

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE AS MEDIATOR

chapter 4

THE ROLE OF INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

This thesis is rooted in the search for what Interior Architecture means to the public. Not just offering simple decorative or temporary solutions, but its worth to support and strengthen the surrounding environment.

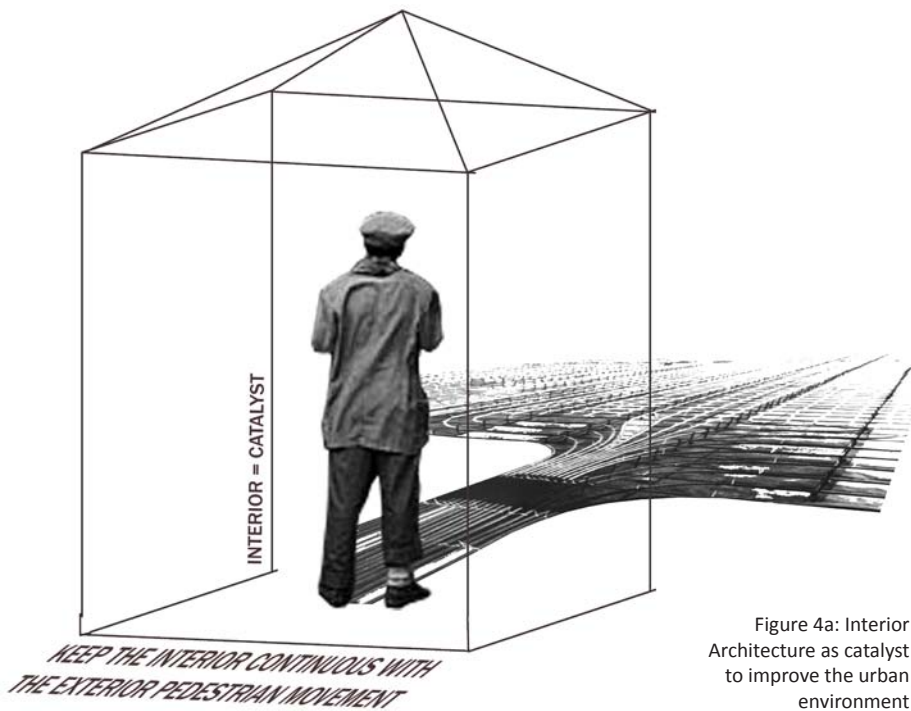


Figure 4a: Interior Architecture as catalyst to improve the urban environment

As described by Hildebrandt (2006:30-31), the professional service of architecture is simplistically apparent to the public as the design of mostly the exterior of buildings. He proceeds with an explanation of how new sets of problems are brought about by new circumstances in contemporary society, and demands a philosophical shift for creative solutions (connected to human and environmental needs). This shift calls to the role of Interior Architecture, as it is especially focused on the interaction between the user and its environmental needs.

The adapting and re-using of buildings is a typical characteristic of Interior Architecture; one on which

architecture is dependent on. Interior Architecture “offers a theory and vocabulary for the design work that responds to and alters architecture” (Scott 2008:12). It manifests itself as the meaning imbedded within the building’s interior as well as exterior and as such must be housed within an architectural structure. Interior Architecture “involves the contractual agreement of design services encompassing interior elements equally with shell and site conditions associated in building design” (Hildebrandt 2006:32).

The design of interior environments entails a complexity of space and the body within this space. Thus human experiences and comfort is of deep concern to the profession (Königk 2009:12). The design is based on the contemporary social value system (Hildebrandt 2006:30), based on human use. Therefore its role is continually evolving within a shifting social, economical and political culture.

In contrast to what Hildebrandt (2006:32) writes, Interior Architecture should not be an extension of the exterior to the inside of the structure, but quite the opposite. The exterior shell should become a direct translation of the interior space it contains (Kurtich 1993:5), thereby extending human experience into the city. Such a view of Interior Architecture implies that a space, therefore a building, can remain relevant in an ever changing social context.

Human interaction is of great concern to the discipline of interior design (Königk 2009:12). The **connection of people** is significant to architecture because this interaction has a direct influence on the physical form of the space and also the function and utilization of the built fabric. It creates an allegiance which architecture in the sense that it supports and strengthens the environment.

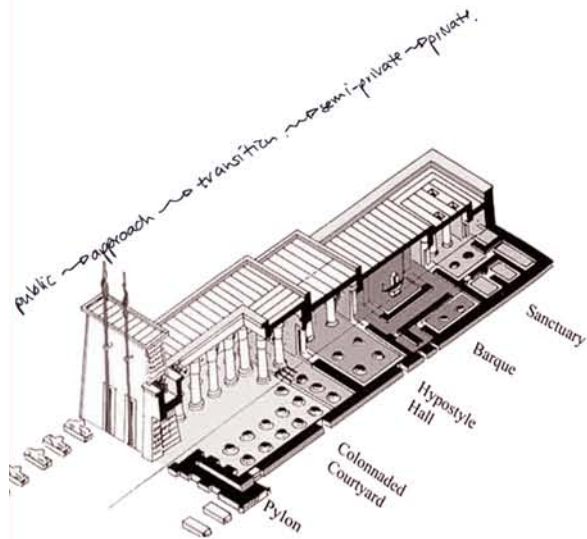
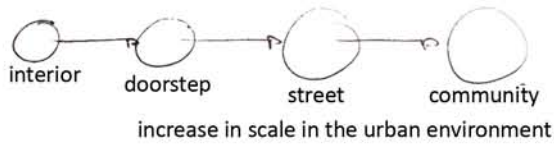
A number of buildings in the inner city of Pretoria do not have maximum linear occupation. This is due to, amongst others, inefficient humanistic design (incl. the public interface) and the high costs of alteration with each occupant (Hildebrandt 2006:31). It is necessary to mediate between ever-changing interior use and activity and static exterior form.

Interior architecture is a completion of space for human use determined by function (Eakin & Kurtich 1993:3). With social conditions changing and function coupled to it, a sensitive approach to alter existing buildings should be used to relate to the building and its immediate surroundings as a whole. The exterior of a building formulates the interior of a city. The shell of a building is derived from its interior and therefore the internal space influences the urban space in which it is situated. But the interior as driving force for the skin of a building does not always apply to existing buildings in the CBD of Pretoria, INTERFACE proposes that **interior architecture is used as mediator or transition between interior and exterior space** (private and public)(figure 4c)

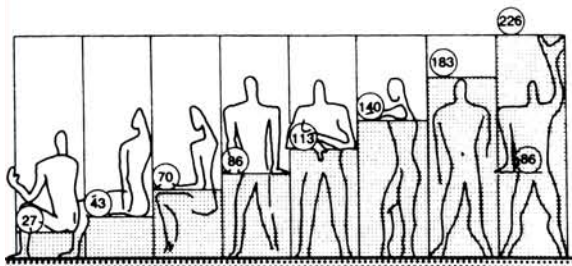


HIERARCHY OF SPACE

Hierarchy and use of space is directly influenced by scale. A decrease in scale is equal to an increase in privacy - the smaller the space or volume the more intimate it becomes



Temple of Khonsu within the Precinct of Amun
"note the increasing sanctity emphasised by: decreased lighting further into the temple's sacred areas - rising floor level and diminishing roof level - (Ziegler 2001:474)



(Neufert S.a.: 30)

SPATIAL EXPLORATION (SCALE) - exploration that links architecture to man, the interface between human and element

To every leap in scale travelled, there is a corresponding shrink to a dimension travelled within. From urban scale, right down to interior, spaces seem to proportion itself so that with every threshold (or interface) being breached, there is only an awareness of one continuous space, not of the separate particles it consist of.

Figure 4b: Movement from private to public space occurs in a sequence of spatial order and change in scale

The proposed intervention will show that Interior architecture is not constrained by the boundaries (walls) of architecture. In Raymund König's (2009:114) dissertation, he raises the argument that **interior design**¹ is often perceived as being inferior to architecture. The argument here is that this is quite the opposite - the scale of the work defined within the profession is of such a nature that it can act quickly and efficiently. Interior interventions can act as the vaccine for the 'vacant city' disease. Jan Gehl (2006:83) states that **intervention on small scale can counter the problem of inadequate sociable environments on urban scale**. Stimulation of the individual benefits an entire social environment.

1 interior design: Interior Design and Interior Architecture is of similar origin but ultimately of different professional status. Please refer to appendix A.

"...great interior architecture is created by the fusion of related disciplines" (Eakin & Kurtich 1993:viii).

This architectural thought should be conducted in a manner in which the single individual becomes absorbed into a space by using basic fundamentals of Interior Architecture as mediator between decayed urban environments, functional space and social exploration.

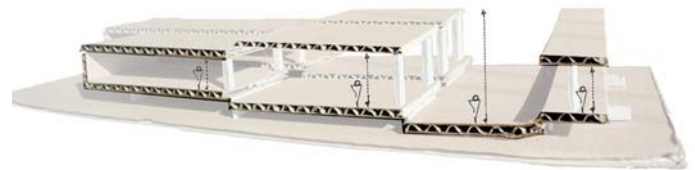


Figure 4c: Exploration and implementation of hierarchy of scale (figure 4b) and how it influences spatial experience n within its urban context



Context model:

The interface between human experience and built form occur on small scale. This small scale permeates into the larger (street scale) surrounding environment and ultimately into urban scale. For this to be successful the interior spaces should extend outwards and become continuous with the exterior pedestrian movement



Pretoria's CBD is a framework that has a current lack of attention to pedestrian sections and attention to pedestrian movement, a negative trend.

