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Balance. Different Types of Equilibrium, is a small book, a compendium of perspectives on the theme of equilibrium in architecture, in relation to the society and the time in which we live. International universities and leading architecture firms were invited to reflect on the meaning of the word *Balance*, the central theme of the 26th edition of WAVe (International Architecture Workshops) at the Università Iuav di Venezia.

Edited by Michel Carlana, Simone Gobbo

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Quaderni Iuav. Esperienze

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Collana “Quaderni Iuav” dell’Università Iuav di Venezia

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Indice

Benno Albrecht

WAVe's Surf Zone

WAVe has become a meeting place for different Universities. A major international workshop where Universities come together to discuss the great themes of the future.

The New Post Sustainable University that we are attempting to create in Venice fully embodies the conviction that «to resolve that political problem in practice, one must proceed through the aesthetic problem, since it is solely through beauty that one attains freedom»[1].

The WAVe of Universities is a meeting space for minds and for thought, where it is possible to experience reality – past, present and future – to look beyond what has been, what has been hidden, and what might have been, and to anticipate the probable, possible, and even impossible future, without profit ends or ulterior purposes. The university is a critical, interpretative and assertive space all at once, where one knows that one does not know and where curiosity reigns supreme.

This year, reflection centres on the theme of *Balance*.

We will be working mentally within the Breaker Zone, or Surf Zone, that part of the sea where waves break.

The Breaker Zone represents the moment of rupture within our physical system caused by ongoing changes, and the Breaker thinking – the thinking of Post Sustainability – allows us to describe the shift towards a future state of calm, a new equilibrium, a new safety to be sought.

A Breaker thinking, at this critical historical moment, before everything breaks apart.

The central theme of the future in a world that completes its transition towards a new horizon of meaning characterised by coexistence and *balance* with climate change and respect for the environment, Post-Sustainability, concerns studies on a new pact of Equilibrium and Safety, understood in broad terms: our safety in the face of a changed environment, and the safety of the environment from ourselves, as we must change our attitudes. *Incŏlŭmĭtās* means safety, integrity, security, but also the enjoyment of civil rights.

1 F. Schiller, *Lettere sull'educazione estetica dell'uomo. Callia o della Bellezza* (1795), edited by A. Negri, Armando, Roma 2002, p. 36.

Spinoza's phrase – «Not to mock, not to lament, not to condemn, but to understand»[2] – leads to the dismantling of barriers between disciplines. It is necessary to reconsider how we inhabit the world, how we imagine it and how we design it.

This is a need that leads to a complete rethinking of the concept of Sustainability, opening up to the paradigm of Post Sustainability and affecting all disciplines and design systems, and which may be articulated across numerous new fields of knowledge:

Territorial Breaker Zone – territorial Equilibrium and Safety investigating places in continuous transformation through the analysis and design of cities, buildings and infrastructures in the light of a continuous risk management framework.

Breaker Zone of Territory – Equilibrium and Safety of heritage transforming the theme of intergenerational and community relations into a precious testimony capable of carrying historical memory and the heritage of the past into an unknown yet foreseeable future.

Environmental Breaker Zone – Equilibrium and Safety of the environment guiding the transition towards new models of engagement with nature and its processes of change, including extreme ones: water, climate, renewable energies, agricultural production and supply chains.

Community Breaker Zone – Equilibrium and Safety of the community and the individual restoring wellbeing to the centre of the processes of constructing society and the environment, through the development of new models for health, nutrition and quality of life.

Designing Breaker Zone – Equilibrium and Safety as driver of new forms of material and immaterial design, placing at the centre aspects that remain largely unexplored today: biological and natural systems, neurosciences, big data, etc.

Stable Breaker Zone – Equilibrium and Stabilisation of Safety: creativity and the production of beauty, envisioning new meanings for disciplines such as fashion, design, art and theatre, in the light of the definitive emergence of a new social and cultural paradigm.

2 B. Spinoza, *L'etica* (1677), Paravia, Torino 1928, p. 75, from P. Servigne, G. Chapelle, R. Stevens, *Un'altra fine del mondo è possibile*, Treccani, Roma 2020.

Research in Post Sustainability must be directed towards the possible repercussions of the concept of Safety, its influences on the physical condition of places, on the society's capacity to withstand climate change, and on strategies for intervention in environments in crisis.

This is research of necessity, based on survival, which has two faces: an operational, immediate one carried out with the means currently available; and a *Curiosity driven research* – or *Blue-skies research* – oriented towards the future and the possibilities of the major changes required in the Post Sustainability era.

We move beyond the Problem Oriented University and *problem-oriented learning* by identifying the problem *par excellence*, that of the new equilibrium of the planet's physical configuration.

WAVe 2026 *Balance* will explore these themes with intuition and efficacy.

Angelo Maggi

WAVe Reconfigured: from Singular Voices to Collective Academic Engagement

The 2026 edition of WAVe marks a decisive shift in the pedagogical and cultural mission of the Università Iuav di Venezia. For the second consecutive year, the workshop moves beyond the traditional model centred on the invitation of individual architects and instead embraces a broader institution to institution framework. This transition – initiated last year through the TNE programme and reinforced by long standing partnerships with universities in China, Korea, and Japan – constitutes a significant evolution in the way Iuav conceives international design education.

This year, the structure of WAVe has been further consolidated through International Credit Mobility and, above all, through the commitment of international partners whose personal and institutional efforts made it possible to renew and expand the experience.

Historically, WAVe has been organised around the presence of a single invited architect whose vision, methodology, and design ethos shaped the thematic and pedagogical direction of each edition. While this model generated valuable encounters and memorable outcomes, it inevitably placed emphasis on individual authorship and on the transmission of a singular architectural narrative.

The new approach, by contrast, shifts the focus from the figure of the architect to the collective identity of academic institutions. Instead of a master apprentice dynamic, WAVe now operates as a platform in which schools of architecture engage one another as peers, bringing with them their pedagogical traditions, research agendas, and cultural frameworks. This transformation redefines WAVe as a transnational academic laboratory, where exchange is no longer vertical but horizontal, fostering a richer and more collaborative environment for design experimentation.

Involving entire schools introduces a new scale of complexity and opportunity. Students and faculty are no longer responding to the vision of a single practitioner; instead, they encounter the methodologies of multiple universities, compare distinct design cultures, and negotiate shared intellectual ground. This generates a far richer and more demanding learning environment – one that mirrors the realities of contemporary architectural practice, where collaboration across institutions, disciplines, and geographies has become an essential condition rather than an exception.

Moreover, the presence of multiple schools cultivates a genuine form of collective intelligence. Each institution contributes its own strengths – whether theoretical, technical, or methodological – and the workshop becomes a space in which these differences produce productive friction. Diversity is thus not an accessory to the process but a structural component of the pedagogical model, shaping the workshop's capacity to generate new forms of knowledge and experimentation.

This institutional model also reinforces Iuav's long term international strategy. By involving partner universities directly, WAVe becomes a tangible expression of sustained academic cooperation rather than a one off event. It consolidates relationships, creates continuity between teaching and research, and positions Iuav as a dynamic hub within the global discourse on architectural education. In this sense, WAVe evolves from a workshop into a platform for enduring transnational collaboration, strengthening Iuav's role in shaping the future of design pedagogy.

This year's participation of the American University of Sharjah (College of Architecture, Art and Design), CEPT University, the College of Architecture at Myongji University, ETSAM – Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, the Facultad de Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño of the Universidad Diego Portales, the New York Institute of Technology School of Architecture and Design, and the Univerzitet Union–Nikola Tesla further demonstrates how WAVe has become a genuine diplomatic and cultural bridge. The workshop now constitutes a shared intellectual territory where diverse academic cultures converge, experiment, and articulate new forms of collaboration. Alongside these institutions, the presence of internationally active architectural practices – Felgendreher Olfs Köchling (teaching at Bauhaus Universität Weimar), LAN Local Architecture Network (TU Wien), Parabase (ETH Zürich), Peris + Toral arquitectes (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya Barcelona Tech), Jean Benoît Vétillard Architecture and Piovenefabi studio (École d'architecture de la ville & des territoires Paris Est), and finally Andrea Faraguna – adds an additional layer of disciplinary richness. Their involvement reinforces

the workshop's capacity to mediate between academic research and professional practice, offering students a rare opportunity to engage with contemporary architectural thinking across multiple pedagogical and cultural contexts.

The shift from individual architects to institutional participation is therefore far more than an organisational adjustment; it signals a profound reorientation in the identity of WAVe. This new model aligns the workshop with contemporary academic values – interdisciplinarity, internationalisation, and collective research – and reaffirms the Università Iuav di Venezia's position as a leading institution within the global landscape of architectural education. By embracing schools rather than individuals, WAVe becomes more resilient, more inclusive, and more representative of the complexity of today's architectural world. It evolves from a stage for individual authorship into a platform for shared experimentation, capable of generating new forms of knowledge, cultivating long term academic alliances, and fostering a transnational community of architectural inquiry.

Michel Carlana

Losing Balance

A spring bottle opener, hooked onto a ladle and other utensils and cutlery, rests upon a plate, itself counterbalanced by a cork that becomes the new centre of gravity of a whole – harmonious or improvised, it does not matter – which finds its base of stability in a green glass bottle. The whole arrangement is laid upon what appears to be a table, covered with a roughly woven cloth, almost as if to reaffirm a material dimension that does not aspire to ennoble itself, but rather to expose itself in its elementary evidence.

To describe this configuration is not simple: the complexity of its elements and, above all, the ambiguity of its narrative outcome divert the imagination in divergent directions. One might think of a precarious domestic aftermath of dinner, in which accident still governs the residues of gesture; or, conversely, of any corner of a junk dealer's shop, where objects seem to have lost their original destination and entered a provisional economy of accumulation. In both cases, what prevails is not so much the recognition of the individual parts, but the suspension of their habitual meaning.

And yet, what has so far been outlined is *Ein neuer Tag beginnt*, one of the most significant works of *Equilibres*, the series of eighty-two photographs produced between 1984 and 1987 by Peter Fischli and David Weiss[1]. In these images, the act of composition does not coincide with an ordering will in the classical sense, but rather manifests itself as a practice of progressive adjustment, a continuous negotiation between weight, friction, and gravity, in which each element finds its place not through inner necessity, but through a contingency that paradoxically becomes system.

The image allows us to speak in metaphor of the painstaking difficulty that accompanies the attainment of a state of grace and harmony, sometimes identified with *concinnitas*[2]. Yet here such a condition does not appear as the outcome of a pre-established proportion or an immanent law: it emerges instead as an unstable equilibrium, continually exposed to the possibility of its own

1 For this exhibition, reference is made to the catalogue P. Fischli, D. Weiss, *Equilibres*, Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne 2006.

2 For the concept of *concinnitas*, reference is made to Book IX, Chapter X of Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, edited by Giovanni Orlandi, Bollati Boringhieri, Milano 2010.

collapse. In this sense, composition is never definitively completed; it retains within itself the memory of attempts, deviations, and corrections that made it possible.

One might therefore argue that what is staged is not so much equilibrium, but its construction as process – that is, as a sequence of reversible decisions, always liable to be contradicted. The stability we observe is, ultimately, a truce: a temporary agreement between forces that remain heterogeneous and that never cease to exert their pressure. It is in this tension, rather than in the final form, that the meaning of the work resides.

Thus, the apparent immobility of the image betrays a condition of latency, as though each element preserved a dynamic memory of its possible movement. Far from being an intrinsic quality, equilibrium thus reveals itself as an event – fragile and situated – that demands extreme care and constant vigilance. And it is perhaps precisely in this necessity – in the awareness that every arrangement is exposed to its own dissolution – that the space opens for interrogating, in more radical terms, its inevitable reversal.

Equilibrium is not a given quality, nor a stable attribute that can be isolated and described once and for all: it is, rather, a *facere* (a doing), an act that unfolds in time and acquires consistency only within a web of relations. It does not matter whether these relations are architectural, structural, physical, or social; what they share is their differential nature, their irreducible asymmetry. Equilibrium thus emerges as a form of operative intelligence, a continuous adjustment between unequal forces, an agreement that is never definitive between instances that never cease to contradict one another. In this sense, it does not simply coincide with a state, but can be understood as an interval, a suspension in exchange, a threshold in which tensions are not annulled but rendered mutually legible. It is here that its most properly political dimension perhaps arises. Equilibrium becomes the site of a possible democracy – not as a levelling of differences, but as their simultaneous exposure, as a temporary co-presence of pluralities that find, for an instant, a shared form of duration. This is not harmony in the classical sense, nor guaranteed stability, but a precarious condition in which permanence is always traversed by the threat of its own dissolution.

To fully assume this perspective implies an awareness that cannot be pacified. It requires, on the contrary, a disposition to trial, a willingness to traverse territories that offer neither guarantees nor shortcuts. It is in this exposure to uncertainty that the lucidity of the project is measured: in the capacity to sustain error, to accept deviation, to recognise in stumbling not a failure, but a necessary condition of research. Every attempt that diverges, that does not arrive at a reassuring outcome, contributes to disarticulating the illusion of a pre-existing order, opening instead the space for a more radical understanding of the real.

One might then say that equilibrium can only be grasped at the very moment in which it fails – or, more precisely, in the gesture that puts its persistence at risk. As in dreams, where awakening often coincides with a loss of *balance*, with an abrupt collapse that interrupts the continuity of experience, so too in the project the access to a more conscious form of equilibrium passes through its crisis. It is not a matter of denying it, but of traversing it to the point where its evidence begins to fracture.

To think equilibrium, then, means deliberately exposing oneself to its disappearance. Only in this oscillation – between construction and collapse, between order and disorder – does an effective space of knowledge open up, in which what appears stable finally reveals its own nature. With these premises, the invitation is to think *balance* by attempting to lose it.

Simone Gobbo

Balance Within the Storm

Balance is a temporary embodied condition, dependent on the environment and on our spatial relationship with it. Rather than a stable or universal principle, it emerges as a situational and contingent state, continuously negotiated between the subject and the spatial field[1]. This introduces a fundamental epistemological uncertainty, undermining any attempt to define architecture as a fixed or universally applicable discipline. Instead, architecture can be understood as a material and operative structure that unfolds within events, constantly shaped by conditions of instability, transformation, and interaction.

Balance is therefore intrinsically transitory and constructed. It does not pre-exist the architectural project but is produced through it. The project itself becomes the device through which temporal, spatial, and perceptual conditions are articulated, calibrated, and temporarily stabilized. In this sense, architectural design operates as an instrument of mediation between bodies, space, and time, rather than as a generator of static form.

This understanding of *balance* as tension rather than equilibrium can be productively reframed through the work of Walter De Maria, in particular *The Lightning Field* (1977)[2]. Here, a grid of 400 stainless steel poles installed in the desert of New Mexico does not produce an immediate or representational image, but rather establishes a field condition that unfolds over time. The work exists through duration and experience, defined by the interaction between the observer's body, the expansive landscape, and unpredictable atmospheric phenomena.

Within *The Lightning Field*, *balance* manifests as a fragile and continuously shifting equilibrium between geometric order and environmental indeterminacy. The strict Cartesian grid, apparently rational and stable, is constantly reconfigured by variations

1 The reference is to the condition of perception: M. Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, in A. Hofstadter (ed.), *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row, New York 1971, pp. 141-160.

2 Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field* (1977), site-specific installation, western New Mexico, USA. The work operates not as a static object but as a temporal and environmental condition, activated through duration, atmospheric variation, and the embodied presence of the observer.

in light, wind, and weather. What emerges is not a closed composition, but an open system in which perception oscillates between control and its dissolution. The work does not represent *balance* as a resolved condition; rather, it exposes its fragility by transforming it into an experiential field.

From this perspective, the notion of space shifts toward that of an unstable and processual condition, suggesting an evolutionary understanding of habitat in which architectural design operates as a structured yet permeable framework. This framework is continuously exposed to external forces that alter, disrupt, and redefine its internal coherence. In this sense, Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* offers a complementary articulation of similar principles. Within the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern, the exhibition space is reconfigured into an artificial atmospheric environment: a suspended sun, diffused mist, and reflective surfaces collectively dissolve spatial references, destabilizing conventional perceptions of scale, depth, and bodily orientation.

When read in relation, the works of Eliasson and De Maria allow *balance* to be redefined not as a structural attribute, but as an atmospheric and temporal condition. In both cases, space is never fully predetermined; instead, it is continuously constituted through embodied presence and fluctuating perceptual regimes. *Balance* is thus never definitive, but always provisional, contingent, and relational.

If this atmospheric understanding of open space is extended toward the enclosed condition of domesticity, the work of Gaston Bachelard becomes crucial. For Bachelard, space is never an objective or neutral given, but an imaginative and phenomenological construction. In *The Poetics of Space*, the house is described as a constellation of intimate images in which perception is inseparably intertwined with memory, reverie, and imagination. Within this framework, *balance* cannot be reduced to a geometric or compositional property, but must instead be understood as a poetic condition of dwelling.

From this perspective, balanced space is not defined by stability or symmetry, but by its capacity to sustain unresolved tensions. Interior and exterior, protection and exposure, permanence and instability coexist within a dynamic and non-hierarchical

relationship. As in the works of Eliasson and De Maria, Bachelardian space is never fully fixed or exhausted by form; rather, it is continuously activated through embodied and sensory experience[3].

The shift from artistic practice to theoretical discourse thus allows for a redefinition of *balance* in architecture as a relational rather than formal category. It is no longer a principle of static equilibrium, but the capacity of spatial configurations to sustain and modulate perceptual and temporal tensions. Space becomes less a closed structure than a field of forces in continuous negotiation.

This conception of *balance* as controlled instability within a field of forces finds a significant historical precedent in the paintings of J.M.W. Turner, particularly in his depictions of maritime storms and shipwrecks, such as *The Slave Ship* (1840) and *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842)[4]. In these works, the spatial and structural clarity of the maritime environment is progressively dissolved into light, movement, and atmospheric turbulence. Turner's painting thus introduces a fundamental proposition: space cannot be abstracted from its atmospheric conditions. The storm is not a background phenomenon, but an active and constitutive force that shapes perception itself. Within this framework, *balance* does not coincide with calm or resolution, but with the capacity of form to persist within conditions of instability.

