

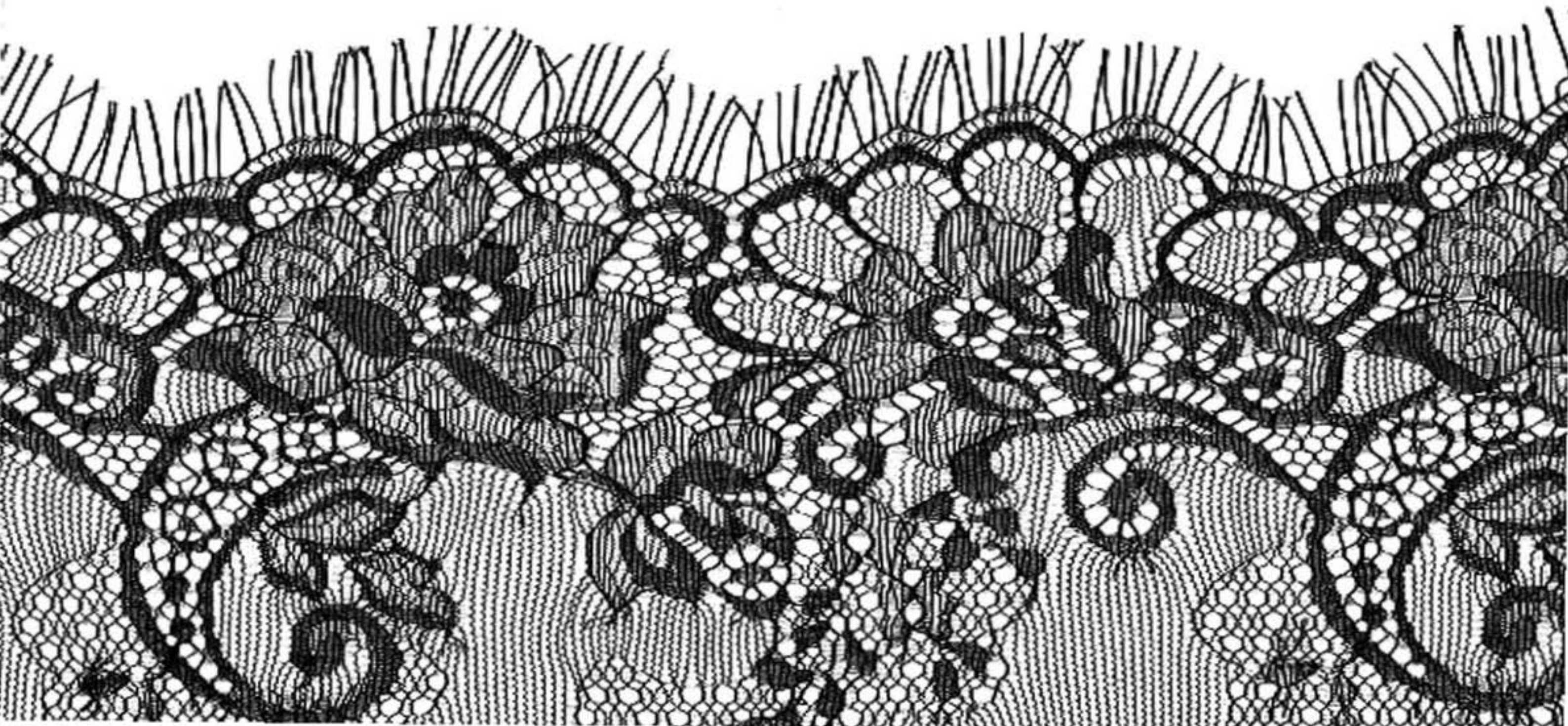
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Our ethical nature. Fashion. Architecture. Environment

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Our Ethical Nature
Fashion. Architecture. Environment

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One may approach sustainable practice with a focus on materials, by building communities, by changing the way users interact with product and services, or by focusing on use, reuse, recycling. However, it is not necessary limited to these examples. Sustainability can mean so many different things it challenges practitioners to be visionary, adaptable and innovative!





Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents Dave and Jean, Andrew and my brother Gareth for their endless love, support and constant encouragement throughout my time in SAUL.

Thank you to all the SAUL staff for their help, knowledge and contribution to my Architectural education.

Thank you to Peter, Mike and Sean for all their help in the final weeks.

Thank you to my Grandparents Liz and Declan for giving me all our family history with Limerick Lace.

A very special thank you to all my dear friends in 5th year for all the constant encouragement, 90's music, help and advice.

Dedicated to my Claremorris Gran

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Introduction

My main interest is fashion. It always has been. When thinking of how I could begin a thesis in architecture I started cutting, folding and pleating a piece of paper as if it were material. Where better to begin than physically changing the state of an obsolete object? It then struck me, fundamentally architecture and fashion are the same. We wear clothes to cover our bodies and to stay warm. From the beginning of time animal hides were used for clothing and for their housing just at different scales. The clothing(hide) covers the body and the tent houses the person. One might have to wear certain types of clothing for professional or cultural reasons. Or we may choose a certain way to dress to form our identity. There are various reasons as to why we choose how we dress ourselves, but in most cases it comes down to aesthetics. Today there is certainly no lack of diversity within the clothing empire with new garments in store every week. Thus Fast fashion is created, surrounded with all its ethical problems. Unfortunately their problems not imprinted on the label.

I then began to think about the similarities between the two disciplines(architecture and fashion) but also the differences. What can each adopt from one another? The idea of immediacy and obsolescence within the fashion world is something which rarely, if ever occurs within architecture. Buildings have to satisfy an idea of sustainability of their design. Projects can takes many years to plan and construct. However a fashion house has to create numerous lines within a season. Decisions have to be made quickly and manufacturing has to happen even quicker. Does architecture need to adopt these traits of fashion? Architecture does not have the ability to continually create new surfaces like fashion does, however can architecture learn to resurface itself?

Can it have a continuous fashionable dialogue that can be some what less superficial? It is true certainly of clothing, that one can not simply have all the new and Fashionable clothing within their wardrobe. The outdated articles are given a new lease of life by the addition of "fashionable" accessories. What are the architectural accessories? Timelessness also becomes an issue. Is something that is timeless deemed "unfashionable"?

I believe that if something is timeless, whether that be a dress or a building, it is also flexible and it allows for change whilst keeping its core structure. Can fashion adopt architectures will for longevity?

Fashion is a quick moving body that has an ever changing cycle that is fleeting and transient. Architecture is durable and stable but is time consuming to create and is unrelenting in its image. Of course the scale and materials which architects employ have an impact on this. How can one amalgamate the fast pace of the fashion world with the stability of the architectural world? Do we as architects need to become more flexible in our way of designing? Or is the "design" the issue? Designing could change and become a more proactive and participatory process aiming for aesthetic sustainability.

“If you describe something as ethical,
you mean that it is morally right or morally acceptable.” Collins English Dictionary.



Ethical History

Fashion and architecture have been considered together many many times for both their contrasts and their similarities. However when it came to forming my opinion on such a discourse it was difficult to narrow it down as to why I, as an architecture student, am so interested in fashion.

Throughout my exploration for my thesis I am discovering that the vast layers of the fashion world have a perplexity that could take essay upon essay to uncover. I took a brief step back from looking specifically at fashion and have begun to look at the broader ethical question that surrounds it- one which involves the ethics of society as a whole.

There has been a significant shift in the last 5 years in how our 'consumer society' is consuming.

Fashion is providing a thread for me to explore through.

According to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 55% of Ireland's populations are 'Active ethical consumers'.³

How can architecture as an engine further drive this change in society. The question of ethics in the trade industry has been circulating since the early 1700s with the formation of the 'Consumer league, New York' and the 'National Consumer League' of Great Britain. These early establishments were the starting point for a more ethical practice in consumerism. The earliest notion of ethical consumerism can be dated as far back as 1770. A number of movements had begun at this time. Three of the main groups were, the Presbyterian

Sabbatarian's, The Free Produce Activists and The Non-Intercourse Advocates.

The Sabbatarian's encouraged 'All their ministers and church members when traveling, to give preference to such livery establishments, steamboats, canal boats and other public

vehicles, as do not violate' the Sabbath.'⁴ The Free Produce movement became more prominent after the American Revolution, their activists implored people to boycott 'slave-made' goods. They believed that 'consumers best enacted their ethical views through the consumption of the goods they sold.'⁵ The Non- Intercourse advocates were of the belief that the American people should avoid any goods of 'British origin in a economic and moral protest'. All of these groups whilst they had their differences also had a common goal to stop consuming goods not made or produced through 'clean hands' or what we now call ethical. There was a new notion of moral commerce. Following on from this, some 100 years later, The National Consumer Leagues of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago were founded in 1899. They concerned themselves with the bettering of wages, working hours, conditions and the rights of women and children. They advocated child labor bans, minimum wage laws and maximum working hours for women. The National Consumer League of Great Britain was of a similar thinking. However this league was set up by the Ministry of Food. it was set up to advise working class shoppers on everyday concerns. In the 40s and 50s it was mainly women's organizations that pushed for correct consumer practices and a Women's shoppers league was formed following on from this. Stemming from all this political noise surrounding consumerism, John F. Kennedy established four fundamental consumer rights. The right to Safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose and the right to be heard. Much legislation has been enacted following on from JFKs statements.

³ David Begg. 'The Ethical Consumer.' Irish Congress of Trade Union 1 (2014): 1-62.

⁴ Richard R. John, Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse. Cambridge,MA (1995) p.180.

