

Reclaiming Modern Architecture

An Urban Visual Narrative of
Kuwait City

Yara Hadi
Thesis Book
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Reclaiming Modern Architecture

An Urban Visual Narrative of Kuwait City

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Design in Interior Studies [Adaptive Reuse] in the Department of Interior Architecture of the Rhode Island School of Design

By

Yara Hadi

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Approved by Master's Examination Committee:

Jonathan Bell

Critic, Department of Interior Architecture, Primary Thesis Advisor

Markus Berger

Professor, Department of Interior Architecture

Julia Bernert

Critic, Department of Interior Architecture

Jongwan Kwon

Critic, Department of Interior Architecture

Francesca Liuni

Assistant Professor, Department of Interior Architecture, Secondary Thesis Advisor & Thesis Chair

Liliane Wong

Department Head, Department of Interior Architecture

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To my family,

Raghda Al Harmi, Tariq Hadi, Randa Hadi, and Ibraheem Hadi, thank you for all you did in helping me with my thesis project.

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Nick Heywood

Critic, Department of Interior Architecture, Adviser: Writing and Thesis Book

Hasan-Uddin Khan

Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, Guest Critic

Paul Mayencourt

Critic, UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design, Consultant: Structure and Materials

Ijlal Muzaffar

Associate Professor, Theory and History of Art and Design, Graduate Program Director, Global Arts and Cultures, Rhode Island School of Design, External Advisor

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ABSTRACT

For a city to be remembered, to be successful, to be desired, a distinct connection has to be made between the city-dweller and the city itself. In 1938 Kuwait transformed from a town that relied on trade into a single resource exporter of oil, fueling a booming modern economy. The influx of the automobile and modern solutions to Western ways of living would forever change the city. In the speed of these developments, critical aspects of city planning such as the pedestrian and the harsh desert climate were overlooked. Kuwait began to lose a connection between the city and its people. With the rise and spread of Western Modernism during this time, Kuwait City adopted a new medium of architectural expression that disregarded much of its former patterns of a heterogeneous urban fabric, and abandoning intricate street networks that produced social relations amongst the people and a sense of community.¹ In *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, Alison and Peter Smithson argued that **“Kuwaitis abandoned an older cohesive order and replaced it with a fragmented one which is in no way Arab.”**² In no building is this more apparent than in the so-called ‘Souk’ Al Manakh.

¹ Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 78.

² Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, 136.

Built as a ‘modern souk’, Souk Al Manakh would likely fall under the category of mixed-use, using polite terms. Realistically however, it is closer to a chimera: multiple building types wishfully combined to form an ideal that falls short of each ambition. In essence a modified parking garage, it runs against the grain in that the top story is an office, while the two lowest stories are retail. Neither function

as intended. Designed under the guise of Modernism, this failure is a rallying cry for a larger conversation about continued development in Kuwait City that takes into account the realities of place.

Like many cities, Kuwait suffers the remnants of unintended urban void after careless redevelopment. One way of addressing these issues is reinvigorating the notion of monument, or a destination to which people actually desire to go. The life of a city is ultimately the life of the pedestrian. How we reach certain places and what we do once we are there define the urban experience. Equally important is the network of paths and directions to and from these places and ultimately between the people themselves. Manakh, in Arabic, means *climate* as well as *market*. By extending the historical souk into the Souk Al Manakh and reintegrating the two, a commercial destination will be formed through a series of weaving ramps where people from all parts of the city can engage with one another and the city itself through a new journey that reveals an urban visual narrative of Kuwait City.

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Kuwait, I was always fascinated by the architecture that filled the city. However, I never understood why they looked the way they did. I just knew that it was how I identified Kuwait City. After studying in the United States and flying back home every couple of years, I noticed that some of the identifiable buildings were missing. They were demolished. In 2019, while I was applying to the Rhode Island School of Design, one of the most iconic modern buildings in the city was on the cusp of demolition. Al Sawaber Complex by Arthur Erickson was considered **“A modernist gem in a hectic city.”**³ With many efforts to save the building, the destruction of the complex was underway. Coming into RISD, I knew that for my thesis I wanted to understand and learn more about Kuwait’s urban history and urban cycle. Thus, my journey began in Spring 2020 in understanding the issue of the city to formulate my thesis project.

³
Abdulaal, wmf.org.

THE EVOLUTION OF KUWAIT CITY

THE OLD CITY

“Architecture of Sociability”



4
Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 57.

5
Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 101.

6
Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 75.

7
Kuwait Souk Study, 16.

8
Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 47.

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Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 71.

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Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 71.

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Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 71.

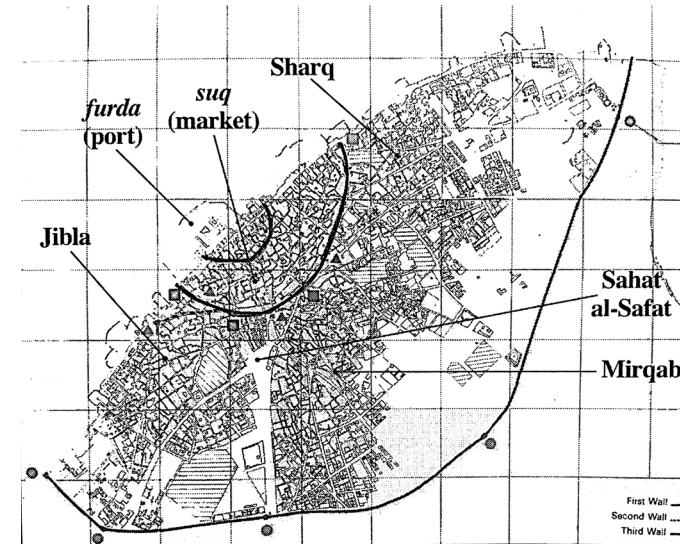
The old city, formally known as Kuwait Town, had a complex urban life that was made of two quarters; Sharq, the maritime quarter, and Jibla, the mercantile quarter.⁴ Quarters can also be identified as districts, each having its own identity and character. The town was surrounded by an old mud wall that was last constructed in 1925 and demolished in 1957.⁵ The wall defined the edge of the city. The city's layout created social relations through its intricate street network. Those relationships created a sense of community within the city. The identity of the city was that it was a hybrid city.⁶ Locals and immigrants lived among each other without discrimination.

The souk was an important aspect of the city, especially since economically it relied on trade.⁷ Souks were considered landmarks within the city located near main streets. They were mainly located around mosques, always facing east. Mosques can be considered nodes in the city “...**which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling.**”⁸ Since mosques always face east, the users can always know where they stand in a city.

The architecture and built environment was directly influenced by the hot desert climate. Buildings were in clusters, and streets were narrow and irregular. The Arab town was simple “**due to the town's cell structure and organization of access.**”⁹ Architecturally, the aim of the built city was to reduce the area from sun exposure.

Vernacular architecture of Kuwait Town was completely functional and rational.¹⁰ This was not only due to the harsh desert climate but also the scarcity of materials. The concept of architecture was based on the human, social, cultural, and environmental needs.¹¹ Some notable elements of traditional Kuwaiti architecture are the courtyard, arcade, roof, and Diwan.





The courtyard was a dynamic space for social gatherings. **“...people gathered to socialize in an open, yet private living setting, and environmentally, it effectively modified climate conditions.”**¹² The courtyard protected the occupants from the sun, wind, and dust. The arcade acts as a double facade between the courtyard and other programs. Its main function was to prevent direct heat and light from entering those spaces.

The roof in Kuwait was an important aspect of architecture. During the hot summer months, it was used as a place to sleep because it allowed for breeze to flow through high parapet walls that were made out of decorative wood. Parapets also provided a sense of privacy in the home.¹³ A predominant program in a traditional house is the Diwaniya, which is still a very important element in almost every Kuwaiti house to this day. The Diwaniya is a place for public and or social gathering mainly used by men in the old days. It was located in the front of house, along the street for easy access to the public.

Materials were scarce. Indigenous materials included sun-dried mud pellets, seashore rocks which were incorporated with mud to build walls.¹⁴ Most walls were finished with plaster. Walls were very thick to help with insulation and keep the interior spaces cool. Surviving in the harsh desert climate was the number one priority when it came to the built environment in Kuwait Town.

¹² Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 71.

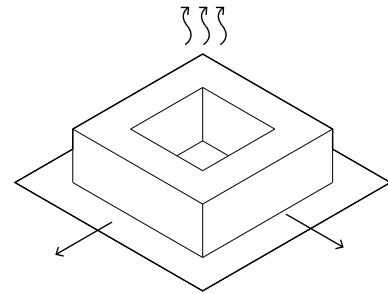
¹³ Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 72.

¹⁴ Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Housing*, 72.



THE OLD CITY

Architectural Elements



Traditional Courtyard

The Courtyard 'hosh'

The courtyard, also known as 'hosh' in Arabic, was an important element in traditional Kuwaiti architecture. "... **The courtyard functioned as a dynamic space where people gathered to socialize in an open...setting, and effectively modified climate conditions.**"¹⁵ The courtyard was a place that contrasted the bustling streets on the outside.¹⁶ Furthermore, the courtyard also modified the harsh climate. "**The courtyard always acted as a temperature regulator in the heat...**"¹⁷

15

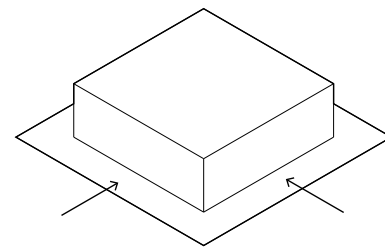
Al Bahar, *Traditional Kuwaiti Houses*, 71.

16

Warren and Fethi, *Traditional Houses in Baghdad*, 44.

17

Warren and Fethi, *Traditional Houses in Baghdad*, 102.



Buildings Today

Date Oasis

In the Gulf, the date palm is a very important species. It not only provided nutrition to the people but also provided material to weave baskets, ropes, etc.¹⁸ Gardens that were known to many Islamic regions were not very popular in the Middle East. However, Oases took forms of Date Gardens, also known as Date Oasis.¹⁹ Because of the hot arid climate, date palms were one of the few species that is able to grow and is very place specific. One individual date palm is not very suitable for climate control, however, when date palms are placed in groups closer to each other, a micro climate can be achieved that reduces direct solar radiation.²⁰

18

Gharipour, *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East*, 194

19

Gharipour, *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East*, 194

20

Gharipour, *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East*, 195.



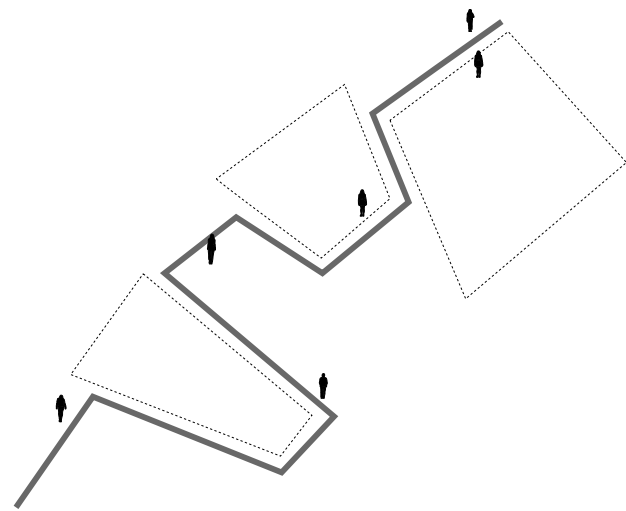
The Old Streets 'firij'

The old streets, or firij, **created a spatial intimacy between the people of the Kuwait and the city itself.**²¹ A sense of community was established by the complex yet simple urban street network. The narrow and intricate street networks had a sense of community because it had a layered program. The old streets were not only used as paths, but also as a space to trade and sell merchandise.²² It was a place for the community to share and interact with their neighbors.

The streets of modern Kuwait does not allow for the type of interaction. Not only are buildings isolated from each other, but the invisible line of segregation between the citizens and immigrants is very apparent.

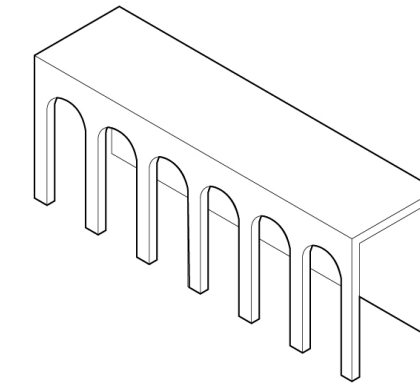
²¹ Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 73.

²² Akbar, *Crisis in the Built Environment, The Case of the Muslim*

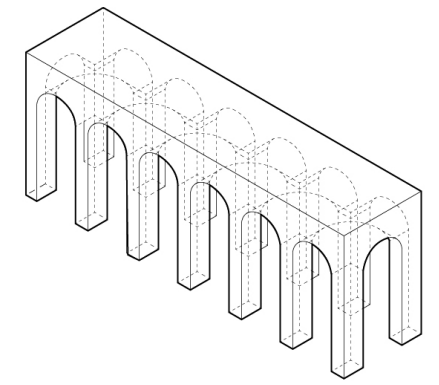


The Arcade

The arcade typically surrounded the courtyard and acted as a double facade between the interior spaces and the courtyard. Furthermore, the arcade prevented the sun from entering the interior spaces which in return cooled them down. The arcade was found both in public and private buildings.

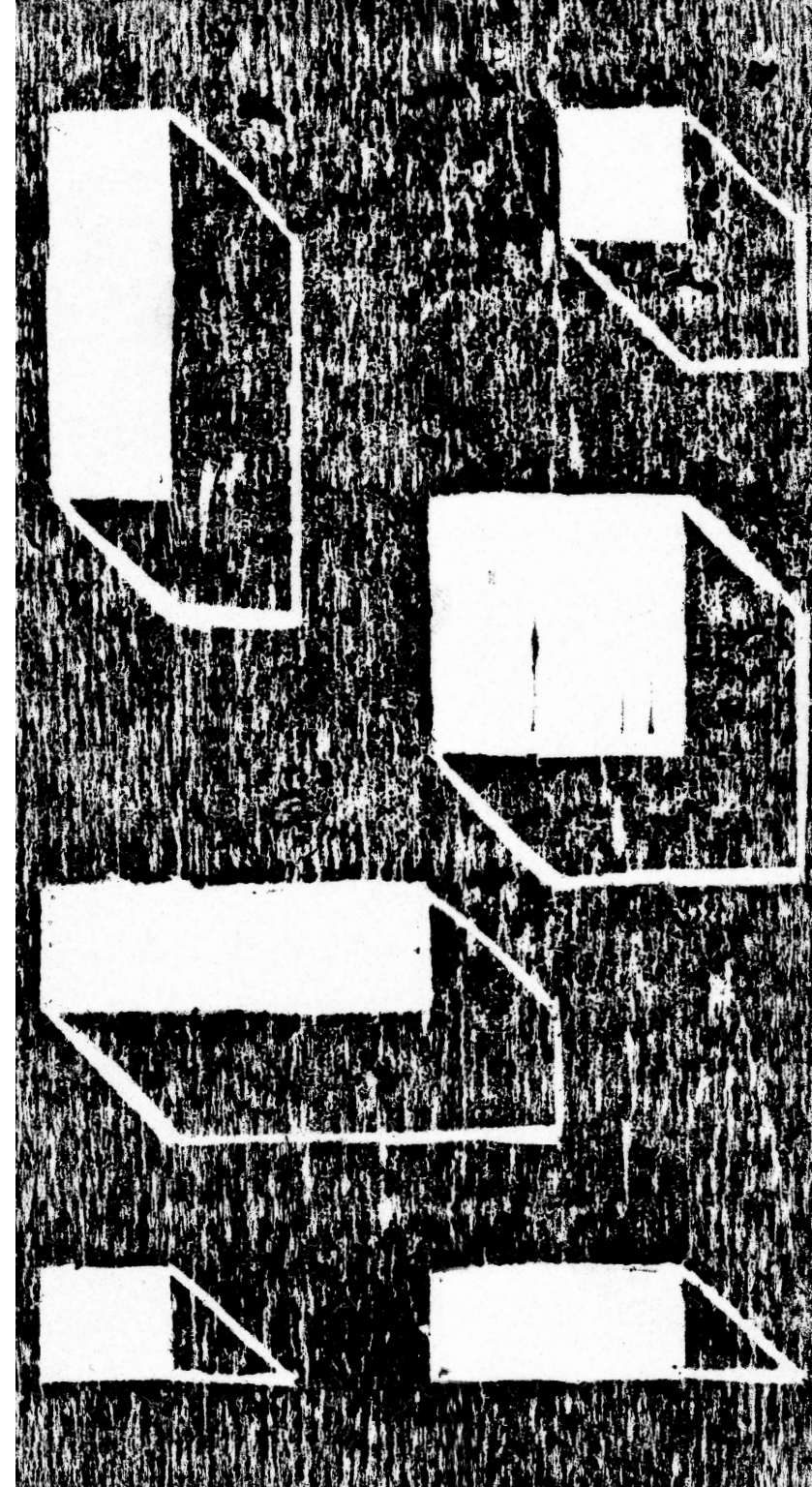


Traditional Arcade



Arcade in a Public Space

MODERNIZATION OF THE CITY



²³
Al Nakib, Kuwait's Modern Spectacle, 9.

²⁴
Harvey, The Condition of Post Modernity, 16.

²⁵
Essays, Arguments & Interviews on Modern Architecture Kuwait, 164.

²⁶
Fabri, Camacho, Soares, Modern Architecture Kuwait, 13.

After oil was discovered in 1938, the Sheikh decided to modernize Kuwait to create **“a cityscape that would serve as the definitive symbol and reflection of Kuwait’s new-found modernity.”**²³ Therefore the old city was completely demolished to make way for a new city. As a desire to start from scratch, western planners and architects approached the city with a modernist urban model that had no trace of the past. David Harvey speaks on his approach to modernity, **“How could a new world be created, after all, without destroying much that had gone before? You simply cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs...”**²⁴ However, the concept of starting from scratch generated a disconnect between the people and the city. Modernism failed Kuwait.

