

Translating Fictions Through Shanshui Painting:

For the Creation of a Traditional and a Contemporary Chinese Architecture

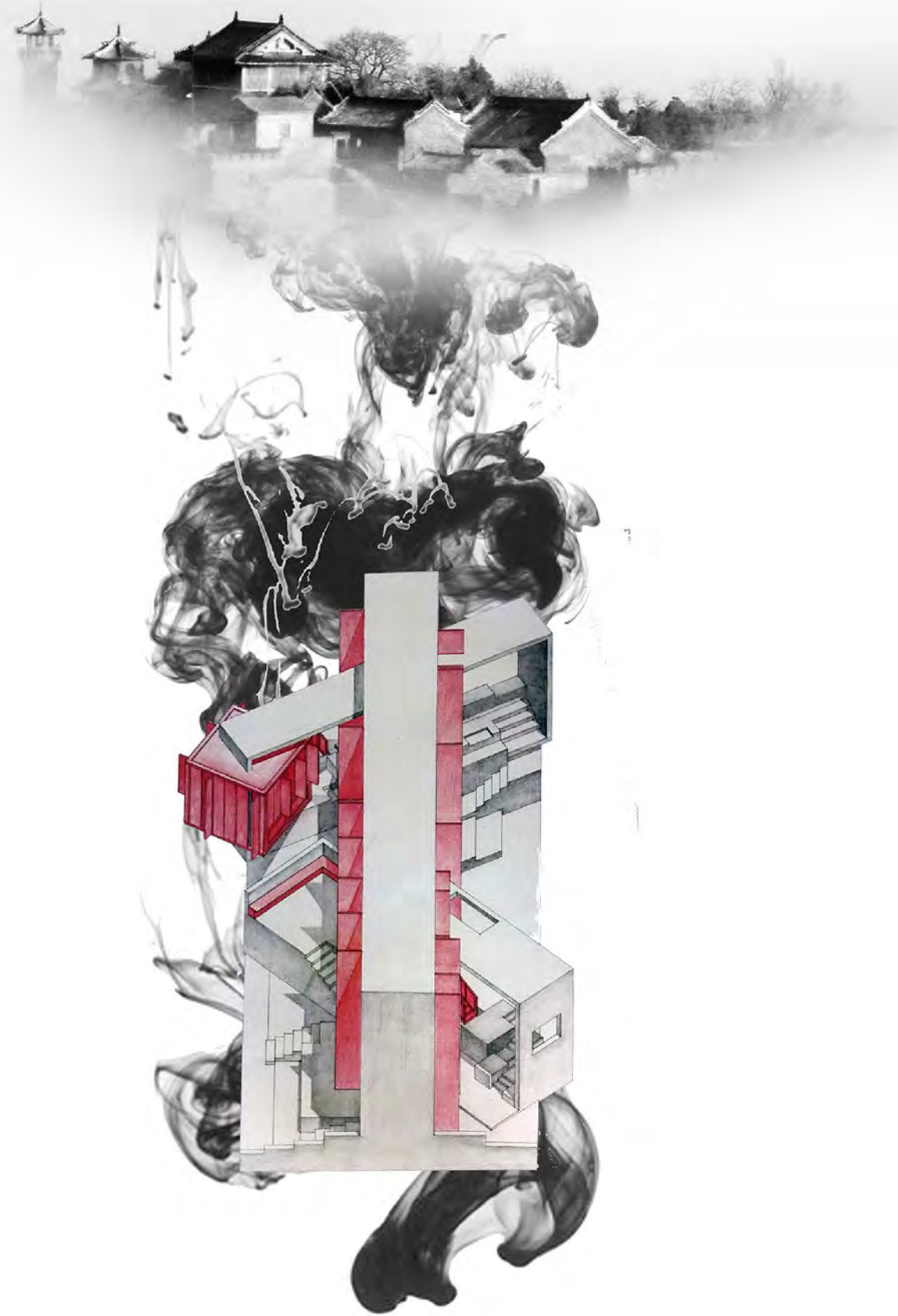


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Statement

The thesis started with studying Shanshui paintings (traditional Chinese painting method) with the purpose of translating desirable qualities from paintings to contemporary Chinese architecture. Over time, Chinese architecture has been influenced by western architecture and has gradually lost the deep logic of embracing nature in architectural spaces.

Shanshui is a traditional Chinese painting method, which depicts natural elements such as mountains, trees, and water in a dream space where people live and wander. These paintings are very inspirational to be studied, translated, and integrated into the field of architecture.

First, it is important to understand rules of nature to grasp the logic behind Shanshui paintings and Yuanlin, which is the traditional Chinese landscape architecture. If we assume an architectural space as fiction comprised of rocks, trees, water, etc., the spatial geometry is not necessarily based on Euclidian geometry. In Yuanlin, architecture, spaces are defined at the intersection of nature and people's daily life.

Second, it is important to understand the 'view' method in Shanshui painting, which is different from a perspective view or a photograph. Shanshui is a multi-layered experience that includes various layers from different times, spaces, and views, which can be grasped only by inhabiting through the layers. There are not starting points and endpoints. Similar logic is used in Yuanlin architecture, i.e.,

architecture is the recording of views. In this way, the view method becomes the design method.

Third, parts appear before the whole. Shanshui paintings are painted from parts with an emphasis on how parts create the whole. The word 'whole' refers to connections and relationships between parts.

As a result, my thesis project explores the Shanshui logic to design and develop architecture, which envisions integrating multi-layered experiences in Chinese architecture.



Why do we need current Chinese architecture?

Taiwanese essayist and cultural critic returned to Beijing in the 1980s and disappointedly noted: “The overall impression of these new buildings is that they are devoid of personality – simply stated, they lack in both characters and aesthetics. The old Beijing does not exist anymore. They ruined the traditional atmosphere of this ancient city. These historic sites belong to China and the Chinese people. I feel deprived. When I was gone, I feel someone destroys it.”

War has had a profound influence on Chinese architecture, albeit in a short space of time. It has augmented the gulf between modern buildings and older ones in that there is no nexus between them. The more I study architecture in America, the more I understand the discipline is the only one of several which exist. It is premised on the fact the western culture has led the world since the Industrial Revolution.

A person who has been in a different culture will refrain from pausing to consider the true essence of Chinese architecture and whether it has the opportunity to evolve with industrialization. The central question is whether the style will continue to grow or morph into something completely different. There appears to be a gap of sorts in its evolution which requires studying current Chinese architecture while bringing back old experiences.



01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.1 Inside and outside spaces in life

In the past, because of the limitation of technologies, human activities were usually divided into outdoor and indoor activities. People's daily basis range of activities involved indoor and outdoor spaces. This situation led to the construction of indoor and outdoor residential units. Then, housing with a courtyard became the foundation unit of people's life.

Comparing with the present, along with the fast pace of human life, the development of science and technology, as well as the refinement of the social division of labor, many outdoor daily needful activities in the past have moved into indoor, or become no longer necessary. At the same time, along with the social development, the demand for people communication increases; however, the unit of life shrinks to the closed apartment in towers.

The unit does not contain all the requirements that the past life unit could provide; it requires people to find the opportunities outside the basic unit of life, which is the status of many buildings today. Buildings in the past and buildings in today are not functionally equal, also cannot be directly compared.

In the past, the outstanding representative of Chinese architecture which expresses Chinese thought is Yuanlin, the Chinese landscape architecture. However, in the past Yuanlin could be owned only by upper classes and now they all belong to the state. The ordinary people only have a small space for their own home, which only meets the basic needs.

Look at the past architecture which accommodates ideological and aesthetic expressions and compared to the architecture of the present, we can see: per capita area of the residential building in the past, there was more space than per capita area at present. Because of people's lifestyle in the past, buildings were accommodating more functions than. Different functions of living, watching and wandering

all can be done in people's own home. Now, most people live in apartments with limited spaces. Home only meets the single function of life. To meet the demands of watching and wandering, people need to drive away from home to public places. In the fast-paced society in China now, people are far from their original demands for aesthetics and relaxation.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.1 Inside and outside spaces in life

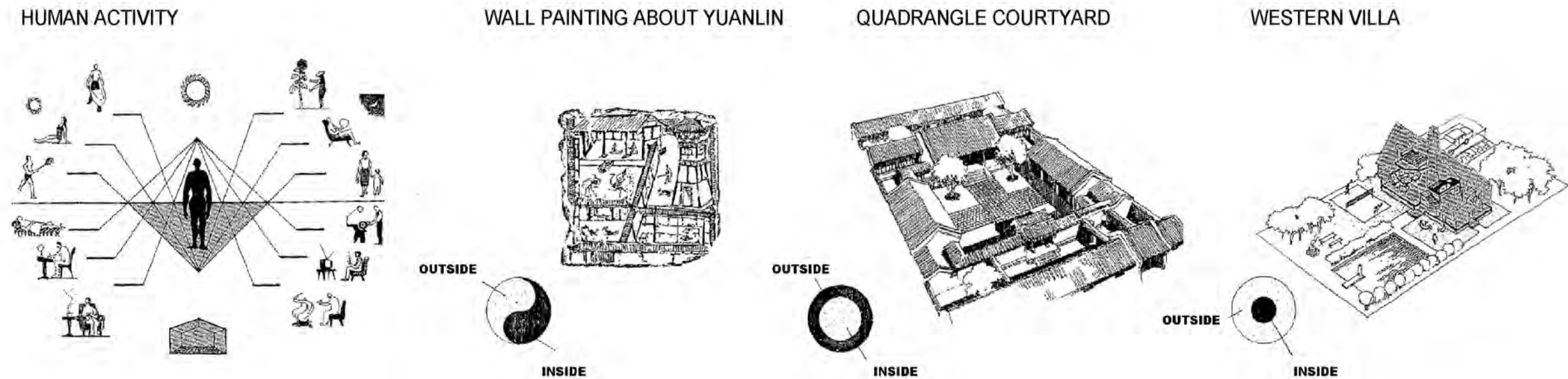


Figure 1¹

1. Peng, Yigang. *Analysis of classical Chinese gardens*. China Building Industry Press, 1986.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.2 The importance of traditional Chinese architecture

“Traditional Chinese architecture does not have a facade.”——The Misunderstanding of Facade

“The shape and type of the architecture is limited yet somehow manages to demonstrate the thought process along with the construction of both the space and architecture,”——Wang Xin

Applying the methodology of Wang Xin, the 'rockery space' is enlarged such that it becomes real architecture. Accordingly, space is not only able to be appreciated but also to be approachable. People are immersed in the painting.

The traditional Chinese architecture adopts an inside-outside experience for

both the construction and the design of the space. The shape is not completed first because this constrains both the internal and external aspects. Also, it does not have a certain façade, which makes people feel nature embraces them.

‘Shanshui’ painting is the epitome of an optimal understanding of both space and life, and the ‘Yuanlin’ is the realistic expression of ‘Shanshui’ painting. The rockery, bonsai, and ornaments in yards or rooms create this experience in living spaces. Different classes of people accept this to varying degrees.

It is a notable absentee from our contemporary way of life.

