







**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

Lund University  
Faculty of Engineering, LTH  
Department of Architecture and Built Environment

AAHM01: Degree Project in Architecture  
2024, Ceremonial Spaces and the Thinking Hand

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The completion of this thesis marks a significant milestone for me, and I owe a great debt of gratitude to those who have shared their knowledge, passion, and support along the way.

To my supervisors, Gediminas and Pablo, my deepest gratitude for your guidance, mentorship and expertise. You have given me so many keys, thank you. To David Andréen for your honesty and competence. To Jesus Mateo and Mika Friis for your rigorous, joyful and open hearted introduction to the profession, and to atelier Y. To Aya Voišnis, Elin Daun and Per-Johan Dahl for your insightful tutoring. To Mats Hultman and Tomas Hellquist for your compelling lectures on the theory and history of architecture. To the wood and metal workshop, David Eriksson, Carl Nilsson and Peder Karlsson, for your expertise and craftsmanship, thank you. To Daniel, for never leaving a stone unturned. To Teodor and Erik for your camaraderie during these years. To my sisters, and my family. To my little ones, Hedda and Hilding, for bringing so much life in to my world. And finally, to my loving partner, Cinna, thank you for opening so many doors, both imagined and real.



## Abstract

This thesis explores the intersection of ceremonial spaces and the concept of “the thinking hand” in architecture, with a focus on the design of secular spaces for funerals and burials in the context of Sweden’s increasing secularization. Drawing upon Juhani Pallasmaa’s “The Thinking Hand,” the thesis emphasizes the importance of embodied knowledge, sensory experiences, and materiality in architectural design, and how architecture can create meaningful and emotionally resonant spaces. It proposes an architectural design for a ceremonial space on the island of Ven, incorporating these principles to create a space that fosters contemplation, reflection, and connection with the natural environment. The design aims to provide a meaningful and adaptable space for various burial practices, addressing the changing needs and functions of ritual spaces in contemporary society.

*Händernas erfarenheter är beröringen*

*Deras liv bland tingen är mångfaldigt, fullt av tysta innehåll.*

*De hör inte men är med i vibrationer.*

*De ser inte men vet hur det är i mörka källare.*

*När sammeten skall värderas är de där, och slipstenen och lieäggen provar de tyst.*

*De behöver inte låta eggen bita till.*

*De känner med lätt beröring stålbettets skärpa.*

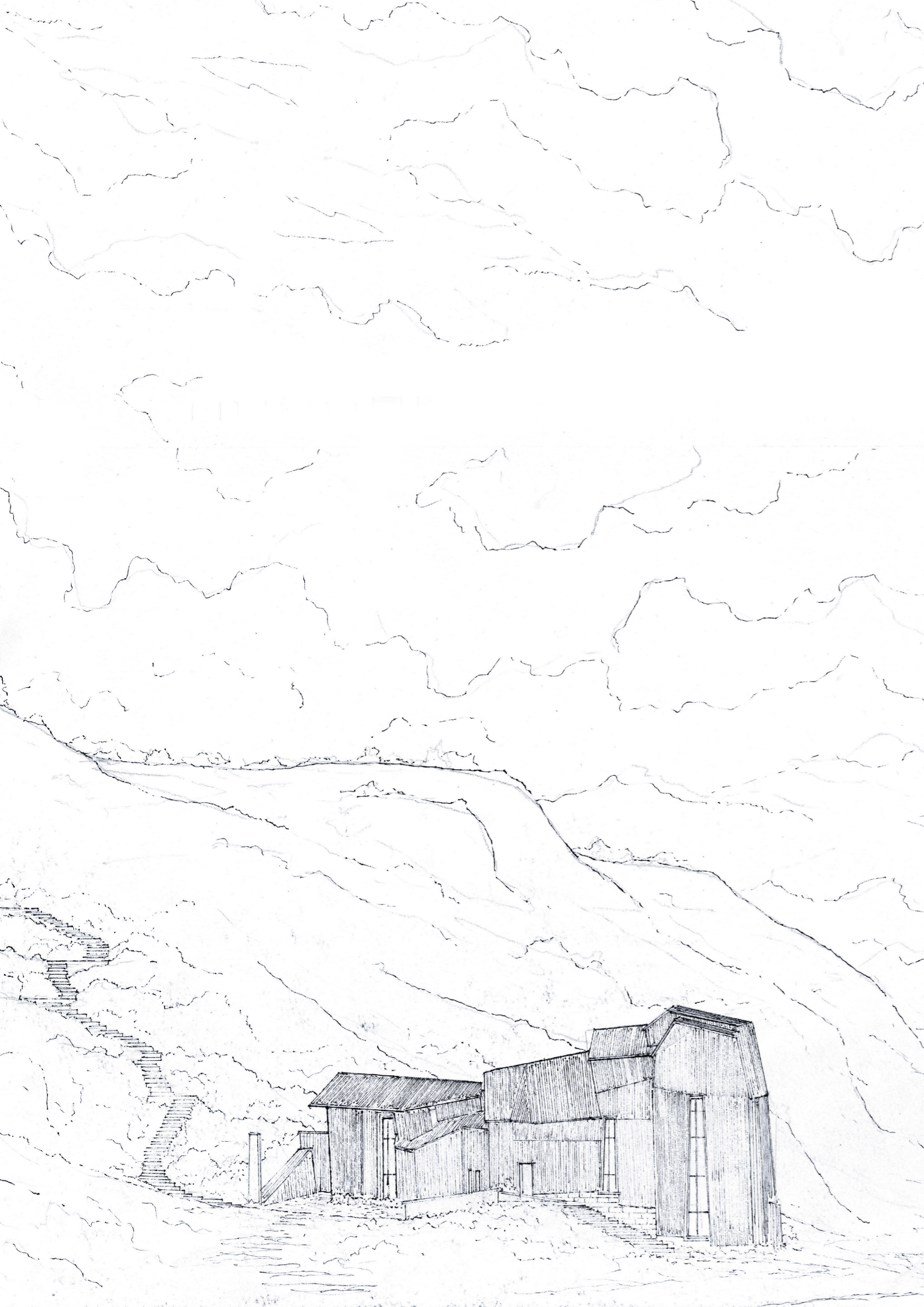
*Hur har de hunnit samla alla sina fina erfarenheter av ull och grus, av fjun och stål,  
av glatta ytor och av taggig tistelboll, av smidig talk och av alla sorters mjöl.*

*Deras register är oerhört - från glansigt silke till grova säckar,*

*från sträva filter och rivjärn, till de nyföddas glatta naglar och beröringsglansen på evighetsblommor.*

- Harry Martinson





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## Introduction

This project is rooted in personal encounters with the significance of human ceremonies, especially those surrounding death and grief. I have often witnessed confusion and a yearning for meaning during life's major transitions, not only in myself but also among friends and family.

Sweden stands out as a society marked both by individuality and secularization. This combination seems to create a cultural shift challenging traditional ideas about community, religion and the role of ceremonies. The number of people having burial memorials has been cut in half since the 1990s. And today more than 8 percent of Swedes are buried without any kind of ceremony, a dramatically increased number in only ten years. This is a phenomenon basically unheard of outside of Sweden, showing how unique this shift is.

As Sweden moves away from traditional religious practices, a growing segment of society seems to find itself without a clear framework for navigating life's major events. Where does one turn to bury a loved one, or to marry a spouse, if you have no firm ties to a traditional religious context? The city hall, while functional, may not offer the depth of experience desired by some individuals. I believe this creates a growing need for spaces that facilitate meaningful ceremonies.

This project aims to address this emergent need by exploring the transformative power of architecture, in creating embodied and atmospheric secular ceremonial spaces.

As a method in exploring the holistic concepts of human ceremonies, this project relies heavily on the ideas presented by Juhani Pallasmaa in "The Thinking Hand" to look at how (and if) architectural design can foster emotional and contemplative spatial experiences. And in doing so, challenging the notion that thinking resides only within the mind, as the hand becomes an essential partner in the thinking process.

Given the vastness of the topic, this project can of course not capture or communicate the subjective experience of every individual. Instead, it aims to offer a thoughtful exploration of atmosphere, placemaking and architecture, and its potential to support us during life's most significant moments. Many assumptions are made, especially surrounding the importance of place, and its value in the face of significant life transitions. I invite the reader to consider the ideas presented as a starting point for further exploration and discussion.

## Program

*“Westerners operate with an interesting, paradoxical world view. Rationality is highly regarded as a “superior” mode of thinking. Yet the role of metaphors and symbols are inextricably linked to the ability to think rational thoughts, so westerners paradoxically also place a high priority on visual perception.”*

- from “Do Funerals Really Matter?”

Sweden has become increasingly secular, where more and more people identify themselves as non-religious, or that they have a more flexible and multifaceted view of religion (Thurfjell et al. 2021). This has led to a mixing of religious and non-religious practices in funeral rituals, where the role of religion has become increasingly fragmented, leading to a shift towards more and more personalized rituals (Kjellin et al. 2021).

Recent statistics from the Swedish Association of Funeral Directors show that the number of guests at memorial services following funerals has halved since the early 1990s, while at the same time burials without any ceremonial at all has quadrupled to nearly eight percent of the deceased. Dismissing all ceremonies is unique to Sweden, where other countries lack statistics on the subject, because it is so rare, according to Ulf Lernéus, association director at Swedish Association of Funeral Directors.

“En Riktig begravning”, a study from Svenska Kyrkan (Ibid 2021) shows that there is a growing trend towards non-religious burial and memorialization practices. The study states that a collective community, as well as a cultural community, has become the most important role in the individual choices that one makes in connection with the funeral practice. These changes exist in a continuity where partly new practices and ways of expressing one’s grief do not seem

to have any total breaks with previous traditions, but that they instead get reinterpreted and fragmented. The funeral ritual has become a more physical act, with boundary-crossing functions, relying on various social norms that seem to work to counteract disorder/chaos. Examples of such norms include customs regarding seating arrangements in the church, with the closest relatives seated in the front on the right side, wearing black, and examples such as moments in shared silence (Ibid 2021).

These aspects of human tradition seem to be closely linked to some kind of “core value” in ritual acts. William Hoy also touches on these aspects, defining rituals as “cultural devices that facilitate the preservation of social order and provide ways to comprehend the complex and contradictory aspects of human existence within a given social context”. Here, the funeral becomes a highly ritualized metaphor, and a way to cope, with the important transition between life and death (Hoy, W.G. 2013)

In this context, the spatial experiences surrounding rituals become central. Hoy states that there is a close connection between symbols and the sensory experience. Symbolic acts such as music, flowers or sensory images all play central roles in evoking strong emotional responses. He states that the human neurological system encodes these symbols to specific events, places and experiences, enabling the ritual act (Ibid 2013)



## The Thinking Hand

Architectural theory is essentially the intellectual exploration of architecture. The thinking, discussing, and writing about architecture. One important aspect of architectural theory - which in many ways separates it from other academic environments - is that it is often based on experience, rather than research (Mo, L. 2003 p 133).

In "Philosophy of science for architects" Linn Mo suggests that architectural theory resembles esthetic theory, especially in its form of argument (Ibid 2003 p 150). She states that architectural theory does not strive for truth, technical perfection or "beauty", but instead that it seems to be judged by a rhetorical discourse on the values and goals set out by the architect itself, and the "why" behind the work (Ibid 2003 p 151).

Mo states that esthetic theory fundamentally differs from scientific thinking, in the sense that it rests on an appeal to authority. In contrast to scientific theory, it is not the data that has a privileged status, but the interpretation and its power to convince. She argues that since the goals in architecture in general are so diffuse, unique and individual, the analysis of them is a product of how one chooses to see them (Ibid 2003 p 154).

There are arguably endless ways to approach a deeper understanding of human rituals. Given the limited time (and the aspects of approaching this issue as an architect) the chosen method to explore the holistic concepts of human ceremonies has been by using the ideas presented by Juhani Pallasmaa in "The Thinking Hand", and in this way to look at how architectural design can foster emotional and contemplative spatial experiences.

Juhani Pallasmaa' delves into the power of the hand as a source of knowledge and creativity. He argues against the many intellectual concepts in architectural design, and how it often prioritizes

the theoretical aspects of the creative process (Pallasmaa 2006, pp 21-22). Instead Pallasmaa calls for a design process that tries to integrate what he describes as "embodied knowledge" with intellectual thinking. This embodied knowledge involves incorporating sensory experiences and material feedback. A practice rooted in bodily experience, where he stresses the importance of sensory engagement, and actual craftsmanship in creating meaningful architecture.

The book highlights the hand as more than just a tool for execution. Pallasmaa argues that it's an extension of the mind, actively involved in understanding and shaping the world. Through touch, manipulation, and making, the hand generates its own form of knowledge, distinct from theoretical or visual understanding (Ibid 2006, pp 30-37).

This approach is particularly relevant for designing ceremonial spaces, as the thinking hand encourages a deep, sensory engagement with materials and forms. This could be crucial in the design of ceremonial spaces, where the atmosphere and ambiance are essential in creating a meaningful experience. The tactile nature of this process allows for a more intuitive and spontaneous design process. This can be particularly beneficial in designing ceremonial spaces, where emotional resonance and symbolic meaning are often paramount. By working directly with materials, the architect can tap into a deeper understanding of how forms and spaces can evoke specific feelings and ideas. And by physically interacting with materials and models, the architect can better understand how the space will be experienced, and essentially how to evoke emotions in those who use it.

## Duality of Mind and Body

Pallasmaa argues that the interconnectedness of mind and body in design and experience is crucial in knowledge and understanding as it involves the engagement of all senses and bodily interaction with the environment. Beyond sight, architects should consider how spaces evoke touch, smell, sound, and even taste. Pallasmaa suggests that each material has its own life, and that instead of imposing a preconceived idea upon a material, we must listen to the material, learn its language and collaborate with it, with the ambition to communicate its language to a third part (Ibid 2006 pp 53-55)

This is a process that Pallasmaa calls “Creative fusion”, where he states that “Design is a process of going back and forth among hundreds of ideas, where partial solutions and details are repeatedly tested in order to gradually reveal and fuse a complete rendition of thousands of demands and criteria, as well as the architects personal ideals of coordination and harmonization, into a complete architectural or artistic entity” (Ibid 2006, pp 107-108).

Pallasmaa emphasizes that these diverse elements are not simply combined passively but undergo a fusion. This suggests a dynamic and transformative process where individual ideas and solutions interweave and influence each other, ultimately leading to a unified whole.

This concept aligns with Pallasmaa’s broader argument in chapter 5 “Embodied Thinking”, where Pallasmaa suggests that the design needs to act through continuous testing, refinement, and back-and-forth movement between different ideas, where the individual elements are not considered in isolation, but viewed as contributing to the overall composition and experience.

This process leads to a final design which cannot be fully predicted beforehand as it emerges from the dynamic interaction of various elements. Here, the architect’s sensory experience and personal intuition play a role in shaping and refining the design.

The “creative fusion” of various elements reflects this integration, leading to designs that are not only intellectually conceived but also resonate with our embodied selves, where material choices and construction methods have a significant impact on our perception and experience of space.

