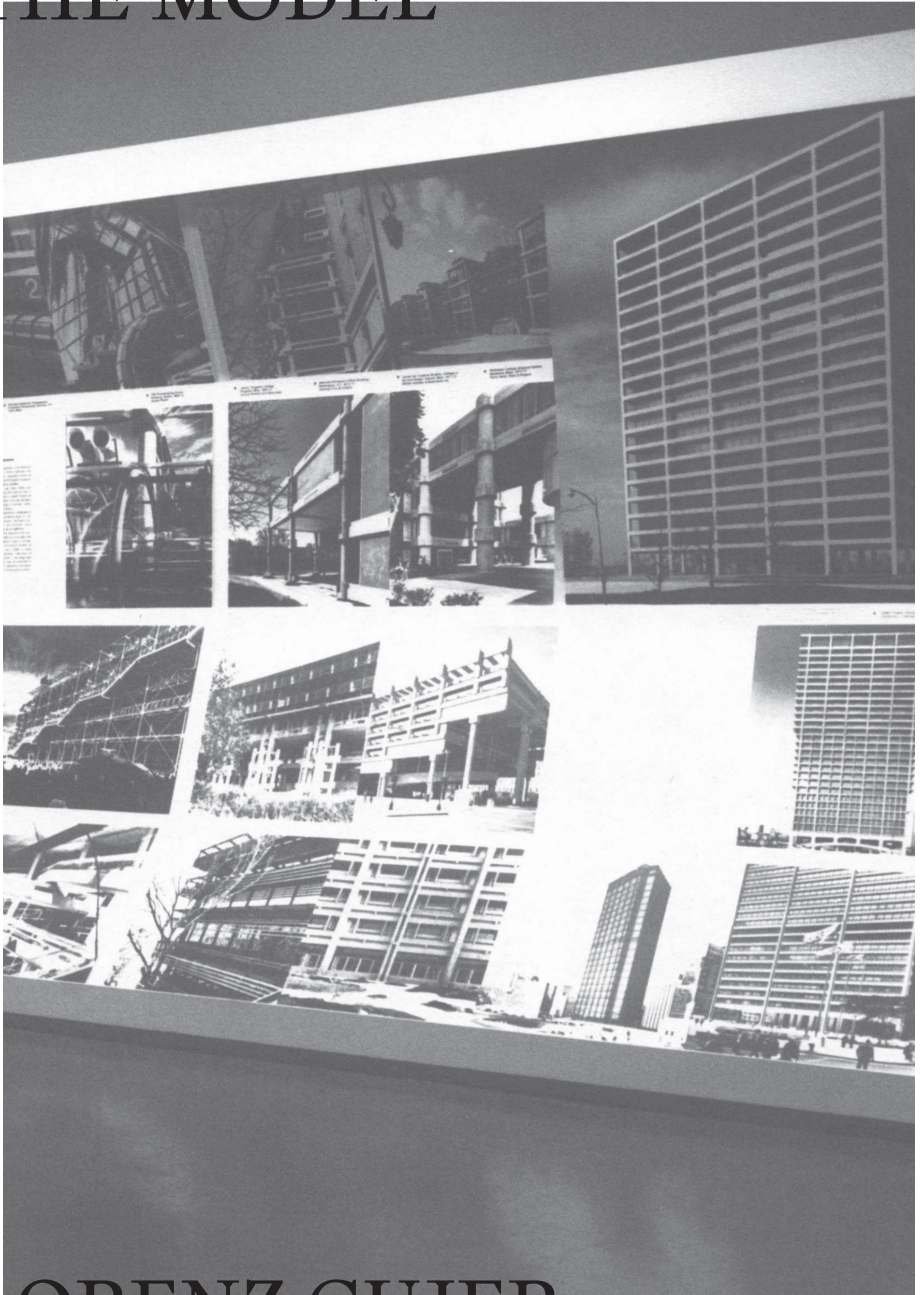# COPYING AND
THE MODEL

LORENZ GUJER

THE MODEL AND THE QUESTION OF ORIGINALITY IN ARCHITECTURE

Models have always played an important role in the work of architects. It either was a learning tool to copy from, an embodiment of a circumstance of a region, a society, a culture or an era, or a thing that was strongly denied to create the myth of the genius creator. As the speed of the dissemination of models increased over time so changed the use, the purpose and the perception of it. In this essay I want to tackle the question: Where do architects copy from? The search and handling of the model embedded in the Renaissance, the Historicism of the 19th century and even in the tabula rasa narrative of Modernism.

To understand and question the originality and the authorship of architecture I will go through the election of the model(s) and how the copy then was implemented into the projects.

MODELS AND COPY BOOKS

To learn the grammar of architecture around 1500 A.D., architects copied the models by drawing and redrawing it, over and over again. Therefore they weren't always going back to the source, a building, but copied the model from already drawn copies, lying in front of their table. They were drawn in different perspectives, how do they show it, in different techniques, how they are drawn and with different selections of what they show. What matters in the challenge for the copyist was what they did with all these different tools. As paper was expensive these days, copies were drawn on small handy sized blank sheets which then were bond together, to create a copy book. Beside the built role models, all the architectural knowledge was contained in these tiny compounds of drawings. Hence these combined accumulations had to travel for the next decades around Italy and central Europe to then be copied from. Through that circulation the same objects appeared all over again and became part of an exquisite selection of common acknowledge models.

One of these models of and for architecture in the renaissance of the Antique was embodied in the Tempietto di Bramante. Inspired by the Roman, round Tempio di Vesta, it is remarkable for its elegantly and simple reinterpretation of classical forms.

Sebastiano Serlio's selection of models for his seven books of architecture came out of this Zeitgeist. It was not him choosing who a good architect is and which object became a good model, but the cultural production, work of hundreds of people, that acquire a common basis for architecture. It was not Serlio but the drawn production of a collective group who defined the grammar of architecture and what an architect should know.
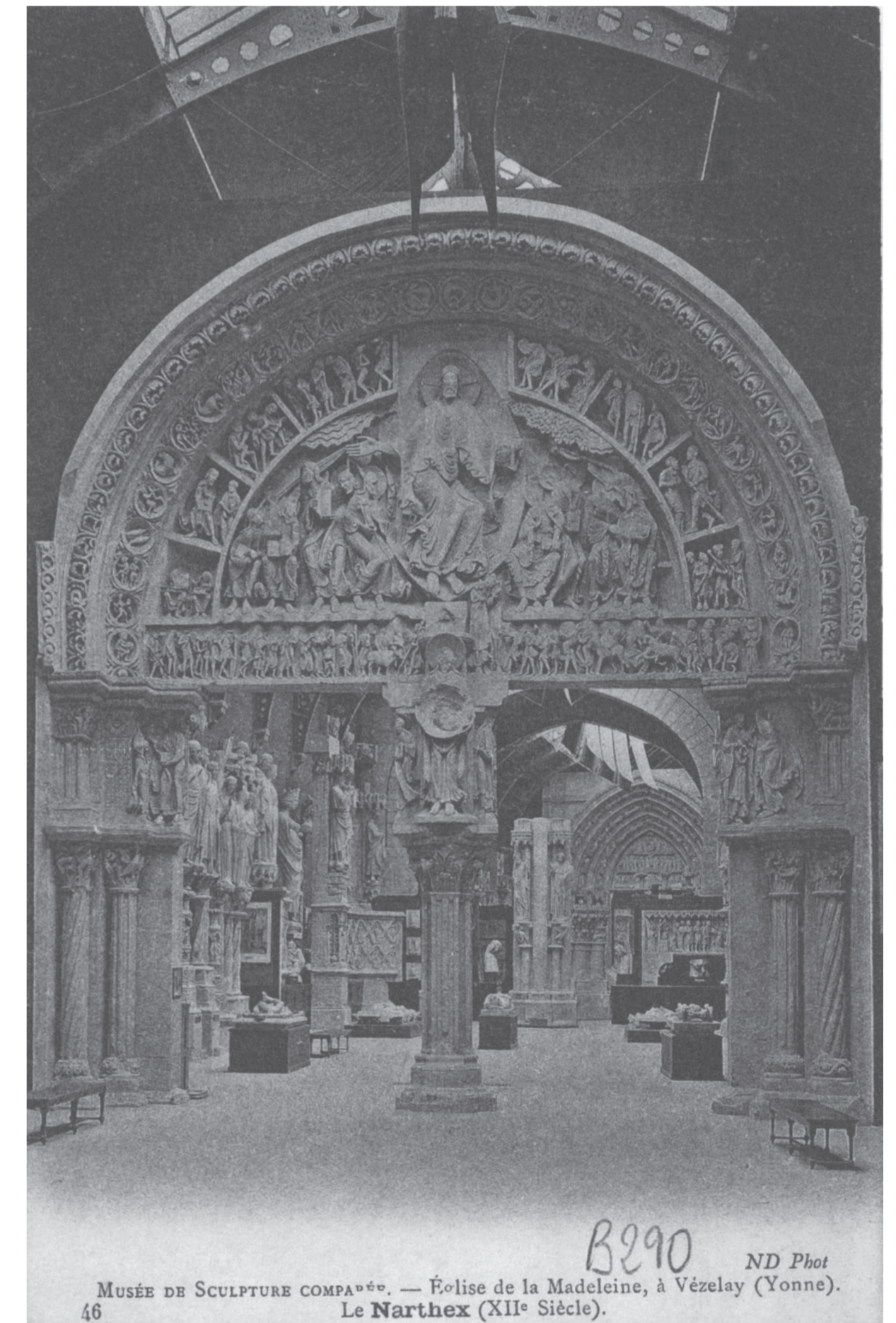
Even though the men we still know today were just a few of all authors, the today unknown copyists were very proud of their work. They needed a big amount of skills to generate a copy. It was not unpopular to sign the copy with their own signature either it was a drawn copy of the Tempietto or a chiseled copy of a greek sculpture.

