Graduation Report

Theater de Baaierd

The guesthouse for collective culture

TU Delft
Faculty of Architecture

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01

introduction

1.1 Problem statement

The urban fabric of Delft is defined by its fine-grained, delicate structure of small houses, intimate canals, and tight street profiles. Introducing a large-scale civic program into this historic center presents a real spatial challenge. The investigation for this project began eight months ago with an attempt to completely adapt to this fine-grained morphology. Early explorations focused on designing a theater adapts itself to this fine grain urban fabric, an image of this early design can be seen in figure 1. This was in the form of a cluster of tiny, stepped houses attempting to camouflage a massive program. However, this approach proved to be a illusion; it was an artificial design trying to hide an unavoidable reality.

A deeper analysis of the city's structure revealed a different truth: Delft's identity does not rely solely on small scales. The city is a composition of fine-grained volumes disrupted by massive, imposing monuments, most notably its medieval churches. These churches "land" within the city fabric, with a completely natural, undisputed presence this can be seenin a photographic exploration in figures 2 & 3 . The true architectural challenge is therefore not to hide the volume of a theater, but to find a way for a large monument to land gracefully without overwhelming its neighbors.

In addressing this challenge, it is important to reflect on contemporary architectural discourse. Currently, there is a strong tendency toward absolute flexibility and neutrality (Forty, 2000). Modern cultural buildings are frequently designed as adaptable "empty boxes", exemplified by typologies like the Half Moon Theatre in London or The Shed in New York. While these spaces serve a purpose in rapidly changing cities by offering programmatic freedom, introducing such a generic volume into the historic center of Delft would miss an opportunity for urban dialogue. Furthermore, contemporary construction is increasingly driven by economic efficiency, value engineering, and cost avoidance. This paradigm often results in buildings designed with a projected lifespan of merely 50 years, prioritizing short-term utility over craftsmanship and permanence (Frampton, 1983). This project diverges from both the concepts of the "empty box" and the contemporary construction. Instead, it advocates for a return to permanence and craftsmanship, proposing a specific spatial design that balances contextual embedding with formal grandeur.





Figure 1 :
Early design explorations through iterative model wmaking (Own work, 2026)





Figure 2 :
Pictures of how Maria van Jesse church in Delft lands in urban fabric (Own work, 2026)





Figure 3 :
Pictures of how the New Church in Delft lands in urban fabric (Own work, 2026)

1.2 Social and architectural relevance

The social and architectural relevance of this project is tied to the historical stratification of its specific site: the Gasthuisplaats. As can be seen in the Kaart figuratief in figure 4 around the year 1252, this location housed the oldest hospital in the Netherlands, a medieval Gasthuis (later evolving into the Reinier de Graaf Gasthuis). A component of this complex was 'De Baaierd', a sanctuary dedicated to providing shelter, food, and basic care for the poorest citizens and outcasts. By naming this project Theater de Baaierd, the design wants to create a direct lineage with the past, transitioning from a place of physical care to a place of collective culture.

As urban theorists Setha Low and Neil Smith (2006) argue, public space in modern city centers is increasingly privatized and commercialized. There is an urgent societal need for spaces that resist this trend by creating genuine, uncommercialized human connection. While classical theater typologies, such as Charles Garnier's Opéra de Paris, illustrated in the picture of figure 5, excelled at creating a sense of spectacle but they were also very much controlling and auditing the behavior and movement of their visitors.

Theater de Baaierd aims to challenge this narrative by proposing the democratization of grandeur, which will be the core theme in this thesis. The belief driving this architectural exploration is that every citizen, regardless of status, deserves to experience articulated spaces, in short: everyone deserves to feel grand.

Furthermore, the project addresses a urban deficiency of Delft: the lack of public green spaces within the dense historic core, visualized in the context map of figure 6. By intentionally expanding the building program vertically rather than spreading it horizontally across the entire plot, the design acts as a "good neighbor". It leaves significant open space on the ground for public park courtyards and activates its stepped roofs as accessible gardens. These green spaces are not reserved exclusively for theater ticket-holders; they are a direct gift back to the public of the city.

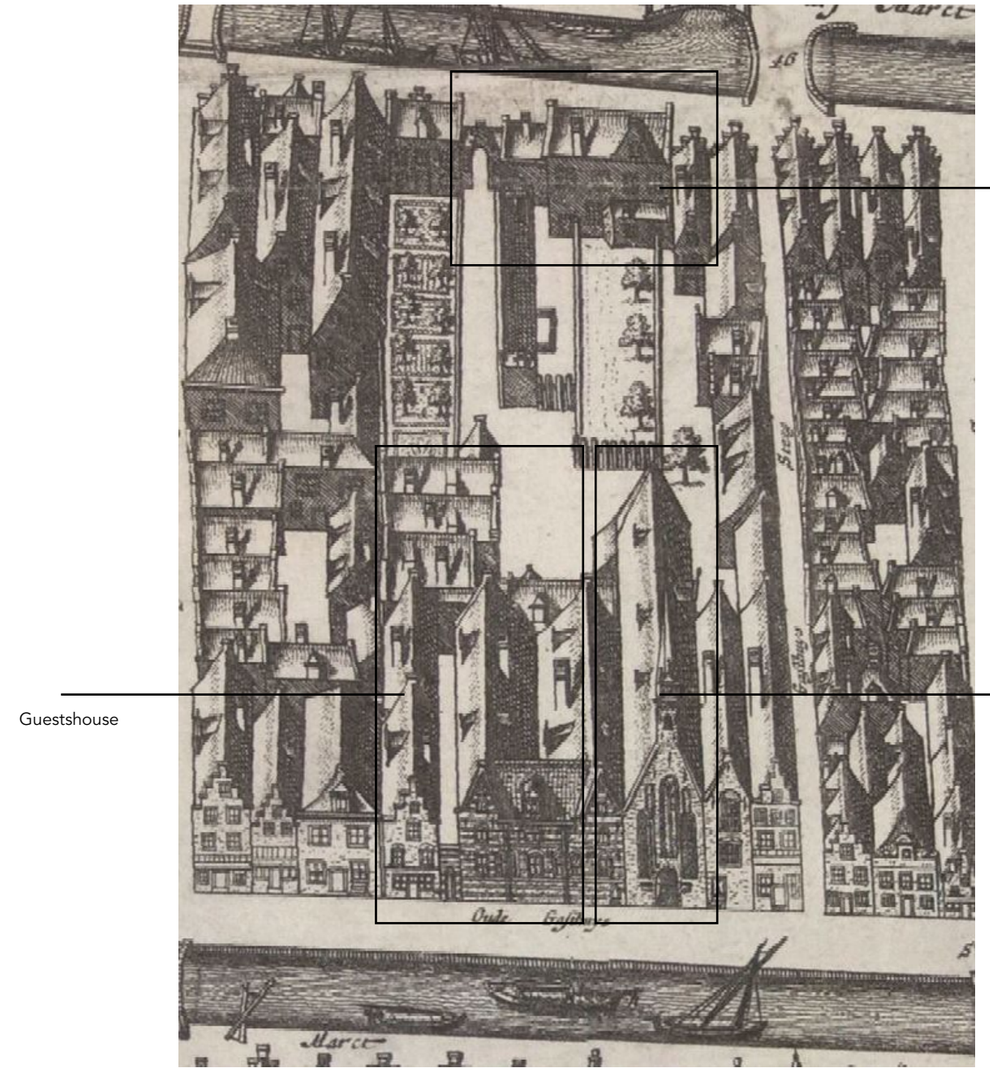


Figure 4 :
Kaart Figuratief Delft including old Guesthouse & Baaierd (Gemeente Delft, 2026)



Figure 5:
Perspective of Opera Garnier – Paris Grand staircase (Own work, 2026)



Figure 6:
Greenery context map of Delft (Own work, 2026)

1.3 Scope & Program

The scope of this project is bounded to the perimeter of the Gasthuisplaats in Delft. The building footprint has been deliberately restricted (my myself) to ensure that the site is not overfilled by architecture, allowing the leftover space to be used into accessible public courtyards. Programmatically, Theater de Baaierd operates primarily as a receiving theater. Its main auditoriums, the 800-seat proscenium hall and the flexible black box, are designed to host external, touring productions ranging from classical ballet to modern plays. However, a major objective within this scope is to prevent the building from becoming a "dark box" or a passive machine that sits empty during the day.

To achieve this, the additional program is diversified. The complex integrates a large Art Centre, which will be eleborated on in the results section, that provides spaces for local, small-scale creation alongside the main touring stages. By including workshops for clay and painting, dance studios, a children's theater studio, an art gallery, and dedicated spaces for costuming and prop-making, the program ensures that the building remains active, vibrant, and welcoming twenty-four hours a day.

Program compontents	Key spatial elements	Target Users	Urban Relation
Main performance hall	800-Seat proscenium hall, fly tower, orchestra pit, backstage infrastructure	Theater visitors, artists, production crews	The "mystical" space hidden behind concrete walls which main masses are visible from outside.
Experimental hall	Flexible black box theater, rehearsal studios, technical support	Local performers, experimental productions, theater visitors	A adaptable space that can be opened and expanded directly into one of the public courtyards.
Art Centre	Workshop spaces (clay, painting), art gallery, dance studio, children's theater, podcast & photo studio	Students, children, hobbyists, local creators	Visually open to the public courtyards via grand, glazed openings.
Urban anchors	Grand cafe-restaurant, foyers, public roof gardens, landmark viewing tower	General public, tourists, neighbors, theater visitors	Directly accessible from the street and courtyards; open independently of showtimes.

1.4 Objective and motivation

The primary objective of this project was to design a multifunctional cultural complex that operates as a monumental civic building, while simultaneously functioning as an open, approachable urban living room for Delft. The architectural motivation for achieving this balance was influenced by the initial four-week "City Stage" studio exercise (see Figures 7 & 8).

The final conceptual model (Figure 8) focused on spatial sequence, revelation, and absorption. By moving visitors from narrow, compressed entryways into open courtyards and using reflective and absorbing materials to manipulate visibility, the architecture framed the visitor as both observer and participant. The goal was to translate these abstract learnings into a large-scale civic building for the final design.

In classical theater typologies, spatial sequences are often linear and hierarchical, strictly dictating the visitor's movement from the entrance to the auditorium (see figure 9) . This creates an over-controlled environment that dictates a single, formal way to experience the building. To counteract this and preserve the freedom of the "City Stage," the objective was to replace this traditional hard threshold with a gradual gradient of engagement. By organizing the building into three conceptual layers, the architecture gives visitors the agency to choose their level of participation, allowing them to wander, observe, or fully commit to a performance at their own pace.

In the results section you will find more on these three layers, here only the objective is set.

The Outer World: The ambition here is to design a civic envelope that actively dialogues with Delft's historic skyline. The objective is to express tectonic weight and monumentality, anchoring the building in the city, without resorting to direct historical mimicry.

The Transitional World: The objective for the intermediate zones is to extend the urban fabric of Delft into the building. However, rather than functioning merely as a passive pathway or a standard waiting area, the ambition is to activate this layer as a continuous "City Stage." By strategically manipulating sightlines and spatial relationships throughout these zones, the goal is to create a dynamic environment of "seeing and being seen". With this approach I aim to blur the boundary between the performer and the visitor,. Which transforms the casual social interactions of the public into a theatrical event of its own, building engagement before the final threshold of the auditorium is crossed.

The Inner World: The objective for the performance spaces was complete architectural and acoustic isolation. This layer is envisioned as an intimate, dark cocoon almost where visitors can leave the outside world behind and fully immerse themselves in the collective experience of the performance.








Figure 7:
First model of "City Stage" studio excercise (Own work, 2026)





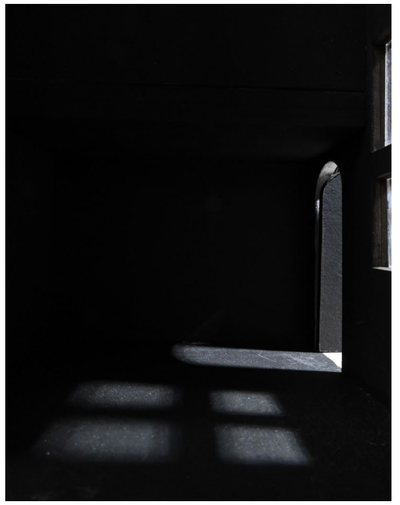



Figure 8:
Final model of "City Stage" studio excercise (Own work, 2026)

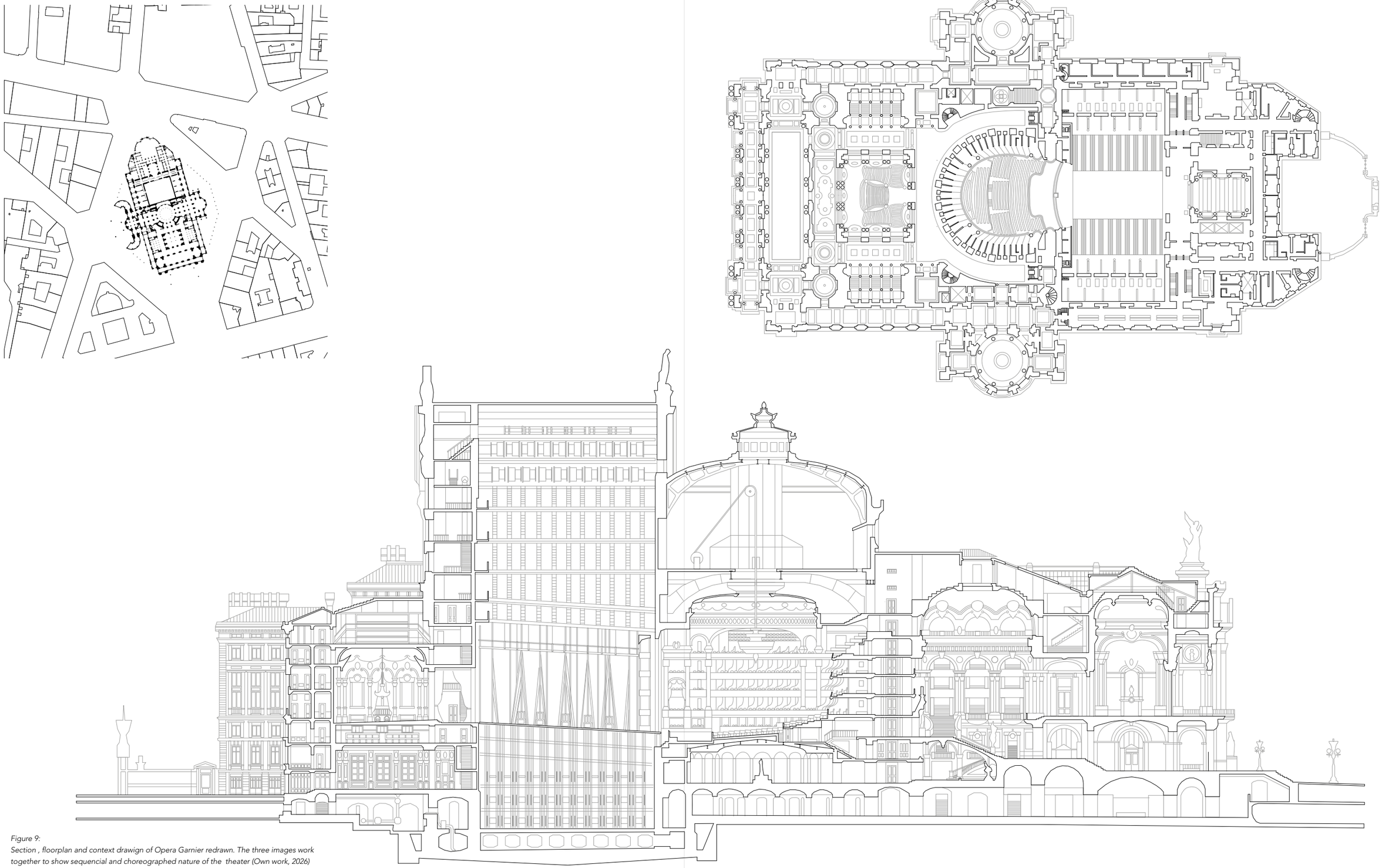


Figure 9:
Section , floorplan and context drawign of Opera Garnier redrawn. The three images work together to show sequencial and choreographed nature of the theater (Own work, 2026)

1.5 Research and design questions

The main design question is formulated as follows: *How can a civic, monumental theater building be integrated into the fine-grained historic fabric of the Gasthuisplaats in Delft, acting as an open, approachable guesthouse for collective culture?*

To solve this primary challenge, the main question is divided into three sub-questions:

1 How can the massing and facade abstract the grand, church-like scale of a civic monument while harmonizing with the fine-grained residential fabric of Delft, avoiding historical imitation?

2 How can the integration of daily cultural programs (such as the Art Centre) and transitional spaces dissolve the boundary between the street and the theater, creating an active, 24/7 accessible urban living room?

3 How can the spatial journey from the city to the performance halls be clearly articulated through a sequence of three distinct architectural layers using honest material expression and tectonic permanence?

.

2

approach

2.1 Overall research strategy

The research and design process for Theater de Baaierd is characterized by a combination of analytical, empirical, and design-led methods which will be elborated on in the next subchapters. Rather than adhering to a linear process, the approach is very much iterative: research directly informed design decisions, and in turn, new proposals generated new research questions. Through this process multiple design options were developed during the trajectory of this thesis particularly in relation to circulation and massing as can be seen in figure 10 .

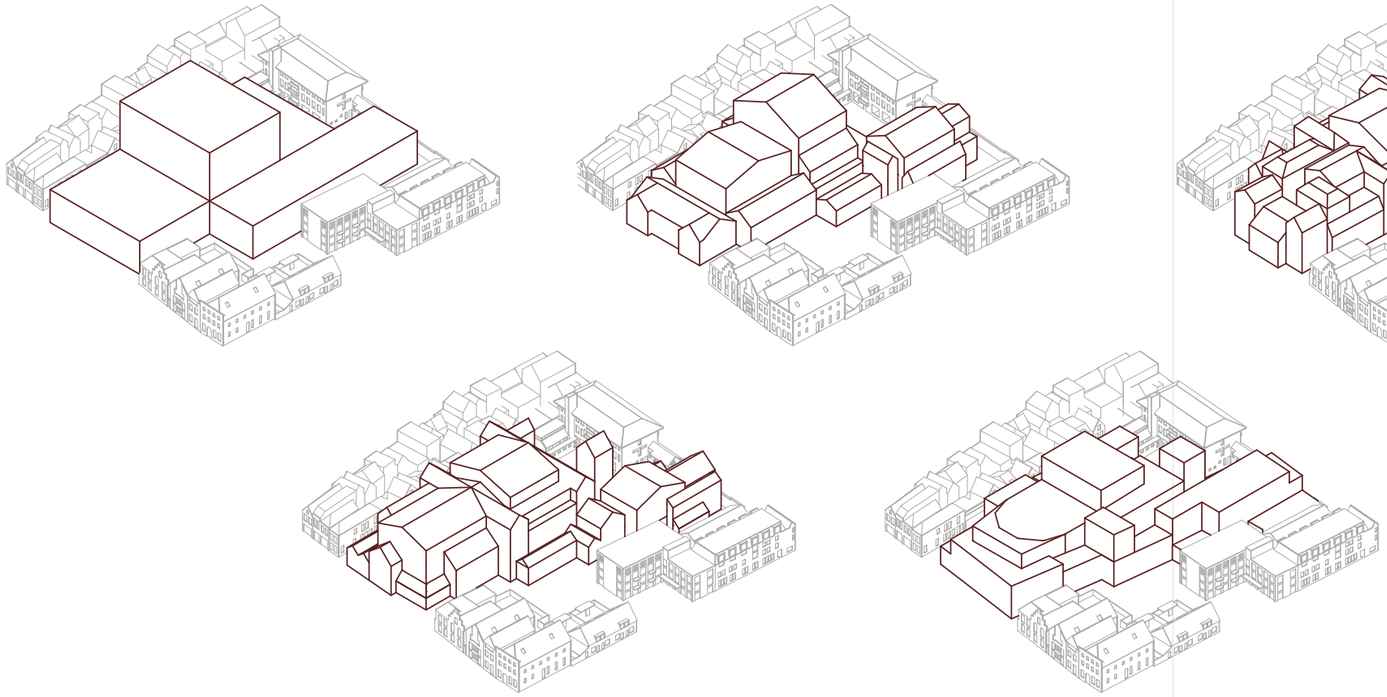


Figure 10:
Different variations of massing of the design. This process of developing these masses and circulation types happened iteratively (Own work, 2026)

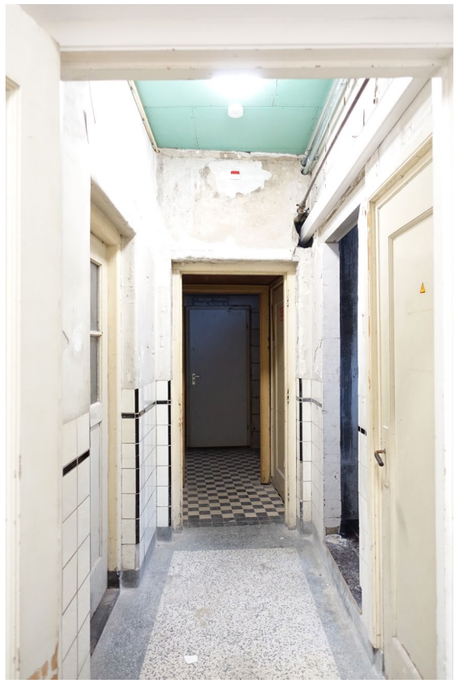
2.2 Site-based research

Thoughout the process it became evident that introducing a monumental civic program into the Gasthuisplaats required an understanding of the site's layered history. Approaching this urban context was guided by Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1979) concept of Genius Loci. To embed the theater naturally, the research focused on capturing the unique "spirit of the place" rather than just analyzing its physical dimensions.

To use this context in a usefull way , fieldwork and archival research were combined. Together with a project group, key buildings surrounding the site, such as the Synagogue, the CultureLab, and the historic Zuster building, were documented to understand their spatial organization and daily operational realities, images of these visits can be seen in figure 11, 12 and 13. Archival research was then carried out to figure out the historical development of the medieval Gasthuis, as can be seen in figure 14 and 15 (for more site analysis, see process book vol. 2) This historical groundwork was critical to the development of the proposal as it identified recurring site-specific themes of care, collectivity, and public access, which ultimately provided the foundation for positioning the new theater as an open, democratic space.



