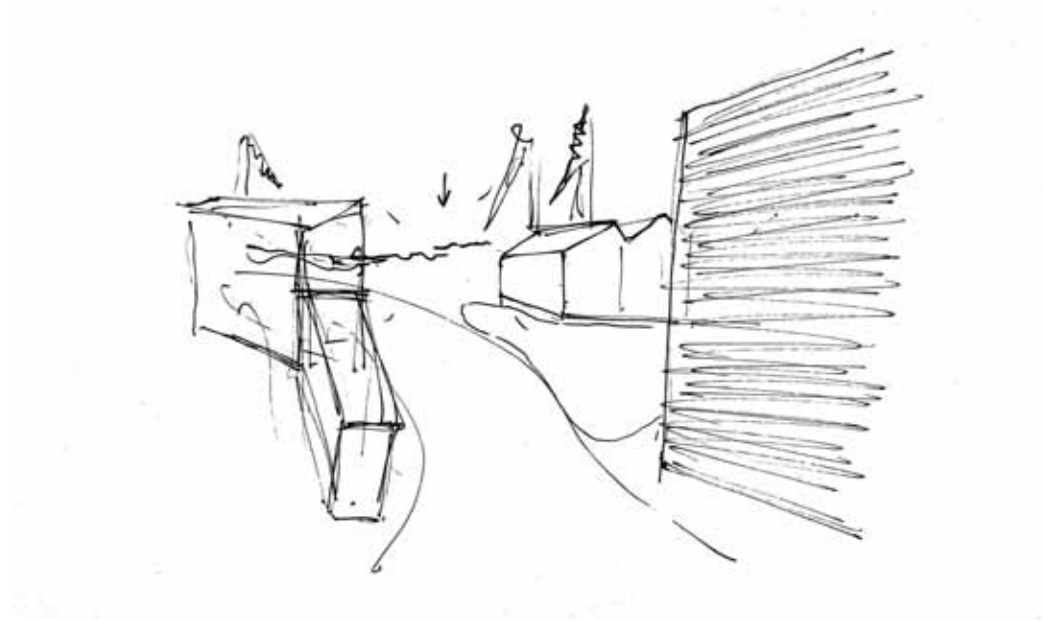


# (RE-)ACTIVATION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION

Envisioning the (re-)activation of the Sluisjesdijkpier: generic principles for transformation, the Eekhoutstraat as a prototype and visual impressions of the design process





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Annemieke Blaha  
Graduation project  
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## VISION FOR THE (RE-)ACTIVATION OF THE SLUISJESDIJKPIER

Vacancy is a rapidly growing issue. Not only an increasing number of buildings, but whole areas are currently vacant. In my opinion vacancy does not necessarily have a negative meaning, it also represents potential. The docks in and around our cities are a good example for underused areas, they are constantly being renovated and what was built is often left behind. Questions arise about whether we should leave, clear or transform these buildings. Can these parts (again) become valuable parts of the cities, more than just working areas? Can these areas be (re-)activated in a different way?

When zooming in on the Rotterdam Port and eventually the Sluisjesdijkpier, it quickly became clear that there are a lot of quite recently constructed buildings of which already a high percentage is inactive, vacant and / or deteriorating. This affects not only the individual building, but as well the area as a whole including its issues and potentials. The Sluisjesdijkpier is located in a central part of Rotterdam and has many scenic qualities. Transforming the Sluisjesdijkpier means repurposing the currently existing underused building stock and reappraising the area as a very valuable part of the city which also accommodates the city's needs as opposed to being just a quickly deteriorating port-related working area.

As a point of reference it is good to look at the case of the transformation of Rotterdam's 'Kop van Zuid'. At a time when some of the warehouses were still in use and some were vacant, it was facing a very uncertain future. An entrepreneur started a restaurant in the middle of the port-area in the aluminium containers and storage buildings. This relatively small place consisted of a number of rooms with glass walls. Nevertheless it had an unprecedented effect, many people were drawn to this scenic port environment. All kinds of other activities and transformations started to happen. Hotel New York followed and from that point on the 'Kop van Zuid' kept on developing. This case proves that port-related areas have certain scenic qualities and symbolizes the pulsating heart of the city which many people are attracted to.

The project I present here is about suggesting a possible future for the Sluisjesdijkpier without mapping out the whole future or forging a master plan. Through a series of very modest operations a part of the pier could become very attractive and interesting for many different groups of people. The adaptive character of the project provides a small but sustainable

framework for things to happen within and respond to the unpredictable future of the Sluisjesdijk, looking at the current socio-economic circumstances and developments. These kind of transformations would allow the Sluisjesdijkpier to operate as an integral part of city. The transformation of the Sluisjesdijkpier means changing its depot-like qualities bit by bit into a promising area in which all potentials are fully utilized. Both small and larger transformations transform the area into a more plausible urban environment, as opposed to just a working environment. Central in this approach was human-centred thinking. The pier doesn't need to be an environment for exclusively creatives, it should be able to accommodate an ad hoc planning process with all sorts different users. No matter how big or small the future developments will be, the transformations will always be able to adapt and will therefore remain as little centres. The project suggests reference points which may become the foundations for the (re-)activation of the pier and prepare for how it will develop in the future.

## FIVE GENERIC PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFORMATION

I formulated a set of five generic transformation principles that, in addition to the specific qualities, can be applied to the redevelopment of building complexes and areas on the Sluisjesdijkpier. These generic principles can be used as basic interventions in the transformation (regardless of the type of transformation and functions) of certain building complexes and areas on the Sluisjesdijkpier:

- Connecting buildings and spaces;
- Selective clearing;
- Transformation of existing roads;
- Relationship between interior and exterior;
- Formation in floor plan.

In a sense my project proposes that building sites with a certain number of characteristics can be effectively transformed in being little proto urban places and foundations for how development may follow in the future. In my research I developed a brief (regarding the necessary spaces, surface areas and functions), which functioned as practical and qualitative guidelines for building selection on the Sluisjesdijkpier. Based on this idea and my research I was able to develop a set of preconditions for building complexes and areas on the Sluisjesdijkpier eligible for transformation using the generic principles: It is needless to say that besides these preconditions sufficient research must be undertaken to determine the transformation in question.

- The location should have a range of buildings that can be considered as a complex, in which the separate buildings are able to function as a whole;
- The site has to be reinterpretable;
- Streets that are adjacent to or bind the sites have to be able to be transformed;
- Buildings on the site have to be transformable in terms of vacancy (presently or expected to be within 15 years), sufficient surface area, financial feasibility and sufficient technical possibilities (flexibility with regards to designing the floor plan, high ceilings, light allowance, possibilities to construct extra openings, etc.).





## THE EEKHOUTSTRAAT AS A PROTOTYPE FOR (RE-)DEVELOPMENT

Based on my research conclusions and goals, the Eekhoutstraat building complex proved to be one of the best locations on the Sluisjesdijkpier to be transformed into a creative hub. In addition to the design goals mentioned in my research, I also wanted the design to become a model for the (re-)activation of other complexes and areas in the area. The generic principles that were formulated can be seen as the attitude I have used to approach the design of the Eekhoutstraat.

The introduction of the Eekhoutstraat as a Creative Hub could be a great step towards the development of the Sluisjesdijkpier. The creative hub will counteract some of its existing issues and embrace its potentials. The creative hub will contribute to attracting a wide variety of target groups to the Sluisjesdijkpier in an effective and sustainable way and without using major investments. The creative hub could have a very positive effect on the socio-economic climate of the area and facilitate the great demand for inexpensive working spaces in Rotterdam South.

In my vision the Eekhoutstraat can be seen as an important incubator, which will lead to the development of other incubators on the Sluisjesdijkpier. Along with this development, the future plans of the City of Rotterdam and the Havenbedrijf for the Sluisjesdijkpier will contribute to this development by connecting multiple locations on the pier by means of pocket parks and a green strip along the water.

The following steps will explain the process that followed by using the five generic principles in the design for the Eekhoutstraat.

### *1. Connecting buildings and spaces*

The existing buildings on the site can be transformed individually, but they can also be transformed from being just a collection of individual buildings to a group of buildings that have something valuable to contribute to and communicate with each other and engage with its built environment.

A creative hub represents a group of creative people that want to be and work together in a building and/or a whole site. Therefore, like these people, the buildings need to be able to work together, as a whole. The buildings along the Eekhoutstraat currently do not function as a complex. In my design the aim is to allow buildings to actually work together, not just to exist next to each other.

In my design I choose to develop three buildings with different functions. As each function required different preconditions, this was the first factor that was important in selecting the right buildings and their functions. The three buildings were allocated as an atelier building, an office building and a public pavilion. The spaces in between the buildings need to be designed in such a way that the functions are connected. Various functions were attributed to the adjacent public space areas; a main entrance, a service and backdoor area, a parking lot, an exterior living room, a terrace along the water and a multifunctional space.

## *2. Selective clearing*

Using the selective clearing principle I looked at the existing building stock, evaluated whether it was either financially feasible to transform all the buildings on the site and whether all the existing building elements could remain in place without compromising the underlying vision of the transformation. In this process I found two elements that I removed in the design to rework the arrangement between buildings and reinterpret the site.

The façade element next to the Sluisjesdijkpier is the first impression of the building when you enter the site. This element was added to the original complex in a later stage and has a very different character and style. The characteristic industrial brick factory building is hidden behind this element. For these reasons it does not represent the building complex in a good way and is disconnected from the rest of the building. The element can quite easily be removed and it does not result in practical difficulties. Therefore I choose to remove this element in my design.

A bigger element I choose to remove was the most North-West located building. This building is in a very bad state and it would not be financially feasible to transform this building. The building that I designed on the site of this building will

function as a site for office spaces. It was designed to strengthen the dialogue between the various buildings and spaces.

### *3. Transformation of existing roads*

By reworking the streets around the buildings, it becomes possible to reinterpret how they function. A main aspect of this reinterpretation is transforming whole complexes from private areas to public spaces, while retaining some private spaces within these public environments. The transformation of existing roads not only makes the area more attractive to people using the buildings facilities, it also creates a visual and logistical connection between the buildings and between the buildings and the green strip along the waterside.