Recent studies in psychology on understanding of creative intelligence are also arguing against the isolated, disembodied mind, suggesting that thinking is deeply connected to our physical bodies, especially our hands. Professor Susan Goldin-Meadow of the University of Chicago states in “Learning through gesture” that we “literally move our way to new ideas” and that “Our hands can affect how we think and learn.” This embodied cognition approach highlights how our bodies, and particularly our hands, actively shape our thoughts, where physical actions become a kind of thinking workshop, in which we sculpt and refine our ideas.

Research on intuition also suggests that one’s expertise and how well one’s feeling/intuition guides is based on having a large amount of experience stored in the body. Intuition in this sense is the ability to understand or know something immediately based on feelings, rather than facts, explained as something that is entirely sprung from one’s collective bodily experience. That means that it takes practice, in this case of working physically with materials, to be able to use the body’s collective intuition in that area. The more experience, the better “instrument” the body becomes (Chudnoff, E 2016)



## The thinking hand as a method

*“I used to believe that the architect’s duty was to design structures and details that are as easy to execute as possible. Having realized that every serious professional has his ambition and pride, I have changed my view entirely.*

*Skilled craftsmen and builders like to face challenges, and consequently the work needs to meet the full potential of the maker in order to provide the desired inspiration and satisfaction. Work that is too simple and repetitious kills ambition, self-esteem, pride and, finally, the craft itself.” - Juhani Pallasmaa*

The architectural practice has historically been indistinguishable from builders and craftsmen, focusing mainly on the physical construction of buildings. In the early Renaissance, Filippo Brunelleschi’s work marked a significant turning point in this role of the architect, transitioning the profession from a primarily hands-on practice to one that included both theoretical and practical expertise, where Brunelleschi elevated the architect’s intellectual role by emphasizing the importance of design and planning.

Brunelleschi’s approach to design and construction, particularly his emphasis on standardized elements and modularity, came to centralize control over the building process in the hands of the architect. Brunelleschi’s reliance on detailed plans and drawings solidified the architect’s control over the building process. By providing precise instructions and measurements, he limited the builder’s creativity to mere execution, leaving little room for individual interpretation or improvisation. This had a direct impact on the expression and power of individual craftspeople on the building site (Aureli, P.V, 2015).

Today, architecture is dominated by an ever growing precise digital workflow, allowing an excessive control over the design. In this sense, working with a craftsman’s hands-on approach, as described by Pallasmaa, becomes the intimate connection between the creative act of making

and architectural understanding. The hand carving of wood offers a form that could never be conceived on a screen, and the inherent qualities of the wood’s material – its texture, weight, smell, how it interacts with light, can all spark imaginative leaps. This collaboration between the hand and the material can give rise to design solutions that are also infused with a human presence, and a tactile quality. This tactile engagement can spark new insights and lead to a deeper understanding of how a design might feel and function in reality.

Perhaps this comes in contrast with Brunelleschi’s design philosophy, where the architect’s vision and control over the collective creativity of the craftsmen became prioritized, as this shift did not only change the dynamics of the building site, but it also reflected a broader societal shift towards valuing intellectual labor over manual skill. Where the architect, as the “maker” and designer of the building, was elevated to a position of authority, while the craftsmen were degraded to the role of executors of the architect’s predetermined vision.

Based on Juhani Pallasmaa’s theories surrounding atmosphere, the interconnectedness of body, self, and mind, this project aims to investigate how materiality and sensory experiences in the designed space can promote individual reflection, emotional expression and connection.

By working primarily with the hand through a series of physical models, this project aims to draw from these ideas, and its iterative process, with the end goal of designing an architectural proposal based on these concepts sprung from the hand.

By doing so, the project hopes to contribute to both the exploration of meaningful ceremonial spaces, and to the architectural creative process.

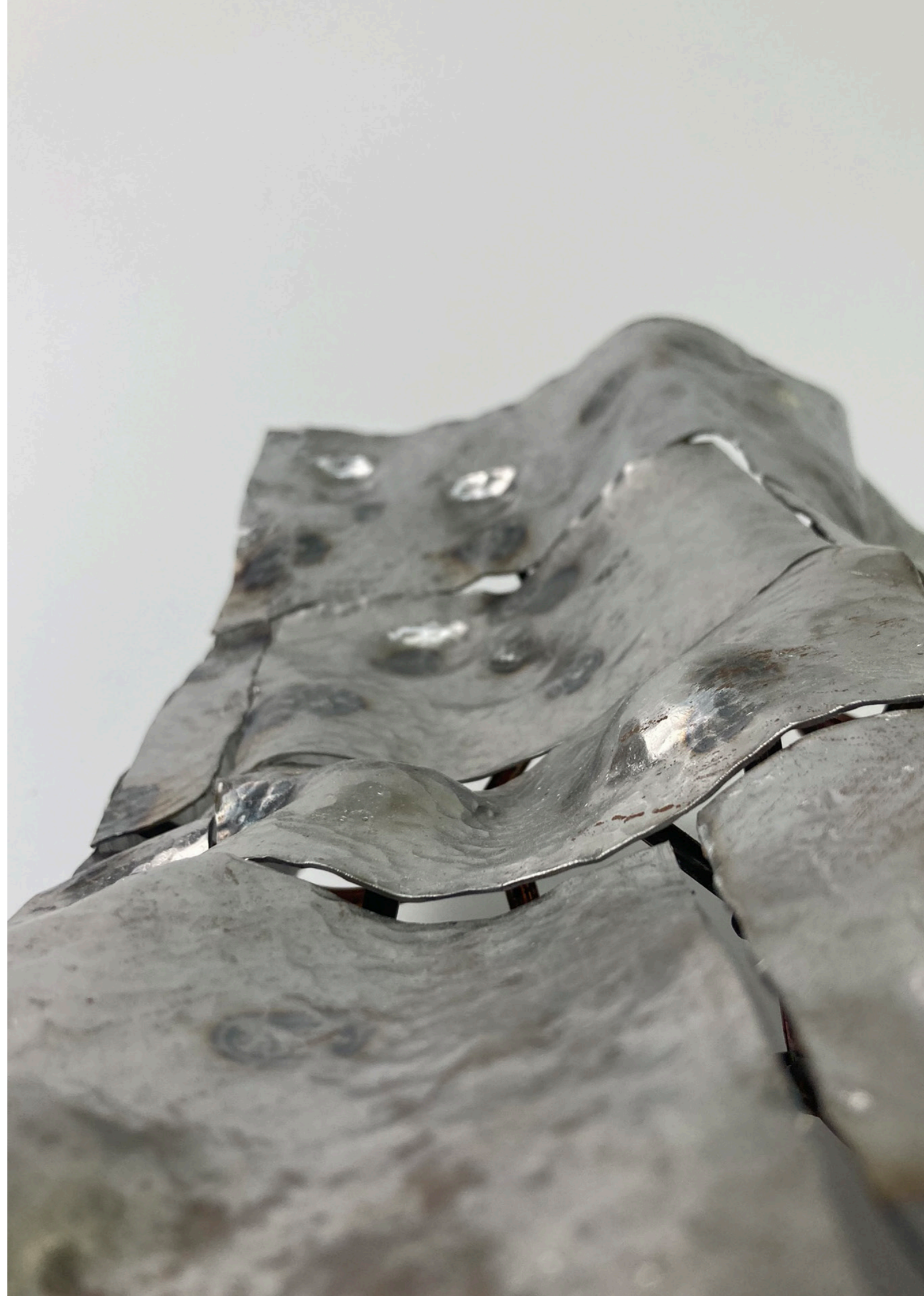




Cold-hammer forged metal sheets, welded and polished.

The repetitive process of model making creates a unique feedback loop for architects. Each iteration of a model allows for a deeper engagement with the design, fostering a continuous dialogue between the creator and their creation. Through this cyclical process of building, observing, and refining, architects gain a more intimate understanding of their design's strengths and weaknesses.

The way light filters through a model reveals the emotional potential of the envisioned space. Shadows become dynamic elements, shifting and transforming the atmosphere as the sun or an artificial light moves across the sky.







Metal, welded and grinded.

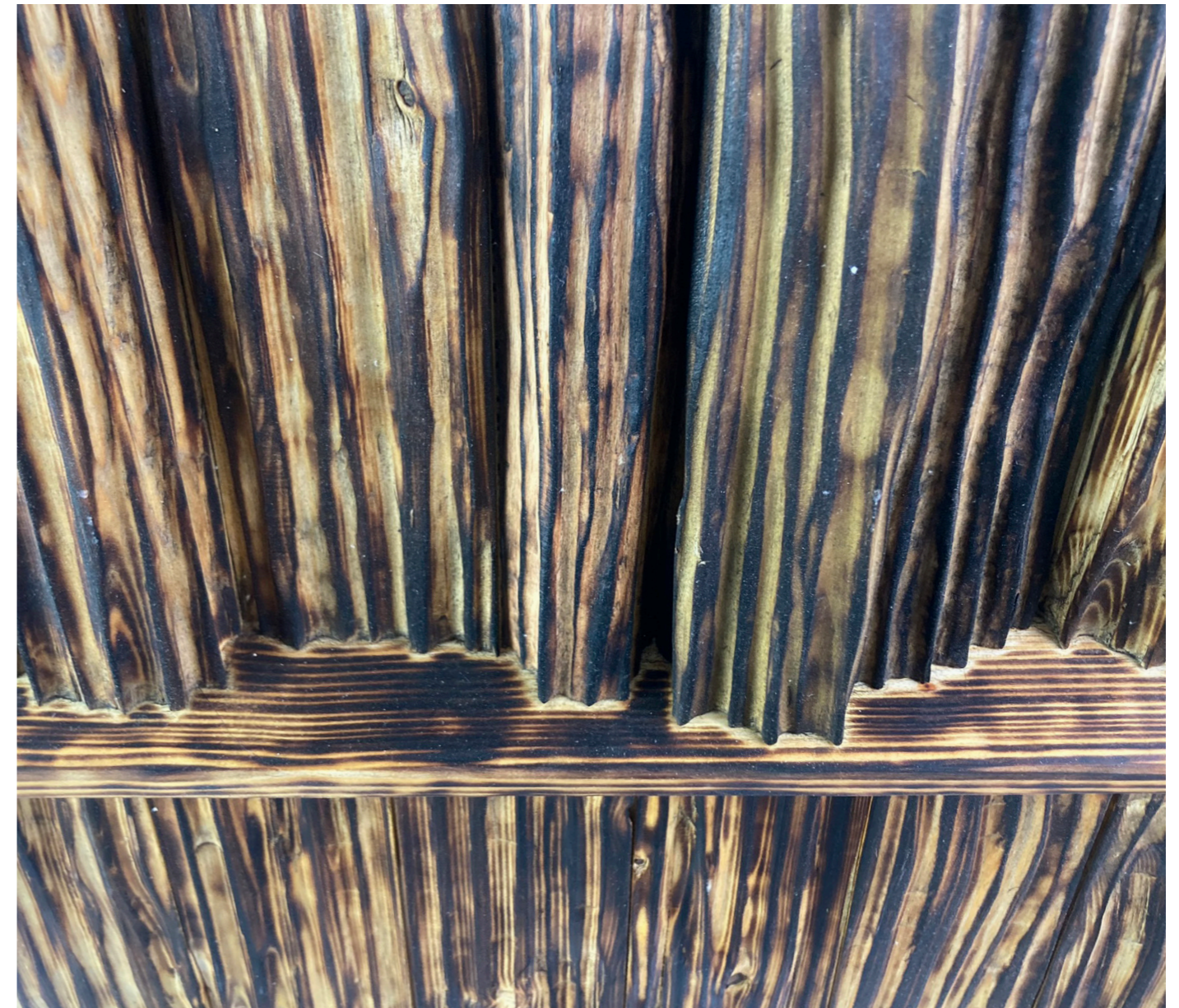


Pine heartwood, spliced, cut and joined. Coated with linseed oil.





Carved pine, beech and elm wood. Charred and coated with linseed oil.



The act of physically constructing a model reveals nuances that might not be apparent in drawings or digital representations. Light, shadow, proportion, and spatial relationships become tangible, allowing for a more intuitive and informed design process.

This allows the choice of materials within the model to speak a language of its own: a mixing of rough and smooth surfaces, where carvings and cuts become intuitive, imbuing the space with meaning beyond mere form.





Pine heartwood, spliced, cut and joined, beech wood, 2 mm metal sheet rough grinded and welded.







Masonite and gypsum.

Models also provide an unique opportunity to explore and refine the relationship between a structure and its foundation. The dynamic interplay of building and ground becomes a space for experimentation where unexpected architectural solutions can arise.

The way a building meets the ground can influence how people interact with and experience it. It can create a sense of welcome, openness, or even a dramatic statement. As the architect refines the model, she can develop a deeper connection to the design, gaining insights into its underlying principles and potential. This evolving relationship between the architect and their creation can lead to a more nuanced final design.







Pinewood, cellular plastic and gypsum.

Model making can also engage less emphasized senses. The subtle quality of a space can be suggested through the choice of materials and their arrangement. Even the simple things, as the smell of a wooden model, could evoke connections to nature, grounding and memory, shaping the narrative of the space.



