

Studio Jan De Vylder  
universum carrousel journey  
RE-NOW-RE

# MASQUERADE OF SECURITY

Salome Schepers

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**"Masks that hide nothing but  
themselves"**

- Peter Sealy, Archetypes

The starting point of my Diploma is the Swiss Re mock up, situated on the shores of Lake Zurich. The mock up is two faced: a thoroughly designed red concrete facade towards Mythenquai and a pragmatic white rendered backside.

The mock up is a fragment intended as a testing ground for the project “Lake” by Meili Peter and GFA. This office building will complete the “Campus Mythenquai”, headquarter of Swiss Re, and replace the Mythenschloss from 1987 which was built to replace the residential building by Arminio Cristofari from 1928. The succession of buildings predating the site reveals a shift from residential to commercial use. The Mythenschloss embodied that transition combining both office and residential spaces and expressing each separately: a representative façade imitating the original Cristofari building towards the lake and a contemporary metallic facade along Alfred-Escher-Strasse. Today, this programmatic ambiguity is still defined in the zoning laws, where 33% of the total surface is attributed to residential use. However the new building “Lake” will only have a commercial function, compensating for the lack of residential use elsewhere.

The first phase of my project made an attempt to question the use, and possible worth of the mock up beyond its intended purpose. A story based on personal intuition projected onto the mock up related it to single family homes. This story acknowledges the existing structure as something that has not only consumed effort, energy, materials and money in its making but also actively participates in the dynamic

of its surroundings. The story acts as a lens that extends the meaning of an object and consequently liberates us in how we intervene and interact with it.

But where does this association come from? In Fehraltorf, a 40 minute train ride north east of the Mythenquai, eight single family houses are composed seemingly identical to the backside of the Swiss Re mock up. This striking similarity is mostly due to the simple appearance and minimal detailing - exterior insulation, flat roof, black rain gutter and windowsills.

The mock up juxtaposes two supposedly separate worlds - Mythenquai and Fehraltorf: in terms of location: city / countryside, in terms of use: office / residential, in terms of expression: thoroughly planned and tested prefabricated concrete facade / pragmatic constructive solution and in terms of content: numbers / humans. The dual expression questions the typological strictness of the two worlds and showcases the possibility of architecture to make a statement on society.

# The single family house

Thomas detects the shimmering white of the wall through the leaves of the tree on the right side of the road. He turns his head around for a split second, trying to fully grasp the picture, before he needs to look back on the road in front of him.

A sense of warmth floods through his body, caused by the familiarity of the scene. The white render of the facade reflects the sunlight. What a clean and bright design! It is almost as if he could feel the irregularity of the plaster underneath his fingertips, a memory from running around the house chasing his younger sister. They always had to be very careful not to run into the rabbit cage.

The sleek facade ends with a flat roof, a dark metal rail draws a clear line seperating the slender wall from the blue sky. How well it accentuates the proportions of the house! His childhood home had the same flat roof, and so did the rest of the houses, forming a unified backdrop along the street. It was like a shared vein, connection to the city, playground to the kids, and sometimes the place for communal events like fleamarkets or summer parties.

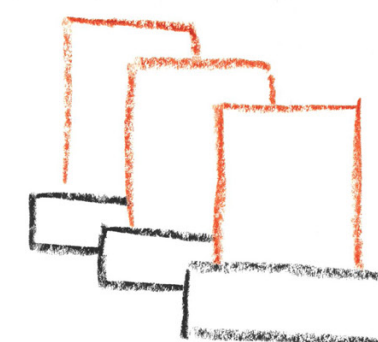
The element of this house that strikes Thomas the most though is the powerful gesture of the added outside stairs. The dark ballustrade forms a body, almost a sculpture, that meanders around the corner of the white cube. A bold contrast to the lightness of the bright facade! What a nice experience it must be to climb up these stairs, being able to take the view in while walking up to the next floor.

While driving along, he tries to imagine what the inside of the house would look like. There’s probably a lot of marble.

How lucky these people are, owning a plot of land right on the shores of Lake Zurich. They must be incredibly rich. Maybe they are one of those old families that have had their foundation in the city for generations. Thomas feels a sense of gratitude and pride to have grown up in a similar house. Will he ever be able to provide the same for his family in the future?

In the rear mirror, he takes one last glance at the white cube before the car turns around the next corner.









In order to understand the correlation of the architectural typology and the social and economical context, it is worth looking at the systematic behind both worlds, taking Mythenquai and Fehraltorf as an example.

The single family houses in Fehraltorf are a reflection of the market of ready-made houses. Companies sell houses out of a catalogue with the guarantee of a budget and completion date. They fulfill the popular dream of owning a house, made more affordable through pragmatic construction solutions, cheaper materials and standardized detailing. The presented pictures and floorplans in the catalogue outline a specific living standard, an emotional value, romanticized, promising originality through the illusion of choice. Beyond buildings, the catalogue sells an ideology, gender roles, family appearances, making the single family house a reinforcement of stereotypical contemporary social values.

In Fehraltorf the catalogue becomes built reality. Each house is surrounded with a metallic fence, marking the owned plot, claiming individuality. Close inspection shows small differences between the homogenous houses - the balcony balustrade, the tone of the render, the color of the rain gutter, slight adaptations in the volume. Every variation traces back to a specific wish of the home owner, catering to the social ideal of individual expression manifested in the listed differentiating physical details.

The houses are not only of the same appearance but are buying into the same ideals. Investigating the people who live there, the “sold” social model

can be observed. The wives are mostly staying at home or working in the immediate area: in the local library, at the school or a nail studio in the basement. Meanwhile, the careers of the men are publicly displayed on LinkedIn, proudly narrating their professional ascents. They work for companies such as UBS, Microsoft or Swiss Re, the very reason allowing them to afford their house.

While the home might be seen as a symbol for emotional security, insurance companies have turned this emotional value into an economic one where security becomes a commodity. Though linked to vulnerable aspects of life: home, health, people, the only security an insurance company provides is an economic one. The provided security is thus abstract, a number, an illusion of emotional security. Nonetheless it reveals the status of capital in our society.

It is based on this abstract value that the insurance companies have gained their economic wealth and consequently now own physical property. The buildings serve as the formal representation of the status of the company, purposely displayed to attract possible future employees.

Both the single family houses and the institutional buildings at Mythenquai are status symbols and the formal expression of property, economic relevance and as such symbols of power. The two typologies are materialized consequences generated by the same system and ideology.

## Hausbau ist Vertrauenssache



Bild Inhaber: Beat und Evelyn Niederberger

Für die meisten Menschen bedeutet der Bau eines eigenen Hauses nicht nur die Erfüllung eines Traums, sondern auch die grösste Investition in ihrem Leben. Bauinteressenten sollten deshalb genau prüfen, mit wem sie ihr Projekt realisieren. Drei Dinge sind es, die ein Realisierungspartner unbedingt mitbringen muss: Kompetenz, Erfahrung und Vertrauen.

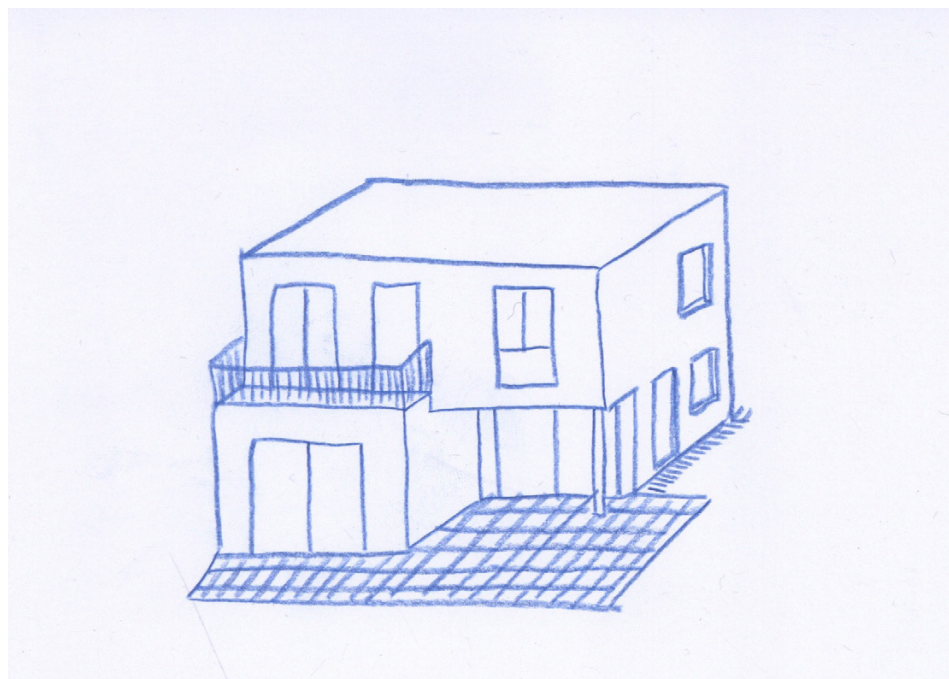
Exakt auf diesen drei Pfeilern haben wir Atmoshaus aufgebaut. Wir bieten Ihnen ein unabhängiges, individuell und ökologisch konzipiertes Wohnen zu attraktiven Bedingungen. Und das Wichtigste: Auf dem Weg zu Ihrem Ziel lassen wir Sie nie allein. Wir unterstützen Sie von der Projektierung und Finanzierung über die Grundstücksbeschaffung und die Einholung der Bewilligungen bis zur Schlüsselübergabe.

Herzlich

*B. Niederberger*  
Beat Niederberger  
Geschäftsinhaber

*E. Niederberger*  
Evelyn Niederberger  
Geschäftsinhaberin



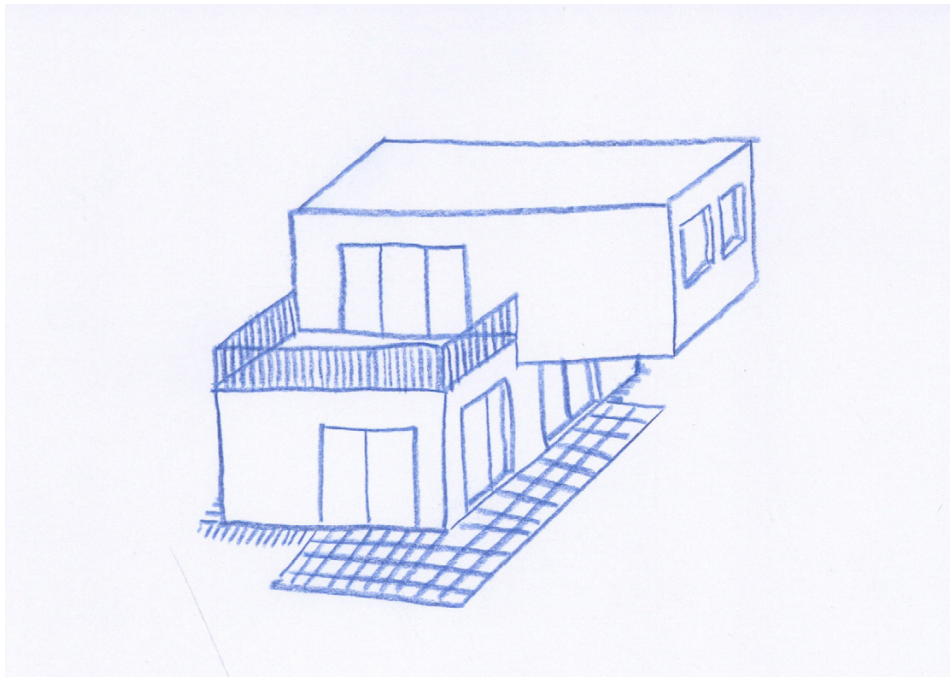


FUTURE F_02.00	
5 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
11.52 x 6.52m	CHF 561'000.-
12.12 x 7.27m	
790 m <sup>3</sup> SIA	
233.2 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
194.7 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	



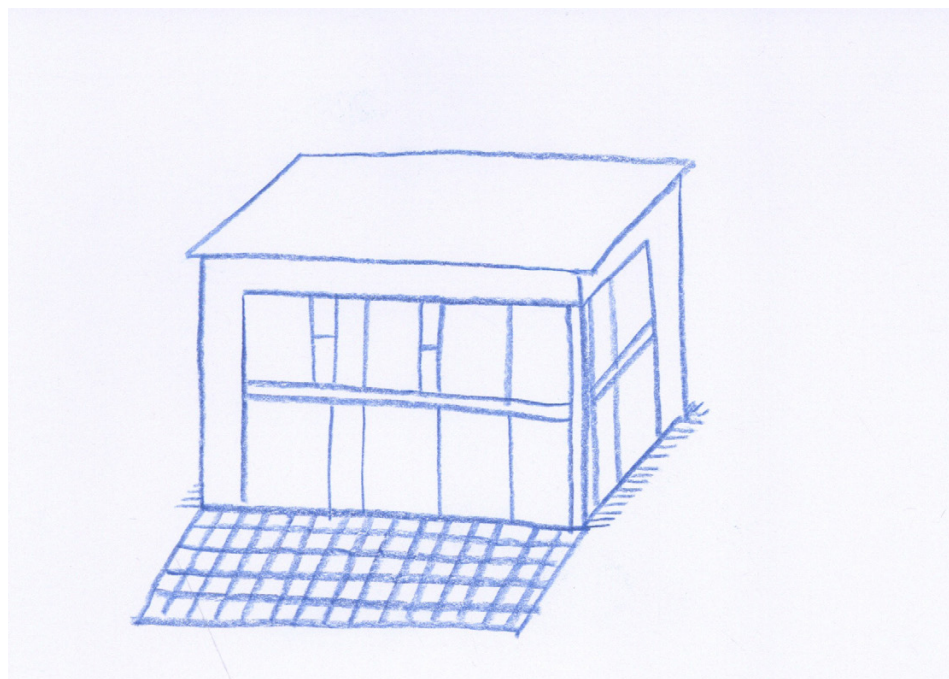


HAPPY FAMILY	H-01.00
5 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
10.42m x 7.62m	CHF 459'000.-
665 m <sup>3</sup> SIA	
231.8 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
195.7 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	
1.5m KtH	
27° DN	



VISTA	V-01.00
5 1/2 ZIMMER	invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
11.32 x 8.52m	CHF 464'000.-
9.32 x 8.52m	
835 m <sup>3</sup> SIA	
198 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
163.1 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	



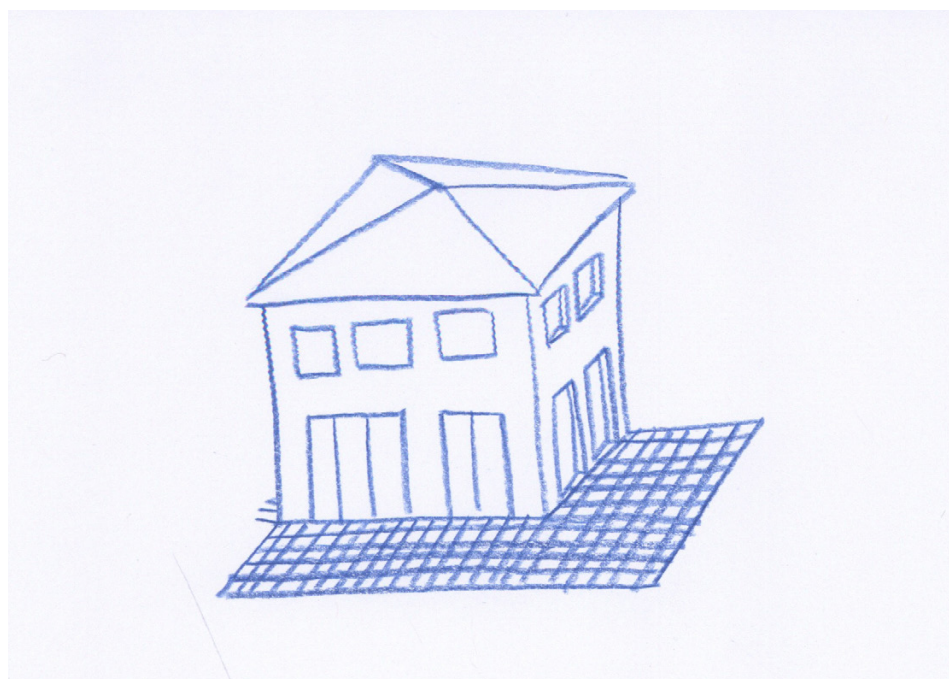


BLICKFANG PLUS B-02.00	
6 1/2 ZIMMER	Invst. netto inkl. 7.7% Mwst
12.02 x 8.92 m	GHT 658'000.-
885 m <sup>3</sup> SIA	
278.9 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
239.2 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	
2.10 m KntH	
5° DN	

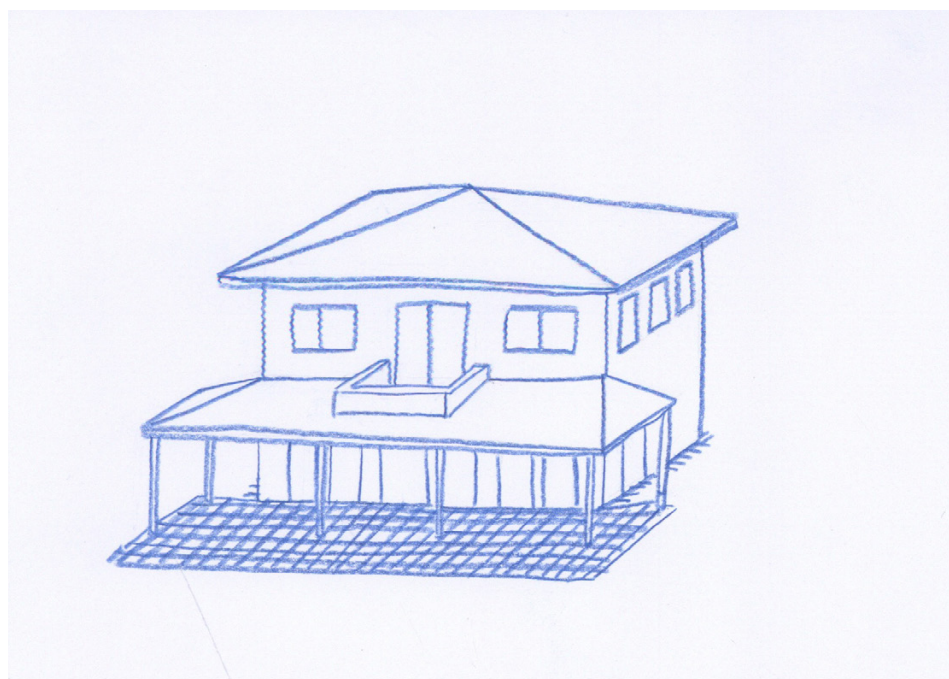


BELLUGIHA (OHNE KELLER) B-01.00	
4 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
9.32 x 8.52 m	CHF 396'000,-
555 m <sup>3</sup> SIA	
158.8 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
131.1 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	
1m Knt	
38° DN	