The first master plan by Minorpio, Spencer, & Mcfarlane, a urban planning firm from the United Kingdom, completely ignored the existing city structure. **“The desired modern Kuwait failed to integrate the older city, lacking a clear urban identity and a civic sense of belonging.”**²⁵ This lack of organic urban growth created a place for cars and not the people of Kuwait.²⁶

Modernization of the City



1971 - Commercial Bank of Kuwait
 1975 - Souq Al-Manakh
 1961-1965 - CBD Area 1 + 2
 1963 - Gulf Bank
 1963 - National Bank Headquarters

1966 - Chamber of Commerce & Industry
 1983 - Kuwait National Museum
 1965 - KNPC Office Building

1967 - Kuwait Investment Company
 1979 - Institute of Banking Studies
 1979 - Souq Al-Wataniya
 1983 - Kuwait Law Courts
 1976 - Souk al Kabeer
 1982 - Kuwait National Assembly

1972 - Kuwait Airways Tower
 1975 - Savings & Credit Bank
 1985 - Al-Muthanna Complex
 1982 - Ministries Complex
 1980 - Salhiya Commercial, Le Meridien
 1981 - Anwar Alsabah Complex

1978 - Kuwait Radio Television Centre
 1979 - Souq Al-Mutahida
 1966 - Sheraton Hotel
 1957 - Thunayan Al Ghanim Building

1979 - Dasman Complex
 1986 - Commercial Bank of Kuwait Operations
 1986 - Al Awadi Towers

1986 - Kuwait Foundation For Advanced Sciences

1979 - Public Institute For Social Security

1975 - Central Bank of Kuwait

1974 - Gulf Bank Headquarters
 1989 - Al Sawaber Housing Complex
 1958 - Mubarakiya School
 1974 - Al-Ahli Bank
 1982 - Gold Market
 1976 - Souq Al-Kuwait
 1983 - Joint Banking Centre

1965 - Ministry of Commerce & Industries
 1962 - Ministry of Information + Guidance
 1965 - Former Ministry of Defense
 1975 - Souq Al-Safat
 1973 - Kuwait Fund For Arab Economic Development
 1979 - Souq Al-Masseel

1982 - Awqaf Commercial Complex

1962 - Municipal Complex

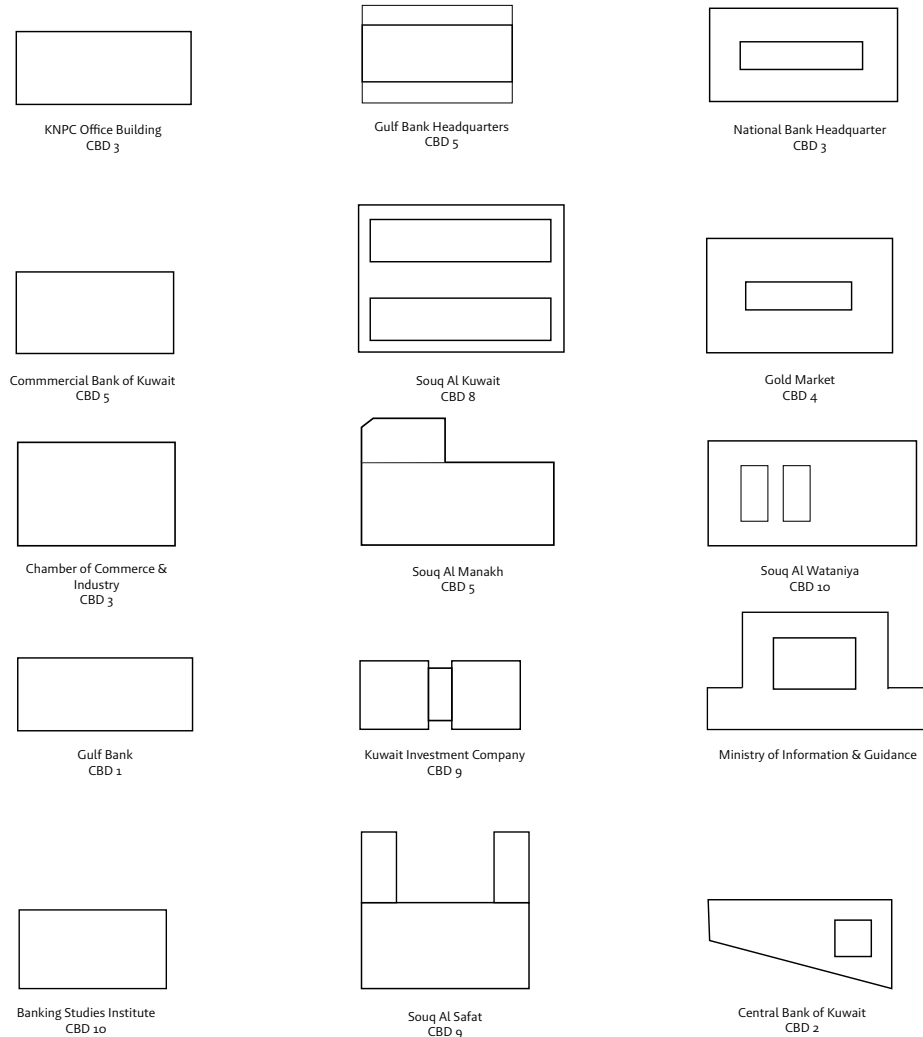
● Arab Architects
 ● Western Architects



MODERNIZATION OF THE CITY

The Central Business District

Central Business District Building Typologies



As the city was being developed, planning focused on how the city looked rather than how the city functioned. **“Most of these buildings are being treated as isolated islands in a sea of parking lots.”**²⁷ Fragmented buildings replaced the grouped and clustered buildings that created a sense of community within the city. **“Kuwaitis abandoned an older cohesive order and replaced it with a fragmented one which is in no way Arab.”**²⁸ The result of the city was due to westerners imposing on a city in which they knew nothing about. In addition, the citizens themselves rejected the old city.

²⁷ Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, 259.

²⁸ Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, 136.

²⁹ Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 111.

³⁰ Shiber, *Kuwait Urbanization*, 159.

³¹ Shiber, *Kuwait Urbanization*, 120-121.

After the initial master plan by MSM was implemented, Kuwait hired Saba George Shiber who was an American urban planner. Shiber designed the Central Business district with the approach of bringing back the old patterns and structure of the old town to repair the damage.²⁹ He posed three aspects to implement; a physical and aesthetic satisfaction, ambiance and tailoring the area to the human scale³⁰ because **“Kuwait was a victim of urban planning.”**³¹ His approach to the mega-blocks of the CBD was the opposite of what the old city possessed.

After the need to bring back the city’s identity, Kuwait hired George Candius, Reima Pietla, Peresutti + Rogers, and Alison and Peter Smithson. During the modernization of

Kuwait, there was a criticism of superimposing different cultures on local traditions which came from the citizens who abandoned the city. Furthermore, in able to construct this new city, **laborers from outside the country were brought in to help build the new city.**



MODERNIZATION OF THE CITY

Old vs New

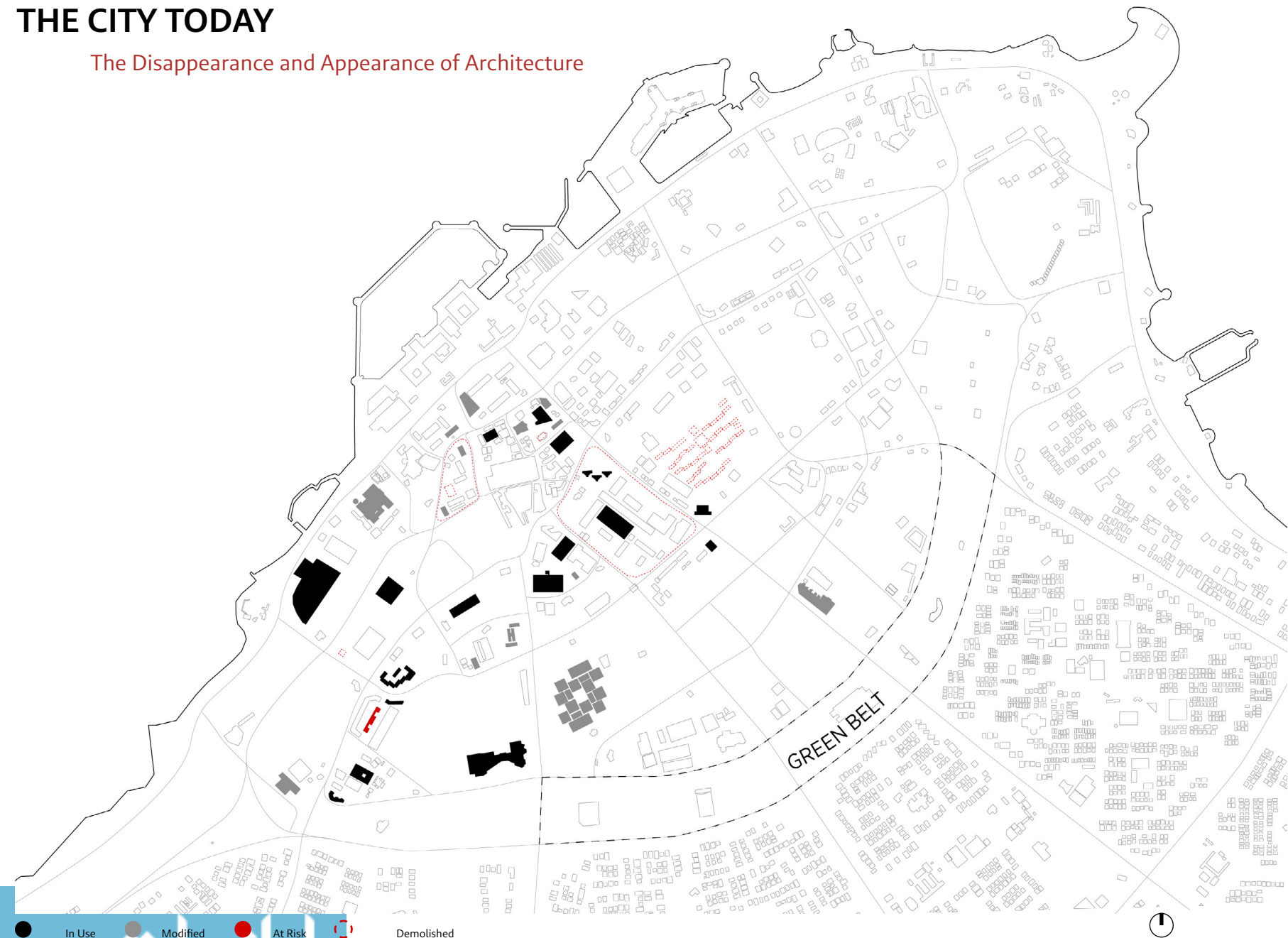


The images show the clear distinction between the old buildings from Kuwait town and the modern buildings being super imposed into the existing fabric that once existed. The image on the left is taken from one of the gates along the old wall that was demolished in 1957 to build the first ring road. The image on the right shows the monumental modern buildings overtaking the 'un-monumental' organization of old Kuwait Town.



THE CITY TODAY

The Disappearance and Appearance of Architecture



³²
Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 78.

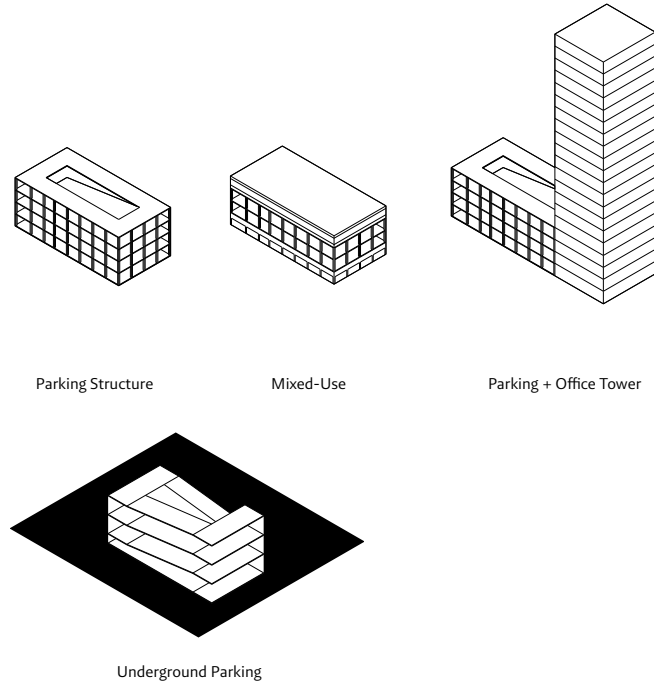
The city today is still facing the issue of finding its identity. The edge of the city is now defined by a green belt that was designed in the 1952 master plan by Minorpio, Spencer, and McFarlane. The green belt follows the shape of the old mud wall that protected Kuwait Town. In addition to the two quarters of the old city, Sharq and Jibla, the city today is made up of three quarters or districts; Sharq, Jibla, and Mirqab. However, since the modern city came into fruition, these districts no longer have a sense of character that distinguishes them from one another. The souk is still considered a landmark, but not a prominent one. Monumental modern buildings are also considered landmarks because of their presence in the city. **“...the key physical characteristics this class is singularity, some aspect that is unique or memorable in the context.”**³² These modern buildings are now identifiable by many citizens and are at risk of demolition. Kuwait’s urban cycle seems to repeat itself with the destruction of the old town and rebuilding the city from scratch. Furthermore, the city now is demolishing the modern buildings and replacing them with skyscrapers.

As the Middle East was starting to flourish in the early 2000s, more skyscrapers in Kuwait were starting to replace the modern buildings. The map to the left maps out all the modern buildings built in Kuwait between 1949 and 1989

and categorizing them in four categories; In-use, modified, demolished, and at risk of demolition. As noted in the map, many of these buildings were modified. They were modified to the sense that they were no longer identifiable. This process, I believe, is one of the issues why Kuwait is still struggling to find its identity. **There is no sense of permanence.**

THE CITY TODAY

Parking in the City

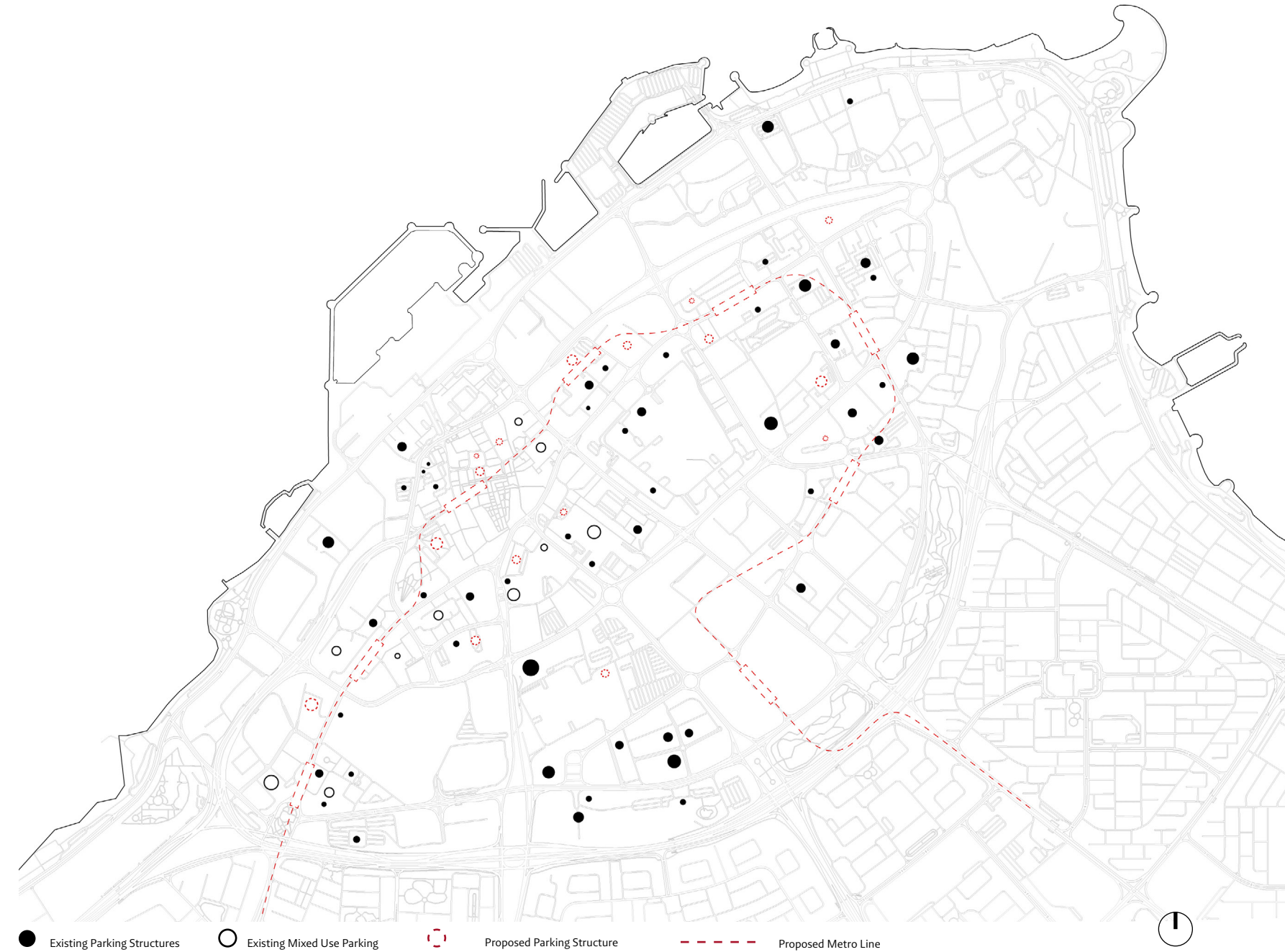


Kuwait City emphasizes the vehicle more than ever. The paths of the city are mainly streets that are lined with on street parking. Kevin Lynch talks about paths as “**streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads. For many people these are the predominant elements in their image.**”³³ Unfortunately, the image of Kuwait City is vast open streets and empty urban interiors. There is a potential to revitalize them and bring back the connectedness between the city and the people. Kuwait City went from a people city to a car city that is filled with open parking lots, underground parking, and parking garages. The scale of the city is not for people.

In Kuwait City’s 2030 Urban Development Plan, the municipality is proposing a metro line that would run throughout the city; see map on right. However, in addition to the vast amounts of parking garages, excluding on street parking and parking lots, about sixteen additional stand alone parking structures are planned to go along the metro line. Kuwait’s proposal completely goes against their plan to better public transportation as well as a new vision for the city. Unfortunately, non of the modern buildings that shaped Kuwait’s modernity are considered apart of Kuwait’s plan. They were labeled as “**in-adaptable Built Form**”³⁴.

³³ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 47.

³⁴ Kuwait City Urban Development 2030, 6.



● Existing Parking Structures ○ Existing Mixed Use Parking ◻ Proposed Parking Structure - - - Proposed Metro Line

THE SITE

SOUK AL MANAKH



The modern building I have selected for the thesis proposal is Souk Al Manakh . The building was designed by The Architects Collaborative and built between 1973 and 1975. Souk Al Manakh is a multistory structure that is considered one of the many “modern souks”, which in reality were **“commercial parking garages, new hybrids of lower-level commercial spaces, multistory parking garages, and upper-level offices and/or housing.”**³⁵

Today, Souk Al Manakh is being forgotten and neglected because of urban renewal. Even though the building fails the city, it is apart of Kuwait’s urban history and signify a moment in time when Kuwait City went from a small town to a modern city. Having the modern building and the old souks near by, there is a potential in linking the two to connect back to Kuwait’s architectural history and reclaim the building for the people of the city. **“...They still hold the potential to restore a lost sense of urbanity.”**³⁶

³⁵
Kubo, *The Incorporation of Architecture*, 16.

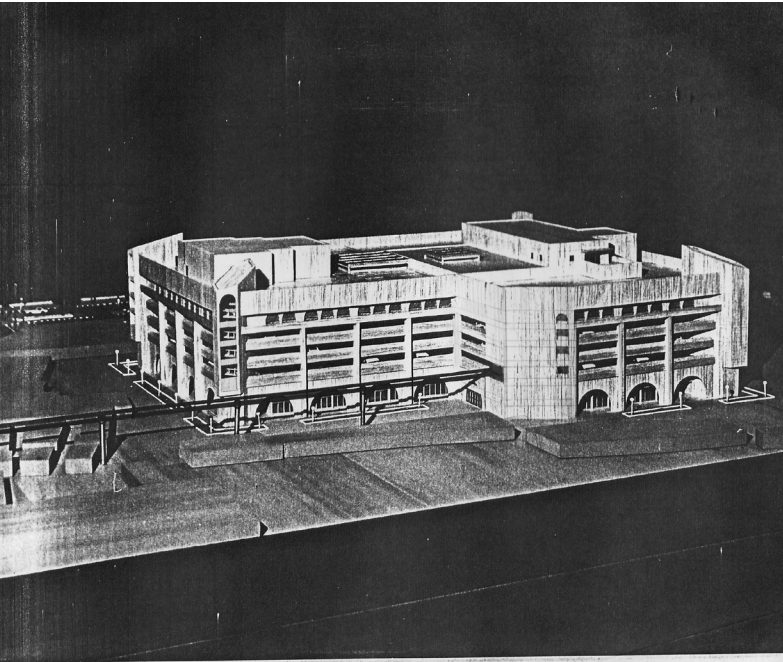
³⁶
Al Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 214.

Located at the heart of the city, in Central Business District 5, Souk Al Manakh is surrounded by fragments of the old souk. The souks were the gateway to the old city. It was where both quarters, Sharq and Jibla, came together to shop for produce, poultry, and other goods. It was where the true identity of the city laid. Now, with the modern souks surrounding the old souks, the connection between old and new has been lost.