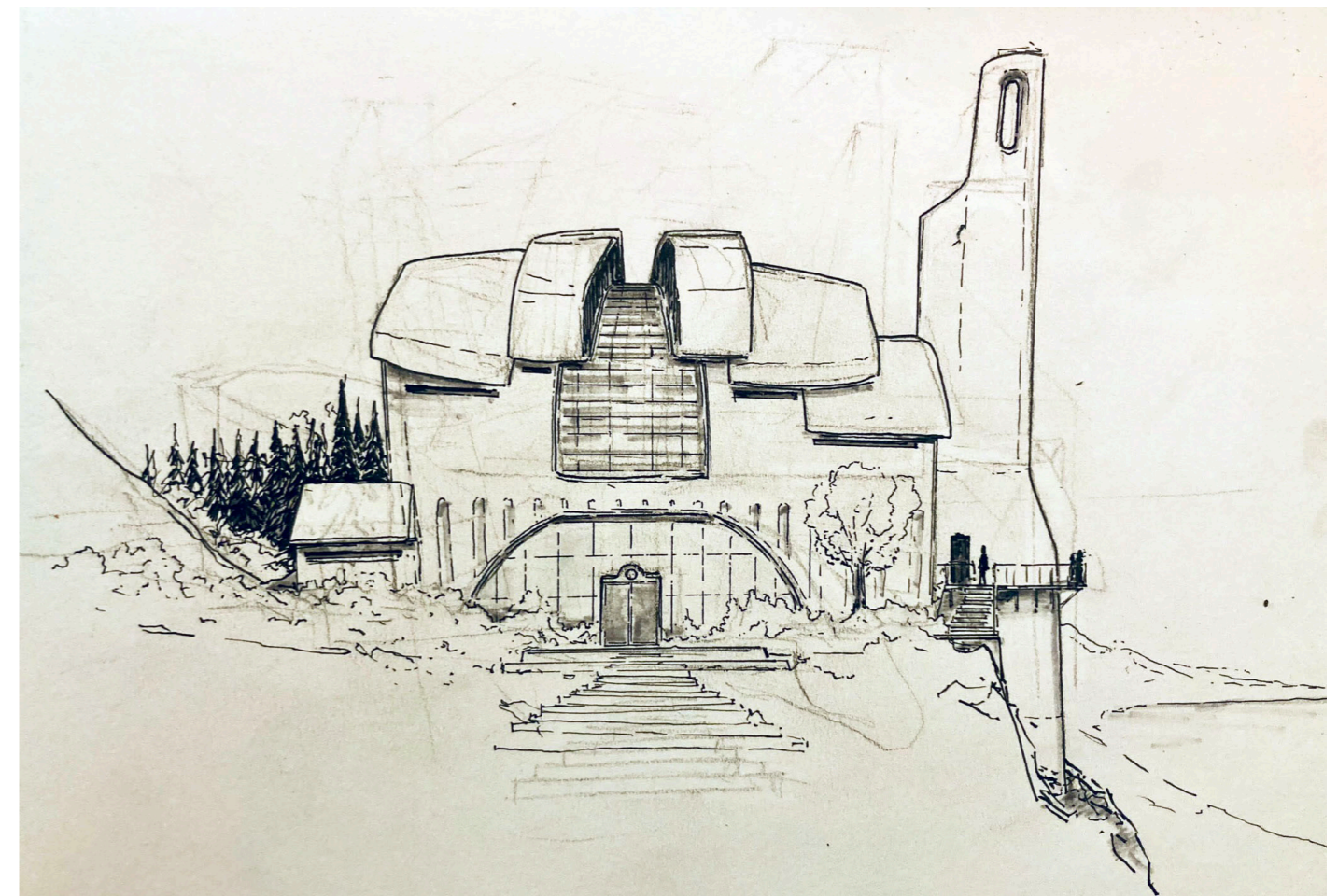
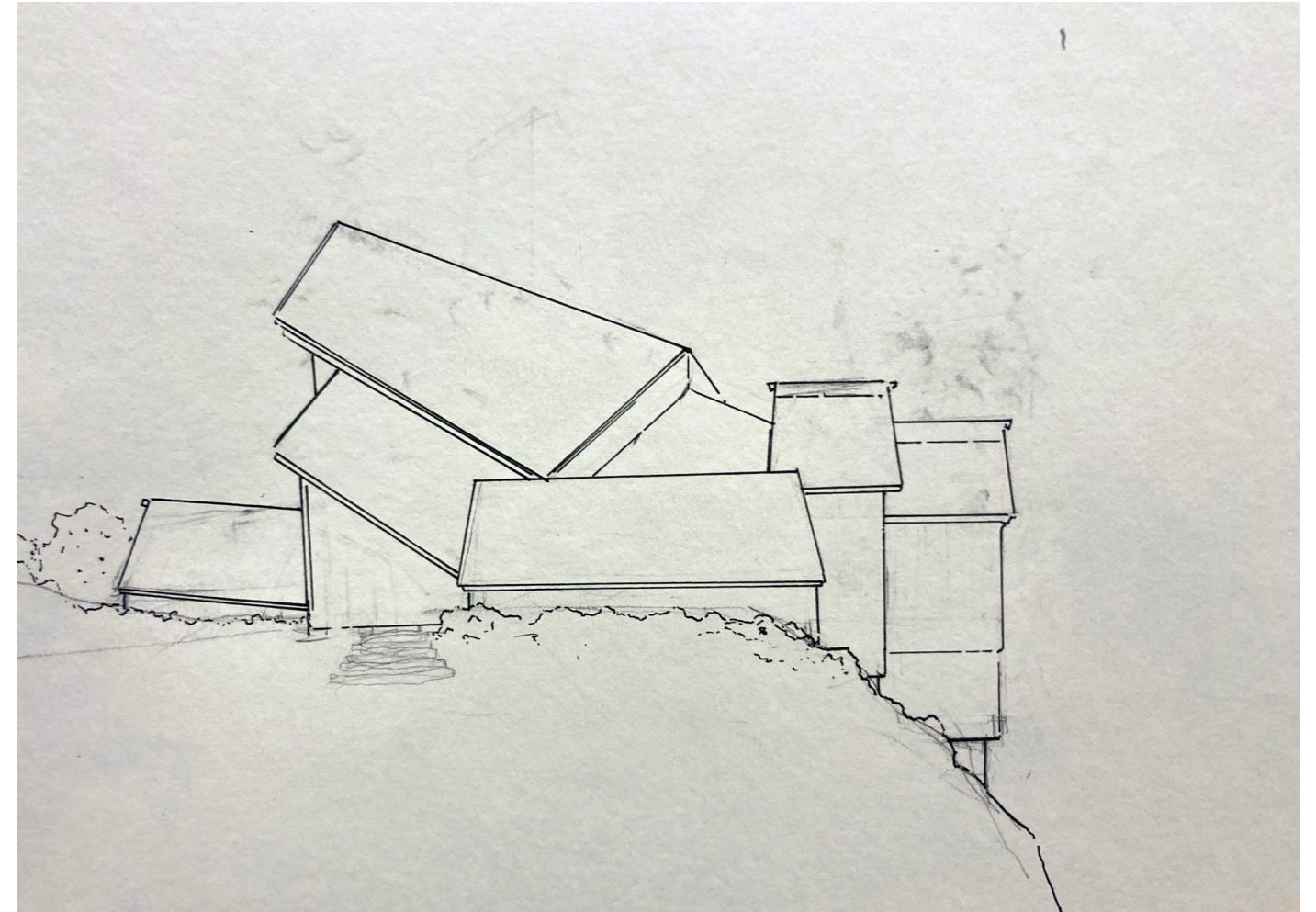




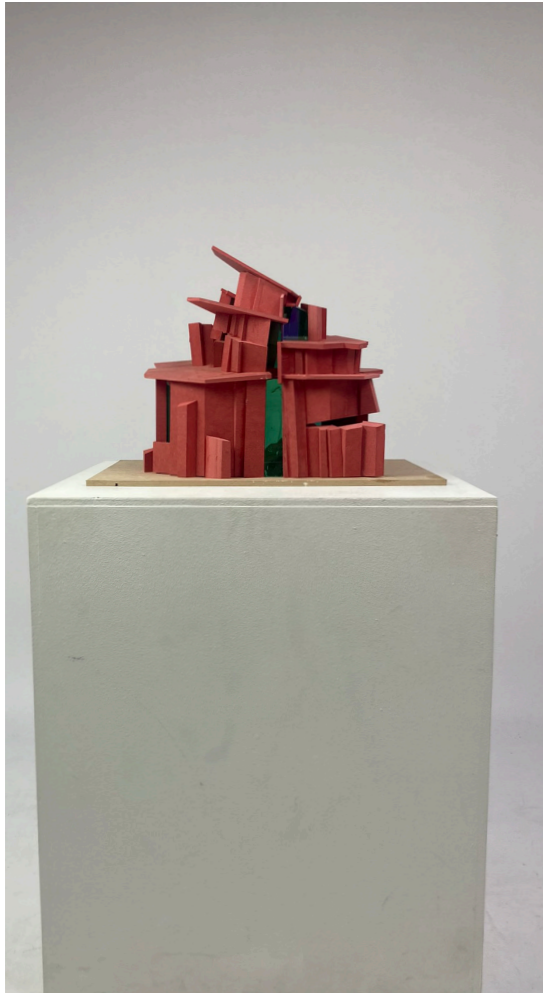
Ink on paper, A3.

Like model making, physical drawings also tap into a wider range of senses. The faint texture of the paper can evoke an unexpected response, giving new direction for the design. The sound of the pen moving across the surface influences the rhythm of lines and shapes, shaping the composition.

Physical drawing also allows for a type of freedom and imperfection that can be lost in a more precise digital workflow. It is in these moments of uncertainty that the architect can discover unexpected possibilities.



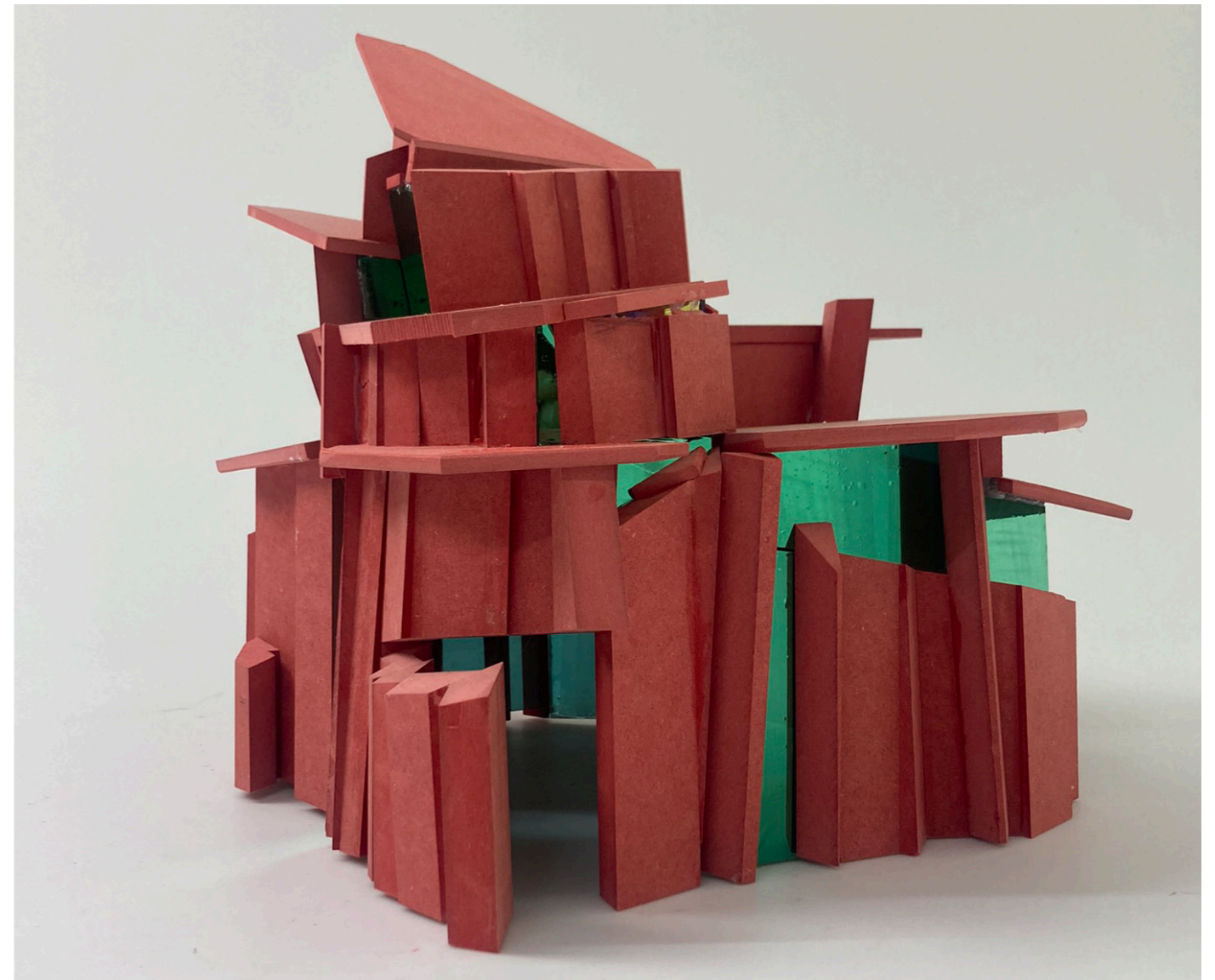




Red valchromat, styren plastic and green glass film coating.

Furthermore, the nature of model making encourages experimentation and risk-taking. Architects can quickly test different variations, exploring alternative configurations or material choices without the constraints of a finalized design. This process fosters a sense of playfulness and discovery, leading to unexpected and innovative solutions.

In essence, the many aspects of model making transform the act of design into a dynamic conversation. Through this ongoing exchange, architects can unlock the full potential of their ideas, creating architecture that is not only visually compelling but also meaningful and responsive to its context.







Pinewood, beech, gypsum, cellular plastic, cold-hammered forged metal sheets, falu röd dye, styren plastic and green glass film coating.

In designing ceremonial spaces, where the atmosphere is crucial, model making becomes invaluable. By building a physical representation, the architect is confronted with an immaterial experience, such as how a space is perceived, and not just what it looks like. It allows for the manipulation of light, material, and even sound in ways that naturally transcend two-dimensional representations, leading the design process forward.





## Atmosphere

The OASE Journal for Architecture's issue "Building Atmospheres" deals with the understanding of atmosphere that extends beyond visual aesthetics. Atmosphere, in this context, is the elusive or intangible aspects of space, and in this sense how the emotional response shapes the occupants or users experience. It's a quality born in the intricate interplay between physical elements and the way they invoke sensory and psychological responses within us.

The issue draws a lot on the philosophy of Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, and his work on manipulation of atmosphere. Zumthor argues that successful architecture must resonate with the human experience on a primitive level. This means considering not only how a building looks like, but how it's experienced – the way light filters through its spaces, the textures that invite touch, the acoustics that amplify or silence sound, and even the subtle scents that linger within its walls.

Both Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter Zumthor argue that the creation of atmosphere lies at the very core of architecture. Having different approaches on how to imbue and implement atmosphere into architecture, they both imply that in creating atmosphere lies careful orchestration, and by understanding and implementing architectural elements like light, material and scale, it is possible to evoke a desired emotional state (Zumthor, P. et al. 2014, pp 5-11).

These theories surrounding atmosphere and the thinking hand in architectural design have been essential in the project, investigating how materiality, textures and sensory experiences in the designed space can promote individual reflection, emotional expression and connection, and in that sense the exploration of meaningful secular ceremonial spaces.





## Ceremonial Spaces

*“The popularizing and secularizing of funerary rites is likely to be one of the major arenas of ritual development in the coming decade. Some will prove successful and others will fail, for rites, too, are subject to the survival of the fittest. If our argument is correct, then the rites which flourish will be those which cause the bereaved to flourish as they enhance the quest for life.”* - Douglas Davies, 2017, “Death, Ritual and Belief : The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites”

It seems as if death is no longer solely viewed through a religious lens. The ways we talk about and respond to death are shifting from the traditional, religious sphere towards more secular approaches. While religious interpretations still play a major role, there now seems to be an increasing focus on personalized, poetic, and therapeutic expressions of grief.

Ceremonies in most cultures involve some aspects of physical actions such as rituals, dances, gestures, or preparation and consumption of special foods. They evoke emotions like joy, grief, awe, and a sense of belonging. But most of all, they seem to reinforce community ties, create shared experiences, and in the end affirm cultural values. Excluding human traditions, such as burials, seems to have a significant impact on a society in several ways, as traditional rituals surrounding death provide a framework for processing grief and loss. These rituals also seem to help us understand and give meaning to death and other transitional human experiences, as well as providing a sense of comfort and direction in navigating this inevitable experience (Hoy, W.G. 2022, p 20-21).

This perspective suggests that death rituals do more than just help us cope with loss or to maintain social order. They can actually energize and empower the living, contributing to a sense of purpose and identity (Davies, D 2017, p 27). If this is true, allowing and enabling such rituals

become important, as they may hold the key to understanding a powerful force that benefits society and enriches our self-awareness.

This reflects a broader social change where individuals are seeking more personalized and meaningful ways to commemorate the dead. “We’re not just moving away from religion; we’re actively seeking new ways to find significance in death, using a mix of traditional and innovative approaches” (Ibid 2017, p 236).

This change can be seen as a positive adaptation, as it allows for greater flexibility and individuality in dealing with death. As funerals are becoming more diverse, and the focus is shifting towards supporting the living, as they navigate their grief and find ways to move forward.

