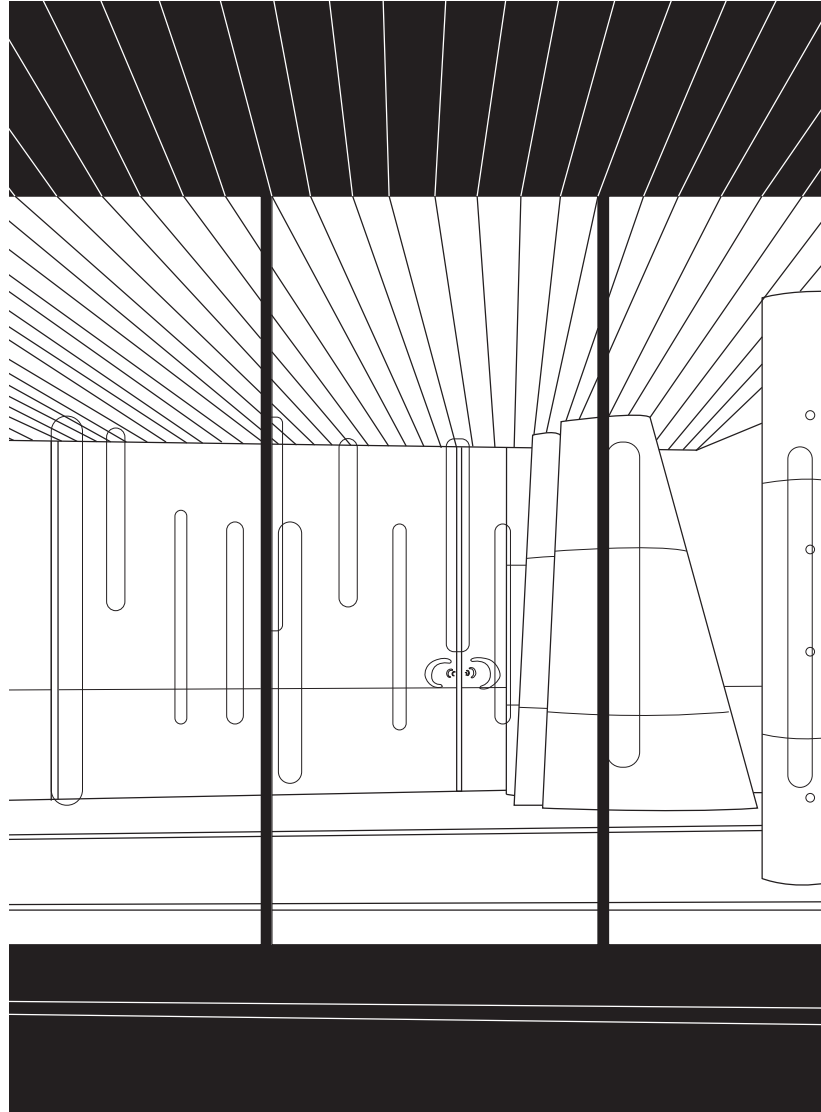


# ESCAPIA

Escapism through forced perspective and reflections in interstitial spaces



Ida Moss / Master's Thesis 2024

Chalmers School of Architecture  
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering

Examiner: Daniel Norell  
Supervisor: Karin Hedlund

## **ESCAPIA**

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Architecture and Urban Design, MPARC  
Architectural Experimentation  
Before and After Building

Examiner: Daniel Norell  
Supervisor: Karin Hedlund



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## Abstract

Escaping has always been a core phenomenon for humans. At first, we escaped from physical threats by using physical means, which then shifted into escaping the non-physical, for example the mental, with distractions such as activities and fictional worlds, becoming what we call escapism (Heilman, 1975).

While the term escapism comes with a lot of negative associations, Yi-Fu Tuan suggests in his book "Escapism" (1998), that human culture, in its fundamental sense, is a mechanism of escape. This argument is supported by Greg Shazer in "Late escapism and contemporary neoliberalism" (2022) stating that while escapism can be seen as a diversion of the social world, that it is in fact what constitutes it.

This masters' thesis investigates how a sense of escapism can be created through the means of architecture, specifically illusions by asking "How can the use of reflections and forced perspective be used in a threshold/interstitial context to achieve a contrast in architectural space and personal mindset?".

Through the investigation of escapism connected to places, the concept of "middle landscapes" (Tuan, 1998), was found as examples of places that evoke the sense of escapism through utilizing the aspect of what you want to escape from together with the contrast of it, for example the artificial city and nature.

It was also found that illusions are a technique to evoke escapism from the real everyday life into the unreal. By using forced perspective and reflections from mirrors, the perception of space can be bent. While it is important to have a believable illusion to achieve immersion in gaming world (Polfeldt, 2024), the deliberate break of an illusion could in physical spaces be of value.

A method was developed for the design proposal where the process focuses on identifying what to escape from in an interstitial space and the contrast to that scenario, later translating that into an architectural space by the use of illusions.

The thesis results in two interventions using reflective mirrors and forced perspective to shift the perspective of the transitional space in a transport hub in Gothenburg Sweden, hoping to achieve spontaneous escapism in that space.

Keywords : escapism, forced perspective, reflection, interstitial space

## Author

Ida Moss

MSc. Architecture and Urban Design  
Chalmers School of Architecture

2022-2024

*Architectural Experimentation: Building on Context*  
*Public Buildings*  
*Emerging media and representation*

Erasmus exchange

Fall Term 2022-2023

Università IUAV di Venezia

*Sustainable Urban Design and Performance*  
*Theories of the City*  
*Analysis and Theory of Architecture*

BSc. Architecture

Chalmers School of Architecture

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## INTRODUCTION

The interest in escapism comes from my own desire and tendency to escape my reality. To escape the city life, I seek nature. To escape stillness, I seek movement. To escape monotony, I seek fiction. Even though escapism can be criticized for being "self-suppressing" (Stenseng, 2009) it has often helped me as a way to recharge in order to deal with everyday life. Therefore, I come from a more positive standpoint in the discourse about escapism, acknowledging that it does not only have negative parts to it.

The aim of this masters' thesis is to investigate how a sense of escapism can be created through the means of architecture, specifically through the use of forced perspective and reflective mirrors. In addition an attempt on creating a method for designing through escapism with illusions as tool is made.

## Research questions

This thesis will be an investigation of how escapism takes form in physical spaces by exploring and examining historical and current examples of forced perspective and the use of mirrors, in order to bend the perception of the physical space.

The thesis departs from the questions:

- What places do we want to escape from?
- What places do we escape to?

Which later evolved into the main research question:

How can the use of reflections and forced perspective be used in a threshold /interstitial context to achieve a contrast in architectural space and personal mindset?

## Use of terms

ESCAPISM

"The tendency to seek, or the practice of seeking, distraction from what normally has to be endured" - Oxford English Dictionary

"Habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine" - Merriam Webster

INTERSTITIAL AREA

"A transitional urban area (as between an industrial and residential district) "

- Merriam Webster

REALITY

"Real existence; what is real rather than imagined or desired; the aggregate of real things or existences; that which underlies and is the truth of appearances or phenomena."

- Oxford English Dictionary

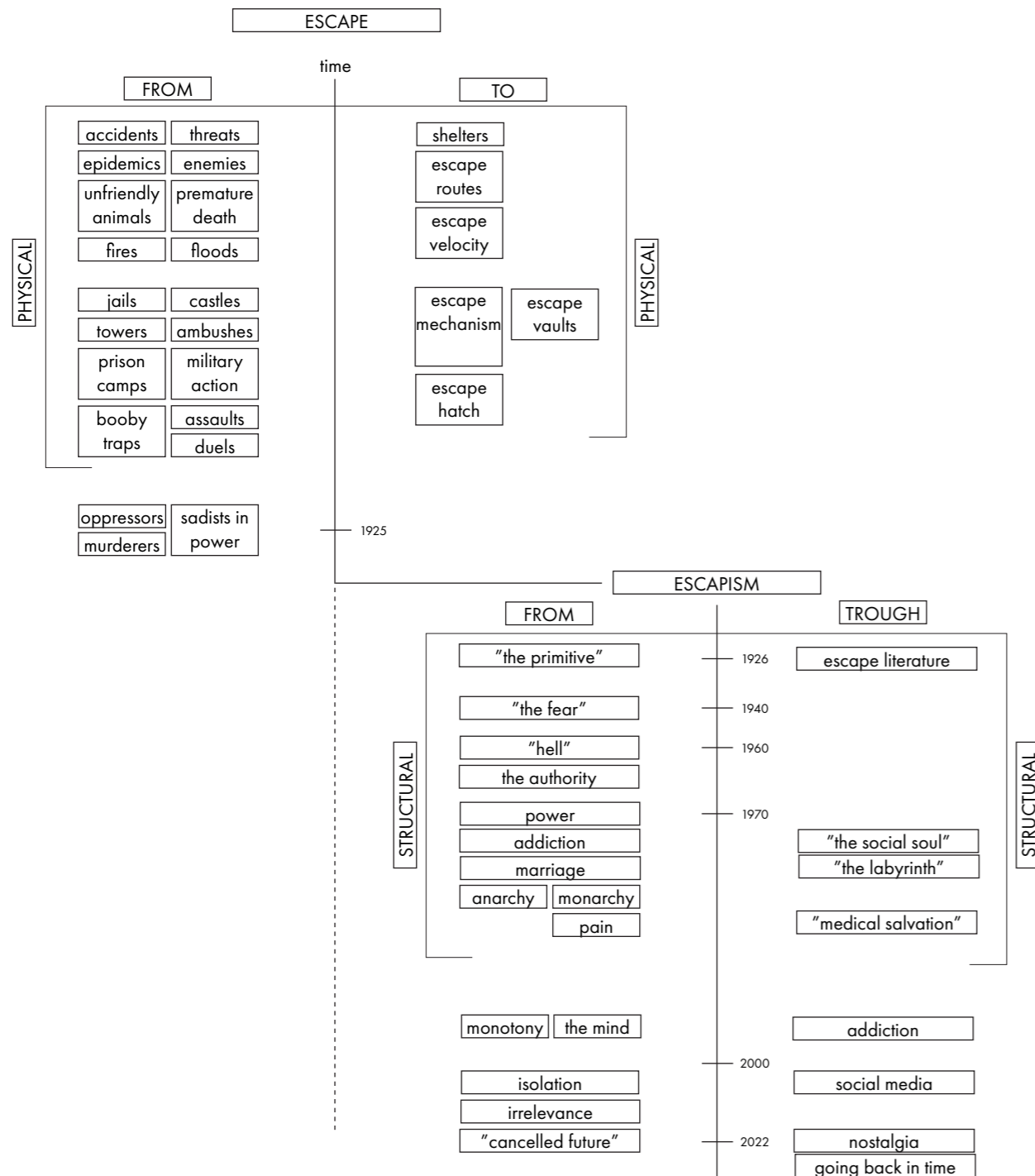


Diagram 1  
Historical associations with the words escape and escapism according to Heilman (1975) and Shazer (2022)

## Background

The concept of escape has existed since the birth of life, being a core phenomenon within us humans. However, the meaning and association around the word has changed throughout history, once being connected to a physical external escape to becoming an association to escape from the structural and/or inner parts of life (Heilman, 1975). In the 1930's the term escapism arose, most likely from literary critic John Ransom, describing the psychology of defeat (Shazer, 2022).

Greg Shazer writes in "Late escapism and contemporary neoliberalism" (2022) that escapism in the contemporary context can be described as the desire to run from circumstances that do not allow actual change, such as pandemics, global economical depression, climate change as well as the monotony of everyday life. While escapism can be seen as a diversion of the social world, Shazer states that it is in fact what constitutes it. This argument is also somewhat supported in Yi-Fu Tuan's book "Escapism" (1998) where he suggests that human culture, in its fundamental sense, is a mechanism of escape.

Tuan continues to describe how we tend to think about escapist places as mega shopping malls, fancy resorts, theme parks etc., summarizing them as "places that all lack weight". He also acknowledges that the common notion of escaping from reality to fantasy comes with a negative association (Tuan, 2002).

In the article "Running to get "lost"? Two types of escapism in recreational running and their relations to exercise dependence and subjective well-being" (2009) Frode Stenseng presents what he calls "The

two dimensional model of escapism" where he suggests that there are two outcomes of escapism: self-suppression and self-expansion. "Self-suppression escapism derives from motivation to avoid negative evaluation of self by getting focused on an activity, whereas self-expansion is motivated from facilitations of positive experiences by getting immersed in an activity" (Stenseng, 2009). Despite this fact of the two tendencies of escapism, it seems that society often focus on the negative association that comes with it.

Escapism can also be described as the act of unlearning the ideological everyday and embracing the anamorphosis. Something which Shazer believes to be much closer to disjointed reality than any smooth narrative arch (Shazer, 2022).

With escapist places being generally associated with Vegas, Disneyland and shopping malls, one begins to wonder if an escapist place can be designed in a transitional form, rather than the traditional place one needs to actively seek? What are the techniques these places use to create an "escapist feeling"? How can a physical public space be transformed into an escape from contemporary everyday life? What places do we want to escape from and to what?



## **Delimitations**

As stated in the background, escape can take form in a variety of shapes, both in what is being escaped from and how that escape is performed. This research will not be dealing with physical escape from traumatic experiences such as war, natural disasters, pandemics, global economic depression etc. in form of shelters or migration.

The research will not be covering escapism in the form of activities but having a focus on space.

The intention of the research is neither an attempt to create an utopia nor a dystopia but rather function as a comment on the present reality we live in by showcasing the escapes we utilize.

## Context

While we as humans have more or less eliminated the physical threats most places could oppose, it does not change the fact that the space around us can be perceived unpleasant and something to escape from. It could seem futile to define the aesthetics of everyday life, because of the broadness of the subject (Shazer, 2022), but looking at it from an architectural viewpoint, it could be argued that there are places where everyday life is more concentrated than others. Places which indicate universally lived experiences.

Interstitial areas, or in-between spaces, are places without defined function and acts as buffers that connects spaces together, for example, hallways, waiting areas, entrances, tunnels and bridges etc. Furthermore, they can offer a mental detachment from the previous scene and enable a retreat to deep thought (Abdel & Pintos, 2022). Despite this, many of these spaces seems to have been designed for the functionality of passing through, not going beyond that experience. Since these thresholds are places we constant meet, often times without actively seeking them, they could be seen as places with high concentration of everyday life.

By taking in-between spaces and transforming them through illusions one might be able to achieve spontaneous escapism, and transforming the area into something more than just a threshold.

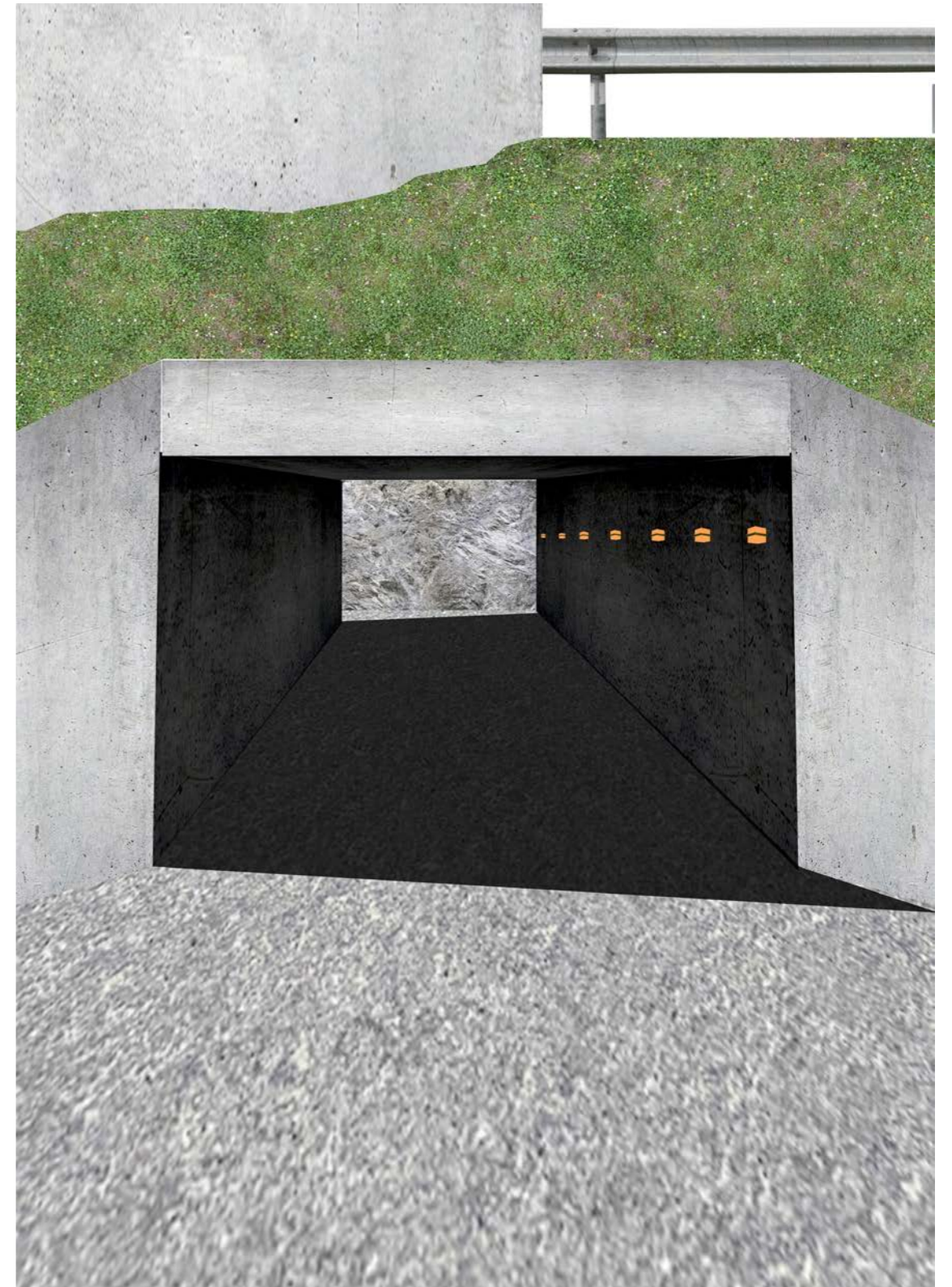


Fig. 1  
A collage representing the interstitial space of a pedestrian tunnel, inspired by tunnel in Gothenburg.

## Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen

Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen is one of the larger transportation hubs situated in Hisingen, a northern part of the city Gothenburg, Sweden. It's biggest role is acting as a connection between the inner city of Gothenburg and the rest of Hisingen island, a part that is rapidly growing in habitants and evolving industries.

North of Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen lies Backaplan, a large shopping area with massive parking lots, heavily characterized by consumption and the aesthetics of the different brands owning the stores. To the east and southeast lies the industrial area of Ringön, as well as the connection to the inner city of Gothenburg. This adjacent area is however barricaded by Lundbyleden highway, making it less apparent to the visitors of the transportation hub. Last but not least, lies several residential areas to the west/southwest, but as the previous example, they are also disconnected to Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen by roads.

Despite Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen's importance to the city network, it has not been designed as a final destination. In both the larger perspective as well as the smaller, the space can be seen as a threshold, acting as an interstitial space.

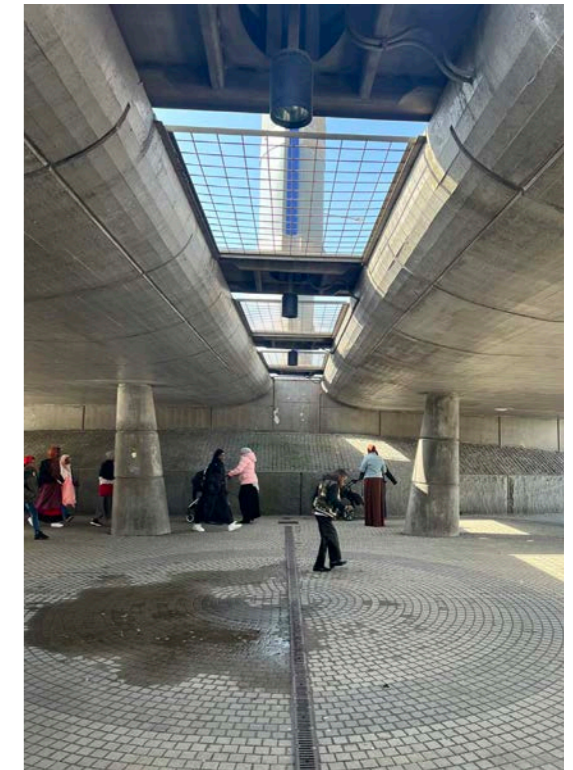
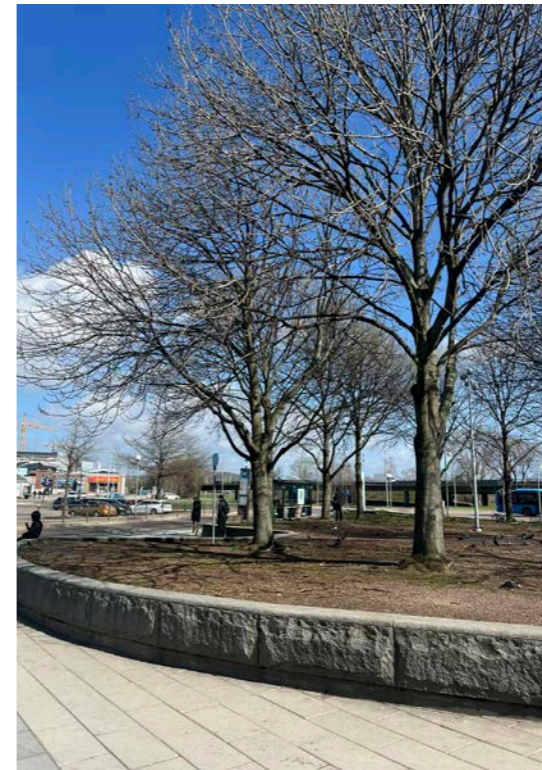


Fig. 2 (Upper left)  
Photograph of green area in Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen seen from outside.

Fig. 3 (Upper right)  
Photograph of pedestrian tunnel in Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen seen from inside.

Fig. 4 (Lower left)  
Photograph of pedestrian tunnel in Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen seen from outside

Fig. 5 (Lower right)  
Photograph of green area in Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen seen from inside.

## Theory

“People yearn for other places they cannot reach” - Greg Shazer (2022).

Defining what an escapist place is, seemed at first like an easy task: a place we seek when wanting to escape our everyday life. The complexity arose when trying to specify the qualities of such a space and finding a pattern within it. Since the form of escapism often relates to the thing we want to escape, by contrast, the answer becomes that all places can be seen as escapist (Tuan, 1998). As an example, if you need to escape your home, you might do so by going to work or going to the gym or going outside to the garden or just reading a book. All of these places then become an escapist place. Infinite reasons gives infinite answers.

### *The paradox of the real and the unreal*

While Oxford’s dictionary defines reality as “Real existence; what is real rather than imagined or desired; the aggregate of real things or existences; that which underlies and is the truth of appearances or phenomena”, the concept of real shifts as the context changes (Tuan, 1998) and following does the unreal. As the real and unreal are not static, neither is escapism. For example being in nature is being in the real, but it is also escapism by being the contrast to the artificial city, therefore being unreal.

It might be easier to say that reality is the familiar, the predictable, home as an example. This would mean that moving out of home could be seen as escapism, escaping ones reality. However this new scenario will inevitably become the reality as time goes on. A lot of times the unreal becomes the real

when sought too much or for too long of a time. Moving to Hawaii to escape the Swedish winters is escapism, until it becomes the new reality (Tuan, 1998).

Why this is interesting in the context of architecture is the fact that the unreal can become the real. Our drive to escapism and the contrast of our realities could be seen as the foundation to all culture we have created, including the built environment. One might even suggest that architects job is to escape, in order to later create the new reality.

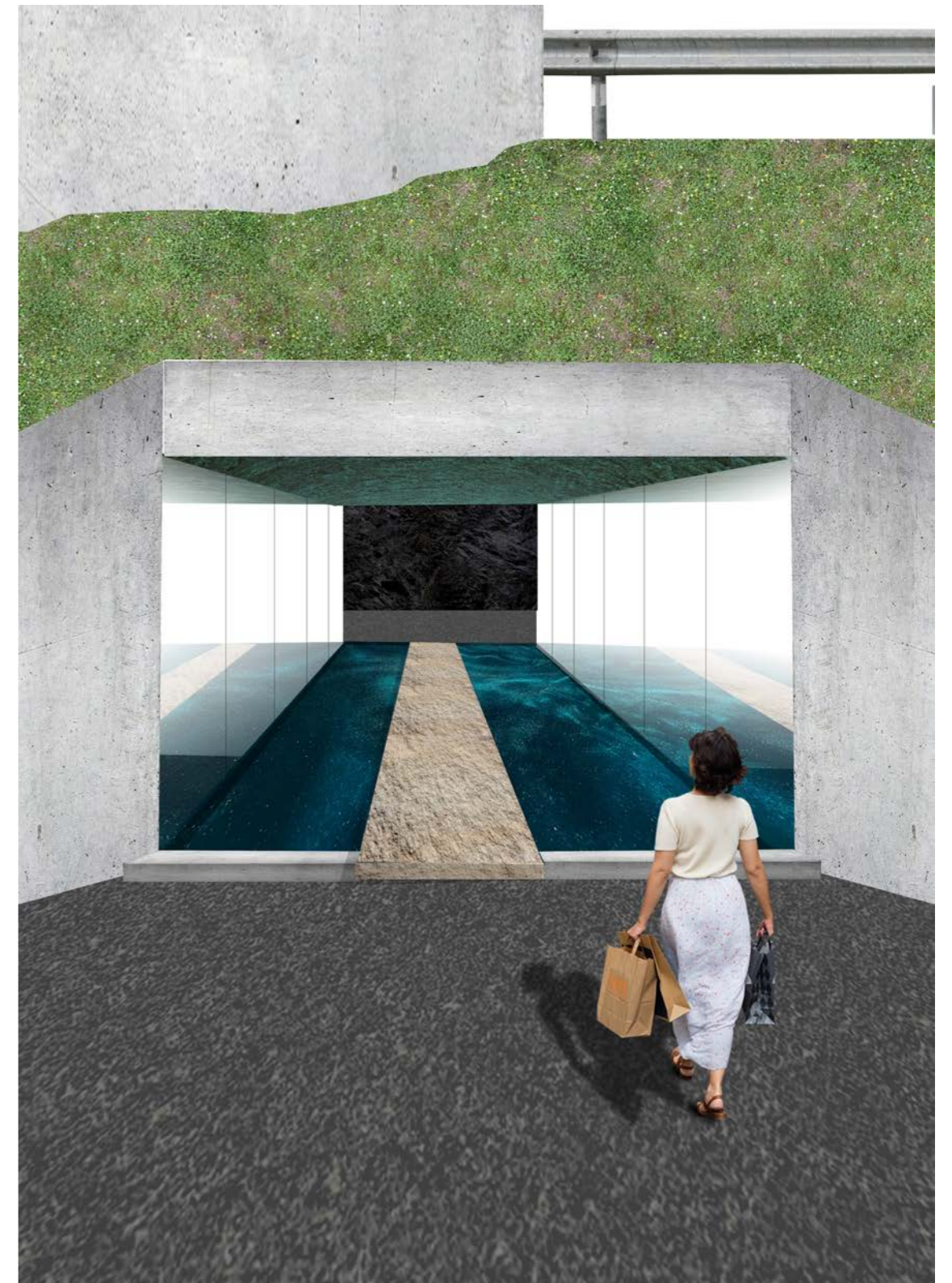


Fig. 6  
A collage re-imagining the interstitial space of a pedestrian tunnel

*Middle landscapes*

One of the first things we did as humans was to escape nature by creating the artificial city (Tuan, 1998) and thus creating the inside and the outside. Since that escape we have consistently tried to escape back to nature and in this process inventing “middle landscapes” (Tuan, 1998). By seeing nature and the artificial city as the opposites ends of a spectrum, middle landscapes are the things between them, such as theme parks, suburbs, gardens and parks, places which is neither nature nor the city, acting as spaces to escape to.

Middle landscapes varies in scales, as seen in the examples above, from camping trips to the return of rural farm life. During the pandemic 2020 there was a large increase in moving from cities to the countryside in Sweden, escaping the restrictions of living in the city during this time. However seldom has “nature movements” resulted in abandonment of cities (Tuan, 1998). After all, escape to nature is dependent on escape from nature.

“People of urban background -and increasingly people are of such background- know little about plants and animals, soils and rocks, even if they now live in exurbia or have a home in rural Idaho”. (Tuan, 1998)

Middle landscapes utilizes aspects from both sides of the spectrum to create an escape. The nature aspect contrasts the artificial surroundings, while the artificial makes it more comfortable than “real” raw nature. For while we seek the contrast to our everyday life, we often times are seeking the idea of the contrast rather than the actual one.

While Tuan used the term middle landscapes specifically for the spectrum between the artificial city and nature, the concept of middle landscapes could very well be used in other contexts. Wouldn't for example the cafeteria be the middle of being at work and at rest? Or the town square the middle of being collective and being alone?



Diagram 2  
Examples of middle landscapes as a spectrum between the artificial and nature, based on examples in “Escapism” by Yi-Fu Tuan (1998)

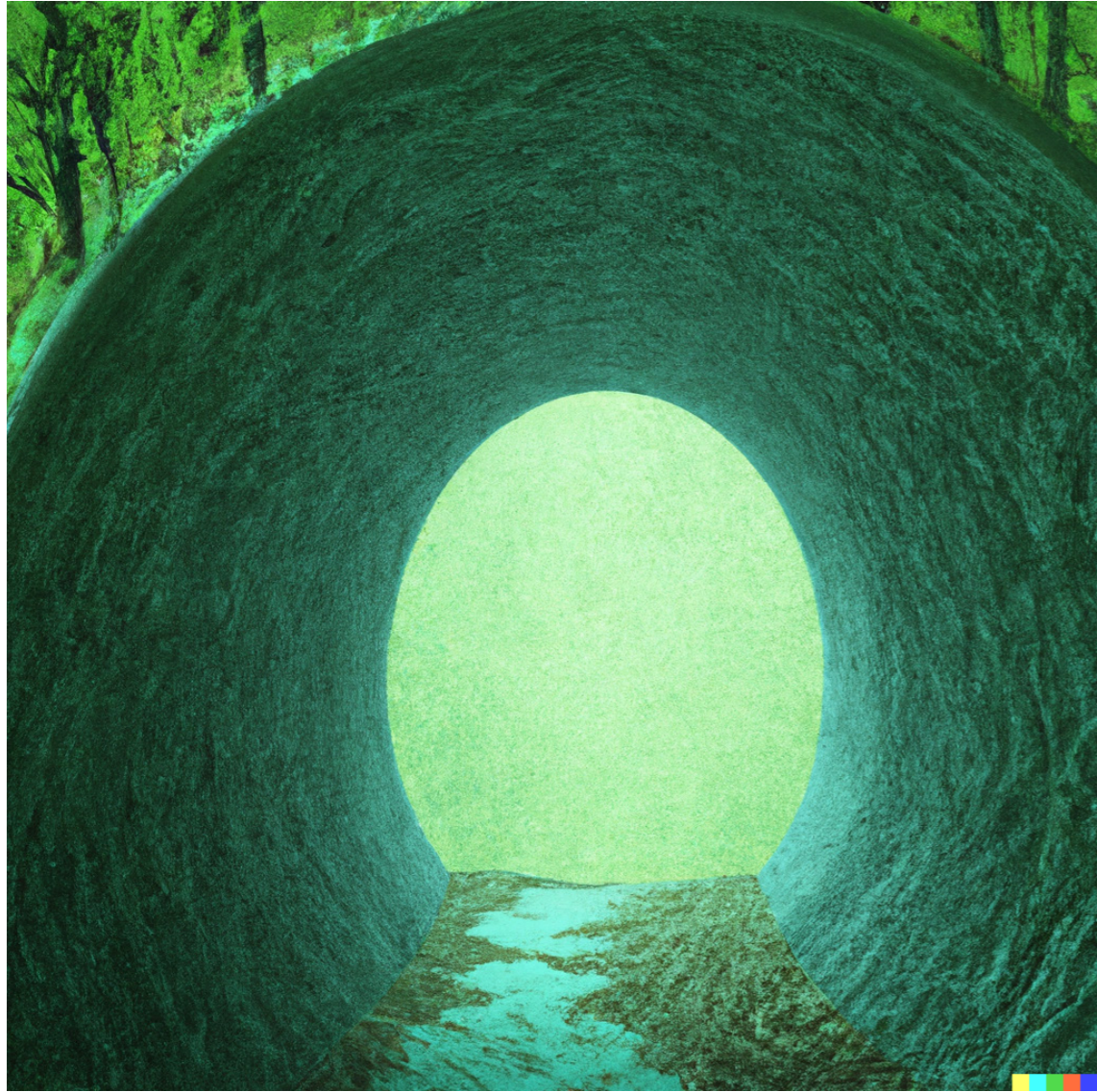


Fig. 7  
AI-generated picture by author, Dall-E2, Open-AI  
Prompt: A photo realistic picture of a fantasy tunnel with nature and illusions

### *The fictional escape*

Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of escapism, from drawings on cave walls to singing, literature, theatre, movies and so on. While most of these still live on, the most contemporary fictional worlds one can escape to today, are the ones that are created for video games. One factor of why the gaming worlds is so compelling is how immersive the experience is for the user. Another is the fact of gaming having shifted the narrative of who the hero is. In older media such as movies and theatre, the audience is only a bystander watching, while the hero is the actors and directors. With gaming the role shifts to the audience, making them the hero of the world (Polfeldt, 2024).

To keep the illusion of the immersion, gaming uses several techniques that are vital for the experience because of the artificial aspect of the worlds. While movies can be seen as artificial with their sets, there is always something real behind it, while in gaming everything is artificial in the aspect of the visuals (Polfeldt, 2024).

One aspect of creating this illusion is called “living world”. This idea bases of the fact that a fully artificial place does not have a history, so in order to create a believable one, this aspect needs to be considered greatly. What has happened in this world? How long has it existed? What are the physical laws of this space? The question “Why?” is important to work with, since our minds are very sensitive to this in our environments.