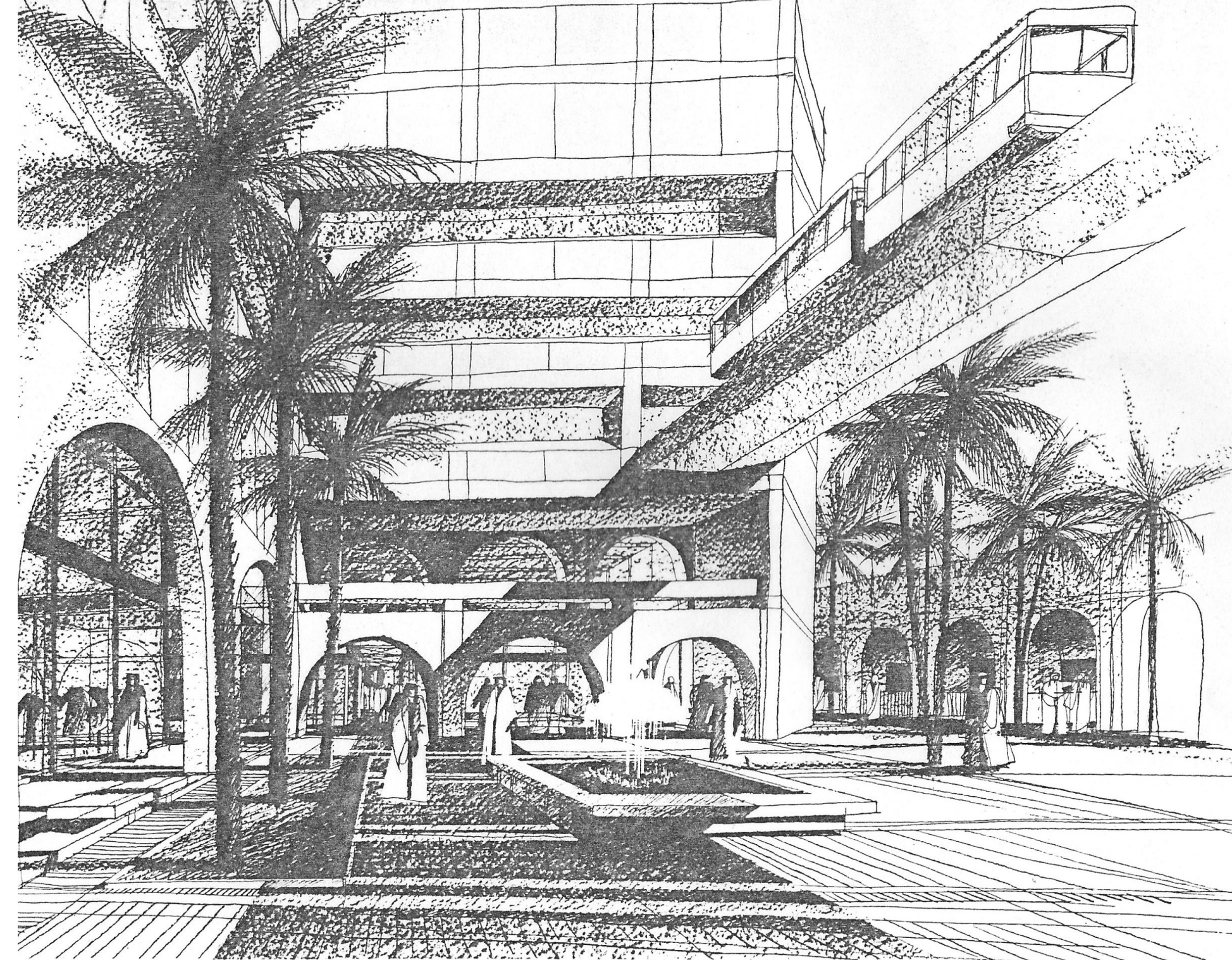
SOUK AL MANAKH

Interview with Edward Nilsson



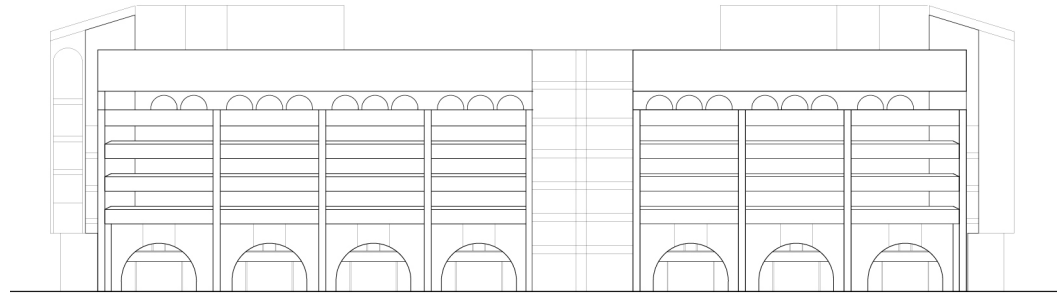
On February 9th, I had the pleasure of interviewing Edward Nilsson who was the project architect at The Architects Collaborative for Souk Al Manakh. Having interviewed him, I had the opportunity to really understand the building itself, the design thinking and the process. **Souk Al Manakh and 12 surrounding planned parking garages were designed to allow for a monorail to pass through.** The images to the left shows the monorail on the North side of the L. During our interview I found out that the design is still capable of that transformation because of the way the building was constructed. The construction of the building was a cast-in-place concrete girders and the Freyssinet pre-cast framing system, using bush hammered concrete. Ed informed me that this type of material would absorb heat during the day and release at night, which is ideal in Kuwait City as the desert climate is harsh. Bush-hammered concrete was also used because of the texture it presented was reminiscent of the old traditional Kuwaiti Houses.

The design of Souk Al Manakh was led by his associate, Basil, who is from Iraq and had a familiarity of the Middle East. The use of Arches along the facade was used as a symbolic measure along the arcade between the “retail spaces” and urban interiors. The ground was initially designed and built for commercial use, however after returning to visit Kuwait in 2016, Ed had mentioned to me **that the ground floor is currently being used for real estate offices. The usual bustling souk was idle and uninviting.**

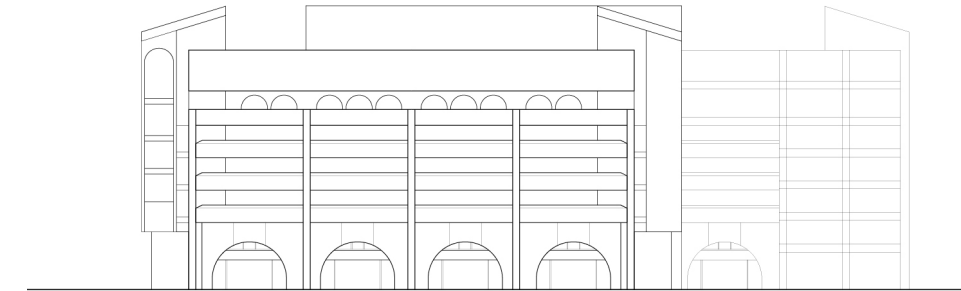


SOUK AL MANAKH

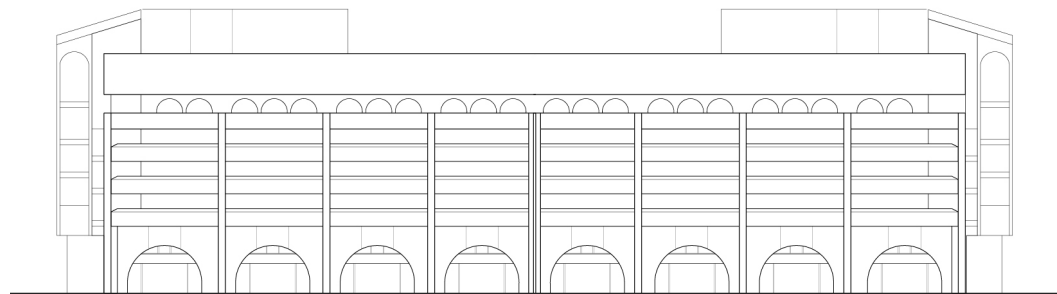
Existing Conditions



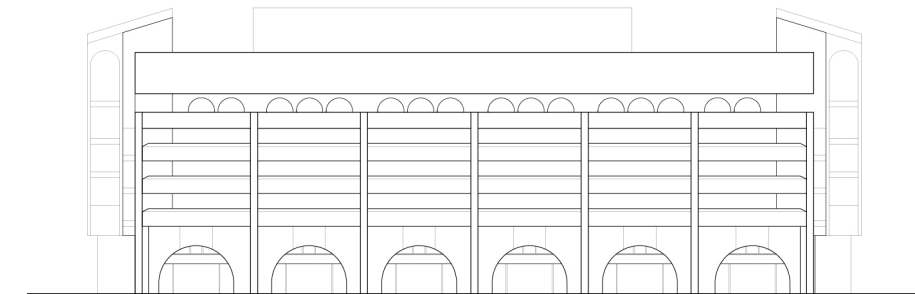
Southwest Elevation



Northwest Elevation



Northeast Elevation



Southeast Elevation

SITE ANALYSIS

Site Markers

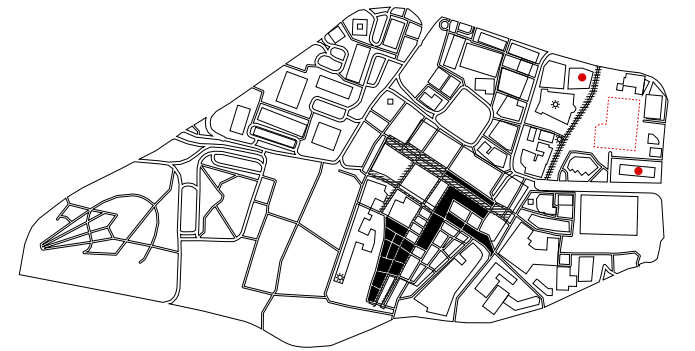


37
Smithson, *The Charged Void: Urbanism*, 141.

The fragments of the old souk can be considered as site markers **“One of our ways into any urban problem is to look into identifying elements characteristic of a particular place.”**³⁷ In addition, we can consider the modern buildings as site markers as well, as they are apart of Kuwait’s rich architectural history. These identifiable elements are the site markers located within and around the Souk Al Manakh. By identifying them, there is a connection that can be made between the multiple pasts and present of the city.

There are two types of historical markers located on the site. The first type of markers are site based, meaning the site itself holds significance of what was there; i.e. historic locations. The second type of markers are physical; they hold a significant, still standing, structure that connects back to the past; i.e. Surviving landmarks. The first site based marker is the first known school in Kuwait (1912). The site currently holds the Mubarakiya School (1957), and was one of the first modern buildings to be built during the modernization of Kuwait. The surviving landmarks on site is the First Friday Mosque, the historic Souk Al Amir Arcade , and the modernist building, Gulf Bank of Kuwait.

The diagram on the right showcases two maps of the same city block. One map is off the old city and the other of the city today. These map indicate the site markers from the past, the recent past, and current present. Furthermore, the intricate human scale street network is very evident in the old city, whereas today, the streets are wide fit only for the car.

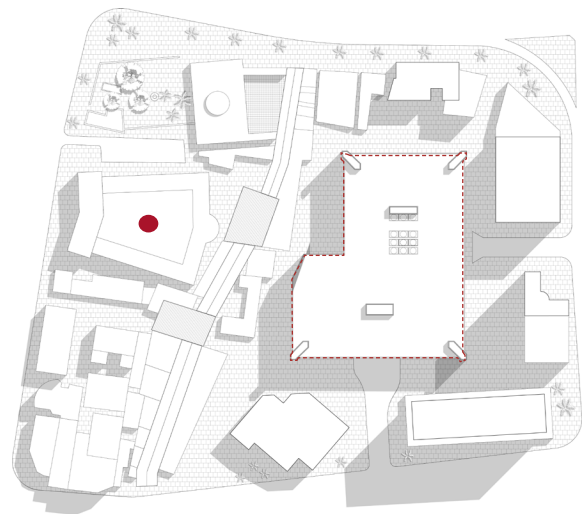


- Surviving Landmarks
- * Historic Locations
- Renovated Historical Mosques
- ≡ Surviving Arcades
- Surviving Souk Buildings



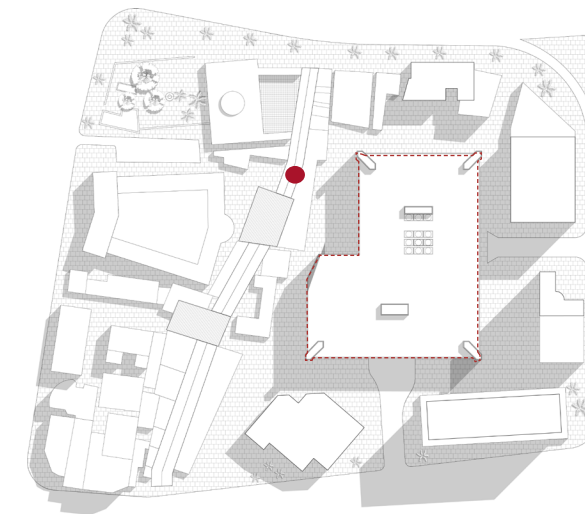
Mubarakiya School

The Mubarakiya School is considered a historic location because it is built on top of the first ever school in Old Town Kuwait. The Mubarakiya School was also one of the first modern developments that happened during the economic boom.



Souk Al Amir Arcade

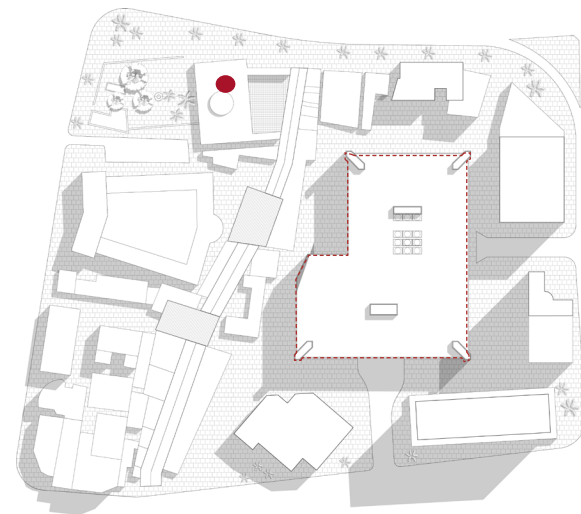
The arcade was the one of the most central souks in Kuwait. It was where people from two districts, Jibla and Sharq, came to shop for necessities as the merchant souks was a big part of Kuwait's income before the oil economic boom. The roof of the arcade has been restored and modified, however the shops and teak wooden doors were kept as close to the original.





First Friday Mosque

The First Friday Mosque is a historic surviving landmark because it was the first mosque in Kuwait built to hold Friday Prayers. Friday Prayers are somewhat equivalent to going to church on Sunday. The mosque features a courtyard with a beautiful arcade.

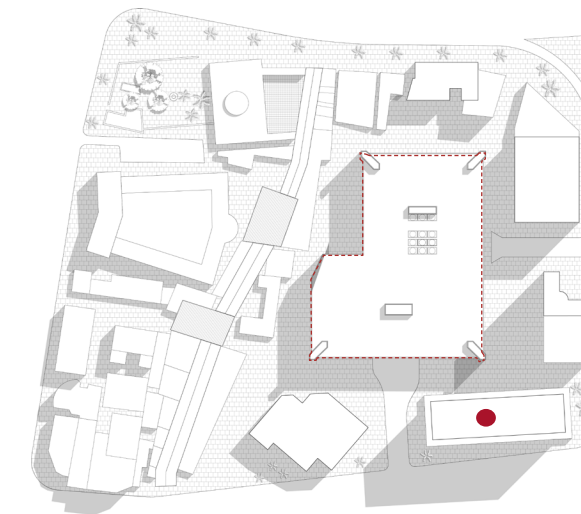


Gulf Bank of Kuwait

The Gulf Bank was built during Kuwait's economic boom between 1969 - 1974.³⁸ This building is considered a landmark because of its monumentality and identity. The pre-molded concrete elements that makes up four facade is what makes this building the most recognizable modern building in the city.³⁹

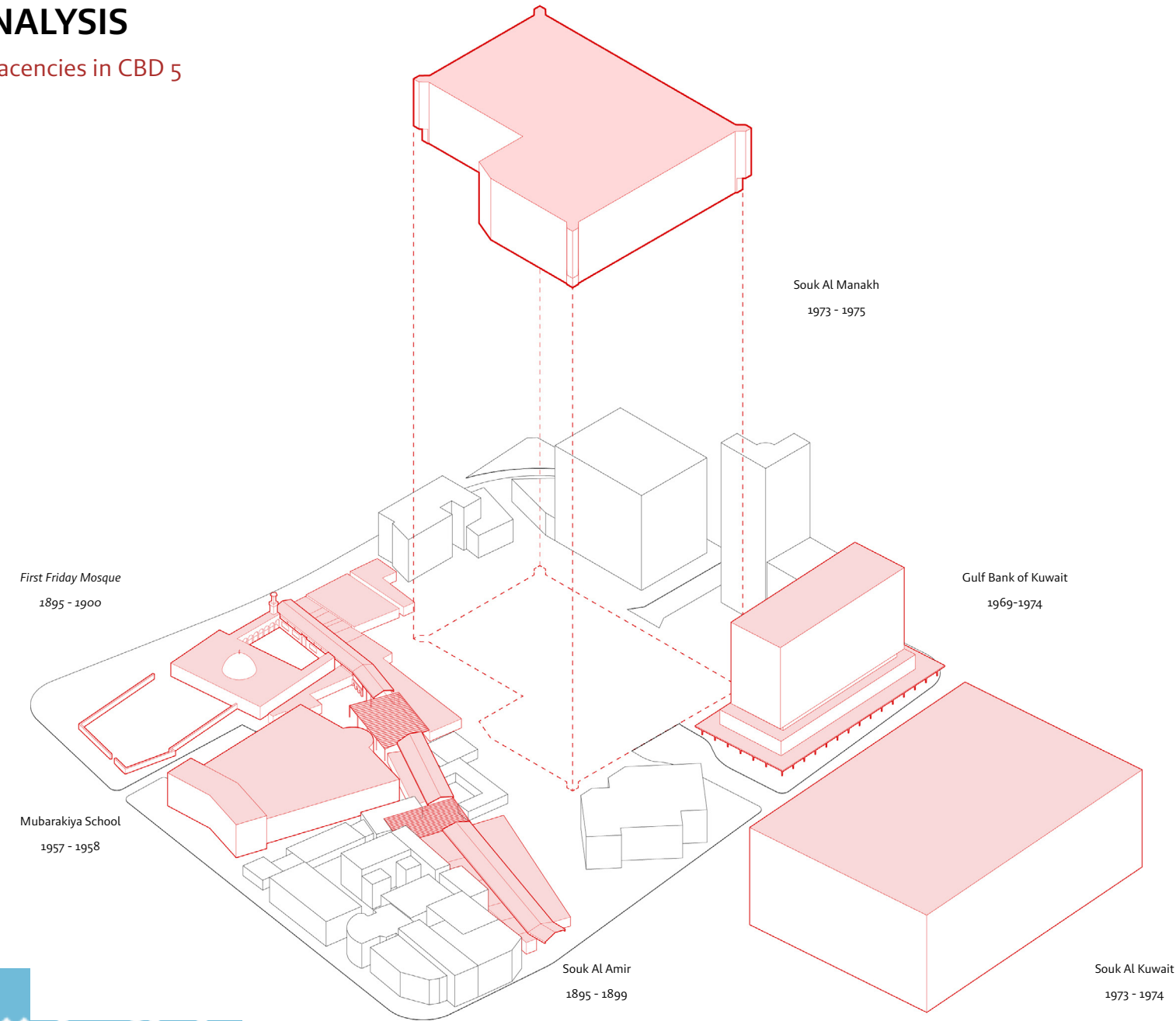
³⁸ Fabri, Camacho, Soares, *Modern Architecture Kuwait*, 182.

³⁹ Fabri, Camacho, Soares, *Modern Architecture Kuwait*, 182.



SITE ANALYSIS

Adjacencies in CBD 5



CBD 5 is a unique mixing pot of Kuwait's architectural past. The juxtaposition between the brutalist Souk Al Manakh, the ornate Gulf Bank, and the historic souk gives the site a narrative that does not exist anywhere else in the city. This creates an opportunity to celebrate Kuwait's rich urban and architectural history.

