SPATIAL READINGS

An Investigation of the Translation
Between Words and Structure

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 ABSTRACT
5 PROLOGOS
6 REFERENCE
7 STRUCTURAL TRANSLATION OF DIVINA COMEDIA
8 LOGOS
9 INVESTIGATION I
10 MANIPULATION
11 RESULT
12 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: PROFOUND
13 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: GRAVITY
14 PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: PROFOUND GRAVITY
18 OUTCOME: PROFOUND GRAVITY
20 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: CONTINOUS
21 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: CONTRADICTION
22 PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: CONTINOUS CONTRADICTION
26 OUTCOME: CONTINOUS CONTRADICTION
28 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: MOMENTARY
29 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: SENSATION
30 PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: MOMENTARY SENSATION
34 OUTCOME: MOMENTARY SENSATION
36 INVESTIGATION II
38 STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS
39 MODEL STUDIES
40 OUTCOME
41 EPILOGOS
42 INVESTIGATIONS DURING THE PROCESS
44 REFLECTIONS
45 BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABSTRACT

Human history and development have been propelled by ideas, constantly changed and developed in new contexts and conditions, how we build our cities and how buildings are perceived is no exception.

These ideas and conceptions are most commonly made understandable through language and primarily text. Text is also the main tool for communicating initiatives for new buildings as well as regulating how and where they are to be built.

How we interpret words and what is communicated through them is thus of great importance to the outcome of an architectural project.

This project is exploring the translation between the written word and architectural form/phenomena. It does so by manipulating specific texts and translating that to form.

The project main reference is Danteum, a non built monument designed by Giuseppe Terragni for the fascist state in Italy to celebrate the poet Dante and particularly his work the Divine Comedy.

The project is made by two exercises. The first exercise focuses on highlighting different words by deleting words. The focus is here to score out words and in this sense highlight aspects of the text that might not otherwise be found. The second part of the exercise focuses on making representations of some of the words left. The text chosen for this exercise is the DADA manifesto written by Tristan Tzara in 1918. The manifesto is interesting due to it´s paradoxical nature, making no claims but at the same time doing just that.

The second exercise takes it's departure in a claim done by Friedrich Nietzsche as a critique of the modern movement. Nietzsche claims that there is a process of rationalisation of our senses happening, pleasure is no more perceived through the senses but is placed in the brain. We no longer ask ourself what something is but what it means, thus our senses become rational. In Nietzsches words:

> *"Meanwhile it is still said: the world is uglier than ever, but it signifies a more beautiful world than there has ever been."*

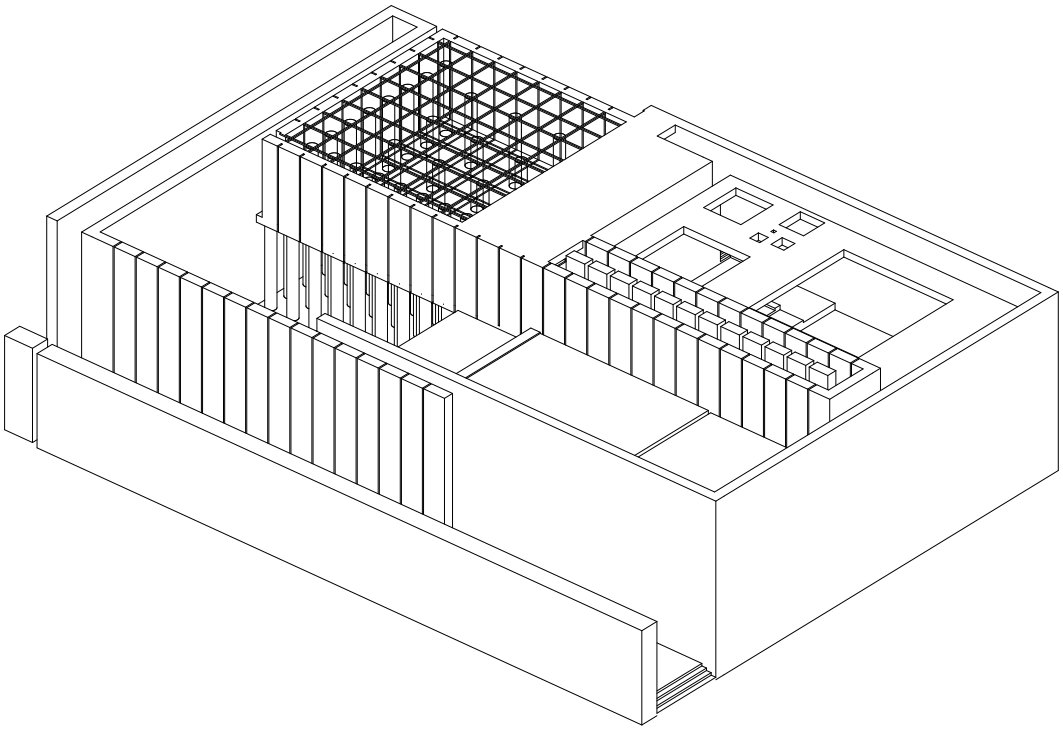
How would a text that is reacting against such a process look like? On answer could be a text without punctuation.

The second exercise is investigating the properties of a novel, how it is, by the poet Samuel Beckett. This novel is written completely without punctuation thus giving it a very special character, making it very difficult to read but also making it able to read in a large number of ways. The interpretation of the text is the basis of the resulting model representing the text.

PROLOGOS

noun | pro·lo·gos

REFERENCE



The Danteum is an unbuilt project designed by Giuseppe Terragni for the Italian state (Mussolini) prior to the second world war.

The project were to be a monument celebrating Dante Alighieri but was also to function as a library an study place for research on Dante. It was also to aid initiatives that foster and attest to the character of Imperial Fascist Italy.

The departure of the design is the book Divina Comedia by Dante and is based on the narrative in the book.

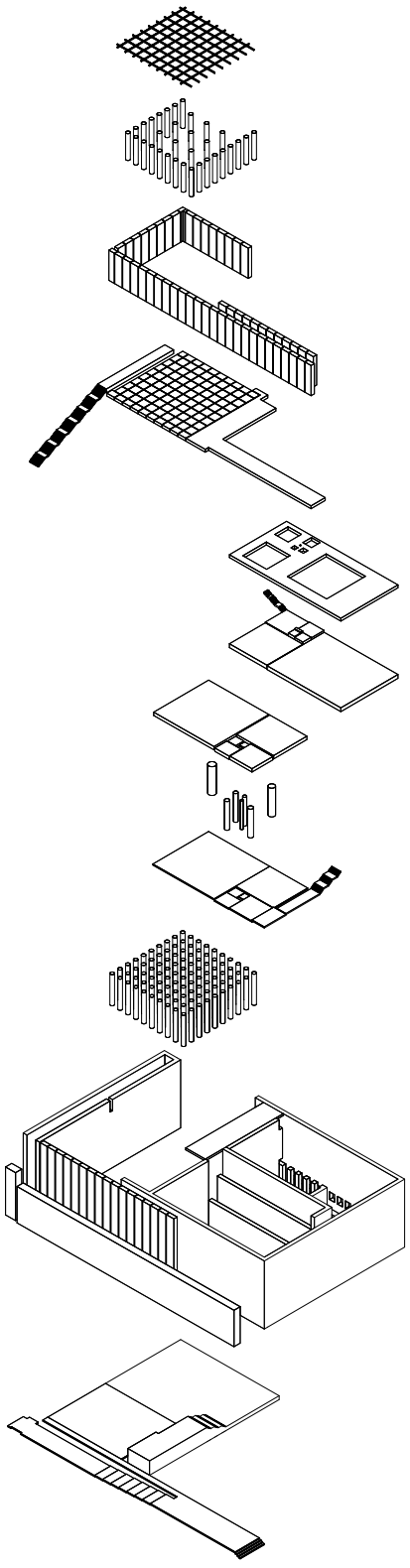
For Terragni it was important that the building would be autonomous from the poem only sharing the structure of the scripture thus the design of the building was derived from the structure of the text.

In parallel to the design Terragni wrote a text, Relazione, where he explained the design and the choices he made during the process.

He emphases the importance of the relationship of the numbers 1 and 1;3 and 7;1, 3, 7 and 10 which he means is a numerical law found in the text that he uses in the design, for instance the different levels in the building or the use of the golden ration.

The following pages quotes are taken from Thomas L. Schumachers book Terragni´s Danteum and his translation of Terragni´s text Relazione.

STRUCTURAL TRANSLATION OF DIVINA COMEDIA



PARADISE

This part of the Relazione is missing.

ROOM DEDICATED TO THE EMPIRE

“the “longitudinal spine” that is constituted of three walls (alternately solid and perforated) defining, at the top of the building, the room dedicated to the Imperial concept of Dante. This room of fundamental spiritual importance comes to represent the germ of the architectural whole as the conclusion of the experience of teh spaces traversed - from the Inferno, to the Purgatory, to the Paradise. Ti can therefore be interpreted as the central nave of a temple, dominating and giving light to the minor spaces.”

/ Para 12

PURGATORY

“The subdivision of the golden rectangle into seven squares is identical, but reversed in direction (to follow the itinerary that the visitor must follow). Such a concentric pattern of squares is made by a slight depression, like a valley, in the ceiling. The outline of the fascias is clearly shown – equivalent to two steps of Dante’s "terraces" – which is nothing more than the proposition of the "frame" of the hypothetical structure, in terraces, of the mountain of Purgatory.”

/ Para 26

INFERNO

“The fractured ceiling and the floor which is decomposed into diminishing squares, the scanty light that filters through the cracks in the blocks in the ceiling, all will give the catastrophic sensation of pain and useless aspiration to gain the sun and light – sensations that we find so often in the sorrowful speeches of the sinners interviewed by Dante.”

/ Para 23

FOREST OF COLUMNS

100 marble columns, equivalent to the number of cantos (Inferno = 33, Purgatory = 33, Paradise = 34) in Divina Comedia.

OUTLINE OF THE BUILDING

The proportions and size of the building are retrieved from the Basilica Maxientius, built in Rorum Romanum around 300 AD.

THE ENTRANCE

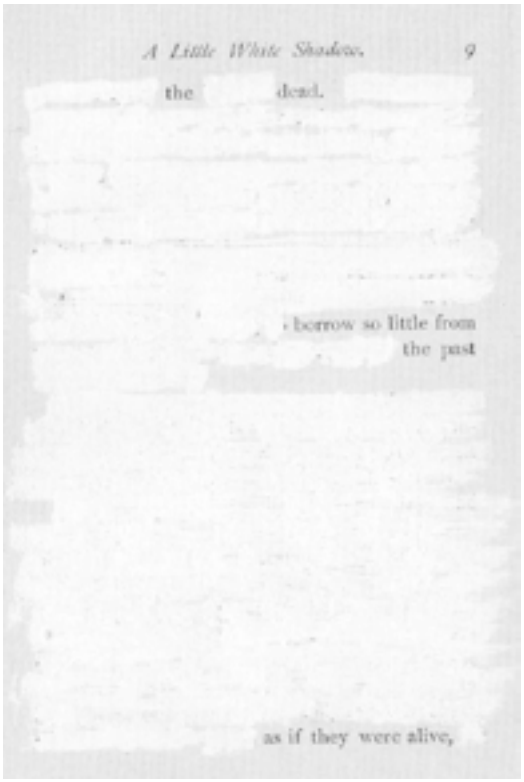
“The entrance to the building, then, situated parallel to and behind the facade, and between two high walls of marble, further restated by another long wall parallel to the front, can also correspond to another Dantesque "justification": "non so ben come v’entrai" [I do not know how I entered (Canto 1,10)]. This securely establishes the character of pilgrimage that visitors must make, lining processionally in single file, and guided only by the intense sun light that will be reflected on the square space of the court.”

/ Para 10

LOGOS

noun | lo·gos

INVESTIGATION I



In 2006 the poet Mary Ruefle published a reinterpretation of a book called A little white shadow. In this publication she took away a larger part of the words, giving new meaning to the piece.

This way of manipulating the text is interesting as a method to extract meaning out of the text. The process is very tiresome due to the need for high level of concentration needed to inhibit the autonomy of deleting material that is found interesting.

This method was used as a way trying to bring new meaning to the DADA-manifesto.

The DADA manifesto was written in 1918 by the artist Tristan Tzara who was one of the leading figures in the DADA-movement that included notable artist such as Marcel Duchamp and André Breton that would later be the founder of the surrealist movement.

Dadaism was one of many art movements in europe during first decades of the 1900-hundreds.

The first exercise is divided into 4 parts: First is the manipulation of the text (process of deletion).

Second is the choosing of and linguistic analysis of the words found to bear spatial qualities.