As a subheading to the “living world” concept comes the aspect of “People don’t just stand around” (Polfeldt, 2024). Every person in this

world has a life and a purpose to being where they are. Even other lifeforms are often forgotten, such as insects and animals. This is something that, according to Polfeldt, separates an immersive game from a non-immersive one.

Even if the fictional world is not based on our real worlds logics, it can still be believable, as long as it always follows it’s own logic. Polfeldt calls this “Kalle Anka logik” (English: Donald Duck Logic) and refers to how Carl Barx, the creator of the comic, had a foolproof logic in his world, the habitants doesn’t wear trousers. In a sense this can be seen as a trivial logic but the fact is that it stands for the logic of being a fable and that it will always be a fable.

*The unreal reality*

To bridge the fictional into the real, one can utilize illusion as a tool. Illusions can make us believe that something impossible, in fact is possible, bending the rules of visual space as well as making us question what is real and what is not.

Connecting back to Polfeldt's theory about making a immersive world through believable illusions, the same goes for optical illusions in our physical space. The better the technique of said illusion are hidden, the more believable it becomes.

A believable unbroken illusion seems to be the key to an immersive escape into the video game world. However as Polfeldt stated, the gaming worlds are fully artificial and therefore more fragile in believability. When connecting this to physical architecture, the importance of believable illusions might not be of as high importance. For once, we always have parts being "real", such as material, lighting, smell and sounds. Secondly, there is something magical about when an illusion breaks in the physical world, showcasing the real and the unreal in the same space. This magic could be the very reason of the rising interest in visiting movie sets such as Hobbiton (From the Lord of the rings Saga) or the café frequently seen in the TV-series Friends. It is not enough anymore to only watch these fictive worlds, we want to experience them ourselves, know how they are made and as a result transforming ourselves from the viewer to the protagonist.

Worth mentioning is the importance of having a deliberate breaking point of the illusion rather than an accidental one. The accidental break makes it feel unfinished and less complex than it is, while a deliberate break can strengthen the complexity of the illusion, even if it is rather simple.

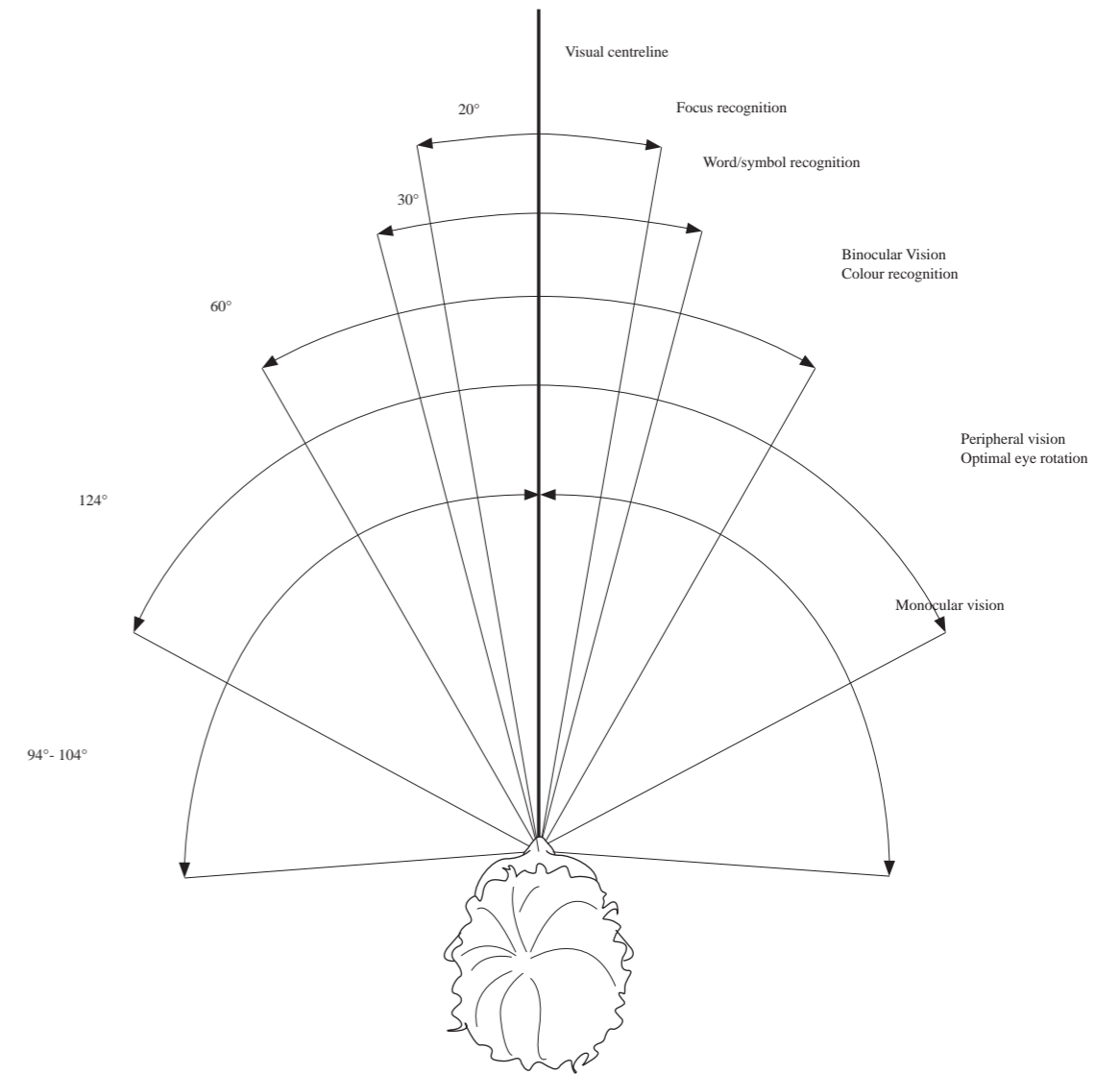


Diagram 3  
Different areas of the human field of view

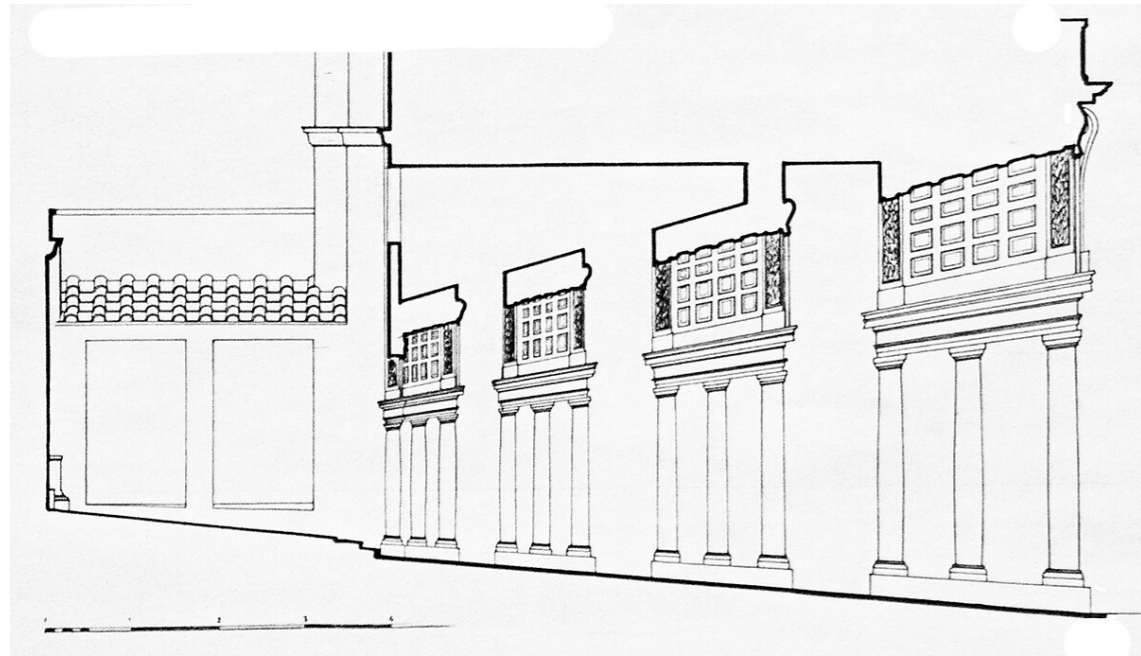


Fig. 8 (Upper)  
Section of Francesco Borromini's Gallery at Palazzo Spada, Rome (1635).

Fig. 9 (Lower)  
Photograph of Francesco Borromini's Gallery at Palazzo Spada, Rome (1635).

## Illusions

### *Forced Perspective*

The technique of forced perspective is an optical illusion, tricking the mind to believe a space to be larger, smaller, further away or closer. By using scaling of objects and how they correlate with a vantage point of the subject, the perception of space can be bent (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019).

Forced perspective can be calculated with the formula:

$$\Theta = 2 \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{h}{2D} \right)$$

$\Theta$  is the forced perspective angle

$h$  is the height of the object

$D$  is the distance to the object

(Hess, 2017)

Famous examples in architecture who has utilized this technique are Francesco Borromini's work in Palazzo Spada, Rome (1635) making the arcade appearing to be much longer than it was in reality. (Palazzo Spada, 2022). The technique has also been utilized for the castle in Disneyland, USA, making it appear bigger than actual size, and the Potemkin stairs, Odesa, giving the illusion of depth (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019).



### *Mirrors and reflections*

Another tool for bending the perception of a space are the usage of mirrors and reflections. This technique is more present in visual artists works, such as Yayoi Kusama, Olafur Eliasson and Guillaume Lachapelle.

The mirrors we are familiar with today, not counting other reflective materials such as water, polished stone and, are often made from metals being applied on glass to create the reflective surface.

Mirrors can be traced back in history as a symbol of luxury, only the bourgeoisie could afford them going back 500 years. However with time, as the technique of developing mirrors became more easy, they became more affordable for the working classes. (A Brief History of Mirrors | Museum of the Home, n.d.)



Fig. 10  
Photograph of an infinity landscape created through reflection

## Method

The method used for the design proposal was developed from research on design, research by design and research through design in a curiosity driven manner.

The first two mentioned concluded the initial phase of explorations where research on design generated the techniques of forced perspective and reflection as ways of manipulating physical spaces.

Research by design then tested these techniques and challenged them into what context they could be utilised in.

For the last step of research through design, the method was divided into several steps to use for the final proposal. The steps are as follows:

1. Identifying and choosing a site that is a threshold between two experiences
2. Defining what a person wants to escape from
3. Defining the contrast to previous step in order to define what the person might want to escape to
4. Translating that escape in terms of architectural space
5. Using techniques such as false perspective and reflections, as a tool to achieve the illusion of that physical space

## Design explorations

### *Teatro Olimpico*

In Andrea Palladio's work for the Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza, 1555, a variety of illusion techniques was used to recreate the essence of a classical Roman theatre. The work with forced perspective and al fresco for the background creates a deception of having an infinite road within the physical boundaries of the site.

### *Exploration 1 Forced Perspective*

As a starting point to understand forced perspective, a 3D version of Teatro Olimpico was made. It became clear that the forced perspective was harder to recreate than expected, because of the available sections and plan that distorted the actual shapes of the slanted walls.

Another discovery that was made, was that without the al fresco background, the illusion was somewhat broken, showing that the shapes alone might not create the full effect. Another factor that might have an influence on the illusion is the fact that the real Teatro Olimpico is embellished with a lot of ornaments. Since the viewer most likely has a preconceived image in their mind of what a building is, the ornaments and faked materiality could work as a distraction to make the viewer believe the illusion rather than to question it. When stripped from most ornamentation in the rendering, the "flaws" of the technique becomes much more visible.

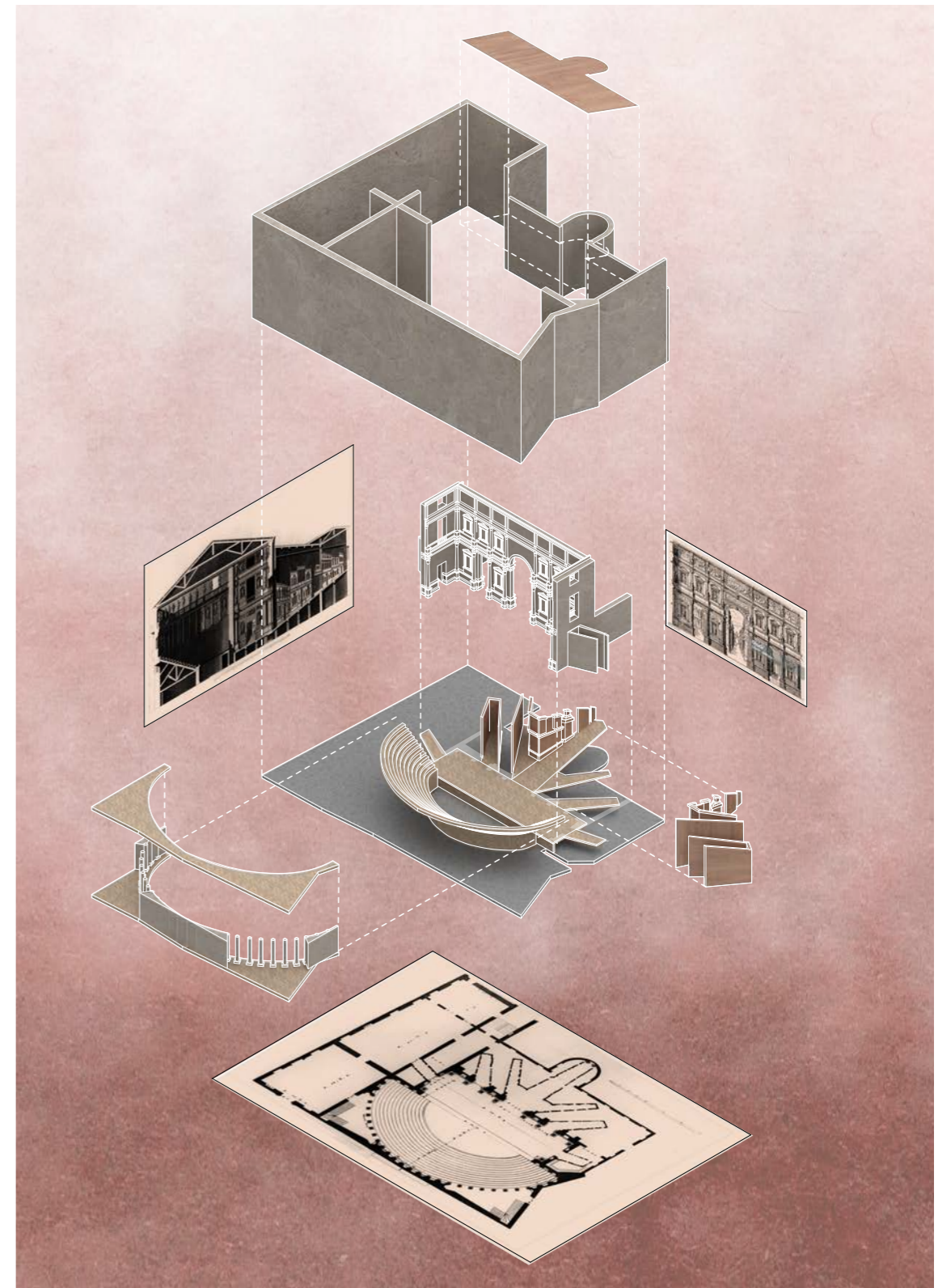


Fig. 11  
Exploded axonometric drawing of Teatro Olimpico

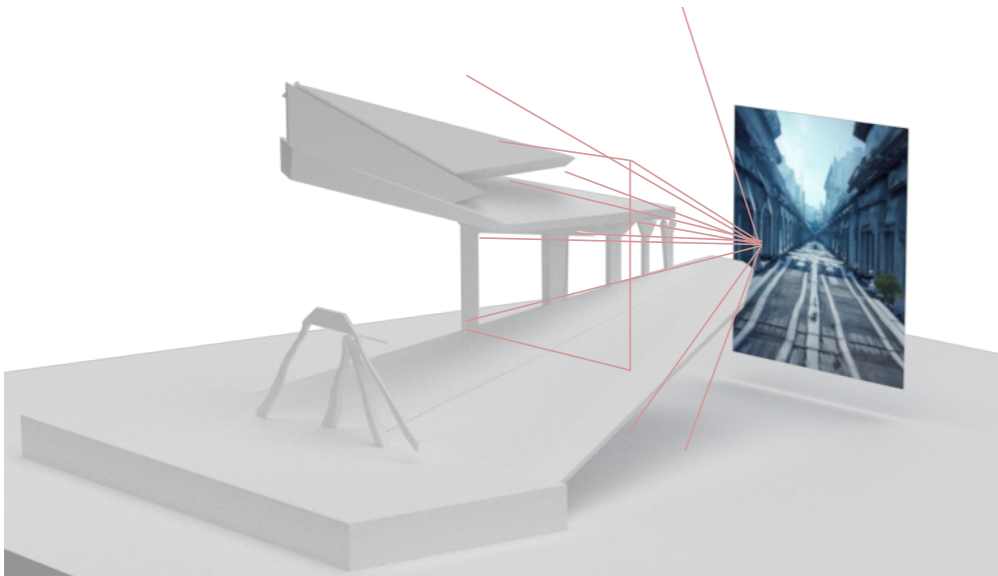


Fig. 12 (Upper)  
 AI-generated picture by author, Stable Diffusion, Stability AI  
 Prompt: *an open portico revealing an infinite dystopian road, vray, unreal engine, 8k, cinematic lighting, forced perspective, hyperrealistic.*

Fig 13. (Lower)  
 Process picture of translating fig. 12 to 3D

*Exploration 1.1 Escapism context*

Going further in order to reinterpret the forced perspective, a context was needed as a base for the exploration. This base was generated through the AI Stable diffusion, where four images became a result of the prompt: *an open portico revealing an infinite dystopian road, vray, unreal engine, 8k, cinematic lighting, forced perspective, hyperrealistic.*

AI-generating was chosen because of the nuance of “the uncanny valley”. Since the outcome of AI-generating often mimics reality while still having surrealistic ambiance to it, the method seemed appropriate in relation to the subject of the escaping reality.