⁵ Chatriot, Alain. The Expert Consumer: Associations and Professionals in Consumer Society. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, (2006) p.24

Contemporary aesthetic norms are based in capitalintensive,
highly automated, unsustainable procedures. These procedures
tend to reduce the potential
for fulfilling employment and often ignore social
and
environmental losses.²





Fashion Exploitation

America and most of Europe adopted this attitude. However, as economic stability fluctuated, population increased and a demand for cheaper clothing occurred so too did the development of textile factories in the south east of the world. Countries such as India, China, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Bangladesh all fell victim to the western worlds needs. During this exploration, I am discovering my interest in the idea of obsolescence and immediacy within architecture and fashion alike. A culture of mass consumption has led to the conditioned desire for the instant commodity. The architecture currently in place for the creation of such mass production is predominantly in the east of the world with the majority of the 'commodities' being sold in the western world. They are large industrial buildings void of light and air. Where the workers are hidden away from the public and all that gets seen is the garments displayed on the shelves of our shops. Why is this the case? The answer is simply because the labor is cheap. This is not a new fact. The conditions of workers within these factories are less than acceptable. Take for example the factory fires in Bangladesh. On April 24th 2013, one thousand workers were killed and over 2500 were injured, in the collapse of one of the largest garment factories, Rana Plaza, Bangladesh. Despite the fact that the building had been deemed unsafe and according to an employee of the factory 'cracks on the wall continued to grow bigger and bigger, day by day'⁶. workers were still forced to work in these horrific condition. Following this unpardonable disaster on which every ethical facet was ignored, there was an increase in minimum wage and inspections of similar multinational factories are supposedly taking place regularly. Workers in these factories however are just seen as commodities who 'don't know their worth'. I wish to challenge this. Can Ireland lead the way in a new type of institution and reform its own

society by way of a new textile industry? Can we slow down the pace at which mass production is occurring. Can we slow down to a pace where the design and craftsmanship can overtake mass produced items. There is more to life than increasing its speed. Surely this slowness has its own value.

At the heart of society of consumption stands an entity, an agent, an identity, a being and a citizen about whom all can speak and whom all can attempt to define, translate and shape the interests of so much else.⁷

⁶ "Rana Plaza Arrangement." Rana Plaza Arrangement. Accessed February 1, 2015. <http://www.ranaplazaarrangement.org>.

⁷ Chatriot, Alain. *The Expert Consumer: Associations and Professionals in Consumer Society*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006



Image of Rana plaza after its collapse.



Fashion Exploitation

In Beatriz Colomina's book *Privacy and Publicity*, there is a discussion of whether a product holds or does not hold any trace of its producer. She refers to Le Corbusier's experience with *L'Esprit nouveau* to emphasise the point. I believe that in our culture we have for the majority lost the relationship between the two. There was a cultural shift from the focus on design and skilled craftsmanship to rapid, attainable and most of all cost effective products. The former is now being what is regarded as a luxury. Has the idea of good design perished along with its crafts people? As Le Corbusier so aptly stated 'now [this change] only seems to be regarded as cultural diffusion and a context of production of its own autonomy'.

'His encounter with the metropolis produced a break with *L'Éplatténier's* crafts formation where the object is identified with the world, where the material carries traces of the maker. Such continuity between hand and object is inside a classical notion of the artefact and of the relationship between producer and product'.⁸

The only relationship we have between producer and product is a cotton label imprinted 'Made in.....'. We have lost this continuity within the tangled fabric that makes up 'consumer society'. We no longer know who makes the product that we wear, use, eat or build with.

⁸ Colomina, Beatriz. "photography." In *Privacy and publicity: modern architecture as mass media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994.107.



Image of Le Reive Bon Marche central circulation.

The Consumer Edifice

Daniel Defoe was a trader, a pamphleteer, a journalist and more notably as writer. When it came to his knowledge of shops, he wrote quite extensively on trading in London where he himself was based and where he traded as a general merchant in wine, wool and hosiery. During his time as a tradesman Defoe observed that 'Every false light, every artificial side window, skie-light and trunk light was exploited to make goods look finer than they really were'.⁹ Here Defoe is referring to the exploitation of architecture purely for the sales of goods that was occurring in the early 1700s. This didn't necessarily make the architecture any better but it did increase the sales of goods. The department store or 'magazines, repositories or warehouses'¹⁰ as they were referred to then were of a completely different nature than we find them today. The retailers of the time wanted to create an atmosphere of an opulent domesticity. The front of the stores were for the sales of goods. However the back section of these new stores were purely about the pleasure of shopping and the experience. For example, Wedgewood at the time, displayed there goods in large glass cases where the displays would be changed on a weekly basis. An almost museum like typology. Another example most famously was Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche, Paris. A department store that grew from a simple stall. In 1852 Aristide Boucicaut, the son of a Parisian hat maker conceived the idea of a 'department store'. Himself and his wife offered a stall from which a wide range of items could all be found in the same location. Together they developed a whole new culture of commerce, offering not just shopping but reading rooms, an art gallery and private concerts amongst many other things. 'The store served as a free intermediary and facilitator between artists and art lovers.'¹¹

Today's shopping centers are giant steel boxes of con-

sumption with little if any space given to natural social interaction. One is unaware of the time of day from the inside, usually they are devoid of any views to the outside just in case it might distract the shopper. The main concern is separating the shopper with their money. Rem Koolhaas refers to the shopping mall typology as 'junk space'.¹² They are described by Barry Quinn, in his book *The Fashion of Architecture* as 'transitory non-places'¹¹ mostly made up of commercial activity. It is space purely formed to best display brands and products with little or any consideration for collectivity. Unlike Boucicaut's Le Bon Marche, shopping centers today don't offer collective spaces. Yes there maybe food halls and the typical grouped seating area found in the center of the 'box' but this doesn't encourage collectivity, it simply offers the shopper a resting place. Another such argument from Sitte is that "modern public space [is] only suitable for the photograph".¹³ This is again an ethical problem within this society. The design of public space has given its hierarchy to the its aesthetics rather than the true needs of beings-collectivity. We live at such a speed that functionality is of utmost importance and our ethical nature has disintegrated over time as a result.

We are instinctively social beings. However, there are architectures in place that are forcing a collectivity that is unnatural in its reality. So taking Thomas street in Limerick as an example- it was transformed into a 'shared street' and was supposed to be a col

The Consumer Edifice

lective space for people gathering in the city. This is totally unnatural to us and therefore the space is not used as it was intended. The market place or green urban park were originally the places of collectivity. What differs from these spaces in comparison to my example of Thomas street is that they are places of activity. They have a functionality, a reason to frequent. It is not forced on the frequenter. They are there to shop or to play, thus the park and the market place. The collectivity of social beings thus materializes. There are seats randomly dispersed around the street and the paving has been changed to accommodate both traffic and pedestrian, giving neither hierarchy over one another. Of course this is the objective of the shared street concept and it has reduced the dominance of the vehicle but it has not encouraged a collectivity on the street. The lack of the understanding of how society can be collective seems to be evident in today's architecture. Many collective spaces lack genuine quality. The activities or events have lost their authenticity.

There simply must be an architecture to help the sustainability of societies culture.

9 Defoe, Daniel, *The Complete English Tradesmen*, London, 1727

10 Kathryn A. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, (Yale University Press, 2003)

11 "Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche." EN .: Accessed January 16, 2015. <http://www.lebonmarche.com/en.html>.

12 Quinn, Barry. *The fashion of Architecture* (Berg Publishers 2003)

13 Wigley, Mark. *White walls, Designer dresses: the fashioning of modern architecture*. Cambridge, Mass; MIT Press, 1995





While it is true that transitioning to more sustainable growth will require large changes , it is individuals whose combined impact has the power to chage the world in its entirety.

Changing Climate

There is also a relationship between this shift in social thinking and climate change. We are being forced to look at the consequences of our actions and the irrefutable changes in the world's climate. Could this be down to ethics? This is apparent in not only the way we shop or what we choose to buy but in the way we build, the way we live, the materials we choose and the land we take from the earth. There is no question that changes in society are occurring but unlike fashion's immediacy, they are slow to make any meaningful difference. In an interesting talk in SAUL by Gerald Fleming on the 15th of October 2014 on climate change, I was made aware of the impact of our decisions as a society and as architects with regard to our climate crisis.

I took most interest in the projections of the climate change that probably will not affect me in my life time but will however affect future generations. Yet I was struck by the lack of anything significantly substantial being done about this within our society. We have become so obsessed with the here and now that any thought of future generations seems to have been lost. The level of our carbon based fuels is rising daily. For example, the use of cement in the building industry is contributing significantly to this. The idea of the life span of a building and the materials that they are made from, needs to be thought about in much greater detail. The ethical decisions made within our discipline need to be changed. However 'sustainable architecture' to me seems more like an opportunity for the client to save money on their bills rather than a focus on how ethical the building is in terms of our environment. Given our exponential advances in technology there are various construction methods surfacing that promise to promote 'sustainable architecture'. However upon listening to Ger Fleming and then exploring these new methods

it appears that these methods are more focused on reduction rather than eradication of the use of these fossil fuels. Fashion has an irrefutable link with climate. However it is often cast aside unlike other industries. Cleaning up fashion has an immense opportunity to transform itself. We can instill the design power houses of the world to match their aesthetics with their ethics. Eighty billion garments are newly produced every year. To emphasize the impact on our climate, a pair of jeans uses 11,000-20,000 liters of water in their production alone. Textile production is dependent on multifarious resources. Within the fashion world designers are making conscious choices with respect to materiality and design in order to uphold their ethical nature.

