

Ethan Ranalli

Portfolio

Kent State College of Architecture & Design

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About

My name is Ethan Ranalli, and I am from Buffalo, New York. I am in my senior year of the Bachelor of Architecture program, developing a body of work that leans toward modern, forward-thinking design while still maintaining a connection to its origins. My interests extend across old films, graphic design, fashion, and the ways photographs and references can shape the atmosphere of a project. I begin each design through geometry, using simple forms that are informed by references, location, environment, and intent. Most of my work is developed in the digital realm, but I build physical models and quick test studies to push ideas forward and iterate efficiently. Outside of architecture, I'm drawn to cycling, soccer, volleyball, urban history, fashion, and graphic design, all of which influence how I see and interpret the built world. I hope to work in a research-driven role focused on experimental housing, conceptual urbanism, and new forms of spatial thinking. The layered design process keeps me engaged, and I'm most interested in uncovering efficient systems, solving problems in real time, and allowing ideas to evolve through careful investigation.

Fire House

312 Carnegie Ave. Cleveland, OH 44115

Abstract

The project's architectural composition is built from five repeating massings that define a series of interstitial spaces that carry directly into the interior, shaping circulation through the firehouse's three core zones: public programs, private offices, and living quarters. The design grows from simple geometric origins, specifically a triangle that is iteratively transformed into shard-like forms. By duplicating and subtly altering this base geometry, a unified family of shards emerges, and their combination establishes both vertical and horizontal organization throughout the structure. These interstitial spaces do more than guide movement; they lock the building's components together across both axes, creating seamless transitions that strengthen physical and visual connections. Areas not used for egress become program zones, arranged in alignment with the overlap spaces to generate a consistent circulation rhythm on both floors, while natural light enters through strategic openings that illuminate the interior and emphasize the layered massing. At the ground level, repetition continues through strategic subtraction that reinforces continuity between the building and its surroundings, with shard-like forms projecting from the earth to amplify the play between solid and void and anchor the structure within its context. Surface articulation further refines the design, highlighting overlap spaces through controlled material treatment and halftone variation, making these zones legible architectural features that support a coherent form and strengthen the building's relationship with the site.