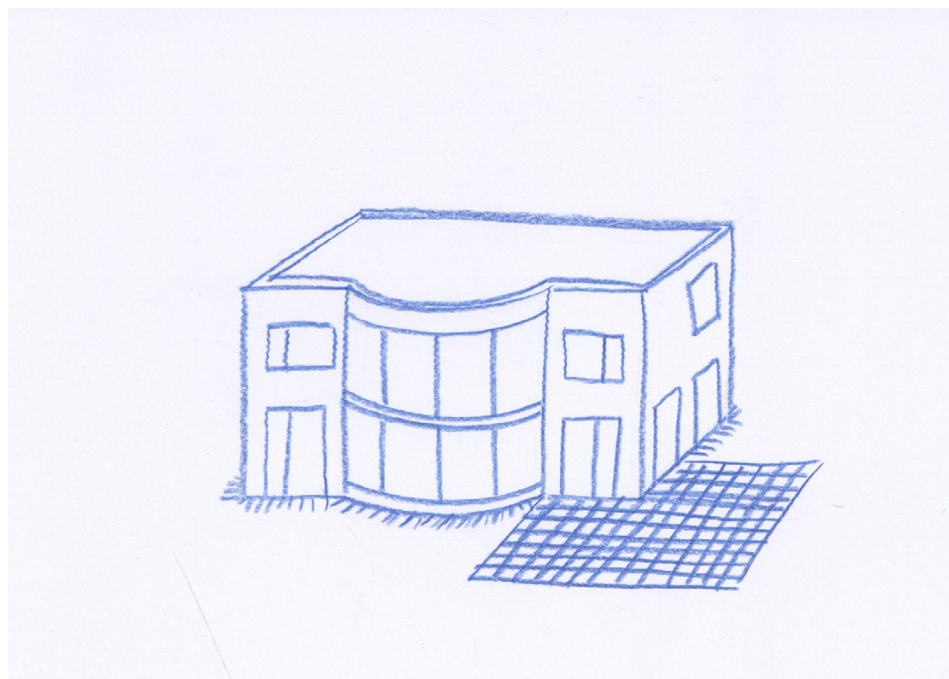


TRENTO	T-02.00
5 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto incl. 7.7% MWST
9.12 x 9.12 M	CHF 469'000.-
690 m <sup>3</sup> OIA	
204.8 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
169.3 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	
20° ON	

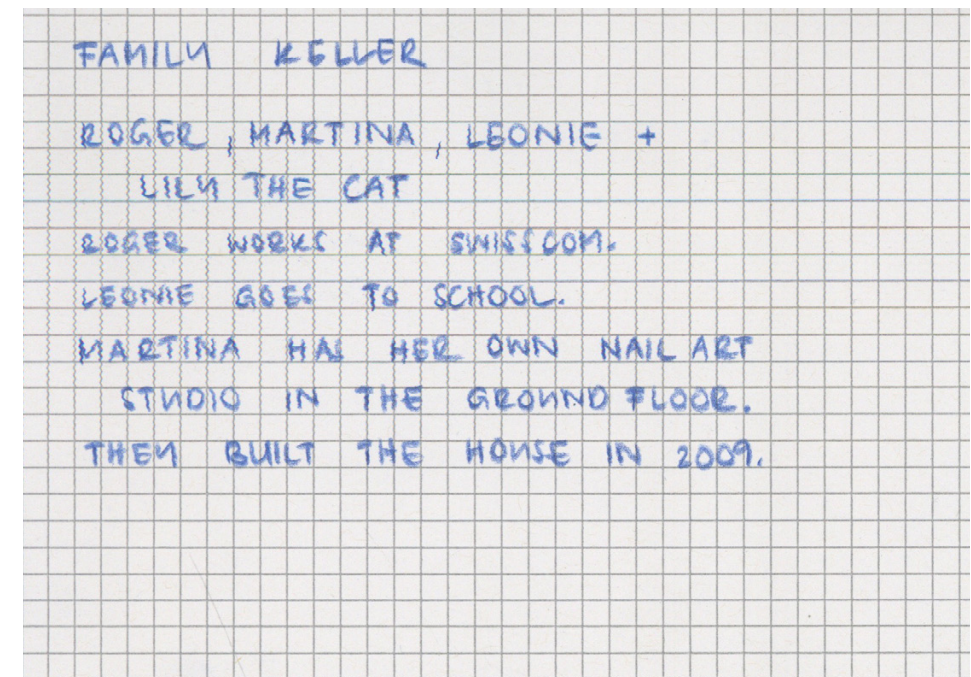
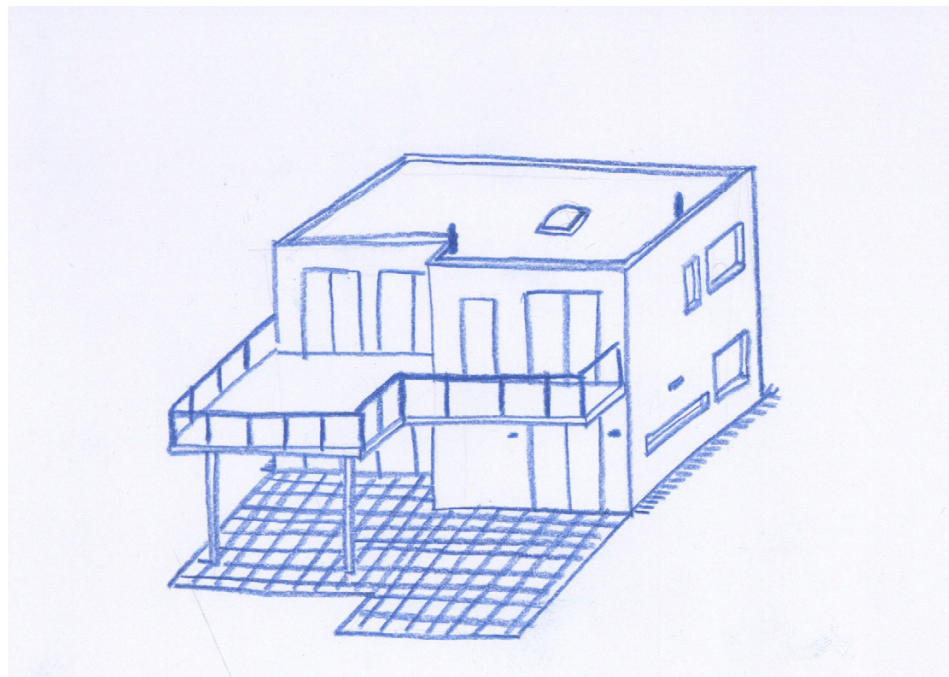


TERRANA PLUS	T01.00
5 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
12.12 x 11.72 m	CHF 923'000.-
1270m <sup>2</sup> SIA	
363.6 m <sup>2</sup> GF	
311.7 m <sup>2</sup> NGF	
18° DN	

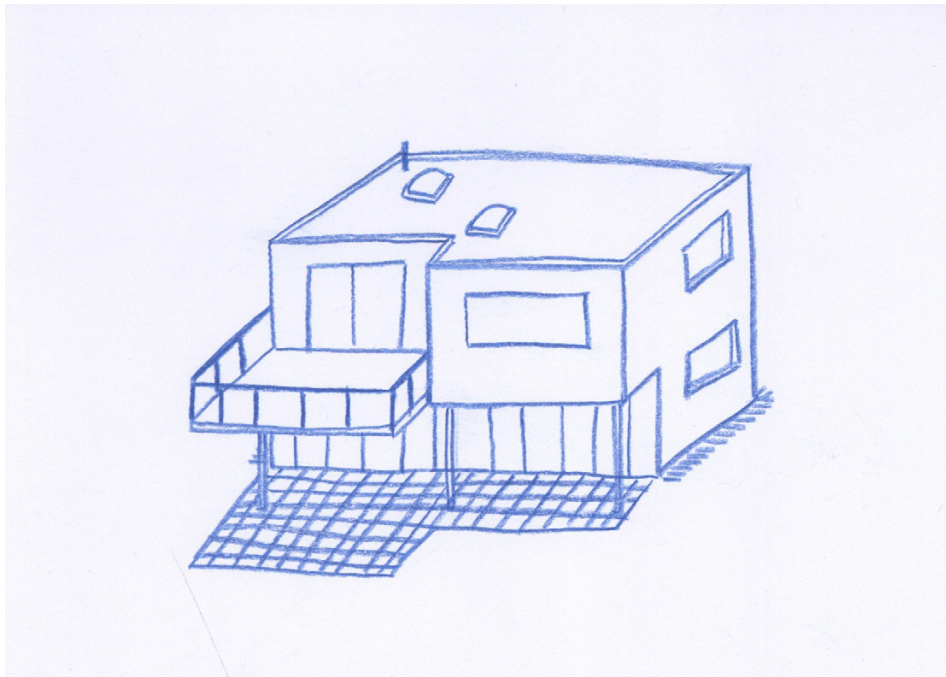




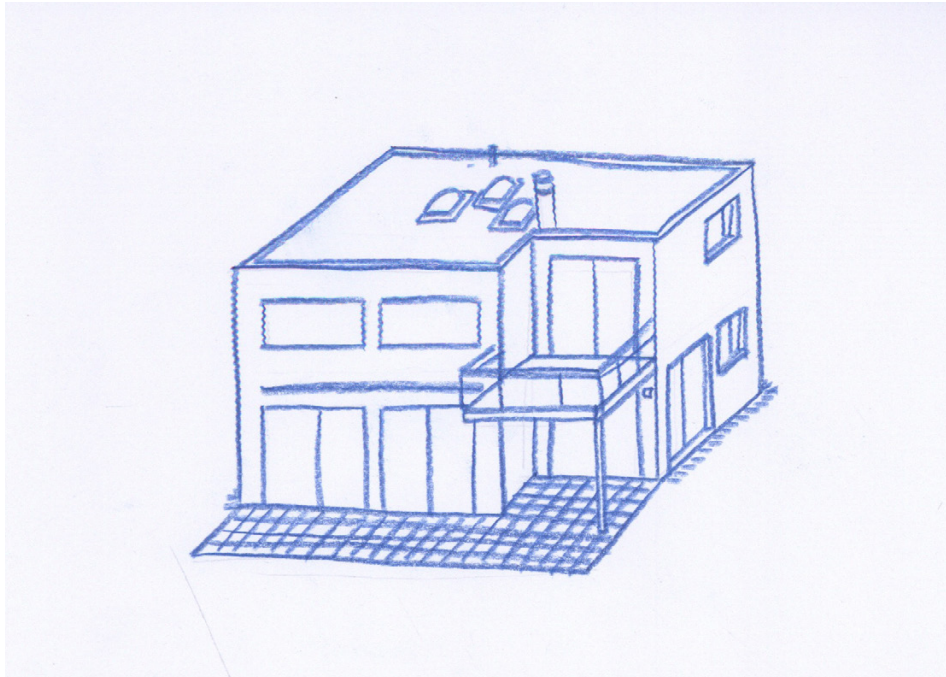
GRANDESSA G 02.00	
7 1/2 ZIMMER	Invest. netto inkl. 7.7% MWST
13.12 x 8.82m	821'000.- CHF
1105 m³ SIA	
325.3 m² GF	
272.8 m² NGF	







FAMILY TANNER  
CHRISTOPH, SONJA  
CHRISTOPH WORKS FOR APPLE  
SONJA WORKS AS A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER.  
THEY BUILT THE HOUSE IN 2009.  
CHRISTOPH WAS VERY INVOLVED TO PUT UP  
THE SOLAR PANELS ON THE ROOF. THEY  
NOW ARE A REFERENCE ON THE  
WEBSITE.  
THEY ARE VERY PROUD OF THEIR POOL.



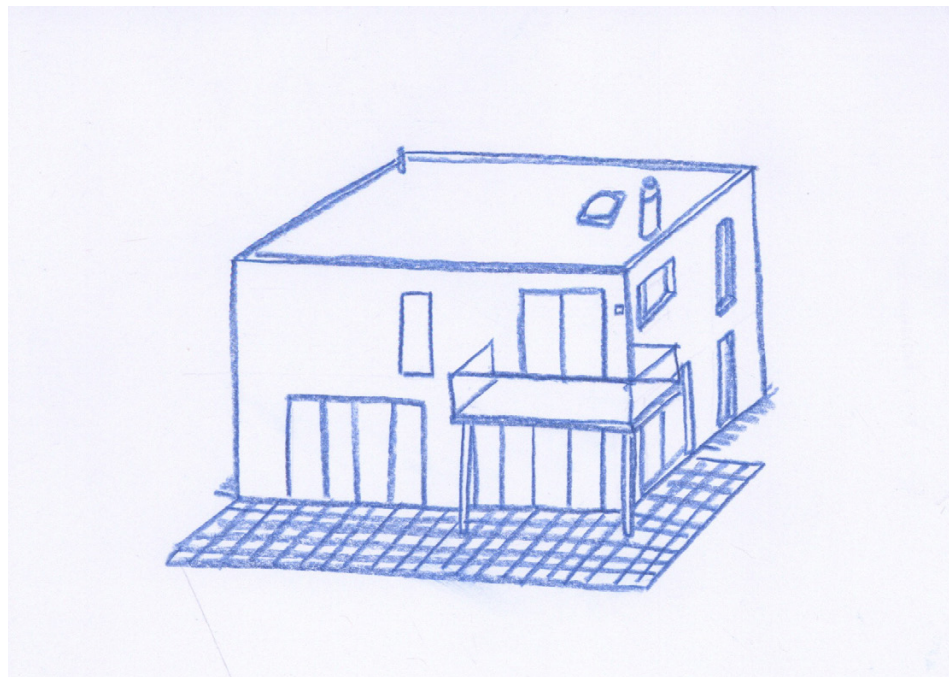
FAMILY BÖSCH - STREHLER

PAUL, MARIANNE

PAUL IS A RETIRED CONSULTANT.

MARIANNE STAYED AT HOME TO LOOK AFTER THE TWO CHILDREN. TODAY, SHE IS VERY ENGAGED IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. BOTH CHILDREN MOVED OUT A LONG TIME AGO.





FAMILY HEISTER

ADRIAN, DOROTHEE, SEBASTIAN, ANTON

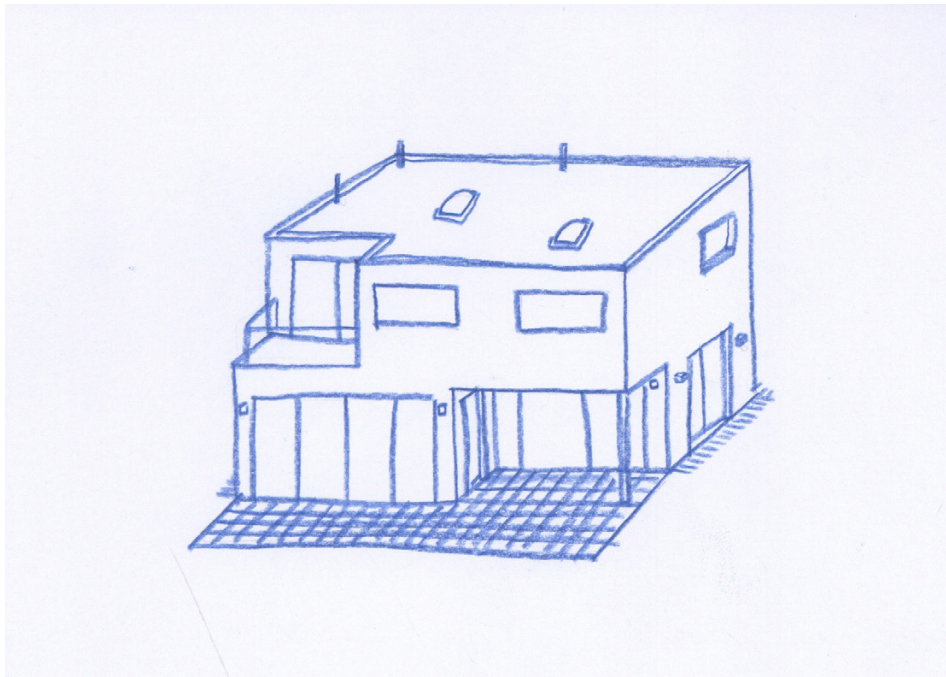
ADRIAN WORKS FOR CREDIT SUISSE.

DOROTHEE LOOKS AFTER THE TWO BOYS.

THEY BUILT THE HOUSE IN 2010.

THEY HAVE TWO RABBITS AND A

TRAMPOLINE IN THE GARDEN.



## FAMILY KRAMER

MARIO, BEA , LISA , TILL

MARIO IS A LAWYER.

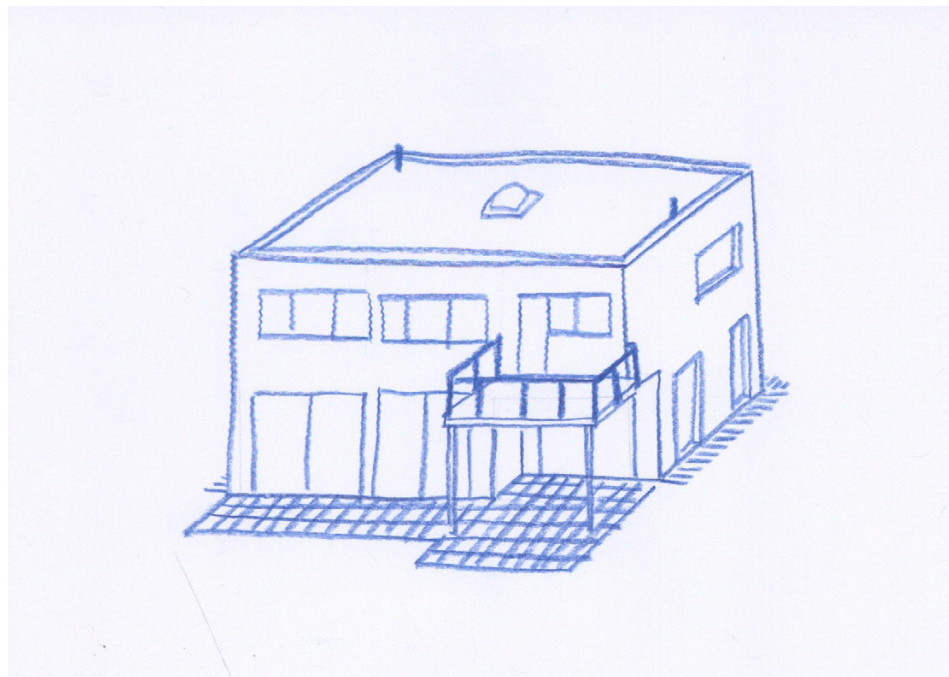
BEA IS A LIBRARIAN.