So what is ethical fashion? 'Ethical fashion represents an approach to the design, sourcing and manufacturing of clothing which maximizes benefits to people and communities while minimizing impact on the environment'.¹⁴ Brands, retailers and consumers have all become fantastically adept at divorcing fashion from the very fact that it is been made by an army of living, breathing, human beings with resources which are depleting the environment. Ethical fashion strives to take an active role in poverty reduction and to create a sustainable livelihood. This relates strongly to my thesis. I believe that my proposal of a new type of textile industry could potentially awaken Limerick's areas of regeneration, more specifically the Southhill area located on the fringes of the city. An area of severe deprivation, it is one of Limerick's most disadvantaged areas. According to a Health Service Executive a report was conceived showing the startling statistics. One statistic identified that 59.3% of people in the area are unemployed. On a deprivation scale ranging from 1-10 South Hill was rated at 10. However of the 40.7% of people who are

¹⁴ "the-issues." What is Ethical Fashion?. <http://www.ethicalfashionforum.com/the-issues/ethicalfashion> (accessed October 22, 2014).





Changing Climate

employed 83 men are employed in the manufacturing industry and 89 females employed in trade or commerce. Thus taking this data into account, I firmly believe that this type of industry in this deprived area could have a huge potential to drive significant positive change. Hence why I have chosen not to deal with the housing problem that surrounds South hill. I believe that if the South hill community gains a pride from its new industry the housing crisis will start to regenerate itself, Restoring the community to the former period when the production of Limerick lace made it a thriving area.

Limerick Lace Industry

Looking at the Limerick Lace industry as a precedent, it is apparent that we have a strong history of textile and craft making throughout Limerick. It was the first Irish lace making venture that was purely commercial. Set up in 1828 by Charles Walker, it was at a time when the lace industry in England was in recession. Walker took a tour of Ireland and chose Limerick as the site for his newest venture. It is said that this was due to the fact that there was a large population of unemployed Limerick females and he came to the conclusion that this was an opportunity for cheap labor. The first factory was set up in Mount Kennet; 'A larger building with spacious rooms and affordable ample accommodation for workers at that time numbered about 500'.¹⁵The lace factory moved after 8 years to a new premises on Mulgrave Street and following that onto another factory in Glentworth Street. However by 1843 the machine had started to take over from the skilled craftswomen of the Limericks Lace making industry and threatened their livelihoods. A Mr. Samuels a successful lace maker from London, recounted a very vivid real discription of almost 3000 women being employed in Limericks lace industry. The industry slowed down between 1843 and 1893 when Mrs. Vere O'Brien set up a lace making school. One factor that led to this revival was that 'lace making in Ireland at this period was the realization that good design was absolutely necessary'.¹⁶

In this brief insight into Limerick's craft making history, it is clear that textile production is embedded in our culture and is something that should be drawn upon. Today, we are still in the midst of recession with unemployment remaining a major issue. The Definition of 'sustainability' is "[to meet] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The

built, the social and the environmental all become an intertwined fabric of this ethical discussion. We have a social responsibility to increase the welfare and the potentiality of communities within the fashion world. Eradication of exploitation of the fashion workforce, building to reduce environmental impact and helping to produce a new ethical collectivity, form part of the aspirations that I as an architect want seek to explore throughout this thesis.

¹⁵ Undated hand written account from Mrs Vere O'Brien's private papers.

¹⁶ Cléirigh, Nellie, and Veronica Rowe. Limerick lace: a social history and a maker's manual. Gerrards Cross: C. Smythe, 1995. p.16





Here is a small excerpt of how I began the start of this thesis Project. I wrote what I imagined Limericks new fashion industry to be. It is set in a differnt site as to where I have choosen for my final project but I have included it to give you a small piece of my imagination.

Limerick.2020.Fashion. Empire

It is 2 days to runway, models are being pushed, pulled, pinned in and cut out of the newest designs, scissors clanking off the polished concrete floors, pins falling like rain drops and material slinking over the open balconies that protrude over the main atrium of the building. The building is electric with sound, the sound of people rushing and sewing machines running is amplified throughout. The sound is mirrored by the hustling busy street of Limericks main thoroughfare; Williams St. People going about their daily lives totally unaware of the deadline that is looming for the fashion community of Ireland. I step inside to escape the busyness of the outside world only to be consumed by the busyness of the interior fashion world. It is a different type of busy. The building that houses Ireland's fashion industry has everything from classrooms to haberdasheries to lecture spaces to production floors, housing machines that one thought only existed in shipping yards. People of all ages taking part in the fashion frenzy. There are older women teaching lace making, Limerick's oldest and finest craft, to the young fashion students who are eager to learn. There are buyers and sellers, shop fronts and offices. This is Ireland's fashion district. It would rival that of New York or Paris. It is the most open fashion house that I have ever experienced. The production floor is a knowledge exchange between couture and everyday. It is a vast room filled with all types of machinery and people scattered like a pattern of the most intricate piece of lace. One could be producing low cost clothing and believe they are amongst the designers of the world's most exclusive brands. This is ethical fashion production. No longer rooms void of light and air, no longer people crammed into every square meter possible. The terrible conditions that enveloped the previous culture of low cost clothing has been destroyed by the new architecture of the fashion industry. The building spans between streets. Bridges hover over thoroughfares revealing parts of the fashion industry to passers by. The skin of the building is transparent in its nature. Fashion is open to all. It is no longer a closed door industry. Clothes are fundamental to everybody's everyday. This new district is not just simply about fashion. Power has become so critically important. It is at the heart of this building. It makes it beat. Beneath the vast production spaces is Limerick's new power source. It gives life to the building and to the city. As I make my way down I'm hypnotized by the gleaming silver capsules that are dispersed amongst the space. There are children playing happily in a playground right next to them with plants and trees of all kinds from all climates intertwined

Conclusion

Throughout the process of researching & compiling this thesis, I have formed the view that ethics in both fashion and architecture is gaining more overall prominence and is becoming a more central tenant in discussions. Despite this very positive move forward, my profound hope as a future architect is that in the fullness of time key words such as 'green, eco and ethical' will no longer need a definition or clarification .

I envisage a transformation that normalizes such words.

My vision is that design integrity will banish the current era of 'throw-away clothing'.

I truly believe that it is possible to have a society where the glow of social responsibility is more appreciated than the glow from the sparkled dress.

Fashion does not revolve solely around clothes in the same way that Architecture is not just about buildings. There is a deeper meaning..... it is the way that each and every one of us in all levels of society chooses to live.

It is my most sincere hope that upon reading this small contribution to the very large debate that you too might just take a second today to think about what you choose to wear tomorrow.

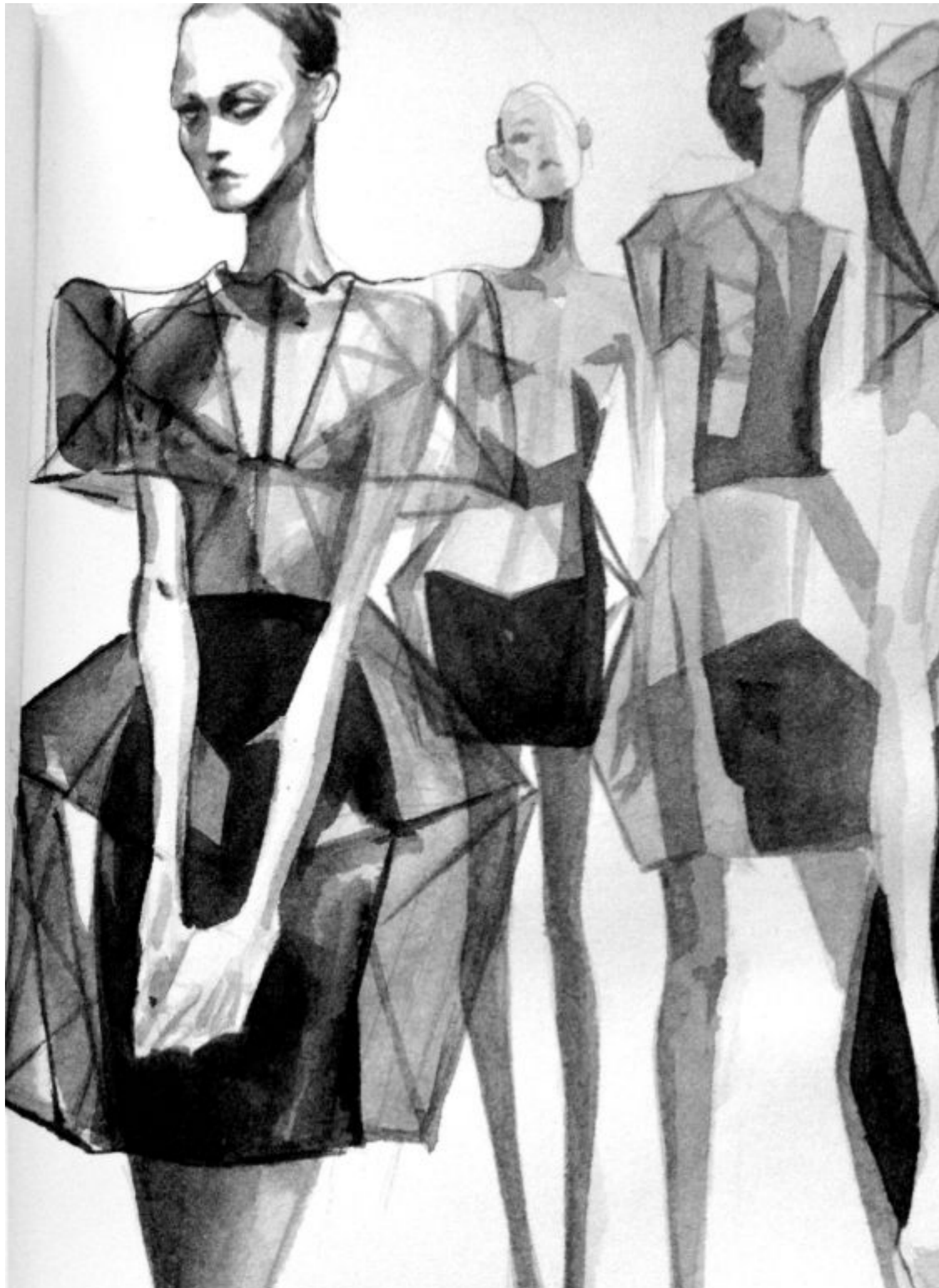




This relationship between personal values and professional practice has inspired a new type of designer, one who is a strategic thinker, a successful creative maker, and an experienced communicator driven by values-based decision making.

