

THE ARCHITECTURE OF PERSUASION : A REINTERPRETATION OF COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR ON WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

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ARCHITECTURE

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Allison Eddy

THE ARCHITECTURE OF PERSUASION: A REINTERPRETATION OF COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR ON WILSHIRE BOULEVARD





LOCATING
CATALINA
ISLAND

ABSTRACT

This project explores the existing dichotomy between building and sign on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Spanning 16 miles long through the heart of Los Angeles, Wilshire Boulevard is comprised of a wide variety of building types ranging from art deco theaters, to modernist office buildings, to one story bungalows. The street acts as a microcosm of the ever changing, inconsistent nature of Los Angeles. Most experience this eclectic street panorama from behind the wheel of a car, interpreting them as reoccurring two dimensional objects. The only constant and repeated element in these fleeting, constantly changing scenes are the billboards which recur along the length of the street. The dominating presence of these flat advertising signs adds to the confusion of the variable range of building types, resulting in a feeling of emptiness and flatness along Wilshire Boulevard.

This thesis investigates the urban landscape of Wilshire by reinterpreting the billboard as an innovative means of architectural expression on the street. Rather than interpreting the street as problematic, and seeking to fix its problems, this thesis embraces its current state, in an attempt to assimilate design to the natural rhythms and true character of Wilshire Boulevard. The

goal is to reactivate the existing structures of urban advertising which are typically ignored or dismissed as detrimental and/or detached from the life of the street. This project reinterprets the commercial vernacular of the billboard as a series of architectural insertions which aim to resonate with the urban rhythms and architectural framework of Wilshire Boulevard, enlivening pedestrian activity on the street and occupying street front spaces.

The spatial language of existing commercial urban fabric of Wilshire Boulevard is analyzed in order to find meaning in surface and structure as well as promote public use in these spaces. The goal in doing so is to integrate art and architecture, as well as scale, neighborhood, and education, in order to bring together and integrate architecture as both sign and building. This project explores the ways in which billboards and visual signs can be experienced within the realm of the built environment as more than fleeting, empty moments. More specifically, this project responds to current conditions of the street and transforms these seemingly mundane conditions into heightened, even celebrated displays of architectural persuasion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Louisa Llaroci, for helping me to believe in the limitless possibilities of the tiny seed of an idea.

To my mom, for your inspiring strength, creativity, and continued patience and support.

To my brother, for your contagious enthusiasm for a life lived to its most beautiful and boundless potentials.

And to my dad, for reminding me always to hold ideas and dreams steady and sane with the power of instinct.





MIRAE BANK

Korea Be Inspired

3243

AIDS WALK
K-POP K-SHOT
CHAMISUL soju

Wilshire Blvd

We ♥
처음처럼
HAPPY SHAKE!
술은 남의 몫!

Wilshire Boulevard

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INTRODUCTION

[thesis statement]

[the problem]

[project goals]



INTRODUCTION [THESIS STATEMENT]

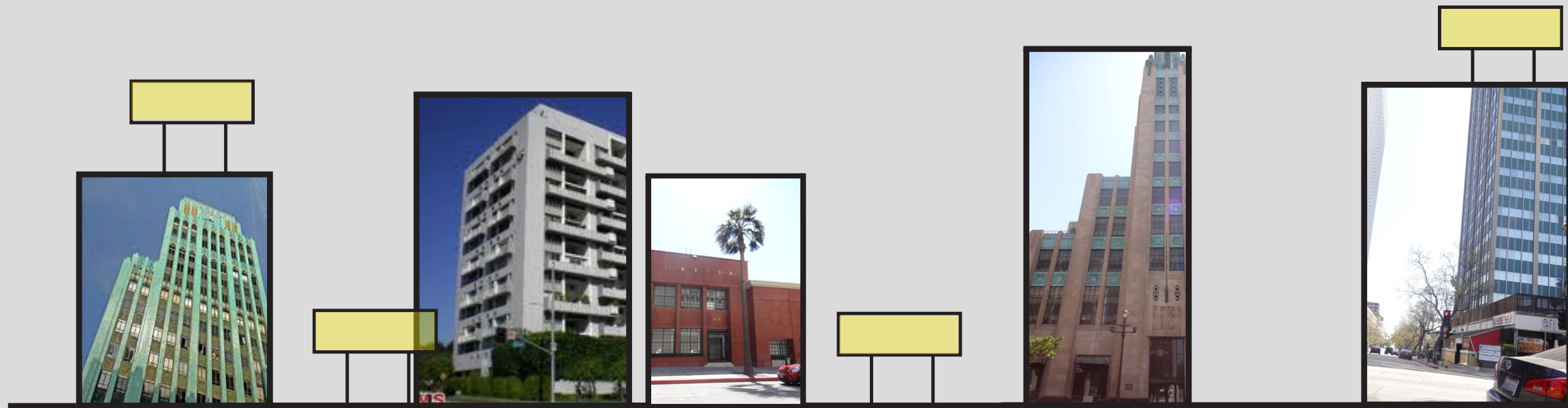
Today Wilshire Boulevard is experienced by most people from the inside of a car at about 25-35 miles per hour. This speed allows people to take in their surroundings for long enough to understand and absorb the environment of Wilshire. Because of this perspective, buildings along Wilshire are perceived as two dimensional objects or signs, much like billboards, only to be viewed for a few seconds at a time. These fragmentary scenes unfold as a movie strip, or series of photos that flash for an instant and then are gone. The buildings lose their sense of reality and three dimensionality, existing only as scenes which provide the flat backdrop for the life of the boulevard. The extreme variation of building types along Wilshire also makes for a street which is in a constant state of flux and indecision about its true identity. Various buildings along the street take on the quality and characteristics of billboards; presenting themselves as projected facades which visually capture the eye, but give little information about their internal use and do very little to address the street. The billboard, scattered along the varied urban fabric of Wilshire, exists as the only constant and repeated element. The abundance of these structures confined to a single use limits the amount of interaction, both visually and spatially at street level, and produces a sense of placelessness and a loss of identity. While driving through Wilshire, one perceives the billboard as a superficial attachment to the urban fabric, as it does

little to create spaces of significant public interaction. Because of this, the signs have a negative connotation in the public eye as they portray messages and images which are disjointed from the lives of every day people. These massive outdoor signs also lack any form of physical or functional connection to adjacent structures and nearby buildings, their existence made mundane by their repeated and monotonous nature. Despite these shortcomings, these commercial spaces could be reinterpreted in order to give their existence a renewed sense of vibrancy and expression on the street. Billboards add a layering of physical and visual interest to the dynamic streetscape of Wilshire. Not only this, but their vibrant and visually communicative nature begins to suggest the positive ways in which these signs could actively engage the public, taking the billboard from the mundane to the culturally pertinent and imaginative.

This project aims to reinterpret the billboard as a viable means of architectural expression on the street. This thesis also seeks to uncover the underlying order signs create within the varied, scattered existing urban fabric of Wilshire Boulevard and to elevate and take advantage of their visibility and directness of communication. The project explores how sign can interact with surrounding structures and urges to enhance this relationship within the built environment, specifically along Wilshire Boulevard and the greater Los Angeles area. Effectiveness of the



Wilshire Boulevard



billboard as a highly visible tool of communication in the city is accentuated in order to reconnect to the everyday life of the street. The goal is to bring life into spaces which are otherwise detached from the life of the street, and in doing so to promote a newfound dynamism between art, the commercial vernacular, and architecture within the built environment.

As both a form of commercial advertising and as an element of the street infrastructure, the billboard is a product of subliminal persuasion. These advertisements not only exude messages two dimensionally, but also add to the depth of the city infrastructure. This investigation into the architecture of persuasion draws upon its existing language as sign and symbol and its strong connection to the visual culture of the city. This project manifests itself as a center for the arts and is located on the Miracle Mile area of Wilshire Boulevard. In addition to the main location there exist additional "satellite" studio spaces affiliated with the center for the arts which are located along Wilshire Boulevard. In its entirety, the art center seeks to actively take cues from the character of billboards in the surrounding area and integrate these qualities with the design of the building. Seeking cohesion between building and sign, the project engages the public in a way which encourages direct interaction with the urban rhythms of the city. The programmatic motivation for a center for the arts stems from a desire to engage in a

project which actively pursues meaning in architecture and visual media in order to create cohesion between building and sign.

The project explores this by taking cues from billboard patterns and placement in order to create a useful and meaningful program of spaces. The process for this project begins as a search for integration along the street. It investigates the idea of the bringing together of building and sign, continuing with an exploration of how this relationship can work to invert the negative connotation of billboard to building relationships along Wilshire Boulevard. The project utilizes these negative attributes of the billboard in order to breathe life into new, positive design attributes of a building which exemplifies billboard qualities, but reinterprets this idea through interactive spatial and visual qualities, public use, and active participation in the arts.

The negative perception of signs plays a role in the design explorations as a means of asking how design can reinvent these negative associations in an effort to reinterpret them as newfound meaningful structures. This project is rooted in an exploration of the perception of sign in the built environment and investigates the place visual form has within the realm of architecture as well as art. It challenges the idea of common negative affiliations of outdoor media, and seeks to provide framework for new designs inspired by the presence of signs on the street.

SCOPE

[WILSHIRE BOULEVARD]

[AN EXPLORATION OF SIGN : LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS]





SCOPE [WILSHIRE BOULEVARD]

Spanning 16 miles long, Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles winds its way through the massive sprawl of the city, weaving through eight different neighborhoods, moving west from downtown, towards Santa Monica and the Pacific Ocean. It sets the stage for numerous varied expressions of architecture ranging from generic office building, to art deco theaters, to 1950s bungalows- all in the span of just a few short blocks. As one of the earliest main east-west arterial roads in Los Angeles, Wilshire has been a testing ground for architecture experimentation since the 19th century. Kevin Roderick describes early building types along Wilshire in the early twentieth century as, "Impossible not to notice, the enthusiastic structures were visible from all directions across the basin and hills and consciously designed as visual landmarks for the sprawling distances of the car city"(Roderick, 129). From its origin as a main thoroughfare in the city, buildings along Wilshire have been perceived as visual place makers, meant to entice those driving by in their cars. Wilshire in the late 1800s was a much more rural setting, with horses and trolley cars as main forms of transportation. The boulevard is described as being "assembled piecemeal while Los Angeles grew up from a dusty Mexican pueblo into the first metropolis to commit its future to the seductions of tempestuous double-crosses of the automobile"(Roderick,8). As the city abandoned its street car system and transitioned into a more automobile focused city, Wilshire became a main thoroughfare for cars and the street has since then remained a boulevard centered around the movement of the vehicle and how one perceives their surroundings from the inside of a car. Wilshire is

the site of the cities first automated traffic signals and by the 1930s there were over one hundred gasoline stations located along the boulevard. Beginning from its densely packed downtown to the sparser and strung out fragments of the boulevard occurring towards Santa Monica, the built fabric defines the edges of the four lane roadway, and yet still fails to endow it with a distinctive identity. Despite this seeming lack of cohesion, the monumental buildings still symbolize the impressive hopes and dreams of the city of Los Angeles and further emphasize Wilshire as a gateway to the West.

An article in the LA times recently described Wilshire as, "a lurching, piecemeal utopianism that can take you from a world-famous piece of architecture to an empty lot, from a realized ambition to an abandoned one, in the space of a few blocks... Wilshire is our boulevard of cold feet and second thoughts"(Hawthorne,2-3). The street scene is a somewhat frantic urban landscape, leaving one searching for connections and grasping for a common string to pull everything together. The eclectic assembly of architectural landmarks represents a city which is constantly willing to reinvent itself and is continually looking towards the future.

DESIGNING ON WILSHIRE

As mentioned earlier, Wilshire Boulevard is experienced by most people from the inside of a car at about 25-35 miles per hour. This speed allows people to take in their surroundings for long enough to understand and absorb the environment of Wilshire for an instant before the scene is moved from their view and the next view is then brought forth.

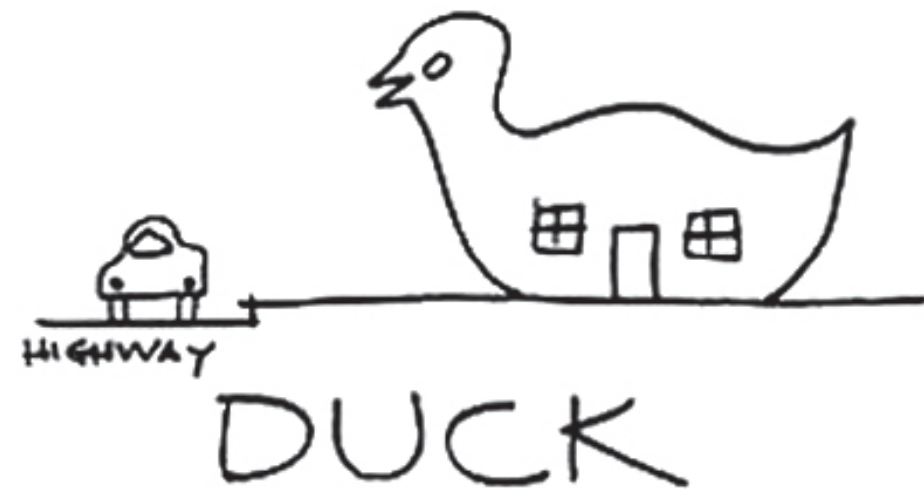
Buildings and urban spaces along Wilshire are perceived as flat objects, existing only as a series of fragile frames which provide the flat backdrop for the life of the boulevard. The extreme variation of building type along Wilshire has created a street in constant flux and indecision about its true identity. Wilshire funnels traffic through a series of neighborhoods in the city, allowing the public to easily get from point A to point B, but does not encourage one to get out of the car and explore.

As a means of interacting with the existing environment of Wilshire, the project seeks to encourage the public to interact with this building upon viewing the structure from a car, as well as upon foot. The building acts as a visual and experiential celebration of the ways in which signs add a layer of depth to the fragmentary and chaotic identity of Wilshire. Heightening this existence and bringing it to the forefront of how one perceives this building will hopefully entice the public to slow down, and take a second look. And, upon doing so experience Wilshire through a newfound lens, as a sign, a symbol of the city and an exploration of what it means to visually represent a point of view.



Similar to the Las Vegas strip, the patterns of billboards along Wilshire Boulevard act as a means of interpreting the commercial language of the street and the spatial relationship of how we experience these signs. It reinforces the question of how these signs could be incorporated into a building both visually and spatially. Architecture here is seen as sign and symbol in space as opposed to form in space. Similar to both Wilshire and the Vegas strip, signs are seemingly incongruous but the lack of uniformity and order give a sense of vitality and movement.

Wilshire Boulevard in LA is comprised of having not only signs but also a wide variety of building types which define the nature of the street. The building types range from art deco theaters to 1950s bungalows to large scale office buildings, sometimes all occurring within the span of a few short blocks. As one drives past these varied building types, it feels as if each building is an image that flashes for an instant and then is gone. On the Vegas strip, there is a far more obvious and prolific use of sign as the main attraction of a building. A description of the Las Vegas strip reveals the importance of signs on the street, "The graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape" (Venturi, 13). When you take away these signs, there is an obvious lack of place on the strip. These signs act as place makers on both Wilshire Boulevard and the Vegas strip. On the strip,

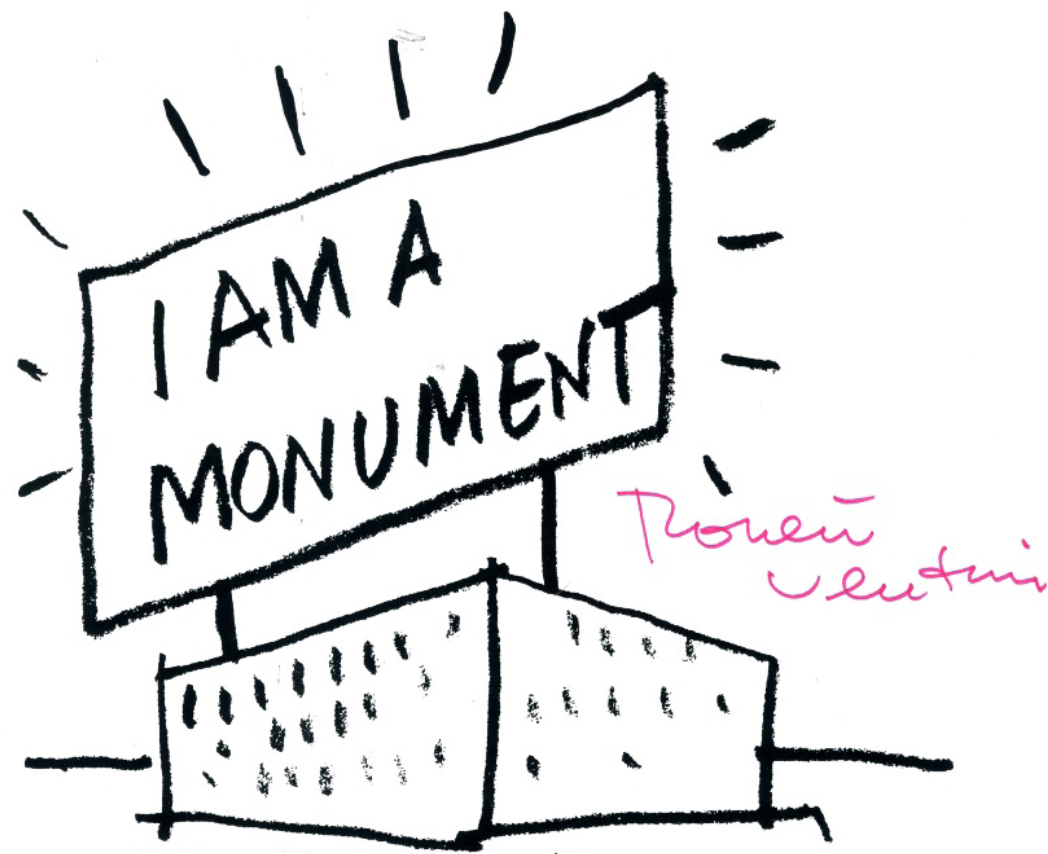


the sign exists as the primary means of defining the building aesthetics, with the actual building existing as a mere back drop to the large scale sign. And yet, both address the notion of the sign and the importance of how one perceives and reads a building from the street, as well as the ways in which the seemingly mundane could be reinterpreted into the built environment.

Venturi and Brown briefly discuss the negative perception of billboards and this idea that the commercial vernacular is a less accepted expression of architecture in society. The billboard and advertising directly impact the buildings which surround them as well as the spatial relationship to the street. Venturi and Brown are highlighting the fact that these signs add to the life of the street and should be viewed as a viable form of architecture. Modern architecture and advertisements both form a visual means of expression on the street, adding layers of character and meaning to the urban environment. They both actively contribute to the urban fabric which give character to streets like Wilshire Boulevard and the Vegas strip. The work of Venturi and Brown makes an argument for the value of understanding building as sign and the role of reinterpreting the mundane.

Decorated Shed and Duck. Venturi, Robert, Izenour Steven, Brown Denise Scott. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1972. Print.

In *Learning From Las Vegas*, architecture is described as having abandoned the use of two dimensional forms of expression. This thesis aims to put into action the idea that advertising, a two dimensional visual experience, can be integrated with the three dimensional space of architecture, in a real and meaningful way. Venturi and Scott Brown emphasize the power of signs stating, "complex programs and settings require complex combinations of media beyond the purer architectural triad of structure, form, and light at the service of space. They suggest an architecture of bold communication rather than one of subtle expression"(Venturi,9). This statement encourages the idea that signs can be intertwined with building shape and form in order to enforce a strong message. It reinforces the idea that building and sign must be considered together and that the visual power of the two dimensional form of the billboard can be extended into the three dimensional realm. Incorporating both two dimensional forms of advertising as well as the three dimensionality of architecture into a viable means of urban renewal, will a key motivator for what drives this thesis.



I am a Monument. Venturi, Robert, Izenour Steven, Brown Denise Scott. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1972. Print.

Building upon Venturi and Scott Brown's findings, Anna Klingmann further investigates the nature of commercial architecture and branding in the public realm in her book entitled, *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy*. She states, By visualizing these two contingent principles of the commodity in architecture-one pertaining to the materialist, the other to the semiotic realm-Venturi and Scott Brown expose the schizophrenic nature of the consumer object, as it applies to the building industry: projected desire(embedded in the sign) versus economic reality of the ordinary, stripped of illusion (inherent in the shed)(Klingmann,197). In this sense, the sign can signify a desire which goes beyond more utilitarian architecture and compensates for the lack of desire which is inherent in the shed. Klingmann suggests that the gap between the realm of the functional shed and that of the sign as symbol-holds great potential for designers. This thesis will explore the possibilities of bringing together architecture and sign, that is, of interweaving the materialist rational elements of built form with that of its projected communicative visual qualities.



