

GOTHENBURG NEW ACADEMY OF BALLET

Or the search for timeless qualities through a contextual and straightforward architecture



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Supervisor: Mikael Ekegren
Examiner: Björn Gross

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CHALMERS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This thesis investigates and puts forward a building design for Balettakademien in Gothenburg. Currently located in a dark and unambitious industrial building in Gamlestaden, the academy's future on the site remains uncertain due to massive urban redevelopment taking place in the area. Therefore, this thesis suggests that the school relocates to a more prominent location on Linnégatan where it will be linked to Teaterstråket and other adjacent dance venues, admitting a larger extent of collaboration between dance groups.

Further, this thesis departs from the crafts-focused thoroughness of 'den frihetliga traditionen', a direction often described as a modern architecture without modernism, as a way to search for and discuss timeless qualities in architecture. Above all, focus has been put on applying the working method of the tradition: that a design should dive straight into the heart of the matter, derive from the immediate restraints of program and context, and be measured in how straightforward and self-explanatory the proposal is in achieving purposefulness and beauty.

Through case studies of relevant dance academies and references within 'den frihetliga traditionen', spatial configurations are analyzed and refined to suit the site and program accordingly. Moreover, the surroundings of Linnégatan provide both a clear palette of materials and a distinct grammar in facade composition to respond to. The proposal needs to perform a balancing act of interpreting and relating to what is already there while at the same time develop an individual expression of its own. This thesis suggests a narrative loyal to its surroundings where the interaction between detail and the whole makes up the spatial tension, and where variation lies in composition and different ways of processing materials.

Being a respectful interpretation of the past and an answer to present needs, the proposal seeks to add value to its urban setting and build on Gothenburg's honorable tradition of providing its citizens with cultural institutions of high dignity.

Keywords:

Building Design, Dance Academy, Den Frihetliga Traditionen, Contextual Adaptation

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Figure 1.

Student background

Robin Bylund

1987	Born in Trollhättan, Västra Götaland		
2013-2016	Chalmers University of Technology Architecture - BSc. Independent Courses	180 42	ECTS ECTS
2016-2017	Krook & Tjäder Architecture Internship		
2017-2018	Chalmers University of Technology Architecture - MSc.	90	ECTS
	Sustainable Development and the Design Professions	7.5	ECTS
	Residential Healthcare	22.5	ECTS
	Architectural Competitions	4.5	ECTS
	Gender and Norm-critical Design	3.0	ECTS
	Housing Inventions	22.5	ECTS
	Master Thesis Preparation Course 1	4.5	ECTS
	Master Thesis Preparation Course 2	3.0	ECTS
	Matter Space Structure	22.5	ECTS



Figure 2.

Student background

Hans Carlsson

1994	Born in Älmhult, Småland		
2013-2016	Chalmers University of Technology Architecture & Engineering - BSc. Independent Courses	180 9	ECTS ECTS
2016-2017	Norconsult Architecture Internship		
2017-2018	Chalmers University of Technology Architecture - MSc.	90	ECTS
	Sustainable Development and the Design Professions	7.5	ECTS
	Architecture and Urban Space Design	22.5	ECTS
	Nordic Architecture	4.5	ECTS
	Urban Planning and Design Theory	3.0	ECTS
	Housing Inventions	22.5	ECTS
	Master Thesis Preparation Course 1	4.5	ECTS
	Master Thesis Preparation Course 2	3.0	ECTS
	Matter Space Structure	22.5	ECTS
	Independent courses	12	ECTS

Aim

The overarching aim of this thesis is to take inspiration from the refined simplicity of the architecture within 'den frihetliga traditionen' and its straightforward design method as a starting point for discussing architectural qualities and implement these in a building design. An important part of this approach is to investigate how the surrounding buildings can serve as a framework and palette, contributing to a design proposal that is sensitive to the site yet has its own expression.

On a second note, over the course of thirty years there have been plans to erect dense residential buildings on the site, with a great risk of ruining its urban spatial qualities. Therefore, a second aim is to propose an alternative where the urban space is redefined and kept public.

Research question

How can a building design, inspired by program and context, acquire a sense of timeless robustness through its focus on careful details and straightforwardness?

Sub-questions

Inspired yet independent

How can the building design allow for both an individual expression as well as becoming a coherent addition to the existing urban fabric? Further, to what extent can external references, unspecific to the site but similar to the theme of the thesis, act as an inspirational tool?

Detail and the whole

This thesis claims that a building can become more complex and interesting by introducing a framework that in its limitations unifies the detail and the whole into a common grammar. What rules, and how many are required to make this grammar versatile enough to allow for the complex but not chaotic, the simple but not boring. Is it a grammar of form, colour, materiality or perhaps a combination of the three that is necessary to establish the relationship between intricate crafts and grand gestures?

Method

As a starting point, visits to Balettakademien, the city of Gothenburg's cultural department and other key venues will assist in understanding their respective programs and map out the Gothenburgian dance scene and its overall needs.

The project will then depart from a site analysis where characteristic features of the built surroundings such as facade composition, scale, building typologies etc. are studied. To support our own documentations from site visits, drawings from the municipal planning office and photographs from books, publications and archives etc. will serve as the most important source material. Archived drawings are not only excellent to study proportions and structure with, they are also a particularly useful tool for tracing the history of a building and its relation to the original intentions of a site as a whole.

Further, case studies of references within 'den frihetliga traditionen' together with suitable examples of dance academies will complement the contextual analysis with aspects that are freer in relation to the place such as light, material and spatial configuration.

Alongside the above-mentioned, the design proposal will evolve using an iterative process driven by building models and producing drawings and images. This idea of evaluating a base concept with refined alternatives in a continuous and steady dialogue makes this a research-by-design project.

Delimitations

This thesis does not aim at producing a building design with generic traits and an appearance that makes it applicable anywhere. On the contrary, it stresses the importance of having every project depart from its own set of conditions, and it encourages the architect to use their respective uniqueness to his or her advantage. If one wishes to find a general tool for any project to benefit from within this thesis, it is the method and not the results that should be reproduced. Or to put this aspect of straightforwardness in another way: the smallest and most narrow route will always adjust its serpentine from place to place, the principles to find it remain the same.

When looking at the Gothenburg branch of Balettakademien and its current economic situation, actual figures remain undisclosed. However, it is likely to assume that the school itself cannot sustain the proposed move to such a central location without having to include new ways of gathering income. One possible solution is to imitate how Balettakademien in Stockholm remains open after school for evening classes. Another one is to co-facilitate the building with independent freelancing dancers as proposed in the 2018 municipal report investigating the future of the Gothenburgian dance scene (Ölund, 2018). However, just like this thesis chooses to relate freely to this report, the economic model for Balettakademien has not been heavily focused on and should be considered speculative.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies in text and built references

Den frihetliga traditionen

Jan Gezelius coins 'den frihetliga traditionen' in a debate article defending the winning proposal in the 1986-87 competition for Vasamuseet (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989 pp. 31-32). As carriers of this direction he lists a series of names such as Klas Anshelm and Erik & Tore Ahlsén for having stood firm throughout the twentieth-century in fostering an architecture that was straightforward, purposeful and crafts-oriented. The tradition represented an antidote to the influential postmodern discourse that was as dominant at the time as it was despised by Gezelius. To him, postmodernism, or any other -ism for that sake, was only capable of achieving poetry in its rhetoric but never in its built form. In Gezelius' world, architecture can never be reduced to a set of dogmatic principles, it needs to be rooted in every specific situation.

When later asked to elaborate on the tradition in a series of interviews, new names are added to the list and a family tree of master-apprentice relations grows forward with roots in KFAI (The architecture firm of the Swedish Co-operative Union) and Gunnar Asplund (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989, 31-32). The respective stems can be read as two parallel tracks, with the first one representing more of rational objectivity and social commitment and the latter academical aesthetics and artistry.

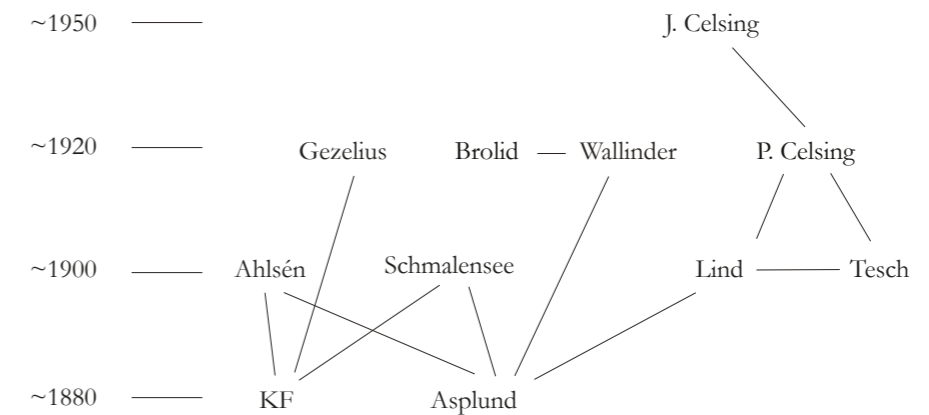
History and evolution

To understand what kind of historical backdrop the tradition sprung out of, two aspects in particular need to be accounted for. The most obvious circumstance has to do with the war against decorative ornaments. Perhaps most famously personified by Adolf Loos¹, this principle came to dominate the modernist discussion around the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 and the release of legendary manifesto *Acceptera* (1931) - the years when modernism truly struck Sweden. This was abstraction as aesthetics². At the same time, the lack of right materials to fulfill the new visual ideals, such as reinforced iron for concrete and asphalt for flat roofs, made it difficult for modernism to break on a wider front. Thus, architects were forced to fall back on wood building techniques and traditional elements like pitched roofs in many of their works³.

Times of uncompromising ideology and material scarcity made frugality a necessary condition for the architecture. It formed a principle whose influence on the tradition really cannot be stressed enough. Even in present times with material abundance and a changed discourse, frugality continues to be honored as a key point of departure by architects loyal to the tradition.

By the end of the second world war, Sweden came out as one of few intact European countries and could finally tend to the building of the people's home.

Year of birth



Grasping the master-apprentice relationships is key to understand how knowledge and references are inherited and carried forward in 'den frihetliga traditionen'. This version is the author's interpretation of an existing diagram (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989).

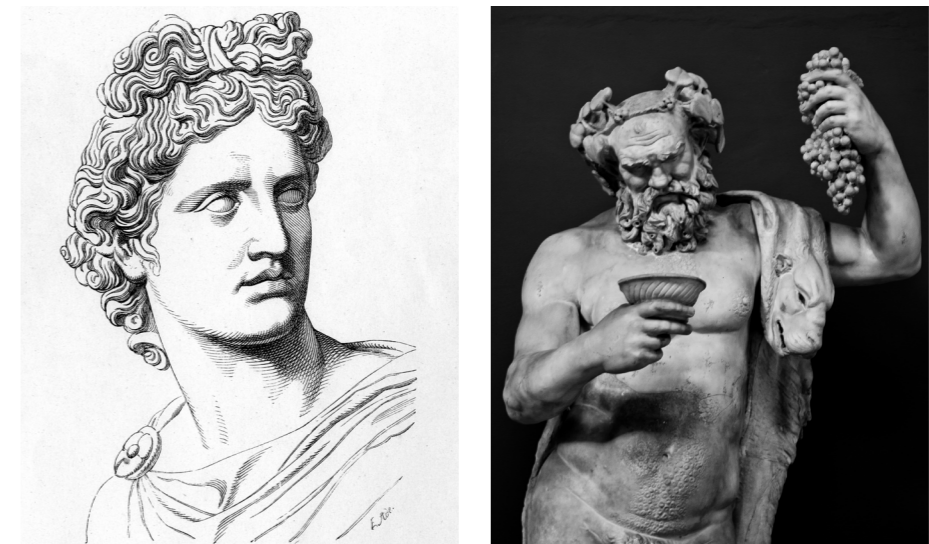


Figure 3-4. Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus are often used to describe the creative tug-of-war between emotional containment and poetic romanticism ("Apollo Belvedere", n.d.) & (Key, 2013).

¹Loos did indeed take a critical stance against ornaments, however he would never agitate in favor of an anti-historical modernism. On the contrary, Loos saw the war on ornaments, and a new modern aesthetics as a necessary continuation of history and made several statements to confirm this including "Der zukünftige große Architekt wird ein Klassiker sein" (Billing, 2008 pp. 160).

²One should not forget that Swedish architecture by this time already stood in a phase of abstraction with the stylization of classical elements within the Nordic Classicist style, consequently paving way for a smoother functionalist breakthrough (Linn, 1982, pp. 16).

³Olle Svedberg points out in *Planernas Arbundrade: Europas Arkitektur på 1900-talet* however, that it would not take long before the lack of material lost its role as the prime driving force away from the abstract sugar cube modernism. It had already before the second world war been condemned by own advocates as too dogmatic and elitist.

History and evolution (cont.)

Frightened by absolute ideologies and the atrocities they had brought upon the world, a new, non-dogmatic language grew forward. In short one could say this was a direction with less engineering aesthetics and more of garden city ideals. Picturesque neighborhood units with a richness in colors and shapes replaced strict functionalist ideas of zoning, and in England, the Swedish development was labeled 'New Empiricism' and 'New Humanism'. When James Stirling in 1966 would summarize this early post-war architecture he states, "Let's face it, William Morris was a Swede", as an ironic way of confirming the move of Swedish architecture from Apollonian tightness towards Dionysian romanticism (Svedberg, 1988, pp.135). Beyond the romantic however, Olle Svedberg emphasizes works such as Årsta centrum (1943-53), Guldheden centrum (1945-46) and Friluftsstaden in Malmö (1944) as carriers of a realist tradition. The realism derives from adapting a modern language to regional building techniques and material use, which to him explains why their popularity remains strong even today.

It is interesting to note what influence the Danish architect Kay Fisker and the somewhat earlier, 'funktionelle tradition' he represented would have on 'den frihetliga traditionen'. They both share a view that the international style should be given a distinct national identity in terms of materiality and tectonics. And when looking deeper into works like Fisker's Århus university campus (1932-46) and the Kingo houses (1958-59) by Jörn Utzon, one cannot avoid how the buildings, in true Gezelius manner, are softly subordinating themselves to a dialogue with the landscape. Simultaneously, the projects are heavily characterized by a modernist volume abstraction and uniformity in material, be it yellow bricks instead of white plaster (Svedberg, 1988, pp. 97-98). The biggest difference probably lies in the overarching aim. Though departing from a similar time and aesthetics, 'Den funktionelle tradition' settles for modifying functionalism, while 'den frihetliga traditionen' moves forward through time and keeps a flexible openness to both historical and contemporary discourses.

The openness is key to understand why an architectural piece like Härlanda kyrka (1952-58) with its strokes of postmodern disobedience can belong to the tradition. The answer is simple: the links in the chain that makes up 'den frihetliga traditionen' have never been based on preserving an absolute style. When Celsing manipulates the façade in Härlanda kyrka, he is no more different than Asplund when he stirs up frustration with Villa Snellman (1918). Though they represent different styles and different typologies, the purpose of the mannerism is the same: to create spatial tension and a narrative that both enriches the expression of the building and its ability to stand in dialogue with its surroundings.



Figure 5. Aarhus Universitet - Kay Fisker's strict brick regionalism (Venge, n.d.).



Figure 6. The playful and lively Årsta centrum by Erik & Tore Ahlsén (Sundabl, 1954).



Figure 7. An everyday-life square by Gunnar Wejke & Kjell Ödeen ("Guldhedens torg", n.d.).

Clarifying the notion

In an attempt to clarify the common characteristics of 'den frihetliga traditionen', Claes Caldenby talks about the poetic and the objective (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989, pp. 32-33). Indeed, no one who hears the Ahlsén-brothers talk about the importance of diving straight into the matter can doubt how apparent the principles of rationalism are within the tradition (v Matérn, 1980, pp. 37). Still, this is an architecture that leaves the door open to both historical references and local building traditions. Perhaps more than anyone else, Gezelius is very clear in maintaining a strong relationship with history and its old masters. He problematizes German art theories of juxtaposing the classical and the gothic as too one-dimensional and reminds us that even the renaissance in Florence strived for balance between harmony and dynamics (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989, pp. 73-74). Theories like these are simply too crude instruments to tell important nuances apart. Consequently, a reference should never be dismissed for representing the "wrong style".

This strive to merge the modern with the traditional, allows for a rich vocabulary and an architecture of softer compromises towards its surroundings. However, with a great palette comes great responsibilities, and Gezelius reminds that within the 'free' lies an explosive anarchism that has not only tremendous potential but also requires a strong discipline to be tamed and used to its advantage (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989, pp. 74).

Another characteristic for this architecture lies in its approach. A design should depart from direct conditions like program and the potential and history of a site. From this framework, a process of refinement begins to take shape, with the aim of creating architecture that is as purposeful as it is simple in its expression. If the result manages to emit a convincing self-evident existence, or as Gezelius states "explain the landscape to the landscape itself by building it", the architecture has fulfilled all its demands (Caldenby, 2016 pp.74). This is architecture in dialogue, the self-interested and spectacular works need not bother.

A typical implication when making a lot with a little is that time is reallocated away from complex forms in favor of questions of materiality and details. Caldenby calls this an architecture on the craftsman's terms, and he points out that the downscaled focus is often being reflected in how architects loyal to the tradition often have small firms with a carefully selected production (Caldenby and Walldén, 1989, pp. 33).

Sprung out of a mediating process between the modern and the traditional, it is no surprise to find that some of the finest spatial qualities in the works within 'den frihetliga traditionen' is the result of this balance act. In the Woodland Cemetery, the colonnade that frames the biblical landscape upon leaving the Chapel of the Holy Cross is a phenomenal example where the infinite room in modernism and the closed sequential room in classicism enhance each other. At a smaller scale, the extended stair landings in Kiruna City Hall and the Gothenburg Courthouse Extension have a similar effect. By stretching out further than usual they form a sort of transition space that simultaneously belong to the stair and the foyer. Spaces that gradually change and dare to be either or have therefor a special history in 'den frihetliga traditionen'. Björn Linn talks about these 'interpenetrative' rooms, a transformation in depth, as a common feature in the Nordic Classicist architecture, reminiscing us about Asplund and his roots (Linn, 1982, pp. 20).



Figure 8. Asymmetrical interpretations come into play at Gunnar Asplund's Gothenburg Courthouse Extension ("Göteborgs rådhus", n.d.).



Figure 9. Asplund's Chapel of the Holy Cross - a phenomenal example of an interpenetrative room (Rosenberg, n.d.).