TILL GOES TO SCHOOL , LISA IS GOING TO  
DAYCARE TWICE A WEEK.

THEY BUILT THEIR HOUSE IN 2010.

IN THEIR GARDEN ,THEY HAVE A TRAMPOLINE,  
A SLIDE & A PING PONG TABLE.





## FAMILY STRÄSSLER

CHRISTOPHE, DANIELA

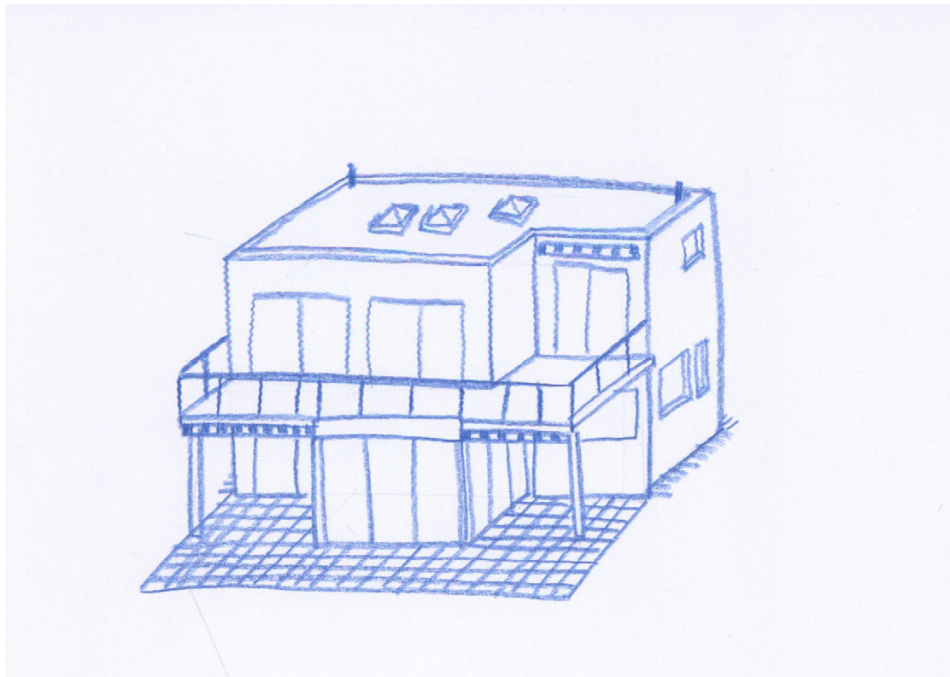
CHRISTOPHE WORKS FOR NBS.

DANIELA WORKS AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL  
TEACHER.

LAURA AND SIMON BOTH GO TO SCHOOL.

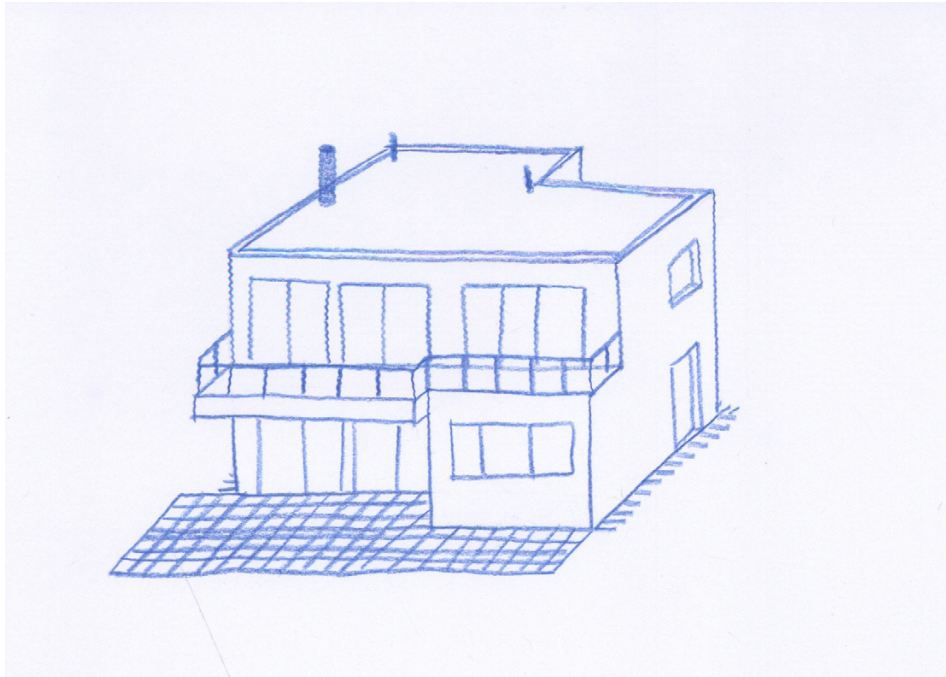
THEY BUILT THEIR HOUSE IN 2009.

THEY HAVE RABBITS AND A BASKETBALL  
NET OUT THE FRONT.

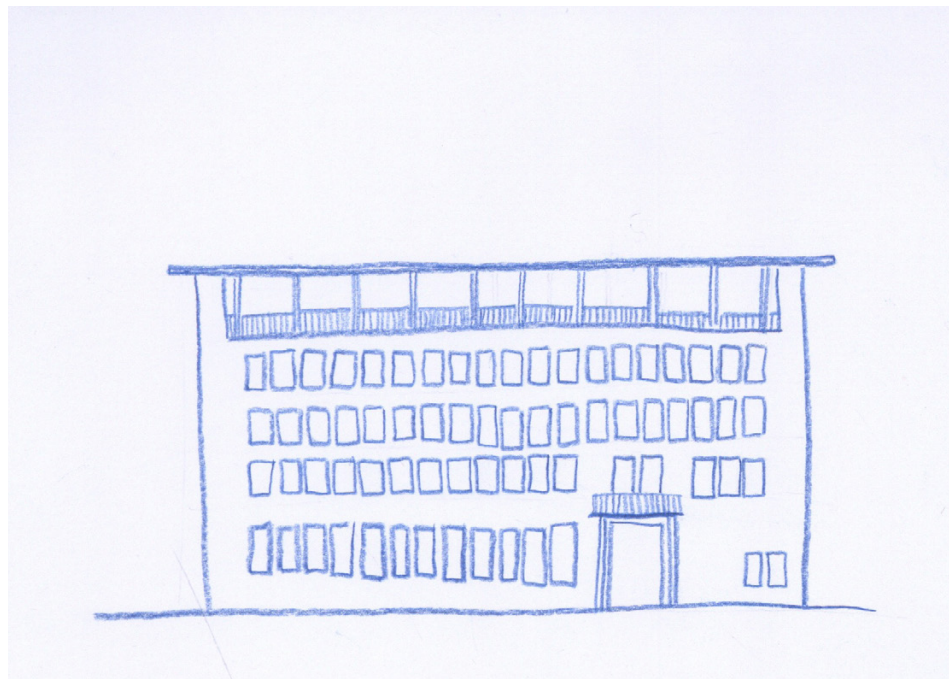


FAMILY BÜHLER  
MARTIN, NORA  
2 KIDS  
MARTIN WORKS FOR CEMBRA MONEY BANK  
NORA WATCHES THE CHILDREN.  
THEY BUILT THEIR HOUSE IN 2008.  
THEY HAVE AN ALARM SYSTEM.



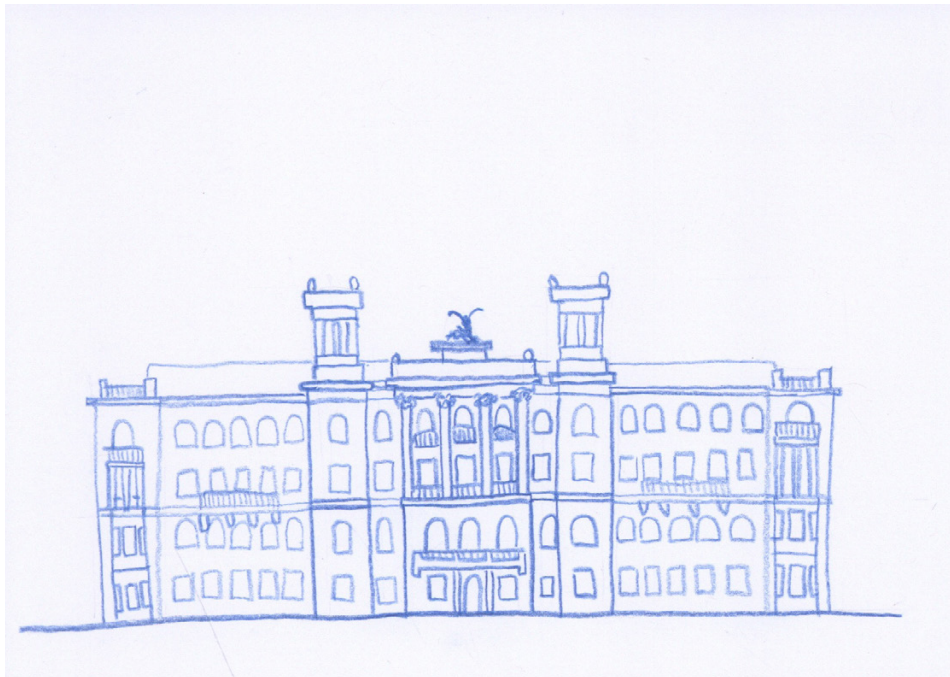


FAMILY GERBASI  
GENARO, NALANI  
3 KIDS  
GENARO WORKS AT A TECH COMPANY.  
NALANI WORKS AT A MARKETING AGENCY.  
THEY BUILT THEIR HOUSE IN 2009.  
THEY HAVE AN ALARM SYSTEM.



GENERAL - GUIJAN - QUAI 40
SWISS LIFE AG
LARGEST LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY IN CH
2020: ADJUSTED PROFIT CHF 1.57 mld.
HEADQUARTERS
GERBRÜDER PFISTER
1963
68.5 m x 70 m x 24.5 m
people?
m <sup>2</sup> / m <sup>3</sup> 2





MYTHENQUAI 2

ZÜRICH INSURANCE GROUP AG

HEADQUARTERS

BIGGEST INSURANCE COMPANY IN SWITZERLAND

?

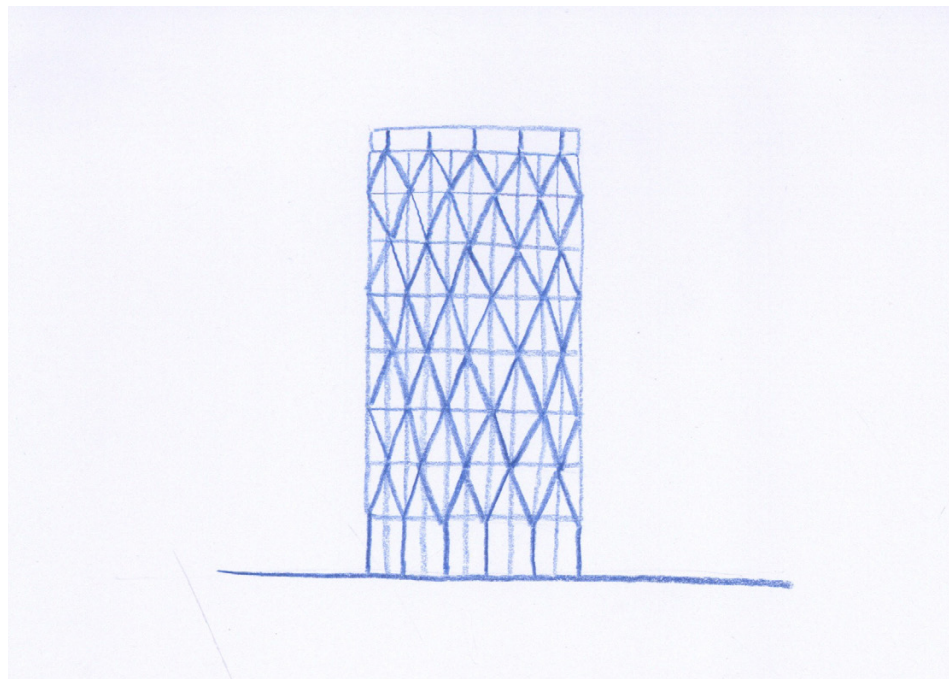
GOTTFRIED JULIUS KUNKLER

1900

16m x 72m x 24.5 m

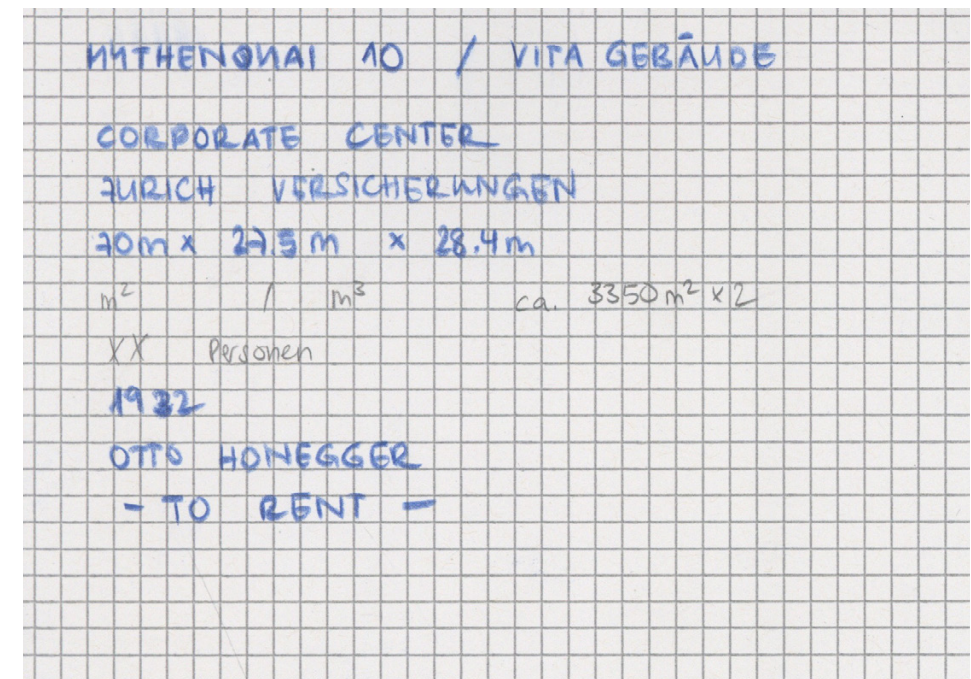
Personen

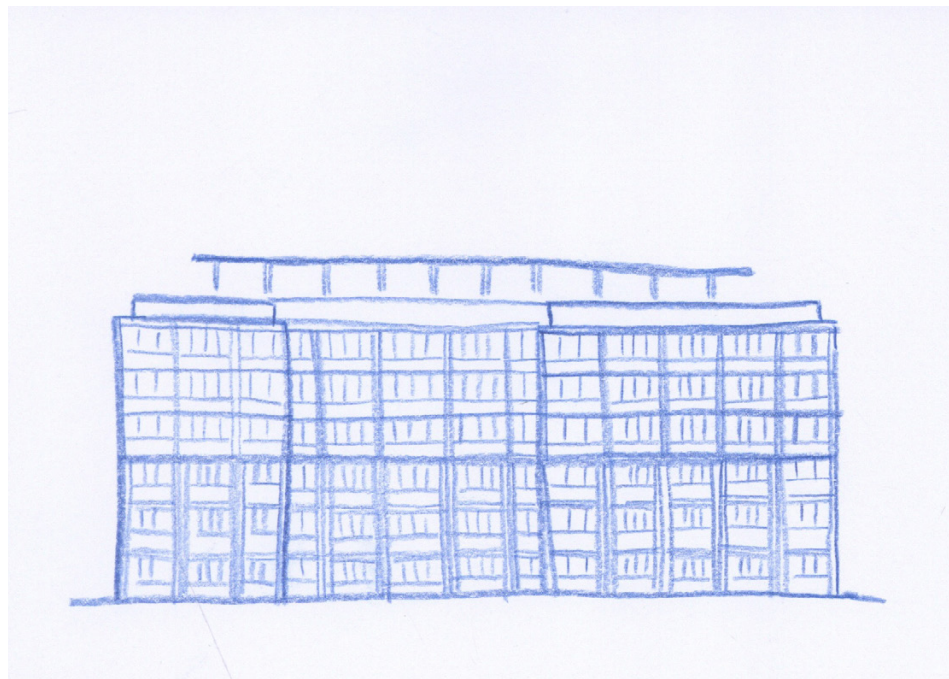
M<sup>2</sup>



MYTHENQUAI 1				
ZURICH INSURANCE GROUP AG				
CAMPUS				
BIGGEST INSURANCE COMPANY IN SWITZERLAND				
2				
KRISCHANITZ ARCHITEKT				
2021				
size	/	m <sup>2</sup>	/m <sup>3</sup>	2
people	?			

