SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Thesis Preparation Book

MEMORY FOR FORGETFULNESS

Registering/Effacing the Memory of the Lebanese War

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"MEMORY FOR FORGETFULNESS":

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"…Springing up like weeds among ruins, like melancholy flowers of forgetting."

Milan Kundera, from The Book of Laughter and Forgetting

T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

"Just as expecting is possible only on the basis of awaiting, remembering is possible only on that of forgetting."

Martin Heidegger, from Being and Time

"In the conscious act of forgetting, one cannot but remember."

Friedrich Nietzsche

THESIS STATEMENT

Architecture, as a synthetic physical act, has long been a common and prevalent means of giving a commemorative presence to memory. However, just like memory, a finite selective process, architecture inescapably embodies an act of exclusion as well. Moreover, by giving physicality to memory, architecture offers simultaneously its means of annihilation, thus becoming an ideal means of achieving its antithesis, oblivion. Hence an inherent relationship emerges between architecture and forgetting that seems to only parallel the ontological intertwining of memory and forgetfulness. As such architecture, in its vulnerable physicality, becomes an ideal vehicle for memory, as well as its inherent antithesis, forgetting.

Yet the question of memory, and forgetfulness—especially in the particular context of this study, that of the Lebanese war—is an essentially political one as well. Why remember? Why forget? What to remember? And what to forget? The arguments generated by these questions reveal ethical, social and political necessities, and inevitabilities, for the intertwining of memory and forgetting. Thus a program that reflects the intertwined relationship between its antagonistic components: one that aims to facilitate forgetting of the memory of the war while inescapably reminding of it; and one that aims to register the memory of the war, but inescapably promoting ambivalence towards that memory by means of its very intention.

The site as well reflects the same antithetical intertwining of memory and forgetting. Situated in the pre-war center of the city of Beirut, the site is saturated with memory of the throbbing pre-war life of the city—as well as its destruction, and its poignant present absence. Being at the eye of the Green Line, the battlefield zone that divided the city in half during the war, that part of the city witnessed the heaviest destruction during the war. As a result, in post-war Beirut, that area of the city has become a gaping void, an immense absence at the heart of the city. For a whole generation of Lebanese youth, a generation that has known the life of the city only in the multiple 'centers' that proliferated at its periphery during the war, the old heart of Beirut is no more that a blank slate onto which their parents' memories are projected. Thus, in the slowly emerging new life of this part of the city, memory and oblivion are juxtaposed.

"Destruction and construction can be understood, in a certain context, as two equally valid features of immortalisation."

Mikhail Yampolsky

"Common to the acts of forgetting… is the sense, even the insistence, that
they are part and parcel of a larger project of remembering."

David Lowenthal

In his introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, Adrian Forty notes that "the Western tradition of memory since the Renaissance has been founded upon an assumption that material objects, whether natural or artificial, can act as the analogues of human memory. It has been generally taken for granted that memories, formed in the mind, can be transferred to solid material objects, which can come to stand for memories and, by virtue of their durability, either prolong or preserve them indefinitely beyond their purely mental existence. Much Western artefact making (and this would include products as diverse as funerary sculpture on the one hand and information technology on the other) has been dedicated to the creation of material substitutes for the fragile world of human memory."[1] This understanding of memory, which Forty attributes to Aristotle's thought, implies a logical corollary, however. For, Forty continues, "if objects are made to stand for memory, their decay or destruction (as in the act of iconoclasm) is taken to exemplify forgetting."[2] Thus, this model of memory offers a model of forgetting as well in the form of the earthly materiality of the very object of commemoration. For "in the tendency of monuments to reduce themselves to dust, they became material enactments of the mental decay of images supposed to constitute the process of forgetting and, ultimately, oblivion."[3]

This understanding of physical objects as simultaneous embodiments of memory and the possibility of oblivion is adeptly illustrated in a parable from Russian psychologist Alexander Luria's book *The Mind of the Mnemonist*. The parable describes a man "with an exceptional ability to remember everything and anything he wanted."

> "Taking advantage of his extraordinary memory, the man became a professional mnemonist and gave performances at which he would recall with complete accuracy prose, poetry, or random lists of words and numbers presented to him by the audience. With his capacity to remember everything, his greatest difficulty became the chaotic congestion of his mind with unwanted memories: he had to learn to forget what he no longer needed to remember. Experimenting with various techniques, he first tried writing things down, on the assumption that if this method enabled other people to remember what they did not want to forget, it might help him forget what he no longer wanted to remember. 'Writing something down', he said, 'means I know I won't have to remember it.' Finding that simply writing things down was not sufficient to forget them, he took to throwing the pieces of paper away. Finally when even this failed, he tried burning them."[4]

As such our mnemonist made use of "two well-tried and familiar techniques: first of all the making of an artefact—in this case writing on a piece of paper; and secondly its destruction—iconoclasm."[5]

What's so curious according to Forty, however, is that "throughout the various attempts to create through architecture and urbanism a consciousness of collective memory—or, perhaps, as seems more likely, to fill the emptiness that comes from having no memories—what was remarkable was the unquestioned assumption that the objects created would come to stand for memory. In every aspect, architecture most perfectly reproduced the old, Aristotelian-based

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[1] Adrian Forty, "Introduction" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 2.
[2] Ibid., 4.
[3] Ibid., 4.
[4] Ibid., 1.
[5] Ibid., 1.

assumption that to transfer memories to objects would preserve them from mental decay. Looking at the works with claims to reconstitute the memory of cities, they reveal no misgivings about the capacity of objects to take the place of memory—buildings and memory seem to have been treated as exchangeable currencies." [6] Modern thought, however, has presented us an alternate model of memory and forgetting in the form of Sigmund Freud's theory of mental processes. For Freud suggested that "in mental life, nothing that has once been formed can perish—that everything is somehow preserved and in suitable circumstances… can once more be brought to light." [7] Thus, within the life of the individual, "forgetting was an impossibility, and oblivion non-existent." [8] Hence, "rather than memory loss taking place through the passive attrition of time, as in the Aristotelian model, Freud posited it as the active force; rather than being natural and involuntary, Freud stressed that 'forgetting is often intentional and desired.' " [9] This, Forty argues, not only inverted the Aristotelian model, but "it also called into question the relationship between objects and memory that had grown up of the Aristotelian tradition. For Freud, physical artefacts could no longer be regarded as analogues of memory, because mental material was not subject to the same processes of decay as objects of the phenomenal world." [10] According to this model, Forty suggests, "were a city to truly represent the mind, it would have to contain simultaneously all the structures that had ever been built within it, with many sites occupied at once by the successive buildings of different ages." [11]

This model of memory finds echoes in the writings of contemporary thinkers, such as Michel de Certeau, for whom the principal feature of memory was "that it comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself, it moves things about," [12] and thus "when it ceases to be capable of this alteration, when it becomes fixed to particular objects, then it is in decay. Seen in these terms, objects are the enemy of memory, they are what tie it down and lead to forgetfulness." [13] Thus a highly complex relationship starts to emerge between memory and forgetfulness, a relationship so intertwined that it becomes all but impossible to mention one without inadvertently referring to the other. In a highly ambitious effort, Forty, in the same introduction, attempts to identify facets of this highly tense relationship. One of those facets is what he refers to as *exclusion*, mentioning the example of post-WWII Dresden to illustrate it. After being destroyed in an air raid in February of 1945, Dresden began to be gradually rebuilt, a process that consumed close to forty years. Only a "great domed eighteenth century baroque church", the Frauenkirche, was left "a weed-infested pile of rubble dominating the city center." Thus, Forty argues, "By default, if not by intention, it became one of the most potent memorials anywhere of the Second World War." In the 1980's, the citizens of Dresden, in "an attempt to erase the memory of the GDR" that seemed to overwhelm the city, set about its reconstruction. Thus, "the filling of a void, whose emptiness had exercised

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[6] Ibid., 15.
[7] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. J Riviere. (London: Hogarth Press, 1969), 6.
[8] Adrian Forty, "Introduction" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 1.
[9] Ibid., 1.
[10] Ibid., 1.
[11] Ibid., 6.
[12] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 87.
[13] Adrian Forty, "Introduction" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 7.

diverse collective memories, [has ended] by excluding all but a single dominant one." The citizens' response Forty identifies as a perfect example of what he refers to as *counter-iconoclasm*, "remaking something in order to forget what its absence signified." [14]

In a reverse facet of this complex relationship between memory and forgetting, what Forty refers to as *iconoclasm*, he narrates the example of the destruction of monuments in Moscow after the fall of communism. After 1989, fifty to sixty monuments to Lenin were removed from the streets and squares of Moscow. That left, all around the city, "empty plinths, above which the voids were as noticeable as the sculptures that stood on them previously had been invisible. The empty pedestals, far from erasing the memory of the communist regime, became memorable in a way that they had never been when topped by statues." [15]

These examples raise very important questions about the political nature of memory, and oblivion, questions that are especially pertinent given the specific focus of this thesis study, the memory of the Lebanese War. In fact, this exploration began as a series of questions that revolved around this aspect of memory and forgetting especially. "How do you entice a people to remember what they want to forget? Why do you want them to remember, in the first place? And why is it that they prefer to forget? And ultimately, is it really possible to achieve this blissful oblivion?"

In "Think/Classify", Georges Perec states that "remembering is a malady for which forgetting is the cure." [16] And in his preface to *The Art of Forgetting*, David Lowenthal declares that "much forgetting turns out to be more benefit than bereavement, a mercy rather than a malady," [17] and goes further to say that "forgetting is often a merciful as well as a mandatory art." [18] For the 17th-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, forgetting was "the basis of a just state, [and] amnesia the cornerstone of the social contract." [19] Ernest Renan, echoed that in his pique observation that "the essence of a nation is that all the individuals share a great many things in common and also that they have forgotten some things." [20] In an attempt to understand this concurrence, Lowenthal refers to "the close etymological connection of amnesia with amnesty" being at the basis of the "confusion of forgiving with forgetting." [21] This find a particular resonance in the case of the Lebanese War in the form of the general amnesty law decreed by the Lebanese government at the end of the war:

> On 26 August 1991 the Lebanese National Assembly approved the 'Amnesty for War Crimes' law, governing crimes committed in the civil war of 1975-90. Excluded from amnesty were those responsible for the incident alleged to have sparked off the civil war (the assassination of Maarouf Saada [*sic*] in February 1975), as well as the attack by armed Falangists on the bus carrying Palestinians through the Ain Rumaniyeh [*sic*] suburb, and the assassination of Kamal Jumblatt in 1977, Rashid Karami in 1987, Rene Mouawad in 1989, Dany Chamoun in 1990 and several others. [22]

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[14] Ibid., 10.
[15] Ibid., 10.
[16] George Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. J. Sturrock (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 199.
[17] David Lowenthal, "Preface" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), xi.
[18] Ibid., xiii.
[19] Ibid., xi.
[20] Quoted in S. S. Wolin, *The Presence of the Past* (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 37.
[21] David Lowenthal, "Preface" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), xi.
[22] Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1998), 213.

This seems to be a perfect illustration of what Lowenthal must be referring to when he says, "Artfully selective oblivion is necessary to all societies. Collective well-being requires sanitizing what time renders unspeakable." [23] Adrian Forty, however, warns that "there has been a tendency to confuse the memory of individuals with the memory of societies, and to attempt to explain the one through the other. This confusion has to be challenged." He then adds, clarifying the distinction, that "as far as societies are concerned, material objects have less significance in perpetuating memory than embodied acts, rituals and normative social behavior. The question of how societies *forget* remains uninvestigated, however, and here one may ask how much object making has to do with the process." [24] Lowenthal notes another distinction between individual and collective memory, saying, "Individual forgetting is largely involuntary… Collective oblivion, on the other hand, is mainly deliberate, purposeful and regulated. Therein lies the art of forgetting—art as opposed to ailment, choice rather than compulsion or obligation. The art is a high and delicate enterprise, demanding astute judgement about what to keep and what to let go, to salvage or to shred or shelve, to memorialize or to anathematize." [25] Thus forgetting is revealed as a highly political act, a revelation that seems to beg the question: "Are there appointed agents of oblivion as there are of memory, official erasers like official scribes?" [26]

But if such was the case, if the argument for the necessity of forgetting stands so strong, why then should there be any need for remembrance? One of the most convincing answers to that question comes from the Holocaust. Forty writes that "the natural reaction to its unbearable memory was to forget—which is exactly what many of the survivors themselves did, or attempted to do. Yet, as they and everyone else knew, to forget it was to risk its repetition. The difficulty was to know how to remember the atrocity without lessening its horror, without somehow sanitizing it by making it tolerable to remember." [27] Indeed, some of the symptoms of the prevalent general amnesia/amnesty in post-war Lebanon are at the very least disturbing. Leaders of wartime militias, thanks to the General Amnesty Law, now assume high-ranking governmental positions, including seats in the Parliament and heading ministries. The situation for anybody with the slightest traces of memory is nothing short of revolting. But the greater fear, perhaps, is that with amnesia comes the risk that the lesson has been missed—a lesson that has come at too high a price to be missed—and thus the risk of repetition.

[23] David Lowenthal, "Preface" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), xii.
[24] Adrian Forty, "Introduction" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 2.
[25] David Lowenthal, "Preface" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), xi.
[26] Ibid., xii.
[27] Adrian Forty, "Introduction" to *The Art of Forgetting*. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 6.

"How can I write about Beirut? How can I collect it into one volume: the years of pain; of watching a world collapse while trying to stave off that collapse; the layers of memories and hopes, of tragedy and even sometimes comedy, of violence and kindness, of courage and fear? Above all, how can I express my strange love for this mutilated city; how to explain, both to myself and to others, the lingering magic of the place that has kept me and so many others clinging to its wreckage, refusing to let go, refusing to abandon it?"

"The streets of Beirut, even those that are relatively intact, provide a shifting landscape of memories and sorrow . . . Each of these physical landmarks, and so many others like them, are milestones in my inner journey of pain. Memories wash over the map, and layers of time alter its shadings."

Jean Said Makdisi, from Beirut Fragments

"The city I am talking about offers this precious paradox: it does possess a center, but this center is empty."

Roland Barthes

"How is one to deal with a city that has become a metaphor?
For some, a symbol, an icon; for others, a comic strip…
And for many, no more than a memory…
How is one to deal with it but with all the crassness and sublimity
of the metaphor, the symbol, the icon, the comic strip,
and that elusive thing called memory?"

Ashraf Osman

"Beirut is dead; long live Beirut."

Rodolphe el-Khoury, from "Beirut Sublime"

"Even in the best of times, in the years before the war, Beirut was a chaotic place, its undisciplined traffic legendary. Its various quarters, each with its own character and function, were united by the downtown area at its heart, and all roads ultimately poured into that region."[28] That region was the business center as well; it housed the head offices of all the major banks, airlines, and businesses. It also housed the *souks*, the specialized markets: the gold market, the fish market, the tailors' market, the glass market, "each one an ancient alley radiating away from the center, the palm-lined *Places des Martyrs*, or, as it was called, the *Bourj.*"[29]

The historic origins of Martyrs' Square, or the *Maidan* of Beirut, were military, "a cleared area beyond the city walls facing the most likely direction of the attack." Its popular name, the *Bourj*, the Tower, comes from "a medieval lookout tower that once stood at its southern end", the foundations of which have recently been unearthed. The square's other common name, *Places des Canons*, stems from the Russian occupation of 1773, when "a large artillery piece was set up in the space".

The square's association as a place of leisure dates from the 1630's, when "Emir Fakhr Ad Deen built his palace and gardens there, among the mulberry trees". Some 150 years later, the area in the vicinity is reported to have housed "a circus of rare animals, places to throw dice and many other activities to attract and entertain the visitors". First laid out as "a public garden with fountains and bandstands" in the Ottoman period, the Square was transformed during the French Mandate. In 1950, it was enlarged northward with the demolition of the *Petit Serail.* [30]

Martyrs' Square was "at the heart of it all", Angus Gavin, mastermind of the new urban plan for the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (BCD), describes. "Busy with commerce by day, center of the cinema world by night, the hub from which bus and service-taxi terminals served destinations in Beirut, Lebanon, and even Syria and Jordan."[31] Jean Said Makdisi describes a typical day at the Square then with vivid detail in her book *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir.* "Noisy and crowded, this square was wonderfully active, and one felt the vitality of the city here. Buses and taxis met in the shade of the palms to take you anywhere you wanted to go in the country, north to Tripoli or south to Tyre, east to the mountains or west to the sea; the suntanned drivers stood by their vehicles, shirt sleeves rolled up, invitingly calling their destinations and the number of seats available. 'Three places for Baalbeck,' one would yell; 'One for Bikfaya,' another; 'Two for Aley,' 'Three for Sidon,' 'One more for Jbeil.' The names floated innocently on the air then; many of them are forbidden places now." [32]

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[28] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir.* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 70.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Angus Gavin and Ramez Maluf. *Beirut Reborn: The Restoration and Development of the Central District.* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 57.
[31] Ibid., 59.
[32] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir.* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 70.

That was the new order of the war. The split of Beirut came soon after the commencement of the fighting, its lines of demarcation coming into being as a means for the combating factions to delineate their area of control, and to claim control over newly gained territory. "In the beginning, the lines of confrontation at the center shifted for months until they finally settled down to where they were to remain fixed, dividing the city between eastern and western portions, along the notorious Green Line, as it is called by foreigners, or as Beirutis know it, *khutut at tammas*." [33] 'Christian' militias reigned over the eastern part of the city, which was predominantly Christian in its demographics before the war; while 'Muslim', Palestinian and leftist militias assumed control over the western half. The Line extended from the historic center of the city in the north, where the site is located, passing through Damascus road to the hilly slopes of the southern part. Physically, it was formed by "the alignment of wide roads and public spaces that provided fighters with comfortable physical distances, sufficient to defend their respective communities from military infringements."[34] The Green Line was thus "marked by milestones of once-ordinary life—a museum, a harbor, a church, a shop, an oil company, a school—that have given their names to crossroads notorious in the context of the war. Here one crosses, sometimes at great peril, from one side of the now divided city to the other, from East Beirut to West Beirut, and vice versa. Other thoroughfares that, in another time when the idea did not exist that there were two sides to the city, are barricaded with mountains of sand, collapsed buildings, and a heart-stopping desolation, like the *Bourj* itself." [35]

Thus a new reality descended on the city. The violent armed conflicts of a society with itself that characterize an internal war "rapidly eradicate the country's ruling institutions, disintegrate its prevailing social structure, fragment its cities' fabric, ruin its infrastructure and built environment, bankrupt its economy, and physically split it into hostile enclaves."[36] Thus, as a result, the city is left divided into more or less autonomous sectors based on opposing ideological, ethnic or religious affiliations, each dominated by the corresponding armed power group. Makdisi testifies that "this division in itself was the most traumatic of the many changes that the war produced in our environment."[37] Such elements of the public realm as avenues, streets and other public spaces now, instead of their normal function of supporting public interaction, dysfunctionally enough, acquired a strategic military role as buffers and borders and act to separate people and prevent their interaction.

