

# PROJECT MEDIO- LANUM

The Shape of

~~Designing the~~ Void

Adrian Labaut



# PROJECT MEDIOLANUM

## The Shape of the Void

Adrian Labaut

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*Politecnico di Milano, Architecture Masters Thesis*



**POLITECNICO**  
MILANO 1863

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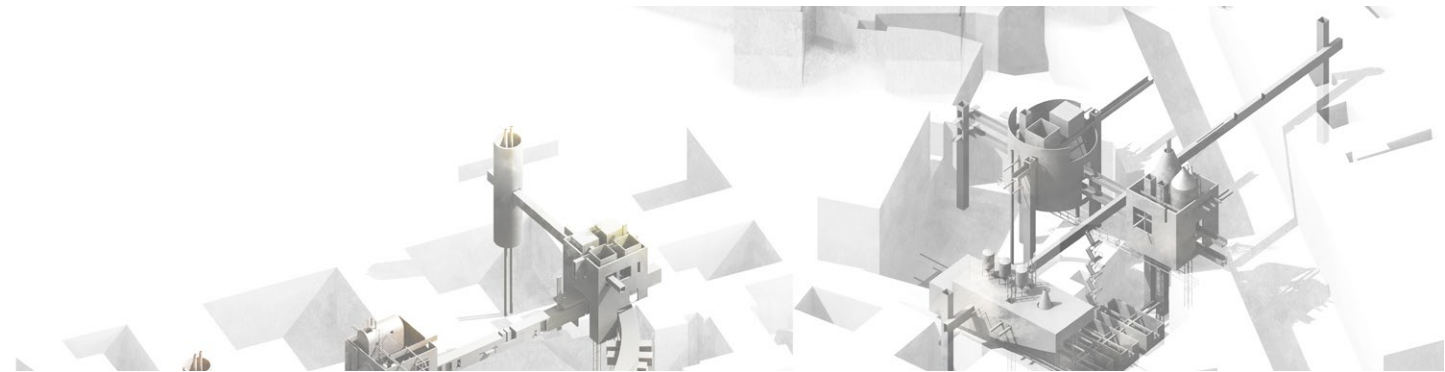
**Co-Tutor:** Alessandro De Magistris

**Special Thanks:** Alessandro Rocca, Lorenzo degli Esposti, Marco Biraghi, and the Civico Museo Archeologico di Milano.

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The background of the entire page is a detailed architectural rendering of the Project Mediolanum. It features a complex, multi-level structure with various geometric forms, including rectangular blocks, curved surfaces, and a prominent central tower. The rendering is presented in a light, semi-transparent style, allowing the text to be clearly visible over it. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, emphasizing the intricate details of the building's design.

# PROJECT MEDIOLANUM

## **The Shape of the Void**

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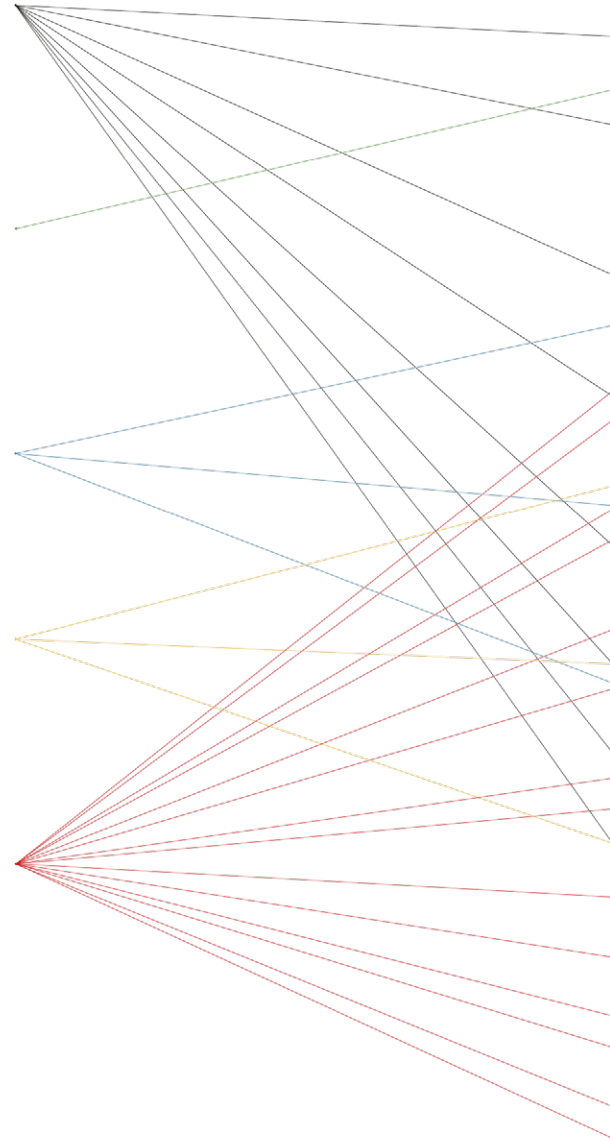
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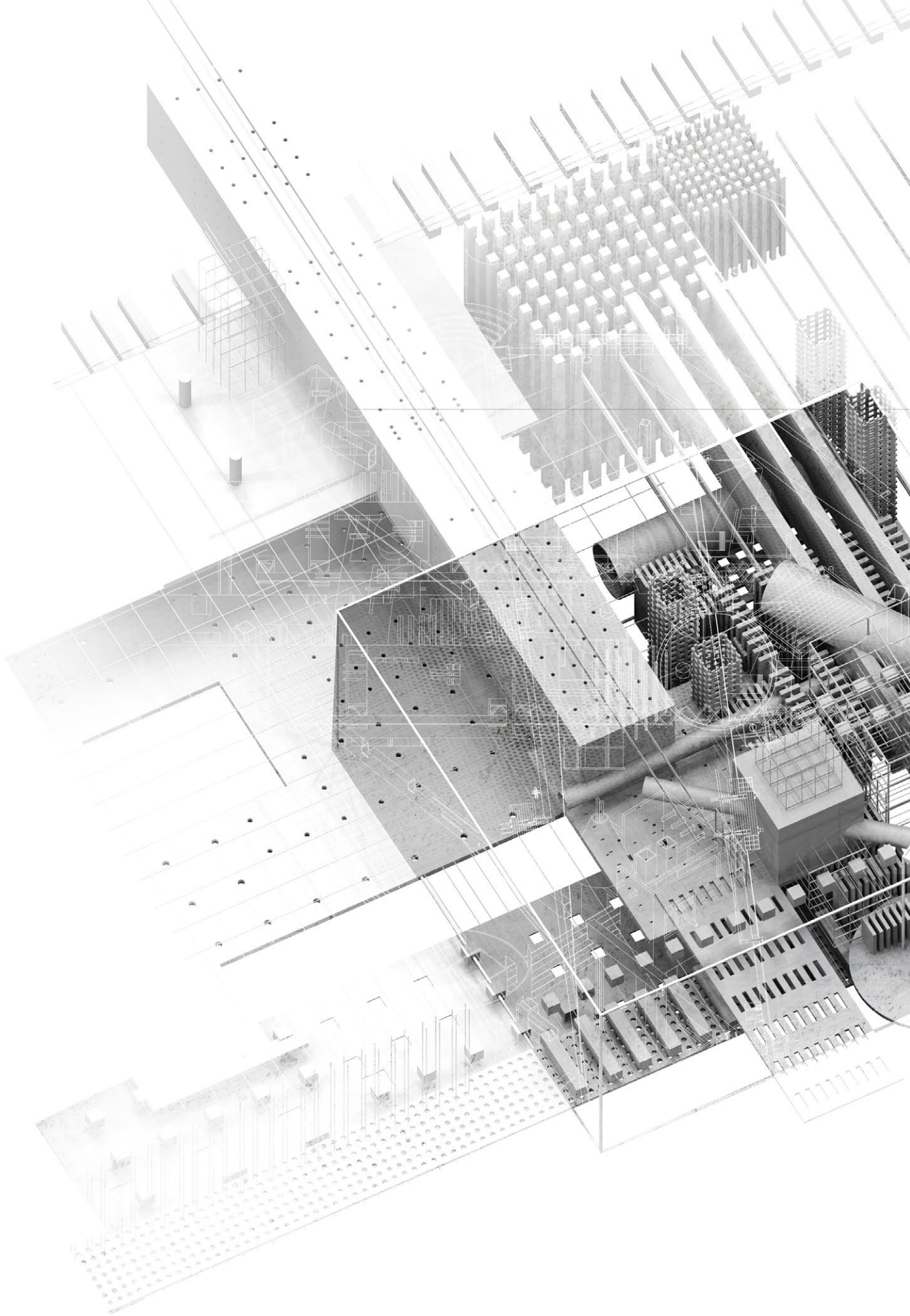
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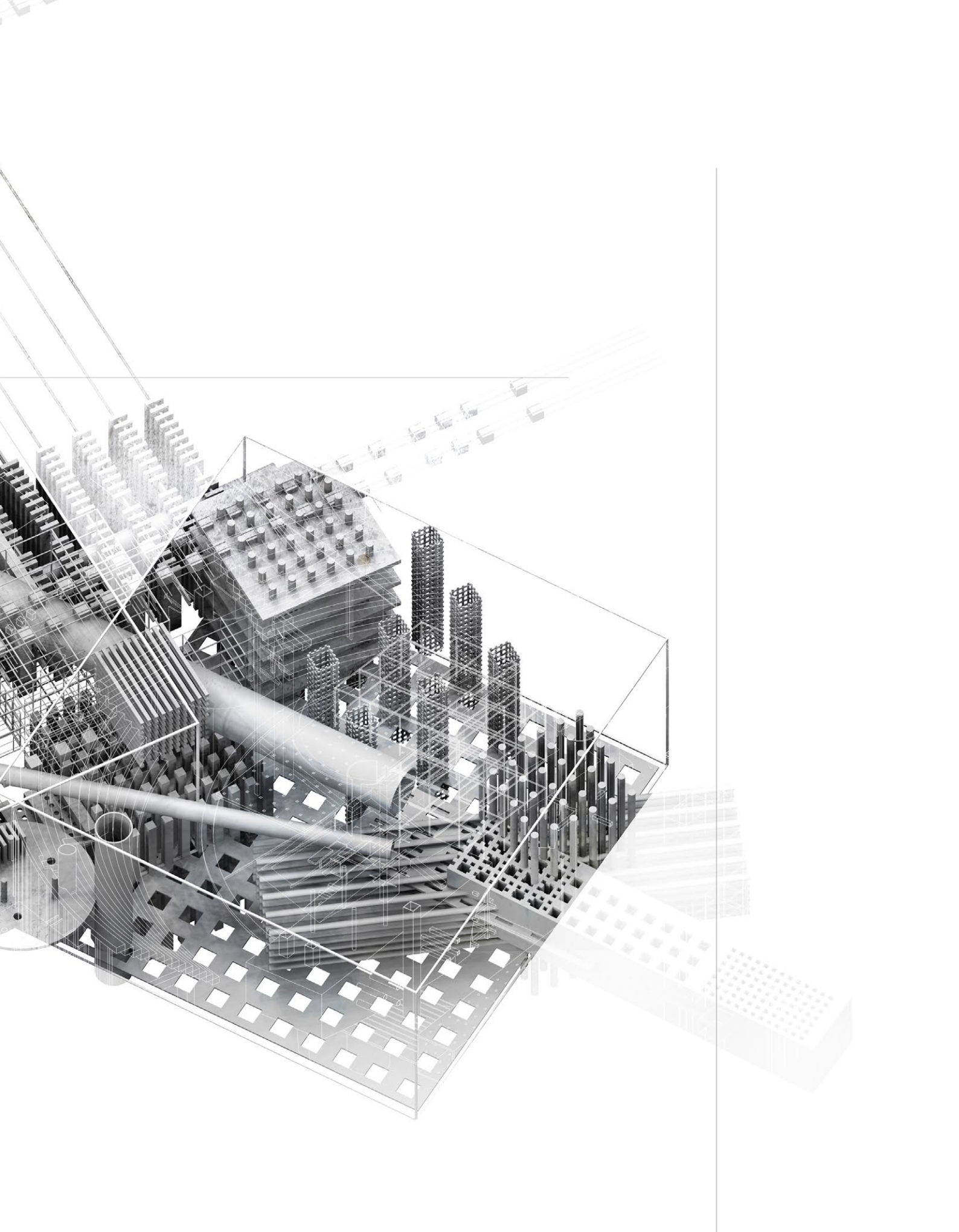


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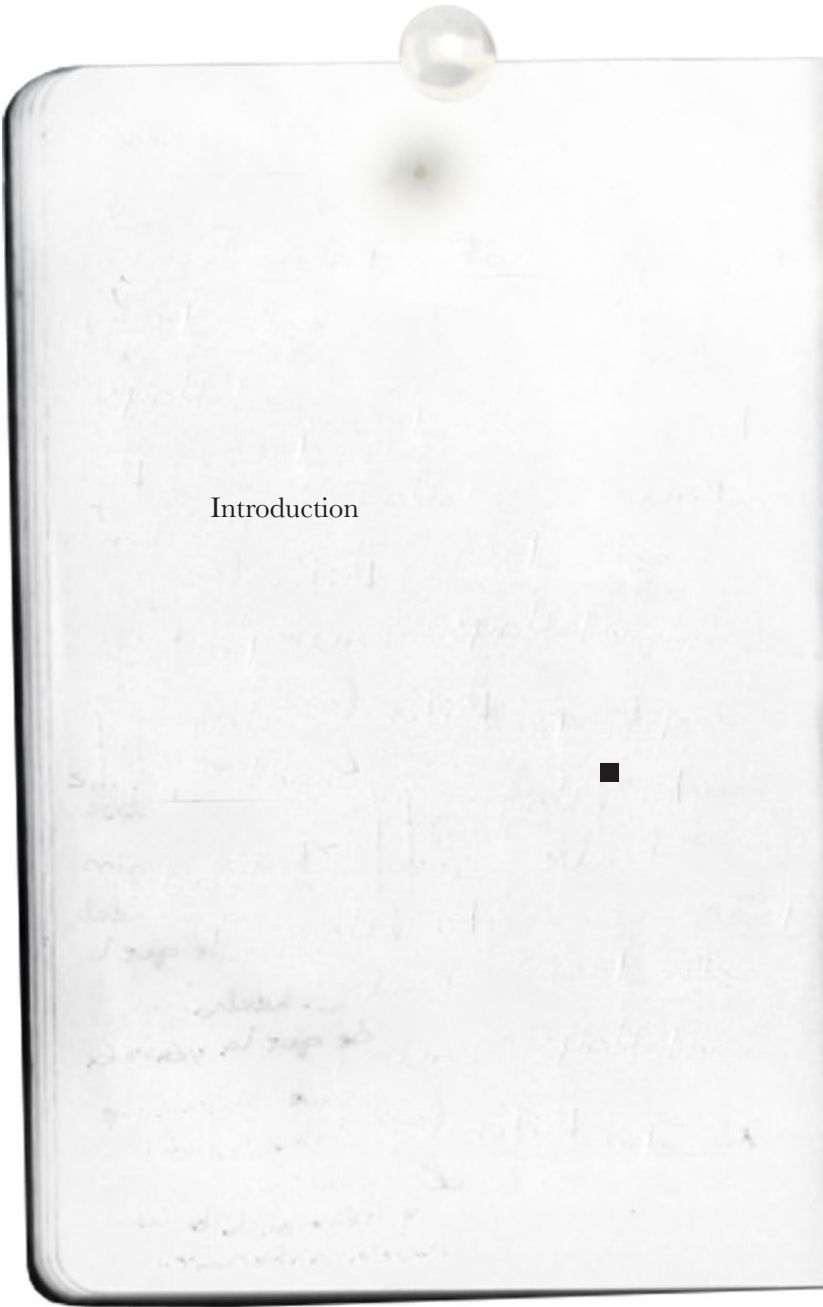
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This study describes an alternative reality: the establishment of an architectural multidimensional retrospection. The projects are the result of a fundamental conflict, which is the articulation and the programmatic relations of a specific generic “volume” in its two most important stages: the “original” structure and the present one, result of centuries of transformation. Milano is the arena for experimentation, the purpose is the clash of the contemporary city and the **MEDIOLANUM**, and the method is based on the regeneration of the specific buildings of the **Roman City** inside the actual context through the confrontation of the original structures inside the modern reality. Paralelly there is an investigation related to the potentialities of the **VOID** in association to the built space. Each project created is a “**prototype**” a generic idea without intentions of design. The structures are urban condensers that amalgamate with the context, increasing the overall performance of the whole, while at the same time being a direct reflection of the Roman building which occupied the same space initially. The aesthetic is that of the raw, the exposed, the permanent incompleteness. The Thesis is an experimental exercise, a spatial-temporal incongruence that in the final stage becomes **ARCHITECTURE**



Introduction

SAN VITTORE AL CORPO

AMPHITHEATRE

MAXIMIANUS CITY WALLS

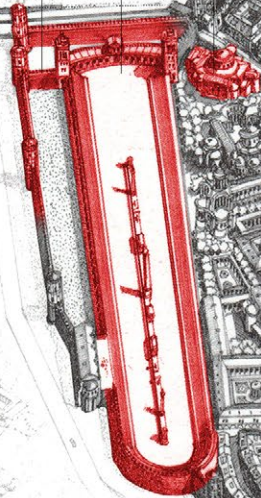
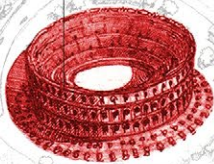
CIRCUS

IMPERIAL PALACE

SAN LORENZO

THEATRE

FORUM

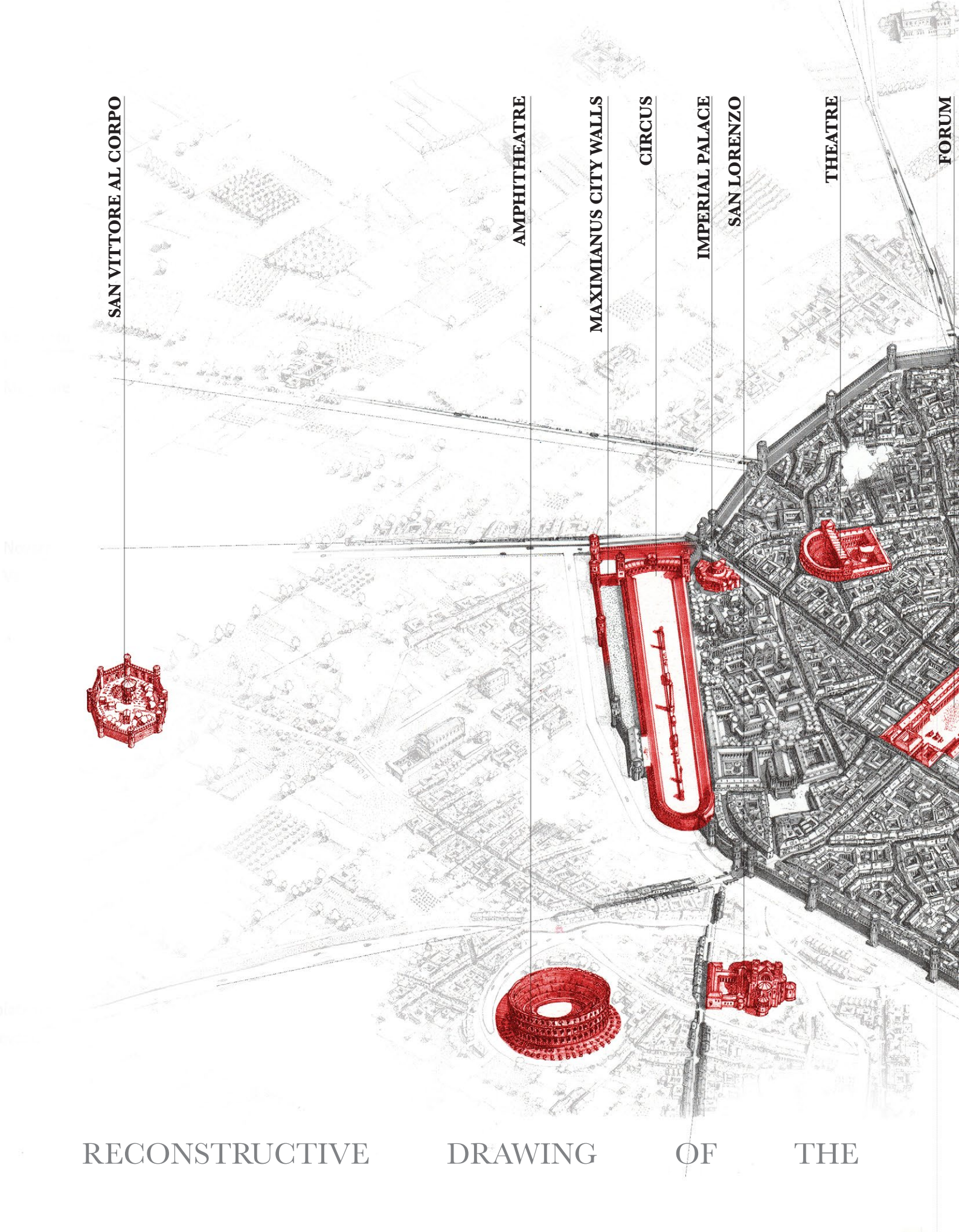


RECONSTRUCTIVE

DRAWING

OF

THE



HORREUM

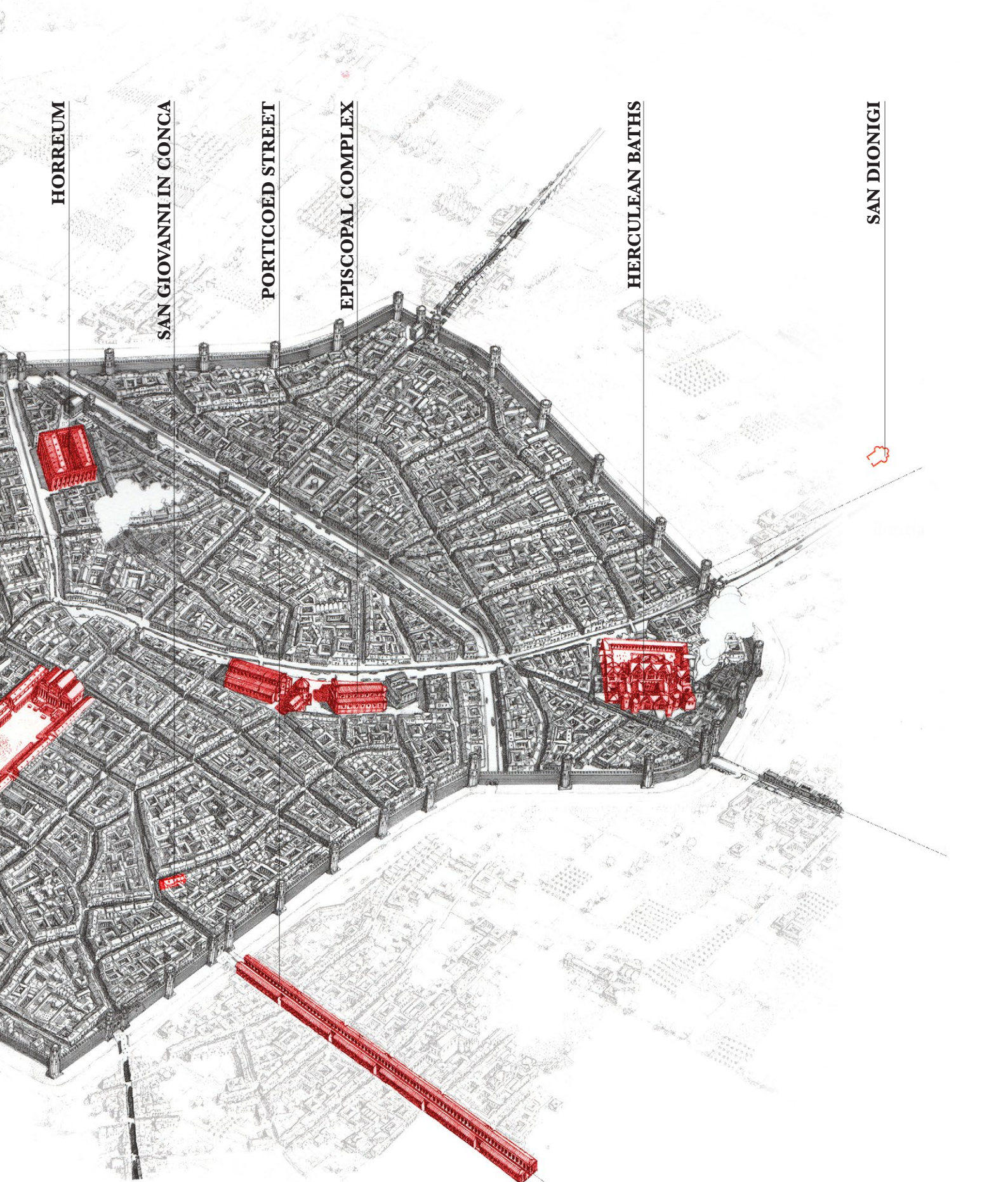
SAN GIOVANNI IN CONCA

PORTICOED STREET

EPISCOPAL COMPLEX

HERCULEAN BATHS

SAN DIONIGI



# MEDIOLANUM IN THE V CENTURY

*Immagini di Mediolanum, Archeologia e storia di Milano dal V secolo a.C. al V secolo d.C. Comune di Milano, 2014*

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# Not Quite Architecture

The Science of the Void





The following essay is an attempt to integrate a theory of the Void from a scientific point of view, and an analysis realized with a base on the Roman City of Milan, concluding with a series of projects. Initially, it is important to understand the intention and qualities of these projects closer to the unfinished and the infinite, rather than the completed idea. The intention of developing the studio from the point of view of the archetypical buildings of the Mediolanum<sup>01</sup> with their specific programs will work as a base for the conceptualization of an idea with similar outcomes. The new projects are Archetypes<sup>02</sup>, and so they do not have a well-defined shape, but rather personify specific requirements of articulation and performance, eventually becoming conscious, nurtured with the stuff of conscious experience.

When interpreting this thought in relation to the concepts developed by Carl G. Jung, we can agree in a similar conclusion:

**Basically, the built Archetype is empty, purely formal, nothing else but a pre-shaping possibility or an innate tendency of shaping things. The archetypal structure is imagery generated and regulated by the programmatic base, and the later is, in itself, invisible. It is an innate predisposition that may be an inherent component of the brain. The archetypes stimulate the individual mind to generate a vast variety of images and subsequently of ways of utilizing the space.**

The projects do not have any fixed meaning but, rather, points to a greater reality that can never totally be understood in a linear way, because it

contains possibilities that transcend the knowing mind. When the building as a symbol becomes fixed, with a universally agreed upon meaning, it ceases to be a symbol and becomes a collective arena.

The translation of these ideas into a project are nurtured by the comprehension of the Void<sup>03</sup> as a body of wholeness, which contains what we can imagine and also what we cannot. It is about the white paper rather than the black ink.

For being able to generate a project with such characteristics, it is important then to understand the qualities of the Void as a physical entity, its relations with nature, and the mean through which it can be converted into an efficient device.

Even just trying to imagine nothingness seems like an impossible task, but the entire universe and the places that now we transform into habitation appeared and are contained inside Nothing. This scientific translation of the meaning of the Void into Architecture helps us to differentiate from extreme points of view those places that represent multiples possibilities and are an arena for their fruition, and those other areas saturated with the matter, manually shaped and converted in mechanisms of control and preconceived use.

In his book, *“Much Ado about Nothing, Theories of space and vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution”* (1981), Edward Grant provides a description of the major ideas about void space within and beyond the world that were formulated between the fourteenth and early eighteenth centuries, presenting a comprehensive and detailed description of the scholastic Aristotelian

arguments for and against the existence of void space. So great was the danger of Void space to Aristotle's world system, that he also formulated a variety of arguments to show that motion in a separate void space was either impossible or that the consequences of such motion were absurd and contrary to nature. At this point, we may understand in a parallel manner the motion in a Void space on one hand, and the infinite interactions that a "Vacuum space" would contain in an urban context on the other.

One of the motions defending the impossibility of the empty space is related to its homogeneous nature. For Aristotle, the fact that every part of the Void is identical to every other -this lack of differentiation- would offer no good reason for a body to move in one direction rather than another.

The natural motion would fail because up and down are indistinguishable in the void. Translating this thought directly to the urban realm, we may identify the saturation and ordination of the space as an attempt to give it a meaning, and consequentially propitiate its interactive relation with the rest of the context, differentiating its parts in scale and function for a more 'efficient' performance. Following this theory, people in a void would thus be immobilized and incapable of determining the region of the place in which they could fully actualize their potentialities. Equally, without resistance inside the vacuum, a body would yield equally in any direction, or perhaps in all directions simultaneously, and that is exactly one of the strengths of the space 'without qualities' in the urban context.

In opposition to what we may find in a city like Milan as a city full of "obstacles"-base for this research-, the Voids would represent areas of unlimited possibilities, a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the

condition of urban society, a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances that are nothing else than the points in which the void interacts with the surrounding matter.

The crescent possibilities of this theory are materialized in the project through the use of mechanisms of interruption of the linear use of the city, that is, the surface in interaction with means of mobility and connection. The Horror Vacui<sup>04</sup>, or commonly stated as "Nature abhors a vacuum" as argued by Aristotle, is translated inside the urban realm in similar terms, as we tend to fill immediately the rarity of an incipient void with different devices in order to approach space to our understanding, and in many cases limiting substantially its quality and freedom, but Vacuum is Nature's default state.

The strength of this ideas and the proposal of inserting back the void in a city like Milan has to be with the -undiscovered- capacity of the people to transform their understanding of the vacuum, in relation with external activities, also contained in the void, but an almost insignificant one. The project is a tool for research, in empty space, anything can happen without the interference of the contaminating distorted physicality of the context.

The ideas represent also a radically new picture about the future of Architecture and space use. In the near future, space will be valued over building, and its transformability will depend on the uncertainty of new technologies.

The materialization of the projects signifies the "rediscovery" of the Void, but of course not a complete one. The principle of the project can be expressed in a different way, and it is the balance between the vacuum, and energy concentrated in small amounts

as to generate spatial and functional fluctuations. This energy is translated into direct mechanisms of interaction connecting different kinds of spaces, making possible to understand the area with a more complex set of visual relations, and transforming its character.

When speaking for example about the Roman Theatre, that would be located now between the Piazza degli Affari and the Vie Meravigli, Via delle Orsole and San Vittore al Teatro, the “reconstruction” would be developed more or less in the following way:

**The area, which is fully occupied now, will be analyzed, understanding the capacity of use of its existing elements (undergrounds, roofs, internal yards and buildings itself). After this study, the components with potential use will be grouped for understandings their collective interaction which will be at the same time tridimensional compared with the former plan and sections of the theatre that used to occupy the same space.**

The next stage is related to the identification of the Void. This zones will be the core of the project and will occupy as much space as possible, resulting even with the demolition of certain structures, or the reuse of existing ones.

After identifying the space dedicated to the void, the taking into consideration the former plan of the theatre, the new mechanisms of interaction will be located in places that are associated with the same specific functional quality, resulting in a Generic<sup>07</sup> body in which the vacuum occupies the biggest area, that is

functionally very dynamic and phenomenologically in concrete interaction with the ancient structure, elevating its program to a very intense level while collaborating with the actual context.

The studio is all about flexibility, and more importantly, the potentials of space.

The intention is to arrive at solutions which main strength lies in the intensification of the former programs, having the empty space as the fundamental component, and creating areas of very high social quality, flexibility, dynamism, and complexity when analyzing its structure in relation with the near context. Creating at the same time a set of functional and cultural conflict which will reinforce its archetypical character, recurring to the Roman City for the metamorphosis of the city into a superior being.

**01.** In 222 B.C. the city of Milan was conquered by Romans and it was annexed to the Roman Empire, getting the name of Mediolanum.

**02.** Mid 16th century: via Latin from Greek arkhētupon ‘something moulded first as a model’, from arkhe- ‘primitive’ + tupos ‘a model’.

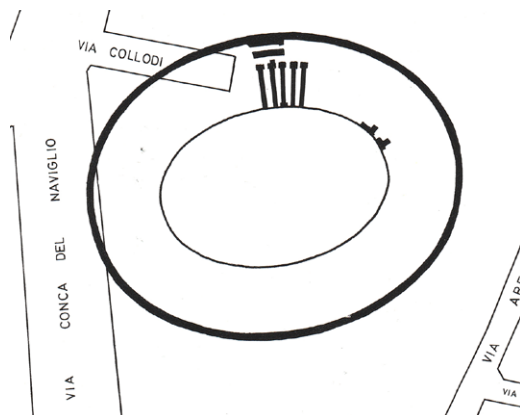
**03.** Middle English (in the sense ‘unoccupied’): from a dialect variant of Old French vuide; related to Latin vacare ‘vacate’; the verb partly a shortening of avoid, reinforced by Old French voider.

**04.** Horror Vacui (from the Latin: “fear of emptiness”).

# The Amphitheatre

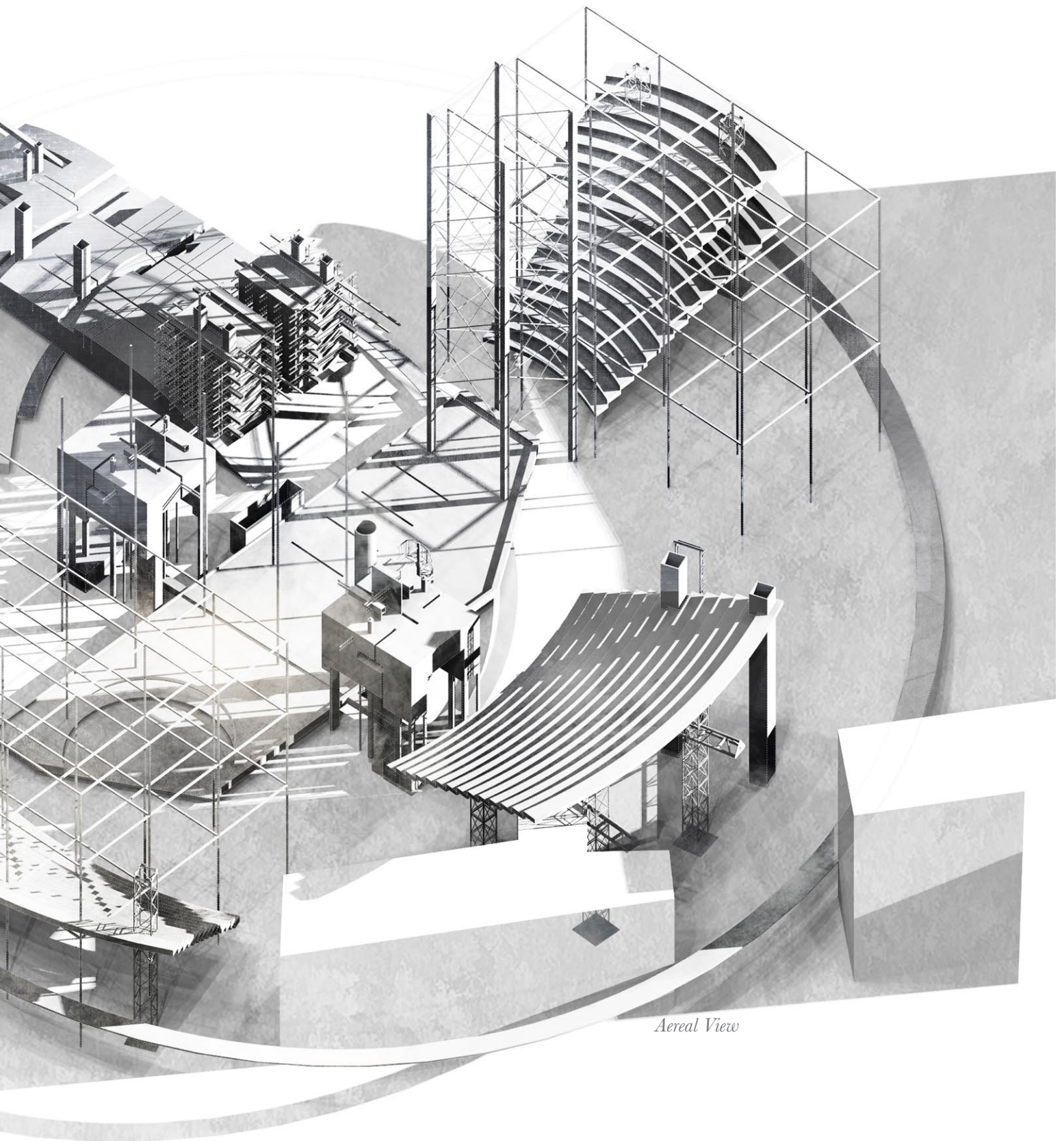
**Location:** *Area between Via De Amicis, Via Arena and the Conca del Naviglio.*

Not far from the Ticinensis Gate, outside the walls, the Milanese amphitheater, one of the biggest known in Northern Italy, was built during the first century A.D. In this typically Roman construction, with an elliptical central arena, surrounded by tiered stone bleachers for the spectators, combat between gladiators, fights between men and ferocious animals, public executions for those condemned as bestias i.e. torn to pieces by wild beasts and even naval battles took place. This imposing building which could hold 20,000 spectators, had its outer ring denuded of building materials during the fifth century A.D. which were re-used in new constructions such as the nearby Basilica of San Lorenzo or to reinforce sections of the city walls. After recent archaeological studies, some scholars have hypothesized that the amphitheater was still in use in the Longobard Epoch (sixth-seventh century A.D.), perhaps as the headquarters of the military garrison as it was a protected and fortified site.



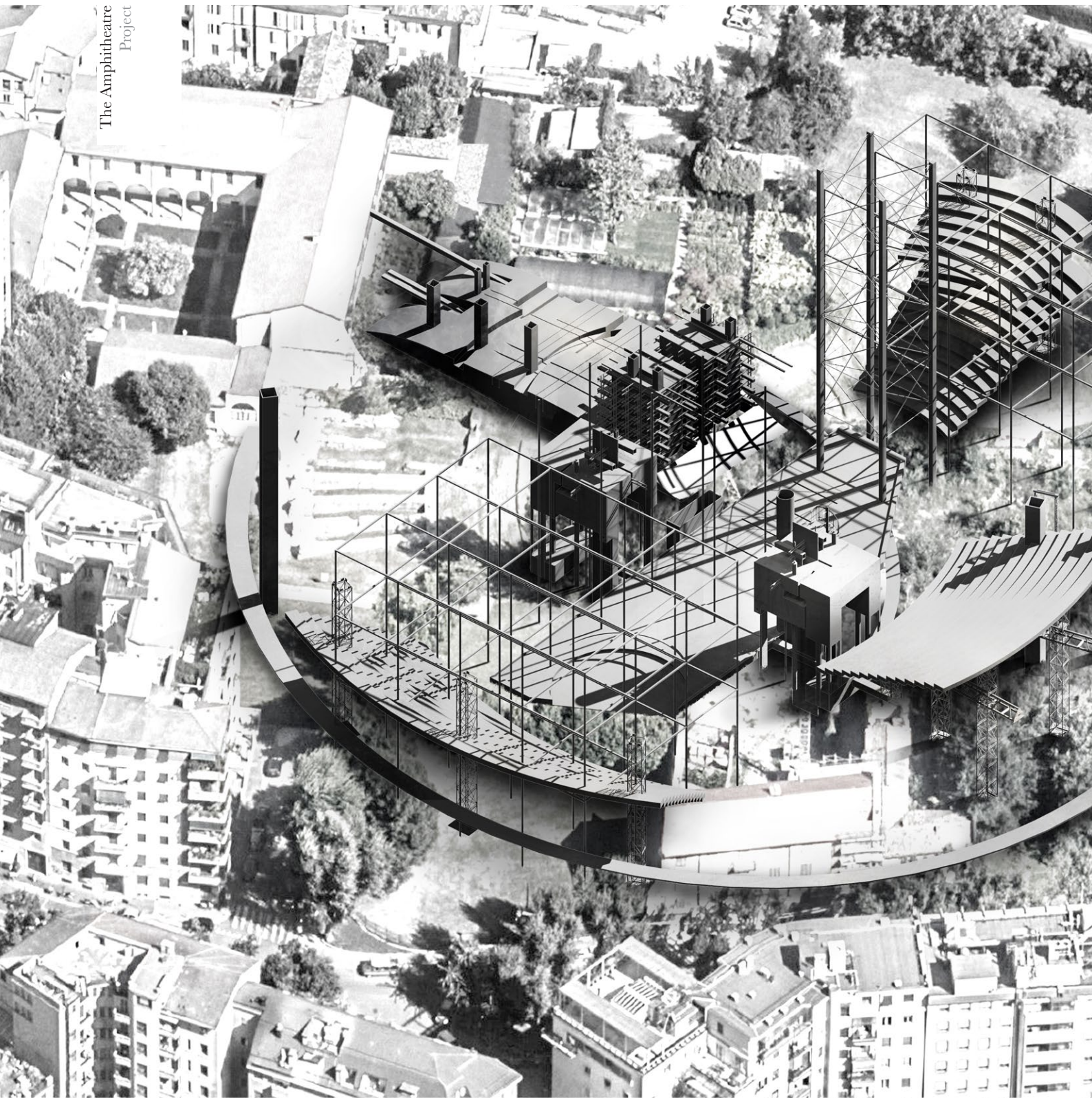
**Plan of the Amphitheatre**





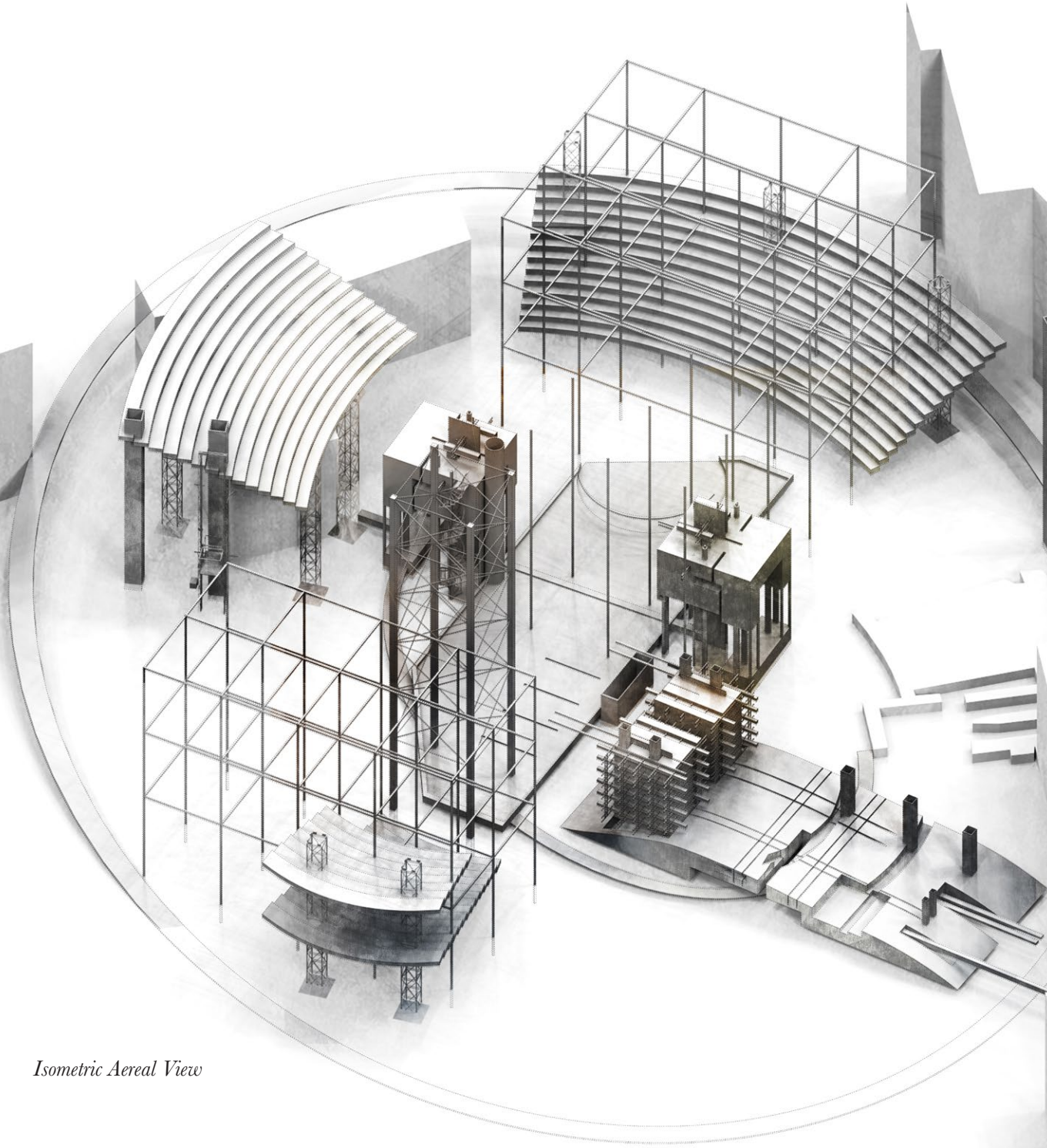
*Aerial View*

The Amphitheatre  
Project



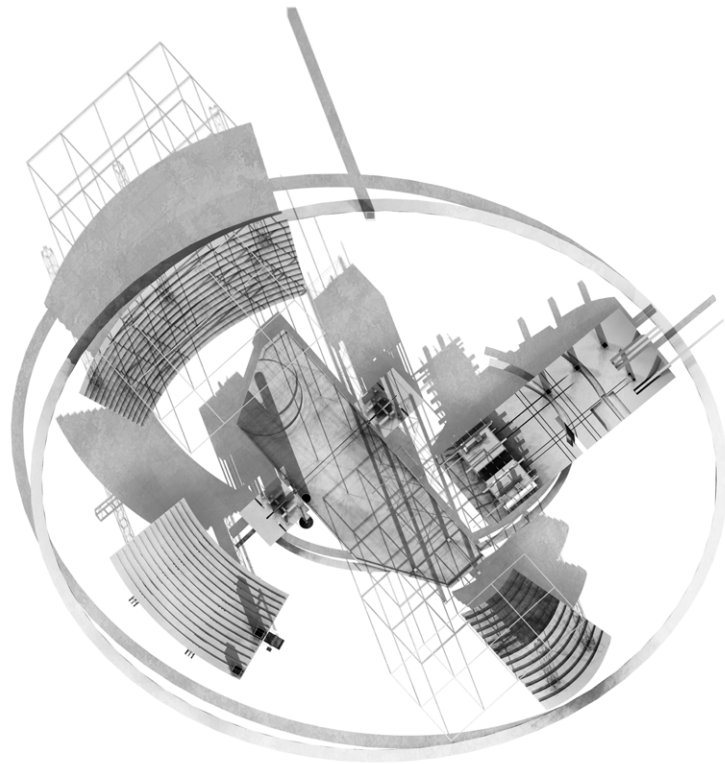


*Aerial View*

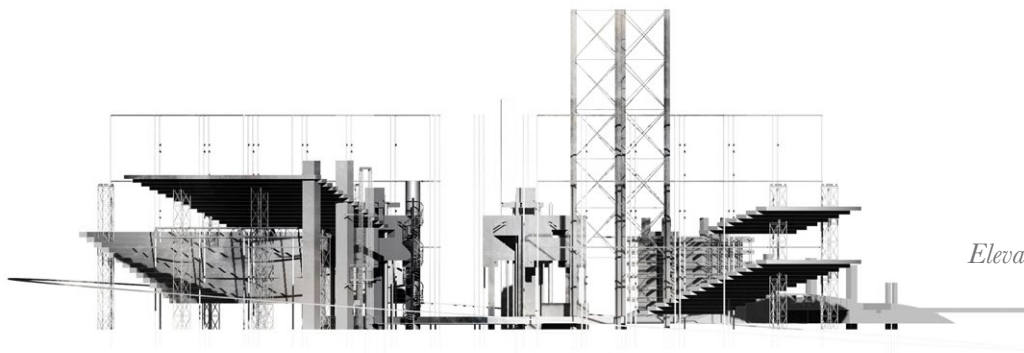


*Isometric Aerial View*

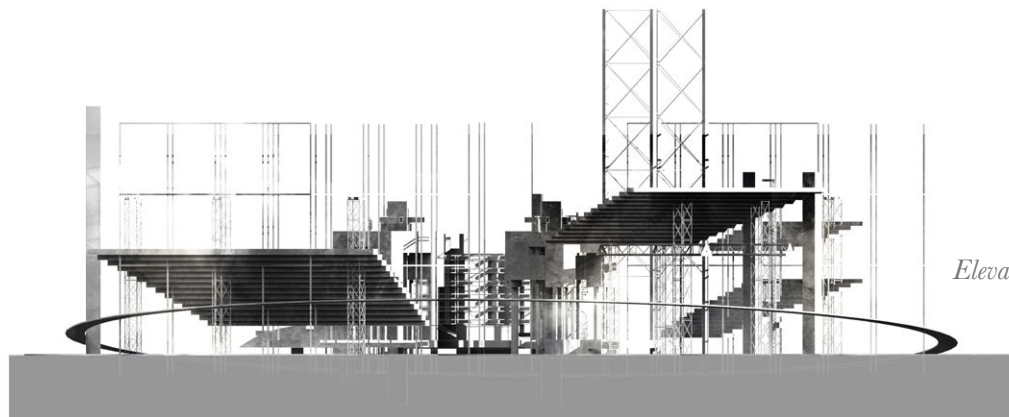




*Top View*



*Elevation 1*

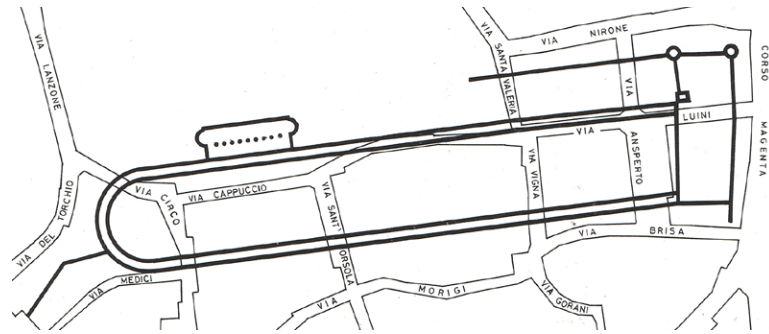


*Elevation 2*

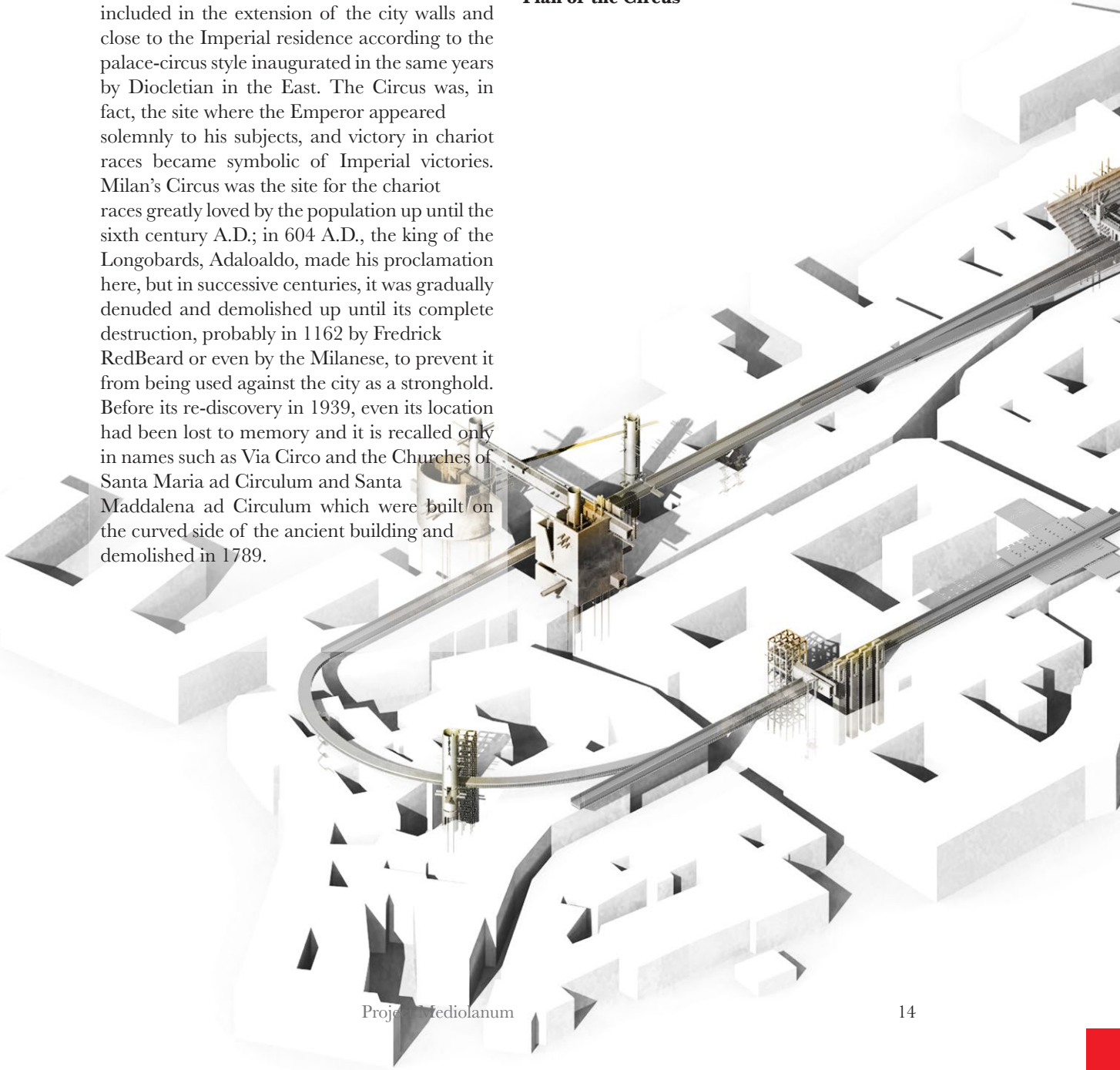
# The Circus

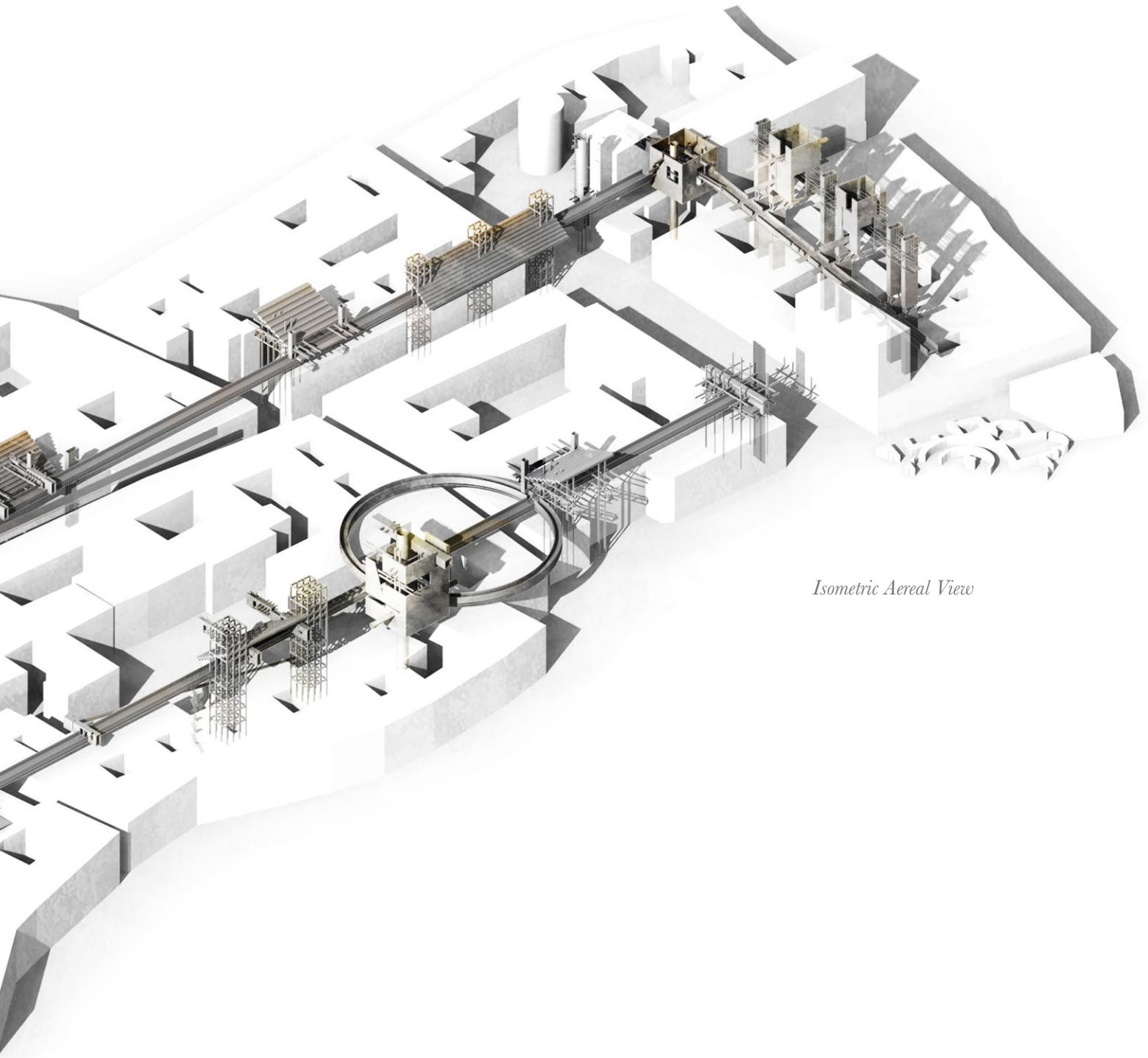
**Location:** Area between the Corso Magenta and Via del Torchio, Via Brisa-Via Morigi and Via Luini-Via Cappuccio.