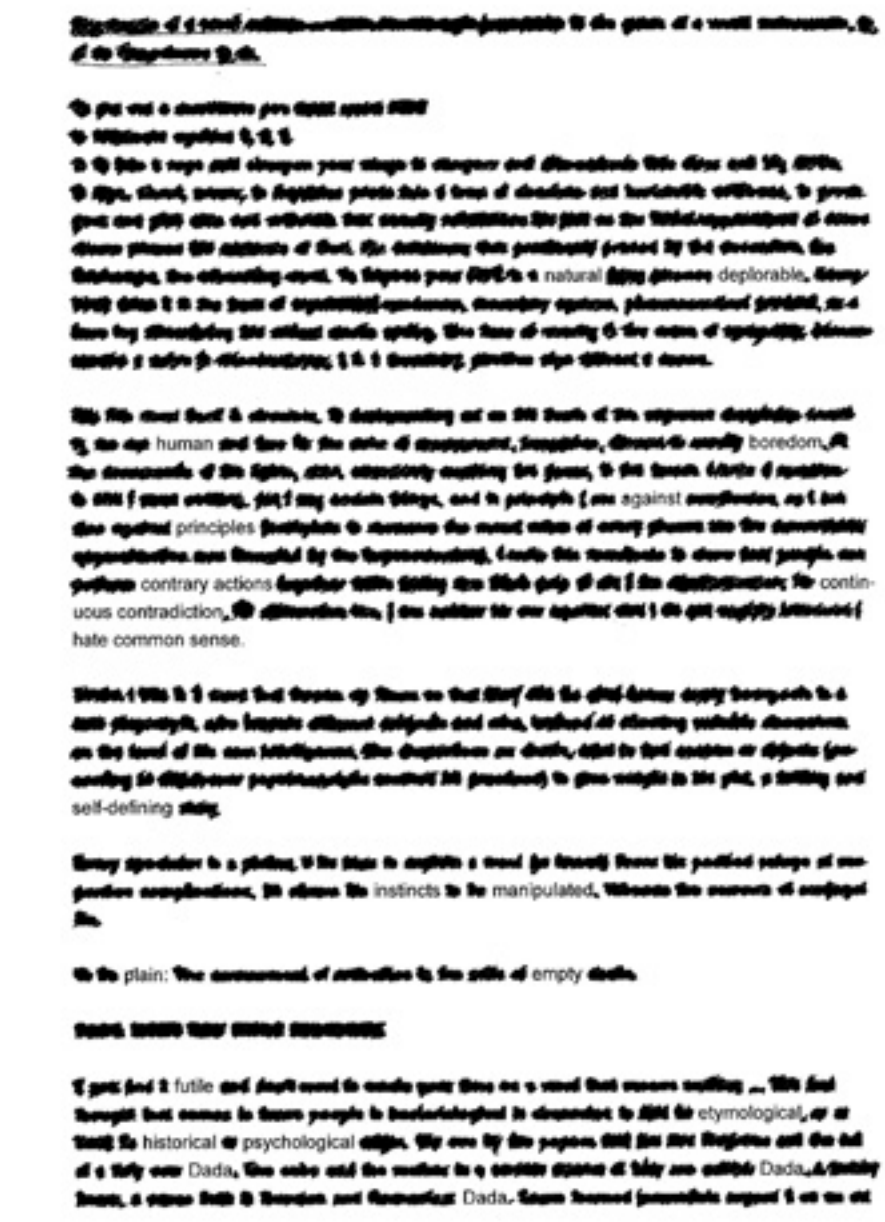
Third is a phenomenological analysis in model, trying to grasp the essence of the words.

Finally a model based on the two steps before is made but more subjectively modified.

The third step is supposed to be an investigation into the core properties of the expression examined, viewing the model more as an object.

Whereas the last step is supposed to add scale and more architectural properties.

MANIPULATION



natural

deplorable.

human

boredom,

against

principles

contrary actions

continuous contradiction,

I hate common sense.

instincts to be manipulated.

empty

futile

etymological,

historical

psychological

Dada.

Dada.

1

LOGOS

RESULT

natural deporable
human boredom
against principles
contrary actions
continuous contradiction
hate common sense
self-defining
instincts manipulated
plain: empty
futile
etymological historical psychological
dada dada dada
noisy noisy
perfection boring
relative beauty
atmospheres only subjectively
chaos constitutes man
no theory
enough laboratories of formal ideas
trembling awakening we
elements its implements
locomotive organisms turned
momentary sensation
transposed world
art regulated chaos
author's necessity own benefit
laws significant
explode
profound gravity
vortex vertigo newness eternity staggering
absurdity
enthusiasm principles typography
raging wind

spectacle disaster conflagration decompostion
false choice
progress personal
authority
can rationally thought think
no Truth
mind impotence
points of view millions exist
against system principle
fight thought
spontaneity extricate
art private
immutability
beyond understanding
Logic wrong
monument
work of destruction
sweep and clean
without organization
decomposition
destructive action
logic impotent create
object clash
abolition
memory archaeology prophets future
trajectory
individuals of the moment
disagreeable ideas
Freedom
DADA
intelacing opposites contradictions grotesques
inconsistencies
LIFE

LOGOS

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

PROFOUND

adjective | pro·found

MEANING

1. Penetrating or entering deeply into subjects of thought or knowledge; having deep insight or understanding

2. Originating in or penetrating to the depths of one's being

OPPOSITES

1. Shallow (adjective)

1.1 Of little depth; not deep

1.2 Lacking depth; superficial

2. Open (adjective)

2.1 Having no means of closing or barring

2.2 Relatively free of obstructions to sight, movement, or Internal arrangement

2.3 Constructed so as to be without cover or enclosure on The top or on some or all sides

2.4 Having relatively large or numerous spaces, voids,or Intervals

LOGOS

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

GRAVITY

noun | grav·i·ty

MEANING

1. The force of attraction by which terrestrial bodies tend to fall toward the center of the earth.
2. Heaviness or weight
3. Acceleration of gravity
4. Serious or dignified behavior; dignity; solemnity

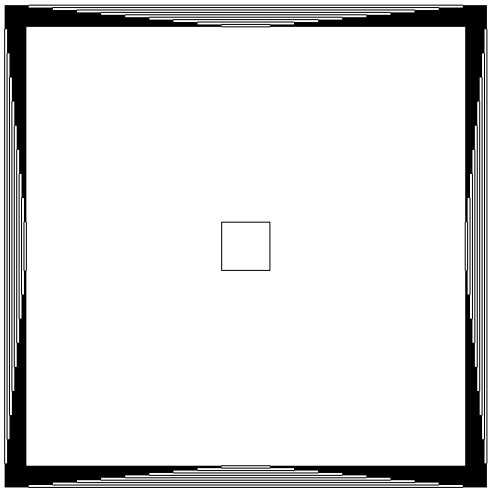
OPPOSITES

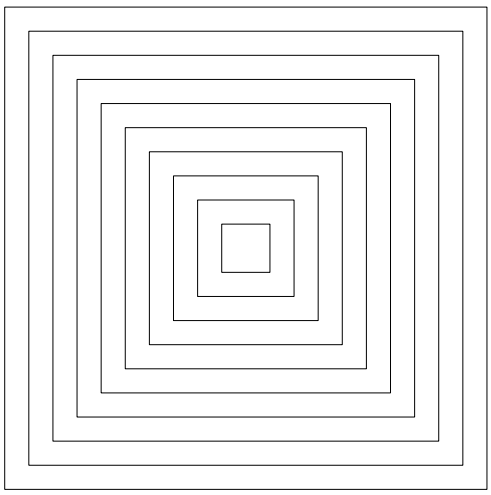
1. Inconsequentiality (adjective)
1.1 Of little or no importance; insignificant; trivial
1.2 Inconsequent; illogical
1.3 Irrelevant
2. Levity (noun)
2.1 Lightness of mind, character, or behavior; lack of appropriate seriousness or earnestness
2.2 An instance or exhibition of this
2.3 Lightness in weight
3. Unimportance (noun)
3.1 The quality or state of being important; consequence; Significance
3.2 Important position or standing; personal or social consequence

LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

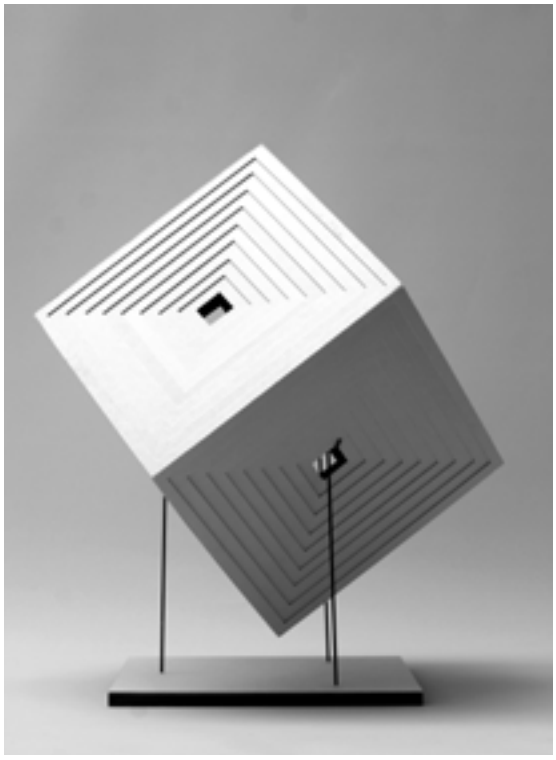
INTERIOR FORCE

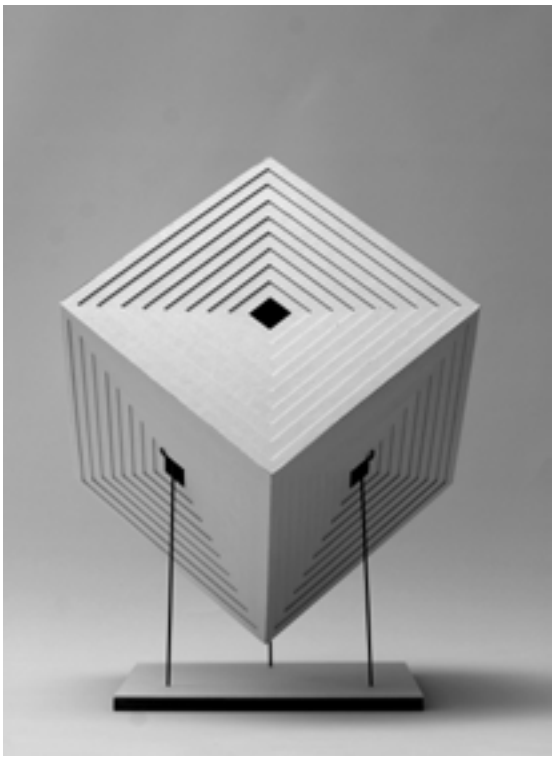




LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

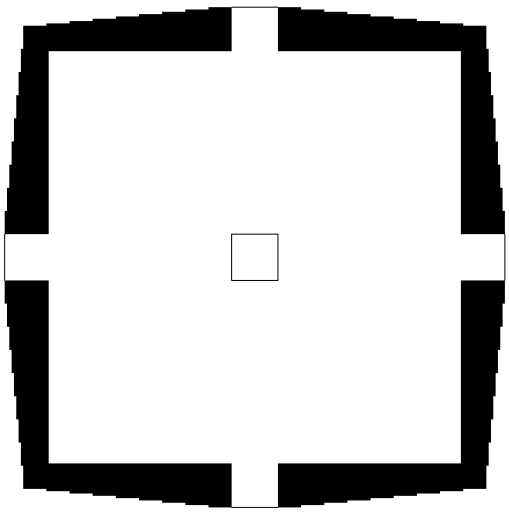


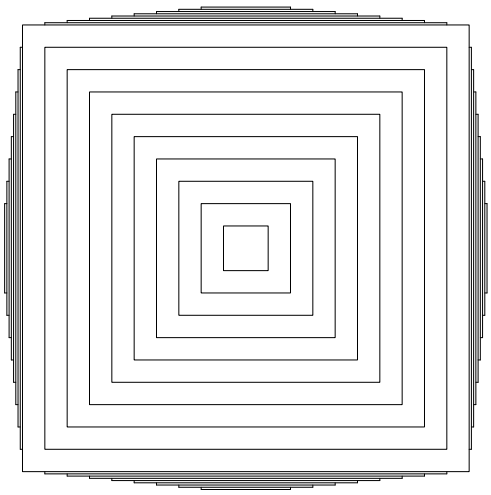


LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

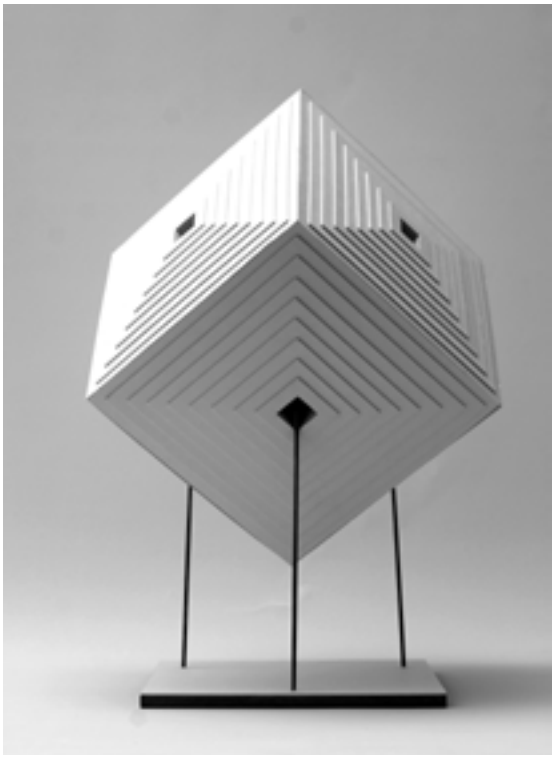
EXTERIOR FORCE

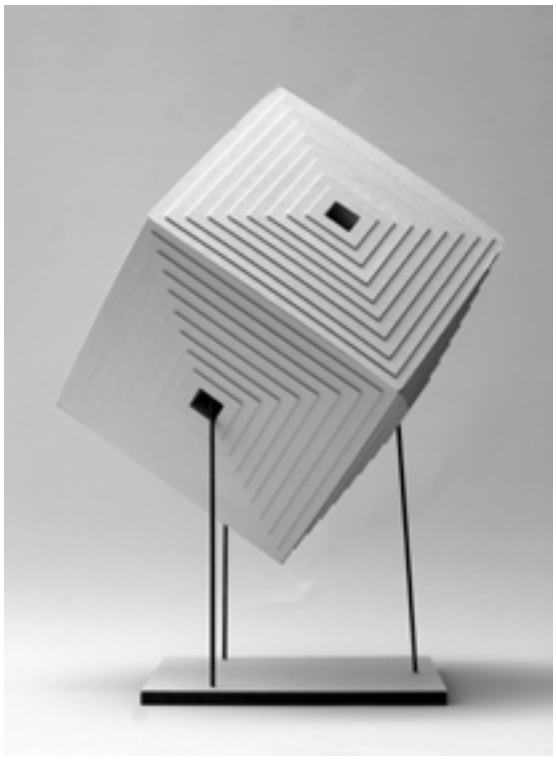




LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS





LOGOS

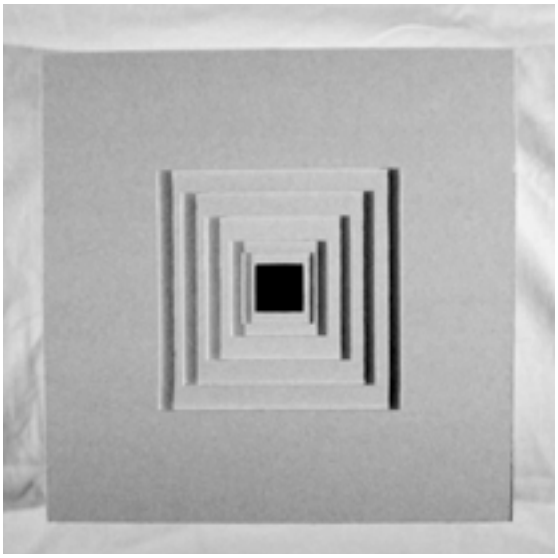
OUTCOME

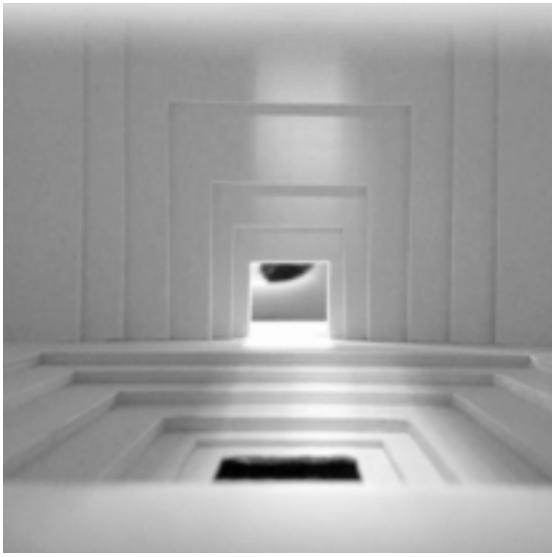
The gradual dislocation of the opening is meant to represent a gravitational force directed towards an imaginary point in space placed within the box.

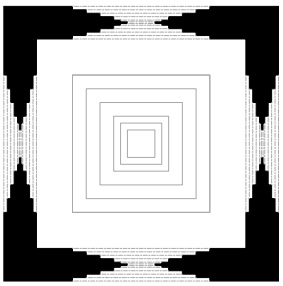
The different thickness's of the layers and the change of distance between them enhances the feeling of depth and profoundness of the model. This is further articulated by the double distance above the openings.

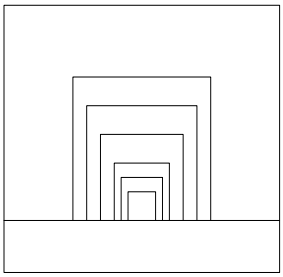
The walls are articulated the same from the inside towards the outside which places the imaginary point of gravity in several points at same time, increasing the complexity of the interpretation.

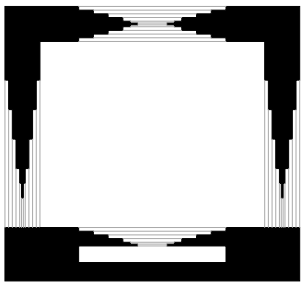
The model have a base which suggest that this is some sort of building, placing the model in a architectural category.





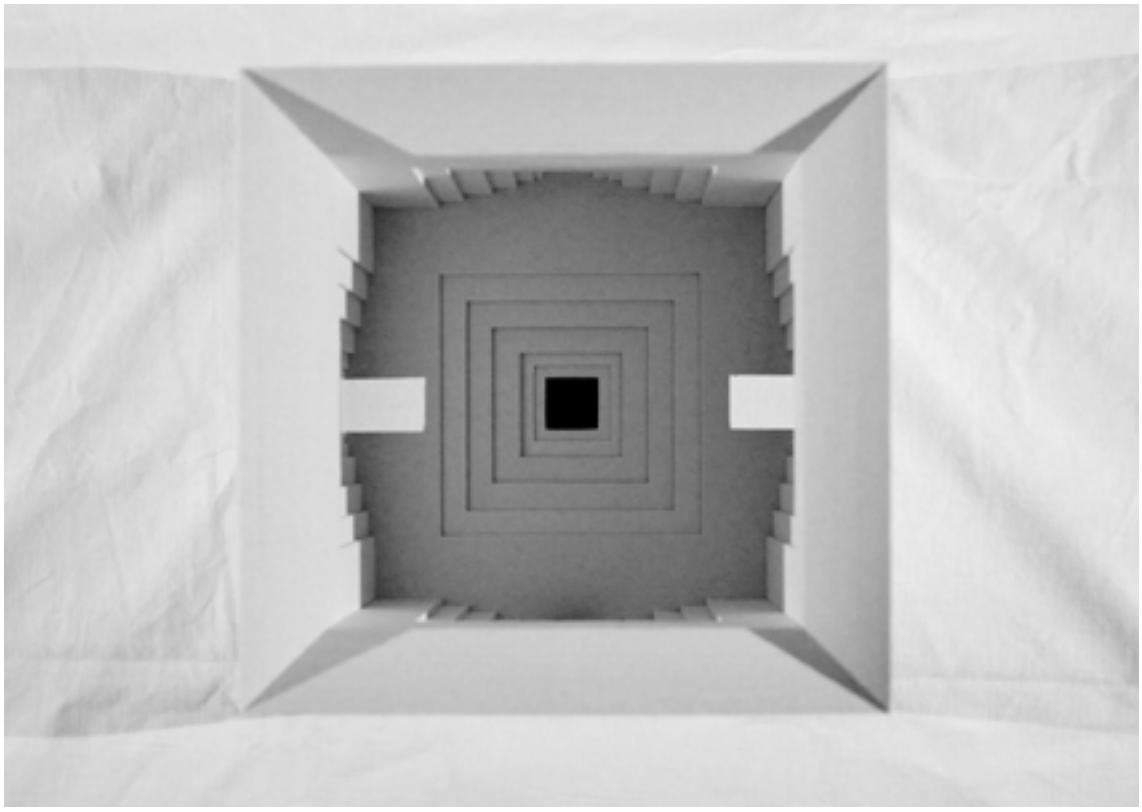


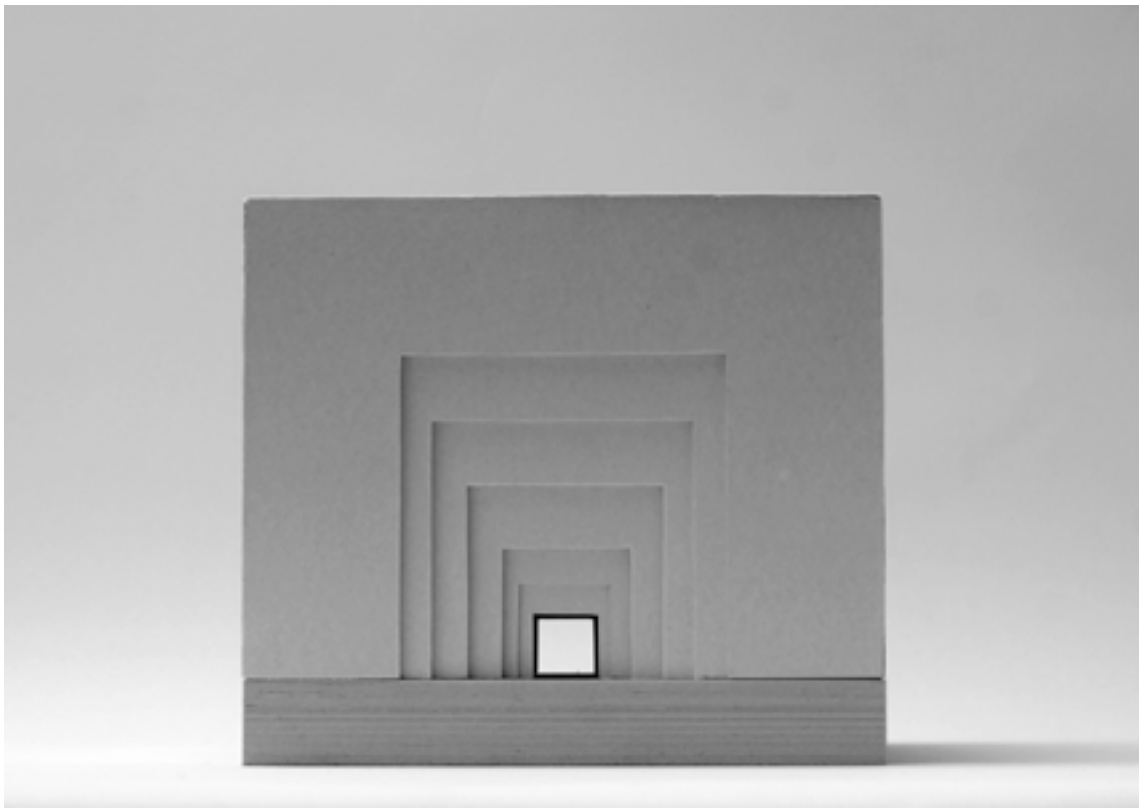




LOGOS

OUTCOME





LOGOS

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

CONTINUOUS
adjective | con·tin·u·ous

MEANING

1. Uninterrupted in time; without cessation

2. Being in immediate connection or spatial relationship

OPPOSITES

1. Broken (adjective)

1.1 Reduced to fragments; fragmented

1.2 Ruptured; torn; fractured

1.3 Changing direction abruptly

1.4 Fragmentary or incomplete

2. Discontinuous (adjective)

2.1 Not continuous; broken; interrupted; intermittent

2.2 Mathematics. (Of a function at a point) not continuous at the point

3. Intermittent (adjective)

3.1 Stopping or ceasing for a time; alternately ceasing and Beginning again

3.2 Alternately functioning and not functioning or Alternately functioning properly and improperly

4. Unfixed (verb)

4.1 To render no longer fixed; unfasten; detach; loosen; free

4.2 To unsettle, as the mind, traditions, or habits

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

CONTRADICTION

noun | con·tra·dic·tion

MEANING

1. The act of contradicting; gainsaying or opposition

2. Assertion of the contrary or opposite; denial

3. A statement or proposition that contradicts or denies another or itself and is logically incongruous

4. Direct opposition between things compared; inconsistency

5. A contradictory act, fact, etc

OPPOSITES

1. Accord (noun)

1.1 Proper relationship or proportion; harmony

1.2 A harmonious union of sounds, colors, etc

1.3 Consent or concurrence of opinions or wills; agreement

2. Concurrence (noun)

2.1 The act of concurring

2.2 Accordance in opinion; agreement

2.3 Cooperation, as of agents or causes; combined action or effort

2.4 Simultaneous occurrence; coincidence

2.5 Geometry. a point that is in three or more lines simultaneously

2.6 Law. a power equally held or a claim shared equally

2.7 Archaic. competition; rivalry

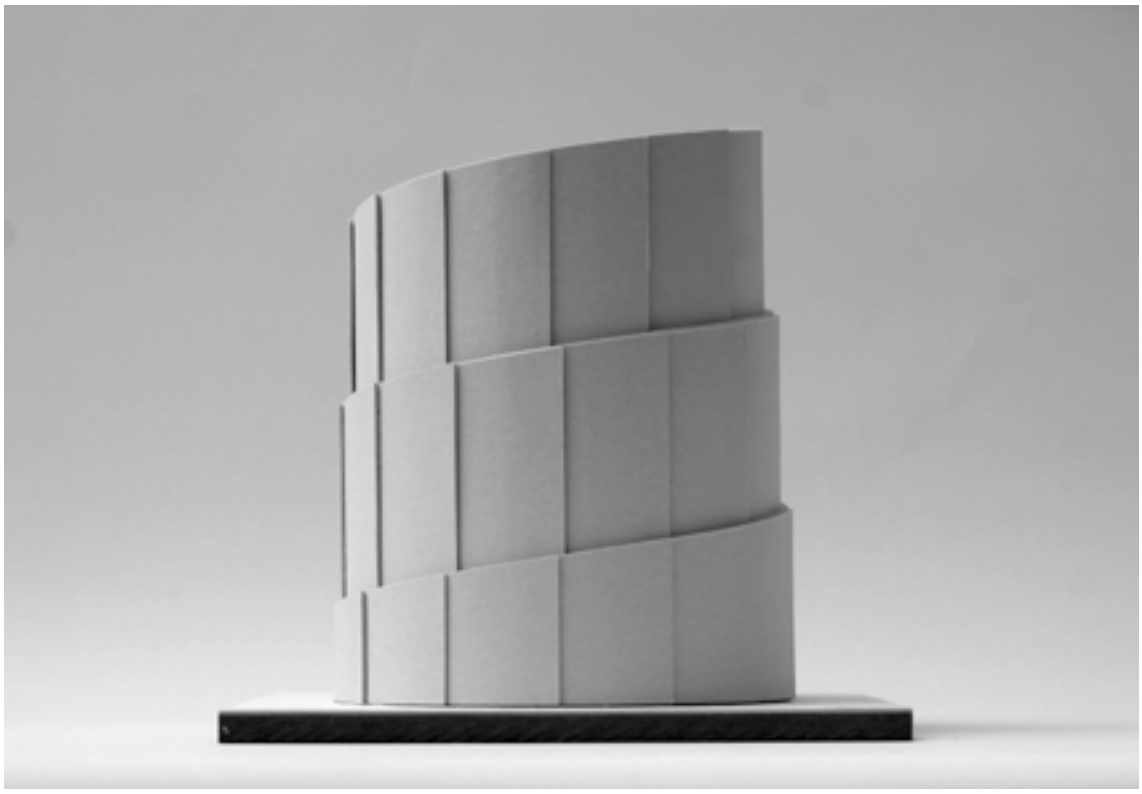
3. Harmony (noun)