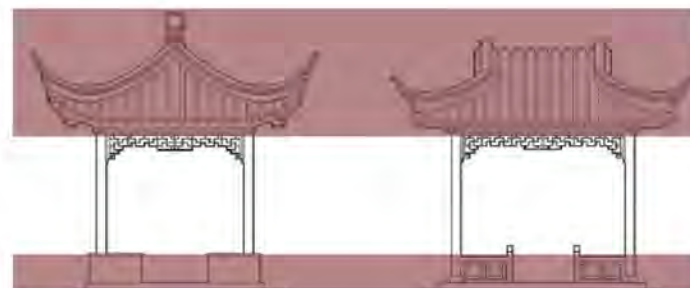


Figure 2¹ THREE LEVEL OF ELEVATION

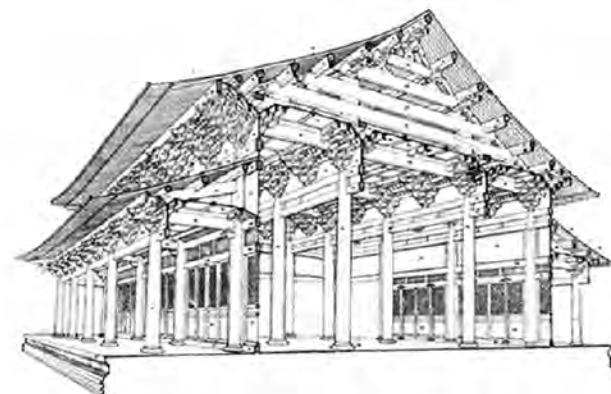


Figure 3² STRUCTURE

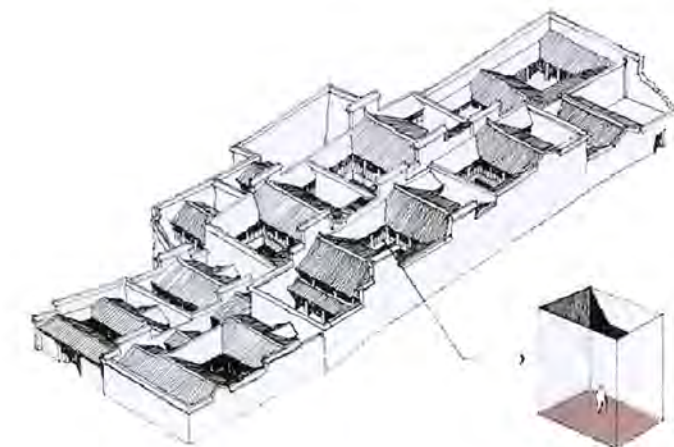


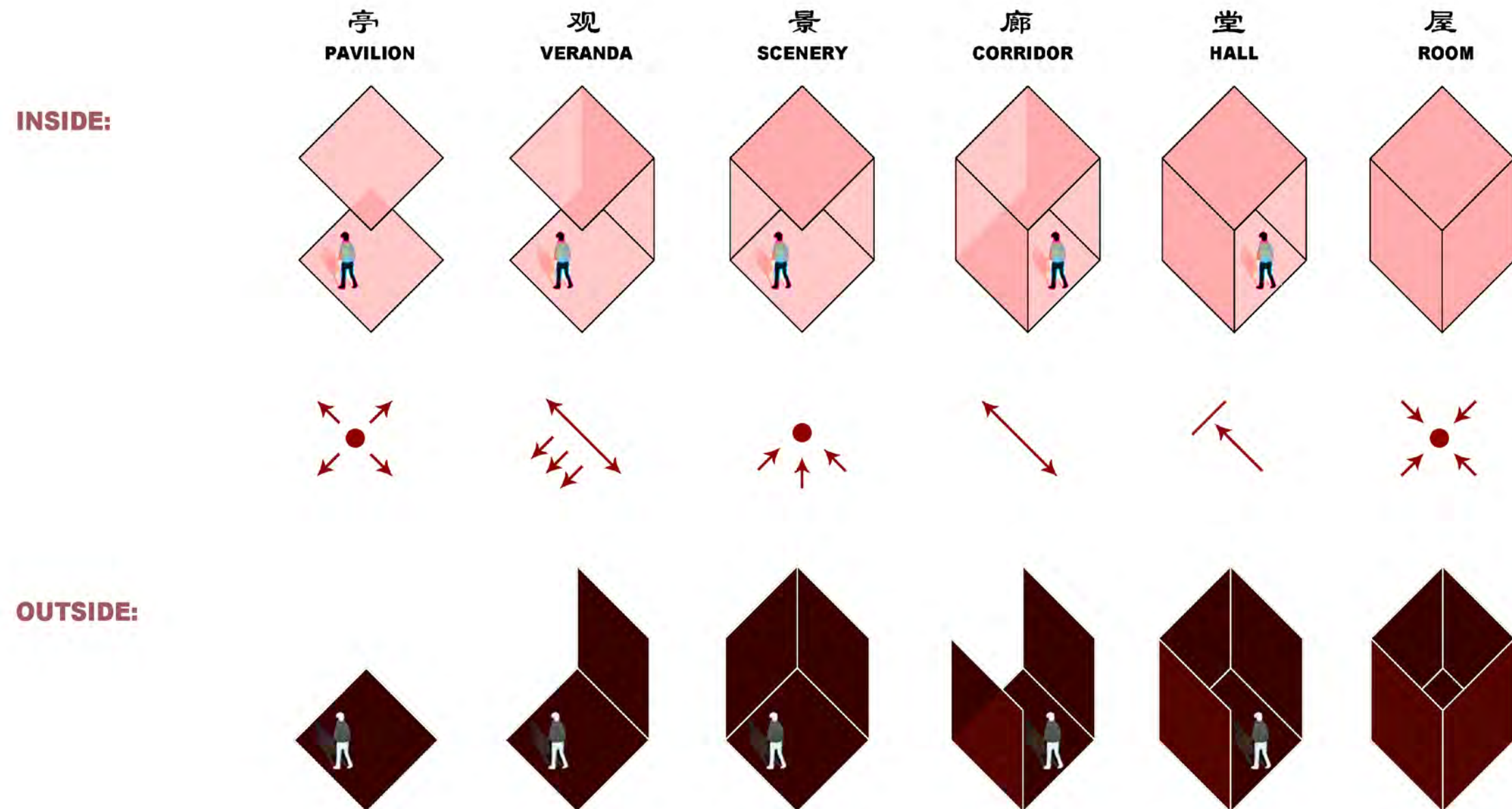
Figure 4³ COURTYARD

1&2. Zhulong: <http://www.zhulong.com/>

3. Peng, Yigang. *Analysis of classical Chinese gardens*. China Building Industry Press, 1986.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

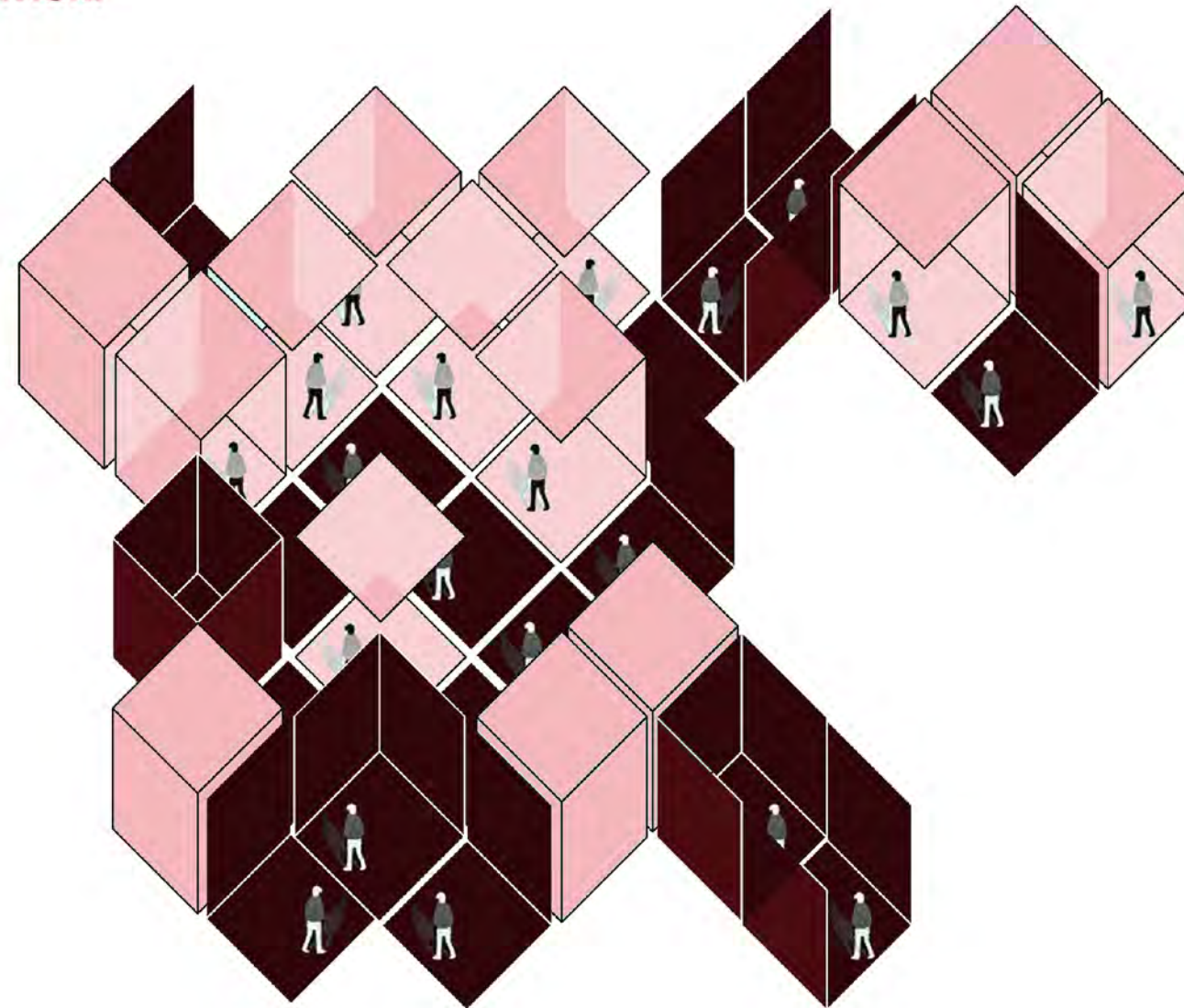
1.3 Spatical elements of traditional Chinese architecture



01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.3 Spatical elements of traditional Chinese architecture

EXAMPLE OF A SPATIAL ORGANIZATION:



01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.4 The difference between Eastern and Western paintings

Western paintings seek to place a great emphasis on the actual manner in which people perceive things based on light reflection. It endeavors to take into account the functioning of the human eye and employs perspective and lighting to create a reality which we can appreciate. Therefore, these methods enable us to convert a two-dimensional painting into a three-dimensional reality in our brain. Perhaps the most common example of this is a three-dimensional drawing on a wall. There is a degree of chicanery involved in this sort of artwork. Which as a form of imaginary space leaves a noticeable impression on the person.

Eastern paintings offer a different perspective in that they seek to demonstrate the remaining memories after people perceive the picture. As such, there is minimal detail, but its purpose is to describe the entire story. For example, the mountain is quite large relative to the size of human eyes so if the eyes are too close, then it is not possible to appreciate the size and shape of the mountain. The prototypical example of this phenomenon is the Chinese landscape painting titled 'Shanshui' which depicts the mountain from a distance, to ensure it does not detract from its inherent characteristics.

'Three far' is a keyword in 'Shanshui' painting which explains the three primary angles of the mountain. 'Gaoyuan,' which is from the ground to the mountaintop, ought to be clear and must not be short. 'Pingyuan,' which refers to the framing of the picture indicating it may be small. 'Shenyuan' sees the mountain from the front

to the back (see inside) and it should be splintery. The manner in which the 'Shanshui' painting places more things in the paper while ignoring the rule of perspective makes each element independent and creates a greater view by combining them.

The Eastern painting seeks to incorporate far more information in the picture while including a temporal element in that the painting follows time. Different places with different timing tell stories from both a spatial and temporal perspectives. Due to the independent element, the painting can make distance feel like one-step and time is underlined and dimmed. 'Yuanlin' architecture (or garden architecture) is the practice of 'Shanshui' painting, which uses time as the key line to shape its contouring.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.4 The difference between Eastern and Western paintings



Figure 5¹
Kuanglu

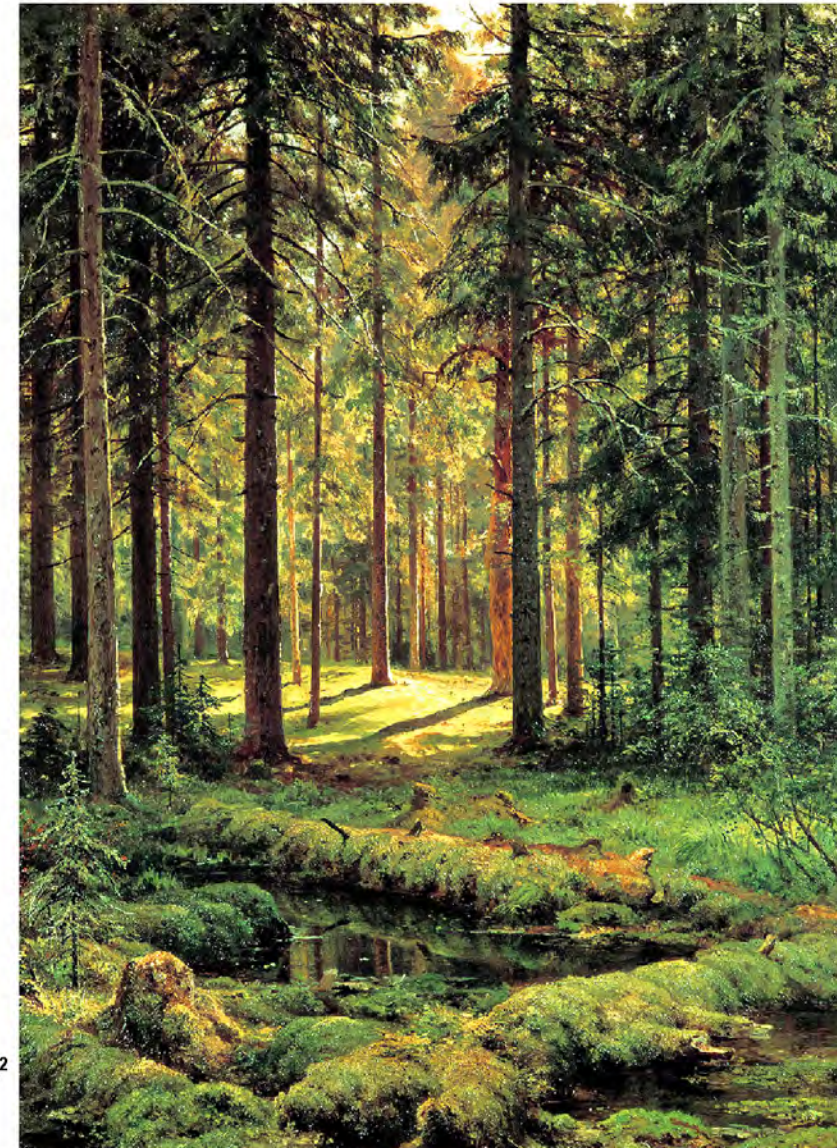


Figure 6²
Forest

1. Jing, Hao. *KUANGLU*. Five dynasties period. National Palace Museum in Taipei, China.

2. Ivan I. Shishkin. *Paintings of Shishkin*.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.5 Space of Shanshui painting



Figure 7¹ Li Bai's poetry



Figure 8² Space of Li Bai's poetry



Figure 9³ Snow mountain (part)

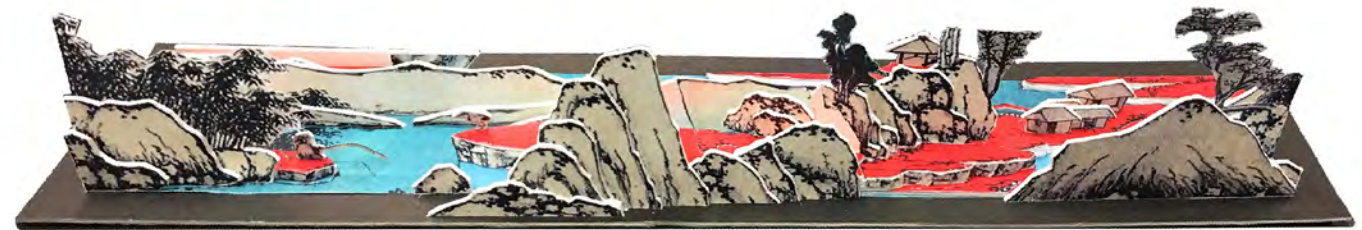


Figure 10⁴ Space of snow mountain

1. Wen, Zhengming. *Li Bai's poetry*. Ming Dynasty.

2&4. Author's own photograph.