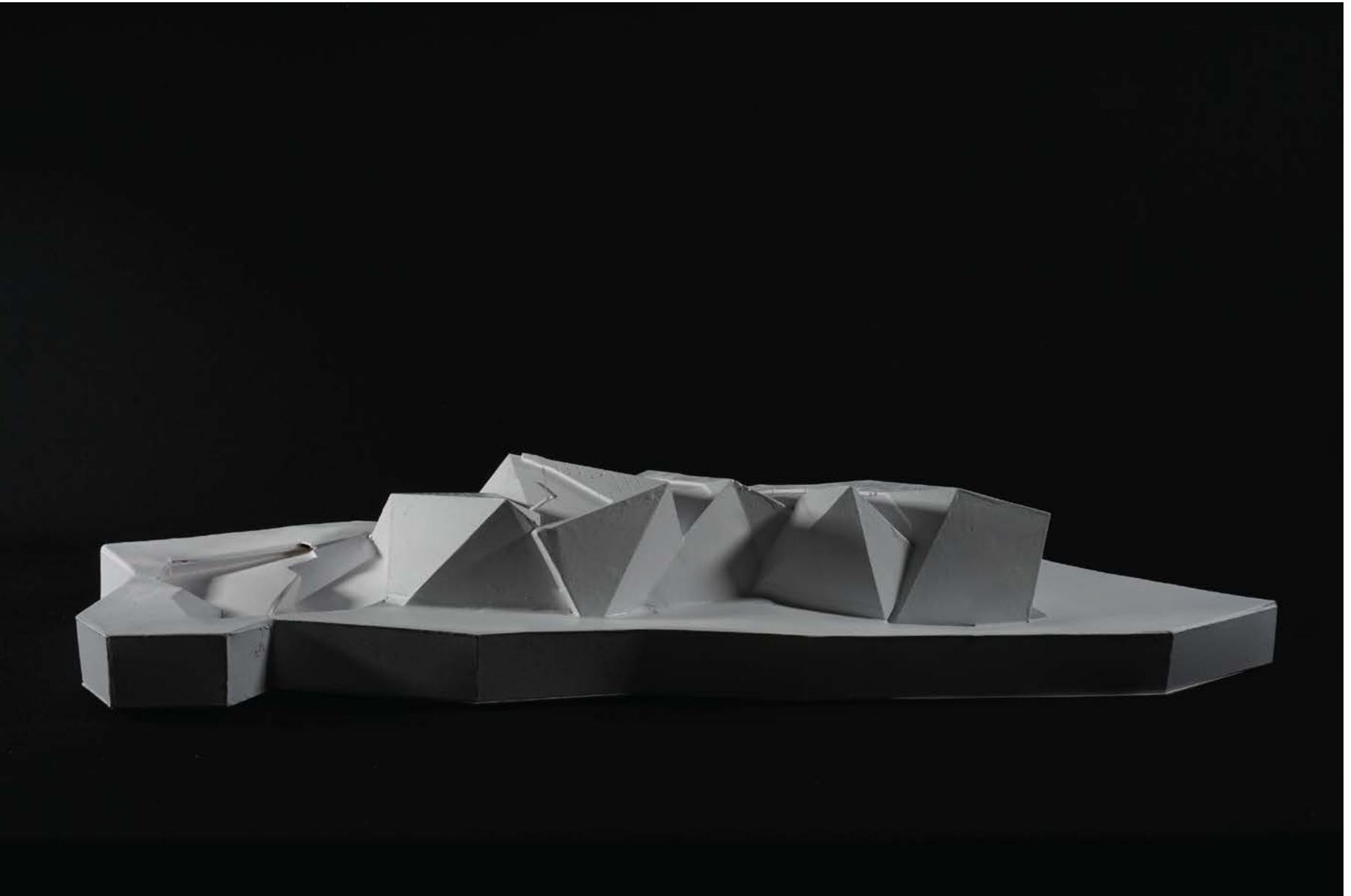


Fig. 1
Physical Model

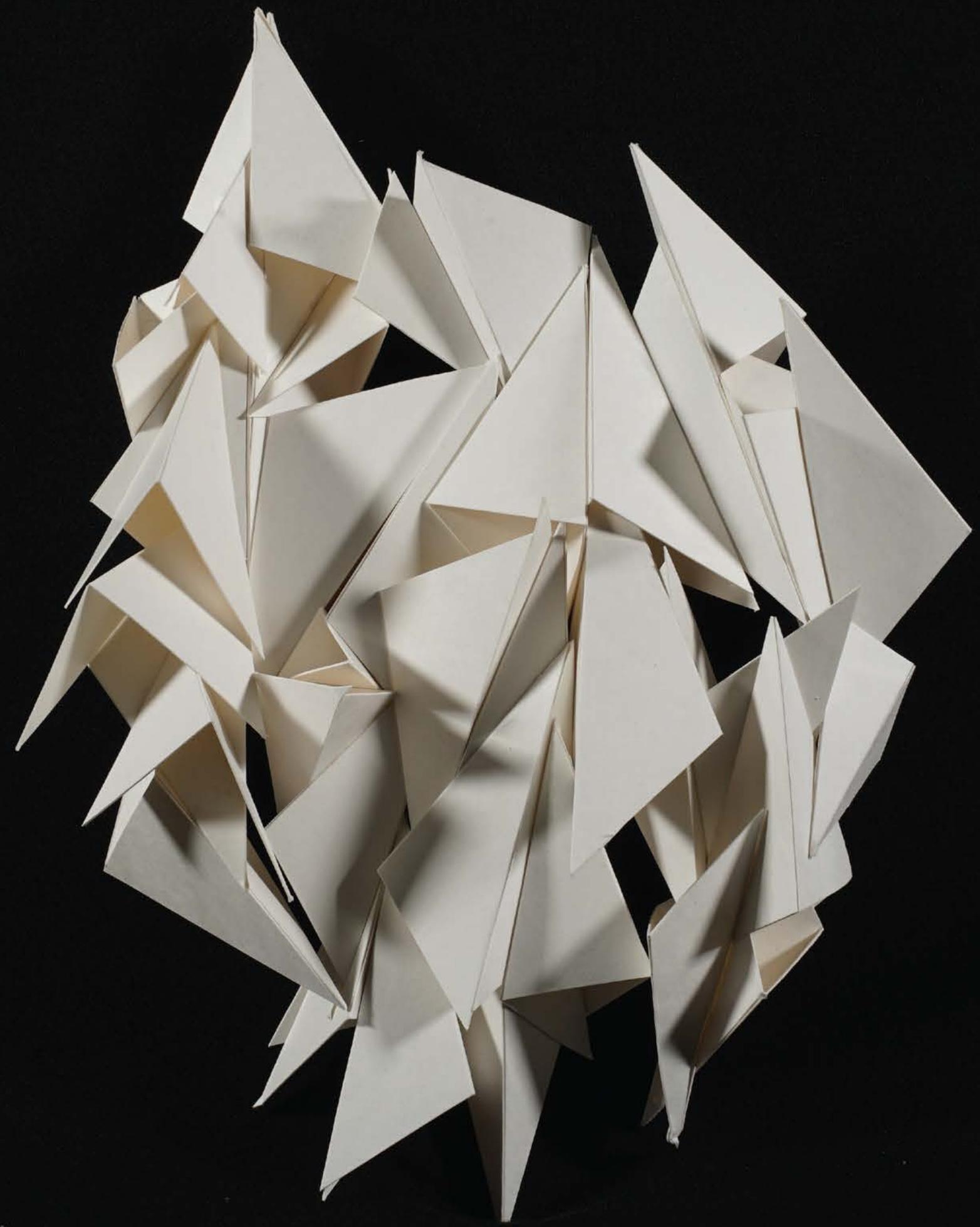


Fig. 2
Starting element

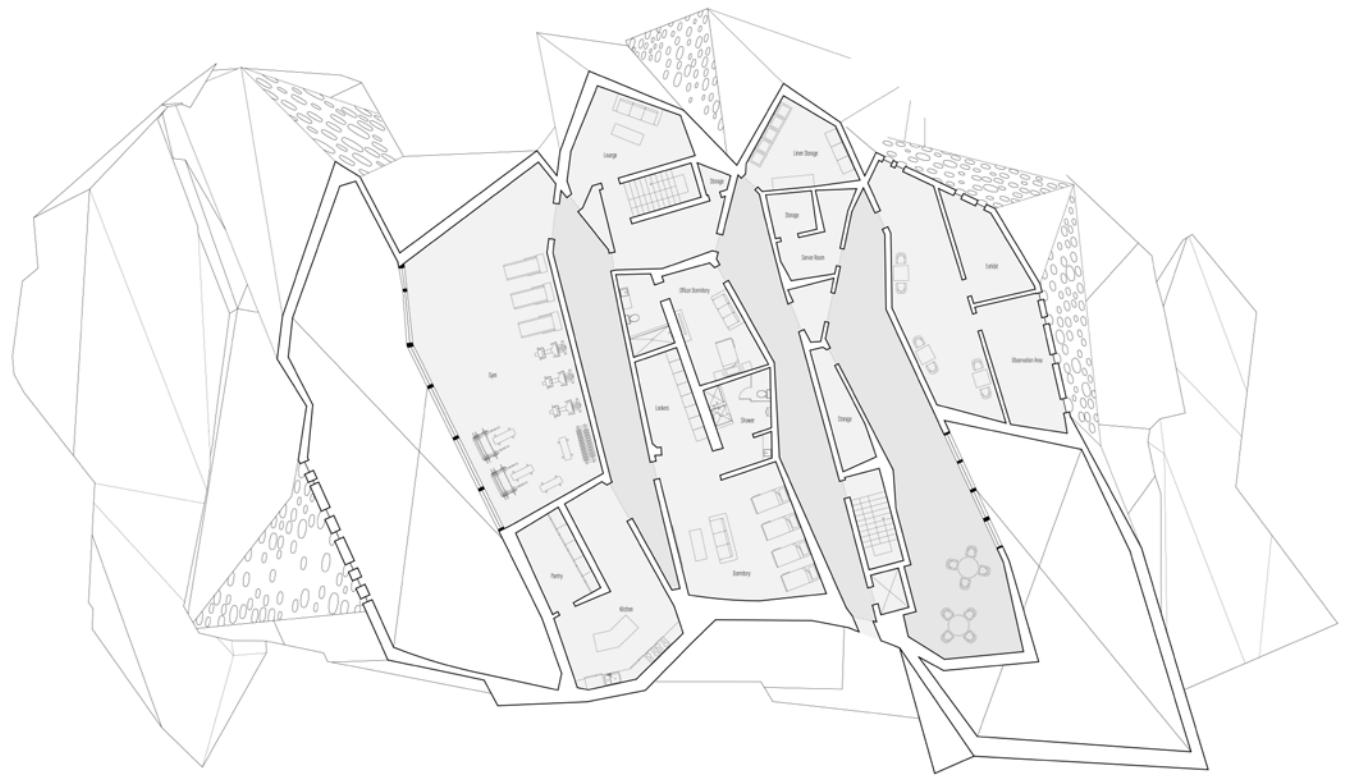


Fig. 3,4

First & Second Floor Plan

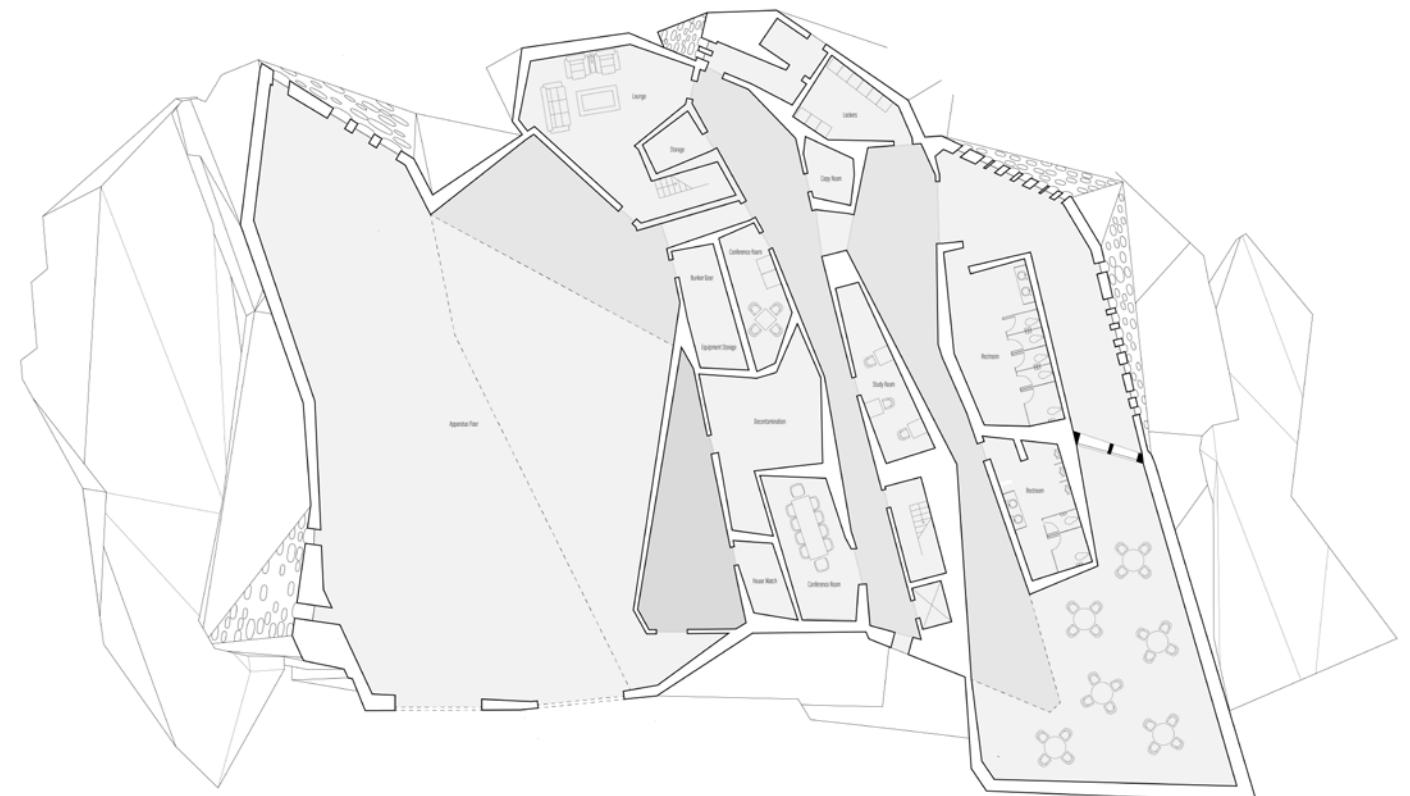
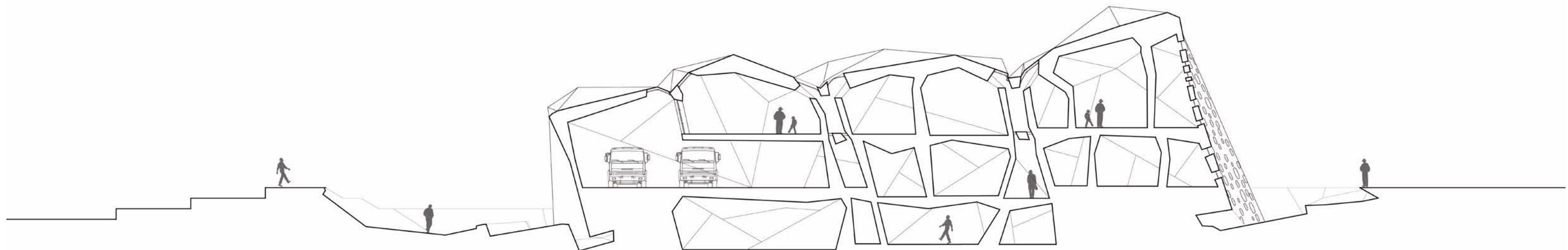