Reflections

There are several similarities between 'den frihetliga traditionen' and the more internationally famous term 'critical regionalism' - made famous by Kenneth Frampton - that deserve to be elaborated a bit further. Both notions seek a dialogue between the local and the universal cultures, and they both plea for an architecture that is so steadily rooted in its context it can provide a resistance to the kind of stupefying design whose sole purpose is to please commercial interests (Caldenby, 2016, pp. 74-76). Frampton longs for a time when the spectacular effects of a generic skyscraper no longer can outshine the emptiness of its lack of place. However, with arbitrary free-form exercises dominating the growing discipline of parametric design, the temptation to produce the next famous shape remains an obstacle towards a more human-, and user-centered architecture. If Frampton believes that architecture should have to do with humans, surely, he can find comfort in Gezelius talking about the architect as 'the scenographer of life' (Grotenfelt, 2016, pp. 73).

Difficult as they might be to define, behind the ideas within 'den frihetliga traditionen' lies an impressive catalogue of works. The Chapel of the Holy Cross, the Gothenburg Courthouse extension, Härlanda kyrka and Kiruna stadshus are just a few examples of buildings of unprecedented quality in Sweden and arguably on the international scene as well. And with so many buildings considered carriers of timeless qualities, 'den frihetliga traditionen' continues to be a steadfast antidote to self-interested architecture, making Gezelius call to arms as relevant today as it was in 1987.

Årsta kyrka

Årsta kyrka is situated just a few steps away from its humbling namesake Årsta centrum, one of the masterpieces of the Ahlsén brothers. Still, it was Göran Dahlstrand's parish hall from 1968, already standing on the rocky site that made up Celsing's canvas that was going to be the most dominant source of inspiration. It is no doubt that its modern abstractions and clear-cut geometries served as an important point of departure as Celsing shaped his own addition.

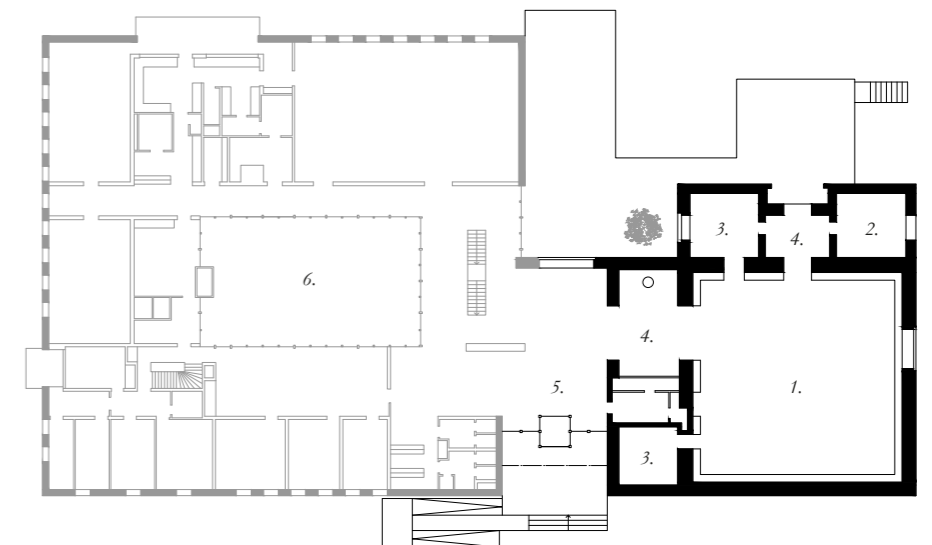
Already upon arrival, one can see Celsing's strive to relate to Dahlstrand's cuboid shapes in the way he treats his proposal as a composition of sharp edges. The brick is so dominant in wrapping the envelope that the eaves are reduced to no more than a thin line of sheet metal and in all cases but one, the windows are aligned with the wall. The result of treating the perforations like this also provide separate narratives for the interior and exterior. On the outside, you read a solid volume, a surface, where the sense of depth is reduced to subtle notes, whereas the thick niches on the inside create enclosure and spatial tension by reminding us of the vast forces that are contained within the walls.

Like any other suburban church, the program in Årsta is small and reflects on the simple needs of its parish. The main hall needs to consider the scale of a quite modest Sunday service and yet it should, at least on occasion, have the acoustical qualities to work as a concert venue as well. Celsing's answer to this is a square that is small in plan but towers high over the visitor to approximate a cube in its volume, giving the room a rich reverberation.

Another consequence to this stretch upwards is an accentuated verticality, which is also repeated in the proportions of the vast windows. As a counterweight to this, Celsing creates a partition of the wall into three elements. First, he defines a horizontal frame by having white glazed bricks reach about the height of a person. From there, a matte plastered brick takes over and stretches up to the concrete lid ceiling, the third element which is also emphasized in the exterior, from which a set of concrete beams playfully run across from side to side. The fragmenting of the wall, particularly through the glazed brick frame, is a well-balanced compensation for the large volume he creates, and his attempt to control the spatial experience is equally impressive when he hides the window frames from the inside to create the illusion of crisply cut holes in the wall. These are architectural interventions showing that sometimes, if you are skilled enough, you can both have the cake and eat it.

Without the clear-cut conditions of its surroundings Årsta kyrka would have never found its shape. Moreover, Celsing's consistent use of brick and the way that concrete elements act as a contrasting frame to openings confirms the close kinship to father Peter Celsing and his roughly fifty-year older Hårlanda kyrka. Independent yes, but it is also a work in open dialogue with its predecessors and memories of the past.

When a room is made abstract, the care for what is left becomes even more important. In Årsta kyrka, this was turned into an ideology, making it a good example that straightforwardness and frugality indeed can be ingredients for good architecture.



1. Nave
2. Sacristy
3. Chapel
4. Church Porch
5. Entrance
6. Parish hall (grey)

Simple geometries and carefully studied sequences make up the spatial richness in Årsta kyrka.

Balettakademien

Balettakademien was founded in Stockholm in 1957 by dance teacher and choreographer Lia Schubert in collaboration with Folkuniversitetet after having taught evening classes there for several years. Despite its seemingly conservative name, it filled a clear void by being the only professional dance school apart from the Royal Opera in Sweden that educated in other dances than classical ballet. The openness towards new influences and techniques have always been a trademark for the school. Already from the beginning, Balettakademien was first in the country to introduce ballet training on the floor as a substitute to the barres, and in the seventies the school broke new ground by bringing pilates to the Swedish dance stage. Moreover, with Schubert's far reaching international contacts, the school managed to establish themselves as a prominent scene for jazz dance in the 1960's by securing people such as Walter Nicks and later also Charles Moore as guest teachers.

The education branched out to Gothenburg ten years after its opening in Stockholm and was originally situated in the art-nouveau building that resides as neighbour to the Gothenburg Cathedral on Kungsgatan 39. Having been intermediately located in Mölndal for some years, Balettakademien found its current location in Gamlestaden the 1980's, the same decade the school initiated a three-year-long musical theatre programme. The musical profile is a specific characteristic for the Gothenburg academy, which is also reflected in the programming of the facilities, for example in the need for black boxes, song rooms and a large scene. As of today, the school offers tertiary training in dance and musical theatre for a total of 120 students on approximately 2400 square meters.

Throughout its more than sixty-year-old history, the repertoire has developed and changed just as trends come and go. Nowadays, the education focuses as much on classes in hiphop/street-, modern- and contemporary dance as it does in the classical line-up. This natural process of an art form developing through time can partly be seen in the architecture, not at least in an increased need of a durable and robust floor that works as well with sneakers as it does with ballerina shoes. However, the general need of well-proportioned mirror halls with rich ceiling heights remain equally relevant today as it did when Degas painted the ballerinas at the Opéra Le Peletier.



Figure 10. Daylight and steadfast proportions appear to be timeless aspects of a dance hall. Indeed, not much seems to have changed since Degas painted his crisp 'ballet rehearsal' to today (Degas, 1873).

Balettakademien Stockholm

Situated along Birger Jarlsgatan, the street intersecting two of Stockholm's most vibrant and prominent neighbourhoods, Balettakademien have prospered in its tailor-made lamella house since 1996. Mimicking the footprint, scale and pastel green facade from its older neighbour, Stockholms Borgarskola, it makes full use of its potential with a 3000 square meter program in a compact envelope.

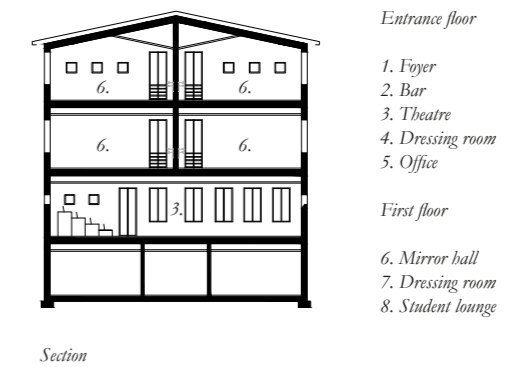
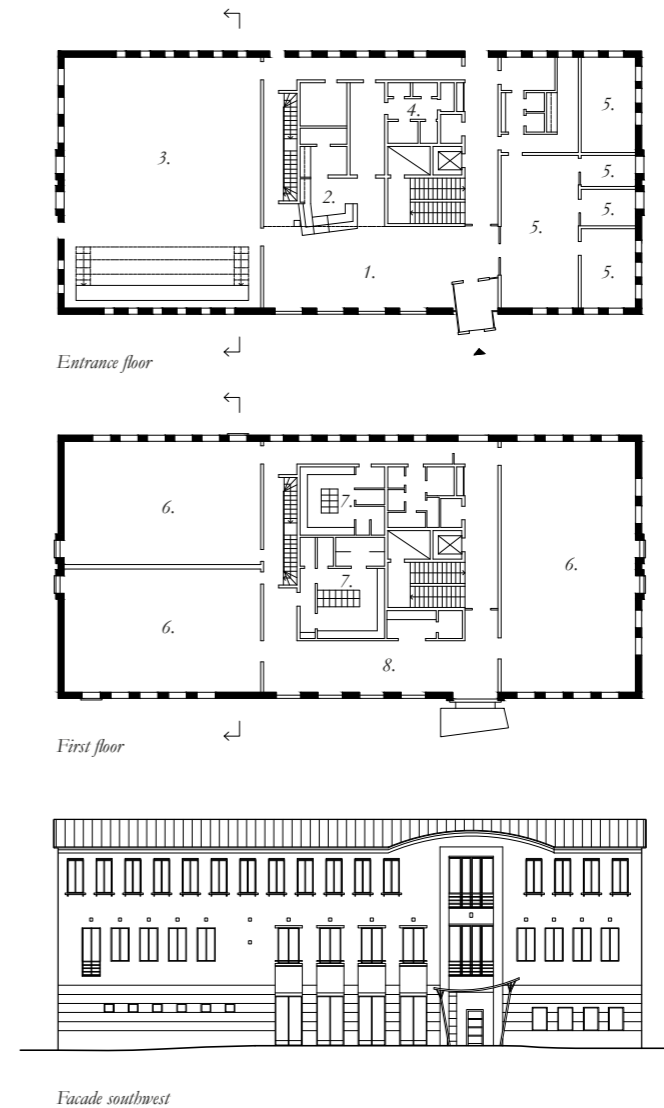
The asymmetrically placed entrance, highlighted with an arc shaped roof contour, is not only an aesthetical element. It creates a clever division of the plan where the middle segments of each floor become continuous lounge spaces without jeopardizing the idea of having as many high-quality dance halls as possible. A thick floor slab makes columns in the mirror halls abundant. They are further given at least two facades each to ensure the dancers have a rich and varied daylight throughout the day. A square shaped core housing the dressing rooms and communication of the building fills a double purpose by stabilizing the structure and make circular movement possible through its slight retraction from all facades.



Facade facing Birger Jarlsgatan with its accentuated entrance.



Interior view of a mirror ball with light dancing from the wall down to the well-worn linoleum carpet.



Balettakademien Göteborg

Arriving in front of a low-rising, yet vast-spreading, industrial building, Balettakademien in Gothenburg is set just a few steps away from Gamlestadens brand-new high-rises and transport hub. An example perhaps as good as any to tell the story of an area with huge contrasts in vivid transformation.

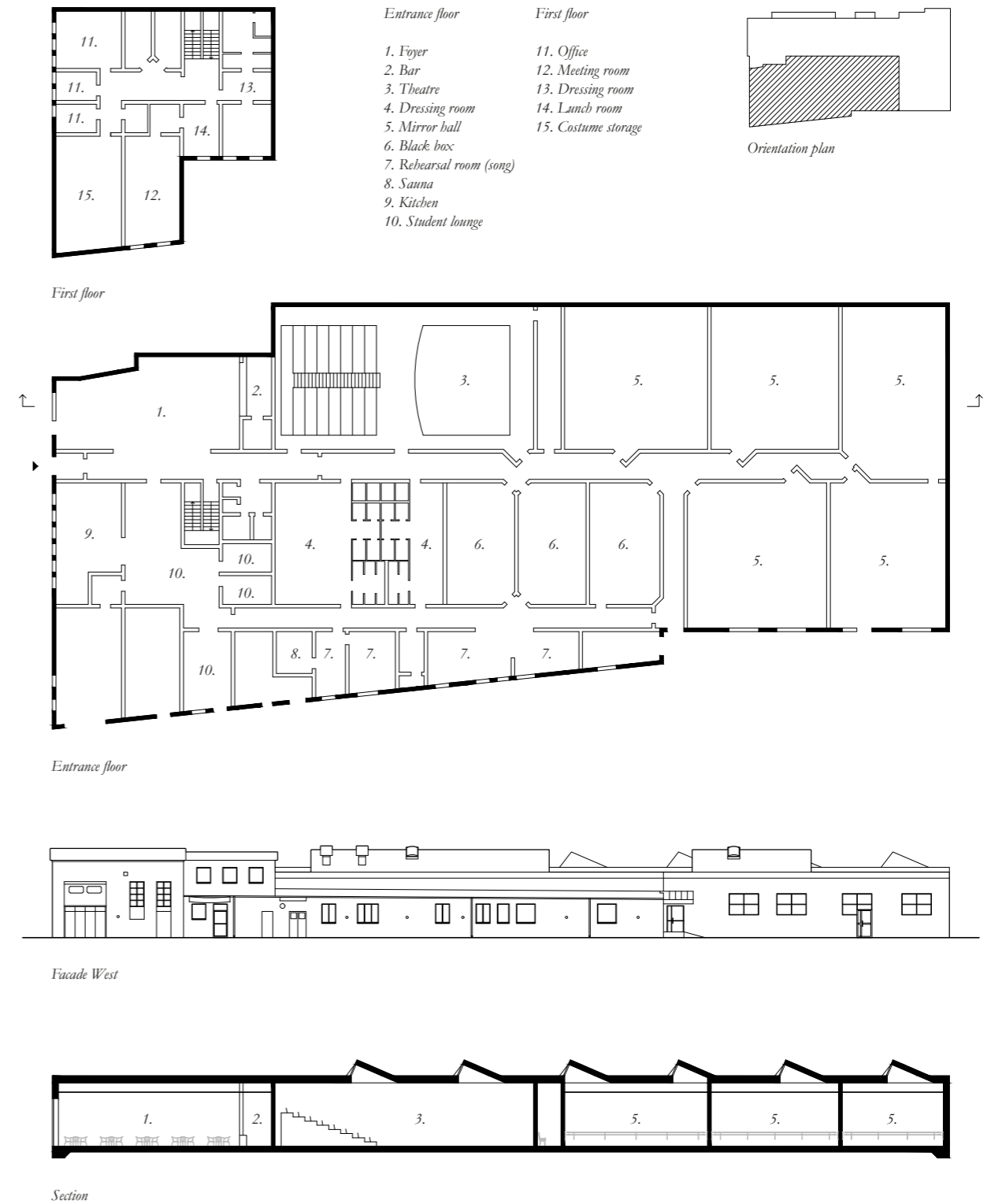
Entering from the short side, two seemingly infinite corridors that run parallel to each another are broken down in scale by having angled wall pieces cut the sightlines and redirect the movement. Black boxes and a functional core are placed in-between this circulation as they do not demand daylight. Following a gradient of privacy, the public spaces in form of foyer, bar and theatre are placed close to the entrance while square-shaped mirror halls are repeated as one moves further into the building. Mirror halls that lack contact to a facade receives a glimpse of daylight from skylights. A second-floor housing administration and storage can also be accessed quickly upon arrival. Sturdy materials, high ceilings and its thick volume work as reminder of the building's industrial past.



Entrance facade with its shifting roofscapes.



Interior view of a mirror ball that is as tall as it is austere in its decoration.



PLAN, FACADE & SECTION 1:500

A possible future

Though Balettakademien in Gothenburg serves its functional purpose and is run with all the competence and passion you might ask for, the building where it resides leaves dull architectural impression with its dark rooms and endless corridors. Moreover, being situated in the industrial and noisy part of Gamlestaden that is currently undergoing a huge urban redevelopment, the future of Balettakademien remains uncertain as the land might be considered too attractive for today's low-density use.

Meanwhile, the City of Gothenburg and the Region Västra Götaland are investigating how to create better conditions for freelancing dancers by establishing a fixed scene and a production environment within the city. During the summer of 2018, a dialogue process was held with six of Gothenburg's dance venues, resulting in a report comparing three scenarios with programs ranging all the way from 1000 to 10000 square meters. The idea of gathering multiple studios in one large venue requires a significant amount of funding, which tells something about the level of ambition that lies within this campaign.

With the history of Balettakademien in consideration, this thesis proposes the school to relocate back into the city centre by choosing an empty plot along Linnégatan. Apart from the obvious benefits of a central location lies a strive to connect with the adjacent Teaterstråket and other dance venues nearby. This would hopefully lead to synergy effects, where the building could be utilized by both independent freelancers, dance companies and public classes during evenings and weekends, making it a vibrant focal point for dance in the city.



Figure 11. Visionary illustration of Gamlestaden where the current location of Balettakademien and its industrial building are replaced by a new building block (orange) (Göteborgs Stad, 2016).

SITE ANALYSIS

An exploration in urban connections and existing material- and facade palette

Mapping



Figure 12. Image showing the current location of Balettakademien in Gamlestaden (orange) together with the proposed site in Linnéstaden (pink) (Göteborgs Stad, 2012).



Figure 13. Mapping of dance and theatre venues in close proximity to the proposed site (pink). Overlapping dots suggest that a place houses both functions (Göteborgs Stad, 2012).

