Ruins in Post-Industrial Appalachia

"Growing up among the ruins of an Appalachian Ohio River town, an aesthetic of decay emanates from abandoned store-fronts, factories, and civic buildings, while instilling an understanding of temporality, decline, and an acceptance of finality"

INTRODUCTION: APPALACHIA IN RUIN

Ruins are expressions of time. Their slow, almost indiscernible changes are much like our own aging and reminders of our own mortality. Ruins are not easily definable. They can be attached to personal recollection or collective memory. Growing up among the ruins of an Appalachian Ohio River town, an aesthetic of decay emanates from abandoned storefronts, factories, and civic buildings, while instilling an understanding of temporality, decline, and an acceptance of finality. But Appalachia preserves its past in order to prolong its memory's decay. Appalachian culture embraces ruins as signifiers that solidify collective memory and arouse contemplative nostalgia. Ruins are preserved in order to memorialize the past, with the intention these spaces will become integrated in Appalachia's new postindustrial culture.

Appalachia's decayed urban landscapes are products of industrial fervor that swept through the nation in the early 20th c., propelled by perpetual optimism and the promise of unstoppable progress. Now left with the skeletal remains of an imperious and obsolete economic system, Appalachian river city towns must explore with methods of saving their past in order to define its emergent culture. Ruins are an allegorical representation of postindustrial Appalachian culture. Ruins are connections to the past, which can be adapted, reused, and reclaimed in the present in order to ground a culture struggling with identity and progress within an era of Post-Industrialization.

With this thesis I will establish connections between ruins and the post-industrial Appalachian culture. By first defining ruins and Appalachia, I will show ruins as an allegorical ruins of the post-industrial Appalachian culture. The first precedent studied is located within my hometown of Ironton, Ohio. The Grand Army of the Republic's Memorial Hall, an abandoned civic building, represents the effects of Appalachian population migration along the Ohio River. The second precedent, Ashland Kentucky, demonstrates the effects of the emergent "New"

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Appalachia in the urban landscape, leading to questions of culture in contemporary Appalachia. Where in contrast Pittsburg, Pennsylvania has reinvented its city in its own unique way, by a preemptively negating the largest effects of deindustrialization, and through projects, such as the Armstrong Cork Lofts managed to create its own measure of progress, through its unique culture.

DEFINING RUINS

Ruins are objects defined by its culture and current conditions. "A ruin is a ruin precisely because it seems to have lost its function or meaning in the present, while retaining a suggestive, unstable semiotic potential."[1] Its semiotic potential, the ability to invoke ideas or contemplation, differentiates ruination from dereliction. Ruins evoke sublimity through mortality, timelessness, limitless and transcendence, which appear within the motionlessness and empty space created by man and nature. With time as an every flowing, creating force ruins are always temporal and in flux. Much like Heraclitus' river, you cannot gaze at the same ruin twice. From the roots of Romanticism to the present, ruins are objects that acquire specific meanings through their different cultural periods.

From the roots of Romanticism to the present, ruins are objects that acquire specific meanings through their different cultural paradigms. Ruins provide moments of pause and reflectance that force contemplations of mortality, past and future, and nature's power to consume and destroy. The late 17th century, ruins have emerged as potent images for Romanticists and anti-rationalists. Irish Statesmen, Edmond Burke, and French Philosopher, Denis Diderot, began the intellectual investigation of ruins as Enlightenment movement. Romanticists saw ruins as example to where human emotions allow a ruin to exist, as a ruin, rather than the Enlightenment's examination of the world through reason alone. Such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Vedute, which documented the condition of Roman Antiquity in the 18th c., showing the once grandiose ruins reduced to cow pastures.

Ruins provide moments of pause and reflectance that force contemplations of mortality, past and future, and nature's power to consume and destroy. With the United State's recent deindustrialization, ruins have rose from intellectual circles as objects for the interpretation of decline. "America used to set little store by ruins, venerating its prehistoric natural heritage at the expense of historical artifacts… Yet in post-Post Fordist, post 9/11 reality, the imaginary of imperial ruins and ruination has become pervasive, prompting even the representation of urban decay in coffee-table books…" [2] Americans began to acknowledge ruins, through watching the decline of their own empire.

Yet, only sixty years ago the belief in the "American Dream" had convinced generations that perpetual progress was a promise. But the United States' persistent industrial decline has challenged the faith in those promises continual progress of economic and society growth.   Or as Adreas Huyssen states," Ruin is a critique of a spatial organization of the modern world and its single minded commitment to a progress that throws too many individuals and spaces into the trash." [3]

RUINS IN APPALACHIA

Appalachian River cities, are defined in this paper as cities along the Ohio River, and as a specific portion of Appalachia that differs from Central and Southern

Appalachia. The River Cities are a different landscape than other Appalachian small towns and cities. Mountains isolate central Appalachian and Southern Appalachian cities, while the river lessened the potential for isolationism. Also, River cities were typically wealthier, because of the manufacturing and transportation of coal and steel along the river. Despite these differences in geography and distribution of wealth, the Appalachian culture is shared throughout the region.

The definition of Appalachia, like ruins, is in constant flux and is defined by forces that created it. Many author's, such as Ronald Eller, The Appalachian Regional Council, and John Alexander Williams, have struggled to define Appalachia. The Appalachian Culture has been defined by the confrontation with the regions uncharted wilderness, cultural isolationism, and a reinforced collective memory coupled by feelings of disenfranchisement in relation to the rest of the nation. To the outside, through a misinformed media, Appalachians is defined through stereotypes as backward people that turned their back to progress and innovation, because of religious extremism and paranoid distrust of outside forces. Either definition is acceptable because forces from within and outside the mountains have defined its culture.

The definition of Appalachia I would like focus on is from observations within the mountains, but not ignore those from the outside. Appalachians have been a largely neglected cultural, and some would argue ethnic, constituency within the United States. A pervasive Romantic nostalgia can be attached to Appalachians, providing a link for many of its different culture components. Collective memory, enhanced by a tradition of story telling and close family ties, encourages Appalachians to intertwine past and present through a subconscious imprint that influence their choices and understanding. Therefore the history of Appalachia past is one of the influences on the essence of Appalachia.

In the 19th c. East Coast companies established the Appalachian economical ecosystem as coal industries began to colonize the Appalachian region.

The East Coast advancement into the Appalachians gained support through the Color Movement. The Color Movement, was a yellow journalism campaign lead by East Cost industry, as a way of discrediting the local Appalachians, by making claims that the advancement of industry was the best interest of the poor, uneducated, lazy and godless mountain people. Deep in the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky and South Central West Virginia property was bought for a fraction of the cost. Leaving the workers to face abhorrent working conditions pay as miners. This portion of Appalachia would never receive any fair compensation for the vast mineral wealth that left the coalfields. While river cities would capitalize on the processing and distribution of natural materials from the mountains, but the absentee landowners were the main benefactors of the newly industrialized Appalachia.[4]

Despite, the boom of coal production during early 20th c. Appalachia became the antithesis for American progress. While the United States was basking in feelings of invisibility provided by the post World War II euphoria, Appalachia never followed the agenda. In 1960, while campaigning for the presidency, John F. Kennedy toured the central Coal Fields of Appalachia and shocked nation with images of hungry children with no shoes and one-room schoolhouses. It showed

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Figure 1: Olive Hill Pig Iron Furnace

Figure 2: Entrance of Memorial Hall of Ironton, Ohio

America that progress was an uncertain promise.

By the 1970's decreases in steel production began the end of the river cities economic progress. Populations decreased and buildings began to be abandoned, left to decay, leaving only the skeletal remains. The government encouraged the exodus by introducing the interstate system in 1982, which increased migration from rural and small towns. With the migration, depopulation lent to abandonment, and abandonment accelerated the ruination of Appalachia. Ruins are the physical representation of Appalachia's current predicament as postindustrial culture. In Appalachia the prevalence of ruins reinforces Appalachia's cultural flux. A ruinous infrastructure of abandoned factories, city blocks with missing vacant neighbors, became typical for River Cities such as Ironton and Portsmouth, Ohio, Ashland Kentucky, and Huntington W.V.

The emptiness of River Cities, with quiet streets and blank storefronts, leaves a feeling of pervasive absence and indefinable loss. Diderot writes in the Salon of 1769 "Sense of having lived on too late, of having, survived the collapse of dreams of the future, is key to the ruins optic that still animates certain artists today."[5] Appalachia could only stand and watch as its culture was being dismantled by depopulation and economic catastrophe. Questions remained what would arise from ruins of a culture on the verge of collapse.

CASE STUDY #1 MEMORIAL HALL

Ironton, Ohio is one of the four major urban centers along the Ohio River located within the core of the Appalachian region. In the 1920's- 70's industry filled blocks and blocks along the river, and smoke stacks flanking the river. By the 1980's most of the industry had vanished, leaving vast blocks of ruins or empty space as holes in the urban memory. As Industry vanished, so did the population of Ironton causing the city to contract inward, giving it a gaunt and emaciated appearance.

A victim of Ironton's economic decline, the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall, a Josef Yost, late 18th c. Romanesque revival building, lay in ruin from abandonment. After the disillusionment of GAR in the 1920's the City of Ironton moved into the building making it a grand city hall. After the city reduced in size, the city no longer needed such a large building and they relocated the vacant J.C. Penny's building in downtown, but the presence of Memorials Hall's noble structure was a painful reminder of the city's retreated into just another storefront. Now, the limestone shell of the once and former "Grande Dame" is all that remains, while the guts now lie in a heap at the bottom.

The building is a metaphorical representation of the decline of the city. Like Appalachian river cities the structure exists, weathered, exposed, while the interior workings have collapsed through loss of economic energy. For the citizens of Ironton Memorial Hall there is a tragic beauty found in the decayed remains of a once noble structure. Edmond Burke, an Irish, London based writer and Whig statesmen, wrote in Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful "Through the their experience of the sublime, human being confront their own mortality and arrive at an awareness of their own impotence, of which convinces them that virtue and solidarity with one another- and by extension, a reliance upon society as a whole- are necessary." [6}

Memorial Hall stands as an almost post-apocalyptic reminder of the economic catastrophes that had befallen the city. There is a lingering shame, for any attempt to save the building has failed due to the lack of funds, which doomed the structure in the first place.

Collective memory, like decay, is imprinted on the building readable to viewers that have been culturally initiated. The collective memory, passed down through oral histories, adds depth to the building as the layers of time continue to build up. The richness of Memorial Hall as a ruin is largely dependent on these memories. Ironton, as home to longest running Memorial Day parade in the nation, began the parade every year at Memorial Hall. Until the 1970's Ironton school children, dressed in white, would meet at the civic building hen march through the parade carrying flowers that would later be placed on soldier's grave at the end of town. Then there are the more unpleasant aspects such as the drunk tank in the basement that was visible through the pig iron bars at the bottom, or the 1932 floods that permanently scared the sandstone at its 12' crest. These memories are additives to the effect of the building, separating ruin from dereliction, showing physical decay is only a partial element required to elicit a potent emotional response.

While walking around the building the skeletal structure no longer holds any functioning organs. The basement jail cells are still visible through the iron bars that line the sidewalk. Flecked paint and rust decorates the cast iron while the floor periodically fills with water, leaving piles of debris as it recedes. Artifacts left behind by the occupants are reminders of another time, still interconnected with the current. Tim Endensor writes "As memory continually adapts to changing contexts, so decaying buildings extinguish and reveal successive histories as layers peel away and things fall out from their hiding spaces." [7]

CASE STUDY #2 ASHLAND, KENTUCKY: THE OLD AND NEW APPALACHIA DIVIDED BY A BRIDGE

Directly to the South of Ironton, Ashland Kentucky chose a different path to confront its urban decay process. Ashland's urban landscape has been clearly divided into the "new" and "old" Appalachia. Old Appalachia is the typical Appalachian River City Downtown with blocks of small eclectic storefronts. New Appalachia, as defined by Ronald Eller, is landscapes of Big Box Marts and strip malls representing signs of Appalachia's goal towards a progress that exemplifies the lower spectrum of the American main stream. [8] These bi-personalities left Ashland, Kentucky with a physical dual landscape separated by the 13th and 12th street bridges that represents the current post-industrial struggles in Appalachia.

Ashland's urban personality differs from the other Appalachian Ohio River Cities and their economic history gives some insight. While, the other river city towns began to struggle in the 1970's Ashland maintained a strong economic footing through corporations such as Ashland Oil Inc. and Armco Iron, now AK Steel. But, its economic machine was largely been controlled by outside economic management. Ashland's non-Appalachian populations pushed to support and develop corporate chains, as apposed to local business. Ashland's landscape began to represent an antagonistic relationship between the outsider elite and the local downtown businesses, as the sprawling commercial center and local downtown were divided neatly by the 13th and 12th Street Bridges.

In a greater whole, Ashland's outside economic influences is one factor in the rise of the "new" Appalachia. "New Appalachia" is a generational shift of where more connected and mobile Appalachians no longer live within the same isolation.