Fig. 5
Section



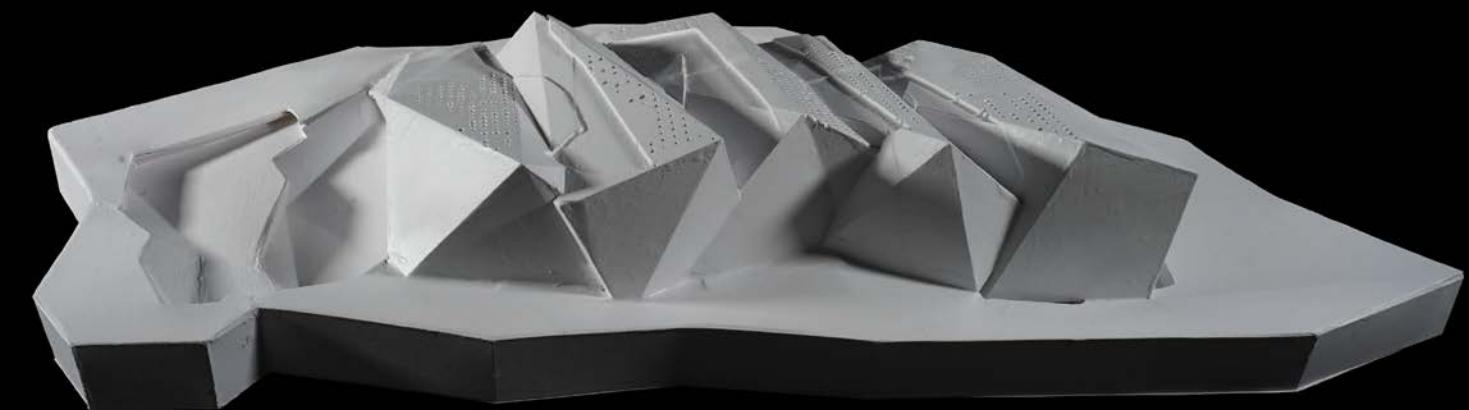


Fig. 6,7,8,9
Physical Model



Fig. 10,11
Tower Physical Model

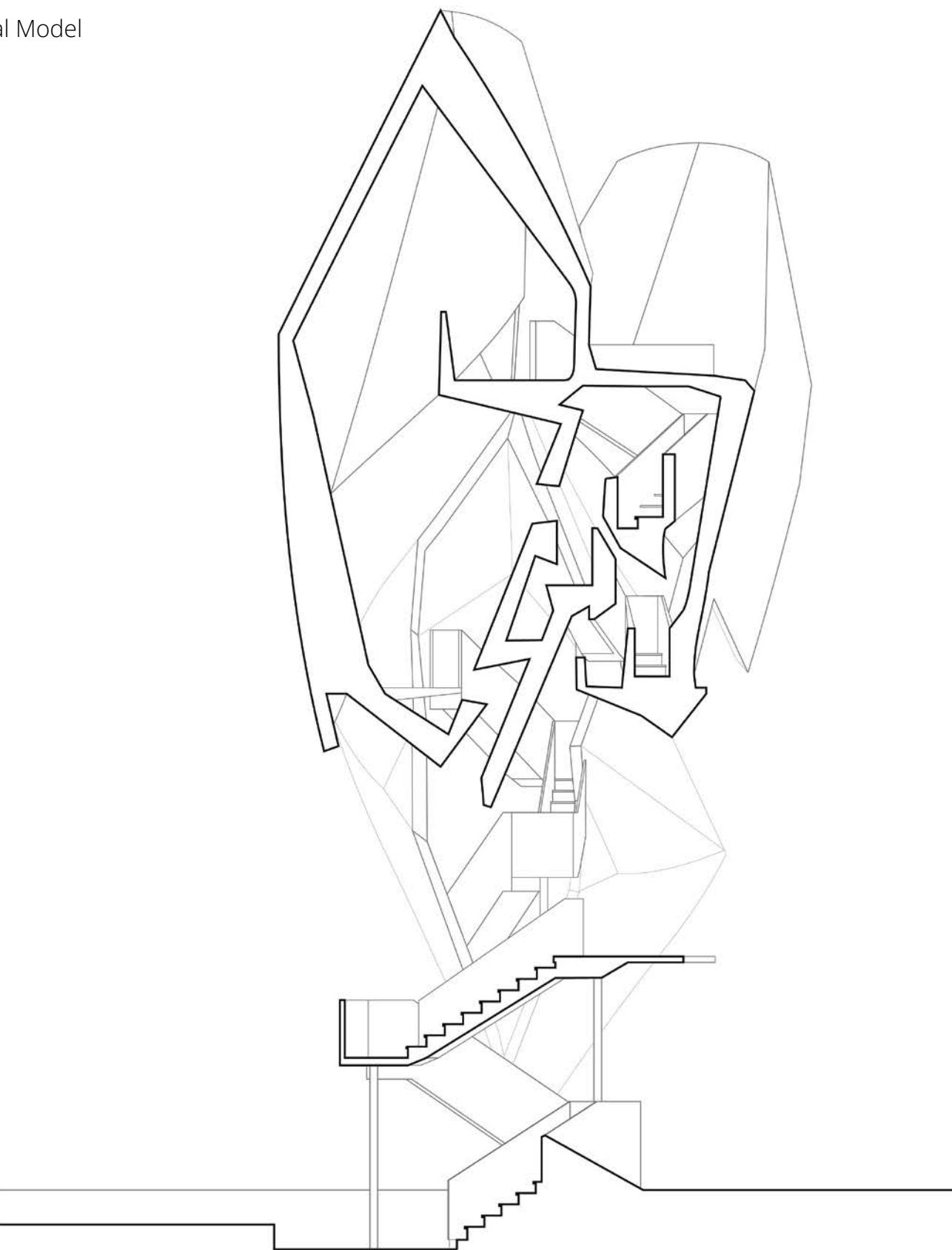


Fig. 2
Tower Section

The Renewal

1025 A Ave, Seymour, IN 47274

Abstract

The project centers on a bold triangular tilt that presses into the site and organizes circulation around a sequence of layered research and demonstration fields. Two primary pathways run along this tilted form, linking a Welcome Center, a Living Center, and a Central Working Center while establishing a clear spatial hierarchy that guides movement and frames experience. Inside the constructed geometry, an untouched grass field remains intact as a symbol of ecological restoration, serving as both a visual anchor and a quiet counterpoint to the project's imposed interventions. At its center, a stepwell descends into a seed vault, merging metaphorical ideas of growth and renewal with the pragmatic need for preservation. Sandstone walls define the horizontal layers of the site, and several of these layers tilt in alternating rhythms above and below ground, shaping forced perspectives and producing shifting visual corridors. As visitors move along the pathways, the project reveals a series of intentionally framed views that expose the relationship between geometry, material expression, and the slow resurgence of the landscape. The entire composition becomes a calibrated field of movement, restoration, and projection, where each vantage point reinforces the narrative of a landscape simultaneously shaped by human intention and natural return.



Fig. 1
Digital Collage

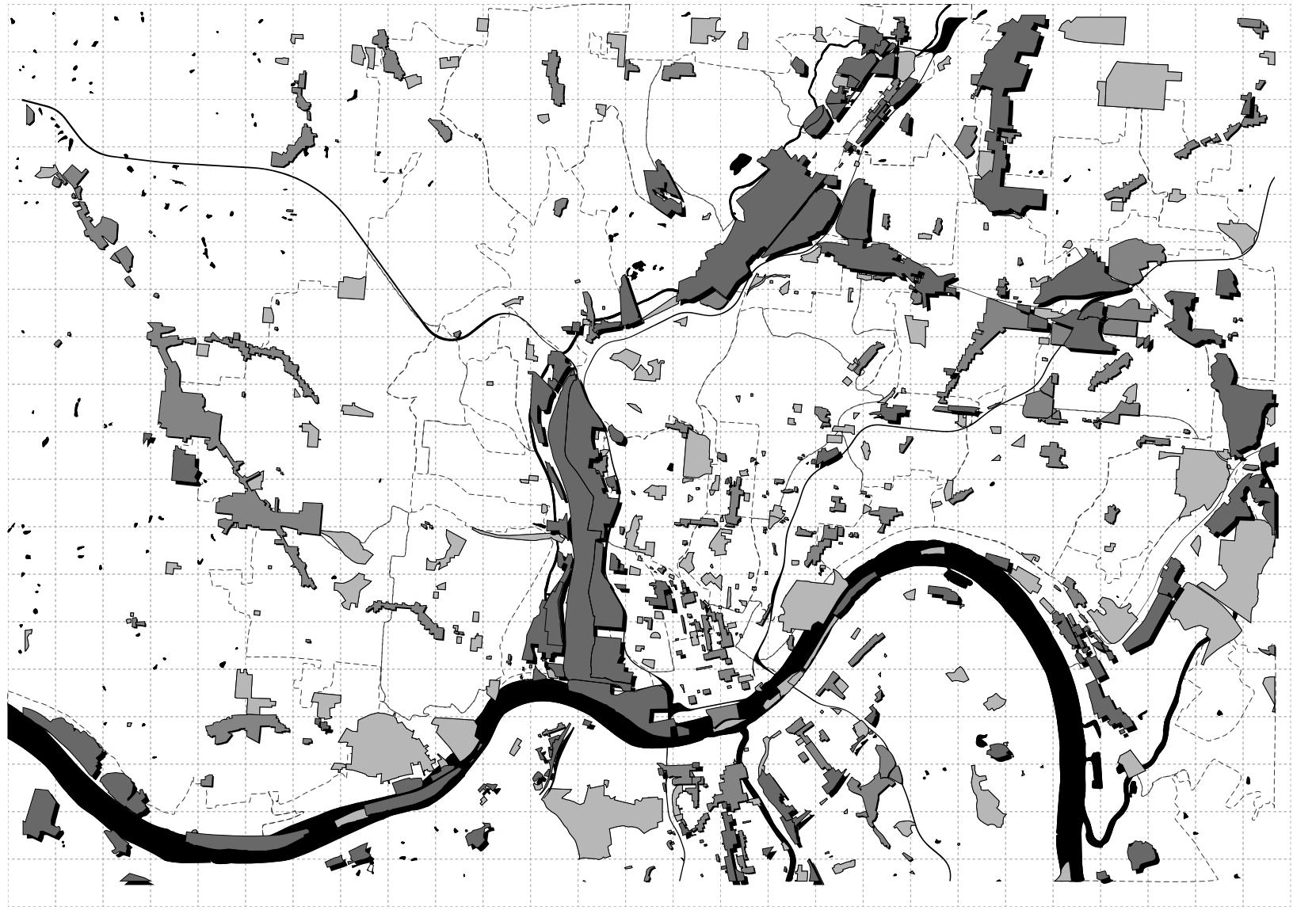


Fig. 2
"Cincinnati"

Phase 1

This studio emphasizes how geographic and contextual conditions directly shape architectural decision-making—from site design and programming to land use, permitting, and long-term stewardship. Grounded in restoration ecology, land management, and alternative agricultural practices, the work requires balancing environmental, cultural, and economic forces such as land-use history, habitat fragmentation, and the realities of the globalized food system. For the first phase, an in-depth “diagnosis” of the Central and Eastern Corn Belt Plains was developed through independent research, culminating in two gallery-quality drawings that map the region’s geophysical, geological, ecological, and territorial characteristics while clearly highlighting zones of ecological damage, degradation, and decay using GIS, maps, and related visual sources aligned with the provided representational style.