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ● Teaterstråket | ● Dance Venues | ● Folkuniversitetet |
| 1. Stora teatern | 13. GöteborgsOperan | 20. Main building |
| 2. Teater Jaguar | 14. Dansforum | 21. Art College |
| 3. Atalante | 15. Danskompaniet Spinn | |
| 4. Hagateatern | 16. Embla Dans & Teater | |
| 5. Folkeatern | 17. World Dance Company | |
| 6. Teater UNO | 18. Danslagret | |
| 7. Mastbygsteatern | 19. Danscentrum Väst | |
| 8. Teater Trixer | | |
| 9. 2Lång | | |
| 10. Göteborgs Dramatiska Teater | | |
| 11. Teater Sesam | | |
| 12. Gest | | |



LINNÉSTADEN - CITY PLAN 1:5000



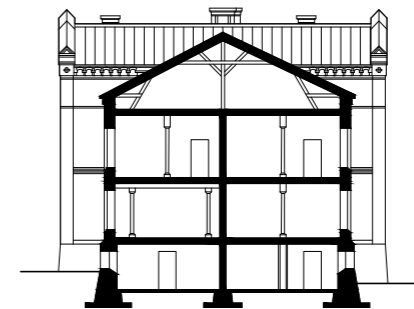
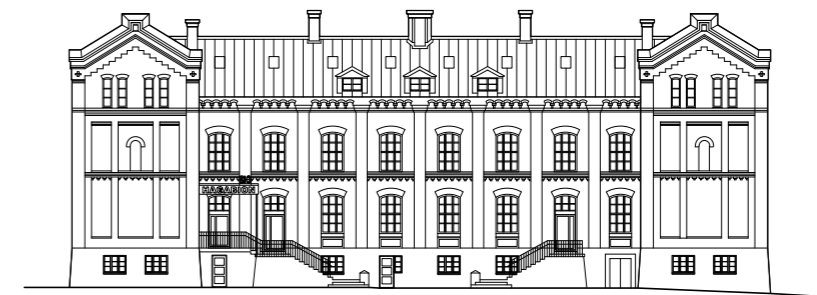
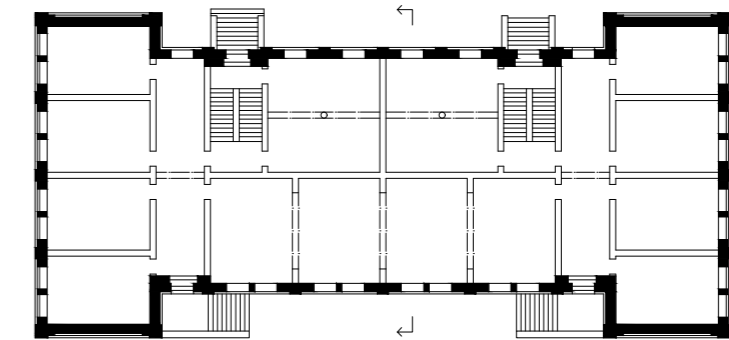
LINNÉGATAN - SIGHTLINES & OPEN SPACES 1:5000

Viktoriahuset

Built in 1875-77, Viktoriahuset was the first stone building to be erected in Olivedal, even before Linnégatan was created. It acted as a school, housing 750 children in various ages for a hundred years up until 1975. What is today a big parking lot used to be the schoolyard, originally with trees and an outhouse.

The building is owned by the city and was rebuilt in 1981 to house non-profit associations. About 20 different associations are located there today, all working with questions regarding culture, environment, peace and solidarity. Hagabion, a cinema with restaurant and bar is probably the one most familiar to the public.

The building consists of a basement, two floors and an attic. A plinth of robust granite constitutes the heavy base upon which walls of mainly red brick sits firmly. Pilasters and details in yellow brick adds verticality and gives the building a distinct rhythm. Seen from Järntorget, the east facade and north gable of Viktoriahuset is an important motif and a starting point of the landscape of rooftops that climbs up Kråkestadsberget in the distance. Viktoriahuset is protected by a saving program of historically important buildings in Gothenburg.



PLAN, FACADES & SECTION 1:500

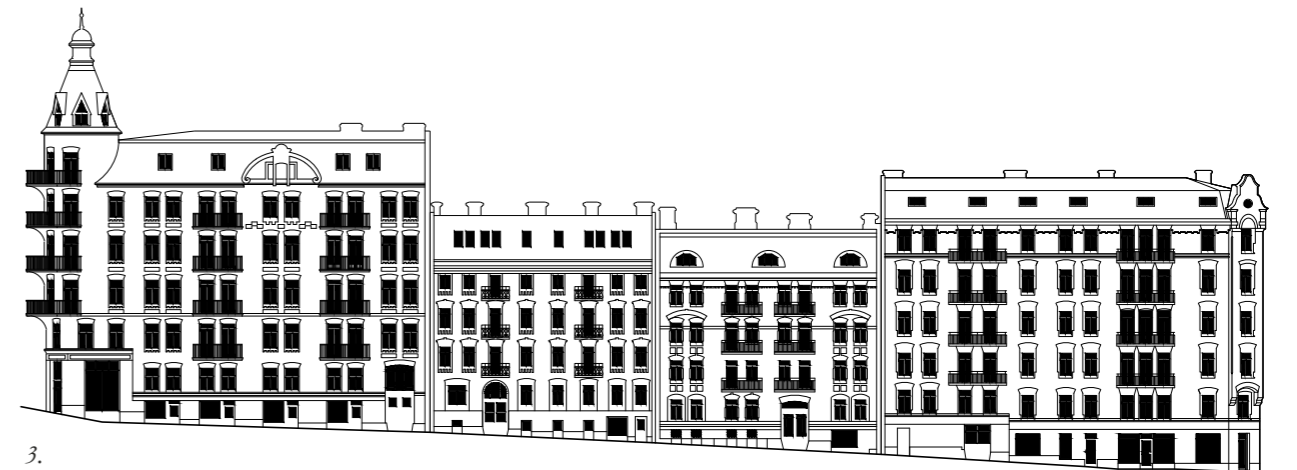
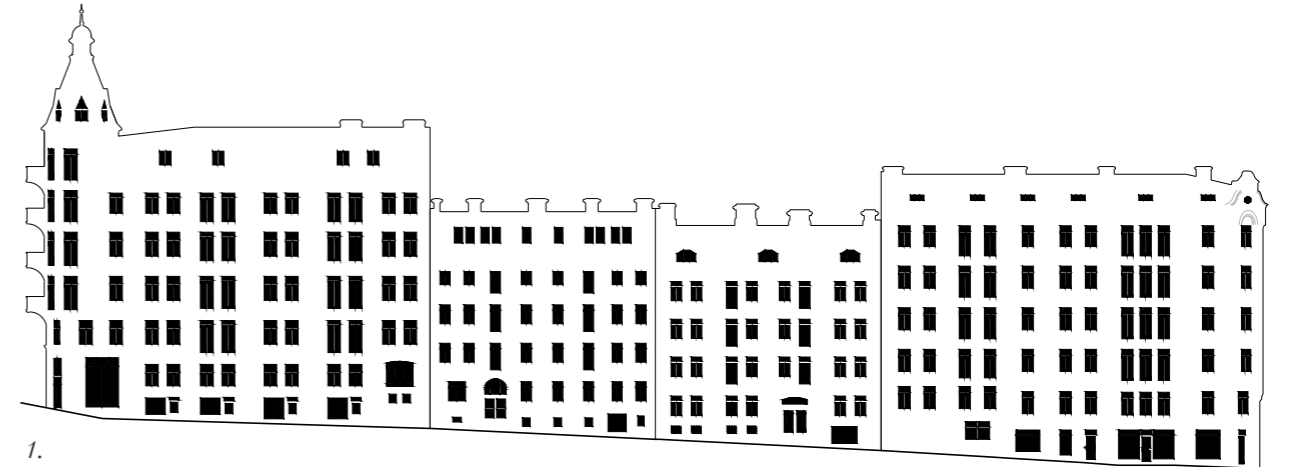
Nordhemsgatan

A facade study of Nordhemsgatan can be seen to the right. Set just behind the main facade of Viktoriahuset, its buildings constitute both a spatial frame and a distinct background motif, making it an important reference for this thesis' building design.

1. A study in perforation where openings are marked in black. Their placement, and proportions make up a strong verticality to each of the individual buildings. Moreover, one can conclude from this closed/open ratio that these are buildings where the solid is stronger than the thin. Mass triumphs lightness.

2. Horizontality is added through the lines of base and ridge. This is further accentuated through distinct and carefully decorated balconies with cast iron railings.

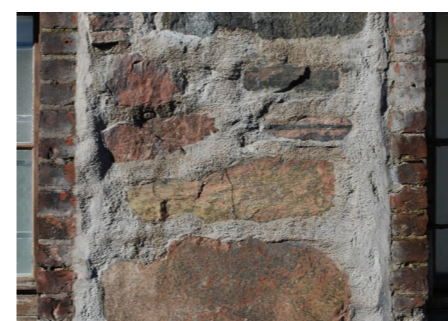
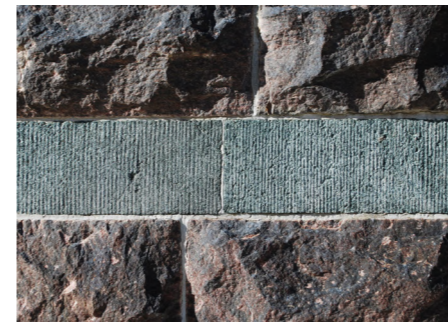
3. Decorative lintels and other facade partitions add further emphasis to the horizontal expression. All in all, a clear transformation from verticality to a balance between the two can be noted from 1. to 3.



FACADES 1:600



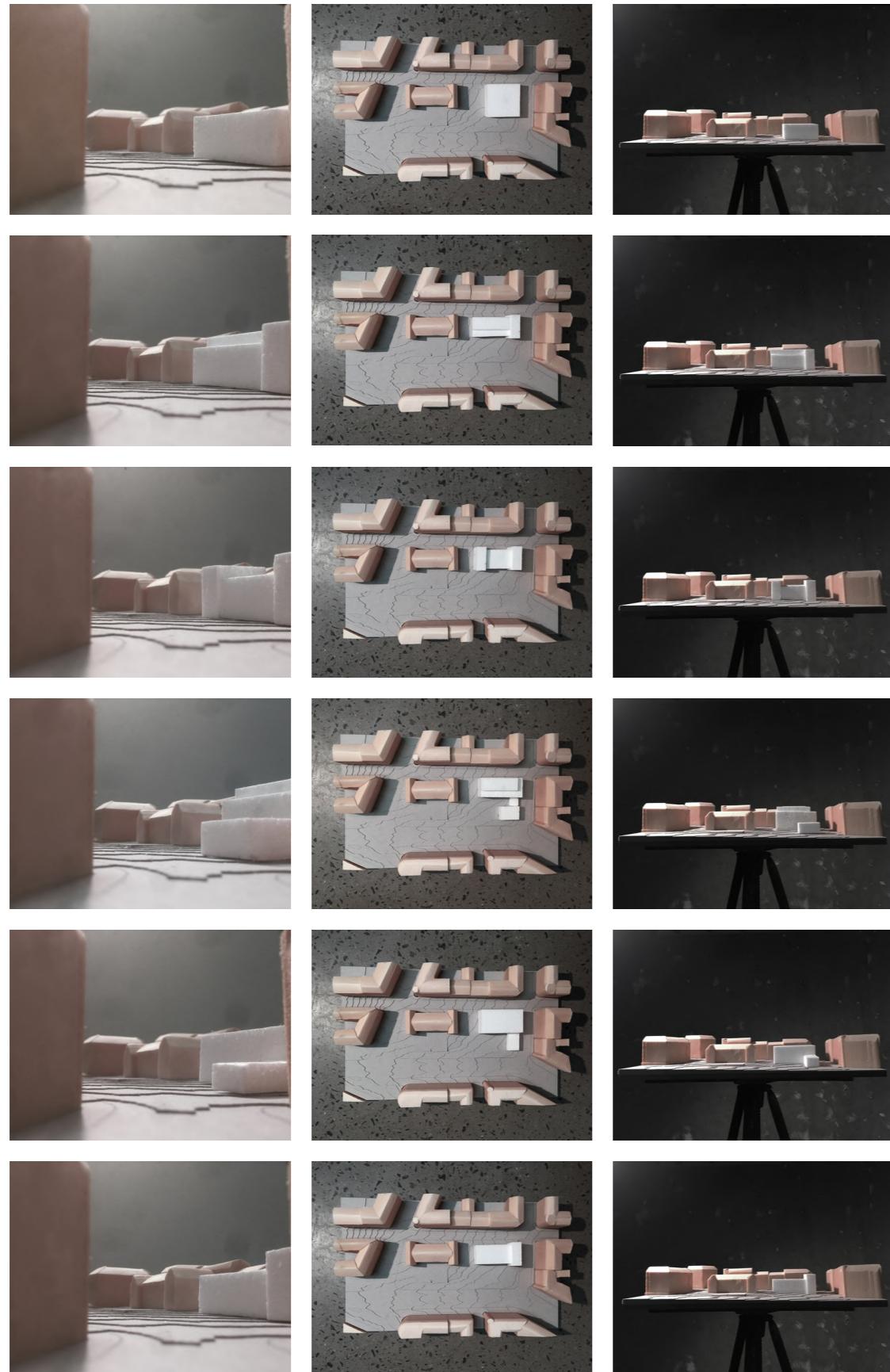
SURROUNDING FACADE EXPRESSIONS



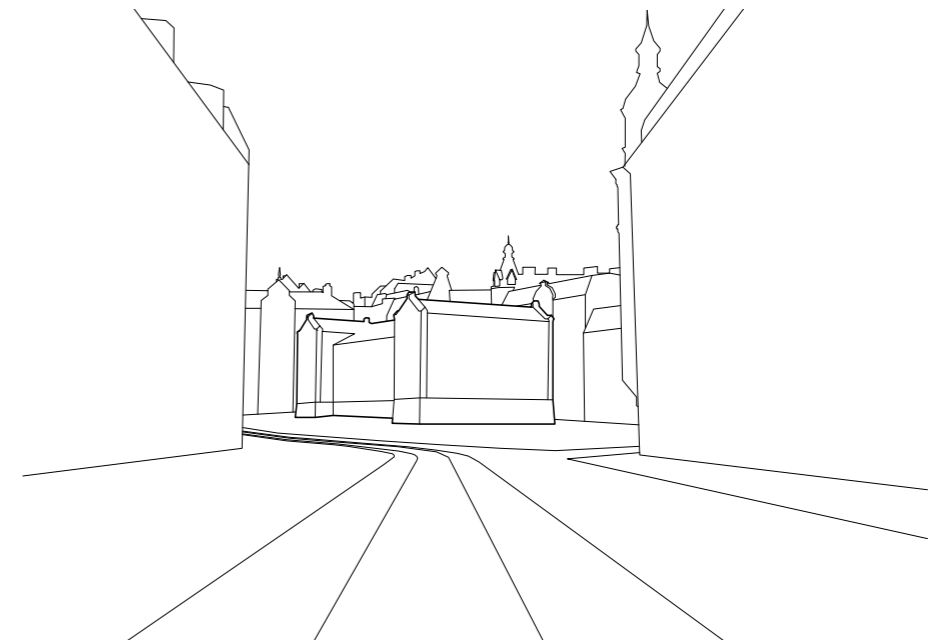
SURROUNDING MATERIAL PALETTE

DESIGN PROCESS

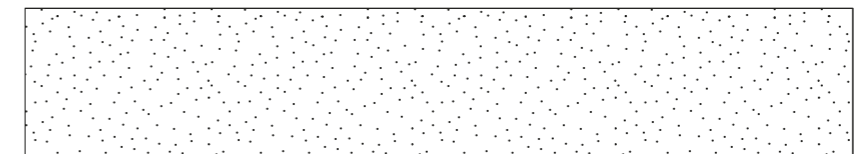
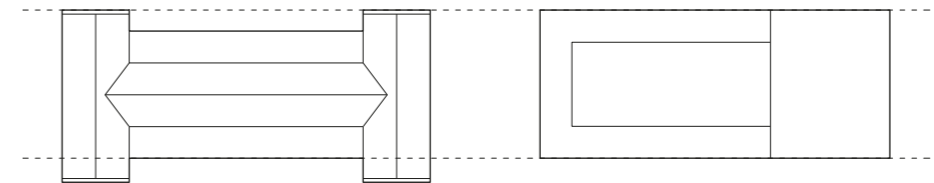
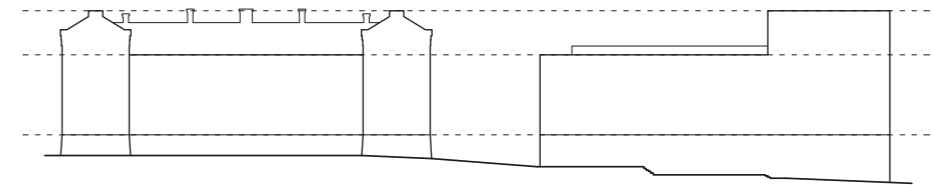
An iterative study in volume, facade composition and plan



VOLUME STUDIES



1.

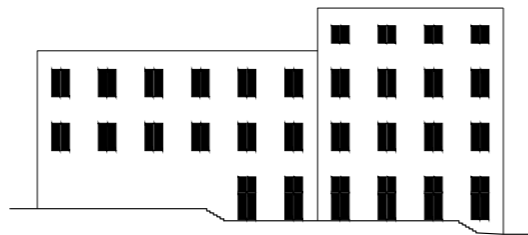
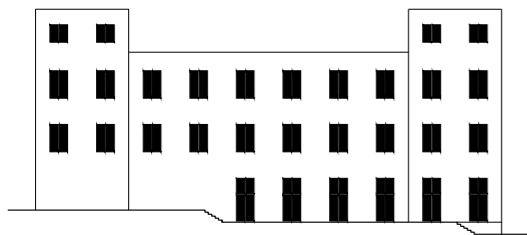
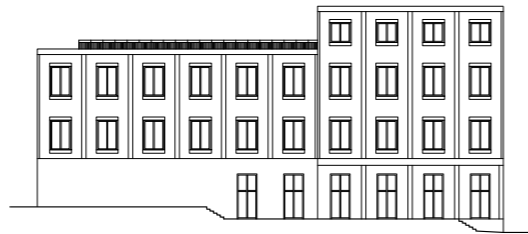


2.

Concluding design principles for the urban space.

