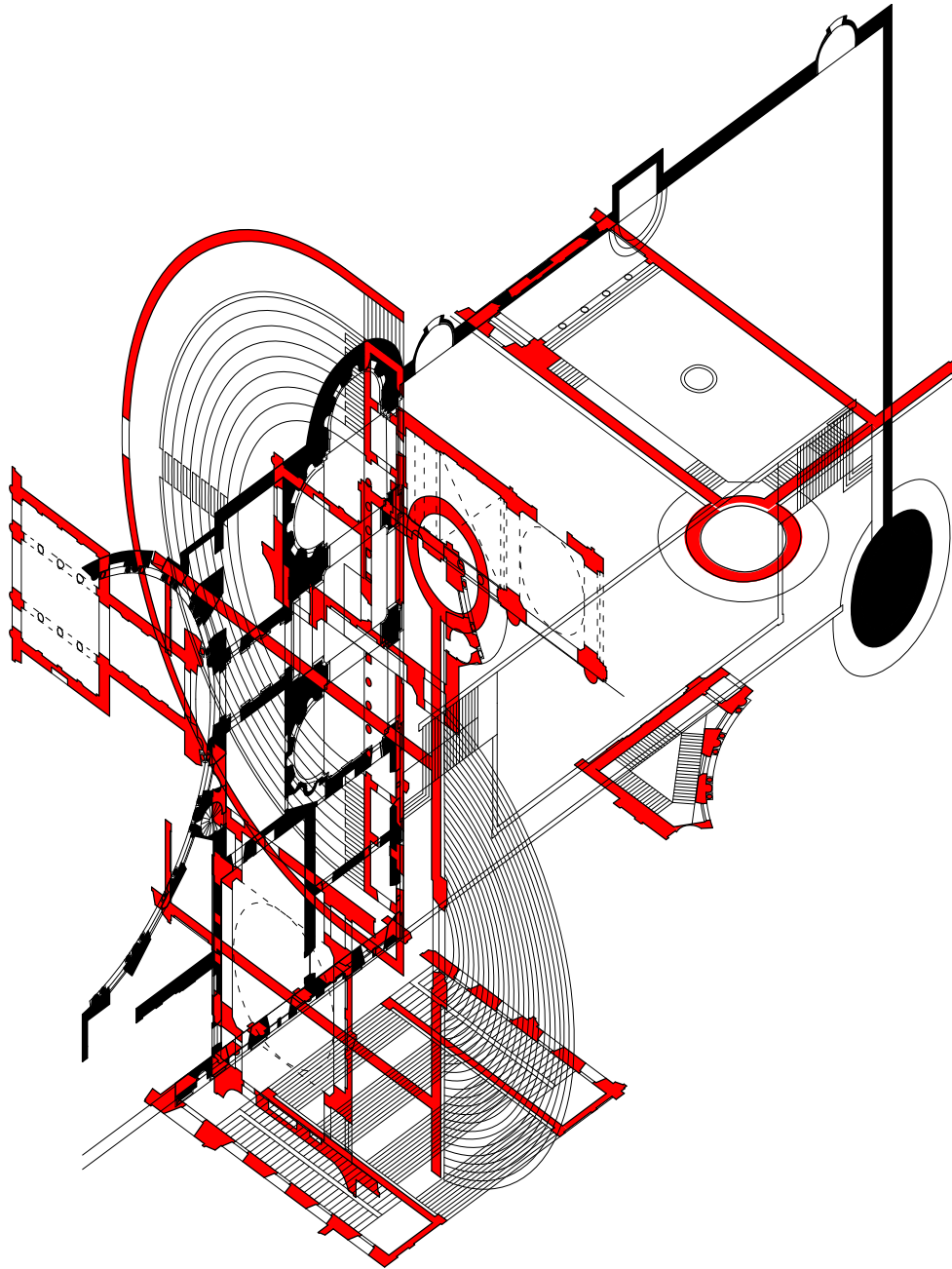


HYPER-REAL VILLA: ARCHITECTURAL SIMULACRUM



By
Guillermo Gonzalez
May, 2019

HYPER-REAL VILLA: ARCHITECTURAL SIMULACRUM

An Abstract of a Senior Honors Thesis

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Bachelor of Architecture

By

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May, 2019

Abstract

In the essay *Figures, Doors and Passages*, Robin Evans explains the evolving relationship between architecture and simulation. Using two historical case studies, Evans proposes that culture, through visual representation, directly influences architecture. He explains how the Villa Madama, designed by Raphael in 1518, provides a perfect example where representations, such as contemporary paintings, sculptures, and literature, influence the program, shape, scale, and experience of the building. Naturally, those representations reflected the values within the social structures of that time and prompted an architecture that reflected the contemporary culture. In today's landscape, visual representations have evolved into simulations that often have little association with reality. According to Jean Baudrillard, we seem to have accepted the simulated as a reality and have begun to shape our culture based upon it. The way we interact and respond to the simulation has changed, yet we are still practicing the same design strategy that was used in the Villa Madama. This is clearly shown in video gaming arenas where we are still designing massive structures and slapping the simulation on platforms all around. Just like in the Villa Madama, we go to these buildings to be entertained by the representations and simulations surrounding us. This thesis proposes that architecture should reflect our cultural shift in the relationship with the simulated by blending architecture and the simulation. This is accomplished by re-interpreting the second half of the Villa Madama that was never built as an arena in which spectators can experience and be emerged in the simulation. This prompted two forms of design, the first part is a physical structure that is an abstraction of what was never built made up only by platforms and stairs. The second part is the simulation that allowed the movement through the structure to be perceived as a sequence or montage of spaces in which the spectators could experience the second half of the villa through a new perspective.



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Site history

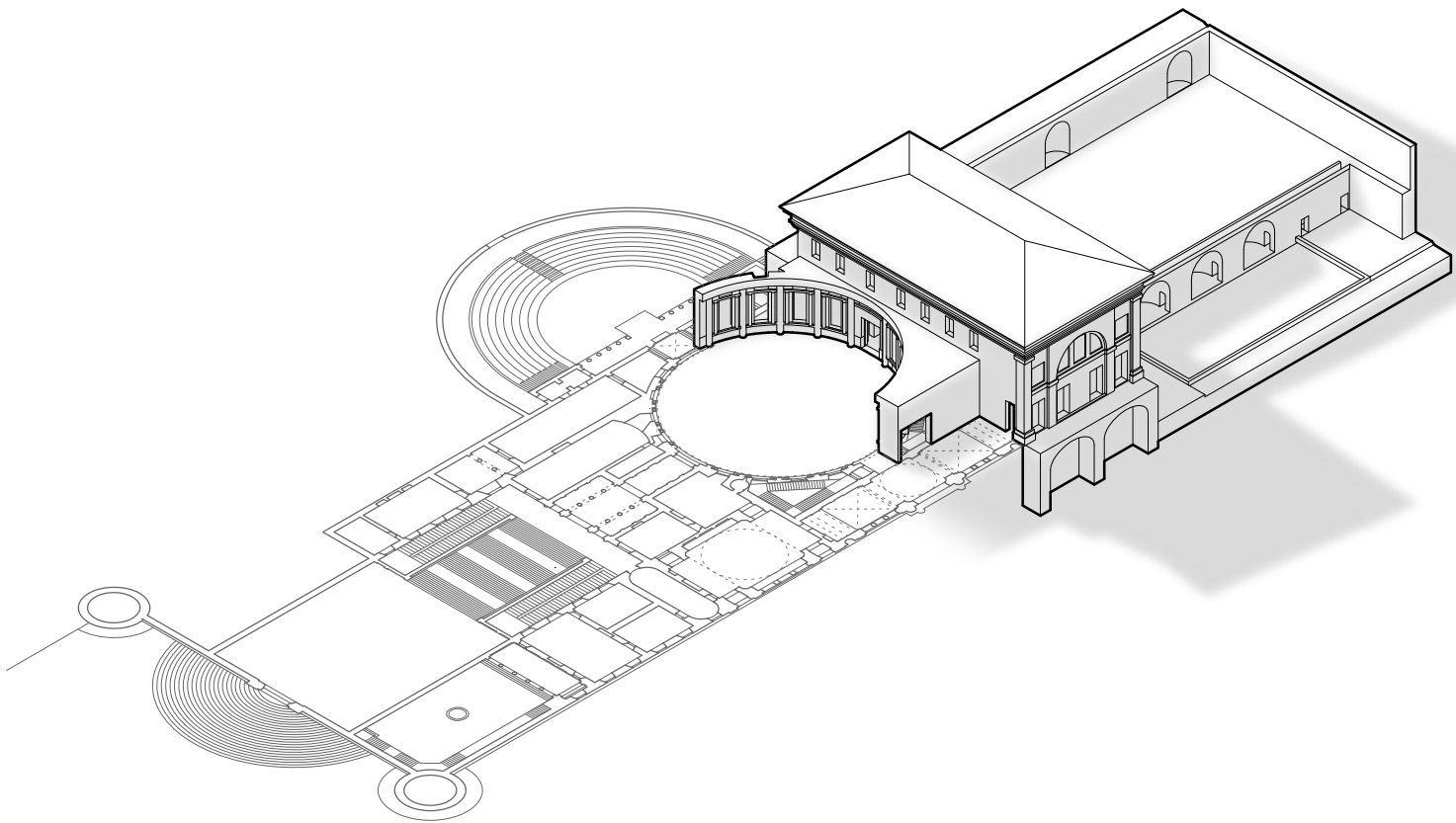
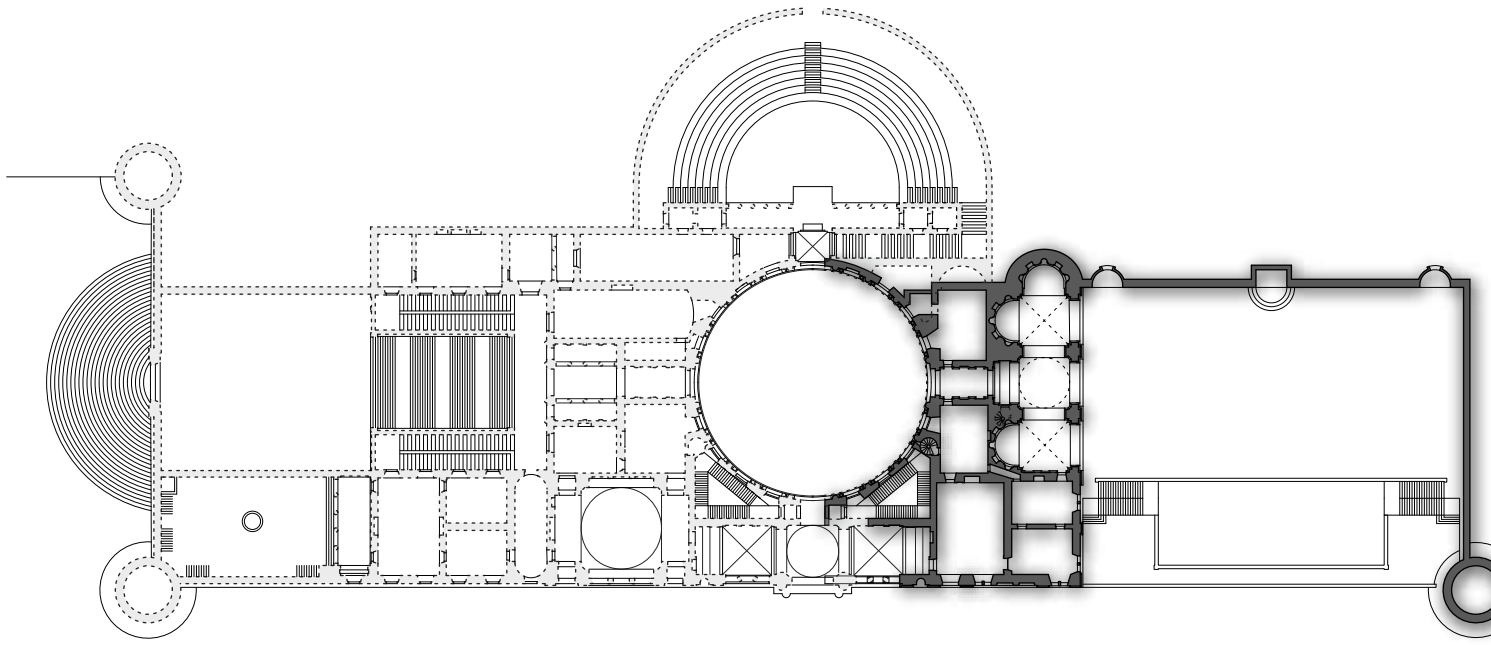
On the slopes of Monte Mario is Rafael's masterpiece as an architect: Villa Madama. He designed it in 1518, shortly before his death, as a resting place for Cardinal Giulio de 'Medici and as a place of preparation for the delegates that visited Rome.

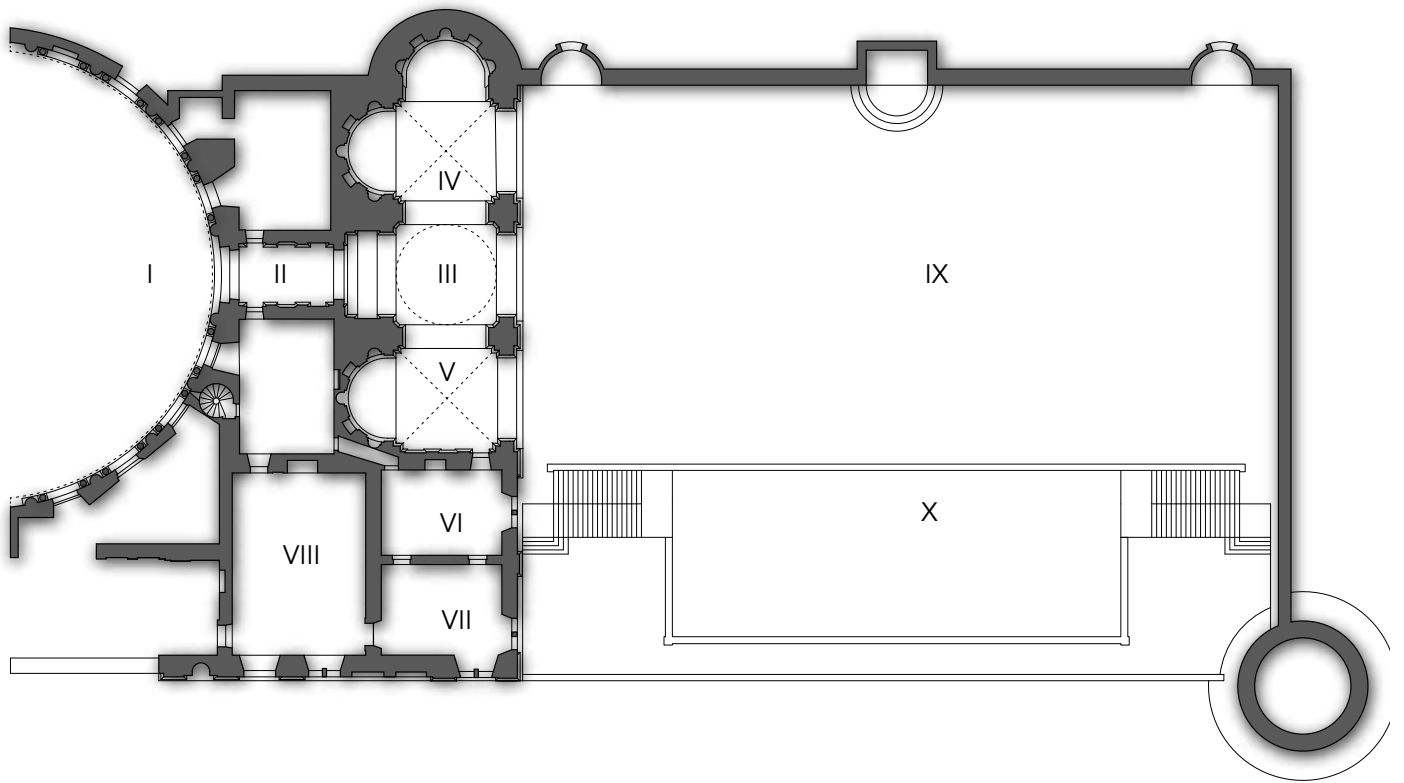
Villa Madama owes its name to Madame Margarita of Austria, daughter of Emperor Charles V, who was the owner and lived in the villa between 1538 and 1550, although the villa was never completed. However, there are documents about the building that allow us to know the intentions of Rafael, from drawings to a copy of the letter that describes the villa at the time of the design process. The plans made show the complete idea of the whole villa.

The villa is organized around a circular patio. Behind this, the nymphaeum and the theater are raised in the old ways, and in the front, a gallery opens to the field. In the background are the stables, on whose roof are the hippodrome, place of walking that is integrated into the gardens that fell into the river. In the wing on the left was the atrium, the organizing axis of this sector, and next to it, the winter apartment, with a large circular lounge, a secret garden and the huge nursery. In the wing on the right is the garden with a greenhouse, the summer apartments and a gallery that was used as a dining room. It is also filled with exquisite decoration: the fragmented stucco ornaments, the grotesque vaults, the floors inspired by Classical Antiquity, and the frescoes by Giulio Romano are just some examples. Unfortunately, only one part of Rafael's original project was built due to the artist death in 1520.

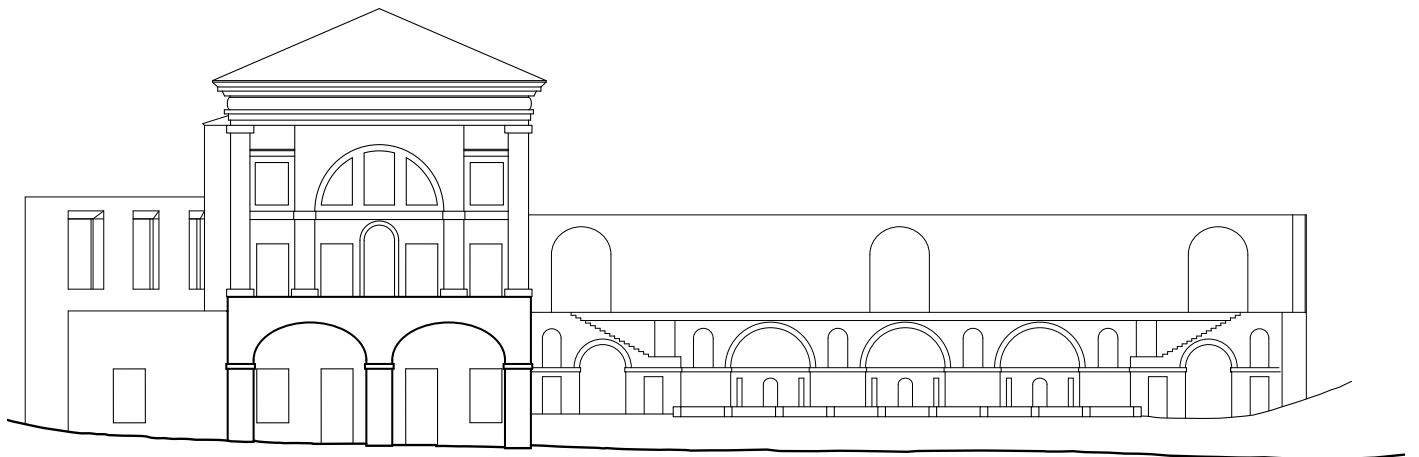
The Villa Madama passed by inheritance at the hands of the Farnese, a family that disappears towards the seventeenth century. In the 20th century it was bought and restored by Count Carlo di Frasso, who then leased it to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was later bought by Mussolini in 1941. Today Villa Madama remains the property of the Italian government and is used to host foreign guests and press conferences related to foreign affairs.