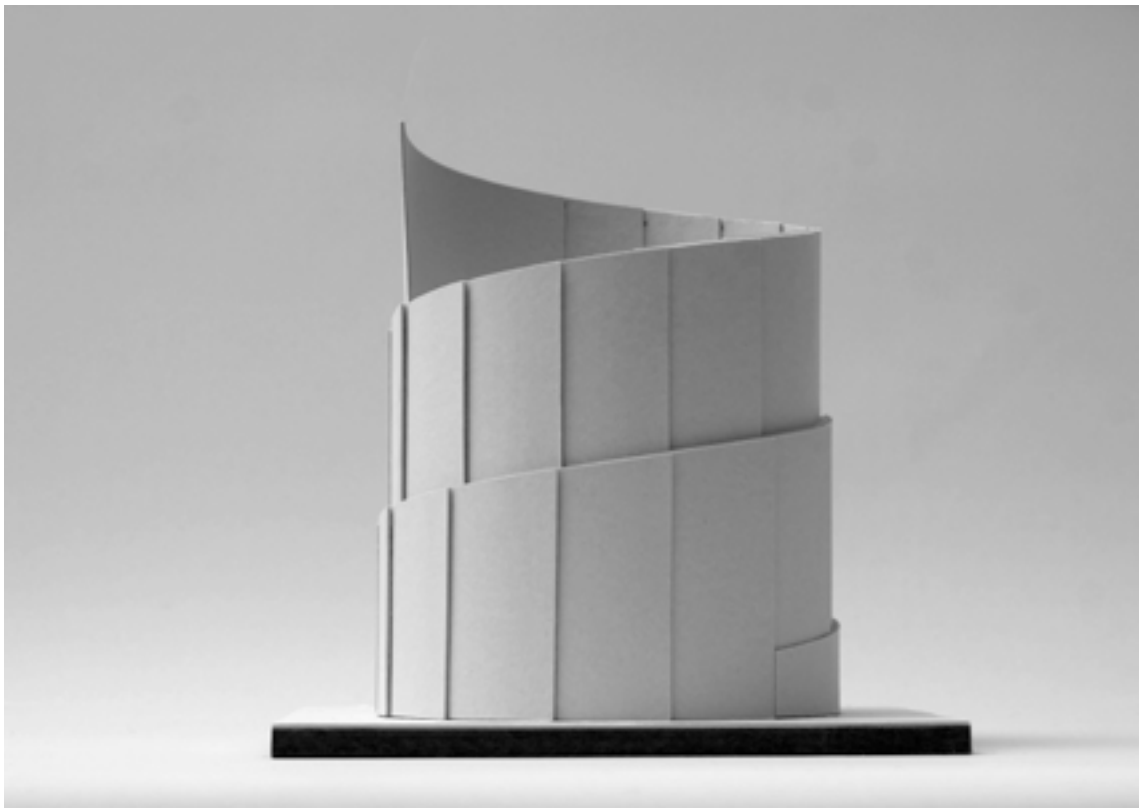
3.1 Agreement; accord; harmonious relations

3.2 A consistent, orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts; Congruity

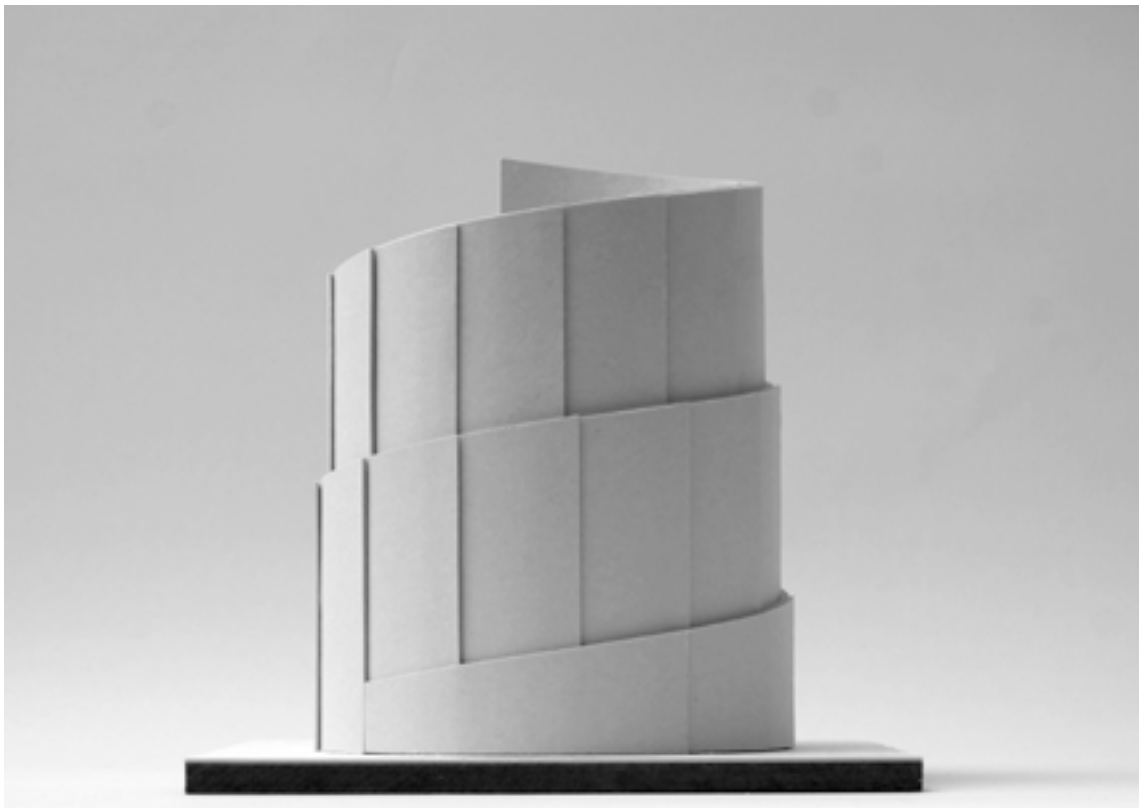
LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

