

The Octagon
Canadian Architect Awards of Excellence
2018

Project Description

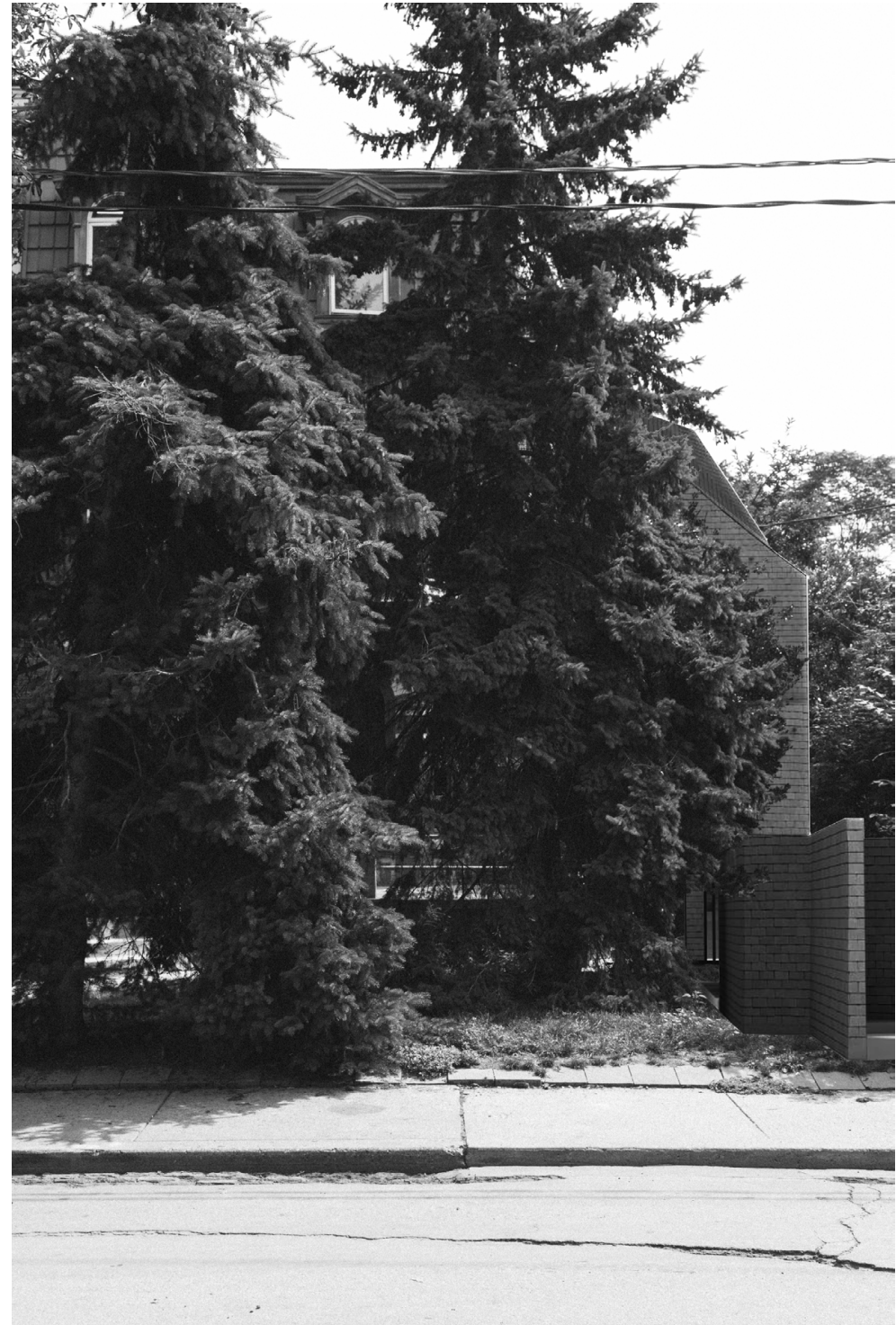
Despite increasingly reduced possibilities and lowered ambitions, architecture has a role to play in imparting identity to our cities. As such, *The Octagon* resists the notion that architecture should be either formally interesting and autonomous from its site or completely contextual. Instead the project proposes a complex and figurative form that, in spite of being a new building, is inextricably linked to its surroundings and adaptable enough to mediate between the existing historic victorian semi-detached house and the changing environment around it.

Located directly behind the vibrant commercial strip of Toronto's Queen Street West, the property is situated in the heart of one of the most highly sought after neighbourhoods in the city. As property prices continue to rise and development pressures increase, it is inevitable that this area will continue to change. Despite the new developments to the South, and the ongoing expansion of the neighbouring Drake Hotel, this corner has managed to hold onto its character and continues to support an active street life.

This condition extends into the neighbourhood's laneways. As such, the new rear laneway suite is developed around the idea of a long path -- a singular organizing circulation element -- that, both in plan and in section, weaves through each room of the unit, prescribing a route from the public street up to the private upper level mezzanine. Without being overly prescriptive, a series of spaces along the way aim to support the rituals of daily life: serving coffee to locals on their way to work; cooking dinner for guests in the garden; providing a place for guests to sleep; or settling in for a quiet night reading in the study.

Formally, the project aims to be both functional and expressive. Borrowing the form of octagon turrets found nearby in the neighbourhood, the solid mass in the rear laneway extends upwards. Balconies are carved out and a slight twist in the roof ridge creates a form that is both responsive to its surroundings and dynamic. A long corridor envelops the path as it extends from the base of the building towards the street.

Overall, this set piece encourages new development to find virtues in often overlooked spaces and suggests that function does not trump form. At its best, architecture allows for a broad range of functions to take place simultaneously and proposes new forms that are innovative, purposeful and expressive.