3. Shen, Zhou. *Snow mountain*. Ming Dynasty.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.6 Elements of Shanshui Painting



Figure 11¹ Mountain (sold)



Figure 12² Water (empty)

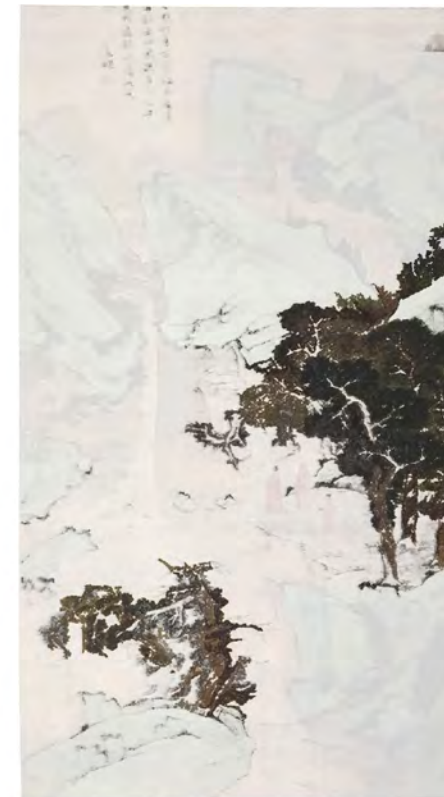


Figure 13³ Tree (scale)

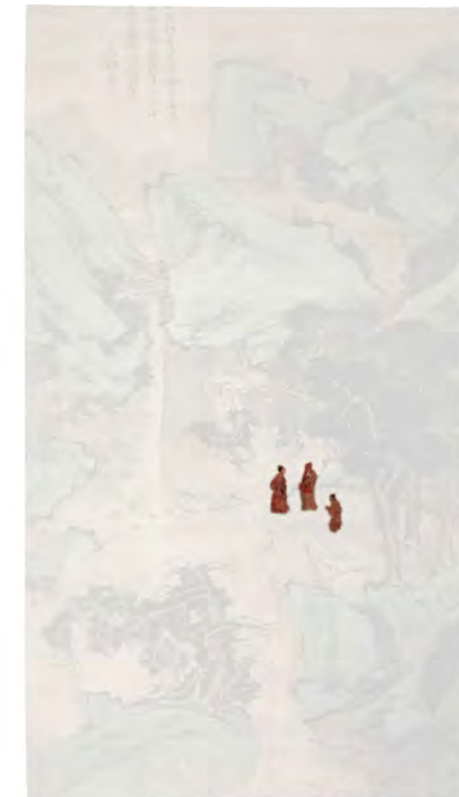


Figure 14⁴ Human (point)

1&2&3&4. Author's own analysis.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.7 The view method

The view method is to create different perspectives. It includes the space, the narrative, and artistic conception among different angles of view. Traditional Chinese landscape just like the Chinese Shanshui painting, refine the concept of a set of view methods of natural sequences.

The pictures do not follow the rule of the perspective and the purpose is not to distort the architectural form, but it is for tandem scenes. Normal Angle of view cannot include so many contents at the same time. Achieving reasonable scene in series through deformation makes people's emotion to be enhanced by a picture of all kinds of view methods which is the ultimate purpose of the picture.

By that, We understand the thinking process of Chinese ancient landscape designers. If we want to build a building blending with natural experience in cities, it must accept the view of nature series method; the essence is formed, through interactions between the natural landscape and humans.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.7 The view method

SHENYUAN:



Li Bai's poetry



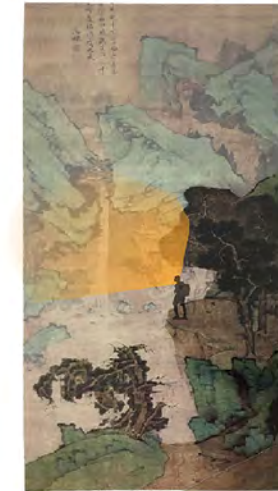
Water



Reachable space



Outside view



Inside view



Visual experience

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.7 The view method

GAOYUAN:

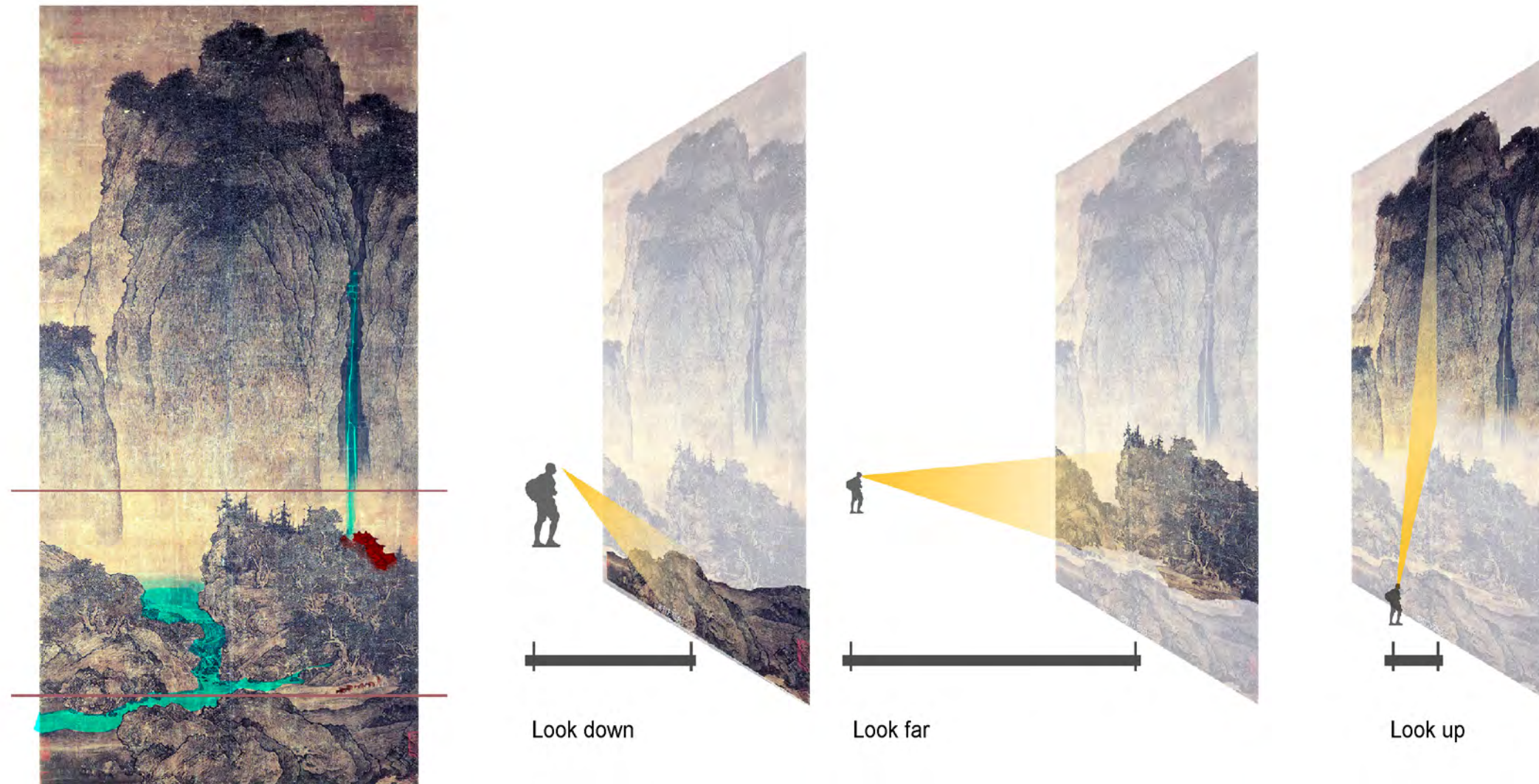


Figure 15¹ Travelers among Mountains and Streams

1. Fan, Kuan. *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*. the Northern Song Dynasty.

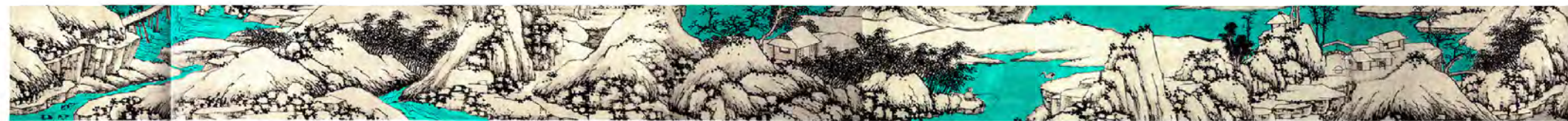
01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.7 The view method

PINGYUAN:



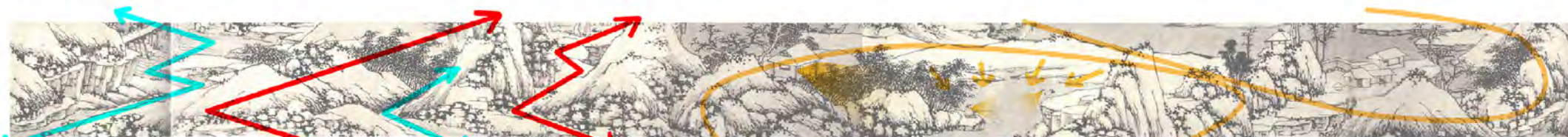
Figure 16¹ Snow mountain



Water



Reahchable space



Subsection

1. Shen, Zhou. *Snow mountain*. Ming Dynasty.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.8 The study of Yuanlin

People live in a three-dimensional world yet are unable to occupy it entirely. We are creatures capable of moving freely over two dimensions with little guidance; our perception is also based on horizontal views. However, vertical changes are more accessible when viewed rather than moved towards. As a result, humans are always in a relatively passive state to the vertical dimension, which makes the façade akin to a boundary.

‘Yuanlin’ is a design for space that is based on a two-dimensional space in the horizontal direction. In ‘Yuanlin,’ Chinese architecture is shaped from top to down. It evokes the feeling of a vacuum as the vertical relationship is shown clearly by

materials, and shadows, and is structured as follows: ‘top – space – bottom.’ This relationship can be a rule of architecture which gives people a clear understanding as to which part of the entire ‘Yuanlin’ space they occupy. Architecture is the sign of the entire space, forming a bridge between the human-made landscape and individuals observing themselves in the ‘Yuanlin.’ Therefore, it can be said to give people a sense of identity. It is the feeling which vertical skyscrapers are incapable of evoking. People are also unable to feel a similar sense of identity when looking at a high rise building.