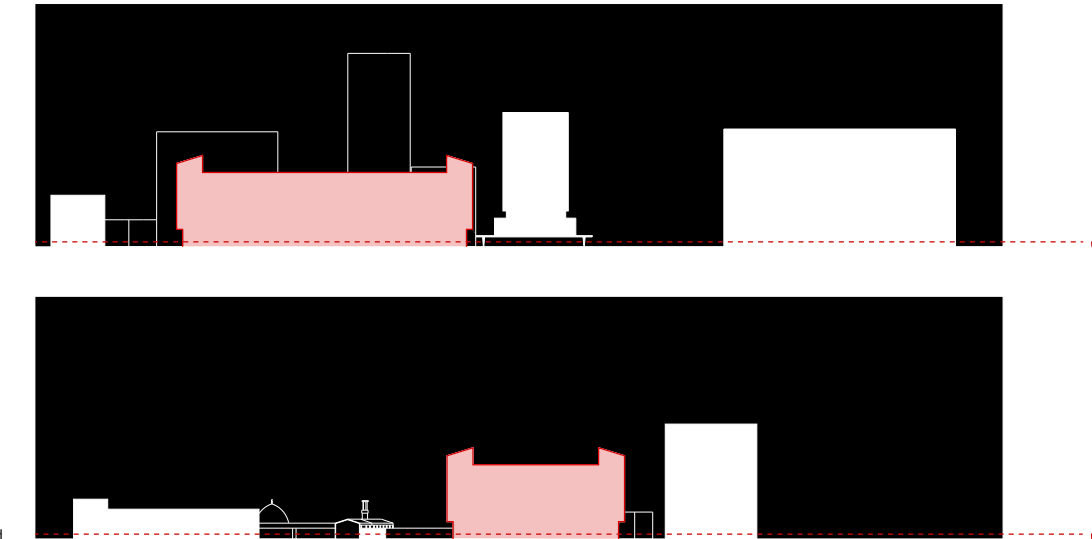
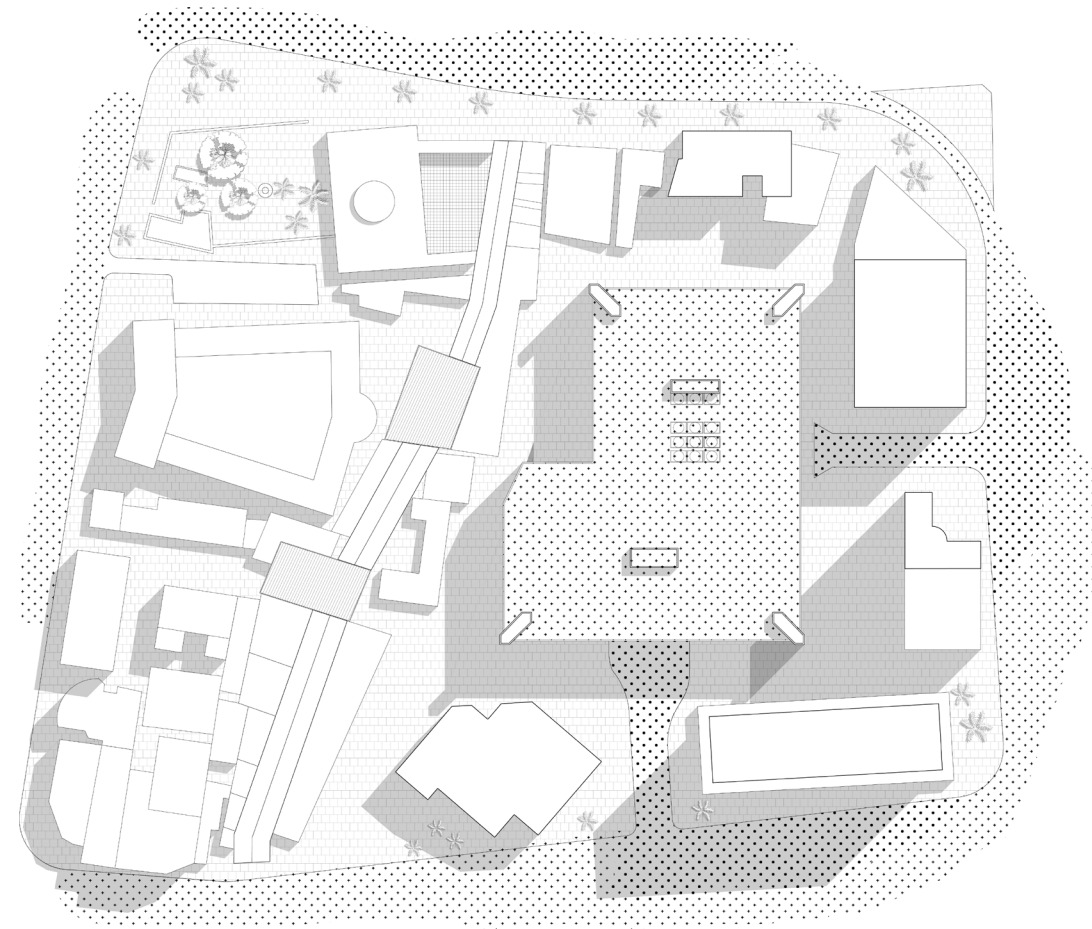


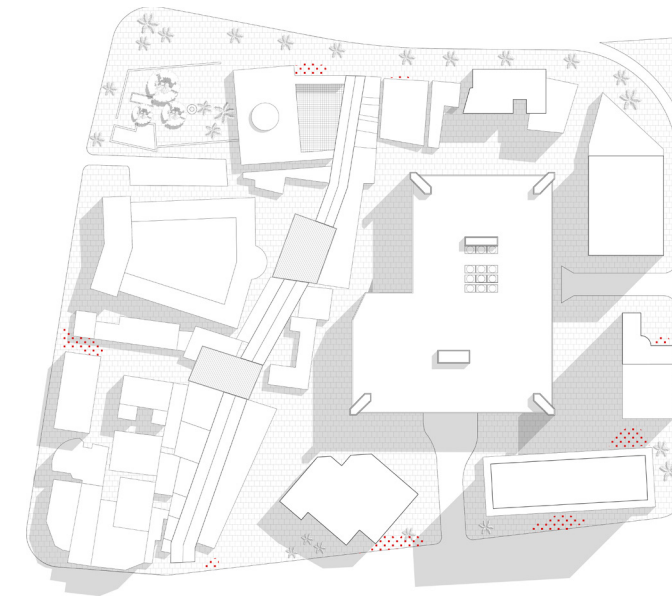
Figure Ground

SITE ANALYSIS

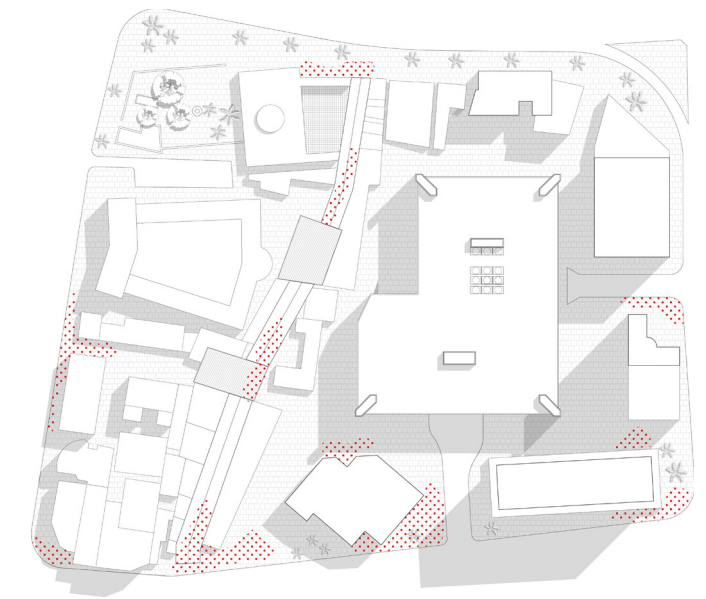
Urban Circulation



Vehicle Circulation



Pedestrian Circulation (Summer)



Pedestrian Circulation (Winter)

ACCESS

Site + Visual Access



Site access

Souk Al Manakh is located at the center of central business district 5, gaining access from different parts of the city. Although this a positive sign, the current state of the site sits idle and uninviting. The urban interior of the site is not well taken care of as it lacks shade, public seating, and landscape. Furthermore, the building has access to multiple views of the city as well as the allocated site markers, however since the building is fundamentally a parking garage the connection between the city and the people is lost. By merging site access and allocating visual frames to the surrounding context, a new journey of visual narratives will start to implement itself to the existing urban condition by creating “...spaces that can be appreciated on the move”.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Samuel, *Le Corbusier and the Architectural Promenade*, 41.

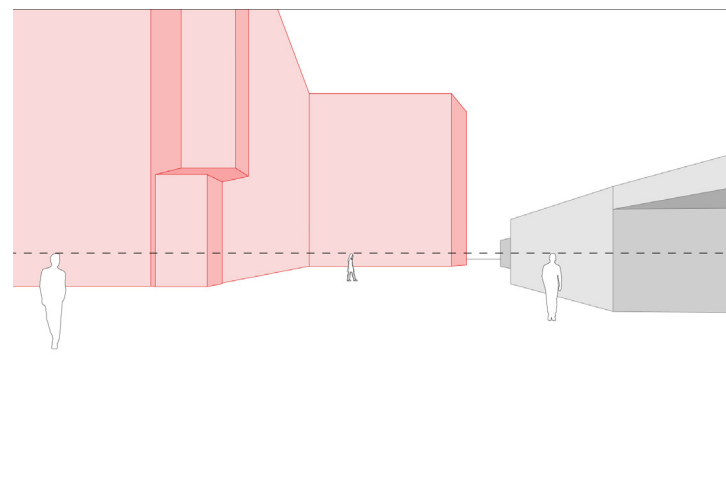


Visual access overlaid over site access

BUILDING AS A DESTINATION

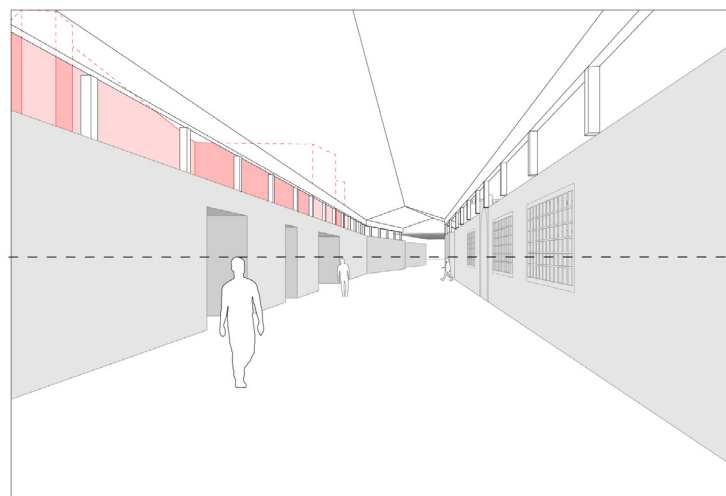
FRAMEWORK

Design Approach



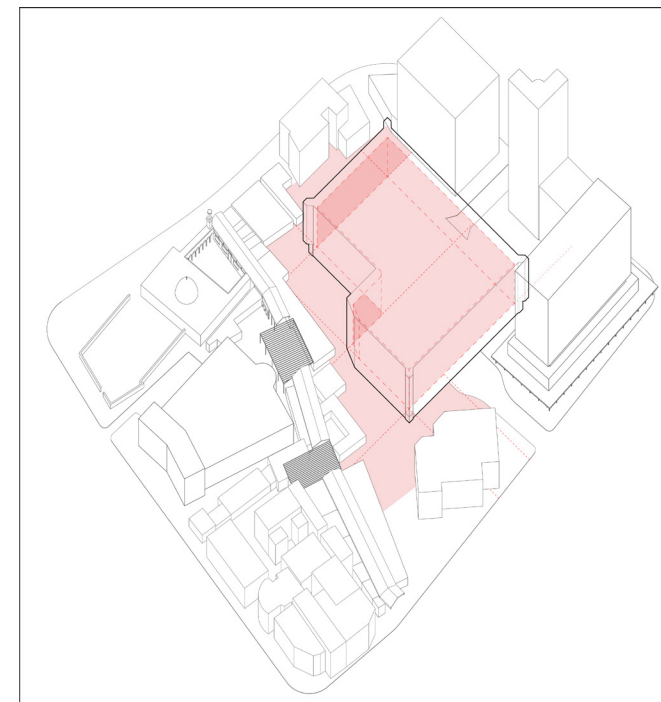
Reintroducing the human scale :

Souk Al Manakh in relation to the souk and human figure



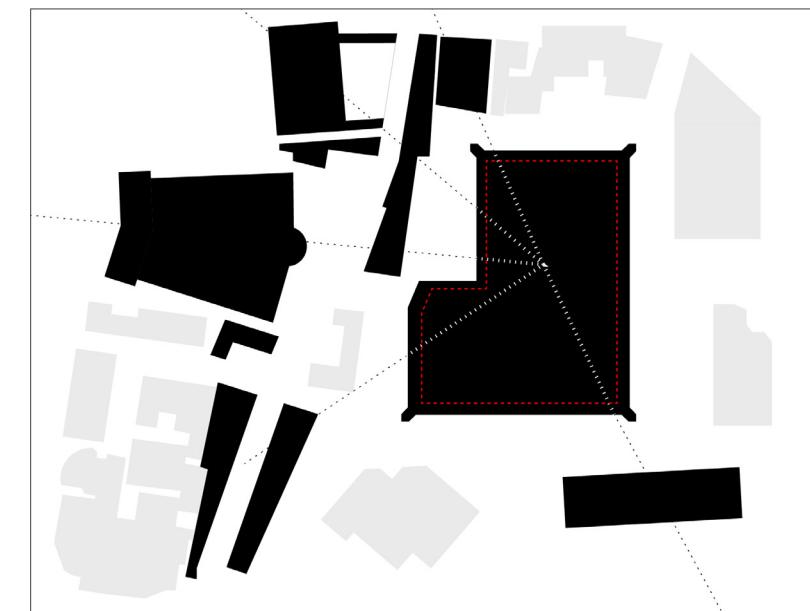
Reintroducing the human scale :

The historic Souk Al Amir in relation the human scale



Reactivate :

Linking and expanding from the existing building and urban fabric

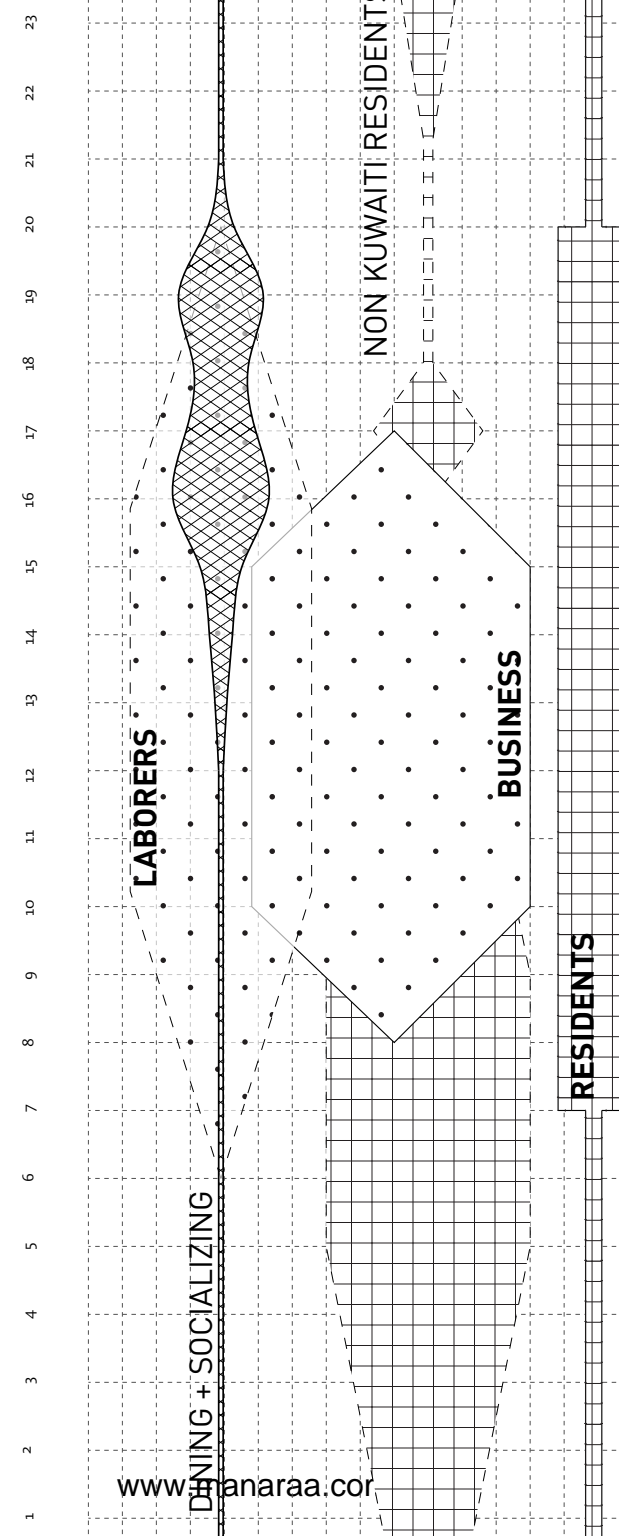


Urban Visual Narrative

Creating a visual narrative to build upon history of Kuwait's architectural history so it does not get lost

USER GROUP

Reintroducing the Human Scale



⁴¹
Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 151.

⁴²
Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 182.

Kuwait urban modernization affected the cultural heterogeneity the old town that once had. When the urban plan was being implemented, the country had to hire outside labor because citizens were not capable of such work. This resulted in a growing population of immigrants. In 1965, Kuwaitis became a minority, which impacted the Kuwaiti's willingness to accommodate, accept, and coexist with strangers.⁴¹ Kuwait's identity completely changed after the discovery of oil. Before oil, the city was considered hybrid, mutable, and inclusive. Whereas now, the city is considered uniform, fixed, exclusive.⁴²

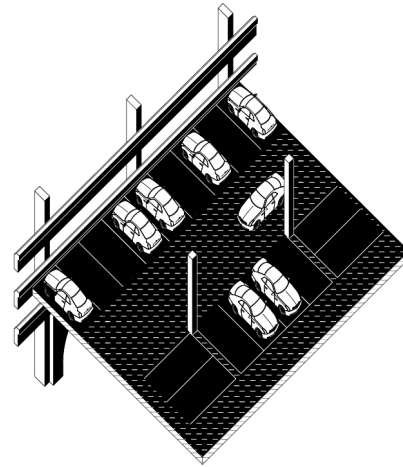
The audience for this thesis are the Kuwaiti citizens who use the city as well as the expatriates who work in the city. The city is used differently at night that it is during the day. During the day, people come into the city to work. At night, people use the city to socialize in restaurants and during the winter, they also socialize in the old souks. Groups of men and women fill the streets during the winter and it is a joy to see.

