

foreplay



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Benoît Jacques

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A short account of three millennia of entrances

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

Laboratory for Architecture as Form

Kersten Geers - Andrea Zanderigo

La forme est nécessaire. Trouver les bords, pour ne pas être avalé par la profondeur.

23.7.97

Quand la forme s'impose, l'espace se tait. Mais quand la forme s'allège, s'aplatit, l'espace répond, se bombe ou se creuse.

11.8.03

Alexandre Hollan

With the primitive hut (whatever form it may have taken), human beings invented the two notions that are *interior* and *exterior*. Then suddenly, a tension between the two appeared. Architects began to think about the importance of entering; and what had been a surface became a space, neither inside nor outside, a third space. Architecture has always been the play of passages, strong thresholds or imperceptible transitions, from the outside towards the inside. The control of this space ends up as an architectural strategy in its own right. The entrance is thinking as a set of emotional deeds that has the ability to enhance the experience of the inner space. The entrance acts as foreplay. While entrances took specific forms, architects used them in order to represent the building and the institution or person behind.

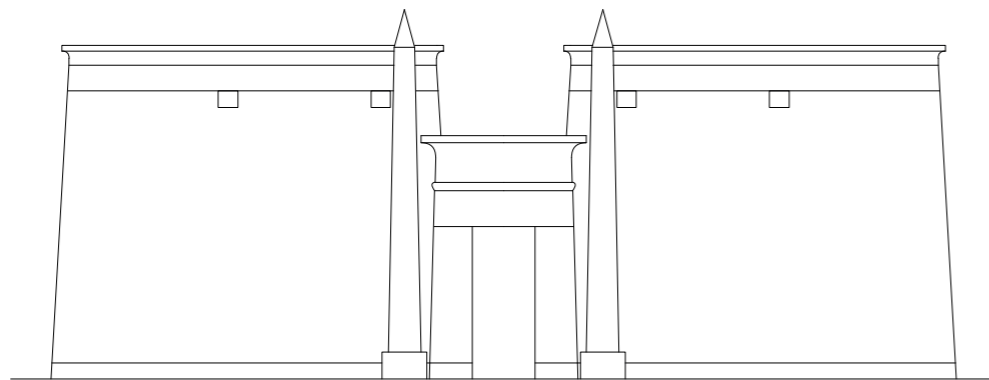
Intrigued by this theme, I chose to investigate the different forms of entrances in the history of architecture. The aim of this account is to relate their evolution through an anthology.

As entering in architecture is a very wide subject, and it is certainly too wide to compare different architectural cultures, I decided to concentrate my research only on Western architecture. I have selected 30 buildings (*remarquables par leur beauté, par leur grandeur, ou par leur singularité, et dessinés sur une même échelle* that is 1:500), which trace an (non-exhaustive) evolution of entrances since the beginning of Western architecture until the present time. In addition, I have also added to the list, what could be considered a *black sheep* as it is outside, but nevertheless relates to, Western architecture: the Temple of Luxor. There is much literature on the study of all these buildings and one could speculate for hours on every detail, which is why I will aim to focus only on the entrance.

For the study of an entrance, it is essential to understand what the entrance space is, and to distinguish between the object-thing and the object of containment. I chose to redraw every project underlining the entrance space, and revealing, if space permits, the rest of the building. The drawings are elevations or sections (that depends on which one is more relevant) and plans, using *poché* to compare the two opposite *doppelgängers*, which are on one hand the object and on the other the space. However when the entrance space is more than a transitional space, hatching nuances the *poché*. As objects, the buildings are isolated from their environments in order to make comparisons between them more coherent.

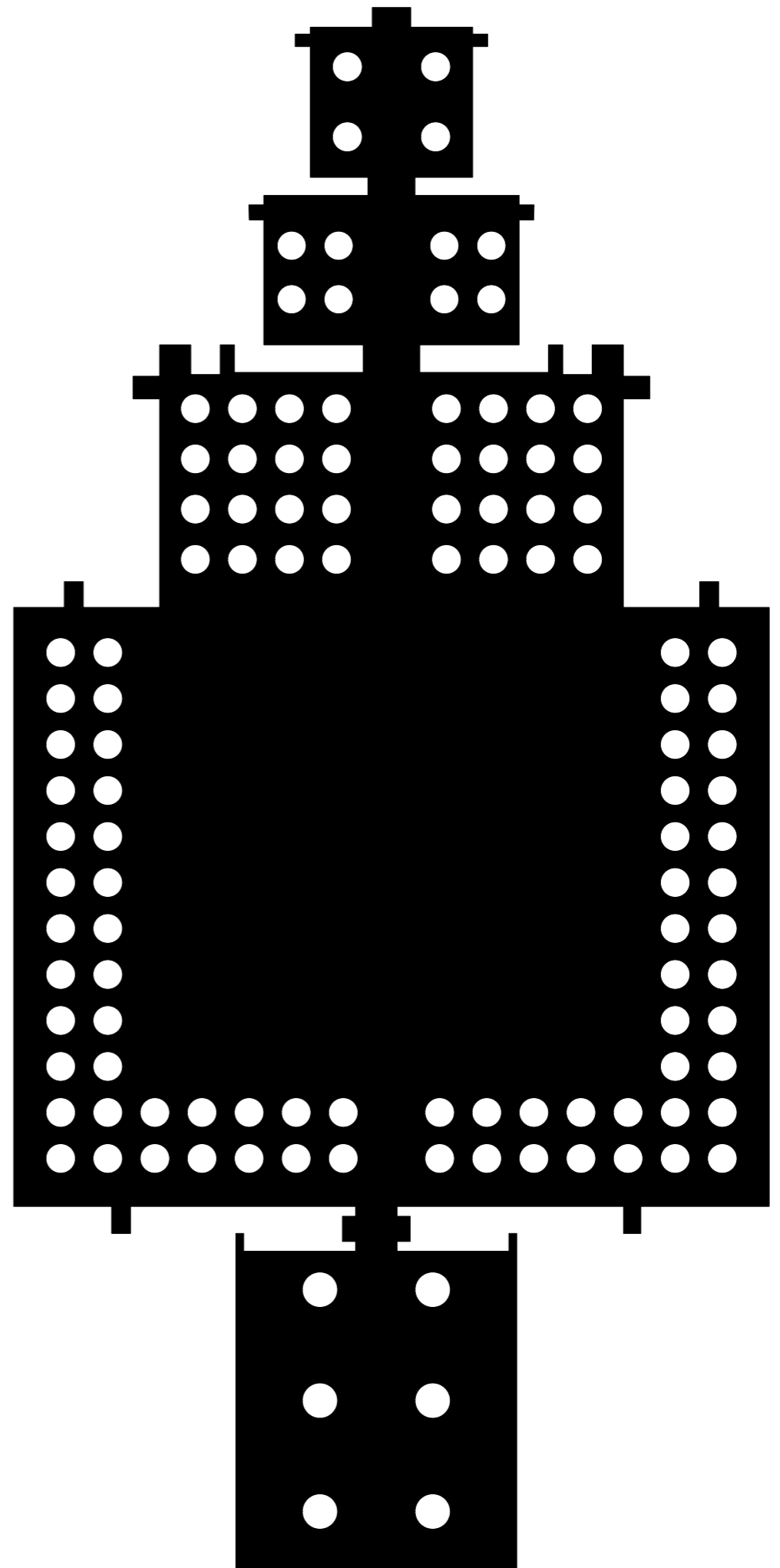
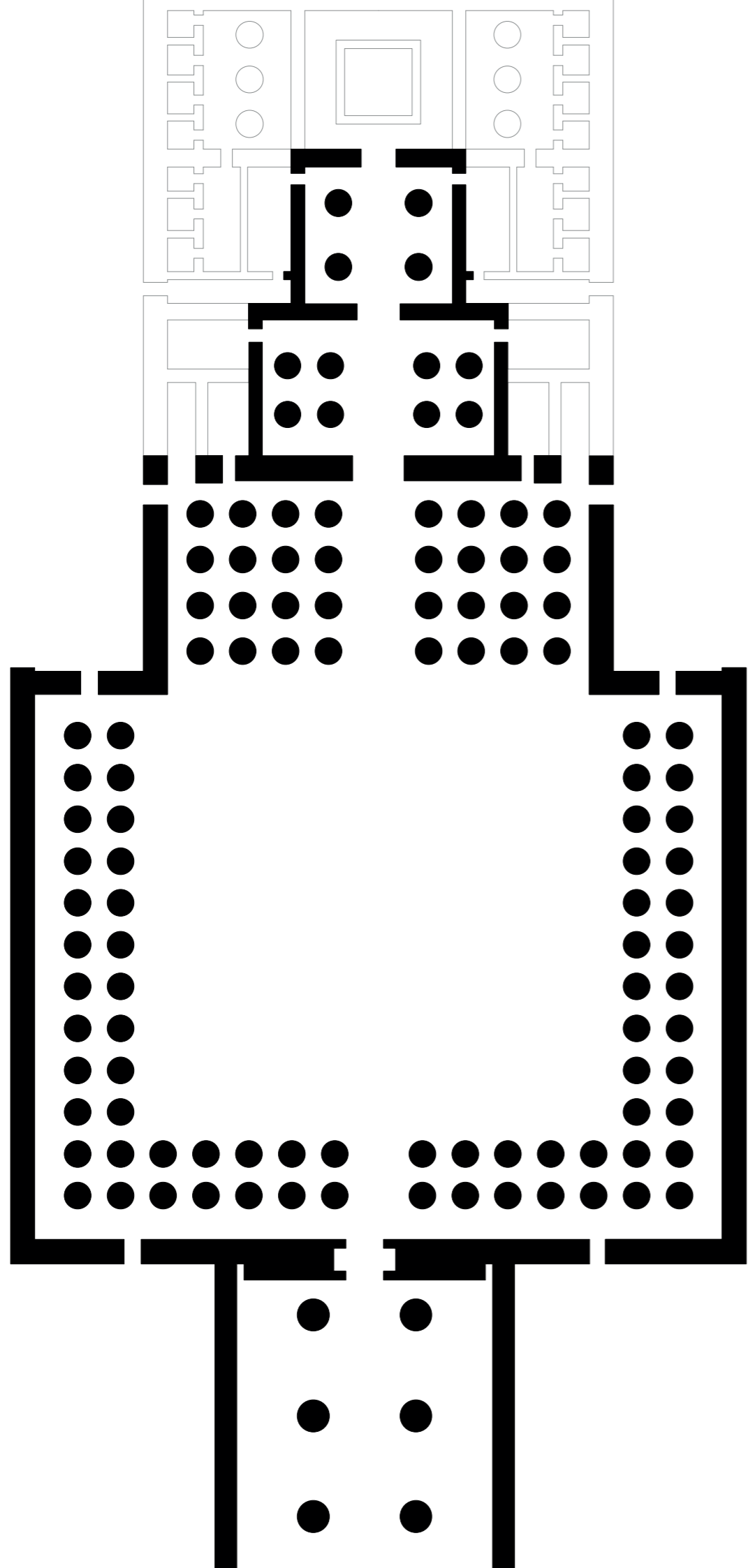
00	14th Century BC, <i>Temple of Luxor</i>
01	438 BC, Phidias, <i>Parthenon</i>
02	1 st Century BC, <i>Domus of Aulus Trebius Valens</i>
03	126, Apollodorus of Damascus, <i>Pantheon</i>
04	360, <i>Antica basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano</i>
05	1128, Bernardo el viejo, <i>Catedral de Santiago de Compostela</i>
06	1275, Bernard de Soissons, <i>Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Reims</i>
07	1462, Leon Battista Alberti, <i>Basilica of Sant'Andrea</i>
08	1536, Baldassarre Peruzzi, <i>Palazzo Massimo alle colonne</i>
09	1563, Andrea Palladio, <i>Villa Badoer</i>
10	1571, Michelangelo, <i>Biblioteca Laurenziana</i>
11	1670, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, <i>Sant'andrea al quirinale</i>
12	1790, Jacques-Germain Soufflot, <i>Eglise Sainte-Geneviève</i>
13	1828, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, <i>Altes Museum</i>
14	1875, Charles Garnier, <i>Opéra de Paris</i>
15	1888, D.H. Burnham & J.W. Root, <i>Rookery Building</i>
16	1899, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, <i>Glasgow School of Art</i>
17	1910, Frank Lloyd Wright, <i>Robie House</i>
18	1911, Adolf Loos, <i>Looshaus am Michaelerplatz</i>
19	1913, Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, <i>Fagus-Werk</i>
20	1925, Konstantin Melnikov, <i>The Soviet Pavilion</i>
21	1928, Gunnar Asplund, <i>Stockholms stadsbibliotek</i>
22	1950, Luigi Moretti, <i>Casa "Il Girasole"</i>
23	1951, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, <i>Farnsworth House</i>
24	1963, Le Corbusier, <i>Palace of the Assembly</i>
25	1964, Robert Venturi, <i>Vanna House</i>
26	1964, Marco Zanuso, <i>House in Arzachena</i>
27	1966, Marcel Breuer, <i>Whitney Museum of American Art</i>
28	1971, Louis I. Kahn, <i>Phillips Exeter Academy Library</i>
29	1989, OMA, <i>Très Grande Bibliothèque</i>
30	2010, Herzog & De Meuron, <i>Vitrahaus</i>

By marking *The Beginnings of Architecture* (according to Sigfried Giedion), Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilisations mark also the genesis of the action of entering in architecture. For this reason, it is essential to mention them as part of this study. However, Greek architecture is the first to express the Western approach of the entrance, it is the origin where the roots of the Western architectural family tree are born. This is why the Temple of Luxor is here as a starter before the opening of this account.



Two massive obelisks first indicated the entrance of the Temple of Luxor, and then a series of doors, antechambers and courtyards were deployed. As one got closer to the sanctuary, the columns became bigger and the space narrower and darker. Most of the built part of the temple was the entrance, the separation between the exterior and the inner sanctum deeply burrowed in the mass of stones. In *Existence, Space & Architecture*, the historian Christian Norberg-Shulz characterized Egyptian temples by the concept of “one straight path leading ‘in’ towards a final but unreachable goal”¹.

The Temple of Luxor announced what would be two important notions in the theory of architecture. The first one was the *gradation*. An entrance conceived as a progression towards a goal, a room, or more precisely the Room of an edifice. This concept will be rediscovered in this account with the Roman Pantheon, the Altes Museum or the Stockholm Public Library. The second notion was the idea of the *unreachable goal*. An entrance conceived as an endless threshold. The history of Architecture includes some examples that converge to the idea, I am thinking about the infinite symmetrical suites of the Beaux-Arts architecture, most of the thermal complexes or even the Villa Giulia in Roma. The endless threshold finds its peak in the literature, such as the *Divine Comedy*, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* or *A Thousand Plateaus*. I will not develop these boundless entrances because it is a far too wide topic that deserves its own account.



Around the 5th Century BC, the rising Greek civilization, aware of the Egyptian and Sumerian's architecture, created an entirely new and unique architectural style. From that moment, a universal architectural vocabulary, which is still in use today, started its life, including an entrance vocabulary. Some new terms have become the founding principles for two millennia of entrances, including, *crepidoma*, *portico*, *entablature* and *pediment*. The concept of a central entrance was added to the list, and will stay as a dogma until the beginning of the 20th Century.

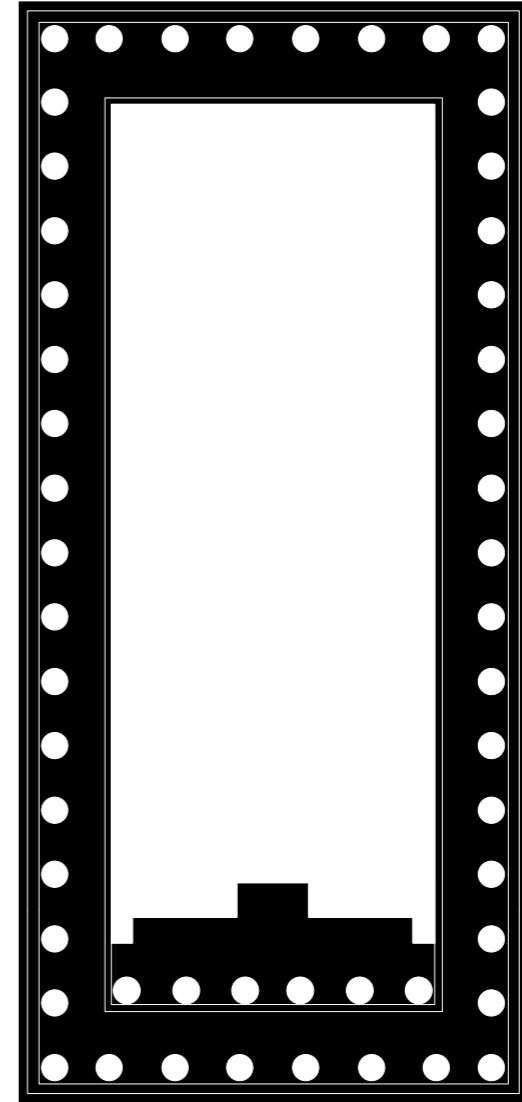
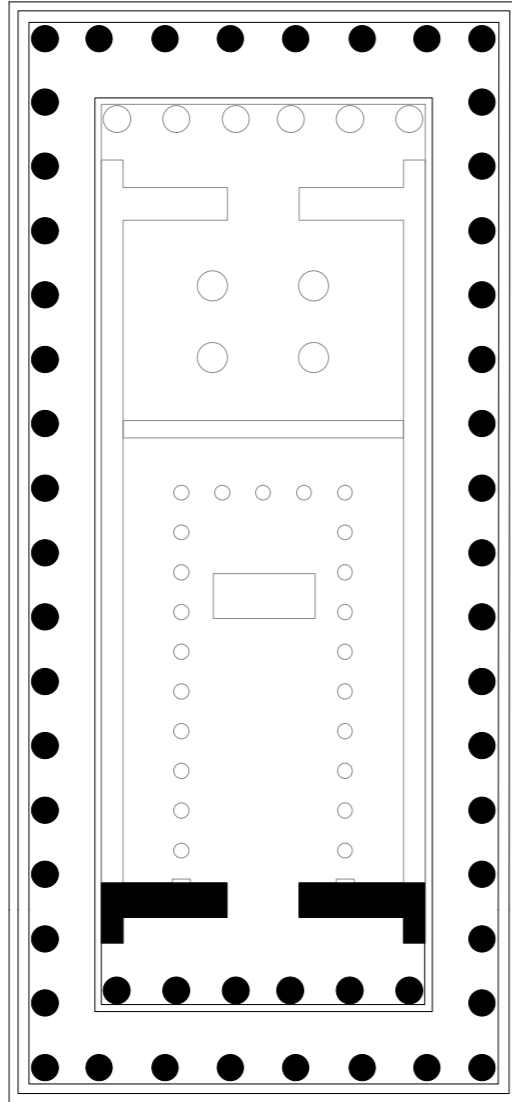


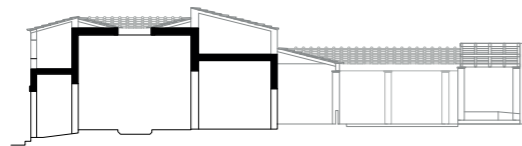
During the two centuries of Classical Greece, known as the Hellenic period, the Parthenon can be said to have become the culmination point of Greek architecture, the *foundation of universalism* as Alain Badiou might say. In its manifest *Toward an Architecture*, Le Corbusier wrote “for two thousands years, those who have seen the Parthenon have felt: this was a decisive moment for architecture”².

I confess that isolating the Parthenon from the Acropolis is a crime; it obviously changes the notion of the entrance, which should start at the *Propylaea*. However, I chose to take it as an object in order to make comparisons with the other buildings. The Parthenon, as a former temple, is a good example to start with and understand the interior, the exterior and the third space, and the entrance space.

The interior space of the temple was the *naos*, the room dedicated to the goddess Athena. Only very few (and important) people could enter this room. The *pronaos*, literally “the space in front of the temple”, and the *peristyle* (the space around the *naos*) composed the entrance space. This entrance space was the only space for the majority of the population; therefore, this space could be seen as an entrance leading nowhere. The entrance was the building. A *crepidoma*, a platform on which the building is erected, expresses clearly the threshold between the exterior and the entrance space. This simple ascent to the building was a statement that manifested the power of architecture: One was higher inside the Parthenon than on the outside.

As with all Greek temples, this third space is more in relation with the territory, than with the interior. Reinterpreting the concept formulated by Sigfried Giedion, in *Architecture and the Phenomena of Transition*, I take the liberty of calling the entrance of the Parthenon: a *space-radiating* entrance.

