To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by William Doyle entitled "Architecture as the Imitation of an Action." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, with a major in Architecture.

Adam Drisin, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Jon Coddington

William Martella

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Architecture as the Imitation of an Action

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Architecture

Degree

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William Doyle

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Abstract

When Aristotle writes in the *Poetics* that "tragedy is the imitation of an action," he is referring to an action that is the essence and the motivation behind the drama, and that all the parts of the tragedy are concerned with imitating this action in the forms appropriate to them. This thesis applies this definition to architecture, and argues that the action that architecture should imitate is the moment when the everyday is elevated by extraordinary circumstances to the level of art. This action is both the intellectual content behind the building and its physical inspiration. This action occurs when normal, everyday things are transformed, changed into something else: they become heroic; they become art. Architecture, like drama, affords us the opportunity to recreate this transcendent action with every performance.

The thesis is explored through the design of a theater center located in New York, New York called the Manhattanville Theater Project. In informing the design of the project the thesis suggests the following design issues that help to bring the action to the surface and make it understandable:

1. Things that are normally not seen are made part of the performance.
2. Things that are normally hidden are revealed.
3. Audience and performance are reversed.
4. The traditional boundaries of the theater are blurred.

Contents

I.	Argument	1
II.	Program	5
III.	Site	9
IV.	Precedents	23
V.	Project Drawings	29
VI.	Project Description	49
	Works Cited	53
	Vita	55

List of Figures

Figure 1. Action.	3
Figure 2. Performance Spaces.	6
Figure 3. Program Areas.	6
Figure 4. Existing Site.	10
Figure 5. Existing Elevation.	11
Figure 6. Aerial Photo.	14
Figure 7. Building Use.	14
Figure 8. Site Axon.	15
Figure 9. Existing Site Behind Elevated Train Tracks.	16
Figure 10. Subway Elevation.	17
Figure 11. Subway Elevation Detail.	17
Figure 12. Subway.	19
Figure 13. Fire Escapes.	21
Figure 14. Stoops.	21
Figure 15. Storefront for Art and Architecture.	23
Figure 16. House #1, Photo.	24
Figure 17. House #1, Axon.	24
Figure 18. 2econd Stage Theatre, Plans.	26
Figure 19. 2econd Stage Theatre, Section.	26
Figure 20. 2econd Stage Theatre, Circulation.	27
Figure 21. 2econd Stage Theatre, Exterior.	27
Figure 22. 2econd Stage Theatre, Vault / Box Office.	27
Figure 23. Aerial Photo Montage.	31
Figure 24. Axon from Southwest.	32
Figure 25. Street View Photo Montage.	33
Figure 26. East Facade Perspective.	33

Figure 27. Plan 1 – Ground Level. 34

Figure 28. Plan 2 – Shop Level. 35

Figure 29. Plan 3 – Main Stage Level. 36

Figure 30. East Elevation. 37

Figure 31. Cross Section AA – Performance Section. 38

Figure 32. Long Section BB – Facing West. 39

Figure 33. Cross Section CC – Public Atrium. 40

Figure 34. Cross Section DD – Public Atrium. 41

Figure 35. Long Section EE – Facing East. 42

Figure 36. Public Entry View. 43

Figure 37. Atrium View. 43

Figure 38. Atrium Stair. 44

Figure 39. Atrium View from Above. 44

Figure 40. View of Entry to Main Stage Theater. 45

Figure 41. View from Audience. 45

Figure 42. View from Boardroom. 46

Figure 43. View from Ground Level Workshop. 46

Figure 44. View from Downtown Train. 47

Figure 45. View from Uptown Train. 47

I. Argument

A work of architecture is the imitation of a single action which is both the intellectual content behind the building and its physical inspiration. This argument is derived from Aristotle's description not of architecture, but of tragedy in the *Poetics*. James Hutton's description of the position poetry holds in Aristotle's general scientific framework demonstrates also the close relationship between poetry and architecture:

> "Aristotle divides the sciences into the theoretical, the practical, and the productive. As sciences, all have knowledge as their purpose, the theoretical sciences (e.g. mathematics) knowledge for its own sake, the practical sciences (e.g. ethics) knowledge for the sake of conduct, the productive sciences (e.g. poetics) knowledge for the sake of making something" (9).

Architecture would fall into the classification of a productive science, which has as its purpose knowledge for the sake of making something.

Aristotle describes various art forms as imitations of some truth or fact. A painting, for example, is pleasing because it reminds us of something that we know to be true. For Aristotle a drama enacted on the stage is an imitation of a universal truth. And because it is a drama and not a narrative, this imitation is in the mode of action. The imitation occurs on the stage as we watch it; it has not already occurred at some prior date as with a painting. A work of architecture is an imitation of an action like a dramatic play is. Each time a person interacts with a building it is a performance. An action inspires its imitation and a universal truth is conveyed. Architecture – like literature – is based in knowledge for the sake of making something, and as it is with tragedy, something is made with every performance.

Poet William Butler Yeats describes the drama that occurs at the convergence of these three ingredients as an act of transcendence. In "Lapis Lazuli" (1938), Yeats describes three figures depicted climbing a mountain in a piece of art carved in lapis lazuli. In their climb these figures, representative works of art, climb above the normal, everyday world below, and the poet imagines them when they have reached their destination:

> There, on the mountain and the sky,
>
> On all the tragic scene below they stare.

One asks for mournful melodies;

Accomplished fingers begin to play.

Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,

Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay. (51-56)

What allows the figures to be gay in spite of the "tragic scene" they observe, a scene that includes war and dying and the inevitable passing of time, is that through the action of artistic creation they have been able to transcend that passage of time. To Yeats it is the action of art, not the product, that is important. Even if the artwork does not last, the action is still valid: "All things fall and are built again / And those that build them again are gay" (35-36).

Yeats describes political heroes in much the same way. An act of heroism causes a person to leave the "stream" of passing time and become something that transcends the mundane concerns of everyday life. In "Easter 1916" he writes,

Hearts with one purpose alone

Through summer and winter seem

Enchanted to a stone

To trouble the living stream. (41-44)

He describes the heroes of the Irish Easter Uprising as people who began as normal, unimpressive characters concerned with the everyday worries of getting and spending, living and dying; clowns who "But lived where motley is worn" (14). Through their history-making actions, though, these figures are transformed into something more than normal people – they become heroes: "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born" (15-16).

Adding this to Yeats' description of artistic action, we see that for him this action occurs when normal, everyday things are transformed, changed into something else: they become heroic; they become art. From the stream of everyday life they are removed. And while their lives may continue through time – heroes may live or die; artwork may survive or be destroyed – it is their heroic or artistic action that has been transformed into "a terrible beauty" (see Figure 1).

As a form of art, a work of architecture is the manifestation of such a transcendent action. The creation of a work of architecture is an act that transcends the everyday world, no matter if the building

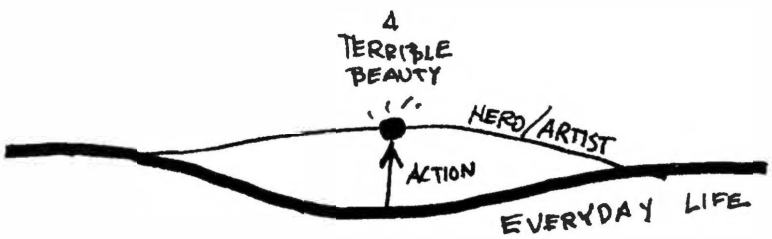


Figure 1. Action.

lasts for thousands of years or is destroyed in twenty. But architecture, like drama, affords us the opportunity to recreate this transcendent action with every performance.

The power of transcendence that Yeats ascribes to heroic action could not exist without a political content to inspire it. Likewise, artistic action could have no potency without an intellectual content to inspire and motivate it. A work of architecture must have a specific intellectual content that is identified at the beginning of the design so that it informs all the further steps in the design process. In the study of an existing work of architecture, this content must be identifiable by a "reader" – someone studying the project from an informed perspective. It is the responsibility of each work of architecture to establish the intellectual content that motivates its action so that a reader may interpret but not invent it.

The thesis argument suggests the following *action* as the specific intellectual content to motivate the design of this project: *to elevate ordinary things into extraordinary circumstances*. This is the expression in the mode of action of the argument that action, in architecture as in drama, occurs when normal, everyday things are transformed into art. The purpose of this statement is to make the thesis argument into an action that can be imitated in a physical form as a building.

II. Program

The action *to elevate ordinary things into extraordinary circumstances* occurs when everyday people and events are elevated to the position of art and placed on stage. This makes the experience of theater a most appropriate vehicle for the imitation of this action. In his description of the ideal material for tragedy Aristotle concludes that the best hero for a tragedy is a person who is neither perfectly good or completely evil: "Such is the man who on the one hand is not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall into misfortune through vice or depravity, but falls because of some mistake" (*Poetics* 57). He is in other words a normal man, but one who finds himself in extraordinary circumstances.

The action *to elevate ordinary things into extraordinary circumstances* has ramifications for the physical characteristics of a theater building. In fact, the building, a part of everyday life that may tend to recede into the background in a traditional theater performance, must in this case be brought into the foreground and placed on stage. Bertolt Brecht includes devices in his plays such as loudspeakers, intense lighting, and visible props and set equipment to keep his audience constantly aware of the fact that they are watching a play and not a realistic spectacle (Jacobus 689). Following his example, this project will emphasize the presence of the building, so that the audience will recognize that they are watching a play in a theater, a particular instrument for the creation of this kind of art.

Because a theater is a place for the performing of works of theatrical art, the theater building must not only be the imitation of an action, but as well a building that affords the opportunity to imitate actions, those of the plays to be performed there. While not every play and not every production would be appropriate here, flexibility is required. In a theater where the building is intended to exert its presence on the performance, that presence must be alterable to suit a variety of performances.

One way that this flexibility may be enhanced is by providing a variety of performance spaces. The main stage will be open to the neighborhood, the elevated train, and the experience of the city as well as the full "performance" of the theater-going experience. A second performance area will be a black box theater in the interior of the building, enclosed and insulated from external interference. This smaller, less formal theater will bring theatergoers closer to the action on stage, blurring the distinction between

audience and performance. Finally, a third performance area will be created out of the entire theater building, using the lobby and circulation areas as spaces where new performances may be designed and new relationships between actor and spectator can be explored (see Figure 2).

The program is divided into three areas: performance, public, and service (see Figure 3). The performance area contains the space for the audience and the stage, with its associated supporting elements: fly, backstage, control booth. These elements have a necessary configuration mandated by the performance of a play: the audience, balcony, and control room face the stage, the fly stage is above, and the backstage is adjacent. To be able to incorporate the urban context and the train into the performance, the stage must be at the front (east side) of the building. The train goes by at an elevation between the second and third floors of the existing buildings, so a raised stage and audience are needed to allow a full angle of view. The above-mentioned intention to elevate the ordinary elements of the service area into the extraordinary circumstance of the performance also necessitates a clear connection between the performance and public areas.

The public area includes the elements of the program that would traditionally be designed to provide service to the public, the patrons of the theater: lobby, box office, café, restrooms. But in this project the ordinary or mundane functions accommodated by these spaces are elevated to the level of the theatrical performance, so that they are part of the production, a performance in their own right. A multistory lobby will lead to the raised level of the performance area, and the circulation through this space

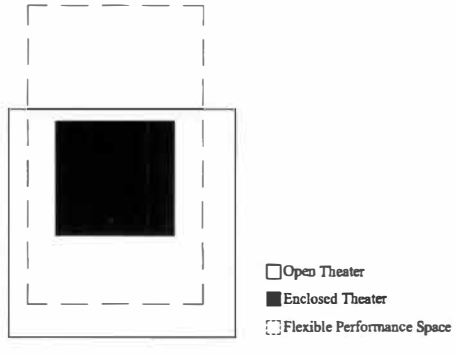


Figure 2. Performance Spaces.

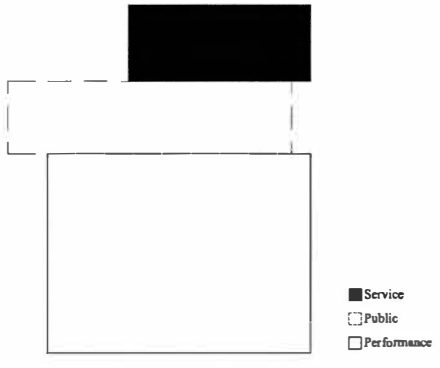


Figure 3. Program Areas.

will be an event. The café that serves food and drinks before the play begins will be broken apart and dispersed throughout the lobby and circulation space. The customer getting a drink between acts will be on exhibit to those moving through the lobby as well as to the audience members in the theater seats. Bathrooms will also be dispersed throughout the lobby area, with lavatories out in the public view. Going to the bathroom will be a self-conscious participation in the event of this theater.

The third area, service, is for the support of the theatrical performance, and it includes a rehearsal space, green room, dressing rooms, shops and storage for sets, props, and costumes, and a loading dock to serve these shops. The natural inclination would be to separate these functions from the public performance, like Oz's man behind the curtain. But the thesis demands that these ordinary functions are essential to the action of the theater, and must be celebrated as part of the action. A dressing room can provide refuge for an actor who will be hiding in plain sight. Sets and props for past or future shows can be stored in the open, and constructed in place that is visible to those who want to watch.