There are two main streets in the pier and some side streets branching out. The streets are used as service streets and parking lots, but they could also be used as public areas and connection points between the present buildings. The Eekhoutstraat road was effectively transformed from a road and parking area into a multifunctional public street for pedestrians that runs from the main road until the waterside and which can be used for markets, fairs, events and all sorts of other activities. The area has adjacent public spaces such as a terrace along the water, an exterior living room (garden) and a main entrance area. The service road, parking area and back-entrance were relocated to the back of the complex, which still allows for sufficient parking spaces and still allow for trucks to deliver and pick-up goods.

### *4. Relationship between interior and exterior*

The relationship between the interior and exterior was strengthened by creating visual elements that literally connected the interior and exterior spaces. In the design the connection between interior and exterior was made by using the same materials which overflow from inside to outside. Another method used in the design is installing many windows in the facades of the buildings which creates additional viewpoints and strengthens the connection between inside and outside.

### *5. Formation in floor plan*

Following up on the attribution of functions and strengthening the relationship between interior and exterior three different formations of floor plans were designed. These formations all met the requirements of individual functions.

#### *- Box-in-a-box*

For the atelier building I choose for the box-in-a-box formation of the floor plan. Taking the current construction into consideration I designed a main route through the building, connecting it with the exits and the exterior spaces. The current construction and the route formed the main floor plan, along which units could be placed that could accommodate the atelier functions in the building. The placement of the units is done according to a system which allows for sufficient common space in between the units. Based on the available space for these units and their preconditions, I developed the box-in-a-box formation. These self-supporting modular units (boxes):

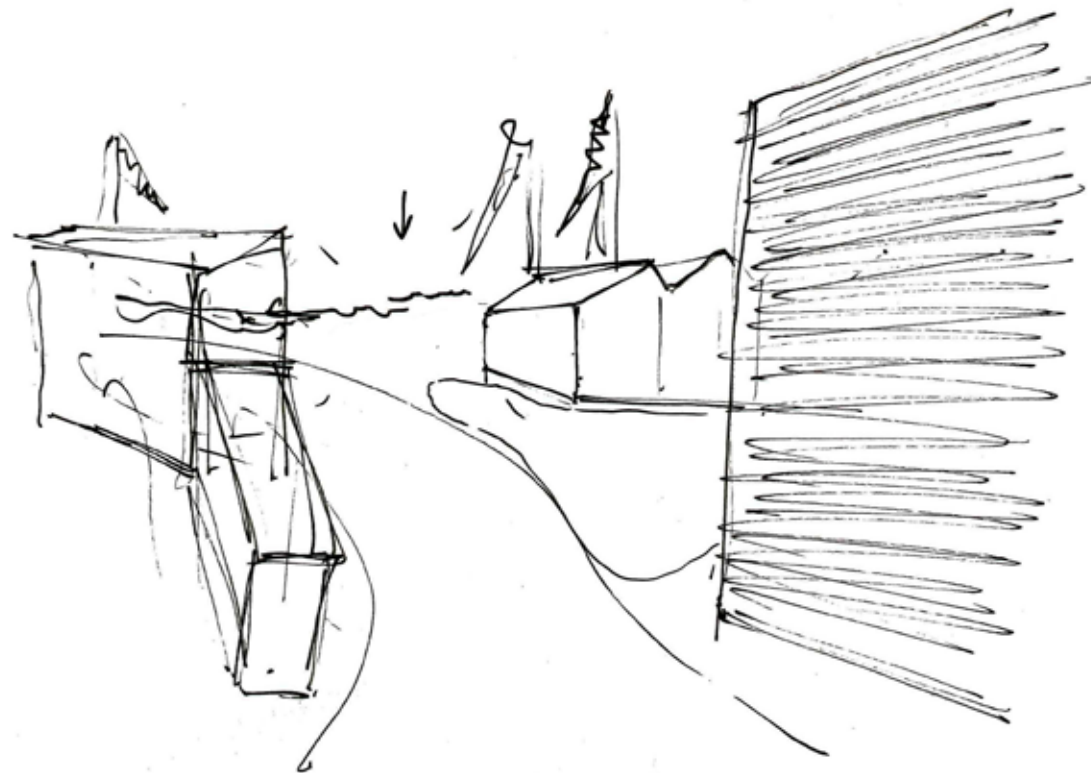
- are easy to build (assembly of construction and materials) and install;
- are designed according to the wishes of its user(s): they can choose from either transparent, semi-transparent or closed facade elements (glass, polycarbonate or wood);
- can easily facilitate sufficient space, multiple units can be combined to form a larger atelier space.

#### *- Main core*

For the public pavilion building I choose for the main core formation of the floor plan. I developed the main core in a way that it has the ability to separate the two main spaces and their entrance. The main core is also the location of the common facilities (kitchen, bathroom, power and gas installation, storage, etc.). The main core in the middle of the building functions as a separator with sliding doors and is therefore able to divide the building into several different spaces or to use the building as one large space.

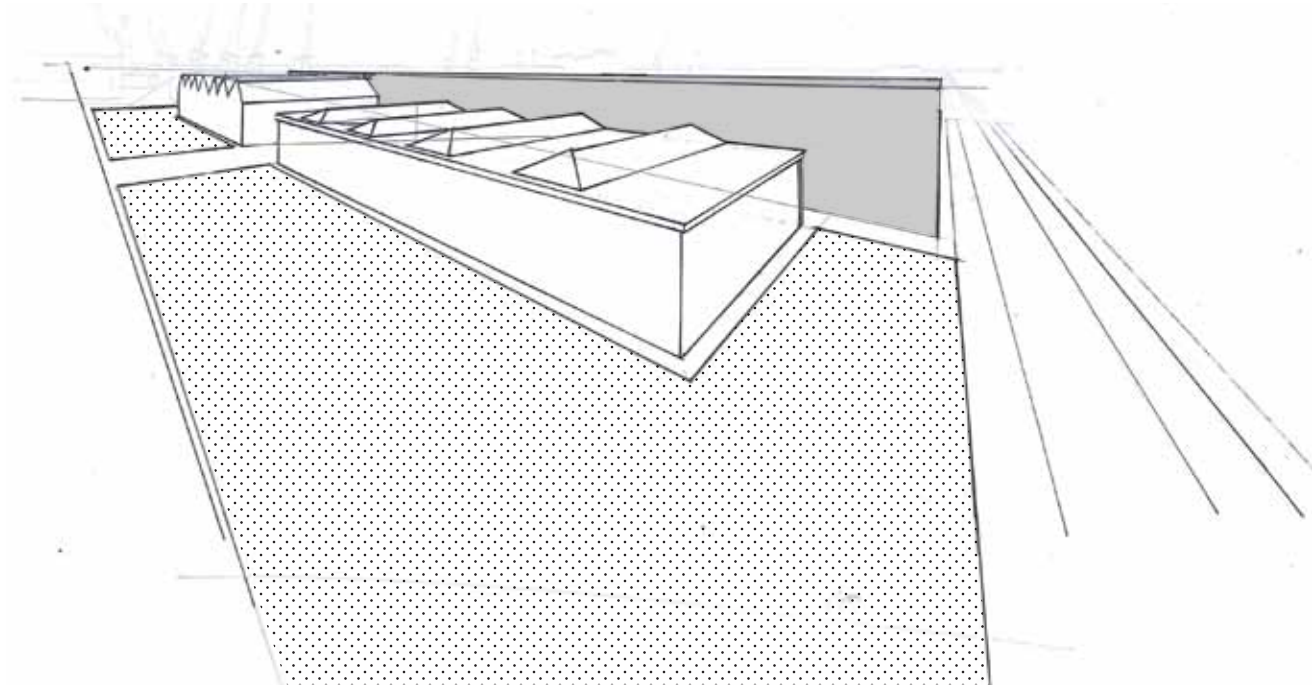
#### *- Separating element with services and storage*

For the office building I decided to develop a formation that uses the space for services and storage to separate the clear space (flexible working space and entrance area) from the contained spaces (offices). This formation is aimed at allowing differently sized offices to form a whole.