Here, the aspects of place and architecture seem to be central, as humans have always built structures to remember the dead, from ancient burial chambers to grand memorials. These buildings have served as places to honor the deceased and reflect different beliefs about what happens after death. Some, like the pyramids, suggest a belief in an afterlife, while others celebrate the person’s achievements. Some memorials, like Sigurd Lewerentz and Gunnar Asplund’s Woodland Crematorium in Stockholm, are designed to create a “space of absence.” This is appropriate for cremation, as the body is physically gone, but a place for remembrance is still needed.

Human memorials and the ceremony of funerals are not just about handling the body; they also serve important social and personal roles. Most human societies have some form of funeral ritual, suggesting these practices have helped us adapt and thrive over time. But it also seems that funeral rites can actually strengthen our commitment to life, even in the face of death. Across many cultures and religious traditions, rituals surrounding death often emphasize the idea that life continues in some way after death. This reflects humanity’s drive for optimism and progress, even in the face of mortality (Ibid 2017, p 237)



## Architectural proposal

*Åldrarnas ålder var träets.  
Sträckte sig en gång till alla,  
försynande alla med medel:  
räfsor magerfingrade i starrhö,  
slevar i fattigmansrodd genom år av vattgröt.*

*Den stora formbarheten  
kommen ur livets skog:  
Vävstolar, båtstora tråg.  
Masttopp pendlande bland stjärnor.  
Kista i mulnande jord.  
- Harry Martinson*

Key aspects of this proposal have been in trying to to spatially communicate a space for a ceremonial act, primarily towards burials. This architectural exploration naturally extends to concepts surrounding beauty, sensory architecture, art, craftsmanship, and the relationship between humans and materials, as these are all deeply intertwined with the practice of architecture.

It also touches on the human-built relationship with death as expressed through architectural symbols, ornaments, sculptures, fables, and pictorial representations, and with this, the spatial aspects of death rituals – the movements, passages, and crossings that architecture facilitates. I believe architecture can play a powerful role in the storytelling of death, utilizing metaphors to help us make sense of the world.

Using the thinking hand approach, bridging the sensory and spatial concepts from the physical models, my aim has been to design a multifaceted and flexible architectural proposal for contemporary burial practice. The architectural proposal aims to combine both function and spatial qualities, with the ambition to design a structure exploring human shared experiences and cultural values. And by doing so I hope that this architectural proposal can address not only the practicalities of death, but also foster meaningful conversations about it.















Map over Ven, edited original from Rikets allmänna kartverks arkiv.

Sweden arguably has a special connection to the natural environment, in the sense it's a given right to wander and experience the freedom in nature - perhaps giving a spiritual connectedness with the landscape.

In this project, the site has been central in many ways, as its unique characteristics, such as topography, vegetation, and existing structures, all in some sense have shaped the design's response. The site's emotional qualities, such as its history, cultural significance, and sensory experiences, have inspired the design's narrative and, hoping to create a deeper connection for users, with the ambition to propose a structure that harmonizes with its surroundings, rather than imposing itself upon it.

Here the site's relationship with nature and the ocean hopes to aid in creating meaningful interactions between its users and the environment. As the site is not merely a location for the building; it is itself a dynamic entity that has shaped the architectural design.

The island of Ven, located in the Öresund between Sweden and Denmark, holds a rich history that already includes two significant religious sites: St. Ibbs Church, a 13th-century landmark, and the deconsecrated Allhelgonakyrkan, now a museum dedicated to the renowned astronomer Tycho Brahe.

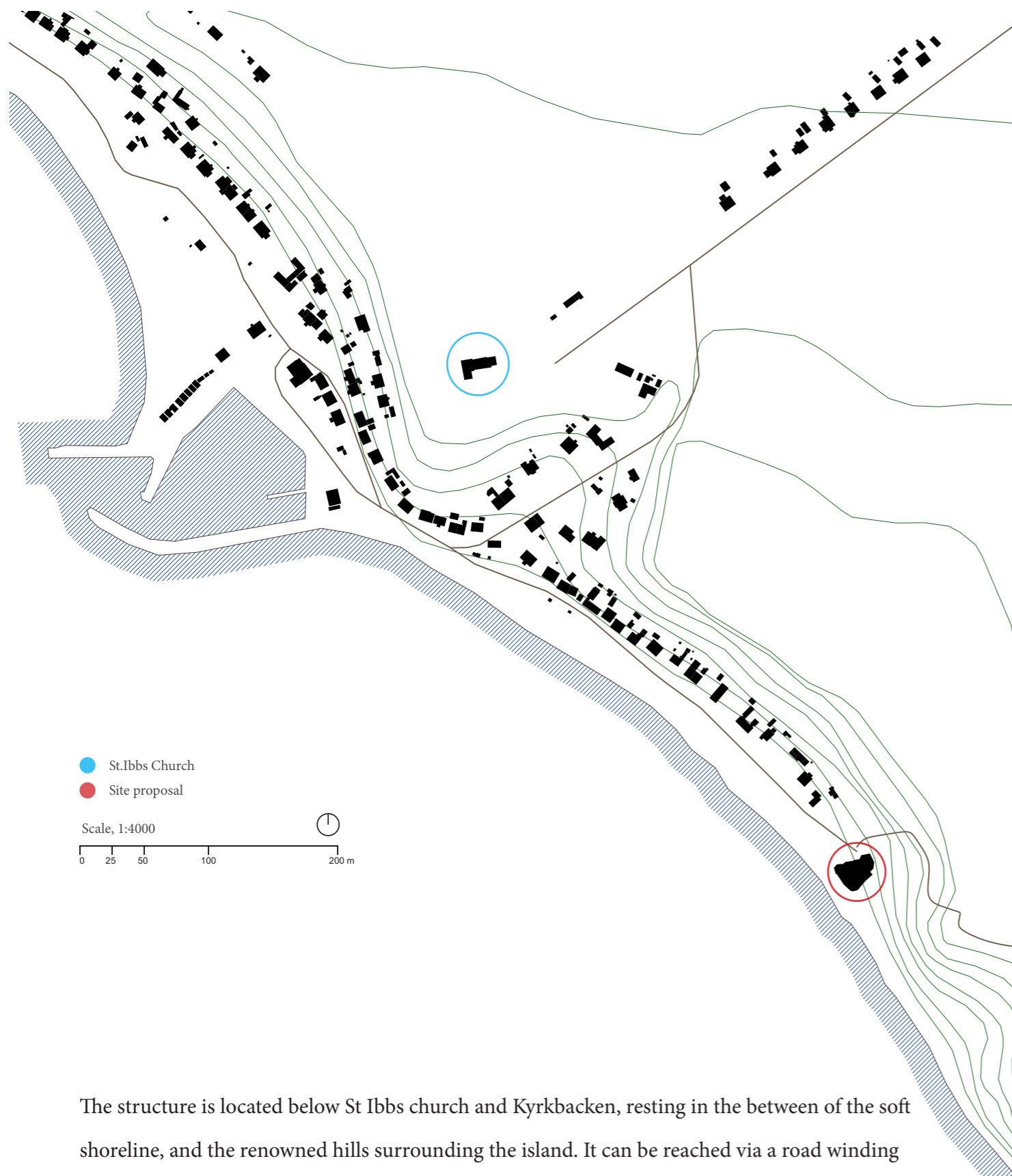
These two churches, with their distinct cultural and religious functions, present a unique opportunity to explore the evolving role of ritual sites in contemporary society. The proposed project seeks to create a third site on Ven, a space that engages in a dialogue with the existing churches, bridging the gap between past and present while addressing the changing needs and functions of ritual spaces.

By embracing the island's unique context and historical significance, this new site could offer a new perspective on how we approach rituals, commemoration, and the human need for connection and meaning. It could serve as a space for contemplation, reflection, and ceremonies, contributing to the ongoing conversation about the role of spirituality and community in modern life.

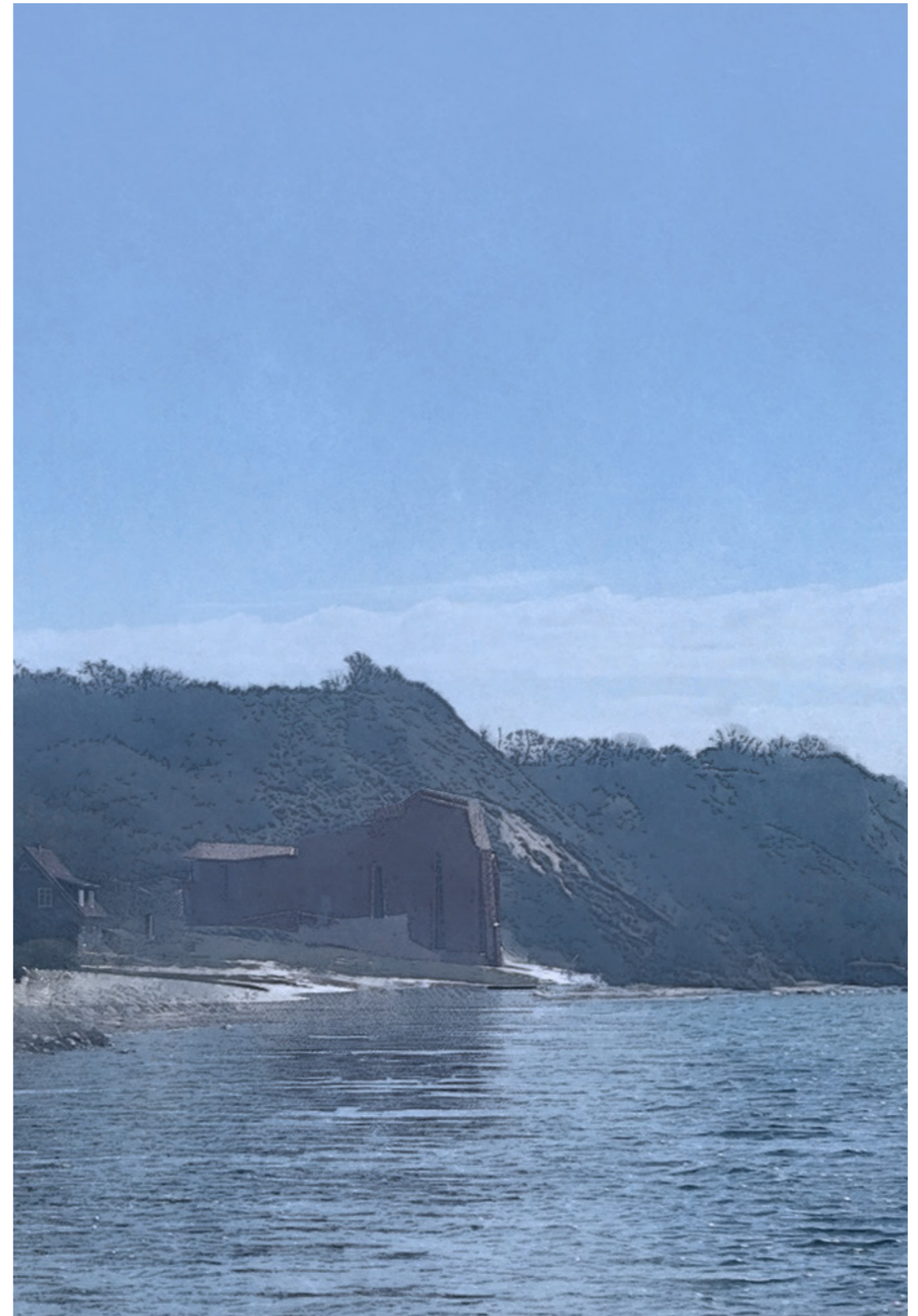
While the chosen site on Ven Island is ideal for conceptual discussions, particularly due to its connection to the ocean and natural surroundings, it's important to acknowledge the practical implications of its unique location. The island's accessibility solely by boat emphasizes the significance of the journey to the site, making it an integral part of the overall experience.

Given the conceptual nature of this project, the primary focus has been on the interplay between the hill, the ocean, and the surrounding landscape. Consequently, practical concerns such as building restrictions have been put aside for now, allowing for a more unconstrained exploration of design possibilities.





The structure is located below St Ibbs church and Kyrkbacken, resting in the between of the soft shoreline, and the renowned hills surrounding the island. It can be reached via a road winding through a cluster of smaller buildings, offering a direct approach. However, a more ceremonial route unfolds through the hillside, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the island view, before arriving at the structure.







