AT THE LOCH

A Library proposal for the
Boleskine House Foundation

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ABSTRACT

At the eastern shores of Loch Ness, Scotland, Bole-skine House is found. This is a manor built in 1809 with an interesting and controversial history, most noticeable for having been owned by Aleister Crowley and Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin. Since 2019 the area is owned by the Boleskine House Foundation, which is a non-profit organization whose main aim is to restore and maintain the Boleskine House estate. Their end goal and overall vision for Boleskine House is that it will become a historical landmark that will offer public accessibility and enjoyment in a way hitherto unavail-able, including a forum that will enrich people with the importance of history and heritage. Therefore, the foundation has future plans to build a library on site. The focus of the library will be local Scottish history but also the contested topic of western esotericism.

This thesis presents a design proposal for how a library on this site could look like, and what qualities it would offer. The aim of the thesis is to show how architecture can relate to place and history, but also how it can facilitate reading and learning. Incorporat-ing the concept of a lightbringer and the theory of analogue architecture, the design proposal is based upon traditional site analysis as well as studies of the library typology through literature and drawn refer-ence projects. The library is situated on the same lot as Boleskine House and its restored formal garden which means that it has to relate to the existing architecture, while at the same time also act as a public building on site. The interior spaces include a book collection of 25 000 volumes as well as a small archive and spaces for reading, working and recreation.

Keywords: library architecture, contextual architecture, analogue architecture, Loch Ness, iconography

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STUDENT INFO

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Chalmers University of Technology (A)	2015 - 2018
BSc in architecture	2018
Architect internship: Bonava (Sthlm)	2018 - 2019
Master studio: Healthcare/hospital architecture	2019
Competition: Wernstedt Sketch	2020
Master studio: Spatial morphology	2020
Master studio: Matter, space, structure III	2020

THESIS AIM

The aim of this thesis is to show how architecture can relate to place and history, as well as how architecture can facilitate reading and learning. This is manifested through the design proposal of a public library building at Loch Ness for the Boleskine House Foundation. The library will be situated on the same lot as Boleskine House and have a focus of western esotericism and local Scottish history.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do you make an addition to a historical place?

- How do you design a space for books and reading?

Bonus question: can the tectonic elements of a building bring forward a sense of the magical or mythical?

COLLABORATION

The thesis is a collaboration with the Boleskine House Foundation, who is the legal owner of the site for the thesis. The idea to design a library proposal as a master thesis subject was suggested by the foundation after having been contacted by the author regarding a possible collaboration. It has been the authors' ambition to have an ongoing dialogue with the foundation throughout the project for the best possible outcome, for instance the Brief was developed this way. The foundation has also kindly provided articles and photos from the site, since a planned site visit in 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

DELIMITATIONS

The thesis will **not** focus on the ongoing renovation of Boleskine House, since this is already in progress by the foundation and can be followed on the Boleskine House Foundation Facebook page as well as on the Highland Council Planning Applications webpage. Nor does the thesis focus on the additions of cabins and visitors centre also being proposed on site. Instead, the narrative takes place in a future scenario where all the current plans have been fulfilled according to planning, with the library added as a step in the ongoing history of the Boleskine House estate. The thesis should be read and considered from this point of view.

"The tectonic resolution of a building is ultimately a matter of the highest artistic order. It is best if the tectonic resolution of the building brings forward a sense of the magical and even a sense of the mythical."

(Valerio Olgiati interview, a+u 2012:12)

THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

TECTONICS
The concept of tectonics within architecture can be interpreted in several ways, but it seems commonly associated with construction and materiality being important elements in the building expression. It has therefore been an ambition to let the construction be a visible part of the design proposal, as well as showing the building materials "as they are" rather than trying to resemble something else. This should create a building with an honest expression and a focus on the architecture in itself, as well as relate the thesis to the Building Tectonics direction. As the design proposal will show, it does not mean that topics such as iconographic content within the library is excluded. However, it has not been the starting point of the design but rather something added to the construction and materiality of the building.

The concept of tectonics may also be seen from an alternative viewpoint, illustrated by the opposite quote by swiss architect Valerio Olgiati. This is especially interesting in relation to the thesis subject since a part of the library focus will be western esotericism, a topic connected to both magic and myth. The quote is therefore rephrased and found as a bonus research question for this thesis, although not being the main focus.

ANALOGUE ARCHITECTURE & MOOD
The term *Analogue Architecture* was originally developed by Aldo Rossi in the 1970s, although it is also associated with Czech/Swiss architect Miroslav Sik, a former professor at ETH Zürich. He used the short formula "Analogue Architecture = integration + transformation" to summarize the concept. This has been interpreted as a reference to a historical context without nostalgically repeating it but tapping into its character in some other way. A contextual typology is picked up and then tweaked to give it an alien property. This can for instance be to use the same window shapes or roof pitch as surrounding buildings but change the materiality in order to at the same time set it apart from the context. The value this adds is a clearly contextual architecture that avoids being nostalgic (Hultcrantz, 2017). Miroslav Sik and his associates also talked about the mood, or *Stimmung* of a certain building typology, and this feeling of mood came from two sides: from the site, the locus, and from the program. The designs were a combination of these two components (Bressani, 2019).

DISPOSITION & METHOD

The formalia of the thesis is found in the beginning and in the end and the main thesis material consists of two parts: a background and a design proposal. Since the aim of the thesis is complex, the background part is split into two separate themes in order to give a clear understanding of the topic.

CONTEXT
The site and existing buildings are investigated through a site analysis and description of the buildings. There is a more detailed analysis of Boleskine House in terms of its historical style (drawn example I). The life and times of the previous owners of Boleskine House will also be described in this part.

TYPE
As a library building is the subject for the thesis, this part includes a description of the library in general and conceptual terms as an overview and introduction. Its typology is then investigated and analysed through relevant reference projects (drawn example II and III) which has contributed to the design proposal.

The background part follows a *research on design* process since it mainly consists of literature studies and drawn examples of existing buildings, hence not adding any new information but merely understanding what is already there. On the other hand, the design proposal follows a *research by design* process. This means that the proposal has been crafted through different iterations of design where many different alternatives have been investigated in search of the right solution, using references from the background research and being driven forward through the supervision sessions as well as discussion in the focus groups.

BACKGROUND

I. CONTEXT

LOCATION

Loch Ness is a lake found in the centre of the Scottish highlands, placed 16 meters above sea level. It is the result of ancient movements in the earth's crust, which led to the creation of a huge rift across Scotland, known as the Great Glen, which connects both sides of the sea through the Caledonian Canal. When placed along the loch, one might actually more get the feeling of a Norwegian *fjord* than the typical picture of a lake. The loch contains more water than any other British lake, has a deepest point of 230 meters and its water visibility is exceptionally low due to a high peat content in the surrounding soil (Wikipedia, n.d.) This creates a subdued impression and the dark surface gives the feeling that the lake is even deeper than it actually is. Loch Ness is also known to be the home of a famous sea monster, "Nessie".

The chosen site for this thesis is found on the eastern side of Loch Ness. Most traffic runs on the western side, giving the site a remote setting around two kilometers from the small village Foyers. The nearest city is Inverness with an approximate distance of 29 kilometers. One is clearly found on the other side here.

INVERNESS

LOCH NESS

Foyers

Fort Augustus
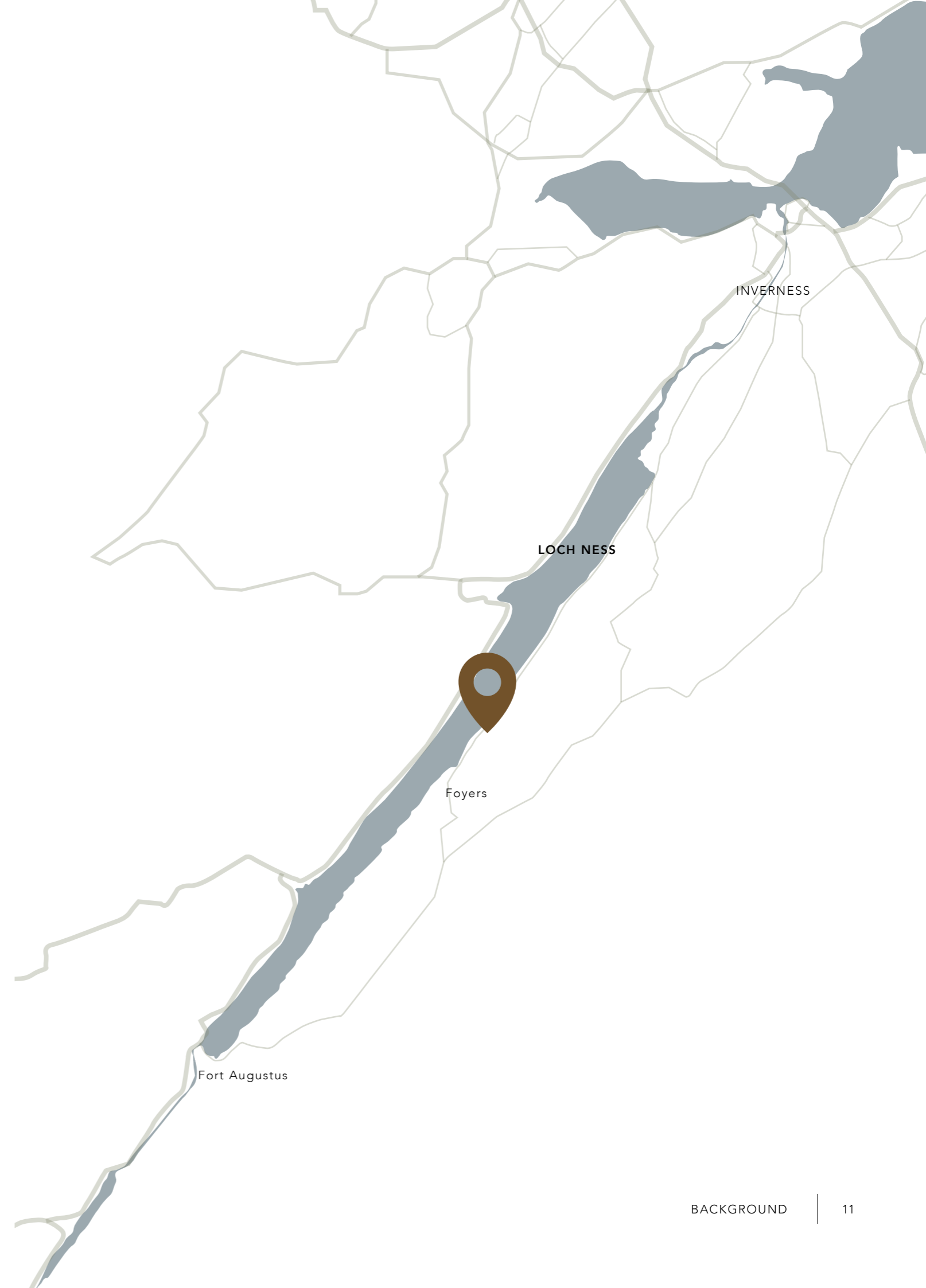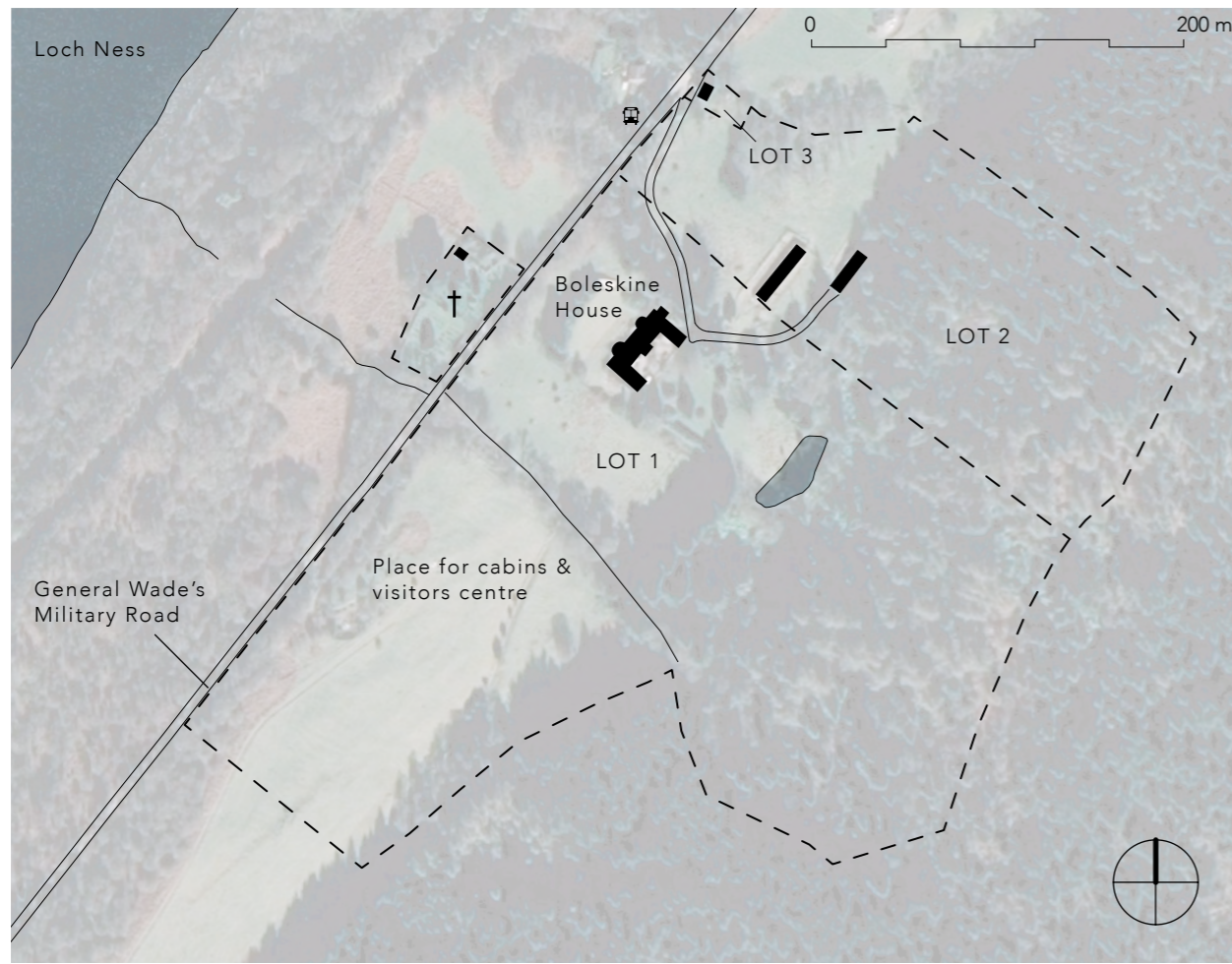
Site map 1:4000

SITE

Latitude: 57.2653 / 57°15'55''N
Longitude: -4.4748 / 4°28'29''

The thesis takes place on the Boleskine House estate. The site has an elevated setting circa 85 meters above water level which allows for spectacular views across the loch and the hills beyond it. It is approached and accessed from General Wade's Military Road, constructed 1732, which follows the eastern side of Loch Ness. On the other side of the road lies Boleskine Burial Ground and there is a bus line stopping close to the entrance. The estate consists of three lots. The first lot is the biggest and the location of Boleskine House itself, its former garden with a pond, open fields and native woodlands. The second lot contains a former coach house and a piggery, and the third lot contains a gate lodge and entrance to the site. The area was visited by the author in 2014 and although Boleskine House was privately owned then and could not be accessed, the contrast between the subdued loch versus the open highlands created a lasting impression.

OWNERSHIP

Since 2019 the area is owned by the Boleskine House Foundation. They are a non-profit organization whose main aim is to restore and maintain the Boleskine House estate. Their end goal and overall vision for Boleskine House is that it will become a historical landmark that will offer public accessibility and enjoyment in a way hitherto unavailable. Future plans include a forum that will enrich people with the importance of history and heritage, education and learning in branches of philosophy and Western Esotericism, archaeology, and Scottish history. The charity may host community events in the future and will welcome educational and cultural activities such as academic lectures and art exhibitions (Boleskine House Foundation press kit, 2020). The foundation is currently planning to add ten eco-friendly cabins and a visitors centre on the field land south of Boleskine House and later the detached library that this thesis presents a proposal to.
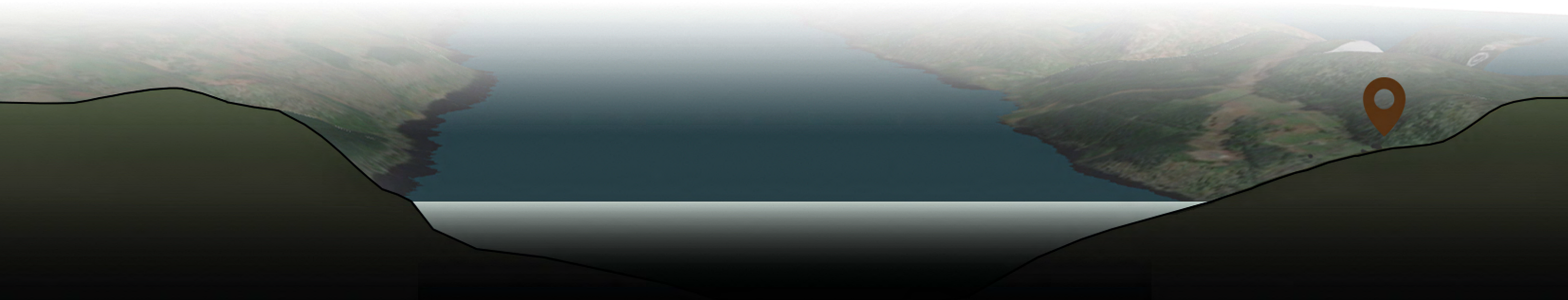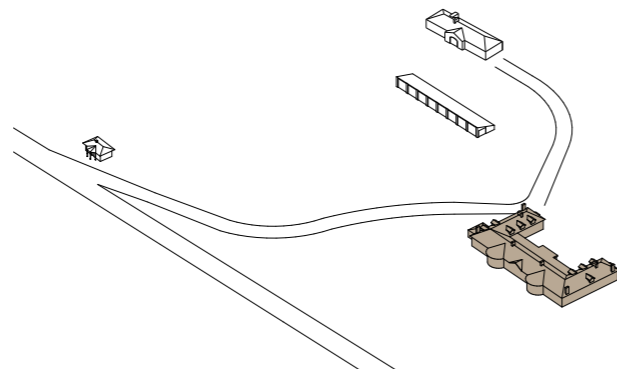
BOLESKINE HOUSE

Construction year: 1809 (B listed building, expansion of an existing structure)

Footprint: 540 sqm

Building material: stone, wooden interiors

Character: COMMANDER

Boleskine House is a manor consisting of a front part facing the loch and two wings. The elevated setting gives the building a commanding position, overlooking the lake while at the same time being protected from the back by the forest and a hill. It is a one-storey building with an attic and there is also a basement in the northern corner. The front and wings of the building together form a courtyard, where the main entrance is found. The entrance placement means that the open landscape views are experienced as the building is entered. The porch connected to the two wings has a shallow loggia supported by slender roman doric columns, as well as deep, continuous entablature (British Listed Buildings, n.d.). The main building material is stone, with wooden king post trusses used as structural elements (Boleskine House Foundation, 2019-10-14). The roof is covered with slate and facades are clad with white render. Windows are framed with beige sandstone. The cornes are rusticated with sandstone. Boleskine House is a Category B listed building issued by the Scottish Government, which means that it is a building of special architectural or historic interest which are major examples of a particular period, style or building type. The building is currently under renovation by the Foundation after having suffered two fires in 2015 and 2019. The aim of the renovation is to restore Boleskine House into its previous historical state, with the principal rooms open to the public.

Placed into historical context, Boleskine House was built within the Neoclassicism period which continued well into the nineteenth century. An English brand of Neoclassicism is called Neo-Palladianism since inspiration was drawn not directly from ancient Greece or Rome but rather indirectly, through Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) and his interpretation of classicism (Fazio et al., 2013). The construction year 1809 also happens to be within the Georgian period of architecture, named after the four british monarchs (George I-IV) who reigned in continuous succession from August 1714 to June 1830. Georgian architecture is characterized by classical symmetry, proportion and balance. Windows are typically symmetrically arranged with vertical emphasis and entrance doors are centrally positioned (Marvin Architectural Digital Marketing, n.d.).

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Considering drawings of Boleskine House (see page 16), signs of both Neo-Palladian architecture and Georgian architecture can be seen. The plan shows that the rooms are symmetrically arranged, with the principal rooms connected by a hall corridor which runs the whole length of the building. The front elevation has a centrally positioned front gable with a large, round-headed window and two large, half-circle bays symmetrically placed on each side. There is also a Venetian/Serlian window symmetrically placed at each end, consisting of a large, round-headed central section flanked by two narrower, shorter sections having square tops. This window style has been described as a key element in Palladian architecture (Wikipedia, n.d.) The courtyard elevation has a centrally positioned entrance door and the side lights, pilasters, columns and windows are all symmetrical in placement. Also, several windows in Boleskine House have Georgian proportions. This means a height/width ratio of 1,6:1, similar to the golden section ratio.

The symmetry and composition of the elevations contribute to the commanding building character of Boleskine House. However, the symmetry is broken by a single bay extension to the northeast, as well as an added door from one of the front rooms which leads out to a front terrace. The door is facing true north and was probably added by former owner Aleister Crowley as part of conducting the Abramelin magic ritual (see page 22-23). This room is therefore the most famous of the house and commonly referred to as "the oratory".

Fig. 1 *Boleskine House from before the fire. Reprinted with permission.*

Fig. 2 *Boleskine House anno 2020 in relation to the landscape. Reprinted with permission.*
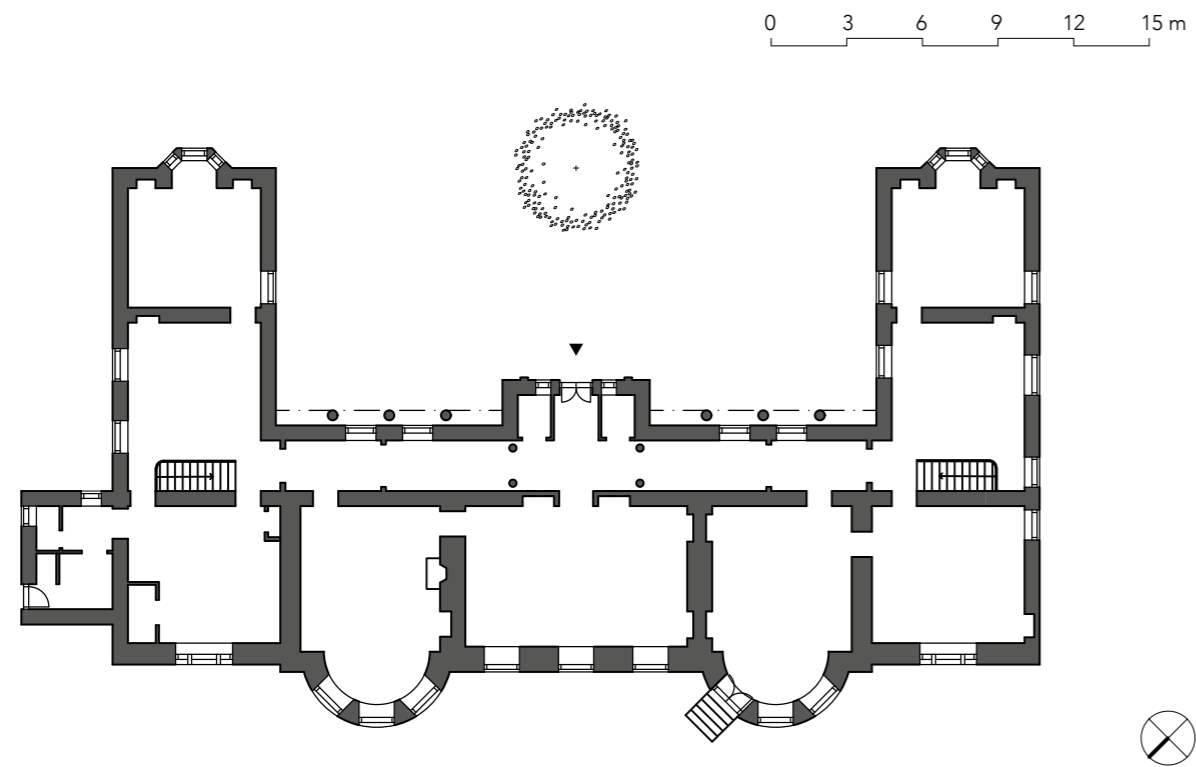
Drawn example Ia: Boleskine House, original floor plan 1:300. Note the door facing true north.
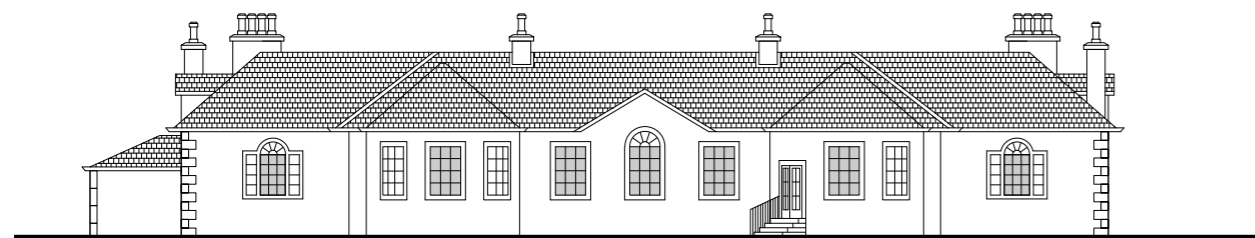
Drawn example Ib: Boleskine House, original front elevation 1:300. Windows in grey have Georgian proportions.