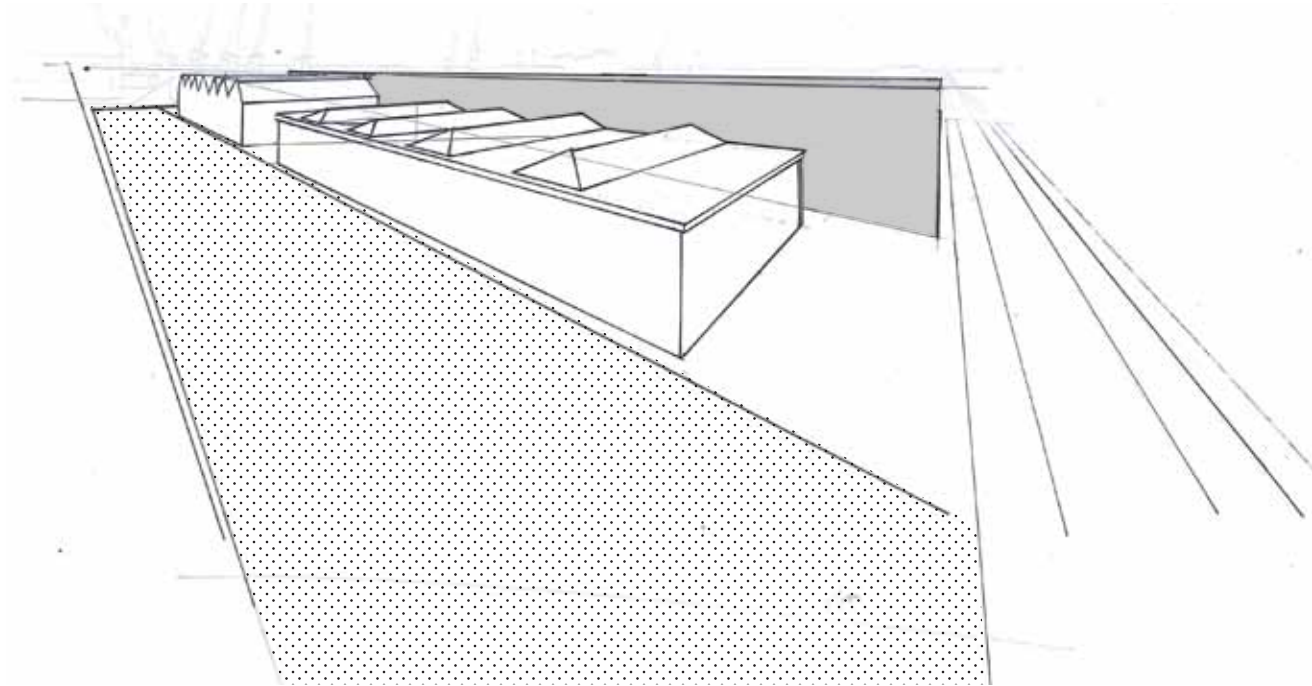


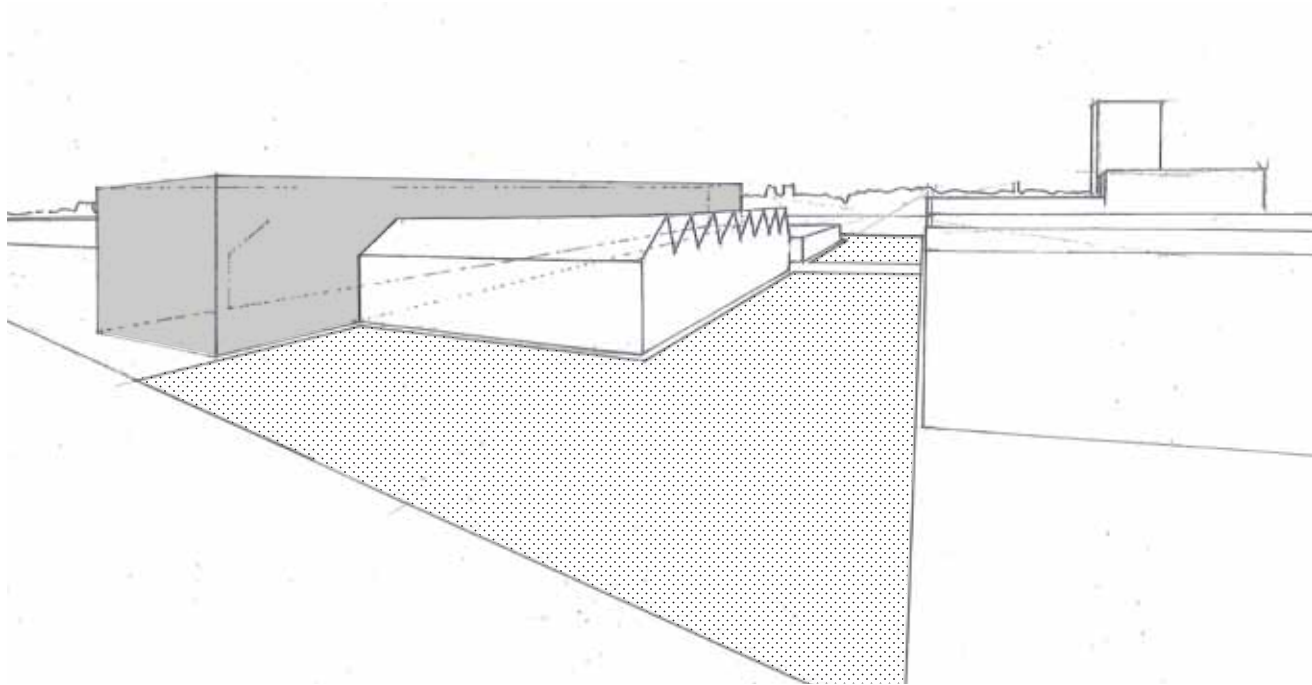
## VISUAL IMPRESSIONS AND SKETCHES OF THE DESIGN PROCESS

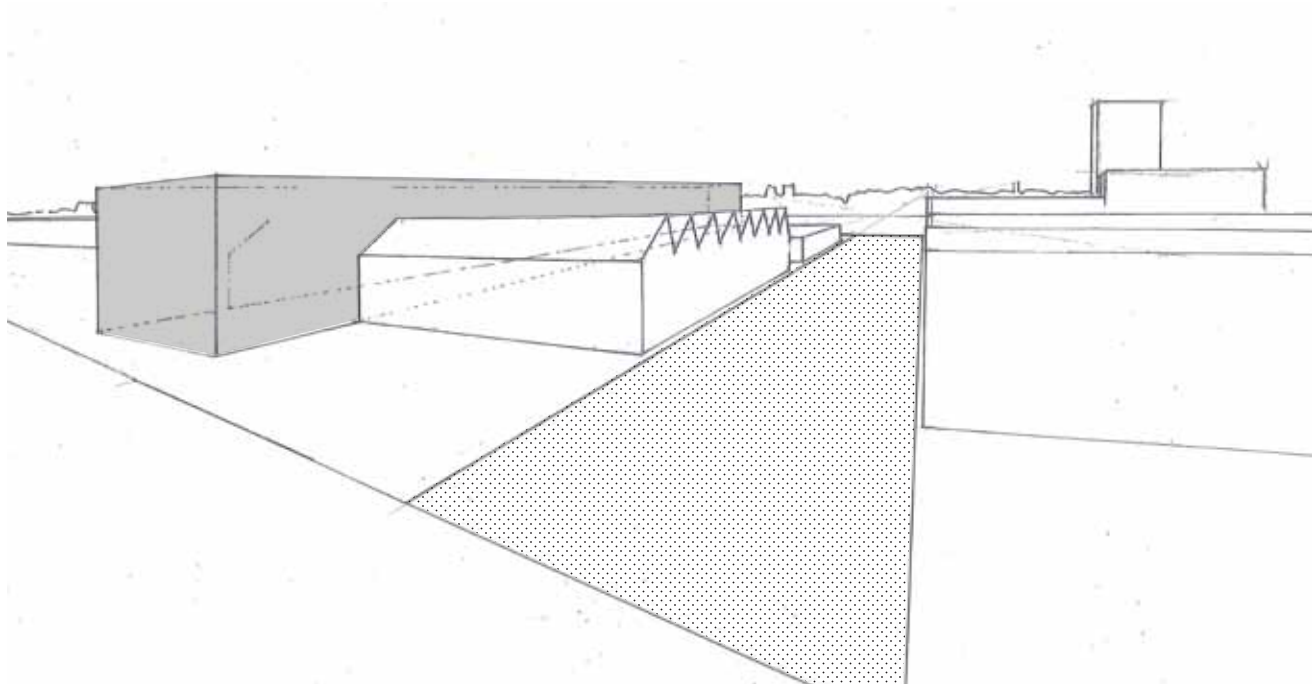
In this document I have included quite a large number of sketches, drawings and impressions which I made during the process of designing the transformation of the Eekhoutstraat. These will illustrate the process and choices in the process and the implementation of the generic principles.