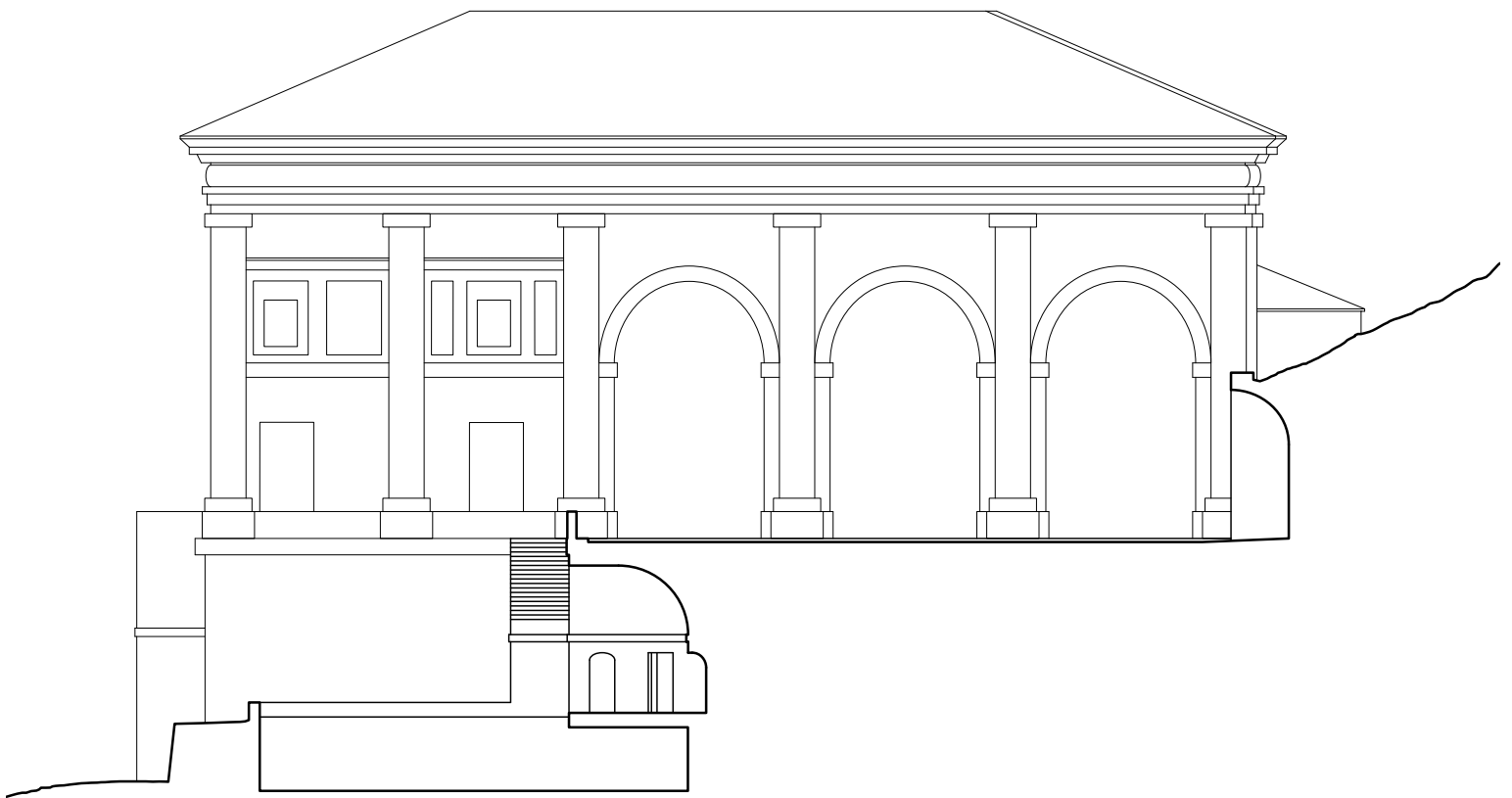
I: Exedra / II: Atrium / III, IV, V: The Garden Loggia / VI, VII: Rooms / VIII: Sala di Giulio Romano / IX: Garden / X: Fishpond

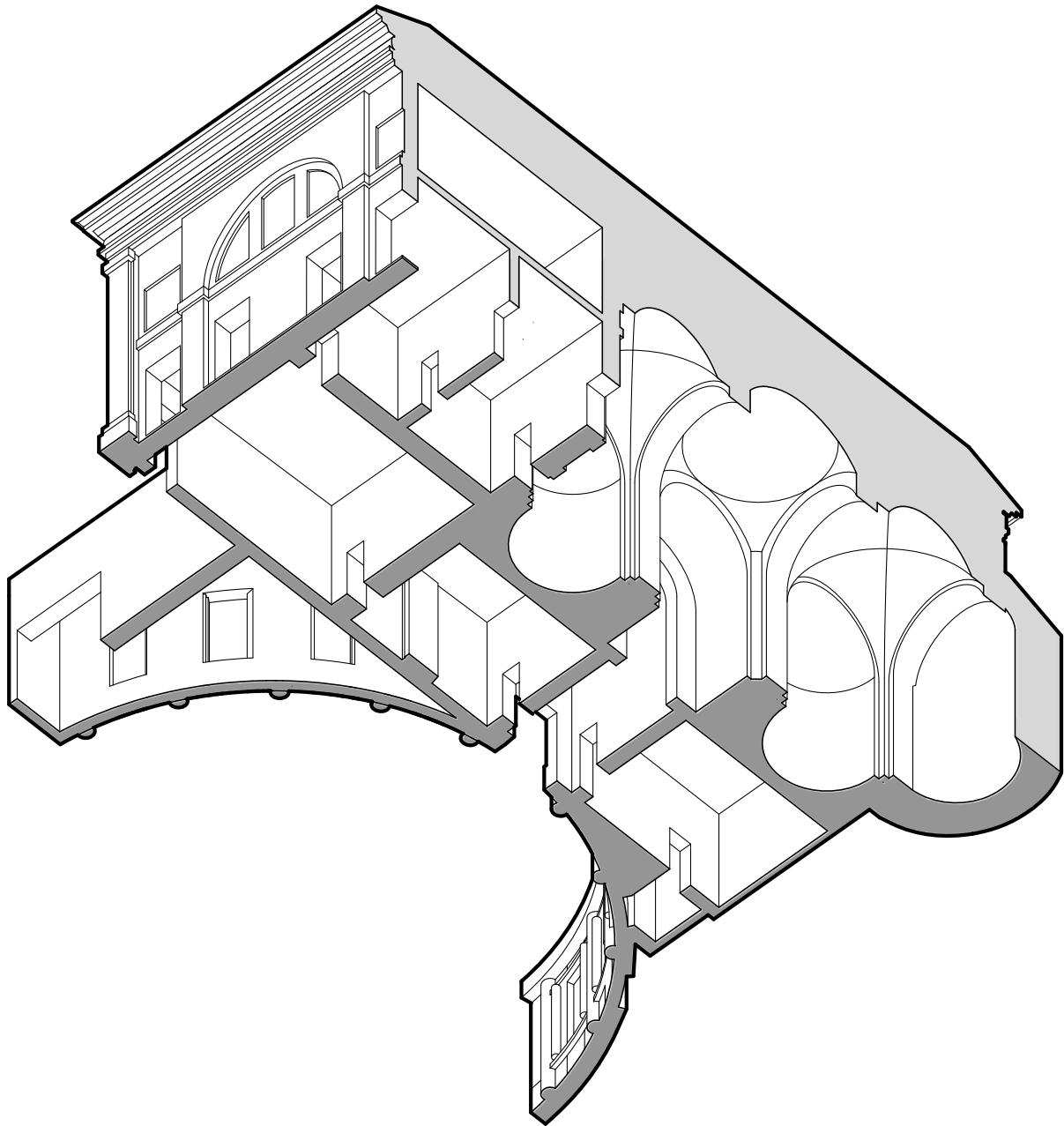


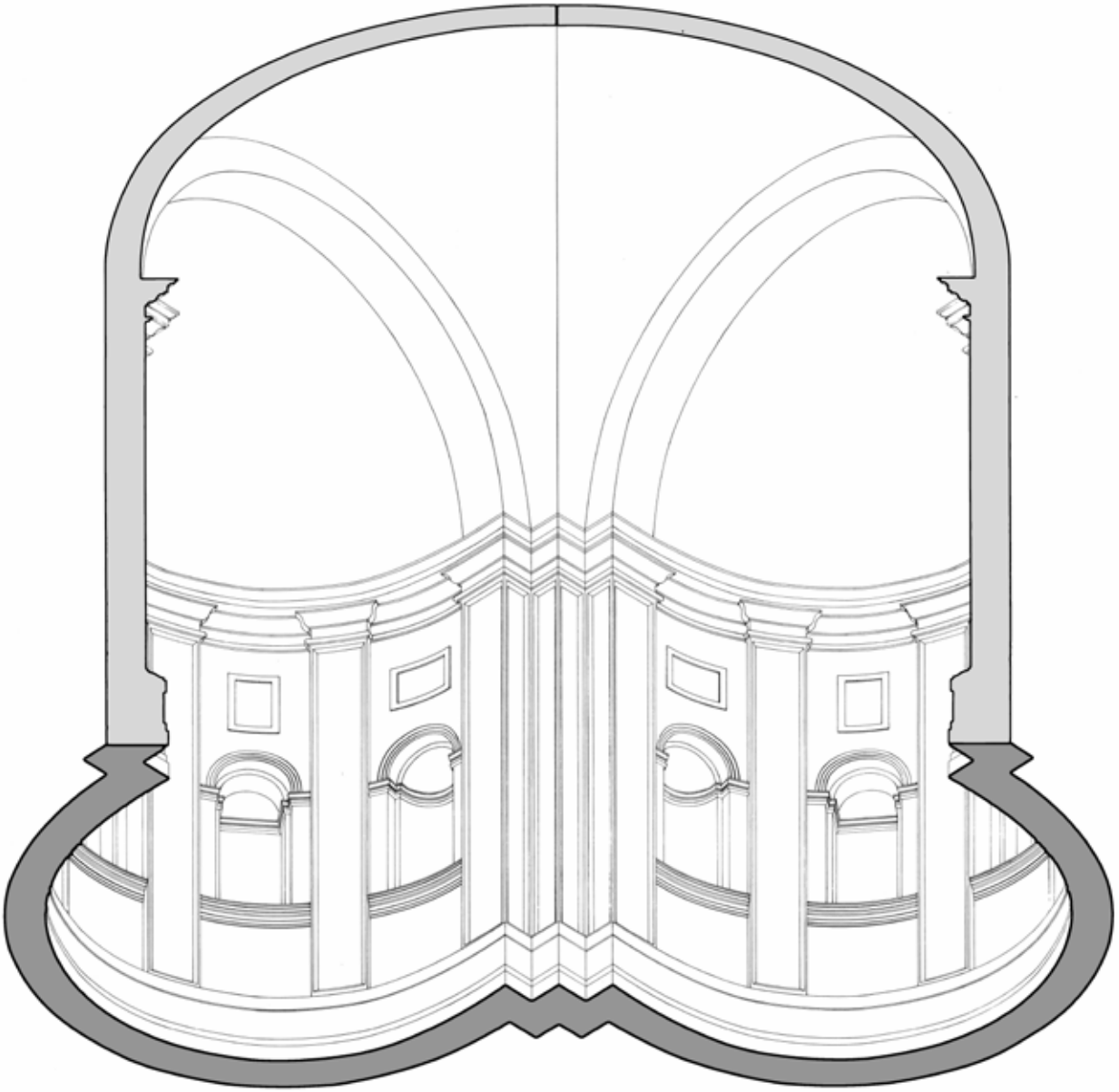
Analysis of representation in the villa

Roma villas built during the Renaissance period had one main function apart from their housing features, entertainment. Villa Madama was meant to be the first stop for any important visitor of Rome. There, Pope Leo X would greet them and sometimes even offer the villa for the period of their stay. For this purpose, Raphael had to incorporate two main design concepts into the villa. First it had to demonstrate the power of the Medici family as well as the promise that Rome would be in peace under Medici rule. It also had to “revive the corps of Rome” by incorporating old roman practices as well as ideas.

To achieve this Raphael let representations penetrate many architectural elements during the design process. Within the villa, the most important representational space was the garden loggia. This extravagantly scaled room with soaring vaults is decorated with richly interwoven frescoed and polychromed stucco decorations, which blanket the vaults, dome, pendentives, and walls. The inner garden, centered on the axis and enclosed by the architecture, becomes an extension of the loggia. It also housed colossal statues as well as the well known Elephant fountain. This assemble of loggia and garden exemplifies the Renaissance dialect of art and nature. To revive the corpse of Rome, Raphael turns to Vitruvius writing to incorporate ancient theaters into modern times. This metaphor served Raphael as the divine, life-giving power of the artist, and a cultural rebirth to the stage Raphael had design for the pope. This representative complex incorporated architecture, multimedia decorations, and garden elements into a network of meanings alluding to ancient literature, cosmology, and Medici dynastic propaganda.

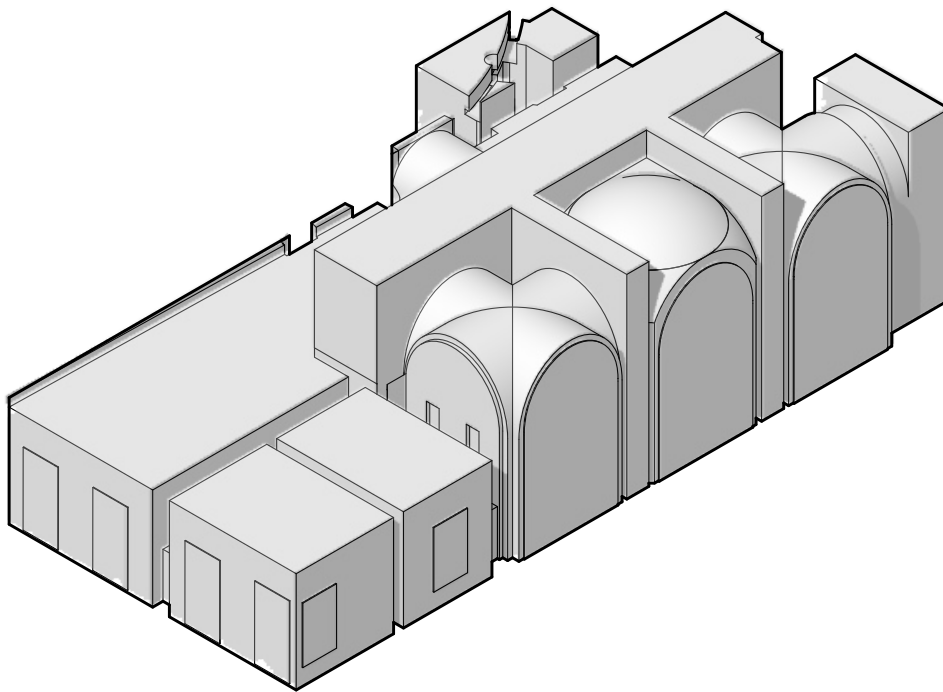






Architecture representing culture

During the Renaissance Period, it was typical for a house layout to be a series of rooms connected to one another. The occupied areas of the house, and a designated path through the house, were not distinguished in this plan. This layout generated an intersection of paths between the inhabitants, and it opened the entire plan to be an acceptable choice of movement. This cultural acceptance of carnality was also reflected in the Italian Renaissance paintings. Evans points out that in the Madonna, also by Raphael, the figures' bodies interact and touch each other. This distinction reflects, at the time, the culture of passion, habitual gregariousness, and carnality. Each of these characteristics is also represented in the plans of the interconnected rooms of the Villa Madama. Therefore, we can say that "if anything is described by an architectural plan, it is the nature of human relationships"; a representation of the cultural norms of the 15th century.