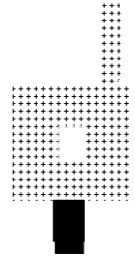
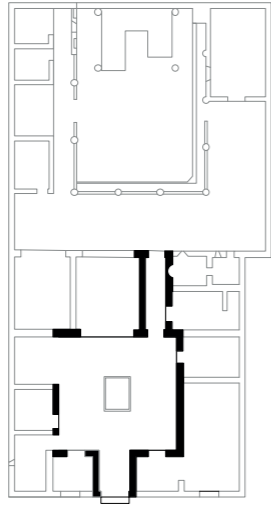


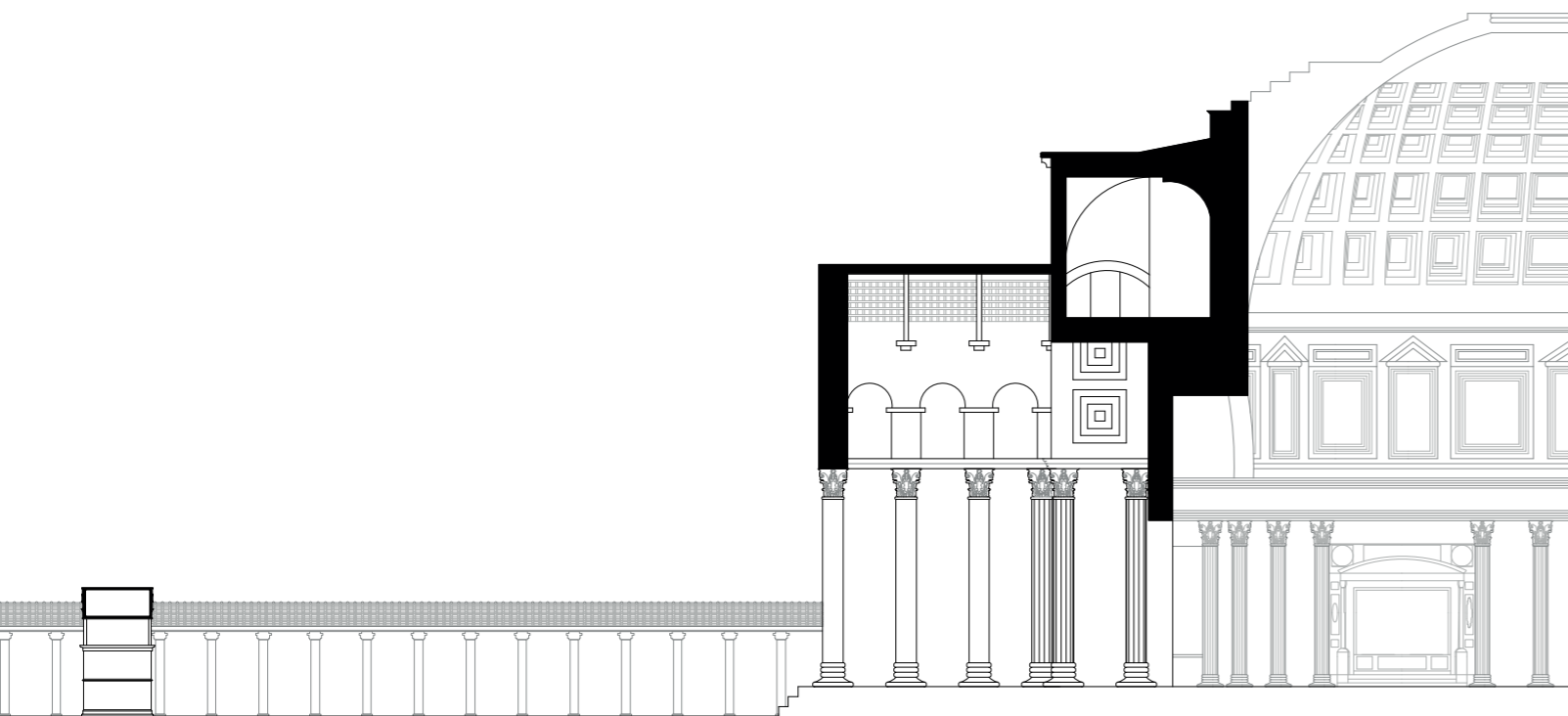


The third building in this account represents an important category in ancient civil architecture: the *domus*, which was the city upper class house during Ancient Rome. A traditional *domus* clearly has a clear entrance space, which was called *vestibulum*. Many urban houses had shops facing the streets, therefore a *vestibulum* was created to link the street and the home behind; and at the same time this space created security by keeping the home away from the street. There was no other opening to the street or to the sides; the *domus* was totally introverted. The transition between the outside and the entrance hall was through an *ostium*, a doorway that could be accentuated by a flight of steps, or a small portico (with a Greek pediment).

However the entrance space was not that simple. Beyond the *vestibulum* was the *atrium*. This room was used to greet guests and clients: it was almost a public room. Then a transitional space called *fauces* separated the *atrium* and the private part of the house. Therefore, the *atrium* was a room inside the building, which means it was neither part of the entrance space, nor part of the house as a home. The *atrium* was an in-between space. It is interesting to note that it was the highest space and the most ornamented space in the whole house.

The *domūs* enhanced the Neolithic tradition of the courtyard houses: not as an outdoor room only used to bring light right out in the house, but as an open transitional space establishing a relationship between the exterior and the interior. The entrance was the most important room of the house.

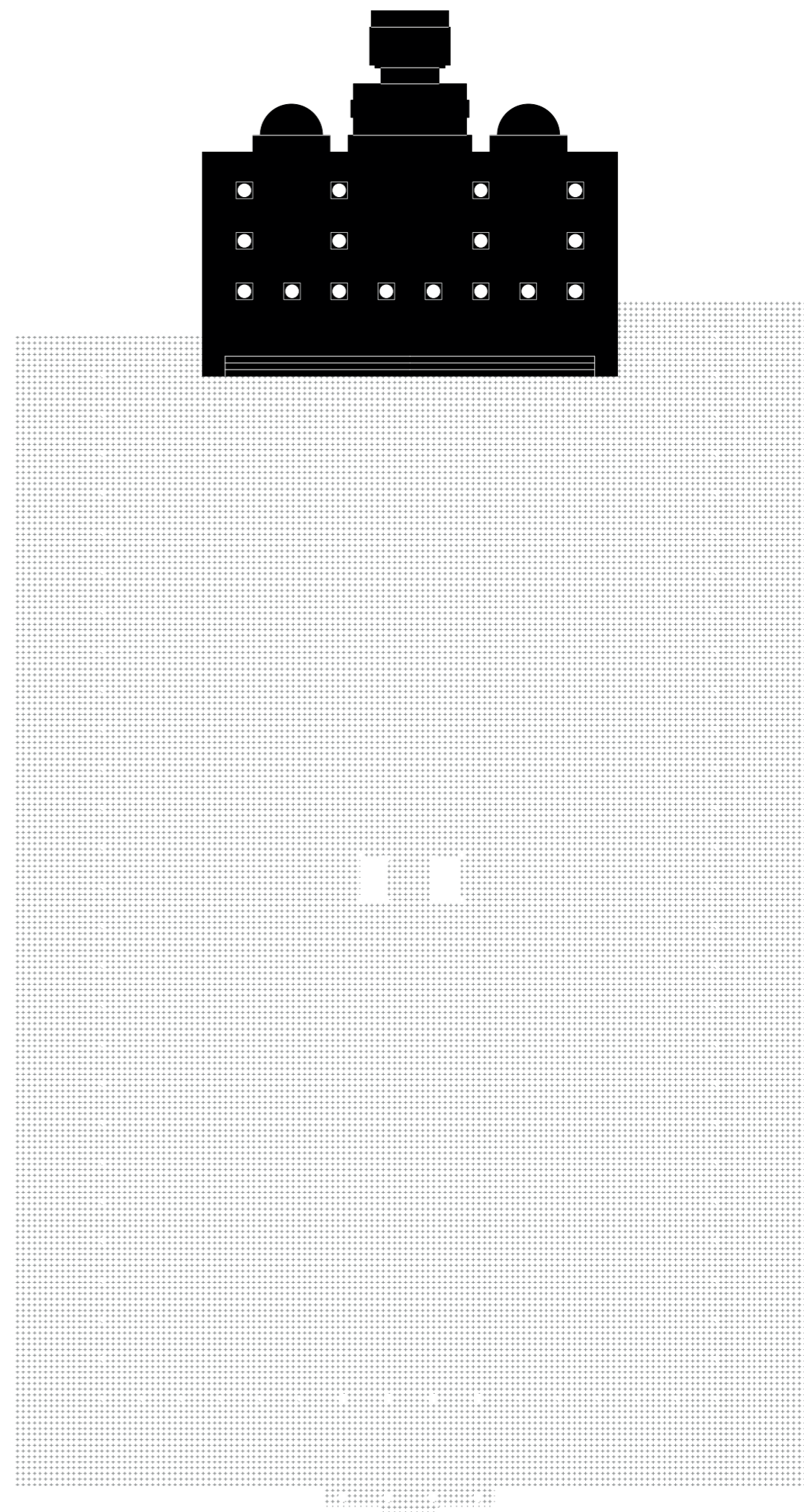
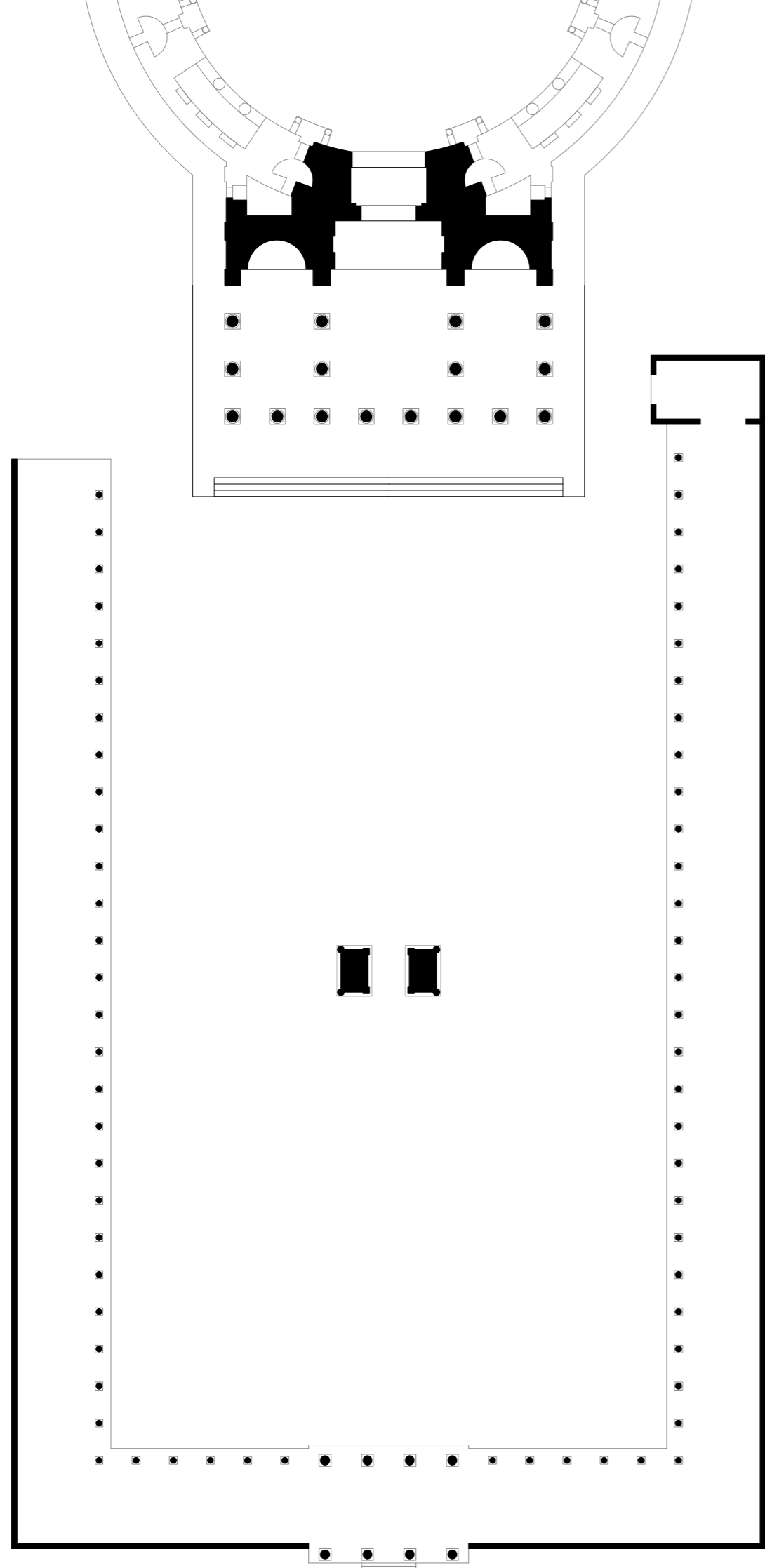




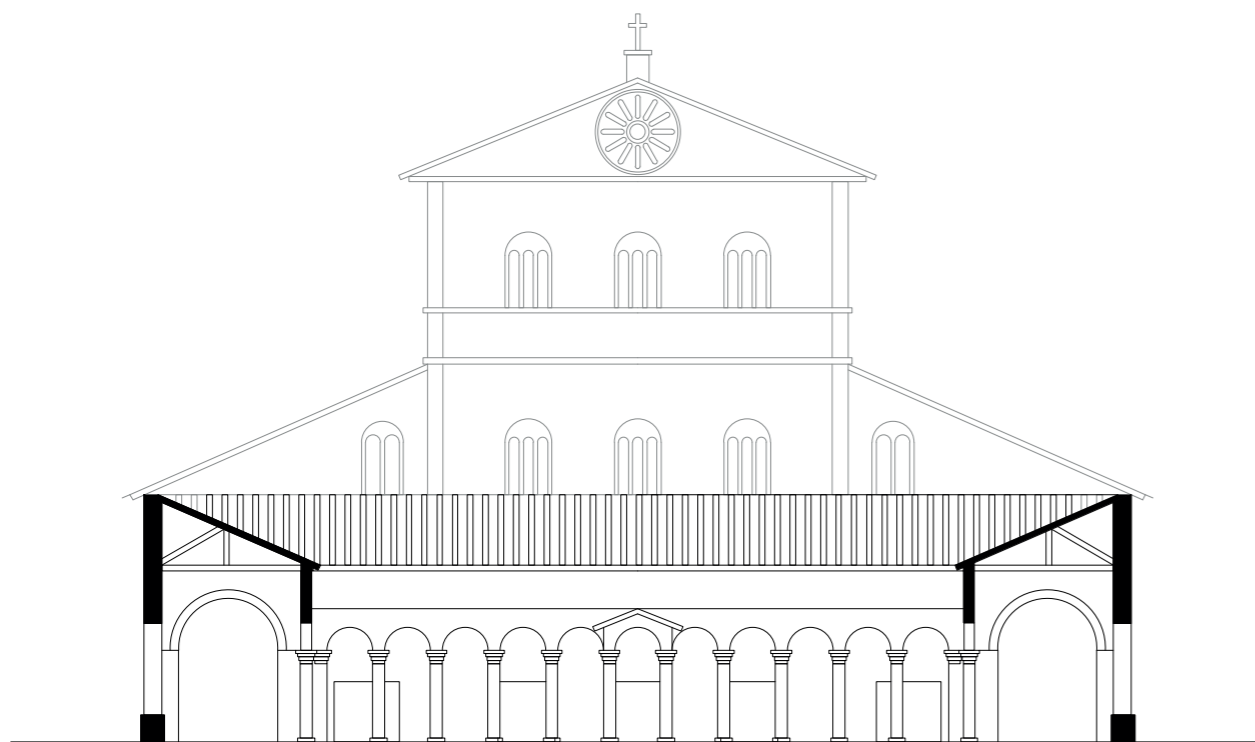
In the center of Rome, an immense court, where a triumphal arch stood in the middle, was attached to a monumental Greek temple-front (with a greater height relative to its width with respect to classical proportioning). Erected on a podium, this front prevented any further view and offered to the visitor a traditionally Hellenic sense of space. The surrounded colonnade of the frontcourt seemed ridiculous next to the eight columns of the portico, which were surmounted by a massive pediment. Then the third part of the entrance was a connecting block: a building, as wide as the porch and as high as the beyond rotunda, linking the two with a massive door. Finally, the visitor penetrated with no expectation into the finest room ever designed.

If Hadrian's Pantheon was one of the masterpieces of Roman Empire, the primary role of the entrance was to prepare the user and to enhance its experience of the space. The mono-orientation of the entrance transformed the radial radiation of the rotunda into a frontal radiation toward the forecourt.

This entrance space functioned as an autonomous space that could prepare any visitor to any inner space. It was an *added box* that created a sign in the city of Rome, Robert Venturi would call the Pantheon a *decorated shed*, contrary to the Parthenon, which was a *duck* (because the building was the sign).



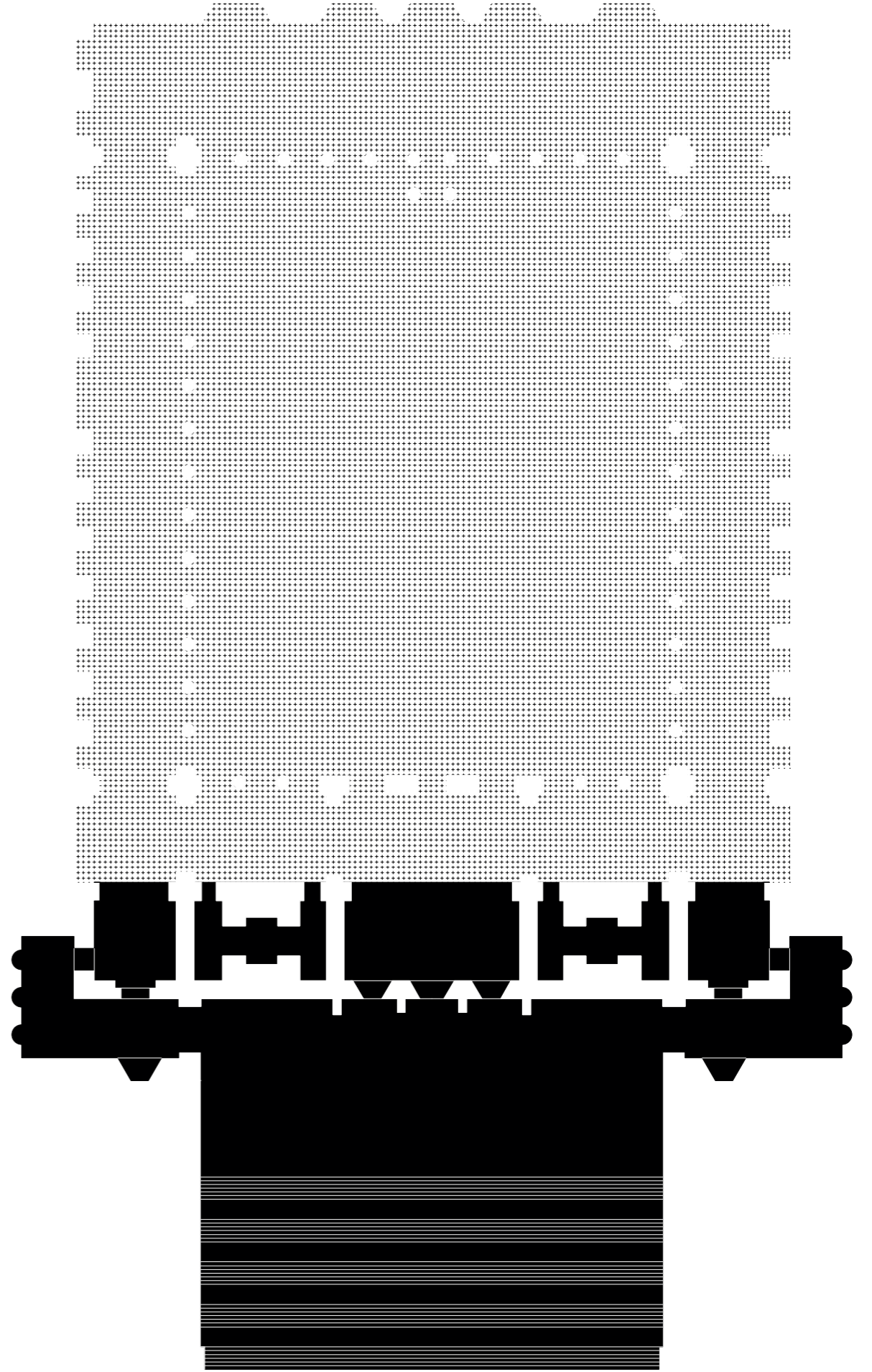
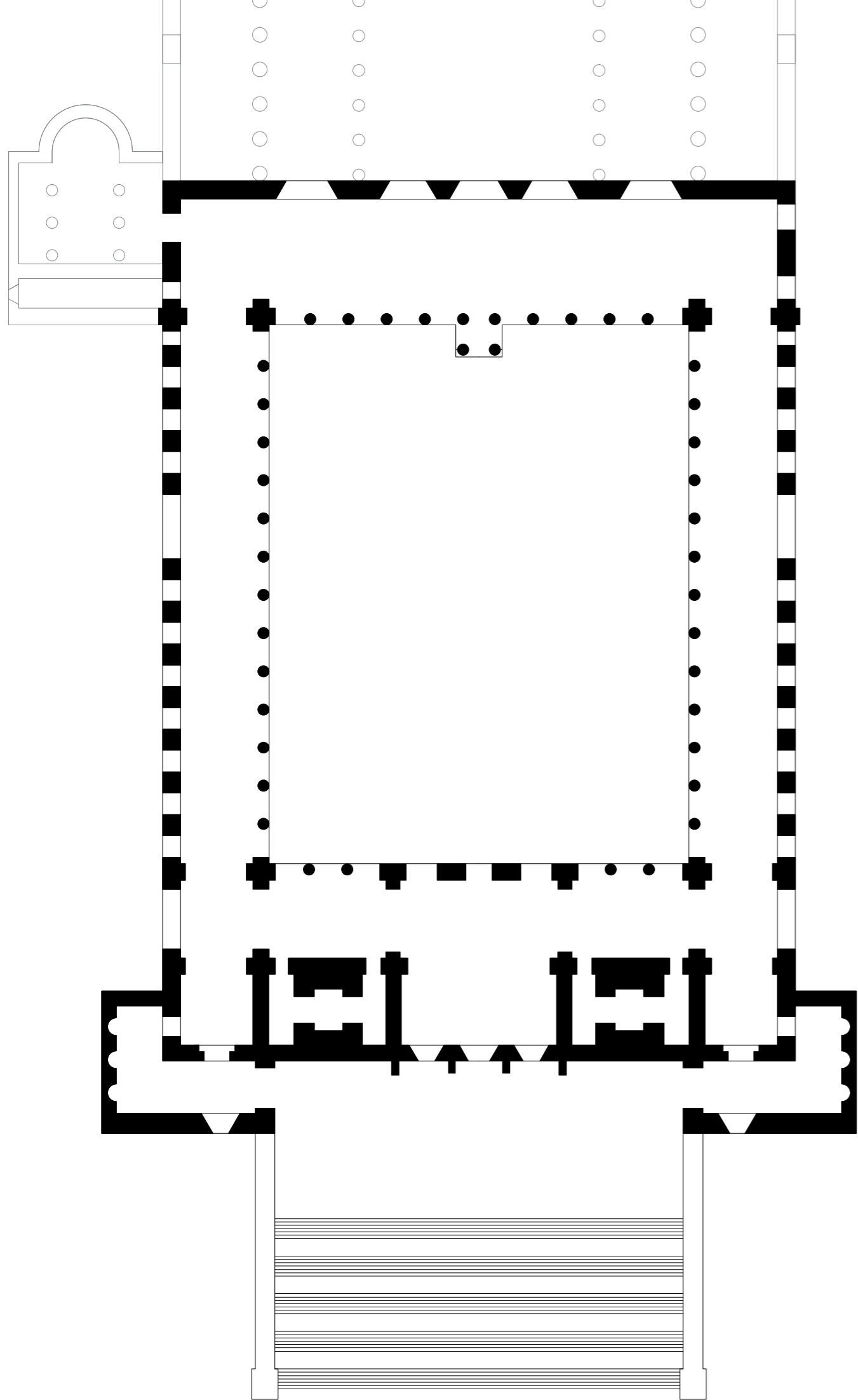
After the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan in 313, Christianity was a new religion; everything had to be re-invented. The faithful did not participate in the liturgy of the Roman temples; it could not be a model. For this reason, the Greek vocabulary was put aside for a long period in the history of architecture. The Church took inspiration from the civil basilicas, those places that were used to gather large crowds. While the Greek people did not enter the temples, Christianity created a space that could absorb the entire community.