The building described thus far is one with a shell made up of various parts of a previously existing building put together in different and changeable ways, with an interior that is for the most part open, without hard-lined distinction between areas. The performance area flows into the service area, and workshop elements are intermingled with those accessible to the public. The architecture will be defined by the action that takes place in it.

III. Site

It is clear that New York City is the best location for this project. Throughout the last century New York has made the commonplace extraordinary (and vice versa). The focus of a media industry on New York City gives everyday life here an epic proportion; it becomes the backdrop for *When Harry Met Sally* and *NYPD Blue* and *Sesame Street*, as well as for the surreal drama that has been played out on the national news since September of this year. In *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* Marshall Berman writes,

> For more than a century, New York has served as a center for international communications. The city has become not merely a theater but itself a production, a multimedia presentation whose audience is the whole world. This has given a special resonance and depth to much of what is done and made here. A great deal of New York's construction and development over the past century needs to be seen as symbolic action and communication: it has been conceived and executed not merely to serve immediate economic and political need but, at least equally important, to demonstrate to the whole world what modern men can build and how modern life itself can be imagined and lived. (288-289)

This atmosphere where aspects of mundane everyday life are elevated into things of much greater significance creates a great opportunity for the creation of action through the transformation of normal things.

It is also appropriate that the material for this project be the ordinary "stock" that makes up the fabric of New York City: the standard tenement block. This is the material from which the city is made – housing for ordinary New Yorkers. It is the fabric that makes the backdrop against which more spectacular events occur. The site for this project is a portion of such a block of four story apartment buildings located at 3281-3289 Broadway (between West 132nd and West 133rd Streets) in the neighborhood known as Manhattanville. The buildings on the site range in condition from derelict to run down, and provide the opportunity for a partial demolition with the salvaging of some parts, particularly the beautiful and characteristic facades (see Figures 4 and 5).

The site is immediately surrounded by more examples of New York's urban fabric, with the exception of a large high-rise housing project on the super-block to the north, and William Lescaze's



Figure 4. Existing site.

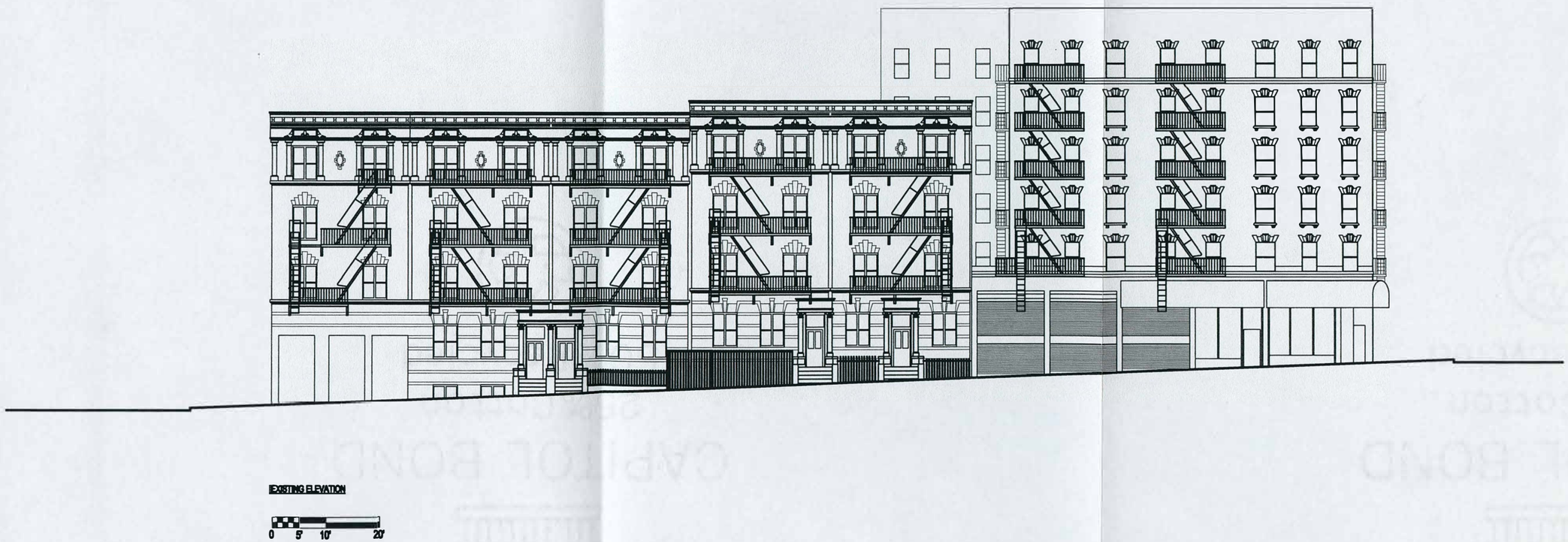


Figure 5. Existing Elevation.

Manhattanville Housing Project (1941-6) across Broadway to the east (see Figures 6-8). These projects that interrupt the urban fabric of buildings as well as the block structure of Manhattan will provide a contrast to this project which will create dramatic action in the midst of New York's urban fabric instead of attempting to eradicate it. This contrast will help to underscore the argument.

The most striking thing about this site is the presence of the elevated IRT subway that goes by on Broadway (see Figures 9-11). The ground drops between Morningside Heights and Hamilton Heights into a valley where Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (West 125th Street) cuts diagonally across towards the Hudson River. The IRT, remaining level, comes out of the ground between West 122nd and West 135th Streets. The 125th Street station is elevated several stories above ground, while the stations at 116th and 137th Streets are below ground.

Placing a row of apartment buildings facing an elevated train track does not seem to be the best example of building with sensitivity to place. The existing buildings on the site share an antagonistic relationship with the subway; the passing of trains at all hours of the day and night deny apartment residents the peace and quiet and privacy to which people should normally be entitled in their homes. In return these buildings ensure that the only view that subway passengers are likely to see is one of graffiti and vacant buildings: crime and urban decay. On the other hand, the large housing complex just north of the site seems to be immune to the subway's antagonism (see Figures 6 and 8). The building is set back from Broadway more than a hundred feet, and the forty-story building towers far above the train. The newer building also is climate controlled – closed windows on air-conditioned apartments block out the noises of the city. The protection, however, comes at the price of isolation. The building, set back from the streets on all sides, does not address its immediate context. Residents' views are of far away, not their neighborhood.

The elevated train is an important metaphor for the argument that architectural action occurs when mundane things are transformed. The subway is one of the most characteristic things about New York, as well as one of the most mundane. For most New Yorkers it is a way to get to work, not glamorous, fun, or interesting, and for the most part it stays underground. When it comes above ground it becomes something else: an annoyance for people who live near the tracks. But it has the opportunity to become something extraordinary for a building that is designed with a sensitivity to this particular place. It suggests exciting



Figure 6. Aerial Photo with Site Highlighted.

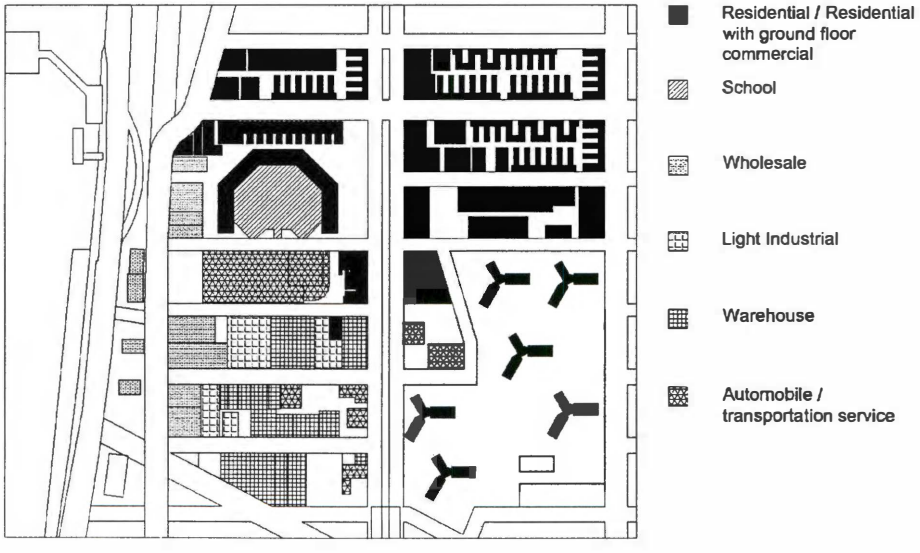


Figure 7. Building Use Diagram.



Figure 8. Site Axon. Existing buildings are highlighted in center. Lescaze's Manhattanville project (Y - shaped towers) lie to the south across Broadway (with elevated train tracks). Also visible are the Hudson River, the Henry Hudson Expressway and Riverside Drive Viaduct to the north and west.



Figure 9. Existing site behind elevated train tracks.

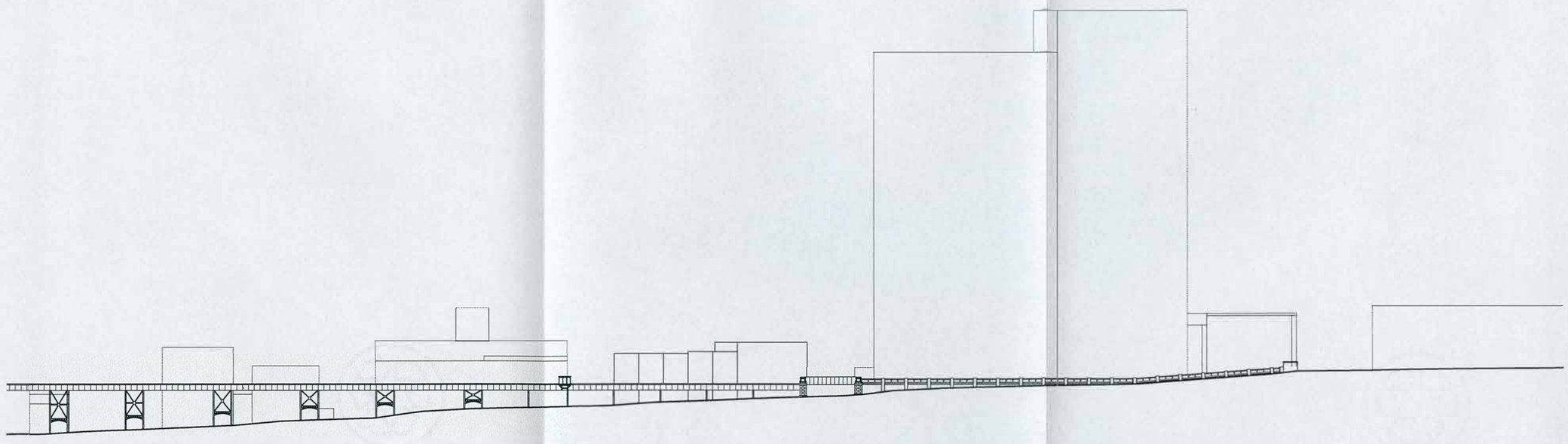


Figure 10. Subway Elevation.

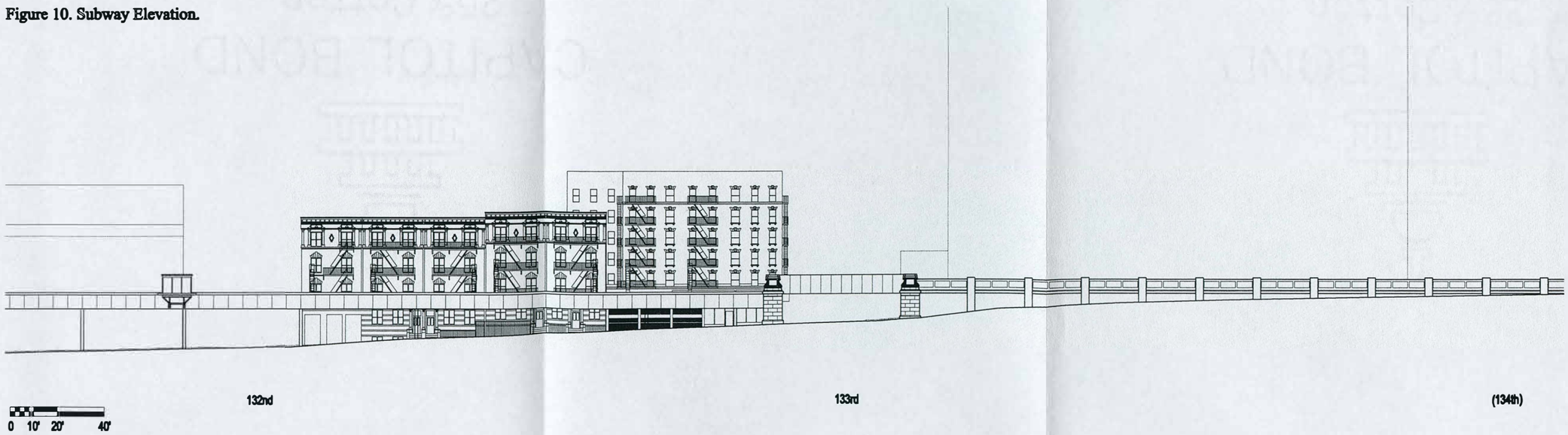


Figure 11. Subway Elevation Detail.

