# A story of three

## a narrative approach to reading atmosphere and making place

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## Abstract

This article explores a site-specific, narrative approach to placemaking in order to reveal ways of reading and reacting to spatial atmospheres. The contribution presents an MSc Architecture project that results in the design of three particular places on the fringes of the Dutch urban landscape by means of utilizing a narrative approach to reading and analysing the existing site-specific atmospheres. The three architectural follies designed within the landscape present opportunities for the insertion of narrative through experience, illuminating the contents within the existing context. The intention of the project was to explore how an architectural installation could serve as a locus for the generation of new trajectories of perception and understanding. Through a sequencing of events within each landscape folly, the existing site is revealed to the reader in a new way, establishing new circumstances to engage with the landscape. The implementation of narrative within the processes of placemaking allowed for the overlay of subjective interpretations through personal experience, creating spaces saturated with personal signification and interpretation. The three projects demonstrate the necessity of freedom of imagination and interpretation in placemaking and how a narrative approach to design can allow one to be fully involved in the creation of personal and particular place.

## Keywords

placemaking; narrative; urban Fringes; atmosphere; literary methods

# Alternative methods for reading and designing place

This contribution discusses a site-specific, narrative approach to placemaking, aiming to find ways to read and react to site-specific atmospheres. The ongoing processes of urbanization in the Dutch Randstad has caused the creation of fringe zones on the edges of many cities. These interstitial realms, aptly defined as a metropolitan landscape, include spaces that are fragmented, and lacking spatial identity and definition (Tisma, and Velde, 2014, p. 603). Being neither urban nor rural, these spatial configurations have an absence of significant places amid their discontinuous tissue of parts and pieces. These interstitial spaces have been referred to as Zwischenstadt (Sieverts, 2003) and as Diffuse City (Gianotti and Vigano, 2012). At first sight, they may appear as a placeless geography (de Wit, 2014, 14) that experientially goes unregistered: their meaning and significance being lost to the rush of daily life, experienced merely as grey, anonymous areas by the passer-by. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of such spaces is dynamic and multifaceted. An immense amount of activity occurs within the variable and interlocking typologies and geographic scales. These spaces are a reservoir of possible perceptions, filled with unique connections and characteristics that simply need to be presented in a new light. The detriment of such spaces is their lack of clear focus, disallowing them to attract awareness or engage understanding because they are too chaotic, dynamic and in a constant state of flux. Such boundary zones of indeterminacy, this article argues, should not be seen as a hindrance or limit, but rather as a place for new possibilities. What these spaces require is a means of gathering and grounding, a concretization of their contents in order to create a pause and a place for the experiencing body to engage physically and perceptively with the surroundings. The article presents a recent diploma project (MSc Architecture), which proposes a narrative approach to the reading and designing of atmospheres by means of analysis of and design for three particular places in the fringes of the Dutch urban landscape.

# Site-specific atmospheres

A key notion within this project is atmosphere. As difficult as it is to fully grasp and define, atmosphere is one of the key qualitative aspects of urban places (Havik, Tielens and Teerds, 2013). Atmosphere, as the assemblage of both subject and space, is the coming together of objective, spatial and material arrangements, and the embodied, perceiving subject (Böhme, 2006). It is, therefore, a construction dependent on individual interpretation and ephemeral experiences. As the result of embodied experiences, atmospheric spaces allow one to relate to place beyond its physical forms, enabling generic sites or everyday surroundings to become relative and relatable, intimate and near. Being simultaneously the result of material properties of space and the immaterial realm of perceptions, atmosphere remains difficult to define, and new approaches are needed to deal with such atmospheric quality in (landscape-) architectural terms. The discourse on phenomenology, investigating the embodied experience of the world around us, provides a crucial point of departure for further research into the atmospheric qualities of places. A number of authors in the architectural field, who have a long pedigree of their investigations in architecture and phenomenology , such as Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Pérez-Gómez, have recently brought their focus to atmosphere. Pallasmaa speaks of atmospheric imagination, and calls into work the notion of empathy: in order to imagine how one would 'live' a certain situation, one has to be empathetic. Pallasmaa is convinced *"that atmospheric qualities arise from the designer's empathetic sensitivity and skill."* (Pallasmaa in Havik, 2013, p. 43). In Attunement, the eminent architecture theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez (2016) appeals for the

seeking of a balanced (attuned) relationship between man and his environment, and looks into the notions of 'stimmung' and atmosphere. He suggests that it is through the linguistic dimension of architecture that we could be able to make sense of attuned atmosphere. Pérez-Gómez has stressed the *"importance of poetic narrative"* for obtaining attuned environments.

In order to recognize and reveal the site-specific atmospheres of these seemingly 'placeless' urban fringes, we turn to a narrative method: not by literally working with literary stories, but through the practice of 'site-reading' and by turning to narrative processes of placemaking. Through a close reading of the embodied experience of physical and perceptual participation, the fleeting qualities of neutral space become an identifiable and relatable place. Place, this project argues, is made at the precise moment when the perception of the real and the projection of new possibilities converge to introduce a new articulation of space of which one feels a part. Through personal engagement and insertion into our spatial environments, atmospheres and elements of space no longer appear as a disjointed and fragmented expanse, but as a place: a situated locus of moments, experiences, and occurrences. A site-specific atmosphere is not rooted in the place objectively, nor in the mind subjectively. Its totality involves the coupling of physical manifestation and dynamic, tangible, yet ephemeral changing seasons, weather, time, and presence, along with the sensory apparatus of the perceiving subject (Rigby, 2003, p.11). As researchers of site-specific atmospheres, we could look at the integration of the material, human behavioural and psychological worlds that define and denote a sense of place. With the idea to work with the sense of place, we indeed position ourselves within the discourse of the genius loci. While Norberg Schulz' notion of an essential *"spirit of place"* (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) remains a source of inspiration, we acknowledge that such a 'spirit of place' involves a balancing and mediation between physical-spatial ensembles of the geography and the psychological perspectives that people prescribe to place (Casakin and Bernardo, 2012, p.13). Indeed, no single place is experienced in exactly the same way by two different people, and the experience of place is more complex than simply registering its specific characteristics. Doreen Massey maintains that each place consists of multiple identities, experienced differently by different people. She speaks of placemaking as the weaving together of ongoing stories, geometries and events to create a distinct and connected constellation within the wider topographies of space (Massey, 2005, 131). To establish such an understanding of site-specific atmosphere and to establish a sense of place, this research and design project explores the process of narrative within the application of small-scaled and curated installations.