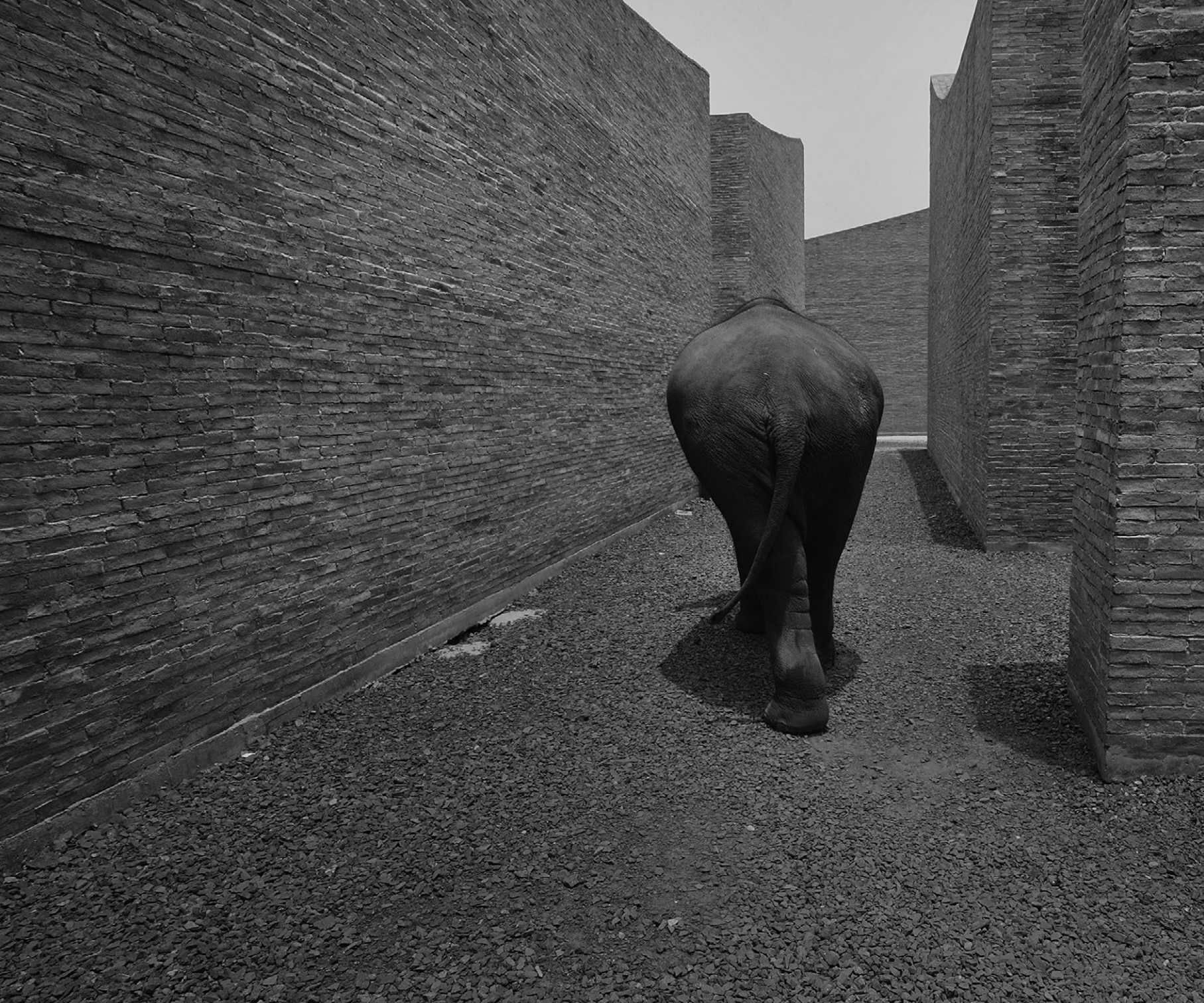
Taken together, these trajectories suggest a reconfiguration of architecture as an environmental and relational apparatus: a system capable not only of organizing spatial conditions, but of producing and sustaining tensions within them. Architecture, in this sense, can be understood as a practice of positioning within fluctuating fields of forces, perpetually situated between stability and transformation, order and disruption, structure and event.

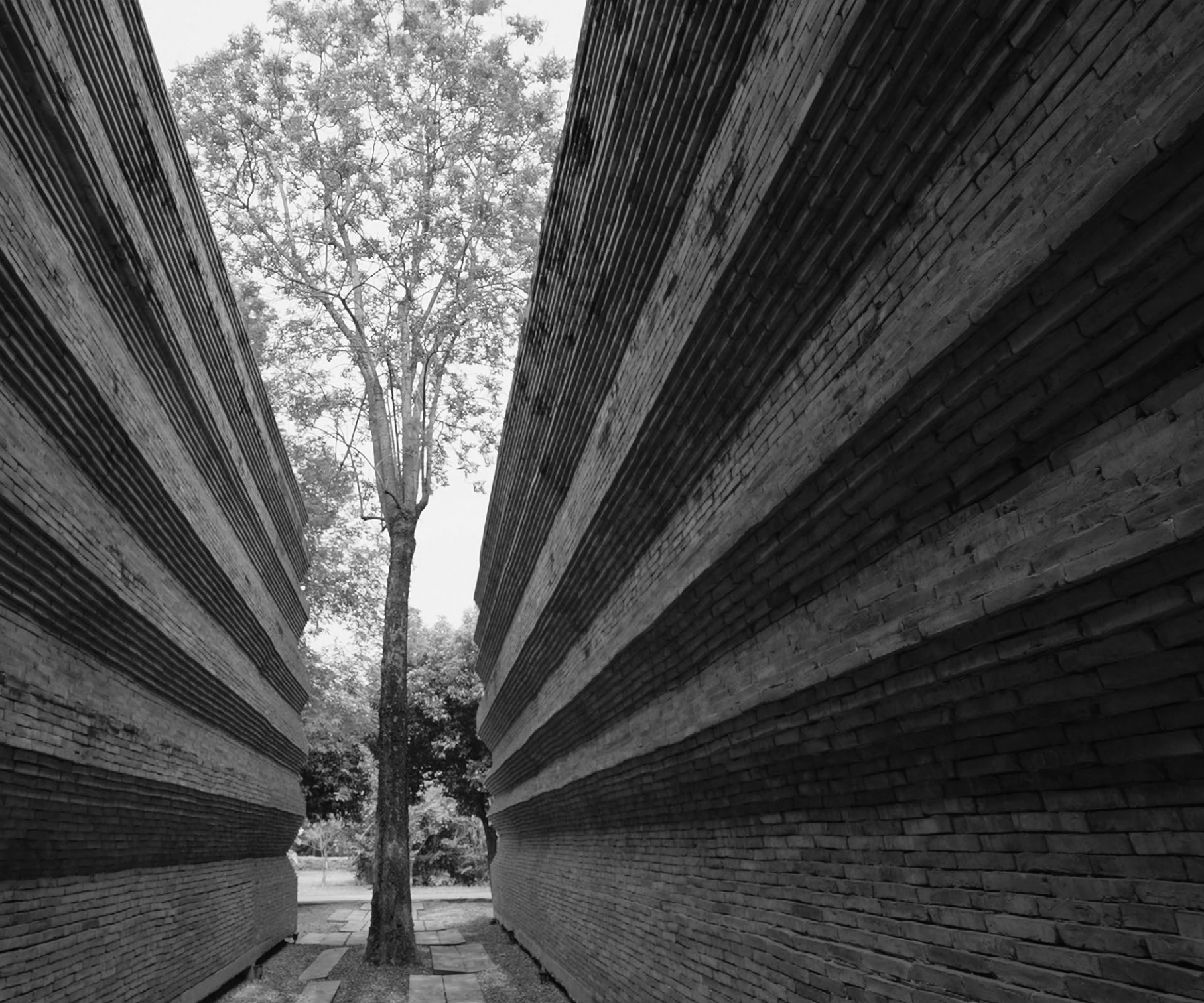
3 G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Beacon Press, Boston 1994.

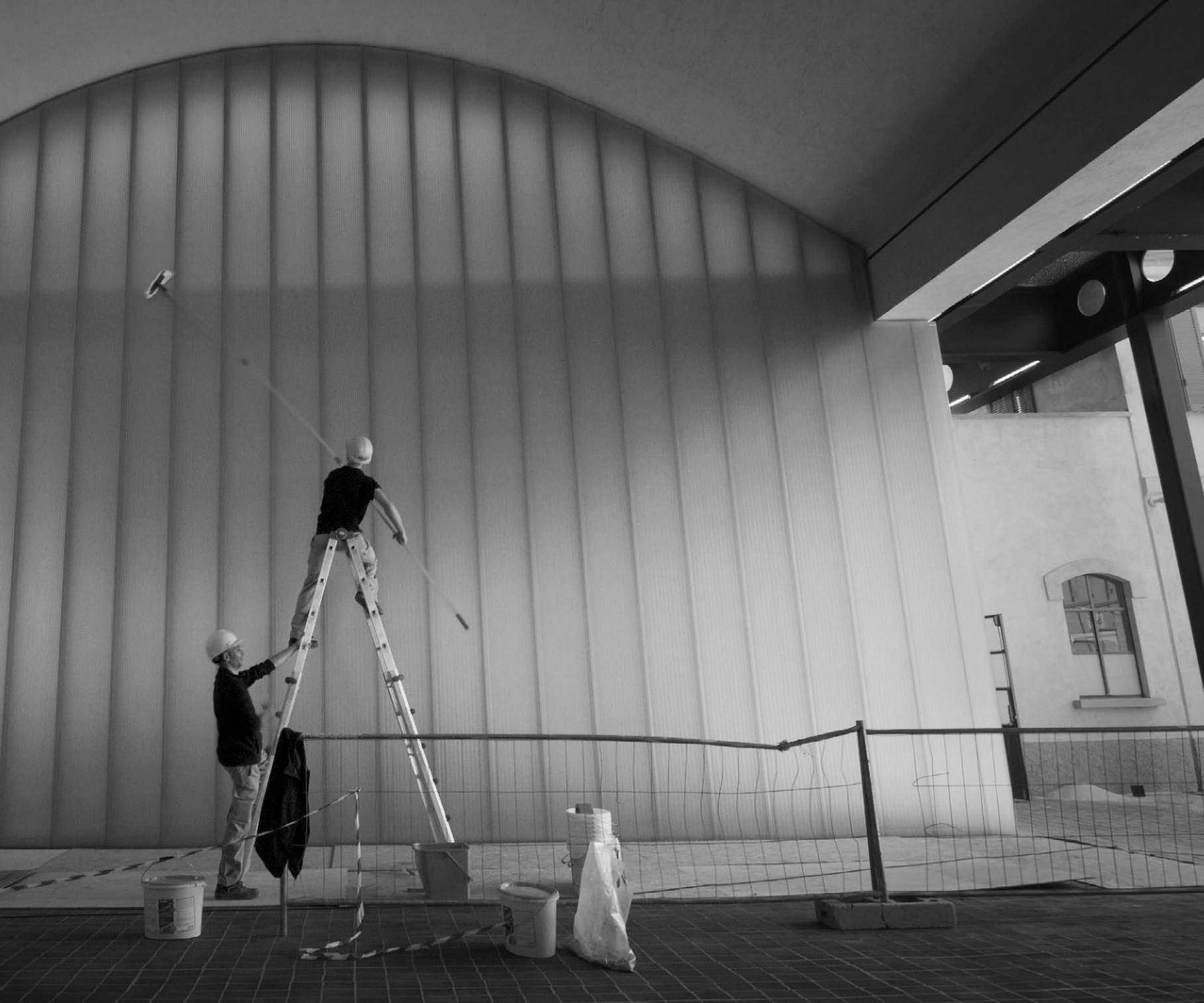
4 J.M.W. Turner, *The Slave Ship*, 1840; *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842. Oil on canvas. Also exhibited at Tate Britain, London.

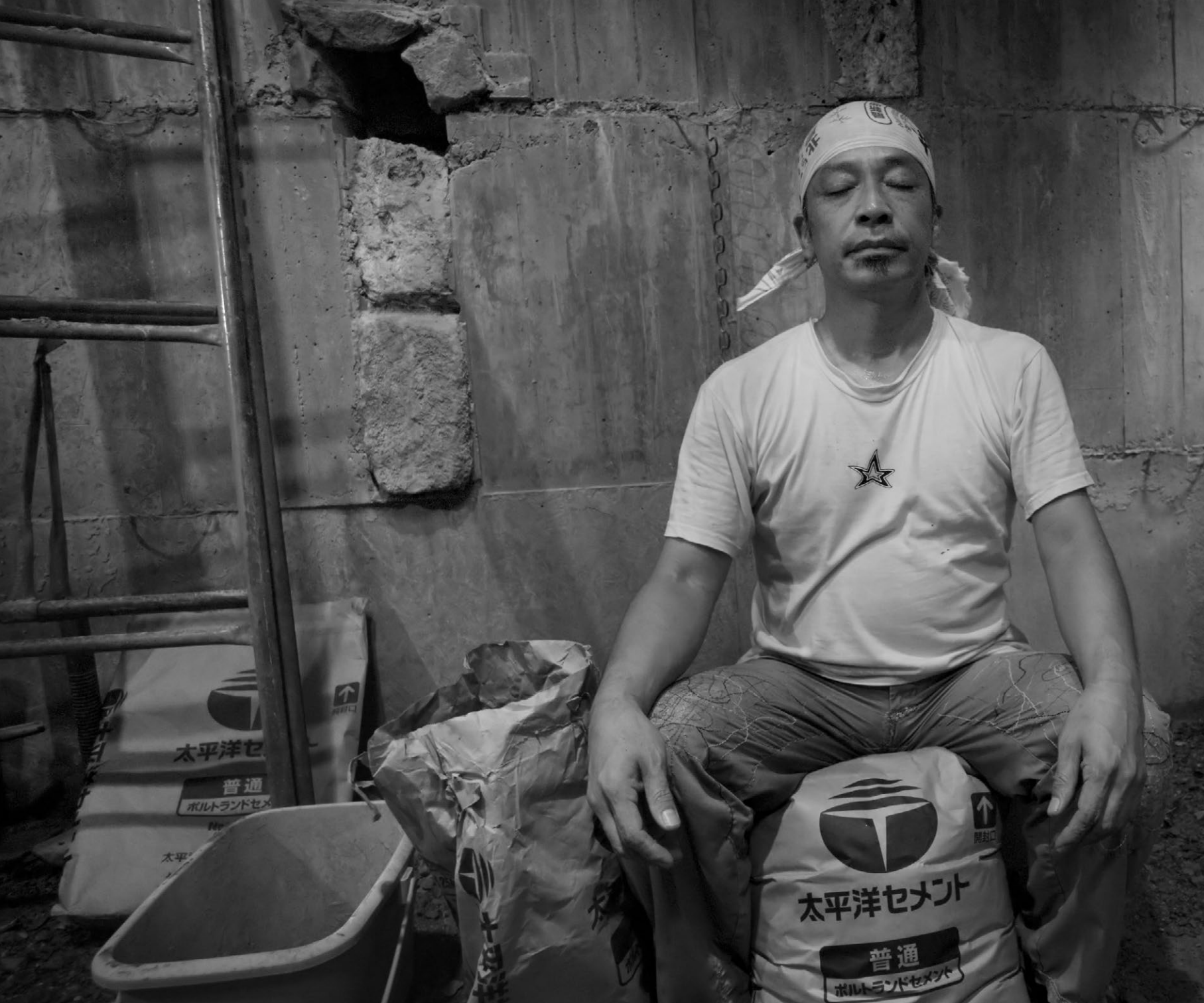
Bêka & Lemoine

Recording Balance





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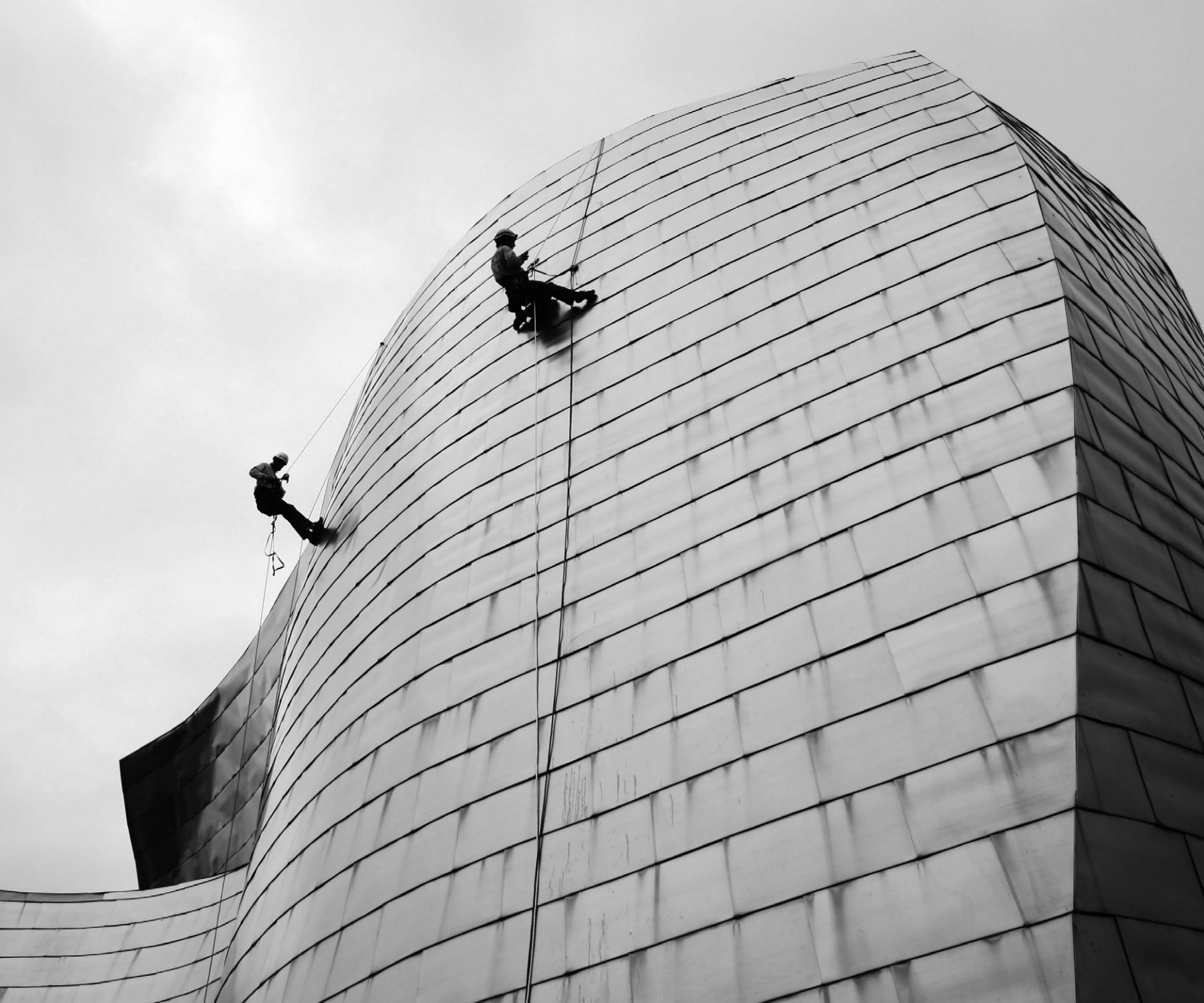