This new generation exists liminally in the United State's mainstream. They are unsure the scope of American progress and has entered the American mainstream clinging to its lowest rung, seeing every step upward as an economic acquisition of the American commercial machine. Joseph Eller gives the example where the construction of a Walmart in Hazard, Kentucky is seen as a benchmark of economic progress for a new Appalachia. The commercial advancement of "new" Appalachia is not the only factor, but it has had the greatest effect its current environment.

On the opposite side of the 13th Street Bridge, "Old" Appalachia is exemplified in the warn facades intermittently interrupted by brightly colored storefronts. It is a pedestrian friendly area, with an eclectic series of storefronts with original names of buildings faintly painted or engraved as a physical testament of its past. This "old" Appalachia is comforting in it's layered past, that comes to a surface piece by piece. Storefront signs and fonts create an eclectic array for past styles and times as a historical testament to Ashland's once thriving downtown. They are locally owned, family, businesses that give back to the philanthropy of Ashland, which includes "First Friday" Car show and Art Gallery openings along Winchester. It is a popular community event that testifies to the strength of the Ashland downtown as an area of community engagement.

Across 13th street, along Winchester Ave, a Burger King, Bob Evans, and Starbucks begin the section of the city known as "new" Appalachia. Residential and Industrial sections of Ashland were demolished in order to make way for chain stores and restaurants with spacious parking lots. This section is not pedestrian friendly, as fast traffic and continuous purgatory of parking lots make any destination far and difficult. Chain stores and restaurants have drove out local small business in this section, as the appeal of mainstream America has established cultural homogenization and commercialization. As a testament to the internal conflict a grafittied boarded up window states, "Absentee Property Owners are a drain on the progress of our town." It is a statement of ownership in the new Appalachia.

New Appalachia has a jarring contemporaneous that pervades the area in loud signs and even louder traffic. Bright colors decorate shiny vinyl awnings and signs yell loudly to passing motorists in order to heard beyond their accompanying parking lots. Applebee's, McDonald's, Office Max, Wal Mart, Wendy's and other commercial stores are replaced at the first sign at wear, making the differences between the contradictory sections even more jarring. Its newness and mendacity makes it visually unappealing in comparison to the adjacent old Appalachia. The short drive from "Old" to "New" Appalachia is an abrupt journey that demonstrates a region in flux.

CASE STUDY #3 ARMSTRONG CORK FACTORY LOFTS

Pittsburgh is a city that created a unique path, a path that was forethought by the Allegheny Regional Council in the 1950's when the decline of steel, and therefore coal, became a serious possibility in the heavily industrialized city. It proactively took control of its path and laid plans for its identity as a post-industrial city. It began to continue its substantial endowments to the arts and emerging industries, especially technology. Pittsburgh was able to avoid the potential crisis that engulfed the Rust-Belt region and claimed cities such as Cleveland, Youngstown,

Figure 3: Photo overlooking the commercialized section of Ashland, Kentucky, *New Appalachia*

Figure 4: Photo shot on Winchester Ave in Ashland, Kentucky showing traditional River City Architecture, *New Appalachia*

and Detroit, and becoming a haven for the tech savvy generation. [9]

Pittsburgh's plan for the future utilized existing infrastructure, and therefore retaining some of their past and culture. As housing for the new technology based economic machine, Pittsburgh's old factories and an existing gritty infrastructure as inexpensive property for young companies needing start up space. By being able to provide work, in a dire economic market, Pittsburgh has been able to capitalize on the new "millennial" generation's willingness to become

urban dwellers. The adaptation of old factories, such as Armstrong Cork Factory, is an example of Pittsburgh's ability to capitalize on up and coming opportunities.

The Armstrong Cork Factory is located along the Monongahela River in the outer area of the Strip District, an area known for its international outdoor food markets. A reported 22,406 cars enter this area and 24,800 individuals use public transportation to enter the strip district, making it an accessible area for many different social and economic demographics. The location of the factory is a block down and over from Penn Avenue, the Strip Districts main thoroughfare, but the Cork Lofts are too far South West to feed off its energy, and the surrounding area has an under developed feel. To the north of the Lofts a supporting mixed use block, with commercial in the bottom, and parking for three stories above, was designed in conjunction to the project, but no other such investment appears to have been instigated by the loft's construction.

The Armstrong Cork factory was originally built in 1901 and remained functioning until 1974. Construction began in 2005 and was finished in 2007, with a cost over $78 million dollars. The industrial site was required to remove the existing VOC, SVOC's, Bonzoa Prene, TCE Benzene, Methyl Chloride, Arsenic, Mercury, Asbestos, and Lead Paint, to levels that were acceptable for residential use. Another condition for the renovation design process was the adherence to the Historic Landmark Standards, which was required in order for the project to receive over $9 million in Federal Historic Tax Credits. The existing shell remained largely as is, with new glass fenestration, brick repointing and removal of loose metal work being obvious interventions. The existing smokestack and metal clad walkway connecting the buildings' sixth floor remained to, becoming useful and decorative forms to the small urban space.

When entering the complex the connection to the river is striking. A small breeze moves between the two buildings and the lack of river traffic creates peaceful outdoor space. Some metal machinery has remained as landscape and façade ornamentation. The factory to loft transition almost appears seamless. The industrial aesthetic is softened by the landscape and river in the background. Traces of soot have been cleaned from the façade, removing with it the evidence of Pittsburgh's moniker "Hell with its lid off. For the apartments themselves, all existing walls are exposed brick with all new construction delineated by typical white gypsum board. Single, Double, and Triple rooms are available, making it flexible for a diversity of tenants.

In some ways the Cork Loft's was rehabilitated to remove any of the unpleasantness associated with industrialization. Left over machinery has been cleaned and painted, to be appropriate ornamentation for the landscape, removing the memory of its past or original purpose. The importance of the Cork Lofts lies in the larger context of Pittsburgh's reinvention of itself. The factory's transformation into young professional housing is an important element in the city's

Figure 5: Interior Courtyard of Armstrong Cork Factory Loft in Pittsburgh, PA

infrastructure. Pittsburgh became responsible for its own path and ownership, aligning its decisions to the culture of the city and ignoring any competitive pressures from cities such as New York and Chicago.

CONCLUSION

Like Pittsburgh, Appalachia must take ownership of its own progress. It is no longer acceptable for Appalachians to accept their assimilation into the lowest level of American mainstream. Ruins are an allegorical representation of not only the decline of industrial Appalachia but also the question of ownership. In order for Appalachians to reclaim Appalachia we must reclaim the ruins of our past first, and then begin to establish an architecture that provides the necessities unique to Appalachian culture. Therefore Appalachian should begin to define its own progress, even if the progress is divergent of the American mainstream. It is an unfair position to claim that these cultural changes in Appalachia are completely unbeneficial. Appalachia's connection to the American mainstream, through the communication revolution, allows Appalachians to understand their position within a more globalized region. Appalachia needs to not imitate the American mainstream for benchmarks of progress, but to create their own progress, inspired by their own culture. The region has its potential to utilize its unique cultural position and then create its own path to progress

Adaptation of ruins into areas of viability for Appalachian culture is a way to begin the reclamation of ownership to Appalachia. But Appalachia has, and probably will, continue to suffer from low economic capital and investment. Absentee company owners and corrupt nepotism based local governments funnel money, not into local infrastructure, but often to the creation of jobs in order to gain political support. Funding for building projects can be received from The National Historical Landmark Fund, Community Action Organization Grants, and Port Authority Grants, but most require an initial capital investment, a difficult requirement in economically disenfranchised region. It is a tireless condition of money creates money and Appalachia has rarely received any economic benefits.
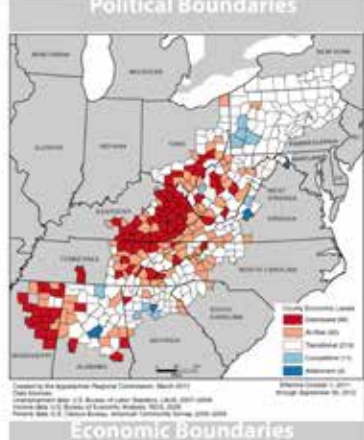
What Appalachia does have is a deep musical tradition, miles of beautiful wilderness, and a unique and supportive community spirit, and aged landscape that speaks to the characteristics of the Appalachian culture. Ruins are apart of the Appalachian landscape, they are not a shameful urban condition, but an opportunity for architecture to add to the story of Appalachia.

ENDNOTES TITLE

1. *Ruins in Modernity* by Julia Hell and Schonle Andreas

2. *Ruins in Modernity* by Julia Hell and Schonle Andreas

3. *Ruins in Modernity* by Julia Hell and Schonle Andreas

4 *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* by Ronald Eller.