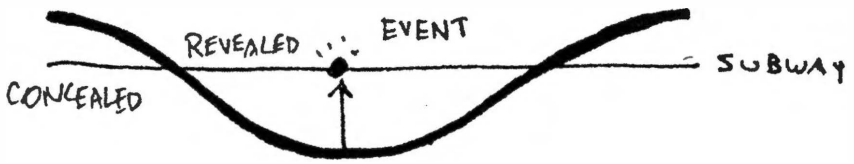


Figure 12. Subway.

possibilities for a theater designed to draw the city into the performance, making each performance a unique event (see Figure 12). The performance space can be designed to use the sound and the sight of the trains going by. King Lear can rage into a storm that includes the sound of the uptown local #1 train.

The new program for this site, a theater center, requires the replacement of the original buildings. The existing buildings that are one of the major reasons for the selection of this site must be significantly altered or destroyed. The theater does not require the entire block, but it is the older, more elaborately ornamented traditional tenements at the south end of the block that will be replaced or severely modified, and the less interesting, less characteristic building on the north corner that will remain largely as it is. While a part of the reason for this is that this building is in much better shape than the others, with viable commercial interests (including a restaurant) on the ground floor, the chief factor compelling the intervention into the other buildings is the meaning these signs represent. What makes them attractive is what compels their modification.

While there is a temptation to restore the buildings to their original beauty and then leave them alone, there is more to be gained from what Harries calls a "re-presentation" of what is significant and important about these buildings as representatives of their type. A similar example is the House on the Nova Scotia Coast # 1 by Brian MacKay-Lyons (see Precedent section below). This project is a "renovation" of a 200-year old Cape Cod house which would scandalize a strict preservationist. Inspired by the remains of nearby farmhouses that had burned, leaving only the stone foundations and central chimneys, MacKay-Lyons removed the floors and interior walls of the thirteen-room house and created a central chimney-like mass which contains fireplace, kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping areas. Instead of preserving the house in its historic form, MacKay-Lyons makes a bold statement about what is important about the type the house represents, and about home in general.

Like the Cape Cod house, the buildings on the project site are not unique designs that must be preserved for history. Rather, they are much more important as representatives of their type, and provide an opportunity to comment on the type and on the general condition of urban living today. Dismantling the buildings and re-presenting what is important about them makes a more valuable contribution than would by preserving them as artifacts. The original direction for the project involved keeping the facades of some of the buildings as whole pieces that become elements in a new facade with the new building behind it. But the isolated facade – the face removed from its body – would become decoration that exists for its own sake, instead of serving the building. Even though it is preexisting, it would meet the definition of what Harries calls "constructed decoration" (73). A better strategy is to re-present the important elements of the facade in a new way. The facade of the tenement building is important because it is how the building connects with the street, and how the residents of the building connect with the city. Inside the building are individual apartments; there the residents are living in the worlds they have created for themselves. But they can occupy the building itself instead of their own apartments by occupying the façade. The façades of these buildings are three-dimensional, and the stoops and fire escapes present opportunities for people to enter the wall of the building itself. The stoops and fire escapes are physical elements of the building that are also essential elements of urban life, well represented in the neighborhood of this site (see Figures 13 and 14). Therefore it is the stoops and fire escapes that must be re-presented in the new design. This becomes part of the design problem: to create a building with an occupyable facade that activates the building and helps to establish the connection between the theater and the city.

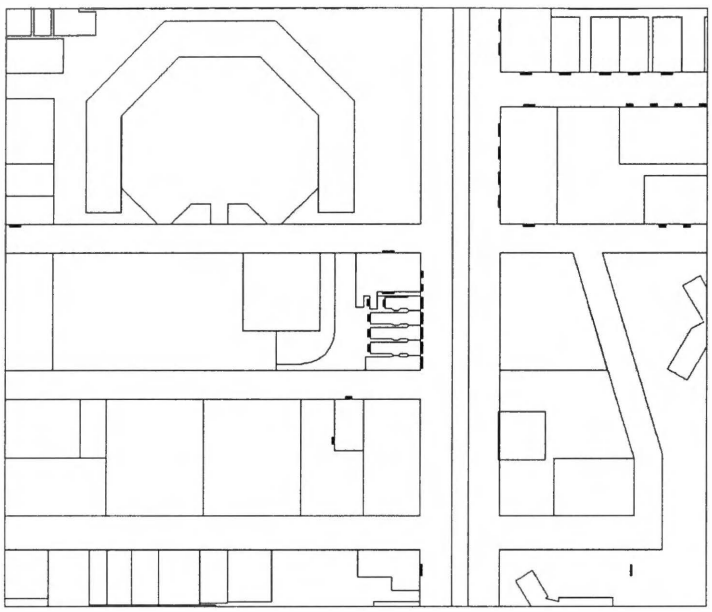


Figure 13. Fire Escapes.

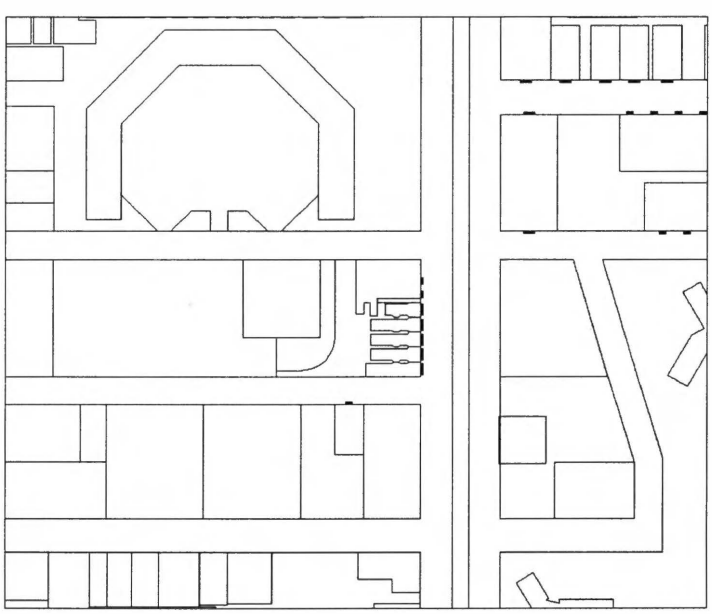


Figure 14. Stoops.

IV. Precedents

Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York, NY, by Stephen Holl and Vito Acconci (1993)

The Storefront for Art and Architecture is a small gallery in SoHo in which the building itself becomes a major part of the art exhibit. It has a concrete board facade (see Figure 15) with moveable panels that can be manipulated by the audience. This pubic participation not only brings the spectator into the performance, but incorporates the building into the experience of art as well. As Susanna Sirefman describes, "Blurring the boundaries between street and building, the small space and its surroundings merge so that inside and outside begin to become one and the same" (2.24).

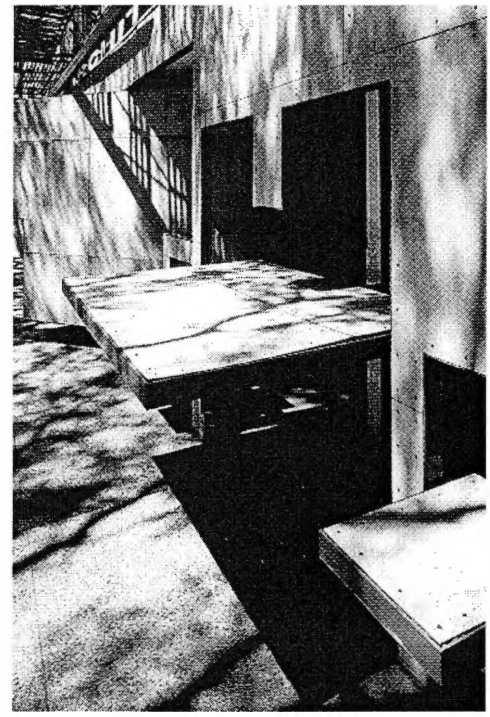


Figure 15. Storefront for Art and Architecture (Sirefman 2.25).

House on the Nova Scotia Coast #1, Upper Kingsburg, Nova Scotia, by Brian MacKay-Lyons (1986)

The renovation of this 200-year old Cape Cod house (see Figure 16) concentrates on re-presenting the essential elements of the original house rather than preserving the house as an artifact. Brian MacKay-Lyons was inspired by the stone foundations and central chimneys that were the only things remaining from nearby houses that had burned. He focused on this essential remaining part in his renovation, removing the interior floors and walls, and rebuilding a central chimney element that contains not only the fireplace but also a wood stove, bathroom, stair and ladder, closets, bookcases, and sleeping places for eight (see Figure 17). While the intervention may be said to have destroyed the original house, the reinterpretation has made an important statement on the nature of this particular house typology, and on the meaning of home in general.

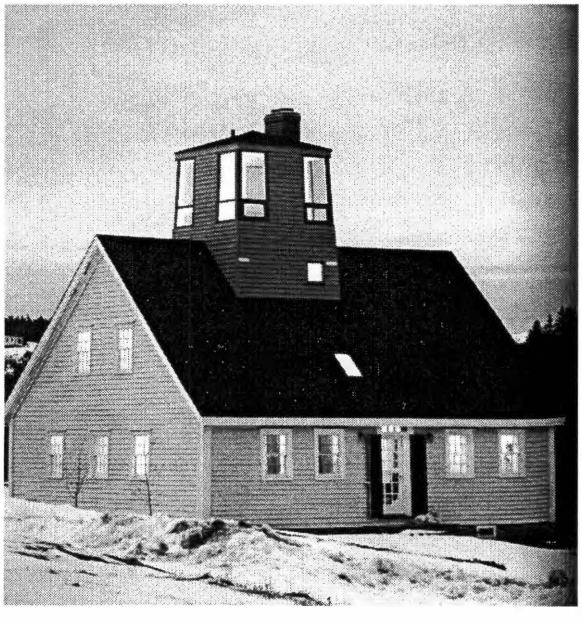


Figure 16. House #1, photo (McKay-Lyons 16).

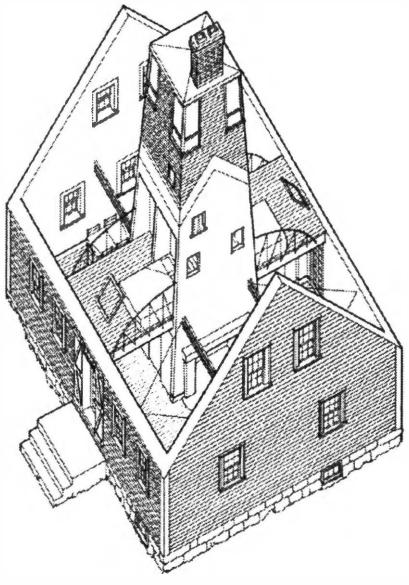


Figure 17. House #1, axon (McKay-Lyons 18).

2econd Stage Theatre, New York, NY, by Rem Koolhaas and Richard Gluckman (1999)

This theater in a converted bank building (see Figure 18) is remarkable for a number of reasons. One is the skillful spatial sequence which stacks public elements of the program vertically (see Figure 19). Playgoers enter a ground floor lobby and then proceed upstairs to another lobby with a café and from there into auditorium, and up to the seating located above the second floor lobby. The back of the seating area overlooks the café, although the spaces are kept distinct by the way the *promenade architecturale* is controlled. Before the play, the doors at the south end of the second floor lobby are closed, while the sliding panel which leads into the café is open – patrons move through the café to get to the auditorium. After the play the sliding panel is closed and the doors opened; the audience is encouraged to make a smooth exit through the lobby and downstairs (see Figure 20).

Also noteworthy are the large windows of the original banking room which now open into the auditorium. Before and after plays and at intermissions, these windows afford views of the city. As the play begins, the curtains are drawn over these windows, an ironic twist on the stage which has no curtain. Finally there is the semi transparent wall that separates the balcony and the backstage from the audience. The lower halves of audience members sitting in the balcony are visible as hazy forms behind the corrugated glass, as are actors and stage personnel moving from the stage exit to the back stage facilities.

2econd Stage illustrates the argument that dramatic action occurs when mundane things are transformed into art. The conversion of a bank into a theater is a prime symbol. A bank, representing the world of money and finance, clearly represents the mundane world that Yeats characterizes as small, unromantic, and unheroic, the antithesis to art. The conversion to an instrument for art, however, does not eradicate this symbol. The recognizable bank facade remains (see Figure 21), and the vault becomes a new focal point for the theater (see Figure 22). A reorientation of the building and its entrance sequence brings the bank vault to the front of the building where it serves as box office – the ordinary is elevated. The windows which open onto 43rd Street serve to bring the city into the performance. The open access to the café and lobby and the transparent wall separating the "backstage" also allow everyday non-theatrical activities to be elevated to the level of performance. People moving backstage can be seen by the audience, and therefore become part of the performance.

