



2020

BRITTANY FLOWERS

TN-TU



TN-TU

T A · T U

brittany flowers



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TO MY PARENTS

*Thank you for the unwavering  
love, encouragement, and  
support. I could not have done  
this without you.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*To my chair, Dr. Ahmed K Ali:*

*I came to you with an idea, not quite sure what to do, and you helped me translate it into architecture. Thank you for exploring this topic with me and always telling me the truth when I needed to hear it. The depth and richness of this project is largely accredited to our many conversations together.*

*To my studio prof., Ray Holliday:*

*No matter how off-the-wall an idea I brought you was, you never shied away from helping me make it into a reality. Thank you for your guidance and support as I explored my interests and ideas to their fullest extent.*

*To my co-chair, Andrew Tripp:*

*Your input was invaluable. Each of our discussions catapulted my project to new levels of refinement and clarity. Thank you for helping me to see the opportunities within my own design.*

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## abstract.

The world of art and creative expressions is where my passion in life resides. Art of all different forms and mediums inspire wonder and admiration within me. However, there is one particular form of art that intrigues and fascinates me nearly to the point of obsession: the art of tattoo. Talented tattoo artists create beautiful works of art in the absence of the luxuries provided by art mediums such as drawing and painting. A painter gets to choose his or her canvas, while a tattoo artist does not. Tattoo artists work with the most delicate and inherently unique canvas; the human skin. Not only do they have to constantly acclimate to different colors, textures, and ages of the skin, they also have to tailor their designs to the form and qualities of the body parts they tattoo. All the while maintaining a high degree of finesse to execute the tattoo as painlessly as possible on a living human canvas that is rarely perfectly still. Tattooing indisputably has the highest stakes of any art form. Tattoo artists must mitigate high levels of pressure associated with the moral, emotional, and ethical implications of permanently altering the human skin.

Of all artistic mediums, tattoos arguably provide the most physically intimate connection between oneself and art. Our bodies are the most sacred canvases to exist, which is why the craft of tattooing deserves to be amongst the most highly respected art forms. This can be observed in different traditions and cultures all around the world, but unfortunately, this is not currently the case in today's world perception despite such a large portion of the population having at least one tattoo. This could indeed be accredited to the outdated and largely unfounded stigmas surrounding people with tattoos which have been used to unfairly diminish tattooing as an art form. In addition to the negative stigma, tattooing as an art form has rarely been celebrated in the built environment. Artists usually practice in the dark, neglected, and unnoticed spaces associated with the "bad part of town". The driving force behind my project is to eradicate these harmful stereotypes and secure tattooing's rightful place in the world of fine art. Through architectural intervention the true essence of tattoo is revealed and celebrated.

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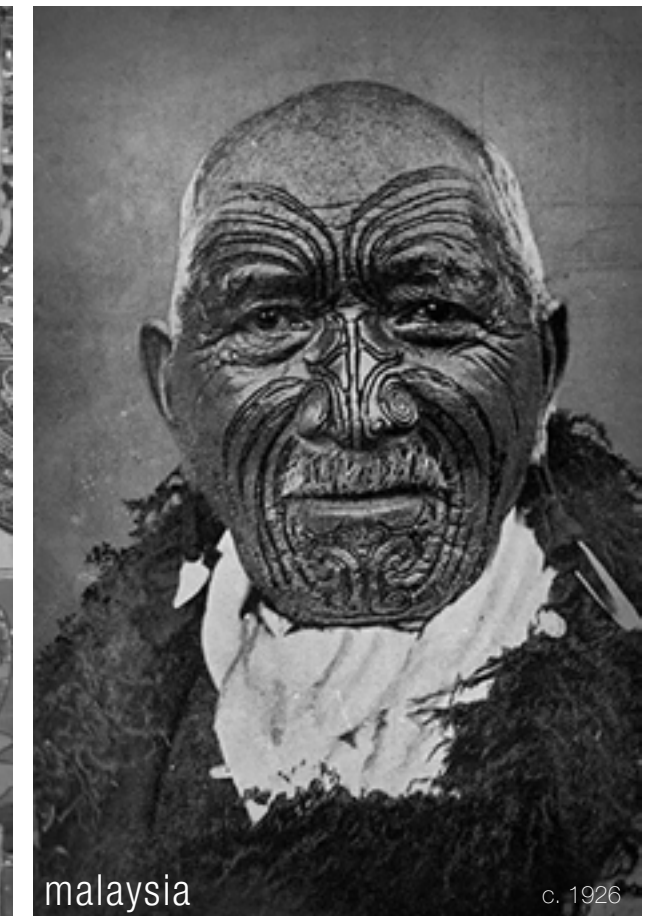
+

the  
art of  
tattoo

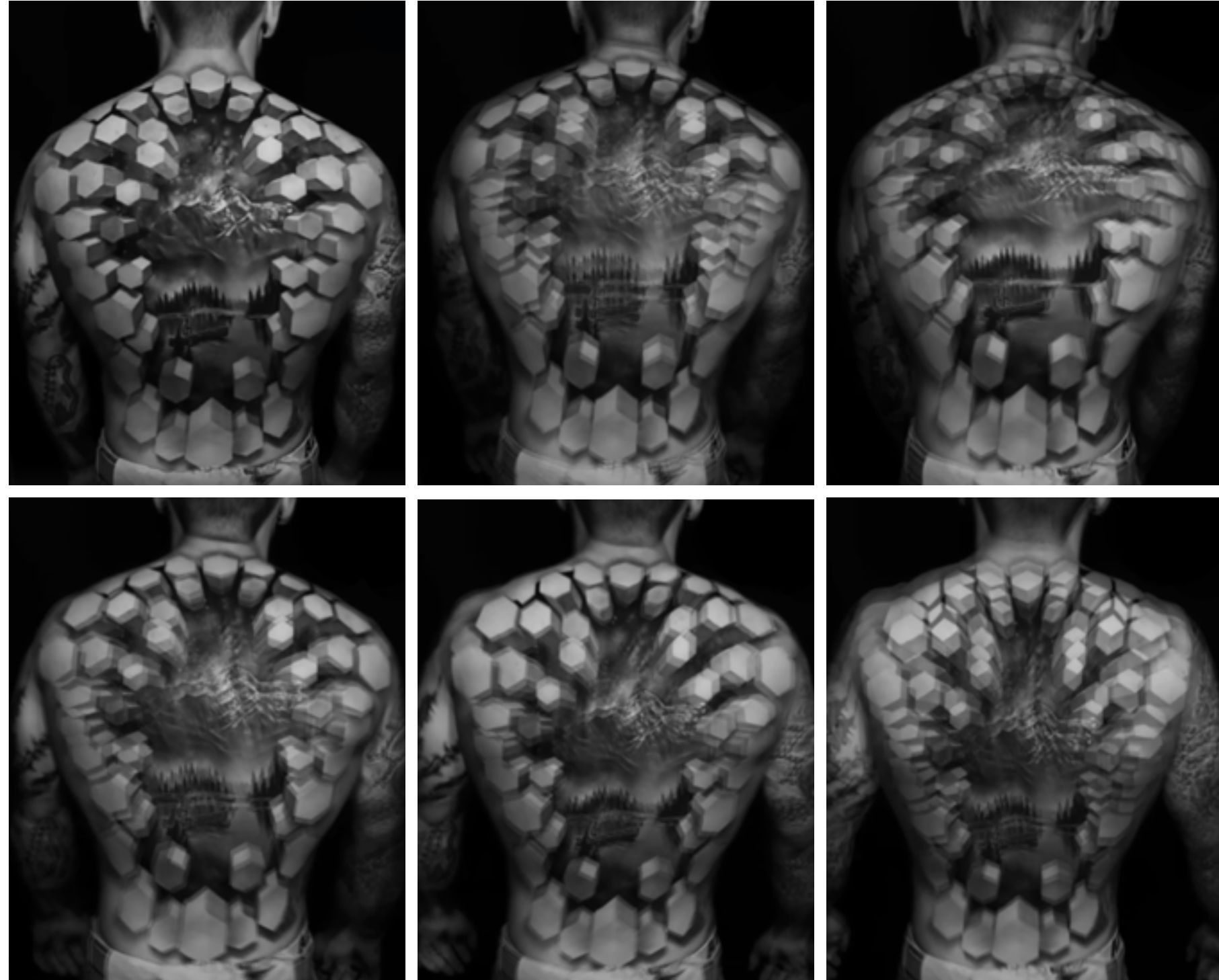


*"Not one great country can be named,  
from the polar regions in the north to  
New Zealand in the south, in which the  
aborigines did not tattoo themselves."*

- Charles Darwin







## art, alive.

*When an image\* unites with the human body something truly magnificent happens. An image that previously only existed statically in the two-dimensional form becomes a dynamic and performative piece of art.*

In contrast to most artistic mediums such as dance, music, or painting, tattoos are a transitory art form at the mercy of the human they exist upon. As a person changes, so does the tattoo. As a person ages, the tattoo fades; when a person dies, the tattoo decays. This unbreakable link between art and the human condition compels us to contemplate the way we perceive art, performance, and our own fleeting mortality.