Sign inside Building.

THE BILLBOARD

[HISTORY OF THE BILLBOARD]

[BILLBOARDS IN LOS ANGELES]

[ADVERTISING WITHIN THE URBAN FABRIC: THE RHYTHMS OF THE CITY]

[WHY BILLBOARDS? ADDRESSING BILLBOARD PROBLEM]

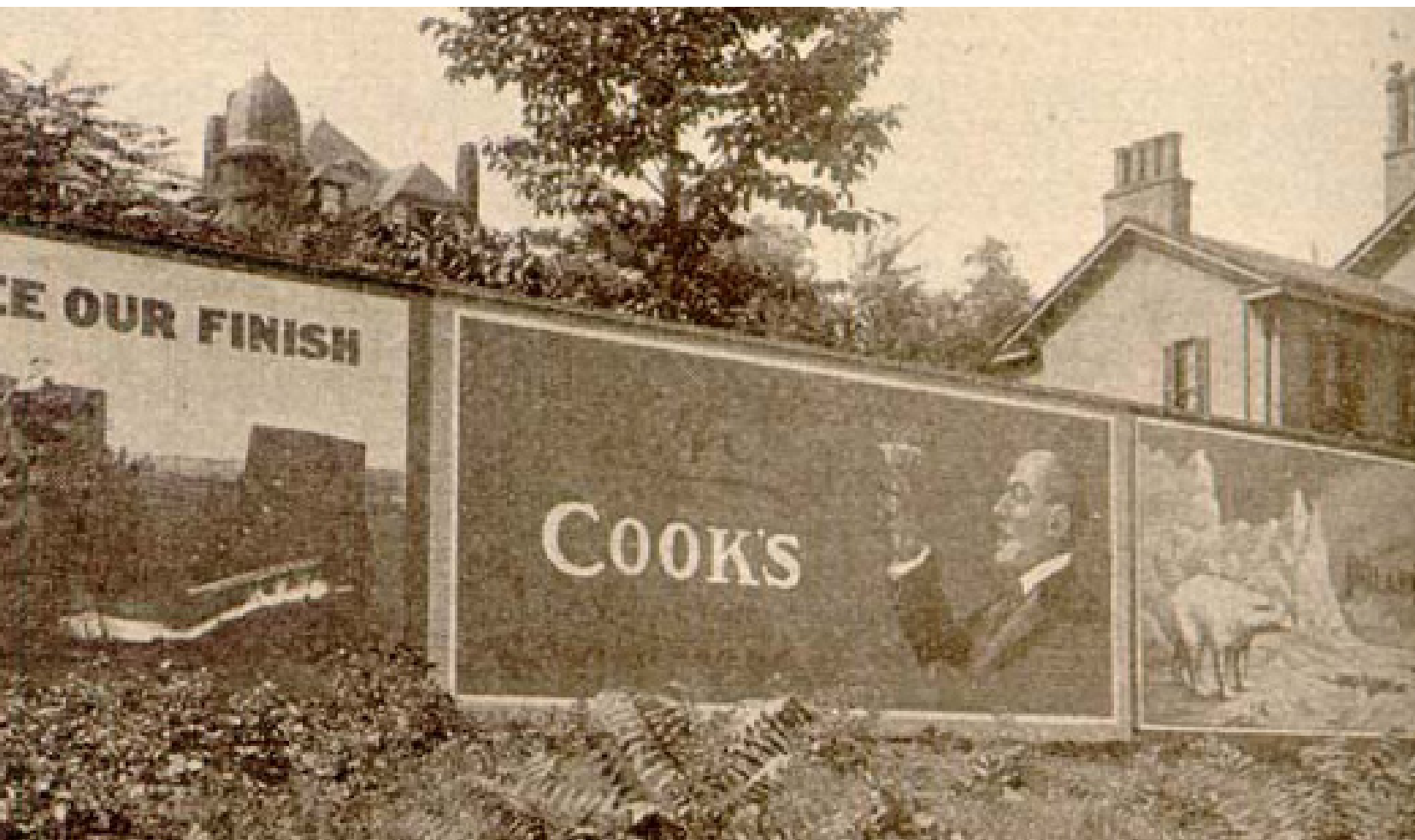


HISTORY OF THE BILLBOARD

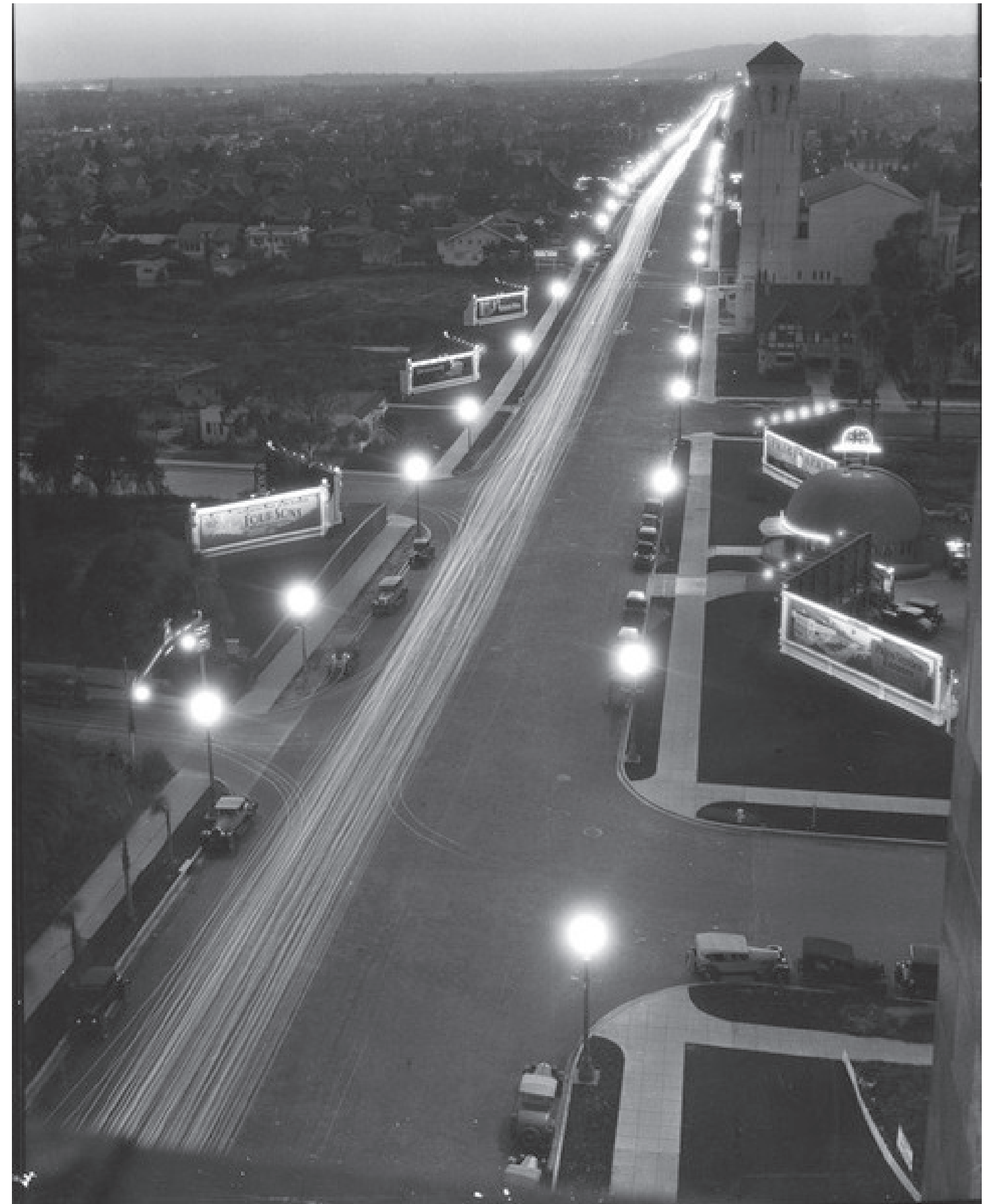
Since the beginnings of advertising in America billboards have been seen as serving as both a powerful selling medium for companies and at the same time having a detrimental impact on the environment, both built and rural. David Burnett, in his article "Judging the Aesthetics of Billboards", observes that: "Because billboards visually impact their surroundings and are 'designed to compel attention,' as one court put it, throughout their history these outdoor advertisements have been denounced as ugly, overbearing, intrusive-even dangerous and immoral"(Burnett,173). He characterizes the history of the court's ability to regulate billboard placement according to aesthetic value of billboards is a highly subjective notion. Burnett states,

"The story of billboards in America is thus characterized by an ongoing struggle between expanding industry and a resistant public"(Burnett,174). From the mid nineteenth century outdoor advertisers have challenged court rulings that have sought to regulate the design and placement of billboards according to aesthetic and economic values. The advertisers evoked their First Amendment right of free speech while resistance came in the form of civic ordinances and public opinion.

The medium of outdoor advertising actually dates back to the 1830s when P.T Barnum used painted sheets of paper to promote his circuses (Burnett,180). By the end of the civil war hundreds of "billposting" companies thrived at time when the



country was transitioning from an agrarian society to a more urban society based in consumerism. At the turn of the 20th century in urban America, billboards could be found almost everywhere and were beginning to take over the landscape. The placement of these “floating” advertisements along busy roadways and in empty lots allowed them to create a kind of structural language of their own. Burnett states, “Early billboards were often clustered in large groups, often linked end-to-end in rows and sometimes stacked on top of one another. Vacant city blocks were sometimes surrounded by rows of billboards fronting on the sidewalk; in other cases, enormous billboards were placed on rooftops and high up on the exterior walls of buildings for greater visibility” (Burnett, 182). With growing competition and greater density, the billboard, a seemingly banal and innocuous structure, began to have a greater impact on its surroundings. As far back as 1908, the public reacted to the proliferation of these outdoor advertisements negatively. Burnett sites a commentator who states, “there is a strong crusade in full swing all across the country against the further maintenance of billboards and signboards” (Burnett, 183). The perception was that the structures were obtrusive, blocking views of the landscape and even offensive in seeing their message. It seems as though this negative attitude towards the billboards is almost ingrained in the minds of American’s today. At the same time, the billboards were a topic of popular interest, even subject to humor, thus alluding to the idea that perhaps these signs are not purely negative in their nature.



BILLBOARDS IN LOS ANGELES

As in major cities throughout the country, civic authorities in Los Angeles enforce billboard regulations and the general public is also very conscious of their increasing negative effects on the city. But as stated by Bryan, because of its visual and consumer culture, "Los Angeles has an especially ambivalent relationship with billboards-on the one hand, the city is a critical test market for advertising technologies, and such signs contribute to its lively, eclectic visual culture. But billboards are also decried by many who view them as a

blight" (Bryan,2). As one of the most visible symbols of consumerism, these outdoor advertising structures exist as part of the identity of LA. As a dominant and representative emblem of visual culture of the street, billboards hold great potential for further exploration of their role as urban place makers and points of public interaction. Billboards are perceived as part of the urban fabric of LA and therefore, should be given the opportunity to explore their architectural potential.

Recently many attempts in the city can be found to make use or exploit the



billboards as something more than an instrument of selling and urban blight. They have been described as, “fertile territory for artists interested in investigating the ways in which public space is produced (and consolidated) in relation to commercialism” (Bryan,1). In a 2008 article in Artforum, Julia Bryan-Wilson highlights the fact that artists see the billboard as a way to make subtle commentary on the commercial nature of these billboards in the city. One such artist is Mike Mills who uses the billboards to send blatant messages to the public. As seen in one of his installations, “the cops are inside us” is seen on the billboard with Helvetica lettering and a light pink background, symbolizing a simple and direct way to suggest the power of visual communication and advertising and the effect it has on the public.

The billboard here provides a means for the artist's message to the public about civic bodies of surveillance. Or as Julia Bryan suggests, “the words could be taken as a warning about punitive force of the super ego” (Bryan,2). In another example of the appropriation of this advertising medium, The MAK Center for Art and Architecture's project “How Many Billboards? Art In Stead” featured large-scale artworks commissioned throughout Los Angeles. Artists have responded to this very public means of visual expression and are addressing the ways in which powerful visual means of communication in art could take the place of the commercial messages seen today on billboards. Also, in contrast to most other cities, a majority of billboards in LA are actually hand painted, likening these seemingly mundane street signs to a form of high art (Stewart). These art projects raise the question of just who public visual space belongs to and the idea that if billboards do exist in the public realm, they possess the opportunity to give back to the public. Today the billboard is seen as a visual nuisance because it does not activate the community in a meaningful way. These artistic reinterpretations of the billboard suggest its presence not just as an outdoor gallery, but as a work of art in and of itself. These projects take advantage of the power of signs as a communicative tool, with the directness of their messages, a highly visible location, and the strength they possess in activating their surrounding space. These artistic forms of visual communication are raised above the urban fabric and yet also embedded and attached to the character of the street. This relationship, coupled with the reinterpretation of the signs as a form of art, heightens the billboard's



Art installation on billboard. <http://mikemillsmikemills.com/graphics/the-cops-are-inside-us-poster/>



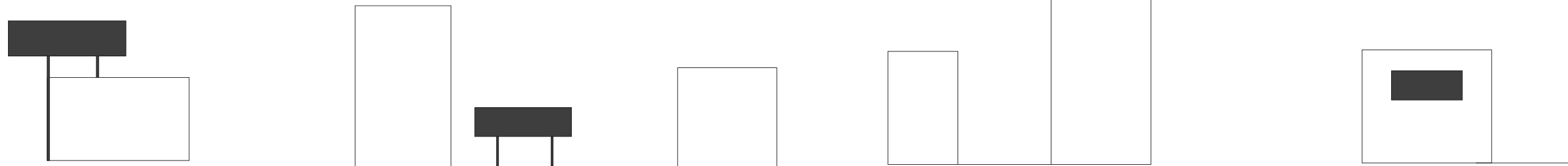
Art installation on billboard. <http://www.howmanybillboards.org/>

ADVERTISING WITHIN THE URBAN FABRIC: THE RHYTHMS OF THE CITY

The placement of billboards along Wilshire Boulevard presents a unique urban condition where their role as mediators between commodity and viewer and between the flow along the street and built edge can be studied in order to understand the role of architecture within this dynamic setting. Billboards on Wilshire represent a way of seeing and internalizing movement along the street. The Miracle Mile, a portion of Wilshire which is known as the "mecca" of art deco architecture, exists also as a destination for art seekers as it is home to the "museum row". Aside from the museum fees, the viewing of art inside the interior of these institutions is parallel to the viewing of billboards on the street. Our reading of the street is similar to how one might interpret a collection of art pieces in a museum; each work possessing its own statement, and yet when seen all together there is a sense of rhythm and connection between the pieces. In her article, "Advertising and the metabolism of the city: urban space, commodity rhythms" Anne Cronin argues that the placement of advertisements actively carves out spaces within the urban environment. Actively participating in our daily rhythms, advertisements become nodes, functioning as visual markers that engage in our everyday movements and routines. Mapping various patterns of human movement throughout the city, advertisers strategically place the billboards in response. Movement plays a large roll in how we

internalize the visual character of the billboards, building facades, and the nature of the street.

Cronin claims that outdoor advertising "aims to tap into the rhythms of the city and the people who move around the city to create a biographical dialogue-a rhythmic hybrid-linking the rhythms of commodity innovation and commodity promotion with the rhythms of the city and the rhythms of people in city space"(Cronin,627). Cronin refers multiple times to a rhythm of the city, which we can interpret as the natural, and habitual movements of people throughout the span of a day, and how these ads tap into those rituals in order to optimize public exposure. The potential along the Miracle Mile on Wilshire Boulevard, to exploit these rhythms, through human interaction and usage, adds a crucial element to the perception of the sign and its role on the street. This project seeks to tap into these billboard rhythms and connect the sign back into the public realm through the power of visual communication. How we move through spaces and how we perceive them visually is a crucial point in understanding these advertisements and the possibility of their adaptation into the language of the street and the expansion of their use in the public realm.



Los Angeles Billboard patterns

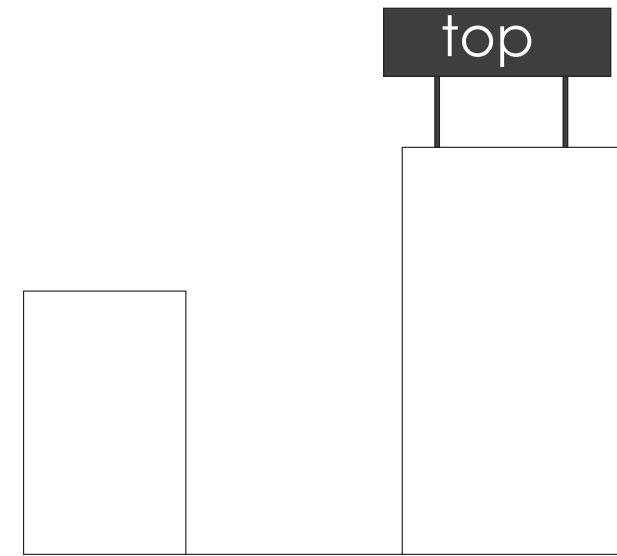
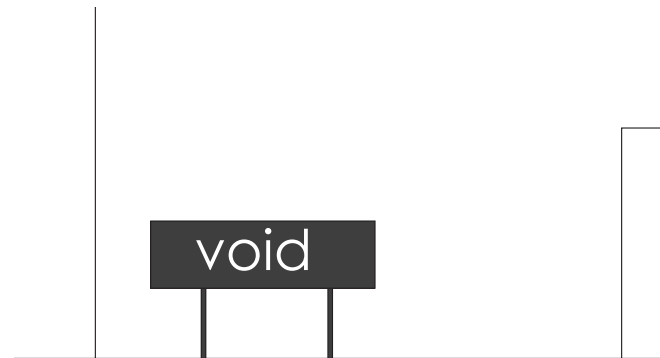
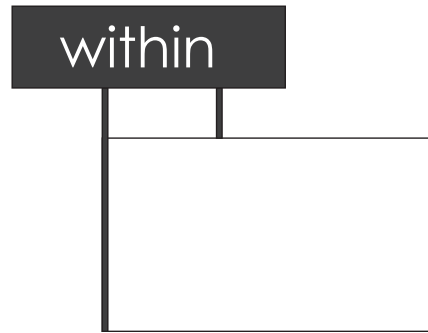
WHY BILLBOARDS?

As I searched for consistency and patterns on Wilshire and continued to explore urban conditions on this street, I became interested in signs and studied outdoor media responses to the environment. The project begins with an analysis of billboards which exist as the common thread on Wilshire, weaving together its many fragmentary qualities.

These commercial spaces provided a point of interest for the project in terms of how they communicate with their surroundings and how their placement reflects the movement and rhythms of pedestrian and traffic flow. These signs allude to how new possible design reinterpretations of commercial vernacular could approach

display with a sense of vibrancy and expression on the street. Their visually communicative nature begins to suggest how visual interactions could coincide with physical structure and begin to invoke spatial responses.

This project aims to develop a design based on the existing conditions of Wilshire Boulevard and incorporate these characteristics into the spatial qualities of the design. Through embracing this surrounding urban environment, specifically the abundance of signs in the area, one of the goals of this project is to seamlessly coincide with existing rhythms in order to heighten and celebrate these conditions.



THE SOLUTION IS IN THE PROBLEM

Outdoor ads as they exist now are a part of the texture and movement of the city and Wilshire, but are also seen as a nuisance to the public. To many, the signs are off-putting, as they do not provide any tangible or meaningful public interaction, and are constant reminders of a society deeply rooted in consumerism.

By responding to the abundance of billboards on Wilshire as part of the unavoidable media driven culture of Los Angeles, the project aims to show

how their layering within the city adds depth and creates rhythms on the street. Not only this, but also how the visual message they convey can be further utilized as a meaningful expression of individuality, cultural relevance, and spatial experience. This project will attempt to explore the positive ways that media and two dimensional display could actively engage the public, taking cues from outdoor advertising, and transforming it from the mundane and irrelevant to the culturally pertinent and imaginative.