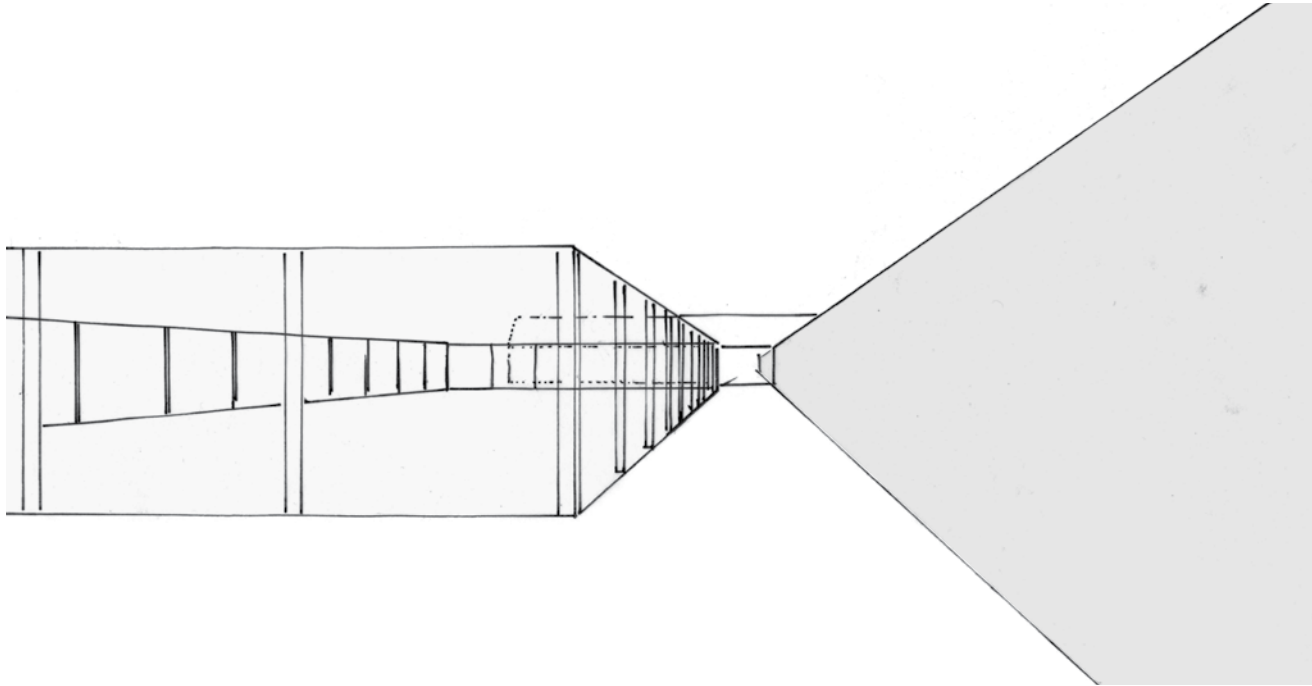


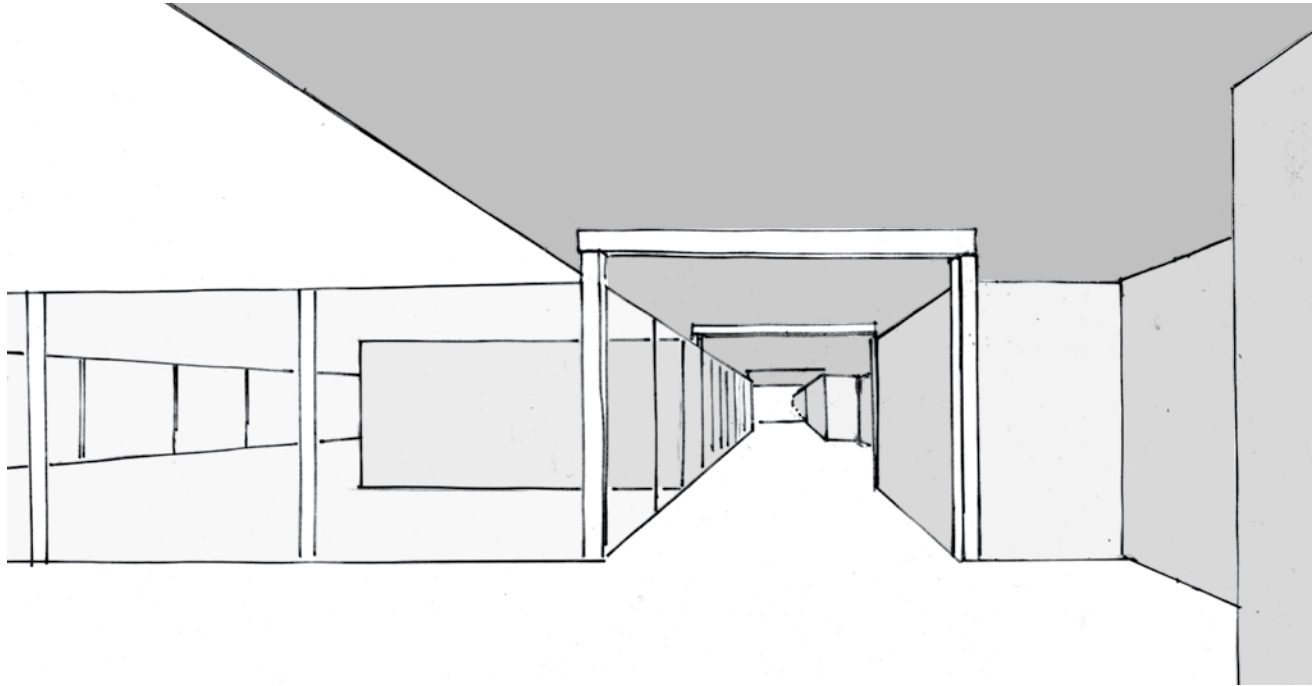




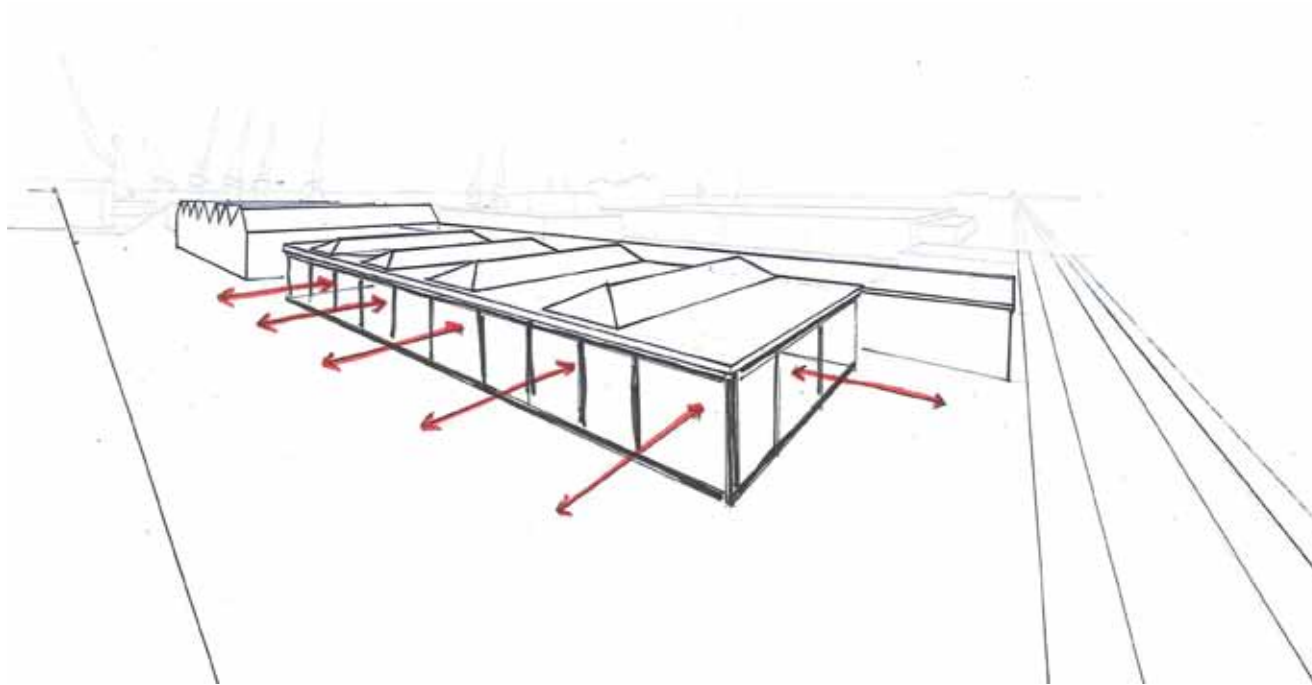




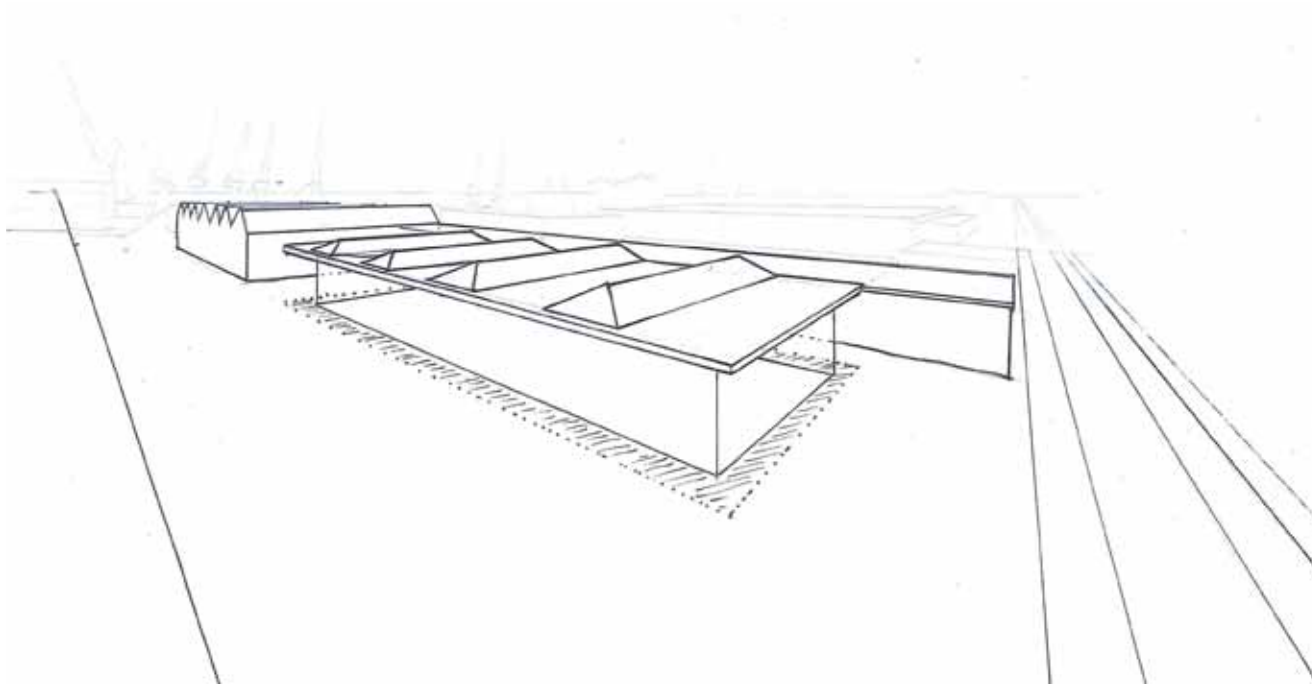




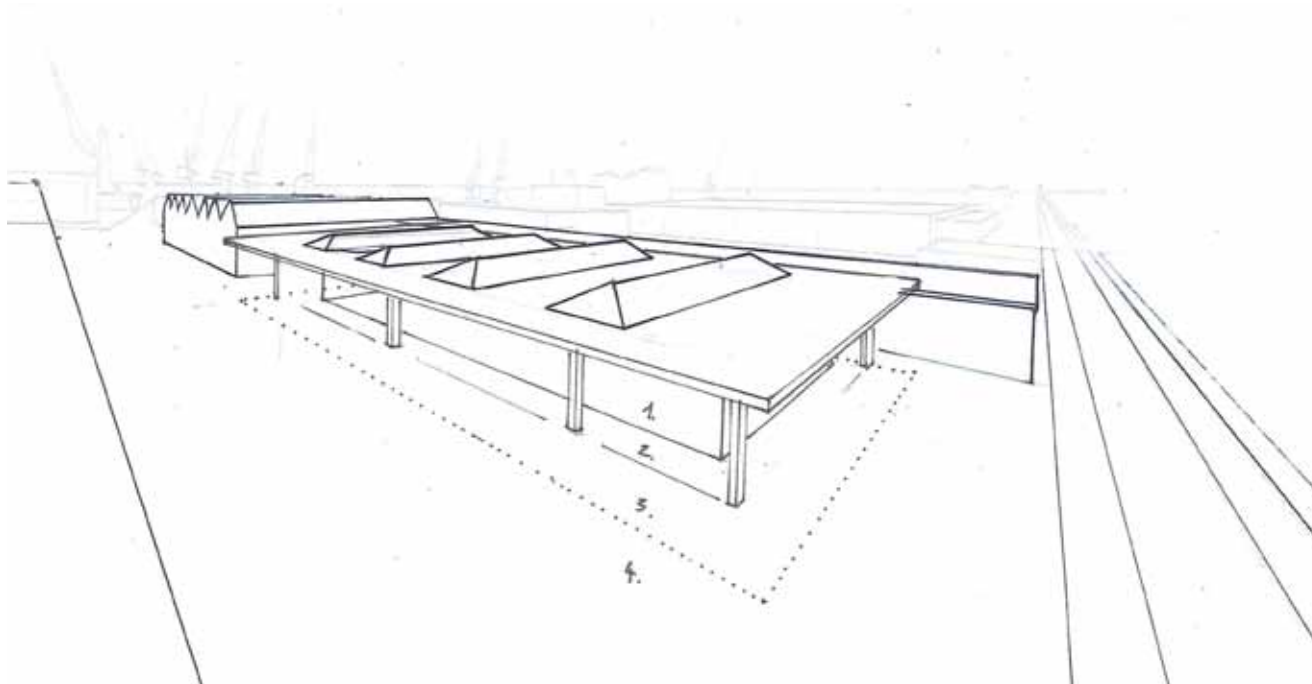
Connecting interior and exterior



Connecting interior and exterior