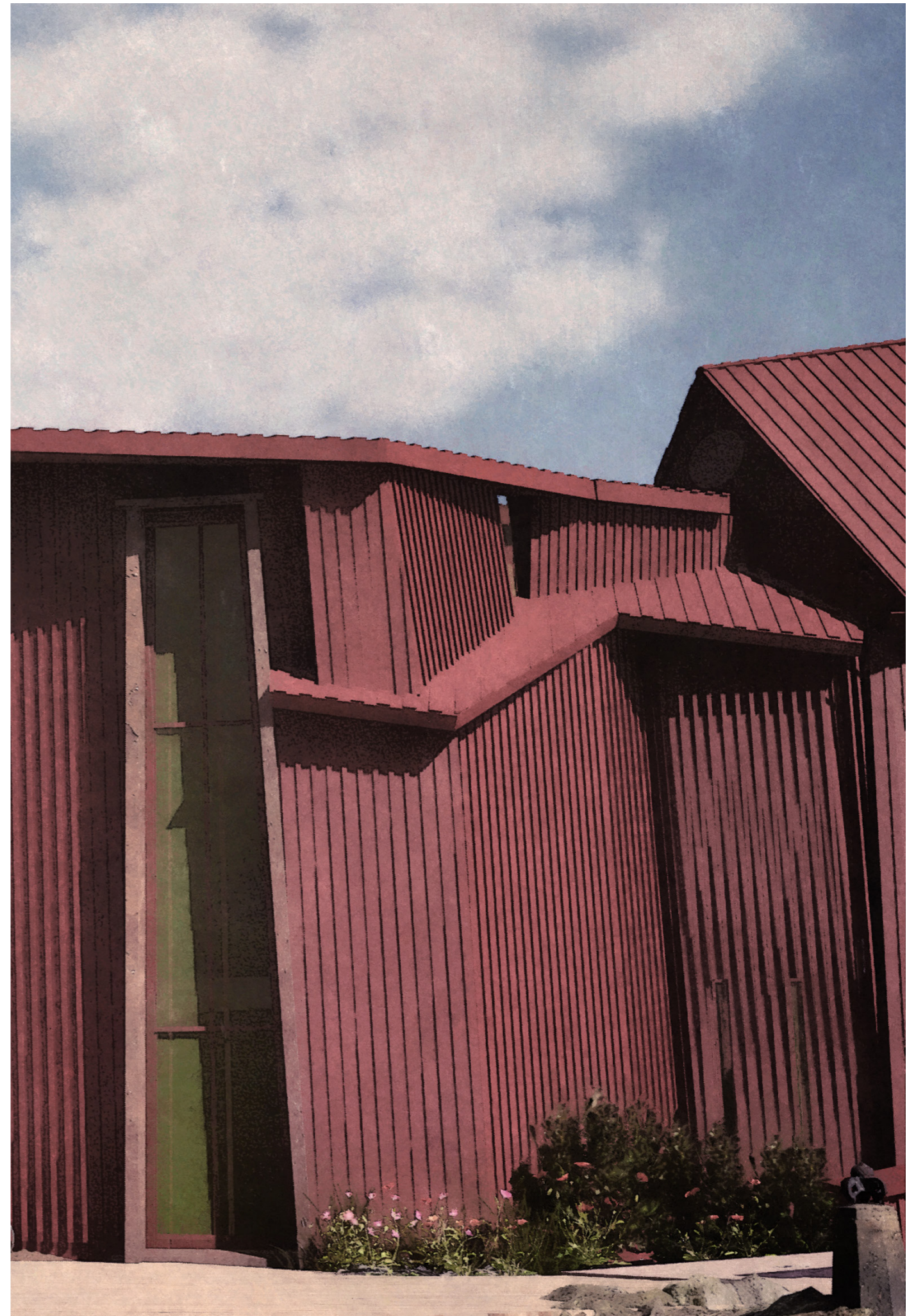
View from north



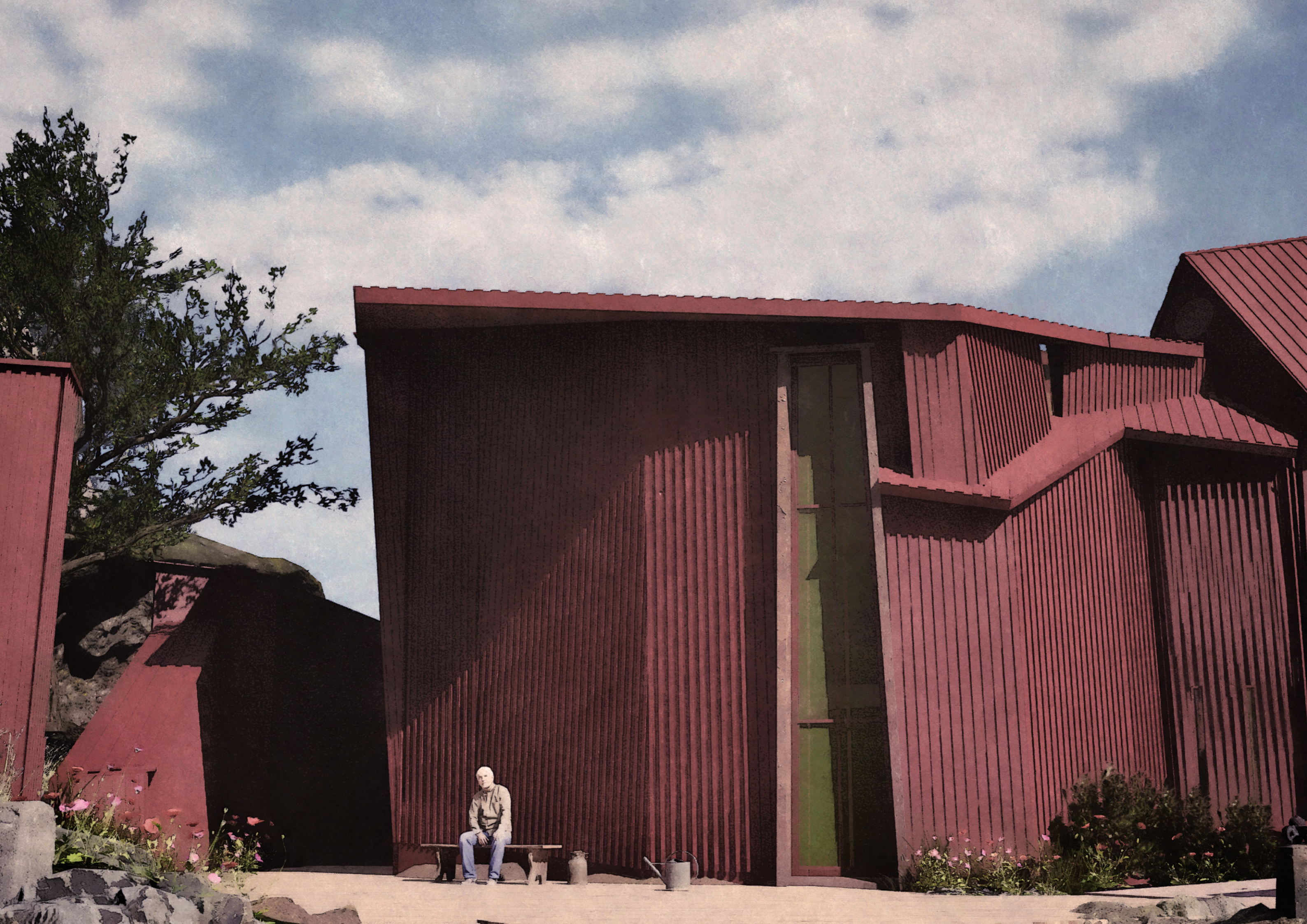
The proposal aims to prioritize sensory engagement. The dynamic and expressive angular forms of the building and the use of red-painted wood aim to create a sensation of uncertainty, but also embrace and warmth. Here the color, Falu rödfärg, is symbolically important to the design. This choice of material is intended to provide a sense of continuity with traditional building practices, but also to enhance the buildings' presence within the natural landscape, offering a connection with the surrounding environment.

Falu rödfärg is a traditional Swedish dye, and is in many ways a symbol deeply ingrained in the country's cultural and historical identity (Falu rödfärg 2023). This red hue, originally from the copper mines in Falun, has been a part of Swedish homes and public buildings for centuries, where the use in to the design hopes to create a visual connection that evokes a sense of familiarity and belonging.

But it's also a visual reminder of the country's agricultural roots and the traditional building techniques that have been passed down through generations. The color has become synonymous with Swedish architecture, and is often seen as a symbol celebration of local craftsmanship.









View from southwest, in relation to the nearby St. Ibbs Church seen on the hill in the back. This placement suggests a dialogue between the new ceremonial space and the traditional religious site, bridging past and present practices. And in that sense exemplifying how modern architectural practice could adapt to changing cultural and religious contexts.

The coastal setting of the building, with their integration into the natural surroundings, also hopes to evoke a sense of timelessness and contemplation. The expansive views of the horizon and the open sky could contribute to the contemplative and reflective quality of the space.

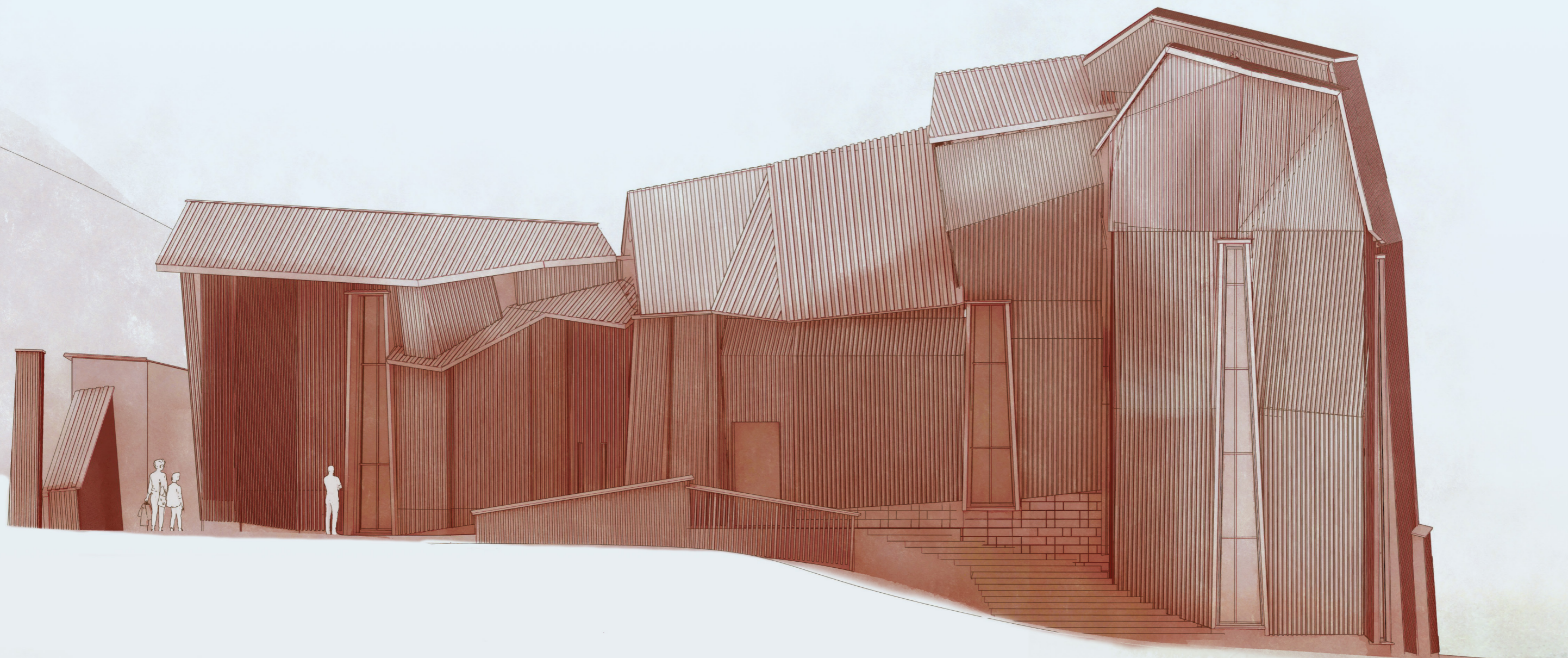
Spatially the rites of movement, passages, and crossings could also have architectural meaning. Where the architecture could be a way to invite the users to have conversations about death, how we prepare, what memories we share and what stories we tell or leave behind. And in that sense, the structure itself could be viewed as a bridge between life and death, and a vessel that carries memories, anchoring our present to what lies ahead, and a physical manifestation of our collective past, present, and future.











North elevation. Scale, 1:100

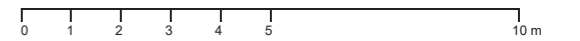




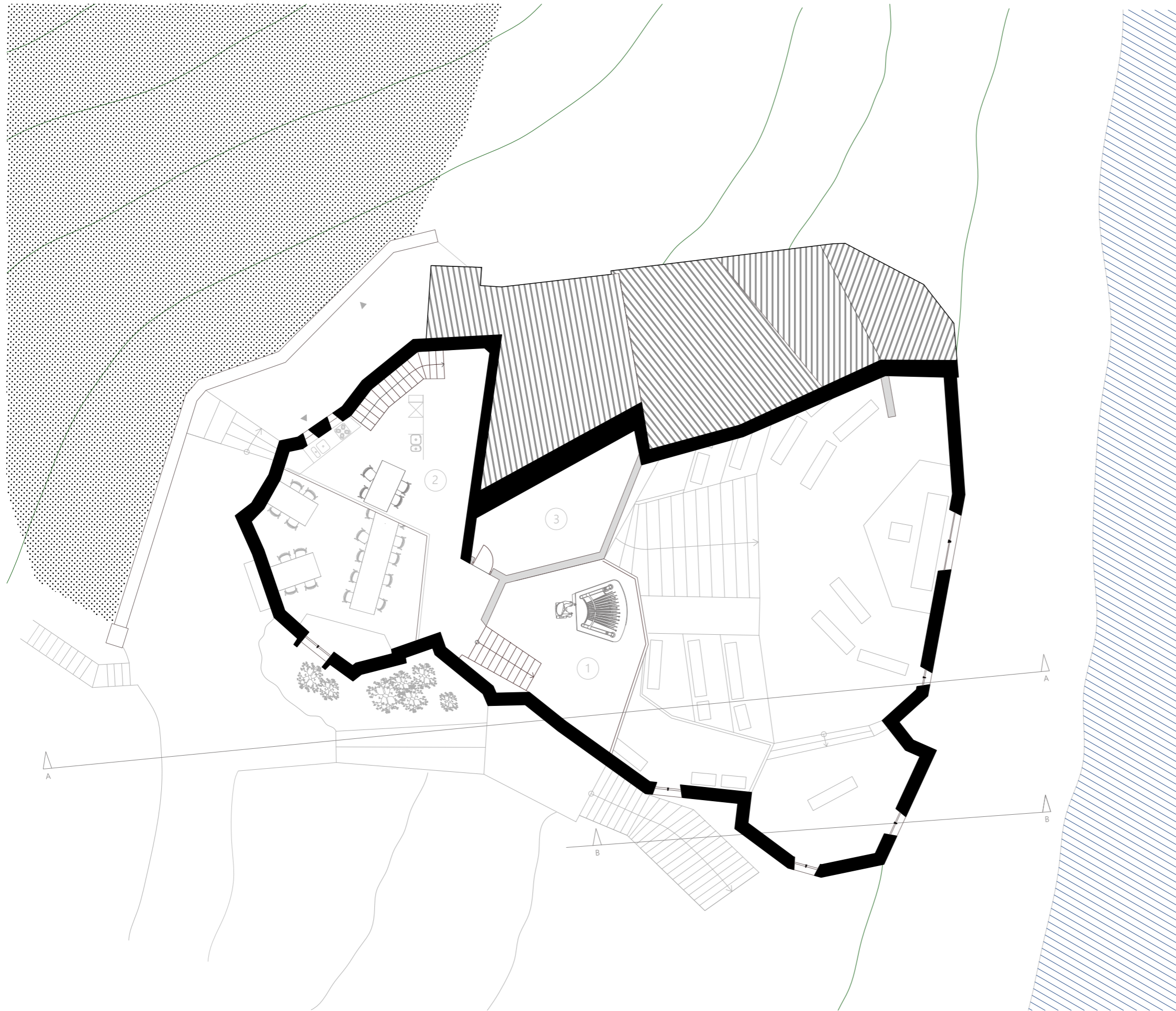


- 1 CEREMONIAL SANCTUARY
- 2 SANCTUARY
- 3 COLUMBARIUM
- 4 REMEMBRANCE
- 5 VESTRY
- 6 PREPERATION
- 7 LAVATORY
- 8 OFFICE
- 9 MAIN ENTRENCE