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Geometric Dress Sketch.

Concept sketch

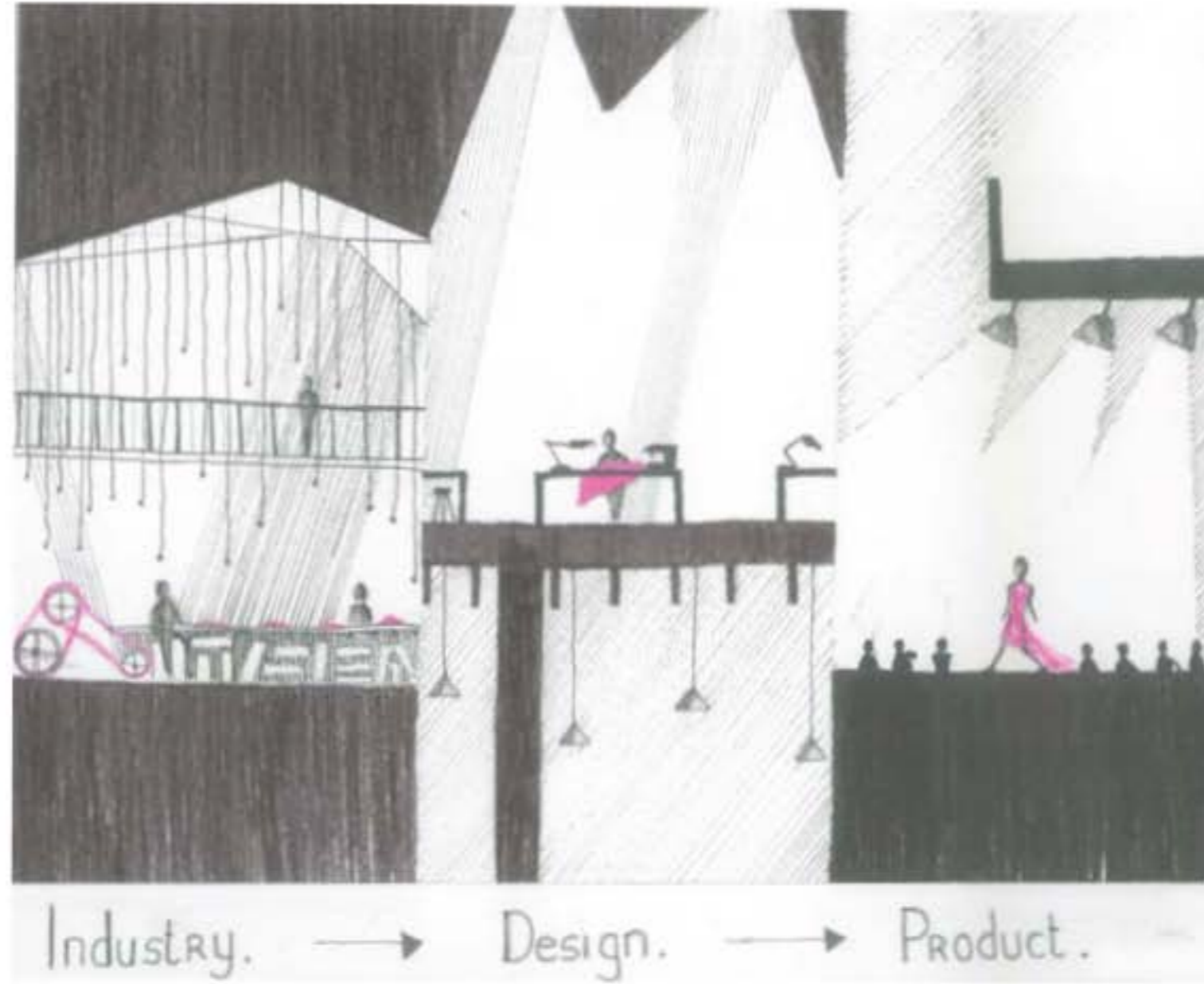
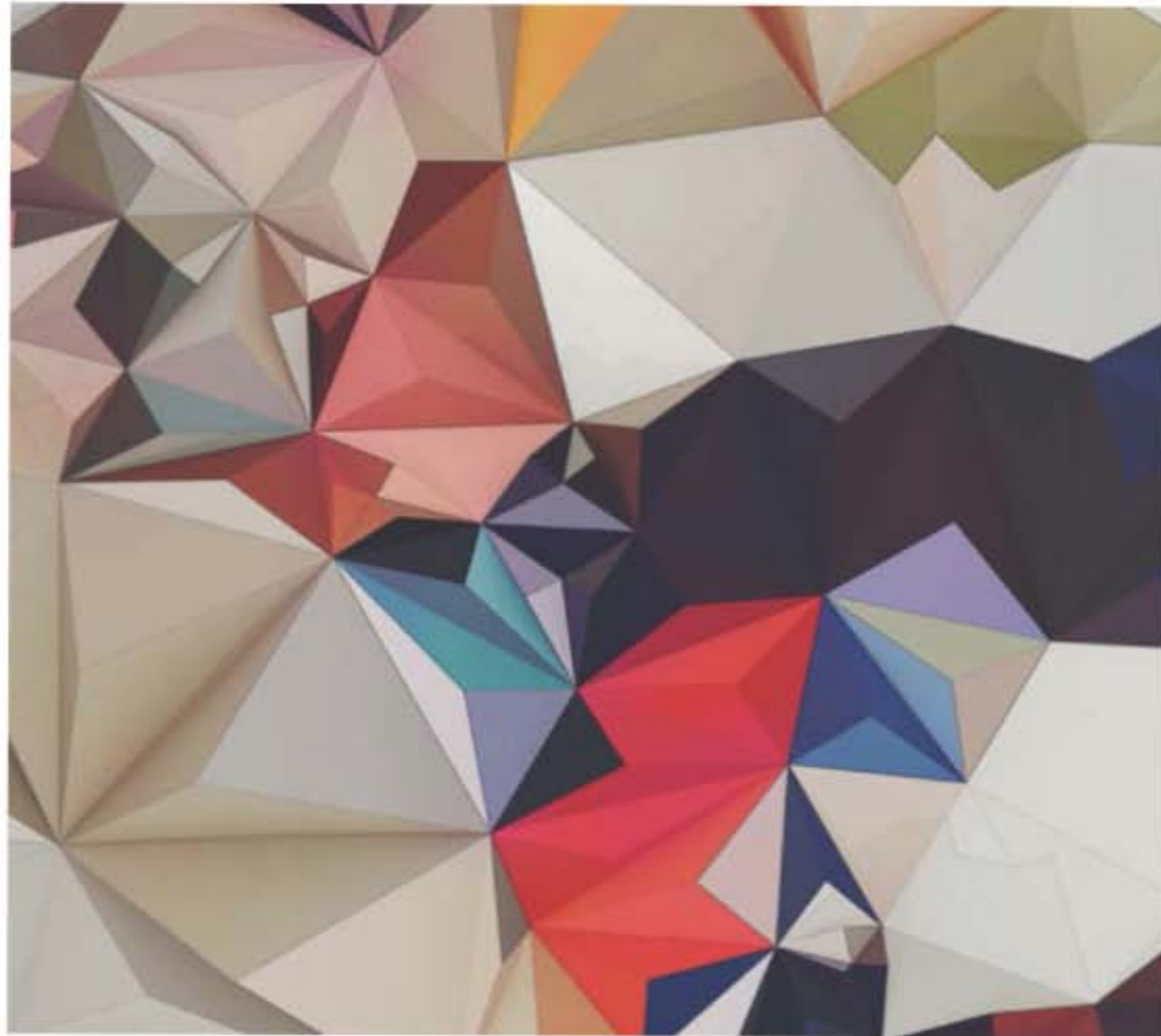