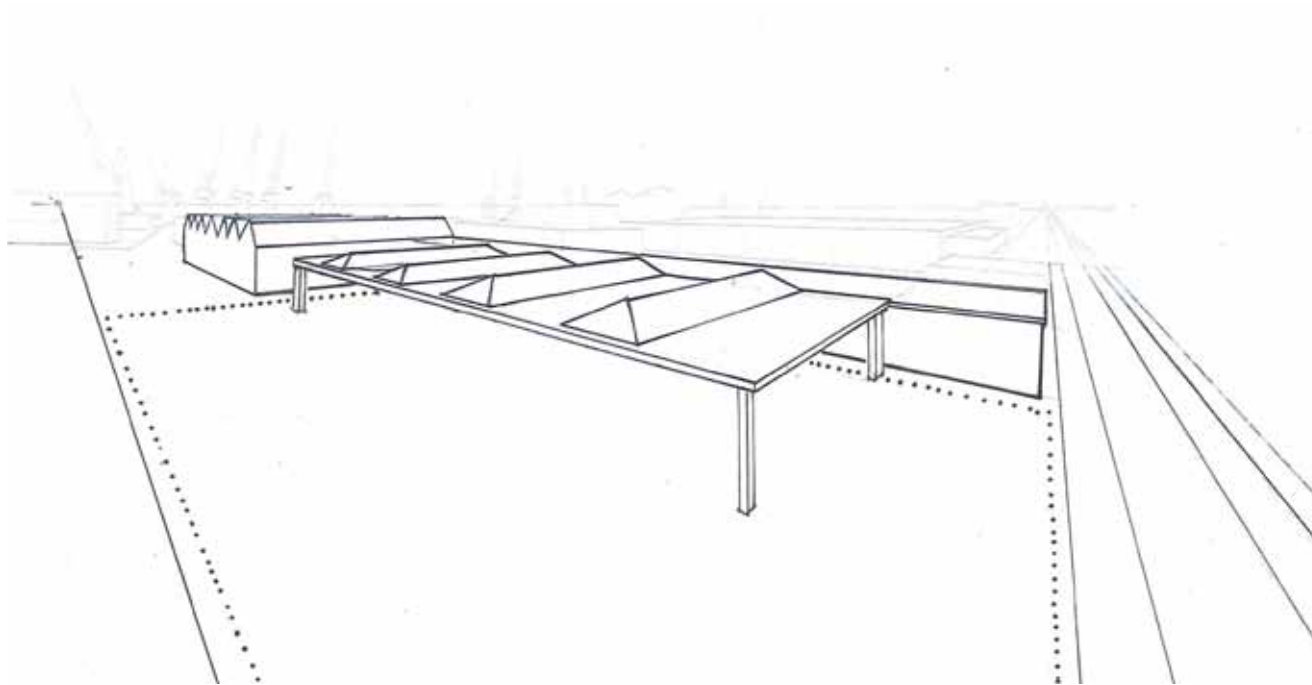


Connecting interior and exterior

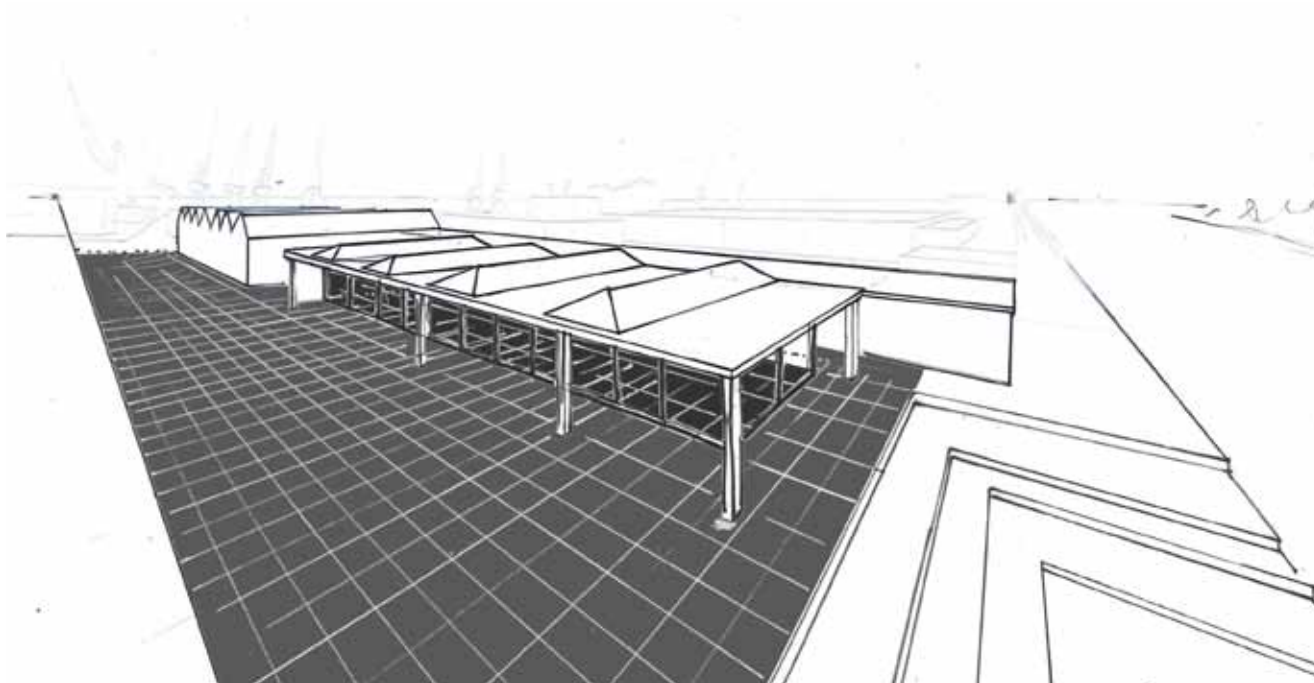




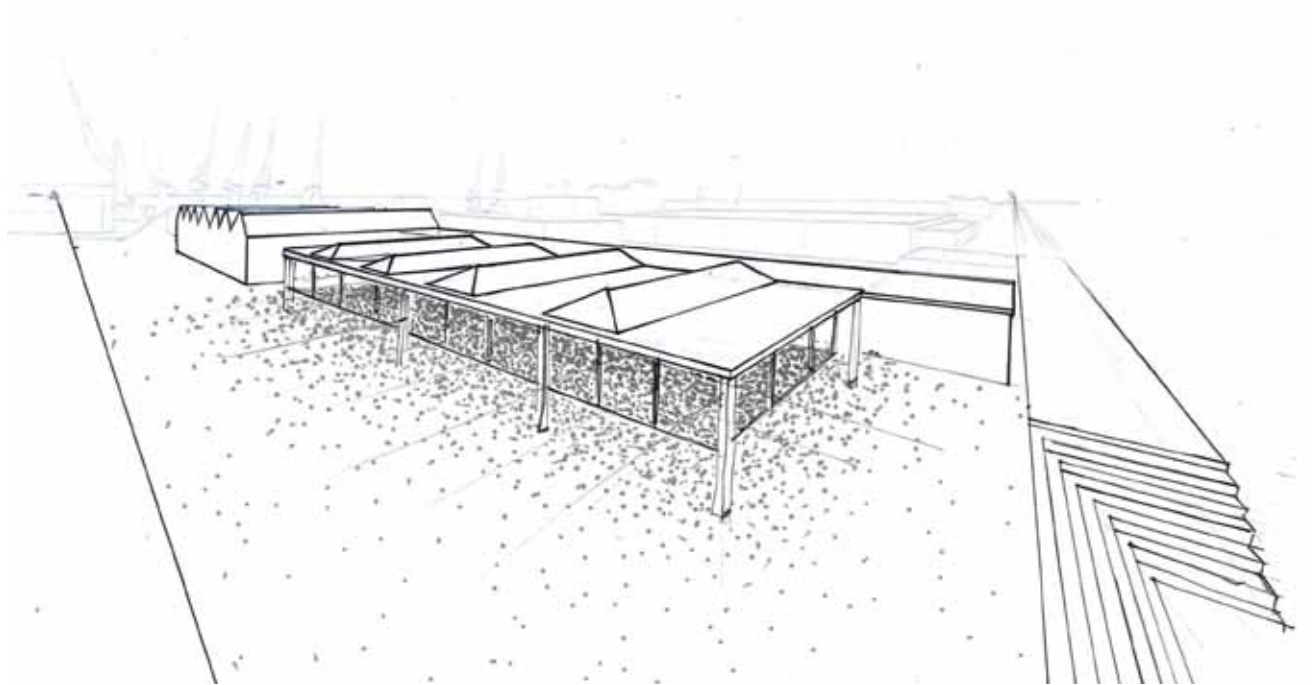
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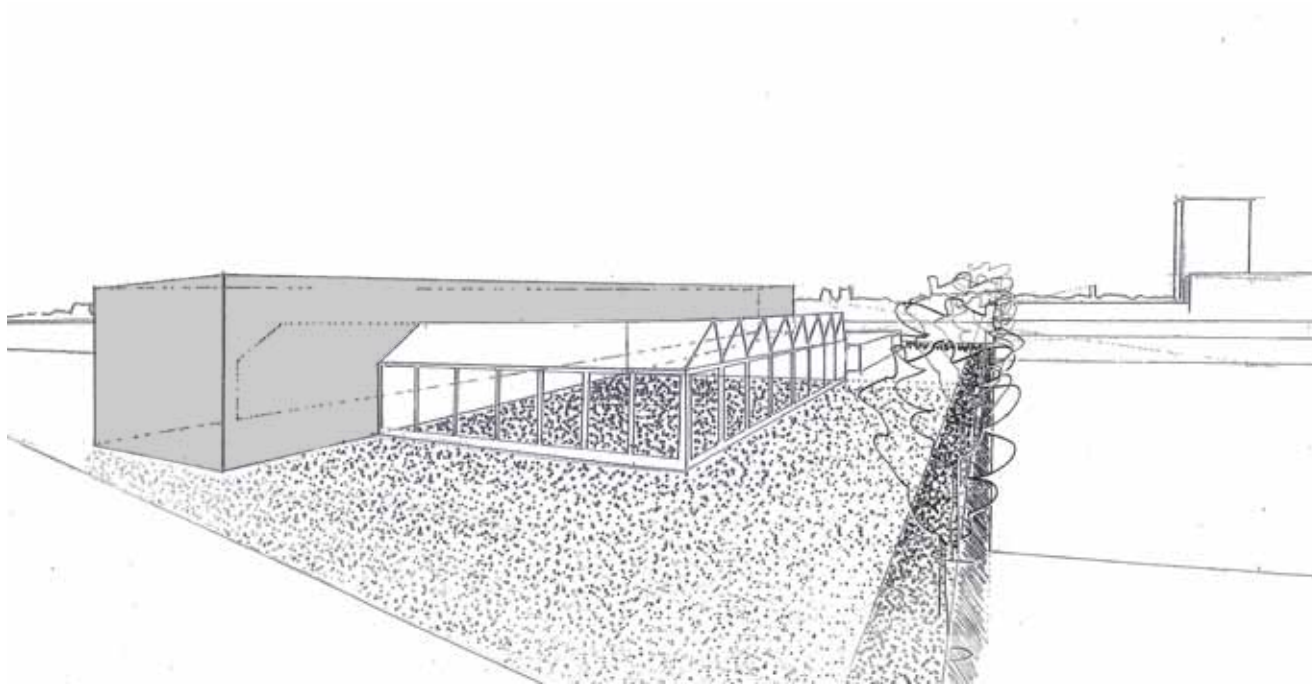
Connecting interior and exterior