Billboard protests. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/06/us/06billboard.html?_



Billboard reuse. <http://stephenglassmanstudio.net>



Billboard art installation. <http://www.howmanybillboards.org/artists.html>

METHODS

[THESIS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES]

[SITE CRITERIA]

[DESIGN METHODS]

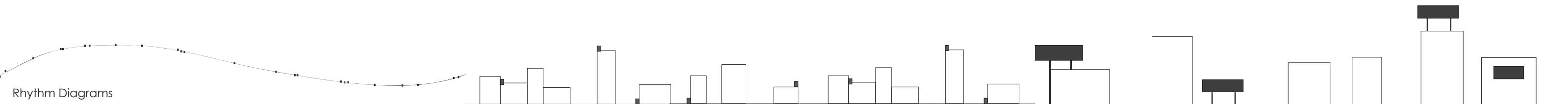


METHODS [THESIS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES]

Wilshire Boulevard still remains today as a main thoroughfare of the city, and yet, it still lacks a sense of identity. Billboards in this setting function as both an advertising element as well as markers of place. A closer look at these outdoor advertisements reveals their potential to activate the street through the power of visual messages and signs as well as their structure embedded in and elevated above the city. This thesis seeks to find cohesion within the relationship between the built environment and the commercial vernacular, specifically through the coming together of architecture and billboard advertising along Wilshire Boulevard. The billboard will be viewed, not just as a two dimensional surface, but also as a spatial form that exists as an urban marker and a potentially occupiable space. Part of the goal of this thesis is to show that while these outdoor advertisements often lack in obvious connections to their context they do in fact add a dynamic quality to the street which can begin to suggest possibilities of new spatial interactions. These relationships will be accentuated and brought to the forefront as vital elements of this urban experience. The goal of this thesis is to approach an understanding of the billboard as an urban place maker, by means of mapping, and noting billboard placement patterns along the street. Another goal is to further develop a connection within the urban fabric between sign and building, and in doing so establish a series of typological conditions where sign relates to

building. This thesis will use these newfound understandings of building and sign relationships in order to explore the transition from two dimensionality to three dimensionality and strengthen the architectural potential of creating visual messages within the built environment.

Through the design of a center for the arts, this thesis seeks to reveal a possible strategy for the integration between exterior media and built structure. The selection of art gallery design stems from a few aspects which relate to both site selection and overall programmatic possibilities. First is the idea that the art within the gallery, a two dimensional form of visual communication, could lend itself to a number of culturally relevant interactions with outdoor advertisements, further revealing how the ads interact with external and internal functions of the building. Second, the building is located in an art centric area of Wilshire Boulevard which would benefit from a community based art gallery and studios. And lastly, museum and gallery design is a relevant and highly debated topic in current discussions within LA's art and architecture community. A gallery and art studio which also integrates outdoor advertising would be able to add a layer of depth to this discussion, investigating the question of just how buildings can relate to billboards through an exploration of how gallery design can relate to art.



SITE CRITERIA

The Wilshire Center for the Arts is situated in the Miracle Mile area of Wilshire Boulevard. Specifically, the site is situated in an area of Miracle Mile called "museum row". As suggested by the name, this area is characterized by a cluster of museums and galleries. Across from the site is the La Brea Tar Pits and Page museum, directly next to the site is the Craft and Folk Art Museum, and also across the street is the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The criteria for site selection was that site to be highly visible, located in an art centric area, and possess some kind of connection to signage. Crucial to the selection of this site is that, much like the importance of a billboard, there is visibility on multiple sides of the building in order for the structure to read from multiple directions by pedestrians and drivers. It was also a necessity of this site to possess a billboard either attached to it placed in close proximity. Because the site currently exists in direct contact with a billboard, the new structure can then also begin to

incorporate the sign into the basis of its design. Or, perhaps not incorporating the sign, which also formulates as a conscious design decision. The building serves as a beacon or landmark for the gallery, signaling to the public about the energy and creative projects taking place within. The main building functions as a center for the arts, however there also exists a series of satellite studio spaces related to the billboard typologies along the street. The public will be given free access to this gallery space in an attempt to actively engage the public and further promote the arts within the area. These sites are not necessarily located near the art center, but scattered throughout Wilshire. Their location coincides with an analysis of billboard typologies and their placement in relationship to the street. They also serve as beacons to the public, signaling sites of public interest and creativity. This site will set the stage for an analysis of exterior conditions of the street as well as interior functions of the building.



DESIGN METHODS

Design will begin with an analysis of the billboard typologies and system of movement along Wilshire. This network of billboards along Wilshire will be analyzed in relation to the linear quality of the street as well as in relation to the built fabric of Wilshire. A driving force behind the concept of this building will be to reinstate this idea of a public art gallery which is actively engaging the public and visually communicating exhibitions and projects. Not only this, but studio classes available to the public at the gallery will further promote a sense of active public engagement with the arts and emphasize public interaction with outdoor billboards. In design phases, this thesis will investigate the possibilities of relating the building structurally and visually to commercial ads and strive to push the limits of

how billboards relate to the built environment.

The billboards along Wilshire will be analyzed in terms of their relationship adjacent buildings in order to indicate possible sites for design. This will involve a careful documentation and understanding of the various typologies of billboards. It will analyze the ways in which the billboard operates not only in a visual manner, but also spatially within its urban surroundings. Although these advertisements are seemingly mundane to those passing by, they do in fact possess spatial ramifications which exceed their two dimensional messages. The first step in this process will be to create a mapping of the street in terms of where these billboards are located and how their presence adds depth to the street and built environment.



Sign Placement Along Wilshire

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

[PROGRAM]

[CASE STUDIES]



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS [SITE ANALYSIS]

The Wilshire Center for the Arts is perceived as a reinterpretation of signs partially through the ways that the gallery and studios actively engage with public media and builds upon the complexities of experiences the visual form both two dimensionally as well as three dimensionally. The site is located on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Stanely Avenue and is situated directly next to the historic Craft and Folk Art Museum as well as the La Brea Tar Pits and George C. Page Museum. This eclectic mix of cultural institutions provides an appropriate and yet challenging context which build upon the existing public art scene.

The site is located on a corner lot, making it a prominent location with high visibility to those passing both by foot and in cars. Currently, the site is occupied by a mid century office building which at present does not contain any occupants. The site itself possesses a sign on the roof of the building, making it an optimal site to begin a project which considers the design possibilities of either interacting with signs, taking over the sign, or reinterpreting the sign altogether, as a building which represents the notion and idea of billboards on Wilshire Boulevard and the greater Los Angeles Area. The corner location, and proximity to art related activity make this site an idea location for an art center which strives from an experimental expression on the street,



La Brea Tar Pits



LACMA



Architecture and Design Museum



Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

PROGRAM [a center for the arts]

The selection of this site on The Miracle Mile is both a response to the local arts district, and to the larger infrastructure of commercial vernacular along Wilshire Boulevard. Drawing upon the visual role of the billboard as a communication device, and its spatial role as an urban place marker, the program for this design will take form as a Center for the arts. Specifically, the Wilshire Center for the arts will act as a public facility for people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the arts. This juxtaposition of visual and structural means of expression will work here to challenge the lifelessness of the billboard by activating it as a showcase of artistic display and active learning. Spaces for students to learn and make, will act also as spaces to display their work to the public and engage the public. The users of this building range from young children to older adults. Work from all studios and all levels of experience will be put on display in the gallery spaces throughout the building. The program will consist of areas of study in fine arts, photography, and graphic arts, with an emphasis on integration between these areas of study as well as integration with the public. The school will adhere to the visual culture of Wilshire-utilizing public means of display to public and involving the community

in various art related events and exhibitions. The users of the school will include the local community and the public at large, engaging them as part of the vibrant and ever present arts culture in Los Angeles.

Local residents will participate in the gallery showings, art walks and public classes. Local artists will also utilize the gallery spaces, taking part in exhibitions and project reviews for studio work. Tourists will have the opportunity to attend school events as well as access to all gallery showings. A focus of this gallery and art studios is to not only educate students on the formal principals of art and design, but also to engage the public to the creative process, and further develop the conversation of art in relation to display and how this Center for the Arts is perceived from both visually, and experientially.

Another crucial element of user participation in these spaces will be to incorporate this idea of using the commercial vernacular in order to encourage all users to step out of their car and actively engage in these spaces. It will encourage the public to take a second look at these spaces and question the placement of billboards along Wilshire Boulevard. Users will be encouraged to experience the building not only as sign but also as meaningful and inhabitable spaces.



PROGRAM

In an effort to enhance peoples lives, and promote active learning, The program will take form as The Wilshire Center for the Arts which will provide a space for people of all ages and all backgrounds to experience and develop skills in the arts. The art center will provide extensive youth art programs which will take place year round and provide an outlet for youth in the area to develop artistic skills.

The art center will also offer night classes for those working 9 to 5, as well as classes offered during the day. This art center will also host a variety of art related events throughout the year as well such as exhibitions and traveling

gallery shows. The range of users and public participation in the building promotes constant use and activity, thus advertising this building as a space where people are actively engaged in creating and participating in the arts.

This program seeks to counteract the irrelevant qualities of billboards through active learning and creating which engages with the public in a meaningful and useful way. The constant uses of this building, whether it be the night classes, day classes, gallery showings, or large installations, reinforce the notion of movement and the refusal of this building to take on any static qualities.

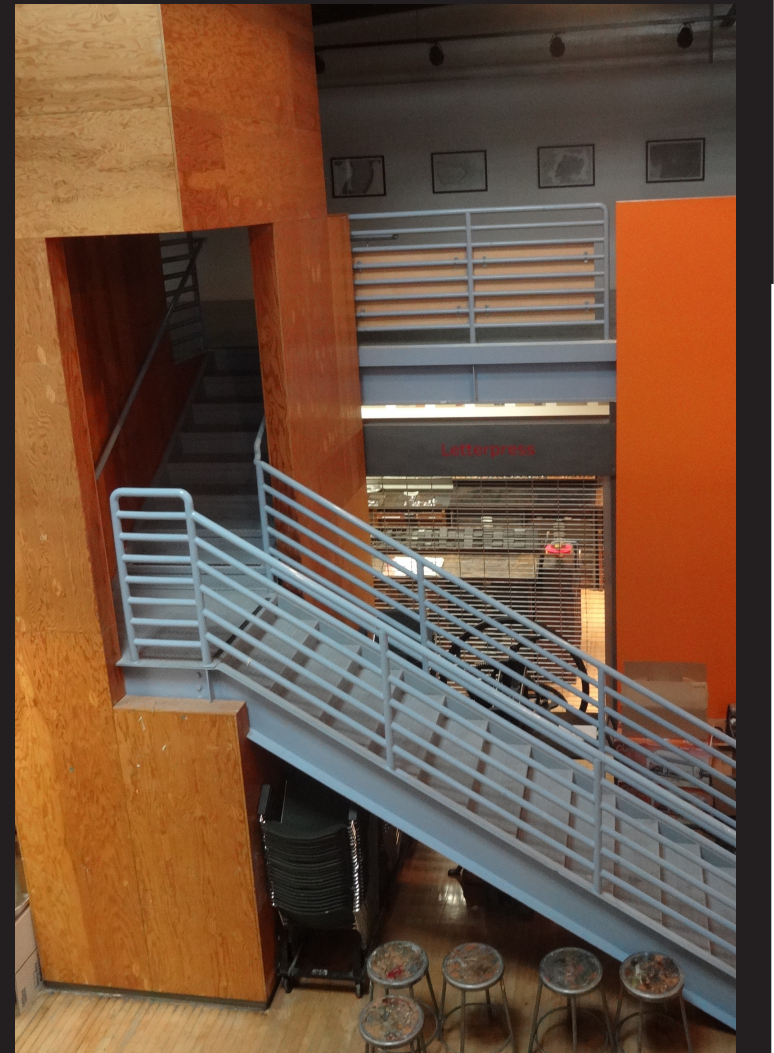


PROGRAM [case studies]

The gallery and studio spaces will utilize Wilshire as a testing ground for ideas of visual representation. Spaces will engage the public both in terms of their visual expression, but also through public engagement. Programmatically, the studio spaces will also be intertwined with public use. The design of spaces within the building will consider the processes of production and their relationship to display. The spaces will be for the use of both students enrolled in studio classes as well as the public. The structures will read expressively from the inside out as a reflection of the power of art and media as well as the experiential qualities of architecture both as sign and space. One such example of this is the large scale exhibition hall on the top floor which will contain large scale art installations created by students. The art pieces will intrigue those passing by, encouraging viewers to interact with the building and find a way to get up to this space in order to experience the installation.

The scale of these spaces will be addressed in terms of their relationship to the street as well as with nearby buildings. The Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena will act as a case study for this project. The arts center offers public interaction with its gallery space as well as an abundance of studio classes offered year round. The Armory center originated as the Pasadena Art Museum in 1947. Classes were led by artists whose teaching concepts grew out of the museum's exhibitions of modern art. The workshops then changed location, moving into the National Guard Armory. The large, industrial space gives an open feeling to the building. And as stated on the school's website this unique floor plan, "encourages ideas to flow freely among exhibitions, classes, artists, teachers and students". The close proximity of the gallery to the open studio spaces promotes a creative energy which feeds into the studio work as well as the art displayed in the gallery. As a case study, the Armory Center for the Arts provides a key example of how a fairly simple building structure can successfully house unique relationships between a gallery and art studios. Every few weeks the gallery displays different work of art instructors who teach studio classes put a portion of their work on display

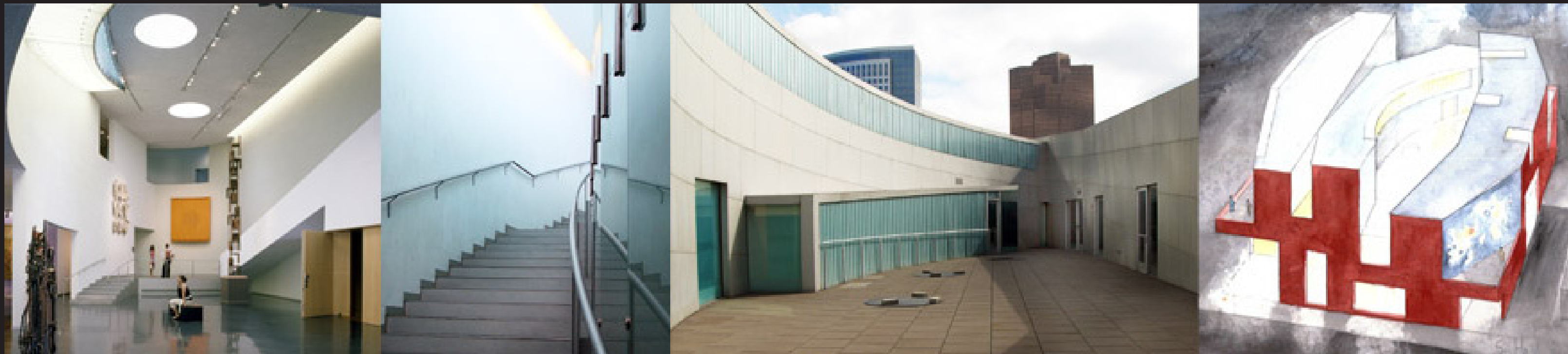




The Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena CA

Another example of a building with a direct programmatic relationship between artwork on display and the local production of artwork is the Bellevue Art Museum in Bellevue Washington by Steven Holl. Having personally taken art classes at this museum, I can speak of the strong relationship between the work on display and the classes offered in the museum. This relationship fosters a sense of connectedness and creative energy. Before entering the classrooms and studios, students first walk through the main spaces of the museum, allowing them to enter a mind set of creative productivity. As stated on the Museum website, "The museum's motto, "See, Explore, Make Art," led Holl to the design concept of "tripleness." A non-dialectic openness of experience, thought and contact, give character to space on three levels, in three galleries,

each with its own personality and unique quality, with three different light conditions and three circulation options." Based on the Museum's strong emphasis on education and community driven art experience, "Holl's aim of the design for the museum was to "provide opportunities for active participation in museum life by individuals and groups representing the entire community." As seen in these precedents, visual displays of art situated in close proximity to spaces where art is created, makes for a dynamic and rich artistic atmosphere. These examples provide inspiration for a gallery and studio driven program, and further encourage the possibilities of its programmatic relationship to the commercial vernacular of Wilshire Boulevard.



The Tabular list of spaces for the Wilshire Center for the Arts include:

Entry spaces	sf
Entry	360
offices(5)	600
community room	720
reception	180
meeting rooms	216
kitchenette	96
Restrooms	432
Exit stairs	180
Circulation	418

Central spaces	
Exhibition Gallery	2,160
Studio Workshops	2,160
Childrens Studio	270
Gallery Stairs	120

Letter Press Studio	540
Ceramics studio	792
Gallery Storage	480
Deliveries	448
Class/Meeting Room	270
Elevators	48
restrooms	256
Exit stairs	180
Circulation	452

11,378

Reading/ Library	320
Administrative Offices	720
Program Offices	720
Waiting Room	288
Gallery	320

Mezzanine Gallery	1,320
Exit stairs	180

Main studio spaces	
Drawing and Painting Studio	792
Media Arts Studio	1,140
Photography Studio	456
Photography Darkroom	456
Graphic Design Studio	800
Storage/Gallery	864
Elevator	48
Exits Stairs	180
Circulation	710

9,314

20,692

TOTAL
19024

First floor site square footage = 8,000 sf

It is important to not only emphasize the close spatial relationship between gallery display and studio classrooms, but also their visual relationship to the street as well as to the infrastructure of commercial vernacular and billboards on Wilshire Boulevard. The layout and massing of gallery and studio spaces will be resolved in a way which addresses their overall transparency to the street.

In addition to the gallery and studio spaces, design for flexible studio spaces associated with art center will also be developed along Wilshire Boulevard. They will also exemplify some of the different typologies of billboards found on Wilshire, and the ways they carve out space and create rhythms on the street. The buildings on each site will be shaped and formed based on how these billboards interact spatially with their surroundings, and how an additional structure could coexist with the billboard to heighten this spatial character and engage the public. They will actively challenge the notion of sign and entice the public to participate in their spatial engagement with the commercial

vernacular, the street, as well as surrounding buildings. The incorporation and study of billboard structures will inspire the creation of space for the arts and build upon this idea of engaging the commercial vernacular with architecture, the public, and the street in a more profound way.

This thesis asks the question of how architects can possibly integrate outdoor ads into the built environment. The project aims to showcase the possibilities of how outdoor media, coupled with the programmatic characteristics a center for the arts, could actively integrate with new architecture on Wilshire Boulevard. The goal in the design of this project is to reveal how this symbiotic relationship can continue to exist in an interactive and meaningful way which engages the public and enlivens the street. In doing this, the design will encourage this idea that purposeful integration can be accomplished between the commercial vernacular, gallery design, and the built environment.