## Reading Layers of Atmosphere

The project entailed the reading of site-specific atmospheres of three particular places at the fringes of the Dutch urban landscape. Three particular sites were chosen, each with an area of one square kilometer, in the region of the Rotterdam metropolitan landscape. The three seemingly similar sites on the outskirts of Rotterdam all shared fragmented and hybrid spatial characteristics. The sites were each a mix of industrial, residential, infrastructural, recreational and other kinds of urban tissue that penetrated natural areas creating varying densities of space (Fig. 1). Areas were chosen in the regions of Barendrecht, Berkel en Rodenrijs, and Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel. Each site, from an initial aerial perspective, appeared to be very similar in nature: each an undefined area on the edges of the Dutch cityscape (Fig. 2-4). Though all were chosen due to their similar hybrid and seemingly 'placeless' character, it was the aim, through various forms of reading the site-specific atmospheres, to discover their differences and the hidden qualities located, but potentially lost, within each landscape. In order to create place within each, the determinants and actors within each dynamic space needed to be deciphered.
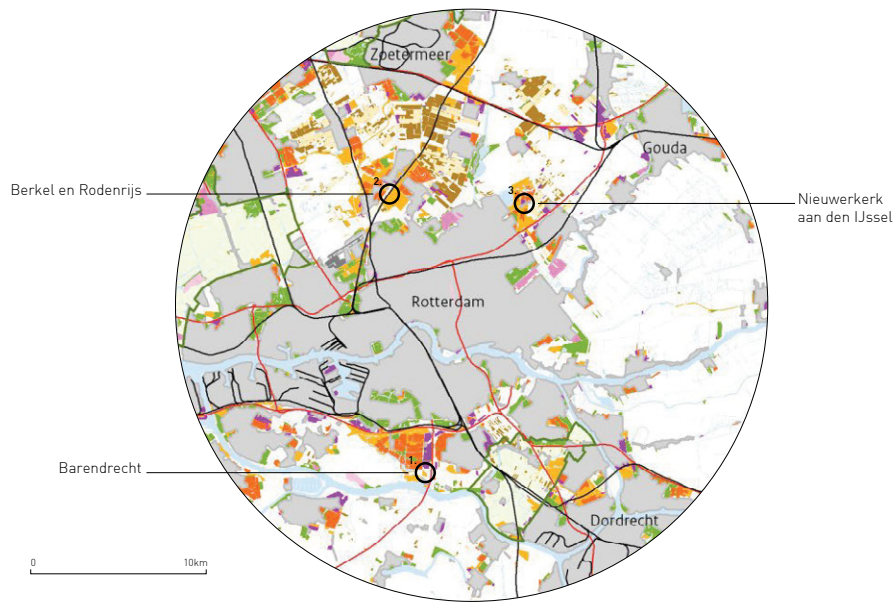
FIGURE 1  Urban Expansion Areas in the Rotterdam - The Hague Region. The three site locations were chosen based on the hybridization and lack of characterisation of landscapes in the surrounding areas of Rotterdam. These areas are neither urban nor rural, but are instead a mix of industry, residential, recreational and agricultural areas. They are transitional zones, placeless areas; they are spaces gone unrecognized. The three sites chosen were in (1) Barendrecht, (2) Berkel en Rodenrijs, and (3) Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel. (Image by Tisma and Van der Velde, 2014).
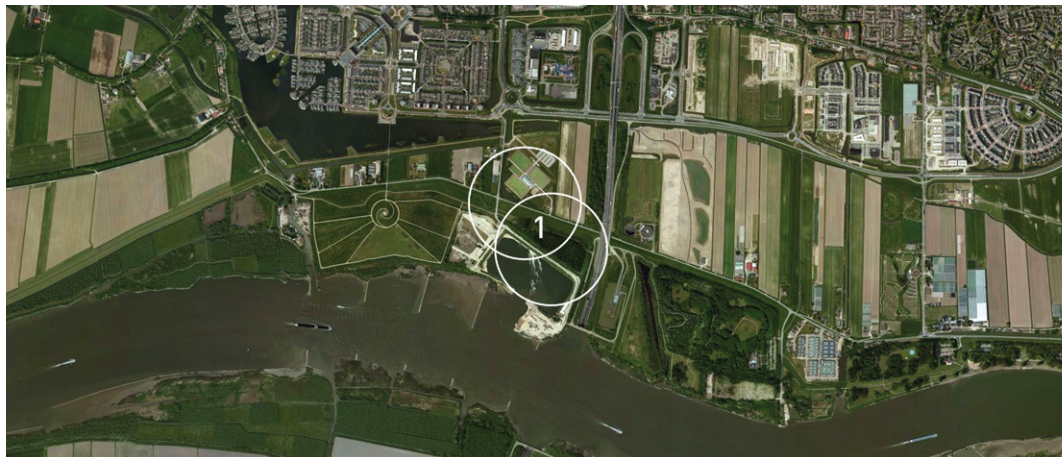


*a    Aerial photograph: Depiction of the natural landscape and spatial systems of the city (Map data: Google)*



*b    Site photographs revealing the interacting elements and spatial formations on site.*

FIGURE 2  Barendrecht

*a*    *Aerial photograph: Depiction of the natural landscape and spatial systems of the city (Map data: Google)*



*b*    *Site photographs revealing the interacting elements and spatial formations on site.*

FIGURE 3   Berkel en Rodenrijs



*a*    *Aerial photograph: Depiction of the natural landscape and spatial systems of the city (Map data: Google)*



*b*    *Site photographs revealing the interacting elements and spatial formations on site.*

FIGURE 4   Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel

The investigation revolved largely around analyzing each site by means of the nine categories that Peter Zumthor defined as the essential elements of atmosphere in his text on architectural environments and surrounding objects. In this text, he distinguished key concerns that guide his architectural work towards a site-specific atmosphere (Zumthor, 2006). The project started by deconstructing and diagrammatically analyzing each of the three interstitial sites, based on each atmospheric contributing element that Zumthor outlined. The nine analyzed elements were the Body of Architecture, Material Compatibility, The Sound of a Space, The Temperature of a Space, Surrounding Objects, Between Composure and Seduction, Tension between Interior and Exterior, Levels of Intimacy, and The Light on Things (Figs. 5-7). This dissection of aspects of atmosphere was the first step in impartially determining what elements were currently acting on the site. Characteristics related to sounds of the space, material compatibility and surrounding objects seemed to characterize the atmosphere of each unique site to the greatest extent. Through photography, video and sound recording, these spatial qualities were analyzed further in order to better understand their presence and impact on the overall contextual character. The nine elements of atmosphere are analyzed at each of the three sites. The repetition of analysis allows each site to reveal its own individual atmospheric qualities, highlighting the existing qualities of each site and directing the focus of the architectural folly.