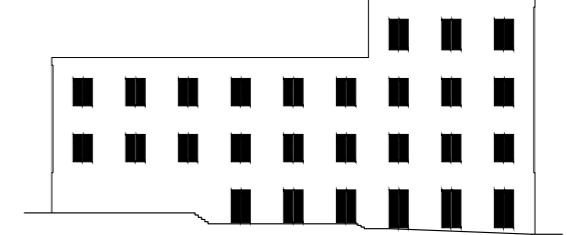
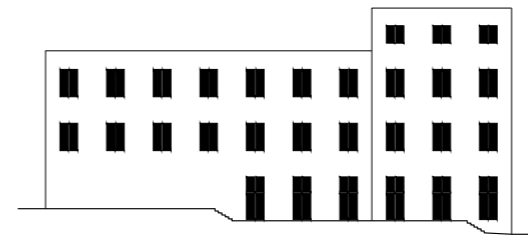
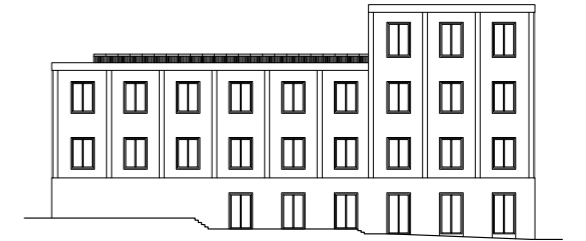
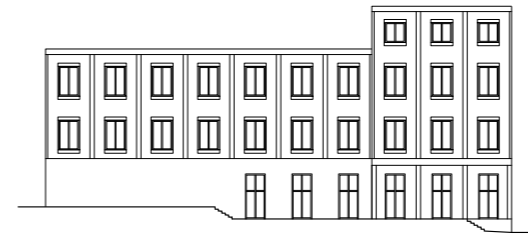
1. *Maintain a visual connection to Viktoriabuset when looking from Järntorget.*
2. *The proposal should adjust its volume and footprint in order to establish a strong kinship to its neighbour. Moreover, this adaptation should help framing and enhancing the urban space that is created from retracting themselves from the street.*

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES



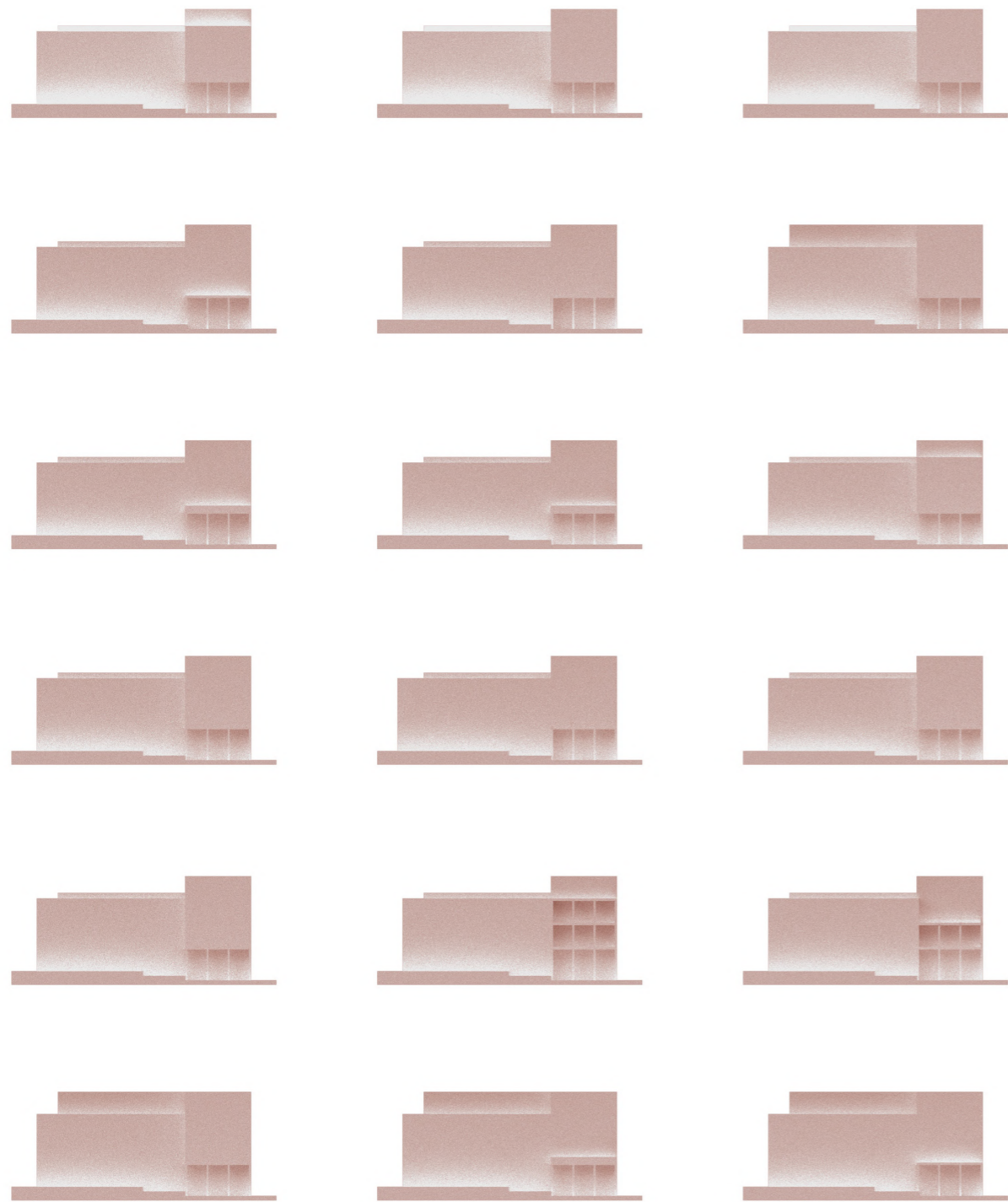
Sketch mimicking the gables of Viktoriabuset.

Sketch where the two gables merges into one volume, creating an asymmetry which highlights Viktoriabuset as well as meeting the taller houses across the street.

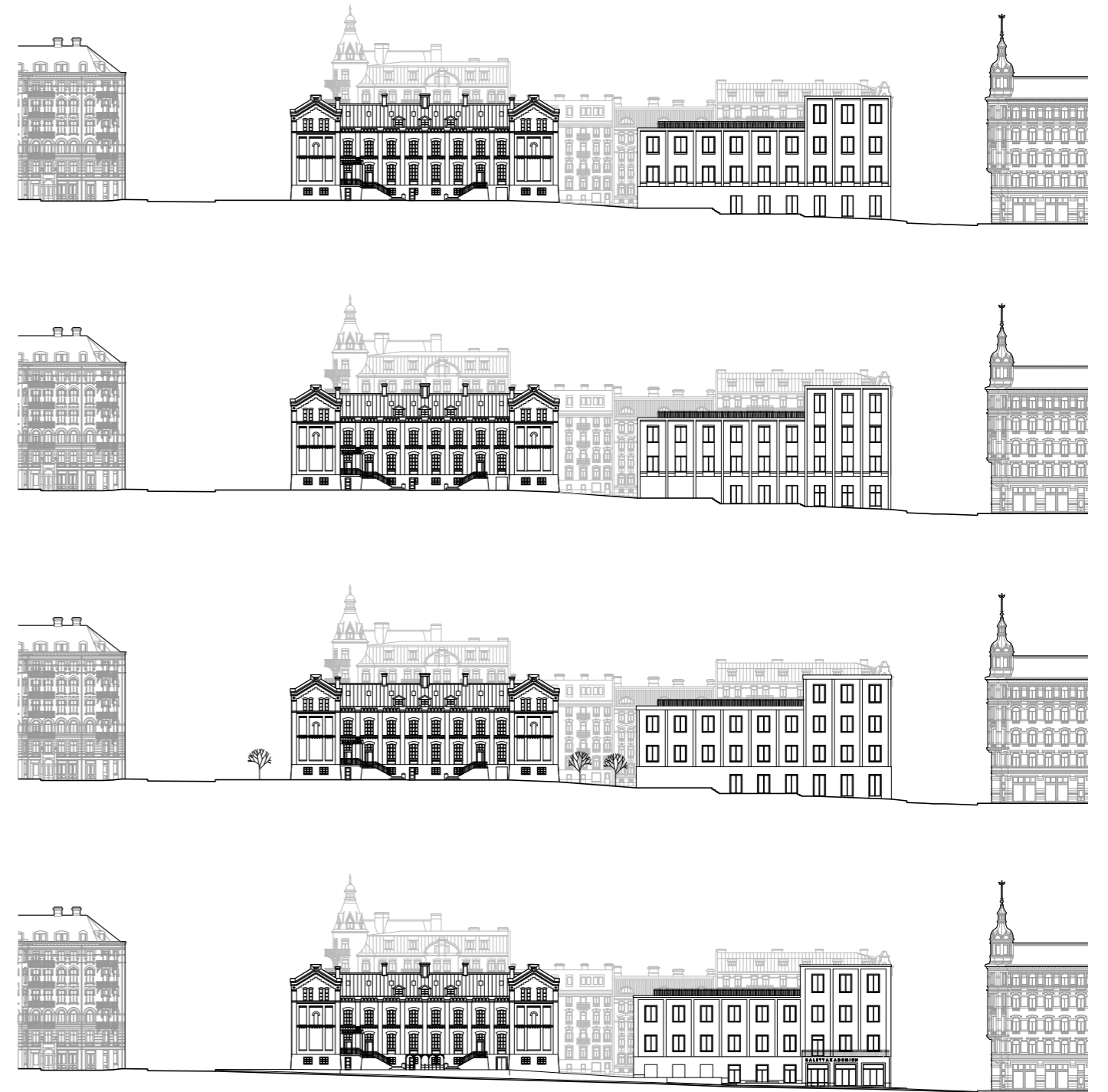


Sketch where the proportions between the horizontal and vertical volumes are adjusted - 6/4 becomes 7/3.

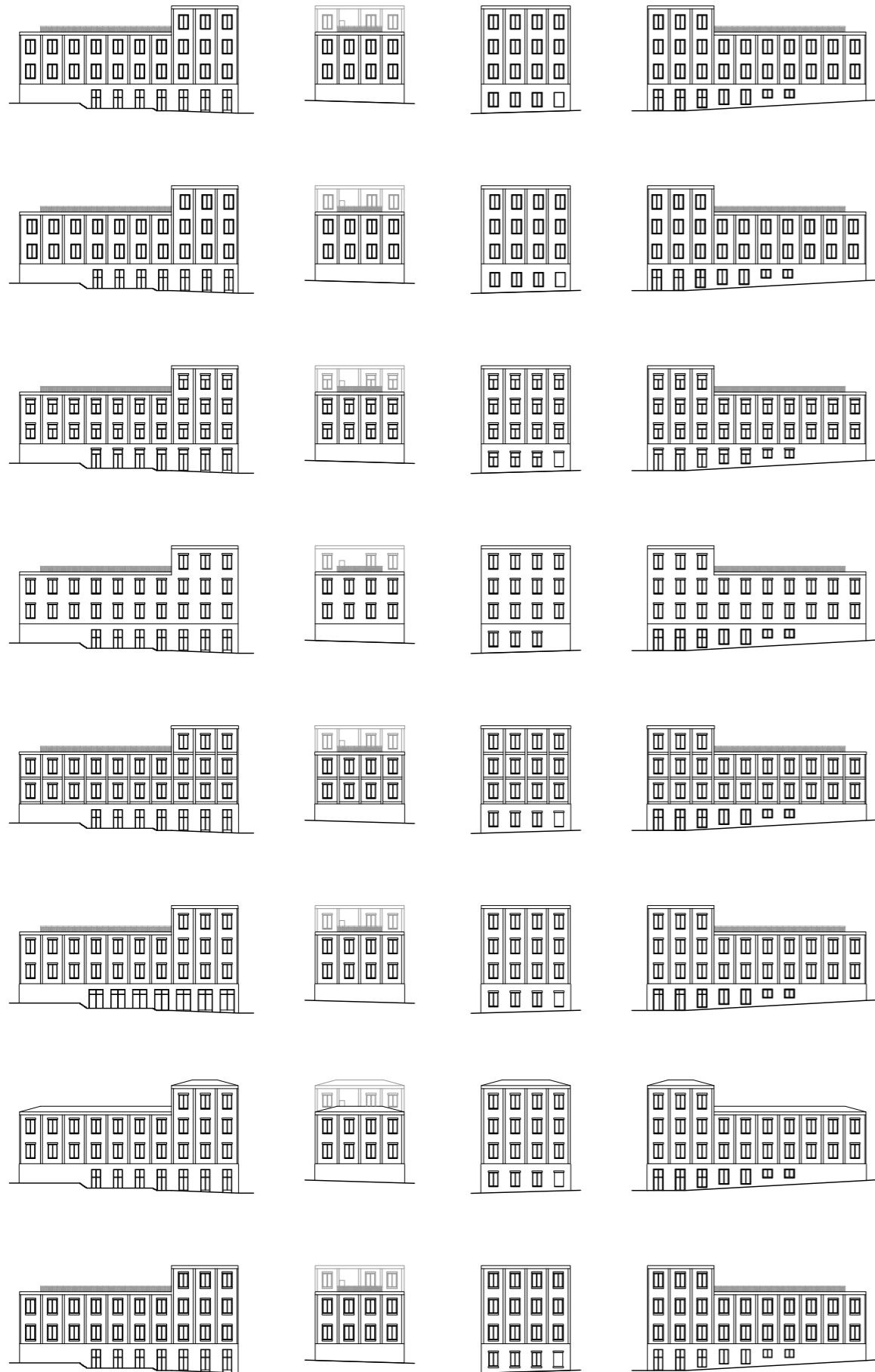
Sketch where the top floor windows are stretched to increase the verticality of the building. The number of partitions are decreased from ten to nine.



Investigations in how to highlight the entrance.



Different facade proposals in a wider urban context.



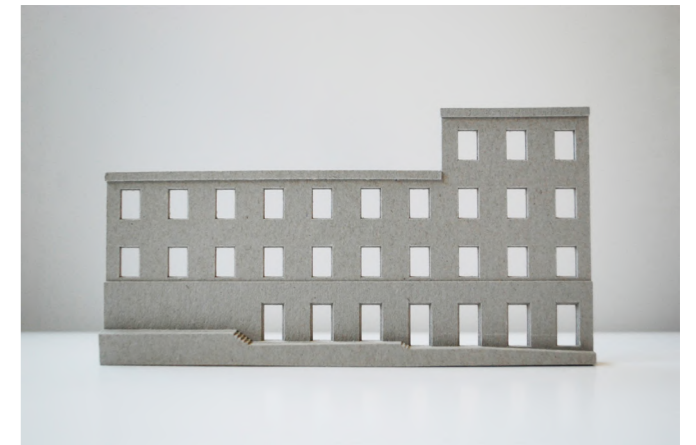
Model study of the entrance facade. General for all the suggestions are the use of vertically stretched openings. However, the design and proportioning of the window frames, which of course also make up a significant part of a facade expression have not been considered here.

1. A proposal where base and ridge are accentuated in an otherwise flat brick wall. 10 partitions.

2. A frame of pilasters creates vertical division in the facade by dividing openings together in pairs of two and three. The base is reduced to the same depth as the floors above and can only be hinted by a horizontal line. 9 partitions.

3. Base and pilasters have the same thickness framing the retracted vertical elements. Window sills play an important role here by adding horizontality and further depth. The sills on the first floor is particularly important as they also connect to the base giving it a more lively impression. 9 partitions.

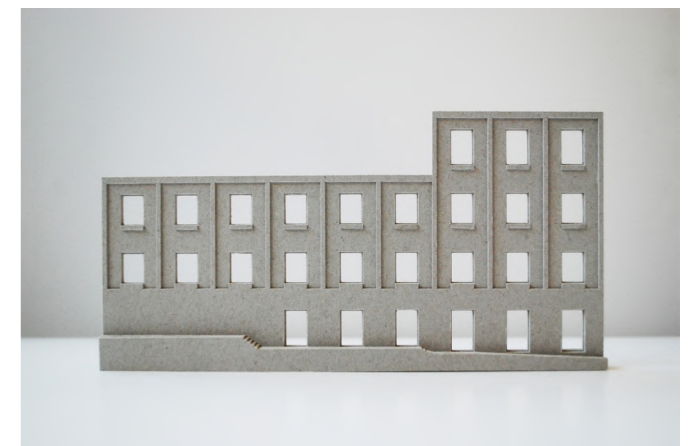
4. The accentuated base devolves into a frame of pilasters within one and same wall depth. Vertical lines balance an otherwise quite horizontal body. 9 partitions.



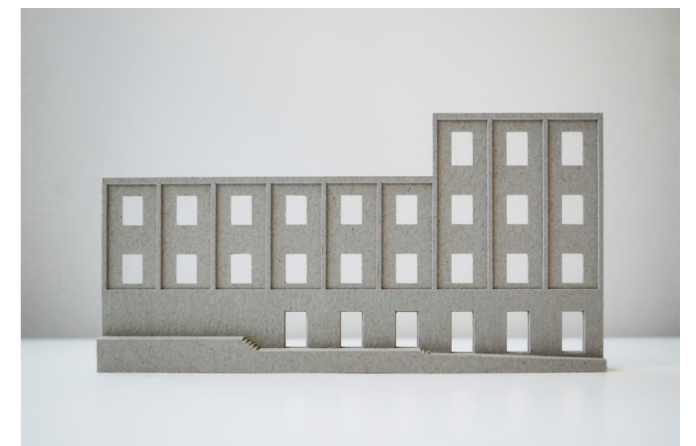
1.



2.



3.