exi

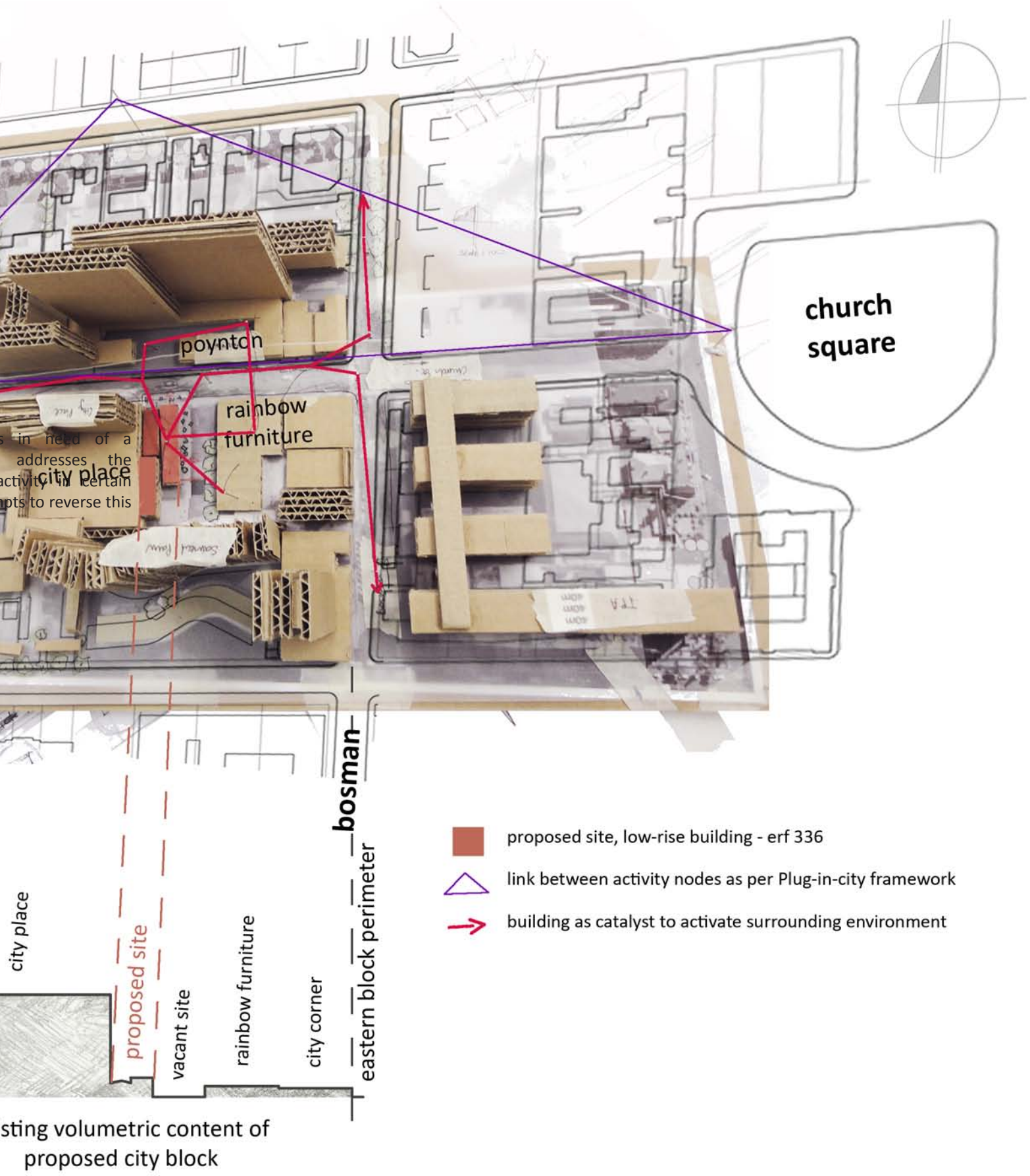


Figure 4d: Model of the proposed interior intervention within its urban context

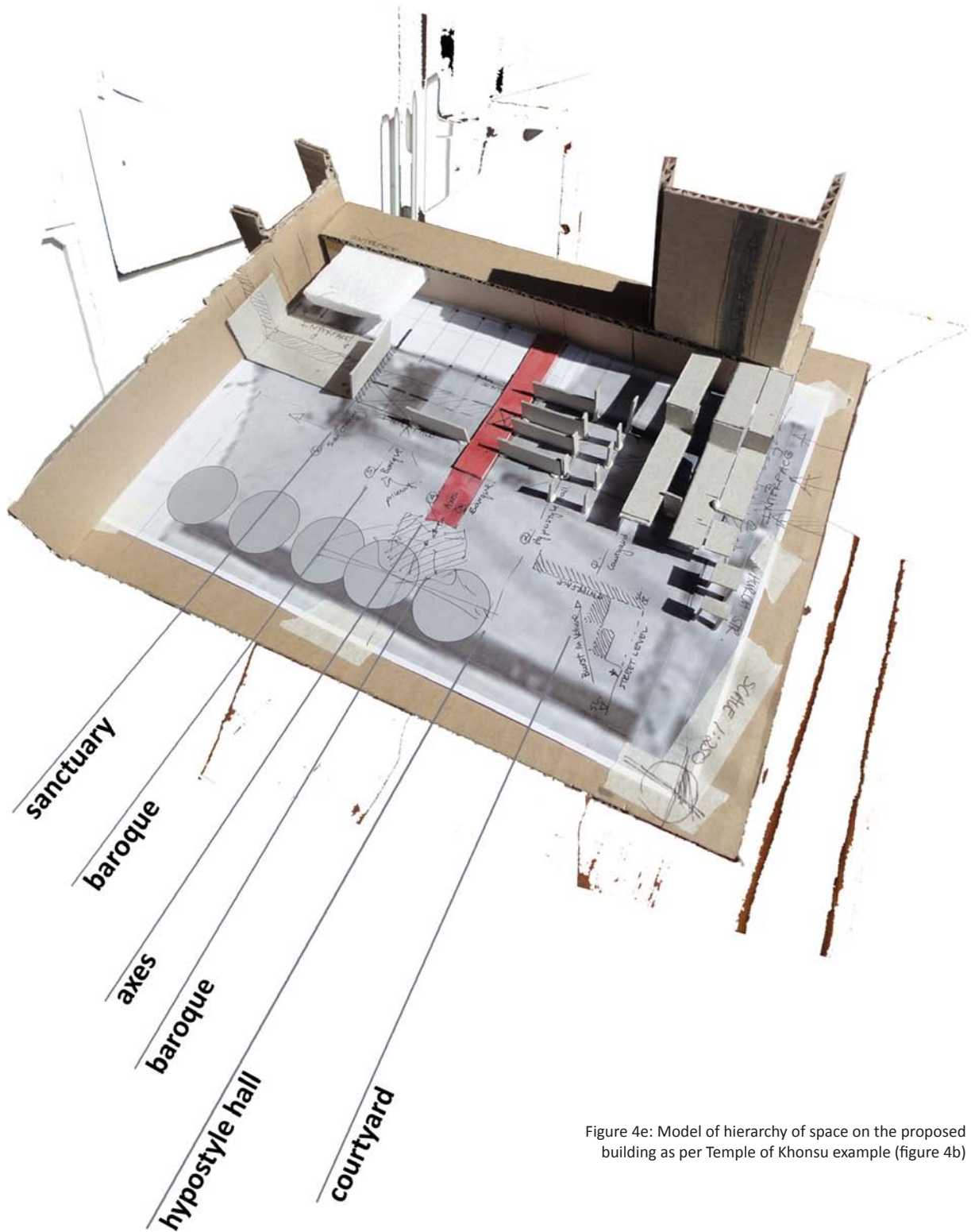


Figure 4e: Model of hierarchy of space on the proposed building as per Temple of Khonsu example (figure 4b)

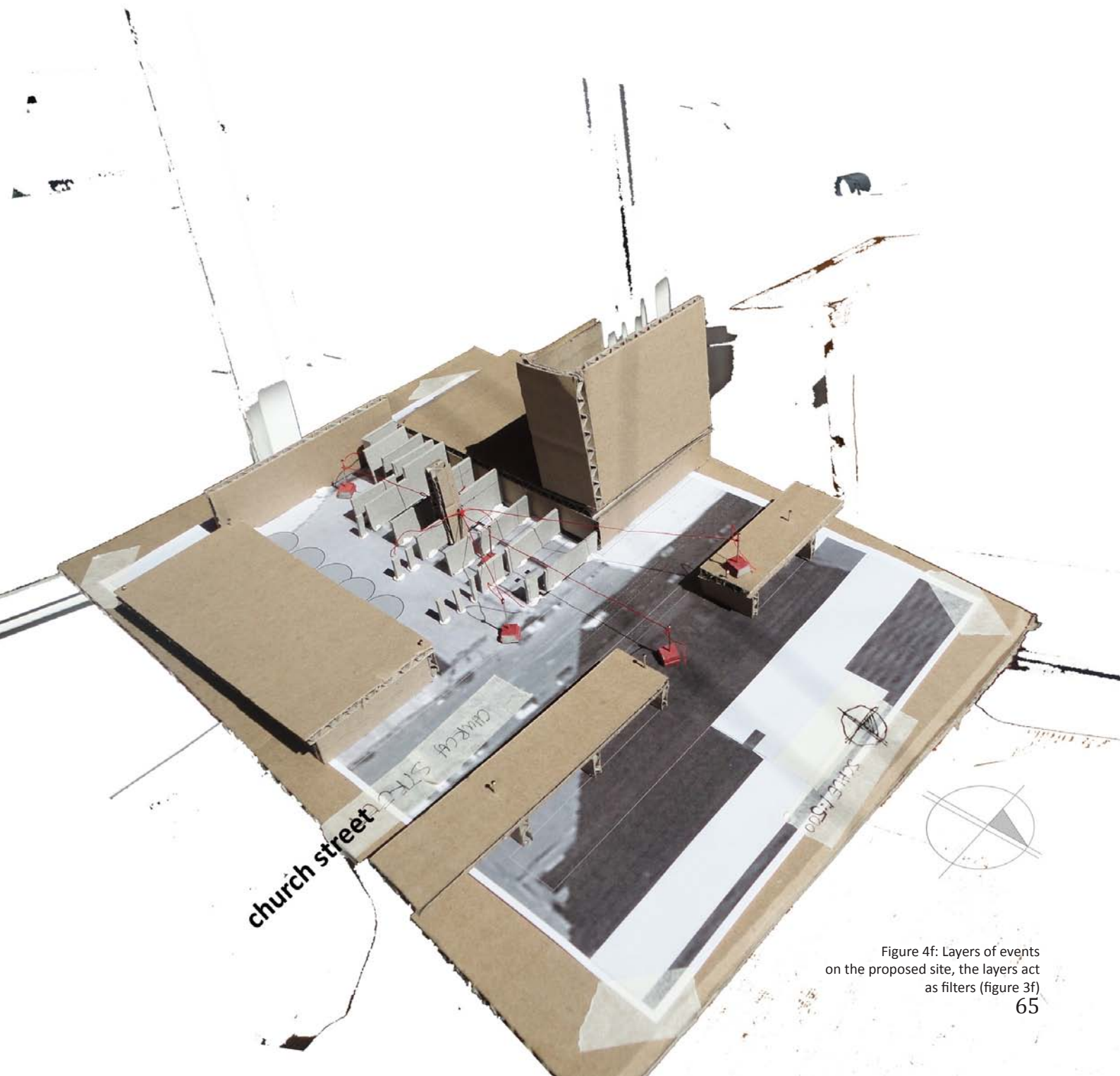
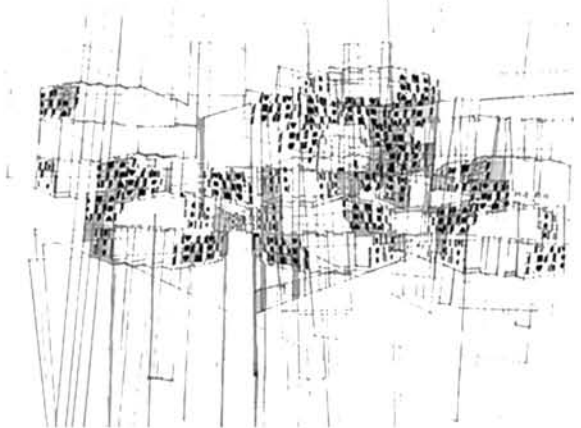


Figure 4f: Layers of events on the proposed site, the layers act as filters (figure 3f)

in-between state to be able to adapt to the environment.