The choice of words came from trying to take inspiration from the structure of Teatro Olimpico while connecting it to something that might be connected to escapism, in this case dystopia.

*Exploration 1:2 Translation to 3d*

The image was brought into a 3D-modelling program where a focal point was decided and perspective lines were drawn in order to create the shapes. The shapes were then created without a notion of having rational shapes but rather explored distorted planes that would only seem “true” from the front view. This resulted in an illusion that could only be believed from head on, all other angles revealed the distortions. Despite this, the breaking point of the illusion became an added interesting effect to the technique making the observer wanting to interact more with the space.

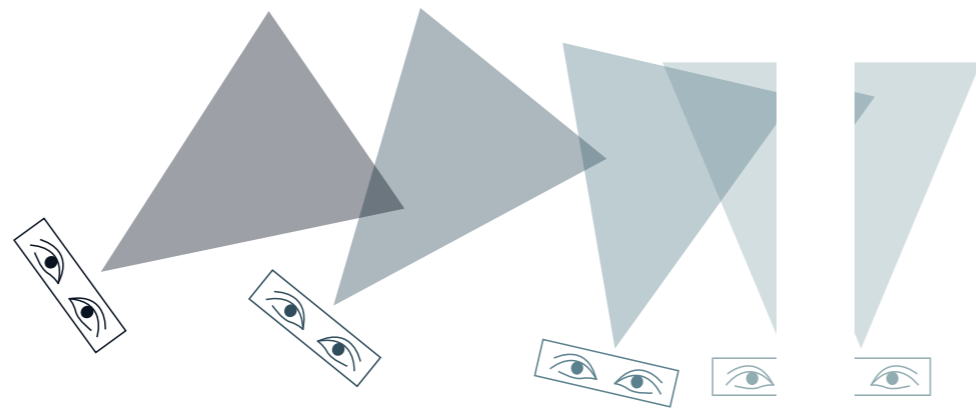
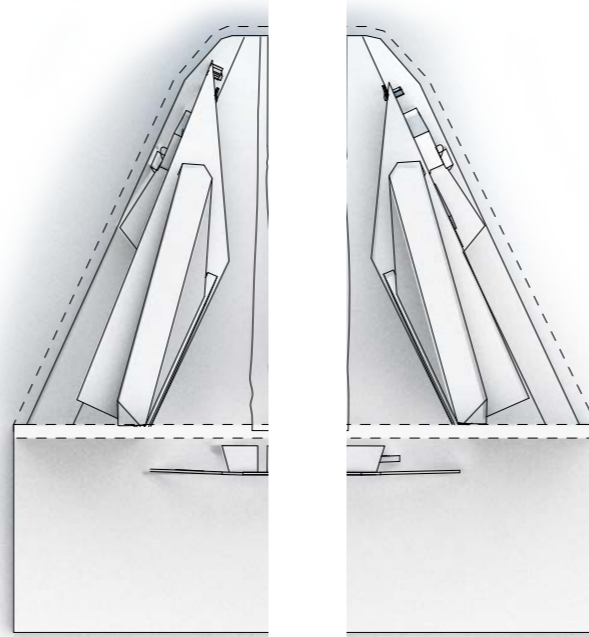
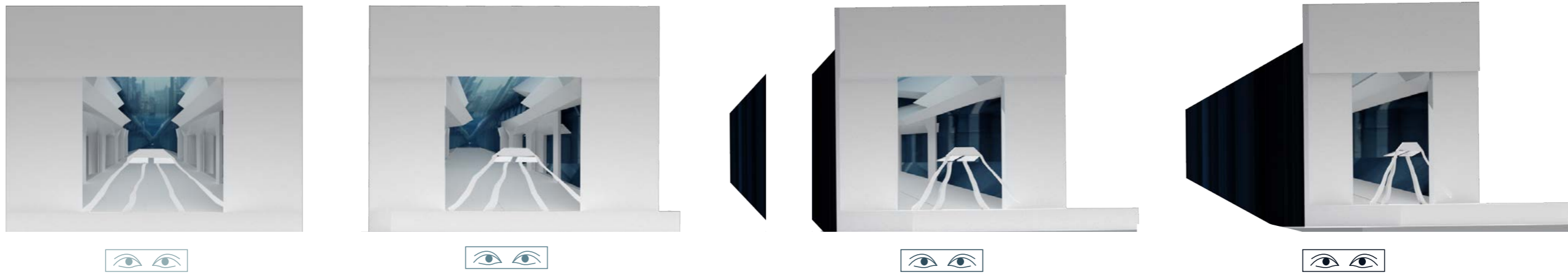


Fig. 14  
Plan view of exploration 1.2 showcasing the breaking point of the illusion

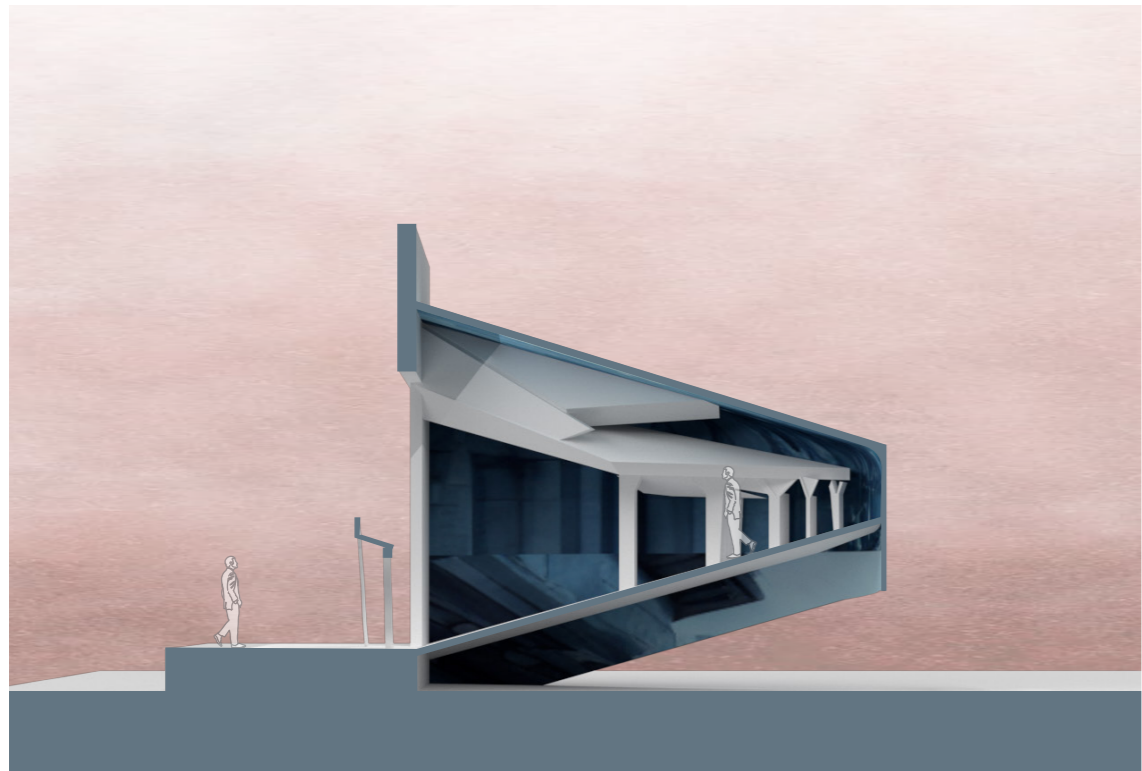
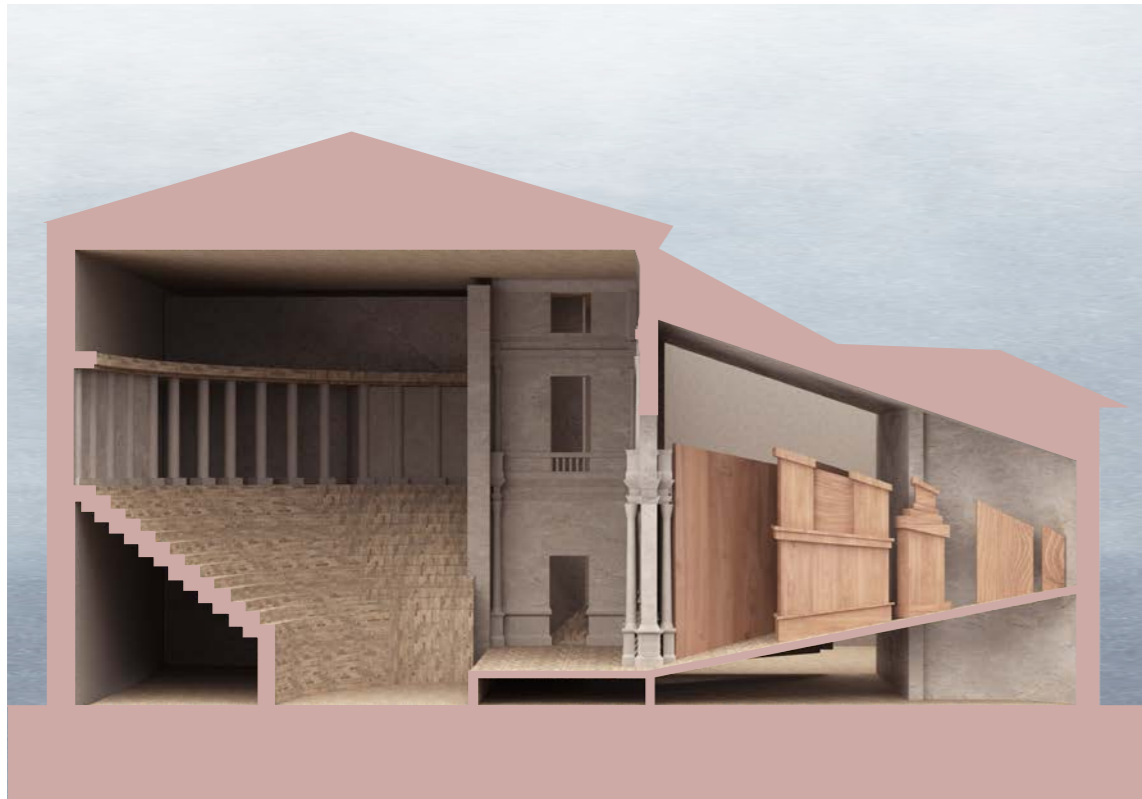
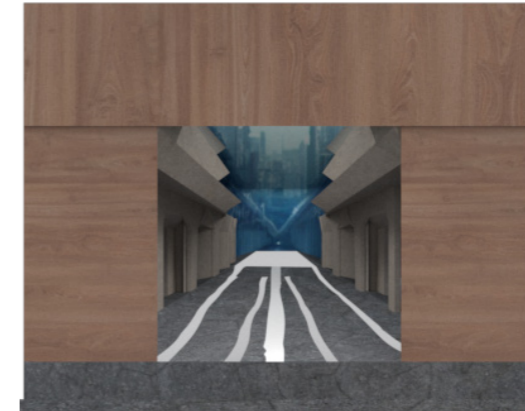
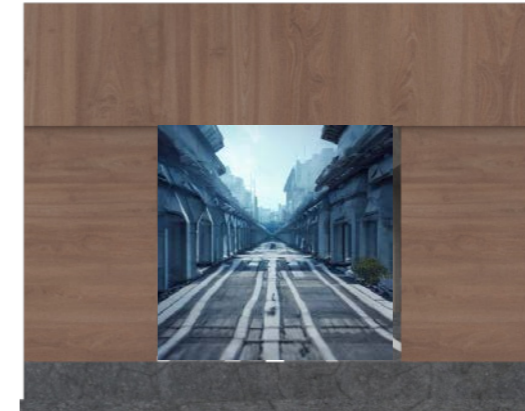


Fig. 15 (Upper)  
Section of Teatro Olimpico

Fig. 16 (Lower)  
Section of exploration 1.2



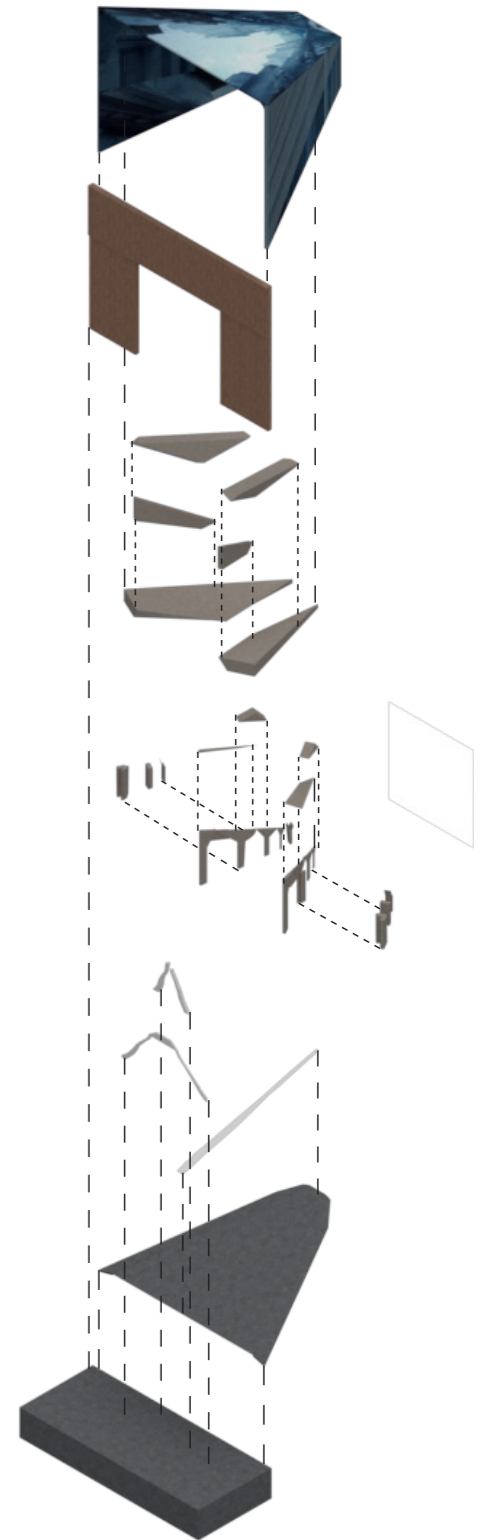
FRONT VIEW SCALE 1:100



FRONT VIEW SCALE 1:100

Fig. 17 (Left)  
Comparison of the 3D translated version and the AI generated picture.