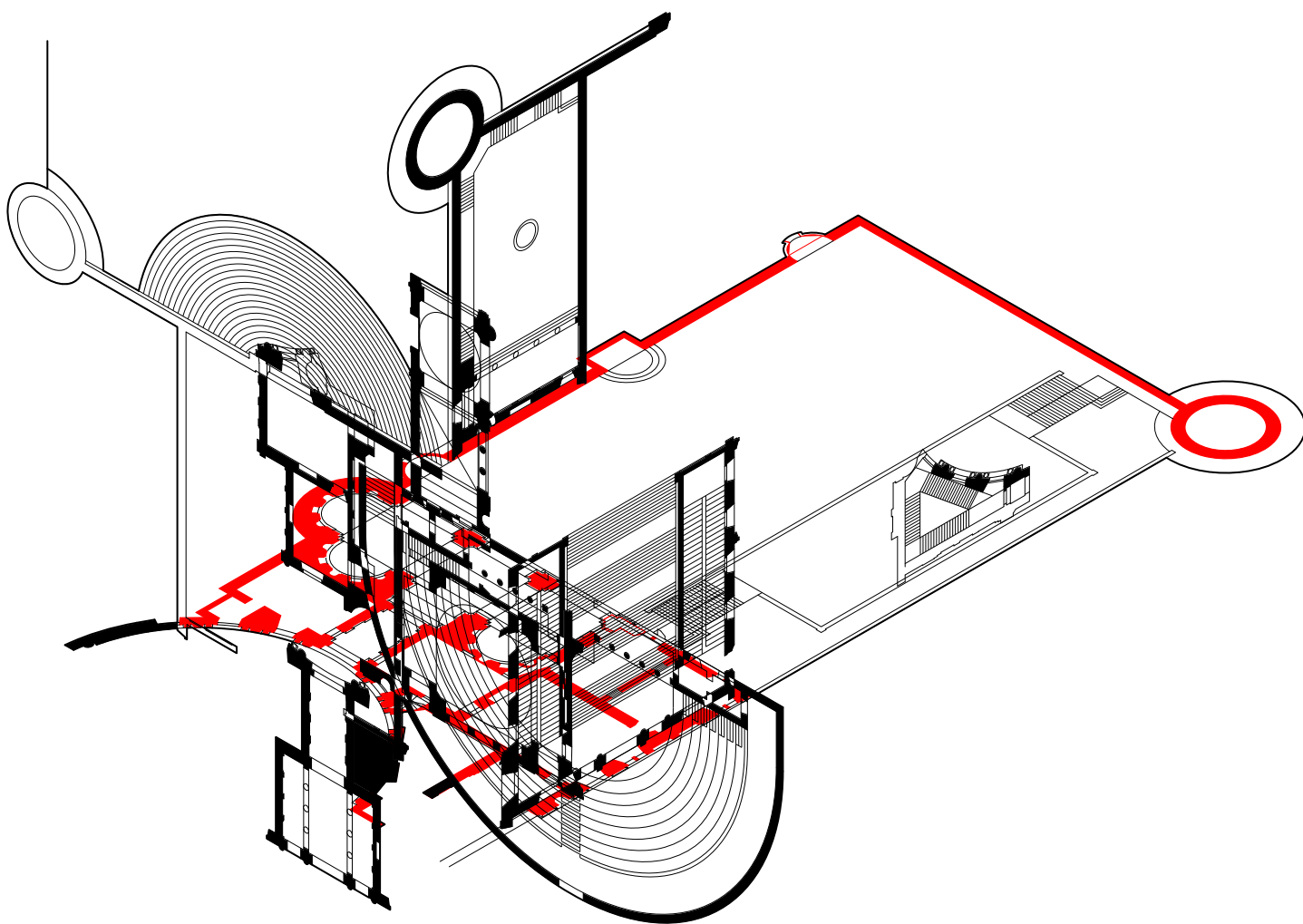
Villa Madama, Room Volume

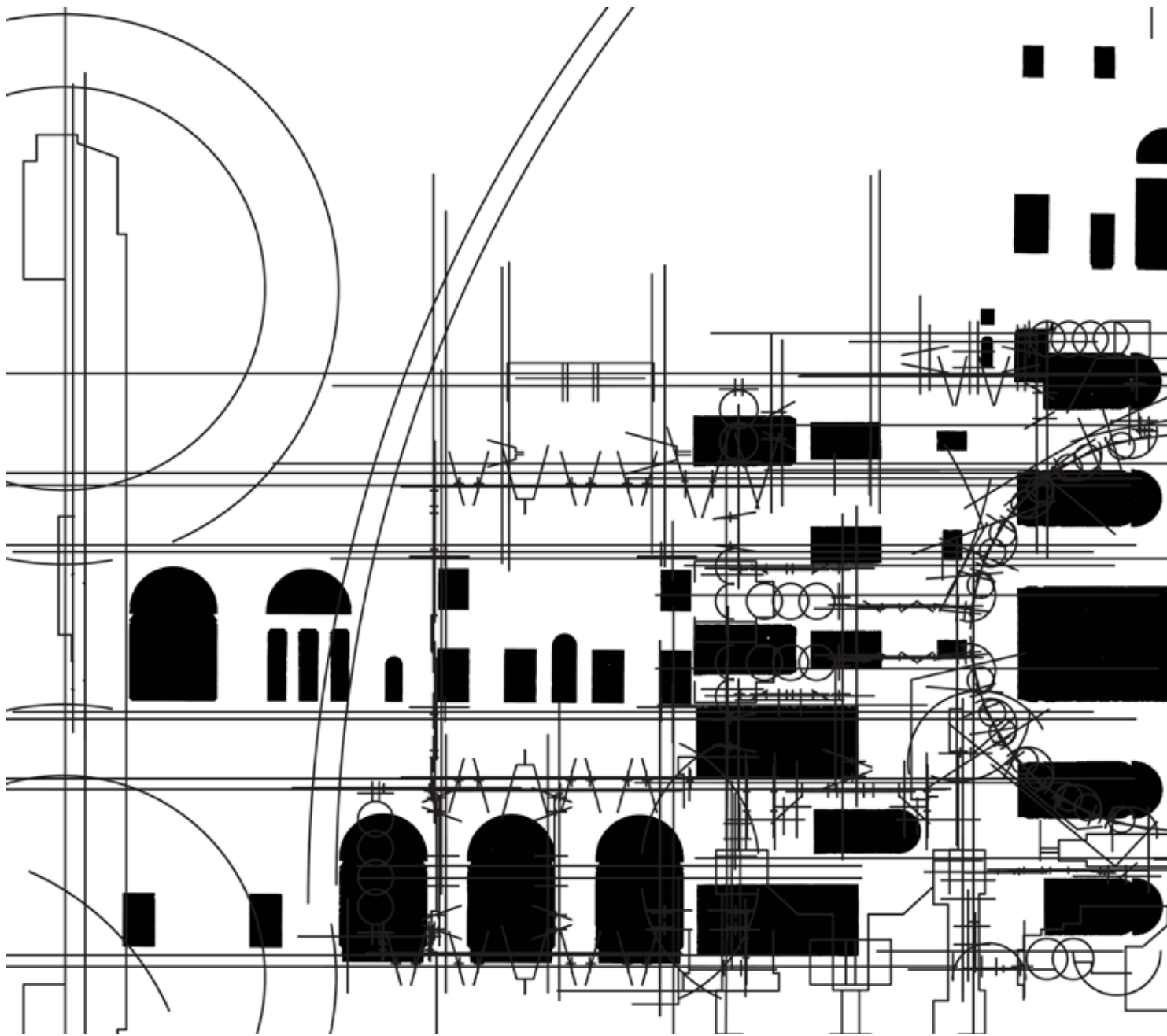


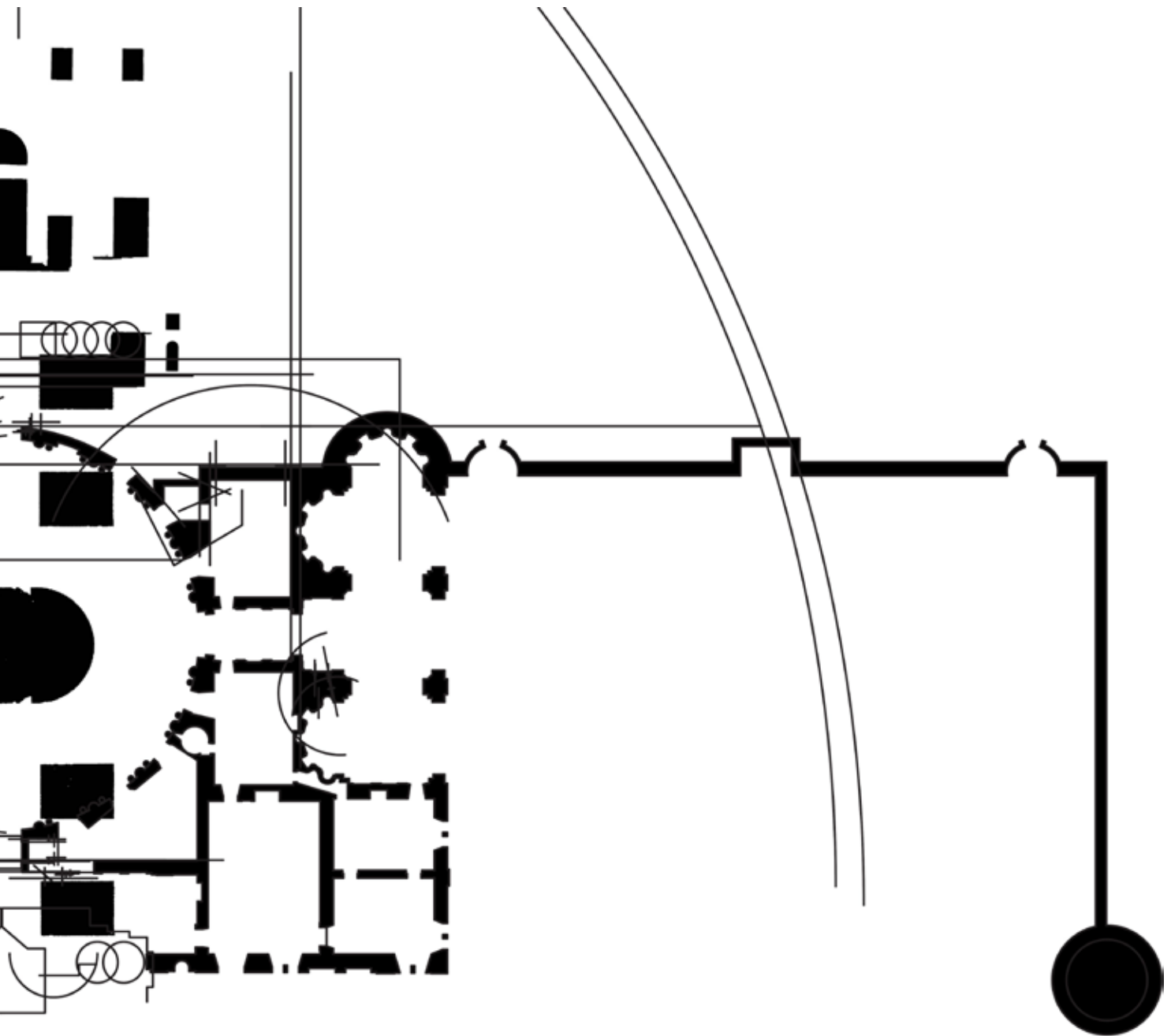
Madonna dell'Impannata, Raphael

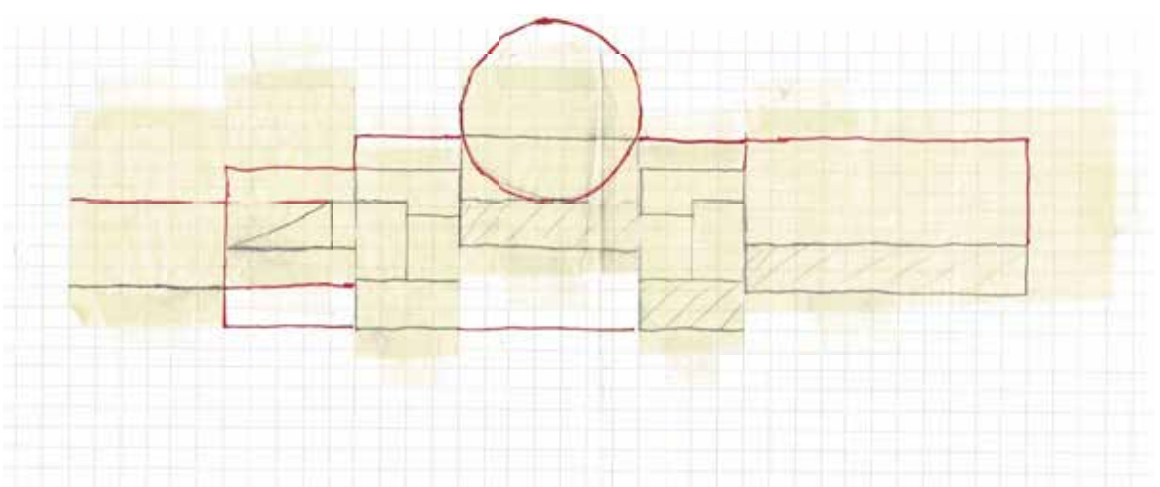
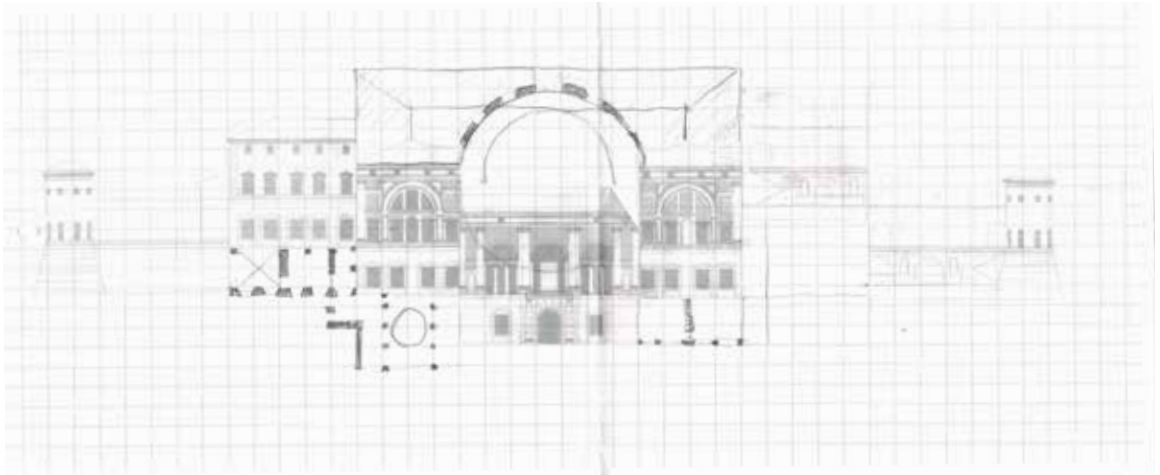
Architecture representing culture

In the contemporary landscape of today how do we, our culture, respond or perceive these representations that have become simulations? Our phone, social media, video games, and TV shows feed us information that has evidently become our culture. Jean Baudrillard calls this hyper real culture. And what is architecture's response to it? Same design strategy as the villa Madama. Take video game arenas for example, this community that has completely accepted the virtual as a form of reality has again massive structures with the simulations like commercialized images, and even the arena, where the action is going on, slapped on all surroundings. We go into these buildings, like the villa Madama, to be entertained by these representations that are all around us. What this design is proposing is to blend architecture and those simulations together, to immerse the spectators into the arena. I achieve this by reinterpreting the half of the villa that was never built in which the whole architecture is the arena.





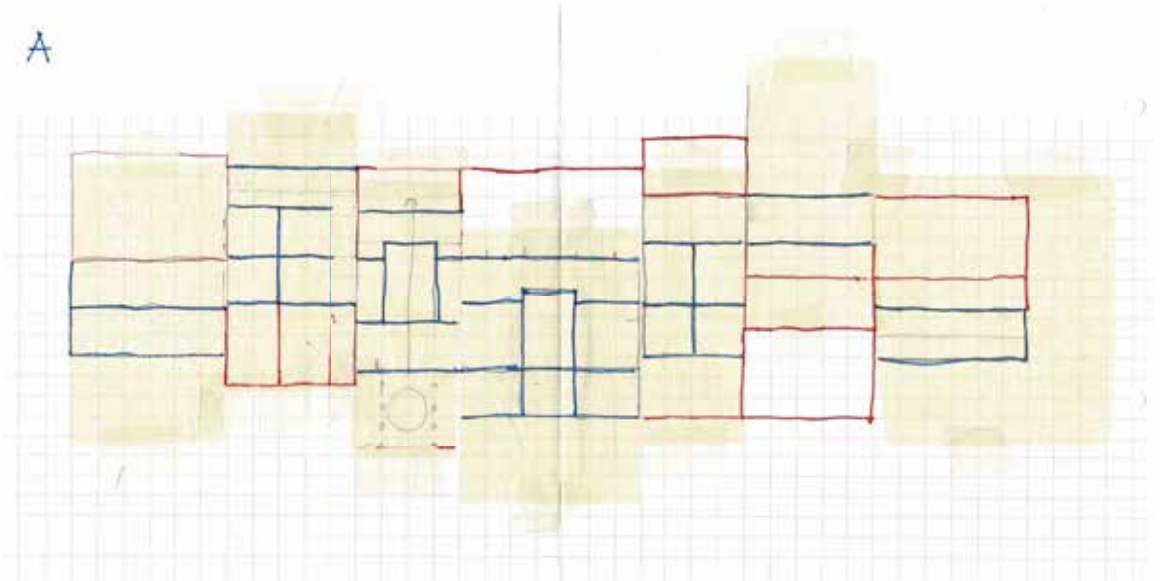




IS THERE A
 (SPECIFIC) CAUSE
 EFFECTIVE?

WHY THIS RELAT?
 WITH THE RE-CHART

A

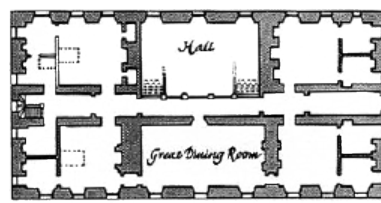
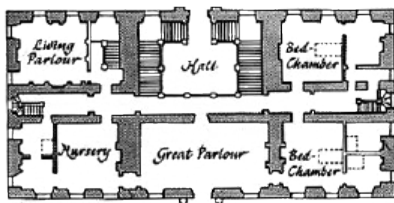




Family Prayers, Samuel Butler, 1835



Coleshill House in Berkshire



1600

CORRIDOR

Sir Roger Pratt / Robin Evans

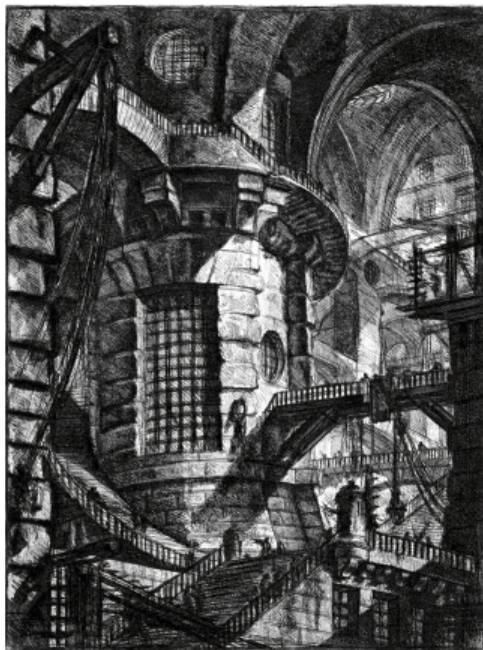
In England during the 18th century, there was a very obvious difference in a domestic layout. In the social desire to separate movement and occupation, the corridor was born. In the Coleshill House in Berkshire, designed by Sir Roger Pratt, the seclusion of a space of movement brings "distant rooms closer by, but only by disengaging those near at hand. And in this there is another glaring paradox, in facilitating communication, the corridor reduced contact." This cultural shift of a desired privacy and the reduction of human contact perforated not only architectural floor plans but all simulations. In the painting *Family Prayers*, by Samuel Butler, bodies no longer interact or touch each other. Bodies simply coexist in space with one another. It simulated a new culture of segregated activities and functions, a society that aimed to avoid contact and interaction with one another. For this purpose, Evans negatively criticizes the creation of the corridor, but culture is created by society. The architects and artist of this era created simulations that were a true and loyal representation of what a society believed in as a collective, reality, and therefore should not be doomed for their faithful creations. It is the creation of simulations made to shape culture and imitate reality that should worry society, a problem first discussed by Guy Debord and fought by the Situationist.

PIRANESI

Imaginary Prisons

Giovanni Battista Piranesi was an illustrator of archaeological antiquities. Everything discovered in Rome during the eighteenth century passed through his eyes and was reproduced to perfection in his engravings. So successful were the reproductions, that tourists who went to Rome in that century did not leave without a Piranesi. The artist studied architecture, but only one of his designs was made. Maybe they were too risky or innovative, maybe he did not have the luck of others. But Piranesi had another passion, and that was, to imagine things. So mixing description and imagination, the artist began to make drawings like Imaginary Prisons. Piranesi made a series of pieces in which he invented most imaginative prisons. They are pure utopian architecture, or perhaps dystopian, in which he combined architectural styles and perhaps also invented a few. Mix of his beloved Roman ruins in which there are huge and at the same time oppressive dungeons, dark corridors, stairs, galleries, platforms, soaring ceilings, etc. They are interiors that anticipate romanticism and the twentieth century, which nourished the art of Escher, and which inspired countless horror films and video games.

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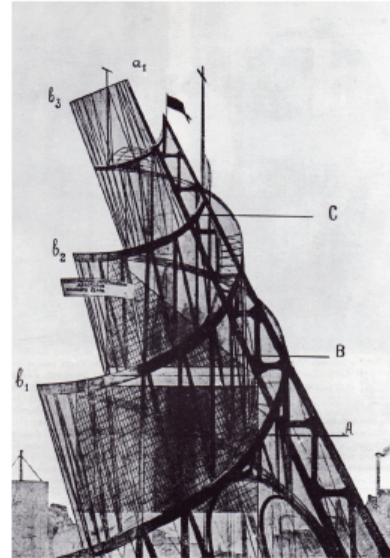




Lenin Tribune



Troublemaker



Monument to the Third International

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CONSTRUCTIVISM

El Lissitzky / Vladimir Tatlin

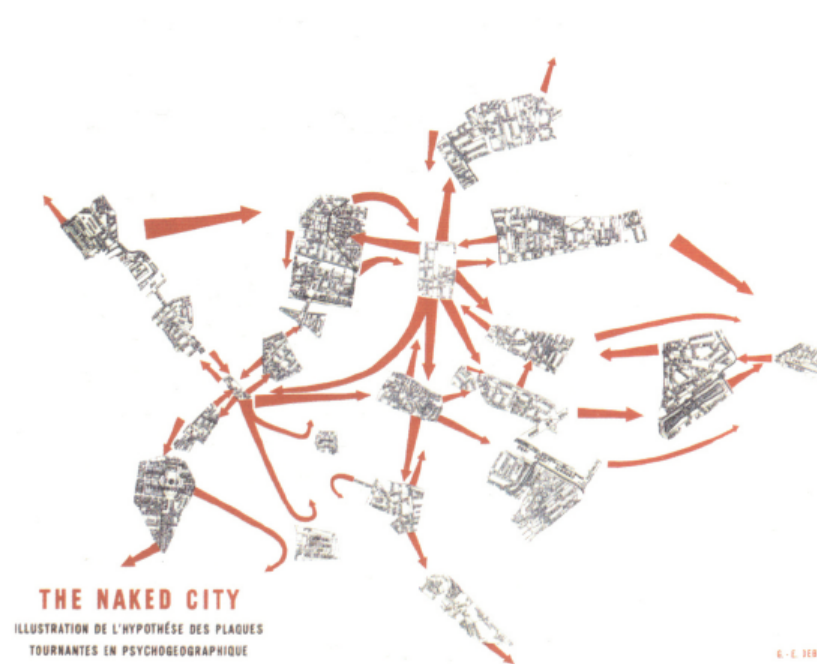
This artistic movement emerged in Russia in 1917, which has its roots in the 'Vkhutemas', or "Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops of the State" and was developed mainly in Russian art, design and architecture. It is based on cubism, and aesthetically it is related to engineering and architecture. The Soviet Revolution sought new forms of expression related to the aspiration to supplant the capitalist system by more democratic schemes of production and distribution of goods. To this end, artists such as Vladimir Tatlin, Kasimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Wassily Kandinsky, Naum Gabo and El Lissitzky promoted an aesthetic and an approach to design that, among other things, was associated with industrial production and bid farewell to complacent ornament. Therefore, his compositions are mathematically constructed and his motifs are neither real objects nor free fantasies of the artist. In addition, the assessment of space and the space / time component were fundamental. These artists were inspired by the technical production from an aesthetic point of view. They abandoned the purely material sphere and devoted themselves to all artistic fields: poster design, fashion, typography, photography, interior architecture, advertising, illustrations. Among the characteristics of style is the use of colors orange, red, blue, yellow, black and white (usually always in the same tones, both in posters and objects), the constant allusion to modern elements that symbolize progress, geometric structures and heavy forms.