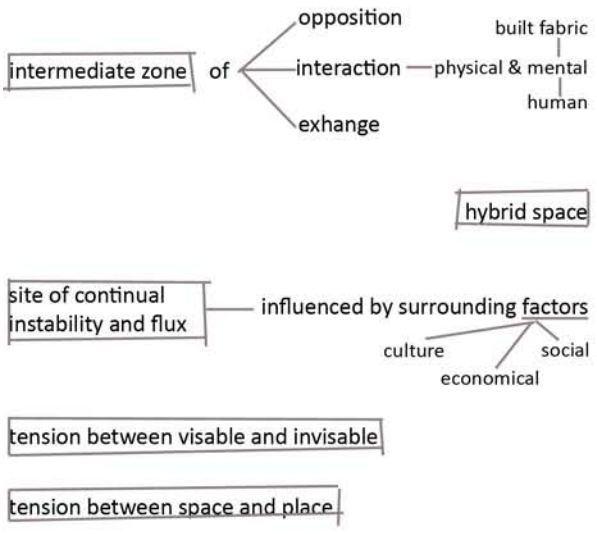
1.1 LIMINAL SPACE

Psychologists refer to liminal space as a quality of ‘in-between’ space. Victor Turner (La Shure 2005) explains the concept of liminality as a place where boundaries dissolve as we stand “on the threshold, getting ready to move across the limit”. It becomes the transitional space that divides human experience - a stage where a person is hearing a space and being inducted. It complicates the effort to construct identity. It becomes the temporary phase rather than a permanent state. This temporary status signifies mobility, it allows for the **freedom of movement**.

- In contemporary cities, it is the slip “between public use and private value” (Parole 2010).
- It’s a transitional zone of oppositions, interactions and exchange.” A state on continual instability and flux” (ibid 2010)

Ching (1996:98-133) describes space as: the arrangement of architectural elements (planes). Space can therefore be seen as a volume contained by a physical form. This physical form or surface of separation (definition of interface according to Harper [Sa]) is creating a type of barrier or boundary.

The definitions that will follow are the investigation into the meaning of the word INTERFACE. The meaning of the word INTERFACE will be investigated in an effort to free the word of its weightiness and portray it as a simple line or mental crossing, rather than a physical barrier, notifying a human being of their transition into the next space - from exterior to interior space.



(La Shure 2005)

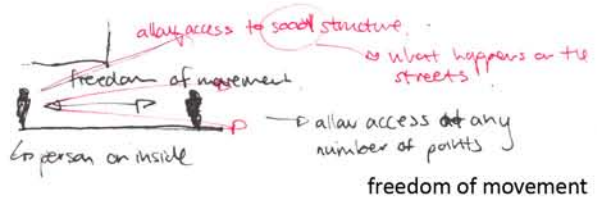


Figure 4g: Liminal space based on the social rite of passage

(noun) - An interface is a surface dividing two spaces (Porter 2005:101).

(verb) – “A building envelope functions as the interface between inside and outside” (ibid).

Kiss: connection of interior and exterior space by means of a plane, without touching each other. Just before the point of contact: it “holds both parties in perfect tension for a moment in time and space” (ibid:108)

(object) - interfaces = interconnectors, a device assuming the role of organisational and narrative character. It is a device intended to “relate us with reality and to multiply its qualities (that is, enhancing its very nature)” (Cros 2003:356).

Interfaces are **catalysts** and channellers transferring bits of information (ibid:356).

Transition “occurs directionally along lines of movement” (Porter 2005:197).

“Exposed to the ravages of time and the elements, architecture itself is in a perpetual state of transition. Moreover, the expression of architecture finds itself in a constant state of flux, shifting from one ideological standpoint or theoretical approach to another. **Transition** is simply another term for **change**” (ibid).

Threshold = transition zone (Porter 2005:193-194)

...where spaces transform the shape, colour and texture of its borders, where objects **react** to external pulses and are transformed. Architecture has always been the interface of human activity.

in INTERFACE architecture react to fluctuating social conditions

A threshold is literally “a strip of wood, stone, or metal fixed to the floor under a door, used to cover the joint between two types of floor finish” (Curl 1992:317). A threshold is a point at which a physiological or psychological effect begins to be produced.

An element of stone that marks precisely a limit between private and public space, combines all the non-physical conditions that the word transmits.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Susanna Cros (2003:623) states that: “**The threshold is a very potential space. It is the place of suggestion, where things happen only in a half way. The place where the moral and the amoral, the legal and the illegal, the truth and the lie can not be sorted out. The place where everything is possible, just for a moment, before you pass through it**”. A threshold (or rather the interface) is a mythical place, only existing for a few split seconds while being crossed. A place of magic, a place of imagination, a place of idealism and now: A PLACE OF REALITY!

“THE NATURE OF ANY INTERFACE WILL BE DRIVEN BY THE NATURE OF THE ACTIVITY AND CONTEXT”
(ibid:357).

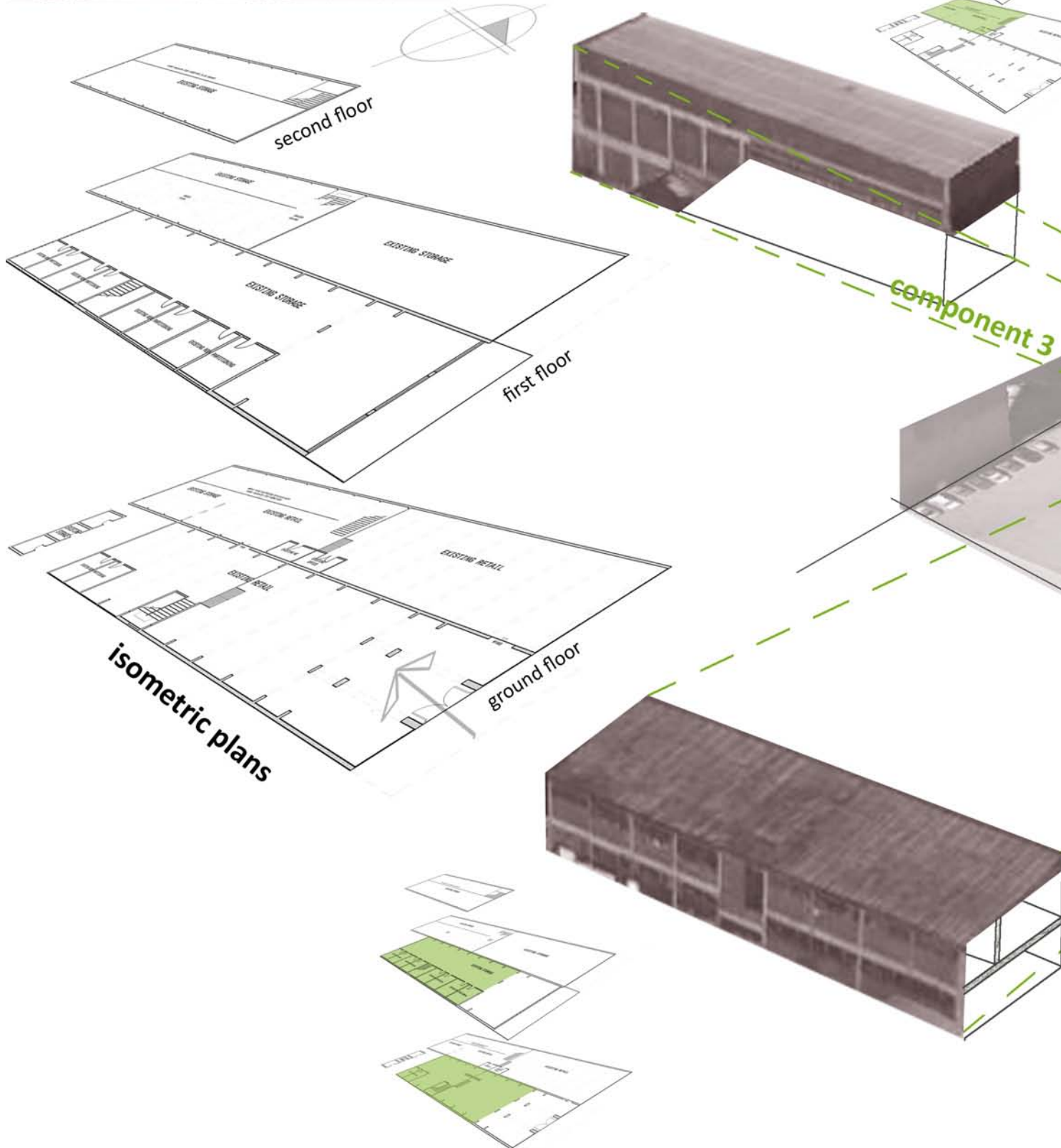
With emphasis on an interface driven by the nature of the activity and not the programme of the spaces.

According to Tappan, Teichmann and van Weert (Cros 2003:357): Interface is the point where **different uses accumulate**; a place of dislocation and re-location, a **place of line and flow**



2. EXISTING BUILDING AS MONTAGE:

Although no information on construction dates are available, Budget Furniture consists of four components constructed at different time periods visible when looking at the materiality and roof construction. With exception to the main entrance (see ground floor plan), the building as a whole 'functions' in isolation with no connection to its surrounding environment.