These newly formed borders were not haphazard, however. They tended to trace social, ethnic, or religious boundaries that were latent but not necessarily physically present in the fabric of the city. Some would argue however that the lines of division were *makers*, rather than *tracers*, of such differences. "The barriers, once entirely artificial, have only partly achieved the intention of those who erected them. There now is a difference between East and West Beirut that never existed before. East Beirut has tended to be cleaner and more orderly, reflecting the greater degree of homogeneity of its people since the war. West Beirut has become more chaotic than ever but still boasts that pluralism that was once the principal pride of the Beirutis and which, even here, is

[33] Ibid.
[34] Oussama Kabbani, "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 241.
[35] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir*. (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 74.
[36] Oussama Kabbani, "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 241.
[37] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir*. (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 74.

threatened. But the difference between one side and the other is staved off by those sullen people who stubbornly cross over, day after day by the thousands, some to go to work, others to visit friends and relatives, and many just to make a point."[38] This could probably be explained by the demographic shift incurred by the demarcation itself. "Fearing persecution," Oussama Kabbani writes, "people generally relocate to whichever district of the city provides them with a sense of security. Soon after, what might have been a pluralistic city is transformed into a mosaic of human settlements based on religious affiliations, ethnicity, and/or political loyalty."[39] However, even the staunchest of optimists/romanticists had to admit that a deeper fissure was brewing. "But there is another kind of change even more difficult to describe: In some places altered appearance is a function of an organic mutation, a kind of metamorphosis from one state of existence to another, from one meaning and function in the city's life to another, from one social, economic, or political symbol to another. In some cases, the changed meaning of a place is a direct reflection of the changed meaning of the country, and of the progress of the war."[40] In either case, it was clear that the physical division obviated deeper differences along the Line. "We noticed these physical changes around us long before we noticed the changes within ourselves. We had to draw up a new map of our world, and we had no instruments to assist us except our wits and our senses. And our lives often depended on the accuracy of our construction, so it was a serious business, drawing up this map."[41]

The 'downtown area', now the 'BCD', was amongst the first areas to 'take the blow'. (And eventually it proved it was perhaps the one to take the hardest blow.) Makdisi reports ominously in her memoir, "Today, the *souks* are dead. Early on in the war, the downtown region was devastated, and the markets were all burnt down. The *Bourj* became the no-man's-land between the two halves of the city, and gradually weeds grew up and covered the spot where the bustle and life had been."[42] But the destruction didn't take long to get loose on its own rampant logic. "Early on in the war, pianos and organs were systematically destroyed: There was a meaning to the destruction then, and symbols counted for something. Later of course, the destruction was haphazard, and all embracing."[43] However, destruction was not limited to that incurred directly from combat artillery; the social shifts had their ways indelible mark as well. "In addition to those downtown, buildings and whole streets that we once frequented were leveled. Some were reduced to a state of ghastly, lopsided ruin and decomposition, or, more often, marred by layers of scar tissue. Superb mountain forests in the background were transformed into charred wastelands. Sandy beaches became slums or concrete jungles, visual echoes of demographic flux. Refugees arriving in large numbers built hideous structures in the hurry necessitated by the urgency of their situation. The refugees have not all been poor, and the structures reflect the relative wealth of their owners. Luxurious apartment blocks can mutilate a landscape as much as—or perhaps more than—the low-lying bare concrete buildings of the poor, which have a less permanent air to them."[44]

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[38] Ibid., 76-7.
[39] Oussama Kabbani, "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 241.
[40] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir.* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 78.
[41] Ibid., 77.
[42] Ibid., 73.
[43] Ibid., 72.
[44] Ibid.

Since the 1989 Ta'if peace agreement Beirut has been caught up in a process of recovery and reorganization, which is proving to be an extremely complex and often painful social process. In his article "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut" Oussama Kabbani differentiates the social and urban post-war implications of the two main types of war: external and internal. External wars are defined as those engaging one or more countries, whereas internal ones (a term I find far more appropriate to the Lebanese War than 'civil war') are those that take place within the same country. "In a war between different countries," Kabbani writes, "the enemy is clearly identifiable by each side of the conflict. It is the 'other', the aggressive regime or people across one's border. At the end of such aggression, euphoria tends to bring people of the victorious country closer together with an exceptional willingness to sacrifice and rebuild the physical destruction and to heal the social wounds of war."[45] However, that is not the case with internal wars where the end of aggression brings no such expression of comradeship and solidarity. Kabbani considers that in the case of internal struggles "the end of civil strife does not necessarily lead to an exceptional willingness for sacrifice by the war-torn society in the same manner that can be witnessed in cross-border wars. The process of healing has to go through a quite complex journey of political reconstruction, common re-identification, and social assimilation."[46] Indeed, that process can extend for many generations after the actual fighting has ceased. "Having been victimized by their fellow citizens during the course of the war, the fragmented post-civil-war era accelerates the restoration of the prewar 'normal' state which once governed all constituents, even if more fundamental, still controversial issues are not resolved." [47]

What has been said, however, constitutes only one general facet of the multi-faceted postwar situation. One of the ironies of the dysfunctional spatial dynamics of internal war is that the Green Line now emerged as the sole 'neutral zone' in this divided city, a role that will have significant reverberations in the re-unified city after the war. As Kabbani puts it, "for quite a while, the Demarcating Line was the only space bisecting and combining the divided city at the same time." [48] However, the termination of the physical war, the immediate *raison d'etre* of this separating zone, caused a reversal in the urban role of these spaces. To understand this better, a re-examination of public space in war-torn cities is desperately called for. "One can argue that for space to be truly 'public', specifically in the context of a post-civil-war urban environment, it should possess a high-degree of 'neutrality'," observes Kabbani.[49] As a spatial quality, neutrality is manifest as the ability to allow the general public to feel on equal footing, or as Samir Khalaf phrases it in his book *Beirut Reclaimed*, it is that attribute of space that allows for "diversity and unity, intimacy and distance, and to allow groups to mix but not necessarily combine."[50] Such qualities are expected to prevail in those urban spaces and elements of the public realm that do not fall under the immediate dominance of any subgroup, naturally. Thus it follows that these spaces would be located in areas that comprise the border between opposing communities rather than being within one of them. Charged with these contradictory attributes, these spaces provide the opportunity to be "used and abused by all". As a consequence of this urban location of theirs, these spaces

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[45] Oussama Kabbani, "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 241.
[46] Ibid., 242.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 244.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Samir Khalaf, *Beirut Reclaimed* (Beirut: Dar An-Nahar, 1993), 153.

came to embody a seeming paradox in the postwar city, a city that no longer has physical barriers but in which the demographic separation of the wartime internal migration persists. "On the one hand, they are a separator or a buffer between rival communities," says Kabbani in describing this paradox, "while at the same time, they are their meeting place."[51] Thus, these spaces, initially spatial and urban separators, invariably "acquire an intrinsic power to resist the hegemony of any one group over the other", and in a most ironic twist become the only truly "neutral public space" in the city.[52]

At the head of this zone of 'neutral public space', in Beirut's city center, where once the busiest and densest structures stood, now lies… "an empty field".[53] "The city looks now like a gigantic body with a colossal hole exactly where its center ought to be," observes Husnu Yegenoglu in *Archis* upon a visit to Beirut. "Most of the destruction took place in what was once a flourishing center, transforming it into an empty and abandoned no-man's land."[54] However, it wasn't solely the destruction incurred by the war that turned the center into this vacant field; reconstruction efforts, ironically enough, coupled with an allegiance of economic and political circumstances, amongst others, had their fair share as well.

During the first few years after the war, the BCD came to be regarded by anthropologists, archeologists, urban planners and above all international investors as "the biggest laboratory for contemporary trends in architecture".[55] As a result, and thanks to "global neo-liberal economic developments, in which the tasks of the public sector are being privatized at full-speed ahead", it was a private corporation, Solidere (*Societe Libanaise pour le Developpement et la Reconstruction du Centre de Beirut*) that became in charge of reconstructing the entire center, with a surface of approx. 1800 hectares.[56] All the original proprietors of property and land in the center were obliged to sell what they owned to Solidere and were paid back in shares of the company. The principal shareholder, however, and certainly not by chance, was the brain behind Solidere, the multi-millionaire Rafic Hariri, the richest man in Lebanon, and its Prime Minister from 1992 to 1998, and from 2000 to the present. It is not surprising that this systematic concentration of political and economic power stirred an immense controversy in the country at the time; many people saw it as standing in the way of broad social discussion of the city's future. The vast majority of residents expressed feeling underrepresented in this process of rebuilding, so much that the ambitious aim of conferring meaning on the new center was risking running aground on this point.[57]

Solidere elaborated its restoration and building plan for the BCD with what seemed at first sight huge aesthetic and symbolic ambitions. These high aspirations, however, were based on a clean slate strategy. The detailed zoning plan, partly based on Ricardo Bofill's 1988 *Cite de la Mer* project, indicated that during the first stage all of the heavily damaged buildings that were still standing were to be demolished, thus literally deconstructing the urban morphology of the city. As the razing proceeded, however, the bulldozers also exposed archeological strata from the Hellenistic and Roman period that had been long forgotten

[51] Oussama Kabbani, "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 244.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Beirut Sublime," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 260.
[54] Yegenoglu, Husnu. "De verscheurde metropool: Verkenningen in Beirut (The Torn Metropolis: Explorations in Beirut). *Archis* 1, (Jan. 2000), 72.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 73.

and erased from the city's memory. The center of Beirut thus became one of "the world's largest urban archeological excavation sites". [58] And it is this that Rudolphe Khoury sees that has driven the last nail into the coffin:

> "The combined effects of thoroughly destructive warfare and equally uprooting reformulations of property law and zoning ordinances—namely the forces of capital—have created a *tabula rasa* at the very heart of the city. This cleared ground has no discernible physical differentiation: all traces of streets and building masses are now erased. Also obliterated are the property lines, zoning envelopes, and other invisible but no less 'real' demarcations which customarily determine or inflect urban morphologies. The homogeneity and superficial neutrality of this clear slate may have been compromised when the archeological strata were exposed in the recent surveys. But the excavations finally participated, perhaps most effectively, in the systematic erasure of modern Beirut by challenging the primacy of the surface, eventually replacing one ground with several others: by the time the survey is complete, the valuable artifacts collected, and the trenches filled up, the new ground will be artificial, and therefore arbitrary, abstract, and more vacant still."[59]

It seems however that this was not the first time in which the uncovering of old archeological layers of the city put a halt in the life of its more recent layers. Makdisi reports that "at one point during the war we heard a rumor that the downtown area was deliberately not being allowed to return to normal, and therefore the city was to remain divided because of the importance of the archeological discoveries made when the buildings there were destroyed. Thus were the present and the future to be sacrificed to the past, a poetic rumor indeed, and more pleasing to contemplate that the harsher interpretations which are more credible."[60]

However, the archeological importance of uncovering all the historical layers of the city clashes with economic interests, as well. And, "perhaps not unfairly for a city that has just been through a long period of destruction", the protection of whatever cultural heritage happens to surface has a low priority. [61] In fact, Helen Sader, who has been in charge of the excavations since 1992, claims that "the 'archeological project' of Beirut has lost its vitality by now and will gradually die away".[62] Until then, the allure of the empty center halted in the process continues. "Visitors to the city have yet to exhaust their fascination with this dusty field . . . Do not be fooled by the subterfuge: their curiosity for the excavated past and the speculative future is an alibi for a morbid fixation on the scene of the absent center."[63] Burton Pikes writes, "The fascination people have always felt at the destruction of a city may be partly an expression of satisfaction at the destruction of an embelem of irresolvable conflict."[64] Roland Barthes suggests that to go downtown, or to the city center, is "to encounter the social 'truth,' to participate in the proud plentitude of 'reality.' " [65] Khoury proposes that this ritual persists in Beirut in its inverted form. "In today's Beirut, we go downtown to encounter another truth in the spectacle of a sublime emptiness." [66]

However, the fixation with this "sublime emptiness" may be well beyond mere inconsequential fascination, Khoury suggests most perceptively:

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Beirut Sublime," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 261.

[60] Jean Said Makdisi. *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir.* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 70.

[61] Yegenoglu, Husnu. "De verscheurde metropool: Verkenningen in Beirut (The Torn Metropolis: Explorations in Beirut). *Archis* 1, (Jan. 2000), 73.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Beirut Sublime," in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, eds. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 261.

[64] *Quoted in* Michael Stanton. "Ontwerp als vorm van verslaggeving: Over realisme en de waarnemer (Design as Reporting: On Realism and the Observer)". *Archis* 9 (Sept. 2000): 51.

[65] *Quoted in* Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Beirut Sublime".

"Beirut has survived for twenty-two years without its downtown and its centrifugal energy and is not about to waste its momentum, despite the efforts of planners, legislators, and investors. So no matter what we build on the site, be it the developer's fantasy of a miniature Manhattan where enclaves of wired office buildings will rival the inscrutability of Tokyo's walled precinct, or the nostalgic reconstruction of a vanished historical district where simulation can only hasten cultural degradation, losses will linger on and indifference will grow. But as long as this *terrain vague* persists in its vagueness, vacancy, and vagrancy . . . we may see in the emptiness of the evacuated center the possibility of difference, of mutation, of a revolution in the propriety of symbolic systems. At the site of Beirut's sacrificial immolation, we may recognize an opportunity for the remorseless detournement of a negative yet liberating violence." [67]

According to Solidere's plans, when the center is done in about 2015, it will be "a paragon of optimism and a symbol of regained identity", however a paragon that Yegenoglu suggests refers to a past that has never existed. [68] Façades that at first seem to be *bona fide Beaux-Arts* will hide concrete structures, and the traditional *Souk al-Jamil* from the Ottoman period will be 'reconstructed' in its entirety atop the center's largest indoor facility. "In line with the postmodern tendencies towards turning cities into theme parks", the new center will consist of clearly recognizable 'urban fragments' with which one can easily identify, such as the 'Saifi Village', the 'Souks District', the 'Seaside Park', the 'Financial District' the 'Historic Core' and the 'Archeological Area'. The center will become a combination of "seriously upmarket flats, offices, shops and attractions". In fact many citizens already voice the concern that Solidere's only concern is to "bulldoze buildings that survived two decades of war and replace them with glass towers and sell them to non-Lebanese". Indeed, Yegenoglu proceeds, "If the BCD ends up looking like the glossy artist's impressions suggest, nostalgia, kitsch and imagination will intertwine there in a new reality." [69]

The first components of this ambitious reconstruction operation can already be seen in place around the *Place de l'Etoile*, historicized compositions of sandstone, concrete, glass and false ornaments. However, "the users of the chic apartments, offices and shops are nowhere to be seen and in the evening, when the last building worker has left, the center becomes a surreal ghost town. Traffic lights direct a flow of traffic that isn't there, while the homeless cluster around small fires." [70]

While the debate rages about Solidere's plans, however, the districts around the center that have actually grown during the war continue their rapidly development, and the suburbs and periphery are expanding without a "discernible planning framework". Thanks to a weak and corrupt government, continuing legal and illegal building activities and the occupation of and speculation in building plots spell a process of complex, opaque and hybrid urban growth. The transformation of Beirut, however, from a "well-ordered city" into an unpredictable conglomerate expanding "at breakneck pace", though accelerated during the war due to the influx of hundreds of thousands of refuges as mentioned earlier, was already under way in the Sixties, influenced by the flows of migrants. As a result, the old city center disappeared, but this gave rise to many new centers, such as Cola, "a dusty and noisy quarter where dilapidated buses depart for the suburbs and dozens of street vendors try to force their wares on the hastening passer-by". This cultural change, however, which enabled the city to survive the

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 261-2.
[68] Yegenoglu, Husnu. "De verscheurde metropool: Verkenningen in Beirut (The Torn Metropolis: Explorations in Beirut). *Archis* 1, (Jan. 2000), 74.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

war, at the same time reinforced a set of economic activities that are no longer dependant on a dominant center.[71] The centrifugal urban process has turned the city into a belt growing alongside the country's main motorway which runs parallel to the coast in a North-South direction. Coastal towns like Jbail (Byblos) and Jounieh, once independent small towns some forty kilometers north of Beirut, are now the new suburbs with all the trappings of a "Third World metropolis": slums next door to hideously expensive casinos, clubs and shopping centers, the gated communities of the economic elite beside ruins of steel and concrete.[72]

It certainly would make more sense to spend the 18 billion dollars that the prestigious BCD project is going to cost on strengthening the polycentric structure, renewing the weak infrastructure and laying digital networks. The metropolis is already so extensive, diverse and heterogeneous that for the vast majority of the residents the BCD will in no way achieve the intended symbolism or "create the identity" that it is expected to do. If anything, in fact, the old districts around the BCD such as Ras-Beirut, Hamra, Yesouiyyeh and Ashrafiyyeh would benefit economically from the absence of a single dominant center. There traces of the Ottoman and French periods are being, if anything, eradicated at great speed. Magnificent old villas set in idyllic gardens are being replaced by densely packed luxury hotels, shops and office and apartment towers. Thus while in the center buildings are being 'reconstructed' that never existed, in other parts of the city the heritage that is still left is being destroyed. Yet this economic dynamism masks immense social differences and inequality. Everyone here is exposed to the universal law of the 'survival of the fittest', "the prime feature of an unfettered neo-liberalism", and this in turn introduces a new phenomenon: the 'culture of resistance' in which local and traditional groups seek to get a grip on the process imposed on them by resorting to self-organization and self-mobilization. The Elisar project, a public initiative unlike Solidere, is perhaps the most interesting experiment in Beirut for that reason. It entails supervising and coordinating legal and illegal urban processes in the slums of South Beirut, processes such as installing infrastructure, restoring public buildings, renovating homes and reallocating illegal building plots, with the aim of "consolidating local identity".[73]

Beirut is a city in transition. The euphoria at the termination of the war is accompanied by a fear that violence may break out again at any moment. The economy is growing, while the country is still controlled by diverse heavily armed troop units and militia. The Christian and Islamic population groups seem willing to reach consensus and have begun dialogue, but the fragile links that have been forged may break at any time. The quest for security and cohesion is understandable, and so is the attempt to contribute to it through the 'historically' motivated reconstruction of the BCD. And yet I wonder whether this project is not building too much on the Potemkin principle, thus becoming a pretentiously showy or imposing façade intended to mask or divert attention from an embarrassing or shabby reality. The uncertain, ambivalent situation of this city is signally ignored in the BCD. [74]

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[71] Ibid., 74-77.
[72] Ibid., 77.
[73] Ibid., 77-8.
[74] Ibid., 78.