THE PROJECT

[URBAN RHYTHMS]

[MULTIPLE SITES]

[SITE EXPLORATIONS]

[BUILDING EXPLORATIONS: INITIAL DESIGN + MODEL STUDIES]

[URBAN RHYTHMS]

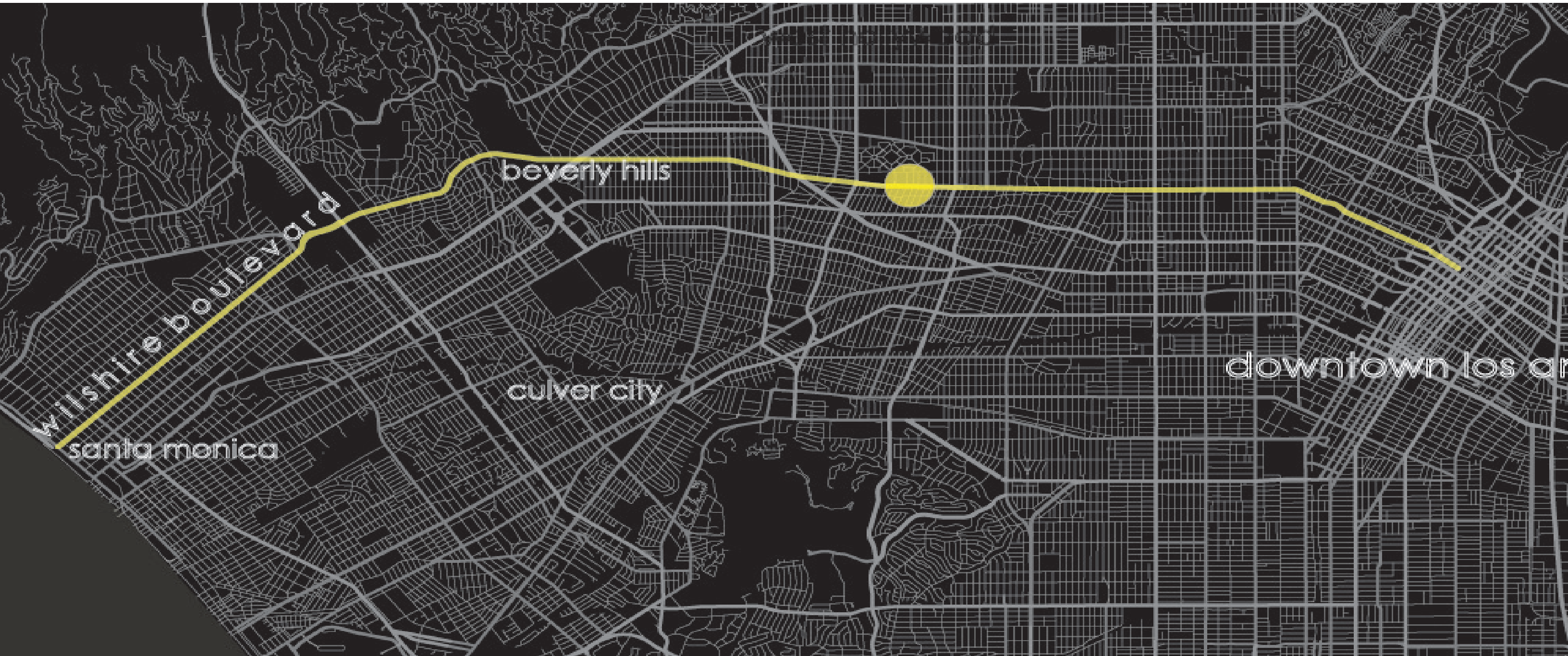
[WILSHIRE CENTER FOR THE ARTS]



THE PROJECT

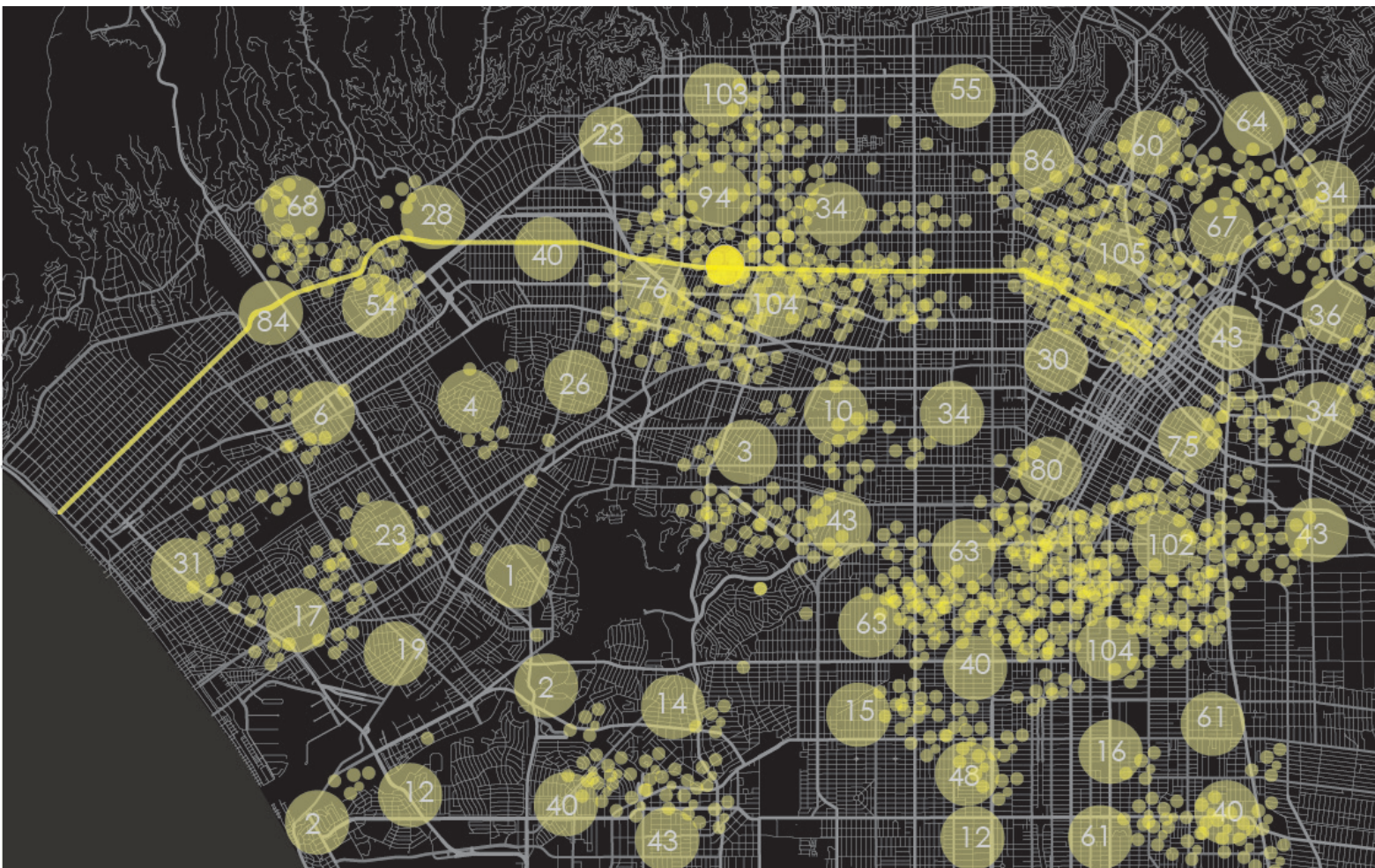
This project seeks to harness the power of visual display both externally as two dimensional communication and internally as three dimensional space in an exploration of how the perception and actual experience of visual display within the urban environment can begin to intersect and come together in order to evolve into dynamic, celebrated public spaces on Wilshire Boulevard.

It builds upon the possibilities of outdoor media display in an attempt to reinterpret the ways people interact with two dimensional perceptions and how this can be broken down as both a visual and spatial experience on a number of different scales. The project seeks to invert the negative attributes which define the nature of signs and use these qualities as design tools from which to base the design.

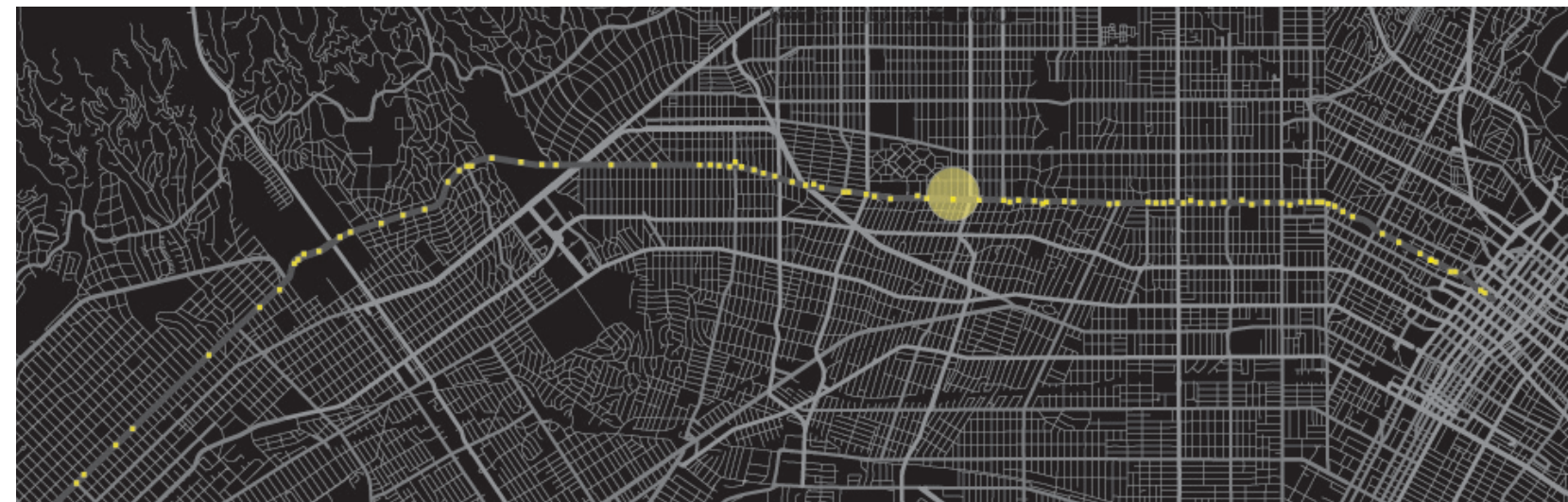


The design for this project begins with an understanding of the rhythms near the site. I developed a group of diagrams which addresses the urban patterns of signs on a number of scales in order to understand their relationship to the design. The concentration of signs near the site is extremely high, making the placement of this site a pointed reaction to a visual media presence in the area. Understanding where signs are in relation to the immediate site, as well understanding sign placement was a key element for this project.

This breakdown of the visual build up of signs in the area acts as a means of understanding movement along Wilshire. The signs are a starting point of reinterpretation, a jumping off point for design inspiration- understanding urban movements, rhythms, and points of urban flow on Wilshire Boulevard. These studies have propelled the exploration of the intersection between 2 dimensional display and 3 dimensional space in order to emphasize the power of media and display in the urban realm.



OUTDOOR MEDIA CONCENTRATIONS



RHYTHMS THROUGHOUT WILSHIRE



RHYTHMS NEAR SITE

In searching for points of entry into this chaotic, fragmented street, I attempted to adapt to these conditions and enhance the urban environment as it exists now. I took in the environment of Wilshire and documented its character in an effort to pin point the elements which stood out as visual cues and markers. Outdoor ads within the built environment appeared as the most prominent visual markers and began to take on a character and pattern of their own, acting as the point of entry for this project and providing the basis of an urban framework for this design.

Following these signs along the street, watching them peer over buildings and pop up in unexpected spaces, I began to see the ways they were able to reveal unused spaces and how their presence shed light unto the unseen and yet all together over saturated visual media presence along Wilshire. The patterns of these signs created a sense of space and character which far exceeded their two dimensional messages. This project seeks to reveal the possibilities of what can go beyond these two dimensional signs.



WILSHIRE BOULEVARD



WILSHIRE BOULEVARD ELEVATION

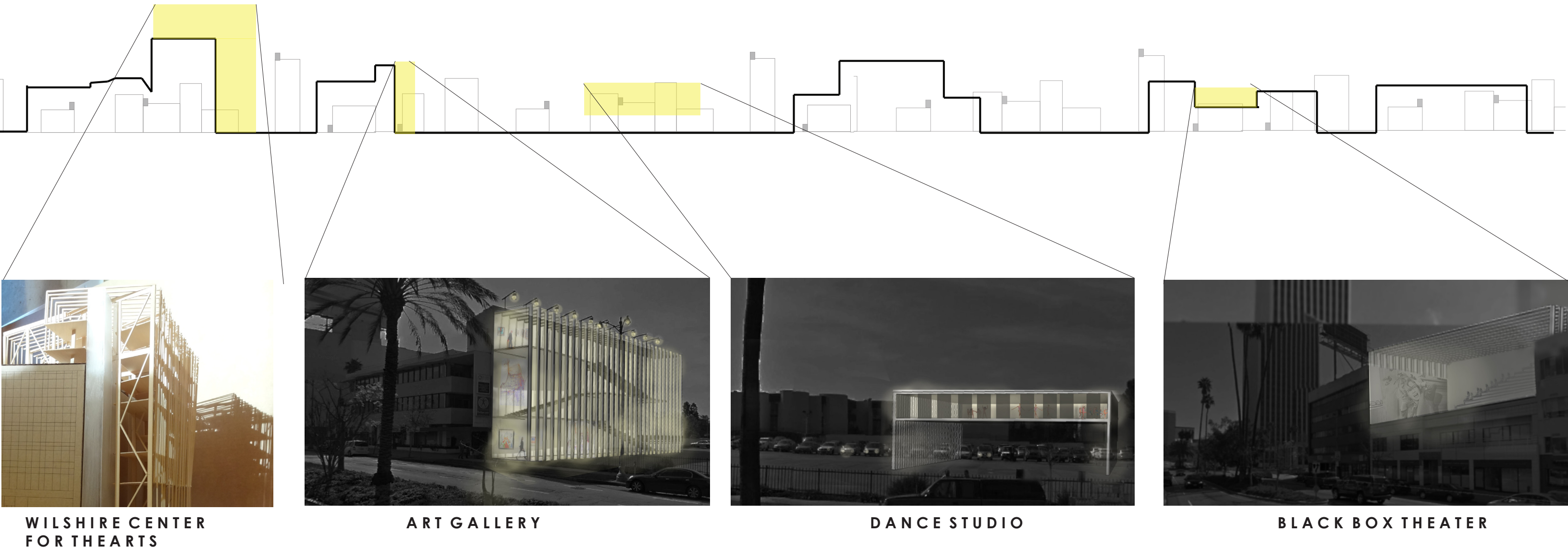
URBAN RHYTHMS : MULTIPLE SITES

Coinciding with These studies, I first investigated the idea of how these patterns could be broken down into multiple sites throughout the boulevard in order to tune into these subtle frequencies along the street. I selected 3 possible sites near the center for the arts, all which would be related to program within the art center, but scattered along Wilshire.

Each site would have a different program: theater, dance studio, and gallery and reflect urban conditions of sign placements on the street (next to a building, in a parking lot, and on top of building).

These sites allude to ideas of the urban conditions of Wilshire and the possibilities of how to build upon the conditions of sign placements in the built environment. The sites were a design exercise which hint at the abstract idea of how multiple locations could be used along Wilshire. They serve as conceptual diagrams in this project of exploring possible ways to enhance the existing conditions.

The sites follow the urban rhythms of the street, and build upon the larger idea of how these signs are in fact dynamic elements of the city.

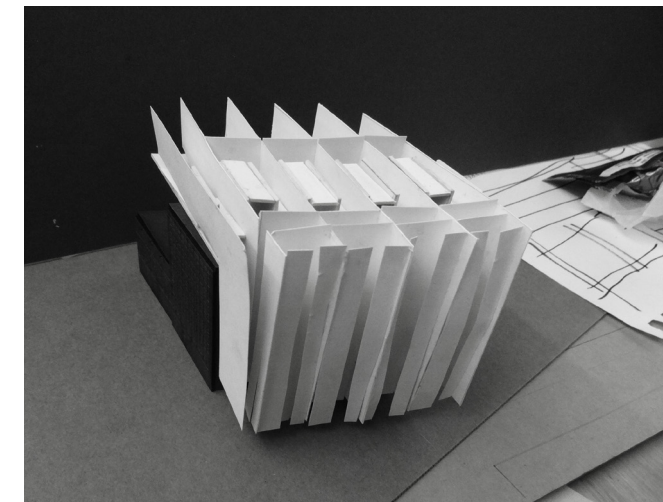
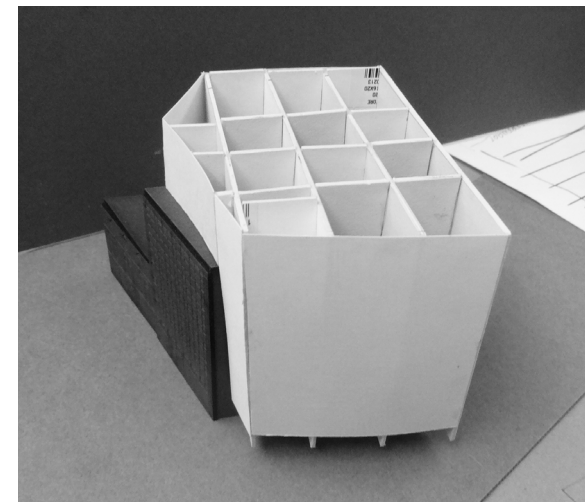
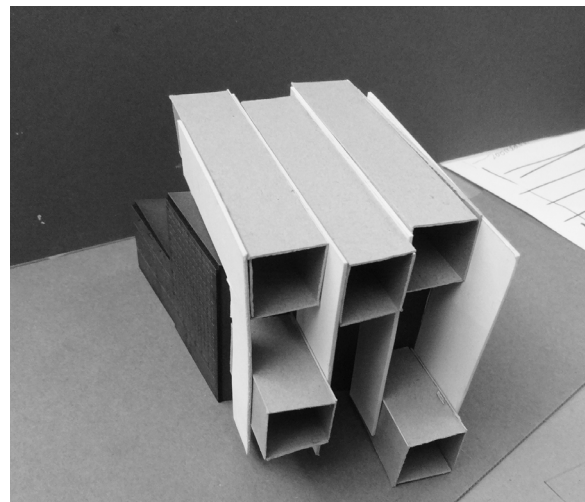
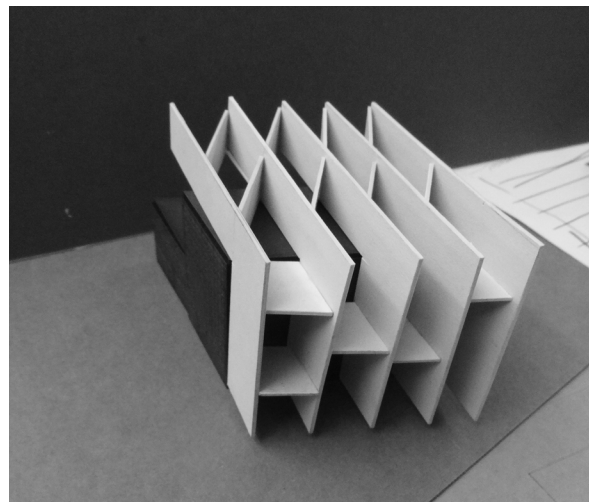
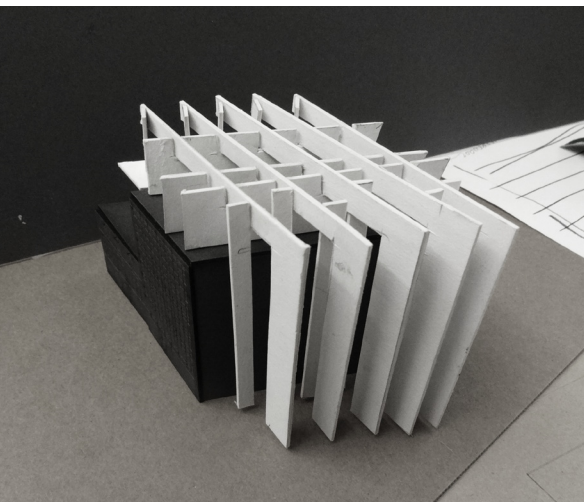


SITE EXPLORATIONS

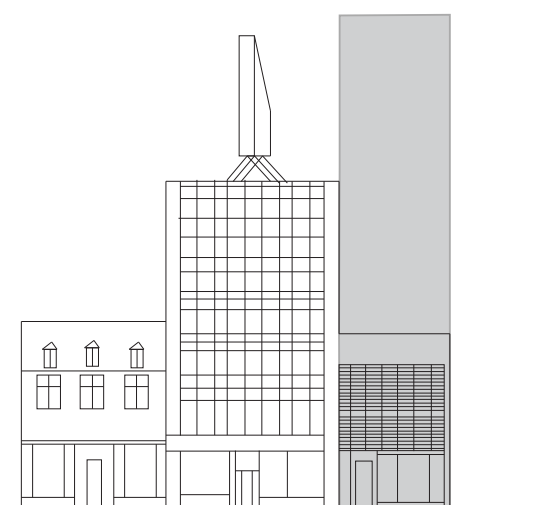
Continuing closer into view of the site for the center for arts is an exploration of building to sign relationships. The design began by exploring interactions with site through conceptual investigations of angles and movements and how the slightest change in angle could then change views and programmatic relationships. I began with the decision to eliminate a portion of the building existing on site, and develop a building design wherein in the structure envelopes the other existing building.

Once this move was established I began to explore the ways in which this facade could then become layered and angled in order to change with views and create visual and spatial interest both inside and out.