After such analysis of the placeless interstices chosen as sites, our first impression of the sites as lacking value or significance was indeed falsified. Differences and distinctions arose from each investigation, allowing each site to reveal its unique qualities and characteristics. The spaces began to resonate as places after such atmospheric reading and analysis, allowing the hidden potentials of the site to surface. Though this analysis, it became apparent that these potentials might be revealed through architectural intervention, which would allow the sharin¬g of the site's stories. To summarize the experience and personal perceptions of each site, a post card was written to describe each spatial encounter. The practice of writing postcards, normally associated with a voyage abroad or a visit to a capital city, showing magnificent landscapes or important monuments, was now overlaid onto a landscape that would normally go unnoticed. It is uncommon to give such importance to these intermediate and commonly transitioning places, but, like poetry, the words reveal a new order and new way, both literally and conceptually, of reading the site (Figs. 8-10). Through the documentation of each experience, one can see how the journey through Site One in Barendrecht resulted in feelings of being overcome with sounds, whereas in Berkel en Rodenrijs (Site Two) one experienced feelings of exposure and vastness. In Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel (Site Three) the journey's description revolves around water and its simultaneous presence and inaccessibility. Such descriptions of these 'placeless' sites already enables one to become more engaged in the site, realizing differences through personal experience.
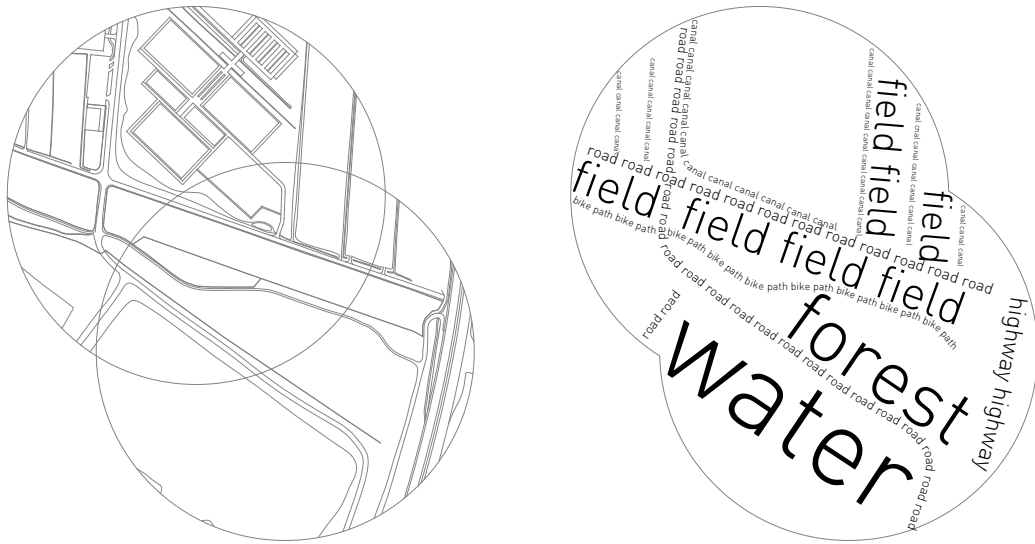
FIGURE 5  Zumthor Atmospheric Analysis of Barendrecht (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).
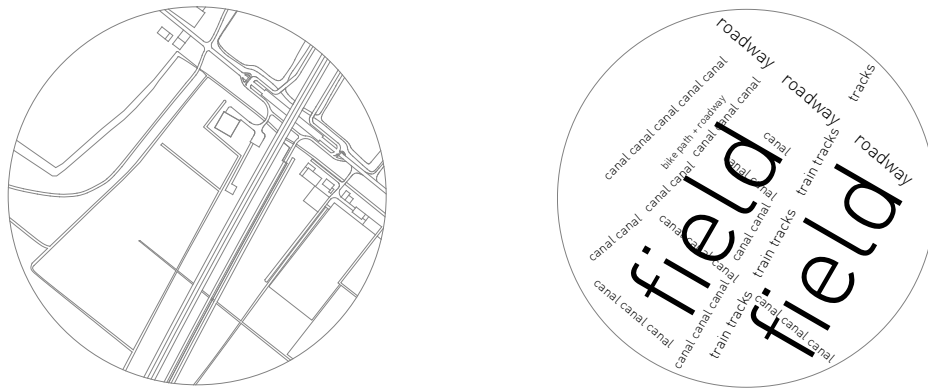


FIGURE 6  Zumthor Atmospheric Analysis of Berkel en Rodenrijs (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).



FIGURE 7  Zumthor Atmospheric Analysis of Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).

## POST CARD

*It was all surrounding and encompassing. Even as I neared the site its presence was made known. The sound of each step crushing the grasses beneath my feet, the song of the bird on this early morning, all were accompanied by its background noise. The highway was a constant company that had not been invited nor welcomed. It was inescapable. It travelled the open spaces and the expanses of land and water. Transgressing and conquering their open character, nothing was untouched by its sounds. Yet it was the continual hum of car tires across their paved plain that gave the sense that the site was alive. Reeds, leaves and paths, all painted in dull browns, greens and greys, all lifeless to the searching eye. Empty benches, abandoned balls, and tree forts looked like they had provided places and play but were no longer capable of gathering participants in the present day. A landscape fully made by man but also abandoned by him, left to the whipping winds carrying the highway's voices. I continued to explore, unconsciously moving across the site.*

*There were a few instances where my automated actions where awoken, not by a new sound or a new presence, but by silence. As I attempted to achieve a closer look to the sheep fields, I crossed an empty basin designed to house water during the rains. At once I became surrounded by mounds of land on either side, fenced in by grass covered soils that allowed me to notice something different besides my new positioning in the landscape. My subterranean situation muffled the mufflers and car horns, denying their song to reach my ears. At first it seemed like a lag in their rhythm as I waited for the next note to be played, and when it did not surface, I waited some more. It seemed impossible that I was finally able to escape the inescapable sound. I was able to find a place where the highway could not penetrate. I found security and solitude in the silence. That is the beauty of the undulating formations of nature. Man, in his designed and strategized landscaping had not planned for this. He had not anticipated the noise and therefore had not planned a place where it could be put on pause. A penetration intended to secure water had instantaneously subjected me to its depths, surrounded me by its walls and silenced the site so that I could feel safe.*

FIGURE 8  Barendrecht - sounds of the space. Postcard recollecting the journey across the landscape. As one would write about experiencing an iconic place or landmark, these postcards depict the encounter with each site. The short narrative allow the sites to gain differentiation of character, bringing a new life to the typical Dutch Landscape (2015).