Figure 17¹ Mountain



Figure 18² Water



Figure 19³ Architecture (human)



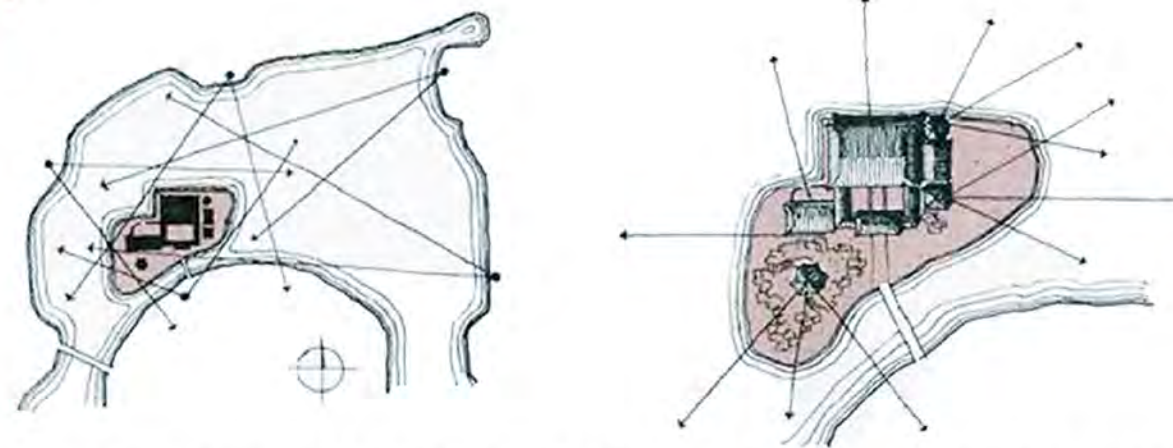
Figure 20⁴ Plants

1&2&3&4. Feng, Chaoxiong. *The classical gardens of Suzhou*. New World Press, 2007.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.8 The study of Yuanlin

WATCH AND BE WATCHED :



As a land scape, people can see it from all around. As a building, it has a beautiful view to see the lake around.
Figure 21¹

WINDING SPACE:



Figure 22²

1. Peng, Yigang. *Analysis of classical Chinese gardens*. China Building Industry Press, 1986.

2. Author's own analysis.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.8 The study of Yuanlin

GUIDED AND CUED:

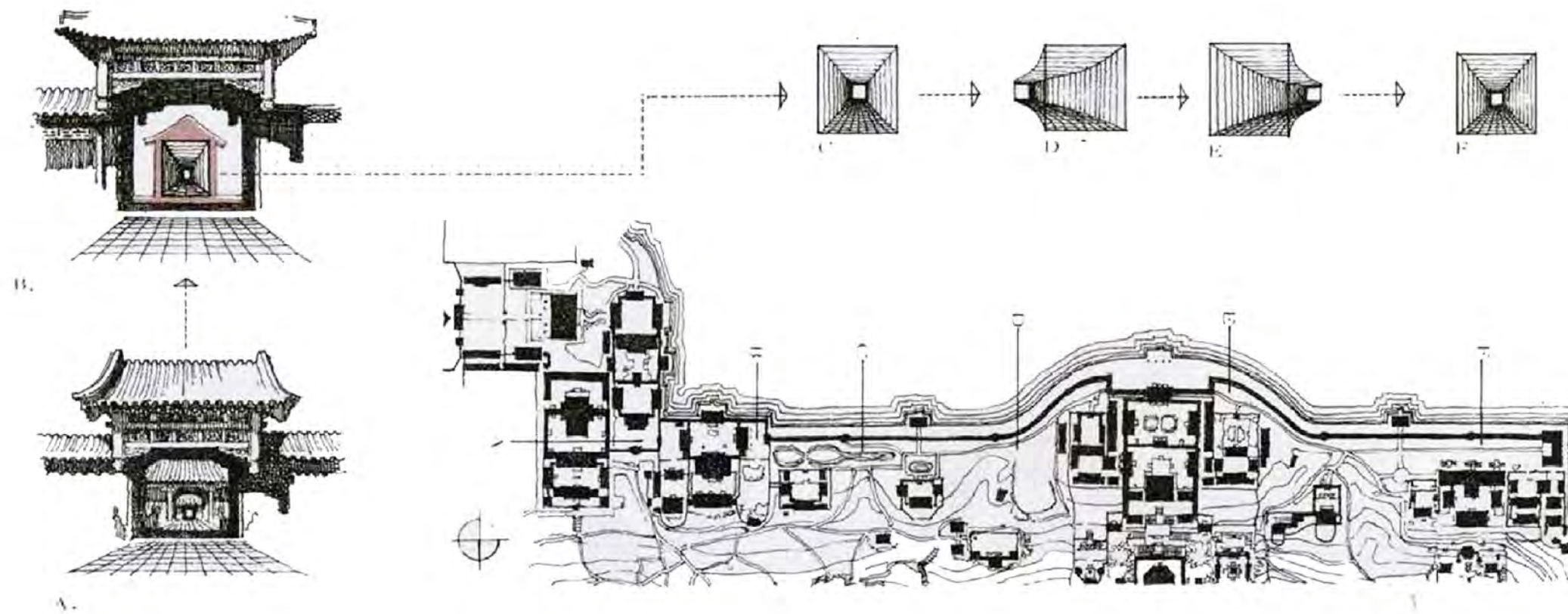


Figure 23'

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.8 The study of Yuanlin

SPATIAL CONTRAST:

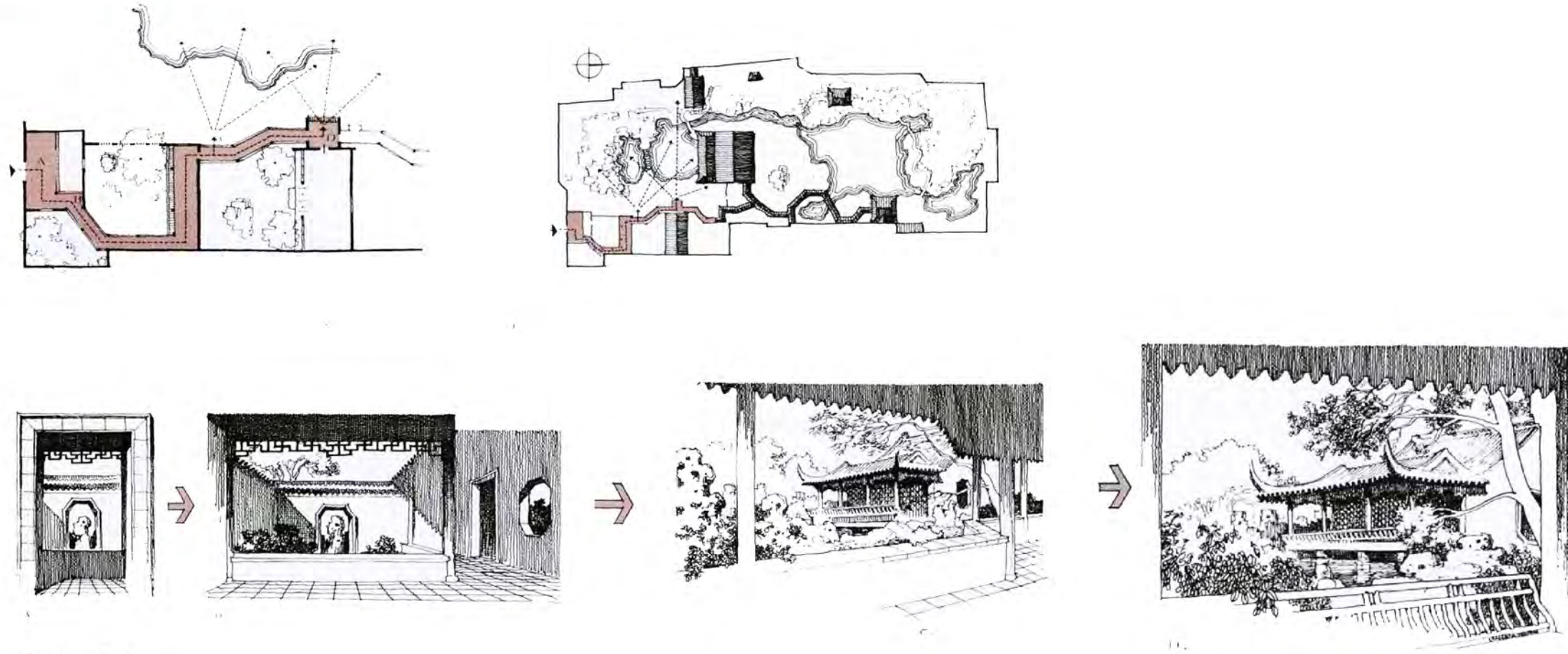


Figure 24¹

1. Peng, Yigang. *Analysis of classical Chinese gardens*. China Building Industry Press, 1986.

01 RESEARCH: SHANSHUI PAINTING AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

1.8 The study of Yuanlin

HIDE AND REVEAL:



Figure 25'

02 WANG XIN'S STUDY OF SHANSHUI

2.1 Ten view methods

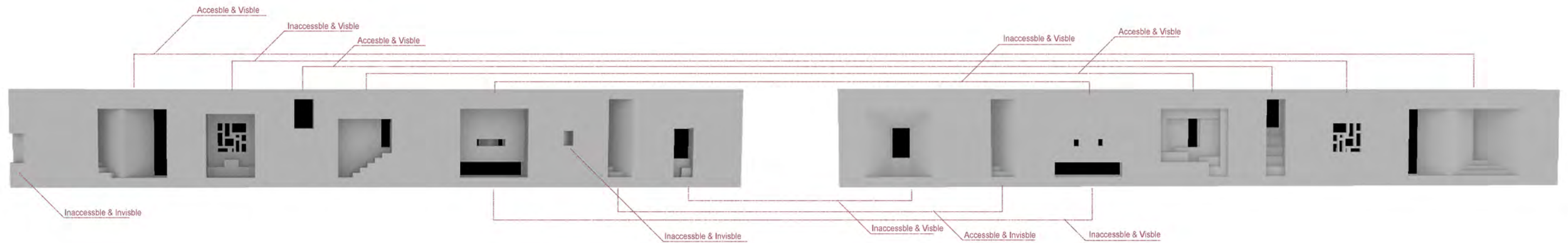


Figure 26¹

1. Wang, Xin. *An Architecture Towards Shanshui*. Tongji University Press, 2015.

NOTE: Author's own analysis

02 WANG XIN'S STUDY OF SHANSHUI

2.2 Four houses of 'Checkerboard'

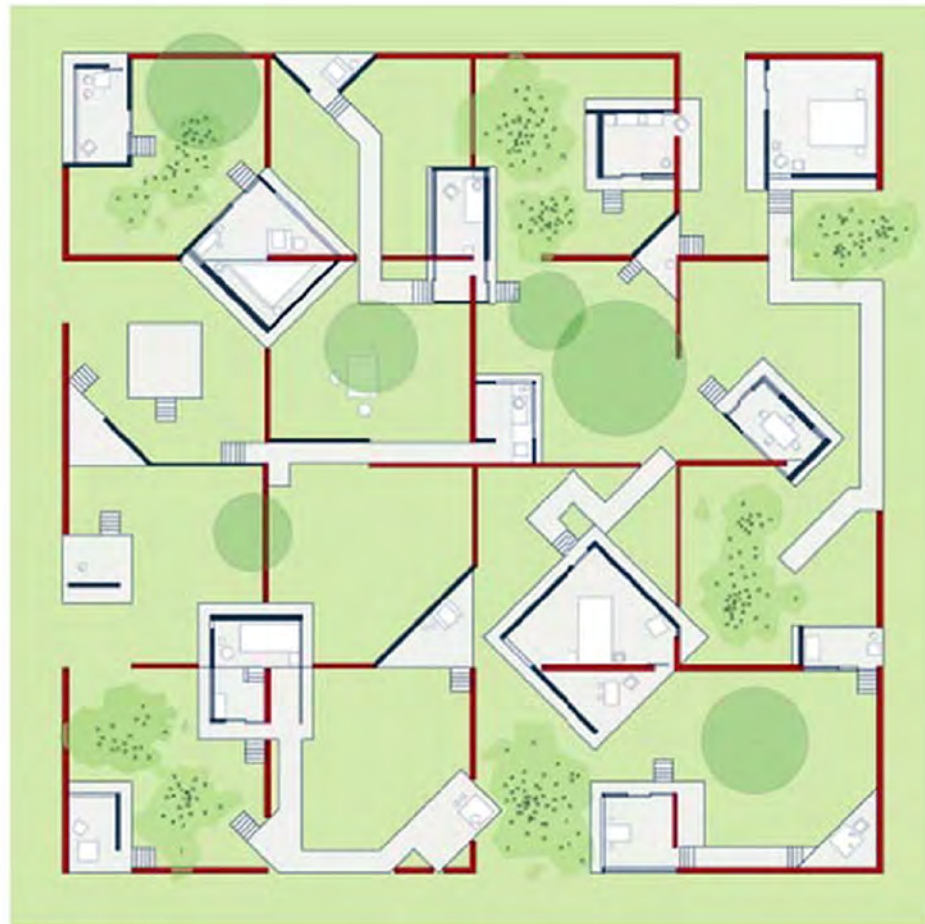


Figure 27¹



Figure 28²

1. Wang, Xin. *Arcadia*. Tongji University Press, 2014.

2. Author's own photograph

02 WANG XIN'S STUDY OF SHANSHUI

2.3 Case studies

CASE STUDY 1: 拈石掇山

(Student project, China Academy of Art, School of Architecture)

