compilation of essays on this phenomenon, Brian O' Doherty makes a persuasive case for the usurping of art by the aesthetics of gallery, achieved over the last century or so. The course has crystallized in a crass commodification of art and intense contextualization of gallery space. In the discussion below, I use O' Doherty's text to typologically trace gallery space at different levels of contextualization, over time culminating in our present model.
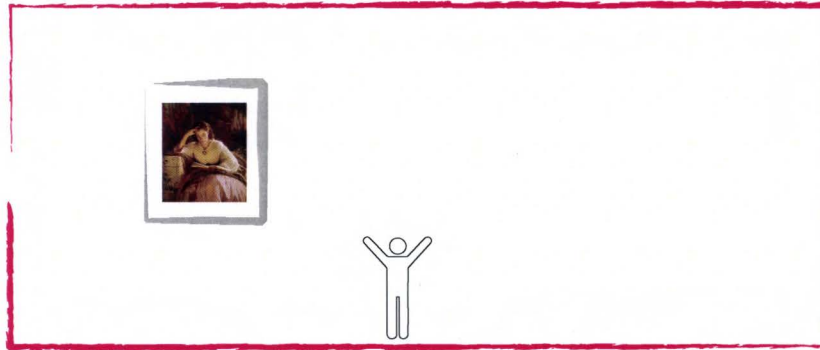
FIGURE 7. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, 19TH CENTURY TAXONOMIC
ORGANIZATION, FRAME FOR ART & ROOM FOR VIEWER

I.   19ᵀᴴ CENTURY SYSTEMS TO 20ᵀᴴ CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

The Salon tradition of Paris in 19th century was discussed earlier already within the notion of institutionalizing of art. However, throw the Salon depicted by Samuel. F.B. Morse 'Exhibition gallery at the Louvre' 1832-33, in this discussion and we have a picture that still respected a territorial status quo between space and art. The *Salon* defined a space with a sense of 'place'. The walls belonged to the art, but did have an intrinsic aesthetic that was in conversation with the art. 'Each picture was seen as a self contained entity totally isolated from its slum–close neighbor by a heavy frame and complete perspective system within.'[55] Each easel picture was 'space' distinguishable and categorizable, a neatly wrapped parcel of space. The perspective system, sometimes with referential elements like a window within the picture in Northern art, is a portable illusionary object that penetrates deep space. If perspective conditioned the elements within the picture consistently, then the Beaux arts frame, acted as a border from the outside, an absolute limit. Overall, easel art up to 19th century was package of perspective enclosed in a frame. O' Doherty argues that 19th century mind was taxonomic and 19th century eye understood hierarchy. Frame was the container for the art that also reinforced the integrity of the wall. The room, on the other hand was the container for the audience, who was transported as a miniaturized proxy into the picture.[56]

FIGURE 8. SAMUEL F.B.MORSE, *EXHIBITION GALLERY AT THE LOUVRE*, 1832-33
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

FIGURE 9. CLAUDE MONET, *WATER LILLIES*, 1920, EXHIBITION AT
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

FIGURE 10. HELEN FRANKENTHALER, INSTALLATION VIEW, 1968
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

However, landscape started to slowly eat away the perspective system and pictures started to put pressure on the frame. In the absence of perspective, landscape started to look like something posed between 'infinite depth and flatness'. The frame dissolved into a parenthesis from an absolute border. Formal composition of frames within frames (coulisses, repoussoirs, the Braille of perspective depth) disappeared. The picture rested on the decision of an 'edge' and with impressionism edge became the umpire of what's in and what's out. 19th century looked at subjects not edges. Studying these edges or limits for the sake of extending them into the wall is a 20th century habit.[57]

Impressionism eventually introduced a 'myth of flatness' where a shallow literal space containing invented forms replaced the old illusory space containing 'real' forms.[58] Monet, for example, in his informal choice of subject matter softened the edge's role which put a two-way pressure on the frame. Slowly, the quandary of the edge along with the invasion of shallow literal spaces, altered the idea of the picture, the way it was hung, seeped into the wall and altered the idea of the gallery space.

Soon the flatness transformed into cultivation of Picture plane. The picture plane developed into an entity with length and breadth but no depth and invented forms. The primary law was 'surface' that cannot be violated. Art was forced to represent without representation, to symbolize without any received convention and as a result a plethora of new conventions were invented but with no consensus.[59]

Cubism arrived as one such convention. O' Doherty argues that Cubism did not, at least, challenge the easel painting status quo – it was centripetal. He calls on examples of Seurat, who painted borders of colored dots to define a border that separates the subject. Or Matisse, who sympathetic to the conundrum of the picture plane, made his pictures seem to grow larger and translated depth into a flat analog. Although, cubism arrived in the convention of flatness, it evolved a 'system' of its own that did not disrupt the integrity of the picture plane. In other words, cubism still made sense in a Beaux-arts frame.

However, O 'Doherty is not sympathetic with Abstract Expressionist paintings. He argues that abstract expressionist painting conceived the edge as a structural unit through which the painting entered into a dialogue with the wall beyond it. On the wall, the artworks started to establish territories but not 'place'. Soon, the wall was as much an artistic element as the art itself, and had drifted far from a neutral zone. 'Wall, the context of art, had become rich in content that it subtly donated to the art. It is now impossible to paint up an exhibition without surveying the space like a health inspector, taking into account the aesthetics of the wall that will inevitably 'artify' the work in a way that will frequently diffuse its intention.'[60]

FIGURE 11. PABLO PICASSO, *STILL LIFE WITH CHAIR CANING, 1912*
SOURCE: www.artchive.com

II. ART OUT OF WALL, INTO SPACE – ROMANTIC SPLIT OF EYE AND THE SPECTATOR.

Soon, wall was part of the art's discourse and the eye went tangentially searching for the wall's limits. The wall was no longer the limit. Art started seeping into space next. Art acquired volume as it emptied out the architectural space. It was no longer lateral expansion. O' Doherty blames vernacular art for the transgression. He points that Picasso's *Still Life with chair caning* (1912) was probably what marked the passage of picture's space into the spectator's space. The half object half painting seemed to ricochet into the spectator's space.

Analytical cubism did not push laterally anymore but poked out of the picture plane. It was facets of space thrust forward. The wall behind was void and the surface itself opaque, but the picture showered into the room. Thus Modernism's in its rancorous argument between Abstraction and reality shoves the picture into space. Space, the 20th century dimension of art arrived. With post-modernism, Gallery is no longer the 'place' where picture hangs, but along with the picture plane is a unit of discourse.

O'Doherty makes a distinctive hypothesis here, on the course of how history unfolds hereafter. He argues two distinct kinds of art evolved after the invasion of space and split the body of a beholder into two with only one faculty activated in each case – eye or spectator. The Spectator is one's body divested of all other faculties. 'It has no face, is mostly a back. It stoops, it peers, is lightly clumsy. Its attitude is inquiring, its puzzlement discreet. (…) he test art patiently and does not resent we give him directions and responses: "the viewer feels…", "the observer notices..", "the spectator moves..", He not only stands and sits in command; he lies down and even crawls as modernism presses on him its final indignities'.[61] Spectator is the obligatory receiver of art sans personality.

The Eye, on the other hand, is O'Doherty's coyish reference to the 'eye for art'. He calls it the Spectator's snobbish cousin. Eye is what is present in a sanitized installation shot. Eye is what purges one's own body (and others' as well) to 'imagine' art as if it was the only entity present in an empty gallery. 'The Epicene eye is far more intelligent than the spectator, who has a touch of male obtuseness. The eye can be trained in a way the spectator cannot. It is finely tuned, even a noble organ – esthetically and socially superior to the spectator'.[62]

In symbolicallly differentiating the beholder into two esthetically adapted faculties of oneself, O'Doherty traces two distinct kinds of interaction art enters with space. The romantic split of Eye and Spectator is also the split of the beholder into 'Audience' and 'Actor'. The art the Eye was brought to bear preserves picture plane, as in an installation shot. Eye went along with mainstream modernism, where the beholder is a mere invisible audience. Eye space is an exclusive experience. All other 'impure' art, like collage etc., favors the Spectator. It includes him as an actor and also fills him with content. Spectator space is an immersive experience.

Thus, when art jumped into space theatrical art emerged. The gallery was the new frame that contained art. Nevertheless, like painting it also went two ways. Conventional stage in the tradition of constructivism, evolved as Tableau. In Tableau, the traditional picture is 'actualized in the gallery space and only the Eye was allowed in its confines. On the other hand, vernacular art emerged as Environmental collage etc., where the spectator was allowed inside. The body was part of the art installation. The spectator copes with real invasion, whereas the Eye maintains a supposed status quo with space.

FIGURE 12.
EXAMPLE FOR 'TABLEAU'
ALLAN KAPROW, AN APPLE SHRINE, 1960
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

FIGURE 13.
EXAMPLE FOR 'ENVIRONMENT'
ALLAN KAPROW, ENIVIRONMENT, 1962
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

Thus O'Doherty traces the Eye and Spectator as two different directions, since analytical cubism, and into the gallery space. The gallery space evolved as a 'condition' that sustains art. No longer the mere container, it was now a special cloister of esthetics.

"Gradually, the gallery was infiltrated with consciousness. Its walls became ground, it floor a pedestal, its corners vortices, its ceiling frozen sky. The white cube became art-in-potency, its enclosed space an alchemical medium. Art became what was deposited therein, removed and regularly replaced. Is the empty gallery, now full of that elastic space we can identify with Mind, Modernism's greatest invention"[63]

The gallery now part of the artist discourse, was loaded with content. It now held the power to sanction an object as art. The content of the gallery space is the new context for art displayed within. Artists aware of this external contextualization of their work initially commented and eventually protested against the significance granted to the gallery space. O'Doherty cites Marcel Duchamp as the precursor of this awareness. He argues that Duchamp exposed the effect of context on art, of the container on the contained. He presents Duchamps *1200 Bags of Coal* (1938) at the Gallerie Beaux-Arts as the moment in history when the gallery was exposed for its intention.

Art, especially in the 60s and 70s evolved almost like activism against the content of the gallery space. O'Doherty presents few examples. Yves Klien's gesture at Galerie Iris Clert is one of them. Klein painted the façade blue, served blue cocktails to the visitors, hired a Garde Republicaine in uniform to stand at the entrance, and painted the inside walls white, whitened one showcase with nothing in it and removed all the furniture. On opening night, three thousand people turned up and in a gesture called 'The Void' he arrived in a free fall from the second floor window. He learned Judo to land without injury. In a peculiar mix of stirring mysticism, art and kitsch, Klien identifies the while wall with spirit. The blanched display case is 'the idea of an exhibition'. The double mechanism of display reciprocally replaces the missing art.[64] Here, to insert the gallery or case puts the art in 'quotation marks'. By making art an artificiality within the artificial, it suggests that gallery art is a trinket , a product of the boutique.[65]

There were other gestures that sought to expose the gallery's content. The gallery was used as 'dialectical foil'. Klein's *Void* produced a response in the same gallery Iris Clert, where Arman's *Le Plein*, an accumulation garbage, detritus and waste filled the gallery visible only through the windows. In Stockholm, at Addi Kopke Glalery Daniel Spoerri arranged for the dealer and his wife to sell groceries bought from the store stamped 'CAUTION: WORKS OF ART'. The gesture was a parody of the commerce inherent in the gallery space.

FIGURE 14.
ARMAND P. ARMAN, *LE PLEIN*, 1960, IRIS CLERT, PARIS, VIEW OF THE GALLERY WINDOW
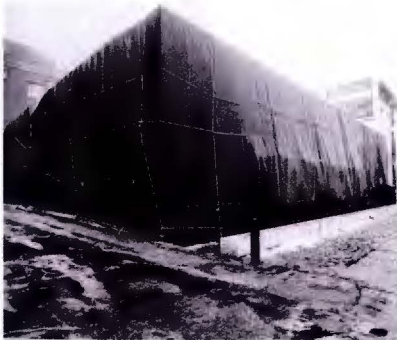SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

FIGURE 15.
CHRISTO & JEAN CLAUDE, MUSEUM OF MODERN AT, WRAPPED, CHICAGO, 1969
SOURCE: *INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999

Another gestures that famously sought to expose the gallery's potency was Daniel Buren's Green and white stripes. Buren sealed off the Galleria Apollinaire for the duration of the exhibition with a 'sign' – green and white stripes. The sign was signature Buren, it sealed off a wall earlier that year in Museum of Modern art, Paris. The stripes were also mounted on 200 billboards all over the city. It was signature of a certain political activism that symbolically closed the gallery in much the same way a public health inspector closed infected premises.

In December 1969, this conceptualization of gallery reached a high point. Following Robert Barry's concept 'during the exhibition the gallery will be closed' the Eugenia Butler Gallery in Los Angeles was closed for a period of three weeks during the exhibition of Barry's work, with a sign outside that read the same. In the closed gallery, uninhabited by the eye or the spectator, only the mind is present. The mind begins to contemplate what might be there. As a result anything seen in that space involves a hitch in perception, and the spectator's 'idea of art' is projected and seen.[66] The gesture attempted to signify that the idea is present in the gallery prior to the art itself.

The 60s and the 70s saw a rush of these gestures. The culminating point was when a certain gestures sought to expose the content of not just a gallery, but the institution that possesses many galleries – the museum. Here, the commentary is extended to the body social, of a wider context that allows the merchandizing of art. In a unique collaboration between the director and an artist, director Jan van der Marck and Bulgarian artist Christo wrapped the Museum of Contemporary art in Chicago. The work was politically charged and parodied the corporate structure. The possession of an object was implied. The identifying morphology was replaced by a general soft outline. The gallery was the point of contention and still is for certain artists. 'How much can art do without? This calibrates the gallery's mythification. How much of the objects eliminated content can the white wall replace? Context provides a large part of the late-modern and post-modern art's content.'[67] The potency of an empty gallery cell was ruthlessly assailed with an indignation that seemed justified from the part of the artist.

IV. MODERNISM GREATEST INVENTION – THE GALLERY ESTHETICS

One can argue that the Modernistic tradition is what determined gallery space. We see a white, ideal space that more than any single picture maybe the archetypal image of 20th century art. The modern gallery is placeless. O'Doherty argues that the development of the pristine, placeless white cube is one of modernism's triumphs – a development commercial, esthetic and technological. 'The spotless gallery wall, though a fragile evolutionary product, of a highly specialized nature is impure – it subsumes commerce and esthetics, artists and audience, ethics and expediency.' [68]

O'Doherty attributes this impurity to a series negative esthetics embedded in the gallery space. It is the gallery's modus operandi. One such negative operation that the gallery executes by default is the hostility to audience. As discussed earlier, the gallery puts the audience through a sensory anguish in the romantic

split of eye and spectator. Gallery fragments the self and simultaneously creates an illusion of holding it together. In the split, the gallery subsumes our identity as a fiction. The audience is mere illusion of one's self, where fragments are temporarily put together.

Another conspicuous esthetics of negativity observed in the gallery is a reciprocal semiotics of hostility exchanged between the artist and the audience. The audience in the transaction is the sane entity. He is allowed to express his anger, dissatisfaction only through rejection of an artist/ art – an exercise at revenge. The weapon for revenge is selection. The Artist is the entity sans sanity. Here modernism borrows on a Bourgeois invention – the Artist's irresponsible persona. Rejection, according to this classic scenario, feeds the artist's masochism, rage and sense of injustice. Within the silent confines of the gallery space, enough energy is generated to allow both parties to presume they are fulfilling their social roles. O'Doherty calls it a social charade that wavers between tragedy and farce. The most obvious negative exchange is the artist trying to sell his crassness and obtuseness and the audience silently encouraging the artist to exhibit his irresponsibility. Once the artist is assigned the marginal role of a self destructive child, he gets alienated from the fate of his art. Here, the militarized zone between the artist and the audience is busy with guerillas, envoys, double-agents and both major parties in a variety of disguises negotiate between principle and money.[69]

O' Doherty posits that this artist-audience relationship that is symbolically played out in the gallery is ritually absorbed in what he calls the support system – museums, collectors, magazines and even house critics. Thus, these dialogues of negative semiotics also contribute to a useful definition of the kind of society we have evolved.[70]

3.2
ART AS COMMODITY:
REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION

Among those who understand the esthetics of the gallery space for its politics, its serious business. Curators, directors, trustees, middlemen, magazines etc., all work acutely aware of the commerce of art. They exploit the semiotics of the space. Esthetics is turned into a kind of social elitism – the gallery space is exclusive isolated in plots of space, what's on display looks like scarce goods, jewelry, or silver: esthetics are turned into commerce – the gallery space is expensive.[71] The gallery – the spatial unit of the museum – is also model that is embedded and makes a commentary of our society at large. Exclusive audience, rare objects that are difficult to comprehend – here we have social, financial and intellectual snobbery which models (And at its worst parodies) our inherited system of limited product, our modes of assigning values and our social habits at large.[72] The supposed democratization of art is a mere merchandizing of this intellectual snobbery – calling on a large crowd to play the game.

Therefore, it can be reasonably said that the content of the gallery space is a commentary on two scales – it comments on the 'art' within to which it is contextual and it comments on a wider context, like street, city, money business, politics etc that contains it. The museum here becomes an in-between the two scales communicate through. This probably is the reason why the post-modernist or late-modernist movement's crusade against the contextualization of the gallery space failed. The museum is only a fraction of the bigger system – the fraction that has come to ironically represent the system – not a system in itself.

O' Doherty argues that though these movements successfully commented on the politicization of art using the symbolic entity of art itself, they disturbed the logic of system. 'When economics of a field are disturbed or subverted the value system becomes confused. The economic model in place for a hundred years in Europe and Americas is Product, filtered through galleries, offered to collectors and public institutions, written about in magazines, partially supported by the galleries and drifting towards the academic apparatus that stabilizes history – certifying much as banks do – the holding of its major repository, the museum.'[73] The movements that used the gallery as dialectical entity to comment on itself strayed away from this value system – there was no 'product' at the end of the exercise. The system therefore, after a brief sojourn, effortlessly dragged the mainstream art back into the confines of the white cube.

The above argument can also be stated as the reason why the museum as entertainment template has dexterously wrapped itself around the museum business. It is after all an inherent trait, of art and the agency that administers it, to obey dynamics of the market. The discussion through history of art convincingly shows that art has been contextualized by the esthetics of gallery space at least for a century now. The commodification of art in the gallery is in the DNA of museum politics and is not externally imposed in a contemporary scenario. The gallery esthetics is however not the only precedent in its DNA for the perception of art as commodity in the museum space, as discussed below.

So far, the museum was presented as an ideologically politicized weapon that edits the representation of art. The museum in its unit module – the gallery – was also presented to have inherited a certain esthetic in its body that administers the perception of art within its confines. As a result, it is argued that museum system is internally as well as externally influenced and cast in a template of commerce. This has conveniently transferred the museum, in our present times, into the realm of entertainment. In this section, the argument is based on certain institutions that developed parallely as commercial models while the museum developed as a cultural model. Nevertheless, the conditions that generated these commercial models are the same that encouraged the conception of museum and hence it can be argued that museum has retained certain traces of their logic in its organization all along, which has now effortlessly surfaced.

3.3
MUSEUM AND
DEPARTMENTAL STORES

I. A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Tony Bennett in his book The Birth of the Museum, observes the museum formation alongside a range of such collateral cultural institutions that later evolved as commercial prototypes. The most apparent of such collateral institutions are the fairs and International exhibitions that also emerged in the late 18th and 19th century. Bennett argues that if the museum was conceived as distinct and opposite of the fair and therefore a derivative of the fair, it is a derivative of the International exhibitions as they both ideologically strived for a 'rational' and 'improving' orientation.[74]

However, the most interesting of parallels is that of the department stores of the 19th century. The similarities are often noted by many. Both the museums and department stores were formally open spaces allowing entry to the general public, both were intended to function as spaces of emulation, spaces for mimetic practices whereby improving tastes, values and norms of conduct were to be more broadly diffused through society.[75]

Michael Miller, in his book on the *Bon Marche, Bourgeois Culture and the department store, 1869 – 1920*, says that Bon Marche offered 'a vision of a Bourgeois lifestyle that became a model for others to follow'[76] Bennett this was part of the function of the object on sale. Bon Marche offered a version of Parisian *haute-bourgeois* lifestyle that was within the reach of the middle classes and what the upper echelons of the working classes may aspire to. In a sense Bon Marche served as an important tool in the social homogenization through dress and domestic décor. In the pattern of politics that the museum plays out today, the department stores in their formation also had certain contradictory imperatives which had to be obliged. 'On the one hand it had to mark itself off from the rough and vulgar as a zone of exclusivity and privilege if it were to retain the custom of Bourgeois women. On the other hand, it needed to reach a broader buying public – partly in order to realize appropriate economies of scale in its operation but also a necessary means of influencing popular tastes, behavior and values.'[77] The agenda was quite similar to that of the museum as a place of social change; only the primary function was commercial. In an ironic reversal, museums today package a similar agenda.

However, Bennett calls on a very specific icon of the department store, which probably like the esthetics of white cube in case of the museum, exemplified the department store agenda – the representation of the typically female sales assistant. This was particularly relevant because from a social point of view it also broached issues of gender. The sales assistant was typically recruited from the lower working class environments but groomed and refined, so that she represents a model for the working-class customers, yet not too refined that it would be considered as threat by the Bourgeois customers. She marked a supposed neutral zone which was intensely politicized. She was intentionally put through 'civilizing programs' on hygiene, etiquette, grammar, spent hours in well-stocked reading rooms, even visits to museums to acquire taste was part of the sales assistants reformation program.

Bennett interestingly draws a gender parallel with the museum here. If the woman sales assistant was the means to reform the working class woman and therefore the mass, the museums reformatory target was the working class-man through acquiring the working class woman. In the museum scenario women were to be the beneficiary as well as a cog in the museum mechanism to reach the working class man. Museums were to function as a learning environment in which bourgeois conception of femininity and domesticity maybe transferred to working class women.[78]

Thus, museum politics, in its origin, had startling resemblance to department store - a commercially modeled institution. They were both conceived as a reformatory of manners, and pondered issues on cross-class and cross-gender implications. Interestingly, the department store politics of negotiating between high culture and popular culture resonates with museum politics today. Andy Warhol is known to have famously said 'In the future all department stores will become museums and all museums will become department stores.'[79] It is museum's reality today. The following discussion observes shopping politics evolve in one of the iconic contemporary art museums of our time.

FIGURE 16.
ADVERTISEMENT WITH REFORMATORY IMPLICATION BY BON MARCHE DEPARTMENT STORE, PARIS
SOURCE: www.debrajustice.blogspot.com

II. A CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLE – METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

Museums today inadvertently betray the shopping metaphor embedded in them. The Museum and the department store evolved out of same social conditions and worked around negotiating low and high culture. Today museums have come to represent an inconspicuous converging of the high and low cultures. Rem Koolhaas, the architect, remarks that 'shopping is the last remaining public activity'. In Office of Metropolitan Architects' (OMA) collaborative project, *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, shopping is observed a phenomenon of museums as well. This discussion elaborates on the excerpt of the book that uses the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York as a backdrop for the analysis.