5. *Ruins: An Anthology* by Brian Dillon

6. *Ruins: An Anthology* by Brian Dillon

7. *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* by Ted Endensor

8. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* by Ronald Eller

9. *Pittsburgh An Urban Portrait* by Franklin Toker
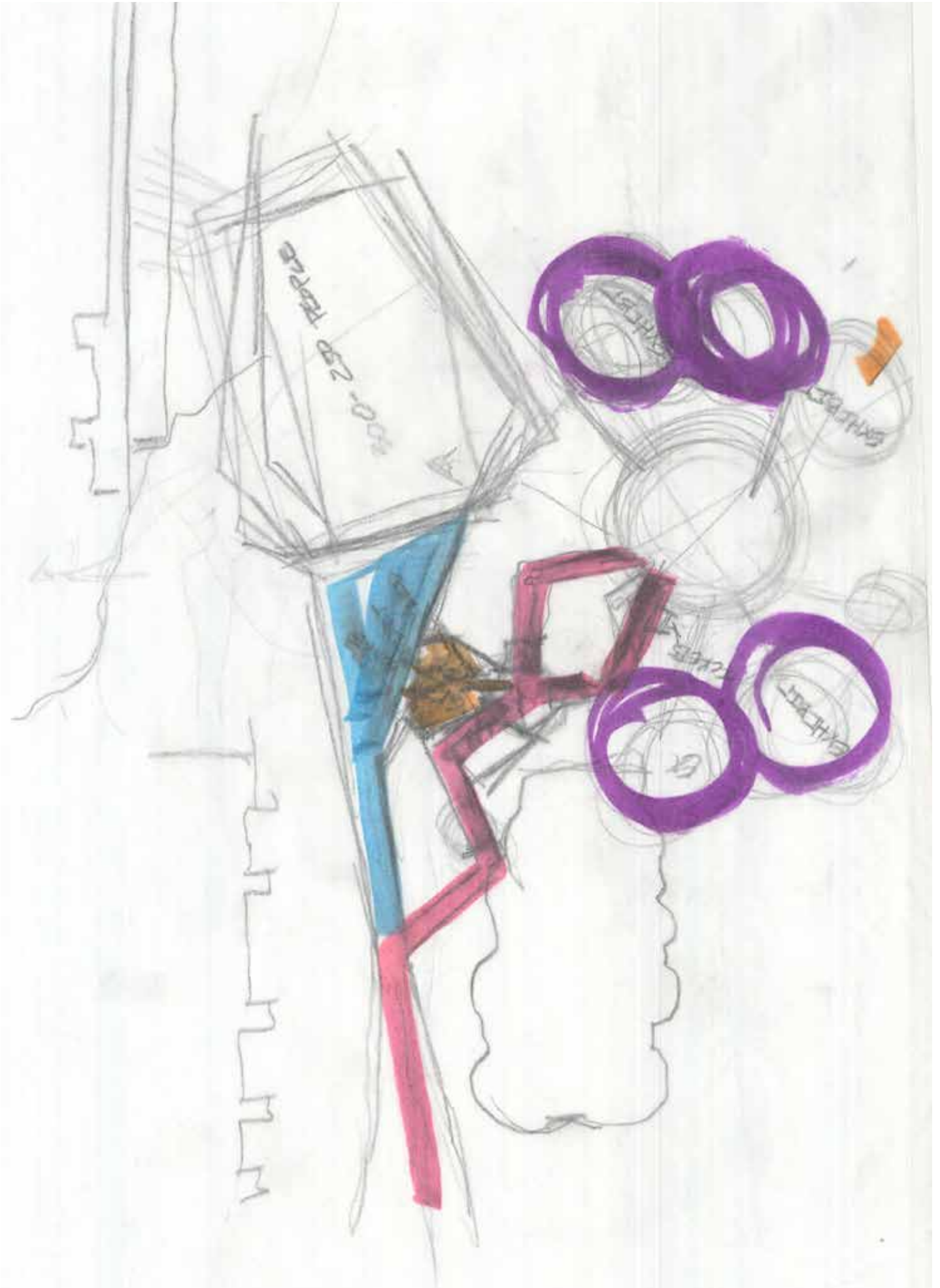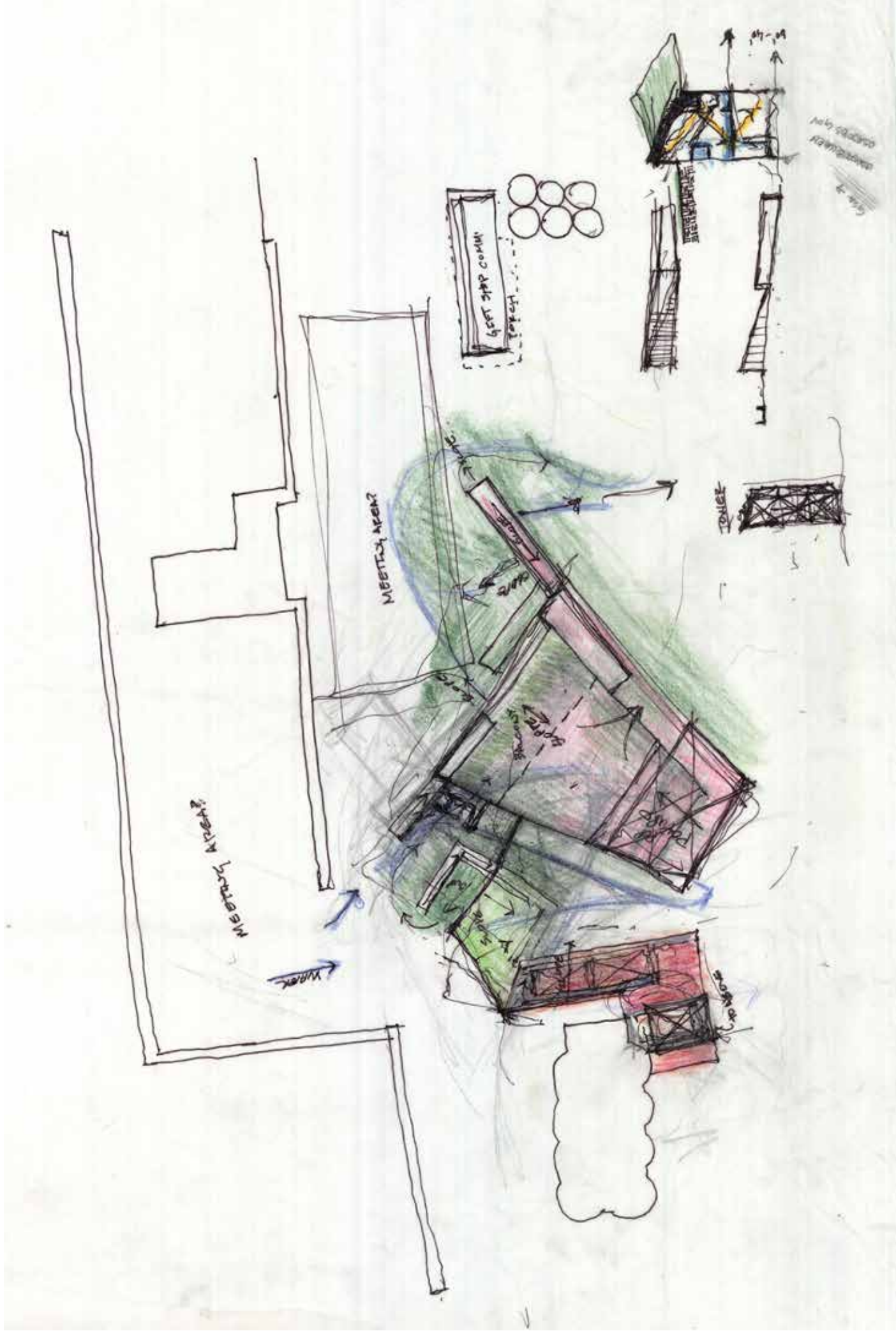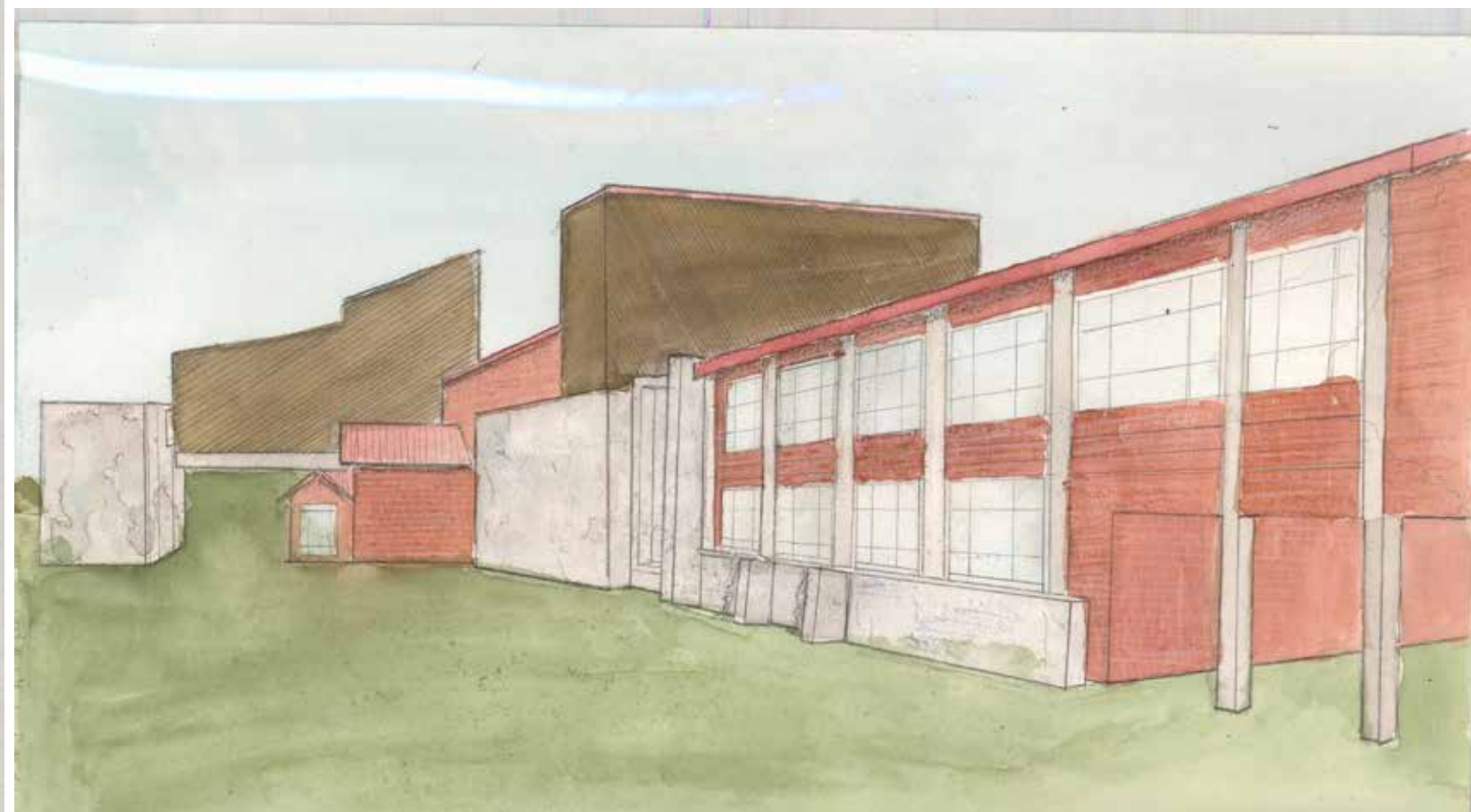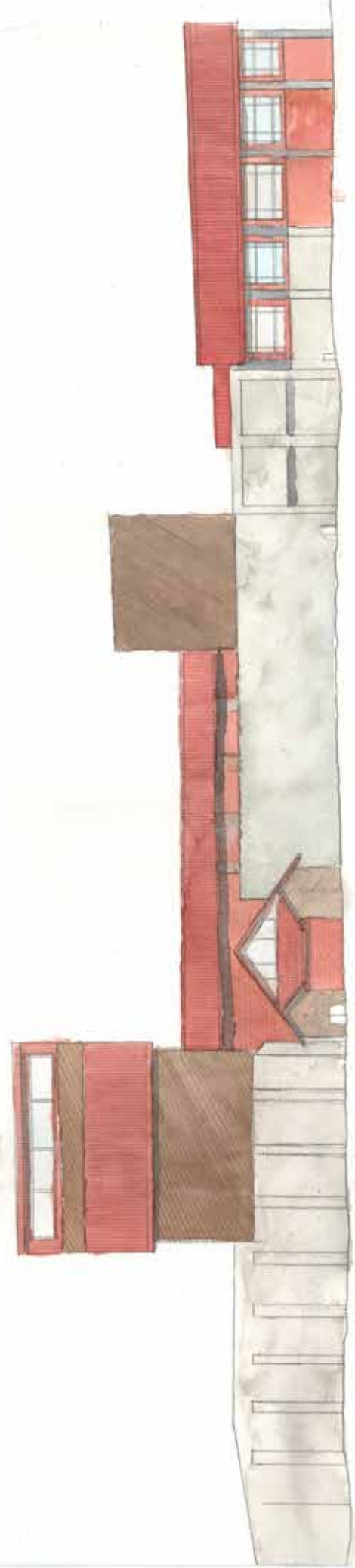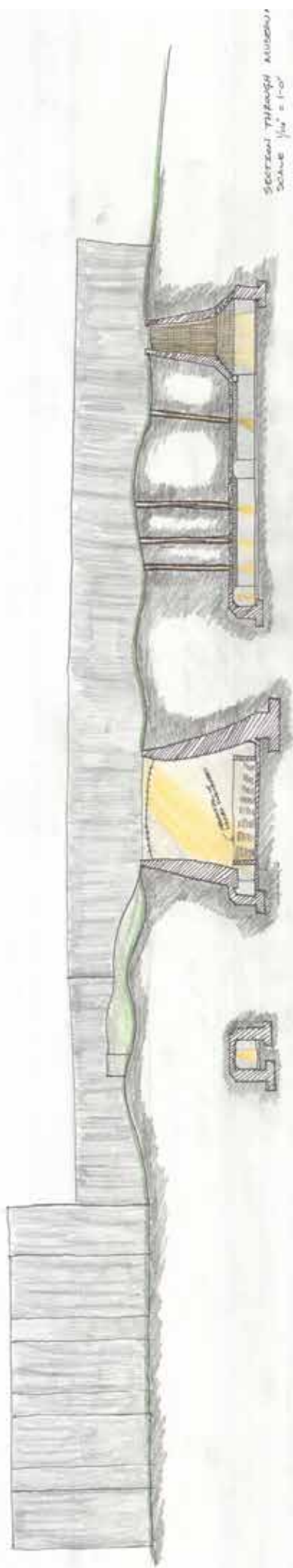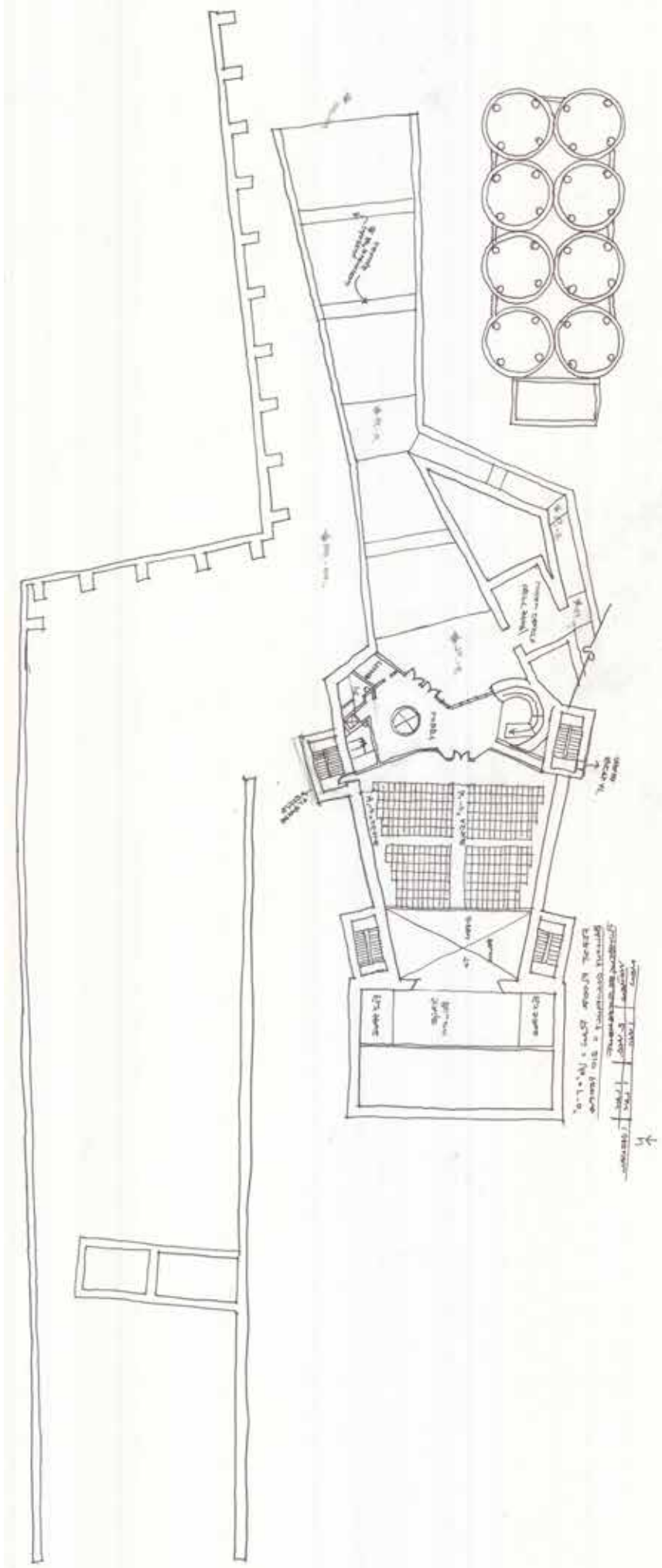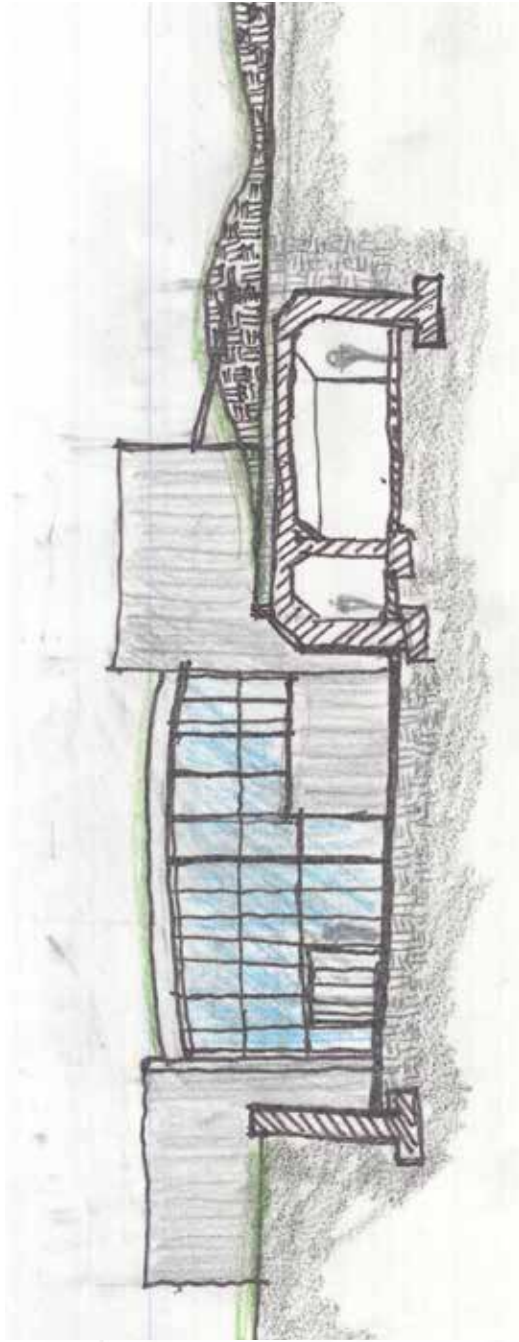
The Big Question:

As allegorical representations of post industrial Appalachian culture, ruins are connections to the past, which can be reused and reclaimed in the present in order to ground a culture struggling with identity and progress within in era of post-Industrialization

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APPALACHIA RISING

The Cycle

Unemployment

Poverty

Ruins

Decay

Ruin is a **CRITIQUE OF A SPATIAL ORGANIZATION** of the modern word and its **SINGLE MINDED COMMITMENT** to a progress that **THROWS TOO MANY INDIVIDUALS AND SPACES INTO THE TRASH**
Andreas Husseyn- the Ruin of Modernity

Through their experience of the SUBLIME, human beings confront their own mortality and arrive at an AWARENESS of their own importance, of which convinces them they VIRTUE and SOLIDARITY WITH ONE ANOTHER- and by extension, A RELIANCE UPON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE- are necessary."
Edmond Burke- Philosophical Inquiry into the origins of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.

It seems , in fact, that the more advanced a society is, the greater will be its interest in ruined things, of it will see in them a receptively **sober reminder of the fragility of its own achievements.** Ruins pose a direct challenge to our concern with power and rank, with bustle and fame. They puncture the inflated folly of our **exhaustive and frenetic pursuit of wealth.**
Alain De Botton, The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work

Those who have the required **WORK SKILLS**, the **ACA-DEMIC** ability, the desperate, **NATIVE**, enterprising grit do so, **GET THE HELL OUT AS FAST AS THEY CAN**, and they have been doing that for decades. As they go, businesses disappear, institutions fall into decline, social networks, erode, and there is little or nothing left over for those who remain. It's a **CLASSIC ECONOMIC DEATH SPIRAL**: the quality of the available jobs is not enough to keep good workers, and the quality of the available workers is not rough to attract good jobs.

Thinking about the future here and its **BLEAK PROS-PECTS** is not much fun at all, so instead you the **PILLS** and **DOPE**, the morning bears, the endless scratch-off **LOTTO CARDS, HEALING MEETINGS** up on the hill, the federally funded ritual of trading cases of **FOOD-STAMP PEPSI** for packs of Kentucky's Best **CIG-ARETTES** and good **OLD HARD CURRENCY**, tall piles of **GAS STATION NACHOS**, the occasional blast of **METH, NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS** meetings, petty crime, the draw, the recreation making and surgical unmaking of teenage mothers, and death:

We must reclaim the ruins of our past first, and then begin to establish an architecture that provides the necessities unique to Appalachian Culture.
Appalachia must **DEFINE** its **OWN PROGRESS**.

Cultural Boundaries

Political Boundaries

Economic Boundaries

What is Appalachian Culture?

The cultural perspective of Appalachia relates to values of Appalachian people and the influence those values have on attitudes, behavior, and lifestyle. There is no single Appalachian culture or consensus about what it means to be Appalachian. Even today, various contributors to the Encyclopedia of Appalachia (EOA) document the region's extreme diversity in terms of geology, biology, history, physical geography, natural resources, wealth, education, politics, religion, ethnicity, race, etc.
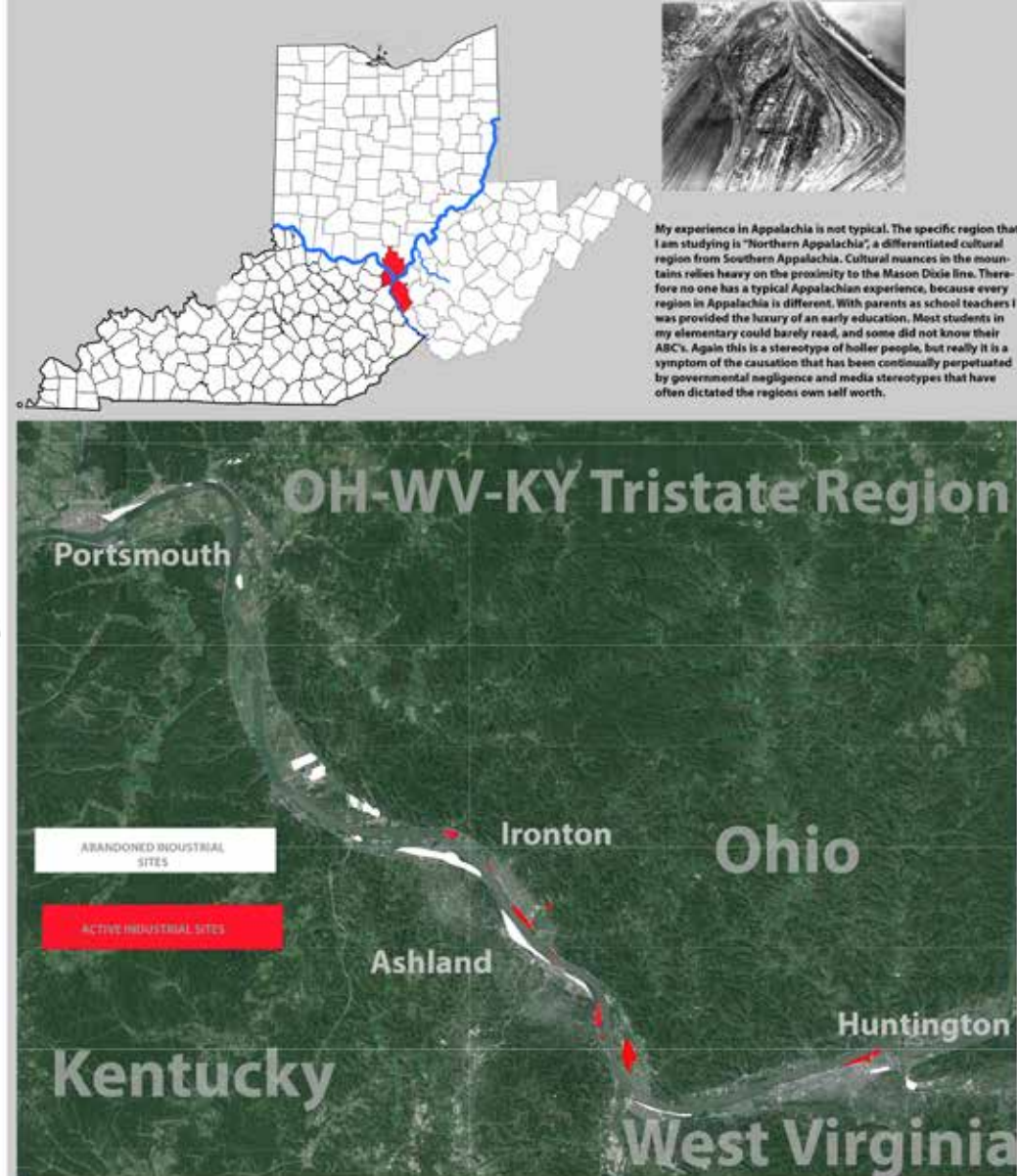
My experience in Appalachia is not typical. The specific region that I am studying is "Northern Appalachia", a differentiated cultural region from Southern Appalachia. Cultural nuances in the mountains relies heavy on the proximity to the Mason Dixie line. Therefore no one has a typical Appalachian experience, because every region in Appalachia is different. With parents as school teachers I was provided the luxury of an early education. Most students in my elementary could barely read, and some did not know their ABC's. Again this is a stereotype of holler people, but really it is a symptom of the causation that has been continually perpetuated by governmental negligence and media stereotypes that have often dictated the regions own self worth.

OH-WV-KY Tristate Region

Portsmouth

Ironton

Ohio

ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL SITES

ACTIVE INDUSTRIAL SITES

Ashland

Kentucky

Huntington

West Virginia

APPALACHIA IN RUINS

GROWING UP AMONG THE RUINS OF AN APPALACHIAN RIVER CITY TOWN, AN AESTHETIC OF DECAY EMANATES FROM ABANDONED STOREFRONTS, FACTORIES AND CIVIC BUILDINGS, INSTILLING AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEMPORALITY, DECLINE, AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF FINALITY.

Alpha Portland Cement Plant- Hog Run Road, Ironton Ohio
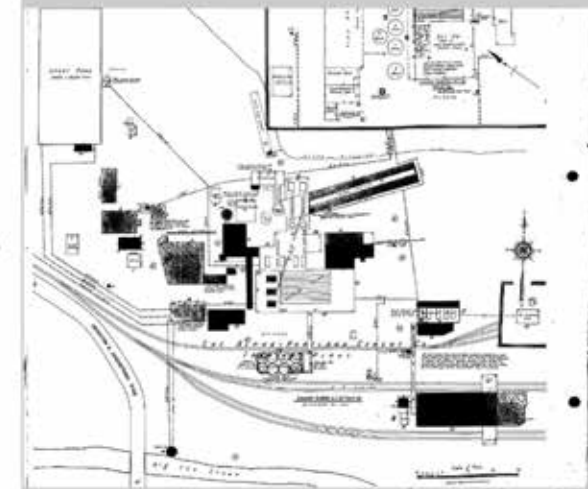
Sanborn Map 1929

"A ruin is a ruin precisely because it seems to have lost its function or meaning in the present, while retaining a suggestive, unstable semiotic potential."

1960s, Alpha Portland in Ironton (Briggs Library col.)

The Ironton Portland Cement Company was founded in the late 1800s and was later acquired by the Ironton Cement Company. In 1910, the company discovered a 100-foot thick vein of limestone 575 feet under the plant property while drilling for gas. The operations was purchased by the Alpha Portland Cement Company in 1920.

In May of 1924, two stock houses were constructed by the Macdonald Engineering Company. The stock-houses had a storage capacity of 170,000 bbls., consisting of eight bins 33-feet inside diameter by 80-feet high. The concrete structures were built with a movable form, which meant that the concrete was poured continuously throughout the day and night. The walls were called 'monolithic.' An average of eight-feet per day in height was constructed, with ideal days pushing that up to sixteen-feet.

The finished cement at the storage plants was carried by screw conveyors and bucket elevators from the finish mill to the stockhouse for storing. When it was ready to ship to customers, the cement was drawn from the bottom of the silos into the screw conveyors, and was done through numerous spouts and feeders under each bin. The screw conveyors under the bins carried the cement to bucket elevators which elevated the cement to the screens above the packing bins. The screens were the screw conveyor type, which perforated housings to catch spray material or heavy lumps of cement from going to the packers.