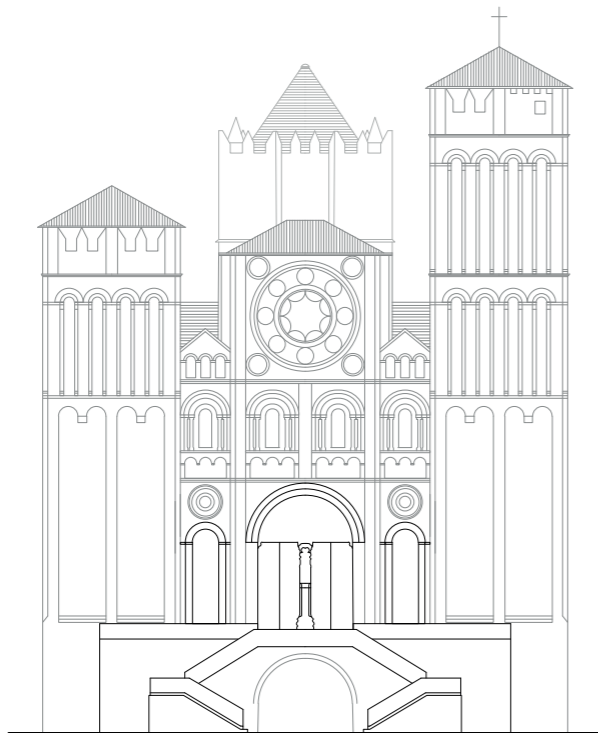
Situated over Saint Peter's tomb and over the historical site of the Circus of Caligula, the Old Saint Peter's Basilica represented the first typology of Christian architecture. The basilica in itself was built as a large rectangular room with an apse, where entrance was permitted only for believers. The entrance part, which was open to everybody, was composed of a massive staircase, a gatehouse, a forecourt and a *narthex*. The design of the entrance was used to express the power of Christianity to the city of Rome further down. However it did not yet have a proper Christian vocabulary. A flight of thirty-five steps led from the street to a *propylon* consisting of columns and bronze doors through which access was obtained to the *atrium*. The forecourt in front of a basilica, surrounded by porticos, was called an *atrium paradisus*. It is interesting to note that the word *paradisus* comes from the Indo-European Aryan languages, where it means a walled enclosure or garden precinct. For the Church, the atrium served as a gathering area for pilgrims and for festival overflows, it was the place *where the souls of the righteous enjoy the bliss*. This court kept the same tradition seen with the *Domus*, with a different scale and function.

The *narthex* defined a room at the entrance of a church, it followed the example of the Greek *pronaos*, and by definition it was a space neither inside nor outside the Basilica. The purpose of the *narthex* was to allow those not eligible for admittance into the general congregation to hear and partake in the service. The *narthex* would often include a baptismal font so that infants or adults could be baptized there before entering the nave.

The principal aim of the entrance of the Old St. Peter's Basilica was to relate the profane exterior and the sacred interior.

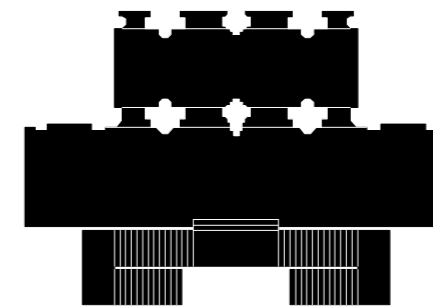
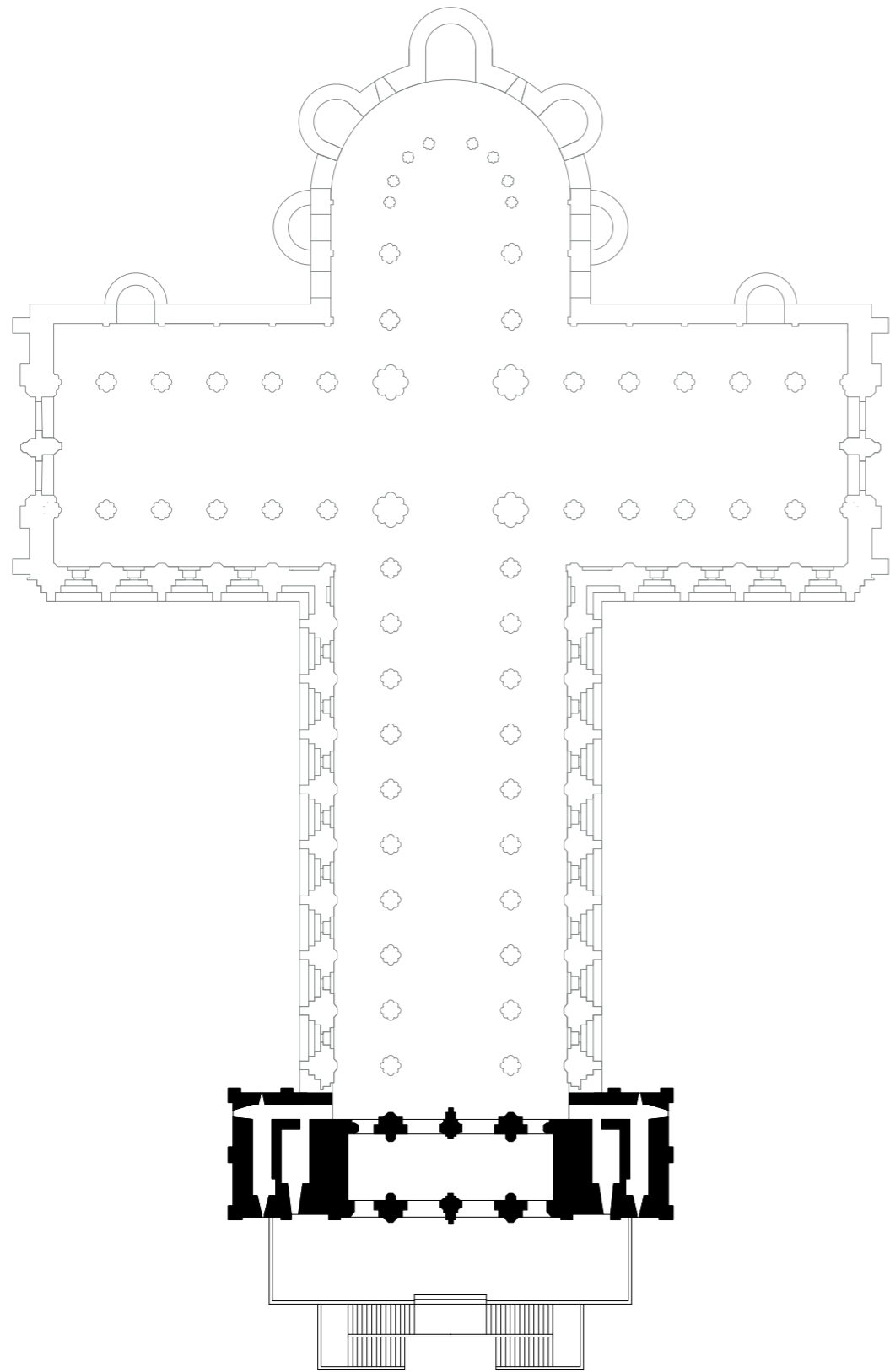


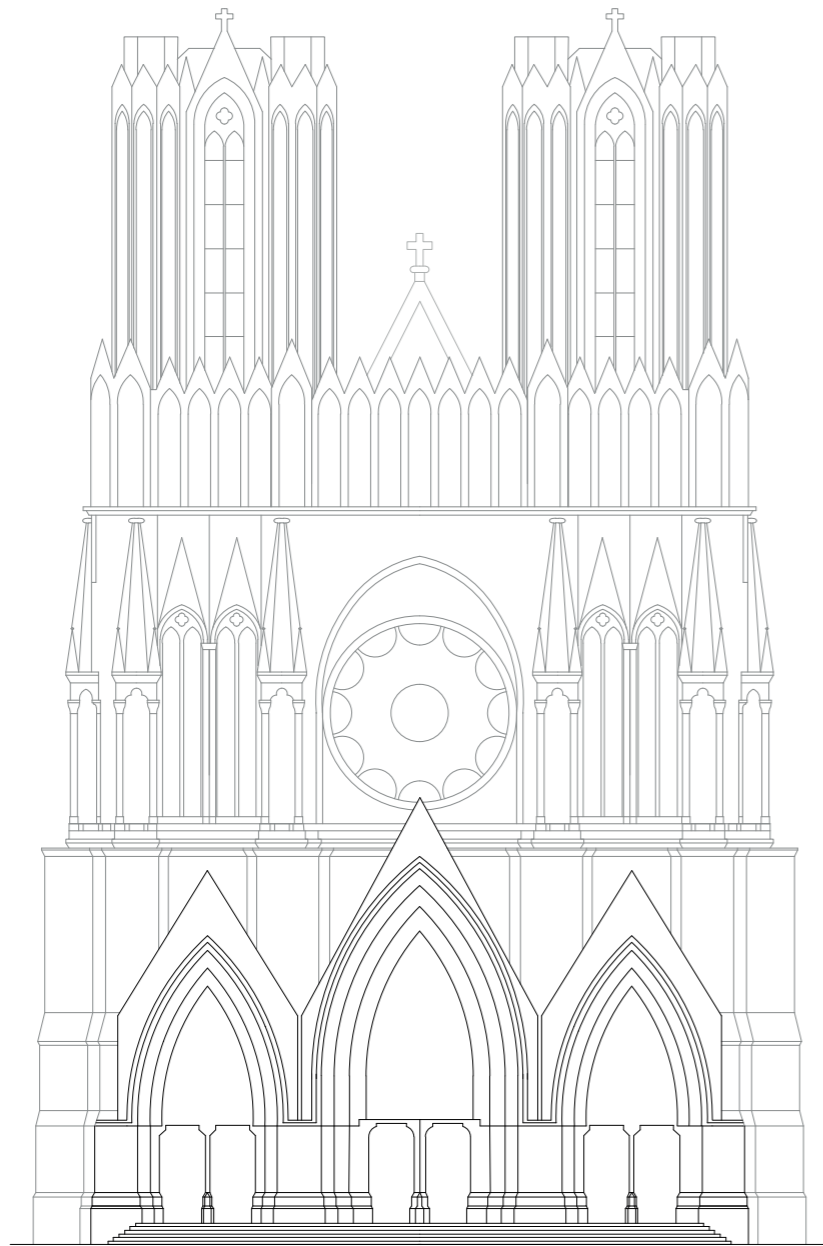
During the 1st Millennium, Christianity spread through Europe, and invented its own architectural vocabulary, especially thanks to the intellectual revival related to Charlemagne, and his coronation by the Pope. Around the 10th Century, simultaneously in the Iberian Peninsula, parts of France and in the north of Italy, the architecture of a Romanesque style came into existence. This architecture covered a wide variety of styles due to very different liturgies that had strong influences on the form of churches.



Before its Spanish Baroque disguise, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela was a good example that followed the new dogmata of the Romanesque entrances. Firstly, the entrance was facing the West (in order to celebrate Mass *ad orientem*). In front of the edifice was a *parvis*. The word *parvis* comes from the Latin *paradisus*, which means that it was seen as an evolution of the *atrium paradisus*. The façade had a new architectural language, comprising semi-circular arches on windows and on the portico, and a high bell tower. The portico (*Pórtico da Gloria*) had three round arches that corresponded to the three naves of the church, supported by thick piers. The central arch, twice as wide as the other two, had a *tympanum*, with the Christ and a *tetramorph*, and was divided by a central column, containing a depiction of Saint James. The aim of the façade was to report and express a liturgy, a way of being before the Lord. The façade was far from open and light; that is why the Romanesque architecture is often referred to as “the heavy silence”. In fact, the feeling of heaviness was due to a construction with heavy stone vaults (replacing wooden vaults of the early Christian basilicas), making it necessary to reinforce the walls and drill narrow bays: the “deep light” was more the result of a technical constraint than a liturgical choice. Beyond the portico was the narthex; which had the same role as in the Old Saint Peter’s Basilica. Here it was a closed room, and it had exactly the same relation with the interior than with the exterior. It was one of the rare thresholds in the history of architecture that treated both sides as equals.

The entrance of Santiago de Compostela was no longer an autonomous portion in front of the edifice, but it was part of a whole.



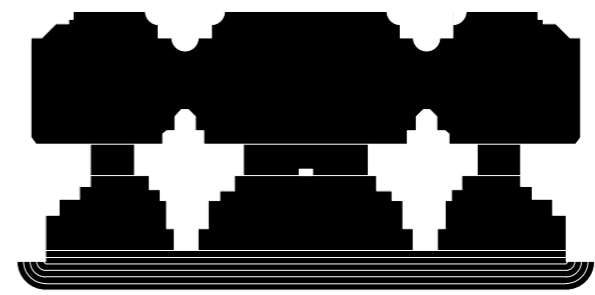
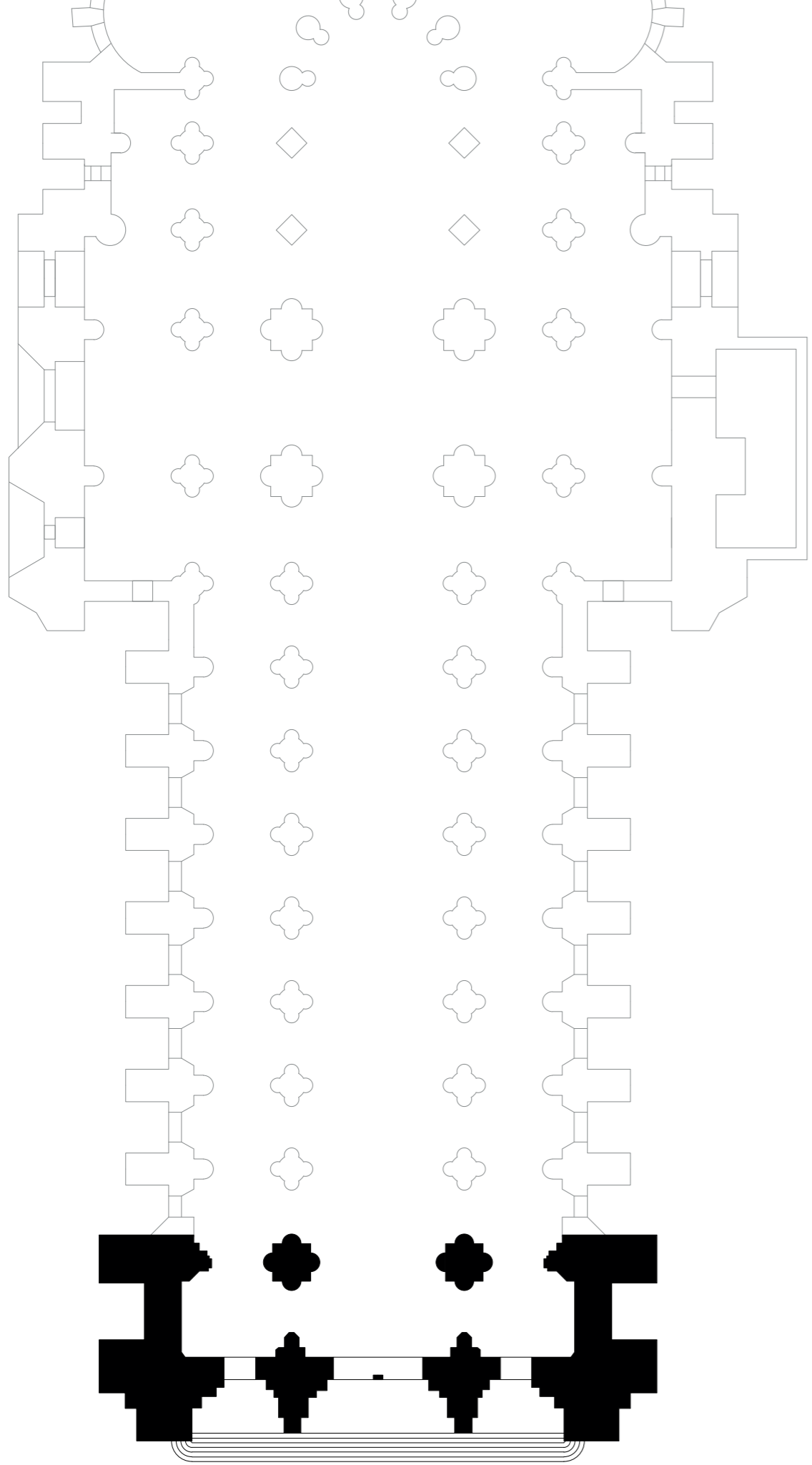


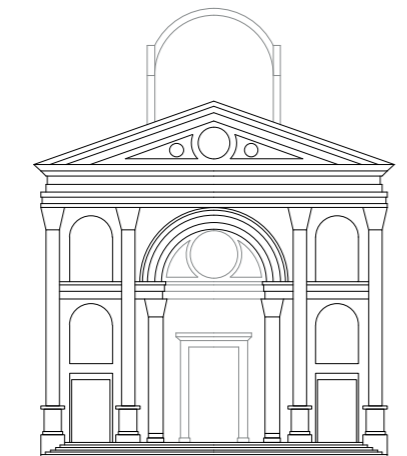
Indicating the entrance, the two bell towers of the Gothic Cathedral of Reims are like the two pillars of a door that one passes through. Even nowadays, one can see this door from all the surrounding countryside.

At the turn of the 2nd Millennium, the aim of the Church was to create public spaces, where relics could be viewed and worshipped. The façade was designed to create a powerful impression for everybody, demonstrating both the might of God and the might of the institution that it represented. Thanks to their heights and verticality, the towers manifested the presence of the cathedral as a landmark in the city. A new vocabulary of the façade developed to express the aspiration to Heaven: pointed arches, large windows with tracery, a rose window, sculpted tympanum and a massive ornament. The tall windows right and left of the rose window, which allowed a view through the building, made the upper part almost weightless.

The entrance space was divided into two parts. Three colossal vault porches, which remind one of the Islamic *iwan*, were open to the *parvis* and attracted it into the cathedral. The porches in multiple linings of relief were similar in two dimensions to the generic idea of matryoshka dolls. The graduated series of doors within doors, which characterized the Gothic cathedral, enhanced the enclosed inner space by making it seem protected and mysterious. Beyond the doors, the *narthex*, which was much more oriented to the inside than in the Romanesque period, revealed already the transcendent interior space.

Reims Cathedral is both a *duck* and a *decorative shed*. Robert Venturi might say that the cathedral is “a billboard with a building behind it”, and the entrance is a “screen for propaganda”³. But at the same time, the porches and the rose window reflect the inner arrangement with nave and aisles of the *duck*’s shape of a cross.



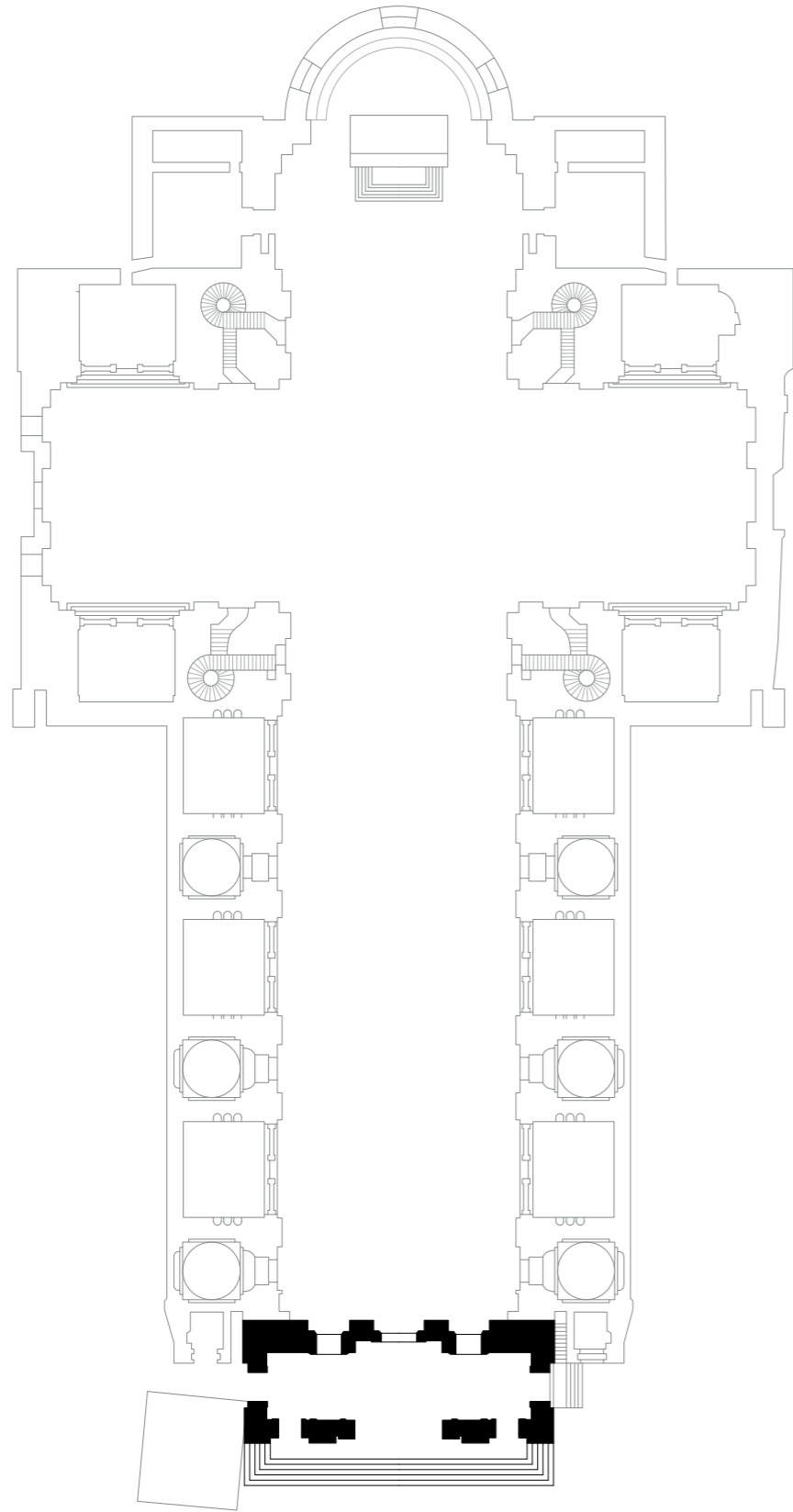


The *quattrocento* was marked by the apparition of the Italian Renaissance, the rebirth of the universal architectural vocabulary created in Ancient Greece, and of Roman classical architecture. The Basilica of Sant'Andrea, begun by Alberti in 1462 but finished by other architects, set the tone of this new type of architecture that emphasized the use of columns, pilasters, and entablatures all unified by a proportional system that governed the heights, widths, and intercolumniations of the pilasters.