Fig. 18 (Right)  
Exploded axonometric drawing of exploration 1.2



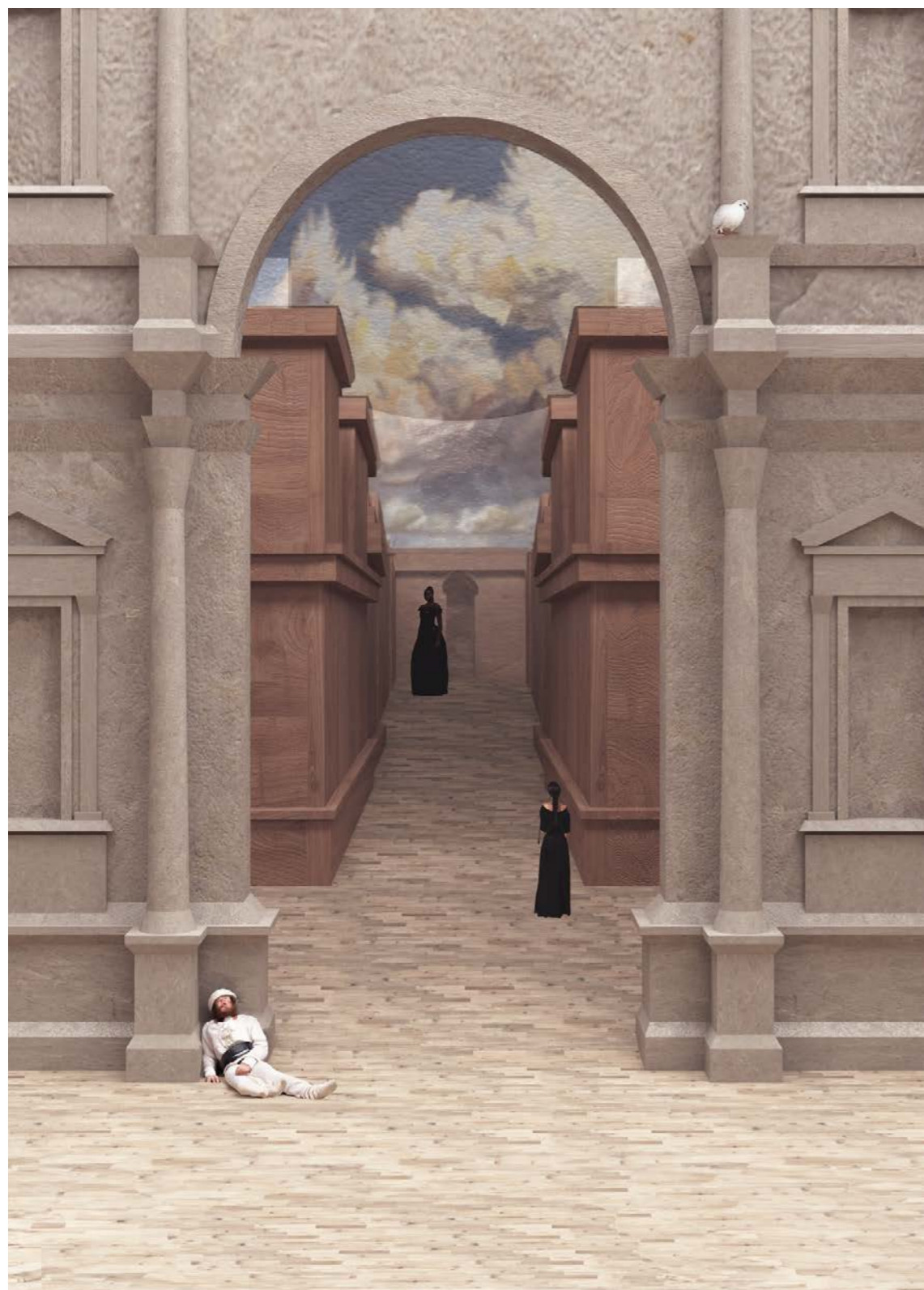


Fig. 19  
3D version of Teatro Olimpico with AI-generated editing

*Exploration 1.3 Re-interpreting the inspiration*  
In the final process of finishing exploration 1, after having finished exploration 1.1, the layer of uncanny was added to the renderings in form of AI-generated people. This was an attempt to stay true to the “real” architecture while adding something bordering unreal to it. While the “people” in the picture might look, when seen from afar, somewhat real. When looked at more closely, one quickly discovers how they actually are distorted in many ways. In one sense this phenomenon connects to the technique of forced perspective, an attempt to mimic reality by not being its “true self”.

The second technique explored, investigated different illusions that could be achieved through reflections and mirrors.

#### *Exploration 2 Levitating object*

The first version explored mirrors facing the surroundings. The intended illusion was to create the sense of a levitating object by putting the object on top of mirrors. The illusion seems to work the best when seen from above (notice the difference between the upper and lower images), because of the grass being the only thing reflected. The illusion might work better with a consistent surrounding, where the environment more or less looks the same from all directions, for example a field. In that case the viewing angle would be less important since the

#### *Exploration 2.1 Inside reflections*

A box with mirrors heading into the box was explored with different iterations of amounts of mirrored sides openings. In the first example (shown at page 39-40) were two sides were open towards the camera, it became clear that the foreground was more present in the reflections rather than the presence of the object inside. While for the second example (page 41-42), when no openings were made, the object inside became most important. An interesting effect was how the gaps between the mirrors in example 2 created an infinite pattern. However it did somewhat destroy the illusion.

#### *2.2 Infinity Landscapes*

A third attempt was made where the focus was on blurring the edges of the mirror to hide the “breaking points” of the illusion. This was done by using vegetation to hide the edges, since the randomness of its shape made it unclear where the mirrors began and ended. However the effect only worked on the lower part of the mirror landscape and the edges from the top and sides where still pretty visual.

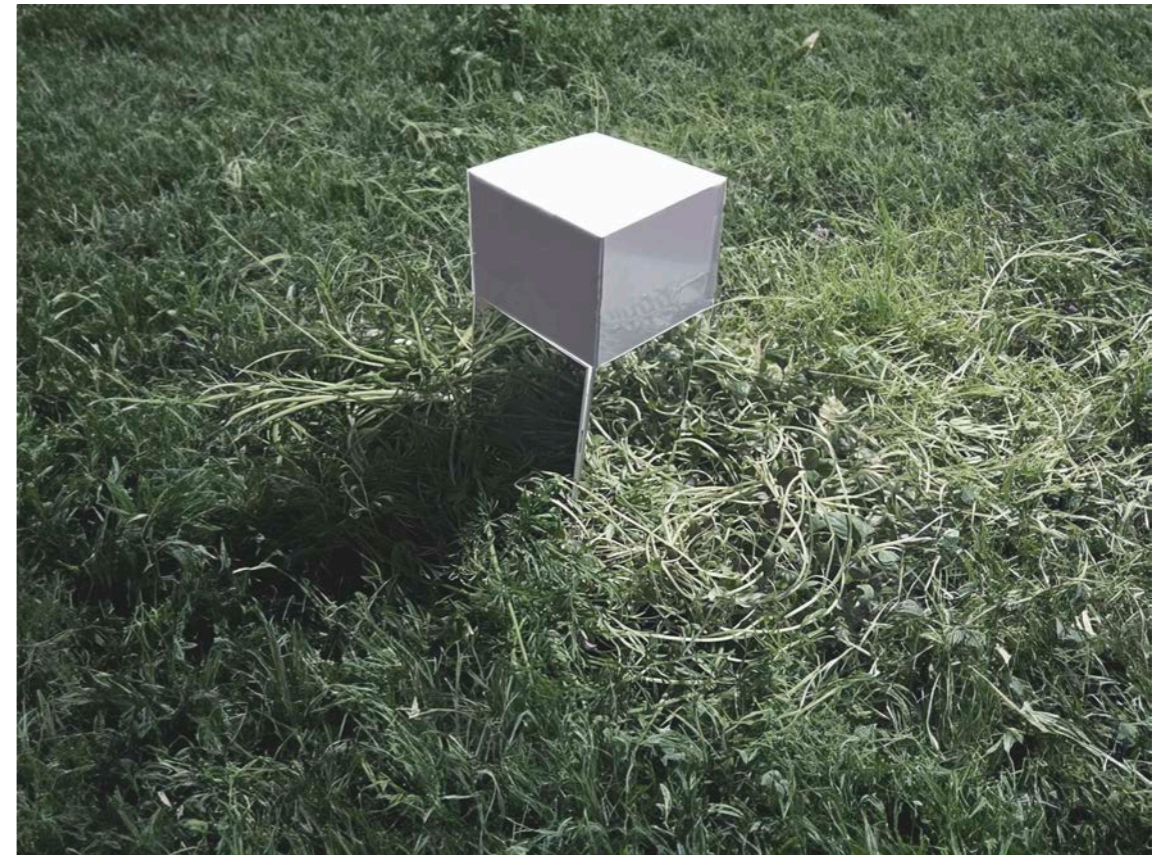


Fig. 20/21/22  
Pictures of levitating object illusion



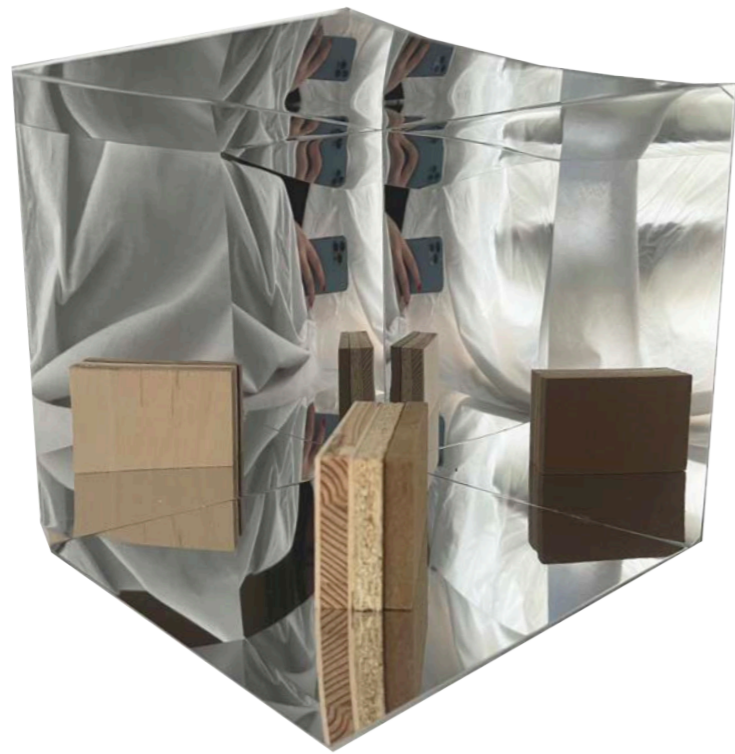


Fig. 23  
Picture of mirror box

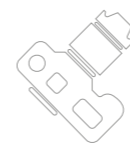
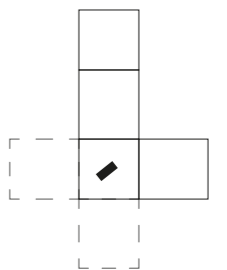


Fig. 24  
Drawing of the mirror reflection based on fig. 23



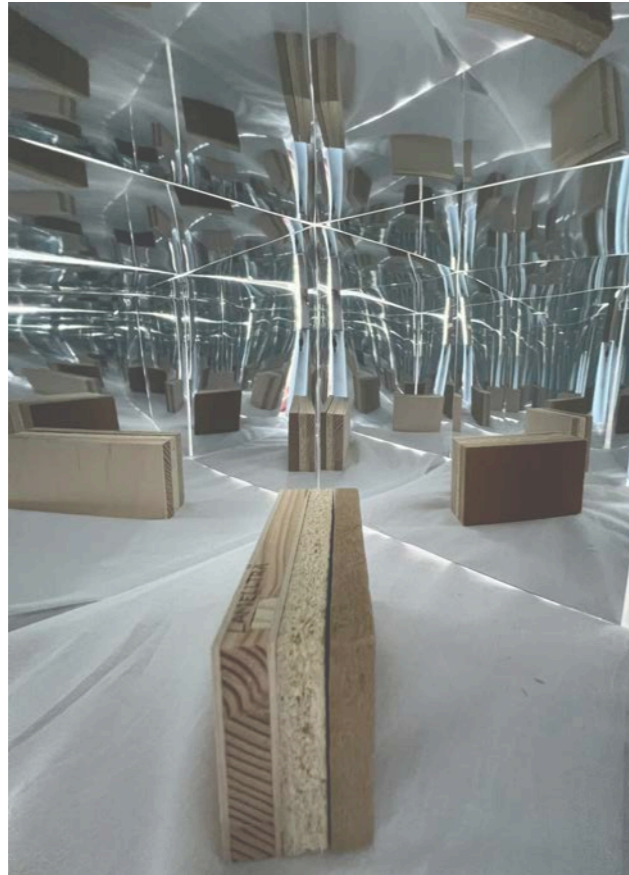


Fig. 25  
Picture of mirror box

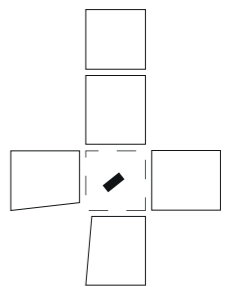
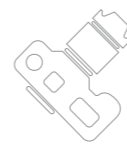
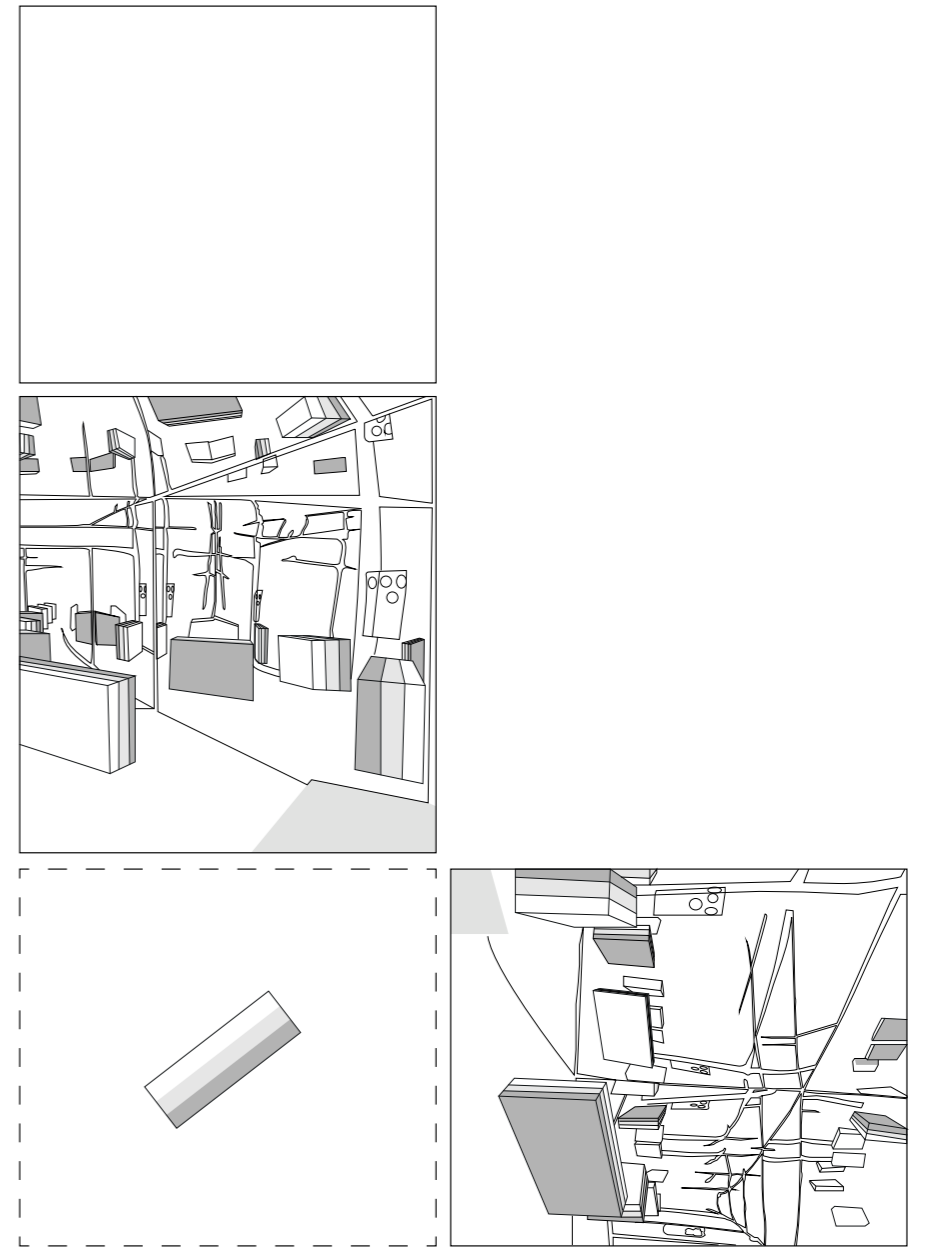


Fig. 26  
Drawing of the mirror reflection based on fig. 25



Fig. 27  
Picture of mirror box with vegetation



Fig. 28  
Picture of mirror box with vegetation seen from above

## Design Proposal

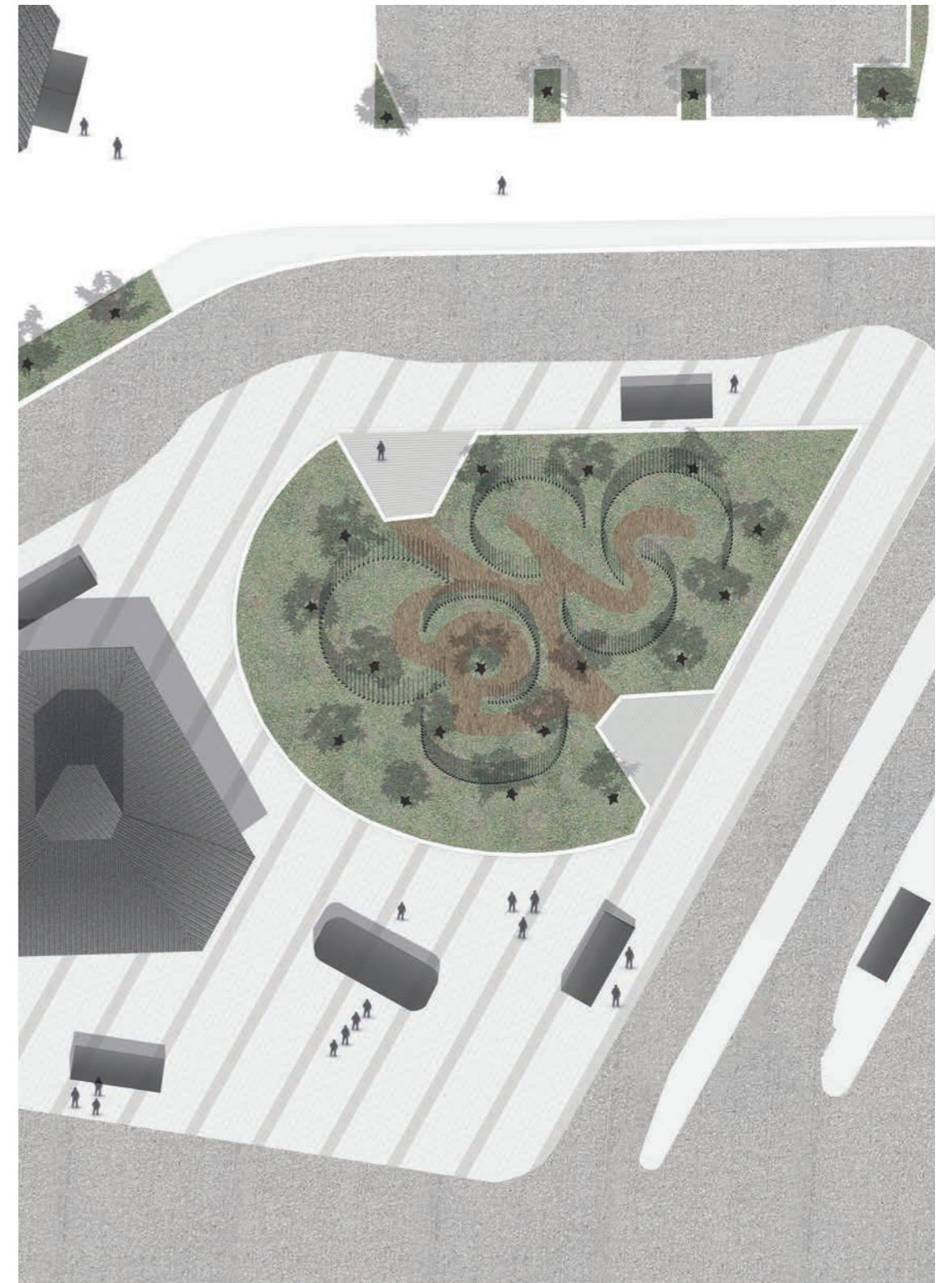
### *Intervention 1: The escape from the exposure*

At the centre of Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen the interstitial space of a small green area was identified. It represents a failed attempt to create a middle landscape for the ones wanting to escape the city by nature. Experiencing the space from within the greenery makes the person feel vulnerable and put in the spotlight, while looking at it from outside the sparseness and emptiness of the space makes it almost invisible and the focus became the crowd around the area.