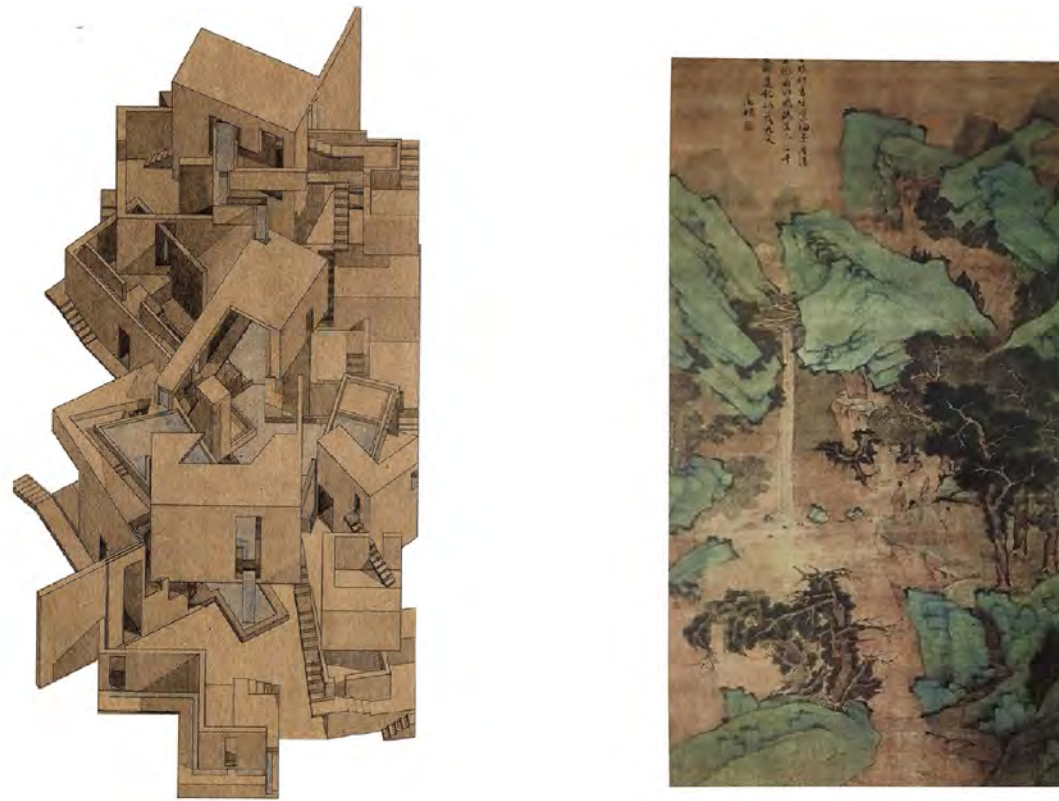
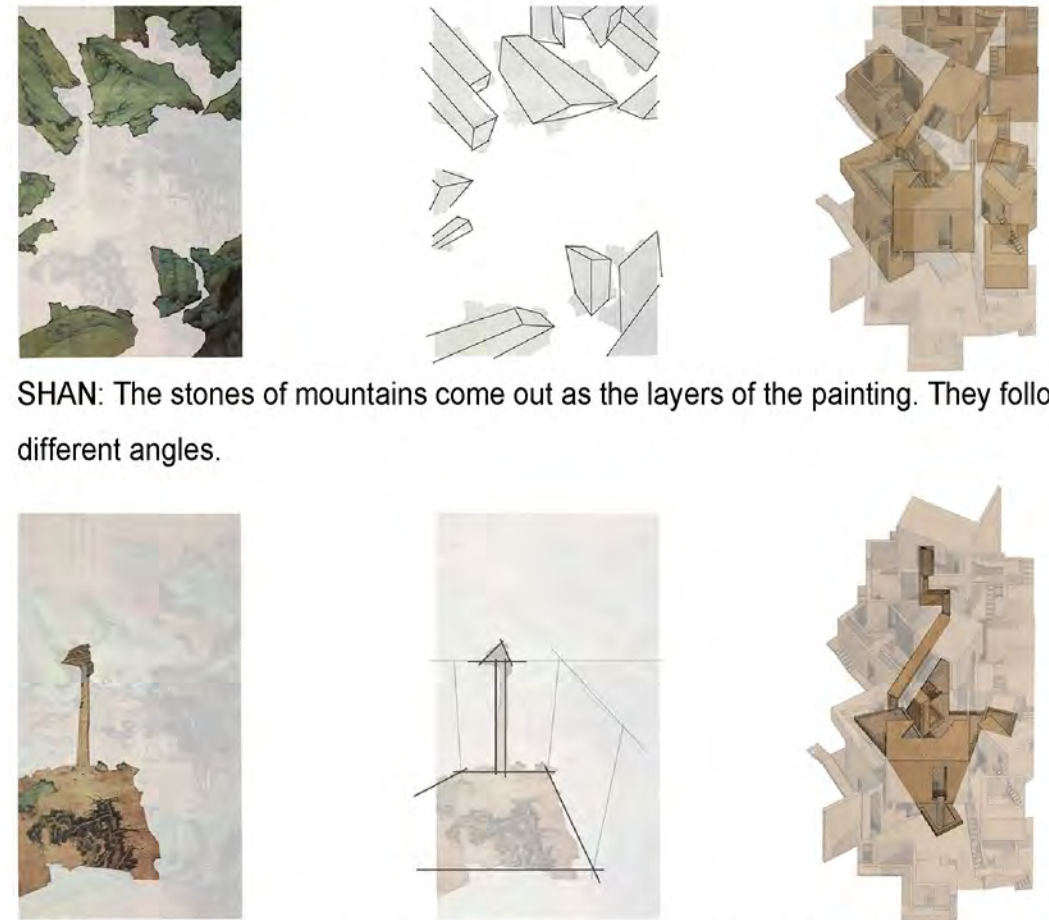


Figure 29¹

Stones accumulate to shape a mountain. More than ten stones are placed in every angles with on gravity. Therefore, interior spaces are formed.



SHAN: The stones of mountains come out as the layers of the painting. They follow different angles.

SHUI: The water comes through the gap between stones and drops down into a lake which is the bottom layer of the painting.

1. Wang, Xin. *An Architecture Towards Shanshui*. Tongji University Press, 2015.

2. Author's own analysis.

02 WANG XIN'S STUDY OF SHANSHUI

2.3 Case studies

CASE STUDY 2: 门障世界

(Student project, China Academy of Art, School of Architecture)

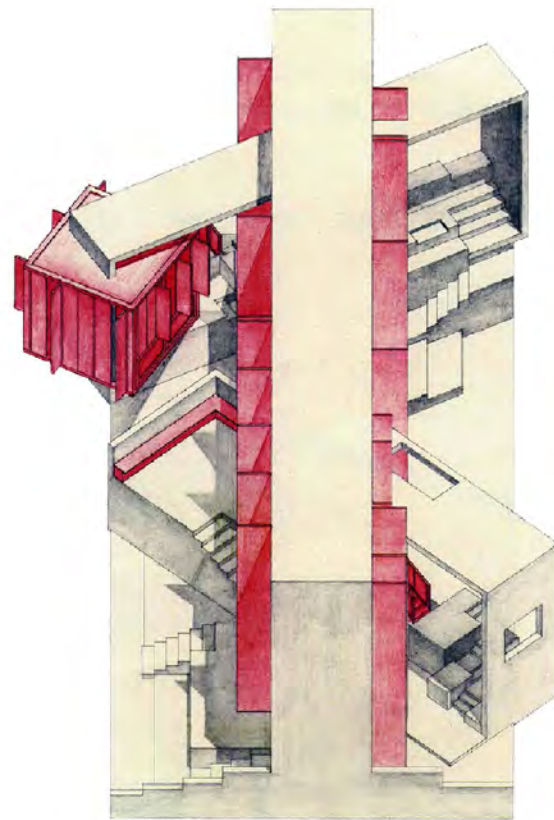


Figure 31¹

The existence of doors should not be ignored. Across each door there is another space. The door can be the dialogue between two worlds.

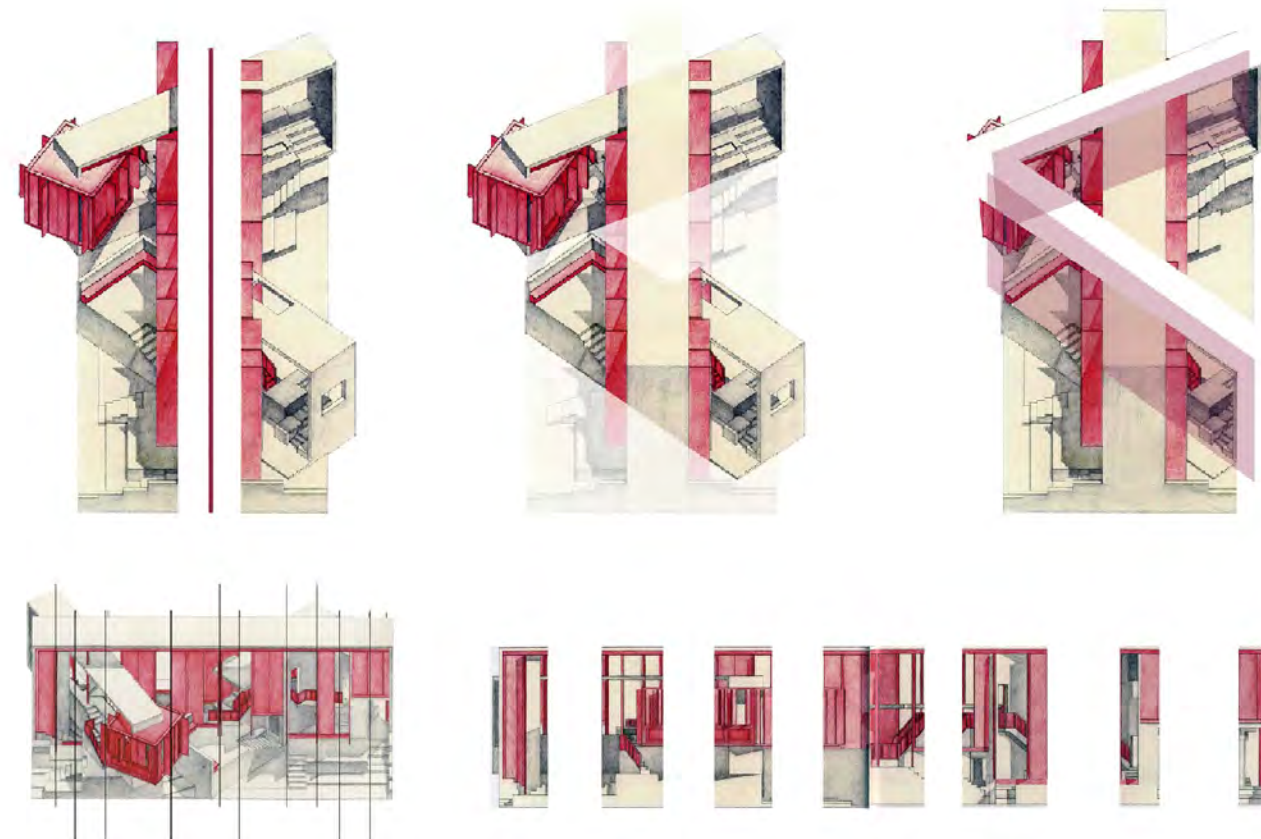


Figure 32²

1. Wang, Xin. *An Architecture Towards Shanshui*. Tongji University Press, 2015.

2. Author's own analysis.

02 WANG XIN'S STUDY OF SHANSHUI

2.3 Case studies

CASE STUDY 3: 折波平远

(Student project, China Academy of Art, School of Architecture)



Figure 33¹

Flat and Distant: The view is flat and wide. Objects spread out over horizontal layers.

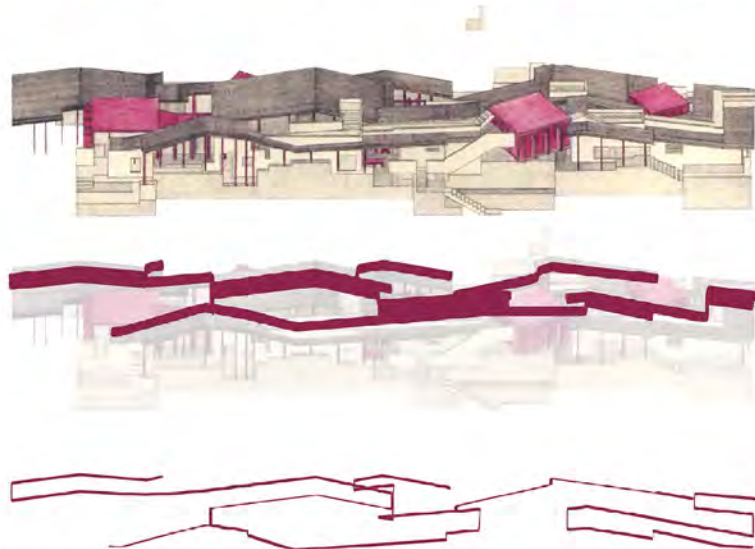
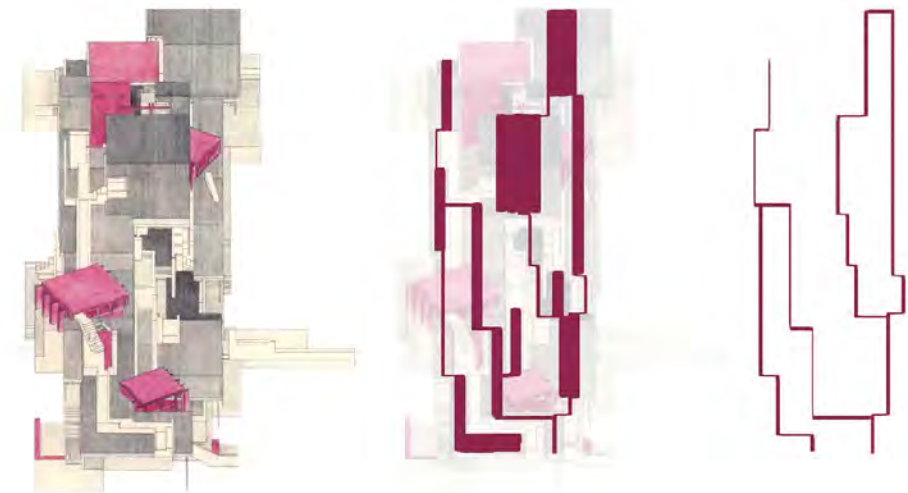


Figure 34²



1. Wang, Xin. *An Architecture Towards Shanshui*. Tongji University Press, 2015.

2. Author's own analysis.

03 PRECEDENTS STUDIES

3.1 Jixi museum

Project: Jixi museum

Architect: Li, Xingguang

Location: Jixi, Anhui province, China

Year: 2013



Figure 37³

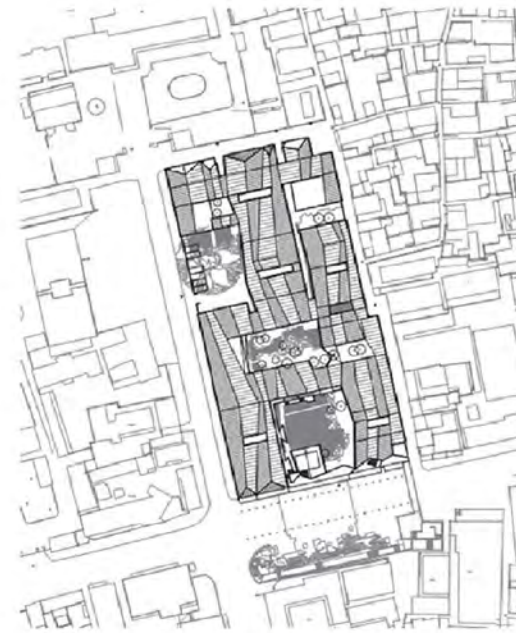


Figure 35¹



Figure 36²



Figure 38⁴



Figure 39⁵

1&2. Zhulong, <http://www.zhulong.com/>
3&4&5. Qiantu, <http://www.58pic.com/>

03 PRECEDENTS STUDIES

3.2 Shanghai World EXOP Ningbo Tengtou pavilion

Project: Shanghai World EXOP Ningbo Tengtou pavilion

Architect: Wang, Shu

Location: Shanghai, China

Year: 2010

Wang Shu uses different activities of ancient Chinese architecture in a natural environment over time to explain a "people-oriented" concept in architectural designs and highlights a complementary relationship between people and the environment, and the buildings and the environment. Wang Shu adopts a special "cutting type" design method through multiple spaces to reflect the architecture form and human activities.