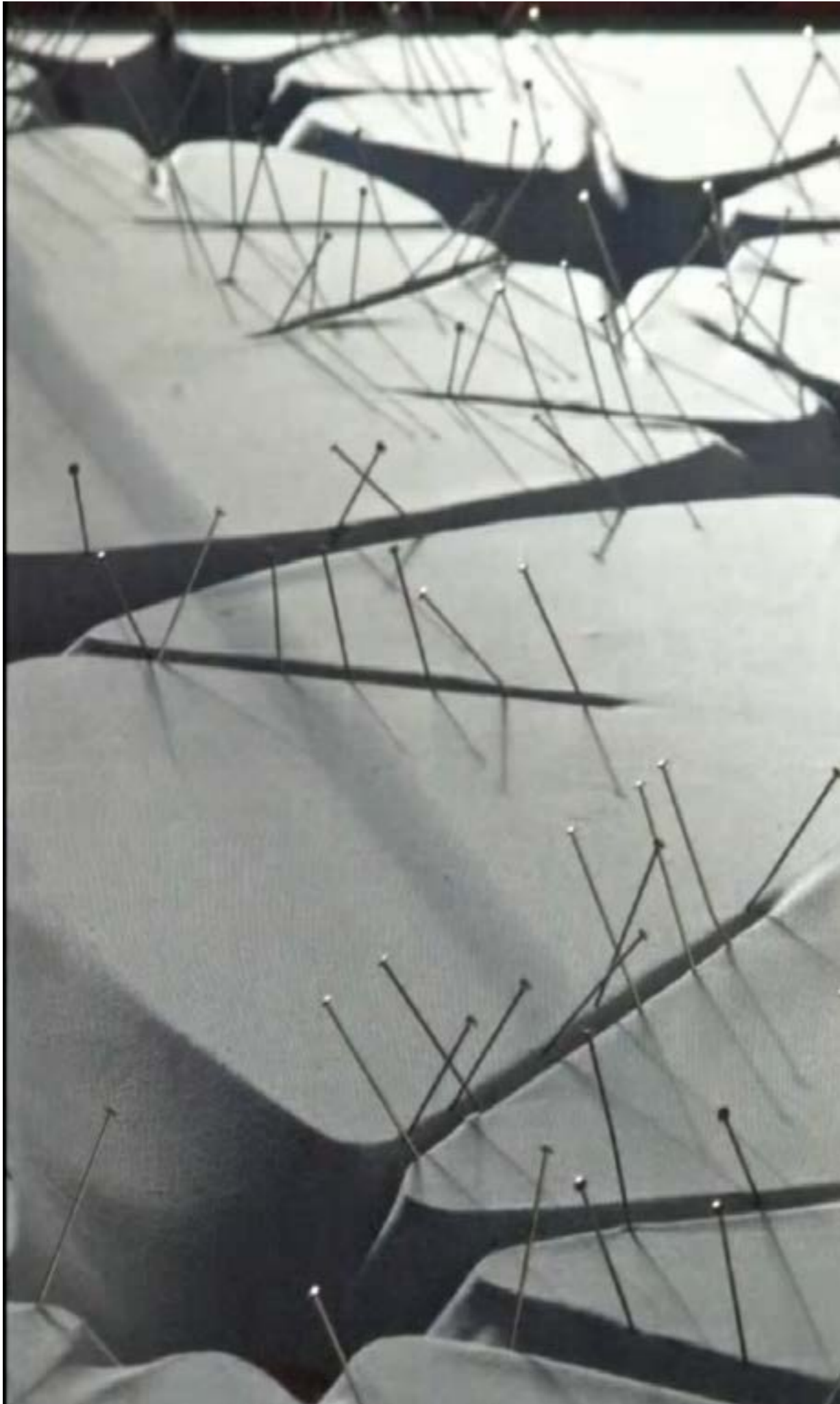


Photo Collage of Alexander Wang Fashion show taking place in abandoned South Hill home.



Geometric Study of Color





Fabric poured Concrete.





Fabric Poured Concrete Form Work



Images of South Hill.