A tattoo's meaning is as equally destined to change over time as it's physicality. People are complex and dynamic living creatures. The relationships we have with ourselves, others, and the world in general, are constantly changing; as are our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Over the course of a lifetime, a person will associate their tattoo with a multitude of different meanings, emotions, and memories.

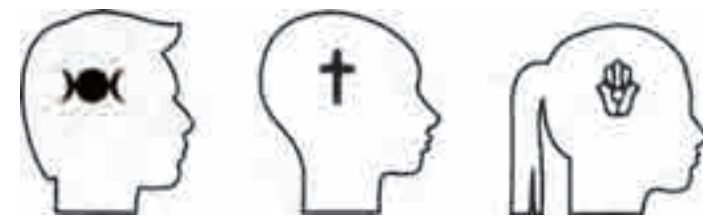
\*The same "image" tattooed on one person is going to be different on another. As a cellular medium, our DNA ensures the tattoo we receive is as inherently unique as we are.

## layers.

*The true essence of a tattoo is not defined by the content of the image. Tattoos are the exteriorization of a person's many layers including thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Therefore, to understand the essence of a tattoo is to understand the essence of a person.*

### non-physical

Tattoos are the exterior manifestation of a person's thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Often, they hold emotional, moral, or spiritual significance. The inseparable connection that exists between tattoos and the human psyche makes them powerful tools for uncovering the layers fundamental to a person's being.



### physical

In an anatomical sense, a tattoo is quite literally revealed through layers. Ink pigments reside in the deepest layer of the human skin. When we look at a tattoo, we are seeing past the two outermost layers to the layer that holds the tattoo.

## intrigue.

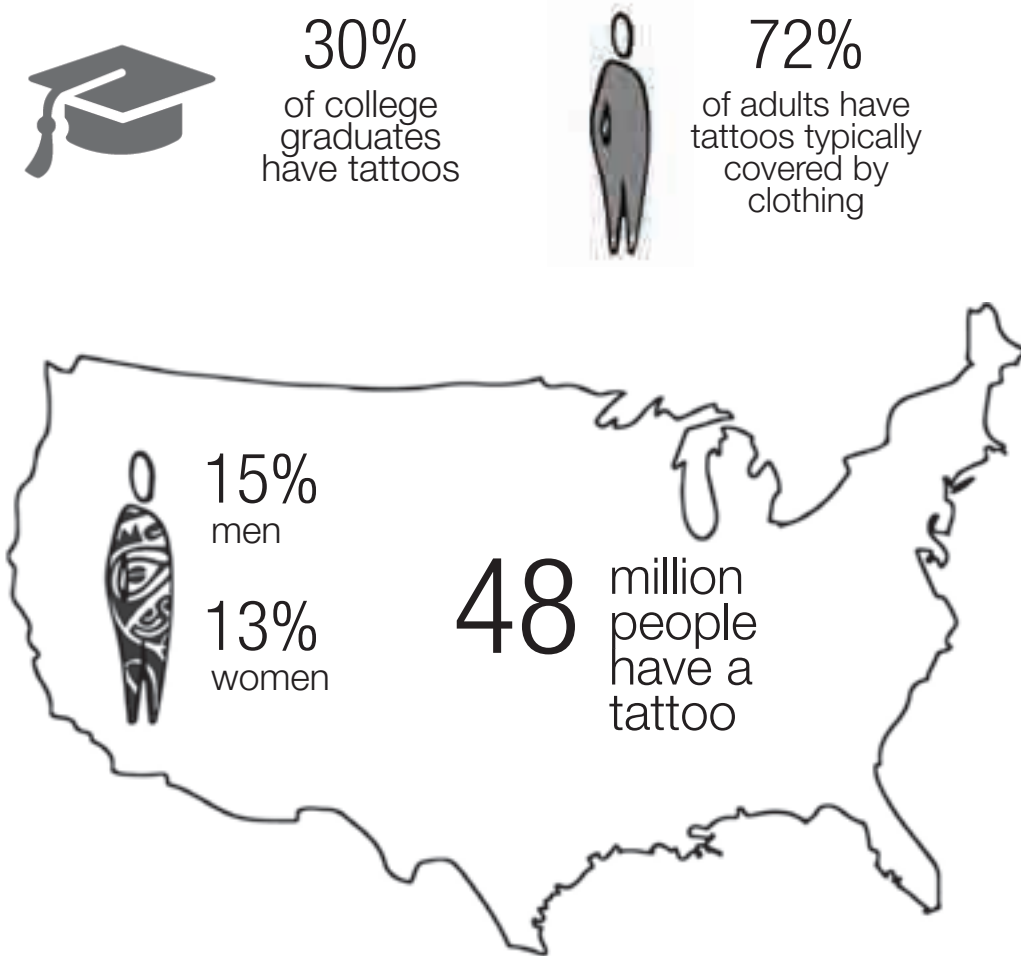
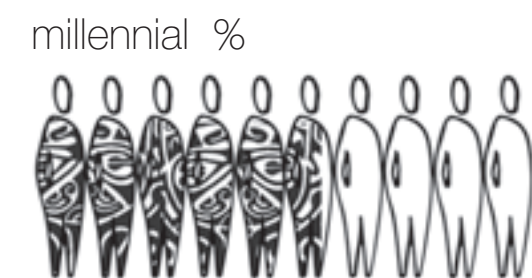
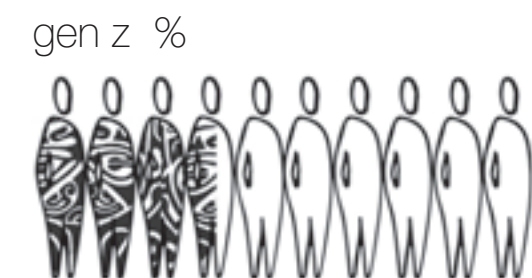
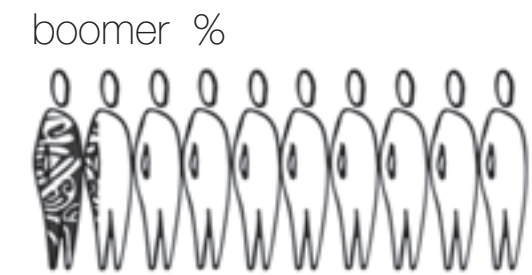
*Tattoos have a fascinating way of arousing curiosity and intrigue within the people that encounter them.*

When someone mentions they have a tattoo it usually elicits a surprised and inquisitive response. The simple act of seeing a tattoo peeking out of a sleeve can cause imaginations to run wild. People often can't help but stare when they see someone with tattoos, sometimes even inquiring to a perfect stranger as to what their tattoos signify.

When we learn what a tattoo means to someone, we get to know them on a deeper and more personal level. We feel more compelled to inquire about someone's tattoo as to, say, a drawing they made because context is essential to understand the true essence of a tattoo.



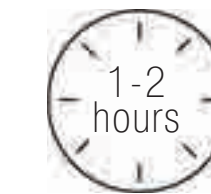
## statistics.



avg. prices x size



avg. tattoo time x size



## logistics.

inspiration



find a shop + artist



finalize design + placement



get tattooed



Anyone over the age of 18 in the United States can get a tattoo. Some people get tattoos on a whim, but for many it's a much more contemplative process. Having an idea of what you want the tattoo to look like is often just the beginning. Next steps include finding a talented tattoo artist, booking an appointment, and working with them to translate the vision you have into a reality. Depending on who the tattoo artist is and what size tattoo you want, this can be a very expensive, painful, and time-consuming endeavor.