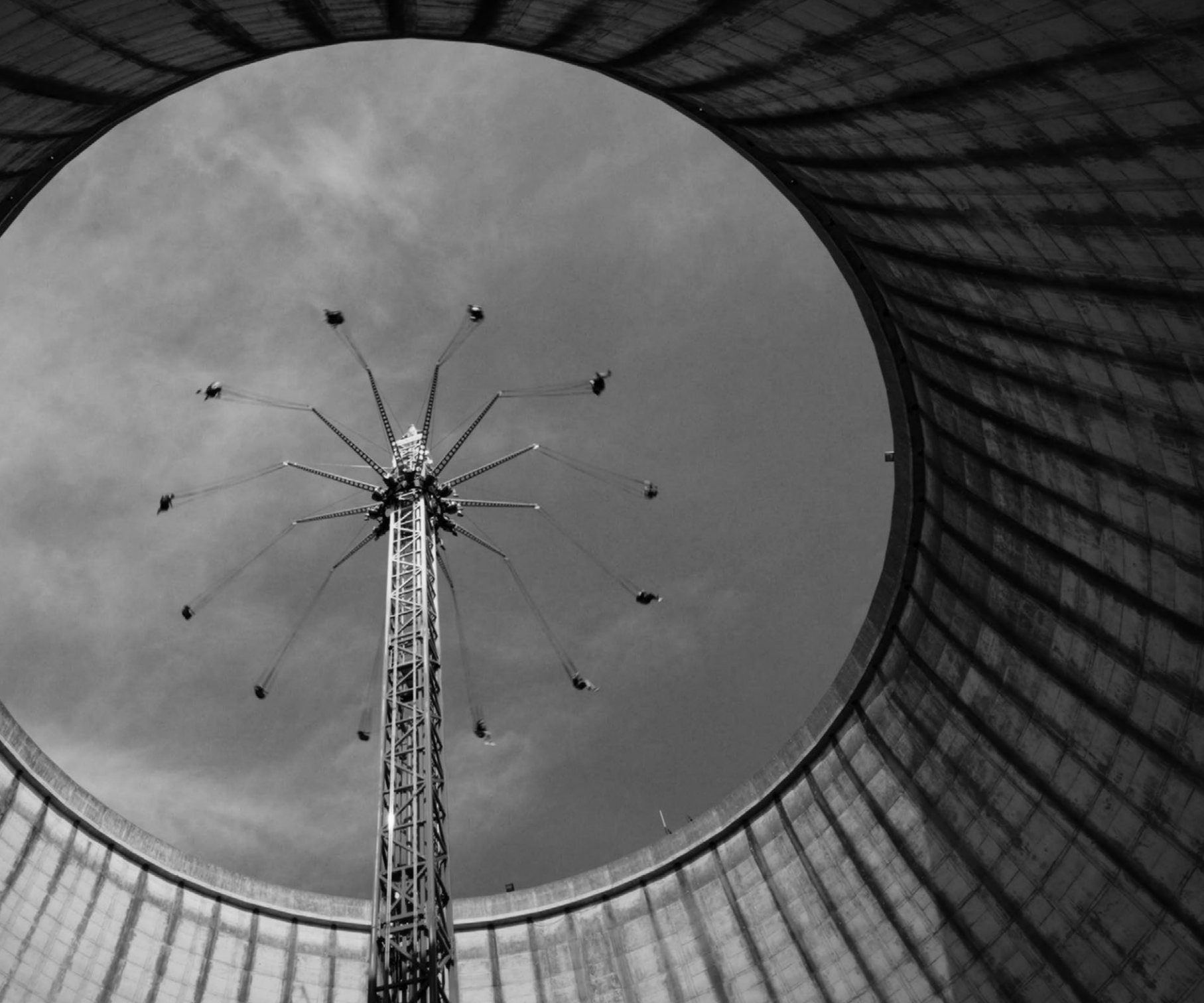

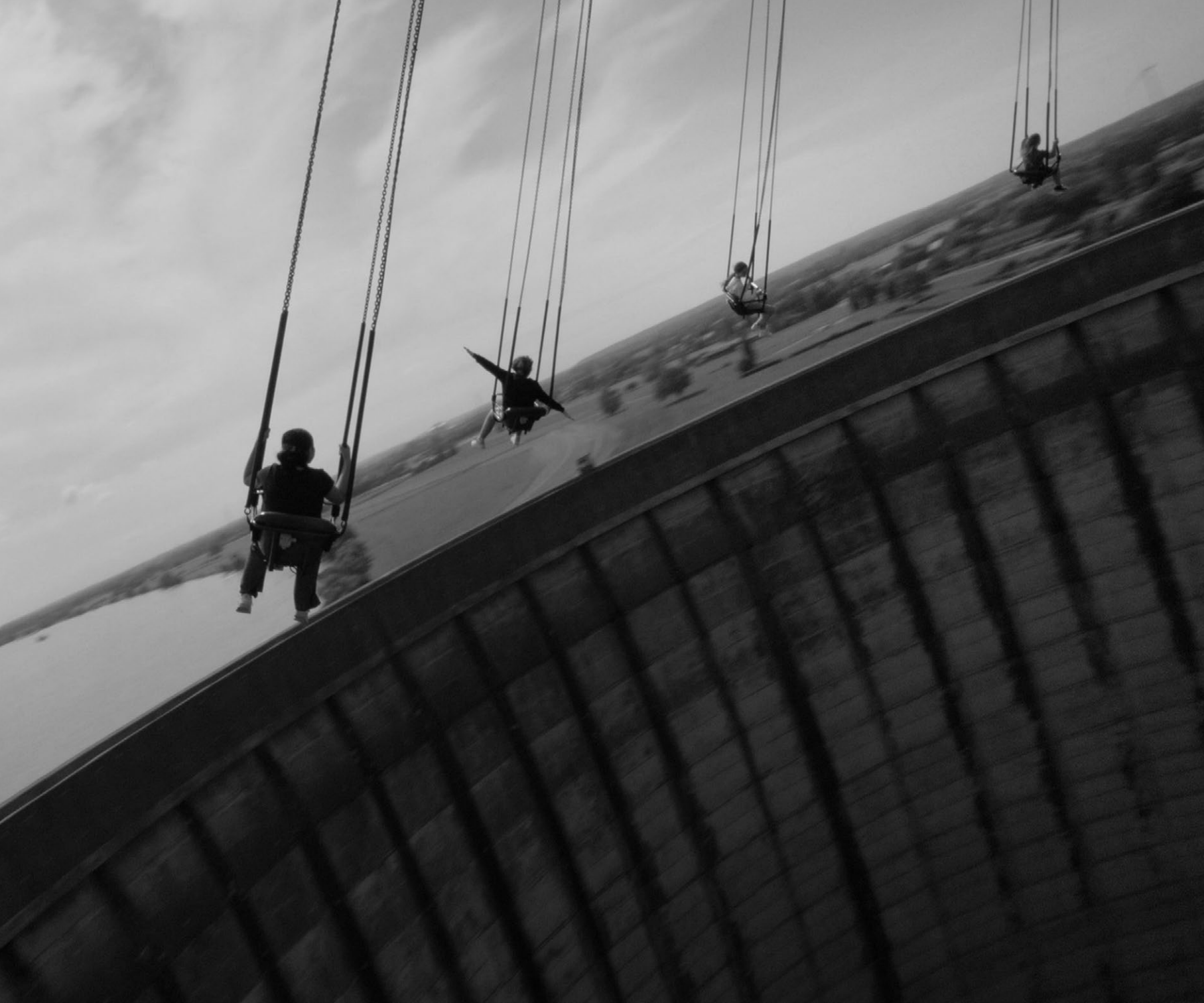

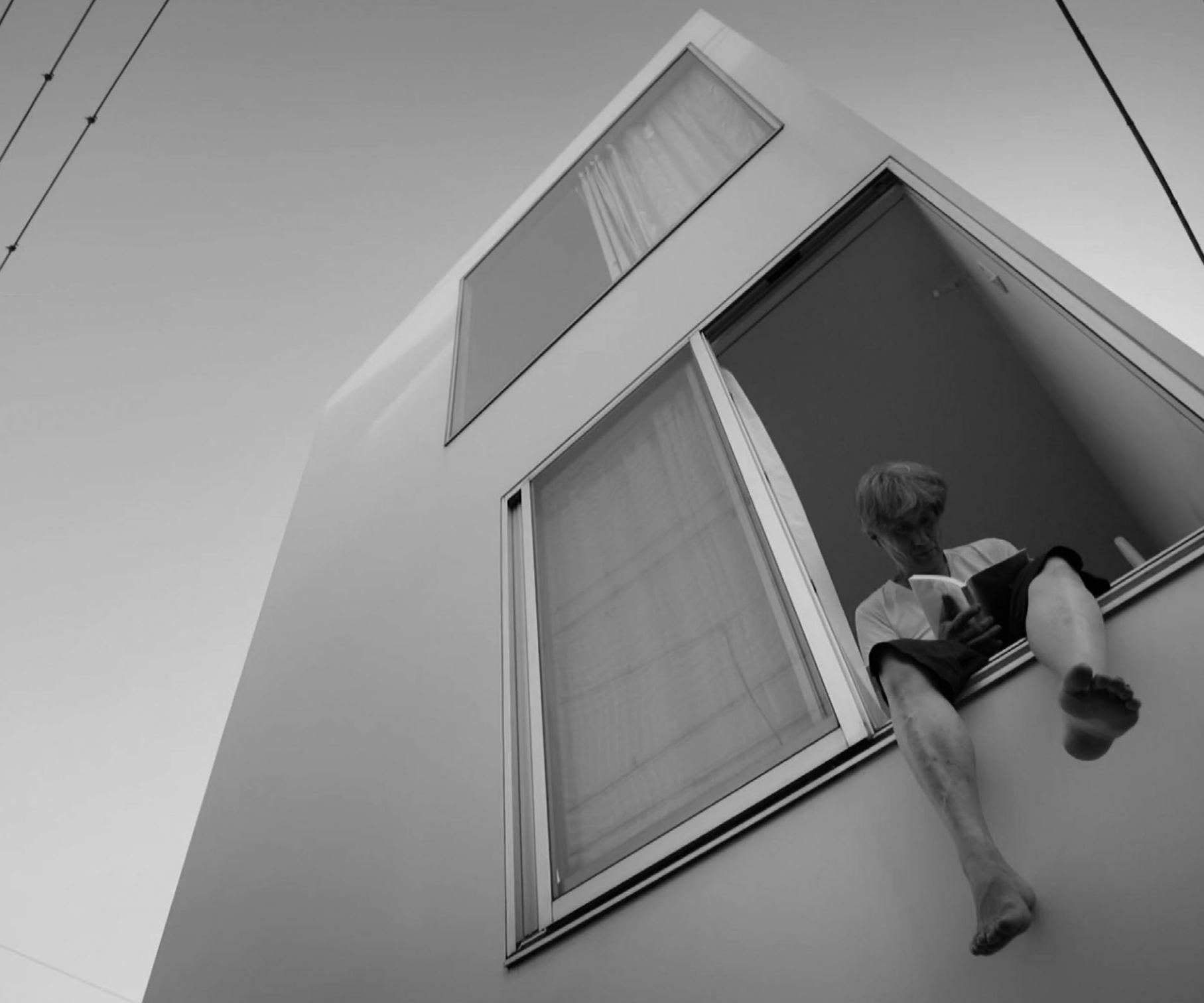

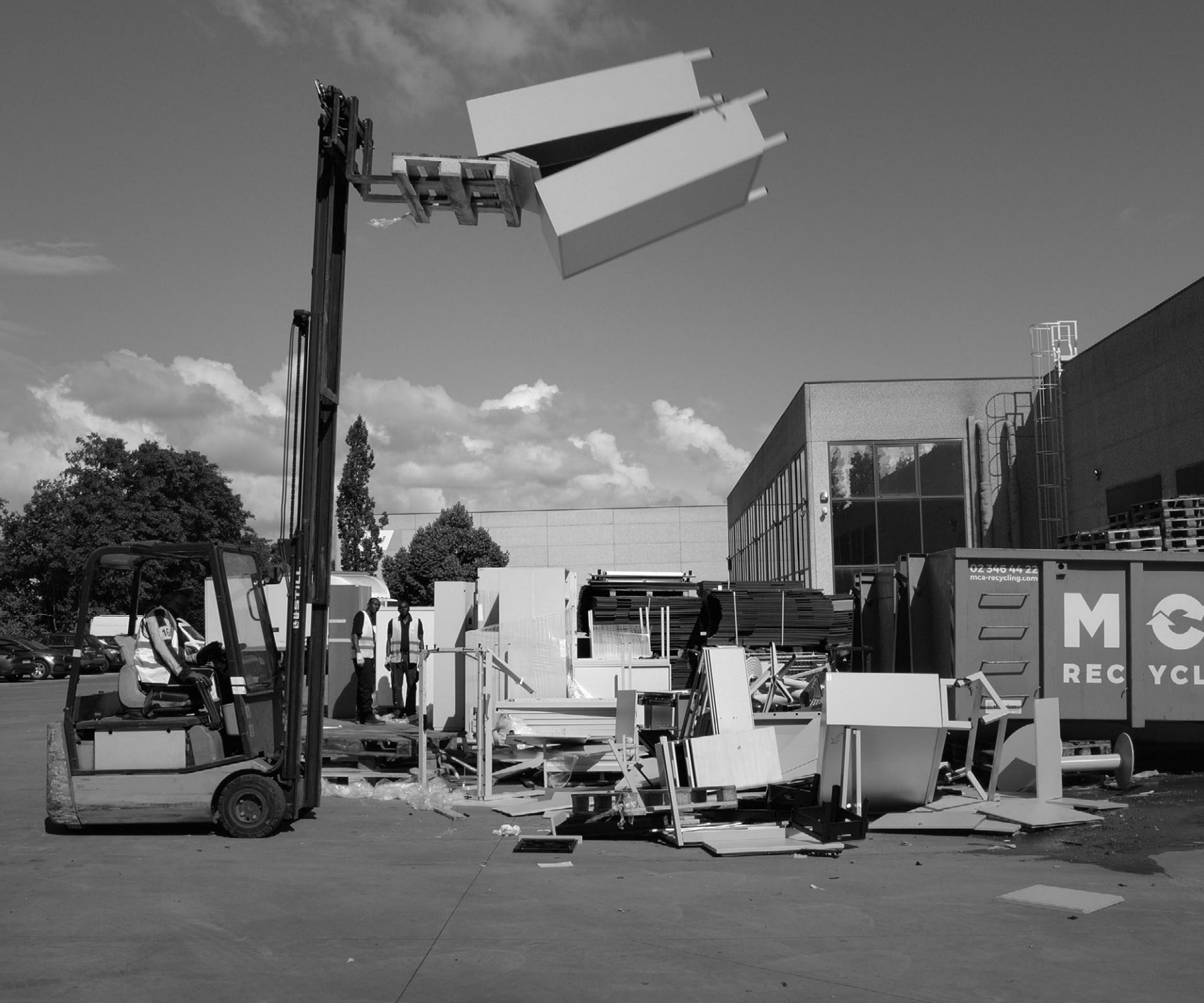
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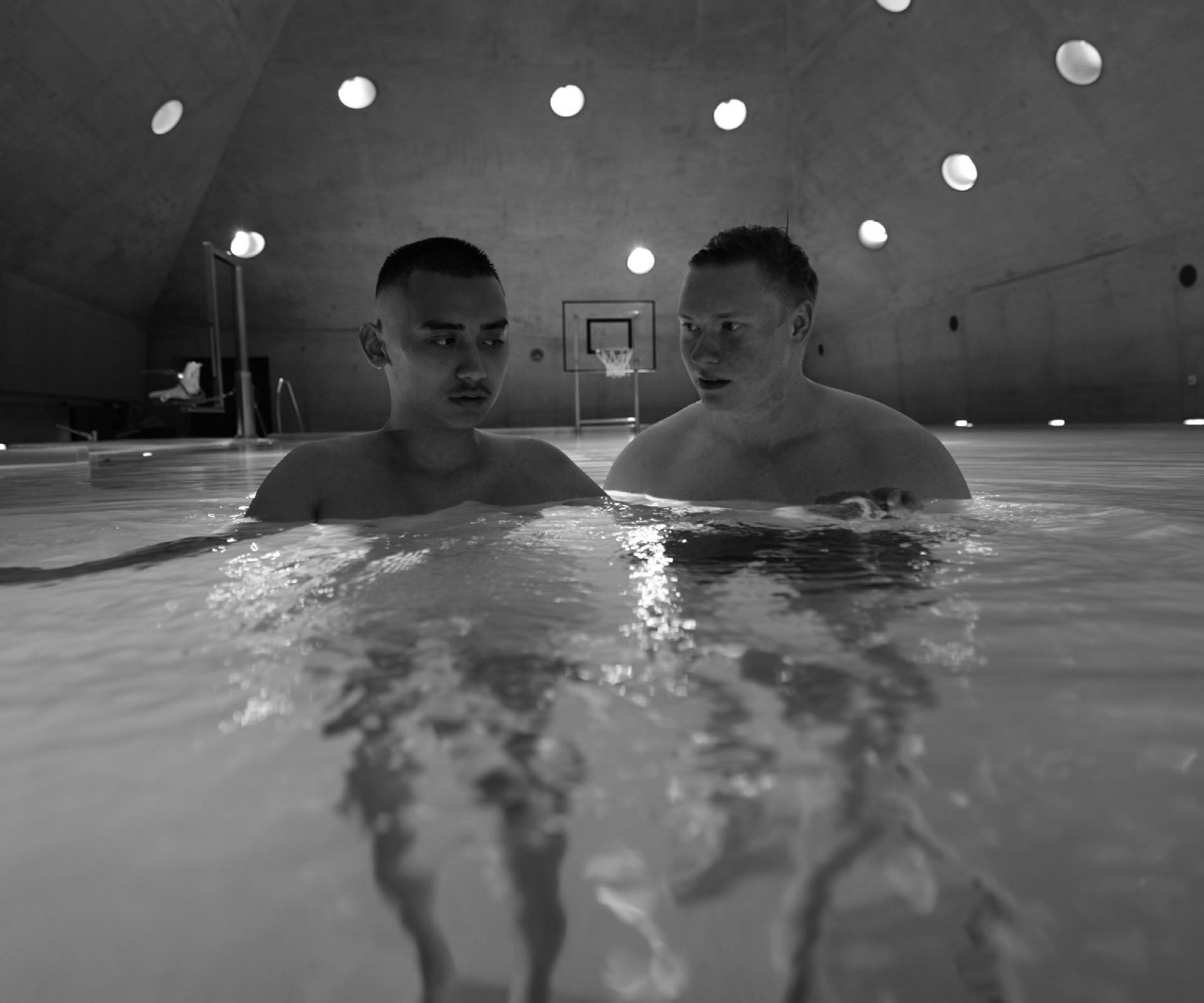

