

# *I DO!*

*Master thesis project in architecture  
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Chalmers University of Technology  
2011-2012*





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# INTRODUCTION

That England's most practised religion, Christianity, is losing importance becomes very clear walking down the streets of London. Here you see churches transformed into apartments, pubs, theatres and restaurants. In total, 1700 churches in England have been transformed or demolished lately<sup>[1]</sup>.

Our master thesis project is about designing a secular building for civil wedding ceremonies in London. This city is truly a melting pot of culture and religion. And, of course, love. In such a diverse society, couples face different problems than in more homogeneous environments. The need of variation regarding wedding venues has captured our interest.

Weddings and marriage have an interesting history. They have been about religion, joy, social patterns and codes. They represented both love and constraint. A way to introduce and welcome someone into a family and tell the world that love is worth celebrating. However, historically, it can be seen as an excluding ceremony meant for heterosexual, healthy people and a way of minimising freedom for women within the marriage. Same sex-marriages are still prohibited in the UK (civil partnerships are allowed).

*Have  
congregations  
played out their  
part?*

Religious wedding ceremonies in England have decreased by twenty percent since 1991.

Nevertheless, civil weddings have increased during the same period. Non-religious people keep getting married. Why is this? Why do atheistic people choose to pursue a ceremony that, historically, is closely linked to religion? Tradition or trend?

*Our master  
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ceremonies*

When churches and other religious places stop being the common place for gathering and socialising, does that mean congregations have played out their role? Might there be an even bigger need for context, when living in a busy city where your very neighbours can be strangers?

*Can a place  
feel grand  
while keeping  
a human  
scale?*

The modern day equivalent to the congregation you find in pubs and sports clubs. Can we add something new to the table?

We are interested in the architectural methods that have been used throughout history when designing grand spaces. How have light, scale, colour, shape and material been used to set a mood? Can a place feel grand and important while keeping a

*Non-religious  
people keep  
getting married.  
Why is this?*

human scale? Architecturally we wish to design a building with a timeless, yet contemporary, expression. We try to distance ourselves from the stereotypical sacral, yet keep the dignified and somewhat grand feeling in our architecture.

We explore the possibilities and limitations that come with dealing with an infill, something that is closely linked to the British tradition of building narrow and high.

With our master thesis we create a new building type that might not exist in London. We see a chance to design a place that is joyful, beautiful and promotes equality and diversity. A building that adds not only to the site, but to the community and to a discussion regarding the need for this kind of building.

## 2 CLERKENWELL RD

*- our little corner of London*

We have chosen to work with an infill site, located in Clerkenwell, Islington. A north-eastern part of central London with a well-functioning mix of offices, restaurants and homes. Nearby is the largest arts centre in Europe, the Barbican Centre, offering well-known brutalist architecture. The site is located 17 minutes walk north of St Paul's cathedral.

Our site faces three streets, but taking the roof scape into account, we consider our building four-sided. A distinctive element of the site is a Victorian corner pub, "The Hat and Feathers", that we incorporate into our design. Surrounded by five-story buildings, the site opens up towards a big junction. The site area is 1164 m<sup>2</sup>.

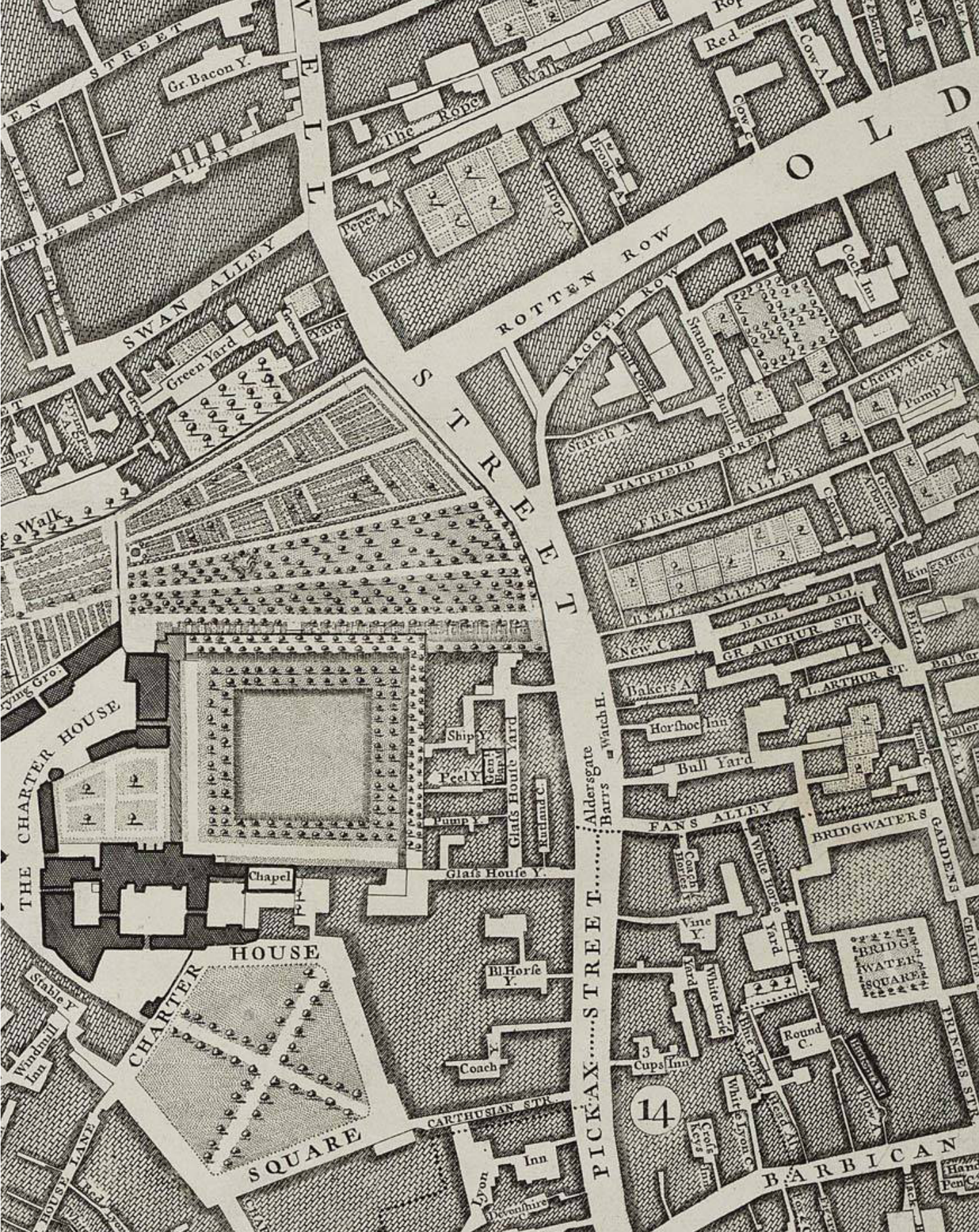




In the end of 18th century, half of the population of Clerkenwell depended on the watch making industry. The area mainly consisted of small factories and housing. Workers often lived above their factory. Today is Clerkenwell still a crafts manufacturing area. Many architects and designers have studios in here and the watchmaking industry is still ongoing.

The area was heavily damaged during the second world war due to bombings. Most buildings were destroyed beyond repair. However, the Hat and Feather pub stood strong and is now listed.

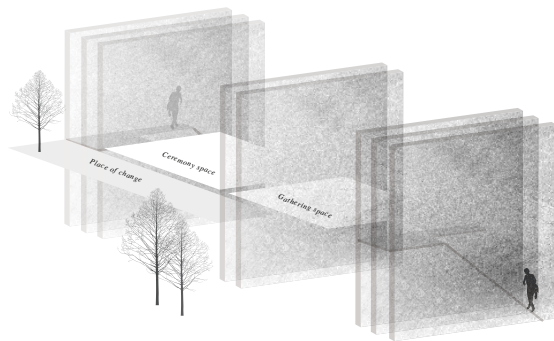




# NARROW ALLEYS AND OPEN FIELDS

- *an introduction*

## *Sequence*



We highlight the importance of sequence. Our design offers rich and varied experiences as you move through the building. We use layers (walls) to direct this sequence, with varying intensity and outlooks as a result.

The sequence is of equal significance as the final goal.

## *Symmetry vs field*



The sequence alters between axial symmetry (directed movement) and "field" (free movement).

## *Voids*



The many alleys in London break the dense cityscape into sections. Their spatial proportions, only wide enough for a human, give a feeling of compression with mass on both sides. They also offer a specific acoustic experience; hearing the echoes of your own footsteps. Above all, there is a sense of mystery- walking down the alley you never know what to find on the other side.

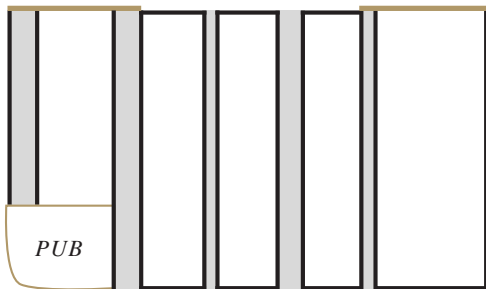
## *Mass*



Our site approach can be compared to “terraced houses”, following the urban morphology of the area.

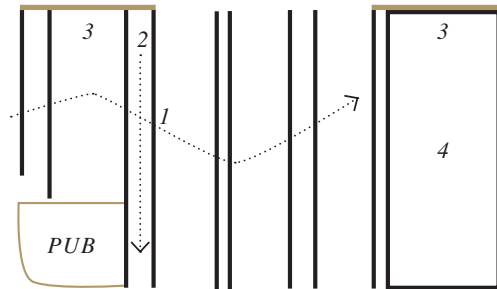
Our building can be considered a compressed block.

### *Mass vs void*



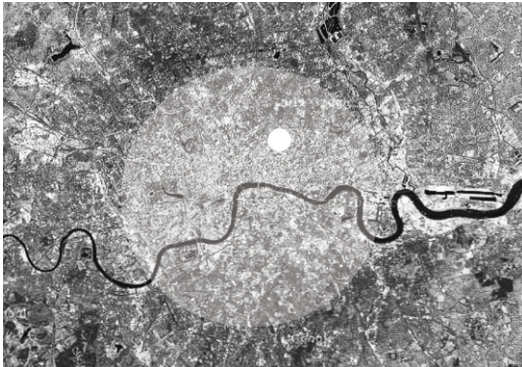
Our building is made up of mass (white) and voids (grey). All communication takes place in void spaces.

### *Through and along walls*



1. Walk through walls in a “free” way.  
The more layers you walk through, the further you move away from the city noise.
2. Processional movement in voids.
3. Existing brick walls are retained and exposed inside the new block.
4. The main ceremony space is located in “The Bookend”. This volume is made up by “packed walls”. We play with scale by additionally breaking down the walls into smaller elements - furniture.

### *Why London?*



London is a truly multicultural city. More than 270 nationalities make up the populaion of the city. It is a city full of diversity, contradictions - and love.

As a result of such a diverse society, couples face other problems than in more homogeneous enviroments. The need of variation regarding wedding venues has captured our interest.

### *Incorporating history*

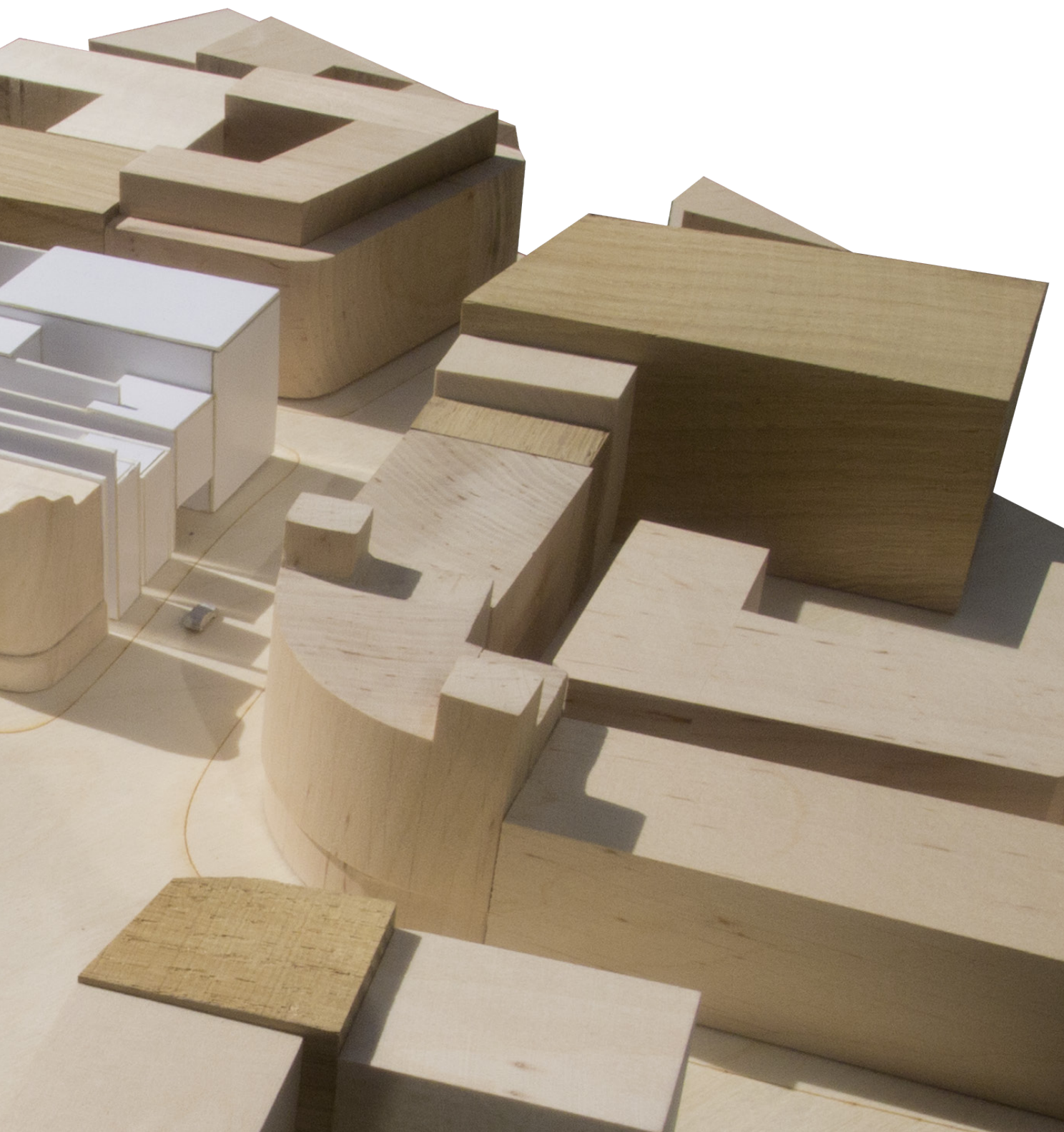


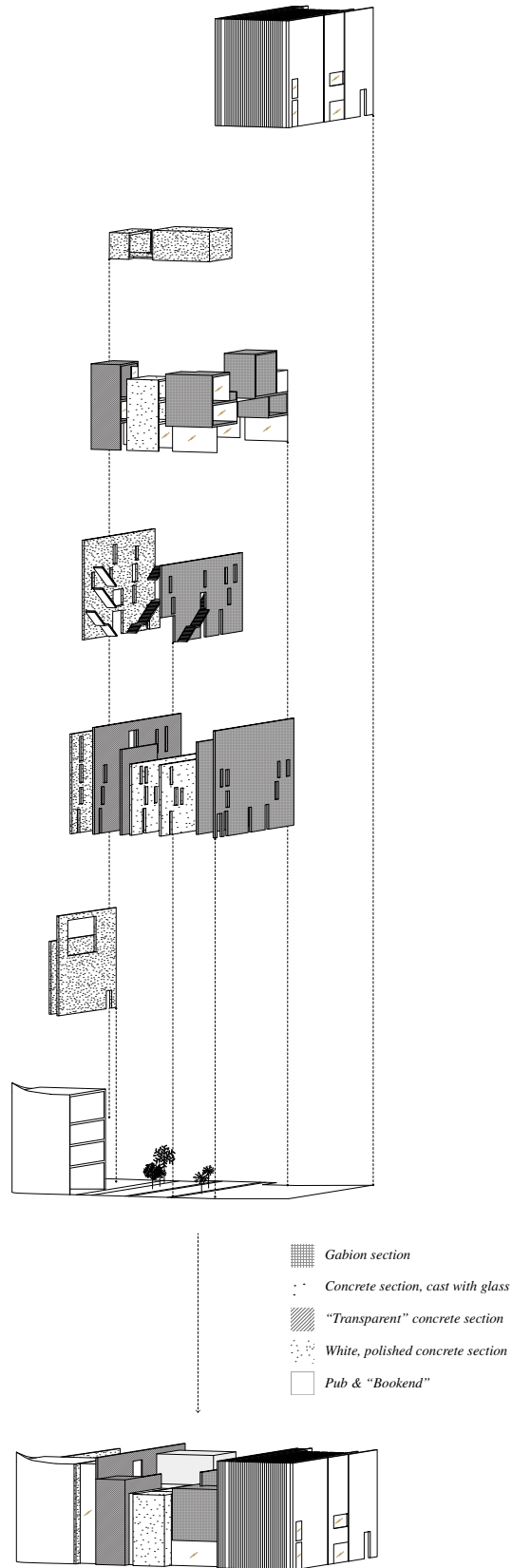
The rich history of the area can be read in the brick walls of our site. By incorporating them as important feautures of our design, we blend old with new.

# SITE PLAN

- *the compressed block*







# SEQUENCE IN SECTIONS

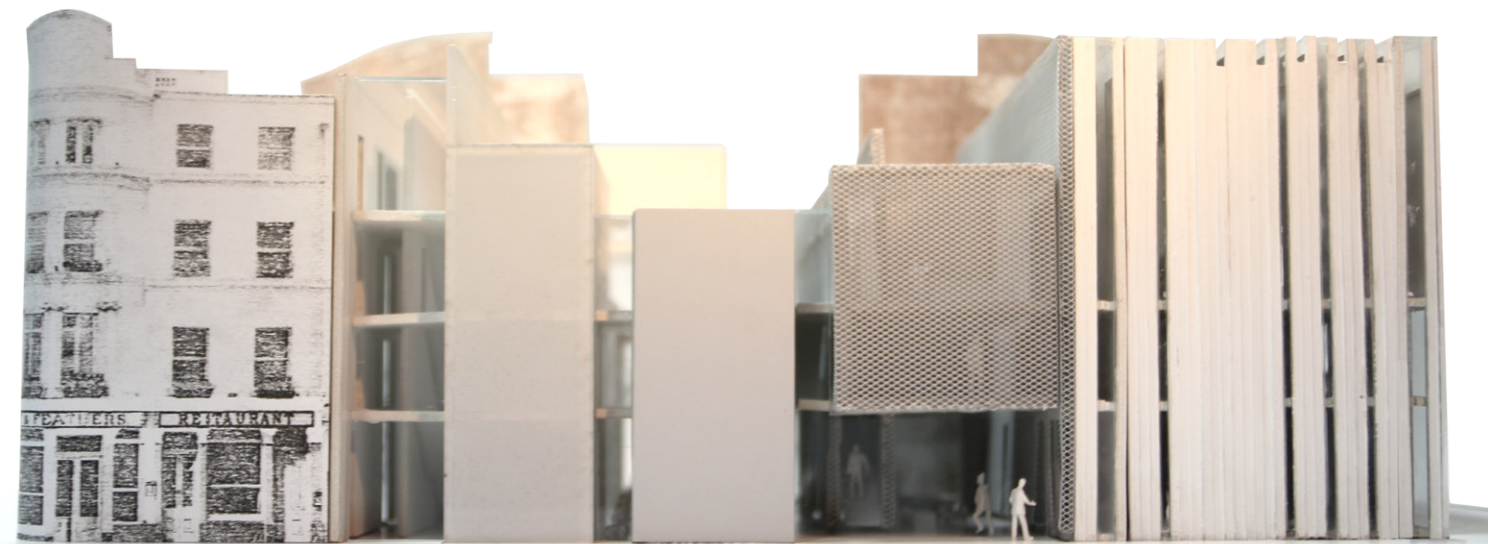
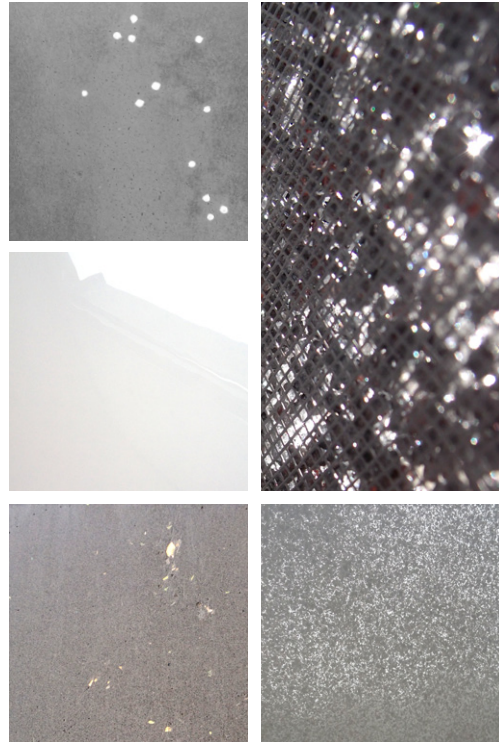
*- material properties*

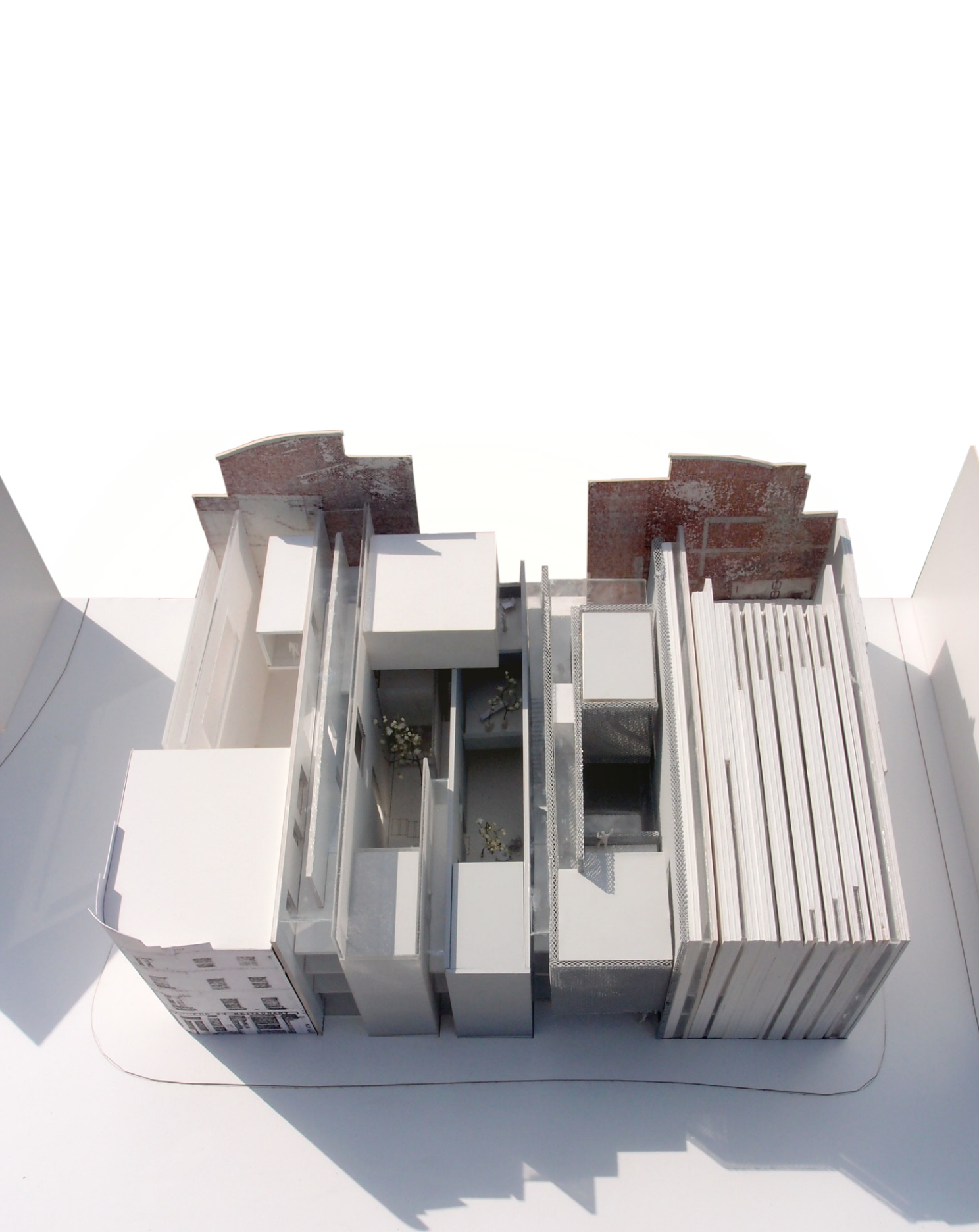
We consider our building to be a compressed block. We work with different materials to create distinct “sections” of the building and aid orientation. The sections can be compared to terraced houses, following the urban morphology of the area.