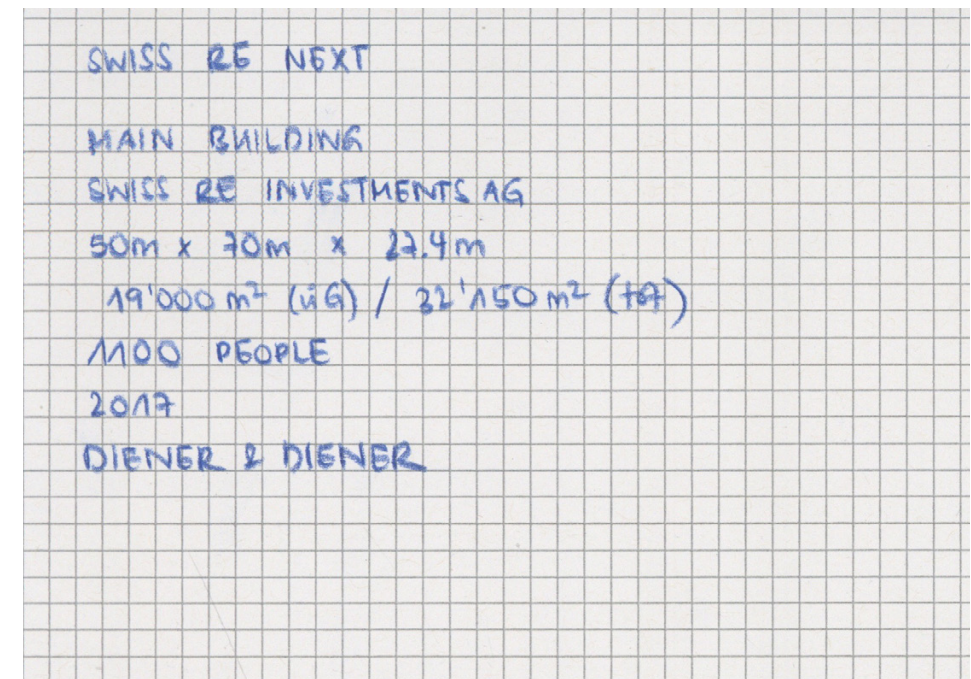
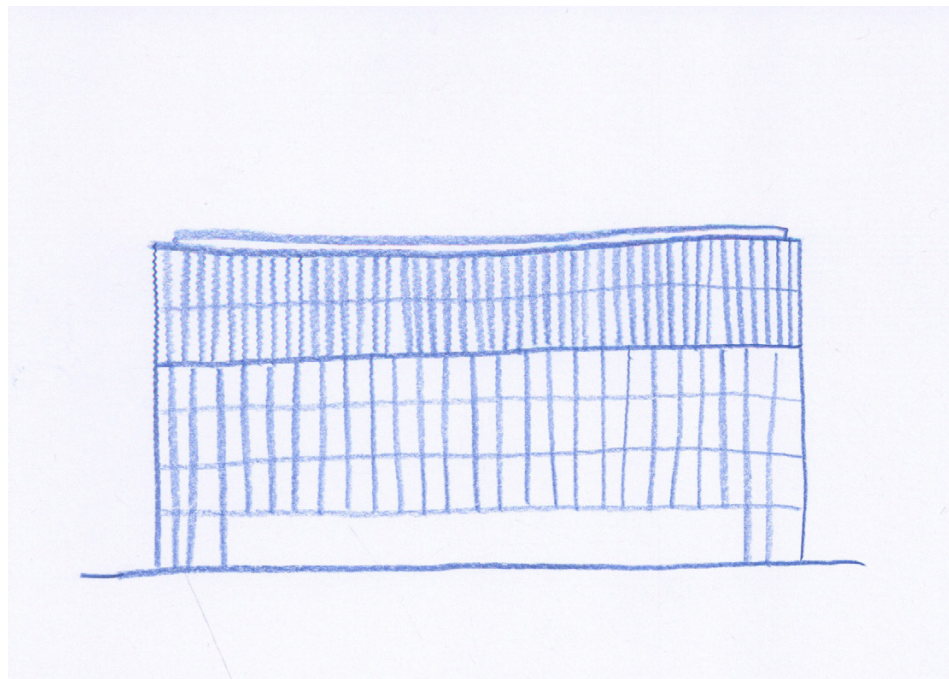


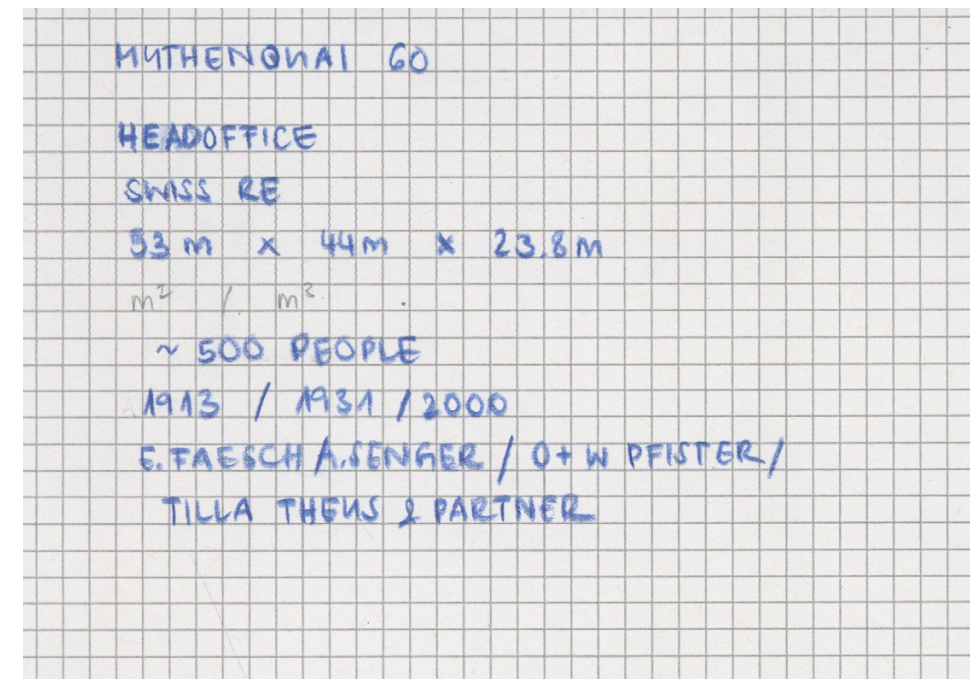




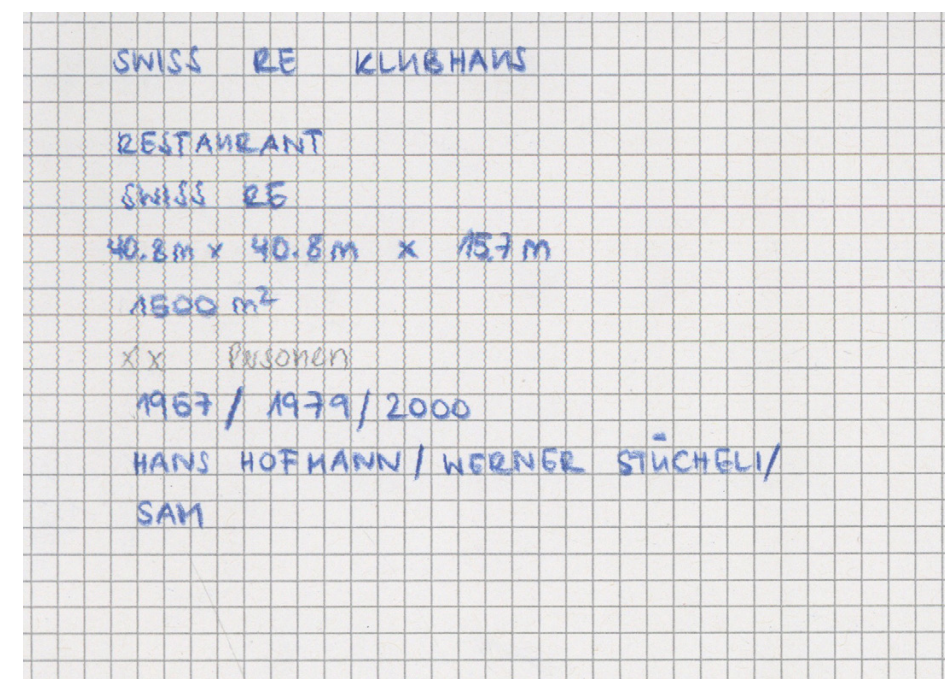
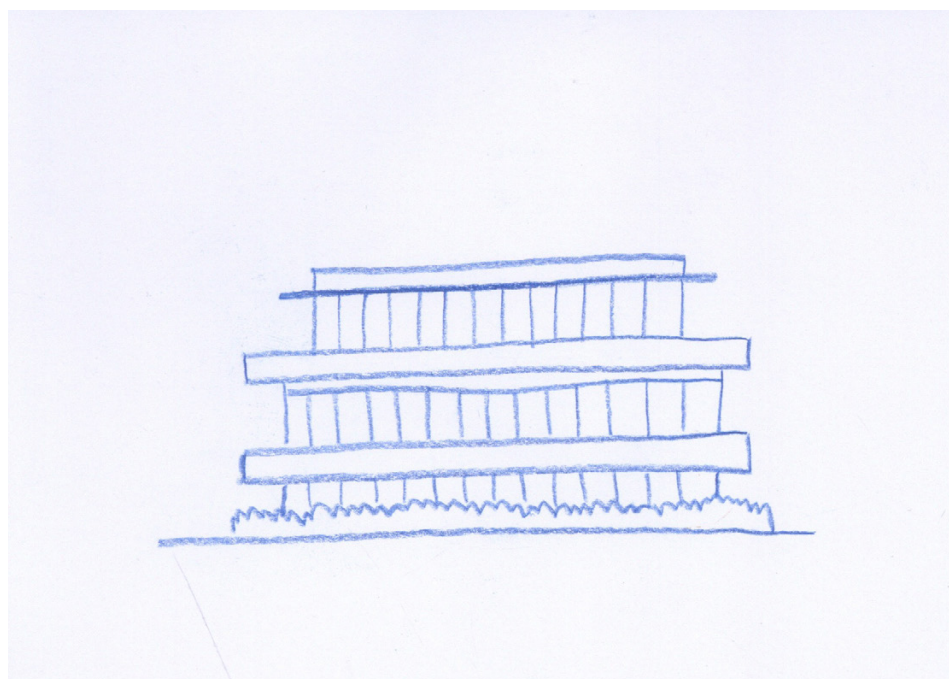
SWISS RE LAKE  
OFFICE  
SWISS RE INVESTMENTS AG  
61m x 80m x 24.5m // 29.5m  
GstF 7'364m<sup>2</sup> / GF 49'070m<sup>2</sup> / GV 201'730m<sup>3</sup>  
~1050 PEOPLE  
2026  
NGIL PETER  
GFA



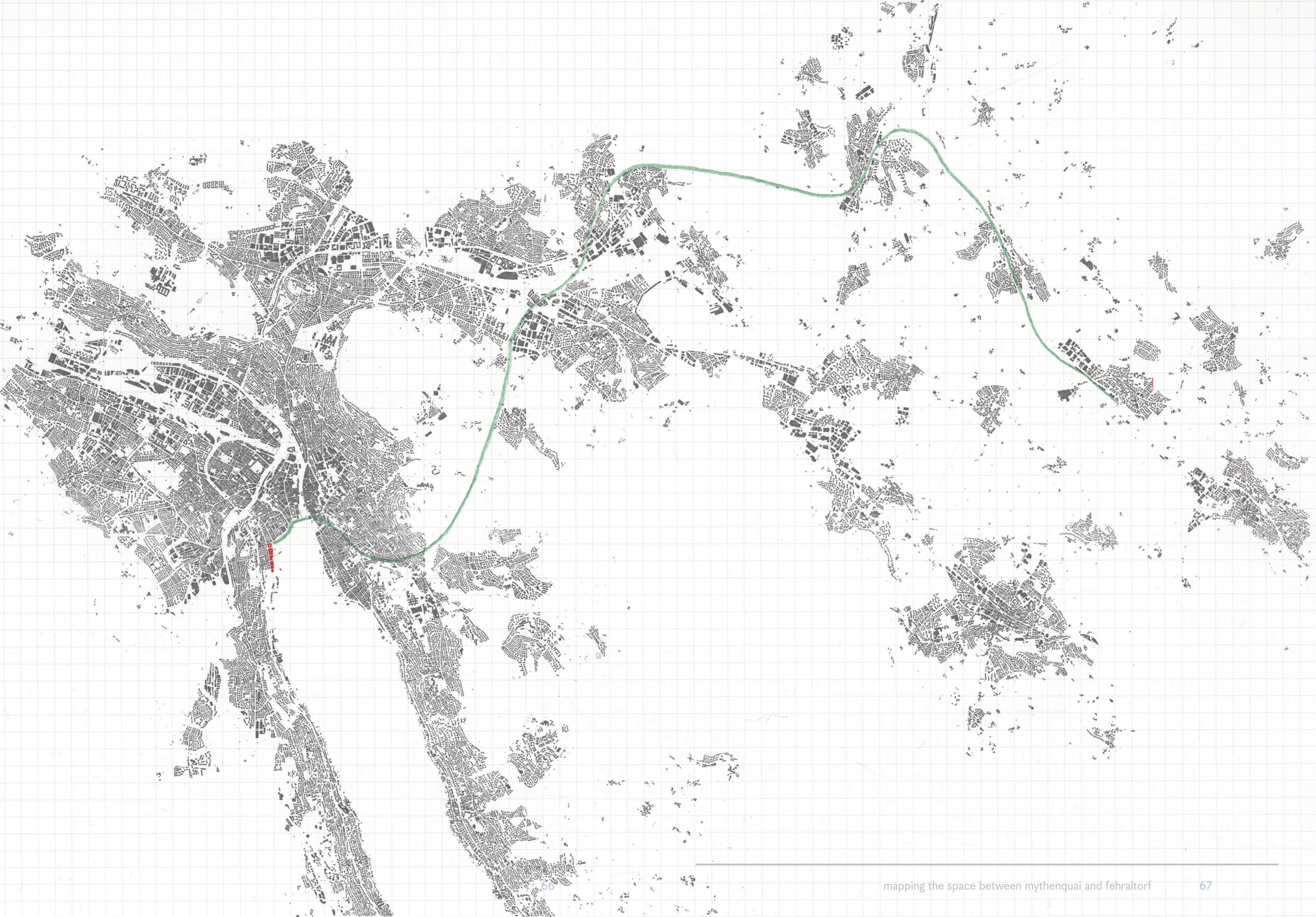




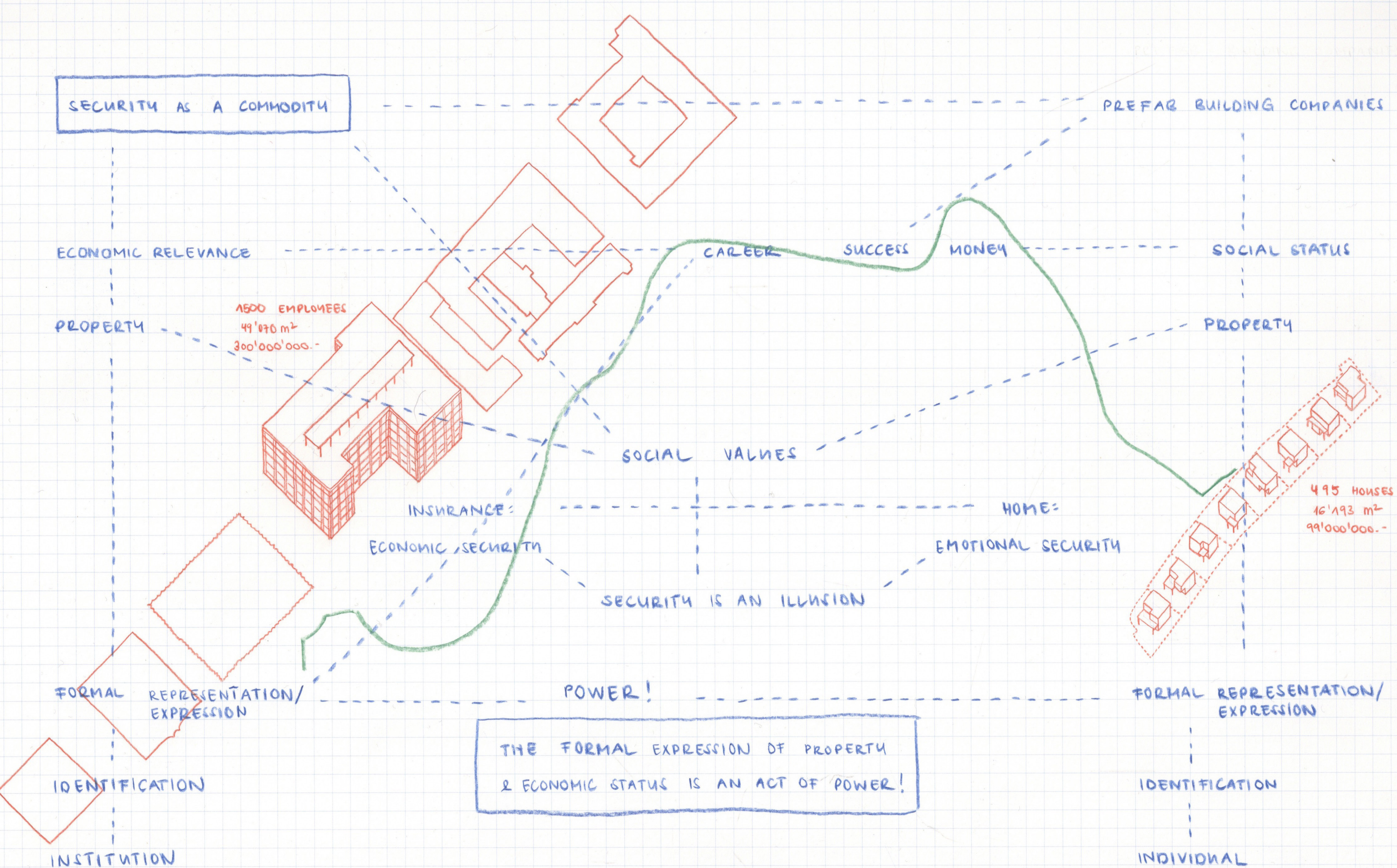












dt. Reborgentheit = engl. security



The Swiss Re mock up served as an entry point into the systematics hidden behind the masks of the buildings at Mythenquai and in Fehraltorf. The direct juxtaposition of two typologies questions their meaning and confronts us with the forces behind it. Through the initial projected image, the mock up developed into an allegory revealing the relevance of formal expression in the exclusivity of space spanned from the city center of Zurich to its outskirts.


In Greek mythology, the chimera is a creature composed of three animals - a lion, a goat and a snake - each symbolizing different character traits. Through that composition, the chimera becomes something else, a monster of disruptive power, unnatural and a symbol for the complexity of the world.

The Swiss Re mock up is such a chimera, a creature composed of two formal languages each representing a specific type. Repeated for the whole Mythenquai, eight chimeras combine the facades from the insurance companies with those of the eight single family houses in Fehraltorf. Both languages symbolize specific values within the earlier described power structure. Similar to the chimera, the simple juxtaposition of the two types results in the disruption of the system. It challenges the scale of the architectural elements, it questions the programmatic separation and the resulting physical distance, it reveals the formal representation as masks, asks about the people behind them and scrutinizes the meaning of property and economic status. Yet, it reveals an unexpected beauty due to the surprise and the uncontrolled danger it threatens to the system.