## tattoo shops.

Going to a tattoo shop can be an extremely daunting experience. When imagining a standard tattoo shop what usually comes to mind is neon lights, fenced storefronts, biker gangs, and in general the “rougher” part of town. Unfortunately, at least one of these descriptors is true for nearly all tattoo shops in America. The vast majority of tattoo shops exude a tough and ‘edgy’ aesthetic that perpetuates stereotypes associating people who get tattoos with rebellion and crime.

### the problem

Tattooing is a borderline medical procedure that has permanent effects on the skin. Health risks, hygiene, and post tattoo complications are just a few of the potential liabilities. Additionally, the experience of being tattooed can provoke extreme emotional and physical stress. So why is it then that the standard is to have this procedure completed in a cramped 15' x 20' storefront next to perfect strangers? You wouldn't get minor surgery next door to the local pawn shop, so why should this be any different for tattoos?



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## objective.

*Since tattoos have a rich history in every culture and such a large percentage of our modern society has them, then why doesn't a work of architecture yet exist to honor and celebrate this long-held tradition of self-expression?*

The objective of this study is to activate architecture as an agent to explore, celebrate, and highlight the true essence of tattoo as art. As a result, redefining how society understands tattoos and establishing tattoo's footing in the world of fine art.

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†  
urban  
canvas



# contextual territory

## Denver, CO.

- Denver as a tattoo city
- + 250 tattoo shops in the Denver metro area
- + top 15 list of most tattooed US cities
- + destination for the world's largest tattoo convention
- + one of the top US cities for art and design

### site location

- + downtown neighborhood: 'Golden Triangle'
- + epicenter of the art and culture scene
- + one of the most walkable areas in the city





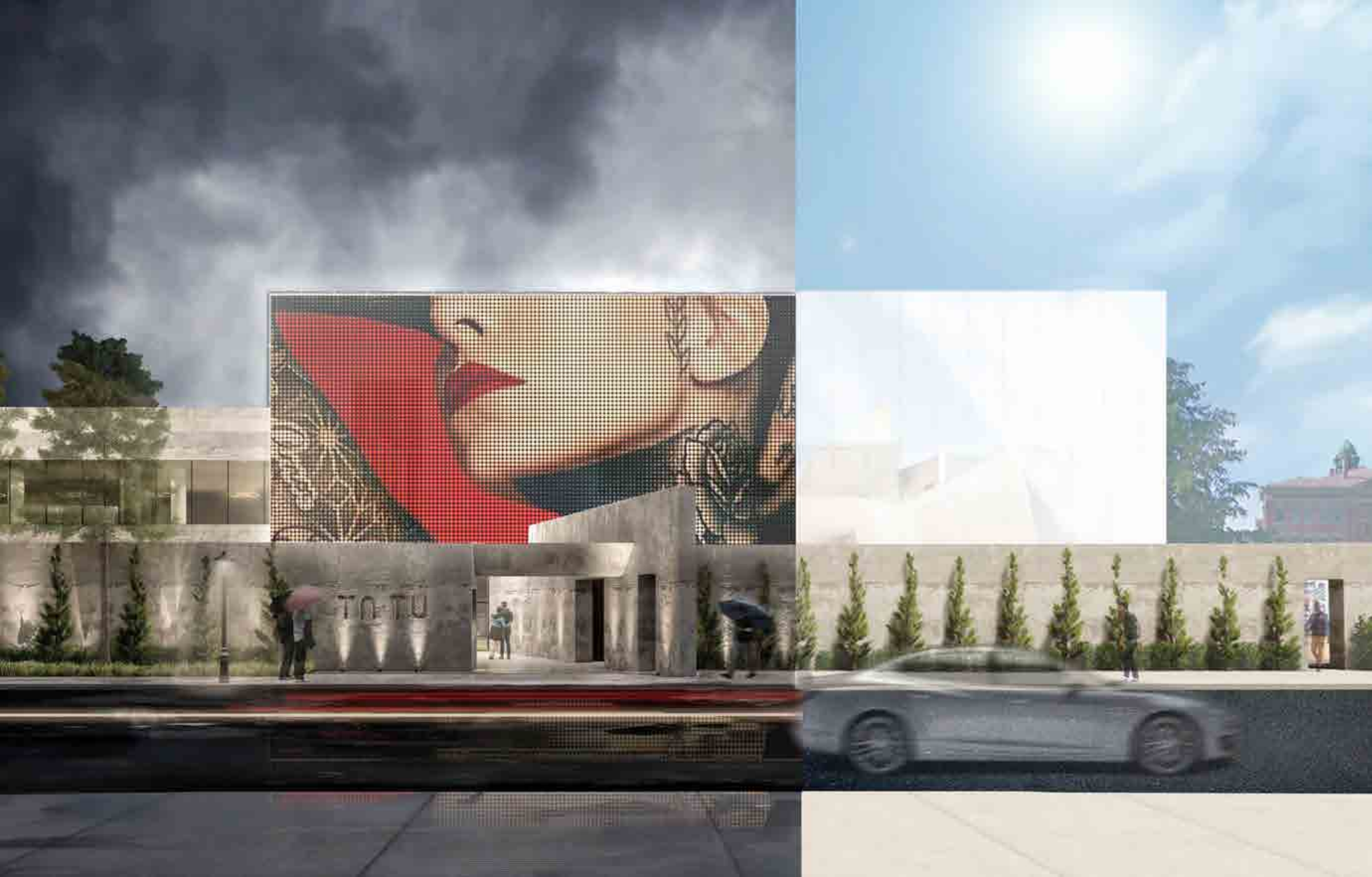
## Denver arts corridor.

The project site context is largely marked by two influential projects located immediately north of the site. The Denver Art Museum by world renowned architect, Daniel Libeskind, is one of Denver's most iconic buildings. This is undoubtedly attributed to the sharp extruding geometries and metal-clad form. The Denver Public Library by the late architect Michael Graves is another significant work of Denver architecture and similarly draws attention with its bold abstraction of post-modern classical forms and volumes. Both projects, although having different architectural styles, hold very strong formal expressions overshadowing the entire area's built environment. In addition to these two pieces of iconic

architecture, is the ART hotel which appears as if it was designed in reaction to the sharp form-work of the Denver Art Museum. The slanting edges of the façade in conjunction with the Libeskind museum creates an interior plaza that extends linearly to the edge of the project site. In addition to these works by famous architects, the Art Hotel across from the Denver Art Museum seems to create additional chaos within the cityscape. The conflicting forms, style, and materiality of the corridor requires a deeper analysis and understanding of my project in order to take a very clear position within that chaos. I believe in architecture that brings order to the chaos.







≡

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# TA-TU arts center

The program of the project was devised to celebrate tattooing as an everyday practice, as a historical and cultural phenomenon, and as an artistic expression of the human form. TA-TU is not exclusively for tattoo enthusiasts. An intended user would be anyone who considers themselves a patron of the arts.

tattoo rooms  
tattoo parlor gallery theater  
gift shop + interactive exhibitions museum

## tattoo parlor

A thoughtful assembly of spaces essential to the tattoo process. These include: client consultation spaces, a tattoo design + drawing space, a gallery for in-house artists to display work, and private tattoo rooms with access to a shaded outdoor balcony.

## interactive tattoo space

For users to experience what they might look like with tattoos. Patrons can stand in front of the floor to ceiling LED screens and see themselves in real time with digitally applied tattoos.

## museum

A history of tattoo in every culture and region. Exhibitions detailing the different tools, techniques, and methods of tattooing as well as the different styles and trends popularized throughout time.

## gallery

A collection of artworks created by tattoo artists as well as tattoo photography. The gallery is a pivotal intermediary space that bridges tattoo theory and practice.

## theater

For productions that highlight the performative nature of body art and the body as art.