POST CARD

*It was all open. Every inch of it was open. It was hard to find a place where I could feel secure. Seclusion was given up to the vastness of the field; to the open plains of green that are inescapable by eye but inaccessible by foot. They surrounded me with every step taken. All I could do was circle them, all I could do was see them. They were physically bounded by canals of water that served as a mote does to a castle; keeping everything beyond it out. The eyes were left the task of travelling; moving and scanning the vast landscape, touching and exploring the grounds as the feet would have done themselves. The fields did not allow anything to be hidden. When a biker passed, I knew, when a train sped by, I knew, when a sheep decided to lower its head to take dinner, I knew. There was no sense of privacy here. The openness leads to the sense that everything was in motion. The tree's twigs blowing in the breeze. Each leaf flapping with every gust, waving in greeting as one passed by. The grasses all bent in one direction and then another, dancing along with the whistling wind. Bikes, planes, trains, buses, all passing the site, leaving nothing but me and their sound behind. I was exposed to a symphony of mechanics; each contraption of metal and gears creating its own rhythm, inserting its own verse into the song. Humming and buzzing along their individual paths that were placed to allow for their transition, but not for their pause. Always in motion. I am not even sure if those who transgress the site realize its bounded nature; if they realize that the path that they are taking is purely structuring their experience and dictating their perception. When one is in motion, they do not realize the movement of the rest of the world; they only see ahead, and do not know what they have left behind.*

FIGURE 9  Berkel en Rodenrijs - exposed to the vastness. Postcard recollecting the journey across the landscape. As one would write about experiencing an iconic place or landmark, these postcards depict the encounter with each site. The short narrative allow the sites to gain differentiation of character, bringing a new life to the typical Dutch Landscape (2015).

POST CARD

*There is little choice other than to continue down the path that one has started. Forwards was my only option, unless I turned around and started again. I was forced to head straight, with no sign of when I would be able to access the other side. There were people over there, on the opposite side, walking in parallel to me. Our strides matched, but there was no way in telling when, if ever, our paths would cross. There were homes over there, across the way, lining the banks, with backyards of fields and farms. But their presence, like the people, resembled those dreams where you are lost and cannot find your way out. I remained separated from the other side, divided by the canal's bends and straights that continued to shadow me along my walk. The ducks didn't seem to mind this situation. Why would they? What a pleasant and unbothered place they have to reside. The canal bed all to themselves, undisturbed by boats and pedestrians alike. There was no way for a person like me interact with the water, feel the water, and truly understand its presence. It simply just stood there, sparkling in the sporadic sunlight, taunting the eye and remaining ignorant to touch.*

*A few passing cars and bikes; only a distant and background sound to their ears. I envied these ducks. It was not until after many minutes, after my many steps going forward, each contemplating turning around, that I saw the bridge. Small, yet stable, it provided room for one person at a time to cross the canal, to finally reach the other side that has been subject to the gaze ever since the journey started. I took to the bridge and paused when I reached its peak. Staring down the long straight of water that had lead me to this destination. I could now see in symmetry how the river's rough edges of reeds and water weeds slowly dispersed and penetrated the site past the roads and into fields of green. The river that I had categorized as a division, could now be realized as a connection; adjoining two different sides in one space. It was an inescapable presence. It was definitely a physical boundary, but it was also, seen from atop of the bridge, a uniting entity and a force that without your knowing or conscious control, took a hold of your notice, never letting it go.*

FIGURE 10 Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel - always at the water's edge. Postcard recollecting the journey across the landscape. As one would write about experiencing an iconic place or landmark, these postcards depict the encounter with each site. The short narrative allow the sites to gain differentiation of character, bringing a new life to the typical Dutch Landscape (2015).

# Narrative as a placemaking approach

Following this reading of the three sites, the project aimed to investigate how the site-specific atmospheres could be revealed or enhanced through architectural design. For placemaking projects, the stories of place become crucial. Indeed, it is through stories that the genius loci of a place is assembled and shared. The practice of narration allows for the binding of characters, events and places into a personal construct. By engaging in narration, the designer becomes a participant in the process and no longer a spectator. Following Doreen Massey, places become collections of stories, embedded with memories and personal meaning, where one is able to situate oneself within the dynamic whole.

The practice of narrative within the processes of placemaking allows for the overlay of subjective interpretations of contextual circumstances and events through personal experience. Narratives allow place to be saturated with subjective signification, forming a very personal geography through an individualized interpretation of experience, and a making sense of a sequence of events. The uniqueness of a narrative approach is that it maintains its point of departure and conceptual roots in the world one inhabits, and builds upon the cognitive mechanisms that arise from existing places (Coates, 2012, 14). It is in this way that the readings of the three sites and the resulting stories (the layered atmospheric analyses and the postcards) were used as point of departure for the design of three small buildings, which could be seen as follies or landscape installations.

The intention to create architectural follies within the landscape was to present an opportunity for the creation of a narrative through experience, allowing one to see, from an unfamiliar angle, what might otherwise be considered unremarkable. The founding of an architectural place was meant to serve as a locus for the generation of new trajectories of perception and understanding. It is through the act of building that spatial experience could be choreographed, creating possibilities for previously unrelated elements to engage and emerge. However, no construct can stand there alone. It is only through the pairing of spatial construct and individual interpretation and narrative, that place can be established. Places are always personal projections and collections of stories of spaces that are lived in and experienced.

Within the three sites on the outskirts of Rotterdam, the architecture interventions served as a means of creating a plot that assembled and structured a new narrative of place. Each significant part, each relative piece of the landscape's atmospheric composition, was given meaning through the architectural whole. The ensemble of constructed moments and sequences of events, created and depicted through a sectional study, revealed the site and elements through the progression of experience, providing moments of focus within the dynamic area, and exposing a composition of site-specific qualities that had previously gone unnoticed (Figs. 8-10).

These sectional diagrams are made of an interplay of transitions and events or pauses. The sectional studies reveal the way in which the architectural folly creates an environment for personal narratives. By means of creating an experiential path that reveals the site to the user through fragments, each person is free to interpret, read and understand the site through their own eyes and in relation to their own personal assemblage of memories and experiences. The segmenting of place as a whole allows for individual and atmospheric qualities of the site to be revealed when, typically, they may be overlooked. The section depicts the experience of the site by situating subjective interpretations beside objective happenings, allowing the reader of the sectional narrative to grasp the place experience. The interplay of transitions and events is illuminated through adjectives, feelings and visual relational images that encourage imagination and interpretation to guide each place experience, strengthening one's connection to place.

