

In Praise of Light | Sacred Trail + Reflection Space

Studying the Phenomenology of Light in Sacred Spaces

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1. Wooden Chapel

Designed by John Pawson in 2018, the Wooden Chapel in Lutzigen, Germany, uses minimal light to create an intimate space for reflection. The interplay of light and shadow evokes solitude and introspection, highlighting light's role in shaping sacred experiences.



2. Reflection Space TEC

Designed by Taller de Arquitectura X and Alberto Kalach in 2020, the Reflection Space at TEC in Monterrey, Mexico. It demonstrates that sacredness in architecture can emerge through thoughtful light and space design, without overt religious symbolism.



3. Chapel of St. Ignatius

Designed by Steven Holl in 1997, the Chapel of St. Ignatius in Seattle uses light as its primary medium, creating dynamic spaces that shift with natural light. Rooted in the concept of a "gathering of different lights," it fosters personal reflection and connects the sacred with the individual.



4. Nijima Gakuen Chapel

Designed by Tezuka Architects in 2020, the Nijima Gakuen Chapel in Takasaki, Japan, uses light filtering through wooden panels to create a serene, sensory-rich space for reflection. Inspired by Christian symbolism, it evokes a journey from enclosed darkness to light, mirroring students' transition from college to the wider world.



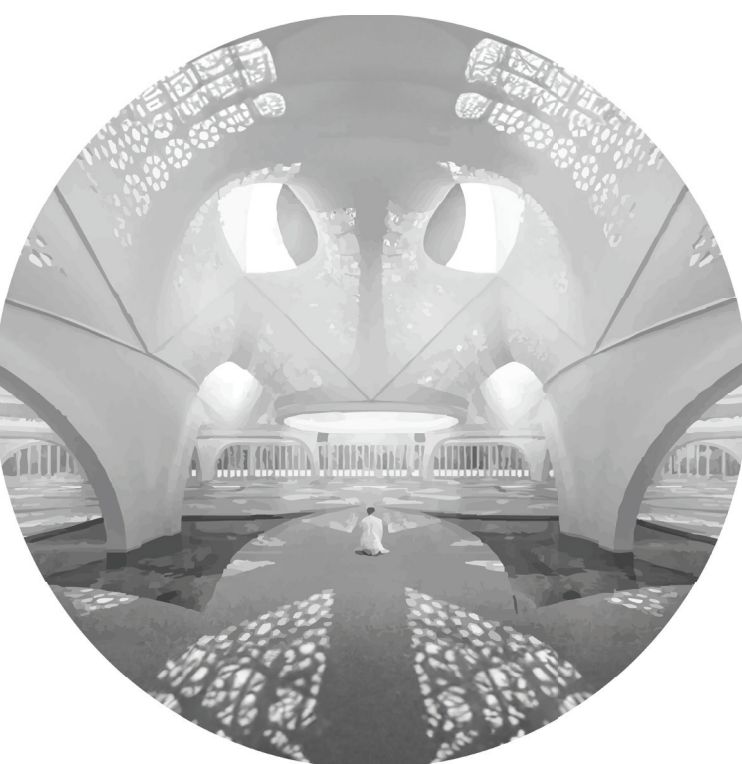
5. Tervajarvi Forest Chapel

Designed by Architecturestudio NOAN in 2020, the Forest Chapel in Lempäälä, Finland, emphasizes simplicity, tranquility, and a connection to nature. Its exposed timber structure blends with the forest, using honest tectonics to create a sacred space.



6. Light of Life Church

Designed by Shinslab Architecture in 2014, the Light of Life Church in Gapyeong, South Korea, emphasizes light and simplicity. Rooted in "Beautiful Nothingness," its design uses abundant natural light and materials like cedar and glass to create a tranquil space that seamlessly connects the sacred with the natural world.



7. Mosque of Light

Designed by NUDES in 2018, the unbuilt Mosque of Light in Dubai uses light as its core element. Inspired by the mashrabiya, its geometric form filters light to create a serene space for 7,500 worshippers, blending tradition with modernity to reflect the spiritual journey from darkness to light.