Profitieren Sie mit freshhaus vom vorteilhaften Home-Office Package für CHF 4'000.-

Das Arbeiten zuhause macht einfach mehr Freude, wenn die Umgebung stimmt und man sich in Ruhe konzentrieren kann. Wer ein komfortables Home-Office einrichten möchte, sollte aber nicht nur auf einen wirksamen Schallschutz im hauseigenen Büro achten. Mit dem Home-Office Package von freshhaus profitieren Sie von einer Gesamtlösung, mit der es sich angenehmer von zuhause aus arbeiten lässt. Das Angebot umfasst folgende bauliche Massnahmen:

- 1. Schalldämmwände für akustische Geborgenheit**  
Bürozimmer-Innenwände mit hervorragenden Schallschutzwerten. Ausgeführt mit den Schalldämmsteinen der Serie Calmo, in einer Mauerwerksbreite von 17 cm.
- 2. Zimmertüre mit speziellem Schallschutz**  
So lässt sich der Schallschutz für Ihr Büro weiter verstärken: Bürozimmer-Türe inkl. Türplanet und Zylinder. Ausführung in der Schallschutzklasse 3, damit störende Geräusche garantiert draussen bleiben.
- 3. Bodensteckdose für maximale Flexibilität**  
Sollte beim Home-Office einrichten nicht fehlen: Eine praktische Bodensteckdose für Ihr Bürozimmer. Die Positionierung der Steckdose ist frei wählbar.
- 4. WLAN Access Point für beste Verbindung**  
Ein WLAN Access-Point im Bürozimmer für eine stabile, leistungstarke Internetverbindung.



























As a result of the previous analysis, the final project understands the mock up not only as a formal announcement of a future architecture or as a method to test a propsed structure. Instead, it recognizes the mock up as an object that challenges existing power structures by juxtaposing different typologies. In this way they can be studied and used to evade architecture from becoming an act of power of a single individual or institution.

The final project recalls the 33% residential percentage marked in the zoning laws and demands for 33% of the new Swiss Re building at Mythenquai to be freed and made accessible for all inhabitants of the city. To make up for the lost surface, 33% of the 1500 employees originally working in the building will return to their homes.

The freeing of the space at Mythenquai happens preliminary through the partial de-masking of the building. The removal of concrete elements of the representative facade grants the city access into the structure. Occurring gaps are enclosed by pragmatic isolated rendered walls, showcased by the Swiss Re mock up. Wherever elements are removed on an upper level, new exterior staircases will make these open spaces accessible. Additionally, they will be equipped with seating and drinking water by the insurance company.

The removed building elements will be distributed to the homes of 495 company employees and reinstalled there. The goal is hereby not only to generate a spatial improvement but also to maintain the

recognition of Swiss Re as an institution across architectural language.

The individual property is thus merged with the institution's property, the formal expression of individual freedom juxtaposed with the representation of the institution's economic status. The professional success and personal identification through a career is expressed not only online or in the appropriation of status symbols but directly in a built representation, de-masking the inhabitant and revealing where the money of the inhabitant comes from. Consequently, the individual is relinked with the institution and vise-versa. The institution is given a face and brought back to a human context, thus de-masked.



# The citizen of Mythenquai

Iris sat down on one of the wooden benches lined up against the white rendered wall. She had to catch her breath for a second, she was not used to climb so many stairs. As her heartbeat slowly recovered, she took a moment to look around. A bit further away, a group of young people set up lines of chairs around a little podium. Two larger chairs were already placed on the podium, next to them a small table with two glasses and an empty jug. Just in that moment, one of the two girls of the group came to pick up the jug and filled it at the metallic water station just next to Iris.

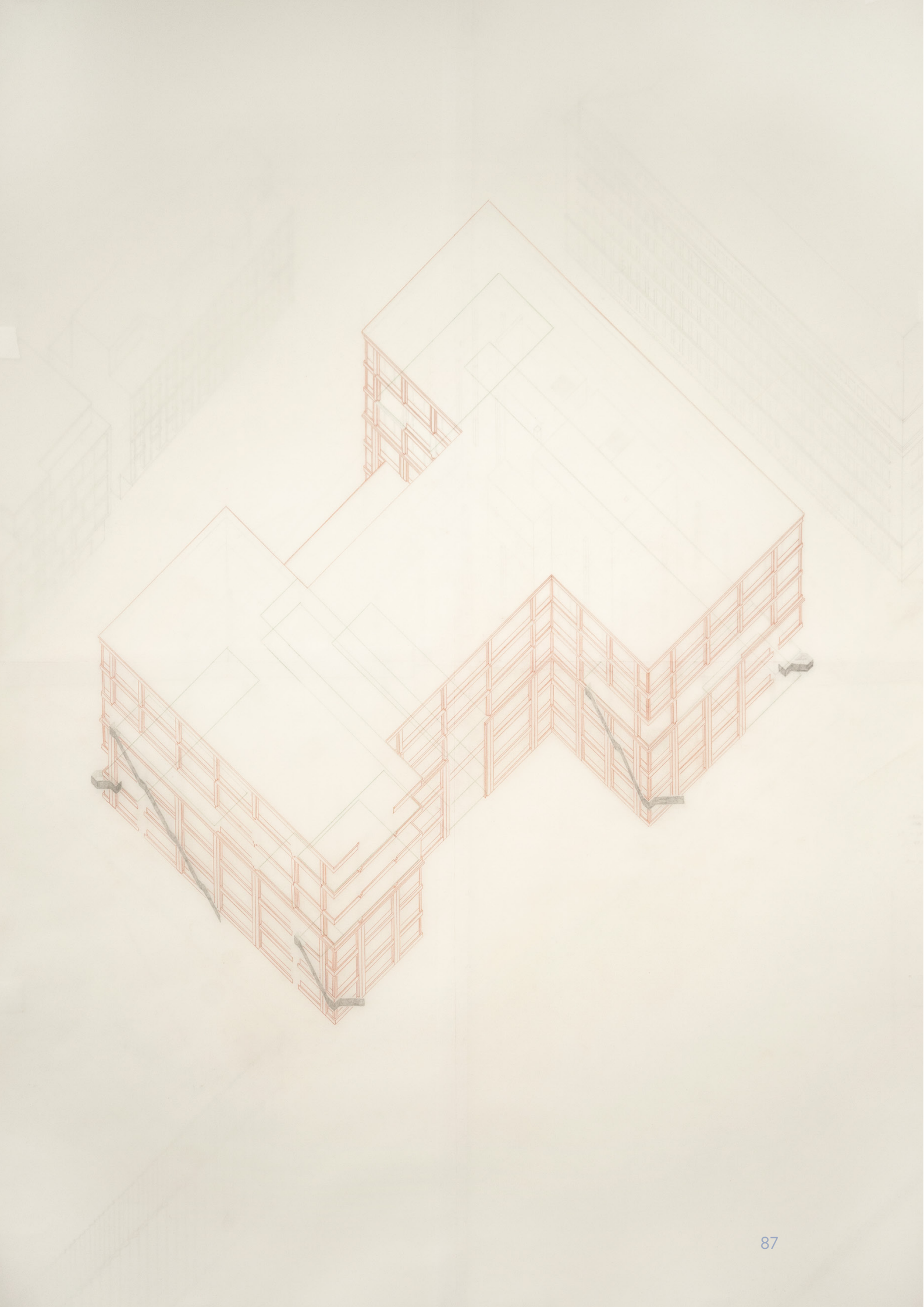
She was curious what they were preparing. As Iris asked the least busy looking man, he pointed towards one of many posters glued to the wall not far from where she just sat. It announced 7 lectures that would be held over the course of summer discussing risk taking.

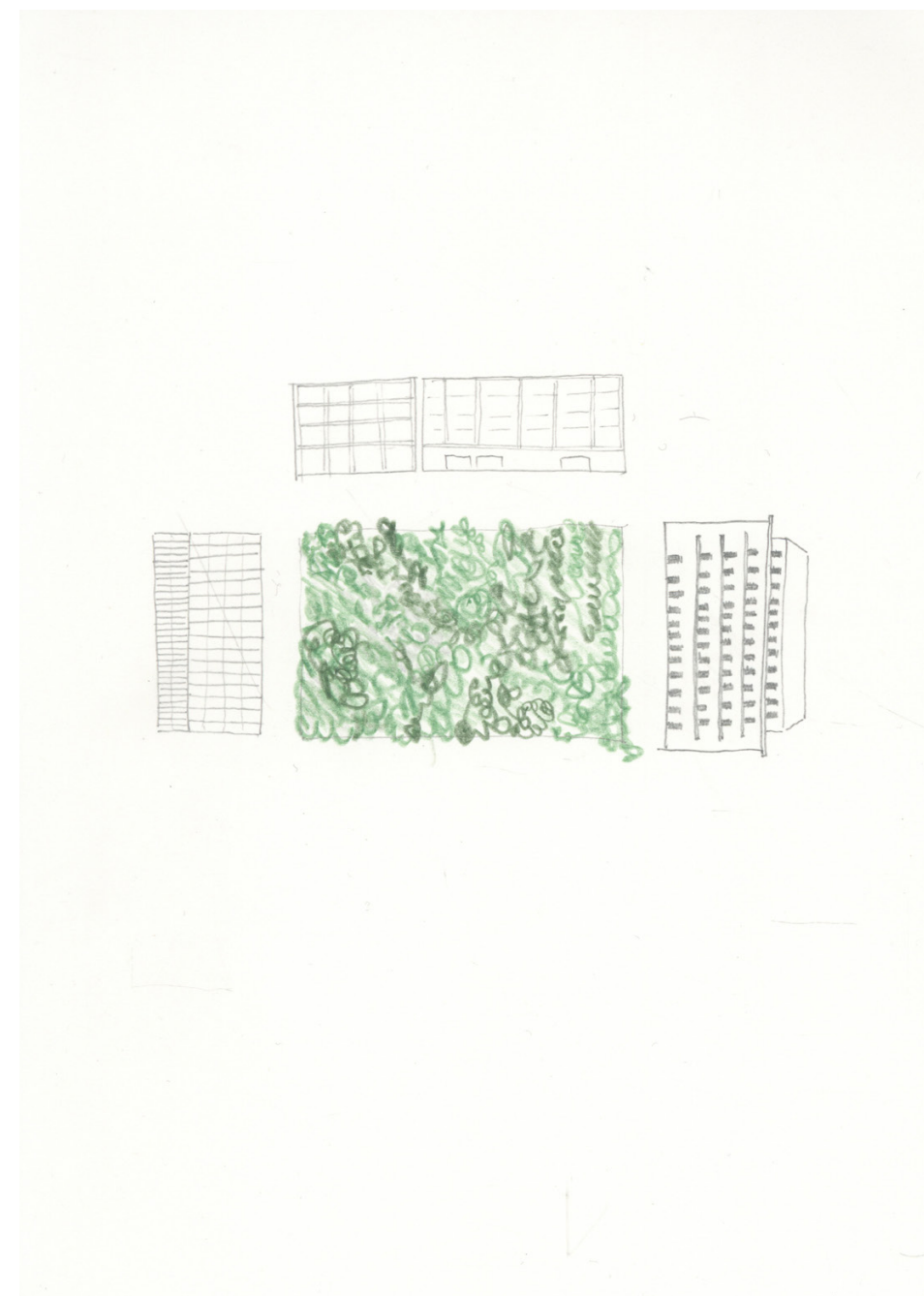
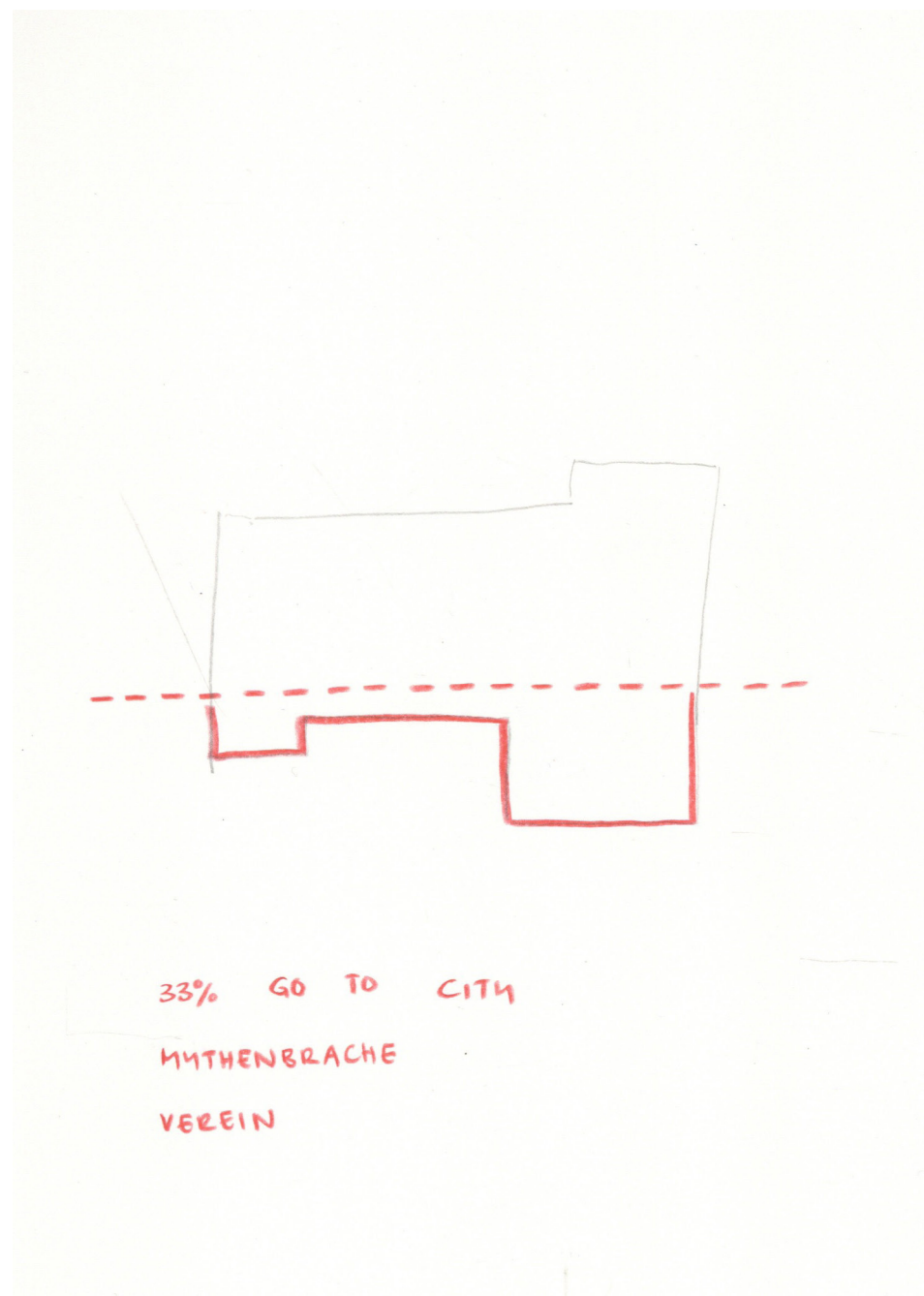
As she looked up from the poster, Iris realized that her spot on the bench had been taken by a woman in a black skirt, black blazer and a white blouse. She leaned against the wall and ate an apple, absently observing the group of children playing.

In another long corridor, different artists of Zurich exposed their work for one month, open for anyone to come look at it. Iris examined a wooden statue. All over it had little splashes of color, little messages and sketches. She was unsure whether these were meant to be there. For a moment she hesitated to take out a pen and write something on the statue herself, but as she started to think about what she could write the urge had already passed.