Built at the wish of Maximianus Herculius at the end of the third century A.D., the Circus was situated in the western part of the city, included in the extension of the city walls and close to the Imperial residence according to the palace-circus style inaugurated in the same years by Diocletian in the East. The Circus was, in fact, the site where the Emperor appeared solemnly to his subjects, and victory in chariot races became symbolic of Imperial victories. Milan's Circus was the site for the chariot races greatly loved by the population up until the sixth century A.D.; in 604 A.D., the king of the Longobards, Adaloaldo, made his proclamation here, but in successive centuries, it was gradually denuded and demolished up until its complete destruction, probably in 1162 by Fredrick RedBeard or even by the Milanese, to prevent it from being used against the city as a stronghold. Before its re-discovery in 1939, even its location had been lost to memory and it is recalled only in names such as Via Circo and the Churches of Santa Maria ad Circulum and Santa Maddalena ad Circulum which were built on the curved side of the ancient building and demolished in 1789.

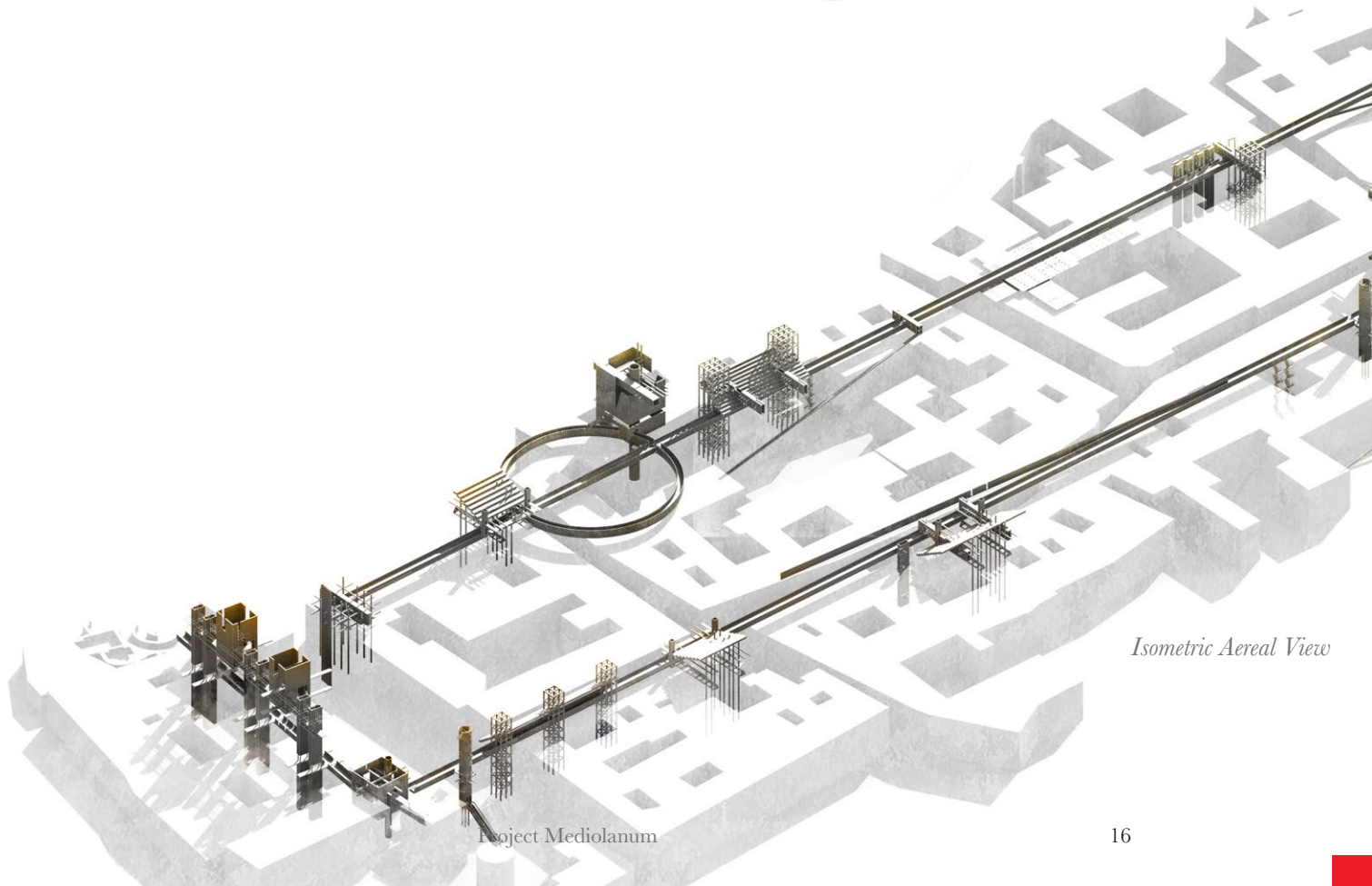
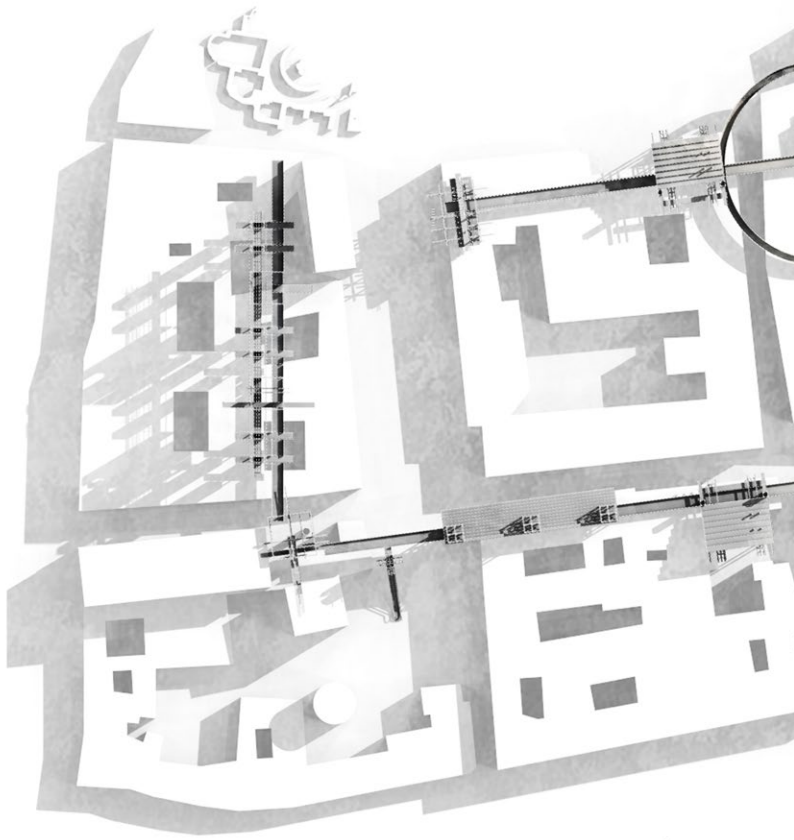


Plan of the Circus

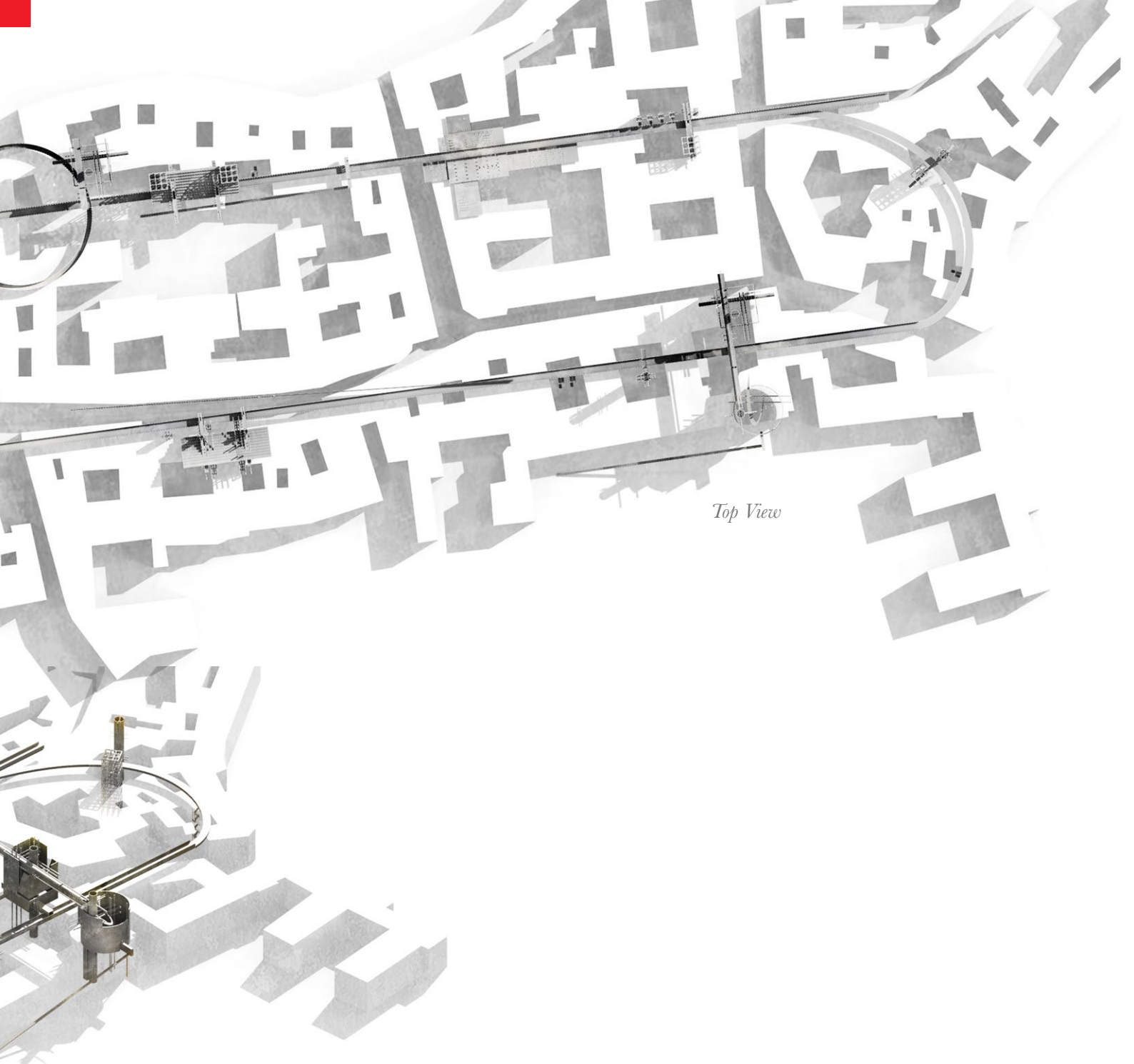




*Isometric Aerial View*

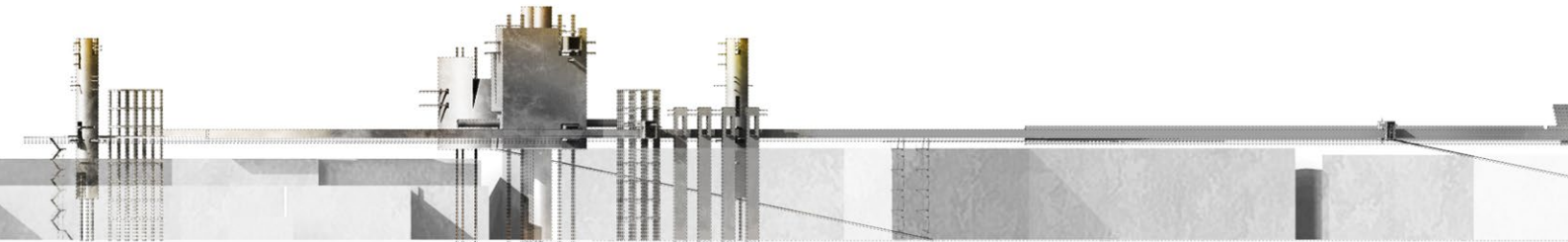
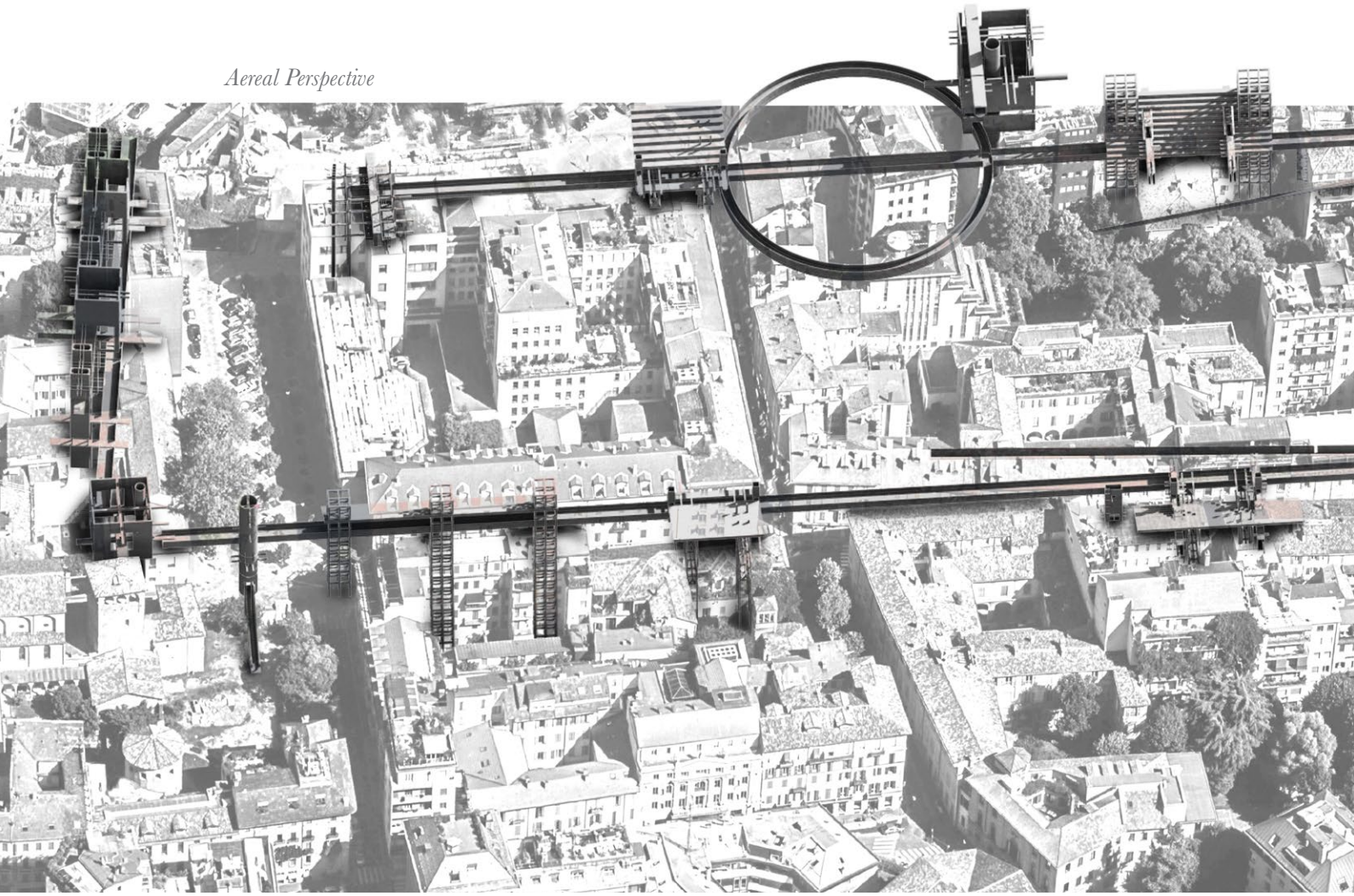


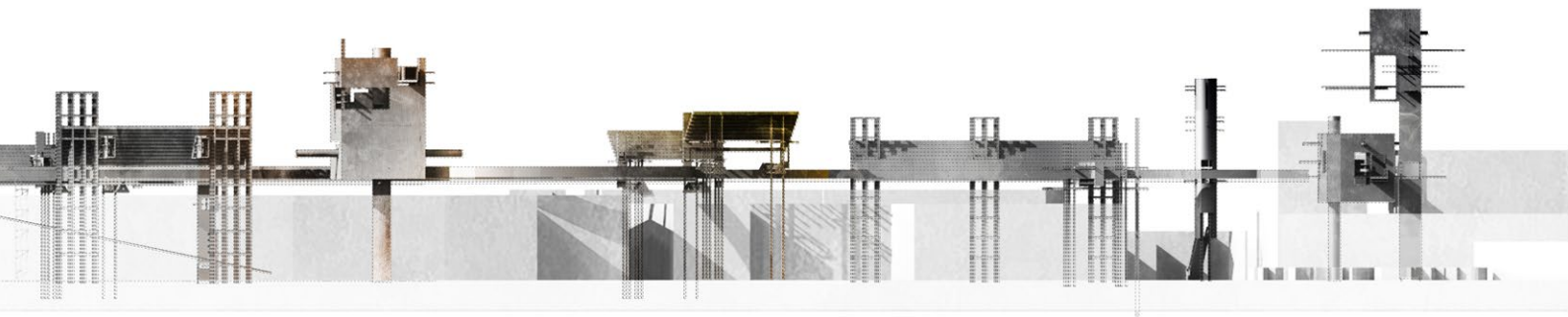
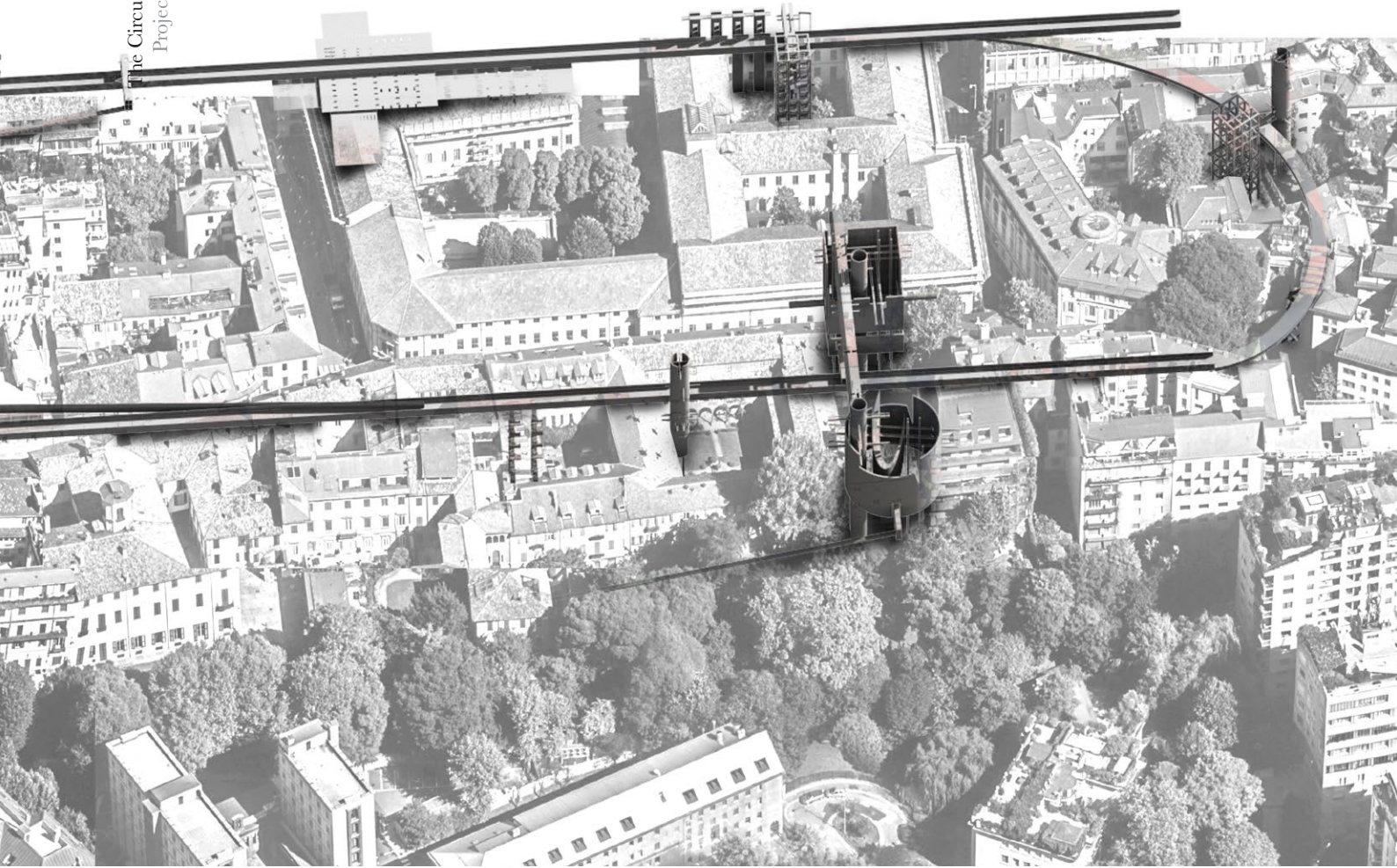
*Isometric Aerial View*



*Top View*

*Aerial Perspective*





# Eventualisation

The rupture of Evidence





Our incapacity or maybe difficulty to assimilate certain architectures as part of the city lies on the fact of its rupture -not formal or aesthetic but fundamentally evolutive- with the Roman base which has always guided its development. The problem, in this case, is located not simply on the Eventualization as a useful evolutive concept, but rather in the rupture of evidence, concluding in the appearing of singularities which constitute ruptures inside the historical constant and linear evolution.

Something that always happens -or almost- with this kind of practices, it that finally at the end it is clear which are not as functional as they should, and so, they are not so necessary as they appeared. The result is part of the rupture of evidence<sup>01</sup>, those from which our knowledge and practices feed. In this case, the example of Eventualization is not directly proportional to the one mentioned by Foucault; for him, Eventualization consists in the search of connections, encounters, supports, strategies, etc., that in a specific moment have formed what later will become evidence, universality, necessity. If we proceeded the same way, we would end up creating a layer that results from the Hyper Landscape<sup>02</sup> of the city and disappears inside it.

In opposition to this, the concept of Eventualization I pretend to argue refers to the comprehension of the compressed character of the evolutive process of the city, and subsequently its architectures as fundamentally transitory, autonomous and dependant on the collective memory of its inhabitants. The process that includes the formation of the abstract thinking is limited to the utilization of know techniques with which we can define the

aesthetic and material qualities of a project, this concept refers to the impossibility to assume the urban project of any city as an infinite matter.

The case of Milan, city which presents itself as a Modern Metropolis with mega projects which economic impact tends to denaturalize its own evolutive processes is an interesting example in which the Roman base of the city has been completely erased from the material expression of the city, and certainly almost in absolute from the collective memory of its inhabitants.

The evolution of the city, and the new projects that occupy its center of public attention, as the case of the Milano City, is the result of understanding the practice of architecture, not limiting to the building but taking also into account the economic and political forces that modify its rules as an “Event”<sup>03</sup> rather than a complementary fact -bridge- with ideological effects in the long term.

In presence of this kind of practice, the diminution of the weight of its lack of utility will consist then in the “construction”, around the singular event analyzed as a process of a polygon of intelligibility, which number of faces is not defined in advance, and that will never be considered as completely finished, given the assimilation of the urban evolution as an infinite process, never readable or predetermined in all its extent.

For the identification of the intelligibility of this kind of singularity, it is necessary to proceed by using the progressive saturation of the void, forcefully incomplete.

This process of continuous saturation results in the “discovery” of points over which we can find connections of the analysed building with its context, finding the typologies of interaction that relate it with its Hyper-Landscape. From this analysis on, it is possible to translate again the given building/area into the conceptual realm with which it is currently in rupture.

**01.** In philosophy, evidence has been taken consist of such things as experiences, prop tions, observation-reports, mental states, state affairs, and even physiological events, such as stimulation of one’s sensory surfaces.

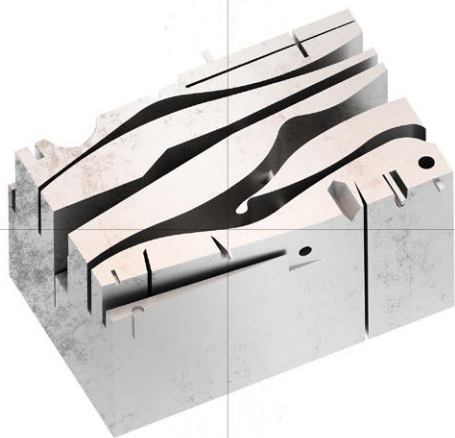
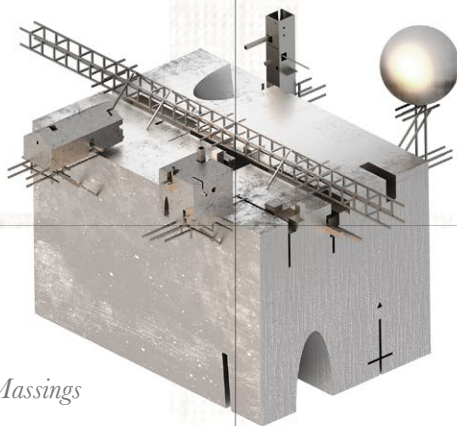
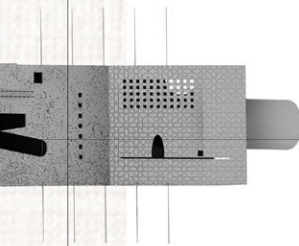
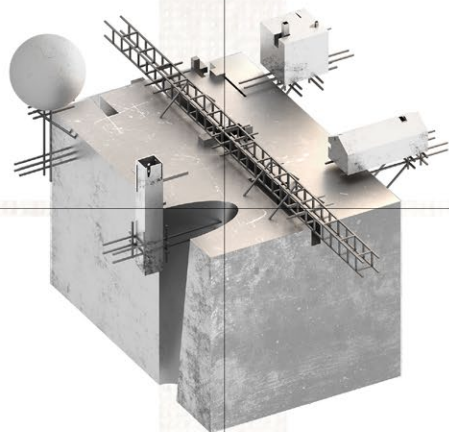
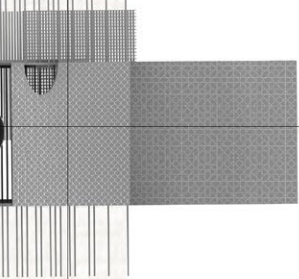
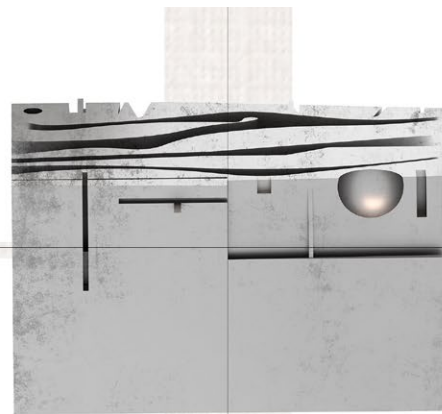
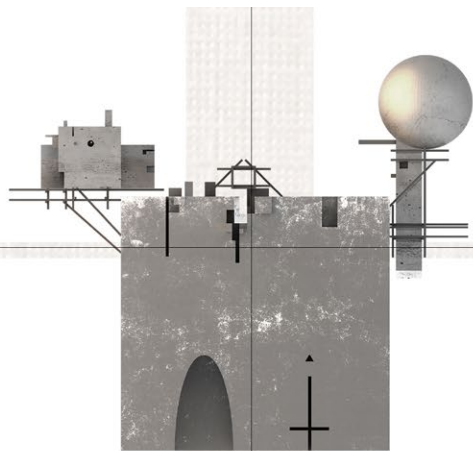
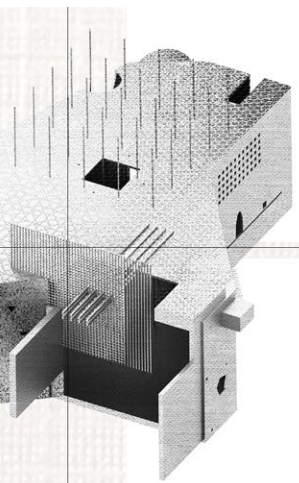
**02.** From Greek Hyper (prep. and adv.) “o beyond, overmuch, above measure,” - Landsc:

**03.** *‘The event is always that which has just happ and that which is about to happen, but never that whi happening’.* **Gilles Deleuze**, extracted from “*Event in Deleuze*, by Alain Badiou.

*“ [Eventualisation] means making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all. To show that things weren’t ‘necessary as all that’; it wasn’t as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn’t self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock them up; it wasn’t self-evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through individual examination of bodies; and so on. A breach of selfevidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest: this is the first theoretico-political function of eventualization.*

*It means uncovering the procedure of causal multiplication: analysing an event according to the multiple processes that constitute it. As away of lightening the weight of causality, ‘eventalization’ thus works by constructing around the singlar event analysed as process a ‘polygon’ or rather a ‘polyhedron’ of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite. One has to proceed by progressive, necessarily incomplete saturation.*

”Michel Foucault,  
‘Impossible Prison’ in Foucault Live. 1996. p. 277

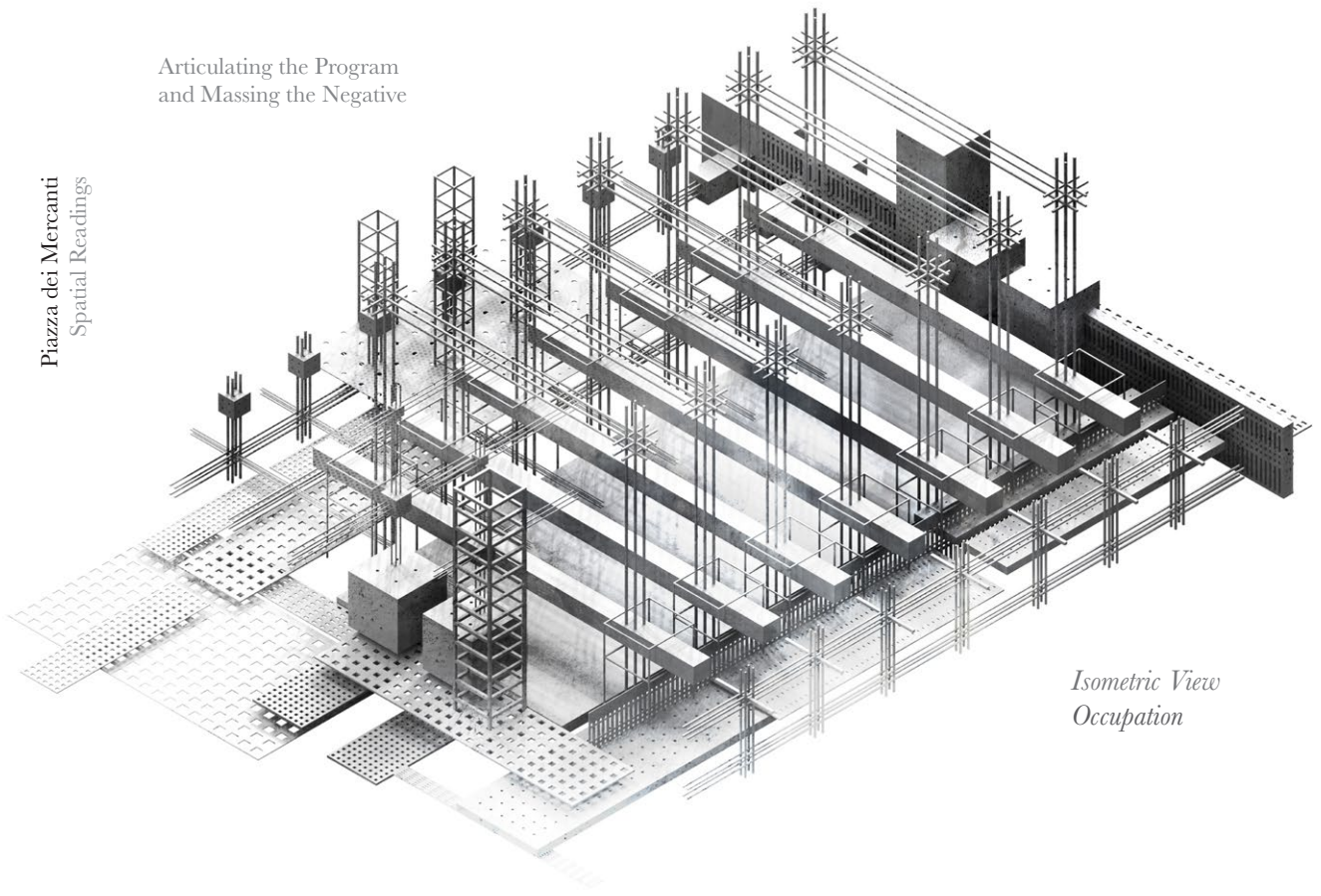


*Organizational Massings*

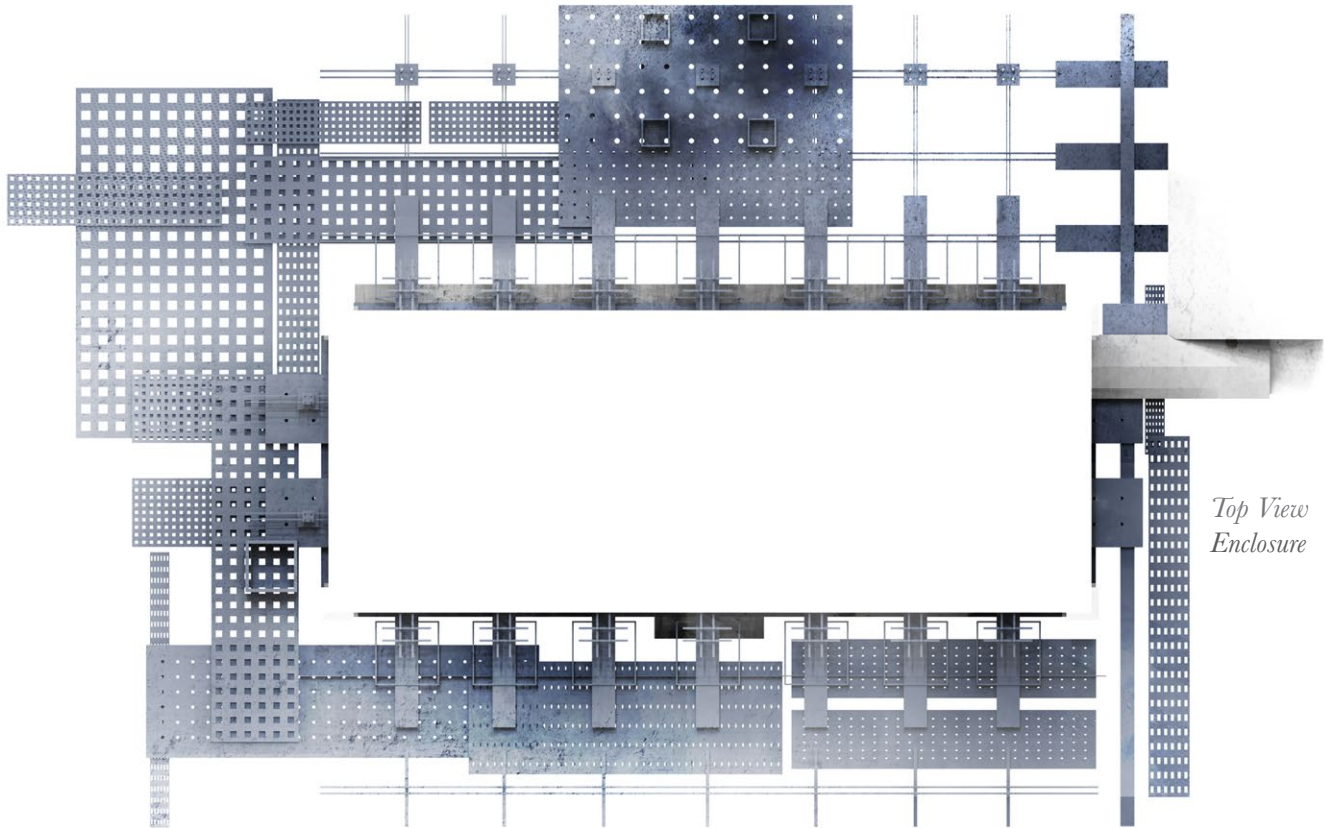
Project Mediolanum

Articulating the Program  
and Massing the Negative

Piazza dei Mercanti  
Spatial Readings

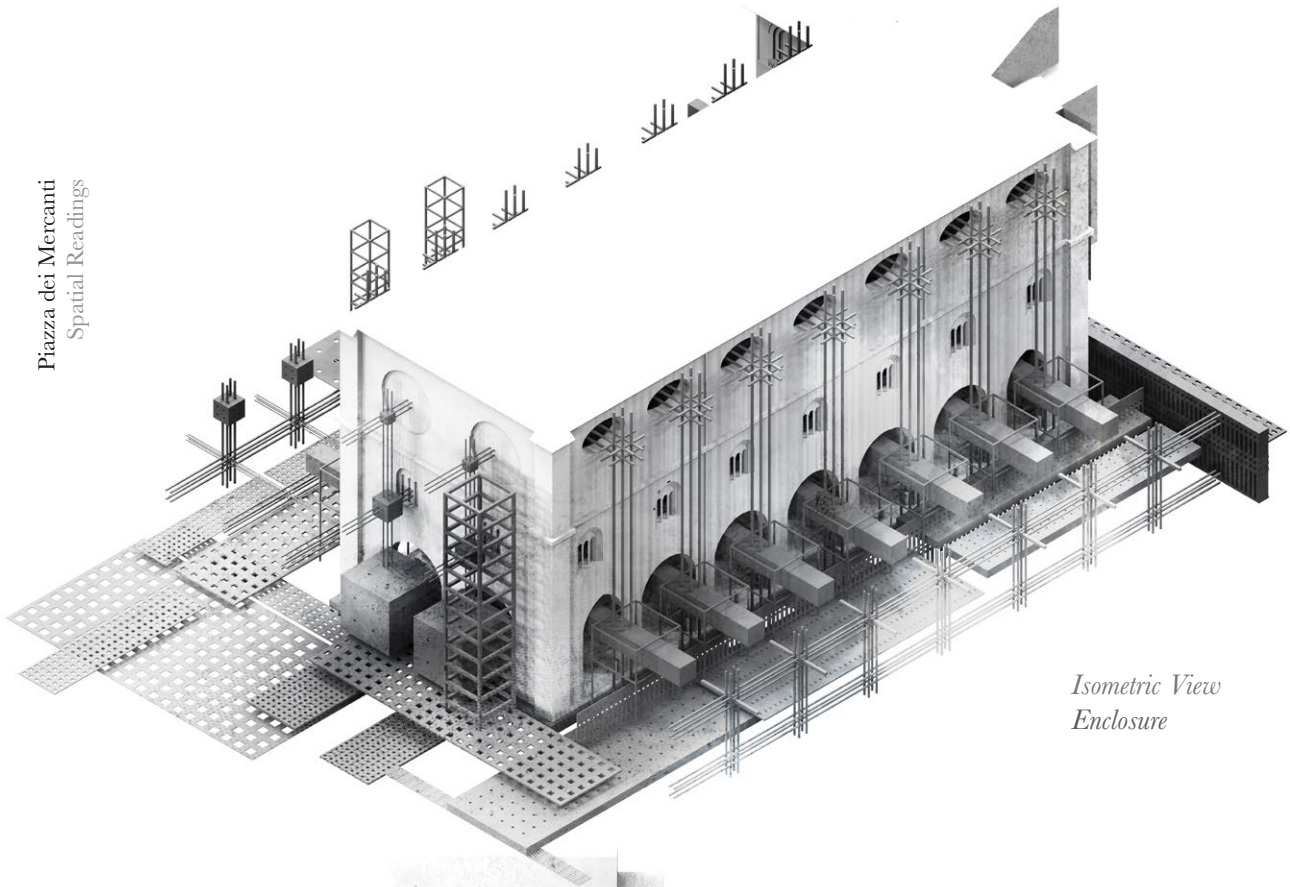


*Isometric View  
Occupation*

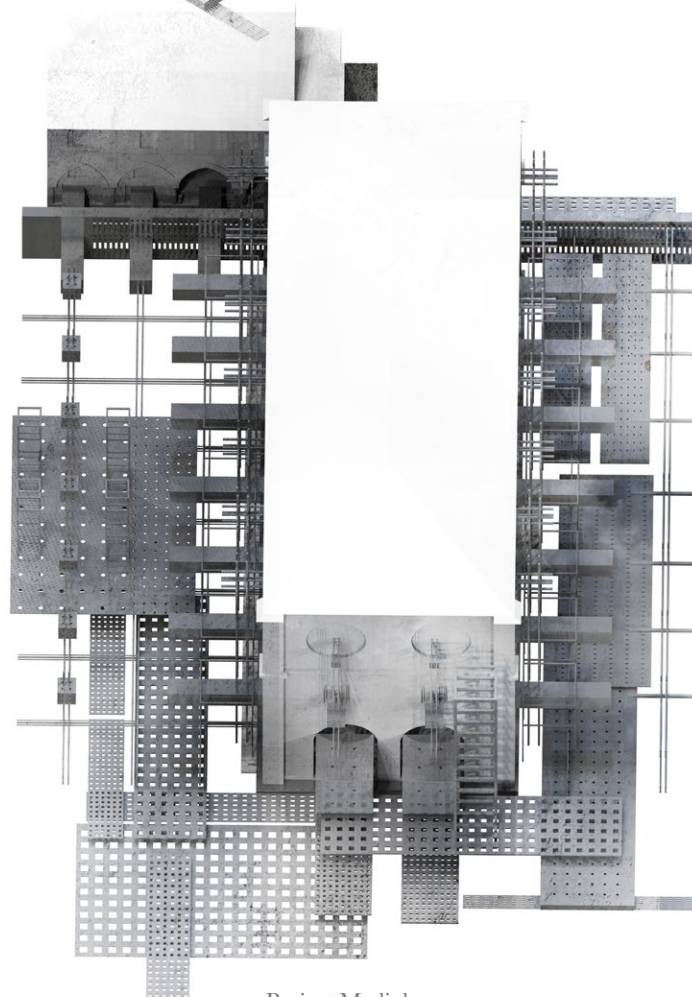


*Top View  
Enclosure*

Piazza dei Mercanti  
Spatial Readings



*Isometric View  
Enclosure*

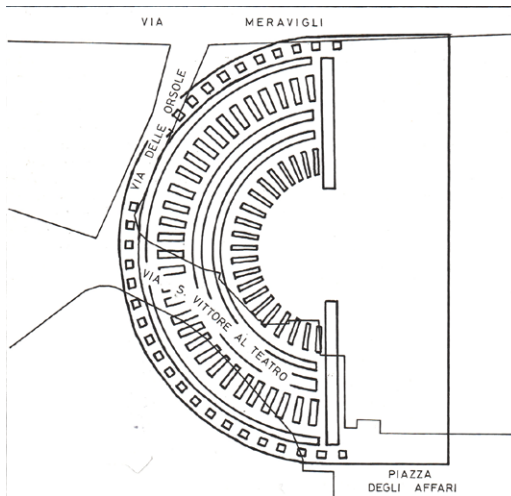


*Isometric View  
Enclosure*

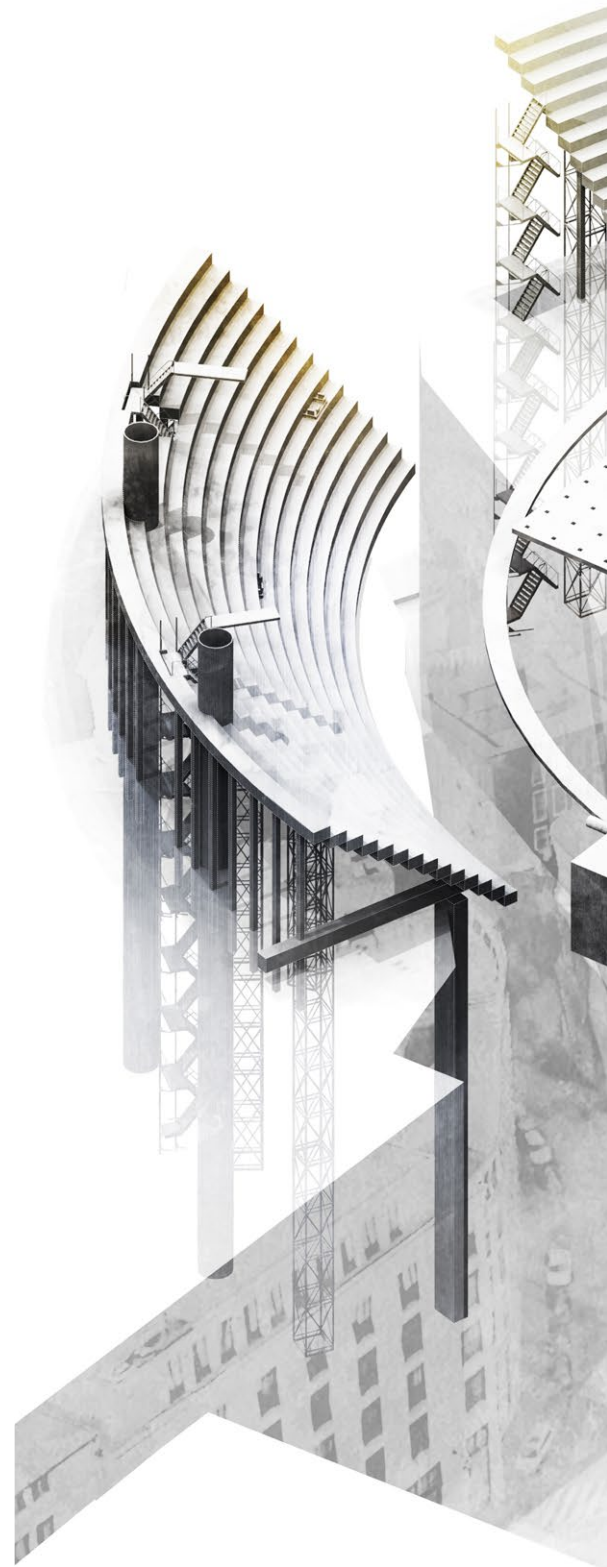
# The Theatre

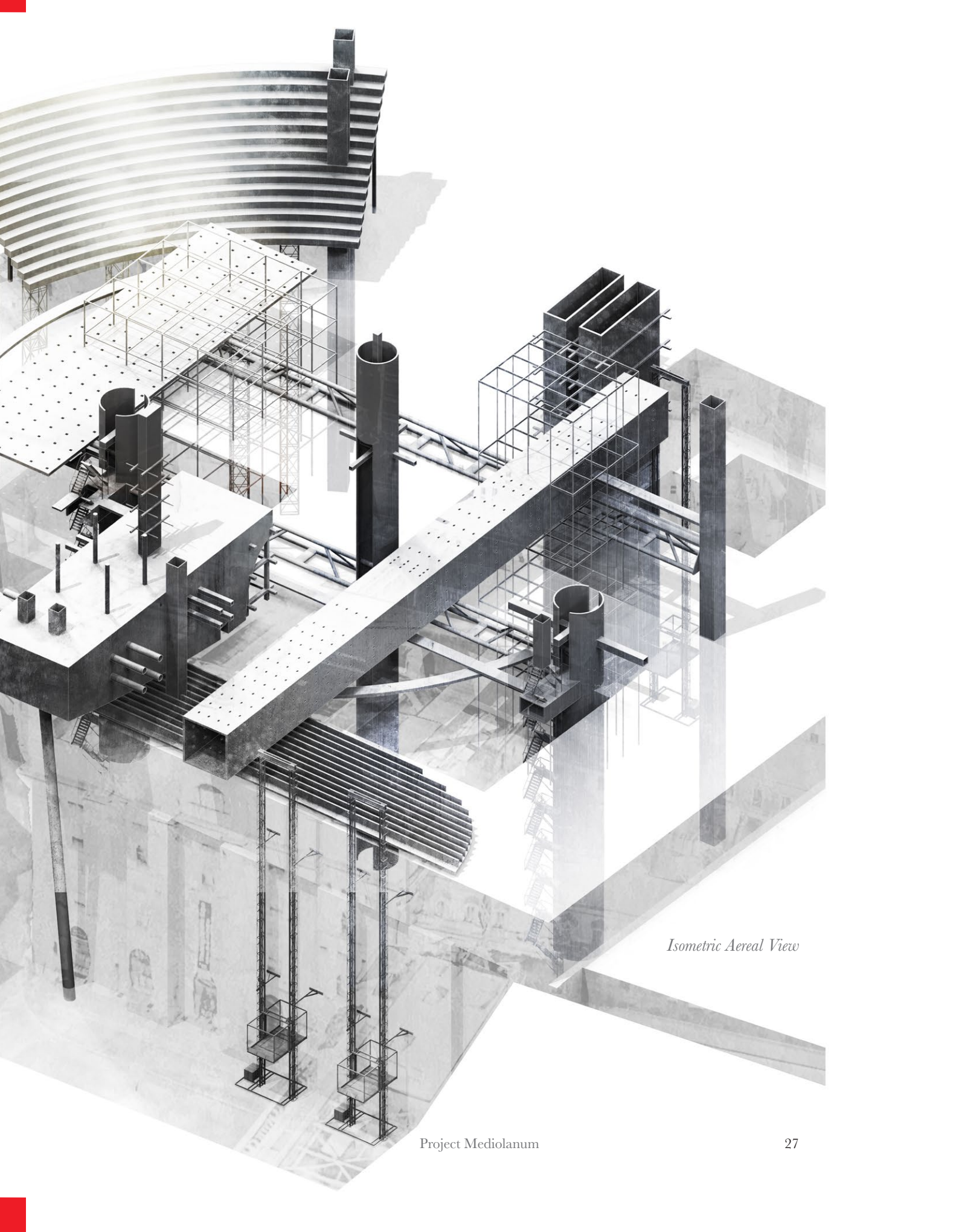
**Location:** Area between Piazza degli Affari and Via Meravigli, delle Orse and San Vittore al Teatro.

The Theatre, earliest known public building of the Augustan Age (end first century B.C) testified to the important historical moment when Milan, Roman municipium as from 49 B.C., began to construct important public buildings, both sacred and secular. Built on semi-circular design, the Theatre could hold 8,000 spectators, seated on tiered stone bleachers which rested in arches and galleries. The site of theatrical performances, games, festivals and meetings, it maintained its use for meetings for the public until the twelfth century when, after the destruction of the city by the Emperor Fredrick RedBeard, it was lost to memory.