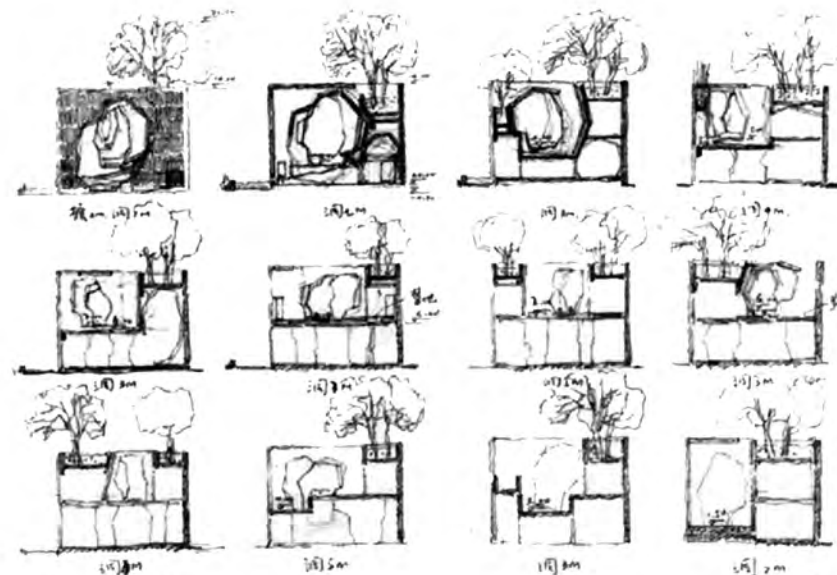


Figure 40¹



Figure 41²



Figure 42³

1&2&3. Baozang, <http://artist.baozang.com/>

03 PRECEDENTS STUDIES

3.3 Qingshui guild hall

Project: Qingshui guild hall

Architect: Dong, Yugan

Location: Beijing, China

Year: 2007

This design is not a simple process of building a house, but it is a process of building a landscape. Two things are essential; one is looking into the architectural meaning principle, the other is the realization of an architectural imagination. One is the heart; the other is the hand.

The architectural principle of the Chinese landscape is related to the Western classical "symmetry," which is able to evaluate the "asymmetry" something that modernism and postmodernism tried to promote but could not.

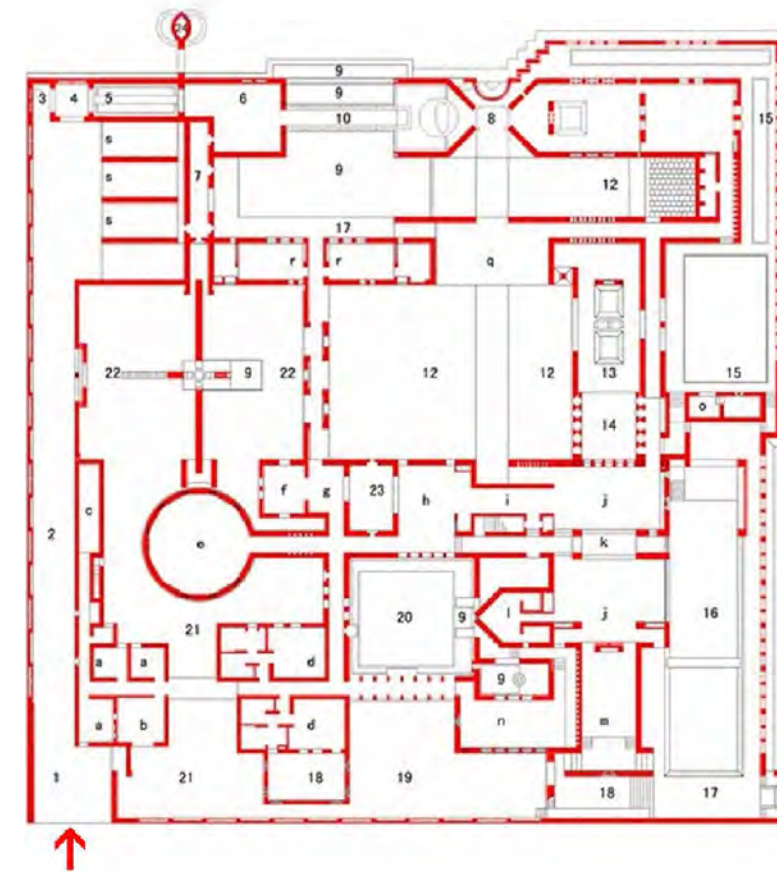


Figure 43¹



Figure 44²



Figure 45³



Figure 46⁴



Figure 47⁵



Figure 48⁶

03 PRECEDENTS STUDIES

3.4 Xiangshan Central Campus of China Academy of Art

Project: Xiangshan Central Campus of China Academy of Art

Architect: Wang, Shu

Location: Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

Year: 2007

In Xiangshan campus, Wang Shu unfollowed the classic planning method of the older architecture, disregarded the axial and symmetric relationships which have no meaning for a real site but instead used the surrounding environment as the significant basis of architectural planning. Thus, he formed a free, dense and dynamic inside and loosened outside. Wang Shu kept a piece of farmland on campus, used old building materials coming from the demolition of traditional buildings. He also tried to use a shape full of traditional memories while being concise and beautiful to keep the relationship between the building and the site.



Figure 51³

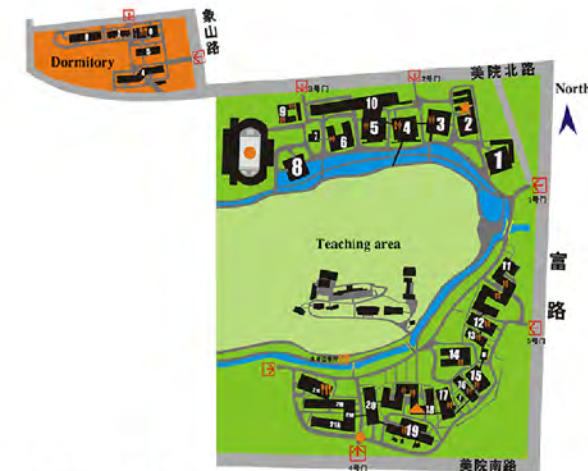


Figure 49¹



Figure 50²



Figure 52⁴

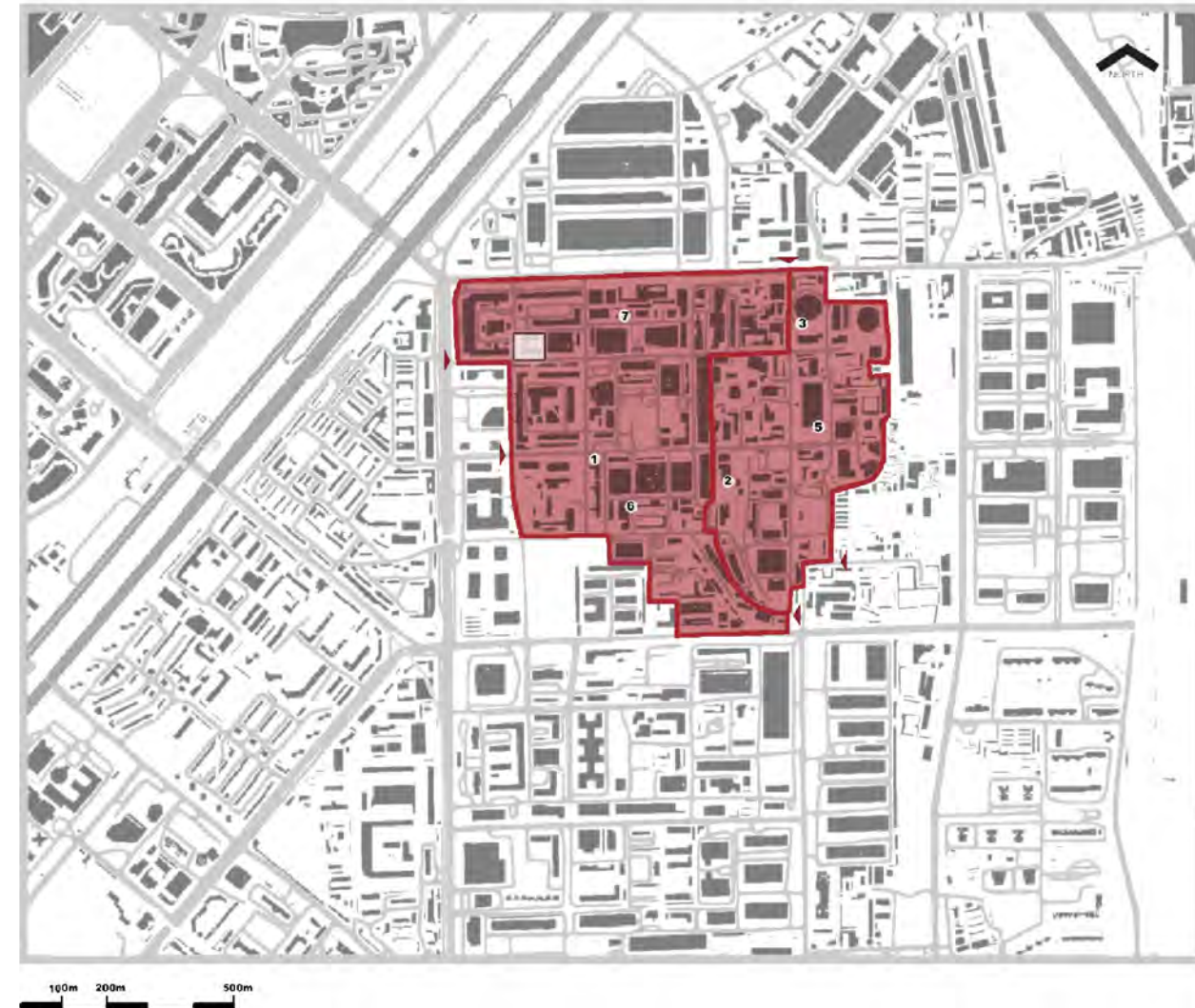
1&2&3&4. Baozang, <http://artist.baozang.com/>

04 SITE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

798 Art District is located in Beijing Chaoyang District Jiuxianqiao street Dashanzi area; it is also known as Dashanzi Art District (English abbreviation DAD - Dashanzi Art District). It formerly was the location of the old factory of 798 Electronic Industry. Today 798 has become a new landmark for the Beijing urban context.

The region covers an area of 60 square meters which is famous for the contemporary art and new lifestyle. 798 also refers to a cultural aspect imposed by the art district. Called LOFT which is the fashionable way of living and working.