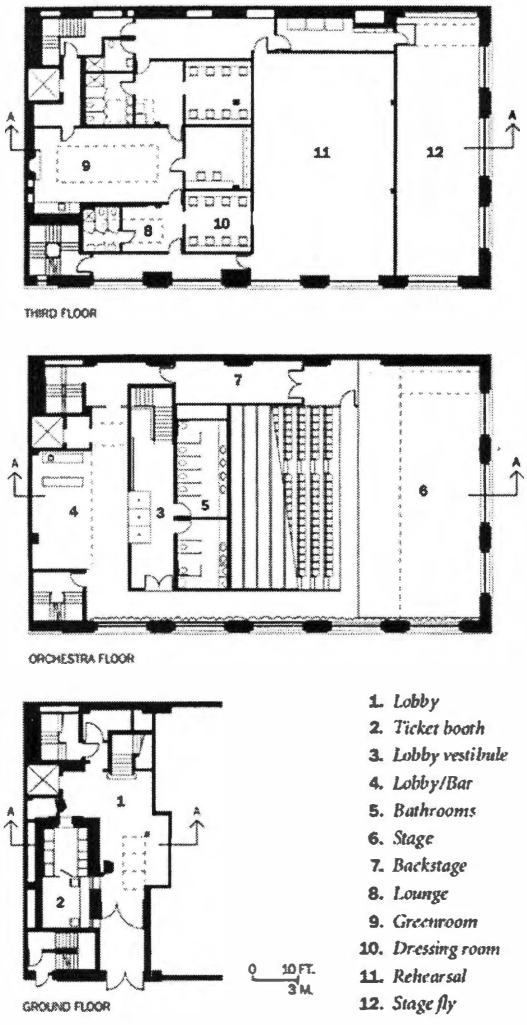


Figure 18. 2econd Stage Theatre, Plans (Stephens 94).

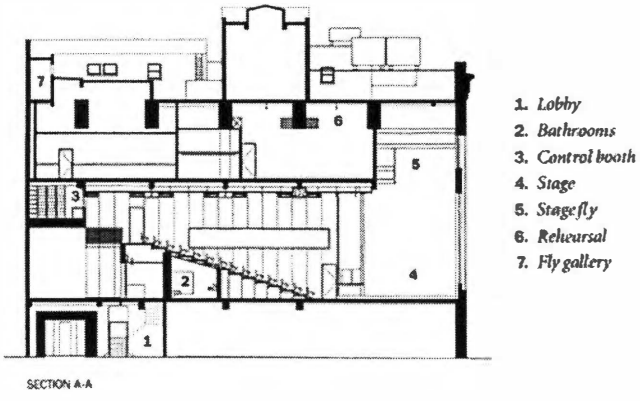
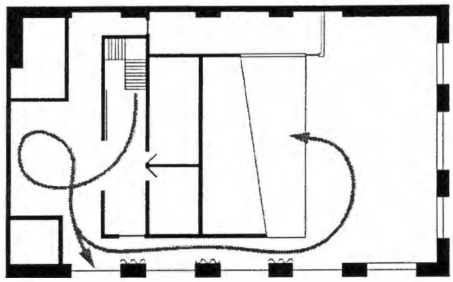
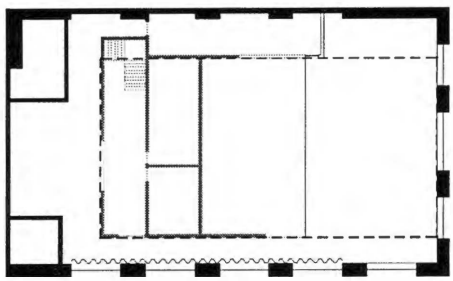


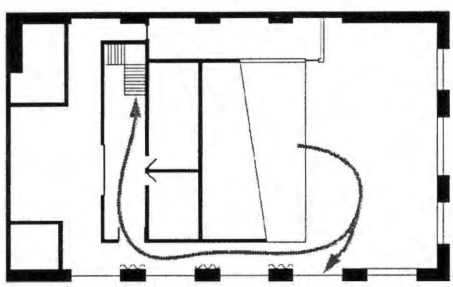
Figure 19. 2econd Stage Theatre, Section (Stephens 94).



A. Before Performance



B. During Performance



C. After Performance

Figure 20. 2econd Stage Theatre, Circulation.

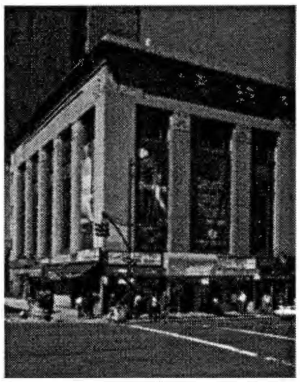


Figure 21. 2econd Stage Theatre, Exterior (Stephens 95).

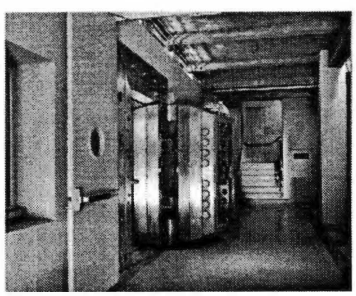


Figure 22. 2econd Stage Theatre, Vault / Box Office (Stephens 95).

V. Project Drawings

The thesis is explored through the design of a theater center located in New York, New York called the Manhattanville Theater Project. The design project is represented in Figures 23-45.



Figure 23. Aerial Photo Montage.

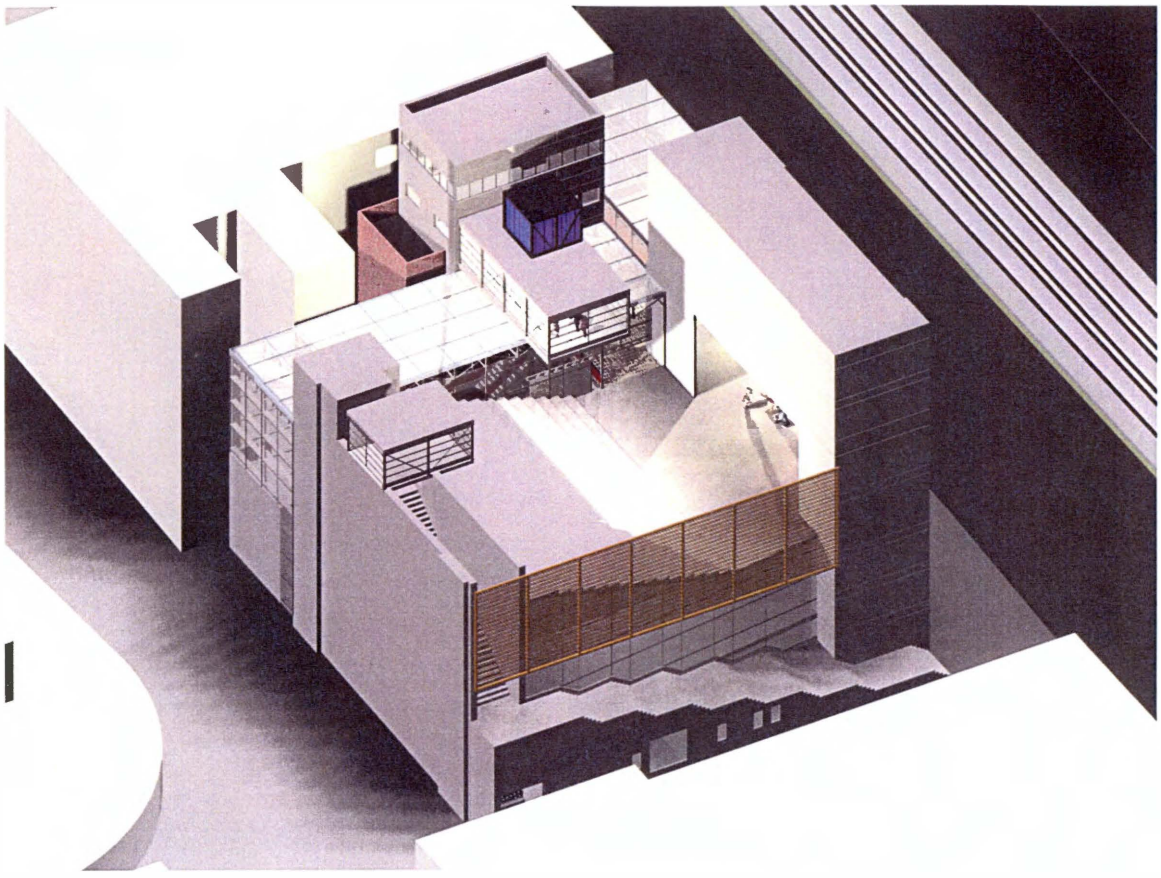


Figure 24. Axon from Southwest.



Figure 25. Street View Photo Montage.

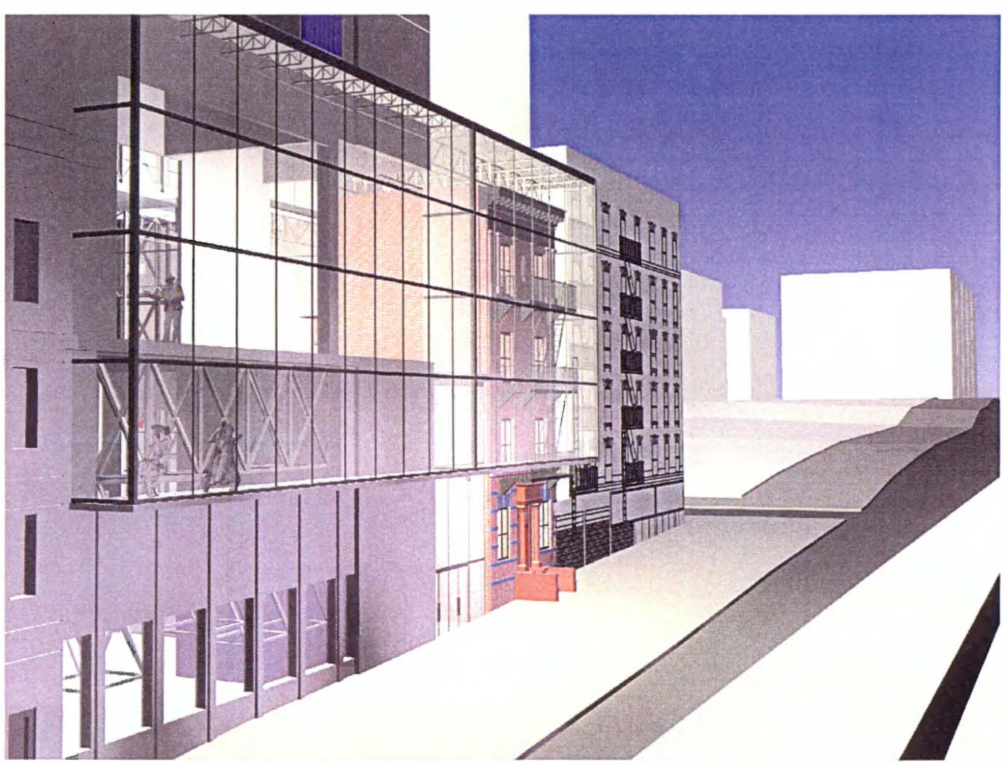


Figure 26. East Facade Perspective.

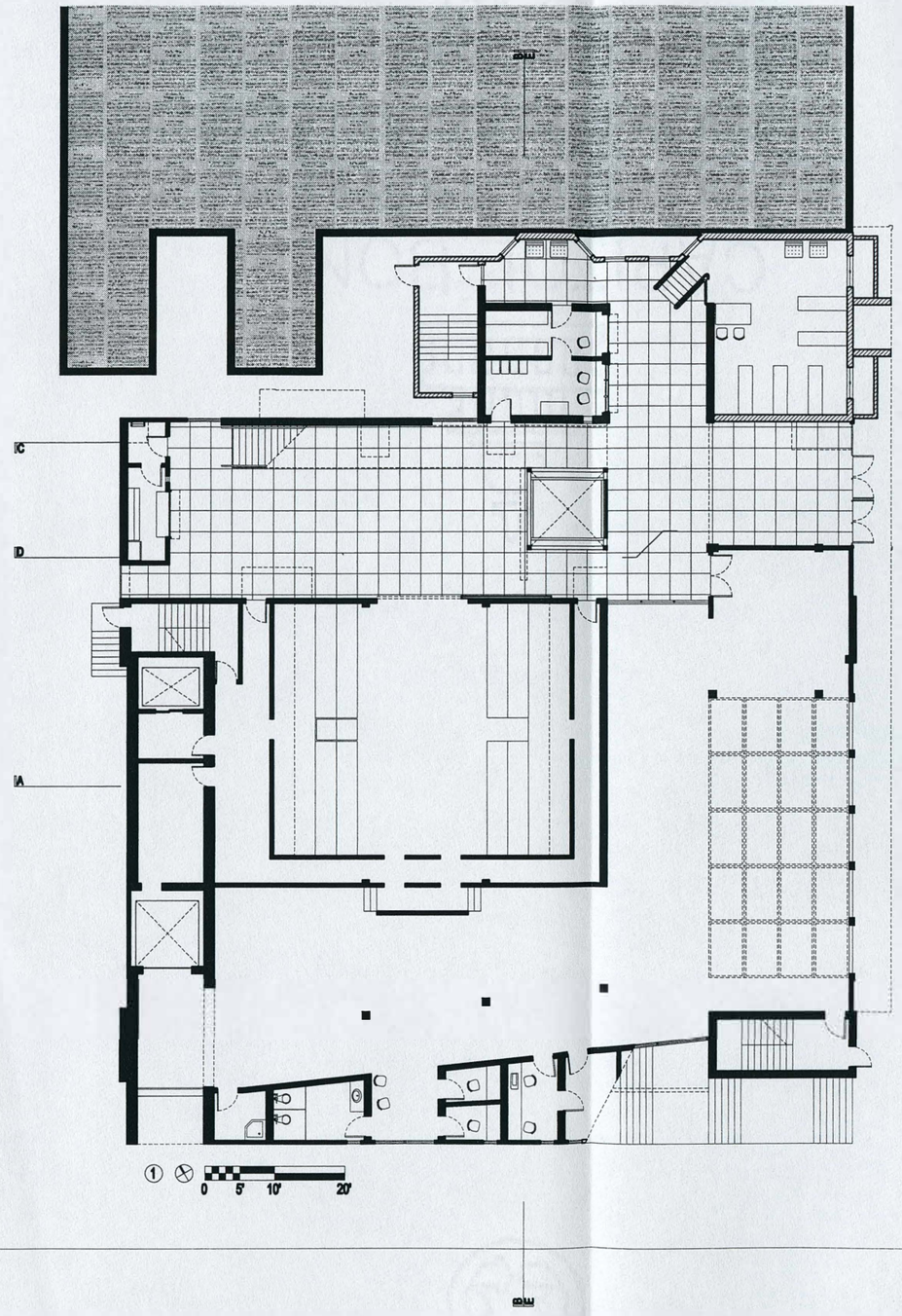


Figure 27. Plan 1 - Ground Level.