The situation to escape was defined as escaping exposure and the feeling of being on stage while being inside the green area, as it is uplifted and sparse with greenery.

The contrast to being exposed could be defined as making the person become the viewer, making them sheltered from outside looks.

These aspects were then translated into several spaces defined by small panels of mirrors, having gaps between them. From the outside, looking at the space, the mirrors would be hiding the inside and reflecting the trees as well as the surrounding creating a barrier for the person within. From the inside, the slanted gaps would give the person a clear view of what is happening outside of the green area, while at the same time being protected from outside looks thanks to the mirror panels. The effect also amplified the aspect of nature when existing inside the space, and amplified the city context when looking from outside.



Plan view of the area



Existing conditions: Perspective view outside area



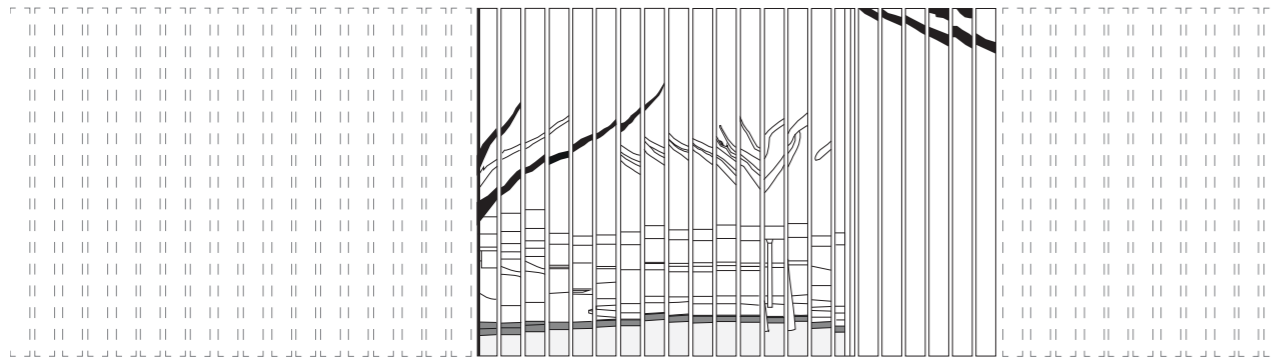
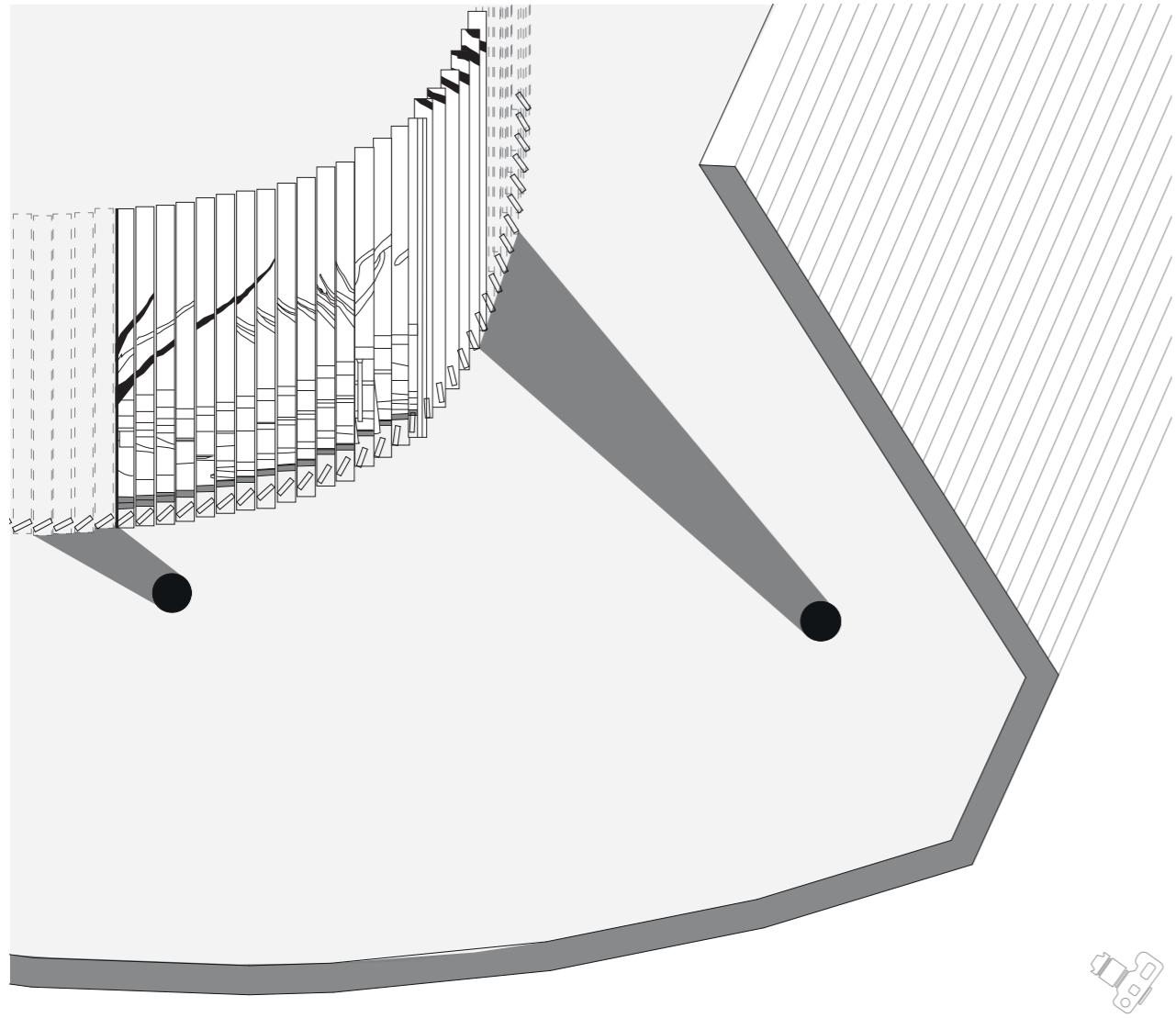
Existing conditions: Perspective view inside area



After intervention: Perspective view outside area



After intervention: Perspective view inside area



Plan view of new intervention in pedestrian tunnel

## Design Proposal

*Intervention 2: The escape from the city and home*  
The pedestrian tunnel south of the tram station was identified as a key threshold and interstitial area in Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen. It represents a connection between the fast, noisy and energetic transportation hub and the slow, vernacular and calm residential area and becomes a portal between the two.

Two scenarios were found as relevant experiences to escape from at this place; escaping home and escaping the city, depending from what way one meets the tunnel.

Coincidentally, the two scenarios can already be seen as a contrast to each other. One being the unknown, the hard and ever growing. The other being the familiar, the softer and the smaller.

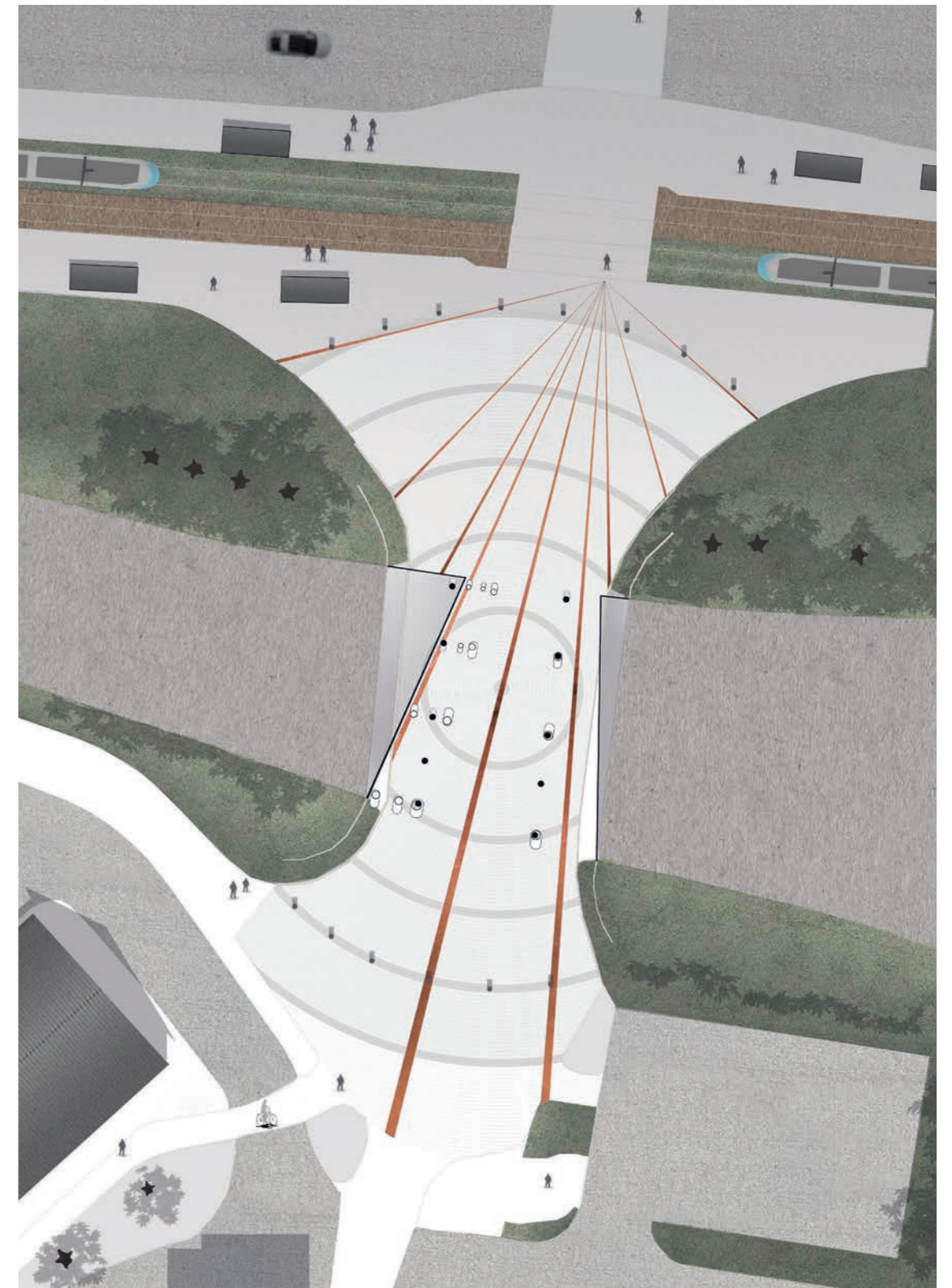
Wanting to escape the city would mean wanting to escape the characteristics of it. By specifying it to wanting to escape Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen that would mean wanting to escape the chaotic moving patterns of people around going to different places, the presence of vehicles being put in centre, the unexpected and so on. So as an escape one would want to get away from the buses, having a clearer pathway and seeing the familiar.

The same goes for escaping home, which could be characterised as the ordinary, the expected, the isolated etc. The contrast to this would be the unusual, the unexpected and the open.

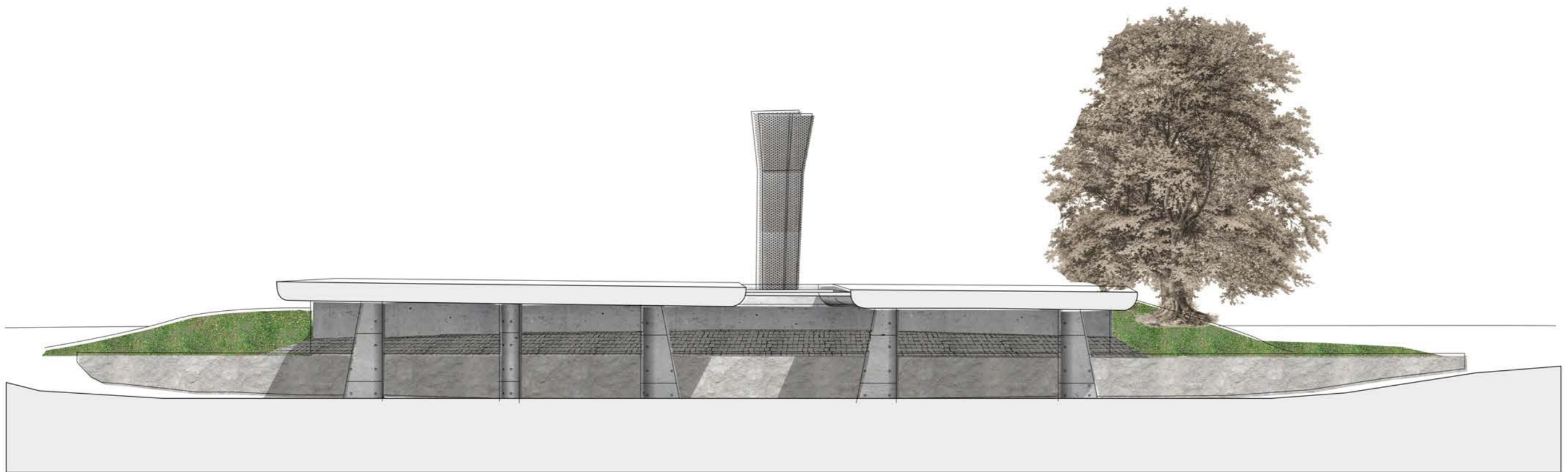
These aspects were translated into a concept of having two separate experiences meeting the tunnel, depending which way one would come

from, each characterized by the corresponding aspects. The one escaping the city sees the tunnel as shorter than it is, believing it to be a straight and clear movement towards home.

For the person escaping home, the tunnel instead looks longer, with the lines added in the ground directing the gaze beyond the tunnel. While getting closer to the tunnel the illusion of the mirrors becomes more apparent, tricking the mind into thinking that “more tunnels” are connected on the sides. The person also experiences the distorted pillars, mimicking the originals uncannily. With these illusions, the mind can escape the familiar into the unexpected.