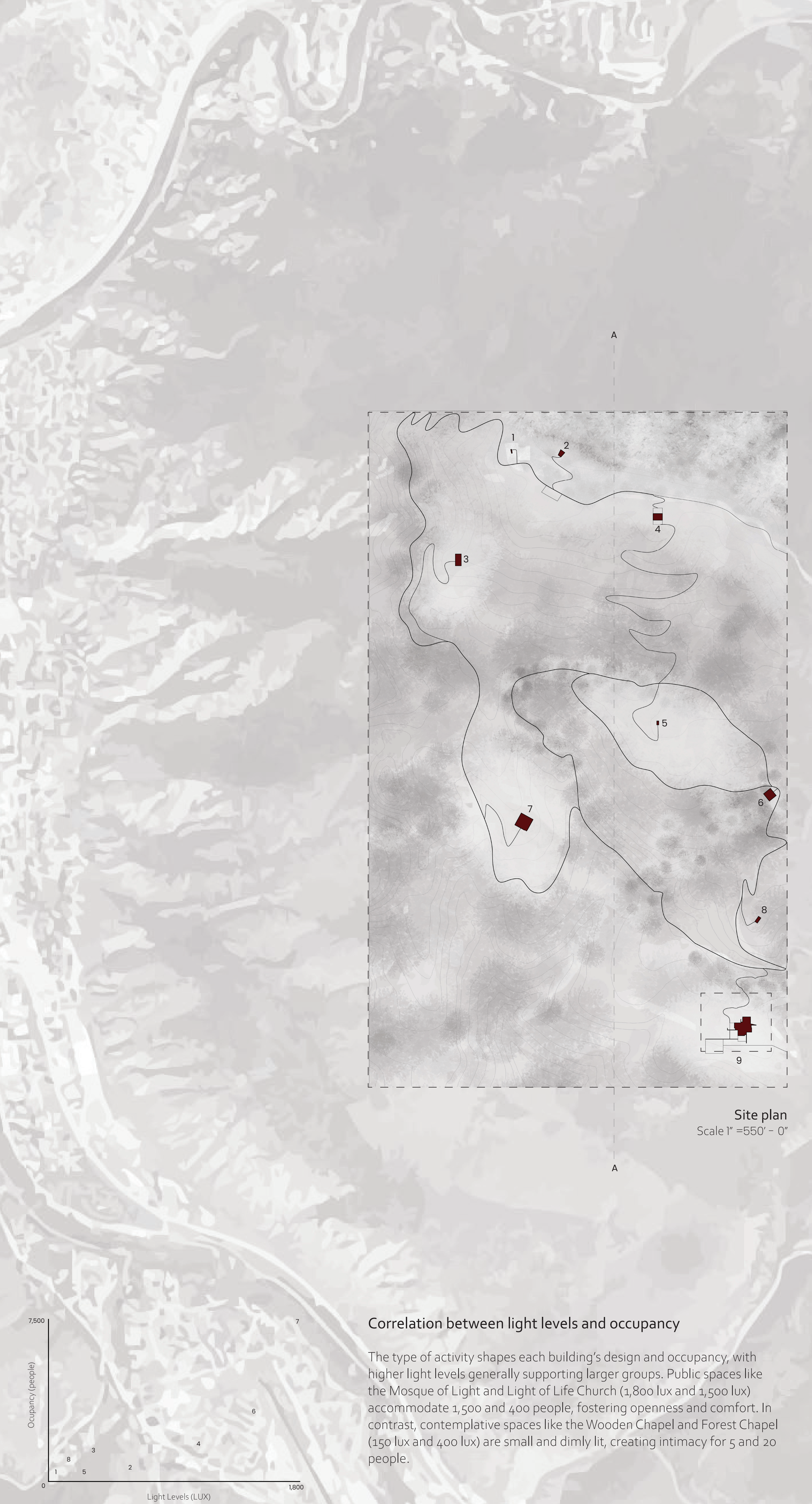
8. Church of Light

Designed by Tadao Ando in 1999, the Church of the Light in Ibaraki, Japan, exemplifies the spiritual power of light in sacred architecture. Its minimalist design features a cross-shaped opening, using the contrast of light and shadow to evoke reverence and guide reflection. Ando turns light into a material, creating a journey through simplicity and contrast.



9. Glenwood Springs Reflection Space

Designed to blend seamlessly with Colorado's landscape and highlight the breathtaking views of the Rockies, the building explores the phenomenology of light to create a sacred and reflective experience. Above-ground spaces foster outrospection through expansive views and abundant natural light, while subterranean areas use controlled skylights to encourage introspection, offering a contemplative journey deeply rooted in the interaction between light, space, and the surrounding environment.