Figure 11 :
Images from Synagogue visit , focussing on large windows as primary light source (Own work , 2026)





Figures 12:
Images from De Zuster visit showing small hallway of the additional building and large Zuster common room (Own work, 2026)



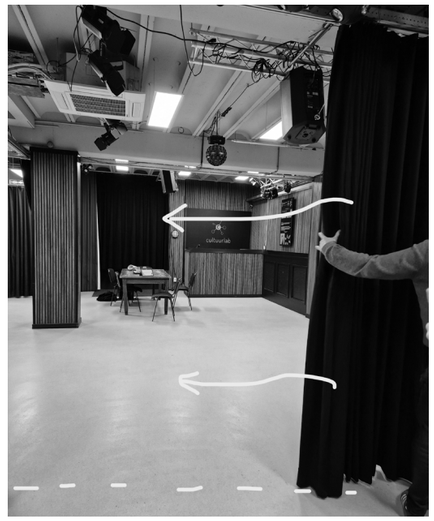


Figure 13:
Images from Het Cultuurlab visit showing view from the roof towards the churches and flexble hall with curtain seperation (Own work, 2026)



Figure 14:
Above a map of the development of building across time. Below a map of the remains of the old Gasthuis.
(Van Horssen, 2018)

2.3 Theory

A important theory for the design is derived from Juliet Rufford's (2015) argument in Theatre & Architecture. Rufford rejects the traditional binary that views theater purely as flowing performance and architecture as static space. Instead, she introduces the concept of architectural performativity: the idea that buildings are never just neutral containers. They actively shape what happens inside them by setting atmospheres, directing movement, and influencing social behavior, much like theatrical scenography.

This perspective reinforces core of this project: architecture must do more than solve practical or technical requirements for a commissioner. The building itself must "perform" to guide people and create meaning. Consequently, this project thus rejects the modern trend of the hyper-flexible, characterless "neutral box." As Marvin Carlson (1989) further argues, a theater building is a "meaning-making apparatus"; it sets the psychological stage long before the curtains rise. While historical precedents like Charles Garnier's Opéra de Paris successfully utilized architectural choreography to guide audiences, they often relied on social exclusivity (Wiles, 2003). The ambition of Theater de Baaierd is to extract these spatial tools of performativity, heavy materiality, dramatic sequences, and structural honesty, and apply them to an inclusive, democratic public building.

2.4 Precedent research and comparitive analysis

To ground these theoretical ambitions in contemporary practice, precedent research formed an important component of the methodology.

Initially, historical theater buildings were redrawn by the group and analyzed, which can be found in our Historical Precedents book, focusing on plans, sections, and spatial sequences. As the project progressed, the focus shifted to the operational and technical realities of contemporary built examples. Projects such as the Lyric Theatre and Sadler's Wells East by O'Donnell + Tuomey, the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool by Haworth Tompkins, and the Performing Arts Quarter in Leuven by Sergison Bates were studied. Additional venues, including the Wexford Opera House and De Meervaart in Amsterdam, gave more insight in dimensions. Documentation of these theaters can be found in the process book vol.2.

These precedents were analyzed comparatively. By sketching over their floor plans at the same scale, different circulation strategies, the complex relationship between front-of-house (public) and back-of-house (logistics), and volumetric organization could be evaluated. This comparative method provided a realistic, technical framework for assessing the massive dimensional requirements of an 800-seat proscenium theater and its fly tower.

2.5 Empirical observation

In parallel to analytical drawing, empirical research through physical site visits played a big role. Visits to operational venues, such as Theater de Parade in Den Bosch Theater de Veste in Delft and the World Forum Theater in The Hague, allowed for direct observation of audience movement and spatial atmosphere.

These visits revealed the functional realities of theater architecture. Observing how visitors navigate thresholds, gather before a performance, and occupy transitional spaces showed the importance of the foyer not just as a circulation zone, but as the primary social space of the building. This knowledge confirmed that Theater de Baaierd must also function as an urban living room, acting independently of the performance schedule.

2.6 Iterative model-making

Model-making formed the central tool for spatial evaluation. On a regular basis, 1:500 models were produced to test massing, roofscapes, and the integration of the building's massive volume within the fine-grained city, pictures of these models can be seen in figure 15.

A critical breakthrough in the methodology occurred when the research focus expanded beyond theater typologies, to include the architecture of Delft's historic churches. To understand how massive, monumental volumes successfully "land" in a dense city without destroying the urban fabric, several major churches in Delft were photographed and reconstructed as 1:500 physical models, which can be seen in figure 16.

As the design evolved, the methodology shifted toward progressively more detailled scales, which strengthened the project. Moving from 1:200 volumetric studies, sectional model (see figure 17), and eventually to a 1:50 and 1:25 model (see figure 18), This continuous process of "zooming in" ensured that the initial urban monumentality was successfully translated down to a tangible, human scale.



Figure 15:
Pictures of 1:500 models developed during the process.
(Own work, 2026)







Figure 16:
1:500 church models. Above New Church Delft, Middle Maria van Jesse kerk Delft, Below Old Church Delft (Own work, 2026)

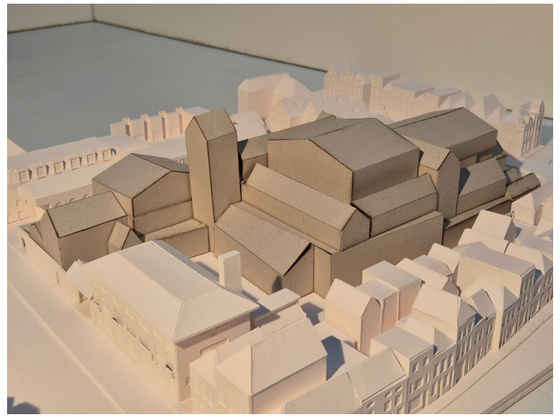












Figure 17:
Variations of 1:200 models above and 1:100 sectional model below(Own work, 2026)





Figure 18:
1:50 Front Facade Portal model and
1:25 interior and exterior model at
Brabantse Turfmarkt (Own work, 2026)

3

results

3.1 Design evolution

The final design is the result of an intensive, iterative process that redefined the project's spatial logic. The initial proposal, building upon the A1 phase, attempted to contextualize a massive theater program by breaking it down into a fragmented composition of stacked, pitched-roof volumes. This "Italian hill town" approach aimed to mimic Delft's fine-grained residential fabric, this can be seen in the images of figure 19.

However, translating this concept into actual floor plans revealed large programmatic conflicts. The strict spatial, acoustic, and logistical demands of an 800-seat theater (backstage routing, sightlines, fly tower dimensions) could not be efficiently resolved within this dispersed, modular grid. In short: the theater became unreadable. Furthermore, the design became over-articulated. The attempt to hide the building's true scale created conflicted and illegible architecture, this can be seen in the 1:500 model pictures of figure 19.

A critical turning point occurred following the interim review. By revisiting the precedent research of Delft's historic churches, it became evident that contextuality does not always require minimizing scale. Delft's identity is defined by the contrast between its delicate housing structure and its massive, singular civic monuments, shown in the scale map of figure 20. Consequently, the fragmented approach was abandoned in favor of a unified, monumental one. The building was reconceptualized as a distinct, heavy volume that embraces its civic scale while stepping down toward its neighbors, visualized in the model pictures of figure 21.

Note to reader: please realize that all images in the next part are heavily rescaled to fit the graduation book format. So please, to have a good look at the images, zoom in! Also, there are lots of images in this chapter, they are organized per type of image, not based on the texts, otherwise the sets of drawings would become to shattered and unorganized, so please flip through to see the referenced images in the text. Also additional images are added that are not refereced directly in the text but do indirectly support the text and the design result.

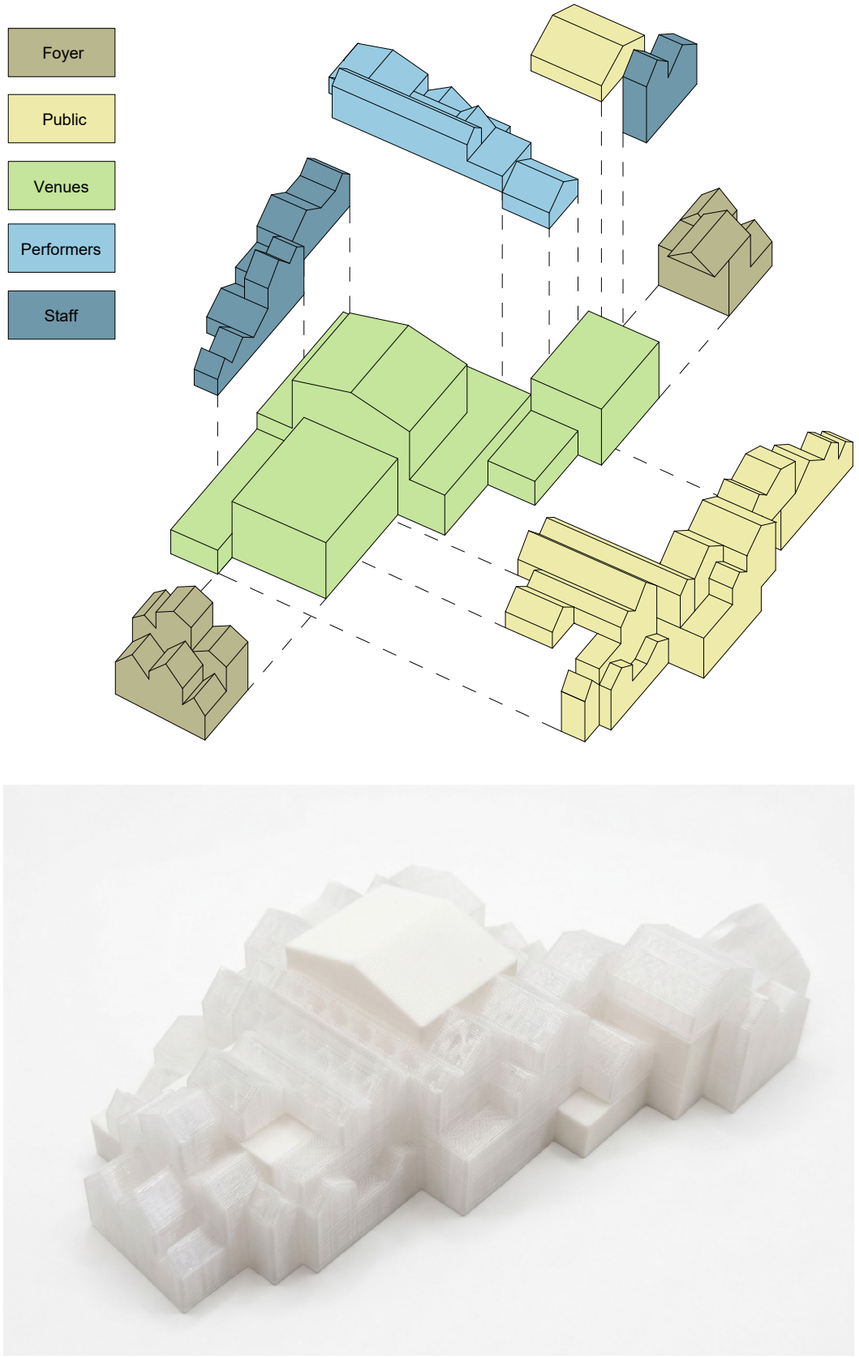


Figure 19:
Above Axonometric view trying to explain functions of early design proposal. Below picture of according 1:500 model (Own work, 2026)

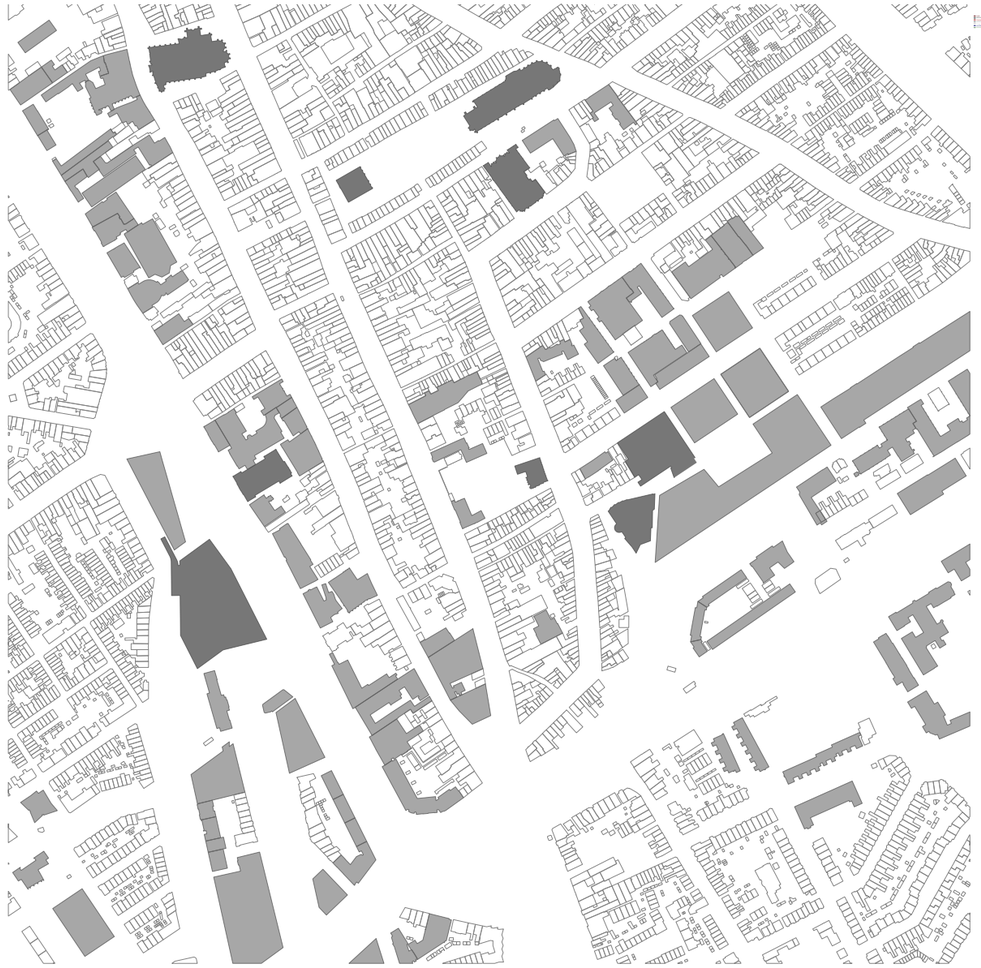


Figure 20::
Site map of Delft focussing on the grey large scale buildings dark grey the civic large buildings (scale 1:2000, rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

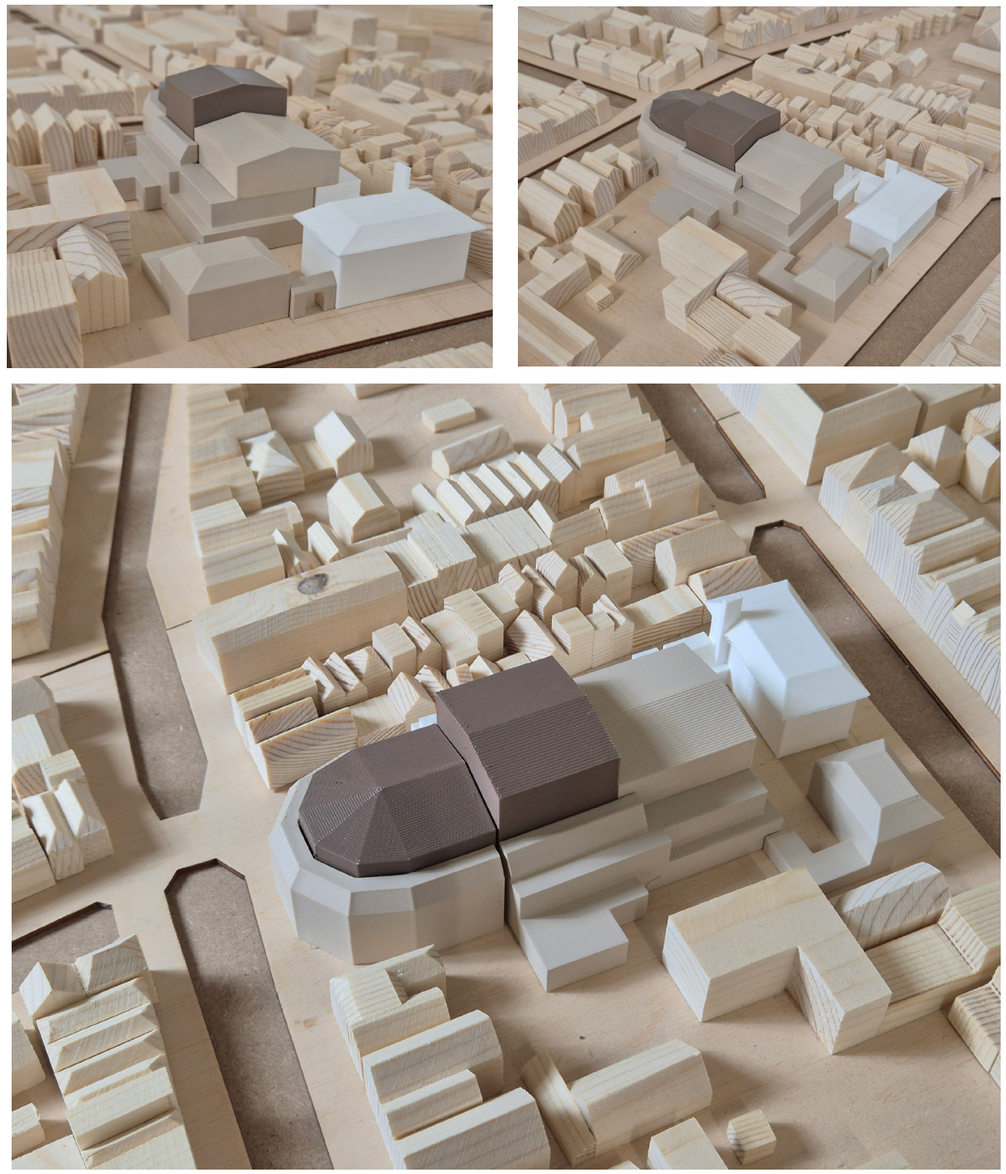


Figure 21:
Preliminary Pictures of 1:500 final model (new final model in the making) (Own work, 2026)

3.2 The three spatial worlds

The architectural result is an sequence based on the concept of compression and revelation. The building actively performs, guiding visitors through three spatial and material worlds:

The Outer World (see figure 35): From the outside, the theater presents itself as a civic monument. The building volume features a clear hexagonal geometry that responds to the Brabantse Turfmarkt, crowned by a detached public viewing tower. The facade is defined by deep, church-like masonry reveals. These deep recesses not only articulate the weight and thickness of the exterior wall but also function as a passive climate strategy. The recessed glazing provides some solar shading, while the high thermal mass of the heavy brick facades naturally regulates indoor temperatures, these concepts can be seen in the 1:20 section of figure 49. The window shapes subtly reference the pitched roofs of the surrounding Delft houses, effectively operating as a "negative" imprint of the local vernacular, as can be seen in the elevation view of figure 58 and 59. At night, this glazed volume acts as a lantern; people on the street can observe the moving silhouettes of the visitors inside, subtly turning the theatergoers themselves into performers on the 'city stage', this is visualized in the day/night visual of figure 32, 33, 34.

The Transitional World (see figure 36): Upon passing through the heavy facade, visitors enter the Transitional World. This realm blurs the boundary between the city and the theater. Because the building footprint intentionally pulls back from the site edges, it creates space for unprogrammed green courtyards. These courtyards visually and physically bleed into the interior foyers. The material palette here is warm yet robust: exposed concrete columns, pink brickwork, and timber-slatted ceilings, grounded by a continuous brick herringbone pavement that draws the street inside on the ground floor.

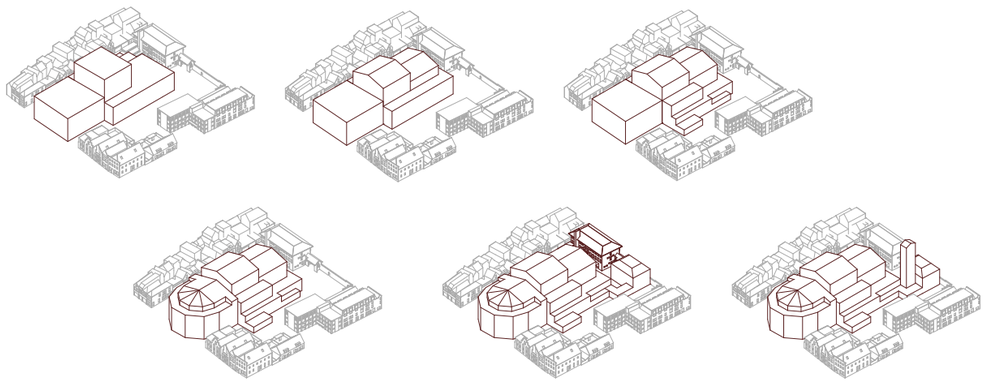


Figure 22:
Development of final massing from main volumes- roof definition- foyers and art centre addition- hexagon shaped front- restaurant cafe addition mirroring the zuster- adding tower(Own work, 2026)

The foyer acts as an "urban oasis" and a daily living room, serving as the connective tissue for the adjacent Art Centre and Café Restaurant. The inclusion of this extensive Art Centre is a direct civic response to the demolition of the Cultuurlab on the site, an outdated but intensely utilized local cultural incubator, as analyzed in the process book vol.1 .By absorbing and expanding the Cultuurlab's program within the new theater and adding on to it, the building guarantees an accessible space for local, small-scale creation.

The Inner World (see figure 37): The culmination of the sequence is the Inner World: the performance auditoriums. The 800-seat proscenium hall is designed in a horseshoe configuration with two sweeping balconies, which can be seen in the floorplans of figure 33. This geometry was selected over a flat, segmented layout because it maximizes intimacy and visual connection. Not only is the audience aware of one another, reinforcing the collective experience of the performance, but this arrangement also deeply benefits the performers. Rather than facing a unidirectional wall of spectators across the room, the performers are spatially embraced by the audience. Clad entirely in rich, dark, warm timber paneling, the hall acts as an immersive acoustic space, completely isolated from the outside world.