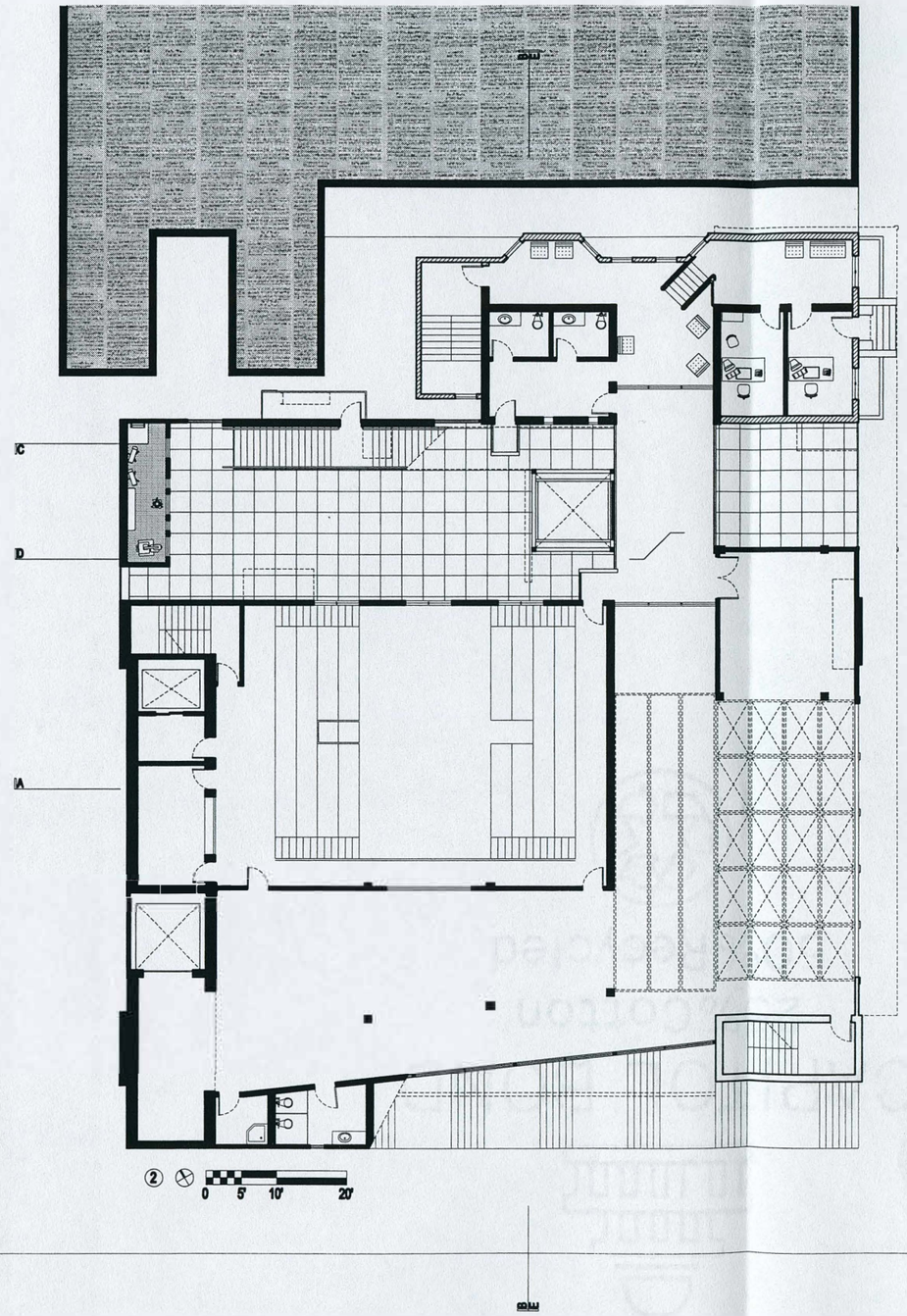


Figure 28. Plan 2 - Shop Level.

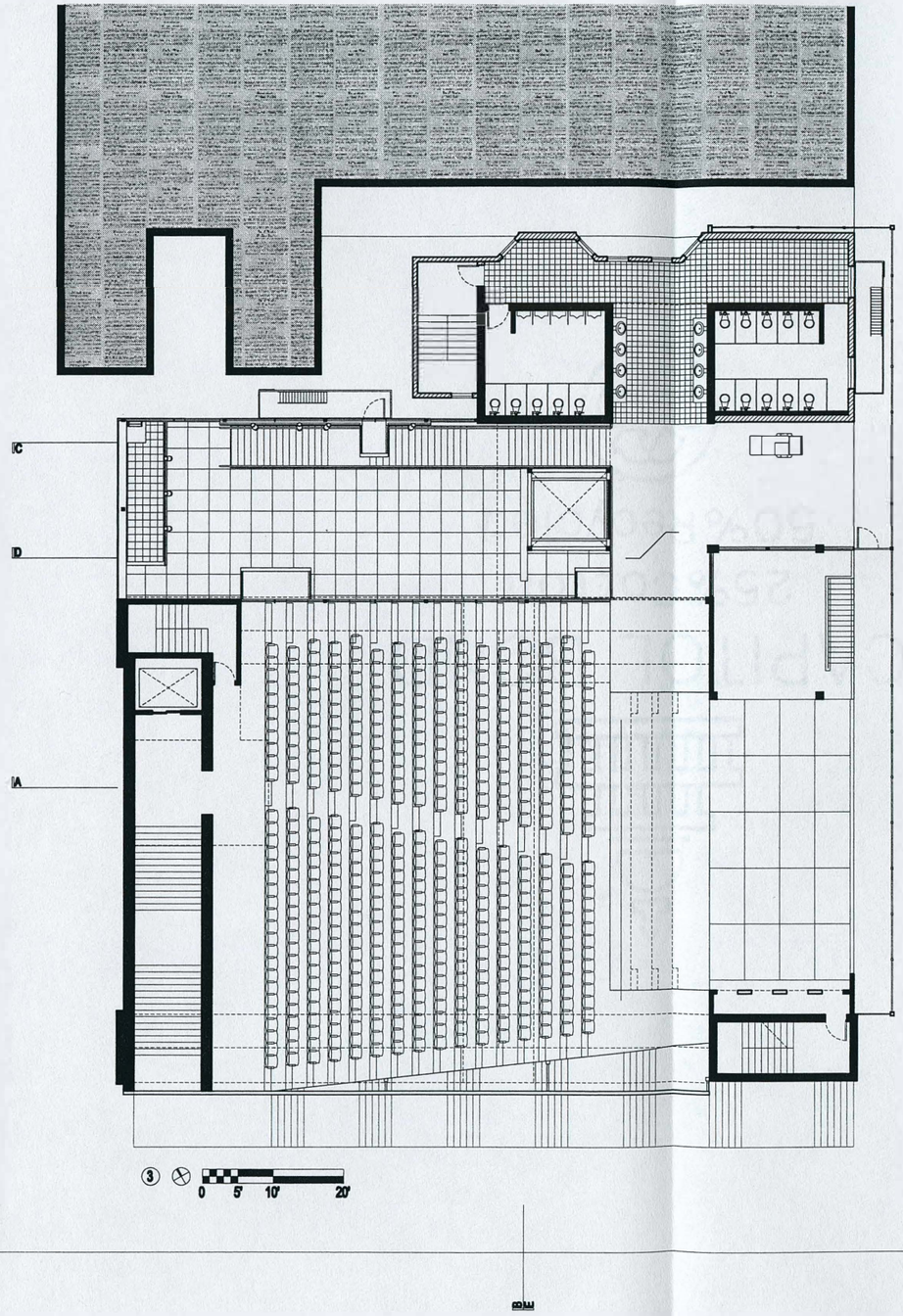


Figure 29. Plan 3 - Main Stage Level.

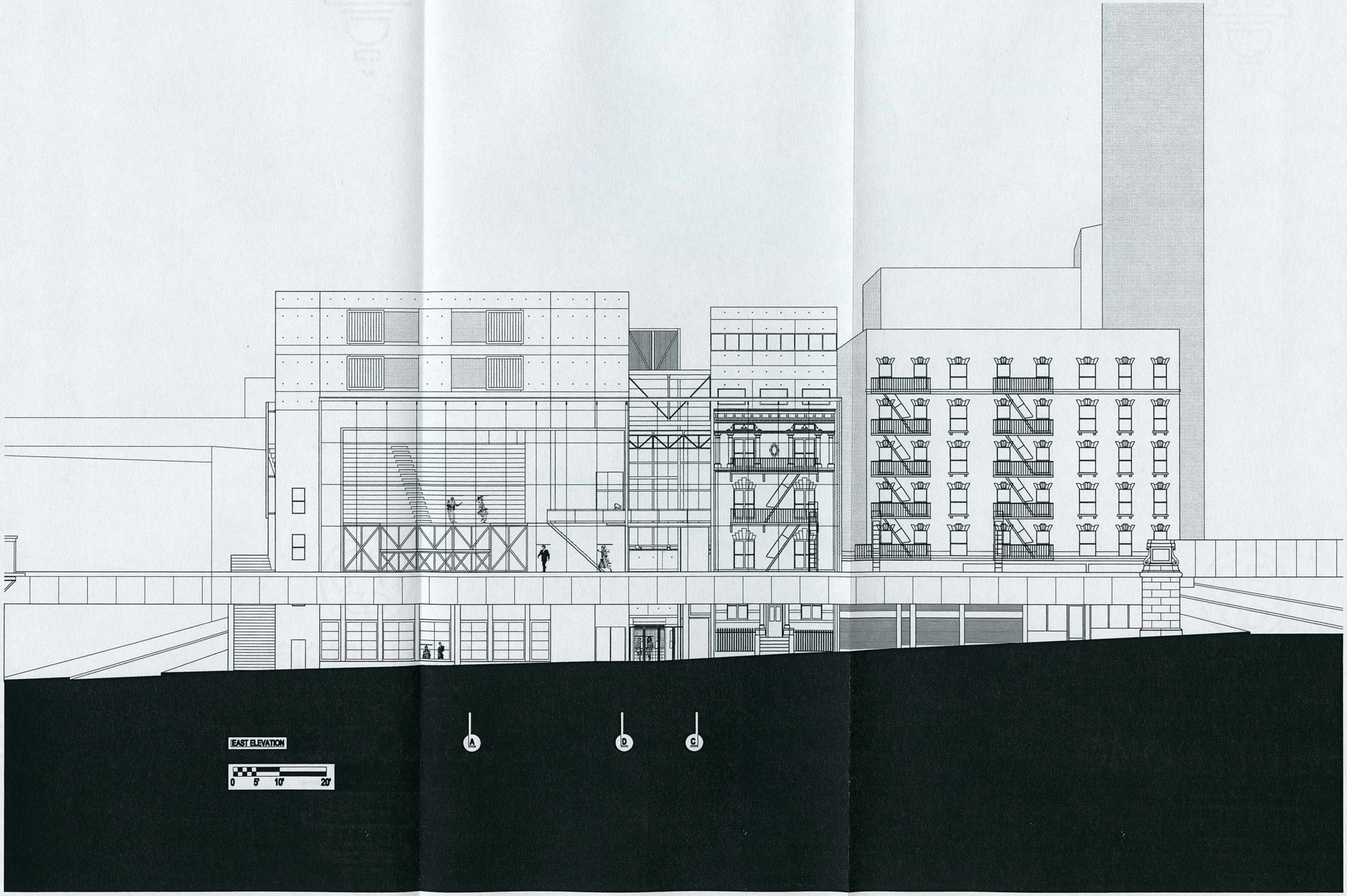


Figure 30. East Elevation.