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Hog Run Road

Hog Run Road

Maddyville Turnpike

US 52

SITE PLAN SCALE: 1/32" = 1'00

IN CONTEXT

SECTION A SCALE 1/8" = 1'00"

To Coal Grove

Ice Creek

Hog Run Road

Site

PROCESS

Aerial Perspective

MUSEUM AND THEATRE ENTRANCE

The Seam
Theatre

WOMENS | MENS

SITE SECTION B SCALE: 1/32" = 1'00"

Staring the Punch Brothers
April 22   5:00

1ST FLOOR PLAN SCALE: 1/8" = 1'00"

LOBBY

GIFT SHOP

MUSEUM ENTRANCE
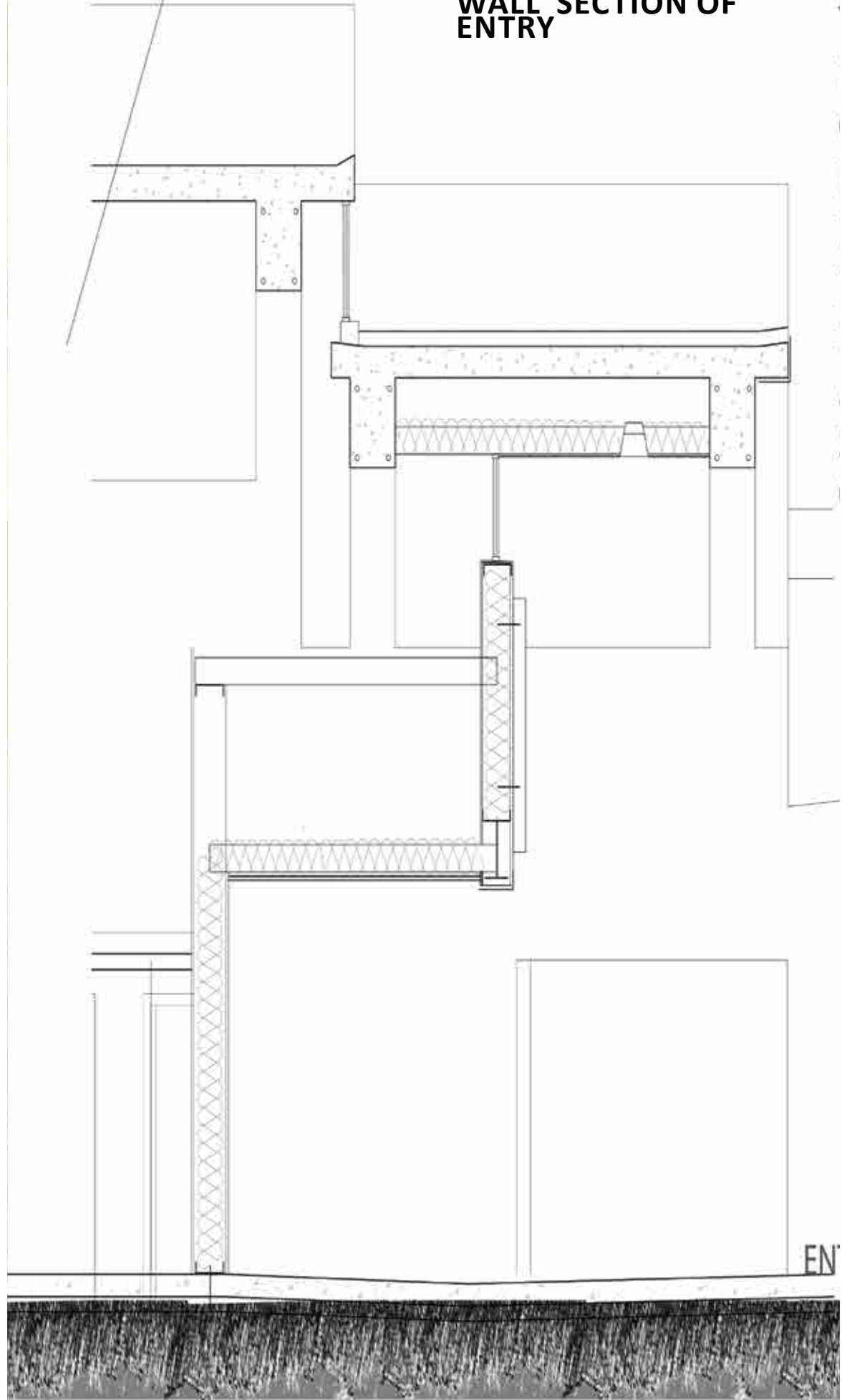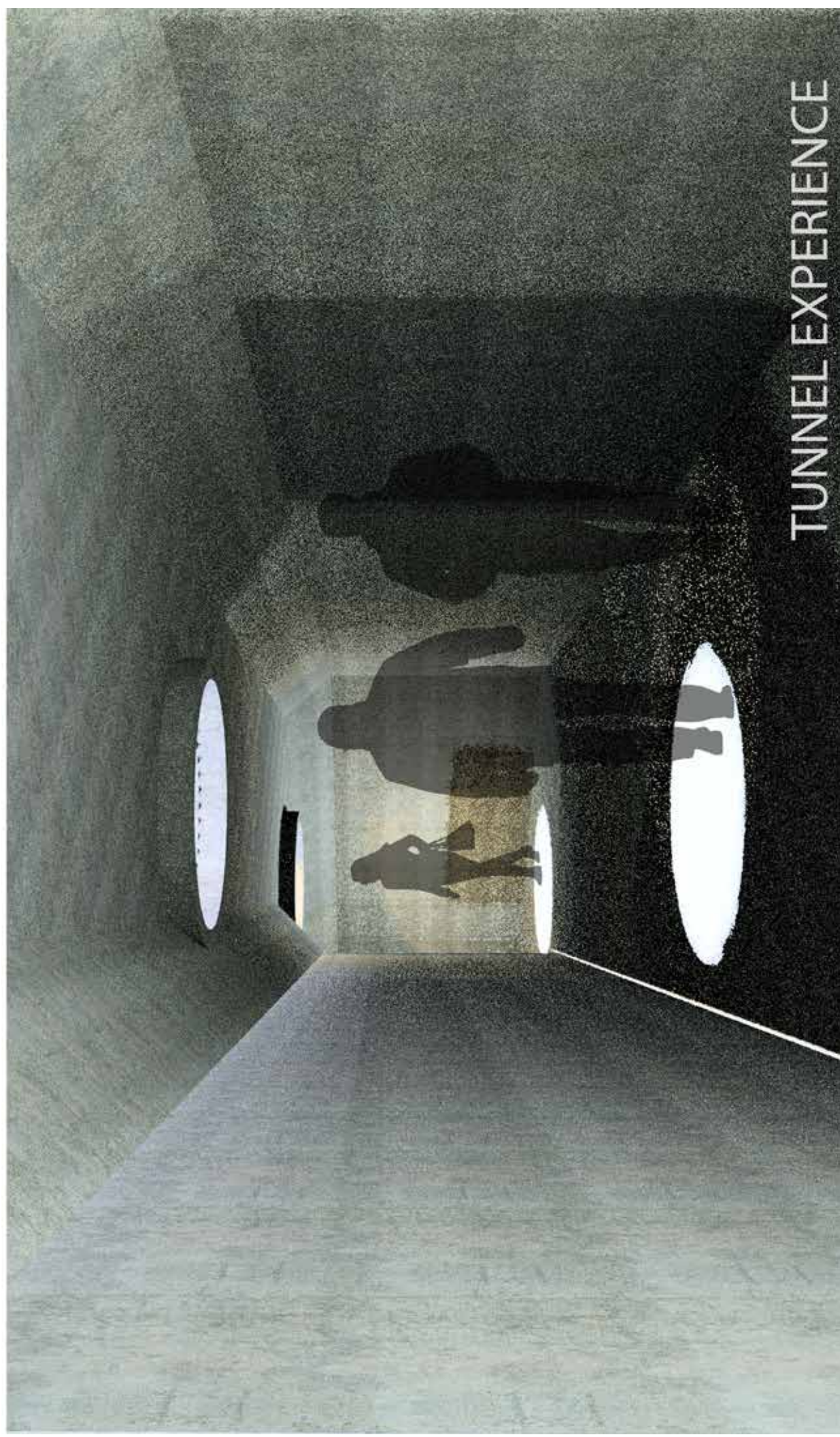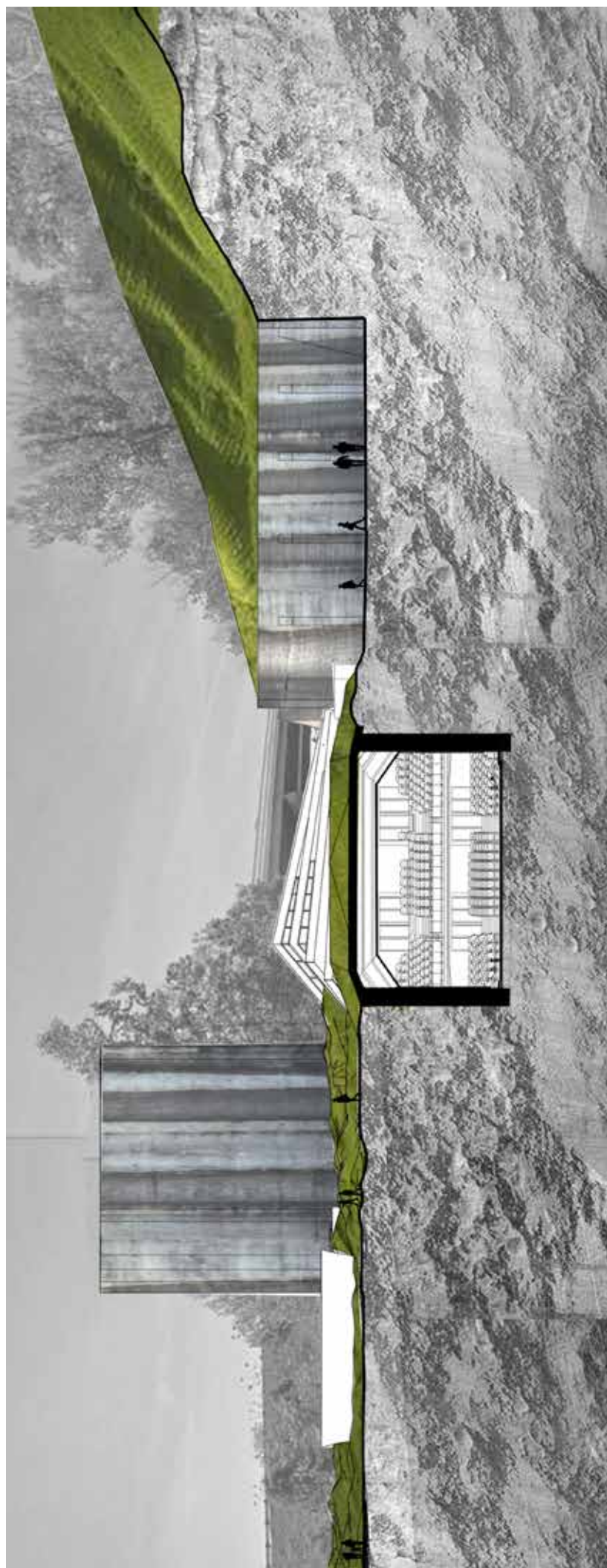
A