Drawn example Ic: Boleskine House, original courtyard elevation 1:300. Windows in grey have Georgian proportions.
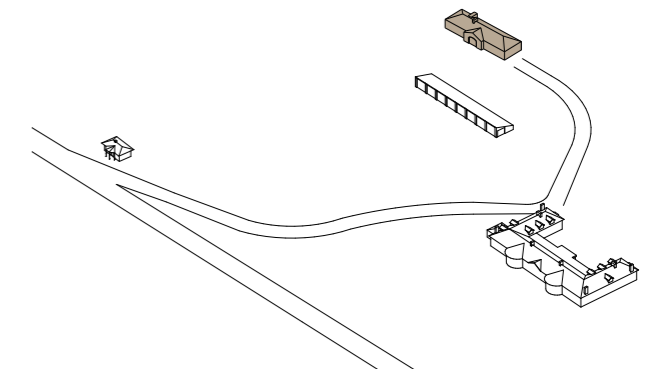
THE COACH HOUSE

Construction year: 1810-20 (B listed building)

Footprint: circa 150 sqm

Building material: stone

Character: RANGER

The Coach House is referred to as a stable by British Listed Buildings (n.d.) and is situated at the very threshold to the forest behind it. The topography rises steeply behind the building, giving it the same protected position as the main building although even closer to the woods. This closeness to the woods gives the building the character of a ranger or gamekeeper, representing a border between the site and the surrounding forest.

The building has a front gable facing the loch, which is defined by an arched former carriage entrance double leaf plank door. The arch is described as segmental by British Listed Buildings (n.d.), but is in fact an elliptical arch. Above the door is a pediment and oval oculus as a decorative element. The front gable has a central position, whereas the other placement of doors and windows show no sign of symmetry. There is a chimney and a hayloft hatch on the back. Like Boleskine House, the Coach House is built out of stone with slate roof and has the same characteristic corner rustication as the main building, but without surface render. The current interiors have an arcaded range of stall survives, however, future plans for this building includes to use the interior as an open hall for events and such. To summarize, the simple shape of the building volume creates a solid impression and robustness. This is even more accentuated by the arched front gable.

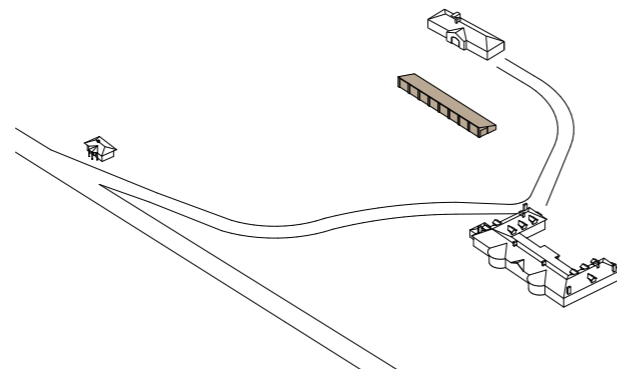**Fig. 3** *Front view of the Coach House. Reprinted with permission.*

THE PIGGERY

Construction year: beginning of the 1960s

Footprint: circa 216 sqm

Building material: concrete

Character: MISFIT

The piggery was built in the early sixties and so represents a modern building in relation to the others. The peculiar idea of having a piggery at the Boleskine estate comes from the owners of the site by that period, namely Dennis and Mary Lorraine, who were part of the "Cadco scandal" of the 1960:s which involved to farm pigs at Boleskine, or at least appear to be doing so (Boleskine House Foundation press kit 2020).

The shape of the building has the appearance of a giant shed, expressing perhaps more utility than beauty. There is a modular division of the building into several bays. The building material is concrete that has been painted in white and beige tones, probably to resemble Boleskine House in color. The fact that the building is from a modern period and with a different shape gives it a "misfit" character in this group. The building is also in a pretty bad state and obscures the Coach House which sits behind it when seen from the road.

Fig. 4 *Front view of the Piggery. Reprinted with permission.*
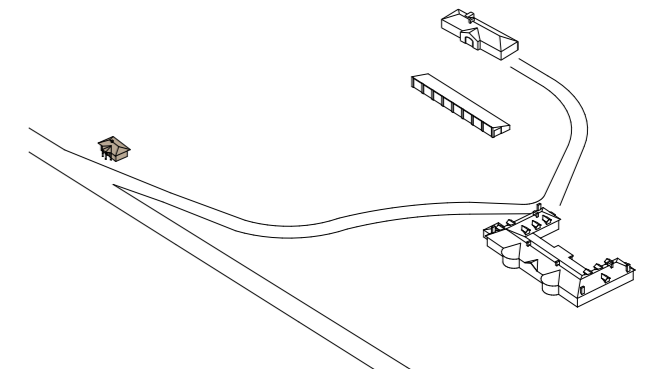

THE GATE LODGE

Construction year: 19th century (B listed building)

Footprint: circa 45 sqm

Building material: stone

Character: DOORMAN

The Gate Lodge represents the interface between public and private at the Boleskine estate. It is situated in direct connection with the road and has to be passed in order to enter the site. This gives the building a clear character of being a doorman to the area. The entrance is made through cast iron gates with decorative spear-head detailing, which are attached to one side of the Gate Lodge. Having passed the gates, Boleskine House is approached through a winding road along an avenue of trees.

The building volume is essentially a one-storey cabin. The entrance door is centered with narrow sidelights and is sheltered by a projecting 3-sided canopy carried by 4 slender painted cast-iron columns (British Listed Buildings, n.d.). The side lights and front windows are symmetrically positioned but the chimney is off-centre. Like Boleskine House and the Coach House the corners are rusticated, but in a more simple manner with no overlaps. It is also a stone building with a slate roof. The building was renovated in 2019 and is currently being used as residential by the foundation.

Fig. 5 *Front view of the Gate Lodge, with iron gates on the right side. Reprinted with permission.*

THE GARDEN & THE POND

As can be seen in historical documents, Boleskine House features a garden behind it. It is currently overgrown but the structure of the original design is still evident. Looking at historical photos, the garden has a formal appearance and features lawns, walking paths and ornamental shrubbery. The layout is symmetrical and defined by two main axes, where the longest one connects to the main entrance of the building. The other axis is less clearly defined. This style is not typical for english garden design but more resembles the Neoclassical renaissance garden style (Fazio et al. 2013). The style of Neoclassicism or Neo-Palladianism suggests that the garden was part of the original design and vision for Boleskine House. The garden is in fact described as "italian" in literature (Crowley, 1979, p. 406).

Following the longest axis the garden terminates in an ornamental pond, mirroring Boleskine House in position. Although Aleister Crowley claims to have constructed the pond (Crowley, 1979, p. 406) it seems to have been already there when he purchased the site (see 1899 map). The pond is in a similar state as the garden and has a similar width. There are several springs that lead to the pond, supplying it with fresh water from the mountains behind it. A bigger freshwater spring has been identified at the far side of the pond, referred to in literature as a sacred well or spring (Crowley, 1979).

Throughout history, an important function of gardens in general has been to give people a place to retreat into contemplation or private conversations. In this sense, the paths are seen as important parts of gardens and are referred to as "walks" if the path is broad enough for two to walk side by side, turning it into a conversational route. A garden path can then become the thread of a plot, connecting moments and incidents into a narrative. Statues in the garden may help to recall the story, making the garden a poetic, literary, mythological and magical space. The garden may in itself be arranged as a whole space that could be read, making the garden as much an intellectual space as a library (Solnit, 2001).

HISTORY & CLAN CONNECTION

The land that is now known as Boleskine was originally established as a church parish. Christianity first came to the Highlands with Celtic missionaries in the sixth- and seventh-centuries, with the extension of the Church of Rome in the middle-ages to be a more organised and systematic pastoral effort to institute Christianity in the region. It was around this time, in the thirteenth-century that the parish of Boleskine may have been established (Boleskine House Foundation, 2020). According to legend, an old *kirk* (the Scottish word for church) once stood on the same place as Boleskine House is now situated. However, on the 1899 map (see Fig. 7) it also seems that a church was placed on the other side of the road, at the burial ground.

The history of Boleskine House as a residence begins with its completion as a hunting lodge 29 November 1809. It was commissioned by Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat (1736–1815) who was a British diplomat, serving as consul in Tripoli and Algiers and also as Member of Parliament in Inverness-shire. He was the second son of the better known Simon Fraser (1667–1747), eleventh Lord Lovat (nicknamed "The Fox"), who was notoriously known to play both sides during the Jacobite uprisings in the eighteenth century, who had led the Fraser clan at the Battle of Culloden, and who was later captured and executed for treason at the Tower of London in 1747 (Boleskine House Foundation, 2020 + press kit).

The connection to the Fraser family shows that the Boleskine estate is also part of Scottish clan history. The clan Fraser has been strongly associated with Inverness and the surrounding area since the clan's founder gained lands there in the 13th century. The Boleskine area can be regarded as Fraser territory from around 1400 C.E. Archibald Fraser died 8 December 1815 and since all of his sons had died before him, his estate passed to his fifth cousin, Thomas Alexander Fraser (1802–1875). Boleskine House then remained within the Fraser family for most of the nineteenth-century until it was sold in 1894 to Katherine Burton, who in turn would sell the estate to Aleister Crowley five years later (Boleskine House Foundation, 2020). Boleskine Burial Ground opposite to the site is now a resting place for the Fraser family.
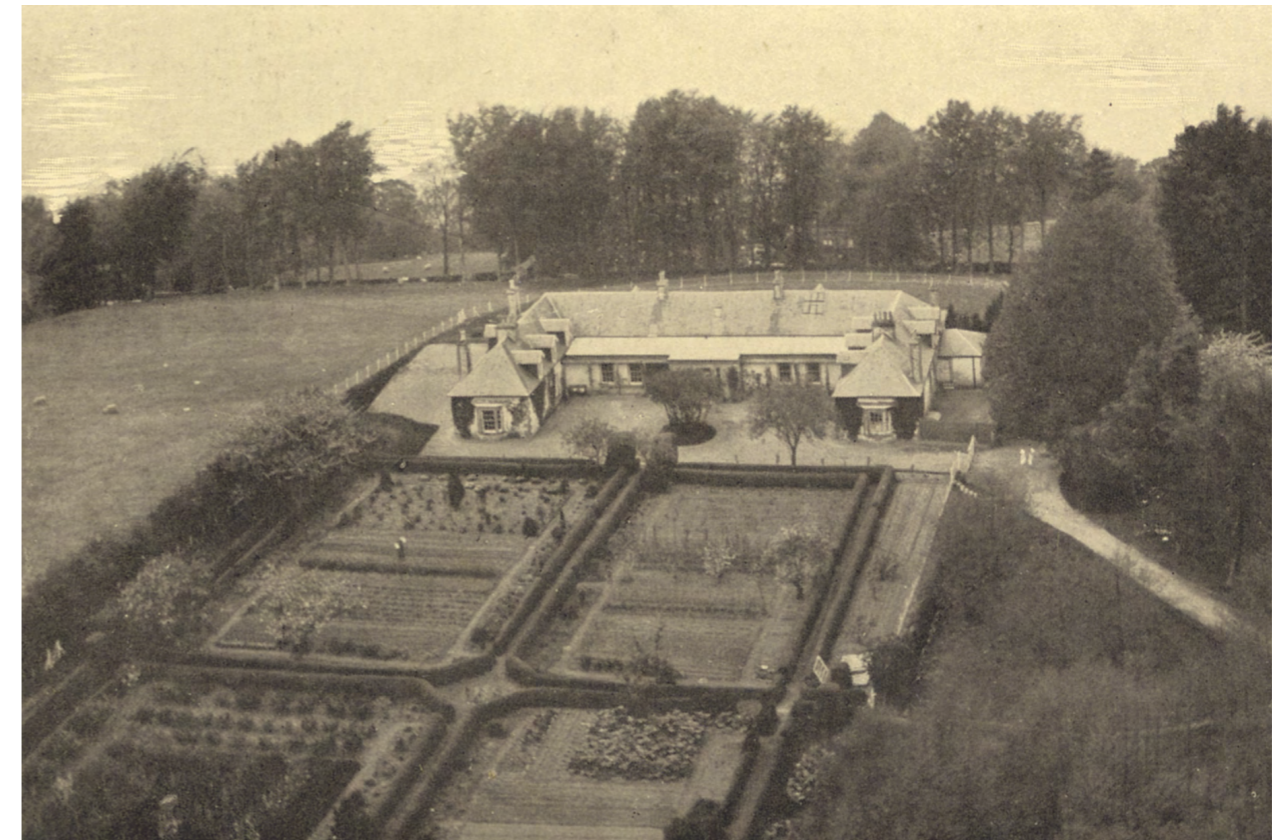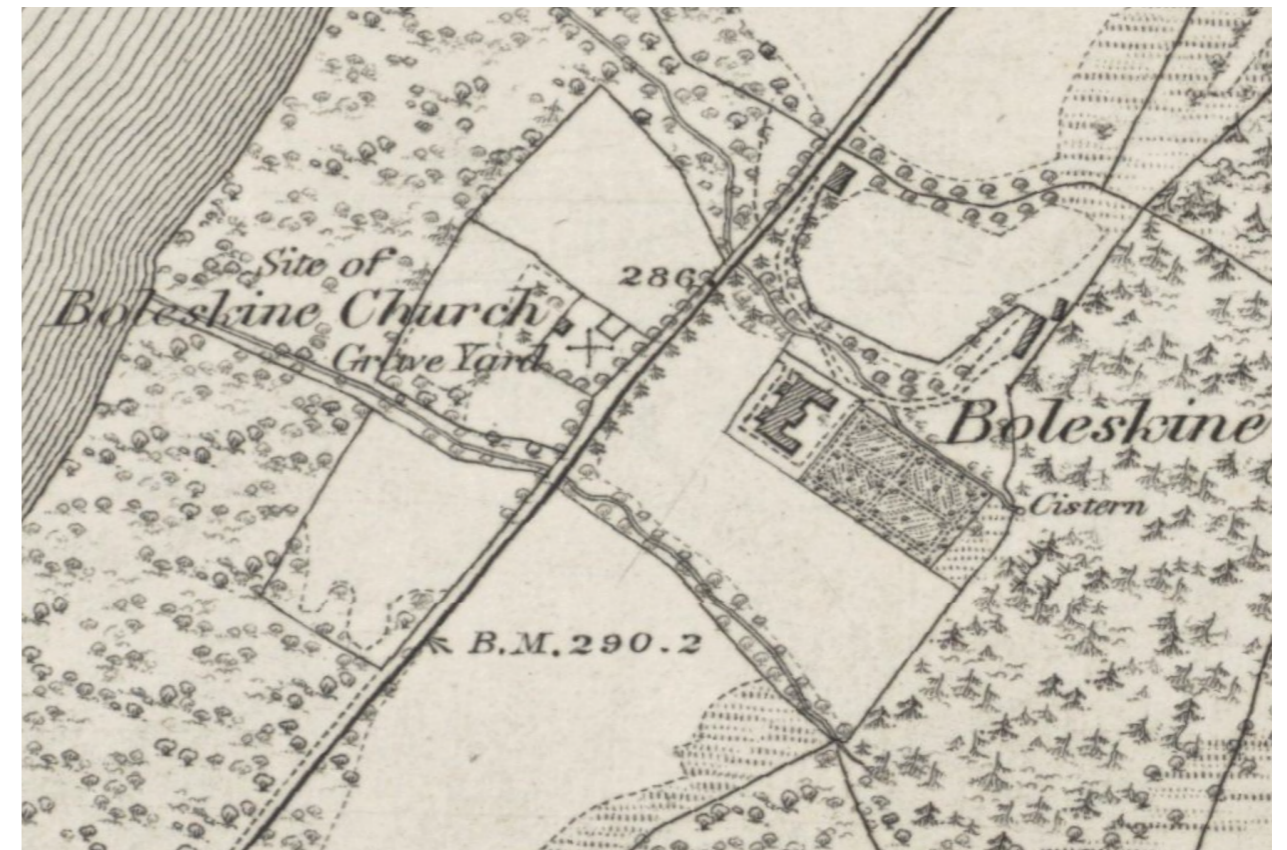
BOLESKINE HOUSE, MYSTICISM & MYTH

Boleskine House clearly has a mythology and a "dark side" attached to it. This is probably much due to the fact that the building was owned by Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) between 1899 and 1918. He was a British poet, painter, and spiritual thinker, best known for being an esotericist and practitioner of the occult, but also for his achievements in setting record mountain-climbing feats for his time and as a champion player of chess. Crowley purchased Boleskine House because he believed it fit the appropriate conditions for a spiritual retreat in order to perform "The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage", a ceremony that originates from a 17th-century manuscript outlining instructions on how to communicate with the Holy Guardian Angel (Boleskine House Foundation press kit 2020). Conducting the ceremony has certain spatial requirements which are mentioned in his autohagiography: "The first essential is a house in a more or less secluded situation. There should be a door opening to the north from the room of which you make your oratory. Outside this door, you construct a terrace covered with fine river sand. This ends in a 'lodge' where the spirits may congregate" (Crowley, 1979, p. 184). Boleskine House met these requirements and Crowley began this practice, but never fully finished. Legend later surfaced that because he did not properly "close" the ceremony, the place became haunted (Boleskine House press kit, 2020). Indeed, some people even want to see Boleskine House demolished because they believe Crowley's spiritual legacy still "lives" in the house.

In 1971, Jimmy Page (1944-) purchased Boleskine House and remained its owner until 1992. Apart from being one of the most influential rock guitarists of all time, Page is known to have a big interest in the occult and for being a collector of Aleister Crowley memorabilia, which explains his interest in Boleskine House. Although he spent little actual time in the building during these years due to a busy schedule, Page oversaw significant refurbishment to the house during his ownership. It can also be mentioned that an outdoor film sequence from the Led Zeppelin concert film *The Song Remains the Same* (1976) was shot at Boleskine House.

THELEMA

Despite many of the portrayals of Aleister Crowley in popular culture as a diabolical villain, he could also be seen as an quirky artistic intellectual who lived a lifestyle that deviated from the mainstream culture at the time. Apart from being a prolific writer, Crowley started a new religious movement which he called *Thelema* (which means Will in Greek). Thelema can, in short, be understood as a spiritual movement that is a blend of the Western and Eastern mystical traditions, including astrology, alchemy, qabalah, Indian yoga, and various Buddhist elements, among others. It asserts a philosophy of self-discovery, self-reliance and personal freedom (Boleskine House Foundation press kit 2020). The core message of the Thelema philosophy can be found within The Book of the Law, technically called *Liber AL vel Legis* (see quotes below). The most well known symbol of Thelema is probably the unicursal hexagram (see book cover), resemblant to the Star of David/Seal of Solomon with a five-petaled rose in the middle. Hexagrams traditionally symbolize the union between the microcosmos of man with the macrocosmos of the universe through the esoteric phrase *As above, so below*. However, the unicursal hexagram can be seen as more potent than a normal hexagram since it creates both the divine and the manifest with the same line, further accentuating the unity of opposites.

"Every man and every woman is a star." (1:3)

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." (1:40)

"Love is the law, love under will." (1:57)
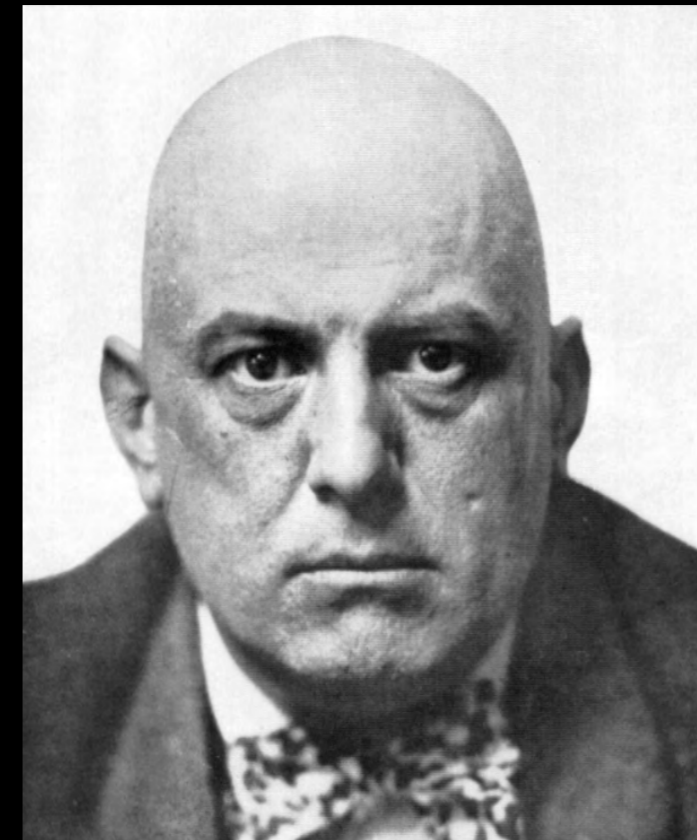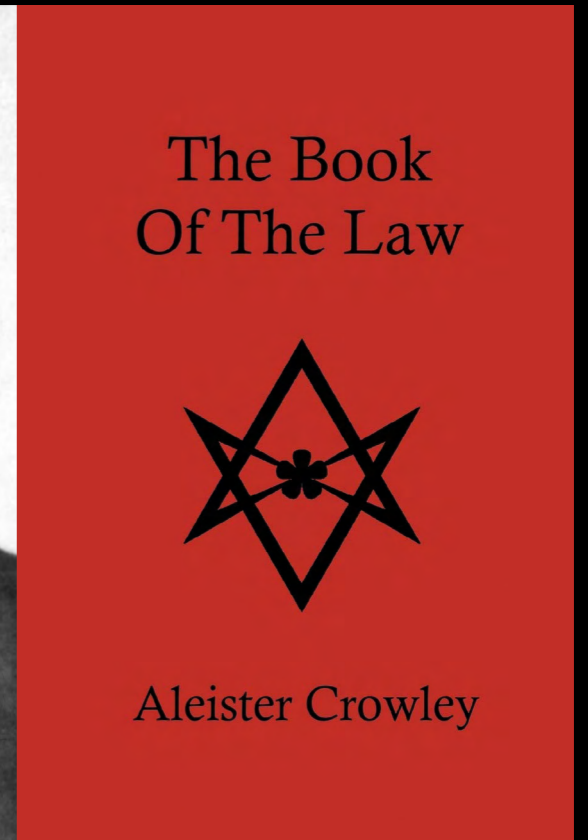
Fig. 10 *Jimmy Page. Screenshot from The Song Remains the Same (1976).*

II. TYPE

THE LIBRARY PHENOMENON

In the online Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), the word library is defined as:

- a building, room, or organization that has a collection, especially of books, for people to read or borrow

- a collection or set of books or other things, all produced in the same style or about the same subject

Other definitions of a library may also be found, but from the definition above it follows that the Library word can either represent the space for a collection of something, or the collection in itself. This is consistent with the findings of Campbell (2013), who mentions that in Chinese and many other languages the words for collections of books and the spaces that contain them are not the same. He also points out that the history of libraries can also be seen as the history of the book. The concept of a "book" encompasses a larger scope than its modern physical form and should refer to anything that can be written on and that is intended to be kept for later reference. Throughout history, books have taken the form of clay tablets, scrolls, palm leaves, carved stones and rolls of silk, all of which were stored in libraries of one sort or another (Campbell, 2013). In our present electronic age, it has been suggested that the printed book is dying and perhaps also the physical library as such. However, the digital library is met with scepticism by Manguel (2006) who describes it as a "phantom" and points out that reading often requires slowness, depth and context; that leafing through a physical book roaming through shelves is in intimate part of the craft of reading which cannot really be replaced by scrolling down a screen. He also mentions other sensory experiences from a physical library – "to see and touch the pages, to hear the crinkle and the rustle of the paper and the fearful crack of the spine, to smell the wood on the shelves, the musky perfume of the leather bindings, the acrid scent of my yellowing pocket books" (Manguel, 2006, s. 17). Apart from a book collection, it is possible to interpret the library in a much wider sense which borders on both the philosophical, metaphysical and even mystical realm. Åkerman (2001) suggests an approach where the library is interpreted on a cosmological level. The library is seen as a microcosmos within the bigger world of phenomenons and ideas. However, it would also be possible to see the library as the macrocosmos, where each book within the library contains a microcosmos. This is consistent with the *As above, so below* phrase (see page 22).