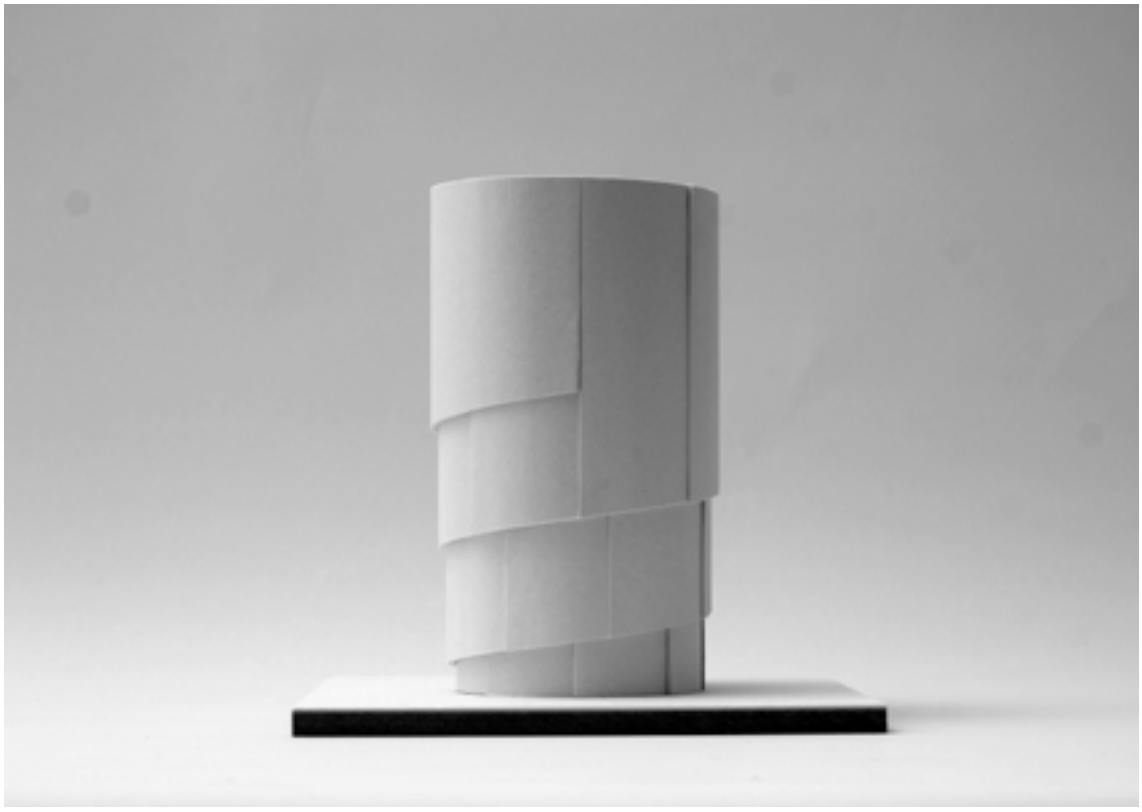


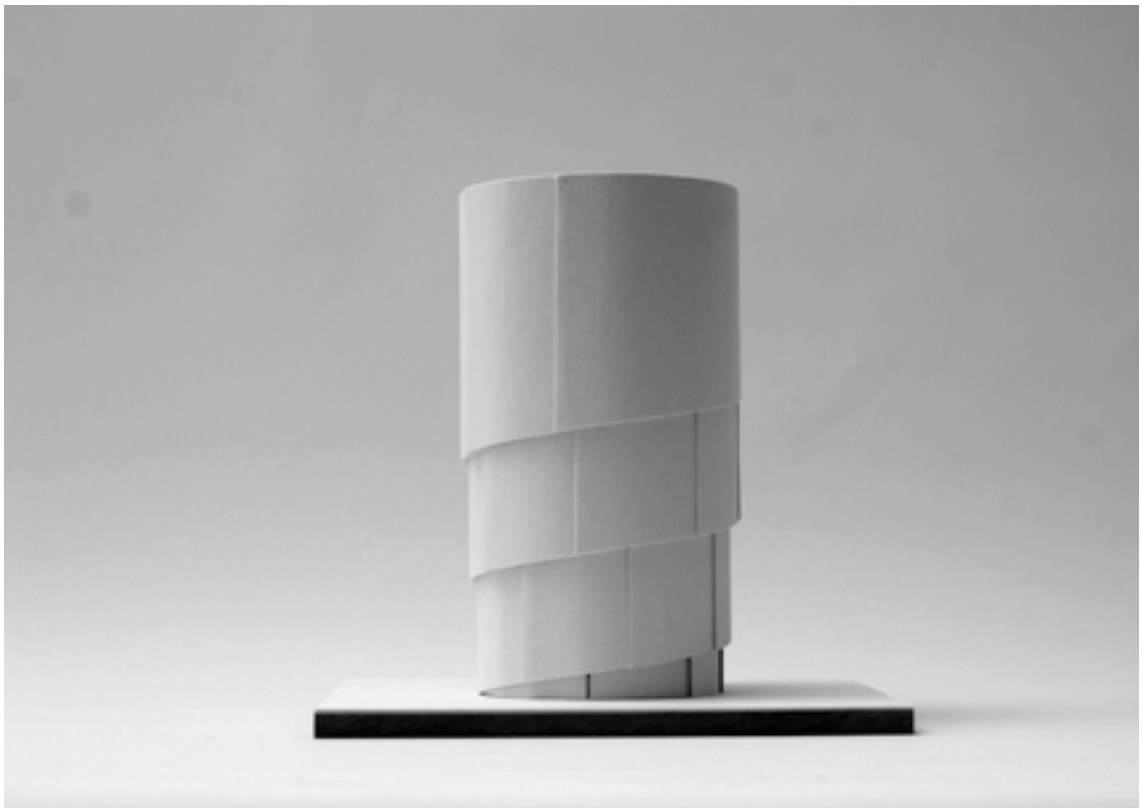


LOGOS

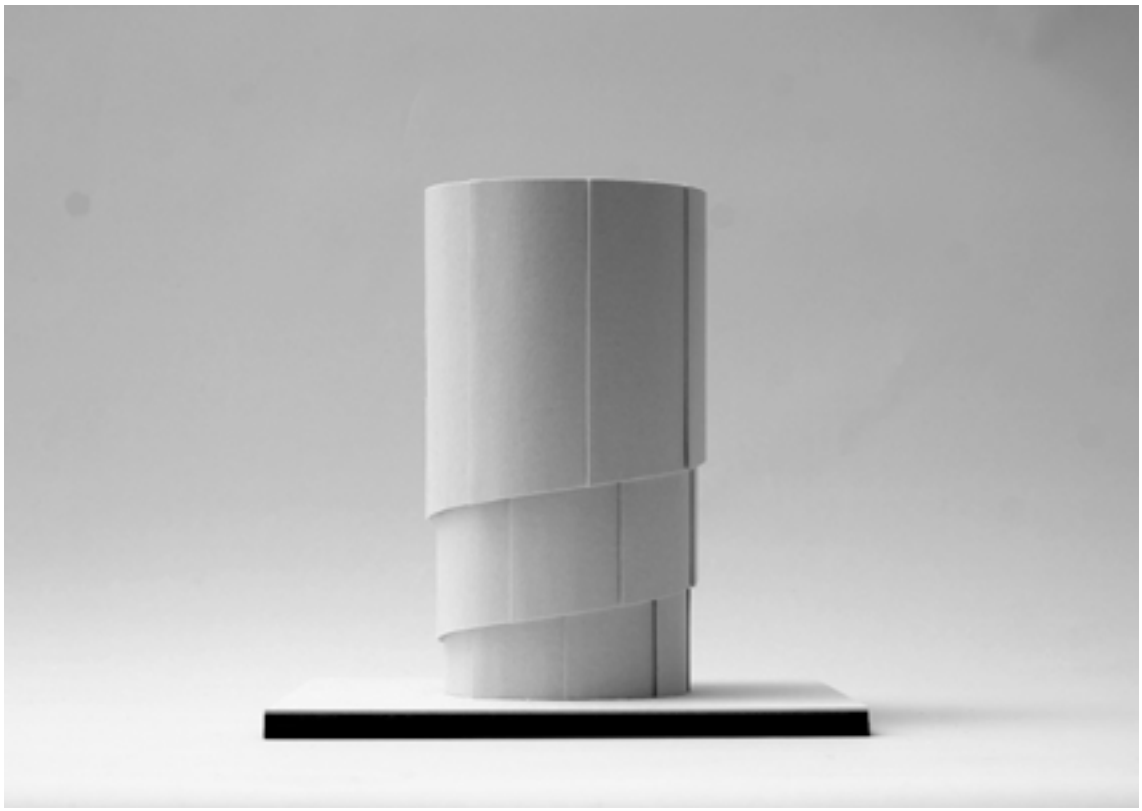


PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS





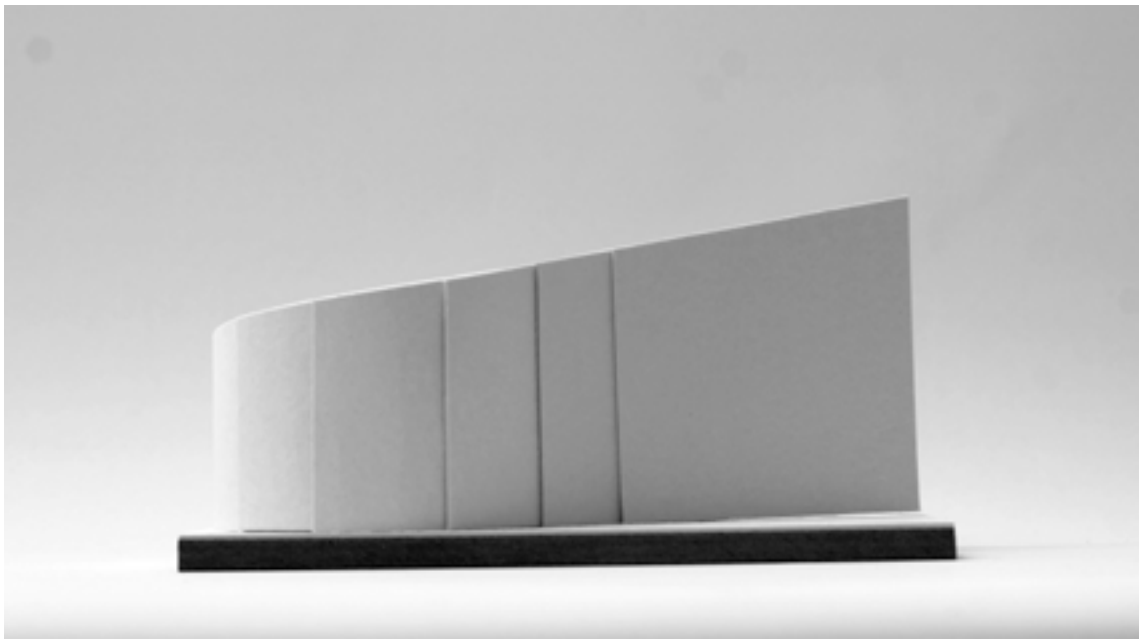
LOGOS

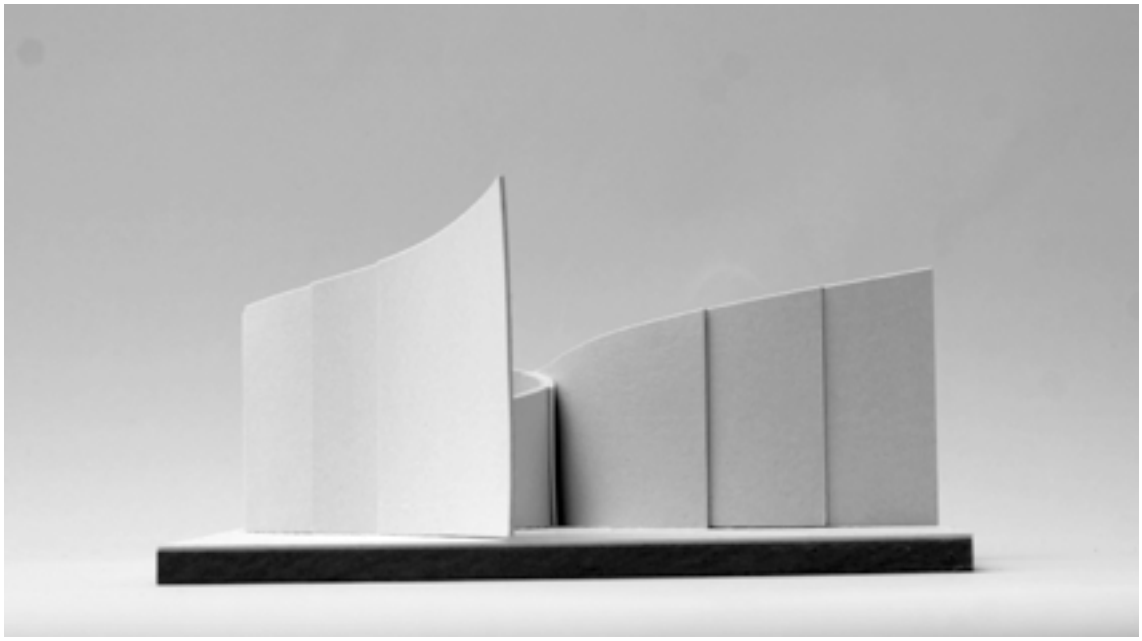


OUTCOME

The curved, circular wall gives the impression of a wall without end, not interrupting the continuation of the space. The layers of sheets gives a vertical direction whilst the overall shape suggest a horizontal one. By breaking the circular form it breaks free of an expected continuation yet follows the logic of the system as a whole.

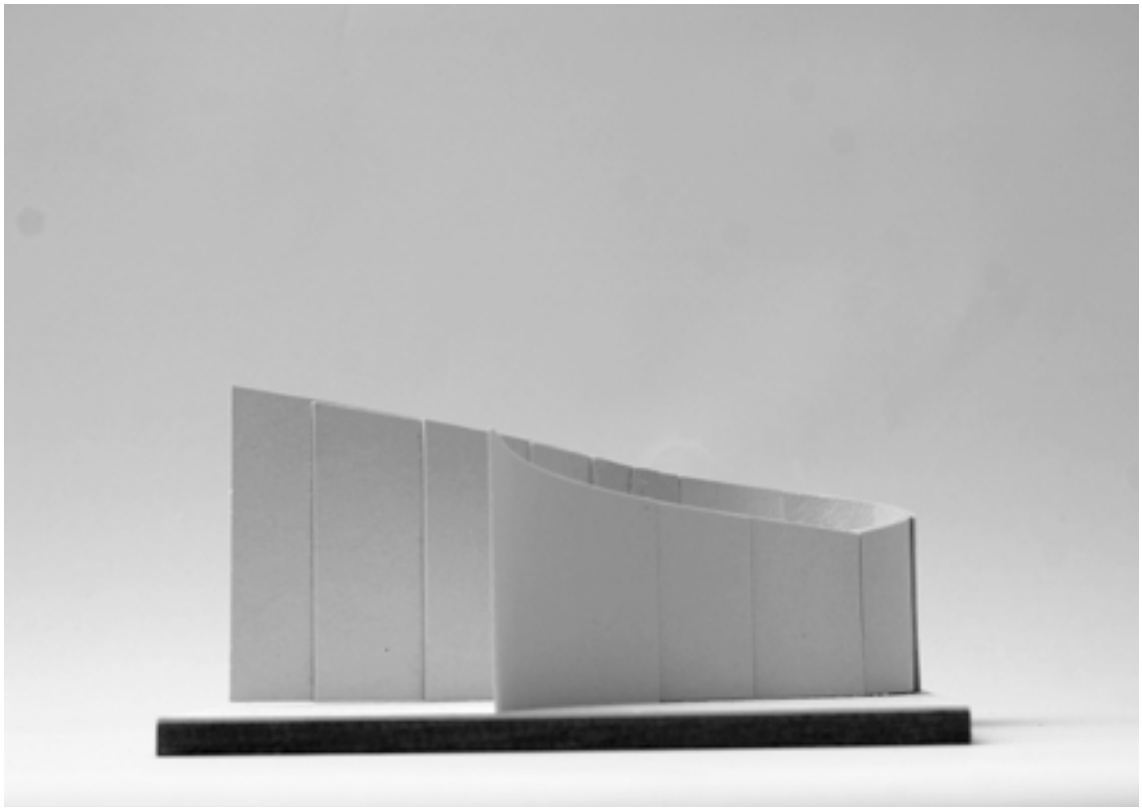
The cut at the edge of the baseplate suggests a continuation of the model and that it's just a part of a greater whole. This suggestion also creates a bit of perplexity concerning inside - outside of the model, not being sure what is what.

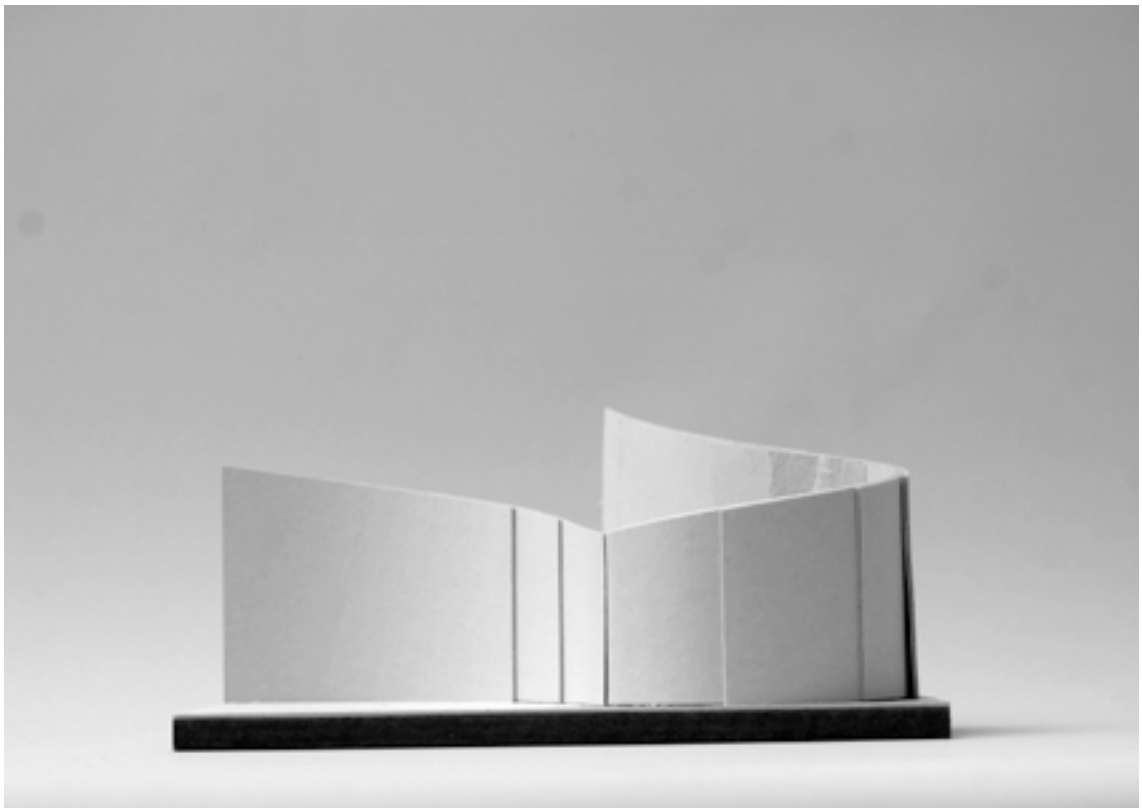




LOGOS

OUTCOME





LOGOS

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

MOMENTARY
adjective | mo·men·tary

MEANING

1. Lasting but a moment; very brief; fleeting

2. That might occur at any moment; ever impending

3. Effective or recurring at every moment; constant

OPPOSITES

1. Lasting (adjective)

1.1 Continuing or enduring a long time; permanent; durable

2. Lengthy (adjective)

2.1 Having or being of great length; very long

2.2 Tediously verbose; very long; too long

3. Long-lived (adjective)

3.1 Having a long life, existence, or duration

3.2 (Of an object) lasting or functioning a long time

4. Permanent (adjective)

4.1 Existing perpetually; everlasting, especially without significant change

4.2 Intended to exist or function for a long, indefinite period without regard to unforeseeable conditions

4.3 Long-lasting or nonfading

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

SENSATION
noun | sen·sa·tion

MEANING

1. The operation or function of the senses; perception or awareness of stimuli through the senses

2. A mental condition or physical feeling resulting from stimulation of a sense organ or from internal bodily change, as cold or pain