À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

At the beginning of the 1890s, Museums like the Metropolitan Museum in New York or the Torcadéro museum in Paris, invested extraordinary resources in completing their already extensive cast collections. They even set up a moulding department based on the Louvre's Atelier de Moulage to build their own physical 1:1 copies of sculptures, gates and plaster casts. Marcel Proust later described in *À la recherche du temps perdu* how he went to the Torcadéro, being surrounded by French romanesque, gothic and renaissance architectural

Postcard of the plaster copy of the entrance porch of the Sainte-Madeleine church in Vézelay, 1910[10]

Copies of the Tempietto di Bramante,[9]
left to right;
Serlio's Terzo Libro,
Raffaello da Montelupo,
Anonymous Italian (ICG Roma)

sculptures, and encounters a beautiful plaster cast of a church portal in Balbec. Highly appreciating the copy he was fully enthusiastic going to visit the original one, but ended up in a profound disappointment „caused by the failure of reality to live up to expectations"[1]. Writing in her essay *Proust and Plaster* Mari Lending describes his experience as follows: „Consequently, the original edition of the church is the one in Paris, and not the inferior version in Balbec, which is contaminated by smell, uncontrolled light, and dirt and degraded by its tangibility - the narrator fantasies about tagging his name on the stone. For Proust authenticity is guaranteed by the first impression. It is the plaster cast that evokes the original impression of the building's grandeur and generates a version which definitely is something 'more and different' than the church itself."[2]

We can say that these collections became the Copy Books of the 19th century. Libraries of good models, a collection of knowledge, a common ground of the architectural culture. Lending expound Proust's love for theses collections: „While in reality, over time, the original work is constantly being degraded, the perfectly preserved copy in the museum belongs forever to the imagination."[3]

THE DISSEMINATION OF THE MODEL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1979 Arthur Drexler curated one of the most controversial architecture exhibitions in de history of the Museum of Modern Art; *Transformations in Modern Architecture*. The Curator has densely packed some five hundred black-and-white photographs of no less than 403 buildings by 270 architects from 16 countries. Without giving any additional information about the name of the architect, location, or purpose of the project most objects stayed unknown. Later Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen concluded in her commentary *When Modern Architecture Went Viral* on that exhibition: „The sheer quantity of projects on view underscored the fact that none of the buildings were in any way remarkable or trailblazing. [...] The format created a somewhat dizzying effect; the viewer was enveloped by images, his or her eyes wandering from photograph to photograph, forced to conclude that every project looked a lot like the one next to it. It was clear that the established tenets of Modern architecture were no longer valid. Indeed when it came to late Modern architecture, form was clearly no longer motivated by functional, material or structural logic; instead

Installation views of the exhibition Transformations in Modern Architecture, 1979.[11]

Le Corbusier in front of the carcass of the Unité d'Habitation. A Model that has spread as a model even before it was built. Picture from around 1949, published in 1950[12]

form seemed to simply follow form."[4]

That overwhelming demonstration of visual models in Modernism, in an increasingly image-saturated world, traveling in a short time around the globe through the mediation of magazines and photographs has somehow stripped the modernistic myth of the genius creator. It challenges the functional, material and or structural logic appreciation of the design.

As this proved the fact of the existence of models in late Modernism, hence it is about how the architects choose and uses them. Pelkonen summarizes: "If a good copy was based on a careful study of an existing built work through site visits, plans, and sections, a bad copy was often taken from a single photographic image. The problem identified in Drexler's exhibition was that bad copies proliferate with greater speed and quantity, often going viral, and when they do there is no way of stopping them."[5]

This suggests a good understanding of the late (architectural) history of the planners to be able to over-peer that flood of photographs to elect the good examples out of this marsh.

THE MYTH OF THE AVANT-GARDE

During the time when museums were banned, history classes not have been anymore part of the schedule of new architectural schools like the Bauhaus, the credo for architects became the non-referential guiding words „form follows function". Rosalind Krauss writes in her essay *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* about the will of a generation that wants to protect themself from all intrusions from outside: „More than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth. [...] The self as origin is the way an absolute distinction can be made between a present experience de novo and a tradition-laden past. The claims of the avant-garde are precisely these claims to originality."[6] Krauss sees „the grid-scored surface [as] the image of an absolute beginning. [...] This origin is what the genius of the grid is supposed to manifest to us as viewers: an indisputable zero-ground beyond which there is no further model, or referent, or text."[7] This mindset of the non-influenceable is the fertile soil for the birth of myth of the avant-garde genius.

Otto Glaus was a successful and typical late Modernist architect. Growing up in a small village in Appenzell, founding his own architecture office in Zürich, later an other one in St. Gallen, in the beginning of the booming years right after the second World War, he was working in a time when everything seemed to be possible. In an interview[8] he is asked if he felt to be a modern architect. He said he never felt the need to be modern, he could describe his feeling as sculptural in a baroque way. The totality of proportions and forms of expression determines the effect of his designs. [...] Wherever possible, he understood the architectural design as a whole and not as a synthesis of individual decisions. Further tells Glaus: Le Corbusier also designed in this way: his buildings are always as a whole, a unity, a culture, whether they are the Unité d'Habitaion, his mansions or in particular the chapel of Ronchamp. Although Glaus has always felt inwardly attached to Le Corbusier, he persists that he was not influenced by him in this way, but being already a baroque figure in his whole basic being. It is interesting how he is aware of the model of his time, even names the ur-father of some of his own works, but at the same time is clearly trying to deny it, even though the models and references are clearly present in his work. This puts a big question mark on the originality he and his contemporary, modern colleagues claim. He d'rather shifts his visions towards the perfect proportions and seeing a building as a whole, highlighting his will of his unique claim for the authorship. He talks about his building like they would be sculptures. Using somehow the words and the mindset of a free and unchained artist.

PLATE 11. Agnes Martin. From the series On a Clear Day, 1973. Portfolio of thirty screen prints on Japanese rag paper. 12 × 12 inches each.[13]
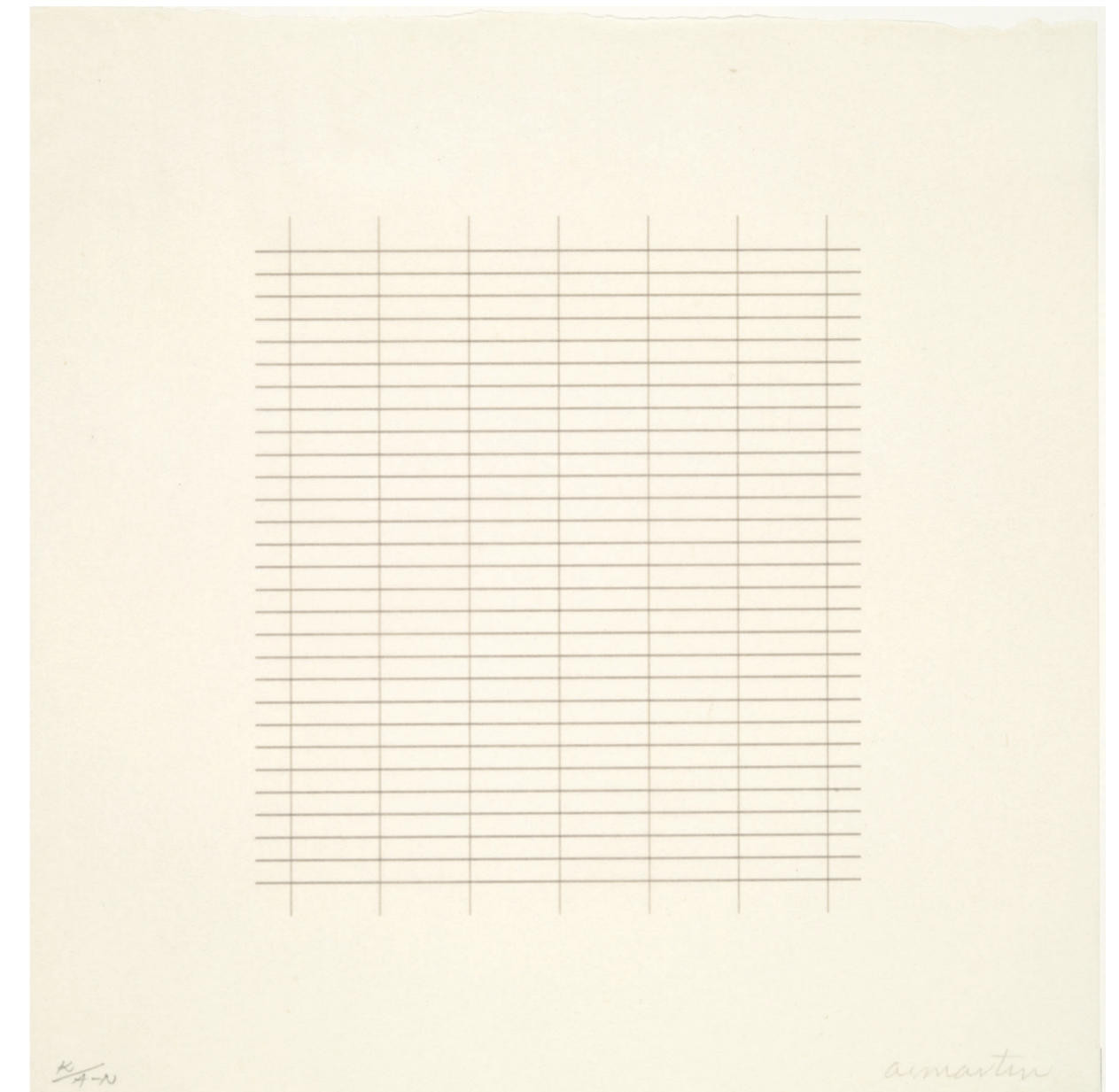
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4,5	Pelkonen Eeva-Liisa, When Modern Architecture Went Viral, Perspecta, Vol. 49, QUOTE (2016), pp. 5-16
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8	Lindt Ueli, Otto Glaus, Architekt, Birkhäuser Verlag, 1995
9	Rachele Cara, 2022
10	Archives du musée des monuments français
11	The Museum of Modern Art Archives
12	s.n., Die „Unité d'habitation" in Marseille, 68 (1950), Schweizerische Bauzeitung
13	Yale University Art Gallery. Leonard J. Hanna Fund.