First floor. Scale, 1:150

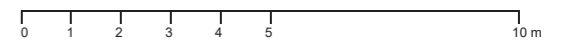




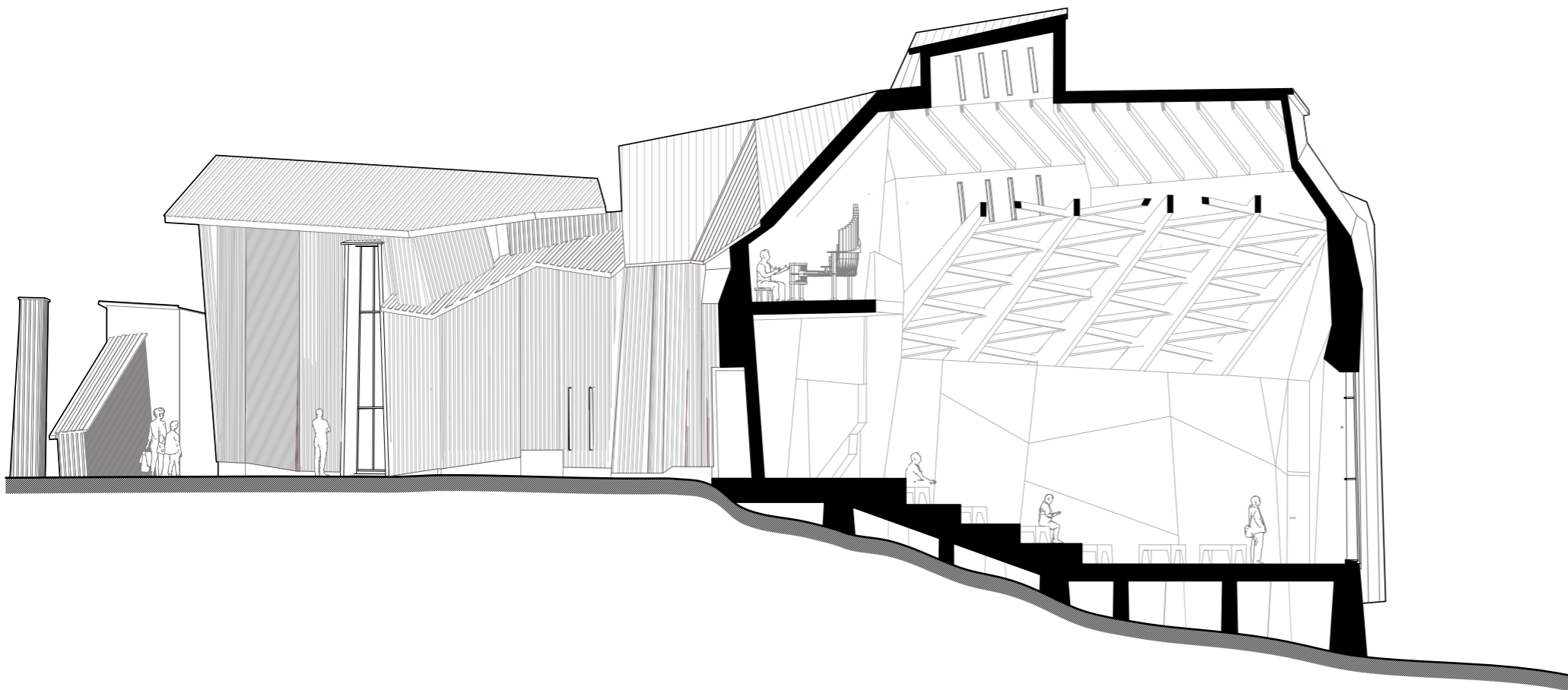


- 1 MUSIC AREA
- 2 PREPERATION
- 3 TECHNICAL ROOM

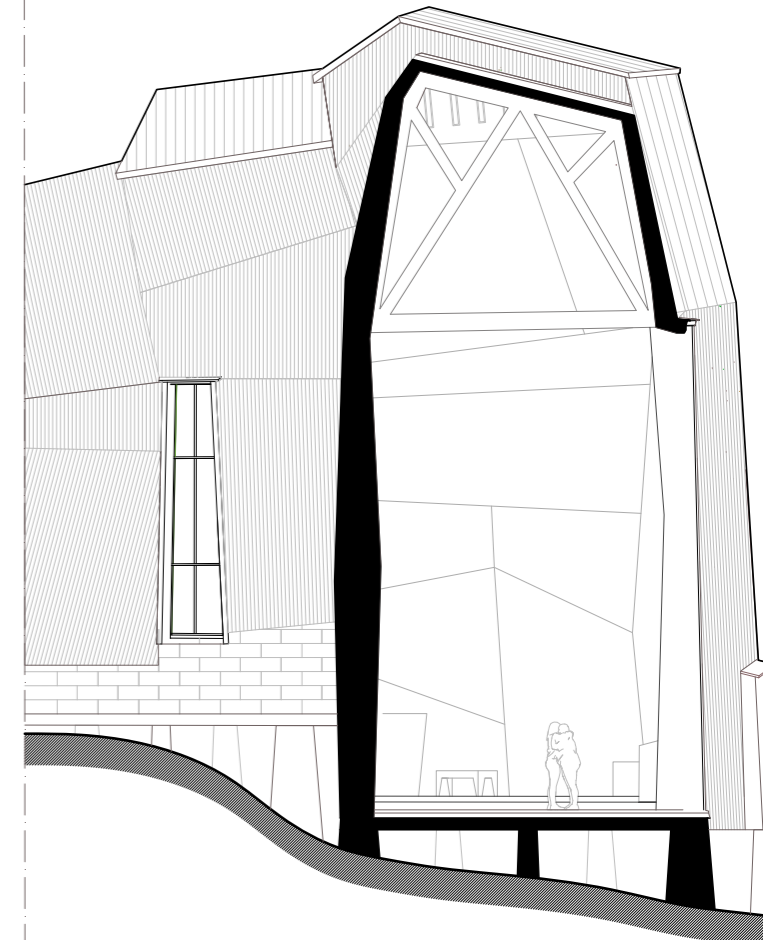
Second floor. Scale, 1:150





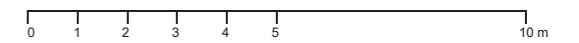


Section A-A

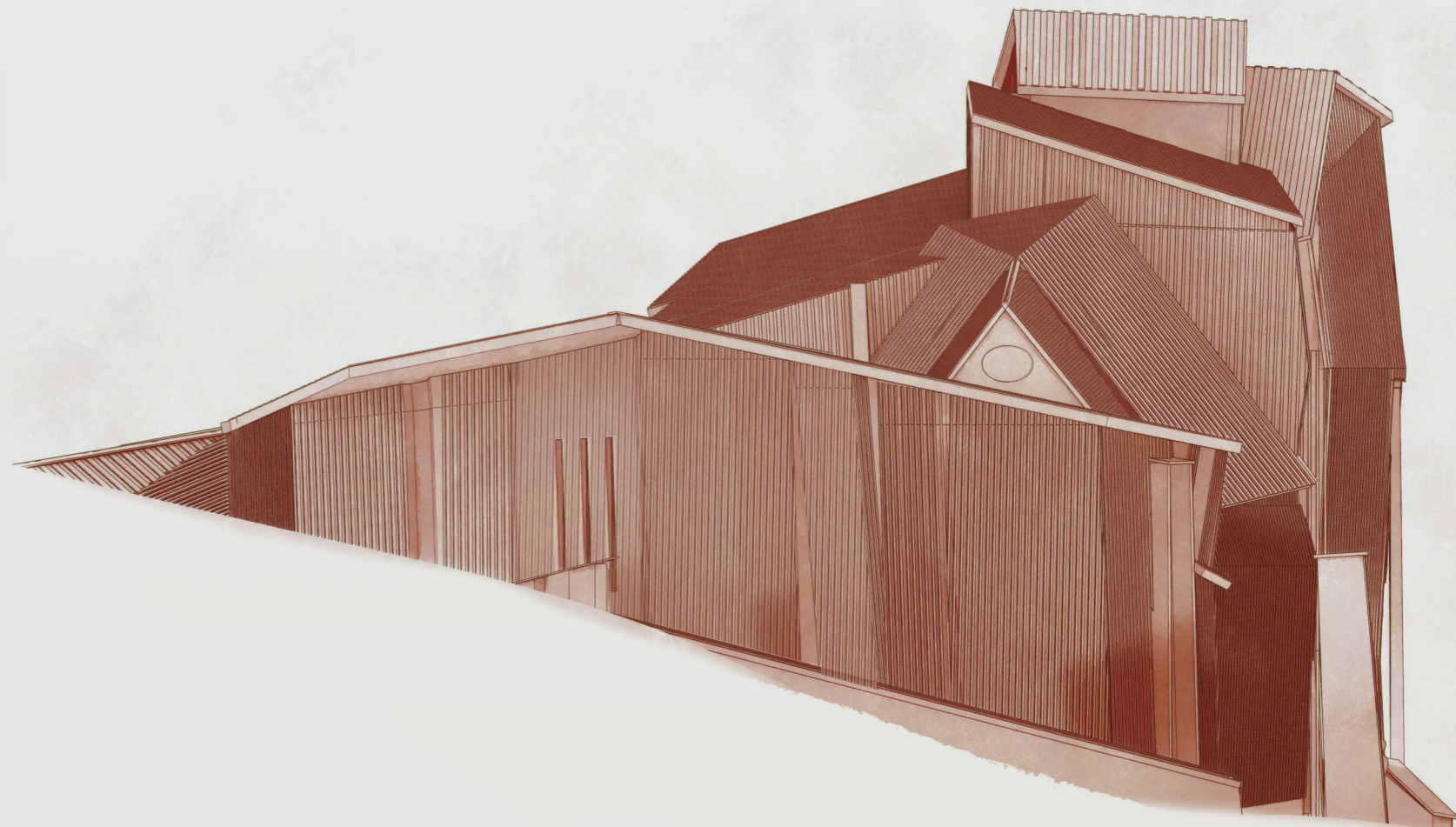


Section B-B

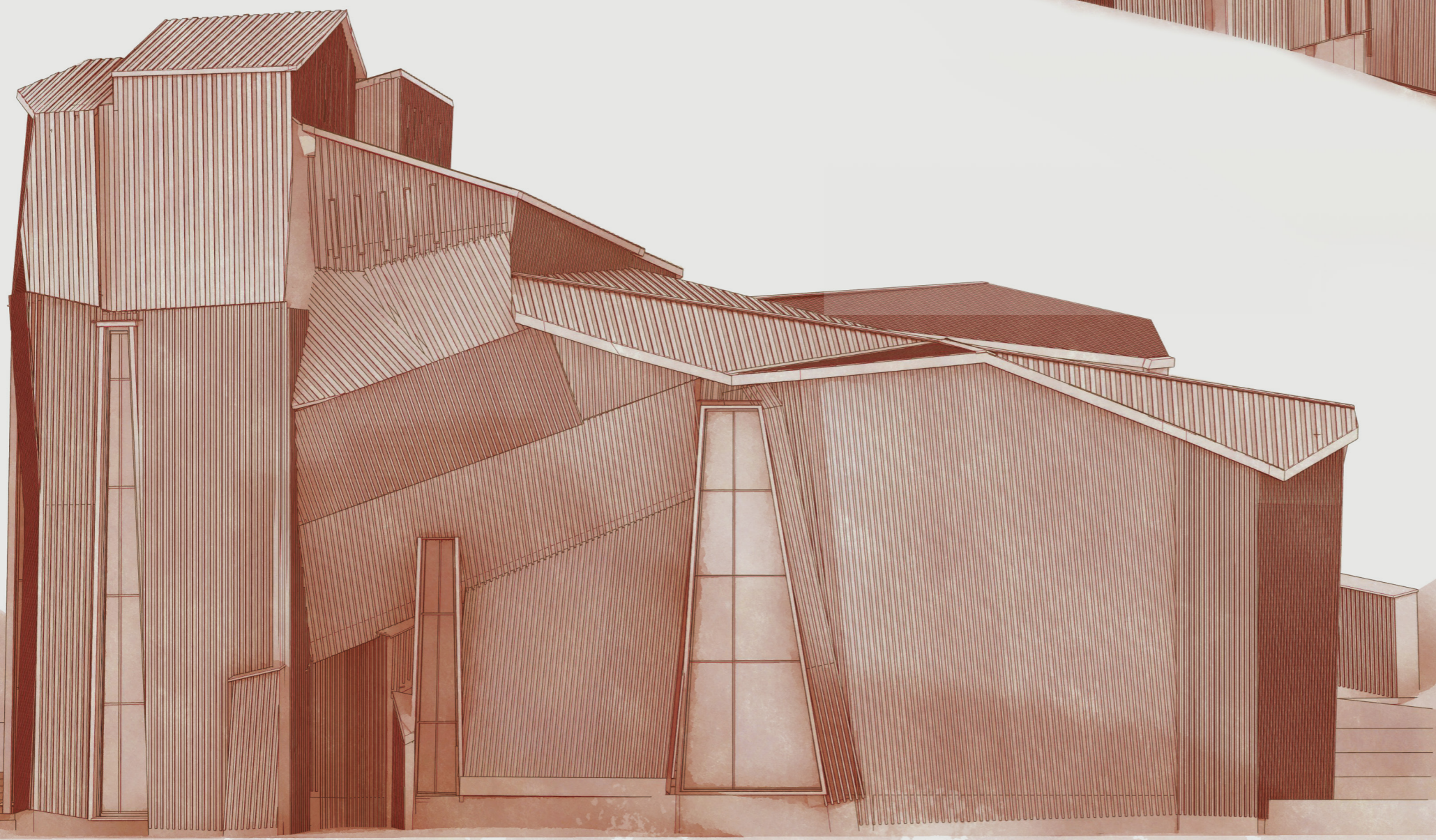
Sections. Scale, 1:150



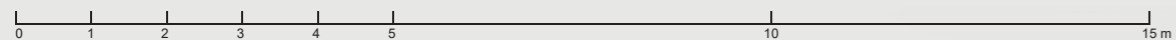




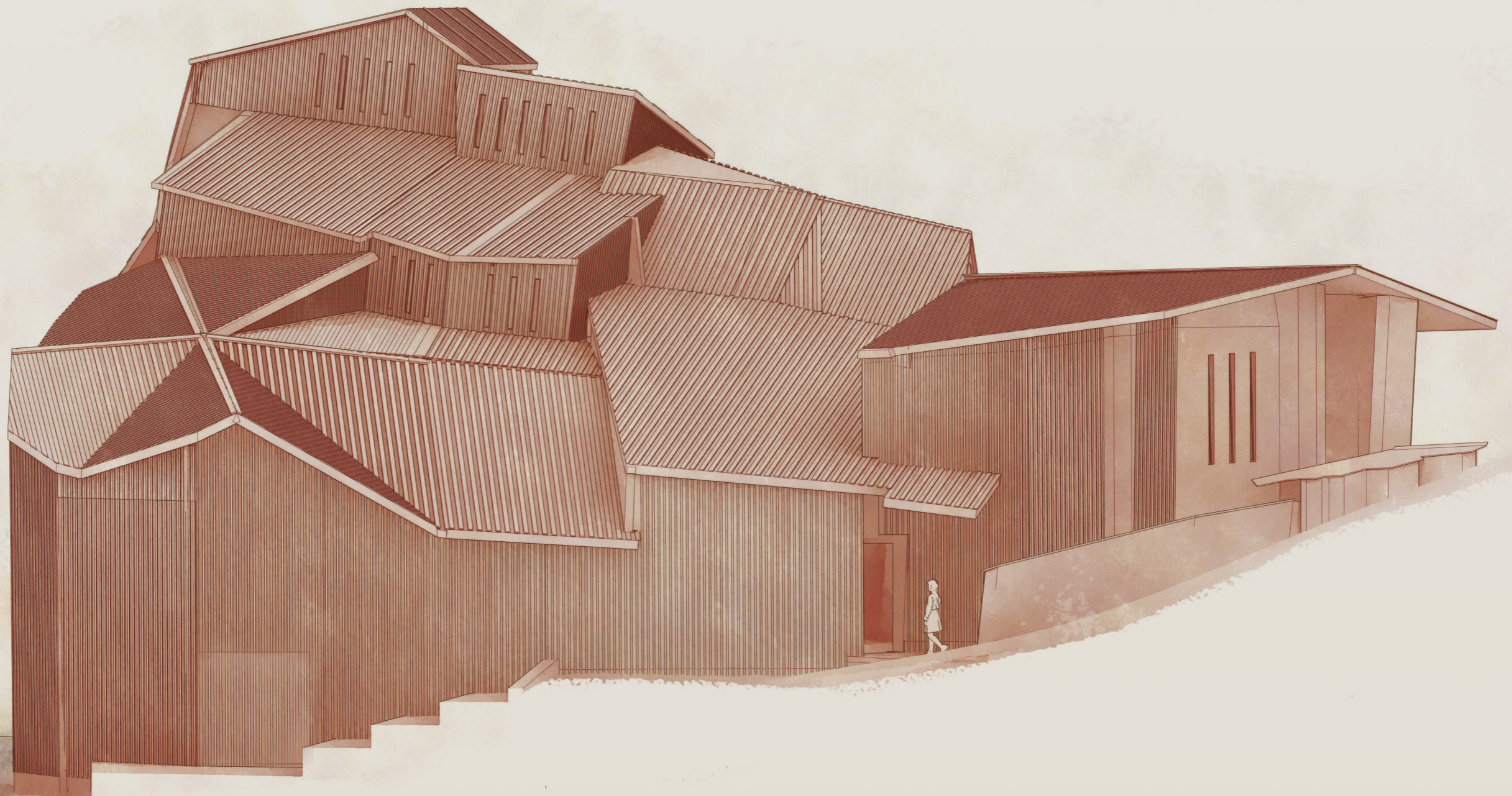
East elevation Scale, 1:100



West elevation. Scale, 1:100







South elevation. Scale, 1:100







Drawing showing the ceremonial route from the hillside



The interior of the ceremony hall is spacious and open, encouraging an embodied experience where visitors can engage with the space through all their senses. The atmosphere aims to offer warmth, contemplation and a sense of belonging, supported by its integration with the surrounding ocean. It hopes to invite touch and interaction, and in that sense to create a space that is both deeply personal and universally accessible.