3. Physiology. The faculty of perception of stimuli

4. A general feeling not directly attributable to any given stimulus, as discomfort, anxiety, or doubt

5. A mental feeling, especially a state of excited feeling

OPPOSITES

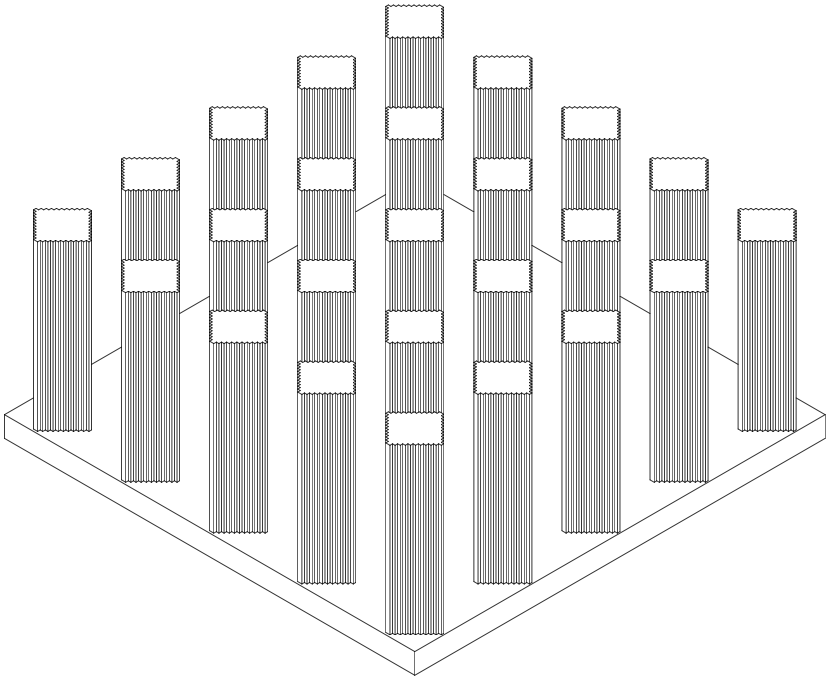
1. Physicality (noun)

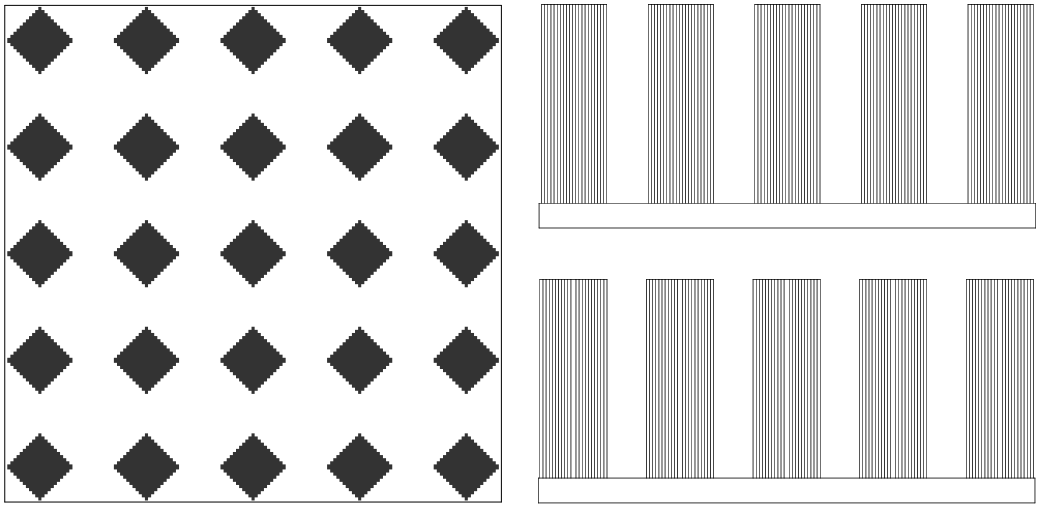
1.1 The physical attributes of a person, especially when overdeveloped or overemphasized

1.2 Preoccupation with one's body, physical needs, or appetites

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

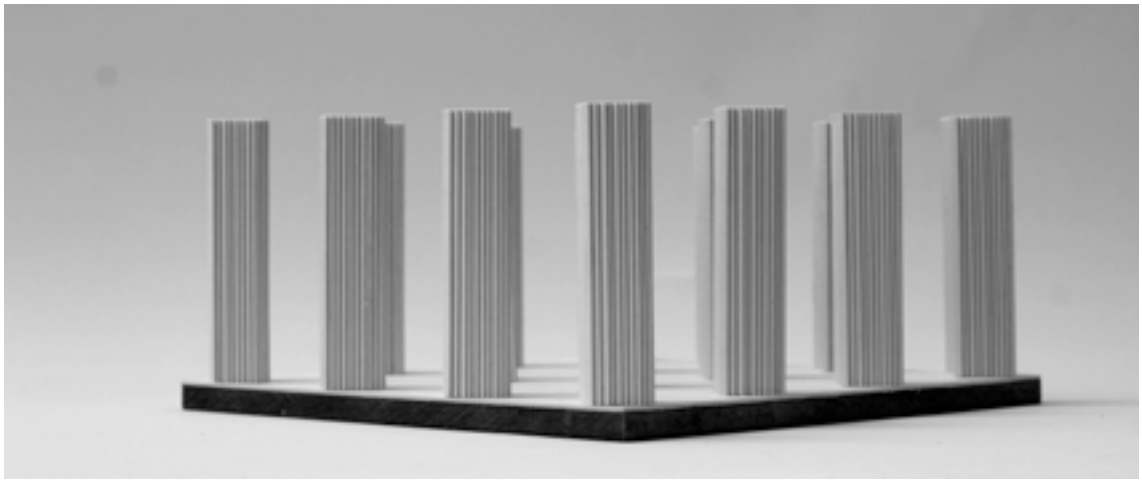
FREESTANDING OBJECTS

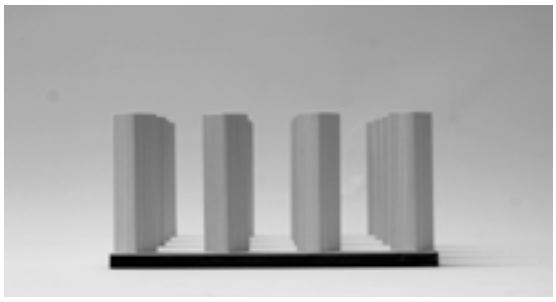


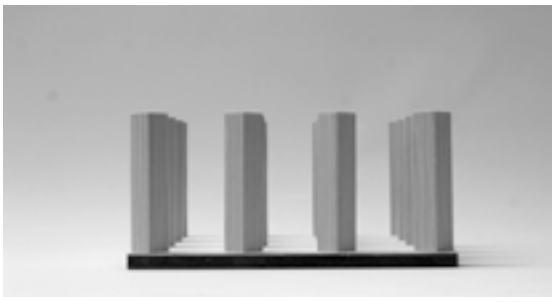


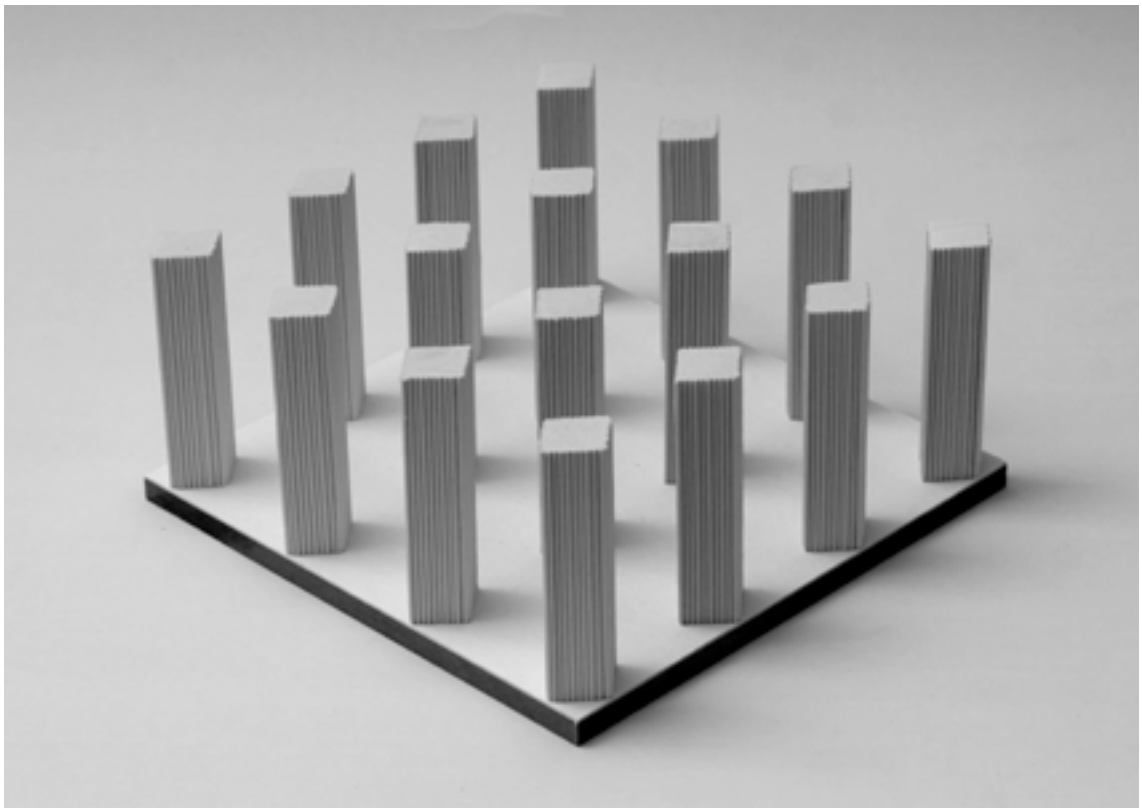
LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS





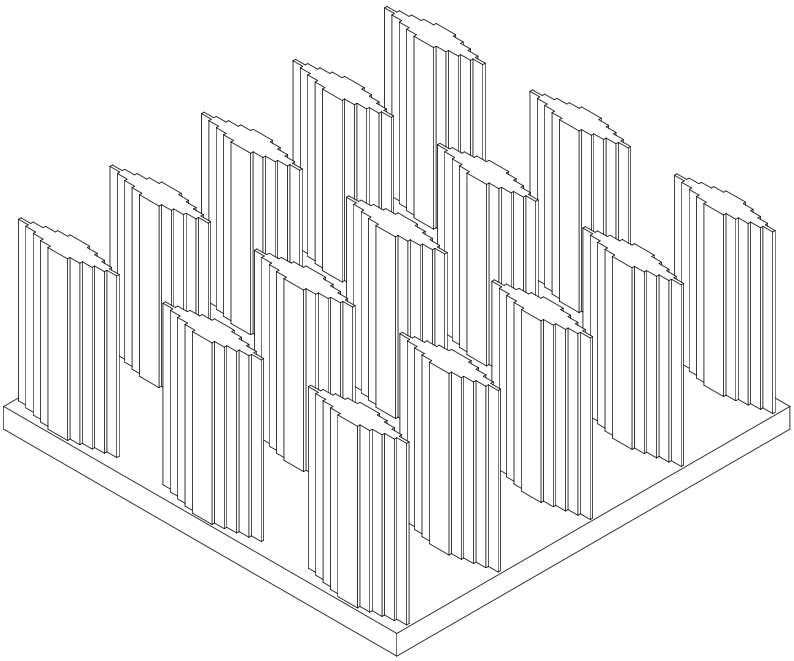


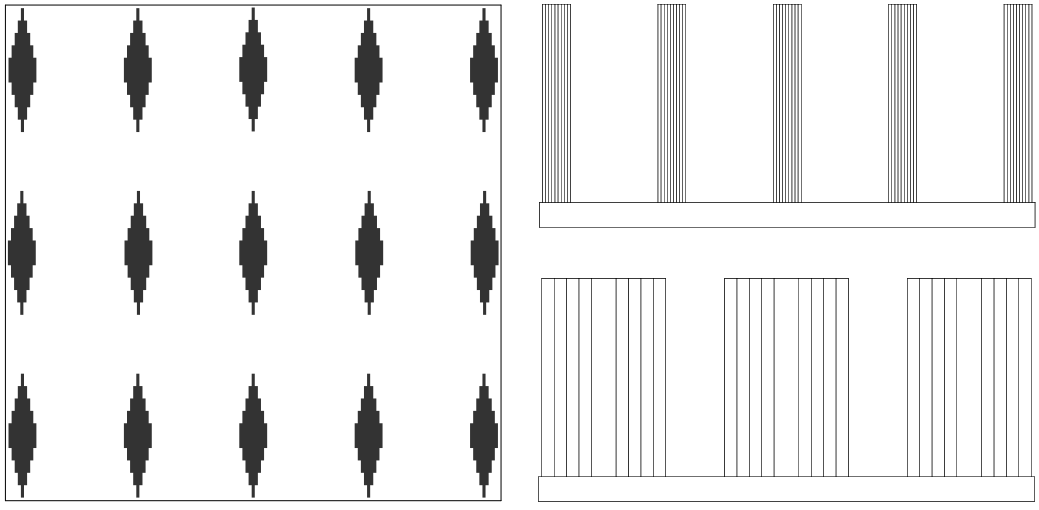


LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

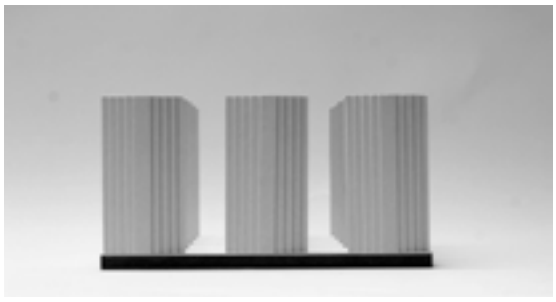
OBJECTS MERGING

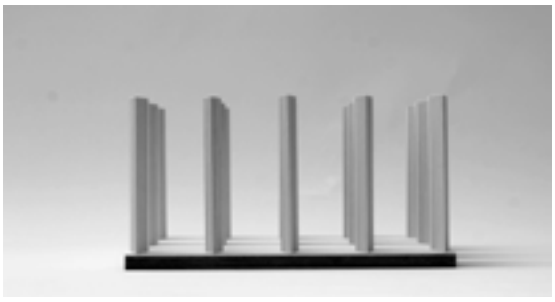


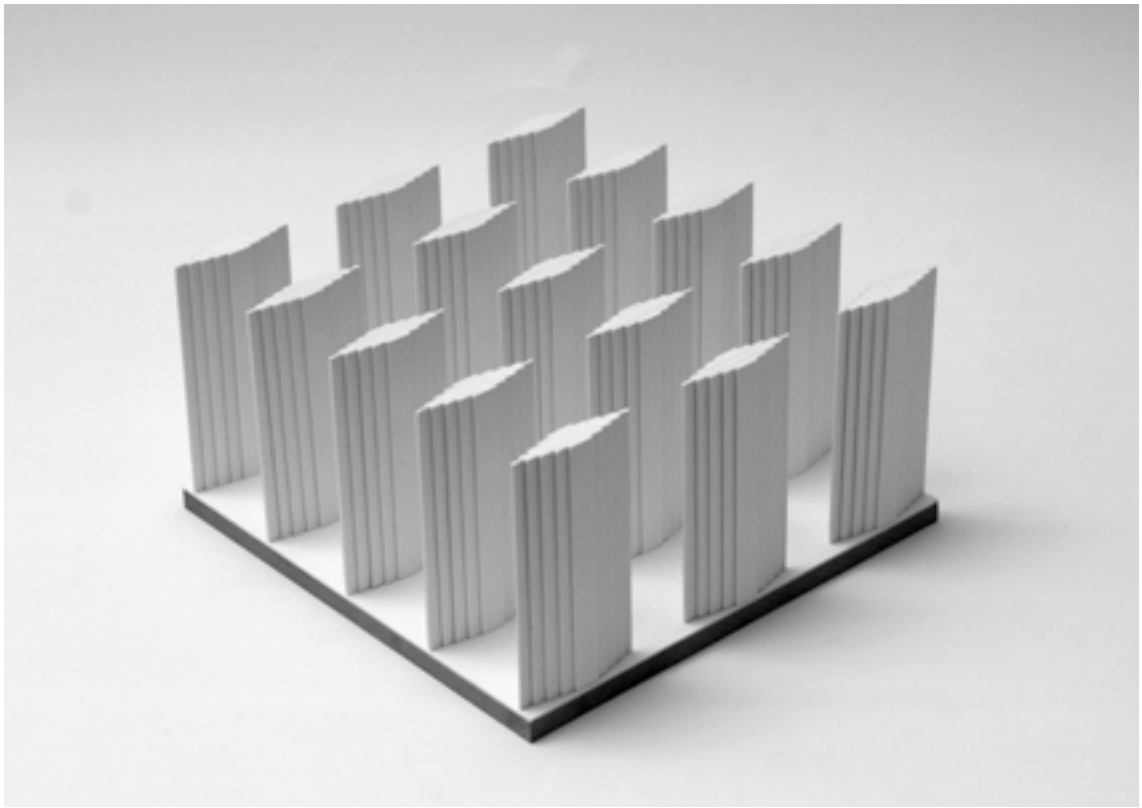


LOGOS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS







LOGOS

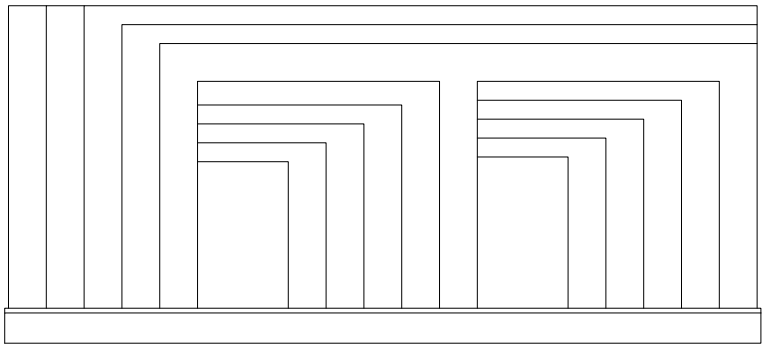
OUTCOME

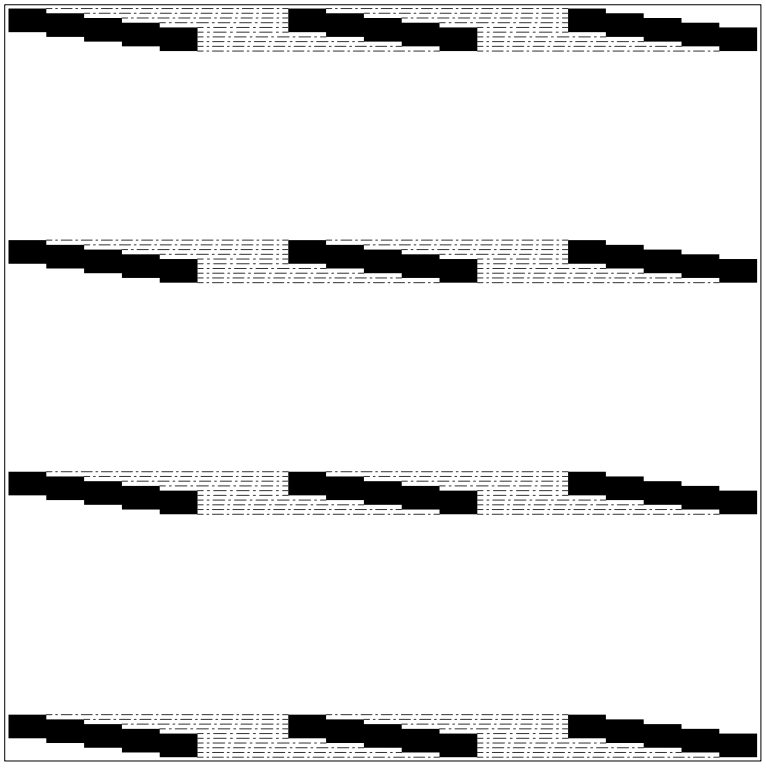
For something to be momentary a movement of sorts is required. By moving along the walls, the aligned openings will, depending on the angle, create sightlines through all of them.

By the direction of the sheets the entire wall seem to be moving and being dissolved and the openings about to shut.

Each wall have the same appearance regardless what side of it you are looking making the walls asymetrical if standing between two of them.

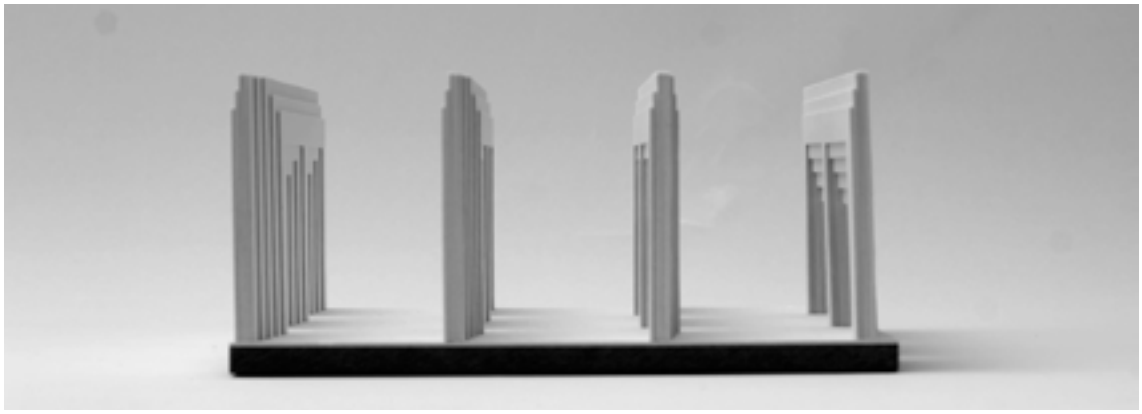
The model is a continuation of the earlier studies, seemingly frozen in a moment of time.

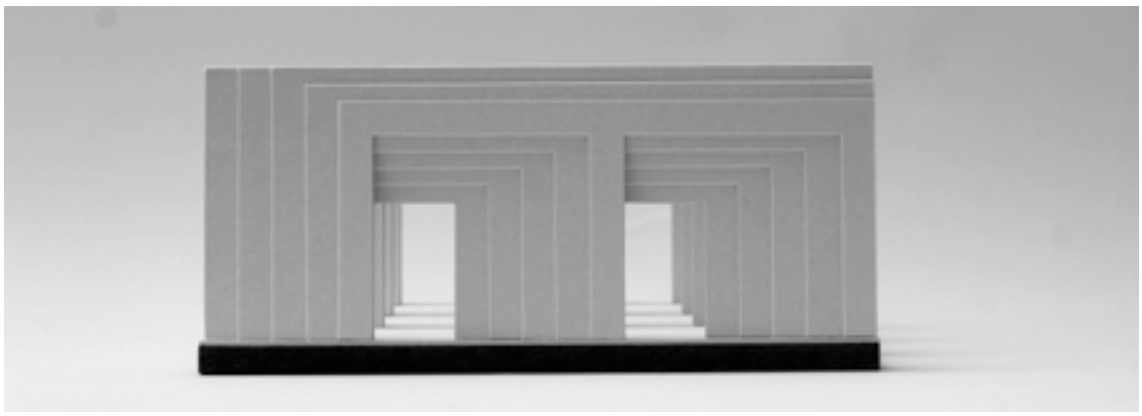


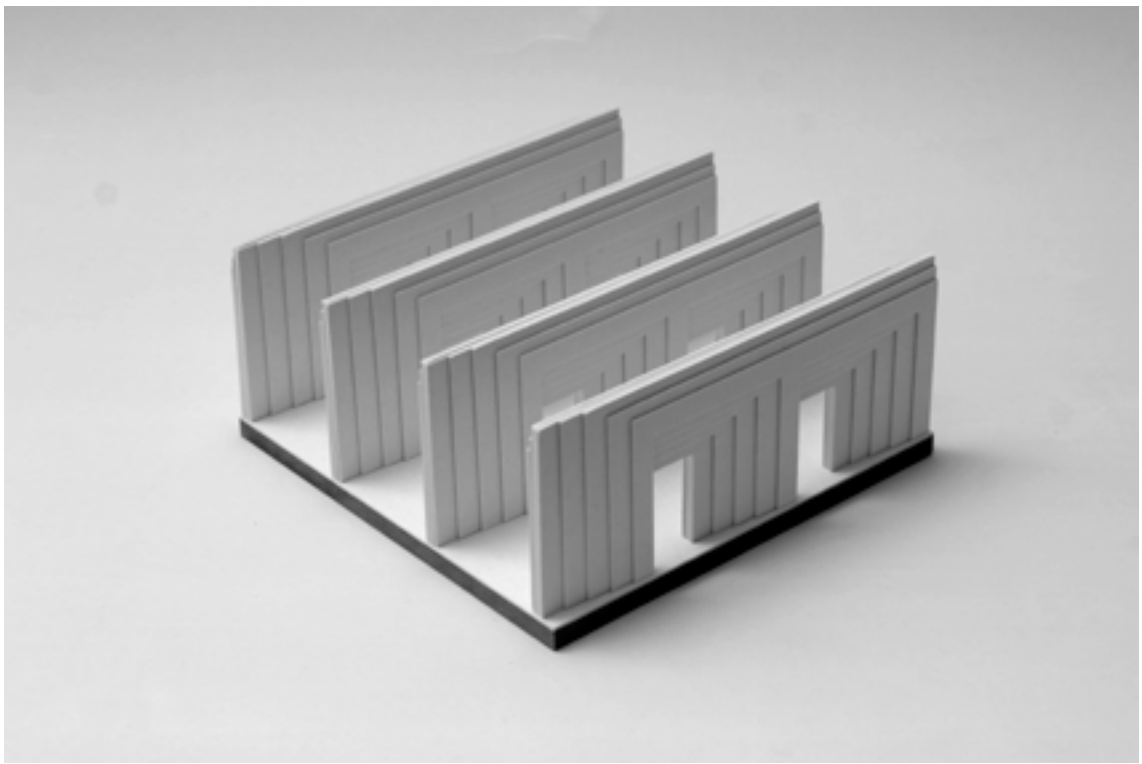


LOGOS

OUTCOME







LOGOS

INVESTIGATION II

NIETZSCHE

For exercise II the point of departure is paragraph 217 of Nietzsches book Human all too human.

In this piece Nietzche is discussing the desensualization of higher art. His claim is that during the evolution of modern music the ears have become increasingly intellectual. He regarded music as the highest artistic expression.