HISTORY

Regardless of how the library phenomenon is interpreted, the design of library buildings throughout the ages have celebrated the act of reading and the importance of learning. Apart from being places to store books, they have also become emblems of culture, whether it be for an individual, an institution or even a whole nation. The first libraries were arguably constructed in ancient Mesopotamia and the library of Alexandria is a famous example of a library building from ancient Greece, probably formed between 323-246 BC. The unbuilt design for a library from 1816 by italian architect Leopoldo Della Santa (1772-1827) was the first to exhibit an ideal arrangement of functions within the typology. The library is divided into three areas that still exist in a more or less similar form to the present day: a space for reading, a storage for books and administrative areas. All of these areas are logically linked with one another and there is one single entrance and exit (Lushington et al., 2018). The fear of fire has always been a strong determinant in the choice of building materials for libraries. Traditionally, brick or stone with masonry walls have been used and replaced with iron frames in the 19th century. However, in the interiors of libraries and especially the bookshelves themselves, timber has been the preferred material to use since it is perceived as being a better material to place the books on than hard metal surfaces. It has also been an important feature to incorporate natural light in libraries for better reading conditions, being illustrated by a famous quote from the american architect Louis Kahn (1901-1974): 'A man with a book goes to the light. A library begins that way. He will not go fifty feet away to an electric light.' (Campbell, 2013, page 272).

Fig. 13 *Bibliotèque Nationale, front elevation (Creative Commons).*
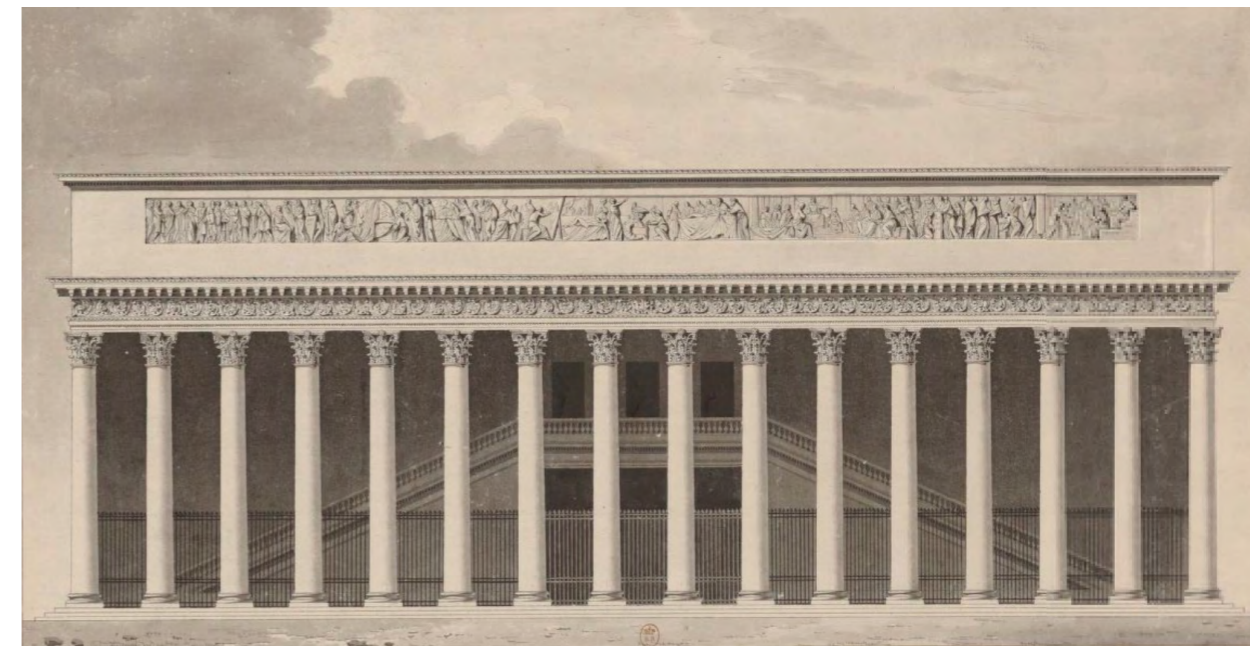
PUBLIC BUILDING ARCHETYPE?

The library of Alexandria was not a public building but a royal library with the aim to just collect Greek literature without making it available to the public (Campbell, 2013). The public library saw its beginning 1609 with the Ambrosiana library in Milan (Manguel, 2006). The idea of the library as a public building was taken to extreme proportions by Etienne-Louis Boullé, who proposed in 1785 a design for an ideal library in Paris. It consisted of a long, high-roofed gallery, inspired by the ruins of ancient Greece, where readers could wander up and down long, terraced mezzanines in search of their volume of choice. The project never went beyond the drafting stage and can be criticized for being too open and not offering any possibilities for privacy and concentrated reading (Manguel, 2006). Still, its design became very influential among architects and the elevation clearly communicates the spirit of a public building through its openness. The idea behind the library as a public building during this period was ultimately a political statement; they were buildings for a new self-assured civil society, not just for a select circle of privileged people (Lushington, 2018). These ideas are still valid. It has been argued that a contemporary library acts as one of the few "tempered public spaces" that are accessible without consuming or submitting to a specific activity. In a society increasingly characterized by polarisation and segregation, the needs for such free public institutions are bigger than ever (Duus, 2019).

ICONOGRAPHY

The iconography of a library can be seen as its symbolic content, which can be used to communicate to the reader a particular intellectual attitude to knowledge as well as ideas or views about society. According to Campbell (2013), libraries are always built with a particular socio-political intent. The mere existence of a library may represent the scholarly ambitions of individuals or organizations to the wider world and they can also be seen as a civic gesture. Throughout history and especially within the Rococo era/18th century, the iconography played a big part of the library and could contain paintings, sculptures and plasterwork to carry very specific messages that would be understood by those able to read them. In many cases, the intentions of the designers of libraries are often very difficult to determine, if no written statement of their intentions has been left behind (Campbell, 2013).

LAURENTIAN LIBRARY

Construction year: 1571

Location: Florence, Italy

Area: 595 sqm (reading room 485 sqm, vestibule 110 sqm)

Architect: Michelangelo Buonarroti

The Laurentian Library is built on top of an existing set of monastic buildings around a two-storey cloister in the centre of Florence, with the original intention to display the private book collection of the Medici family in the best way possible (Campbell, 2013). The library consists of an entrance vestibule which leads up to a lofty reading room "that seemingly stretches towards a point of perspective on the hidden horizon" (Manguel, 2006, p. 156). The reading room consists of a rectangular volume which is approximately 46 meters long, 10,54 meters wide and 8,45 meters high. It has a flat timber timber roof instead of a vaulted space, uncommon at the time. The space is furnished with reading desks arranged perpendicular to the side walls in order to be amply and evenly illuminated by natural light. The books were chained to the desks and thus had to be read at the given spot. The staircase leading up to the library is a famous example of mannerist architecture and has been much discussed in architectural history. The vestibule and reading room creates a spatial sequence with a dramatic effect, although the staircase has been criticized for being too big in relation to the vestibule space.

Since the library is constructed on top of an existing building the walls had to be as light and thin as possible so instead of full or half columns, stone pilasters were used. The pilasters are only visible on the interior walls, where they frame the windows and align with the wooden ceiling beams. Every fourth reading desk lines up exactly with the middle of a pilaster, which turns the furniture into an integrated part of the library. In the 19th century a new reading room was added in connection with the existing space, which blocks some of the windows and the door to the new room ruins the original conception of a perfectly symmetrical rectangular space. It is also likely that Michelangelo wanted the ceiling height to be the same as the room width (10,54 meters) which could not be done due to the construction on top of an existing building (Campbell, 2013).

This reference project was chosen because it is a library of moderate scale, similar to the requested volume of the design proposal. The simple but effective arrangement of the reading room shows how the same repeating structure of elements together create a space which can be experienced "as it is" since the structure is easily read. As no artificial light existed when the library was constructed, there has been attention to letting natural light into the space. The windows are large and have the reading desks placed perpendicularly so that natural light falls on them. The library is also a good example of how each surface has been given treatment and attention, also the floor and the ceiling, which creates an impression of unity. As a final remark, the ceiling pattern details and the floor paintings add a mystic dimension to the library.

0 ⊢⊣⊢⊣ 20 m

Fig. 14 *Laurentian Library reading room (Wikimedia Commons).*

Drawn example II: Laurentian Library. Longitudinal section and floor plan 1:400, with superimposed grid (original design without 19th century addition)
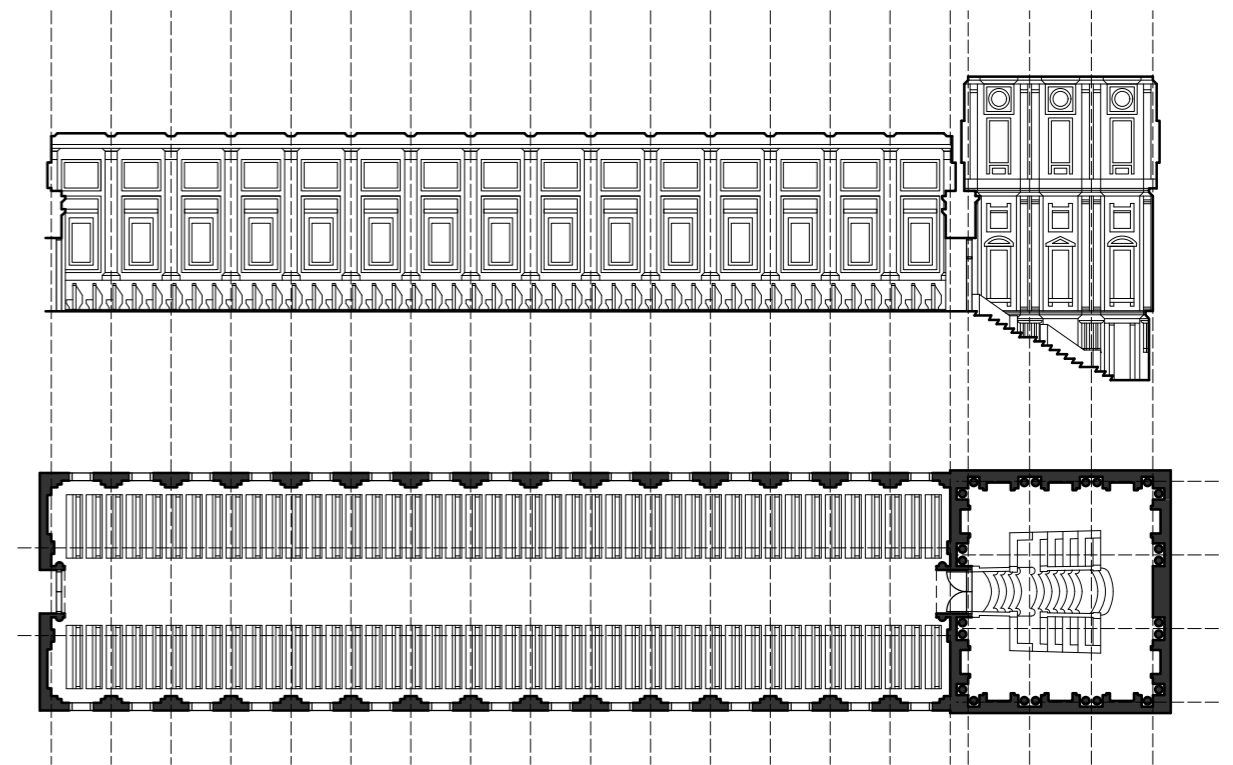
THOMAS CRANE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Construction year: 1882/1908

Location: Quincy, MA, United States of America

Footprint: 431 sqm (original building 288 sqm, addition 143 sqm)

Architect: Henry Hobson Richardsson

The Thomas Crane Memorial library is part of a series of small, public libraries designed by american architect Henry Hobson Richardsson in the end of the 19th century. It is widely regarded as one of his best works, much due to its simplicity. While each of Richardson's libraries was of high architectural interest, the building at Quincy was "the most simplified as well as the most refined in treatment and gains thereby in singleness and force of expression" (Breisch, 1997, p. 171). Compared with his other small, public libraries The Thomas Crane Memorial Library was, "upon the whole, the most successful; and saying that is pretty safely saying that it is architecturally the best Village library in the United States" (Breisch, 1997, p. 171). The building is modest in size. Its entrance sequence consists of a staircase leading to an archway porch, which has a seat on which to shelter in bad weather when waiting for the library to open. A visitor enters the building in the middle of the space, where the librarian's desk is placed immediately to the left and the library proper behind it (Campbell, 2013).

The library is essentially a rectangular volume forming a single hall and being divided by the different functions. Although patrons were originally separated from the collection by a delivery desk and ornamental screen, the idea was to open up the rooms so that the spaces flowed freely one into another (Breisch, 1997). The books are placed in a series of alcoves and have galleries above them. The other end of the room contains a space for reading, furnished with tables, newspapers, armchairs and a fireplace. As noted above, only the newspapers were available to browse. The books were not accessible but fetched by the librarian, to be borrowed and read at home. Thus, the librarian became a filter between the readers and the books, ensuring that the books were kept in order and inappropriate works were not issued to the wrong reader (Campbell, 2013).

The disparate elements of the library are held together by an overriding geometry, which consist of a grid based on the bay division of the book room alcoves. The book room is four bays wide, the hall/service area two, and the reading room two. Along the long axis all the partial wall elements line up with the ends of the alcove walls, so that the nave/side-aisle configuration of the book room is implicit in the remaining space. This is made explicit on the ceiling, where the beams reflect the controlling grid and carry it down the wall pilasters. The flat ceiling type extends from one end of the building to the other, replacing the barrel vaults Richardson had employed in his earlier book rooms. (Breisch, 1997). The library saw an addition in 1908, when a new wing was added perpendicular to the original volume opposite the entrance. This provided extra space for books on three levels as well as offices for the librarians (Campbell, 2013). In 1936 a new main building was added, connected through an enclosed passageway from the reading room.

0   2   4   6   8   10 m

Fig. 15 *Thomas Crane Memorial Library book room with librarian's desk, seen from the entrance (Wikimedia Commons).*

Drawn example III: Thomas Crane Memorial Library floor plan 1:200, with superimposed grid (original design without 1908 addition)
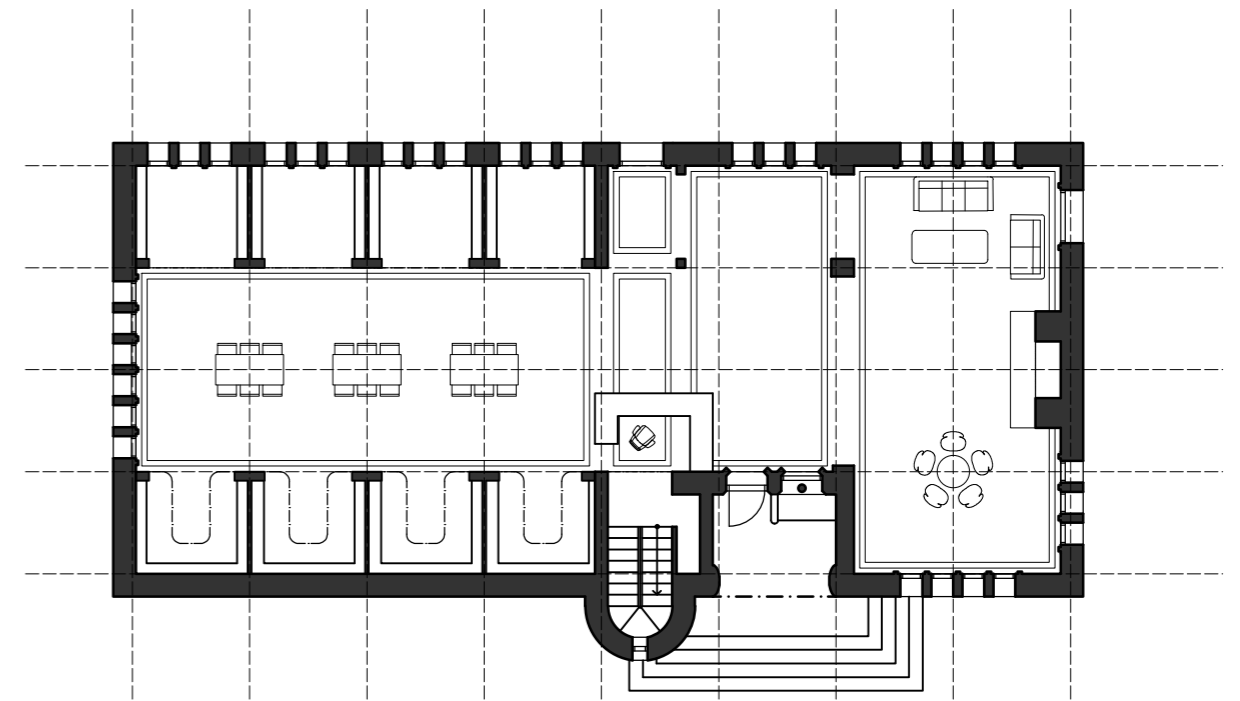
In an interview, Richardson explained that the object of his design was to provide a building the character of which should depend on its outlines, on the massing and accentuation of the main features representing its leading purposes, and on the relation of the openings to the solid parts. The intention was to produce that sense of solidity requisite in a dignified, monumental work, by a perfectly quiet and massive treatment of the wall surfaces. A free treatment of the Romanesque style was followed, since this style was believed to be especially adapted to the requirements of a civic building. To strengthen the feeling of dignity and to express the civic character of the building, a monumental treatment was followed throughout by the architect (Breisch, 1997).

This reference project was chosen because it is a public library of smaller scale, which is believed to have more in common with the design proposal than the scale of national city libraries. The simple but refined interior space is based on a rational structure and has the idea of a book collection and reading room as one continuous space, which creates an openness and accessibility suitable for a public building. As in the Laurentian Library, the volume is rectangular. The exterior of the building has been specifically designed to express a civic character which in this case would reflect its content. The arched windows and entrance arch creates a certain mood that would not have been the same with square openings. It may be added that the design of the library has been criticized for having too small windows, not letting in enough daylight into the building.

TAMA ART UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Construction year: 2007

Location: Tokyo, Japan

Footprint: 2224 sqm

Architect: Toyo Ito & Associates

This reference project was chosen mainly because it utilizes the shape of arches in a contemporary library building, both on the inside as well as the facade openings. The arches give the building a specific character that has been described as "monastery-like" (Mutuli, n.d.), referring to Europe's traditional architecture of arches. However, the arches are not constructed using masonry but instead steel-plate, embedded in concrete. It is clear that the curvilinear shapes help to create another feeling and set another mood than a building with ortogonal forms would have done. As Campbell (2013) puts it, the arched windows challenge the rectilinear geometry of the bookcases inside, and thus our expectations of what a library should look like. Although the traditional method of constructing arches is through masonry, the choice of concrete in this case gives the building a contemporary expression that is also progressive in terms of materiality.
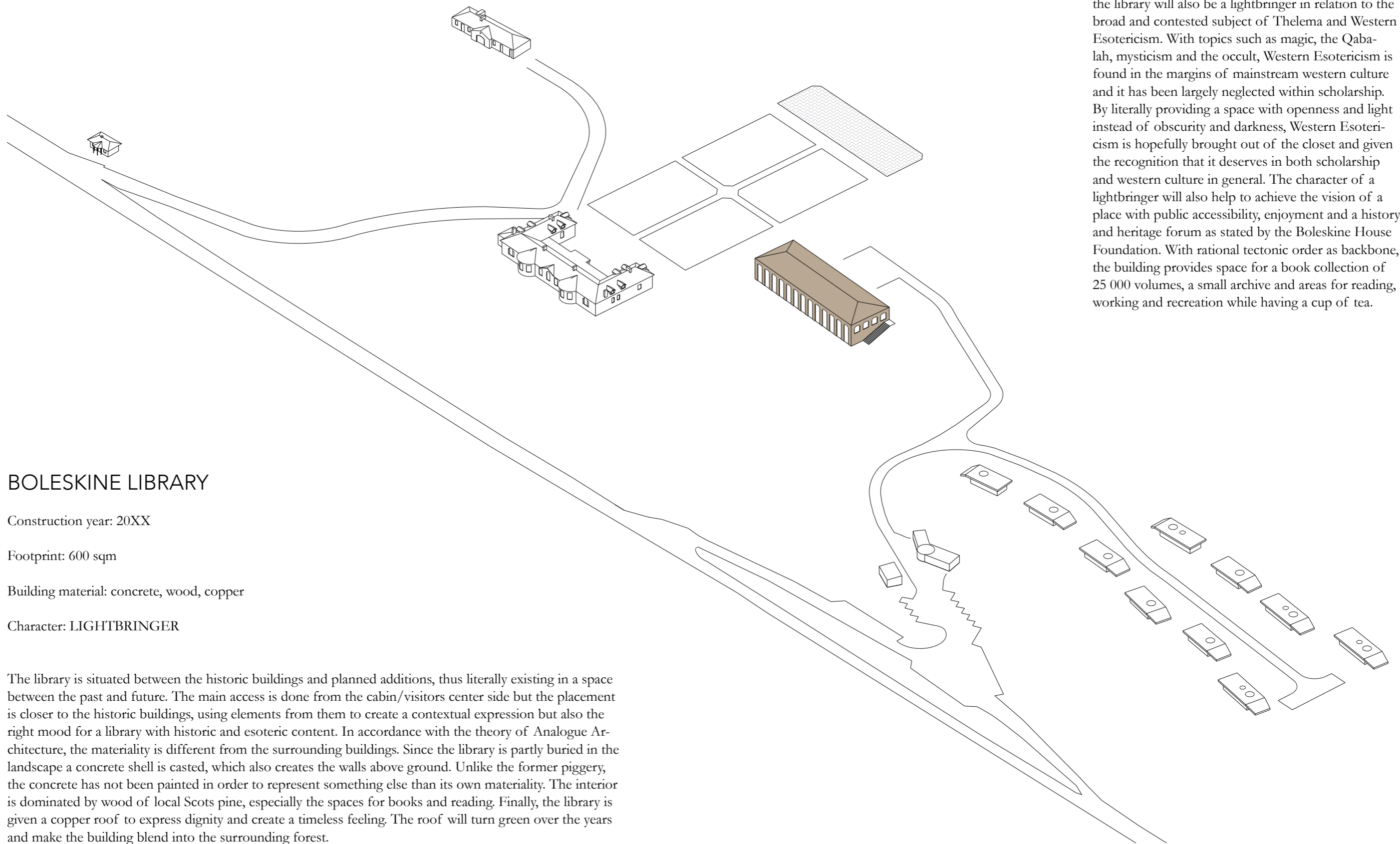
Fig. 16 *Crane Library front elevation with entrance arch in masonry (Wikimedia Commons).*

Fig. 17 *Tama Library front elevation with arches in concrete (Wikimedia Commons).*

DESIGN PROPOSAL

"As yet unmanifested, the library exists in a space at the mid-point between the past and future of Boleskine."