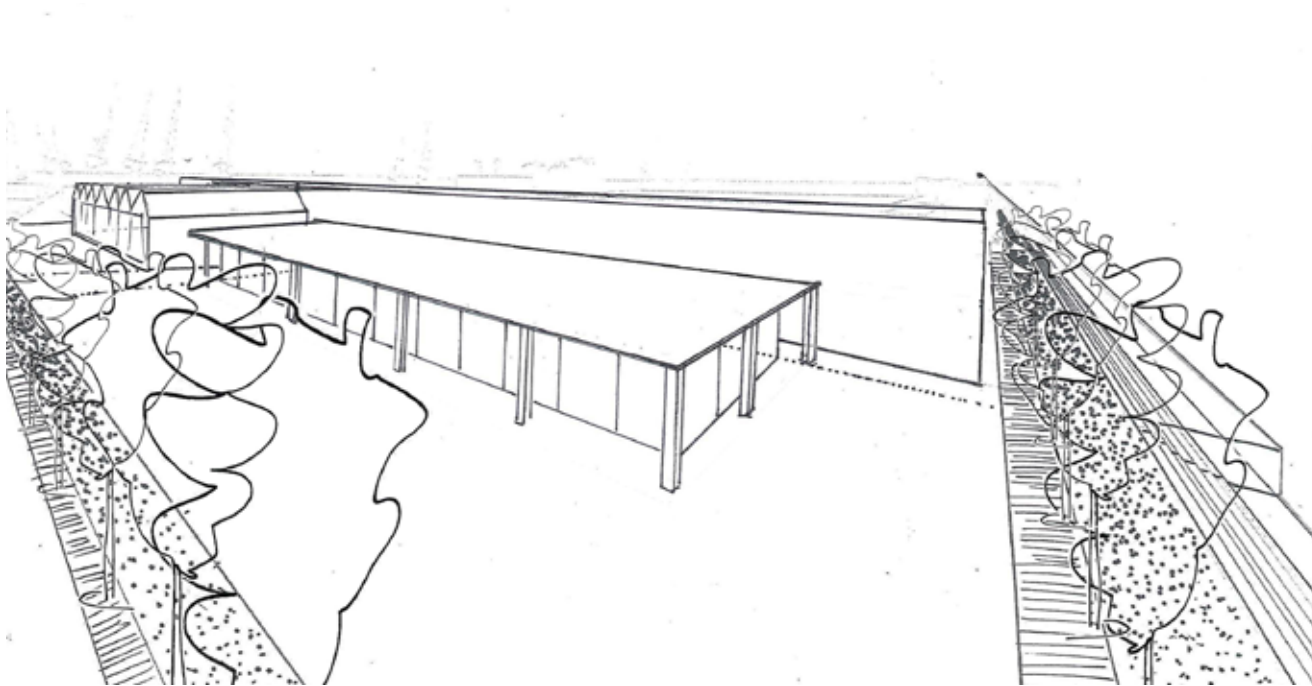
Connecting interior and exterior



Connecting interior and exterior



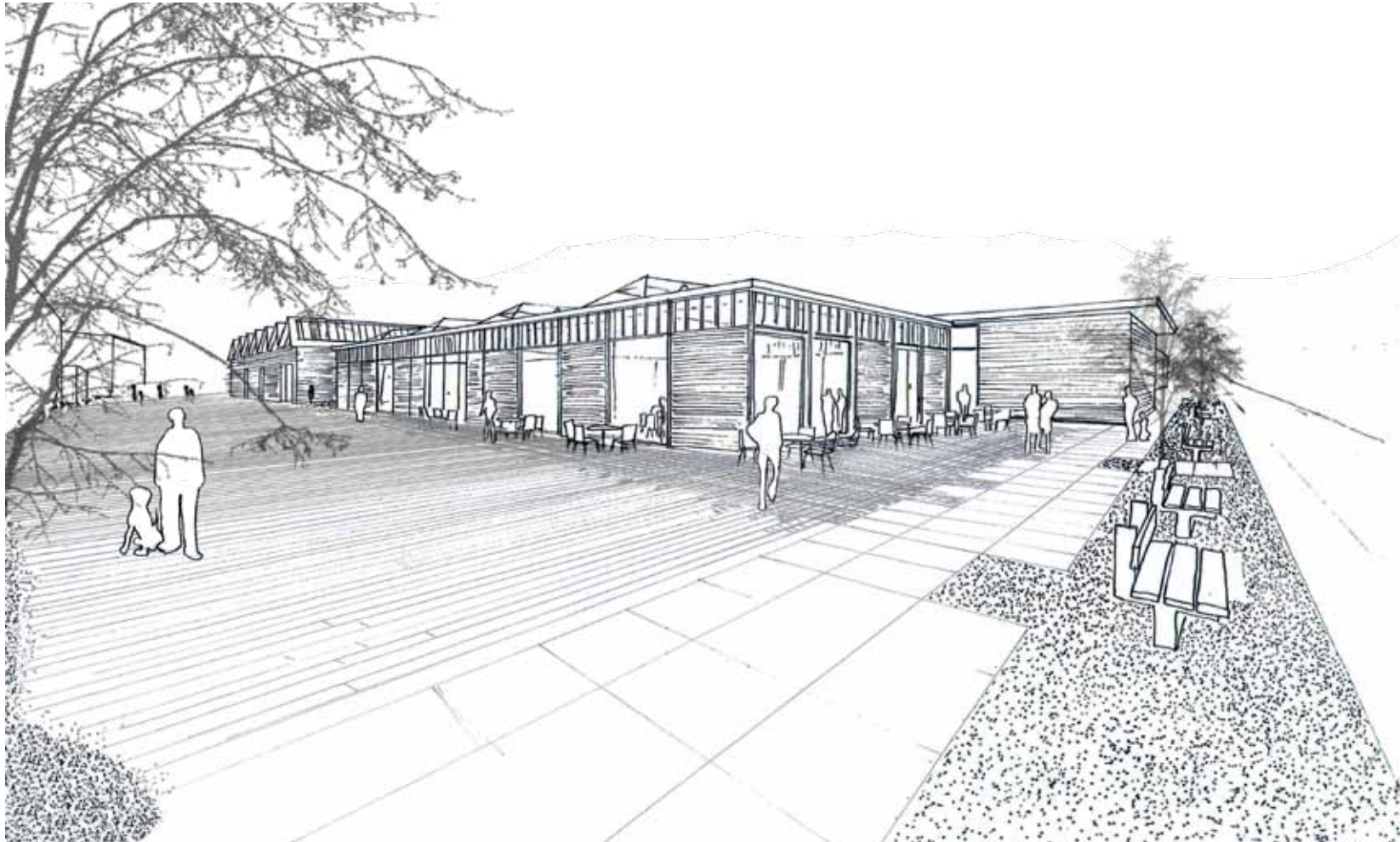
Connecting interior and exterior



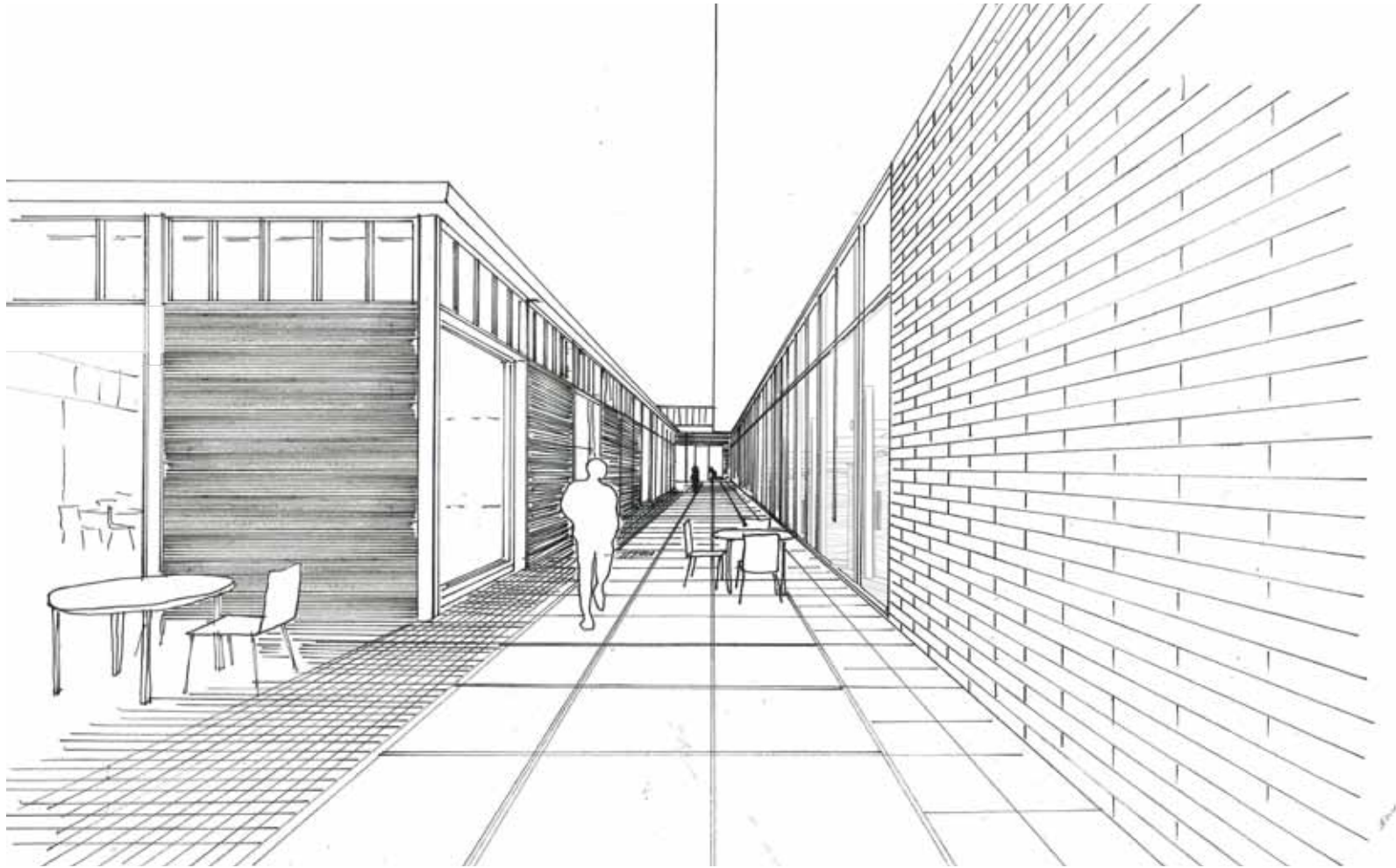
Atelier building | main entrance



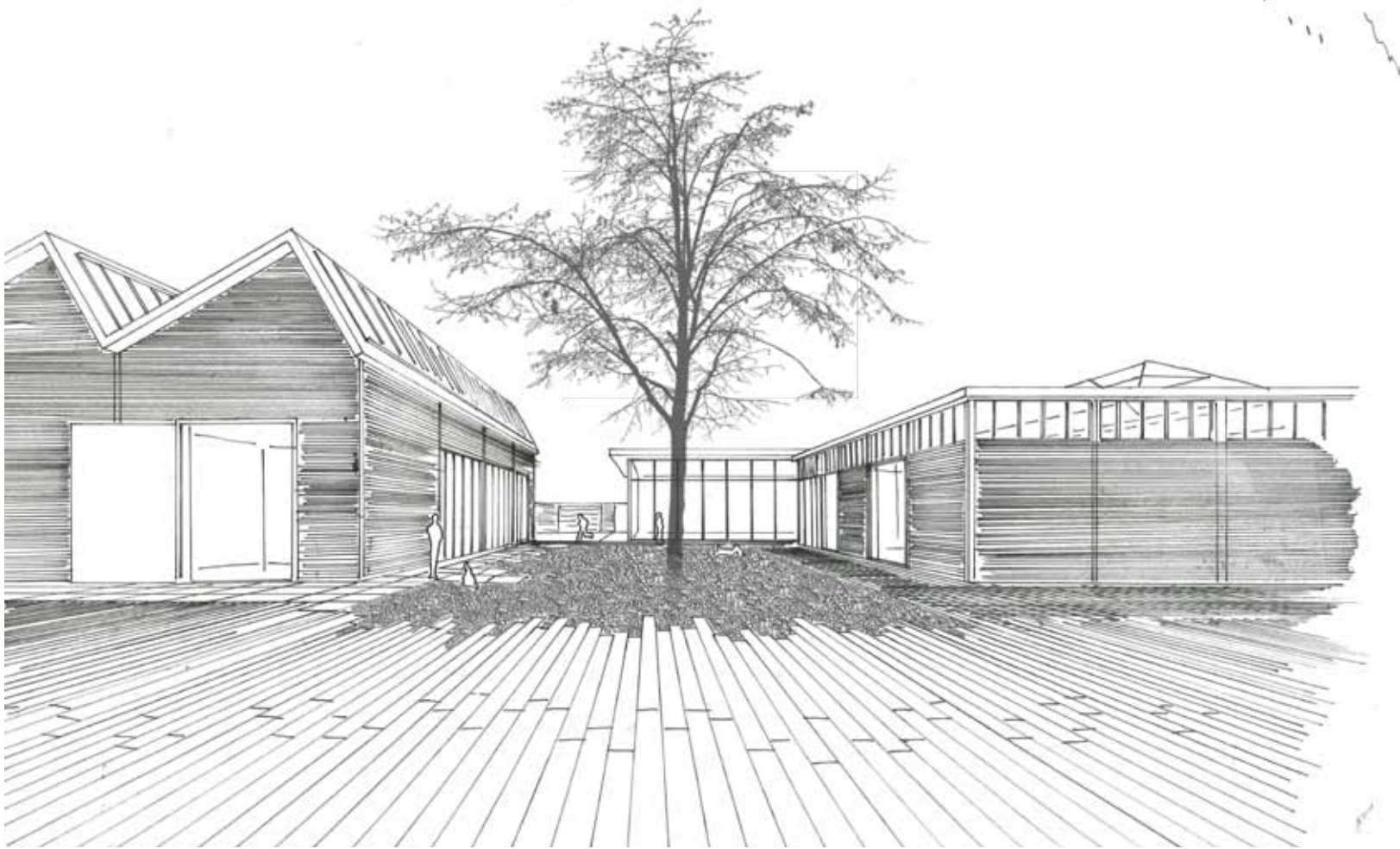