Literature may be regarded as the most rational of the arts, how would a irrational text look like? The investigation study how text without punctuation are structured and the experience of reading one.

> *"In fact, all of our senses have become somewhat dulled precisely because they immediately inquire for the reason, that is, for what "it means,'' and no longer for what "it is""*
>
> *"The more capable of thoughts the eye and ear become, the closer they come to the limits where they become unsensuous : pleasure is displaced into the brain, the sensory organs themselves become dull and weak, the symbolic more and more takes the place of what exists"*
>
> *"Meanwhile it is still said: the world is uglier than ever, but it signifies a more beautiful world than there has ever been."*
>
> HUMAN ALL TOO HUMAN, 217

LOGOS

INVESTIGATION II

SAMUEL BECKETT
HOW IT IS

This novel/poem of Beckett is written completely without punctuation and capitalisation, it's written in short paragraphs and divided into 3 parts: before Pim, with Pim and after Pim.

The story is written as an interior monologue. The narrator is lying in the mud, almost completely physically incapacitated.

By not using punctuation and capitalisation the story is very difficult to read, requiring a high amount of concentration to be understandable, it's easy to zoom out of the text whilst still reading. The reading becomes automated, unfocused.

The story has no clear structure or form also making it confusing. The thoughts of the narrator appears arbitrary and incoherent, much like human thinking is, jumping between subjects.

> *"ABOVE the light goes on little scenes in the mud or memories of scenes past he finds the words for the sake of peace HERE howls this life he can't or can't any more he was able once how it waws before me the the little there was neasrly all like me my life here before Pim with Pim how it was the little there was i've said it I've been able I think so as I hear it and say to make an end with him a warning to me murmur to the mud quick quick soon I won't be able either never any Pim never was never anything of all this little quick then the little that is left add it quick before Bom before he comes to ask me how it was my life here before him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before Bom how it is"*

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

ABOVE the light goes on little scenes in the mud or memories of scenes past he
ABOVE the light goes on little scenes in the mud or memories of scenes past he finds
ABOVE the light goes on little scenes in the mud or memories of scenes past he finds

finds the words for the sake of peace HERE howls this life he can't or can't
the words for the sake of peace HERE howls this life he can't or can't any more he
the words for the sake of peace HERE howls this life he can't or can't any more he was

any more he was able once how it was before me the little there was nearly all
was able once how it was before me the little there was nearly all like me my life
able once how it was before me the little there was nearly all like me my life here before

like me my life here before Pim with Pim how it was the little there was I've
here before Pim with Pim how it was the little there was I've said it I've been able I
Pim with Pim how it was the little there was I've said it I've been able I think so as

said it I've been able I think so as I hear it and say to make an end with him
think so as I hear it and say to make an end with him a warning to me murmur to the
I hear it and say to make an end with him a warning to me murmur to the mud quick

a warning to me murmur to the mud quick quick soon I won't be able either never
mud quick quick soon I won't be able either never any Pim never was never any-
quick soon I won't be able either never any Pim never was never anything of all this little

any Pim never was never anything of all this little quick then the little that is
thing of all this little quick then the little that is left add it quick before Bom before he
quick then the little that is left add it quick before Bom before he comes to ask me how it

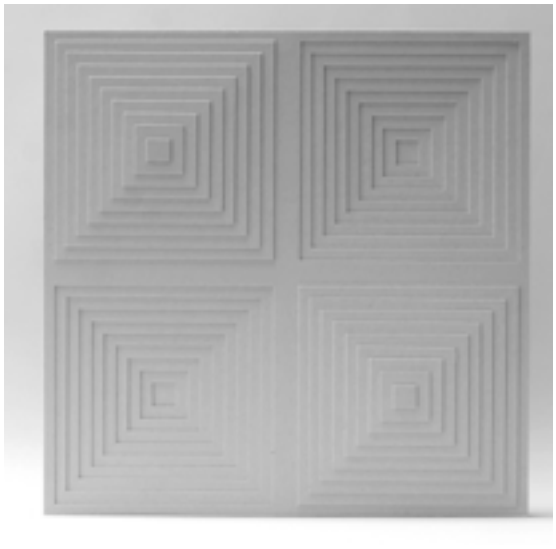
left add it quick before Bom before he comes to ask me how it was my life
comes to ask me how it was my life here before him the little that is left add it quick
was my life here before him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before Bom

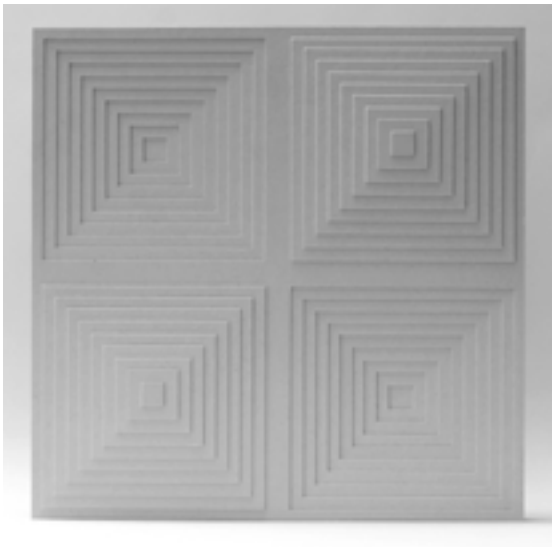
here before him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before
how it was after Pim before Bom how it is
how it is

Bom how it is

LOGOS

MODEL STUDIES





LOGOS

OUTCOME

The structure of How it is allows the reader to interpret it in an infinite number of ways. In the structural analysis this manifest itself as overlapping readings. The interpretation of this observation is done so that the layers of sheets are dislocated in three dimensions as well as overlapping. On one side there are three spaces merging into one that continuous into another one that is partially divided into 2 more.

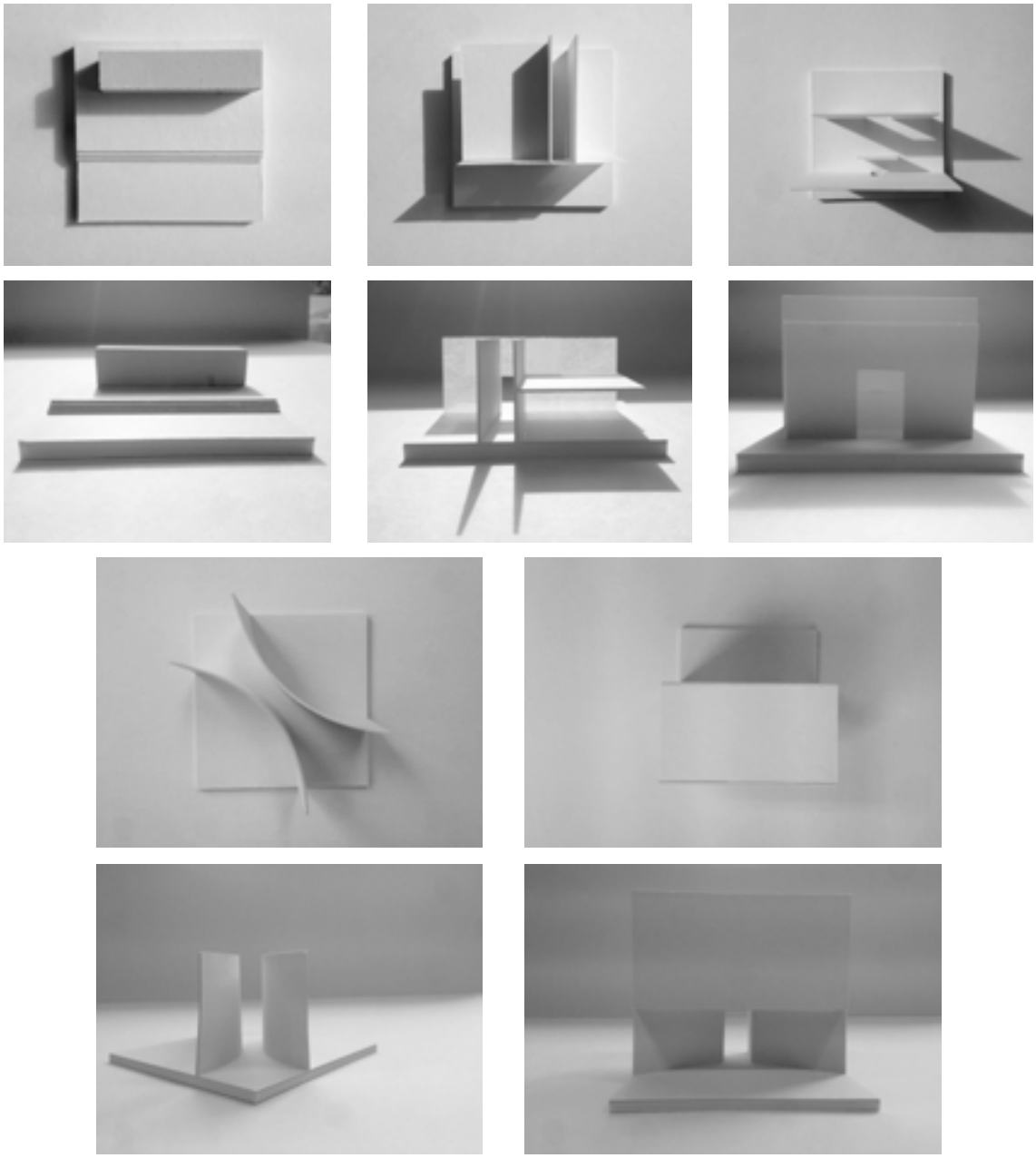
These spaces are both overlapping in terms of their direction as well as by the dislocated layers of sheets.

LOGOS

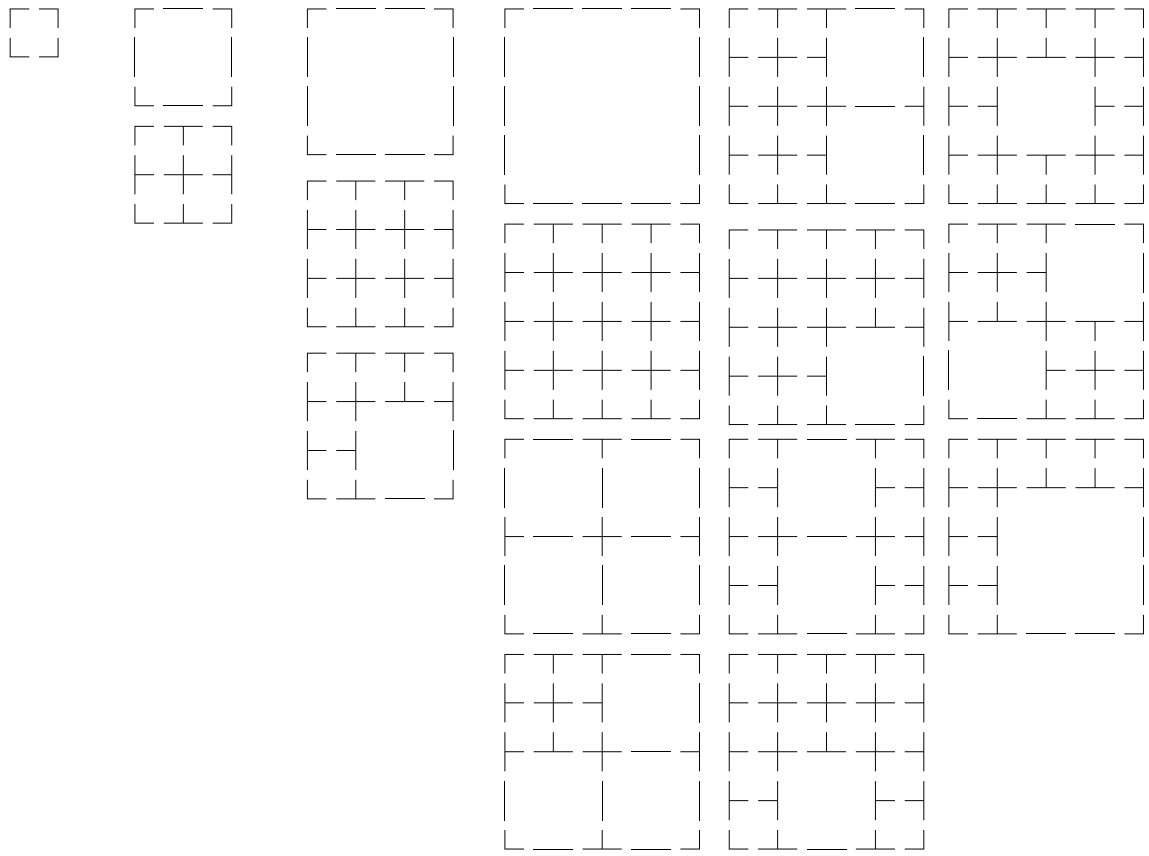
EPILOGOS

noun | epi·lo·gos

INVESTIGATIONS DURING THE PROCESS



EPILOGOS



REFLECTIONS

In the book *The Words Between the Spaces* Thomas A. Markus and Deborah Cameron argues that our experience and understanding of buildings inevitably are mediated by language and discourse. Buildings, experiences and our perceptions of buildings are significally shaped by the language that is used about buildings.

Their argument for this is that architectural production is mainly an act of social interaction, maybe even more now than when the book was written almost 15 years ago, and for social interaction language is essential. Thus our common conception of meaning of words, the prevalent hegemony etc. is of great importance and understanding the processes behind this.

This project have not had the aim at answering these questions but is an attempt at manipulating, translating and transforming language into architectural objects. The ideas that triggered them however go beyond the investigation itself.

This research about language and architecture is rather scarce and expanding the knowledge would benefit both the architectural profession as well as society as a whole.

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