04 SITE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction



798 Circulation



8. Fashion design plaza



7. Creative plaza



1. Hyundai Motoestudio



2. Locomotive plaza



3. 79 Jar factory



4. Art&Craft store



5. Audi China



6. Shouhou coffee

04 SITE ANALYSIS

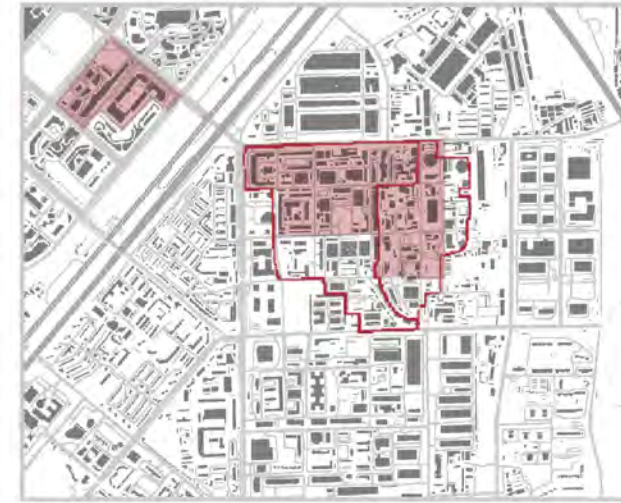
4.2 Neighbourhood function



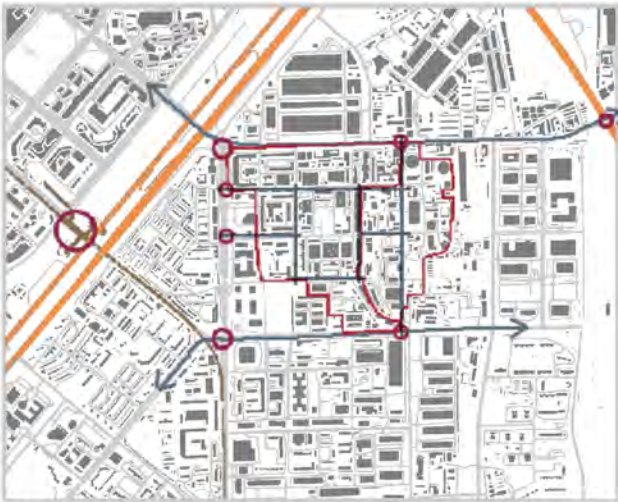
Residential



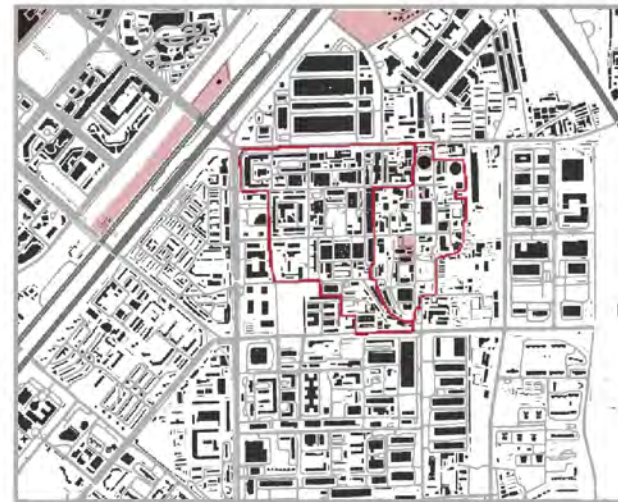
Business



Commercial



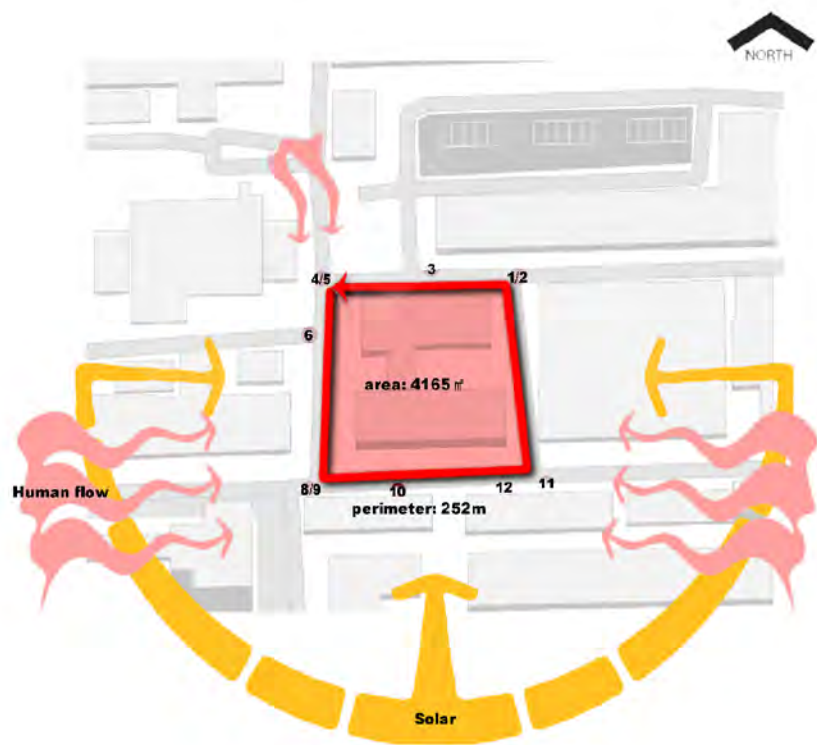
Transportation



Public space

04 SITE ANALYSIS

4.3 Current situation

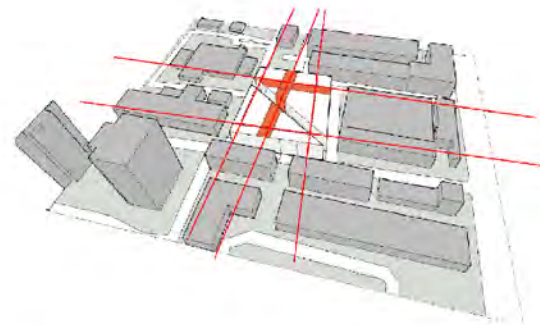


05 DESIGN PROCESS

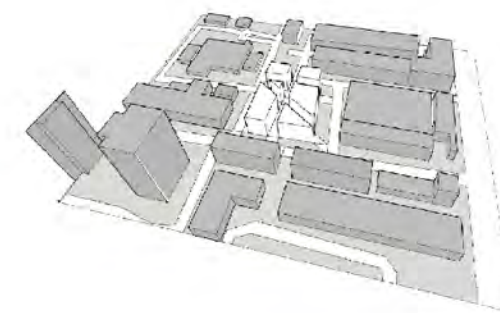
5.2 Concept development



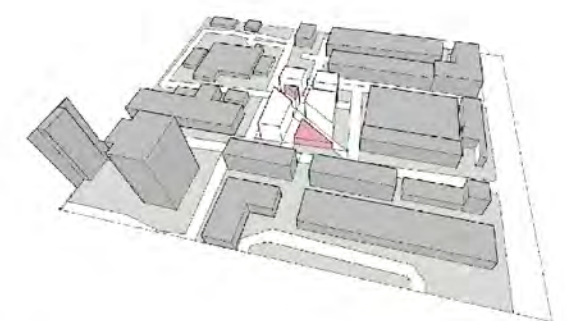
Main entrance



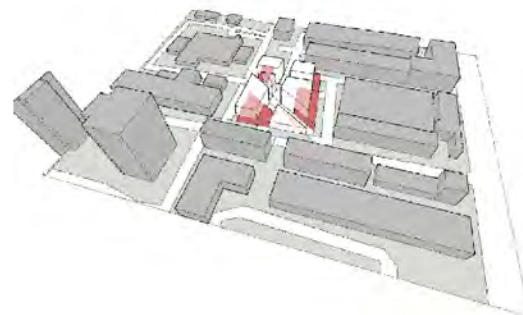
Street grid



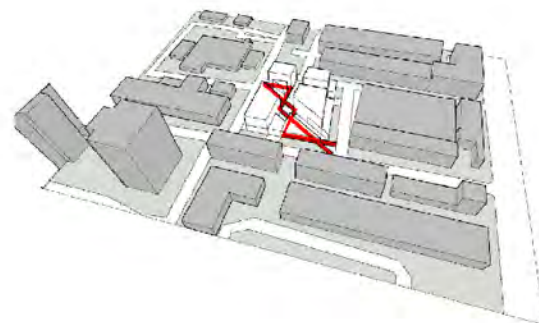
Mass



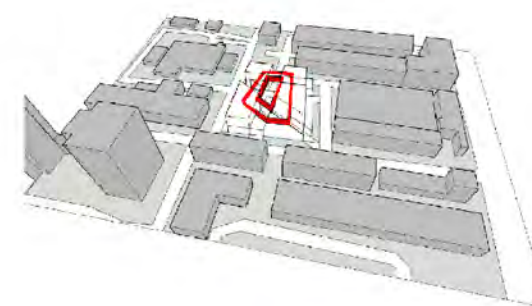
Shared social spaces



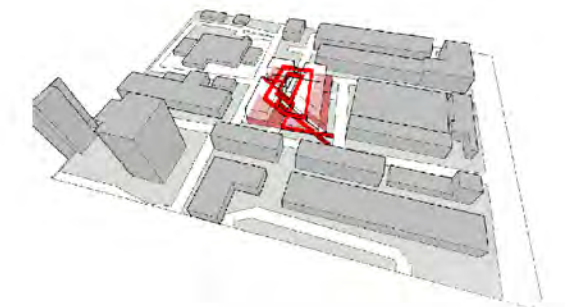
Shops & offices



Circulation: visitor



Circulation: residents



Articulation

05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.3.1 First floor plan

- A. Bedroom
- B. Kitchen
- C. Ice Cream factory
- D. Barber shop
- E. Laundry
- F. Restaurant
- G. Bath
- H. Gymnasium
- I. Cafe & Bookstore
- J. Art studio
- K. Office
- L. Library
- M. Living area



05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.3.2 Second floor plan

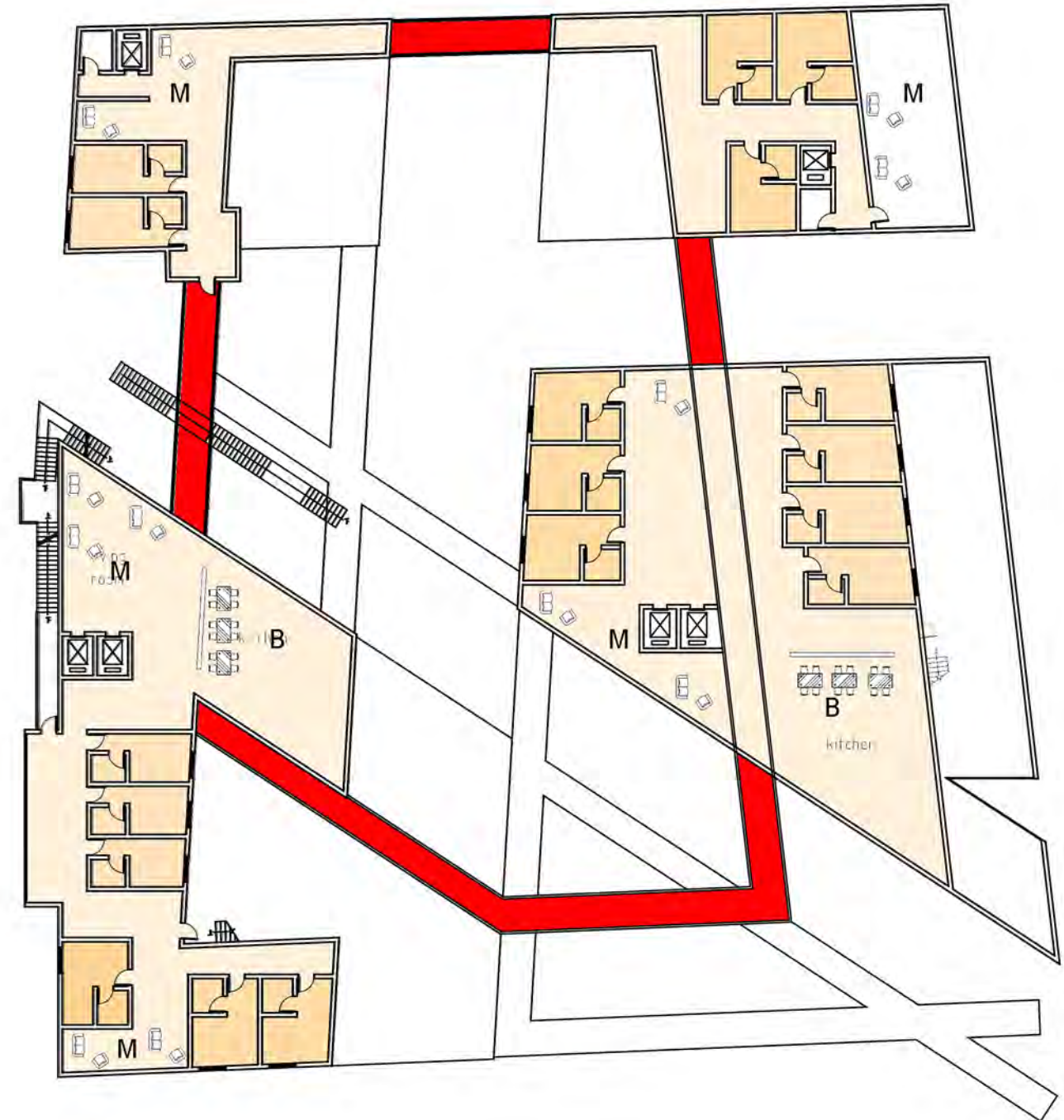
- A. Bedroom
- B. Kitchen
- C. Ice Cream factory
- D. Barber shop
- E. Laundry
- F. Restaurant
- G. Bath
- H. Gymnasium
- I. Cafe & Bookstore
- J. Art studio
- K. Office
- L. Library
- M. Living area