We have cast concrete samples describing our ideas. One is cast with glass pieces, breaking up the density of the material and letting in light. Another is cast with shiny pieces, generating reflections.

Our gabion section holds a mix of crushed concrete and glass, again to offer some transparency. We break up the concrete with material of different character.

We call the white volume, to the far right in the model picture, The Bookend since it finish our block. This volume is made up of “packed walls”. We see The Bookend as a compression of our block.







# COME ON IN

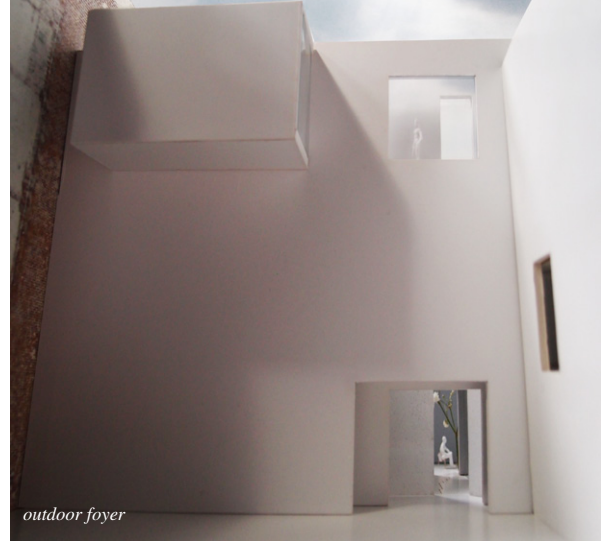
*- once a lifetime and once a week*

The main entrance to our building is an outdoor foyer, a surprising space just one step away from the busy street. It is a space to feel sheltered and an attempt to offer a break from the big city out there.

Walking further into the space, you perceive the depth of the block, through the layers of walls you see restaurant visitors enjoying their meal in the courtyard.

The first void space is the building envelope and this is where you find the stairs. The ceremony- and the public house sequences are separated from each other, making it easier to find the way.

When arriving at the right floor, you turn a corner, leave the void and walk into mass. The different characters of the "sections" are glimpsed on the horizon, giving depth and sense of orientation. The spaces alter in materiality and height with void spaces breaking through. You have contact with the courtyards and the other side of the section you are in.



*outdoor foyer*



*communication void*



*through walls*



courtyard from above

# THE PUBLIC HOUSE

## - a modern day congregation

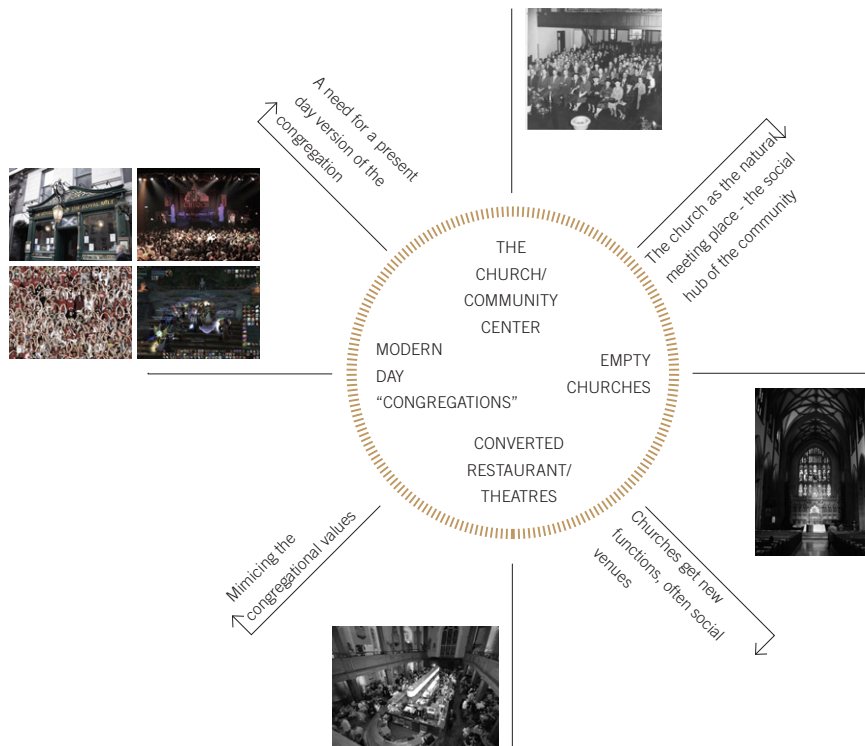
Religious congregations used to be a place for prayers and serious matters. However they were also somewhere to chat about the local gossip, for children to play and where parties could be held. From knitting to education, from confessions to cookies. A social safety net for all stages in life.

Many churches in London have been converted into other social functions such as restaurants, pubs and cinemas. One can even find clubs and stores that mimic a church, despite having no religious connection whatsoever. Why is this?

Living a busy, secular city life we think people still need somewhere to turn. A place, outside of their family, where they feel like a part of a community, can chat about everyday reflections and highlight joyful events.

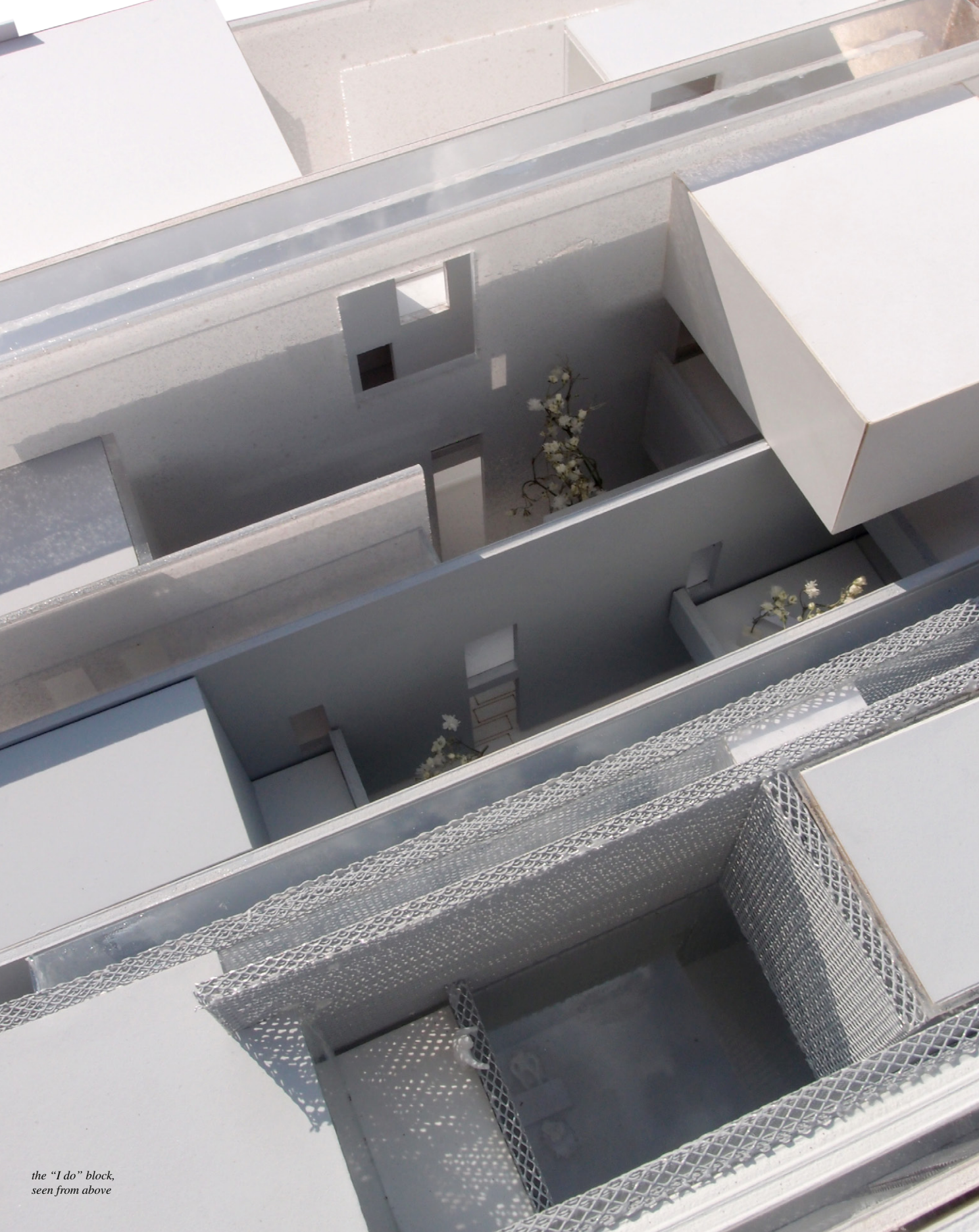
By incorporating functions such as a newspaper library, activity rooms and a rentable party space into our program, we hope to bring people living in the area closer together. We want our master thesis building to serve as a place to stage a wedding, as well as a place to visit for weekly book club meetings.

A place you visit once a lifetime - and once a week.





*courtyard - public house*



*the "I do" block,  
seen from above*



*newspaper library*



*activity room, courtyard and pub*



*outdoor foyer*

# CEREMONY SPACES

- *where to say "I do"*

The "I Do" building is designed to suit many kinds of wedding ceremonies. For some couples, a civil ceremony is the only option and/or a compromise. For others it is the preferred choice. A ceremony can be a five-minute event with only the couple, a wedding official and witnesses present - or you invite all your family and friends. We want to make every ceremony feel equally dignified.

While distancing ourselves from the typical sacral we keep the somewhat grand feeling in our architecture, while retaining a human scale. People of all beliefs should feel welcome and at home.

By offering ceremony spaces of varied scale and spatial qualities we emphasise that weddings come in many shapes and sizes. Each ceremony space can be used in different ways, according to the axial or field principle (processional or in a more fluid way). We always place the couple in the middle instead of at an altar. This makes family and friends a bigger part of the ceremony instead of acting an audience. We incorporate light as an important factor of each ceremony space.

Whatever couples reasons to marry, may it be strictly legal or two hearts bursting with love, they should feel equally welcome here.



*large ceremony space*



*elevated courtyard, passed on  
your way to the ceremony spaces*





*large ceremony space*



*large ceremony space*

This is the main ceremony space. The ceiling and walls vary in height and depth to carefully sift through light. The uneven ceiling improves the acoustics by breaking up echoes.

The atmosphere of the space changes during the day. Sometimes beams of light extend over the floor, at other hours soft light bounces from the ceiling.

We have used the walls to create divisions in the space and played with scale by breaking them down to smaller elements - furniture.

This ceremony space can be used in a processional or more fluid way, offering different ways to enter and leave the room.



*outdoor ceremony/gathering space*

The outdoor ceremony space can be used alone or as an extension of the main ceremony space. It opens up towards one of the existing brick walls. Bringing the ceremony out into the light of day, the city functions as an intensifier of the moment, but in a muted fashion.

On the the third floor you find the suspended ceremony space.

This room is shaped to let in light and reflections from below. Archiving different kinds of atmospheric light has been a major factor in how we have shaped the ceremony spaces.



This is the more intimate ceremony space, with light coming through the gabion, creating reflections on the ceiling and floor. The walls surrounding this room holds a higher proportion of glass in the gabions.



# THE FIRST AND LAST

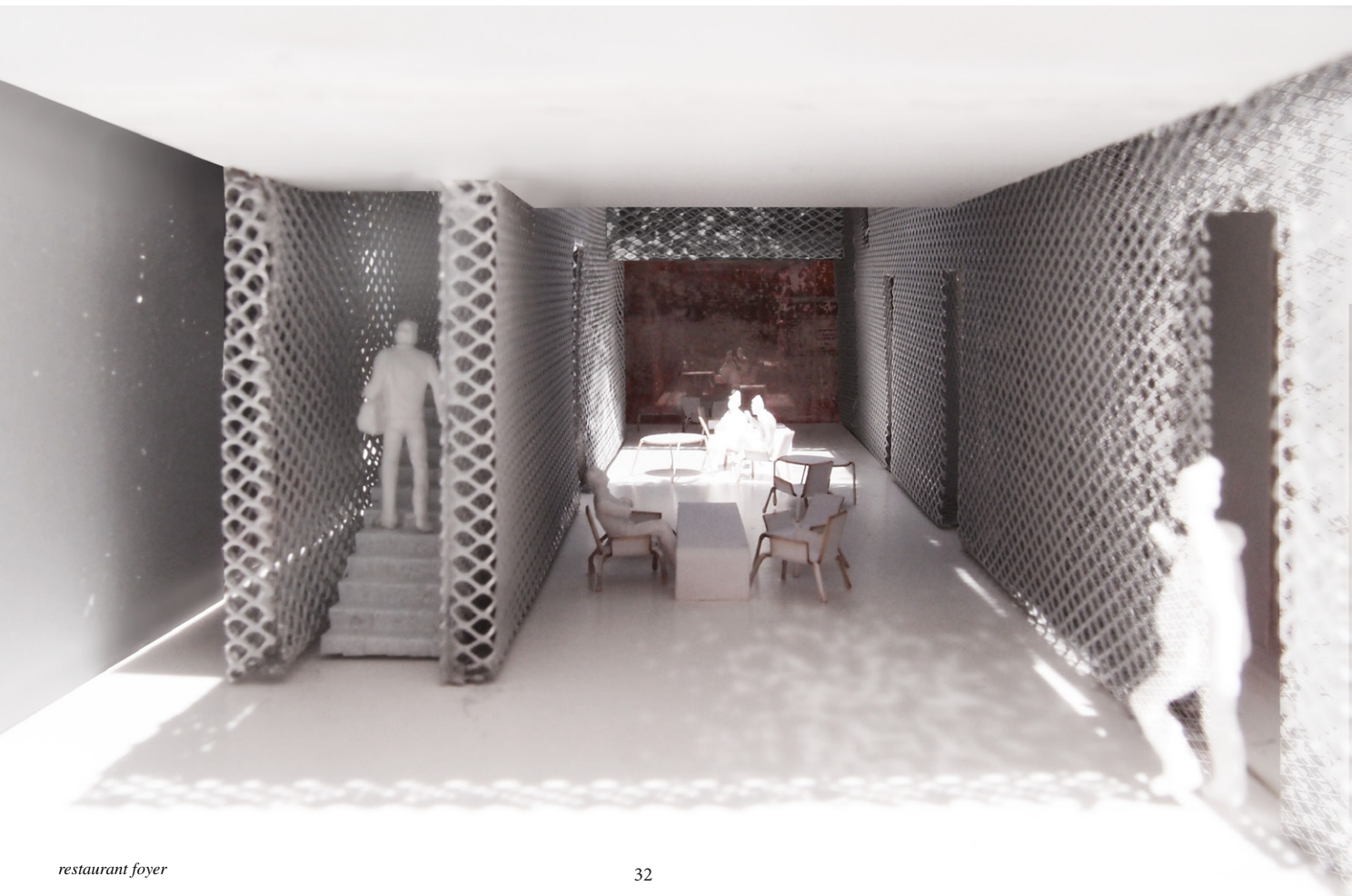
- *where to wine and dine*

The restaurant functions as a social hub and financial generator on the site. Blended together with the pub, the restaurant is suitable for visits of different characters. While attracting local professionals for after work drinks and offering Public House visitors a place to finish their visit with a meal, it can also, in part or in full, be booked to host “I Do” wedding receptions.

The division of the entrance floor is spatially varied. You can choose whether you want to enjoy your meal outside, from a comfortable chair facing the street, in the winter garden or in

a more private void space. These rooms, just as much as the ceremony spaces, vary in size, light and materiality.

The restaurant, rentable studio space and pub also function as financial support, generating income to run The Public House. The central location provides these functions with good business opportunities and fit the vibe of the area.