The main volume of the new lane way unit peeks out from the existing Victorian semi-detached house while the entry sequence stretches all the way to the sidewalk



1



2



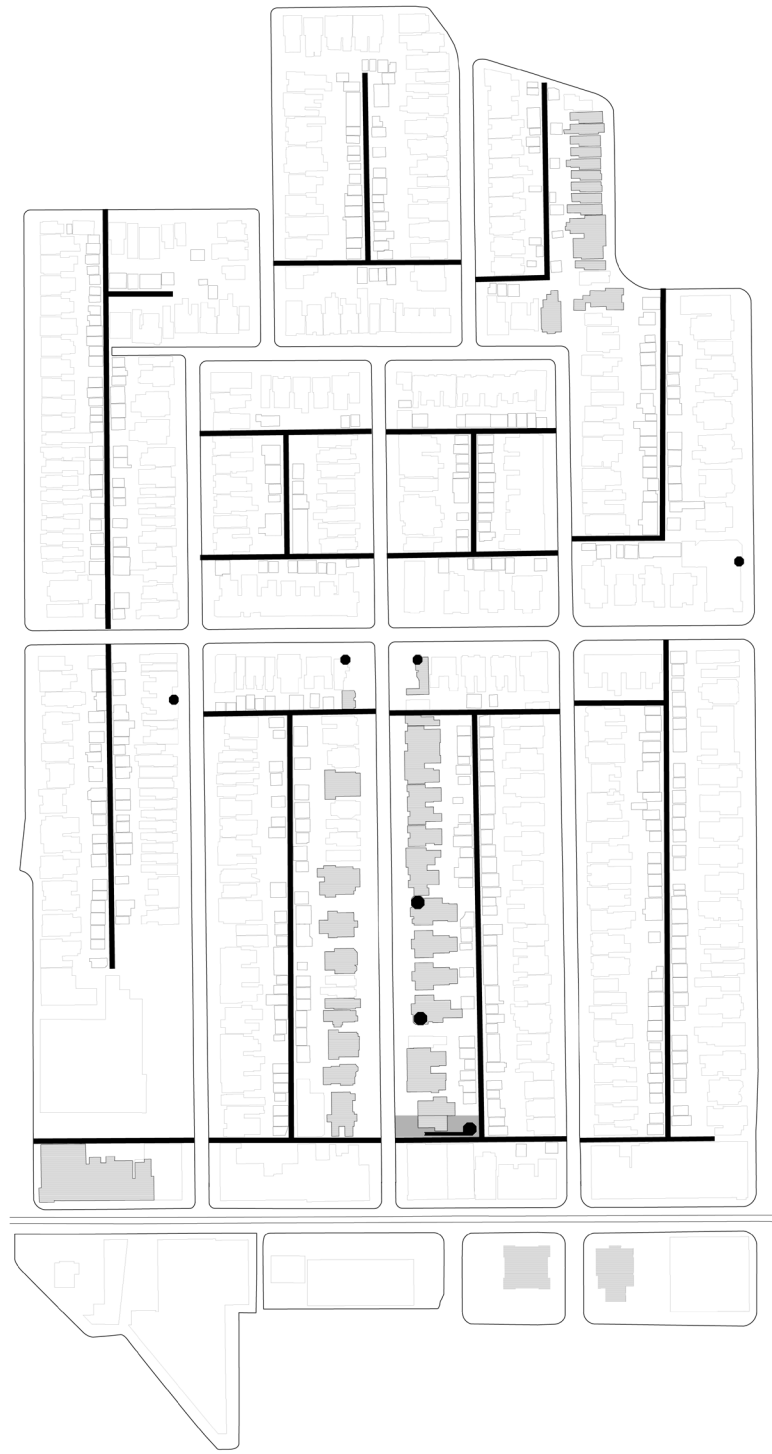
3



4



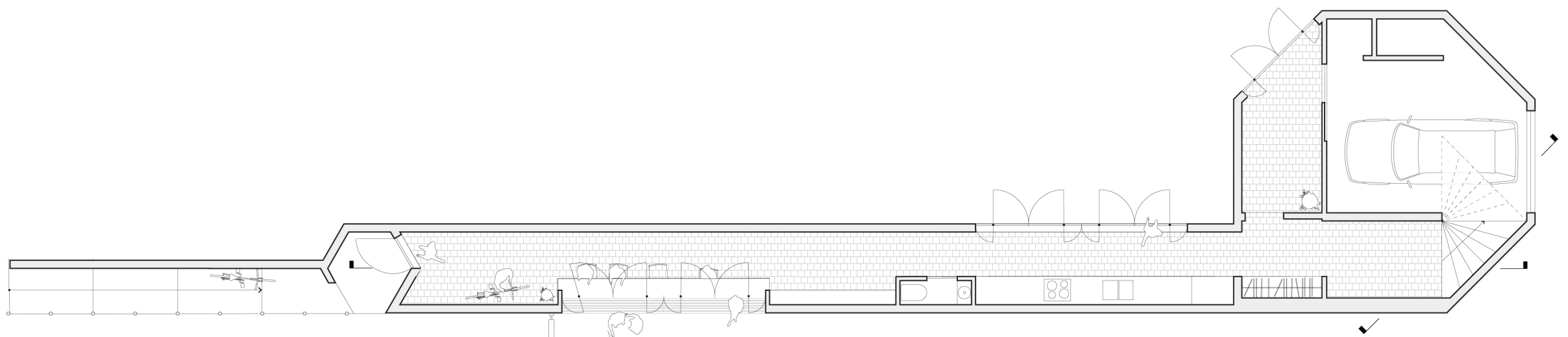
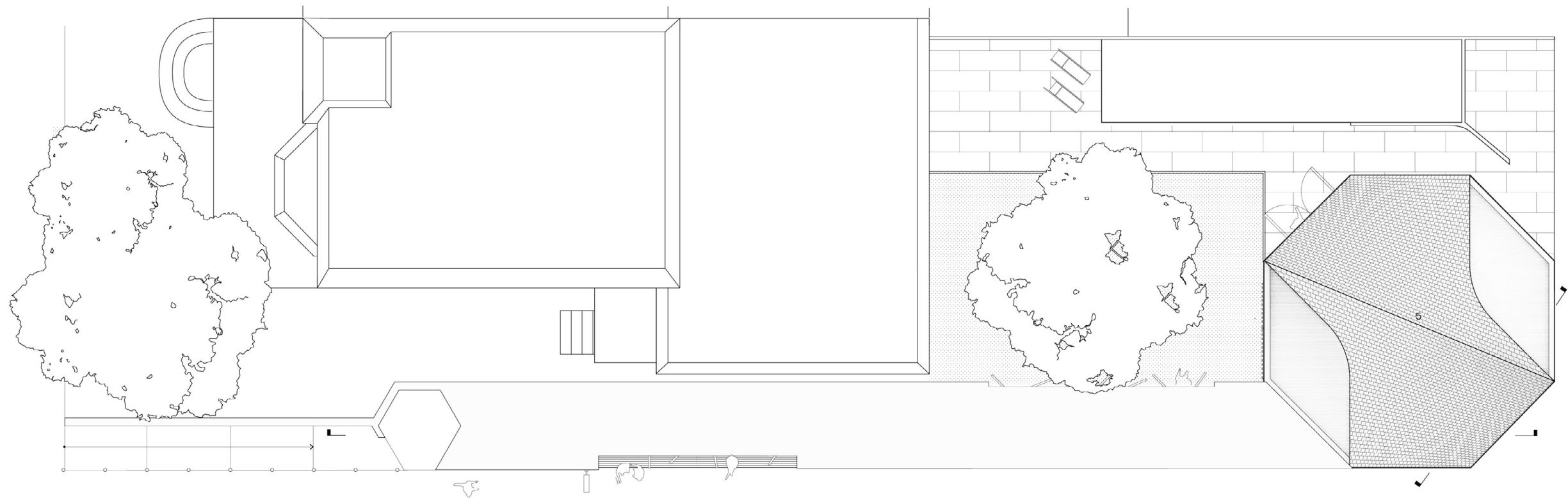
5



6

Reference Images from the neighbourhood

- 1 & 2. Octagon Towers on Beaconsfield Ave
- 1 & 3. Examples of historically listed house in the neighbourhood
- 4 & 5. Examples of the rich layering that happens in the laneway
- 6. A diagram showing example locations



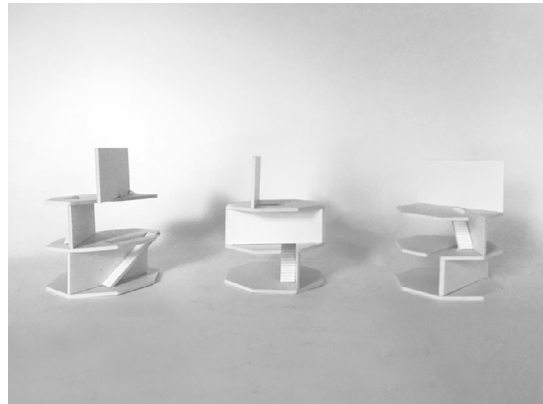
The long corridor acts as an entry sequence that stretches from the street to the staircase to the unit above. This sequence is punctuated by large apertures that open first onto the laneway then onto the shared garden and pool.