B

C

D

E

F
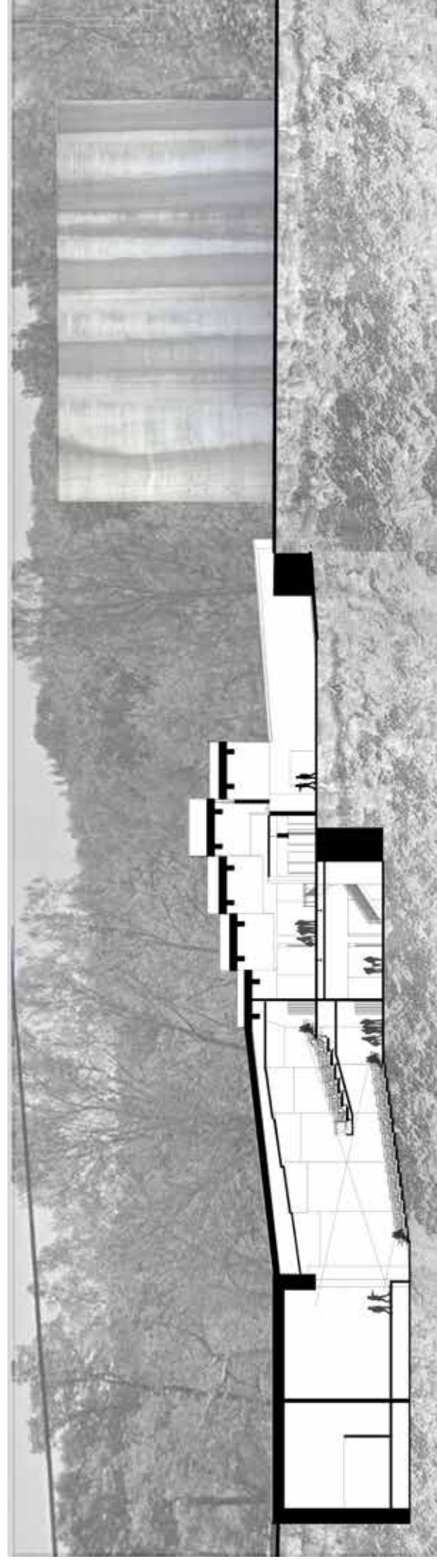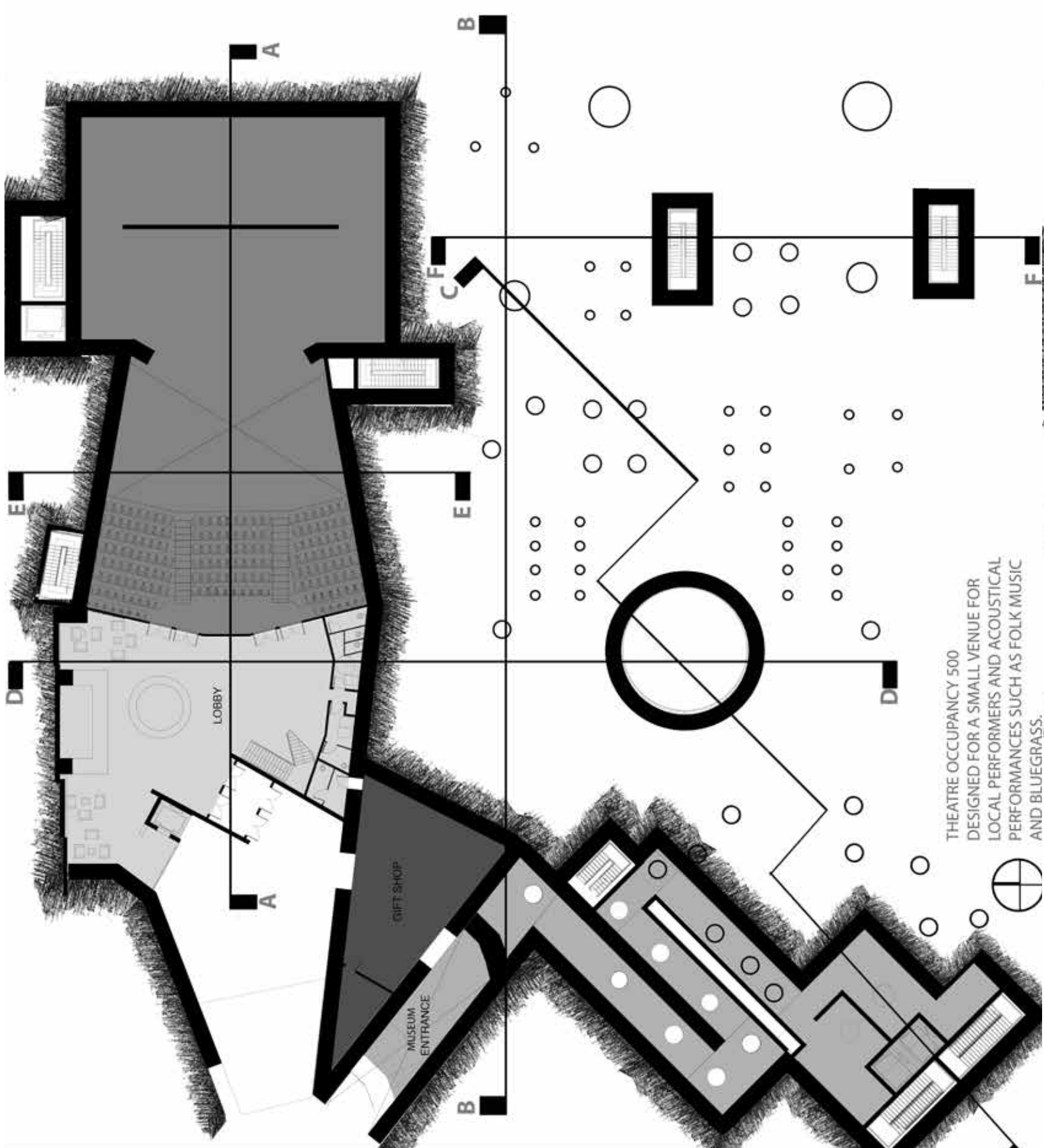
THEATRE OCCUPANCY 500 DESIGNED FOR A SMALL VENUE FOR LOCAL PERFORMERS AND ACOUSTICAL PERFORMANCES SUCH AS FOLK MUSIC AND BLUEGRASS.
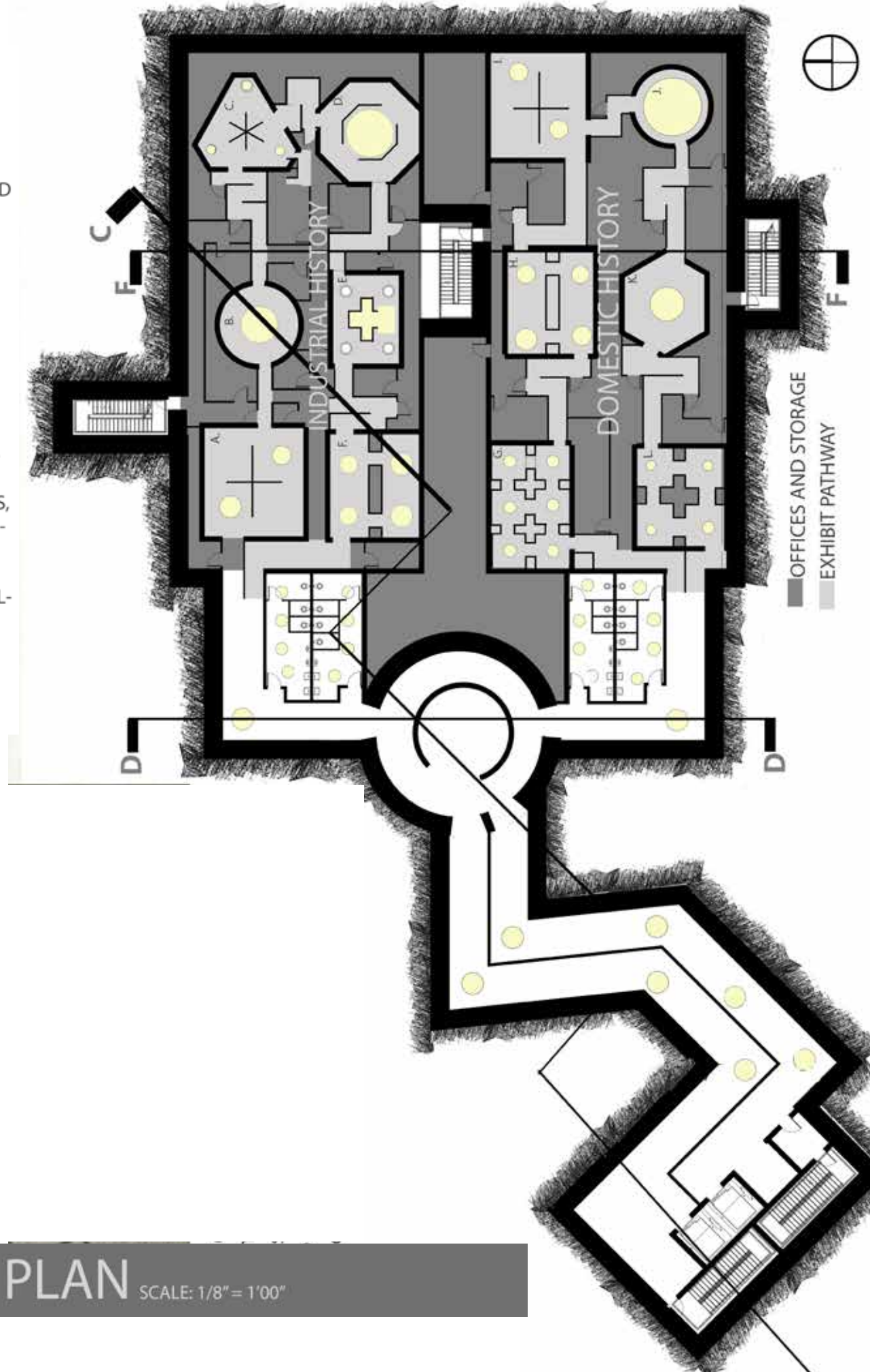
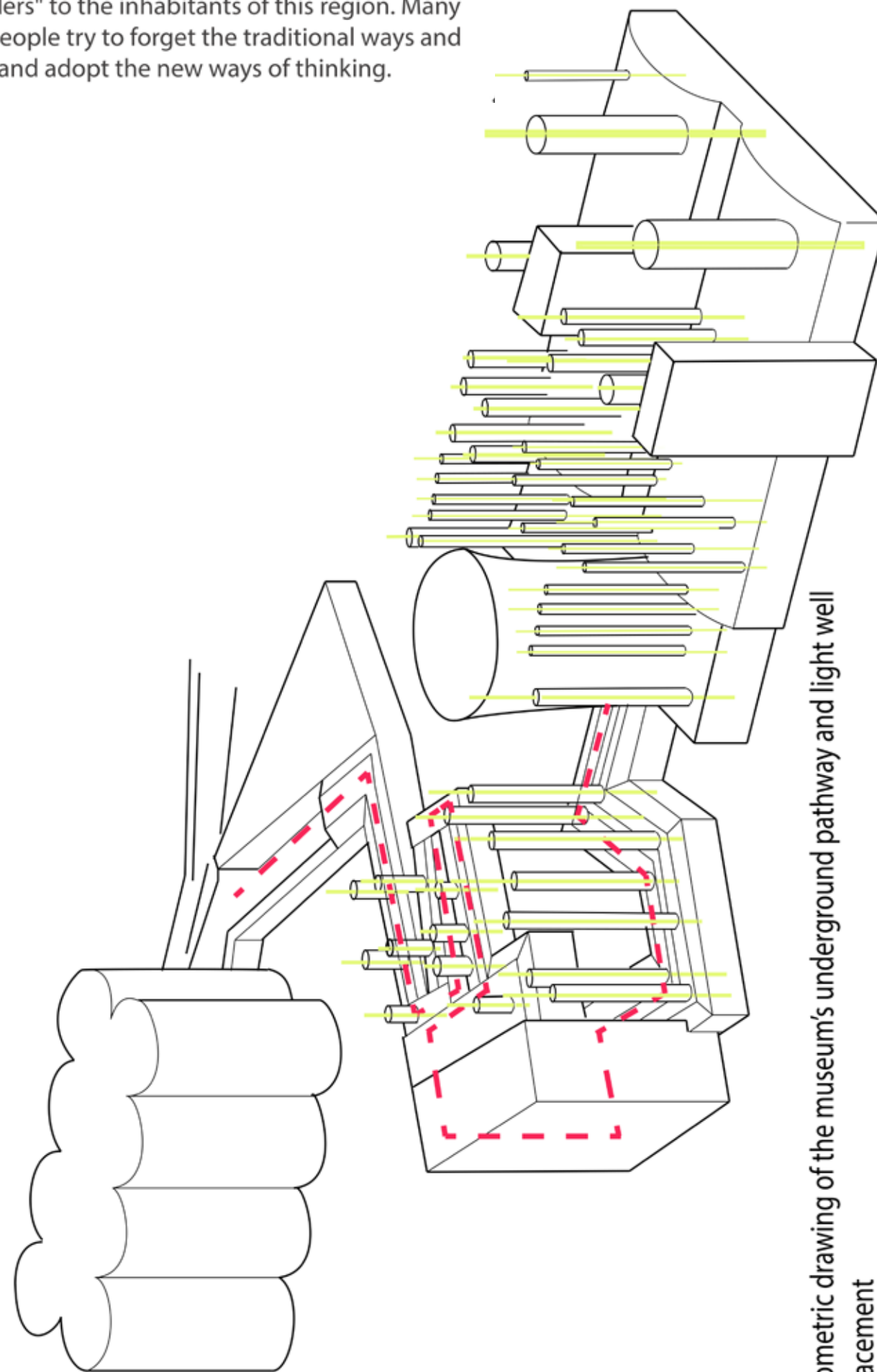# 2ND FLOOR PLAN SCALE: 1/8" = 1'00"