*void space - restaurant*



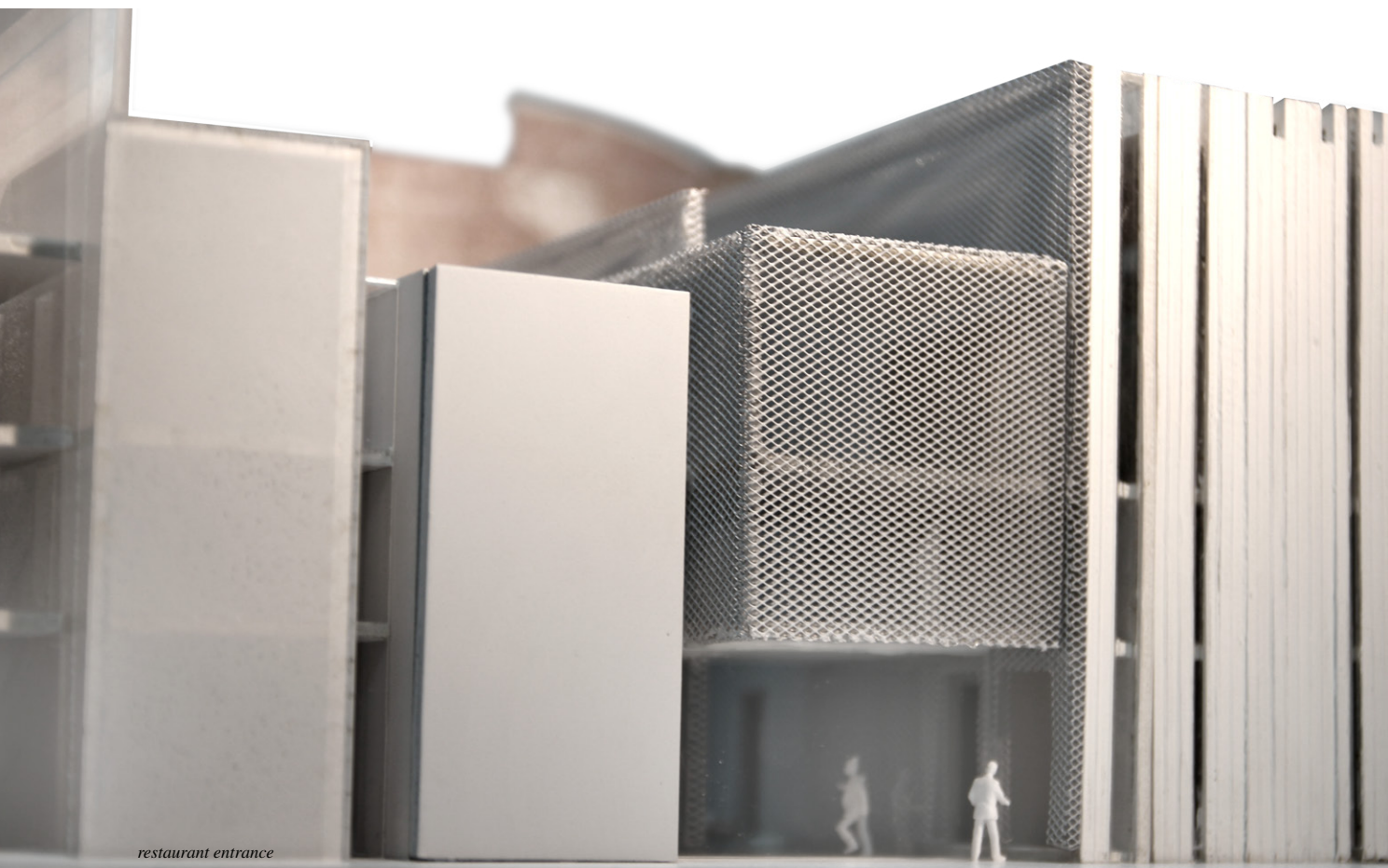
*night perspective - courtyard*



*restaurant - Bookend*



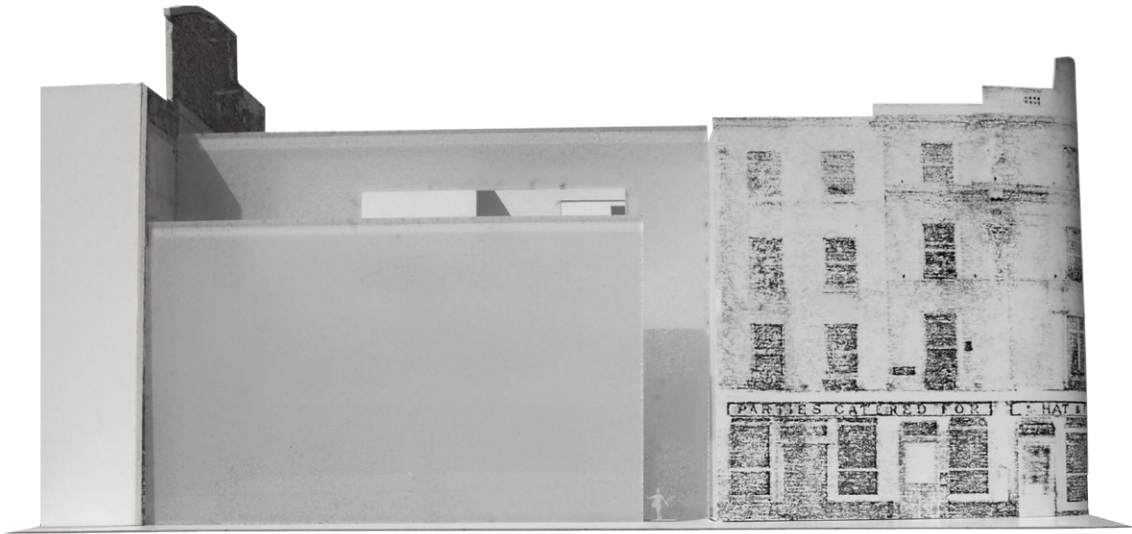
*courtyard*



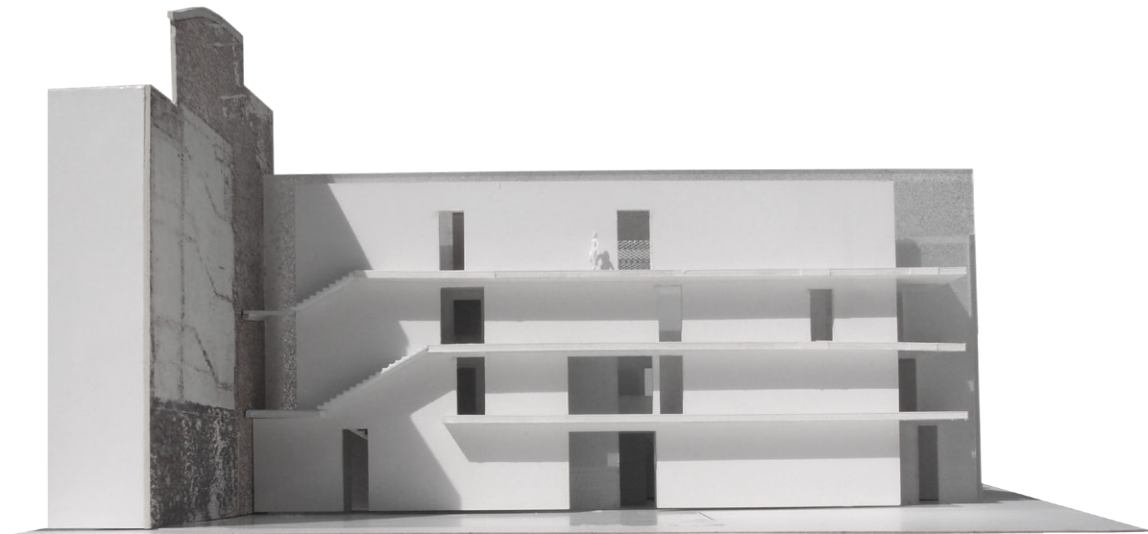
*restaurant entrance*

# SECTION BY SECTION

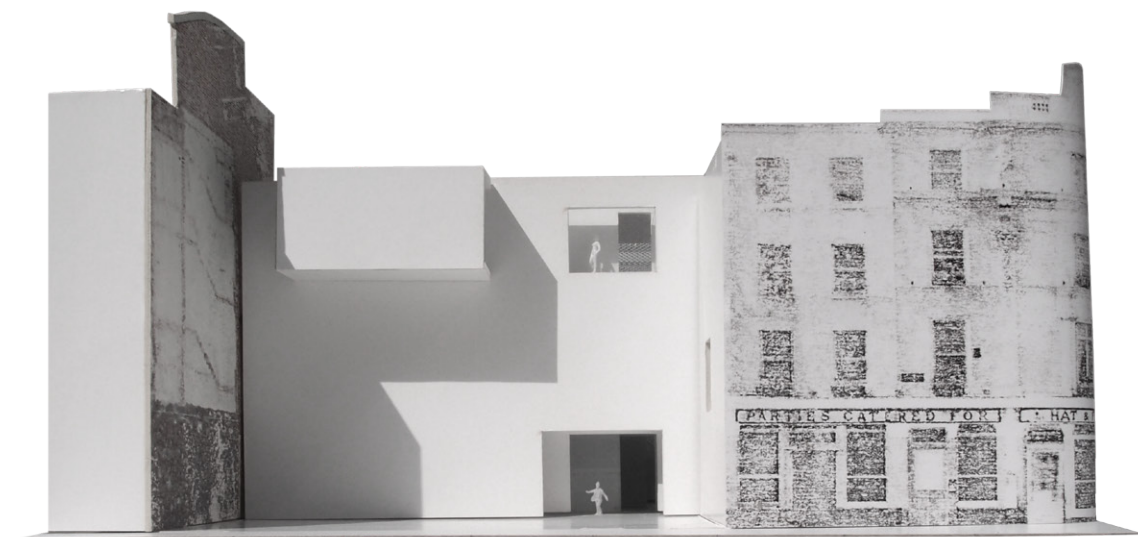
- from entrance to "Bookend"