Two mapping collages of Beirut showing the infamous 'Green Line', its 3 major crossings, and the location history of *B018*.

The first mapping (*left*) uses for the Green Line shreds of the poem *There's No Forgetting* generated by the eponymous 'Poem Reading/ Shredding Machine'. The crossings are made of shreds of Lebanese newspaper clippings.

The second mapping (*right*) employs misaligned shreds of xeroxes of photographs for the 'Green Line'. The slight misalignment renders the images unintelligeable, thus transforming the reading to one of two contrasting zones, a dark zone and lighter one. The dark zone is one where the ruins of damaged buildings remain, thus retaining the density of the urban fabric, albeit in a mutilated form. The lighter zone at the top of the 'Line' lies within the 'Beirut Central District', and was accordingly all but cleared of damaged building skeletons. As a result, it now stands as a gaping void at the center of the city.

The 'location history' of *B018* elucidates two patterns that seem to characterize the club's movements or evolution: the first is 'tracing the margins' of the city, while the second is one of increasing exposure. The club's first location in a private apartment was in fact so marginal geographically that is out of the bounds of this map. Its second location, the first public one, was in a desolate indutrial zone that, though on the map, was accessible only through a dirt road. Moreover, the location was legally 'out of bound' and thus had to be closed. The third location, the second public one, had the added exposure of a major motorway which separated it from a densely populated neighbourhood. Nevertheless the site's marginality was manifest in its history as a quarantine zone first, and then as a refugee camp.
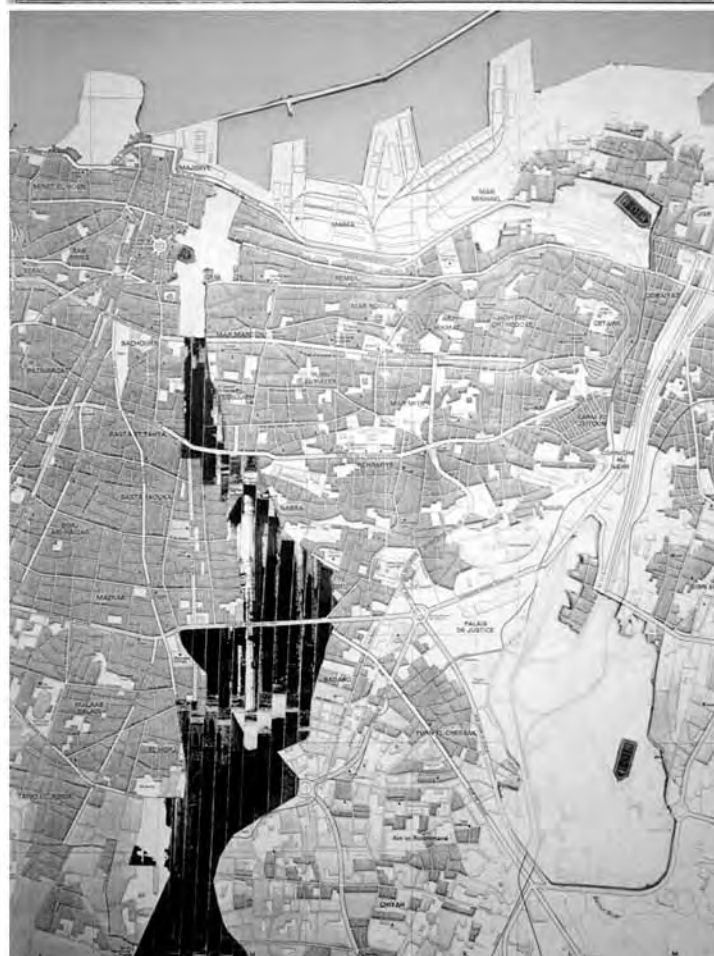
Right: A palimpsest map of Beirut from 1945 showing certain archeological remains found in the city center in the first half of the twentieth century
Lower right: A 1921 map of the city center showing the fortification systems of the city, and the old *Petit Serail* on the *Place des Canons.*
Below: The masterplan for the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District, showing the proposed sites.

The Memorial

The Amnesiac
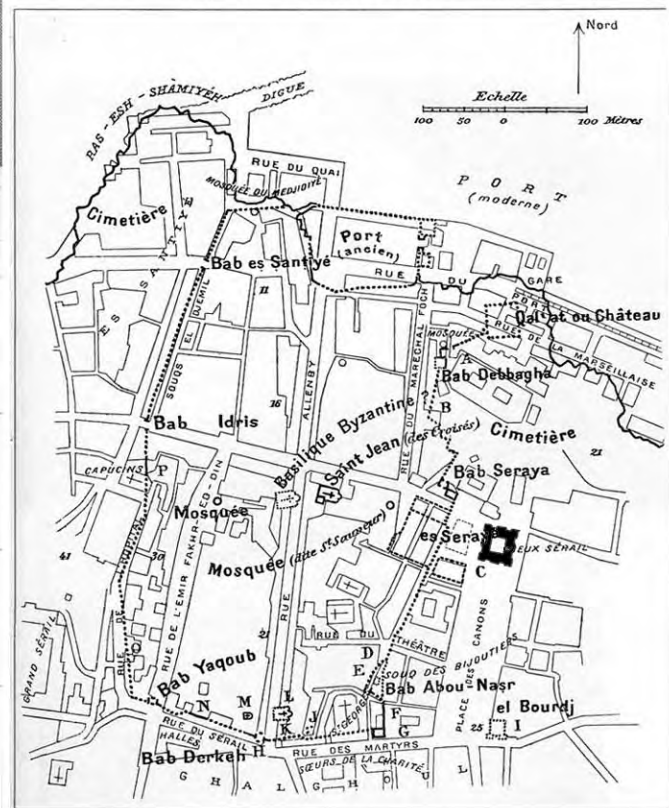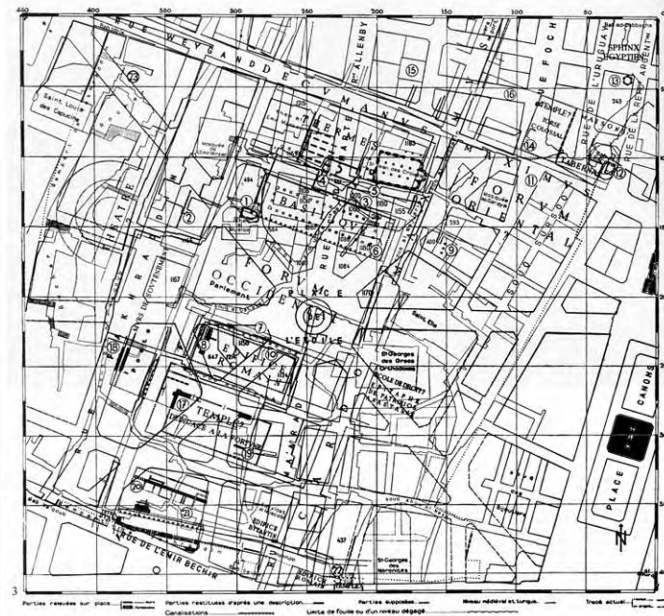
MARTYRS' SQUARE:

(Clockwise from adjacent)
(1) In 1900, then called *Place des Canons;* (2) in its heydey before the war; (3) during the war; (4) and today, partially reconstructed. *(Below) Le Petit Serail*

Quotes from Beirut Reborn, by Angus Gavin:

"Martyr's Square has been Beirut's principal meeting point for more than a hundred years. At the termination of the 'Green Line,' the square and the buildings that formed it were virtually destroyed during the war. Former hub of the city's transport system and center of commerce and entertainment, the site has been associated for many centuries as a place of public recreation and gardens. During the early years of downtown reconstruction, Martyr's Square has been re-established as a festival and exhibition site, bringing thousands of people back to the city center for special cultural and trade events. A powerful sense of place and historical memory will be created by the reinstatement of the square, restoration of the statue and the two surviving buildings, reconstruction of the Ottoman Police Station, and the neighbourhood's rich association with the city's archeological heritage. As the reconstruction plan unfolds, the square, now open to the sea, will resume its role as the city's major public space and social arena." (57,59)

"In 1950, the square was enlarged northward with the demolition of the Petit Serail." (57)

"The Rivoli Cinema, which occupied the site of the *Petit Serail,* was demolished in 1994. This opened up the visual axis from Martyr's Square through to the sea." (58)

"The expansion of Martyr's Square to the sea has been heralded for nearly 90 years. Now finally to be achieved, the great visual axis and public space of the Bourj can re-establish its identity as the city's major meeting point and formal avenue of processional grandeur - a symbol of national unity." (57)

(PS: The quotations are intended as a a parody, and not an endorsement, of their content.)

"Martyrs' Square, at the heart of the city, desolate and effectively unreachable throughout the 15 years of war, remained the one universally identifiable symbol of Beirut. The statue of the grieving fallen martyrs, positioned at its center and originally dedicated to those who fought foreign occupation, became almost mystically identified in the popular mind with those who had fallen victim to the Lebanese war. No other public space so captures the Lebanese imagination as this historic square..." (57)

Angus Gavin, *Beirut Reborn*

Statue of the Martyrs

(clockwise from upper left):
(1) The statue as it stood before the war; (2) during the war; and (3) as it stood, a literal war amputee, for a brief time after the war, before its removal for 'restoration'. (4) Today, the Square stands without its namesake statue.

The precedents for this study have been chosen both for their conceptual relevance, as well as the material ways in which they convey their ideas. The first precedent, a work of 'conceptual art' by Mona Hatoum entitled **"+ and –"**, is essentially a 3-dimensional self-erasing drawing. A motor-driven arm, rotating at five rpm on a central pivot, draws circular lines in a bed of sand with one end while the other end of the arm immediately erases them. Michael Archer, in his monograph on the artist, describes the work as a "*reductio ad absurdum* of a closed system, a paradigm of the inseparable but ambiguous relationship of opposites, an ironic automation of the artist's volitional act of marking and rubbing out, 'a sense existence accentuated by the fear of disappearance'." [75] The work is highly potent in the sense that it employs very minimal, and rather poor, physical and material means to achieve its strong psychological impact and its complex conceptual resonances. The relationship between presence and absence in it is simultaneous (in the sense that the same movement which creates the lines in the sand is the one that erases them), and repetitive in a highly precise and uniform automated cyclical pattern. The act of inscribing and effacing, however, remains independent of the observer due to automation, thus the relationship between the subject and the work is reduced to one of observation.

The second precedent, in contrast, employs the public's participation in the work as an integral part of its conception and operation. The **"Monument against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights"** by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz began as a forty-foot-high, three-foot-square hollow aluminum pillar plated with a thin layer of soft, dark lead that stood in the commercial center of Harburg, Germany, "a somewhat dingy suburb of Hamburg". [76] The work is essentially a "vanishing monument", or "countermonument", as James Young refers to it, which invites the public's desecration of the work, and then links that process to the work's disappearance. In fact the explicit invitation, as well as the tools, for 'violating the work' was provided with it. An inscription near the base of the column read:

> We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice. [77]

Pointed steel styluses were attached at the corners of the column for scoring the soft lead plating. As five-foot sections of the column were covered with memorial graffiti, the 'monument' was lowered into the ground into a chamber as deep as the column was high. Thus, the more actively the visitors engaged in this act of desecration, the faster the 'monument' disappeared. As such, Young notes, "the vanishing monument has returned the burden of memory to the visitors: now all that stands here are the memory-tourists, forced to rise and to remember for themselves." [78]

Thanks to its severely minimal means of expression, the work manages to achieve a staggering array of ideological resonances and nuances. It challenges the authority and sanctity of the traditional conception of memorial monuments, "undermin[ing] its own authority by inviting and then incorporating the

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[75] Michael Archer and Guy Brett**,** *Mona Hatoum*. (London : Phaidon Press, 1997), 38.
[76] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 130.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 130-1.

authority of passerby".[79] It reminds of the limitation of memorials, that "all monuments can ever do is rise up symbolically against injustice" and hope that that would inspire the more genuine and enduring form of resistance, that of the public.[80] As would be expected, the work was highly controversial. It was likened to "a great black knife in the back of Germany, slowly being plunged in, each thrust solemnly commemorated by the community, a self-mutilation, a kind of topographical hara-kiri."[81] The monument seemed to embody "not only the Germans' secret desire that all these monuments just hurry up and disappear but also the urge to strike back at such a memory, to sever it from the national body like a wounded limb".[82] More importantly perhaps, the monument became a "social mirror" that was "doubly troubling" in that it reminded the community not only of what happened, but "even worse", it seemed to throw back at them their response to the memory of that past.[83] "People had come at night to scrape over all the names, even to pry the lead plating off its base. There were hearts with 'Jürgen liebt Kirsten' written inside, Stars of David, and funny faces daubed in paint and marker pen. Inevitably, swastikas began to appear."[84] As such, Young sees, "the countermonument accomplished what all monuments must: it reflected back to the people—and thus codified—their own memorial projections and preoccupations."[85] Ultimately, in an act of ingeniously simple inversion of 'memorial monument' to 'memory of a monument', the Gerzes seemed to assert that "the best memorial… may be no monument at all, but only the memory of an absent monument".[86] As such, using very minimal aesthetic as well as tectonic means, the work manages to evoke highly sophisticated feelings and ideas, now with the engagement of an additional potent element, that of the public's participation. Thus the public becomes not only the observer, or even the author of the work; but the public *becomes* the work.

In the third precedent, a "Club/Bar/Exhibition" space by Bernd Mey in Frankfurt, Germany called **"U 60311"**, memory is not event-specific as much as it is site-specific. While the "Monument against Fascism…" dealt with the memory of a more or less specific event (namely that of the Holocaust, despite the disconcertingly general title of the work), its site lacked specificity in relation to the commemorated event. "U 60311", on the other hand, seems to be all about the memory of the site, with no particular event or agenda to commemorate. Thus it lacks the highly emotionally charged, symbolically laden sensibility of the "Monument against Fascism…", though it shares with it (as well as with the first precedent) a comparably minimal language, and an impoverished aesthetic, this time derived from the history of the site, tackling the memory of the site with comparably admirable refinement of thought. In addition to that, U 60311 shares with Hatoum's "+ and –" a sense of recycling. The site, an abandoned subway station and underpass, was sealed off from public use for years. Mey recycled materials and objects found at the site, making them an integral part of the new existence of the site. Such materials as the wooden planks that covered the entrances for years, plans of the station, showcases and plastic containers with samples of earth collected during the construction of the subway become part of the making of the new identity of the site, as well as part of its exhibits.

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[79] Ibid., 134.
[80] Ibid., 135.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., 139.
[84] Ibid., 138.
[85] Ibid., 139.
[86] Ibid., 134.

As the project currently stands, it is expressed above ground with three volumes that cover the old entrances to the subway: pavilion A, which is the main entrance, and pavilions C and D. The fourth entrance, B, is not expressed by an above ground volume; its stair standing exposed. The transparent containers filled with earth, extracted during the drilling for the Frankfurt subway, became part of the enclosure of pavilion A. Lit from behind, the façade turns into an installation: *Illuminated Earth*. The planks that used to cover the entrance of the abandoned station were incorporated into the making of pavilions C and D. Each of these pavilions has a concrete base and a glazed upper section. The planks were used as forms for the concrete bases, and the impressions they left were photographed and printed on the glass of the upper section: the *Luminous Wood-Imprint-Concrete*. Thus, instead of merchandise, these windows display now the planks. The plans of the station, as well as other material found during exploration of the station, were incorporated into the basement, as wall lining as well as part of the exhibit. Fragments of these found documents were printed on black paper that now lines the walls of the basement.[87] As such the site was literally recycled, reusing old found elements in ways that range from the integral (in the making, construction, form-work and enclosure) to the visual (printing and reprinting). Some of these reuses stand ambiguously between the two ends, such as the transparent earth containers in pavilion A, at once part of the building, and yet it can be questioned if they are any more than mere display, albeit more deeply integrated.

Due to its previous function, the entrance pavilions to "U 60311" are relegated to the sidewalk corners of a T-intersection. Separated thus above ground by automobile traffic, the entrances are connected underground by the main space of the club/bar/exhibit. As such the event of the program become the instance of celebration of the connection of disparate and disjointed access points, yet retaining its quality as a connecting circulation space.

The fourth precedent, **"B018",** another bar/nightclub, now in Beirut, acts as a precedent dually. While I am presenting its present articulation as an architectural precedent, I am presenting its 'institution' as a more direct programmatic precedent. "B018" came into being during the war as a series of "musical therapy" sessions, private parties held in the apartment of its present manager Nagi Gebran. B018 was the code number of that apartment/studio, situated 18 km north of Beirut, then in East Beirut. Gebran, a musician and cofounder of alternative jazz band "Wrong Approach", lived in the unit B018 from 1984 to 1993, during which his "alternative sessions" gained popularity and reputation amongst the closed, "underground" circles of the city. At the end of 1993, Gebran moved out of his studio and decided to take the B018 public for the first time. The first public version of B018 was built in an industrial sector of the north east suburbs of Beirut. It operated without a permit in a 200 sq.m. "black box" structure, its only access a dirt road. The "unusual music" and "strange atmosphere" were the main ingredients of the B018 concept, which "quickly became a surprising reflection of the night scene in Beirut". It was obvious that "B018 was a definite success". By May 1997, Gebran was forced to leave the premises. B018 had to find a new address.[88]

Bernard Khoury, a US-educated Lebanese architect, was in charge of "the architectural concept and execution, the scenography and furniture design" of the new B018. "The building was executed and ready to operate in a record time of 6 months." On April 18 1998, the new B018 opened its doors to the public. The site is located near the seaport of Beirut. During the French mandate, this zone was the quarantine of the port of Beirut, hence its name, "la quarantaine". Later on it was "infested by war refugees": from Lebanese from the south, to Palestinians and Kurds. In 1975, the refugees in the area numbered around 20 000.

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[87] "Club/Bar/Exhibition 'U 60311,' Frankfurt, 1999". *Lotus* 106. 52.