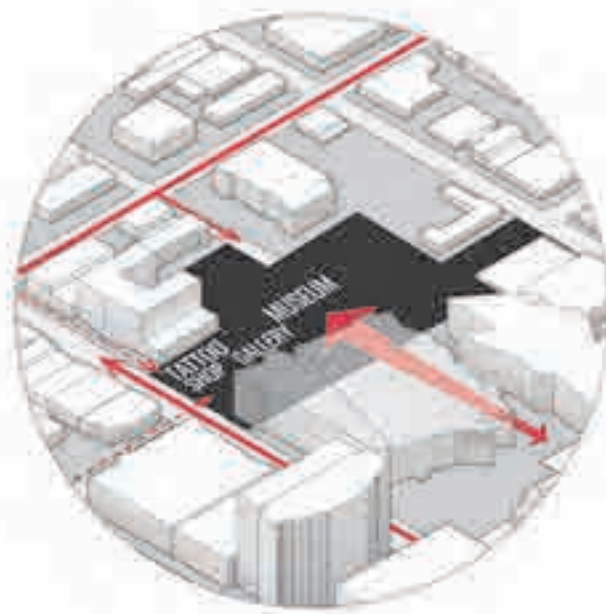


North elevation



grounded.

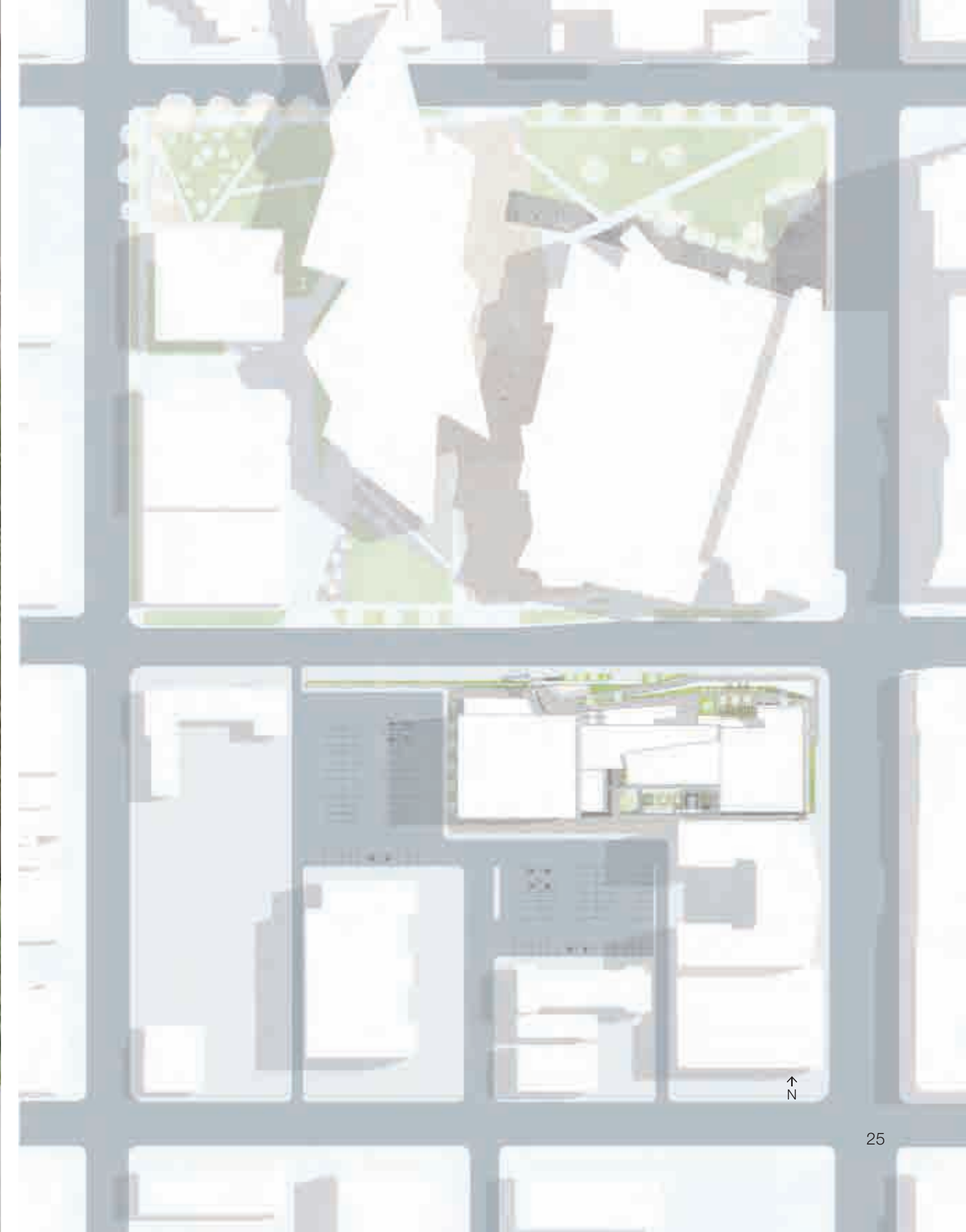
In response to the bold unrelenting forms within the site context, the project aims to establish order and ground the building intervention within the cityscape. The project brings reprieve within the chaos and doesn't concern itself with battling for visual attention. The project invites the user to discover its function and beauty through directly experiencing it. The articulate assemblage of spaces both indoors and outdoors creates a rich architectural experience.