DRESSING ROOM

DRESSING ROOM

SCENE ROOM

STAGE RIGHT WING

STAGE

STAGE LEFT WING

LOBBY

A

B

C

D

E

F
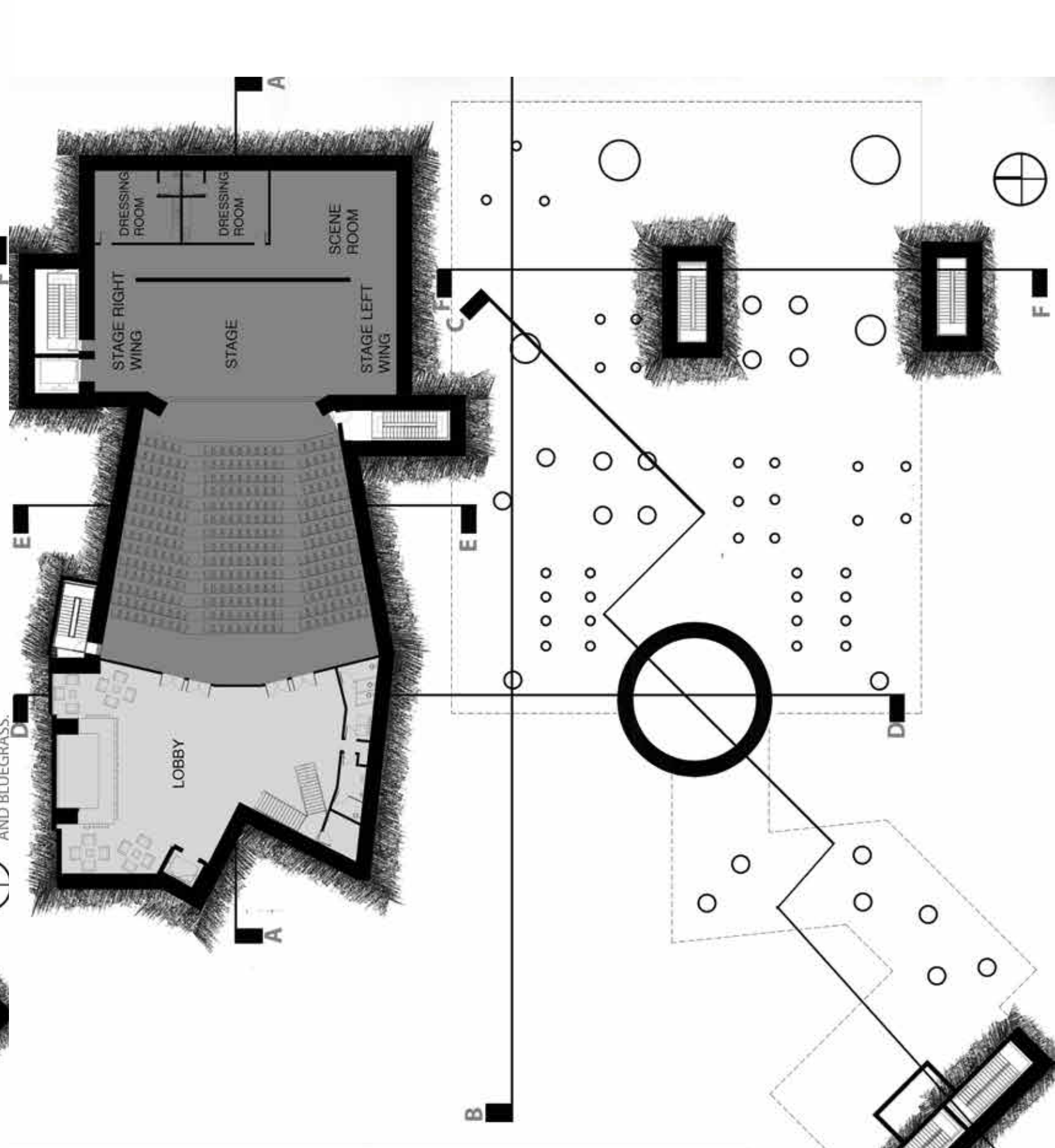
WALL SECTION OF ENTRY

TUNNEL EXPERIENCE

Many modern day Appalachians try to distance them-
selves from the "hillbilly-ness" that is associated by
"outlanders" to the inhabitants of this region. Many
young people try to forget the traditional ways and
notions and adopt the new ways of thinking.
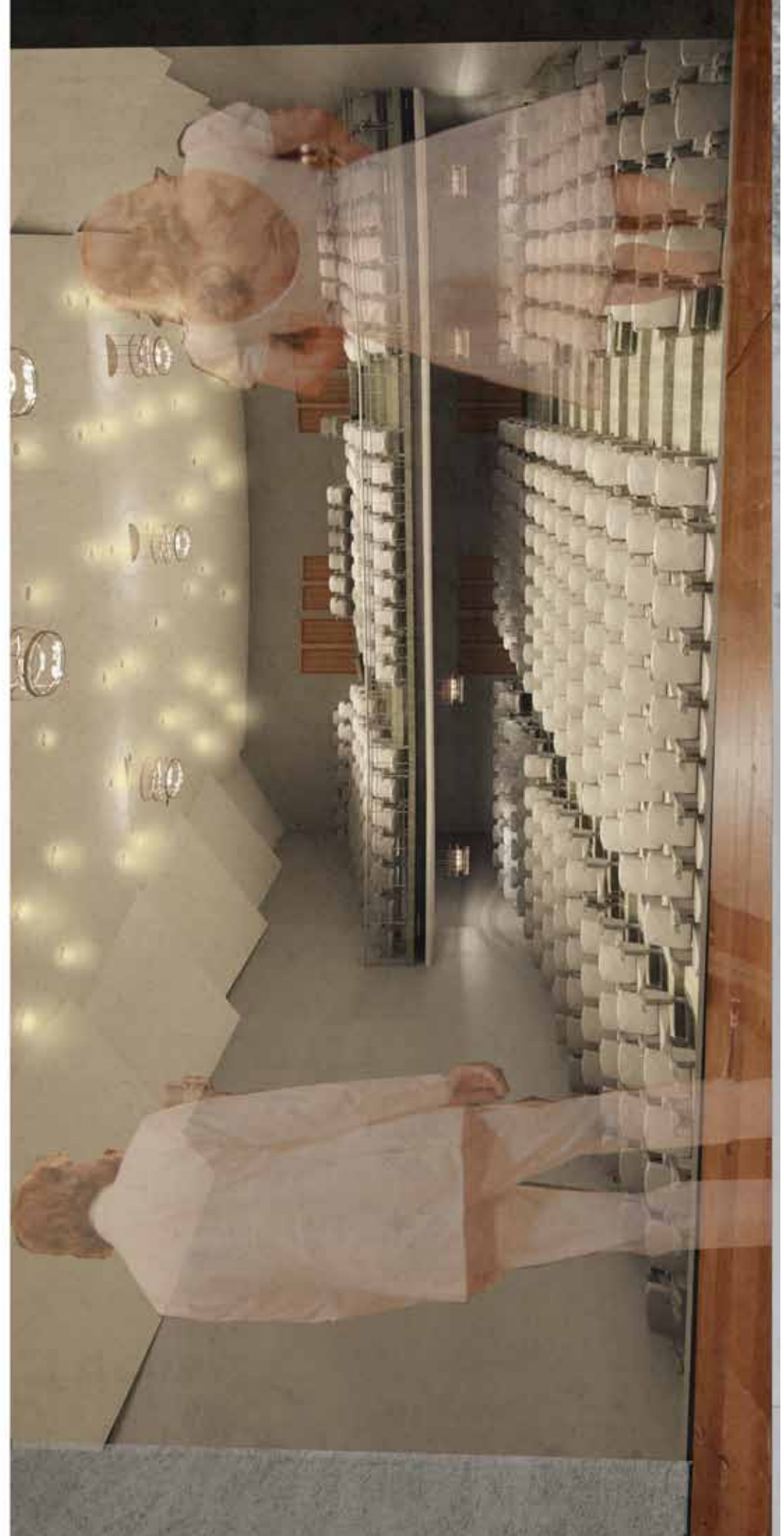
LEGEND

A. INTRO TO
THE MOUNTAINS

B. NATIVE AMERICAN'S AND
SETTLERS THE FIRST INVA-
SION
C. EARLY MINING AND
UNION WARS

D. STRIP AND MOUNTAIN
TOP REMOVAL

E. ACTIVISM

F. FUTURE OF THE MOUN-
TAINS

G. WOMEN IN THE MOUN-
TAINS

H. FAMILY CLANS AND SO-
CIETY

H. QUILTING, HANDCRAFTS,
BASKET MAKING, AND CULI-
NARY

J. POVERTY AND EFFECTS

J. RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL-
ITY

L. SOCIAL CHANGES IN
POST-INDUSTRIAL APPALA-
CHIA

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

DOMESTIC HISTORY

OFFICES AND STORAGE

EXHIBIT PATHWAY

MUSEUM PLAN SCALE: 1/8" = 1'00"

Isometric drawing of the museum's underground pathway and light well placement
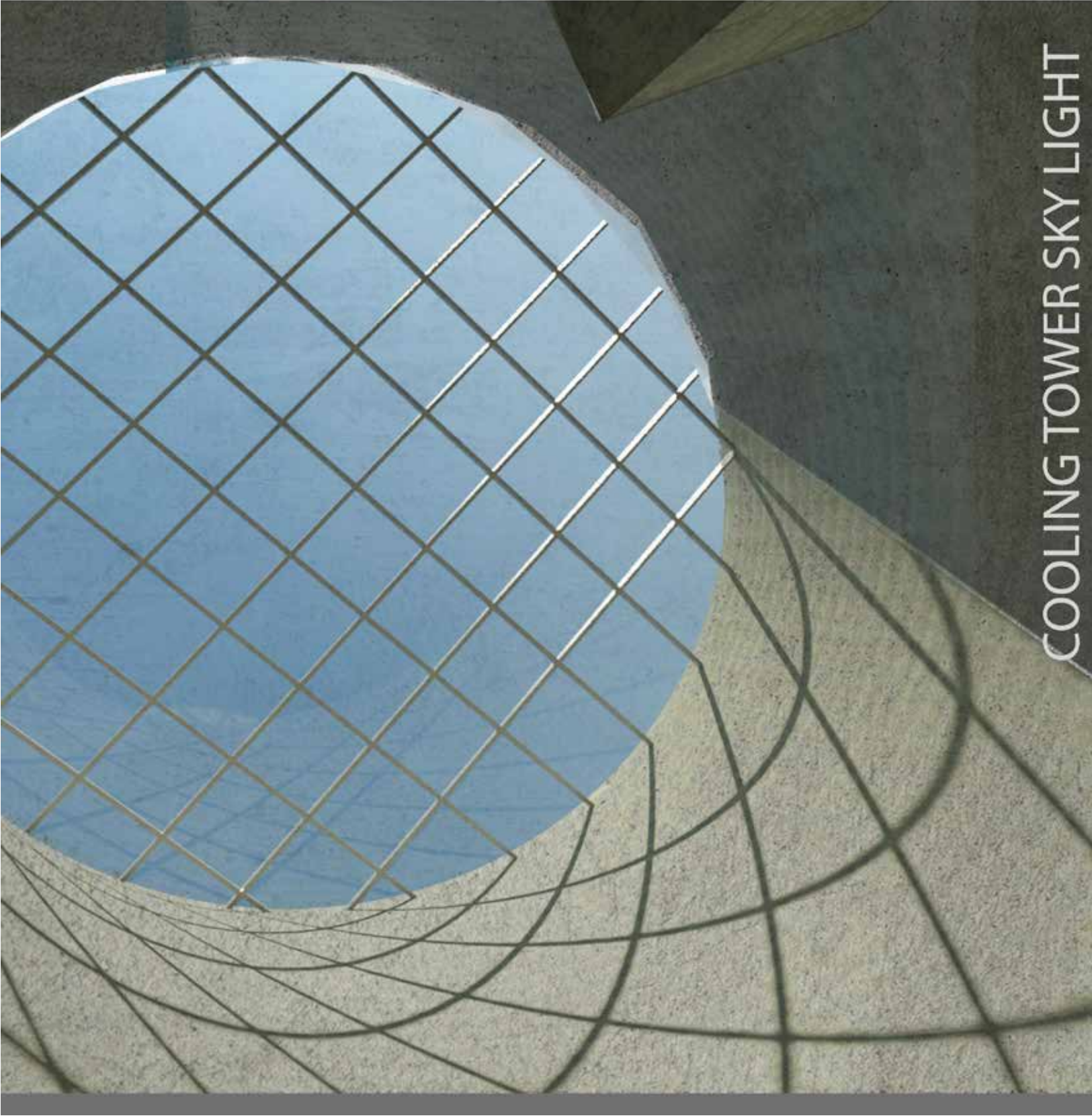
COOLING TOWER SKY LIGHT