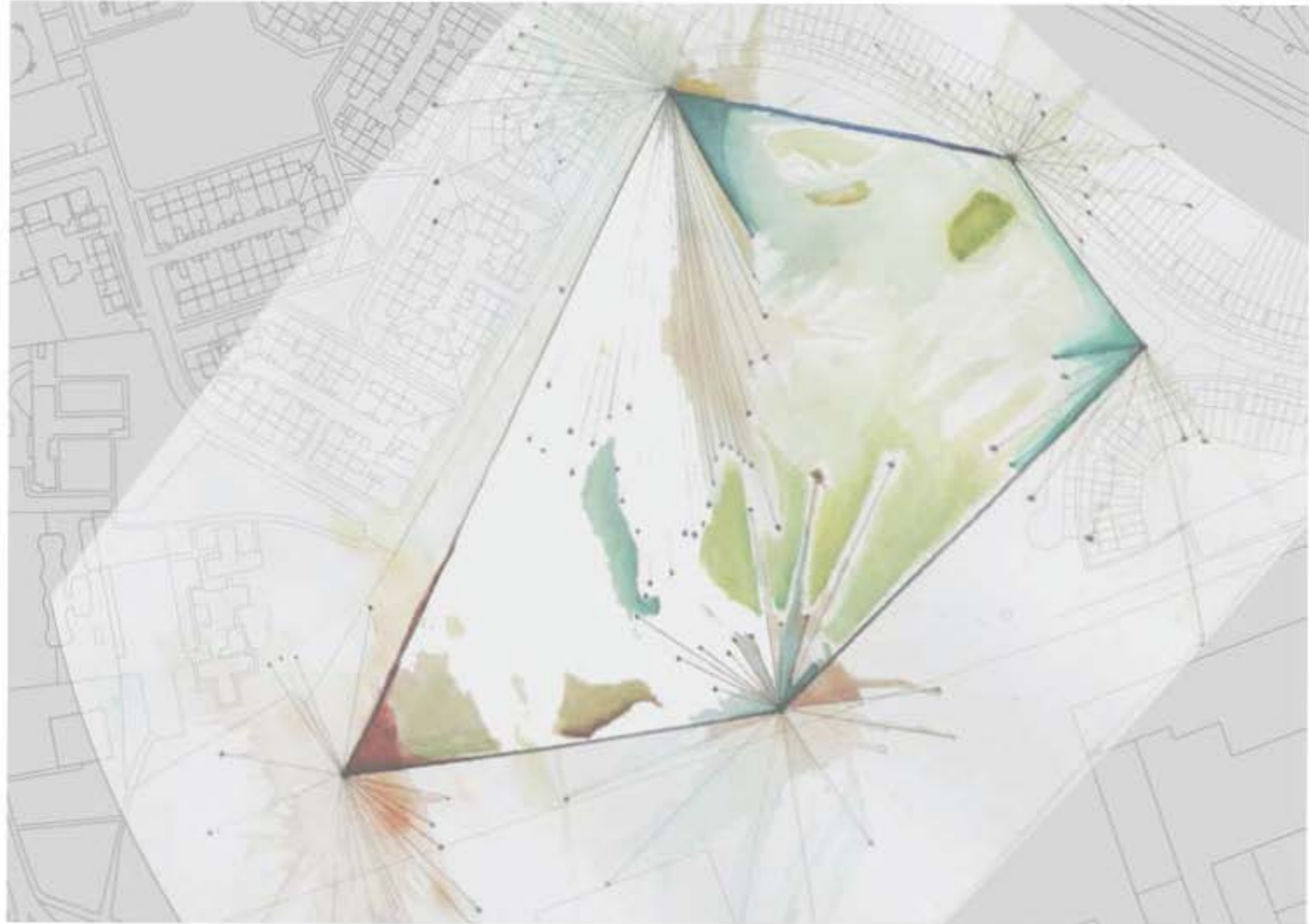




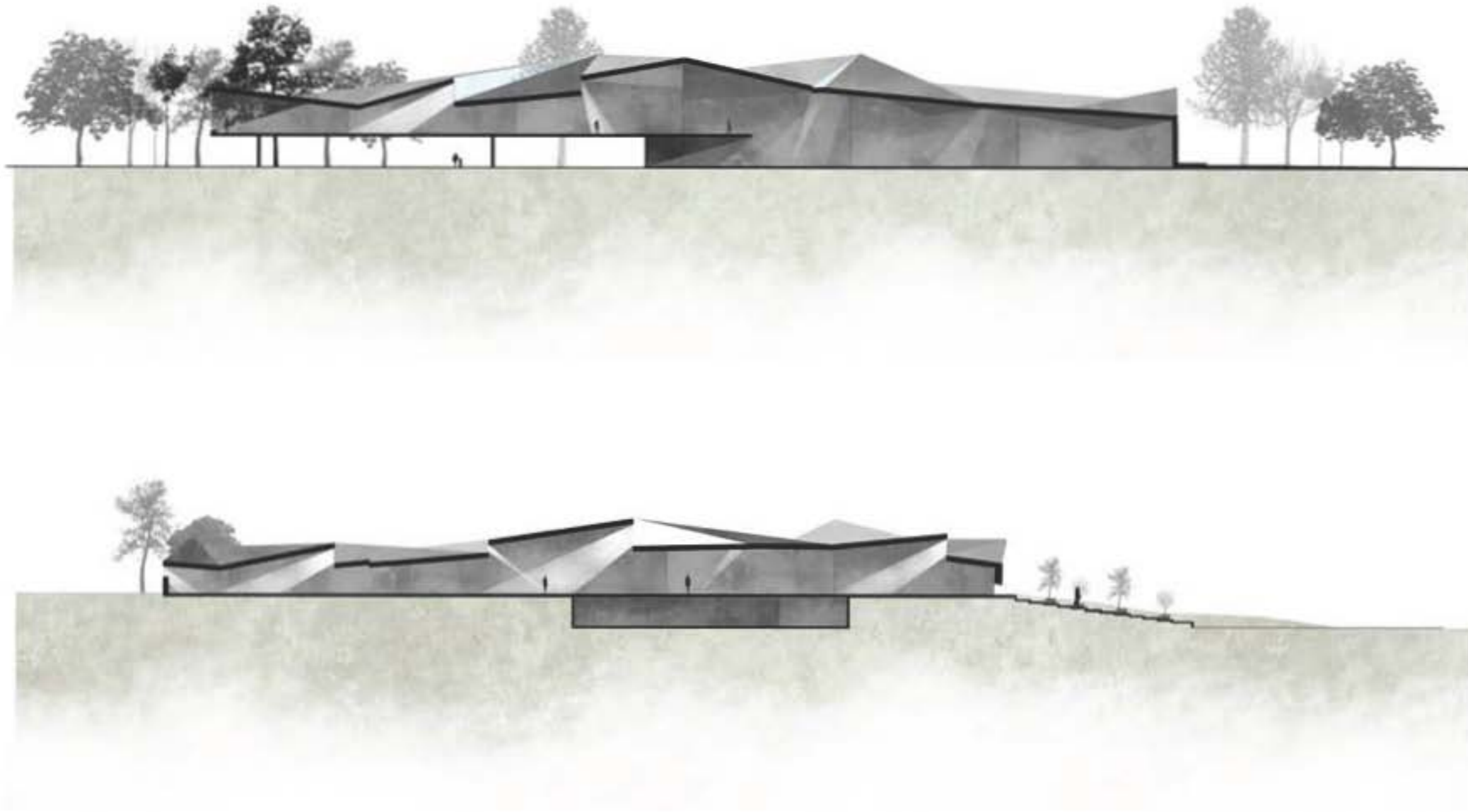
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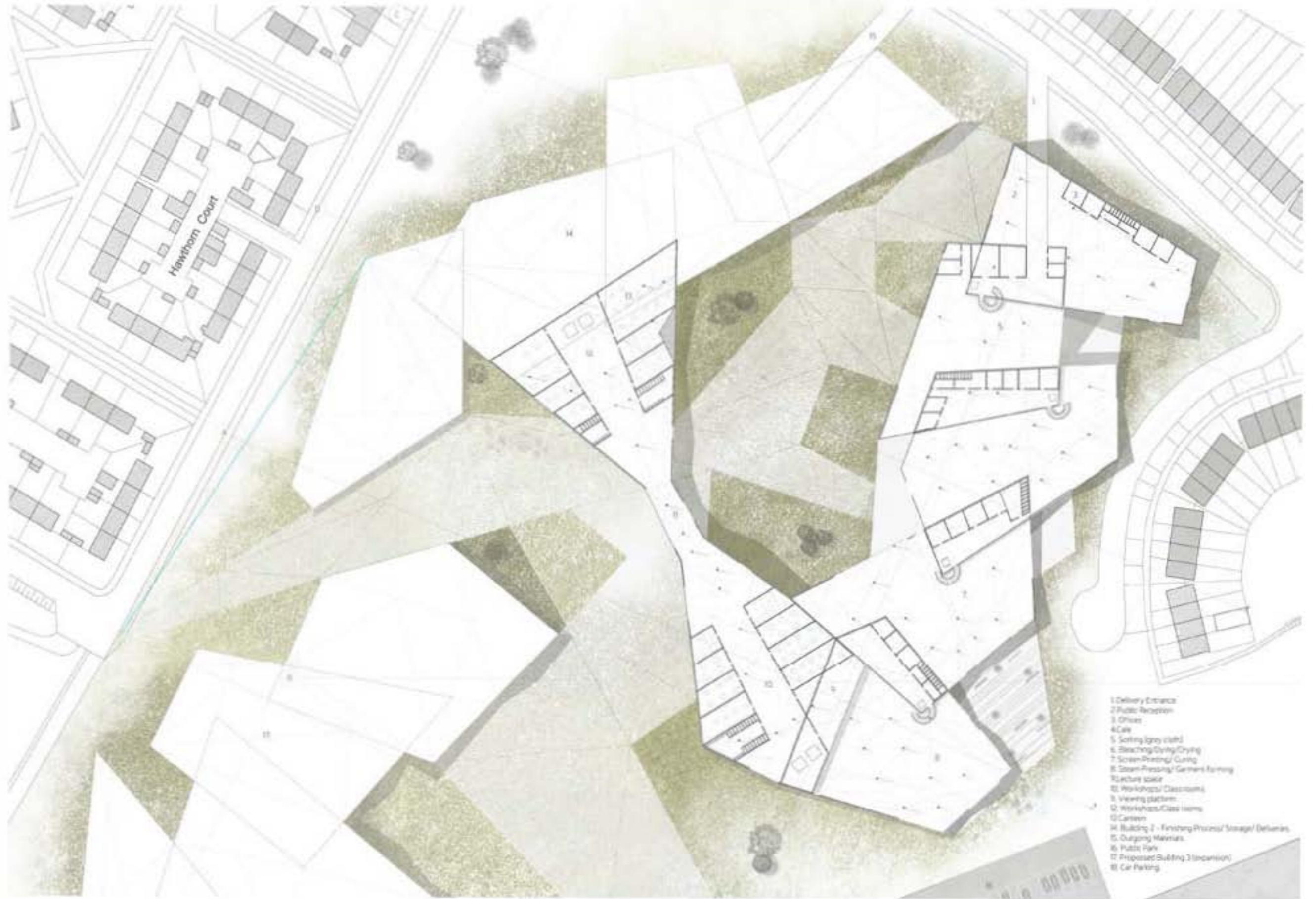
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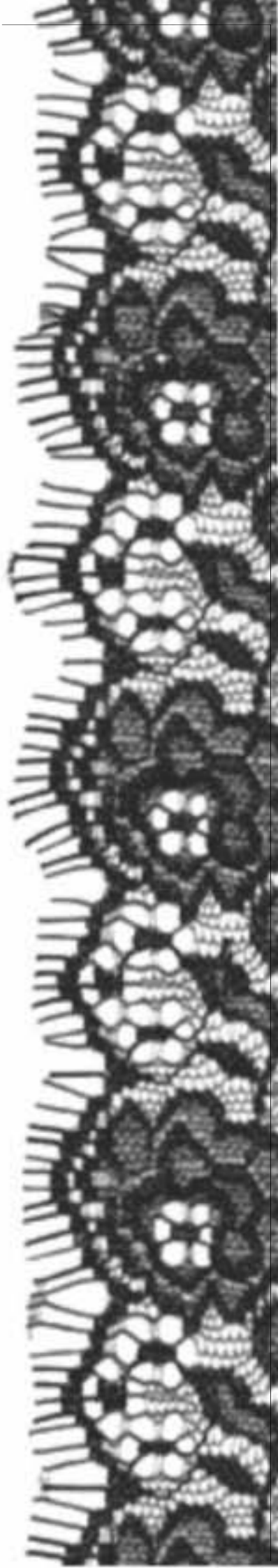
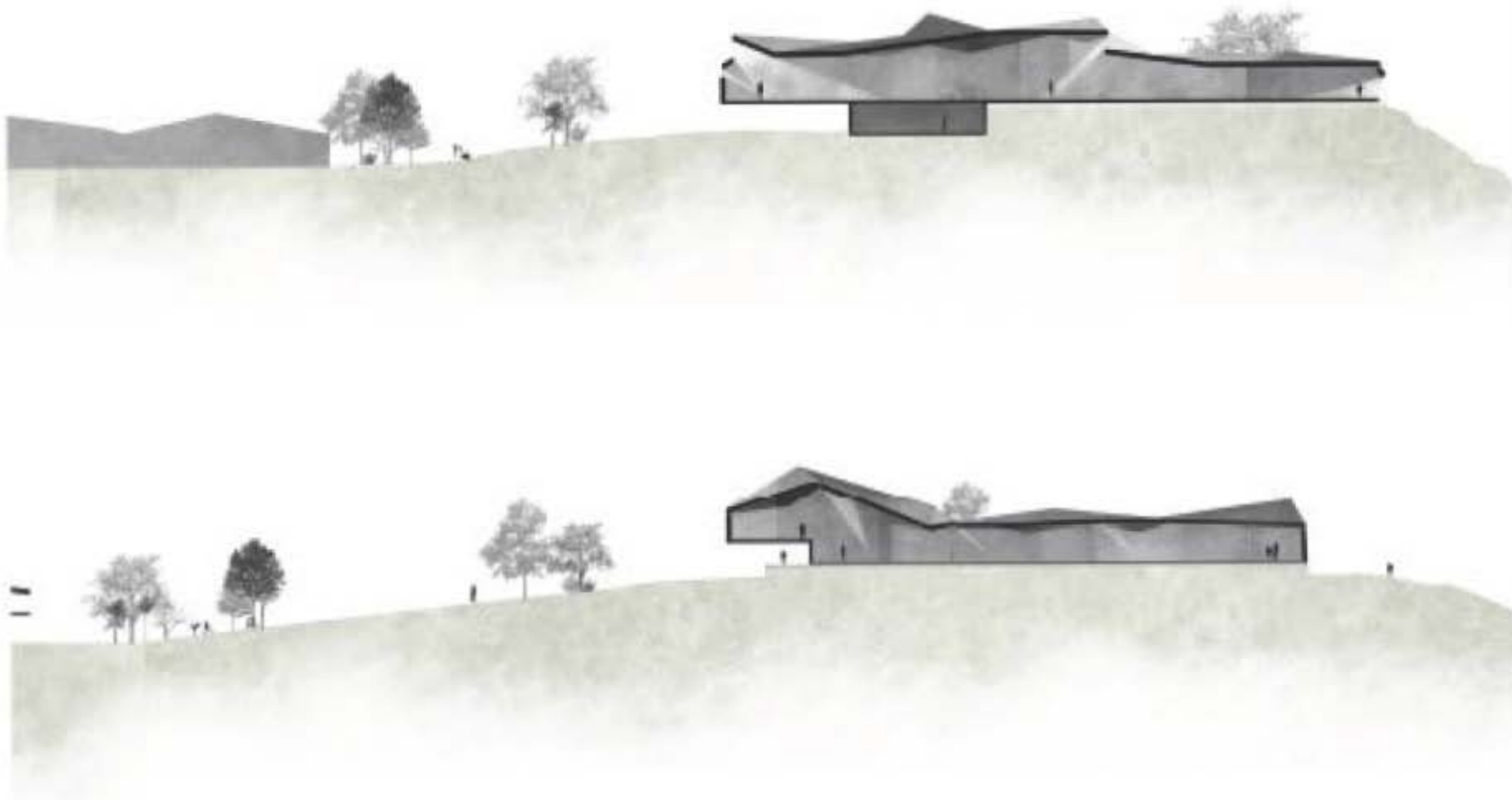
Short Sections through Textile Factory.