Its entrance was a true example of the early Renaissance. While a temple front inspiration was evident in the staircase and pediment, another model had determined the form of the large main bay and the lesser side bays, that of the Roman Arch of Titus. Alberti created a door responding to the scale of the whole city, and no longer only to the *parvis*. He had subtly merged the two models, temple front and triumphal arch, in a synthesis that anticipated a freer assimilation of classical elements in the later Renaissance.

This entrance was monumental and complex, adapting a classical form rather than seeking to replicate it. The huge central arch of the exterior portico, with its coffered barrel vault, prefigured the height and vault of the nave. Nevertheless a wall with a small opening linked the two. Alberti's use of the giant order had been a novel for the Renaissance. The whole was surmounted by a pediment and above that a vaulted structure, creating a shield to the upper-level window.

The triumphal arch seemed to be a totally autonomous object with a different color and materiality than the façade behind. The entrance was an *added box* as if one could take it and put it on another building.



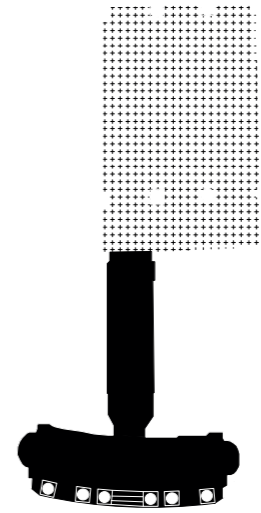
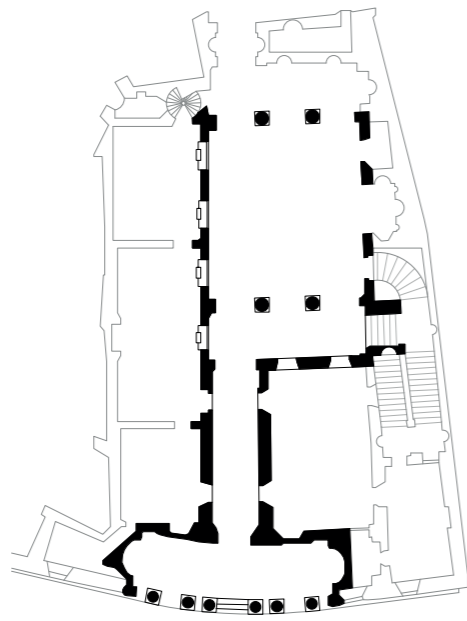


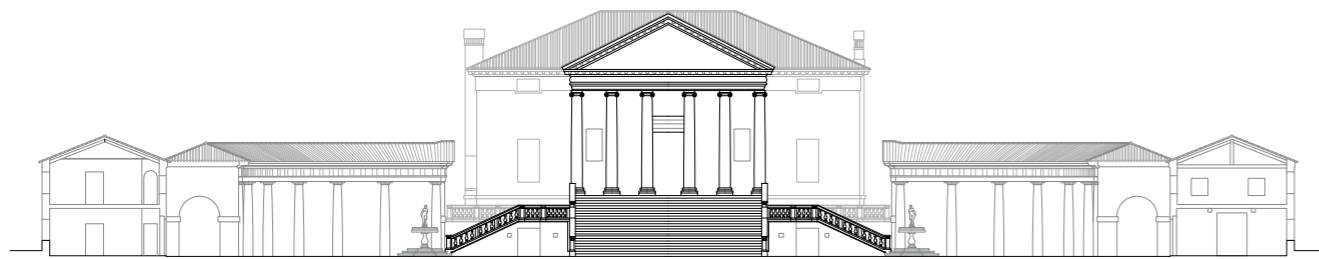
In 1527, following the Sacking of Rome, Pietro Massimo lost his palace and ordered the celebrated Baldassarre Peruzzi to build one of the masterpieces of the Italian *cinquecento*. This edifice recalled the theme of the city upper class house, the *domus* became a *palazzo*, but the *atrium* was still there. The *palazzi* differed from the *domūs* since the main space of the house moved to the first floor, the *piano nobile*, facing to the street.

The first important gesture in the design of the entrance came from the surroundings. The *palazzo* was situated along a street, with no *piazza* to express a massive entrance; for that reason Peruzzi decided to place the entrance in front of a crossing street. In order to have at the same time, the entrance centered on the façade, Peruzzi extended the façade further than the width of the *palazzo*. The façade was also very interesting for its dialogue between the entrance and the windows; at first sight the entrance seemed to be the main part of the façade, but if one looked at the windows, only the *piano nobile* remained dominant, at the center of the whole façade. One instantly knew that this was where one had to go.

The first entrance space was a loggia made by six columns. With a variation in the intercolumniation, these columns could be seen as two pairs and two single, or as three pairs, with the two adjacent pilasters. With that ambiguity, Peruzzi expressed the location of the entrance and kept a regular rhythm, related to the windows.

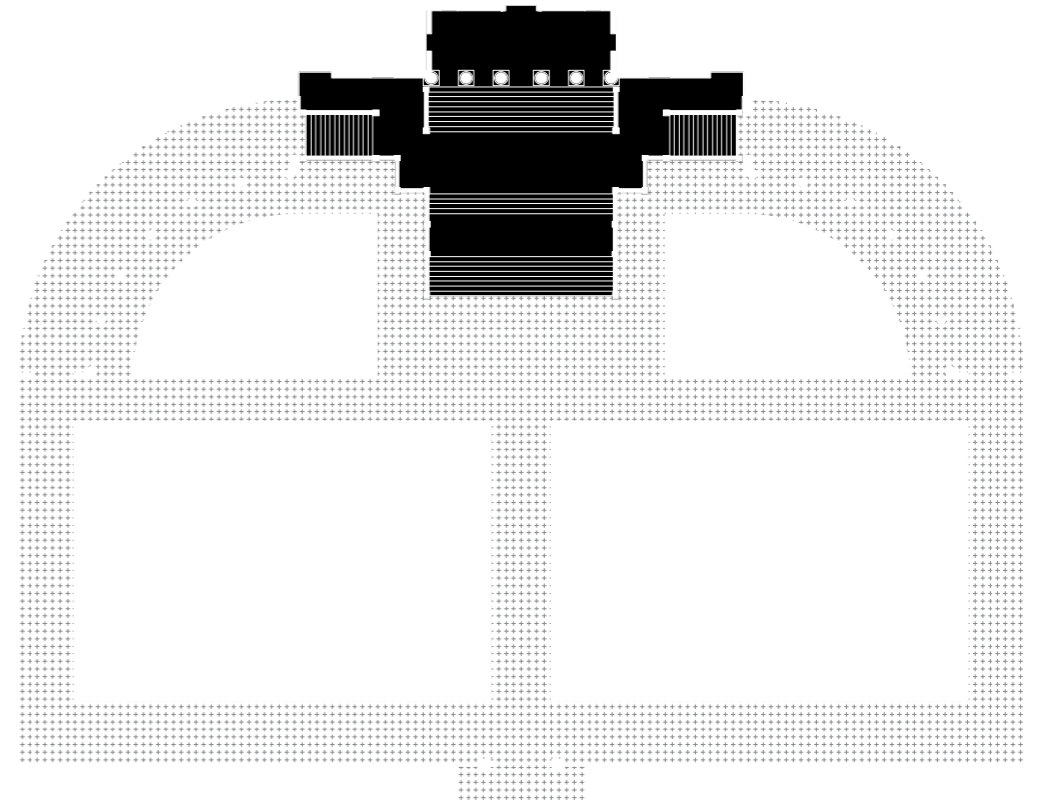
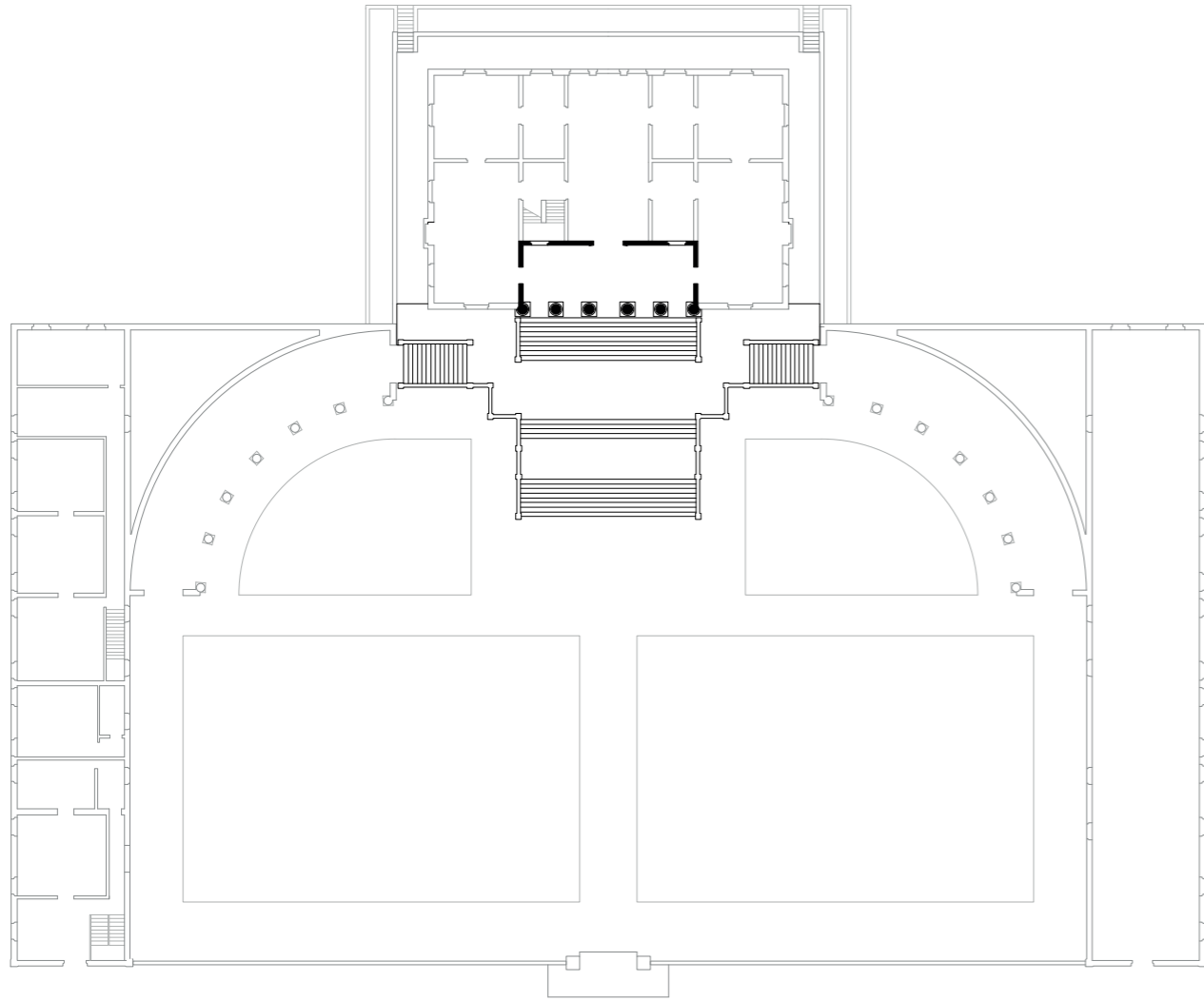
Beyond the loggia and a corridor, the *atrium* was designed as a reminder of the Massimo's family's long Roman heritage. The staircase leading to the *piano nobile* was situated in this courtyard. One was not inside until one had reached the first floor: the entrance area was thought as a protection against the city.





I agree wholeheartedly with these simple words of Vincent Scully: “Only Palladio brought to perfection this new synthesis of classicism”⁴. Almost as much as the Parthenon, Palladian villas radiated over the territory. They stood, solitary, on a vast lawn, on top of a hill or on the bank of a river. People felt their influence at first sight, and a feeling of invulnerability took hold of them. Most of the Palladian villas had a massive temple-front entrance leading to a great hall that gave access to the different rooms of the house. The entrances were the vanishing point where the lines of the whole villas converged.

The Villa Badoer clearly demonstrated the importance of the entrance for Andrea Palladio. In the frontcourt, two porticoes welcomed the visitor with open arms. The temple façade, raised behind a large flight of stairs, faced the frontcourt. This simple ascension gave more importance to the house and to the owner inside; it expressed power. The columns, supporting a large pediment, moved away from the center in order to highlight the passage. The main door, the loggia or the entire entrance complex seemed disproportionate in relation to the villa. It appeared to communicate more with the landscape than with the house. This entity turned an almost banal house into a magnificent object of desire. The role of the entrance was essential for the villa: it made the villa.

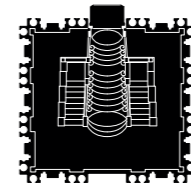
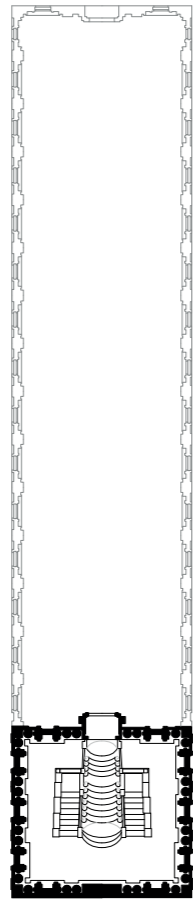




In a history of entrances, one cannot forget the bizarre and almost perverse Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana. In 1523, newly elected Pope Clement VII commissioned Michelangelo to build a public library for the old Medici collection of manuscripts. The site eventually chosen was a traditional one, in a cloister and above ground in order to be well lit and to preserve the books from dampness. The organization of the edifice was clear: a vertical space was the entrance hall and a horizontal one was the reading room.

The vestibule, also known as the *ricetto*, was a Mannerism room almost entirely occupied by a stairway that led to the reading room. Pope Clement VII had specifically ordered Michelangelo to design a staircase that takes up the whole vestibule⁵. The stairway purpose was rather simple, but Michelangelo had made it into a dynamic, startling form that defines a curious room. The freestanding stairway was divided into three parts. The treads of the center flights were convex, with projecting oval risers of odd irregular size, decreasing in width as they went up. They were divided into separate sets of three, seven and five steps. The outer flights were straight but abruptly interrupted and led virtually nowhere. Their reasons seemed to come from the two entrance doors that are on the sides of the room (and not in front of the stairs).

This theatrical stairway became, for the first time in the Renaissance a major feature of architectural design, it also revealed Michelangelo's irreverent attitude towards ancient Roman architecture. In the vestibule, he emphasized the arbitrary nature of forms, and their lack of structural logic; he used the design of the entrance to express its architectural *parti pris*.

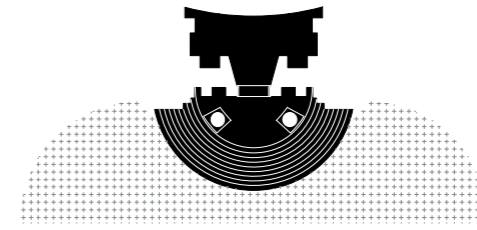
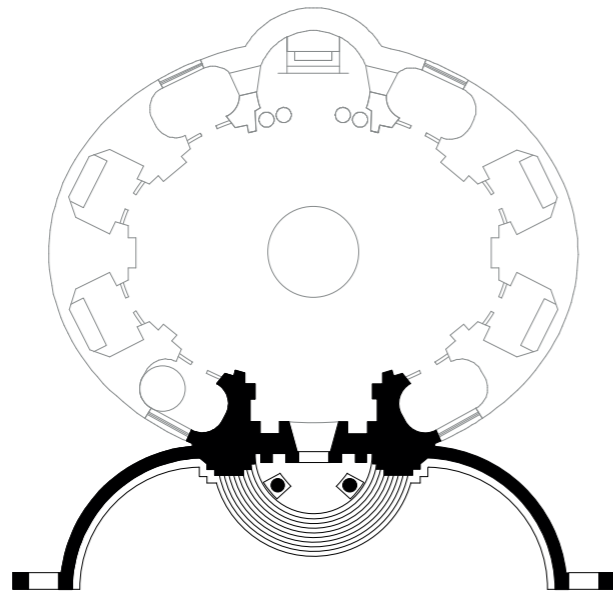


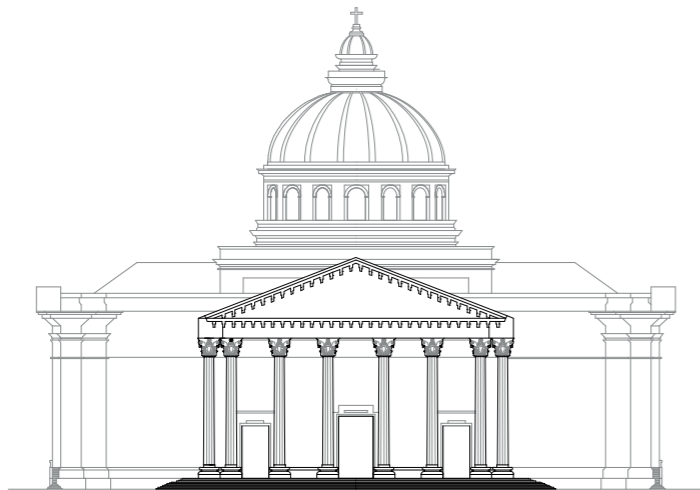


The Baroque spirit laid in the freedom of reshaping the classical forms so as to make them permeable to all shades of emotional expression. Bernini was one of the pioneers of this new architectural trend that bound theatricality and domination over the surrounding urban space. In 1657, the Pantheon was restored and rekindled as an example of perfect architecture; a year after, Bernini aspired to design a Pantheon for the Jesuits. But the complexity of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale went much further than its false friend. The circle of the Pantheon seemed to be flattened, and half of it was mirrored on the street; these two spaces were linked by one small passage. The half generated a concave space that responded to the convex volume of the church erected behind. Then, Bernini created a public *exedra*, a semicircular *piazza* in front of the church. This allowed the visitor a moment to contemplate the architecture. He was one of the first to theorize the *promenade architecturale*, which, according to him, should start outside in order to enhance the architectural experience.

Two colossal Michelangelesque pilasters expressed the entrance, out of which was projected a curved entrance canopy. The convex curve of the porch was cradled in the middle of the concave-shaped *piazza*. This semicircular porch had two Ionic columns; the bases were oriented diagonally. Before this period, architecture had only orthogonal orientations, Bernini gave a new dynamic to architecture. He reinforced this statement with the prominent curve of the architrave.

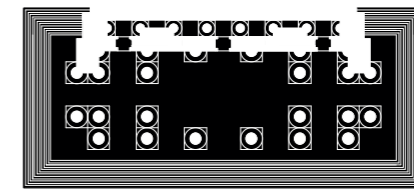
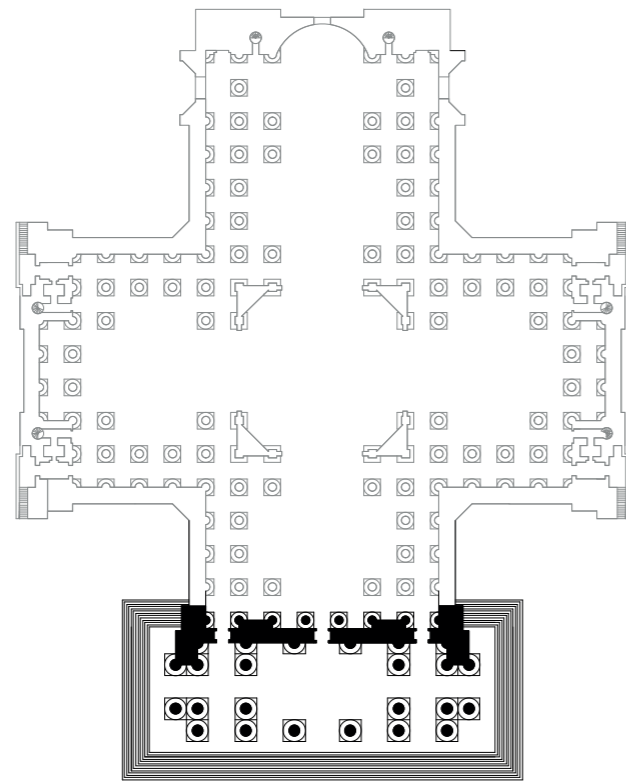
In Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, the whole building was no longer understood as a sum of individual parts but, rather, as the whole of the part. The entrance was totally dependent on the whole.

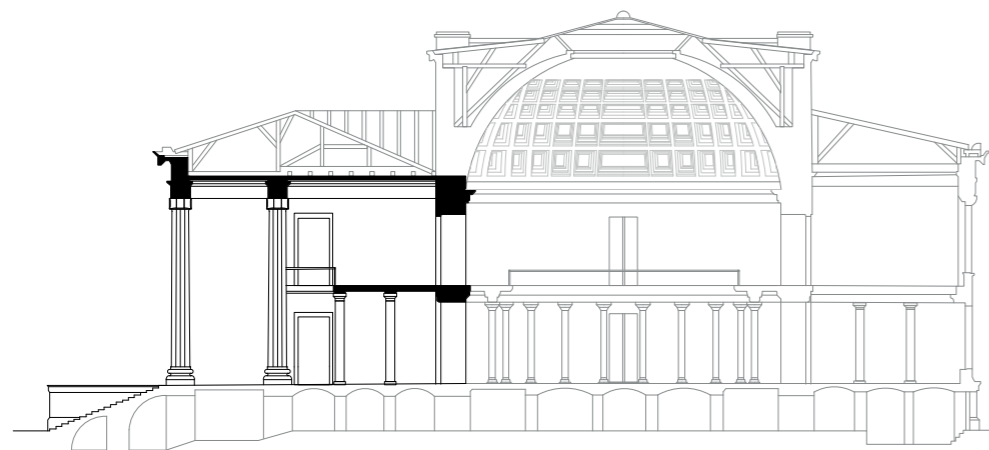




In the 18th Century, the discovery and the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum sites revived up to date classical forms. Succeeding the Renaissance, and reacting to the over-decorative Baroque architecture, Neoclassical architecture employed Greco-Roman vocabulary to political propaganda; essentially in the expression of the entrance (the colonnade du Louvre seemed to be the perfect demonstration that entrance manifested power). Having reflected on the matter, Pope Pius V revoked the rule of the orientation of the celebration Eastward for the efficiency of the place of worship. He declared that the façade should be properly oriented in relation to the city.