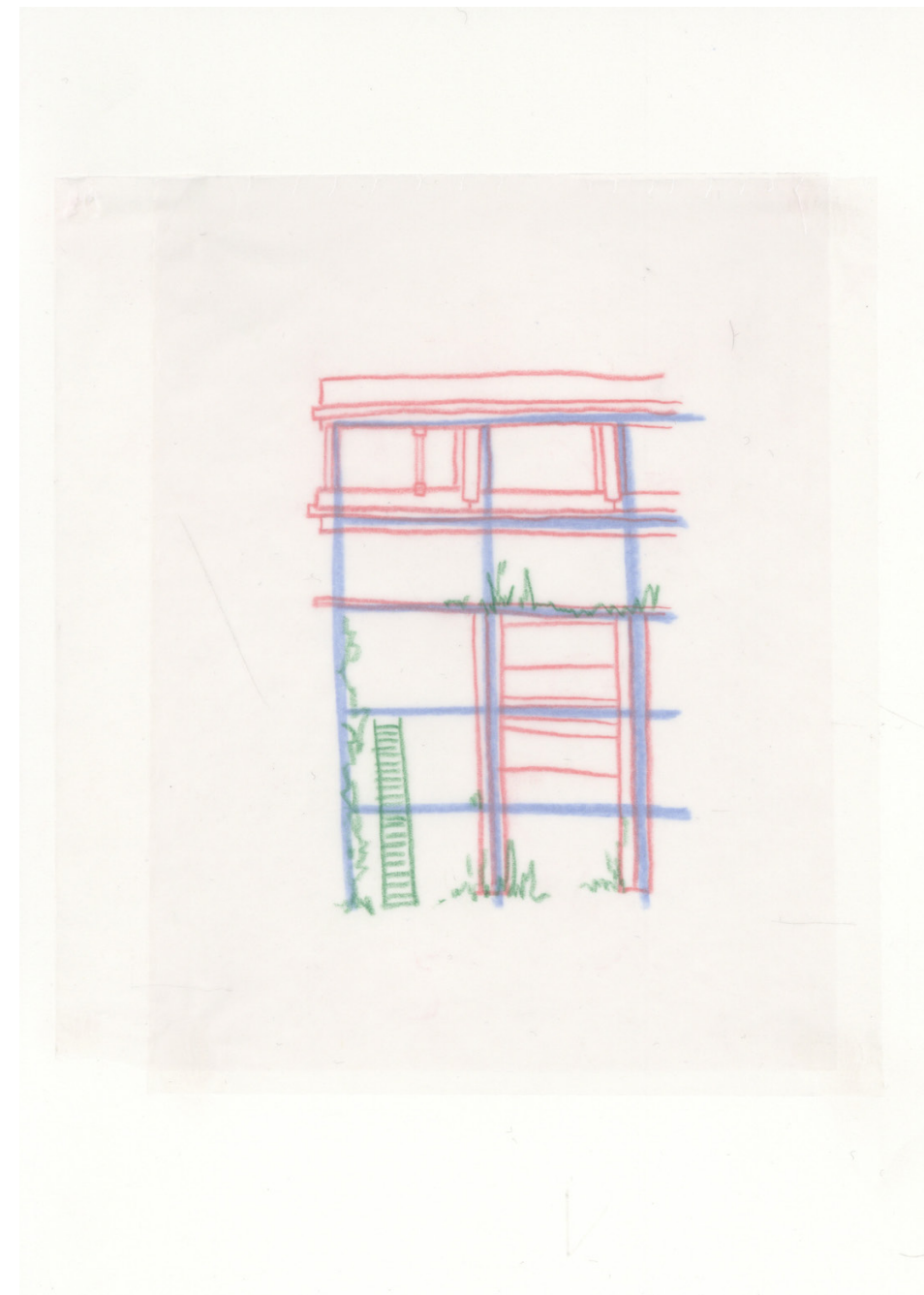
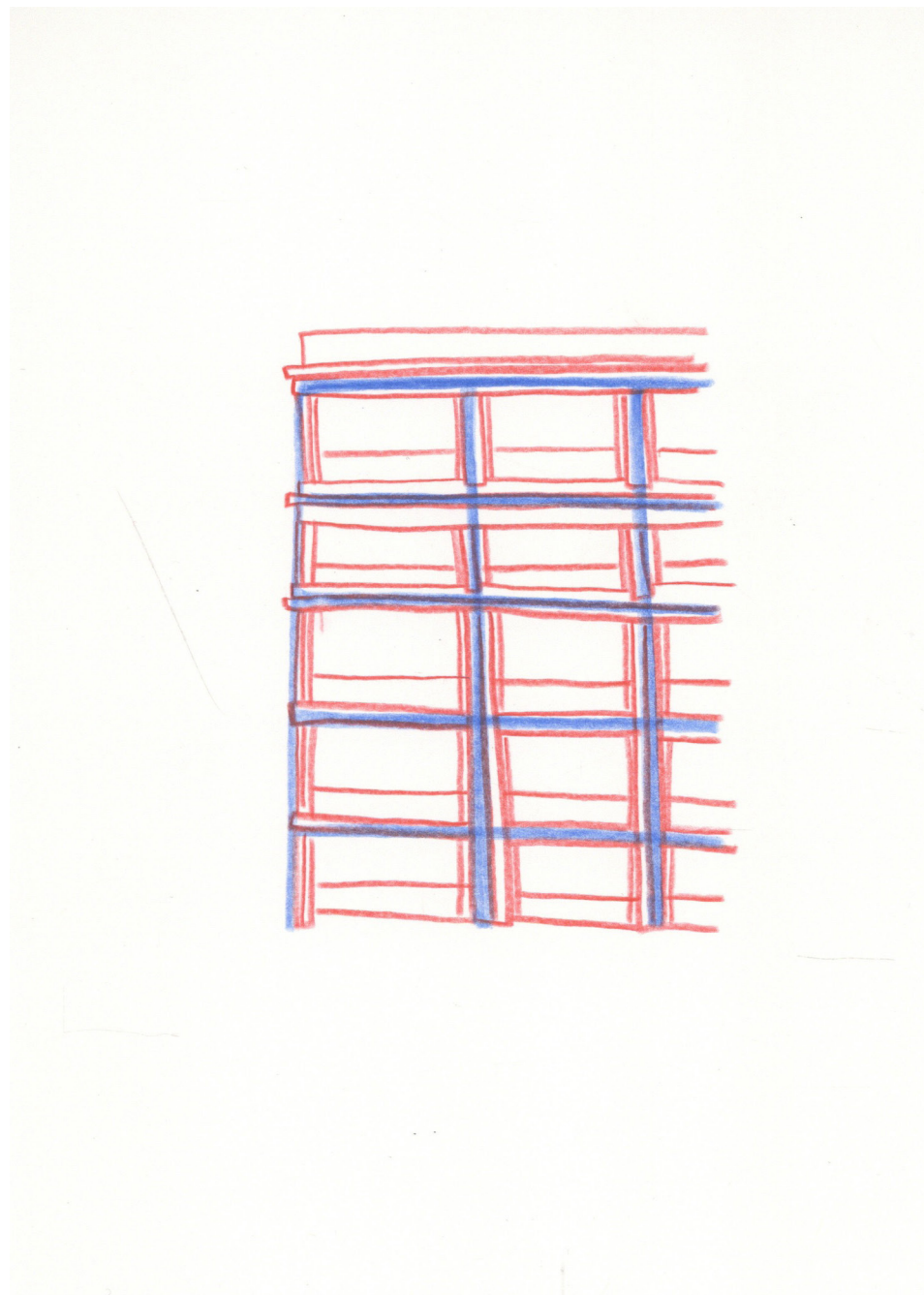
She turned around and walked down the stairs as a few meters above her head loud music started to play. She looked up. The music came from a glowing green space squeezed between the red concrete elements. The Sommerbar was one of the ways the Mythenbrache-Verein made a little money during the warm months. So far, she only ever was up there when the bar was not in use. The temptation would be too strong to resist otherwise.

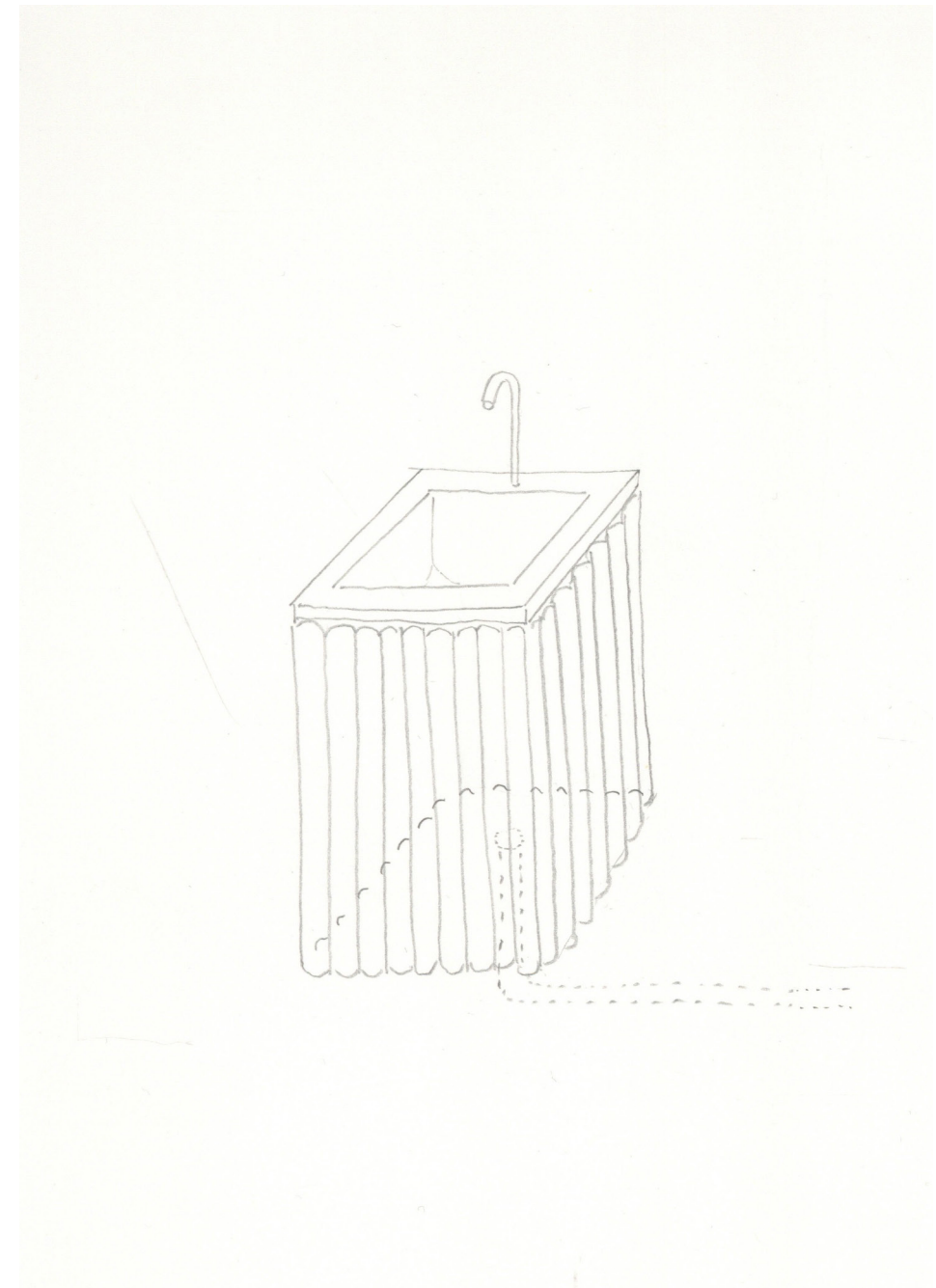
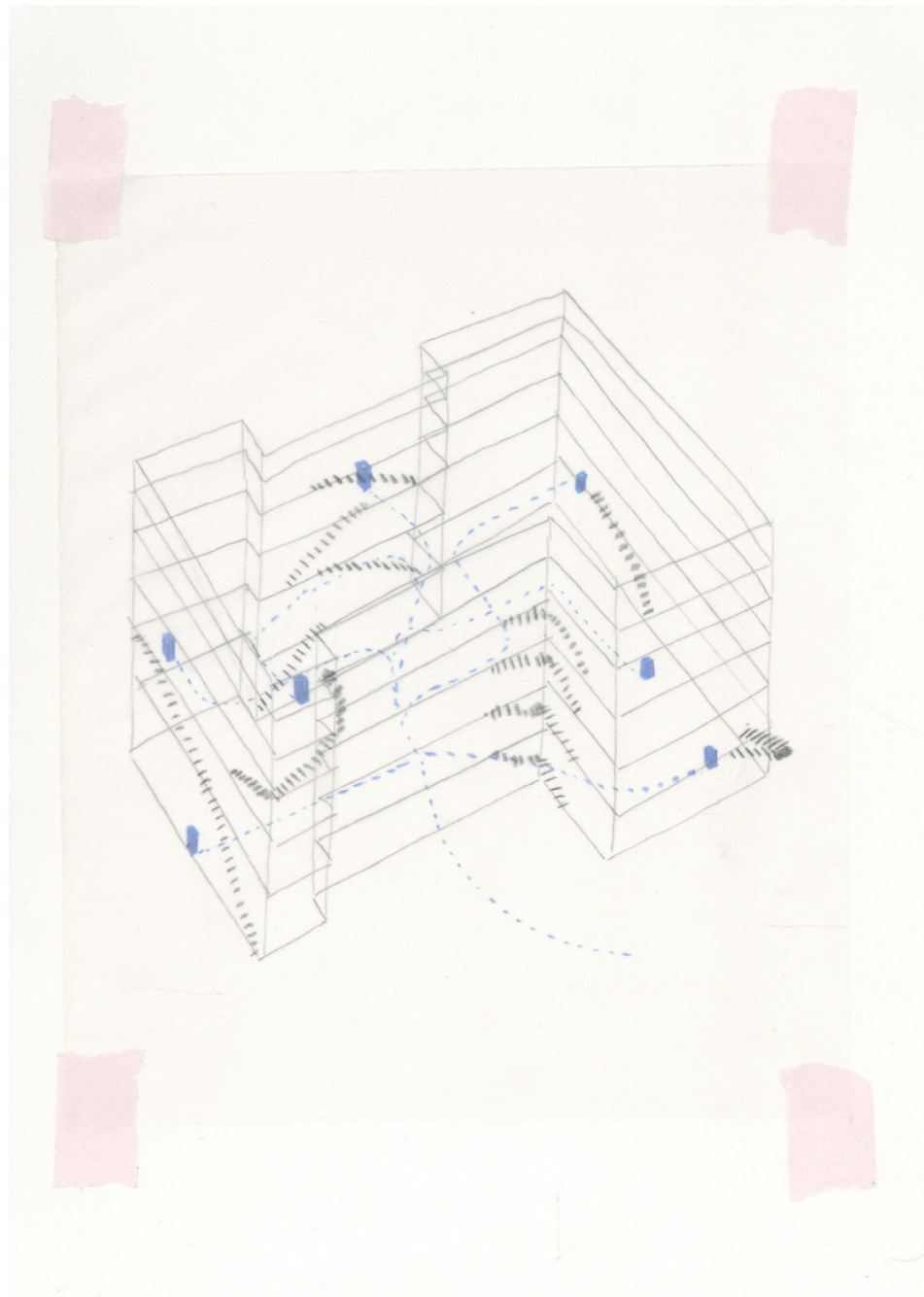
Iris quickly made her way down the last few steps of the stairs just to sit down on another bench and wait until the lecture would begin.