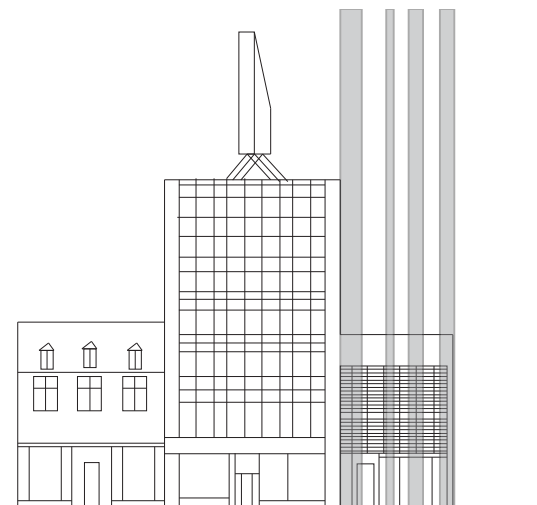
The facade is an element which on one hand depicts a visual message to those passing by, but is also a defined space which is created through these facade elements. This study explored the ways in which the 2 dimensional can work to create visual interest as well as dynamic spaces.



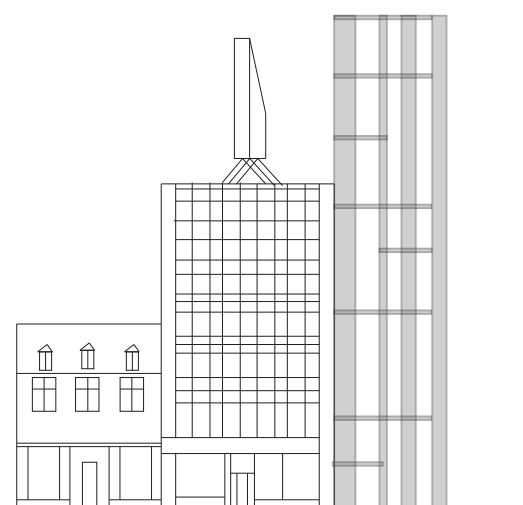
EXPLORATIONS OF FACADE



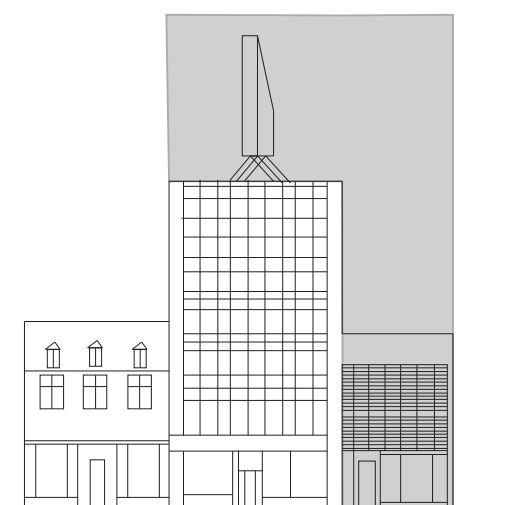
building occupies slice of existing



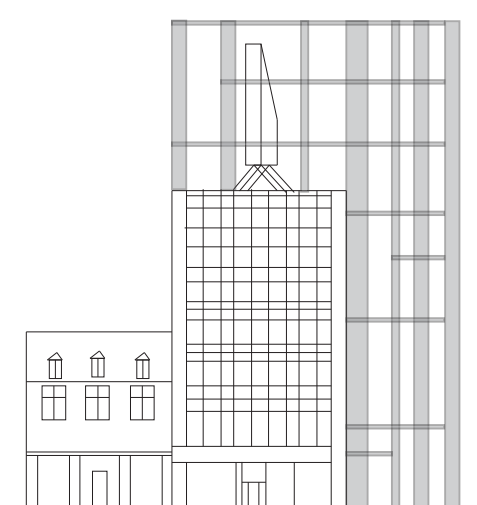
rhythms of slice



additional layers to rhythm



building envelops existing

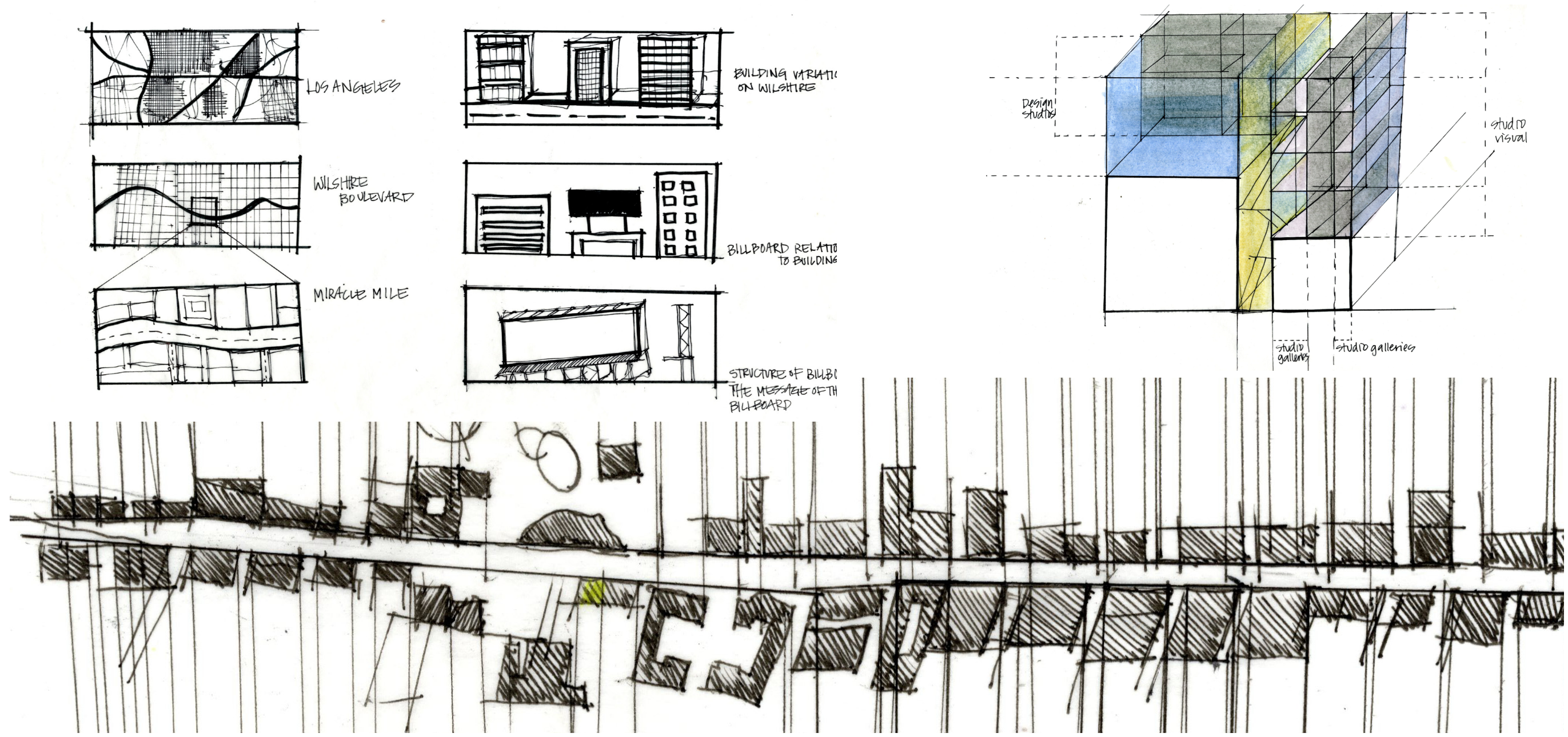


rhythms of enveloping building

INTERACTIONS WITH EXISTING BUILDING

This design begins at the scale of the city, as an exploration of how one moves through the various arterials of Los Angeles and how one absorbs surroundings and internalizes rhythms and movements. I first attempted to break down these perceptions and interpretations through diagrammatic

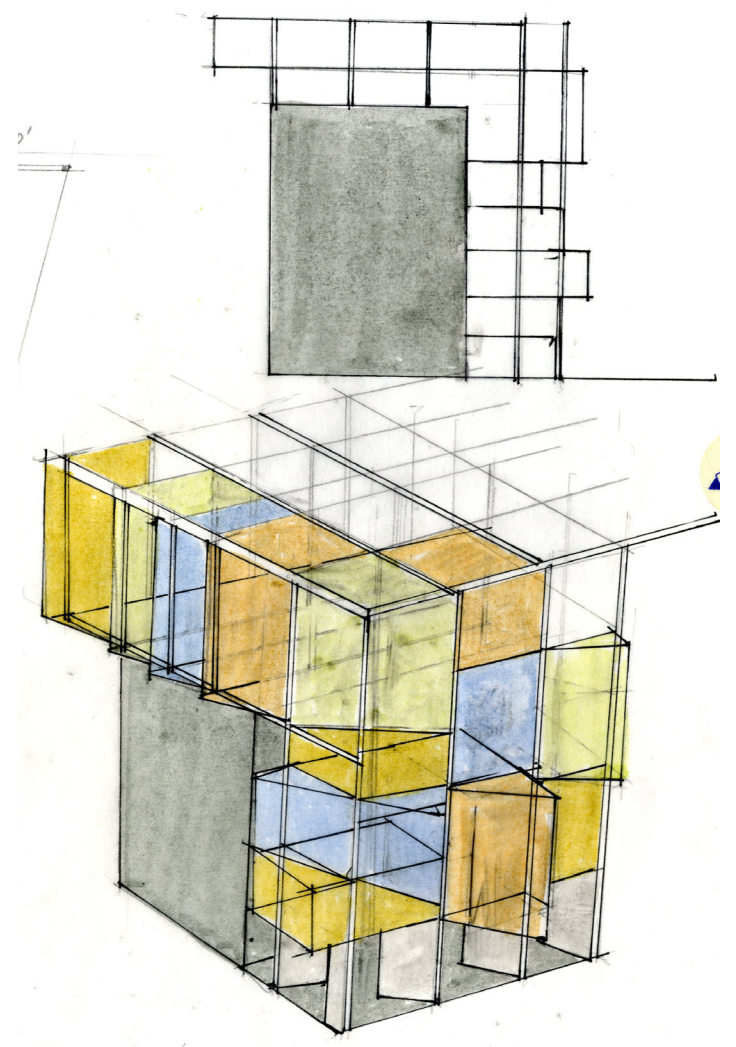
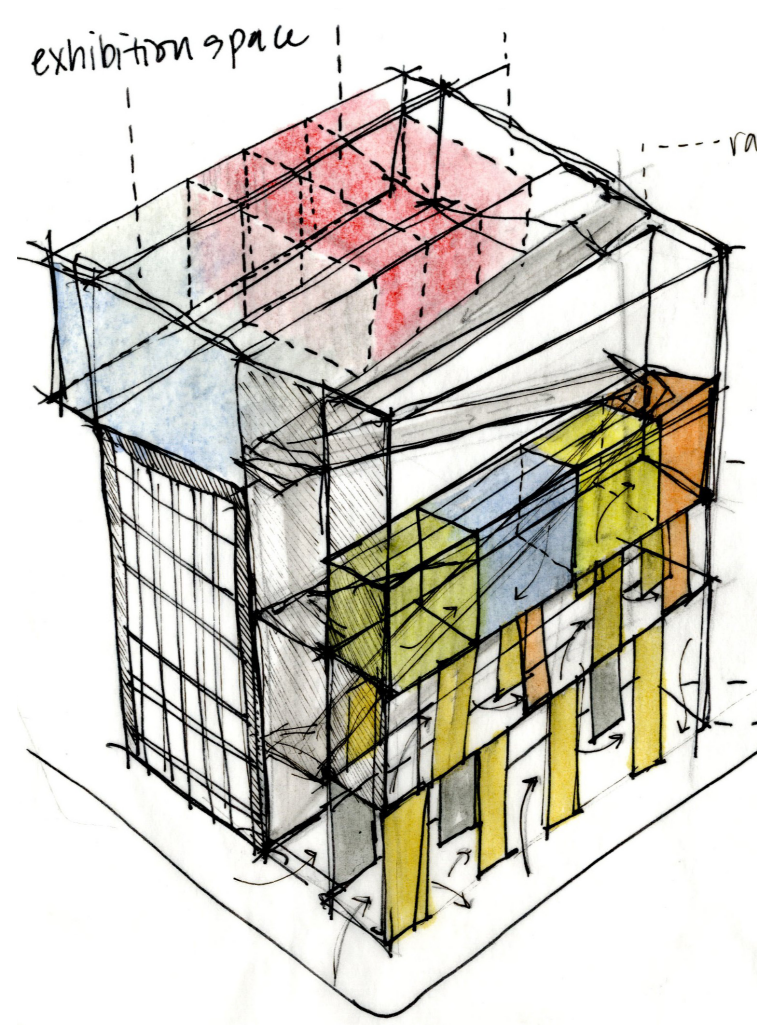
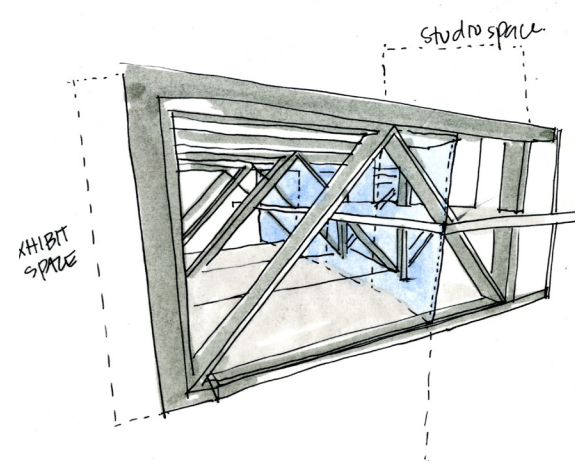
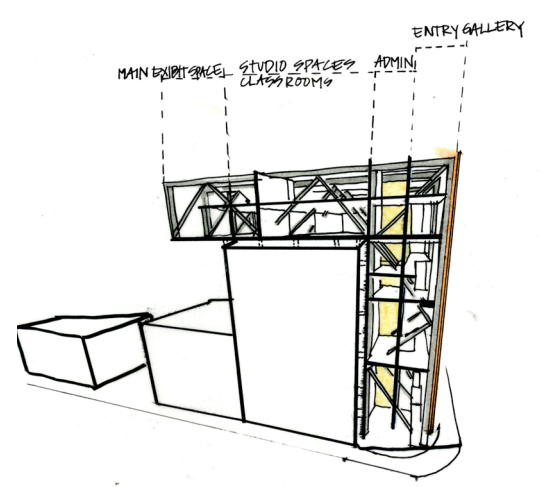
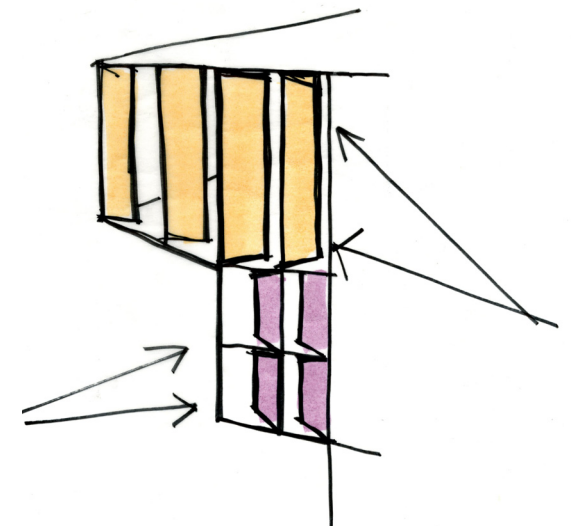
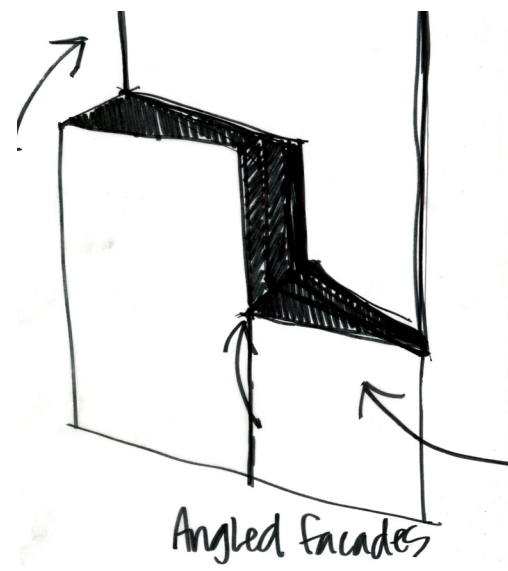
snap shots of how one experiences this city as a series of visceral frames of view and abstract moments. I then began to channel this into the movements near and around the site and explore the ways that the beginnings of a structure might arise from these investigations.



S I T E

The design then moved closer in towards an exploration of understanding the subtleties of movement and various viewpoints and angles of the site. I incorporated studies of outdoor media wherein signs are strategically angled towards the direction of highest viewers, as well as various billboard technologies which utilize moveable panels and double sided

surfaces. Developing this further into an actual building facade revealed newfound opportunities within the design for these spaces to read externally and also exist as dynamic spaces internally due to this variation of angle and space.