1871	The MoMA establishes the museum shop
1912	The MoMA refuses an exhibition about the Werkbund, on the grounds that it would 'have nothing to with anything so crassly commercial'
1927	Macy's puts on its own exhibition "Art in trade Exposition", partly funded by the MoMA
1970s	Thomas Hoving, the then MoMA director states not only that "my goal is to make the MoMA a people's cultural paradise, full of fun and celebration, but also that "retail sales are the most beautiful way to collect decent revenue. It's the only place you can score and roar
1997	Phillipe de Montebello, MoMA director, states that "too many museums are trying to become like theme parks or upscale shopping malls (…)There is a complicity in the notion that you have compete with the Disney, and this is tragic" [80]

The article discusses MoMA's shopping metaphor as a strategy embedded in its organization now. The new MoMA Senior Vice-President James D. Gundell, was General Merchandising Manager at the Bloomingdale's. Glenn. D. Lowry, the Museum's Director reasons the strategy behind the recruitment being to explore retail beyond just stores for MoMA, "We will look at free-standing stores, electronic stores, licensing, branding, whole-saling – at National as well as International level."[81] The strategy here is a 'MoMA brand'.

The article states a declining government support and increased competition for consumer's leisure time makes museum vie for customers and not visitors. The distinctions are being blurred intentionally and organization must respond to them in their strategy, which is what is apparent in the chronological events compiled above. Merchandizing of the museum is a fact now that is openly addressed, like de Montebello, one way or the other.

The penetration of retail in museums is becoming apparent in many gestures. For one, market research, once the sole province of toothpaste and detergent makers is a standard protocol in museum management. Market research decides image overhauls of the entire museums, how to write a wall label, and how much admission to charge and perhaps very soon what art to show.[82] MoMA's pioneered Market research in USA with a first survey that revealed that after the 1991 Seurat exhibition, 61% of out-towners dined in a restaurant, 57% went shopping 33% caught a broadway show, 10% visited the Statue of Liberty and 1 % went to the Big Apple circus. The survey squarely puts museum on an entertainment menu.

In another instance, collaborations are formed as strategic alliances with the retail. Tie-ins and promotional packages have displaced parts of museum at railway stations, airports and hotels. The brand franchising of the Guggenheim also involves partnerships with retails brands such as Lufthansa, Hugo Boss and Deutshe Telecom.

The MoMA is only one example for a pattern that evolved around almost every mainstream museum – a trend the MAMAC liege is also programmatically targeting.

FIGURE 17. SHOPPING METAPHORS IN MUSEUM
SOURCE: 'PROJECT ON THE CITY 2: HARVARD DESIGN SCHOOL GUIDE TO SHOPPING', TASCHEN, 2001

FIGURE 18. SHOPPING METAPHORS IN MUSEUM
SOURCE: 'PROJECT ON THE CITY 2: HARVARD DESIGN SCHOOL GUIDE TO SHOPPING', TASCHEN, 2001
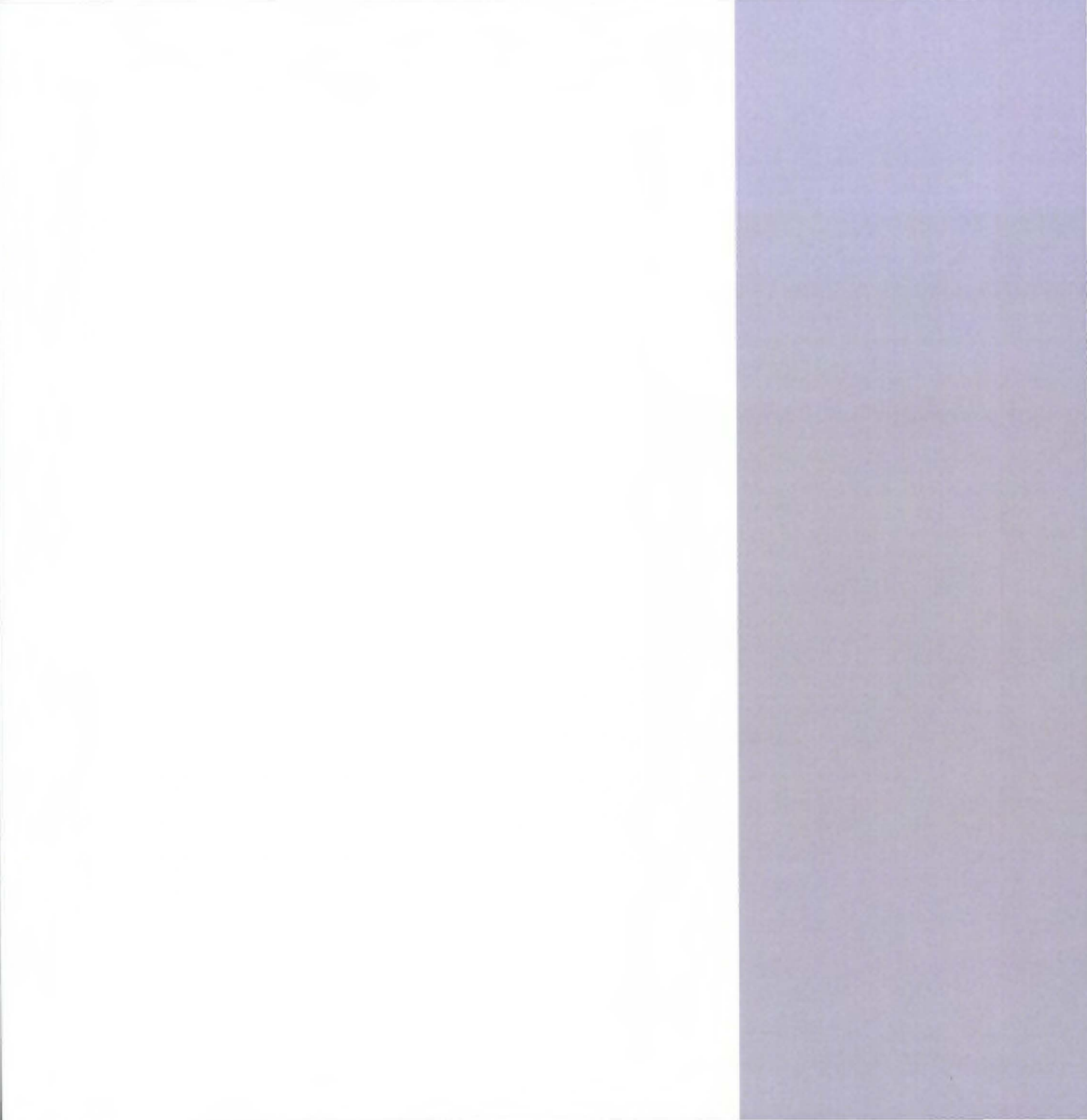
CHAPTER 4
LIEGE: AN URBAN STUDY

4.1
LIEGE HISTORY

HISTORY - ANCIENT TIMES

Liège has one of the longest and most continuous histories among all Belgian cities. The oldest (pre-) human settlements in Belgium, dating from 800,000 years ago, were found in Hallembaye, 15km north of the modern city centre. The world's very first Neanderthal skull was found in the suburb of Engis in 1829, i.e. 27 years before the skeletons of the Neander Valley in North Rhine-Westphalia, after which the Homo species was named. Liège was the cradle of Caroligian dynasty and the birthplace of Charlemagne, the founder of the Holy Roman Empire.

ORIGINS OF THE NAME "LIÈGE"

First mentioned under the Latin name of Vicus Leudicus in 558, Liège only took off as a city after St Lambert was murdered in 705 near a chapel in what is now St Lambert's Cathedral, and became one of the greatest medieval cities of Lotharingia under Notger. The city name, Liège has the unique distinction of being translated in a dozen European languages - more even than Rome, Paris or London. Furthermore, Liège flaunts many historical apellations in French as well. In fact, the city's name in French doesn't seem to have stabilized yet. Liège was spelt Liége until 1946, which shows a slight evolution in the pronuciation.

THE PRINCE-BISHOPRIC OF LIÈGE

Liège was ruled by an elected prince-bishop for around 800 years. Their sumptuous palace still stands in the city centre. Liège became the capital of the independent Principality of Liège in the late 10th century and remained part of the Empire until the annexation of the Low Countries to France in 1792. The Principality of Liège therefore never belonged to the Burgundian, Spanish, Austrian Netherlands like the rest of Belgium.

Another particularity of the prince-bishopric was that it was the only permanent part of the Holy Roman Empire, from its foundation in 800 to its dismantlement in 1806, to remain predominantly Francophone (apart from the Counties of Looz and Hornes that were Dutch-speaking). French language itself is thought to have originated in Wallonia and Northern France as the Frankish version of Latin spoken by the Frankish nobility. The city of Liège was ruled by a council, first composed of noblemen, then by elected citizens form any social class from 1384 (a marvelous example of early democracy). From 1424, the system changed, and a permanent commission of 22 bourgeois was established to elect 32 members of the Council each year.

PRINCE OF BAVARIA

In 1647, Grignoux, an enthusiastic defender of the democracy and the head of the Popular party gained victory in the election and prohibited the entry of the Prince-Bishop Ferdinand of Bavaria. Marching from Visé accompanied by German troops into Liege. He transferred the seat of the government to Huy and, helped by his nephew Maximilien-Henri, reconquered the city. On August 12th, 1649, Liege was bombarded and captured on August 29th. On September 19th, 1649 the Prince of Bavaria entered Liege and suspended the majority of the political rights. The electoral system was also re-evaluated to favor the Prince.

LIÈGE SINCE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: END OF THE PRINCIPALITY

In 1789, with the breaking out of the French Revolution, ambitions for a revolution were whetted in Liège as well. The locals, with French support, ousted the last prince-bishop Antoine de Méan. In 1792, the principality was formally dissolved and the disappearance of the Principality was ratified in 1801 by the Traité of Lunéville signed between France and Austria. Liege was annexed to France until 1815. Liège then for short periods of time became part of the United Kingdom and then the Netherlands and finally the Kingdom of Belgium in 1830.

Later, Liège entered the industrial age with verve and thrived through the industrial revolution as a leading competitor in coal-mining, steel and metal fabrication industries. Liège's rich history in coal mining is still evident in the mines of Blegny, about 10 km north-east of the city centre. It used to be one of the largest colliery in Belgium, employing up to 650 people and extracting some 1,000 kg of coal per day. Closed in

1980, it now houses the industrial age museum. Liège's industrial age also thrives in the famous Val Saint Lambert crystal, manufactured in the suburb of Seraing. Two Frenchmen established the crystal factory in 1826. 'Val Saint Lambert' was soon renowned for its exceptional purity and brilliance, and flooded the houses of European Bourgeois. Sales sharply decreased in the 1930's following the depression, and the industry never recovered, partly due to the cheaper Czech production after WWII.

TERRITORY

The Principality of Liege was part of the current Belgium. It extended along the Belgian Meuse, except for the area of Namur, diving into the territory on the Comté of Looz. It thus divided in two the Austrian Netherlands, isolating Luxembourg and the old Limbourg from the rest of Netherlands. Bouillon was also related to the principality. The Prince-Évèque codirigeait in addition the town of Maastricht, initially with the the Brabant, then with the United Provinces, the Republic there having begun again the Brabançons rights after the Guerre Eighty Year old. The current Province of Leige is redefined upon the armorial bearings of the territories that were assumed under the principality. Quartered: 1, of Bubble; 2, of Franchimont; 3, of Looz; 4, of Hornes; on-the-all of Liege. The duchy of Bubble constitutes the southern point of the Principality, while the county of Hornes constitutes the the northern point. The Principality counted 23 Bonnes Cities, was divided into 15 districts (5 in suburbs of Liege and 10 out-suburbs) and also had freehold seigniories , pertaining to the inheritance of Saint-Lambert (and thus independent of the Prince and the 3 States).

PARC DE LA BOVERIE

The southern tip of the island of Outremeuse is occupied by the pleasant Parc de la Boverie, where we find the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. Housed in the last surviving pavilion of the Universal Exhibition of 1905, the museum possesses nearly 1000 works from 1850 to the contemporary period. It covers various artistic styles, ranging from Impressionism (Monet, Pissaro, Signac, Claus, Ensor, Van Rysselberghe), Fauvism (Gaugain, Derain, Dufy, Friesz, Wouters), Symbolism (Khnopff), Expressionism (Chagal, Picasso, Kokoschka, Permeke, Van den Berghe), Abstract Art (Mortensen, Nicholson, Poliakoff, Vasarely) and Contemporary (Tapiès, Van Velde, Viallat).

4.2
LIEGE 1905 EXPOSITION URBAN IMPRINT

FIGURE 19,20,21. LE PLAINE DES AUGUSSES
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 22,23,24. LE PLAINE DES AUGUSSES
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 25. LEIGE CITY, LE PLAINE DES VENNES
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 26. PANORAMA OF THE EXPOSITION, VU DE COINTE
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 27. PANORAMA OF THE MEUSE AS SEEN FROM THE EAST
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 28. PANORAMA OF THE MEUSE AS SEEN FROM THE NORTH
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 29. EXTERIOR ENTRANCE OF THE HALLS DE L'INDUSTRIE
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 30. LIEGE, LEFT BANK OF MEUSE
SOURCE: LE LIVRE D'OR DE L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE ET INTERNATIONALLE DE 1905

FIGURE 31. IMPRESSION BY EMILIE BERCHAM FOR LIEGE EXPOSITION OF 1905 BASED ON
THE IMPRESSION FOR PARIS EXPOSTION OF 1900 (BELOW)
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

FIGURE 32. IMPRESSION OF PARIS EXPOSTION OF 1900
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

FIGURE 33. PALAIS DES BEAUX ART
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

FIGURE 34. LAYOUT FOR PARC DE LA BOVERIE DURING THE EXHIBITION
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

FIGURE 36. EXHIBITION LAYOUT IN PARC DE LA BOVERIE
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

FIGURE 35. MASTER PLAN FOR THE AREA
SOURCE: LIEGE ET L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSALLE DE 1905, DEXIA PUBLISHERS

4.3
LIEGE REGION

FIGURE.37 LIEGE METROPOLE REGION SHOWING URBAN, DISTRICT AND REGIONAL CENTRES
INFORMATION SOURCE: 'PERSPECTIVES ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN BELGIUM', KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, 1992

SECONDARY REGIONAL CENTRE ⊙

URBAN DISTRICT CENTER ○

SATELLITE CENTER OF THE CITY ●

CENTRAL ZONE OF THE REGION ■

REGIONAL BOUNDARY ▬

DISTRICT BOUNDARY ┈
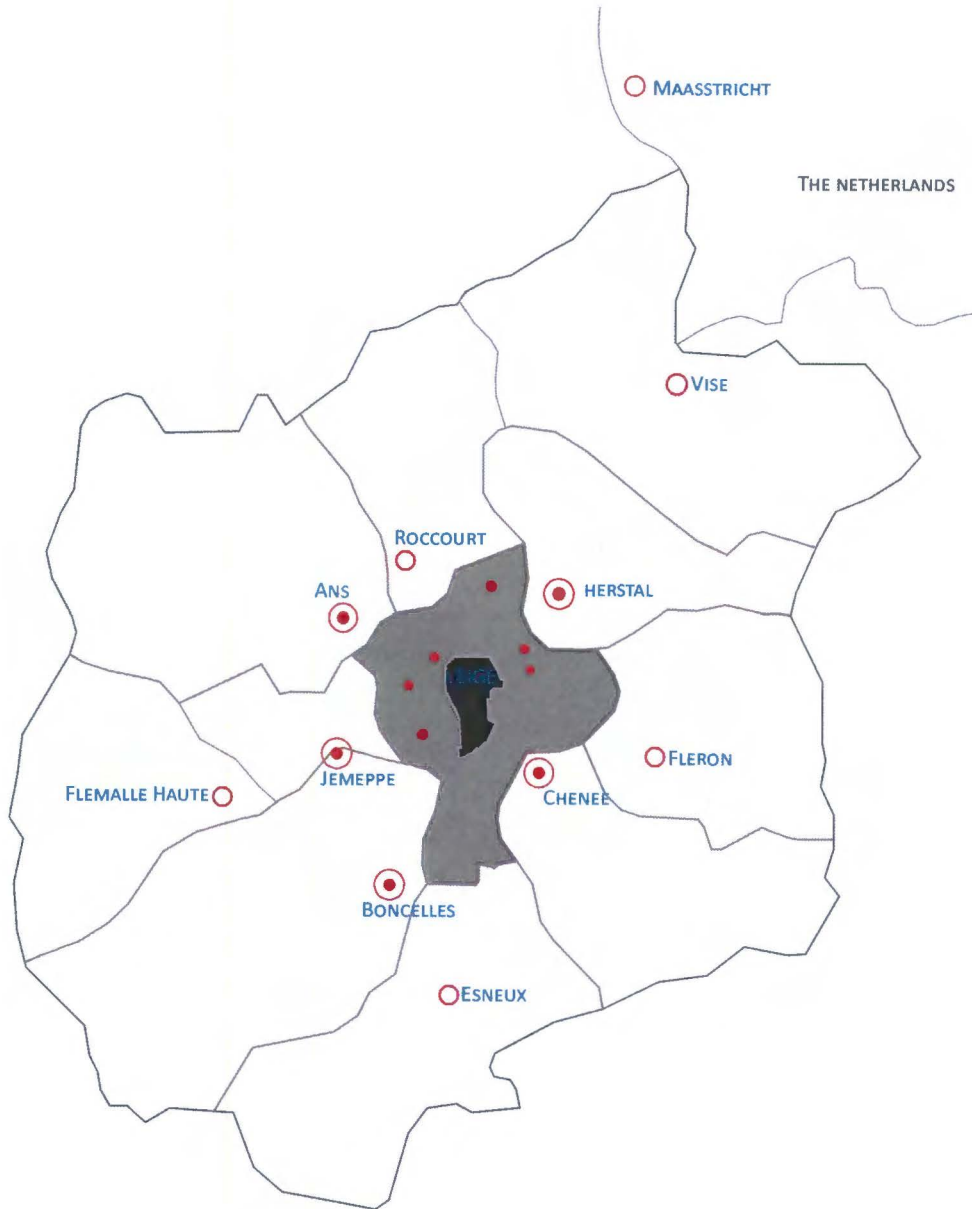
MAASSTRICHT

THE NETHERLANDS

VISE

ROCCOURT

ANS

HERSTAL

LIEGE

FLERON

FLEMALLE HAUTE

JEMEPPE

CHENEE

BONCELLES

ESNEUX

METAL FABRICATION ●   50 - 100 ·
OTHER INDUSTRIES ○   100 - 500 ·
                           500 - 1000 ●
                           1000 - 5000 ●
INDUSTRIAL PARK   MORE THAN 5000 ●
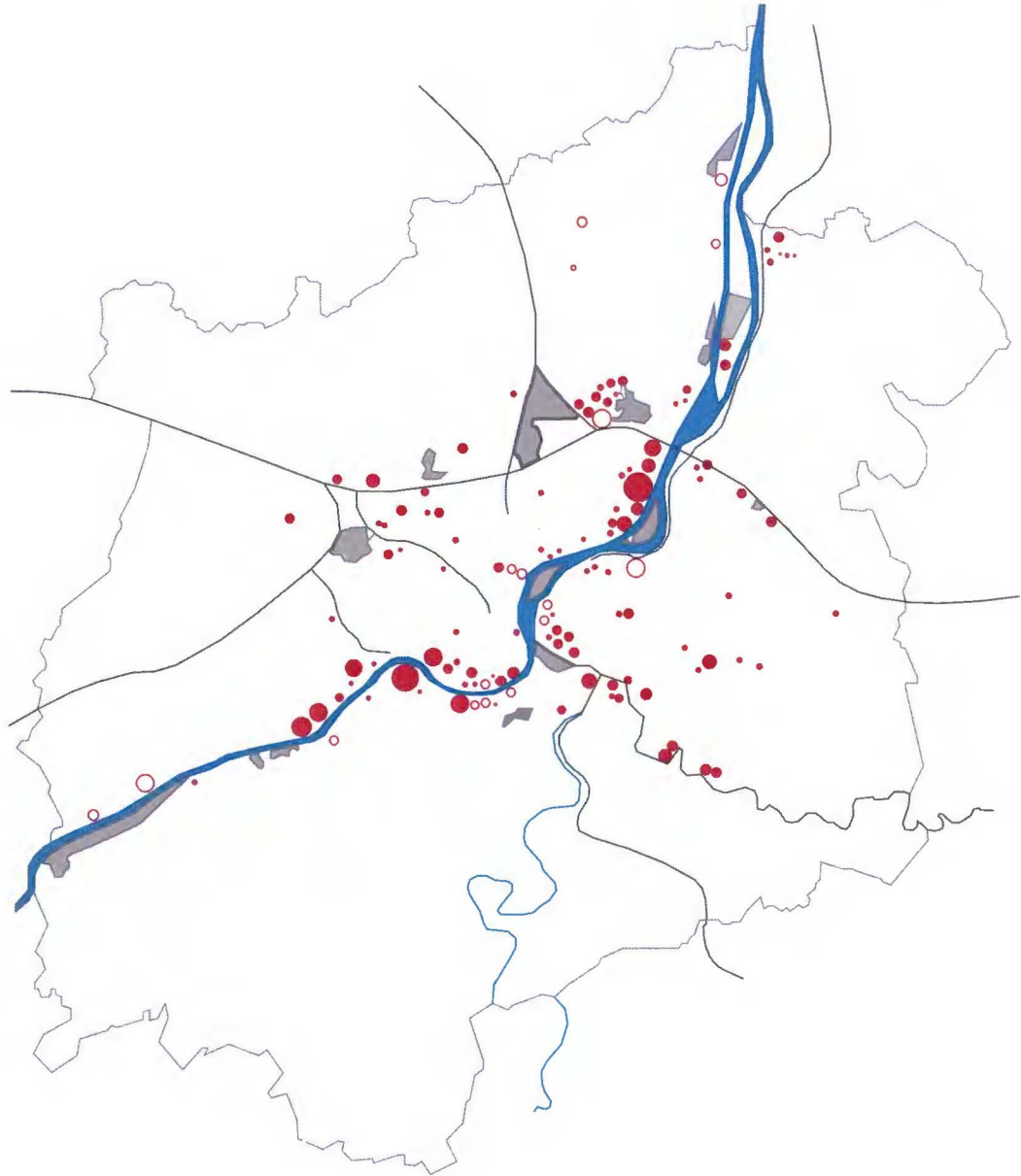
FIGURE 39. EXISTING LAND USE IN LEIGE REGION
INFORMATION SOURCE: 'PERSPECTIVES ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN BELGIUM', KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, 1992

HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

MEDIUM DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

LOW DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

INDUSTRIAL PARKS

CULTURAL AREAS

MIXED USED AREAS E.G LOW DENSITY DEVEL-
OPMENT, WOODED AREAS, CULTURAL AREAS
& FIELDS

MIXED USE AREA - WEST

MIXED USE AREA - SOUTH

PRINCIPAL FORESTS

AIRPORT
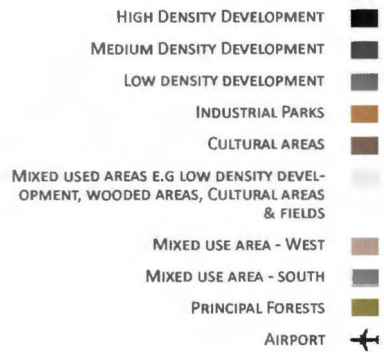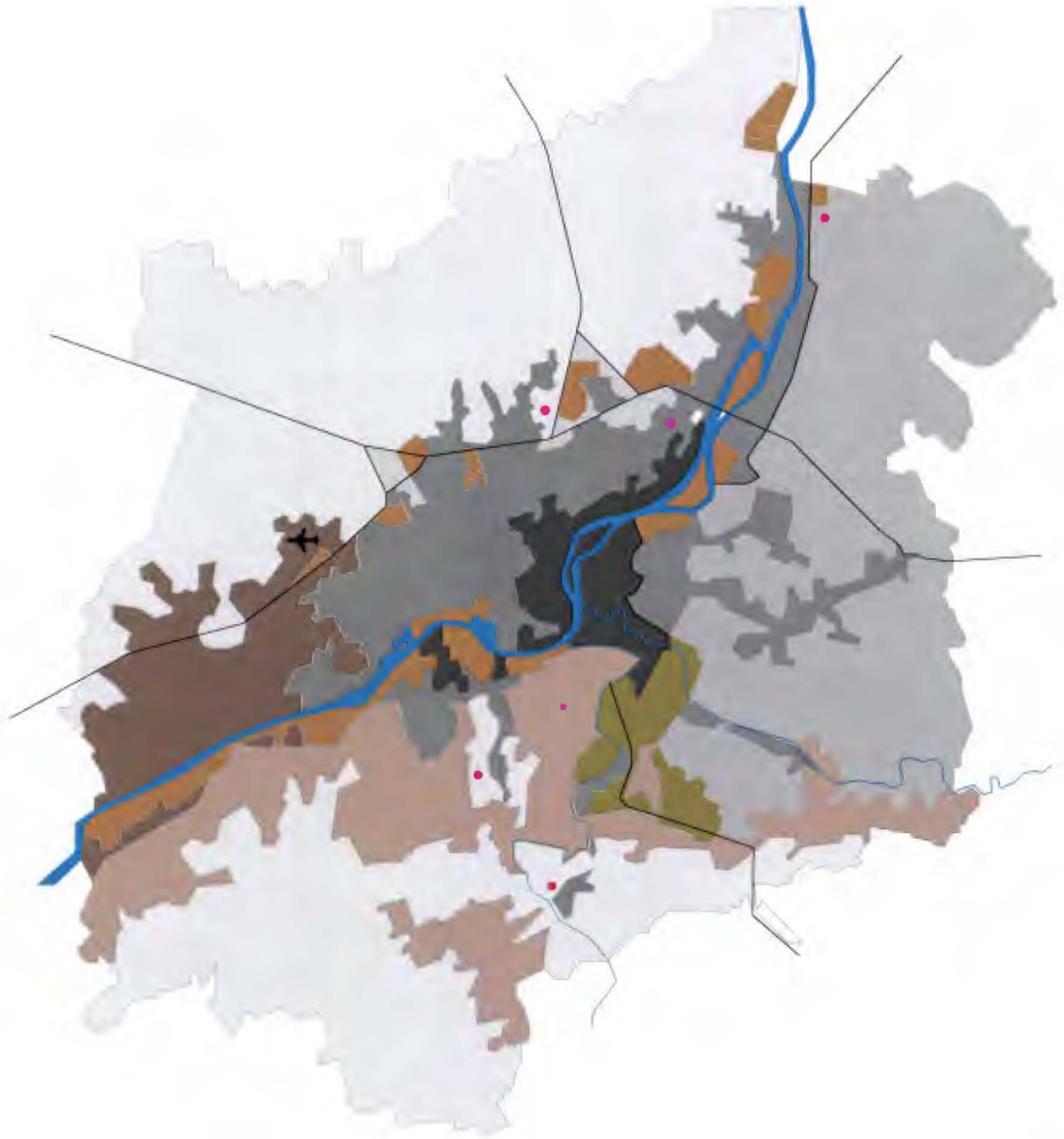
FIGURE 40. WATER, ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPED FOR SPECIFIC   INDUSTRIAL AREAS
INFORMATION SOURCE: 'PERSPECTIVES ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN BELGIUM', KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, 1992

WATER TRANSPORT BASED INDUSTRIES
ROAD TRANSPORT BASED INDUSTRIES
RAIL TRANSPORT BASED INDUSTRIES
AIRPORT

CONTOUR LINES
TOPOGRAPHIC CUT
BOUNDARY
WATER COURSE

PLATEAU HESBIGNON

PAYS DE HERVE

PLATEAU DU CONDROZ ARDENNAIS

320 NW

200

PLATEAU DU
CONDROZ ARDENNAIS

PLATEAU HESBIGNON

LE MEUSE

LE OURTHE

ARDENNES

SE

0

10

20

30
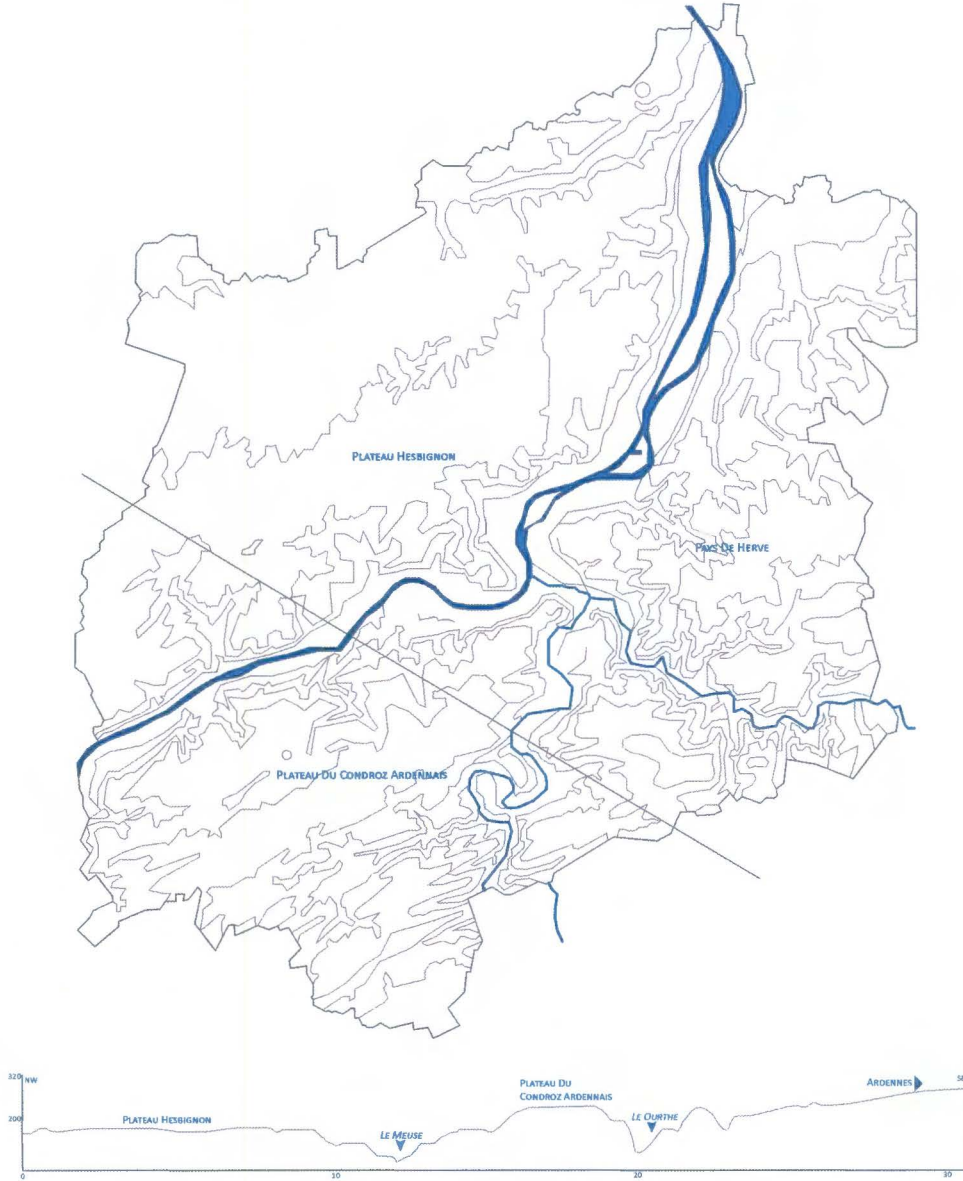
FIGURE 42. COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE OF LIEGE REGION
INFORMATION SOURCE: 'PERSPECTIVES ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN BELGIUM', KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, 1992

240.000 M²

30000 M²
25000 M²
20000 M²
15000 M²
10000 M²
5000 M²

DEPARTMENTAL STORES
SPECIALITY STORE
BOUNDARY
WATER COURSE
NUMBER OF SPECIALITY STORES   90

20
ROCCOURT

110
ANS

230
HERSTAL

140
VISE

75
SOUMAGNE

2530
LEIGE

75
FLERON

190
JEMEPPE

50
FLEMALLE

190
SERAING

100
CHENEE

BONCELLES

60
TILF

55
ESNEUX
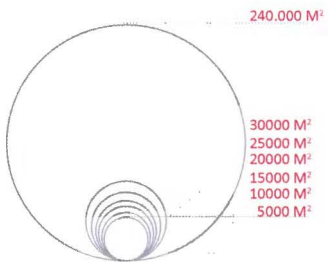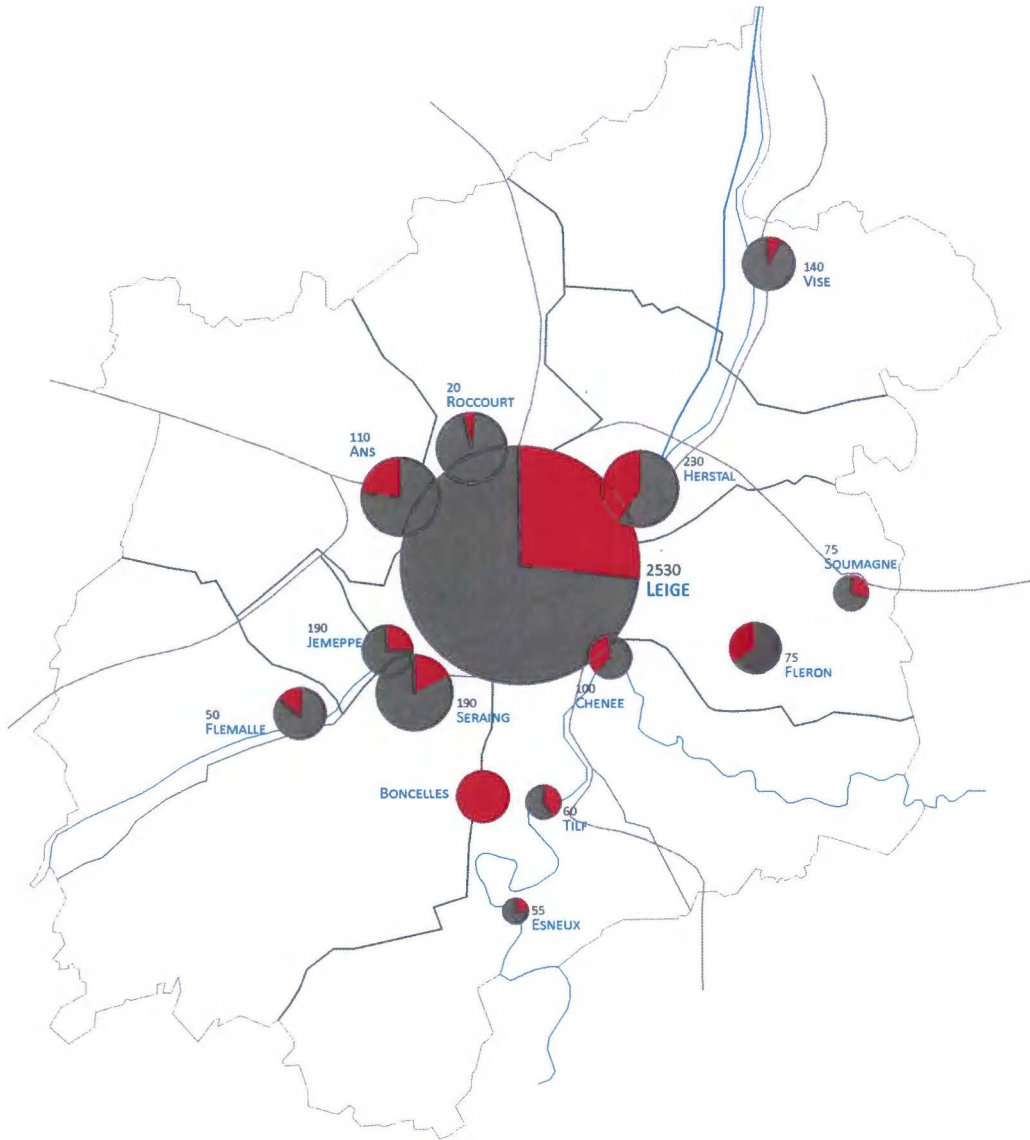
4.4
LIEGE CITY

FIGURE 43. URBAN ANALYSIS OF CAR TRAFFIC PATTERN IN THE AREA AROUDN PARC DE LA BOVERIE

CAR TRAFFIC ROUTES IN AND
AROUND THE ISLAND

FIGURE 44. URBAN ANALYSIS OF BUS TRAFFIC PATTERN IN THE AREA AROUND PARC DE LA BOVERIE

BUS ROUTES IN AND AROUND THE ISLAND
LEADING TO TRAFFIC IN THE ISLAND
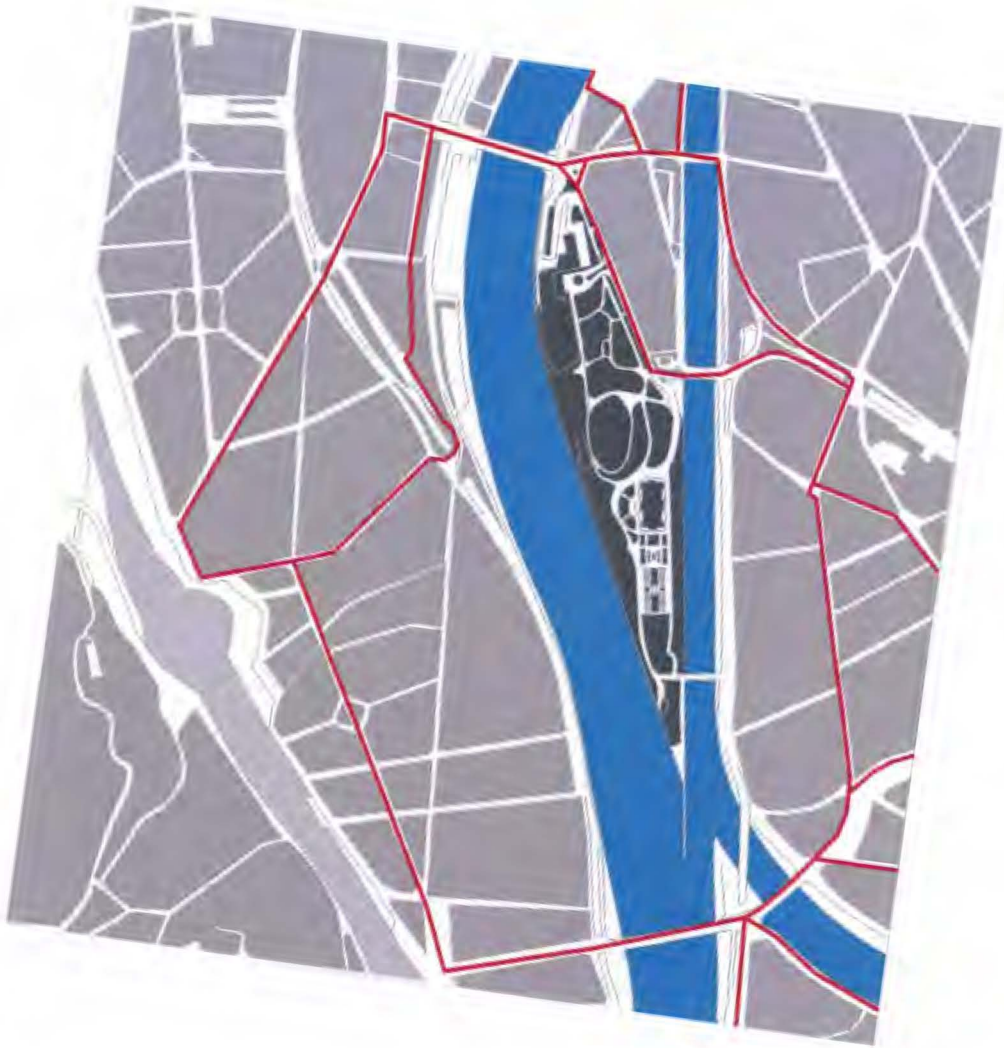
FIGURE 45. URBAN ANALYSIS OF TRAFFIC FLOW PATTERN INTO PARC DE LA BOVERIE

TRAFFIC FLOW INTO THE ISLAND CAUSED
BY VARIOUS TRAFFIC PATTERNS IN AND
AROUND THE ISLAND
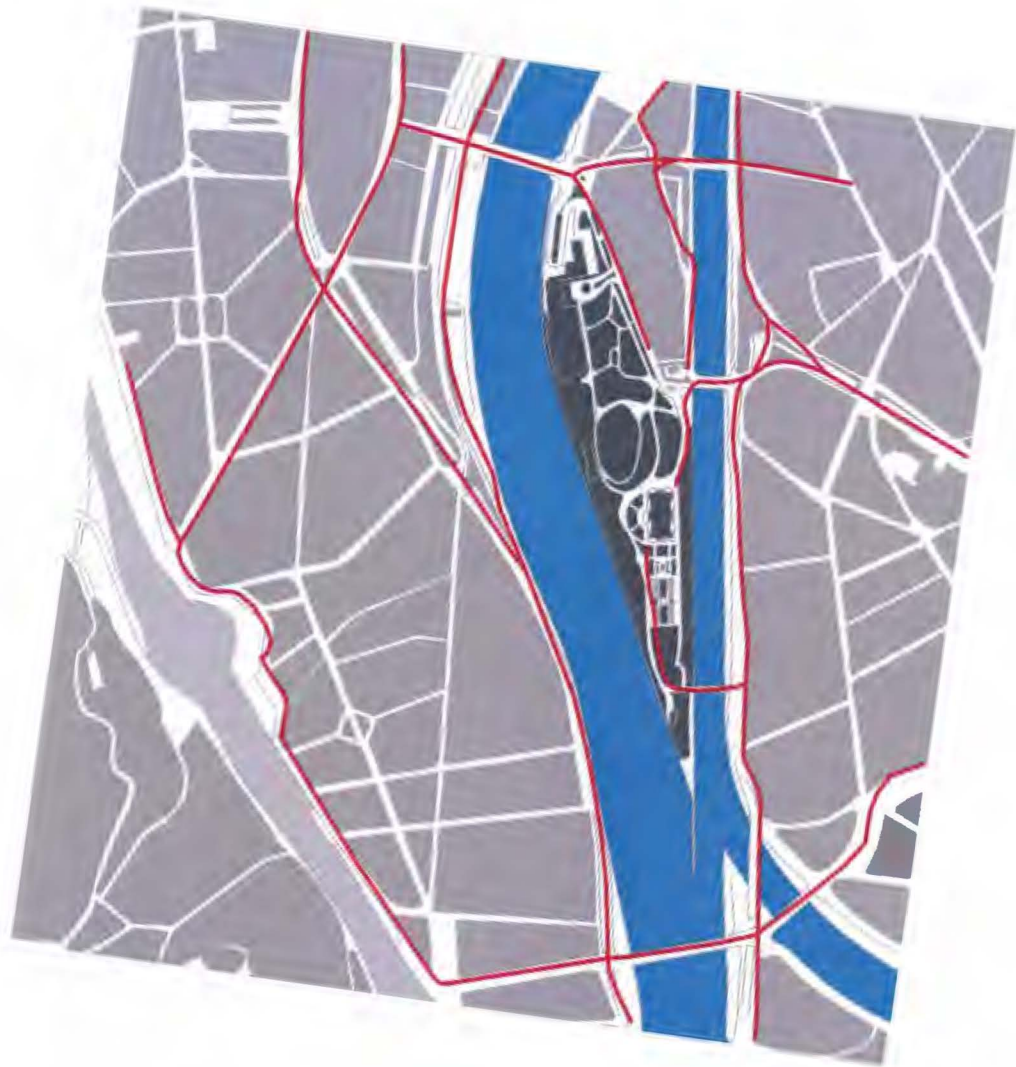
4.5
LIEGE PROPSED ESTUARY

FIGURE 46. PROPOSED ESTURARY/ AXIS CONNECTING THE LIEGE GUILLEMINS STATION AND THE ISLAND OF PARC DE LA BOVERIE
DESIGN PROPOSAL BY DETHIER & ASSOCIES, ATELIER 4D - AGENCY TER - NEY & PARTNERS
SOURCE: www.liegeonline.be
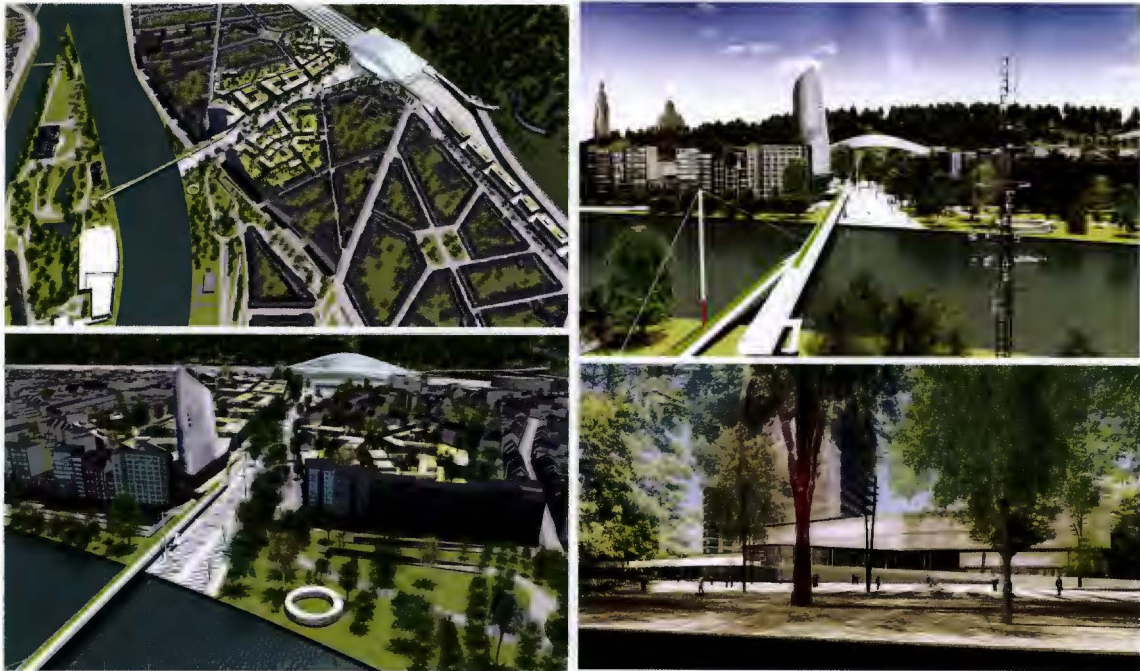
FIGURE 47,48, 49, 50. IBID.,
SOURCE: www.liegeonline.be

FIGURE 51. PROPOSED ESTURARY/ AXIS CONNECTING THE STATION AND THE ISLAND OF PARC DE LA BOVERIE
DESIGN PROPOSAL BY S.CALATRAVA
SOURCE: www.liegeonline.be