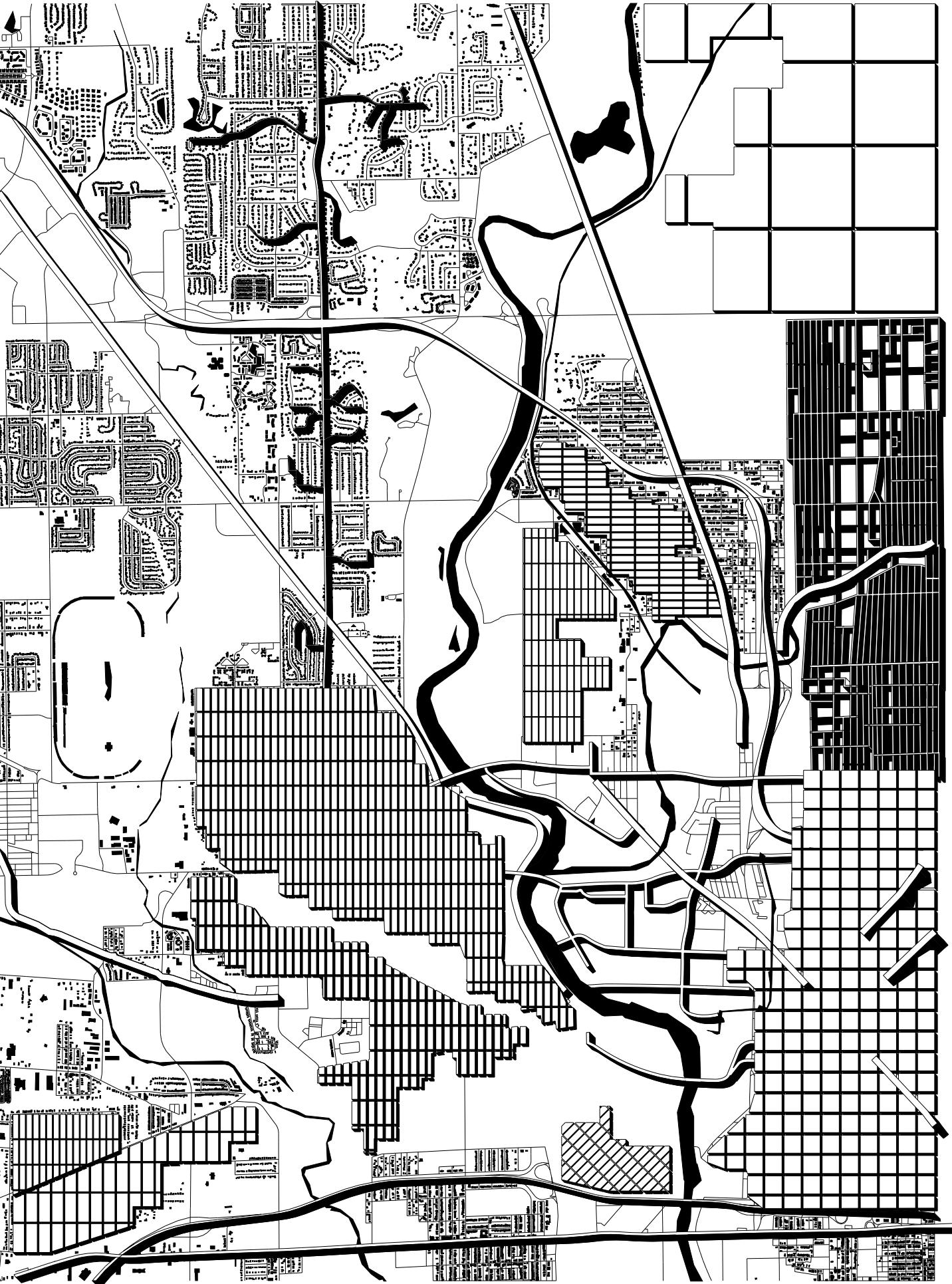


Fig. 3
"Indianapolis"

Phase 2

Phase 02 deepened the regional geophysical research through a focused site analysis of the 14-acre Seymour Recycling Corp. Superfund site at the former Freeman Army Airfield near Seymour, Indiana—an area contaminated in the 1970s by improper hazardous-waste storage and handling that impacted soil and groundwater beyond the property. The work produces a precise, two-dimensional line-drawn “territorial plan” that centers the site and maps its relationship to larger natural and geographic systems—topography, natural areas, and landscape change—while clearly identifying zones of degradation and contamination through clean keys and tightly controlled labeling, alongside an “existing conditions” base site plan that becomes the technical foundation for the next design phase and the Agricultural Research Management Institute proposal. A critical representational deliverable is a high-quality digital collage inspired by Hans Hollein’s “Transformation” series and his essay “Everything is Architecture” (1968), explicitly citing other works of art and architecture to reinterpret the Corn Belt’s agrarian landscape by overscaling and displacing elements so non-architectural objects read as architecture, maintaining spatial realism while making the implausible feel plausible and grounding the composition in research on environmental contamination and remediation.



Fig. 3
“of 3” Collage

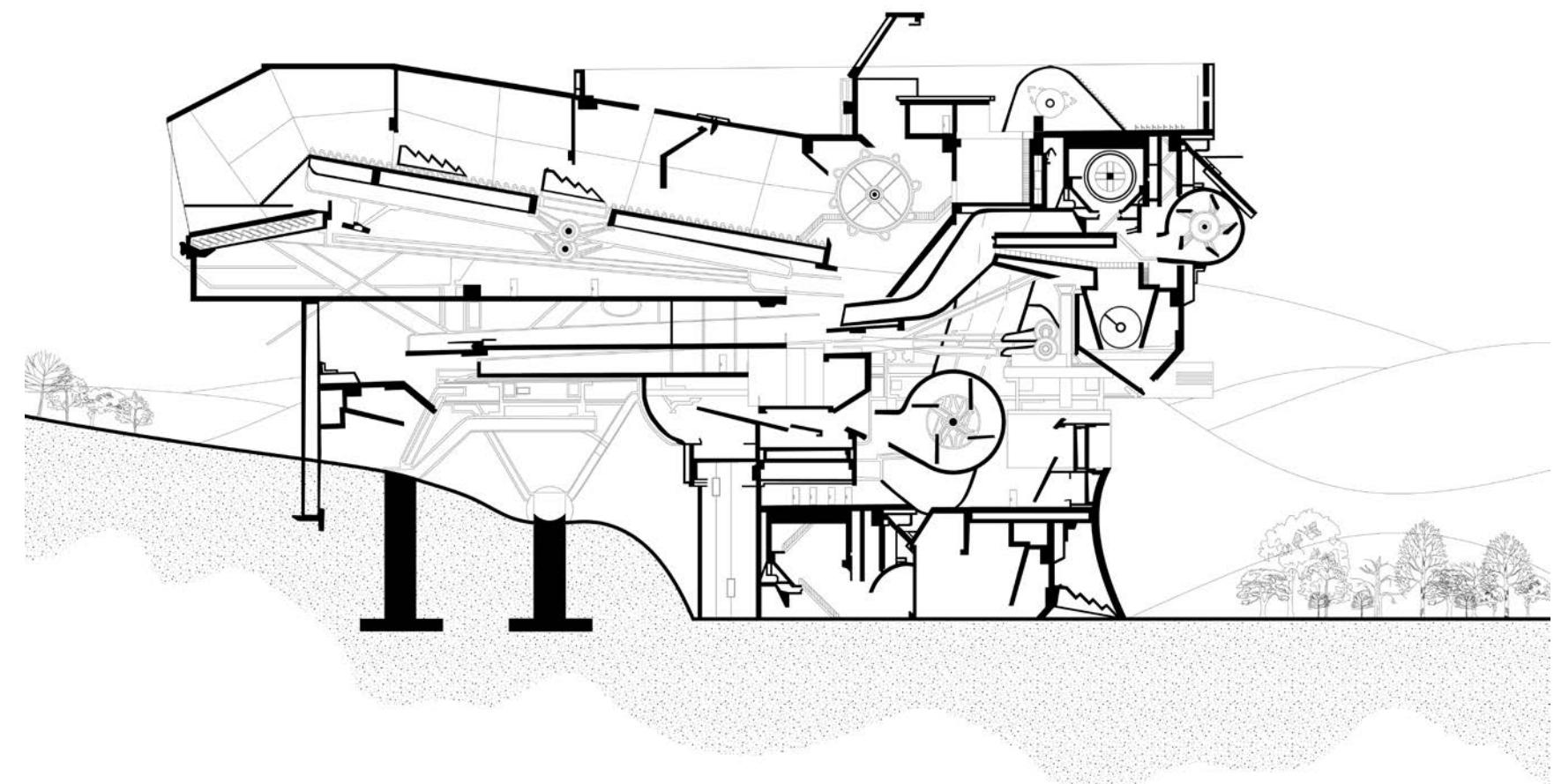


Fig. 4
“of 3” Section



Fig. 6
Exterior Render

Phase 3

Inspired by Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), which frames Neolithic ecology as experimental, balanced environmental cultivation rather than maximum-yield extraction, this project treats the Seymour Recycling Corp. Superfund site as a post-agricultural design laboratory where agroecology becomes a method of repair. Using strategies such as land-farming bioremediation, regenerative farming, permaculture, and agroforestry, the design proposes site interventions that remediate contamination while intentionally expanding biodiversity, developing a legible "architecture of an ecoregion" rooted in analysis of both the site and the Corn Belt Plains. The proposal culminates in an Agricultural Research Management Institute, produced through a rigorous weekly workflow of yellow-trace iterations that combine a parti, archetype, and pattern in varied arrangements—using the parti to structure spatial organization at the site scale without dictating the building's form.