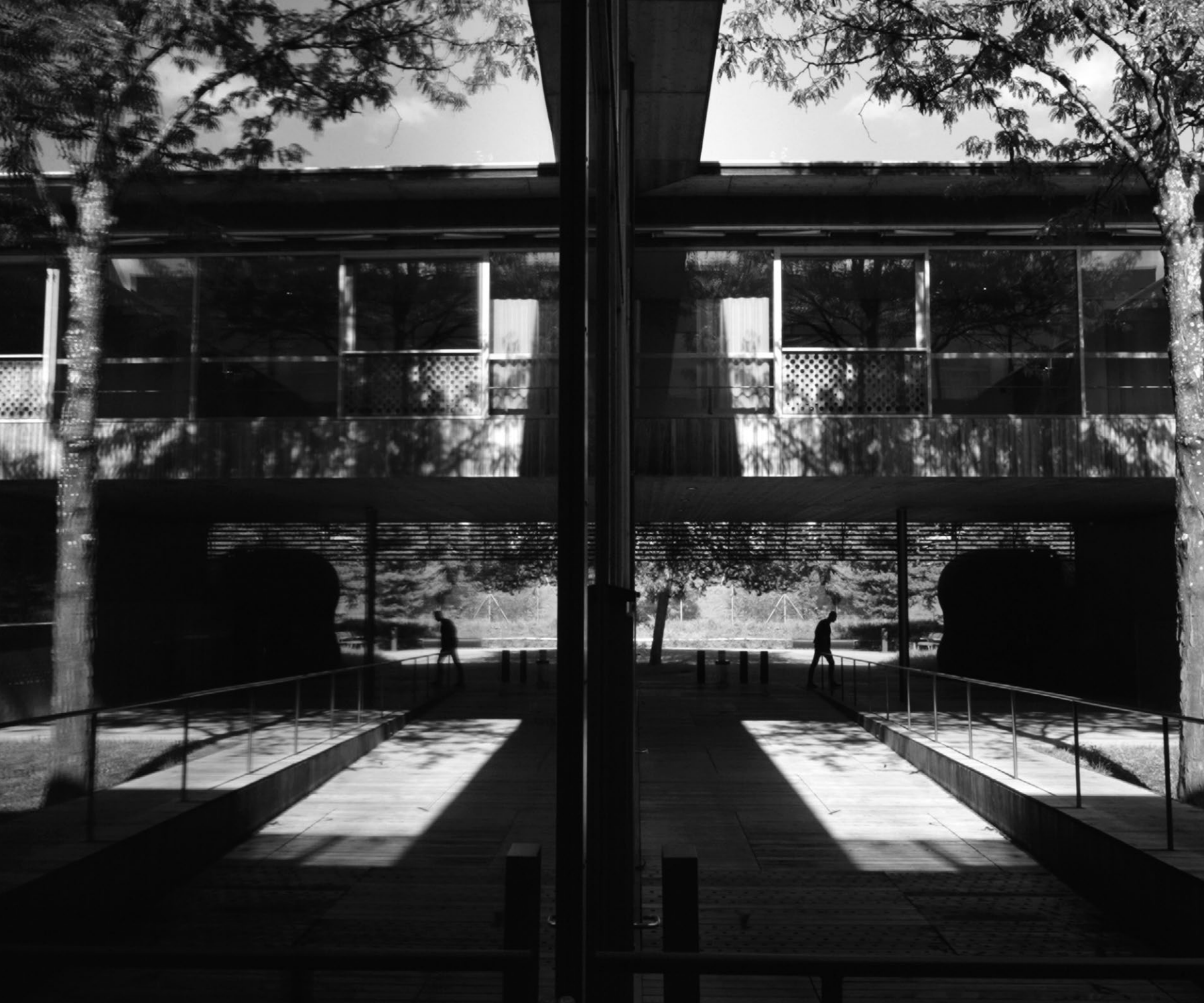

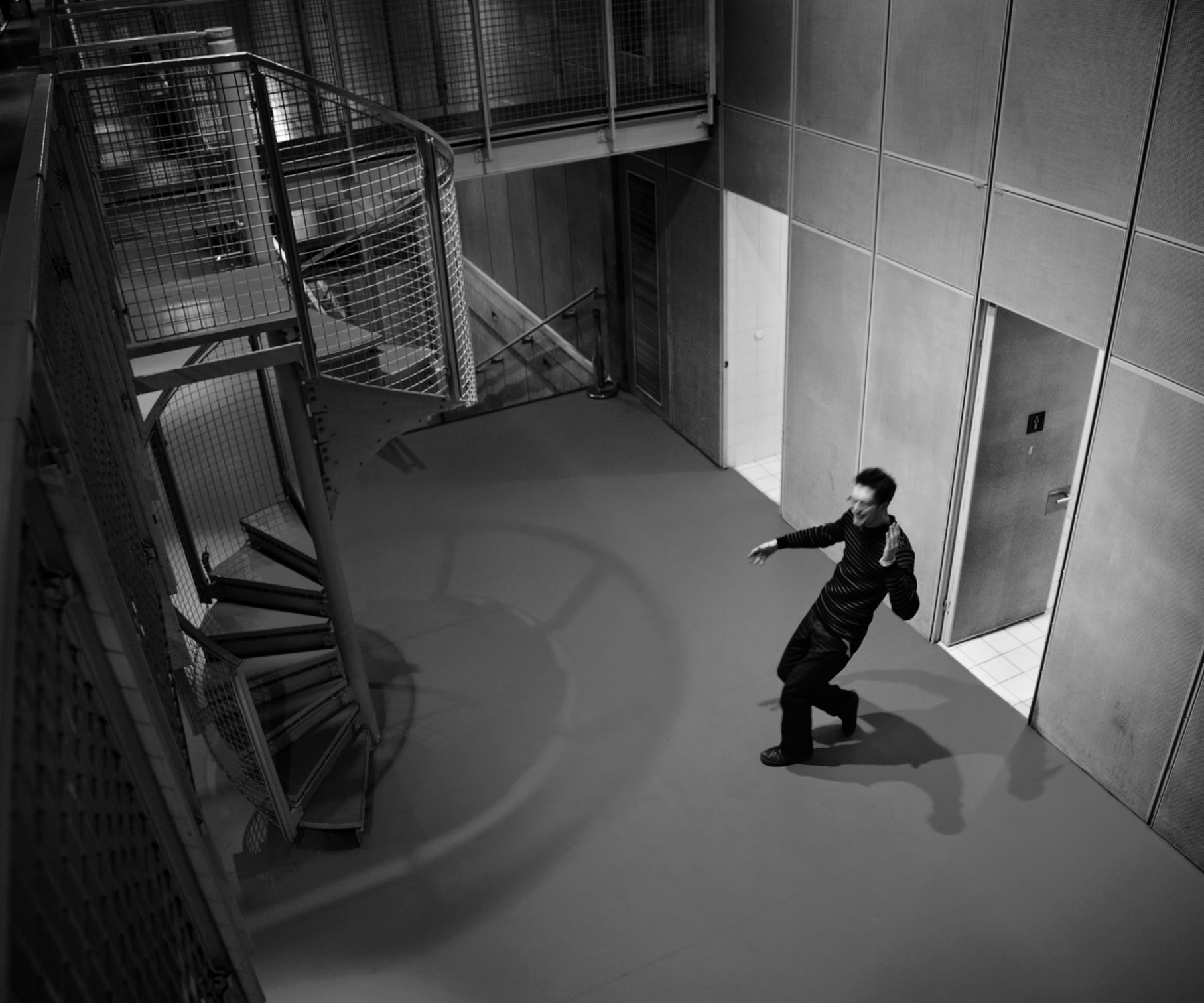

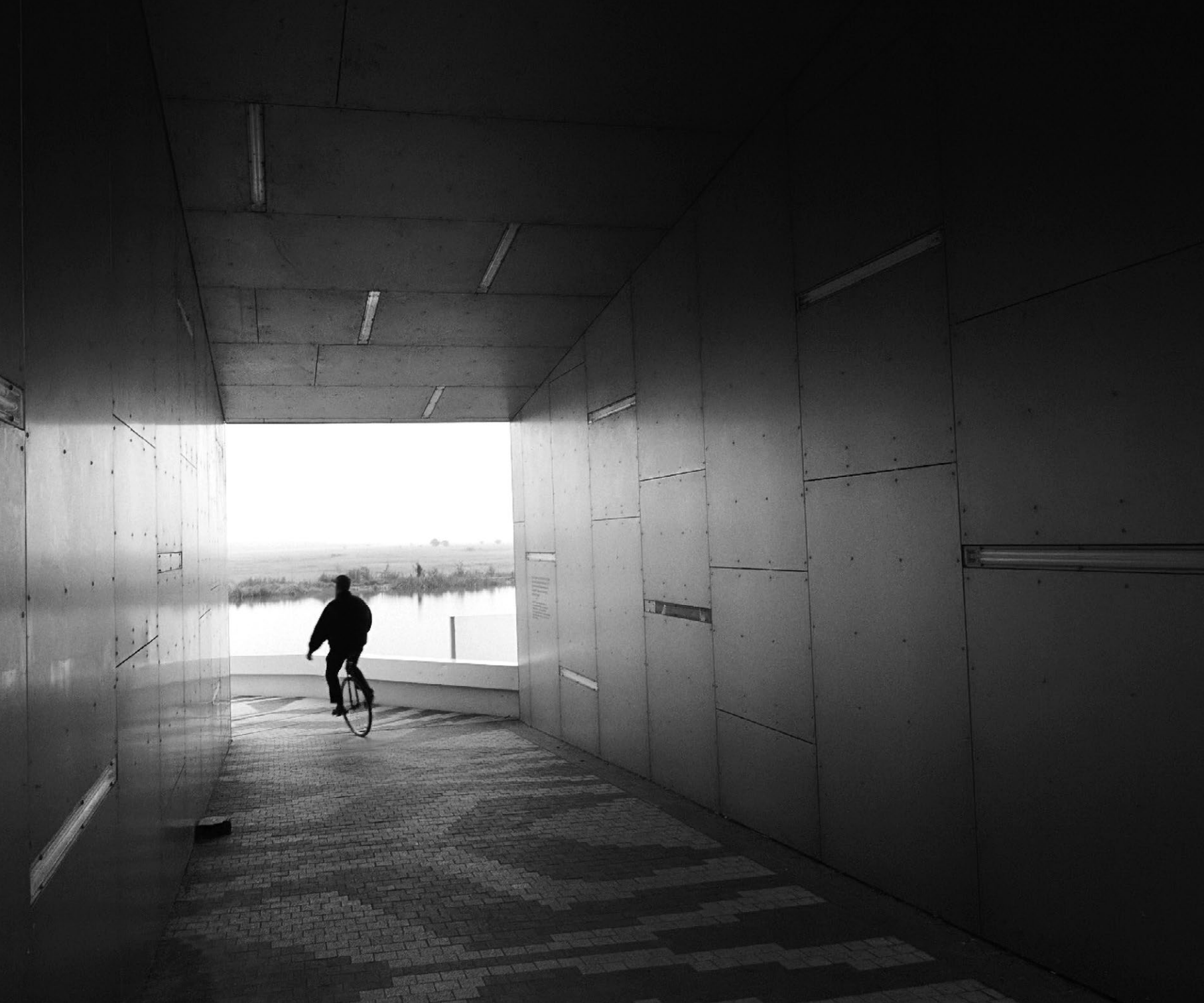

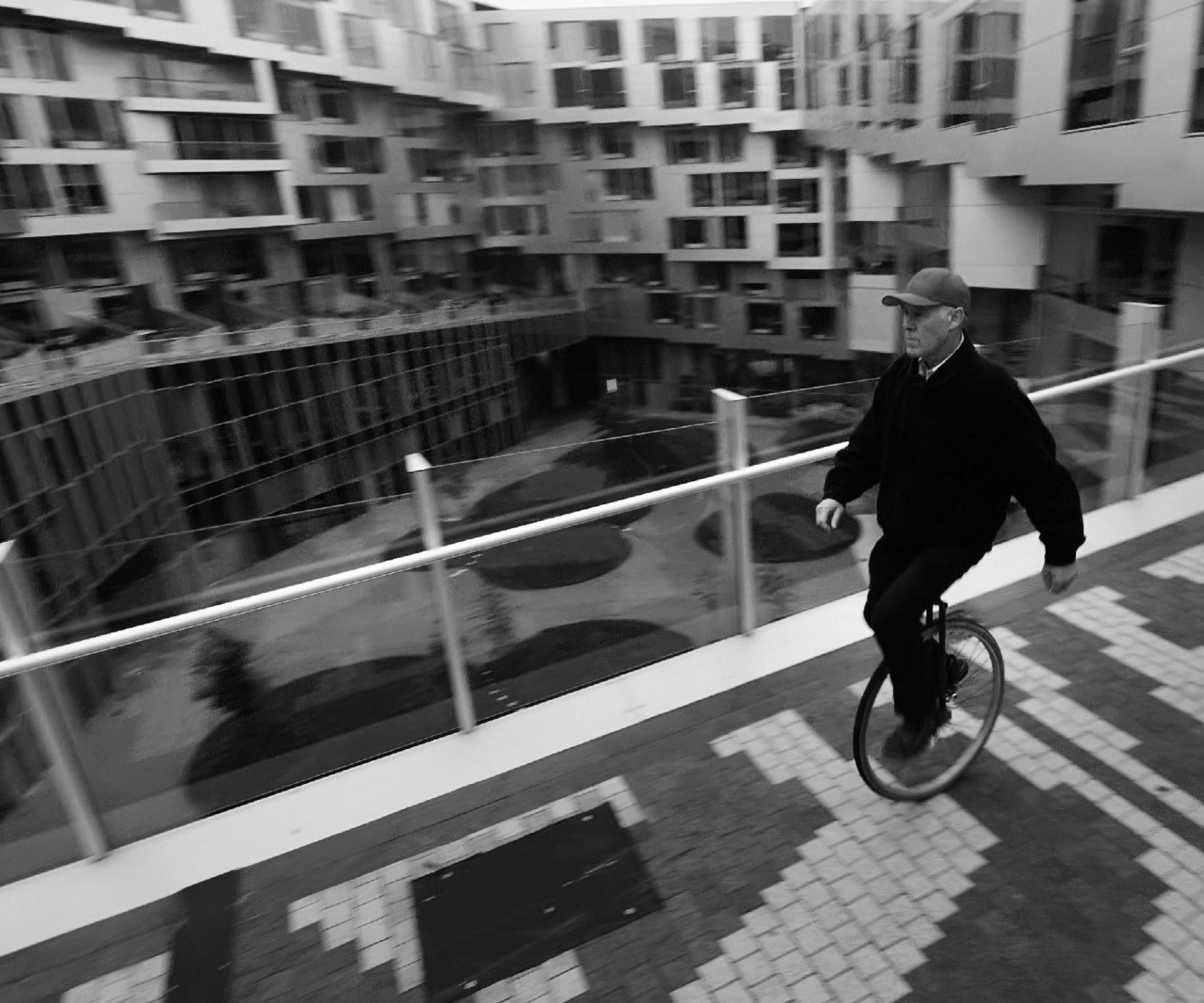

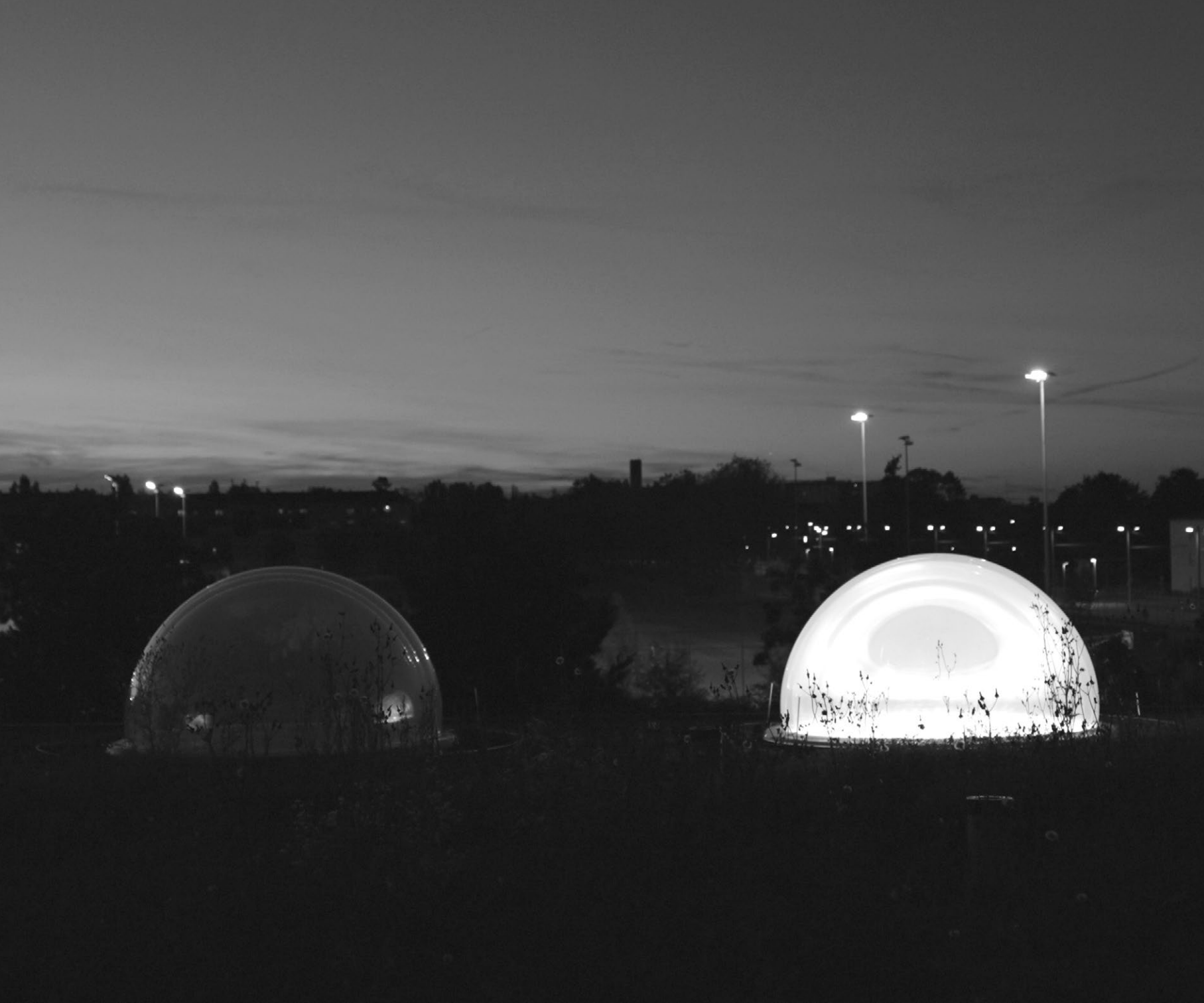

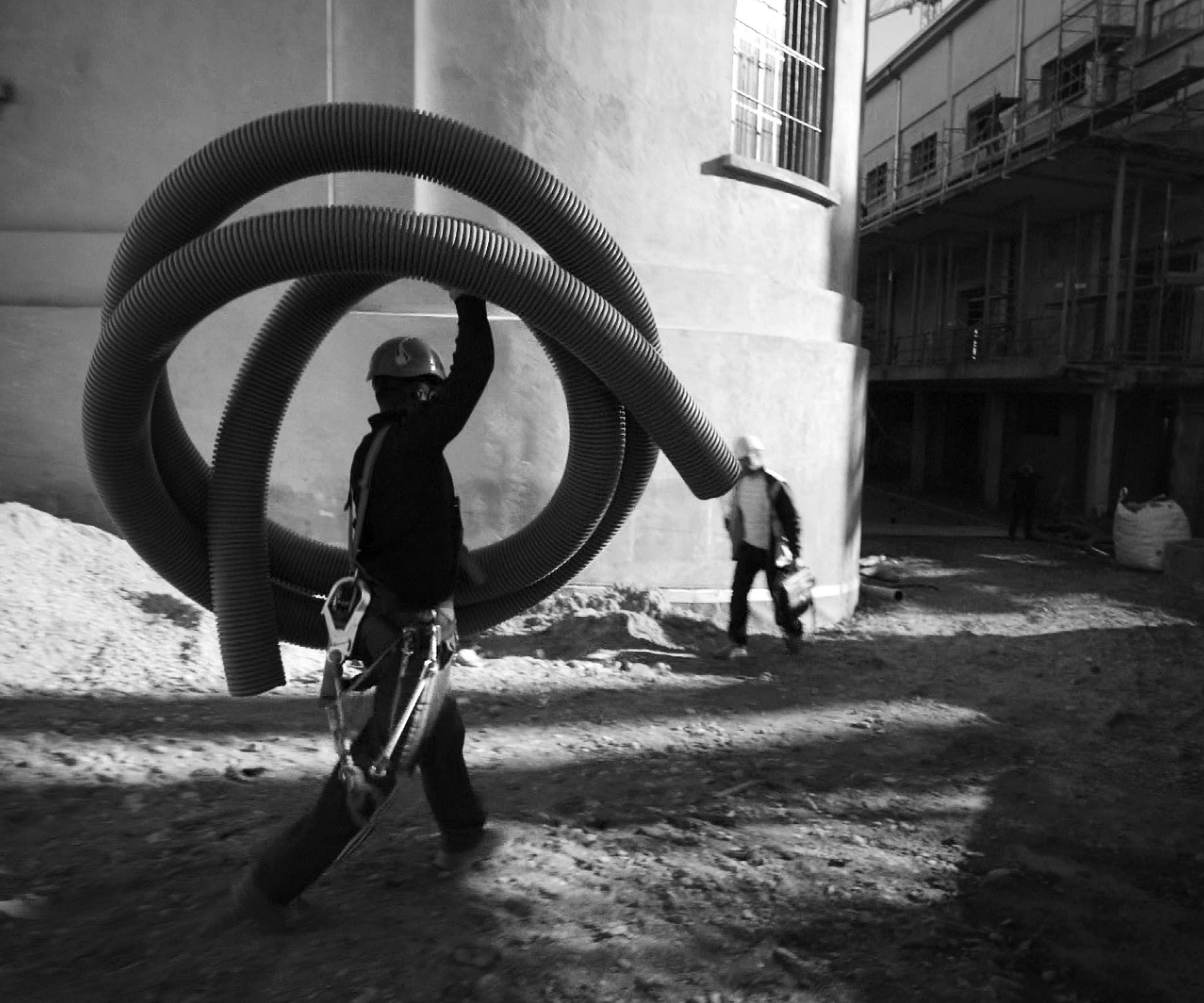

Bêka & Lemoine, *24 heures sur place*, 2014.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Big Ears Listen With Feet*, 2022.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Big Ears Listen With Feet*, 2022.
Bêka & Lemoine, *SPIRITI*, 2015.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Butohouse*, 2019.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Gehry's Vertigo*, 2010.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Gehry's Vertigo*, 2010.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Transmutation*, 2025.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Transmutation*, 2025.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Koolhaas Houselife*, 2008.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Moriyama San*, 2017.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Transmutation*, 2025.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Rehab (from rehab)*, 2023.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Rehab (from rehab)*, 2023.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Inside Piano*, 2010.
Bêka & Lemoine, *The Infinite Happiness*, 2015.
Bêka & Lemoine, *The Infinite Happiness*, 2015.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Rehab (from rehab)*, 2023.
Bêka & Lemoine, *SPIRITI*, 2015.
Bêka & Lemoine, *SPIRITI*, 2015.
Bêka & Lemoine, *Tokyo Ride*, 2020.
All the images courtesy Bêka & Lemoine.