Figure 52,53. ibid
Source: www.liegeonline.be
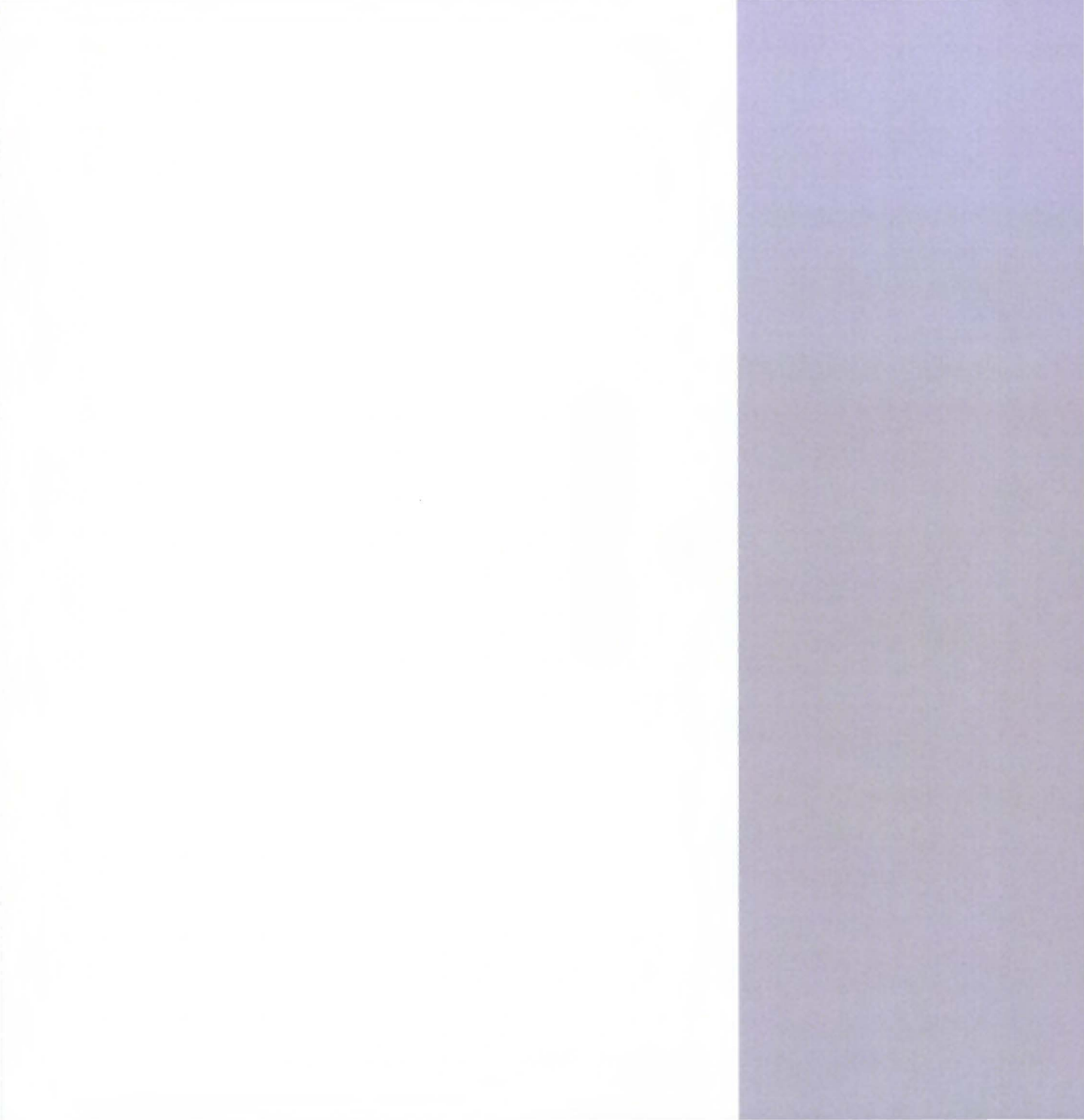
CHAPTER 5
THE DESIGN
INTERVENTION

5.1 PLANS
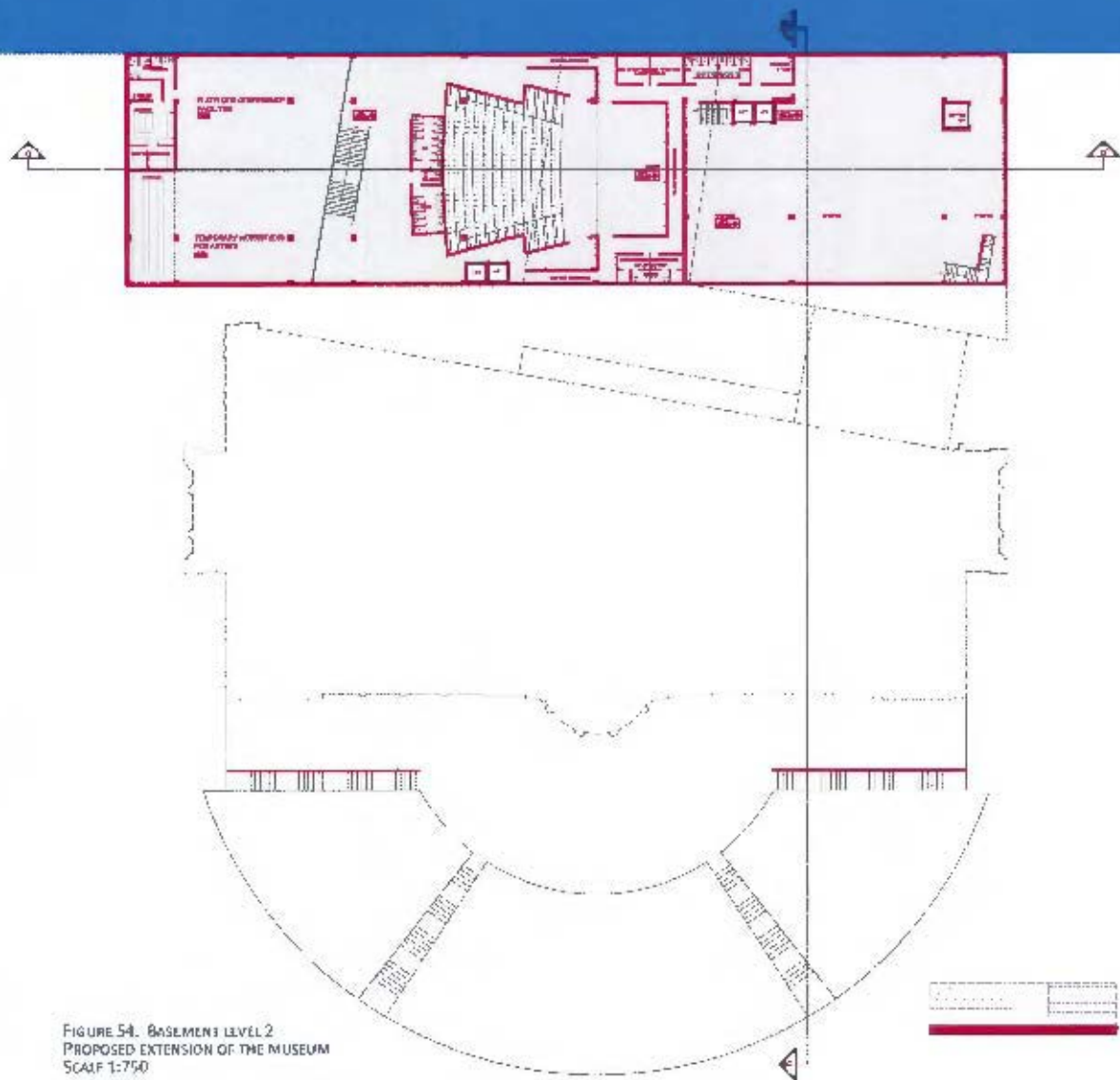
FIGURE 54. BASEMENT LEVEL 2
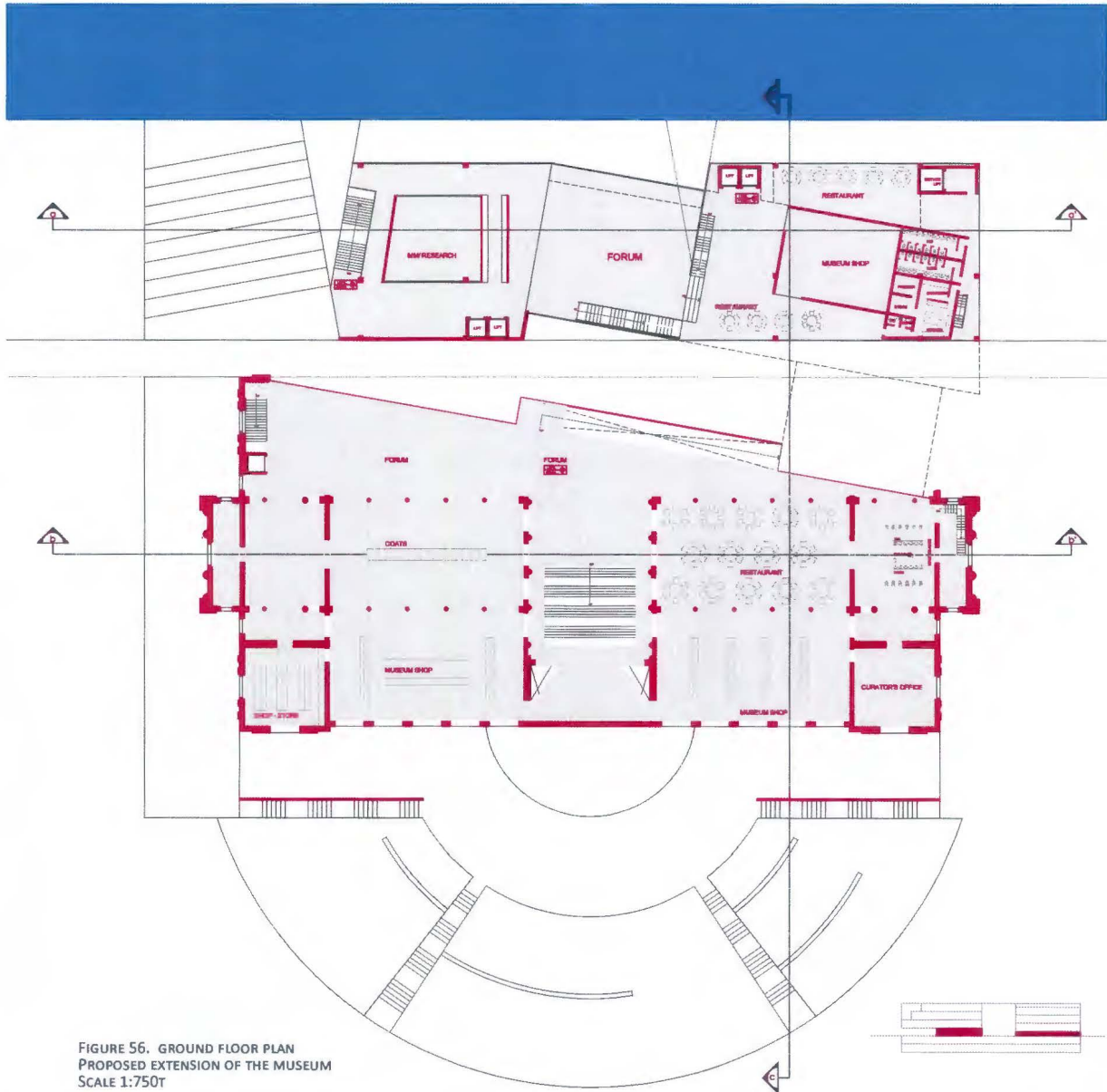PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

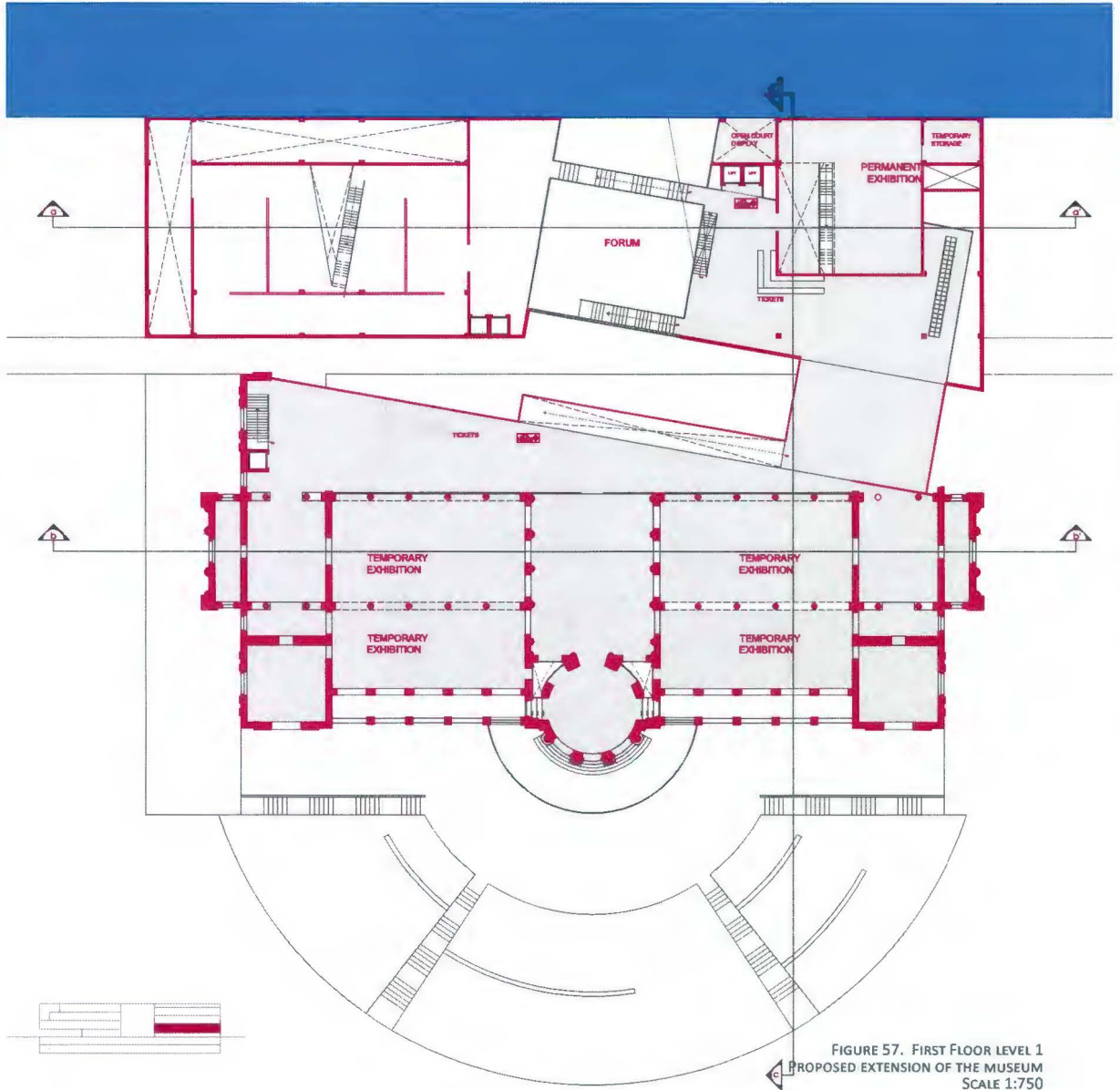FIGURE 55. BASEMENT LEVEL 1
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

MECHANICAL SERVICES/
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT ROOM
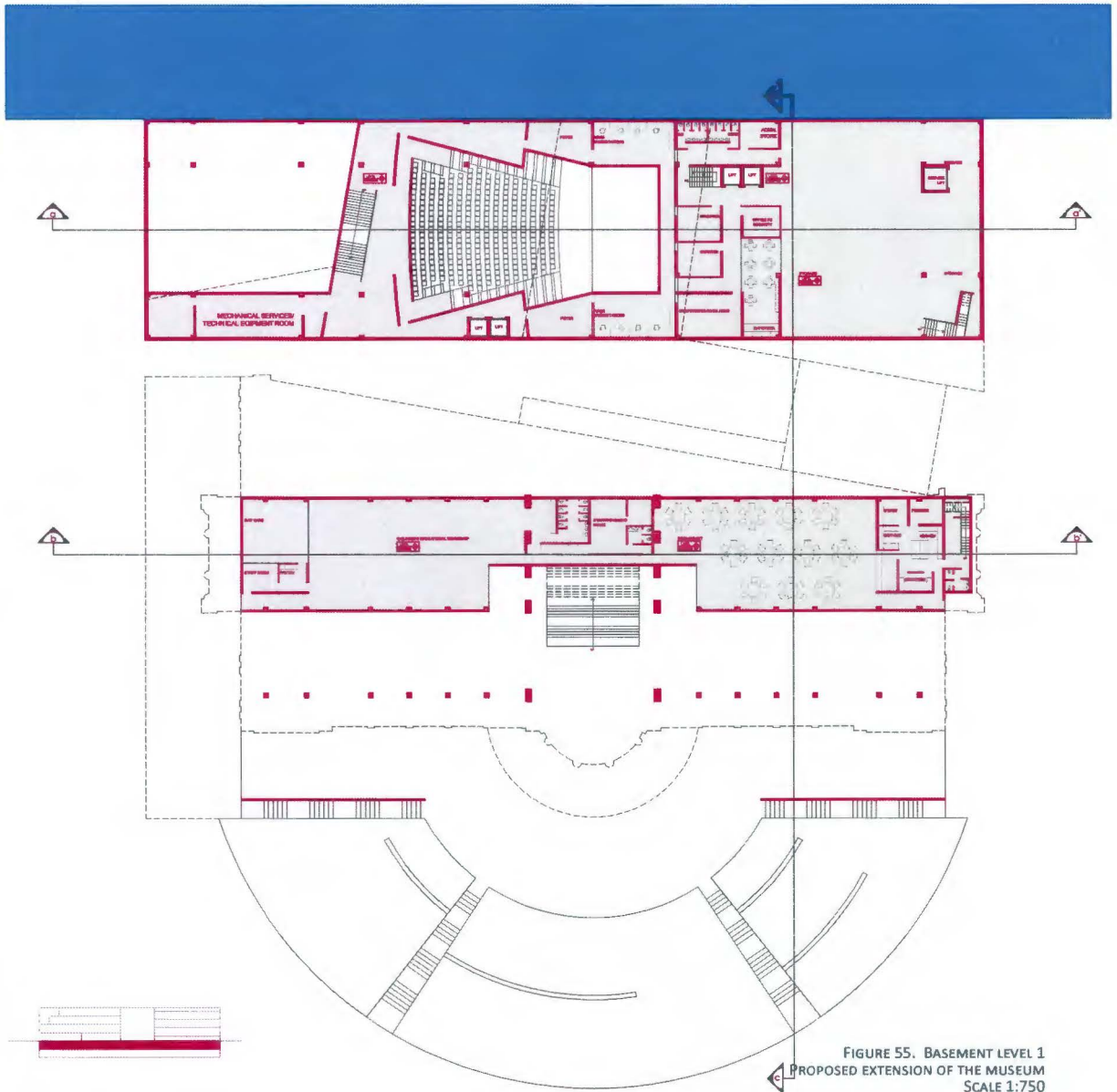
FIGURE 56. GROUND FLOOR PLAN
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750T

FIGURE 57. FIRST FLOOR LEVEL 1
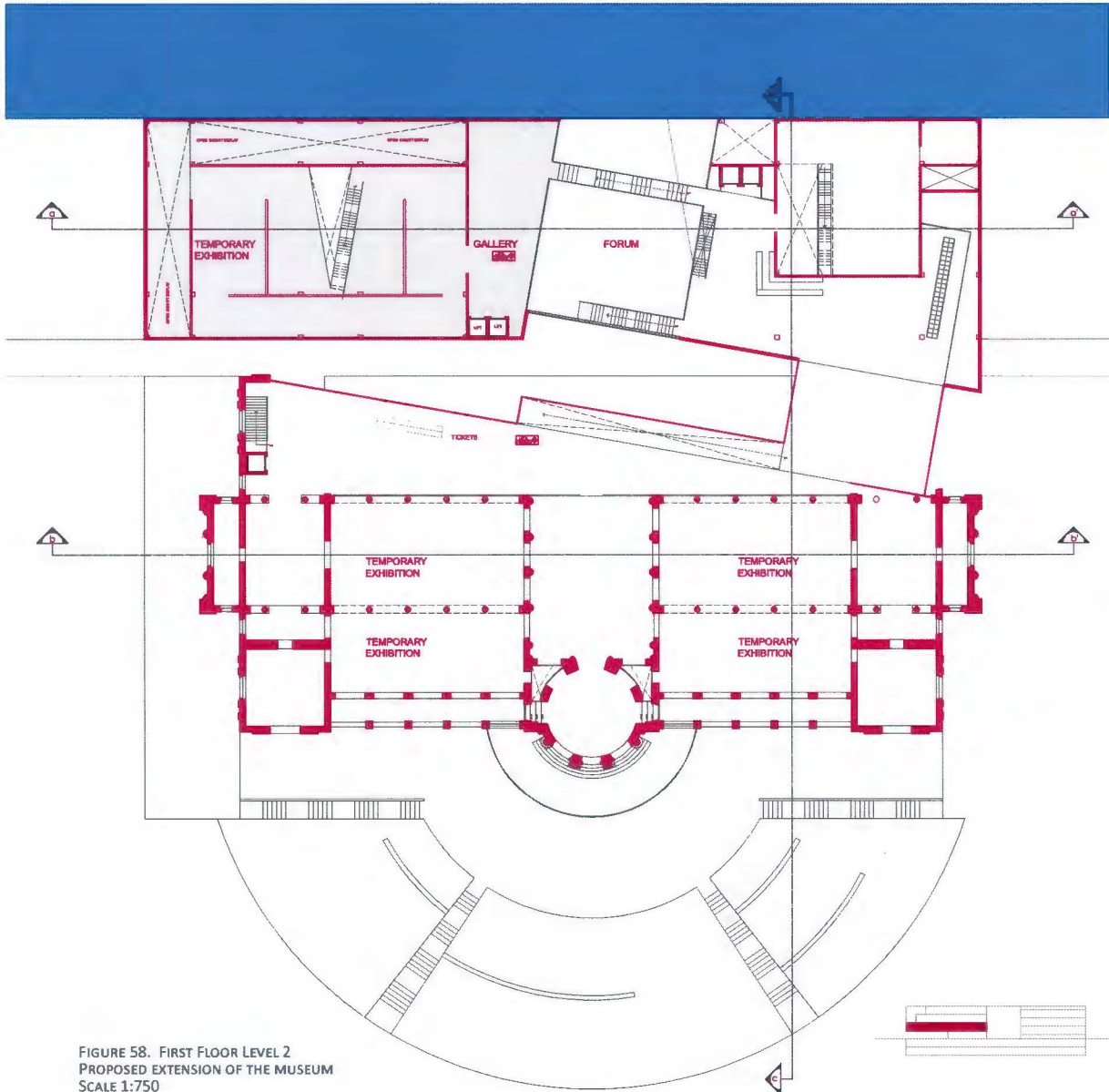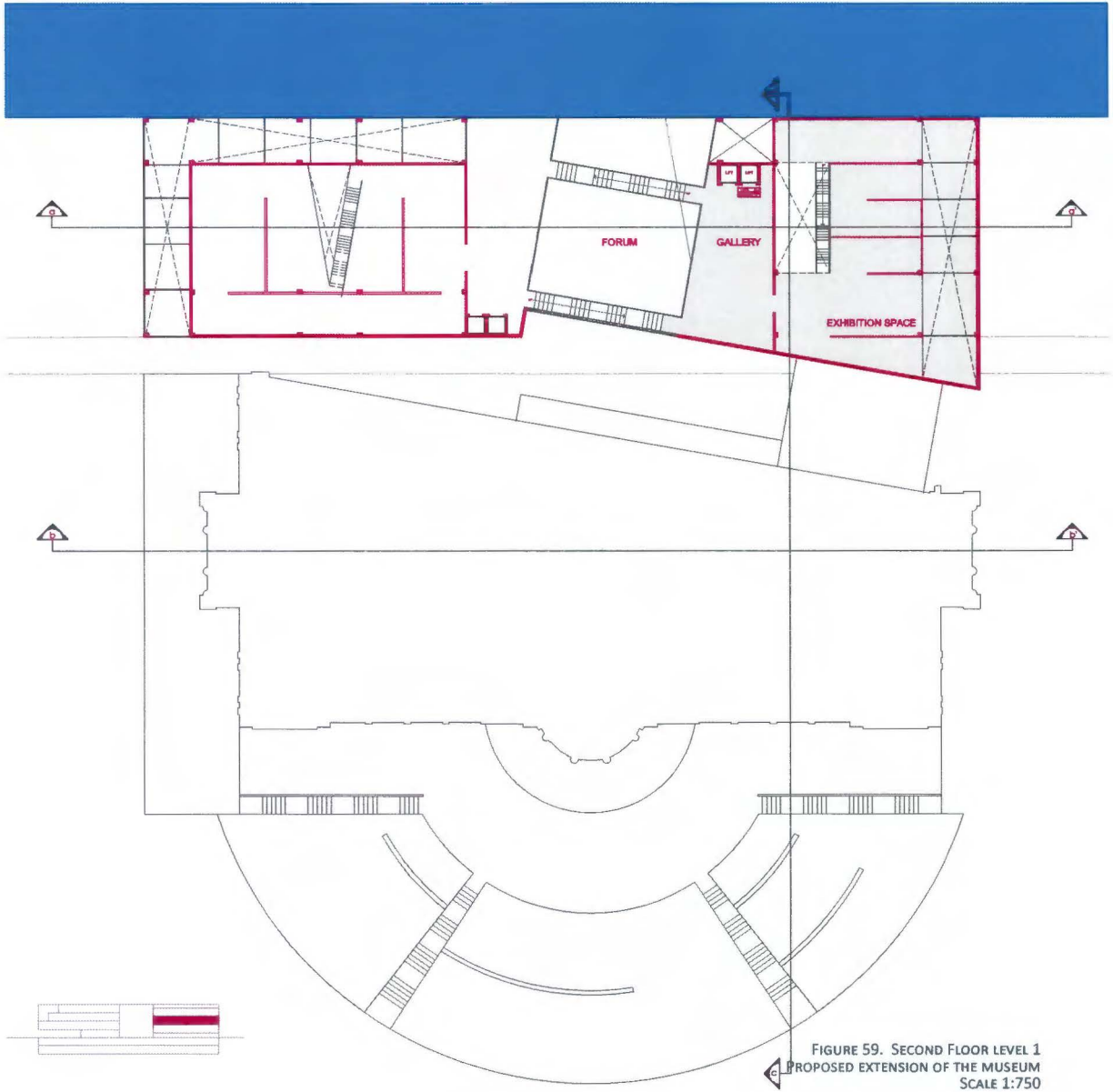PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