Fig. 7
Vault Render



Fig. 8
Walkway Render

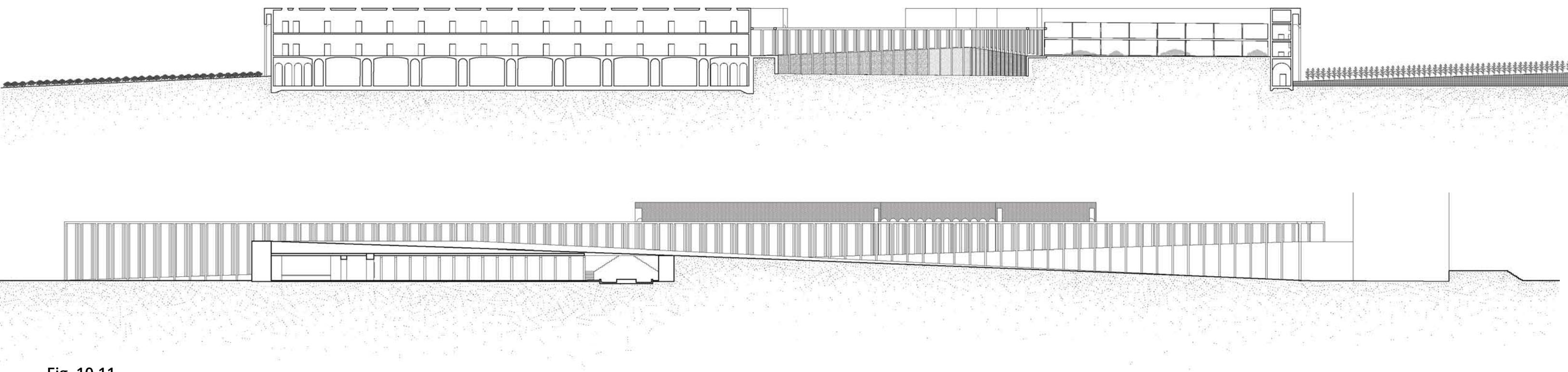


Fig. 10,11
Traverse,
Longitudinal
Sections

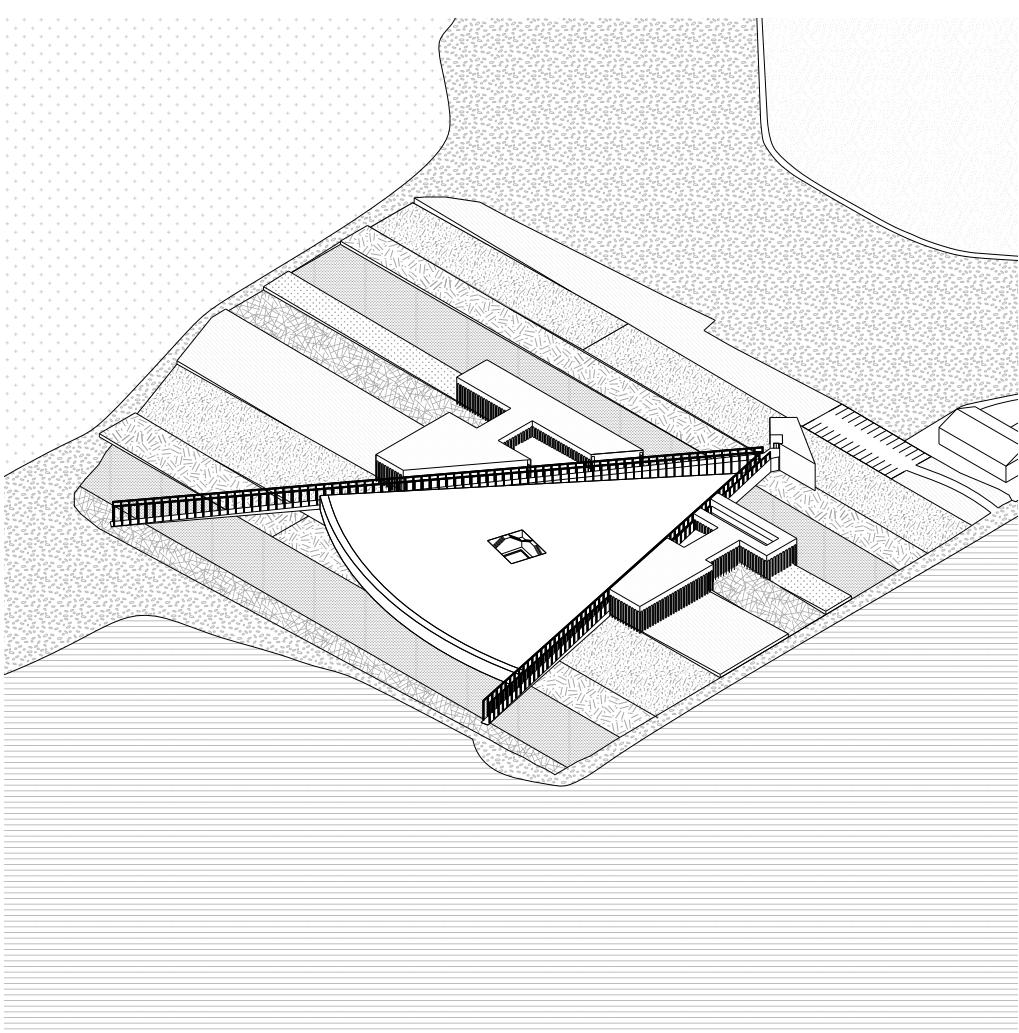


Fig. 12
Axon

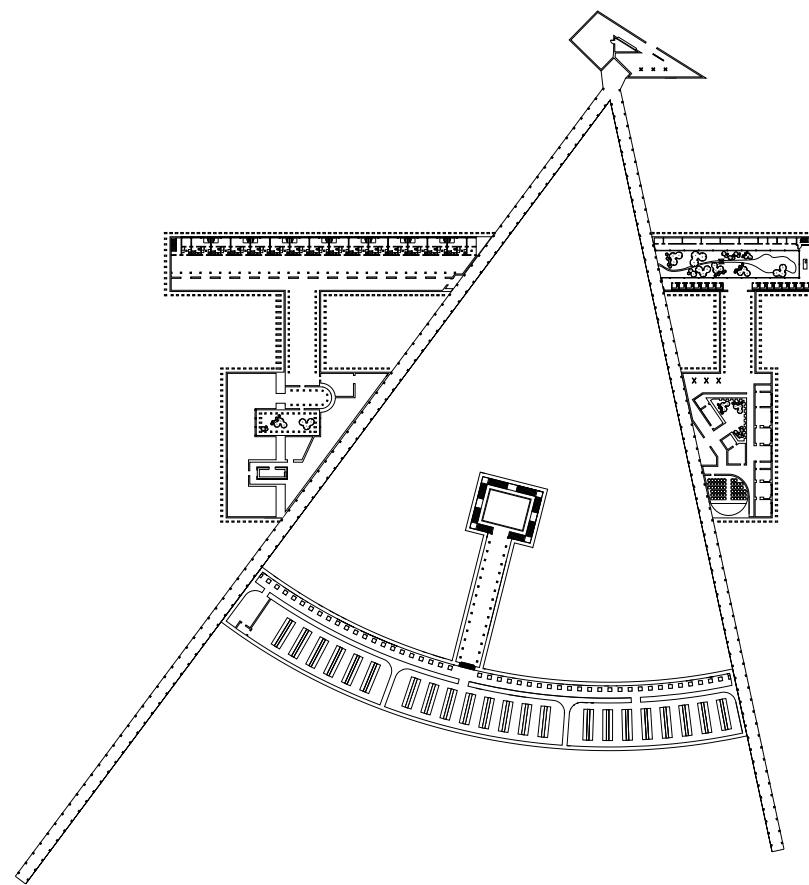


Fig. 13
Plan

Super Block

Via del Castellaccio, 50122 Firenze FI, Italy

Abstract

The Super Block reconceives student housing as an adaptable, transformative, and ecologically embedded urban environment shaped by the radical imagination of Florence's Superstudio. Set within Piazza Brunelleschi, the four-story structure turns Superstudio's conceptual grid into an inhabitable three-dimensional framework organized by a modular steel-pipe system and flexible concrete slabs, creating a structural clarity that supports a wide range of living configurations. Its identity is defined by a deep integration with nature, as vegetation occupies both the interior of the grid and its exterior edges, gradually overtaking the structure with plants, vines, and trees that soften the rigid geometry and transform the building into a green ecosystem. Within this ordered framework, students are given the freedom to personalize and adapt their units, turning everyday life into a collaborative act of shaping space and fostering community. Drawing from the open-ended logic of Archizoom's No-Stop City and echoing Superstudio's visionary ambitions, the Super Block proposes a flexible architectural typology capable of adapting across climates while remaining responsive to its site. It rejects permanence in favor of continuous evolution, allowing architecture, ecology, and its residents to grow together within a framework that reconnects daily life, community, and the natural world.