0

1

5

Site Plan 
10m



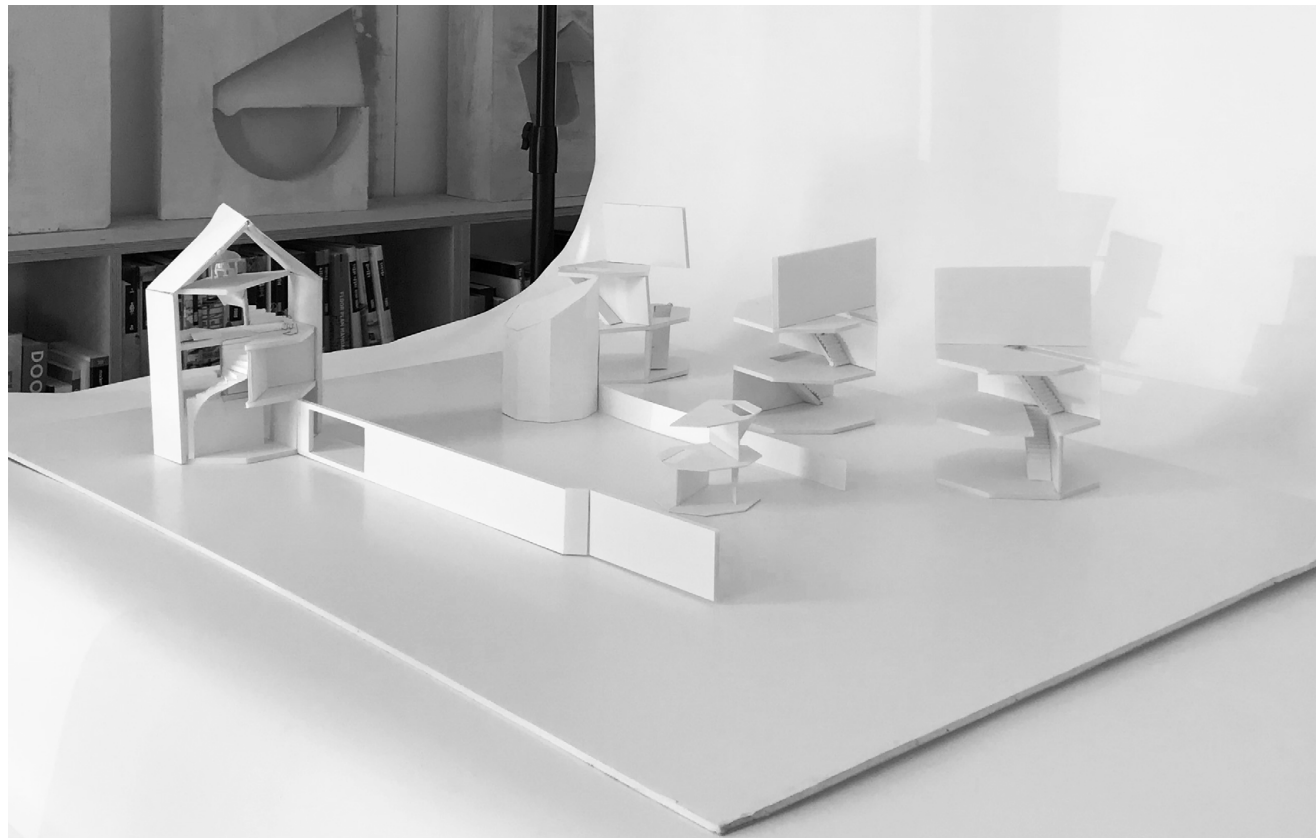
1



2



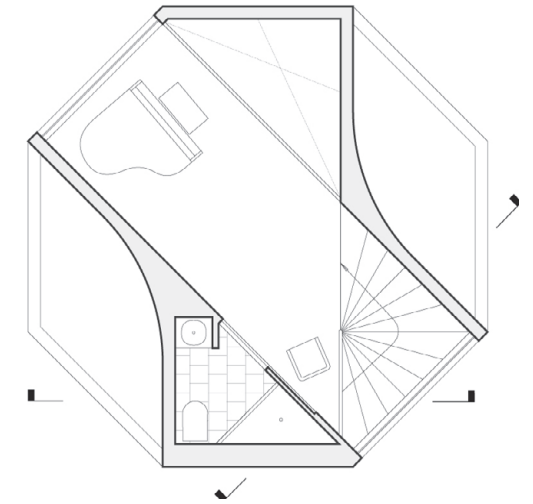
3



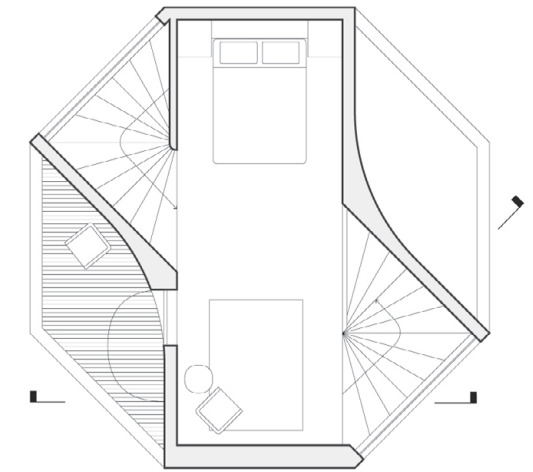
4

- 1. Circulation study models on an octagon footprint
- 2 & 3. Final Study Model showing circulation
- 4. Study Models in the studio

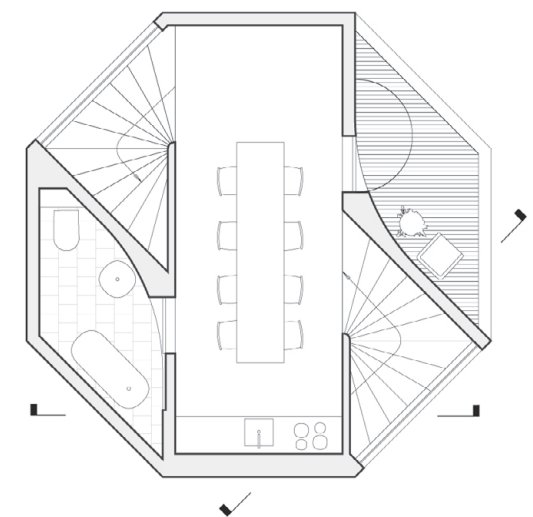
Once the octagon footprint and the idea of a continuous path were decided, study models were used to evaluate the spatial implications of different types of stair configurations. The spiral staircase beside the window is both efficient in plan and offers views to the exterior as one ascends upwards.