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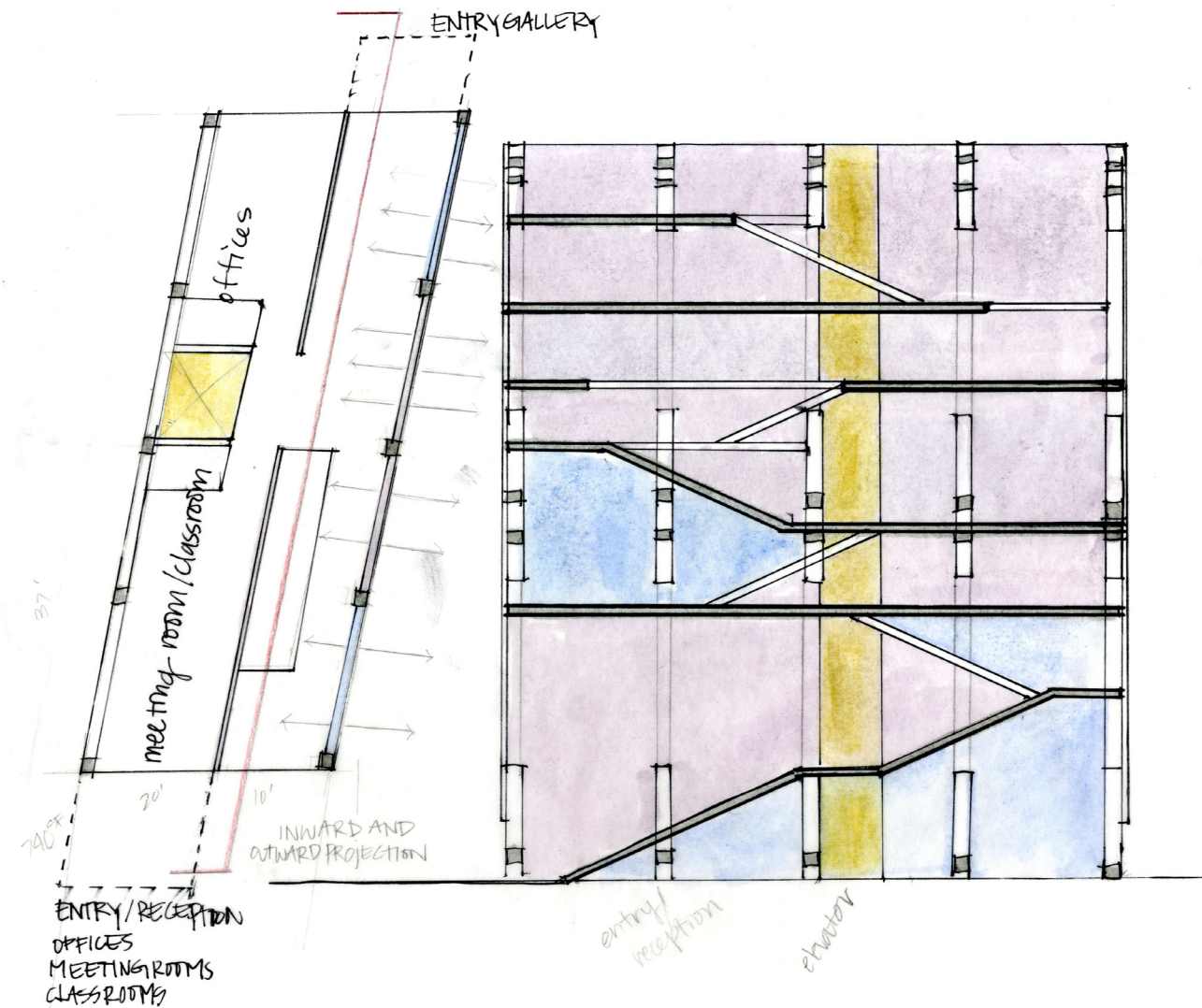
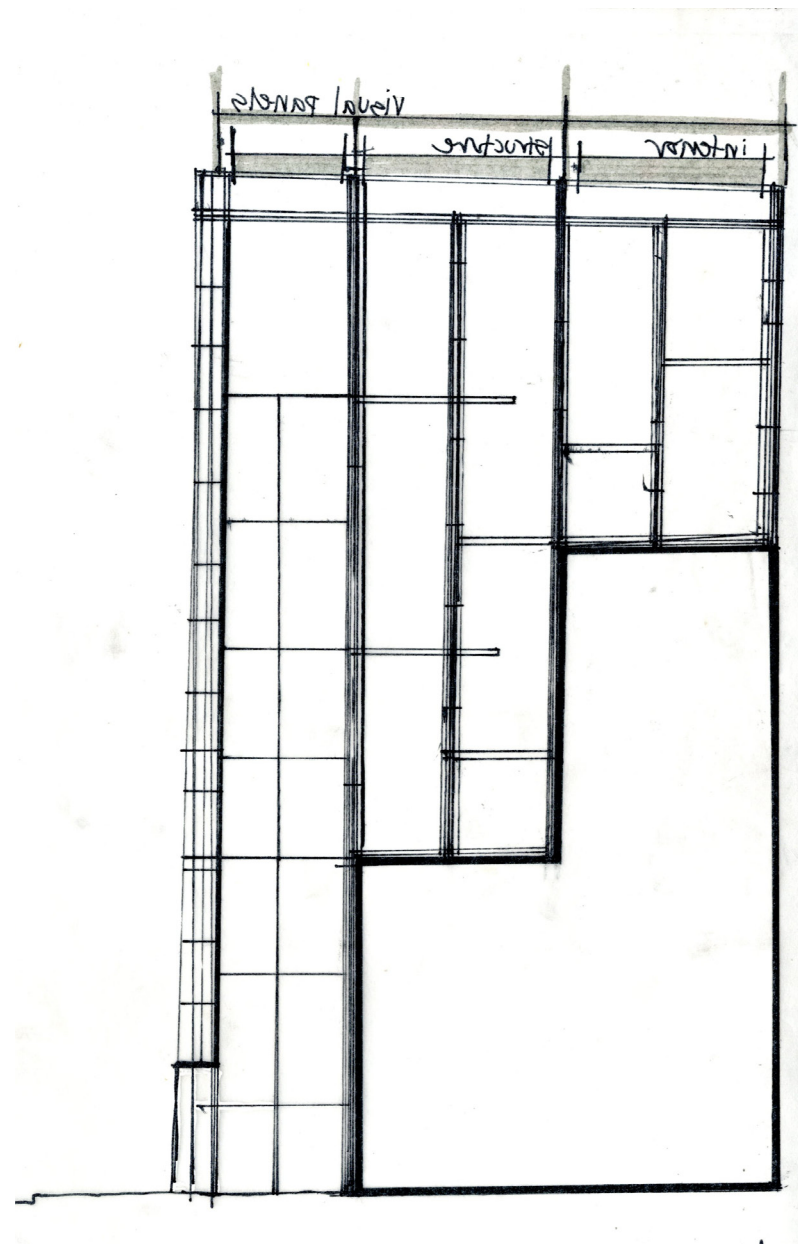
L

E

S

Another level of exploration in this project took form in striving to achieve a sense of layering within the spaces so as to create multiple facades of visual interest as well as a variation of spaces which result from this layering. Views that on one level are perceived as 2 dimensional, become 3 dimensional spaces upon viewing from another direction. This was explored through section drawings of how the various spaces could build up layers to create sectional depth.

The idea of how this building could possess a sense of layered messages and spaces coincides with the goal of using the visual sign to transform it from the 2 dimensional sign to a series of spaces with depth and with the ability to relay a meaningful message. Creating layers within the building pushes the limits of the flatness of the sign through the creation of dynamic spaces which elevate this notion of a single message being brought forth.

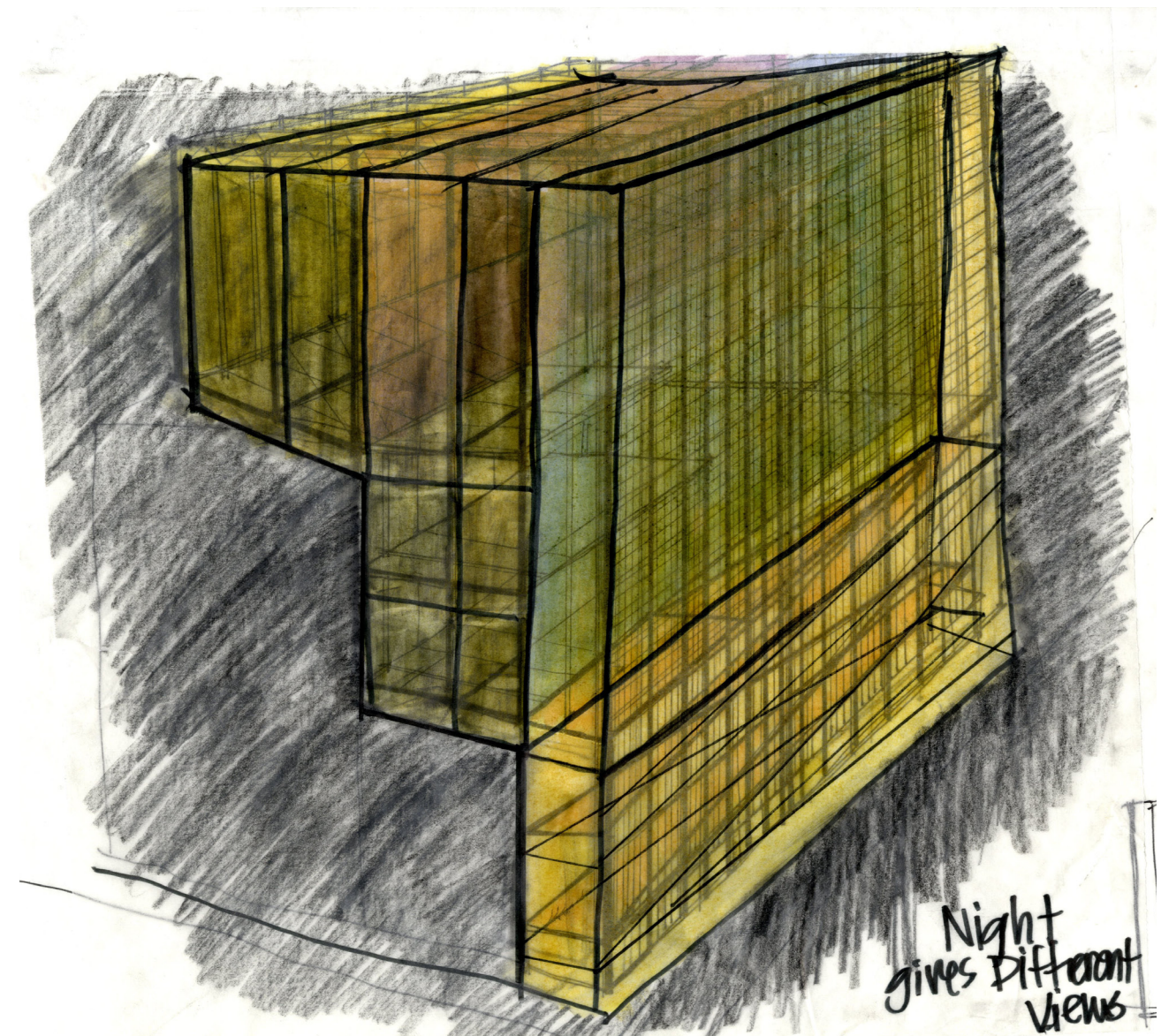
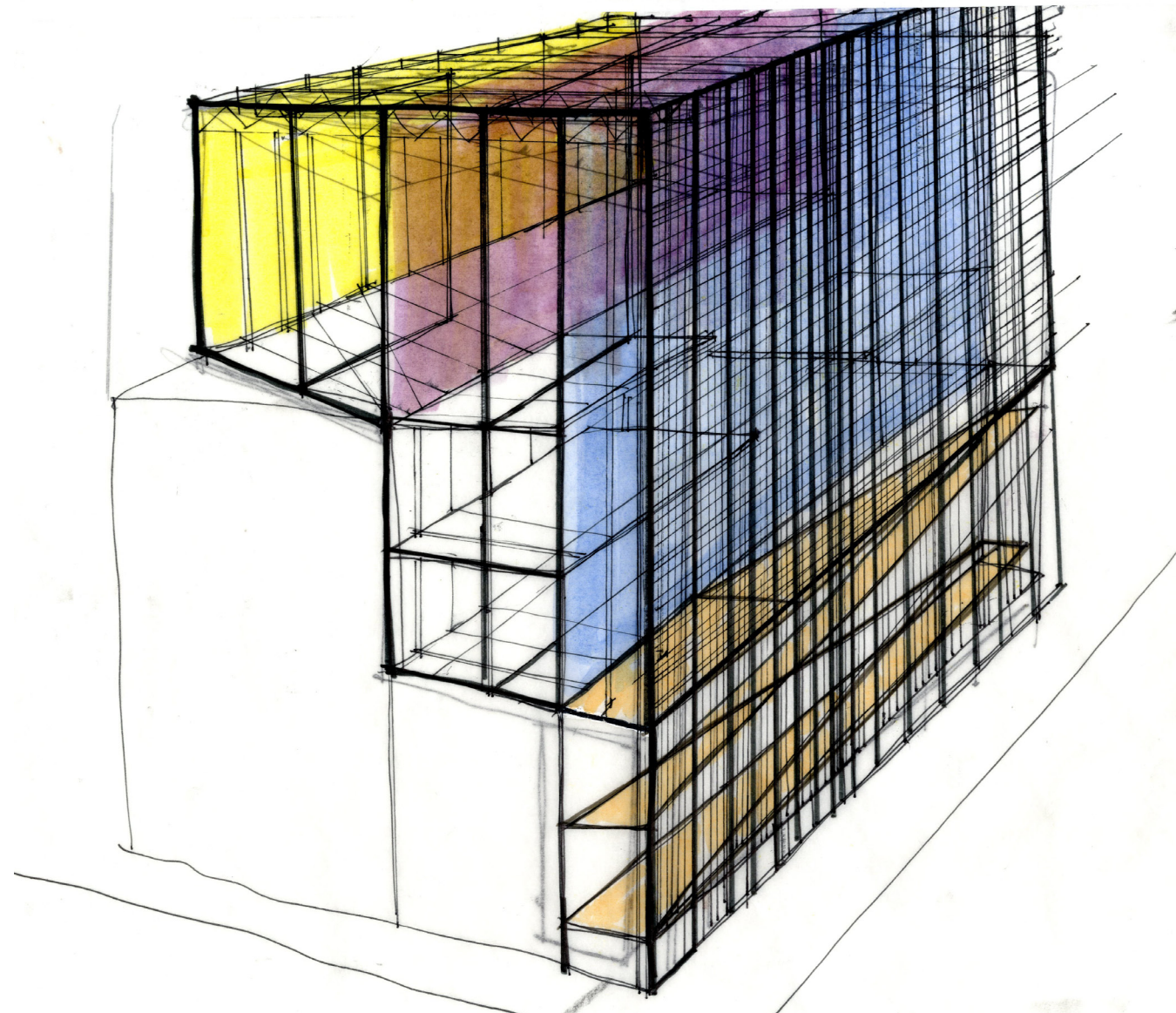


L A Y E R S

Finally, in an effort to create a structure which alludes to ideas of movement and change within the spaces as well as the exterior conditions, studies of lighting possibilities were considered as a way to highlight different areas within the building and showcase activities at certain times of day in order to convey the message that this building is in fact a place of active

learning and creativity within the arts.

The variation of light also highlights the various structural elements within the building which reveal spatial relationships and highlight display during various times of the day and in instances where specific events are taking place.



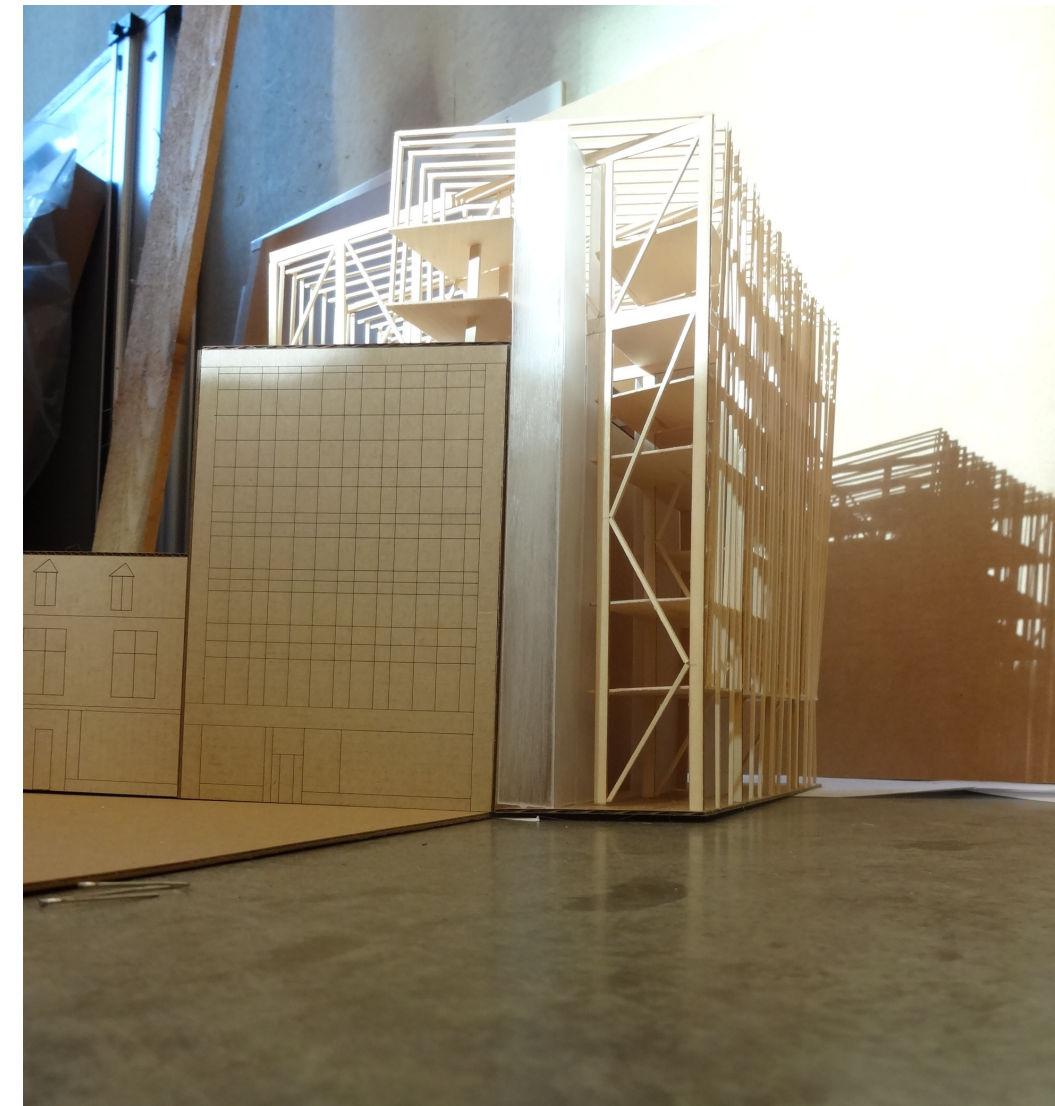
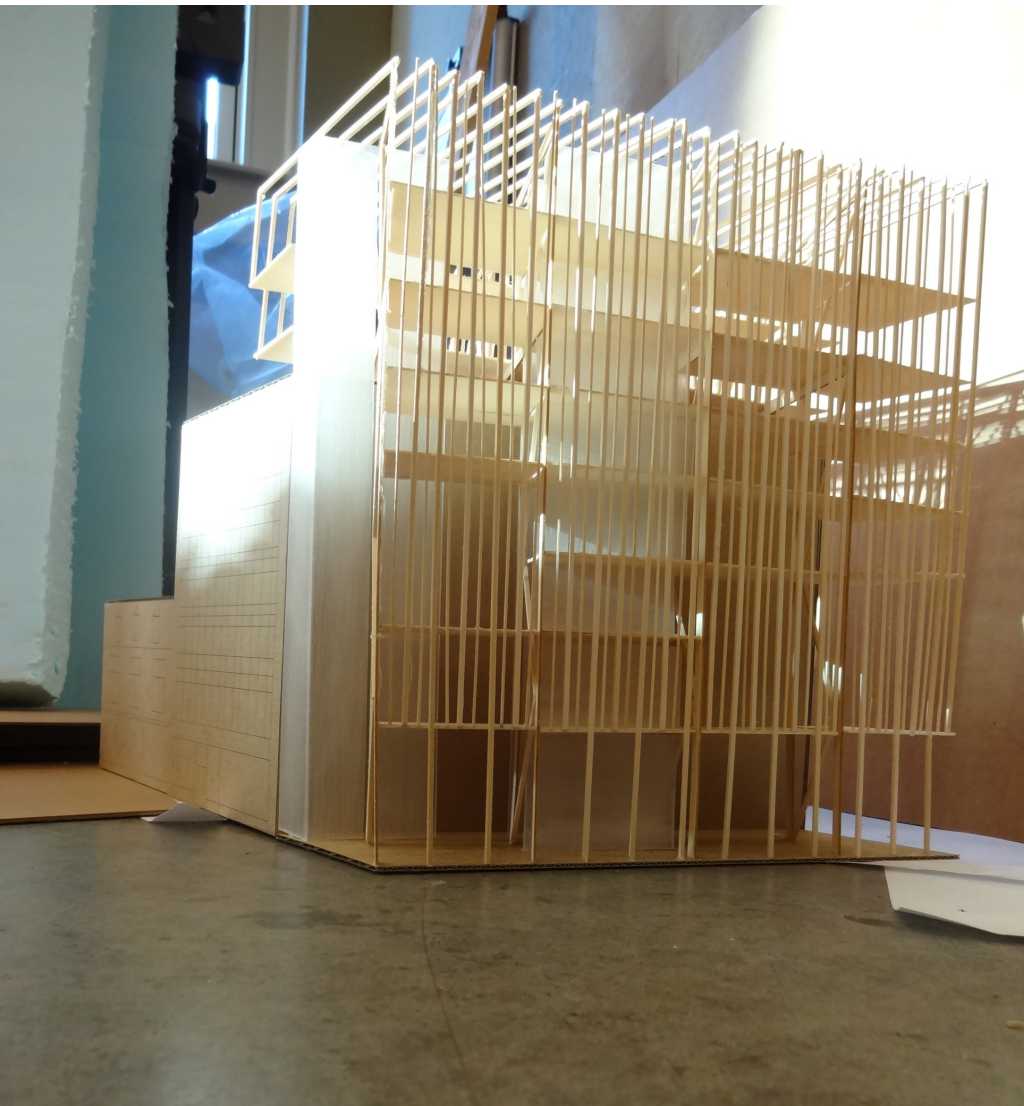
BUILDING DESIGN EXPLORATIONS [model and structural studies]

These explorations of layers, lighting and structure became more fully realized in the form of conceptual models. The models explored the notion of how spaces could form as a result of interweaving structural elements in order to create a sense of layering a series of facades through out the building.

The structure of the building works with the existing angles on site in order to emphasize the viewpoints which come from following these angles. The models explored how the building turns as the viewpoints around the site change to from different angles. The idea as explored through models is one underlying structure comprised of large scale truses which support a secondary and tertiary structure. These secondary and tertiary structures are the elements of the building which stray from the the rigid angle set by the primary structure.

The building lightly rests on top of the existing office building on the site. Columns meet the roof the building and existing structure, thus allowing for visible space between the new structure and existing building. The two structures coexist but do not relate programmatically in any way. The Wilshire Center for the Arts needs the existing building for support but does not contribute to this building's function.