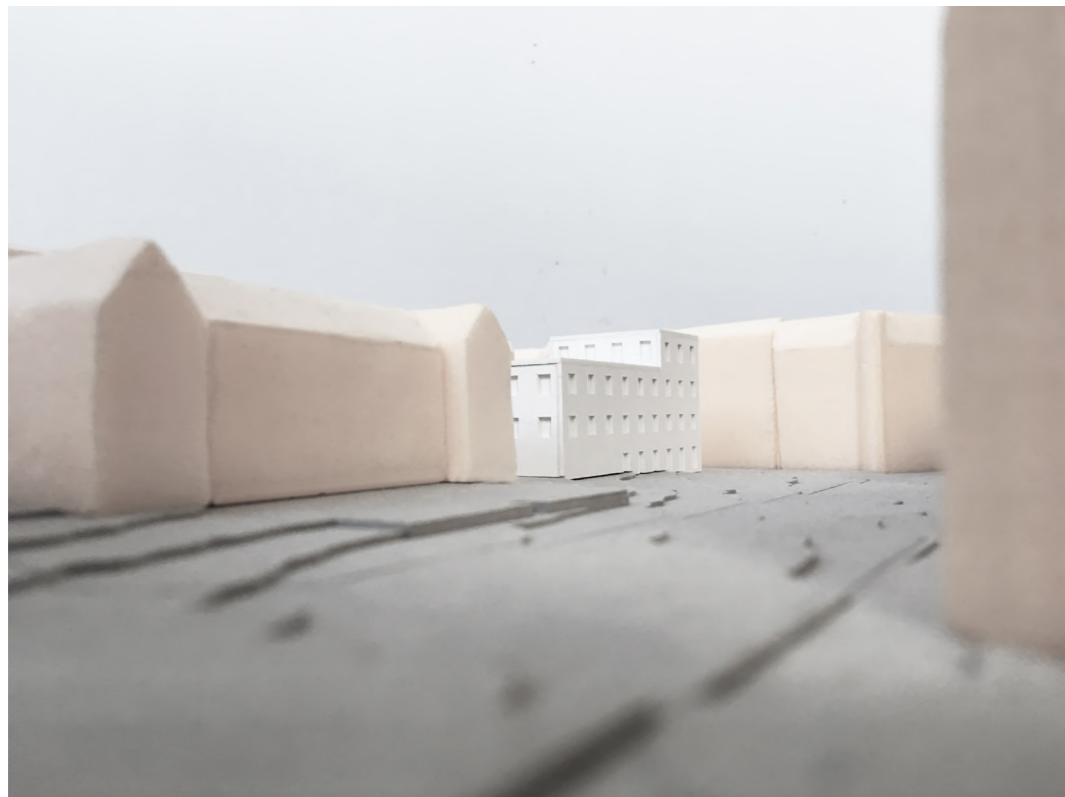
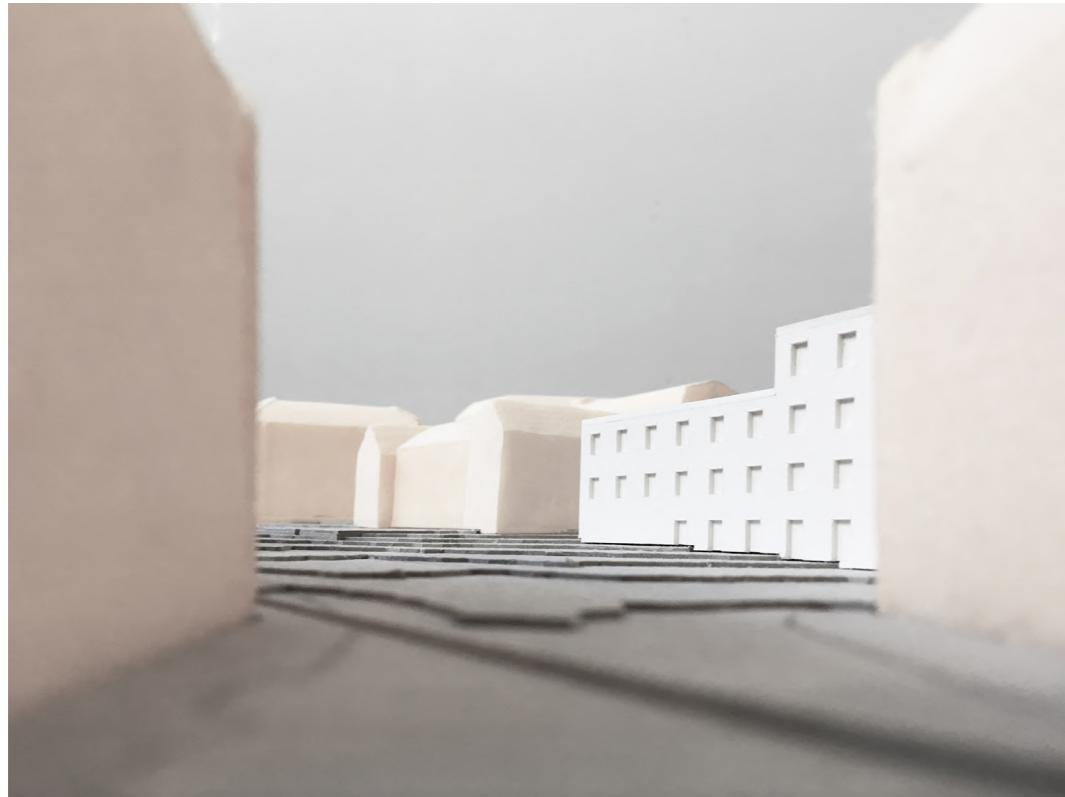


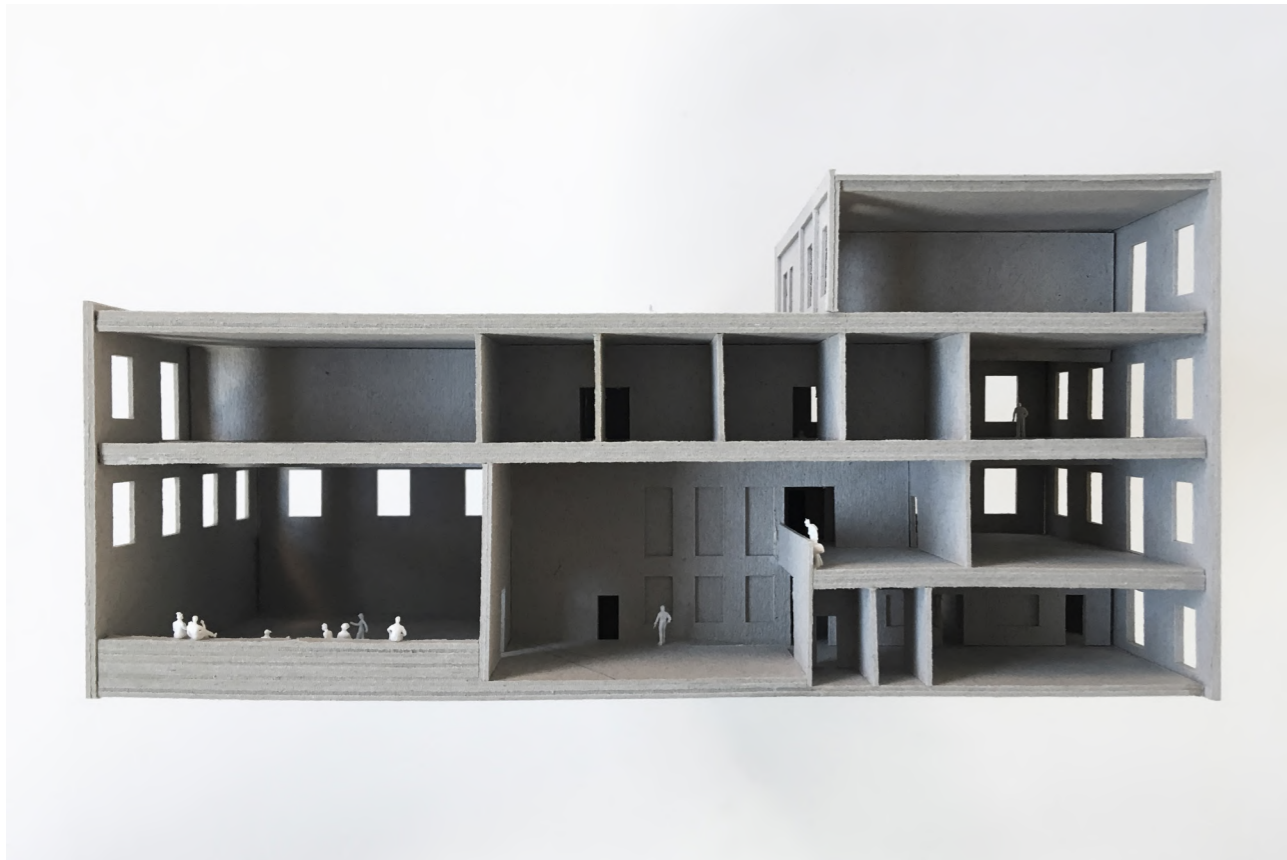
4.



MODEL IMAGES - MID CRITIQUE









DESIGN PROPOSAL

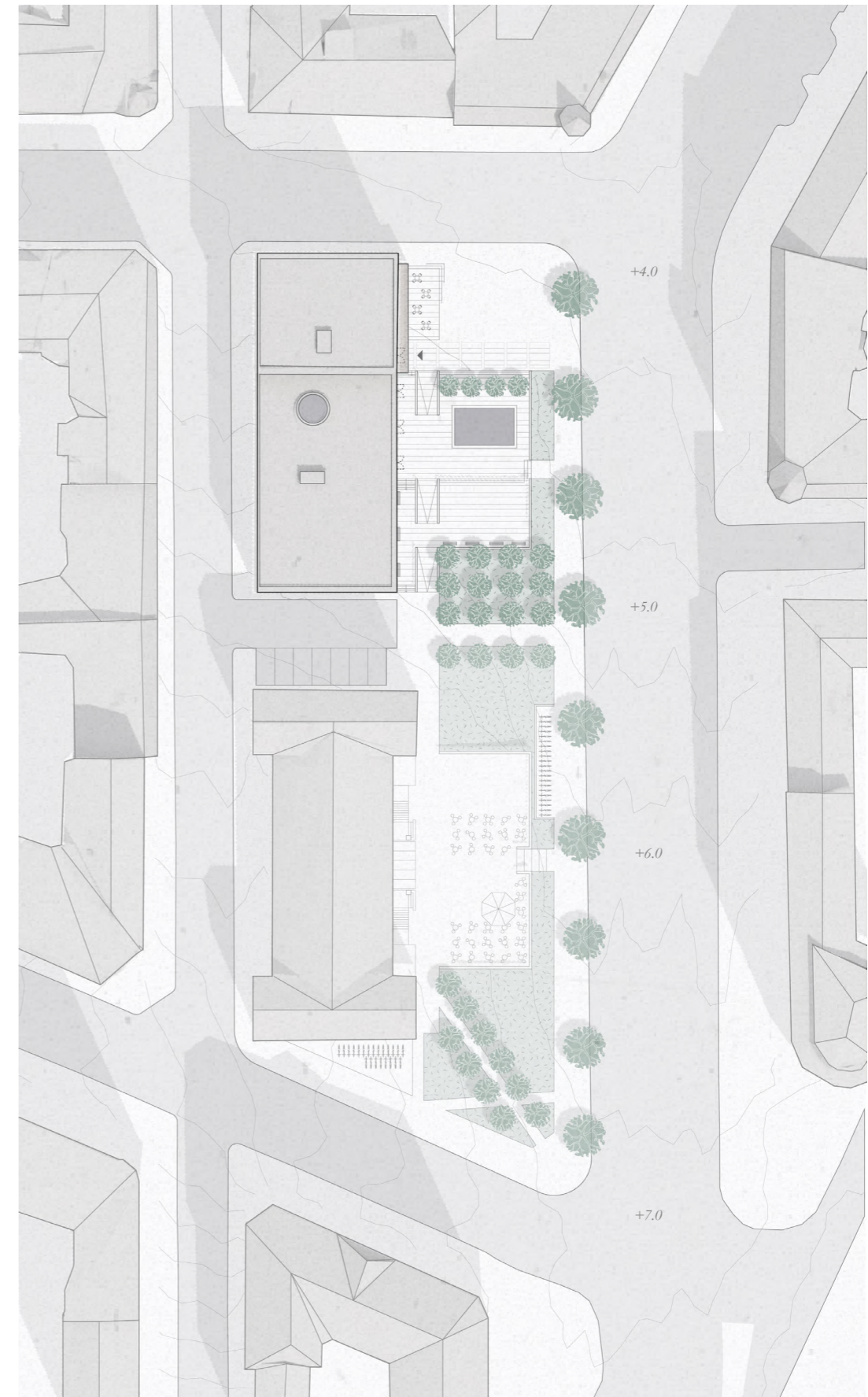
Let's dance!



Space program

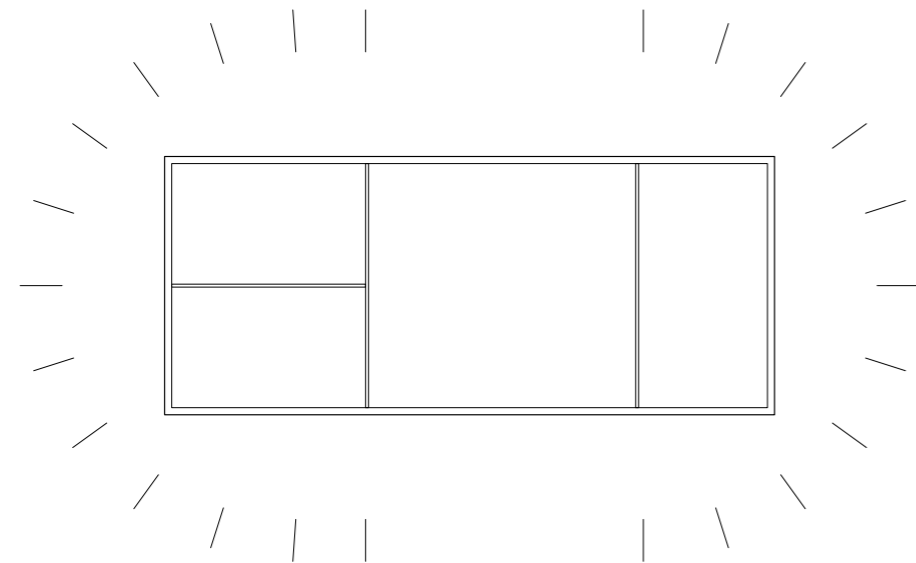
Quantity		Space	m ² each		m ² total	
1	1	Theatre	240	260	240	260
6	5	Mirrorhall	125	130	750	650
4	4	Rehearsal room	25	25	100	100
1	2	Black box	80	55	80	110
		Foyer			160	50
		Café			110	60
		Student lounge			110	180
		Office			100	140
		Kitchen			80	20
		Dressing room			330	200
		Restroom			30	20
		Backstage			50	30
		Storage			100	100
		Maintenance			120	undisclosed
		Communication			390	430
					2750	2350

Thesis proposal (black) can be compared with current program (grey).

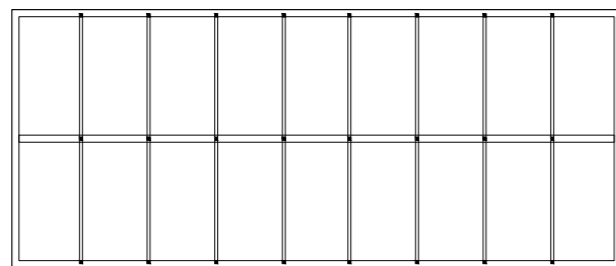


SITE PLAN 1:800





1.



2.

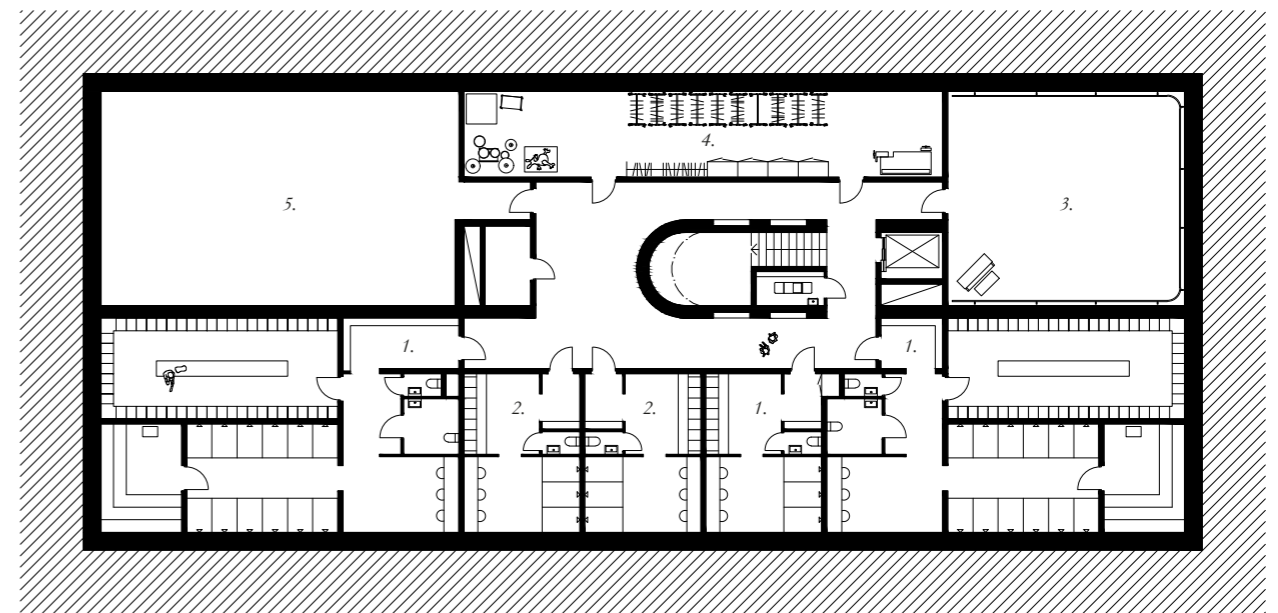
Design principles for the plan.

1. *Mirror balls are placed in the corners to give a rich and varied light throughout the day.*

2. *A principle diagram showing the structural system. Three parallel load-bearing walls carry a repetition of beams (they are adjusted to the placement of the windows) on which the slab rests.*

Installations are stretched in the voids between the beams and are hidden by acoustical panels of perforated plywood. Furthermore, this system of elements gives spatial rhythm and a narrative for the division of rooms.