## Outdoor corridor

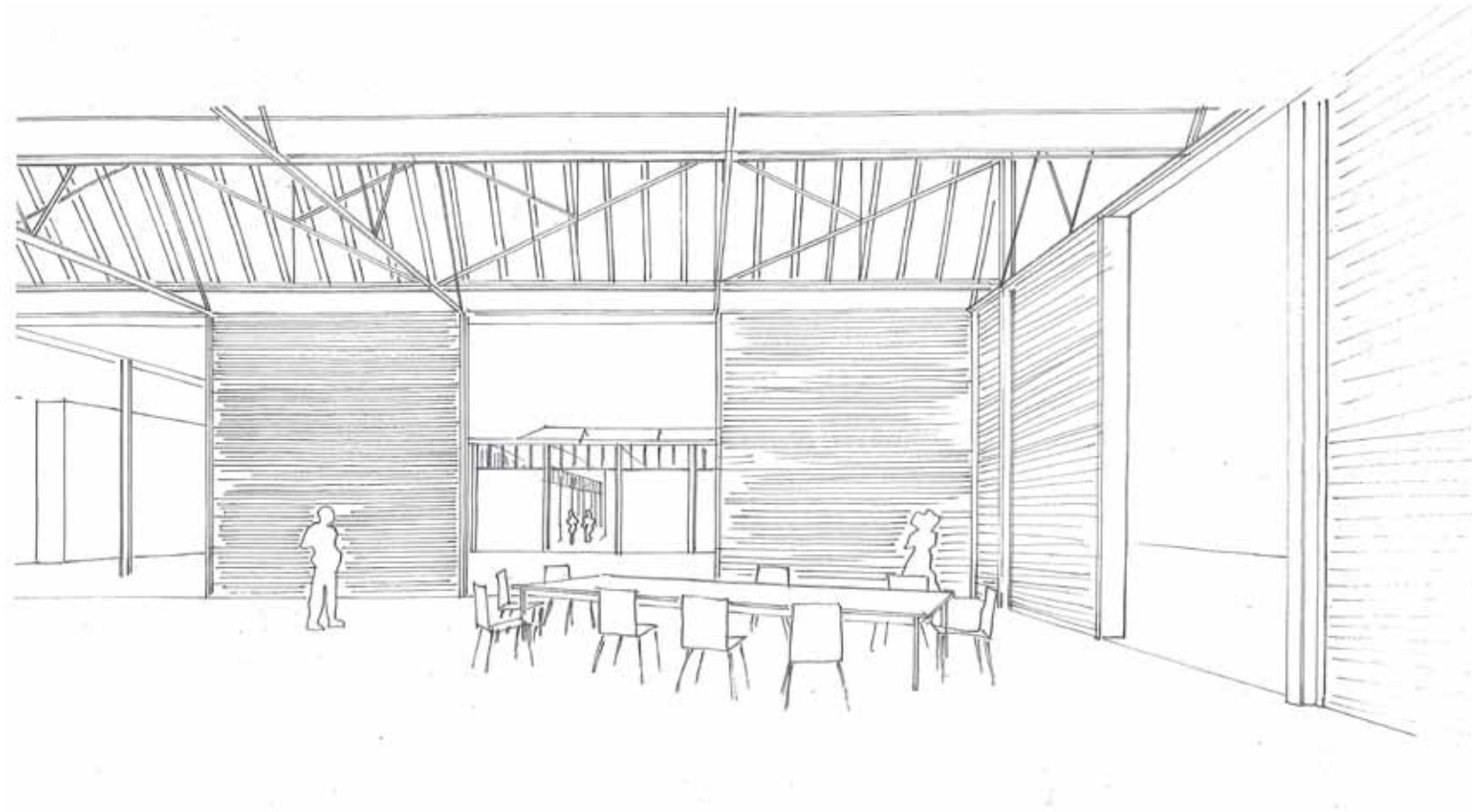












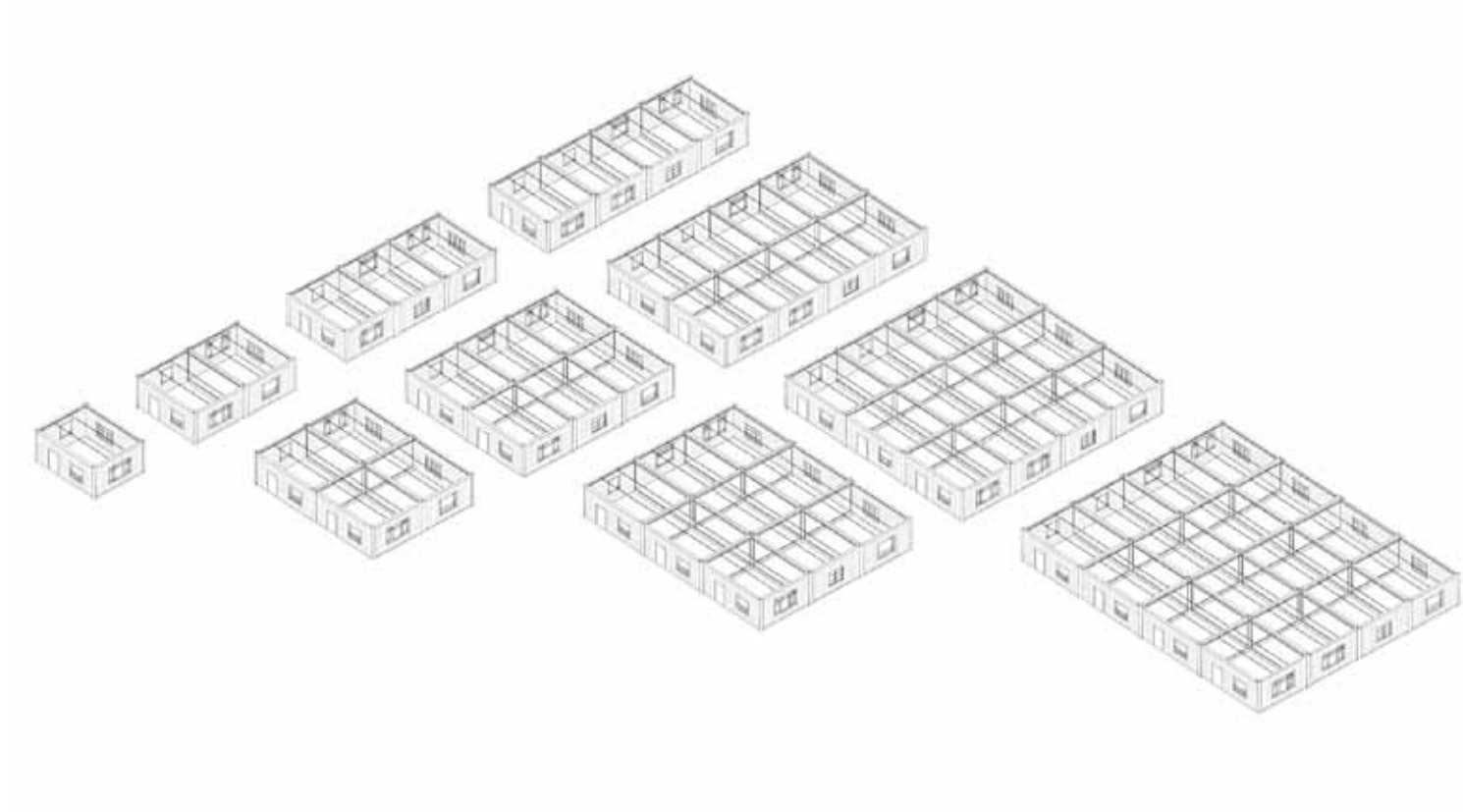








## Modular units

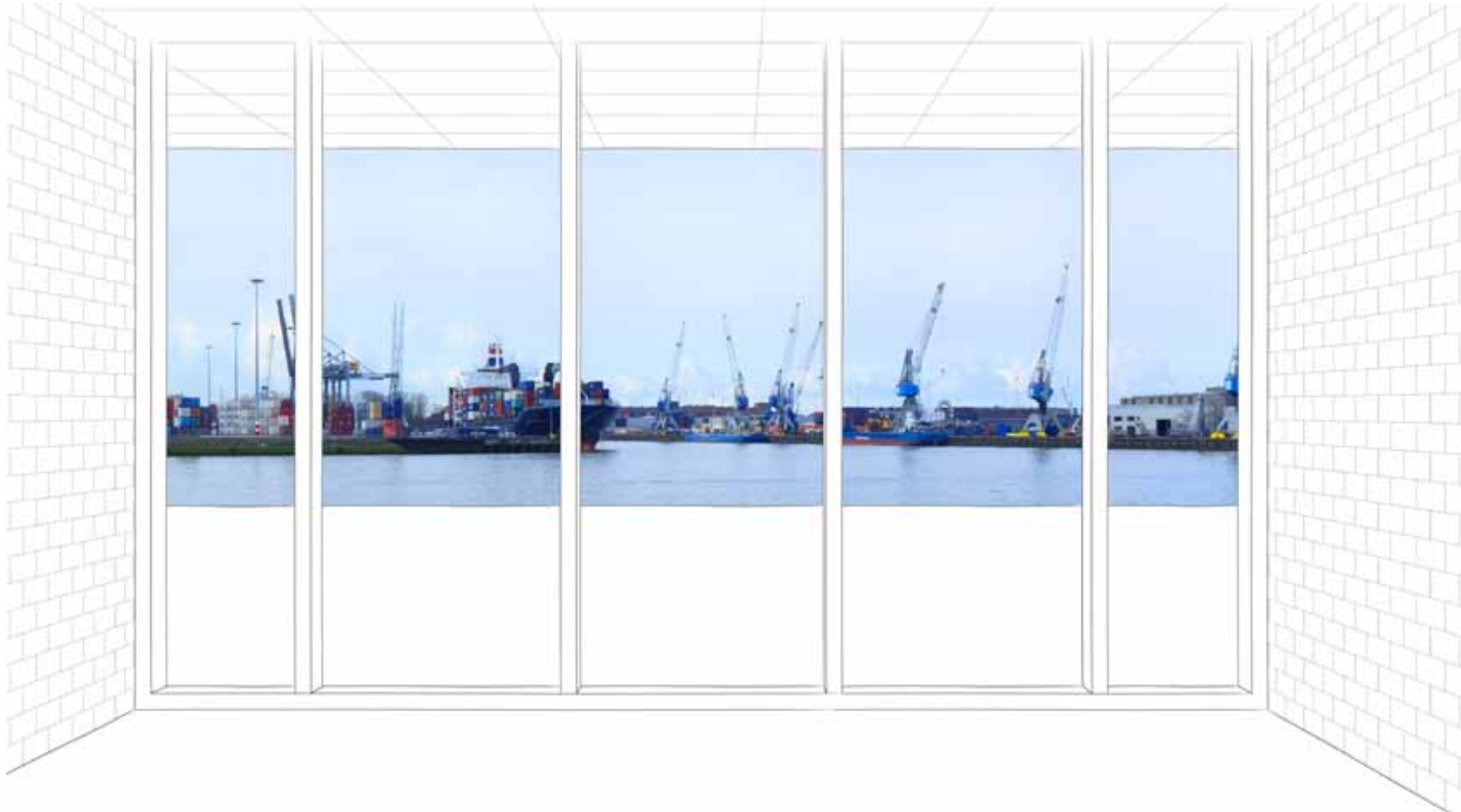




Modular units | different kind of facade panels: closed, semi-transparent & transparent