In January of 1976, the Phalangist militia launched an attack on the quarantine, leaving the area devastated. The highway that borders the site is the main northern access to the city. Across the highway are the densely populated quarters of the "river of Beirut" area. The B018 will remain there until the expiry date of the rental contract (Nov. 8, 2003), when it's going to have to locate a new address. [89]

Khoury's B018 is set entirely below ground level. It is covered by heavy black steel roof which retracts and folds out "as darkness falls". Both the structure and panels of the roof made of steel. Conceived of as a structurally autonomous cap, its anchoring is imbedded under the circular concrete slab. The roof is composed of five moving panels (one flap and four sliding) activated by hydraulic pistons. When open, the 26 sq.m. roof flap, with its under-face of 126 reflecting panels, becomes the effective 'façade' of the project. As such, its surface reflects a "descriptive section of the project, the contrasted superposition of contradictory conditions": the density of the quarters of the "River of Beirut" as a backdrop, the highway axis drawn by the rapid passage of the cars' headlamps, the parking "carrousel" and its lighting "crown", and the spectacle of the hall ended by a birds eye view of the bar on the foreground. The distortion of the reflected images is only accentuated by the fragmentation of the panel. Opened, the roof releases sounds and light reflections, "stretch[ing] the limits of the place, and extend[ing] the atmosphere to the outside". As such, its closing becomes "a voluntary gesture of disappearance, a strategy of recess". [90]

This strategy seems necessary given the 'overexposure' of the site, which Khoury admits was "originally incompatible with the origins of the B018." Yet in the three incarnations that the B018 has had so far, one can start to elucidate a pattern of increasing exposure: from private "sessions", to a public bar/club in a deserted industrial area accessible only through a dirt road, to its present siting near a major highway, and across from a densely populated area. It can be argued that, although the present scheme is literally underground, it predecessor more "underground"—not literally, but legally and through its siting, access, etc. And it is this pattern that I tried to represent in my mapping of precedents, "Modes of Absence/Cycles of Erasure". And it is based on the same pattern of increasing exposure that I suggest the proposed site for the next B018, in the (empty) 'heart' of Beirut.

Khoury's scheme attracted another form of overexposure as well, in architectural journals and magazines. It became the most published 'building' in Lebanon, putting to shame such other much larger buildings as Pierre Khoury's new UN headquarters. Husnu Yegenoglu likens the 'building' to "a bunker for cruise missiles or an underground war machine." [91] But as such, he sees it as "an impressive example of an intelligent architectural reaction to the present situation" and "a sublime symbol of Beirut's condition as a torn metropolis in the transition between a turbulent past and an uncertain future". Stefano Pavarini, in *ARCA Plus*, laments the pre-decided limited life span of the 'building', stating that, "It is a real pity that this shrine to music will come to an end when the leasing contract expires in the years 2003 and the building will have to be moved. But it would be nice to think that someone is already planning another reincarnation of B018 for that data." [92]

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[88] www.b018.com
[89] Ibid.
[90] www.b018.com
[91] Yegenoglu, Husnu. "De verscheurde metropool: Verkenningen in Beirut (The Torn Metropolis: Explorations in Beirut). *Archis* 1, (Jan. 2000): 78.
[92] Stefano Pavarini. "*Avanguardia e Sperimentazione:* B018, Beirut.*" ARCA Plus* 26 (3rd trimester, 2000): 29.

The two next precedents are recipients of the 48th Annual Progressive Architecture Awards. The first project is a **community pavilion** by Mark Anderson and Andrew Zago in Detroit, Michigan. I include it here for the way it 'recycles' the site, evoking the memory of what was on the site materially, and yet allowing it to transform programmatically. The site is a vacant lot filled with the charred remains of a single-family house that once stood there. The site is situated in a neighborhood known as the Near East Side where such "derelict and similarly burned houses" seem to be in abundance. The project's program was inspired by the "impromptu seating" found throughout the area where neighbors gather to chat and socialize. The resultant was thus a 1,200 sq. ft. community pavilion for "informal neighborhood gatherings". The pavilion is made of burned timbers from the house that formerly stood on the site, "and other debris salvaged from the area". The proposed construction technique is a "seeming contradiction", "an orderly building up of a jumble of old materials". The existing basement will be emptied out and filled with parallel, 12-inch-deep rows of debris. The foundation will be built up by placing additional rows perpendicular to those underneath, and concrete poured into the cavity. A dense grid of columns made from salvaged lumber will be inserted into the mix. Above ground, the pavilion's enclosure will be made of 4 ft. by 4 ft. bundles of charred wood laid in alternating directions within a bolted structural frame of the salvaged wood columns and beams. The pavilion will be roughly two stories above grade, about the mass of the previous house. Its "simultaneously rough and fine wooden filigree" will let light pass through the gas between the bundles of wood. With most of the materials being salvaged refuse and volunteer laborers building the pavilion, the project seems to take the phrase 'impoverished architecture' (that I have been repeatedly using) to a new dimension, giving a refreshingly new twist to '*arte povera* meets architecture' with a structure that is expected to cost no more than $4 per square foot! [93]

The second project uses equally cheap material that is abundantly present at the site for the most part, but I include here more importantly for its approach to the temporality of construction. The project is the **Winter Gardens,** by Canadian architect Pierre Thibault, in the *Parc de Conservation des Grands Jardins*, in Charlevoix, Quebec. The *Parc*, a nature reserve, is a mountainous zone more than 800 meters in altitude. The southernmost taiga in the world, its numerous lakes dot a forest trail that extends over several kilometers through the mountains. The trail is open to the public for recreative activities all year long. The project is part of the *Parc*'s program of public activities. It aims to induce "an enhanced appreciation of the trail's seven main lakes" through the deployment of six temporary winter installations. It offers visitors places to stop, "unique visual vantage points" and "refuges". The project employs a palette of ephemeral materials such ice, snow, and light (both electrical and candle light), as well as a complementary array of 'cheap' materials, such as canvas, metal, and wooden stilts; and pre-manufactured 'mundane' objects that are transitory in connotation: camping equipment. The constructions are varied, as are their duration; some installations will last just a few nights, other several weeks or even months. [94]

The first installation, *Blue Line*, consists of blocks of ice taken from the lake itself and aligned in "a progressive and increasingly close-knit chain" that extends from one side of the lake to the other "like a spinal column or crease". At night, the ice takes on a blue glow; "it becomes a bridge or a road, a reference point in the dark". The second installation, *Constellation*, "redefining the shape of the lake" by lighting 2000 candles in an orthogonal grid over the entire surface of the lake. For one hour every night, fifty people light these candles, each one protected from the wind by a small well of snow. The third, *Icebergs*, consists of

[93] Barreneche, Raul A. "48th Annual P/A Awards". *Architecture,* (Apr. 2001): 93.

rectangular plaques of ice that are selectively cut out of the lake and placed next to the slots thus created. Lakewater is brought to light and remains so until the gaps freeze over again. The holes in the lake will thus seal over, the sun will melt the blocks of ice and snow will cover again any trace of human intervention, making this installation a sort of a 'self-effacing' work reminiscent of Hatoum's and Gerz's. The fourth installation, *Rhapsody*, is comprised of seven hundred and fifty flutes installed in a regular grid over the entire surface of the lake. As the wind blows, air is caught in the flutes, producing a melody whose momentum varies according to the wind's strength and direction. "The lake sings in the winter silence." *Caravan*, the fifth installation, is an alignment of tents across the surface of a lake, with a distance of 20 meters between each one, thus "strip[ping] winter camping of its discretion". "Through the unbroken line of the tents, transient human presence is sublimated and the tents become either caravan or road, crossing the lake and the forest, reaching out for the horizon." The sixth and last installation is entitled *Refuge*. It begins with a series of tree trunks planted in such a way as to blend in with the surrounding natural growth. These gradually become highly squared posts, followed by cubes of wood until small plywood houses mounted on stilts sit right on the lake.[95]

The series of interventions thus attempts to decipher the passage of time through constructed elements, "relatively fleeting phenomena within a natural, apparently immutable environment of staggering proportions". The project employs the seasons as a mark of time. "Imbued with perennial force, they are the recurring cycles that create rhythm, distinguishing change." As such, the constructed elements simply act to focus and sharpen perception of place and time. The architect declares, "Human intervention, even that which is small, would allow us to witness the environment in a new way, heightening divisions of time that are naturally occurring: before, after, now." The *Parc des Grands Jardins* is a site protected from human intervention. Consequently, "it is not subject to time as perceived within a human framework, and is only modified by its own evolutionary cadence". Winter Gardens thus reflects time as it occurs within a specific, natural landscape, and the project's interventions become "fugitives": "gardens of snow, ice and light come to rest softly on a ground just as impermanent— the frozen lakes of winter." As an inquiry of space, the project seeks to modify our perception of landscape without permanently altering the environment. The project is equally an encounter with time, making sensations become "curiously dilated" and contrasts increasingly apparent. "Time slows down and, in some cases, even stands still. Our bodies react accordingly. Sensations are more acutely observed, life becomes more intense and time spent with a heightened awareness of space becomes indelibly engraved in our minds." [96]

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[94] http://www.pthibault.com/hiver_e.htm
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

+ and -

Monument against Fascism...

"There's No Forgetting"

BO18

The War
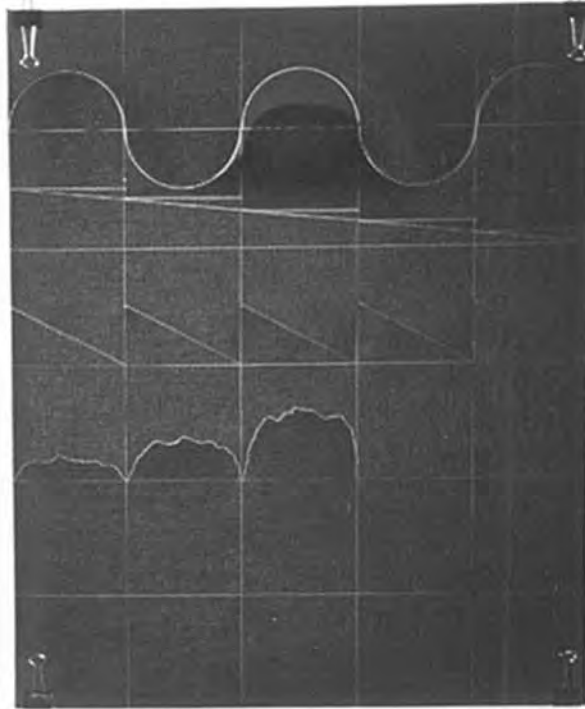
MODES of ABSENCE

CYCLES of ERASURE

"MODES OF ABSENCE/CYCLES OF ERASURE"

Charcoal plastic mesh mounted on black board (15" x 18")

"Modes of Absence/Cycles of Erasure" is a mapping of the temporal cycles of erasure/modes of absence of three of the precedents ("+ and -", "Monument against Fascism…" and "B018"); the conceptual model, "There's No Forgetting"; and the Lebanese War (as reflected through accounts of the Green Line in Edgar O'Ballance's history, Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92. Pending). The technique itself, that of incision/cutting, was an attempt at "presencing through absence" that I thought appropriate given the contention of this thesis.

"+ and -" has a highly precise, uniform, repeating cycle of simultaneous presencing and absencing due to its automation. The "Monument against Fascism…" has a unidirectional mode of absence, one that is nevertheless sporadic, and in spurts, depending on the public's participation and its 'rules of engagement'. "There's No Forgetting" has a unidirectional, but repetitive, mode of absence (due to the multiple iterations of the poem); however, it is one that is sporadic as well, depending on use. "B018" has had only three 'cycles' so far, each marked by absence at its beginning and end, but each with a higher interim presence than the one before. The Lebanese War, as expected, presents a far more complex extended 'cycle' than the others. It shares with "+ and -" the simultaneous presencing and absencing, although without the precise repeating uniformity, of course. For despite all the destruction of the war, it was a time of the most intense, albeit unorganized, building activity; similarly, despite the immense number of tragic and senseless deaths, the war was a time of astounding demographic growth (albeit an 'unbalanced one', in the sense that the religious/ sectarian demographic constituency of the country, on which the parliamentarian representation is based, was significantly altered, and with it thus 'the balance of powers' in the country.)
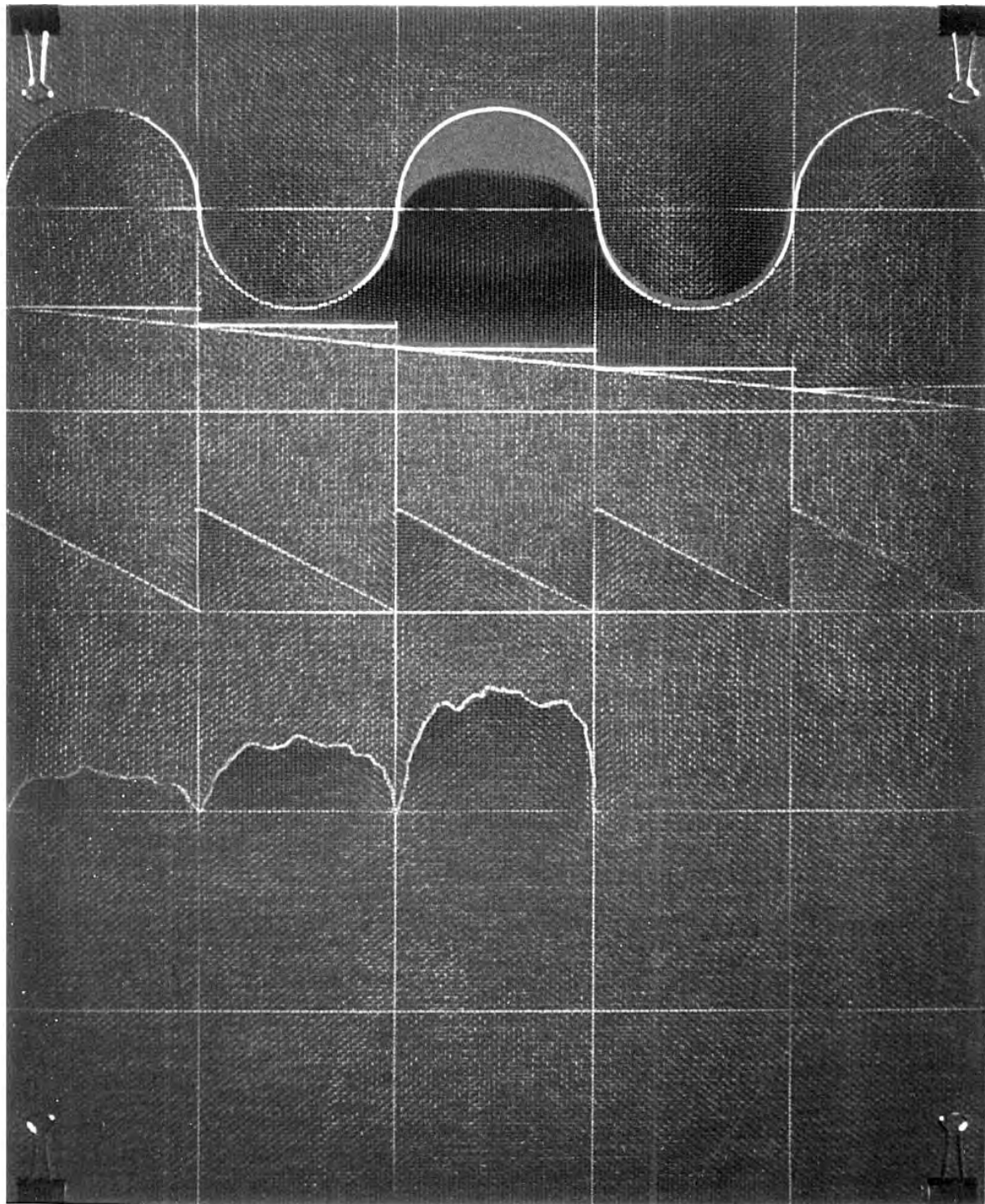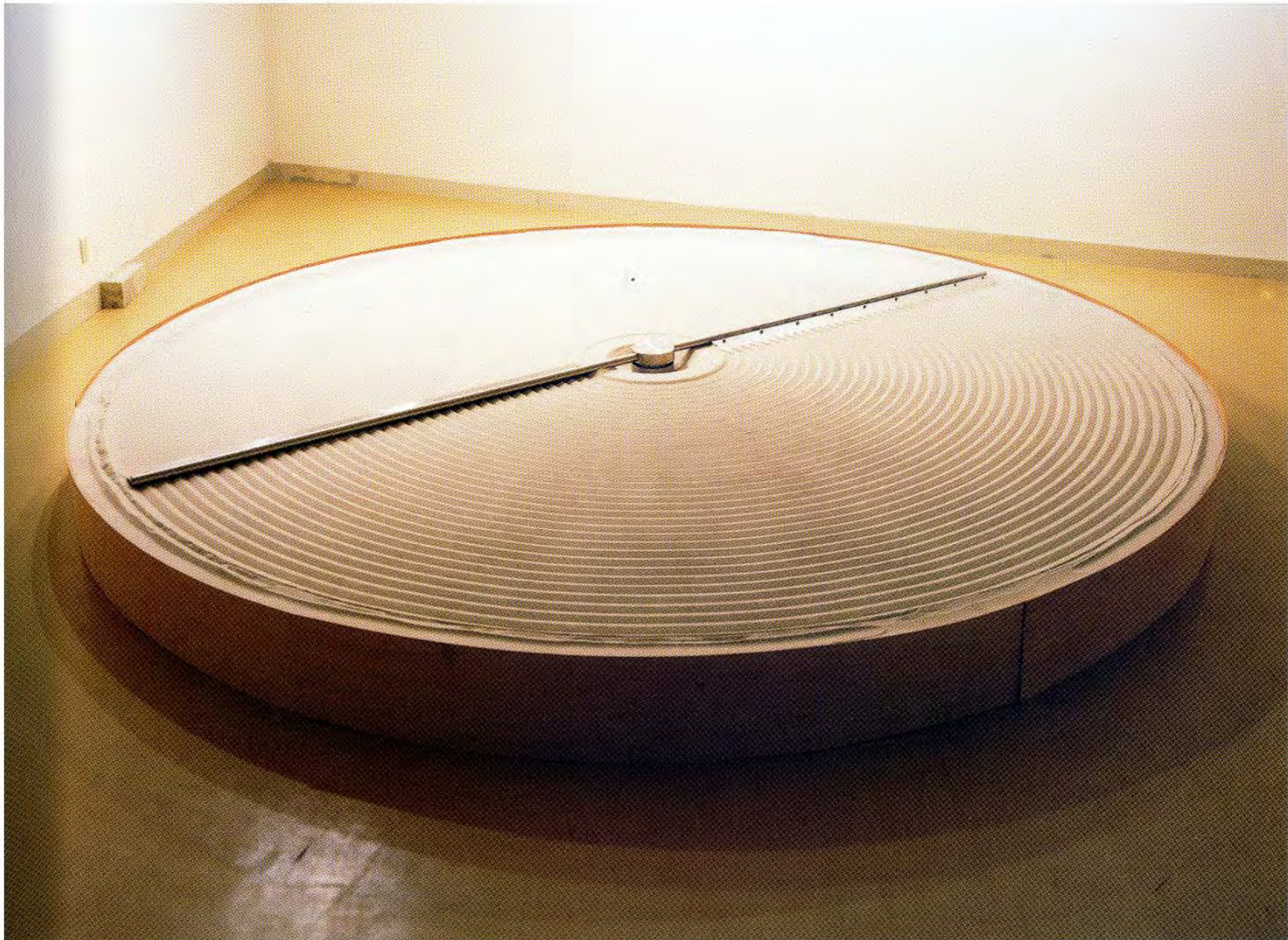
"+ AND -"