(foundation trustee Elin Morgan)

The library is given the character of a lightbringer. From an architectural point of view it is clear that light should be an important feature of any library, and especially natural light when it comes to designing a space for reading physical books. Equally important, the library will also be a lightbringer in relation to the broad and contested subject of Thelema and Western Esotericism. With topics such as magic, the Qabalah, mysticism and the occult, Western Esotericism is found in the margins of mainstream western culture and it has been largely neglected within scholarship. By literally providing a space with openness and light instead of obscurity and darkness, Western Esotericism is hopefully brought out of the closet and given the recognition that it deserves in both scholarship and western culture in general. The character of a lightbringer will also help to achieve the vision of a place with public accessibility, enjoyment and a history and heritage forum as stated by the Boleskine House Foundation. With rational tectonic order as backbone, the building provides space for a book collection of 25 000 volumes, a small archive and areas for reading, working and recreation while having a cup of tea.

BOLESKINE LIBRARY

Construction year: 20XX

Footprint: 600 sqm

Building material: concrete, wood, copper

Character: LIGHTBRINGER

The library is situated between the historic buildings and planned additions, thus literally existing in a space between the past and future. The main access is done from the cabin/visitors center side but the placement is closer to the historic buildings, using elements from them to create a contextual expression but also the right mood for a library with historic and esoteric content. In accordance with the theory of Analogue Architecture, the materiality is different from the surrounding buildings. Since the library is partly buried in the landscape a concrete shell is casted, which also creates the walls above ground. Unlike the former piggery, the concrete has not been painted in order to represent something else than its own materiality. The interior is dominated by wood of local Scots pine, especially the spaces for books and reading. Finally, the library is given a copper roof to express dignity and create a timeless feeling. The roof will turn green over the years and make the building blend into the surrounding forest.

Above: Site analysis plan 1:2000
Below: Site section 1:2000

+ 50 m

(Place for cabins & visitors centre)

+ 150 m

0   100 m
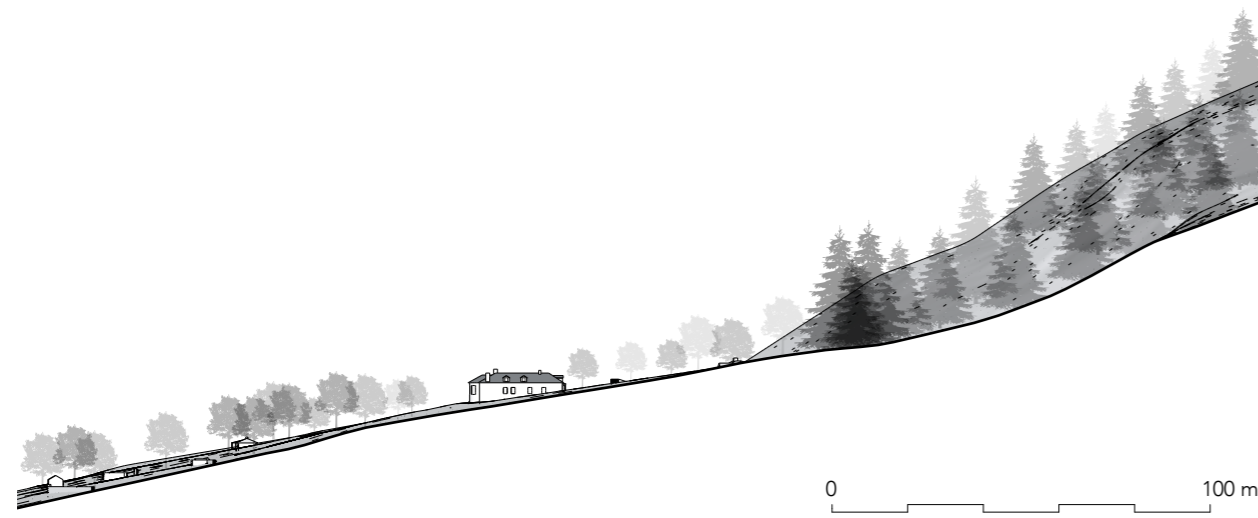
SITE ANALYSIS

- Sloping site against the loch, with a steep hill and dense forest behind it. The existing buildings are oriented along the slope and are facing the road.

- Trees along the main road and in front of Boleskine House, partly obscuring the view and forming a barrier. Boleskine House may be seen from a far distance but not clearly from the road.

- Strong axial connection between Boleskine House and the pond, through the former garden. The garden represents an orthogonal structure within the organic landscape.

- The former Piggery is suggested to be demolished as it is in a bad state and blocks the view of the Coach House when seen from the road. Placing the library on the same spot is not optimal.

- The sloping field in front of the burial ground offers a particularly fine view of the landscape and the loch. In the back a massive line of Scots pine trees arises, literally forming a green wall to the forest behind it.

This would be a suitable placement for the library.

Fig. 11 *2020 drone photo of the chosen spot. Reprinted with permission.*

Fig. 12 *Approximate view from the chosen spot. Reprinted with permission.*

Building evolution
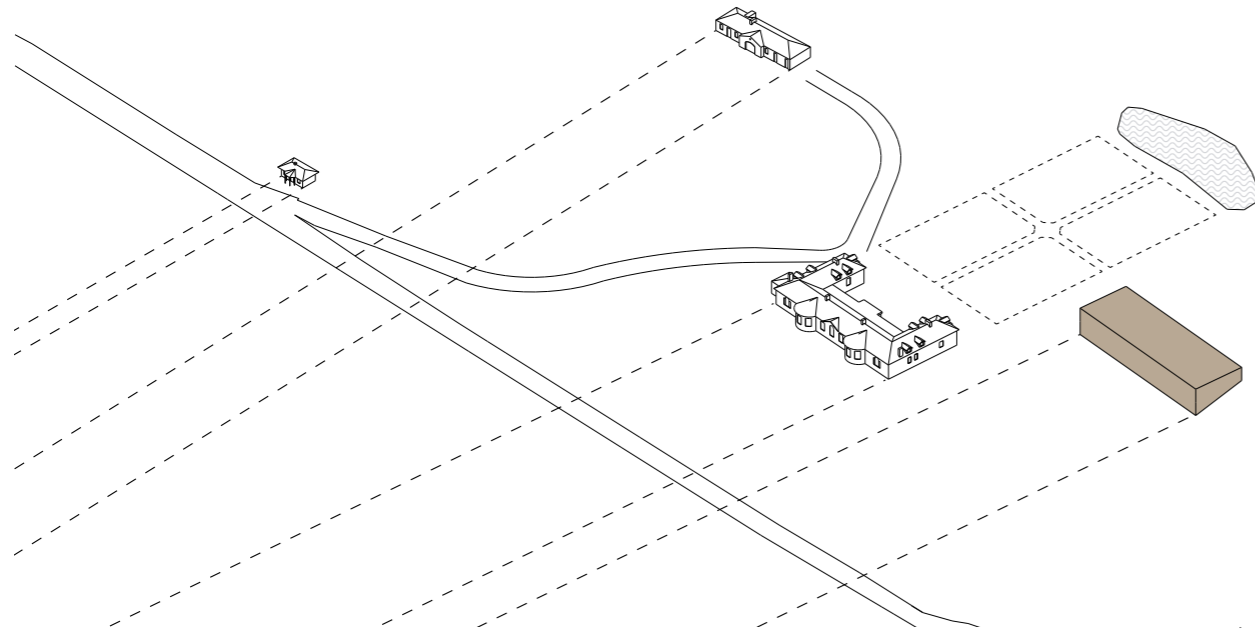
I. The library is placed next to Boleskine House and its former garden structure. Its volume is kept to a similar size as Boleskine House, adapting the same orientation and alignment.

III. Pushback from the forest line creates a sheltered main entrance between the Library and the trees, with the same orientation as the main entrance to Boleskine House.
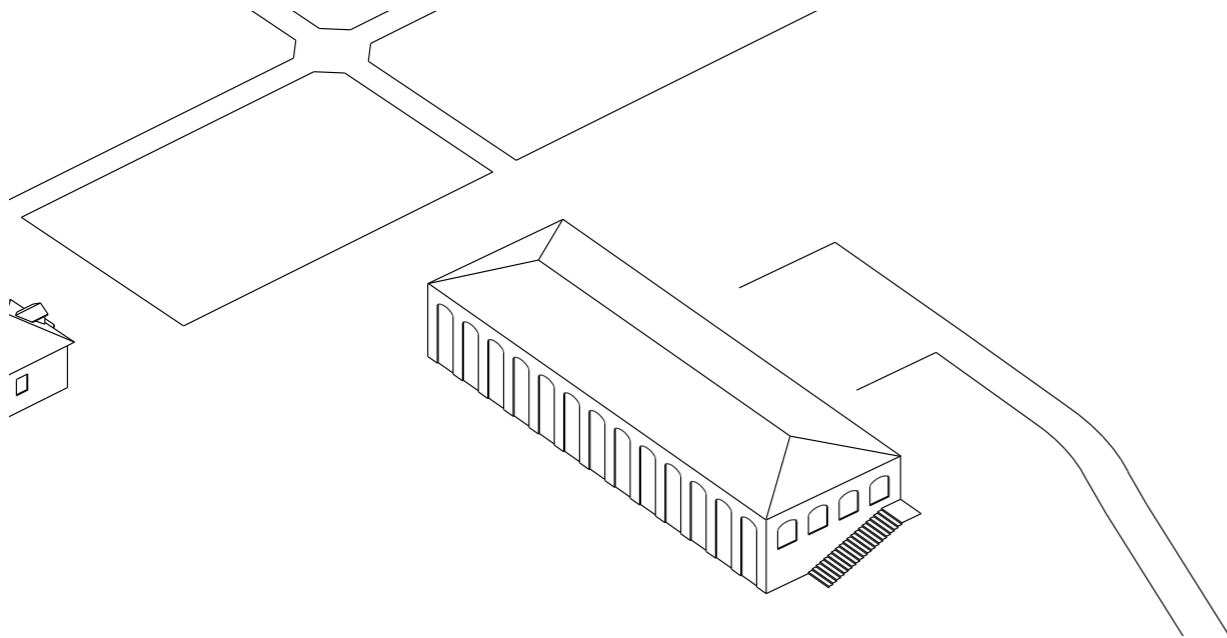

II. Boleskine House is given the front and center position. The Library adapts the same levels as its neighbours. Due to the sloping site, the building is two floors towards the loch and one floor on the other side.
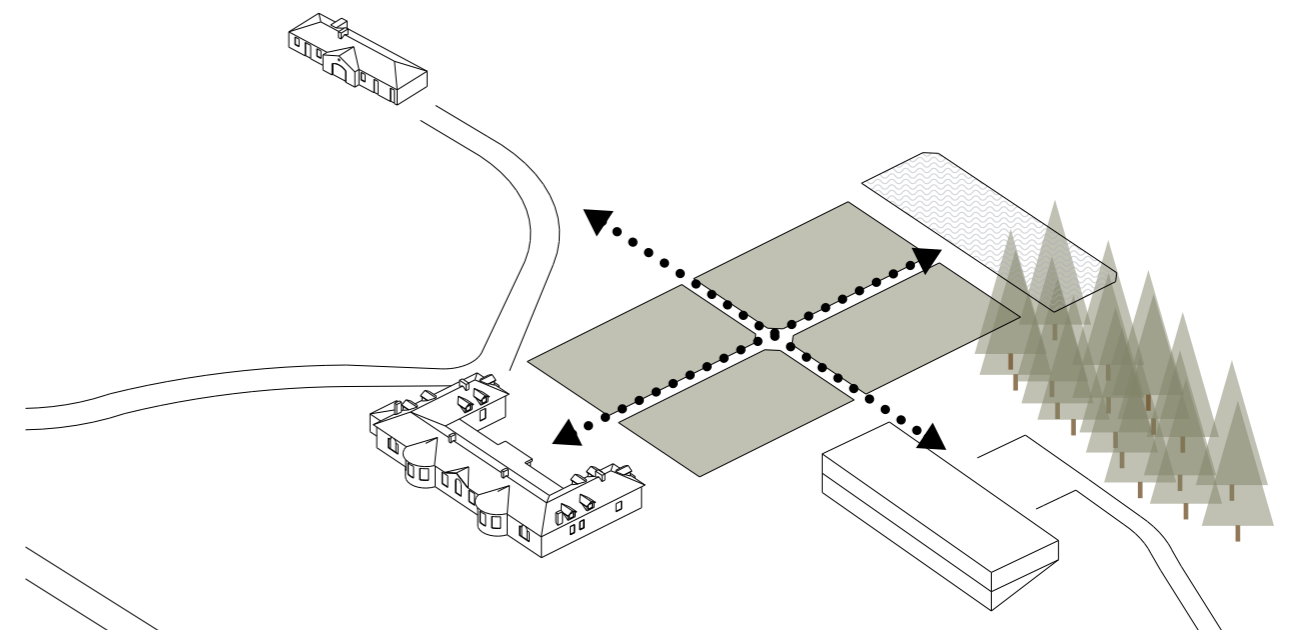
IV. The space between the library and the trees also becomes an entrance to the restored garden, activating its second axis and creating an additional connection to the Coach House.
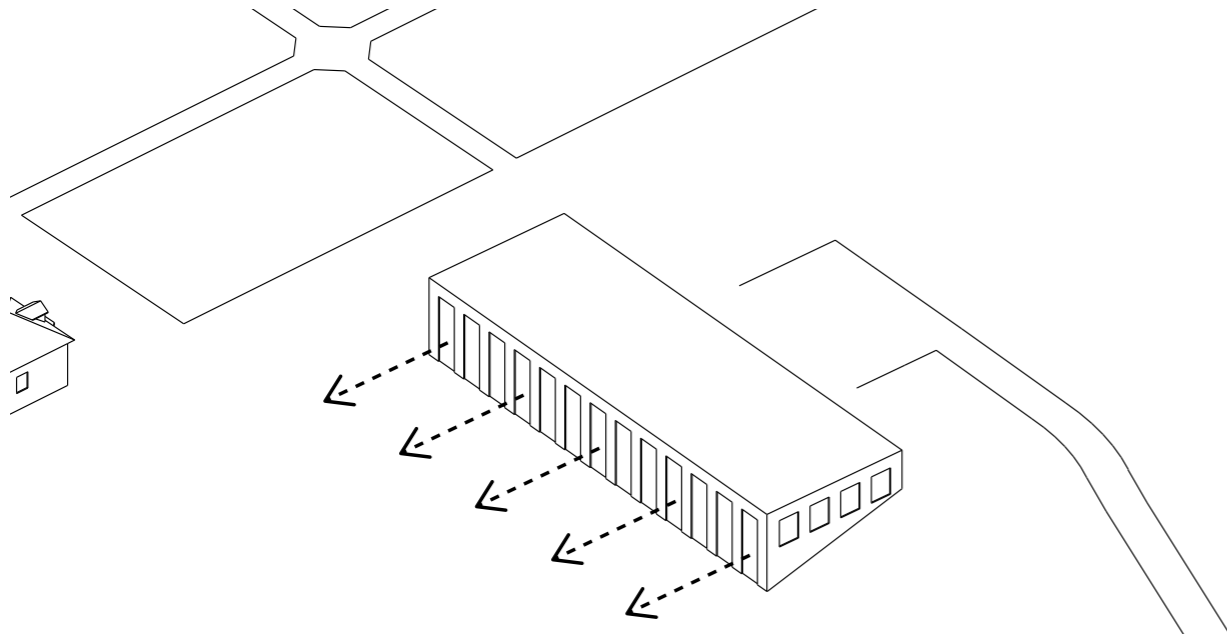
V. Added windows bring in light, allow contact with the landscape and communicate the spirit of a public building when seen from the road.

VI. Analogue adaption to context: hipped roof and elliptical arched windows. As a bonus effect, the hipped roof is less likely to leak than a flat one.

VII. The elliptical arch can be found on the Coach House entrance door. Adapting the same shape to the library strengthens the unity between the two wing buildings of Boleskine House.

Fig. 18 *Coach House entrance.*
Reprinted with permission.

Fig. 19 *Boleskine House hipped roof.*
Reprinted with permission.

Material chart
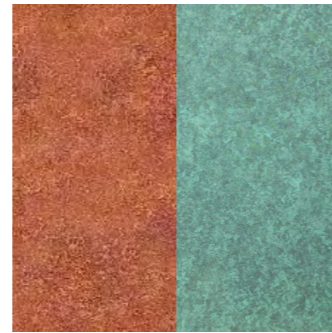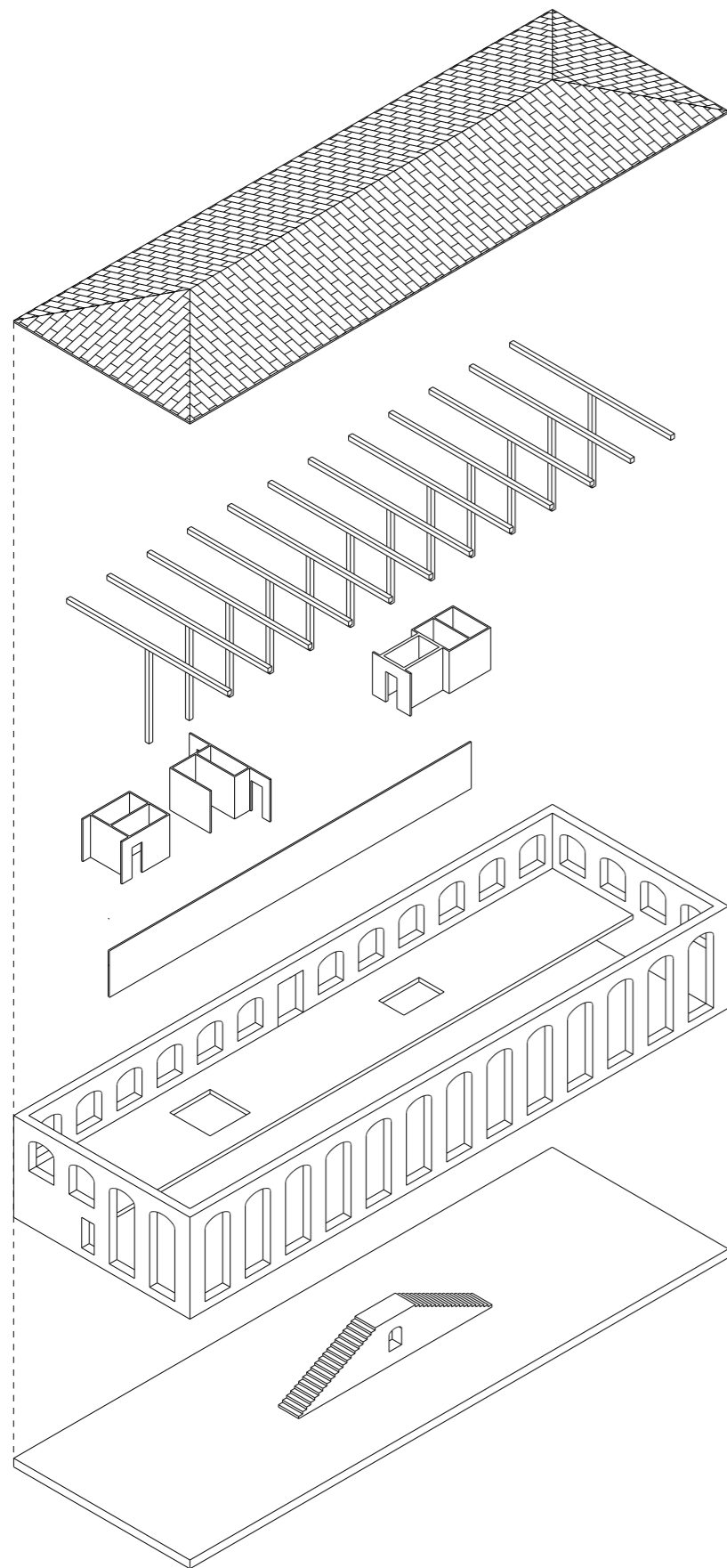
Copper roof, new versus aged

*Local scots pine interiors,
natural finish and painted with tar*

Concrete shell and slabs

Building structure
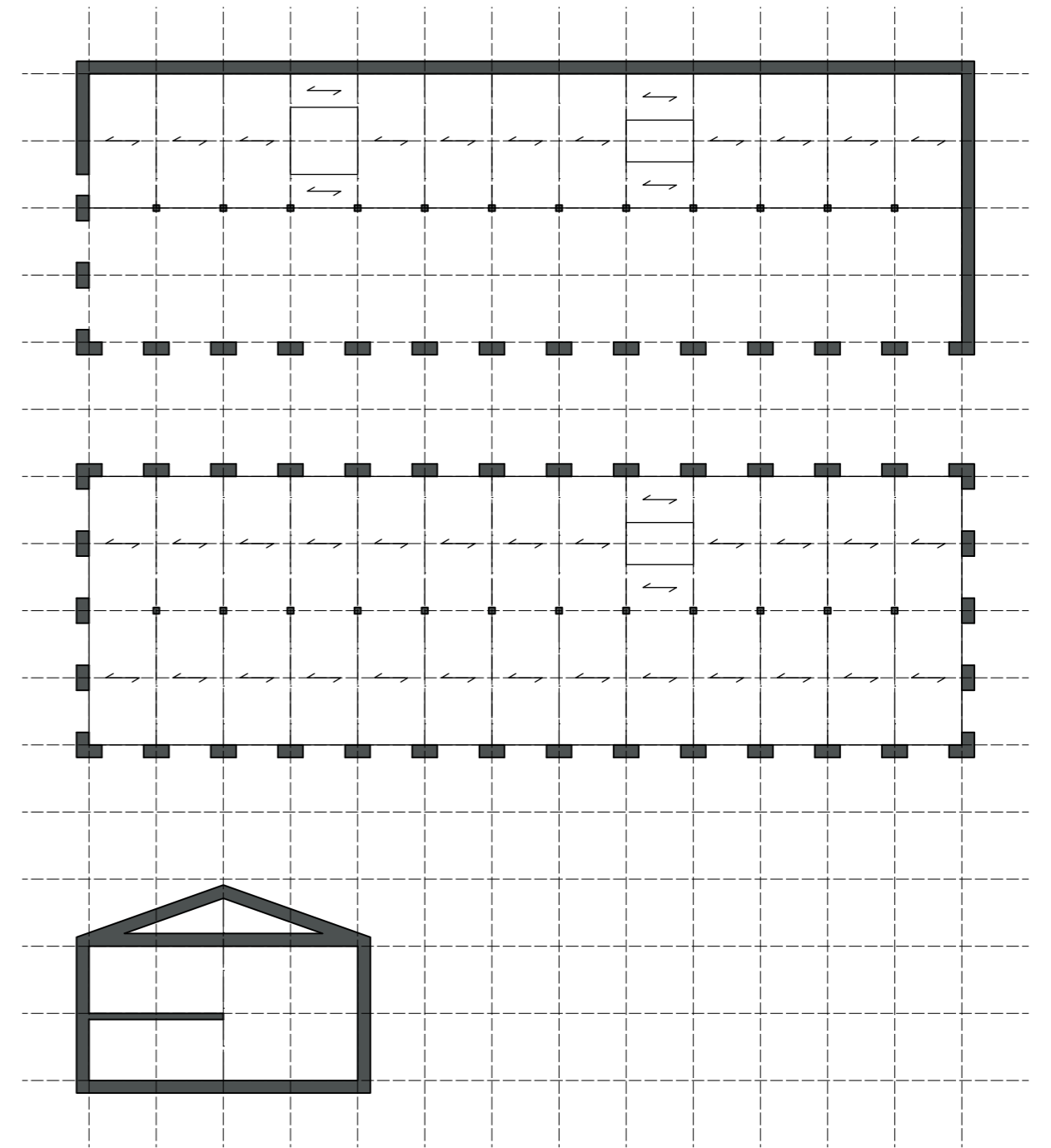
- Load bearing walls
- Line of columns along middle axis
- Line of beams carrying the roof
- 3200 x 3200 mm grid
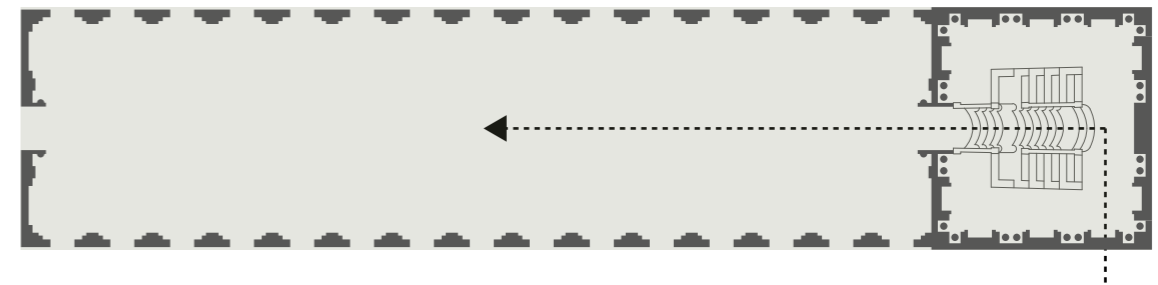- Same grid used both in plan and section