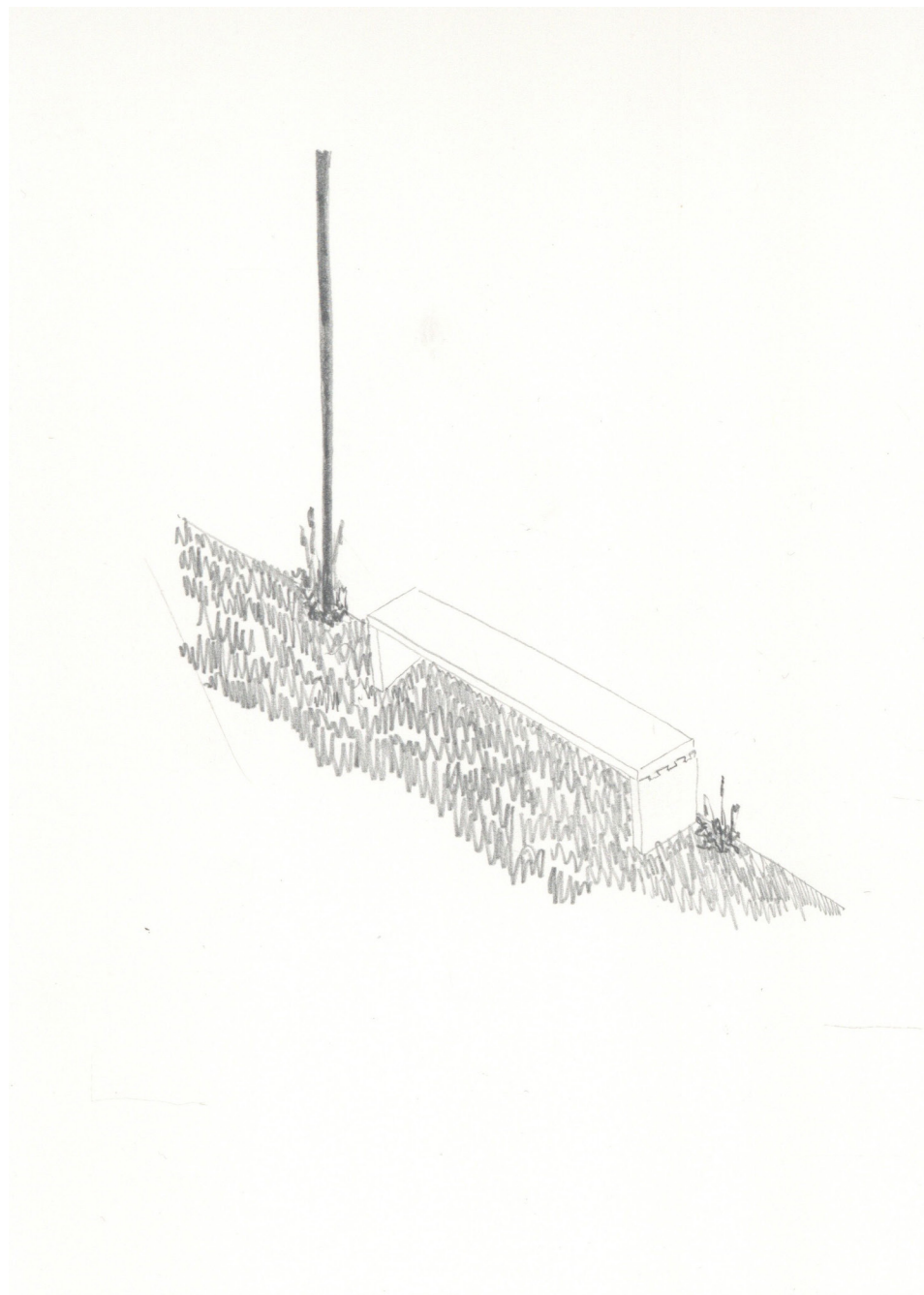




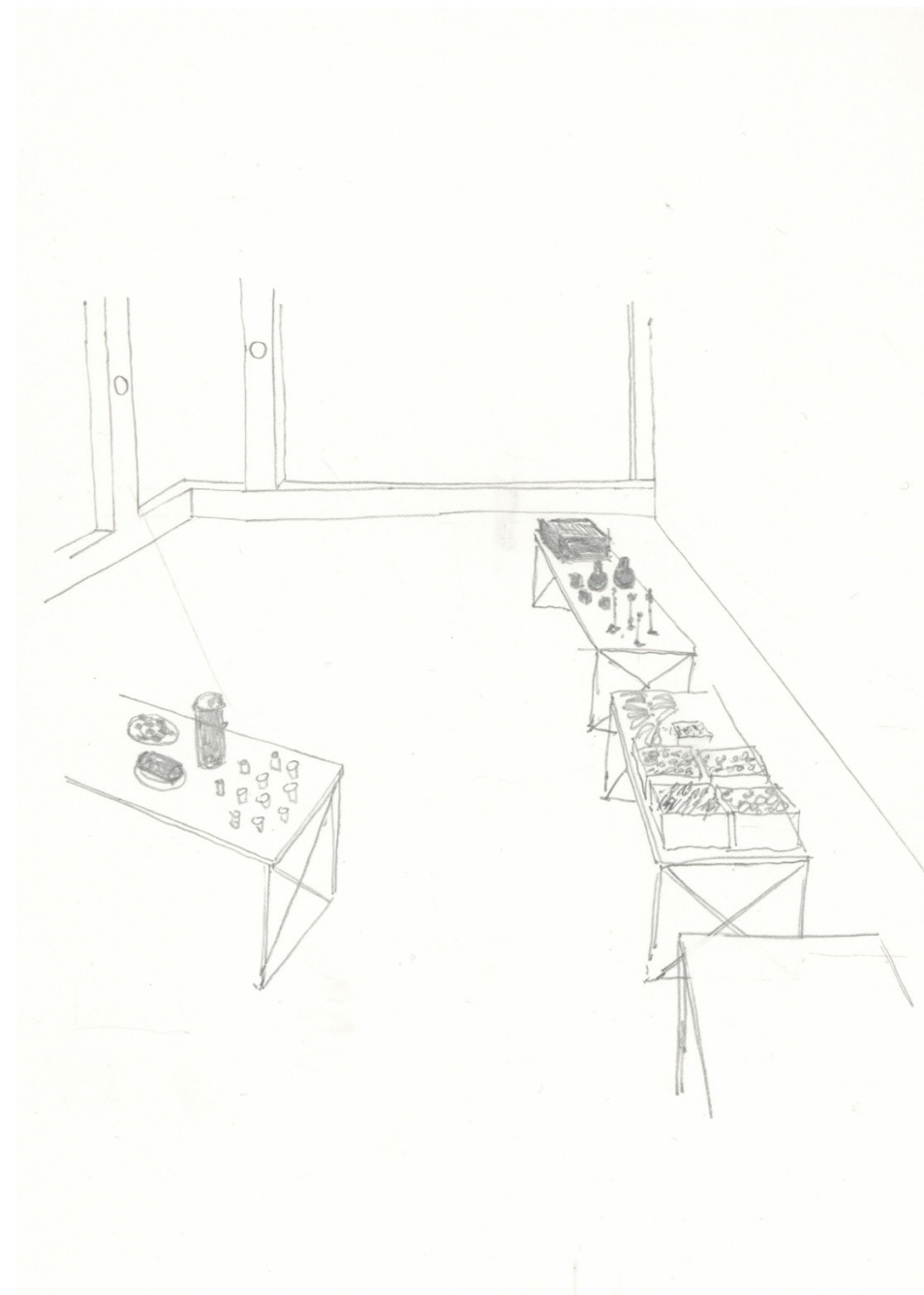








benches are scattered across the freed spaces



temporarily occupying the space













the staircase leads to further public spaces - 1:33



mythenquai by night - 1:33



# A piece of headquarter in Fehraltorf

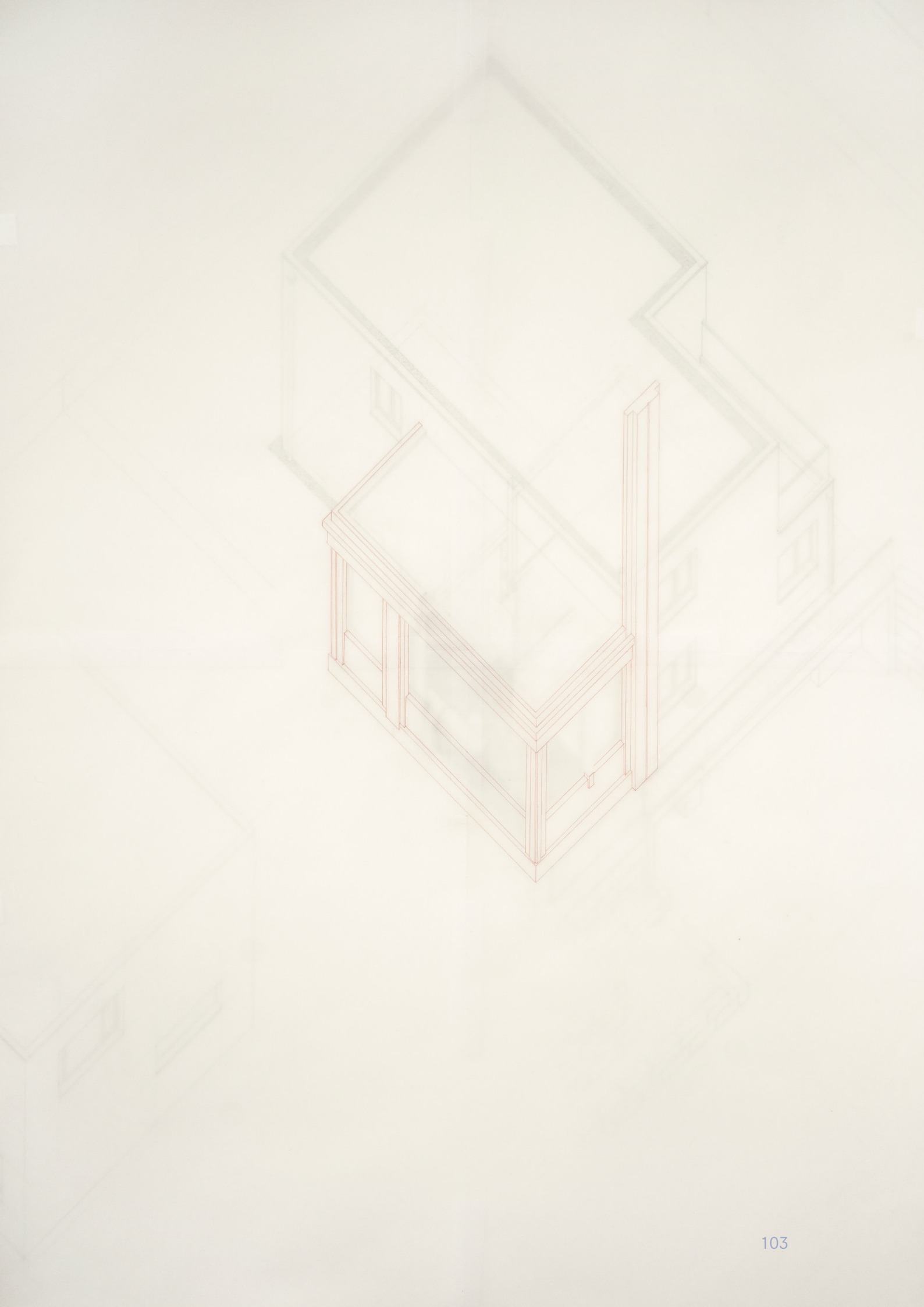
At the beginning, Mark didn't particularly like the idea. He could not imagine how working from home could have any advantage, neither for him as an employee nor for the company. But it turns out, he was wrong. He felt slightly uncomfortable about this, he hardly ever was wrong about work related questions. That was his talent. That was why he was so successful at what he did.

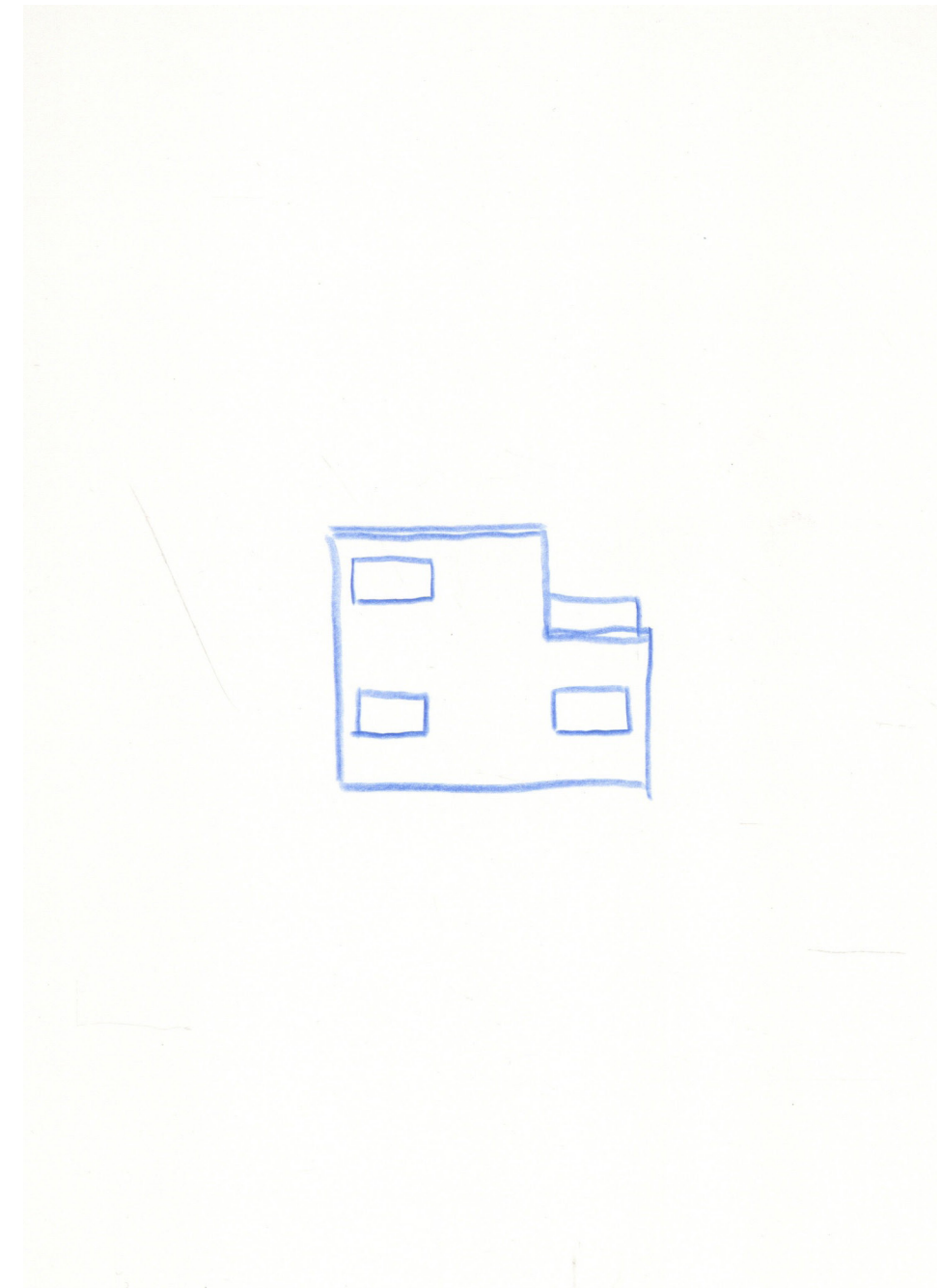
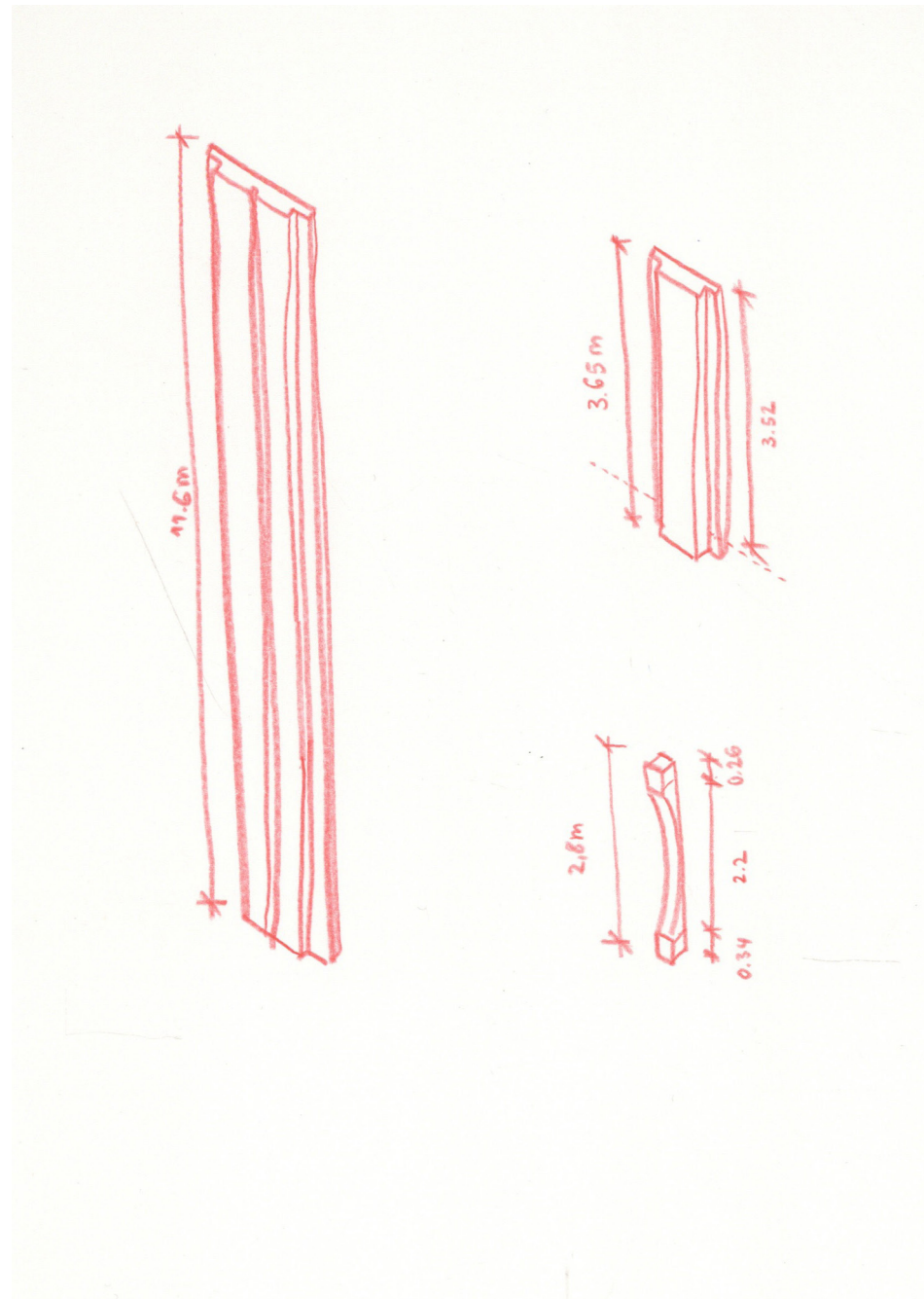
Mark sighed and turned away from the kitchen window overlooking the street. The boxwood hedge needed trimming, it was all fuzzy. But this morning other things would keep him occupied. At nine o'clock he had a call scheduled with one of his colleagues, Sandra, who worked at Mythenquai. Mark hadn't been to Mythenquai since the changes, so he only ever had Sandra's and a few of his other colleague's reports to imagine how it would be to work there now. Apparently, on Tuesdays there was a small food market on the second floor somewhere. Sandra had told him about it after the third time she was 10 minutes late, biting blissfully into a red apple.

Before heading into the office, Mark opened one of the large windows facing the backyard, put on his garden shoes and slipped passed the hanging chair into the fresh morning air. It had become a habit of him to walk around the house once before work, checking on the garden, inspecting the neighborhood and finally examining the red concrete elements that made up his office. Though Swiss Re send a cleaning team once a month to wash down the facade, he still felt the urge to insure a proper appearance. His eyes brushed over the sharp flawless edges. It filled him with pride and content.

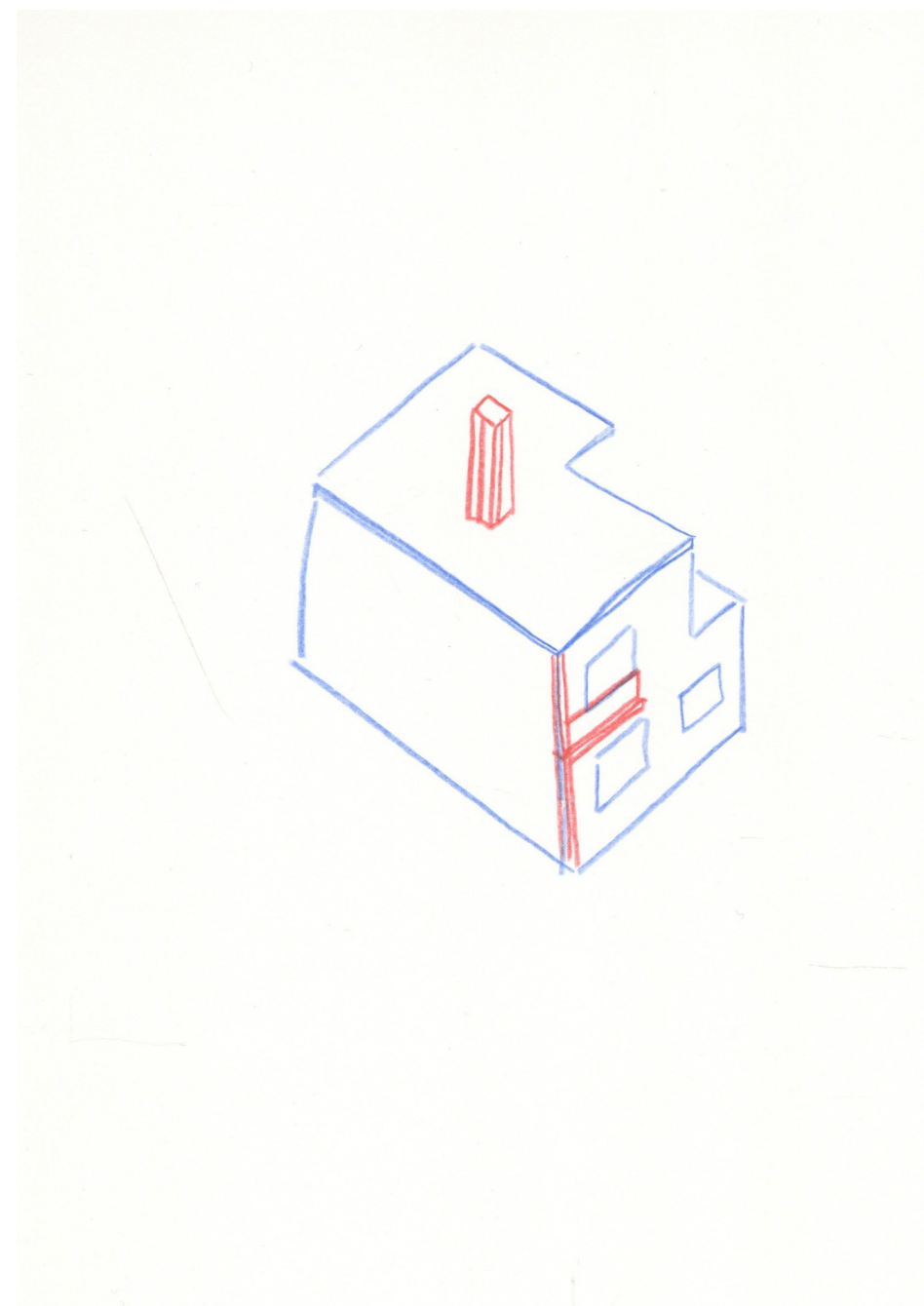
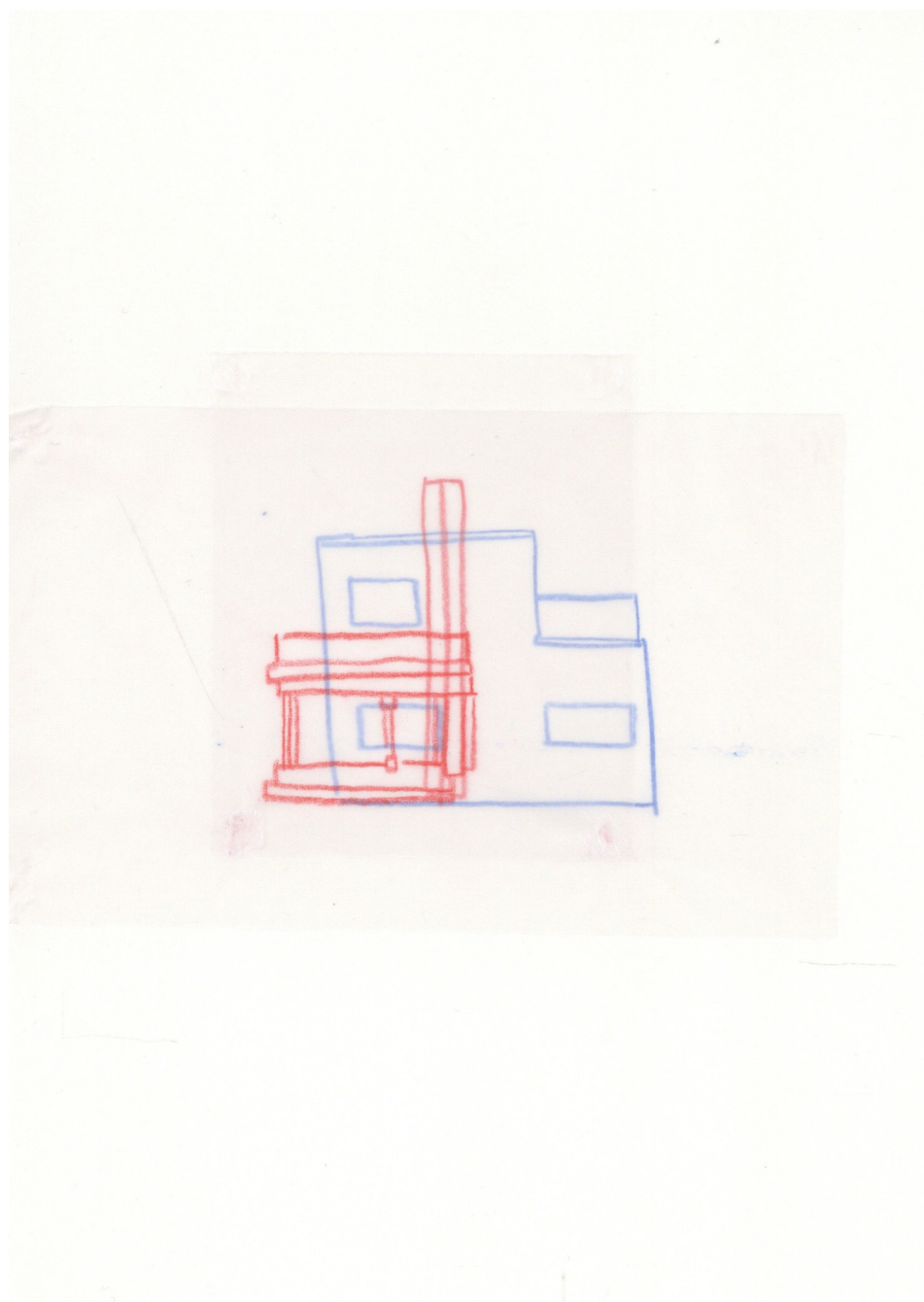
Just as Mark turned to go back inside, his neighbor came out of the house and started walking towards him across the properly cut lawn. He had a newspaper in his hand, and as soon as he reached Mark, started to rant about some investments scandal, waving the newspaper in the air over the metal fence separating the two men.