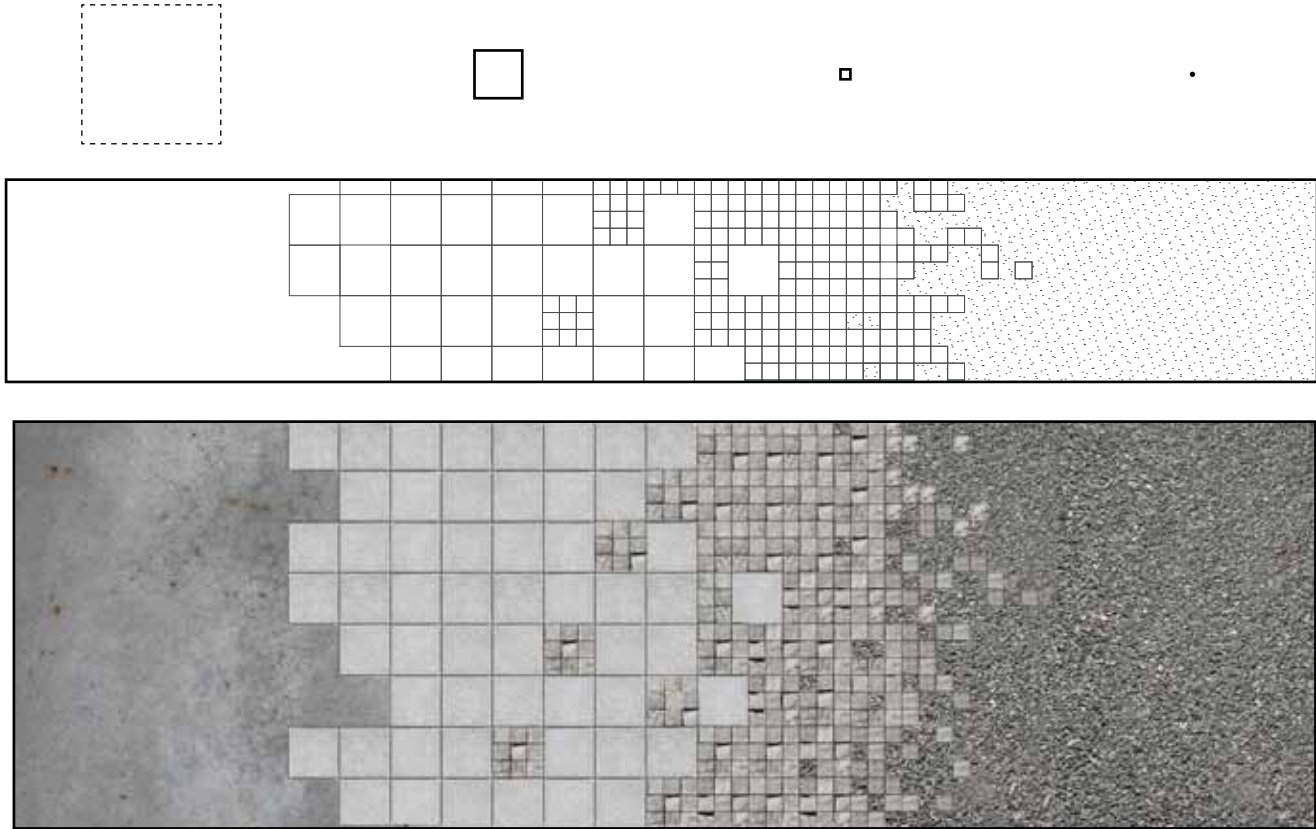


Connecting interior and exterior | visual connection



Connecting interior and exterior | use of same materialisation











Exterior living room | heart of the complex | garden



Transformation of the Eekhoutstaat into a public street with side spaces