Spatial division
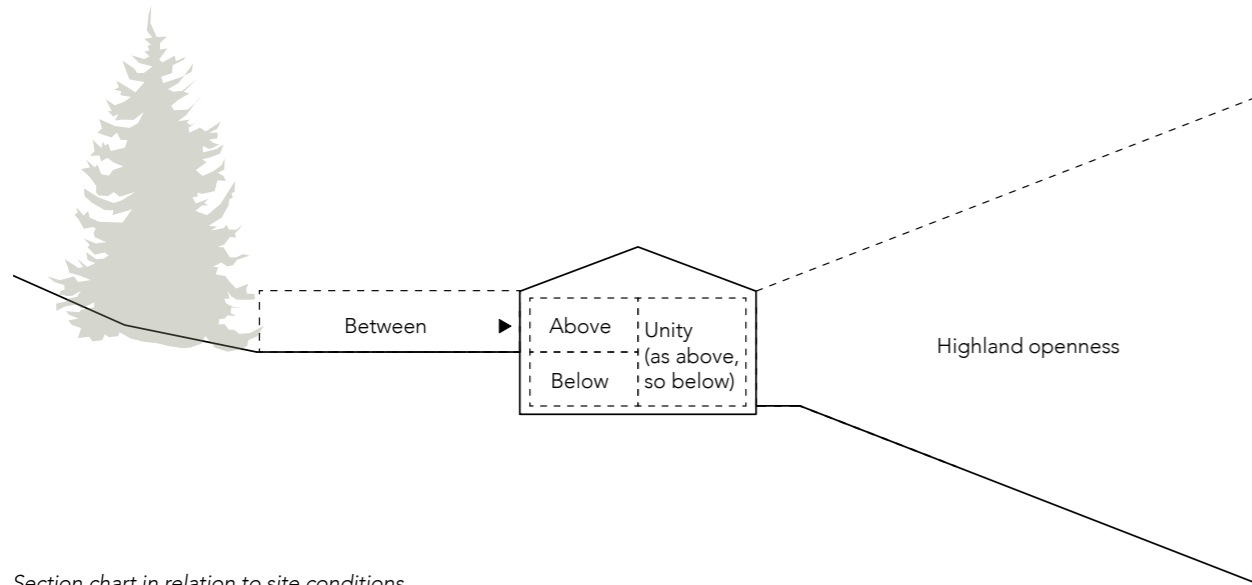
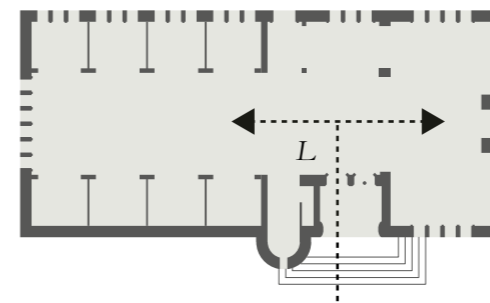*Section chart in relation to site conditions*

Above | Unity (as above, so below)
Between ▶
Below

Highland openness
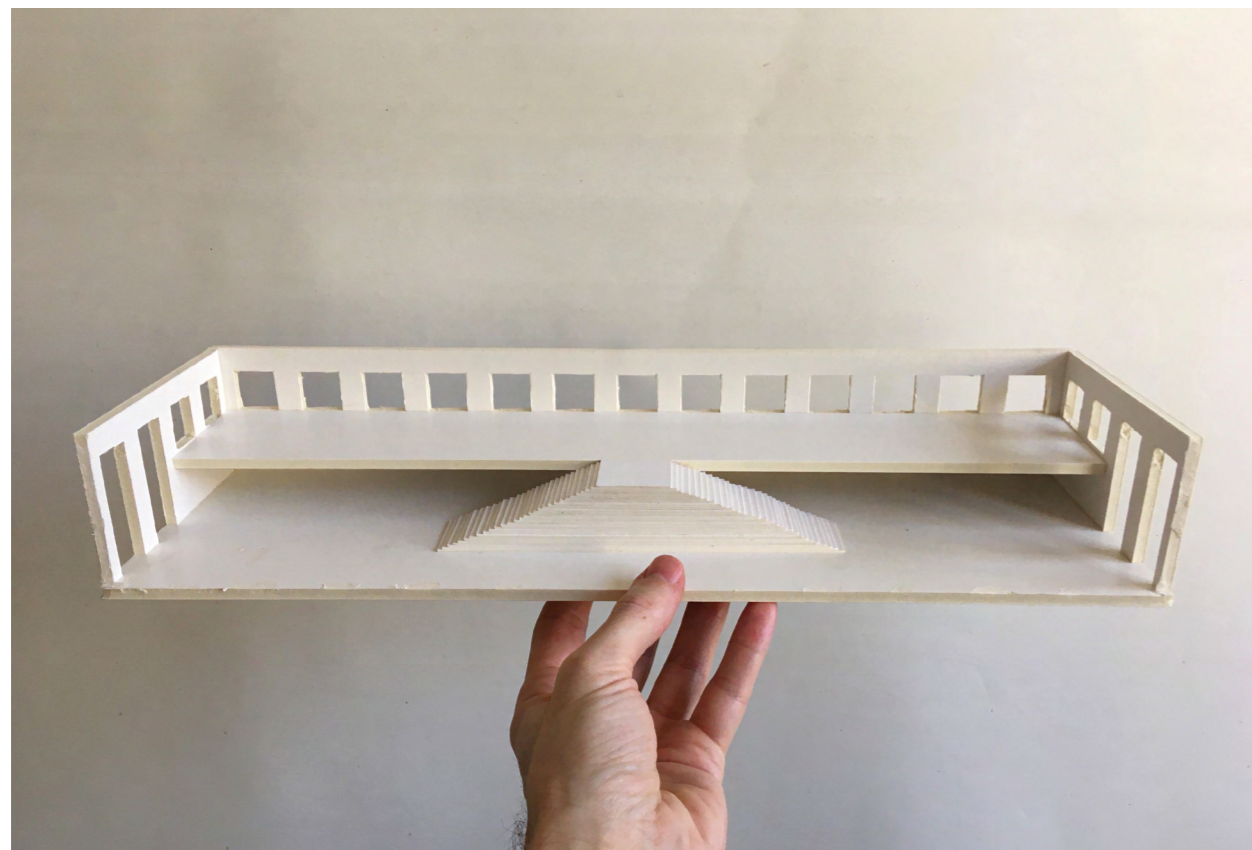
Physical concept model of internal spaces

Reference comparison

LAURENTIAN LIBRARY (p. 26-27)

- Rectangular volume
- Corner entrance
- Internal staircase

- Ascending spatial sequence
- Single main axis
- No librarian

THOMAS CRANE MEMORIAL LIBRARY (p. 28-30)

- Rectangular volume (more or less)
- Off-centre entrance
- External staircase

- Ascending spatial sequence
- Split main axis
- Librarian at entrance
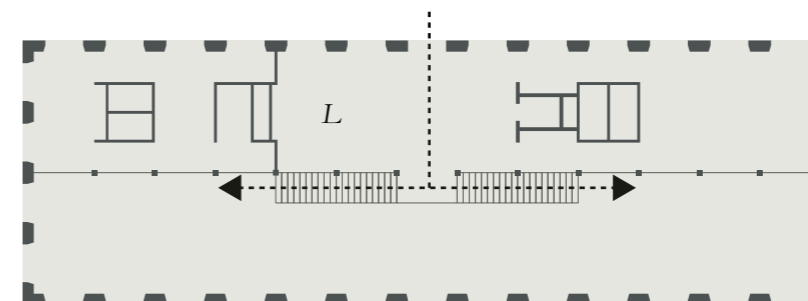
DESIGN PROPOSAL

- Rectangular volume
- Centered entrance
- Internal staircase

- Descending spatial sequence
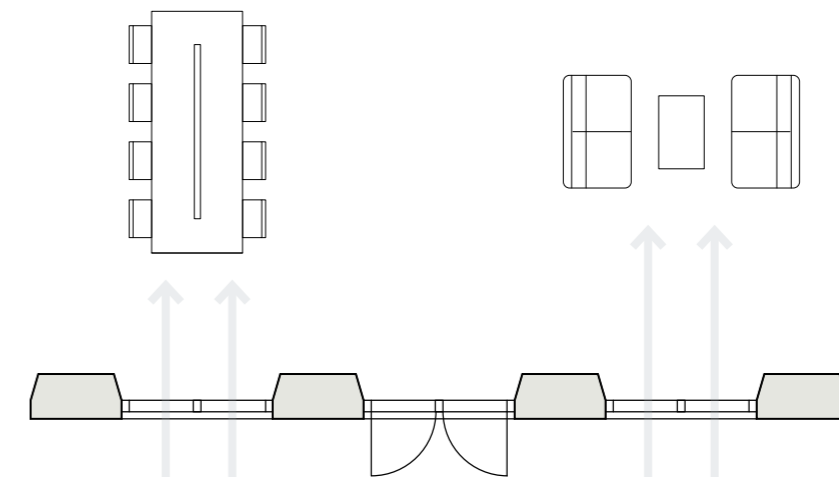- Split main axis
- Librarian at entrance

A space for books and reading

- The book collection is partly buried under ground and is kept in the part with less windows, which will protect from most of the sunbeams

- Natural light from the north can enter the building freely, creating a calm atmosphere for reading and learning
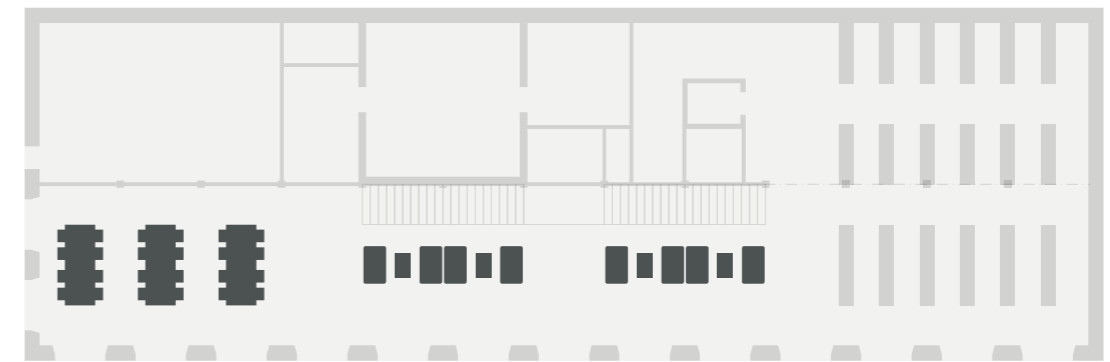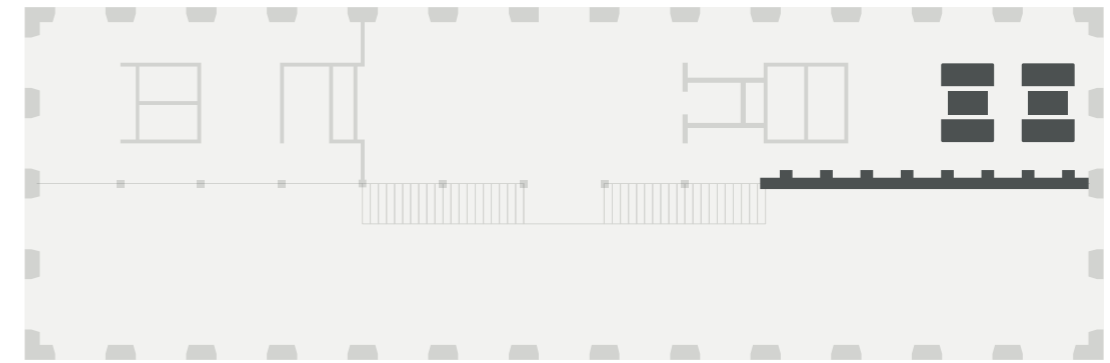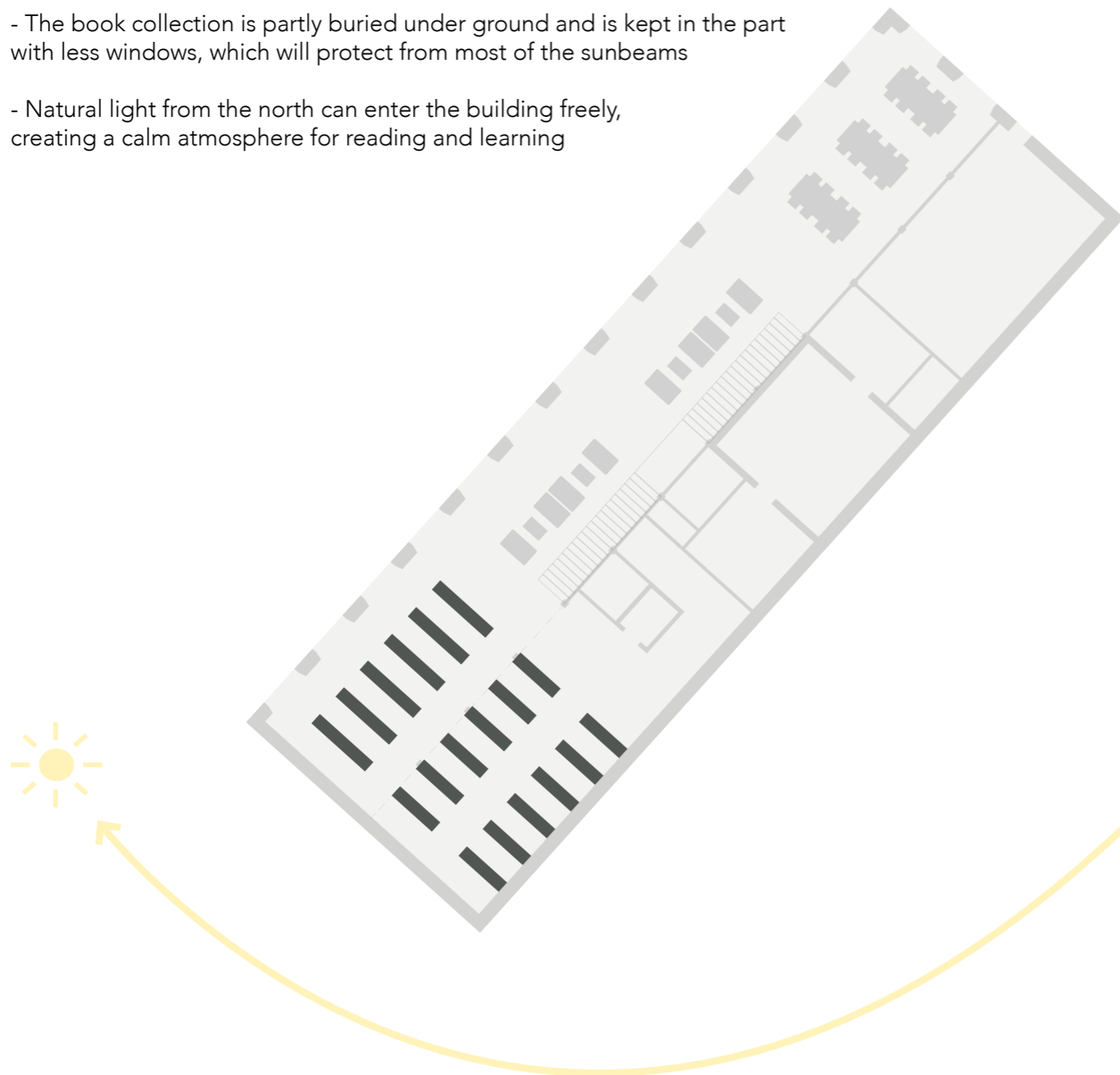
- Variety of reading spaces, allowing visitors to find a space that suit them

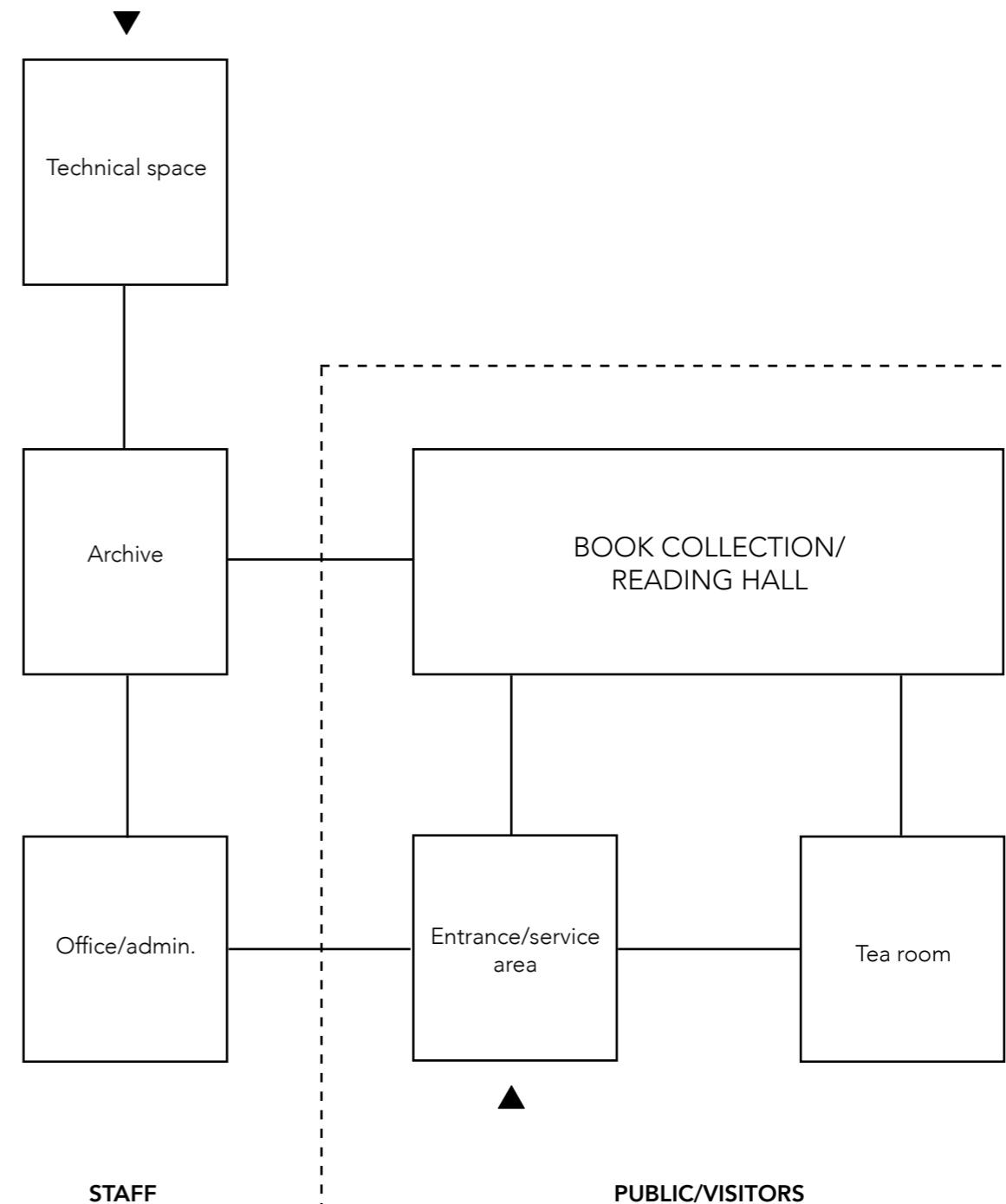- Reading hall furniture follow window placement, arranged perpendicularly to optimize light flow
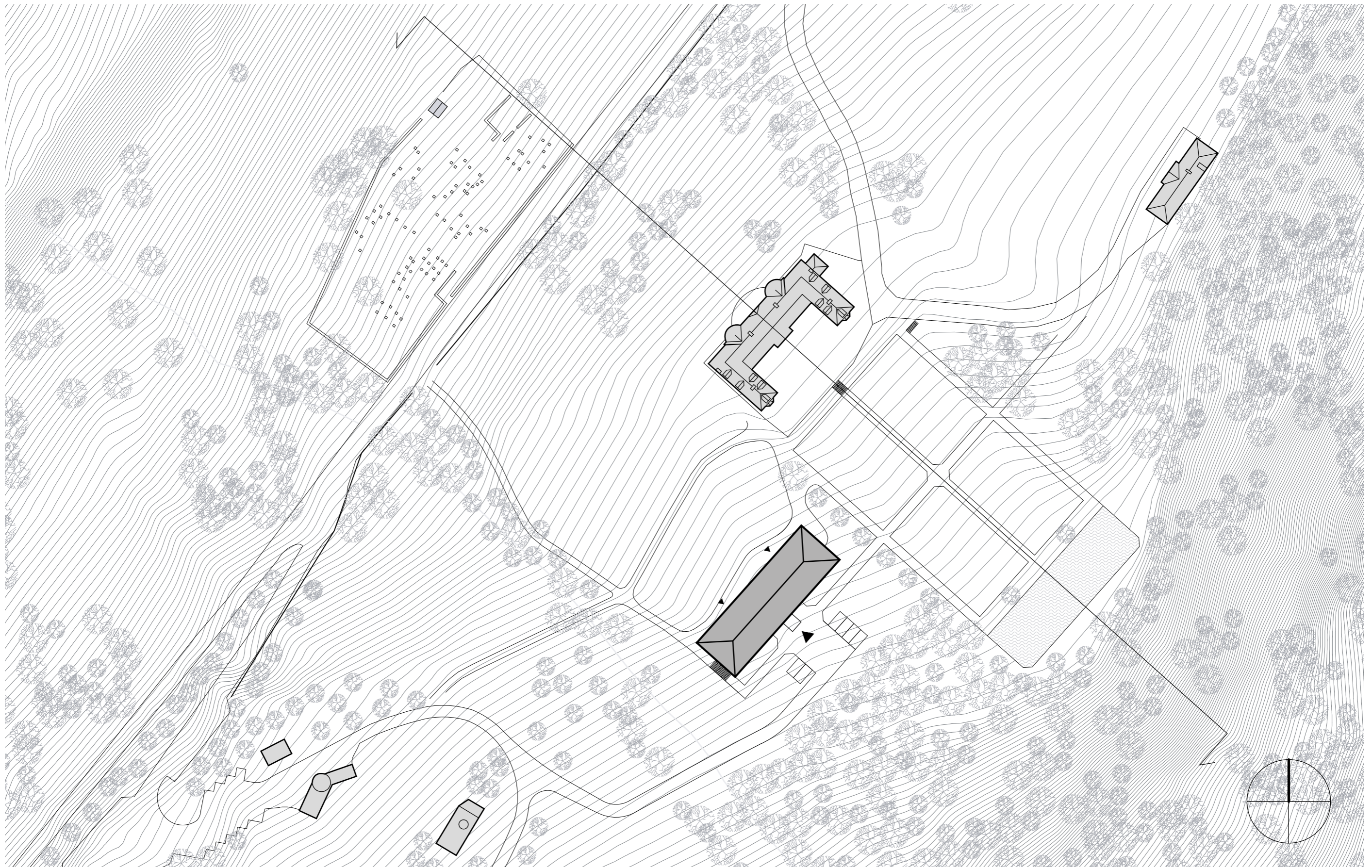
Brief