The designs are simultaneously a reflection of and a response to the atmospheric elements that were uncovered during the initial site readings. They each function as a progression that leads one from their current perspectives of the landscape to the newly situated and architecturally enabled ones. Whether below, above or integrated within the landscape itself, the designed responses allowed one to be newly oriented within and connected to space. The architecturally revealed places serve as a source of new identity and belonging, forged through the formation of emotional and psychological ties with the environment (Relph, 2008, p.141).

The resultant tunnel (Fig. 11-12), tower (Fig. 13-14), and bridge (Fig. 15-16), through their typological differences alone, reveal how the apparently similar sites within the Dutch landscape encompass drastically differing spatial atmospheres and compositional elements. Each project, created as a response to site-specific qualities, finds itself anchored to drastically different topographic situations. The atmospheres of each site, impregnated with a range of cultural and geographical qualities, cause the architectural derivative of each place to differ both physically and experientially. In different ways, the three projects illuminate their site's sounds, views and textures by means of creating a sequential experience that transitions between obscuring and revealing conditions. The landscape makes its way in through moments and materials that make up the interior experience, creating a place that resonates the rhythm of the spatial context through a focused vision. The segregation from some aspects, and selective choice of others, enables a place to be centered and specific, established on clear foundations that allow each depicted aspect of the environment to take on a new, noticeable presence. In the tunnel, one is subjected to a loss of vision, and an alternating amplification and loss of site sounds. This uncommon experience brings emphasis to another sense that is usually taken over by the prioritization of vision. The structure of the tower, made up of small rhythmic windows with set views to individual aspects of the site, means that neither they nor the viewer are permanently lost in the sea of the vast landscape. Lastly, the bridge allows one to no longer be limited by the presence of water, but instead allows for interaction with it through a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Overall, the architectural installments bring new life to a space, revitalizing and revealing essences of our spatial environments by offering a framework for a different way of seeing and being in a place. It is in the small details and nuances of design, the minor movements and short glances, that one's sensual and spatial experiences become interwoven with space. By providing new instances of connection and movement within an existing and unchanged environment, a new dialogue begins to take hold of both spectator and space.

The design objective for each of the three volumes was to reveal what is hidden within each interstitial landscape. The installations ignite an intrigue in users, standing bluntly within the context, and invite a wondering and wandering within its walls. Through a sequencing of events in each architectural intervention, the existing site is intermittently restricted and revealed to the reader, the experiencer. The architectural form establishes new circumstances to engage with the landscape, awakening one's distant gaze to one of focus and precision, exposing a composition of site-specific qualities that had not been realized previously.

## Making a Difference

The projects are a reaction to the typical Dutch topography but also its unique differentiations in each location. Upon close investigation, each site is located and anchored in a different topographic situation, ranging from more rural to more residential, to one that is predominantly transitional. The infrastructure

and surrounding urban compositions play a large role in the derivative of each place, causing the architecture of each site and situation to respond to a range of cultural and geographical qualities. As each design is both a response and reaction to the landscape, they offer unique experiences and moments of pause within their respective chaotic contexts. Each architectural installation offers the opportunity to identify, orient and dwell in the here-and-now, in a personal and momentary place.

For this project, the process of reading and creating site-specific narratives has been explored through small-scale architectural interventions in order to establish a sense of place by means of making the elements of site more accessible and recognizable to the user. The project uses architecture not as a function of insertion but as a means of serving a site, illuminating the contents within the context. From this approach, personal narrative through the experience of architecture can become the method of organizing dynamic atmospheres and undefined space, connecting the disparate parts of site with exact intention. Architectural narratives can be a means of modification and ordering of space that establish an absolute meaning and identity relative to place. By way of almost choreographing spatial encounters, architecture can serve as a portal to a contextualized composition, allowing a readable dialogue to emerge from the overlapping and fragmented elements of space. Building can be seen as a manifestation and freeing of the hidden meanings and stories of a space. Placemaking architectural projects grow from a process of gathering and transposing nature's dynamic characteristics in order to reinstate environmental significance and establish a sense of place.

The project argues that architecture can introduce new articulations and instigate a renewed way of seeing and being within space. It can create opportunities for previously unrelated elements to engage and emerge. In this way, architectural design has the potential to enlarge the range of human spatial consciousness (Tuan, 1977, p.116), and to produce possibilities for an alternative perspective of place.

The more one is able to read site-specific atmospheres, and to respond to them, the more likely a given site will begin to resonate as a place. Eugene Walter, author and poet, describes place as a location of dynamic human experience in his book Placeways. He writes about place stating,

*"It evokes and organizes ones memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings and the work of imaginations. The feelings of a place are indeed the mental projections of individuals, but they come from collective experience and they do not happen anywhere else. They belong to place."* (Walter, 1988, p.21)

Walter clearly depicts the epitome of place as a space that takes on personal projections, and holds that it is only through physical and psychological participatory practices that place may be distinguished from the surrounding complex world. Places are not an understandable or transferable things derived only from a material sense; they are events, occasions, and experiences that come into existence upon engagement and with the acquisition of personal meaning. Place provides a unique circumstance for each individual to process space through his or her filters of attitudes, experiences, and intentions.