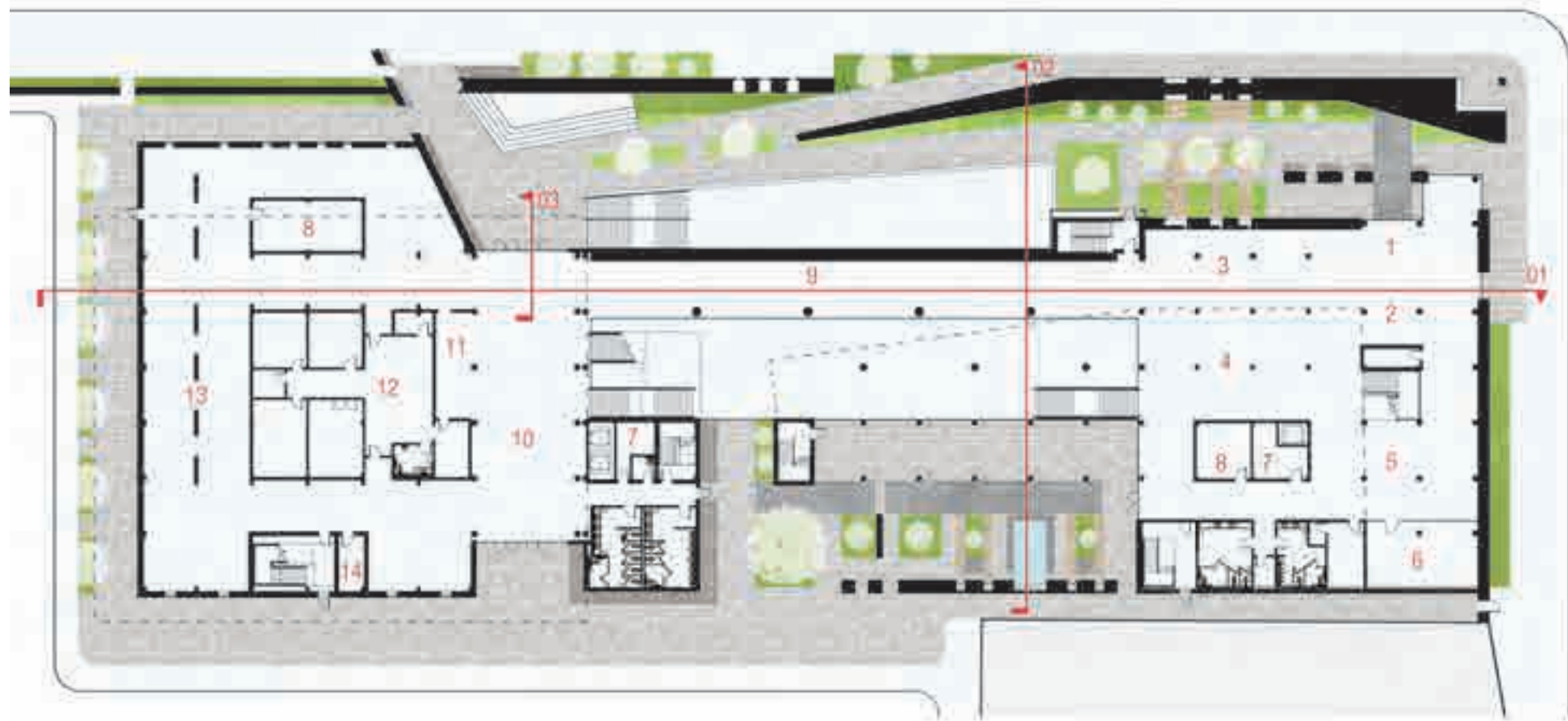




tattoo parlor courtyard







ground level plan



lower level plan

- |   |                         |    |                          |
|---|-------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | tattoo parlor lobby     | 10 | museum lobby             |
| 2 | tattoo parlor reception | 11 | museum reception         |
| 3 | tattoo parlor gallery   | 12 | museum admin             |
| 4 | consultation space      | 13 | museum exhibitions       |
| 5 | drawing room            | 14 | IT room                  |
| 6 | tattoo parlor admin     | 15 | interactive tattoo space |
| 7 | mechanical              | 16 | gift shop                |
| 8 | storage                 | 17 | office                   |
| 9 | gallery                 | 18 | sunken plaza             |