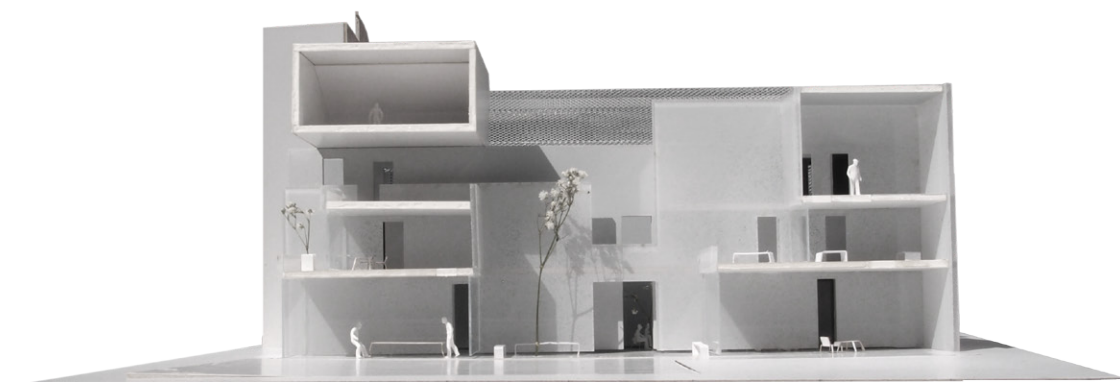
1 Entrance



3 Communication



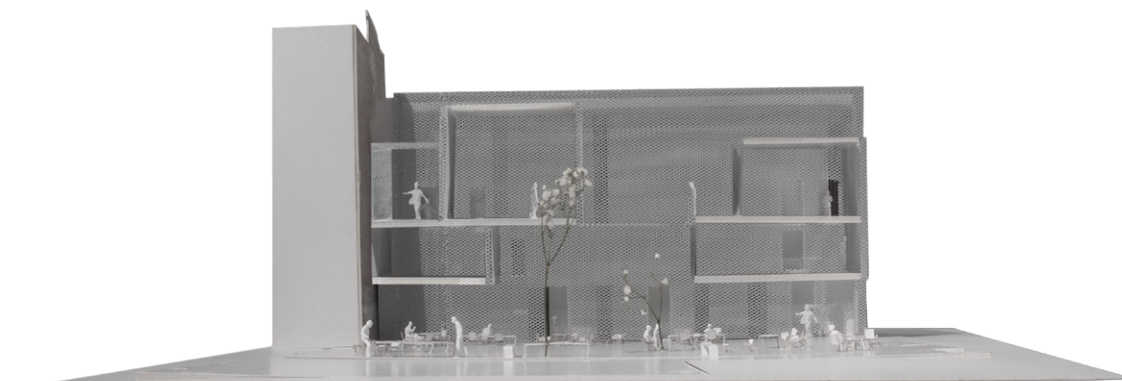
2 *Outdoor foyer*



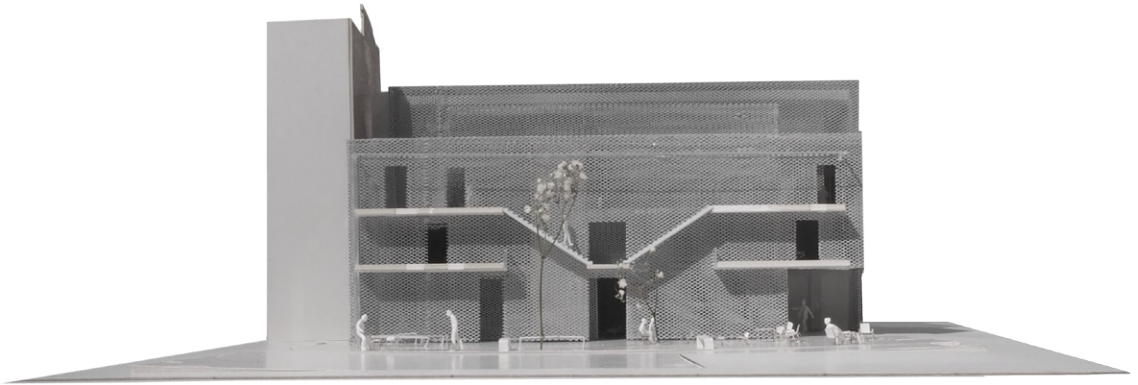
4 *Semi transparent section*



5 *Concrete section, cast with glass*



7 *Gabion section*



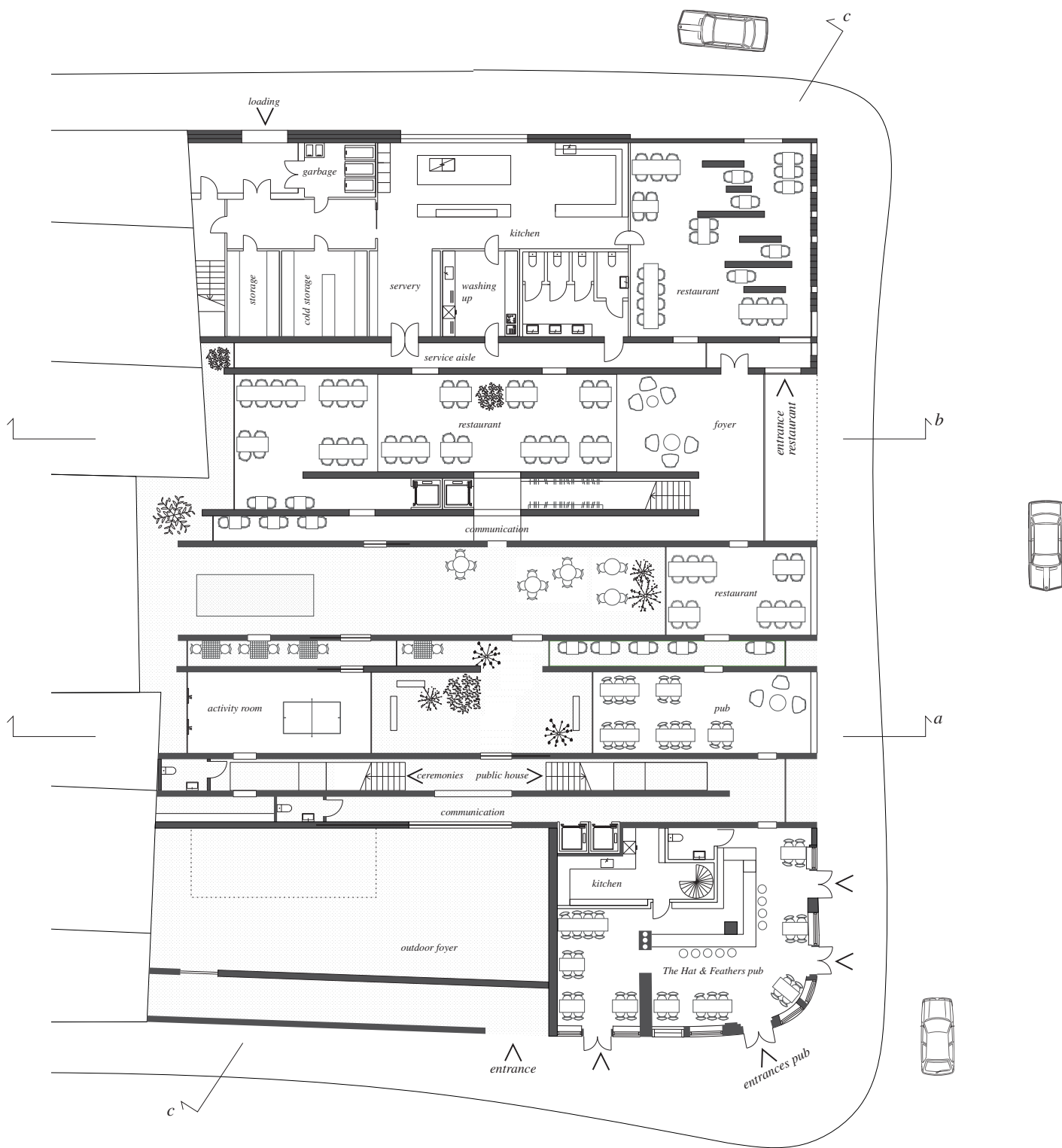
6 *Communication*

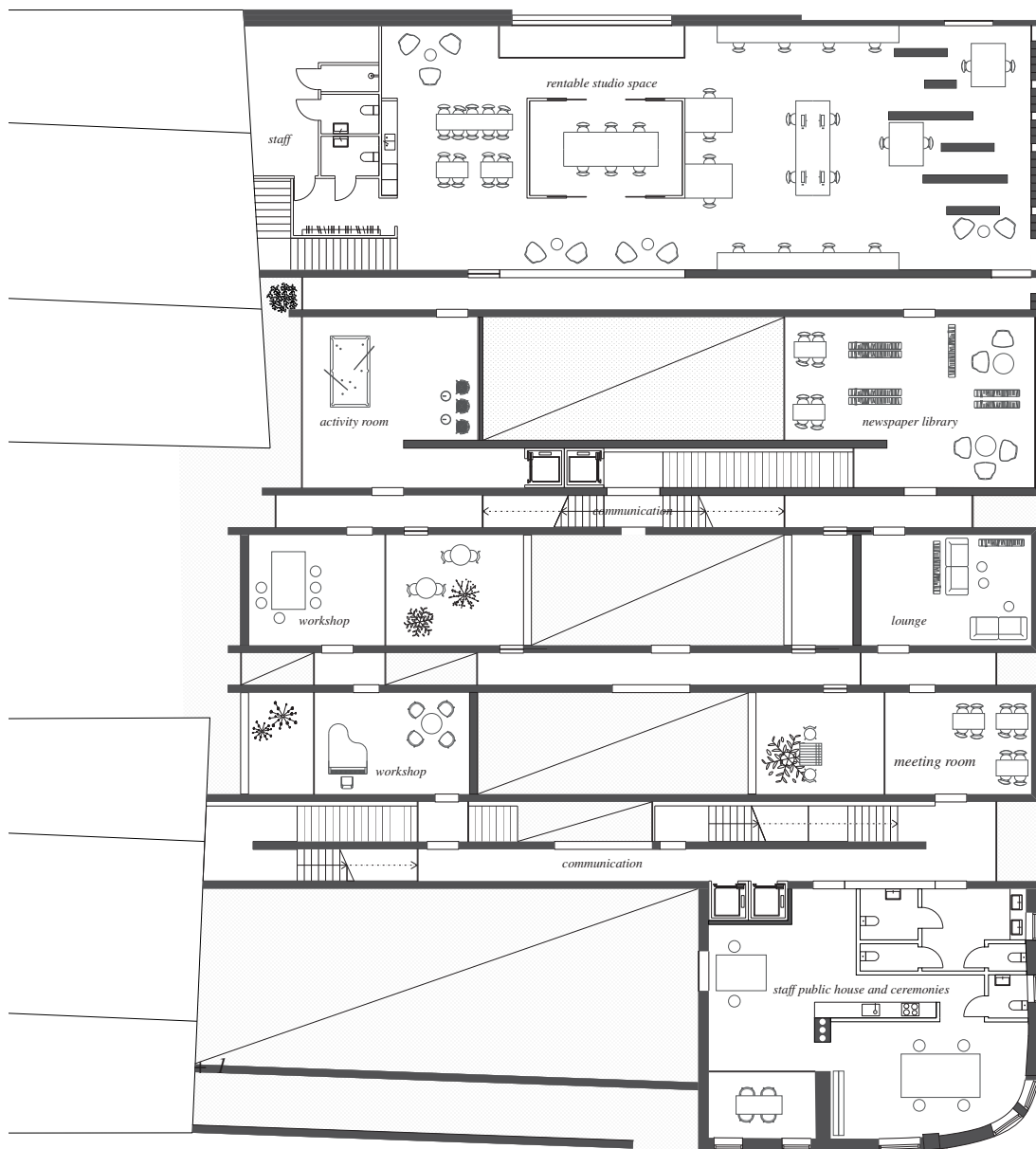


8 *Bookend section*

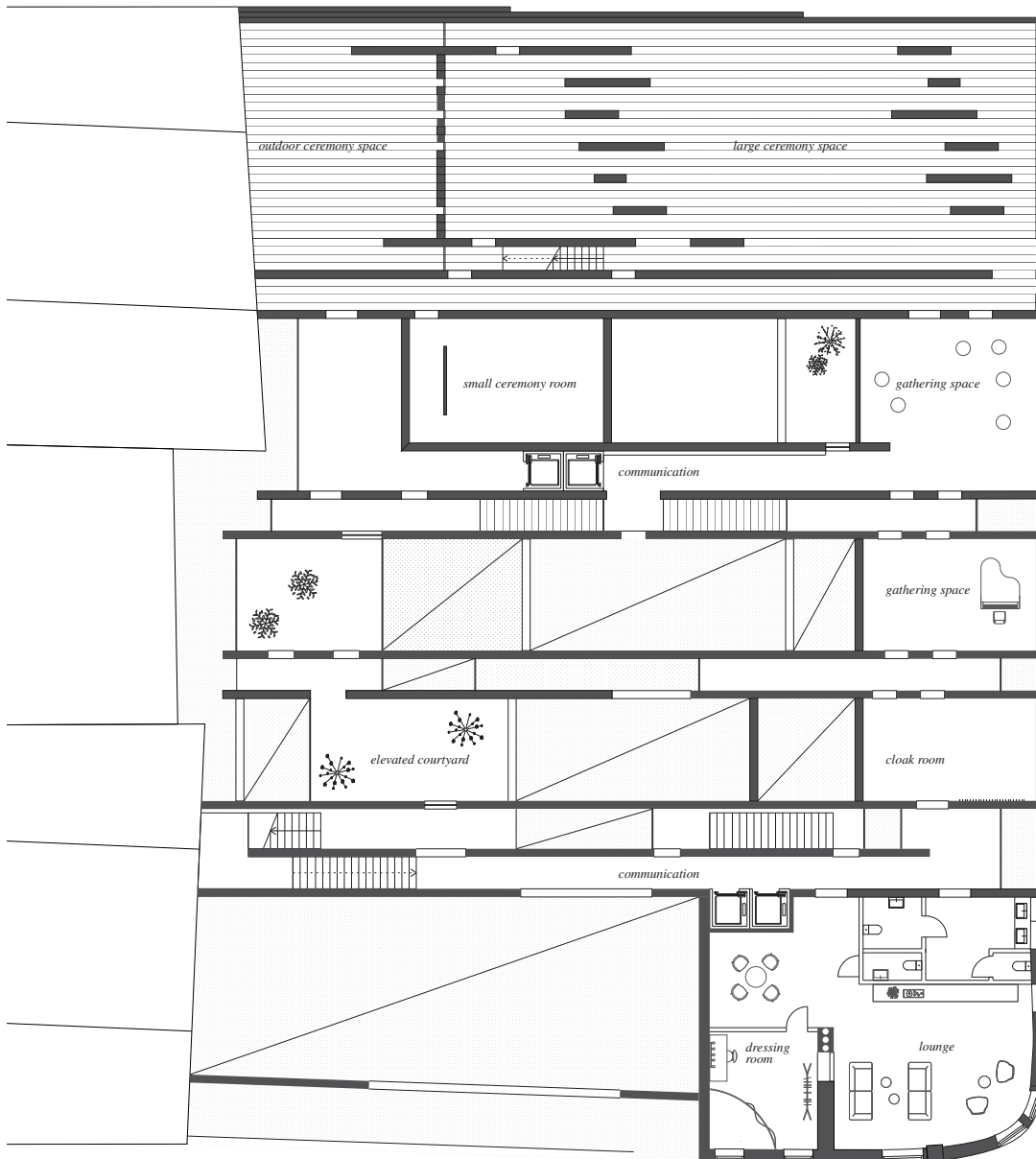
# FLOOR BY FLOOR

- mass and void in scale

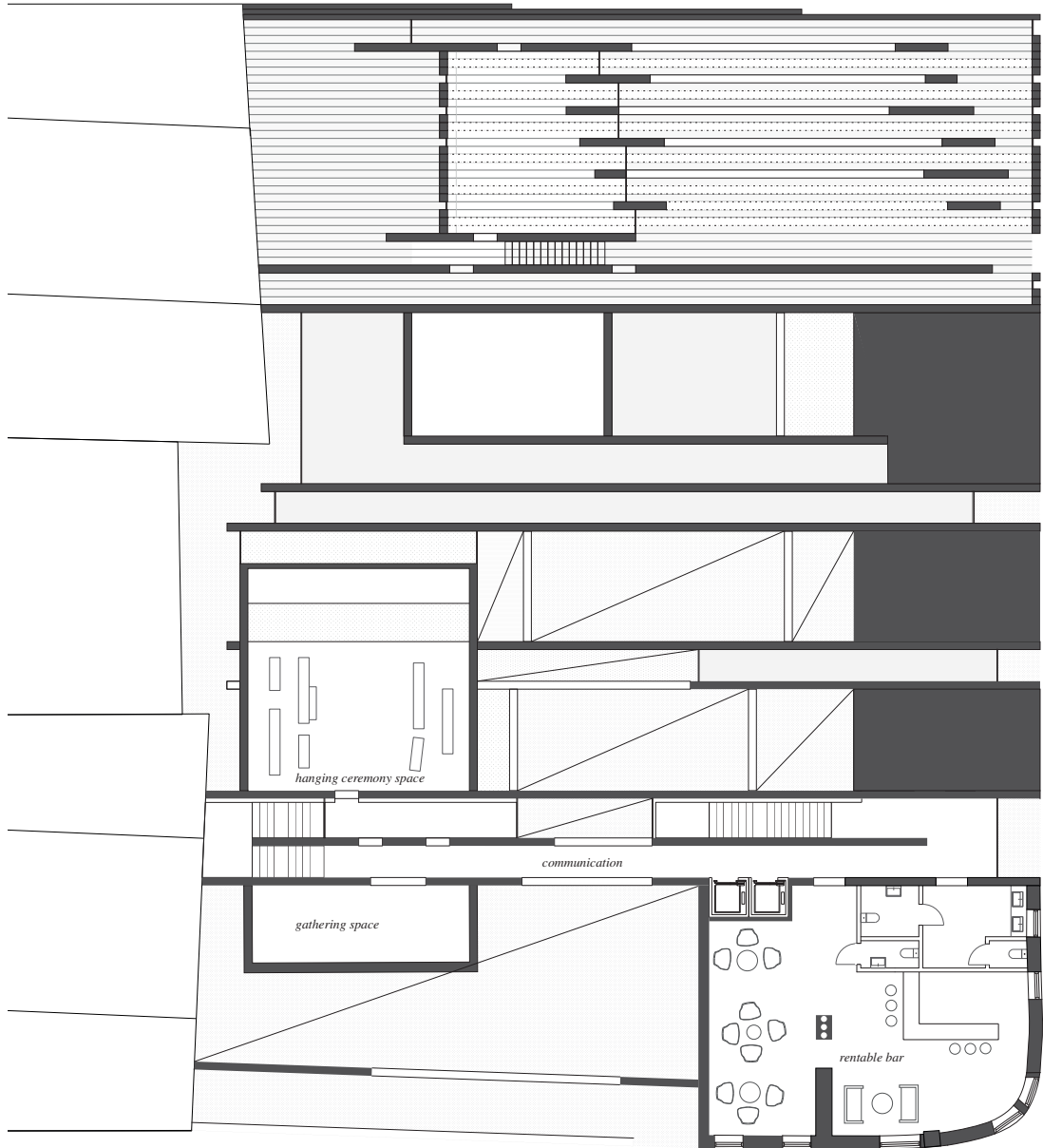




+ 1



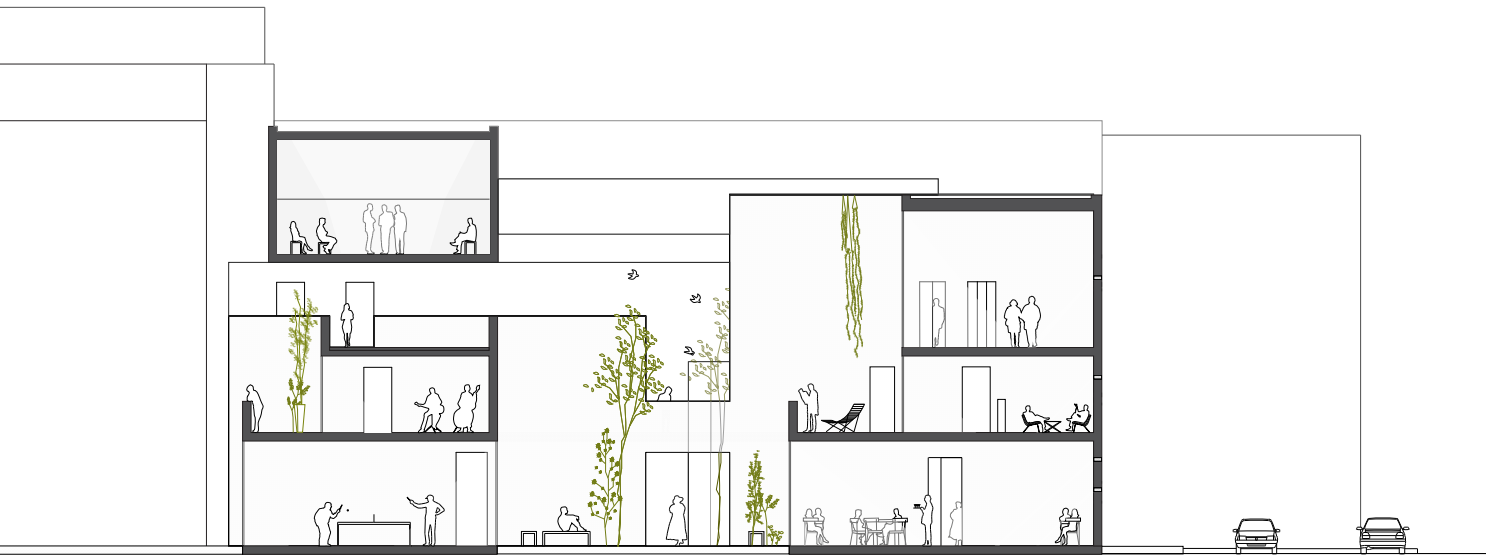
+ 2



+ 3

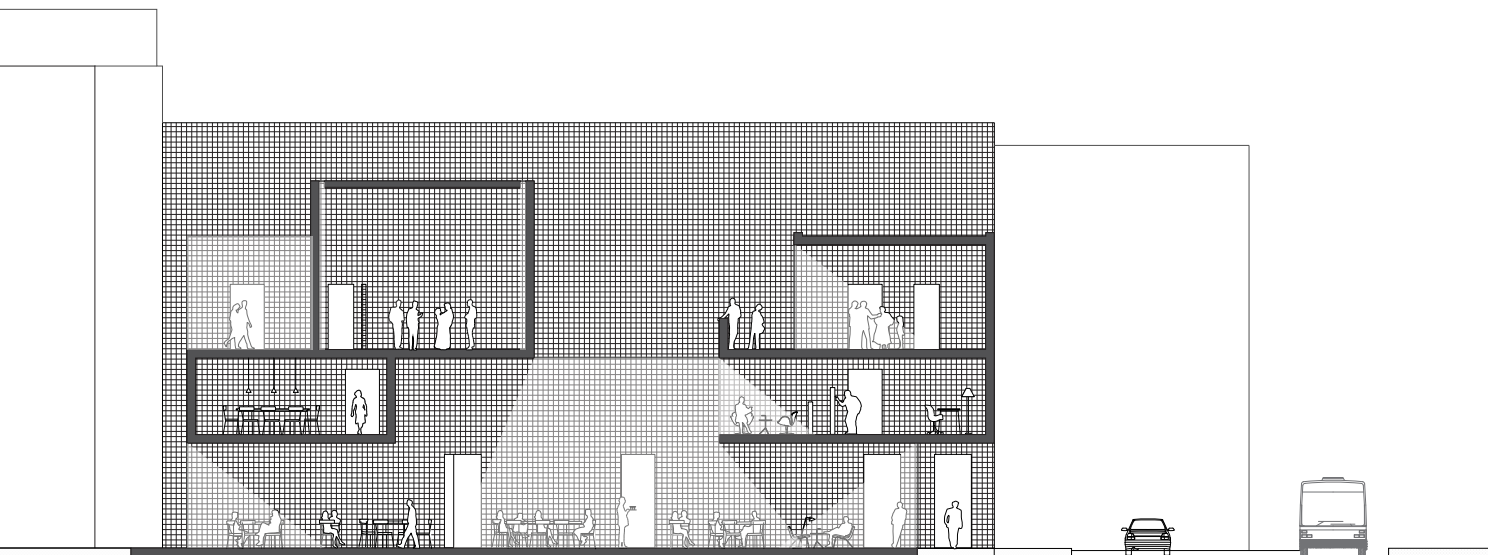
# TOWARDS AND THROUGH

- *the face to the city*

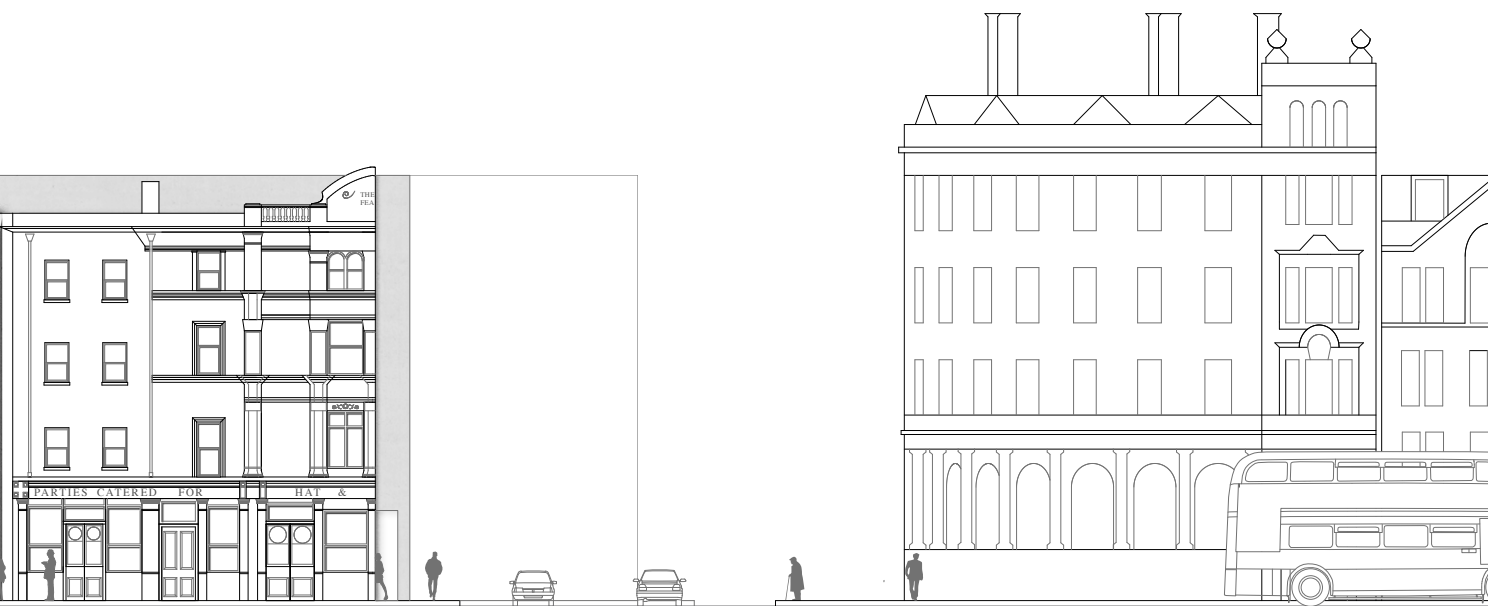


*section a-a*

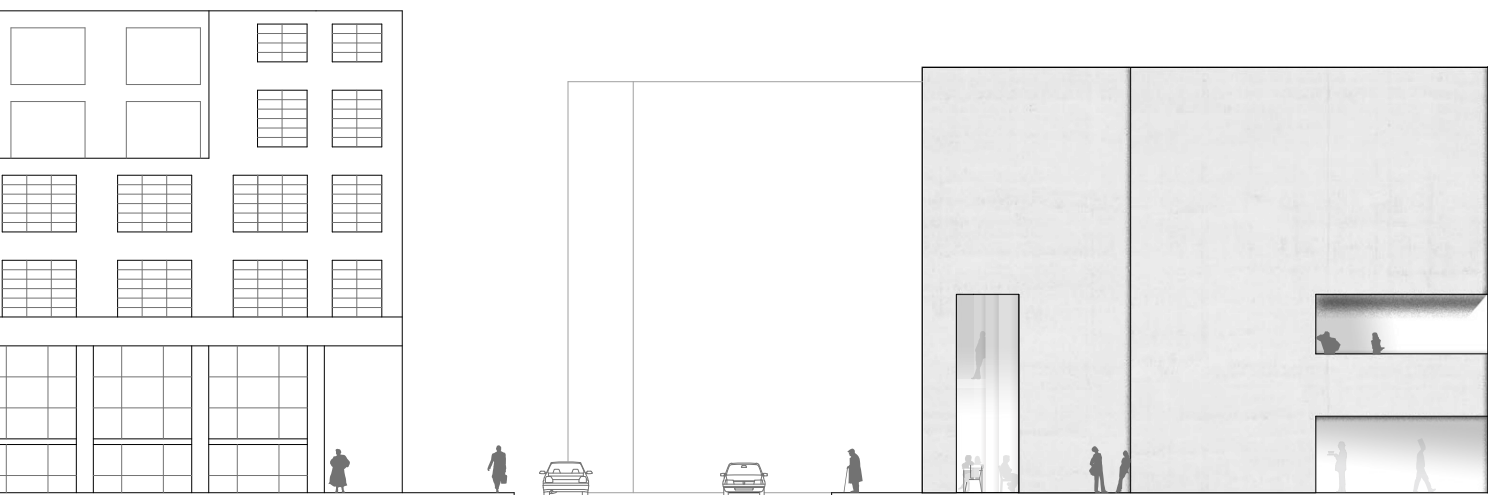




*section b-b*

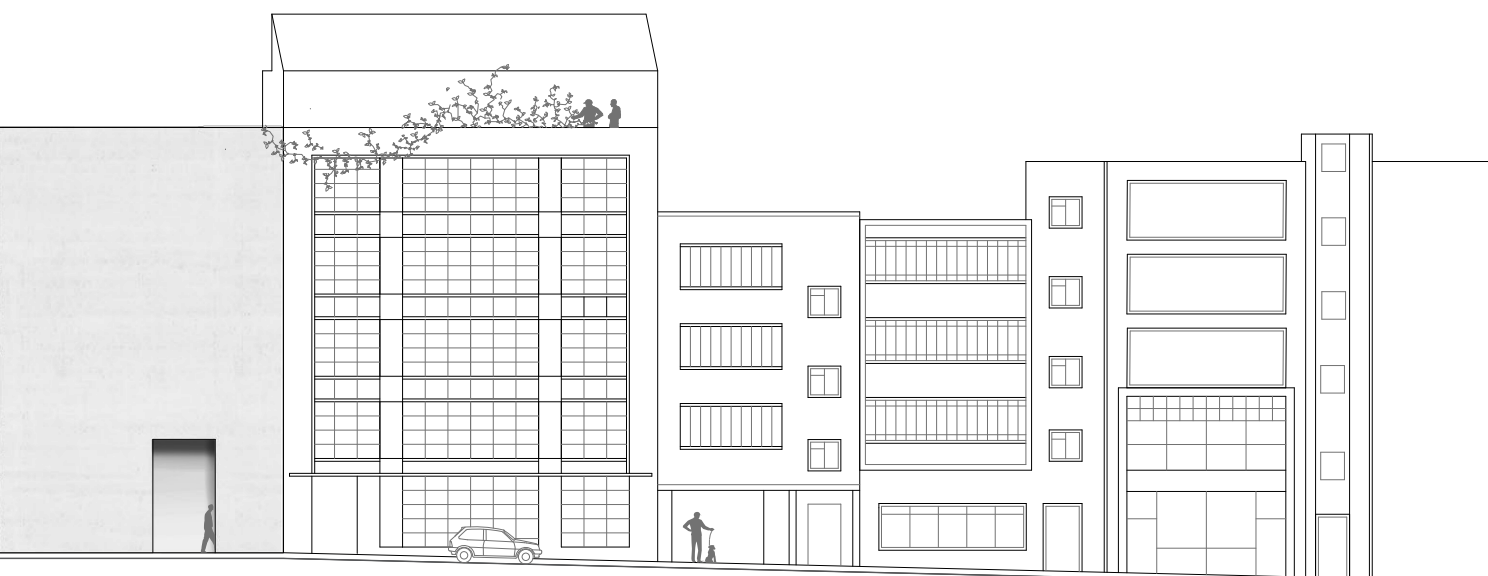


*facade Clerkenwell Rd 1:300*

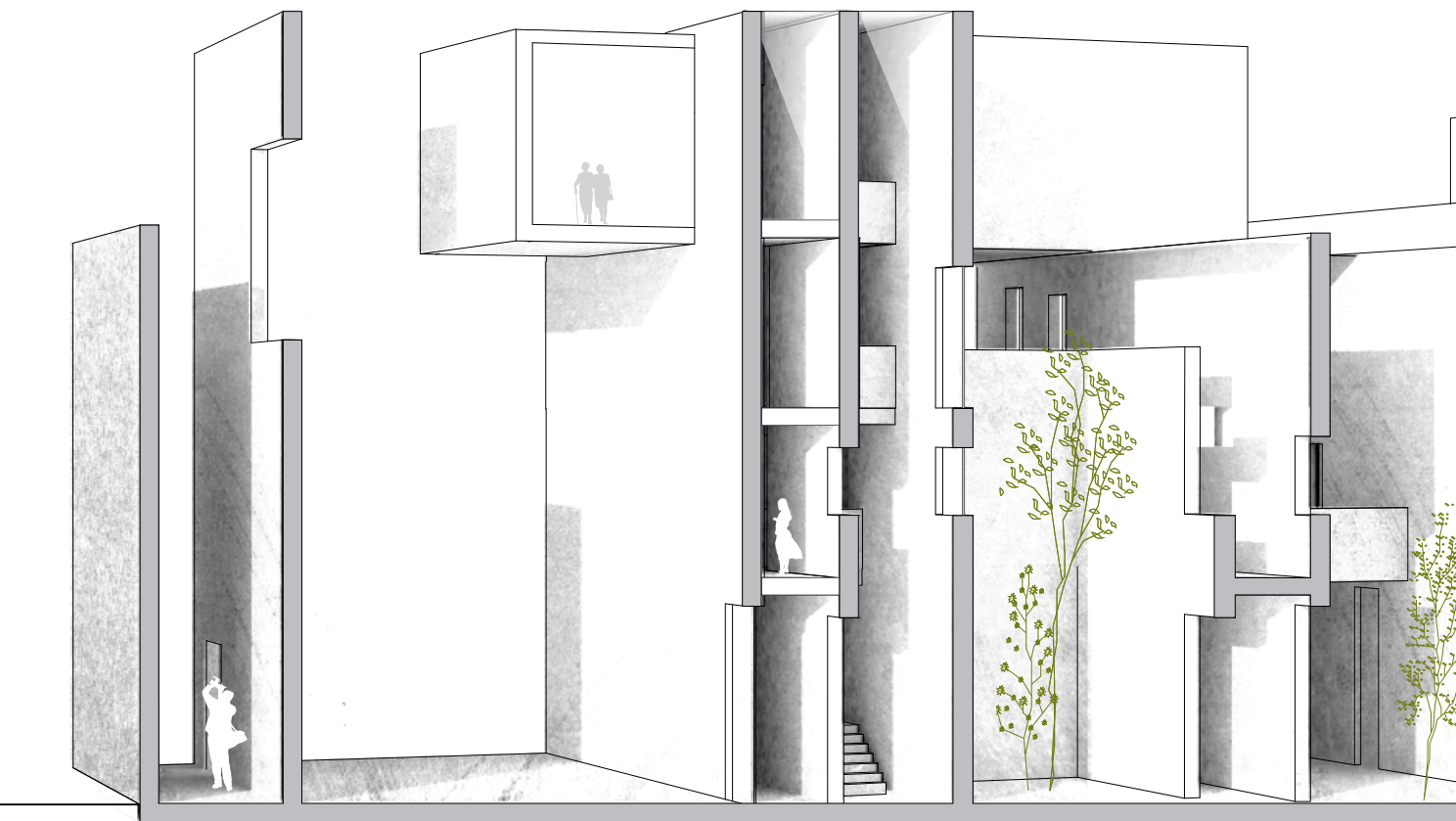


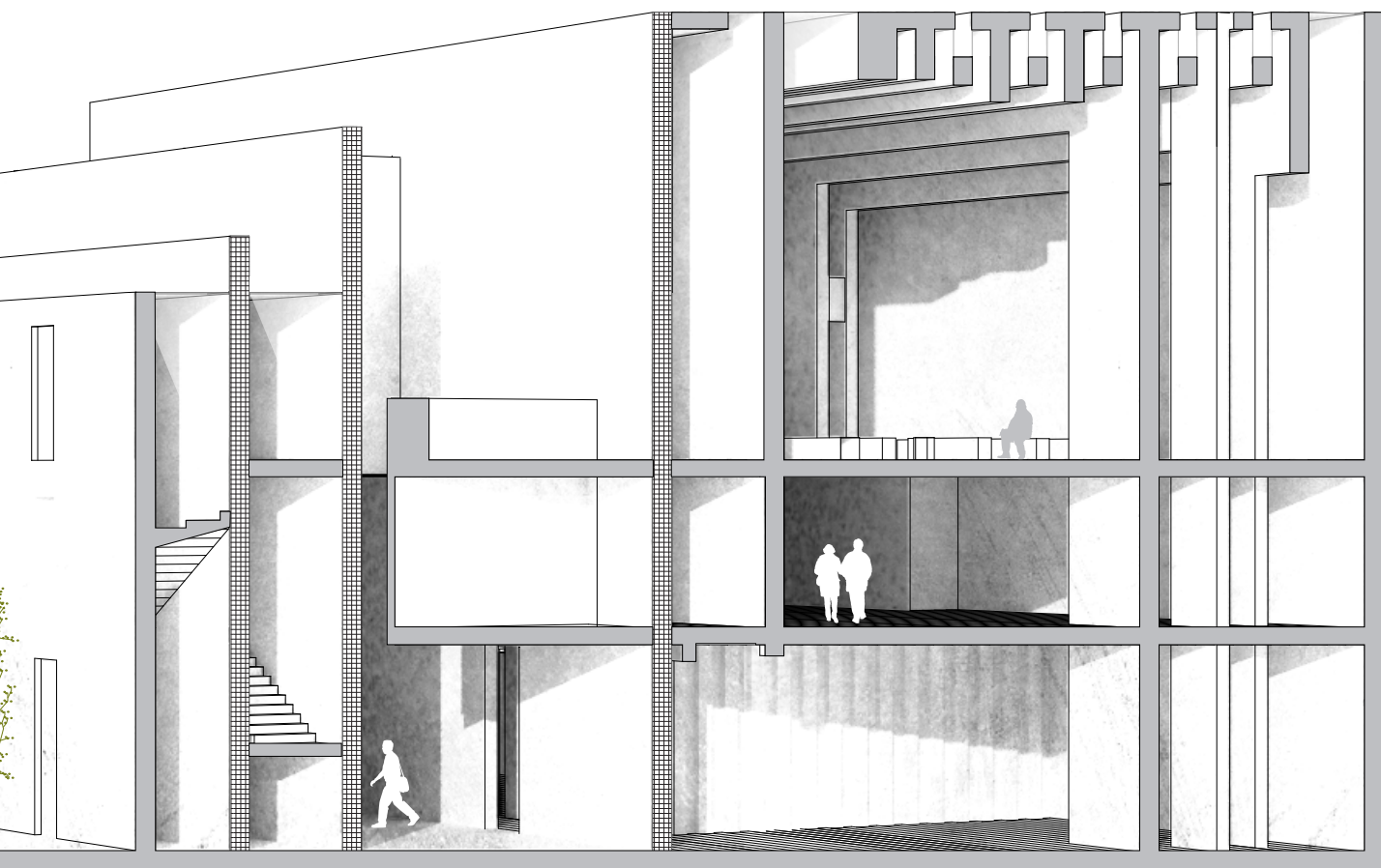


*facade Goswell Rd*



*facade Great Sutton St*



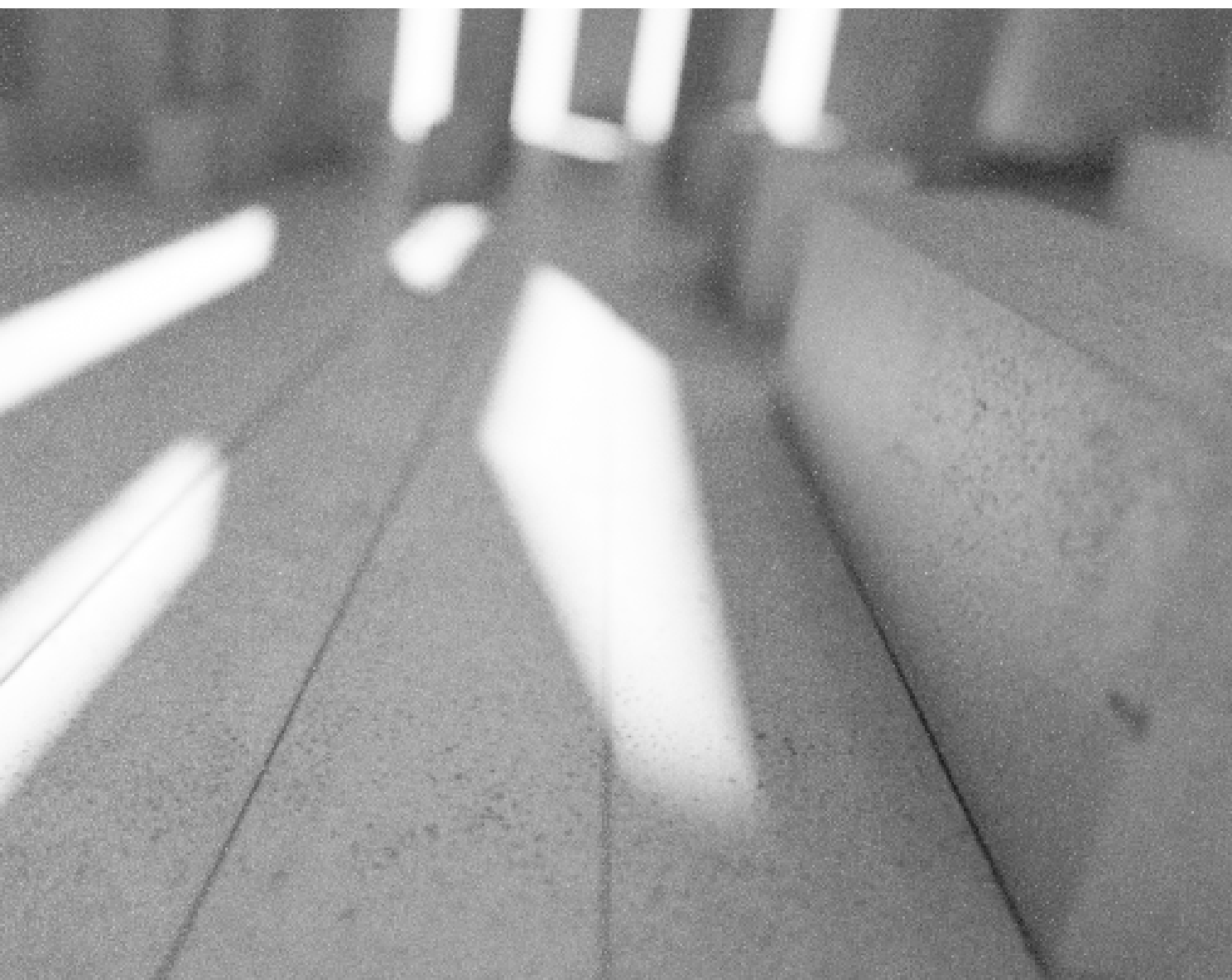


*diagonal section c-c*



# PROCESS



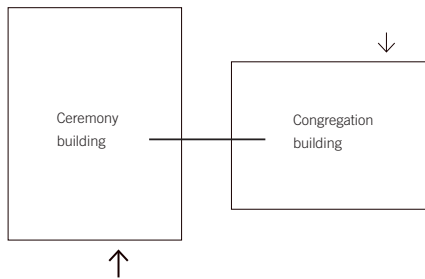


# HOW DID WE END UP HERE?

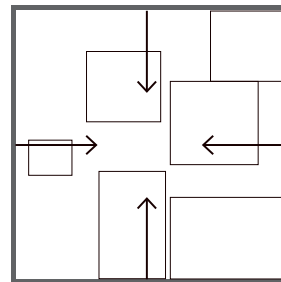
## - a sketch summary

Six months ago, we made these diagrams showcasing our ideas about the building we were about to design. It is interesting to see that many of the ideas remain in our final design.

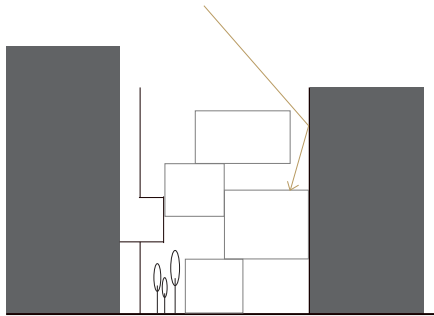
Throughout our master thesis project we also wrote a blog ([idotoyou.tumblr.com](http://idotoyou.tumblr.com)) that allowed us, and others, to follow our work process. The following pages are extracts from this blog.



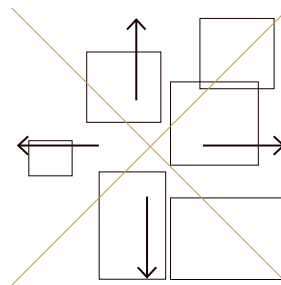
We are dividing the program into two main blocks, connected with a symbolic space.