The three site-specific projects demonstrate the necessity of freedom of imagination and interpretation required in the processes of placemaking, in order to allow people to engage with and identify themselves within a space, both in the moment and in memory. Therefore, the use of narrative can greatly benefit placemaking practices through the highly subjective processes of reading and understanding stories. Though each storyline may consist of the same basic parts, narratives allow interpretation and imagination to have an important role in the overall understanding of place. By enabling one to insert his or her own narrative into a space, it becomes a personal, explicit and particular place.
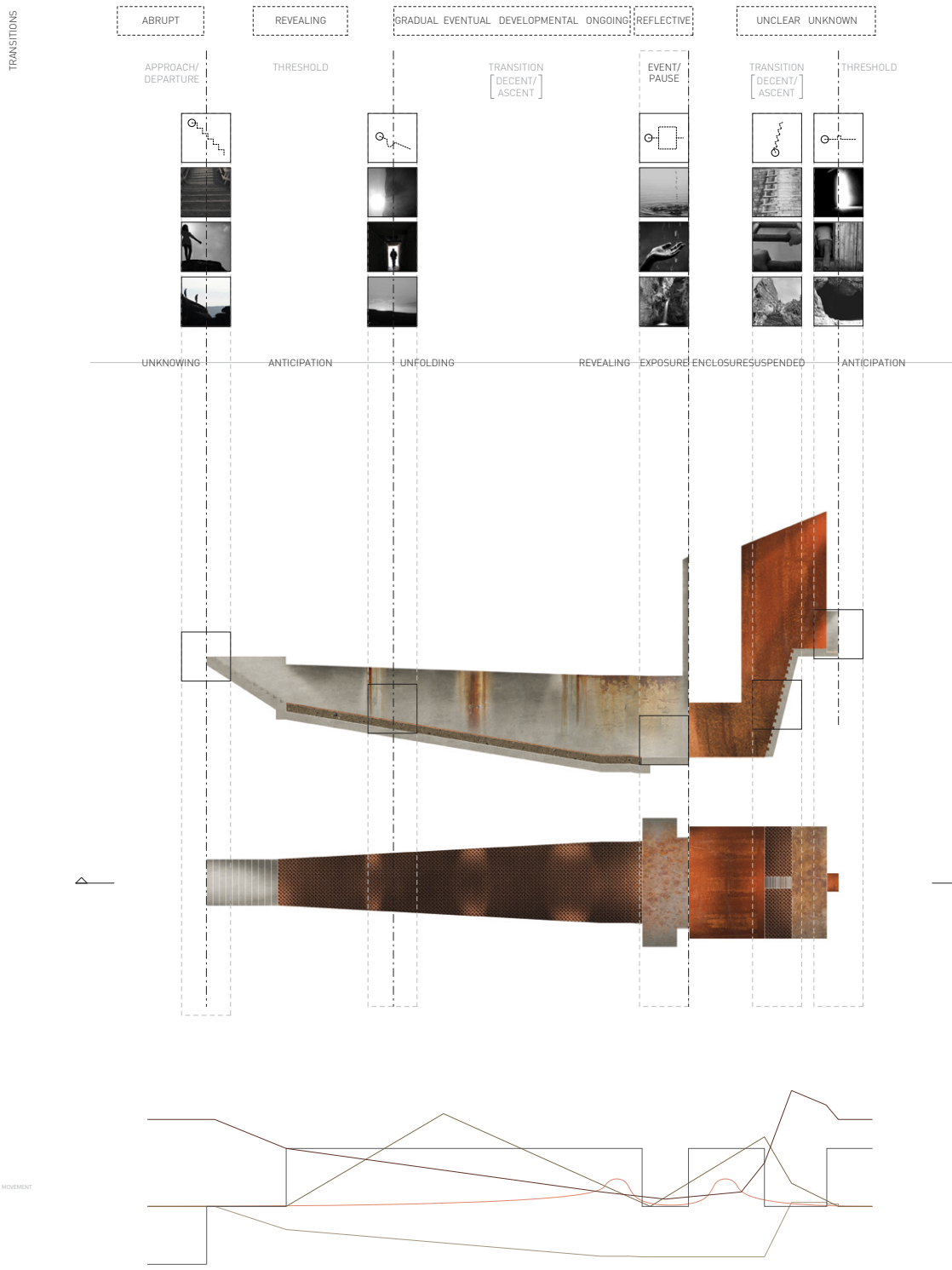
FIGURE 11 Sectional Narrative. Mapping of movements: Tunnel / Barendrecht. In this site scenario, the visual aspect of the site is almost non-existent. Instead, the sounds of the site are revealed to the user, enabling a focus on non-material aspects that contribute to the atmosphere of the site. Through transitions of muting and amplification, the sounds of the site are revealed independently, allowing them to be recognized and realized. The tunnel also allows for what happens beneath the