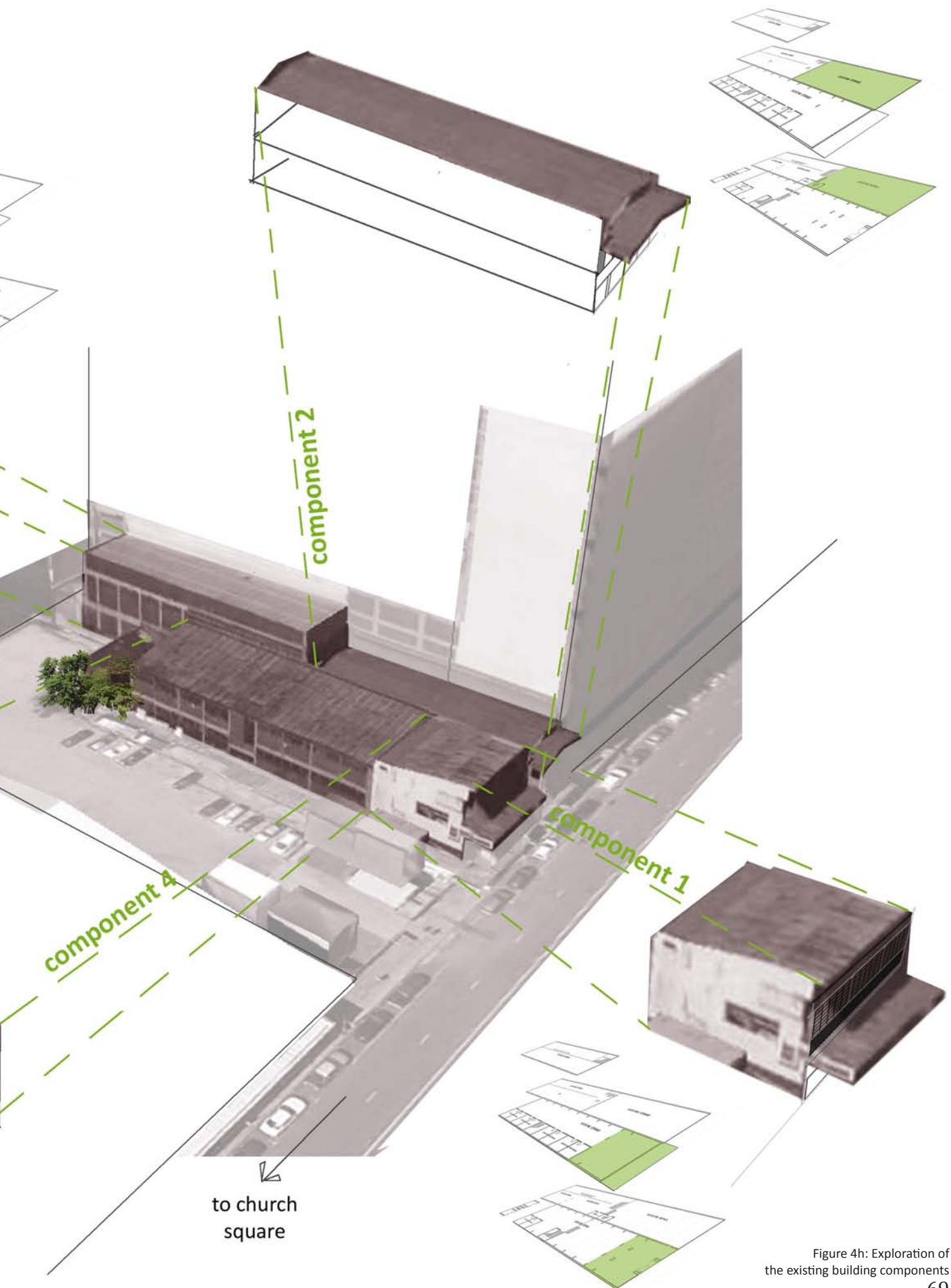
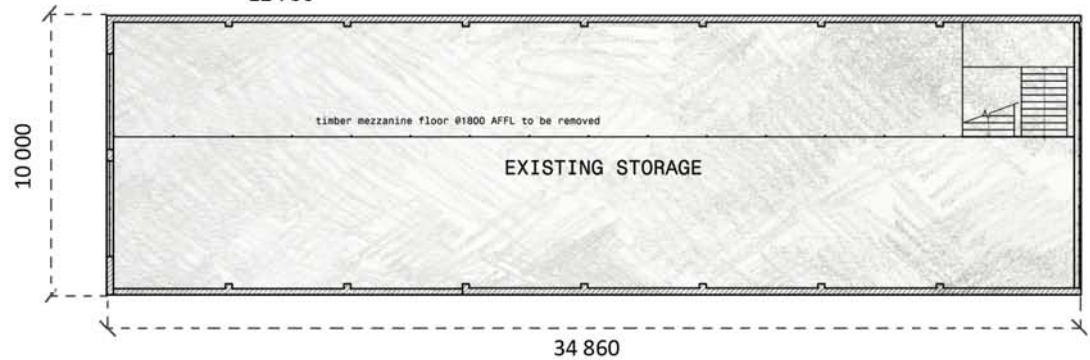
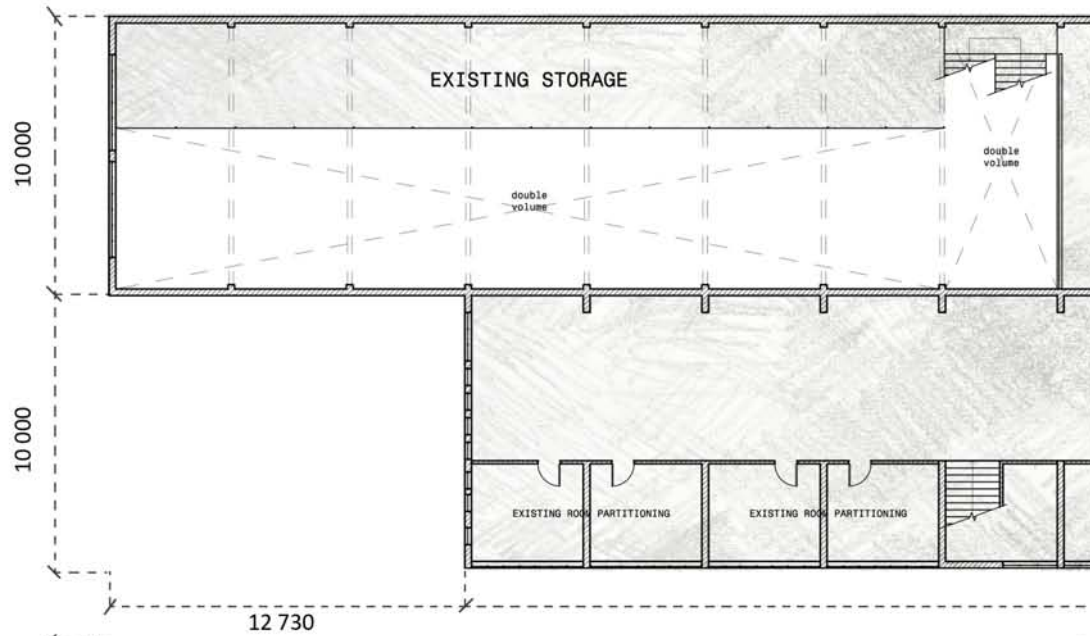
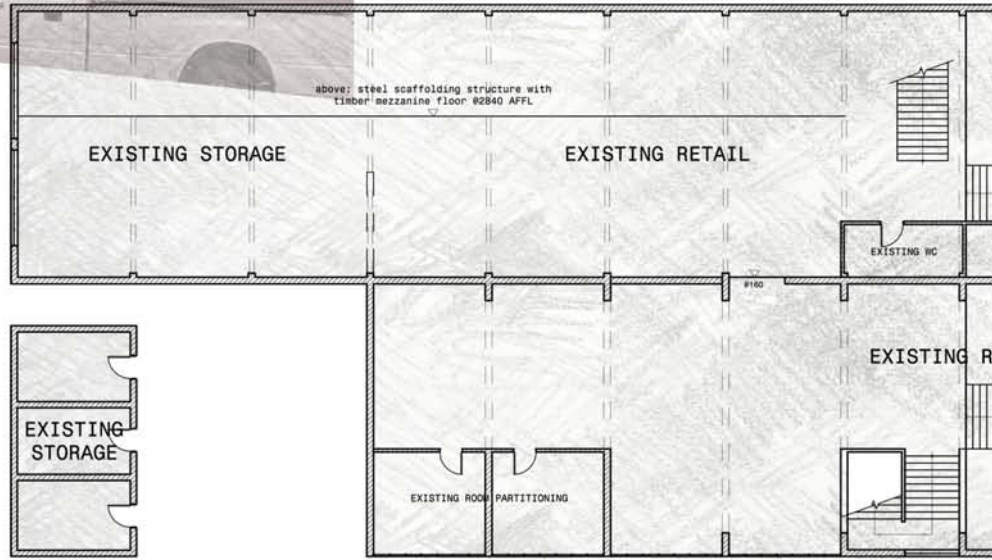