The first project of the Church of St. Genevieve (now called the Panthéon) would have been perfect example of this new theory of the entrance. This project of Jacques-Germain Soufflot was somehow simple, enormous but simple. The church had the perfect shape of a Greek cross with a dome; then straightforwardly added to this cross, a Herculean Greek temple-front came and said I AM A MONUMENT. The entrance appeared to be the only way architecture could express power. The final project for the Panthéon was more complex. Connecting the temple-front, a space appeared like a deformation of the interior toward the exterior. This solution was much less radical (it also looks less interesting for this specific account). To express even more the power of the Church, the place and the street in front of it were liberated. This was going too far in 1789, according to the French Revolutionaries.

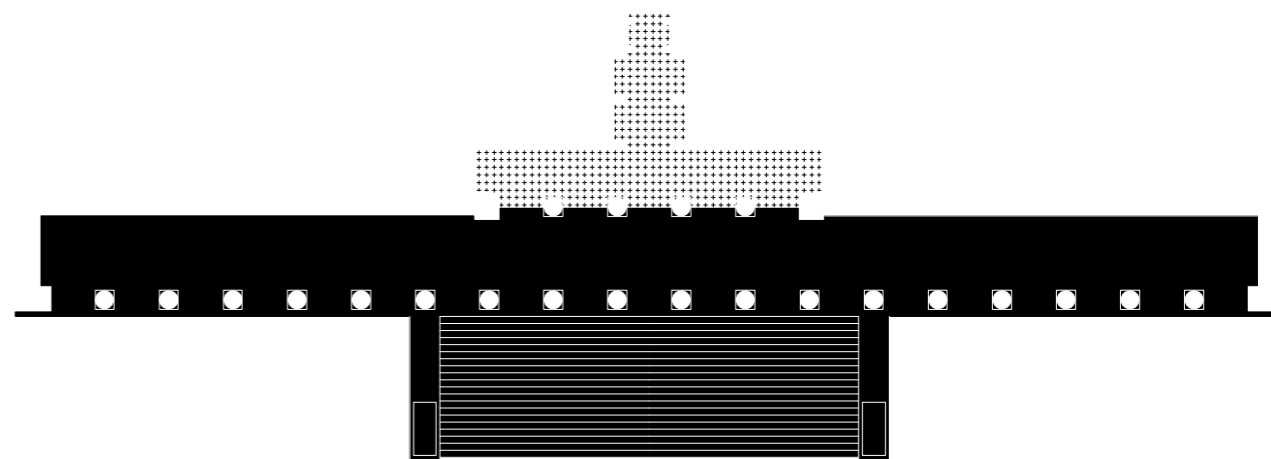
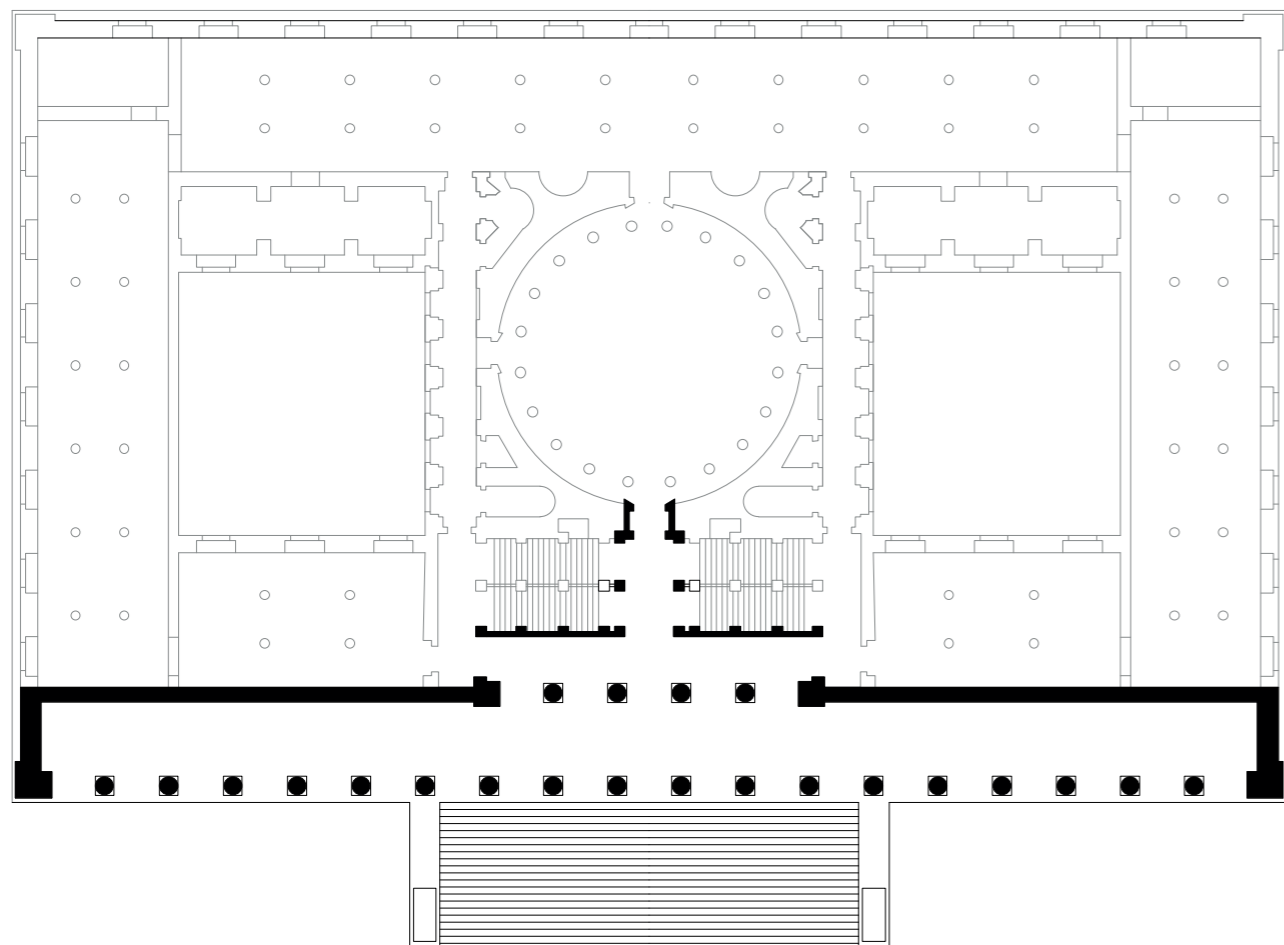


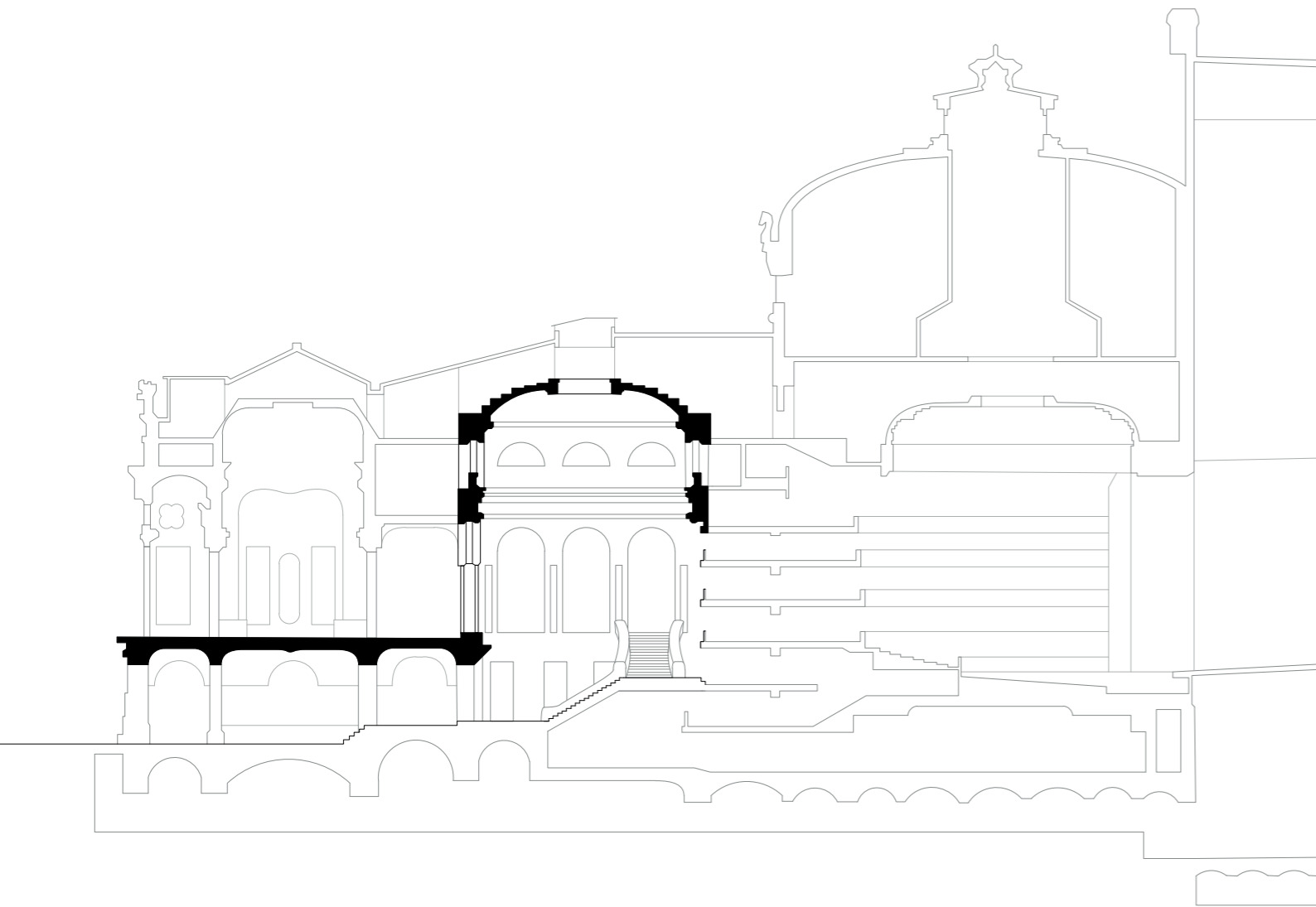


Fredericus guilelmus III studio antiquitatis omnigenae et artium liberalium museum constituit MDCCCXXVIII

Neoclassicism was at its height with the Altes Museum; when Schinkel merged the rectangular plan with the colonnade of the Parthenon and the circular *tholos* of the Pantheon. When King Friedrich Wilhelm III charged Schinkel to plan a public museum for the royal art collection of Prussia, Schinkel's main idea was to represent power and opening through architecture. The museum became a Greek temple that shelters the art collection; Schinkel seemed to say that Berlin would be the new Athens.

While a *peripteral* colonnade forms the Parthenon, as it is on top of the Acropolis, the Altes Museum is situated in a different landscape: there are buildings behind the museum, a channel on a lateral side and an important square in front of the entrance. It is therefore where Schinkel put the colonnade. The three other facades have no decoration; this creates a real contrast between these elevations and the front elevation, by their very sobriety, Schinkel emphasized the front as a front. The imposing ionic colonnade exceeds the scale of the museum, and responds to the whole environment. The entrance hall, as high as the colonnade, allows the city to come inside. In the lobby area, one does not know if one is part of the building or part of the city. The city landscape appears to be the fourth wall of the lobby. After a gradation of privacy until a small corridor, one arrives in the heart of the museum: a rotunda that is an exact hemisphere modeled on the Roman Pantheon. Schinkel underscored the ecclesiastic dimensions of the museum as a temple of art. From the outside, the dome was disguised with a square over the top, in order to be invisible, because it was not permitted to compete with that of the nearby cathedral. In the 19th Century, people could do huge things in architecture, but not rival the Church.

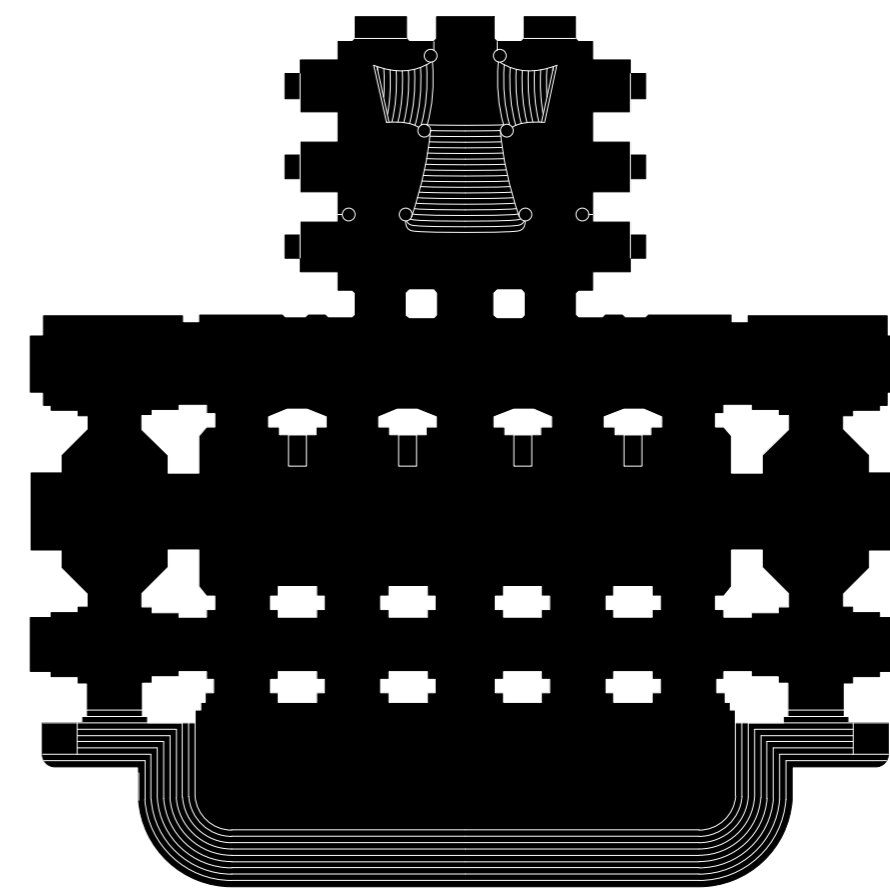
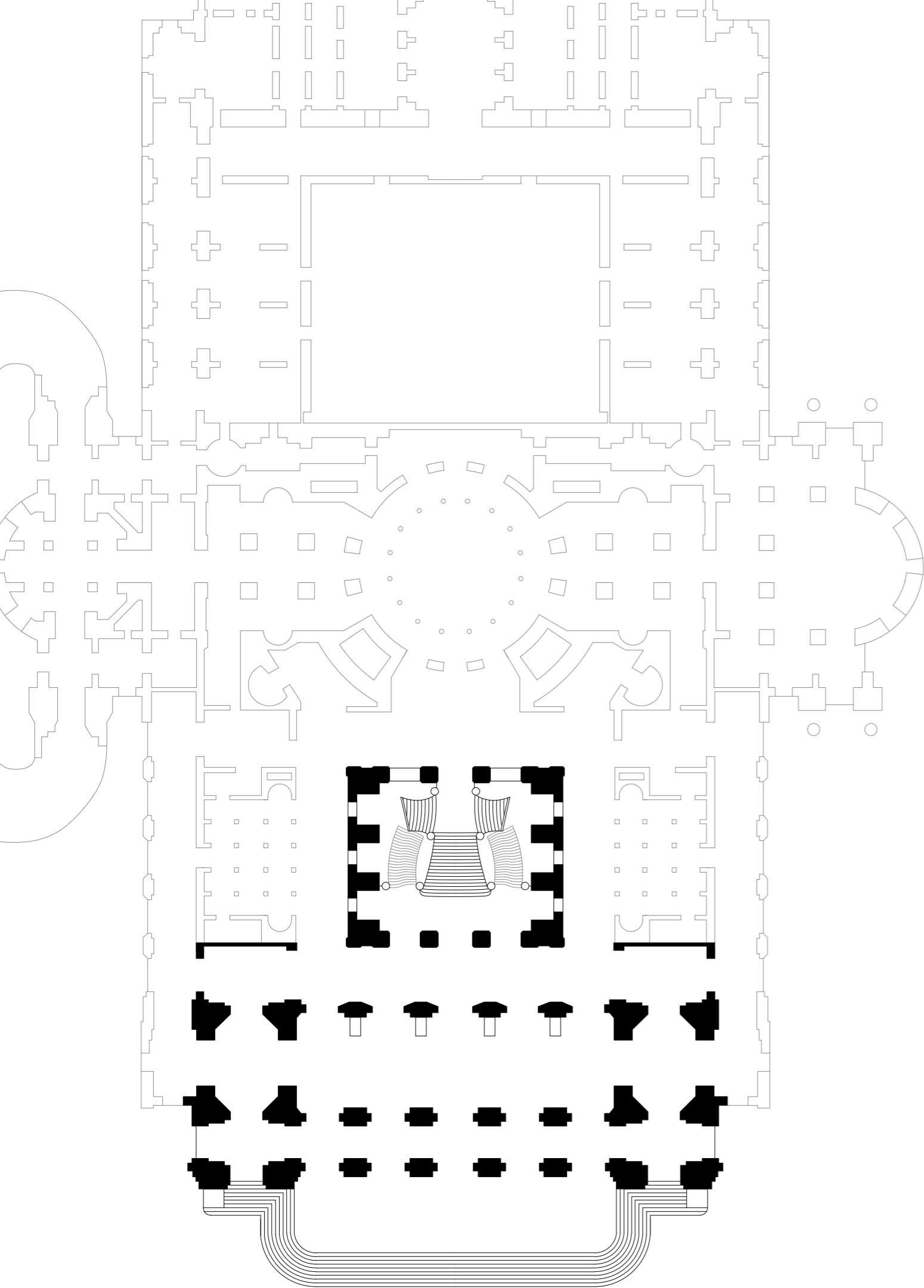




“A little too much of everything is sacrificed to introductions”⁶. The *Gazette des architectes et du bâtiment* was truly severe with Charles Garnier, but its criticism is very interesting for our investigation. The Opéra de Paris was certainly the best architectural representation of the *bourgeoisie parisienne*. The entrance had a new role in the history: it celebrated the cult of the *m’as tu vu* (show-off).

Before entering the building, the over ornamented façade imposed itself on the *place de l’opéra* and down to the Louvre (thanks to the Baron Haussmann). Charles Garnier designed it to be apprehended walking from the *avenue de l’opéra*; the stage and the auditorium gradually disappeared behind the façade as one came closer. Yet, the urban approach was scenographic. For Garnier, “the most important part should be made to stand out with the most importance”⁷, one already knew that the first floor was the great floor, that of the dress circle and the foyer.

The first transition space was the *Petit Foyer*: a low and almost dark space, which allowed room for the *Grand Foyer* above. The contrast with the exterior was very surprising, and served to enhance the second inner space of the entrance: the *Grand Escalier*, where the public headed towards the *Grand Foyer* or the auditorium. With this masterpiece that embraced the entire height of the building, Garnier aroused an almost total admiration. This could lead to an excessive preponderance attributed to one single part, while critics summed up the building as its staircase. By this time, people could read in the *Gazette*: “The ensemble of the monument seems to be condensed to a single point: the Opéra, it is the staircase”; “the *Salle* seems to be made by the staircase instead of the staircase made by the *Salle*”. The entrance seemed to be the most important part of the Opéra for Charles Garnier, where the *bourgeoisie* met and showed-off. The balconies all around were designed as observation points, where gossip circulated.



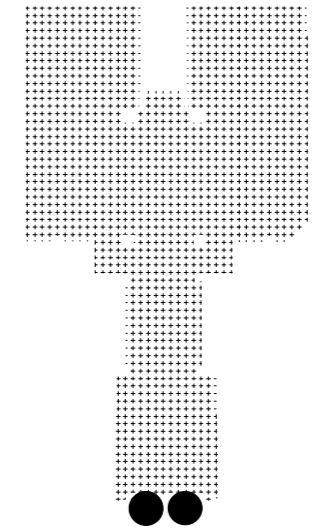
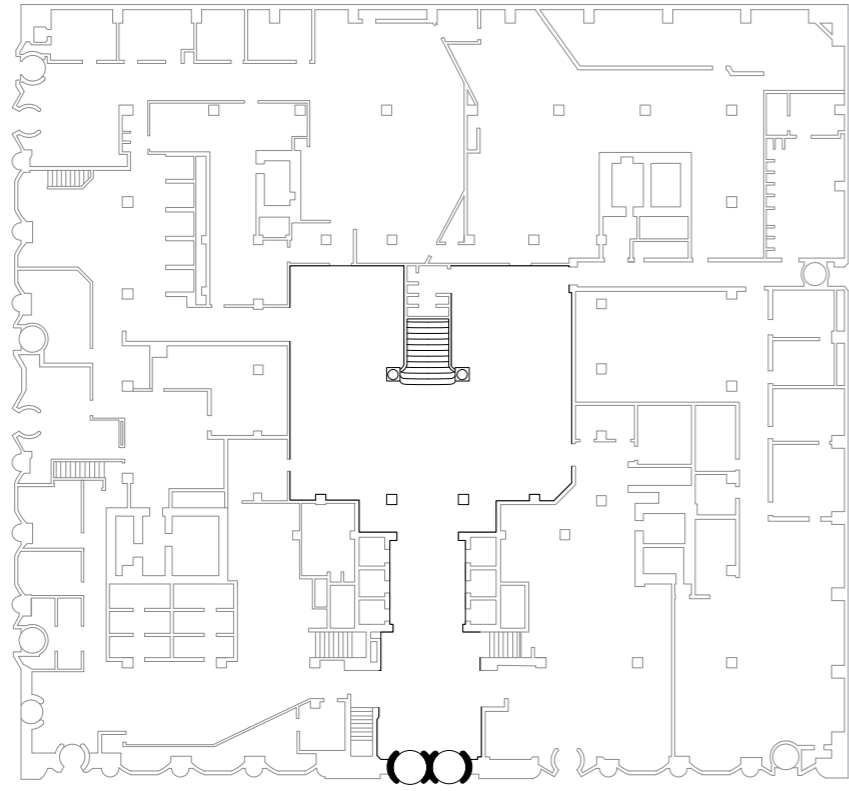
I have now come to the middle of this account, and at the same time to the *fin de siècle* period. The turn of the 19th century had lots of consequences in architecture. A deluge of new architectural principles appeared and made Historicism less fashionable. The Parthenon was no longer the unique point of reference.