OPEN COURT
DEPOT

PERMANENT
EXHIBITION

TEMPORARY
STORAGE

FORUM

TICKETS

TICKETS

TEMPORARY
EXHIBITION

TEMPORARY
EXHIBITION

TEMPORARY
EXHIBITION

TEMPORARY
EXHIBITION

FIGURE 58. FIRST FLOOR LEVEL 2
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

FORUM

GALLERY

EXHIBITION SPACE

FIGURE 59. SECOND FLOOR LEVEL 1
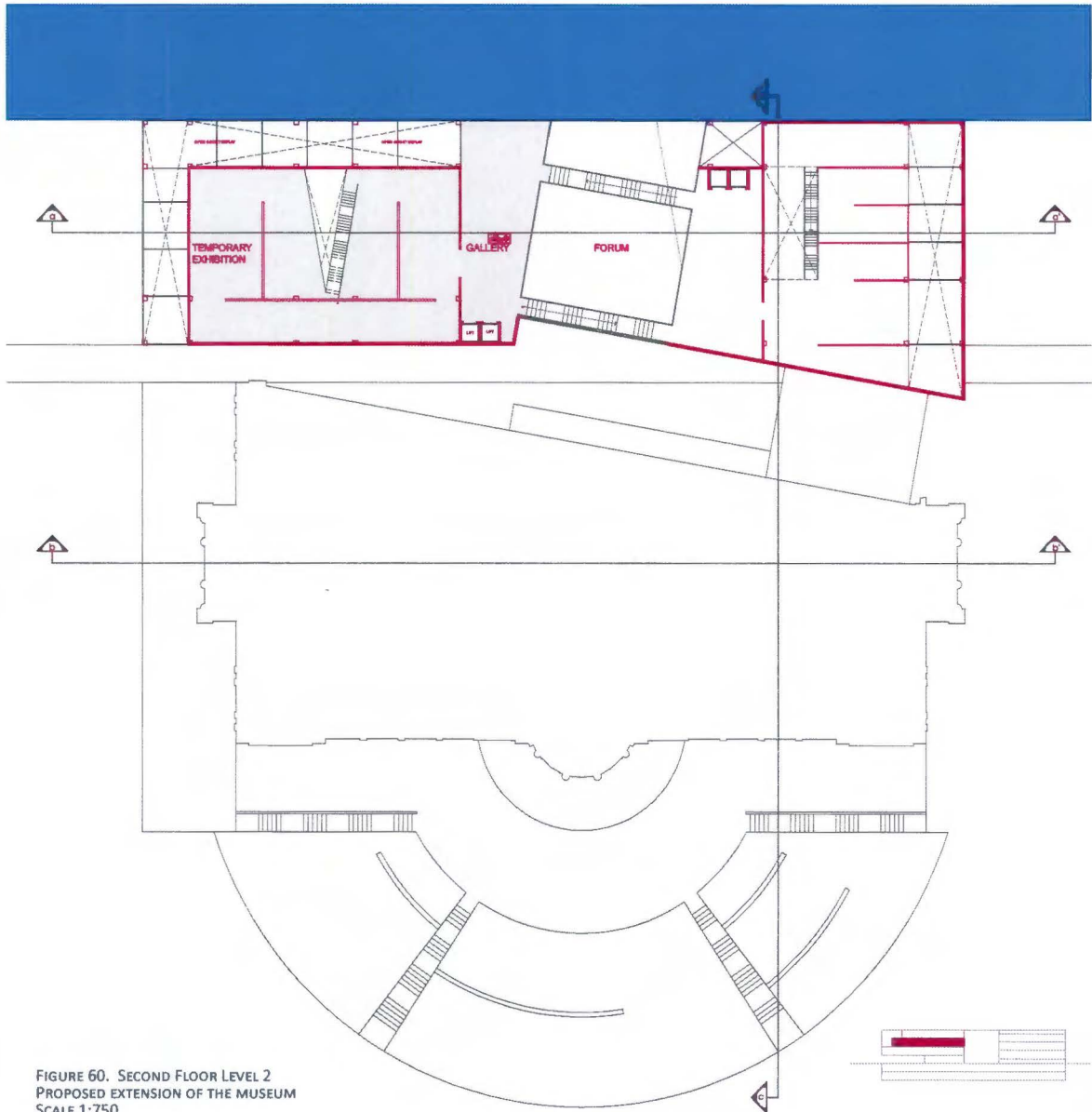PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

FIGURE 60. SECOND FLOOR LEVEL 2
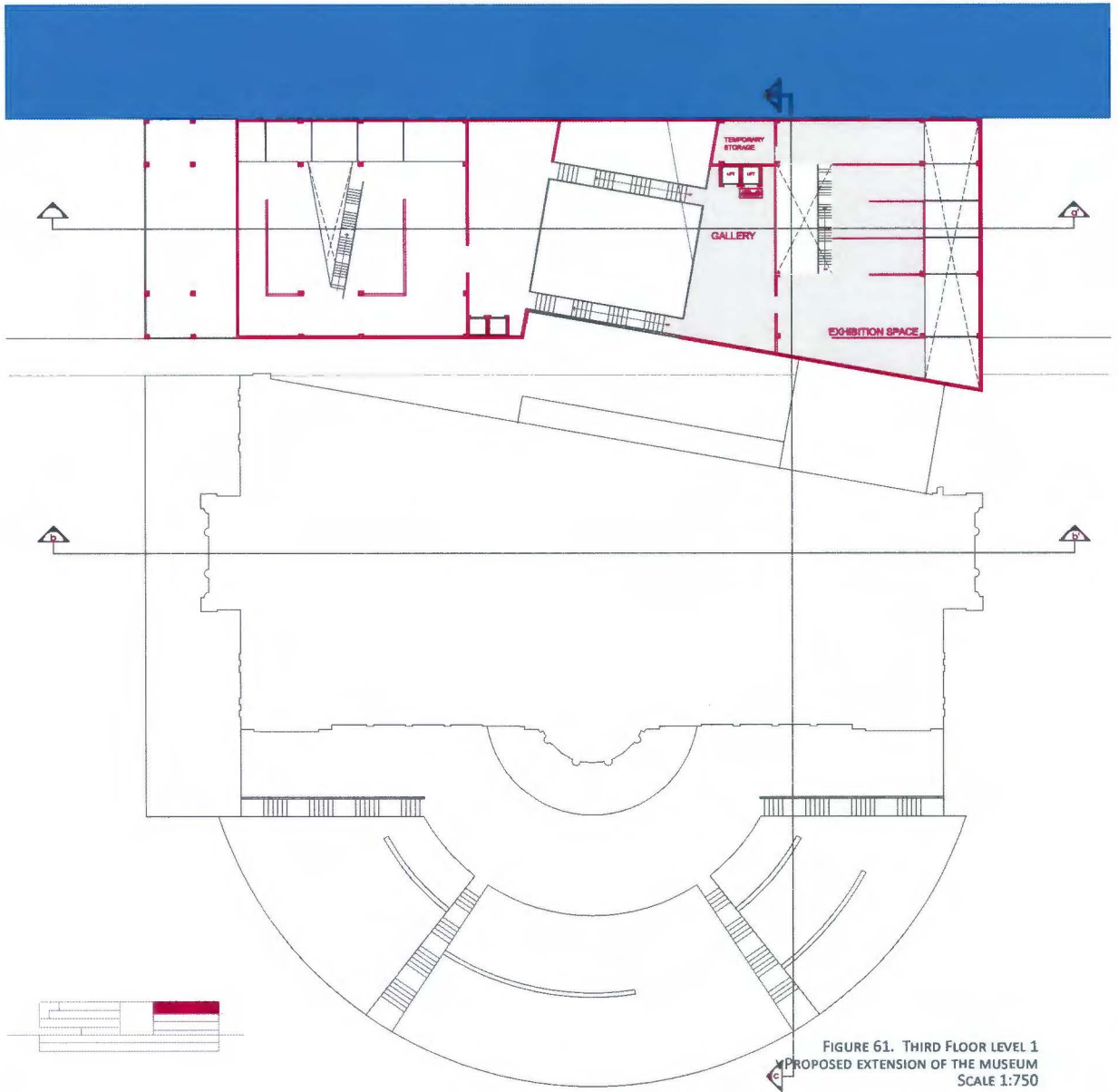PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

FIGURE 61. THIRD FLOOR LEVEL 1
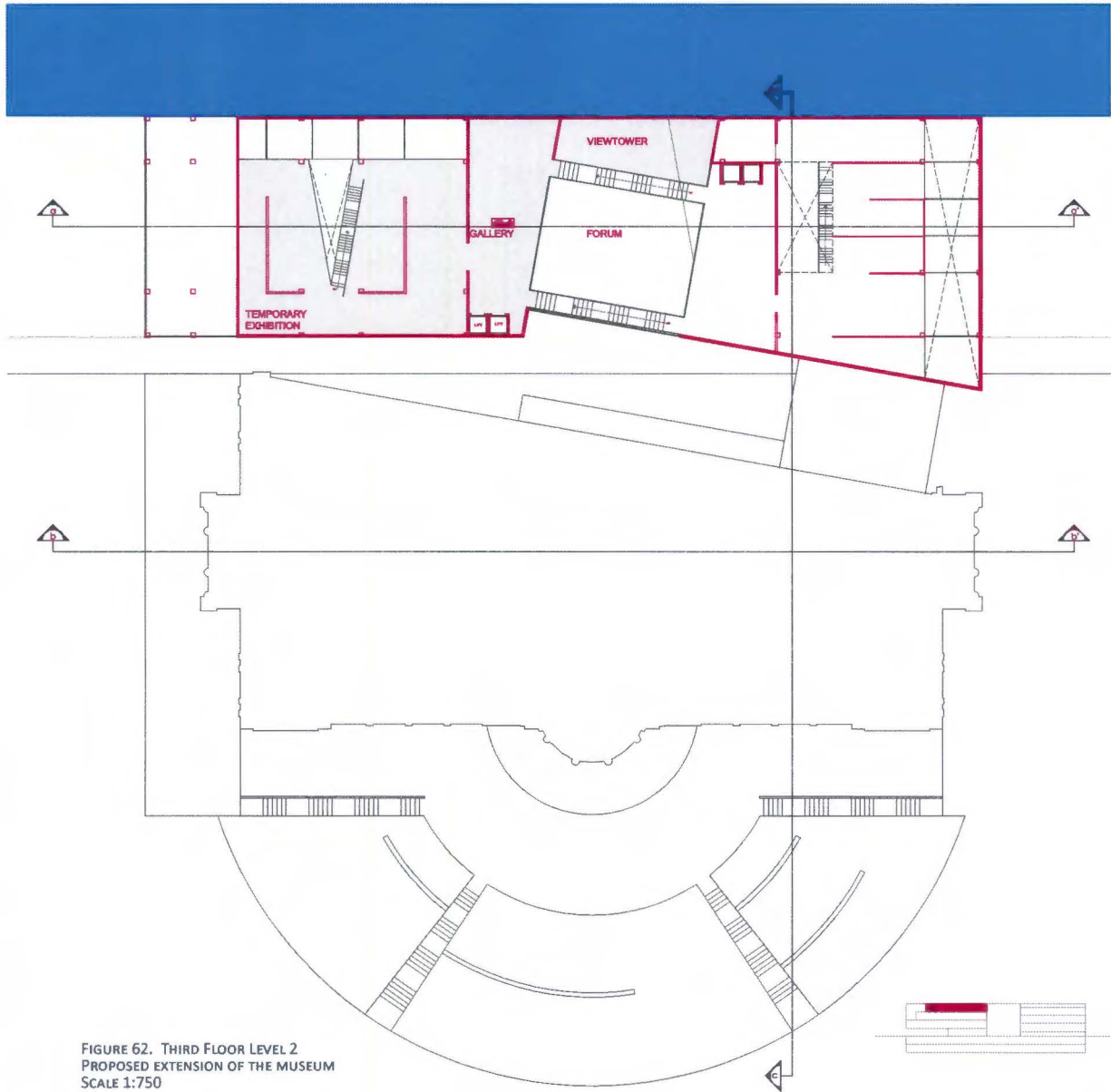PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

Labels within figure: TEMPORARY STORAGE, GALLERY, EXHIBITION SPACE

VIEWTOWER

GALLERY

FORUM

TEMPORARY
EXHIBITION

FIGURE 62. THIRD FLOOR LEVEL 2
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

5.2 CROSS-SECTIONS
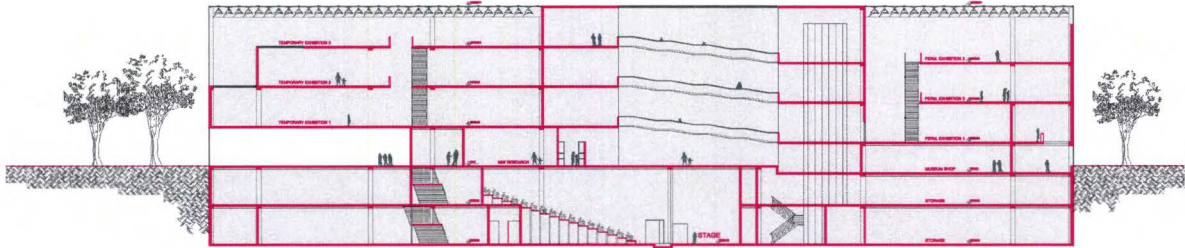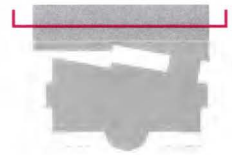
FIGURE 63. CROSS SECTION A-A'
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750
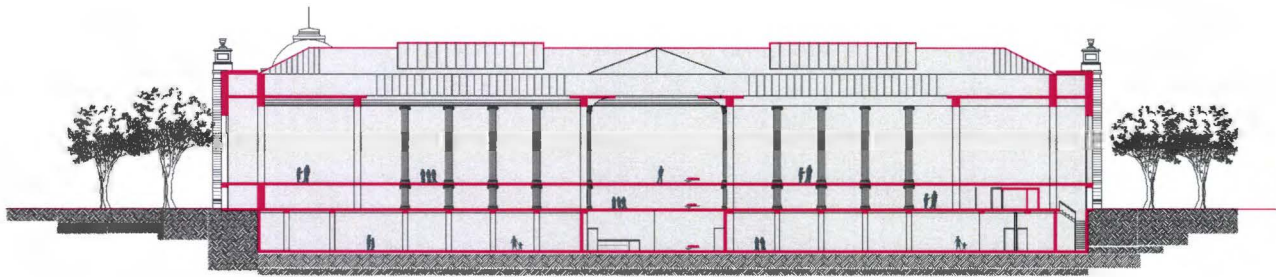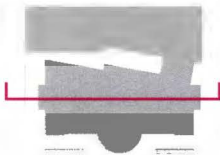
FIGURE 64. CROSS SECTION B-B'
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

FIGURE 65. CROSS SECTION C-C'
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750
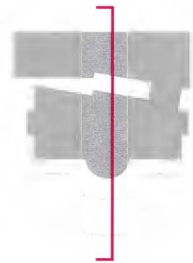
5.3 ELEVATI◉NS
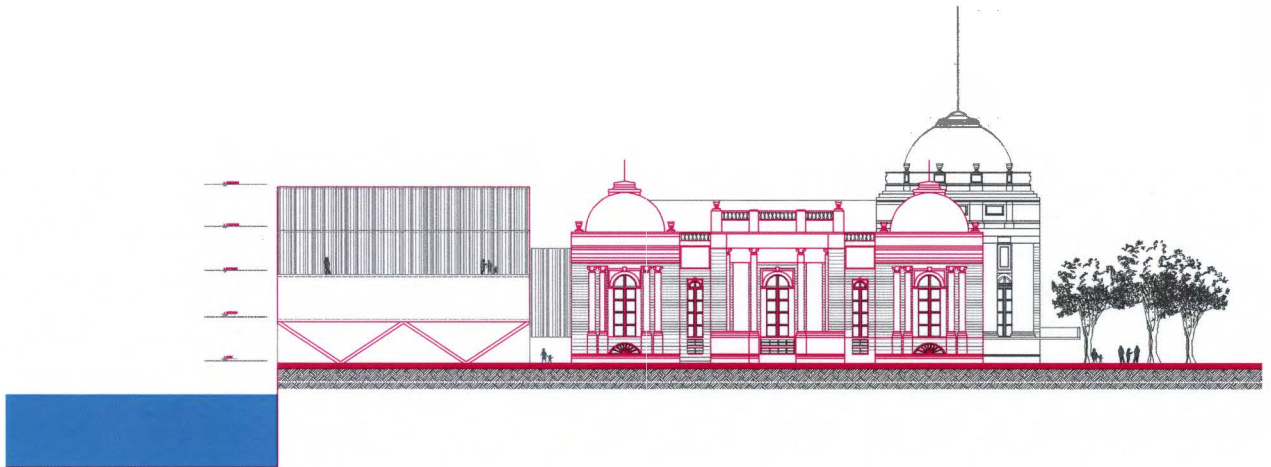
FIGURE 66. SOUTH ELEVATION
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750
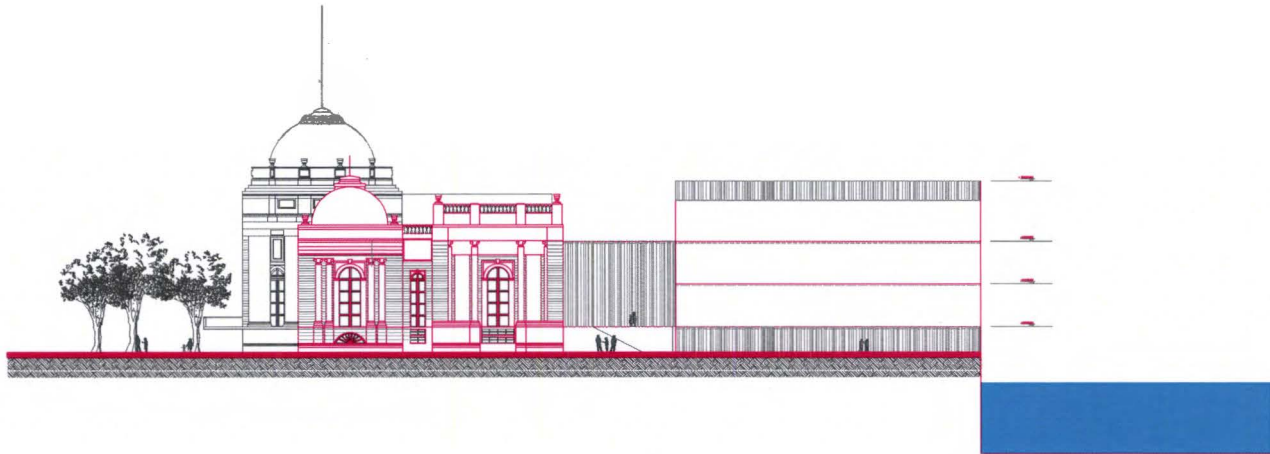
FIGURE 67. NORTH ELEVATION
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750
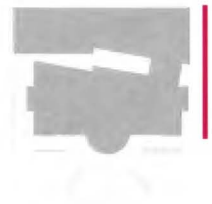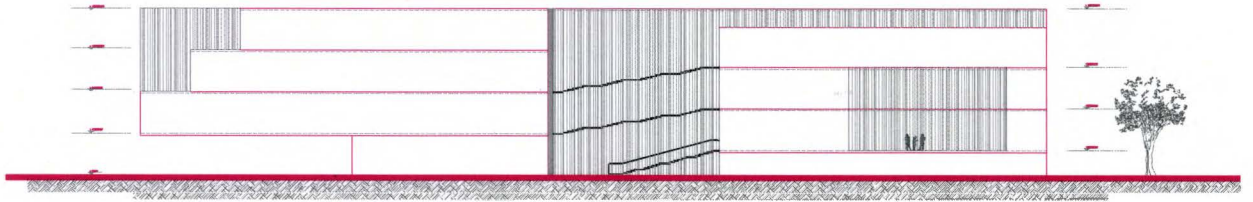
FIGURE 68. WEST ELEVATION
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750
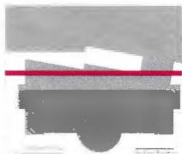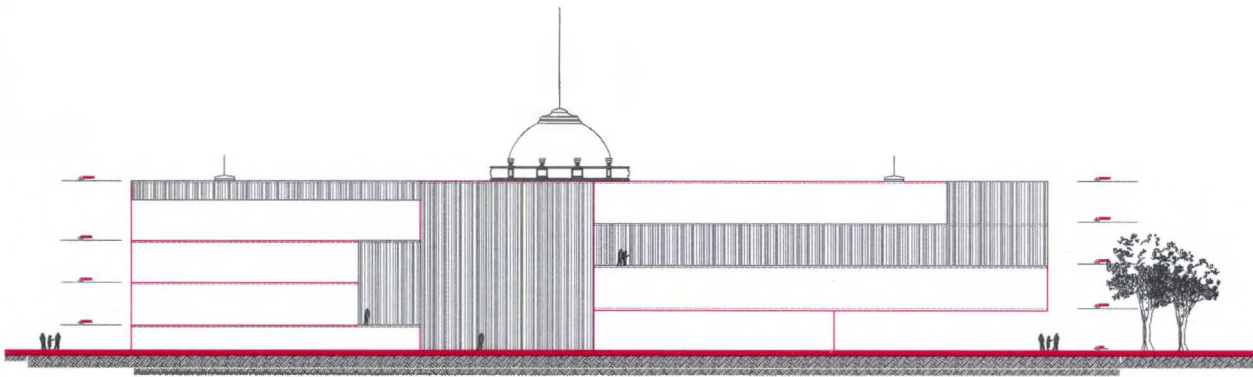
FIGURE 69. EAST ELEVATION
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM
SCALE 1:750