Through explorations in model form, the project took abstract ideas and tested them in physical form. The angles on site dictated and challenged the structural placement of the design and formulated a diagram of the building which coincided with the views and angles from which the design is perceived.



URBAN RHYTHMS

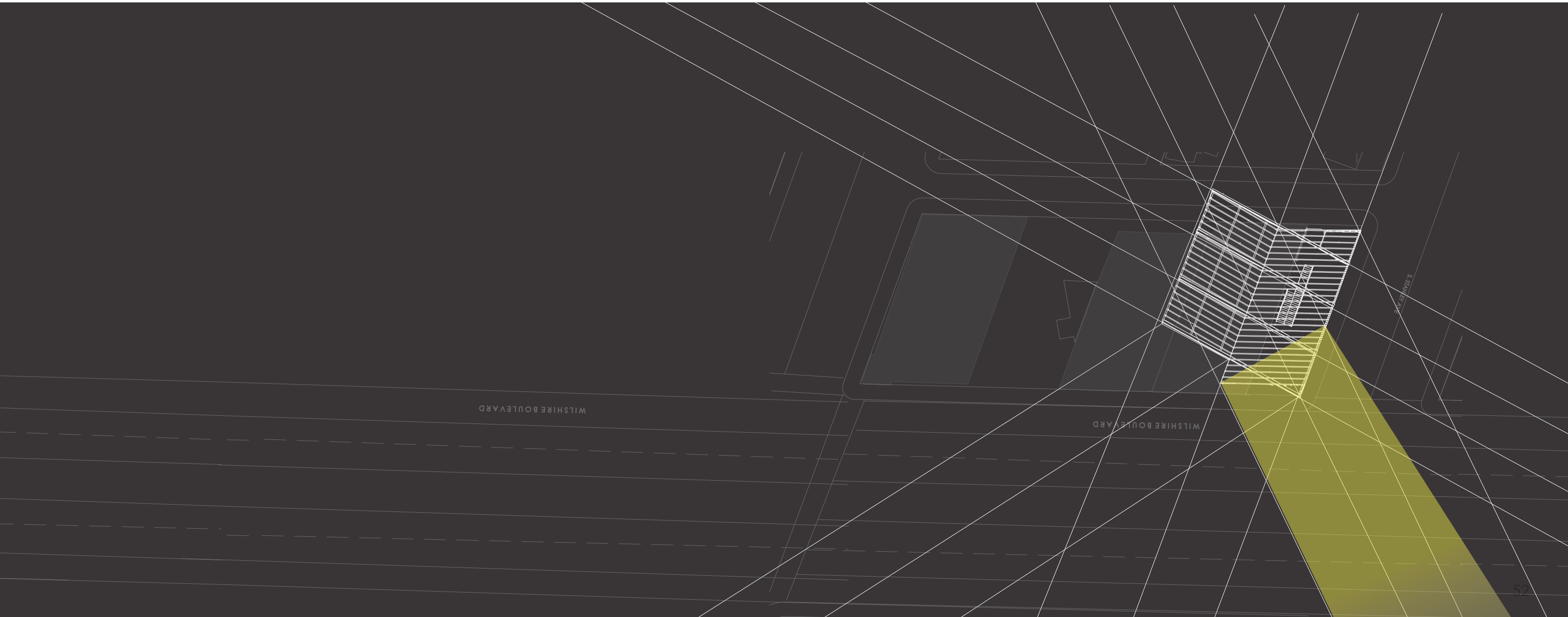
Understanding how the building is perceived from different angles externally and how this could then be carried throughout the actual building internally in form and shape was one of the key elements of this design. Taking cues from angles of sign placement was a part of this exploration, but the projects seeks to take this a step further by exploring shifting depths, in form and structure and how this ultimately intersects with the visual perceptions of the building in two and three dimensional forms, as well as how these visual perceptions of the building from afar, become dynamic spaces up close upon further interaction.

Understanding how these flat two dimensional objects could be reinterpreted as dynamic, constantly changing and fluctuating structures which adhere to the movements and patterns of traffic along Wilshire begins to suggest the ways in which this building could reinterpret outdoor media.



Not only does the building change upon viewing it at multiple angles and depths, it also changes depending on times of day. A part of the design consideration for this building was to create conditions where the form and appearance could change as needs within the building were changing as well. Not only this but also to coincide with the fluctuating lighting conditions and activities within the building.

Conceptually, the building will then act as a constant advertisement for activities within, changing and moving to reflect the movements and uses within the spaces. The program and building design actively work to counteract the static qualities of many of the existing buildings on Wilshire Boulevard through the conscious use of design inspiration from those elements which remain the most static on the street, that is the billboard.



REFLECTIONS OF A CITY

SHOWING TONIGHT
8PM

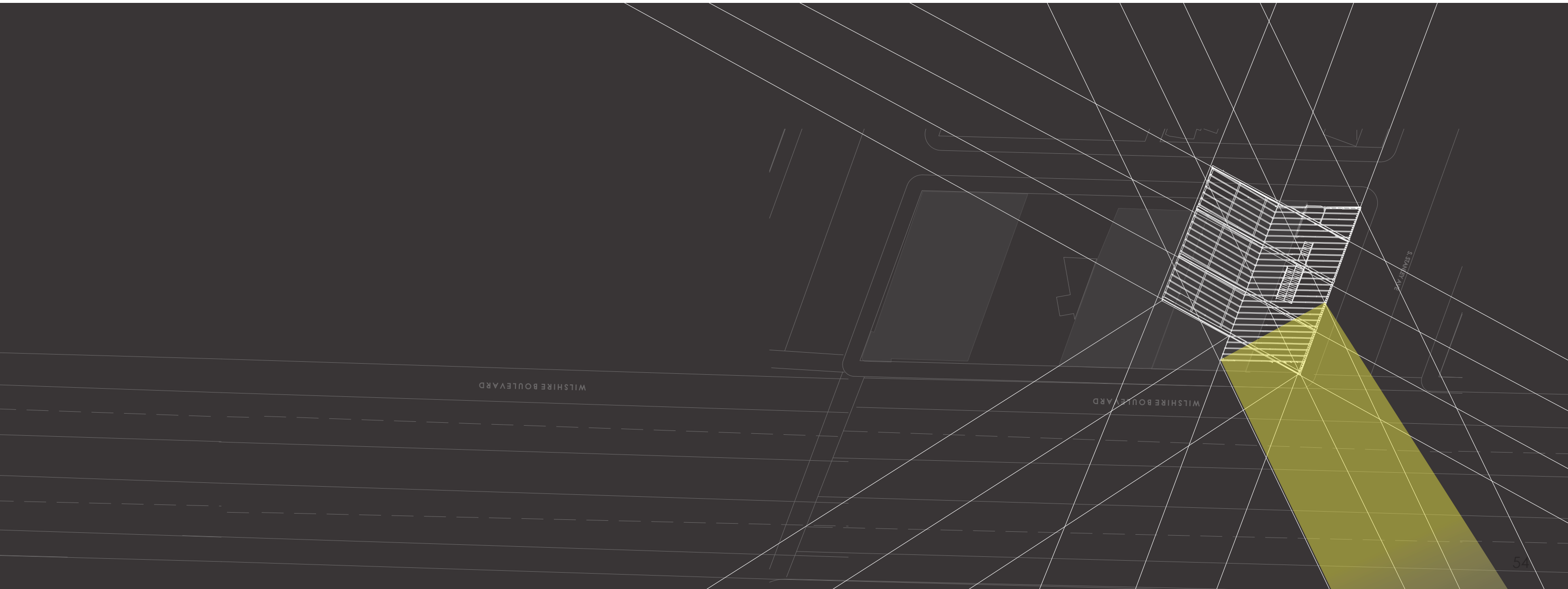


The building is constantly changing in order to coincide with the surrounding movements of pedestrians and cars, as well as the changing times of day and lighting conditions. It challenges the notion of a static presence along Wilshire, as well as challenging the staticness of signs along the street.

The design also explores the possibilities of using shading devices which become signage during the day and then, upon darker conditions, open up in the night to let the activities within read to those passing by. In many places,

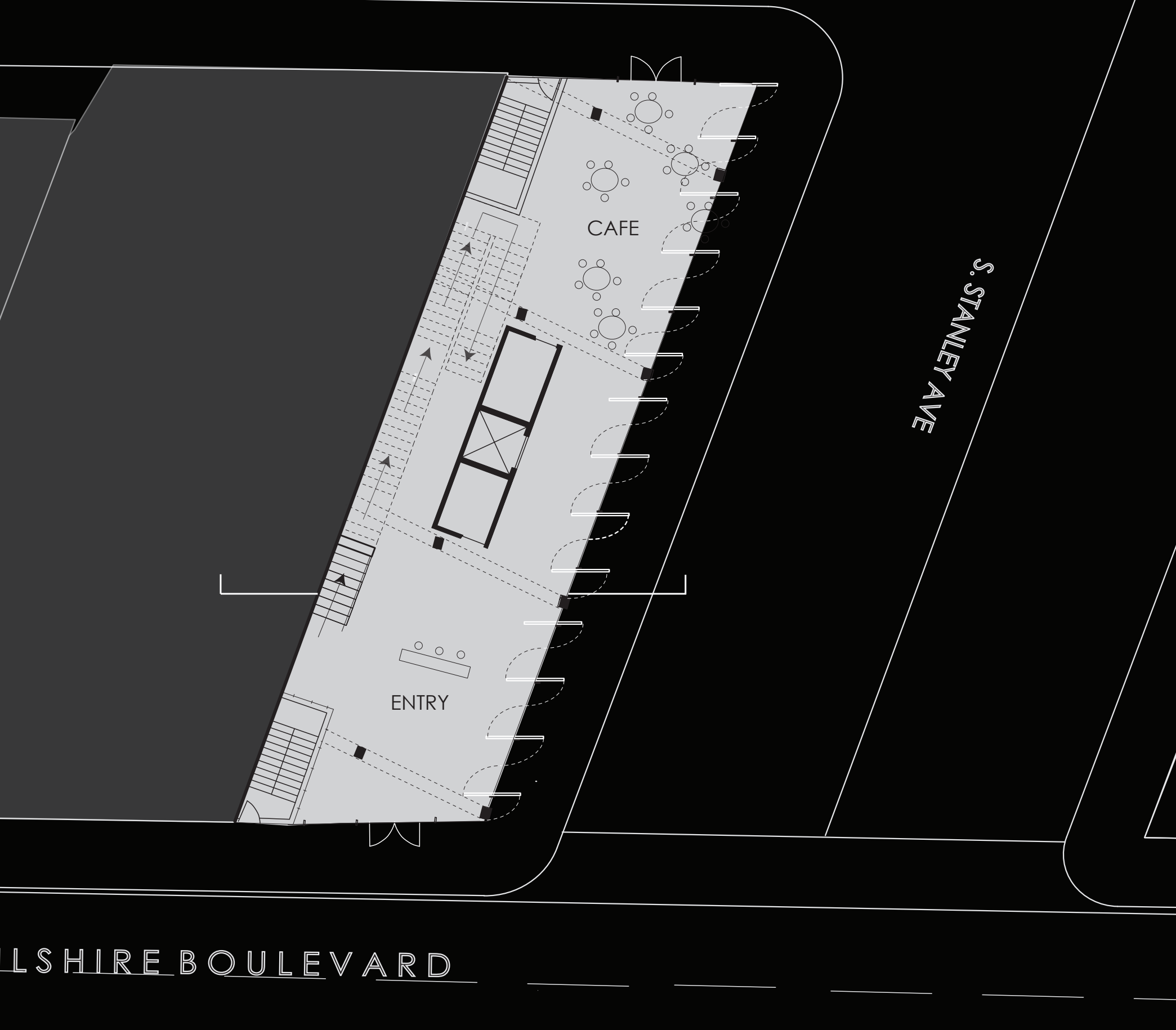
the shading devices are manually operated, thus allowing for those who use the building to actively participate and have control over how the building reads to the outside public.

The idea of shading devices as an interactive and visually effective means of portraying messages to the public, serves as a way to reinforce the notion of layers and this idea of creating spaces which are in constant flux and movement.



WILSHIRE CENTER
FOR THE ARTS
STUDENT
EXHIBITION
DEC 2-JAN 20, 2014

ALLEY

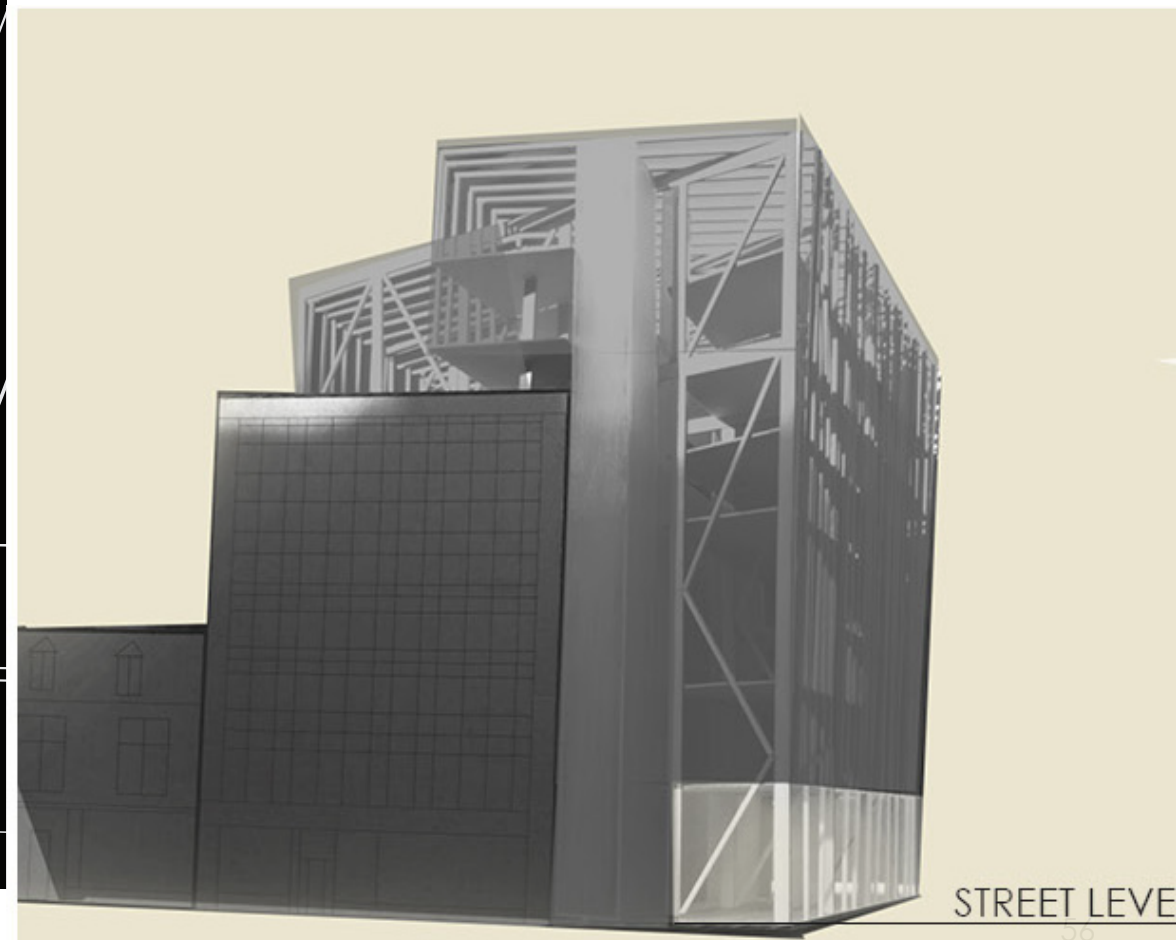


LSHIRE BOULEVARD

STREET LEVEL

At street level the building opens up to the surrounding area. The main structure touches the ground, however the main curtain wall starts at the first level, leaving the street level more open to surroundings.

It functions as an open air space and can also be closed in other conditions. Operable panels which can open and close and display art give the street level a sense of openness and porosity, and invites the surrounding public to explore and interact with the building.



STREET LEVEL

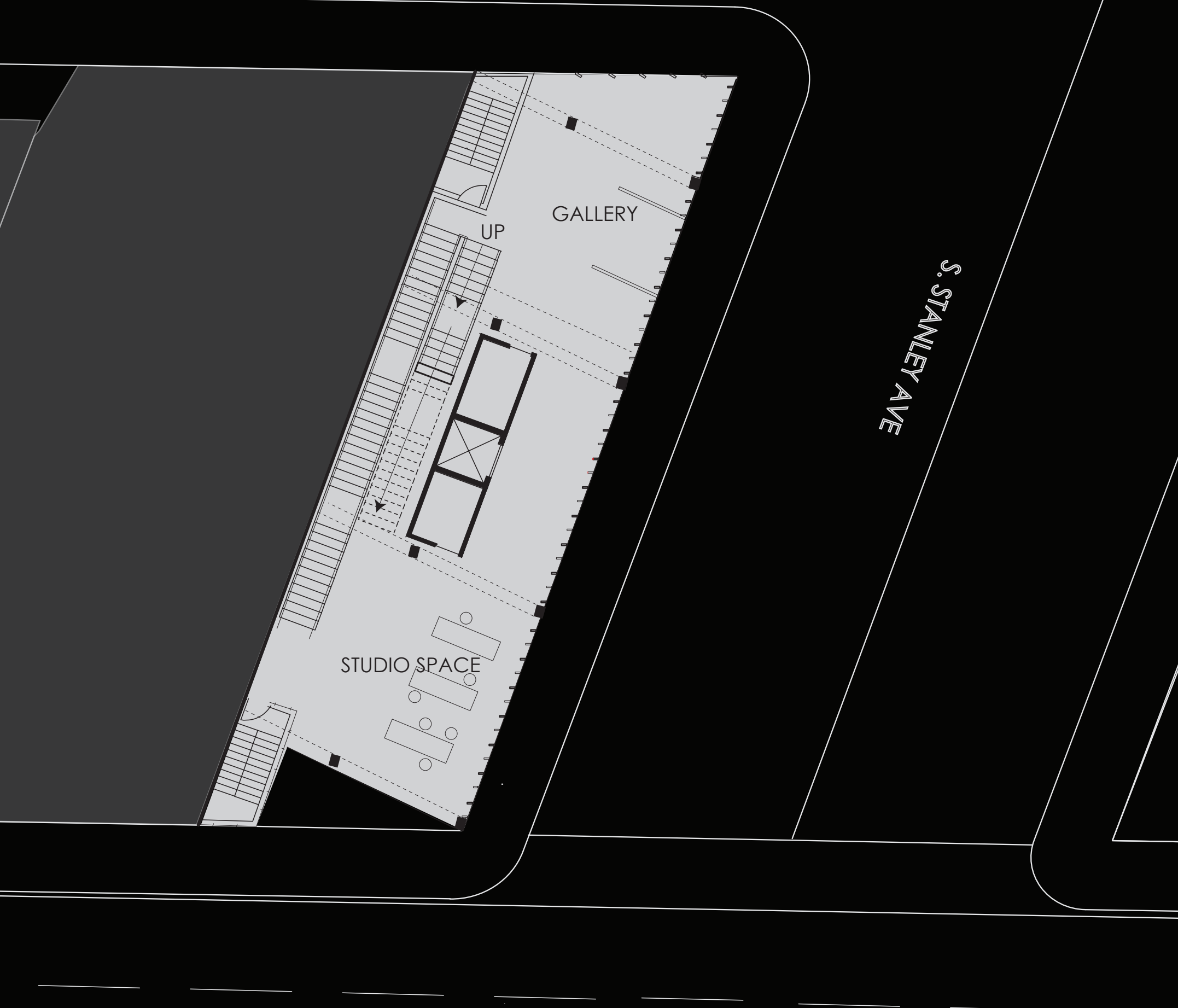


PUBLIC STREET LEVEL ART GALLERY

At street level the building opens up to encourage people passing by to experience this space. Student work is displayed here as a way to engage the public and activate use on the ground level. This level remains open air for most of the year in an effort to allow the public to

feel they can access and participate in the galleries and spaces within the building. The goal in the structure and building is for this space to touch the ground lightly, with an open feel, bringing the public into the building to experience the arts. The curtain wall stops at this street level which also encourages an openness.