The large windows intend to capture the natural light, and the ocean, where the green tinted glass could create an ever-changing play of light and shadow. Here the complementary effects of the green and red aims to enrich the sensory experience, something that aligns with Pallasmaa's emphasis on light as a vital element in shaping our perception of space.



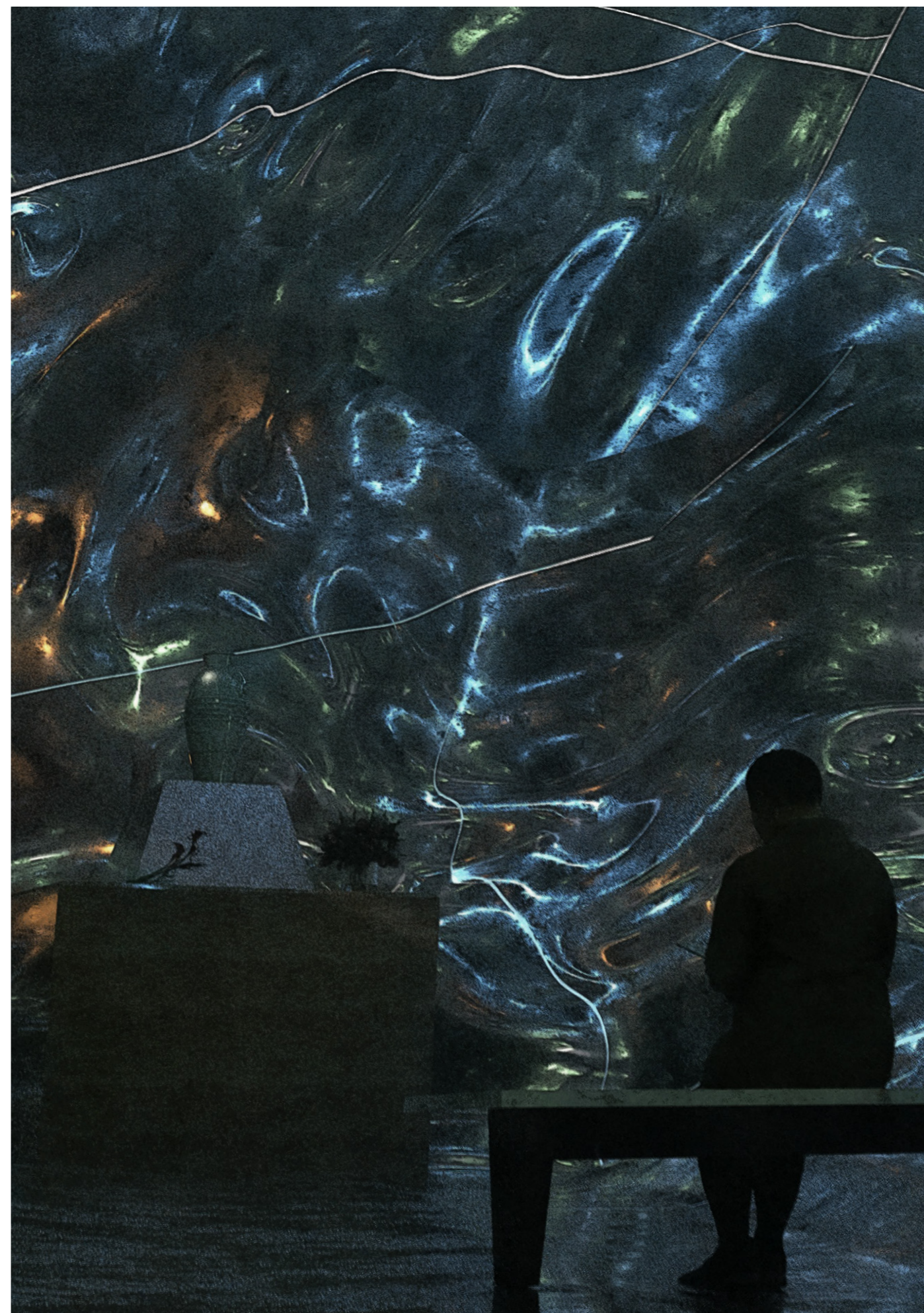




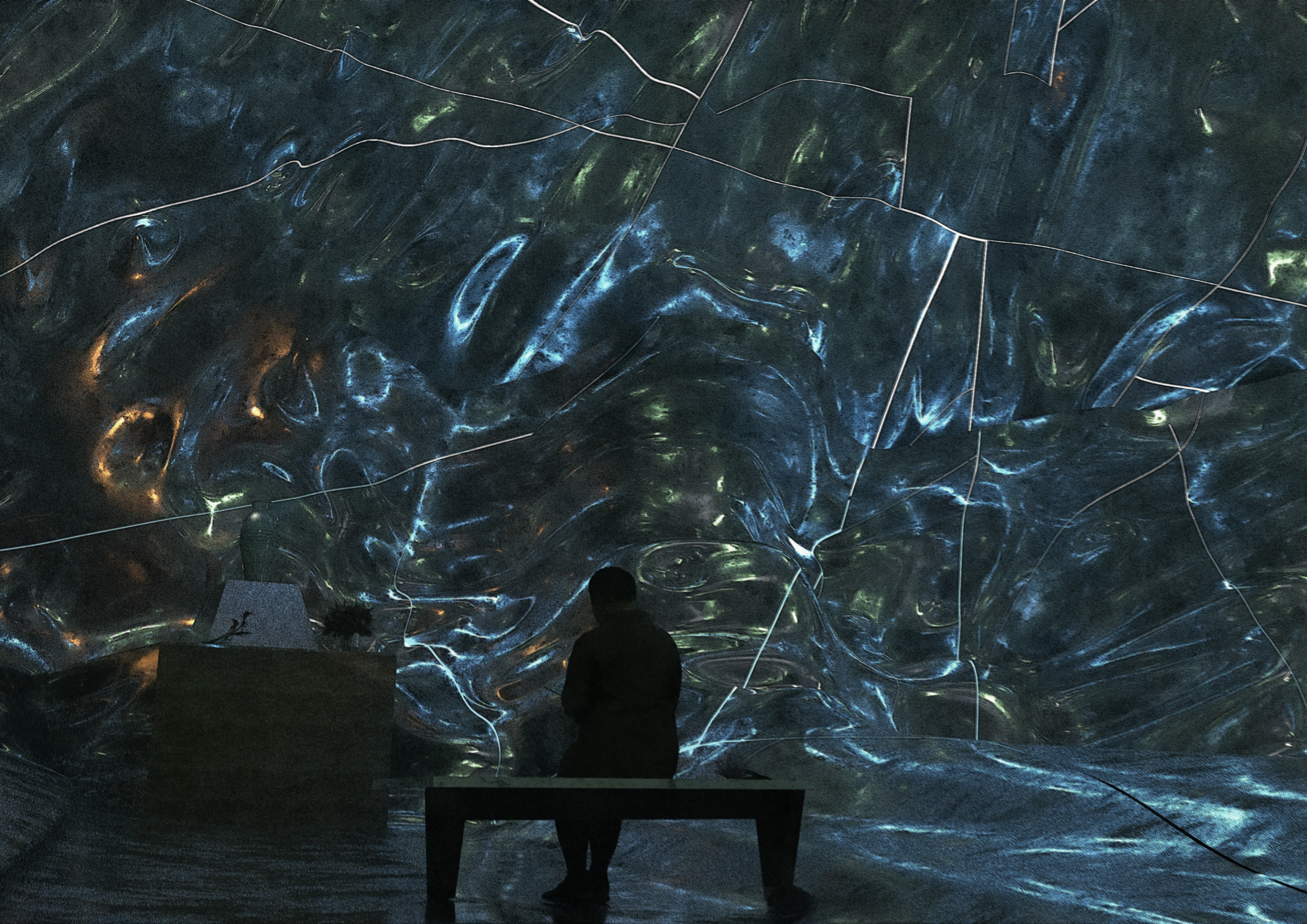


In contrast to the ceremonial hall, the columbarium offers an enclosed sanctuary for more subtle sensations, designed for solitude and introspection.

The forged metal sheets allows for an acoustic experience, where sounds echo and reverberate, encouraging slow, deliberate movement. The interplay of shifting light evokes the waves of the ocean or the night sky, inviting a sense of peace and remembrance.









The sun dips below the horizon, casting long shadows across the island. A group of mourners slowly winds their way along the ceremonial path through the hillside, the scent of wildflowers filling the air.

Entering the main hall, they are enveloped in a warm, comforting atmosphere. The mourners gather in a circle, their faces illuminated by flickering candles and the reflections of the ocean.

A hush falls over the room as a family member steps forward, their voice echoing softly in the stillness. They share stories of the departed, their words painting a picture of a life. Others join in, their voices weaving together a tapestry of memories.

As the ceremony progresses, the mourners move to the columbarium, where the ashes of the departed will be placed. The air is cool and quiet. Each mourner takes a moment for private reflection, their thoughts and prayers mingling with the echoes of the past.

Emerging from the building, the mourners gather on the grassy slope overlooking the ocean. The sky is ablaze with stars. A musician begins to play a melody, the notes carrying on the wind and blending with the rhythmic crashing of the waves.

As the music fades, the mourners release small lanterns into the night sky, each one representing a life that has touched their own. The lanterns rise slowly, their warm glow creating a constellation of hope and remembrance. The mourners stand in silence, watching as the lanterns drift out to sea, carrying their love and grief into the vastness.

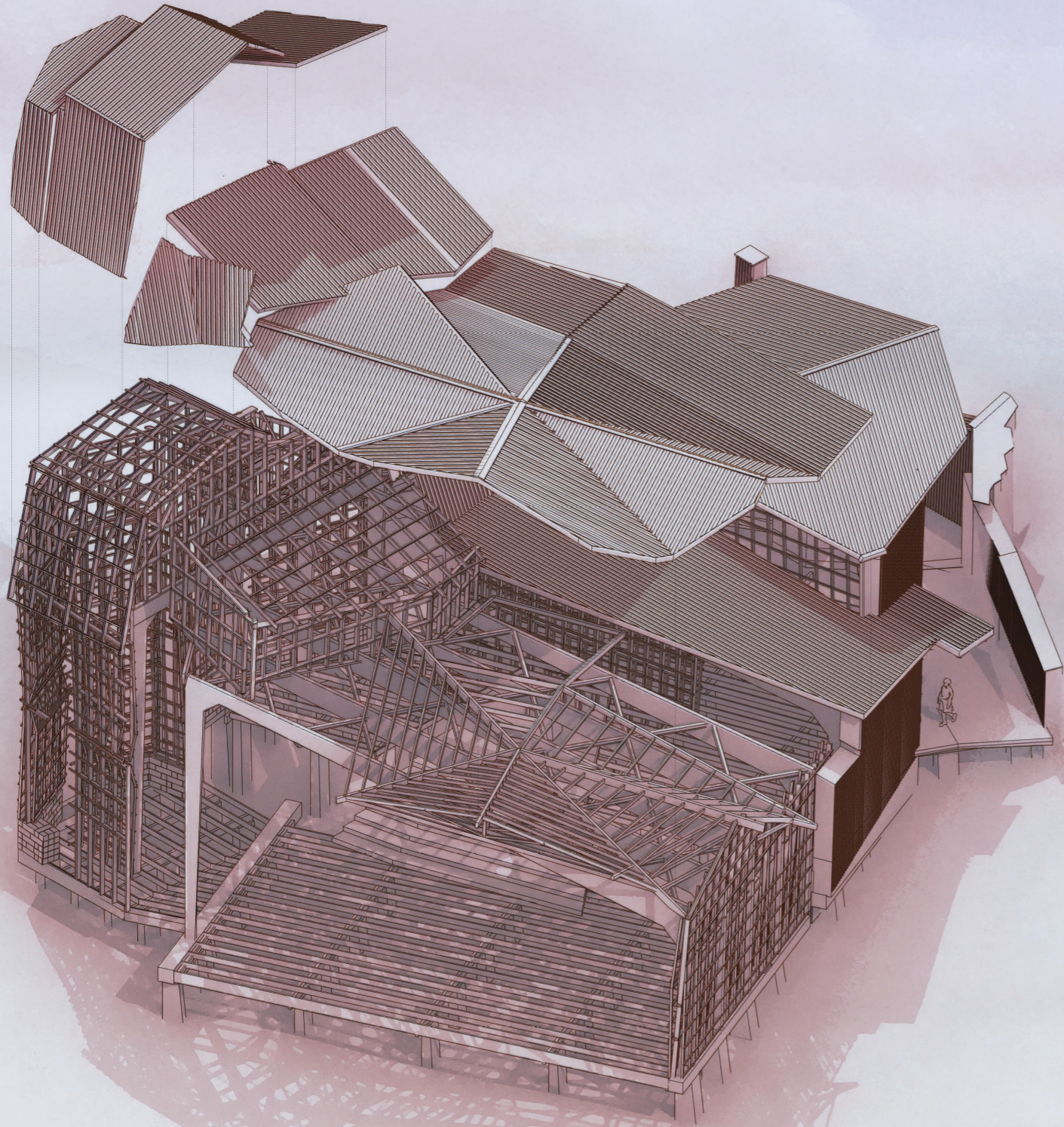
The mourners gather in the remembrance hall. The ceremony is over, but the memories linger. The structure has provided a space for the mourners to share their grief, and to find solace in the company of others. It is a place where the past and present intertwine, where the living can honor the dead and find meaning in the face of loss.