tattoo reception

tattoo consultation

private tattoo room

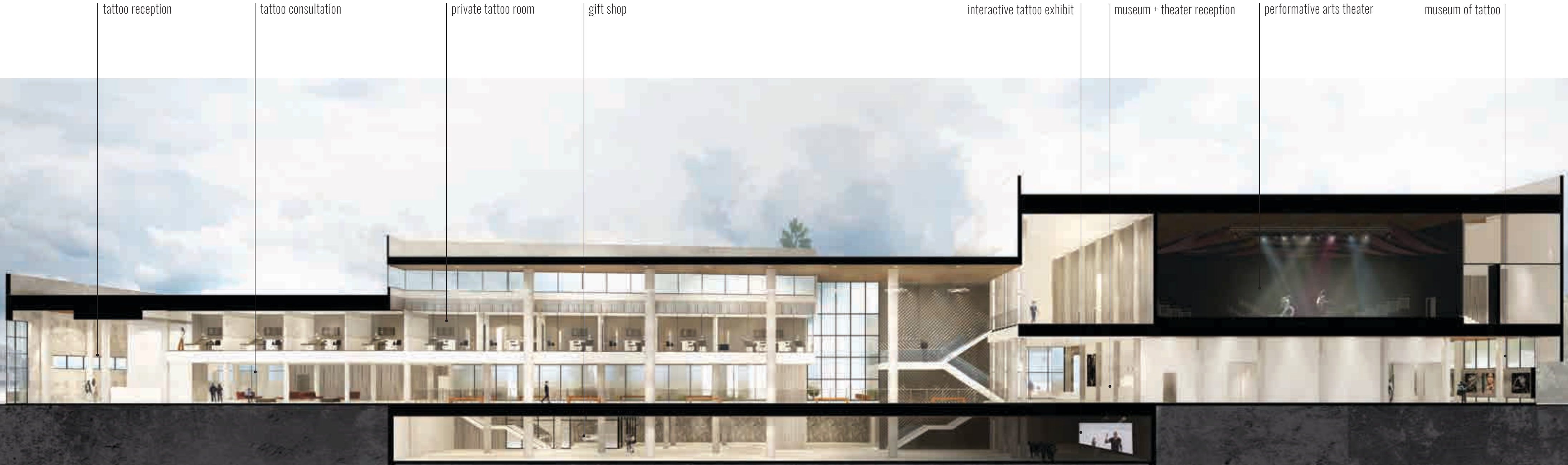
gift shop

interactive tattoo exhibit

museum + theater reception

performative arts theater

museum of tattoo



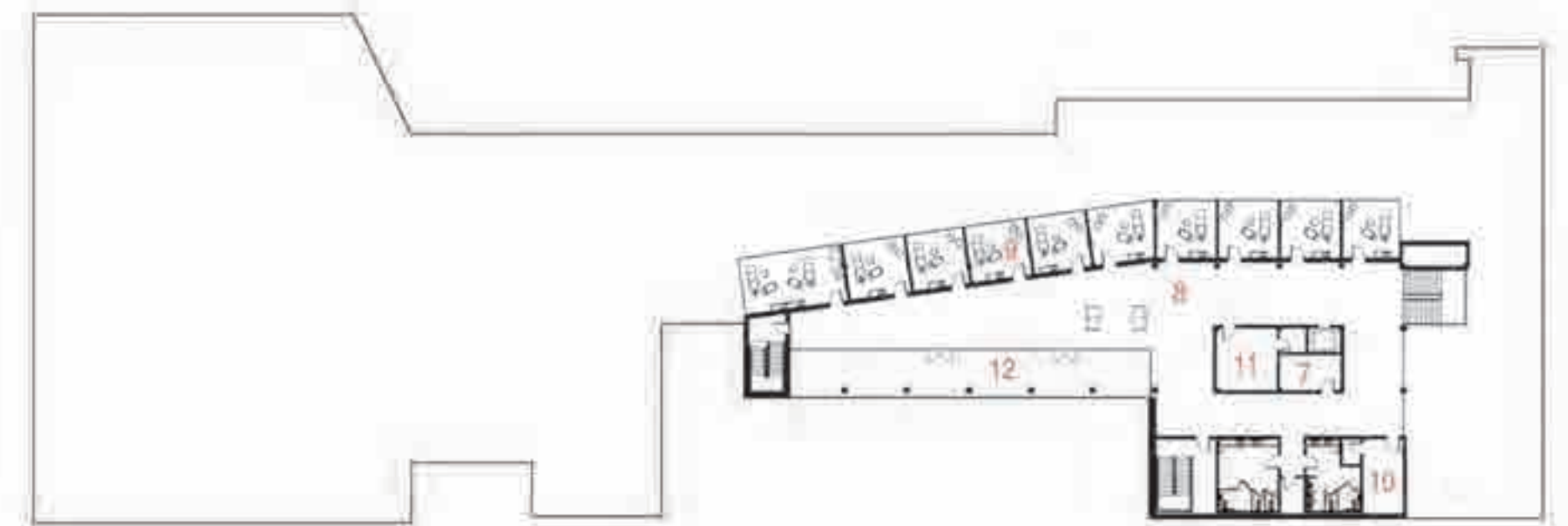




museum + theater reception



third level plan



second level plan



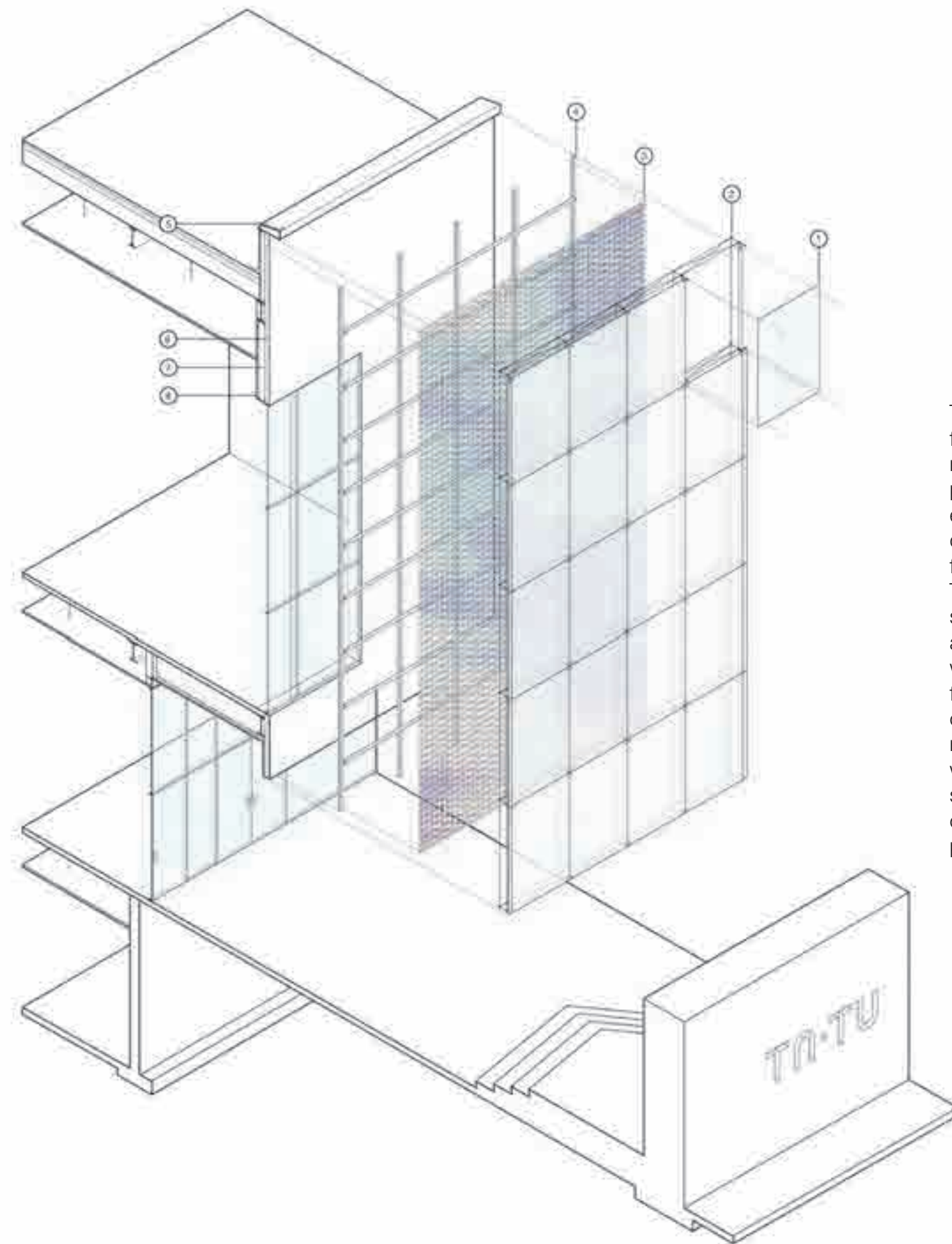
- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 theater lobby     | 7 mechanical            |
| 2 black box theater | 8 tattoo parlor         |
| 3 dressing room     | 9 private tattoo room   |
| 4 set storage       | 10 sanitation / storage |
| 5 meeting           | 11 tattoo admin         |
| 6 IT                | 12 balcony              |





tattoo parlor entrance



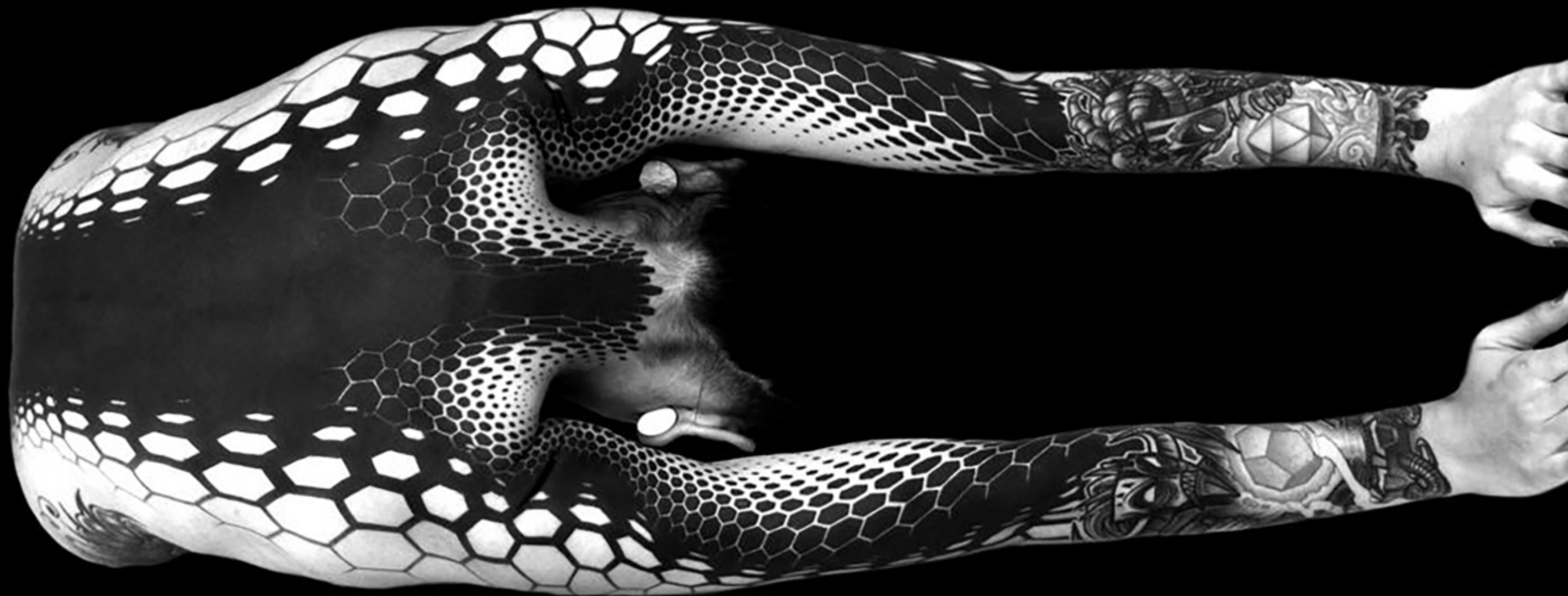


## reflect + project

The theater mass is a beacon for the project. Its positioning makes it the only part of the project fully visible over the exterior courtyard wall. During daylight hours, the glass façade reflects the city scape. The project takes a respectful stance to its surroundings and does not try to compete with the bold architectural forms existing in the arts corridor. Come nighttime, reflection turns to projection with the illumination of the LED screen. The project ceases an opportunity to become a focal point within the context.

- 1 triple pane low-E glass
- 2 tensioned aluminum frame with spider clips
- 3 LED outdoor screen mesh
- 4 steel backing frame
- 5 parapet with flashing to extend over curtain wall
- 6 insulated metal panel
- 7 steel stud 6" typ.
- 8 gyp board finish





IV

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ience





## conceal + reveal.

The breaks within the exterior wall build upon the notions of intrigue and curiosity associated with tattoos. As passersby walk around the site, they will experience these moments where a part of the project is revealed. The wall is a device to draw people into the project and plays an active role in a person's experience of the project. Excavations in the wall provide seating of different scales, and punctures in the wall frame views further into the project. The wall also plays into the ideas of layers and tattoos. In order to understand the full extent and essence of the project you must first traverse the layering established by the sequential wall, courtyards, and interior spaces.

exterior approach







## spatial layers.

The layering achieved by the plan from the progression of street, wall, courtyard, and interior is also translated vertically among all floors of the project. The central atrium connects the lower level floor up to the third level theater lobby. This spatial layering creates a dynamic atmosphere and establishes visual continuity among spaces that represent different facets of the tattoo world: theory, artistic expression, and physical practice.

main entrance







## learning through circulation.

The intention of the building's organization is to provide a learning and interactive experience by way of moving through the building. Upon entering the main entrance of the project, which is situated as a terminating point to the axis established by the arts corridor, patrons are welcomed by the museum reception and entry. Patrons enter the museum through the threshold perpendicular to the reception and the natural progression guides them full circle back to the lobby. At this junction they have the choice to go up to the theater for a show, or downstairs to the interactive tattoo exhibition and gift shop.

museum





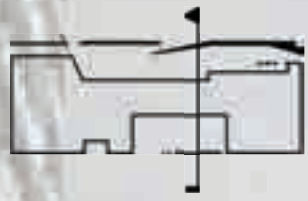
## introspection.