SITUATIONISM

Society of the Spectacle / Guy Devoran

Situationism emerged at the end of the 50s within the framework of the Situationist International and maintained its activity until its disbanding in 1972. It had a great political implication, and was in search of alternatives to the capitalist system and of the call "society of the spectacle". The situationist thought was a reaction against a capitalist world, against the ruled and boring city, fought against what was considered an ingrained and simulated social model. Under the current perspective we could say that it was a long and deep dream that offered an opportunity to reflect on politics, art and the city, a dream that taught to look at the urban landscape, investigating new spatial models and social behaviors, resulting as a breath of fresh air for a generation eager for a different world. A totally unprecedented way of thinking emerged in a society that abandoned its certainties and detached itself from its old skin. It was then that they began to look for alternatives to live in the city, proposing a non-conformist attitude with the urban experience, a "wandering through the labyrinths of the urban space in search of subversive desires". Concepts such as wandering, walking, everyday life, surprise, play and spontaneity were valued. In this context, the theory of situationism was born, proposed by Guy Debord in 1958, "a fleeting transit technique through changing environments", one of his most suggestive contributions, as a call to wander, tracing psychological paths according to the different urban experiences. The predetermined attitudes for economic and utilitarian conditions were rejected as opposed to "letting oneself be carried" by the city through different atmospheres and microclimates. It mattered more to travel than to arrive.

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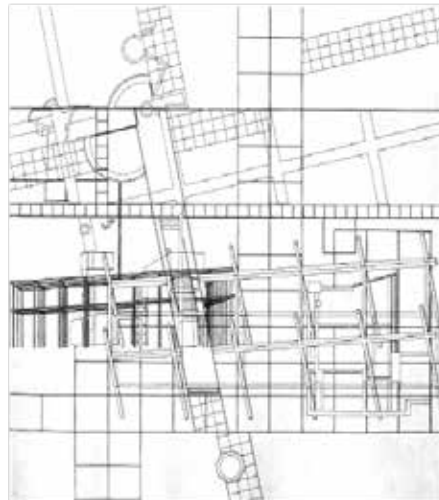
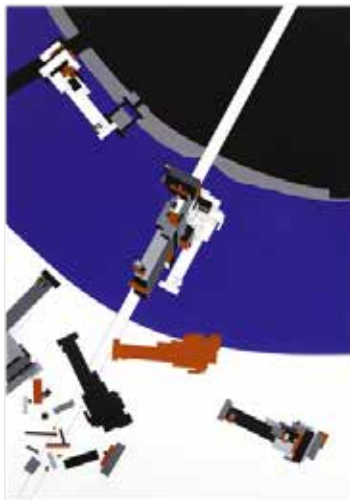


DECONSTRUCTIVISM

Zaha Hadid / Peter Eisenman / Daniel Libeskind

Deconstructivism or Deconstruction is a modern architectural movement that emerged in the decade of the eighties of the twentieth century and has some similarity with the Russian Constructivism of the 1920s. However, the father of this style is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, since he been the one that has contributed the most to defining it. It is a style that is encompassed within Postmodernity, and that currently coexists with the Postmodern style, the High-tech or also called Late Modern, the New Organic Architecture of Toyo Ito or Sustainable Architecture. Its main characteristics are the lack of harmony, continuity and symmetry, fleeing significantly from the Euclidean geometry. "It's about showing contradictions openly, which means dispensing with the classic laws of support and burden, of the wall and the closing of space, of proportion and regularity." The architects assigned to this movement are Peter Eisenman, Frank O. Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi. These architects contributed some of their most representative works in the exhibition entitled "Deconstructive Architecture" that took place at the MOMA Museum of Modern Art in New York that was held from June 23 to August 30, 1988.

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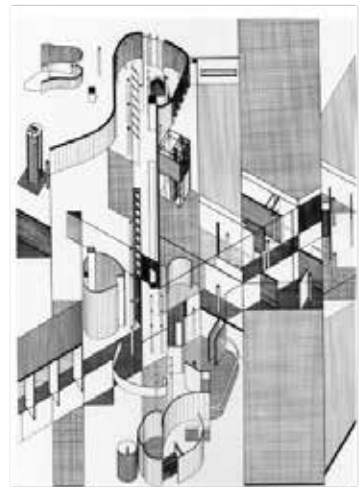
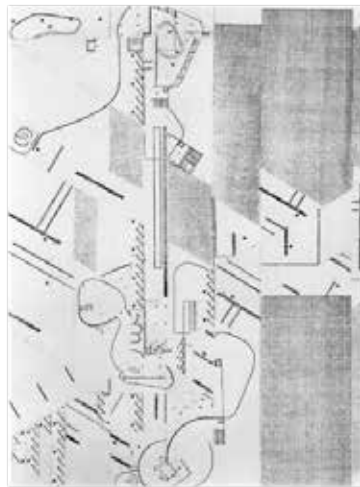
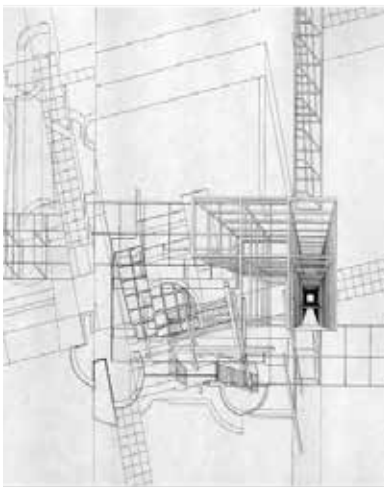
Dominion office building, Zaha



House II, Peter Eisenman



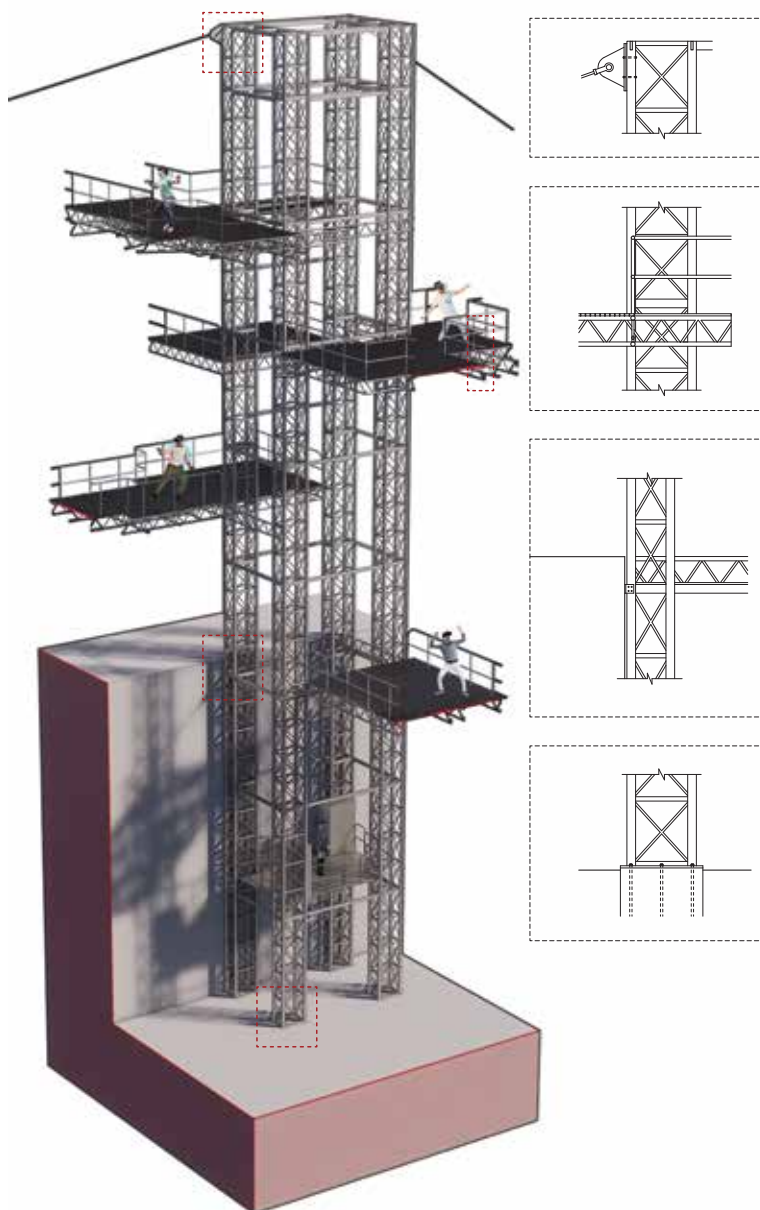
**Jewish Museum,
Daniel Libeskind**



Design, Concept, Strategy

There are two parts to this project that needed to be designed

- One is the physical structure that was going to be built for the spectators
- Two was the simulation its self in which you would experience the second half of the villa in which the actors performed



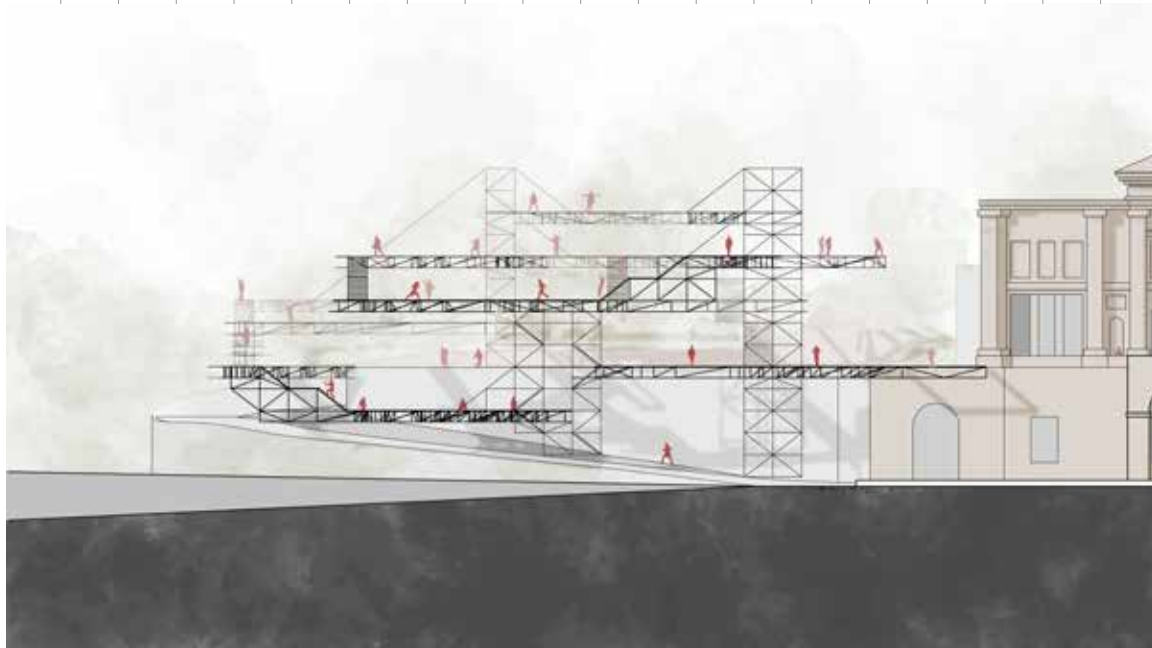
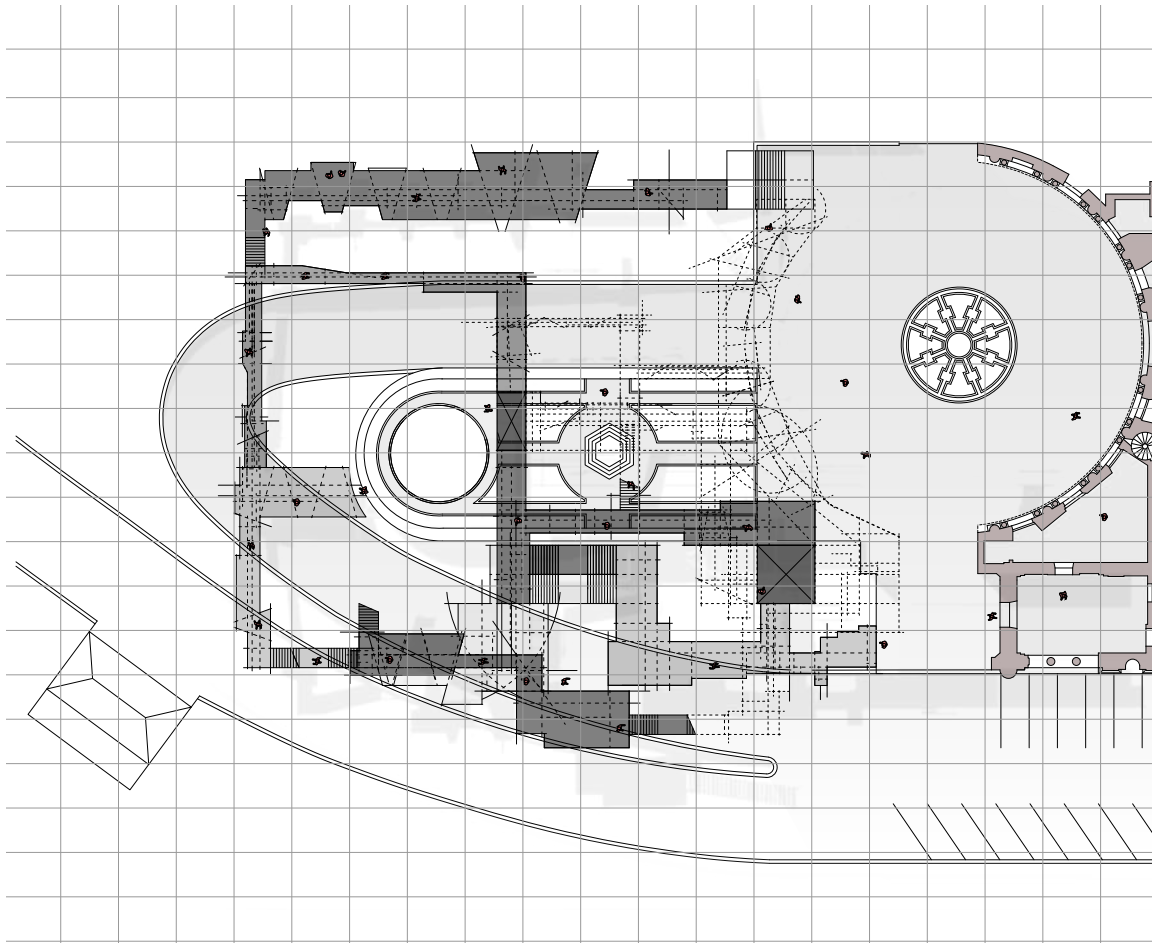
For the physical, there had to be platforms in which the spectators would move through and I took a strong stand in saying no we need the great history the current villa offers in order to merge or contrast the two and I designed an abstraction of the part of the Villa that was never built. Like if I almost took out its nervous system because the beauty and the experience of the mass was going to be in the simulation. It generated this almost like scaffolding system made of only platforms and stairs that was very gentle to the site and was a continuous circulation so I could control the spectators experience in particular spaces.

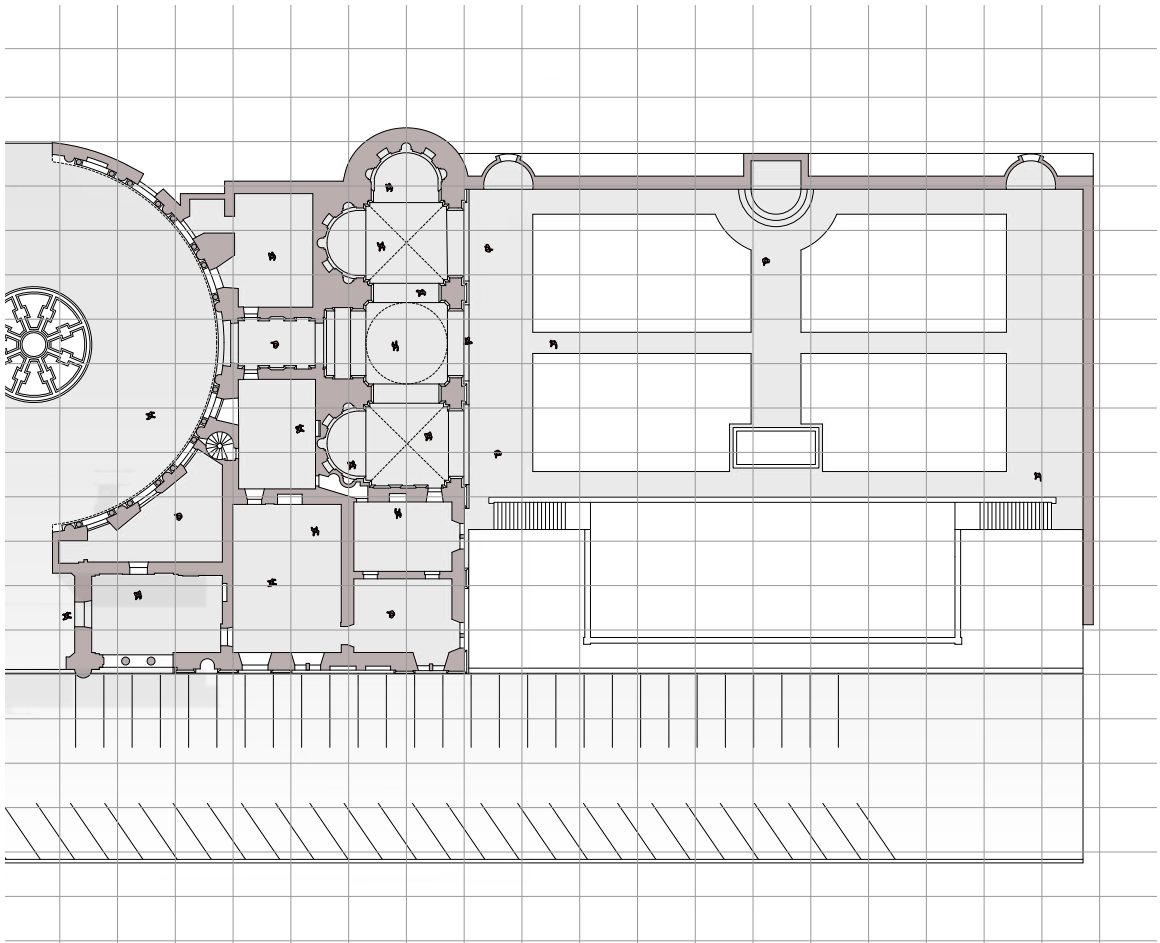
The trouble emerged with the design of the simulation for the actors. I wanted to experience from a different perspective the whole other half of the villa in this limited space. If you think about it, I was designing backwards. Traditionally we have a program with x amount of square feet and we begin to create a bubble diagram or a collage of program areas the eventually begin to create the overall form. I started with the core, the circulation, and it was difficult trying to fit these space in a way that respected the initial proportional and grid Raphael established in his design, something I had accomplish up to this point.