Fig. 1
Green Block

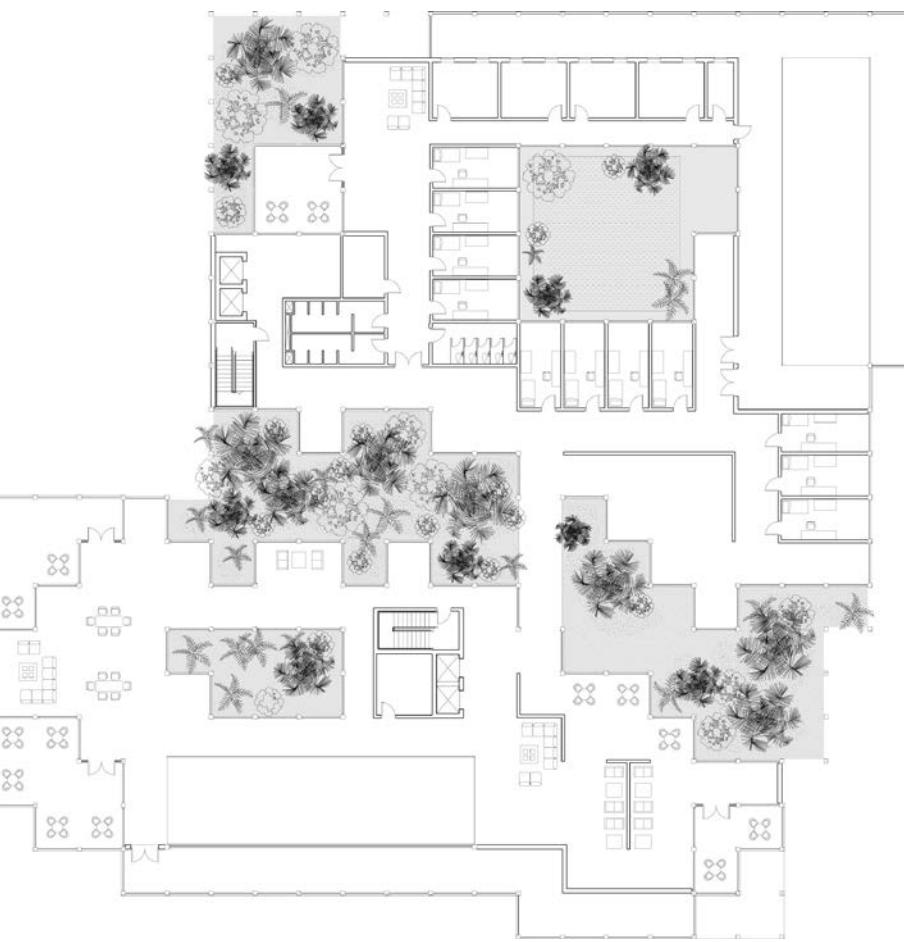
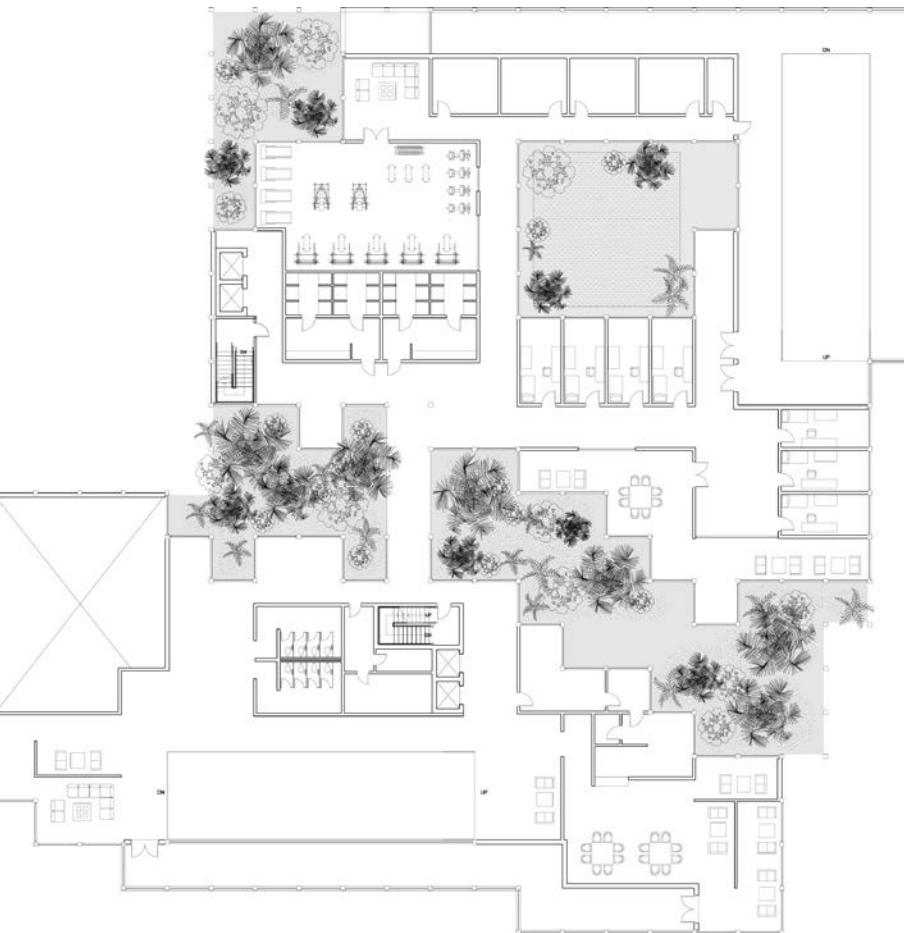
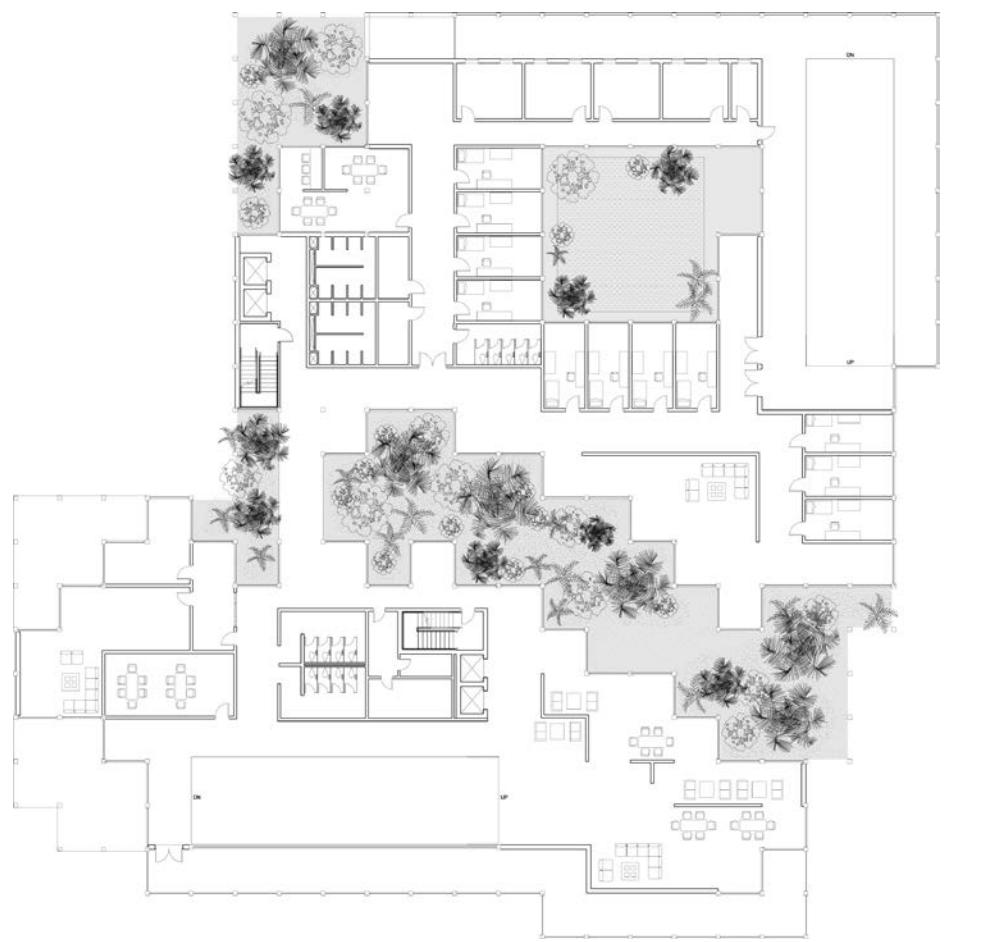
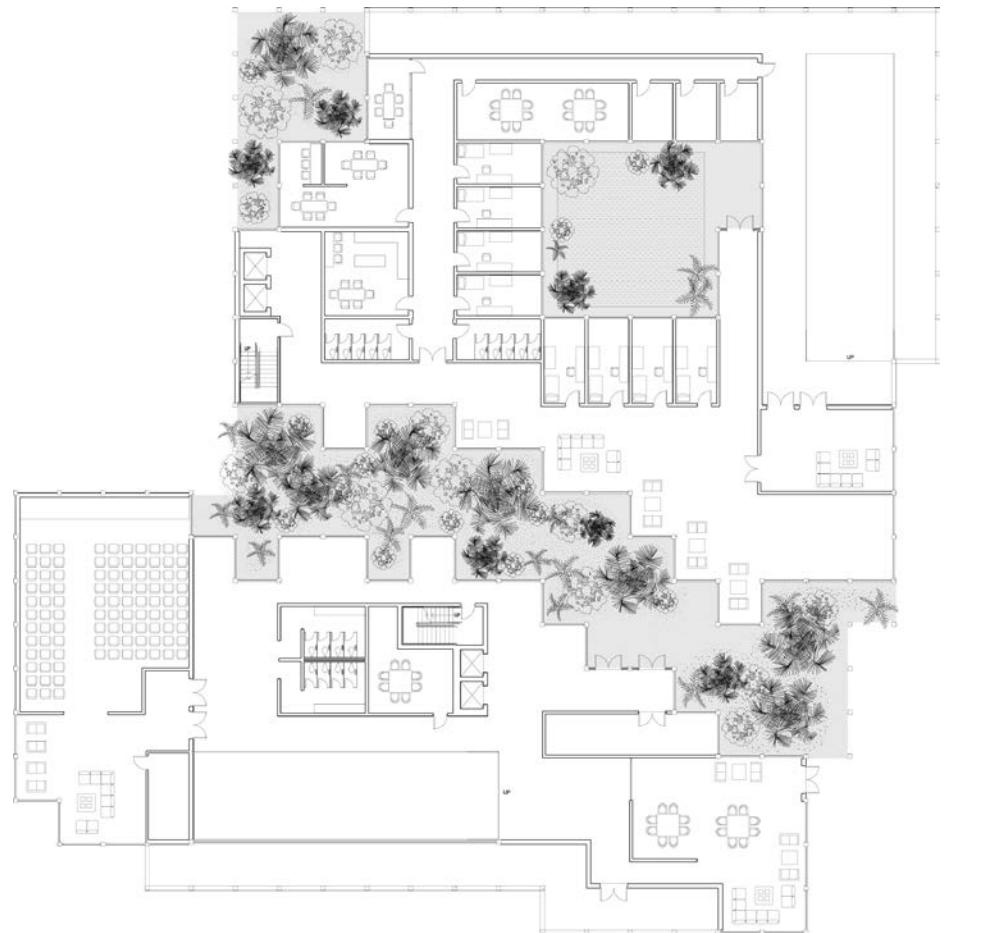