Mezzanine



3rd Level

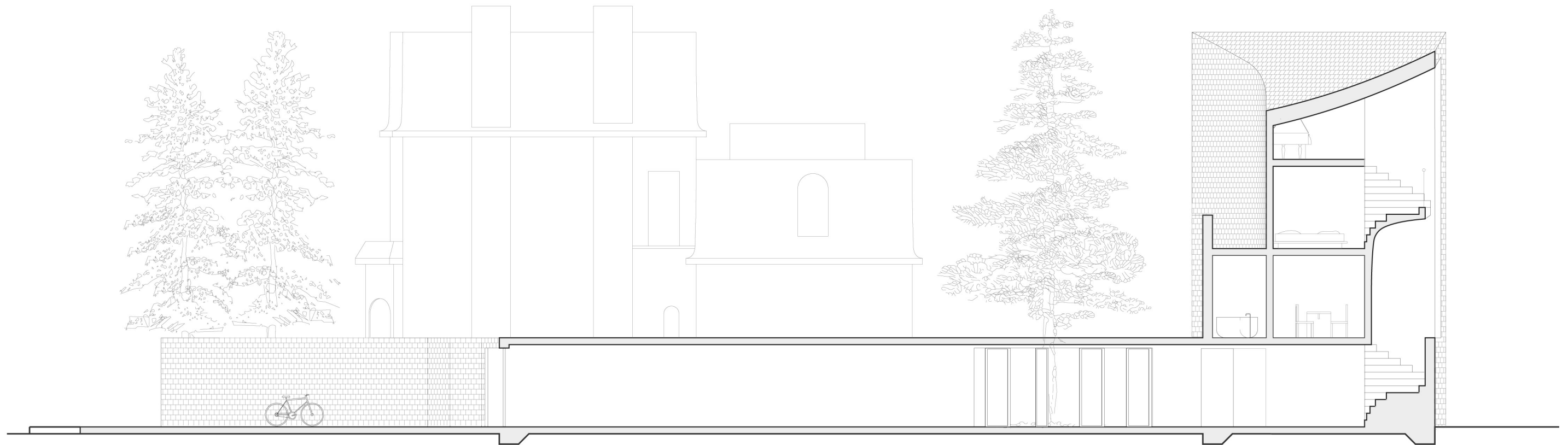


2nd Level





View from the entry with the cafe opening onto the laneway, the full height doors to the shared garden and the stairs to the unit in the background



The exaggerated corridor terminates with a staircase that leads you up to the living unit. This continuous path weaves through each loosely defined space; a living space on the second floor, sleeping area on the third and a private study on the upper level mezzanine.