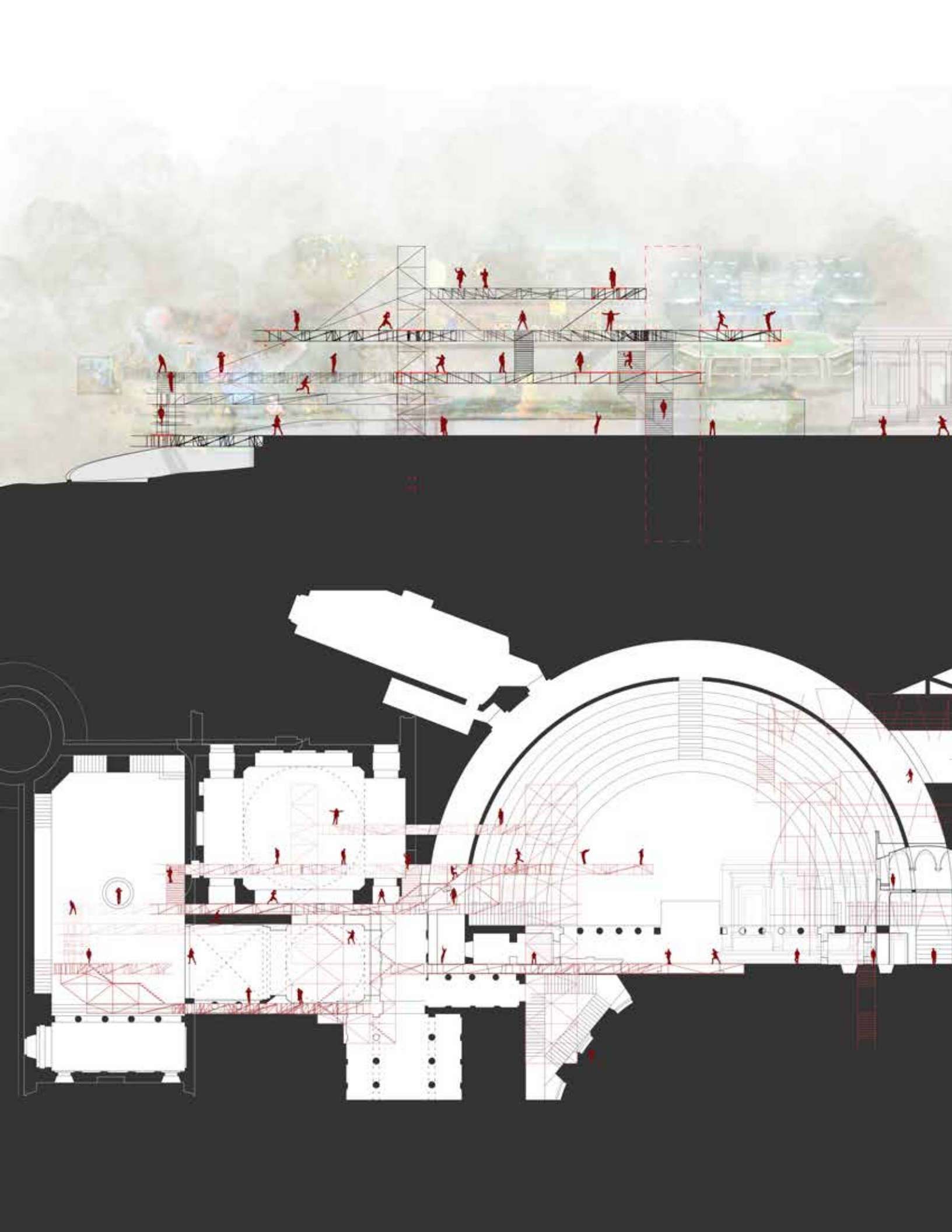
As I was running one morning along the bayou I realized some. As I move through the miles in a linear direction what I see, the space, it changes. If I was to take those 6 miles and collide them into one space together. It would look something like the concept drawing on page 27. What I needed to do is unravel this continuous circulation and design the simulated there.

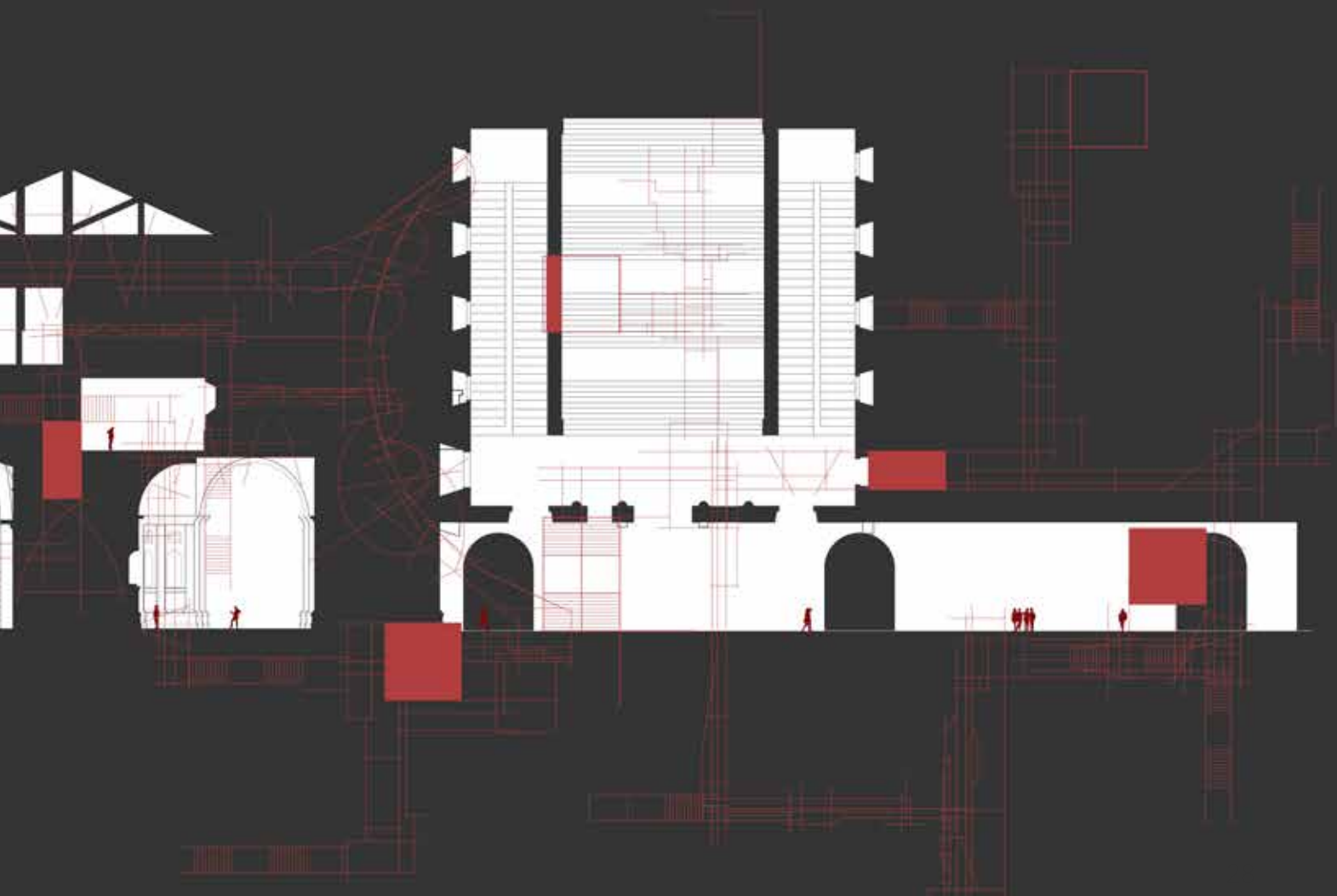
If you look at the simulacrum plan on page 30, and Elevation on page 28, you will notice the new villa becomes a sequence or montage of spaces in which I'm able to create that same experience I have while running but with the architecture of Raphael seen through a new perspective.

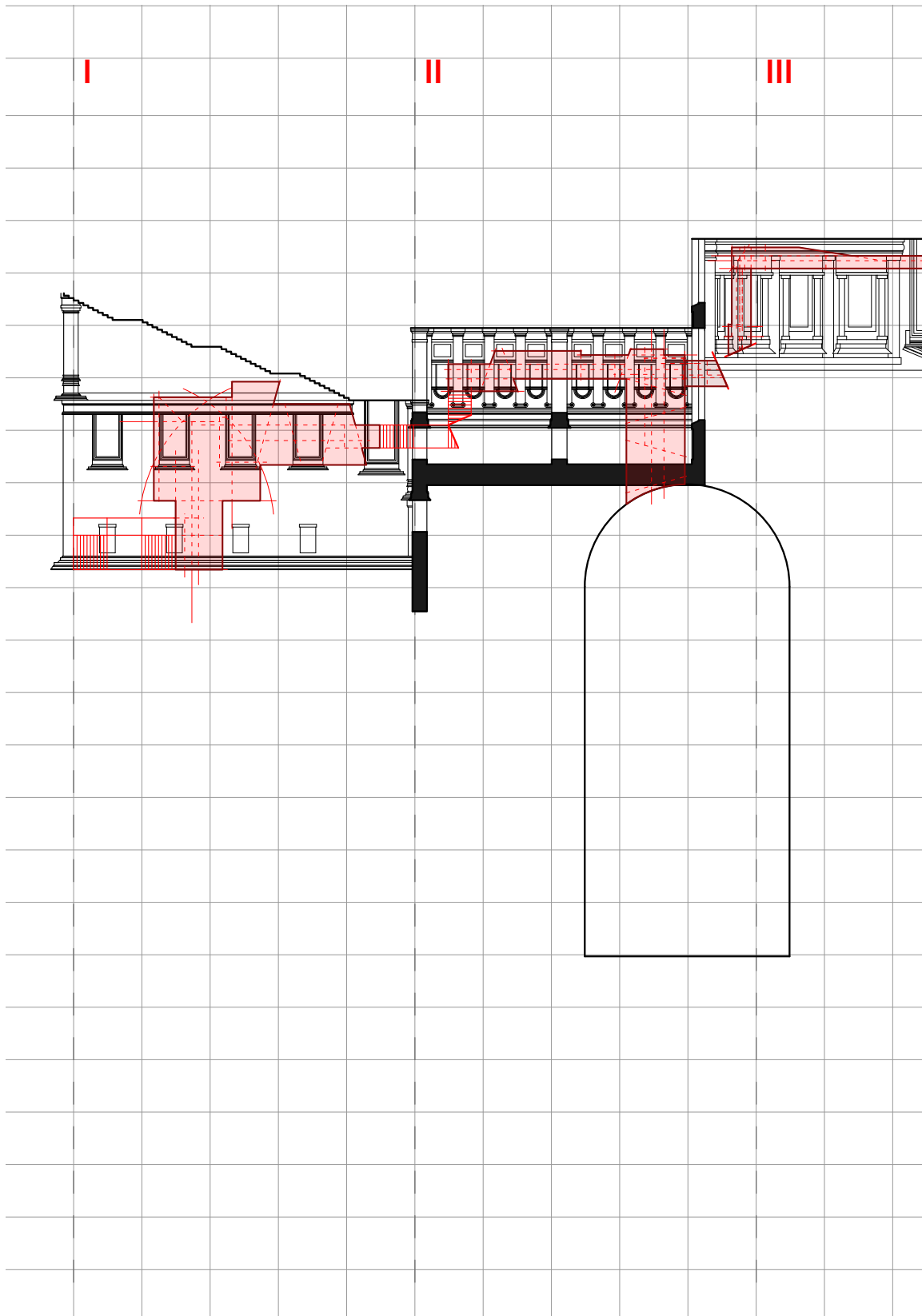
If to try to see the drawings on page 45 and 46 as an actual perspective and not as drawing technic we use to illustrate space. You can see how as we move through the sequence the way we pensive those spaces changes and as you get further into the arena the new villa by itself begins to inject a relationship with what is currently there. It is in these space where the simulation and the real are undistinguishable that the project becomes a simulacrum