Fig. 2,3,4,5
First, Second,
Third, Fourth
Floor Plans

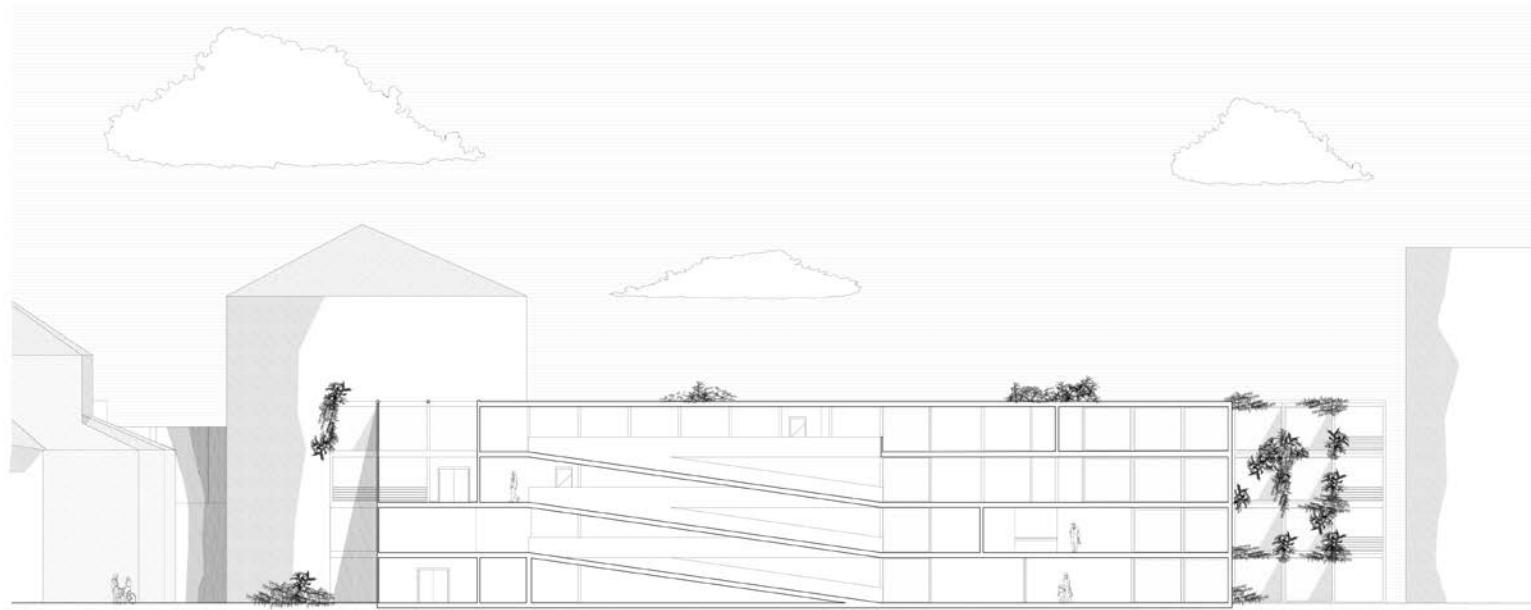
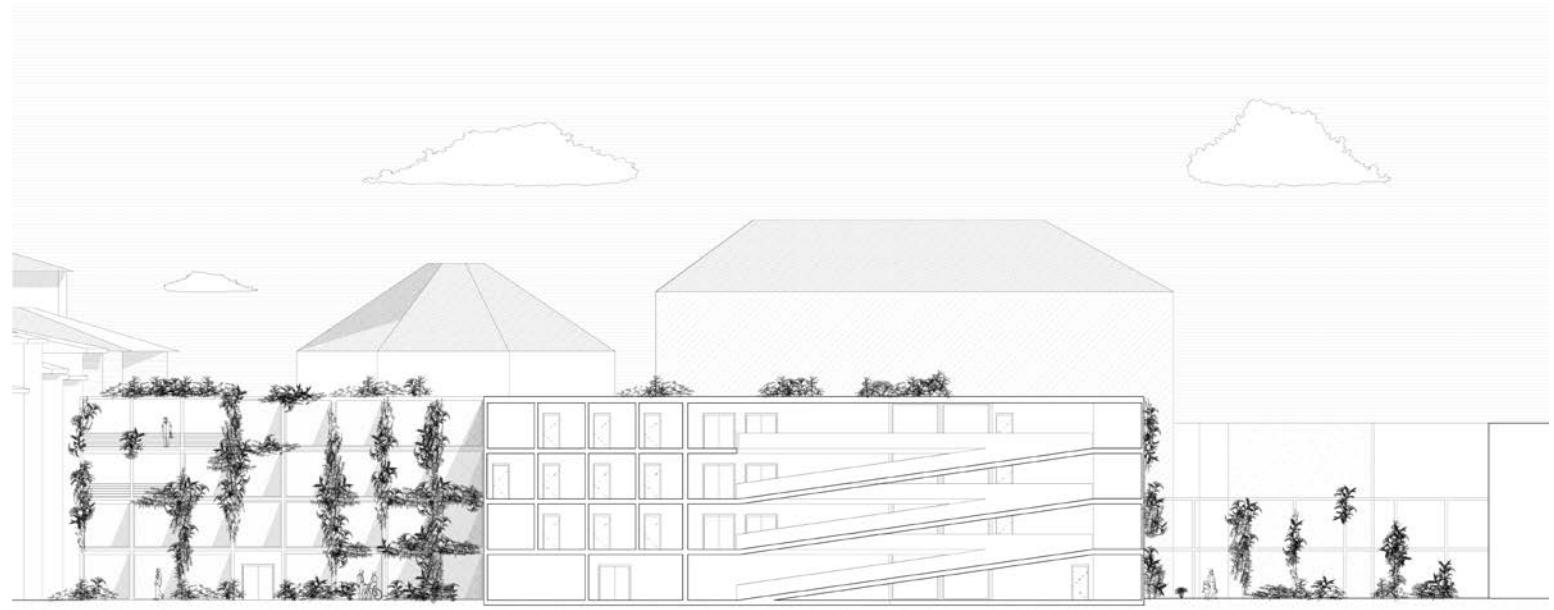


Fig. 6,7
Longitudinal,
Traverse Section

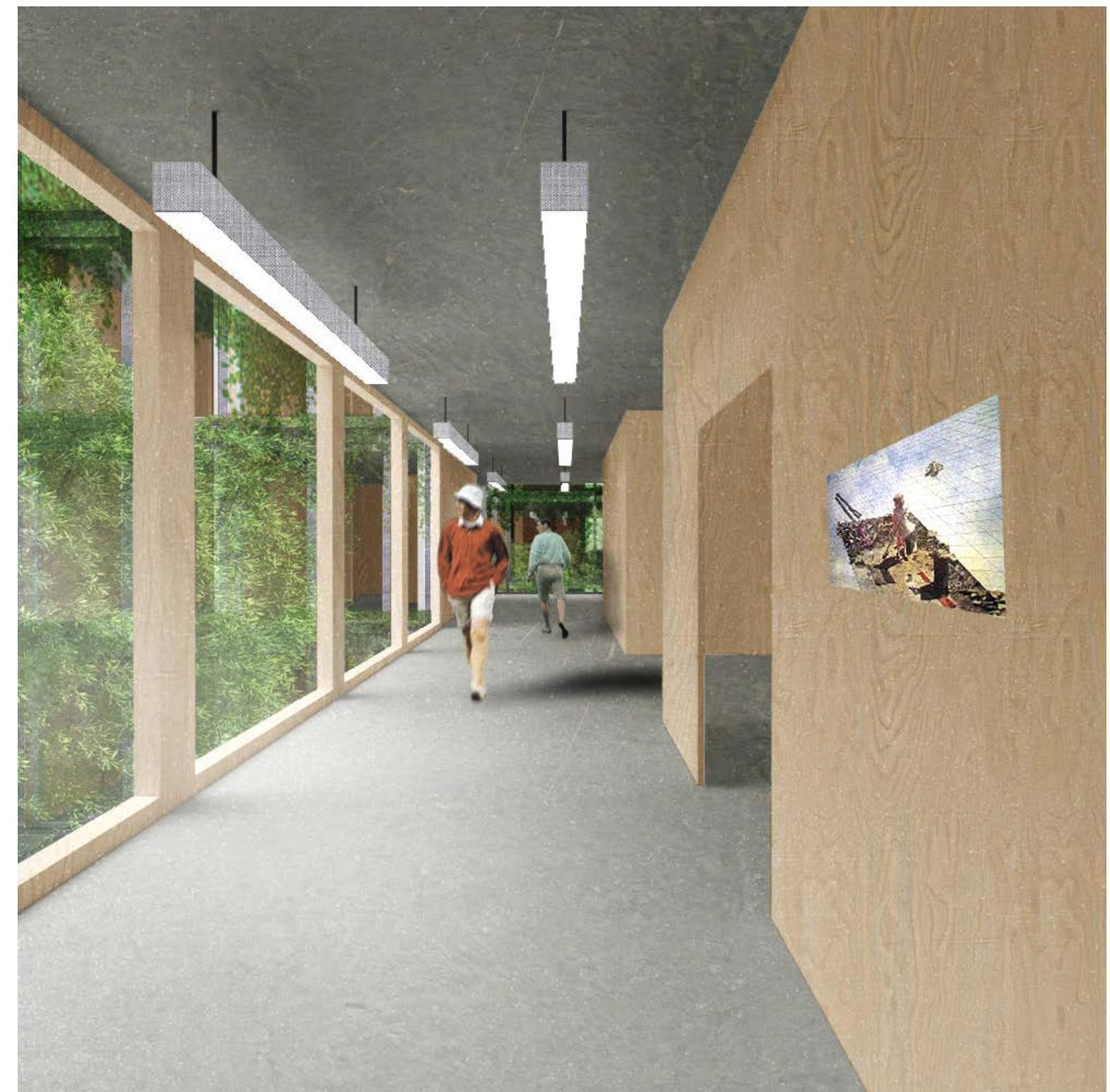


Fig. 8,9
Canyon Render,
Hallway Render



Fig. 10,11
Exterior Render,
Top Floor Render

Dakota Research

<https://www.instagram.com/dakotaresearch/>

Abstract

Dakota Research LLC, founded in 2020, is a visionary platform shaped by creativity, design, and global collaboration, committed to pushing past conventional boundaries and imagining new architectural futures. The studio is built on the belief that bringing together diverse creative minds from around the world can generate truly original ideas, where films, narratives, architectural structures, music, and countless forms of artistic expression converge into a single, evolving practice. Central to this mission is the Global Campus, a hybrid virtual-physical environment that acts as the core of inspiration, a place where ideas meet, take root, and evolve into tangible, experimental work. It operates as a dynamic crucible that dissolves traditional limitations and encourages open exploration, fostering projects that challenge established norms in architecture and design. Defined by a continual pursuit of the avant-garde, Dakota Research embraces risk, experimentation, and unconventional thinking, ensuring every project becomes a testament to the expansive potential of human imagination and the possibility of reimagining the built world.