Figure 4h: Exploration of the existing building components
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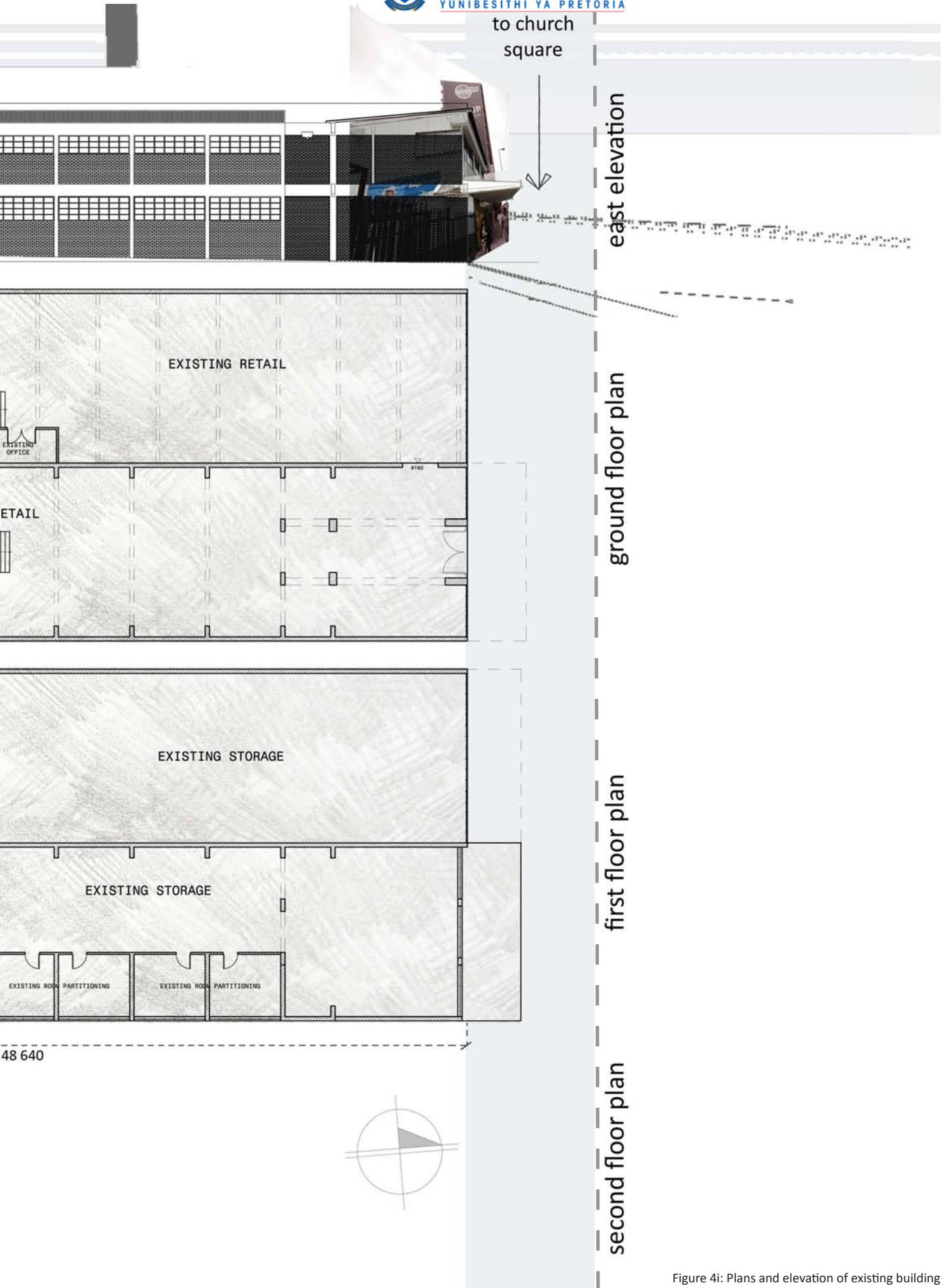
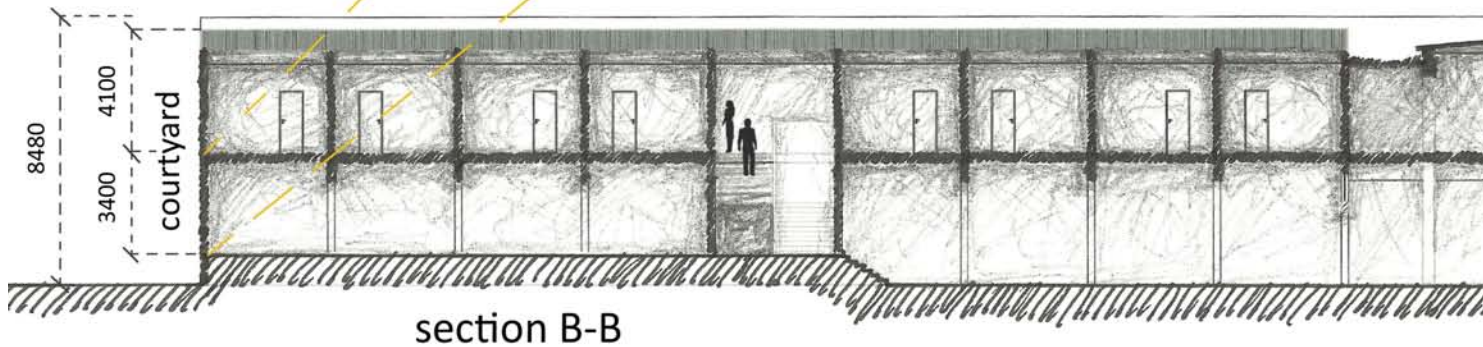
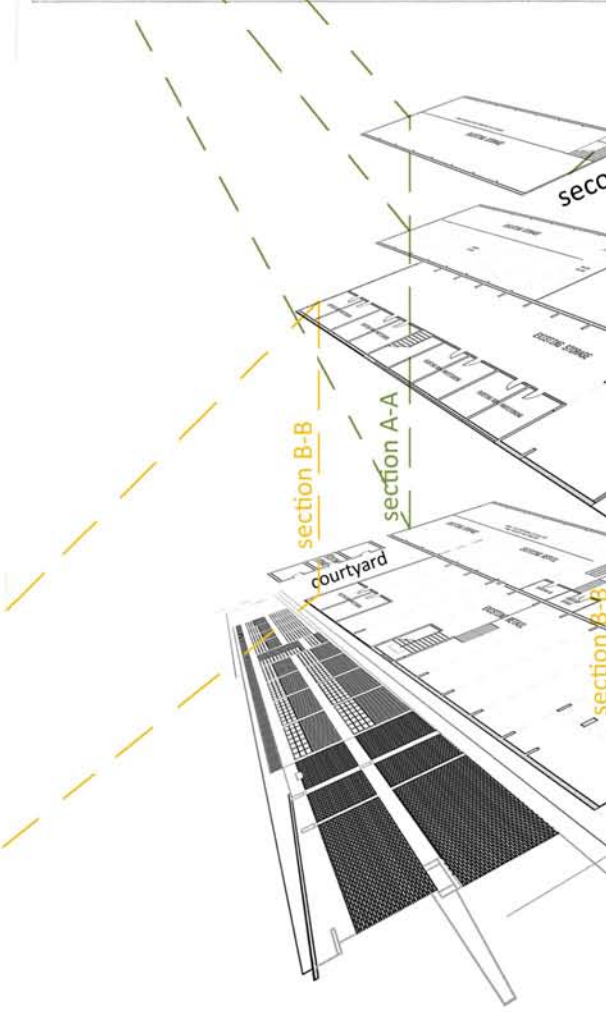
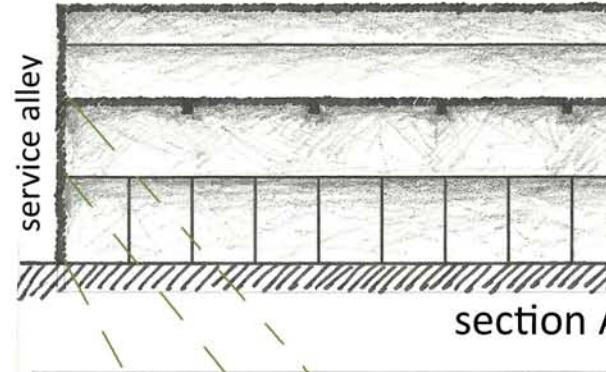
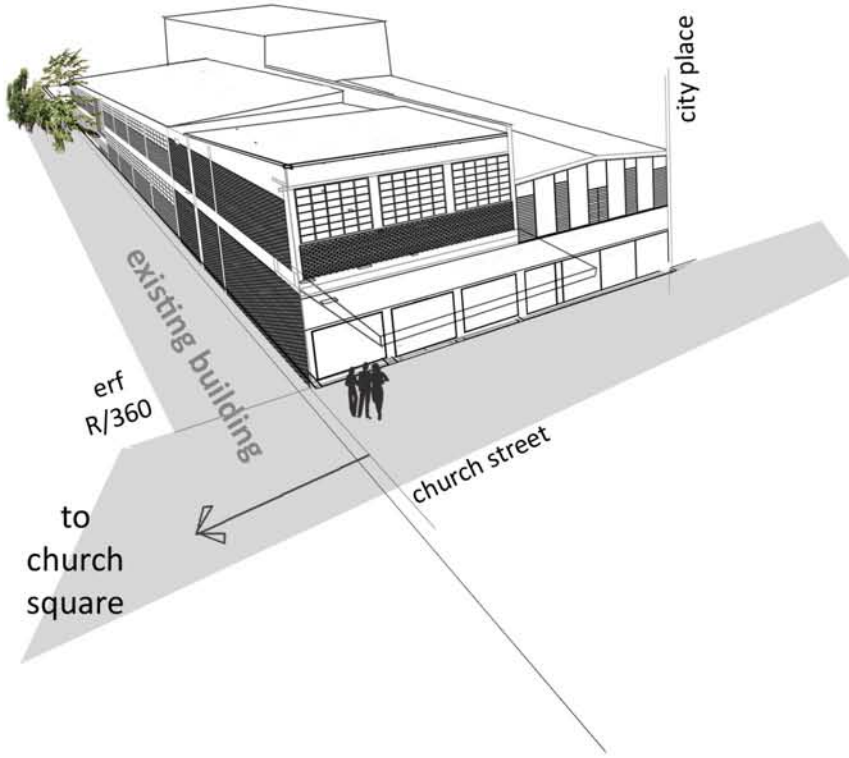
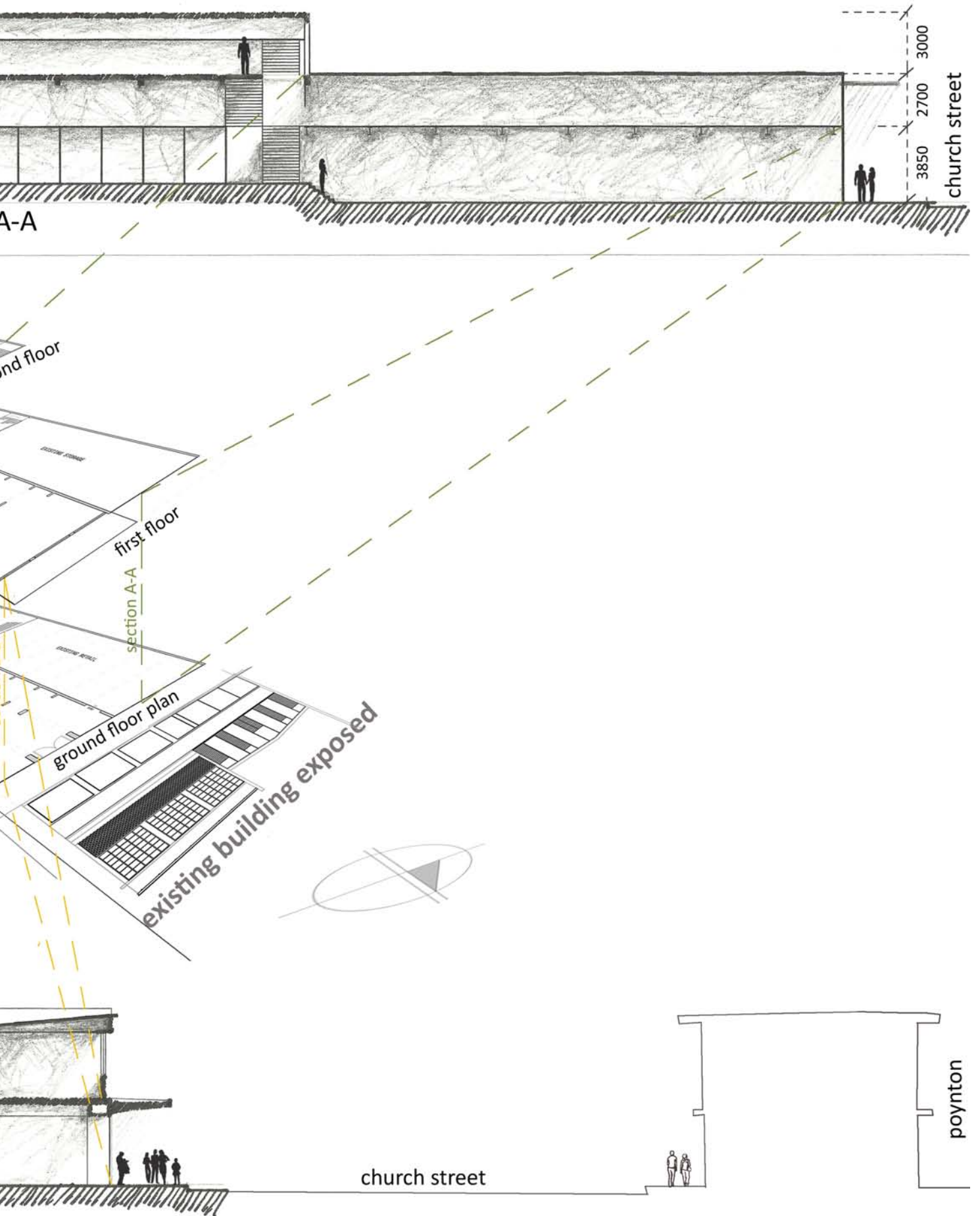


Figure 4i: Plans and elevation of existing building





4j: Further exploration of the existing building with sections – to give an indication of volumetric properties of the interior spaces



3. EXISTING INTERIOR MATERIALITY:

From the entrance straight through to the service alley, the building acts as a puzzle: there is no consistent use of materials; restricted movement because of arrangement of products in the showroom; and no separation between private or public space. The addition of mezzanine floors in component 3 (figure 4i) cannot be used for anything other than storage because there is not enough head room. Artificial lighting is switched on during the day to illuminate the dark interior spaces.