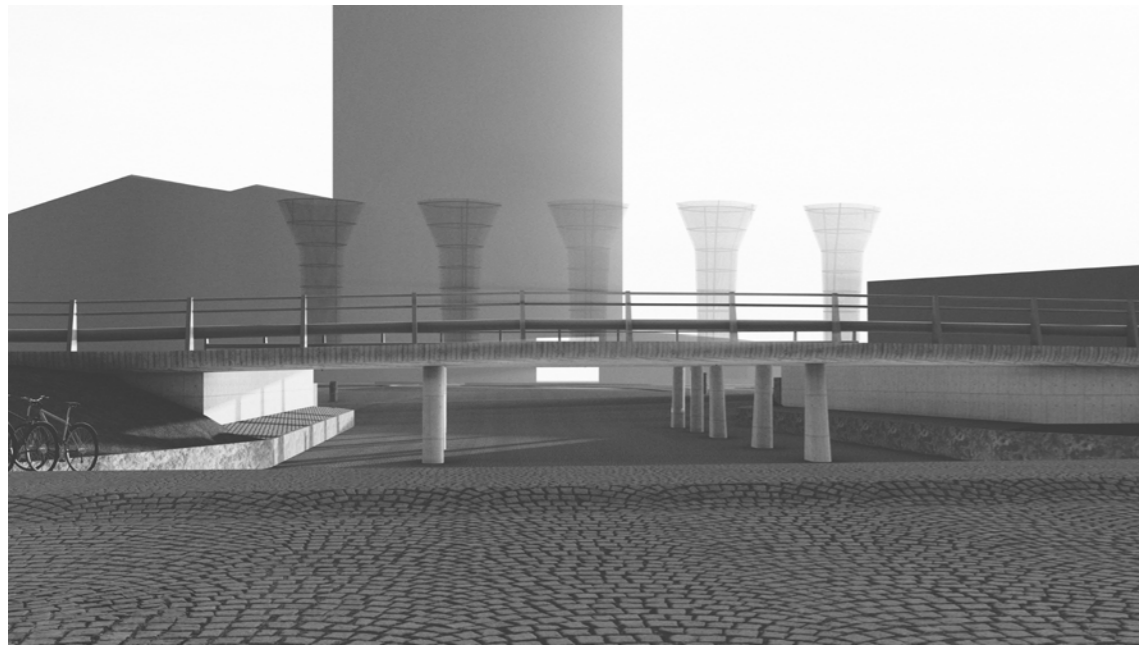


Plan view of new intervention in pedestrian tunnel

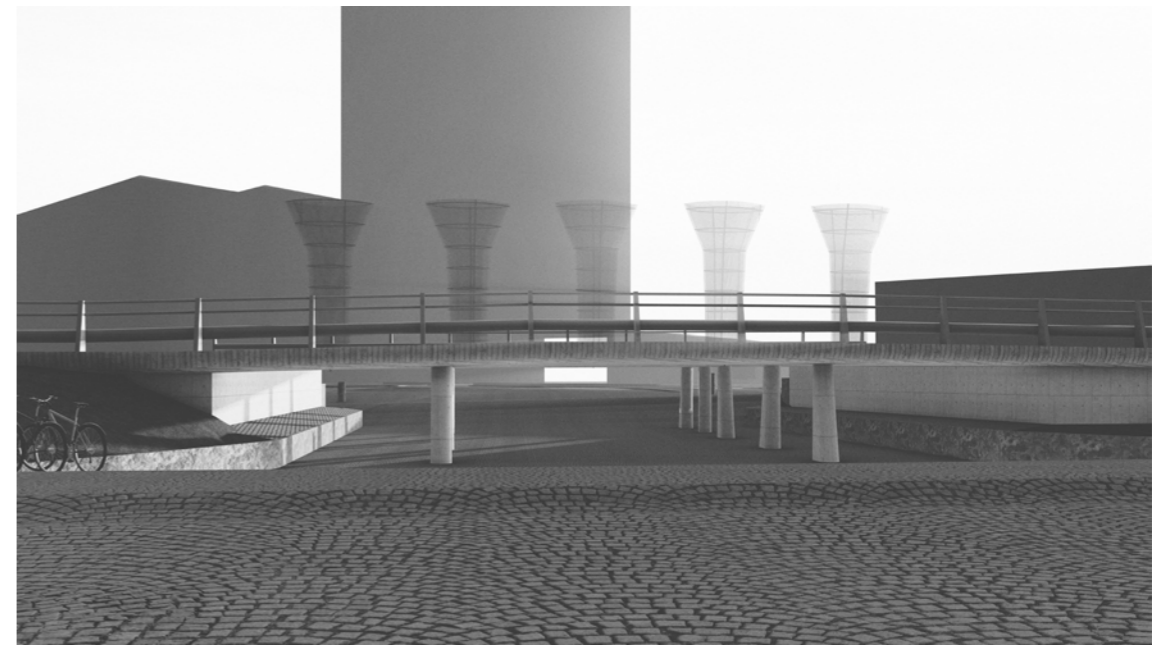


Upper: Section A-A of after intervention  
Lower: Section A-A of existing conditions

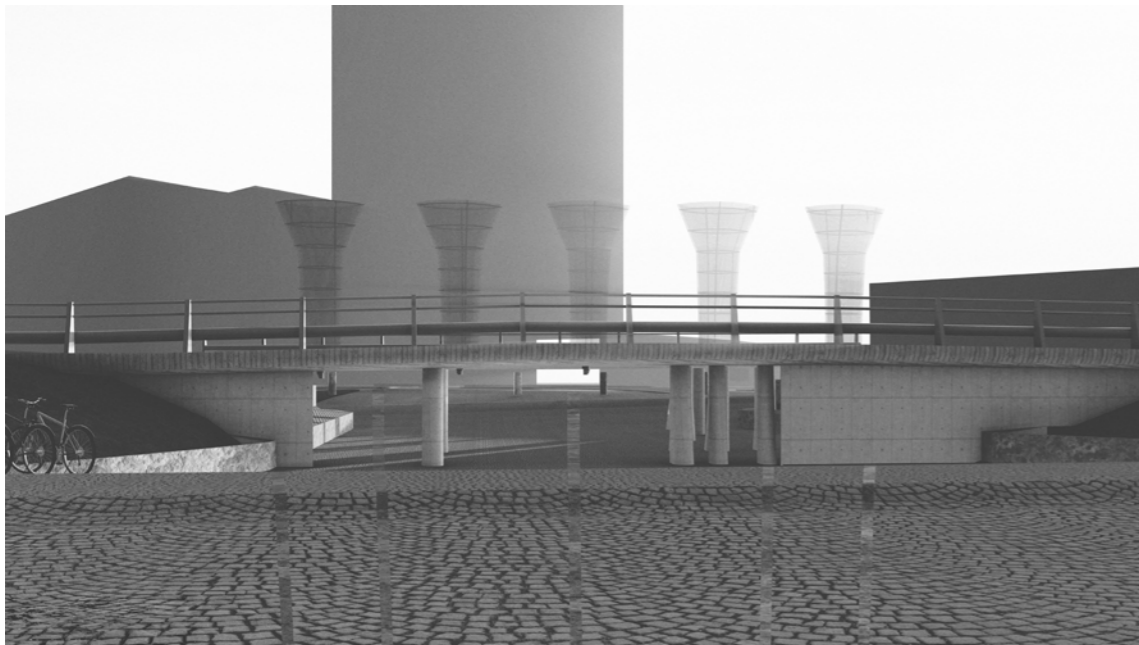




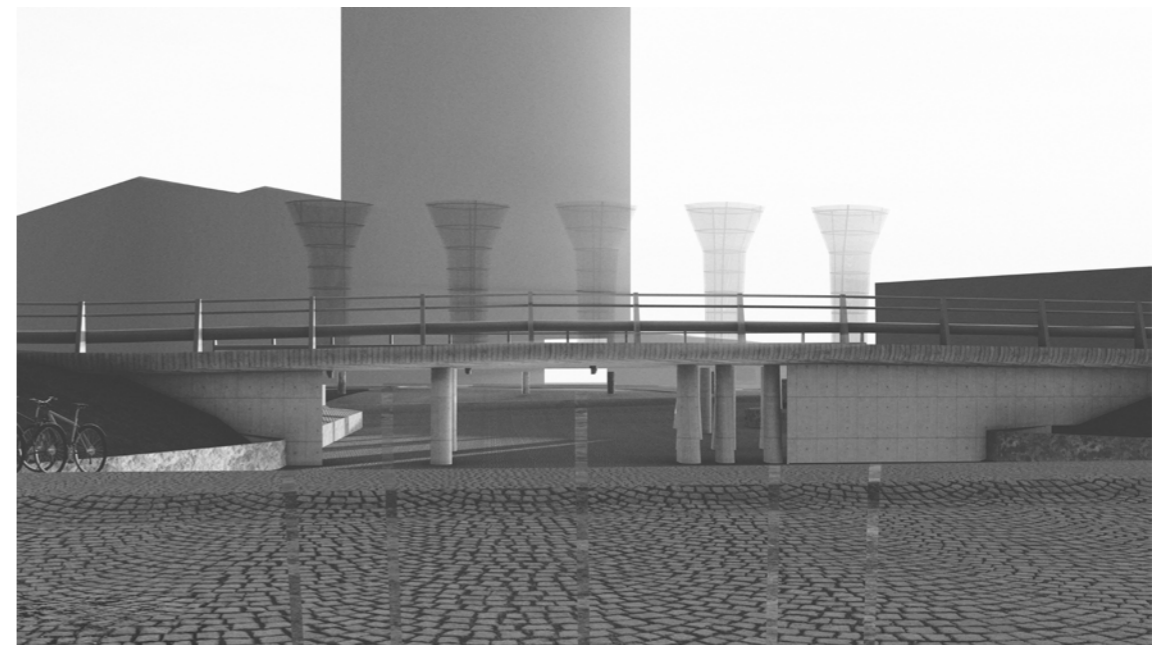
Existing conditions: Perspective view meeting the tunnel coming from the residential area (south)



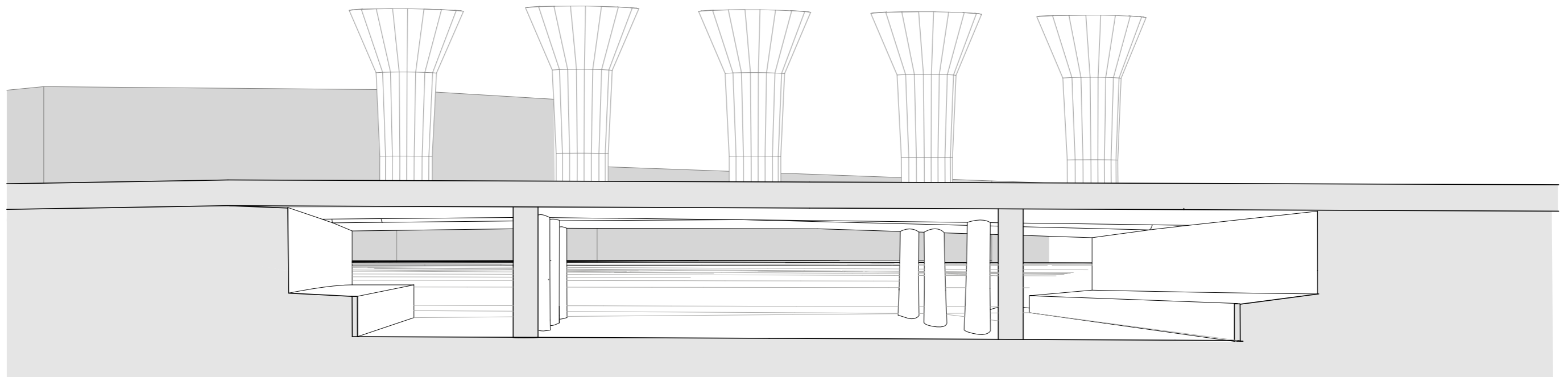
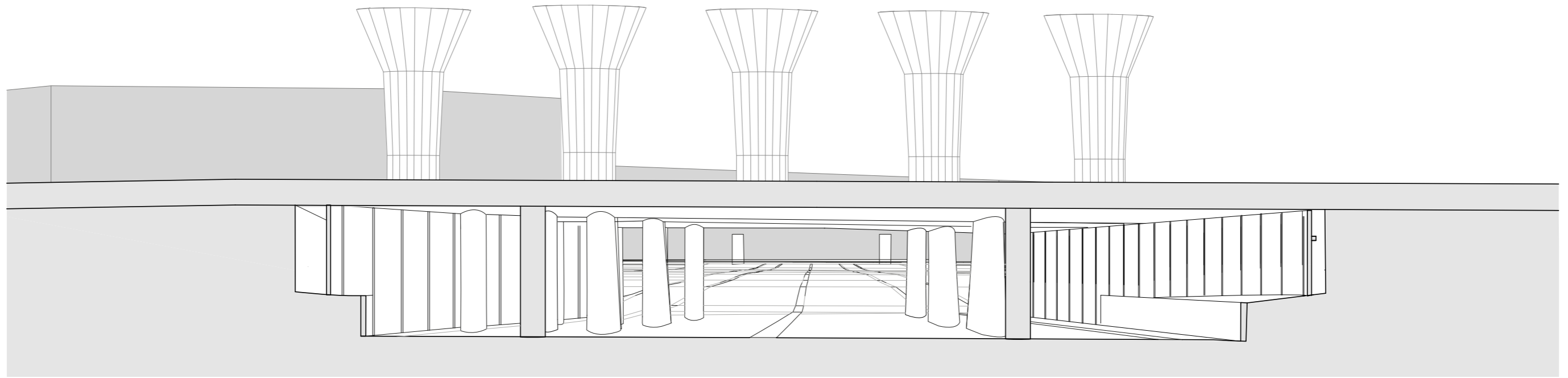
Existing conditions: Perspective view meeting the tunnel coming from Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen (north)



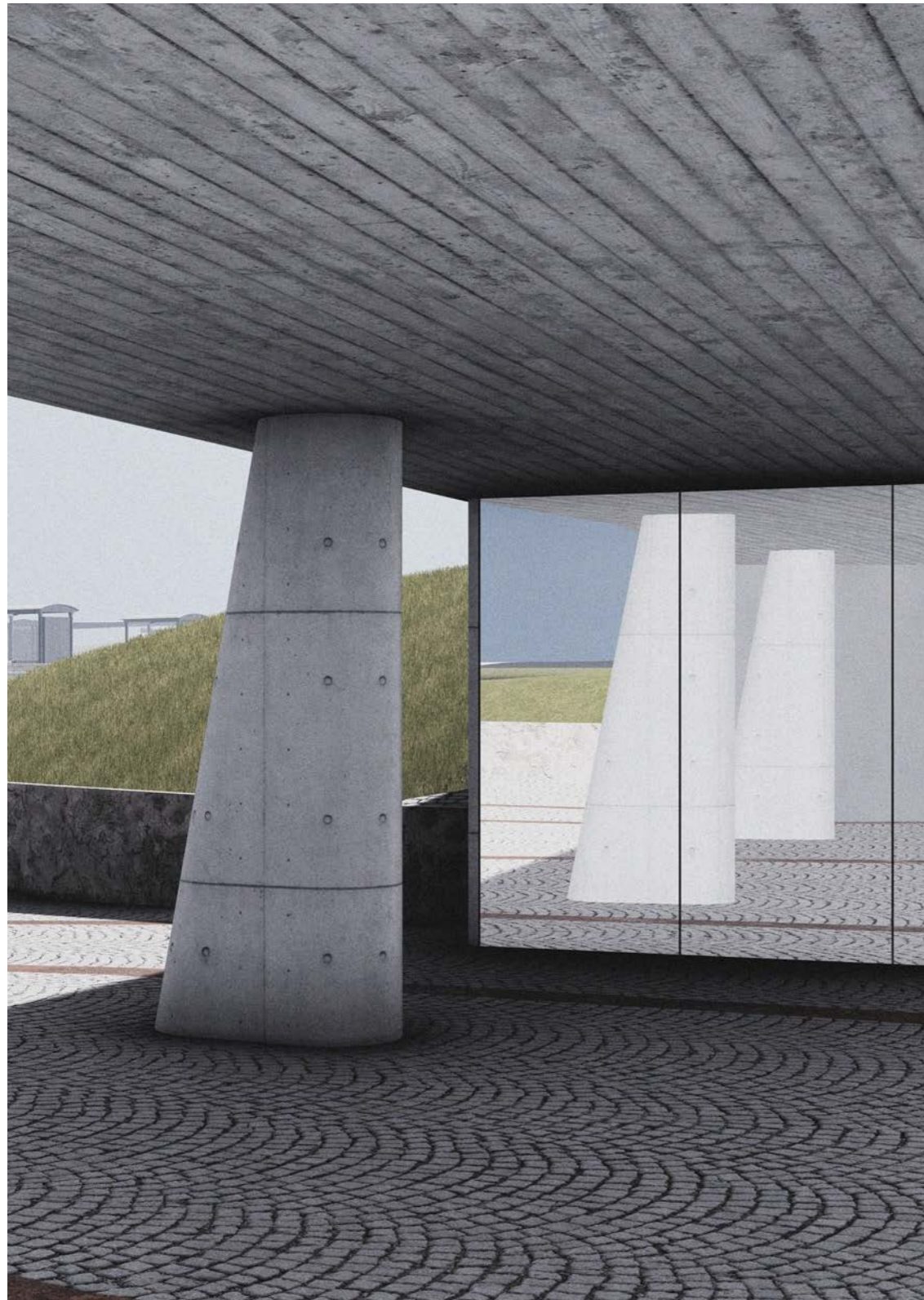
After intervention: Perspective view meeting the tunnel coming from the residential area (south)



After intervention: Perspective view meeting the tunnel coming from Hjalmar Brantningsplatsen (north)



Upper: Section B-B of after intervention  
Lower: Section B-B of existing conditions