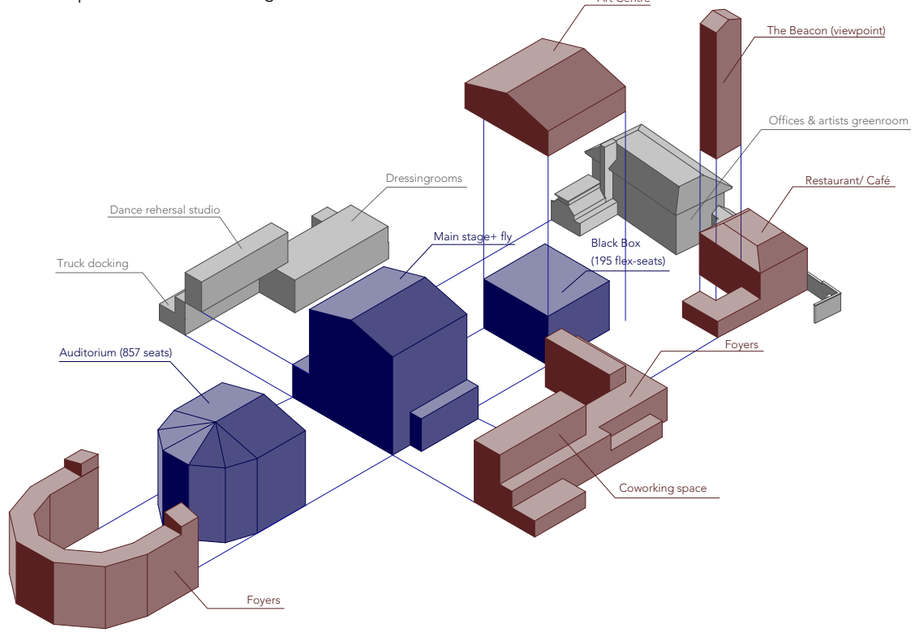


Figure 23:
Exploded simplified functino diagram of final model (Own work, 2026)

Figure 24:
Ground floor plan incl. context (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

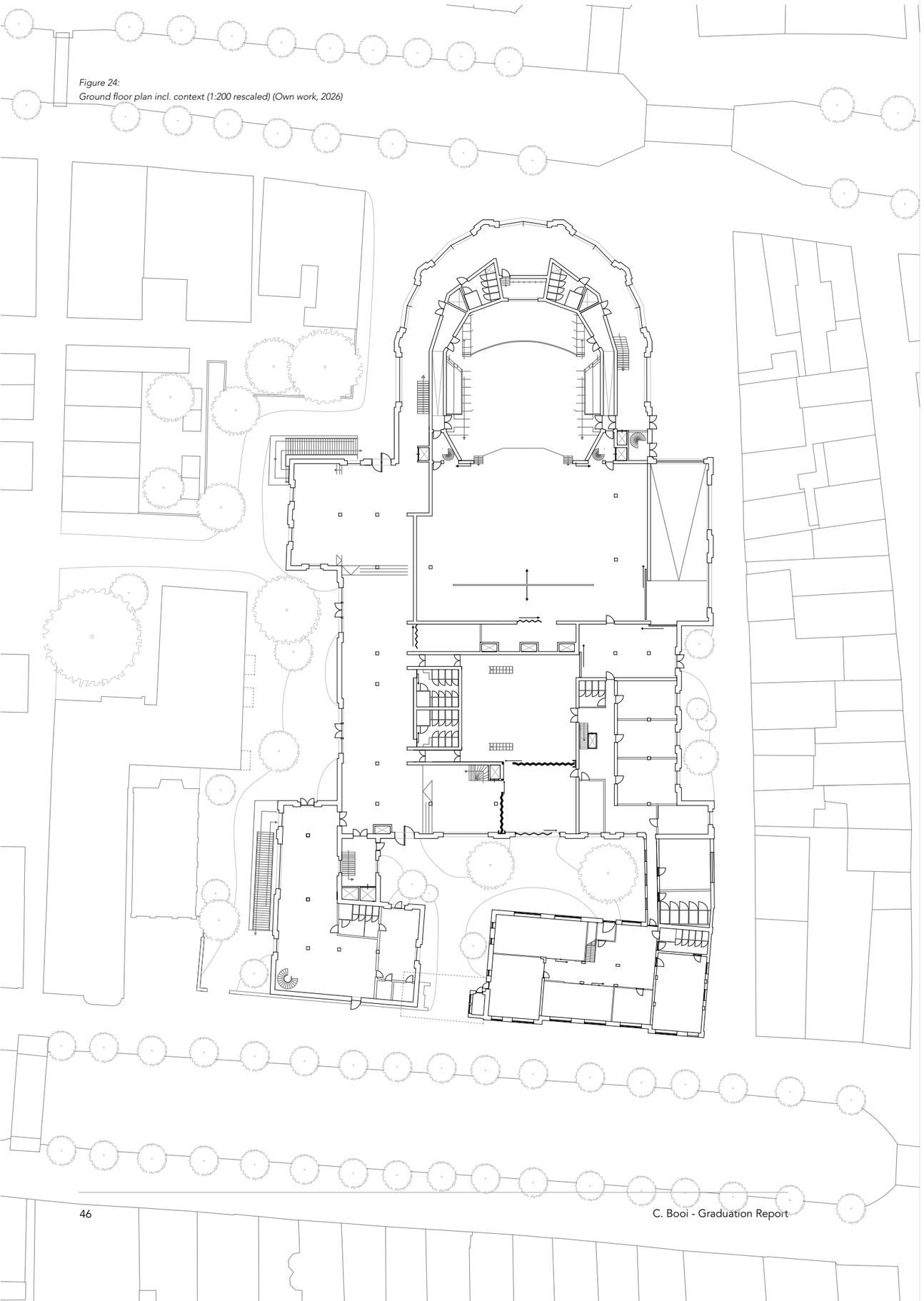


Figure 25:
Basement plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

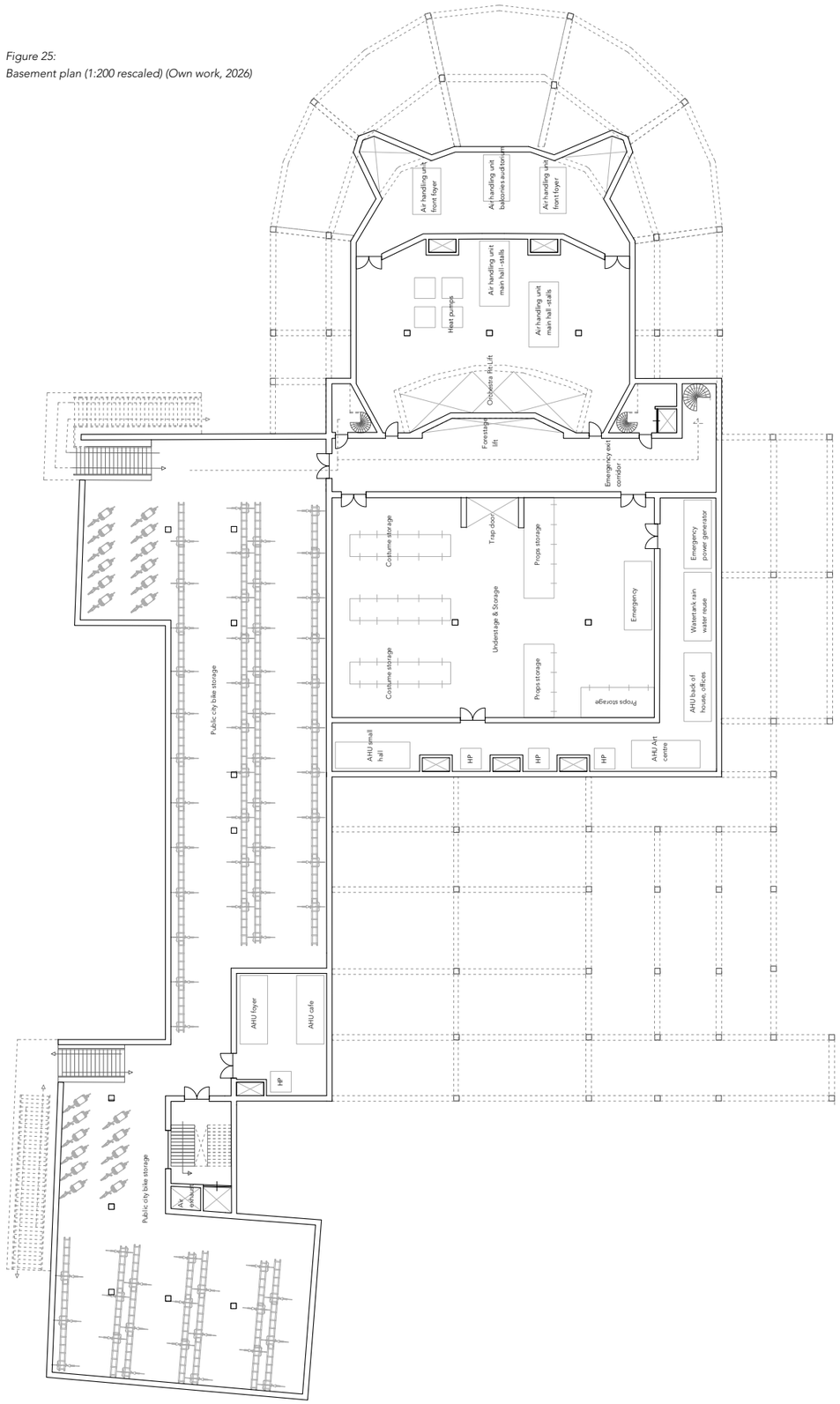


Figure 26:
Ground floor plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

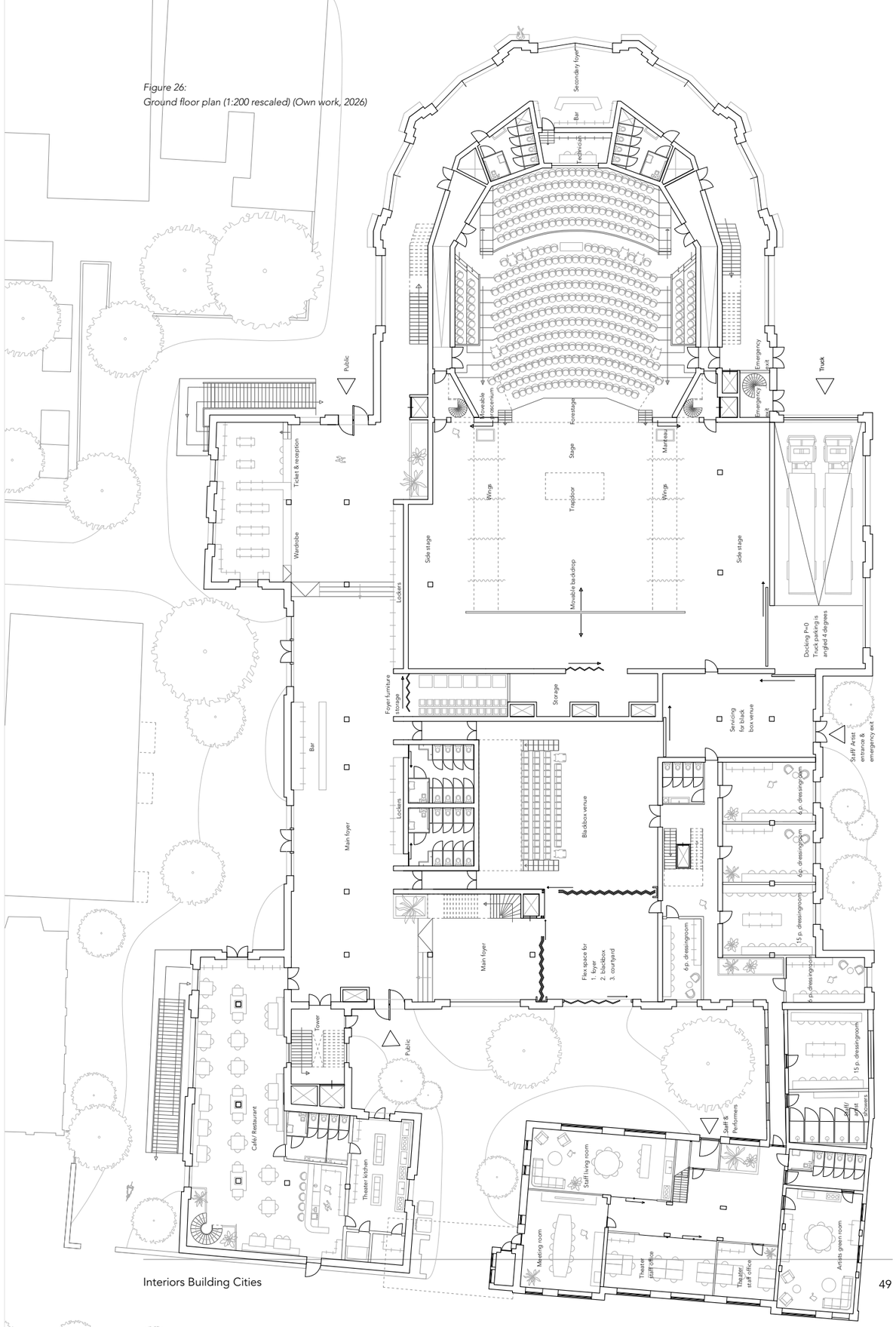


Figure 26:
First floor plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

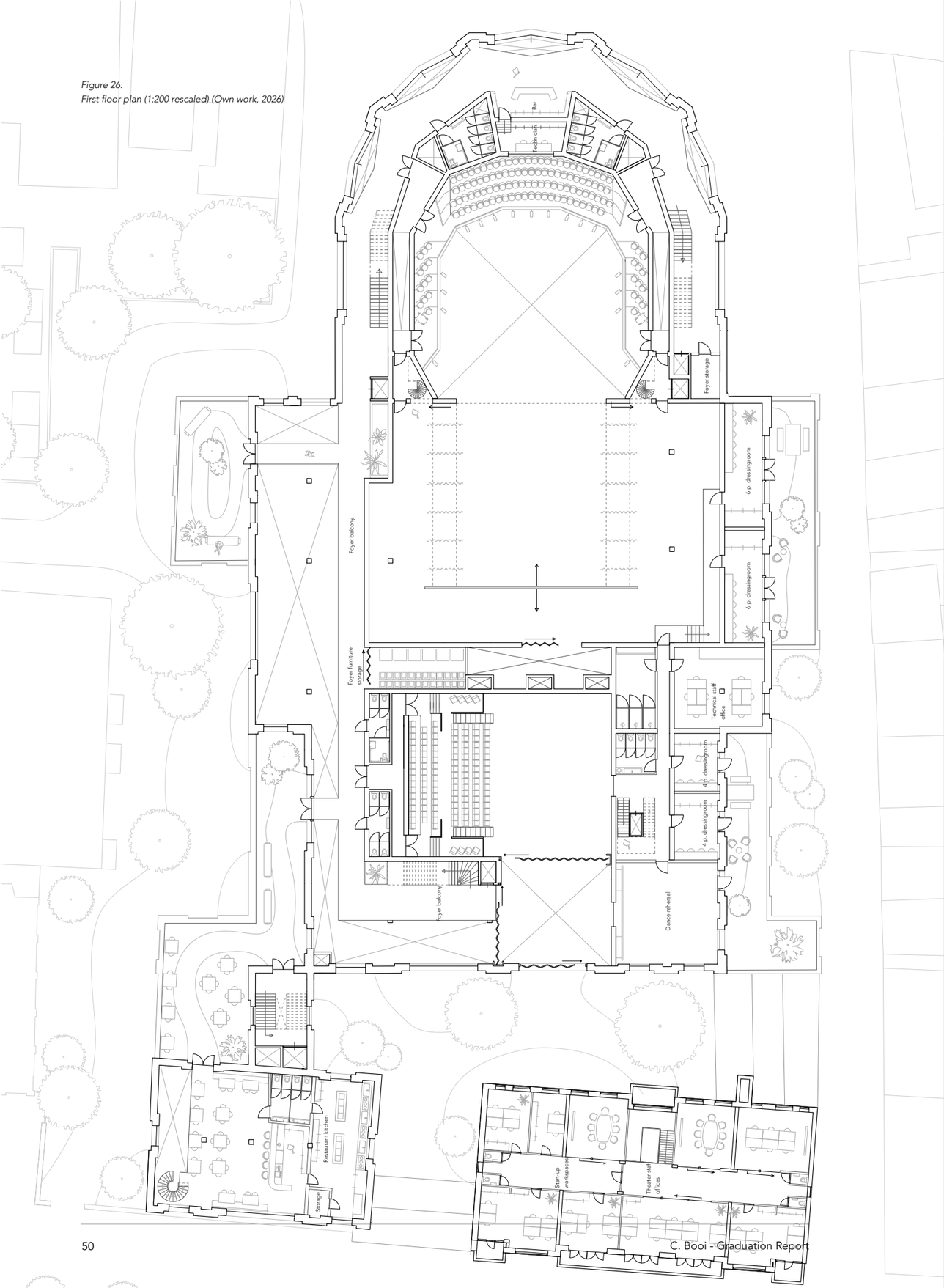


Figure 27:
Second Floor plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

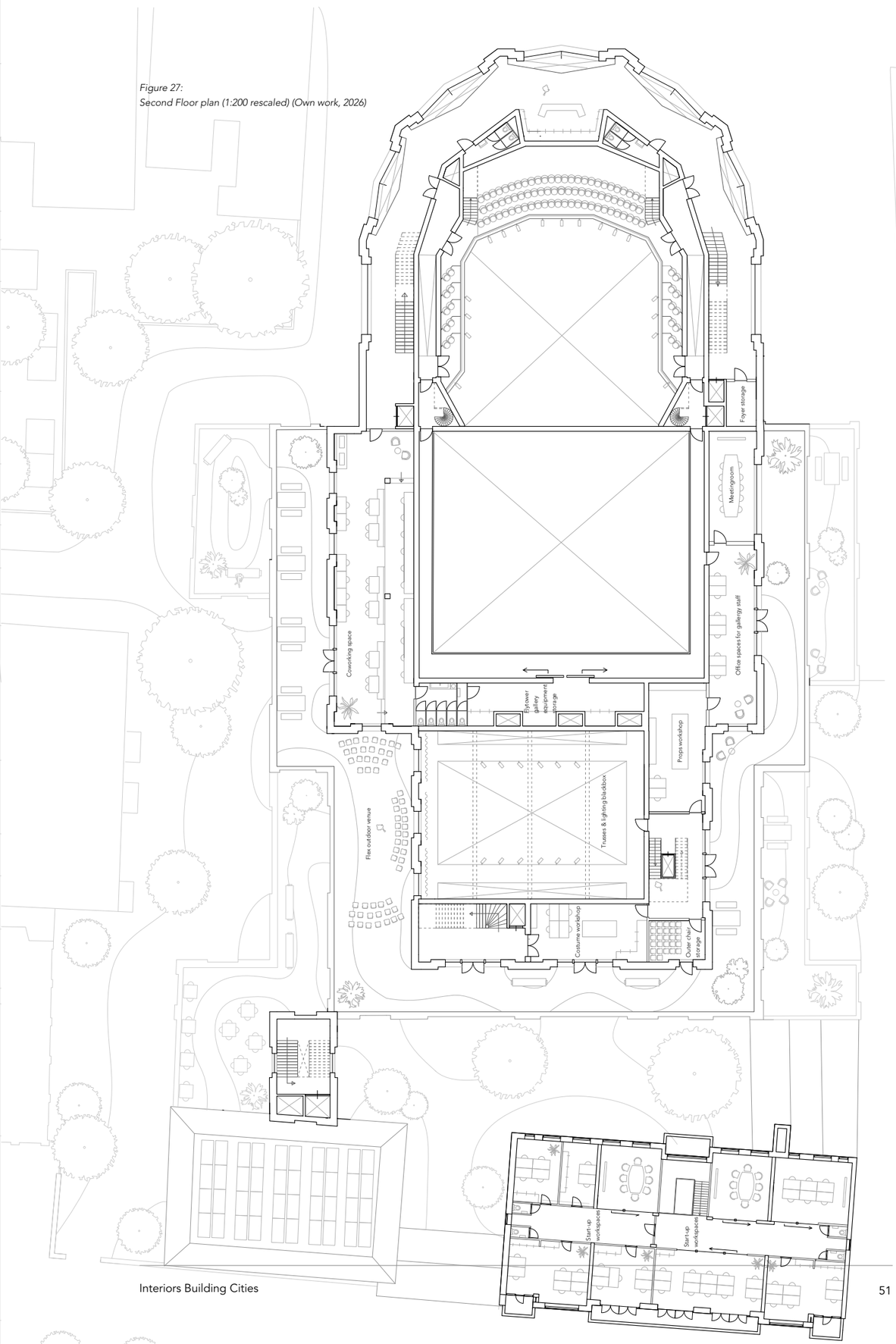


Figure 28:
Third Floor plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

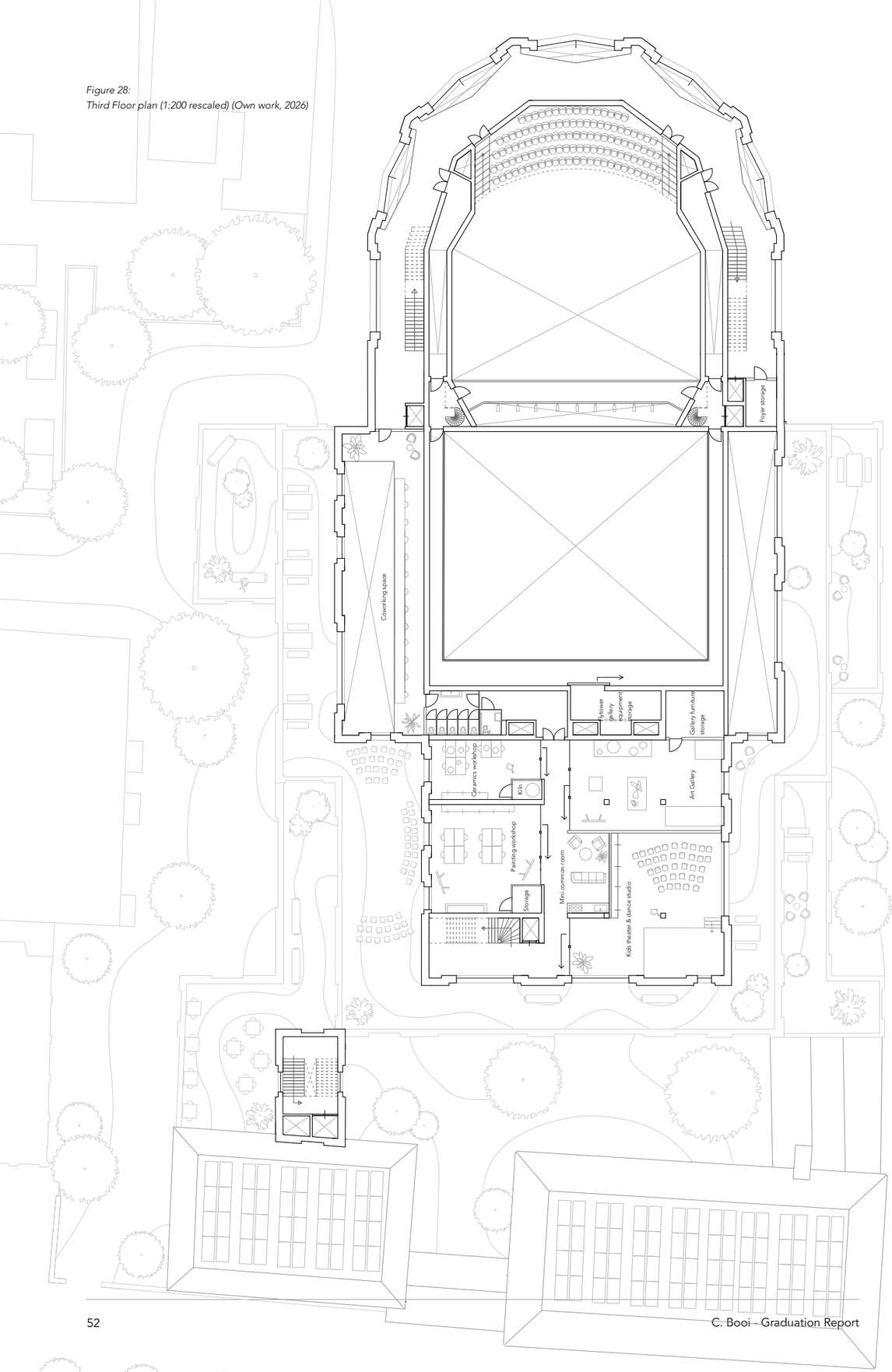


Figure 29:
Fourth Floor plan (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