PLAN PRINCIPLES

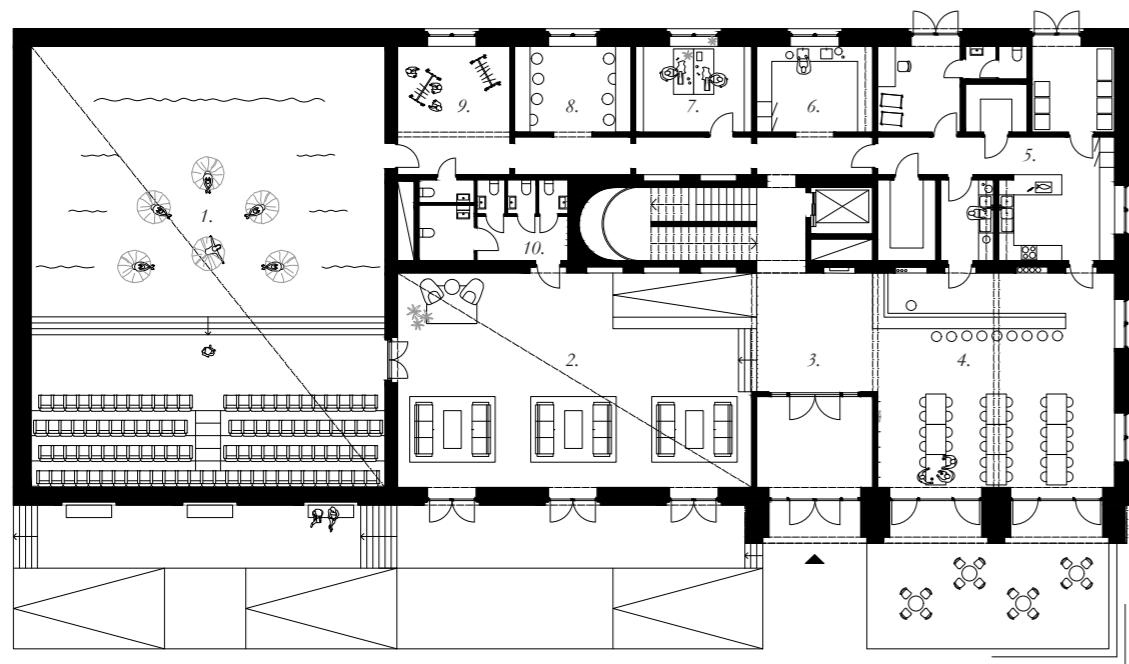


- 1. student's dressing room
- 2. teacher's dressing room
- 3. black box
- 4. costume storage
- 5. maintenance room



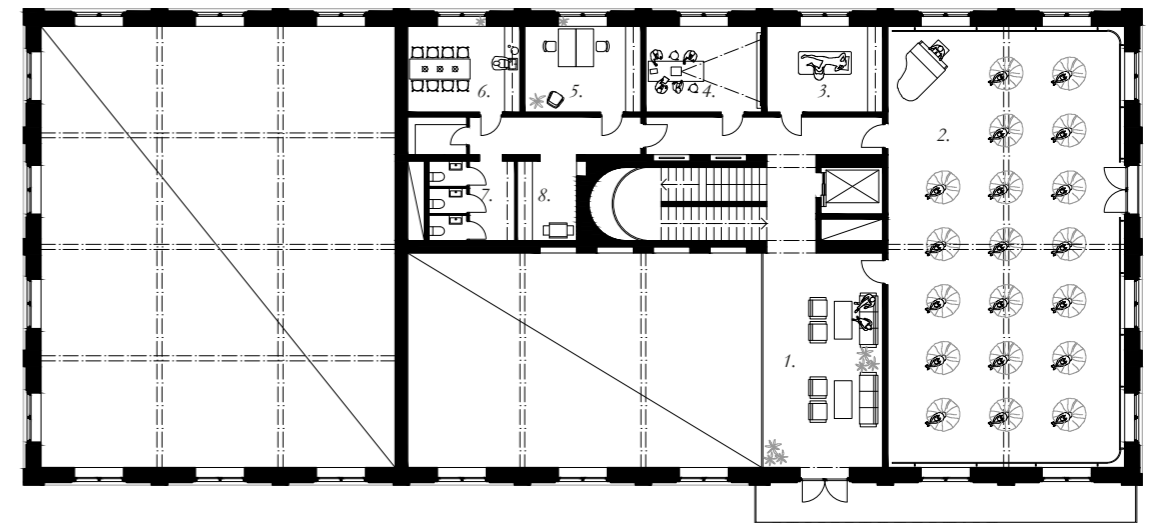
PLAN -1 1:300





- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. theatre | 6. pantry |
| 2. foyer | 7. workshop |
| 3. reception | 8. make-up |
| 4. café | 9. backstage |
| 5. kitchen | 10. restrooms |

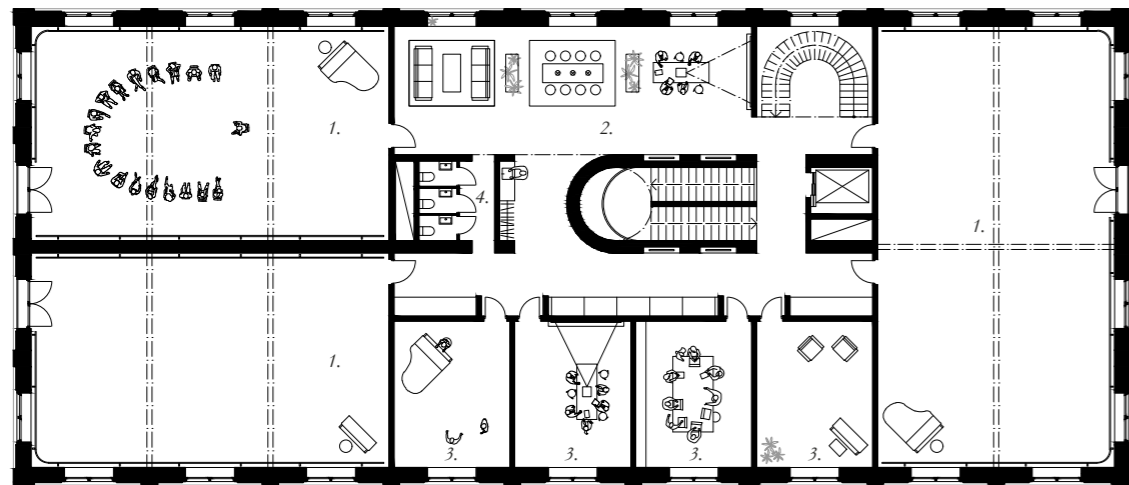
PLAN 0 1:300



- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. foyer | 5. office |
| 2. mirror hall | 6. pantry |
| 3. physiotherapy | 7. WC |
| 4. meeting room | 8. printer room |