The Seam
Appalachian Cultural
Museum

Staring the Punch Brothers
April 22   5:00
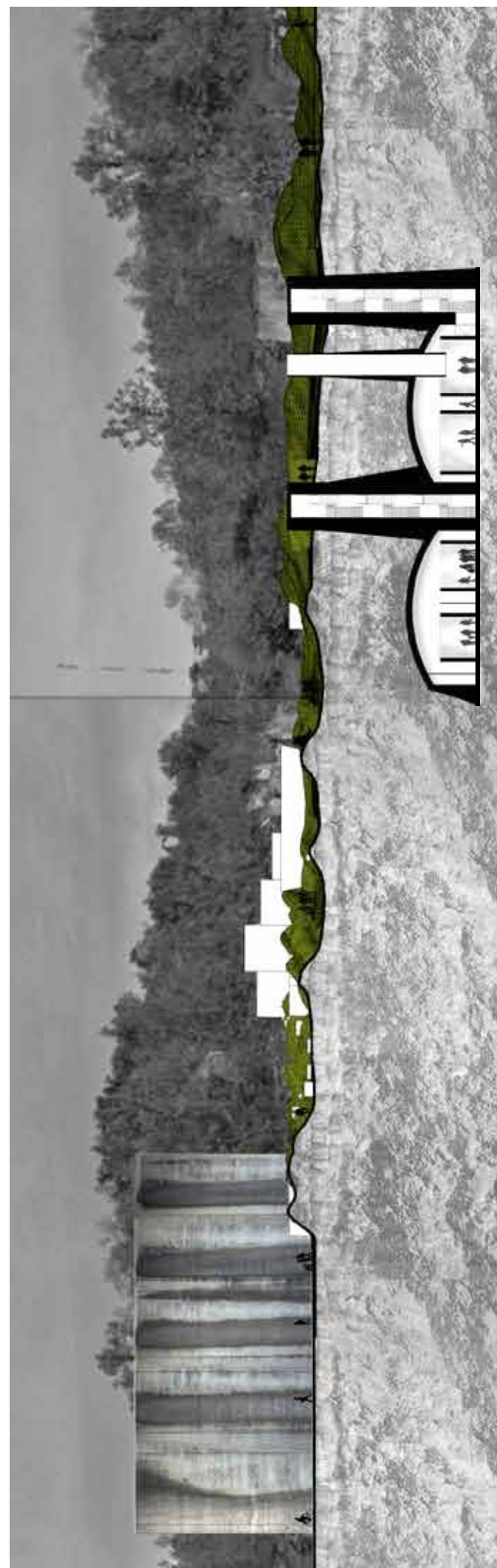
Two key characteristics of the culture of Appalachia are the independence displayed and the constant mutual aid provided to others in the region. There is a sense of equality that exists between the people, this is of course in sharp contrast to the inequality and elitism that exists in other areas of modern society.
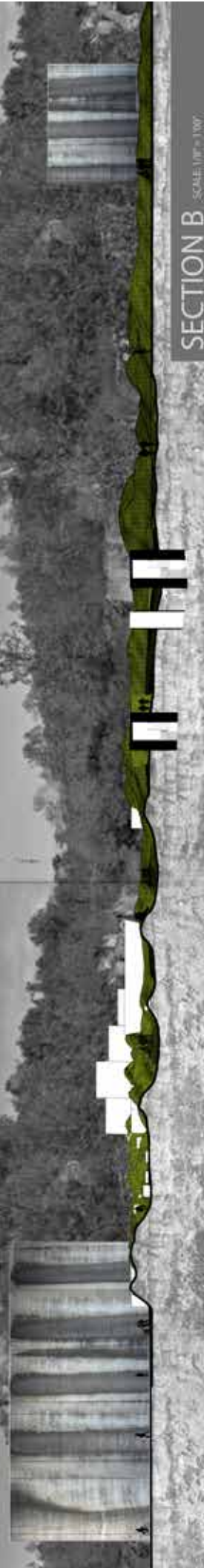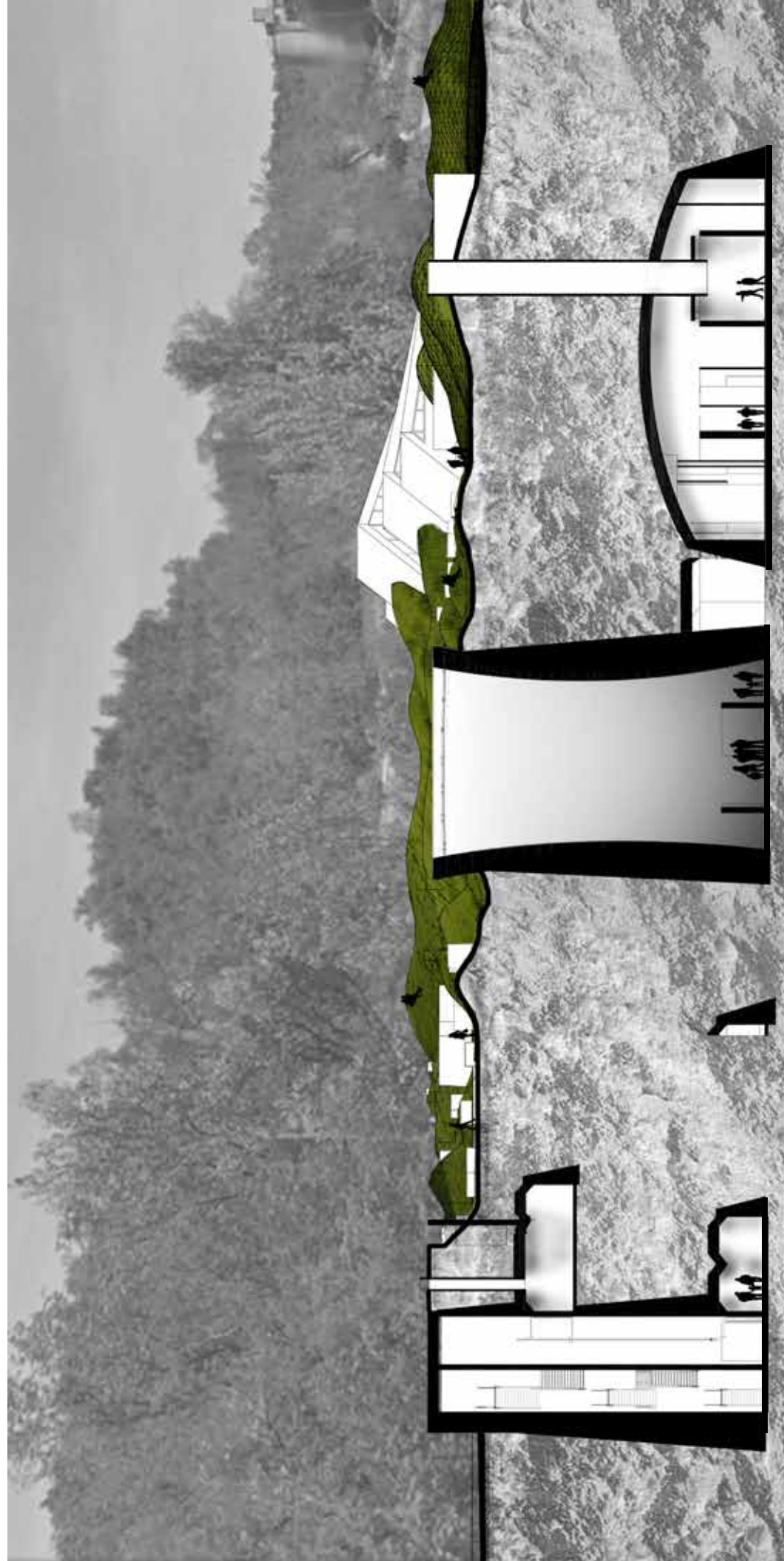
Ruins in Post-Industrial Appalachia

Introduction

After presenting the paper and receiving various and different feedback I realized for the design portion I had to redefine my question. If ruins are representative of Post-Industrial Appalachian culture, then how does Appalachia begin to address and embrace these allegorical objects as an essential part of the Appalachian cultural landscape? I was no longer trying to establish ruins as just cultural representations, but ruins as integral to Appalachia's cultural environment imperative for architectural design pertaining to Appalachian culture.

Site Selection

In order to pick a site was confronted with two options. One, consider Appalachia's social and political disenfranchisement and provide a design that address one or more of these issues. Or two, design a more conceptual project looking at a way for creating the experience of Appalachia in a building program and form with the hopes it will educate the public on Appalachian cultural history and current condition.

For the social justice design I originally, I intended to do three different sites, in three different River City towns, with interventions of ruins at each site that responded to social context and need. Quickly, I realized that a social justice route was a potential thesis design pitfall. My paper did not narrow my design to a specific social issue within the river city cultural community, and to do so at the design portion would have seemed arbitrary. Also, rightly so, John Becker considered three sites to ambitious and my committee reluctantly agreed.

I deiced to take the second route. Partially spurned on by the fact that Appalachia's museum and cultural centers primarily focused on Appalachia in the 1850's, rather any current conditional issues. It was disservice to the still present Appalachians that only our ancestor's voices were to consider to be valid for roaming tourists and gawkers. I wanted this design to be as much for tourists as for locals.

I finally settled on the Alpha Portland Cement Plant, an abandoned cement plant, outside of Ironton, Ohio as a potential site for an Appalachian cultural center. It was built in 1910 as an iron ore mine, but a very large seam of limestone was discovered and then a cement company, from up state New York, bought the site. In the 128-acre site, tunnels went beyond the hillside and into the ridge, but the factory was located in the valley next to Hog Run Road. It was abandoned in 1972 after 15 miners were killed in a mine collapse due to unsafe working conditions caused by neglected infrastructure. Throughout my childhood it remained in a state of decay and ruination. As the years passed the cement continued to crumble as vines and trees climbed the giant silos.

At the time I started my thesis the ruins had just been demolished, but my committee allowed me to Time Machine my project to the beginning of 2013 and pretend that the two flanking silos and retaining walls were still present. It was integral for the project that the ruins were present and a major object that had to be integrated into my design for the reasons I had discussed earlier. Since my site was destroyed I spent time searching for pictures and documentation in order to recreate the feelings of ruination, which was a very daunting process. It was imperative that the design be true to the ruination that so closely represented Appalachian culture.

Program and Process

As I continued further into my research I came to several startling conclusions I had not discovered in my paper. One, Appalachian culture is very difficult to define, but there are definite threads, and most agree that whatever it is, it is changing and homogenizing in the American mainstream. I continued to research Appalachian culture as I worked through my program, and the abstractness and ephemeral quality of the culture made the program simple, and yet very potent for a narrative based design.

As program and cultural analysis continued I ran into a unique problem of trying to define a culture as nebulous as Appalachian culture. Each region of Appalachia is very different (it spans from Maine to Alabama) creating a problematic idea of "what is Appalachia". I had to pick an Appalachia that I knew, and then design from there. Then that became a question or "what aspects defines Appalachian Culture". That took several months of self-reflectance and research to finally establish a more definitive answer.

As part of my cultural analysis, I surmised that Appalachia has no indigenous Appalachian architectural typology, for which a design could be used to address Appalachian culture. I sincerely tried that path, due partially to my chair's resounding knowledge of regionalism and typology, where I looked at local "architecture" as a generator for the site's materiality and form. But it felt forced, and foreign to me as Appalachian. The only objects that appeared to be genuine to Appalachia were the ruins. Therefore, a typological and regional approach I

first attempted felt ill suited to the design project and I was forced to consider an alternative to the image of Appalachia.

I left for break forced to reconsider my original approach. Spending time over break in the area of my site forced me to accept that a solely architectural solution would not suit the narrative I was developing. The design needed to branch into something hybrid and I looked to the Appalachian landscape to as the cultural generator.

The mountains provided the isolation needed for the Appalachians to grow a rich independent culture, but at the same time it provided for the disenfranchisement and exploitation by outside investors through the natural resources industry. From isolation came a close nit community, with rich musical culinary craft tradition all interconnected to the industry that made what little economy Appalachia had flourish. The mountains became Appalachia's empower and oppressor.

So from this analysis I began to look as the landscape as being a typology unique to the Appalachian region. I decided to make my building part of the landscape. This was made easier by my program, which consisted of a theater and museum, both successful programs with little exterior light. From there the building was able to submerged adding to the narrative of Appalachian mining.

Design

The final design became a hybrid design of landscape and architecture. It was divided into three parts landscape, theatre, and museum. With the concept of the mountains as the generator of Appalachian culture the landscape took a rather literal interpretation of the Appalachian valley and ridge system. The landscape was to be scene as part of the theatre façade, while the museum was dug underground requiring a processional experience into the ground that was to reminiscent of a coal mine descent. It also morphed into an exterior theater that was cut into a bermed landscape like the current strip-mining controversy in the mountains.

The theatre seated around 500, a small intimate venue that was able to accommodate Appalachia's typical acoustical performances. The lobby design is probably one of the strongest of the project, with large projecting fins creating a lofted, but still intimate space where light pierces through the gaps between. It has a limited backstage and wing space, again it was not a theatre designed for large musical acts.

The museum was dug under the ground and consisted of three major parts. The path downward was articulated by light tubes, which broke the darkness of the tunnel with intermittent rays of light. The occupant would continue until they would come to glass elevator, which would mimic the path downward of most coal shaft elevators. From there they would continue to the main museum lobby space, a large cooling tower inspired space with a large skylight oculus, would be inscribed with names of mining victims in the Appalachian region. From the main lobby the exhibit spaces were divided in two different sections, an industrial history section and a domestic section.

Conclusion

As with every thesis you finish the design with satisfaction and disappointment. For me this process was intensely personal, because I was designing for my own culture, a neglected and misunderstood culture. Then, I found myself questioning my own place in my culture and what my future could be. As much as my thesis calls for the youth to stand up and fight for a new Appalachia, I was confronted with a potential job far away, and jumped for it full throttle. It is odd that I am writing this for my conclusions, but I became my thesis, and I realized that I might never fulfill that aspect. I too may go away from Appalachia and never come back, because modernity has passed Appalachia, and it may only continue to fall further and further behind.

My thesis always went beyond the design; my thesis became a vehicle for me to discuss the plight of the rust belt region, and the even worse off Appalachia. While the design met with rave reviews at the thesis critique, I still felt I could have done more, tried harder to really develop the landscape fuller and the site in a larger context. It was an emotionally exhausting experience at the end, but I believe I introduced the plight of Appalachia in the most dignified and sophisticated manor I could conceive.