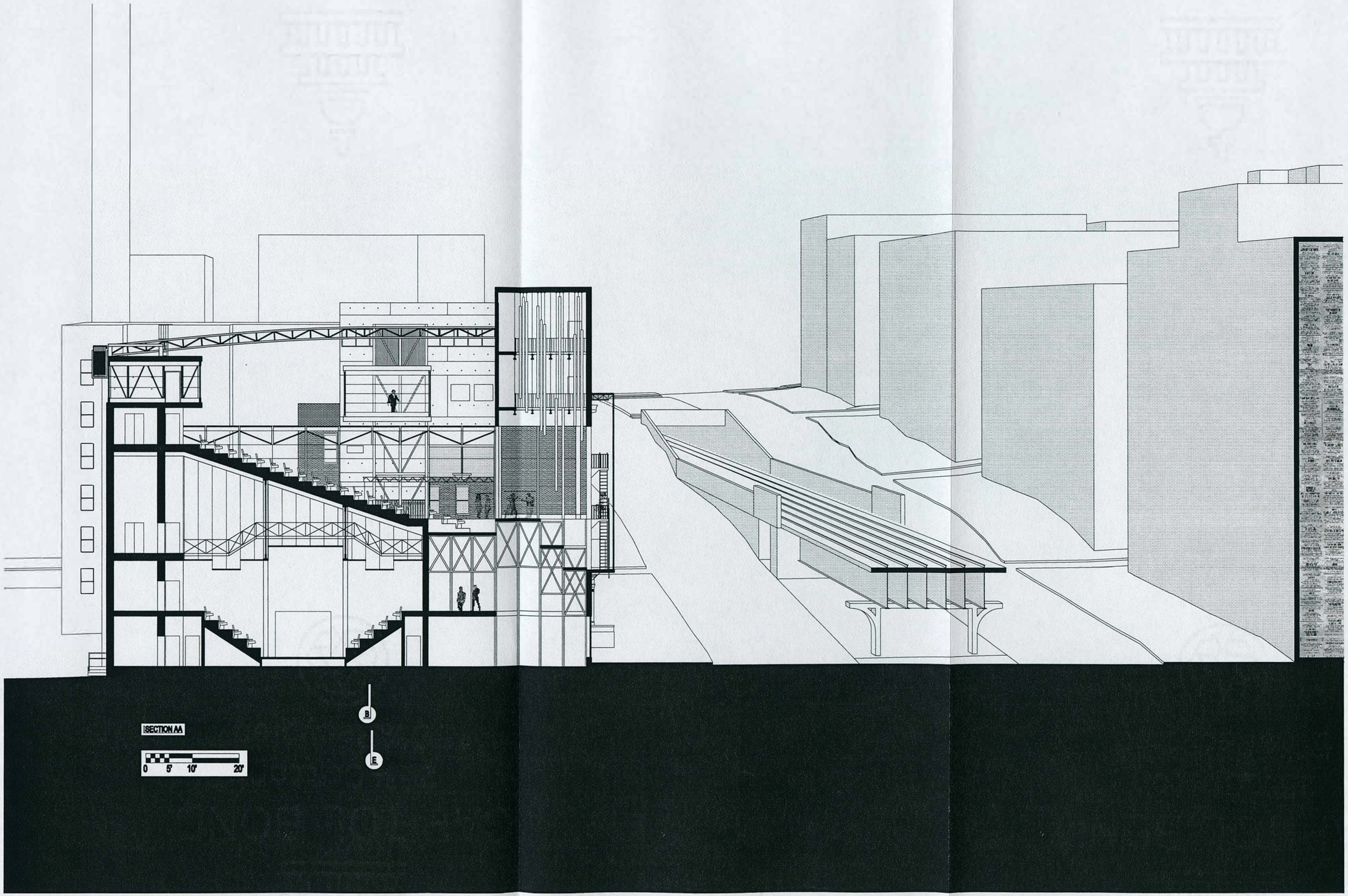


Figure 31. Cross Section AA - Performance Section.

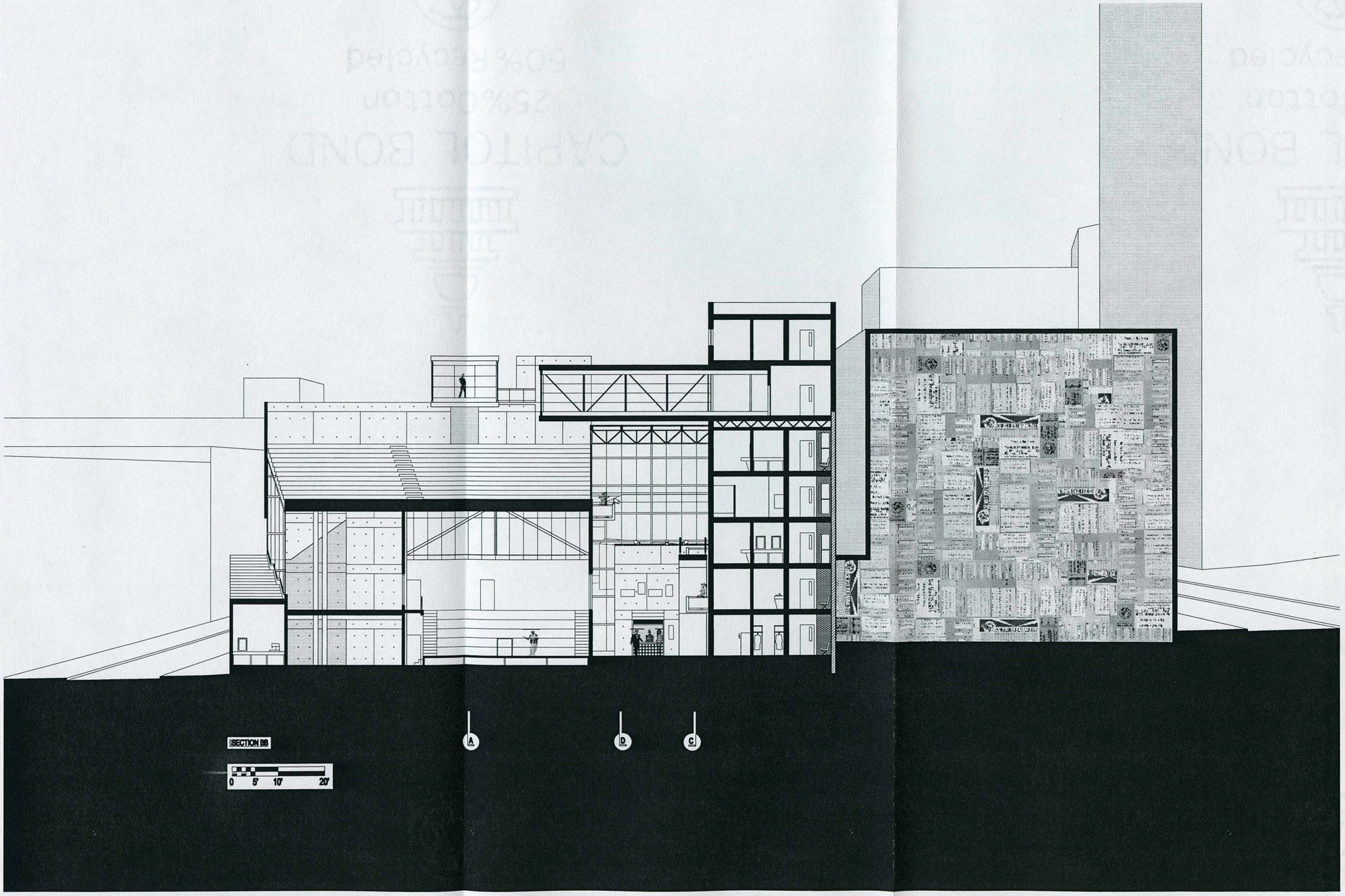


Figure 32. Long Section BB - Facing West.

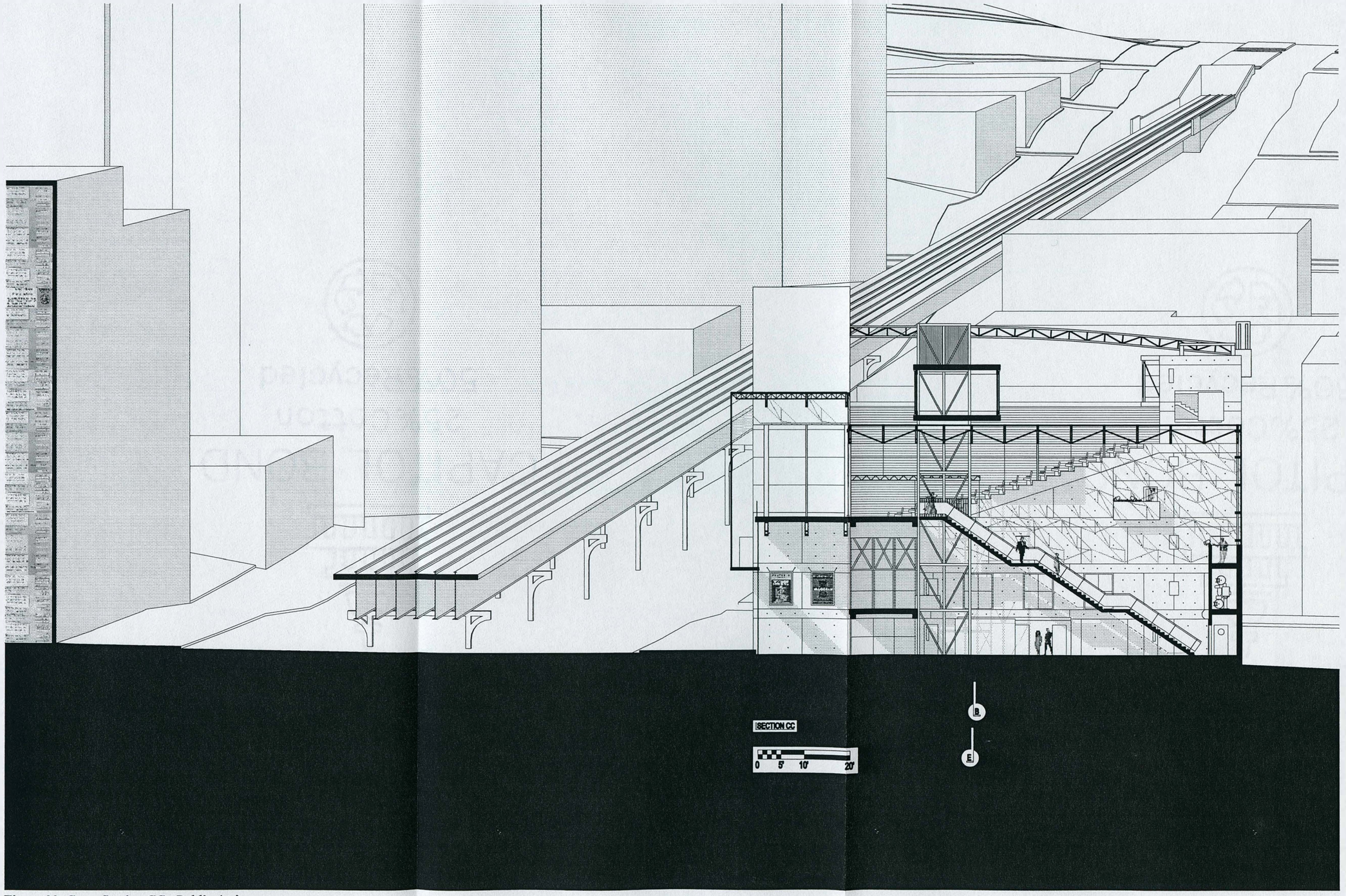


Figure 33. Cross Section CC - Public Atrium.