In a set frame we are free to arrange each room after desired light-, sound- and size conditions.



Working in section, rather than plan, light conditions for each space and the connection to the surrounding buildings come in focus.



A strict facade is combined with an organic "inner plan" where courtyards play an important role. Paying much attention to the "antispaces", created between the rooms, we work with the full size of the site.

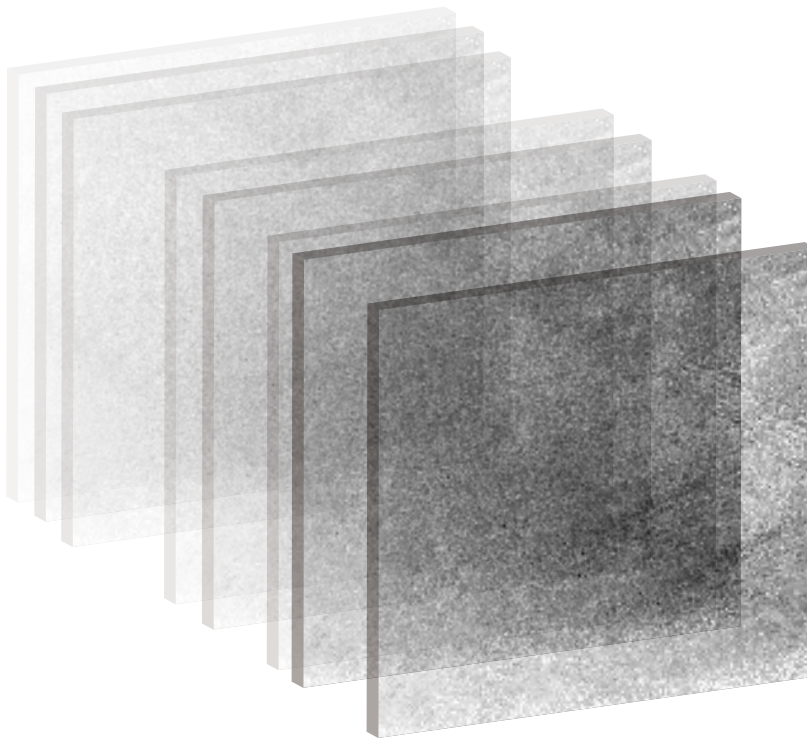
*2012.01.24*

We decided to kick start our design process by conducting a number of workshops. Focusing on light properties and materiality we tried to find the sort of light we wanted to bring into the design of the ceremony spaces.

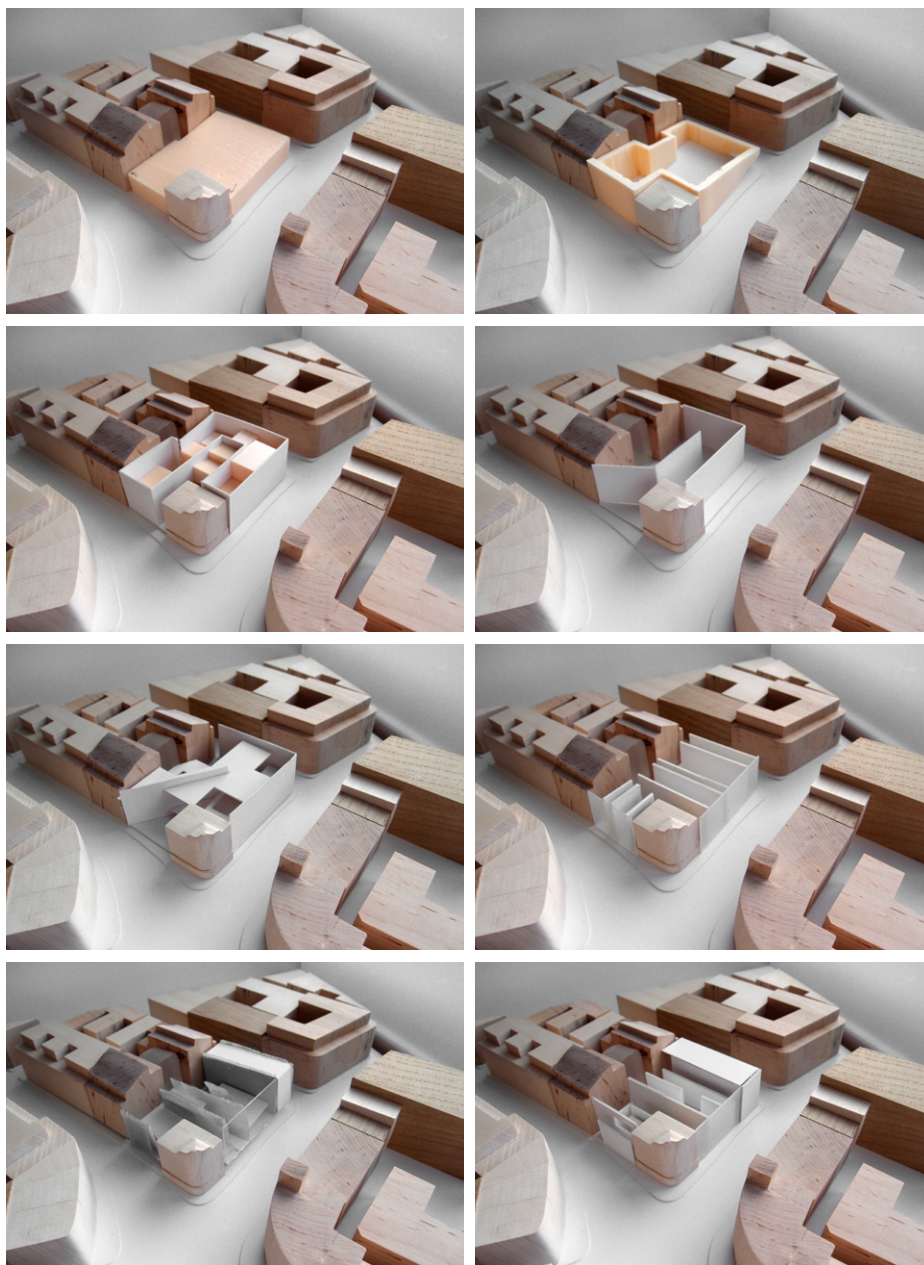


*2012.01.27*

We find "layered walls" as a concept and evolve this through sketching and model making.

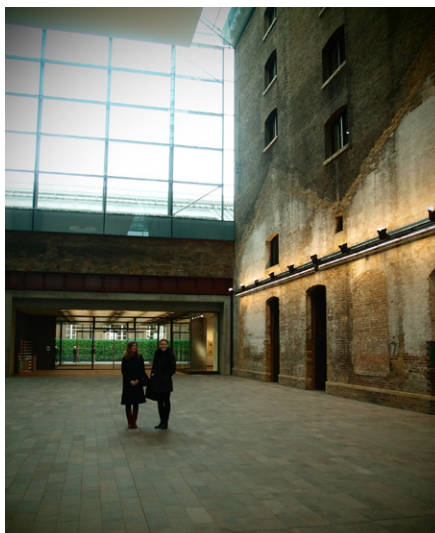


2012.01.29



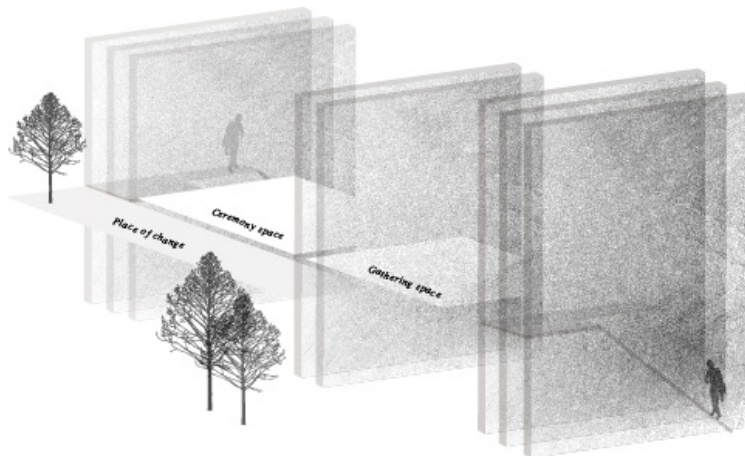
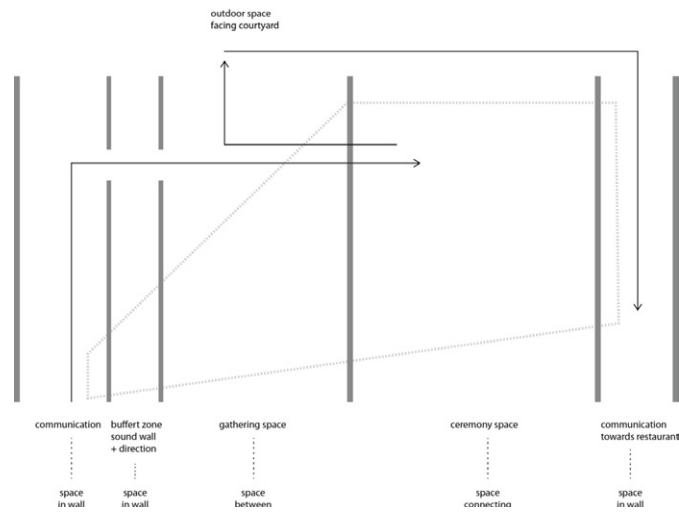
*2012.02.01*

We have visited London several times during our master thesis project. This to find the right site, sketch, buy model making material and make study visits.



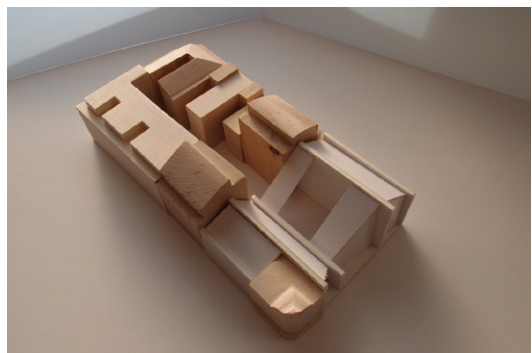
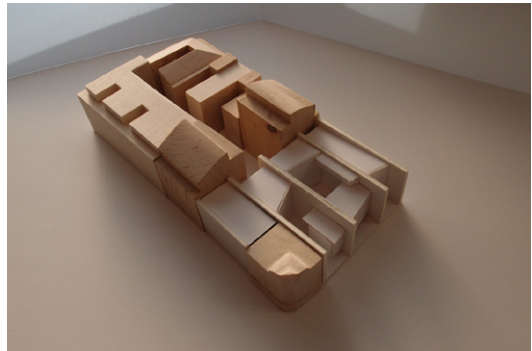
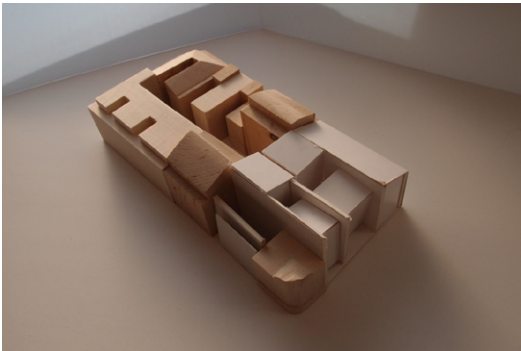
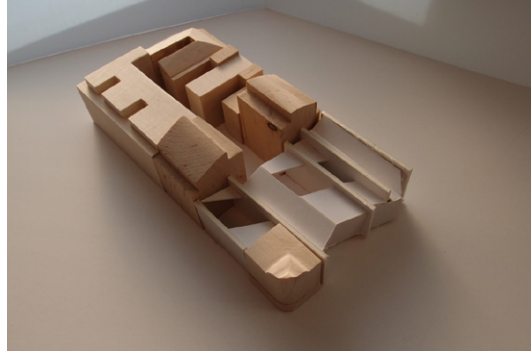
2012.02.20

The ideas regarding the sequence surrounding a ceremony space evolves.



*2012.02.26*

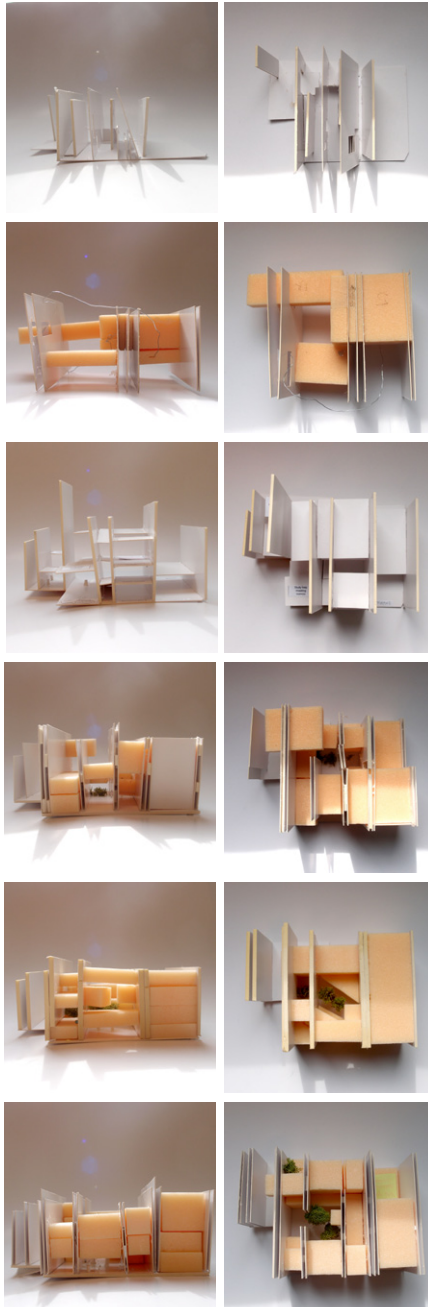
Model sketches - roof scapes.



*2012.03.01*

Been working on the overall plan and “room structure”.  
Changed between thinking about each room as a volume (clashing cubes)  
to allowing them to merge into bigger spaces.