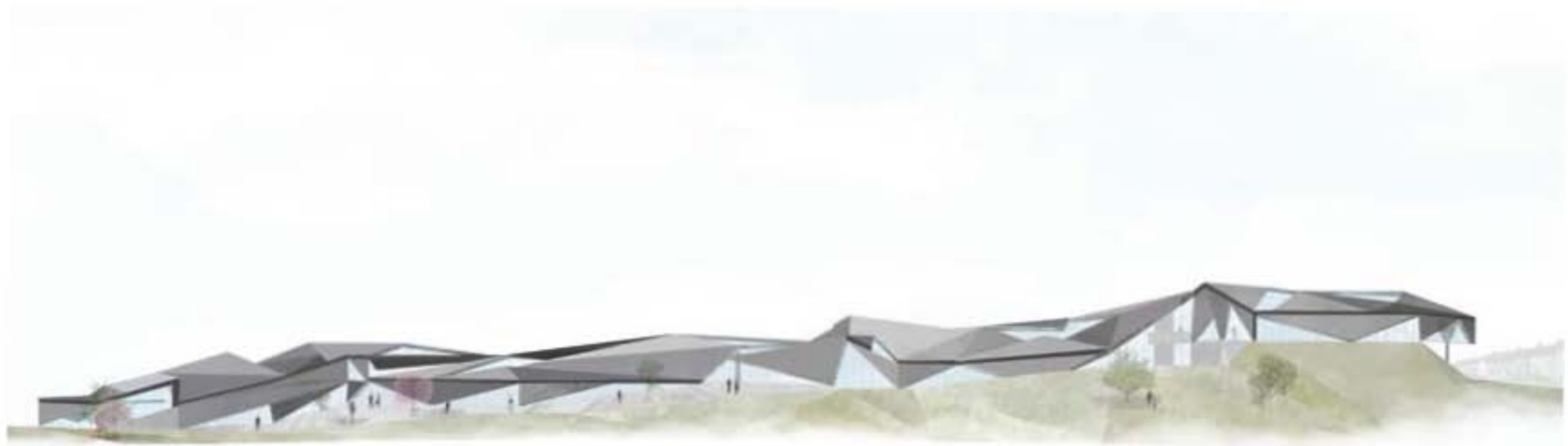
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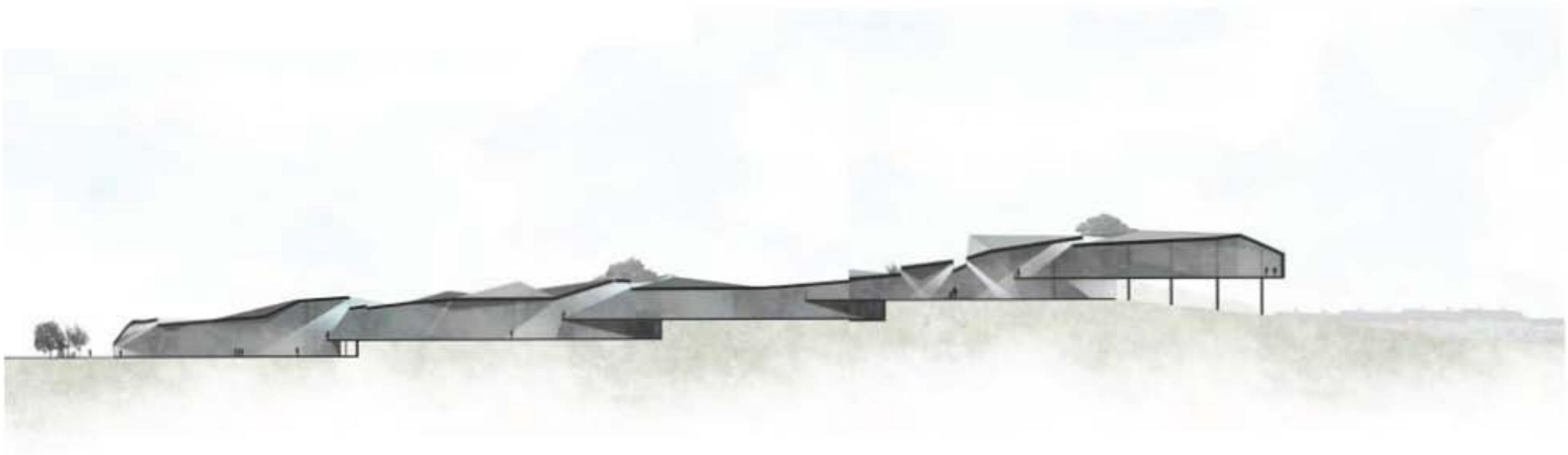
Short Section through Textile Factory.



Elevation.



Long Section.



Perspective.

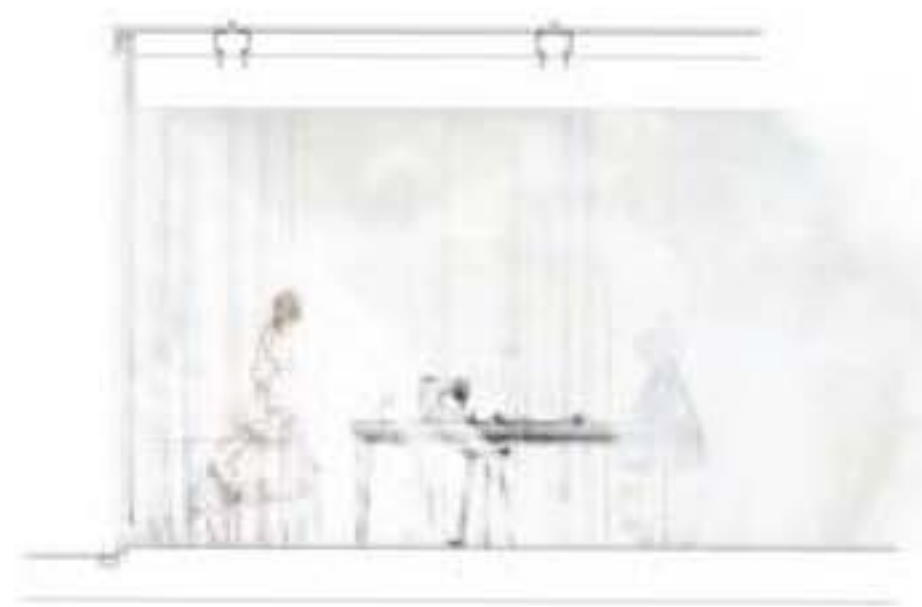
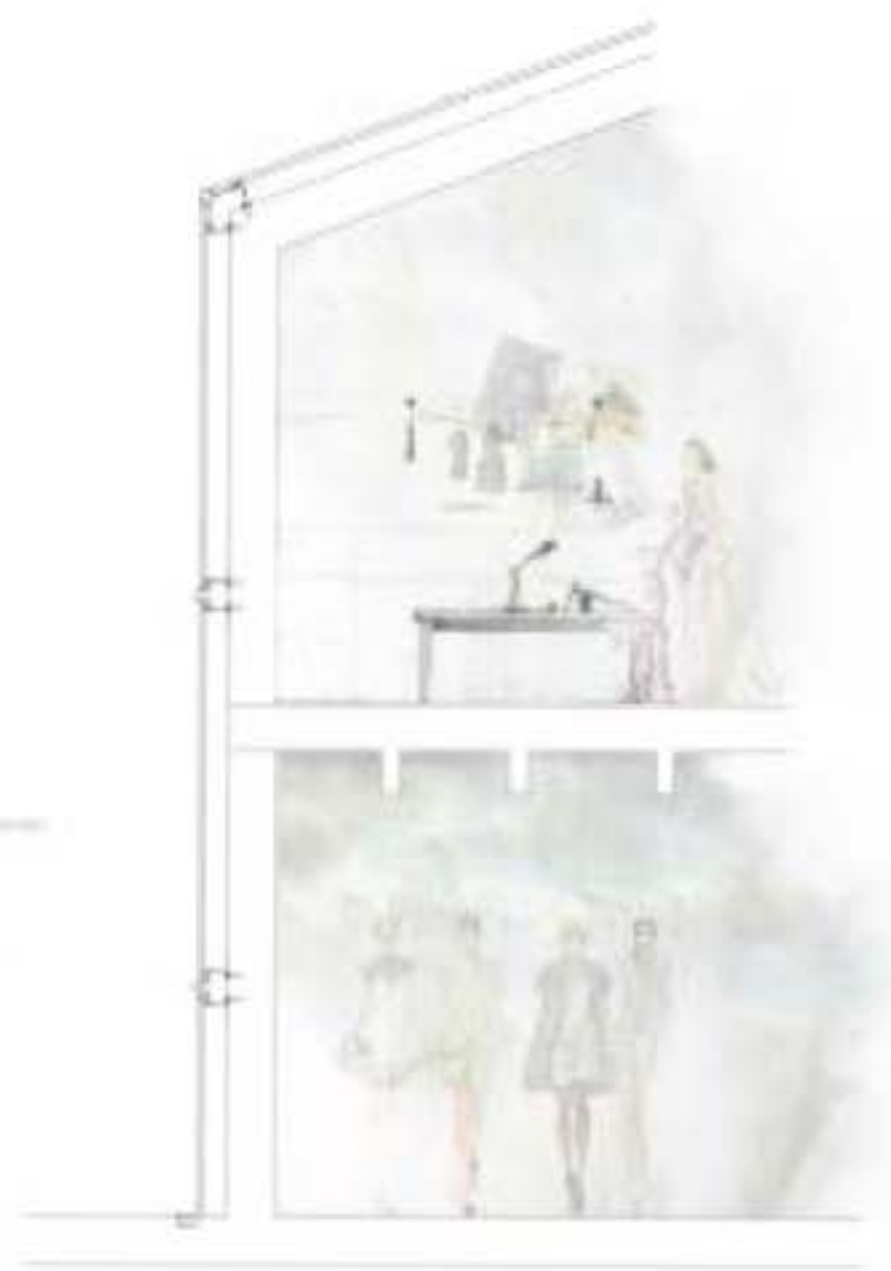