The expatriates work and live in the city. However, most of the spaces the two groups of people do not intermingle. There has always been social discrimination and entitlement against expatriates, however **the project will try to provide a space for both, as each site access engages different types of users from different parts of the city.** Discrimination has been an issue in Kuwait for many years and I wish for this thesis to accommodate a space with no discrimination and **bring back the social interactions that the old town possessed.**

BUILDING AS A DESTINATION

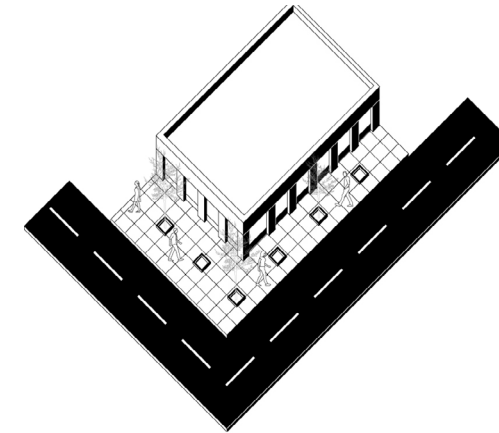
Reactivate

Existing



Parking

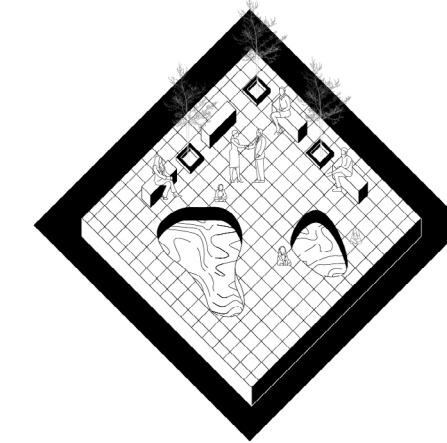
Enhancing transportation is in Kuwait's future, however parking is still an issue. 50% of the parking will be kept from the existing building.



Street-scape

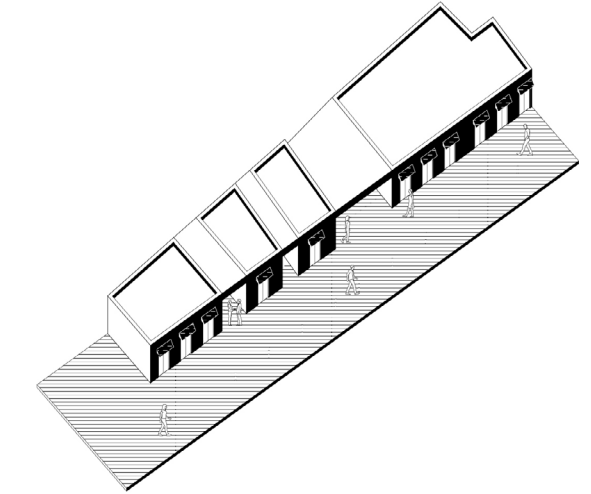
Extending the pedestrian experience of the street into the building. Walking is a big part of urban city life, which has been lost and not integrated in Kuwait.

Proposed



Plaza

Referencing urban plazas, this program will create spaces to increase social interactions between people

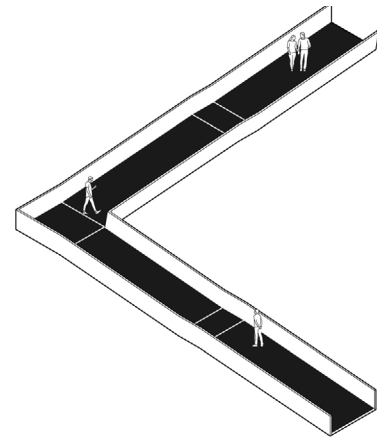


Souk

The old town of Kuwait relied heavily on souks. Going to the market was a big part of people's urban life. By creating an extension of the existing souk, a commercial destination is formed

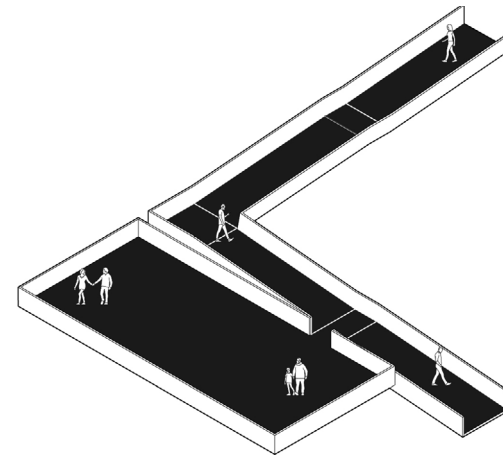
ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Urban Visual Narrative



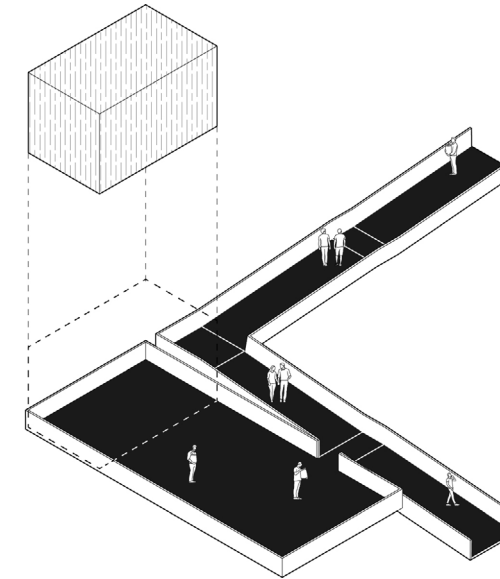
Ramps

The ramp signify a new journey based on the old street network, encouraging people to walk and interact with 'the city'. The new journey reveals the past through the visual cues



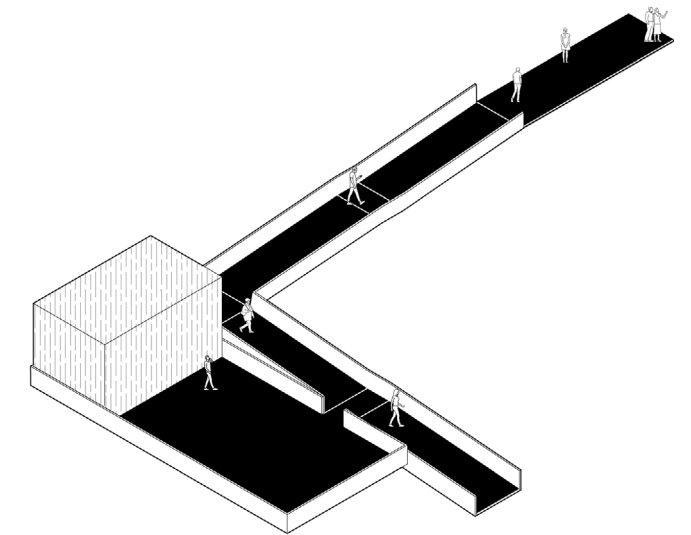
Platforms

The platforms reference urban plazas to allow for moments of sociability and rest along the ramps themselves



Solids

The solids are retail that act as a destination for the users. To encourage people to walk and use the ramps, the retail spaces mostly happen along the ramp.



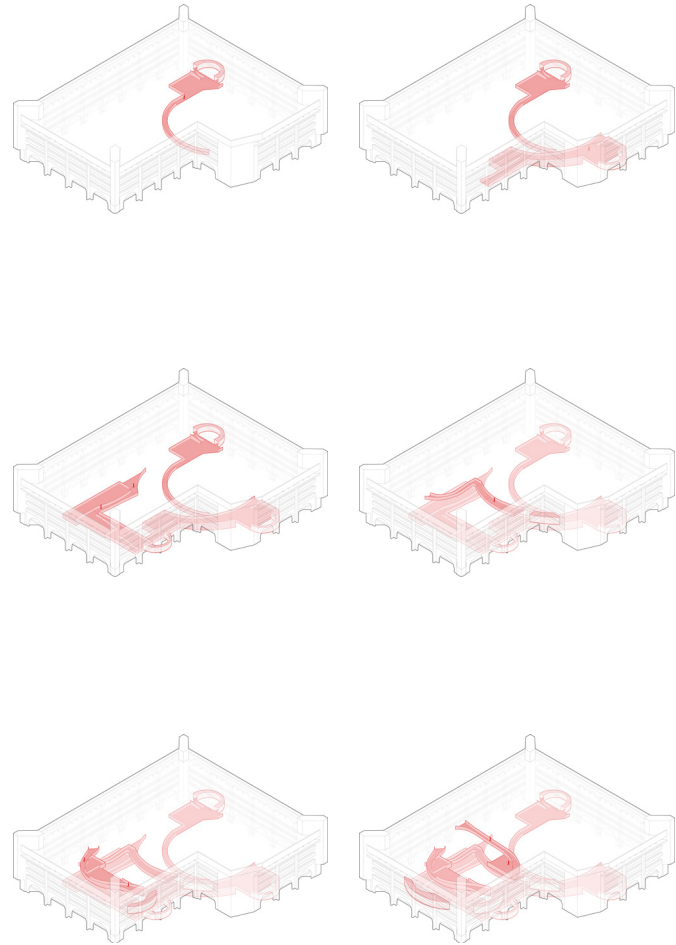
Cantilever

The cantilever off of the ramps lead the user to the framed visual cues of the existing site markers

URBAN VISUAL NARRATIVE

INTERVENTION STRATEGY

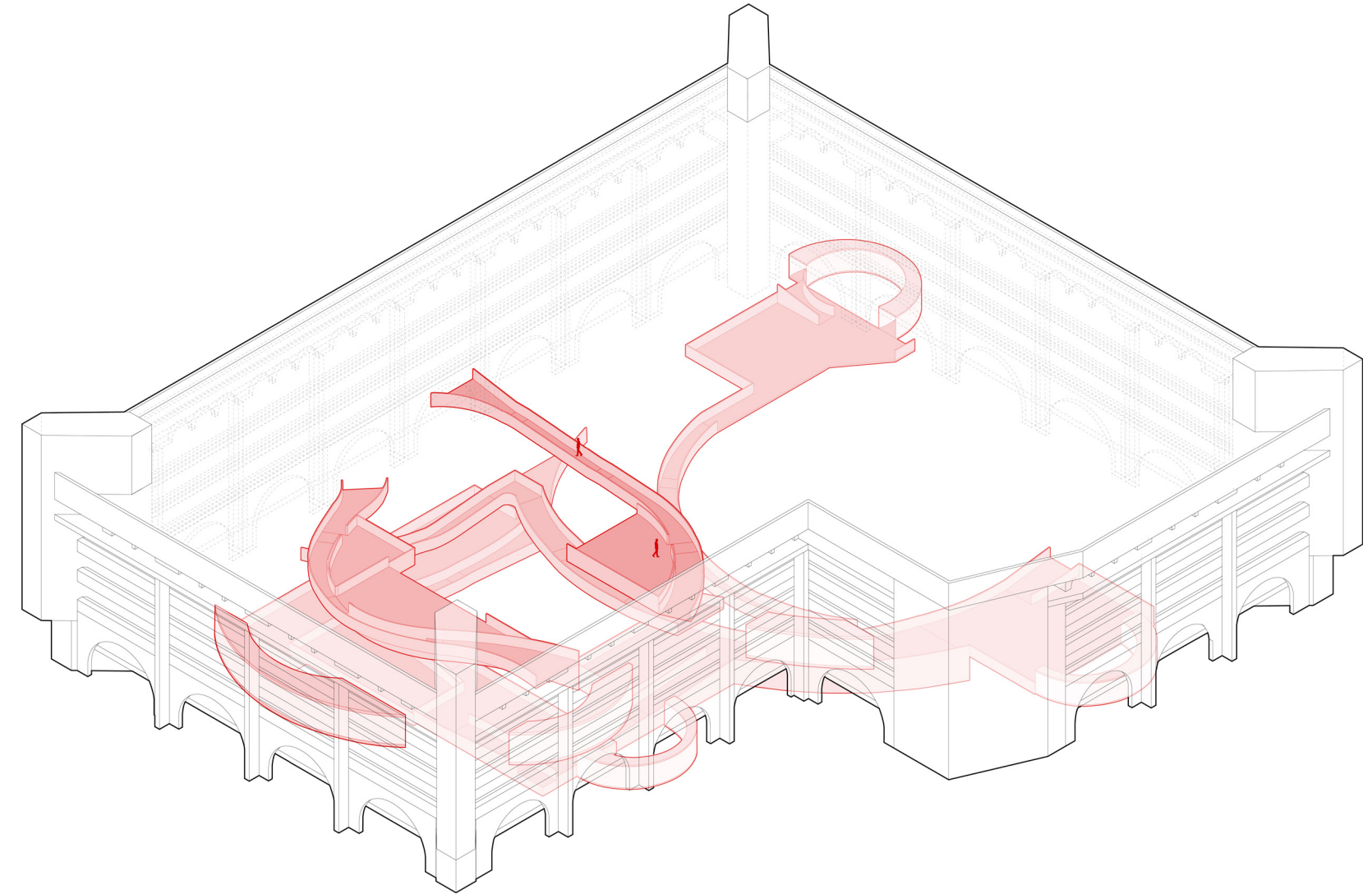
Weaving Ramps

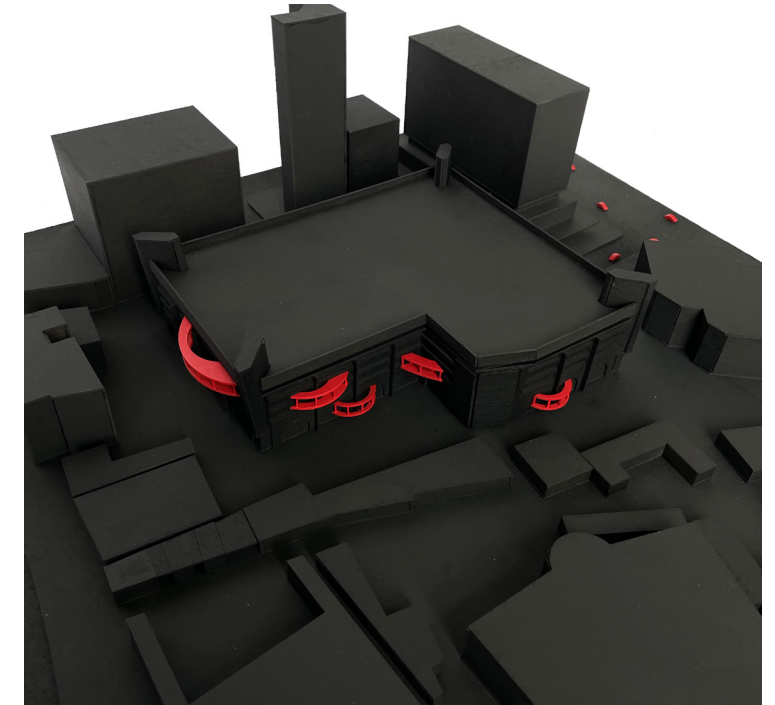
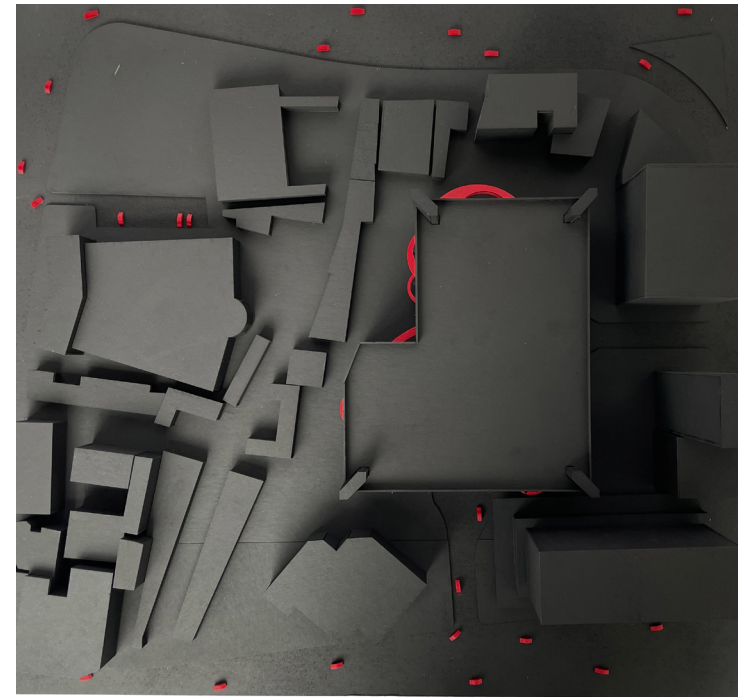
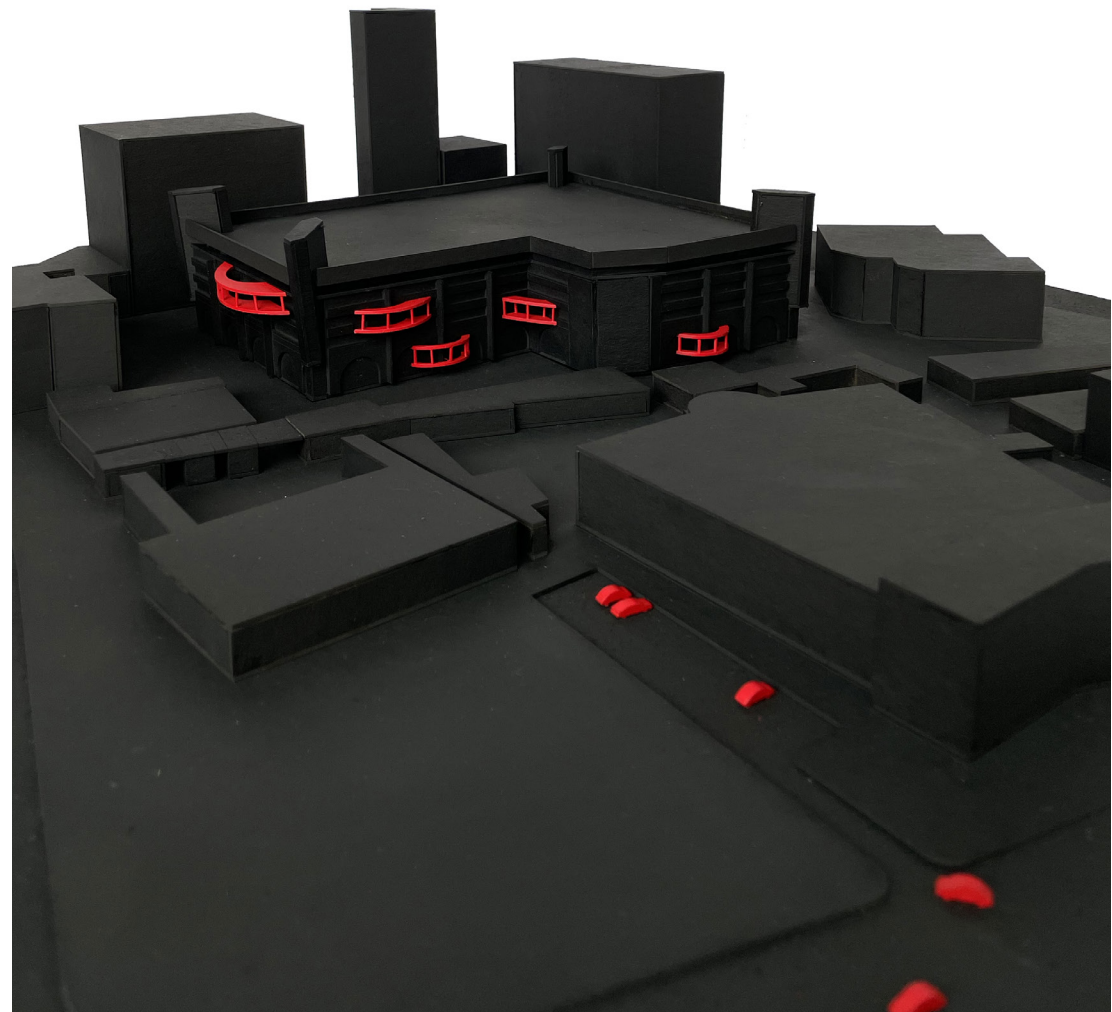


A total of six individual ramps are woven throughout the monumental Souk Al Manakh giving the building back to the people instead of emphasizing the vehicle. The ground floor engages with the urban fabric by adding three distinct ramps at three different locations, as the building can be approached from all four sides. Each floor above contains one ramp to take you to the floor above. Along the ramps are platforms that provide spaces for the user to step away from the main circulation, providing a moment of rest and sociability. In addition, some ramps also include retail spaces to encourage the user to walk and experience the Souk Al Manakh. **“Today it is possible to construct a history of walking as a form of urban intervention that inherently contains the symbolic meanings of the primal creative act: roaming as architecture of the landscape, where the term landscape indicates the action of symbolic as well as physical transformation of anthropic space.”**⁴³

As the streets of Kuwait City do not provide the ability for city dwellers to walk and enjoy the city, the design approach for the Souk Al Manakh is to provide a space for city dwellers to roam and walk the ‘city’ within the Souk Al Manakh along the six designed ramps. Where the ramp stops is very significant to the design, as it provides a visual cue to the site markers. By providing a visual cue, a connection will be formed between the people and the city. This connection is of Kuwait’s architectural and urban history from the old town it was, to the modern city, and now a contemporary one.