THE POWER OF THE CURATED IMAGE

In this Grammar of Ornament I want to examine the impact of the, through photographs and magazines, fast disseminating images on the modernistic architecture around Otto Glaus and expose how the built product has chanced and adapted over time.

In the middle of the twentieth century the illustrations of a building was limited through the accessibility of cameras. Therefore the image of a building, disseminating around the globe, was precisely curated by the architect himself, his or her personal employed photographer or people like the architecture historian Sigfried Giedion.

Inspired by Drexlers show *Transformations in Modern Architecture*, I collected similar facades starting with to the one from Otto Glaus - Ankerhof. Displayed on the curated images, proportions and rhythms, light and shadow, define the ornament of the facade, the facade as an ornament.

1954/57, Ferdinand Kammer, Universitätstsinstitut für Pharmazie und Lebensmittelchemie[21]

1955, Eduardo del Fabro, Schulanlage Untermoos, Zürich[20]

1955, René und Walter Noser, Schulanlage Buchlern, Zürich[16]

1955/56, Otto Glaus, Ankerhof, Zürich[18]

1947/52, Le Crobusier, L'Unité d'Habitaion, Masreille[17]

1964/66, Otto Glaus, Fabrik Schneider, Langnau[15]
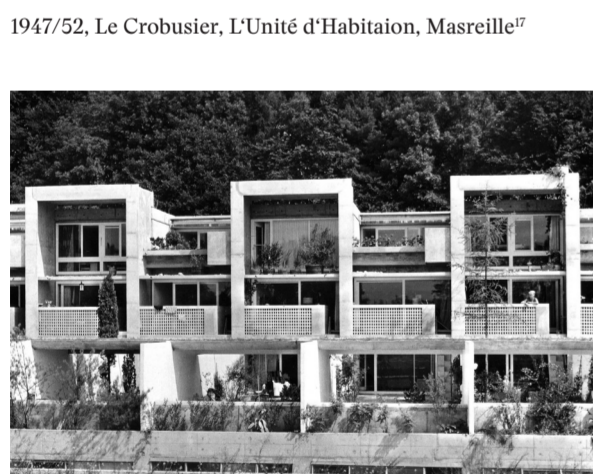
1961, Atelier 5, Siedliung Halen, Bern[19]

1956/59, Otto Glaus, Wohnhochhäuser City-Park, St. Gallen[14]

1956/60, Jacques Schader, Kantonsschule Freudenberg, Zürich

1961, Roland Rohn , Jelmoli, Zürich[23]

1956, Ernst Gisel, Schulhaus Letzi, Zürich[24]

1963, Hohlstrasse 610, Zürich[22]

1954/55, Otto Glaus, Haus Stoffel, Greifensee[26]

1954/57, Max P. Kollbrunner, Schulhausanlage Luchswiesen, Zürich[33]

1954/55, Otto Glaus, Palazzo Ferrari, Chiasso[29]

1957/58, Atelier 5, Flamatt 1, Bern[25]

1962, Walter, Doebeli, Amtshaus Zürich[28]

1954/57, Max P. Kollbrunner, Schulhausanlage Luchswiesen, Zürich[27]

1956/58, Pier Luigi Nervi, Gio Ponti, Pirelli Tower, Milano[31]

1967, Esther Guyer, Rudolf Guyer Schulanlage Stettbach, Zürich[32]

1973, Josef Elfinger, Bürogebäude der Schubert & Salzer GmbH, Ingoldstadt[30]

1959, Charles Steinmann, Schulanlage Hirzenbach, Zürich[51]

Ankerhof
Otto Glaus
with Robert Neukomm
Zürich
1954/55
35

ca. 1985
36

ab 2003
37

LORENZ GUJER

THE POWER OF THE CURATED IMAGE
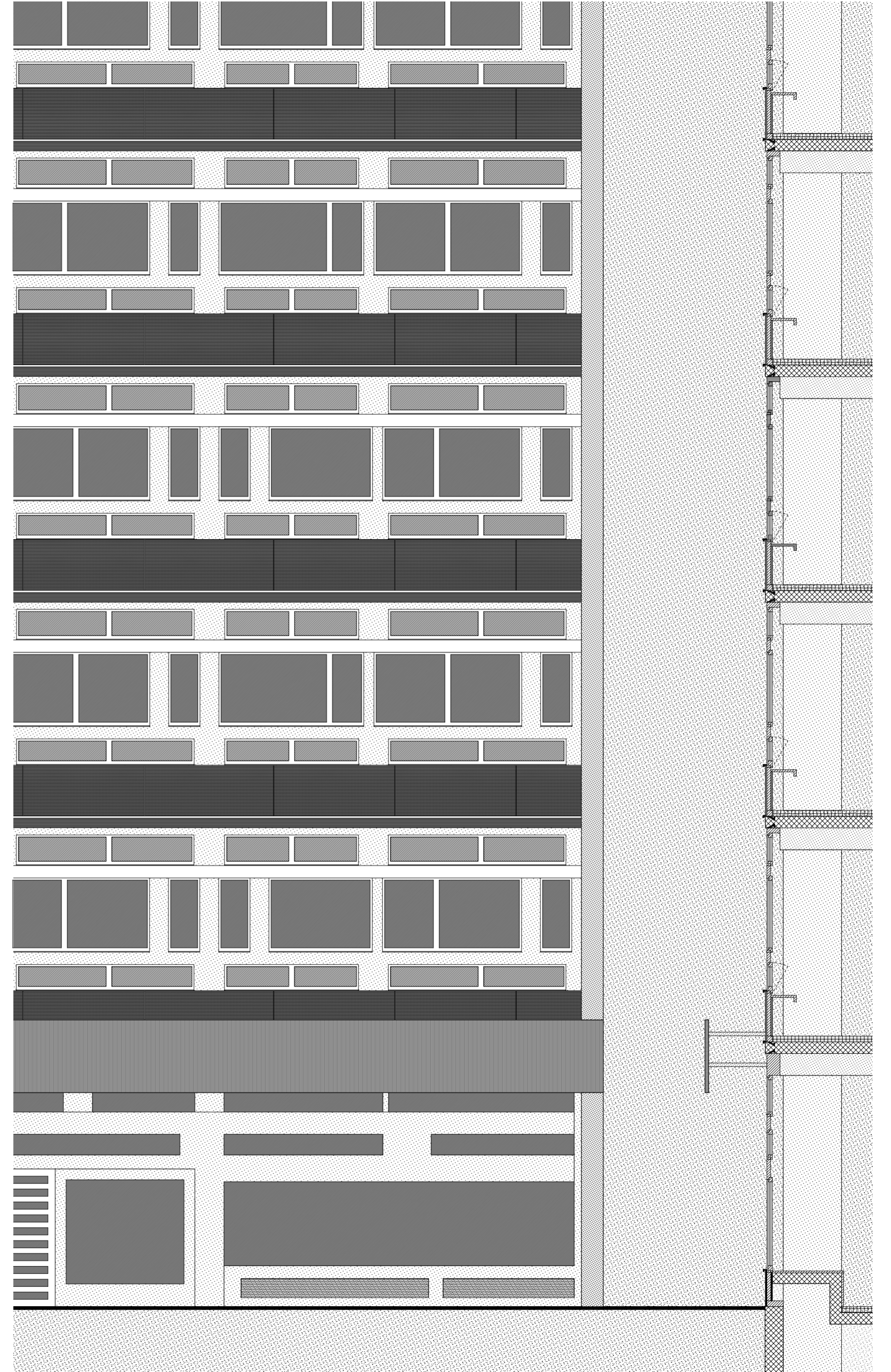
Amtshaus Zürich
Walter Doebeli
Zürich
1963
42