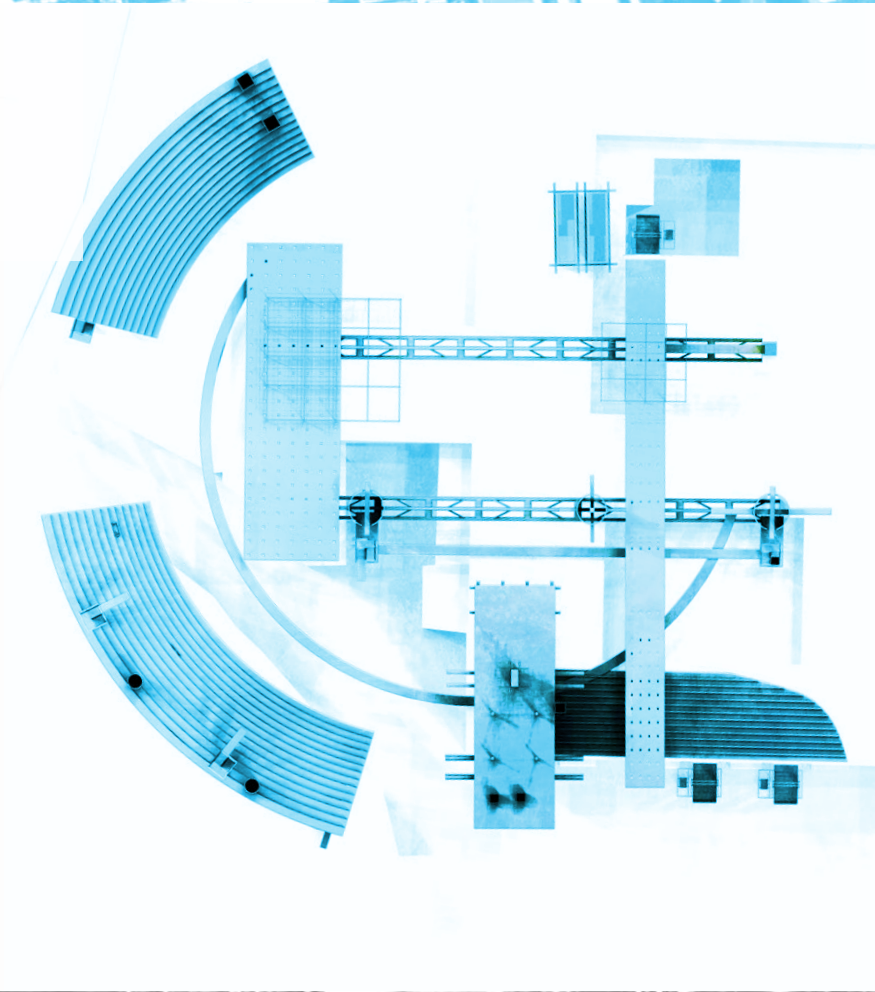


Plan of the Theatre





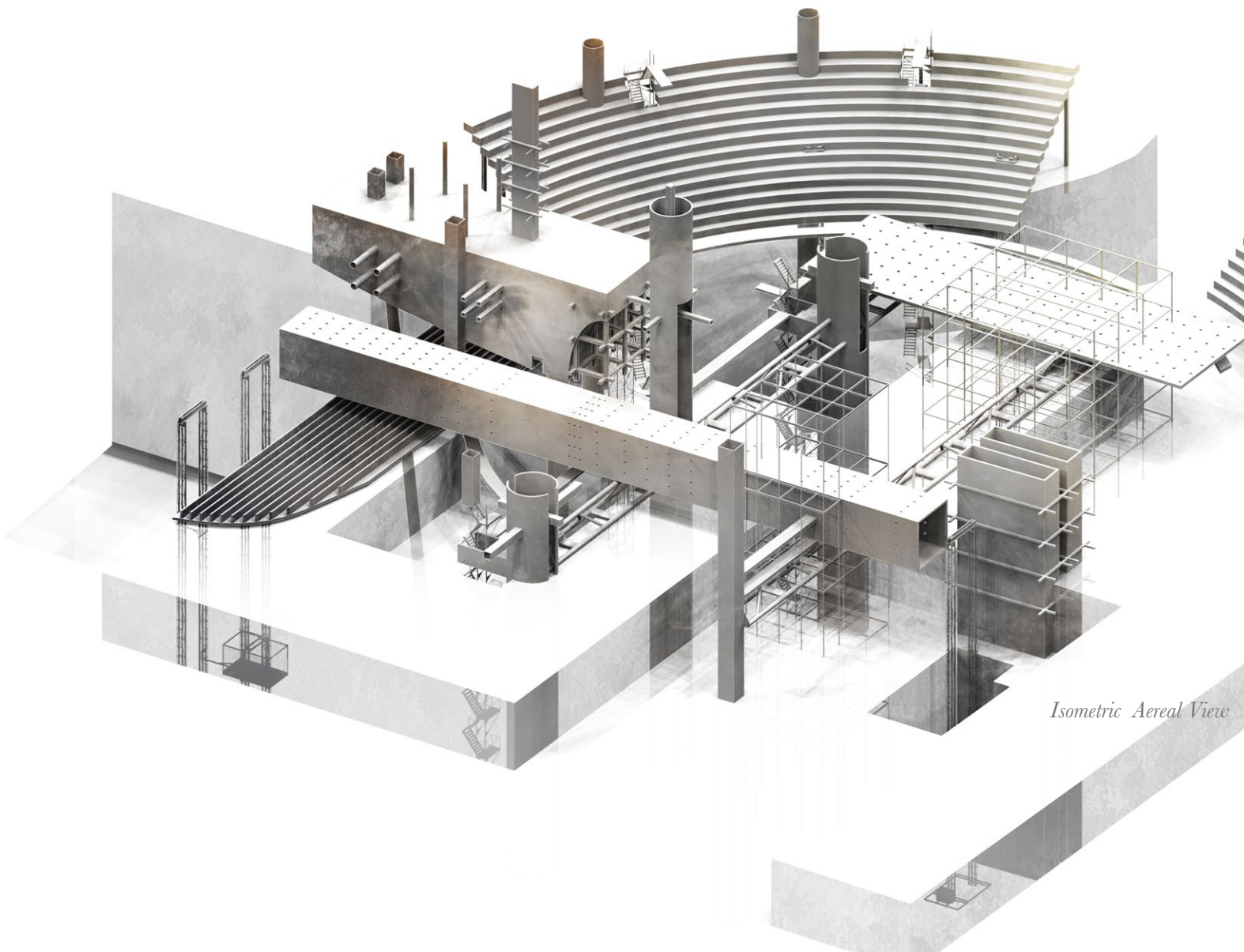
*Isometric Aerial View*



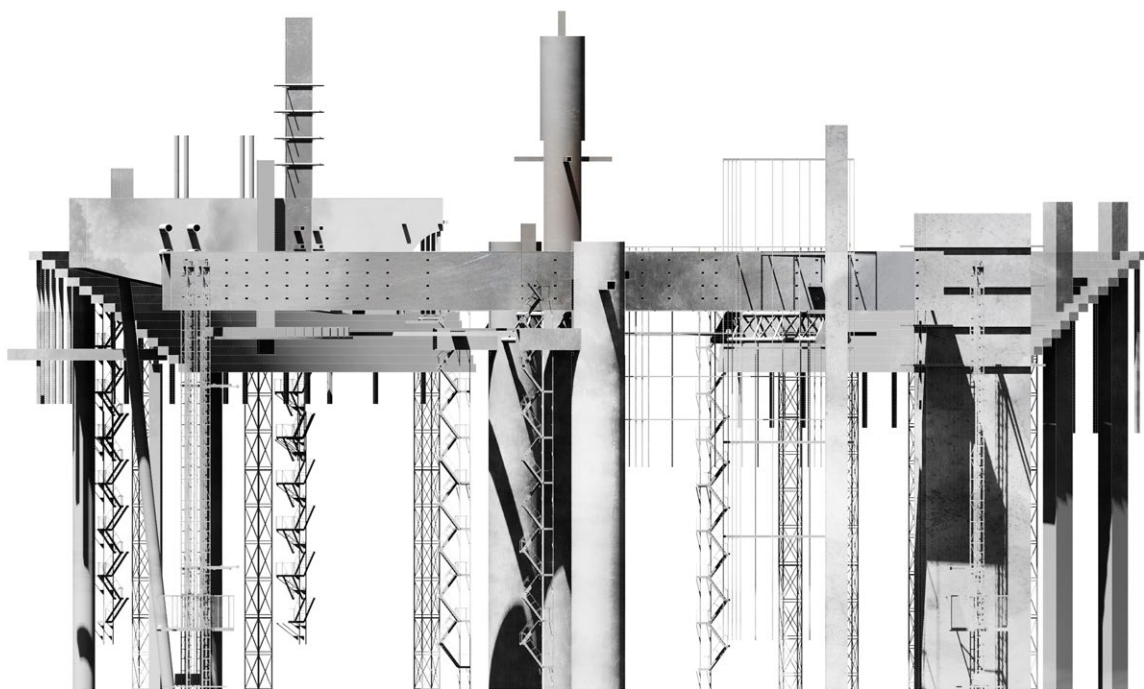
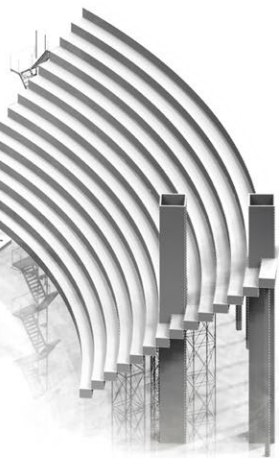
Top View



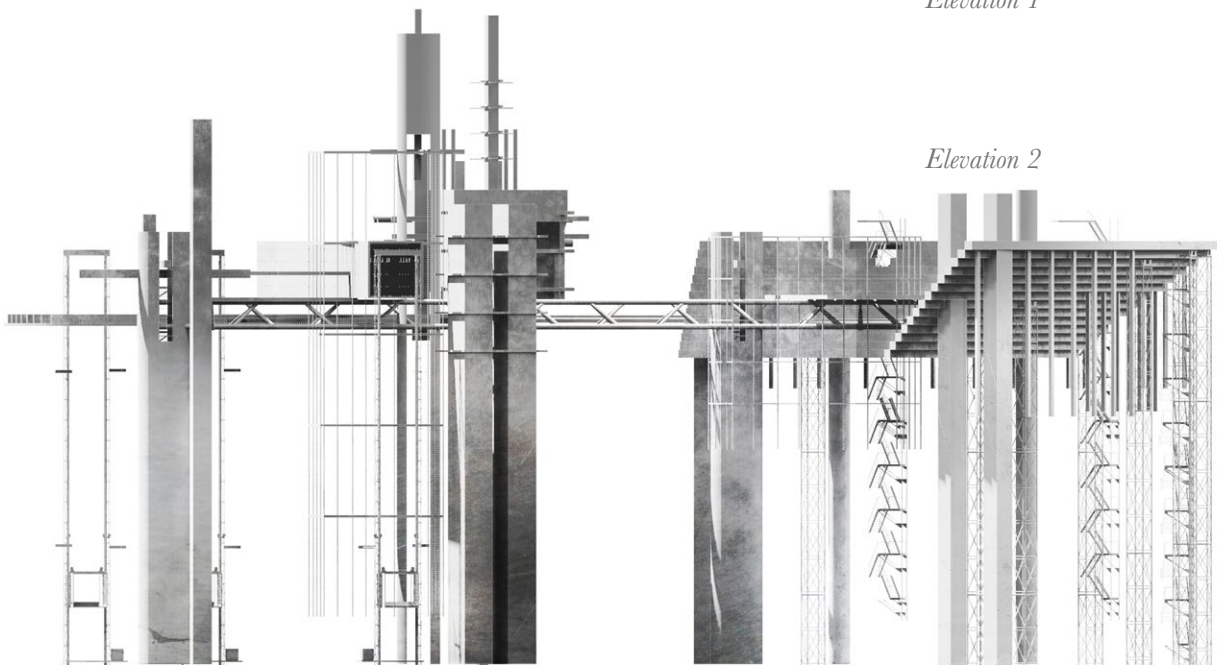




*Isometric Aerial View*



*Elevation 1*

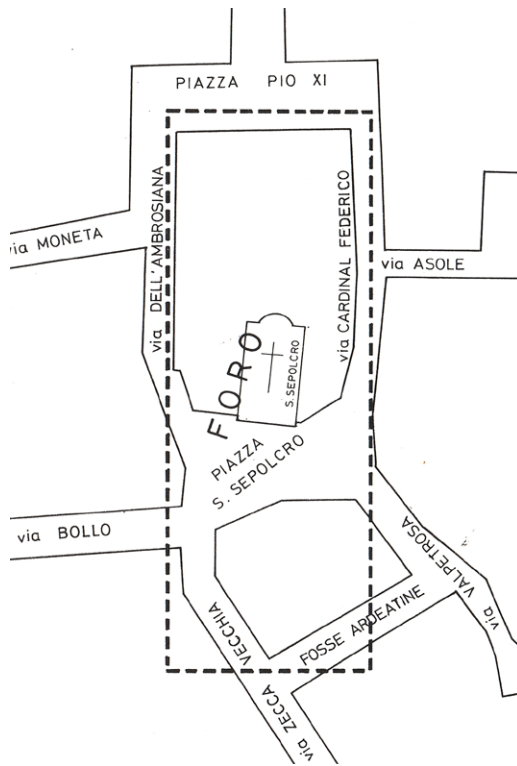


*Elevation 2*

# The Forum

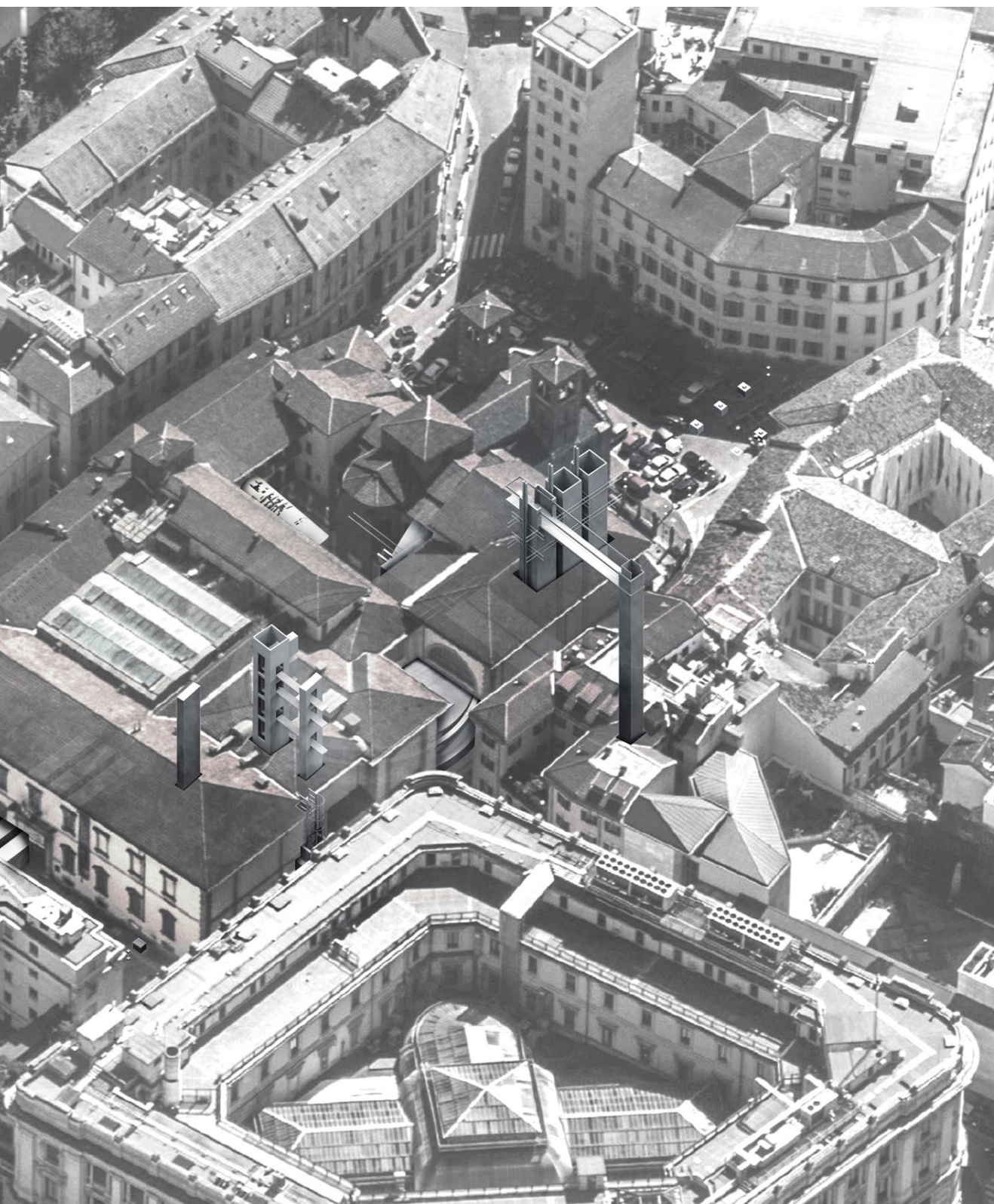
**Location:** Area between Piazza Santo Sepolcro and Piazza Pio XI.

The Forum, site of the political, religious and administrative functions of the city and fulcrum of its commercial activity, was built at the intersection of the principal roads, in an area which had been inhabited at least since the fifth century B.C. The great rectangular city square, paved and monumentalized during the Augustan Age, was flanked by *tabernae* (small shops) on the long sides and adorned with honorary statues. Data relative to the principal buildings such as the site of the Municipal Senate (curia), the building for administrative-judicial activity (basilica) and the temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva (Capitolium) which is believed to have been

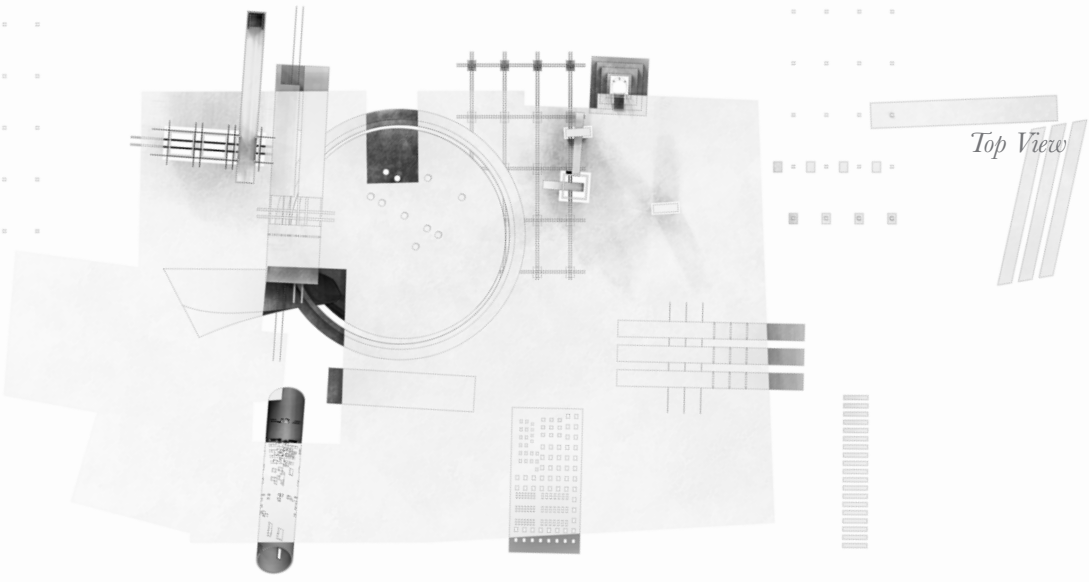


Area of the Forum

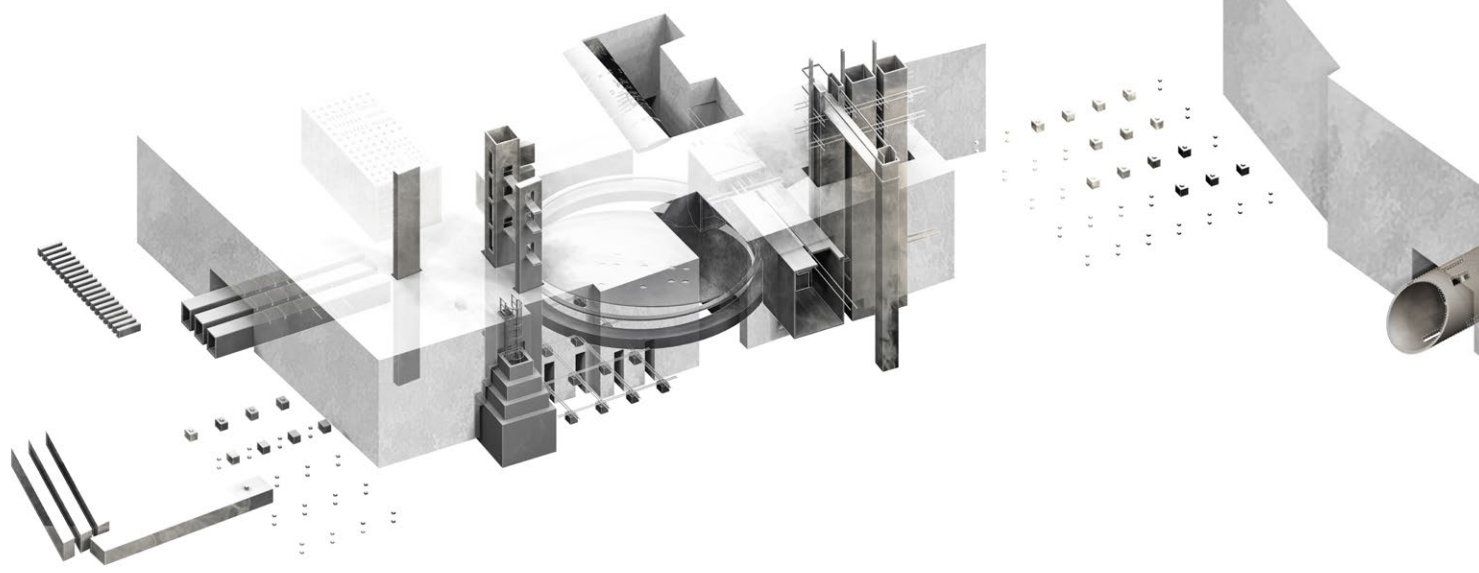




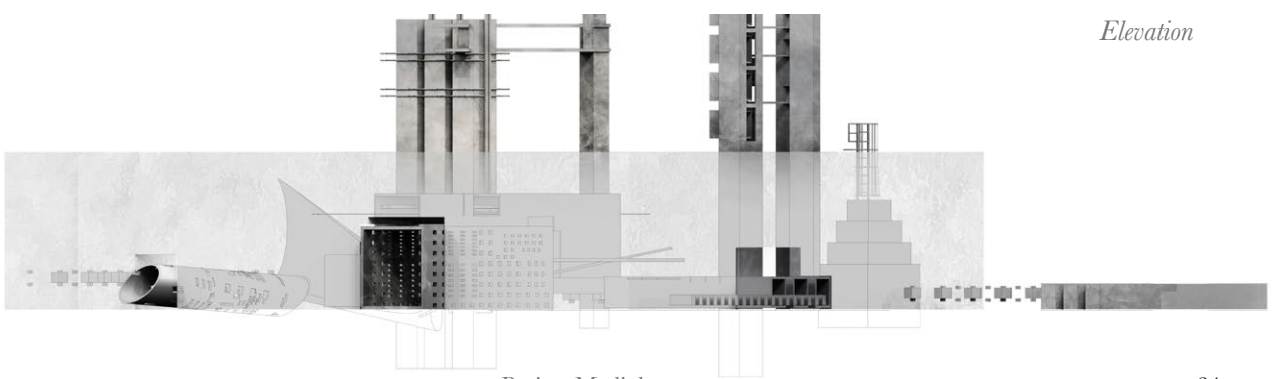
The Forum  
Project



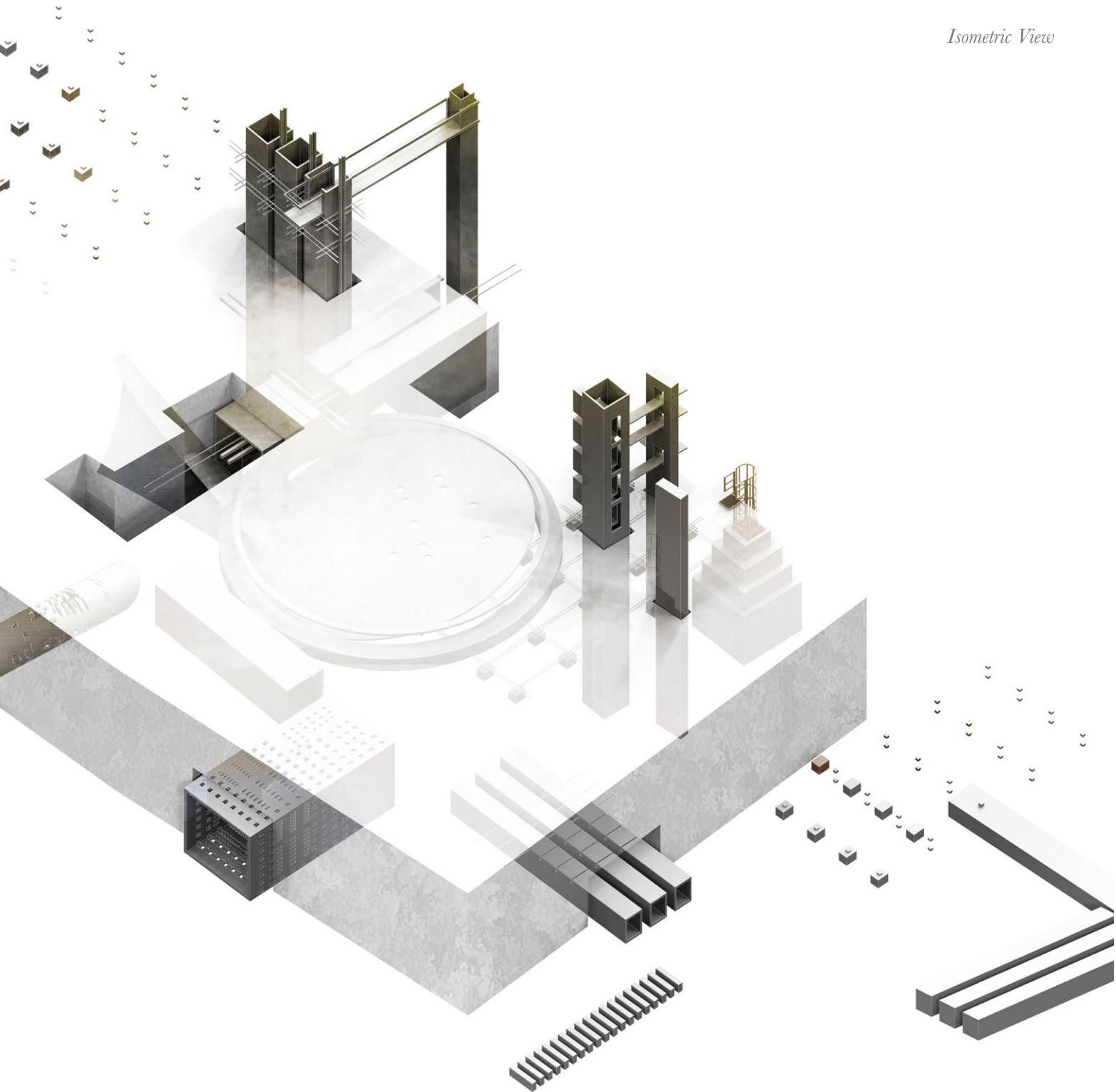
*Top View*



*Isometric View*



*Elevation*



**Milano** è in questo preciso luogo per una intersezione tra una importante struttura viaria che è la via Emilia, che poi diventa la via che va in Francia e un'altra linea che forma sessanta gradi con la via Emilia, che è la linea delle risorgive (quel insieme di punti in cui l'acqua viene fuori), al Sud di questa linea i terreni sono argillosi in superficie, e quindi l'acqua sta su, sono buoni per la agricoltura. Invece al Nord di questa linea i terreni sono ghiaiosi, e quindi l'acqua percola, sta più in profondità, e quindi sono ottimi terreni per gli insediamenti. Il fatto che le linee formino un'angolo di sessanta gradi è molto interessante, perché ti porta ad una configurazione triangolare. Esistono tre tipi di struttura in natura, una struttura ortogonale, una struttura radiale e una particolare struttura che in qualche maniera potrebbe essere parte di una struttura radiale ma non lo è, in quanto è una struttura triangolare, a Milano ci sono tutte i tre.

### **Milano Urban Plan**

Nessuna città mai può avere una piano urbano continuo, è impossibile perché si succedono dominazione diverse, situazione diverse, crescita-decrescita della città. Il piano in se è un'idea politico-economica, quindi è impossibile, non c'è l'ha nemmeno Roma. La Città di per sé è la commissione tra molteplici forse, quindi qualsiasi sforzo inteso a tenere insieme queste diversissime forse può avere successo ma no per un tempo indefinito. Nella città hai una stratificazione di tante forme e ciascuna cancella o comprende quelle precedenti ma sono tutte intrecciate. Adesso la relazione tra la città Romana e la città attuale c'è, perché attualmente il Sud-est - Nord-ovest, è ancora la direzione principale della città sulla quale è innervata. Ancora questo è in qualche maniera una possibile lettura delle linee di forse Milanesi, e non è a caso che hai Liniate, Malpensa e Orio dove sono.

Anche al interno della città c'è il Mediolanum, tutto ciò che era all interno delle mure era più regolato, tutto il resto era dinamico. A Milano c'è la ossessione per lo scavo di un originale principio insediativo, un originale "origine". Più scavi più trovi, non è detto che sia utile.

### **Milano Manifesto**

La mia idea è una città che è tutt'uno con tutto il resto della Pianura Padana, quindi per me Milano non è più Milano, per me Milano è una città reticolare su questa triplice giacitura che va da Torino a Venezia e Ravenna. Si chiama Policentropoli. Gottman l'ha già chiamata la Megalopoli Padana.

### **Vuoti & Pieni**

Il Vuoto è una "cosa", non è spazio. La parola spazio è quasi inutile, per me son tutte cose. Bruno Zevi parlava di invasi, anche Moretti faceva i modellini delle chiese e rappresentava le parte vuote. Se non ci fosse stato Cartesio potevamo parlare di spazio, ma dopo Cartesio...

Close Reading non è solo sui pieni, anche sui vuoti. Il Close Reading tende ad astrarre, però tu puoi astrarre anche questi corpi vuoti. Non è detto che le linee che disegni nel Close Reading stiano a determinare i pieni, la linea è il punto in cui il pieno diventa vuoto.

Se prendi Saggio sull'Arte, quando parla della foresta e del tempio, quando tu hai una foresta fitta e di fronte un tempio, quel vuoto è abbastanza definito da diventare leggibile, anche in città senza dubbio si può fare il Close Reading, la città è fatta di strade, piazze, e quelle sono COSE tanto quanto gli edifici. Poi nella città contemporanea tutto questo si sfuma perché il vuoto diventa più diffuso. Nella città contemporanea, la relazione tra tutte le parti, pieni, solidi, corpi e obietti diventa molto più casuale.



### Close Reading

Il Close Reading che è una pratica in letteratura che poi è stata anche applicata alla Architettura, significa una lettura ravvicinata. Andare a vedere la relazione tra le parole, le frasi e le parti delle frasi senza avere il problema della narrazione e dell'unità dell'opera. Bensì andando a vedere i dettagli e le relazioni sintattiche tra le parti, quindi più sulla forma che sul significato, più sulle relazioni tra le parole stesse che su quello che queste vogliono raccontare.

Tante Architetture sono state lette da diversi critici ed Architetti arrivando ad esiti diversi, dipende qual è l'obiettivo.

Un'analisi formale alla Wittkower e alla Colin Rowe è molto diversa una rispetto all'altra, una è più generativa, e l'altra potrebbe essere molto più conservatrice.

È una possibile differenza tra una strutturale o strutturalista rispetto a una formale o formalista. Nel Close Reading abbiamo la possibilità di prendere un piccolo dettaglio nella sua potenzialità generativa rispetto che prendere i dettagli di una composizione nei loro intenti conservatori bloccanti. Andare a prendere di tutto un edificio i piccoli elementi e vedere come possono dare degli indizi rispetto alla composizione dell'opera.

### Architettura sintattica

È un modo di intendere le serie e sistemi nella Architettura, ovvero, il linguaggio architettonico è fatto di elementi che si mettono in relazione uno con l'altro, quindi la sintassi è il modo di metterli in relazione. Una sintassi Architettonica è maggiormente percepibile se lavori con le griglie, i telai, etc., se lavori invece su corpi più pieni, più massicci, più materici, non importa.

### Architettura e Astrazione

La Architettura è Astratta senza dubbio, è una serie di relazioni formali tra varie cose, che poi assorbono anche dei compiti.

C'è una porta lì ma potrebbe anche non essere una porta, potrebbe essere uno spazio vuoto che oggi è una porta, ma in realtà è un vuoto, che poi è una cosa. In un sistema di relazioni tra vuoti e pieni, la forma di quel vano non è dovuta al fatto che io devo passare, è dovuta ad altri ordini di ragionamenti.

Non credo che tu stia facendo una architettura per comunicare qualcosa. Non penso che sia importante fare quello che ci si aspetti che tu faccia, in questo senso una Architettura Sintattica può essere una tua presa di distanza rispetto alla norma. Con il problema che fin che non rimanga sulla carta, qualcuno all'interno di questa norma deve pensare di poterla usare.

### Architettura & Mainstream

Oggi c'è tanta produzione di immagini ma non penso che sia un problema; all'interno di una certa varietà chiunque può trovare una sua linea, un suo modo di.

Il fatto che ci siano tante cose diverse non è preoccupante, una Metropoli è così.

All'interno di una molteplicità tu poi trovare il tuo canale, la tua linea di ricerca, direlazioni, quindi non importa, tutto sarà demolito.

Lorenzo degli Esposti

# Flexibility

The Grid and the House



The particularity that occupies the case of projects like the continuous monument by Superstudio and contrary to what may appear at first sight is given by the negation of the spatial simplification. What appears to be the super-simplification of the habitable space is nothing else than its exponential growth in complexity and its reinterpretation.

This happens when representing inside of what was void and now is built, again a Void, but this time in relation to a space that is a fruit of evolution. The result of this exercise takes shape in the generation of time-space relations of great complexity, in which the essence of unlimited flexibility is given back to space. The continuous monument denies emphatically the simplification of space, and it does so by transforming the tridimensional form to its former state, exteriorising once more the flexibilities and freedoms that exist when anything is possible the Tabula Rasa<sup>01</sup>.

It is here where lies the “Radicality” of this project:

**What appears to be simply surfaces and architectonic models that represent in any case the ‘total urbanisation’, actually are a very direct and immediate attack to the spatial and political divisions that constitute the base of our society. The Continuous Monument and the Supersurface represent our incapacity to understand the city out of its established socio-political divisions.**

As Jean Paul Sarte mentioned:

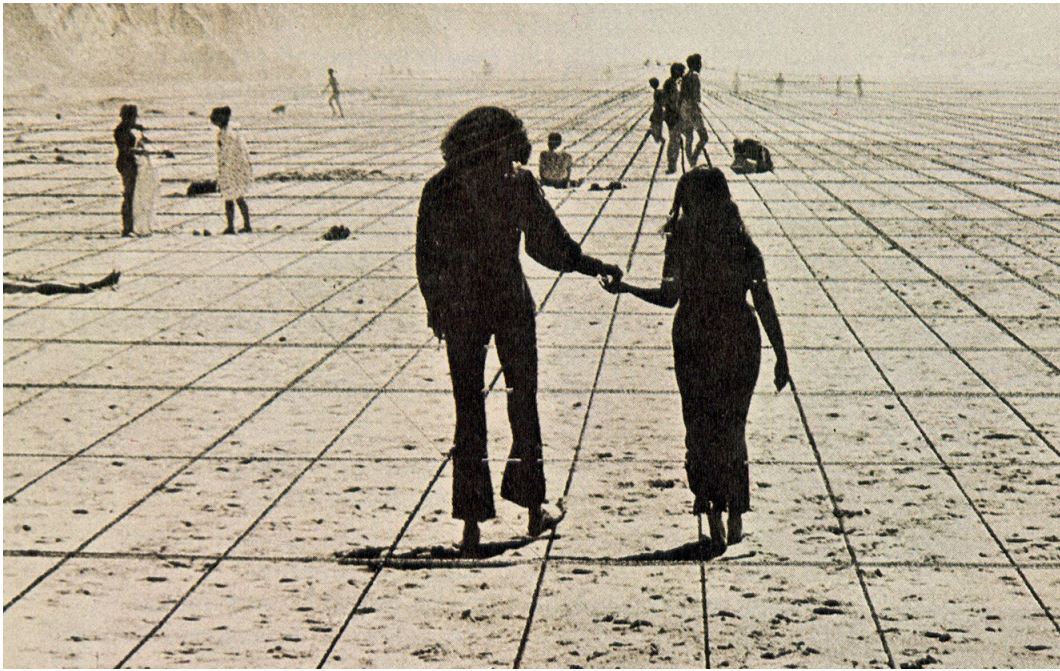
*“Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. It is up to you to give [life] a meaning. ...He was free, free in every way, free to behave like a fool or a machine, free to accept, free to refuse, free to equivocate; to marry, to give up the game, to drag this death weight about with him for years to come. He could do what he liked, no one had the right to advise him, there would be for him no Good or Evil unless he thought them into being.”*

But this condition is constantly negated due to our need to control and while at the same time being controlled.

Very different models of this fundamental concept can be understood by analysis different projects from ‘extreme’ points of view:

From the point of view of the sensitisation<sup>02</sup> of space, its projection as a field of infinite possibilities, we find as mentioned the case of Superstudio, which models have been repeated and copied indiscriminately and without any sense. This happens because while reproducing it, there is total ignorance about the base proposition formulated by the radical group, and so the new images (that do not represent ideas anymore) of grids and megastructures, lack in the actual context of any sense.

On the other hand, for analysing what we can define the project of super control and the simplification of all sort of spatial possibilities -in opposite to the void- we find, as an archetypical model, the group of the housing project that occupies and materialise the skyline of cities like Moscow, among others where the ex-soviet regime gave shape to its ideals of space economisation and mass control.



Superstudio, The Continuous Monument, 1969

Social Housing Estates, Floreasca Neighbourhood, Romania, Photo by Rachita Misra



In the case of these examples, the tridimensional space has been absolutely oversaturated and reduced to a group of symbols extremely well defined, absorbing any possibility that could signify their re-interpretation or transformation into more open models.

The social housing projects adopted by these countries is a significative example of phenomenological simplification, in which these structures lack any connection with the Hyper Landscape that defines the city and its evolution through time. These buildings and each one of them independently is an autonomous model, which separation from any functional, cultural or social layer converts them in dispositive under absolute control, isolated and extreme in their densification. Their capacity for becoming mechanisms of control is given also because of the possibility that this model represents for differentiating social groups, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Given the autonomy of each of these buildings with respect to the others and to the context itself, it is possible to act specifically over one of them, without any need of interacting with the rest.

If we were to define these models looking at their phenomenology, and contrary to what we can suppose, the model of the Supersurface and the Continuous Monument would be absolutely illegible, but very simple when observed in direct relation to the projects of the Soviet social housing. This is due to the fact that the Supersurface is formed by a space yet to be defined, infinite, in which it is impossible to suppose any series of formal or functional connections.

When analysing this model we are discovering an arena for experimentation, ready for any kind of intervention, and over which converge all the complex layers that compose any city, but that haven't been deformed yet under the

collective intentions of its inhabitants. This area is still part of the kingdom of dreams of architecture, the subconscious side of space. On the other hand, the case of the socialist housing models, that phenomenological spatial composition of the space is completely defined.

In this case, there is no space anymore for any kind of speculation. When reading there project we will find a regular organisational pattern, defined by several components that -opposite to the open model- do not express expandable alternatives, deformability or connectivity. The no-deformability is probably the characteristic that defines more clearly the structure of the spaces -Societies of Control<sup>03</sup>.

In this cases, the difference interior-exterior is not relevant anymore.

We can then define, from a very generic approach but without much margin of error, the infinite prototype model created by Superstudio as a permanent archetypical interior, and the social housing fashion as the undeniable exterior.

*The conception of a control mechanism, giving the position of any element within an open environment at any given instant (wether animal in a reserve or human in a corporation, as with an electronic collar), is not necessarily one of science fiction. Félix Guattari has imagined a city where one would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighbourhood, thanks to one's (dividual) electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what costs is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position -licit or illicit- and effects a universal modulation.*

*Gilles Deleuze, Postscript on the Societies of Control.*

The reason for this categorisation is the following:

**The social housing is a model radically simplified, it is specifically programmed for the working class use -‘Minimalised’- The functions are defined in such a way that there is not space for imagination or suppositions about what may happen in its interior, everything is already preconceived. The furniture distribution is obviously distributed, the localisation of services, kitchen and resting rooms is standardised in a generally very poorly achieved plan.**

The dispositive of mobility (emergency stairs, main stairs, elevators corridors) is legible from the exterior of the buildings. In this way it would not be very hard creating a diagram of activities in which we could map without much effort the “privacy” of all the building dwellers, like if it was a theatre play in which all actors represent different roles and act as if they didn’t know that the spectators can follow every single move they do. The idea of privacy is completely suppressed when all the functions are predictable when the range of possibilities to be carried out in a place is formed by a group of habits of limited deviation. The literal and phenomenological transparencies studied by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky are clearly applicable to this example, in which we may as well extend its application to the field of human relations.

*“... Therefore, at the beginning of any inquiry into transparency, a basic distinction must perhaps be established. Transparency may be an inherent quality of substance—as in a wire mesh or glass curtain wall, or it may be an inherent quality of organization—as both Kepes and, to a lesser degree, Moholy suggest it to be; and one might, for this reason, distinguish between a real or literal and a phenomenal or seeming transparency.”*

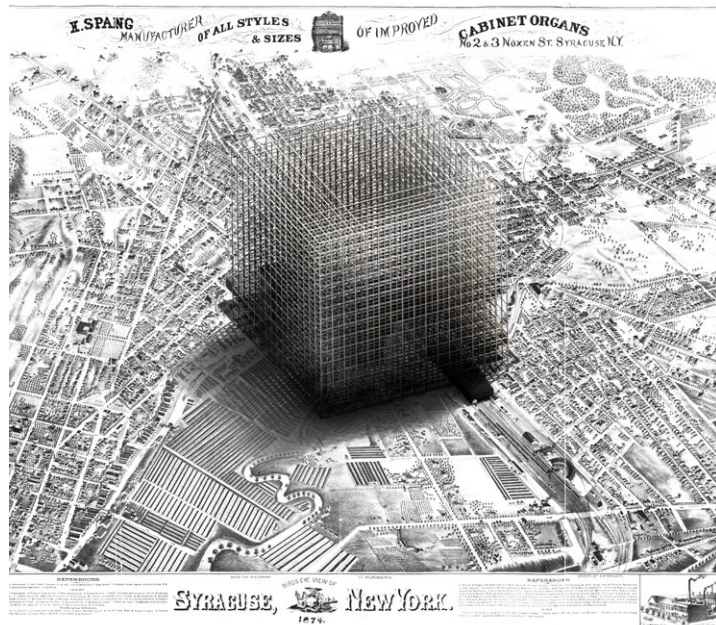


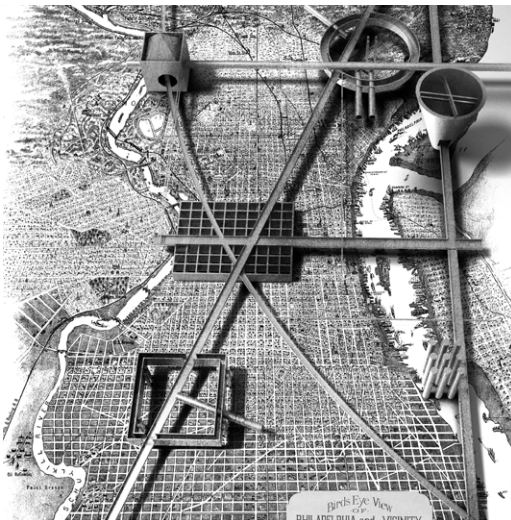
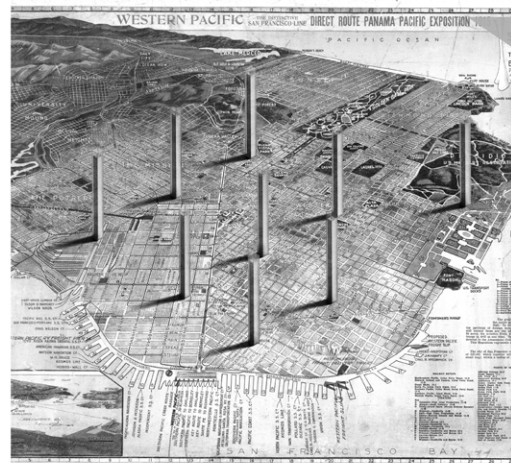
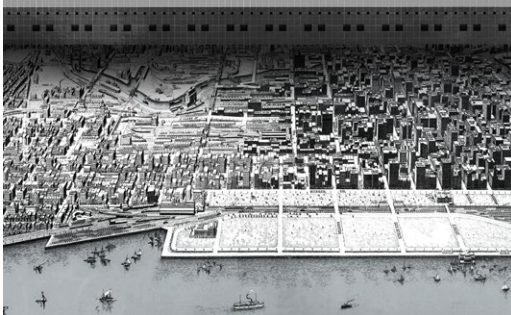
From the series “**Manual for becoming a Radical Architect**”

*Left.* Project 1.5, Monumental Urbanism, New York, 1951.

*Top right.* Project 1.4, The Megastructure, Syracuse, New York, 1874.

*Bottom right.* Project 1.7, Floating Units.





**Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky,** “*Transparency*”, with a commentary by Bernard Hoesli and an introduction by Werner Oechslin, Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel-Boston-Berlin.

**Transparency:**

1. Spatial penetration, and the ubiquitous flow of air, light, and physical movement... The houses of Le Corbusier define themselves neither by space nor by forms: the air passes right through them!

“*The air becomes a constitutive factor!... The separations between interior and exterior fall.*”

[**Siegfried Giedion;** ‘*Bauen in Frankreich*’; 1928]

“*The knell has sounded for dwelling in its old sense, dwelling in which security prevailed. Giedion, Mendelssohn, Le Corbusier have made the place of abode of men above all the transitory space of all the imaginable forces and waves of air and light.*”

[**Walter Benjamin;** ‘*Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs*’; 1928]

2. On another level, transparency opened up machine architecture to inspection;... the very epitome of social morality...

The spirit of the times (1920s) is captured by **André Breton:**

“*As for me, I continue to inhabit my glass house, where one can see at every hour who is coming to visit me, where everything that is suspended from the ceilings and the walls holds on as if by enchantment, where I rest at night on a bed of glass with glass sheets, where who I am will appear to me...*”



From the series “**M**... becoming a Ra...

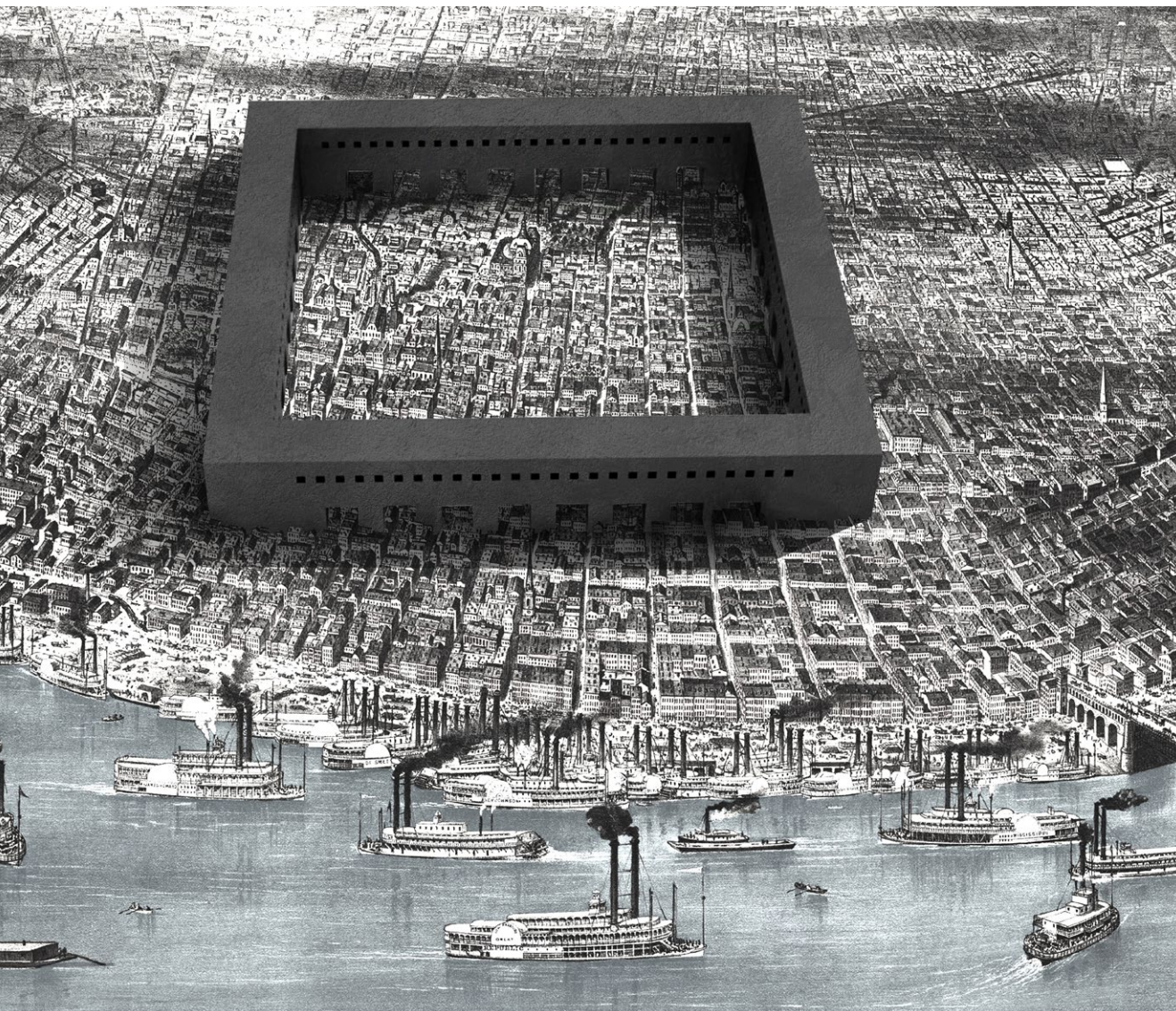
Top left. Project 1.3 IL, 1916.

Center left. Project 1.1 Francisco Bay, 1916.

Bottom left. Project 1.2 System, Philadelphia, 1916.

Right. Project 1.0, Orleans, LA, 1885.





**“Manual for  
Political Architect”**

1.6, The Wall, Chicago,

1.6, The Towers, San  
Francisco, 1850.

1.8, New Mobility  
in Chicago, 1870.

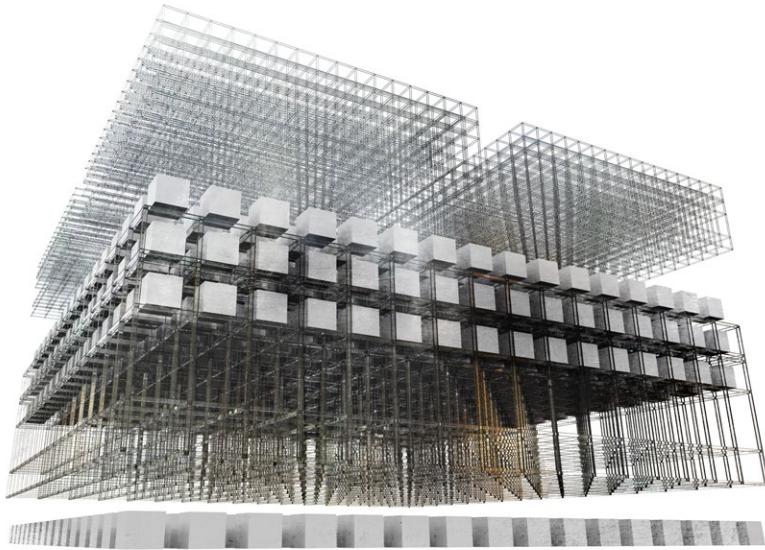
1.9, A Square over New  
York, 1870.

We are facing then two very different mechanisms inside the same example.

The model was created to serve as shelter, protection and obviously privatise the daily nonpublic life of the people inhabiting it, but when reading it closely we can get as much information about the internal life of the structure as of its exterior. The internal reality is saturated in such a level that the privacy of the dwellers has become a collective rite, predictable and uncanny.

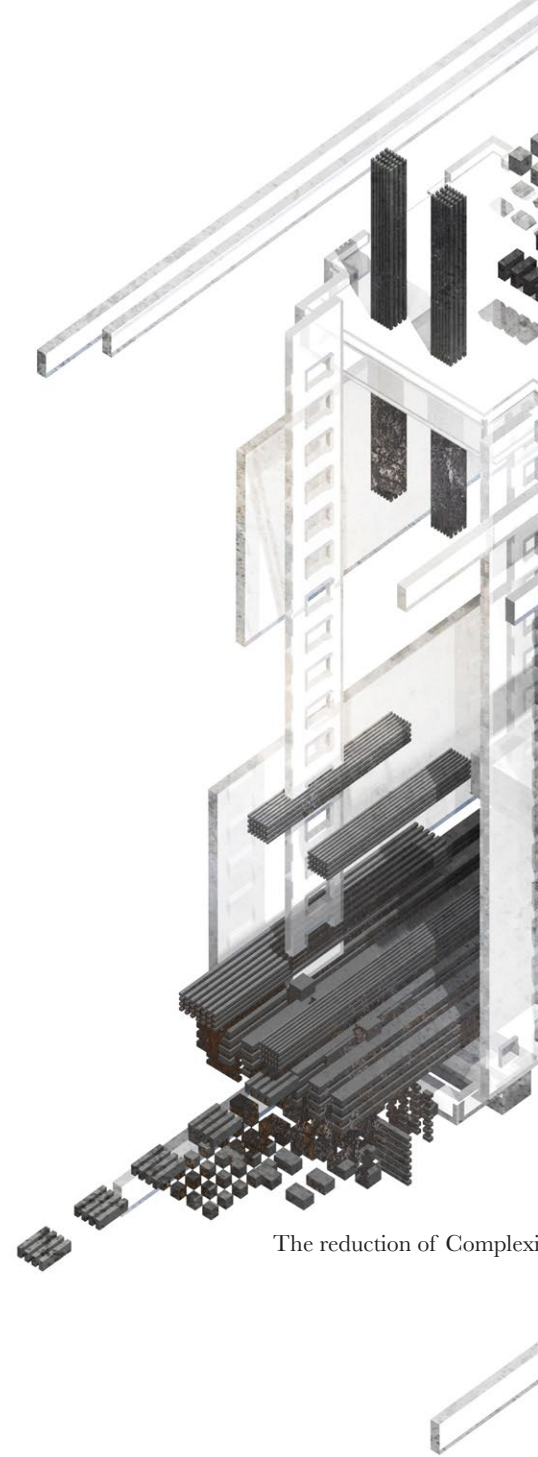
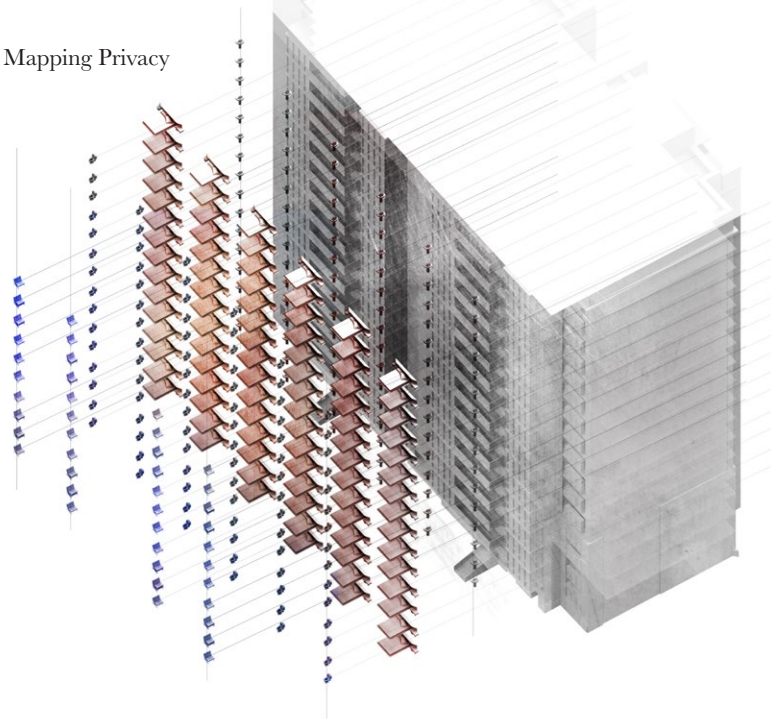
*As a concept, then, the uncanny has, not unnaturally, found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror, and then in the city, where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community, has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity.*

*In both cases, of course, the “uncanny” is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial conformation; it is, in its*



Structure and Flexibility of Space

Mapping Privacy



The reduction of Complexity



*aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely eludes the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming*

**Vidler, Anthony;** *“The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely”*, 1992.

Let's now analyse the infinite model:

The infinite city is represented in the mechanism which main property is its extreme flexibility. The Supersurface, for example, forms an archetypical interior; this is due to the number of possibilities and interactions that space has to offer. Infinite variations, connections, morphologies yet to discover. Its use, differently from what happens with the social housing model, it is not predictable anymore. It is not possible to suppose what is about to happen in a specific quadrant of the grid or organise the mass movement, and as a result, the mapping of this activities, differently from the housing scheme is not probable.

When observing the continuous and indefinite space, yet to be built, ultimately unknown, we are in presence of the “infinite randomness”<sup>04</sup>, the constant punishment that supposes the excess of freedom, and the absolute activity of “selection” as a method of existence. The difficulty that appears when trying to completely understand this model is based on the arbitrarily of its possible development. Each project -as a given fact, is governed by a group of rules, suppositions and collective agreements that rationalise the socialisation as a determinable and predictable process; but the reality is a reflection of the impossibility of identifying each one of this processes as fundamentally differentiable.

This affirmation can be formulated when taking into consideration the instability of any political regime, governs, people. Inevitably then, the process of creation of complete cities, buildings, conceptual exercises, is guided without any doubt by constant randomness, the decision making in all cases is based on collective moods, intentions. Collectivisation in thinking takes shape when the individual intentions are not sufficiently important as to condition the project making operation. The city is derived then, from a continuous process of incarceration of the individual, not just as a condemn toward specific intellectual or philosophical points of view, but also because of the lack of rigor that emerges when the decisions and main conditions of the crowd lifestyles is born from ideas in development, punctual, in fashion.

All too human and too free as to be able to enjoy freedom in its maximum spatial and ideological form. The city is an scenery that expresses the collective insecurities individualised in permanent places of habitation, and collectivising points of socialisation.