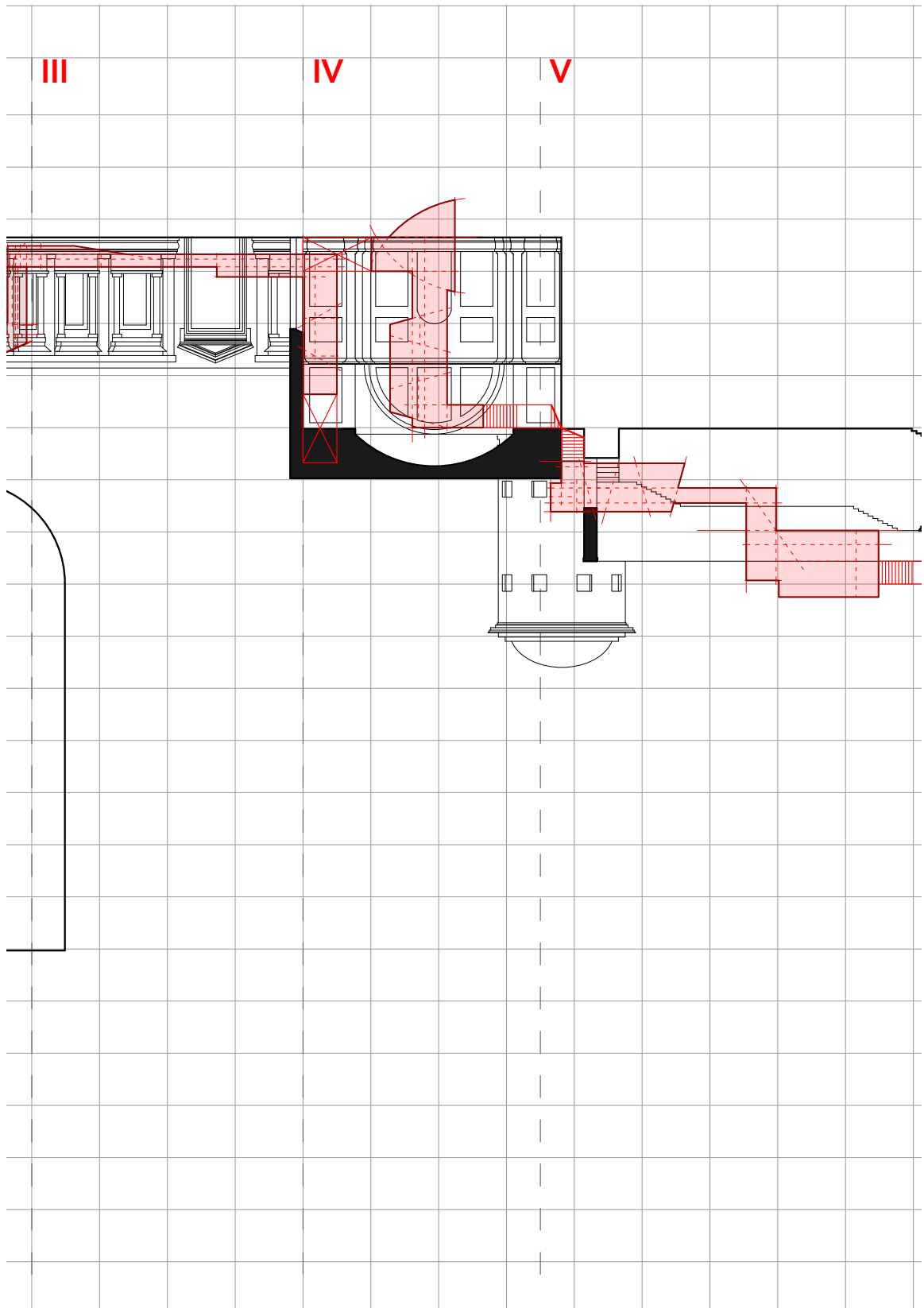


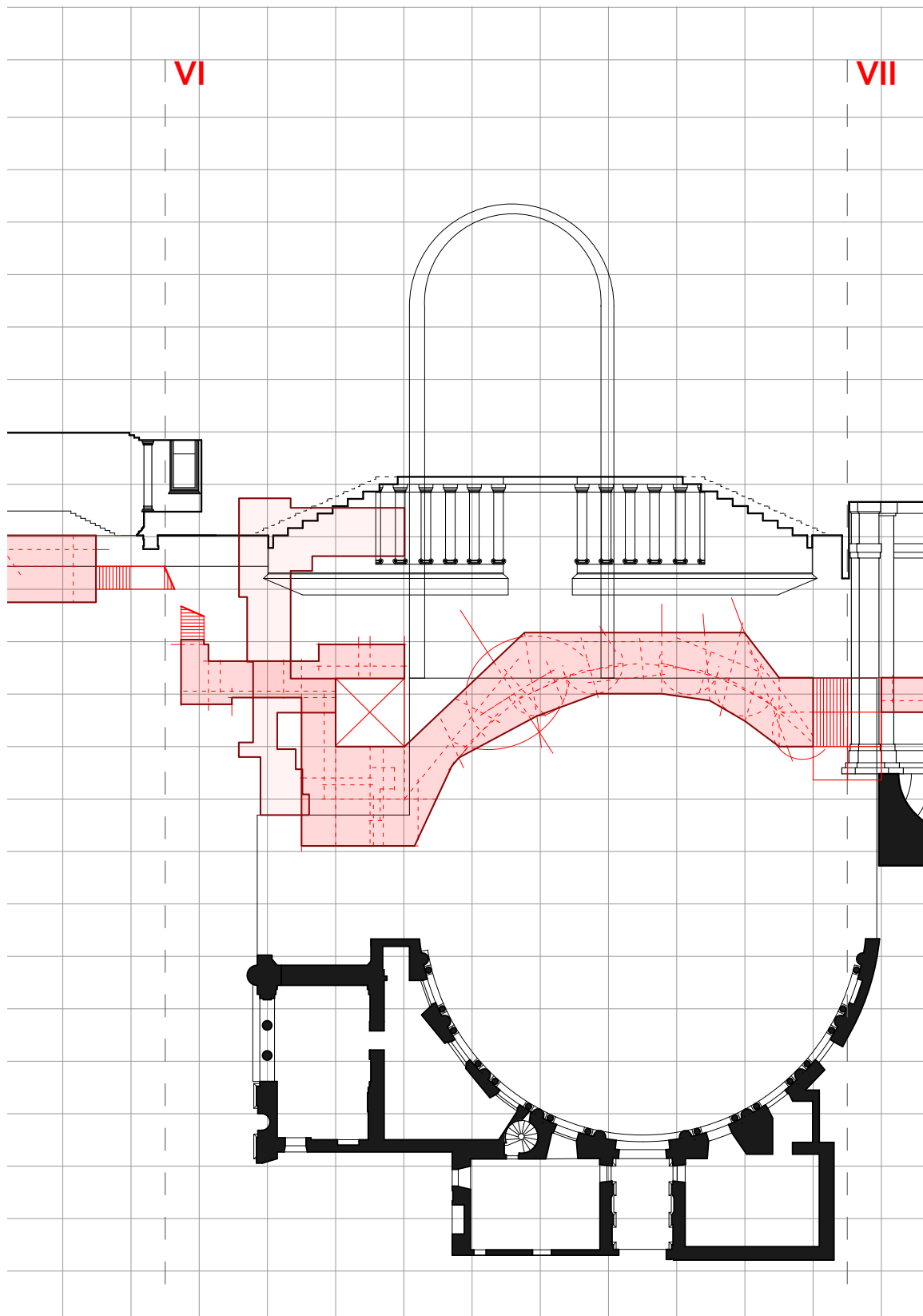


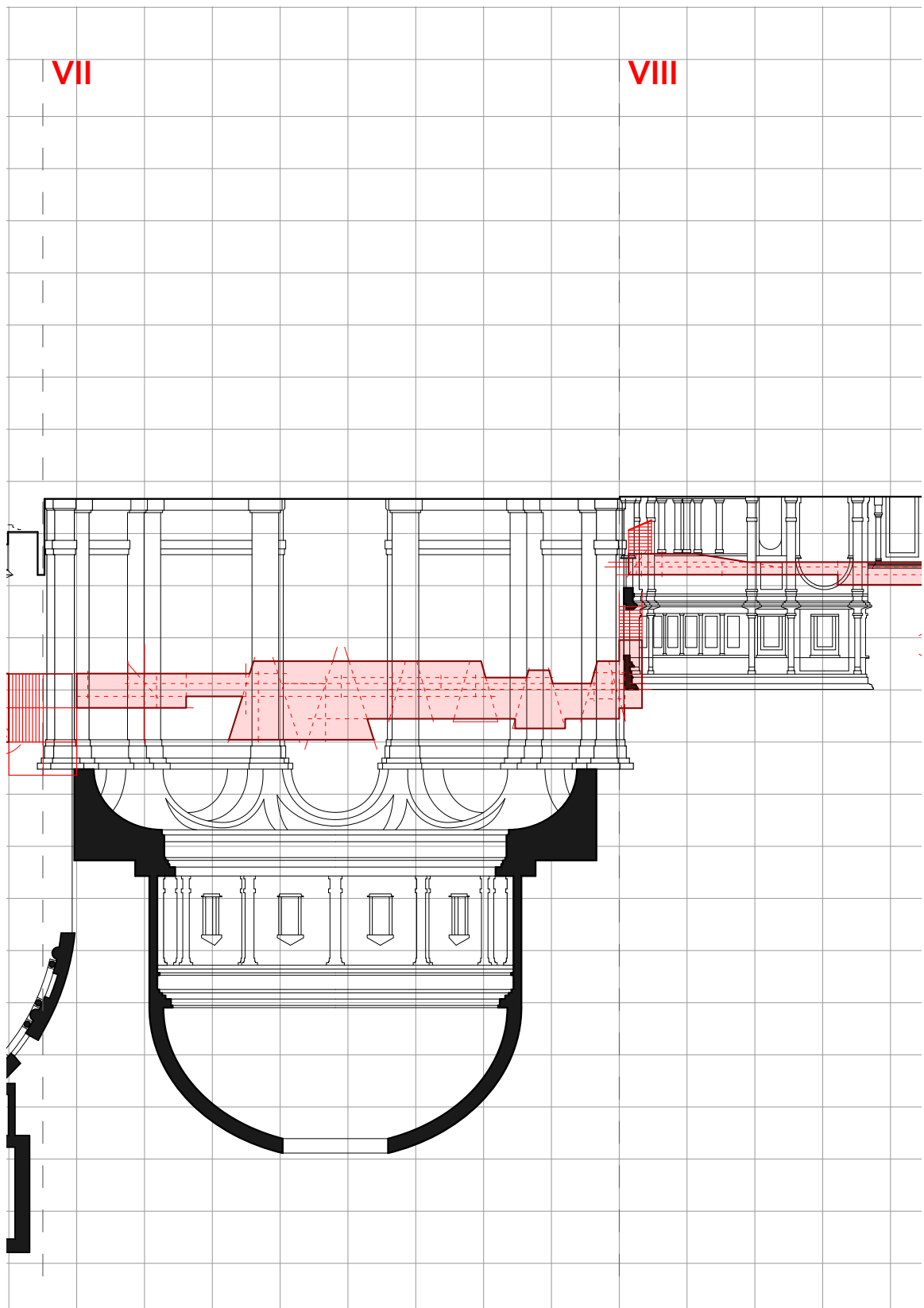


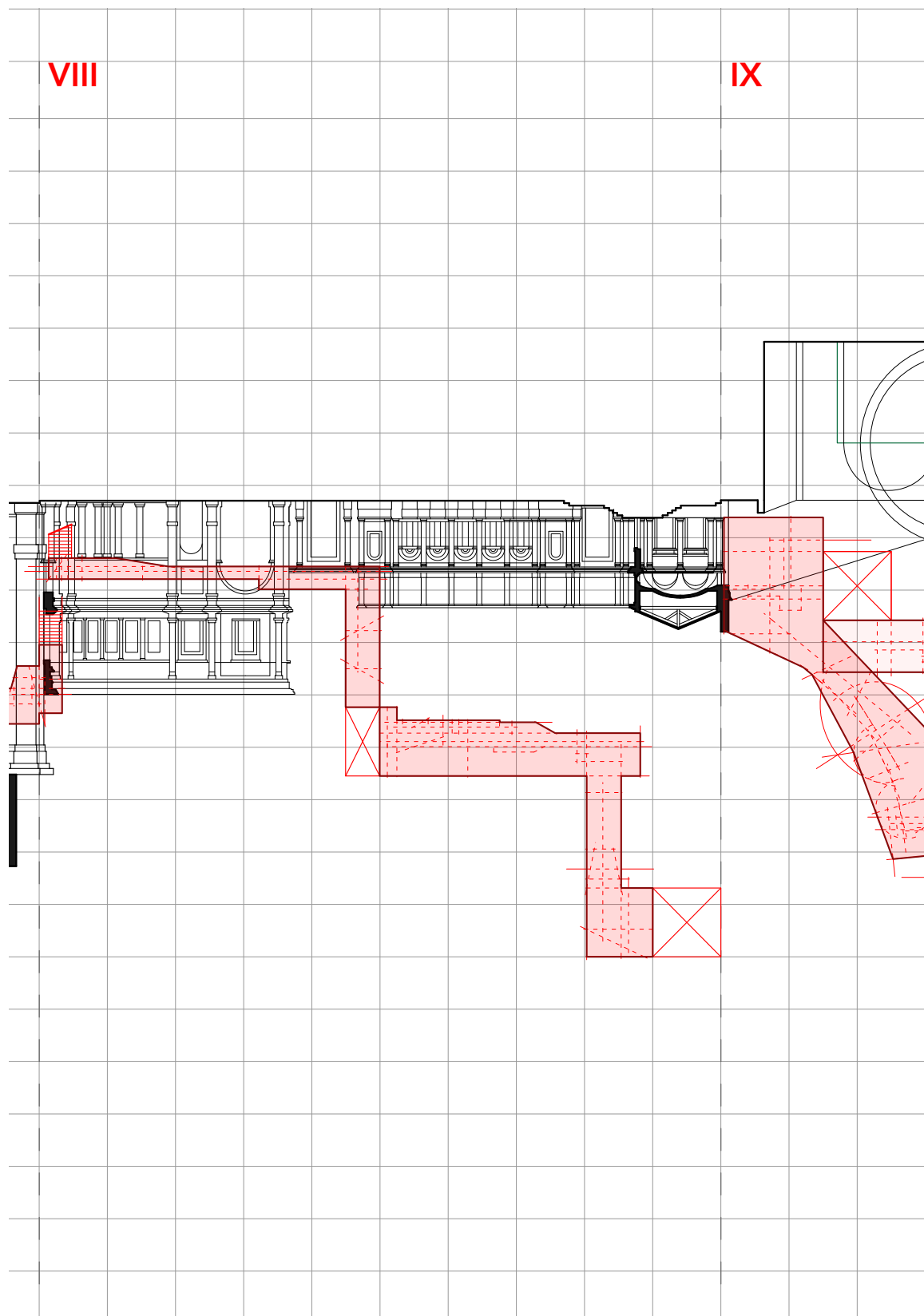


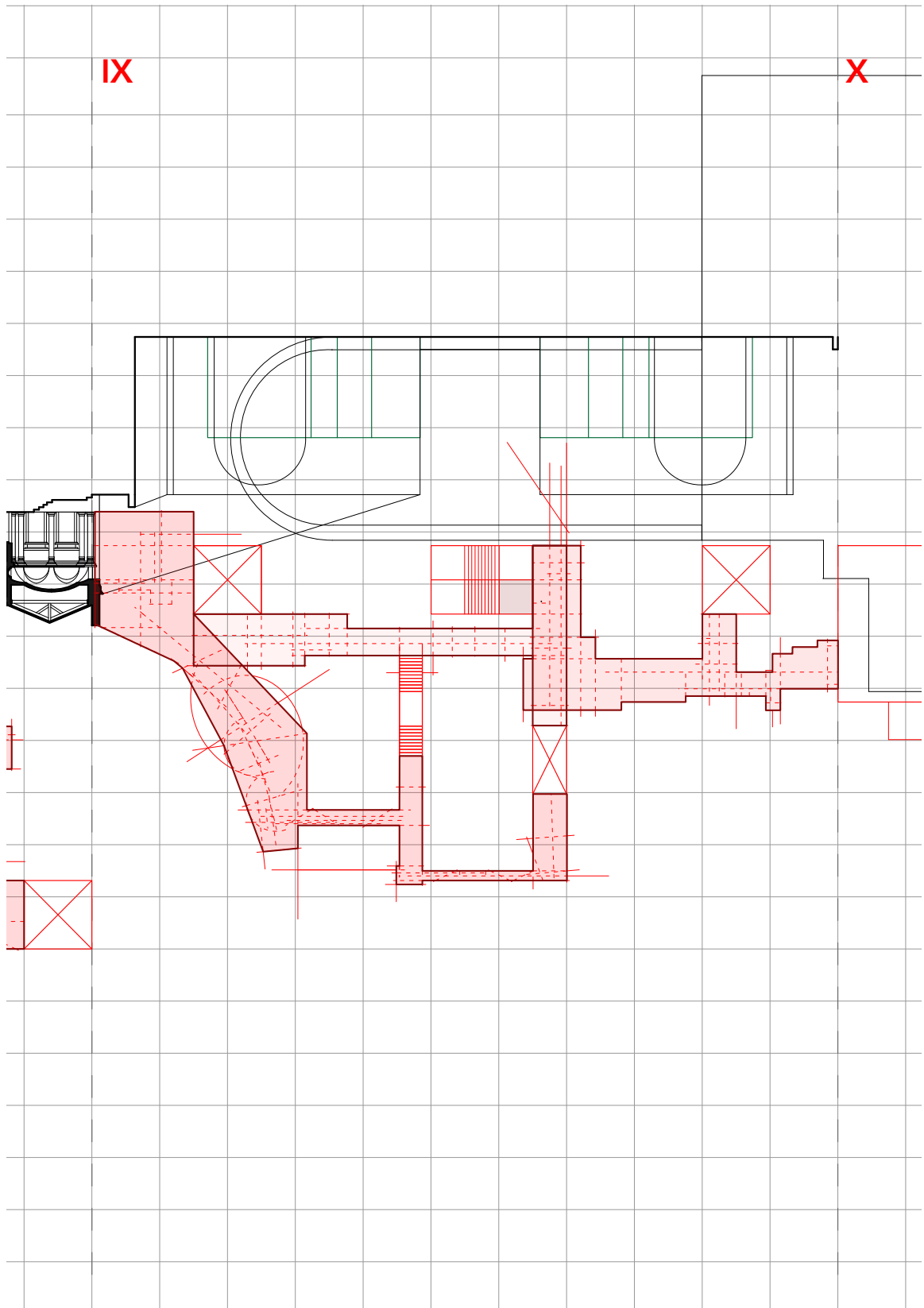
Simulacrum Plan

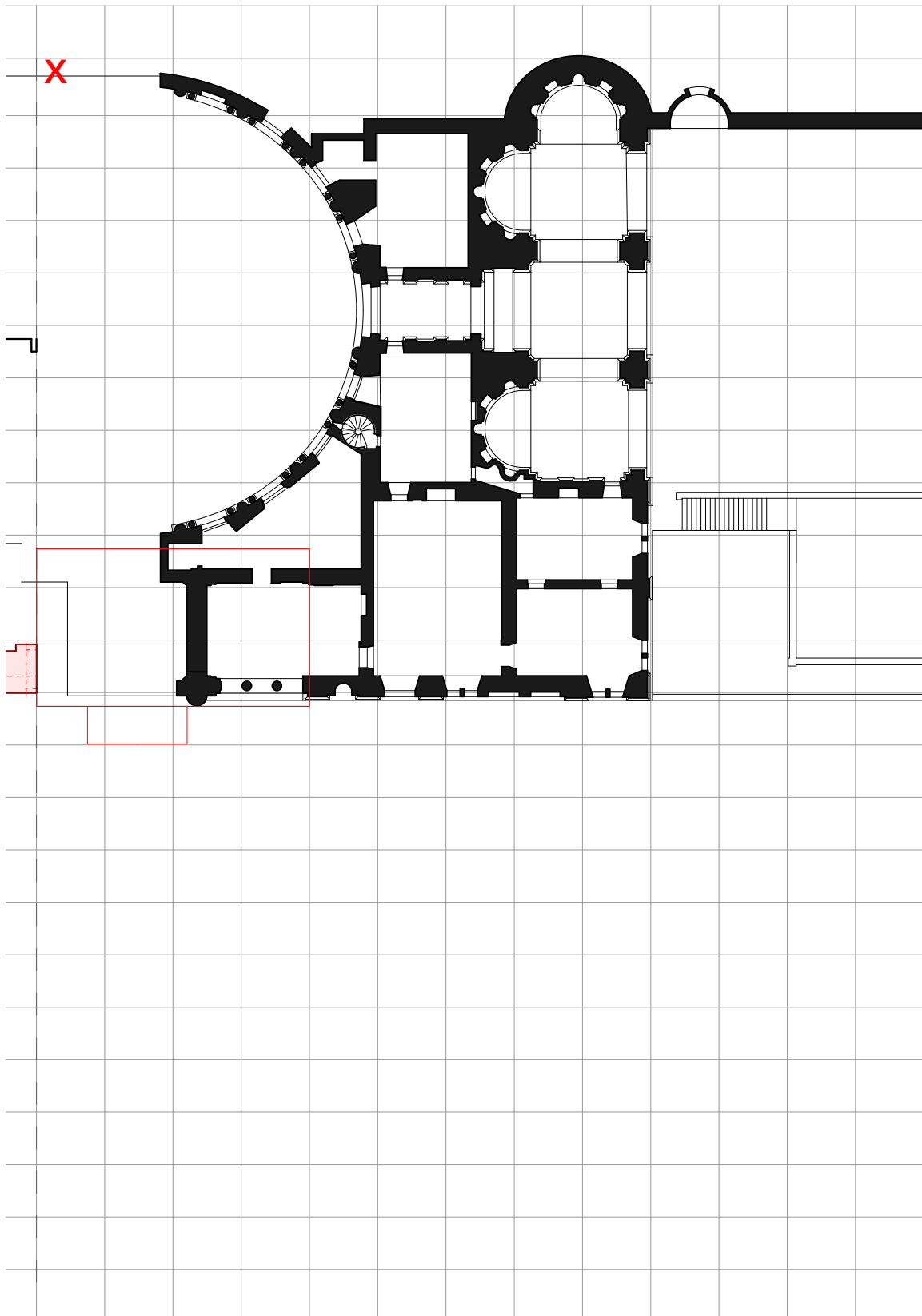