2012
40

2019
41
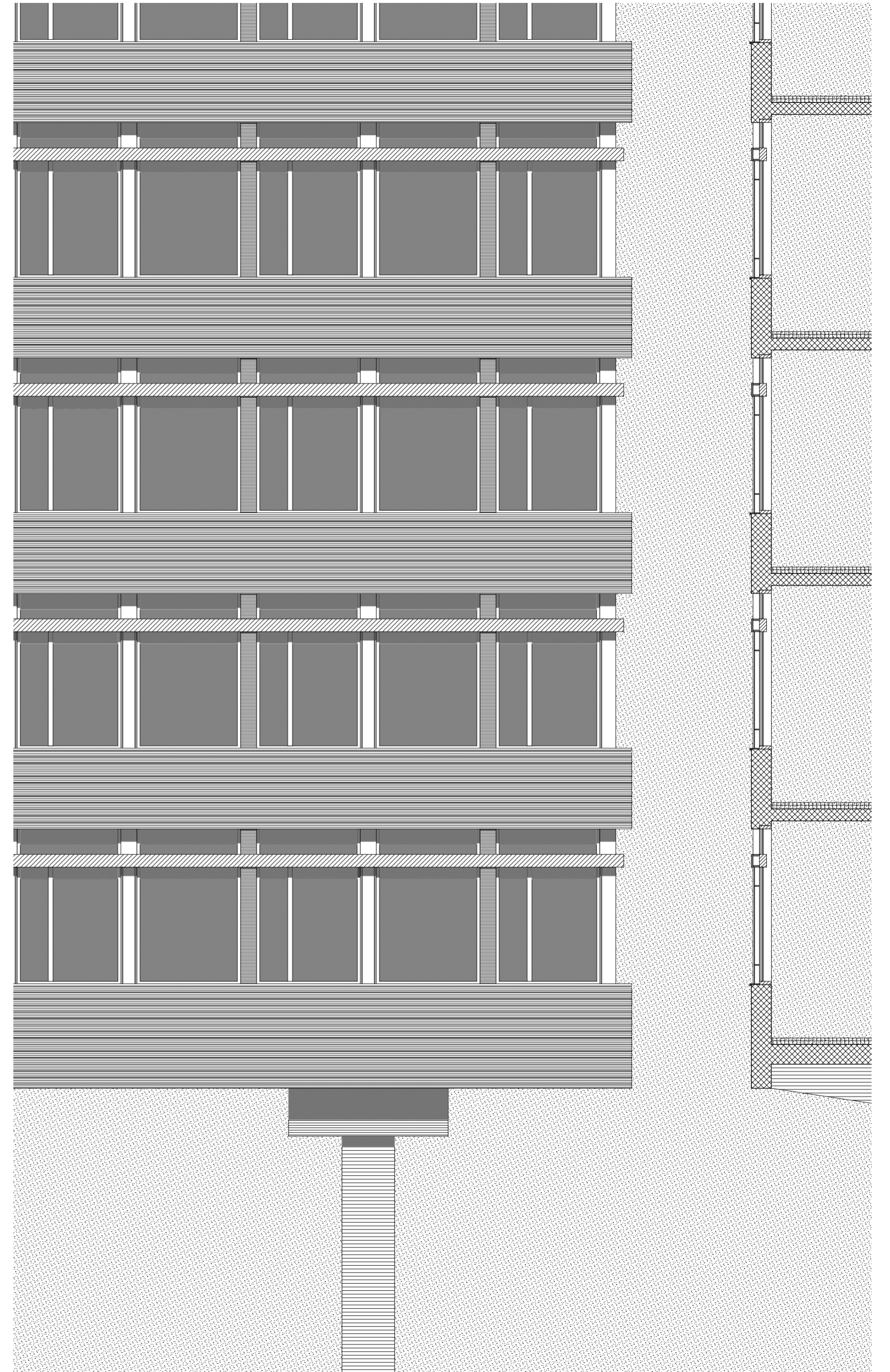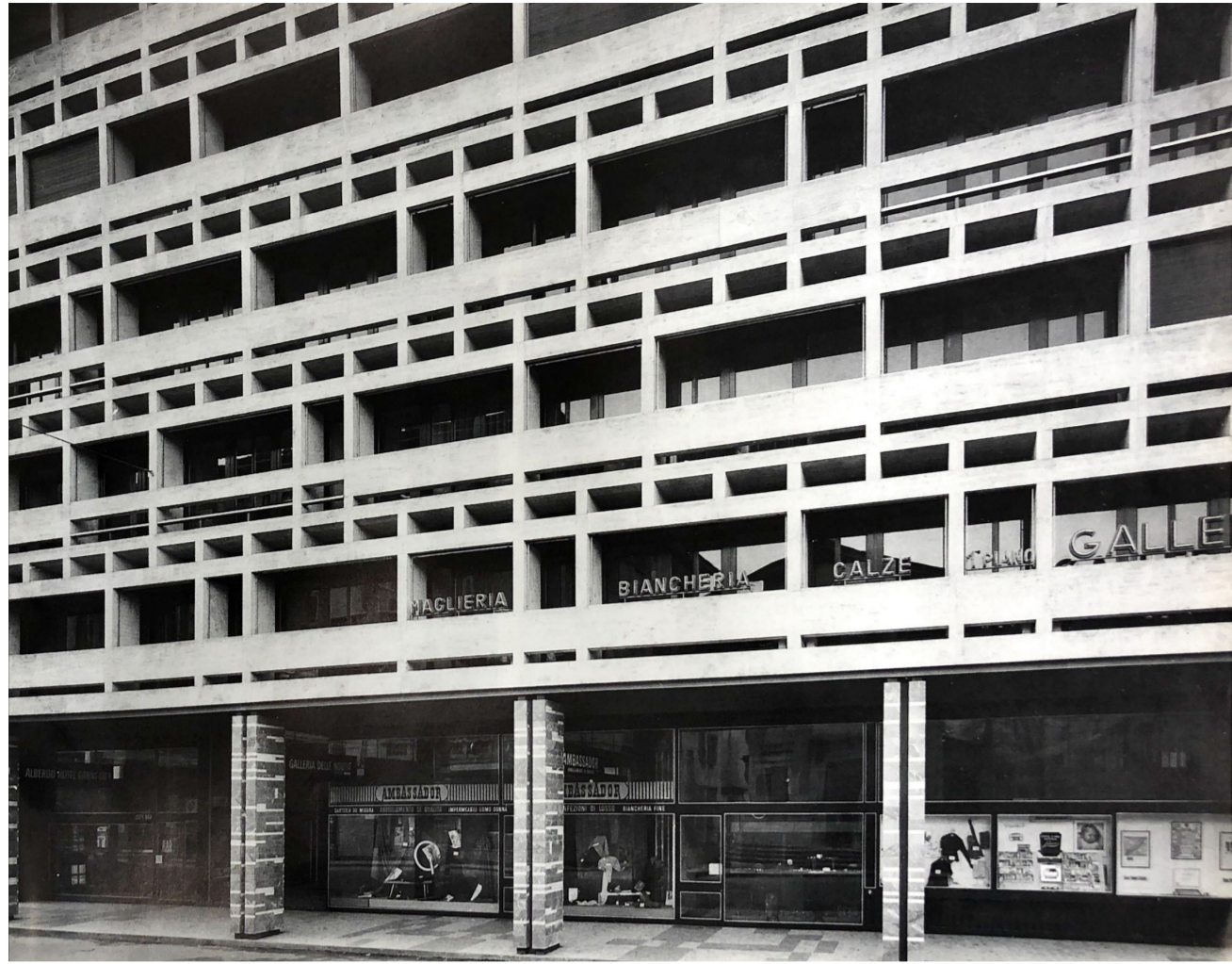
Palazzo Ferrari
Otto Glaus
Chiasso,
1955-57
43

2013
44

Werkbundsiedlung Neubühl
Werner Max Moser
Paul Artaria
Max Ernst Haefeli
Carl Hubacher
Emil Roth
Hans Schmidt
Rudolf Steiger
Zürich
2020
55
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57