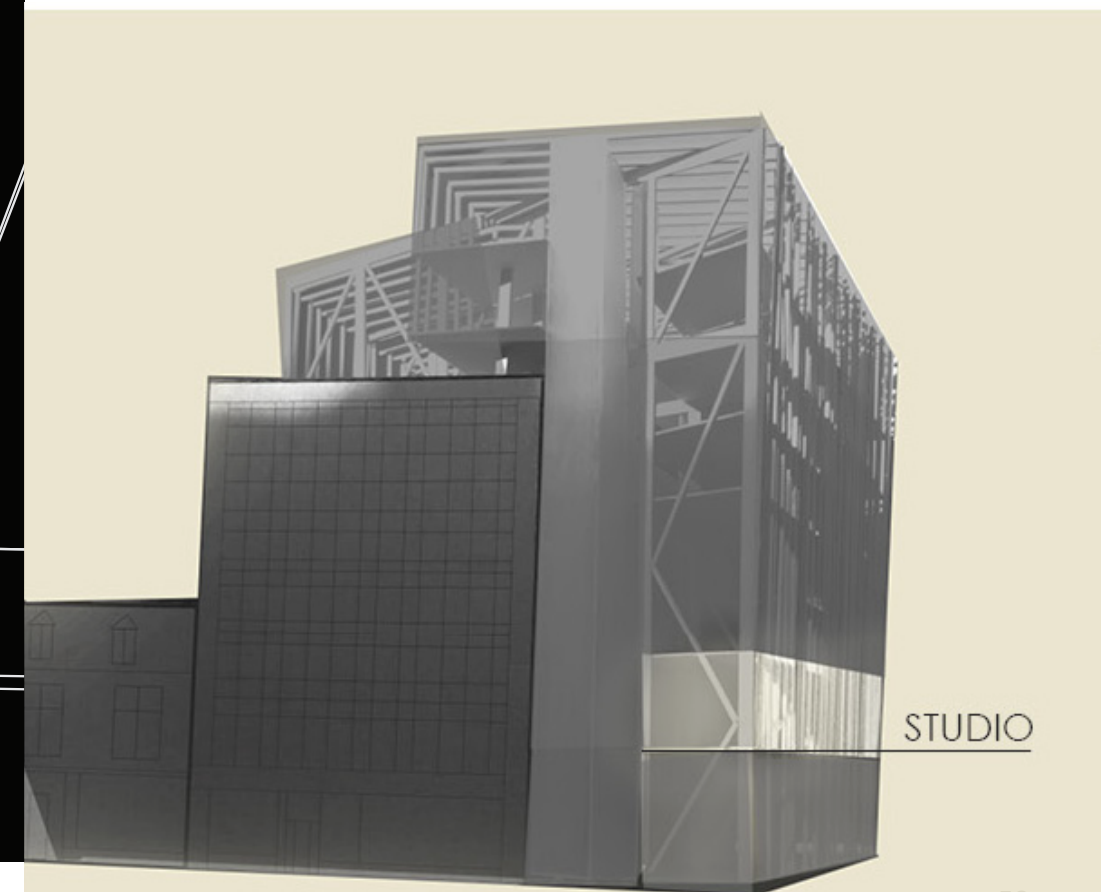
ALLEY



LEVEL 1 [TYPICAL]

At level one which is shown here as a typical plan within the vertical portion of the building, users are encouraged to move upwards through the building to view both galleries as well as activity within studio spaces. These levels contain most of the studio spaces in addition to a few galleries which lead to the upper floors.

The galleries are located in close proximity to the studio spaces in order to emphasize the relationship between display and actually physical making and creating.

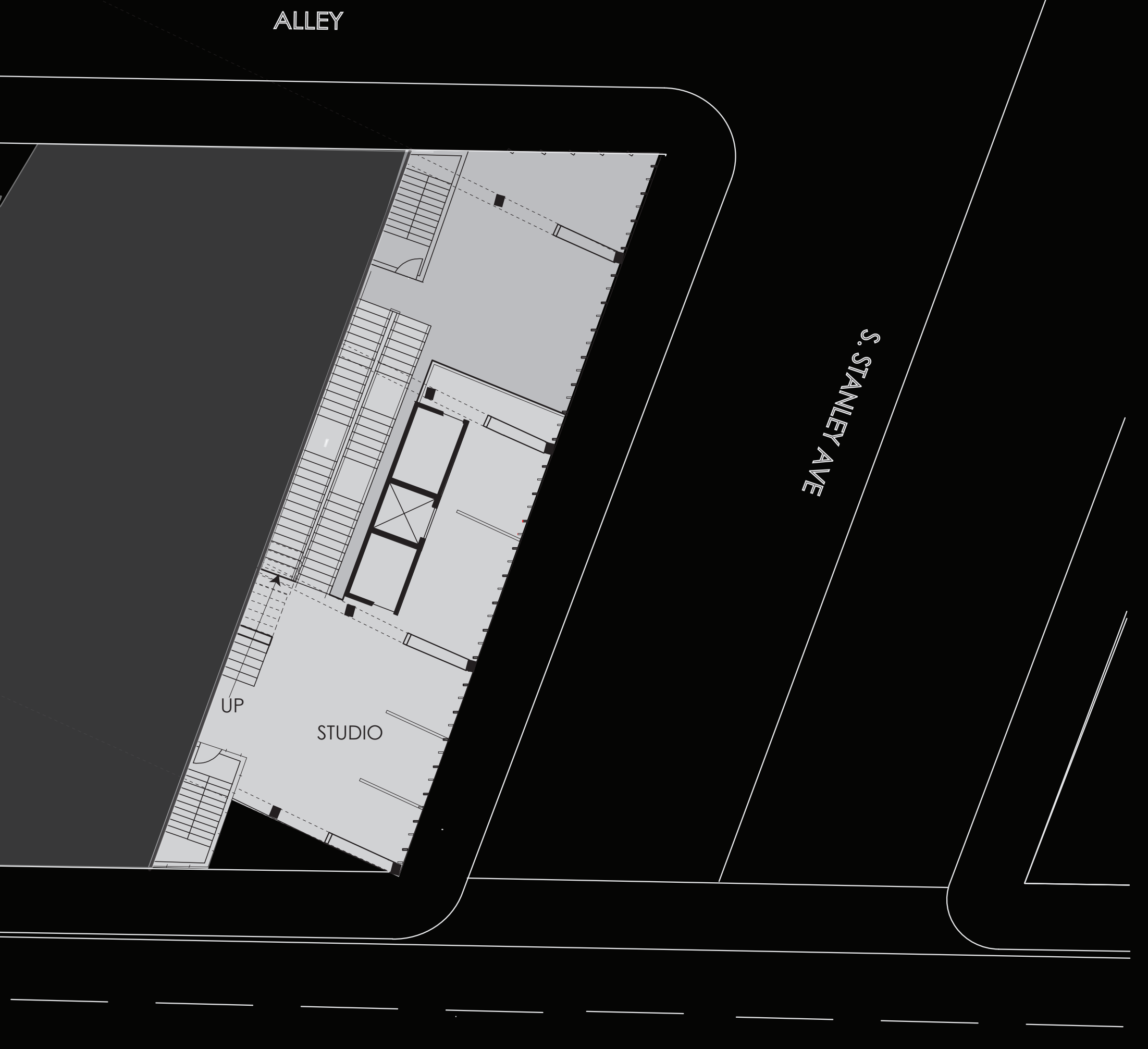




WILSHIRE CENTER
FOR THE ARTS

5820

ALLEY

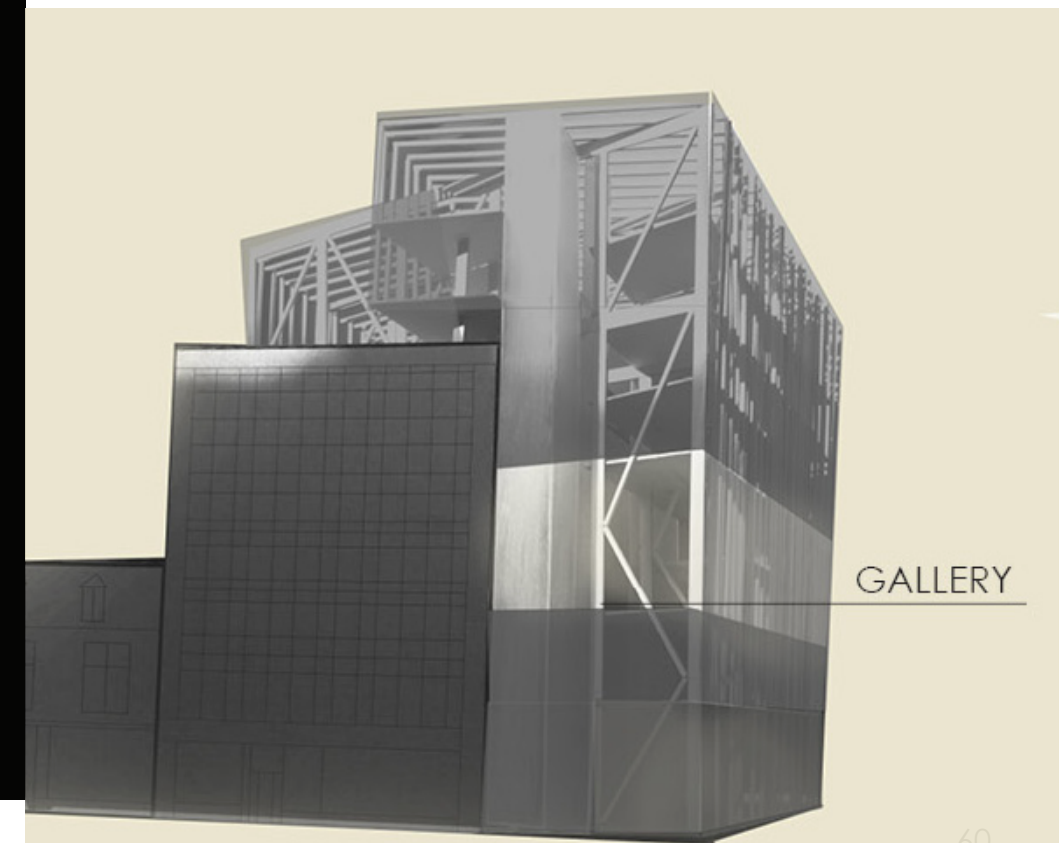


MEZZANINE GALLERY LEVEL

This plan represents a typical floor plan for a mezzanine condition in the building which contains a studio space overlooking a gallery.

Again, this studio to gallery space relationship strives to perpetuate the visual connection between the creation of art in relation to the display of art.

Studio spaces within the double height gallery emphasize this connection within the school as well as display this relationship on the exterior of the building.





PUBLIC ART GALLERY

The design of the gallery spaces explore the possibility of this being a space which could possibly read from the inside out with projections that act as both art on view in the gallery, and a visual sign or indicator to those looking in from the outside and seeing it as a building for the arts. This coincides with other explorations of moveable panels throughout the building which could be mechanically operated as well as manual.

The idea of art within the building being actively created and simultaneously displayed is an element which was considered in the design of this art center. This idea could play out in the form of projections of student work which is displayed on the facade of the building, as well as on panels which turn and move throughout the day. The form of this art center is in a sense seen as a constantly moving and changing advertisement for the activities which take place within.

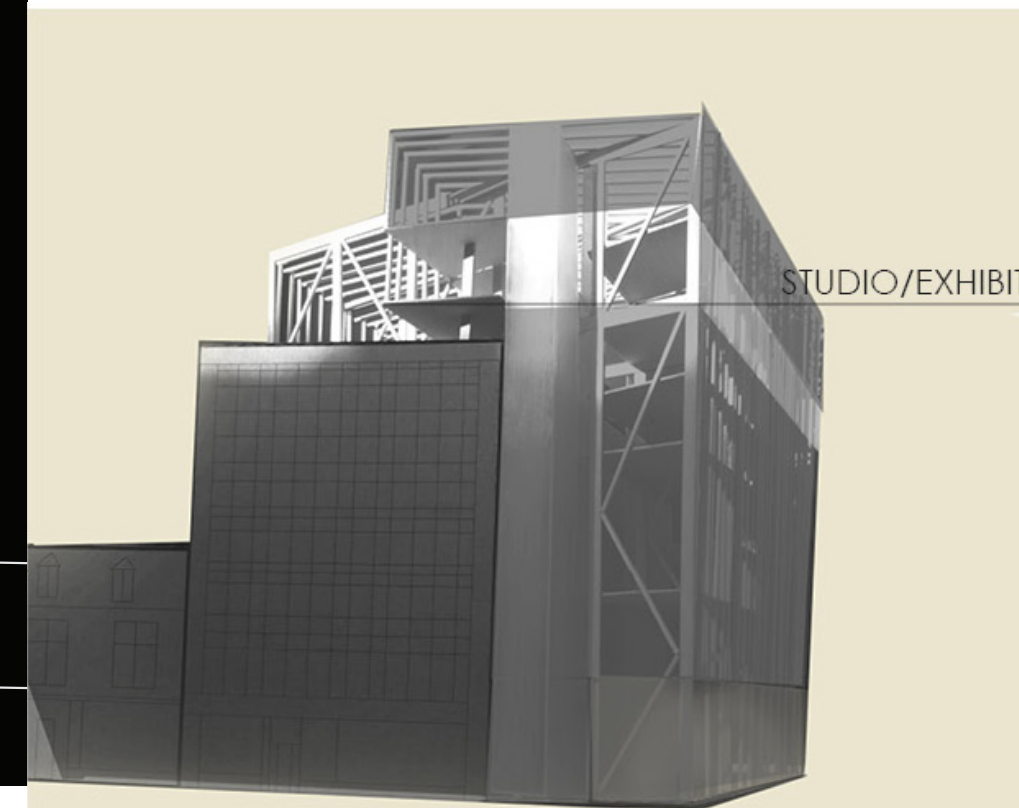


UPPER LEVEL FLOOR

The upper floor level as you arrive to the top contains studio spaces, administration, as well as a double height exhibit space which houses ongoing installation projects created by students in the school.

The studio spaces are in view of this larger double height installation space thus reinforcing the idea of a school which both displays and actively creates artistic displays.

Students are actively learning and building skills while also displaying these efforts to the public in various forms of visual display.





The exhibition space is open and light, leaving it as a blank canvas for students to push the limits of their creativity with large scale art. The exhibit is constantly changing as each term the installation piece transforms from one student design to another. The large scale expression, and freedom of concept and space, gives the public a chance to take back these highly visible

public spaces in an act which is strongly rooted in creative form, and individuality. This idea transforms the notion of media presence along the street from the irrelevant to the culturally celebrated and intriguing. Expressions of the Los Angeles art society can be seen and experienced along this street and inside this building. From the outside, viewers are intrigued by this space and the activities that take place within.

REFLECTIONS OF A CITY: CONCLUSIONS



REFLECTIONS OF A CITY

This project began as an investigation of a city and a fascination with the rhythms and boundless possibilities which exist in a large metropolis. The project specifically focuses on Los Angeles, but it reinstates this larger idea that all cities are living, breathing entities which thrive on the movement and energy of people. This idea has been a life long fascination of mine, which is explored within this project. Finding ways to connect to the urban fabric as it exists as a celebration of the gritty, neglected spaces within a city; these nuances are sometimes ignored but are the very elements which define a great deal of how a city is characterized and experienced on a visceral level. Despite other paths of exploration which may have strayed from this goal throughout the process, the investigation of a city is still present in the current state of this project.

Los Angeles has always been a city which for me has felt lost and lacking in identity. I spent some time there as a young adult beginning a life on my own, and had a strong reaction to the city as having a physical presence which played a role during this chaotic time. The large span of the city gave me a feeling of being cast out into a directionless space where I felt no real grounding. In my time there I noticed a detachment from any real tangible organization which would give the city a sense of place. Despite this fragmented sprawl however, the city has still always possessed a strong energy and dynamism, although I never felt it could be fully grasped.

This thesis in part, is an attempt to understand Los Angeles. Many people see Los Angeles as a city which on the surface has little character or sense of place, however it has always been a goal of mine to see it as more than this, as a city with depth which goes beyond the

surface level. The beginnings of this project are rooted in attempts to find a sense of place and embrace these qualities; that is, as a celebration of those very fragmentary pieces which characterize the city today. Upon further investigation, the choice of using the billboard as a lens through which to see the city proved to be an exciting and fruitful point of research. One of the most interesting resulting elements of this thesis was the fact that these billboards, although seemingly flat and mundane, can possess a wide array of possibilities in terms of design and their theoretical perception as seen by the public, as well as their role as a mirror into our society.

The study of these signs has illuminated many facets of interest which range from political discussions of outdoor media, to structural expression, to commentary on the many ways a design rooted in the character of signs could embody qualities of billboards while also becoming a separate dynamic element of its own. Perhaps the most interesting idea which surfaced in these discussions was the possibility of designing not just one single element on Wilshire, but multiple ones throughout the entire city. These insertions could start to form a language of their own as unique configurations dispersed throughout the sprawl of Los Angeles. Implicating multiple structures heightens a sense of connectedness throughout the city, illuminating the negative through a new positive lens. These are the ideas from which this project has stemmed, and perhaps the most compelling element of this project is that these ideas are where the project can continue to grow and be developed into further investigations of a city. Furthermore, examining the ways design can play a role in the discovery of how embracing an existing urban fabric can heighten the depth, character and vibrance of a city whose identity is evasive, yet altogether rich with endless possibility.



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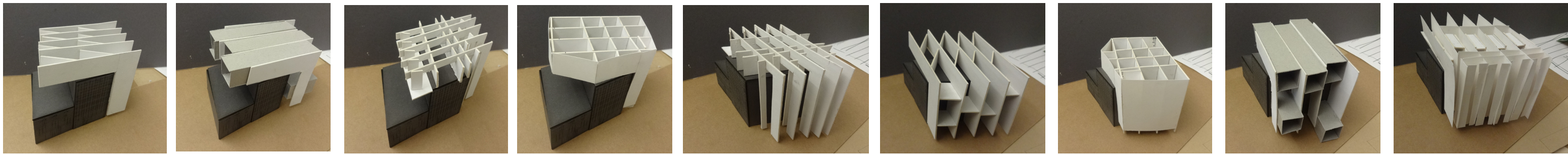
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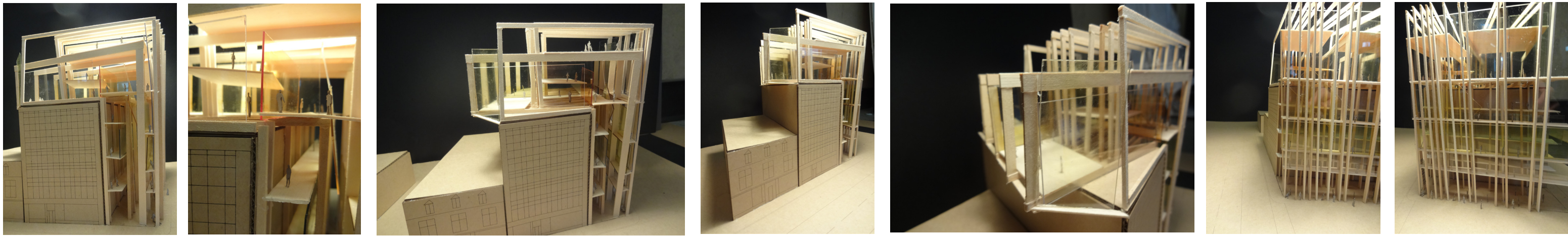
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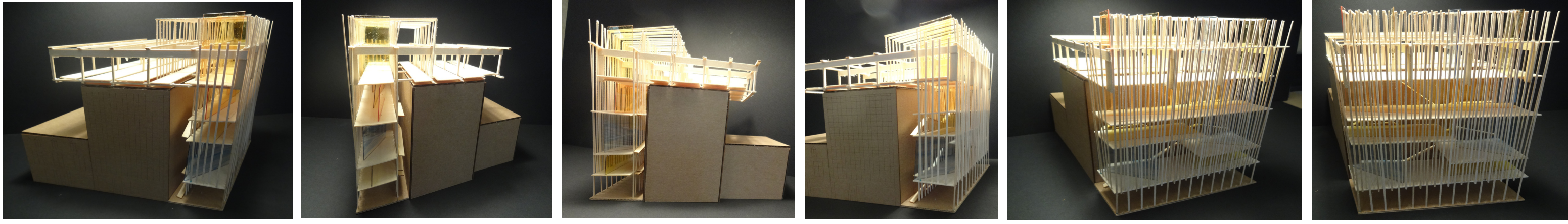
massing models-----



model 1-----



model 2-----



model 3-----