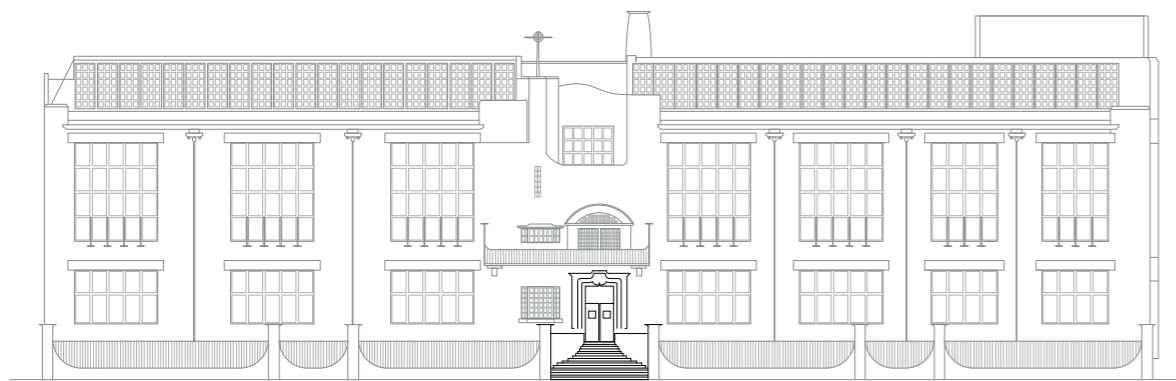


In the early 1900s, novelist Theodore Dreiser compared Chicago to the Florence of Michelangelo and the Medici. Indeed, the Post-Fire period inspired a great creativity in many branches of the arts, including architecture. While devastating, the Fire launched a building boom that pushed architectural experimentation and advancement that put Chicago to the forefront of progress. The Rookery is one of the resulting masterpieces of commercial architecture. It is the oldest high rise building still standing in Chicago. From the edge of the century, the Rookery represents an interesting transition between Historicism and Contemporary architecture.

Its picturesque façade recalls Beaux-Arts Classical style mixed with a combination of motifs from all over the world. However the façade has a completely new scale that responds to new cities. The entrance, still centered, has a much smaller proportion in the façade, but it manifests on the whole height. Now that the volume has to follow the grid plan of cities; the strategy to indicate entrances is much subtler: the architects are not anymore just adding a Greek temple-front. As a symbol of this generation, people enter the building via a revolving door. The scale of conception of the entrance has completely changed.

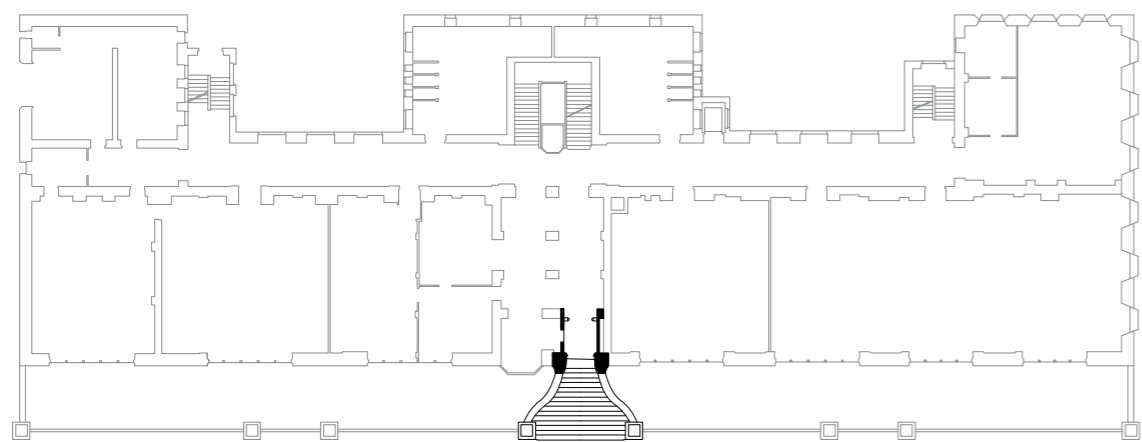
Once past the door, one can still have the feeling of being outside. Indeed, a glass roof over the stunning lobby creates zenithal daylight, which seems to refer to the Milan's *Galleria* or Paris's *Passages couverts*. The ambiguity of an interior space that reflects an exterior space was very trendy in the late 19th century. In 1905, Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned to remodel the Rookery light court and lobbies. He added Prairie style elements and sadly covered Root's elaborate wrought iron finishes with white marble surfaces.

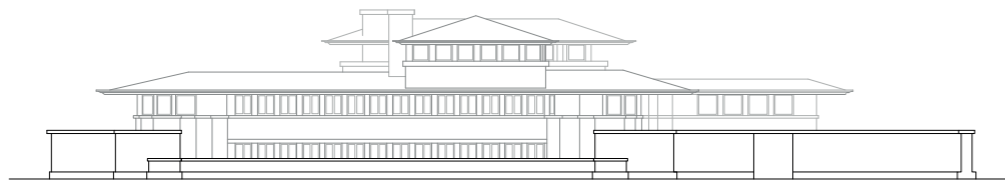




I like the name Glasgow School of Art; I already feel an intriguing opposition between an industrial smoky town and a building representing an art school. This building was a manifesto of a new architecture. Mackintosh rejected the historicism of the styles and the constraints of Classicism in favour of a fresh look at nature in the light of the writings of Ruskin.

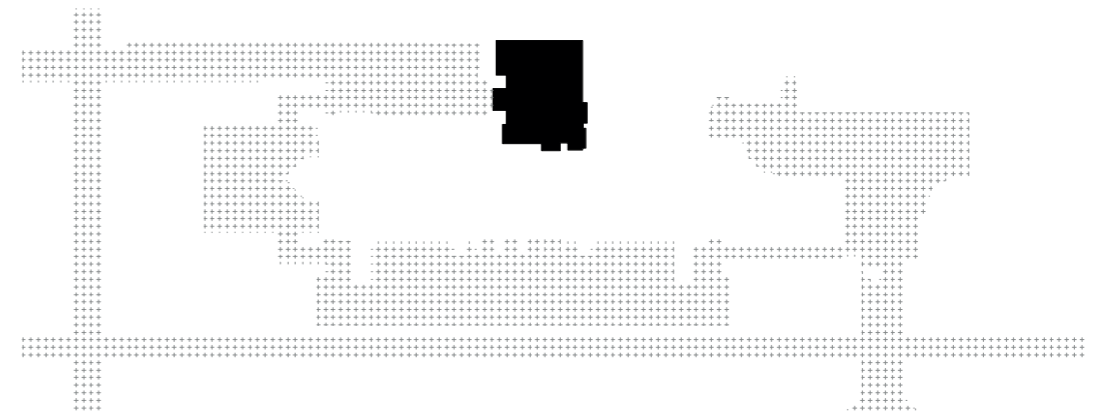
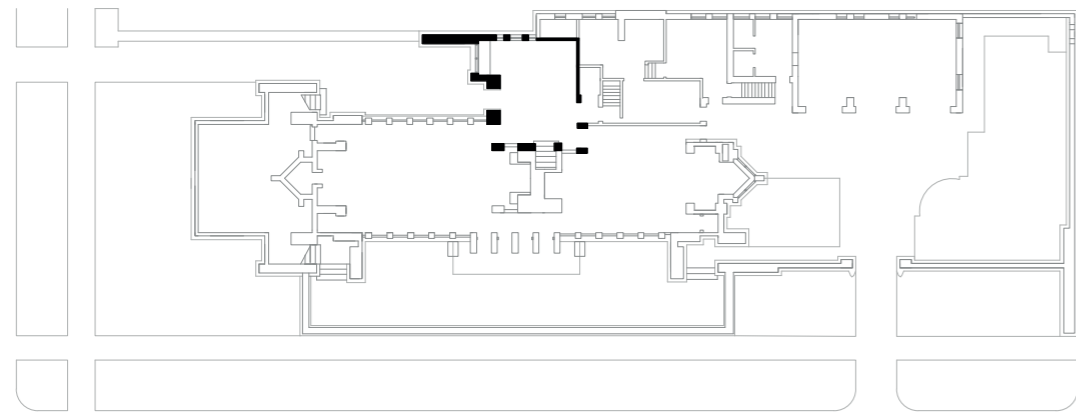
Most of the street façade is a good representation of what industrial architecture is about. Its form is determined by the nature of the site, the activities of its users and the materials and means of its construction. It has huge windows that follow no rules, but happen as and where required. However, around the centre of the façade, a heavily modelled entrance contrasts with the rest; recesses, bays and arches transform the industrial façade into façade Art Nouveau. As one enters the school following the main façade to its centre, Mackintosh designed the entrance to be seen obliquely from the street; and no longer from a central axis. These subtle changes in the vocabulary of the architecture magnify the entrance as an entrance. One knows that something of importance happens here. The stairs end fluently narrowing and compressing the landing to make penetration irresistible. The wall round the door swelling out to a post in the centre of an opening, with its dark doors inset with vivid but sombre coloured glass.

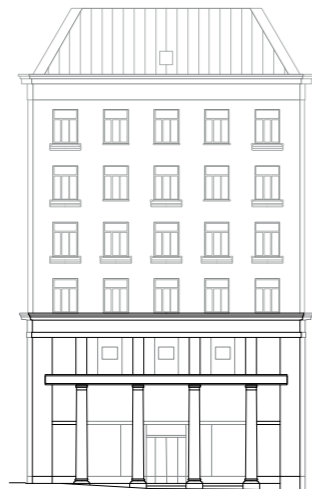




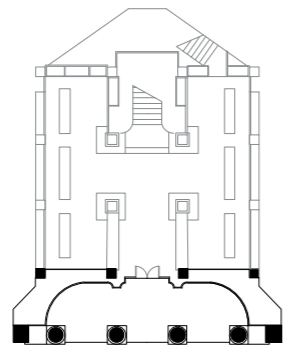
What is very attractive with the entrance of the world famous Robie House is that the entrance seems to be uninteresting. Firstly, it is not easy matter to find it, since it is hidden beneath an overhanging balcony in the backyard of the house. As if the house has no principal entrance. Then, the entrance space in itself is low-ceilinged and dark. At the entrance level, there is only the children's playroom, the billiards room, the laundry room, the cellar and the garage. At first sight, one may think that Wright showed no interest in the architecture of the entrance.

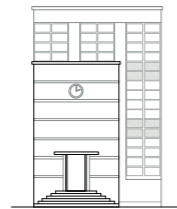
However, Wright used the entrance as a new tool. To reach this entrance, one has two solutions, one can walk around the house and enter by the side avenue or through the garden on the long side of the house, climb the stairs to the balcony with the large porch, than descend to the ground again and head for the main door. The entrance is finally the whole *promenade architecturale*; it is an appetizer that enhances the drama of the whole house before entering.





When Adolf Loos wrote *Architektur* in 1910, he made a striking distinction between a domestic sphere and a daily life, which responds to the useful and necessary, and collective sphere more open to the artwork. The Michaelerplatz Building seems to be the exact application of this doctrine. In contrast to the sobriety of the upper residential floors, the façade of the commercial base is very tactile and plastic, uniting cipollino marble with Classical and Contemporary architectural elements. The façade of the commercial part appears to be structural; the shop windows behind allow room for a two-story loggia that evokes the Palazzo Massimo alle colonne. However the four columns are non-load-bearing, they are ornaments dialoguing with the portico of the right opposite Michaelerkirche. The entrance is the entire front of the commercial part; a frame expresses it as one immense door able to receive all the Viennese, even if just a smaller door is located behind. With this move, Loos responded to the impressive neo-Baroque Michaelertor (the entrance gate to the Hofburg), which dominates the Michaelerplatz.

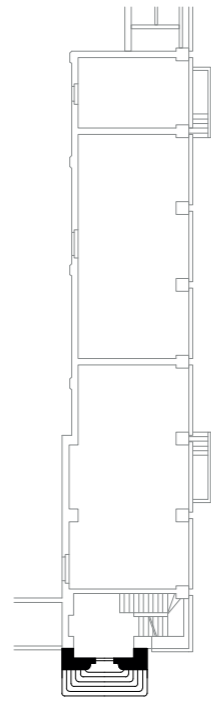


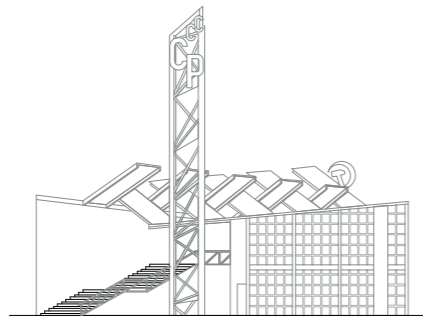


“A building designed in the spirit of our time no longer adopts the restrictive model of symmetrical façade. One has to move around the building to appreciate its corporeality and understand its different parts”⁸. With those words, which remind us of the Robie House, Walter Gropius expressed an important change in the history of entrances: the central entrance is not anymore a dogma.

One approaches the Fagus Werk from an almost central axis, but with a slight angle from the right side. The factory is a pure glass cube with sharp edges. The entrance is an added brick box non-centered but put on the left side of the front façade; therefore opposite to us (in relation to the axis of the building). The non-axiality and the asymmetry create a dynamic entrance space, which reaches back to the bases of the columns of Sant’Andrea al Quirinale. This idea of dynamism marks the introduction of the concept of the fourth dimension in architecture.

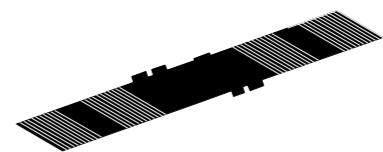
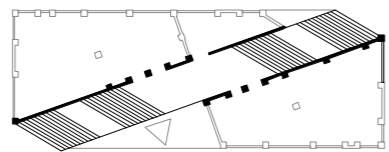
While the angles of the factory are transparent and light, the brick entrance contrasts by its opaque angles that signal it as an anchor to the whole complex. A nearly classical flight of steps leads to the entrance door, which is carefully marked by a small porch and two convex corners that reproduce the convex angle of the steps (the only curved surfaces of the building). These details seem to facilitate the visitor’s movement towards the interior, as if the whole outdoor area of the Fagus Factory converges to the small door.

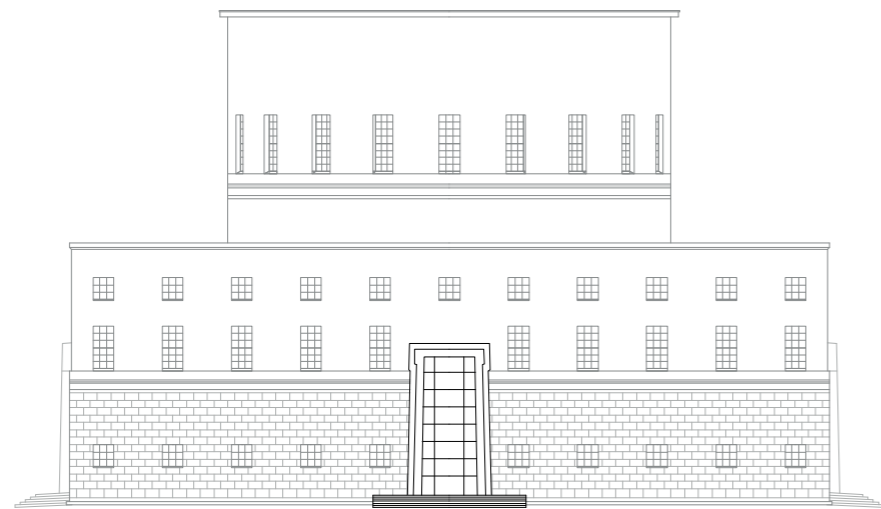




Founded in 1919, Constructivism was an artistic and architectural movement that had set the aim of finding the very expression of Communism through Art. Constructivists sought to apply three-dimensional Cubist vision to Communist constructions for propaganda.

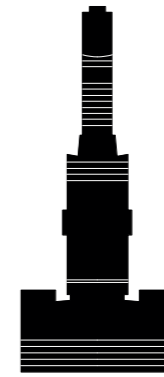
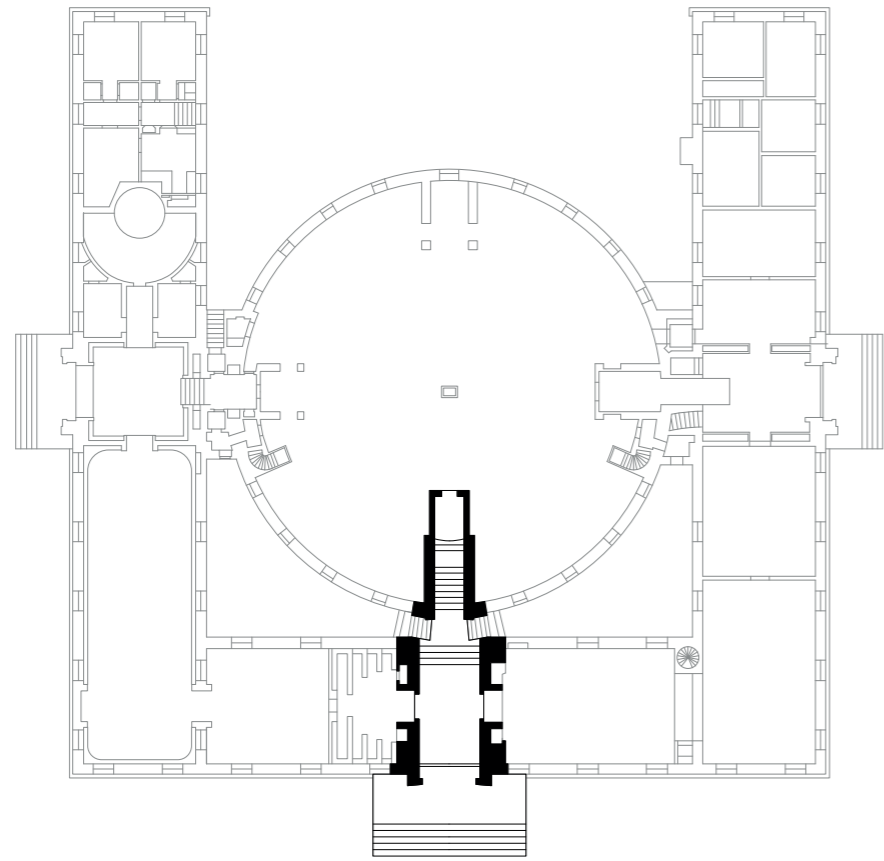
If one entrance was the very expression of the idea of dynamism in architecture, it was the Soviet Pavilion, designed by Konstantin Melnikov for the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts, which took place in Paris in 1925. The composition of the whole plan was based on researches for an architectural dynamism, obtained from the work on the diagonal and of the transformation of a static rectangle into two triangles. The entrance space was this entire diagonal space; it was embodied by the presence of a staircase, rising and falling, leading visitors to the first floor of the pavilion. The dramatic aspect of this staircase was enhanced by cross roofing elements and by the impression given by the askew steps. Melnikov moved from a space designed to be passively observed to a system that drew the visitor inside and transformed the movement of the crowd to an integral part of the construction.





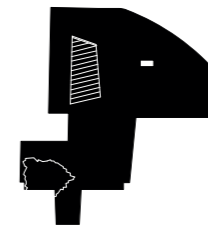
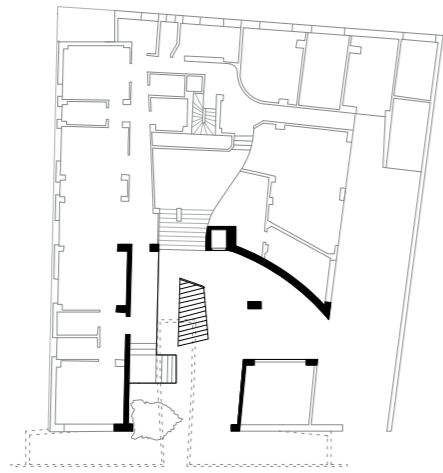
While the Stockholms Stadsbibliotek seems to be an archaic monument from another century, which looks like the Rotonde de la Villette by Claude Nicolas Ledoux. In reality, this library has a strong importance in the completion of its extraordinary spatial experience on entry, as one penetrates its many layers. According to Asplund and its interpretation of town planning, a library has to play the representative role of a landmark in the city. This means that the entrance has to exert a monumental effect as well as offering enough space for the crowd.

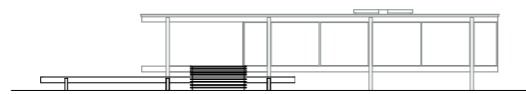
At the first stage of the project, Asplund celebrated the entrance by giant order columns and entablature, surmounted by arches in the wall that gives much power to the entrance. Asplund abandoned it in favor of a more Modernist entrance: a projecting stone frame, detached from the façade, gives massiveness and a severe independence. The cylinder of the rotunda coming out of the box, the centrality is obvious, one knows where the entrance takes us. Passing through the doorway, the central space is promised by the lightness of the drum yet hardly visible. The processional entrance is created by an axial and dramatic staircase that cuts through the various layers of the building toward a central lending hall with books on offer around the periphery. From the vast outdoor space, the progressively narrow entrance creates an impression of intimacy that enhances the passage to the reflection area.





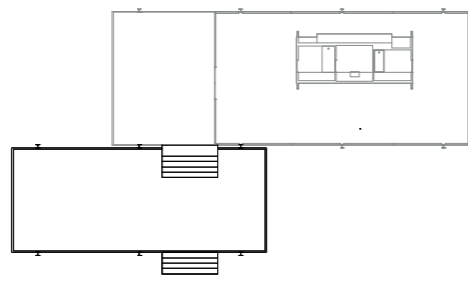
Just like the Palazzo Massimo alle colonne was an evolution of the Roman *domus*, I consider the Casa "Il Girasole" (the Sunflower) as a possible evolution of the Palazzo Massimo alle colonne. The building is aligned with these two important Renaissance concepts: the access to the upper floors (where the housing is) is situated in a central "courtyard", and the front façade follows a tripartite organization; a rusticated base, a fenestrated body and a solid cornice that resembles a pediment crowning the building. At the same time, Luigi Moretti plays with these concepts. He exposes steel structural elements between the rustication and the underside of the floor, which express that the rustication is not structural but iconic. The pediment is divided by a central cut and turned it asymmetrical (by rising slightly higher the right side). This front façade (as the rear one) extends beyond the building base (as we have seen with Peruzzi), but this time, is detached from the rest of the building. The façade appears to be a hoarding. The large cut manifests the entrance as an event in the façade. The Venetian blinds underline the horizontality of the façade, which then contrasts with the vertical cut and highlights it. To make it even clearer, a vertical relief is drawn in the façade, next to the cut. Thanks to this latter, the light falls directly on the central staircase and enhances it as something spectacular. The surrounding and curious lobby area seems to respond to the staircase with a convex deformation on the right side and with a suspended mosaic that expresses the descent on the left side. With simple elements, Moretti magnified the entrance as a dramatic statement in the façade.