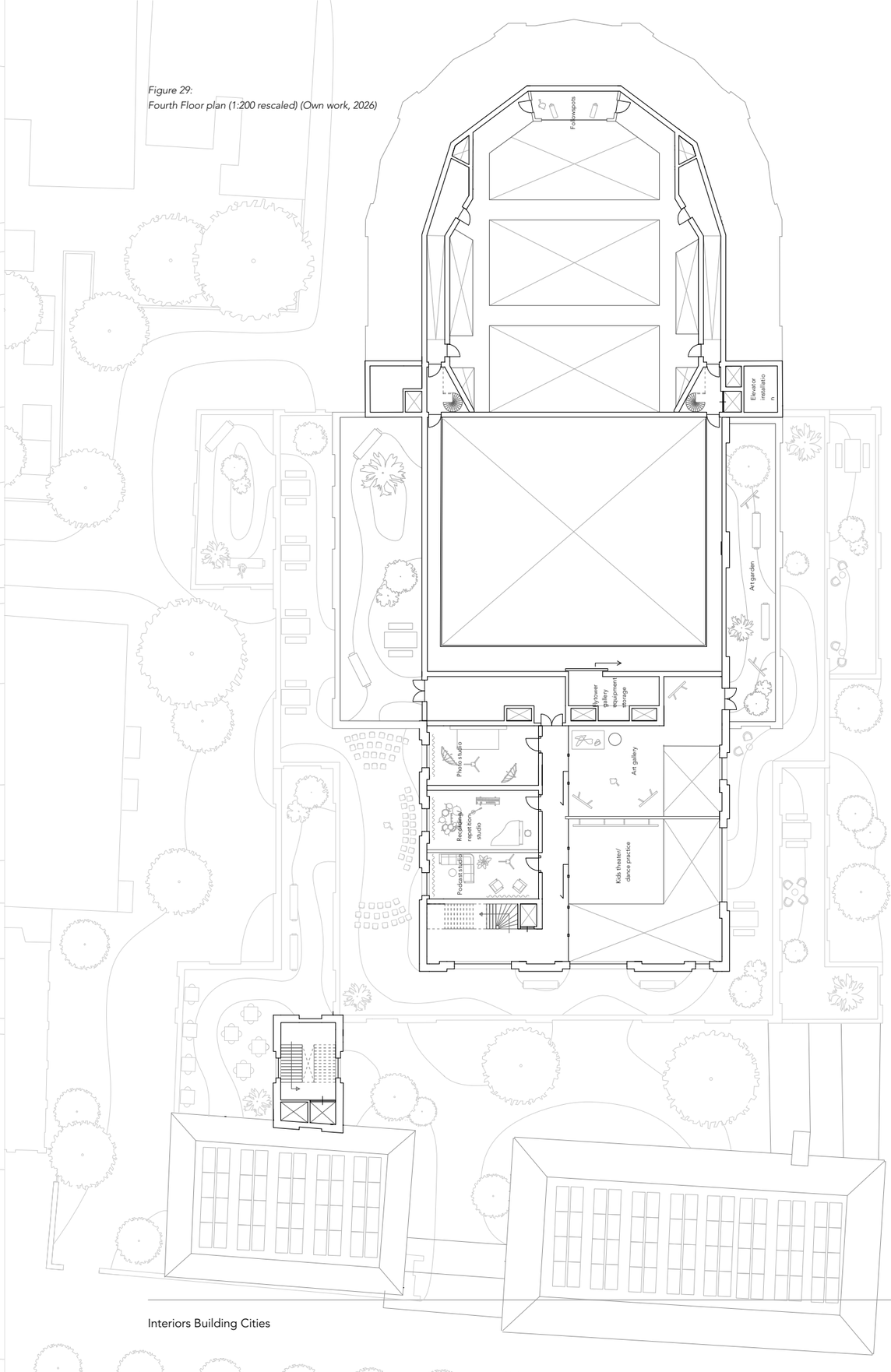


Figure 30:
Transverse Section (Own work, 2026)

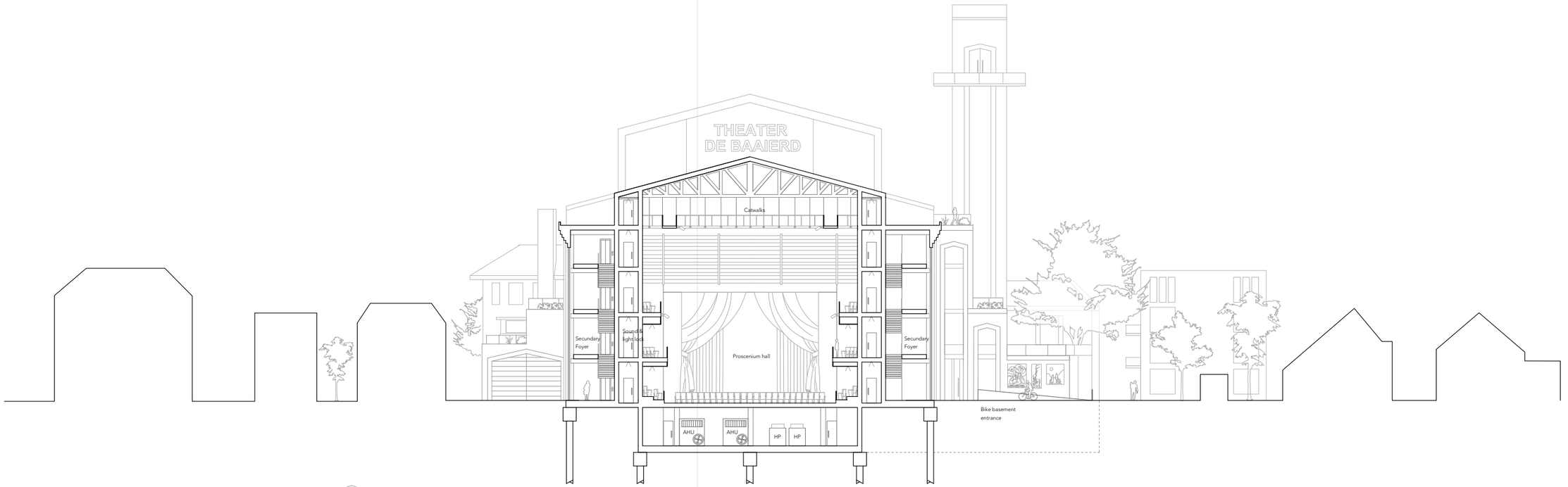


Figure 31:
Longitudional Section (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

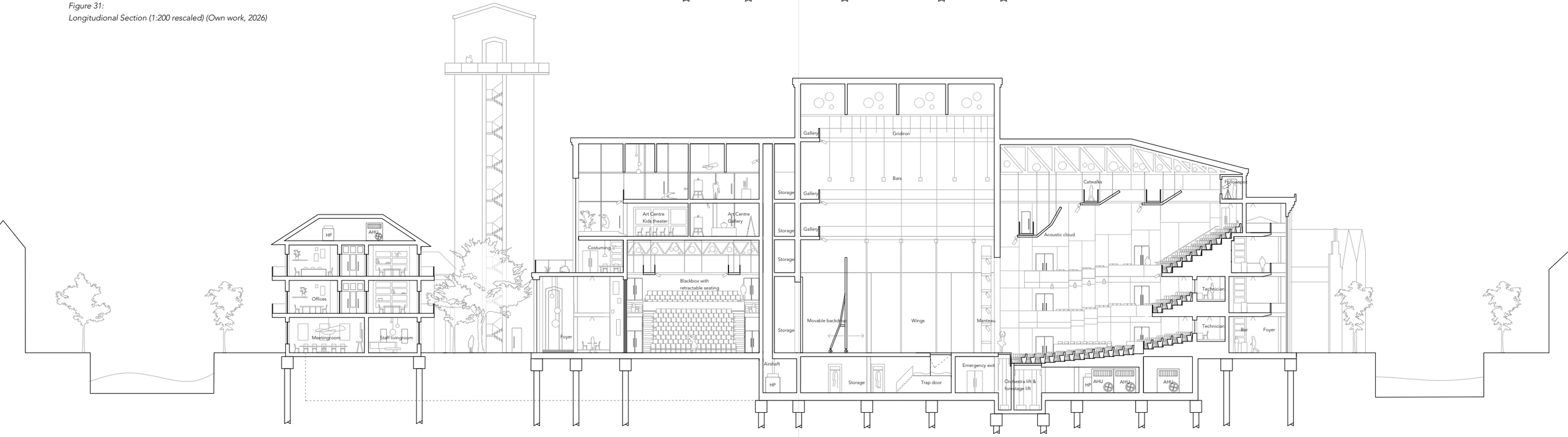


Figure 32:
Front Elevation (Brabantse Turfmarkt) day and night variation (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)

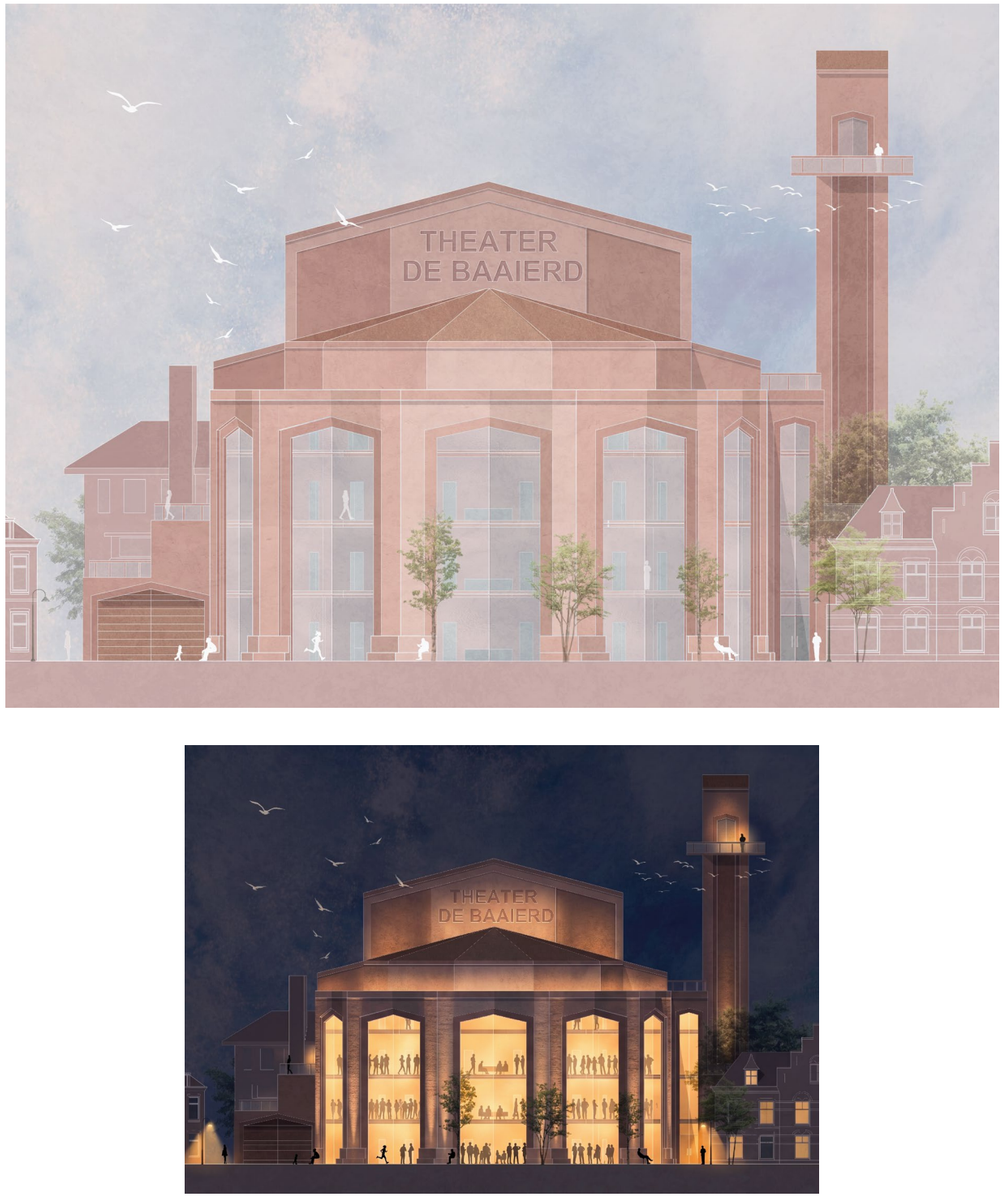


Figure 33:
Side Elevations day and night variation (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)





Figure 34:
Back Elevation (Koornmarkt) day and night variation (1:200 rescaled) (Own work, 2026)







Figure 35:
Perspective visual of approaching the theater from the Brabantse Turfmarkt (Own work, 2026)



Figure 36:
Perspective visual of main foyer space (still under construction this visual!) (Own work, 2026)



Figure 37:
Perspective visual of main venue proscenium hall (Own work, 2026)



Figure 38:
Sketch of entrance Brabantse Turfmarkt
(Own work, 2026)

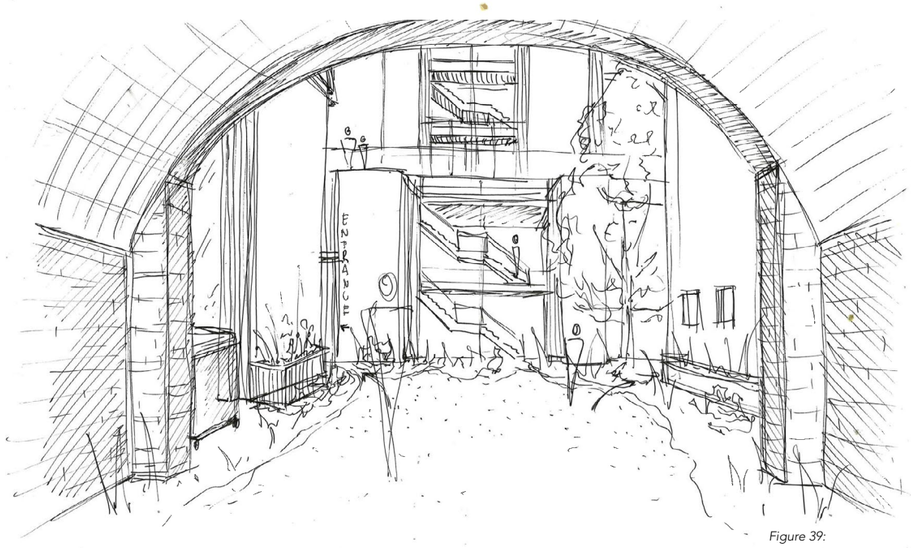


Figure 39:
Sketch of entrance Koornmarkt
(Own work, 2026)

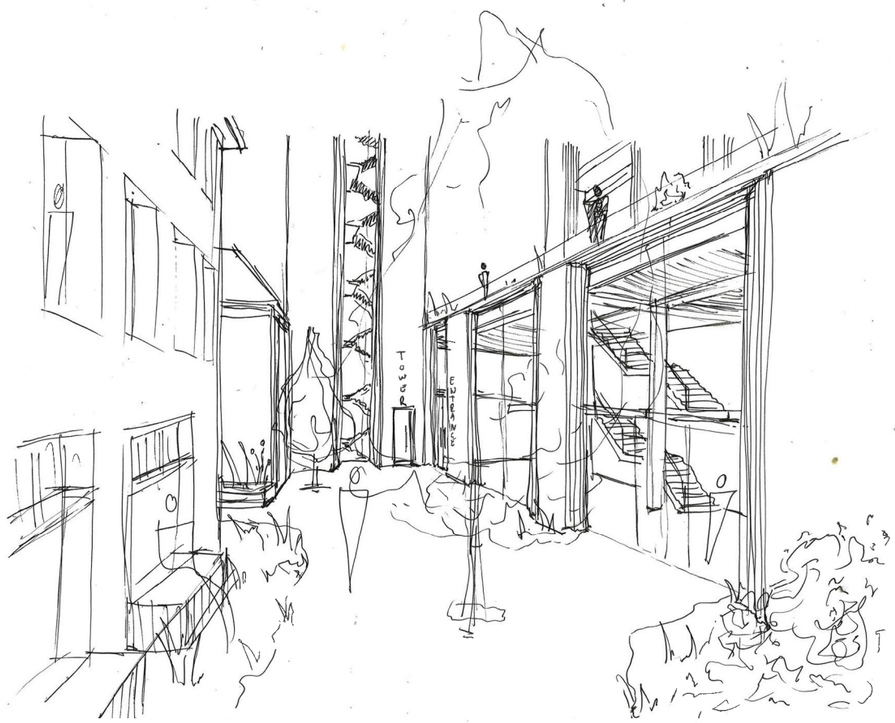


Figure 40:
Sketch of inner courtyard
(Own work, 2026)

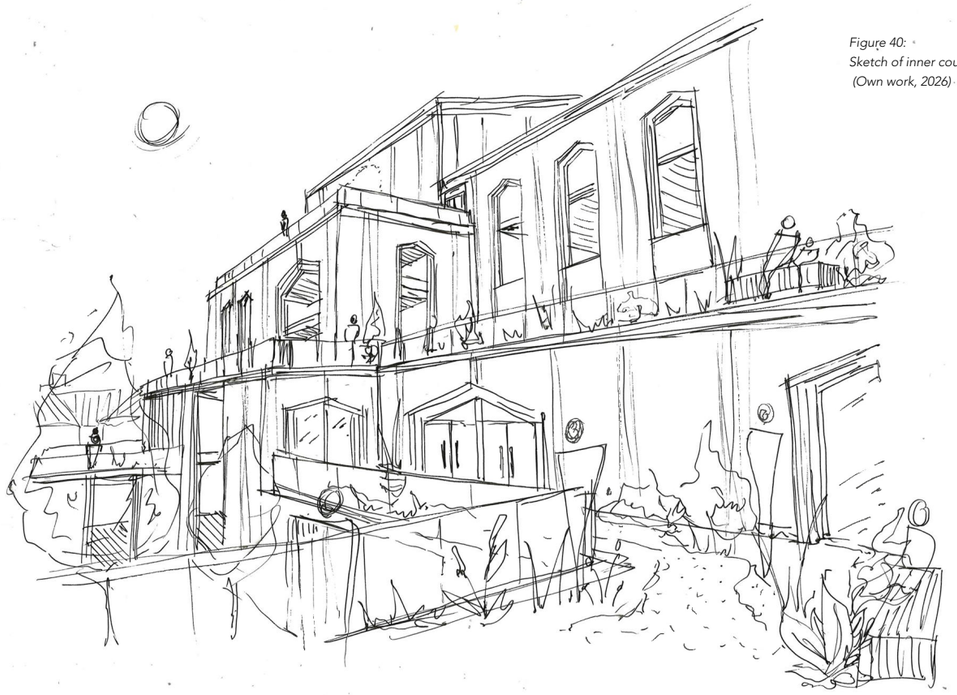


Figure 41:
Sketch of rooftop garden landscape
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 42:
Sketch of main foyer (ticket office and wardrobe have been adjusted in final floorplans)
(Own work, 2026)

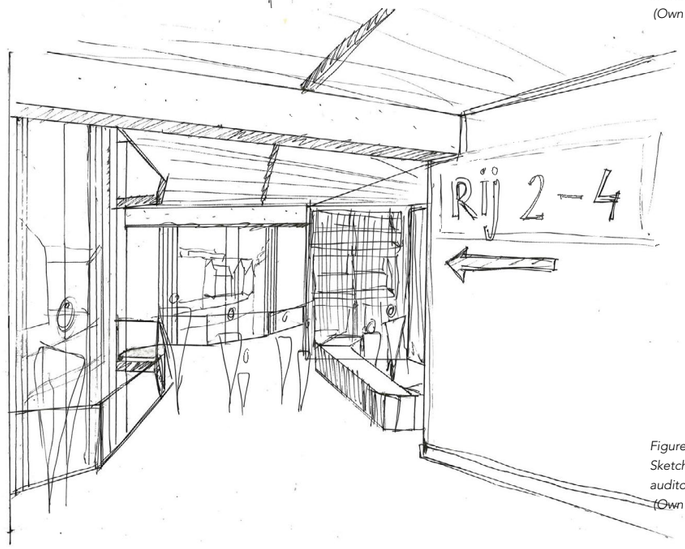


Figure 43:
Sketch of foyer surrounding auditorium
(Own work, 2026)

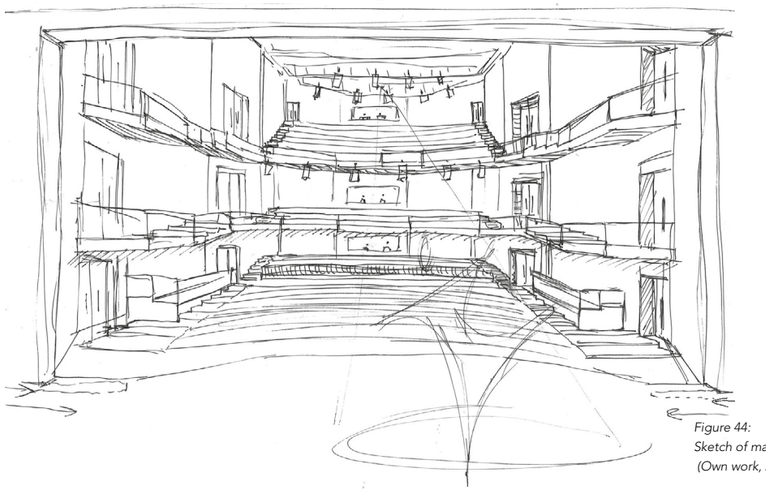


Figure 44:
Sketch of main hall
(Own work, 2026)

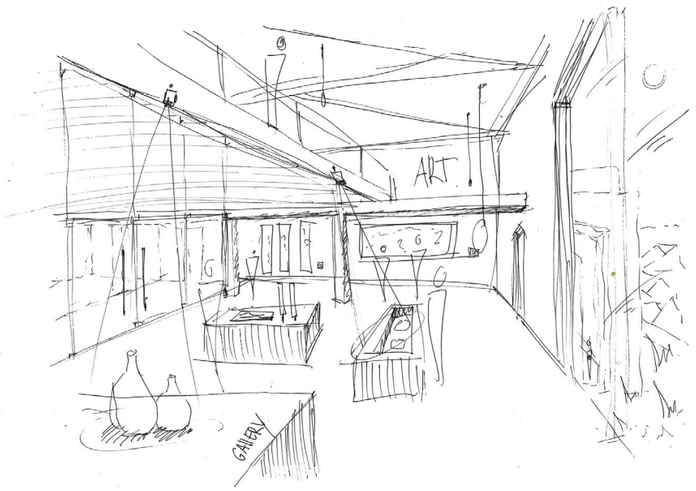


Figure 45:
Sketch of art centre gallery (has been adjusted in final floorplans)
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 46:
Sketch of coworkingspace
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 47:
Sketch of dance studio (has been adjusted in final floorplans)
(Own work, 2026)

3.3 Materialization and structure

To achieve the acoustic isolation required for a professional theater, the Inner World is contained within massive, mass-optimized concrete inner cores, this is shown by the exploded axonometric diagram of figure 49. Surrounding these cores, the Outer World is defined by a heavy masonry shell. In line with the structural logic of historic churches, this envelope is not a continuous solid mass with minor punctures, but a framework of monumental brick statures (penanten) that efficiently channel loads while framing grand and expansive openings.