Mona Hatoum
Sand, wood, stainless steel, and motor (32 x O400cm)
Museum City Tenjin, Fukuoka, Japan. 1994.
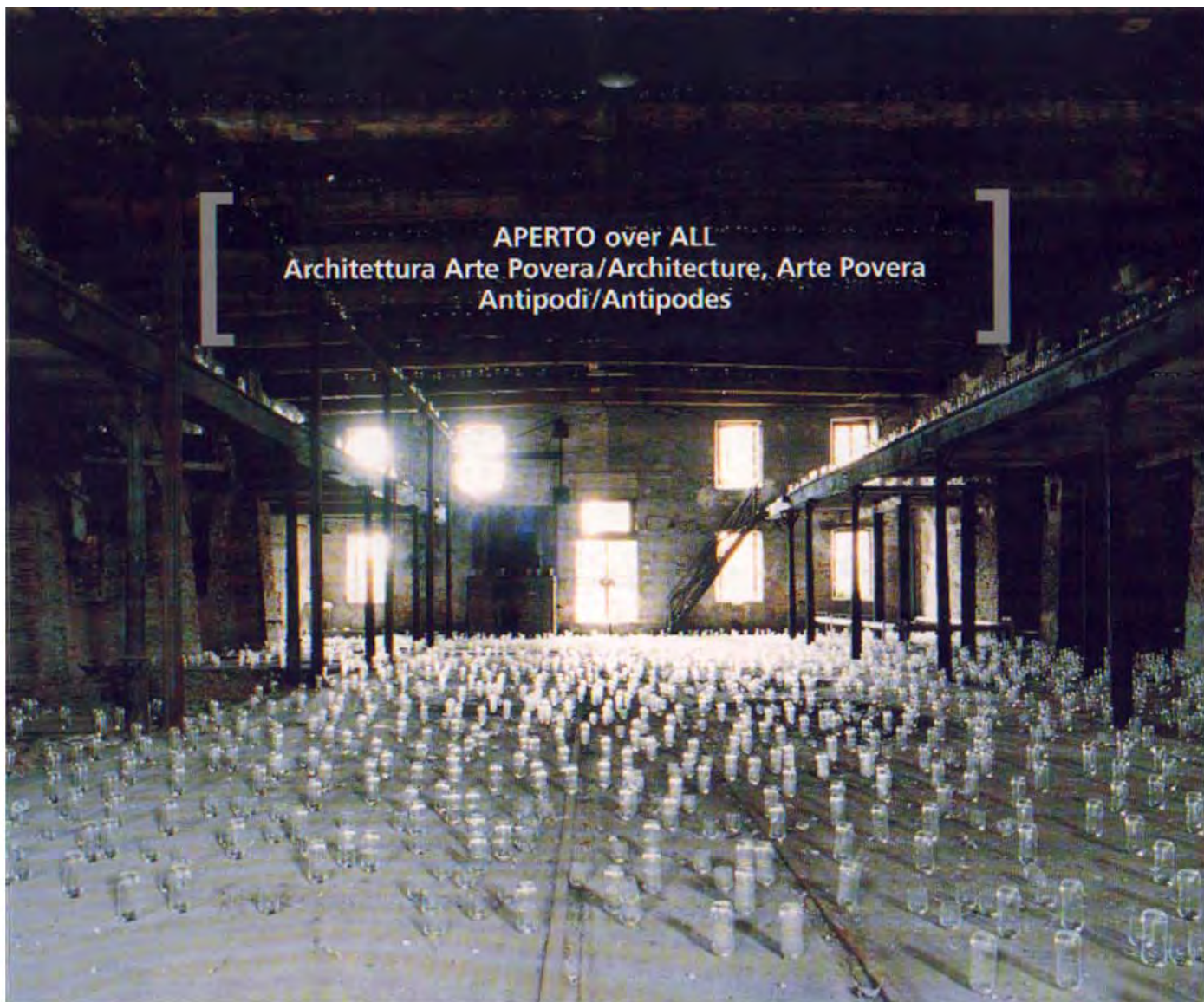
The cover of *Lotus 105*, featuring a work by Isreali artist Serge Spitzer entitled *Reality Models-Re/Cycle/Don't Hold Your Breath,* part of *La Biennale di Venezia*'s 48th exhibition of 1999. The work was set in the *Isolotto*, light entering it only sparingly, creating a rather grim atmosphere. Slender columns of cast-iron supporting wooden beams separated the impassable space into three sections. "Making use of a local product, blown glass, Spitzer strewed the setting with 8000 glasses: set one on top of the other like alchemical ampullae, they formed a sort of 'sandwich of air', reminiscent of Duchamp. At the end of the exhibition the glasses were recycled and returned to the state of glass that could be used for blowing again. Spitzer chose to contrast the gloom with lightness, the darkness with the glimmer of light reflected from the surface of the glass and, again, to link the work so closely to the space as to destroy it when its time was up." (Zevi 23)

TECTONIC PRECEDENTS:
War Architecture

Above: Sandbags in action
Above right: 'Impoverished architecture' - peeling
plaster, rusted metal and barb wire.
(The former *Khiyam Prison*, South Lebanon.)
Below right: 'War architecture' - precast concrete
barriers and sandbags at a former Isreali position
in South Lebanon.

DETROIT COMMUNITY PAVILION
Mark Anderson & Andrew Zago
Detroit, Michigan
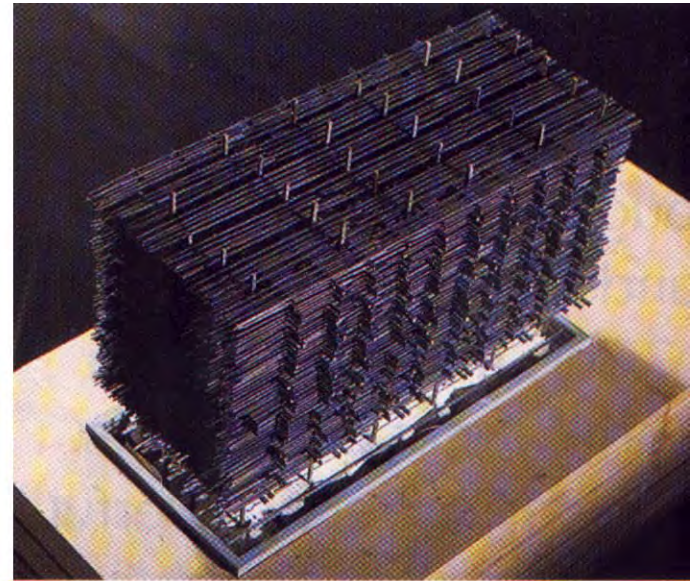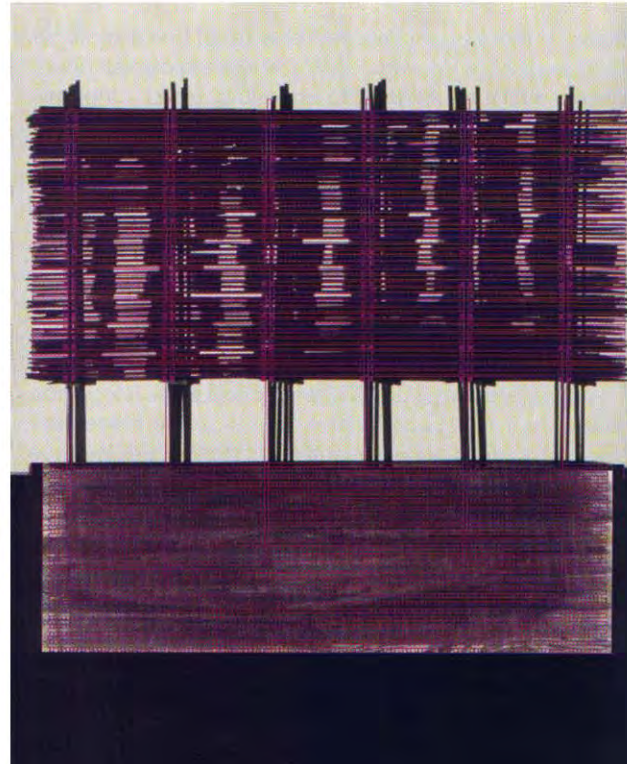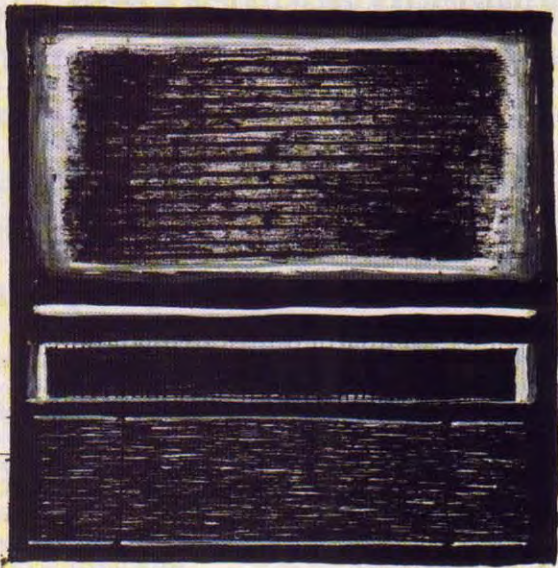
Far left:
Sectional study
Left:
Section & elevation study
Above:
View of the model

WINTER GARDENS
Pierre Thibault
Charlevoix, Quebec

Left:
Constellation
Below:
Caravan
Right:
Icebergs
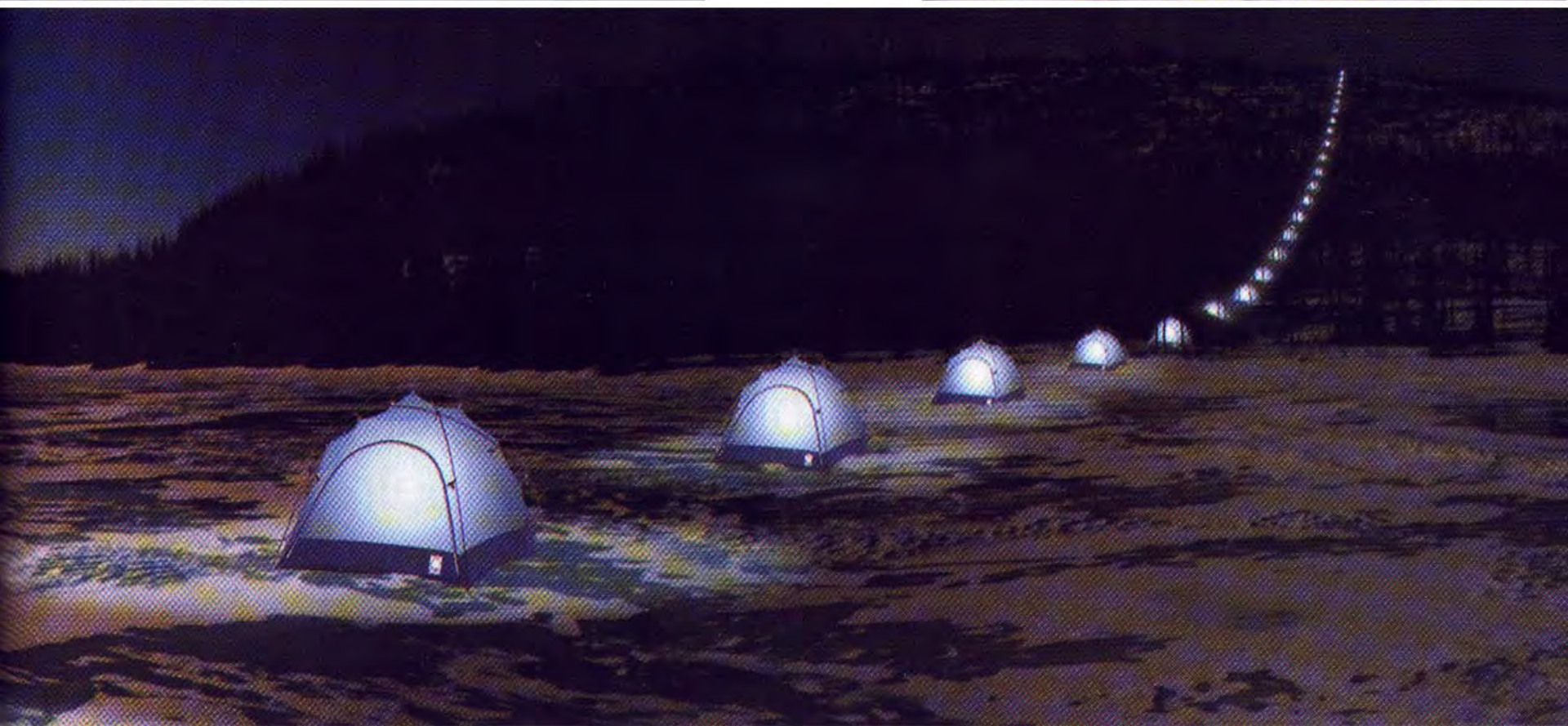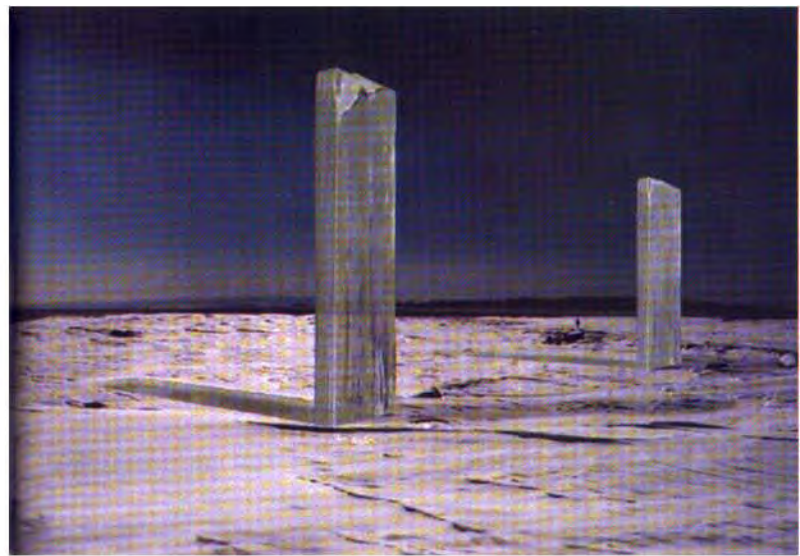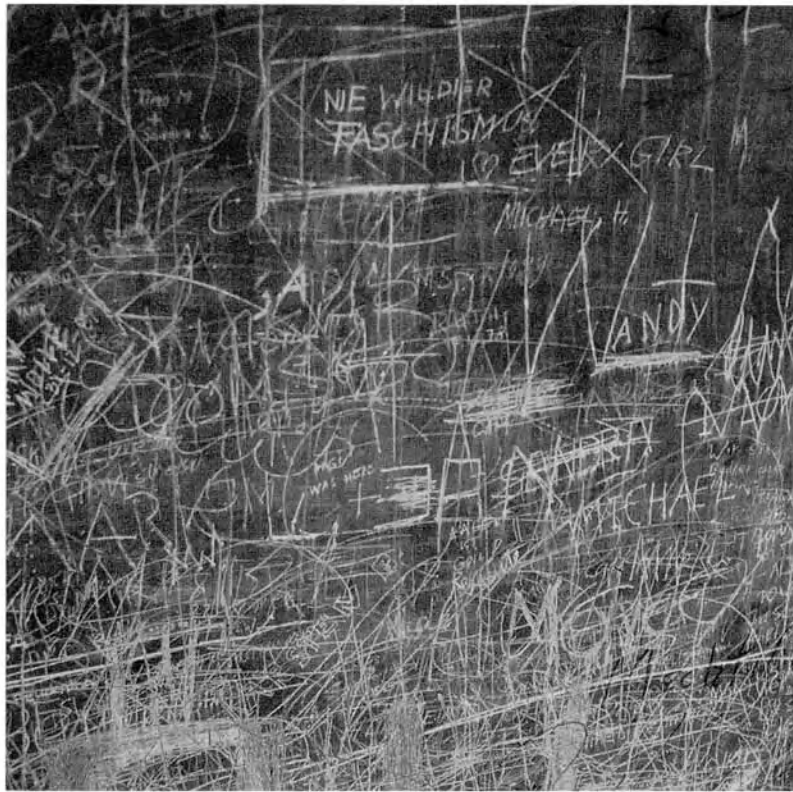
Left: Inscribing grafitti.
Far left: Detail of grafitti.
Below: Sequence of submergence.

10. Oktober 1986
Einweihung

1. September 1987
1. Absenkung

23. Oktober 1988
2. Absenkung

6. September 1989
3. Absenkung

22. Februar 1990
4. Absenkung

4. Dezember 1990
5. Absenkung
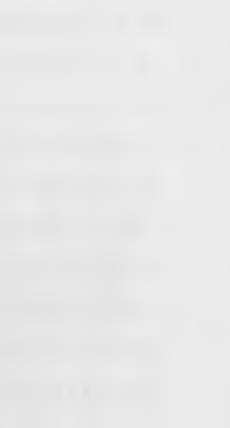
27. September 1991
6. Absenkung

Left: Monument, full-length.
Below: Monument, partially submerged.
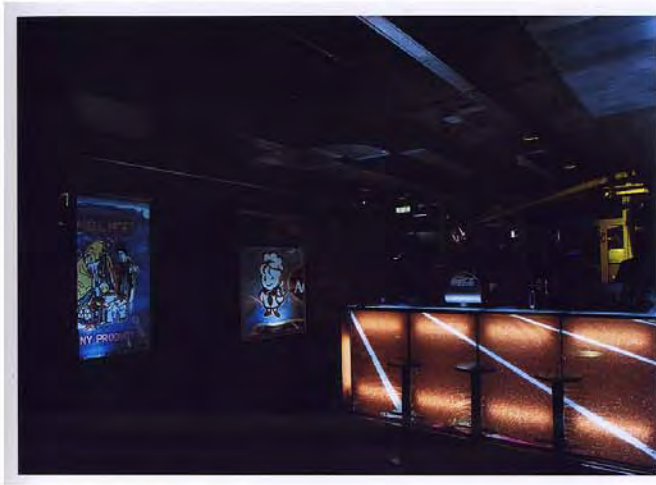
Top: Views of the interior of the nightclub showing the DJ booth.
Above: Pavilion A (left) and a close-up of its enclosure system containing the plastic ground sample jars (right).