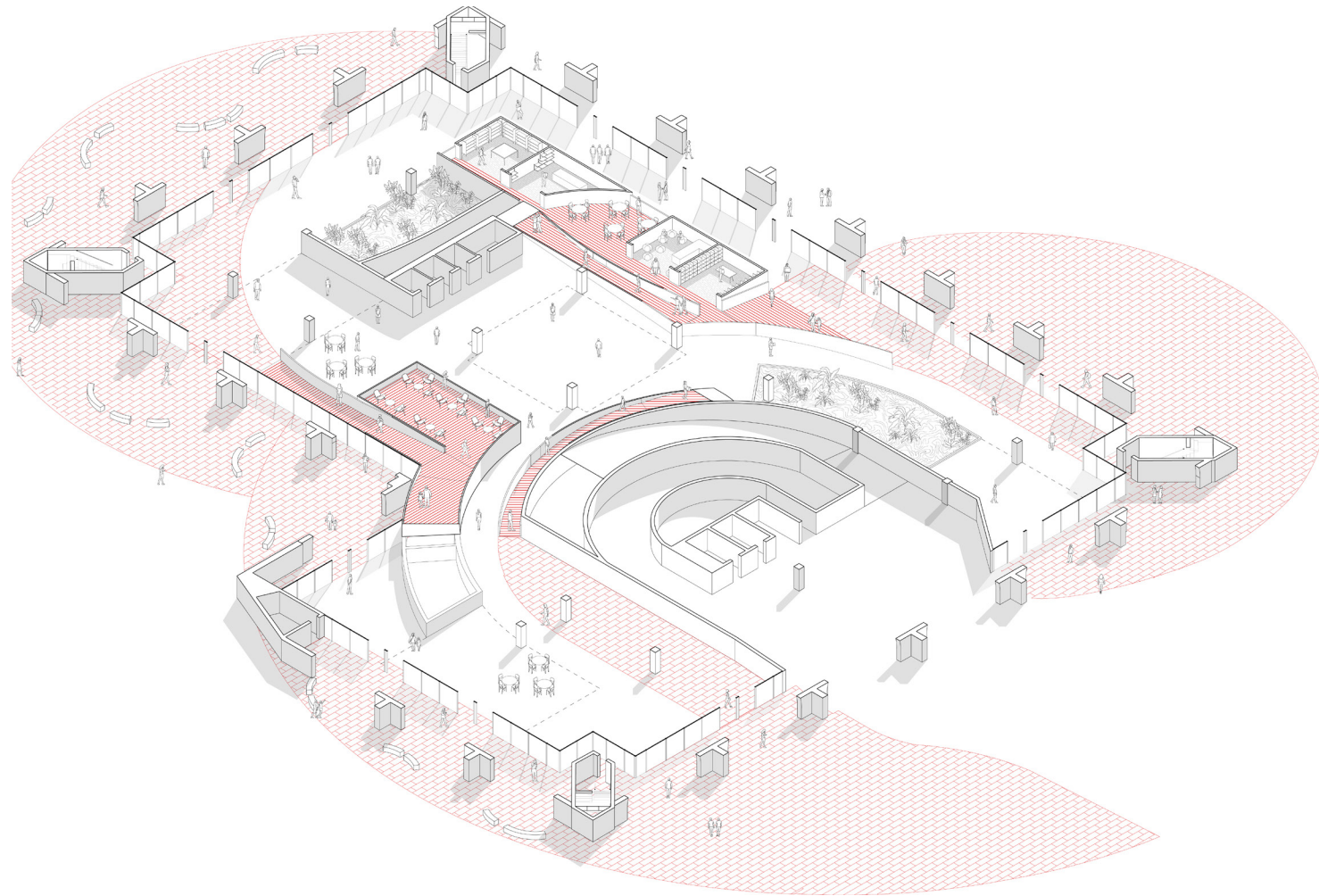
⁴³ Careri. *Walkscapes, Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, 26.



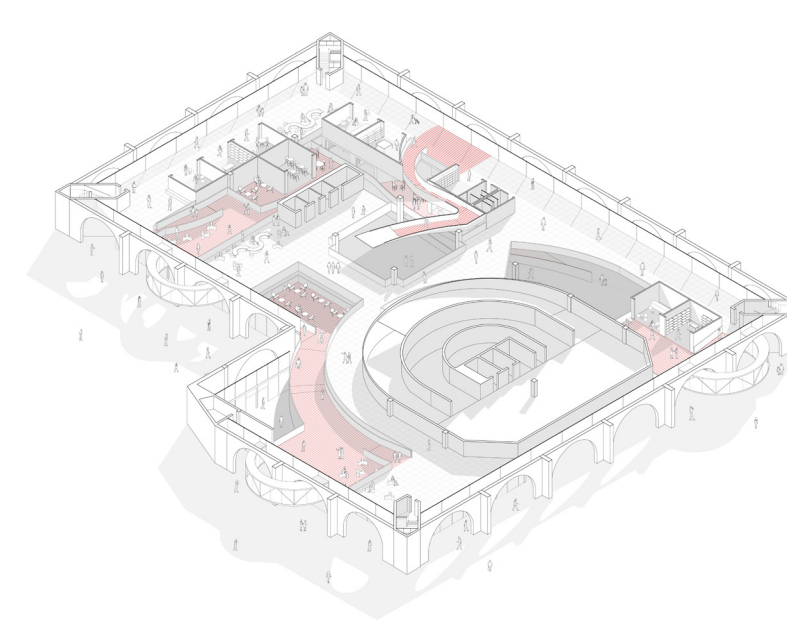


A BUILDING FOR THE PEOPLE

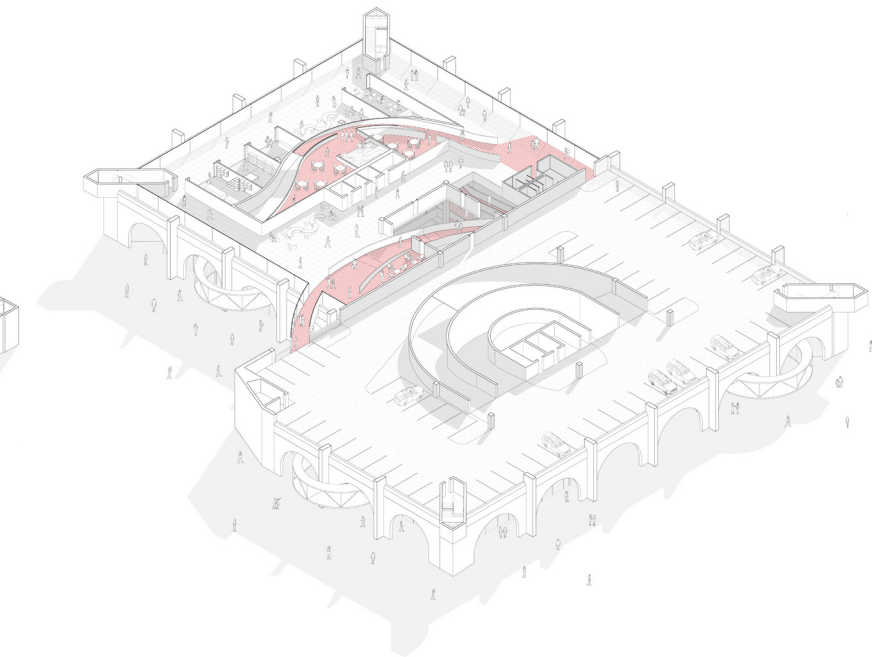
Axonometric Plans



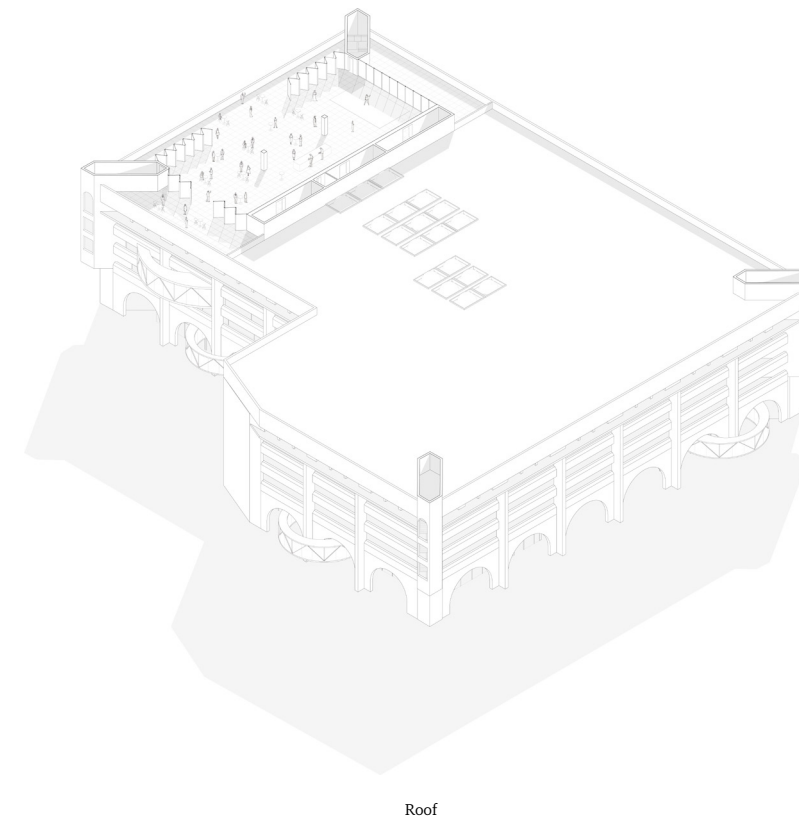
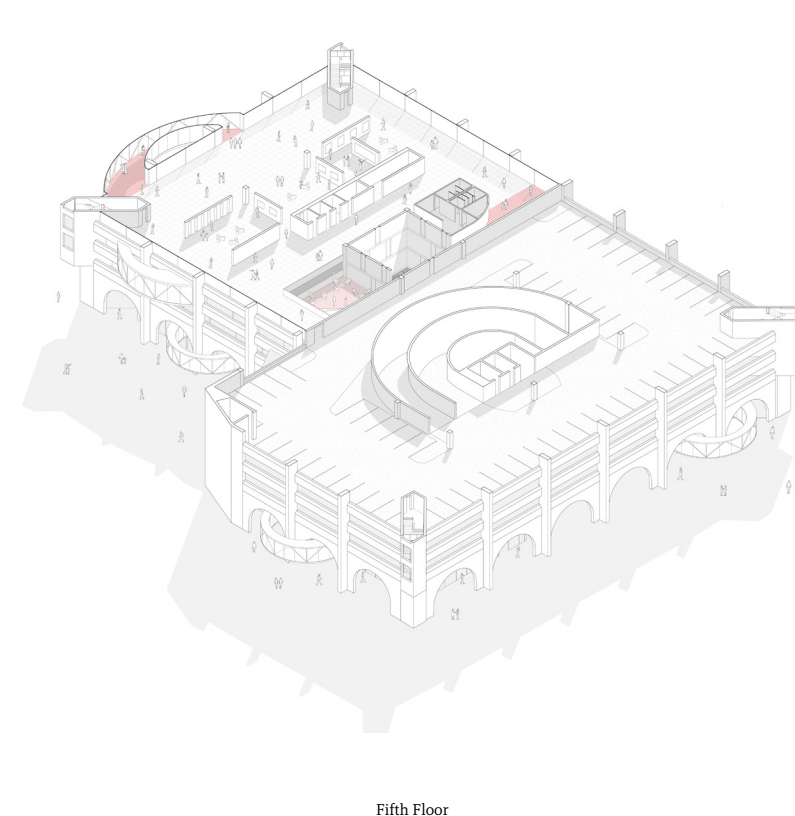
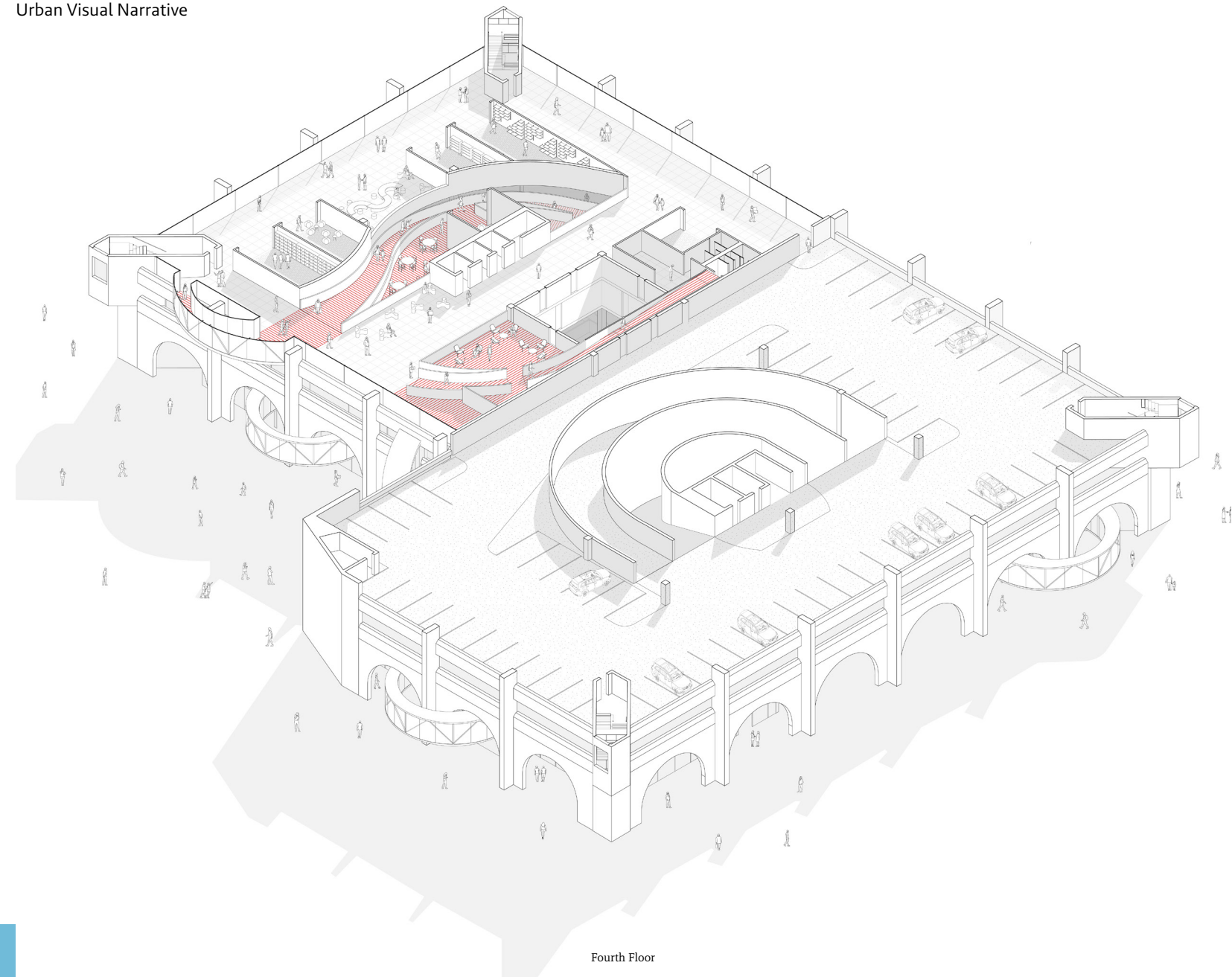
Ground Floor