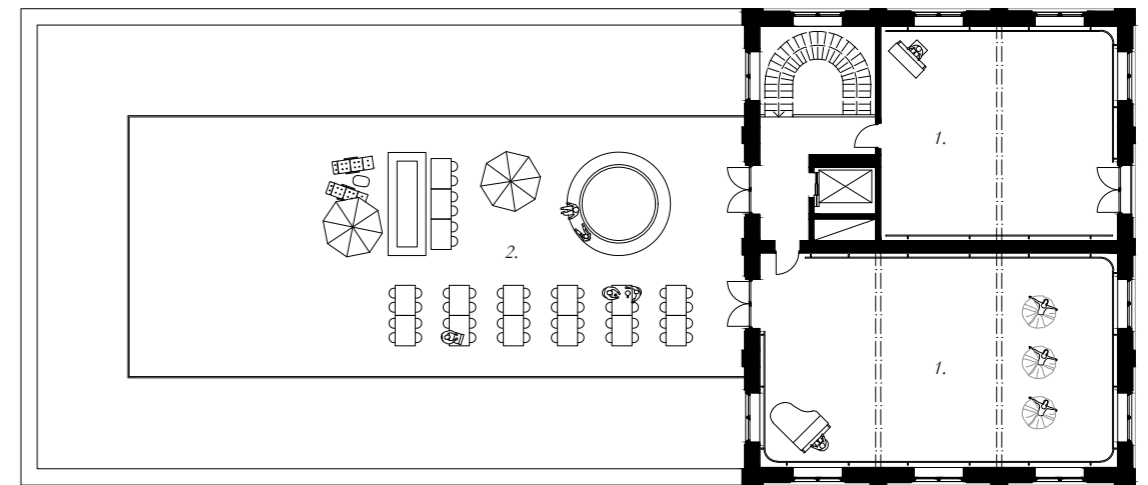
PLAN 1 1:300





- 1. mirror ball
- 2. student's lounge
- 3. rehearsal room
- 4. restrooms

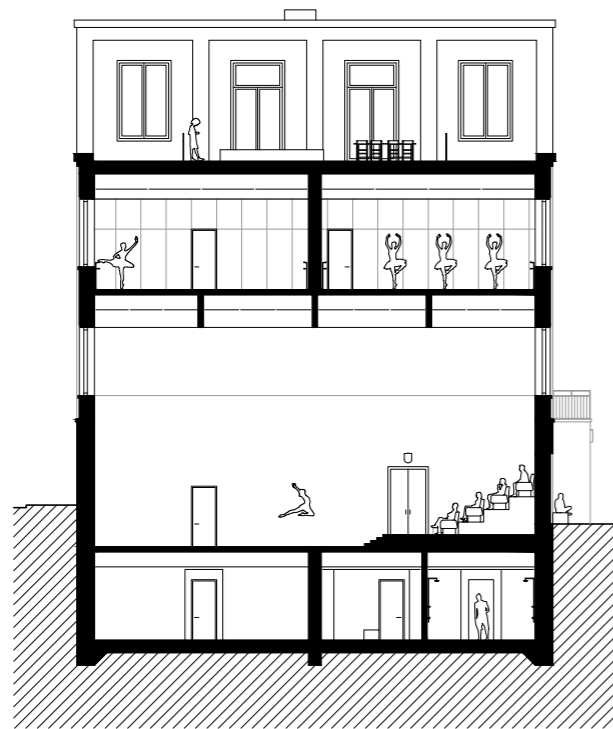
PLAN 2 1:300



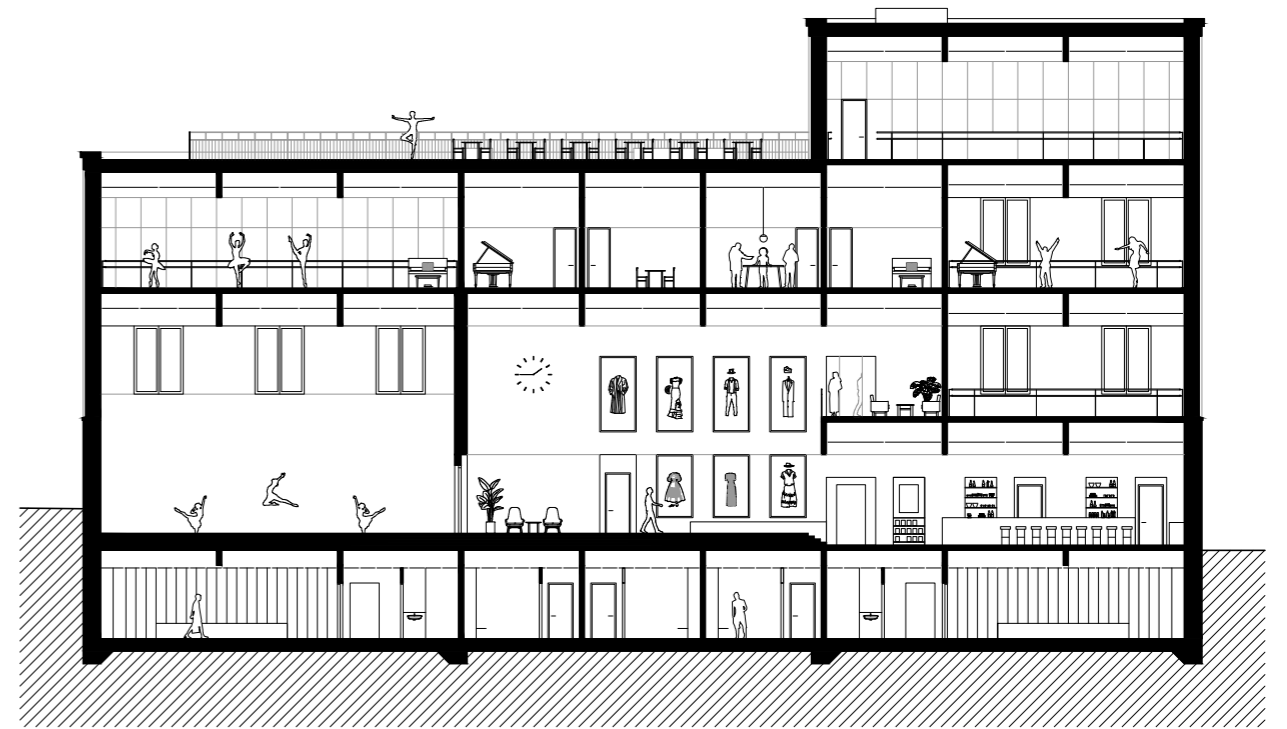
- 1. mirror ball
- 2. terrace

PLAN 3 1:300



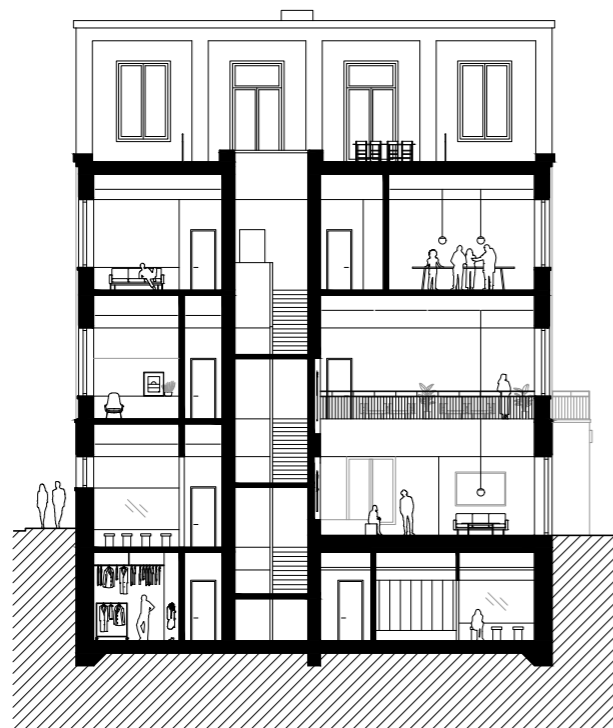


SECTION 1:300

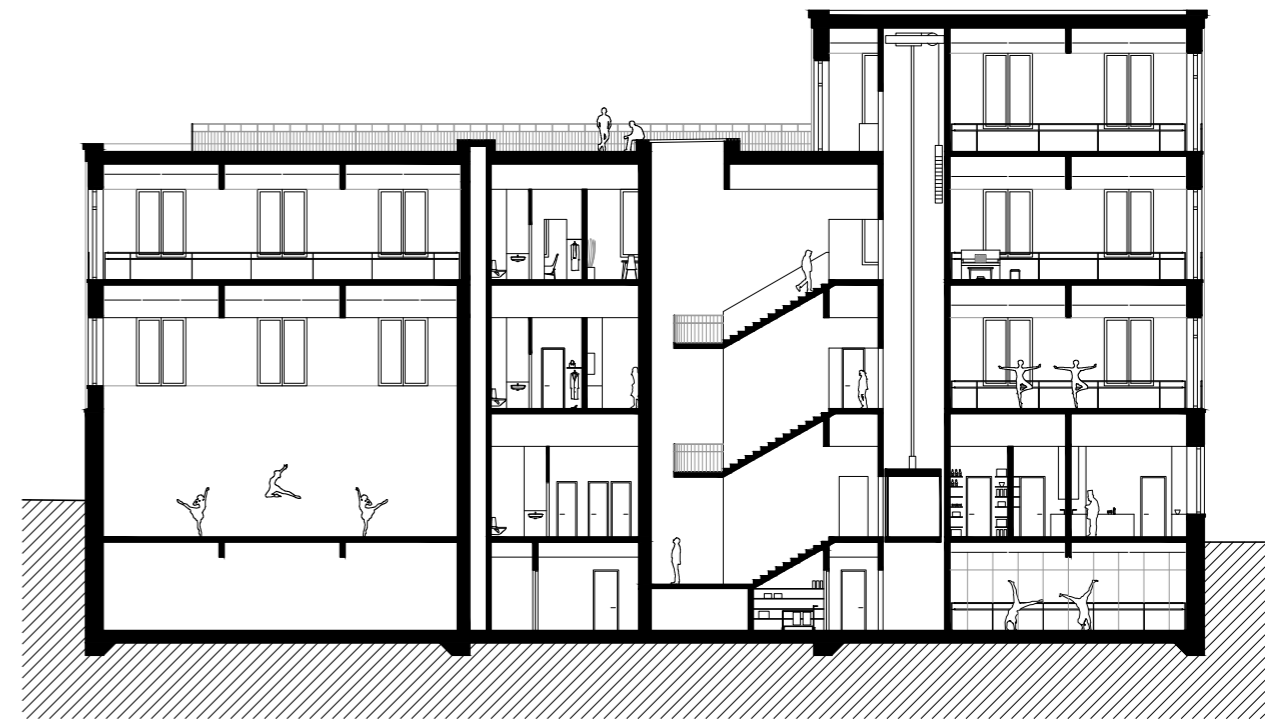


SECTION 1:300



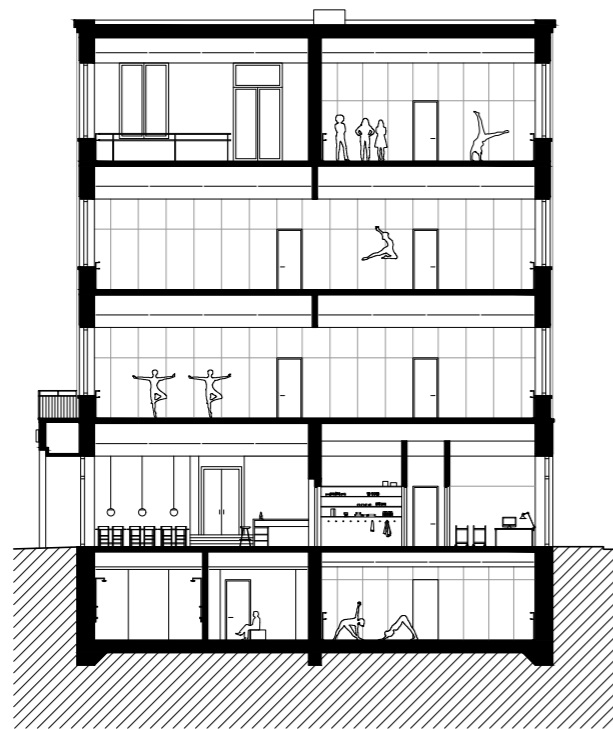


SECTION 1:300

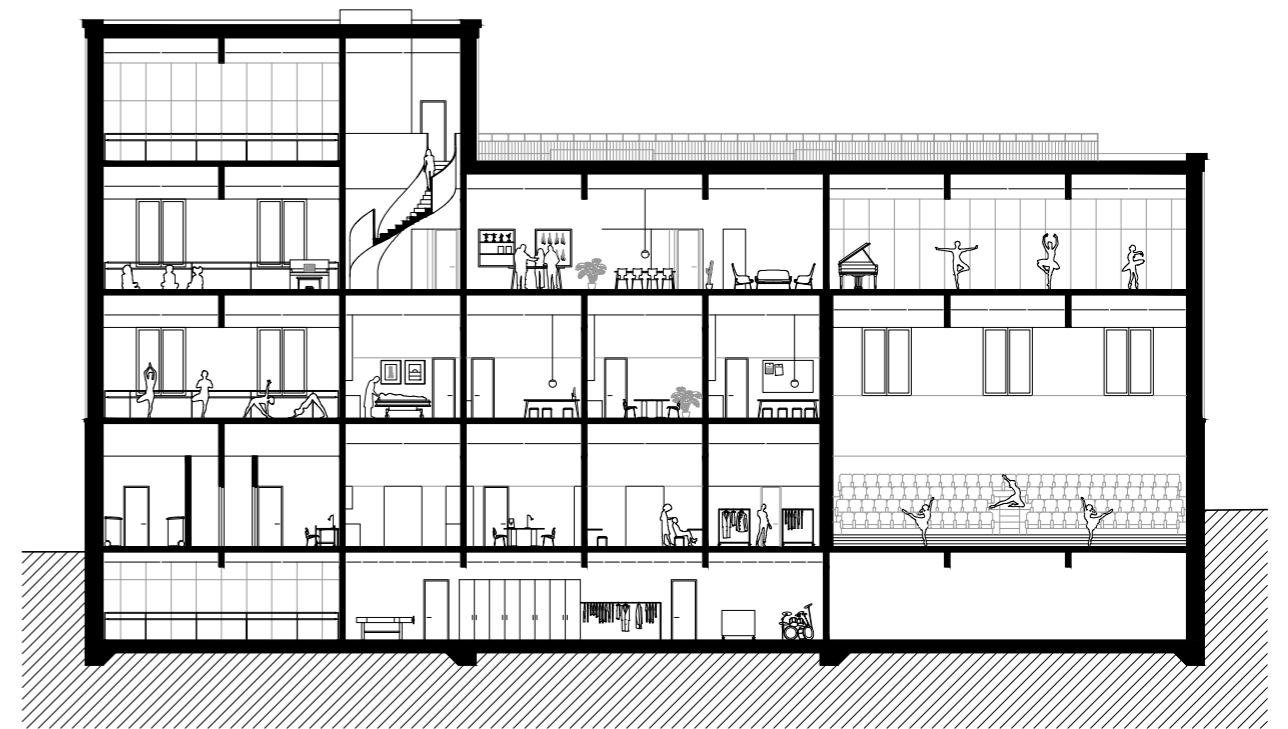


SECTION 1:300



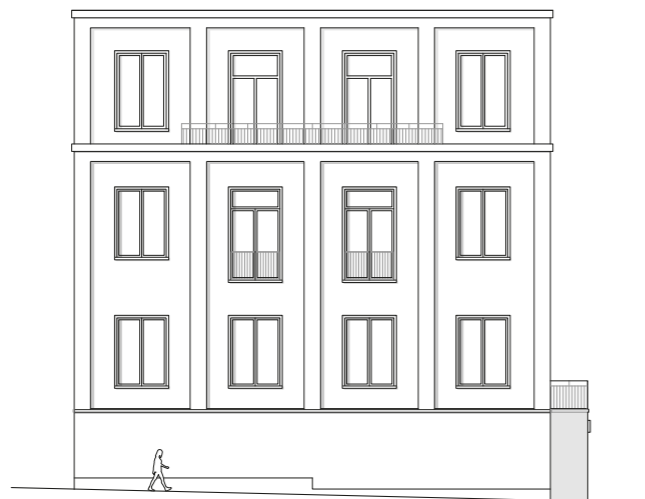


SECTION 1:300

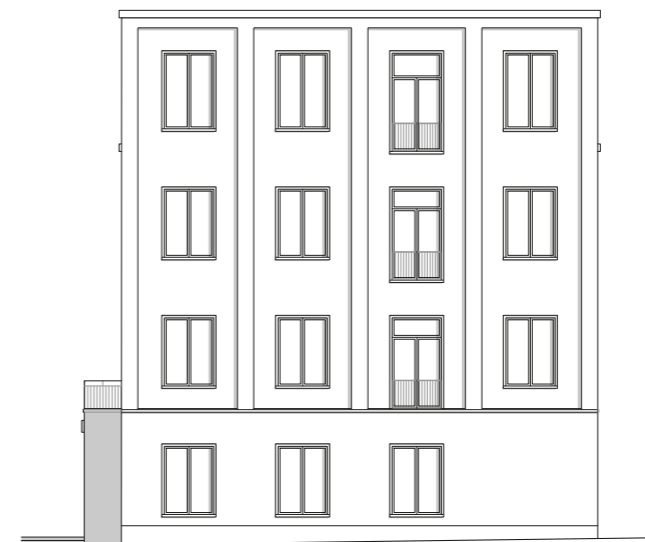
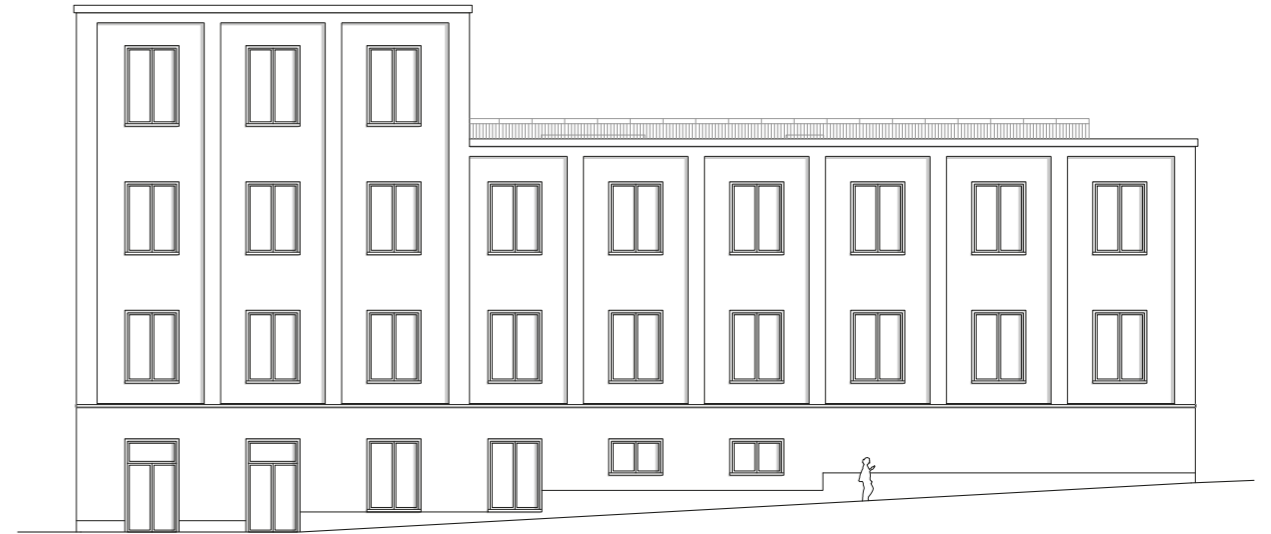


SECTION 1:300



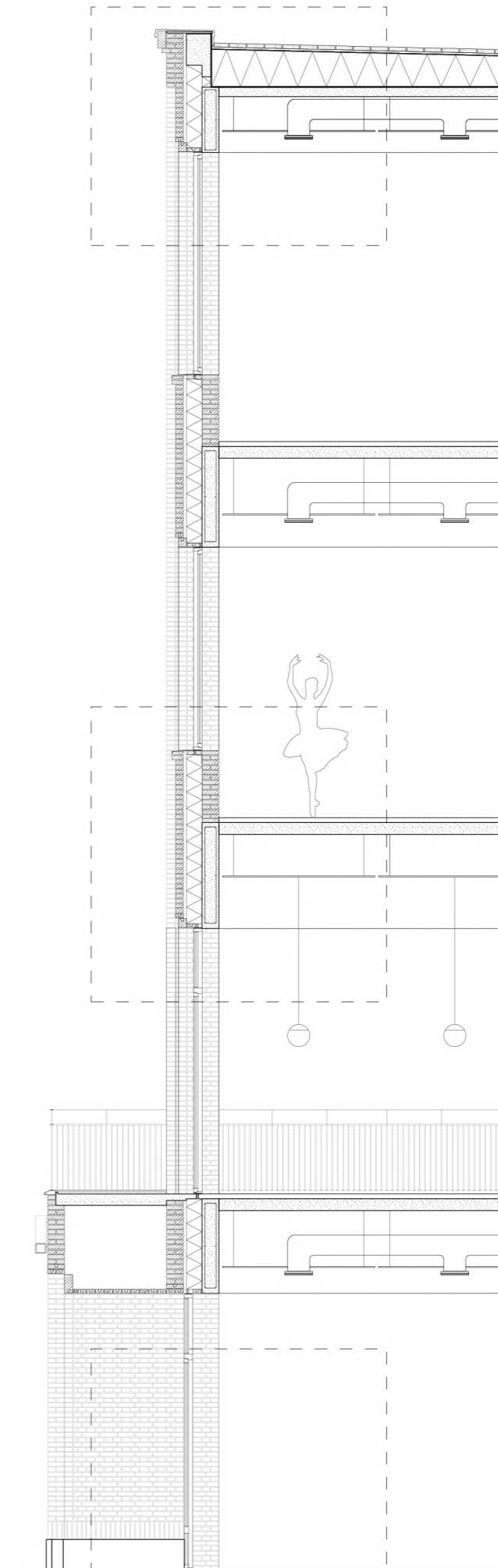


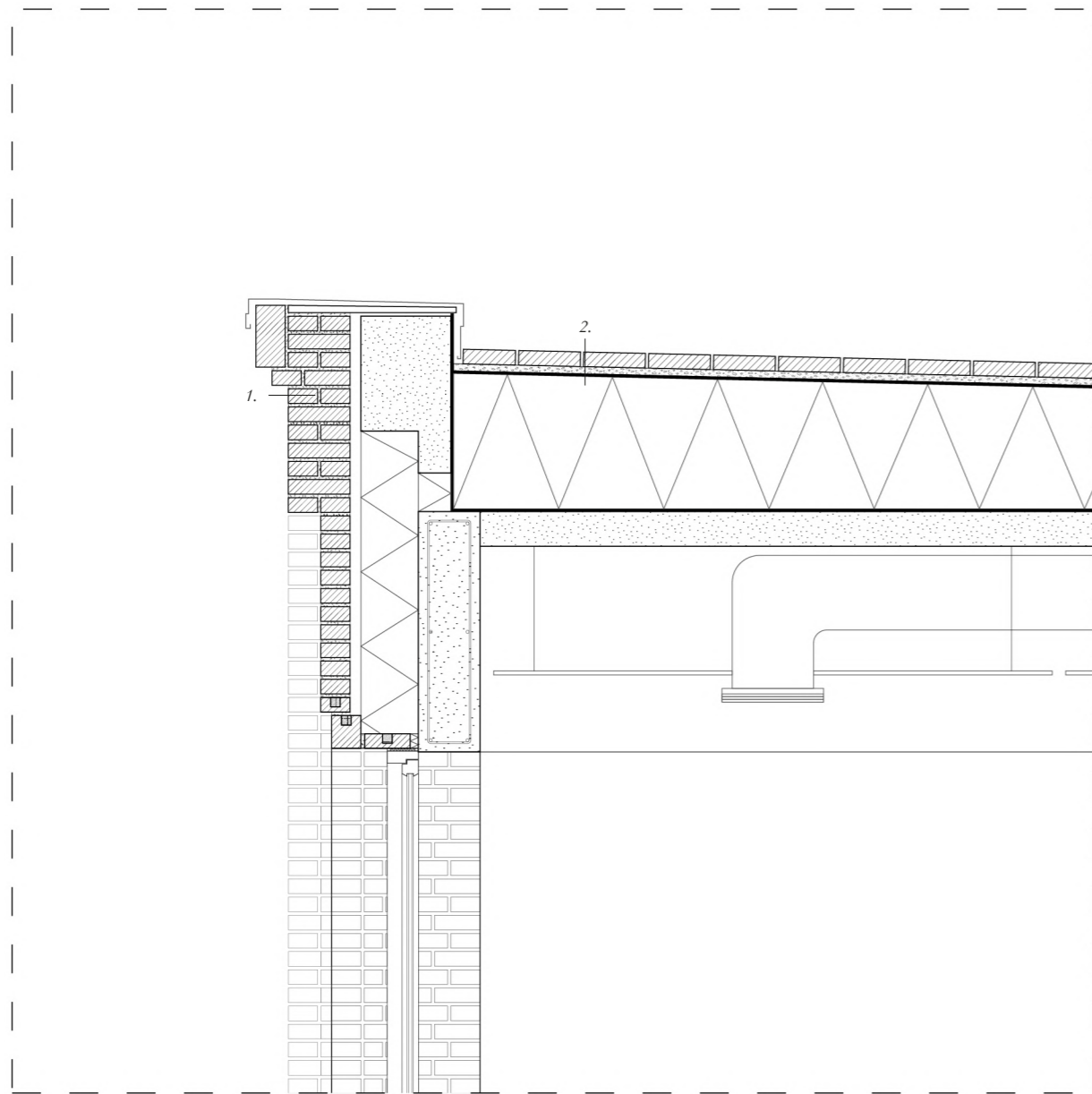
WEST & SOUTH FACADE 1:300



EAST & NORTH FACADE 1:300



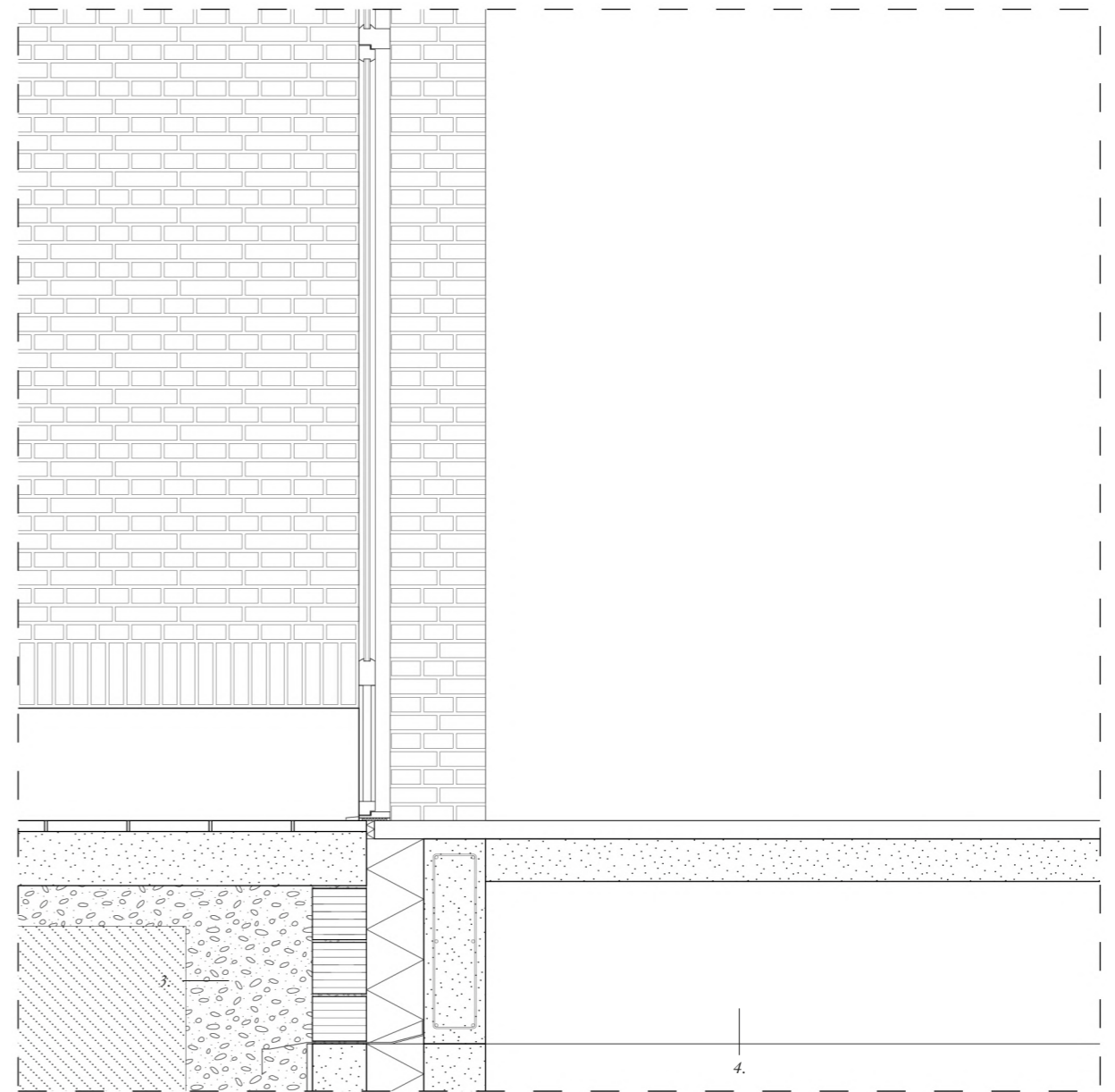




1.
 228 x 108 x 54 brick in English bond with
 12 mortar
 40 cavity
 300 concrete
 angled brick
 sheet metal covering

2.
 54 x 228 x 108 ground brick on 30 grit
 geotextile
 20 drainage protective sheet
 300-400 thermal insulation angled to falls
 with a surrounding bituminous seal
 150 concrete slab
 750 (c.l.c 4800) concrete beam with
 installations covered by 25 wooden sheet
 in-between