*“It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men, which blind us and make us happy. At first the former are regarded with scorn, as though the two things could not possibly be accorded equal rights: they stand there so modest, simple, sober, so apparently discouraging, while the latter are so fair, splendid, intoxicating, perhaps indeed enrapturing. Yet that which has been attained by laborious struggle, the certain, enduring and thus of significance for any further development of knowledge is nonetheless the higher; to adhere to it is manly and demonstrates courage, simplicity and abstemiousness.*”

*Gradually not only the individual but all mankind will be raised to this manliness, when they have finally become accustomed to valuing viable, enduring knowledge more highly and lost all faith in inspiration and the acquisition of knowledge by miraculous means. -*

*Worshippers of form, with their standards of the beautiful and sublime, will, to be sure, at first have good ground for mockery once estimation of unpretentious truths and the scientific spirit begins to dominate: but only because either their eye has not yet discovered the cha of the simplest form or because those raised in that spirit are as yet very far from being thoroughly permeated by it, so that they still thoughtlessly imitate old forms (and do so badly, as does everyone to whom a thing no longer matters very much). Formerly the spirit was not engaged in rigorous thinking, its serious occupation was the spinning out of forms and symbols. That has now changed; serious occupation with the symbolic has become a mark of a lower culture.*

*As our arts themselves grow ever more intellectual, our senses more spiritual, and as for example we now adjudge what is pleasant sounding quite differently from the way we did a hundred years ago: so the forms of our life will grow ever more spiritual, perhaps to the eye of earlier ages uglier, but only because it is incapable of seeing how the realm of inner, spiritual beauty is continually growing deeper and wider, and to what extent we may all now accord the eye of insight greater value than the fairest structure or the sublimest edifice.”*

**Friedrich Nietzsche**, “*Human, All Too Human*”, 1. Of First and Last Thing; translated by R. J. Hollingdale; with an introduction by Richard Schacht. (Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy), 1878/1879.

At this point, it is possible to understand the city as an enormous machinery, which principal objective lies in the continuous control of its inhabitants as a mass and as individuals when it is precise. This takes place clearly if analysing the Roman city, its archetypical planning, the specialisation of its programme and the super identification of the specific functions that structure it. Commerce areas, habitation, social interaction, isolation, housing. The evident contradiction that exists between the collective ideals of freedom and flexibility are not compatible with the plan of the cities, which organises, creates habits, rituals, movements, etc., that will be later legitimised around individual and collective moral conducts.

We are constantly condemned to accept and censure at the same time this reality. The absoluteness of the city conditions its inhabitants to create their own interpretation of its context, conceptualising it from points of view of infinite freedoms, but finally, the reality of the collective living is the other side of a prominent mechanism of cooperative standardisation.

That absurd is the reflex of our existence, which evolves summing absurd after absurd, expressed through the sacralisation of the methodologies of education, the artificiality of 'naturalising' architectures and the ghost readings of aged books.

Conforming an ineludible vicious circle of prejudices, hypocrisy and malicious ignorance.

**01.** Latin, literally 'scraped tablet', denoting a tablet with the writing erased.

**02.** The Attempt to make oneself or others aware of and responsive to certain ideas, events, situations, or phenomenon.

**03.** *"In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything—the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation."*

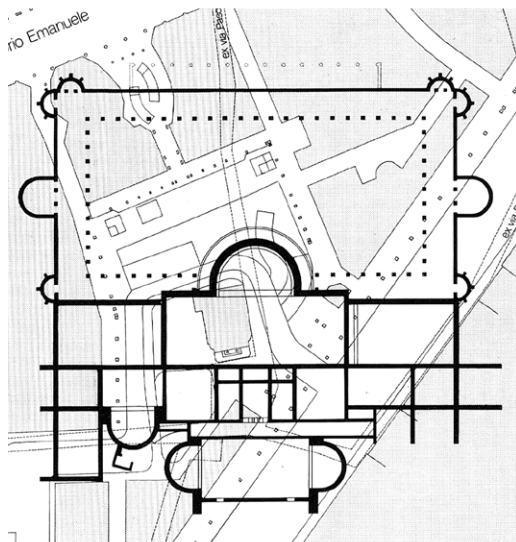
**Gilles Deleuze**, *"Postscript on the Societies of Control"*.

**04.** Lacking any definite plan or prearranged order; haphazard: a random selection.

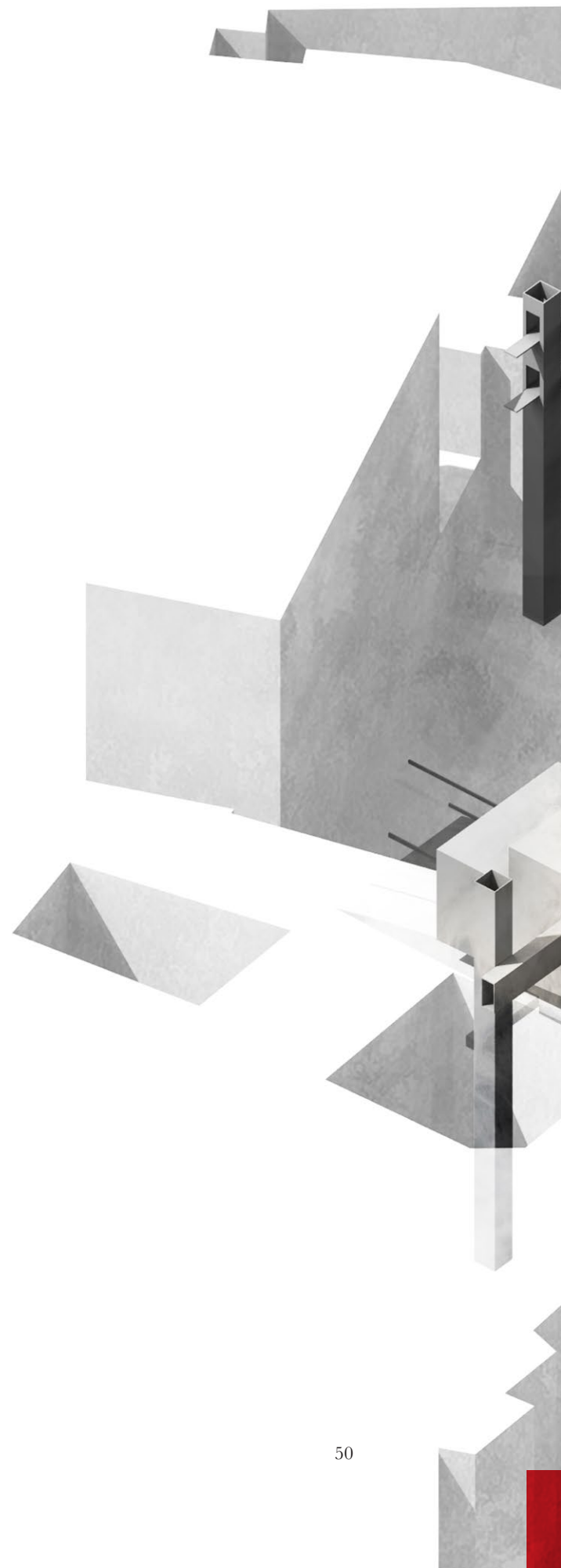
# The Herculean Baths

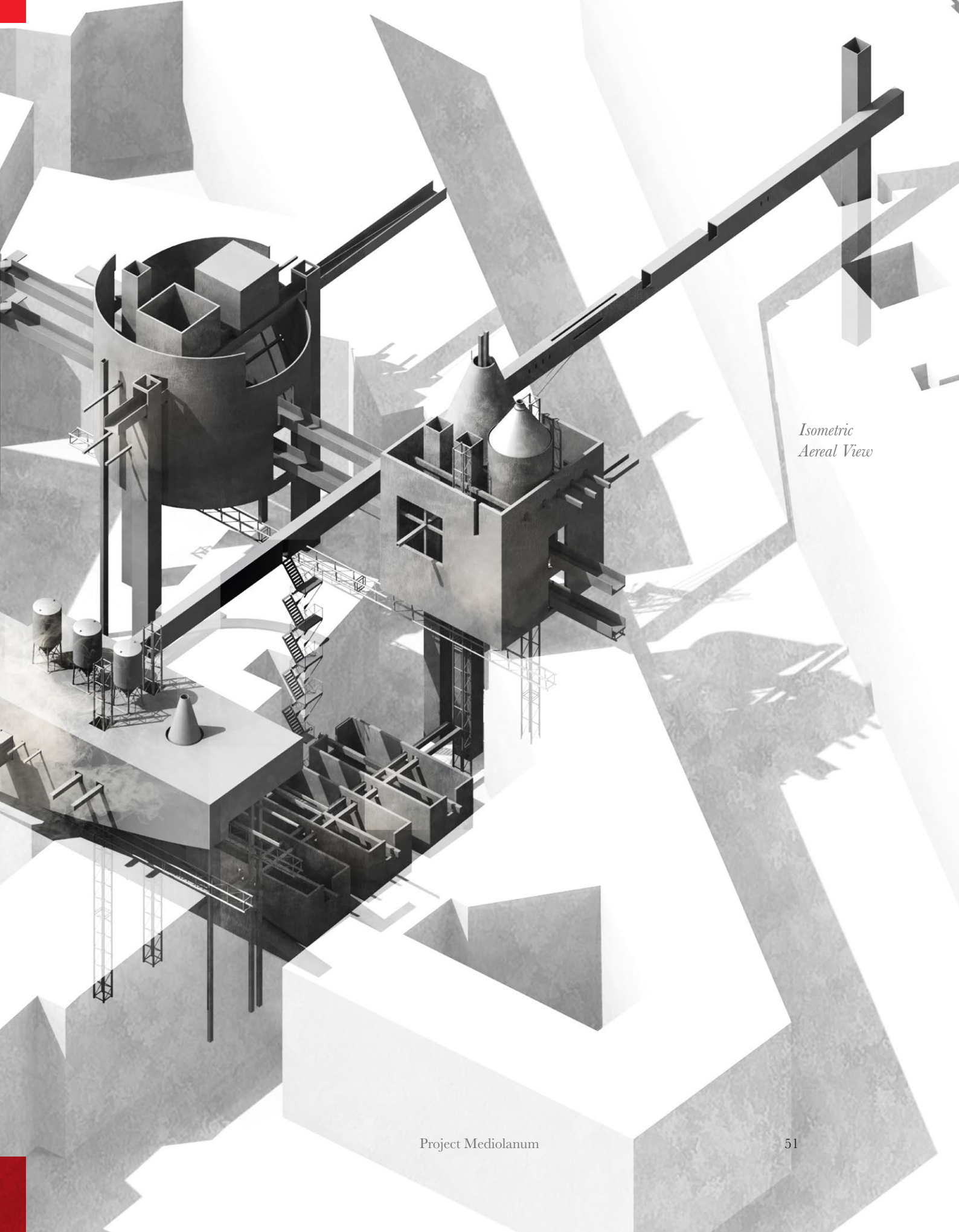
**Location:** *Area between Corso Vittorio Emanuele II and Corso Europa.*

One of the most important monuments of Milan in Late Antiquity was the great complex of the Baths, so-called Herculean because Maximianus Herculius ordered them to be constructed inside the city walls he had extended in the eastern area of the city. The Baths establishment, which was 14,500 square meters in area, was supplied by a watercourse, noted in medieval sources, as Acqualunga, which may have determined the choice of the site. The complex was composed of vast, porticoed, outside area, the gymnasium, which gave access to the imposing structure devoted to the different phases of the elaborate ritual of bathing. This social custom had become indispensable in the Roman world from the early centuries of the Empire and was maintained up until Late Antiquity. The complex, seriously damaged by fire, was probably abandoned in the fifth century A.D.



**Plan of the Herculean Baths**

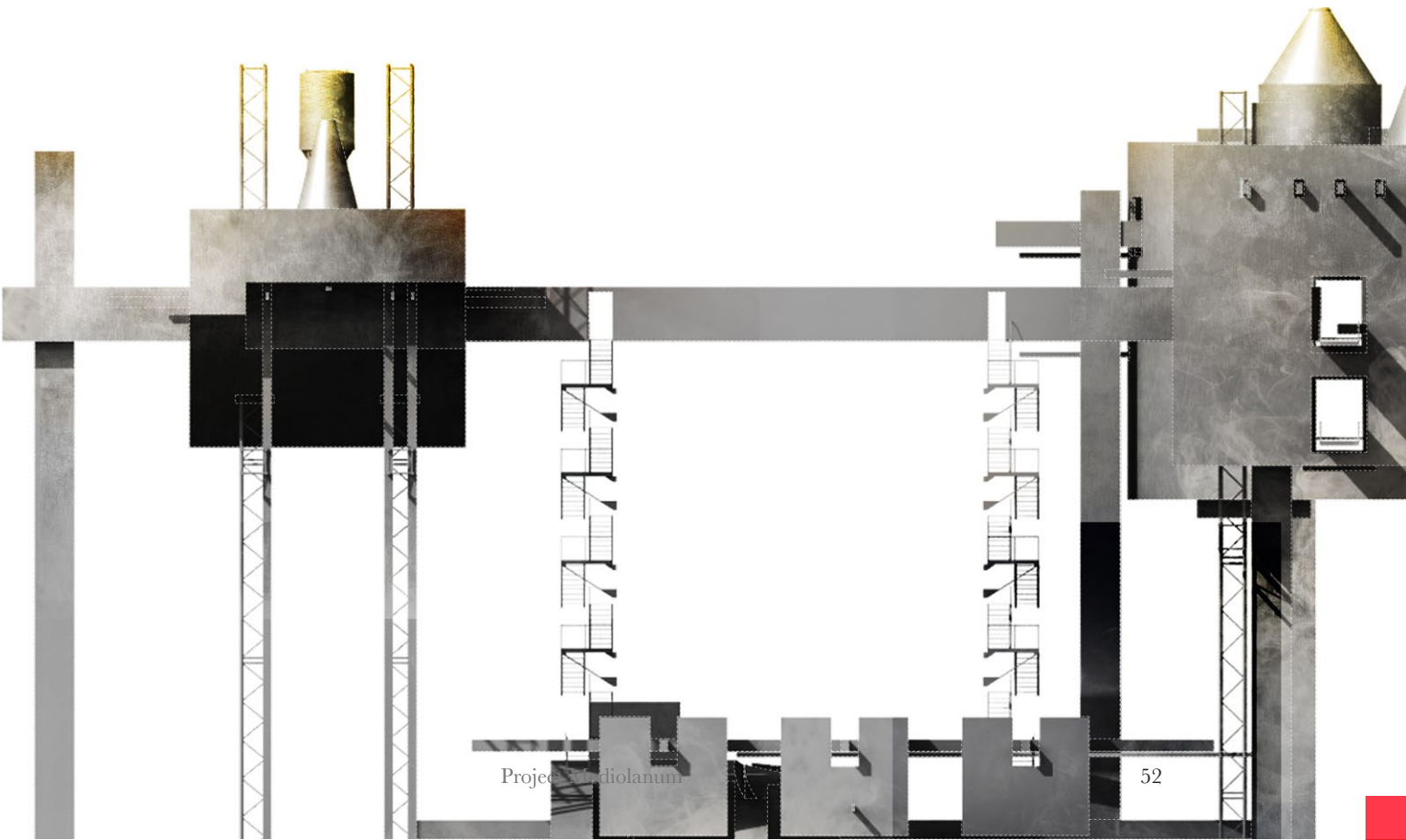
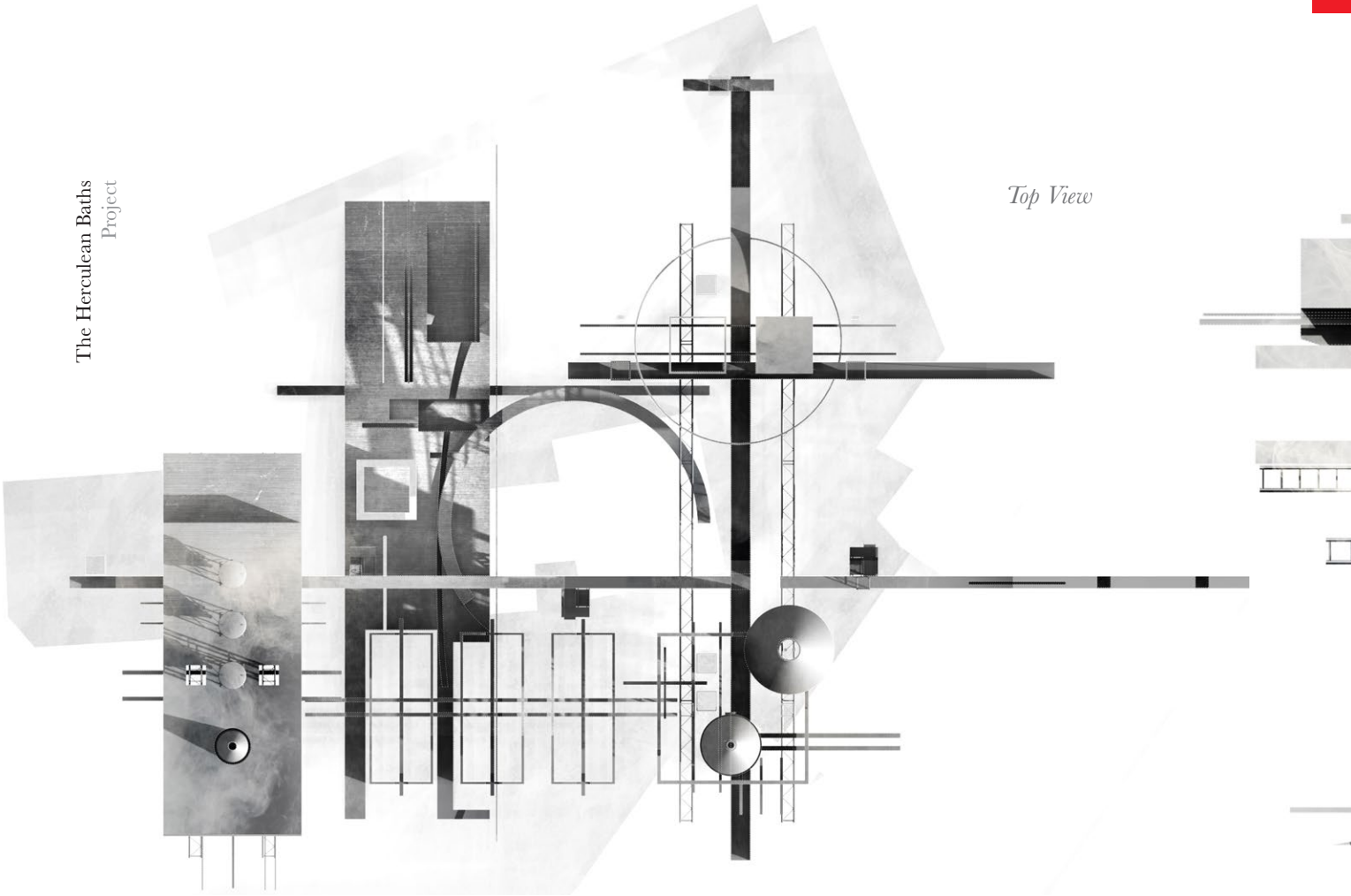




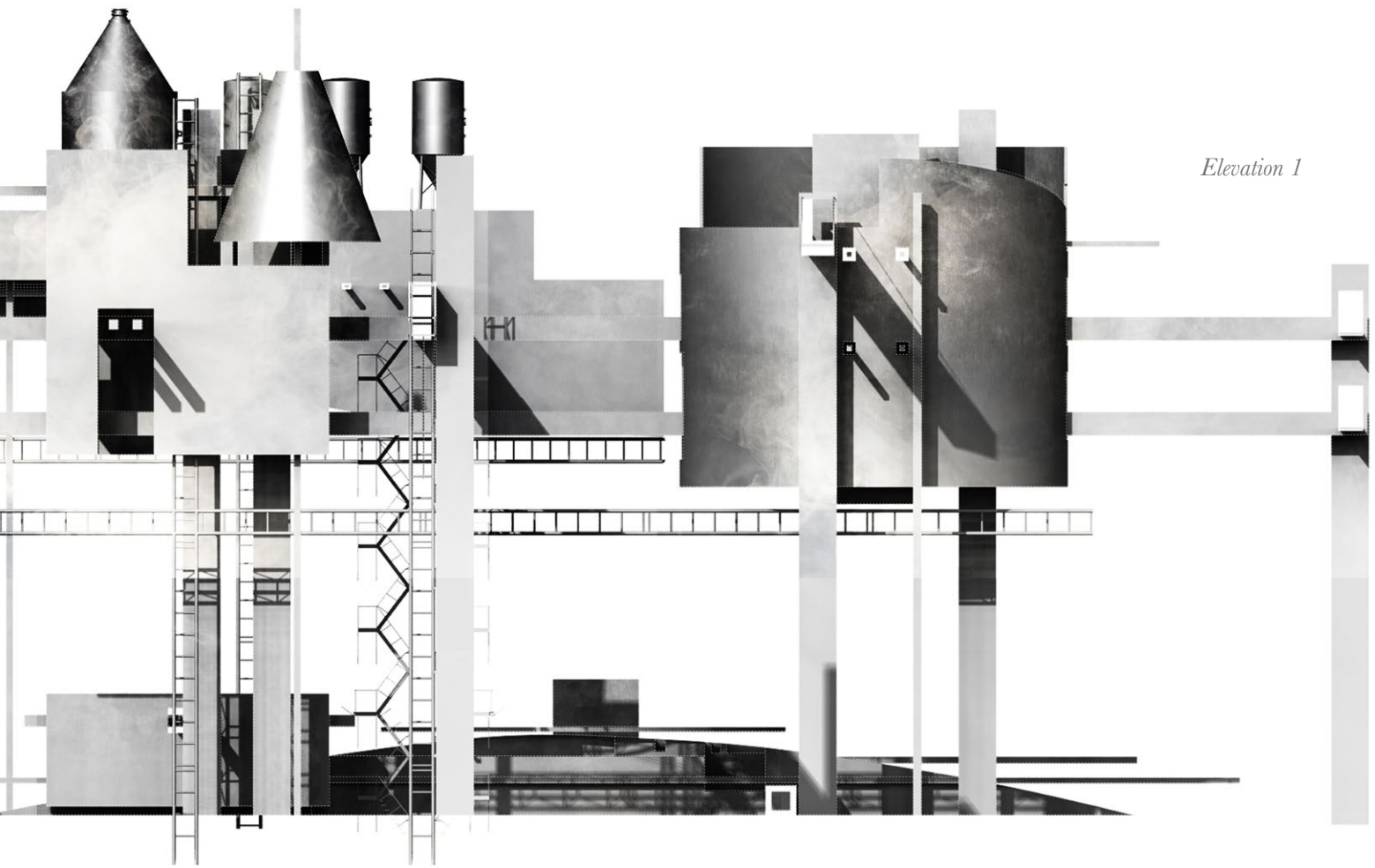
*Isometric  
Aerial View*

The Herculean Baths  
Project

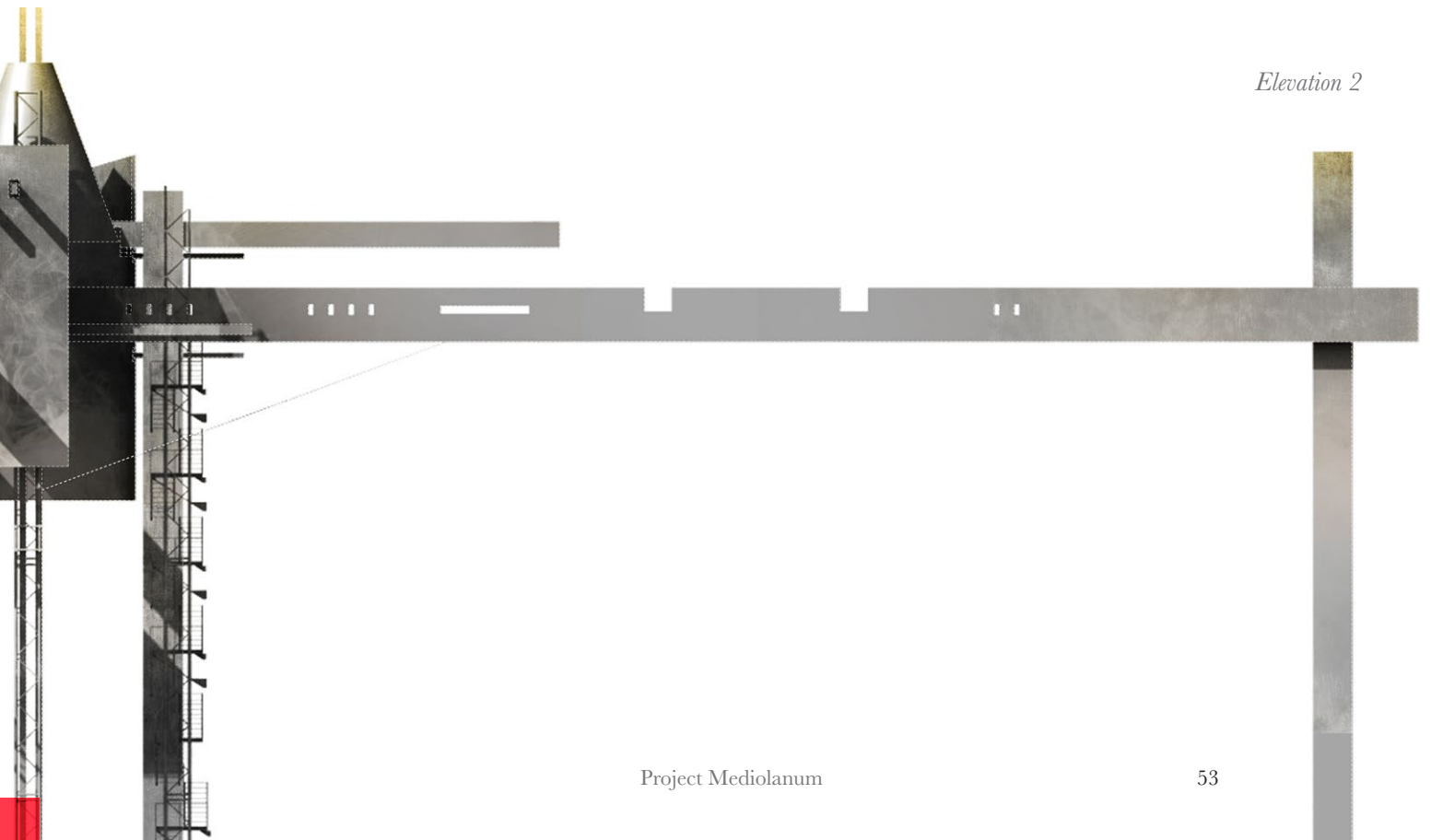
*Top View*



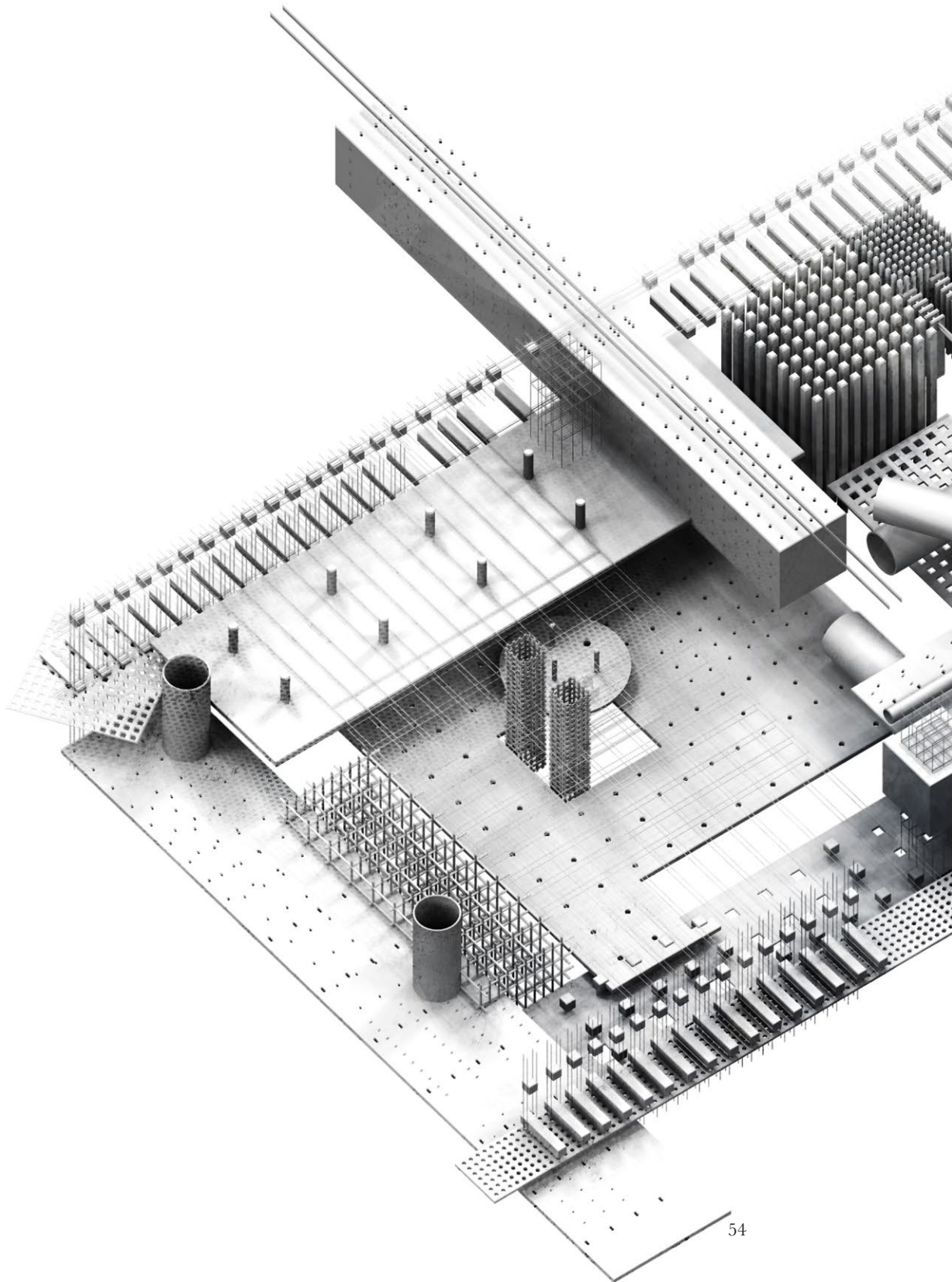


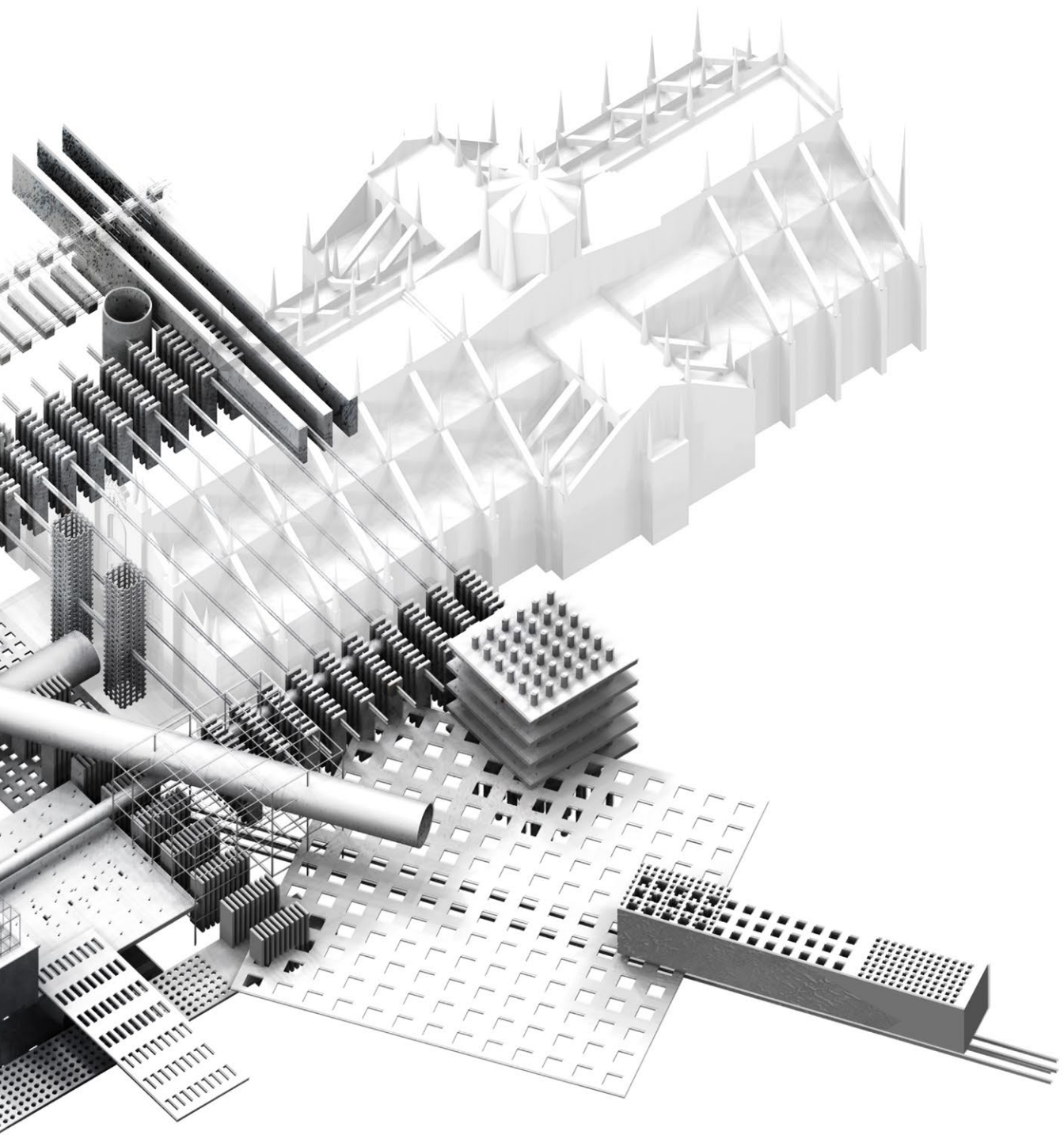


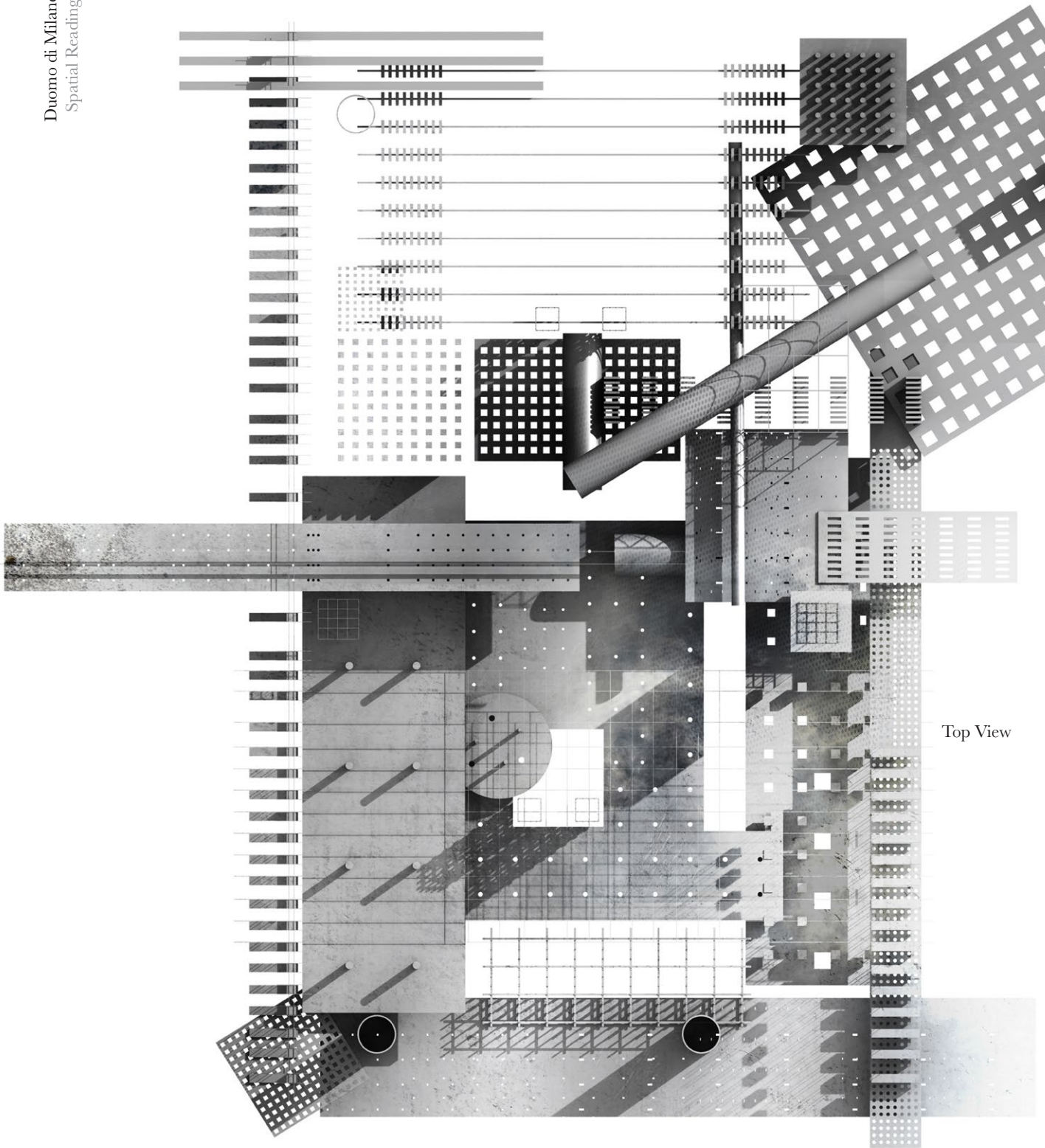
*Elevation 1*



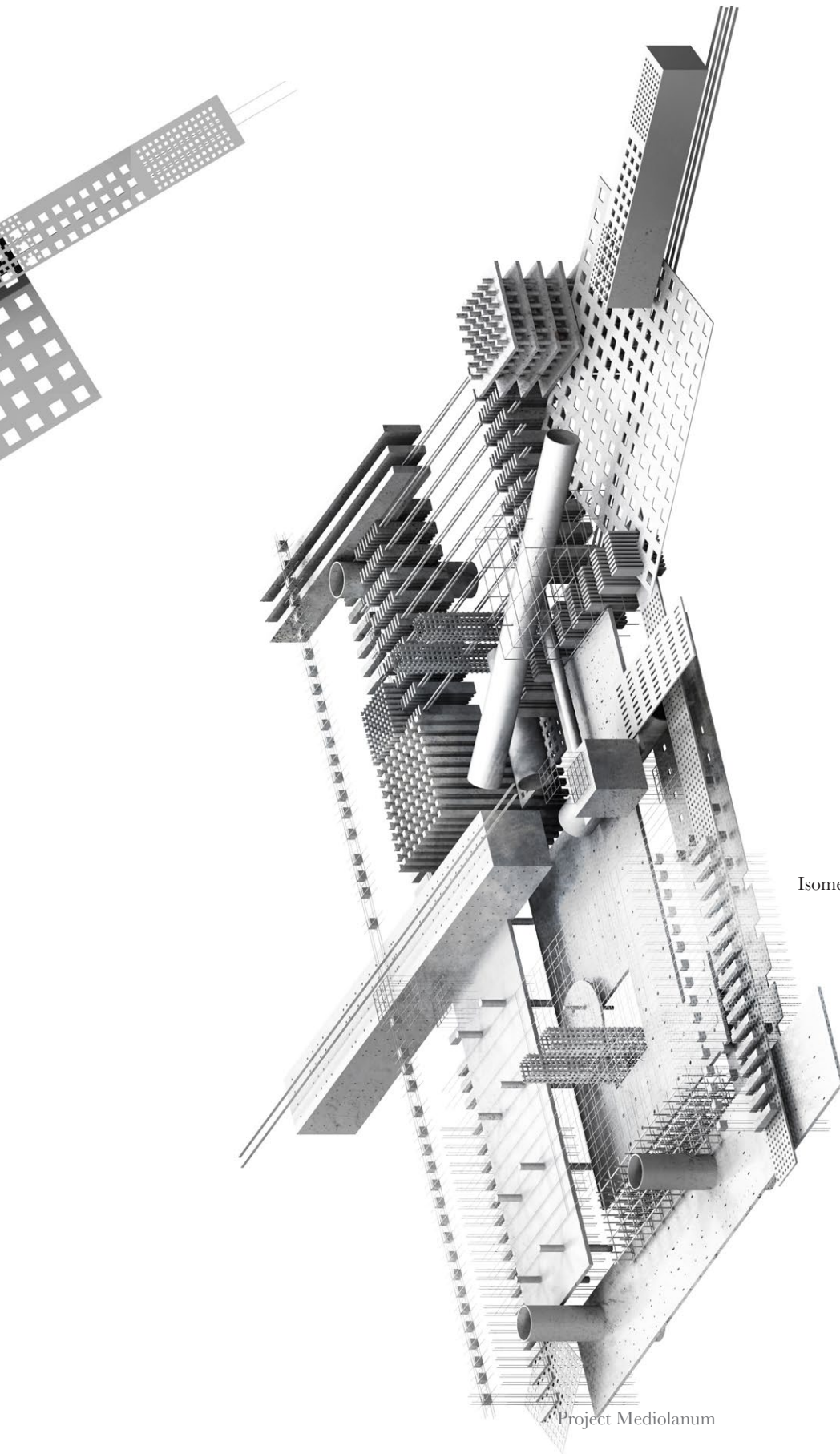
*Elevation 2*







Top View



Isometric View

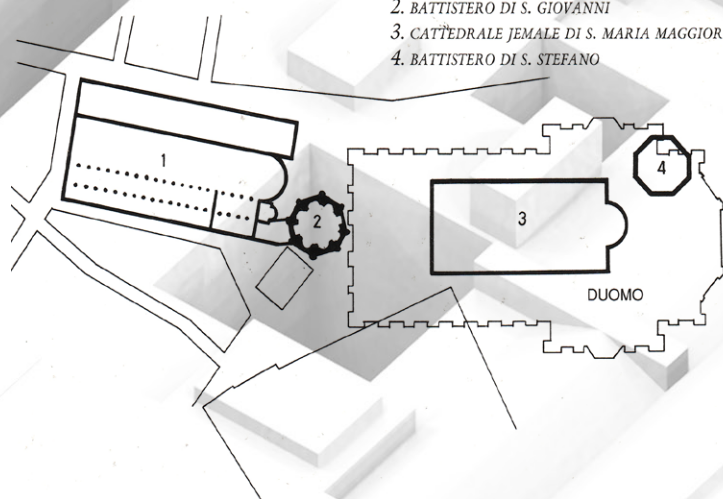


# The Episcopal Complex

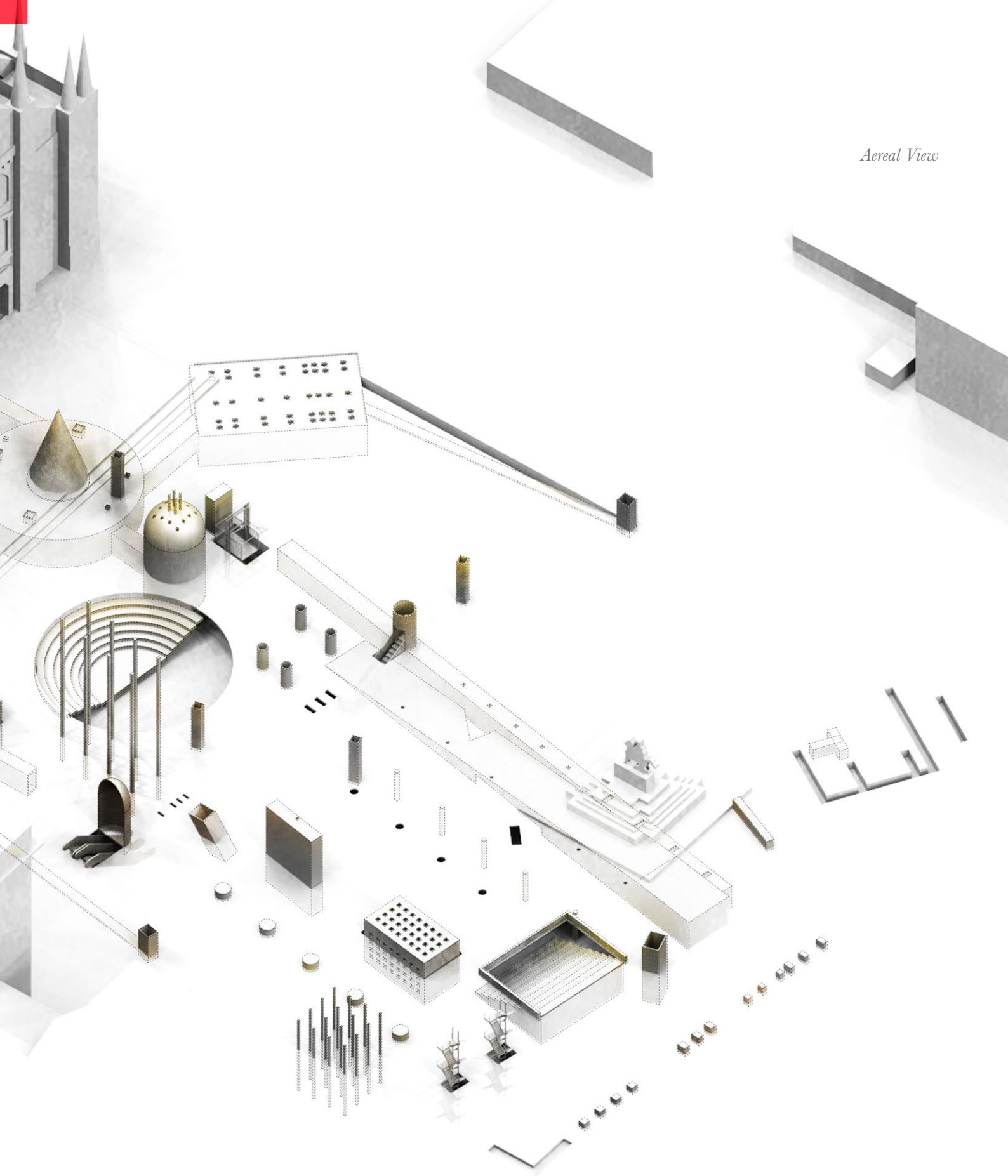
**Location:** *Area of the Duomo and Piazza del Duomo.*

Present day Piazza del Duomo, seat of the city cathedral from the earliest centuries of Christianity, was the site of an Episcopal complex consisting of baptisteries and basilicas, the structure, location and dates of which are still under discussion. Two baptisteries, Santo Stefano and San Giovanni alle Fonti have been documented as well as three basilicas: the vetus, the minor and the nova, the only one subjected to archaeological excavation, dedicated to Santa Tecla in the Early Medieval Period and Cathedral of Milan until its demolition in 1461.

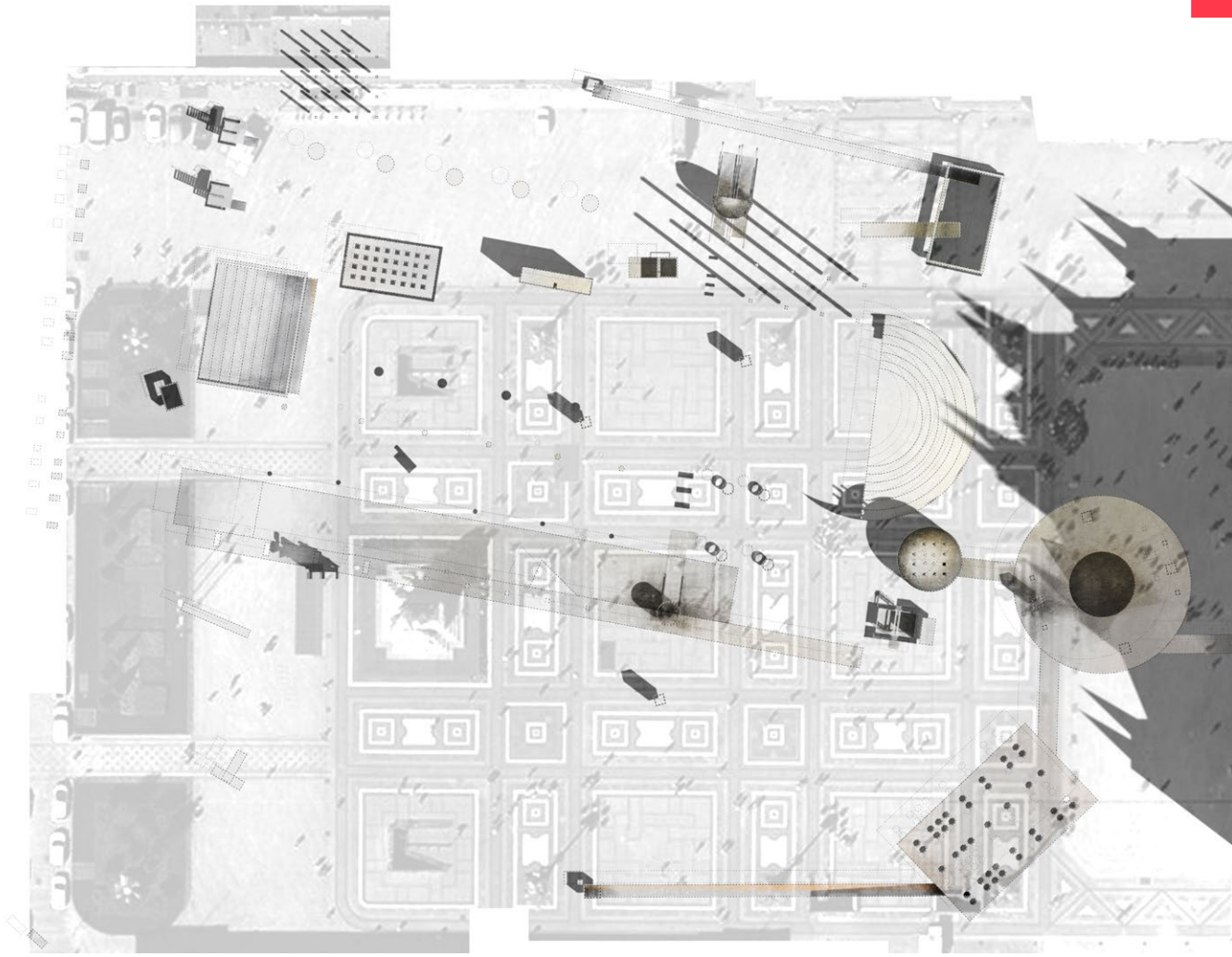
1. CATTEDRALE ESTIVA DI S. TECLA
2. BATTISTERO DI S. GIOVANNI
3. CATTEDRALE JEMALE DI S. MARIA MAGGIORE
4. BATTISTERO DI S. STEFANO



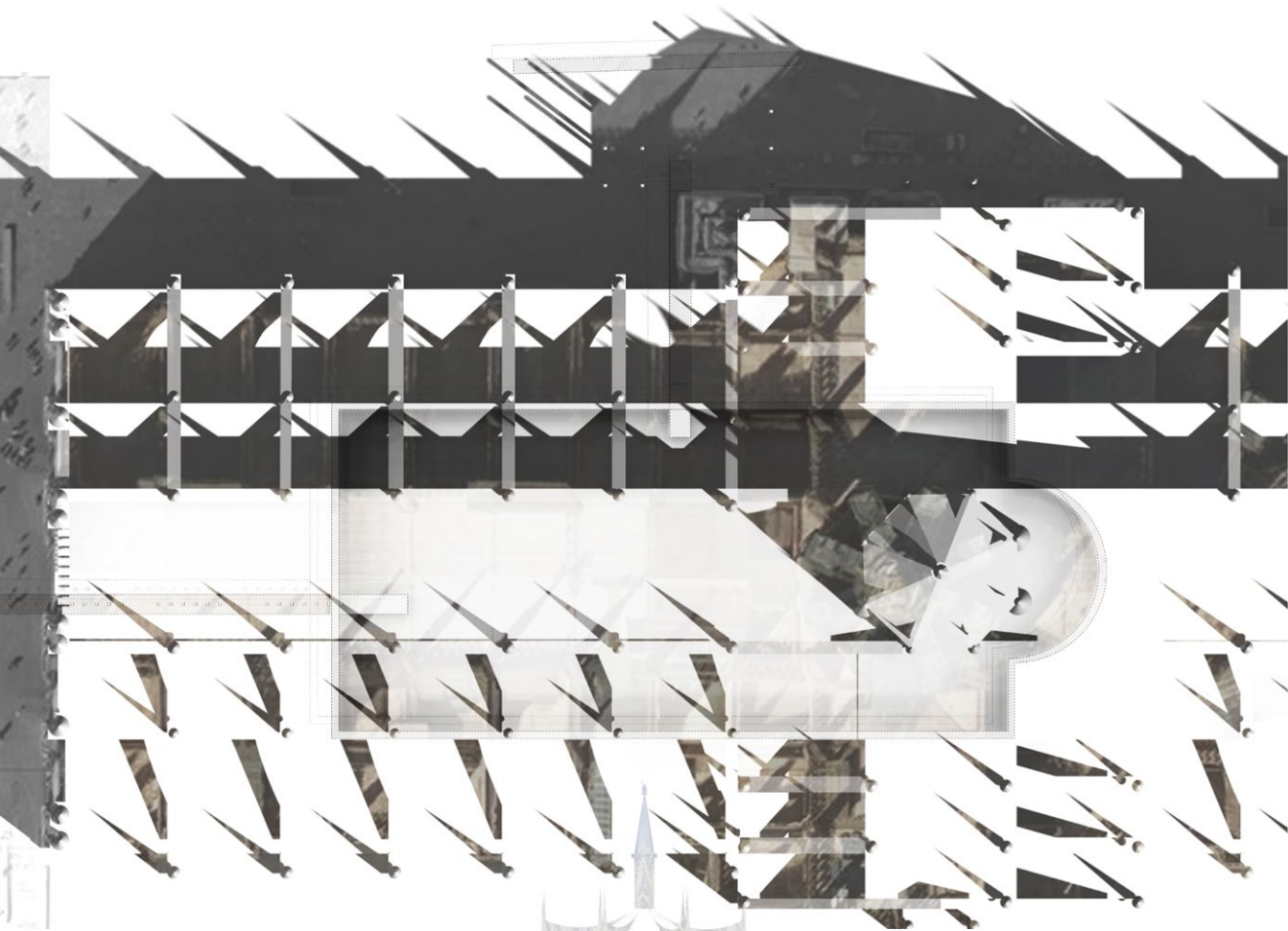
**Plan of the Episcopal Complex**



The Episcopal Complex  
Project



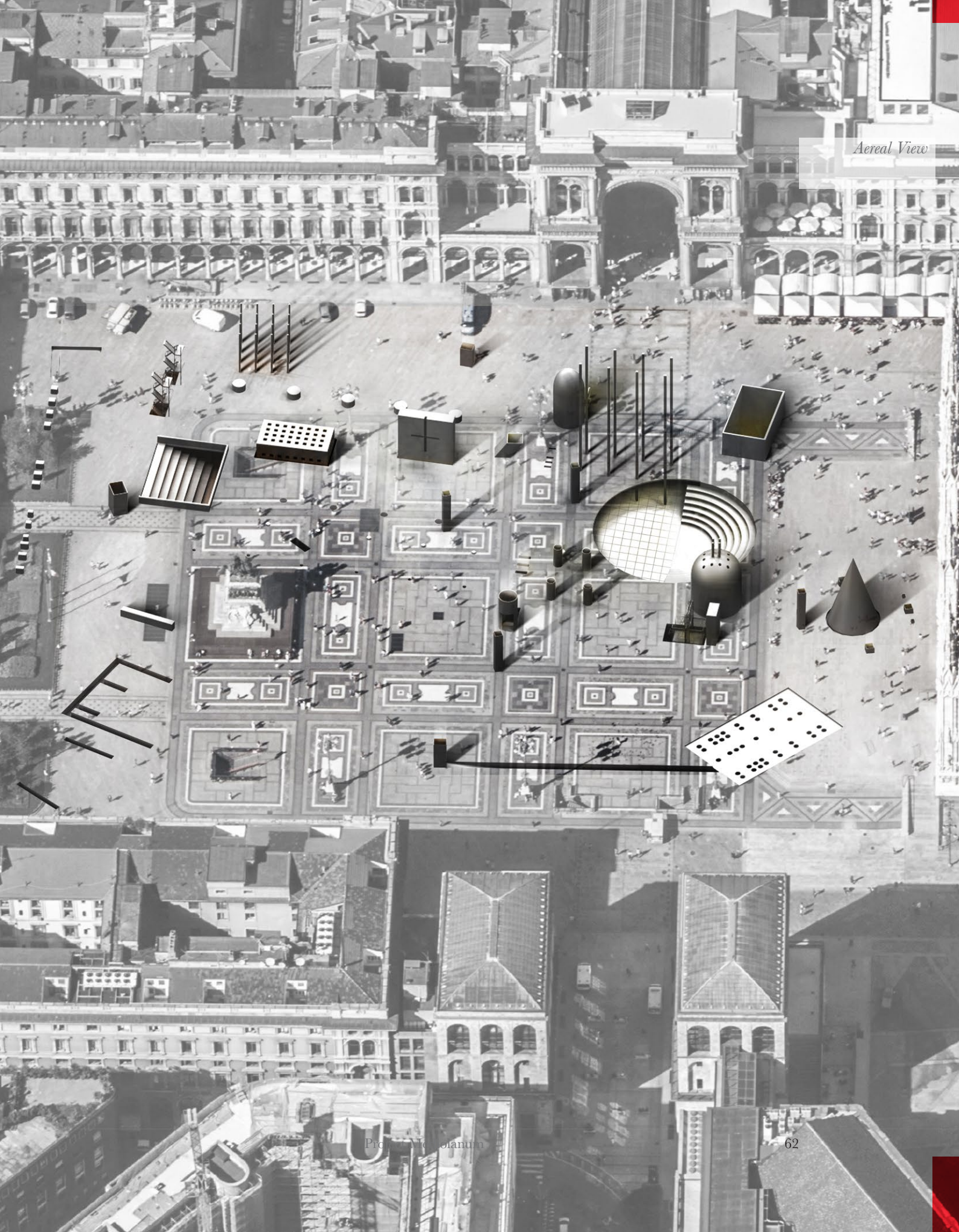




*Top View*



*Elevation*





# Theory of the VOID

The stratification of Memory



This theory, which is based on the spatial analysis and topics treated in this thesis, is constructed in opposition to the useless contradiction that represents styles and the built environment. During the process of construction of the cities and the individual architecture that this one contains, we very often forget a fundamental truth:

**The fragility of the shape in relation to the space that this one ignores to become a building.**

In this chapter -as in the whole book- I do not pretend to speak about analysis of architectural shapes or styles and materials, but more importantly about the implications of the use and reuse of the common landscape and its correlation with the void “left behind” and present in every period of the evolution of the space in very different ways. For now, we will call prototypes to the void that is always an implication and a negative of the building; we will define this element as Architecture at the end of the discussion.