Second Floor

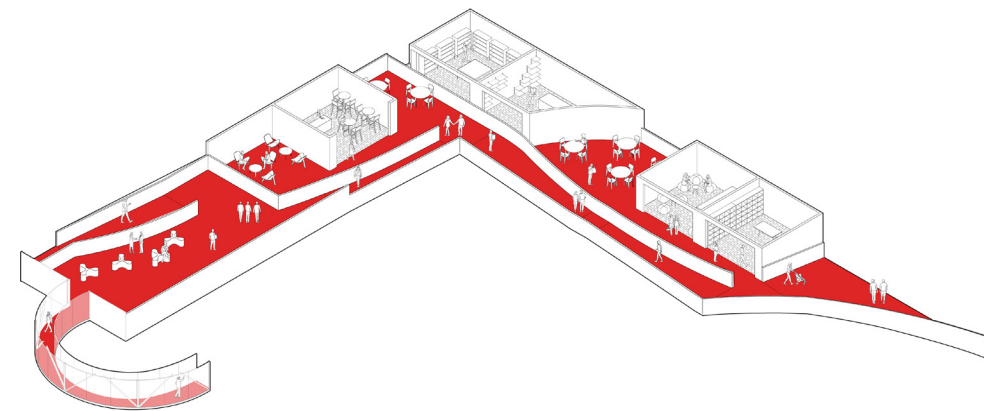


Third Floor



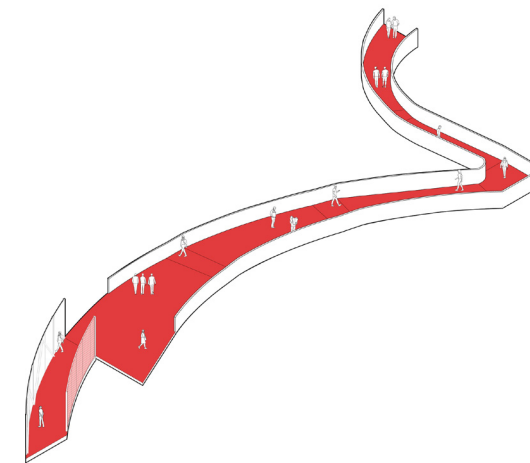
CATALOG OF RAMPS

Axonometric Drawing



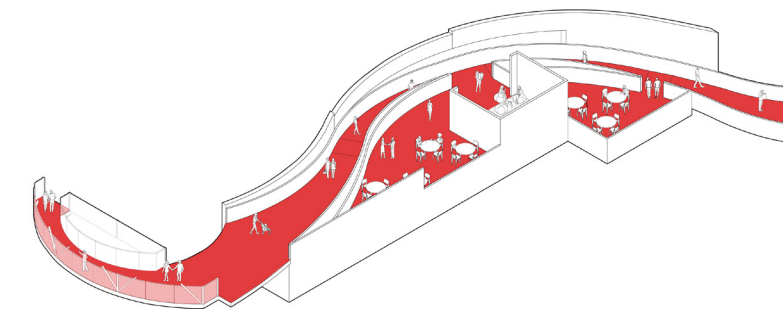
Ramp 1

Ground floor to second floor
See detail on pg 70



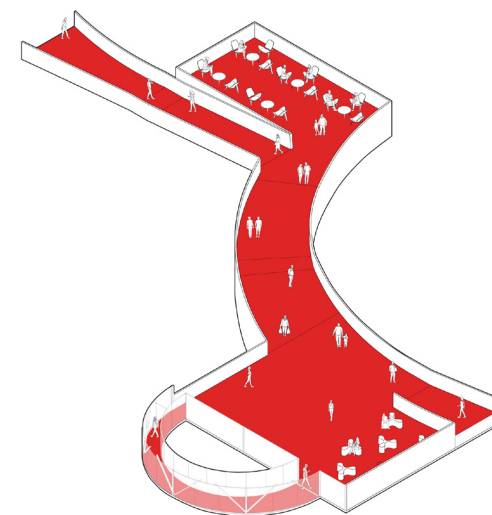
Ramp 4

Second floor to third floor
See detail on pg 73



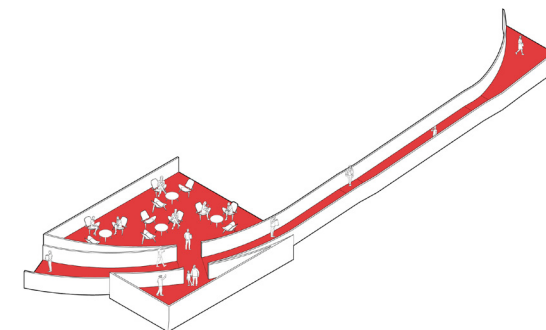
Ramp 5

Third floor to fourth floor
See detail on pg 74



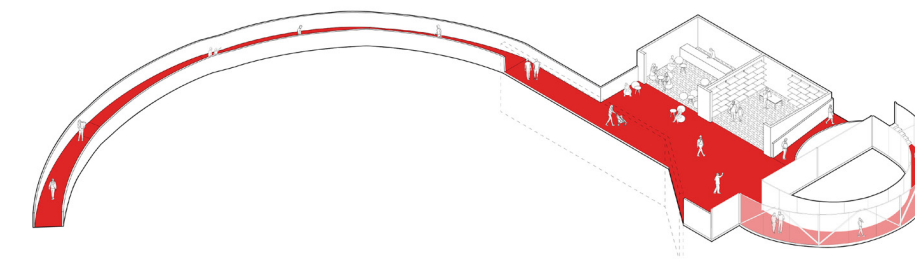
Ramp 2

Ground floor to second floor
See detail on pg 71



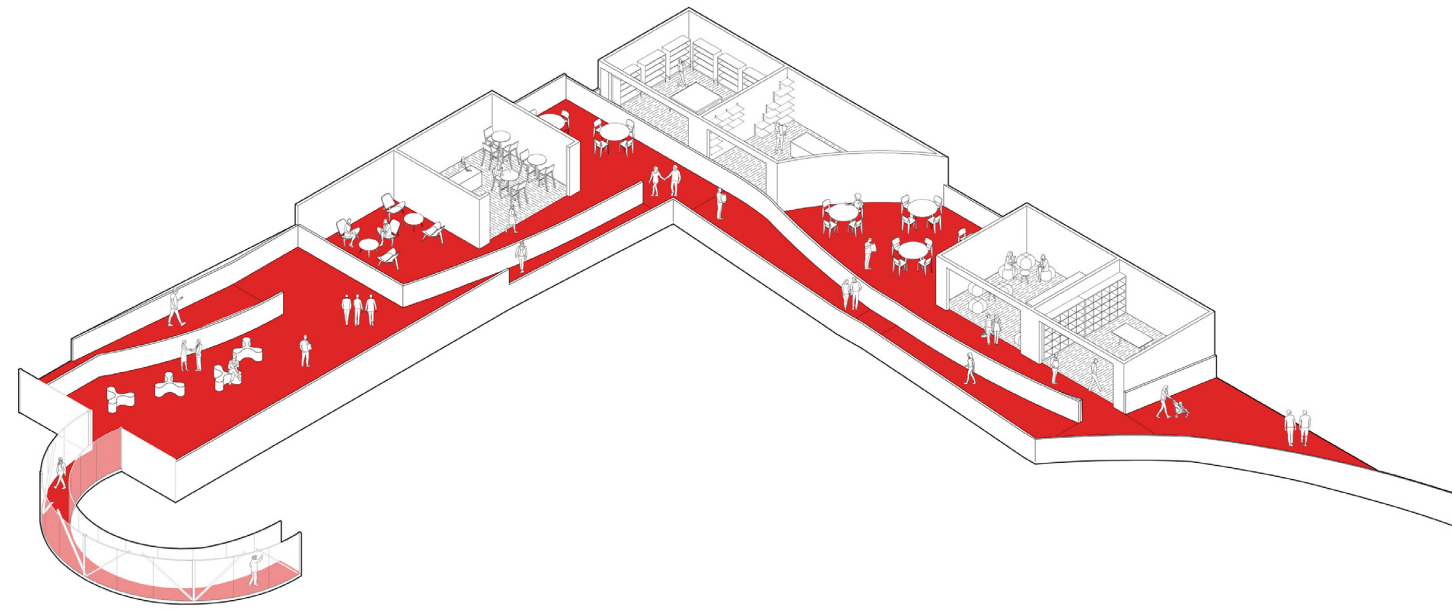
Ramp 6

Fourth floor to fifth floor
See detail on pg 75

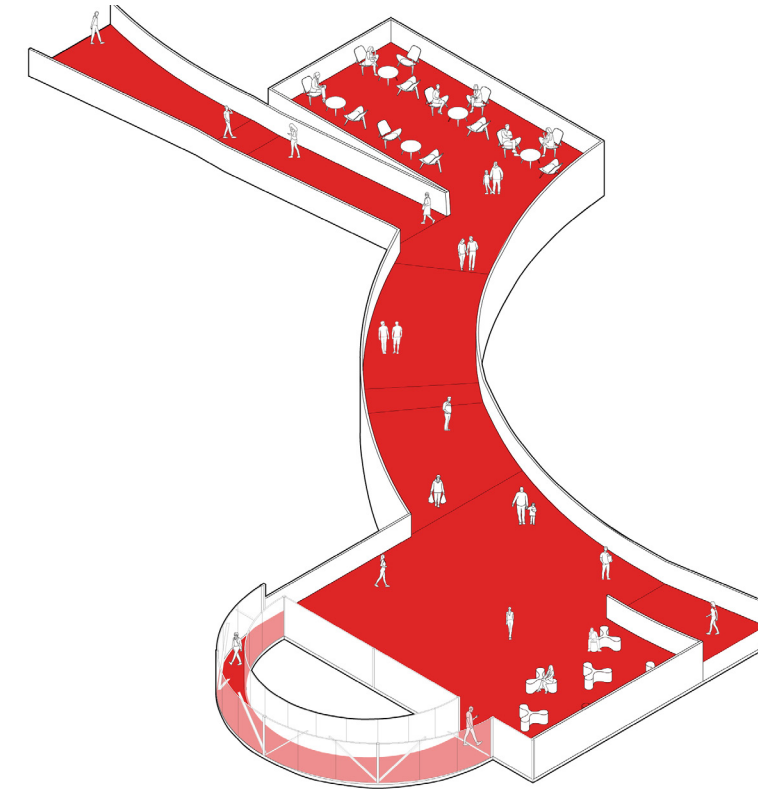


Ramp 3

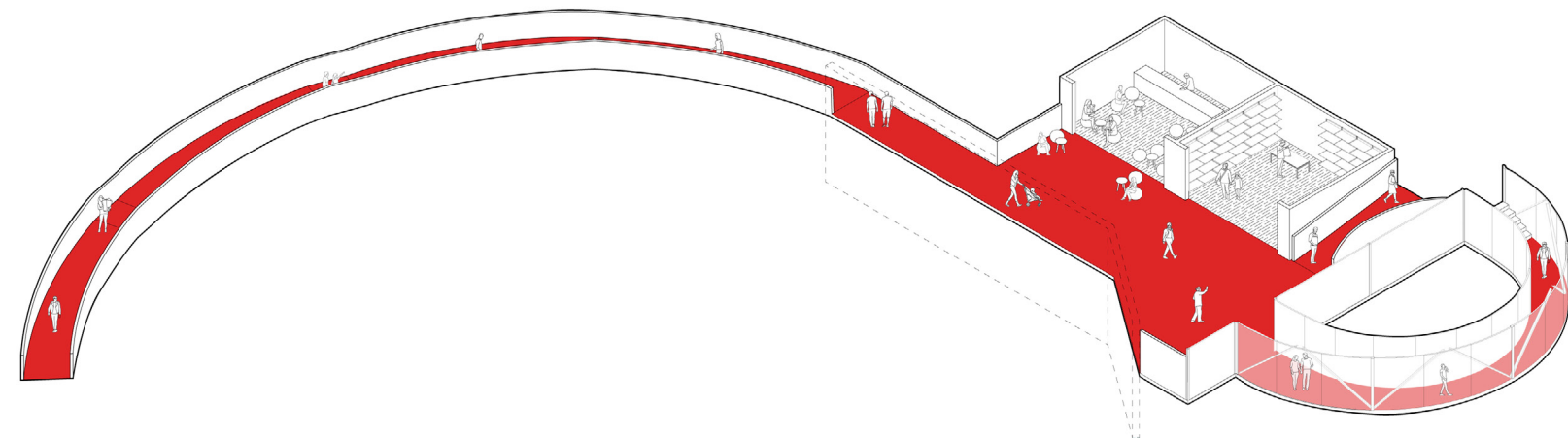
Ground floor to second floor
See detail on pg 72