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18   Hellstern Max, ca 1960
19   atelier5.ch [Oktober 2022]
20   Wetter, Datum unbekannt
21   Förster Paul, ca. 1957
22   Wolf-Bender's Erben, 1963
23   Wolf-Bender's Erben, 1963
24   Hellstern Max, Datum Unbekannt
25   atelier5.ch [Oktober 2022]
26   Maurer Fritz, Datum unbekannt
27   Melchior André, Datum unbekannt
28   Haller Juliet, 2019
29   Mauer Fritz, Datum unbekannt
30   Brutarchitekt, Januar 2009
31   Abraham Harry, Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture, 1964
32   Maurer Fritz; Datum unbekannt
33   Melchior André, Datum unbekannt
34   Hussel Thomas, 2018
35   Hellstern Max, ca 1960
36   Helbling Andrea, 1992
37   Gujer Lorenz, 2022
38   Hellstern Max, ca 1960
39   Gujer Lorenz, 2022
40   Hussel Thomas, 2012
41   Haller Juliet, 2019
42   Wolf-Bender's Erben, 1963
43   Maurer Fritz, Datum unbekannt
44   2022 Google, Mai 2013
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48   Glaus Otto, gta Archive
49   Gujer Lorenz, 2022
50   Wolf-Bender's Erben, 1963
51   Gujer Lorenz, 2022
52   Nachlass Roth Emil, gta archiv
53   Nachlass Roth Emil, gta archiv
54   Giedion Sigfried, 1931
55   Palmin Yuri, 2020
56   archipicture.eu [Oktober, 2022]
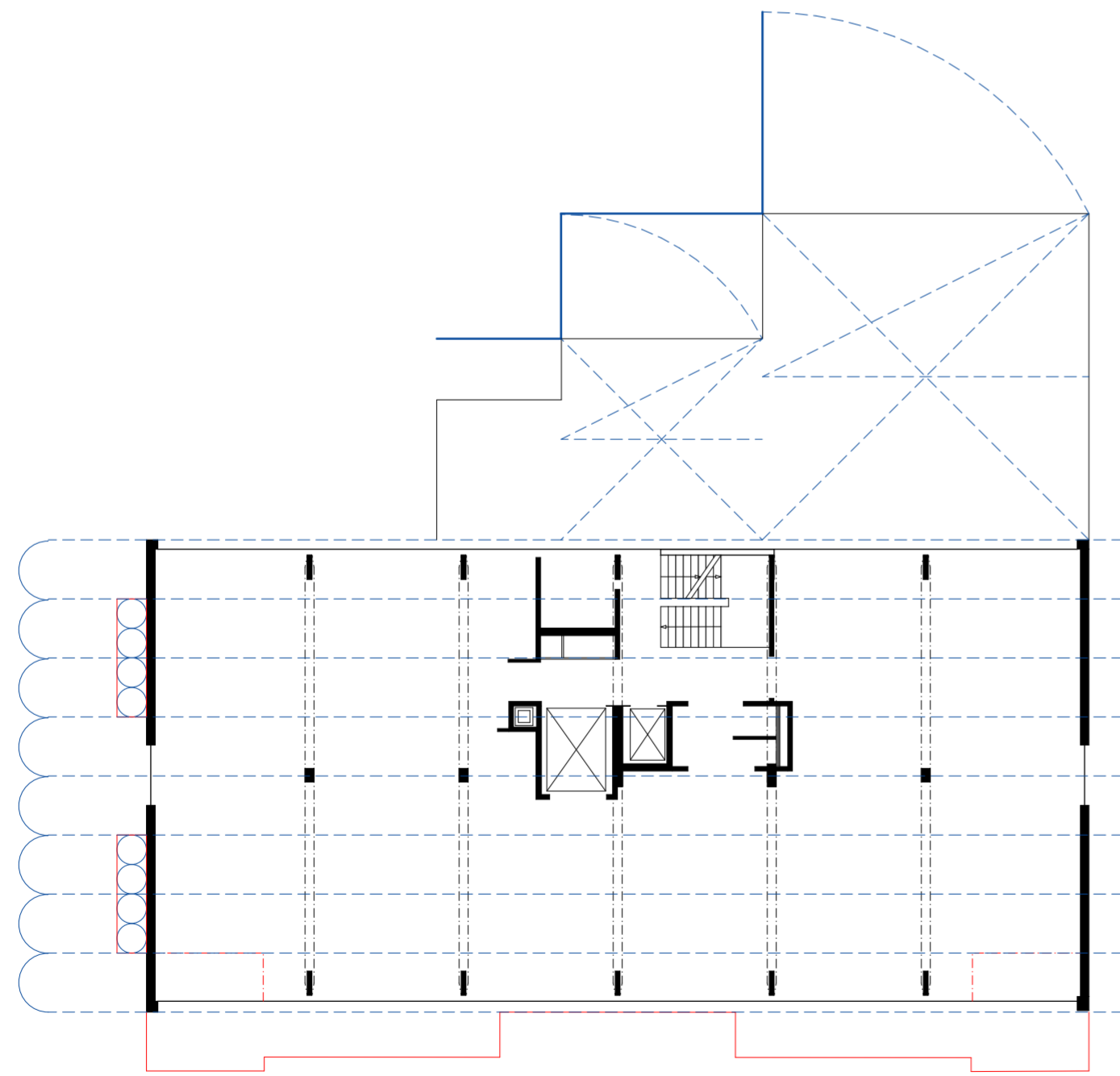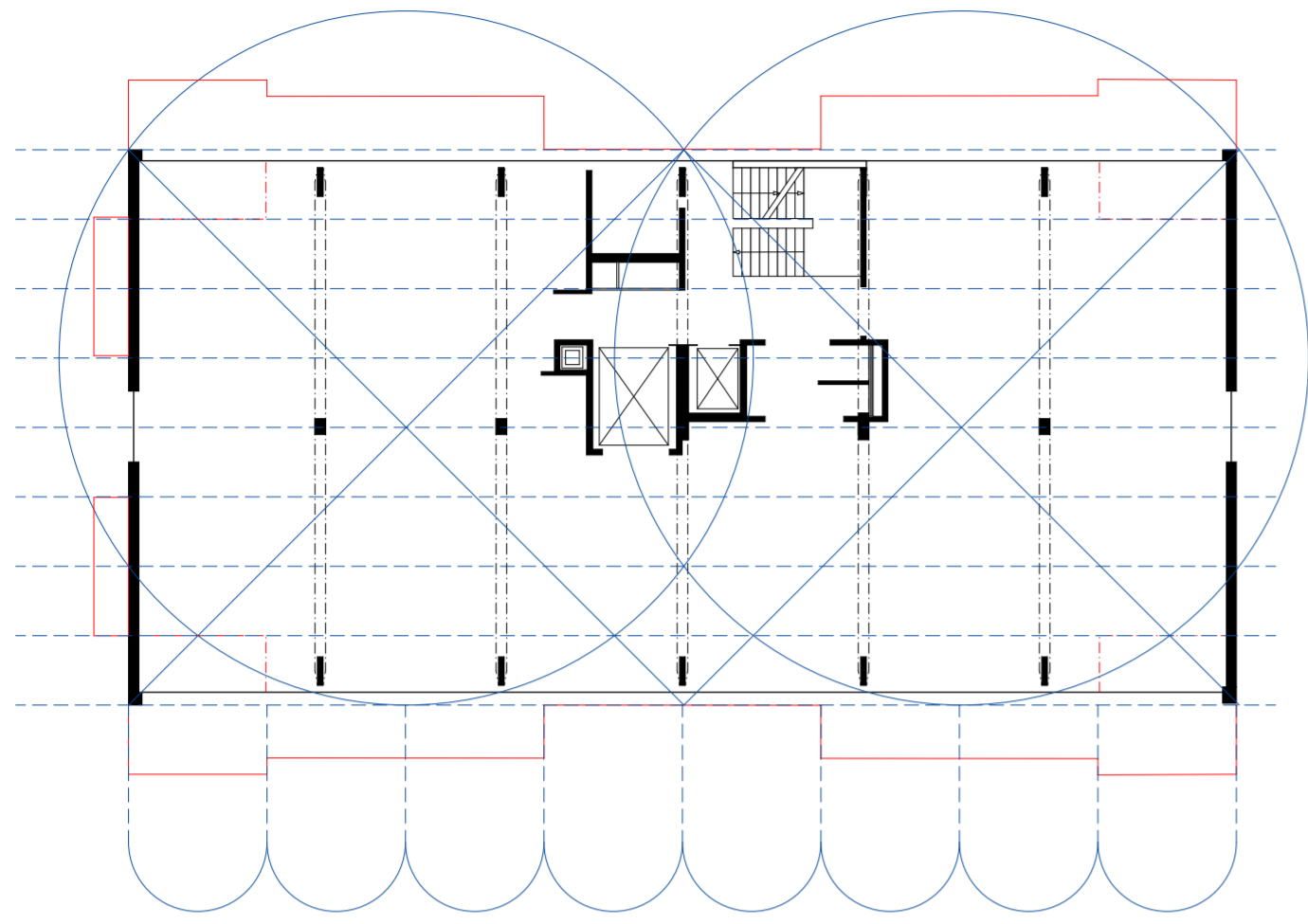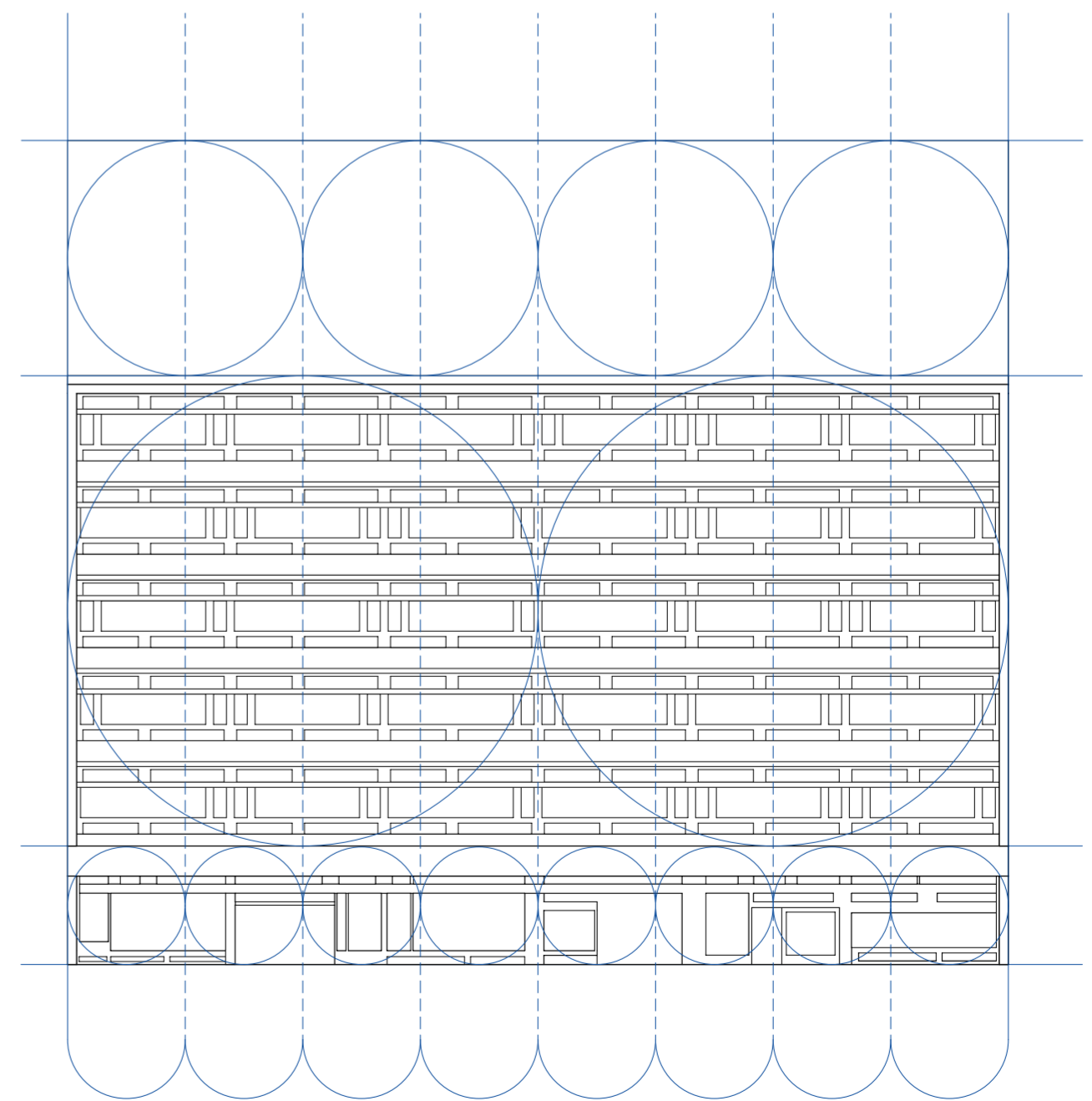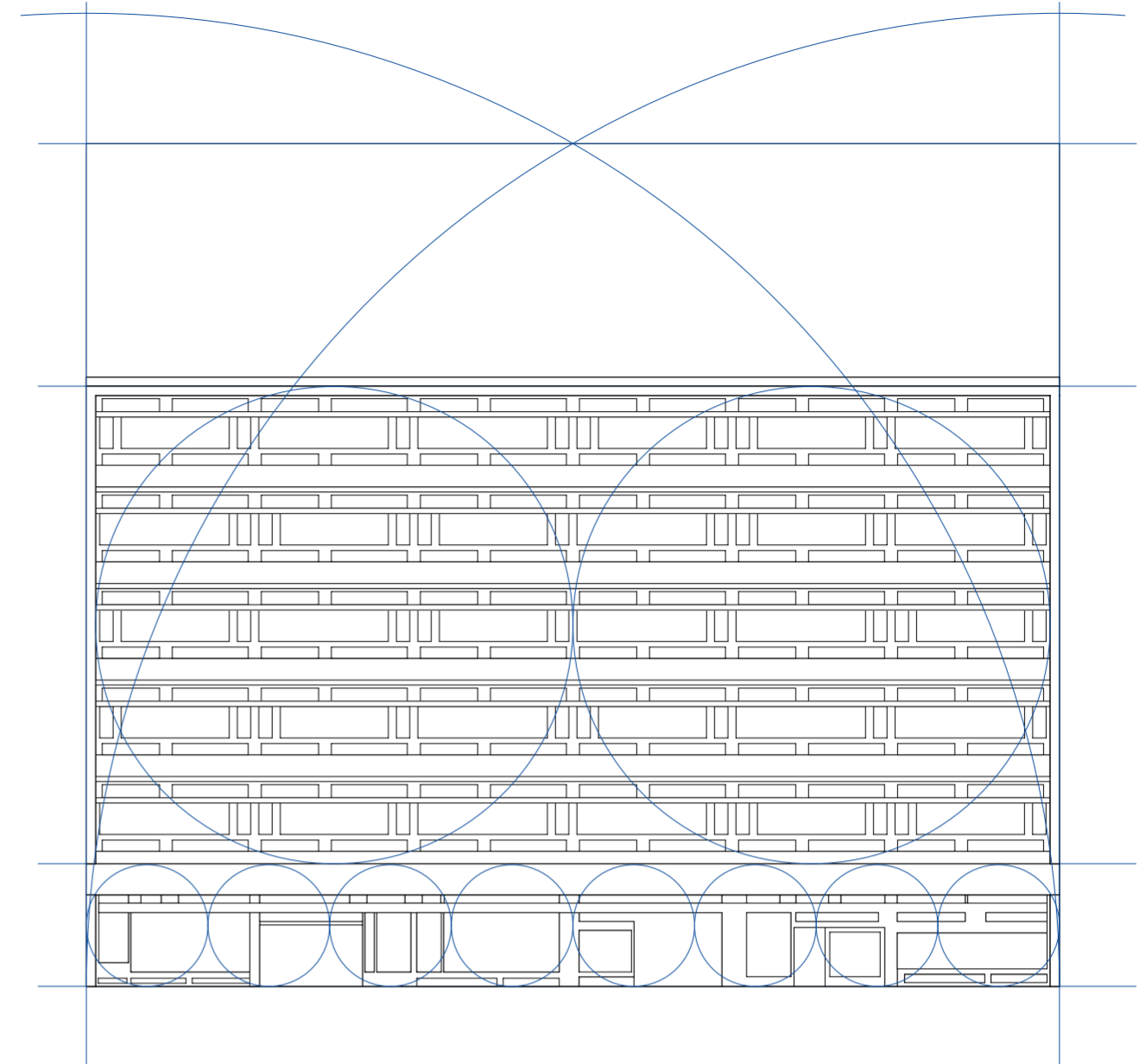57   Andrea Zahler, ca. 2019