surface of the site to be revealed: a system of drainage and water relocation that greatly contributes to the experience of the site. (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).
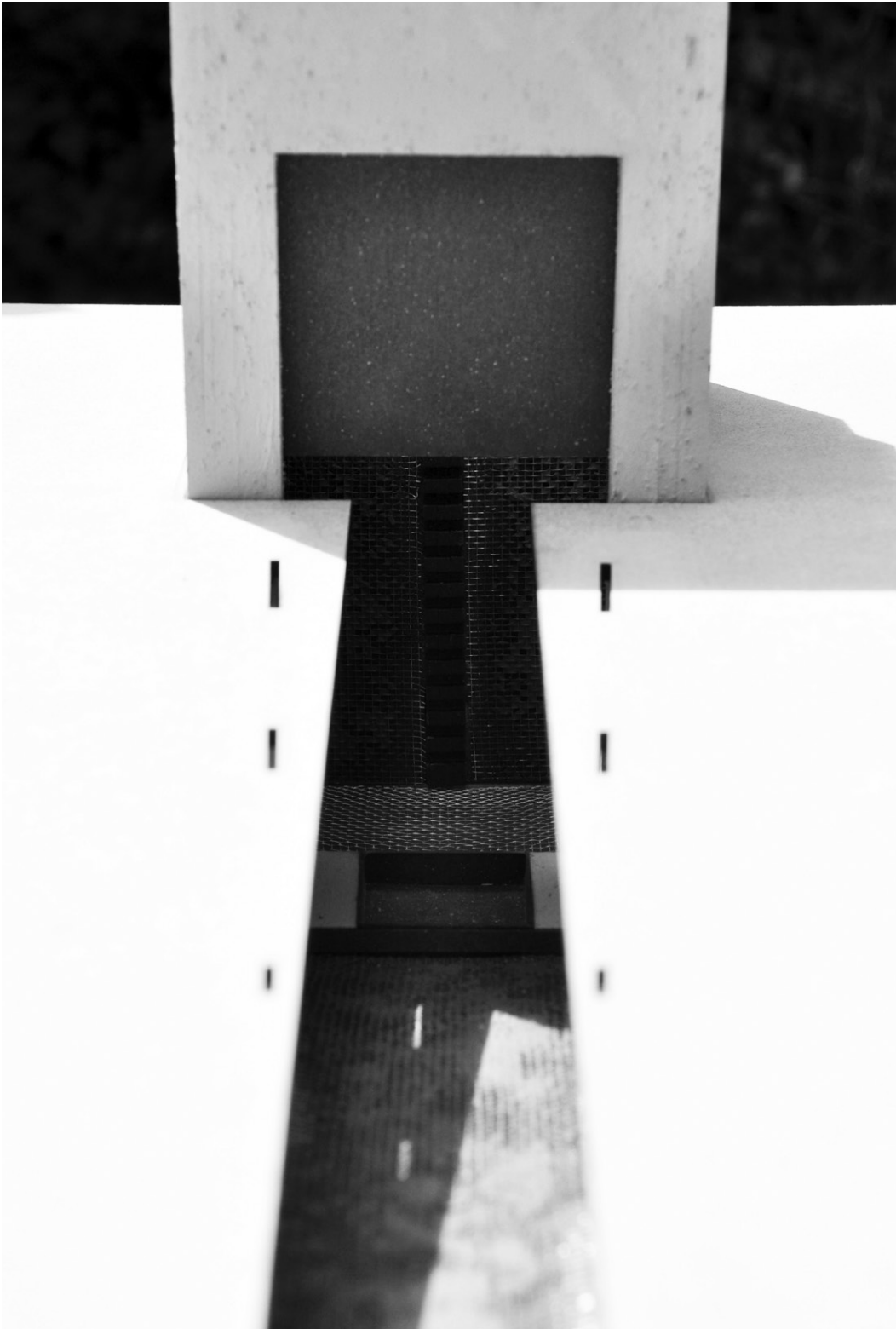
FIGURE 12  Model of the Tunnel. The image shows a fragment of the architectural folly, specifically highlighting the interior path that maps out the ways in which one comes into contact with the site (Model by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).
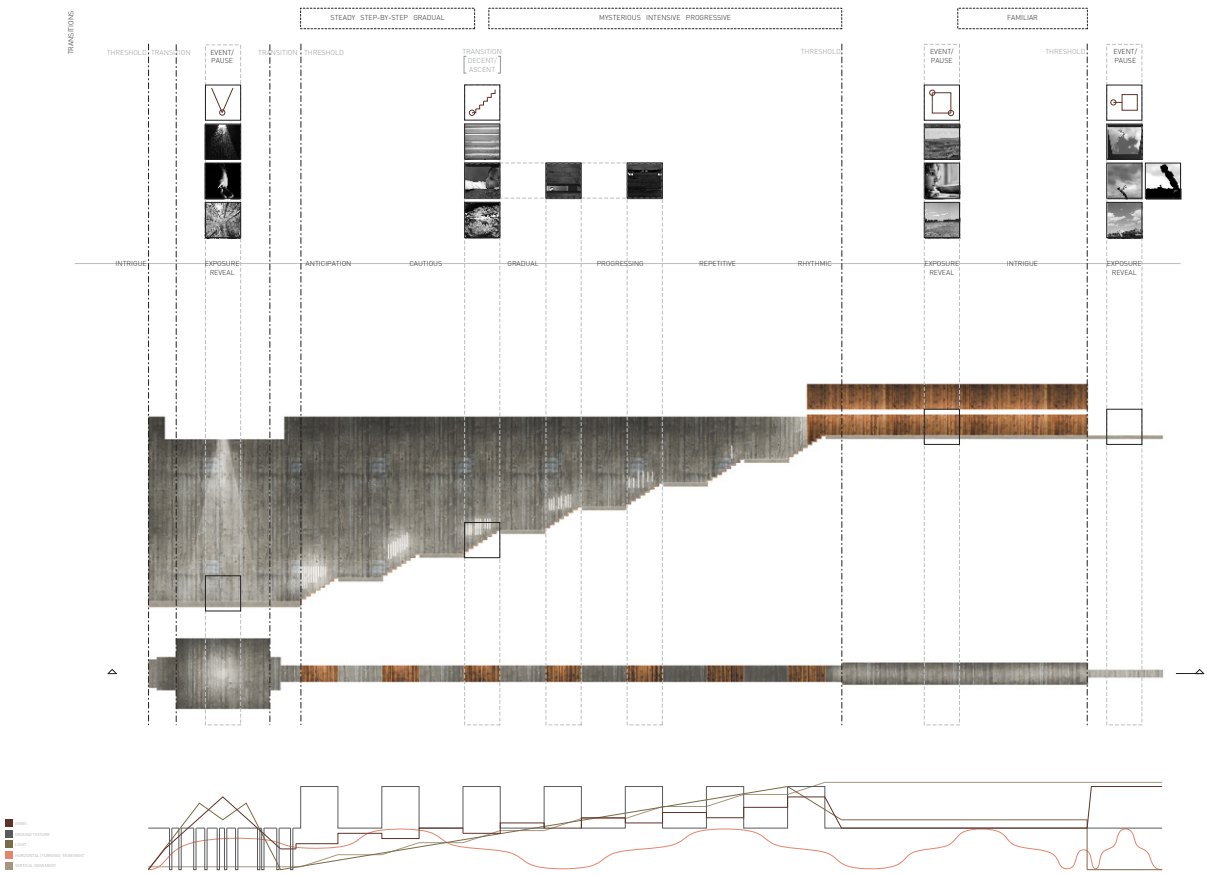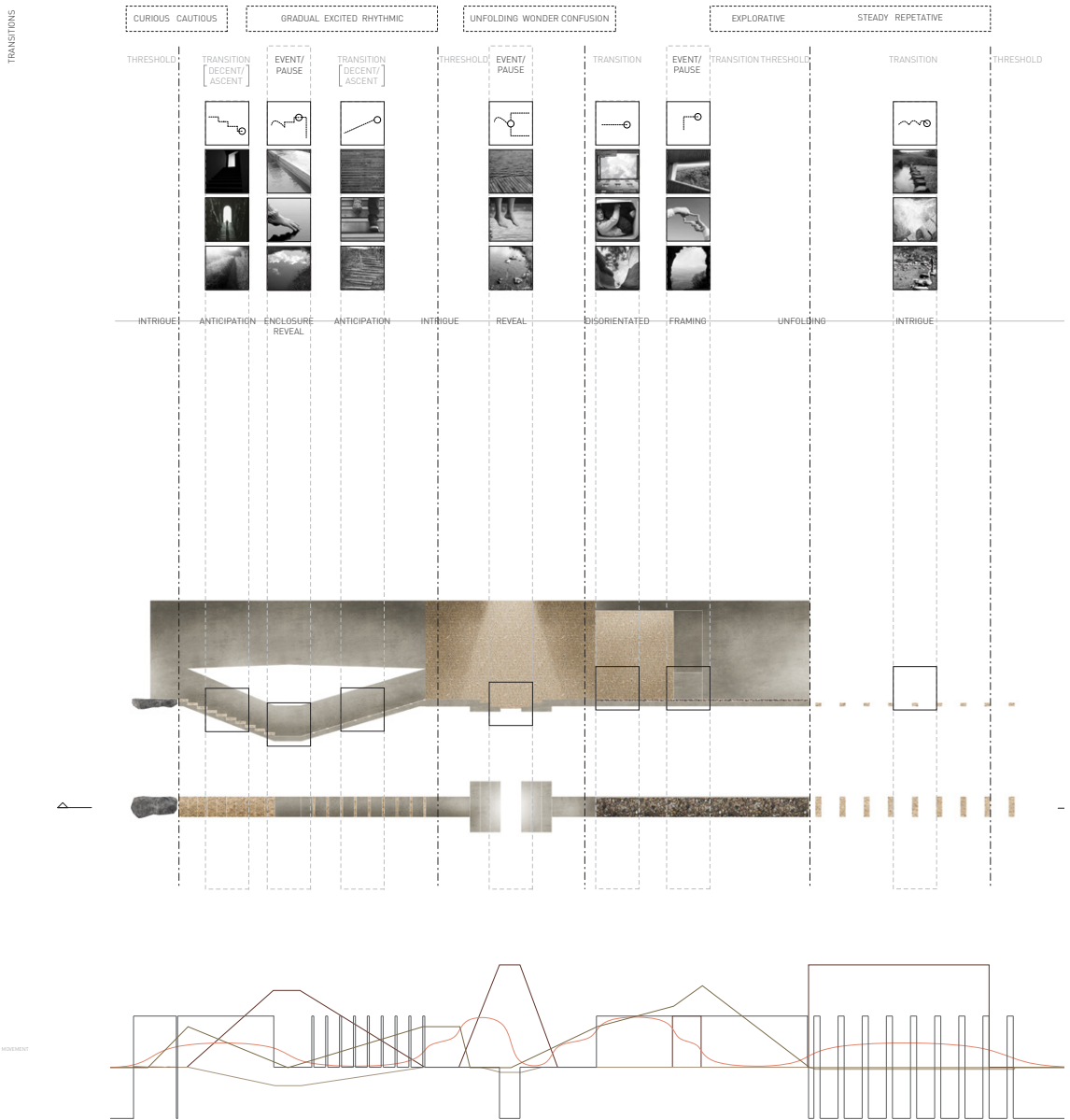
FIGURE 13  Sectional Narrative. Mapping of movements: Tower / Berkel en Rodenrijs. Here, the vastness of the site is broken up into fragments, giving attention to the pieces that come together to make the atmospheric whole. The tower allows one to see without being seen, while ascending the spiralling stairs that provide views out to the various aspects of the site. The tower allows for each element of the site to be given attention, including the sky above, which is always there, but overpowered by what is below the horizon. The tower provides a place for pause within a typically transitional landscape (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).