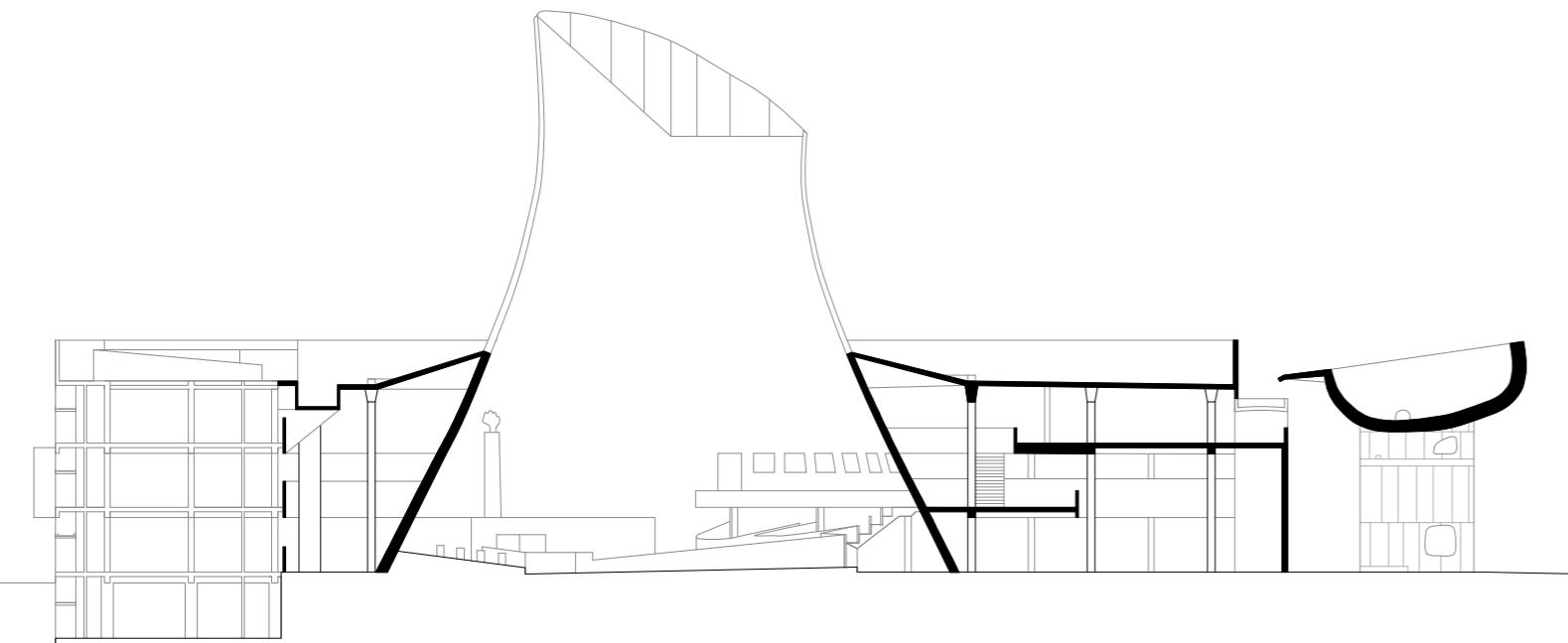




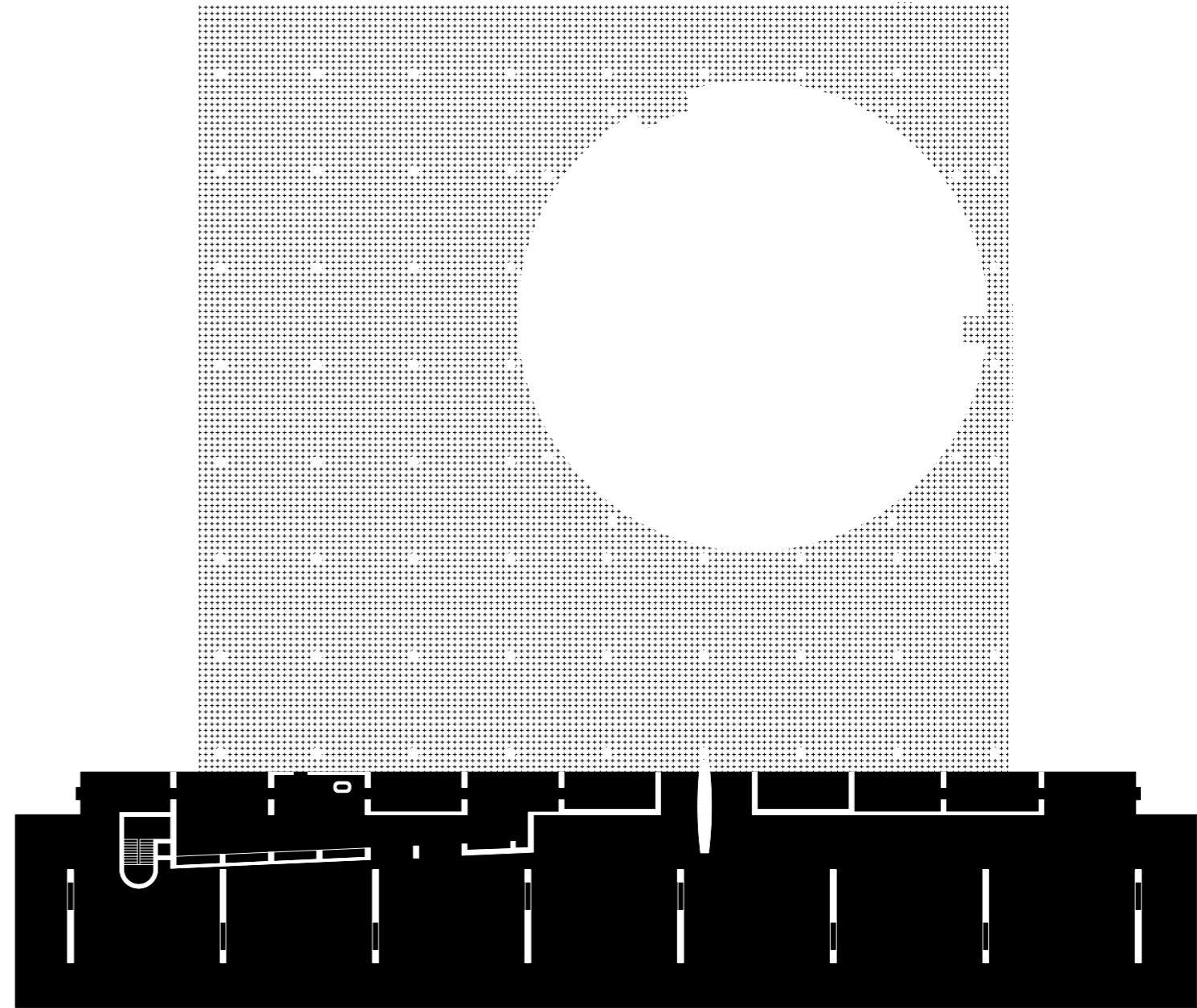
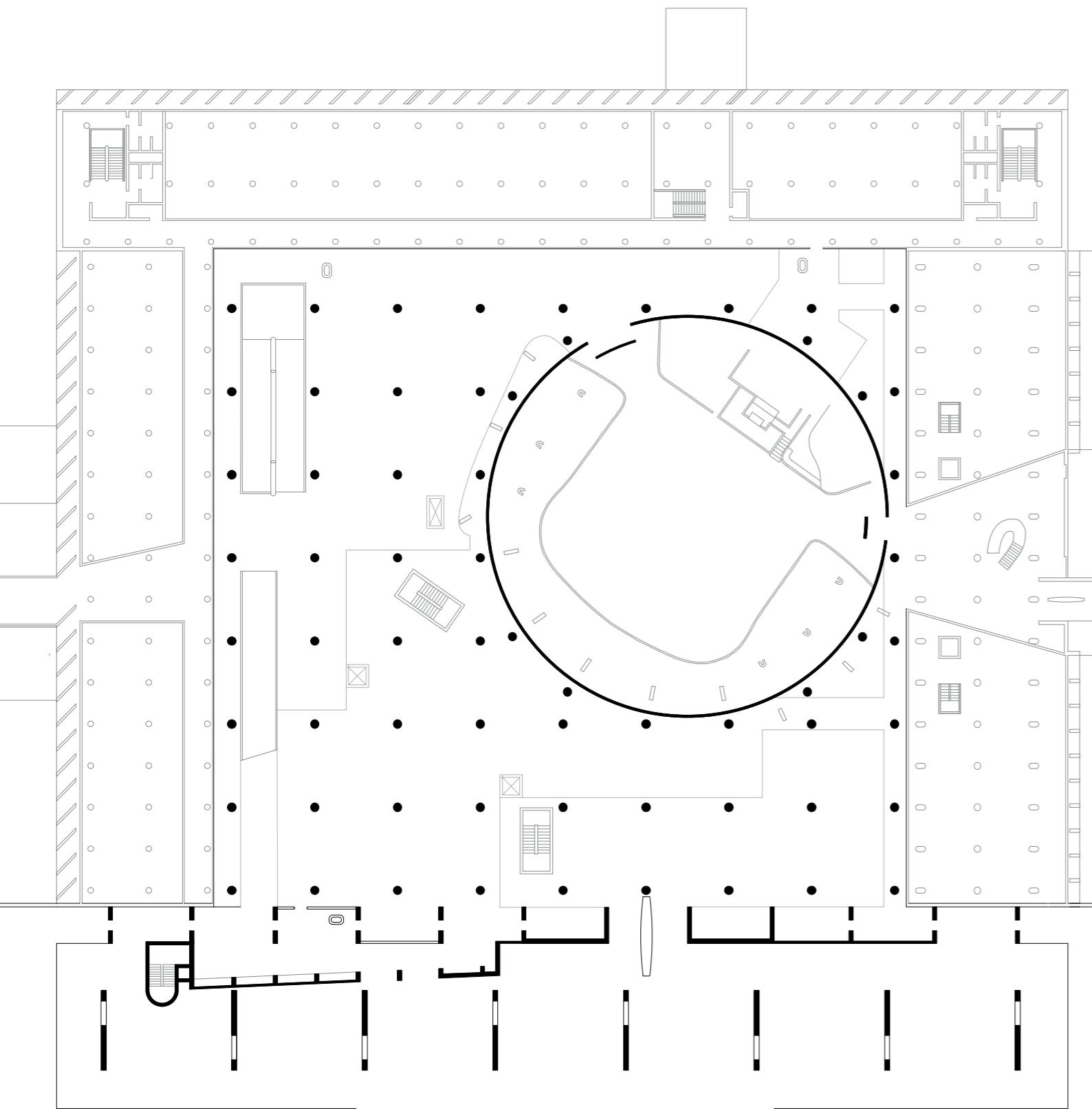
So far, the relation entrance/building has always been treated as a unity or as an added box that is nevertheless considered as a part of the whole. The Farnsworth House is an achievement that refutes the Classical part-to-whole unity. The scheme of the house is simple: two superimposed rectangular slabs, suspended by eight steel columns define a space that is the house. A third floating slab has no walls or a roof and acts as a transition between the living area and the ground. One accesses this platform through four linear steps, and another five steps give access to the house. This primary space is part of the house, and yet still outdoors. The horizontality of the inner space is emphasized thanks to a perpendicular movement in the progression: after the vertical move created by the stairs, the horizontal one is marked by change of direction; the house is developed on our right side. This is accentuated by the fact that one crosses the first platform perpendicularly to its own direction. In the progression the first rectangle lays on the left side and the second on the right side, this gives the feeling a movement, as if before the two rectangles were aligned.

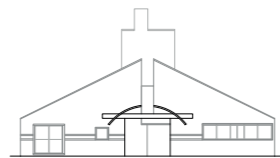
With this detached and asymmetrical entrance space, Mies left a traditional and symmetrical entity in favor of dynamic parts.





For the purpose of this account, I consider in some ways the Palace of the Assembly as two buildings at once. Firstly, it is the well renowned building, part of the Capitol Complex of Chandigarh, which follows Le Corbusier's five points of architecture. Regarding the conception of the entrance, I also see it as a modernist interpretation of the Altes Museum. Colin Rowe, considering the study of the *poché*, pointed out this relation: "A conventional classical *parti* equipped with traditional *poché* and much the same *parti* distorted and made to present a competitive variety of local gestures – perhaps to be understood as compensations for traditional *poché*"⁹. Even if the vocabulary is completely different, the wall colonnade supporting the large swooping concrete form, which dialogue with the environment, greatly reminds one of the massive colonnade of the Altes Museum. Passing this colonnade, one enters an in-between space that gives access to the key room, which develops above the building as if it is the only interior space. However, while all roads lead to Schinkel's rotunda, Le Corbusier seems to place a private room in the middle of a public area with almost no connection. There is more gradation; a simple wall separates the inside from the outside.

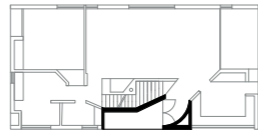


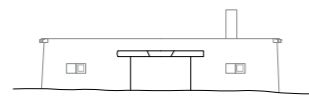


The Vanna can be seen as a performance from Robert Venturi to express his rejection towards the abstract Modernist house (*less is a bore* according to Venturi), and at the same time to apply his beliefs from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.

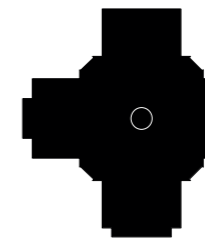
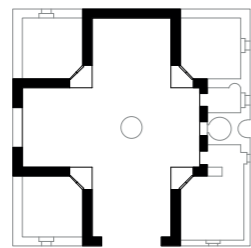
Venturi wrote: “The front, in its conventional combinations of door, windows, chimney and gable, creates an almost symbolic image of a house”¹⁰. Indeed when one approaches the house, one discovers an almost symmetric façade that acts as a sort of awkward billboard for a house, with familiar, but perverse elements. The front, with a broken gable, looks like a Mannerist split pediment, which recalls Luigi Moretti’s Casa “Il Girasol”. The entrance is indicated via an arch, conventionally a Classical structural element meaning “entrance”, but he split the decorative arch into two parts, subtracting the keystone. By this way, he suggested an event of entrance using the visitor’s assimilation (this play with Classical elements evokes Giulio Romano’s slipped triglyphs at the Palazzo del Te). Behind the façade, a chimney juts out in an exaggerated manner, as if, before entering, Venturi is telling us that the chimney is the pillar that articulates the house. Under the arch, a small porch is deformed and guides the visitor’s progression; he is already turning around the chimney without having seen it.

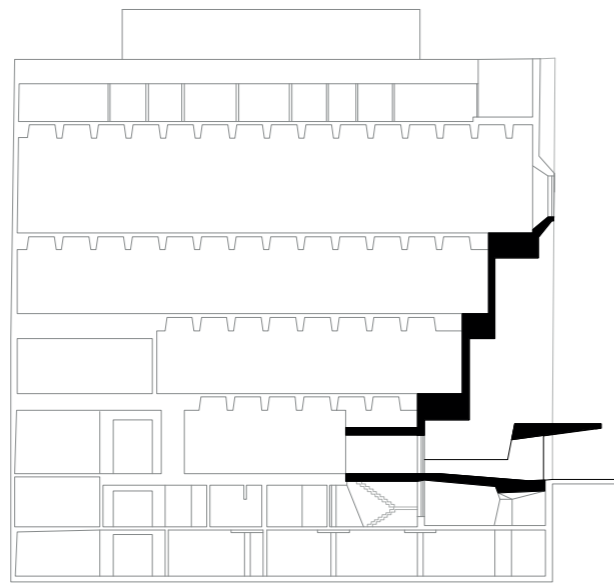
In the Vanna house, Venturi apprehended its interest for the semiotic philosophy of the sign in architecture, later developed in *Learning from Las Vegas*. With the façade as a *sign of a house* and the chimney creating a form to express its role, Venturi cleverly associated the design of a *duck* and a *decorated shed*.





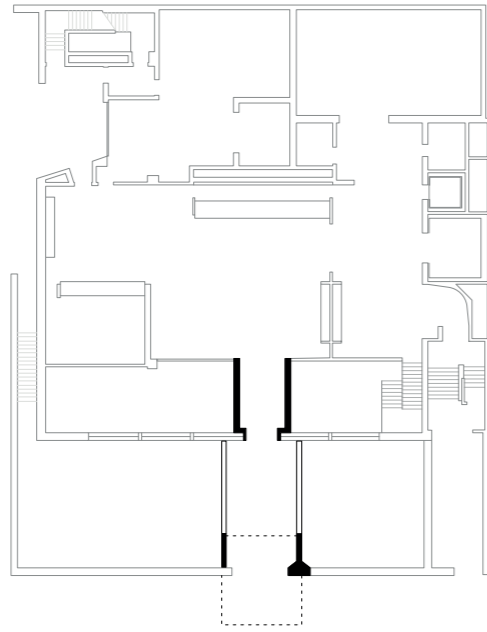
This Sardinian holiday house designed by Marco Zanuso totally contrasts with Venturi's house. In a very wild land overlooking the coast, one discovers a house that seems to be primordial; it is hard to define its year of construction as nothing indicates any technology. The house is a stone square with very small openings, a bigger one with a lintel reveals the entrance. Once penetrated inside, the square house is divided into nine smaller squares: four of them are built allowing room for a central courtyard, recalling the historical *domus*. This open air space neither outside nor inside is the house and the four closed volumes are only here in case of bad weather. To enhance the relation with the court, one enters these rooms through the truncated angle. Especially as their doors are drawn to disappear once they are opened. It is interesting to note that the entrance is on the coastal side, opposite the coming road. For the first time in the account, the entrance aperture is used as a frame to look outside.

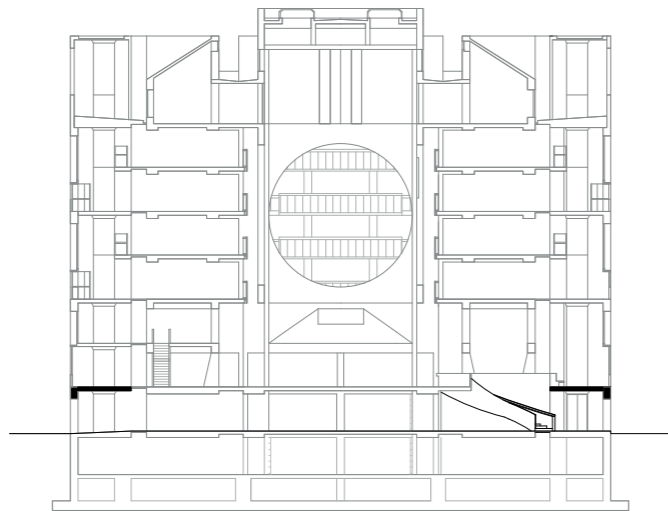




It is quite a difficult task to affirm the entrance of a building in a place like Manhattan. With the Seagram Building, Mies van der Rohe made a first statement by simply letting an empty square in front of the building (*less is more*). A few years later (and after the reform of the zoning resolution), on the next street, Marcel Breuer made a second one. Indeed, the Whitney Museum stands out against its neighboring façades. Aside from the criticized fact that it is heavy and brutal, the design of the entrance is cleverly resolved.

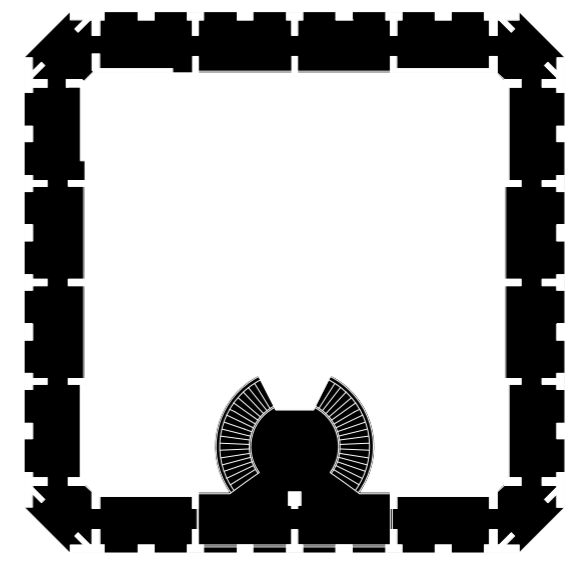
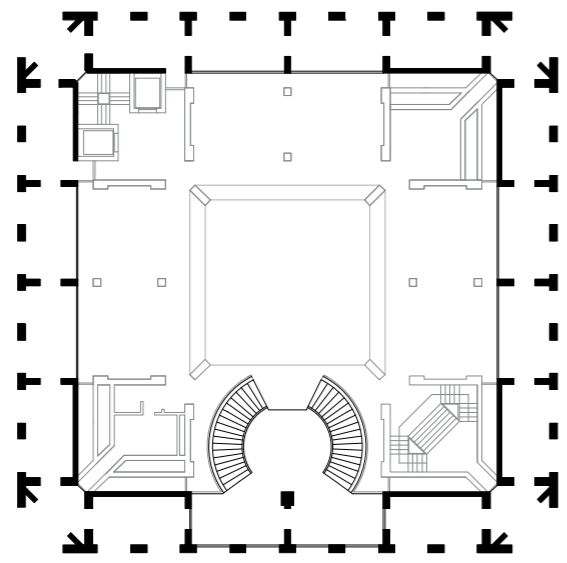
The entire building seems to move back, step by step, creating void that attract the whole street until its heart and allowing room for a sunken sculpture court. Breuer turned upside down the commercial ziggurats that push the pedestrian off the sidewalk and inverts the effect. A sculptural concrete objet comes out of the museum, without touching the street, offers a porch then a bridge to receive the visitor inside. With this subtle delicateness, Breuer gives the impression of inviting the inhabitant to a shelter, protected from the city that never sleeps.