Requested library capacity: 25000 books (625 shelf meters)

FUNCTION	SQM
- reading hall	160
- book collection	165

    WESTERN ESOTERICISM
    - magic
    - alchemy
    - astrology
    - the Qabalah
    - paganism
    - shamanism
    - the occult
    - secret societies (e.g. freemasonry)
    - mysticism
    - Gnosticism
    - Hermeticism
    - Thelema

    LOCAL SCOTTISH HISTORY
    - The Fraser clan/Highland history
    - Loch Ness
    - Aleister Crowley/Jimmy Page

FUNCTION	SQM
- archive/revolving stacks	40
- viewing room (supervised display of artefacts)	16
- entrance area (circulation services, librarian desk etc.)	95
- visitors WC	7
- tea room/discussion space	60
- office (open workspace)	20
- Media room (print, copy, scanning etc.)	3
- Staff WC	3
- kitchenette/break out space	20
- housekeeping	4
- recycling room	4
- storage (office goods, extra furniture etc.)	12
- stairs & elevator	70
- shafts	6
- technical space	60
- additional communication space	55
TOTAL AREA	**800**

Division & configuration

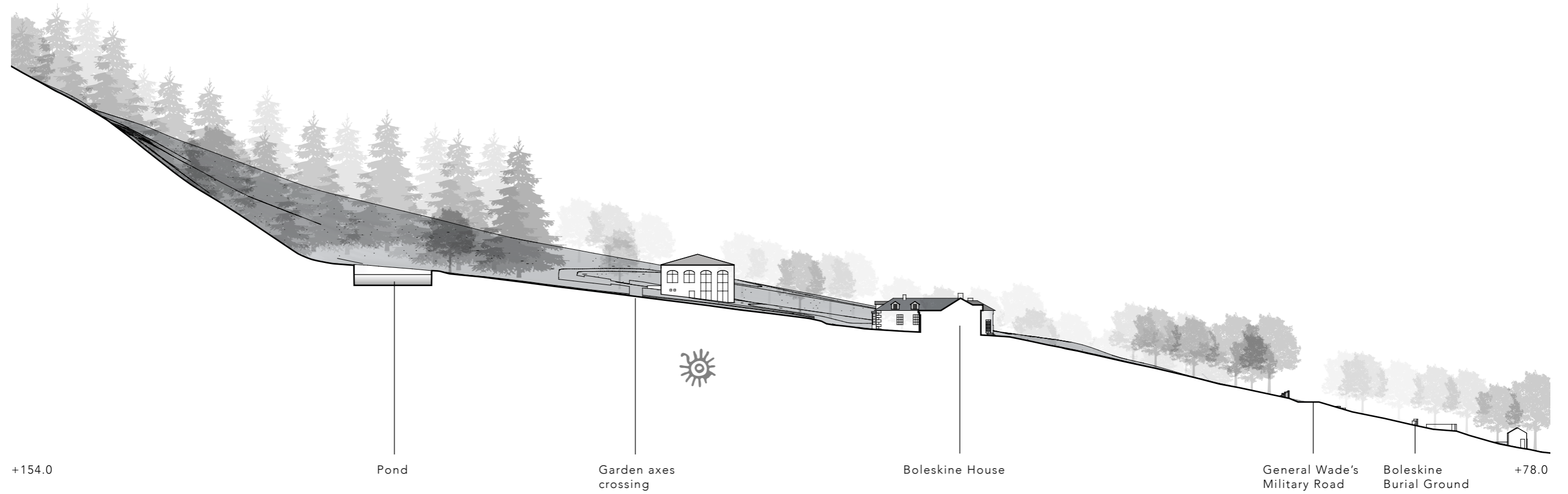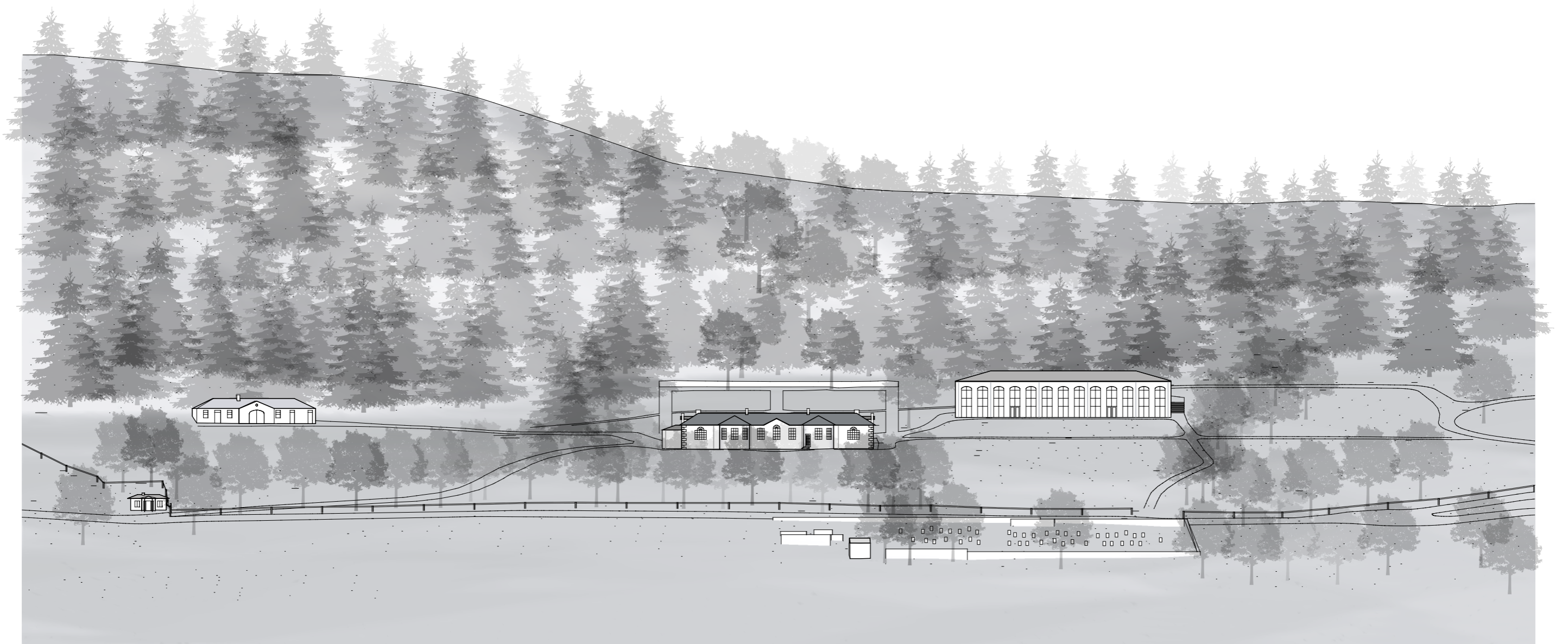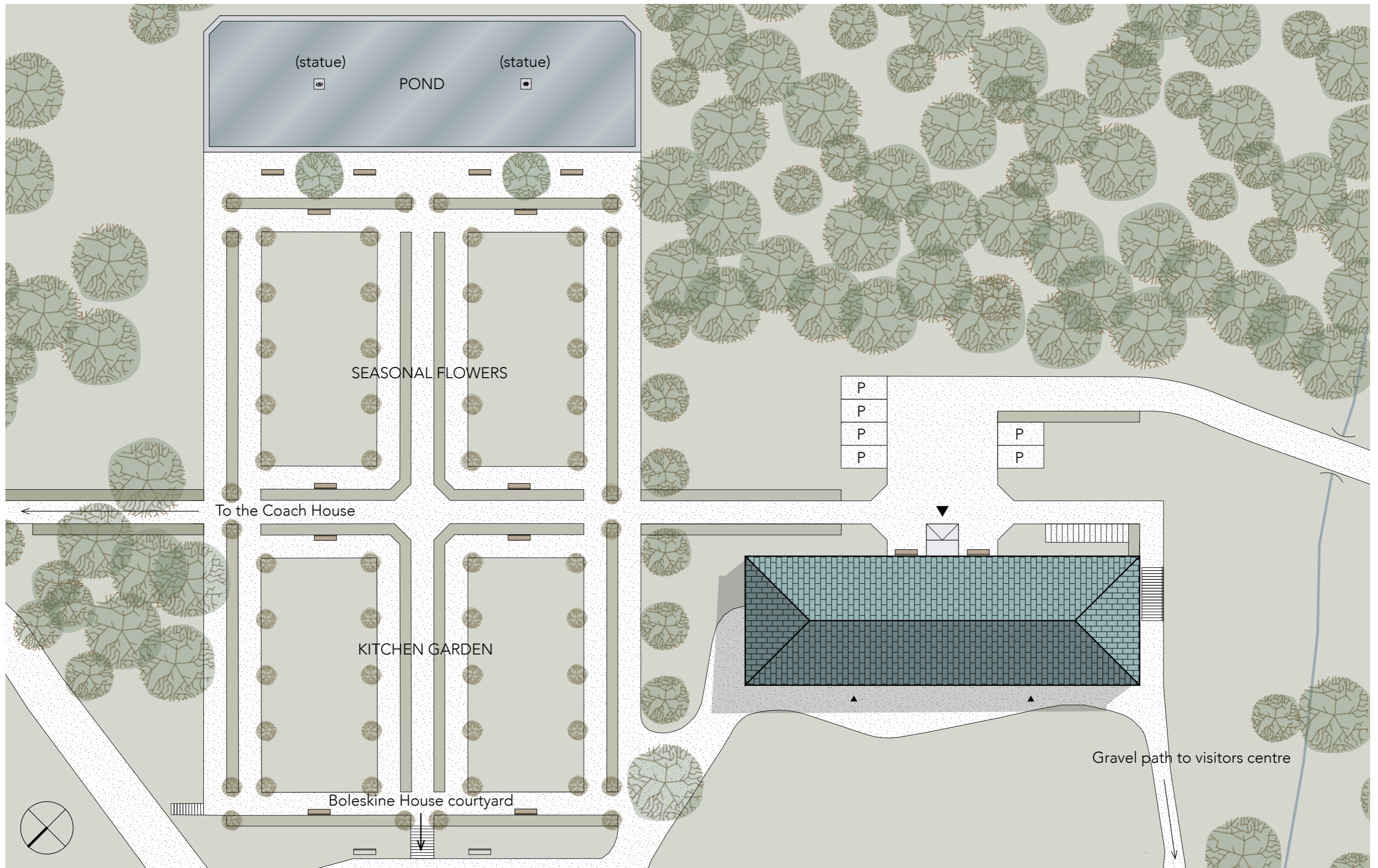| ABOVE	BELOW	UNITY
- Entrance/service area	- Technical space	- Reading Hall
- Office/admin.	- Archive	- Book collection
- Tea room	- Book collection	(local Scottish history)
	(western esotericism)	

STAFF   PUBLIC/VISITORS

Site plan 1:1000

0   50 m

Site section 1:800

+154.0   +78.0

Pond

Garden axes
crossing

Boleskine House

General Wade's
Military Road

Boleskine
Burial Ground

Site elevation 1:800

0 ————— 40 m

Illustration plan 1:400

(statue)

(statue)

POND

SEASONAL FLOWERS

P
P
P
P

P

P

To the Coach House

KITCHEN GARDEN

Gravel path to visitors centre

Boleskine House courtyard

Plan 1:200

0   2   4   6   8   10 m

Mezzanine

OFFICE/STAFF AREA

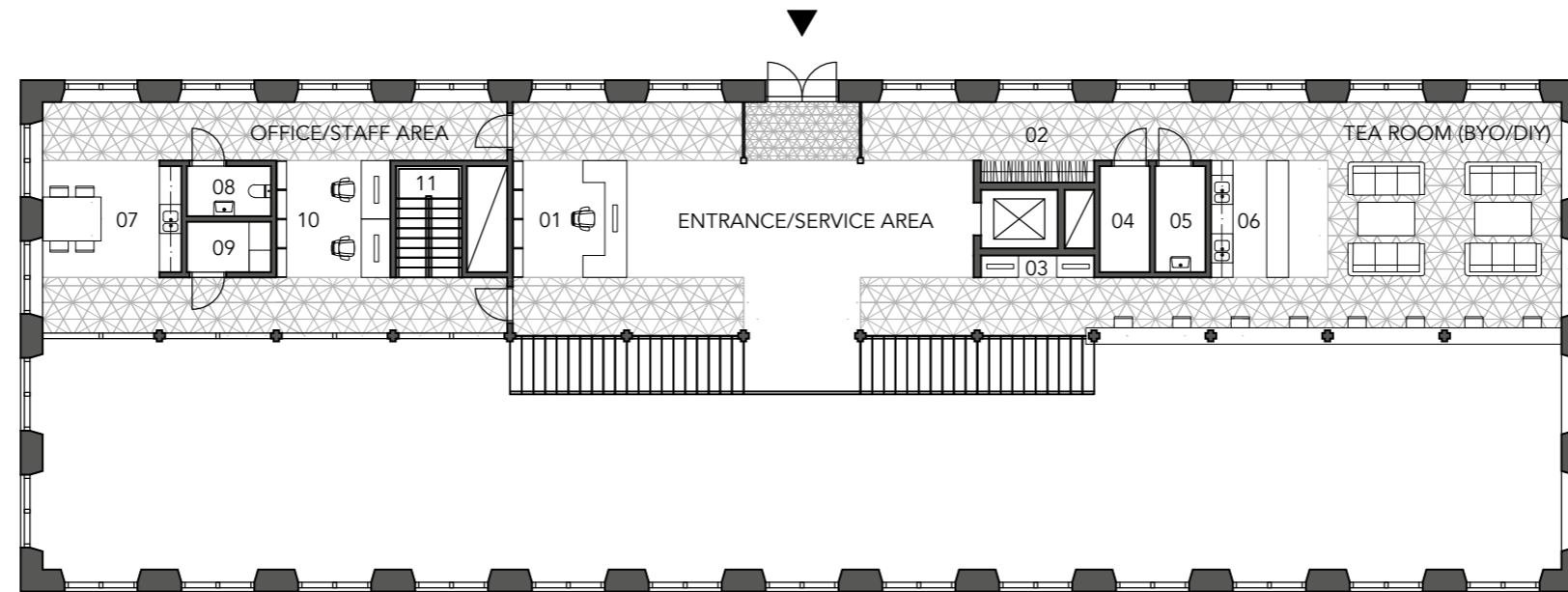07 08 10 11

09

01 ENTRANCE/SERVICE AREA

02

TEA ROOM (BYO/DIY)

04 05 06

03
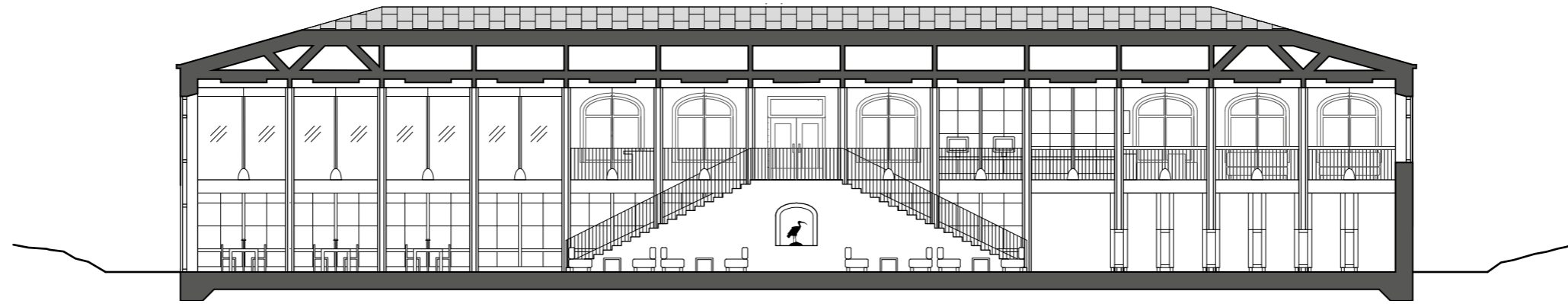
01 Librarian's desk
02 Coat hangers
03 Borrow/return self-service
04 Recycling room
05 Housekeeping/storage
06 Tea brewing desk
07 Staff kitchenette/breakout space
08 Staff WC
09 Media room (scan, print etc.)
10 Open office workstations
11 Internal staircase

**Ground floor**

TECHNICAL SPACE

12 11

ARCHIVE

14

13 15

17

16

21

23

18

READING HALL/BOOK COLLECTION

22

19

20
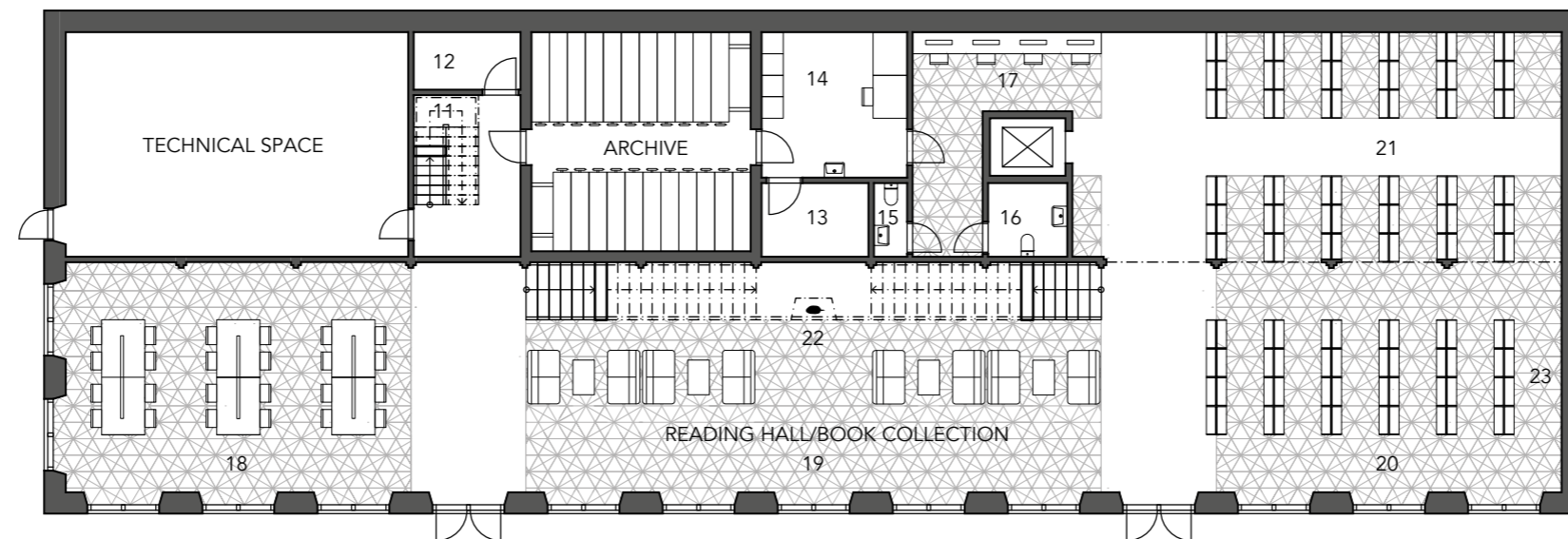
11 Internal staircase
12 Storage (office)
13 Storage (archive)
14 Viewing room/artefact display
15 Visitor's WC
16 Visitor's HWC
17 Catalogue search desk
18 Reading tables
19 Reading lounge
20 Books: local scottish history
21 Books: western esotericism
22 Niche with ibis statue
23 Wall inscription

0   2   4   6   8   10 m

I. Reading hall and book collection
as one continuous space
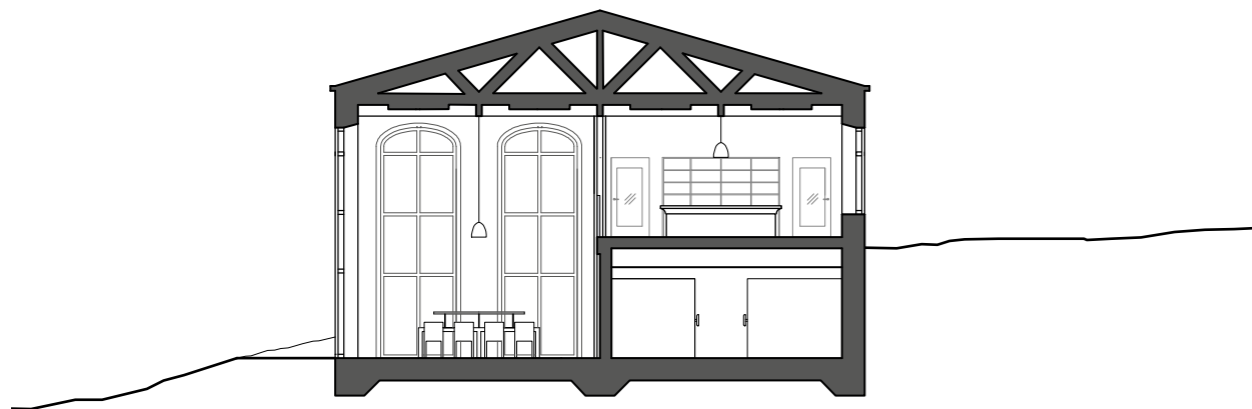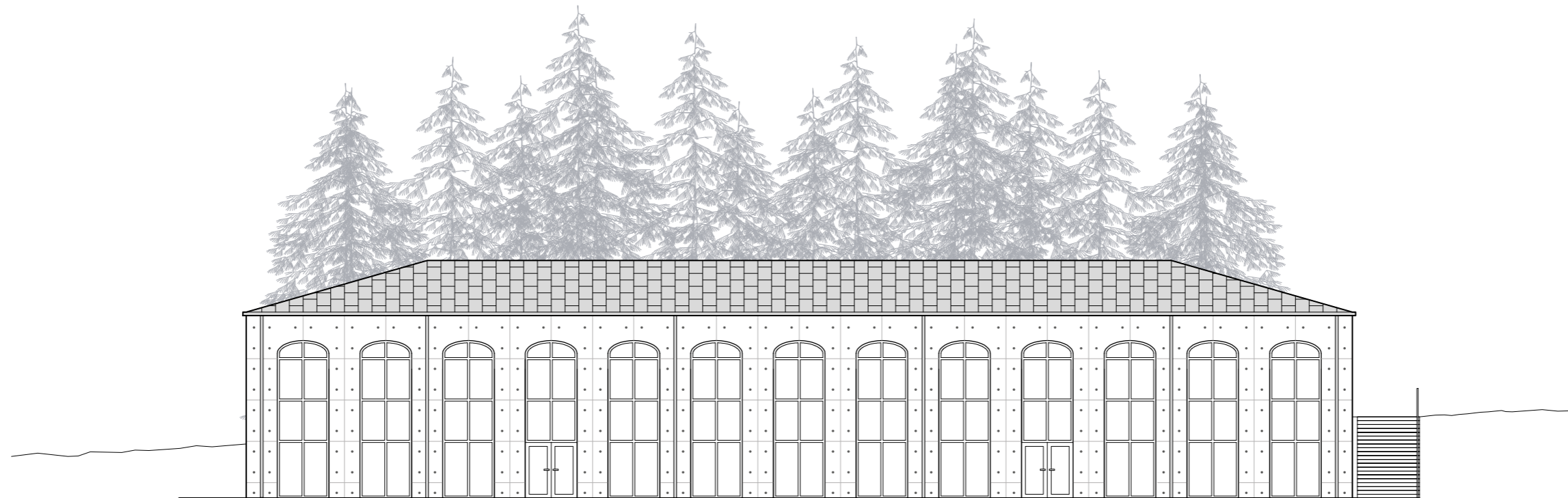
II. Reading hall, librarian's desk
and archive
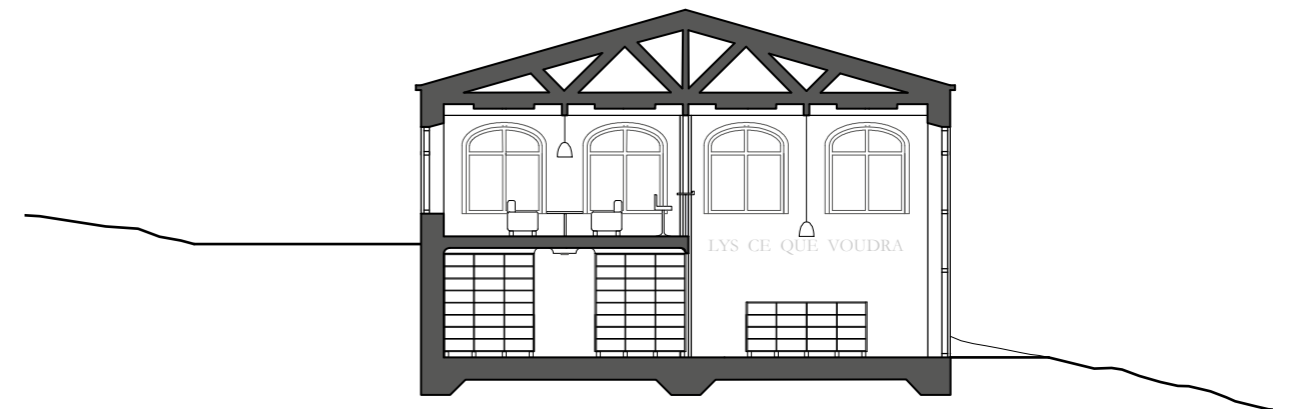
III. Tea room and book collection