The idea of calling them this way is due to the fact that when converting this presence into architecture, we can immediately detach them from the context that gives them shape, and automatically they become autonomous organisms, part of the city but freed from it at the same time, and applicable in any background.

The prototypes are like short lyric poems. Are part of the kingdom of dreams of Architecture: dematerialised, confused behind the mask that is the leftover of the materialisation of the cities. If we were to define the city as a living entity, then the prototypes would be part of its unconscious.

These entities are essentially the immaterial part of the built environment and also

of the brut space, being its essence of functioning and structure. The fact that the negative is present in every single place and scale, signifies that it would be possible to develop a reading of the city based on this element, of course of great complexity.

The ‘immaterial architecture’<sup>01</sup> of the cities is morphologically very abstract -in representation and identification- is a container of all the possibilities that it accommodates: visuals, mobility, hierarchies, transparencies, control, market, mapping.

As mentioned, the Void is a very abstract entity as it refers to its differentiation and classification accordingly, but on the other hand, it is purely literal, as it is the specific field of action in which all the narrative of the context takes place. When analysing their scenarios from a physical point of view, it is possible to understand the prototypes as hermetic configurations that interact ones with the others containing different levels of complexity. Their content coexists simultaneously in the same time-space geography.

We could call them at this points spatial configurations, visual intermittences, literal or phenomenological transparencies. In any case, the given entities are conceptual, and its reading involves the brain more than the eye -anti-retinal as **Duchamp** would call it-

**CABANNE:** *Where does your antiretinal attitude come from?*

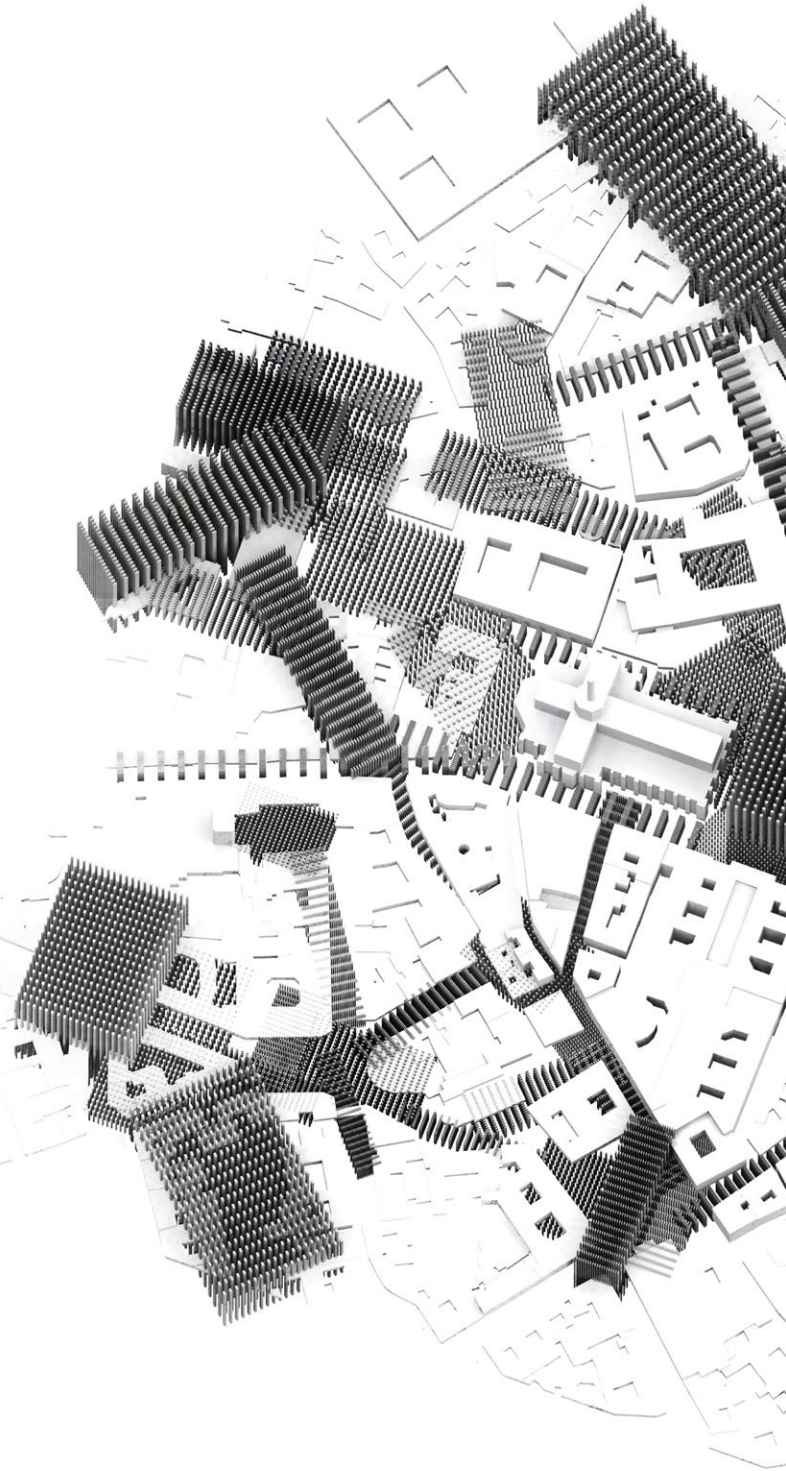
**DUCHAMP:** *From too great an importance given to the retina. Since Courbet, it's been believed that painting is addressed to the retina. That was everyone's error. The retinal shudder! Before, painting had other functions: it could be religious, philosophical, moral. If I had the chance to take an antiretinal attitude, it unfortunately hasn't changed much; our whole century is completely retinal, except for the Surrealists, who tried to go outside it somewhat. And still, they didn't go so far!*

*In spite of the fact that Breton says he believes in judging from a Surrealist point of view, down deep he's still really interested in painting in the retinal sense. It's absolutely ridiculous. It has to change; it hasn't always been like this.*

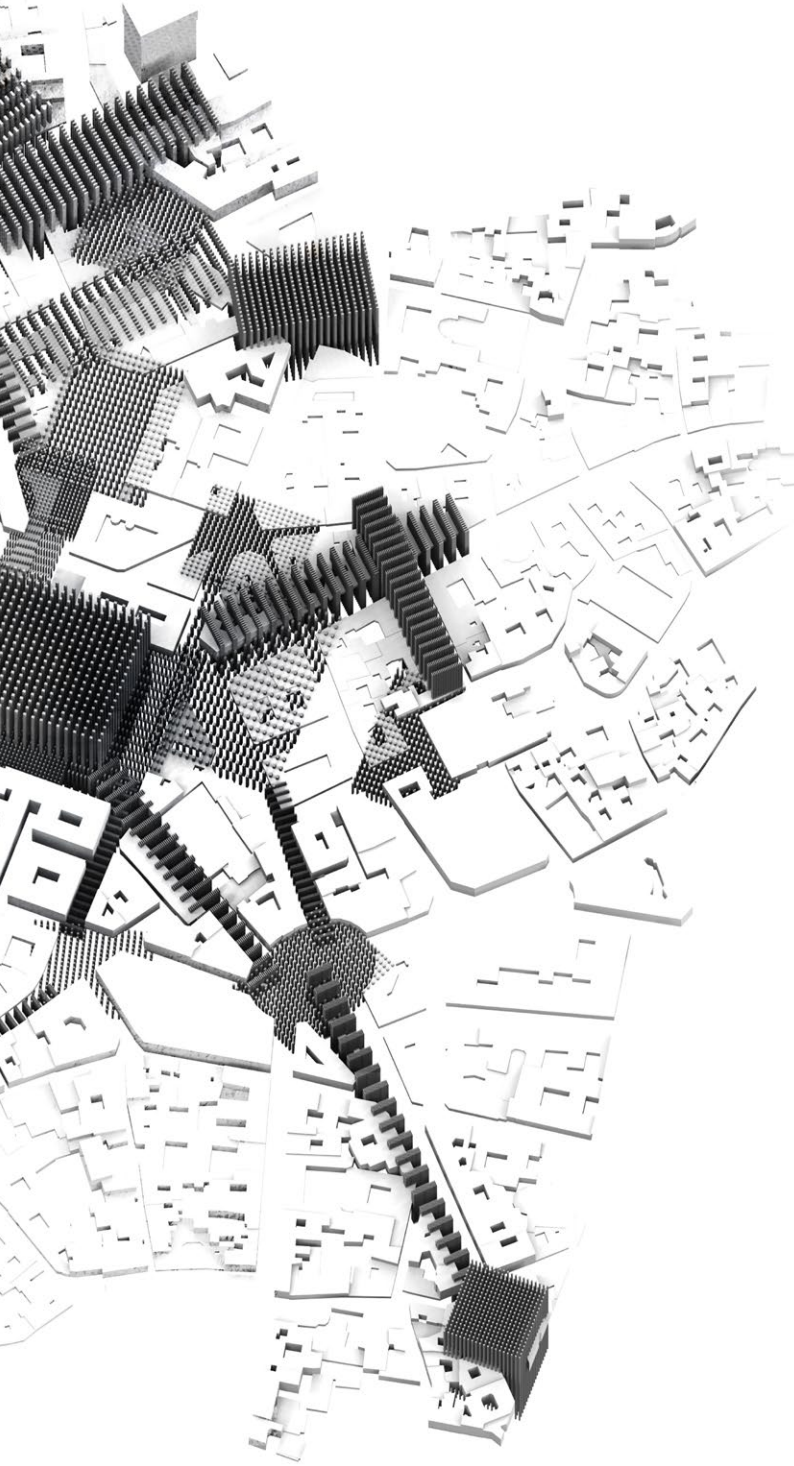
**\*Duchamp uses the word “retinal” in the way that many people use “painterly”; in other words, Duchamp objects to the sensuous appeal of painting. [Ed.]**

*“Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp” by Pierre Cabanne, with an appreciation by Jasper Johns. Translation of: Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp. Reprint. Originally published: London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.*

Their difficulty of mapping is given because of what they represent: mobility, duration, space, simultaneity, are sculpted movement. But at some point, we have to get to a ‘method’ for reading these complex structures. In this thesis, we approach the stratification of space as a mean through which the territory is built, filled with substance, articulated. This stratification is nothing else than the superimposition in the same geographical quadrant, of spatial qualities, dynamic and perceptual that belong to different time agendas.



## The Space of the Void, Milan



If we could attribute to space the qualities of water, then the Void would be like dams, by mean of which space is contained, embanked, tunnelled, sliced, and finally spilled into the informal space that represents its borders and that connects it with the rest.

At this point, I find clearly that the Void is more interesting than the built Architecture itself that frames and defines it, and I would say that it happens because these entities are nothing but “pure” space. Of course, architecture in some case may contain somehow some sort of purity, buy the Void in infinitely more complex, because while being space, they represent an infinite number of morphological internal configurations with external connections which we are unable to predict and to find in the same state in the built architecture.

The whole idea of getting to know this unconscious<sup>03</sup> side of the cities is as romantic as it is scientific. It is an attempt to develop a wider vision of the built reality, fundamentally out of the dilemma that represents the Architecture of Self punishment that we face daily formed by slogans and light thinking, widely accepted as absolute solutions for fleeting minds. The compulsive sadomasochism of the architects of the social compromise, which actions are ‘good’ for society while being even better for themselves. Far beyond puzzling attempts to group the history of Architecture under a single theory, the Void represents a superior entity, that contains it, dematerialises it and deforms it.

The present architecture and theory -as it happened already before and **Adolf Loos** explains in his book: *Architecture (1910)*- is sadly immature, infantile and distant from the very complex process that defines the creation of anything, but as it may be understood from Loos writing, the history -looks like- has always been about the same problem in what refers to creativity and reason.

*“The Architect has reduced the noble art of building to a graphic art. The one who receives the most commissions is not the one who can build best but the one whose work looks best on paper. There is a world of difference between the two. If we were to range the arts in a row starting with the graphic arts, we will see that there are connections from them to painting. From there we can continue through coloured sculpture to sculpture proper and from there to architecture. The graphic arts and architecture are polar opposites, at either end of the row. The best draftsman can be a poor architect, the best architect a poor draftsman. Nowadays those entering architecture are expected to show talent for graphic art. All our new architecture has been created on the drawing board, there drawings then being exhibited threedimensionally, like paintings in a waxworks.”*

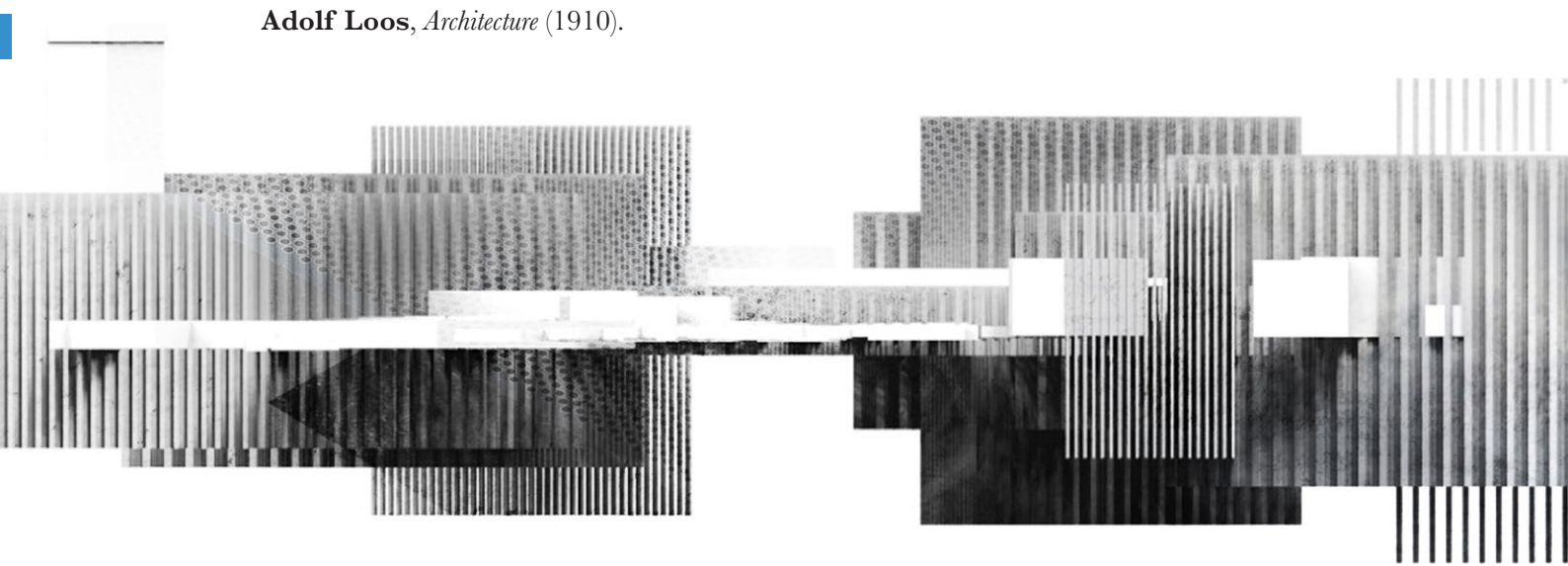
**Adolf Loos**, *Architecture* (1910).

This essay is also an attempt to avoid any collectivist satisfaction, and to, slightly, call back to the work of the genius, individual, abstract, immortal.

But getting back to the lectures on the Void -being the Void the result of the unconscious result of an intuitive process-, that is always a necessary result of the city evolution. The idea of defending just the built architecture, and make it the subject of innumerable analysis, represents undoubtedly a fundamental contradiction inside the profession.

We have been witnesses of the city creations and evolution through all its stages, the human materiality, the spirituality, the collective, the ornament, the mass production; and for some reason during all this time, we have never paid the necessary attention and interest to the not built space, the void, the unconscious city.

At this point, we should somehow define the specific differences between void and space itself.





The unconscious city, that is nothing else but the repetition of the Void creating very complex hermetic configurations connected between them is, from my point of view, a new Architecture. It is as important as the built context, but interestingly, infinitely more complex.

Let's take for example, for trying to understand how this theory may work, one of the more interesting representations -and equally ancient- of our cities: the **Nolli Map**.

These drawings, that shows the relation between the built and the unbuilt space, actually, from a more precise perspective show exactly the built city, and the unconscious's city, both analysable autonomously, and both equally complex and necessary. The city is shown perfectly in the Nolli maps -bidimensionally- as the negative representation of the materiality. And not simply that:

**The city appears as the group of complex spatial relations contained inside the Void, connected ones with the others with varies morphologies, creating at the end, a fantastic collage of**

**interruptions and experiences. This reading is not so evident as it happens with the material environment, it is non-retinal but equally iconic.**

At the same time, this attempt of Theory doesn't simply apply to the big scale, as the case of the city readings. It would be very interesting to develop an analysis focussing on the spatial relations that take place around a column in its different configurations. The column over the altar, the portico, the ruin; the Nolli maps have plenty of these examples.

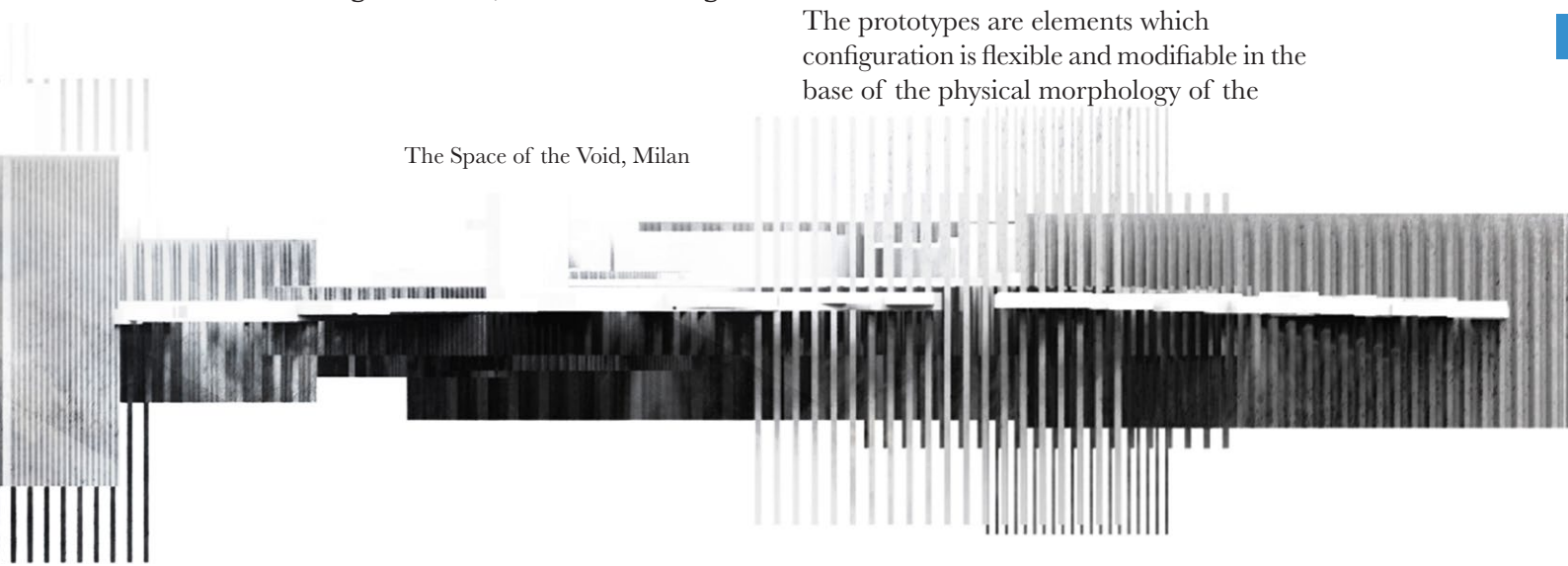
A trace of this method may be found in some of the analysis of **Bernard Hoesli** about the work of Palladio and Le Corbusier.

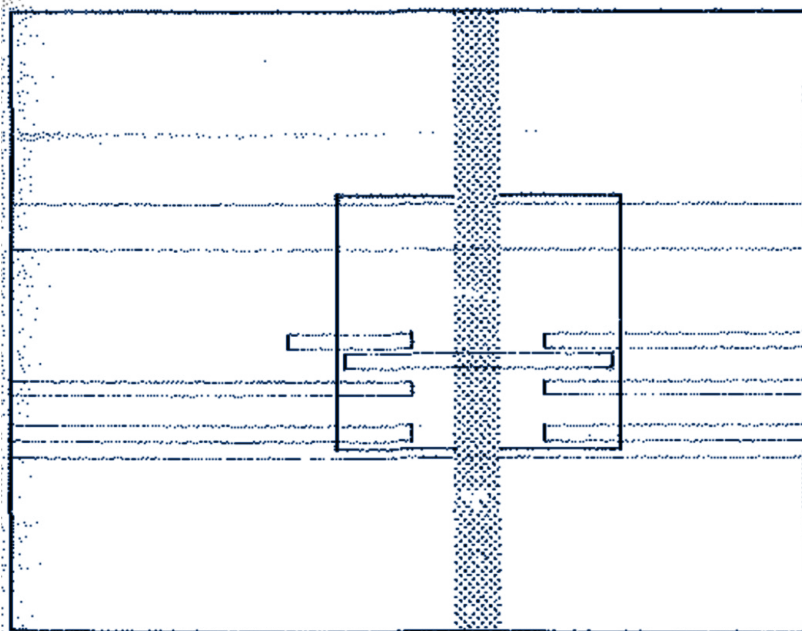
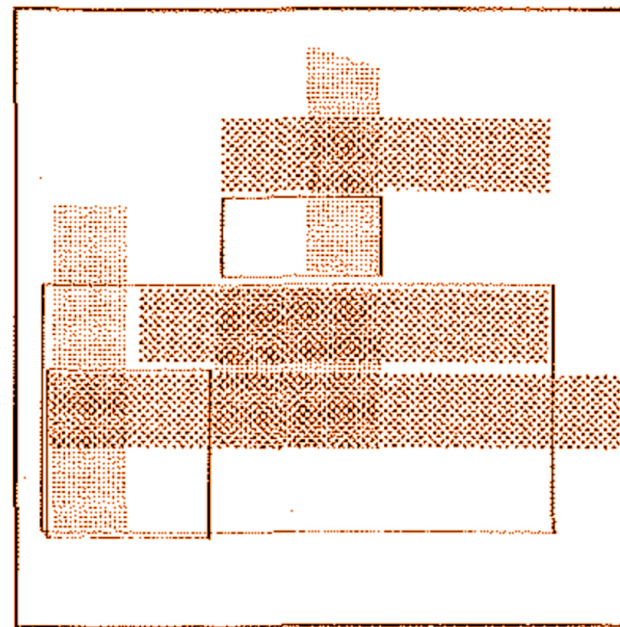
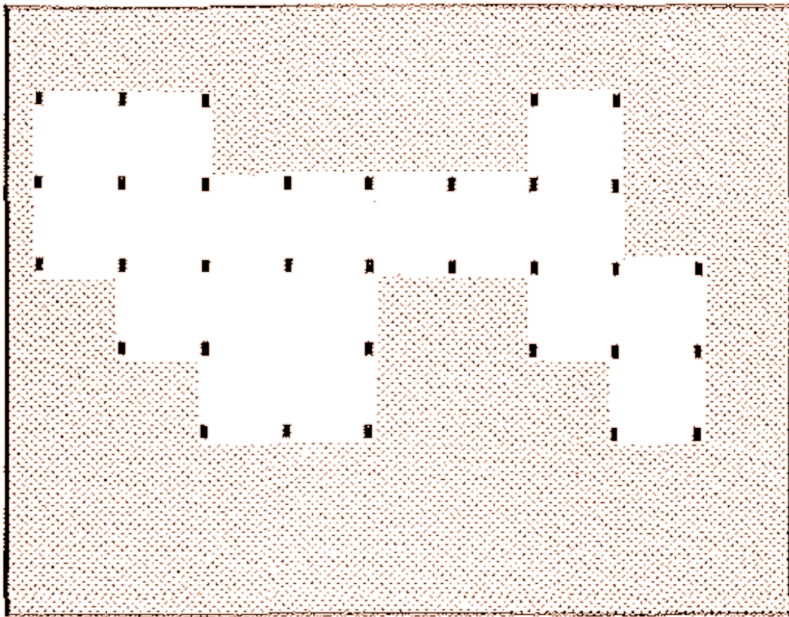
### **Spatial definitions**

Inside the Void, there are segments of space that may be assigned to two or more systems of reference. These "*places*" are more clearly understood and readable when the number of reference systems is bigger.

The prototypes are elements which configuration is flexible and modifiable in the base of the physical morphology of the

The Space of the Void, Milan

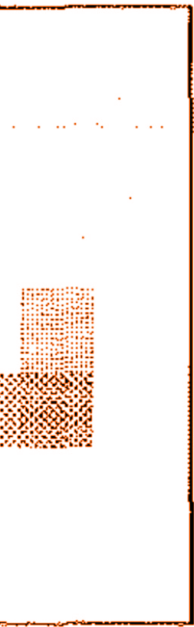




Inside this complex arrangement, which incomparably fuses constructive regularity with the diversity necessitated by functional use, transparency creates the multiple readings of possible spatial relationships and connections.

Transparency, reading of Spatial Relationships and Connections, Bernard Hoesli on the Boissonnas House of Philip Johnson.

*Rowe C., Slutzky R., Transparency. With a commentary by Bernard Hoesli and an Introduction by Werner Oechslin.*



immediate context. The observer may identify itself in relation to one or another system of interaction, and as a consequence of the resulting tension. In this case, we are positioning the observer as a fundamental reference for defining the qualities of the space. Bernard Hoesli utilises the observer as a guide in his analysis of the principles of Phenomenological and Literal Transparencies.

Interestingly, Hoesli uses a very basic spatial reading method, taking into account mostly the space in its bidimensional character. Rowe and Slutzky equally reduce the spatial interpretation to the plane, undressing the work of Architecture as a precise stratification of layers that overlap each other. In many of the cases the context -in the plan or as a background- becomes also a layer.

For reading the Void, we must understand its configuration as based in complex spatial grids, layered as following the chronological evolution of places, but which connections and interactions are retroactive, time is not a limiting factor when understanding the configuration of the city subconscious.

If the city can be seen as a Hyper Landscape, then the Void is also one. The landscape is not anymore a theatre, a scene that makes sense from very specific points of view.

Rather, it is a super crowded field of operations. The network of buildings, ground, parks, history, culture, and topography determine irregularities that penetrate and overlap each other.

A good example of this type of research is given by Hoesli's analysis of the Boissonnas Hosue of Philip Johnson.

It is interesting now to go back, to the moment in which we were analyzing the Supersurface of Supersudio in opposition to the Soviet social housing projects.

These two are antagonistic examples of infinite versus determined. If we were to study the relations and types of interactions between the architectonic or urban object and its immediate context, the examples before mentioned representing the inverses of each other.

The Supersurface contains a fluid field of infinite connections and possible interactions. While on the other hand, the social housing practically loses all connections with the context. The Void which embodies the building has nearly null relation with it. When understanding the theory in this way we can actually conceive two very different pictures of the status of the Soviet field of buildings, the Roman city, and the Supersurface, just to mention three archetypical examples.

**01.** *"The need of the immaterial is the most deeply rooted of all needs. One must have bread; but before bread, one must have the ideal."*

**Victor Hugo**, "The Memoirs of Victor Hugo"

**02.** *"The collective unconscious - so far as we can say anything about it at all - appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious... We can therefore study the collective unconscious in two ways, either in mythology or in the analysis of the individual."*

**Carl Jung**, "The Structure of the Psyche", CW 8, par. 325).

Oggi più che in altri momenti mi sembra che ci sia una maggiore pluralità di mode di procedere oltre che di fare. In questo momento in generale a me pare che ci sia molta poca idea di architettura e invece molta prassi architettonica, molto fare l'architettura che è molto in relazione a quelle che sono delle specie di attese sociali, che poi sono molto manovrate, poco spontanee; però sono delle attese sociali che rispondono alle dinamiche e le logiche economiche e commerciali della nostra città.

In questo momento la Architettura lavora poco sull'ideale, lavora poco sulla elaborazione di modelli che non siano pienamente aderenti al tipo di società che si configura di fronte a noi. La teoria, quasi la si fa posteriore, prima si fa il progetto e dopo si scopre qual è l'ideale. Ancora fino alle anni sessanta/settanta è stato così, poi dopo siamo entrati in una fase diversa (è evidente che stiamo parlando di certe architetture e non di altre).

La Architettura Urbana, che ha una certa rilevanza e dimensione, è una Architettura che agisce sul livello urbano anche come immagine e non soltanto come funzione e che però a punto e molto poco fondata se non in una adesione consensuale al sistema dentro il cui si inserisce.

### **Landscape, Open Space, Void**

Il Landscape risponde a un concetto culturale che oggi si è aperto, il paesaggio non è più solo il bel paesaggio, non ha più bisogno di essere coerente. In qualche modo un'Italia si ha lavorato parecchio sul concetto di paesaggio. Lo spazio aperto è uno spazio che viene comunque pensato progettualmente, con una intenzione. Il vuoto e ciò che rimane come differenza rispetto al pieno, non ha una sua identità, è un buco, un "non", non è una affermazione. Questo non impedisce che si possa ripartire anche alla ricerca di una identità di un luogo dai suoi vuoti, dalle sue assenze in qualche misura. A volte le

assenze sono molto rumorose, molto forti. Qualcosa o qualcuno chi manca può essere forte e richiamare la sua presenza quasi di più di qualcosa che c'è. Ciò che adesso non è detto domani può essere detto.

Quindi se uno riesce a costruire una teoria sulla base della quale persuasivamente il vuoto diventa il centro di qualcosa, dopo di che si sarà costretti a misurarsi con quel paesaggio fatto di vuoti, fatto di cose che non ci sono, di occasioni mancate, di occasione negate, di cose che ci sono perse.

### **Milano**

Secondo me il merito di Milano o la sua caratteristica che la può distinguere tra tante altre città che ci sono è la sua capacità di essere città media, in mezzo alle cose, di dimensione medio/piccola ma capace di tenersi insieme. È una città che secondo me è riuscita ad arrivare a sfruttare molto bene i suoi limiti; naturalmente è una metropoli come area complessiva però poi con una distinzione molto chiara rispetto ad altre città con quello che è un suo centro. Tutta la città storica è il centro di Milano, non grande ma molto bene servito dai mezzi, funziona. La sua dimensione è una che secondo me oggi diventa molto utile per una vita contemporanea. Questo la rende un modello di città interessante rispetto ad altre, rispetto alla idea che in fondo era un po' di una modernità oggi invecchiata in cui più grande sei, meglio sei.

### **Milano & Mediolanum**

La relazione tra Milano e il Mediolanum non esiste più, emerge qua e là con delle sopravvivenze archeologiche. Il fatto che Milano abbia un passato romano è una cosa che sanno forse i milanesi, e che sicuramente non è messo minimamente in evidenza rispetto al turista per esempio. Poi è chiaro che Milano non è Roma, giustamente anche non è che ha delle cose straordinarie da mostrare.

In generale secondo me è abbastanza nascosta e dimenticata la storia Romana di Milano. A Milano non c'è tanta memoria collettiva in generale, neanche del passato dell'altro ieri. Milano è una città molto fatta da persone che non sono di Milano.

Storicamente è stata molto accogliente rispetto a chi viene da fuori, che viene però inglobato attraverso quel meccanismo positivo e negativo nello stesso tempo di indifferenza e anche accoglienza. In fondo secondo me lo spirito milanese in origine è sempre stato abbastanza indifferente, non è così tanto territoriale però anche qui per ragioni pratiche e non per ragioni ideali il territorio milanese diventa un territorio piano. Storicamente non era così tanto differente dove uno si posizionava rispetto ad una città che invece ha il mare, la costa o le montagne.

Tendenzialmente si è sviluppato uno spirito di accoglienza che in parte è dovuto anche al fatto che è indifferente.

ha modernizzato il suo tessuto, però anche lo ha fatto a modo suo, è riuscita anche a non essere del tutto provinciale.

### **Utopia**

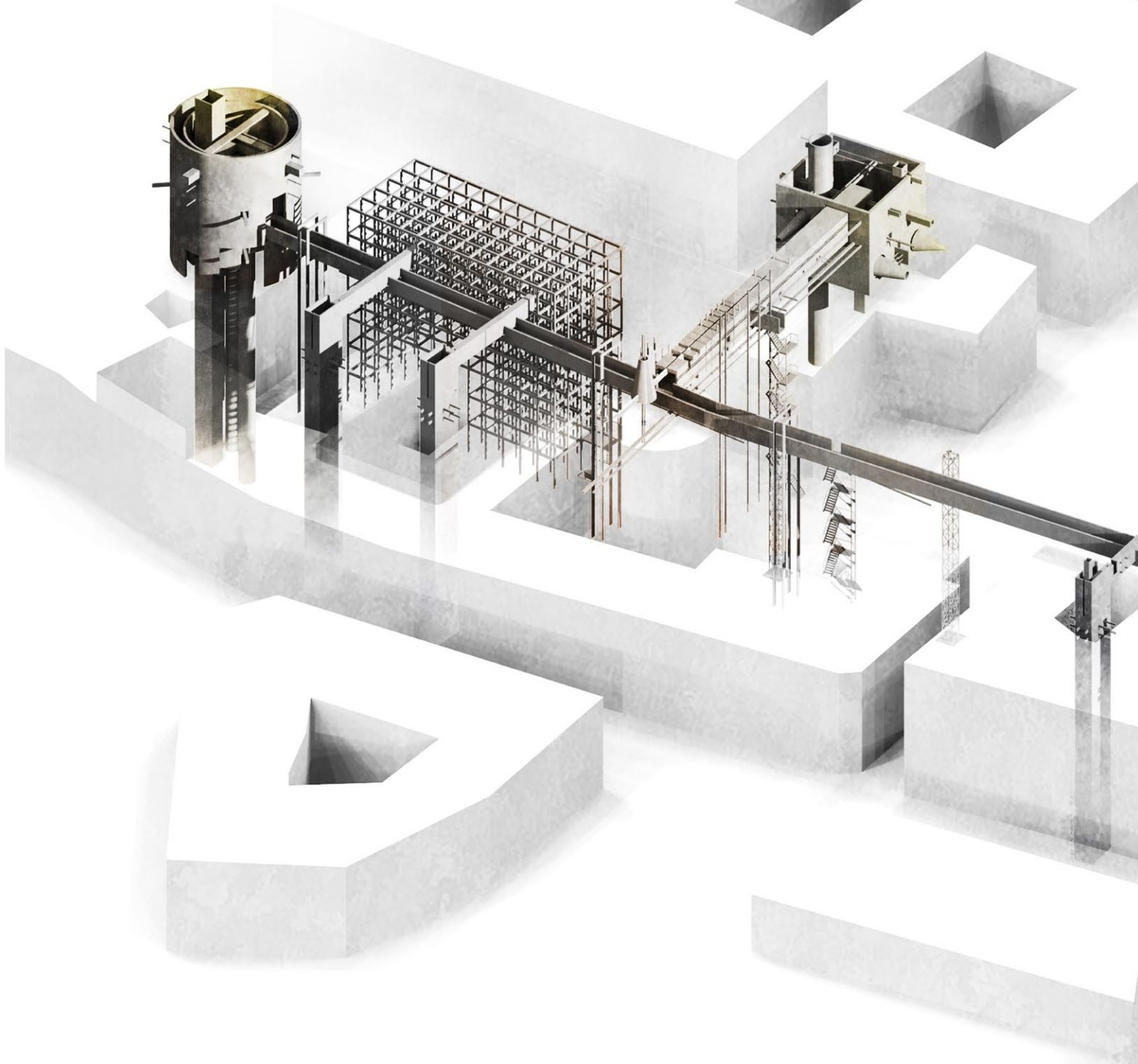
Rispetto alla utopia, oggi la Architettura milanese non mi sembra che dica niente, è una Architettura molto realista. Non mi sembra che ci sia posto per la Utopia a Milano.

La architettura milanese è fatta per la gran parte di cose piccole. Le cose migliori che si stanno facendo oggi sono di piccole dimensioni, sono piccole occasioni svolte bene.

Milano è una città che storicamente ha negato molto se stessa. La Piazza del Duomo è il frutto di un progetto ottocentesco, era uno spazio in realtà piccolo. Milano appunto accoglie il cambiamento e nello stesso tempo sufficientemente lascia esserci le cose che si stratificano. Io direi che nello spirito della città io non sarei tanto per cancellazioni quanto per accumulazioni, le città più interessanti sono quelle che hanno più pluralità di fenomeni, di epoche, di cose diverse. Più che cancellare, il problema è quello di mettere a sistema. Milano è la prima città italiana che

**Marco Biraghi**

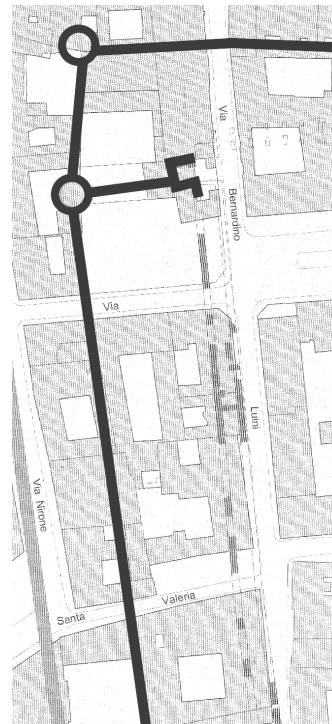
*Isometric  
Aerial View*



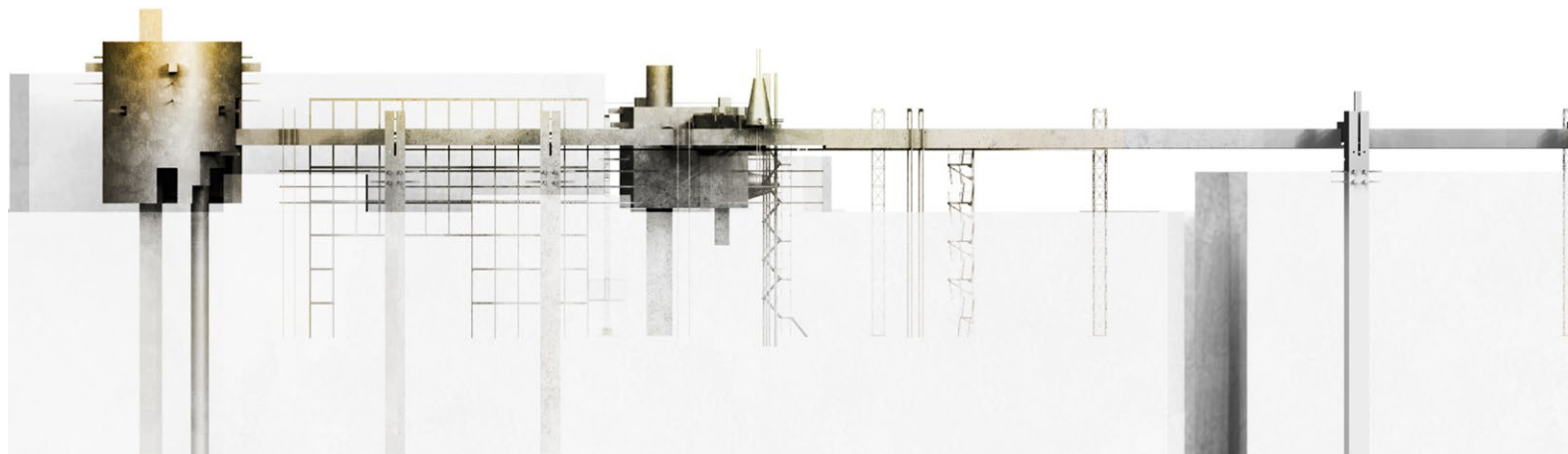
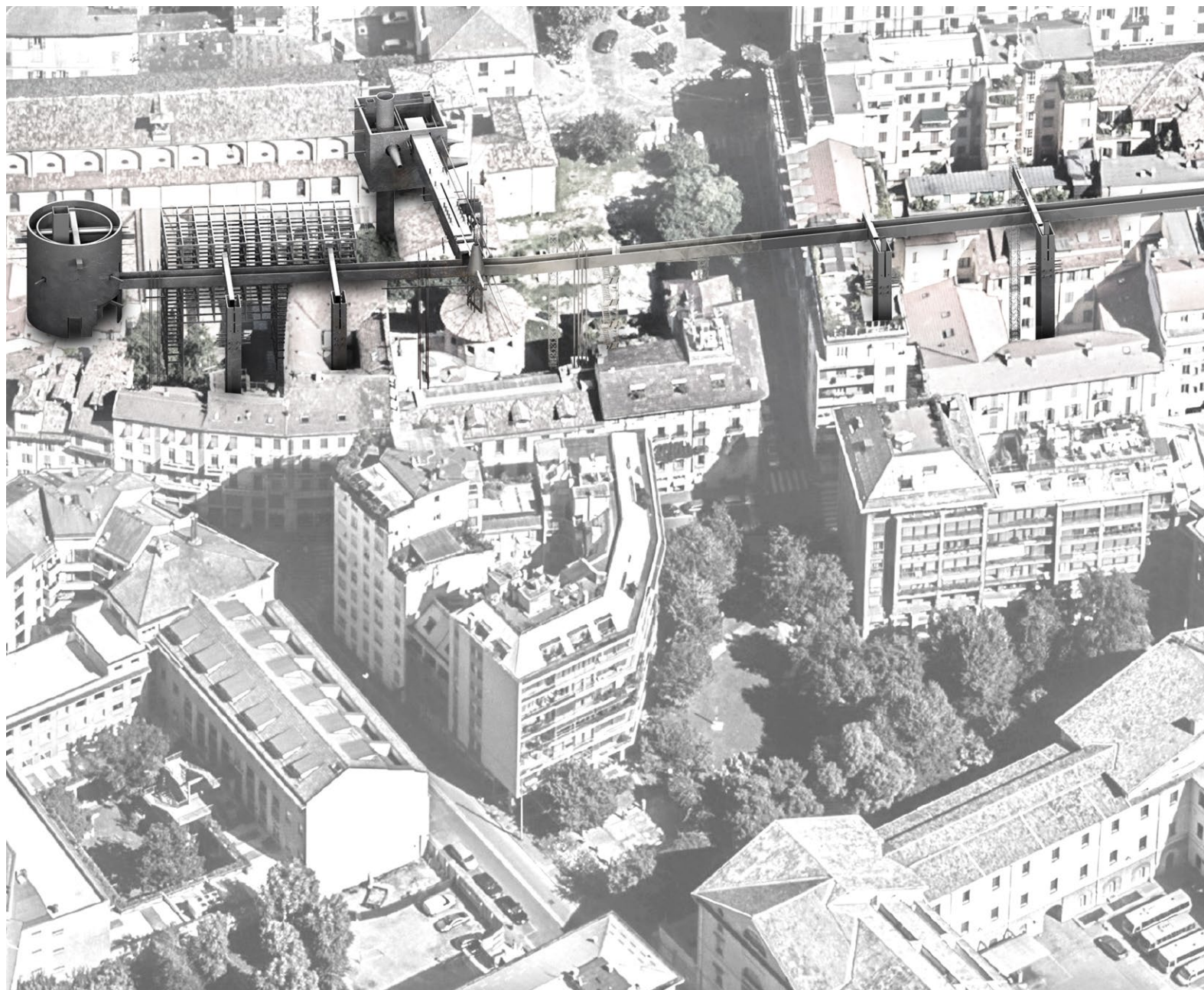
## The Maximianus City Walls and “Ansperto Tower”

**Location:** *Along Via Cusani, largo Cairoli, via San Giovanni sul Muro, corso Magenta, via Nirone, via Medici, largo Carrobbio, via San Vito, via Disciplini, via Barellai, via Maddalena, via Paolo da Cannobbio, via Pecorari, via delle Ore, piazza Fontana, via Verziere, via Durini, piazza San Babila, via Montenapoleone, via Monte di Pietà, via dell’Orso.*

The building renewal tied to the presence of the Emperor Maximianus and his court in the city modified its layout considerably. In fact, the construction of the Imperial residence and the Circus definitely determined the vacating of several central city areas and consequently, the expansion of residential areas well beyond the Late-Republican walls to the East, which were then surrounded by walls in their turn; the new perimeter of the walls became 4,500 meters long. In the West, the walls partially surrounded the recently constructed Circus which had loopholes in its curved side for defensive purposes. Imposing evidence of its urban undertaking can be seen in the garden of the Civiche Raccolte Archeologiche (Civic Archeological Collection) in the form of a twenty-four sided tower linked to a large section of a wall, the foundations of which continue down into the basement of the museum.



**Plan of the Maximianus City Walls and “Ansperto” Tower**



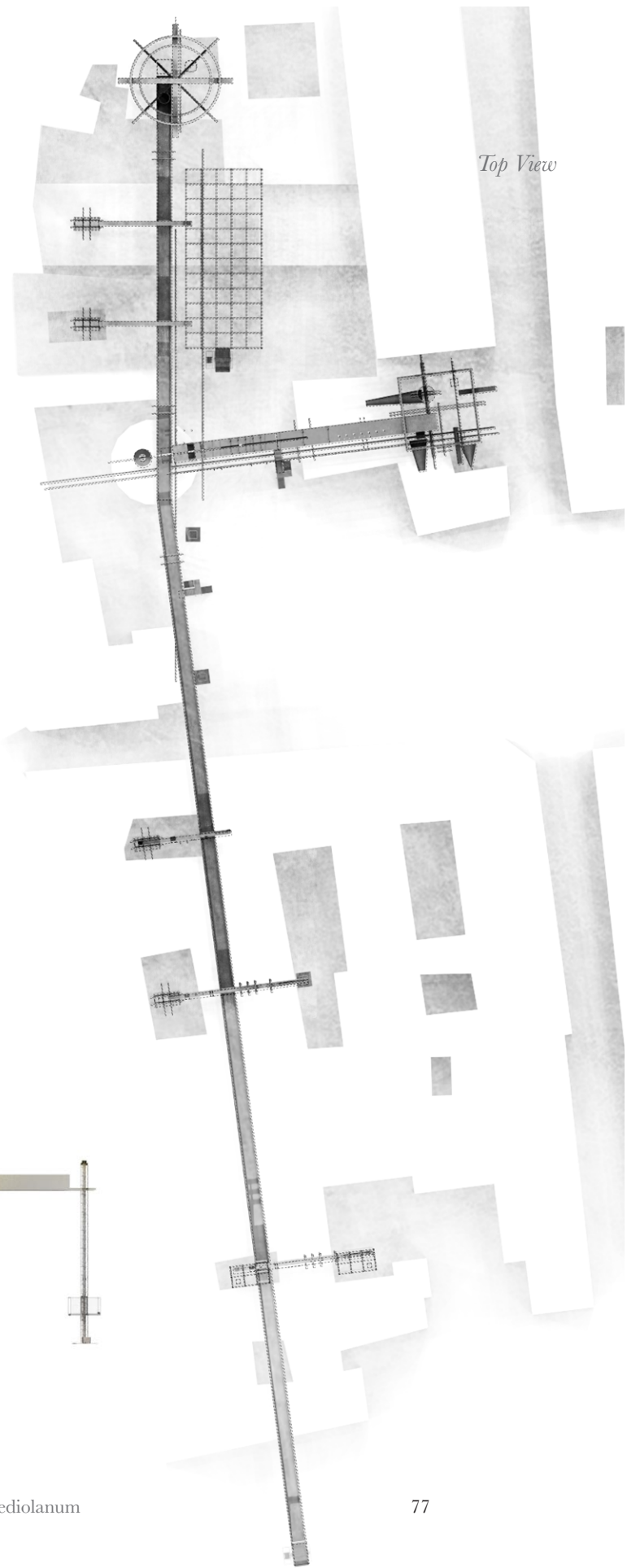


*Aerial View*

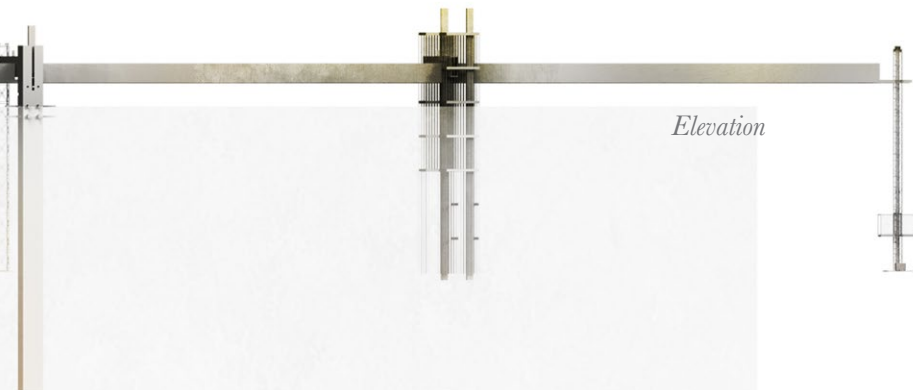


The Maximianus City Walls  
Project

*Top View*



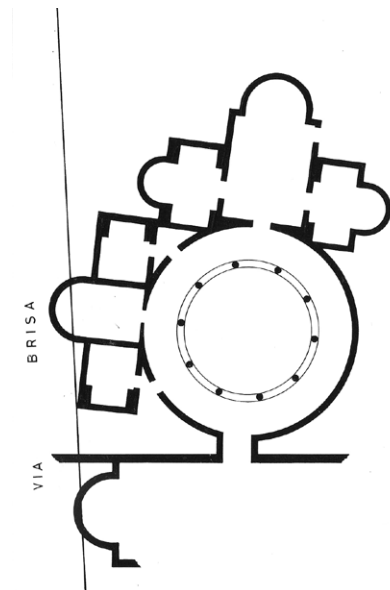
*Elevation*



# The Imperial Palace

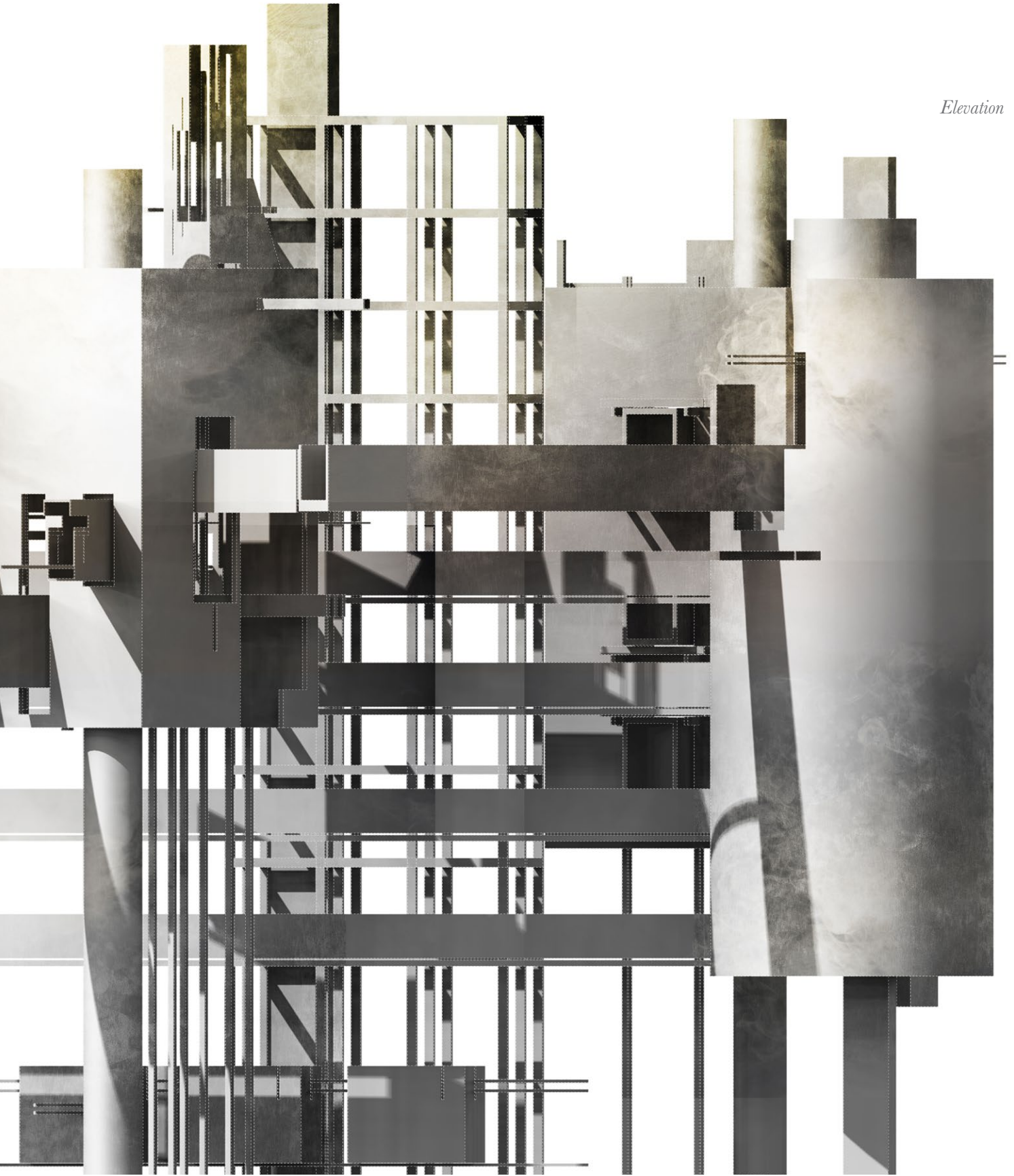
**Location:** *Area between the ancient Porta Vercellina and Porta Ticinese and the Via Torino, Santa Maria alla Porta-Santa Maria Fulcorina.*

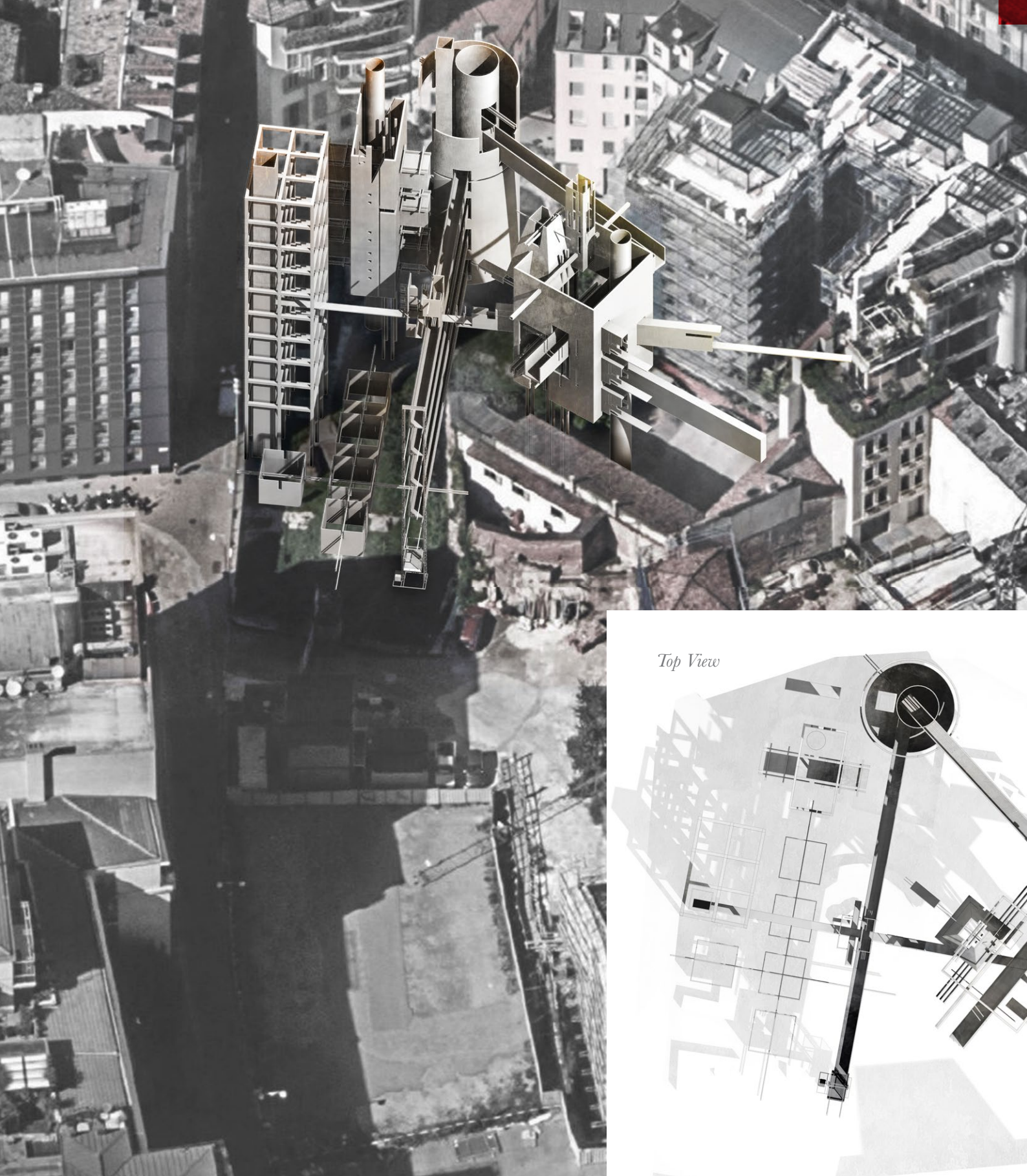
The urban transformation undergone by Milan as the official seat of Maximianus, involved, above all, the western part of the city layout where the imposing complex of the Imperial Palace was constructed. Residential and ambassadorial sectors, private baths and the Circus took up an entire sector of the city near the walls which Maximianus himself had extended. The only visible traces of this vast polyfunctional quarter, which stayed in use perhaps up until the tenth century, are the remains of an ambassadorial building which had central heating; many archaeological remains are probably to be found under the buildings around via Brisa.