American University of Sharjah
Igor Peraza Curiel, Jason Carlow

Balance as Translation: Between Practice and Academia

Balance is not a static state of rest; it is an active, unending negotiation. In architecture, it rarely manifests as equilibrium. Instead, it emerges as a continuous effort to position oneself amid forces that resist resolution. To design is not to eliminate imbalance but to work through it – transforming tension into structure and uncertainty into form. Within this dynamic field, *balance* operates as an operative condition, shaping decisions rather than resolving them. Friction generates momentum.

While architectural *balance* is often framed through material, spatial, or environmental lenses, an equally significant form operates within the discipline's foundational structure: the oscillation between practice and academia. This is not a peripheral concern but a structural one. Architecture exists simultaneously as a mode of building and a mode of thinking. The relationship between these domains is neither stable nor hierarchical; rather, it unfolds as a continuous process of translation and recalibration.

The Duality of Making and Thinking

In *Translations from Drawing to Building*, Robin Evans observes that architects work under the «peculiar condition of being always at one remove from the subject of their work»[1]. Architecture does not operate directly on reality, but through layers of representation – drawings, models, and abstractions. It is, from the outset, a discipline of translation.

Practice engages directly with reality. It is defined by constraints – time, economics, regulation, and the physical laws of construction – and produces buildings that must perform, endure, and respond to immediate conditions. Academia, by contrast, operates within a space of abstraction and relative autonomy. It constructs knowledge, frames questions, and opens possibilities not yet realizable within the constraints of practice.

While practice tends toward resolution, academic work sustains uncertainty. *Balance* does not emerge from reconciling these conditions

1 R. Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, in Id., *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, Architectural Association, London 1997, p. 153.

into a unified whole, but from maintaining their productive tension. The distance between theory and practice is not a problem to resolve, but a condition to activate – a space where ideas are tested, recalibrated, and transformed as they move between speculation and application.

As Donald Schön argues, «when a practitioner becomes a detective of his own self-reflection, he is no longer limited by the descriptions of the world that are built into the techniques of his trade»[2]. Reflection, in this sense, is not secondary to action; it is embedded within it.

In *Practice. Architecture, Technique and Representation*, Stan Allen reframes architecture as a «material practice»[3]. He dissolves the binary between theory and practice, asserting: «there is no theory, there is no practice. There are only practices, which consist in action and agency»[4]. Thinking and making are therefore not opposites, but interdependent forms of operation.

The Role of Pedagogical Constraints

Architectural education occupies a critical position within this dynamic. The design studio operates as a space of mediation – a constructed environment in which the logics of practice and academia intersect without fully aligning. It is neither a simulation of professional work nor a purely theoretical exercise, but a hybrid condition in which constraints are selectively introduced, negotiated, and sometimes suspended.

Andrea Kahn describes the studio as «a site of mediation where the "real" world is not simply mirrored, but is filtered through a set of pedagogical intentions...»[5]. The studio constructs a critical version of reality, allowing students to engage it without being fully constrained by it.

Constraints play a central role in this process. Rather than limiting creativity, they provide the friction necessary for design to begin.

2 D.A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, New York 1983, p. 68.
3 S. Allen, *Practice. Architecture, Technique and Representation*, Routledge, London 2000.
4 Ivi, p. XIII.
5 A. Kahn, *Design Studio and the Pedagogical Imagination*, in *The Princeton Journal. Thematic Studies in Architecture*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2001, p. 42.

In professional practice, constraints are often fixed and external. In the studio, however, they can be interpreted, challenged, and redefined.

In *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett emphasizes that resistance is fundamental to learning[6]. It is through encountering difficulty and ambiguity that understanding deepens. He further notes that failure often arises not from a lack of ability, but from an inability to organize effort[7]. Constraints, therefore, are not obstacles but productive conditions.

Effective pedagogical constraints function as 'productive obstacles' – structured yet open-ended. When students engage with site conditions, structural systems, or programmatic demands, they are not simply solving problems; they are learning to translate conceptual intent into spatial and material form. In doing so, they begin to understand that constraints are not barriers, but the very medium through which architectural meaning is produced.

Calibration and Coherence

The pedagogical challenge lies in calibrating this *balance*. As Jeremy Till argues in *Architecture Depends*, the discipline often retreats into autonomy to avoid the contingencies of practice[8]. Yet it is precisely this contingency that architecture must engage. The studio must therefore sustain a dual orientation: engaging real-world conditions while preserving the capacity to question and reinterpret them.

Ultimately, architecture advances through continuous movement – between thinking and making, reflection and construction. *Balance* sustains this movement, preventing both practitioner and academic from becoming isolated within their respective domains.

In an increasingly complex and fragmented world, architecture remains relevant by operating across these conditions. Through this ongoing act of translation, it transforms tension into coherence and uncertainty into innovation.

Balance, therefore, is not a resolution.

It is a discipline of movement.

6 R. Sennett, *The Craftsman*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2008, p. 219.
7 Ivi, p. 231.
8 J. Till, *Architecture Depends*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 2009, p. 95.

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Between Rope and Stone

There is a parable of a young person swinging a rope with a stone tied to its end. As the arc widens, the stone gathers force; without the rope it would fly off violently, capable of damage, but without the stone the rope itself would never move, left to slackness and stagnation. In the story, the rope stands for *tradition*, the stone for *revolution*. The parable does not argue for one over the other, but for the necessity of their tension. Without *balance*, both degenerate.

It is tempting to think about the relationship between architectural history and contemporary practice in similar terms. Over the past two centuries, a work's most significant meanings, its status within the discipline, have often been articulated through its position *vis-à-vis* history. At times, this position has taken on extreme forms. The Bauhaus, where even the teaching of architectural history was discouraged, marks one such moment, as does much of the early twentieth-century avant-garde in Western Europe. At the other end lies the turn to postmodernism in the mid-1970s, with its explicit, even sentimental, return to historical reference. Architecture, in this sense, can be read as a prolonged oscillation, a struggle to locate *balance* between rupture and recall.

In western architecture, the idea of the 'project' has served as the primary conceptual framework through which this *balance* is negotiated. The project sets up a finite field of time, rules, and objectives within which architecture must operate. It is defined by tensions: between authorial ambition and client demands, between inherited forms and new programs, between the study of history and the projection of futures. Yet this framework is shaped by capitalism, evident in its purposiveness, its emphasis on delivery, and in architecture's formation as a professional, allographic practice.

Outside the Euro-American context, other ways of seeking this *balance* exist. In South Asia, for instance, time is often understood as non-linear, layered, and omnipresent, making the idea of the discrete 'project' less significant. Architecture here is shaped through long-standing cultural and geographical relationships, experienced collectively and informally, and adapting gradually over extended durations. Rather than being resolved through bounded interventions, the *balance* between past, present, and future emerges through embodied practice and material continuity.

To describe architecture as a tension between nostalgia and salvation is perhaps too simple. What is at stake is not only the *balance* itself, but the terms through which it is produced, whether through the structured temporality of the project or through slower, more diffuse processes of collective making. The question, then, is not how to choose between rope and stone, but how to understand the different ways in which their relationship is sustained.

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COUNTERWEIGHT: A Salvage Scenario for the Empathetic City

There is a paradox embedded in South Korea's ascent that architecture has not yet learned to fully reckon with. Within a single lifetime – within living memory – a nation devastated by war and reduced to one of the poorest economies on earth rebuilt itself into a global industrial and cultural power of the first order. South Korea today commands world leadership in semiconductors, display technologies, shipbuilding, and battery manufacturing, occupies a significant share of the global automobile and smartphone markets, and exports its cultural forms – music, cinema, drama – with a reach and appetite that few nations have managed to sustain[1]. The trajectory is, by any historical measure, extraordinary. Yet the shadow cast by this vertical ambition is equally vast, and it falls most heavily on the very people who built the edifice: record-high suicide rates, the lowest birth rate formally recorded among sovereign nations, a corrosive anxiety distributed across every demographic stratum, and a society marked by fracture along every conceivable axis – between old and young, wealthy and poor, native and migrant, credentialed and excluded[2]. Architecture, as it always and faithfully does, has transcribed these conditions directly into built form.

The dominant residential typology – the apartment tower complex (아파트), walled and gated, monocultural in its tenure and aspiration – performs its social role with chilling efficiency[3]. It filters out the city, the stranger, and the unplanned encounter. It stratifies economic class into visible envelopes of exclusion and desirability. Street markets (시장) that once anchored neighborhood life and sustained micro-economies of human exchange are being swiftly displaced by platforms of frictionless and faceless convenience. The school, which once harbored the formative theater of friendship and intellectual discovery, has been conscripted into a regime of competitive preparation, its corridors colonized

1 Republic of Korea Ministry of Trade, *Industry and Energy, Export Statistics Report*, Seoul 2024.
2 Statistics Korea, *Social Indicators in Korea*, KOSTAT, Daejeon 2024.
3 V. Gelézeau, *Apartment Republic. The House Dream in Contemporary South Korea*, Seoul Selection, Seoul 2007.

by the shadow of the private academy – the Hagwon (학원) – leaving children little room for the spontaneous, the exploratory, or the simply joyful[4]. The street itself – historically the commons of the city, the stage for the digressive and the reciprocal – has been surrendered almost entirely to the motorized and the commercial. Those who fall entirely outside the radius of economic participation are assigned spaces that diminish rather than shelter: the one-room (원룸), the *goshiwon* (고시원), the architecture of the bare minimum.

What has been forfeited is not merely a question of amenity or aesthetic impoverishment. What has been lost is the spatial grammar through which a society practices care – the arrangement of threshold, court, path, and place of gathering that allows one person to encounter another without commercial transaction as the sole mediating logic.

Balance, in this context, is not a decorative or philosophical proposition. It is an urgent structural necessity – a counterweight to be deliberately and precisely placed against the accumulated mass of instrumental growth. This is the generative premise of our design studio by Myongji University: to seek the spatial measure, the architectural invention, that restores equilibrium – not through nostalgic recuperation of a prior form, but through rigorous proposition grounded in what cities have, under very different conditions, already learned to do.

We turn to Venice – not as a monument to be admired at respectful distance, but as a living laboratory whose operations remain genuinely instructive. The city endures as a counter-model precisely because it was never organized around the logic of throughput or competitive accumulation. Its *campo*, *calle*, *sottoportego*, and *fondamenta* constitute a pedagogy of encounter: a curriculum of slowness and proximity built into the very geometry of settlement[5]. Venice demonstrates that density need not produce alienation; that water, which isolates, also gathers; that the enforced absence of the automobile is not deprivation but the recovery of the street as a shared stage for life itself. The city's persistence as a place of meaning is, at its root, a lesson in the spatial conditions that permit empathy to exist and survive.

From this encounter between Seoul and Venice, we ask our students to perform an act of architectural salvage – not importation, not superficial mimicry of canal and *campo*, but a disciplined excavation of what remains vital and generative in Seoul's own surviving fabric: the compressed sociability of alley markets in Jongno, the scaled intimacy of the hanok courtyard, the ambient reciprocity of older residential districts before the machinery of redevelopment arrives to replace them with towers and underground corridors[6]. From these surviving fragments, new archetypes are proposed and tested: spatial forms capable of reintroducing into the contemporary city what the Korean word *Jeong* (정) designates with a precision that translation can only approximate – that affective bond of attachment between people and place, that disposition of warmth toward the neighbor and stranger alike, that quality of shared life which distinguishes a neighborhood from a postal zone.

Architecture achieves *balance* not by averaging opposing forces into a comfortable neutrality, but by constructing conditions in which those forces may coexist, converse, and occasionally transform one another. The studio is, in this sense, a microcosm of the city it aspires to propose: a space where rigor and imagination, analysis and intuition, the global and the deeply local negotiate their own form of *balance*.

4 M.J. Seth, *Education Fever. Society, Politics, and the Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2002.

5 M. Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 1989.

6 Seoul Metropolitan Government, *2030 Seoul Urban Master Plan*, Seoul 2023.

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Counter-balance: Architecture Far from Equilibrium

On June 26, 1976, Antonio Inoki faced Mohamed Ali in a fifteen-round bout at the Nippon Budokan Arena. Prior to the event, both fighters' trainers had to negotiate the concessions required to reconcile their respective sporting regulations. Far from reaching an equitable, consensual agreement, the negotiation resulted in a list of unilateral restrictions: Inoki was not allowed to jump, grapple, or block his opponent, nor could he execute a kick unless one knee remained in contact with the ring. The rules were modified so severely in order to produce the appearance of a legitimate contest that the outcome could be considered neither boxing nor wrestling, but rather a farce designed to neutralize one of the bodies in play, even putting the Japanese wrestler's career at risk.

This regulatory imbalance can shed light on the difficulty of critically revising both the pedagogical and practice-based systems that have sustained a discipline as self-referential as architecture. Despite its historical hybridity, our field has gradually crystallized into specific, insulated areas of knowledge such as urban planning, industrial design, landscape, or material fabrication. These compartmentalizations are also constantly challenged by successive pressures from the energy crisis, the digital revolution, and the growing awareness of the not-so-new climate crisis, all of which undermine the historical foundations that have shaped both the architectural profession and the discipline itself.

Far from Equilibrium

Physical reality does not behave as a closed system tending toward equilibrium, but rather as a dissipative structure that operates permanently far from it. Architecture's obsession with energetic 'equilibrium', crystallized in *net-zero* efficient architectural models, is incomplete and even misleading[1]. These balanced-like approaches tend to ignore the complexity of real energy systems, which are characterized by instability, variability, and dependence on dynamic contexts.

Counter-balance constitutes a fundamental update of the mechanical understanding of isostatic structures, placing hyperstatism as advanced management of internal forces and structural safety. Lars Spuybroek asserts that redundancy in design produces a «morphology

1 S. Kwinter, C. Davidson, *Far from Equilibrium. Essays on Technology and Design Culture*, Actar, Barcelona-New York 2008.

of the provisional, not of the optimal», offering a critical update to the postmodern concept of equilibrium and efficiency[2]. Redundancy specifically entails the incorporation of more supports or components than are strictly necessary to maintain static equilibrium, granting the system multiple load paths and counterweights. Should a single element fail, the structure is able to redistribute stress across the remaining members, preventing collapse and increasing robustness against unforeseen events. By integrating redundancy and counter-balance, structures are not only safer in the face of local failures but also more stable against excessive deformations, or external perturbations.

The Architectural Project as Fiction

In 1687, Isaac Newton formulated the principle of action and reaction in his Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica. This law of motion describes not so much a state of stability as a conversation between forces: equilibrium does not exist without interaction, contact, friction, or exchange. From this premise, *balance* can be understood as counter-balance – an active system of countermeasures that introduces a reactive and strategic logic. Counter-balance emerges as a strategy of response to the hegemonic diplomacies of technoscience, which promote not dynamic equilibrium but a continuous drift.

In contrast to progress conceived as an opaque and alienating state of equilibrium, architecture can actively participate in this equation: design is to intervene within a field of tensions, to disrupt equilibrium. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek warns in *Against Progress* of a critical absence within the notions of progress that shape our lives. Architecture can operate as a counterbalancing device through friction and critical thickness. As stated in *El Continente Próximo*, in the face of technological impact «it becomes necessary to deploy a set of countermeasures capable of mitigating the risk of unilateral domination»[3]; this, in our view, constitutes a core responsibility of the architect.

Counter-balance is not a matter of frontal opposition, but of situated response – that is, the capacity to project new fictions governed by renewed notions of spatial diplomacy. Isabelle Stengers calls

2 L. Spuybroek, *The Structure of Vagueness*, «Textile», 3(1), 2005, pp. 6-19.
3 E. Roig, *El Continente Próximo*, Asimétricas, Madrid 2025, p. 12.

for a «reactivate common sense» in response to the automatisms of technoscience. Architecture thus becomes a site where disparate forces – natural and artificial, memory and innovation, permanence and transformation – enter into contact and negotiation[4]. Equilibrium, in this sense, does not coincide with harmony, but rather with a sustained tension maintained within habitable limits. Jim Lovelock described the Earth as a system capable of self-regulation not by suppressing disturbances, but by reacting to them[5]. Counter-balance operates in a similar manner, as a mechanism of continuous readjustment in the face of accumulated imbalances. In a world dominated by technological solutionism or the belief that every problem admits a technical fix, *balance* requires the introduction of questions, pauses, and resistances. Marina Garcés warns that delegating critical thinking to technology entails a loss of collective agency[6]. Against this backdrop, the architectural project emerges as a framework for fiction: a speculative exercise aimed at breaking equilibria and advancing the state of the art of a discipline increasingly shaped by algorithms. Within a fragmented and unstable contemporary landscape, *balance* is not an attainable state, but a practice against which one projects.

Pedagogy of Uncertainty

The multiple counter-balances induced by these agendas seek precisely to neutralize the effect of what is already learned or habitual, presenting frameworks of action in unfamiliar ways. From a constructivist perspective, this imbalance generates the instability necessary to activate the preconscious stage and reflexive response. It is at this threshold that meaningful learning can occur, enabling the learner to articulate, in a personal and situated manner, the new material emerging from the process. Students are supported in constructing for themselves the scaffolding that sustains their learning, while the instructor assumes the role of facilitator rather than that of a transmitter of stable, predefined knowledge.