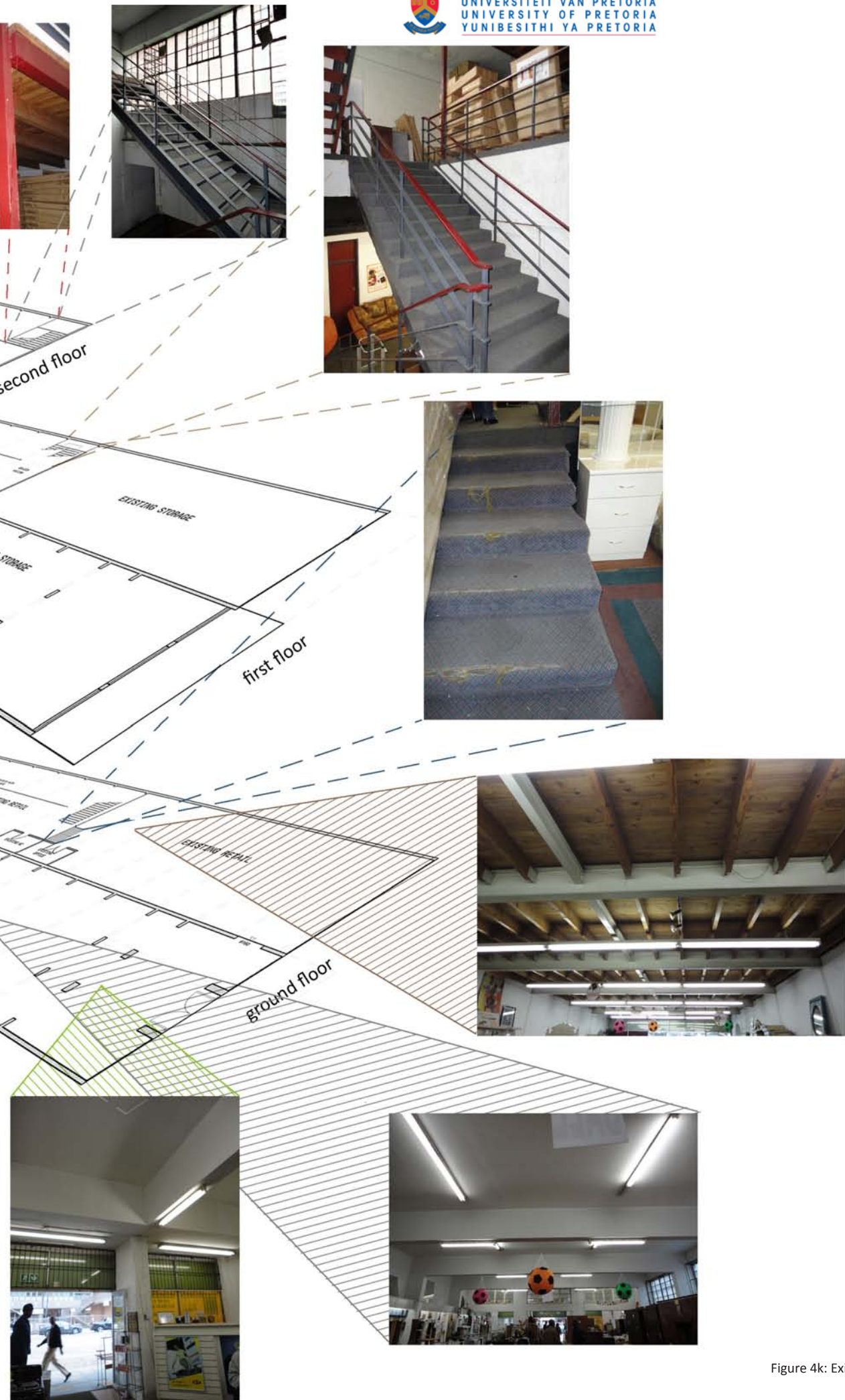
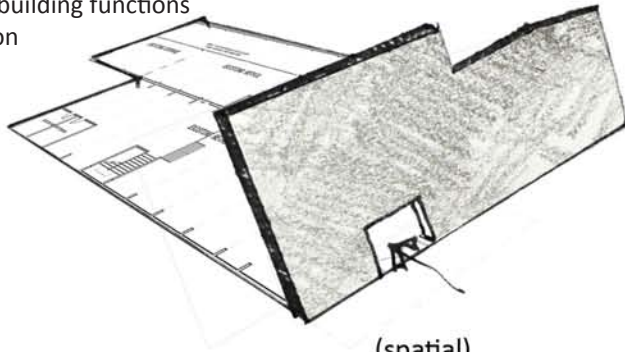


Figure 4k: Existing interior materiality



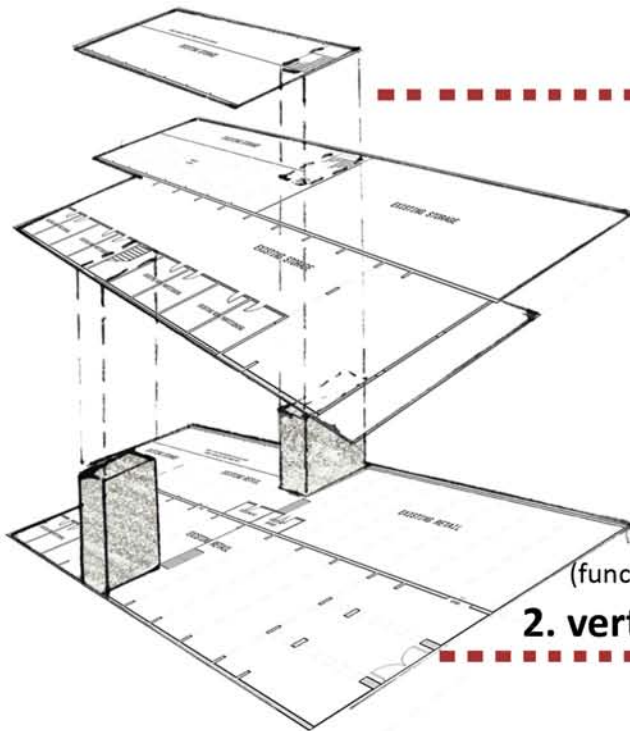
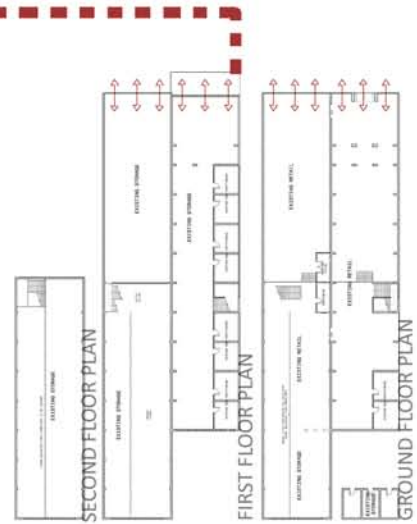
4. EXISTING INTERFACES:

Interfaces present in the proposed building. These interfaces appear problematic as it actually create solid boundaries within the space - the main reason why this building functions in isolation



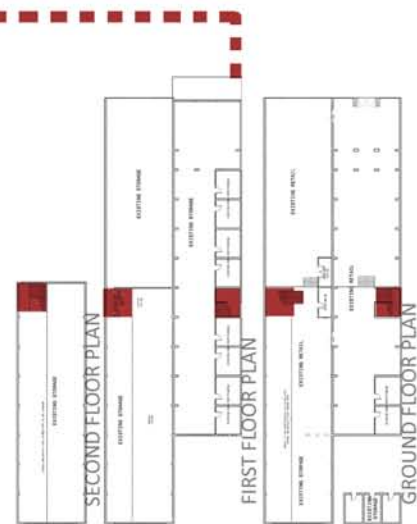
(spatial)

1. street interface



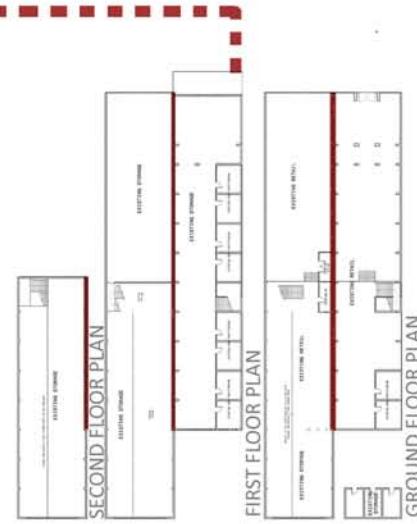
(functionall)

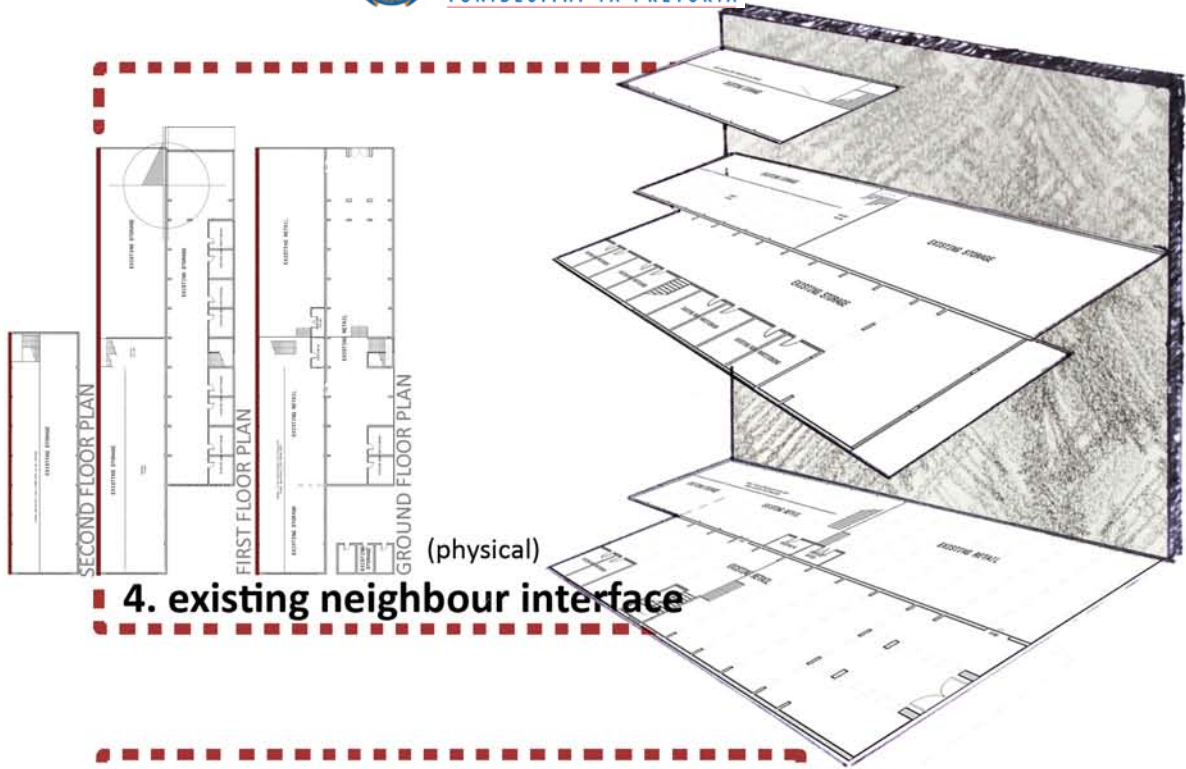
2. vertical interface



(volumetric)