**Plan of the Imperial Palace**



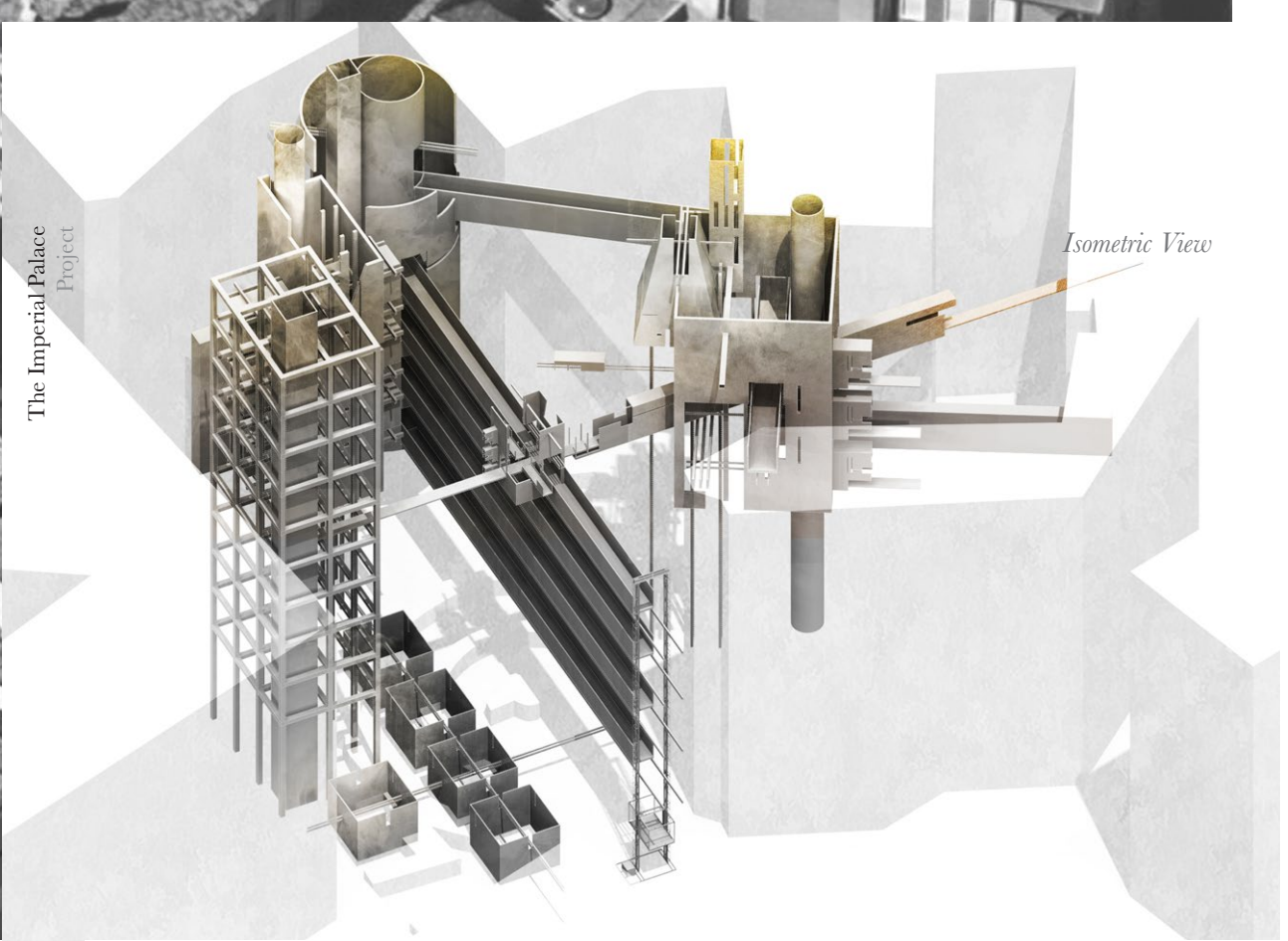




*Top View*

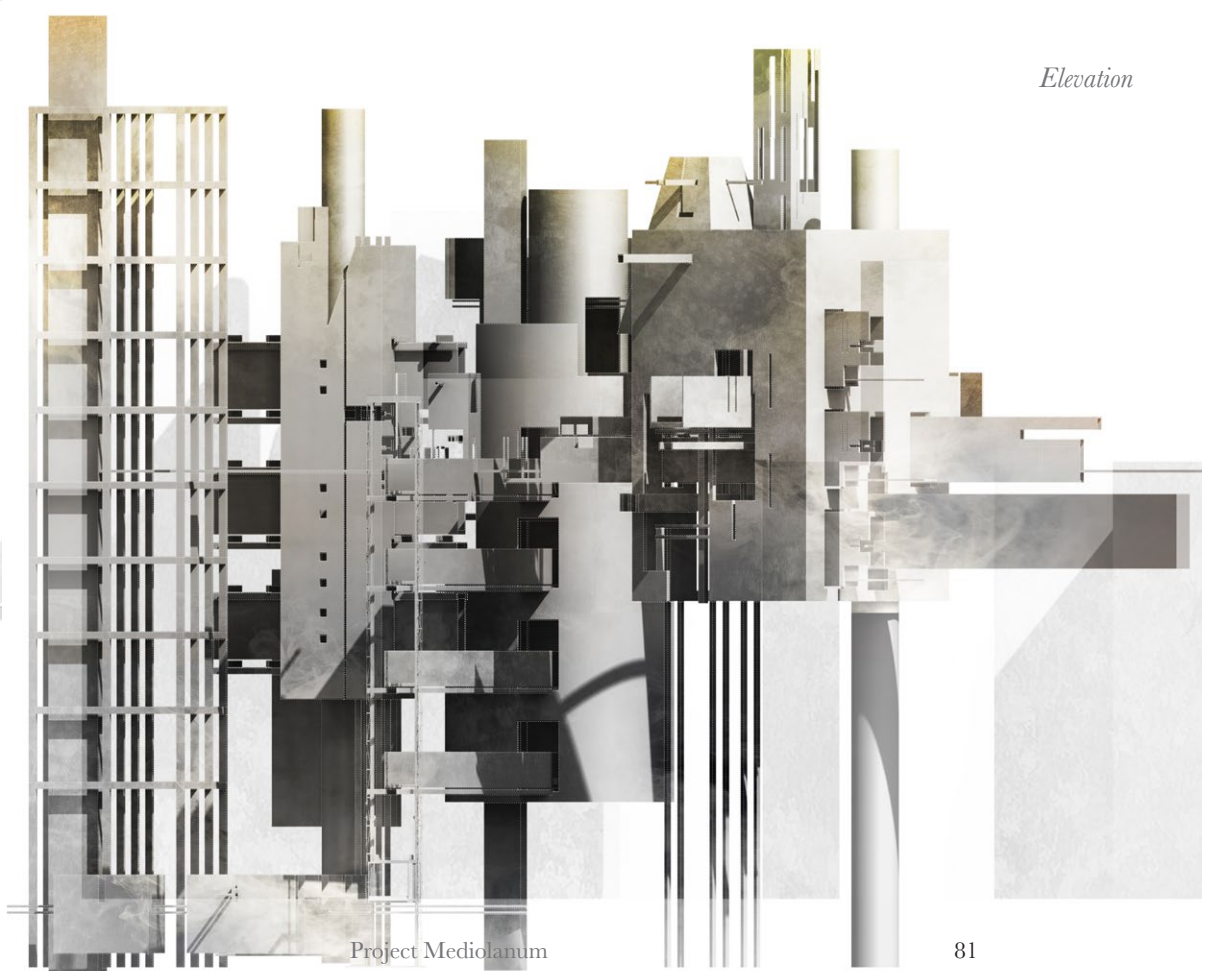


*Aerial View*

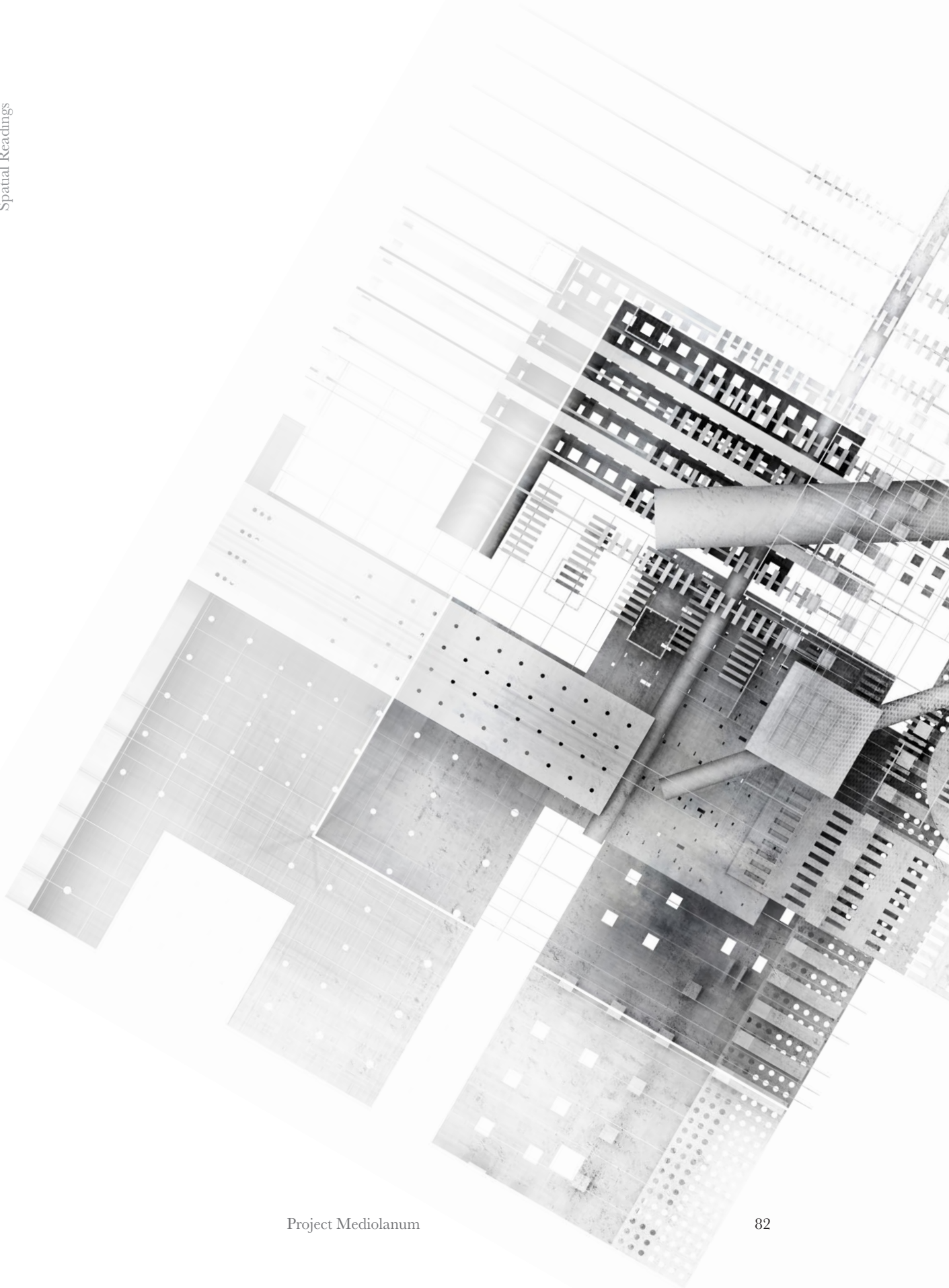


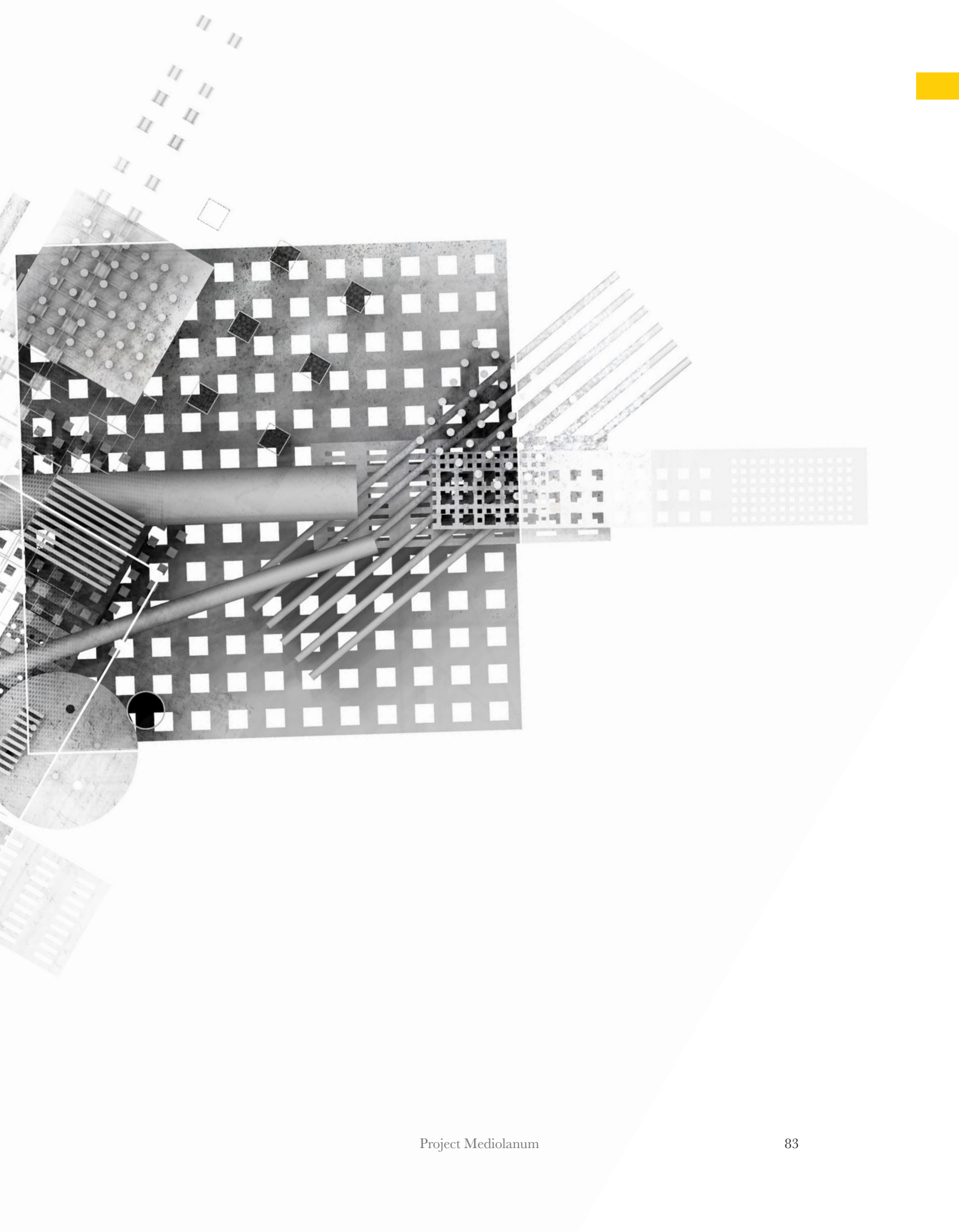
The Imperial Palace  
Project

*Isometric View*



*Elevation*





# Evolution of places

In between readings





The Homogeneous Space<sup>01</sup> exists as a consequence and condition of the construction of our cities. Its configuration tends irremediably to its simplification and its physical reduction, which is inversely proportional to its Historic and Cultural content. The structure and characteristics of the homogeneous space lies in its character of being “in between”, fluid and non-material. The capacity of being “in between” -the negative of matter, the void- feeds these volumes with the flow of adaptations of the present space and the confrontation of its layers.

*Panofsky assumed that in order to construct geometrically a perspectival drawing, one must postulate space as a consistent medium in which the depicted objects are located.*

*The definition of homogenous space that Panofsky adopted from Cassirer had two parts.*

*The first section stipulated that all elements of a space -points and sets of points- are mere designations of positions. They do not possess any other content except their position relative to each other and their existence is not substantial but purely functional. The second part of Cassirer's definition formulated the postulate of homogeneity, which states that from every point in space it must be possible to draw identical figures.*

**Branko Mitrović**, “Leon Battista Alberti and the Homogeneity of Space”, United Institute of Technology.

Since their creation, the cities answer to a process of identification and spatial adaptation, that varies in different cultures as a result of the collective standard of socialisation of its population. The European (Roman City) is described by the spatial condensation of its habitation structures, and the hierarchisation of the governmental buildings. The dimensions of the housing and its codes of divisions and proximity, outline

a specific style of life and use of the public and private spaces.

The cultural environment that characterises any civilisation, creates a system of borders inside which the plans of management of the ground are developed.

Other cultures and cities, like the case of Moscow, in Russia, are characterised by a very different scale, and as a consequence -or vice-versa- radically diverse approach towards the public areas. Here the **Void** occupies a much larger extent when comparing it to the scheme of the Roman planning. It regulates the exercise of living, reinforcing the space as a field of visual hierarchisation, and displacing the activities of socialisation to isolated and very specific areas -mostly the housing-.

Getting back to the Roman example, its morphology is characterised by the condensation of the Void, which as in the theory initially explained, constitutes the field of formalisation of the interpersonal relations of the city inhabitants.

The Void, in this case, does not refer just to the non-built, but also to the complex system of relations that it contains and interacts as an autonomous body and with relation to its context.

When we disassemble the Void, we may obtain a group of symbols:

**-Social devices.**

**-Reading devices.**

**-Psychic entities.**

The transformation of city the in relation to the mentioned elements is part of an infinite process, full of spatial and temporal intermittencies: never linear.

The metamorphosis of Architecture, which contains and is contained by the prototypes -remember the Void-, manifest always in different ways the footprint of evolution. The plan, diagram of personal identification with a given context, illustrates through the growth of cities, indelible marks that the **Social Devices** have printed over it.

The shapes in which the social interaction develops, as mentioned before, are a fundamental exemplification of the 'limits' of the culture of habitation.

On the other hand, the **Reading Devices** exteriorise gubernatorial and political intention in given areas, and in other places concepts of dwelling, superimpositions, additions, and corrections. These define the perception and clarification of places of the city by its occupants, conditioning the visual perception, functional relations, distances, mobility times, speed. This dispositive is probably the clearer component that manifests political interests and control issues over the urban tissue.

It constitutes as well a descriptive measurer for the confines of isolation and control in some cases and observation or hierarchy in others.

The deformation of the Reading Devices through time is, on one hand, a fundamental consequence of the economic possibilities and commercial practices, which make possible the transformation of stable structures into more complex and performative bodies. On the other hand, it is the result of the political changes and the revisions of intentions of the power in charge. We could demonstrate in a graphical way how this example takes shape when understanding the case of Rome, in the context of the plans of transformation that Benito Mussolini had in mind during his period of control.



### Relations of Scale

*Top.* Milano, Italia.

*Bottom left.* Moscow, Russia.



The **Psychic Entities** are formed by the overlapping of different readings that amalgamate in the city. They are a substantial part of the collective memory that, in many cases unconsciously, creates long-term differences between isolated sectors of the urban environment. The Reading Devices are the elements of major impact over the transformation in a change reaction process of the other two. In a unique way, it answers directly to precise social purposes.

The Social Devices in relation to the Psychic ones are in action just through the intrinsic cultural values of the inhabitants of the city, and its impact is a derivative consequence of them.

What makes more interesting the study of the Psychic Entities is the fact that we may translate them into material bodies in a process of close reading of its components, and it is impossible to establish any sense of belonging to them.

When, as it happened in Milan, something takes place and the Void is all of a sudden modified, like in the case of the bombing that destroyed considerably the city during the II World War, the composition of each of the devices mutates in different ways:

The disappearance of sectors of the city, buildings or parts of them, has different connotations for the Social Devices, with respect to the nature of this subtraction process. When it happens as a direct result of the application of urban or architectonic projects, that means in a conscientious and approved manner, then the impression of these regions takes shape initially with an almost total dematerialisation of the building, and then in a discontinued way, it will keep this process of disintegration until it is completely removed from the collective dictionary.

When, on the other side, the erasure takes place through the use of violent or antisocial methods, then, compositely speaking, the prototype that emerges aftermath will materialise, yet in a very evident manner the presence of the building, this time not as a neutral structure anymore, but with strong negative connotations. This body will dematerialise like in the previous case but this time it will take a much wider span of time due to the character of its disappearance. After a bombing, the Reading Devices suffer an immediate expansion, increasing the development and intensification of the “ruins”. Showing sections, interior and plans of Churches, and evincing instantly, its visual relations with the actual context.

Now the observer is able to create a very different mental image of the damaged and exposed space in parallel to the comprehension of the relations of the plan, the context and himself.

The fact of discerning in such a direct way the nude structure of a private or a religious entity, results as well in the generation of an uncanny empathy, that forms in analogy with a close learning about the system of rites and habits that took place before inside the structure. This experience ends up creating a close identification of the person -viewer-with space, establishing a direct relation of the personal behaviour habits and those that exteriorises now almost in a forbidden way the ravaged edifice. This situation altogether modifies the idea that the inhabitant had before about the city and its connection with the “disaster”.

As for the Psychic Entities, the undesired destruction of any building signifies the creation of an immediate new will: **The will for conservation**, linked to images of sadness and condemn. It would be possible to create a new city, by giving back the life to those buildings or segments of cities which have



Clearing the Via del Mare, Capitoline on the left, Theater of Marcellus in the background, 1930.



Mussolini opens the first part of the Via del Mare, Theater of Marcellus in the background, 1930.

been erased from its built reality as a result of accidents or conflicts. Then we could build a collective map to represent the elements that in a specific moment conditioned its relation with the inhabitants of the city, precisely because of their instant evaporation from the material world.

When the building is a victim of hazard, the tridimensional space that was occupied by it before can yet be 'observed' in almost all its extension. Now it will be represented beyond its initial significance, borders, tabus, confusion.

It is terminally forbidden to forget instantaneously the presence of the structure, and its overcoming will be part of a collective agreement, in which will be clear that the re-writing of the given segment of the city appears as a condition of the conservation in some extent of the initial building.

Inside the structure of the Psychic Entities, the points which have been erased in a conscious way (collectively approved), will be once more incorporated in the palimpsest of the city, directly connected and very commonly almost homogeneously adapted with the successive programs that will substitute them.

**01.** The homogeneity of space was first discussed as a philosophical problem by Ernst Cassirer, and the related theoretical considerations were subsequently introduced into architectural and art history by Erwin Panofsky in *"Perspective as Symbolic Form."*



*Top left.* Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio dopo i bombardamenti, 1943. *Cittadella degli Archivi e Archivio Civico di Milano.*

*Top Center.* Gianfranco Ucelli, Il Carrobbio, 1943. *Archivio Gianfranco Ucelli.*

*Top Right.* Piazza Fontana, 1943. *ANPI di Lissone.*

*Bottom Left.* Castle Street during the Second World War Blitz on Bristol.

*Bottom Right.* Castle Street during the Second World War Blitz on Bristol.

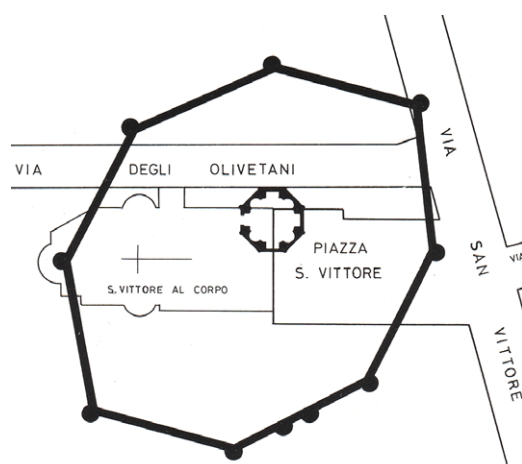




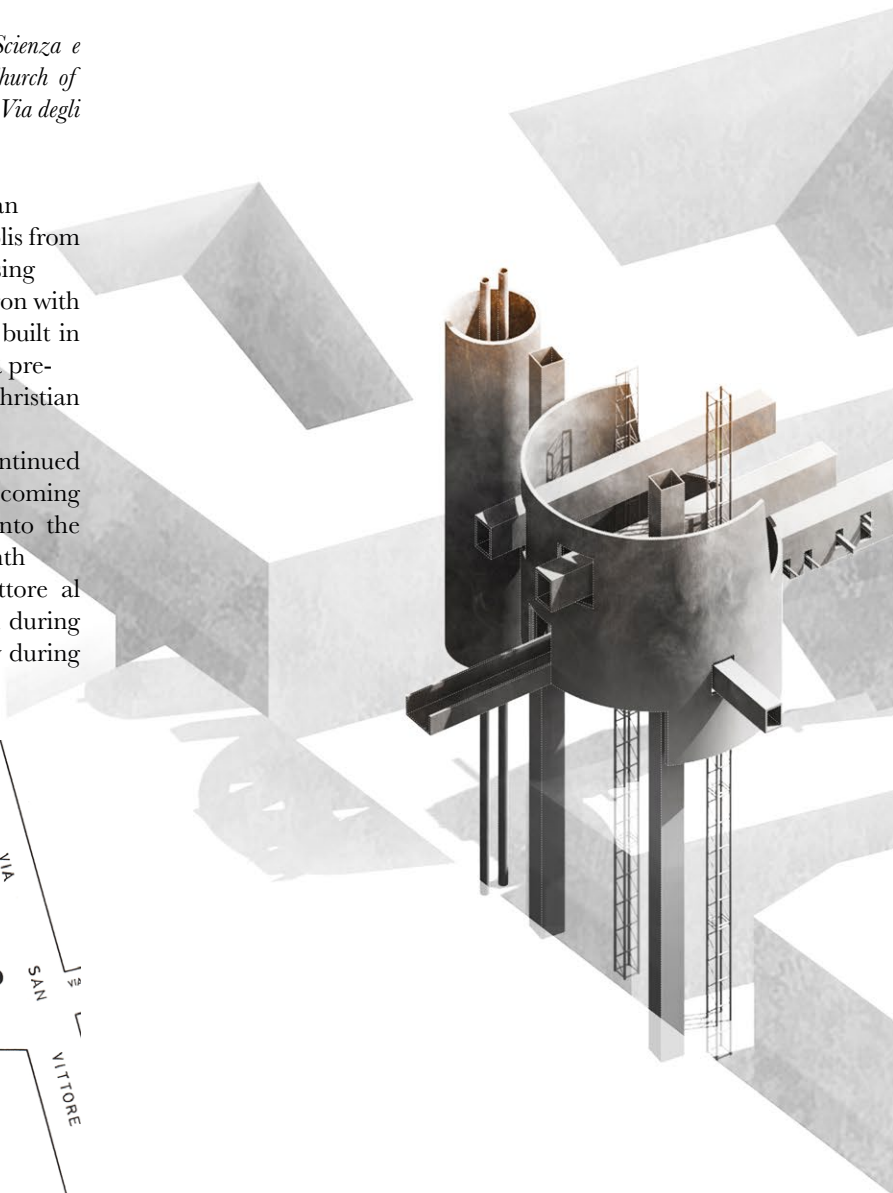
# The enclosure of San Vittore al Corpo and the Imperial Mausoleum

**Location:** Area between the Museo della Scienza e della Tecnologia “Leonardo da Vinci”, the Church of San Vittore al Corpo, the Istituto Buon Pastore, Via degli Olivetani and Via San Vittore.

Along the present-day Via San Vittore, an ancient roadway flanked by vast necropolis from the first century A.D. onwards, an imposing enclosure shaped like an elongated octagon with semi-circular towers at the corners was built in Late Antiquity. This structure enclosed a pre-existing cemetery area, predominantly Christian and a sumptuous octagonal Imperial mausoleum within its perimeter and continued to house further Christian tombs, becoming a privileged burial site. Transformed into the Chapel of San Gregorio in the ninth-tenth century A.D. and annexed to San Vittore al Corpo, the mausoleum was demolished during the last decades of the sixteenth century during the restructuring of the church.

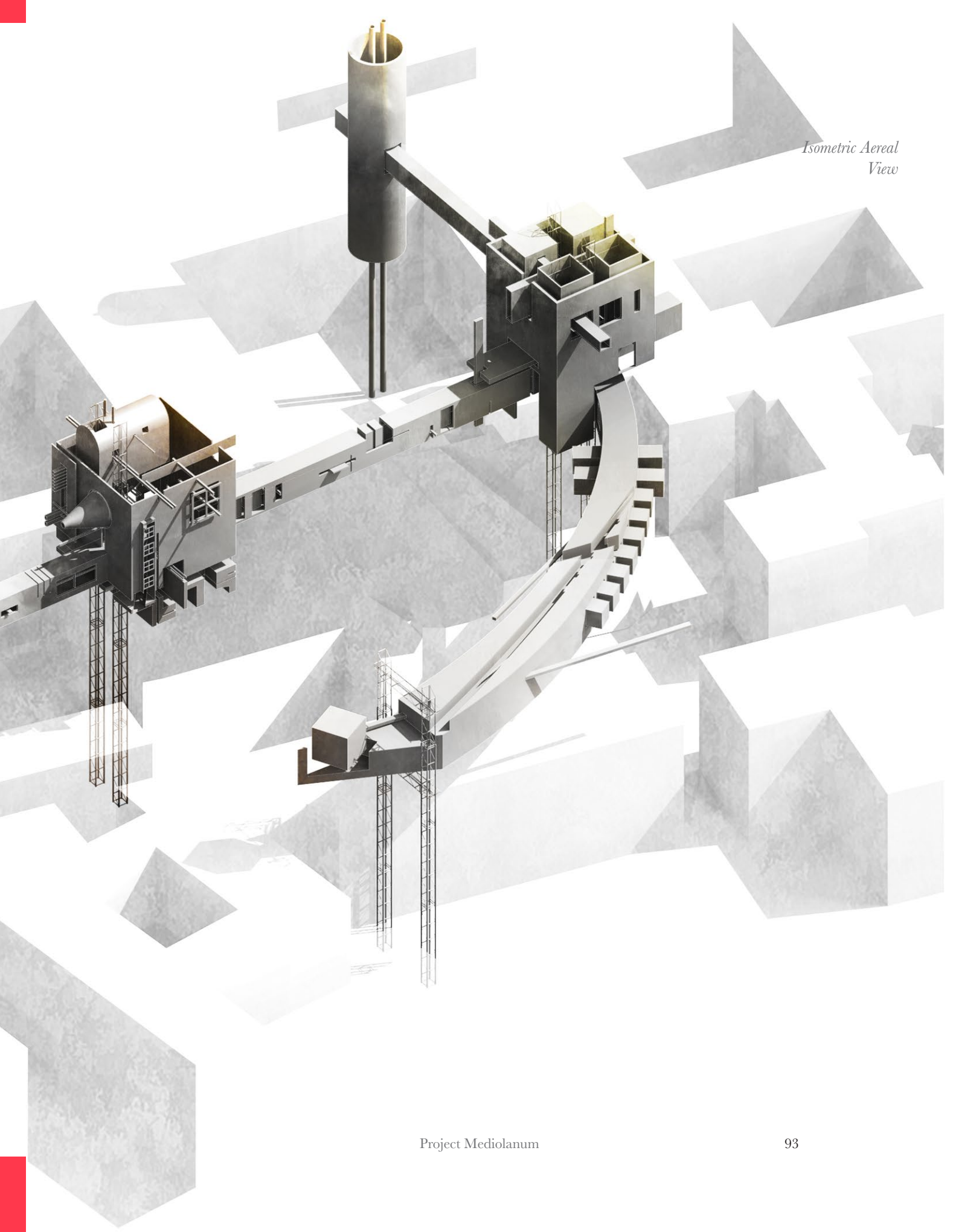


**Plan of the enclosure of San Vittore al Corpo and the Imperial Mausoleum**



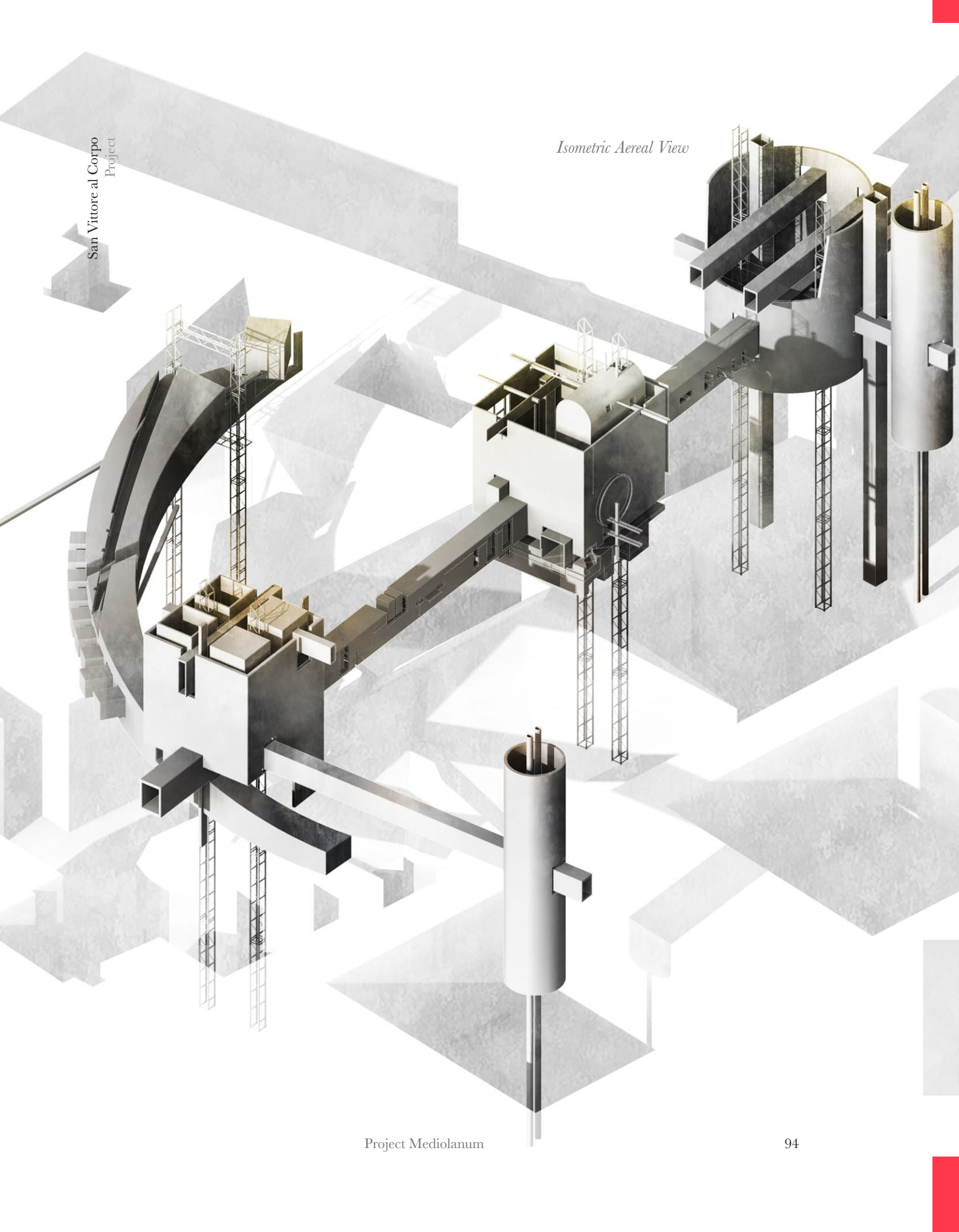


*Isometric Aerial  
View*

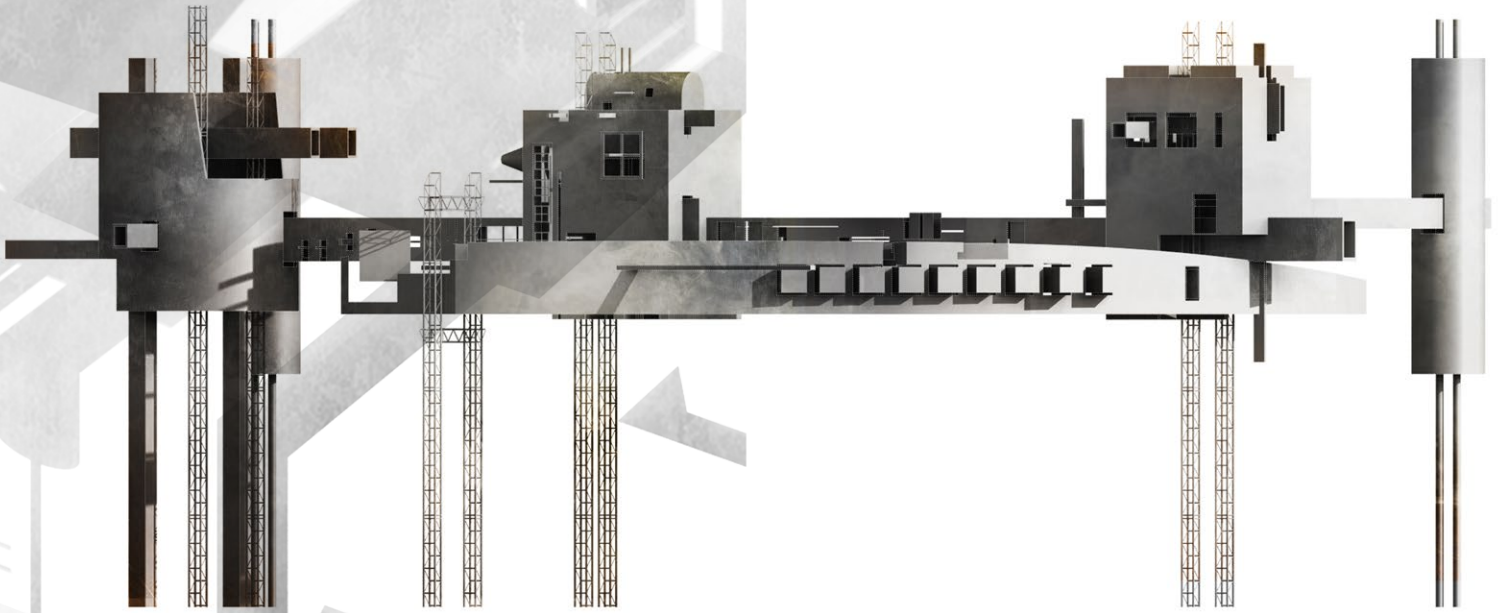


San Vittore al Corpo  
Project

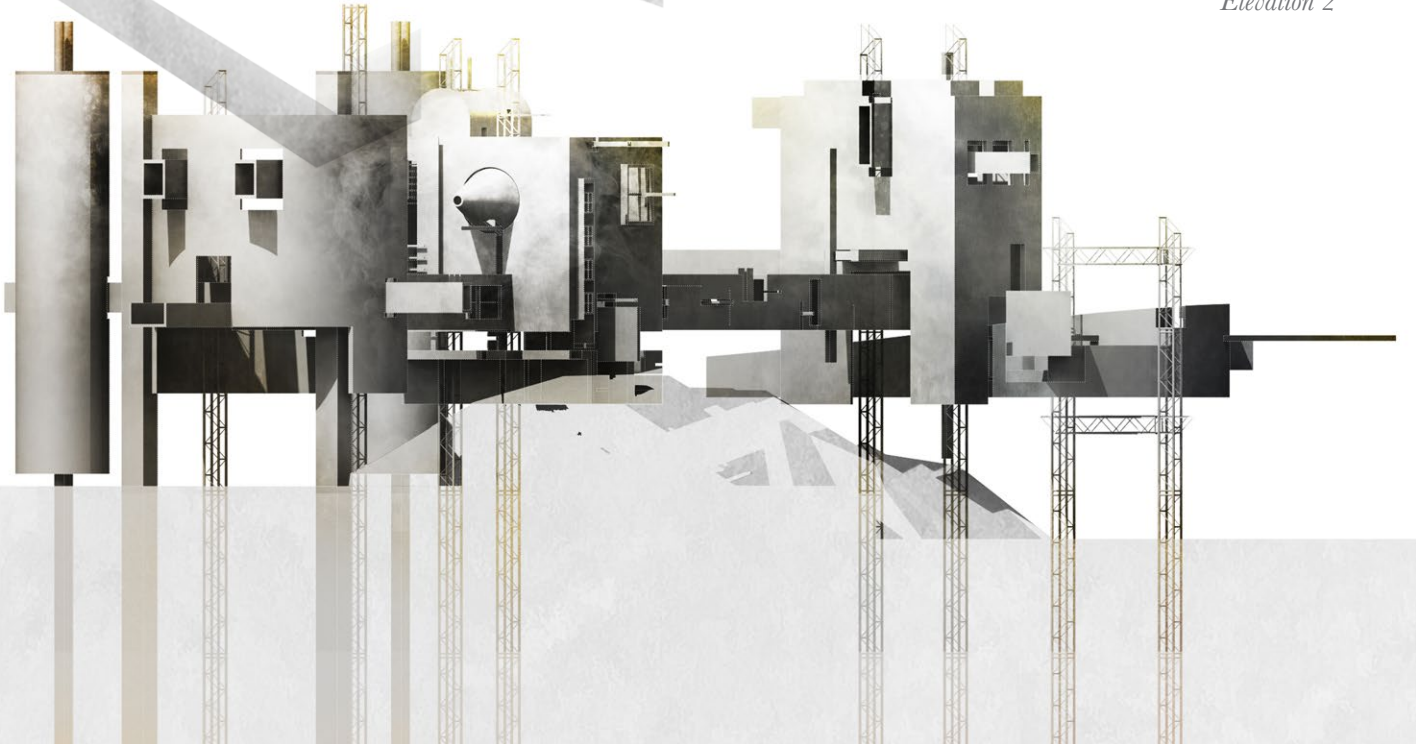
*Isometric Aerial View*



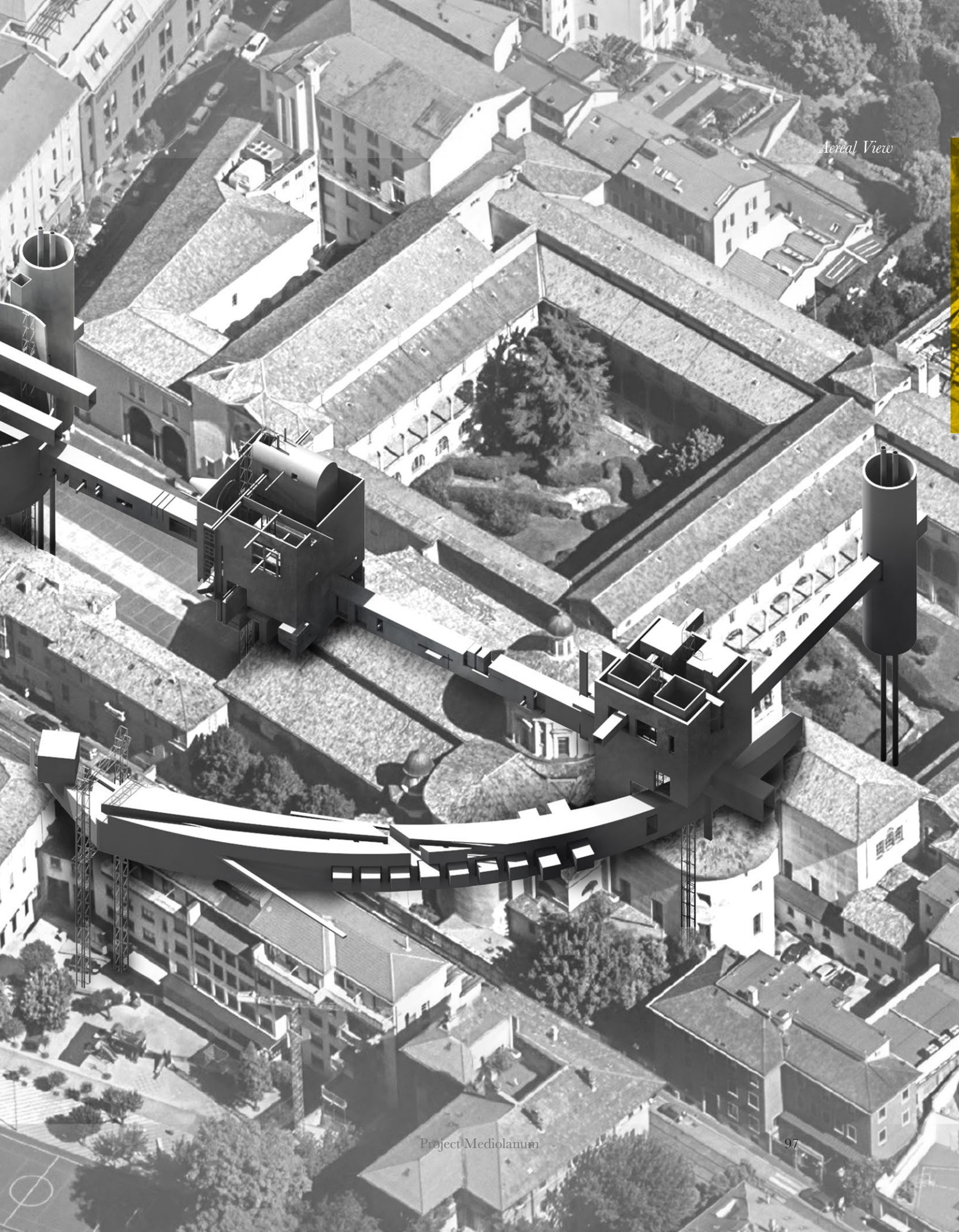
*Elevation 1*



*Elevation 2*







*Aerial View*

### **Manifesto Milano**

Penso che aspetto interessante di Milano è che è una città italiana, nonostante sia Milano. È la meno italiana delle città italiane però, quello che la differenzia da una media città europea è il fatto di essere italiana. La cosa interessante di Milano per me e questo dialogo tra la Europa moderna e una Europa italiana, è alla fine la città meticcie in questo senso. Per la Architettura, Milano è rappresentativa solo di se stessa, se New York o Las Vegas potevano essere dei prototipi, dei parametri sui cui misurare altre cose, Milano no, anche perché è una città di fenomeni modesti rispetto ad altre, anche qualitativamente e qualitativamente. Penso siano più interessanti le cose che si possono scrivere o dire a Milano che costruire alla fine. Avere qua il centocinquantesimo edificio di Zaha Hadid, di Libeskind, Isozaki, Cesar Pelli, non è così significativo; sono degli Architetti che hanno già dato il meglio prima, non sono scoperte milanesi, non è un laboratorio di uno stato nascente. Questo è un aspetto della internazionalizzazione e poi di banalizzazione della città, che diventa più simile ad altre.

### **Milano Urban Project**

Milano ha sempre avuto un senso di futuro, è una città progettuale. Adesso le due aree Expo e Città Studi saranno le due aree di trasformazione, adesso si lavora al più fuori, in modo impegnativo, molto progettuale. In certo senso io credo che se le cose vanno bene, se la economia va bene e queste cose si fanno Milano è destinata a diventare un pezzo di una cosa più grande. La vecchia Milano diventerà un pezzo di un area metropolitana più grande.

Milano non è una capitale, quindi è sempre un terreno dove diverse forze agiscono contemporaneamente su direzioni diverse. Ci sono dei progetti a Milano, il progetto Milano c'è, ed è quello per le periferie adesso. Io eliminerei tutte quelle vecchie periferie degli

anni cinquanta e sessanta, quella è la Milano destinata a morire prima.

### **Milano Memoria Collettiva**

Molto forte sicuramente, Milano ha una cultura molto specifica, come quasi tutte le città italiane, ma quella di Milano è una cultura fortunata, perché ha avuto dei risultati buoni. Milano è una città che si ha costruito il suo futuro sempre.

Esiste Roma, una città che è la vera depositaria della Roma antica. Cartagine non esiste più, allora Tunisi può essere la nuova Cartagine, ma Milano non può essere la nuova Roma perché Roma esiste. La romanità di Milano è molto difficile perché Milano è sempre stata la antagonista di Roma in tempi moderni, già dai tempi di Leonardo da Vinci. Poi certamente esiste la Milano Romana, però credo che la matrice Milanese venga più da altre storie, tante altre storie: la Milano degli Sforza, la Milano Austriaca, la Milano Spagnola.

### **Il pubblico dell'Architettura**

Io penso che la architettura deve permettersi di essere un po' aristocratica. La Biennale di Aravena per esempio è fatta per rompere la barriera tra il pubblico e la Architettura; io credo che non cambi niente. La Biennale è importante per noi architetti ma non per la gente comune, in quel senso è populista, fa appello delle idee di Architettura senza Architetti che non esistono. Anche era populista Rudofsky quando faceva "Architecture without Architects", un bellissimo libro che piace solo agli Architetti.

Io non penso che sia importante che la gente capisca niente di Architettura.

La Architettura è una cosa molto importante, qualsiasi semplificazione è molto ingenua, dobbiamo accettare il fatto che la Architettura è una cosa molto complessa; è come la lingua, che è una conoscenza secolare che cambia costantemente, nessuno

ha le chiavi di casa in mano, e nessuno può neanche darla a qualcun altro.

### **Architettura & Edificio**

Non sono la stessa cosa, e facile dire così perché noi qui abbiamo una grande biblioteca. La Architettura moderna nasce con Guttemberg, nasce con il libro, questo lo spiega molto bene Mario Carpo nei suoi libri. La Architettura moderna, diciamo dal quattro/cinquecento nasce quando si possono incominciare a stampare e diffondere i libri, quando si diffonde la Architettura Rinascimentale in tutta Europa, è attraverso i libri: Serlio, Vignola, Alberti, Palladio, quella è la Architettura Moderna. La Architettura è un sapere e non solo una tecnica.

Io credo che la teoria e la critica coesistono in un modo interessante.

Molto volontaristicamente adesso tutti possono stamparsi un libro, farsi un blog, etc., quindi c'è questa proliferazione di opinioni e anche di critica. Il legame col potere è ancora lo stesso che prima. In un certo senso la Architettura è forte perché sempre rimane se stessa. La Architettura è la dimostrazione del potere, una rappresentazione plastica delle leggi sostanziali della città.

### **Architettura & Teoria**

Adesso le teorie non interessano, si sono trasformate, non sono più dei discorsi.

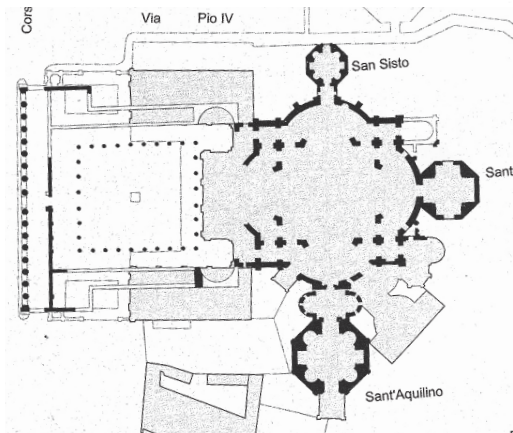
Tendenzialmente io penso che in un certo senso noi Architetti siamo diventati più artisti e più ingegneri. Non ce più un linguaggio comune, tu ti devi costruire le regole del tuo gioco. Dall'altro lato dobbiamo essere più tecnici, però c'è questa strana divaricazione. Prima c'era un linguaggio che risolveva il problema teorico poetico e il problema tecnico. La teoria non esiste da nessuna parte, esiste solo quando diventa una disciplina a se stante. È sempre una discussione, non è qualcosa che si possa codificare in una teoria. Secondo me non è mai esistita la teoria in tempi recenti, io sono d'accordo con Franco Purini: *la architettura è un fatto poetico non è un fatto teorico*. Le teorie servono per sostenere delle poetiche. Alla fine io penso che la idea della teoria è legata agli ordini classici, finché è legata a questi ordini è teorizzabile, perché ci sono degli elementi condivisi. Poi è stata reinventata a partire della città, dalla morfologia urbana.