4 I. Stengers, *Reactivating the Sense of the Common*, Polity Press, Cambridge UK 2011.
5 J. Lovelock, *Gaia. A New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK 1979.
6 M. Garcés, *Nueva ilustración radical*, Anagrama, Barcelona 2017.

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Balance

Balance is always precarious. In architecture, it is often misread as symmetry, as the visual resolution of form through equivalence. Yet *balance* rarely coincides with equality since it is not a state but a provisional relation: a temporary agreement among forces that remain fundamentally unequal in origin and destination. To speak of *balance* is therefore to speak of tension, of the capacity to hold temporarily together what resists alignment.

Balance is often understood as a condition of equilibrium, a stable alignment of forces that neutralize one another. Yet in architecture, *balance* rarely appears as a fixed or final state. Rather, it emerges as a dynamic and provisional quality – one that unfolds through processes of adjustment, negotiation, and recalibration. To design is not to resolve tensions once and for all, but to engage them productively, allowing architecture to operate in the space between opposing forces. These forces do not converge naturally; they compete, contradict, and displace one another in friction. In architecture *balance* emerges from composing these differences not as a condition of rest but as an act of interim positioning.

As a dynamic quality, *balance* runs through the entire design process and represents the meeting point between forces that do not naturally coincide but compete. Stability and change, memory and innovation, natural and artificial, permanence and transformation, structure and void, collapse in the project. Architecture orchestrates this *balance* not as a fixed state, but as a continuous process, open to temporary conditions. In a fragmented and unstable world, design becomes an act of synthesis and measure, capable of restoring coherence and meaning.

Balance is a performance. It belongs to the realm of practice rather than representation since it is not simply perceived in the finished object, but constructed through decisions that distribute weight, organize space and time, and mediate relationships between actors, humans and not humans. The project is a device that measures and remeasures these relations over time. It is situated at the intersection of temporalities: the long durée of materials and infrastructures, the shorter cycles of use and occupation, and the unpredictable rhythms of environmental and social change. In this sense, *balance* is less a compositional principle than a mode of

temporal alignment – a way of situating the project within overlapping and often conflicting durations.

This understanding displaces the idea of architecture as a stable artifact and repositions it as a dynamic, open system in which the building is never fully complete. Situated in space and time, buildings persist within changing environments, subject to use, decay, and reinterpretation. *Balance*, then, is inseparable from territoriality and temporality.

Thus, to design is to intervene within these systems, redistributing resources, attention, and value. In this expanded field, *balance* becomes an ethical problem: how to act without exhausting, how to build without erasing, how to transform without irreversibly destabilizing. Rather than seeking harmony in Vitruvian terms, architecture operates through approximation and distance. What matters is not the elimination of conflict, but the capacity to sustain it productively. A balanced project is not one in which forces disappear, but one in which they remain legible and operative.

In a fragile world, the question of *balance* acquires renewed urgency. The uneven development of territories, the persistence of social and economic inequalities, and the accelerating climate crisis expose profound imbalances that architecture can neither ignore nor resolve on its own. These conditions demand new forms of organization and new ways of thinking about equilibrium – ones that extend beyond the scale of the individual building to encompass cities, regions, and planetary systems. To engage with these challenges is to recognize that *balance* is not given but constructed: a collective and ongoing effort to reorganize our ways of living and to find new balances within an increasingly unstable world.

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Architecture Beyond Stasis: Designing Balance across Evolving Systems, Technological Disruption, and Complex Landscapes of Uncertainty

Architecture today confronts unstable, unequal, and entangled conditions that require *balance* to be understood differently than in the past. While often defined in formal terms, as the even distribution of elements, measured relations of parts, or visual stability, architectural *balance* must also be understood as an active and unfinished condition grounded in the continual calibration of change and instability. To design for *balance* today is not to freeze the world into order, but to work within instability, constructing temporary coherences among forces that remain in tension, friction, and negotiation. This essay approaches *balance* through three intertwined lenses: first, as a multi-system relation across ecological, infrastructural, and urban conditions, requiring interdisciplinarity and multi-scalarity; second, as a temporal negotiation between inherited conditions and new invention; and third, as a recalibration of authorship, judgment, and labor under technological disruption.

From this perspective, *balance* must be understood systemically before it can be expressed formally. Architecture now operates within intertwined ecological, infrastructural, and urban systems, requiring design to engage layered conditions that overlap, interact, and exceed the building itself[1]. Ecology, infrastructure, urbanism, engineering, and allied disciplines can no longer be treated as adjacent specializations, but as integrated fields whose overlaps shape architecture's possibilities. From climatic extremes and energy demands to material flows, labor forces, and shifting definitions of the public, the commons, access, and equity in an increasingly unequal and gentrified world, these conditions exceed the building, yet determine how architecture is produced, where it intervenes, and what it can do. In the Anthropocene, *balance* must also encompass reciprocal relations between natural and human-made processes, with the human understood as one element within a broader ecological field across sites that are territorial and planetary

1 S. Allen, *From Object to Field*, «Architectural Design Profile», 127, 1997, pp. 24-31. See also T. McPhearson et al., *A Social-Ecological-Technological Systems Framework for Urban Ecosystem Services*, «One Earth», 5, 2022, pp. 505-518.

as much as architectural[2]. This systemic condition changes the role of the designer, who must work through interdependencies across systems and scales: how infrastructural systems support civic life, how form performs ecologically and operationally, and how interventions evolve rather than resist time through false permanence[3]. To design in *balance* today is to move across scales, disciplines, and systems with the recognition that architecture no longer acts on the world in isolation. Once architecture is understood systemically, the question of time returns with greater urgency. *Balance* also unfolds between inherited conditions and new invention, especially in an era burdened by the environmental costs of construction. Designing toward *balance* begins with existing buildings, inherited infrastructures, surrounding contexts, layered landscapes, and the social histories sedimented within them. Any decision to demolish, replace, preserve, or transform is therefore a decision about how much further extraction, energy expenditure, and environmental displacement a project is willing to authorize[4]. To build is always, in some measure, to displace matter from somewhere else. Architecture remains inseparable from extractive economies: sand, stone, timber, metals, rare earths, water, energy, and the labor systems that make them available. It reorganizes matter drawn from elsewhere and intensifies carbon burdens across material production and building operation[5]. The architecture of *balance* therefore demands a careful ethic of intervention, asking what forms of transformation can emerge through reuse, restraint, reclaim, and reoccupation. In many cases, the most inventive act is to work with what

2 T. McPhearson et al., *A Social-Ecological-Technological Systems Framework for Urban Ecosystem Services*, cit. See also J. Corner, Terra Fluxus, in C. Waldheim (ed.), *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2006, pp. 21-33.

3 T. McPhearson et al., *A Social-Ecological-Technological Systems Framework for Urban Ecosystem Services*, cit.

4 C. Malterre-Barthes, *A Moratorium on New Construction*, Sternberg Press, London 2025.

5 UNEP, Global ABC, *Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction,* 2024, available online at https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-status-report-buildings-and-construction-20242025, accessed on 30/04/2026.

already exists, redirecting inherited structures toward new publics and performances while treating restraint itself as a form of design agency. *Balance* becomes a negotiation between continuity and change, between caring for existing material worlds and selectively intervening to redirect them toward other futures.

These questions of *balance* become even more complex under technological disruption, where *balance* is unsettled and renegotiated between human and machine intelligence. Artificial intelligence, automation, digital fabrication, and evolving technological systems are reshaping how architecture is conceived, represented, and managed, while also reorganizing labor, authorship, and lifestyle. The challenge is how to maintain a critical relation between machine intelligence and human judgment, between computational optimization and political responsibility, and between the embrace of new methods and the preservation of older ways of practicing design when they still carry value[6]. These technologies redistribute expertise and encourage forms of optimization whose criteria are often hidden from view[7]. The issue is not whether design should engage new technologies, but how they are directed, whose interests they serve, and whether they deepen or repair imbalances already embedded in the built environment. *Balance* here means resisting both technophobia and technological surrender.

We posit, in conclusion, that *balance* should be understood as a design ethic of recalibration. It is an unfinished practice of measuring relations among tensions: ecology and infrastructure, memory and invention, labor and automation, permanence and transformation, without pretending these tensions can be fully resolved. What architecture can offer is a method for holding together heterogeneous conditions with enough care, precision, and imagination to make other futures possible[8]. Rather than opposing change, *balance* is a disciplined way of working through it, remaining grounded while fostering more hopeful futures across our diverse landscapes of collective life.

6 N. Negroponte, *The Architecture Machine*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 1970.

7 *Ibidem.*

8 D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2000.

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Balance. The Measure of the Unstable

In contemporary cities, the pursuit of *balance*, understood as a condition of unstable and continuously redefined equilibrium, today constitutes a structural condition of the architectural project. More than a configuration to be achieved or a form of harmony to be restored, it may be assumed as a dynamic quality that traverses the entire design process, orienting its choices and progressively redefining its outcomes. In this sense, equilibrium does not coincide with a condition of stability, but with the capacity to establish relations between heterogeneous and at times divergent systems of forces: stability and change, memory and innovation, natural and artificial, permanence and transformation, structure and void. In this perspective, the quality of urban space depends not on individual architectural artefacts, but on the construction of spatial relations between them.

Consequently, the project does not merely resolve these tensions but assumes them as its own field of operativity. Architecture does not pursue a definitive order, but rather the possibility of constructing temporary configurations capable of giving form to complex and unstable conditions. The pursuit of equilibrium thus takes shape as a process made of measures, selections, verifications and successive redefinitions, through which the project constructs relations and restores, even if only in provisional form, a certain coherence to the contemporary landscape. In this sense, it may be understood as a practice that operates within complex systems, in which the quality of relations prevails over the nature of the elements that compose them[1].

In the ever-changing scenario of contemporary cities, the exploration of the diverse forms of equilibrium does not coincide with the pursuit of the exception or the formal gesture, but with the construction of devices capable of engaging with real conditions, assuming the processual and non-definitive character of the project as an operative tool. Equilibrium is therefore not a state to be preserved, but a condition that is continuously constructed and redefined, in relation to the transformations affecting urban and territorial contexts.

1 E. Morin, *Introduction à la pensée complexe*, Seuil, Paris 1990.

The project is thus understood as the construction of relations rather than as the assertion of autonomous objects[2]. What, however, appears relevant today is not so much the possibility of defining a stable order as the capacity to operate within unstable conditions, identifying a possible measure between differing factors. The theme of equilibrium does not therefore concern only the composition of the individual architectural artefact, but directly engages the relationship between project and context.

The urban dimension constitutes the most evident field in which this condition manifests itself. The contemporary city presents itself as a heterogeneous system, traversed by logics that are not always mutually reconcilable. In this context, the project cannot confine itself to imposing an ordering principle, but it is called upon to operate on relations, margins, discontinuities, transforming fractures into active elements of the design process. Urban equilibrium thus takes shape as a progressive construction, the outcome of regulatory and adaptive operations.

Koolhaas, in his writings on the *Generic City* and on *Junkspace*, highlights certain drifts within these processes[3]. The generic city describes a condition in which urban growth emancipates itself from context, producing spaces that progressively lose identity, relations and recognisable characters, to the point of configuring conditions devoid of a real urban structure. A juxtaposition of isolated episodes replaces the continuity of the city, while public space recedes or is substituted by privatised devices, incapable of sustaining a real collective dimension. *Junkspace*, in parallel, defines a diffuse quality of contemporary space: continuous environments, including interior ones, produced by accumulation rather than by design, which tend to configure themselves as non-places, lacking rootedness and stable relations[4]. This is a condition common to many contemporary metropolises, which have grown too rapidly and in a heterogeneous manner, with widespread phenomena of

2 V. Gregotti, *Il territorio dell'architettura*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1966.
3 R. Koolhaas, *The Generic City*, in O.M.A., R. Koolhaas, B. Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 1239-1994.
4 R. Koolhaas, *Junkspace*, in «October», 100, April 2002, pp. 175-190.

urban sprawl. In such conditions, the production of space does not correspond to a real construction of the city[5].

By contrast, many European and Italian cities continue to express, despite numerous critical issues, a different construction of urban equilibrium. In them, historical stratification has, over time, produced an articulated fabric of relations among spaces, functions, and forms. Here, equilibrium appears not as the outcome of a unitary design, but as the result of a slow process, founded on successive adaptations and progressive transformations that remain coherent with the context.

The theme of measure, therefore, assumes a central role. To measure means to select, to establish relations, to introduce limits and to construct hierarchies. In this sense, the relationship with context becomes a form of resistance against the dynamics of homologation produced by global processes[6].

Every design choice acts simultaneously on form and on conditions of use, on the duration and transformability of spaces. Consequently, the city takes shape as a collective construction, in which memory and form interweave according to complex temporalities[7].

The concept of *balance* also directly engages interior space, understood as a dynamic micro-ecosystem in which relations between the architectural container, mobile elements and practices of use are articulated. Equilibrium is not exhausted in the definition of the architectural envelope, but is continuously redefined through the presence of furniture, devices and works that, far from constituting accessory elements, contribute to modifying hierarchies, paths and perceptual conditions of space. In this sense, the interior configures itself as an unstable field, in which permanence and temporality coexist, and in which equilibrium derives from the capacity to construct relations between

5 M. Augé, *Non-Lieux*, Seuil, Paris 1992. See also T. Aglieri Rinella, *Dubai Transient City. Anatomy of a Post-Urban Phenomenon*, «Agathón», 6, 2019, pp. 80-93.
6 K. Frampton, *Towards a Critical Regionalism*, in H. Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend 1983, pp. 16-30.
7 A. Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, Marsilio, Padova 1966.

heterogeneous elements. The same relationship between interior and exterior is likewise interpretable not as a stable limit, but as a dynamic threshold of mutual exchange and redefinition.

In conclusion, in the contemporary context, the pursuit of *balance* necessarily assumes an operative character. Equilibrium can no longer be understood as stability, but as a capacity for adaptation and continuous redefinition. The project becomes the site in which diverse configurations may be explored and verified, and architecture an instrument of research capable of engaging with the instability of the present.

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Fernanda De Maio

The Museum and the City. M9 – Museum of the 20th Century and Mestre | Marghera | Venice Urban Regeneration as a Practice of Dynamic Balance

In contemporary architectural discourse, the semantic shift from 'redevelopment' to 'urban regeneration' marks a profound transformation: from a sectoral, building-centered approach to a systemic and multidisciplinary strategy. Regeneration no longer simply entails intervening on the built environment, but rather reactivating the metabolic processes of the city. Within this framework, the concept of *balance* assumes a central role. Architecture is no longer limited to the production of form; it operates instead as a device for mediating between heterogeneous components – social, environmental, economic, and symbolic.

The experience of the Villard:25 seminar, developed around the M9 complex in Mestre, represents an emblematic case study of this transformation and, for this reason, constitutes the starting point for the forthcoming WAVe workshop that I will coordinate. The notion of urban *balance* finds an initial theoretical grounding in the concept of organized complexity[1]. The vitality of the city depends on the coexistence of differences and the density of social interactions. From this perspective, *balance* is not a static condition but an emergent process. Applied to the context of Mestre, this principle implies overcoming the model of the dormitory town in favor of a hybrid urban system, in which cultural, residential, and commercial functions coexist and mutually reinforce one another. The M9 complex acts as a catalyst for this equilibrium, activating new flows and relationships.

From a morphological standpoint, urban regeneration is grounded in the *balance* between permanence and transformation. The city is a stratified collective artifact in which pre-existing structures are not constraints but design resources. In the case of

1 J. Jacobs, *Vita e morte delle grandi città* (1961), Einaudi, Torino 1969. Jane Jacobs advances a radical critique of modernist urban planning and functionalism, which she considers responsible for an excessive simplification of urban complexity. She introduces the concept of «organized complexity», borrowing it from the biological sciences: the city is understood as a living system in which a multiplicity of variables are interconnected within an organic whole. According to Jacobs, urban vitality depends on the capacity of design to accommodate this complexity through mixed uses, short blocks, and the presence of «eyes on the street», thereby ensuring safety and social resilience.

M9, the dialogue between the new intervention and the historic fabric does not result in mimicry; rather, it unfolds as a critical dialectic that recognizes urban memory as a generative element[2]. Here, *balance* manifests itself as a reinterpreted continuity.

A further dimension of *balance* concerns the human scale of urban space. The quality of the city depends on its capacity to *balance* necessary, optional, and social activities[3]. The spatial configuration of M9 – characterized by permeability and accessibility – transforms the space between buildings into a social infrastructure. The pedestrian diagonal and the system of internal courtyards operate as devices of rebalancing between movement and pause, between public and private realms.

However, urban regeneration must also be understood in ethical terms. Social inequalities are inscribed in urban space and call for interventions capable of restoring conditions of equity. In this sense, urban design becomes an instrument for redistributing opportunities[4]. Targeted and strategic interventions, inspired by

2 A. Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, Marsilio, Padova 1966. Rossi's essay shifts the focus to the morphological and typological dimension of the city. The author introduces the concept of the «urban fact» understood as a complex artifact in which architectural form is intertwined with history and collective memory. Rossi theorizes «permanences»: elements that, despite changing function over time, remain fixed points within the urban fabric, acting as «generative elements» capable of giving meaning and identity to new design processes.

3 J. Gehl, *Vita in città. Spazio urbano e relazioni sociali* (1971), Maggioli, Santarcangelo di Romagna 2012. Danish architect Jan Gehl lays the foundations for a human-oriented approach to urban design, offering a critique of the alienation produced by car-centered planning. Gehl examines the quality of the «space between» buildings, distinguishing between necessary, optional, and social activities. His central argument is that only high-quality public space – both architecturally and perceptually – can encourage optional activities, transforming urban voids into active and vibrant social connectors.

4 B. Secchi, *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2013. Bernardo Secchi addresses the crisis of the contemporary city through the lens of social inequality. The author argues that urban planning is never neutral: design choices can either exacerbate social divides or, conversely, operate as instruments of spatial justice. Secchi introduces the need to remove the physical and symbolic barriers that fragment the territory, promoting an inclusive conception of the city.

the logic of «urban mending»[5], enable the stitching together of fragmented urban fabrics and the re-establishment of interrupted connections.

In the project by Sauerbruch Hutton, the concept of *balance* extends to the territorial scale, where the contemporary city is configured as a networked system. In the case of Mestre-Marghera, regeneration entails overcoming infrastructural barriers and constructing new continuities. Within this framework, the M9 complex assumes the role of a node capable of redistributing centrality, contributing to the redefinition of territorial identity within a broader metropolitan dimension[6].

Last but not least, from a compositional perspective, M9 represents a paradigmatic example of architectural *balance*:

- *Balance* between volumetric fragmentation and formal unity;
- Chromatic *balance* between building and context;
- *Balance* between architectural object and urban ground.

The permeability of the ground floor and the articulation of open spaces transform the building into an urban infrastructure capable of generating new relationships. Starting from this core, the areas identified within Villard:25 and some of the projects

5 R. Piano, *Il rammendo delle periferie. Interventi per le periferie*, «Il Sole 24 Ore», 26 January 2014. The theory of «urban mending» is synthesized in this well-known manifesto published in the national press and further developed through the work of the senator for life within the G124 working group. Piano argues that the future of the city lies in its peripheries, understood as «factories of desire» yet often marked by fragility and neglect. The metaphor of mending refers to a strategy of targeted, light-touch interventions capable of triggering regeneration processes without resorting to traumatic demolition.