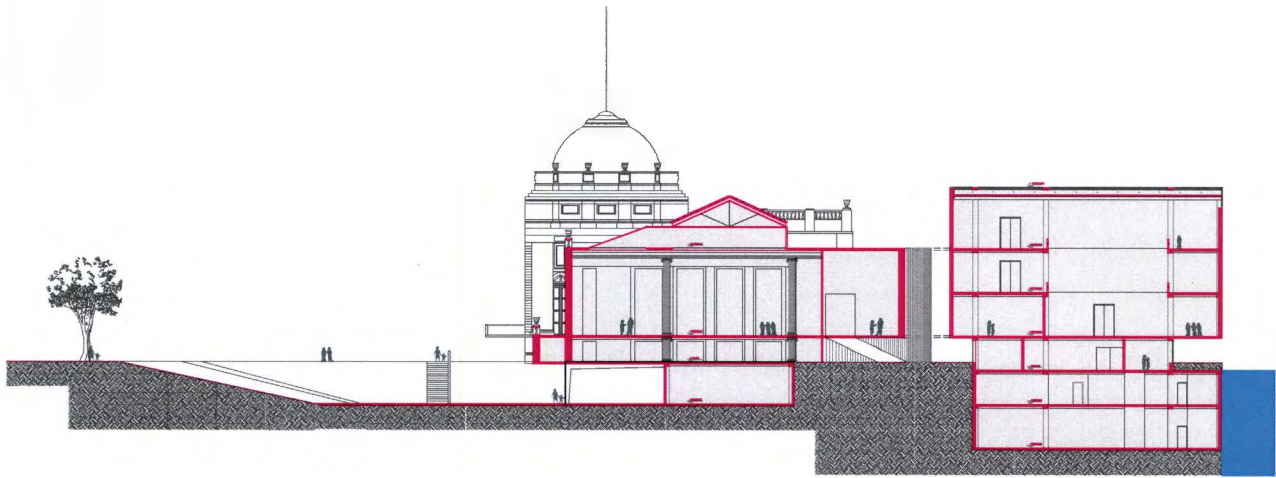# 5.4 **ROUTING**
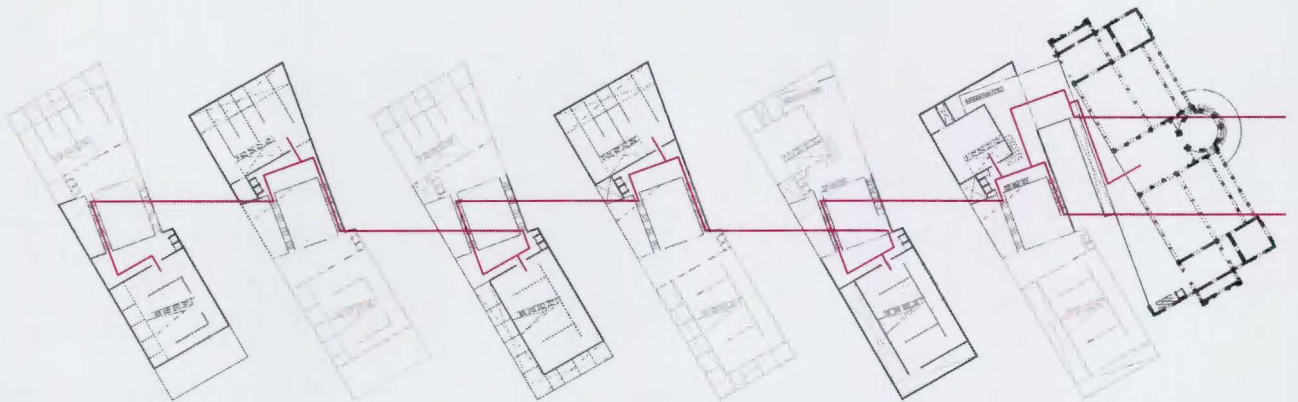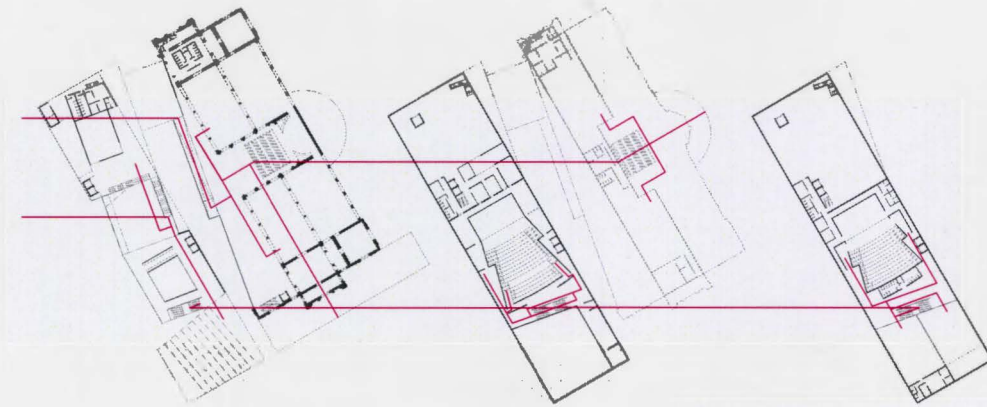
FIGURE 70.
CONSUMER/ COMMODITY ROUTING

FIGURE 71.
FORMAL NARRATIVE/ MUSEUM ROUTING
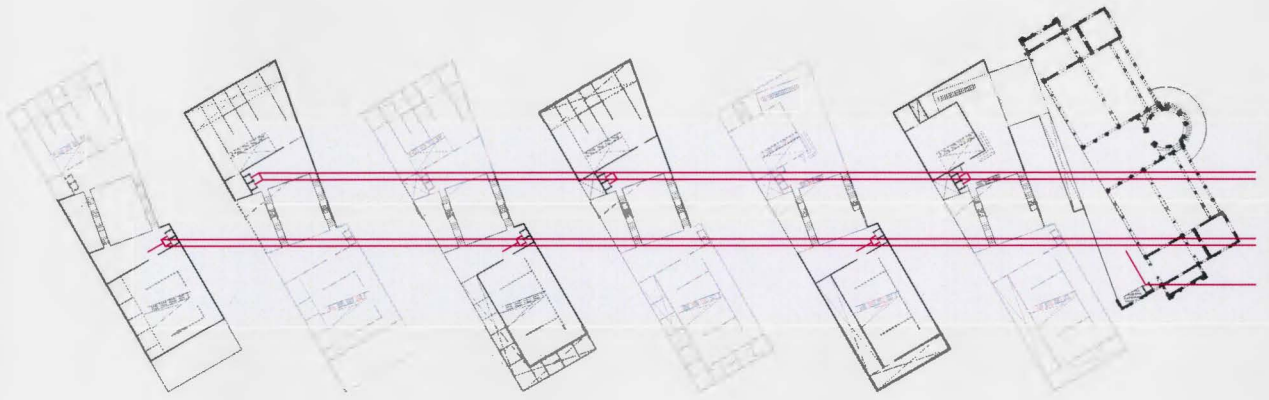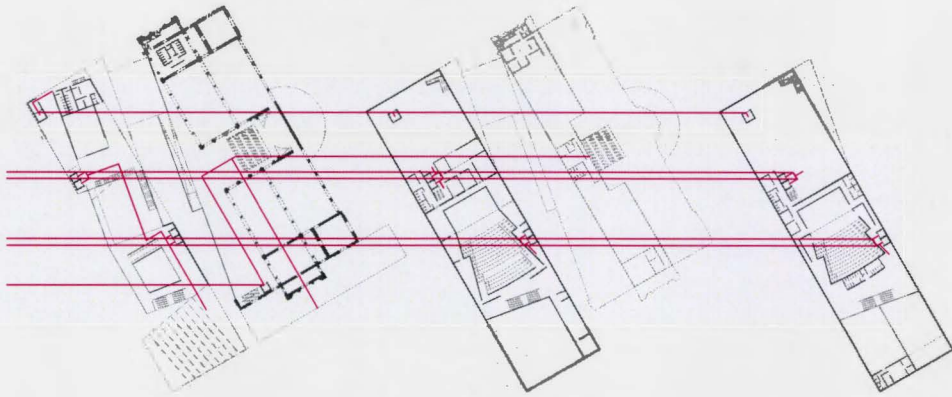
FIGURE 72.
LIFT - ROUTING
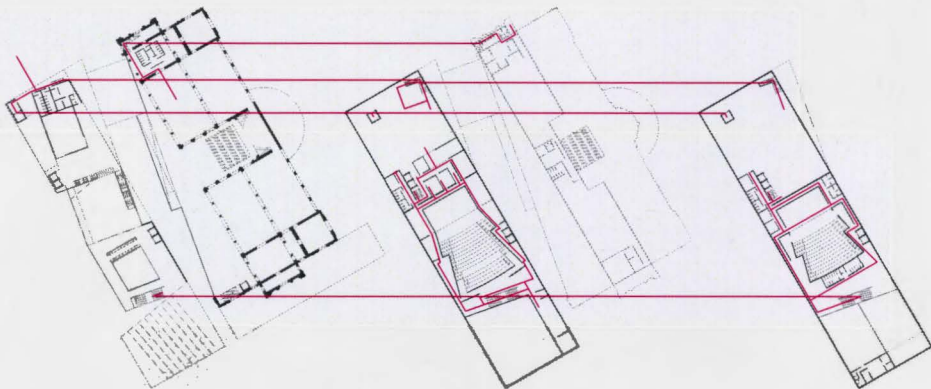
FIGURE 73.
SERVICE ROUTING

5.5 DETAILS

Section scale 1:500

GLASS ENCLOSURE

PRECAST CONCRETE ELEMENT ON REIN-
FORCEMENT

STRUCTURAL STEEL WORK

Part-section
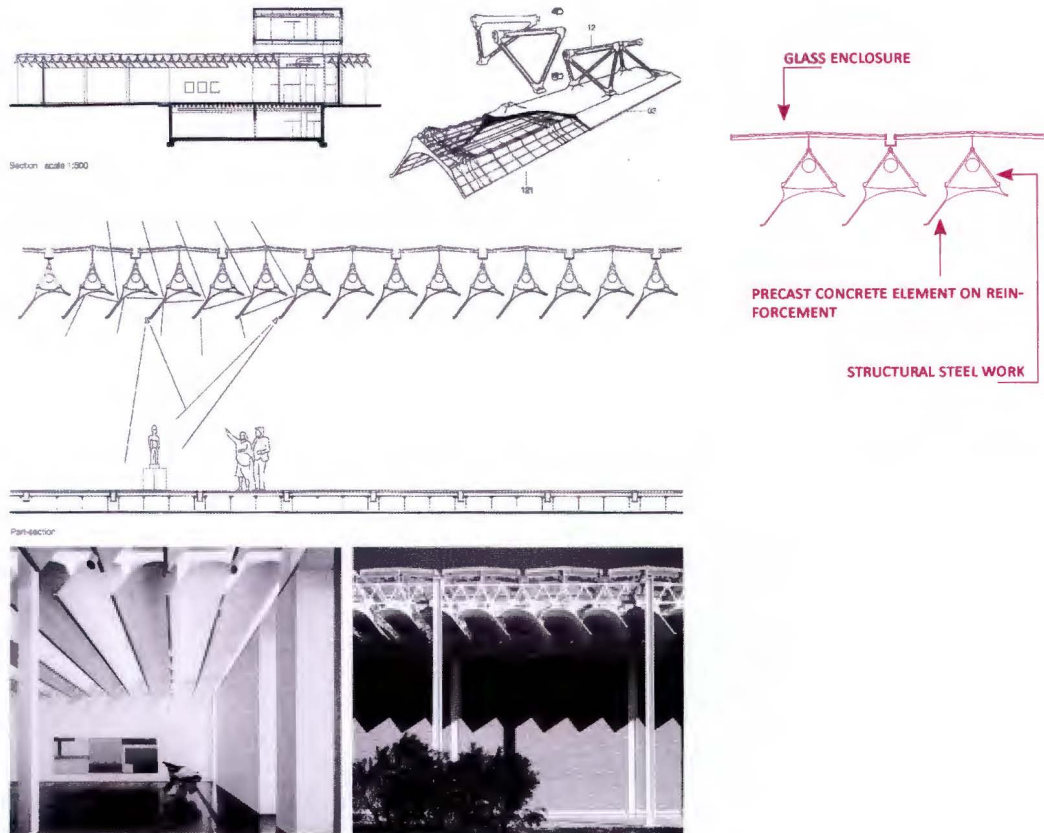
FIGURE 74. SKYLIGHT DETAIL IN HOUSTON MUSEUM BY RENZO PIANO
SOURCE: CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION, BIRKHAUSER PUBLISHERS, 2002
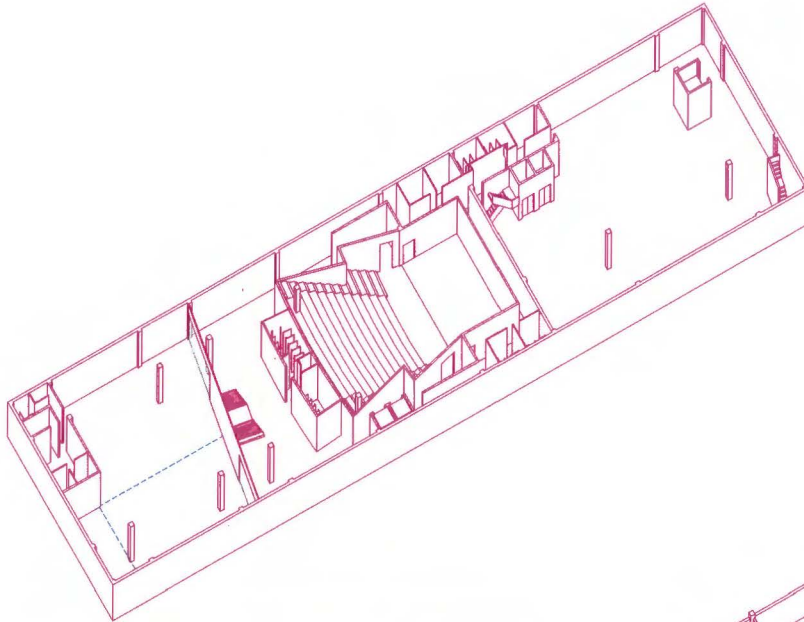
FIGURE 75. AXONOMETRIC DETAIL OF THE BASEMENT LEVEL 2 AUDITORIUM
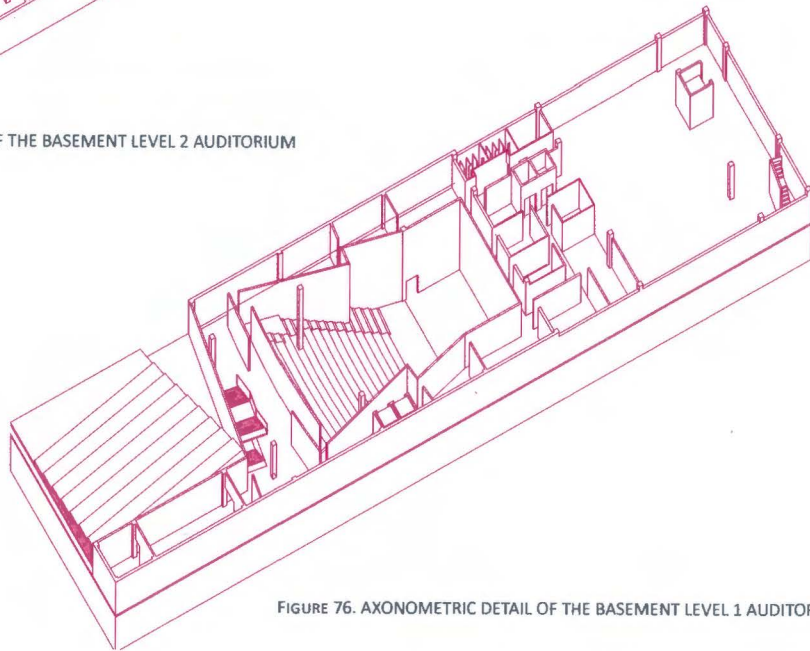
FIGURE 76. AXONOMETRIC DETAIL OF THE BASEMENT LEVEL 1 AUDITORIUM

5.6 **VIRTUAL IMPRESSIONS**

FIGURE 77. 3D IMPRESSION OF THE FORMAL DIGGING OUT OF THE MUSEUM AS A PUBLIC SPACE

FIGURE 78. 3D IMPRESSION OF TRANSITION FROM OLD TO NEW EXTENSION
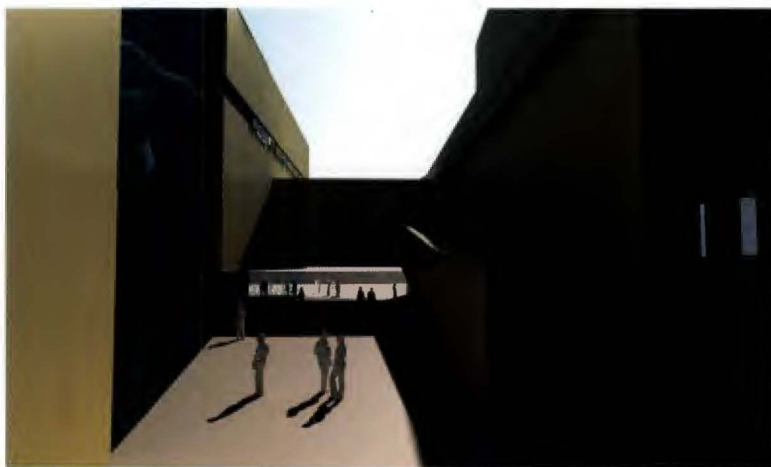
FIGURE 79. 3D IMPRESSION OF THE SLICE OF THE MUSEUM BACKSIDE AND THE TRANSITION FROM OLD TO NEW
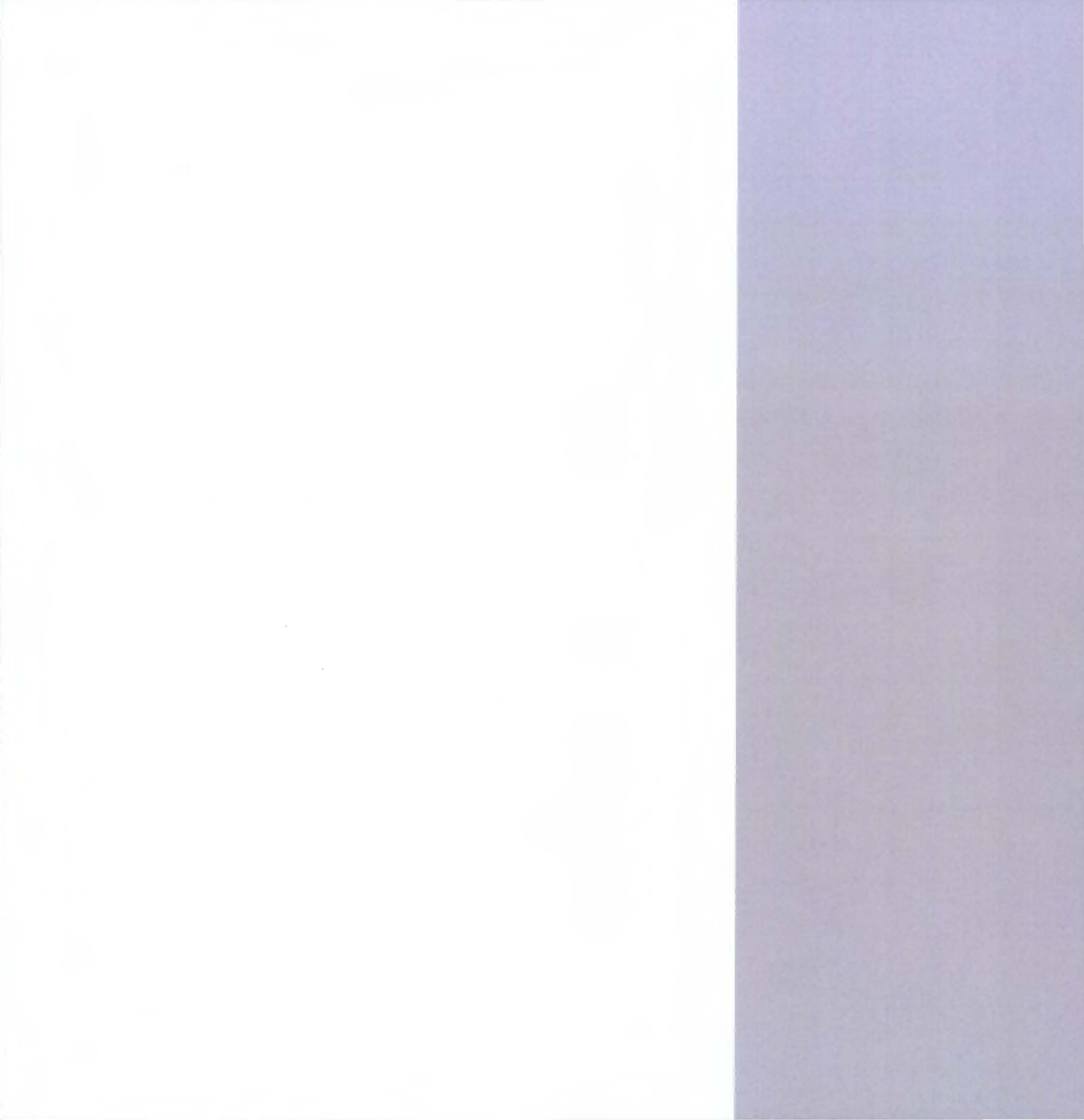
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSIONS|
CONCLUSIONS

6.1
POLITICS OF THE PRESENT:
ART AS COMMODITY
MUSEUM AS SHOP

Oyvind Fahlstorm's, the Swedish painter who worked with cartoon images that depicted the ideal art exhibition as the 'pleasure house', famously commented in the 60s that museums would eventually involve theatres, discos, meditation grottoes, versions of Luna Park, gardens, restaurants, hotels, swimming pools and sale of art replicas. His outrageous statement of that time is the museum model for the present.[83] Museums have been squarely slated alongside entertainment today. Like everything else in show business, museums have to sell to survive. This dissertation has been an attempt to perceive the museum, without judgment, against this very present reality.