Left: Close-ups of the printed glazing, during the day (top), in the shade (middle), and at night (bottom).
Above: Pavilion C
Right: Plastic containers found in the abandoned subway station containing ground bore samples collected during the construction of the subway.

View of Pavilions C & D at night.
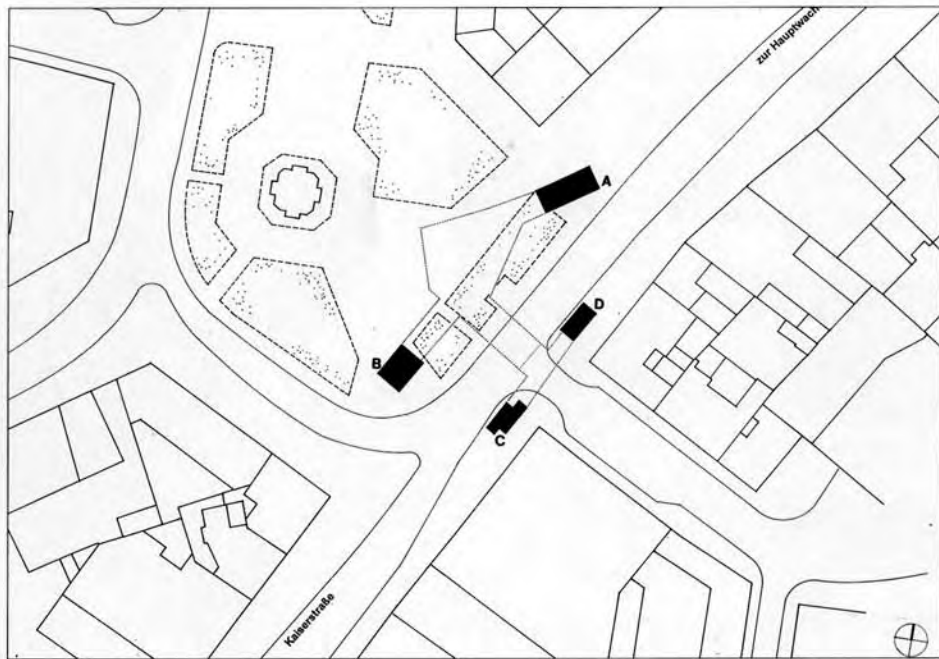
Site Plan
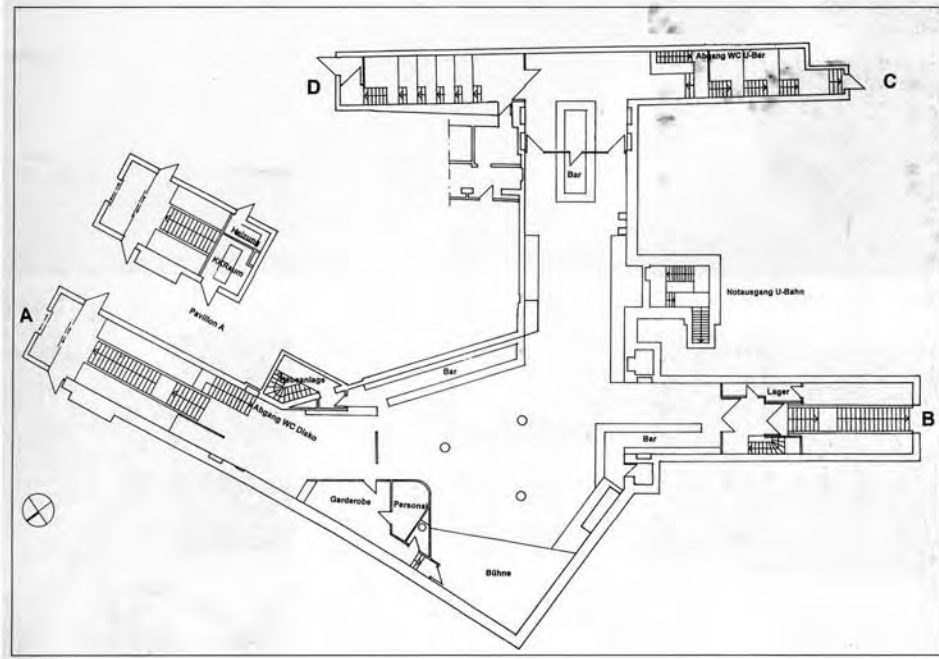
Plan
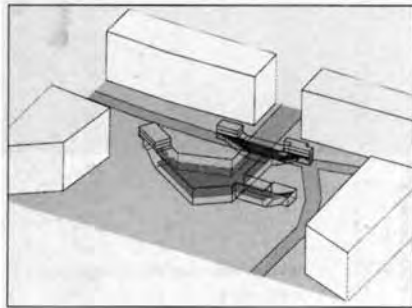
Schematic
Axonometric

Sections through Pavilions A, C & D

A

VENTILATORKÜHLAGGREG.