The gallery bridge links the historic and performative nature of tattoo, to the actual physical action of tattoo indicative of the tattoo parlor. Not only does this space bridge theory and practice but it also serves as an allegory of tattoo art and photography in today's society. Patrons can ponder and observe the artistic ability of tattoo artists around the world and see documentation of their work on the human canvas.

art gallery bridge











## courtyard.

The courtyards of the project provide varied experiences to users on different scales. The north side of the building has an upper and lower courtyard with scales tailored to the individual and to the gathering of groups. Spaces and seating designed for the individual are tied to the tattoo parlor. This is in opposition to the courtyard space in front of the museum entrance that features seating and open spaces geared towards gathering on a larger scale. The courtyard on the south side of the building is designed to provide a relaxing outdoor space to tattoo recipients. Refined materials, shading trees, and a water feature make this an ideal space for users to take breaks in-between tattoo sittings.

tattoo parlor courtyard







## material layers.

The materiality of the project builds upon the earlier established ideas of tattoos and layering. Board-form concrete, travertine, and Cort-en steel all reveal their layering with regards to time. Travertine is a form of limestone closely compacted: its layers reveal its formation. Poured in place concrete reveals its form-work, exposing stacked layers and imperfections indicative of its casting process. Cort-en steel shows new layers of wear as it adopts new patinas over time.

travertine courtyard











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## conclusion.

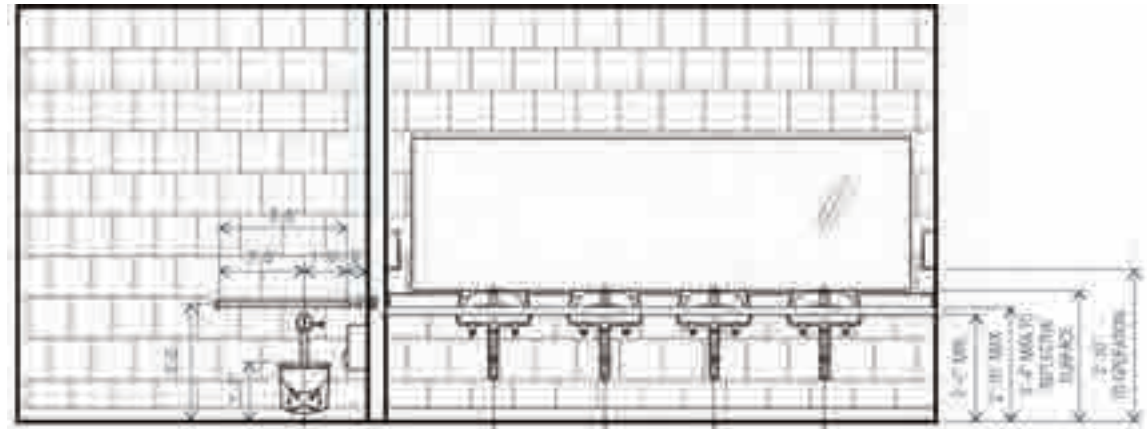
Just as you cannot glean the essence of a tattoo by looking at it, you cannot deduce the essence of architecture from observing its form. Architecture should be crafted in a way that succinctly and seamlessly blends all the contextual layers of the site, program, and project intention. Architecture should not blindly adhere to a certain form, aesthetic, or style. I believe architecture should bring order and clarity to our already chaotic world.

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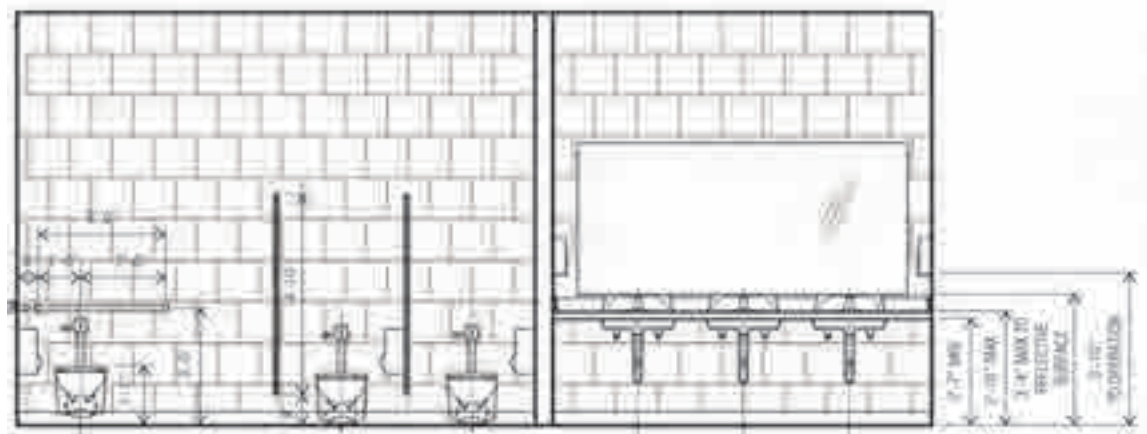