6 J. Gottmann, *Megalopoli. Funzioni e relazioni di una pluri-città* (1961), Einaudi, Torino 1969. The geographer Jean Gottmann introduces the term «Megalopolis». The author describes a new urban phenomenon in which multiple cities, while retaining their individual identities, merge into a single, interdependent system characterized by intense flows of people, goods, and information.

developed – forming the basis for the exercises proposed in WAVe – demonstrate how contemporary regeneration can be understood as a practice of adaptive *balance*. The proposed strategies operate through:

- The integration of ecological and infrastructural systems;
- The enhancement of memory as a design resource;
- The activation of public space as a relational platform.

From this perspective, projects do not define fixed forms; rather, they construct open conditions capable of evolving over time.

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On Architectural Balance as a Tectonic Thesis

A harmonious composition is necessarily balanced, whereas a balanced composition is not necessarily harmonious.[1]

1. Edges: Defining, Delimiting, Balancing

Balancing in architecture constitutes an essential compositional theme, acting as a 'building material' for the project that extends beyond the building itself into the dimensions of history, time, and context through their innumerable points of tangency. As a 'material', balancing presupposes specific 'weights and measures', techniques, design methods, and aims of differing significance.

Equilibrium in a work may be achieved through the act of balancing both the internal and external aspects of architectural form, as well as its relationship with the site in which it is situated. This process focuses on exploring the architectural body to establish its boundaries within the urban or territorial context. It is, in fact, the edges that describe the morphological envelope of an architecture in relation to a context whose destiny they reinterpret.

The equilibrium of a work, attained through the balancing of its edges, determines the quality of architecture, its proportions, and its expressive force. It is therefore not an absolute value, but rather the result of a compensated relationship among the «*points d'interférence*»[2] that compose it. The compositional registers of balancing push a construction to extend beyond its own plastic boundaries: it is a relationship between the historical conditions of the work and the ways in which it proposes a critical interpretation of them.

2. Balancing as a Principle of Compositional Convergence

Beyond its purely formal dimension, the pursuit of equilibrium constitutes a methodological stance that expresses the essence of architecture as a constructive discipline, in which balancing operates as a 'force of convergence' within the compositional process, a search for stability and measure that finds correspondence in

1 F. Melotti, *Linee*, Adelphi, Milano 1981, p. 21. Translated by the author.
2 R. Klein, *La Forme et l'intelligible. Écrits sul la Renaissance et l'Art moderne*, Gallimard, Paris 1975.

Leon Battista Alberti's notion of *gradatio*[3], understood as a synthesis of the hierarchy of parts and their qualification.

The act of balancing entails identifying the compositional barycenter and is therefore a matter of morphological and perceptual counterweights, of harmony and intentions. Consequently, it implies the problem of defining a spatial hierarchy based on the distribution of the proportional dynamic centers of the architectural body, intervals, interruptions, repetitions, and sequences.

Balancing, proportioning, and measuring thus become how an architecture is stabilized, placing its masses in a 'state of rest' and compensating for the tension between form, weight, and *gravitas*[4].

3. 'Declaring Structure' through Detail

Within the tension between unbalance and *balance*, an architectural work always represents the «point of encounter between diverse formative forces, sometimes in conflict with one another»[5].

The attainment of equilibrium in architecture therefore requires the definition of a proportional schema – an order established through the regulating lines of the project – which may be achieved by 'declaring the structure', that is, by composing and decomposing the spatial grid of an architecture: form, use, and constructive elements; history, site, and time, to reach a condition of morphological stability.

The formal potential of the grid, in relation to the tectonic problem of weight, defines the relational value that shapes form.

3 The notion of gradatio is argued by Paolo Portoghesi in the *Introduction* to L.B. Alberti, *L'Architettura* (*De re Aedificatoria*), Il Polifilo, Milano 1966, p. XXXVIII.

4 On the relationship between architectural construction and gravitas and tectonics, see S. Marpillero, *L'insostenibile pesantezza dell'architettura*, in «Rassegna», 36 (*Minimal*), September 1988, pp. 66-73. K. Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture. The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 1999.

5 E. Guidoni, *Equilibrio*, in P. Portoghesi (ed.), *Dizionario di architettura e urbanistica*, vol. II, Istituto Editoriale Romano, Roma 1963, pp. 45-57. Translated by the author.

The issue of «*valori plastici accidentali*» (accidental plastic values)[6] becomes one of volumetric convergence in space, a datum of proportion, and the pursuit of harmony, that is, *concinnitas*.

This might suggest that balancing is univocally understood as a condition of commensurate equilibrium, from the whole to its constituent parts. However, this relationship may be reconsidered by viewing the overall morphological equilibrium of a work as the result of the interaction among its constructive details, which condense its «*valeurs de solidité ou de resistance*»[7], that is, its morphological, material, and perceptual characteristics.

The constructive discipline of balancing, as a barycentric force converging formal weights within details, represents a thesis of 'tectonic stability'. It anticipates the search for conditions of compositional stability realized both in relation to the Semperian category of the building base in its contact with the ground and to the rooting of architecture in a cultural foundation. These are the conditions of belonging that guide the search for the 'rest of form', thus opening a reflection on the meaning of balancing in architecture.

Critically reinterpreted through the project as a process of ordered composition, balancing always occurs within the morphological contest between «Time and the Architectural Project»[8], as well as within the tension between physical foundations and disciplinary grounding in culture. By reconsidering construction details as essential tectonic forces concentrated within an overall form, the rigid reading of the static configuration of form-matter may be overcome. Architectural balancing can thus be understood as a theme-development: a morphological process, a dynamic flow mindful of permanence yet open to transformation.

6 G. Pagano, *Tre anni di architettura in Italia*, in «Casabella», 110, February 1937, pp. 2-5.

7 R. Klein, J. Guillerme, *L'esthétique mathématique*, in «Sciences et l'einsegnement des sciences», 26, 1963, pp. 45-57.

8 According to the definition proposed by Vittorio Gregotti in *Tempo e Progetto*, Skira, Milano 2020, that is, time understood as the «inevitable material of the project, offered by the present in relation to the history of its own discipline and to its context». Translated by the author.

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Bacteria and Insects within Plants with Animals, versus Human and against Humanoid

At the microbial level, spatial intelligence is governed by metabolic exchanges with environment. *Hafnia alvei* bacteria specie occupies surfacial biofilms through multi-stage spatial process. This mechanism is governed by «Quorum Sensing»[1], which acts as a «chemical census»[2] to coordinate group behavior in architectural structures of their collonies. This process begins when each individual bacteria adhere to a feeding surface whose adhering enzyme produces signal AHLs molecules. When AHL molecules concentration reaches a threshold, they bind to the HalR/LuxR receptors[3]. Activating these receptors they further trigger secondary signal to activate expression of genes responsible for building the biofilm matrix. This autopoiesis process becomes «necessary and sufficient condition for a system to be a living one»[4]. Similarly, various insect colonies exemplify distributed spatial intelligence. Termites build massive mounds with internal 'lungs'. They don't follow a blueprint. Instead, they respond to local changes in CO_2 levels and temperature. By moving soil to where the airflow feels wrong, thousands of individuals collectively create a sophisticated ventilation system that maintains a near-constant internal climate. This phenomenon is called 'stigmergy', where «each wasp receives building instructions from the local configuration of existing cells where certain configurations act as stimuli for further construction»[5]. This term describes biological spatiality as a dynamic organization emerging from changes in environmental forces and their temporal rhythms.

1 Y. Zhu, H. Hou, G. Zhang, Y. Wang, H. Hao, *AHLs Regulate Biofilm Formation and Swimming Motility of Hafnia alvei H4*, «Frontiers in Microbiology », 10(1330), 19 June 2019, available online at https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/microbiology/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2019.01330/full, accessed on 30/04/2026.
2 Ivi, p. 2.
3 Ivi, pp. 2-5.
4 H. Maturana, F. Varela, *De Máquinas y Seres Vivos. Autopoiesis: La organización de lo vivo*, Editorial Universitaria S.A., Santiago De Chile 1972; en. transl. *Autopoiesis and Cognition. The Realization of the Living*, Reidel, London 1972, p. 84.
5 A. Meyboom, D. Reeves, *Stigmergic Space*, in P. Beesley, O. Khan, M. Stacey (eds.), *Acadia 2013. Adaptive Architecture*, Acadia-Riverside Architectural Press, Fargo-Cambridge ON 2013, p. 200.

Furthermore, J.W. Goethe posited temporal concept of *The Urpflanze* in his milestone oeuvre *Metamorphosis of Plants*. It represents a dynamic source code or metamorphic principles where all parts of a certain plant structure are derived from fundamental unit of an «archetypal plant»[6]. That being so Goethe proposed that all plant organs are leaves modified in their governed growth and adaptations to different values of the environmental place of growth. Thus, argued by Emanuele Coccia, plants architecture is an «embedded and temporal process»[7].

Therefrom, architectural theoritician S. Kwinter identified term 'chreod' (derived from the Greek *khre* for 'determined' and *hodos* for 'pathway') to describe *Urpflanze* not as static object but a directed route. It is a template that guides how virtual forces are actualized into material reality. Hereby, Kwinter redefines Form as an «event»[8] rather than a fixed object. He also refers to C.H. Waddington's concept of the Epigenetic Landscape to describe synthesis of plant formations and «animal instictive bodily behaviors»[9]. They are assumed as a process of matter 'falling' into these virtual *chreods* to become a recognizable structure.

Drawing on Leibniz, one views the animal bodily behavior and spatial recognition as a mirror image of its environment. In his essay *African Genesis*, Kwinter argues that animals are shaped deeply by the situational forces of the African plain. It applies to social carnivores like lions or wild dogs where he refers to René Thom's catastrophe theory. He explains that as long as their system stays within a certain region of living event, their bodily form is stable. «Crossing of the threshold»[10] of this region results in a sudden jump to a new stable form. Kwinter describes the capture of prey, or an act of lioness leaving

6 J.W. von Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790), The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 2009, p. XVII.
7 E. Coccia, *The Life of Plants. A Metaphysics of Mixture*, Polity Press, Cambridge UK 2018, p. 39.
8 S. Kwinter, *Architectures of Time. Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 2001, p. 13.
9 S. Kwinter, *Landscapes of Change. Boccioni's 'Stati d'animo' as a General Theory of Models*, «Journal Assemblage», 19, December 1992, p. 62.
10 Ivi, p. 61.

her capture behind only when exact numbers of hyennas occupy her surrounding as a rhythmic contraction in spatial recognition. Moreover, an emergence of animal organization in terms of spatial bodily and extrovert behavior is instinctively initiated act of visible «contraction of memory into matter»[11].

Visibility hereby refers to notion of understanding of *eidos* consisting of animal instinctive act of survival and spatial representation of an event. Both can be seen and thereby declared as a single visible form.

Hereby Kwinter ecstatically introduces the idea of radical *anamnesis* recalling forgotten potentials of reality while emphasizing «the imagination's escape from the sterile logic of what is»[12]. It shifts from: 1) what a building is (object oriented ontology) to 2) what it perceptively represents, and how it is, cognitively understood. Plato's *Timaeus* describes the birth of the cosmos as an inevitable «standing-together (*systasis*)»[13] of those two in *eidos* duality of necessity and mind.

This kind of speculative negation of material representation of architecture is in its closest state of physical in/stability in *Shikinen Sengu* regenerative cycle of *Ise Jingu*. This constant process of deconstruction and construction exactly avoids the impurity of decay. It reflects the closest state of being twofold 'being there' and 'standing there' in an always novel architectural *oeuvre* that never permanently remains or perishes. Nonetheless, even though the shrine shifts its position every 20 years at both lands remains *shin-no-mihashira* pillar covered by small *oi-ya* construct. *Oi-ya* represents constant presence of *kami* sacred spirit. It also represents 'mental blueprint' of carpenter abstract intent and construction knowledge that conditions an object of final user's sensory experience. That makes *eidos* state of 'being there' omnipresent architectural construct of the shrine.

11 S. Kwinter, *African Genesis*, 1998, «Assemblage», 36, 1998, p. 40.
12 Id., *Far from Equilibrium. Essays on Technology and Design Culture*, Actar, Barcelona 2008, p. 141.
13 Plato, *Timaeus*, en. transl. *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, edited by R.G. Bury, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 1929, S.P. 32c.

Thence, one imposes on novel ai technologies as a mean to refer to a «new type of Man namely Overman (*Übermensch*)»[14], a new kind of architect. This *Overman* is capable to produce immaterial state of architectural 'Standing there' to be in closest state of experiential 'Being there'. Thus, ai tools «makes us finely calibrated to fit those of a new machinic workplace-society into which s/he is to be seamlessly integrated»[15]. Humanoids as early introduced by Norbert Wiener, are currently argued through living organisms and machine learning. Their «process of receiving and of using information is the process of their adjusting to the contingencies of the outer environment»[16], while resulting in soft equilibrium of architectural formal appearance.

14 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, Schmeitzner, Chemnitz 1883; en. transl. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, edited by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, London 1961, p. 41.

15 S. Kwinter, *The Computational Fallacy*, in A. Menges, S. Ahlquist (eds.), Computational Design Thinking, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester 2011, p. 211.

16 N. Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings. Cybernetics and Society*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1950, p. 96

FARAGUNA
Andrea Faraguna

Balance. On the Default

Every concept carries the conditions of its own emergence. *Bilanx*, two plates suspended from a beam, is a technology of equivalence, developed historically as an instrument of exchange, that architecture has absorbed so thoroughly into its critical vocabulary that the absorption is no longer visible[1]. The scales does not measure things as they are. It measures them as they have been made commensurable, available to a logic of exchange that requires the prior abstraction of everything specific about them. To speak of *balance* is, often unknowingly, to extend that logic, to treat the entanglements of a site, a history, a programme as quantities that can be settled rather than as forces that resist settlement.

The discipline's affection for *balance* as a term of approval is not a neutral aesthetic preference. It is the symptom of a deeper accommodation, in which the rhetoric of measure performs the work of depoliticisation, translating decisions that are historical, infrastructural, and contested into questions of taste. The balanced building is the building that has made its peace with the existing distribution of forces. These are political postures, professionally rehearsed until they appear to be common sense.

What this rehearsal conceals is something the rhetoric of *balance* has structural reasons not to acknowledge: that *balance* is not rare. It is the default condition of everything that exists. A ruin is in *balance*. An abandoned site accumulating decades of erosion is in continuous, self-adjusting equilibrium. Any system, given sufficient time, finds its lowest energy state. *Balance* is what prevails in the absence of intention. The building that performs *balance* has accomplished approximately what would have happened anyway, while collecting the discipline's highest praise for having accomplished it.

A site is not a stable condition to be respected. It is an entanglement: a dense, multi-directional field of geological, historical, atmospheric, political, and spatial forces, most of which are

1 The Latin *bilanx* combines *bi-* (two) and *lanx* (plate), extending into a metaphor for justice and rational measure from Roman legal culture through medieval mercantile practice to the Enlightenment codification of quantitative reason as the foundation of value.

invisible, many of which are in irreducible contradiction with each other. Keller Easterling's concept of *disposition* offers a precise instrument for reading this field: not what a space contains, but the way it behaves, the latent tendencies produced by the interaction of all its components[2]. What presents itself as context is not the field itself but its current suppression. The forces that lost, the histories driven underground, the spatial potentials the existing fabric prevents from emerging, are not absent. They exert pressure that the visible equilibrium is continuously working to contain.

The entanglement precedes architecture and will outlast it. The architect who understands this does not ask how to *balance* the forces at work, but which forces are being held down by the current equilibrium, and what would become legible if that equilibrium were disturbed. This is the argument for disequilibrium as a design position: not provocation, but the most honest response to the actual condition of the field. The project that matters is not the one that achieves a new unified *balance*, but the one that enters this field with sufficient precision that the forces previously invisible are suddenly, briefly, readable. Not resolved, rendered legible. Held open[3].

The emotions this produces are not meditative. They are the unruly emotions of the encounter with something unresolved: discomfort, recognition, the vertigo of understanding that what one is standing in has a depth the surface gave no indication of. Architecture that triggers these emotions does not make a place easier to inhabit. It makes it impossible to inhabit without awareness, and awareness, in a field as ideologically saturated as the built environment, is already a form of resistance.

2 Disposition is the behavior that emerges from the interaction of all components of a field: «not the pattern printed on the fabric but the way the fabric floats». K. Easterling, *Extrastatecraft. The Power of Infrastructure Space*, Verso, London-New York 2014, p. 21.

3 The figure of the architect as someone who summons invisible forces has affinities with what Georges Didi-Huberman, drawing on Walter Benjamin, calls the «dialectical image». See G. Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Les Édition de Minuit, Paris 2003; en. transl. *Images in Spite of All. Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2008.

Federico Campagna's recent counter-history of the Mediterranean offers a theoretical grounding for this position. In *Otherworlds*, Campagna argues that what distinguishes Mediterranean cultures across millennia is not their capacity for synthesis but their familiarity with collapse, their ability to construct meaning from fragments that do not resolve into a unified whole[4]. The Mediterranean has survived repeated world-endings not by restoring equilibrium but by learning to inhabit its absence, treating disequilibrium not as a problem to be solved but as the medium through which new realities are constructed.

This intelligence has an architectural inheritance the rhetoric of *balance* has refused to acknowledge. The Venetian school read urban history as a field of unresolved forces in which the encounter between the new and the existing is detailed rather than reconciled, its contradictions kept legible[5].

Balance is what happens automatically, given time. It requires nothing. What requires something, what demands attention and the willingness to remain in the unresolved field rather than retreat into the rhetoric of professional good taste, is the opposite: the capacity to summon what has been suppressed, give form to contradiction without covering it, and produce work that is legible precisely in its refusal to be comfortable[6].

4 F. Campagna, *Otherworlds. Mediterranean Lessons on Escaping History*, Bloomsbury, London 2025.

5 From Saverio Muratori through Aldo Rossi to Manfredo Tafuri, the Venetian school's engagement with urban history as a field of unresolved forces remains the most rigorous twentieth-century formulation of this position.

6 Counterpoint was theorised in Venice by Gioseffo Zarlino as a system for managing irresolvable tensions productively, producing harmony through their controlled suspension rather than their elimination. See G. Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni Harmoniche*, Francesco Senese, Venezia 1558.

Felgendreher Olfs Köchling
Christina Köchling

Unglued Timber Constructions in Thuringia

Thuringia is a federal state in eastern Germany, in which the Bauhaus University of Weimar is located. Thanks to its abundance of woodland, the state earned the nickname «the green heart of Germany»[1] already in 1897. The Thuringian Forest is a low mountain range reaching a height of 982.9 meters above sea level and covering a good 1000 square kilometers. The region developed from an uninhabited forest area into an industrialized region around 1000 years ago. Early settlement was driven by mining (iron ore) and glassmaking. In the Middle Ages and early modern period, the region was a center of glass production, aided by abundant wood and quartz sand[2]. The forest was intensively exploited as a 'clear-cut region' for glass production. Before human intervention, mixed forests of beech, fir and spruce dominated, in contrast to today's widespread spruce monocultures. These spruce forests are now severely affected by extreme weather caused by climate change and a bark beetle infestation in 2023: 23 per cent of the tree population is so damaged that it urgently needs to be reforested. The forests are suffering severely from so-called drought stress, which weakens the trees' defences and leaves them vulnerable to fungi, beetles, storms and fires. A return to more climate-resilient mixed forests is essential, and human intervention for reforestation is unavoidable[3].