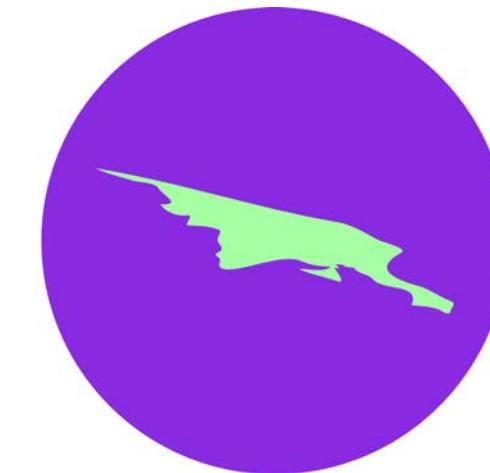
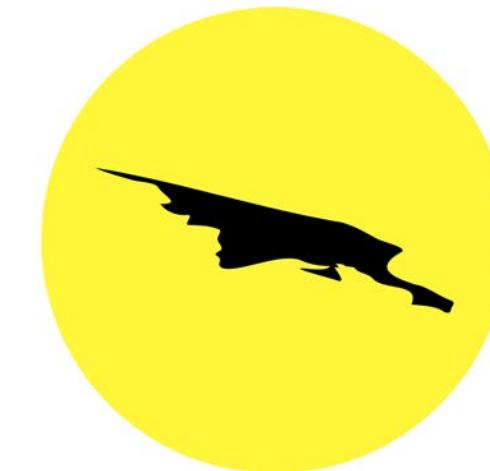
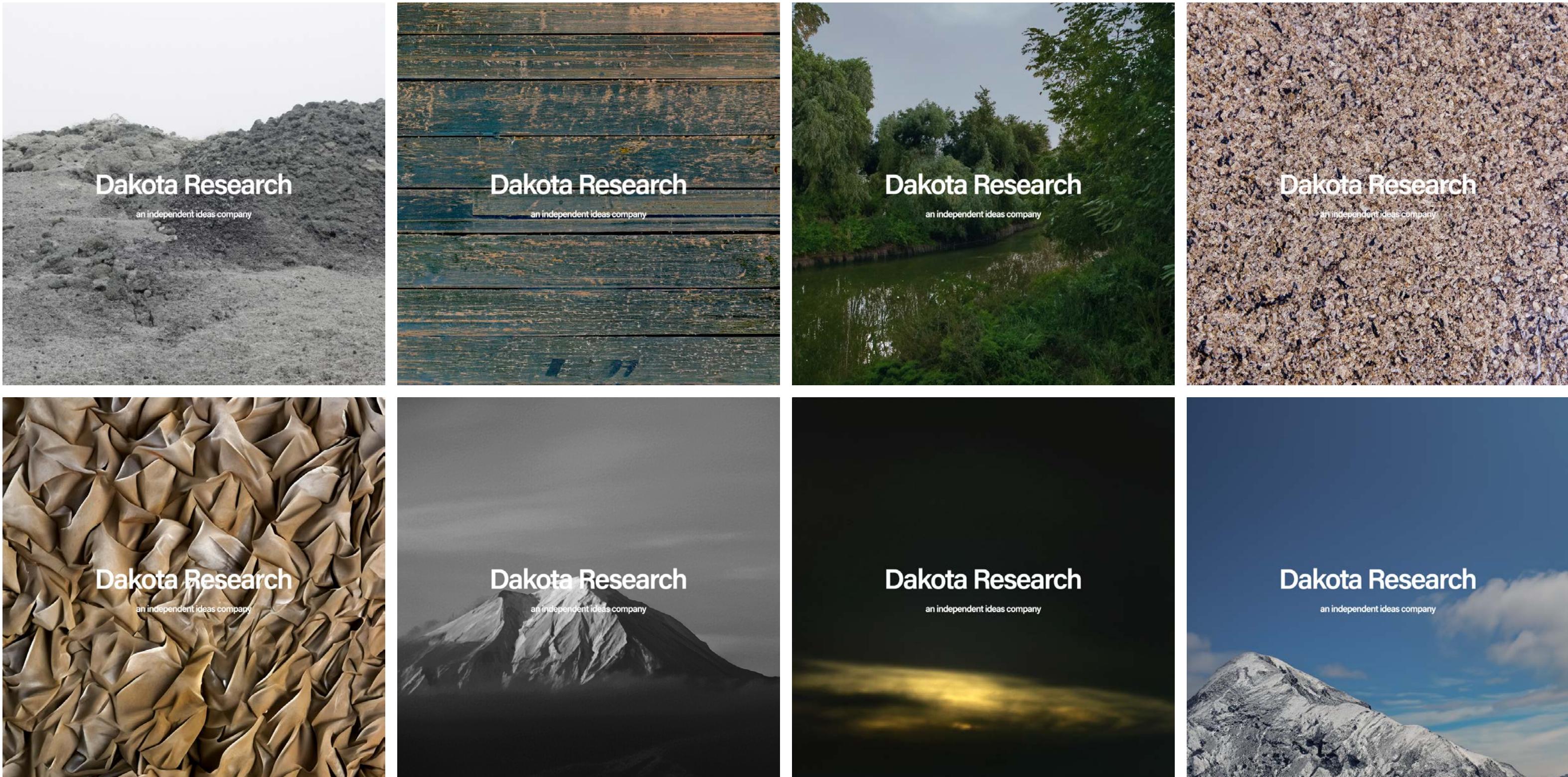


Fig. 1
Logo Color
Design



Marketing Experiments

As artificial intelligence entered its first wave of mainstream creative use, Dakota Research began exploring how these emerging tools could operate alongside graphic design to extend the studio's experimental reach. During this early period, the team developed a series of eight AI-generated visual studies in 2021, each crafted as a speculative marketing experiment designed for virtual audiences. These images tested how algorithmic creativity could amplify brand identity, expand aesthetic language, and open new modes of digital outreach. They represent the studio's first steps into AI-assisted design, embracing the technology not as a replacement for human creativity but as a collaborator capable of pushing visual expression into new, uncharted territory.

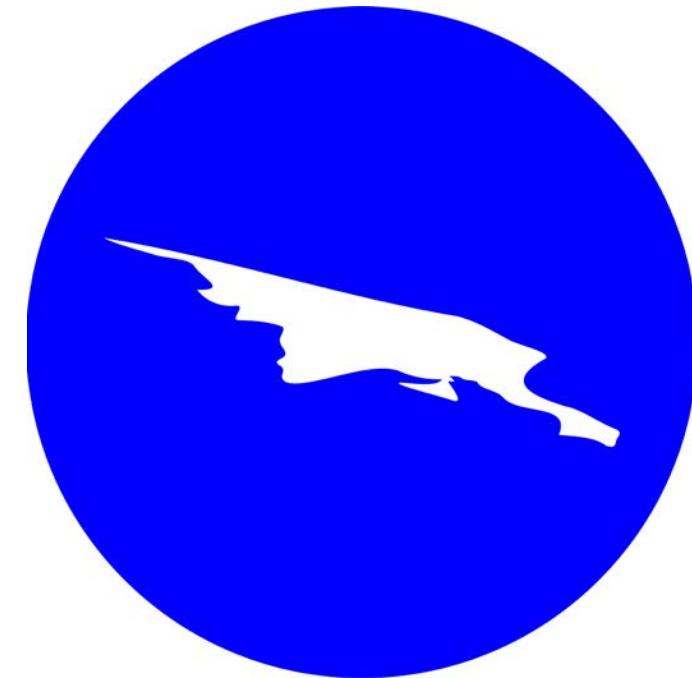
Fig. 2-9
Logo
Experiments



T-Shirt Archive

To explore new directions in graphic design and begin crossing into the world of fashion, Dakota Research started producing a series of conceptual T-shirt mockups. Influenced by designers like Virgil Abloh, these shirts became rapid-fire experiments built from niche references pulled from movies, architecture, and digital media, turning personal obsessions into visual language. Each iteration functioned as both a creative exercise and a motivator, a way to stay engaged with design during moments when momentum was hard to find. These pieces weren't about final products. They were about keeping the practice alive, testing ideas quickly, and developing a distinct graphic sensibility that could eventually translate into wearable design.

Fig. 10-15
Mock T-Shirt
Designs



Logo Progression

Dakota Research has always been symbolic, which is why the creation and continual evolution of its logo is essential to the identity of the studio. The mark reflects both the shifting landscape of contemporary design and the core principles the practice stands on. What began as a simple mountain silhouette gradually transformed into a more abstract symbol, eventually evolving into its current form. This latest iteration blends the essence of a mountain, an island, and a constructed landscape, becoming what we refer to as our virtual location. The logo's evolution mirrors the

Fig. 16-20
Logo
Progression

Contact

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"I could design the candle and spend a lot of time telling you about the candle, or I can just design the room it sits in."

-Virgil Abloh