The dissertation argues that this commercialization has been a consequence of politicization of the museum institution, in the present time. Politicization, however, has been part of museum organization always. The politics is what manifested in the public museum in the beginning as an educational impulse. Soon, politics assumed a more subtle and sinister shroud, under metaphors of religion. Through the enlightenment museum professed to be the new secular religion that held in its power refinement, sophistication and even social enlightenment. The religious and pedagogical metaphors embedded deep and lastingly in reformist manifesto of museum, still persists. However, the new vehicle museum politics has assumed is that of entertainment to sustain economically. Art is explicitly within the precincts of commerce now.

The situation – surrounding politicization, commercialization, commodification, and contextualization of art – is nowhere more apparent than the phenomenon of 'Modern art Supermuseums'. Modern art museums today are part of cultural policy of nation states and figure as the star performer in urban regeneration plans. Modern art museums are 'brands' today that with a touch of a wand can salvage cities and millions of people from slow purgatory of economic doom and place them in map of high-culture. They are political mandates, miracle potions, entertainment extravaganza and also museums.

Another phenomenon is the emergence of 'cultural tourism' around these museums. The boom in communications, the growing availability of leisure time, the increased demand in entertainment and stimulation and the claim for an equal right to access are some of the influencing circumstances of cultural tourism. [84] The phenomenon again characterizes the commodification of culture and museums figure square and centre.

This dissertation in two steps tries to understand this present outcome of politicization of museum – commercialization – from the inside the precincts of art as well from outside within the realm of the society. Interestingly, both scales have precedents of commerce embedded in it. The first step attempted to understand museum politics as a phenomenon of the society. 18th and 19th century political aspiration of reform and education manifested as various cultural and social institutions – fairs, international exhibitions, libraries, public places like parks, squares etc, even commercial models like department stores etc. The museum was one such institution that represented the politics of a certain context. Museums continued to 'represent' different contexts – religious, pedagogical, social etc – as times changed. Commercial is the newest of context in that line and museums today have flawlessly imbibed the rules of a value system based on commerce. Museum, at the scale of this wider platform or society, can then be said to have evolved as a machinery of 'representation'.

The second step has been an attempt to understand politics in the scale of the art. Guided by Brian O' Doherty's critical analysis of the relationship between modern art and the gallery – container and the contained – the dissertation tries to establish that mandate of commerce and economics have always been embedded in the politics of gallery space. Tracing the history of mainstream western art in its container, it is evident that the modern gallery space has evolved as a highly contextualized esthetic icon for the museum. The gallery embeds an idea of a formalist Esperanto in its esthetic of the placeless white cube.

Formalist art in placeless galleries stands, like the medieval church, for a system of commerce and belief.[85] Its semiotics cannot be challenged. Art introduced in this space is carefully editorialized and administered to the viewer, who is also indirectly manipulated. The esthetics of gallery – the unit module of the museum – can then be argued to critically control the 'perception' of art by the society. The intrinsic esthetics of the gallery can, therefore, be said to have evolved as a machinery that administers 'perception'.

These two scales can then also be understood to evince politics in representation (extrinsic) and politics in perception (intrinsic). The museum as a model is double-edged funnel that inadvertently channels these politics from either side into the body of art. What is being funneled is a conditioned context. Far from the unassuming black boxes that are touted as a neutral backdrop and infinitely flexible programmatically, Art is tapered from both the ends. Art in museum is given and received conditionally.

Museums today are in the paradoxical position of editing the products that extend consciousness, and so contribute in a liberal way, to the necessary anesthesia of the masses – which goes under the guise of entertainment, in turn the laissez-faire product of leisure.[86] There has been criticism of the trend as one would expect. Criticism against the contextualization art has persisted at least as long as the museum itself. In his *Lettres* of 1796, critic and theoretician Quartremere de Quincy, contrasted the pleasure of viewing art in Italy against viewing in a museum, a place he described as 'a waxen desert, which resembles a temple and a salon, a graveyard and a school'.[87] Even when museum attempted to recreate the original setting for art in elaborate palace-museums and Beaux-arts purpose built galleries proved insufficient and criticism persisted well into 20th century. Italian poet Fillippo Marinetti in his book the *Futurist manifesto* (1909) called museums and libraries as 'cemetries'.[88] Russian painter and architect El Lissitsky, echoed the same sentiment when he said, 'We no longer want the museum to be like painted coffin for our living body'.[89] In 1925, French symbolist poet Paul Valery treated the subject in his essay 'The Problem of Museums', 'Painting and sculpture are orphans, their mother is dead, their mother Architecture. As long as she was alive, she gave them their place, their function, their constraints.'[90]

The criticism persisted well into our times. Many artists rebelled against this implied censorship of corporate funding and the culture of commodity that has penetrated the walls of the museum. The German conceptual artist spoke for his generation when he referred to museum of 1970s as 'managers of consciousnesses'.[91] For a time artist even walked out of museums and into warehouses, industrial

buildings, factories in a desperate attempt to de-contextualize art. Nevertheless, the system persisted. Contextualization of art is not a mere accident but the logic of system that wholesome and complete – from representation to presentation – with very cog in place. The occasional comment provoked by the vicissitudes of art as product, is slotted of as a vaguely Marxist inconvenience which almost sorts itself out.[92]

Commodification of art is complete. Commercialization of art that has always been a covert mandate has surfaced in present time responding to conducive conditions externally. It is not negative or dispensable, but simply the manifestation of a system in its own nature while responding to the field that is its wider context. Nick Prior, in his call for a re-reading of Pierre Bordieu in the present context, argues for blurred distinctions not just in the wider field of society but within the specific field of museum. He posits that Bordieu's 'capital' – cultural, social or economic, does not generate within clearly defined 'fields' or generate 'habitus' of a one tenor anymore. Contemporary realities manifested as social change, consumption and visual culture have emerged into broader patterns of culture and economy. Changing forms of visual consumption, the rise of mass higher education and economic restructuring, particularly the contraction of heavy industry and the predominance of service industry have all consummated in a new, wider middle-class fraction that is less dichotomized, either cultural or popular and more grey.[93]

Museums today respond to this graying of territories. There is a diffusion of boundaries. Museums are no longer about either high-culture or popular but both, either 'distinction' or 'distraction' but both, either aesthetic or commercial but both. Museums have evolved into what has come to be known as the 'cultural omnivore' with a penchant for high and popular cultural forms, as emblematic of a diffusion of taste in modern society.[94] This cultural omnivore is represented in the system, in the business of museum of which architecture is only a part. The branding of art into this grey zone is a reality too intense to be undone by a mere architectural gesture or maybe even should not be attempted to be undone by architecture.

My attempt to design an extension for the MAMAC Liege is in response to this grey, diffused reality of museum culture. I tried not to take sides with the aesthetic or commercial but place the quandary as the centre of question as well as architectural gesture. Museums may soon vanish into sheer commercialization leaving behind the business of aesthetics altogether, but are now poised at a juncture that balances both. I see my design solution as a commentary that responds to this very present, maybe transient reality.

6.2
THE CASE OF **MUSEE D'ART MODERNE ETCONTEMPORAIN (MAMAC) LEIGE**

I. LIEGE

Liege (Luik in Flemish) is famously described as one of those cities people love and loathe. Liege lies by the banks of the Meuse river, approximately 90KM east of Brussels. It is the largest city in Wallonia region and the third largest municipality after Brussels and Antwerp. It has a metropolitan population of about 200,000 and sub-urban population of 620,000.

Liege grew from a humble chapel built on the Meuse as early as 558 AD. In 705 AD, the Bishop of Tongeren, Maastricht was murdered in the chapel and every since has been a destination for pilgrims. In the 10th century, Liege became the capital of a principality ruled by Prince-bishops who had both religious as well as secular powers. Consequently, it remained independent for 800 years through Burgundians, Spanish and Austrians. Famously prosperous through this time, it still flaunts some of the finest examples of 17th & 18th century Mosan Architecture.

However, the French revolution of 1789 echoed in Liege and in 1794 the long independent Liege was swallowed by France. Liege entered the industrial age. Liege thrived in coal mining as early as 12th century and when industrial revolution swept through in the 19th century, Liege prospered. Coal, steel and other mining industries thrived. However, Liege, like many other European former industrial economies fell into crisis after the industrial age. The Industrial, decaying and gritty appearance of Liege today is owing to the recession and economic crisis that followed an industrial liege. The city's periphery is still dotted with coal mines, abandoned remnants of a prosperous past. Also, the real-estate speculations of the 60s and 70s caused a sort of progressive dereliction. The historic quarters in the city centre was abandoned to immigrants and low-income residents, the effects still visible in a defaced city.

Liege today is trying to re-invent itself as a service economy in the face of new realities. New emblematic projects have been executed and many are on the pipeline. Santiago Calatrava's flamboyant Liege Guillemins station is one such recent extravaganza on the cultural sector's political mandate.

ii. MAMAC – a Super-Museum?

The MAMAC, Museum of Modern and Contemporary art is the biggest museum in the province of Liege. Situated in the picturesque Parc De la Boverie, MAMAC is now housed in the former Palais des Beaux-arts, the site of Liege's World Exposition of 1905. In terms of program, presently MAMAC holds a prestigious modern art collection dating back to 1850. Besides, MAMAC is also committed to host regular temporary thematic exhibition on Contemporary Art.

However, what is particularly interesting is MAMAC's aspiration for the future. MAMAC aspires transform itself into a CIAC or Centre International d' Art Contemporain. The intention is specifically political in two instances. Firstly, MAMAC aspirations are embedded in the political mandate of Liege's cultural policy. Liege is pursuing hard a service economy model to recover from an obsolete industrial past. Liege's urban regeneration plan thus has specific, strong focus on cultural and service infrastructure to bolster these ambitions. An international Museum that may serve as focal point will generate Liege a new image.

Secondly, the requirements of the Museum for an extension are particularly relevant and the organization's political mandate runs parallel to the politics of wider context – city, region etc. Scanning the requirements carefully, MAMAC has slated itself in its new avatar against International giants such as Grand Palais Paris,

Centre Pompidou Metz or Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Also the requirements target an audience in number and quality that can only be called ambitious within the present context of Liege. It becomes quite apparent that MAMAC, rejuvenated as CIAC aspires to be the next Guggenheim for Liege.

With reference to the previous case study of Guggenheim, Bilbao it is possible to examine if the same model is feasible in Liege. There is certain validity in Liege following Bilbao's example. Liege does have a contextual resemblance to the case of Bilbao. Both are former industrial cities now abandoned, in political and economic crisis, wanting to re-invent themselves as service-based economies. Both do not have other significant contemporary museums in the vicinity, that makes international museum and cultural quarters of exhibition pavilions, hotels, conference centers etc, developed alongside a feasible model. Both have political aspiration backing the organization's claim. MAMAC, to its advantage is already a centre point in the cultural life of the region with many organizations, non-profit, children-oriented and artistic collaboration successfully underway. Therefore MAMAC if it does evolve into a super-museum for the region may have the potential to function as a promoter as well as instigator or art-awareness in the region.

Nevertheless, three factors or political actors can be specifically attributed the success of Guggenheim Bilbao – A strong political aspiration at the level of the government, effective public-private partnership to generate opportunities and the eponymous collection of the Guggenheim foundation alongwith the brand name of Guggenheim. Liege, when critically examined against this condition does not have a suitable environment for the Bilbao factor to repeat itself. Although, Liege is also backed by political aspirations, strong public-private collaboration of economic feasibility cannot be identified. Even under the assumption this can be developed in the future, the collection of MAMAC in its own right cannot be expected develop into international Supermuseum. Also, MAMAC does not intend to effect collaboration with a brand like Guggenheim. MAMAC's strategy depends on working around temporary exhibition which may not secure it a place in the international scene.

Thus, MAMAC following a popular template vying to be next Supermuseum, may not be an appropriate strategy. Nevertheless, in terms of program MAMAC has intentionally accepted a popular template with respect to museum politics. MAMAC is willing to, in fact, wants to re-invent itself in the 'Museum as entertainment' template. My design extension for MAMAC is centered around this ideological decision of MAMAC.
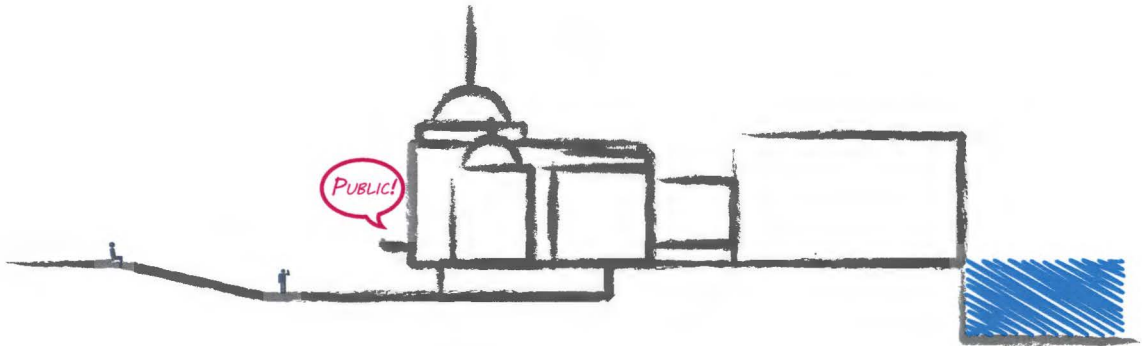
FIGURE 80. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, THE DIGGING OUT AND THE NEW PUBLIC SPACE

III. MUSEUM AS A PUBLIC SPHERE

The first decision that is apparent in MAMAC's strategy is a certain intentional democratization of Museum public. The design reacts to this in two scales. Firstly, the design in the imprint it makes on the Parc de la Boverie, responds to this public-ness. The monumental stairway digged out off the garden landscape double as a public seating space set against the backdrop of Museum itself. The stairway also invites towards the museum – be it the casual stroller in the park or a museum visitor taking a break. Secondly, the extension itself conceptually includes a split that divides into public and private museum spaces. The public fragment of the museum is programmatically embedded as commercial, where the general public is invited to wander. The wanderer is invited to therefore be part of the museum even when he is not part of the exhibition experience.
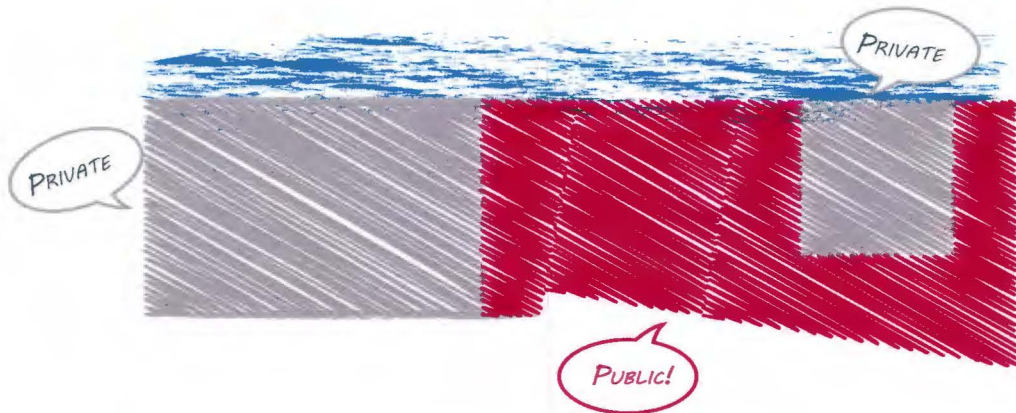
FIGURE 81. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, SPLIT OF THE MUSEUM PROGRAM TO RESPOND TO NEW REALITIES

IV. DESIGN AS INTERVENTION IN THE CITY

The design is aware of the public mandate of the MAMAC that stretches beyond the design or the site of the building. The MAMAC is en route the new axis that is planned from the Liege Guillemens station to the shopping centre on the other side of island. The island is a stop in-between. It's is an intervention in a carefully articulated public route and the original orientation of the building's is maintained keeping in mind the city route. The routing logic inside the building can pick up a visitor on this cultural route, right into the museum or lure him to insides of the park just far enough to make the park a stop. Also programmatically the design includes many a ancillary facilities – conference facility, auditoriums, childrens' educational work shop, even the 'commodity' space that are ideally meant as gallery space, but can be rented out otherwise based on museum policies. These spaces are an inherent part of the design and are included acutely aware of the political position implied for the museum organization itself. The museum here is expected to function as an entity in the city that is capable of promoting and instigating a cultural mandate, beyond mere exhibitions.
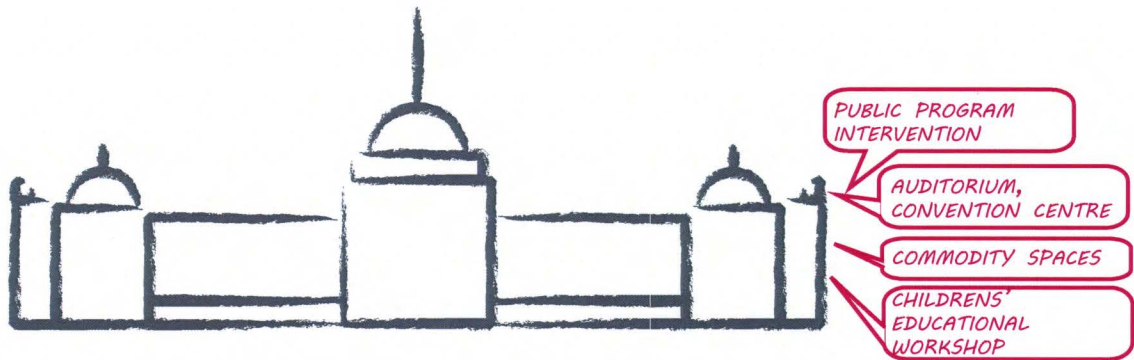
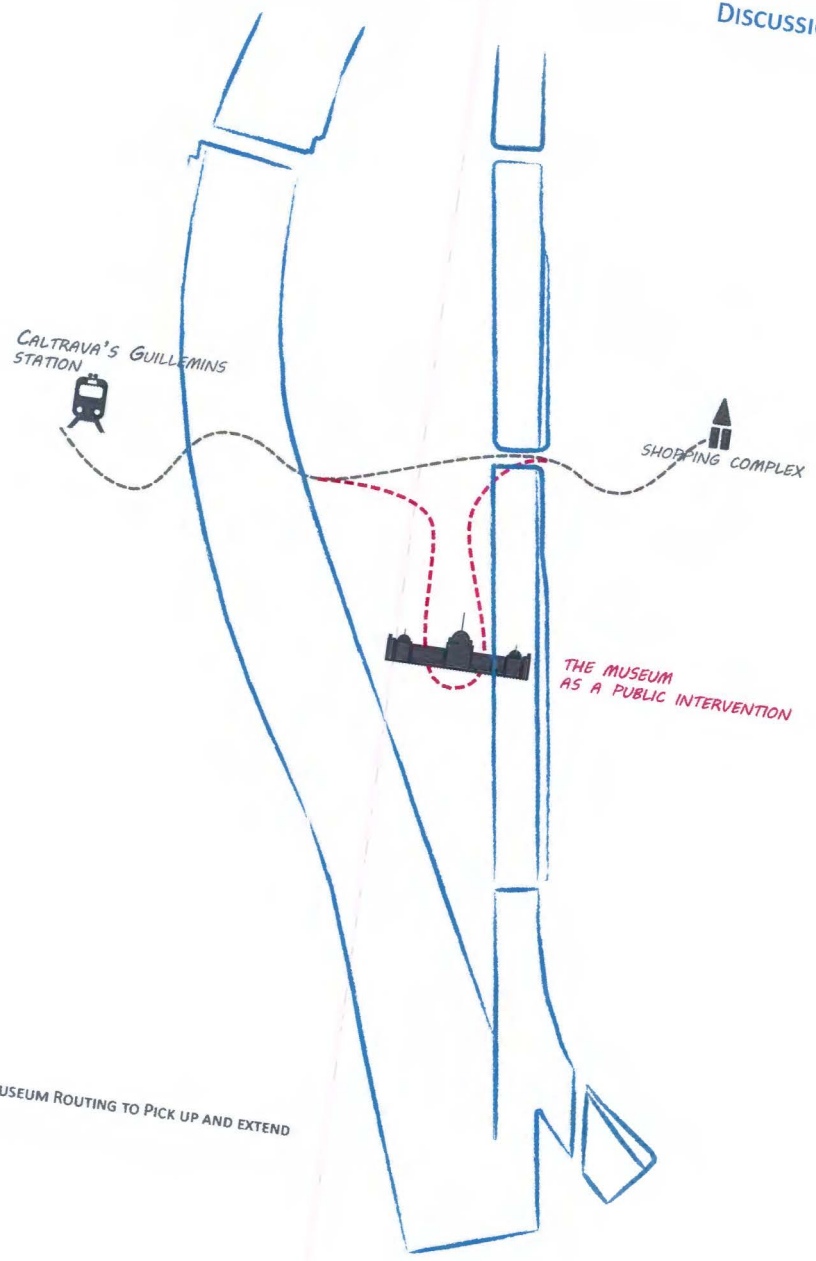FIGURE 82. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, COMMERCIALIZATION OF MUSEUM PROGRAM

CALTRAVA'S GUILLEMINS STATION

SHOPPING COMPLEX

THE MUSEUM AS A PUBLIC INTERVENTION

FIGURE 83. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, MUSEUM ROUTING TO PICK UP AND EXTEND ON THE URBAN ROUTING

V. IMAGE OF THE FAÇADE

The most symbolic decision of the design is the treatment of the façade of the old existing building. The old museum in terms of political context purports to a time, where museum organization assumed religious as well as pedagogical metaphors. Also the building was the main venue for the World Exposition of 1905 and was intentionally representational. The neo-classical building set in the park was an image created to nostalgically, if only inaccurately, refer to Liege allegiance with a great past. These two original implications of the façade are carefully kept in mind in the new design. The façade here is intentionally exaggerated as an 'image' – its original function. The digging out and the surrealistic hanging-over of the existing building is an attempt to restore the façade to its original function. It is a commentary on the image-fication of the façade which was implicit even in the original building. The façade now shall be the symbolic face of the Museum activated only from the park. The digging out of the monumental stairway borrows on a scenography metaphor or an amphitheatre where the façade is the backdrop in front of which the story of the museum is played out.
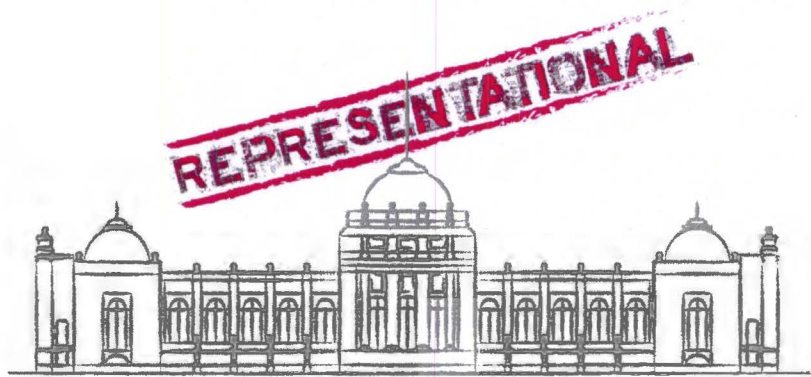
FIGURE 84. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, THE BRANDING OF THE FORMAL FACADE AS PURELY REPRESENTATIONAL