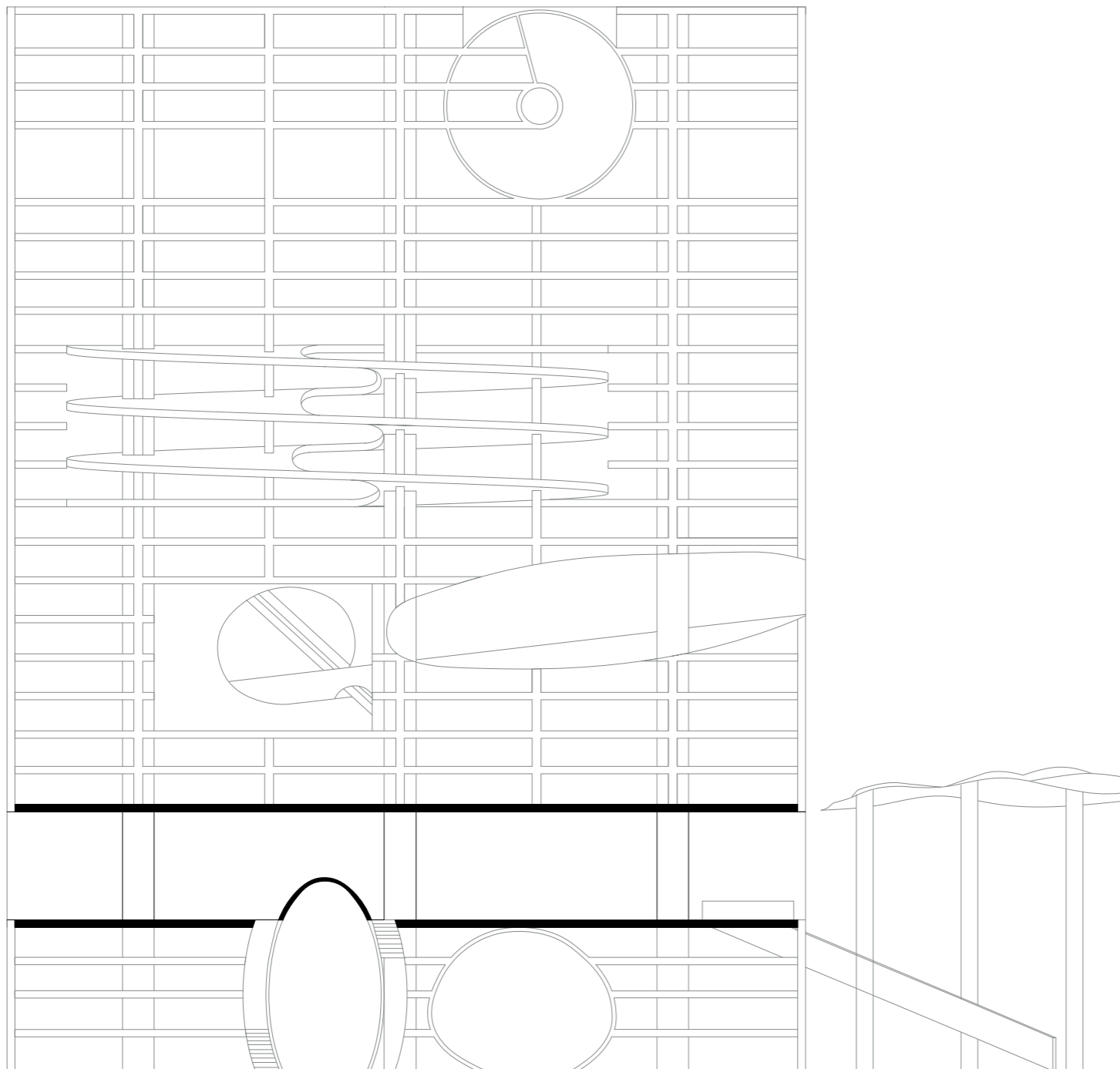




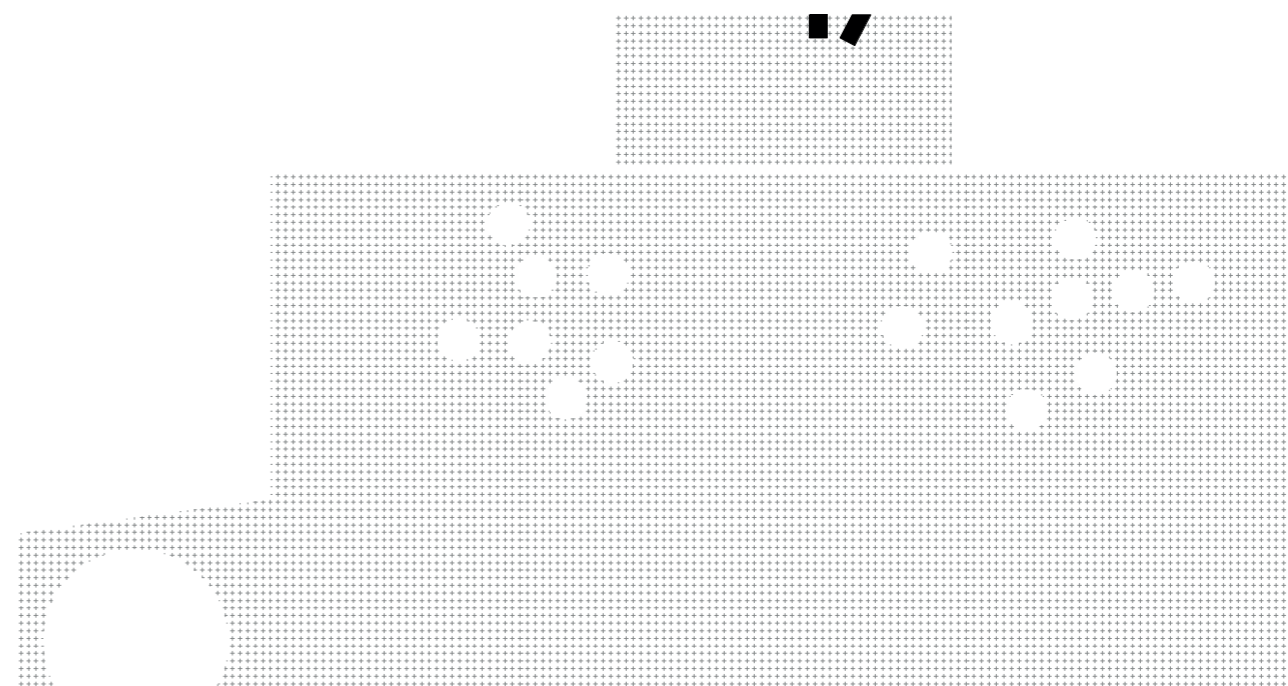
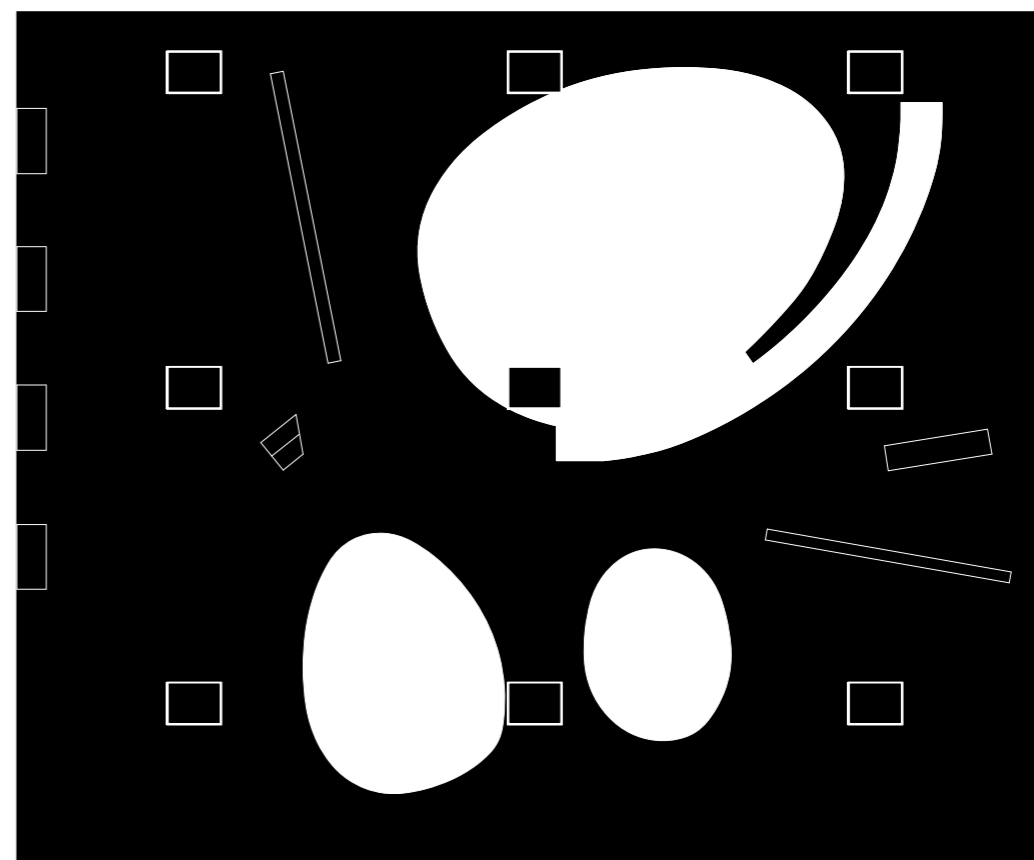
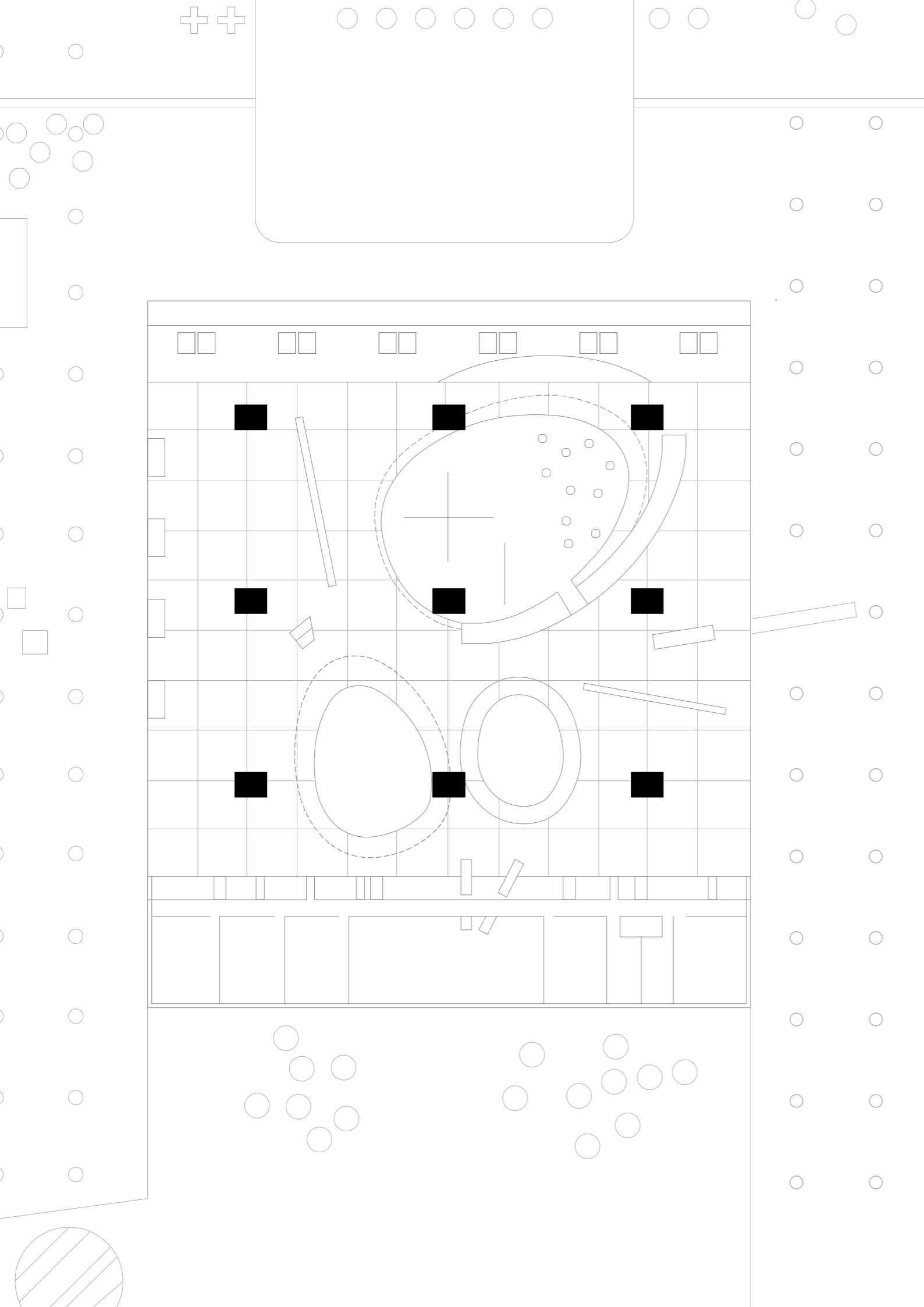
Louis Kahn's famous phrase *architecture comes from the making of a room* is almost precise to describe the Exeter Library. Indeed, from the exterior, the library is a massive cube placed on the grass, while inside it is first of all a room. Kahn reinterpreted the theatrical effect of the 19th century libraries (also existing in Asplund's library) with its panoptic presentation of the collections, dramatizing the accumulation of knowledge. The main idea of the project is the progression towards the light. This means a movement from the periphery to the heart, then (once at a specific floor) back to the periphery (where the carrels are). The ground floor is treated as a modest base with a ring of low open porticos, which separates the outer and the inner space. Nothing particular expresses the position of the entrance staircase hidden behind one of these porticos, as the four facades look similar. It is also surprising that one can enter through all porticos except those facing the entrance. Once one has found the entrance hall, a monumental horseshoe-shaped staircase leads to the main room, which serves the entire library.

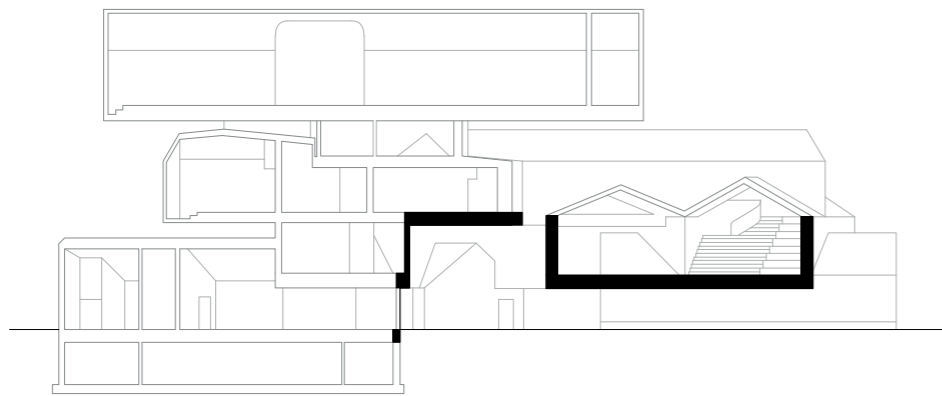
The schematic design of the Exeter library looks similar to the one of the Parthenon: a space-radiating volume, in which the entrance is on the entire periphery and where the interior space is reserved to erudite persons.





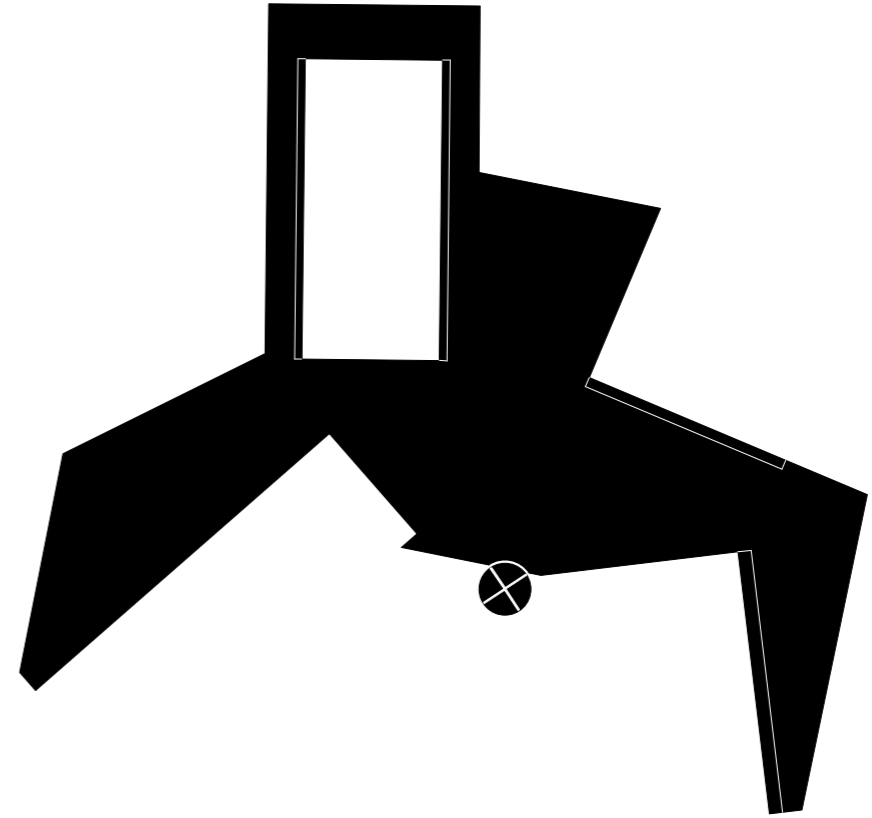
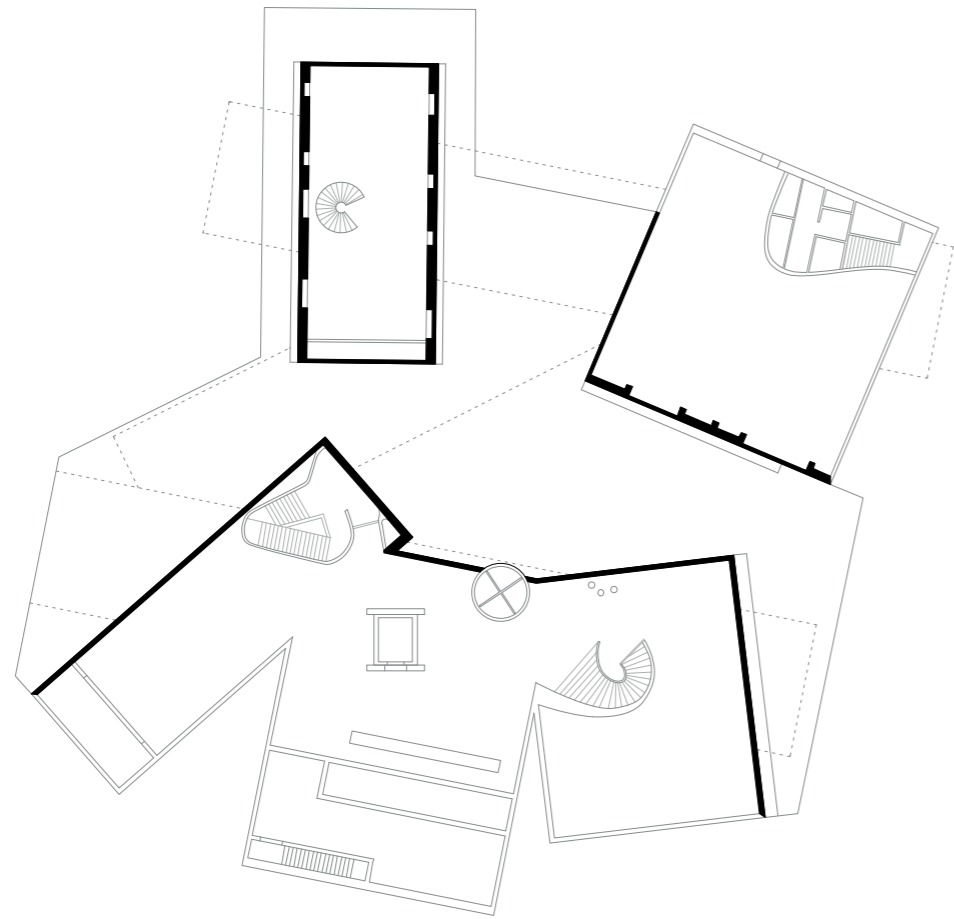
When Rem Koolhaas broached the topic of the library, he made a statement (as everybody expected him to do). For the competition of the new national library in France, he proposed a Très Grande Bibliothèque, the “ultimate” technological library where the public spaces are defined as “absences of building” (its famous “strategy of the void”¹¹). Its project for the library has an almost classical organization, it is separated into two main parts: the stacks (layering of floors) and the readings rooms (void cut into the layering). The reading rooms are separated and independent of each other, according to their affiliation. As in most of the library or museum with this organization, an entrance room serves the different reading rooms. Nonetheless, OMA proposed to transform this room into a spectacular moment that triggers astonishment. This *Great Hall of Ascension* highlights accurately the organization of the building. The ground and the glass ceiling of the hall reveal the treasures of the staging building, they are intersected by the glass cages of nine lift shafts that lead to a different and unique destination. These destinations are indicated on the lift shafts thanks to light information panels in continuous movement. Over the hall, the gigantic cube seems to be carried on the nine transparent lift shafts. The perpetual upward movement of information creates the illusion that the whole edifice lies on signs. Rem Koolhaas used the entrance to make the complex building explicit.





When Herzog & de Meuron design showrooms by stacking twelve archetypal houses, one could have expected twelve entrance doors (maybe *extruded* and *pressed*). Nonetheless, they define the entrance space through the agency of a curious wooden carpet that sometimes seems in conflict with the houses and sometimes concurs with them. Between the four volumes that compose the ground floor, this surface draws an open central space that might dialogue with the houses creating niches or covered waiting zones or might climb over a house shaping a bench. In the middle of the doormat, a revolving door gives access to the entire exhibition spaces.

Herzog & de Meuron close this account with an idea of entering architecture that is both completely different from the Parthenon, and obviously similar.



Across the history of Western architecture, entrances play two distinct roles.

The first role is to relate the exterior and the interior. This threshold between the two is frequently used to enhance the experience of the inner space. Entrances engage a distance of reading. This can be through a step-by-step reading of the architecture, which recalls the concept of *liminality* (from the Latin word *līmen*, meaning “a threshold”) developed by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep. It is defined as the transitional threshold between two fixed states in cultural rites of passage, or with an analogy, between two dissimilar spaces in architecture. The *liminality* is composed of three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. This three-fold structure can be applied to most of the buildings previously presented. Or the distance can be created by a striking lecture; when entrances highlight the marked oppositions and contrasts, then trigger astonishment. The Sleeping Venus by Giorgione and the Venus of Urbino by Titian illustrate clearly these two ways of entering.

The second role is the representation of architecture. Entrances stand for the buildings behind and relate their stories to the exterior. They may symbolize the edifices as signals in the city, as landmarks. Or even demonstrate the power of the individuals responsible for their creation and they reveal the nature of that power. Frequently, entrances come with ornaments to exhibit wealth and social status. Entrances might also manifest protection or introversion. And of course, architects use entrances to express an intellectual position.

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