05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.3.3 Third floor plan

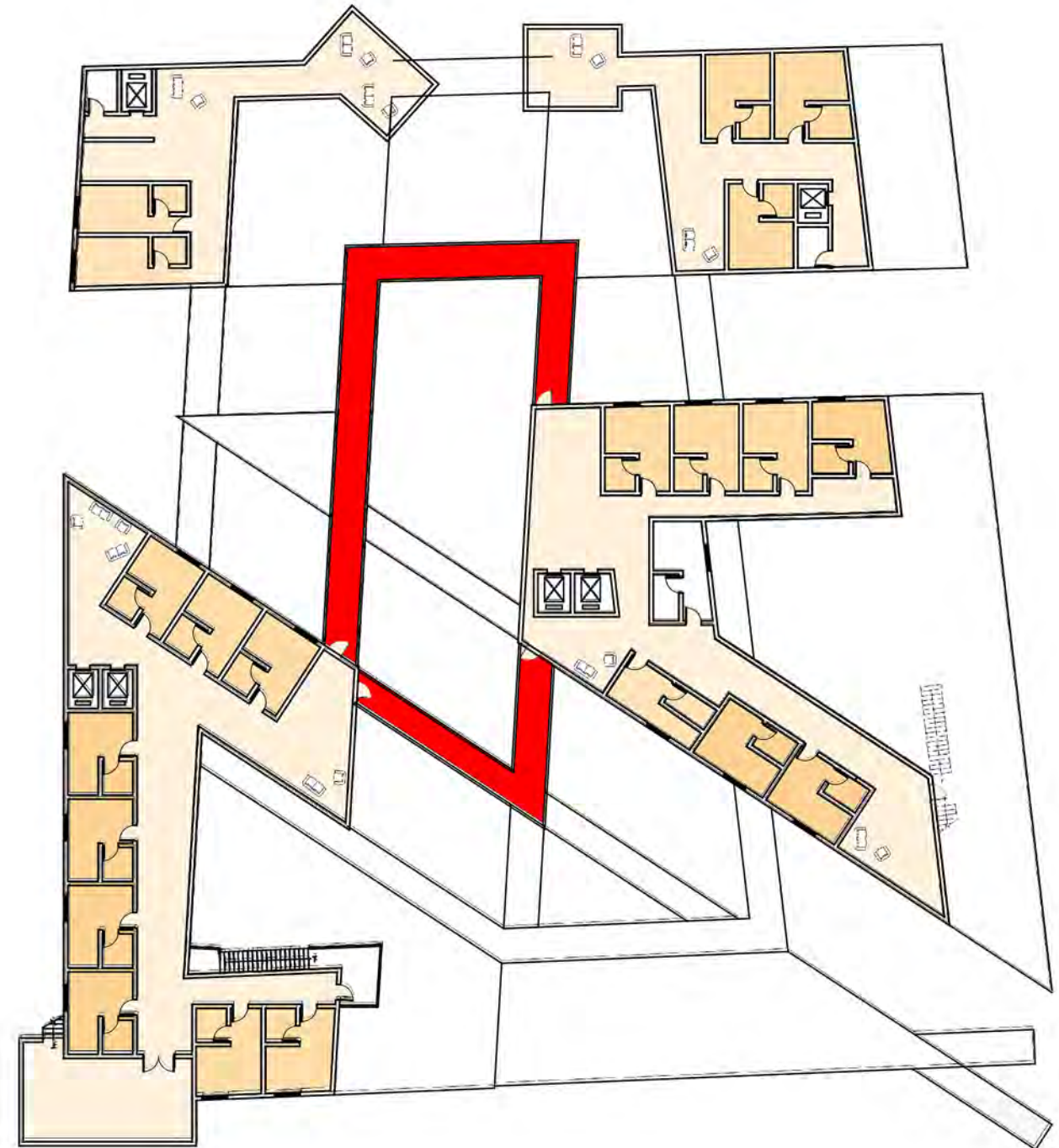
- A. Bedroom
- B. Kitchen
- C. Ice Cream factory
- D. Barber shop
- E. Laundry
- F. Restaurant
- G. Bath
- H. Gymnasium
- I. Cafe & Bookstore
- J. Art studio
- K. Office
- L. Library
- M. Living area



05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.3.4 Fourth floor plan

- A. Bedroom
- B. Kitchen
- C. Ice Cream factory
- D. Barber shop
- E. Laundry
- F. Restaurant
- G. Bath
- H. Gymnasium
- I. Cafe & Bookstore
- J. Art studio
- K. Office
- L. Library
- M. Living area



05 DESIGN PROCESS

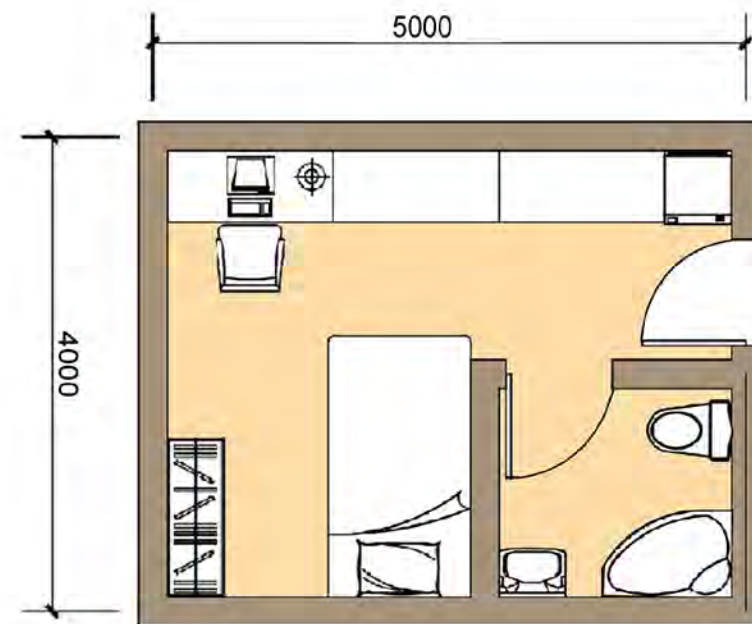
5.3.5 Fifth floor plan

- A. Bedroom
- B. Kitchen
- C. Ice Cream factory
- D. Barber shop
- E. Laundry
- F. Restaurant
- G. Bath
- H. Gymnasium
- I. Cafe & Bookstore
- J. Art studio
- K. Office
- L. Library
- M. Living area

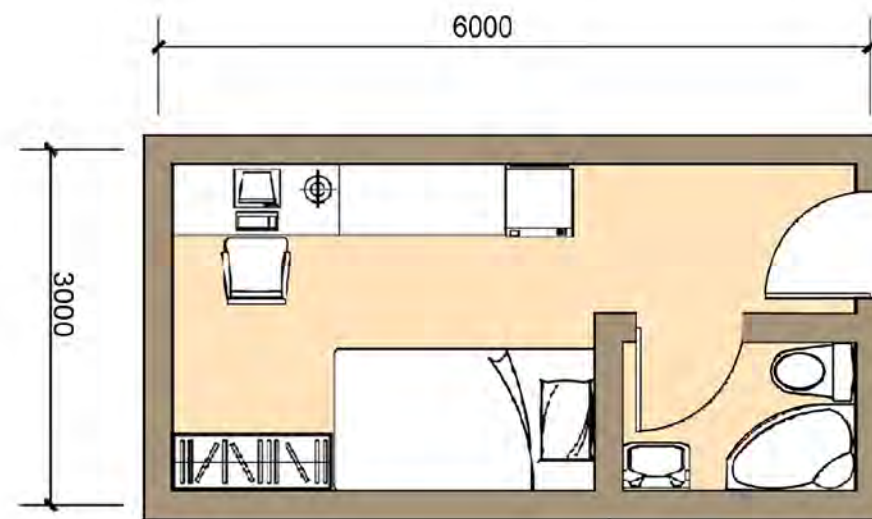


05 DESIGN PROCESS

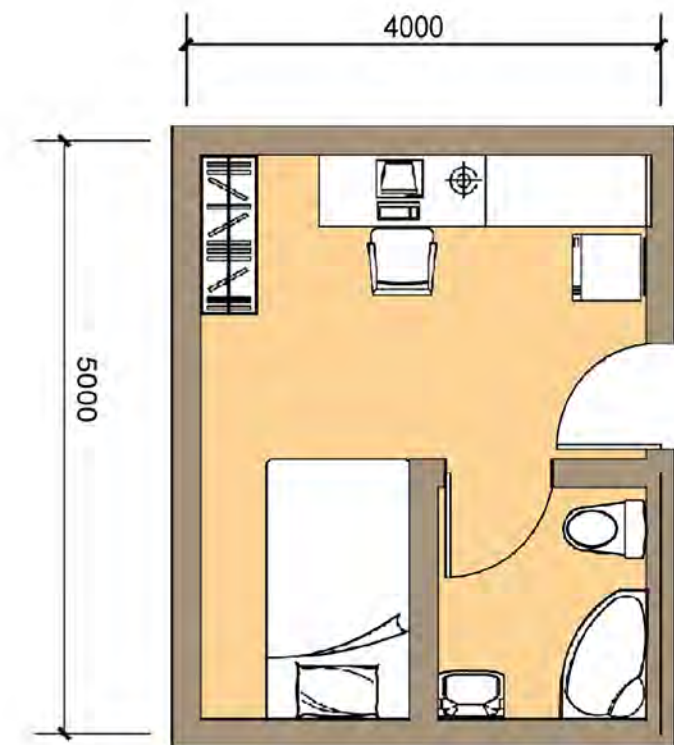
5.3.6 Typical floor plan



ROOM TYPE A



ROOM TYPE B



ROOM TYPE C

05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.4 Elevations



SOUTH ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

EAST ELEVATION

05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.5 Exterior views

WEST ENTRANCE



05 DESIGN PROCESS

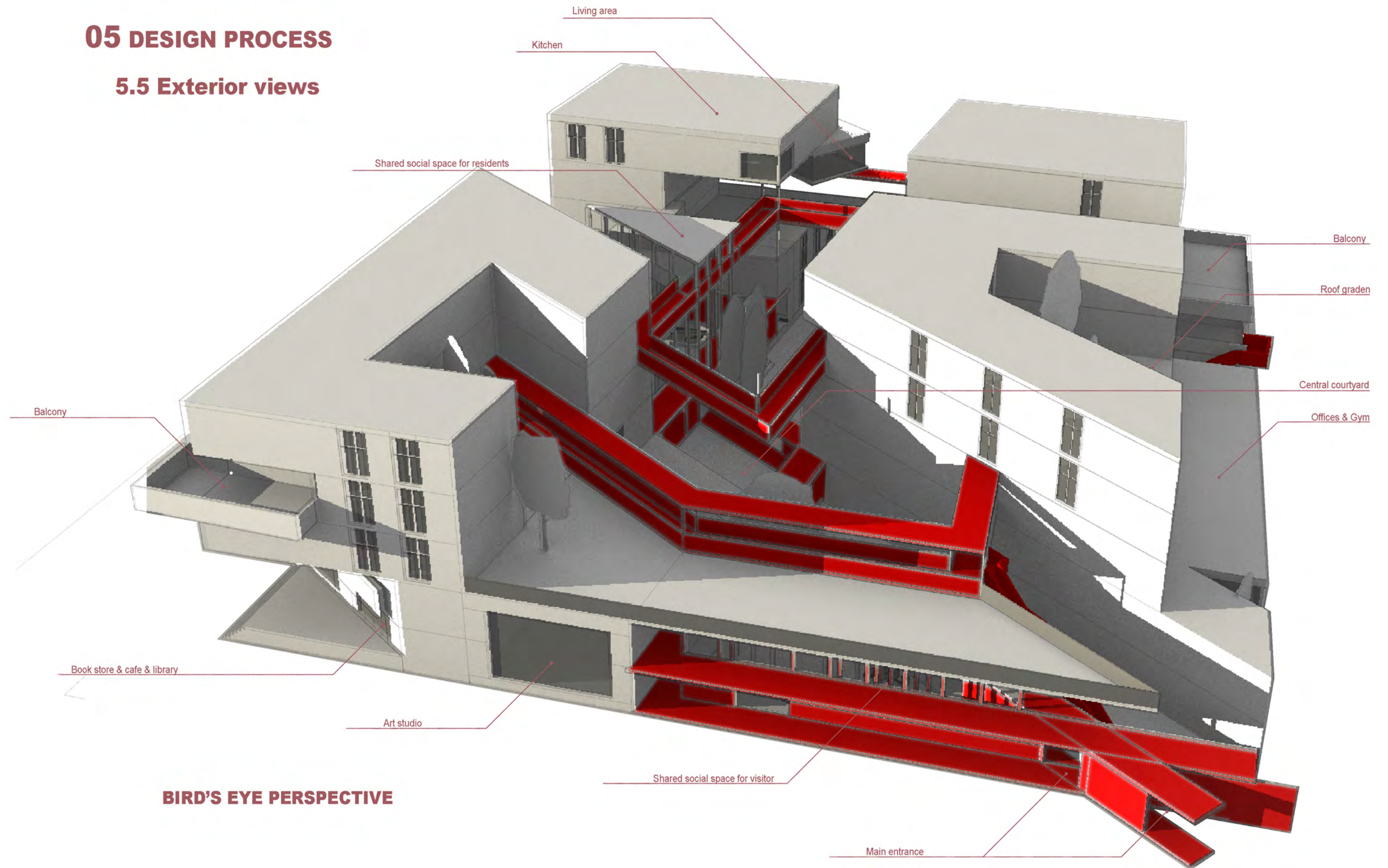
5.5 Exterior views

**SOUTHEAST ENTRANCE
(MAIN ENTRANCE)**



05 DESIGN PROCESS

5.5 Exterior views



BIRD'S EYE PERSPECTIVE