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index

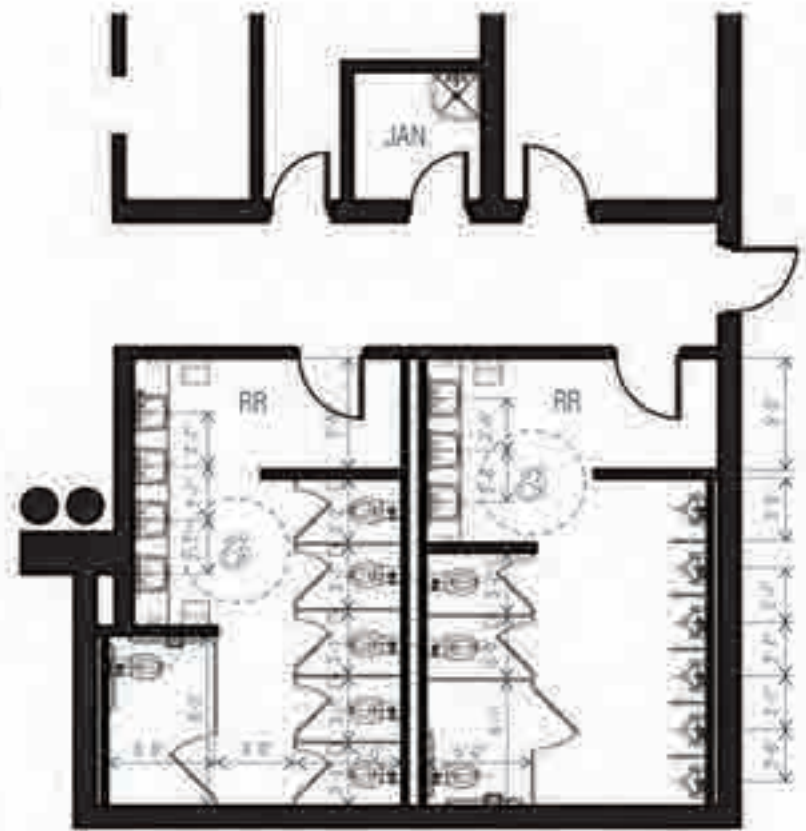




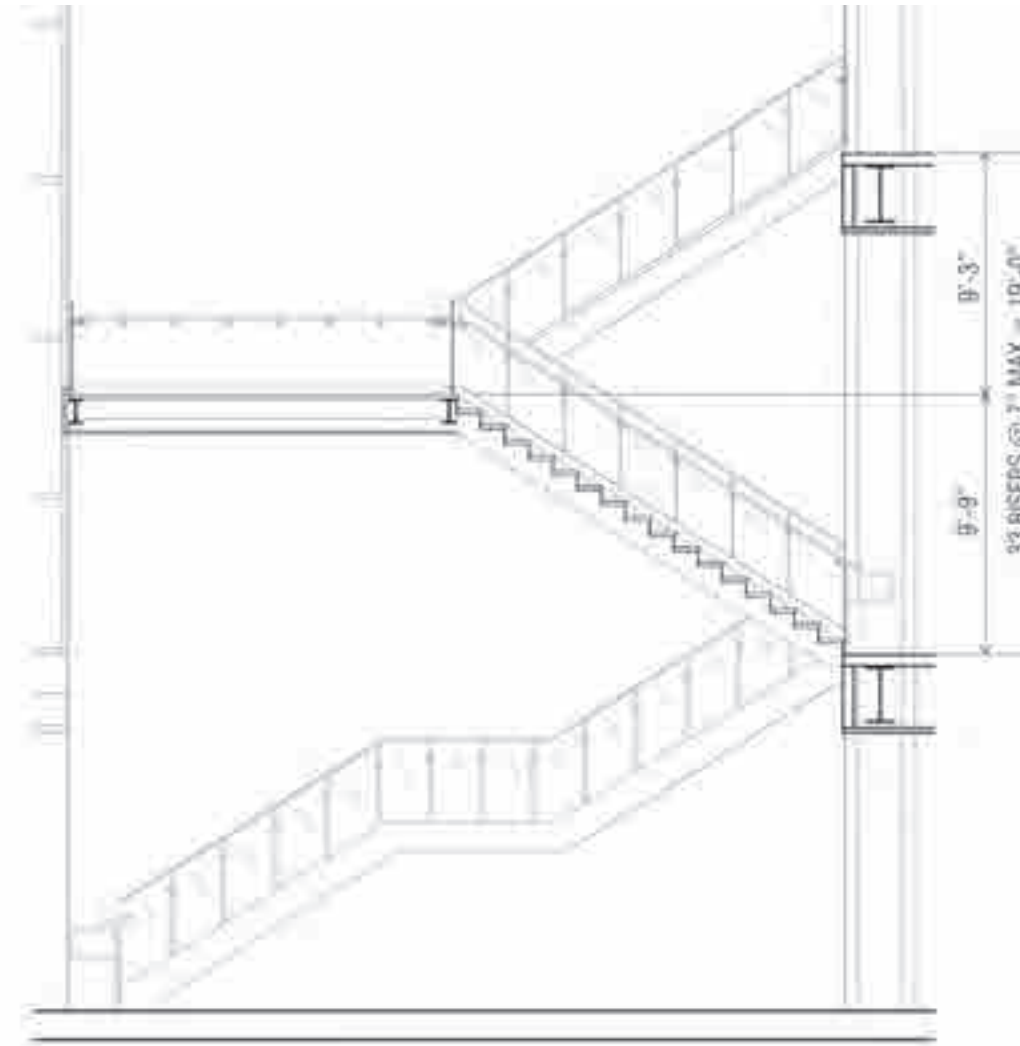
women's restroom plan



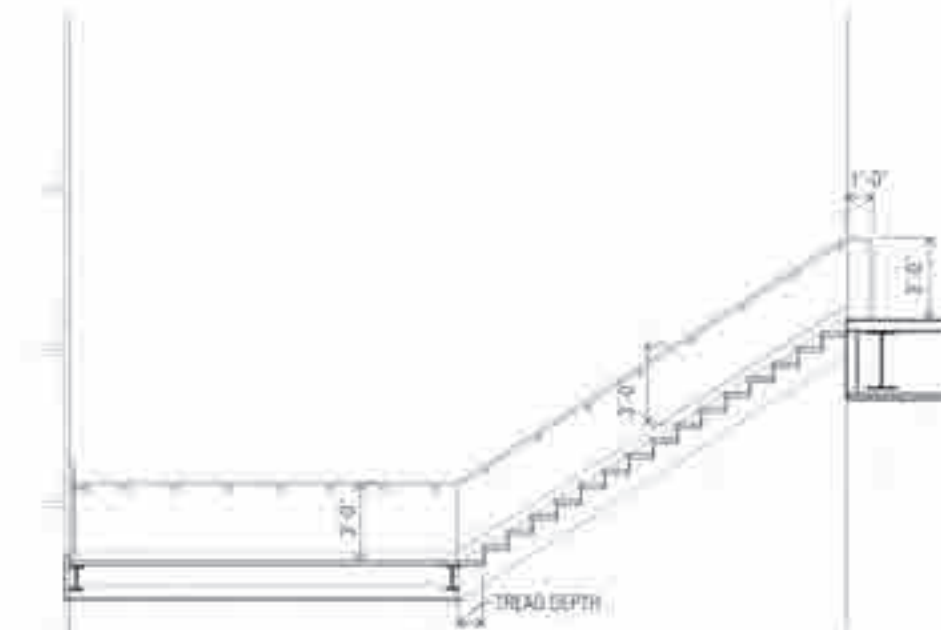
men's restroom plan



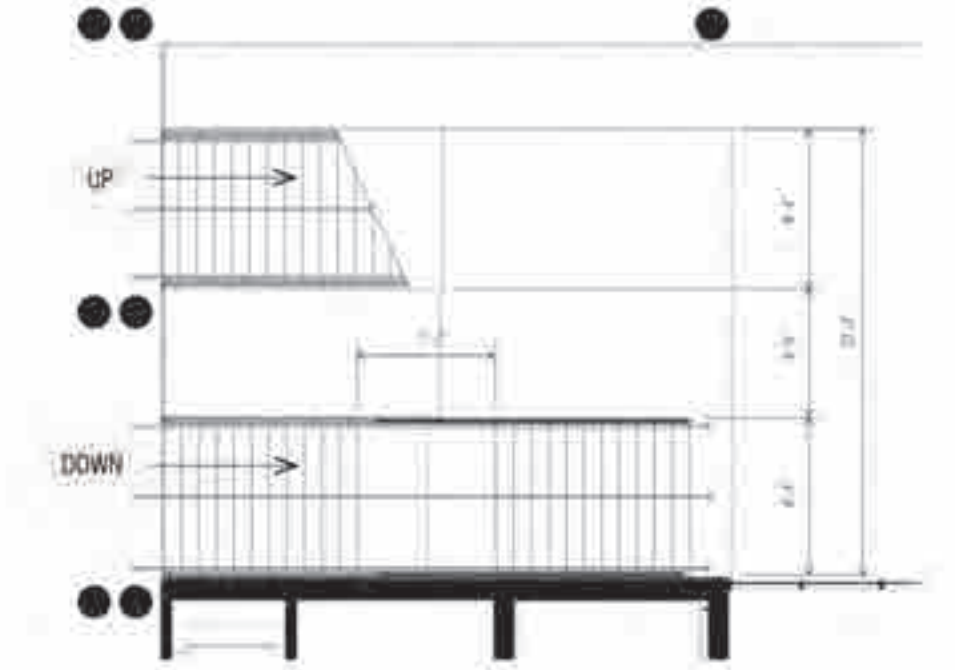
enlarged restroom plan



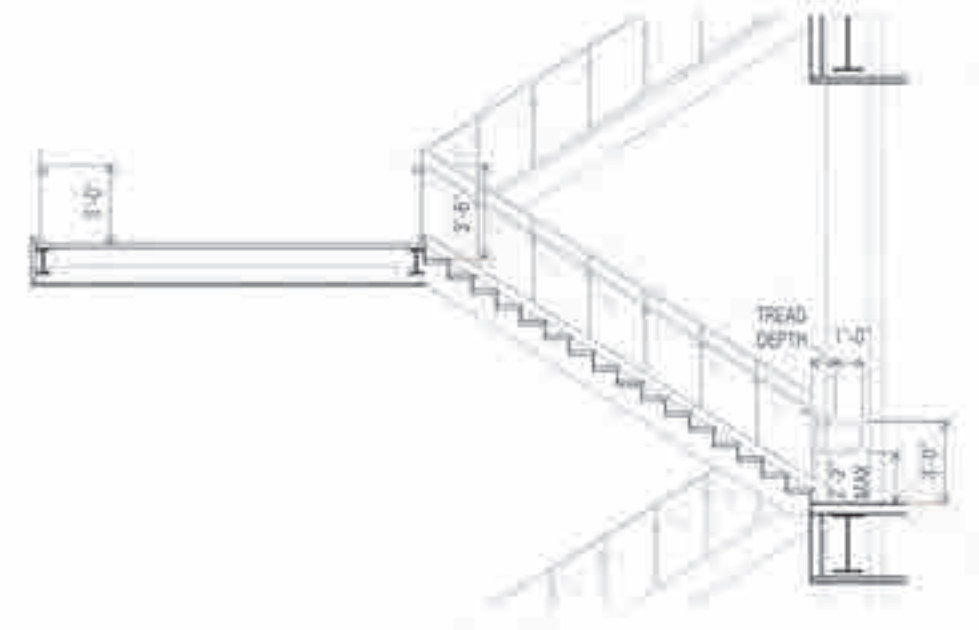
central stair section



stair railing @ wall



central stair enlarged plan



stair railing @ guardrail



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