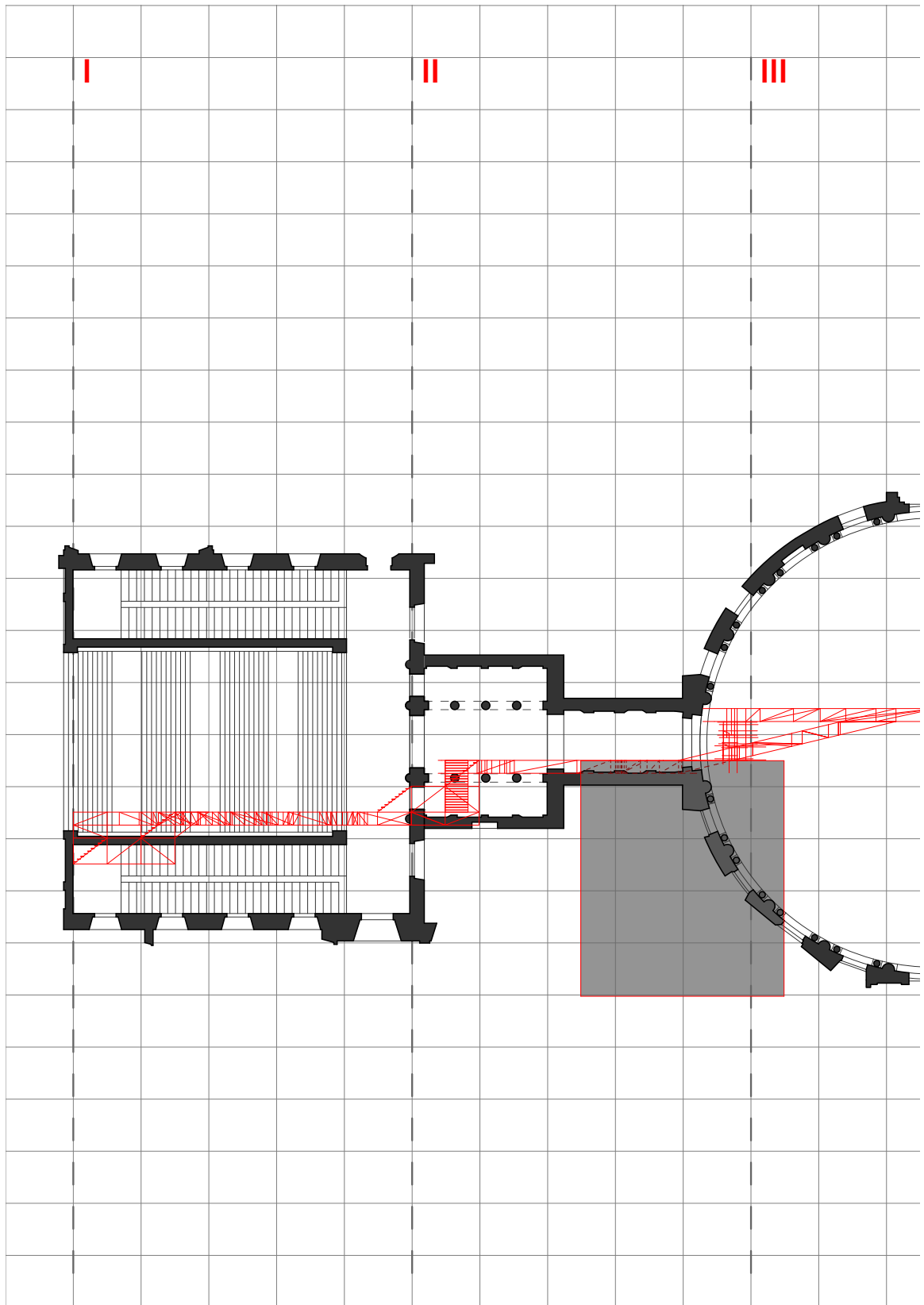




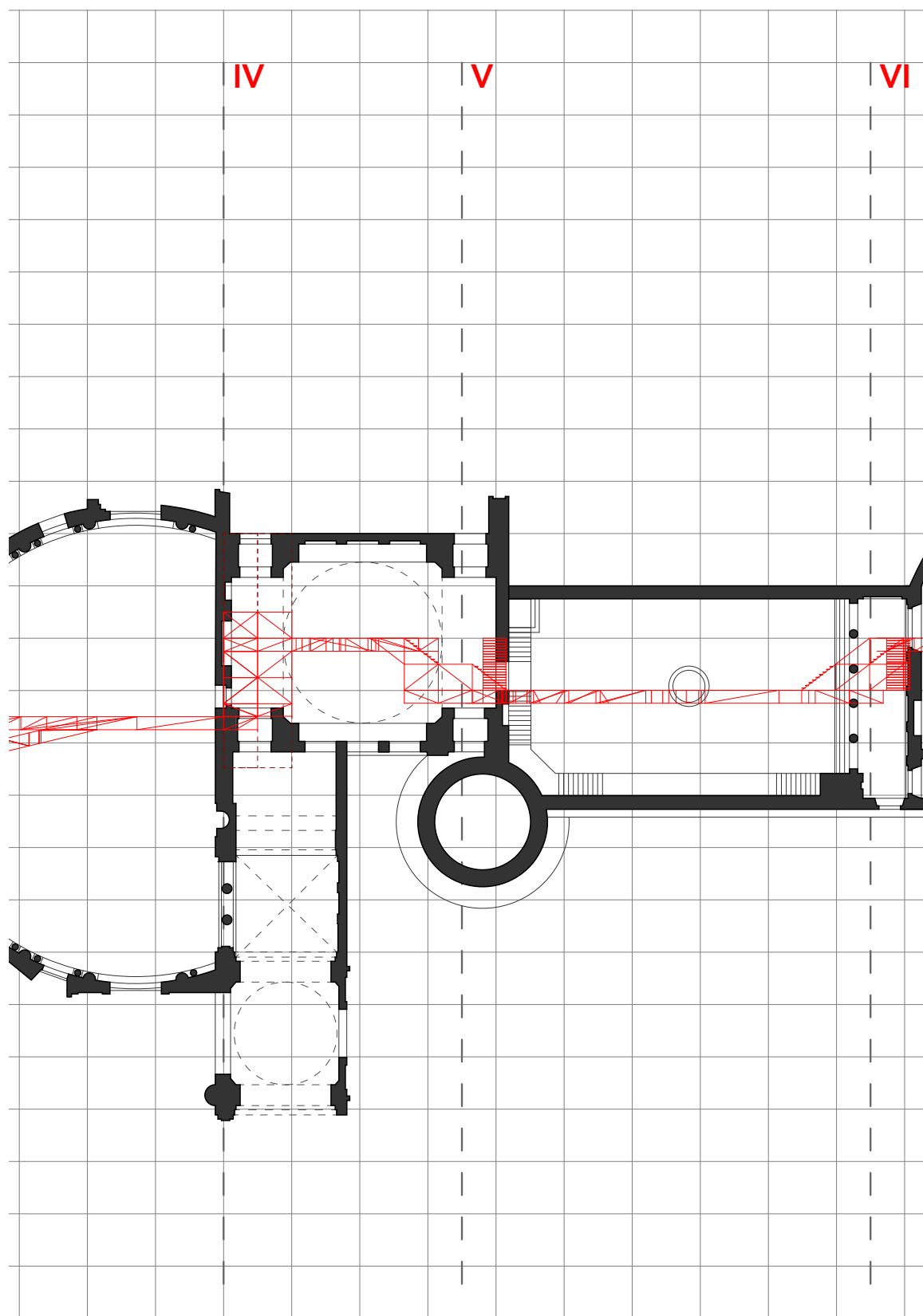


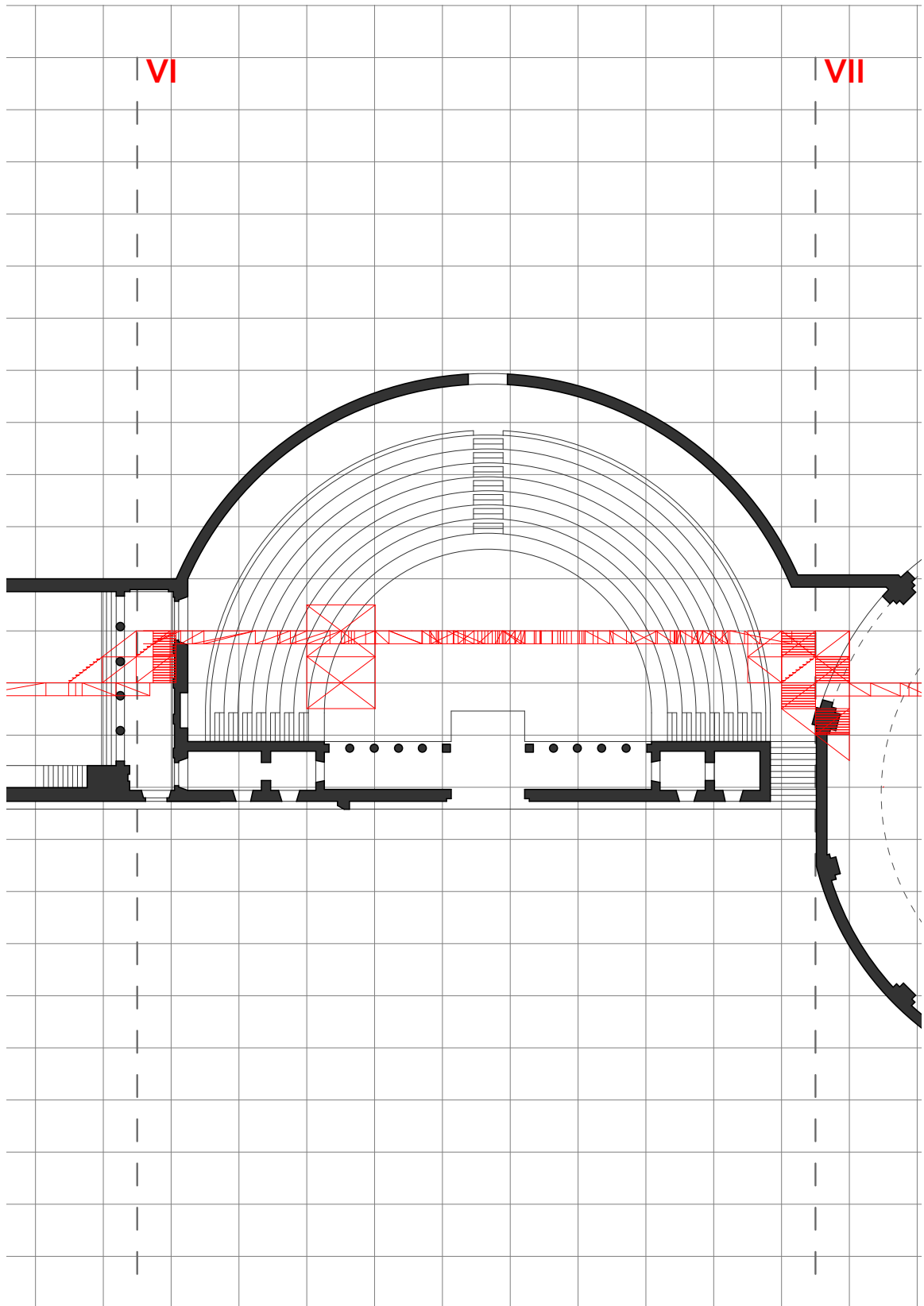


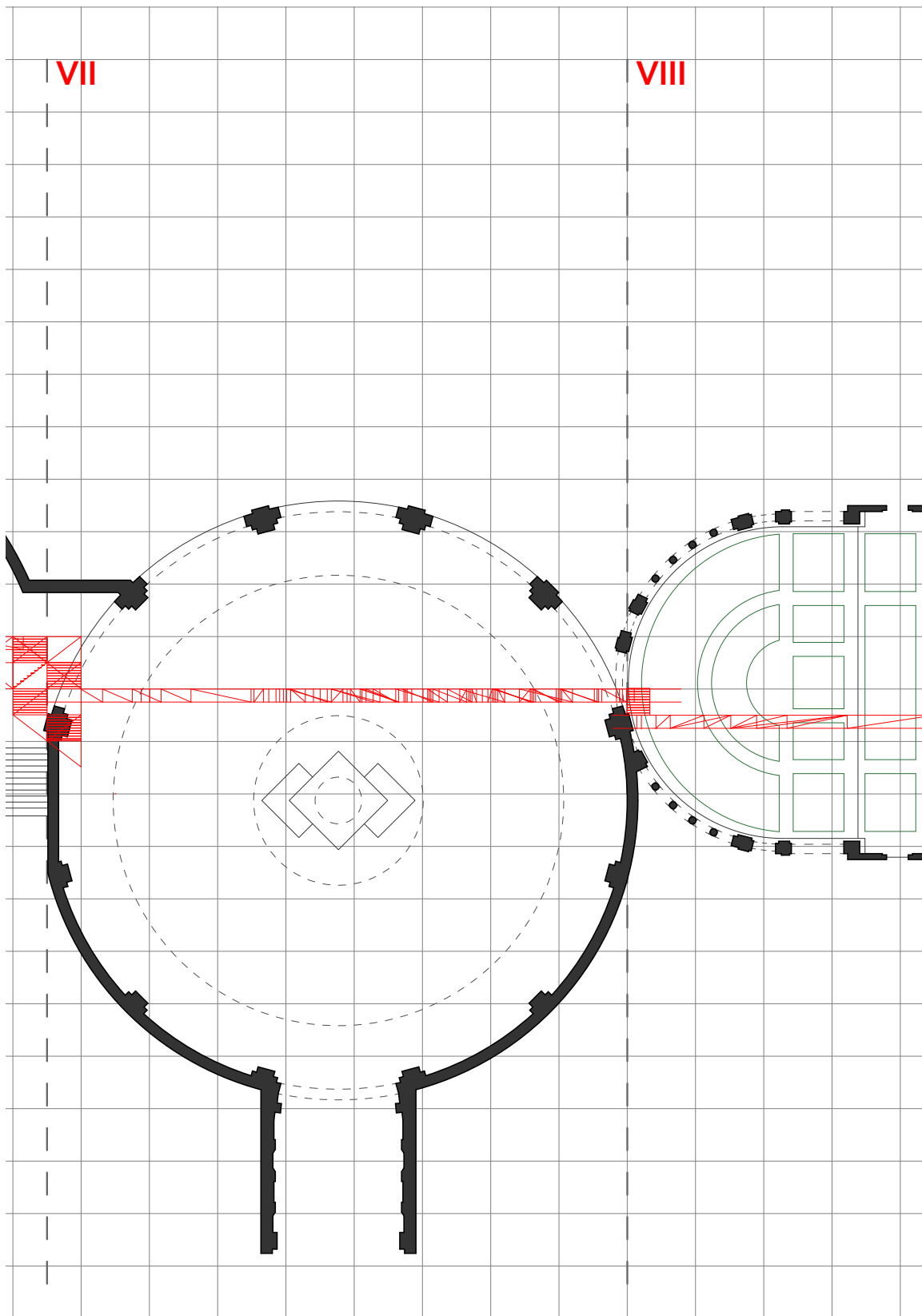


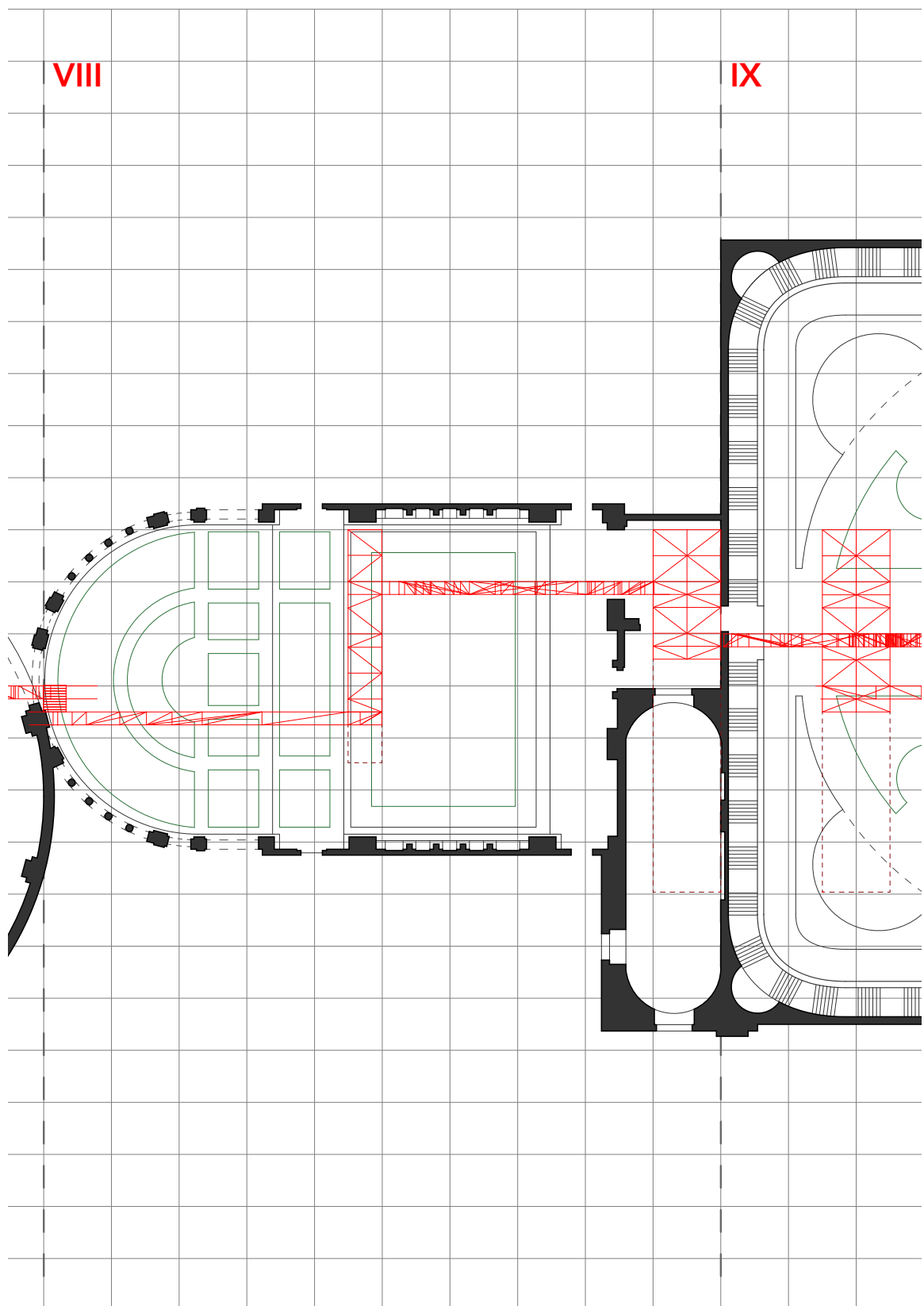


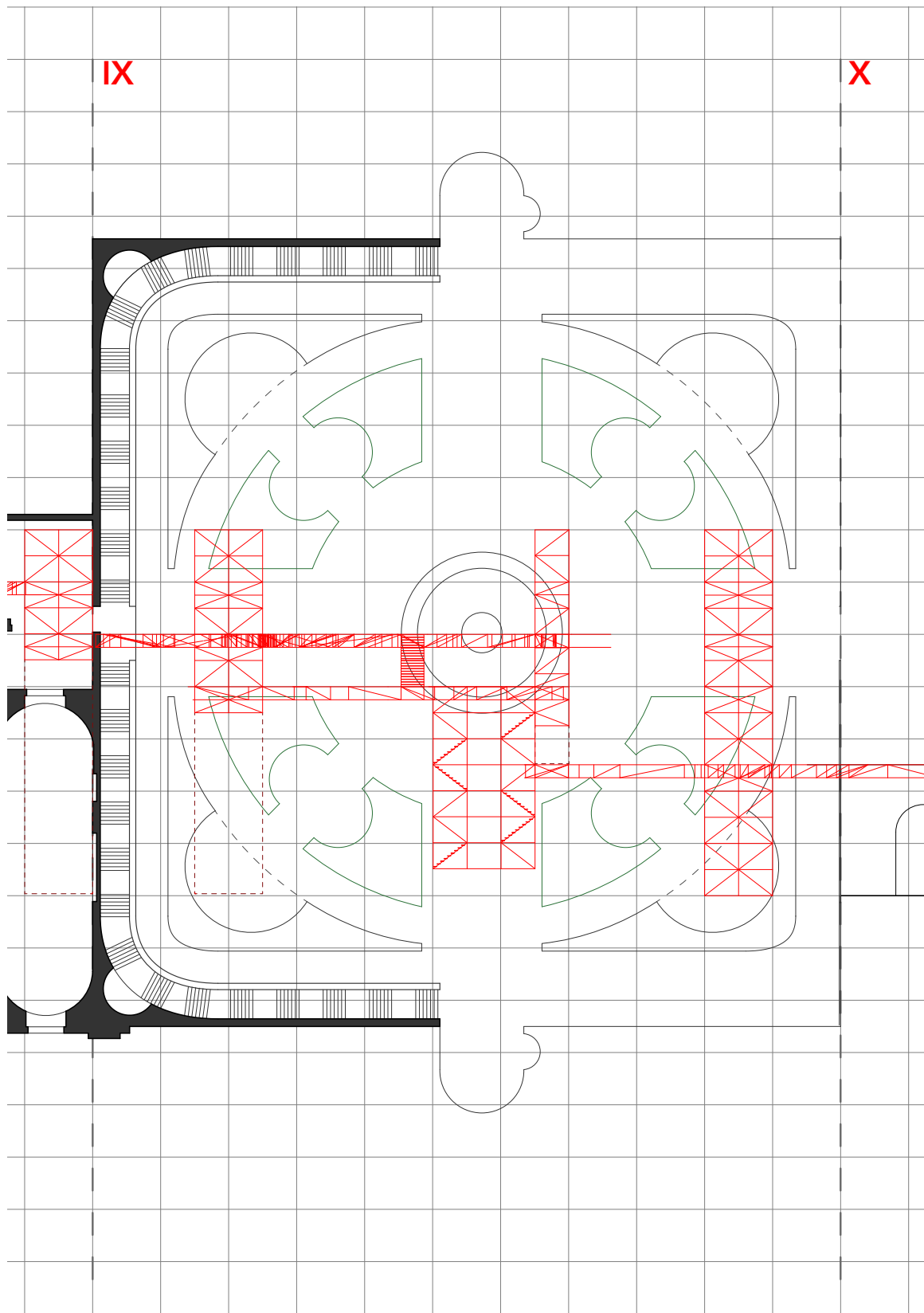
Simulacrum Elevation

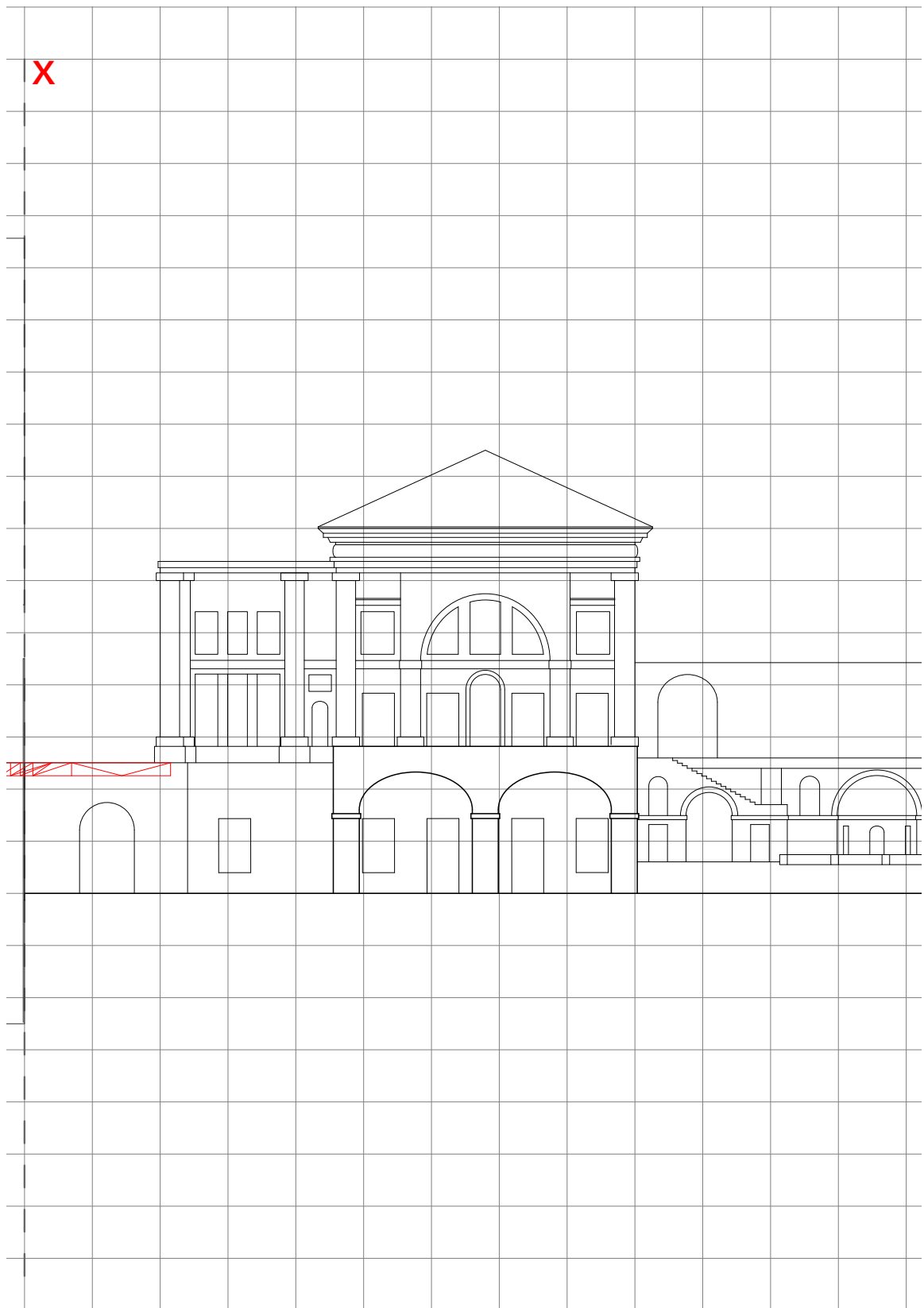