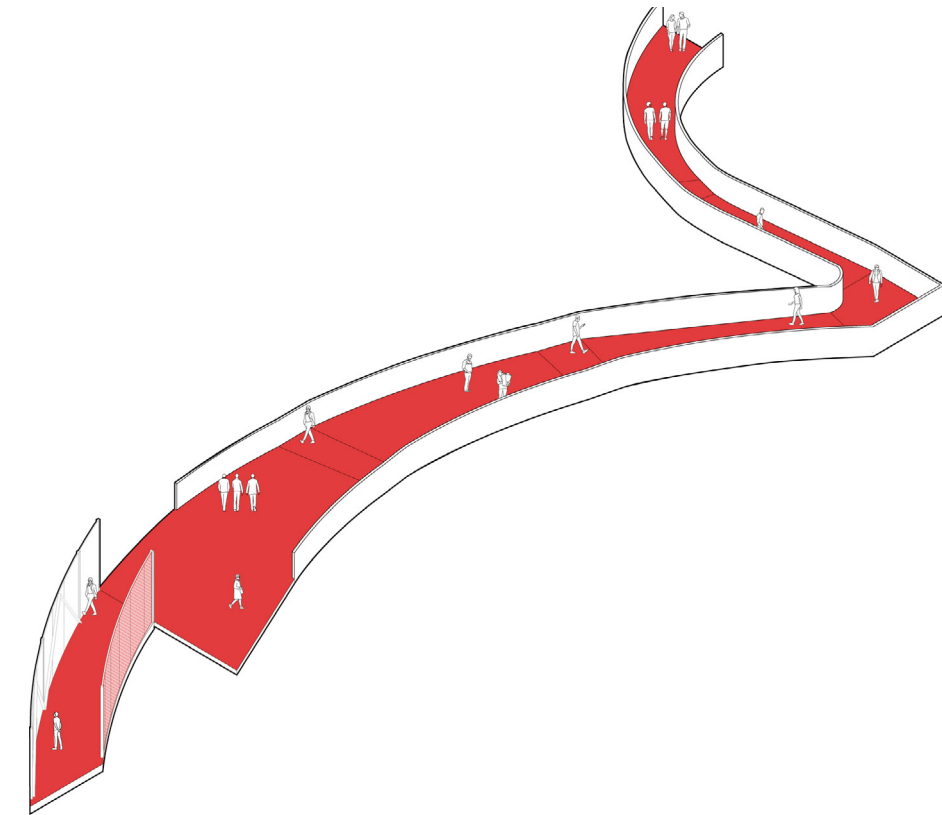
Ramp 1
Ground floor to second floor



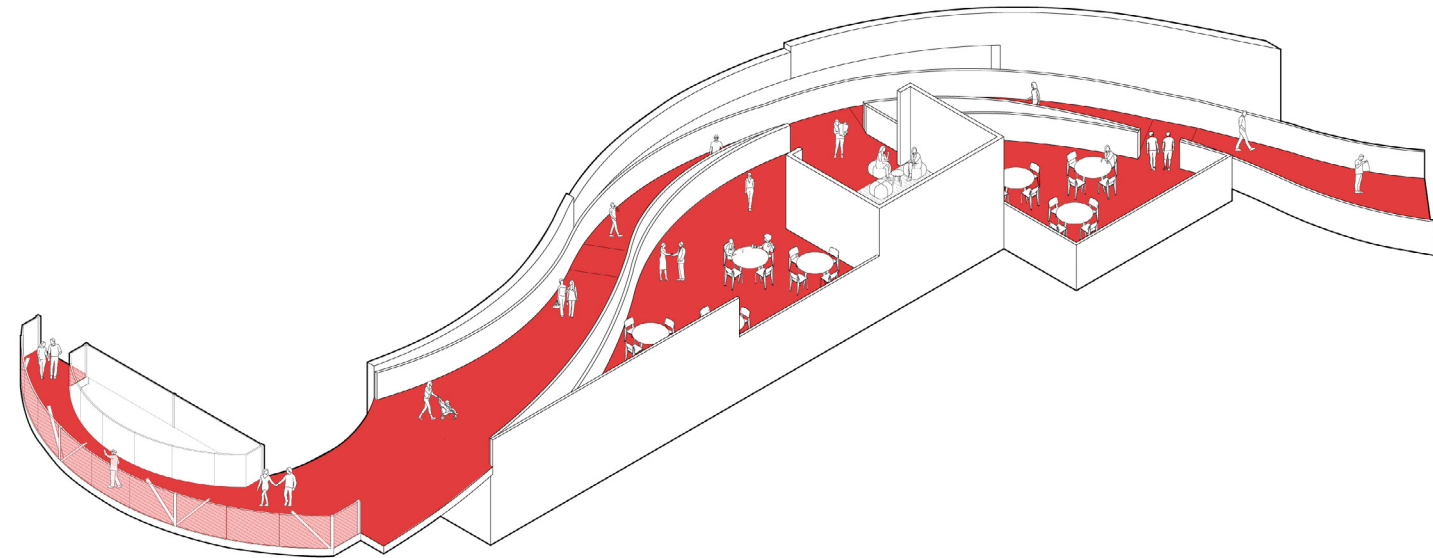
Ramp 2
Ground floor to second floor



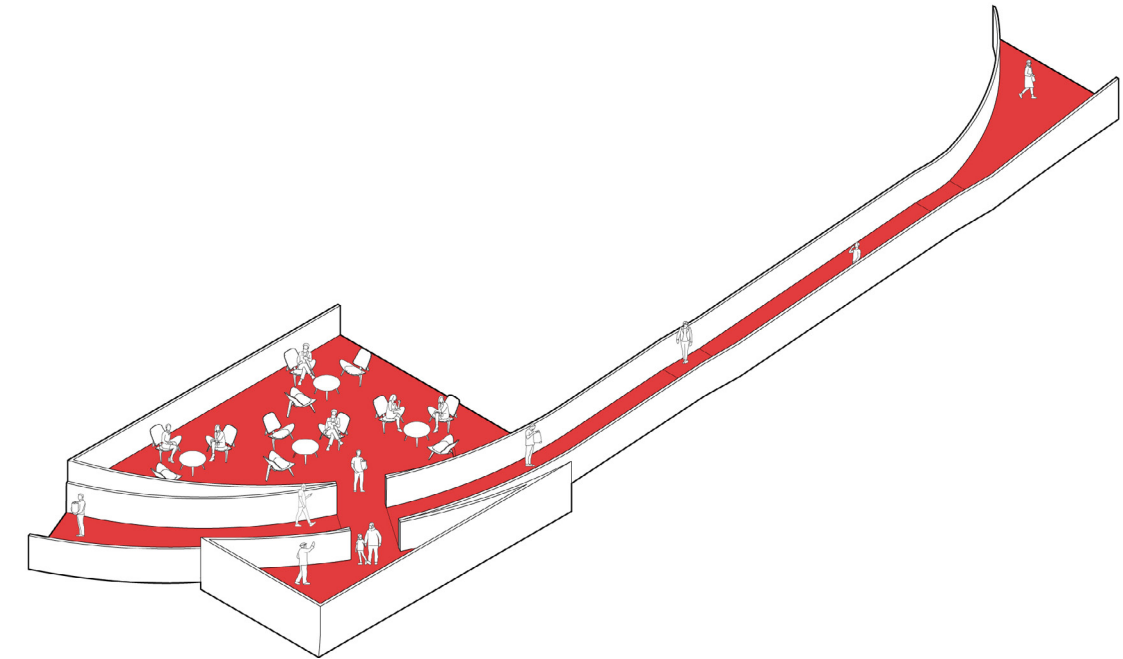
Ramp 3
Ground floor to second floor



Ramp 4
Second floor to third Floor



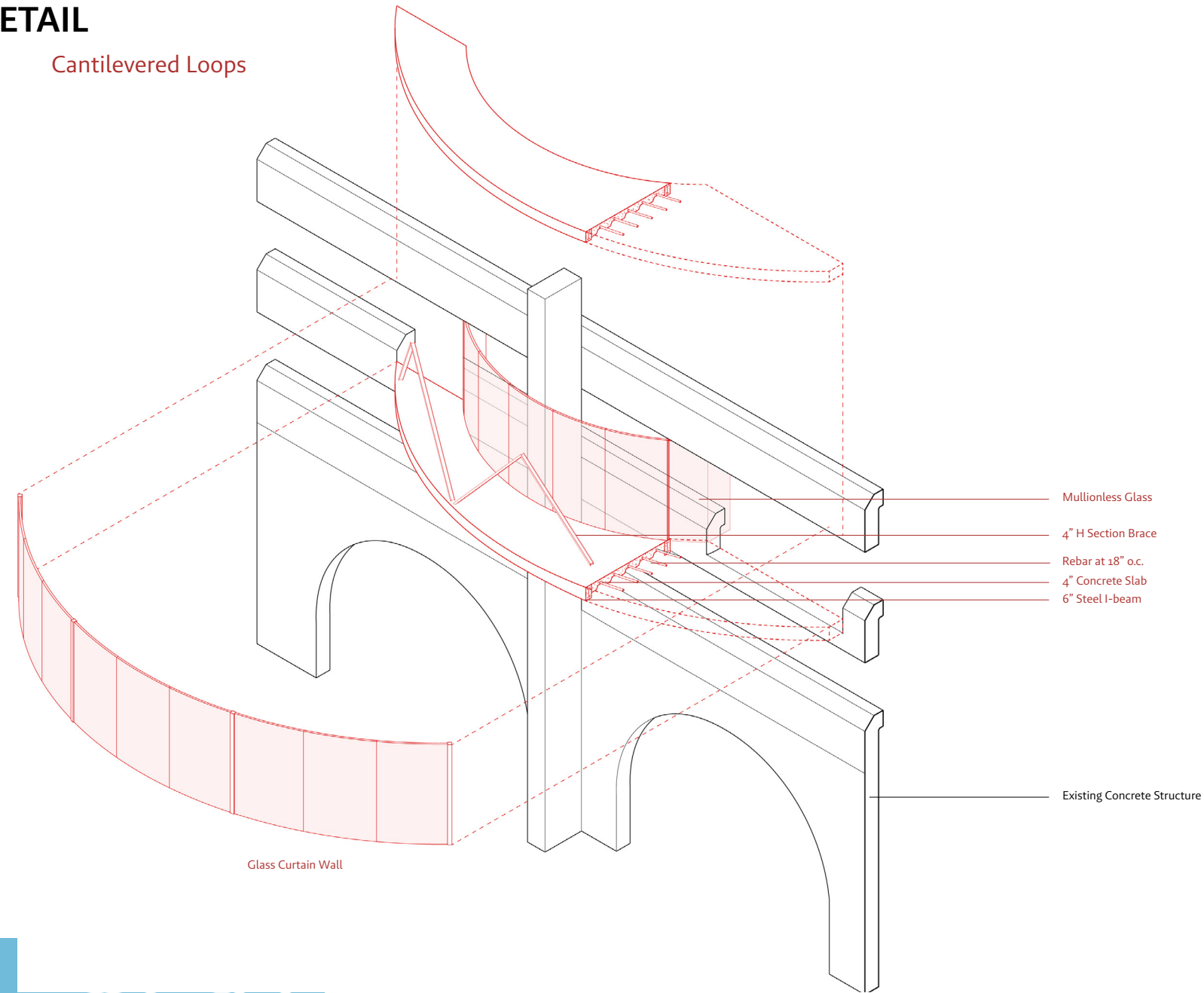
Ramp 5
Third floor to fourth floor



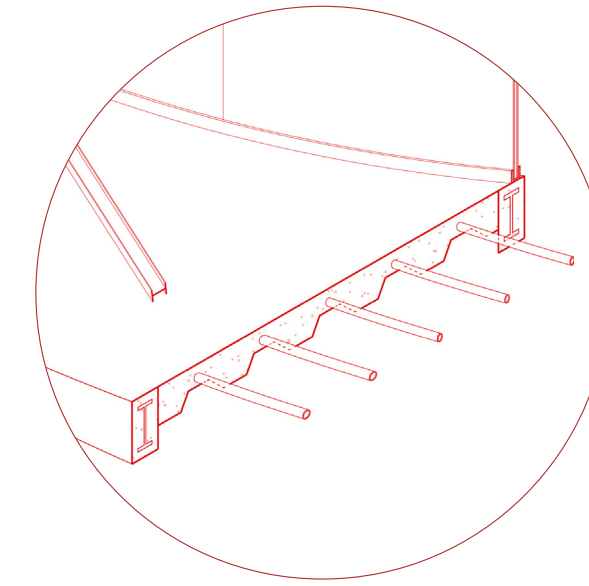
Ramp 6
Fourth floor to fifth floor

DETAIL

Cantilevered Loops



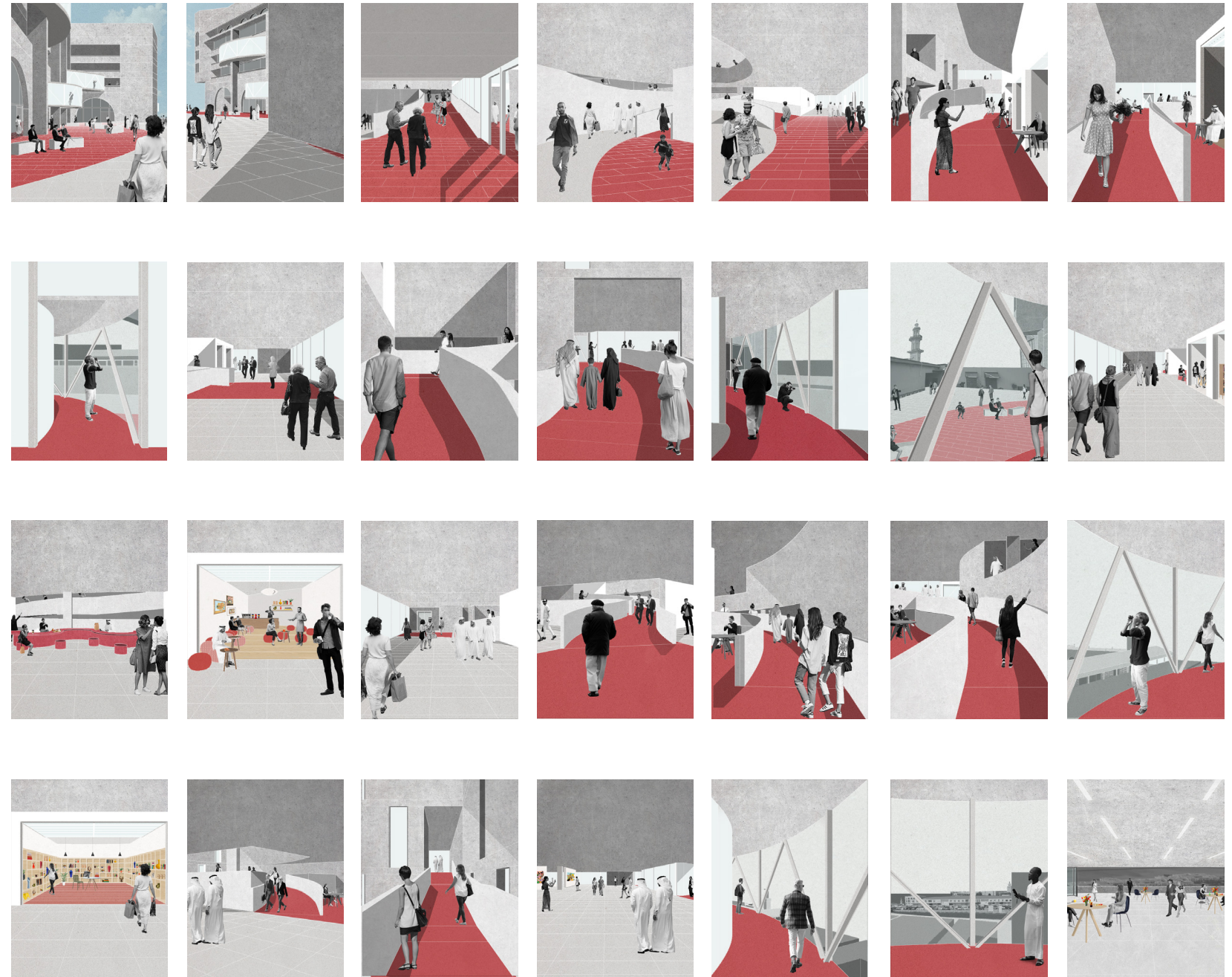
Each one of the six ramps is its own element and identity. The ramps themselves are activated not only through the notion of walking but also through the additional retail spaces as well as the seating spaces that provide places to socialize and gather. The journey of each ramp weaves outside the structure to provide a view to the city. The loops are cantilevered from the existing structure and each loop gives a visual framed view to a different site marker.



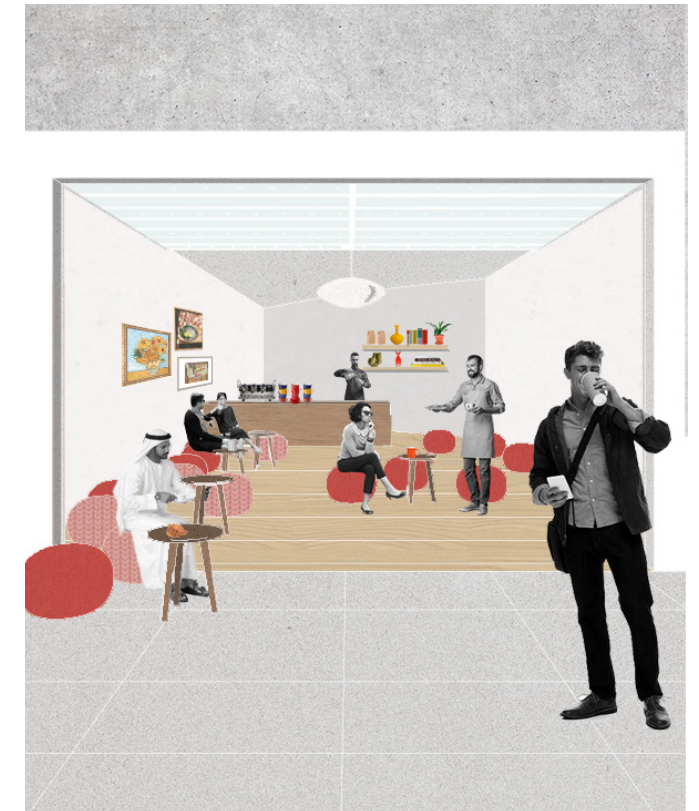
Slab Detail

A NEW JOURNEY OF THE PAST

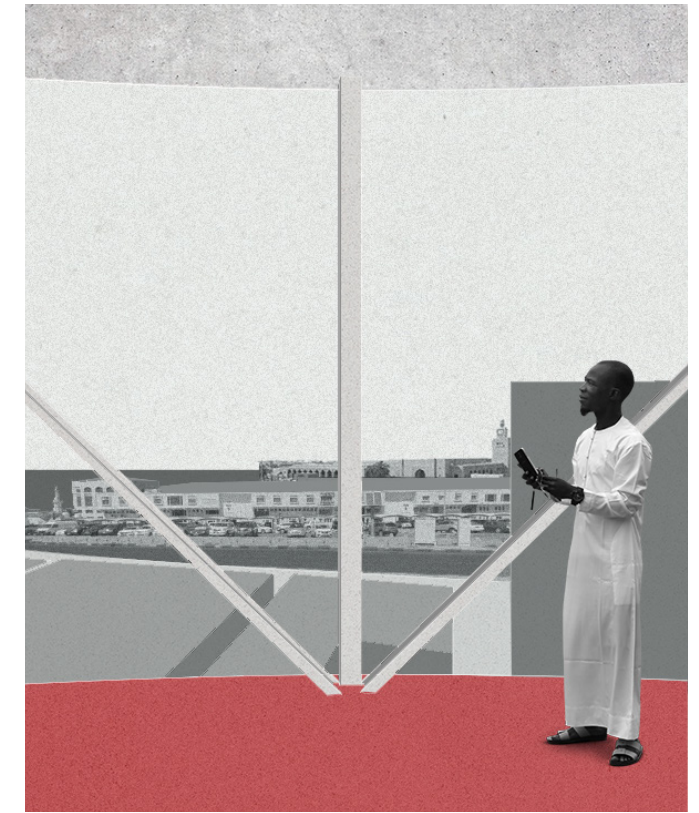
Urban Visual Narrative











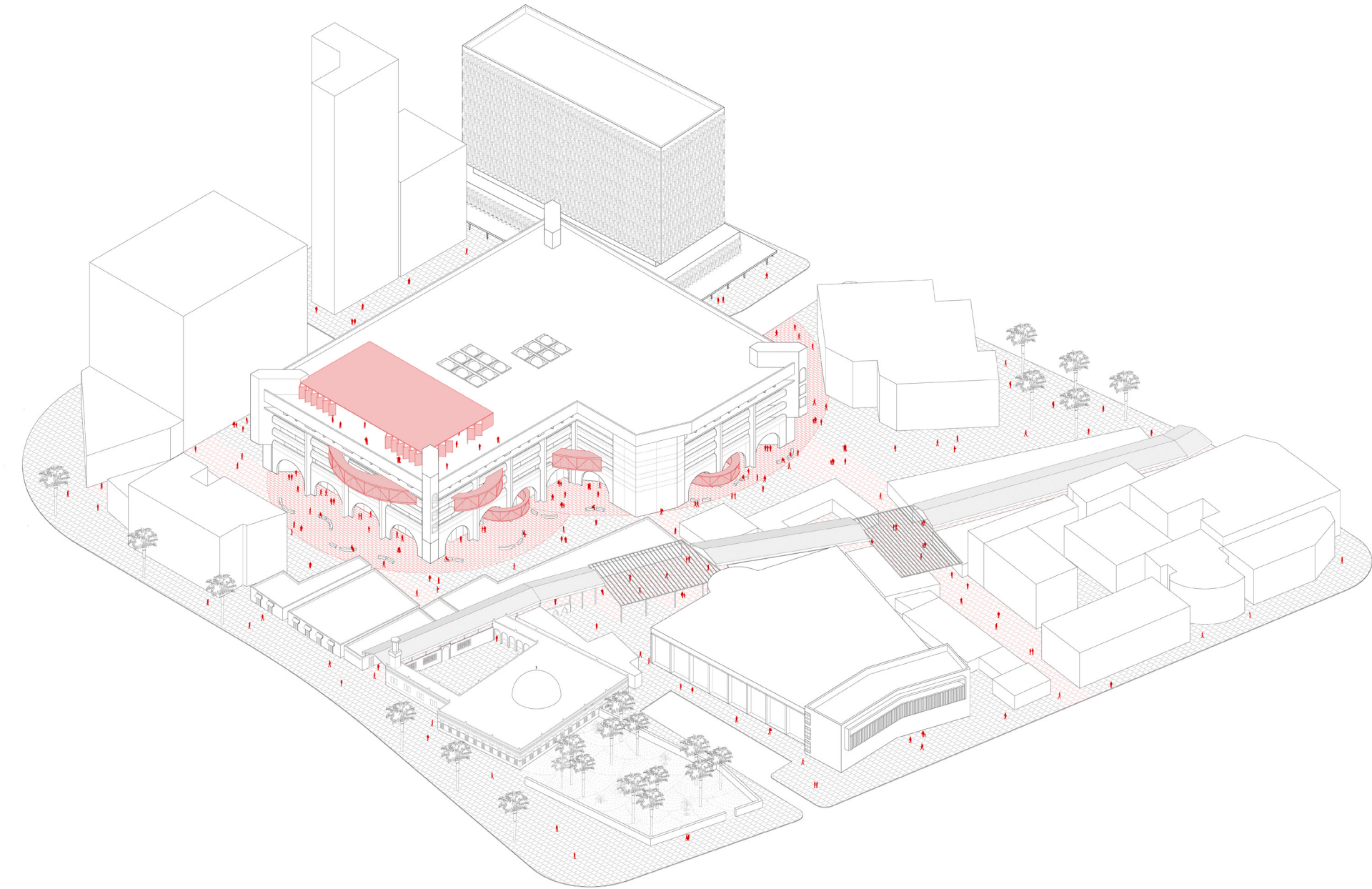
THE BUILDING BACK TO THE CITY

And to the People

The life of a city is ultimately defined through the pedestrian experience. How we reach certain places and what we do once we are there, who we meet along the way. Equally important is the network of paths and directions to and from these places which inevitably extend to the connection between the people themselves.

This project's narrative journey attempts to bring back this connection between the people and the city. Architecture I believe is a series of moments that can create a spatial experience of special significance. These moments in Kuwait City, are helpful in reinvigorating the dynamic social life the city once had.

This project is a deliberation, a mechanism that restores a sense of place. This journey is short, and limited to this building's extent amidst the ever expanding urban fabric. But I hope that it serves as a symbolic gesture at redefining a closeness and tangible connection to our cities.



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akbar, Jamel. *Crisis in the Built Environment: The Case of the Muslim City*. Illustrated edition. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997.

This book talks about elements of traditional Muslim city. Sections of the book helped me understand the public spaces and streets in Arab cities and old Kuwait City. How each element of the city was utilized was important to the thesis in understanding the identity of these old cities.

Al-Nakib, Farah. *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Kuwait transformed is a book that spoke about how Kuwait transformed from being a small merchant town to a modern city due to the economic boom in the 1950s. Al-Nakib writes about the entire process of the cities involvement and transformation throughout the entire process of Westernized modernization.

Al-Bahar, Huda. Traditional Kuwaiti Houses. In *Mimar 13: Architecture in Development*, edited by Hasan-Uddin Khan. Singapore: Concept Media Ltd., 1984.

This article explains the elements of a traditional Kuwaiti house and all the architectural strategies that cooled the houses down from the harsh desert climate.

Careri, Francesco. *Walkscapes Walking as an Aesthetic Practice* (S. Piccolo, Trans.). Culicidae Press, 2017.

Walkscapes talks deeply about the history of walking, and the importance of walking in a city. The idea of walking to bring the city's past was also evident and crucial to this thesis.

Gharipor, Mohammad, ed. *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East*. New York, NY: ROUTLEDGE, 2016.

Gharipor writes about various contemporary landscape projects that are helping to shape the identity of the city in the Middle East. These urban landscapes took elements of traditional landscapes and incorporated them in more contemporary ways.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford [England] ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1989.

In this book, David Harvey critiques post modernism within a social and cultural context. He speaks about modernism and modernity which helped me understand Kuwait's modern approach to the city.

Kuwait Engineer's Office, Wilbur Smith Associates. *Kuwait Souk Study; Phase 1 Base Studies*, Kuwait Municipality. Kuwait City, Kuwait.

Kuwait Souk Study was a study done highlighting the historic landmarks in one of the oldest souks in Kuwait, Souk Al Mubarakiya.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1960.

The Image of the City text helped me analyze Kuwait City, and old Kuwait Town through the elements of the city that Kevin Lynch writes about.

Program, Aga Khan, and Michael Kubo. "The Incorporation of Architecture: Bureaucratic Modernism and Global Practice after 1945," n.d., 21.

Kubo writes about Modernism in Kuwait City, specifically on the modern souks that supposedly embodied the old souks, however in reality are a commercial parking garage. Kubo writes about how these isolated modern buildings created empty spaces that are unused within the city.

Ricardo Camacho, Sara Sarago, and Roberto Fabbri, eds. *Essays, Arguments, & Interviews on Modern Architecture Kuwait*. First Edition. Braun Publishing AG, 2018.

An analysis of modern architecture in Kuwait and the modern built environment. The essays speak about the processes and critiques of modern architecture in Kuwait.

Saba George Shiber. *The Kuwait Urbanization Being an Urbanistic Case-Study of a Developing Country*. Kuwait: Kuwait Government Printing Press, 1964.

Saba George Shiber documented his entire process when he was hired to create a master plan for the central business district area. This document was key to understand Shiber's thinking and design process for the central business district area in Kuwait City.

Samuel, Flora. *Le Corbusier and the Architectural Promenade*. Birkhäuser, 2010.

Le Corbusier and the Architectural Promenade talks in great detail and specifics about how Le Corbusier approached the architectural promenade. This book was helpful in understanding how to approach the intervention of the new journey without emphasizing the Western implications of Modern architecture.

Simon Texier. "Roberto Fabbri, Sara Saragoça et Ricardo Camacho, *Modern Architecture Kuwait 1949-1989*." *ABE Journal* 13 (October 1, 2018).

Modern Architecture Kuwait is a book that lists and documents all the modern buildings in Kuwait that were built after the economic boom. This was helpful in picking and understanding the perfect site for the thesis investigation.

Smithson, Alison Margaret, and Peter Smithson. *The Charged Void: Urbanism*. New York: Monacelli Press, 2005.

In this book, Alison and Peter Smithson write about the Mat Building that was proposed to help bring back Kuwait's Identity. The book helped inform me the direction I wanted to take for my thesis but also use this as a precedent in my design thinking.

Vale, Lawrence J. *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2008.

In this text, Vale touches upon the identity of a city, of a country, in relation to modern times and modern architecture.

Warren, John, and Ihsan Fethi. *Traditional Houses in Baghdad*. 1st edition. Horsham: Coach Publishing House Limited, 1982.

Although this speaks about traditional houses in Baghdad, the houses are similar to the houses in Kuwait. The book talks about all the architectural elements used in a traditional house that use passive cooling methods.

IMAGE CREDITS

المنارة للاستشارات

Page 6:

Yara Hadi, Site Portrait of Old Kuwait Town, wood relief print, 5x7 in.

Page 7:

“Bin.aspx (855x958).” n.d. Accessed November 15, 2020. <https://cdn.worldarchitecture.org/net/bin.aspx?file=197429.JPG>.

Page 8:

Farah Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*: Modified map from Kuwait Municipality (Stanford University Press, 2016), 24, Figure 1.

Page 9:

kwt4you1. n.d. “pr27327.” Accessed November 18, 2020. <https://flic.kr/p/2jq1WX9>.

Page 14:

Yara Hadi, Site Portrait of Modern Kuwait , wood relief print, 5x7 in.

Page 19:

Mark. n.d. “More Old Pictures of Kuwait.” 2:48AM - Everything Kuwait. Accessed December 6, 2020. <https://248am.com/mark/kuwait/more-old-pictures-of-kuwait/>.

Page 20:

“The KOC Archive: Old Kuwait (Part 3).” 2:48AM - Everything Kuwait. Accessed November 15, 2020. <https://248am.com/mark/photography/the-koc-archive-old-kuwait-part-3/>.

Page 21:

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Page 28:

Google Image Capture: © 2021

Page 30:

Photograph of Model., Souk Al Manakh, TAC, 1973-1975. Edward O. Nilsson Private Archive.

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Perspective, Souk Al Manakh, TAC, 1973-1975. Edward O. Nilsson Private Archive.

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Interior, Souq al-Amir, pilar, detail, Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 35 mm slide, 414 x 640, December 5, 2020.

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Image of Mubarakiya School: Hadi, Ibraheem. Photograph. November 15, 2020.

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Image of Souk Al Amir: Hadi, Ibraheem. Photograph. November 15, 2020.

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Image of First Friday Mosuqe: Hadi, Ibraheem. Photograph. November 15, 2020.

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“Modern-Architecture-in-Kuwait-Nelson-Garrido-Photography_dezeen_1568_18-1.jpg (1568x1119).” November 15, 2020. https://static.dezeen.com/uploads/2016/03/modern-architecture-in-kuwait-nelson-garrido-photography_dezeen_1568_18-1.jpg.

Colophon

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