**Alessandro Rocca**

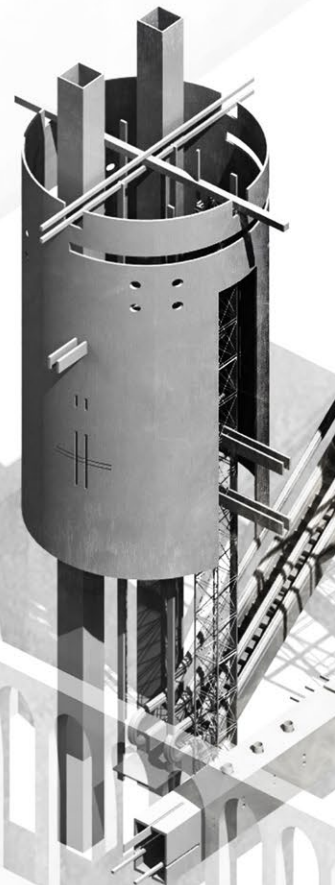
# San Lorenzo

**Location:** *Corso di Porta Ticinese*

Despite the damage inflicted over the years, this superb paleochristian building, constructed outside the walls on the roadway to Ticinum (Pavia) near the waters of the Vepra river, is mostly intact. The floorplan, with a central square section opening on to four porches flanked by four side towers and three octagonal chapels, is the oldest surviving example of “tetraconcal” (four curved sides) church. The entrance once had an atrium in front of it, with a facade decorated by re-used columns and the building has been variously dated between the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Present day studies, assisted by very recent archaeometric investigation combined with stratigraphic surveys of the walls suggest that construction was carried out between 390 and 410 A.D.

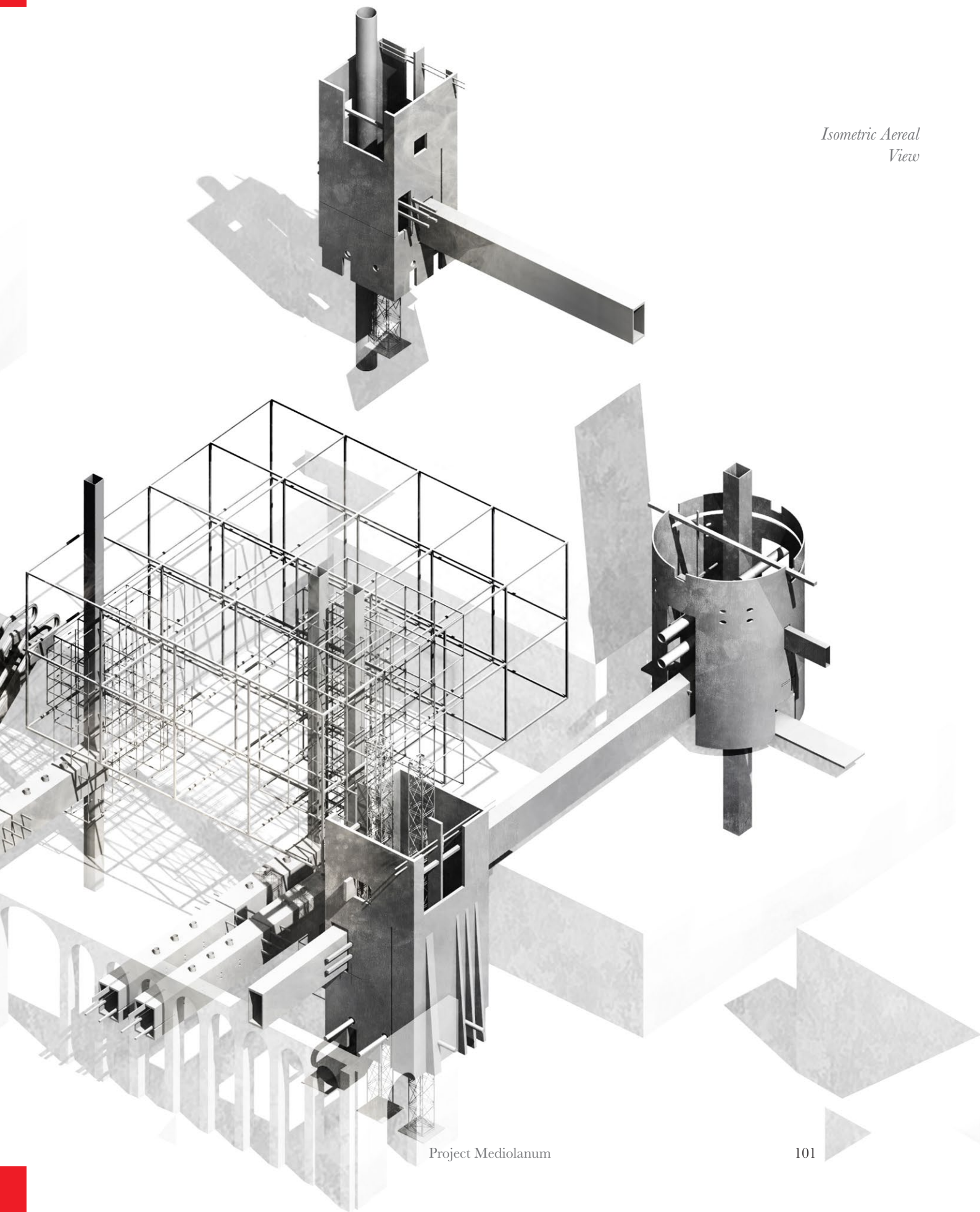


**Plan of San Lorenzo**





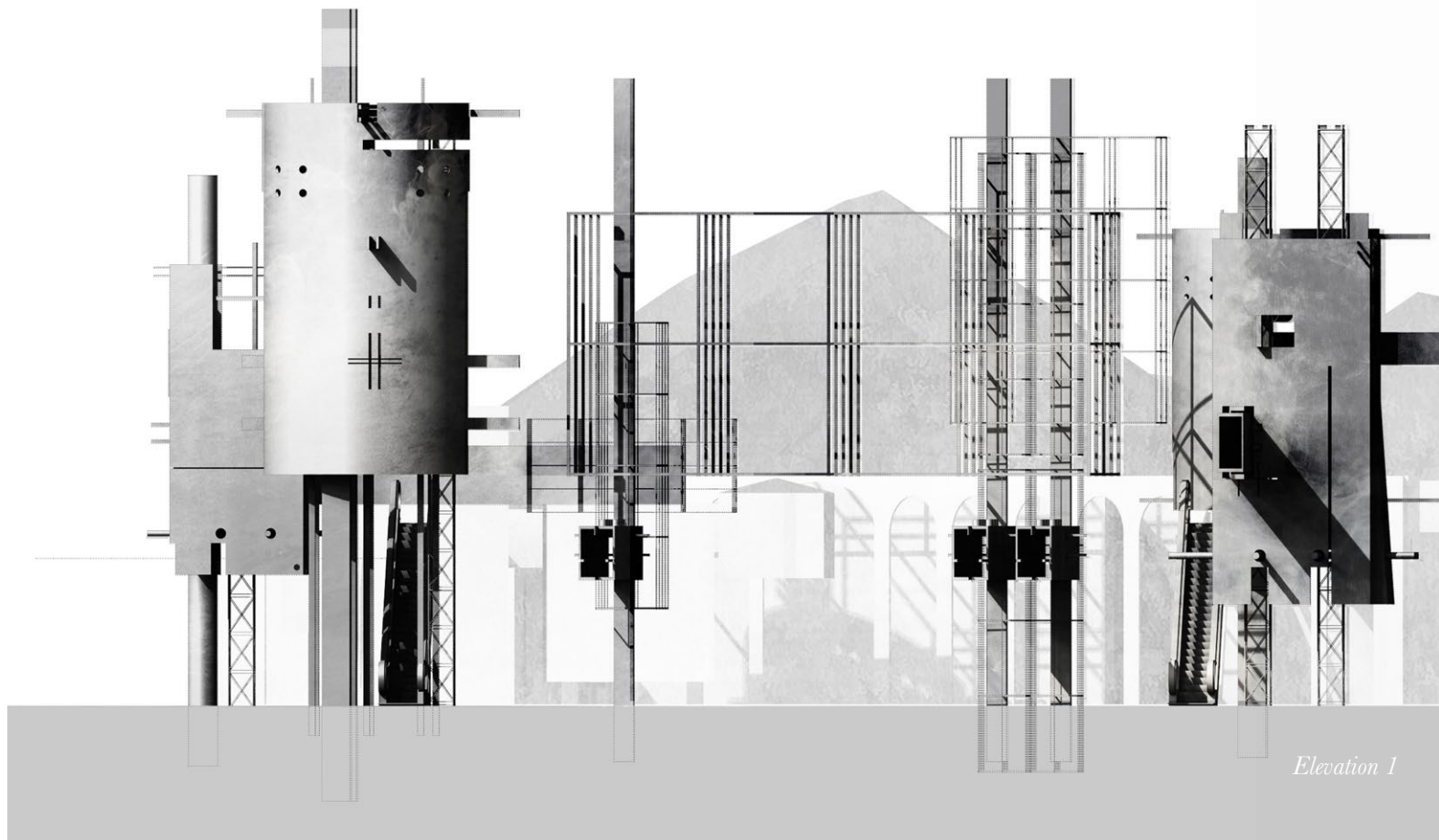
*Isometric Aerial  
View*



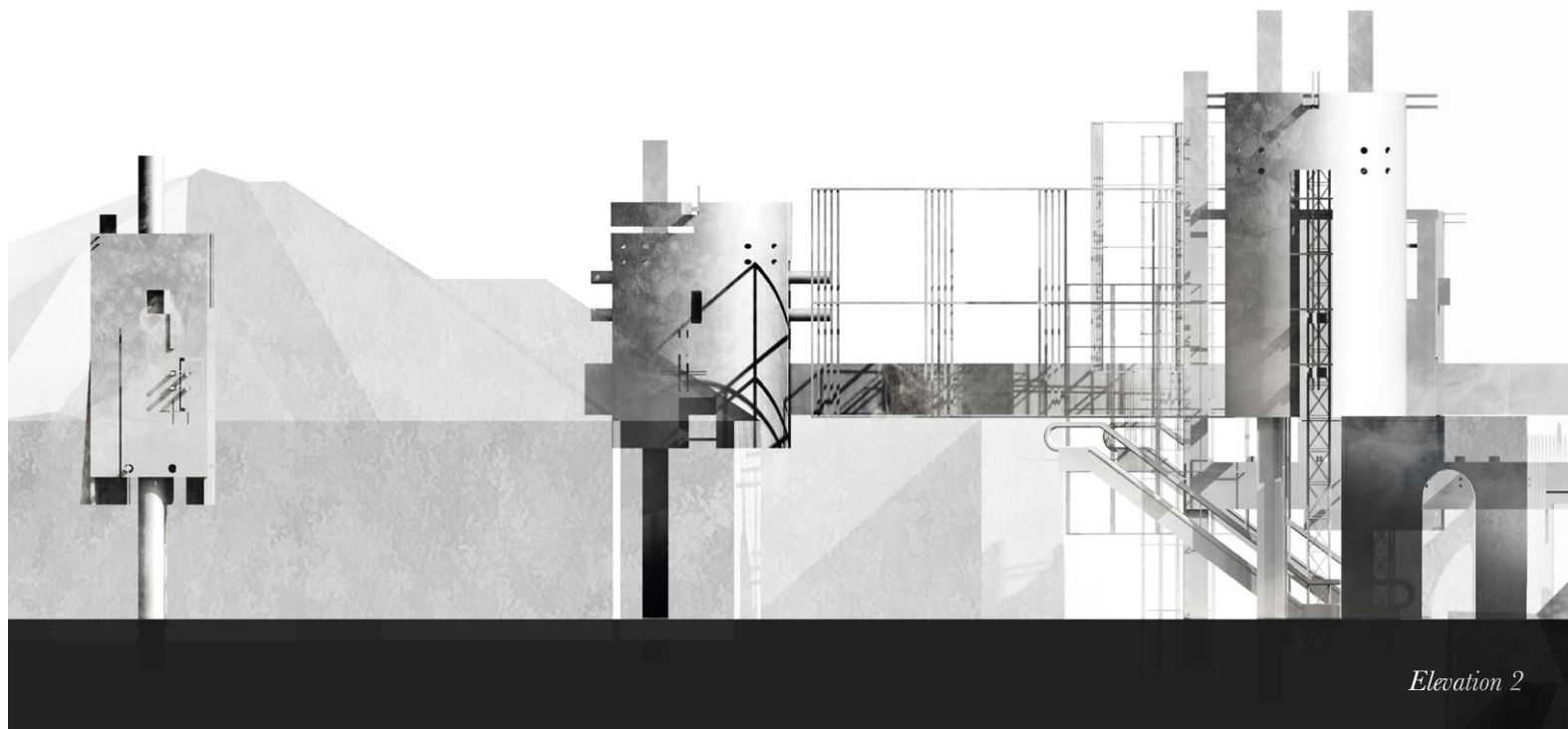


*Aerial View*

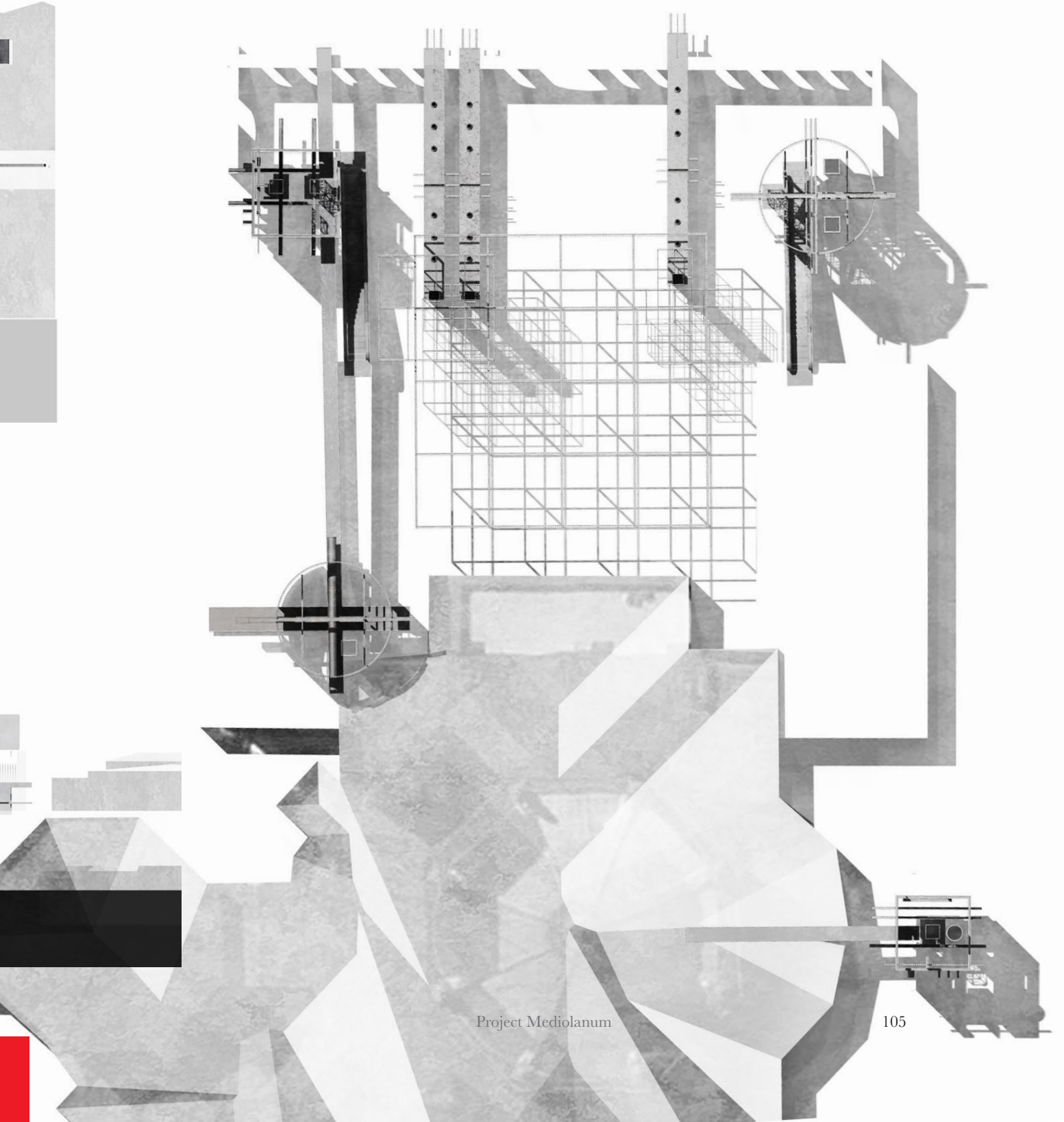




*Elevation 1*



*Elevation 2*



# Fight against Space

Freedom, Privacy and Control



The greatness of Architecture lies in the fact that it is a bridge rather than a goal. This idea of the bridge or the goal has been addressed in innumerable moments during the history of Architecture, the former always from a practical point of view, the later almost always just conceptually.

The fact of not being able to understand the characteristics and the fundamental objectives of architecture is reflected in great extent in our incapacity to identify Urbanism as a process, limited, indefinite and always continuous.

The European cities are strongly attached to their roots, even if parts of them have become almost totally invisible, and very rarely remembered. The existence of Archetypical constructions: the Roman structures located along the whole empire and always structured from a very strong model and equally defined components, is, without any doubt, the main source of modern Architecture and Urbanism.

This model is yet valid in all the cities that were once part of the Empire. Sébastien Marot<sup>01</sup>, quoting Freud in his book *“Sub-Urbanism and the art of memory”* speaks about the relationship that exists between the inhabitants of the city or its visitors and the place itself.

In his book, *“Civilization and its Discontents”* (1929), Freud writes about what a visitor may experience when visiting Rome today:

*“Except for a few gaps, he will see the wall of Aurelian almost unchanged. In some places he will be able to find sections of the Servian wall where they have been excavated and brought to light. If he knows enough — more than present-day archaeology does — he may perhaps be able to trace out in the plan of the city the whole course of that wall and the outline of the Roma Quadrata. Of the buildings which once occupied this ancient area he will find nothing, or only scanty remains,*

*for they exist no longer. The best information about Rome in the republican era would only enable him at the most to point out the sites where the temples and public buildings of that period stood. Their place is now taken by ruins, but not by ruins of themselves but of later restorations made after fires or destruction.”*

Later adding referring to a different interpretation, understanding the city as a physical entity rather than a human habitation, an entity in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one:

*“This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and that the castle of S. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege by the Goths, and so on. But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand — without the Palazzo having to be removed — the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms and was ornamented with terra-cotta antefixes.*

*Where the Coliseum now stands we could at the same time admire Nero’s vanished Golden House. On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of to-day, as it was bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa; indeed, the same piece of ground would be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built. And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other.”*

There is clearly no point in spinning our phantasy any further, for it leads to things that are unimaginable and even absurd. If we want to represent historical sequence in spatial terms we can only do it by



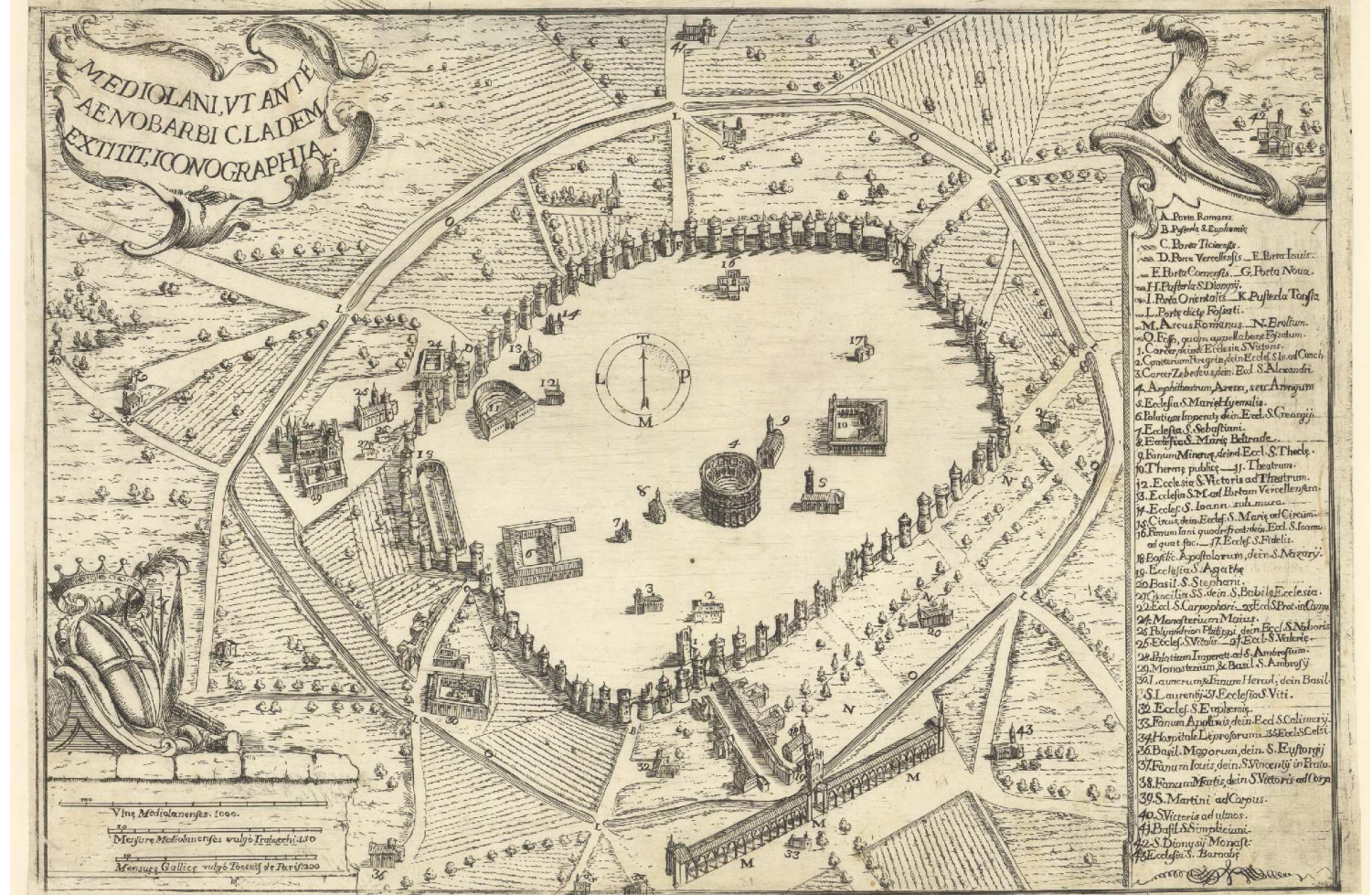
Torino, Medioevo, 1572. Incisione su disegno di Giovanni Carracha  
*Guida Archeologica di Torino, edizione del 2010, a cura del Gruppo Archeologico Torinese*

Torino, 1834  
*Archivio MAUtorino, Museo d'Arte Urbana Torino*

Thimgad, Argelia, founded in the 100CE







Mediolani, vi ante aenobarbi cladem extitit, iconographia, 1735, acquaforte.  
 Comune di Milano, Musei e Istituti culturali Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli

juxtaposition in space: the same space cannot have two different contents. Our attempt seems to be an idle game. It has only one justification. It shows us how far we are from mastering the characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms.”

A fundamental idea that affects spatially and mostly unconsciously our perception of the city and its collective history is given by our capacity of experimenting, in a single space, what once existed there, visiting unconsciously a place through time, reading all the periods that compose the place as a hyper landscape, formed by layers of cultural, political, social and geographical content.

This very beautiful time-space projection is then identified as an “Hyper-Place”.

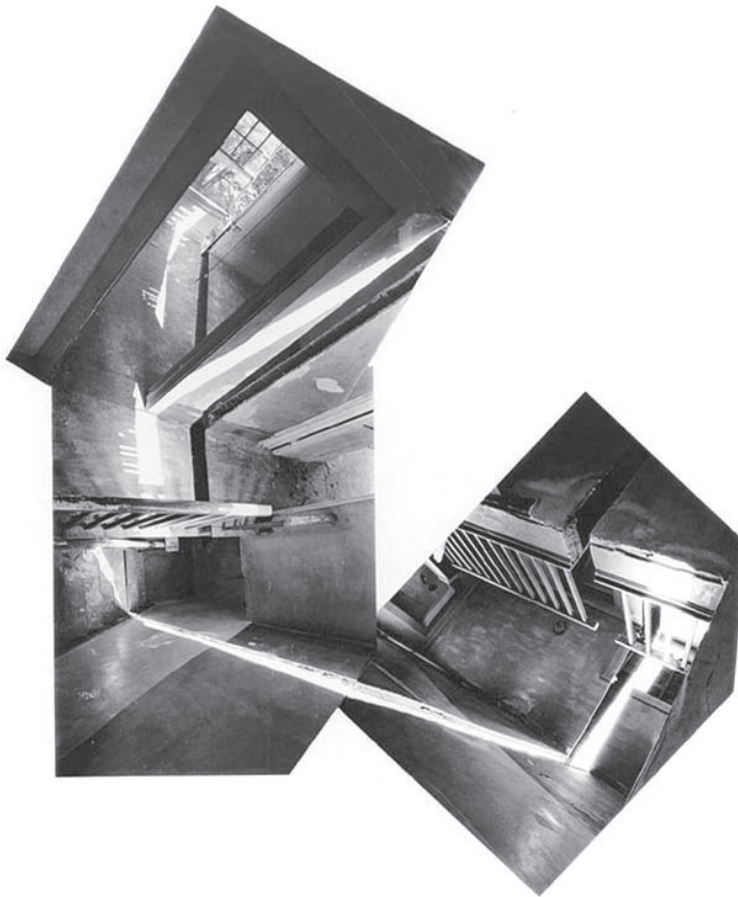
This idea of “the Place” is a fundamental concept which this Thesis utilises with the attempt of re-discovering the spaces of memory. The evolution of this work is marked chronologically inside the history of Milan, reading its very first form that its the Mediolanum, and ending up with the analytical creation of a new project for the city, which absolves indistinctly and discontinuously from the history of Milan, for creating then a retroactive project: a Mediolanum that is represented by its own Phenomenology<sup>02</sup>.

The project is a conceptual exercise and refers to the revival of the former art of using the city, this time over the actual context.

The structure of these forms of experience typically involves what Husserl<sup>03</sup> called “intentionality”, that is, the directness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that is a consciousness of or about something. According to classical Husserlian phenomenology, our experience is directed toward—represents or “intends”—things only through particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. These make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they present or mean.

The project has a base in the lecture of the Hyper Landscape, the Super Space<sup>04</sup>, and this it is created with base in the evolution of the city buildings in relation with the public space around them: the Void. The final morphology is, evidently, not important.

The new project that will reform the functioning of the city is not an attempt to redirect the Milanese urban project towards a “correct path”, beyond that, the idea is to try to understand the nodes, the time-space connections, formal and functional articulations; creating at the same time a set of relations and conflicts extremely interesting. The shape is not important, **the bridge rather than the goal.**



*Bottom Left.* Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting, 1974-75. *Spencer Museum of Art.*

*Bottom Right.* Henri Cartier-Bresson, Children Playing in Ruins, Seville, Spain, 1933. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*



The Roman City as an Archetypical model is fundamental to understand the urbanisation and building processes beyond the political, economical or formal issues.

The intention of creating a city is given radically by a complex contradiction between the empty space (the Void) full of possibilities and the “other spaces”, those we consider usable.

Architecture -conceptually, historically and formally- is formed by two fundamental characteristics: First, the individuality and personification that lies in a process that is nothing more but a continuous succession of decisions. Secondly, we must mention the Collective Memory<sup>05</sup>, which, in opposite position to individuality, almost always represents the family of limits and social tabus which Architecture must take into account before becoming a building.

That is to say, that beyond philosophical or spatial topics, Architecture is in itself a contradiction, that occurs in between the ideals of well being and collective given roles, and the Architect as an individual, who, inevitably, will translate personal experiences into this project.

Every person, and the Architect as so, has a virtue, and that virtue is not common with anybody else, and also it is not transferable. It is comprehensible that at a given moment he will need to call it by its name, cherish; but in the same moment when the Architect allows himself to share the name of its virtue with the people, he becomes then a part of that group. It is in that moment when Architecture moves to that strange place that is not one thing or the other, it is not individual, but it is neither collective. At this point the project will descend to the hands of the critic for being dismembered, tearing it apart into pieces that will satisfy a little bit on one hand the public taste and on the other the critic standards.

*Top.* The Infinite “Arena”.

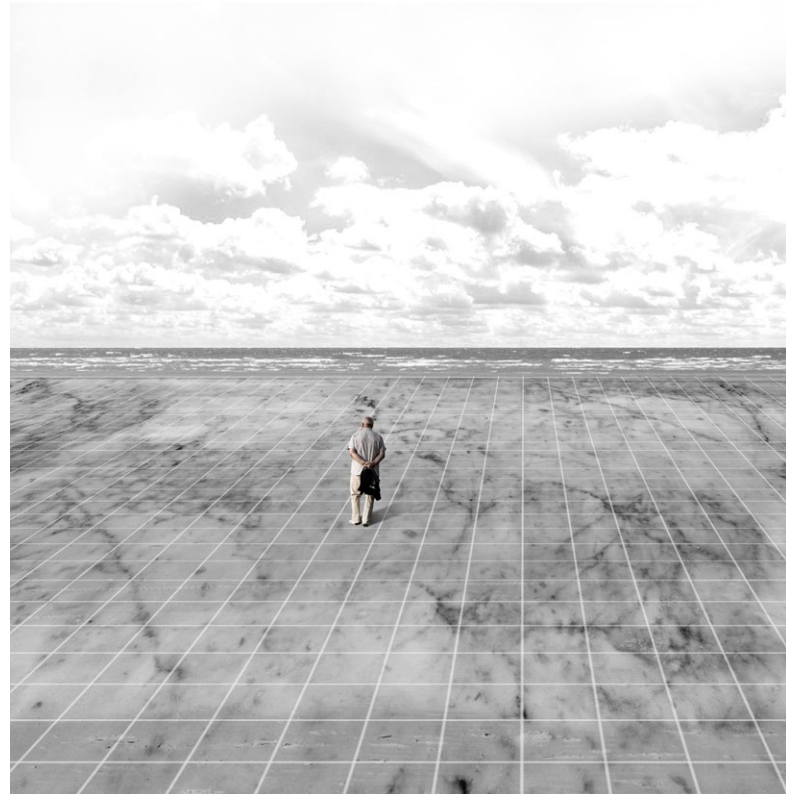
*Bottom.* Spatial Simplifications.

For the Architect this is nothing else but a torture that at the same time fills its soul with sweetness; his work becomes then illegible for himself and lacking in a name.

This babbling is simply to express that Architecture is part of a completely individual process, which is in constant struggle and deformation when its concepts are transported into the public sphere. Then we will agree in the fact that, in any city, a very small piece of it is really Architecture, the rest is the result of a process of ‘filling’ which will occur ideally once the general strategical basis is defined.

In the Roman City, for example, the maximum expression of architecture is given by the archetypical model that the city in itself represents. This model is very clearly defined, it is repeatable, applicable on different locations and transformable, but it will never go too far from itself, or cease from being a Roman City, independently of the difficulties that may appear when reading its constitutive elements: axis, aqueducts, main buildings or walls.

We can conclude then that Architecture is always an idea, that idea may become building when the later one is a direct reflex of the first.





The exteriorisation of the Idea, its transformation into a physical project, lies then on the hands of the Architect, who has understood and reinforced the concepts that its building must express, translating it to the language of the builders.

One of the main difficulties of the actual society that affects strongly the profession is our incapacity of investigation and theorisation. We are fundamentally unable to enjoy the process of thinking, and evidently, we understand the architectural project as a goal, rather than a bridge. The prostitution of the building, the continuous search for immediate satisfactions are then the goal, and the bridge becomes simply the medium through which the creation of the project will take place. In our cities we have forgotten the idea of space like something to get rid of, to overcome. We are not able to read the future of our cities as a structural reinterpretation of itself, and so we limit ourselves to enclose it between an ebb of ideas that condemn it to go back and forth through known mistakes. It is a reality of our interaction with the cities in all its stages, from destruction, plagues, isolation, war, building, and yet we are not totally able to overcome this endless chain of “rediscoveries”.

For being able to understand the idea of the city as a concept to overcome, we must then absorb the bases that condition its creation, expansion, and development.

Far beyond political or governmental points as we mostly see it, the process of creation of the cities is not given by anything else than our fundamental need to reduce the complexity of the space for our own understanding. If we analyze the empty space -the void- as an arena which is the source of an infinite number of possibilities, then we must understand the city as the place where this infinite number

is reduced to a legible amount. The act of creation of Architectures, which varies from the city scale to the scale of buildings, public squares and streets is nothing more than the transformation of the tridimensional infinite space in which it is located, creating a series of time-space intermittencies which afterward are defined inside the void as “internal” spaces.

Architecture then appears out of any political or economic influence. Evidently the cities, buildings, and other places are the result also of governmental discussions and monetary conditions but, inside the chronological evolution of history, the specific needs of the project for the city’s been always in constant transformation, that’s why in the long span it is not important to take these characteristics into account. Once the building is finished, it becomes an autonomous organism, which phenomenology and structure can be disconnected from the common space, and its materialisation then can adopt infinite shapes.

The idea of the project, its essential components come to life by themselves, and eventually can betray the ideological masses which understood once the building as a moral weapon. The mistake is in the identification of the act of building as a moral aim for materializing our banal intentions, and not as a bridge that would transform the Void that it occupies, reducing considerably its number of spatial possibilities, and remaining as part of the spatial and temporal geography of the city. The hyper landscape of the city should be transformed, evolving ideally to a super version of itself, a moment in which politics, religions, and cultures appear secondary in front of the images of the “Super City”.

The study of the Roman City of Milano, and the conclusion of this analysis with the creation of new projects for the city, is based on this idea of the interpretation of its urban evolution from the point of view of the relations of the buildings and the immediate void surrounding it, and connecting with another series of segments.

**01. Sebastien Marot**, “*Sub-urbanism and the Art of Memory*”, Architectural Association Publications; illustrated edition (19 march 2003).

**02.** Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity.

**03.** In Logical Investigations **Husserl** developed a view according to which conscious acts are primarily intentional, and a mental act is intentional only in case it has an act-quality and an act-matter.

**04.** The super-dimensional, continuous expanse extending in all directions and containing all matter: culture, society, matter.

**05. Autobiographical memory:** contains personally experienced events.

**Collective memory:** contains events that were rendered to an individual by other members of society.

**Historical memory:** Shapes the past through the work of historians.

**Maurice Halbwachs**, “*Historical Memory and Collective Memory*”



*Top Left.* Henri Cartier Bresson, The Berlin Wall, 1962.

© *Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos*

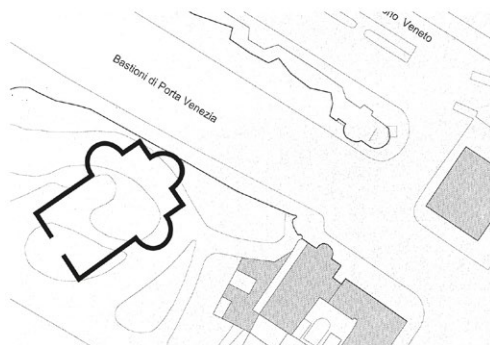
*Top Right.* Segments of the Berlin Wall, now displayed at 5900 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles. *Wende Museum, Los Angeles.*



# San Dionigi (basilica Sanctorum omnium Prophetarum et Confessorum)

**Location:** *Zone of the actual Giardini Pubblici, between the Planetario and the Bastioni di Porta Venezia.*

Nothing remains of this basilica, built on the route to Bergamo and Brescia and traditionally attributed to Bishop Ambrose, except a sixteenth-century sketch, kept in the Archivio Storico Civico (Civic Historic Archive) of Milan. The church had a single apsidal nave, with two small niches, probably for the tombs of illustrious personages, in the side walls.



Plan of San Dionigi

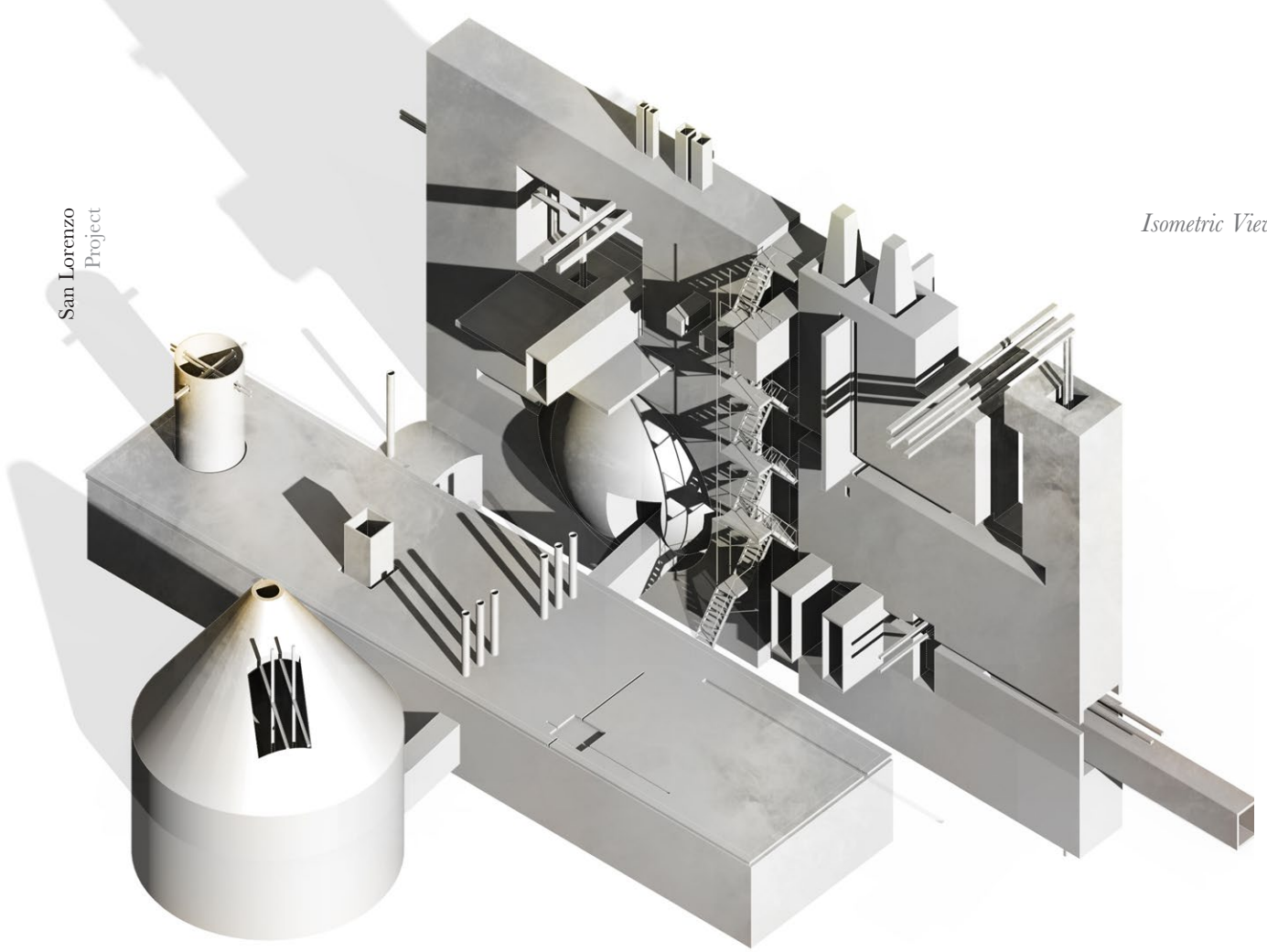






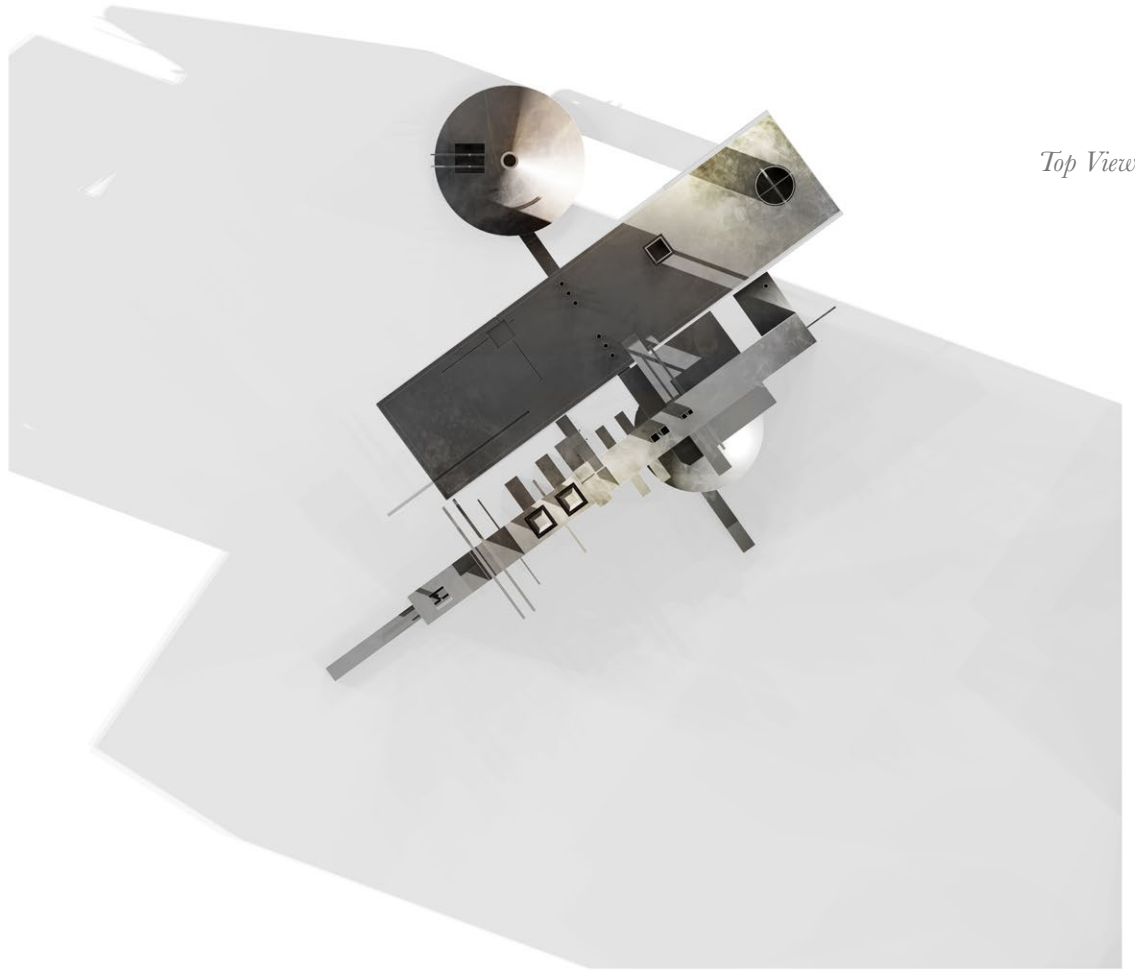
*Isometric View*

San Lorenzo  
Project

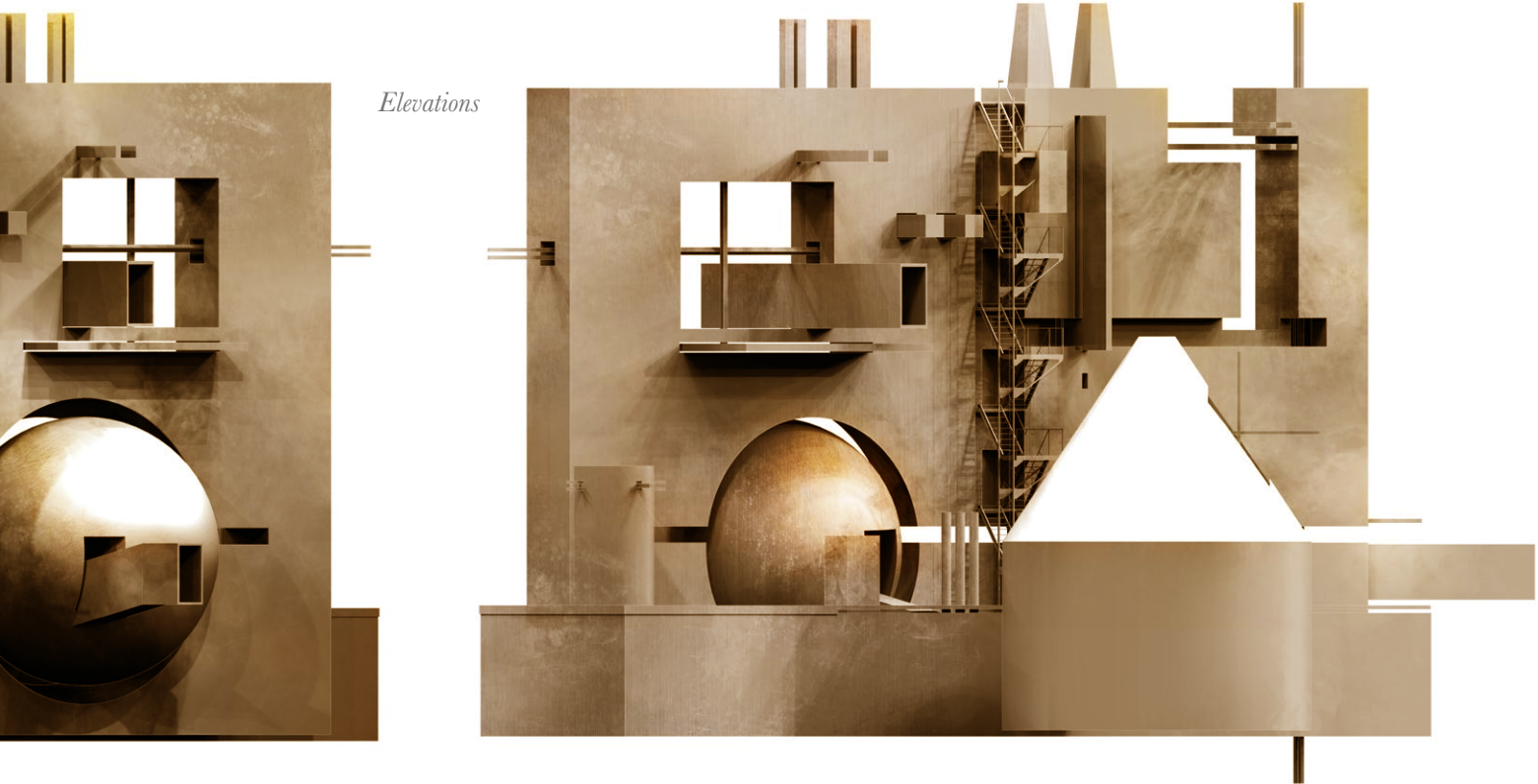


Project Mediolanum

118



*Top View*

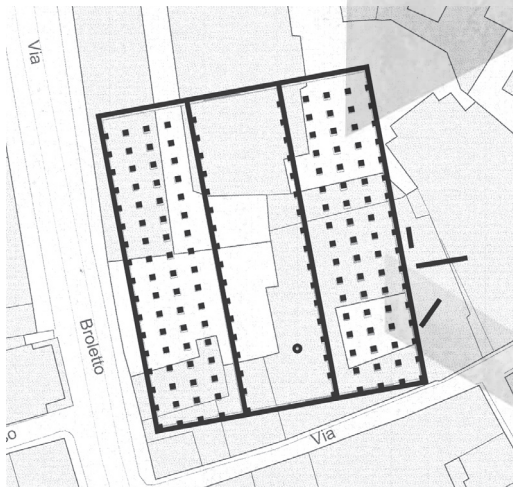


*Elevations*

# The Horreum

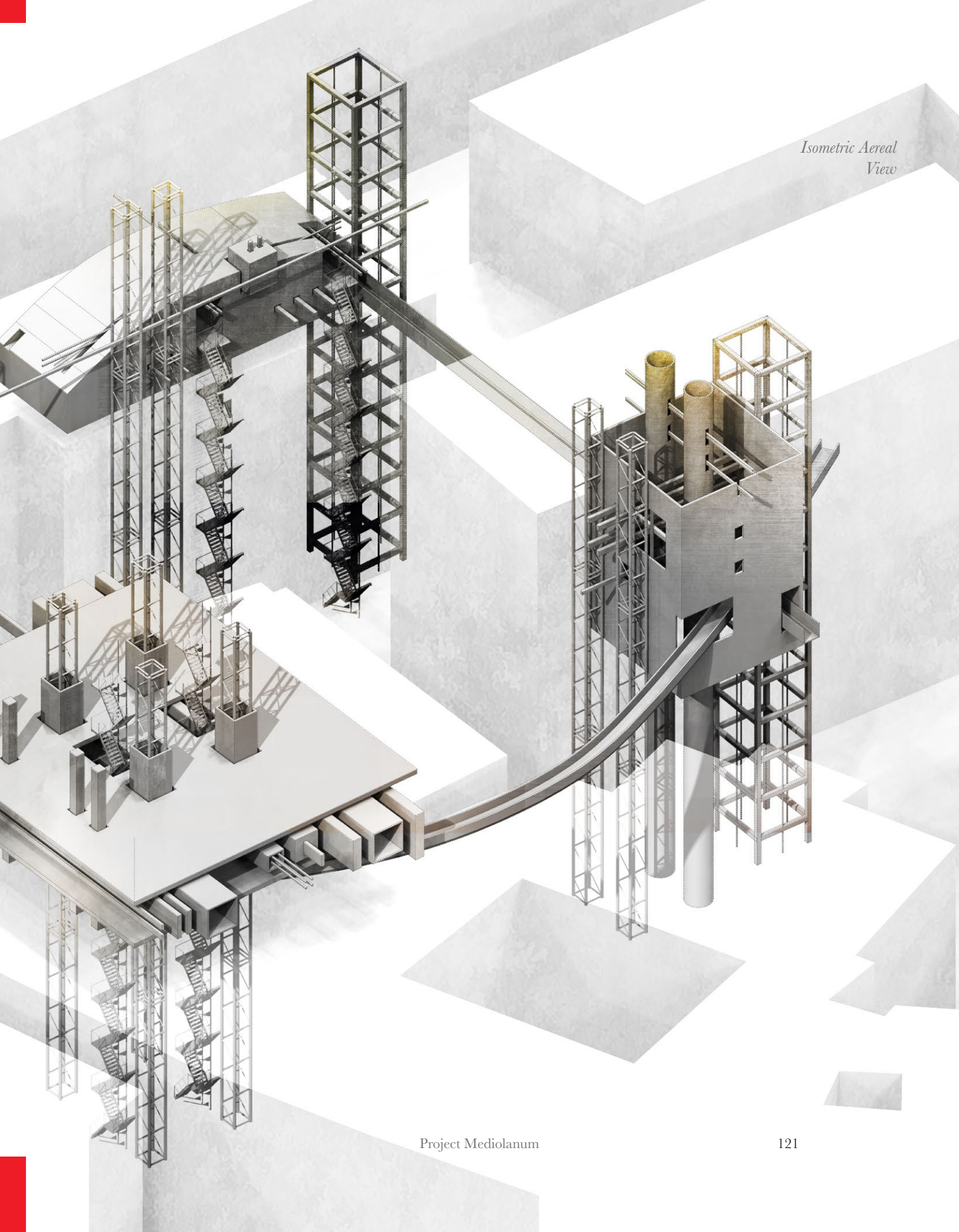
**Location:** *Area between Via Bossi and Via Broletto.*

A huge warehouse (horreum) in which to store army victuals was built at the end of the third-beginning the fourth century A.D., to supply the troops stationed in Milan and nearby areas. A decentralized area to the North of the city was chosen, close to major roads and the urban city walls, surrounded by the ditch, which made it easier to bring in supplies from outside. The Milanese Horreum is one of those rare archaeological testimonials to the great infrastructure network set up to supply the Armies, positioned at strategic points to the Empire.