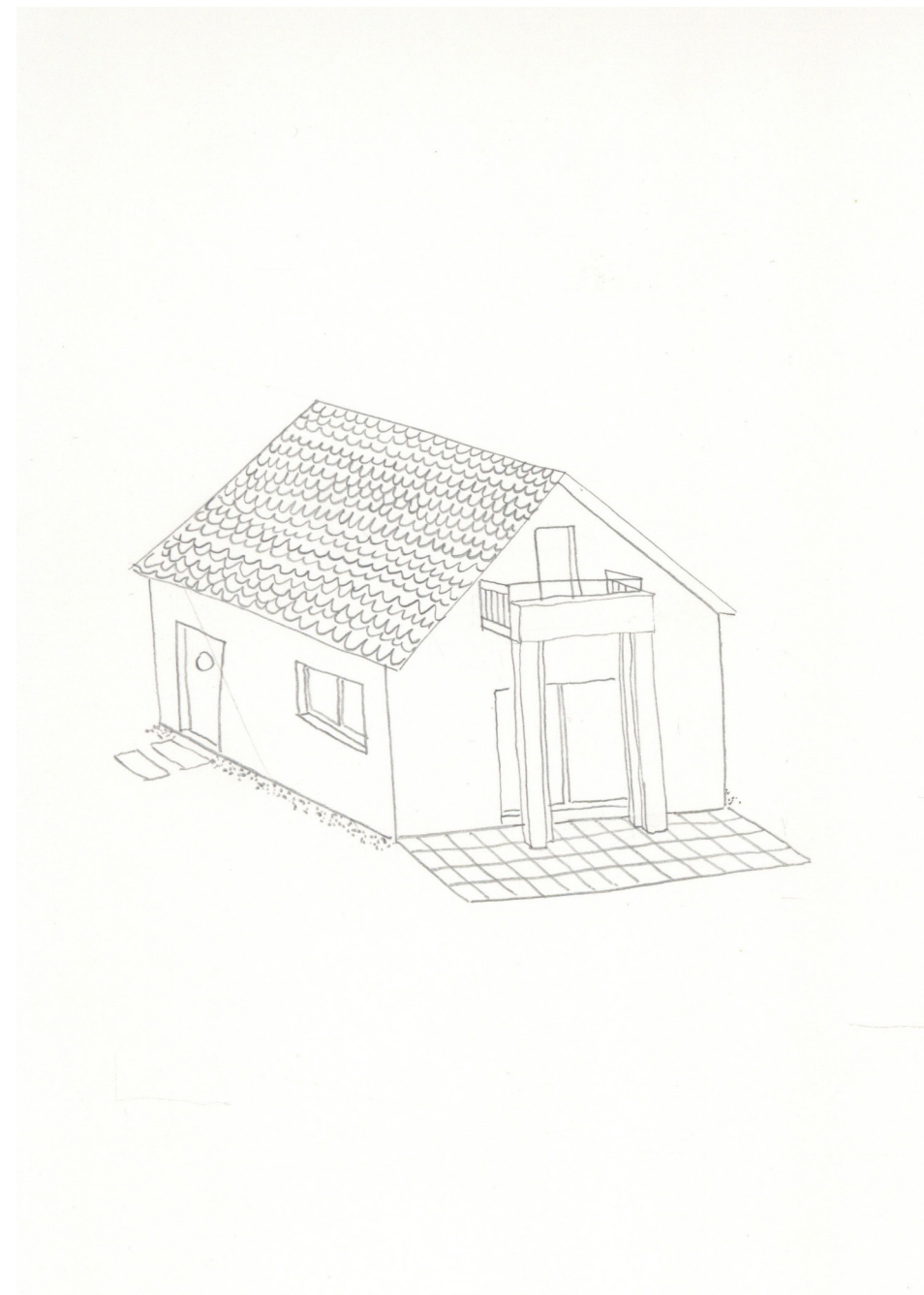
After a small discussion, Mark returned inside, left the empty coffee cup on the kitchen counter, fixed his tie and climbed the three black steps up into the office space.



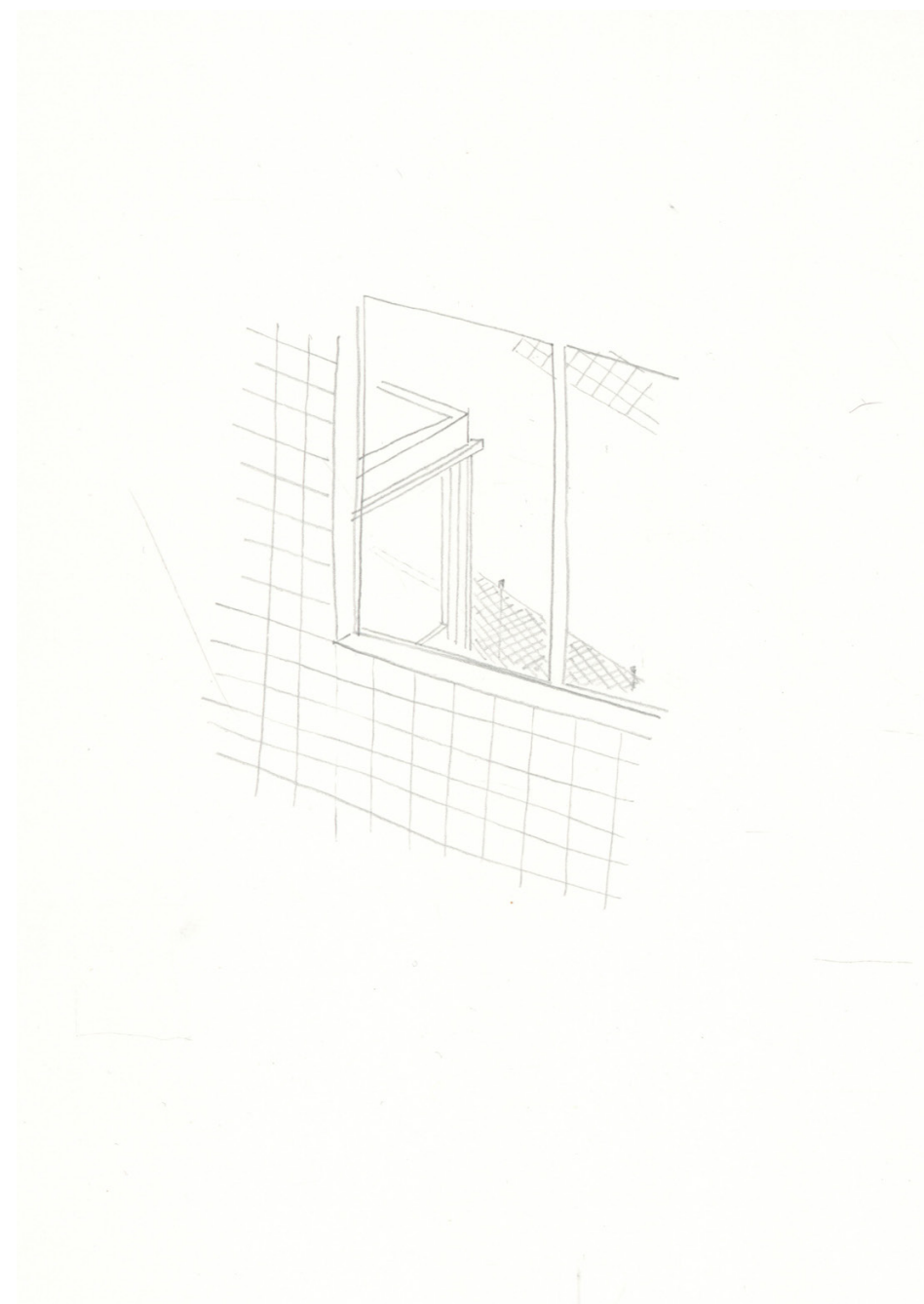
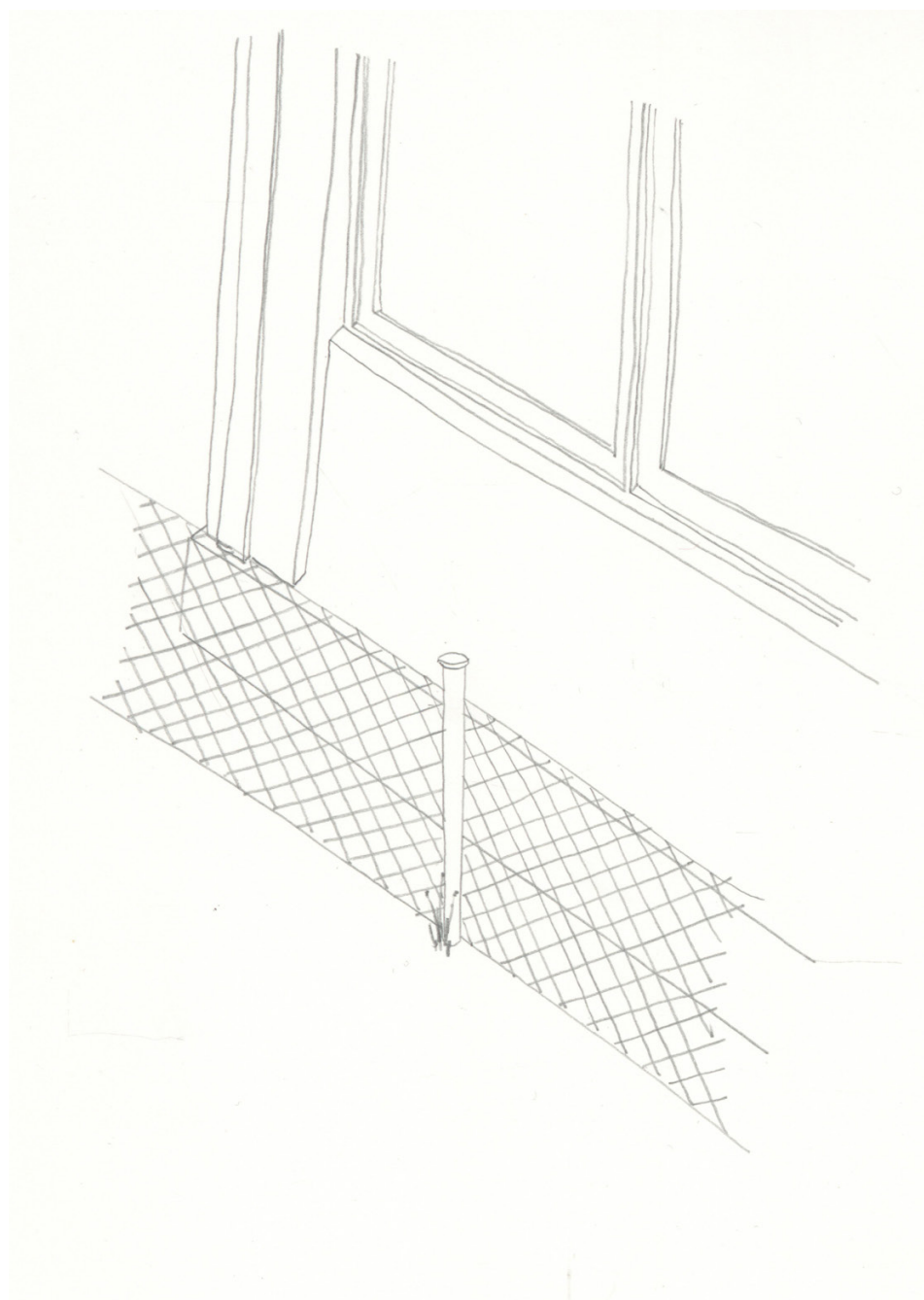












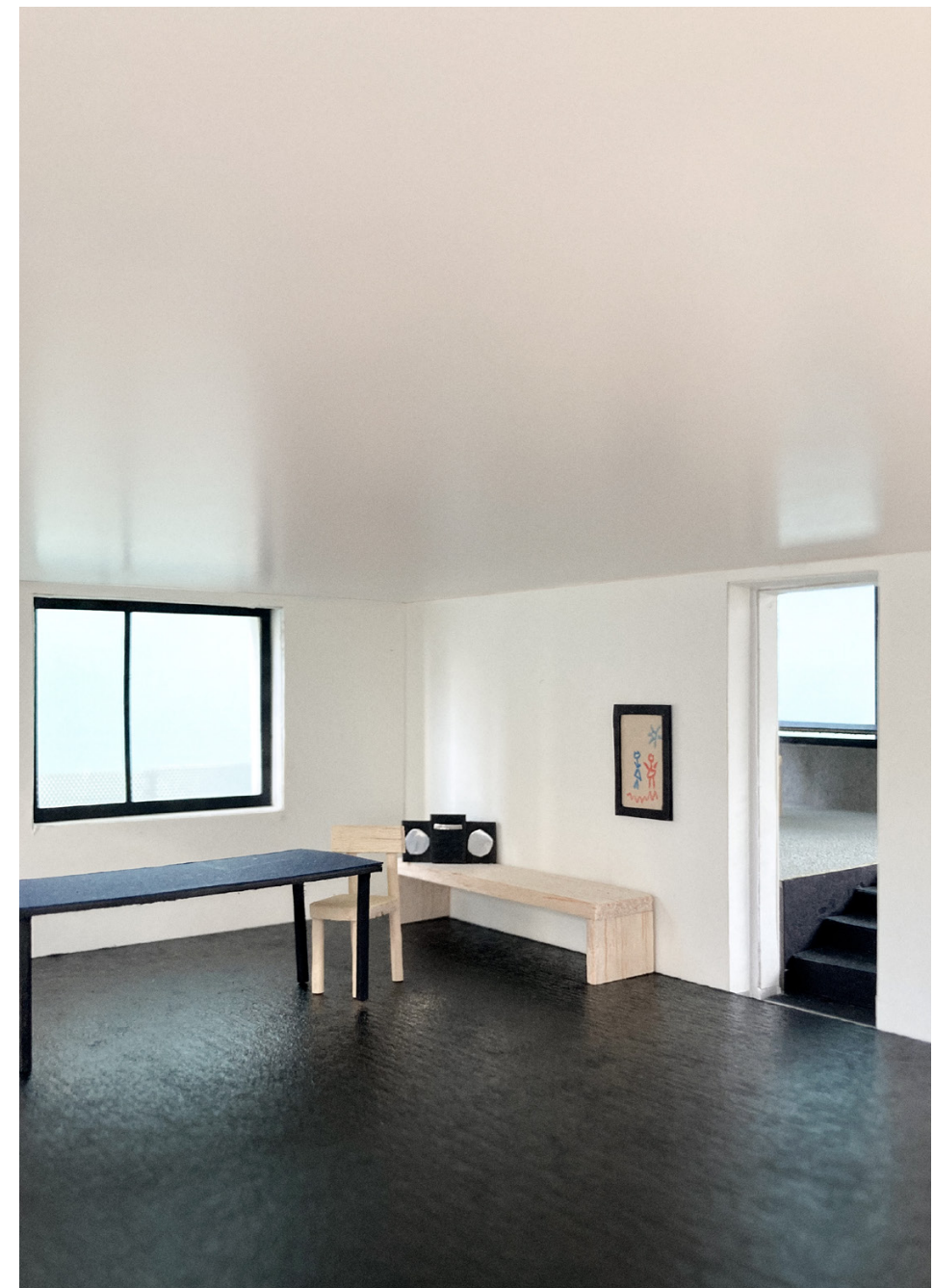








private backyard - 1:33



living room and office behind - 1:33







Toward a minor architecture, Jill Stoner, MIT Press, Cambridge MA 2012.

Archetypes, David K. Ross/Reto Geiser, Park Books, Zürich/Standpunkte, Basel 2021.

Der Process, Franz Kafka, Reclam.

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