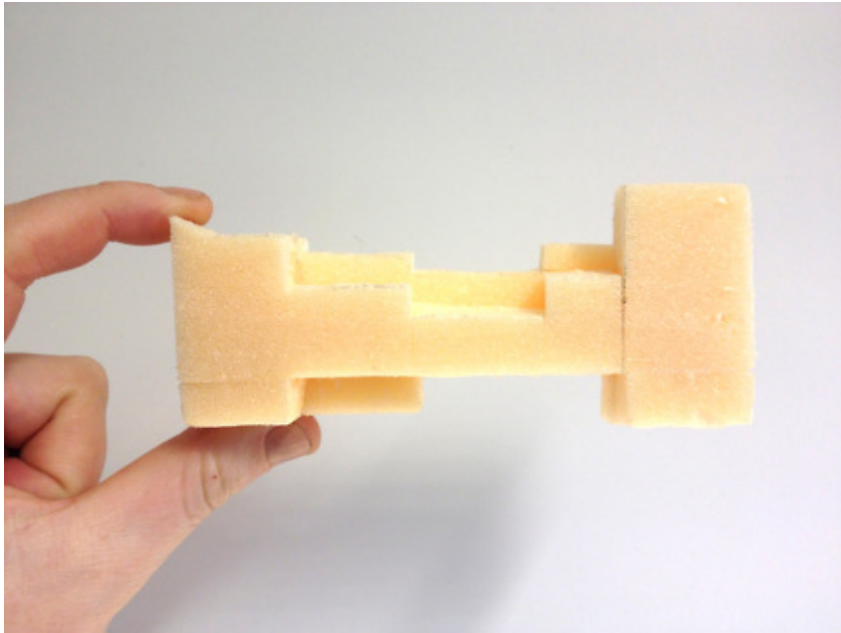
The contrast between walls and volumes are very important.



*2012.03.03*

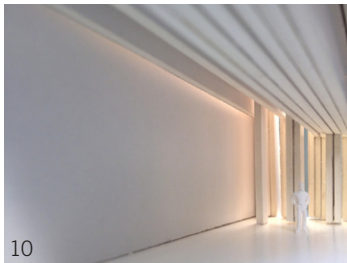
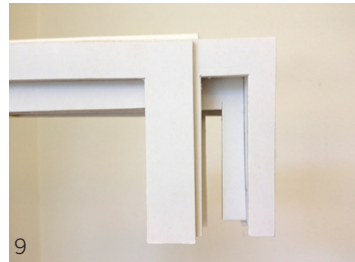
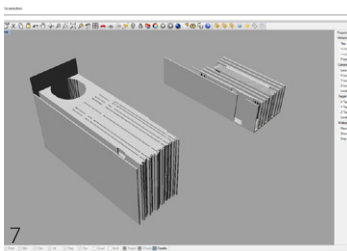
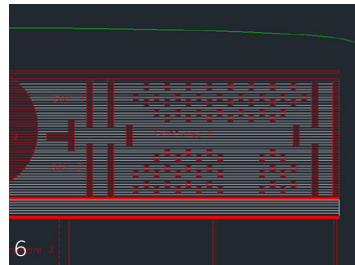
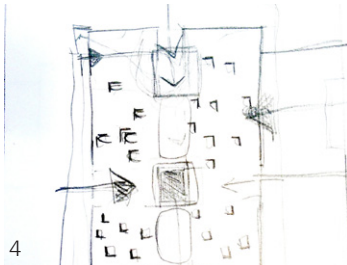
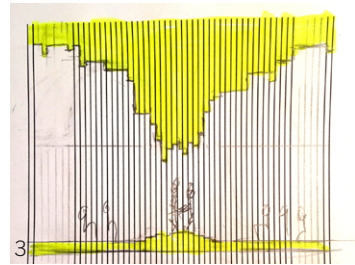
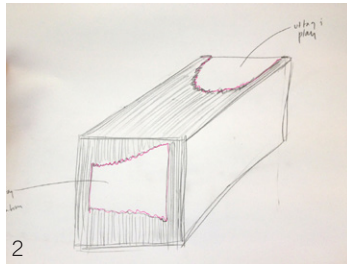
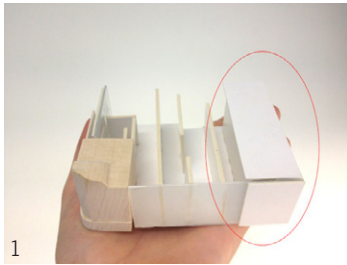
We think about the volumes between/connecting the walls as layered  
“backdrops”, more than individual cubes.

We emphasize the old block structure by differ our volume in height  
between the walls, similar to terraced houses.



2012.03.12

Model sketches - main ceremony space.

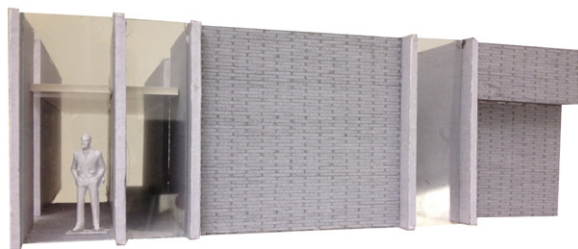
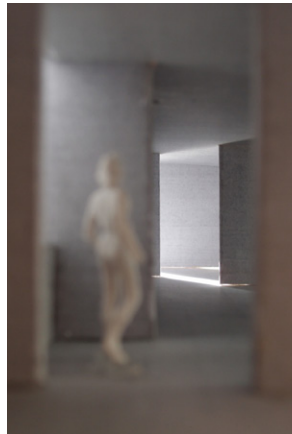


1. We think about our "Bookend" volume as "packed walls".
2. Subtracting rooms from the volume
3. A spatial idea of the room
4. Movement and positioning in the room (couple in the middle instead of at an altar, friends and family a part of the ceremony instead of an audience, different ways of entering the room)

5. Simple model + evaluate
6. We simplify and make a cad drawing
7. A more detailed Rhino model, in many variations
8. Rendering as a sketch tool, not for presentation.
9. Again, we try to simplify and clarify our main idea
10. New physical model

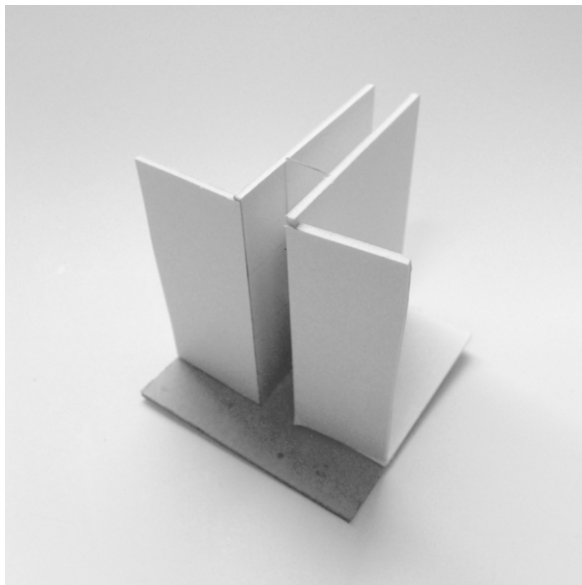
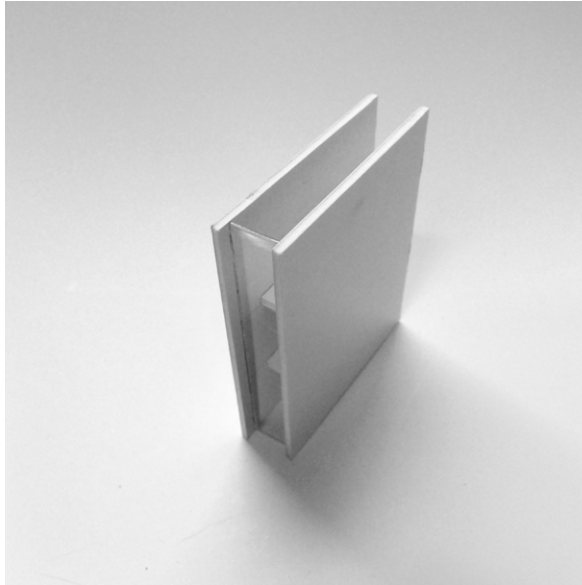
*2012.03.16*

Recent sketches, stepping up in scale and focusing on material properties.



*2012.03.28*

We make an important decision allowing the walls to blend with the surrounding volumes, leaving a void space.



*2012.03.24*

Some chocolate to celebrate this weeks achievements.



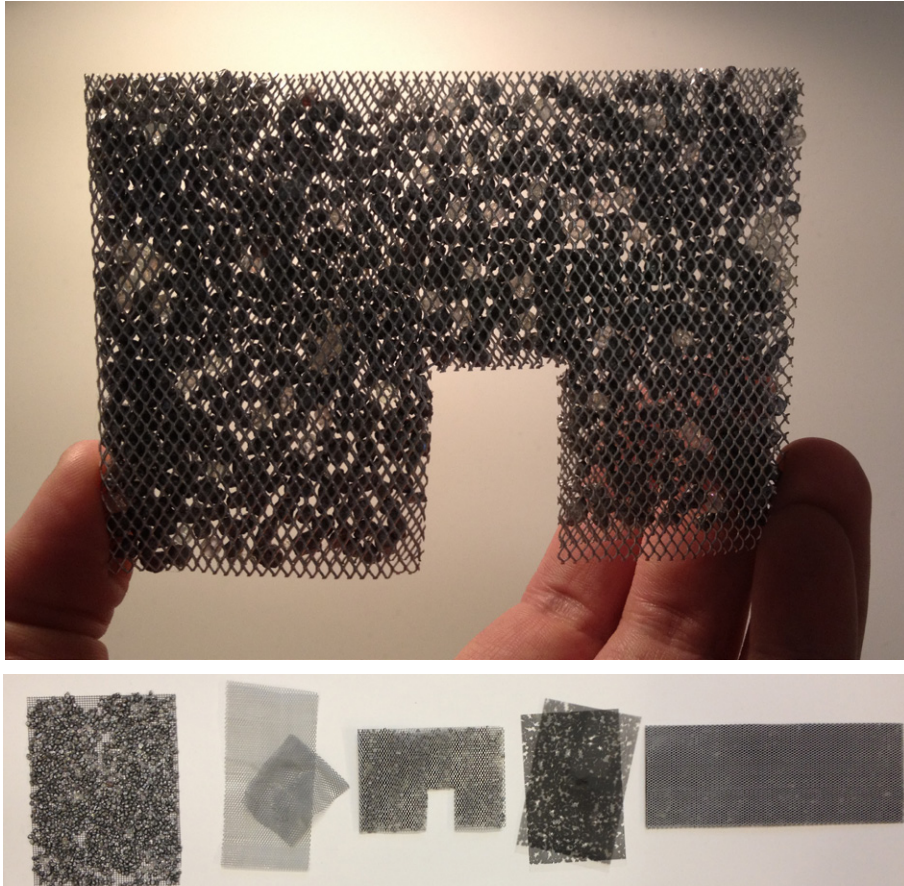
*2012.04.16*

Sketch renderings of a walk through our building.



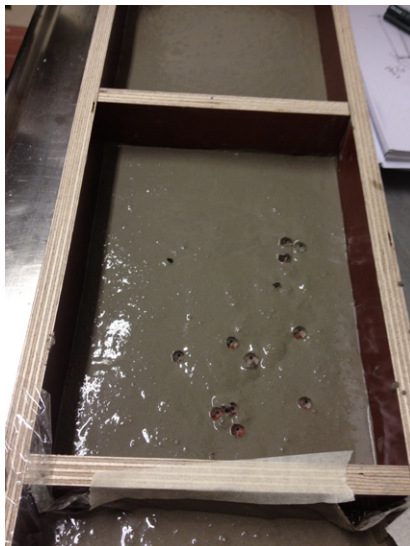
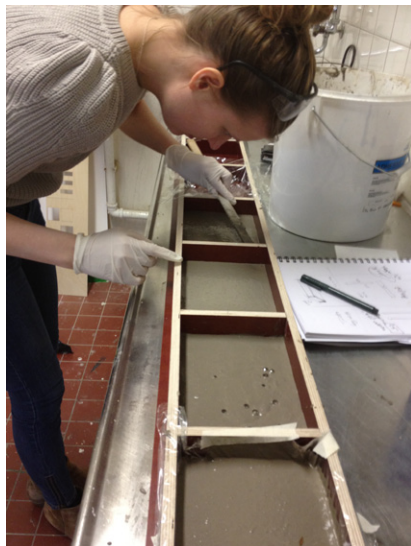
*2012.04.18*

Gabion studies.



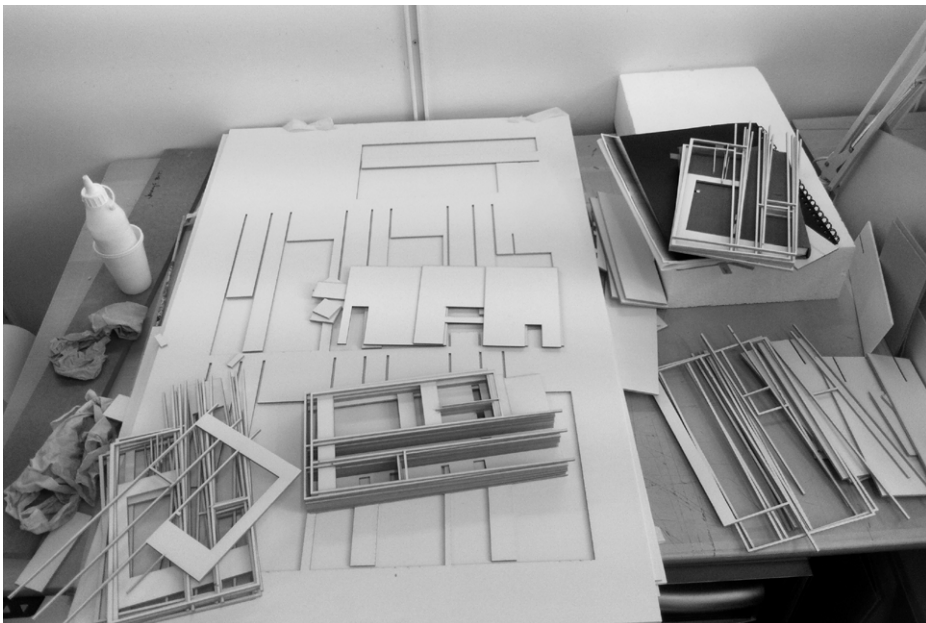
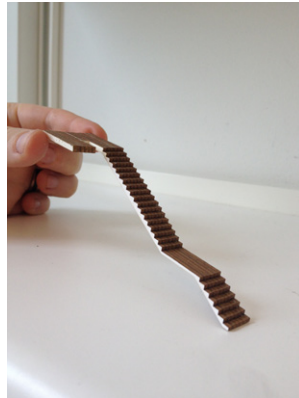
2012.04.20

Fun day - been casting test samples of our concrete facade.



2012.04.25

Model making.



*2012.05.04*

Photo shoot.





# RESEARCH





# HISTORY OF BRITISH MARRIAGE

## - a summary

Marriage, as we know it in the western world today, has a long history with roots in several different ancient cultures, of which the Roman, Hebrew and Germanic are the most important. Western marriage has been further shaped by the rules of the medieval Christian church, the demands of the protestant reformation and the social impact of the industrial revolution. The Church of England, a protestant episcopal denomination, is the English state church.

### *Early wedding traditions*

From the early sixteenth-, up to the nineteenth century, marriages were arranged by parents. They often made the marriage agreements and betrothals when the bride and bridegroom were small children. The woman had much fewer rights than the man and was expected to be subservient to him. One could claim that marriage was an economic arrangement of family matter.

Arranged marriages were however questioned in the late seventeenth century. The outcome was that the betrothals would be valid only if, after the age of seven, the children called each other husband and wife, embraced and kissed each other. Some young couples ran away and chose to have a ceremony privately performed without banns or license. These escapes and private ceremonies represented the beginning of a revolt against parental control of marriages<sup>[2]</sup>

*Betrothals would be valid only if, after the age of seven, the children called each other husband and wife*

### *The Civil Marriage Act of 1753*

The Marriage Act of 1753, was the first legislation in England and Wales to require a formal ceremony of marriage. The pressure to address the problem of illegal marriages had been growing for some time. Before the Act, the legal requirements for a valid marriage in England and Wales had been governed by the Church of England. The church advised on publishing

banns and applying for marriage licences, but it was not mandatory. The absence of them, or the fact that the marriage act was not held in a church, did not make a marriage invalid. The only indispensable requirement was that the marriage act had to be led by an Anglican clergyman.

The Act of 1753 tightened the Church of England's existing rules regarding marriage. From now on a marriage was only valid if it had been performed as a official ceremony in a religious setting recognised by the state, after the publication of banns and with a licence. Also, two or more witnesses were required to attend and the wedding acts could only be performed between 8 and twelve in the morning.

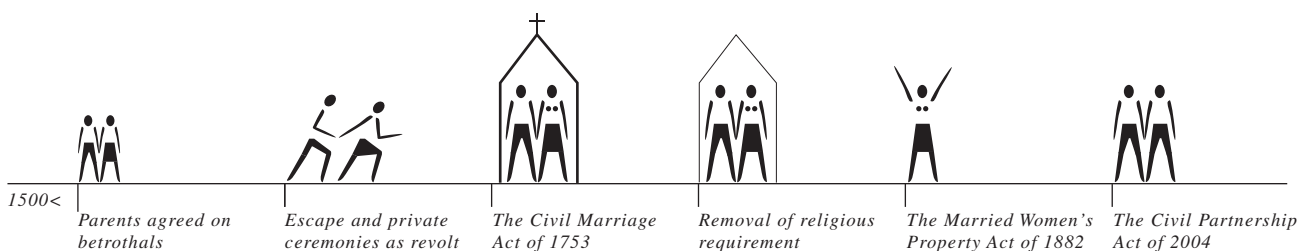
The Act did not apply in Scotland until 1940, until then it was enough for a man and a woman to pledge their commitment to each other in front of witnesses to legalise their marriage. This led to an industry of "fast marriages" in Scottish towns that were located close to the English border.<sup>[3]</sup>

On the Scottish island Isle of Man, a law similar to the act of 1753 was formed, but it differed in one significant aspect. Clergymen that did not perform wedding ceremonies according to the act, could be convicted for it and have their ears cropped, before being imprisoned, fined and deported. The Act was ceased in 1849.<sup>[4]</sup>

### *Removal of religious requirement*

In 1836 the requirement that a wedding ceremony must take place in a religious forum was removed, and registrars were given the authority to register marriages without a religious official.

Since April 1995, it has been possible to arrange civil ceremonies at certain venues other than a register office - commonly known as licensed venues. Buildings such as hotels, castles and country homes can be licensed to allow civil wedding ceremonies to take place on their premises. Approval will not be given for open air venues or private homes.<sup>[5]</sup> The main premise is the fact that no religious content whatsoever is permitted.



## The Married Women's Property Act

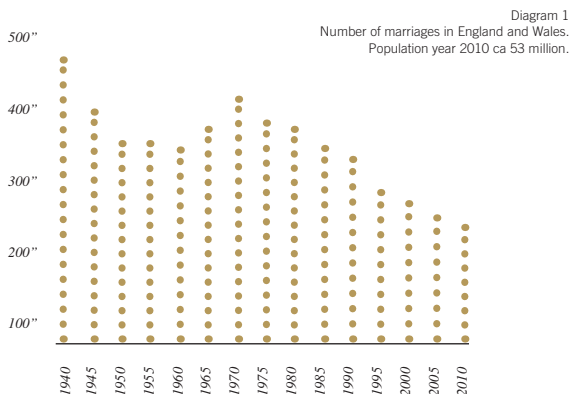
In the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, the law enabled married women to control their own property. Previously, English law had defined the role of the wife as subordinate to her husband, putting her under the protection and influence of her husband. Upon marriage, the husband and wife became one person under the law, as the property of the wife was surrendered to her husband and her legal identity ceased to exist.<sup>[6]</sup>

## A more liberal church of England

Until the early 1990s, it was more complicated to get married in Great Britain. A Christian ceremony had to be held in a registered church in the district where the couple resided.<sup>[7]</sup> The choice of church has become somewhat more flexible, although there are rules to take into account. You can for example marry in a parish where you had previously been living for more than six months, or in the parish where your parents live.<sup>[8]</sup> Any marriage that does not follow the rites of the Church of England or Church of Wales must be preceded by civil preliminaries.<sup>[9]</sup> The Church of England does not, on the other hand, welcome all types of marriage. A priest can deny a divorced person to get remarried and homosexual wedding ceremonies are not permitted.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Property of  
the wife was  
surrendered to  
her husband and  
her legal identity  
ceased to exist*

The Civil Partnership Act of 2004 allows people of the same sex to have legal recognition of their relationship. The act states that any form of religious activity during the process of registering the union is forbidden. The act does not include a ceremony and if the couple wishes to have one, they need to contact the registration authority where the union is to be entered, to find out whether a ceremony is possible.<sup>[11]</sup> The act gives lesbian and gay couples the same legal benefits as heterosexual married couples.<sup>[12]</sup>

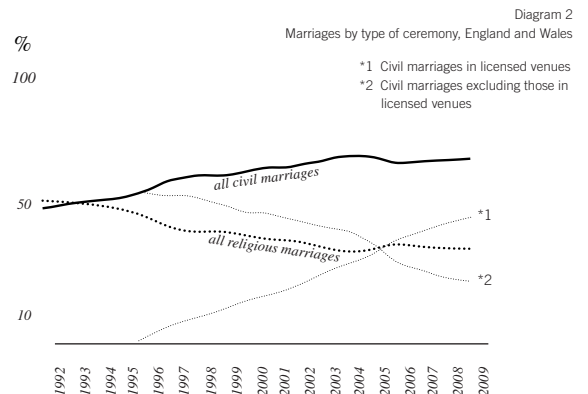


## The different and unique

The number of marriages (see diagram 1) have been steadily decreasing in England and Wales. Marriage rates have fallen to their lowest level since records began in 1862. The average age of first time marriage is decreasing. The factors behind the statistics are many and both of social and political matter.

Despite this new, more liberal approach regarding choice of wedding ceremonies, the statistics (diagram 2) show that an increasing number of people, all religions in England included, chose civil ceremonies, without any religious connection. Church weddings now account for only a third of all marriages. Within civil weddings however, there have been a big drop in register office ceremonies, as couples often chose alternatives. The number of licensed venues are increasing and can be interpreted as a desire for the different and unique.