D

C

Site Plans

External Plan 1

External Plan 2

External Plan 3

Interior Plan 1

Interior Plan 2

Interior Plan 3

Interior Plan 4

Cross Sections

Longitudinal section

South Elevation
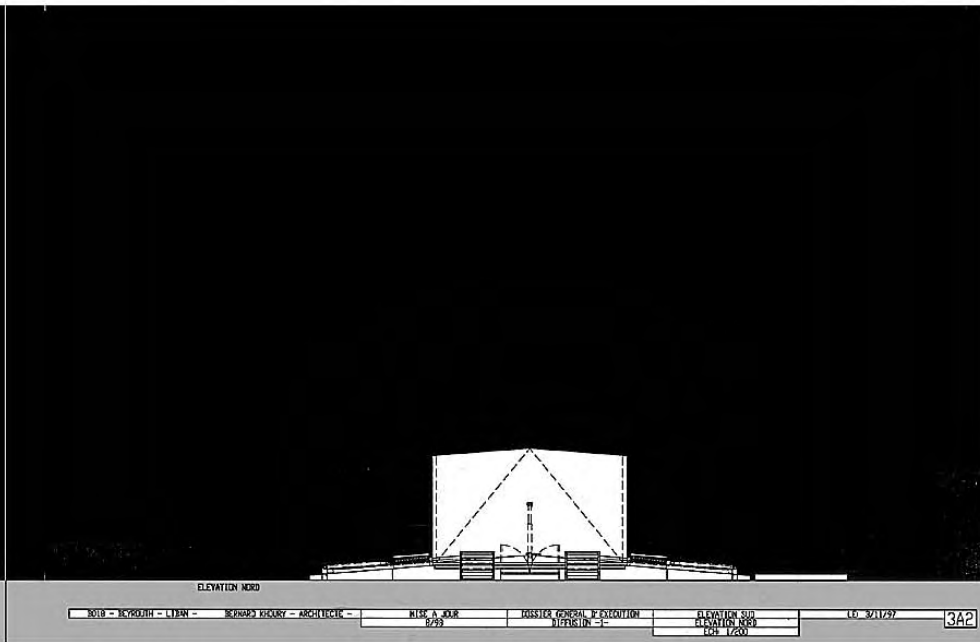
North Elevation
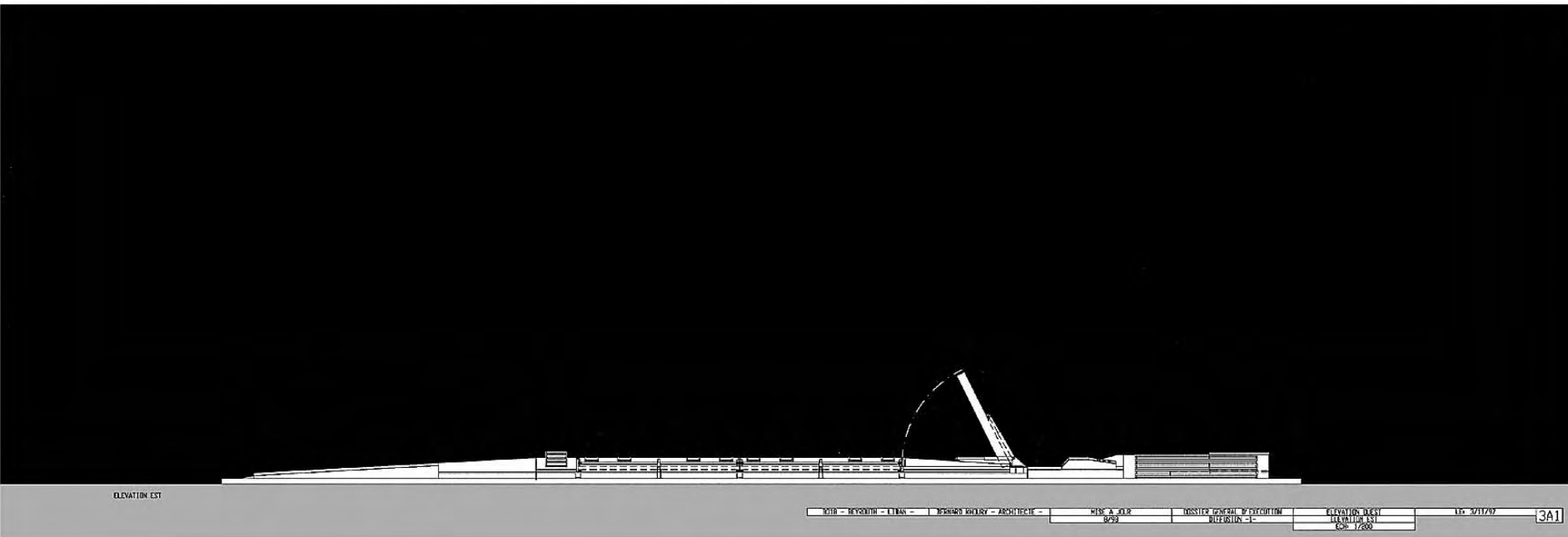
East/West Elevation
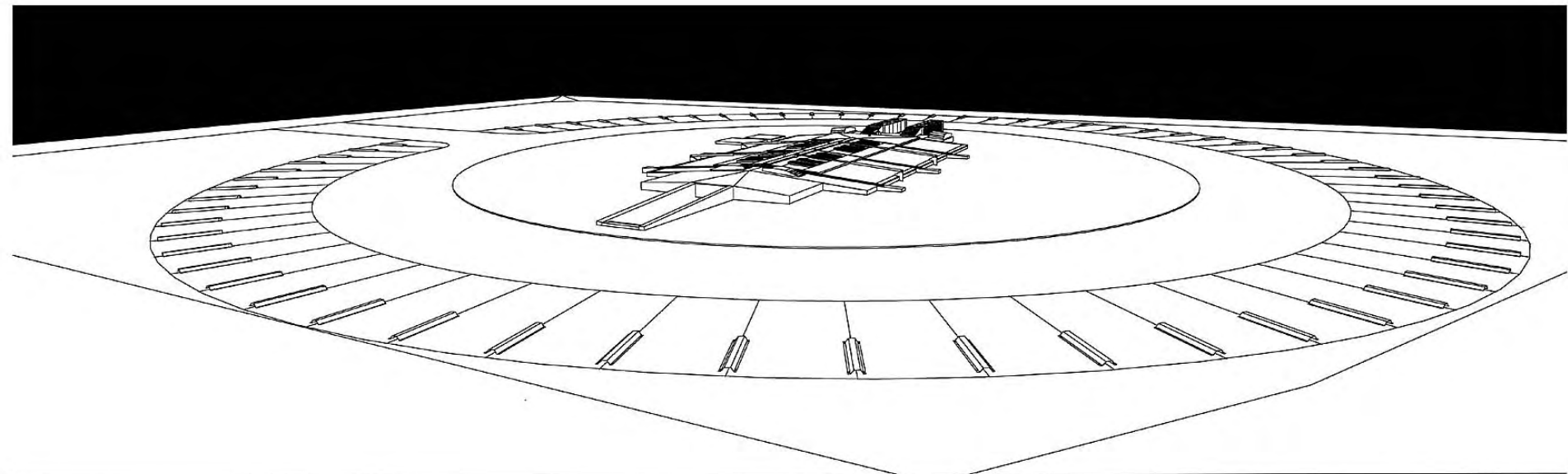
Perspective 1
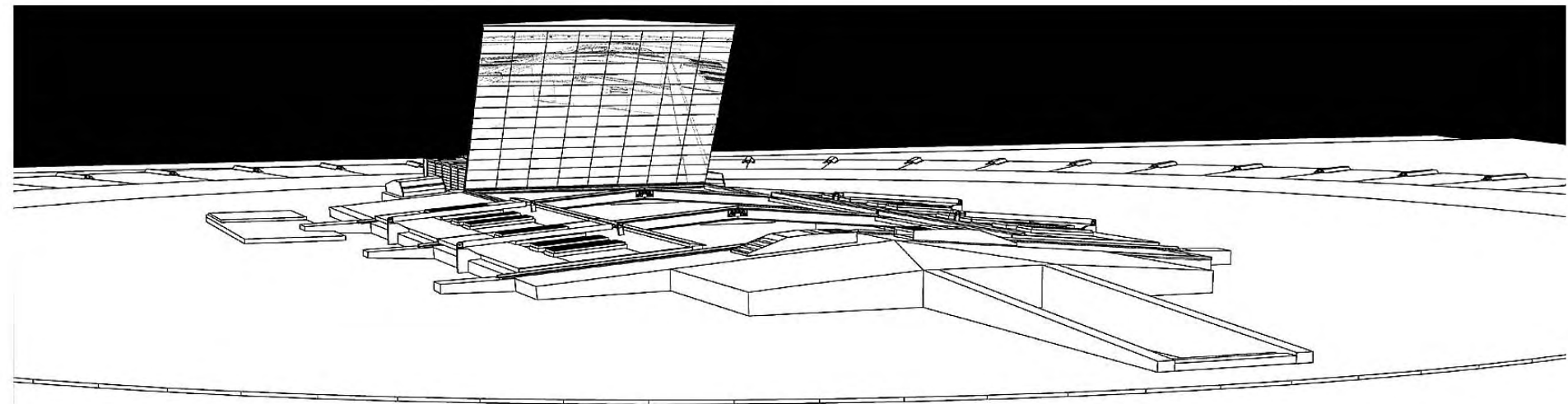
Perspective 2
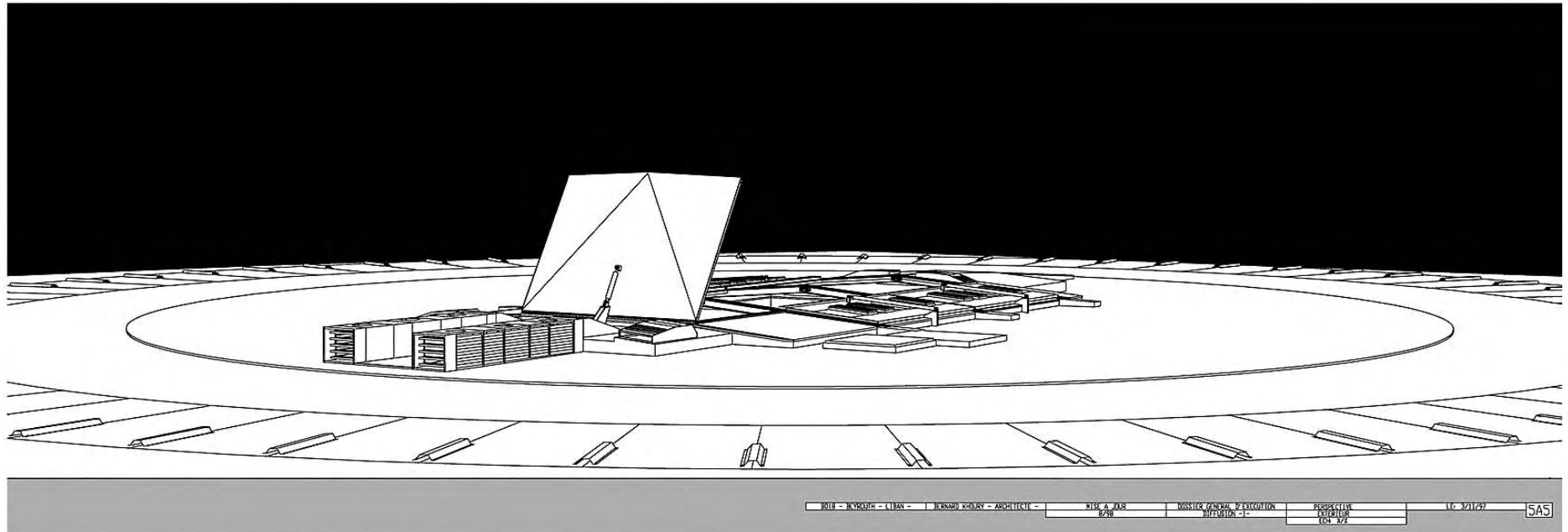
Perspective 3
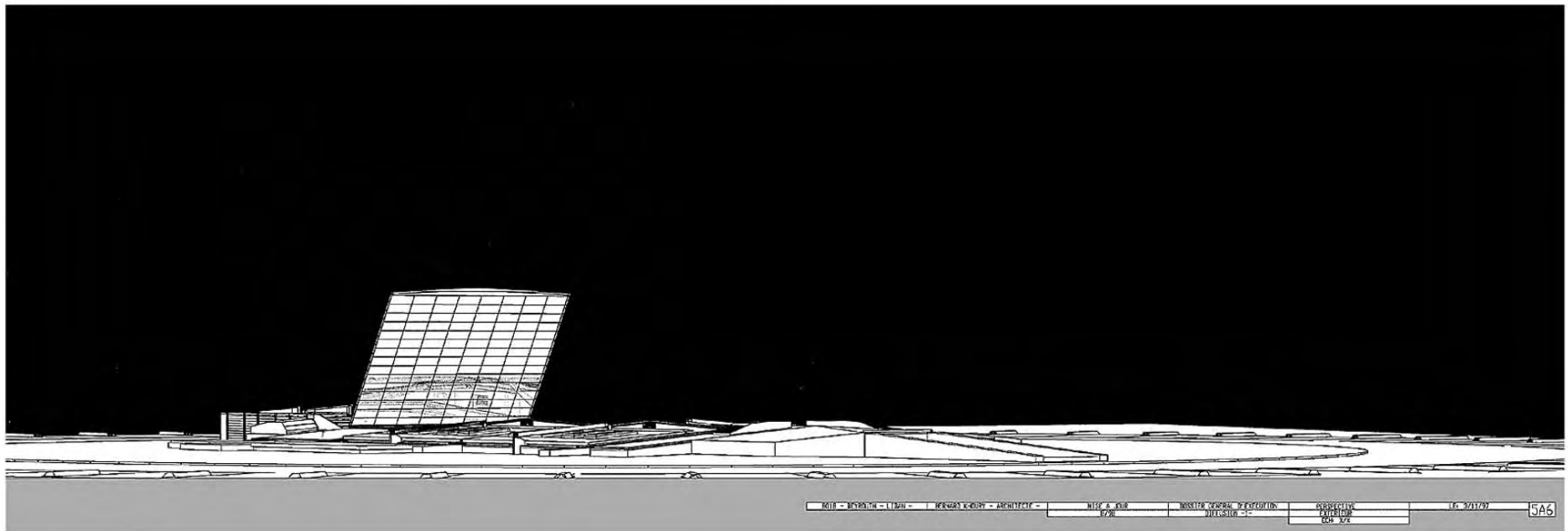
Perspective 4
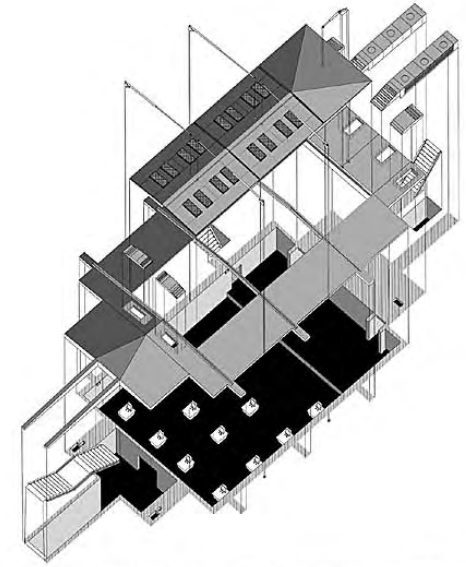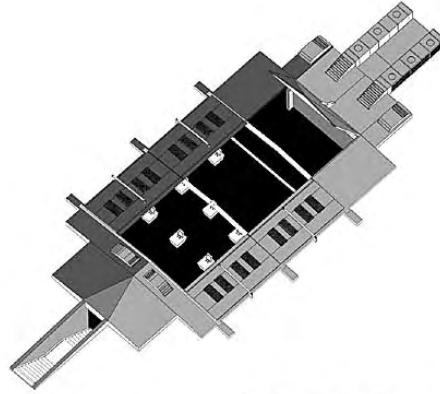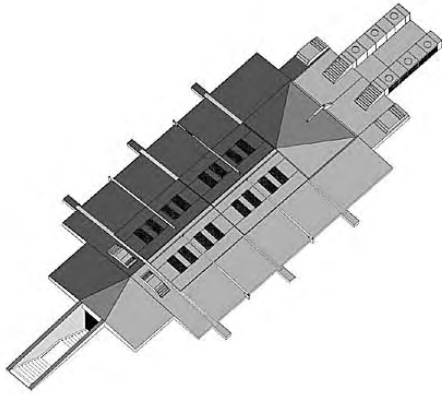
Axonometrics (above) & Details (below)
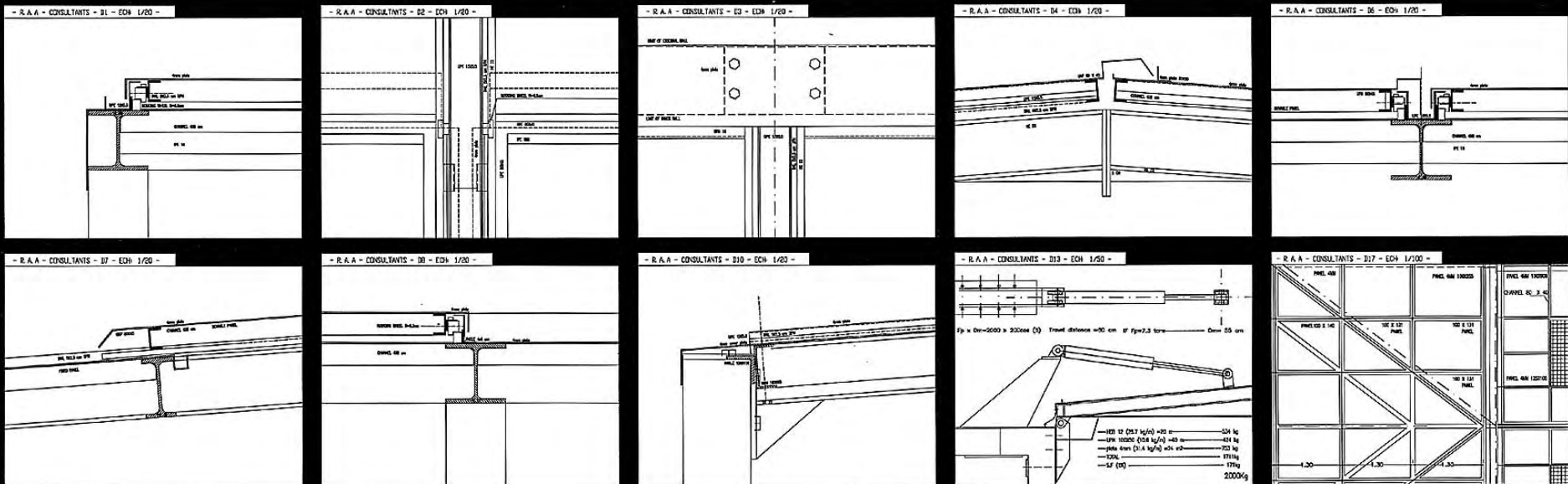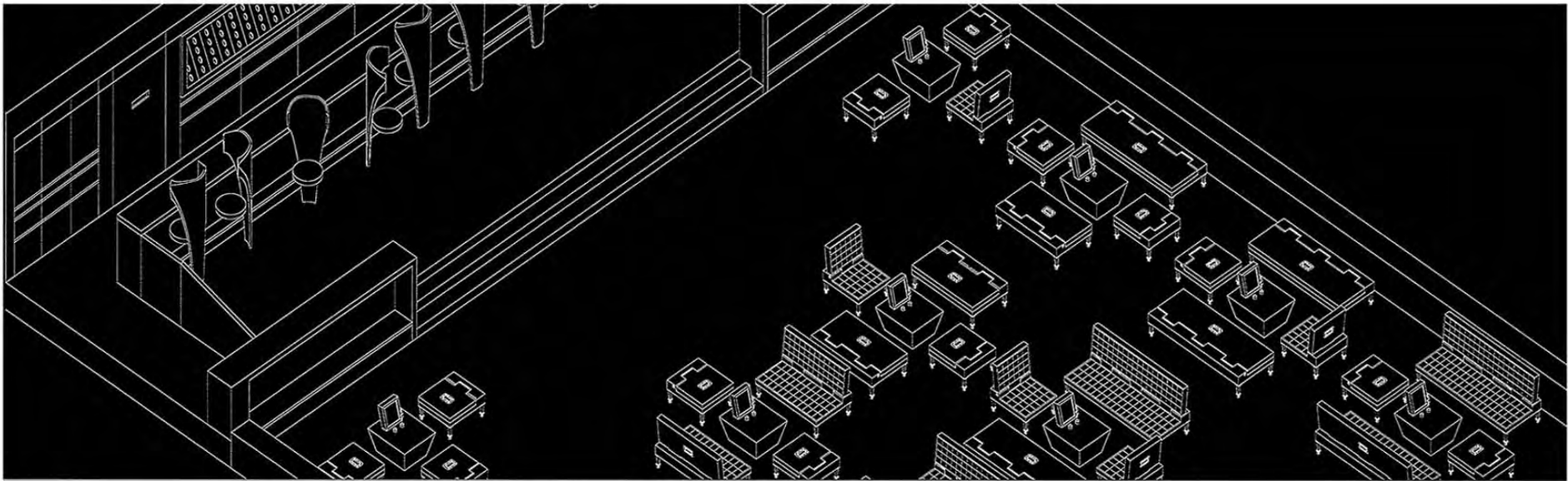
Furniture Systems: Composite
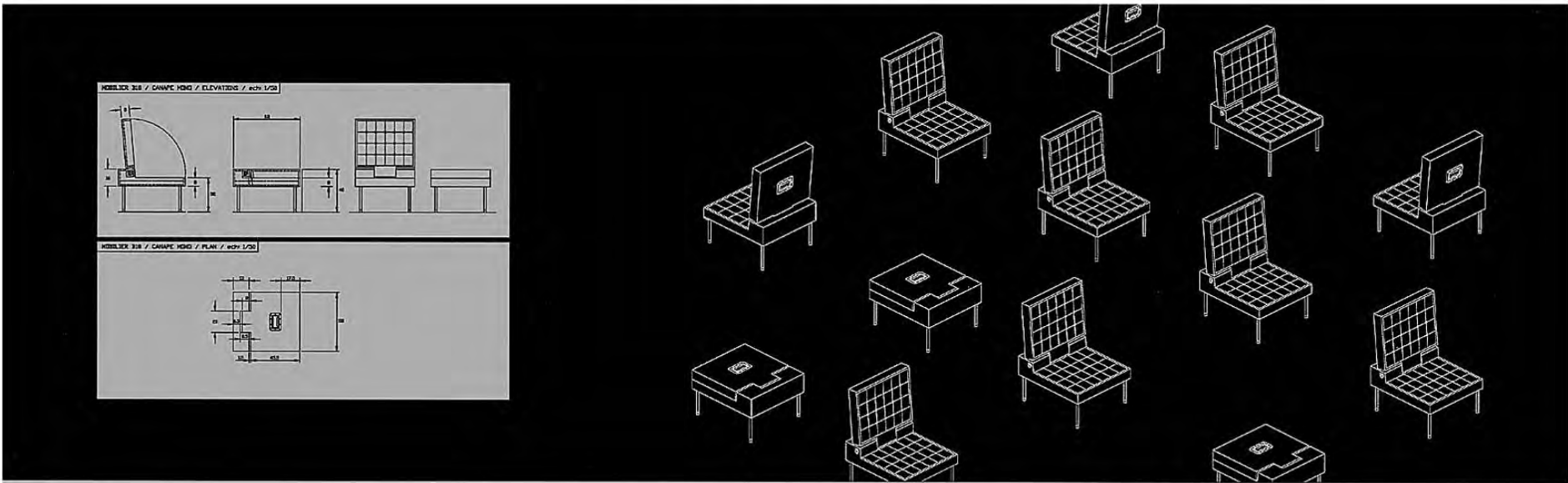
Furniture System 1: Folding seats/tables (single)
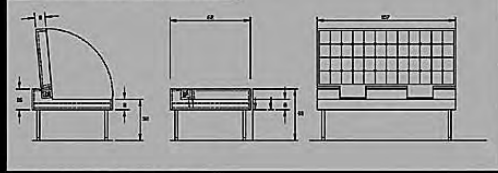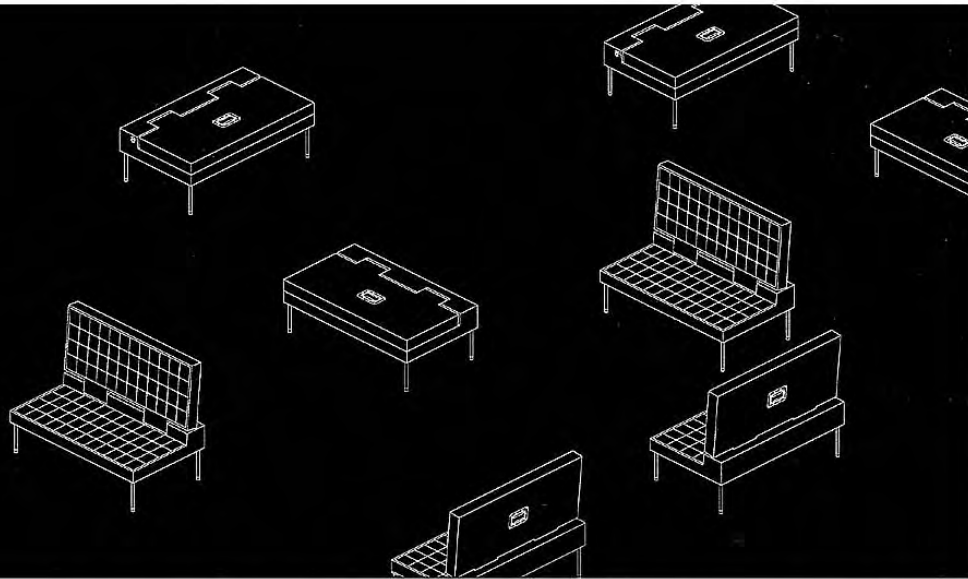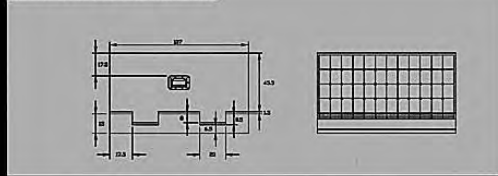
Furniture System 1: Folding seats/tables (double)
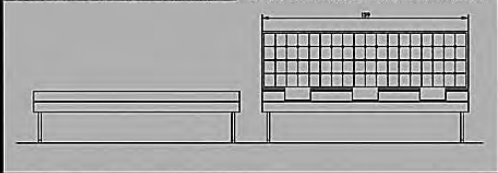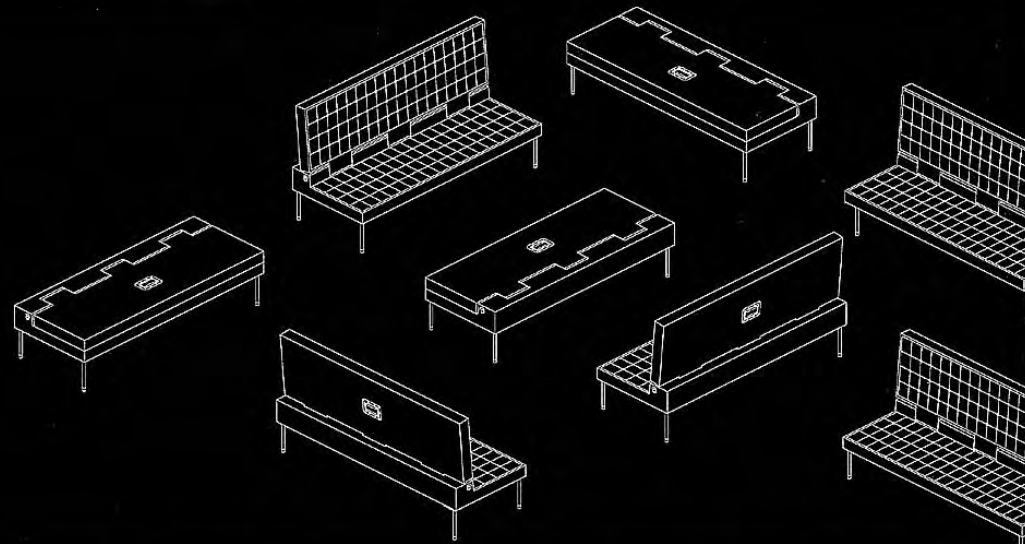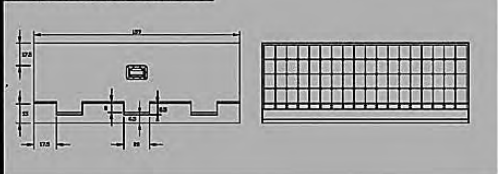
Furniture System 1: Folding seats/tables (triple)

Furniture System 2: Photo frame tables

Furniture System 3: Bar stools

Aerial views

Exterior views

Interior views
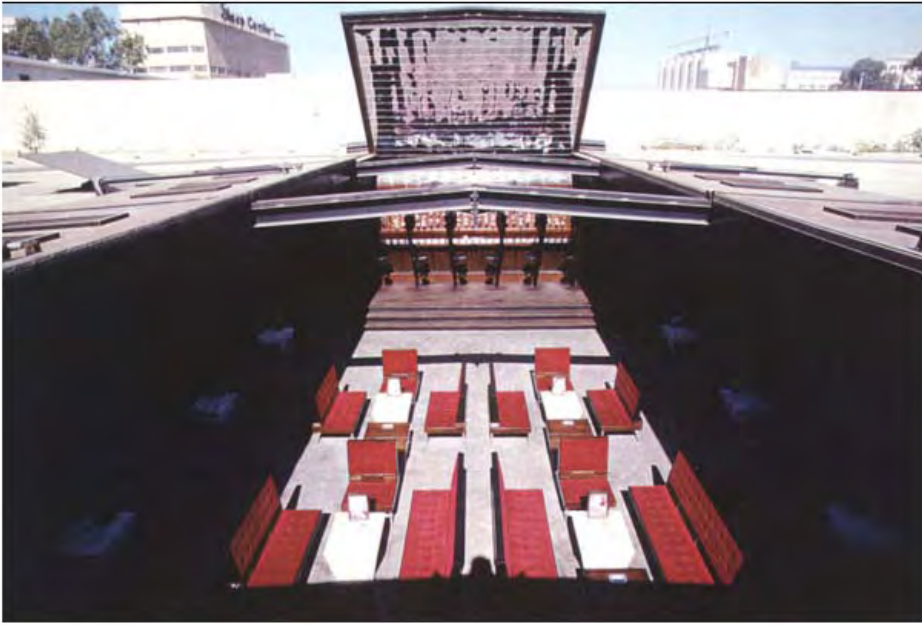
Looking in.

The Bar (above), folding seats/tables (below)
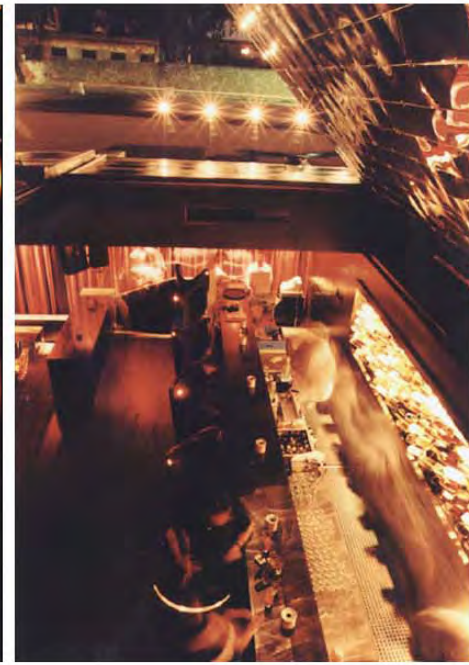
Above: Entrance stairway (far left), views of the reflecting roof panels above the bar. *Below:* General interior views.