A important architectural argument of this project is the rejection of the standard, lightweight wall in favor of true material mass, this can all be seen in the vertical and horizontal fragments and building details of figure 49 The primary facades are constructed as double-brick walls, specifically, two 210mm leaves in a Dutch cross-bond. While this deviates from standard contemporary Dutch building practice, it is a deliberate choice grounded in a philosophy of true sustainability. This approach aligns with Alex Gordon's (1972) foundational principle of "long life, loose fit" and Steve Mouzon's (2010) assertion that "lovability" is the ultimate condition of sustainable architecture. As discussed and validated during consultations with structural expert Koen Mulder, true sustainability is not just found in lightweight, demountable materials. It is about creating robust, heavily materialized, and beloved civic monuments designed to last 200 years, rather than disposable structures slated for demolition after a mere 50-year lifespan. This massive brick shell gives the building its required heavines and allows for the deeply recessed windows. To span the large public openings, customized prefabricated concrete elements are utilized, details of which can be seen in figure 49 and 53, angling upwards and outwards in a sort of pitched roof shaped to carry the heavy brickwork above without resorting to Gothic arches.

Because the building steps back as it rises (accommodating the roof gardens), the structural loads of the upper facades must be transferred. In the Transitional World (the foyers), this is achieved through a monumental colonnade of massive concrete pillars and deep beams that carry the stepping facade above, this can be seen in the load diagram of figure 48. This creates some tectonic tenstion in the foyer: the heavy structure is explicitly visible and grounding, whereas inside the auditoriums, long-span steel trusses allow the ceiling to float without columns which gives it somewhat of a grand almost magical feeling.

While the base of the building utilizes the heavy double-brick system, the structure transitions to a half-brick outer leaf at higher elevations (such as the fly tower and the viewing tower with a slimmer concrete core) to reduce dead loads on the primary structural frame.

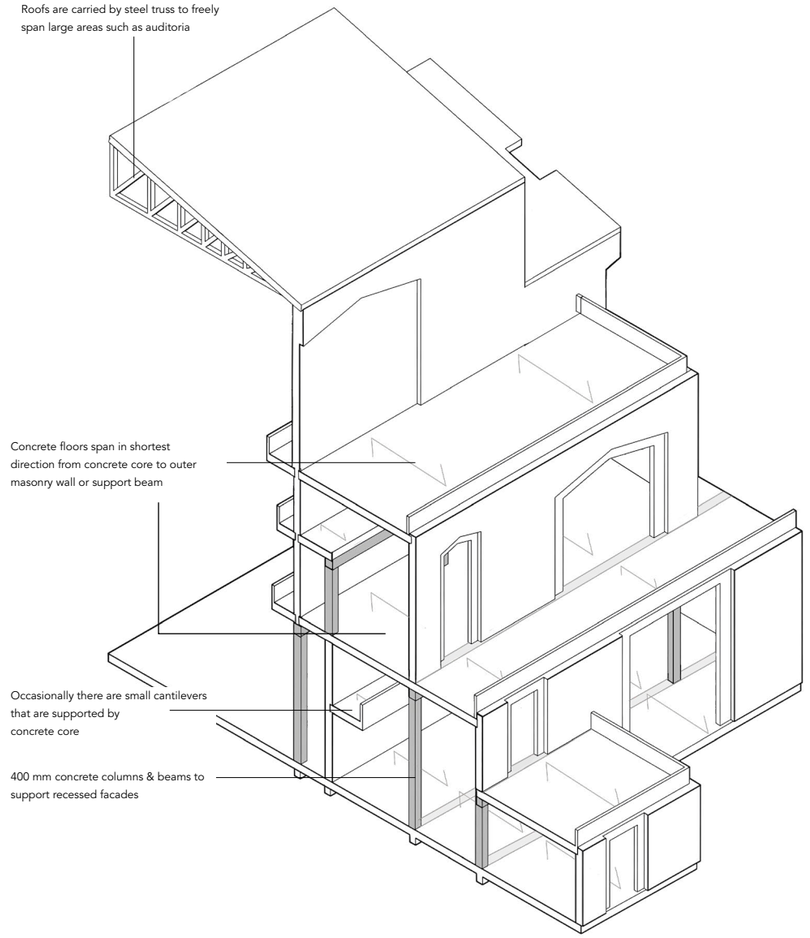


Figure 48:
Principle construction diagram on essential point of the building
(Own work, 2026)

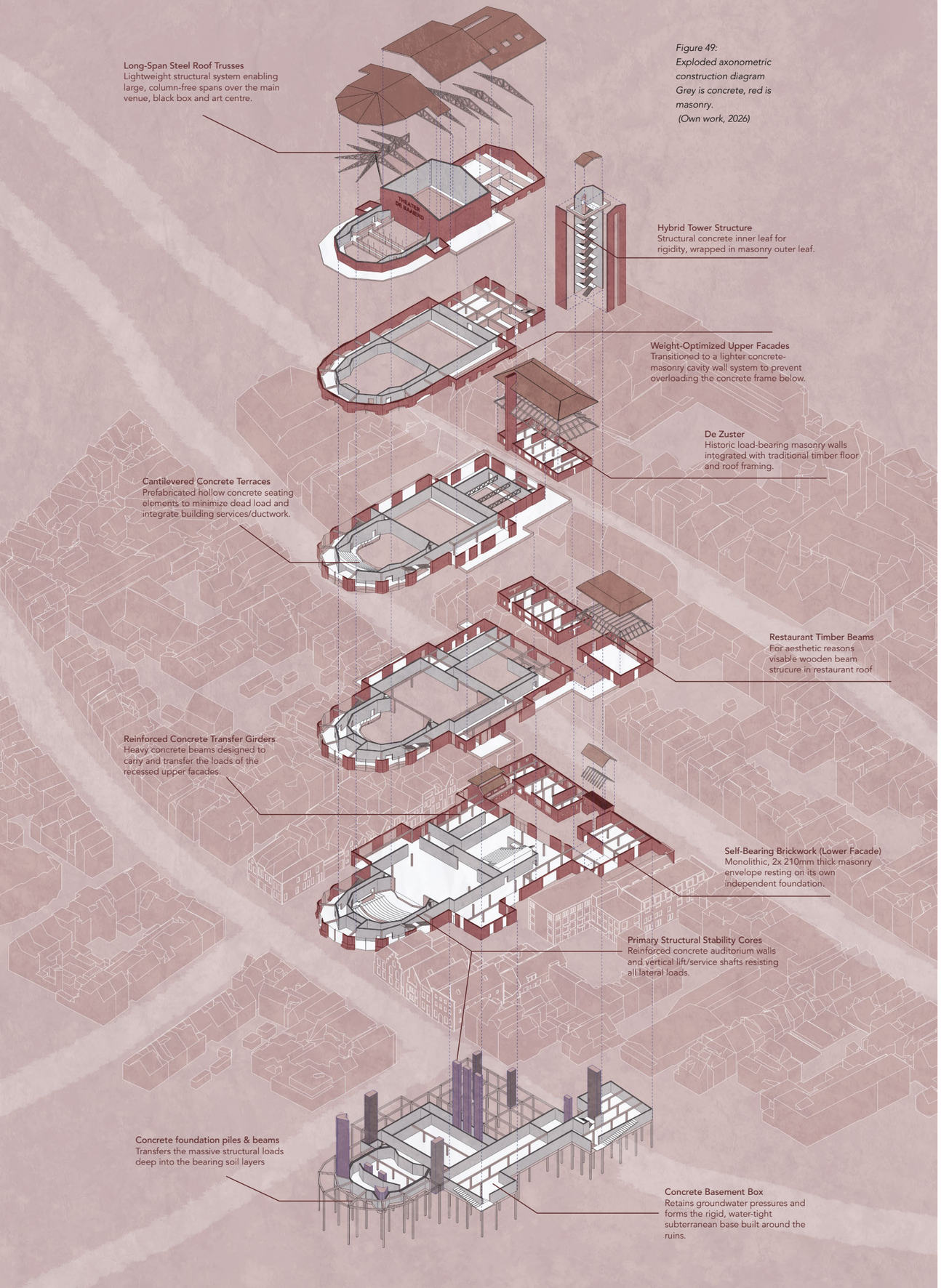
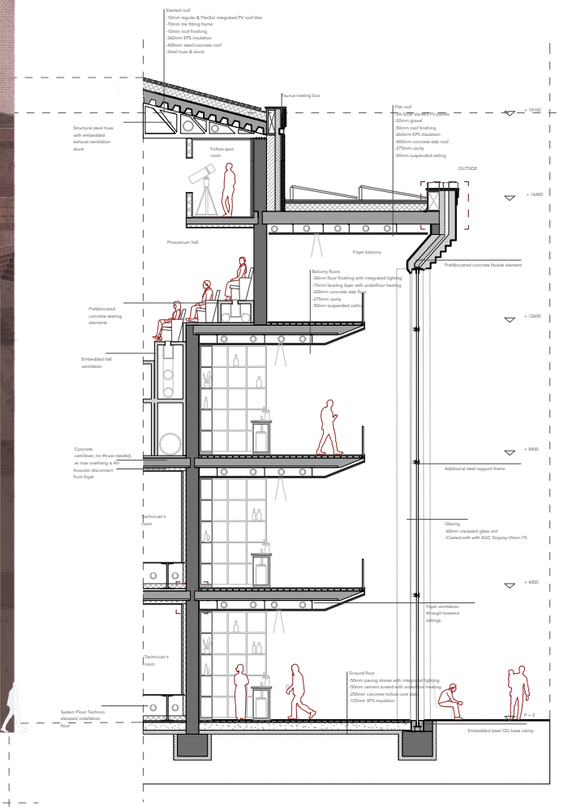


Figure 49:
Exploded axonometric construction diagram
Grey is concrete, red is masonry.
(Own work, 2026)





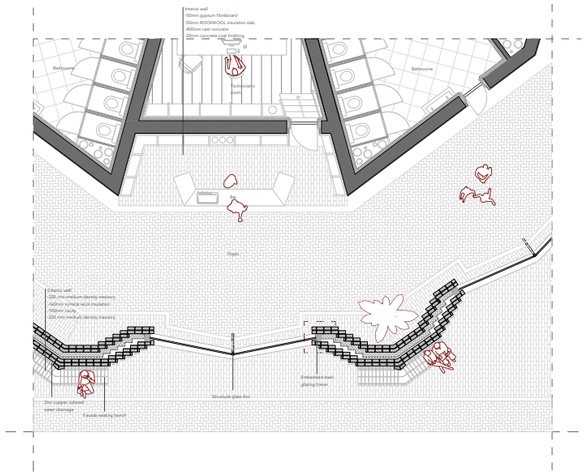


Figure 49:
1:20 Fragment with view, horizontal and vertical cut. To see each drawing seperately, see appendix C
(Own work, 2026)







Figure 50:
1:25 Fragment model
(Own work, 2026)





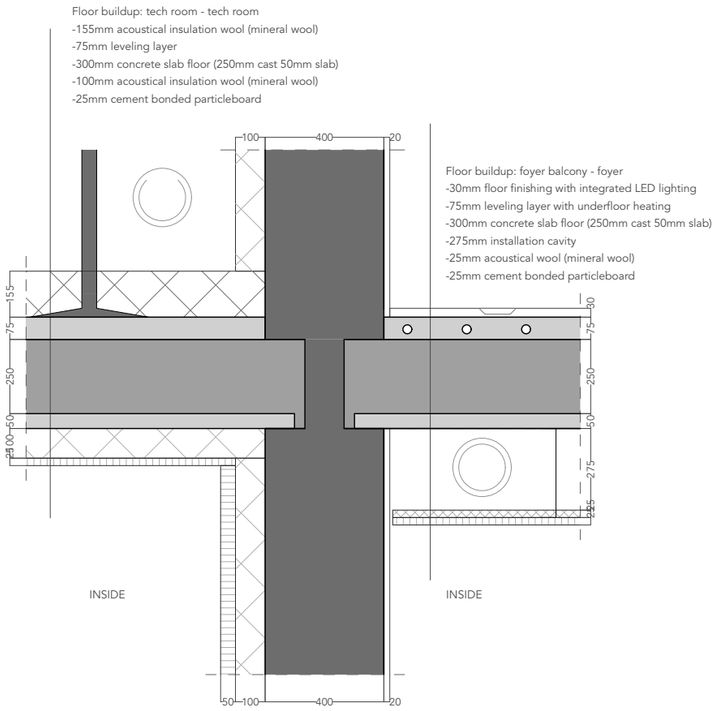




Figure 51:
1:50 Front Facade portal model
(Own work, 2026)

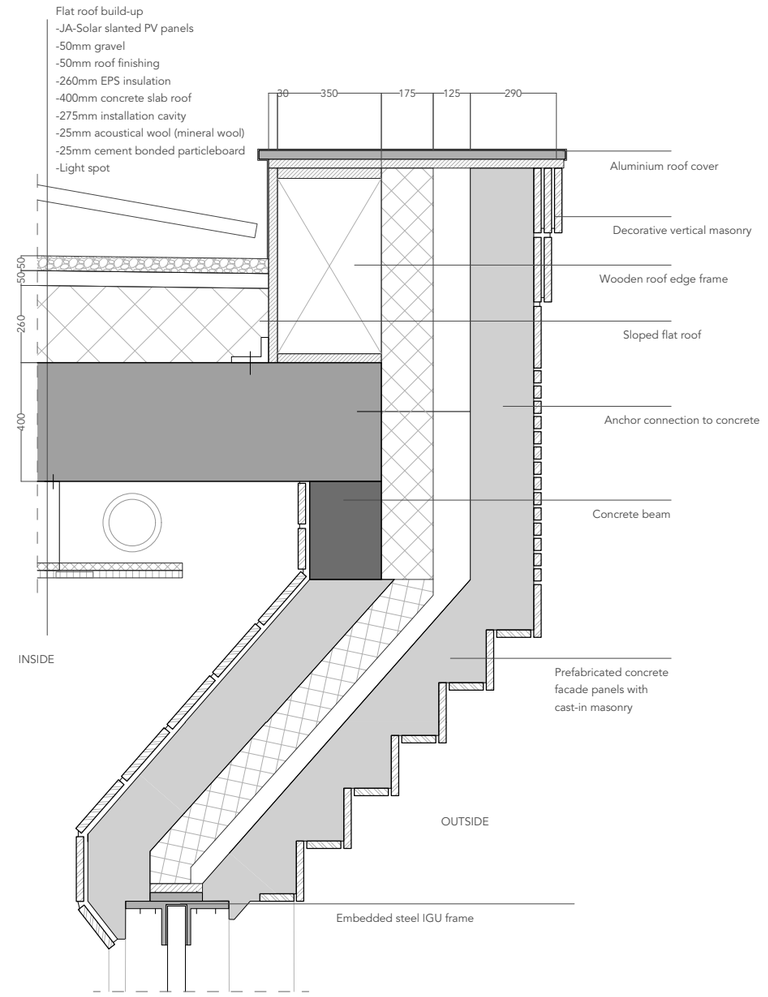






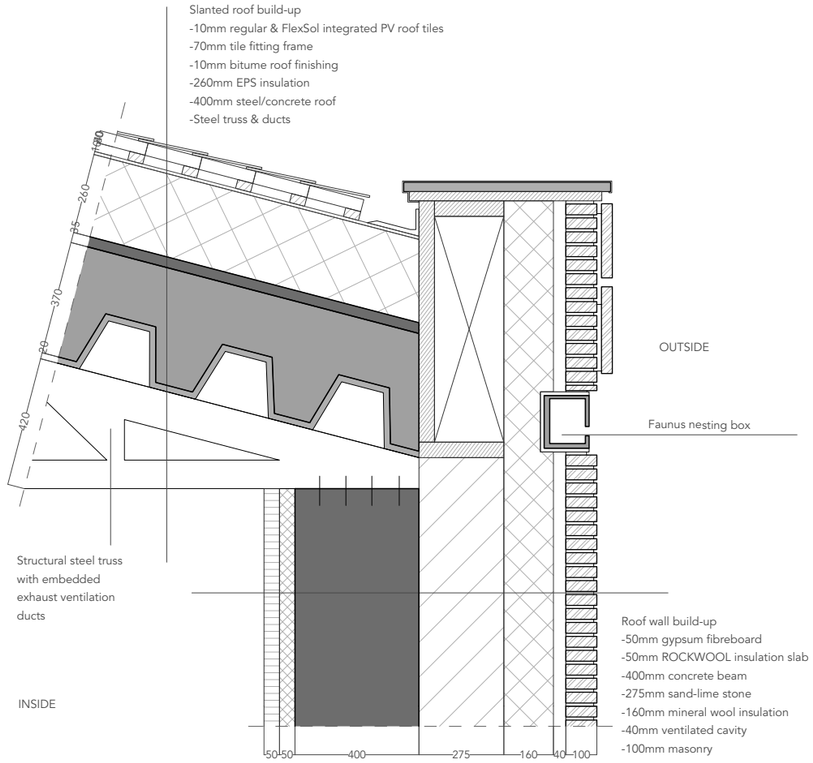
Subject: Partition wall & floor	Subject: De Baaierd	Sheet nr.: V01
Description		Section
In situ cast concrete wall		
In situ cast concrete floor		
Concrete floor slab		
Concrete floor finishing		
Cement bonded particleboard		
Acoustical wool (mineral wool)		

Figure 52:
1:5 detail of inner floor connections from foyer to technicians room (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



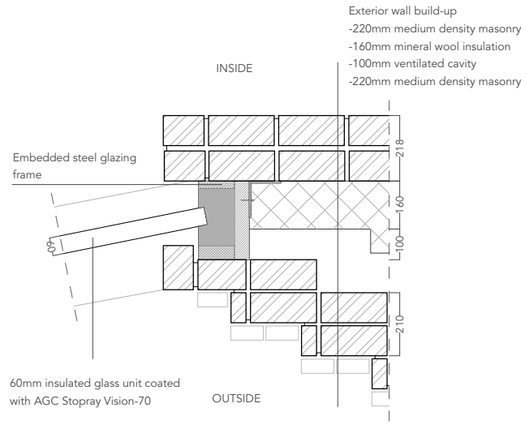
Subject: Roof edge #1	Subject: De Baaierd	Sheet nr.: V02
Description		Section
In situ cast concrete		
Prefabricated concrete floor		
Prefabricated concrete facade element		
Concrete floor finishing		
Cement bonded particleboard		
Insulation		
Masonry		
Steel		
Wood		
Gravel		

Figure 53:
1:5 roof detail of first roof (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



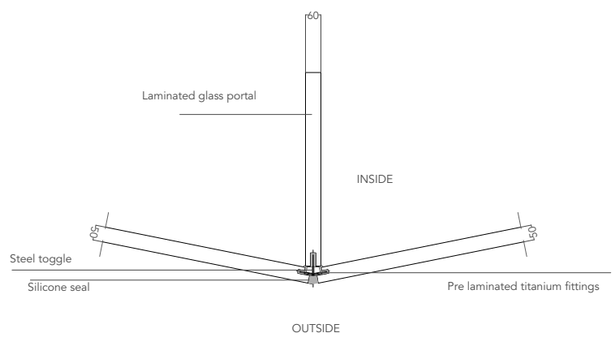
Subject: Roof edge #2	Subject: De Baaierd	Sheet nr.: V03
Description		Section
In situ cast concrete		
Prefabricated concrete roof		
Sand-lime stone		
Wood		
Cement bonded particleboard		
Insulation		
Masonry		
Steel		

Figure 54:
1:5 detail of second roof (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Subject: Exterior wall & glazing frame	Subject: De Baaierd	Sheet nr.: H01
Description		Section
Insulation		
Masonry		
Steel		
High efficiency insulation filling		

Figure 55:
1:5 glass to masonry detail (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Subject: Glass connections	Subject: De Baaierd	Sheet nr.: H02

Figure 56:
1:5 glass finn detail behind front windows (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)

3.4 Urban embedding

The integration of the building into the Gasthuisplaats required careful planning, both programmatically and physically, to respect existing stakeholders and historical layers.

The Zuster Building and the Synagogue: The project establishes a physical and programmatic connection with the adjacent historic Zuster building, which was studied during the initial fieldwork. Currently functioning as a flex-office space for startups, it suffers from very high pricing and 60% vacancy. The design actively repurposes a portion of this underutilized building into workspaces for the theater staff. By stripping away restrictive, non-load-bearing gypsum walls and introducing open, glass-fronted co-working spaces, the architecture breaks down the traditional isolation of backstage staff. It forces a daily cross-pollination between theater professionals, local startups, and the public, which can be seen if you zoom in into the floorplans in figure 26, 27.

Furthermore, the footprint of the theater was negotiated to respect its immediate neighbors. Following an interview with the leader of the adjacent Synagogue, who expressed a desire for a future extension of a few meters, the ground plan was deliberately left open to reserve this spatial buffer, showing the theater's role as an accommodating neighbor.

Subterranean integration: Site analysis identified a severe shortage of bicycle parking in Delft's city center, often resulting in cluttered streets. Because extensive excavation was already required for the theater's understage machinery (orchestra pit, stage traps) and climate installations, the subterranean program was expanded to include a 750m² public bicycle storage. This facility can accommodate approximately 900 to 1,000 double-stacked bicycles, solving a major urban issue while naturally directing more people into the building's public plinth. The basement plan can be found in figure 25.