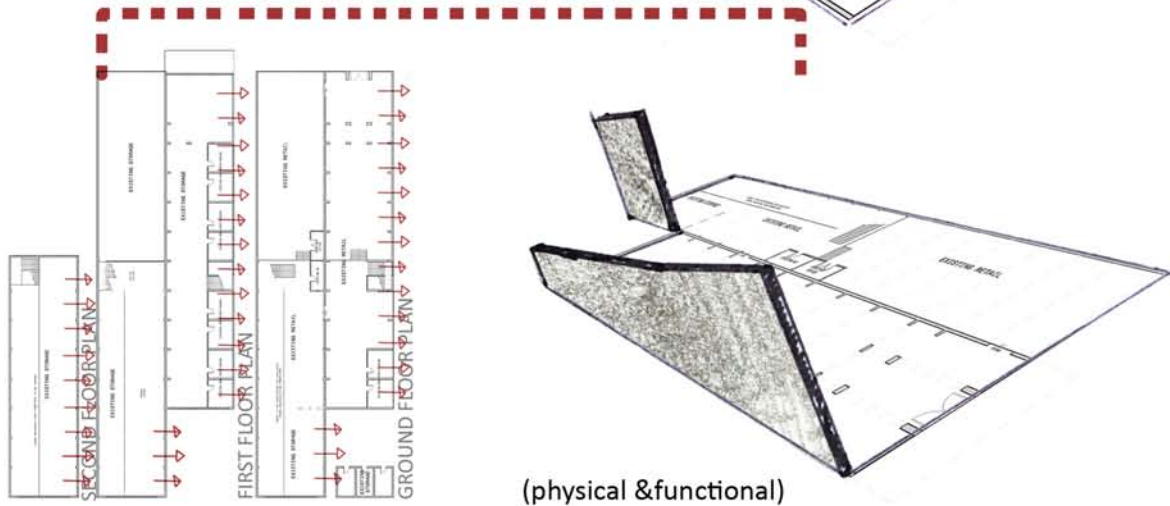
3. link interface





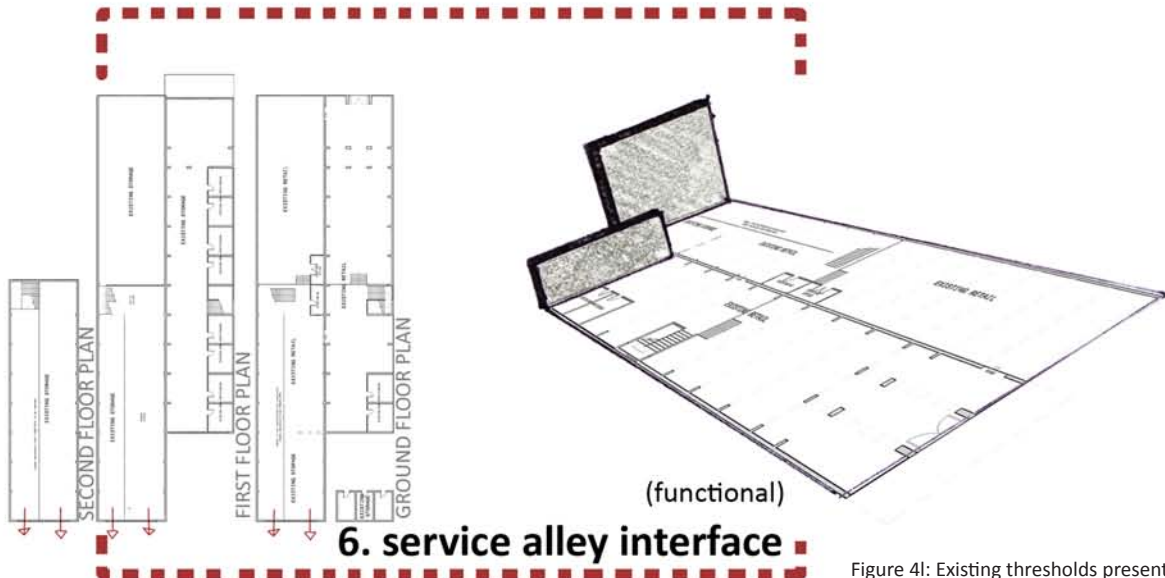
(physical)

4. existing neighbour interface



(physical & functional)

5. adjacent vacant site interface




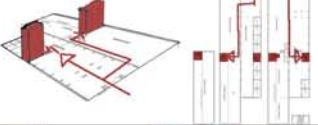
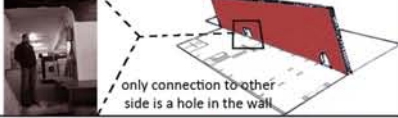



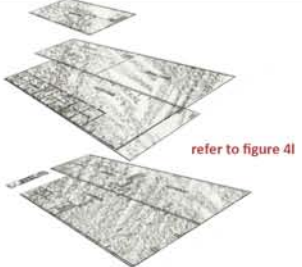
(functional)

6. service alley interface

Figure 41: Existing thresholds present on site

5. EXISTING INTERFACES EXPLORATION:

Interfaces (thresholds) on site which currently act as boundaries, along with alterations (proposed options) to be made to existing structure in order to achieve a responsive building

Interface	Problem	
1 Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited access - Very limited visibility - No visual interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improv - Improv - Increa
2 Vertical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolated/hidden - No contextual connection - Building regulations not followed - Two staircases (no direct movement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improv - Improv - Direct
3 Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boundary - Physically secluded - Minimum natural light - Structural wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increa - Improv - Increa - Improv
4 Existing Neighbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No relationship - Only physical connection - Scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorp - Improv
5 Adjacent Vacant Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolated - No access (only from street façade) - No visual interest - Block off eastern sun - Vacant (dead) external space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildin - Improv - Open t - Improv - Increa
6 Service Alley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boundary - Nothing to react on - Services - Access - Scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct - Decrea - Direct
7 Interior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public to private - Functional (programmatic) interface - New and old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improv - Improv - Perma - Decrea - Improv - Improv - Add to - Inclusi - Human

Simple architectural elements that can be implemented to act as interface layers:

- change of surface material 1
- hierarchy of space 2
- horizontal and vertical separators 3
- boundaries 4
- layers of events 5
- change in levels and spatial qualities 6


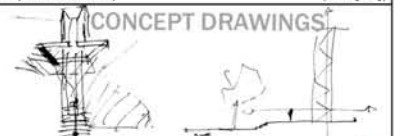


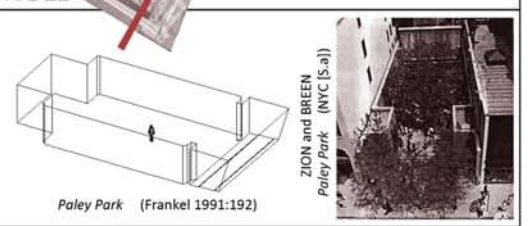
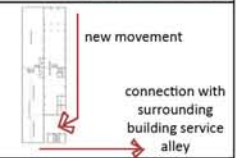
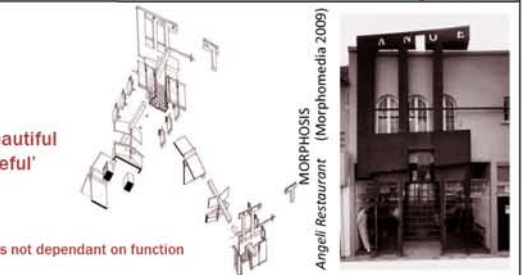

Aim	Proposed options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve visual access improve physical access improve use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movable planes - Materiality (e.g. extension of floor materials) - Lighting - Seating - Shade/shelter - Transitional space <p style="text-align: right;">refer to figure 4o for discussion and relevance of precedents</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve visual connection with context improve visibility from entrance define main access route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase height - Materiality (minimalist with physical strength) - Change axes - Remove 1 staircase 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve natural lighting improve internal movement improve user comfort improve visual access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove floor slabs where necessary - Remove boundary walls, columns in tact - Volume (spatial qualities) - Lighting <p style="text-align: right;">also refer to figure 4c</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elaborate visual link improve connection with context (include scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skylight - Roof garden - Exterior access routes 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> linking must react to empty external space improve accessibility link for natural light improve awareness from street improve use (attraction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Courtyard - New additional entrance - Windows - Activity (programmed space) - Seating - Shade/shelter - Advertising/branding 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve access improve visibility link new services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link access to linking sites - Wall treatment - Vertical visual connection (movement axes) 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve user comfort improve internal movement permanent vs temporary change in scale improve security improve visual interest elevators improve design change in scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movable planes - Materiality - Permanent planes/services - Temporary fittings - Texture - Lighting - Layers of events - Ramps and lift <p style="text-align: center;">'that which is beautiful must also be useful'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">design space which is not dependant on function</p> 

Figure 4m: Table of the proposed options to possible alteration of existing interfaces

5.1 PRECEDENT STUDIES:

The following precedent studies acts as examples of how to go about responding to the different interfaces (figure 4m) individually.

PALEY PARK
ZION & BREEN ASSOCIATES
5 east 53rd street, new york

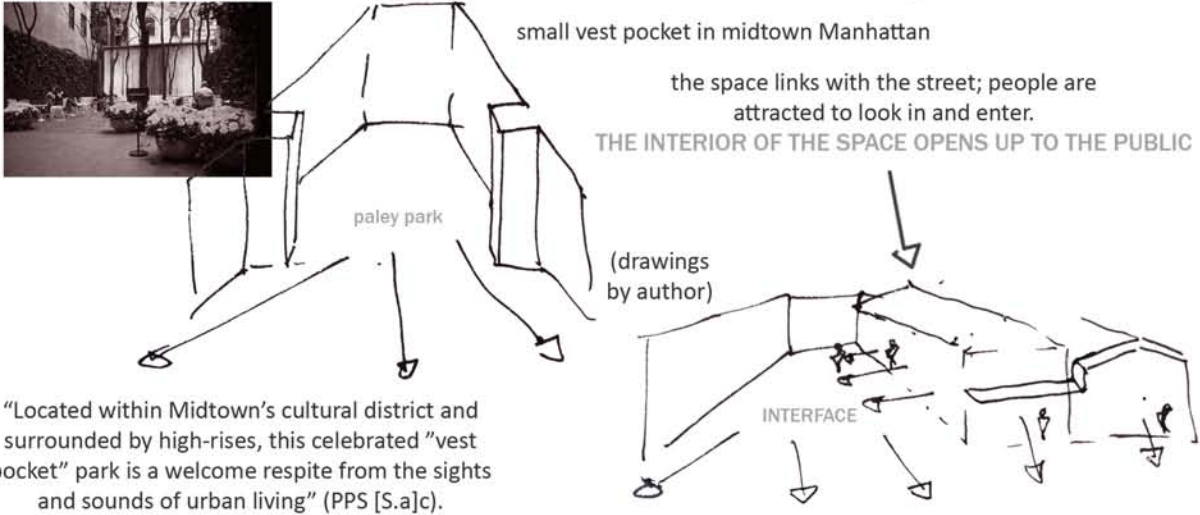


all photos: (NYC [S.a])

small vest pocket in midtown Manhattan

the space links with the street; people are attracted to look in and enter.