There is a surge in ceremonies taking place in stately homes, luxury hotels, historic buildings or other more quirky settings.<sup>[13]</sup> Another aspect of the increase in civil weddings is the fact that London is the multicultural centre of Europe. It has over seven million inhabitants and 300 different languages are spoken in the city.<sup>[14]</sup> Therefore, one could assume that multicultural marriage ceremonies take place on a regular basis.





# I DO?

## - wedding bells of our time

The words spoken during a wedding ceremony have changed little over time. But the meaning of marriage and the reasons for choosing that specific social status has evolved. What role do we think marriage plays in contemporary society?

### *A contemporary view on marriage*

The days when getting married meant receiving Gods blessing and starting a family are fading away. What remains is a rich variety of choices, reasons and opinions leading up to an "I do". When life rushes by, as many of us feel it does, marriage acts as a safety net.

#### *A promise that you are loved.*

#### *A paper offering legal security.*

A promise that you are loved, a paper offering legal security. It facilitates family life under British law, simplifying legal matters that come with having shared economy and raising a family.

A wedding might be a lot more expensive then drawing up alternative legal papers, but much more fun. We think there is a need for highlighting important parts of life, moving away from the ordinary. Furthermore the joy of a wedding often stretches out to extended family and friends. The event makes for a memory that brings people together.

Being wed functions as a "grading of the relationships intensity and validity" in our society. It is the highest level. The wedding ring acts as a mark, stating who is off the market.

The wedding tradition remains firm in modern England, and there are new "players" on the wedding market. Marriage is no longer for life. About 50 % of all marriages end in divorce, meaning many people marry more than once. There seems to be a different set of "rules" when remarrying. Low key, no white dress, civil instead of religious. We think our ceremony building might close a gap for this kind of wedding. Here, there

is always a choice regarding the pace and openness of the ceremony. The architecture states no difference between a same sex registration, people marrying for the third time or a strictly practical ceremony. Marrying someone is always a big decision, regardless of the reasons to do so. This is important to reflect in our designs.

### *Translating into architecture*

Despite living in a secular society, we believe that many non religious couples choose religious wedding ceremonies because of the "authenticity stamp" that comes with marrying in a place full of history and strong social heritage. Also, there is a lack of civil buildings that feels equally grand, especially if you are looking for a contemporary building in an urban environment. The chosen location for our project emphasises this problem. We shape our building to feel significant without being spiritual and remember to keep a human scale.

The building designed during our master thesis reflect what we find to be modern day marriage. Diversity, contradictions and just a pinch of romance...

# INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

## - who can marry who?

The main religious groups in England and London are Christians, non-religious people, Muslims and Jews (diagram 3). These four groups will be the focus of our research phase. Differences and similarities regarding wedding ceremonies, religious buildings and who is considered a good match as a spouse is of interest and importance to our master thesis project.

### Legally

In the UK you are legally allowed to marry the person of your choice, whatever your religious beliefs may be, as long as you are not closely related. Minimum age of marriage is 18 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. With parental permission one can get married at 16. All marriages must be monogamous. You are not allowed to marry someone of the same sex.

Sometimes there is a difference between British law and religious law about the permissibility of, for example, an interfaith marriage.<sup>[15]</sup> This may mean that it is more difficult to have a religious wedding ceremony, but it does not prevent the couple from having a legal marriage through a civil ceremony.

### Catholic

According to Catholic scripture all marriages between baptised Christians (not only Catholic) are considered a sacrament. Although, for a wedding between a Catholic and Jewish person to take place, special approval has to be given from a bishop (the wedding is then, preferably, held on a neutral site and officiated by a rabbi).

In cases where a Catholic is marrying someone who is not a baptised Christian the Church exercises more caution. A “dispensation from disparity of cult,” which is a more rigorous form of permission given by the local bishop, is required for the marriage to be valid. The union between a Catholic and a non-baptised spouse is not considered sacramental.<sup>[16]</sup>

The distinction made between inter-church marriages and inter-faith marriages is often claimed to be based on the opportunities given to the female Catholic to educate her children within her own religion.

More liberal Christians may instead refer to a part of the Corinthian letters (7:12–14) where one can read “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband.” Something that could be interpreted “as long as one partner in the relationship hold Christian faith, this will save the other”,

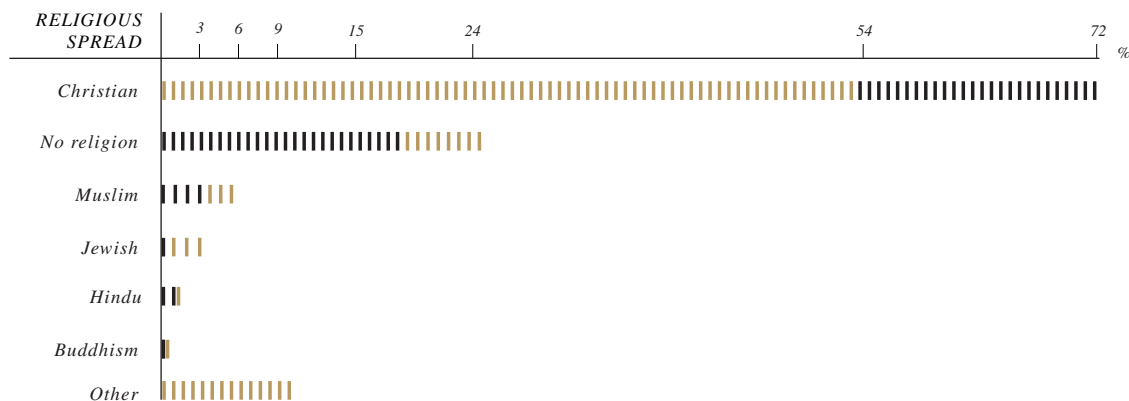
and hence, inter-faith marriages should be more accepted.<sup>[17]</sup>

*“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife...”*

### Islam

Islamic men may marry outside of their faith, though only if their spouse is Christian or Jewish. In fact, according to the Koran, the prophet Muhammed had a Christian wife and Jewish wife. A non-Muslim wife is not required to adopt any Muslim laws, and her husband cannot prevent her from attending church or synagogue. However, Islamic women are forbidden from marrying non-Muslim men, unless the spouse agrees to convert to Islam.

Diagram 3  
Religious spread in England vs London.  
■ in england and wales ■ in london



According to traditional views, it is the religion of the man that will be passed on to his children, and in the end shape the family.<sup>[18]</sup>

Muslim men are also, according to the religion but contrary to the British law, allowed to have up to four wives (with certain restrictions<sup>[19]</sup>). The legitimacy of polygamy is however, questioned by many Muslims.

Judaism

Stricter branches of Judaism, such as Orthodox and Conservative, forbid or strongly discourage Jews from marrying non-Jews and prohibit their rabbis from participating in interreligious marriage ceremonies. This also means that only marriages between two Jews are seen as sacred events. The Reform branch of Judaism strongly discourages mixed marriages, but there is no legal prohibition against it as there is in the stricter branches.<sup>[20]</sup>

However, traditional Judaism does not consider marriage between a Jew by birth and a convert as intermarriage, so their relationship should not be looked down upon or treated differently.<sup>[21]</sup>

Church of England

The Christian Church of England, officially, welcomes everyone to marry in one of their churches whatever your beliefs, whether or not you are christened and whether or not you regularly go to church. However, the wedding service will still be held as a Christian ceremony and follow Christian faith and tradition.

Despite this, more liberal approach to inter-faith marriages, it was only in 2002 that a divorced person was welcome to remarry in a Church of England place of worship, and it is by the discretion of each priest to perform this type of ceremony or not.<sup>[22]</sup>

Generally It was only in 2002 that a divorced person was welcome to remarry in a Church of England

None of the above-mentioned religious groups welcome same-sex couples to be married within their place of worship or into their faith. Female rabbis/imams are still very unusual and/or prohibited within each religion.

For both Catholics and Muslims, one of the most difficult aspects of a mixed marriage is the religion of the children. Both faiths insist that the children inherit their parents' religion.<sup>[23]</sup>

Conclusion

Our master thesis is about designing a building meant for civil wedding ceremonies. Despite this we felt it was important to understand the challenges interfaith couples face, especially if getting married. For some couples a civil ceremony is a last resort and/or a compromise. But we aim to make it feel equally dignified.

Diagram 4

Suitable partner for marriage, according to religion

● = approved ○ = approved under special circumstances

ACCORDING TO RELIGION	JEWISH	MUSLIM MAN	MUSLIM WOMAN	NO RELIGION (CIVIL)	CATHOLIC	CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Jewish	●	●		●	○	●
Muslim man			●	●		●
Muslim woman		●		●		●
No religion (civil)				●		●
Catholic	○	●		●	●	●
Church of England		●		●	●	●
Convert	○	○	○	●	○	●

# INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

## - who can marry where?

For a couple of different religious beliefs, it might be tricky to find suitable venue to stage their wedding. A part from all other decision making (what to wear, contents of the ceremony, cake or cupcakes?), they can face problem with family, their religion and the law.

### Legal vs religious

In England, nothing legally opposes an inter-religious wedding being held in a religious building, as long as it takes place between 8am and 6pm, as all weddings must.<sup>[24]</sup> The problem instead often lies within the religious congregations refusal to marry a couple with two different beliefs in their place of worship. For example, a synagogue wedding can only happen if both partners are Jewish. As a result, multi-religious ceremonies are often avoided and replaced with a civil ceremony, despite the fact that no religious elements whatsoever can be involved.

If both partners wish to combine different religious elements in one ceremony, a wedding that is conducted by ministers from both religions could be an alternative (in the Church of England, certain parts of the service must be taken by the Anglican priest as registrar). A mixed-faith couple also have the alternative of having two ceremonies, where one will be according to the rites of one faith and considered the legal wedding, the other ceremony will be only a “blessing”. Another option is to have a civil ceremony that legally marries the couple, followed by a religious blessing service, which could be taken by a minister of either faith, a friend or a relative.<sup>[25]</sup>

### Venues

In England you are free to have a civil wedding at any licensed venue. Approved buildings range from football stadiums to city halls and castles. The owner of a venue must herself apply for the approval. The venue must also be “regularly open to the public” and a built structure, so outdoor spaces and private homes are not considered suitable.

*Outdoor places and private homes are not considered suitable to host weddings*

Same sex couples should be legally welcome to register their partnership in any premises licensed to carry out registrations, not just a registry office.<sup>[26]</sup> Civil ceremonies allow couples of all kinds to choose their own marriage vows, as long as they are not religious.<sup>[27]</sup>

Diagram 5  
Venue legally approved to host this kind of religious ceremony

WHO CAN MARRY WHERE?	JEWISH	MUSLIM	CIVIL	CHRISTIAN	SAME SEX
Outdoors					
Mosque					
Church					
Synagogue					
At home					
Approved venue					

## A CITY FULL OF LOVE

- *why this city is different*

London is the multicultural centre of Europe. More than 270 nationalities make up the fabric of the city. Problems, joy and inspiration can be found in such diversity.

### *London is far from English*

It is important to remember that behind the statistics and comparisons, there are real people representing the dots in the diagrams. London being a city full of cross religious couples is easy to imagine.

The complexity regarding cross religious marriages is immense. To tie the knot can be far from easy. Our aim has been to display this in a clear and understandable way and to let it be a stable platform for our design of the building. We now know that we will not be able to design a building that can, legally, be used for cross religious weddings. All “I do-ceremonies” will be civil.

The common values we found when studying different wedding ceremonies play an important part of what we bring from this research. When designing, we move away from specific meanings and procedures of each ceremony and focus on creating secular place where people of all believes feel welcome and somewhat at home.

*All “I do-ceremonies” will be civil*



# THE WEDDING CEREMONIES

## - conditions and positioning

### Christian ceremony

The Christian wedding ceremony is of a very uniform character. In the church, friends and family of the bride are seated to the left, the bridegroom's relatives to the right. When the music begins, the Priest walks towards the altar. The assembly stands up and the couple walks down the aisle, the man to the right and the woman to the left.

The Priest welcomes the congregation and reads out a speech describing the Christian belief in marriage<sup>[28]</sup>. That is followed by the declarations, which means that the couple make their promises in front of God that they will love, comfort, honour and protect their partner as long as they both shall live. After that, it is time for the vows<sup>[29]</sup>. The couple say their vows and

**“I now pronounce you husband and wife”**

exchange rings. The rings are put on either the left or right hand ring finger. This is followed by the proclamation: the priest tells the couple that they are now husband and wife. Then the couple often kiss. After prayers

and readings from the bible, the couple must sign a marriage license, a legal requirement, with the priest and two witnesses in attendance. Music of different kinds is often incorporated in the ceremony.

### Minimum content according to state church:

- Must be performed by a clergyman
- One reading from new or old testament
- Two witnesses
- A signed marriage license
- Ring exchange (at least a ring for the woman)

### Civil ceremony

Civil marriage is performed by a government official and not a religious organisation and must be held in authorised premises. It is a legal requirement to give notice in advance of marriage or civil partnership.

The registrar will make a short statement about marriage. It is not possible to insert religious words into a civil ceremony but the couple must say the statutory vows. It is not necessary to have a ring. At the end of the ceremony the registrar, the couple and witnesses must all sign the marriage license.

#### Minimum vows:

You have expressed a will to enter into marriage with each other.

Will you --- take --- to be your lawfully wedded wife/husband.

(Response: I DO)

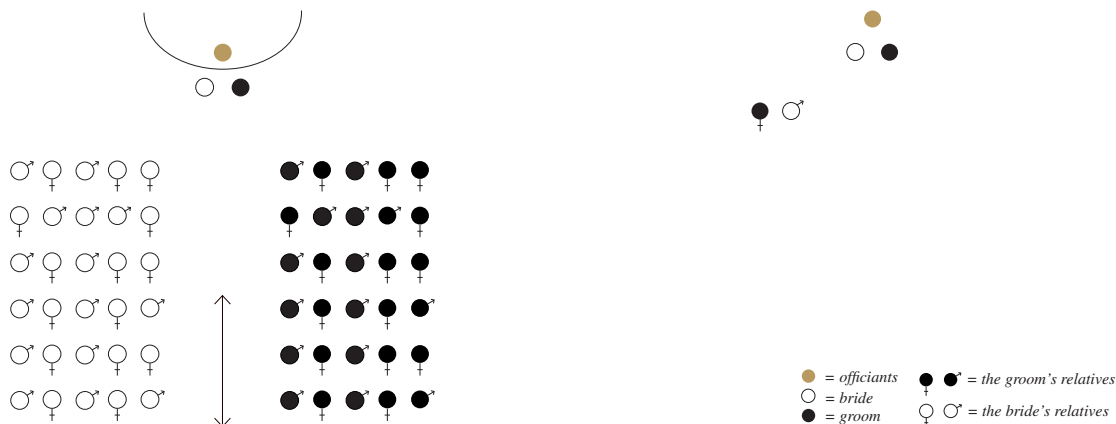
Will you --- take --- to be your lawfully wedded wife/husband.

(Response: I DO)

I now pronounce you husband and wife/to be husbands/to be wives<sup>[30]</sup>.

### Minimum content according to the authority:

- Two witnesses
- A signed marriage license



## Muslim ceremony

According to tradition, there are three elements that makes a Muslim marriage valid. The woman and man must approve the marriage, the families must agree on the dowry and a marriage license must be signed by the man and either the woman or the woman's guardian. The dowry gives the woman a certain amount of financial freedom<sup>[31]</sup> and at the same time demonstrates the husband's ability to support the family. The contract may also include agreement on whether the bride may work outside the home etc.

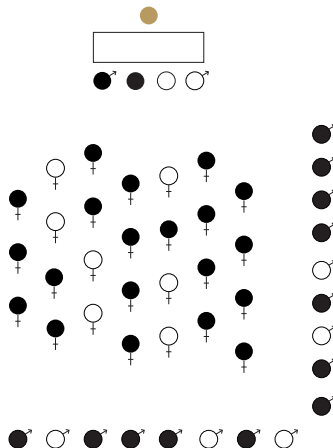
Muslim wedding ceremonies have cultural differences amongst themselves. There does not seem to be one specific way that people position themselves. Before the ceremony, friends and relatives celebrate the couple in their separate family homes. The ceremony can take place in a mosque but also at home or in a community centre.

It is important that the ceremony is kept short and simple. The ceremony does not have to be performed by a Mullah. Any Muslim man, knowing his koran can marry a couple as long as two other muslim men are in attendance. The ceremony is often followed by festivities of less modest character, and if the couple are practicing Muslims, it is likely that the wedding reception takes place in separate rooms for men and women.

The diagram below shows how people are positioned during one specific Bosnian-muslim ceremony.<sup>[32]</sup>

### Minimum content according to Islam:

- Approval of both parties
- Agreement on the "bride fee"
- Two male witnesses or one man and two women
- A signed marriage license<sup>[33]</sup>



## Jewish ceremony

The Jewish wedding ceremony has a rich content and is of great value to the proceedings. According to Jewish law one can marry in three different ways;

1. The man gives the woman a valuable gift in front of witnesses
2. The couple enters a legal binding agreement on marriage
3. The man and woman have a sexual relationship.

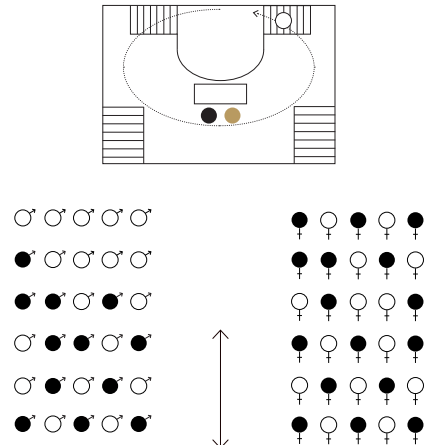
During the medieval era, because of the danger for jews travelling, the rabbis decided to merge the different marriage types into one ceremony.

The ceremony starts with the groom, led by his parents, walk towards a canopy. The groom and the Rabbi stand next to each other by the altar. The bride, covered in a veil, walks up to them, also led by her parents. The bride walks seven laps around the man, to mark that he belongs to her.<sup>[34]</sup> The couple drinks from a cup of blessed wine and the groom puts a ring on the brides right index finger and declares that he takes the woman to be his wife. They are now married according to the first way of getting married. After this, the marriage license is read and signed, second type of marriage is fulfilled.

The rabbi now sings the seven blessings and the groom crushes a glass as a reminder of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The groom lifts up the veil covering the bride and they kiss each other. Finally, the couple, followed by relatives, walks out of the synagogue. To satisfy the third way of getting married, the couple enters a separate room, with the witnesses guarding it from the outside.

### Minimum content according to Judaism:

- Ten male witnesses (incl. bridegroom and rabbi)
- A baldarkin
- Wine
- A valuable gift (ring)
- A signed marriage license
- "Privacy"



- a study visit summary

## Visiting God

*One is allowed to just be, without having to consume, perform or express an opinion*

Visiting the synagogue in central Gothenburg, we could not help but notice the thorough security check. Bags placed in a separate room, passport handed to an enclosed guard, no cameras allowed. Locks and codes. In the beautiful courtyard a memorial over the victims of the holocaust is placed. A reminder not to forget. A symbol of how not to treat each other.

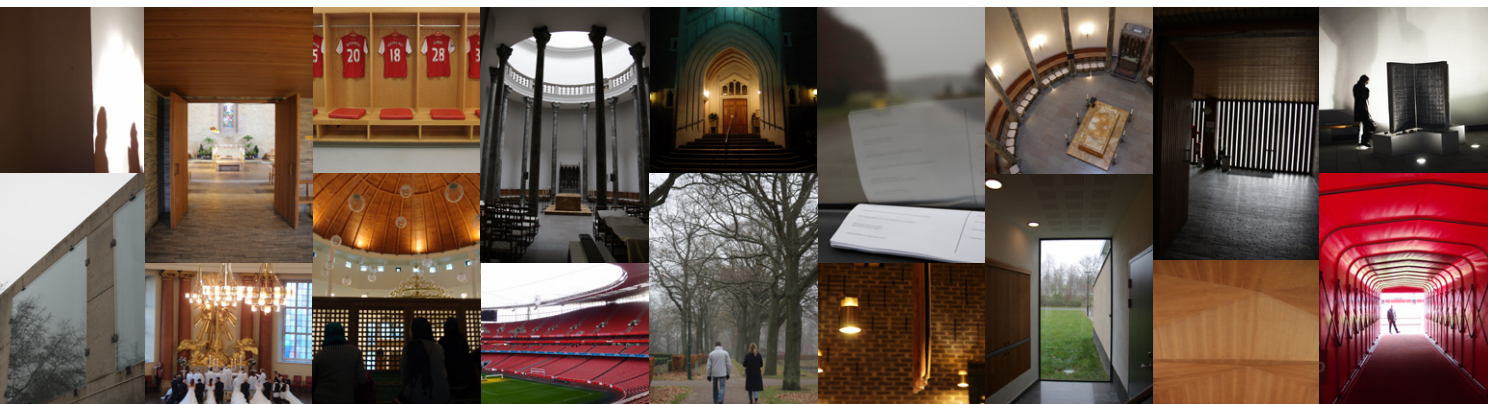
Our study visits to different religious buildings have served us with architectural inspiration. Forecourts at Catholic churches create a nice distinction from busy city life. Sigurd Lewerenz churches prove the beauty of darkness and the striking power of sloping floors. The architect Ragnar Östberg place visitors in a circle around the deceased, instead of in rows, at his funeral chapel at Pålshö.

Variations in intensity, a type of gradient concerning casual - holy can be found in most religious buildings. The way you approach a room can be just as important as the room itself. Stairs, hallways, paths - expectations grow when faced with time. Moving upwards dignifies a space. One speaks in hushed tones in a sacral environment.

The (often) grand volume of a holy room also play part of making it feel “larger then life”. Combined with offered tranquility it makes a powerful mix. We do not think it is a coincidence that many chose to marry in a sacral space.

Dispite being faced with many types of ceremony rooms during our study visits, ranging from a simple meeting room to a grand stadium, we still think something is missing. Maybe personal touch, maybe intimacy. We add a secular, distinctively urban alternative where couples can choose the shape and size of their own ceremony.

We hope that the design of our master thesis building captures some of the values sacral buildings often present. Allowing people to take their time creates a feeling of ease. This is not a place to rush. “Being part of something bigger”, may it represent a relationship with a God or a city, make people grow stronger.



## SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES

### - wedding ceremonies and building types

Churches and synagogues are, contrary to the mosque, programmed in a predetermined way regarding how the building is used and what the movement patterns look like. This has been explained by the American architect and theorist Stan Allen.

#### *Field vs. axial symmetry*

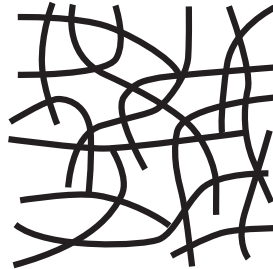
The construction of a mosque is very type formed. An enclosed forecourt, with the minaret tower, opens up to a grand space for worship. The worship space is loosely oriented toward the quibla, a continuous prayer wall marked by a small niche (mihrab). There is not, normally, one entrance to the space

#### *Wedding ceremonies are shaped after the design of buildings*

for worship - one can enter through the entire wall toward the forecourt. Columns are located in a strict and systematic way, forming an unchanged but highly charged field. As a result of this, Stan Allen explains how the viewer can move freely throughout the field. This can

be held in contrary to the Christian church and the Synagogue with their axial symmetry.<sup>[37]</sup>

The wedding ceremonies are shaped after the design of the buildings. Within Judaism and Christianity, the ceremonies are precise, one thing after another. The couple enter the space for worship through the main entrance, proceed down the aisle, towards a specific goal - the altar. It is of great importance how one enters and leaves the building. There is a serial order of "one thing after another". Within Islam, neither the space nor the ceremony is of major importance. The grand space for worship is not normally the room in the mosque being used. More often, the ceremony takes place in a meeting room or other informal enclosure. Ahmed Almofty, who works at Gothenburg's new mosque explains; "Within Islam, it is all about people coming together celebrating, it does not have to be in one specific way."



Field

Fibres nested together irregularly, representing the movement pattern in mosques.



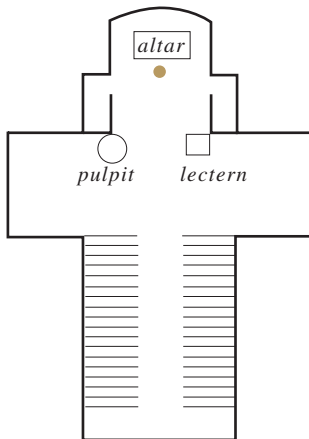
Axial symmetry

Churches and synagogues, being processional spaces.

# BUILDING TYPES

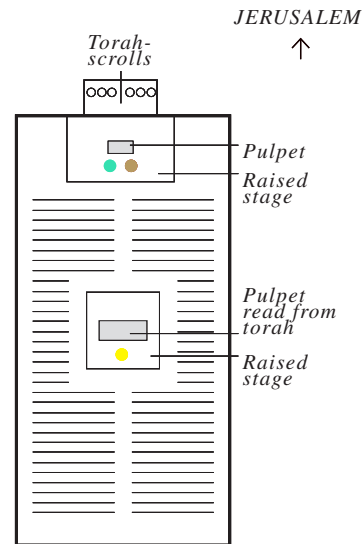
- interior and typical floor plans

## Cathedrals and churches



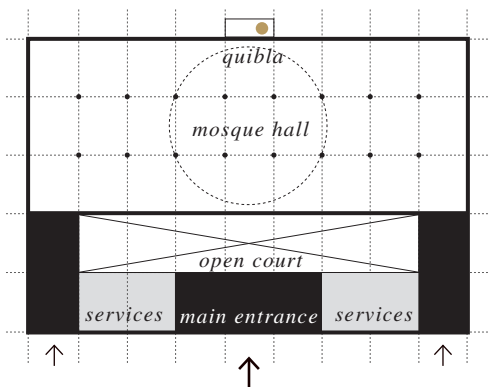
● Canon, priest

## Synagogue

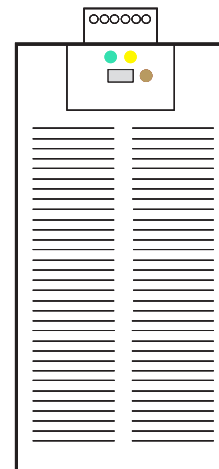


Typical orthodox floor plan

## Mosque



● Mullah



Reform floor plan

● Torah reader

● Precentor

● Rabbi

# MARRIAGE AND EQUALITY

## - a conclusion

We were both raised in a similar environment. Church was a place for school graduations and choir singing. Religion was a social, rather than spiritual part of our upbringing. Our parents have been married all of our lives, something that stood unquestioned.

Now we find ourselves at a similar place in life. Despite our upbringing, we have never dreamt of a white wedding and do not go to church. So why did we choose this subject?

### *Do we promote marriage?*

One could argue that it is a rare opportunity to thoroughly investigate one of the strongest traditions we have in our society, learn about religions that are not a part of our everyday life, and question our Christian upbringing. Another point of view would be that it offers us a chance to design, what is for us, unusual and somewhat dramatic architecture.

Most importantly perhaps, our subject always leads to interesting discussions. Everybody seems to have an opinion, either saying weddings and marriages are heaven or hell (and everything in between). Stories are told about fairytale weddings, heartbreaking domestic violence, the need for an alternative way to “validate” love, wedding shows on tv, nervous wedding nights, quick ceremonies at an embassy to obtain a legal visa...

### *Marriage means heaven or hell (and everything in between)*

There are so many things we do not agree with when it comes to marriage, considering women's rights. Ranging from limited independence for married women historically, to society's view of the “tragic” unmarried/divorced woman and the way children born outside of marriage have been treated.

Weddings have represented (and still represent) a ceremony of both joy and political power. The religious, social and cultural views on the female role as “the wife”, could - and should - be questioned.

But inequality associated with “marital bliss” run deeper than that. By excluding “unwanted” people from the the holy matrimony, marriage has been a way of stating ones role in society.<sup>[35]</sup> Attraction to the same sex, having epilepsy, being Jewish<sup>[36]</sup> - the reasons for being denied marriage have changed over time. However society's view on marriage can be concluded tradicly simply; a married person = a useful person.

We are fed with a romanticised idea of weddings and married life. Being led to the alter by one's father, wearing a white dress or taking your husband's surname might feel like an innocent custom, but they originate from traditions that most everyday women would not accept.

Yet, people keep getting married. Whether the result of a weak economy and need of stability, of religious views or wanting to celebrate true love, this ceremony ain't going nowhere. We would be naïve to believe that by denying its existance, people would reconsider their need of tradition and make everything into a political statement. Not to forget, there is great beauty to be found here as well. We respect the need for ceremonies and highlights in life. A tradition sprung from something questionable can be turned into something positive, equal and undeniably important. We belive in many kinds of love, and that makes this an important project.

By designing a building meant for civil wedding ceremonies we hope to have incorporated the magic moments that are undeniably created when two people choose each other. Whatever their reasons to marry, may it be strictly legal or two hearts bursting with love, they should feel welcome.

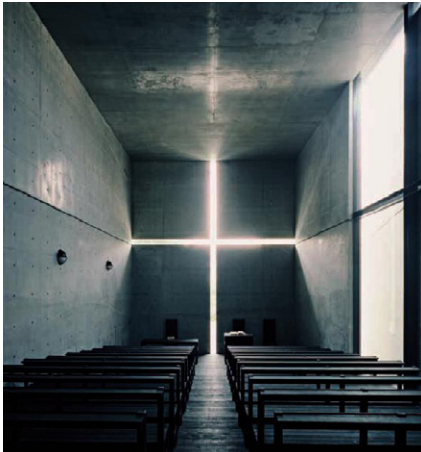
# DESIGNING WITH LIGHT

## - *a comparison*

### TADAO ANDO

- Sharp light/ high contrasts
- Using light to construct “objects” and highlight geometry
- Reflections are important, flat neutral materials are used
- Focus on natural light
- Darkness is used to define the sharp light
- Daylight concept - works best during the day
- Indirect raking light - you are not supposed to see where it comes from (compared to S Lewerentz who uses normal windows that everyone knows to be the normal source of light).

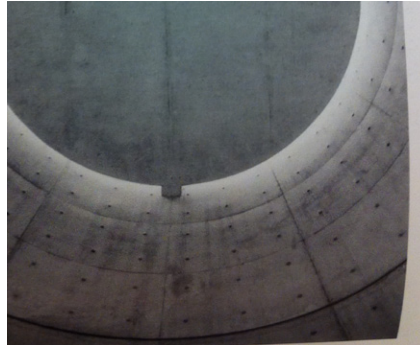
Church of Light, Osaka



Naoshima contemporary art museum



Unesco meditation space, Paris



Chapel on mountain rokko



## *SIGURD LEWERENTZ*

- Soft raking light from angled windows used to highlight specific areas
- Soft shadows, not in focus
- A small amount of natural light is contrasted with warm artificial light
- Custom made, low hanging fixtures
- Darkness important to set the warm atmosphere
- Often using dark, matte materials to diffuse light
- Works equally well when dark outside

St. Knuts kapell, Malmö



St. Petri kyrka, Klippan



Hoppets kapell, Malmö



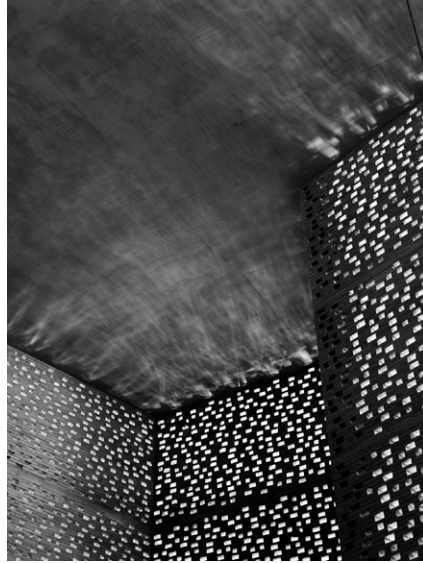
## *PETER ZUMTHOR*

- Fragmented lighting - but with gestures big enough to create a whole
- Light comes first hand, can always sense a clear concept
- Creates a spatial experience using light
- Focus on natural light
- Move away from traditional windows, lighting is an integrated part of the facade
- Light is often let in from above
- Shadows are important to emphasise depth and angles
- Light is used to highlight material properties

Bruder Klaus Chapel, Mechernich



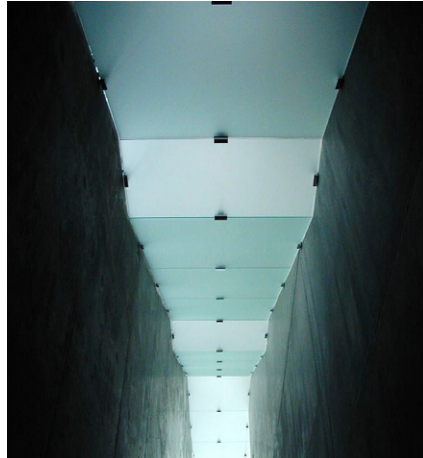
Kolumba museum, Köln



Saint Benedict chapel, Sumvitg



Kunsthhaus Bregenz



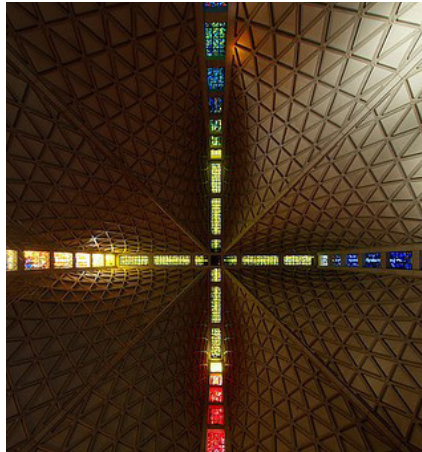
## *PIER LUIGI NERVI*

- The geometry of the construction is used to create patterns
- Natural light
- Shadows as important as light
- The depth of the structure helps to shape the shadows
- Light comes as a result of the load bearing structure - very consistently implemented

Cathedral of St Mary, San Francisco



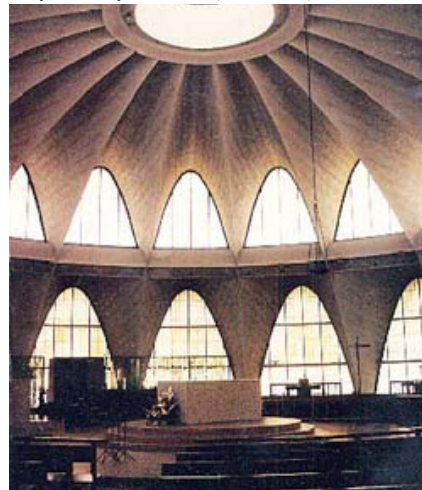
Cathedral of St Mary, San Francisco



Paul VI Audience Hall, Vatican City



Priory of St. Mary and St. Louis, Creve Coeur, Missouri USA



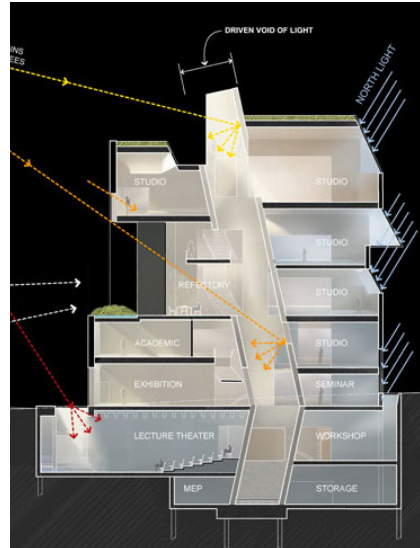
## STEVEN HOLL

- Light is often admitted from above, using different kinds of angled lanterns. This gives a wider spread of light and therefore softer shadows/lights.
- Carefully “directed” light to highlight different parts of the building
- Hidden light sources

Chapel of st. Ignatius -  
Jesuit chapel for Seattle University



Glasgow School of Art



Chapel of st. Ignatius



## *NILSSON & RAHMQVIST*

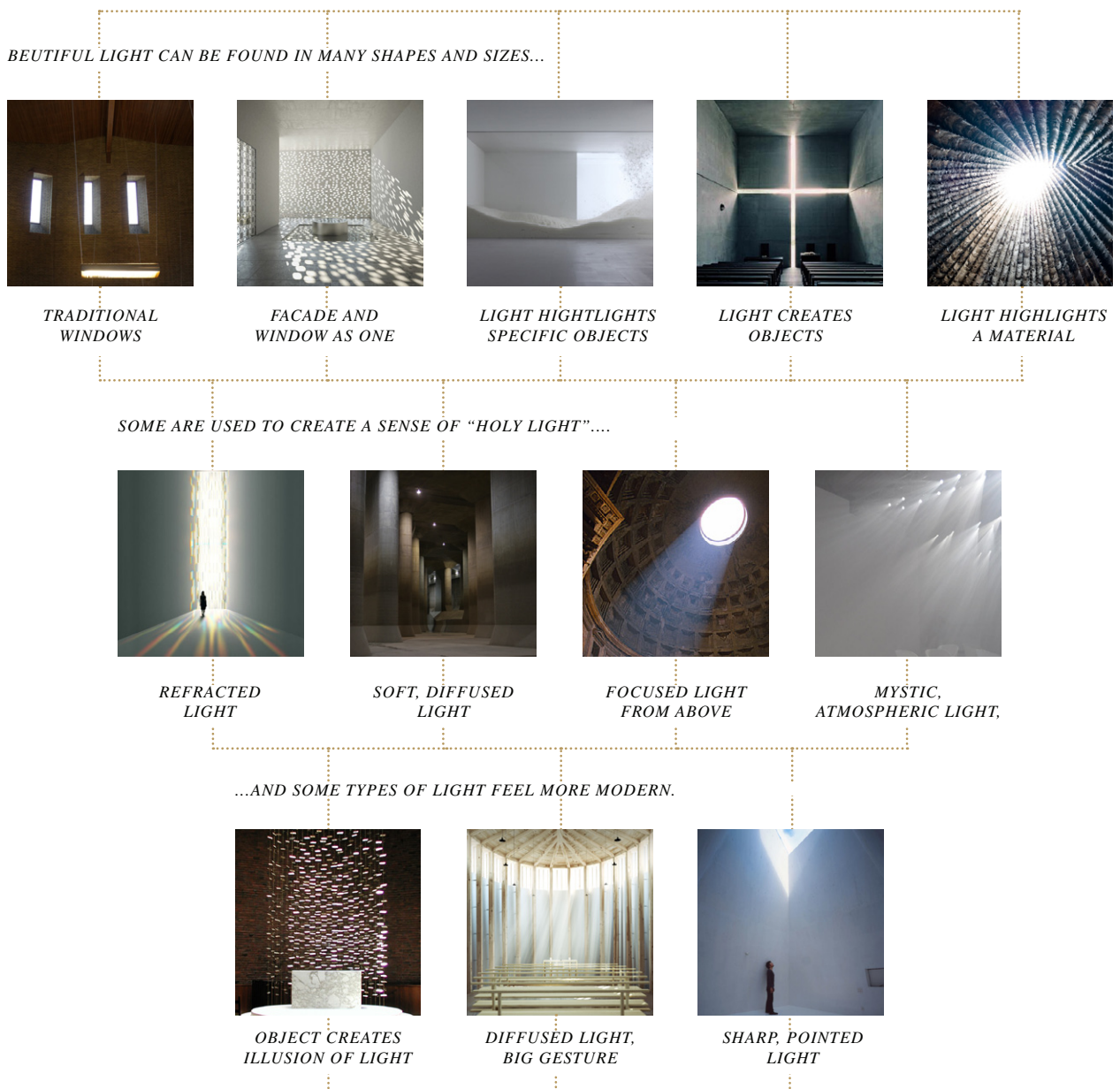
- Big “clean” windows with a three dimensional diffuser in front shape the light
- Artificial light is used to mimic circular skylights
- The asymmetrically placed windows are in focus, rather than the shadows they create
- Matte walls softens the light

Ceremonial building - Pål sjö



# DESIGNING WITH LIGHT

- a summary



# ACOUSTICS






## - worship spaces

The experience of space involves to a high degree the experience of sound. One has specific expectations of the acoustics, when entering a room. The importance of acoustics, especially in sacral environments, could not be overestimated.

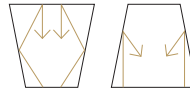
The church, mosque and synagogue have different requirements acoustically. Neither electric nor acoustic instruments are used in mosques and synagogues. In rooms intended for music, the ceiling is sometimes designed to scatter the sound toward the walls, then redirected toward the audience. This makes the sound source appear greater and blends the different instruments. This is, on the other hand, not desired in worship spaces in which the congregants expect the sound to come from one person, the speaker or the singer.<sup>[38]</sup>

Materials are as important and interesting for the acoustics as they are for the visual impression. The long reverberation in churches, for example, is a result of high ceiling height in combination with hard materials.

By deciding the volume size, materials and shape of the space one also decides the reverberation of sounds. It is desirable that sounds within 125-4000 Hz, the interval of human hearing, have the same reverberation. Maximum 45 dBA, preferably 35 dBA (silent as in a bed room).

SOUNDS SOURCE	CHURCH	CIVIL	MOSQUE	SYNAGOGUE
	●	●		●
	●	●	●	●
	●	●		
	●	●		
	●	●	●	●

### Acoustic tool box



First shape - long reverberation, second shape - short reverberation, (it provides more early reflected sounds)



Avoid plans with a length that is three times the width.

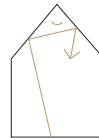
Good proportions:  $\frac{b}{l} = 1-1.6$



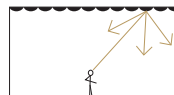
Avoid concave surfaces. Although domes are bad for acoustics, it works in mosques because of floors in rug materials.



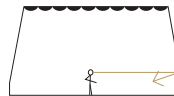
Do not design square shaped rooms. Wall angles should differ minimum 6-7°.



Apex angle less than 90° for best sound diffusion and envelopment.



The sound is scattered which blends, for example, different instruments.



The sound reaches the listeners directly. This is wanted when the congregants expect the sound to come from one person, a speaker or the singer.

# ACOUSTIC CONDITIONS

## - *our building*

### *Context*

The site is not above the London Underground and does not therefore require any special considerations regarding vibrations.

Goshwell Rd and Clerkenwell Rd are, according to Google maps, rated slow and medium busy regarding car traffic.

### *Building*

A well insulated heavy structure reduces noise. If more than 10% of the envelope consists of windows, extra sound insulating windows are required. High performance windows mean that noise from the street will be toned down but low frequency sounds produced within the building will be kept inside. There are special windows meeting both requirements.

To make a building as silent possible, homogeneous concrete cassettes as slabs are to be preferred. For good comfort, a soft buffer layer should be added between slab and floor. If we want to work with stone as floor material, sand dampens the impact sound.

Irregular surfaces are to be sought regarding walls, floors and roofs. One way of reducing low frequency sound using the interior is working with air bricks. Doors will probably not be enough to get a complete silence, “sluices” or “buffer zones” could be useful.

Working with double facades and consciously place silent rooms closer to the “core” of the building could help us reduce interior noise.

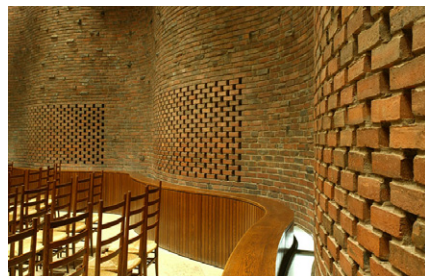
# DESIGNING WITH ACOUSTICS

*- a good example*

## *EERO SAARINEN*

The MIT chapel can be used by people of different religious beliefs. It is open to all members of MIT, for meditation or private events, such as weddings. The chapel seats 115 people.

Despite being a circular building (a shape generally difficult to deal with acoustically) the waving walls combined with airbrick makes this a well functioning acoustic environment. The striking light effect, created by a combination of reflecting objects and natural light, is inspiring.



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"Hoppets kapell", Östra kyrkogården, Malmö  
Domkyrkan, Göteborg  
S:ta Birgitta chapel, Östra kyrkogården, Malmö  
S:t Petri chapel, Klippan  
S:t Knut och S:ta Gertruds chapel, Östra kyrkogården, Malmö  
Synagogue, Göteborg  
Göteborgs new mosque  
Emirate Stadium, London  
Central Saint Martins, London  
Young Vic theatre and pub, London

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