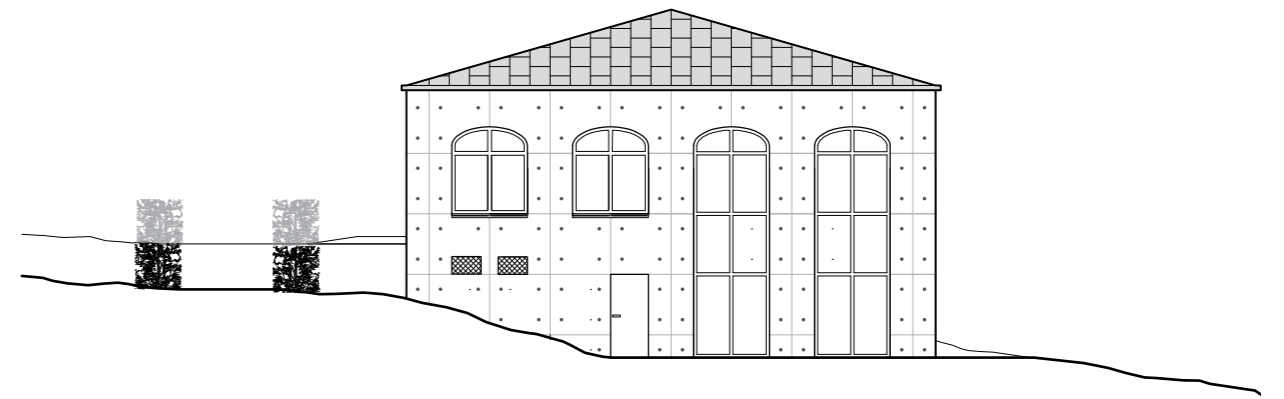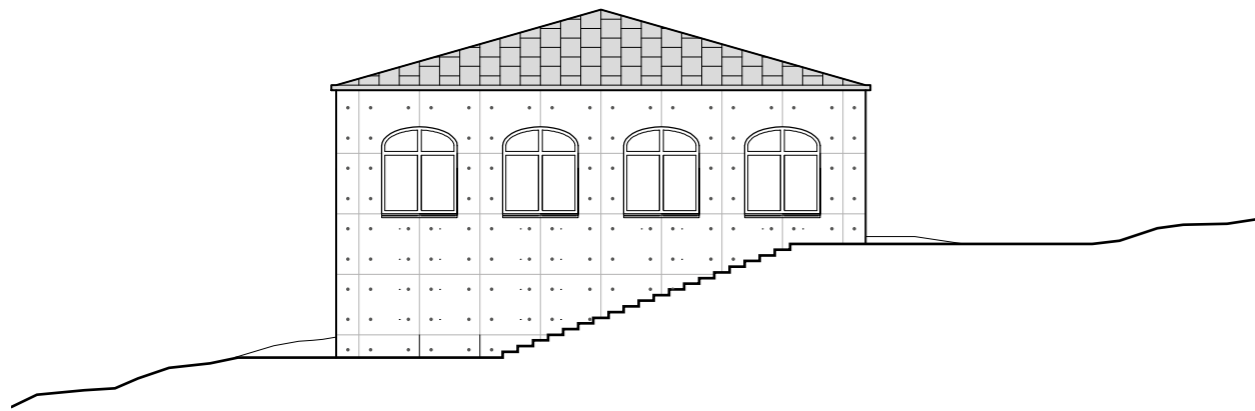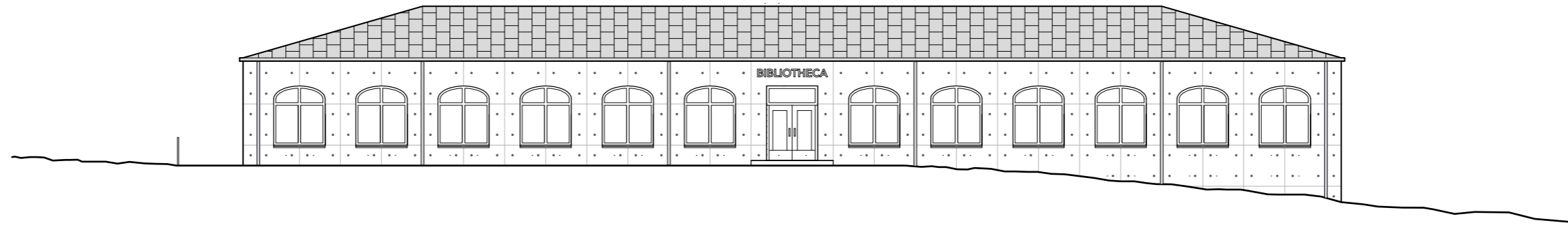0　2　4　6　8　10 m

Entrance and side elevations 1:200

BIBLIOTHECA

Section/elevation 1:50

6400

6400
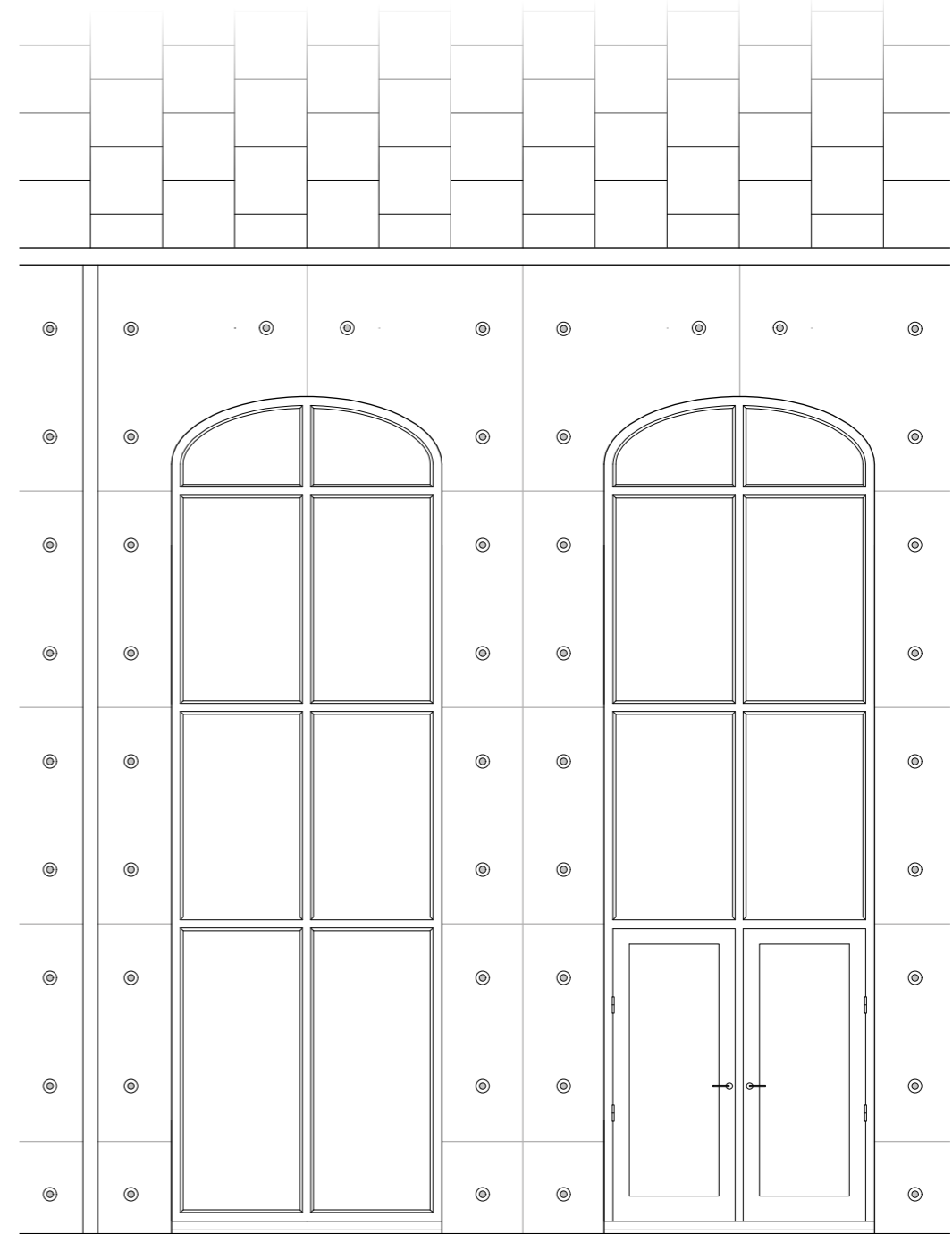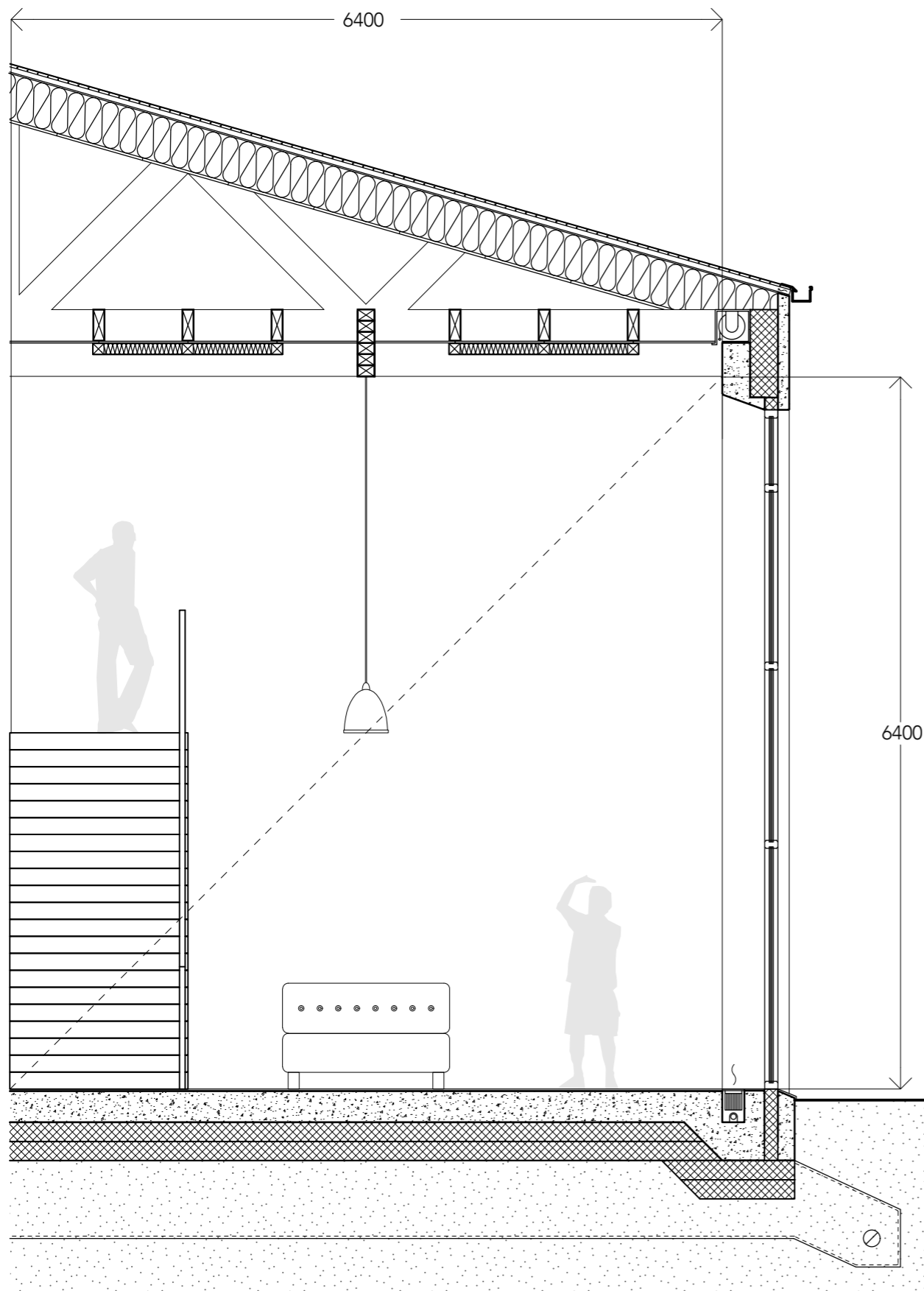
Elevation/section 1:20 - window

0 |___|___|___|___|___| 1 m

1600:1000=
Georgian
proportions

Copper roof   3
Backing board   5
Matchboards (*råspont*)   21
Ventilation gap   45
Masonite   12
Cellulose insulation   400
Fixing board   25

Automatic
sunscreen

Acoustic pad,
clad with textile

Concrete, cast in situ   100
Foamglass   250
Concrete, cast in situ   250

Angled niche to bring in
more light

Window frame in wood

Glass   4
Argon gap   12
Glass   4
Argon gap   12
Glass   4

Inbuilt
radiator

Patterned wooden floor   15
Foam   3
Concrete, cast in situ   200
Concrete, precast   50
Nailing battens   28
Plywood   12
Wooden cornice   150

Copper windowsill

Crushed dolomite (will absorb
any possible copper emissions)

Elevation/section 1:20 - entrance

0 |__|__|__|__|__| 1 m

BIBLIOTHECA

Gutter

Entrance letters
as cast relief

Spotlight

Top light

Wooden door frame

Door opener

Granite entrance step

Heating fan (fitted between wooden beams)

Translucent
glass screen

Ceiling plan 1:200

(lower ceiling)

TECTONIC ORDER
I
II (also above ceiling)

Acoustic pads

Lighting fixtures
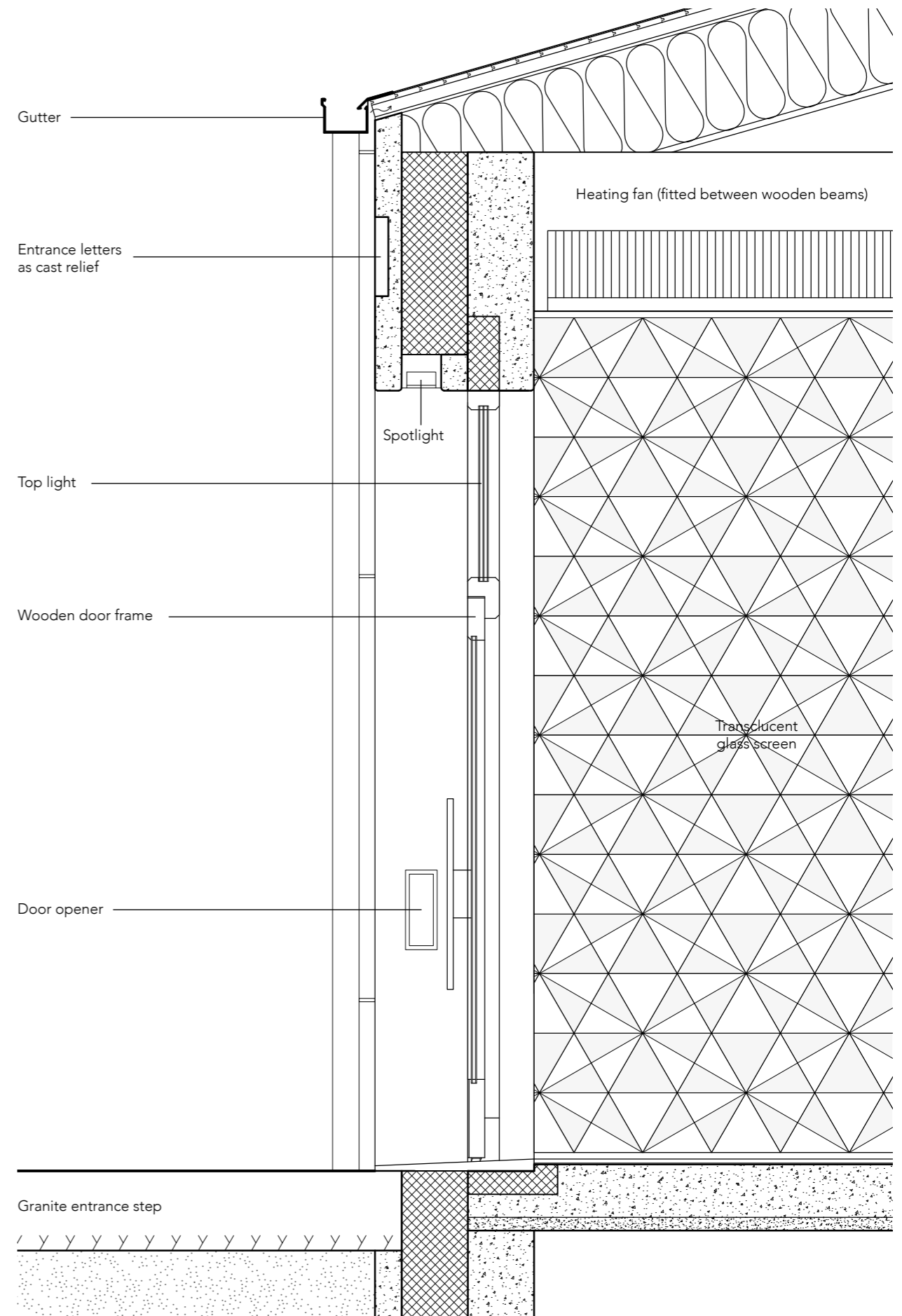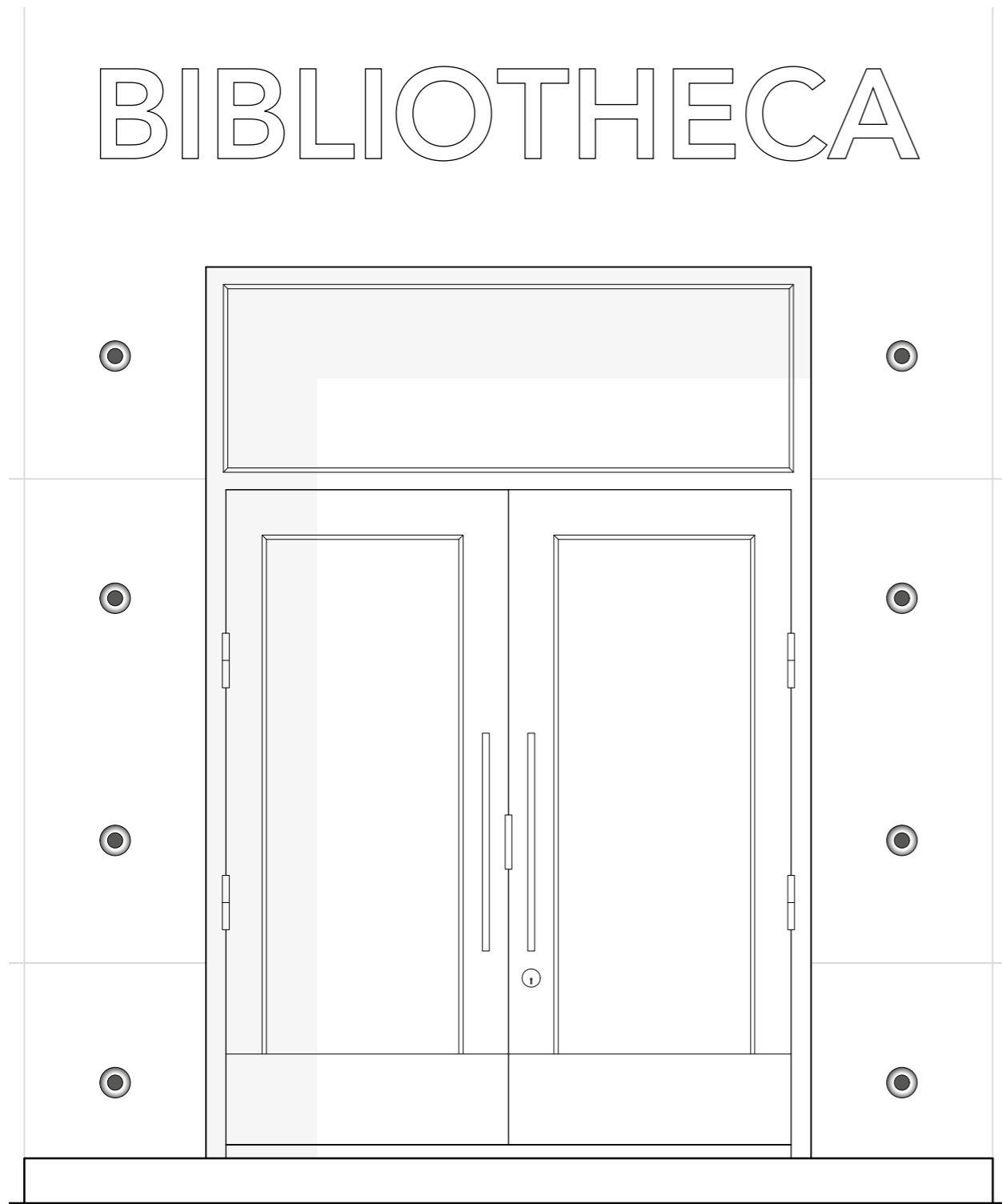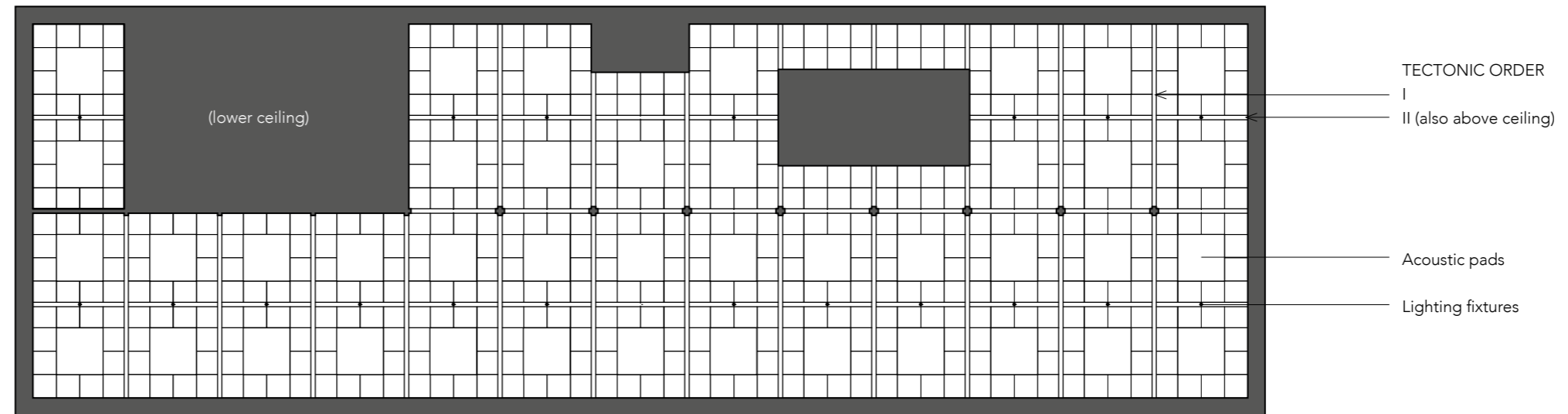
Ceiling plan 1:100
(above Western Esotercism books)