ANKERHOF - PROPORTIONS/POTENTIALS

ANKERSTRASSE 3, 8004 ZÜRICH

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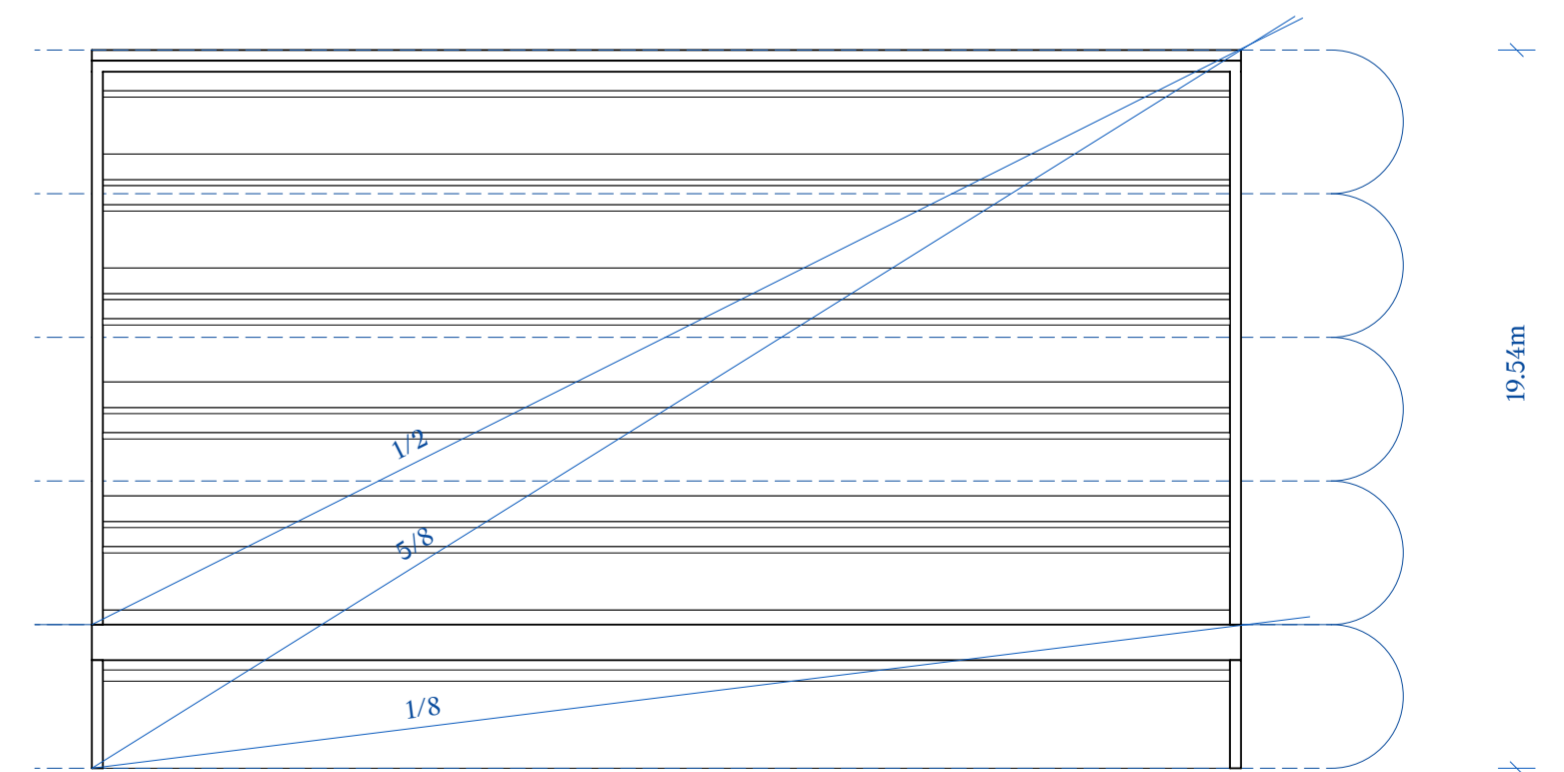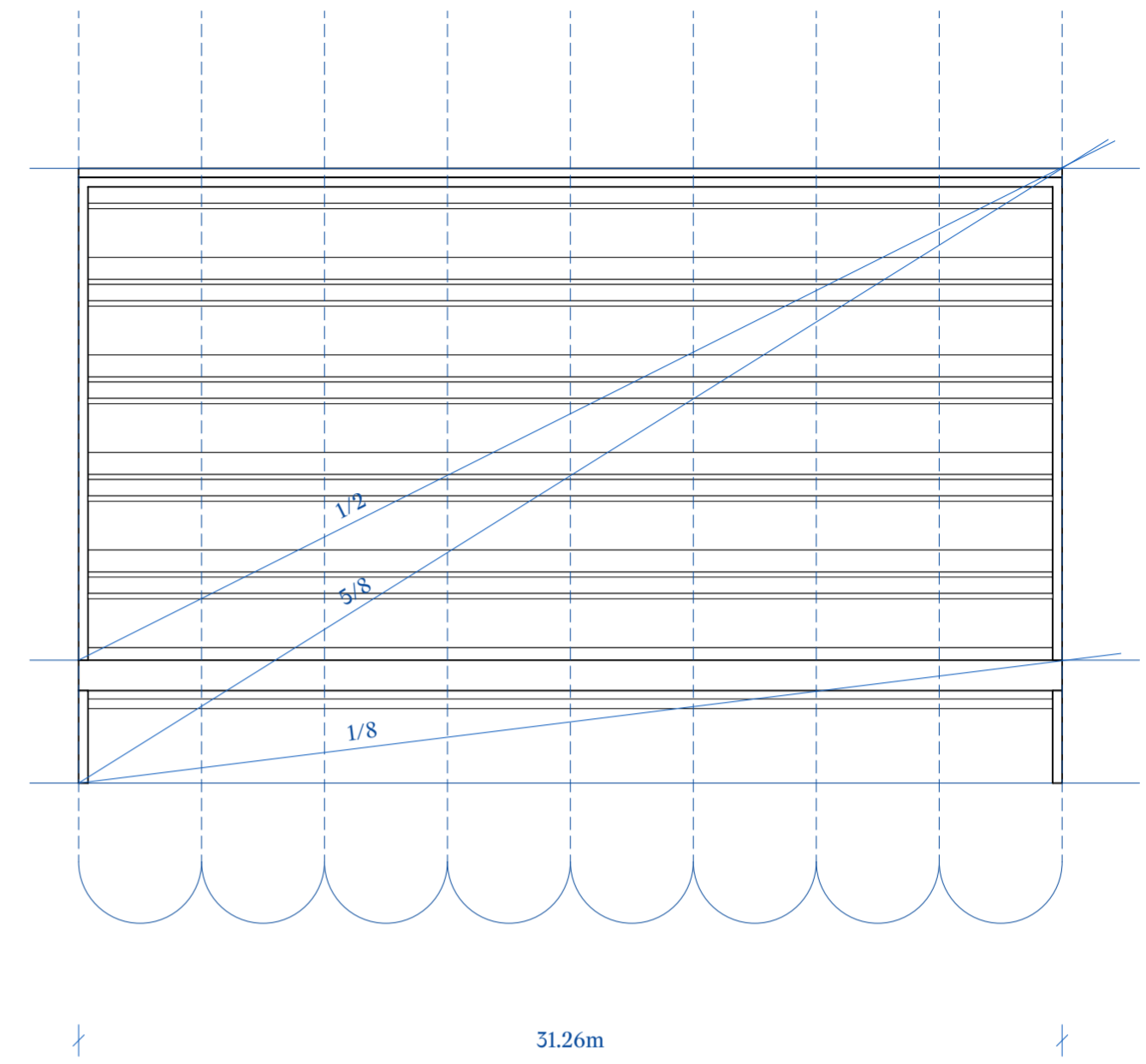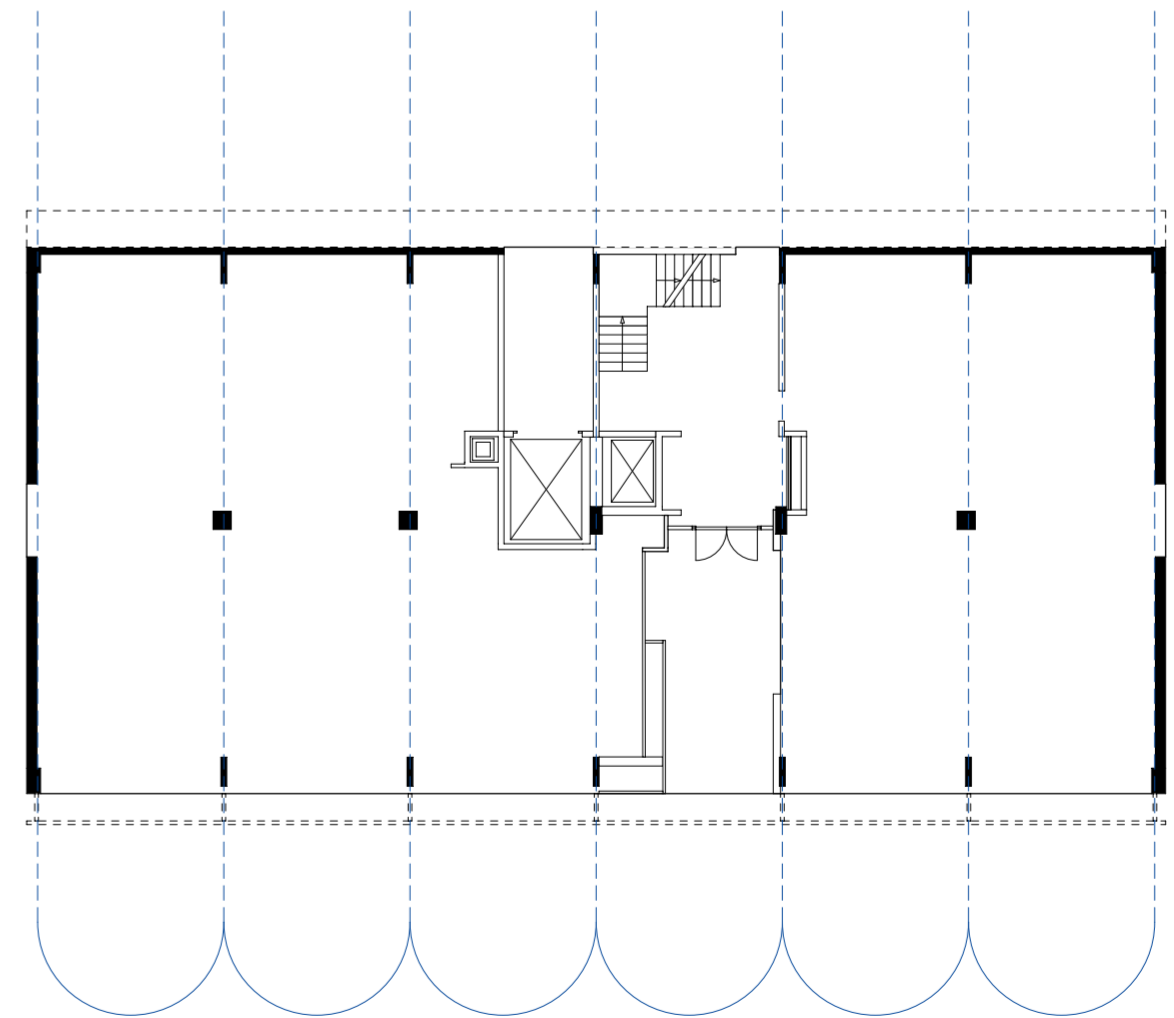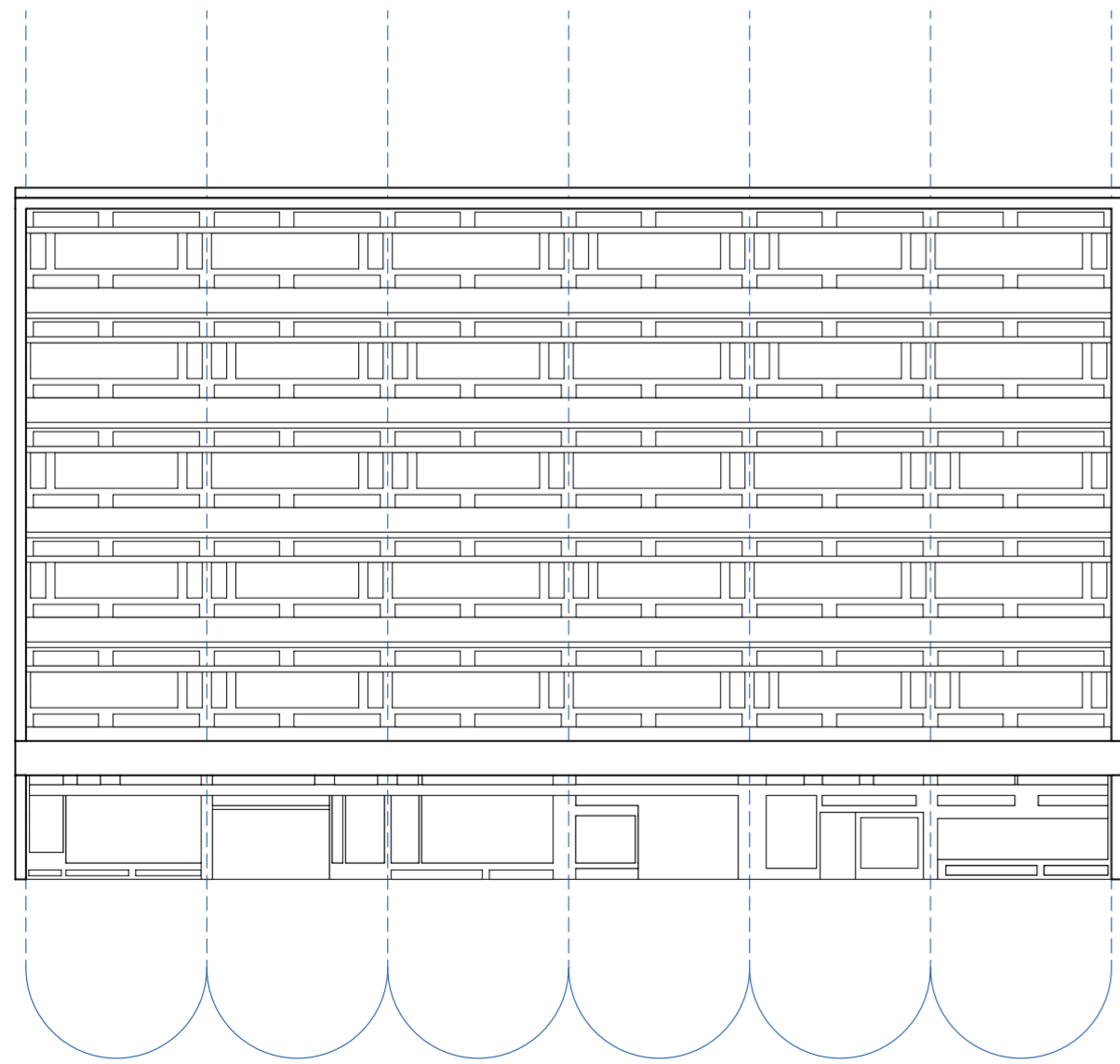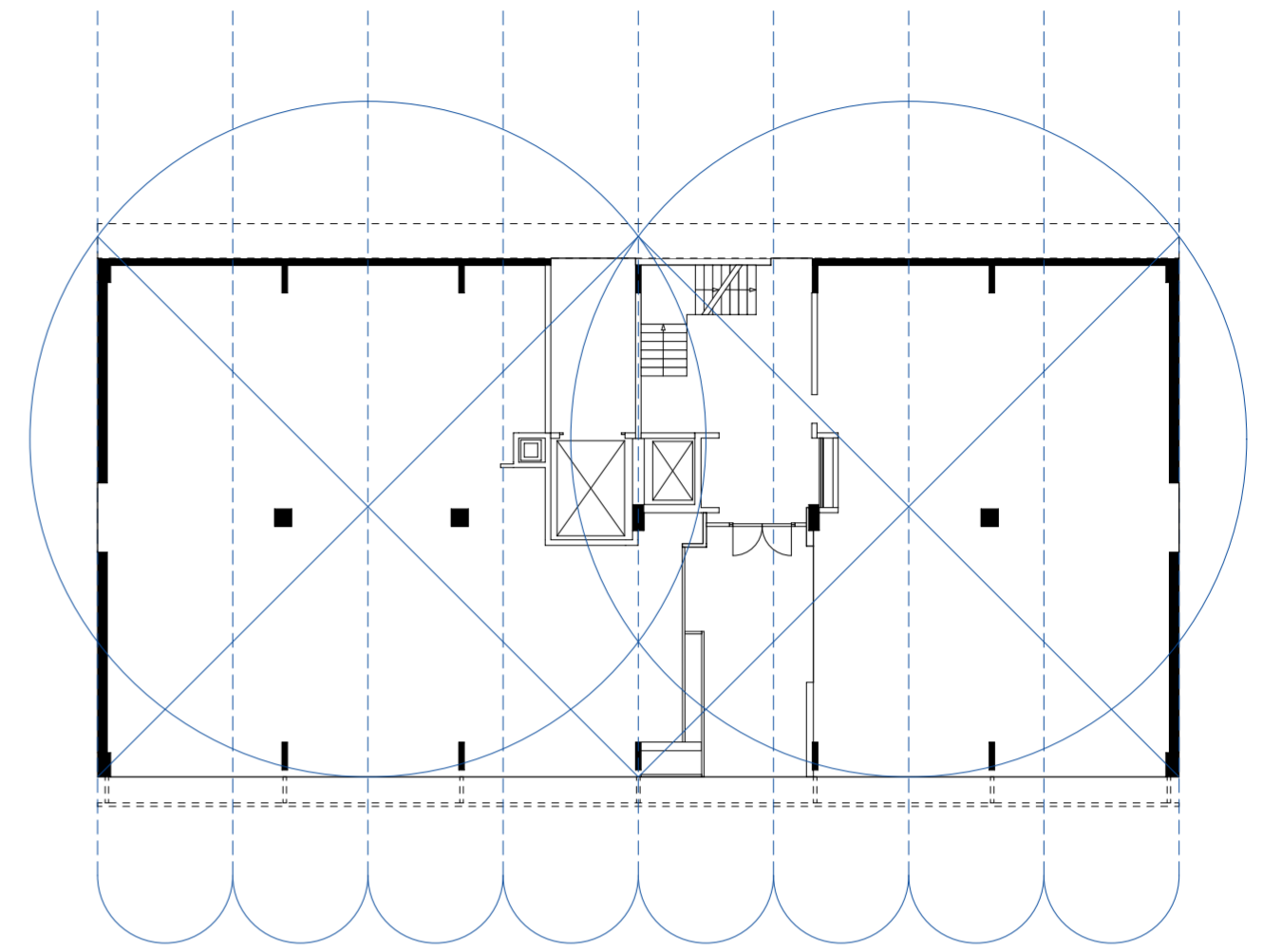