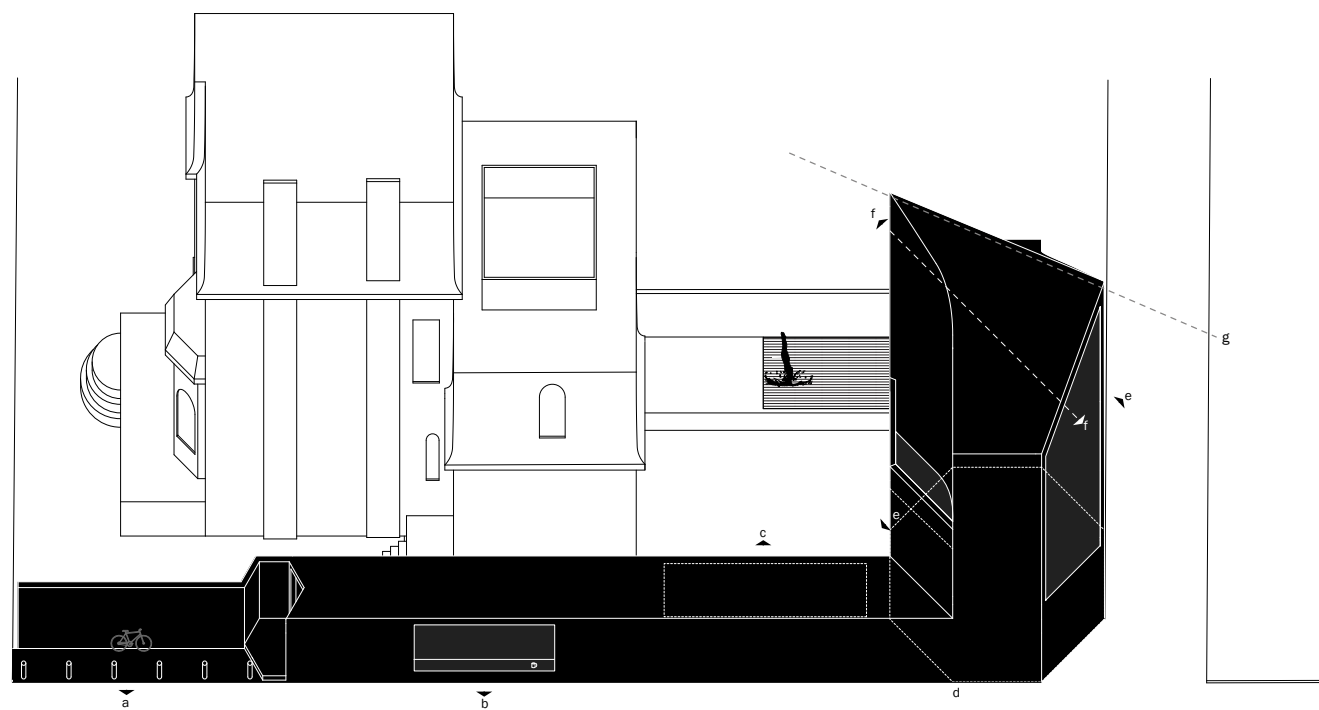
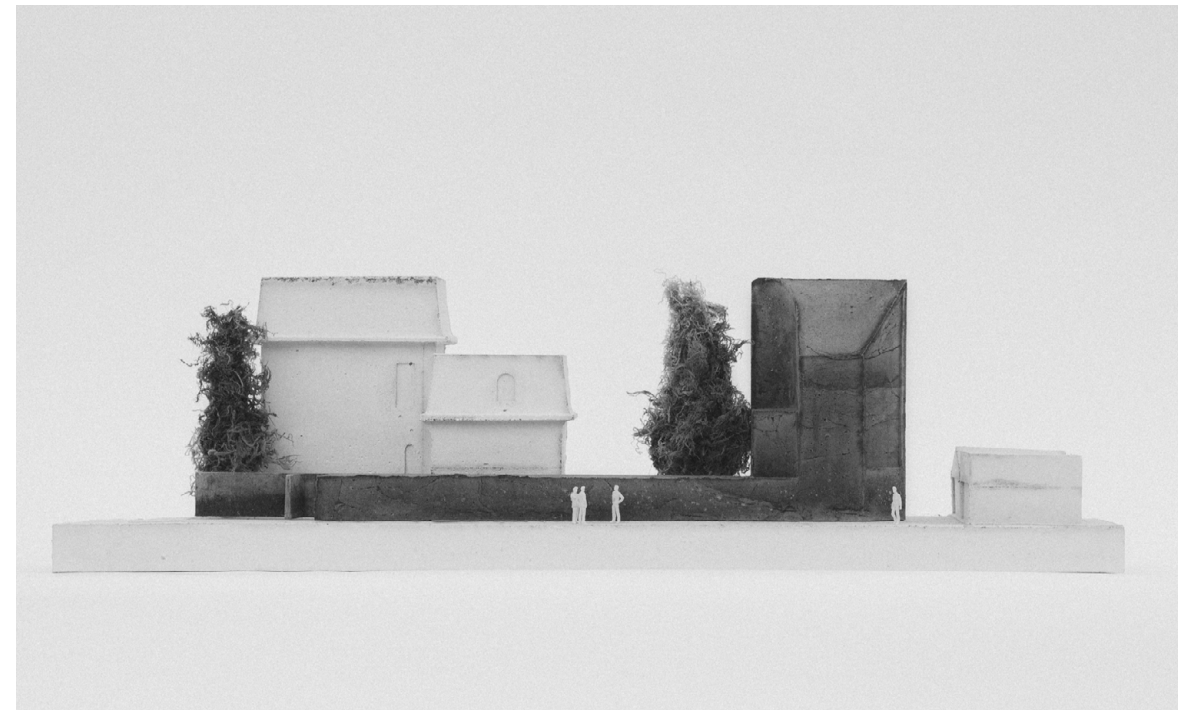
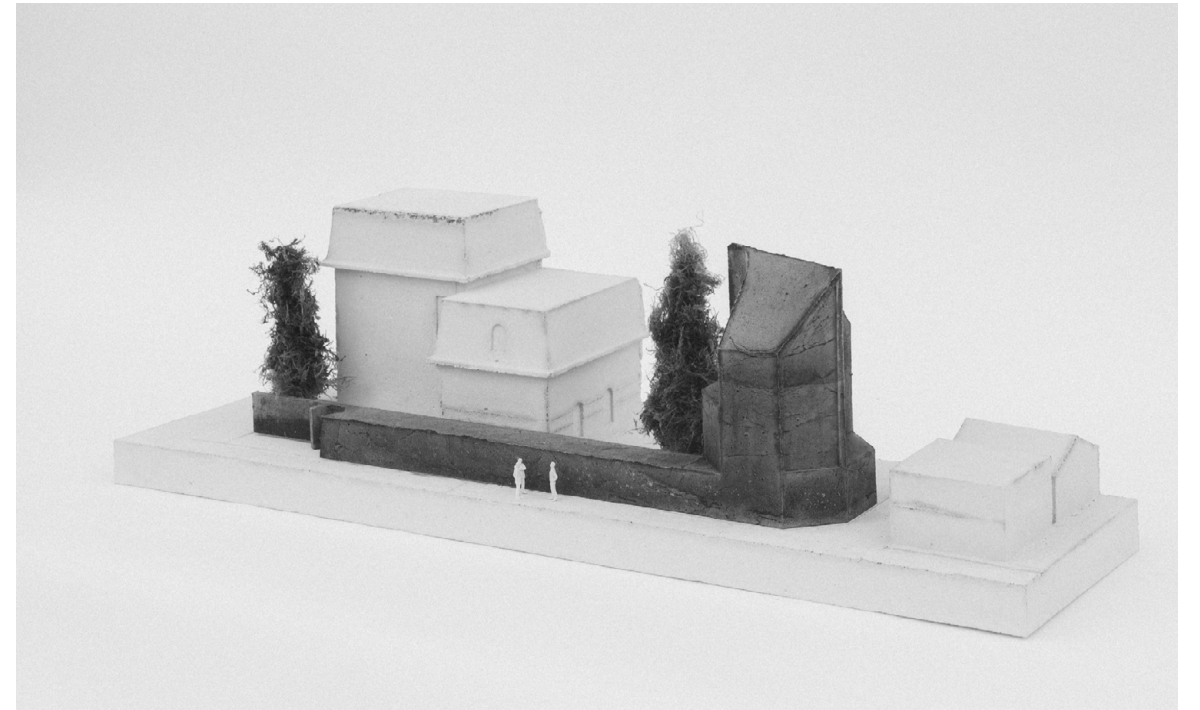


Diagram describing formal rational

- a. Forecourt opens onto the laneway and is visible from Queen St W
- b. Cafe window activates side laneway
- c. Corridor provides acts as a buffer from the laneway, large windows open onto the shared garden
- d. An extruded octagon provide the primary geometric form
- e. Balconies on the seocnd and third floor are cut out of the primary form
- f. Flush glazing on the South-Westa and North-East walls allow for an abundance of natural light to enter the unit
- g. The ridge of the roof is slightly off axis creating a suble shift in geometry and a dynamic form.