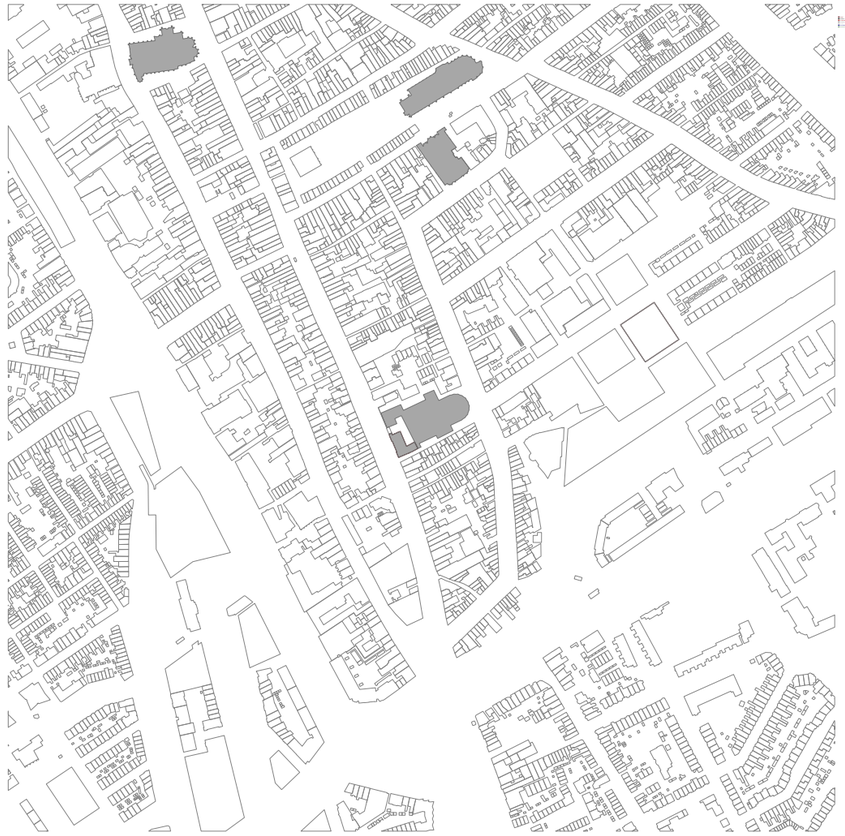


Figure 57:
1:1000 context map of churches in relation to my proposal (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)

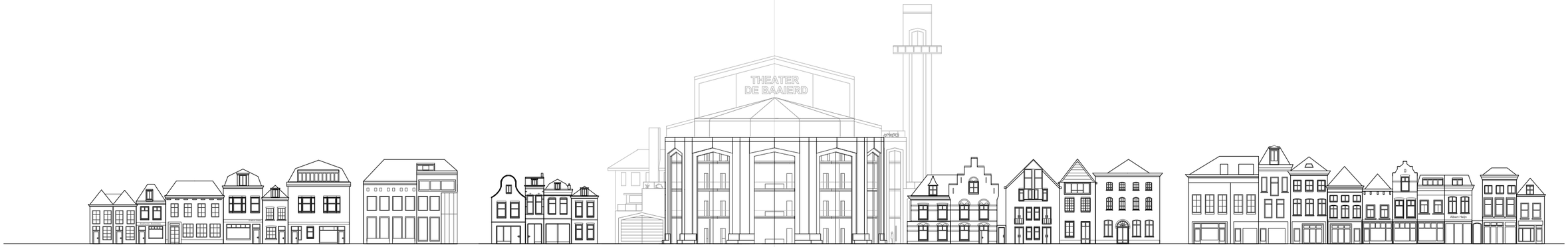


Figure 58:
1:200 Street elevation Brabantse turfmarkt (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 59:
1:200 Street elevation Koornmarkt (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)

3.5 Climate principles

The building's environmental strategy relies on a hybrid energy system and mechanical ventilation. At its core, the primary energy source consists of canal-integrated heat exchangers, which extract thermal energy directly from the adjacent waterways to efficiently heat and cool the complex. To ensure year-round reliability, an underground Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage (ATES) system serves as a seasonal battery and backup. The system only switches to these ATES underground sources when the canal-integrated heat exchangers cannot supply enough energy to meet the building's demands. This thermal foundation is supplemented by solar panels that are discreetly integrated into the higher roofs. As illustrated in the climate diagrams (Figures 60 and 61), they are positioned specifically to remain invisible from street level, preserving the building's aesthetic integrity. Ventilation is managed through a zoning strategy. The building's air intake is naturally pre-cooled and bio-filtered by drawing it across the micro-climates of the green courtyards before it enters the mechanical systems.

This sustainable way extends to the building's stepped volume, which is activated through bio-inclusive architecture. The accessible green roof gardens provide passive evaporative cooling and essential rainwater retention. To manage excess rainwater without disrupting the monumental expression of the facade, the drainage system is concealed within the building's articulation. As shown in the 1:20 section (Figure 49), zinc downpipes are color-matched to the brickwork and tucked next to a protruding layer of bricks where the hexagonal front turns the corner (penant), allowing them to almost entirely disappear from view. Additionally, the massive brick facades seamlessly integrate nesting boxes to actively promote urban biodiversity, as detailed in Figure 61.

Acoustically, the performance halls are structurally decoupled from the rest of the building, utilizing massive concrete cores to provide the necessary low-frequency sound insulation and a buffer zone inbetween. Also the foyers function as spatial buffer zones, shielding the auditoriums from the noise of the surrounding streets. Within these foyers, slatted timber ceiling elements backed with acoustic absorptive materials carefully regulate internal reverberation (figure 52). This buffering strategy is also vital for thermal management. While the high-occupancy auditoriums require intensive cooling and high-capacity ventilation, back-of-house areas like dressing rooms and offices demand warmer baseline temperatures and lower ventilation rates. As visualized in the exploded axonometric drawing (Figure 61), this separation allows conflicting environments to be serviced by dedicated mechanical installations.
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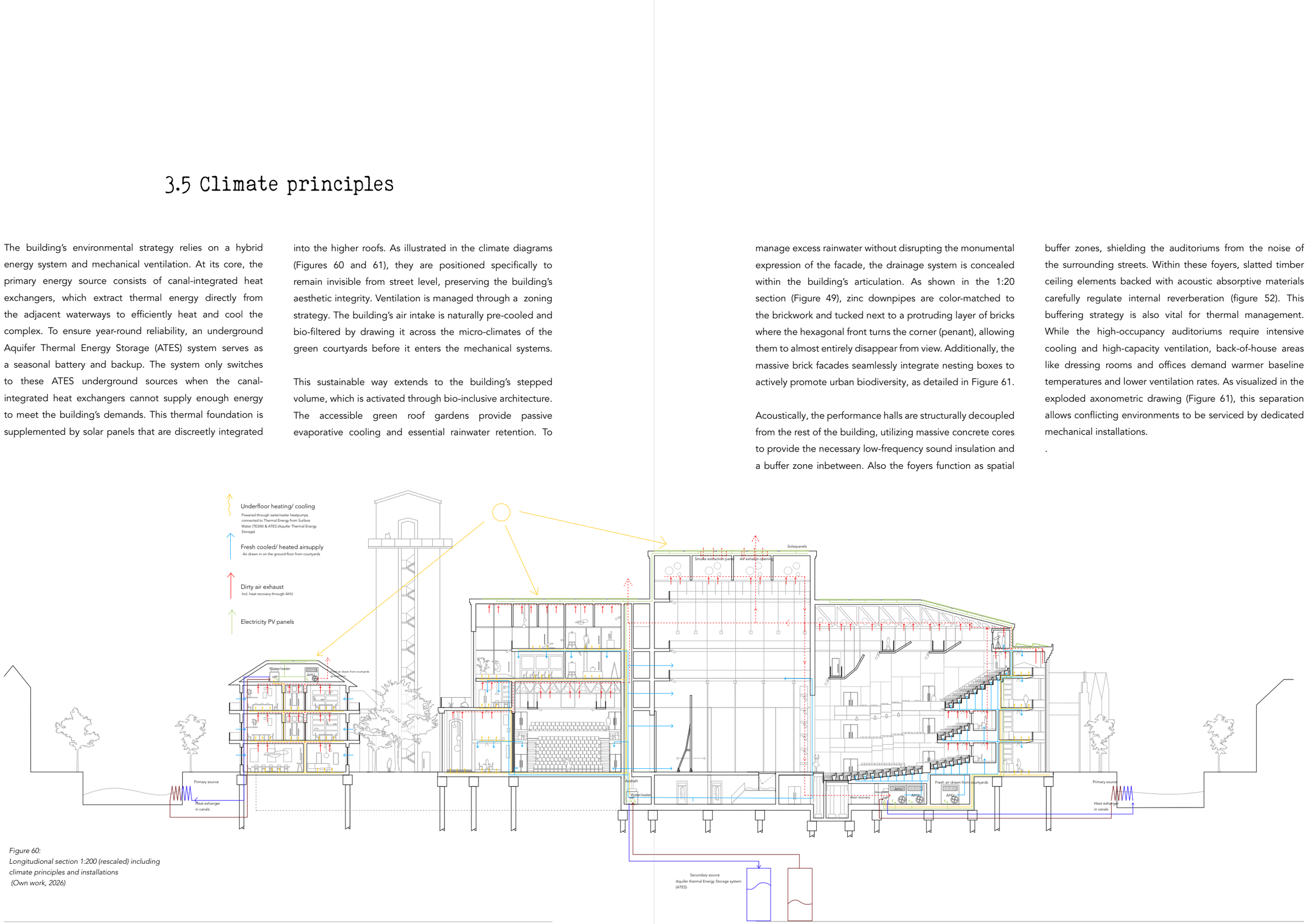


Figure 60:
Longitudional section 1:200 (rescaled) including climate principles and installations
(Own work, 2026)

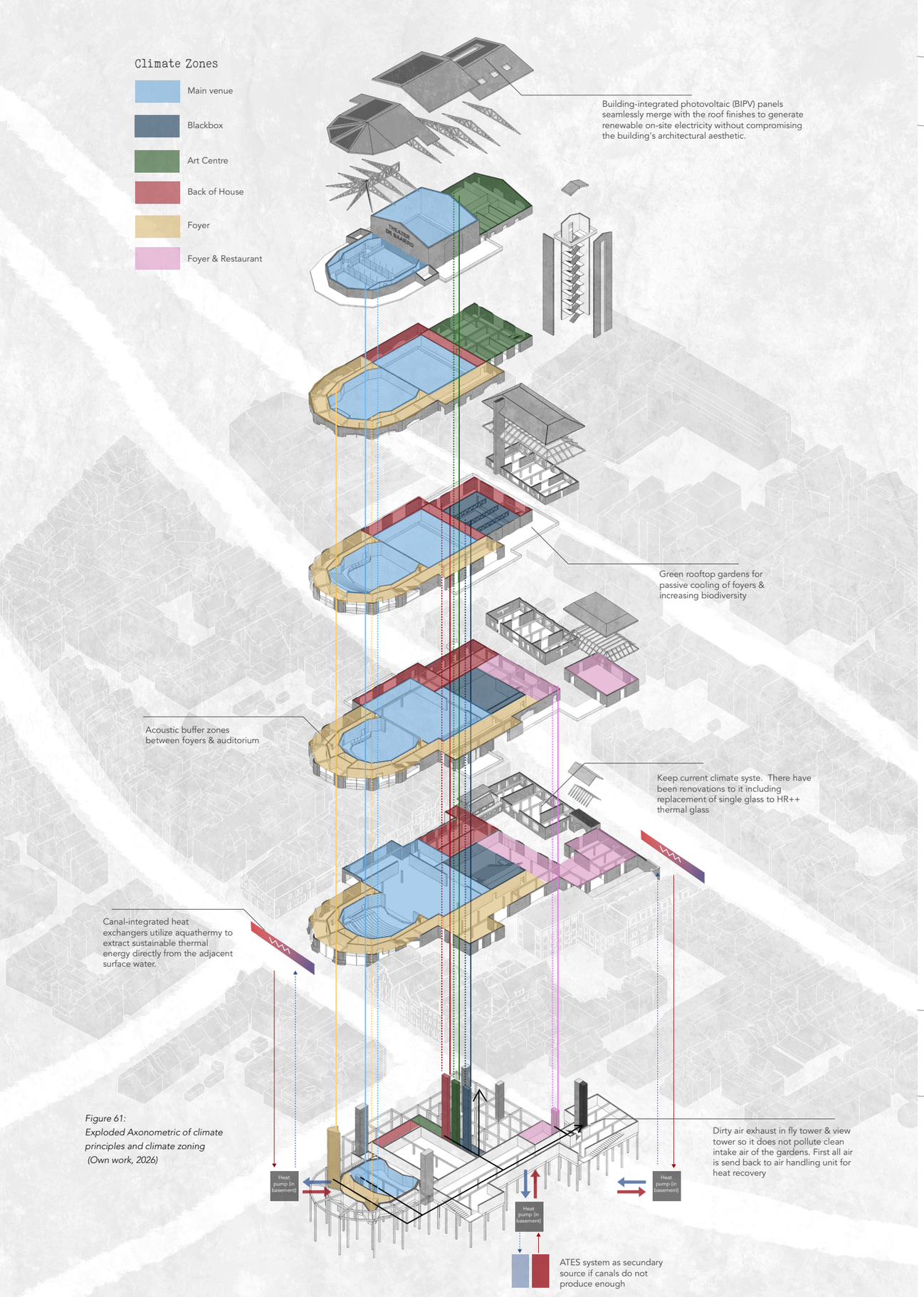


Figure 61:
Exploded Axonometric of climate principles and climate zoning
(Own work, 2026)

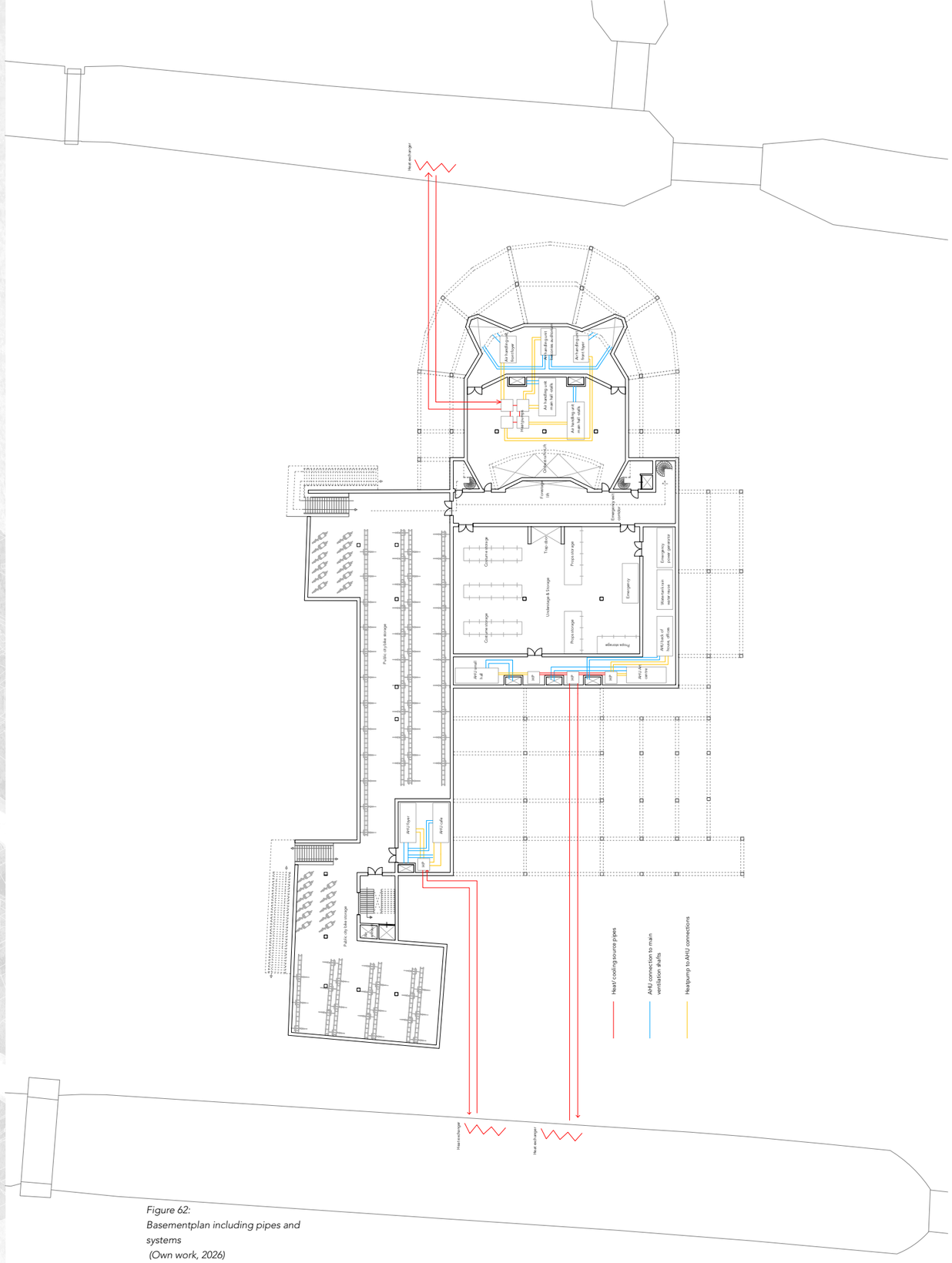


Figure 62:
Basementplan including pipes and systems
(Own work, 2026)

4

Conclusion & discussion

4.1 Conclusion

The main ambition of this graduation project was to investigate how an unapologetically monumental theater could integrate into Delft's fine-grained fabric and function as an open, approachable 'gasthouse' for collective culture. The resulting design for Theater de Baaierd demonstrates that the solution lies in embracing civic scale through structural honesty and spatial choreography.

By systematically addressing the sub-questions formulated in the introduction, the project reaches the following architectural conclusions:

On Urban Scale: The grand, church-like scale of a civic monument is integrated into Delft's fine-grained fabric through a stepping volumetric strategy. Rather than hiding its mass, the building asserts its public presence while mediating down to the residential street level. The facade avoids historical imitation, rejecting elements like Gothic arches, by abstracting the 'negative' profile of local pitched roofs. The design navigates the fine line between historicism and innovation by utilizing double-brick mass with masonry reveals and modern, engineered prefabricated concrete lintels .

On Spatial Sequence: The boundary between the street and the theater is dissolved by intertwining daily, accessible programs, such as the Art Centre workshops, with transitional spaces. By extending the city's street pattern into open courtyards and foyers, these intermediate zones function as an active, 24/7 urban living room. This synergy prevents the building from becoming a closed-off 'dark box' during the day, ensuring that informal public life and collective culture merge before visitors even approach the formal performance spaces.

On Tectonic Expression: The spatial journey from the city to the performance halls is articulated through the tectonic honesty of three distinct architectural layers. The Outer World anchors the building with a monumental, permanent double-brick shell. Moving inward, the Transitional World exposes the heavy, structural concrete colonnades required to carry the stepping facades above, grounding the public foyers. Finally, the journey comes togther in the Inner World, where the architecture shifts into hihly intimate, acoustically isolated timber cocoons.

4.2 Implications and recommendations

The architectural profession is currently navigating two paradigms: the pursuit of hyper-flexible spaces in cultural buildings, and a definition of sustainability that often prioritizes lightweight, circular construction. Theater de Baaierd seeks to contribute to this ongoing discourse by exploring an alternative approach.

Firstly, the project advocates for a renewed appreciation of architectural performativity over the pursuit of the "neutral box." Building upon Juliet Rufford's (2015) assertion that buildings are never merely passive containers for action, this project argues that architecture actively performs, shaping atmosphere, directing movement, and influencing social behavior. While flexible spaces offer valuable adaptability, civic buildings risk losing their distinct identity when designed purely as unprogrammed shells. Architecture has the capacity to take a gentle stance, to direct, frame, and elevate the human experience.

Furthermore, the footprint of the theater was carefully narrowed down to respect its immediate neighbors. Following an interview with the leader of the Synagogue, who expressed a desire for a future extension of a few meters, the ground plan was deliberately indented to reserve this spatial buffer, showing the theater's role as an accommodating neighbor.

Secondly, the project encourages a broader conversation regarding tectonic permanence. Contemporary building practices logically rely on demountable layers and material efficiency to reduce immediate environmental impact. However, as Kenneth Frampton (1983) critiques, the optimization of buildings for short-term economic lifespans often strips them of their tectonic presence and cultural resonance. This project proposes that true sustainability is rooted in endurance and mass. Buildings designed with the ambition to last centuries, buildings that are tactile, robust, and well embedded into the city, offer a different kind of ecological and civic value. A well-loved, heavily materialized civic monument might ultimately outlast multiple generations of structures optimized for shorter lifespans. The recommendation for the profession is not to discard modern efficiency, but to balance it by reinvesting in the longevity, material weight, and enduring civic presence of our public architecture.

4.3 Reflection & Discussion

This process required navigating a fine line regarding formal language. The abstraction of the Delft roofscapes into the deep masonry reveals sparked extensive debate: is it a modern interpretation of vernacular architecture, or does it lean too far into historicism? Architecture is inherently subjective, and navigating this boundary was a continuous struggle. I realize that I could spend another decade perfecting this balance, tweaking the proportions of every arch and reveal. However, I am proud to have taken the risk to design something deliberately different from the standard, safe, glass-and-steel theater architecture that dominates today. Whether the building is objectively "beautiful" to every observer is a different discussion; what matters is that it takes a clear, defensible architectural stance.

This tension was most evident in the discussions surrounding the landmark tower. From a purely pragmatic standpoint, people rightly questioned its presence: it is expensive, and it requires significant structural effort. However, from an urban and civic perspective, the tower is essential. It acts as an urban beacon, making the theater visible from the train station and distant parking areas, guiding visitors through the city. It also establishes an architectural dialogue by mirroring the chimney of the adjacent Zuster building. The ultimate validation of this choice came during the final review from the client, the director of Theater de Veste. Countering critiques, she stated: "I would fight for this tower and invest in it." She praised the project for being bold and daring. That moment tought me a lesson: sometimes, architecture must transcend pure functionalism to fulfill its civic and emotional role in the city.

Ultimately, designing a building of this complexity taught me humility. An architect is not a solitary person; realizing a theater requires an orchestra of structural engineers, acousticians, and technical experts. I am deeply grateful for the expert sessions.

The metaphor of the theater perfectly mirrors my own graduation journey. There was the "backstage", the endless, unseen hours of struggling with the fine line of historicism, the doubts, and the late nights spent building models. And then there was the "performance", the reviews and presentations where I had to step into the light, synthesize the complexity, and convincingly sell the story of Theater de Baaierd. This duality really pushed me beyond my limits, resulting in a personal and professional journey.