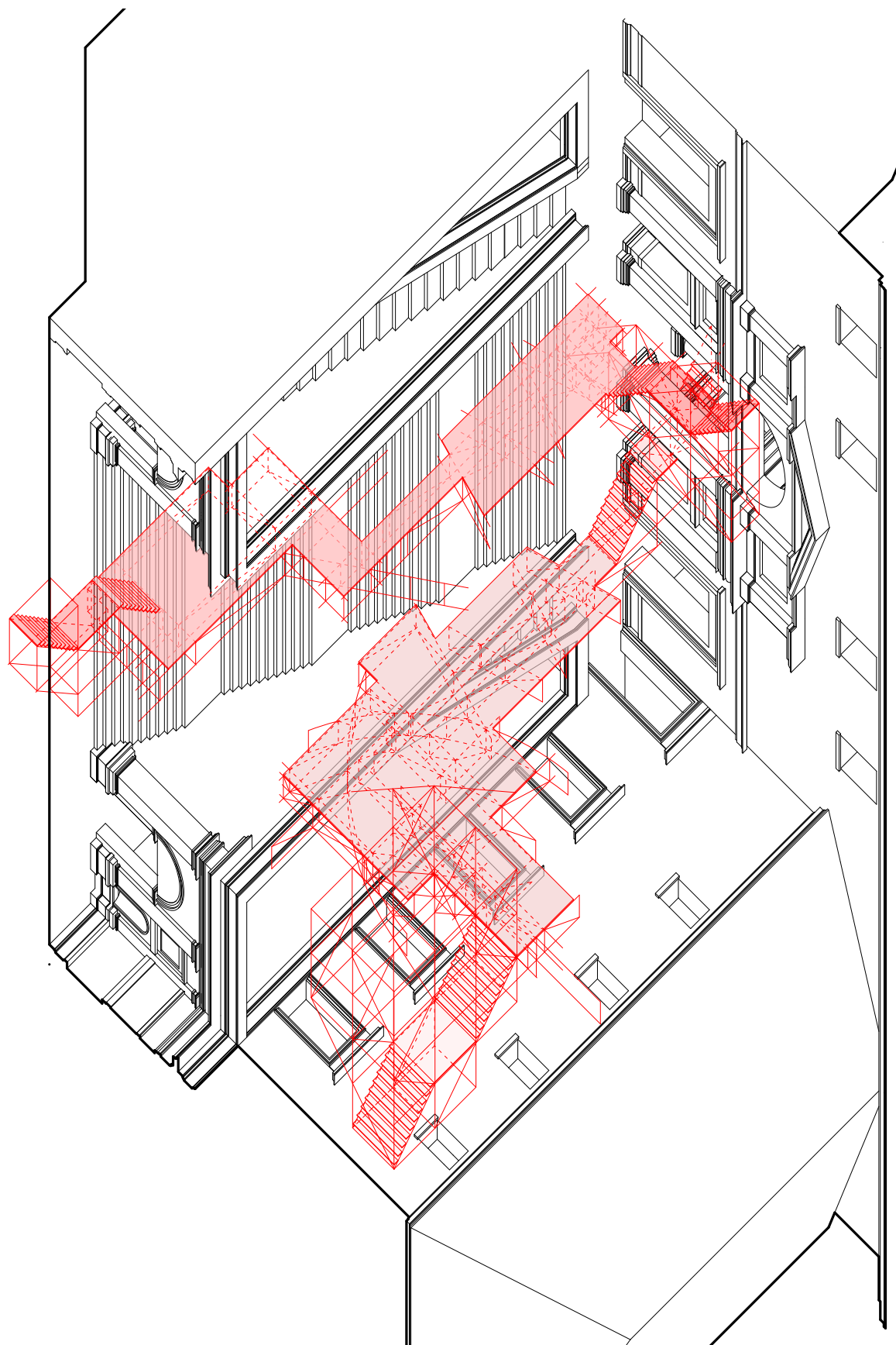


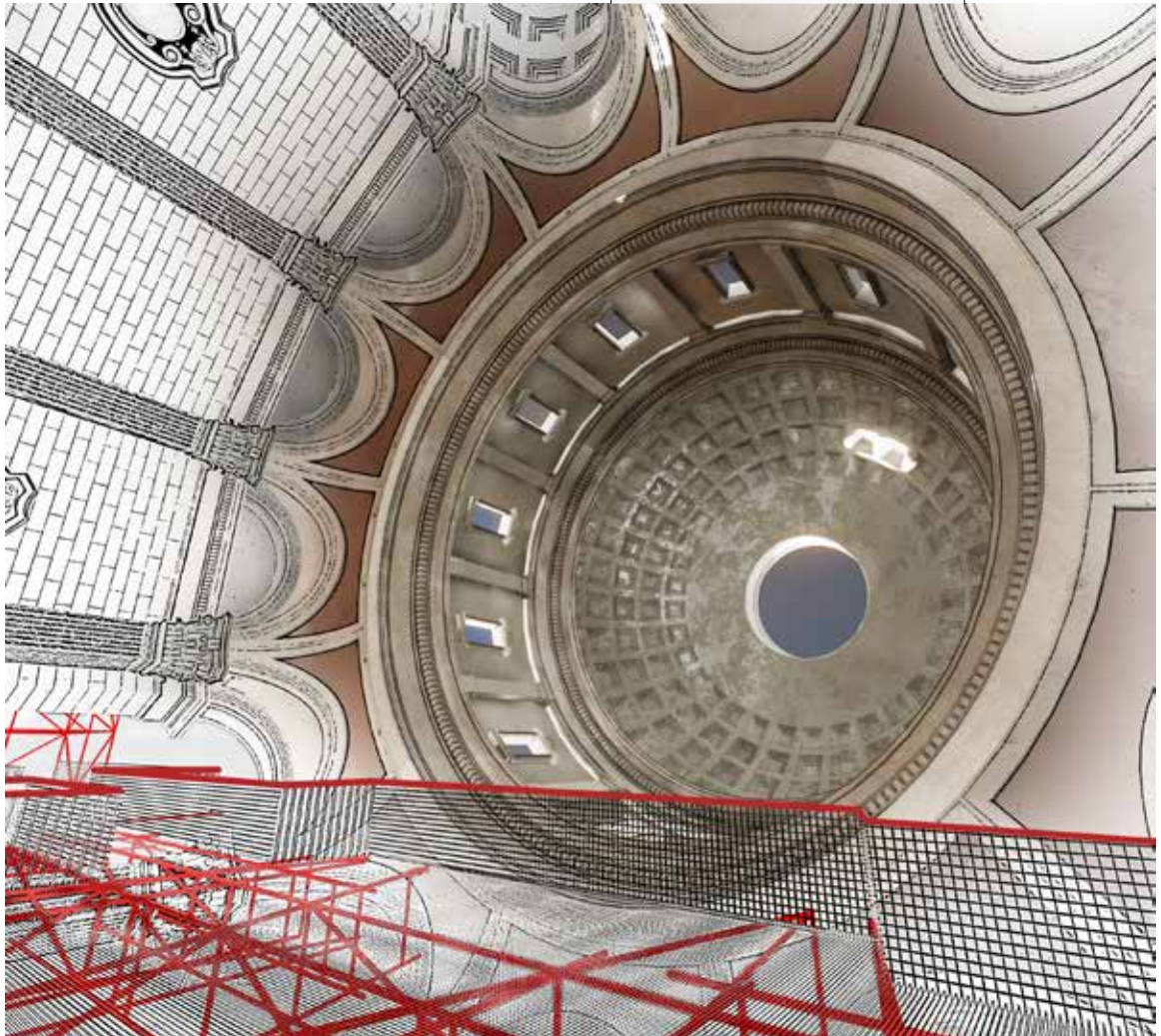
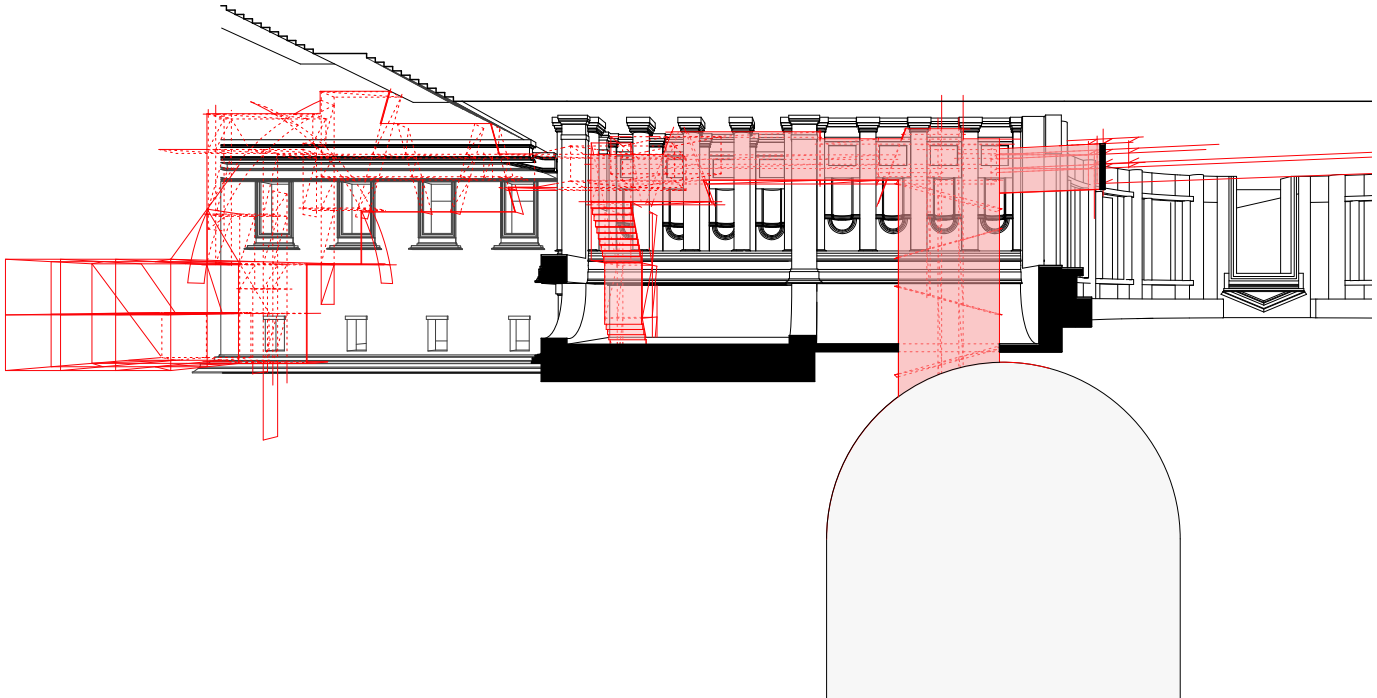


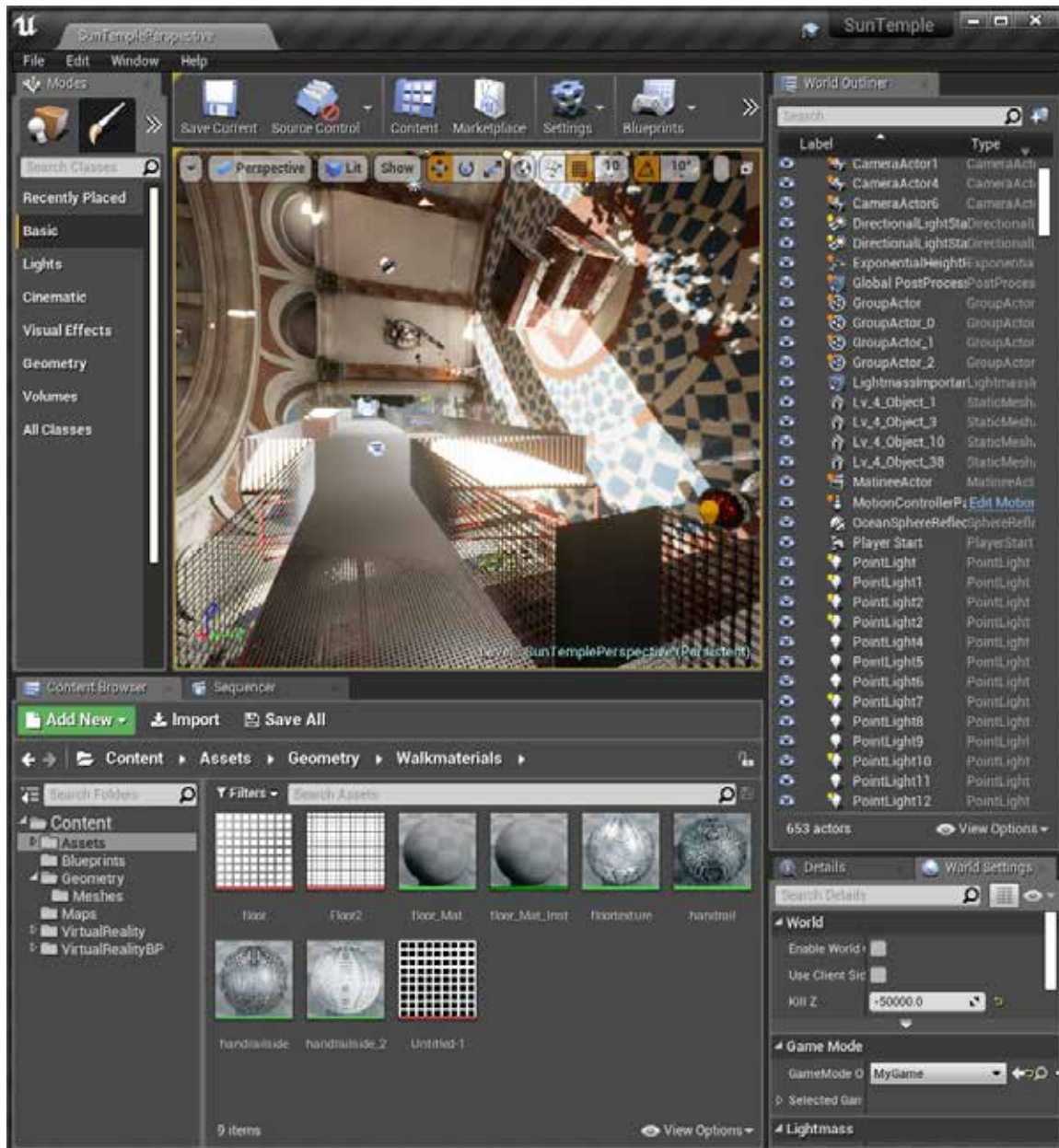


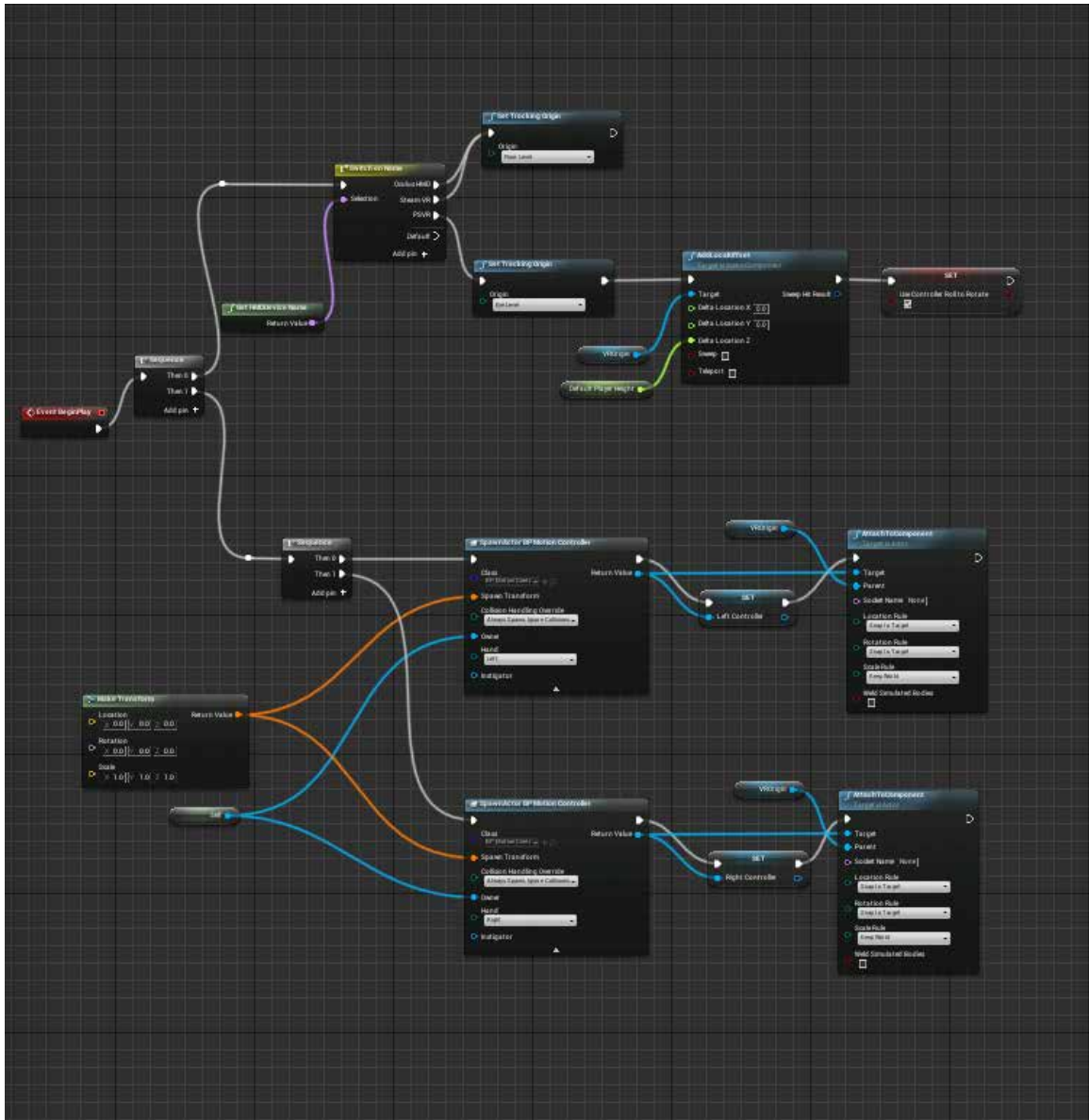












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