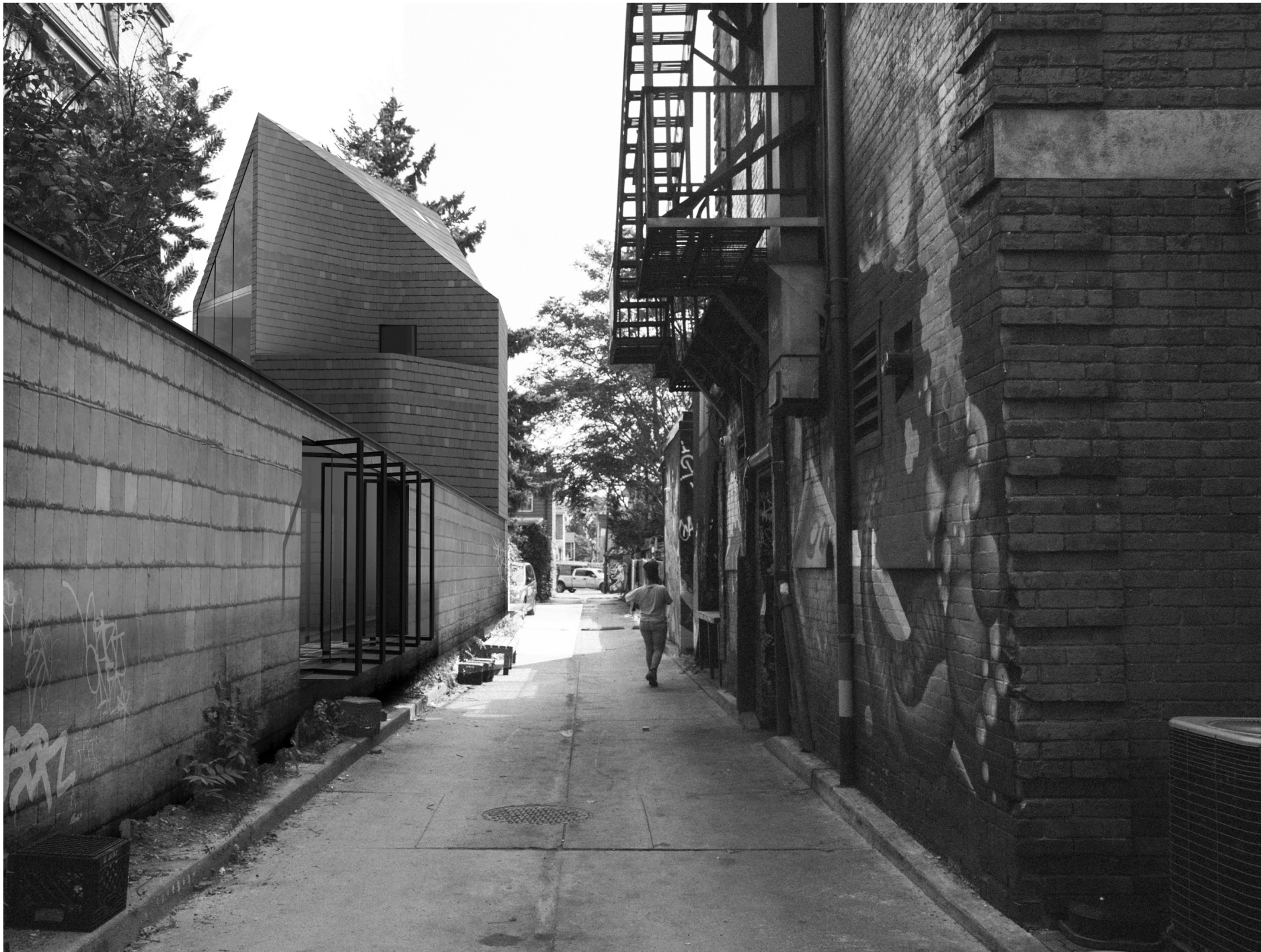
The concrete massing model was created to communicate that project is meant to be read as a singular solid volume that reaches from the tower towards the street.



Slate shingles were determined to be the best solution for cladding the lightweight structure. The substantial materail not only connects it to the main house whose roof uses the same material, the stones natural variation adds tesxture to the long wall in the laneway

South East Elevation

0 1 5 10m



The project sits comfortably in the grittiness of the back ally. This well used connection between the two blocks is frequented by both passersby and by restaurant workers on thier break. The cafe window helps to encourgae activcivy and aims to show the potenitial for these often overloaded space.



Roof Assembly

1. Slate Roofing Tiles
- 3/4x1" Timber Battens
- Vapour Barrier
- 2 Layers of 3/4" Plywood Sheathing
- 2x10" Roof Joists
- 9" Extruded Polystyrene Insulation
- Air Barrier
- 1/2" Drywall
- Concealed Gutters with Heat Trace

Wall Assembly

2. Slate Roofing Tiles
- 3/4x1" Timber Battens
- Vapour Barrier
- 3/4" Plywood Sheathing
- 2x6" Stud Wall
- 5" Extruded Polystyrene Insulation
- Air Barrier
- 1/2" Drywall