0   1   2   3   4   5 m

Ceiling cornice profile 1:2

0   10 cm

Inbuilt spotlights

Bookshelves
(joined into ceiling)

Carbon dioxide sprinklers, hidden
in thelemic rose (see page 22-23)

0   1   2   3 m

LYS CE QUE VOUDRA

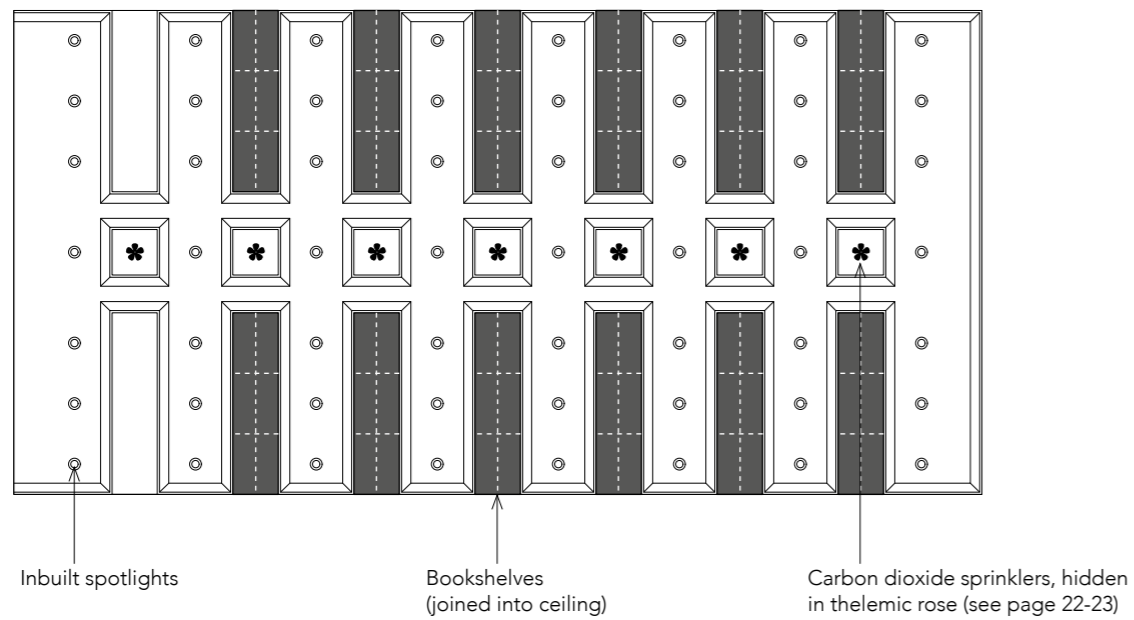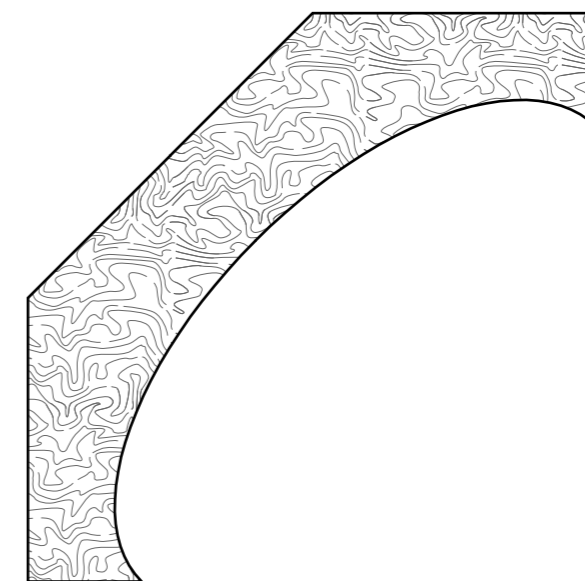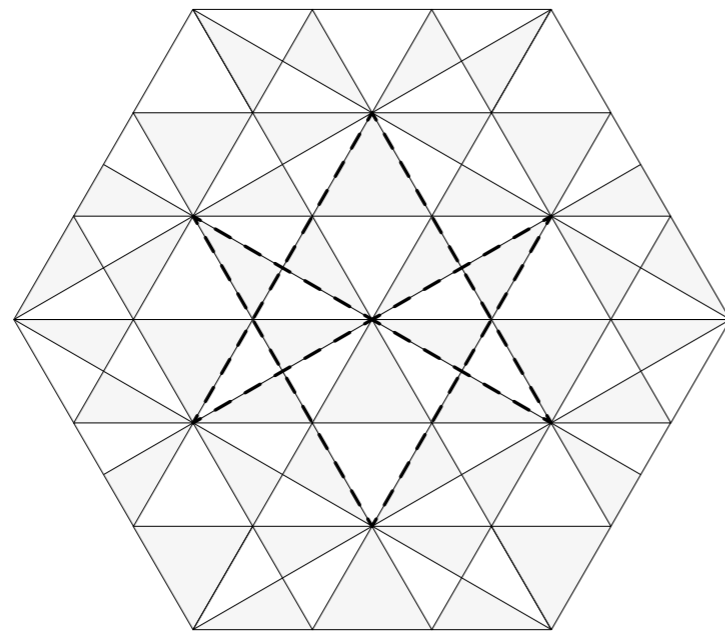- The wooden floors and entrance glass screen consist of a pattern with overlapping unicursal hexagrams. Although the symbol is primarily associated with Thelema (see page 22-23) it may also be seen as a general symbol for the library typology as such, if interpreted on a cosmological level (see page 24).

- The southern wall has an inscription with the words *Lys ce que voudra*, which translates to "Read As You Please" and is a paraphrase of the "Do What Thou Wilt" motto (see page 22-23). The quote originally came from the 16th century french satirist Francois Rabelais (for further information see Manguel, 2006).

- The double staircase has a niche with a statue of an African sacred ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*). In ancient Egypt, this bird was considered the living incarnation of Thoth: a deity of knowledge, wisdom, learning, etc. Previously featured in the works of Aleister Crowley, Thoth now becomes a guardian of Boleskine Library.
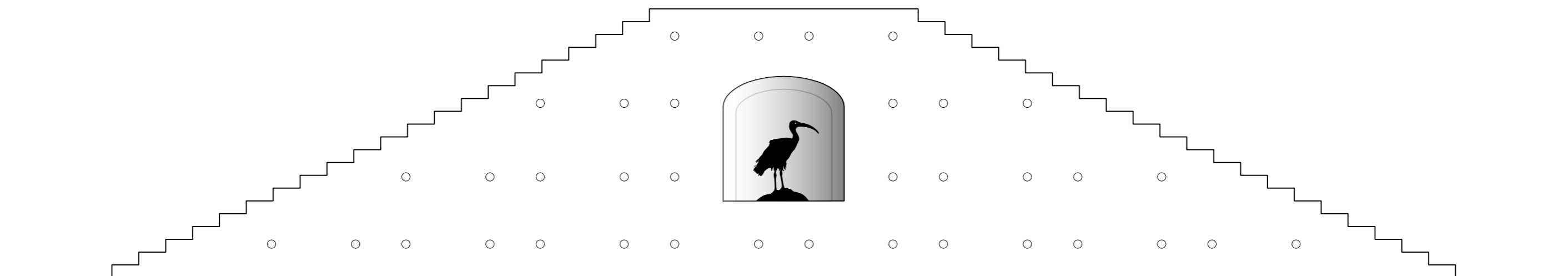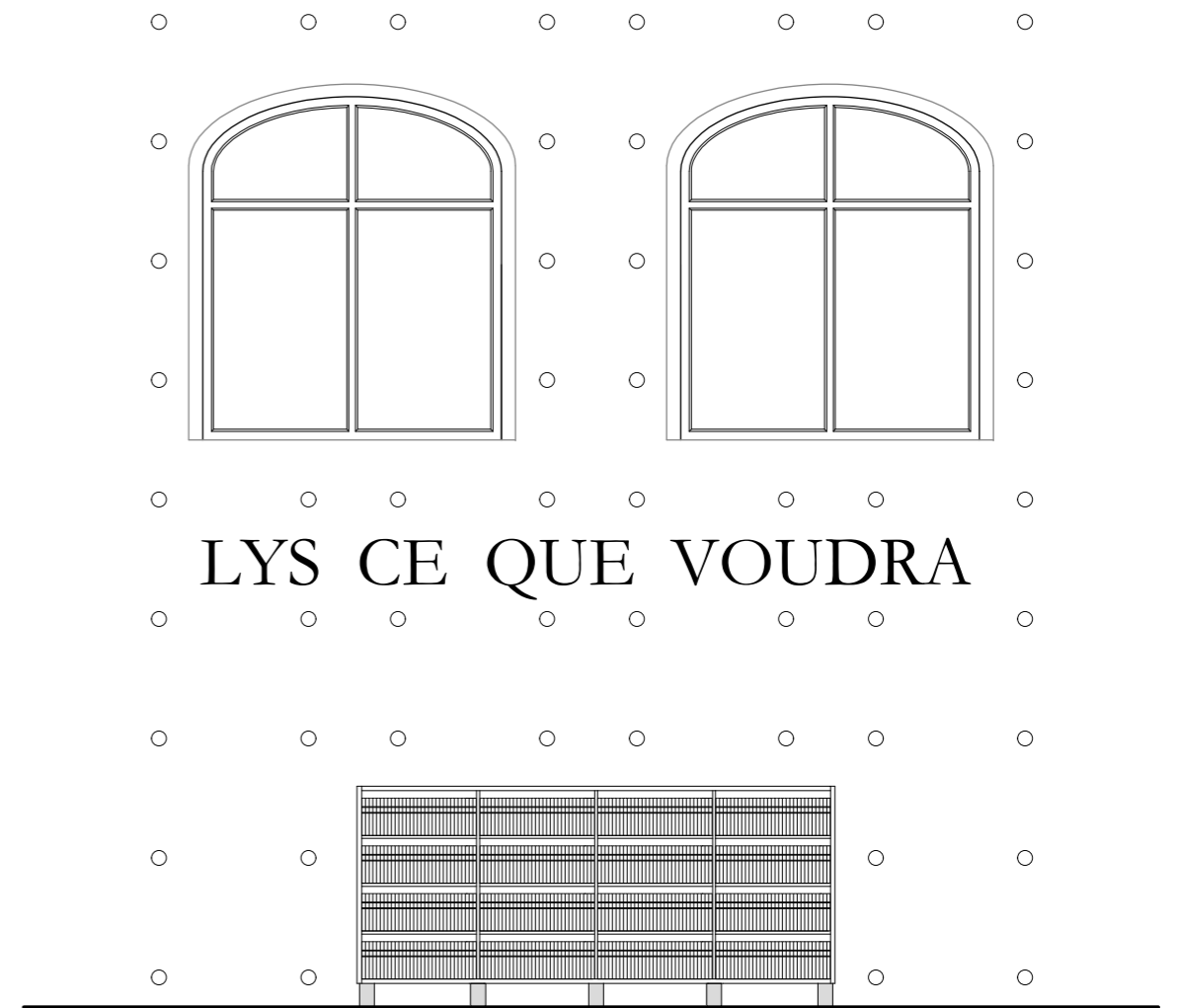
Perspective: exterior

Perspective: entrance view
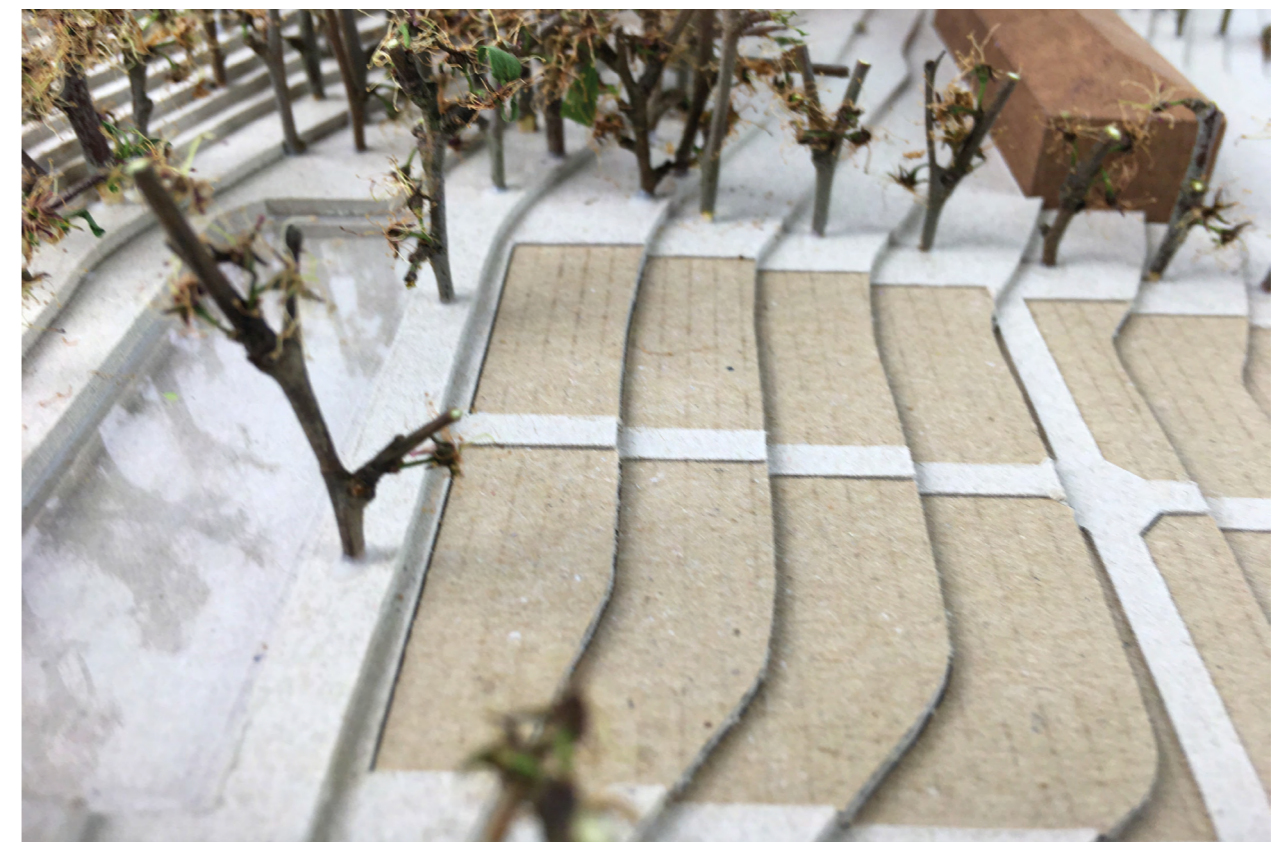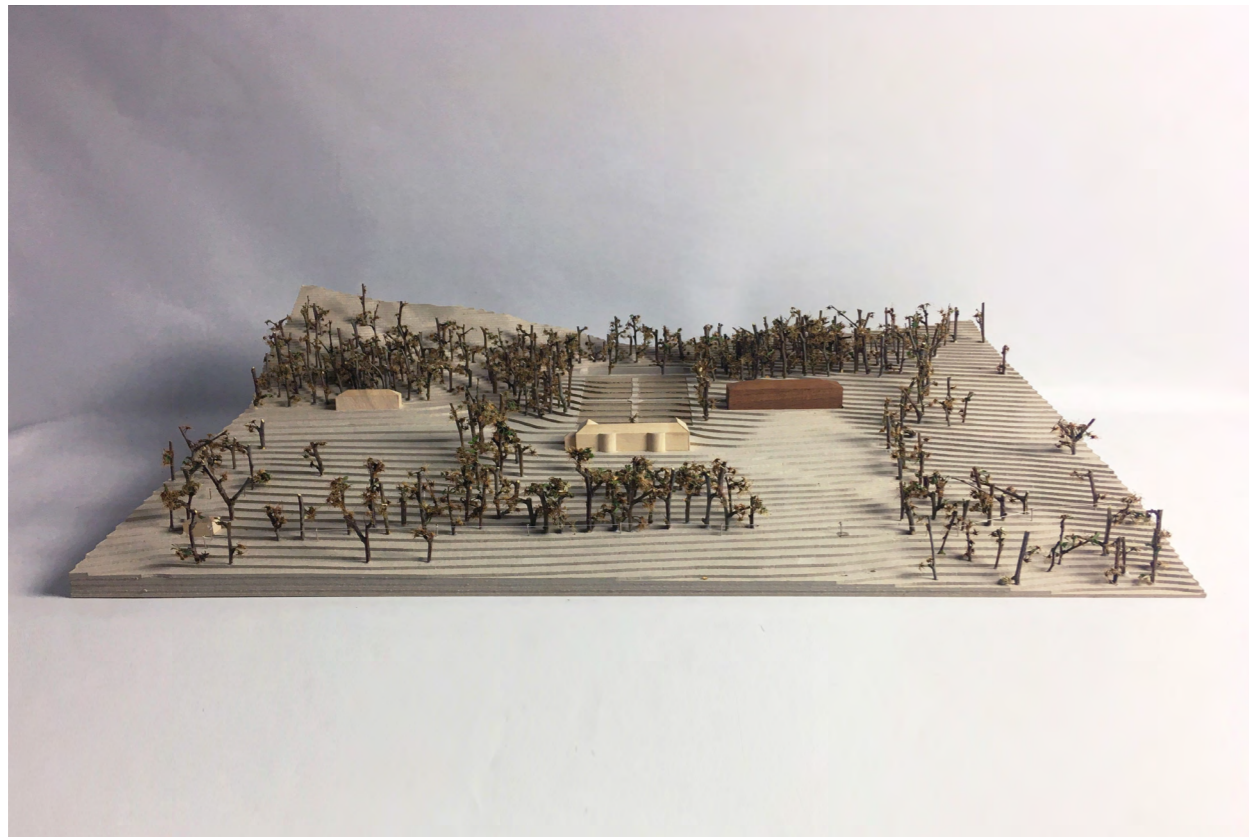
Perspective: reading hall

Site model 1:500

Building model 1:100

AFTERMATH

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

During the process, the ambition has been to relate the design proposal to the chosen research questions: how to make an addition to a historical place and how to design a space for books and reading. Regarding the first question, the conclusion is that **a sensitive addition to a site can be done by adapting the new architecture to what is already present there.** An important finding in the site research was the former garden, which represents an orthogonal structure in the organic landscape and in that sense an ordering element (and a nice place to walk). The library is therefore situated so that the axial structure of the restored garden can be used to unify the site, while the building volume is oriented the same way as the already existing buildings. The exterior design adapts the theory of Analogue Architecture by using the arched opening of the Coach House and the hipped roof of the existing buildings but swapping the materiality. A building with a flat roof and square windows would surely be more contemporary, but it would not be as contextual. That is not to say arched windows should be used on all buildings. It is likely that the library windows would have been given another shape in an urban context, perhaps also if it would have been the only building on site.

An important step has been to introduce a public building at the Boleskine estate. It is likely that a building with a public spirit will be more beneficial for the future plans of the Boleskine House Foundation but it also provides a challenge, since the library is situated so it will be seen much clearer than Boleskine House itself. It has therefore been important to give the building a certain kind of dignity without taking over the character of commanding the site. The proposed elevation has a simple, repeating structure with evenly spaced windows and an openness that communicates the spirit of a public building. As reference, the elevation of the Bibliotèque Nationale visionary project can be mentioned but also the repeating structure of the elegant Laurentian Library. When considering the design proposal, it is possible that the elevations could have had an even higher level of openness. It is however clear that the repeating facade structure is subordinated to the more elaborate elevation of Boleskine House, which remains the dominating main building on site with the library and the Coach House as a wing building or guardian on each side. Boleskine House has also been a reference to the design proposal through its entrance placement, window proportions and interior symmetry.

The background research on design of historic and contemporary libraries has been very important in helping to answer the second research question of how to design a space for books and reading. The conclusion here is that there are many features to consider, however, **natural light within a library will always be important to consider and incorporate as long as there are physical books to read.** This is how the idea to give the building the character of a lightbringer was born, which can also be seen on a symbolic level regarding its content of Western Esotericism. The Laurentian Library gave an important insight to arrange the reading spaces perpendicular to the windows to optimize reading conditions. In the design proposal, the same orientation is given to both reading spaces and bookshelves to bring in natural light to the library while at the same time protect the books from unnecessary sunlight. The Laurentian Library was also a reference in its treatment of surfaces and its general reading hall proportions. The reading hall of the design proposal measures 6,4 meters in both height and width (see 1:50 section) and it is likely that the proportions themselves will help to create a sense of unity in this space, well suitable for both reading and learning.

The Crane Library interior has been criticized for being too dark, probably due to its small windows being placed too far into the wall. This was not consistent with the building character of a lightbringer. However, the Crane Library has been important through its scale, grid structure, ceiling treatment and interior arrangement as a continuous space. Even the exterior has been a reference, not in terms of style but how to create a building with a civic and even monumental character. Finally, the Tama University Library has been a reference through its use of concrete as a way of creating arches in the 21st century as well as not hiding the material. Exposing the concrete and showing the bolt holes gives the design proposal an honest, tectonic expression. Likewise, the wooden interiors were chosen to show the tectonic order, but also because it is the preferred material to have closest to books. To summarize, knowledge has been extracted from all reference projects and then adapted to the Brief and site conditions. This has led to the addition of a building with a typology that celebrates the act of reading and importance of learning, which in this case is interlocking with the thesis aim while also being a contribution to contextual and Analogue Architecture discourse.

REFLECTION

This thesis can perhaps more than anything be seen as a tribute to the library phenomenon as such, in this case situated at a unique place and given the appropriate treatment regarding both context and content. From a personal view it has been the perfect kind of building to design as a final school project at Chalmers University of Technology. Finding the right aim or research questions for the thesis was never a problem, since these have followed logically from the idea given by the Boleskine House Foundation to design a library proposal on site. The hard part has been to fulfill the aim in a satisfying way that also could relate to the Building Tectonics studio. It has been a challenging but also a rewarding process. An esoteric library has likely never been drawn in this studio before (or any other, for that matter) and considering the design proposal, it has been given an overall structure that is rational and feels very satisfying. A topic that would have been nice to have spent more time on is the third bonus research question: can the tectonic elements of a building bring forward a sense of the magical or mythical? The question was asked since it offered an alternative viewpoint of tectonics but was never really answered during the process, at least not in a conscious way...

As expected, the project also met some critique due to its design. It is interesting to note the feelings that arise with arched windows. An opinion that was expressed during the process was that the arches create "too much romantic atmosphere". They are however kept, not only to create a contextual architecture but also to contribute to the mood of a library with historic and esoteric content at the eastern shores of Loch Ness. The opinion that arches create a romantic atmosphere is not really necessary to argue against. On the contrary, it can actually be seen as a good thing to get a romantic or perhaps even nostalgic feeling when entering a library building. As Campbell (2013) puts it, libraries are places of imagination that can take you back to our childhood or transport us to imaginary worlds. They are not only places to read but also to think and most importantly, dream. If this is enhanced by the shape of the arch, all the better. Perhaps this is as close as we get to answering the third bonus research question: a possible answer could be the tectonic element of the arch in itself. It definitely expresses a connection with monastery libraries of the past, and is perhaps in this way telling an architectural myth? Whether it is magical or not is left to the reader to decide.

/ Georg Klint, Gothenburg, 2021-05-25

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