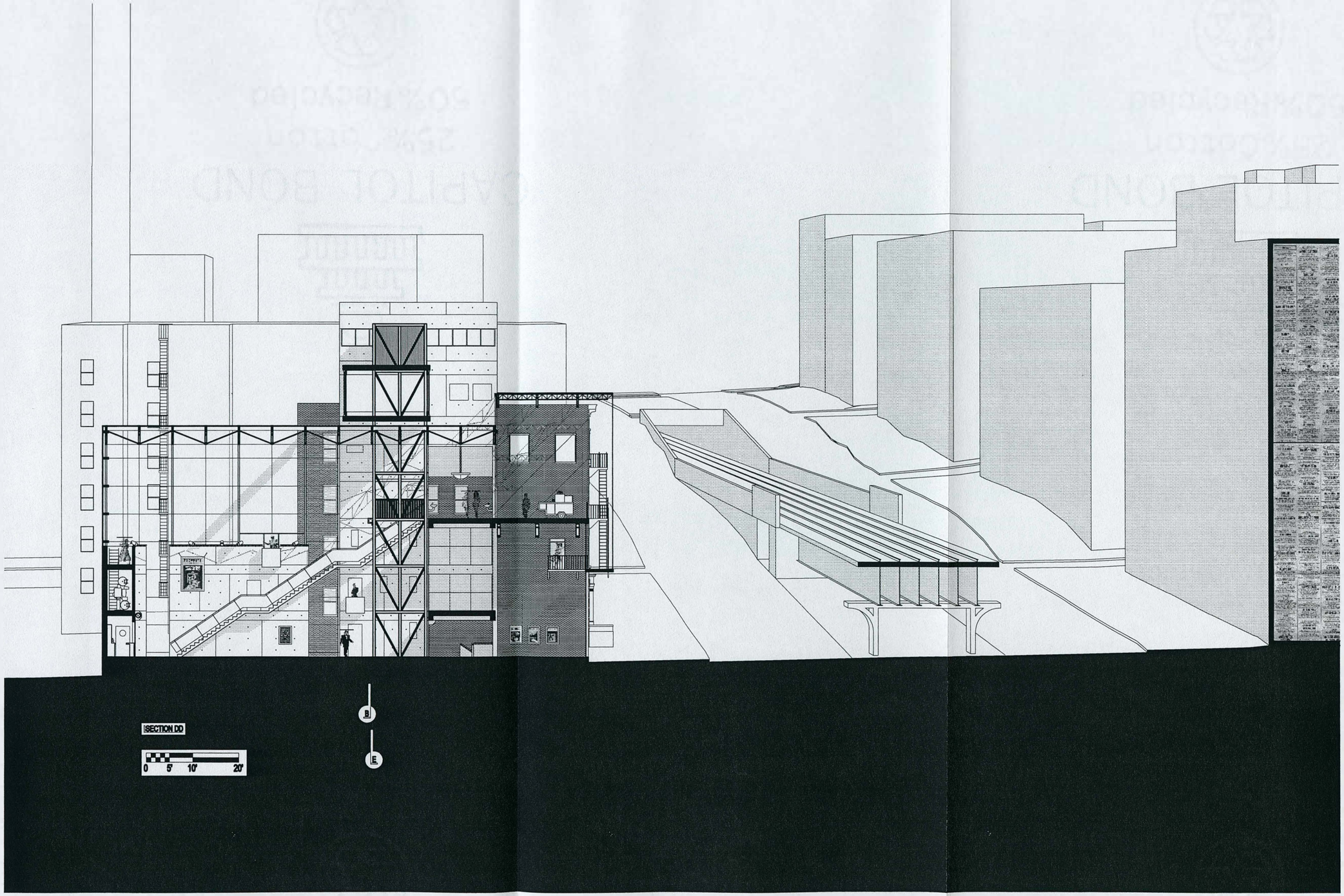


Figure 34. Cross Section DD - Public Atrium.

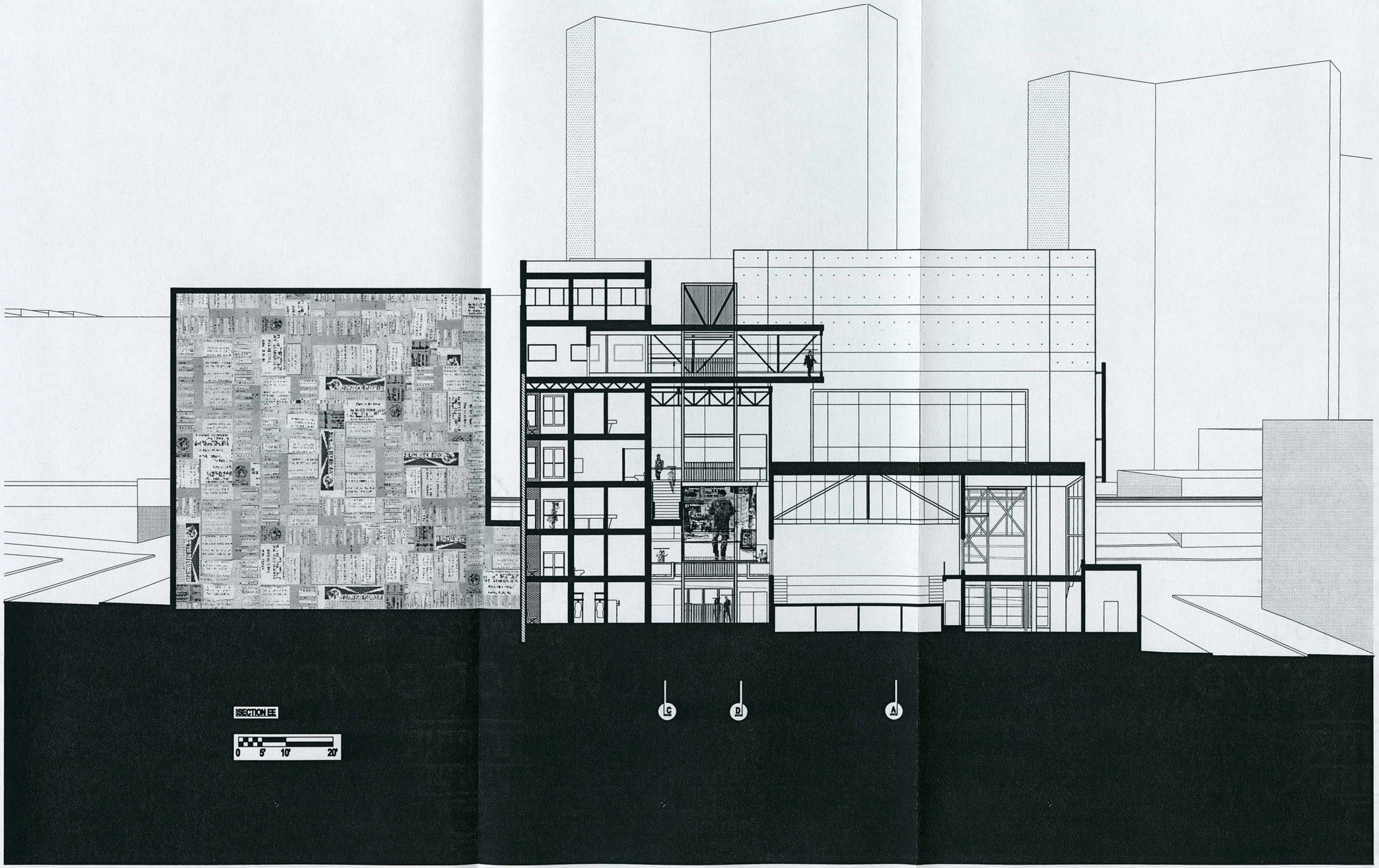


Figure 35. Long Section EE - Facing East.

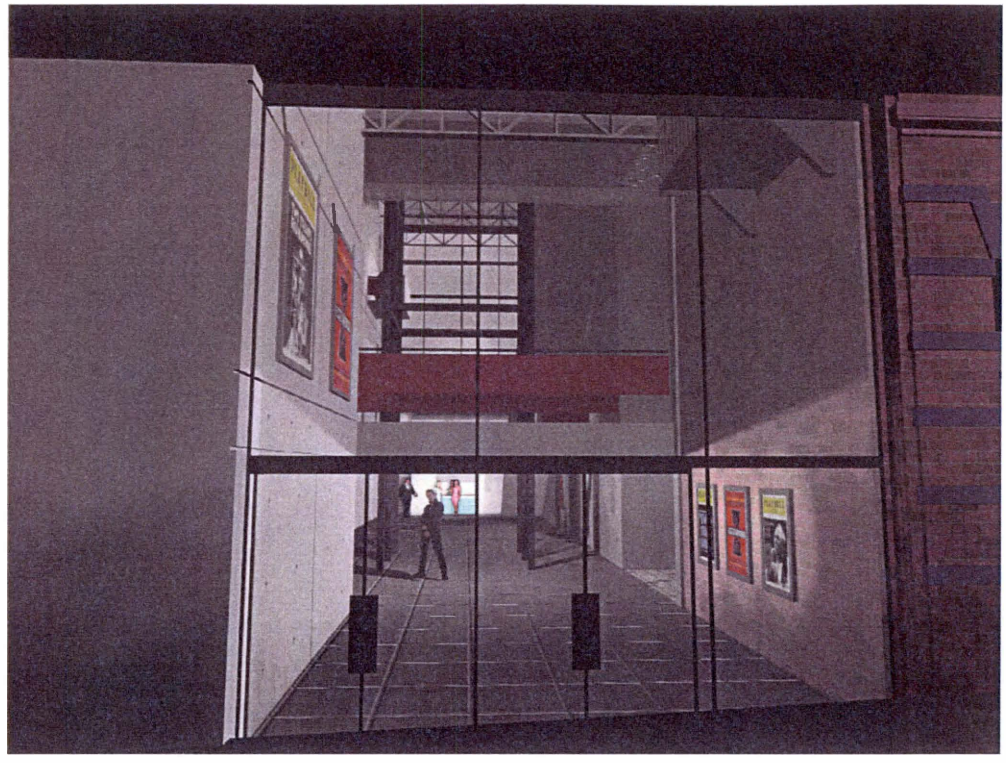


Figure 36. Public Entry View.

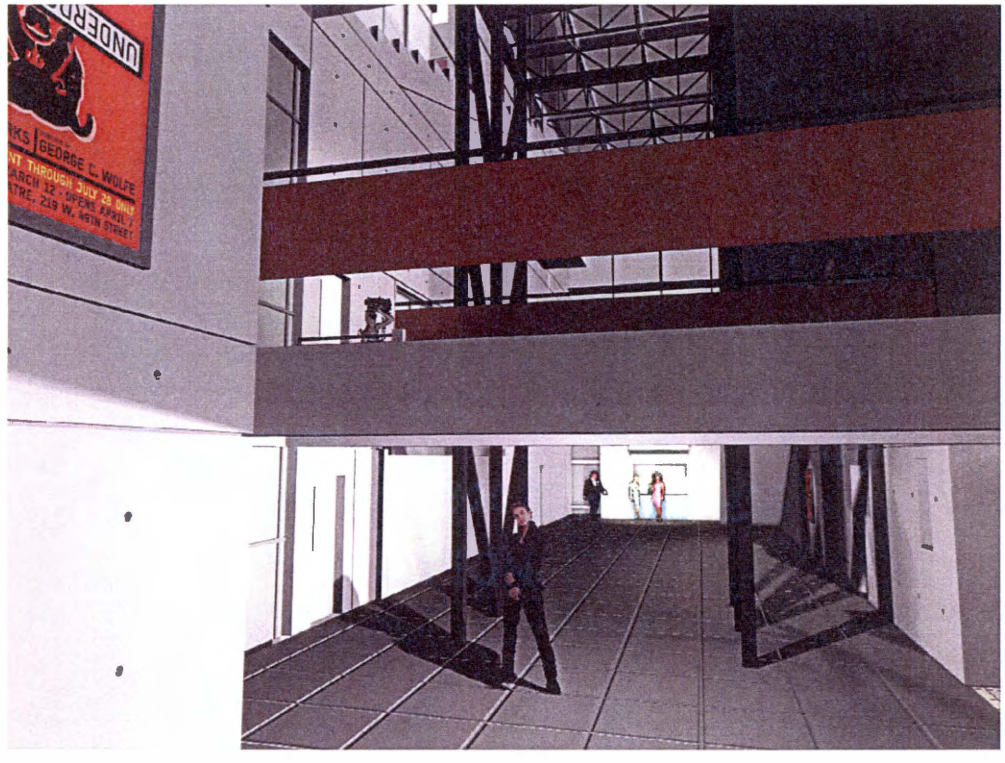


Figure 37. Atrium View.



Figure 38. Atrium Stair.



Figure 39. Atrium View From Above.

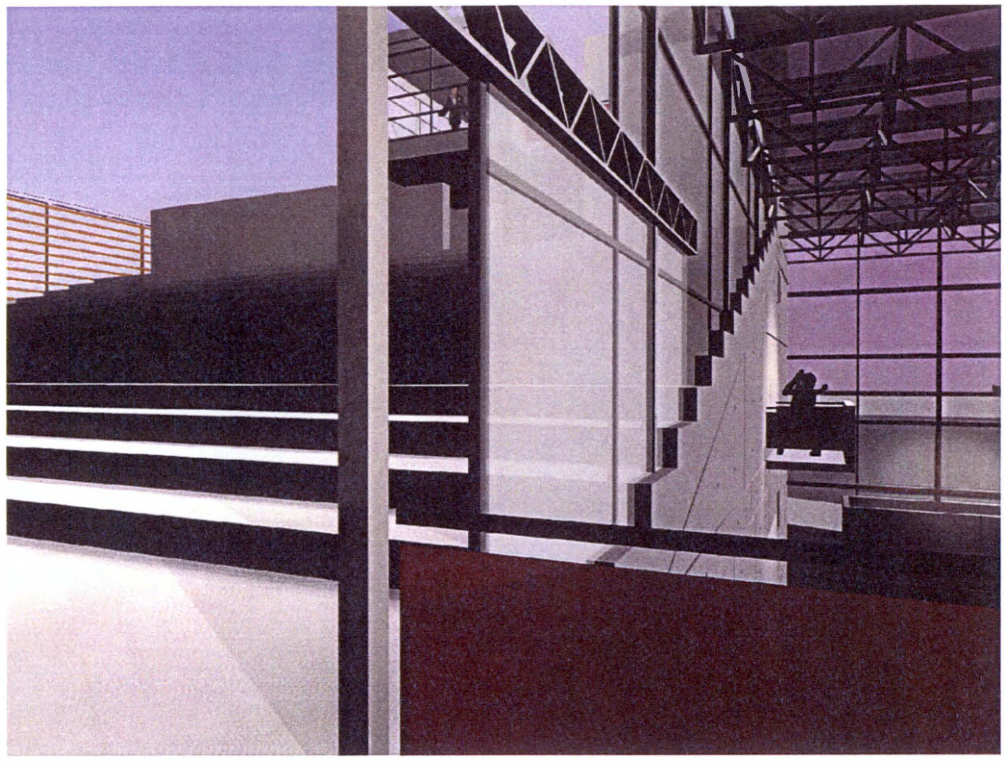


Figure 40. View of Entry to Main Stage Theater.