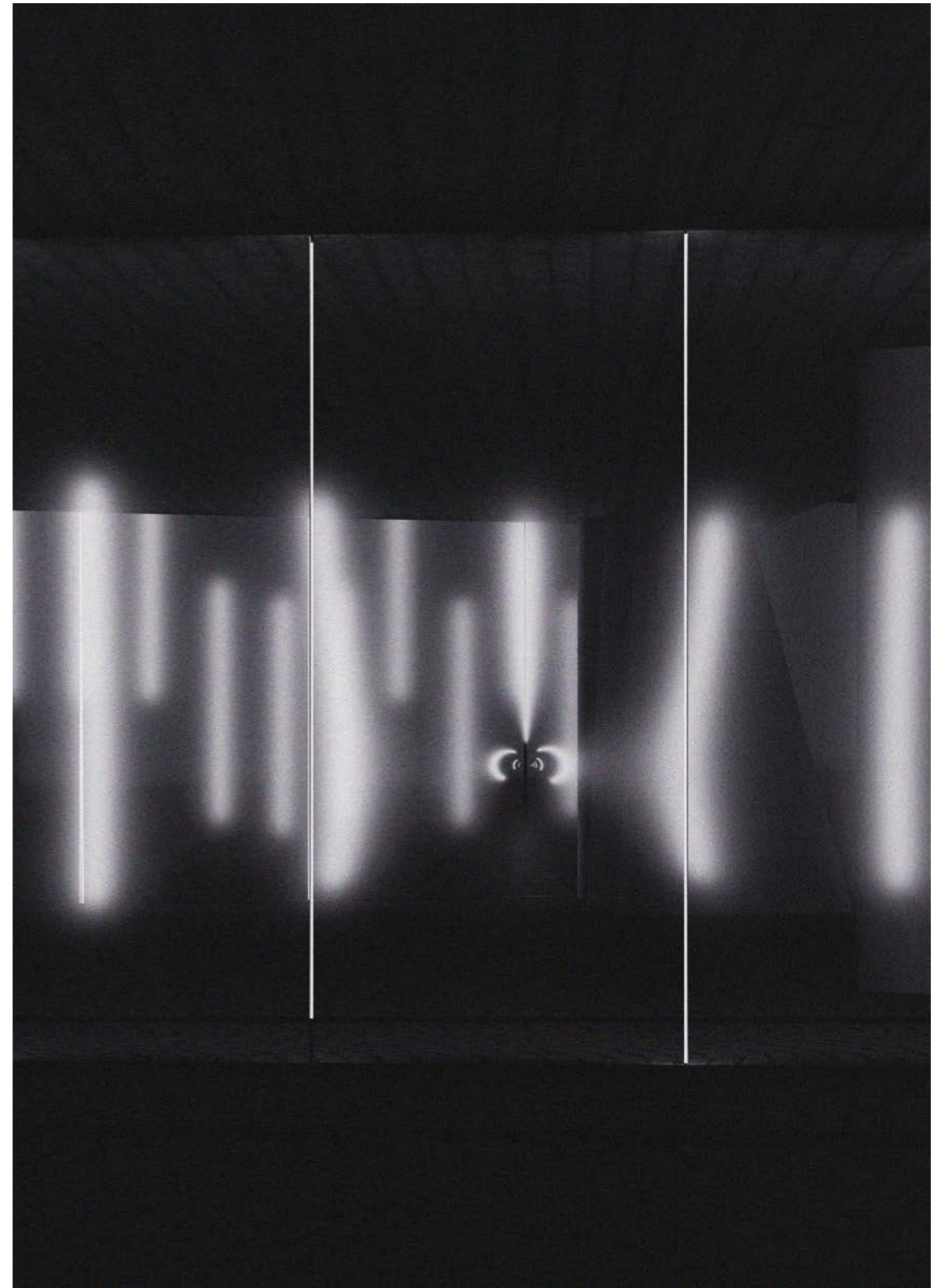
Paerspective view inside tunnel



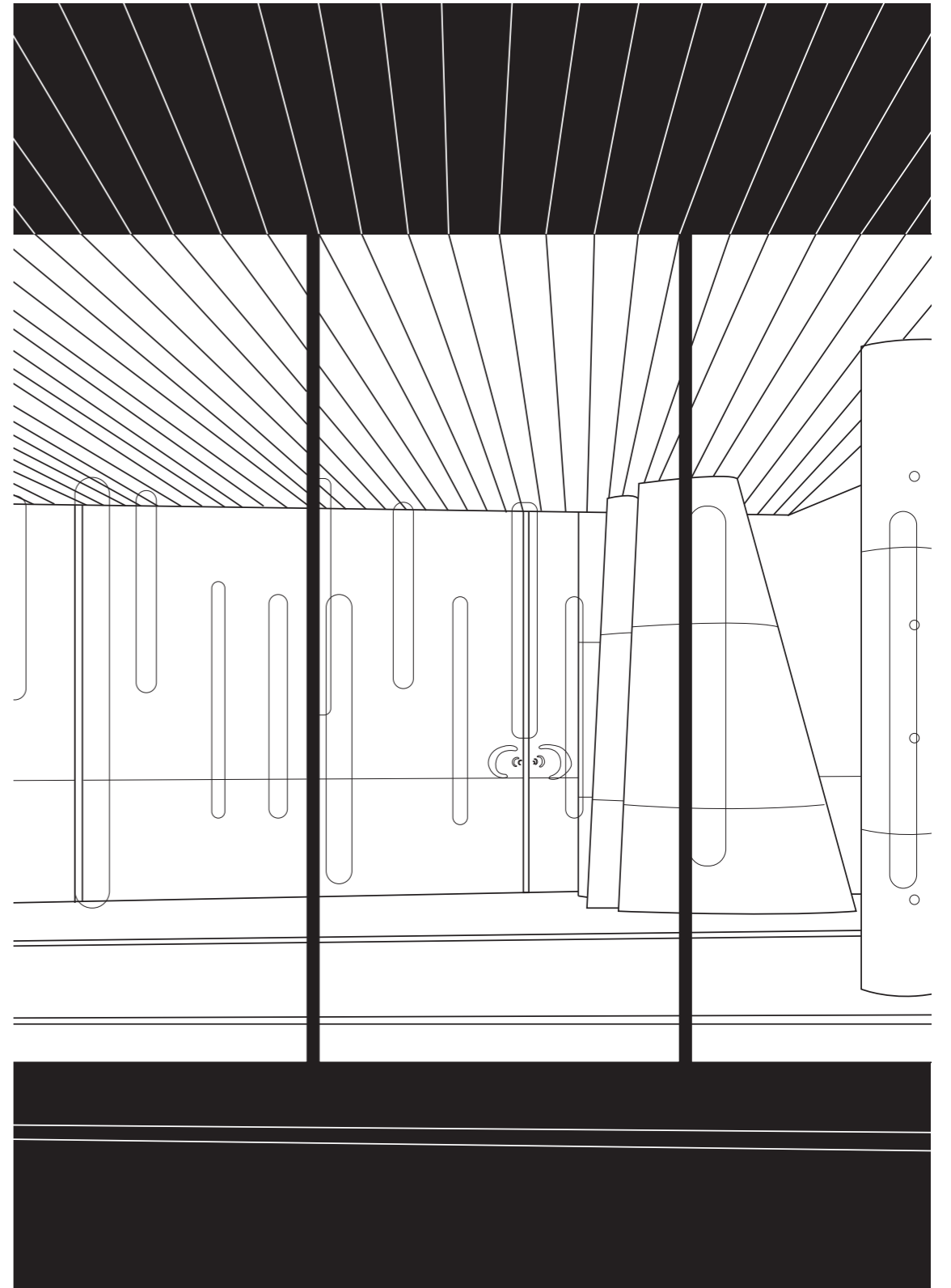
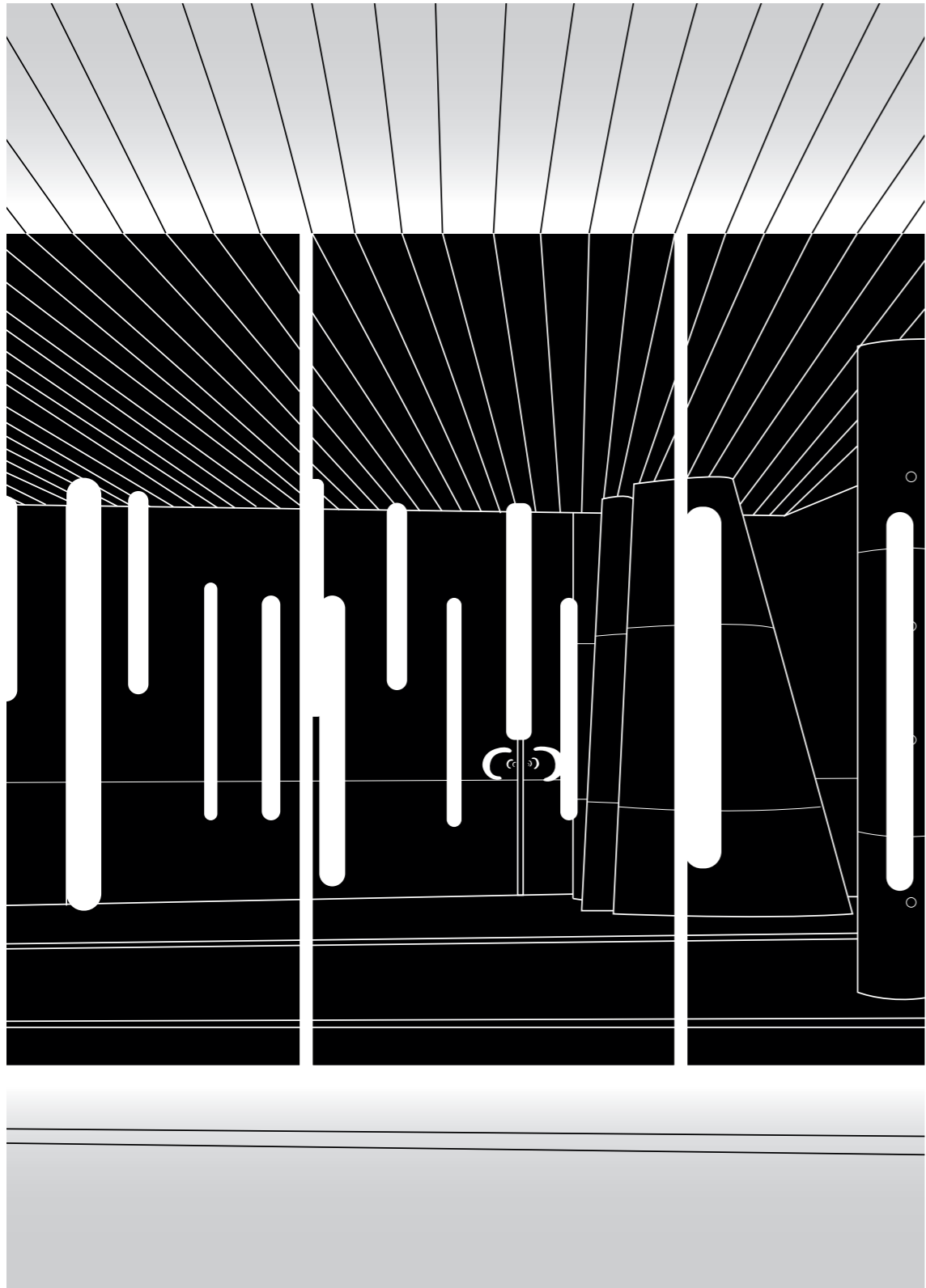
Perspective view outside tunnel

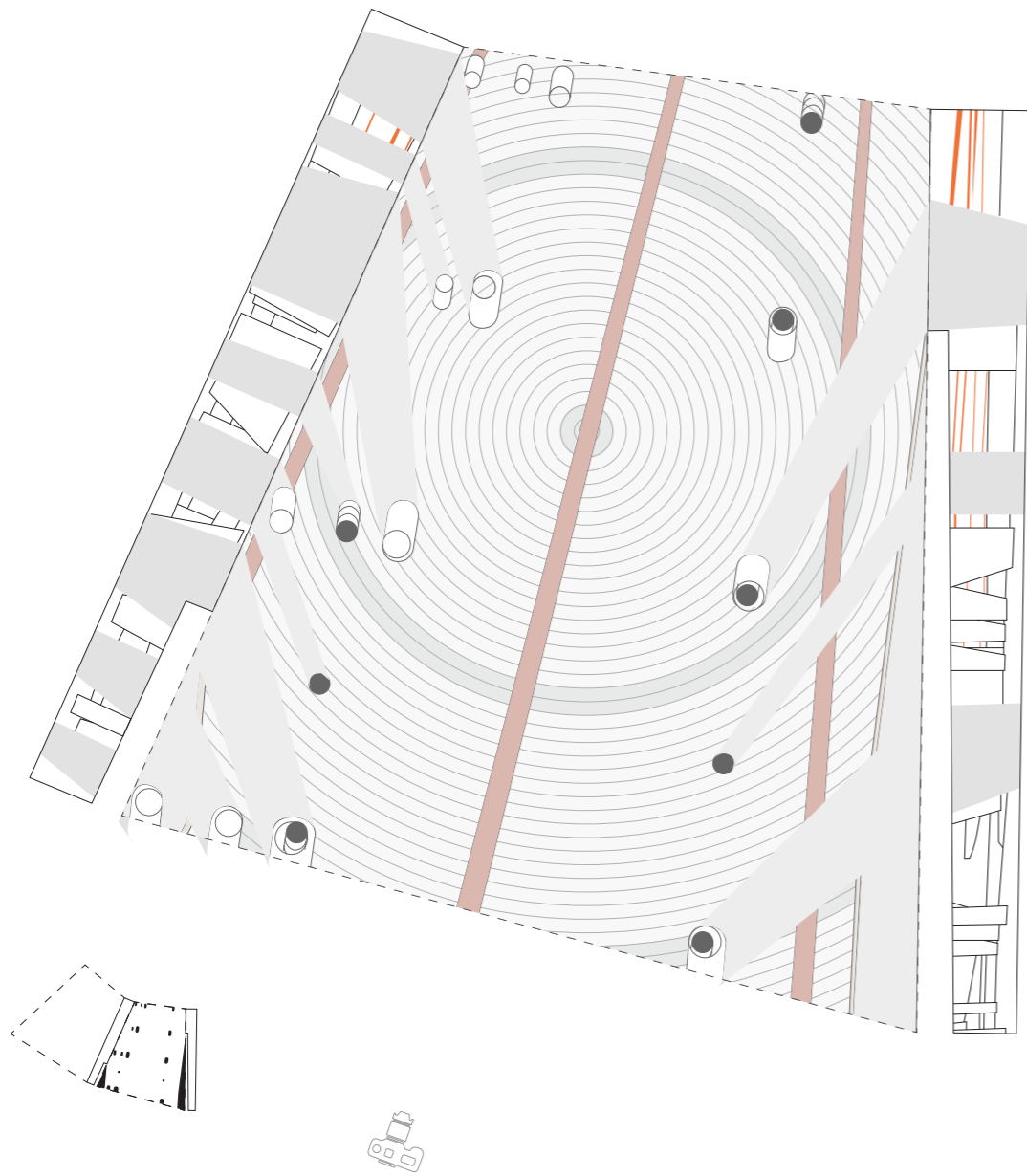


Perspective view outside tunnel at night



View of mirrors during night with light on





Envelope drawing showing the mirror landscape

## Discussion

Defining what places we want to escape from and to turned out to be a harder task than expected because of the infinite amount of reasons why someone would want to escape from or to a place. While it was discovered that there are more places designed for escapism, such as middle landscapes, it only covered a small amount in the broad field. Since escapism is constantly shifting and morphing, so does our perception of spaces, making a place we once saw as haven, able to become hell, and vice versa. This fact, however, does not make it pointless in trying to design for (or against) escapism. On the contrary, as stated throughout the thesis, by both Tuan and Shazer, escapism is what has constituted our culture, and is therefore highly important to consider.

The use of reflection and forced perspective are great tools to amplify, distort and reshape interstitial spaces in order to evoke escapism. The issue comes when considering the ever evolving part of escapism. As mentioned in the part "the paradox of the real and unreal", it is very hard to know if an escape will later just turn into ones everyday life. Since interstitial spaces were defined as places with high concentration of every day life, it is with great likelihood that these frequently visited spaces inevitably will just go back to becoming a place for everyday life instead of staying as an escape. Even if the effect was achieved for now, unfortunately the effect will wear off, making it once again a place to escape. Perhaps has Teatro Olimpico stayed as a escapist place, not because of its use of illusions, but because it is still pretty inaccessible, making it a destination.

While the aim of the thesis was to see how a sense of escapism could be created through the use of illusions, the biggest learning from this research was the large presence escapism has in society yet how unfamiliar the people around me were with the concept of it, despite being able to relate to it. It is important to make light of escapism and the way it has shaped our current everyday life in order to use it when designing for the future. If we design with escapism in mind, as seen in the context of putting it in interstitial spaces, it is possible to make the unreal, become the real or in other words make the escape become everyday life. As mentioned before, escapism can be seen as the foundation 'to all our culture. Maybe it might even be the job as architects to escape, in order to create the new reality surrounding us.

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### Visual

If not stated otherwise, all pictures and diagrams made by the author, (2023).

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