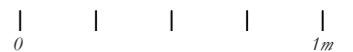
VERTICAL DETAIL - ROOF 1:25

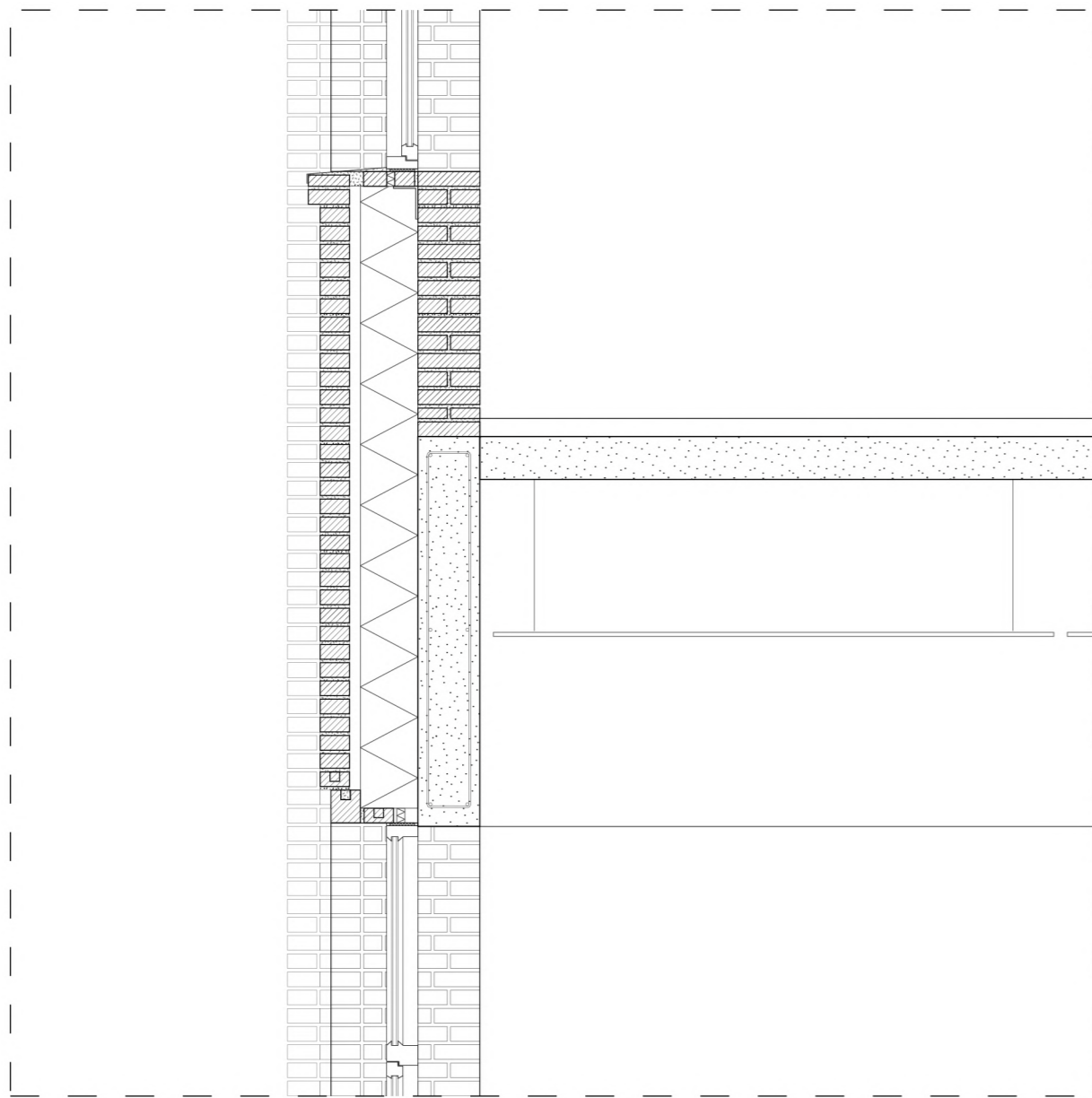


3.
 geotextile
 300 macadam
 20 moisture protective membrane
 200 concrete/leca
 200 thermal insulation
 200 concrete

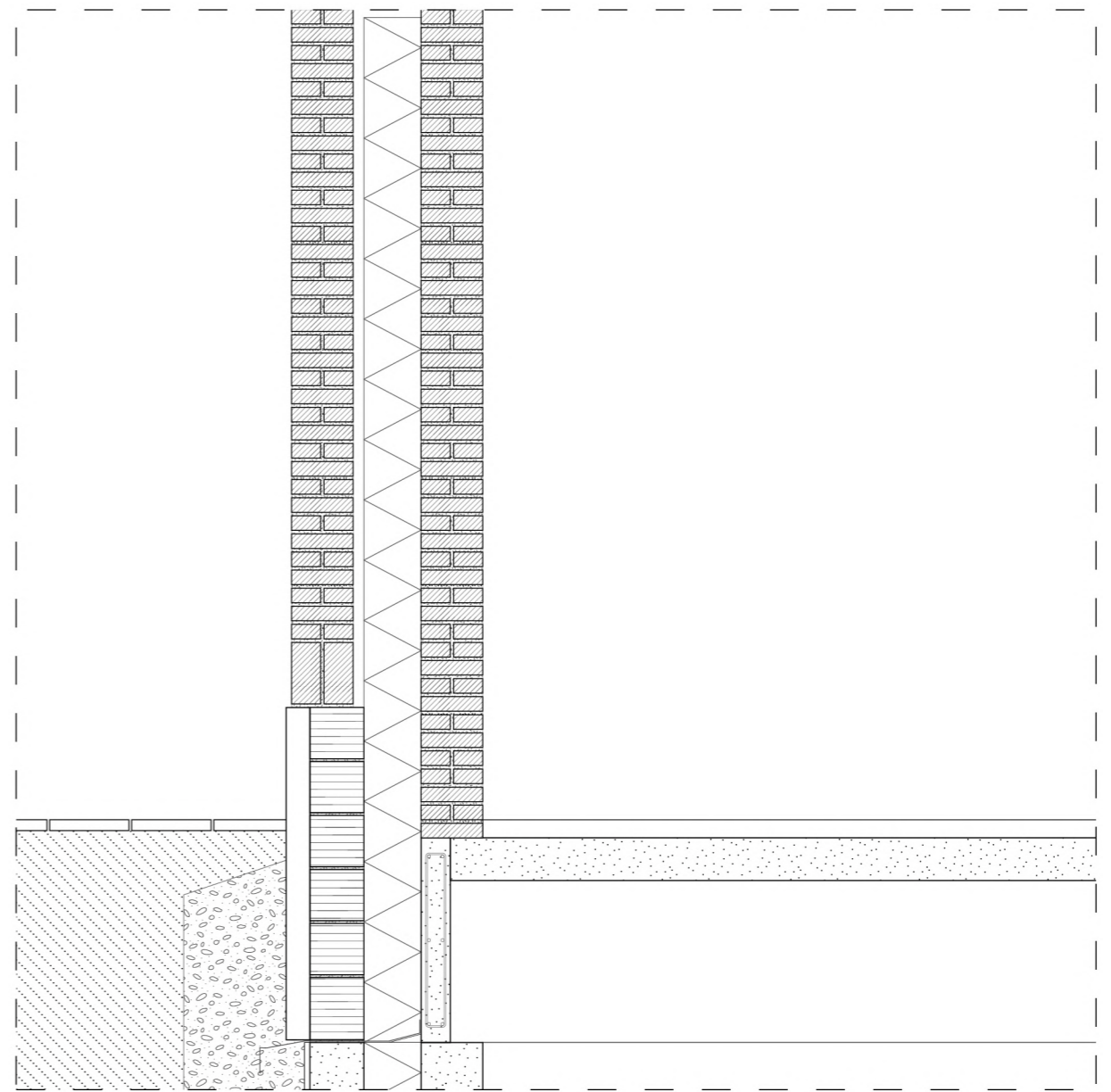
4.
 600 (c.l.c 4800) concrete beam with
 installations covered by 25 wooden sheet
 in-between
 150 concrete slab
 70 screed/ sprunged dance floor

VERTICAL DETAIL - DOOR /BASE 1:25

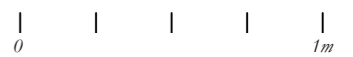


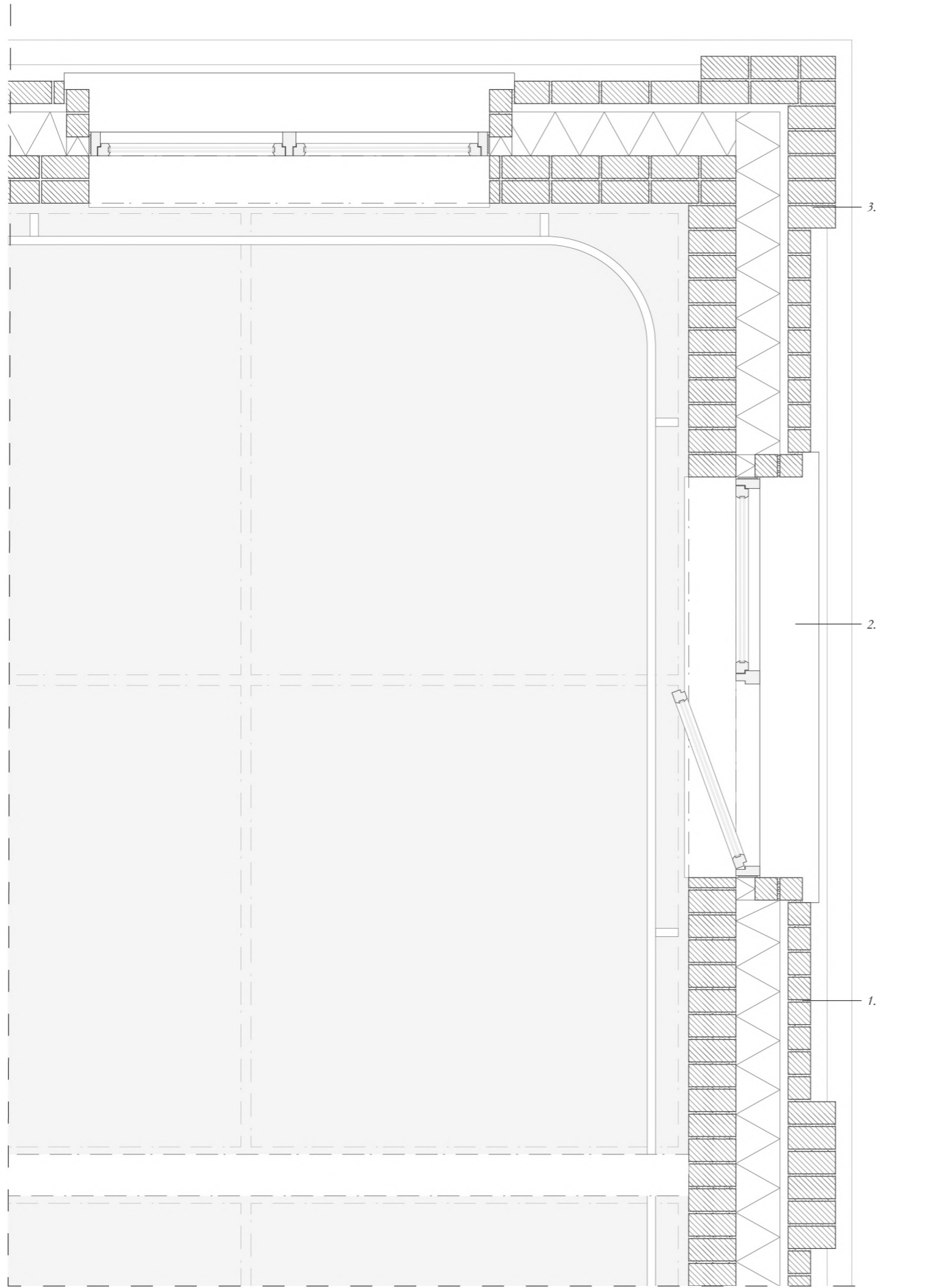


VERTICAL DETAIL - WINDOW /SLAB 1:25



VERTICAL DETAIL - BASE 1:25





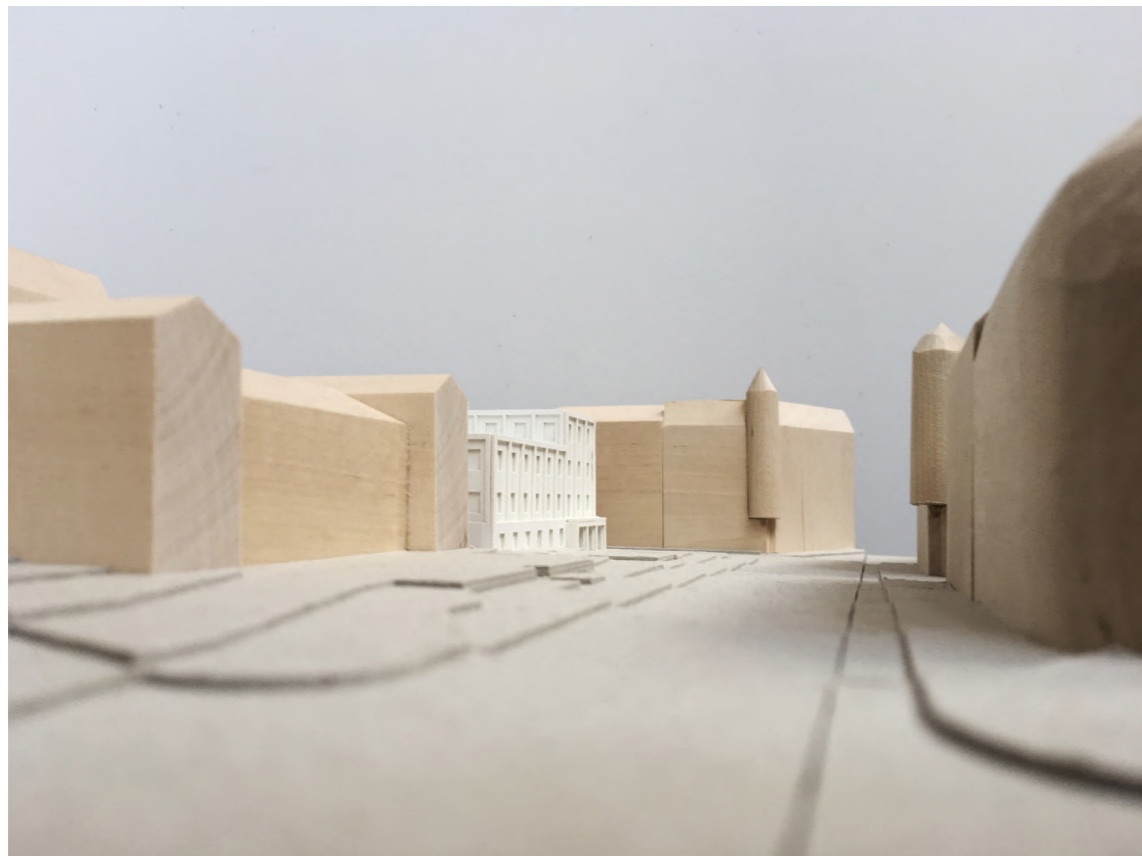
HORIZONTAL DETAIL - WALL/CORNER 1:25



1.
 108 × 108 × 54 brick in English bond with 12 mortar
 40 cavity
 200 thermal insulation
 108 × 228 × 54 brick in English bond with 12 mortar
 (load-bearing)

2.
 2700 × 900 triple glazed window in 95 × 115 wooden
 frame
 opening clad in 108 × 228 × 54 brick perpendicular to
 wall

3.
 Full-brick pilaster (protruding by a half-brick)



LANDSCAPE MODEL 1:500

LANDSCAPE MODEL 1:500



MODEL 1:200



FACADE MODEL 1:50



Linnégatan's new addition sits firmly in its urban landscape. It is fronted by a set of terraces leading down to an open-corner plaza and the entrance.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW



Strolling along Linnégatan, a reflection pool appears as a soothing oasis on the bottom terrace. It can also be used as a backdrop for outdoor performances.

VIEW FROM LINNÉGATAN



*A granite pathway, supported by a row of trees leads the way to the entrance.
On the right: a platform for the café to grow outwards during warm days.*

PLAZA



*The brick columns of the portico and the concrete beams synergize in directing
the sightlines towards the plaza and the vivid life outside.*

CAFÉ



The concrete beams add rhythm and distinction to the bar-reception-foyer sequence. A few brick steps act as a subtle divider and give extra character to the foyer with its proud double-height ceiling.

BAR & RECEPTION



Walking up the stairs, a mezzanine opens up towards the foyer and creates a spatial effect: from where you are now you can look down on where you were just a moment ago.

FOYER



The mirror halls are characterized by rich daylight and distinct architectural elements. Everything from the placement of mirrors to the division of windows, beams and ceiling tiles are there to give extra rhythm to the dance.

MIRROR HALL



Like a hidden gem, the theatre is protected from curious eyes outside through its tall, red brick wall. The whitewashed brick on top divides the room and enhances the light from above.

THEATRE



The rounded landing is slightly retracted to allow daylight to reach down along the stairwell's smoothly curved wall.

STAIRWELL

Discussion

This thesis departed from the dedicated craftsmen who made up the simple, yet poetic architecture of Den Frihetliga Traditionen. However, throughout the process it has grown more evident that the proposal might not share the same spontaneous aesthetics as a typical building by Asplund or Gezelius. At the same time the project has remained within the realm of the tradition by sticking to its notions and its working methods. The investigations made are perhaps best summarized as a strive to find the shortest and most narrow route to a solution, similar to how the Ahlsén brothers described their work.

There has been a strive to merge the spatial atmosphere with the physical limitations of gravity by embodying the play of forces into architectural elements such as visible concrete beams, pilasters and heavy brick walls. That being said, construction is not the only thing that architecture has to consider. Sometimes you exaggerate the height of a beam or the thickness of a wall to take care of the building as a consistent unity. Being faithful to the grammar of the building can lead to expensive solutions at times. Nevertheless, there is more to frugality than economics and this thesis sees an intrinsic value in being aesthetically frugal as an architect. By taking pride in hiding installations and making complicated and multi-layered walls look like simple and uniform surfaces, the most fundamental architectural elements can take the centre stage and appear more clearly.

To reconnect to the research question of timeless qualities, there are a few findings that deserves to be mentioned. First and most obvious, sturdy materials such as brick, stone and concrete, makes up a long-lasting building system that has a timeless robustness to it. This is a building that will stand the test of time.

Secondly, there is timelessness in simplicity - you do not have to make things complicated to make a building interesting. The rooms of the building are defined by the demands of a dance academy's functions but are given general proportions that are generous and suitable for potential changes. Moreover, by simplifying the footprint, the shape of rooms and their sequences into graspable geometries, there is more time for architects to dig deeper into issues of detailing. The aspect of creating a consistent unity between the detail and the whole is a key instrument to enhance the spatial atmosphere from being merely a series of gathered functions to a stimulating experience.

By taking inspiration from neighbouring Viktoriahuset, the Gothenburg New Academy of Ballet strives to become its contemporary sibling without trying to steal the spotlight. The thesis proposal makes up a purposeful addition to Linnéstaden by the way it harmonizes with its overall brick architecture and how it maintains the openness of the current urban space. After all, keeping in touch with and paying respect to history is perhaps the most timeless thing we can do.

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