Figure 63:
Pictures of Interim presentation (Van Tilburg, 2026)

5

Closing

Appendix A

Plans and sections including grid sizes

Figure 64:
Basementplan incl. grid sizes
(Own work, 2026)

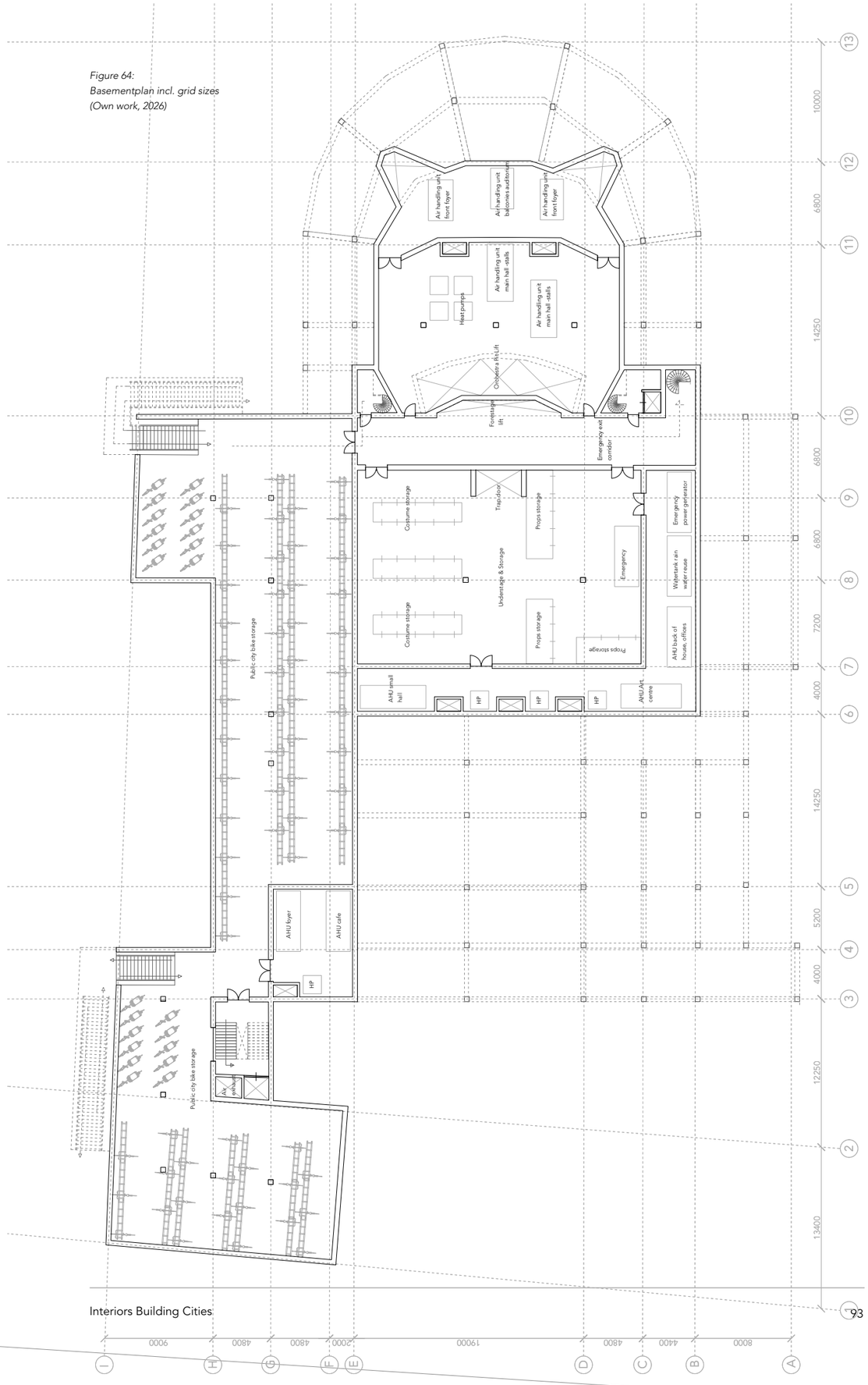


Figure 65:
Ground floor incl. grid sizes
(Own work, 2026)

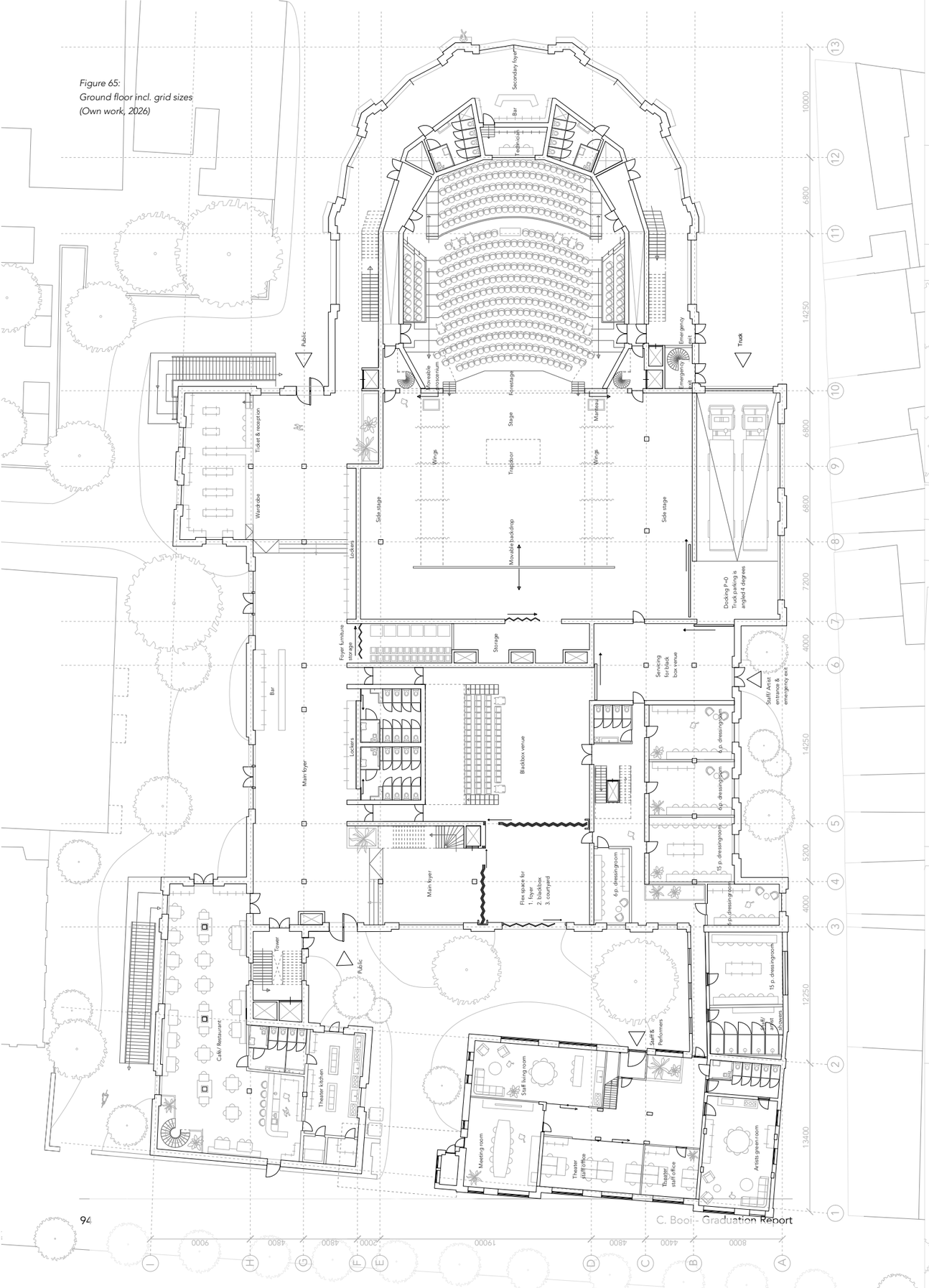


Figure 66:
First Floor grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

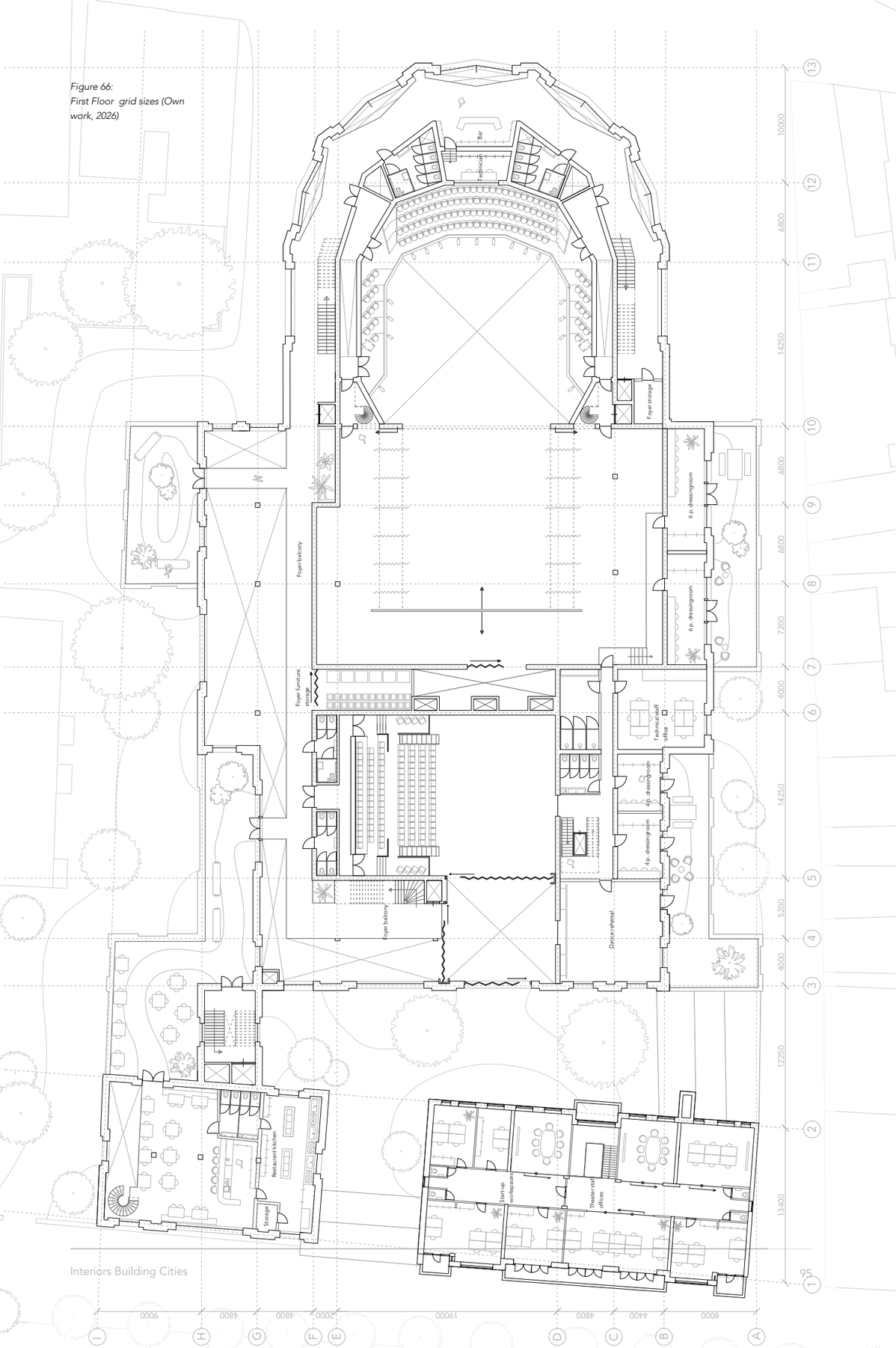


Figure 67:
Second floor grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

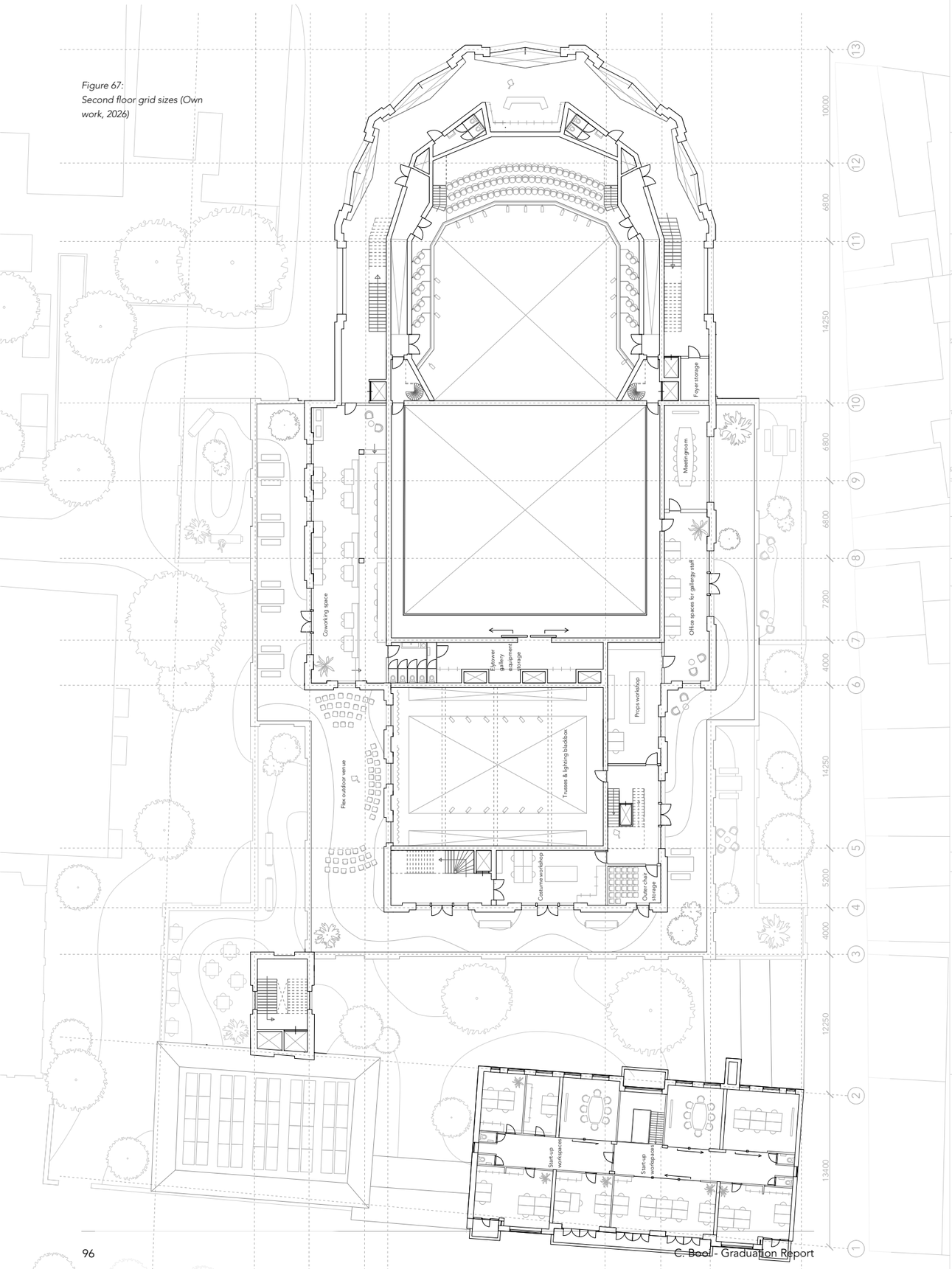


Figure 68:
Third floor grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

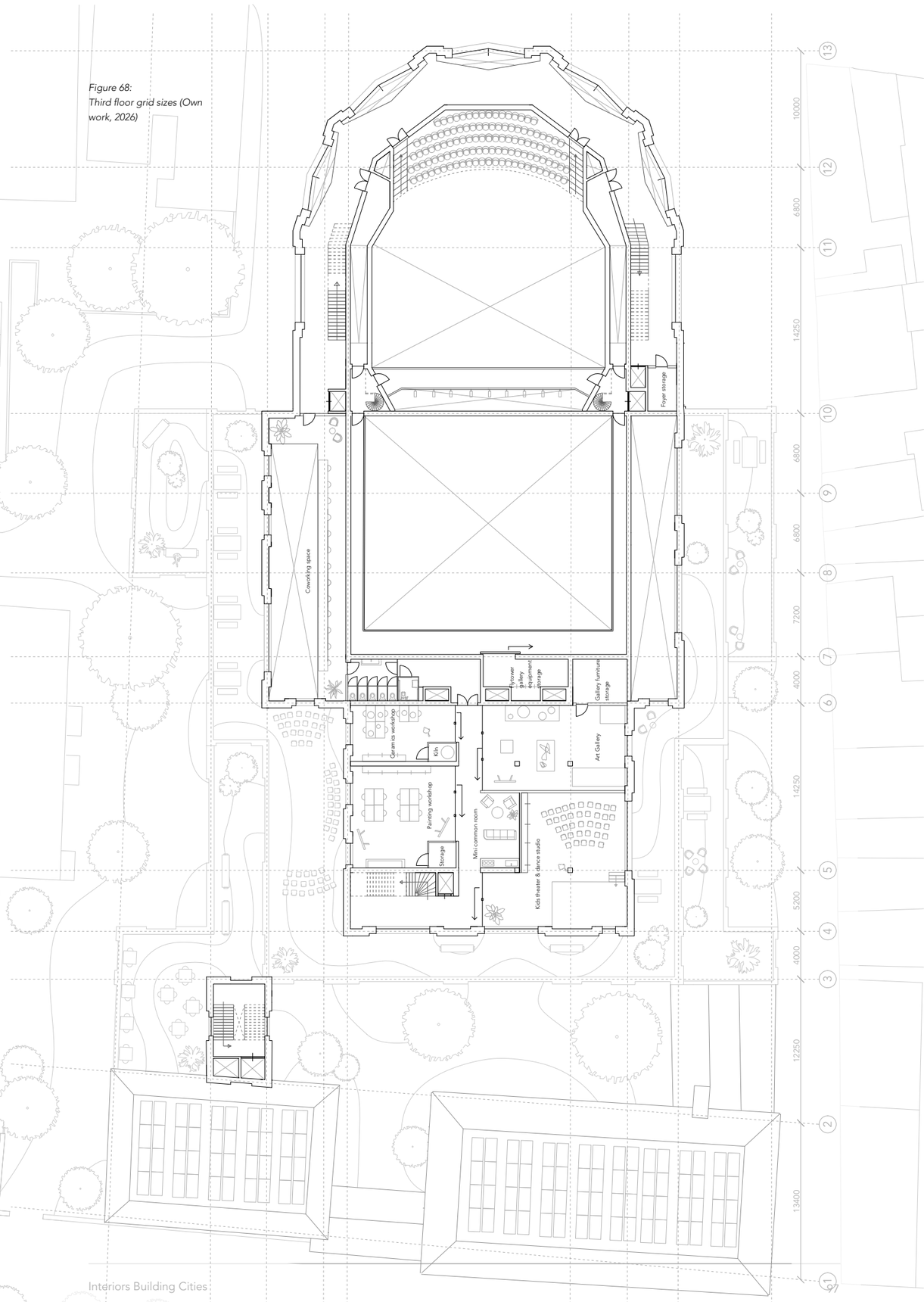


Figure 69:
Fourth floor grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

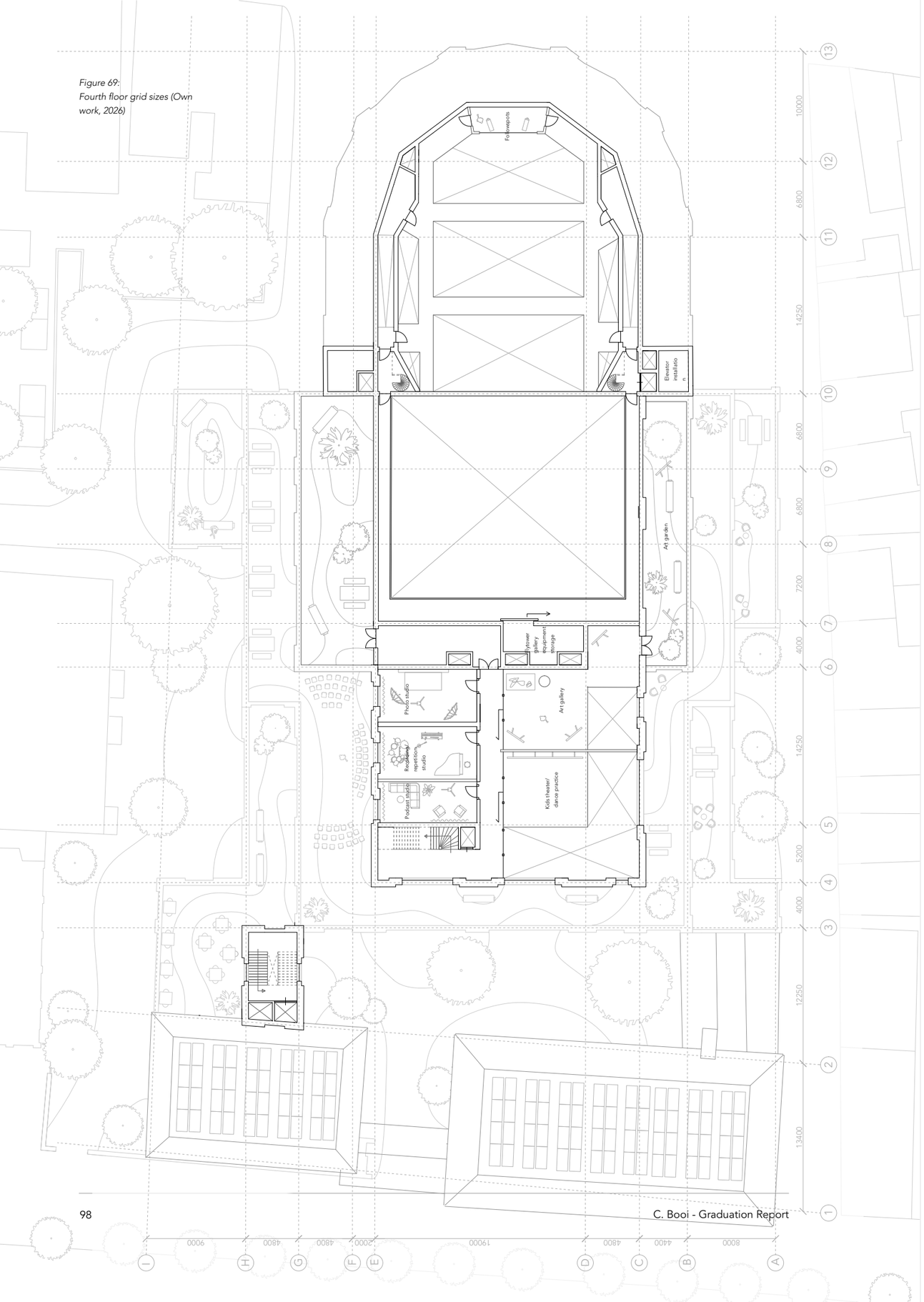


Figure 70:
Transverse section incl grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

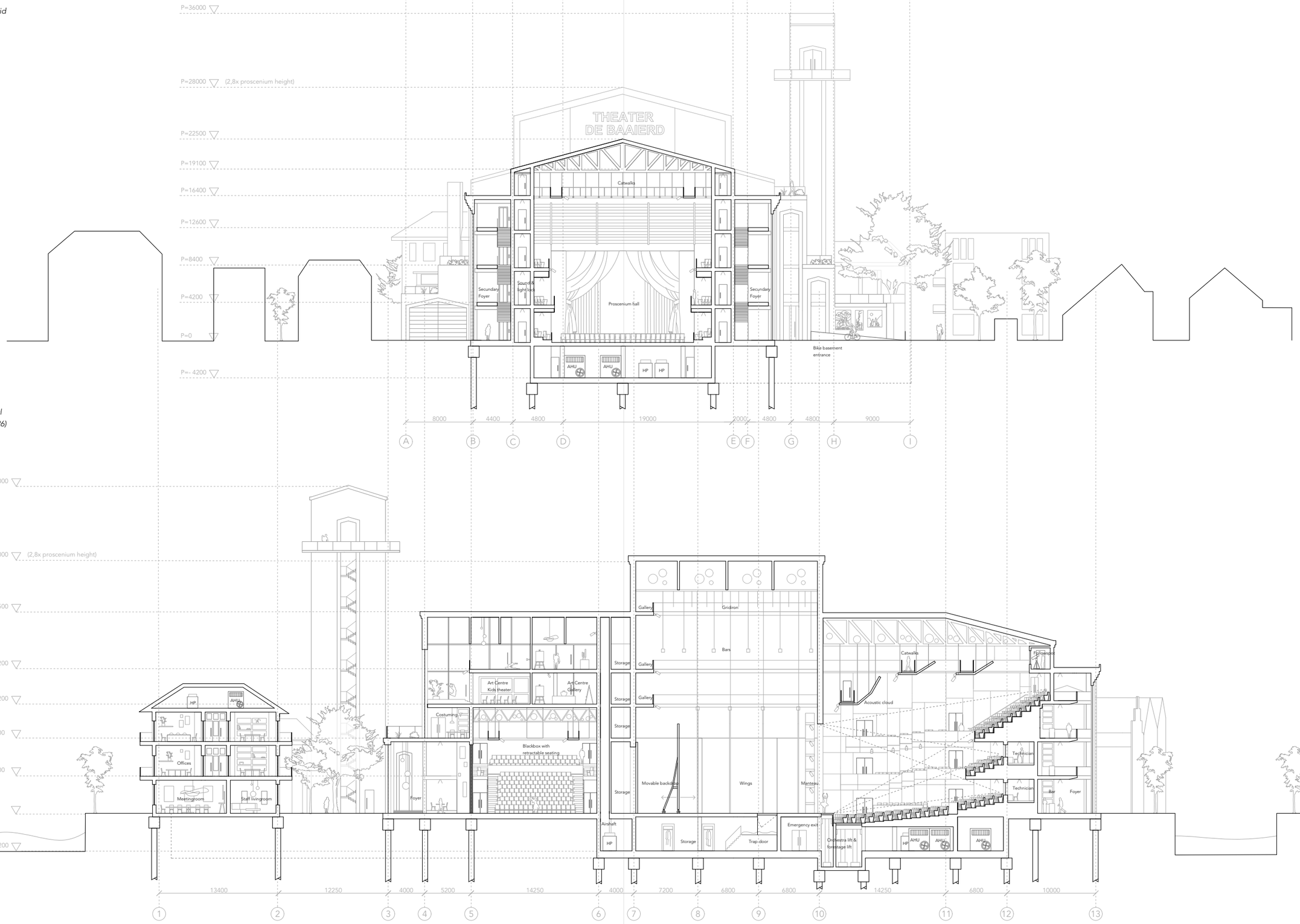


Figure 71:
Longitudional section incl grid sizes (Own work, 2026)