THE INTERIOR OF THE SPACE OPENS UP TO THE PUBLIC



pailey park

(drawings by author)

INTERFACE

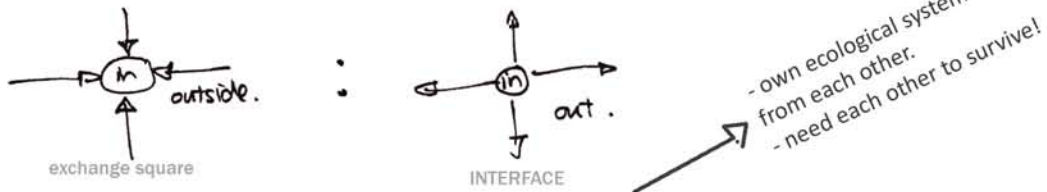
“Located within Midtown’s cultural district and surrounded by high-rises, this celebrated “vest pocket” park is a welcome respite from the sights and sounds of urban living” (PPS [S.a]c).

According to Project for Public Spaces (ibid), the success of this park boils down to the location, food and adaptability. This park has “an intimate relation with the street” (Frankel 1991:191-197) which attract people to look in and enter. The mobility of the chairs and tables allow the public to ‘construct’ their own space and therefore be in control and comfortable. Along with the waterfall, the shades of the trees during the summer and light entering the space, it allows one to ‘escape’ from the urban surroundings and sounds and create a sense of tranquility.

EXCHANGE SQUARE

MARTHA SCHWARTZ PARTNERS
manchester, england 2000

the square fabric extends out to the building edges surrounding it.
social activity is borrowed of the surrounding buildings and streets.



“Vital to the design of the square is that the plaza extends out to the building edges as its success, in part, depends on carefully ‘borrowing’ the activity of the surrounding buildings and streets” (Schwartz 2000).

The design of the square allows for free access for all and a variety of activities to take place, in addition it also “provides a setting for the surrounding buildings” (ibid). The ramps are of great functional value, driving the movement through the space and also providing seating and display space.

STOREFRONT FOR ART
AND ARCHITECTURE
STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS
new york 1992-1993



photo above
(Holl [S.a]a)



photos (Holl [S.a]b)



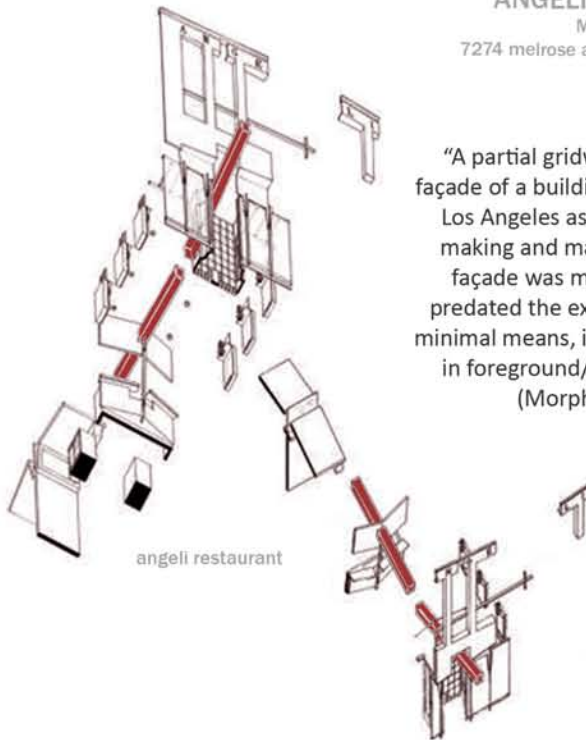
“The design forges a powerful link between public space, the sidewalk and street, and the private space...”
(Holl [S.a]b).

The adaptive nature of the street facade becomes the link/interface between two very different spaces. It creates the awareness of a threshold being breached, and allows the continuation of space by visual and physical access.



ANGELI RESTAURANT
MORPHOSIS

7274 melrose avenue, los angeles 1984



angeli restaurant

“A partial gridwork was added to the façade of a building on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles as an inexpensive way of making and marking an addition. The façade was meant to appear as if it predated the existing building. By using minimal means, it creates a series of shifts in foreground/background meaning”
(Morphomedia 2009).



An example of having one physical element running through an entire building, breaching all interfaces and connecting the respective spaces.

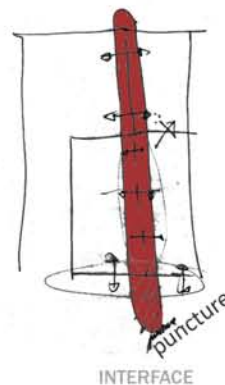


Figure 4n: Precedent studies on altering interfaces

6. INITIAL REACTION AND CONCEPT:

After the analysis and study of the existing interfaces, the initial reactions were driven by instinctive and swift decisions.

INITIAL REACTION

Due to the chosen location, the primary concern within the initial design is to connect it with the surrounding context. Finding the one intervention to respond to all the various interfaces of the building itself. To insure that the interior space is continuous with the exterior pedestrian movement

CONCEPT(UAL) APPROACH

Liminality (figure 4h) refers to a space that links the various interfaces by means of the movement back and forth through thresholds. This space can either be a boundary or an intermediate zone. An umbral is a sign of a change in condition or state that man uses to delimit space.

first each interface was given individual attention:

- 1. street interface
- 2. vertical interface
- 3. link interface
- 4. existing neighbour interface
- 5. adjacent vacant site interface
- 6. service alley interface

Umbral (threshold): an edge of light, a strip where light changes or fades. (Cros 2003:623)

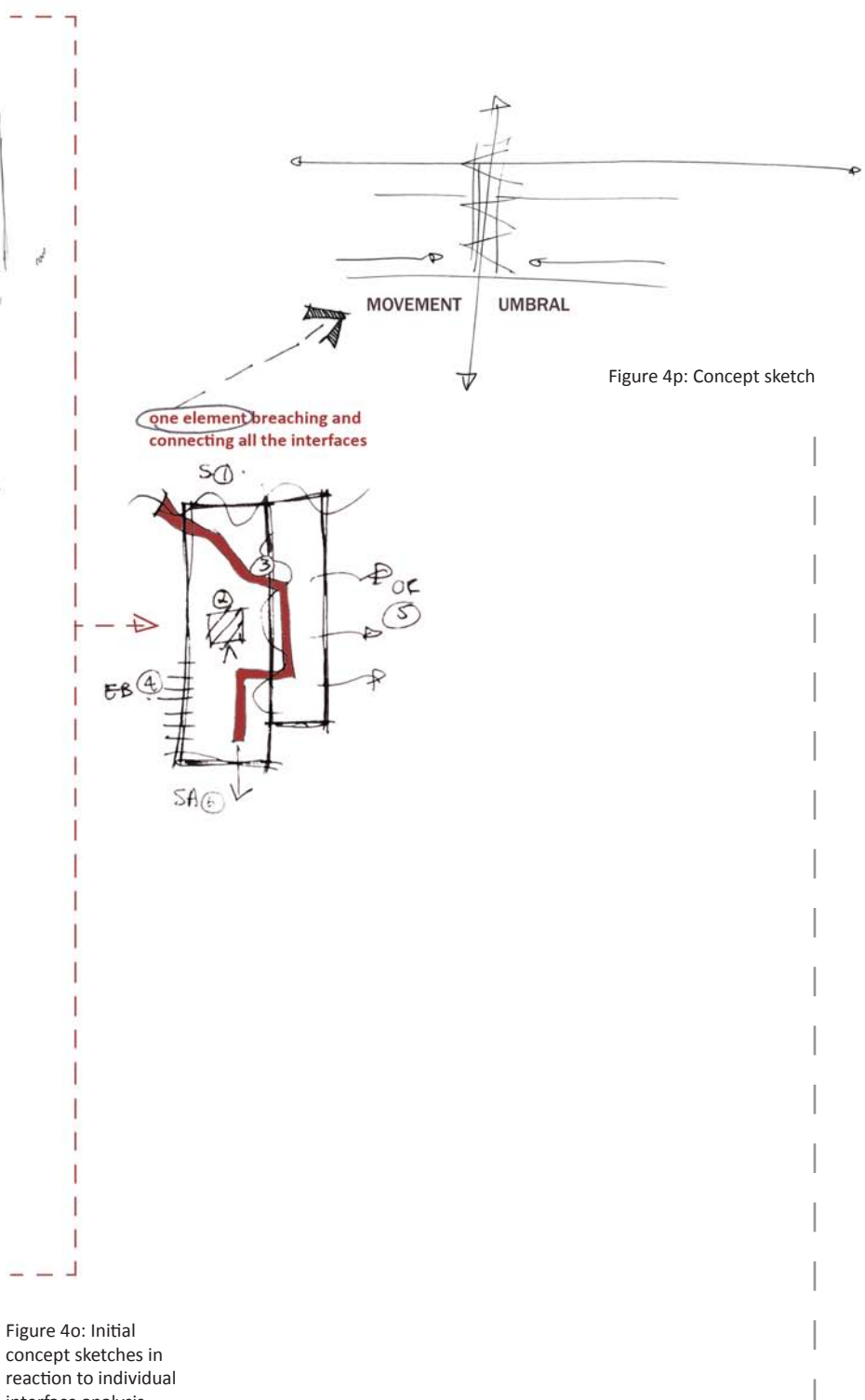


Figure 4p: Concept sketch

Figure 4o: Initial concept sketches in reaction to individual interface analysis



7. CONCLUSION

This chapter started with the role of interior architecture in the broader urban context, narrowed down to a proposed building and further decreased in scale to the exploration of specific individual boundaries found within.

This process of investigation should be done with each vacant or degraded building in the CBD since the materiality; spatial qualities and surrounding context vary.

In spite of the incomplete nature of the design, it was necessary to illustrate that the only constant element connecting the respective interfaces is movement. With the removal of boundaries, the potential energy possessed by each space was set into motion and transferred to the next. Movement activates planes, edges and ultimately spaces.

However it is necessary to proceed with further investigation into the guidelines applicable to all building types.