Collage Image of Old Limerick Lace With New Textile Industry.



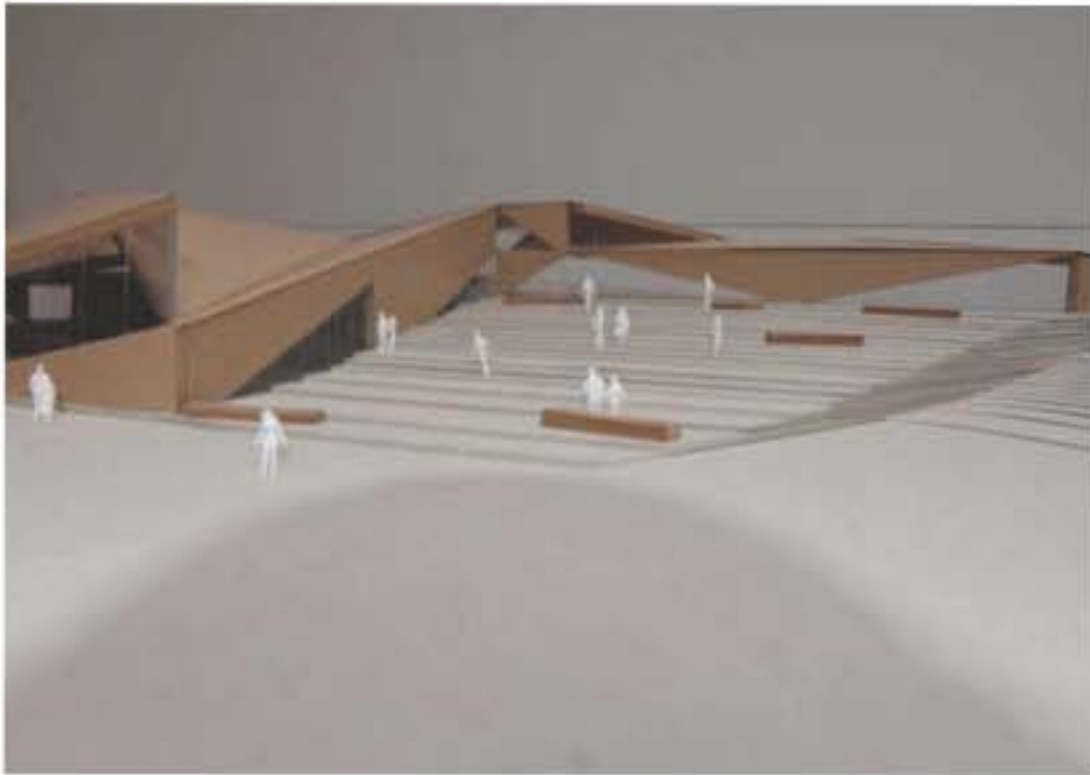


- 1. Main entrance
- 2. Reception area
- 3. Waiting area
- 4. Examination room
- 5. Treatment room
- 6. Office
- 7. Storage
- 8. Restroom
- 9. Corridor
- 10. Staircase
- 11. Elevator
- 12. Utility room
- 13. Mechanical room
- 14. Electrical room
- 15. Storage room
- 16. Office
- 17. Reception area
- 18. Waiting area
- 19. Examination room
- 20. Treatment room
- 21. Office
- 22. Storage
- 23. Restroom
- 24. Corridor
- 25. Staircase
- 26. Elevator
- 27. Utility room
- 28. Mechanical room
- 29. Electrical room
- 30. Storage room

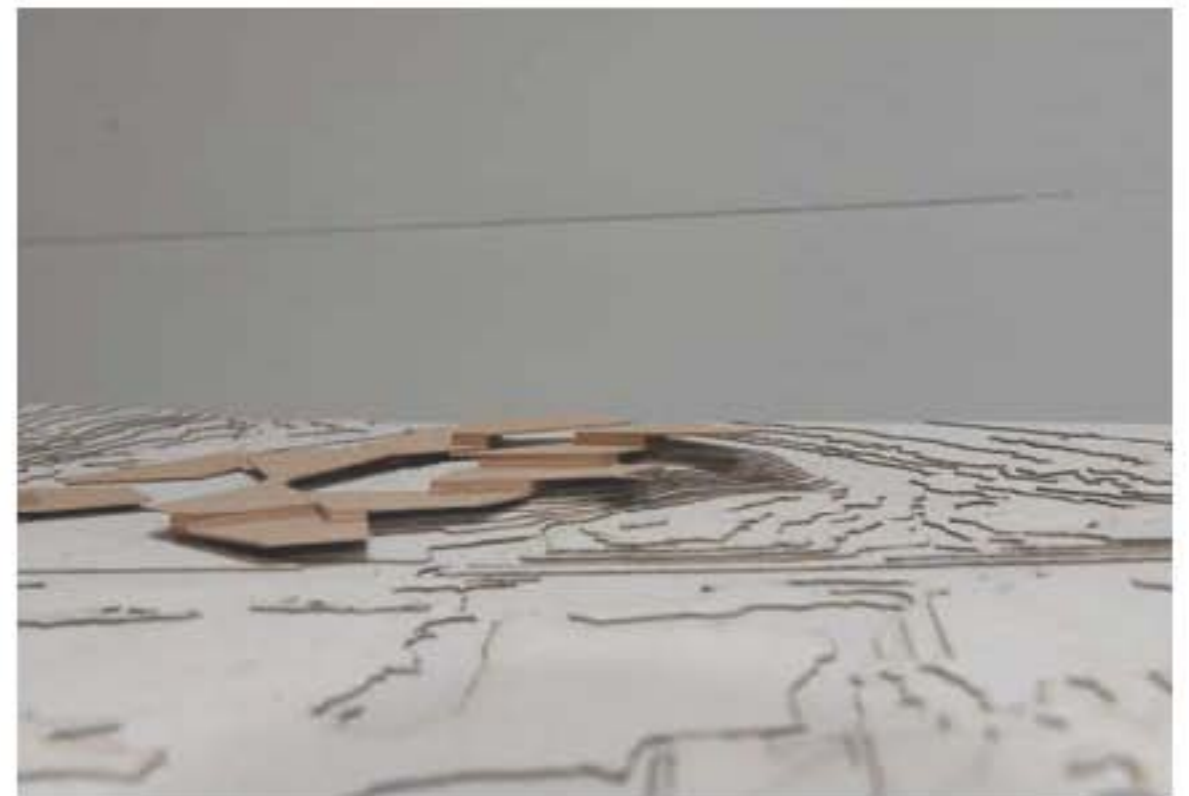


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- 14. Electrical room
- 15. Storage room

Photographs of Models



Photographs of Models





Fabric Formed Colomn.

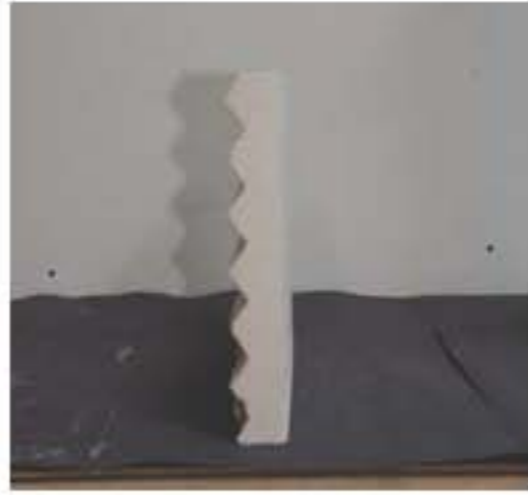




Fabric Formed Colomn.



Photographs of Models



Origami Studies