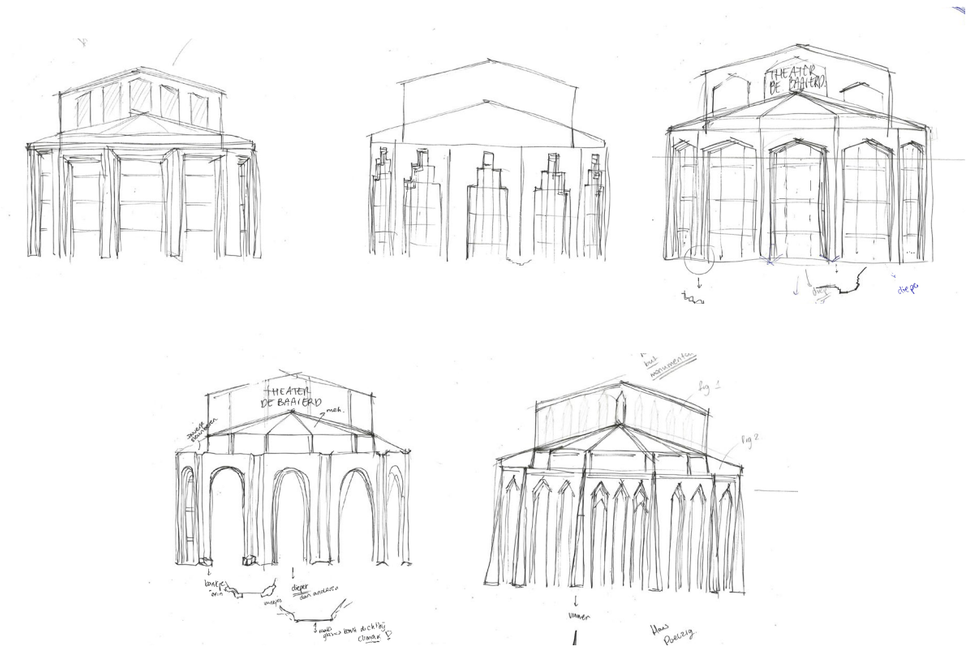
Appendix B

Earlier Facade Explorations



Figure 72:
Old Facade experiment
(Own work, 2026)

Figure 73:
Old Facade experiments
(Own work, 2026)



Appendix C

1:20 Facade Fragment as seperate figures

Figure 74:
1:20 Facade fragement view (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 75:
1:20 Facade fragement horizontal cut (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)

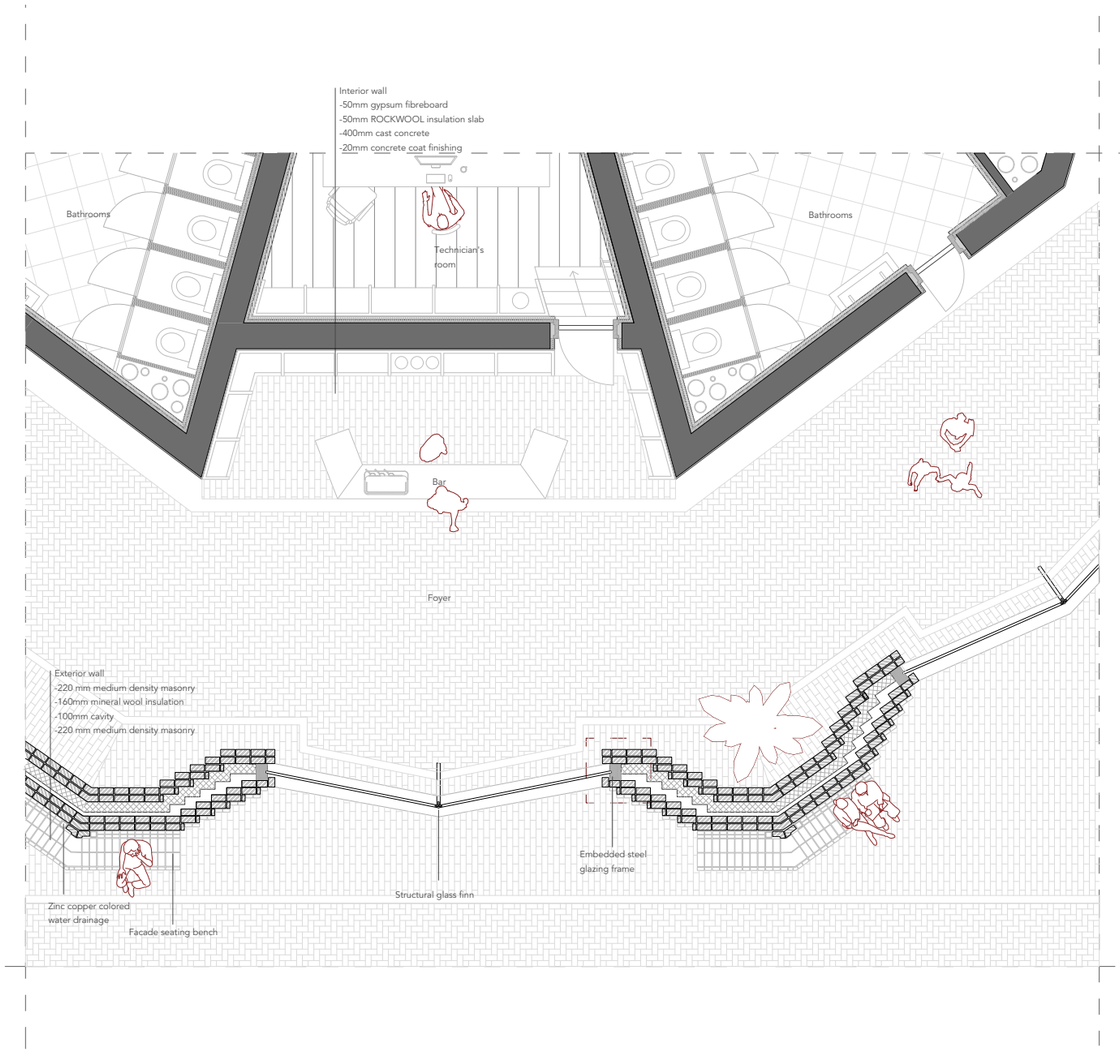
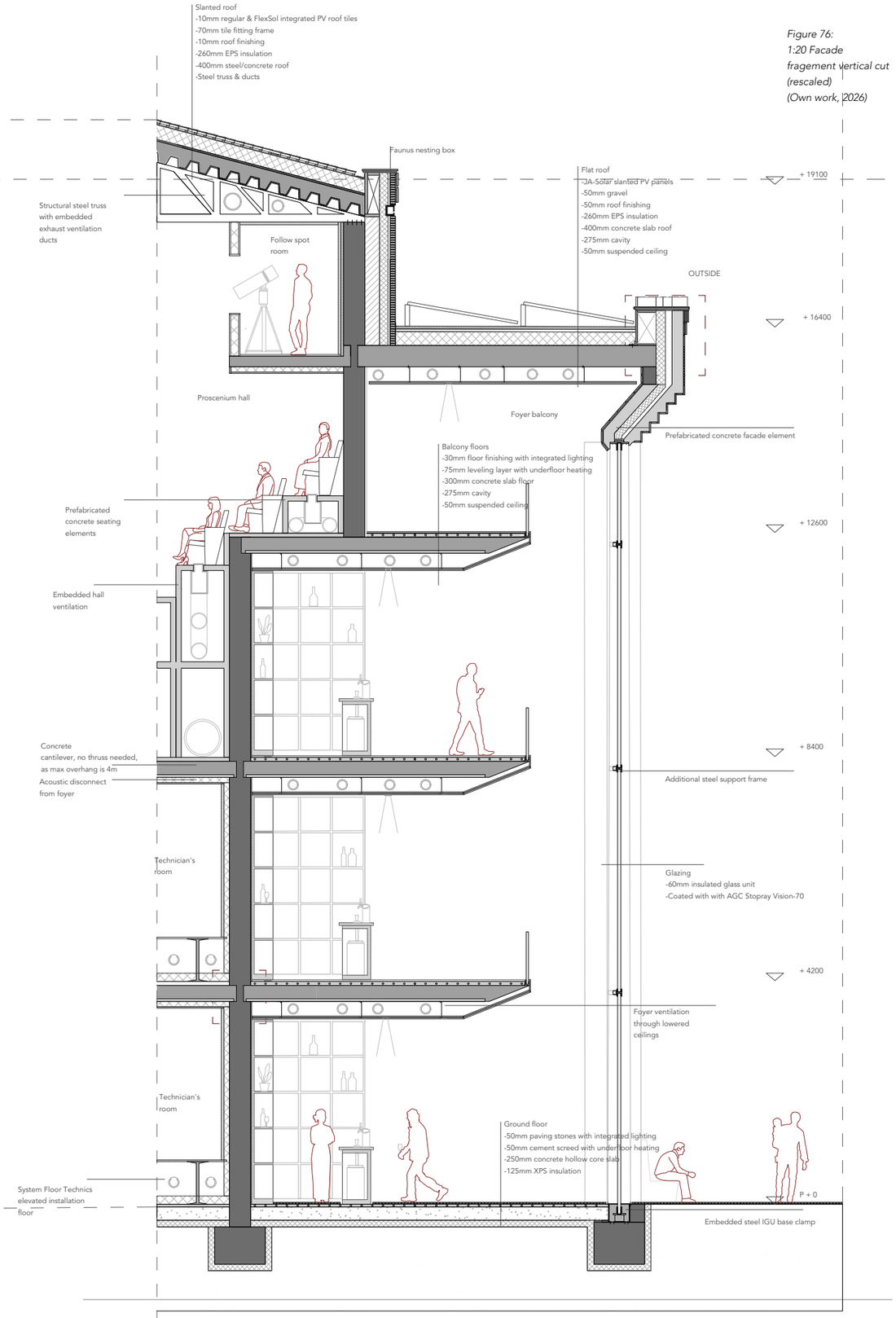


Figure 76:
1:20 Facade fragement vertical cut (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Appendix D

Context Analysis maps

Figure 77:
1:1000 context map of small grain vs large grain buildings in Delft.
Civic buildings highlighted in dark grey and large scaled buildings in light grey (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)

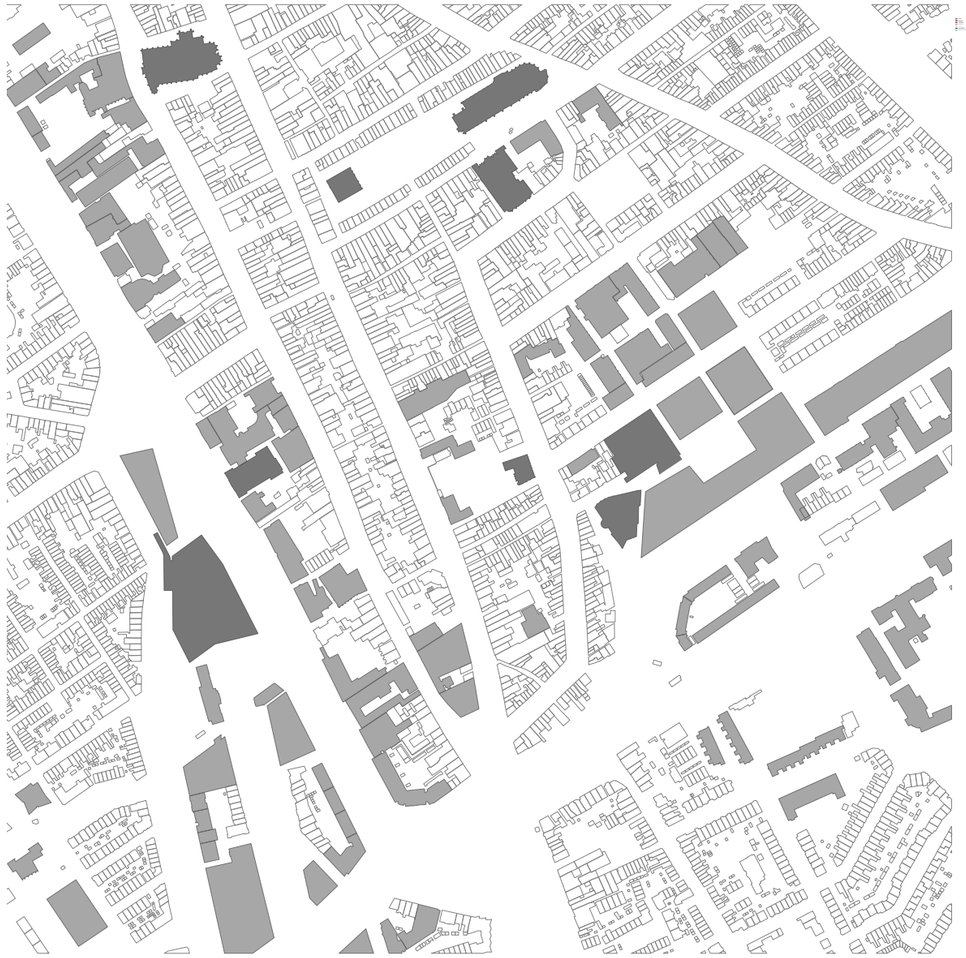


Figure 78:
1:1000 context map of hotspots in delt (red dots) and routing to the Gasthuisplaats from parking and station (rescaled)
(Own work, 2026)



Figure 79:
1:1000 analysis map of infrastructure
(Own work, 2026)

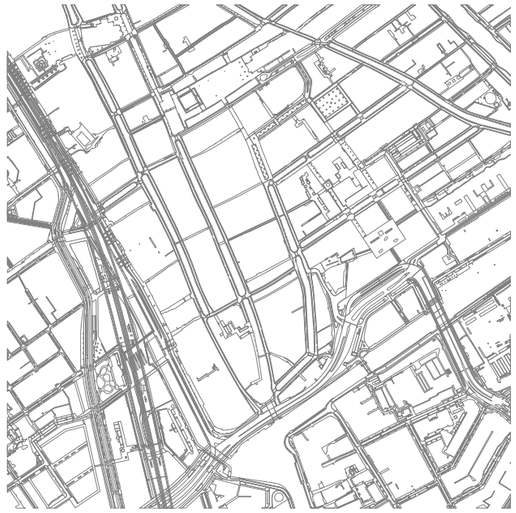


Figure 80:
1:1000 analysis map of water structures
(Own work, 2026)

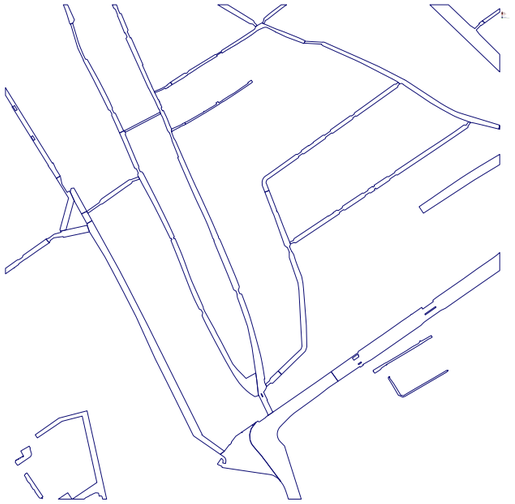


Figure 81:
1:1000 analysis map of green structures
(Own work, 2026)



Appendix E

1:100 Sectional model pictures



Figure 82:
1:100 sectional model pictures
(Own work, 2026)







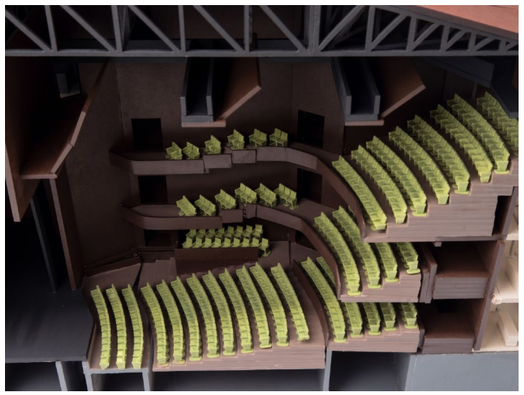


Figure 83:
1:100 sectional model pictures
(Own work, 2026)







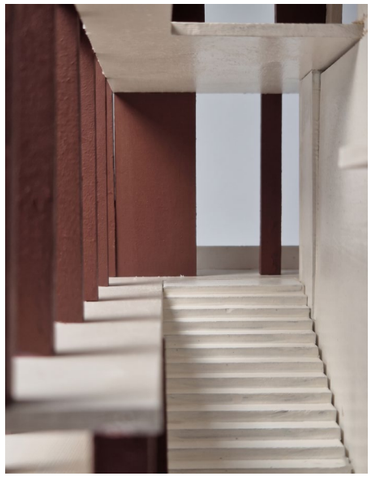


Figure 84:
1:100 sectional model pictures
(Own work, 2026)

Appendix F

1:200 final pictures

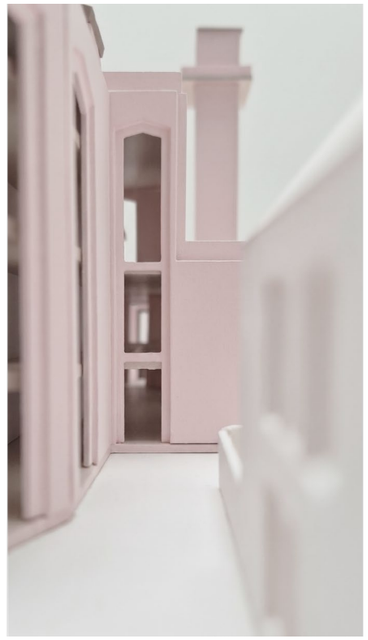








Figure 85:
1:200 urban model pictures including openings and sightlines
(Own work, 2026)





Figure 86:
1:200 urban model pictures including openings and sightlines
(Own work, 2026)





Figure 87:
1:200 urban model pictures including openings and sightlines
(Own work, 2026)

Appendix G

1:25 final pictures



Figure 88:
1:25 fragment model of technician rooms for main auditorium
(Own work, 2026)





Figure 89:
1:25 fragment model of foyer around auditorium
(Own work, 2026)





Figure 90:
1:25 fragment model of brick facade details
(Own work, 2026)







Figure 91:
1:25 fragment model all sides
(Own work, 2026)







Figure 91:
1:25 fragment model transitional details
(Own work, 2026)

Appendix H

1:500 massing model final pictures





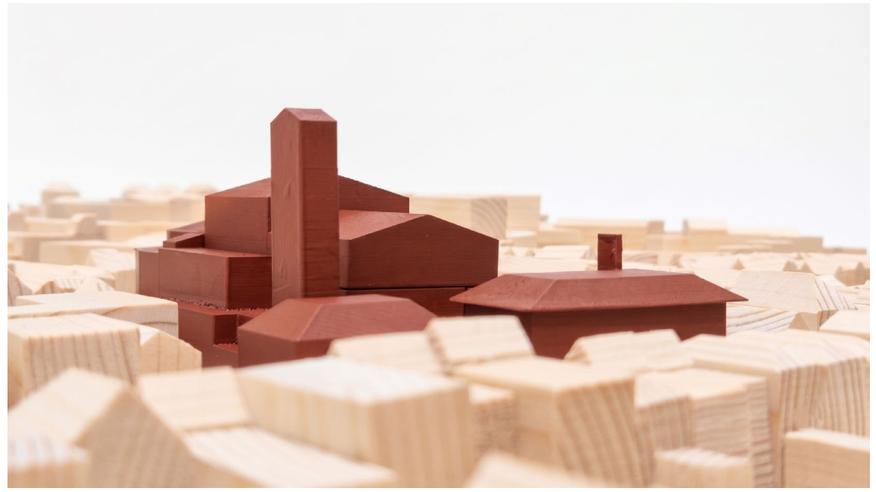














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van den Hoogen, Q. (2021). Dutch theatre politics in crisis. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.

External image sources

Almost all images in this report are my own work so these are not included in this image list.

Figure 4
Gemeente Delft. (2026) "Kaart figuratief." Publiekswebsite Delft. https://zoeken.stadsarchiefdelft.nl/detail.php?id=210987648

Figure 14
Van Horssen, J. (2018). Gasthuisplaats in Delft: Een archeologisch bureauonderzoek. Erfgoed Delft.

Figure 63
Van Tilburg, C. (2026) Pictures Interim Presentation

Acknowledgements

Like a theater production, this graduation project relied on an incredible ensemble. I sincerely thank my mentors in the Interiors Buildings Cities studio; your critical feedback pushed me to abandon the safety of my early fragmented designs and embrace the project's true civic scale. I am grateful to the technical experts, particularly Koen Mulder, whose validation gave me the confidence to pursue a massive, double-brick tectonic expression. Finally, a special thanks to the director of Theater de Veste. Your empowering feedback during the final review, calling the design "bold and daring" and defending the tower, reminded me that we design not just to solve technical puzzles, but to inspire ambition.

I must also acknowledge my peers and project group. The site visits, the shared archival research, and the collaborative mapping of Delft through the 1:500 and 1:200 collective models provided very valuabl. The studio culture we shared made the long hours not only bearable but inspiring.

Finally, to my friends and family: thank you for enduring the "backstage" of this process. Thank you for your unwavering support during the late nights, the moments of doubt, and the endless hours spent cutting models until late at night. This performance is as much yours as it is mine.



Figure 88:
Model building process images which have characterized this graduation process (Own work, 2026)