Multi-sensory Experience

The trail creates a multisensory journey, culminating in a phenomenological moment at the intersection with the chapel's path. Here, the ground transitions from soft decomposed granite to crunching gravel, prompting both physical awareness and aural recognition of change. The lowered vegetation invites more light, illuminating the space and enhancing its openness, while the fragrance of local flowers fills the air, evoking a sense of the sacred. This carefully orchestrated experience engages the senses, encouraging pause and reflection, and serves as a threshold, marking the transition toward the chapel and deepening the connection to the journey's spiritual essence.



Sight

The trail experience transitions from being fully immersed in the vegetation with limited views to open stretches with miles of visibility. Near the chapel, the foliage thins, revealing the surrounding landscape.

Sound

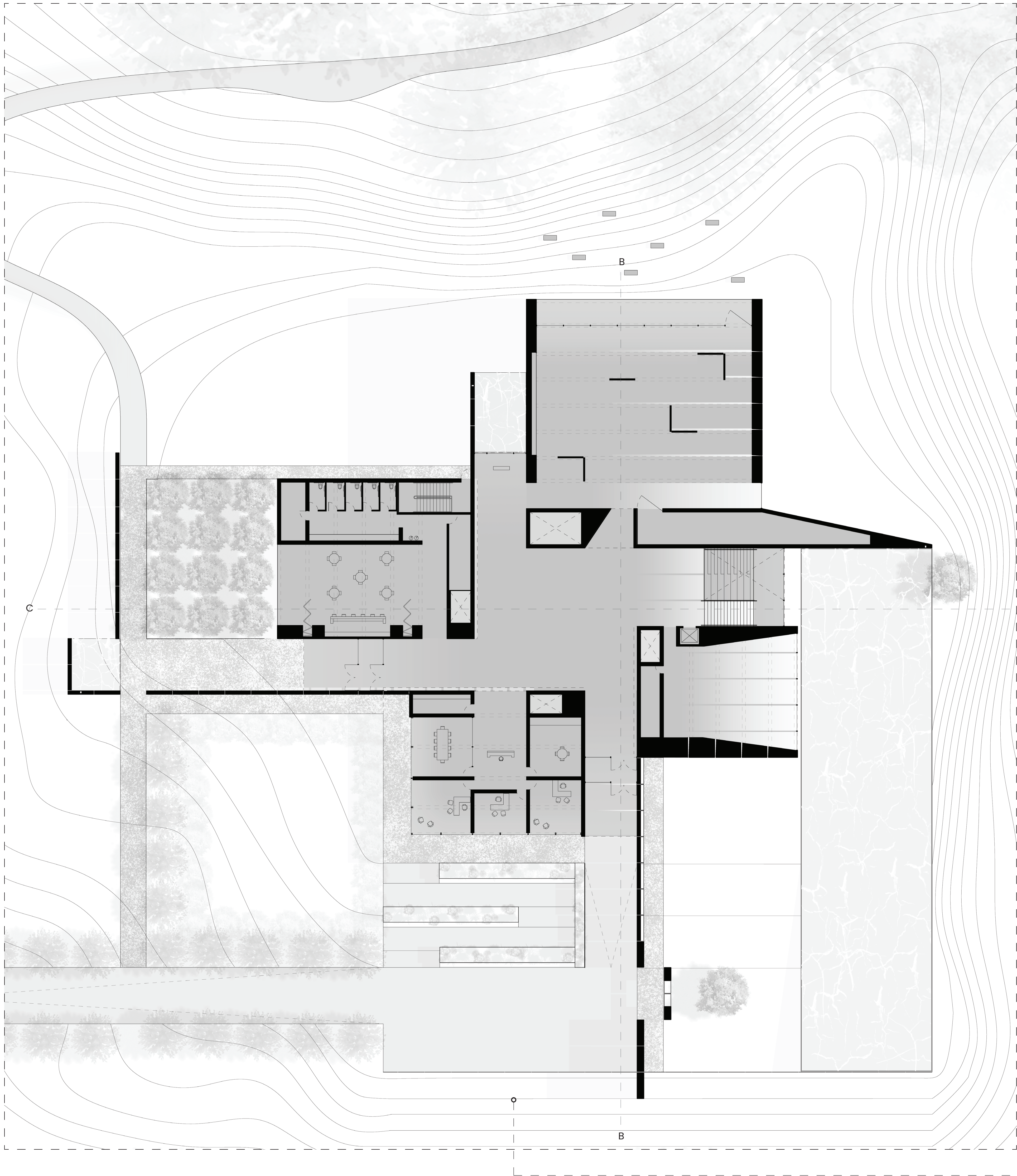
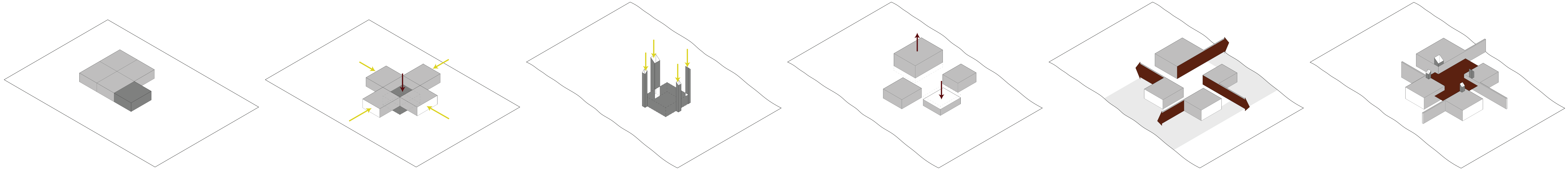
The primary trail, composed of decomposed granite, offers a quiet and serene hike. As you near the path leading to the chapel, the surface transitions to gravel, introducing a different sound that signals the chapel's proximity.