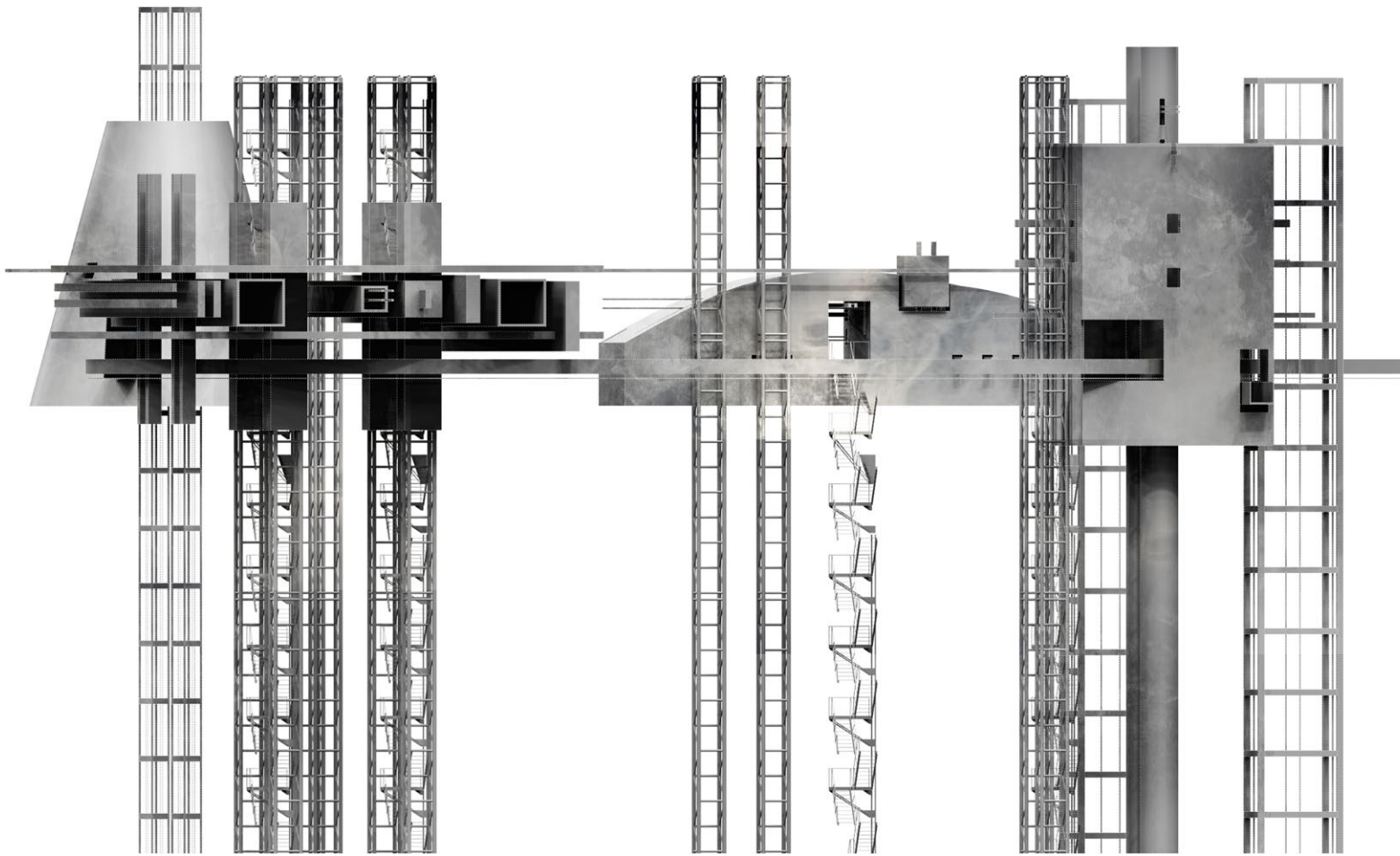


**Plan of the Horreum**

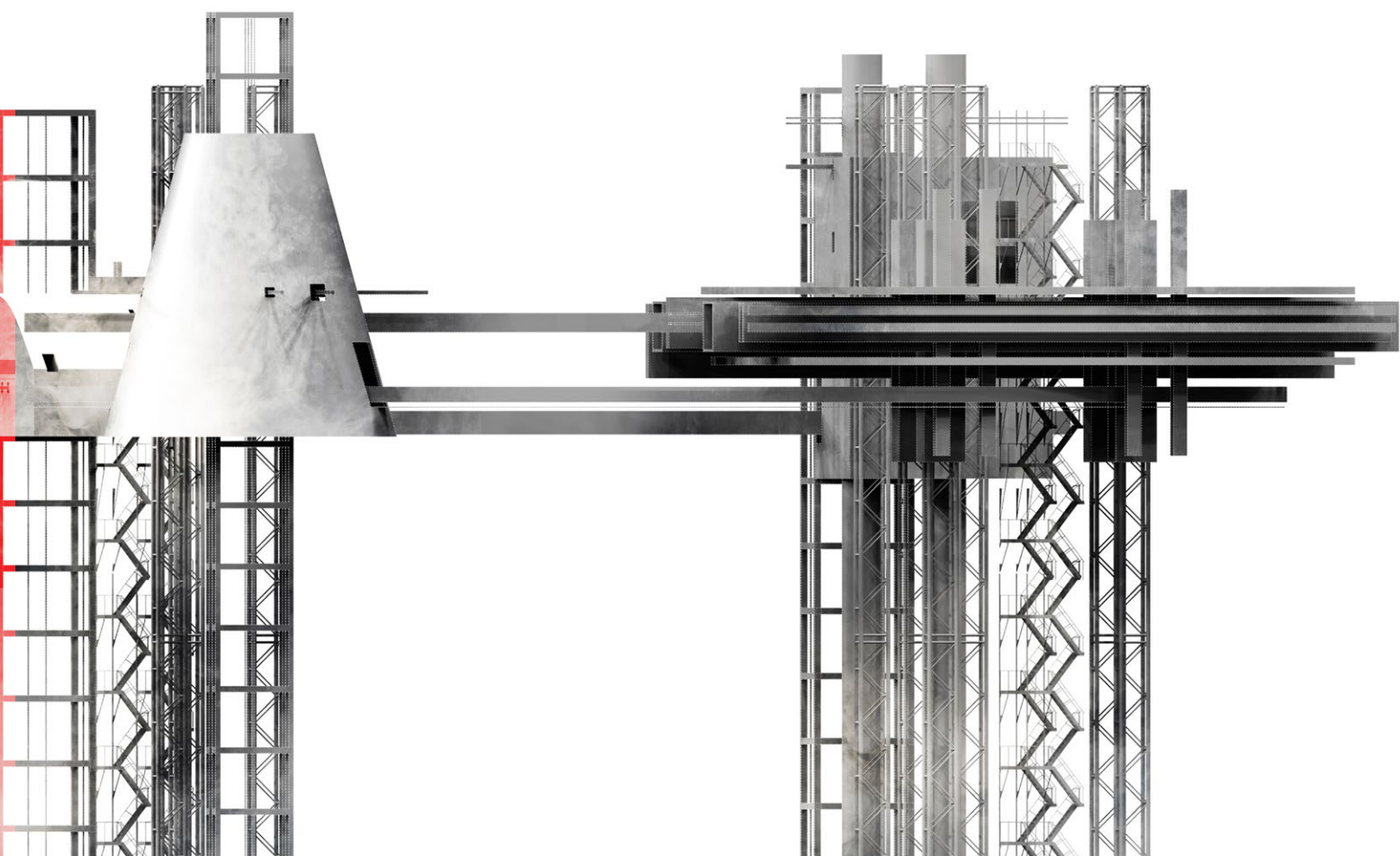
*Isometric Aerial  
View*



*Elevation 1*

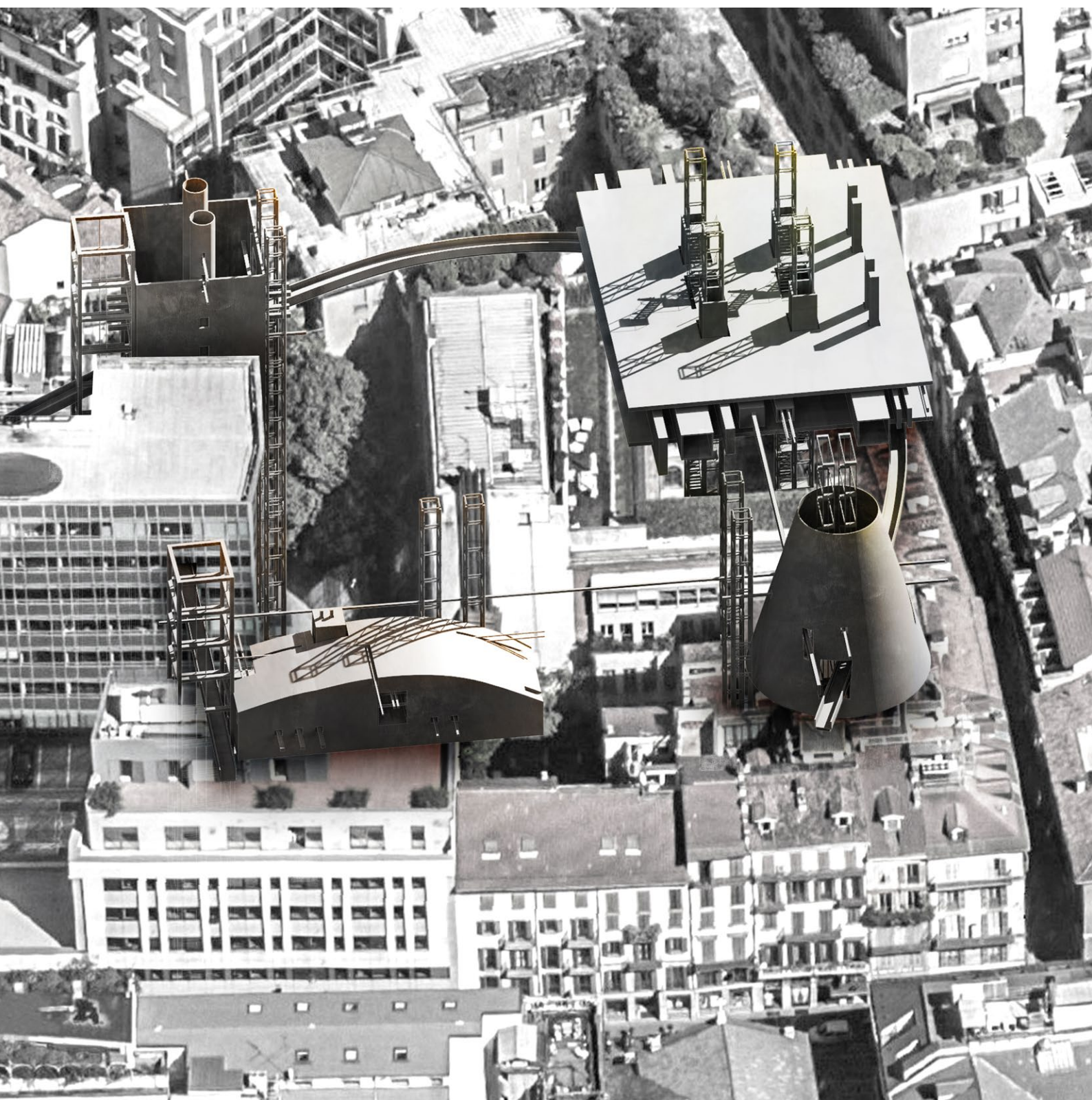


*Elevation 2*









# The Process

Mapping the Theory



-The first operation to be carried is the identification of the places where the Roman buildings were located. On this points will be lately built the Superspatial organism that takes its form from the initial layout.

-Secondly, as a base for the analysis, each of the chosen areas is studied following a chronological logic: starting investigating the original plan in relation with its context, and then the same space that it occupied from the point of view of its morphological metamorphosis through time.

This strategy is adopted for the examination of the evolution of the Void in the different periods, keeping in mind that the new project will be part of the city's Hyper Landscape, so it will necessarily interact with all the structures that occupied its place before.

**The fundamental idea is the transformation from the Unconscious sphere, into the visual and material expression of the fragments of memory of the Void. At this point, they are ready to become prototypes, and later on, Architecture. The most important quality of the interrelation of the fragments into architecture is in their condition of Urban Condenser, it happens so because the idea of intervening in the city do not simply takes place when taking into consideration a period of time, but the combination of them.**

Given their character of "interlocutor", the constructed prototypes that become Architecture, are basically mini cities which contain in itself in a compressed manner the reflex of the history, tradition, and genetics of the densified space.

Each project has as rector idea: the development of a repertoire which possibilities are complementary and explicitly related. **Milan** looks like a perfect example for carrying out such experiment.

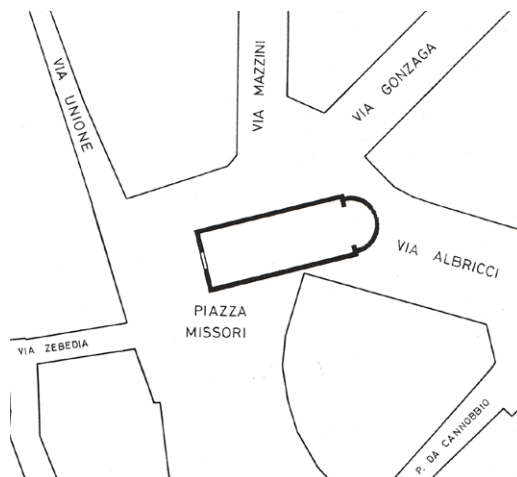
-In a process of reading and transformation, then the only activities of 'design' would be related to the further completing of the buildings by using the laws of Gestalt. This phase should be carried out keeping in mind the necessity for continuous re-lectures and the adding of functional complexity to the program. **The Void converted in Prototype becomes Program.**

This done, it would be possible to realise projects in different parts of the world, which structural and programmatic composition belongs to places without any close relation to the new location. the phenomenological re-invention of sections of cities and architectures suddenly erased from the palimpsest of the urban plan. It would be possible to print in the cities, relevant historical fragments from different cultures and theoretical approaches.

# San Giovanni in Conca

**Location:** *Piazza Missori.*

In Piazza Missori, part of the apse and crypt of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Conca are still standing, a Romanesque church reconstructed between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries on the ruins of one of the most important sites of Milanese paleochristian worship, constructed between the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. in an area of subsidence, hence the term “in conca” (low lying hollow). Deconsecrated at the end of 1700 and successively denuded and mutilated, the church was definitely sacrificed after World War II for the needs of city traffic which required an almost total demolition in order to open Via Albricci. After a recent restoration for preservation purposes, the crypt has become a display area on demand.

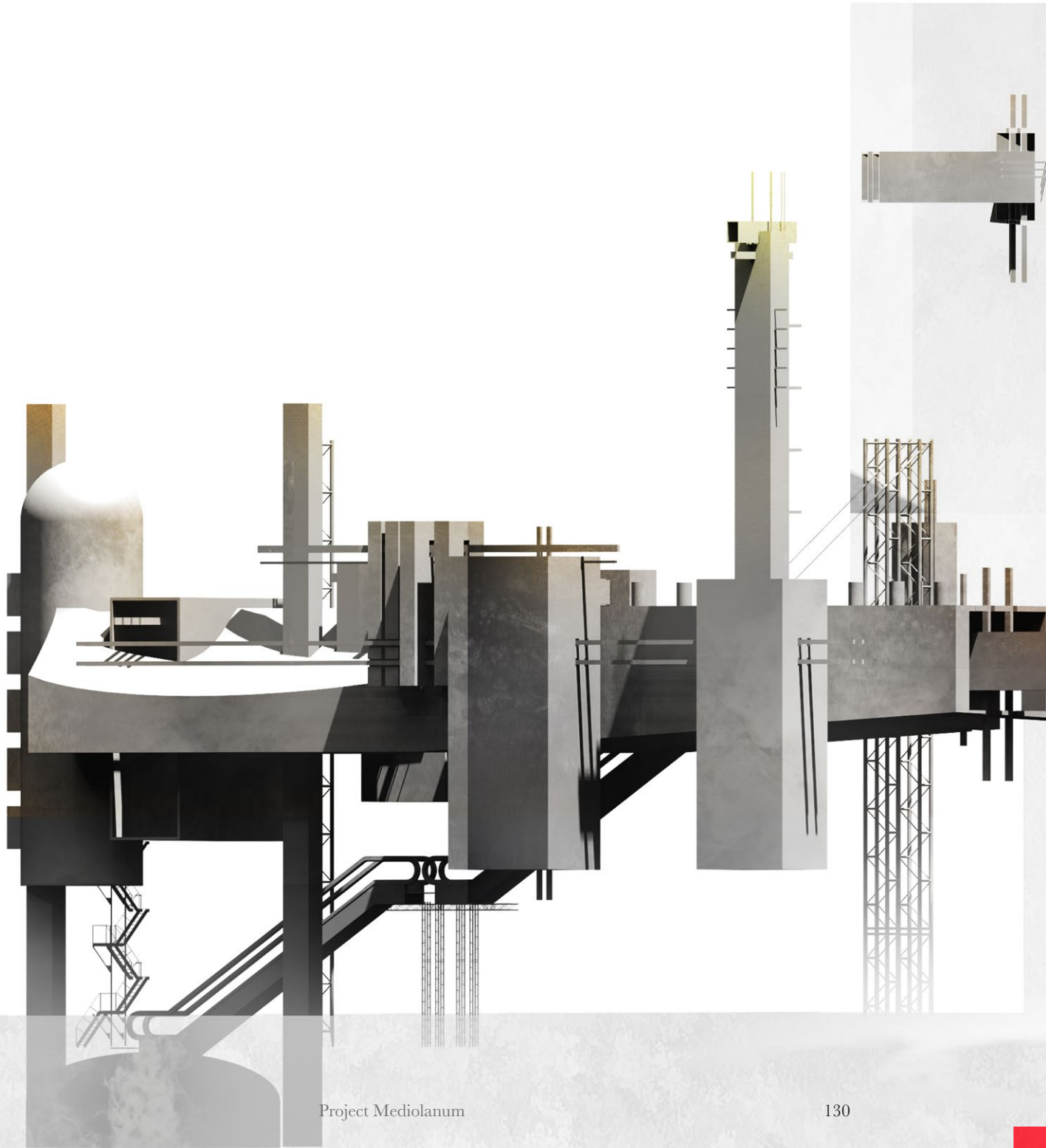


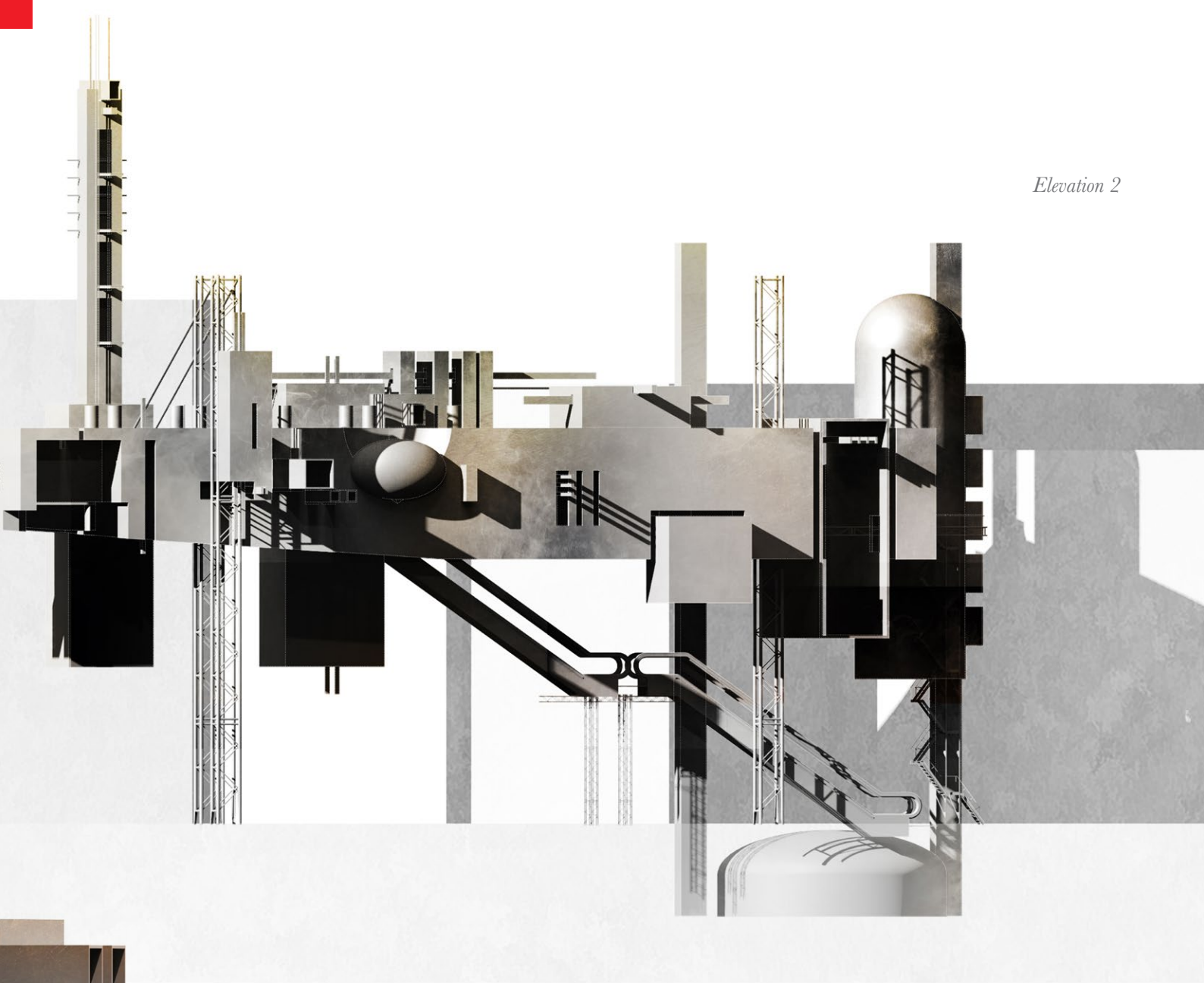
**Plan of the San Giovanni in Conca**





*Elevation 1*

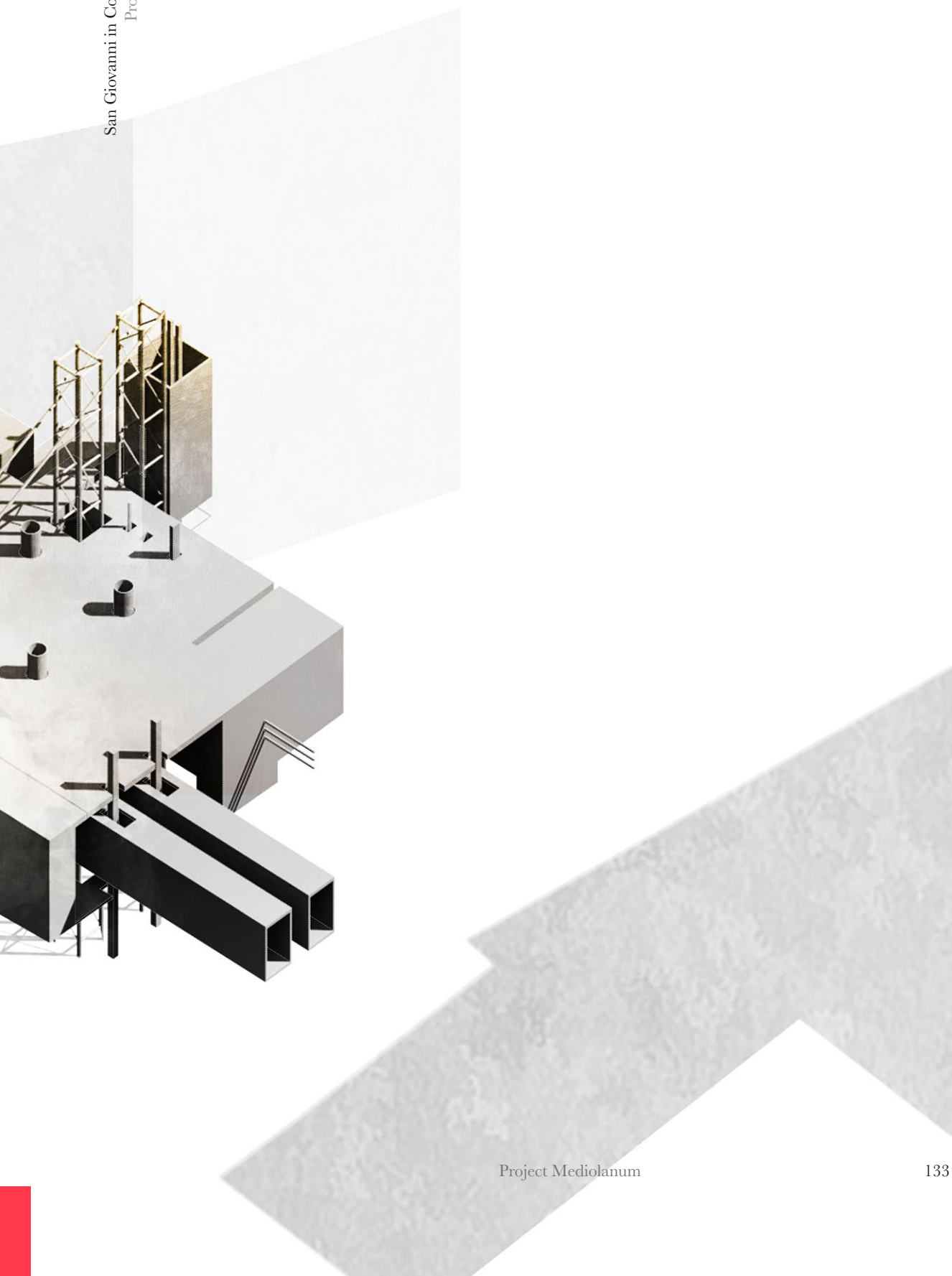


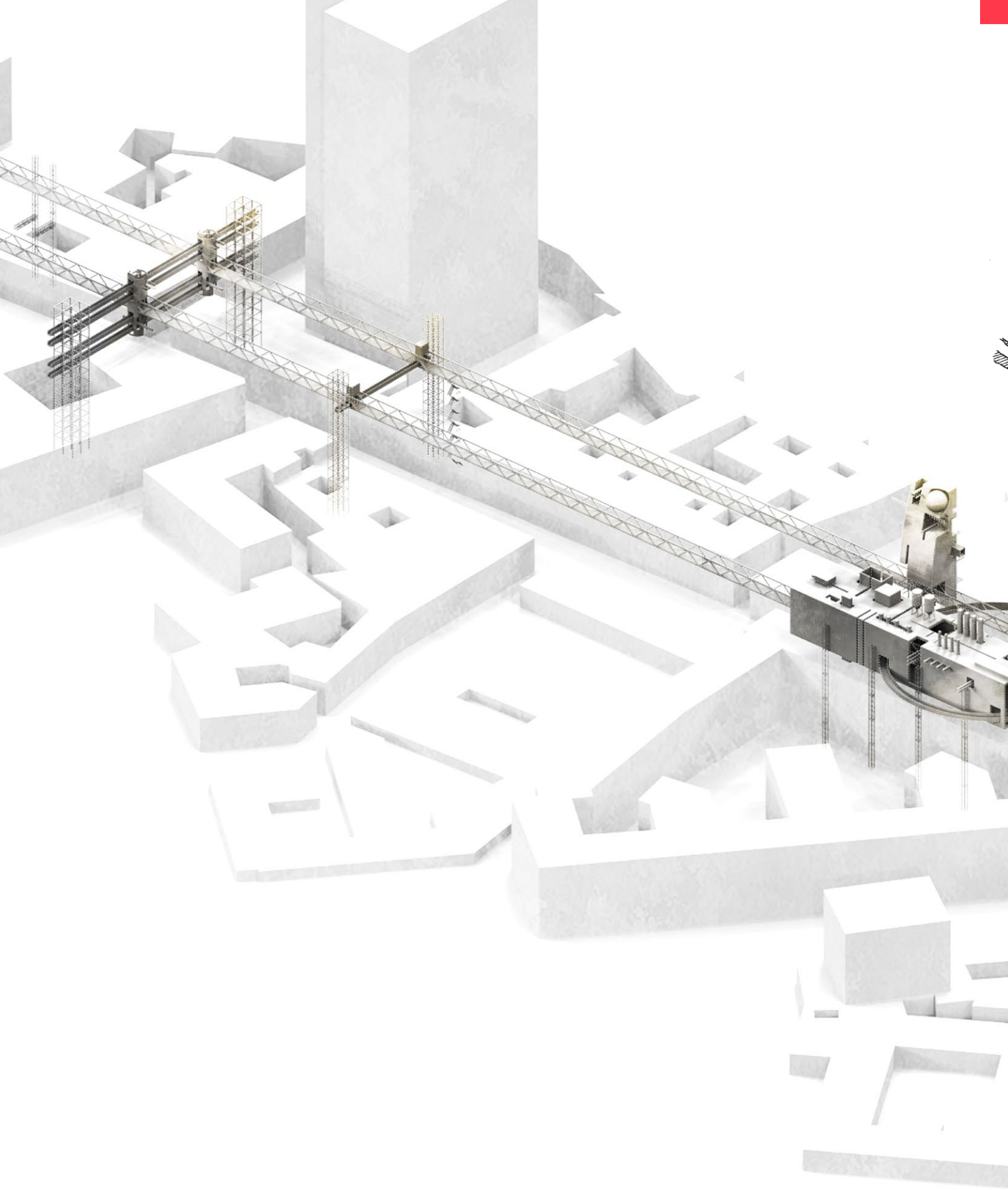


San Giovanni in Conca  
Project







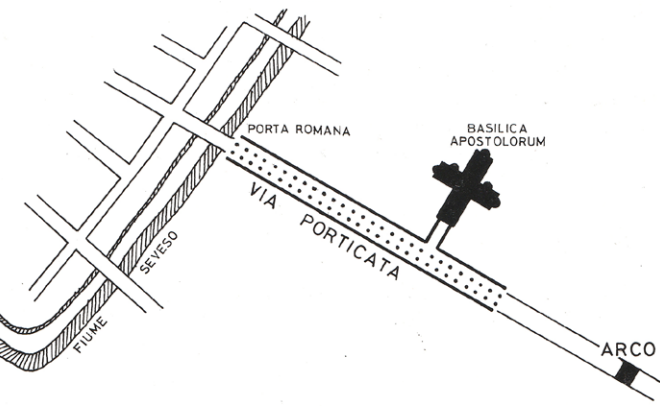


# The Porticoed Street and Honorary Arch

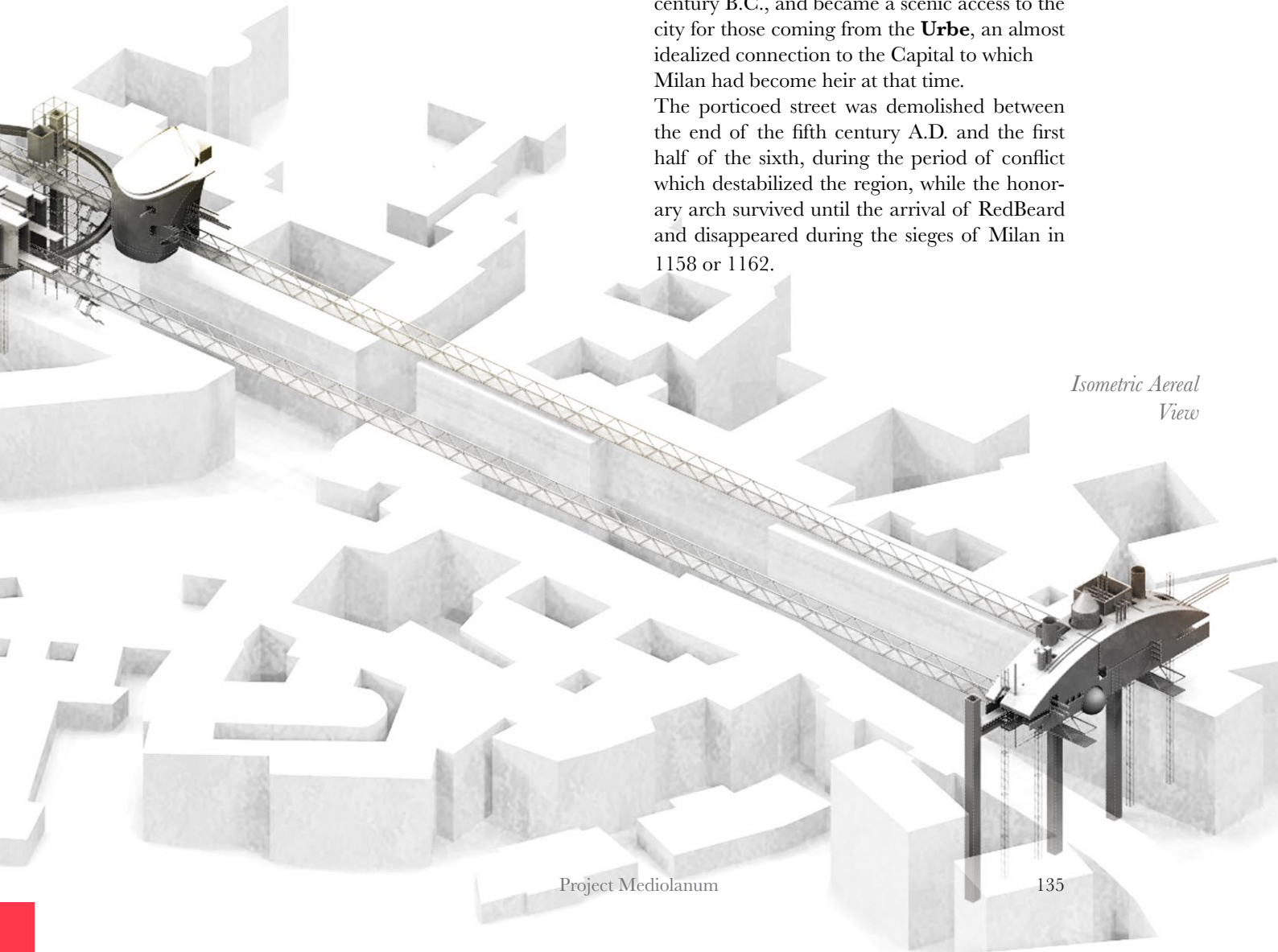
**Location:** *Corso di Porta Romana, from the Piazza Missori to the Teatro Carcano.*

During the second half of the fourth century, a monumental porticoed street and honorary arch were erected outside the city walls and can perhaps be attributed to the Emperor Gratianus (359-383 A.D.). Built along the route leading to Rome, it was the continuation of the decumanus maximus, in existence from the end of the first century B.C., and became a scenic access to the city for those coming from the **Urbe**, an almost idealized connection to the Capital to which Milan had become heir at that time.

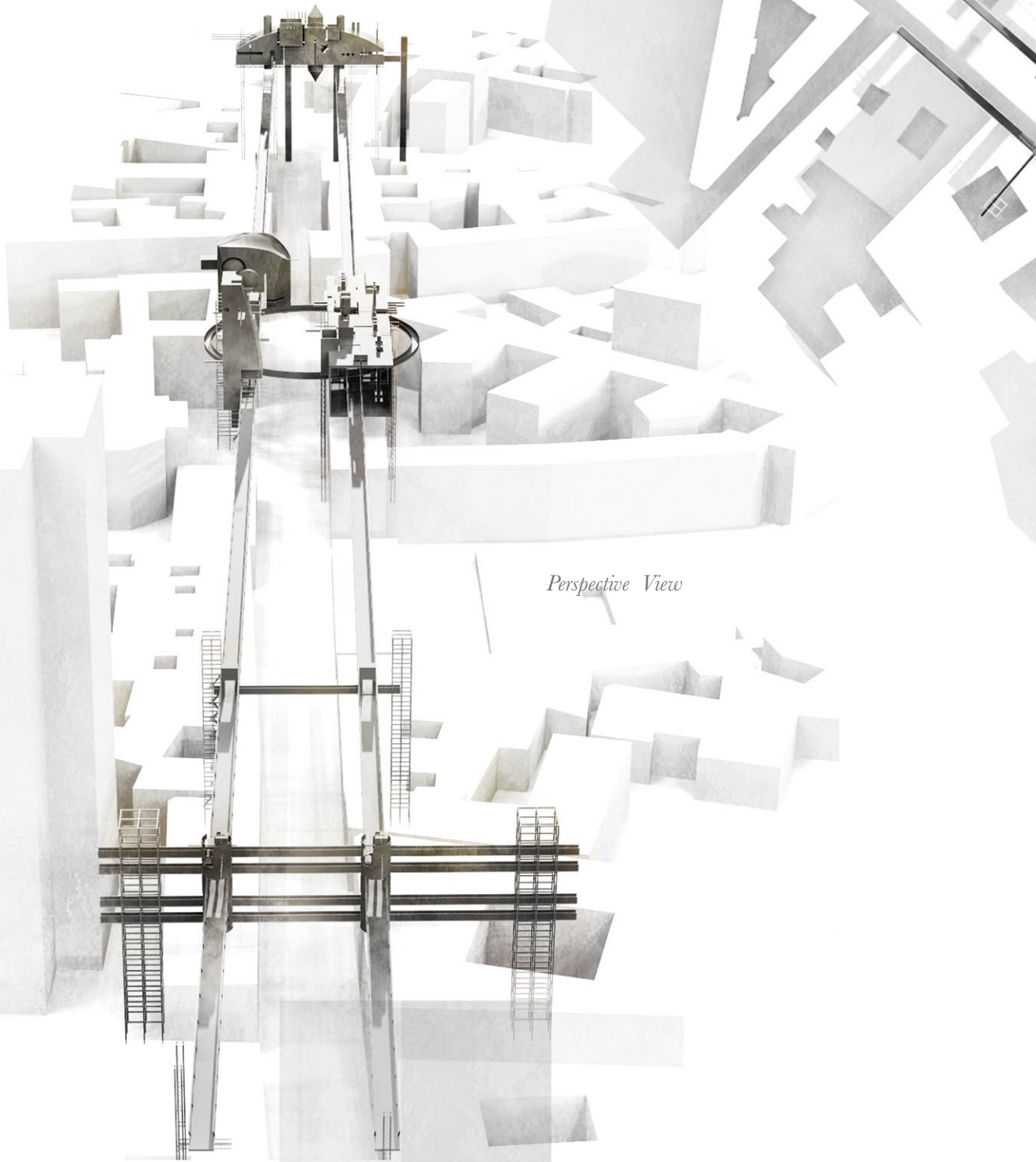
The porticoed street was demolished between the end of the fifth century A.D. and the first half of the sixth, during the period of conflict which destabilized the region, while the honorary arch survived until the arrival of RedBeard and disappeared during the sieges of Milan in 1158 or 1162.



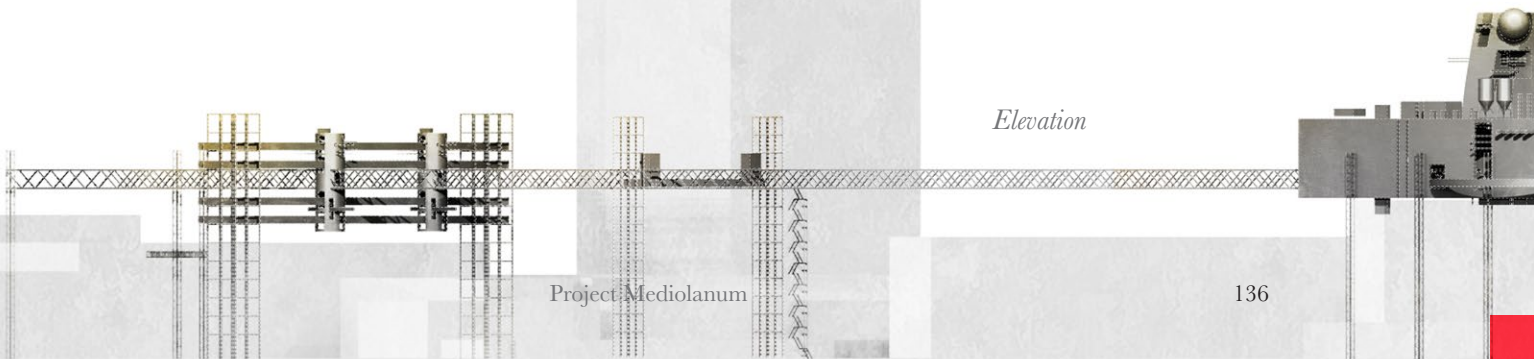
**Plan of the Porticoed Street and Honorary Arch**



*Isometric Aerial View*

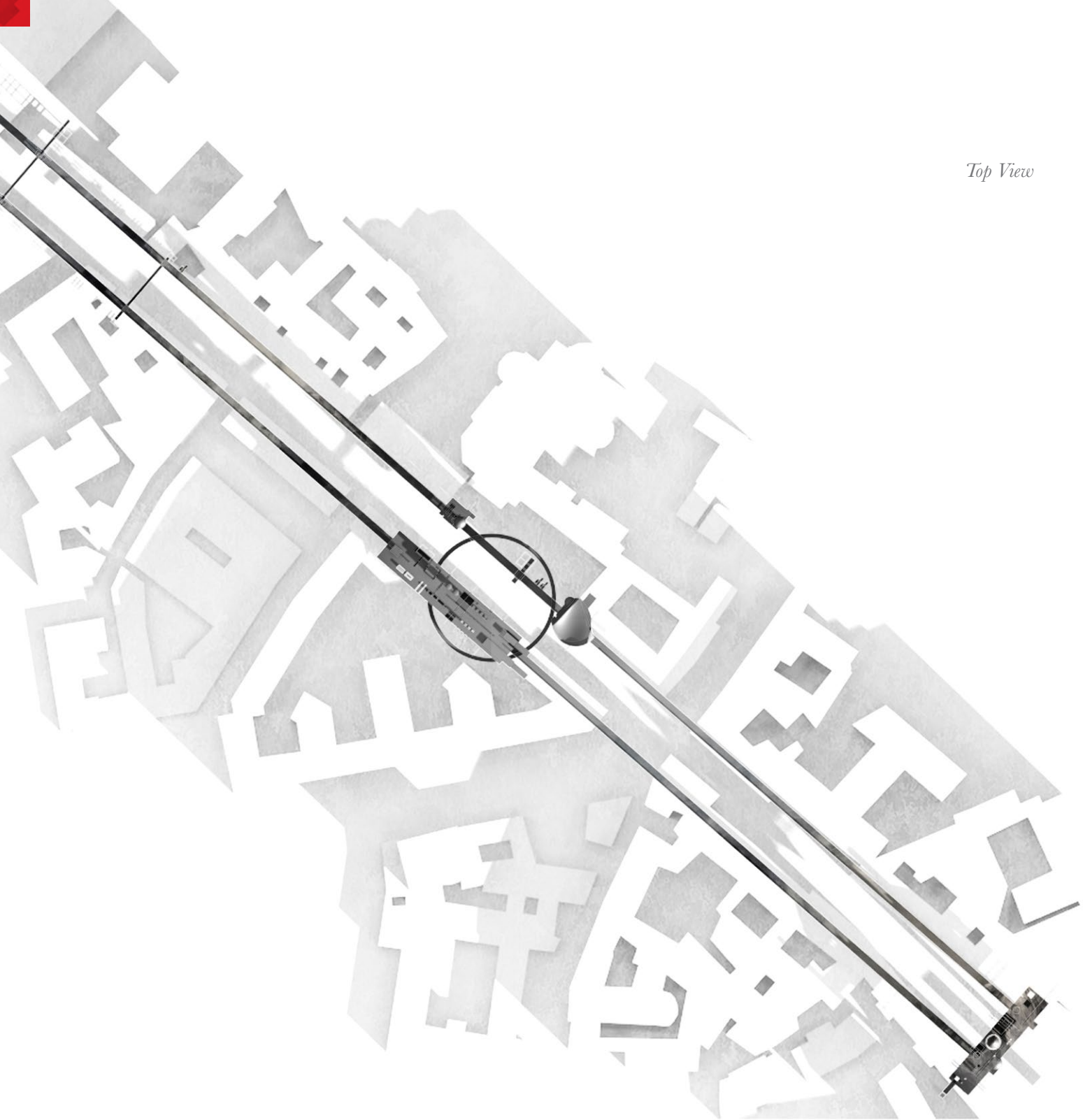


*Perspective View*



*Elevation*

*Top View*



# Manifesto

Space Theory



In the field of spatial flexibility and the generic possibilities of intervention, the city can be seen as a Palimpsest<sup>01</sup>, deformed, modified incoherent and unintentionally through history.

If the Void is at the same time the base that contains an infinite number of configurations and a field of experimentation for unlimited morphological representations; the city is the result of the inevitable process of subtraction of possibilities that appears each time a new building or urban project is added to it, reducing the possibilities of action to a finite number, and creating at the same time a red of invisible relations around any material body.

The selection of the city of Milan for the development of the analysis to be carried out and for an experimental field of action is not casual. Probably Rome is one of the cities that more clearly represents the direct relations between its archetypal past and its present, a complete exteriorisation of the Hyper Landscape that composes it. Milan on the other hand, results for me a more interesting example to be analysed, here the existence of the Roman base is in the actuality not relevant, nor urbanistically neither historically.

Milan appears to be a city that has experimented a total detachment from its past, but, as the urbanism is an always continuous and infinite process, it is possible to differentiate totally the beginnings of the urban project and its actual state. My intention lies in the rediscovery of the Roman Archetypal base of the city, and its regeneration in relation to the current context, while following the previous studies on the Void.

An analysis that would be carried in further investigations, as in the second part of this Thesis will be in understanding the implications of the urban evolution in the cities, and the relations that may appear irrelevant or invisible now, that are carried between a very strong urban artefact -that is the Roman- and the actual people who currently use the space.

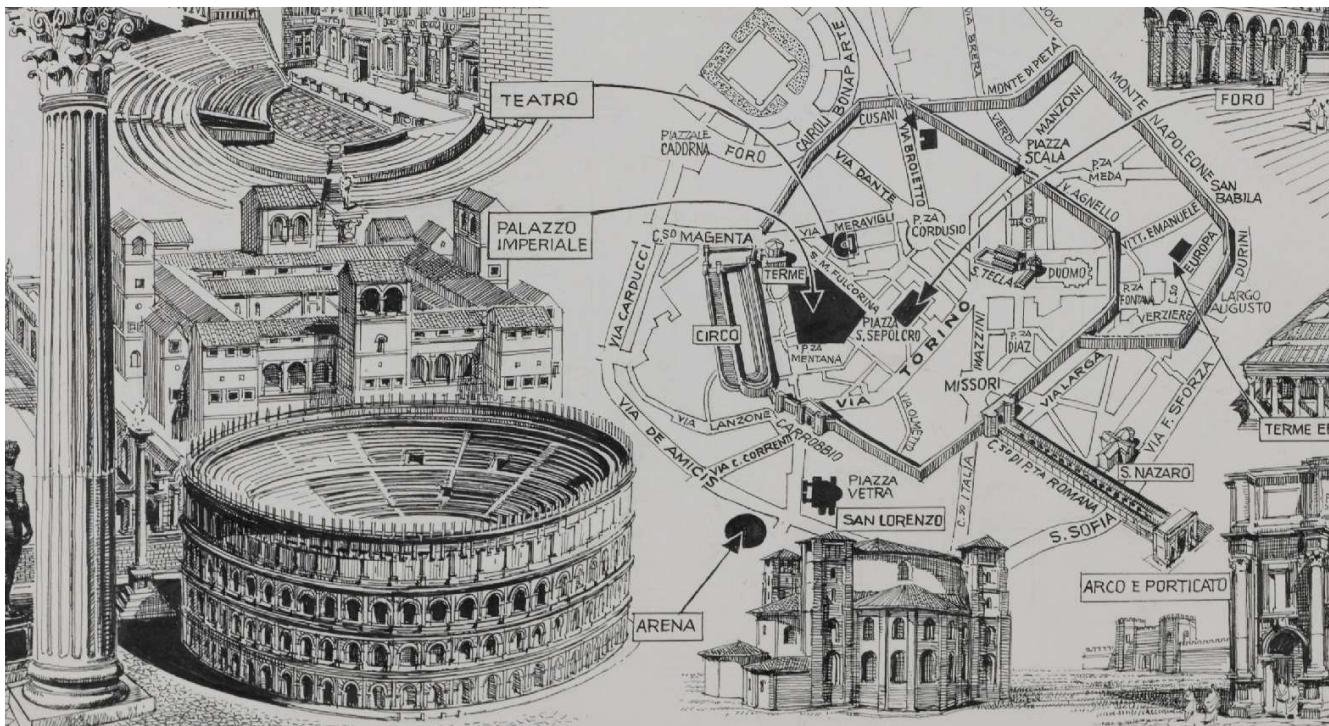
The project of reactivation of the **Roman Urban Model** is based on the essays anteriorly formed, and the analysis of the evolution of Milan thought history, more specifically looking at the transformation of the areas where the main Roman buildings were located, with special attention to the metamorphosis of the void.

There is a very important conclusion extracted from the initial research:

The matter of the buildings disappears when observed in relation to the infinite possibilities of its potential articulations with the Void that contains it. The creational method used is based on the absorption of formal and conceptual elements that escape from the limits of Architecture. The project is the conclusion of an abstract analytical sequence, that initiates in the close reading of the urban form, focusing in specific points, in which collide the cultural, social and morphological components of the place in time.

**It is not about 'form-finding', because actually the final form is not relevant, and concretely is not even a goal to get to it.**

The re-creation of the Mediolanum is pointed at the recuperation of the specific relations and phenomenological qualities which characterised each of the buildings to be materialised again.



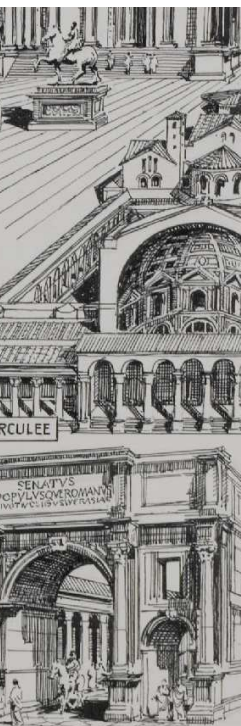
Un'ipotetica ricostruzione di alcuni dei più importanti monumenti della Milano romana ai tempi dell'imperatore Massimiano. Dario Mellone, 1985. *Comune di Milano, Musei e Istituti culturali Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli.*

*“The new time of architecture is thus that of memory, which replaces history. The individual artefact for the first time is understood within the psychological construct of collective memory. Time as collective memory leads Rossi to his particular transformation of the idea of time. With the introduction of memory into the object, the object comes to embody both an idea of itself and a memory of a former self.”*

**Peter Eisenman** defining the idea of type in its introduction to *“Architecture of the City”*, Aldo Rossi. The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts(1982).

The reading of Milano, from the point of view of its ancient structure, allows us to obtain fundamental qualities that make possible the formulation of its phenomenological essence. This portions of history, now reinterpreted inside the Milano Moderna, derives from the superimposition of former definitions of socialisation and public space over current ones, creating cultural and functional interactions that may work





homogeneously or in continuous conflict. In other words, we can speak about the conservation of fragments of the cultural context, creating a sort of **Urban Archeological Museum** over Milan, where the idea of Museum is only given by the relations of the city with its own antique reflection.

The close readings<sup>02</sup> are similar to a process of archeological rediscovery, by exposing the different layers that form the building and its relations with the Void. The project materialises after the analysis of the Void as a project, as a building. In a sort of inverse operation, by digging in the Hyper Landscape of the city, the intention is to discover the elements that the Void contains, how this specific morphology interacts with other Voids, and at the same time with the buildings that it contains.

The city of Milan is understood by taking into account Freud's essay on Architecture and space reading, that is, as an arena in which when walking through it, we could see the different historical moments of the city at the same time, destroyed buildings, former uses, like doing a virtual exploration into the subconscious of Milan. When doing this experiment, we may see fundamental transformations and radical modifications that reinforce the idea of the urbanism and the evolution of cities as a direct result of continuous, indefinite and infinite process, in which the initial structure of the city is as strong as the modern buildings that cover it.

The analysis in specific points of the city shows the group of relations and connections that we may discover in any context, from the most complex prototypes but more easily legible (the field) to those which transformation in time has completely modified their initial

structure, morphology clearly illustrated in the Roman model.

For this thesis, the analysis is developed mostly over the places where the main Roman buildings were located, finding the morphological variations of the sites during different moments of history.

The actual city of Milan is radically divorced from its Roman base. There is not a strong collective memory adopting the ancient city roots, neither in the architectonic and urbanist field it is possible to find direct links between the present and the former urban projects.

The general intention of this project is not to find answers, nor it is to try to search for the ideal urban arrangement for the city of Milan. Rather, the fundamental idea that constitutes the core of the proposal is to create questions, to interrogate the reality of the city and its inhabitants in relation with its initial ways of habitation, socialisation and general organisation. It is a very interesting exercise to confront the actual environment, in which the remnants of the antique urbanism are not visible anymore, with its older ancestor, devolving its former anatomy without necessarily "rebuilding" it.

As a general conclusion of the analysis method and project theory, the final intention lies in the reestablishing of the first and main layer that forms the hyper landscape of the city, closing like that somehow -and evidently in a theoretical way- the urban process that structures the city's evolution.

The specific system of relations of the prototypes that have been part of the city since its very beginnings, step by step transformed into the modern world, interact directly with the group of programmatic relations that defines the specific functions of what once was a Roman City.

Let's take for example the Theatre. It is translated into a system of phenomenological relations and represented by a project that takes place in a very specific location and from a unique program, but that doesn't materialize literally the characteristics of the function it speaks for; it creates the opportunities for a possible manifestation of the activities that used to be carried on in a Roman Theatre, transforming somehow the existing situation into a platform that increases its possibilities.

The final projects may be completely new structures, partial buildings, or in some cases the final morphology can be the result of a process of extraction. This is due to the fact that, for the creation of the mentioned project, the preconceived concepts of analysis and design are not taken into consideration.

The proposal is based on its connections rather than on its borders, its relations with its base and the fluid interactions with the Void containing it.

The program of a Theatre is, in the present, clearly defined by a system of functions; the operative structure, mobility axes, services, main areas, etc., are already part of the collective discourse and it is not difficult to understand and interpret the space when we are inside a Theatre.

In the current project, the before mentioned defined system of cartesian coordinates confronts the paranoiac-critical method, in a process of endless conflict, in opposition to analogies or homogeneity.

The art of absorbing in a battle -in which every single element fight for its preponderancy- each new group of functions and connections, creates at the same time an ensemble of original relations inside the project, and with the city in different scales.

Each intervention independently of its scale changes constantly the scheme of affiliation with the prototypes -the Void- around it, and this is exactly the arena of experimentation in which I put my final interest.

The built prototype -programmatically a Roman Theatre- experiences fundamental contradictions not simply with the city around it, but at the same time with the remaining rests of the original structure in the base of the Palimpsest.

Appears then a crucial discrepancy:

**The intersection of Time and Architecture in the Void.**

This conflict is a fundamental component of this thesis.

The same kind of analysis is carried out in each of the areas where the main buildings of the Roman City were located. The result is as functionally unpredictable as socially uncertain, as it stands on in the reinstallation of a hierarchical model in the city of Milan, from all the perspectives in which it used to work in the empire, that is functional, culturally, socially and politically.

Each one of the buildings created over the city will be the conclusion of the development of its primary base. The 'design process' is based on the analysis of the same kind of programs in projects especially important for the history of Architecture.

Then something fascinating happens:

**The new constructions appear as contemporary monuments in which infrastructure is a key element. The building is the intensification materialised of its archetypal program.**

The Roman City appears all of a sudden and reestablishes its hegemony in the collective memory of the inhabitants of Milan and its visitors. A retroactive interpretation of the city as if its structure never disappeared, undeniably Imperial.

The places where the Theatre, the Arena, the Gates, Walls, Thermes, etc., were located, become again central parts of the Urban organism, and become rapidly Urban Condensers, where “everything” takes place.

Each project created results in the Meta-Type<sup>03</sup> of its former program. That is to say, that the Roman Theatre, for example, becomes automatically the archetypical model of any Theatre built or to be imagined. And the same happens with the Forum Building, the Arena...

The activities we carry out daily in the city, in the buildings which accommodate them, in the case of the new city are translated into their “Supra Level”<sup>04</sup>. The citizens understand this truth, and unquestionably, the Roman compendium becomes quickly the center of the city.

As a consequence, the rest of the functions that are located out of the borders of this vertebral column loses any character. The city out of the Roman axis is transformed in not much time in a living ruin. In a retroactive manifestation of history in which finally our collective impulses and retrograde melancholy are rewarded.

At this point, the initial question marks about possible conflicts and misunderstandings are solved:

The contradiction between the modern city and the Imperial Rome disappears, we have canceled it, and in that way, we have rejected centuries of ‘evolution’, coming back again to the point which, without any doubt, is understood collectively as the only way of becoming ‘civilisation’ again, and that is, by being “Empire”.

The modern man and the roman man are not in opposition one against the other. The Roman city planning becomes once more the archetypical model to be multiplied, due to the extreme success of the Milanese case. In that way, different Empires appear once more all around Europe, like if we were part of a social experiment. Emperors and slaves.

Of course, there is an immediate consequence of the reestablishment of the Roman model:

The rest of the context, once almost homogeneously structured and functional, becomes periphery. Centrality is not a matter of zoning but an effect of program hegemony, resulting in the eventual dissolution of all small services.

Legere Architectures are not relevant anymore because there is not possible rivalry against the established hegemony of the Empire. At this point, the debate that refers to styles, materials, surfaces, inventive volumes or sustainable forces cease immediately, and Architecture becomes an invisible profession. Architects turn into spatial psychoanalysts, and their role is based on achieving the desired solution, by transforming the context from the points of view of social correlations, the city uses, fragmentation, absorption or densification. Projects are fundamentally materialised as connections, bridges, excavations, mini architectures.

Materiality is not an issue anymore, and the program is not important either. Conversely, the center of analysis and main issues to be studied are the structures of fluids, the differentiation of visuals, the time, mobility and velocity inside the city.

Importantly, the vertical connections and the possibilities of transformation of the upper level of the existing buildings and their roofs emerge as a must needed practice.

When speaking about the ground of possibilities and repercussions of the new buildings inside the city, the matter loses importance, because the truly effective form of transforming the specific live styles and habits of its inhabitants in a specific point, is determined by the relations of the given point with a parallel system of associations, in continuous conflict.

The components of the Roman City become autonomous elements with respect to the rest of the Urban layout. The spatial prototypes extracted from the close readings of the Void, are pure Architecture, and once discovered, analysed and translated into the material and retinal field, may be disconnected from its context, becoming self-governing organisms. As a conclusion of the project and the analysis theory that supports it may be conceived, over the city of Milan, a parallel representation that embodies the Roman City inserted into a HyperLandscape in which interact equally the modern city, the archeological remnants transformed into matter, and the buildings that have disappeared from the physical field.

The re-discovery of the places of memory is the base for the complete understanding of the city. The Matter loses territory against the Concept. Architecture stops being retinal for becoming social, mental, invisible.

**01.** Mid 17th century: via Latin from Greek palimpsestos, from palin 'again' + psēstos 'rubbed smooth'.

-A manuscript or piece of writing material on which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing.

-Something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form.

**01.** from Latin palimpsestus parchment cleaned for reuse, from Greek palimpsestos, from palin again + psēstos rubbed smooth, from psēn to scrape.

**02.** Close reading is a critical analysis of a text that focuses on important elements or patterns in order to achieve a deep, rigorous understanding of the text's form, art, meanings.

**03.** Self-referential abstract (after, along with, beyond, among, behind)category or class of linguistic item or unit.

**04.** Latin, from supra above, beyond, earlier; akin to Latin super over.





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