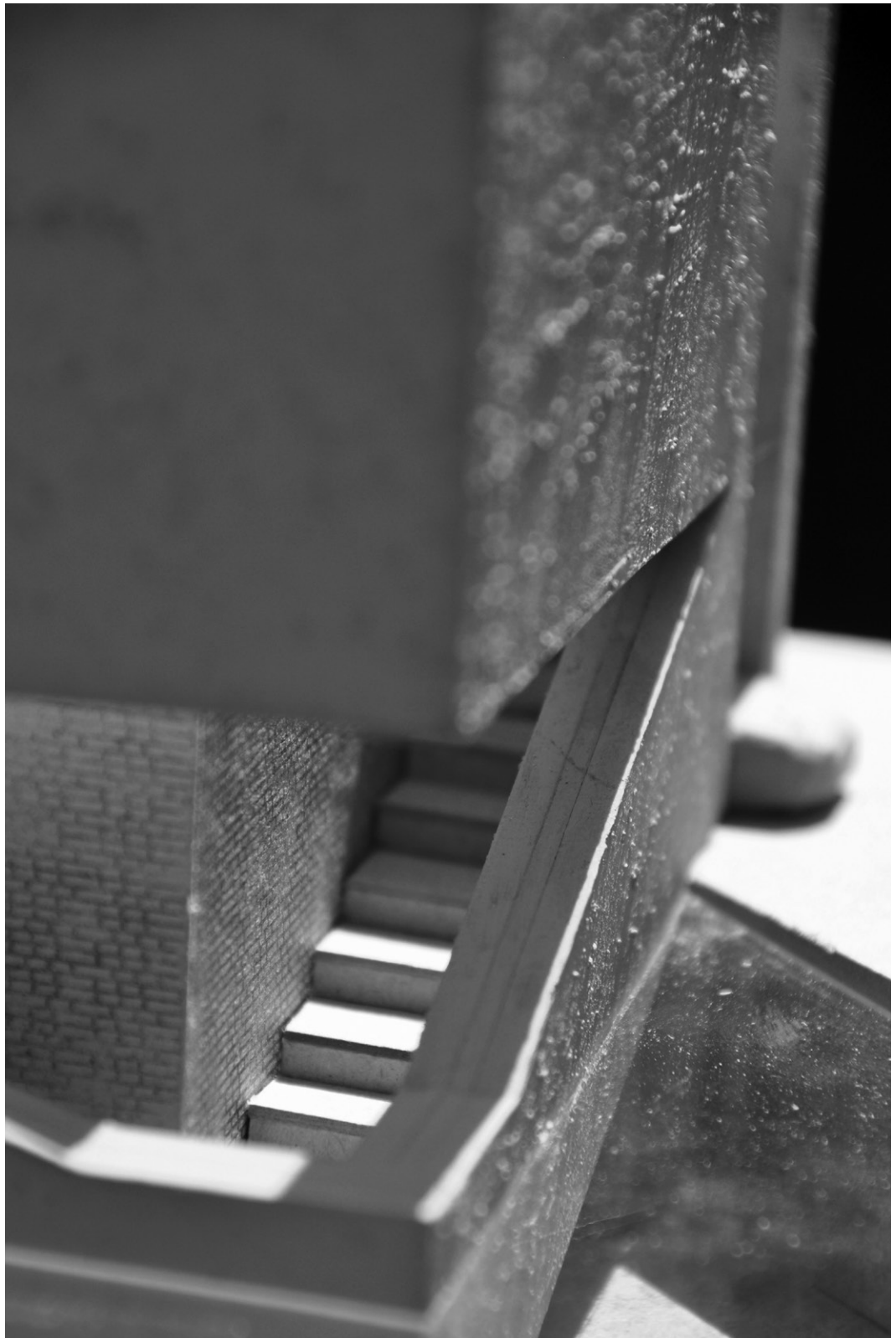
FIGURE 14 Model of the Tower. The image shows a fragment of the architectural folly, specifically highlighting the interior path that maps out the ways in which one comes into contact with the site (Model by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).

FIGURE 15 Sectional Narrative. Mapping of movements: Bridge / Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel. The bridge finally allows one to encounter the water. As a boundary that becomes an interactive element, the water-filled canal is no longer seen as a hindrance but an opportunity. The bridge creates various occasions and perspectives for one to engage with the water: from above, below, or at the same level. The curving path creates chance encounters around each corner, allowing the simple act of crossing the river to be one of continual engagement (Drawing by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).

FIGURE 16 Model of the Bridge. The image shows a fragment of the architectural folly, specifically highlighting the interior path that maps out the ways in which one comes into contact with the site (Model by Kristen Van Haeren 2015).

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