"There are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men: Poetry and Architecture."

John Ruskin, from "The Seven Lamps of Architecture: The Lamp of Memory"

"Might it be possible to construct a history not of memorials, but of amnesiacs?"

Adrian Forty

"Memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable."

Michel de Certeau

"What would an 'anti-museum' be like?"

Adrian Forty

THE (UNFORGOTTEN) MANIFESTO

What I am proposing is an act of condemnation,
condemnation of the War, *and* the people who fought it (the Lebanese before the rest).

It is *not* an act of forgiveness, at least not out of love,
but out of desperation, if anything.
An act of giving up. An act of anger. An act of fury.

It is blatantly symbolic,
an act that is only tangentially pragmatic, as an aftereffect, an afterthought.
It is an architecture that questions the positivism of pragmatism, that seriously questions, that undermines even itself.
It is not an architecture that caters to needs; it's an architecture that is selfish in its anger,
one that is elitist as a rejection of the fallacy of the Public, along with other ideals.

It is terribly emotional, and unabashedly poetic, even if accidentally rational.
It is an architecture of grieving, and as such it is a confused architecture,
one that includes as well moments of flagrant inconsistency.
Any pretenses to otherwise are just that, pretensions.

It will be decidedly secular, if not outright anti-religious.
(PS: Rejection of one religion does *not* imply the embracing of another.)
Whether religion was the direct or indirect cause of the war doesn't matter that much.
It is an act that sees it as one of the main—if not *the* major—fuels that powered the war, and thus condemns it for that.

It is an architecture that is impoverished in language, in materials, and in construction;
as a symbol of the moral depravity of the war.

It will explicitly favor the expression of the war as a historical layer; as the Albatross.
It will favor the *status quo*—
first, because acts of desperation lack the initiative or will power to change, at least not positively, not explicitly;
second, because the *status quo* in its collapses of clashing ironies is simply ideal.

It will be an act of incision,
a presencing through absence, or at least retaining and recycling.

It will be a wound,
one that would heal with time, but definitely leave a scar.
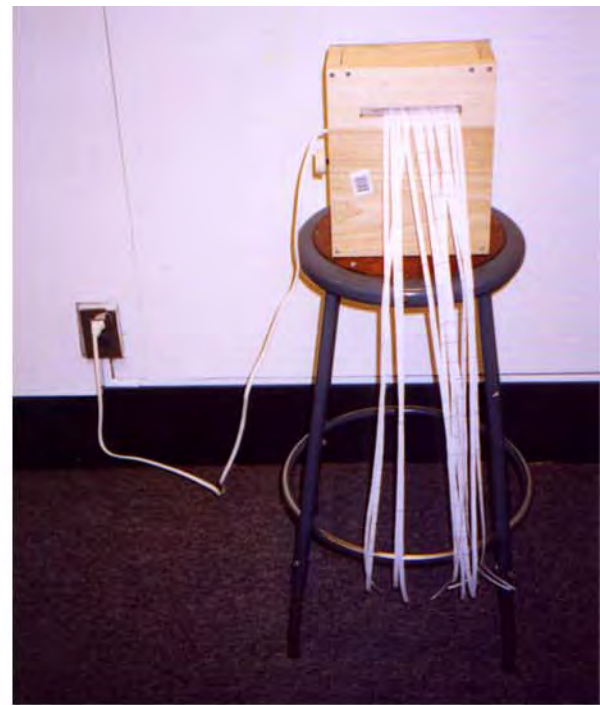
"T H E R E ' S   N O   F O R G E T T I N G"

A P o e m R e a d e r / S h r e d d e r

Wood, Plexiglas, composite screen,
toilet paper dispenser & paper shredder.
(4" x 9" x 12")

THERE'S NO FORGETTING
(SONATA)

Ask me where I have been
and I'll tell you: "Things keep on happening."
I must talk of the rubble that darkens the stones;
of the river's duration, destroying itself;
I know only the things that the birds have abandoned,
or the sea behind me, or my sorrowing sister.
Why the distinctions of place? Why should day
follow day? Why must the blackness
of nighttime collect in our mouths? Why the dead?

If you question me: where have you come from, I must talk
with things falling away,
artifacts tart to the taste,
great, cankering beasts, as often as not,
and my own inconsolable heart.

Those who cross over with us are no keepsakes,
nor the yellowing pigeon that sleeps in forgetfulness:
only the face with its tears,
the hands at our throats,
whatever the leafage dissevers:
the dark of an obsolete day,
a day that has tasted the grief in our blood.

Here are the violets, swallows-
all the things that delight us, the delicate tallies
that show in the lengthening train
through which pleasure and transiency pass.

Here let us halt, in the teeth of a barrier:
useless to gnaw on the husks that the silence assembles.
For I come without answers:
see: the dying are legion,
legion, the breakwaters breached by the red of the sun,
the headpieces knocking the ship's side,
the hands closing over their kisses,
and legion the things I would give to oblivion.

-Pablo Neruda

Here let us halt, in the teeth of a barrier.

useless to gnaw on the husks that the silence assembles.

For I come without answers:
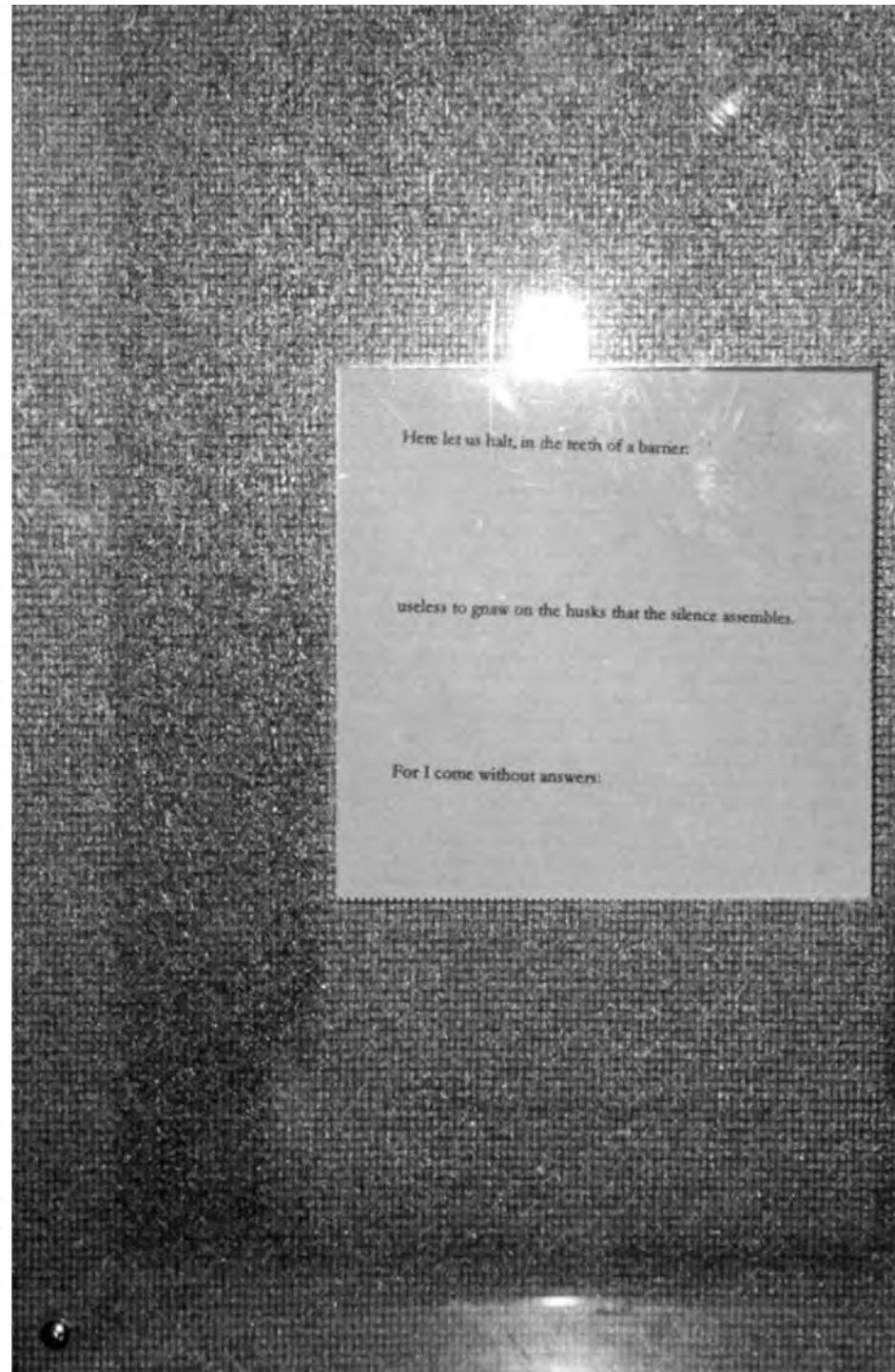
T h e   P R O G R A M
(a n d   n a r r o w e r   s i t e ,   a m o n g s t   o t h e r   i s s u e s)

T h e   M e m o r i a l   &   t h e   A m n e s i a c

In light of the former discussion of the inherently tense, complex and intertwined relationship between memory and forgetting, it would be only appropriate that the program embodies the same kind of highly charged relationship. In hope of clarifying and focusing my intentions, I constructed a conceptual model as a means of further exploring such highly tangled antagonistic relationships. The work, entitled *There's No Forgetting*, after the poem by Pablo Neruda on which it is based, is a "Poem Reading/Shredding Machine". Electrically operated, the device allows the user to read the aforementioned poem using a control knob placed on the side of the box. The knob controls a paper shredder which rolls the poem up the screen by shredding it. Thus the only way that the reader can come to know the poem is by destroying it; the poem can only be presenced through its own annihilation. The roll of paper, however, contains multiple copies of the poem; thus the work operates on a repetitive cycle of reading/destroying, hence the appropriation of the title.

I envision the program as operating with an analogous duality, with memory being presenced/annihilated programmatically as well as materially. The program would consist thus of two seemingly disparate if not antagonistic components that are nevertheless intertwined spatially as well as conceptually. The first component, the "amnesiac", is a bar/nightclub which programmatically promotes forgetting (of the war, daily concerns, etc.) through engagement in drinking, dancing, etc., while reminding (of the war) tectonically. The second component, the "memorial", concerns itself directly with the literal act of collecting and processing the memory of the Lebanese War by housing a small institution for scholarly research, along with its archival collection of media records, of the War. However, by directing itself at a highly specific audience of scholars, giving physicality to the memory of the war through its collection yet keeping it out of reach of the 'general public', the center would be in effect fostering oblivion towards the war. Thus, a dually antagonistic intertwined relationship emerges.

The bar/nightclub of the first component is a specific actual existent one, namely "B018", one of this study's precedents, and an "institution" (or rather "anti-institution") that embodies in many aspects characteristics of the program. Through its short history B018 has managed to combine an ephemerality and transience of being coupled with a persistence of its existence that make it an ideal vehicle for this thesis' exploration. Moreover, it has retained its 'underground' nature (despite increasing exposure), and has constantly maintained a tectonic (and ontological) connection with the war that is in tune with this thesis' contention. The second component, on the other hand, is a fictitious institution. It is my thinking that this contrast between the reality/unreality of the two lends another edge to the program, shedding light on further sociopolitical implications.

These two components of the program mark two sites of absence, albeit different types of absence. The new B018 would be located in the 'island' below the currently empty pedestal of the Statue of the Martyrs', while the research/archive center would be located in the now empty site of the late Rivoli Cinema, and the old *Petit Serail* before it. The former site presents a 'temporary absence'—for the purposes of 'restoration'; while the latter present a 'permanent'

one—for the purpose of opening up the visual axis from Martyrs' Square to the sea, an axis that is nevertheless currently blocked visually by temporary panels of the construction site beyond. As such, the light from the nightclub below, seeping through a hole in the pedestal where the statue is supposed to be, registers the absence of the statue. And the research/archive center, by registering the current blockage of the visual axis for which the site was cleared through its own obtrusive presence, echoes the irony of the absence on the site, and highlights the randomness and absurdity of absences that write the history of the city. Thus absence becomes a common denominator for both main components of the program as it is the necessary condition on which both memory and oblivion reside.

These two elements of the program, however, are conceived of as transient: the new B018 marks its site, the new 'margin' of the city, for as long as it remains a margin. As the urban conditions of the site change, the club has to relocate to a new 'margin', thus continuing its ritual of transiency. Similarly, the research/archival center is imagined as a first house in a series for a growing body of intellectual work and archival collection. Thus it is intended to specifically fit a small starting collection of work and artifacts. As this collection grows, the center becomes increasingly congested until it is no longer viable, and the collection has to be relocated to a new 'house'. This ephemerality of program is to be registered in the construction processes, as well, which ideally would hold within themselves, at least in part, the means or possibility of their dissolution and recycling. One such technique, one with special resonance in terms of the memory of the War, is that of sand bags. This technique not only offers the opportunity to use—recycle—the byproducts of the digging/excavation process, but it also allows the process to become a self-healing one: the sand bags may be emptied after the intervention 'expires' to fill the void left behind.

Inherent in the transiency of these two components is thus a justification for an impoverished architecture. Such an architecture understands its ephemerality, and operates accordingly within the *status quo*. It is an architecture of recycling, both for economic as well as conceptual reasons (of 'recycling the memory of the site'). Yet in its act of reshuffling, rearranging, and processing the present (both materially and conceptually) it sheds new light on its 'reality'. As such it surfaces latent realities of the site rather than 'creates' them, becoming an act of conceptual excavation of the present tense, and through it the recent past of the War, a response to the escapist archeological excavation of the distant past dominating the city. Hence the city becomes necessarily part of the archive of scholarship for the research center, a 'living archive' that allows the processing of the 'dead archive' of the War and understanding it in light of the reality of the present, a grounding that seems to be getting ever more elusive in the amnesiac culture of today's Beirut. Similarly, due to that same amnesiac culture, the city becomes an extended 'site of forgetting', an extrapolation of the 'amnesiac' program, thus casting the nearby 'reconstruction' efforts as larger acts of forgetting of which the club is only a fragment. Hence, the 'site' *par se* becomes essentially a dispersed one, and the two main 'pieces' of program becomes truly that, fragments of a larger whole dispersed around the city.

These smaller dispersed residual elements of the program I imagine as a series of urban/landscape elements, flags of sort, pinpointing certain moments in the city center and connecting them to the two larger components of this agenda of remembering and forgetting. One system of these elements I imagine as a series of fissures violating the ground regardless of its archeological layers, and in that way unifying them through a void, and the equating act of violence to which all are subjected. This system of fissures in turn would be a means of connecting the nightclub to the research/archival center, and rooting them both in the larger site. However, these fissures act as well as barriers at times, making the system a metamorphic one that changes from connection elements to ones of

separation and back, depending on the position in the site. For example, the 'fissures' would become a series of underpasses when they cross the streets of the desolate field of Martyrs' Square, connecting its multiple isolated islands, created by the streets, together. Conversely, on the islands, the fissures attain an above ground presence, with height depending on the location in the site, creating a physical as well as visual barrier. This barrier, however, registers the passage of time by dissolving, literally. Yet, an insoluble part of it remains, a scar in the site. I imagine these barriers, thus, as assemblies of two disparate materials: a visually opaque one that is nevertheless rather ephemeral, soluble; and a visually permeable one that is however more physically enduring. For example, the 'barriers' could be a sandwich of an external enclosure of glass filled with crushed rock salt. Thus, initially both a physical as well as a visual obstacle, with time the filling dissolves, channeled by the system of 'fissures' as salt water back to the sea at the north of the site, becoming visually permeable while the glass remains as a physical hindrance.

In terms of size, the new B018 is to be comparable in square footage to its former (present) incarnation, in order to retain the same signature ambience of 'underground' intimacy. (That would be about 4,000 sq. ft. for an occupancy of around a hundred seated; that increases appreciably, however, when the 'standing occupancy' is considered). The research/archival center has approximately twice the square footage for the same (seated) occupancy (the extra space being needed for media storage). However, since the nightclub is a single (underground) story while the research/archival center is a two- building, the two programmatic components would thus occupy comparable footprints.

B018 IV:

Bouncer's booth: ~25 sq. ft. (the only 'above ground' component)

Lounge: ~1200 sq. ft. (seats ~90 people)

Dance floor: ~250 sq. ft.

Bar: ~500 sq. ft. (seats ~10 people)

Storage: ~500 sq. ft. (about half of which is to be adjacent to the bar, for liquor storage; the rest is for miscellaneous storage)

Manager's Office: ~100 sq. ft.

Toilets: 2 x ~125 sq. ft.

Service toilet & lockers: ~100 sq. ft.

Vertical circulation: ~300 sq. ft. (Main stair, service stair & emergency stair)

Horizontal circulation: ~600 sq. ft.

Mechanical: ~200 sq. ft.

TOTAL: **~4,000 sq. ft.**

War Research/Archival Center:

(In general, the 'storage spaces' are to be 'closed' isolated environmentally controlled spaces, while the 'usage spaces' are to be naturally lit, and visually relating to the city outside.)

Entrance/Lobby/Reception: ~500 sq. ft.

Lockers (at entrance): ~100 sq. ft.

Book shelving: ~1200 sq. ft.

Reading Room: ~600 sq. ft. (seats ~35 people)

Computer Stations: ~600 sq. ft. (seats ~35 people)

Microfilm storage: ~250 sq. ft.

Microfilm viewing stations: ~250 sq. ft. (seats ~5 people)

Microfiche storage: ~250 sq. ft.

Microfiche viewing stations: ~250 sq. ft. (seats ~5 people)

Video storage: ~250 sq. ft.

Video viewing booths: ~250 sq. ft. (seats ~5 people)

Audio storage: ~250 sq. ft.

Audio listening stations: ~250 sq. ft. (seats ~5 people)

Offices: 2 x ~100 sq. ft.

Reproduction room: ~250 sq. ft. (xeroxes, audio/video recorders, etc.)

Toilets: 2 x ~125 sq. ft.

Service spaces (kitchenette, janitors' closet, etc.): ~100 sq. ft.

Vertical circulation: ~600 sq. ft. (Main stair, service stair & emergency stair)

Horizontal circulation: ~1200 sq. ft.

Mechanical: ~400 sq. ft.

TOTAL: **~8,000 sq. ft.**

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