Floor Assembly

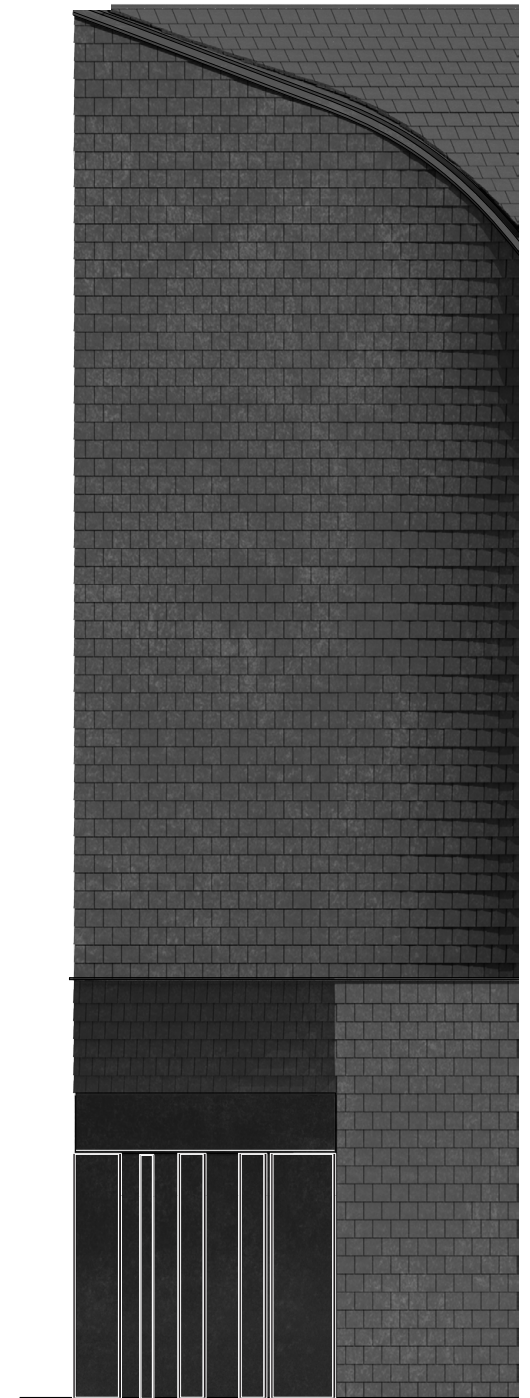
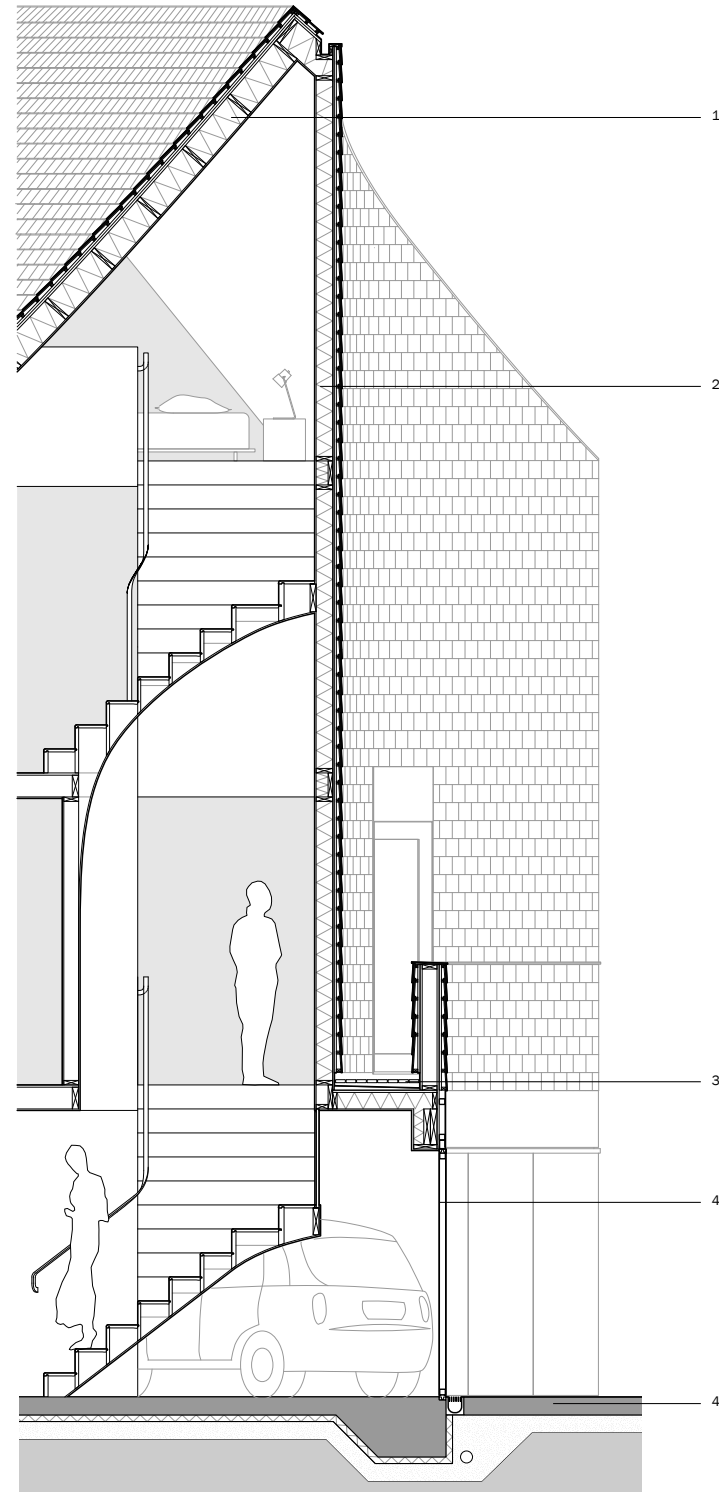
3. Wood Decking
- Vapour Barrier
- 1" Sloped Polystyrene Insulation
- 3/4" Plywood Sheathing
- 2x6" Floor Joists
- 5" Extruded Polystyrene Insulation
- 1/2" Drywall

Garage Door

4. Custom insulated Bi-fold Garage Door

Floor Assembly

5. Polished Concrete Surface
- 6" Reinforced Concrete (poured in situ)
- 3" Compression Resistant Insulation
- Compact Sand
- Clean Gravel Fill



The project uses light wood framing for the ease of construction. The volume is then wrapped in a single material; slate shingles. Details are kept concealed to reinforce this idea of a single volume.

0 1 5m

Detail