Touch

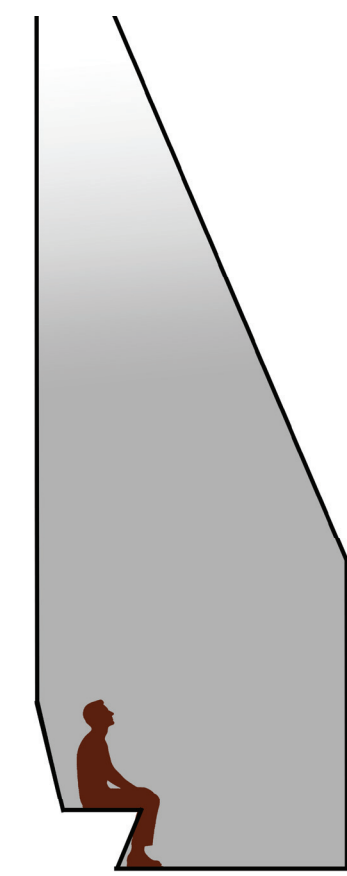
Not only does the sound change, but the texture beneath your feet shifts at this threshold, enhancing the multisensory experience and deepening your awareness of the journey ahead.

Smell

Lastly, as the vegetation thins, local flowers are introduced, filling the air with their fragrance. This change in scent evokes a sense of the divine and the sacred, enriching the spiritual atmosphere of the space.