VI. ROUTING AND THE SLICE– THE UNRAVELING THREAD OF ITINERARY

The story of the museum itself is played in the routing. The routing is designed as a commentary on museum politics since the museum's conception as an institution. The MAMAC museum as a site for extension is extremely interesting in one respect – the existing building stems from a past that almost aligns with first of museum politics in its emergence as an institution – museum as social reformatory of manners. The Bourgeois culture in Beaux-art building, well-dressed people in a space with the purpose to inform and elevate themselves in matters of culture were all on the educational agenda of museum. The new extension on the other hand is slated alongside an agenda of commercialization of the museum, adopting the template of entertainment. The main routing is designed as a symbolic reminder of this transition. The routing begins well within the precincts of the old building in the setting of another world and slowly embarks on to the new reality – unraveling almost a time travel.
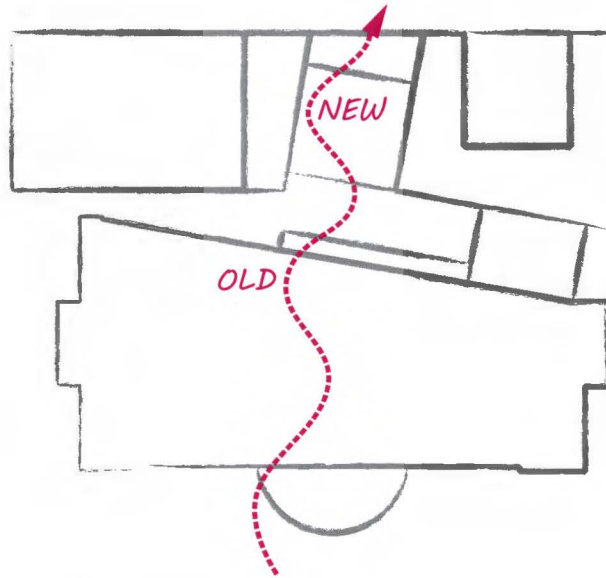

FIGURE 85. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, ROUTING AS THE ESSENTIAL DESIGN STRATEGY

Here, design calls upon, besides the routing, another element to help the wanderer sharply come aware of the threshold of this time travel – the slice. The slicing of the body of the existing building from the backside is symbolic gesture that pre-empts the spatial relevance of the old museum. It is also expected to highlight the image or the mere two-dimensional relevance of the façade more acutely. In any case the visitor is dramatically invited to travel along this slice to enter the new body of the museum - a symbolic crossing-over.
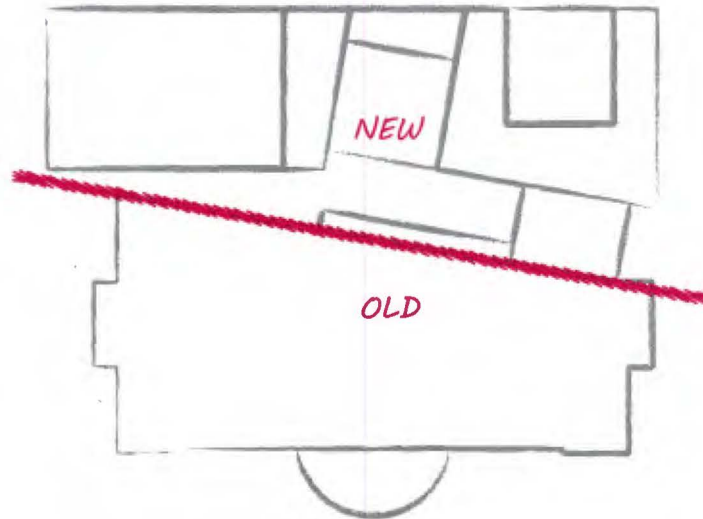

FIGURE 86. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, SLICING ON THE BACKSIDE OF THE MUSEUM AS A DESIGN STRATEGY

VII. Culture and Commodity – the Split

The commentary on the culture of commodity that has seeped into museum, and is now the protagonist and the context of the Museum politics, can almost be called the hinge the design rests on. The not-so-dichotomized reality that blurs the boundary of aesthetics and commerce, culture and commodity, high culture and popular and many other oppositions are called into play. The design does not judge this very present reality but mere comments on it with the design itself. The design reacts to the dialectics of these oppositions with certain design oppositions of its own – for example the split of mass and void. The design strategy is the programmatic split into culture and commodity spaces. The 'culture' spaces refer to exhibition or the museum spaces itself and the 'commodity' spaces refers to the public spaces. The culture spaces are closed, 'masses' that float within the open, accessible vertical 'voids' of public spaces. Thus, there are design strategy oppositions – mass/ void, public/ private, inside/ outside – played against the dialectics of social or cultural oppositions of a contemporary reality. (image)
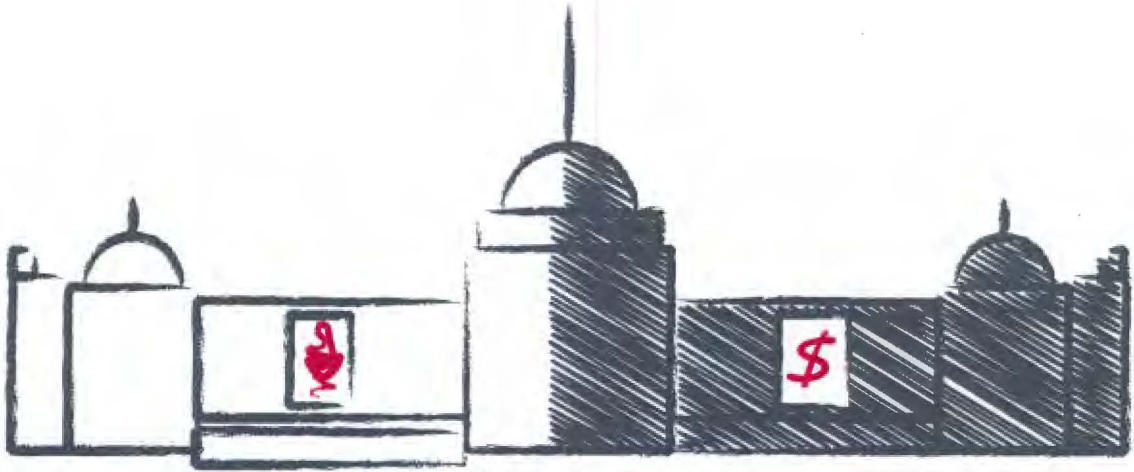
FIGURE 87. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, TWO SYSTEMS OF AESTHETICS AND ECONOMIC INHERENT IN THE CON-
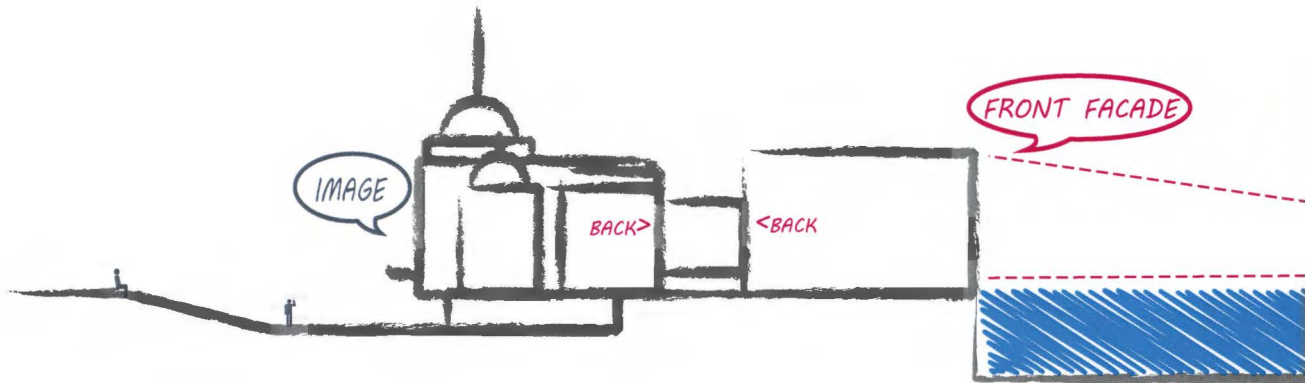TEMPORARY CASE OF THE MUSEUM

FIGURE 88. CONCEPTUAL SKETCH, REVERSING OF THE FACADE AND THE POINT OF PERCEPTION OF THE FACADE/ BRANDING OF THE FORMAL FACADE

VIII. FAÇADE IN THE BACK

The intentional reversing of the architectural logic may also be considered a strategy in responding to the design as an intervention in the city. Nevertheless the front of the new building is a blind façade that participates in the symbolic routing from the inside and is not the representational façade. The new front façade is the back of the building by the river's edge that can be perceived only from the other side of the river bank. This is an intentional strategy to respond to the old industrial quarters of Liege that the old building and island seemed to turn their back towards. The new extension's back façade that faces the industrial city on the other side will aspire to be the new shining landmark that people associate with from this side of the city. The gesture is particularly relevant in light of the axis that is developed from the Liege Guillemins station that runs to that part of the city. The symbolic turning around of the city to face a new liege and counter the blank wall with an 'open' wall is gesture that encourages putting the old geographical boundaries in the past. The old facade of the existing building does not participate in this discussion and will strictly be image or a representational element.

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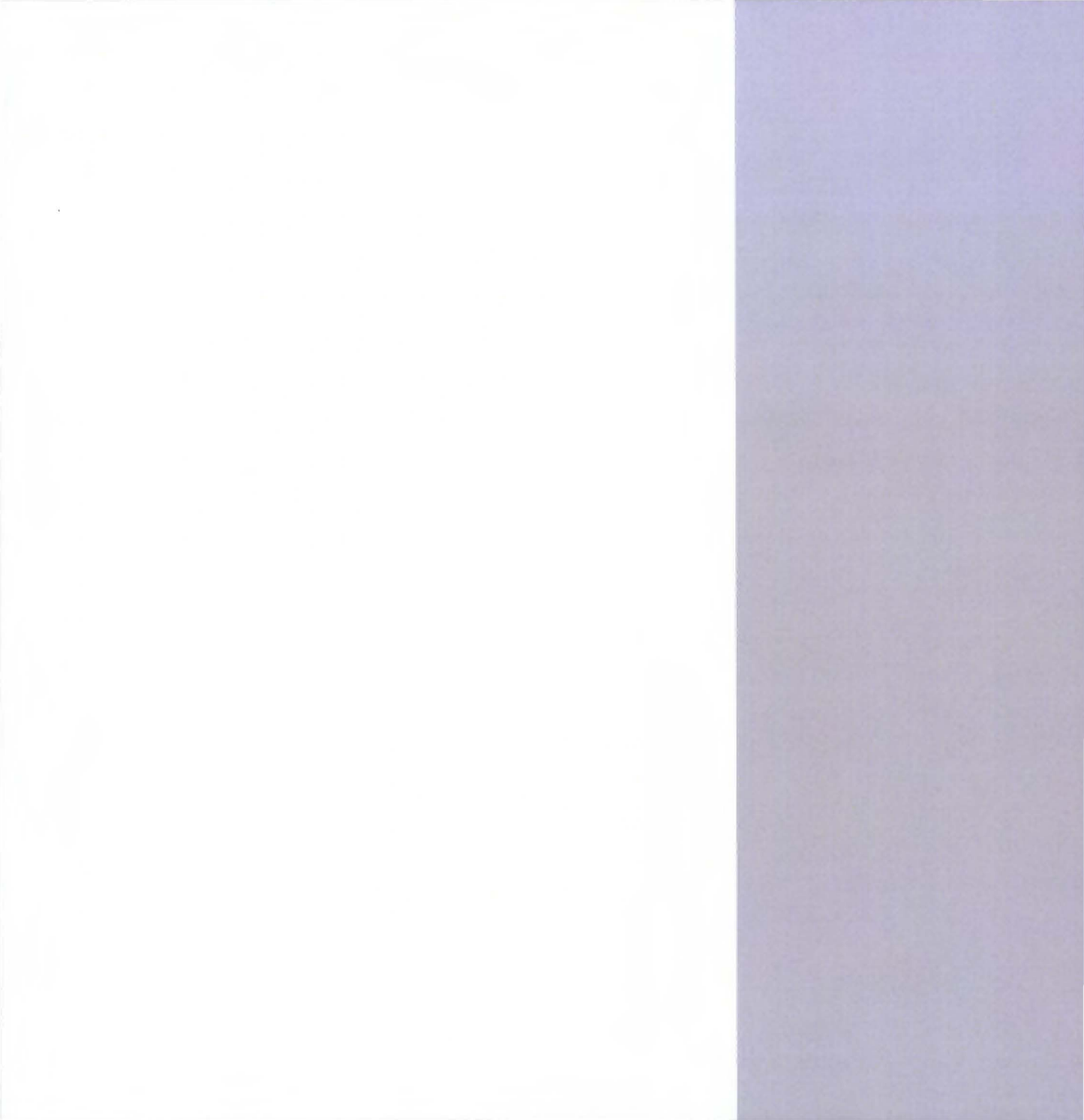
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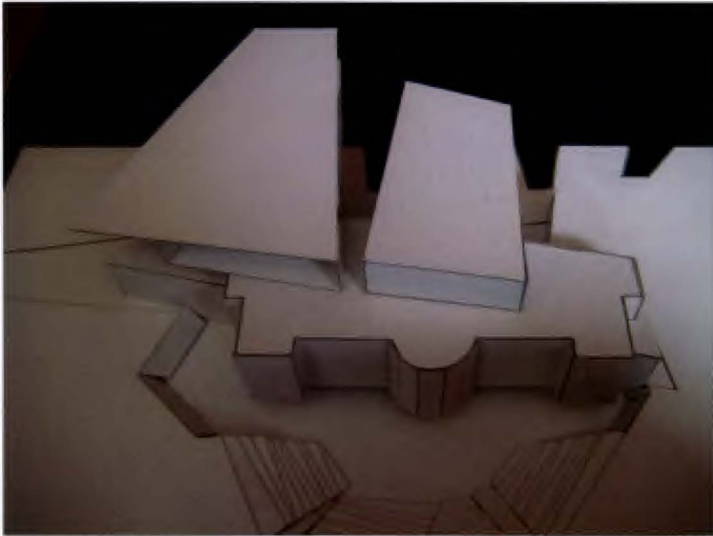
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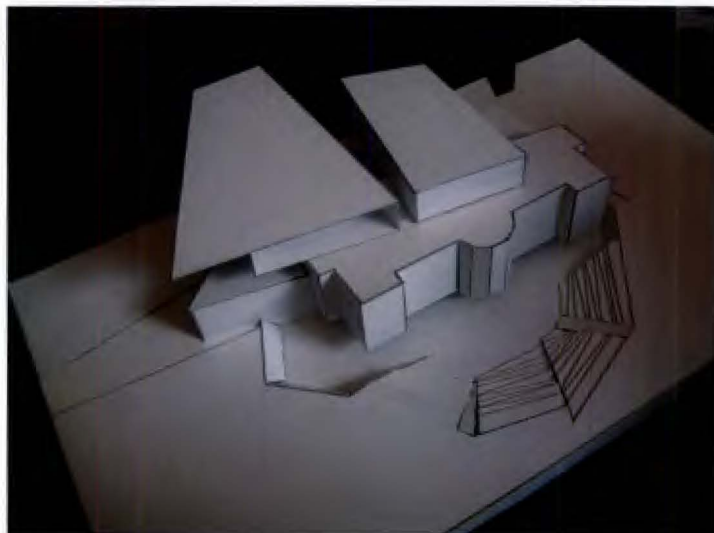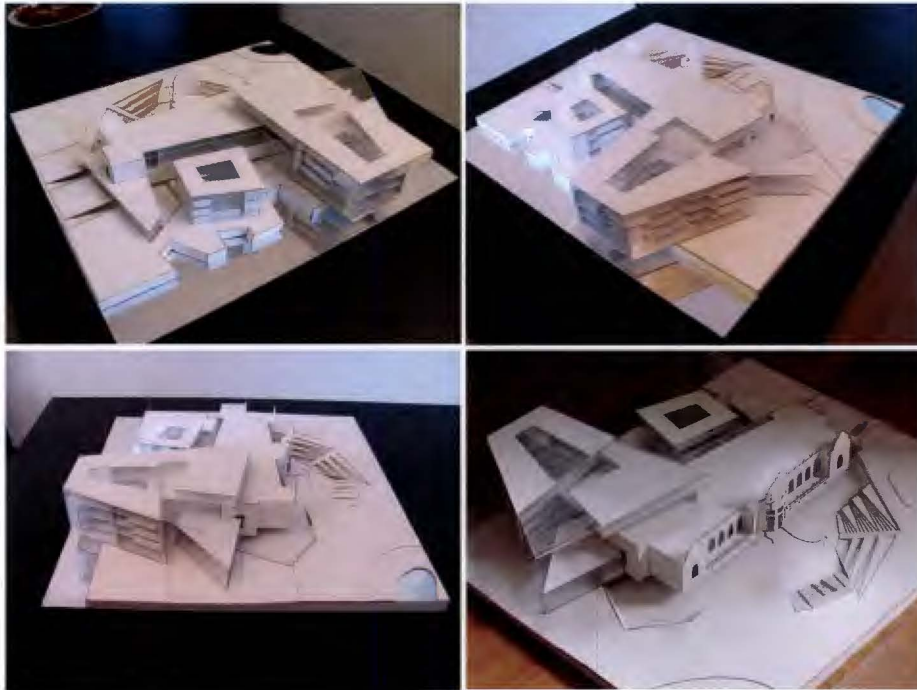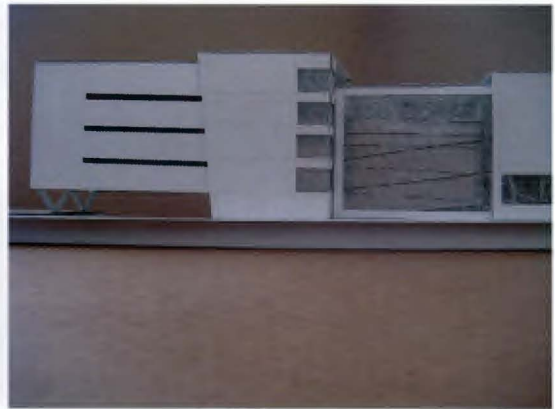
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APPENDIX

STUDY **MODELS**

conceptual

STUDY MODELS

Scheme 1

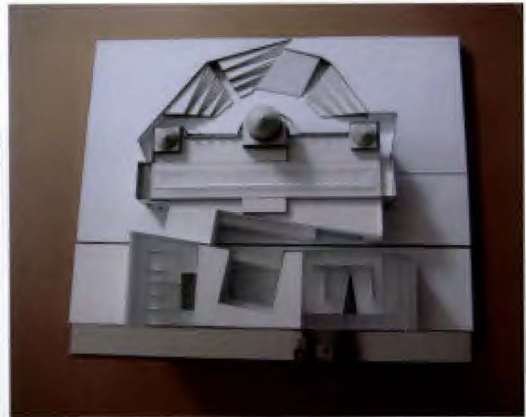# STUDY **MODELS**

Scheme 2

STUDY MODELS

Scheme 3

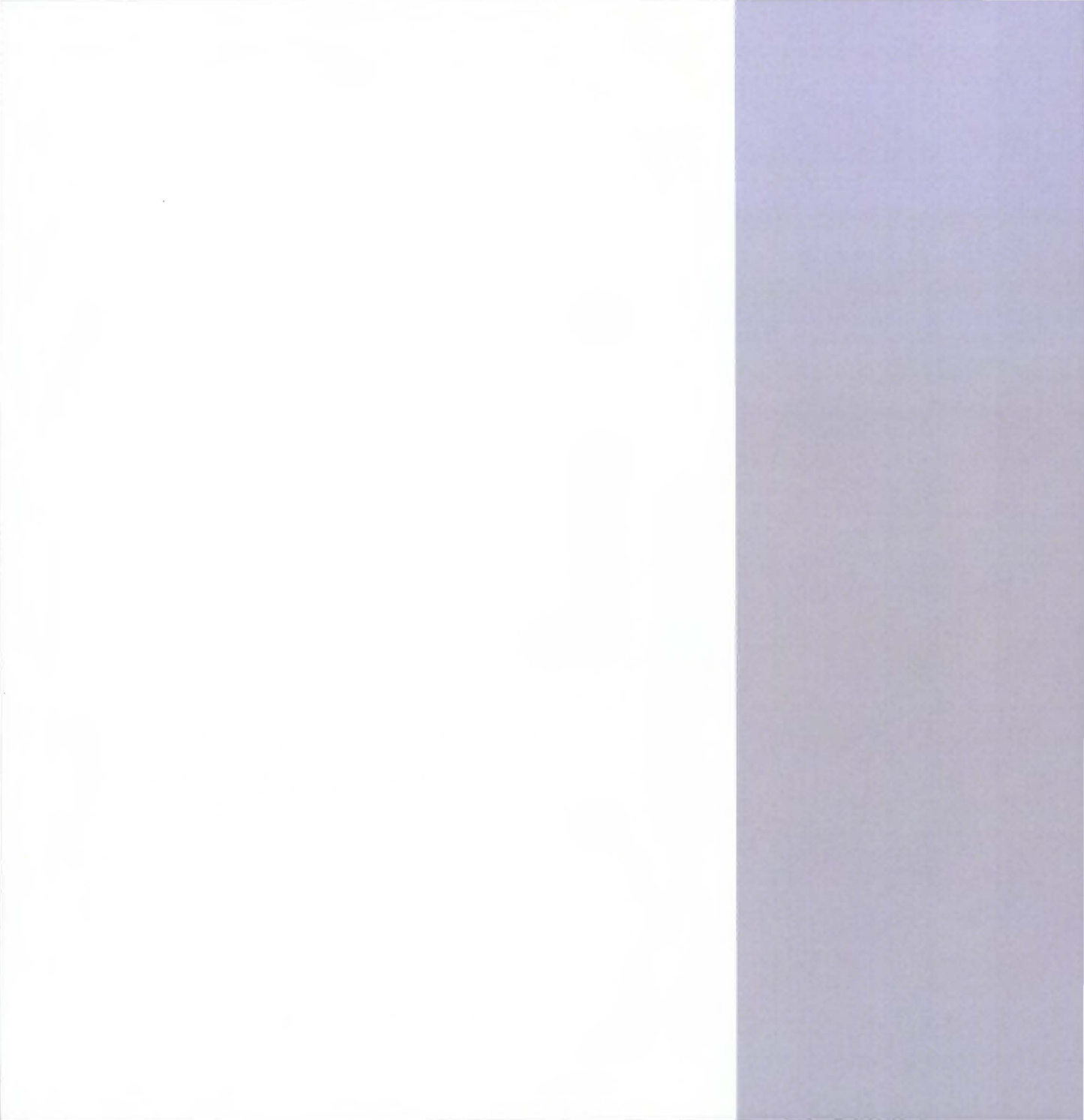# STUDY MODELS

Scheme 4

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