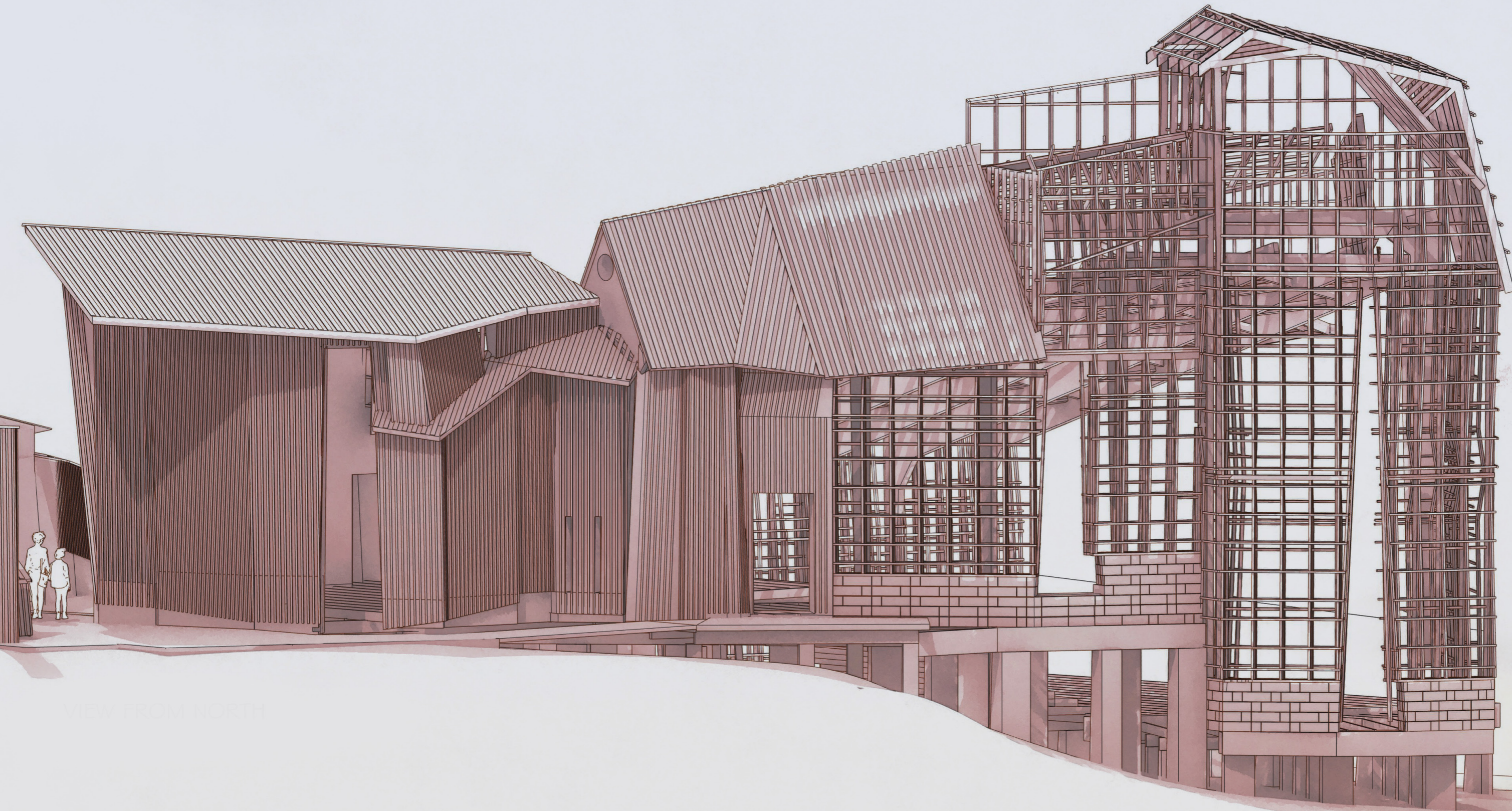


Physical model showing aspects of the primary and the secondary structure

The building, characterized by its numerous angles and sculptural attributes, consists of a primary and secondary tectonic structure. The primary structure, a conventional wooden frame, relies on vertical trusses to bear the main loads and connect to the roof. In the ceremonial hall, longer spans are achieved through tapered glulam beams with finger-jointed haunches.

The secondary structure, an exterior shell, houses the sculptural elements. This design choice allows for the creation of the various angles without compromising the building's structural integrity. Additionally, it adds mass to the structure, imbuing it with a sense of monumentality.

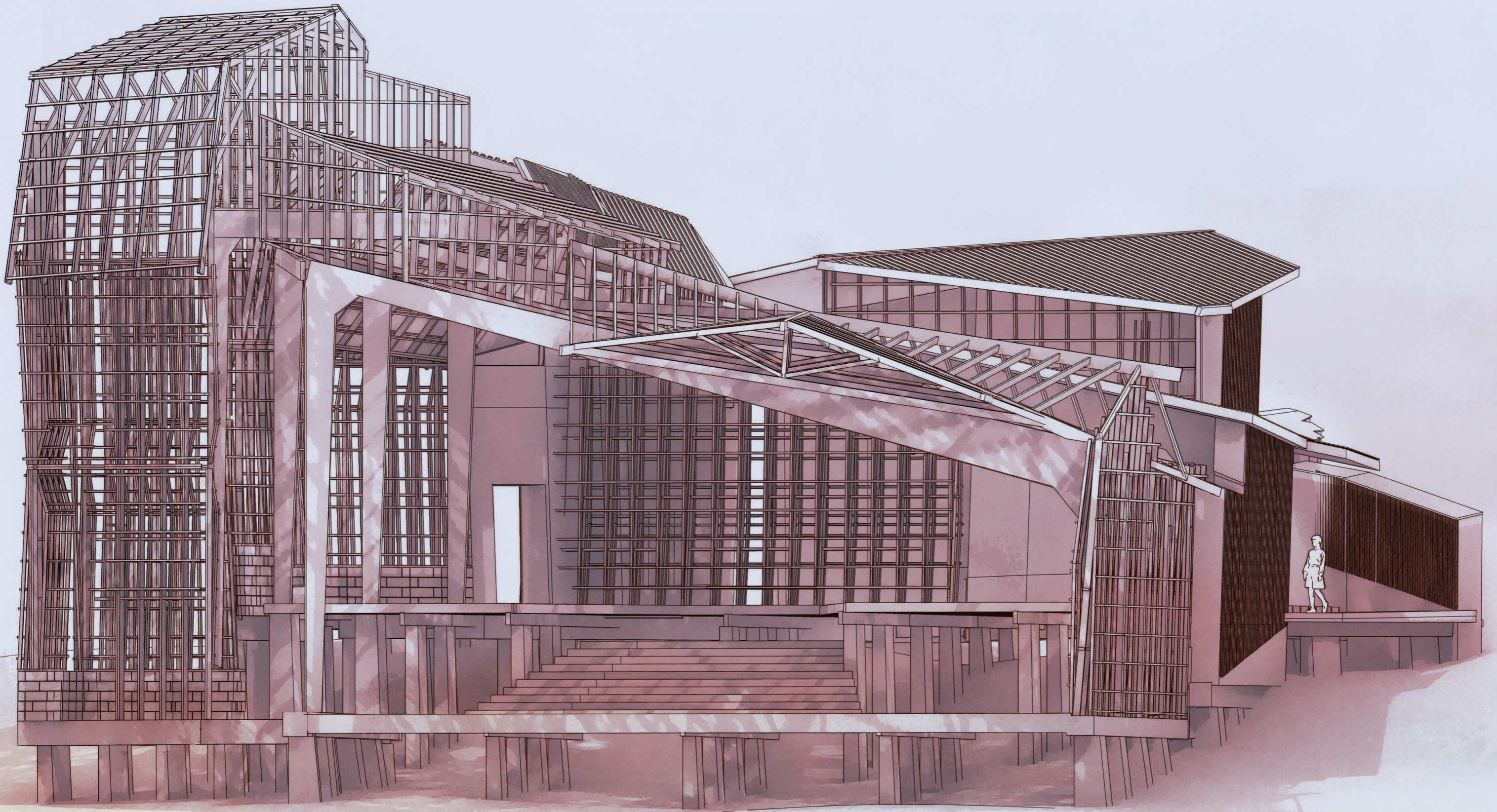




VIEW FROM NORTH

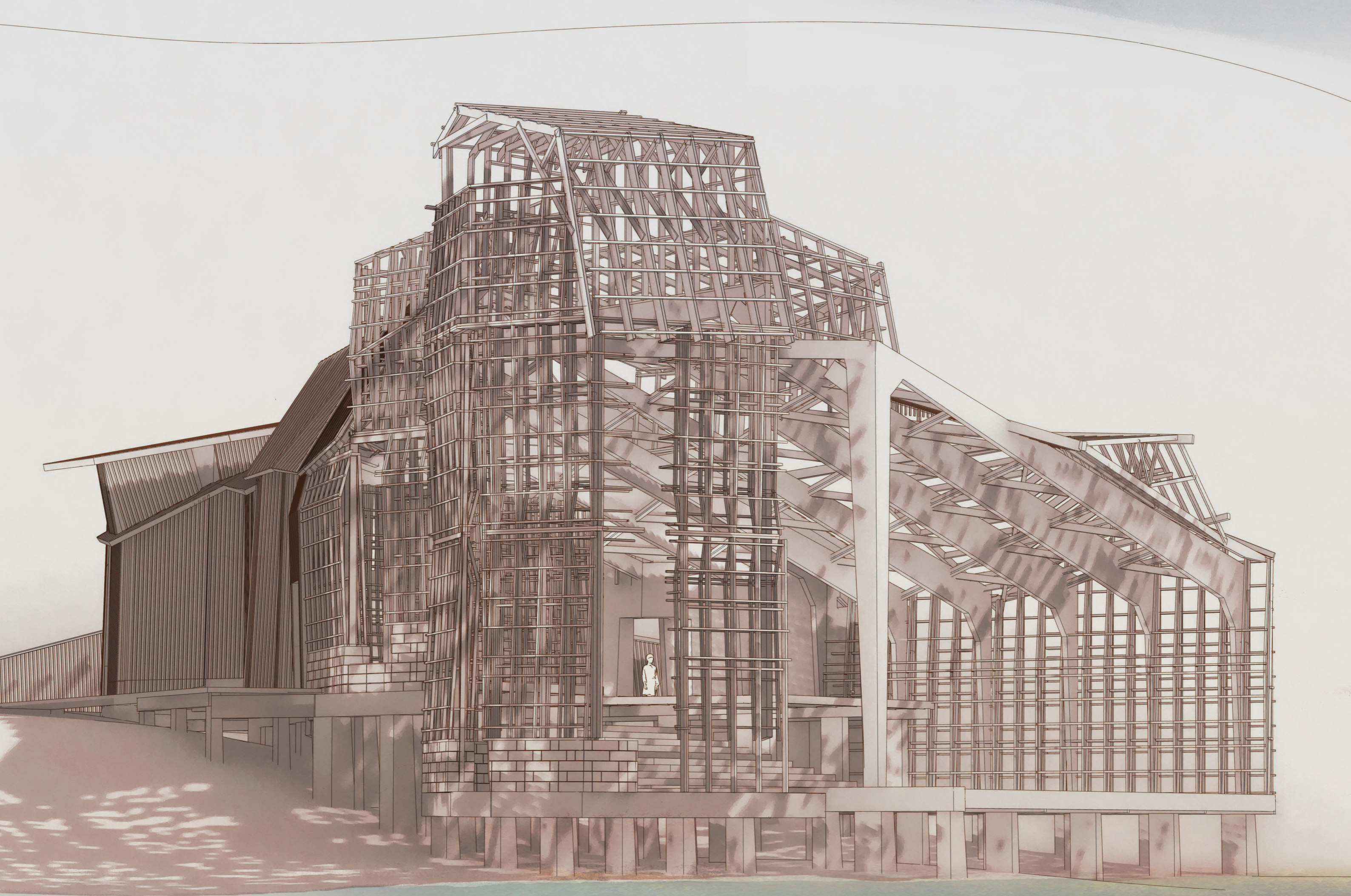
View from north





View from southwest





View from northwest





Physical model, 1:100



Physical model, 1:100



Physical model, 1:100



CNC-milled physical model of the site. Scale, 1:400



## Reflections

*“The prime function of memory is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present. Far from simply holding on to previous experiences, memory helps us understand them. Memories are not ready made reflections of the past, but eclectic, selective reconstructions based on subsequent actions and perceptions and on ever-changing codes by which we delineate, symbolize and classify the world around us “ - David Lowenthal, from “Architecture and Ritual” by Peter Blundell Jones*

Prior to my architectural studies, manual labor in construction has been my livelihood for the majority of my adult life. So has it for my sisters, and my dad. We have all been dependent on the hand to make our living. Growing up in an environment where this is so common, where the hands are constantly engaged in meaningful work, it intuitively feels unnatural to separate the act of making with the act of thinking, as they simply seem intertwined. This background has influenced my architectural studies and this thesis, rendering it a reflection of my personal experiences.

In this context, the value of a thinking hand approach to architecture becomes evident. By engaging in the profession as a craftsman, a mutual respect and dialogue can be fostered between the builder and the architect. This collaborative approach allows the act of building to become a shared endeavor, where ideas are exchanged and refined. Ultimately, this collaborative process could lead to a built environment where the value of craftsmanship and the direct involvement of the hand takes a central part in the shaping of buildings. This allows a process created through skilled manual labor, which possesses an authenticity and emotional resonance, something I believe is often lacking in mass-produced structures. A process where the combined expertise and creativity of all involved, with recognition of both manual, and intellectual labor, could aid in creating a more sustainable and equitable society.

Buildings undeniably impact lives—not just in their aesthetic or symbolic presence, but fundamentally in how they are used. Here the architect’s role is complex and multi-layered,

embedded within a network of collaborators, where the profession carries responsibilities to both a cultural and historical context, but also the myriad technical aspects of construction. I believe this dynamic relationship between building and user elevates architecture to an anthropological realm, where the surrounding social fabric becomes the building’s very foundation.

As Peter Blundell Jones suggests, buildings act as mirrors, reflecting our world, our understanding of it, and our interactions within it, where architectural spaces serve both functional and symbolic purposes, accommodating activities while also becoming reminders of them. This interconnectedness between architecture and ritual highlights how buildings can address the nuances of human experience, a thread that runs through the entire architectural profession. He states, “All kinds of activities need settings, and these settings are nearly always both functional and symbolic. They must both signal and accommodate the activity, and afterwards they tend to become mnemonics of it, at least for those who were involved. This is why architecture and ritual are so closely related”.

I believe that a crucial dimension of architectural practice is its ability to navigate between myth and knowledge, intertwining the unmeasurable with the measurable, offering a unique opportunity to help make sense of our world and infuse it with meaning. Given these aspects, engaging the body in architectural practice offers invaluable insights that cannot be gained through intellectual pursuits alone. The human hand has always been intertwined in the built environment, where the act of building becomes an obvious extension of it. When we construct something with our hands, we gain a direct experience of how different parts fit together, how materials behave, and how structures are formed. The nuanced details, the handle of materials, the tactile qualities - all these elements, and the sheer joy of making, impregnates the practice. I believe this approach fosters an emotional connection to the vast complexity of the world that surrounds us, and a deep appreciation and respect for craftsmanship.

In that sense, this thesis, at the end of my architectural studies, has been a privileged and fascinating opportunity to explore how architecture can address the complexities of human experience, something I believe bridges the whole profession.



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Thank you!