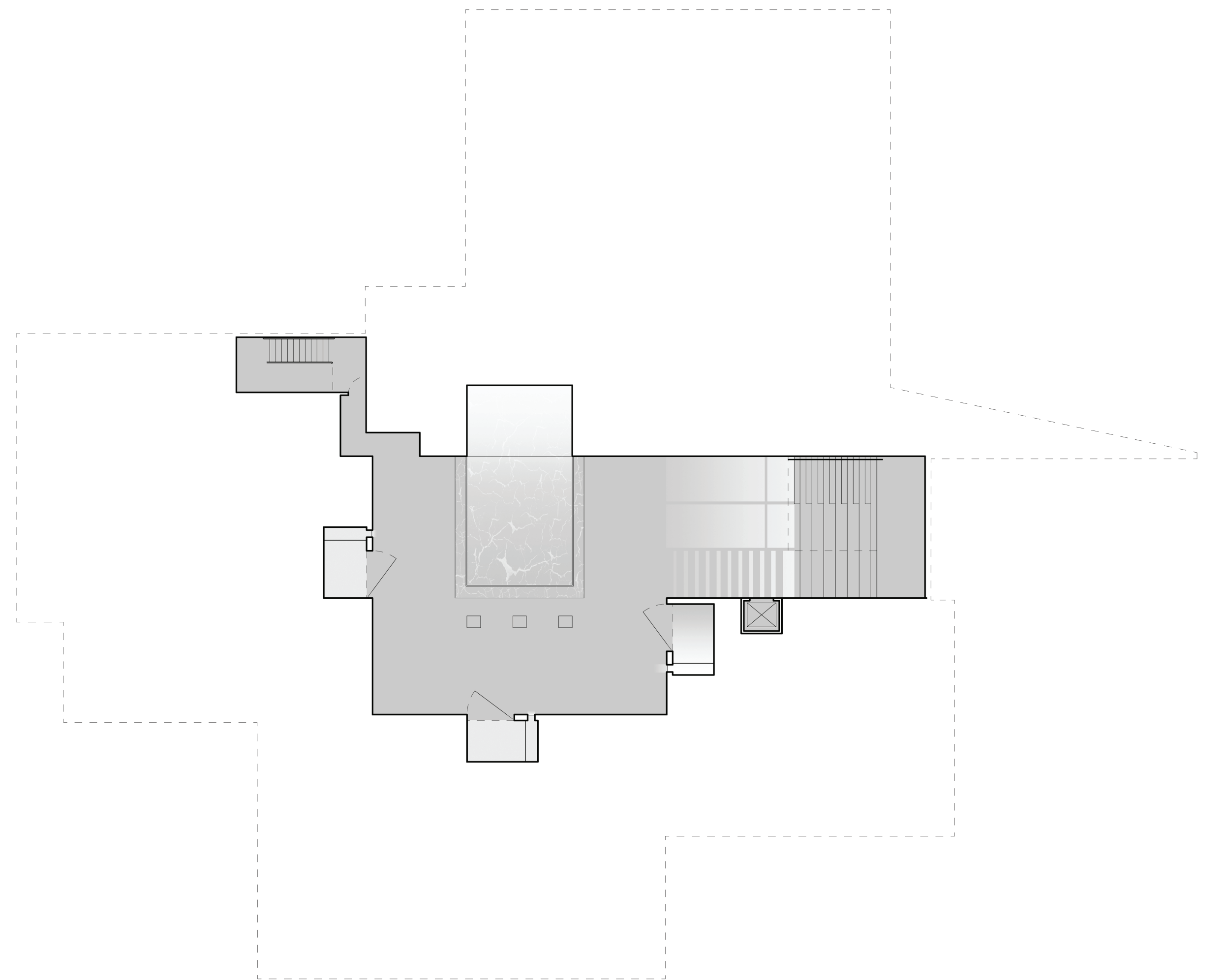
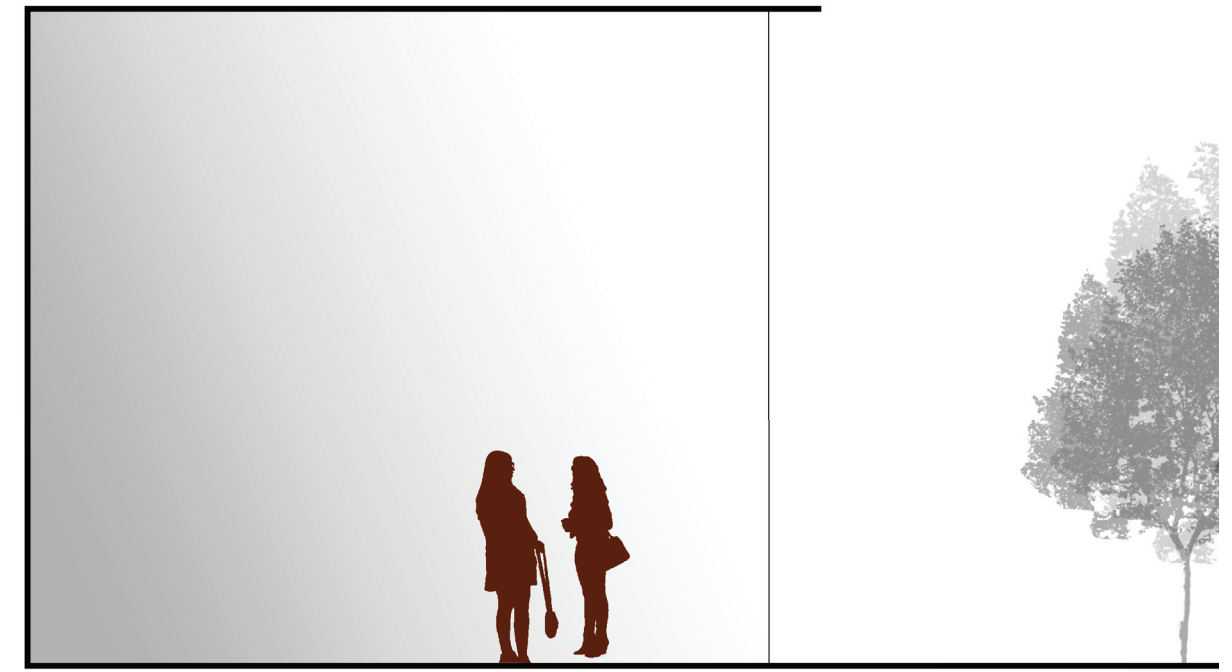


Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1/16" = 1' - 0"

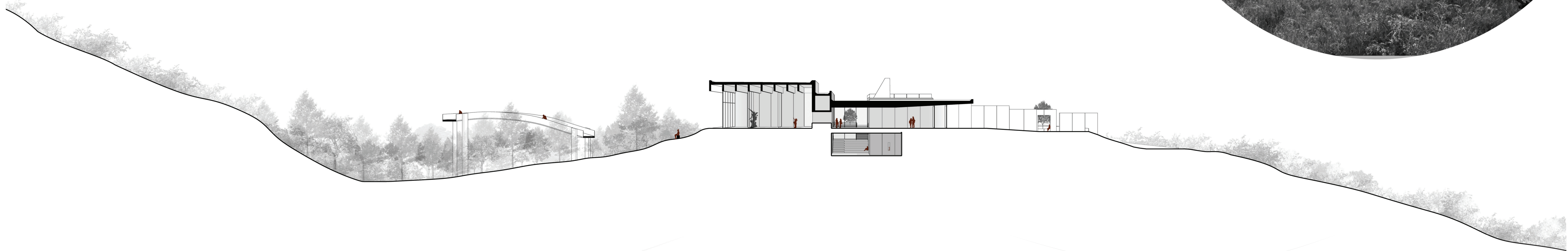


Introspection | Outrospection

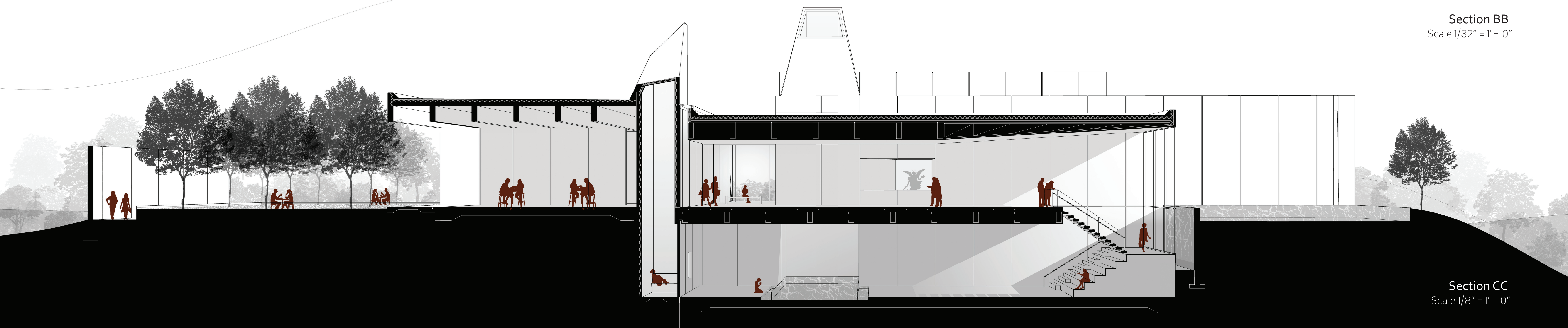
The building's design uses light to guide introspection and outrospection. Introspection encourages self-reflection, while outrospection involves reflecting with and for others and engaging with the world—similar to empathy. From the research: Intimate, dimly lit spaces foster introspection, while larger, well-lit spaces with expansive views inspire an outrospective connection to others and the environment.



Lower Floor Plan
Scale 1/16" = 1' - 0"



Section BB
Scale 1/32" = 1' - 0"



Section CC
Scale 1/8" = 1' - 0"