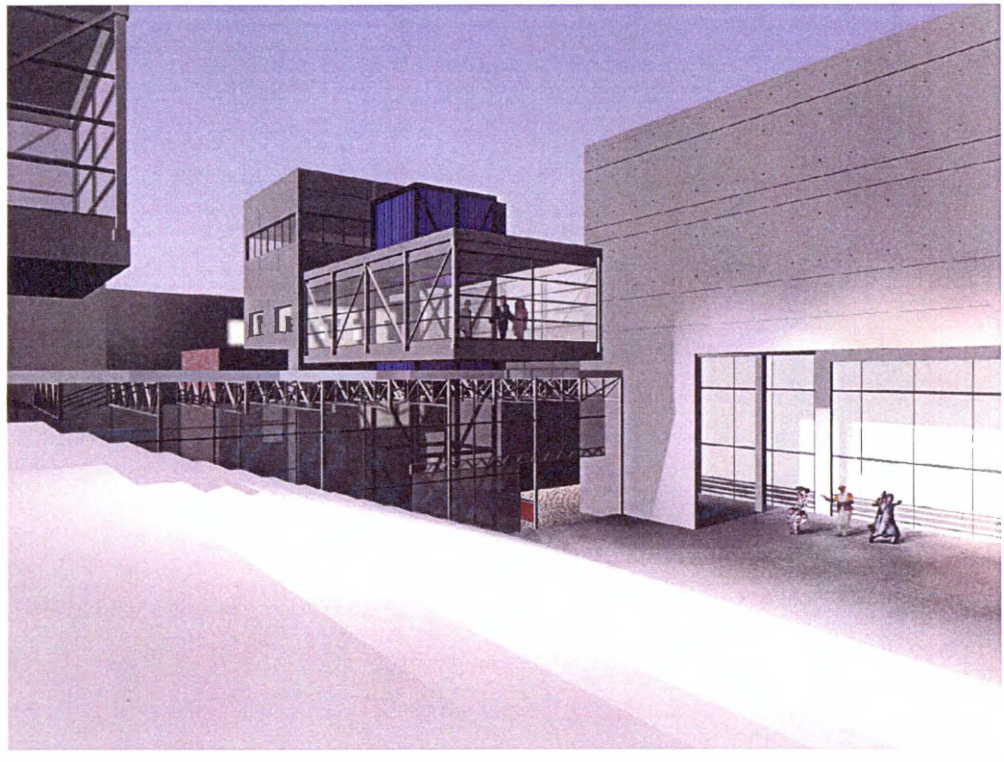


Figure 41. View from Audience.

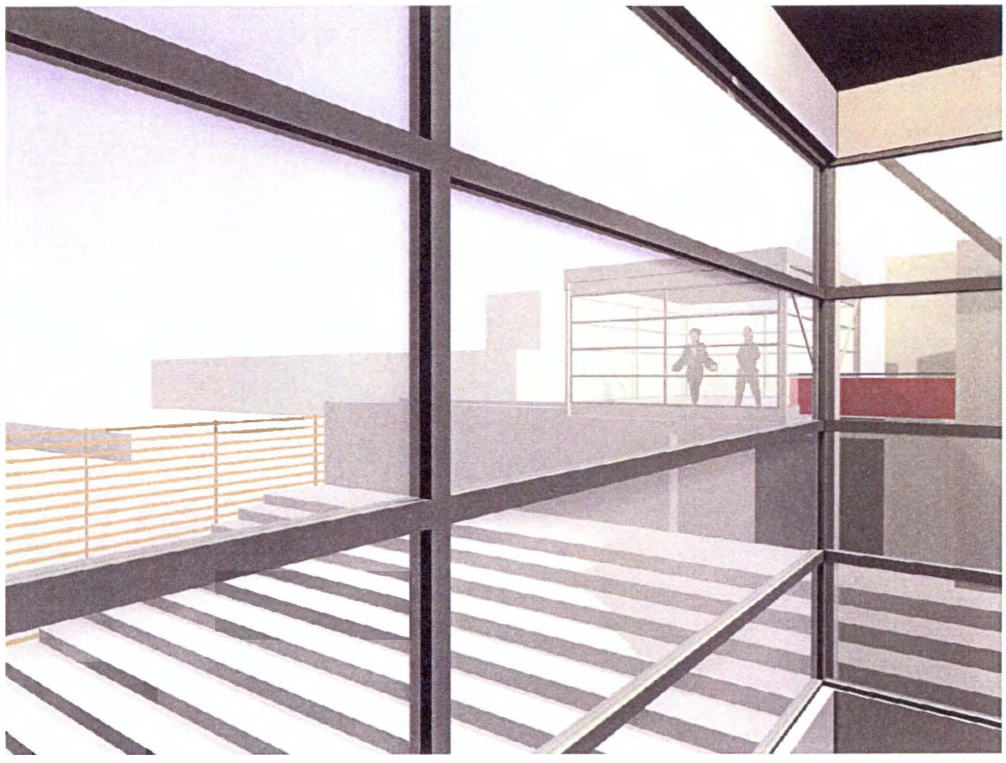


Figure 42. View from Boardroom.

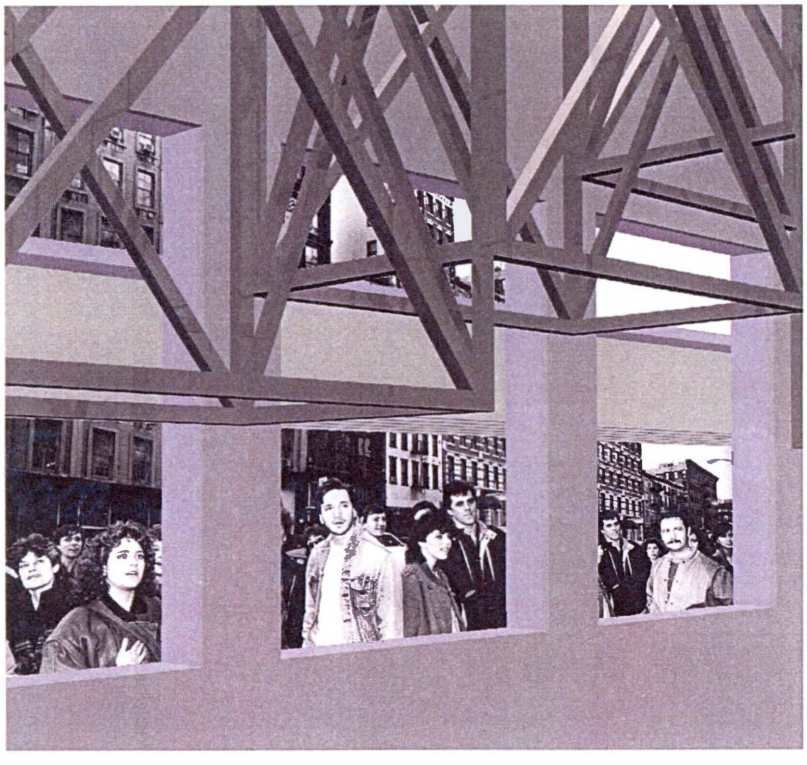


Figure 43. View from Ground Level Workshop.



Figure 44. View from Uptown Train.



Figure 45. View from Downtown Train.

VI. Project Description

The Manhattanville Theater Project is divided roughly into three sections representing the three program divisions: performance, public, and service. The performance section features a main stage with adjustable seating for 494 – 556. This is an open air theater with a retractable fabric roof and a screen with operable louvers to the south (see Figure 24). The stage has a system of platform elevators for multiple performance configurations, and to help move scenery and actors from the shops below (see Figure 31). There is also a fly stage with space for storage and operation of flats for scenery and enclosing the stage. Behind the stage is a glass enclosure that extends across the east facade in front of the public atrium and the preexisting front of the service building (see Figure 26).

The performance section also has an exterior stair that can be used for entry to main stage performances as well as public access to the space when it is not being used (see Figure 25). This stair rises from street level to the back of the audience. Along the way it provides a view through the glass south facade to the set and prop workshops located below the audience (see Figure 28). Below these shops and the stair are the costume shops as well as back stage support for the black box theater on the ground floor. The black box theater, which seats 112, is accessed from the public atrium. Entry to the audience is across the stage (see Figure 27).

The public section of the building consists of a glass enclosed atrium which contains the main entry to the theater center from Broadway (see Figure 36). Box office and coat check areas in the service building are accessible from the ground floor of the atrium, as is the black box theater (see Figure 37). At the back the atrium on the ground floor is the champagne bar, and the stair that leads up to the main stage level (see Figure 38). There is also an open freight style elevator that can quickly bring lots of people up to the main stage. Windows on the wall of the performance section have darkened glass that will show lights and obscured images of the performances going on behind them in the black box theater (see Figure 33). There are several balconies that overlook the atrium and a projection booth above the bar (see Figure 39); these can be used to create an interactive multimedia performance in the lobby atrium, such as an opening ceremony for the theater season (see Figure 35).

The service section of the building consists of a new building inserted into one of the pre-existing tenement buildings (see Figure 34). This section contains some of the public functions such as box office, theater shop, and rest rooms, as well as the supporting program elements of dressing rooms, green room, playwrights' work space and theater center board room. The board room extends from the service section over the glass roof of the atrium and above the main stage audience, providing an additional viewing location for main stage productions (see Figure 42). The boardroom is supported by the shaft of the elevator, which may also provide public access to it when needed. Access from dressing rooms and green rooms to the main stage is by means of a glass enclosed walkway at the east end of the building. This walkway is at the level of the elevated subway that goes by outside, and provides views of performers' activity to theater patrons in the lobby as well as people outside or on the train (see Figure 30).

As discussed above the thesis mandates that this project must imitate the action *to elevate ordinary things into extraordinary circumstances.* This intellectual content informs the project through the following design issues:

Things that are normally not seen are made part of the performance. The open format of the main stage allows the city that surrounds the theater to be brought into the performance rather than being closed off behind a wall. The transparent wall behind the stage allows the elevated train to be part of the scenery for the performance on stage. The glass enclosed walkway between the service areas in the pre-existing building and the back of the stage make actors in the process of making scene changes a part of the performance; what normally would be obscured backstage is brought forward. And the glass wall that separates the lobby atrium from the main theater elevates the ordinary activities of the theatergoers into part of the performance as well (see Figure 40).

Things that are normally hidden are revealed. Just as the subway makes an unexpected appearance in front of the site, the workshops for sets, props, and costumes located under the main theater are revealed through windows on the east and south facades that give casual passersby a view into the workings of the theater that go on behind the scenes (see Figure 43). The public restrooms on the main stage level are arranged around an open unisex lounge that allows private activities like washing hands and fixing makeup to be transformed into a community ritual experience (see Figure 29).

Audience and performance are reversed. While the main stage is open so that the city that surrounds it becomes part of the performance, the audience is also revealed to the city. When the train comes by it will be part of the show that the audience expects to see, but the passengers on the train will also be treated to the spectacle of the audience arranged to face them as they ride by (see Figures 44 and 45). The additional performance spaces explore other aspects of this reversal. The atrium space contains balconies and platforms that can be used for ceremonial performance – the audience will be gathered below with the performers above, in a physical reversal of this relationship (see Figure 38). The black box theater is designed so that theatergoers enter the stage and must cross it to reach their seats.

The traditional boundaries of the theater are blurred. Just as the boundary between audience and performer is confused by the reversal of these relationships, the boundary between interior and exterior is blurred by the open design of the main stage, with an operable screen to the south and the removable fabric roof structure above. The division of the program into performance, public, and service corresponds roughly to the three physical divisions of the building, but these boundaries are repeatedly crossed – the shops are brought into the performance section, and several public functions extend into the service building (see Figure 32). Most obvious is the boardroom which extends from the service building over the public lobby atrium and into the performance area, becoming a viewing platform, crossing boundaries both physically and programmatically (see Figure 41).

The built environment serves as the background for our everyday lives, but this environment also contains the potential for the transformation of the everyday into the extraordinary. The theater offers the same potential by providing a stage upon which everyday lives are made heroic. Karsten Harries writes that the ethical function of architecture is "to help articulate a common ethos" (4), and David Mamet assigns a similar ethical function to the theater which he calls an expression of "a national dream-life" (8). The possibility that from this ordinary background an extraordinary action can be elevated is what unites the two disciplines.

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Vita

William Doyle was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee and graduated from Tyner High School in 1987. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1991, and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from the City College of New York in 1993. He taught English grammar, composition , and literature at Chattanooga State Technical Community College for five years before pursuing a Master of Architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is currently working towards completing the internship requirements for architectural registration.

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