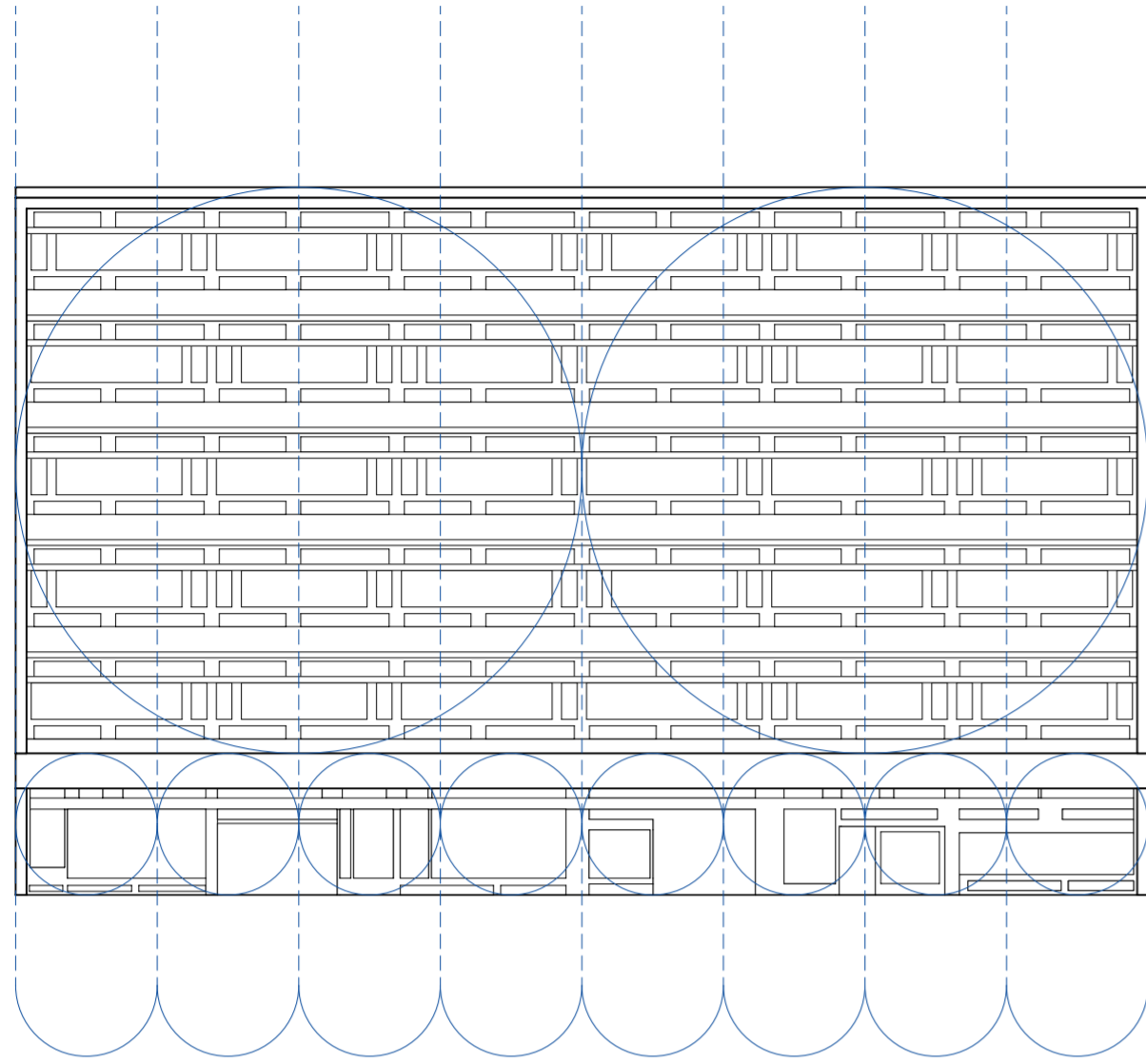
POTENTIAL OF THE EXTENSION

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ANKERHOF - ARCHIVE AND TODAY

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ANKERSTRASSE 3, 8004 ZÜRICH

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