A visit to the small towns of the Thuringian Forest makes it immediately apparent that Thuringia is facing a difficult economic situation, characterized by persistent economic weakness, a declining population and vacant buildings. Since German reunification in 1990, Thuringia has undergone a profound transformation that has affected urban and rural areas to varying degrees. Whilst cities such as Erfurt and Jena have developed into economic hubs, rural areas often struggle with depopulation and infrastructure

1 A. Trinius, *Thüringen. Das grüne Herz Deutschlands*, Abel & Müller, Leipzig 1939.
2 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thueringer_Wald, accessed on 30/04/2026.
3 *Rund ein Viertel der Wälder muss aufgeforstet werden*, in «Spiegel. Waldsterben», 27/04/2025, available online at https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/natur/rund-ein-viertel-der-waelder-muss-aufgeforstet-werden-a-d12ba11f-1d22-4ba0-bca4-522baaaef632, accessed on 30/04/2026.

problems. Companies we visited on a field trip complain of a shortage of skilled workers and a lack of demand for quality products.

The Baukultur Thüringen Foundation states in its program:

> We connect people who are shaping change, support bold ideas and raise the profile of Thuringia's building culture. Through alliances and working groups, we pool regional resources and support committed individuals and institutions in their work towards a building transition. We can all clearly see and feel the ejects of a planet that has reached its limits. Starting with what we already have is the ejective response to our challenges. For existing buildings and infrastructure contain vast amounts of energy, emissions and materials, but also important social and cultural dimensions. Consistently preserving and continuing to use these – whether as buildings or infrastructure, as building materials or land – would not only bring us closer to achieving our climate targets. That is why the Foundation is committed to fostering a culture of renovation through alliances, projects and educational initiatives.[4]

In this summer semester at the Studio Bauentwurfslehre at the Bauhaus-University we are exploring 'unglued timber constructions'. Three themes relating to energy and material savings are in our focus:

1. Short, rectangular timber components for structures mean minimal manufacturing effort, short transport distances and simple construction methods. Material can be sourced locally and worked by local carpenters.

2. When whole tree trunks are used as load-bearing components, the entire cross- section of the trunk can be utilized structurally and there is no waste.

3. In the case of glue-free timber structures, the joints can be dismantled and the components reused at a later date.

4 Baukultur Thüringen Foundation website, available online at www.baukultur-thueringen.de, accessed on 30/04/2026.

To address the necessary new approach to afforestation, timber production and cultural enhancement of the built environment for Thuringia, students at the Studio Bauentwurfslehre are designing a seed drying shed, an extension to a sawmill and an indoor swimming pool. To take the research topic of 'unglued timber constructions' a step further, we intend to work with students from the Università Iuav di Venezia on renovation designs for vacant, profane buildings in Thuringia as part of WAVe 2026.

The concept of *balance* can be understood here as «the meeting point between opposing forces: stability and change, memory and innovation, natural and artificial, permanence and transformation»[5] as specified in the WAVe 2026 program. The design aims to both preserve and utilize Thuringia's existing resources and contribute to a positive and feasible transformation.

Ruins in Thuringia will be transformed with roofs or extensions. Contemporary requirements are to be met using economical, unglued timber components as locally sourced materials. We will refer to material-saving construction methods of the 1920s and 1950s. These will be adapted to meet the new requirement of future reusability, meaning they will be designed to be dismantled. The new use of hardwood or metal joints can reduce timber cross-sections; sourcing materials locally saves on transport, whilst shorter components save energy and reduce the need for industrial processes during assembly. The aesthetics of the joints and the associated architectural expression thereby will be contemporary. The unglued constructions appeal through their simplicity, local craftsmanship and their connection to the site and symbolize the potential and self-reliance of Thuringia's new building culture.

5 Quote from WAVe 2026' official program.

Jean-Benoît Vétillard architecture, Piovenefabi
Jean-Benoît Vétillard, Ambra Fabi, Giovanni Piovene

Peso quindi sono

Balance constitutes a fundamental condition of existence, at the intersection of the body, matter, and social structures. Far from being a stable or definitive state, it involves a continuous adjustment between forces in tension. Through weight – understood both as a physical reality, a unit of exchange, and a normative metaphor – a transversal reading of *balance* emerges, shaping the way we inhabit the world.

Part 1: Balance as a bodily experience rooted in gravity

For the human body, to exist is first to resist a force pulling it toward the ground. Standing upright, walking, and moving all involve a series of constant micro-adjustments, a fine coordination between perception and action. Weight is not merely a measurable datum; it is a lived experience, a constraint we must continuously negotiate. *Balance* thus becomes a practice, an ongoing production rather than an achieved state. This physical condition extends directly into architecture. To build is to organize masses, distribute loads, and negotiate with gravity. Every structure results from a compromise between downward forces and structural resistance. The elevation of a building does not eliminate weight; it makes it legible, channels it, and redistributes it. Architecture stages an unstable *balance*, where collapse remains possible but is continually deferred through technical control.

Part 2: Weight as a medium of social and economic exchange

Weight exceeds its physical dimension to become a tool of mediation between individuals. It structures economic exchange by providing a common basis for measurement and comparison. Exchanging goods means establishing equivalence between quantities of matter according to collectively recognized values.

The example of an equivalence between 10 kilograms of potatoes and an infinitesimal quantity of gold (Based on gold prices as of April 27, 2026, 10 kilograms of potatoes correspond to approximately 0.15 grams of pure gold 24 carats) highlights the arbitrary yet functional nature of such systems. Weight becomes a shared language, enabling transactions and stabilizing relationships. Yet these equivalences are not natural; they rely on conventions and

agreements among actors with sometimes divergent interests. Economic *balance* thus appears as a social construction, shaped by negotiation and power relations. It is always subject to revision, displacement, and redefinition. In this sense, weight reveals another form of *balance*: a relational *balance*, produced through interaction and dependent on cultural and historical contexts.

Part 3: Balance as a symbolic and normative principle

Balance takes on a symbolic dimension in the organization of societies. Individual and collective behaviors are regulated by systems of norms that function like metaphorical scales. Law, justice, and social rules are grounded in an idea of measure: weighing actions, assessing responsibilities, and establishing proportionality between fault and sanction. This logic of *balance* is rooted in a long symbolic tradition. In ancient Egypt, the weighing of the heart – psychostasia – offers a particularly explicit illustration. The heart of the deceased, considered the seat of one's actions, was compared to a feather symbolizing truth and justice. Access to eternal life depended on this *balance* – that is, on the ability to achieve moral equilibrium. This image reflects a conception of order based on accuracy and proportion. In contemporary societies, this idea persists in secularized forms: legal institutions seek to maintain a *balance* between individual freedoms and collective constraints, between rights and duties. Yet this *balance* remains unstable, constantly readjusted in response to social change.

Across its physical, economic, and symbolic dimensions, weight emerges as a central operator of *balance*. It is not merely a measurable quantity but an organizing principle that structures our relationship to the world. Architecture, as both a technical and cultural discipline, lies at the intersection of these dimensions. It materializes balances, makes tensions visible, and proposes forms capable of accommodating instability. In this sense, it does not simply respond to constraints; it enacts a way of thinking about *balance* as a dynamic condition of existence.

LAN (Local Architecture Network)
Umberto Napolitano

Balance. What Resists Resolution

Balance is often described as the point at which opposing forces meet and stabilize. Yet architecture rarely encounters such moments. What it encounters instead are conditions that resist resolution.

To speak of *balance* today is not to describe a state, but to name a tension that cannot be settled.

Architecture is not the art of *balance*. It is a practice that operates within imbalance.

The contemporary condition is defined less by equilibrium than by the accumulation of forces acting at different scales and speeds: environmental urgencies, economic constraints, historical layers, and social transformations. These forces do not align. They interfere, overlap, and often contradict one another. In this context, *balance* cannot be achieved. It can only be approached.

Architecture is not the synthesis of opposites. It is the capacity to hold them together without erasing their differences[1].

This shift becomes evident when considering the role of memory. Architecture has long been understood as a medium of permanence, capable of stabilizing identity through form. Yet memory itself is neither stable nor continuous. It is selective, fragmented, and constantly rewritten. To build today is not to preserve memory as a fixed image, but to engage with its instability.

Balance is not found between memory and innovation. It emerges from their friction.

A similar displacement appears in the ecological question. Environmental discourse often frames architecture as a search for *balance* between the natural and the artificial. Yet this opposition

1 G. Simmel, *The Conflict in Modern Culture* (1918), in *The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays*, Teachers College Press, New York 1968, pp. 11-26.

has become increasingly untenable. The environments we inhabit are already transformed, mediated, and constructed. There is no return to a prior equilibrium.

Architecture is not the restoration of a lost *balance*. It is the organization of new relations within already hybrid systems[2].

Time introduces another layer of complexity. Buildings are often conceived as stable objects inserted into a changing context. In reality, both evolve. Buildings are modified, extended, reinterpreted; their uses shift and escape the intentions of the original project.

Balance does not belong to the moment of completion. It unfolds through duration[3].

This temporal condition transforms the role of form. Form is no longer the resolution of a problem, but the provisional state of an ongoing process. What appears stable is often the result of continuous adjustments, whether visible or not. The project does not fix a condition; it frames its possible transformations. Architecture is not a finished object. It is a structure capable of absorbing change.

At this point, the question of scale becomes unavoidable. Many of the imbalances that define our time – climate change, resource distribution, territorial fragmentation – exceed the scope of individual projects. And yet architecture operates precisely at that scale, intervening locally while being implicated in global systems.

Balance is not the alignment of scales. It is the awareness of their mismatch[4].

2 B. Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais ete modernes. Essais d'anthropologie symmetrique*, La Découverte, Paris 1991; en. transl. *We Have Never Been Modern*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 1991.

3 S. Brand, *How Buildings Learn. What Happens After They're Built*, Viking, New York 1994.

4 S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton University Press, New York 2006.

In this sense, architecture does not resolve imbalance; it reveals it. It makes visible the tensions that structure the contemporary condition. It gives them form, not in order to stabilize them, but to render them intelligible.

Architecture is not the production of order. It is the articulation of complexity.

If *balance* still has meaning today, it may lie here: not in the idea of a stable equilibrium, but in the capacity to maintain a condition of openness. To resist closure. To accept that every project remains provisional, situated, and incomplete.

Balance is not a state to achieve. It is what persists when resolution is no longer possible[5].

5 See also the notion of 'open systems' in contemporary theory.

PARABASE
Carla Ferrando, Pablo Garrido Arnaiz

Toward an Unbalanced Architecture

Architecture is the discipline of *balance par excellence*. Unlike the other original fine arts (always helpful not to forget which is the first of them), built architecture must comply with an obvious relationship to gravity that allows its existence while not endangering various forms of life and diverse entities around or inside it. On an immaterial level, architecture's very condition of impure art[1] obliges it to maintain a series of balances that have been discussed and theorized since the very beginnings of the discipline: the Vitruvian *firmitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas*, or Alberti's *concinnitas*, just to name the most obvious ones, are counted among them. The set of supposed balances that would guarantee harmony between parts, has also been pursued through orders and multiple proportional systems. Classical architecture read the orders in parallel to the human body, transferring that scale of magnitudes to buildings. The quote by Michelangelo is the one that perhaps illustrates it best: the limbs of architecture are derived from the limbs of man[2].

Nowadays, as architects, we are faced with a similar list of conditions to be kept in *balance*, just that it has grown exponentially: price per square meter, net area versus gross area, amount of material and its corresponding particle emissions, volume versus envelope surface, users per number of evacuation routes, roof area per number of supports, occupancy versus total surface or glass surface per opaque surface. These endless series of precarious balances, mandatory if we want to build, is today so dominant that design decisions often end up being made in suffocating spreadsheets. *balance* in contemporary architecture is an Excel file.

Paradoxically, these same notions of efficiency, optimization, and supposed overall *balance* have led us into a dead end, in which the construction industry is counted among the main responsible of a climate change that is destroying our planet. It is precisely against this false logic that we must rebel, because it is in the name of modern *balance* that we are destroying life on Earth, and

1 A. Capitel, *La arquitectura como arte impuro*, Fundación Caja de Arquitectos-Fundación Arquia, Barcelona 2012.

2 M. Buonarroti, *The Letters of Michelangelo*, edited by E.H. Ramsden, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1963.

because the antidotes to this destruction may well reside in the realm of the non-balanced.

We are moving into a new, unknown territory. In this context of multiple collapse, reuse, among other circular strategies, forces us to question these obsolete architectural notions: what conventionally is understood as efficient, optimize or even balanced, must therefore be reconsidered. If we build architecture with reused components, they will be necessarily oversized. Their performance, at every level, by definition, will always be either below or above what is strictly 'necessary'. And yet, depending on context, those building components will be appropriate. Understanding CO_2 as a currency in its own right, it might finally force us to find a new *balance* between monetary and carbon values but, most importantly, to de-fossilize construction. This way, architecture can offer an alternative to the usual order of things, bypassing the logic of capitalist axioms[3].

Humans do not learn through invention, but through the comprehension of models, examples and references[4]. However, in this new paradigm of reuse, we can no longer compare our designs with our built environment to determine the efficiency or the *balance* of our designs. Those traditional conventions in architecture are partly originated in the scientific belief that all things tend toward *balance*, toward rest. This condition means that there is no exchange, neither of matter, nor of energy, nor of information with the surrounding. Therefore, those objects, phenomena and systems are essentially dead.

In opposition, this new architectural paradigm approaches the complex present reality with more plausible models, far from *balance* and in continuous interaction with other entities from very different domains. In these open systems that exchange energy, matter and information with their environment, new forms of organization can emerge from apparent chaos and disorder.

3 M. Angélil, *99¢ Architecture – Story of a California Countryside Construction Experiment*, «Trans» (*Spolia*), 46, September 2025, pp. 23-25.

4 J. Gomá Lanzón, *Imitación y experiencia*, Pre-Textos, Valencia 2003.

What Anthropocene has revealed is precisely a crisis of the human scale. The proportion of buildings no longer depend on rules based on comparison with human measurements. Instead, each building establishes its own means of comparison. The scale that constructs relationships of proportion, harmony and *balance* can be established by the very components that constitute architecture: materials, components and structures. Architecture no longer has a single scale or, conversely, it has many and they are ambiguous. Objects have ceased to have a conventional internal order to adopt a self-referential system of scale.

Baudrillard states in *Fatal Strategies*[5] that postmodern society, and architecture with it, is characterized by having left behind the principle of dialectics, the principle of *balance*. Thus, we no longer seek a dialectical counterweight to the ugly (that is, the beautiful), but rather something more beautiful than the beautiful, uglier than the ugly, and so on. We have left behind a Hegelian model by which the world evolves through dialectical opposition. Architecture is feed by an aesthetics of limits and cross-references that neither cancel nor oppose each other, they simply seduce one another.

More than ever, architecture is designed by induction, not deduction. Architectural form becomes the result of such exploration, assuming a landscape of data derived from the requirements behind it. Design intuition is replaced by research: hypotheses that observe, extrapolate, analyze, and challenge our standards. The passion for uniformization and compliance with standards, is gradually turning architecture into smooth surfaces compatible with market exchanges, now considered the measure of all things.

The architectural project is constructed and defined through time and action. We trust in the process. The complexity of decision-making processes and protocols enables flexibility and freedom in future possibilities and extensions. That is why perhaps Tania Pérez Córdova states that buildings as very slow events[6].

5 J. Baudrillard, *Les tratégies fatales*, Bernard Grasset, Paris 1983; en. transl. *Fatal Strategies*, edited by J. Fleming, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 1990.

6 M. Arriola, E. Filipovic, H. Moro, T. Pérez Córdova, J. Vanegas, *Tania Pérez Córdova. Generalization*, Gregory R. Miller & Co, Ciudad de México 2024.

Procedures allow design to open up to modification, disassemble or adaptation to new conditions. They are temporary, non-linear. Reuse of components also entails the coexistence of different temporalities, in which historical distance and narrative simultaneity are continually intertwined. This way, reuse it is also an invitation to consider the past as an unstable phenomenon in constant change[7].

Heterogeneity is a general condition of the contemporary, surely a product of individualization, but it is not an obstacle to the falsely desired unity. Difference, series, patterns or protocols can also construct unity without the original parts losing their independence. Local decisions transform the *balance* of the whole without submitting to the rigidity of general regulations.

This characterizes a mode of thought generated by simultaneities and parallelisms. Strong mutual interactions between components, feedback loops, steps forward and backward, even come to modify the origins of things. Architectural thinking assumes a discontinuous, fluctuating order. To design means to establish a procedure of successive definition. To design is to negotiate. The process follows a non-linear path. There are no longer only cause-and-effect relationships or purely scientific modes of thought. Non-linearity concerns developments in which phases that should, in principle, be successive instead occur simultaneously.

Architecture is now a complex network continuously outside *balance*, that is, a living system. More than a new way of designing, it is about putting into dialogue all the elements at play, not only those of tradition but everything within our reach, in order to create new, plausible and unprecedented metaphors. At all times, heterogeneity and unbalance are the architect's new tools.

7 S. Settis (ed.), *Recycling Beauty*, Fondazione Prada, Milano 2022.

PERIS+TORAL ARQUITECTES
Marta Peris, José Toral

Balancing

Talking about *balance* is not an abstract choice, but a contemporary necessity. Architecture is facing the exhaustion of a model based on extraction, production, consumption and disposal, with evident effects: climate crisis, resource scarcity, rising costs, biodiversity loss and social fragility. In the face of this systemic malaise, *balance* emerges as a possible cure: not as a nostalgic return to lost stability, but as a critical tool to redefine how much to build, with what means, for whom and with what consequences.

Balance refers to multiple meanings: *adjustment*, *accounting*, *restraint*, *compensation*, *equilibrium*, and *oscillation*. This ambivalence is a conceptual opportunity: it allows the project to shift from object to process, from the search for fixed stability to a practice of continuous adjustment.

Balance as adjustment means replacing maximization with sufficiency. For decades, architectural progress has been associated with improvement: greater efficiency, better performance, greater control. But this logic has reached its limit. As William Stanley Jevons pointed out, efficiency does not necessarily reduce consumption; it often increases it. In architecture, this paradox becomes accumulation: more layers, more systems, more technology. Complexity, cost and material use rise. The quest for the best ceases to *balance* and instead produces imbalance. As Voltaire warned, the best is the enemy of the good. Adjustment, then, no longer means optimizing indefinitely, but calibrating what is necessary: not the best system, but the appropriate one; not the most complete solution, but the right one; not adding features, but aligning means, resources and ends. Sufficiency thus introduces a limit to the expansion of efficiency.

Balance as accounting and restraint compels us to view the project as economic, energy, and emissions accounting. Every construction decision has an economic cost and a carbon footprint; therefore, it is not enough to add material to meet performance requirements: its physical capacities must be fully used. Mass, inertia, insulation, hygroscopicity, and structural capacity should not be treated as independent layers but integrated into a spatial strategy. Designing consists of positioning matter to shape an active void, capable of providing comfort through

its thermodynamic behaviour: a system that regulates temperature, humidity, air, and radiation. Against the logic of adding specialized layers to address each requirement separately, restraint condenses several functions into fewer elements, reducing layers, sections, and weight. Doing less does not mean giving up, but refining. Designing makes that ledger explicit: how much it costs, how much energy it demands, how many emissions it generates, and how far it reduces – or increases – the building's economic, energy, and environmental debt. Measuring and simulating allow us to anticipate behaviour, compare alternatives, and adjust the *balance* before building.

Balance as compensation allows us to include what is usually left out of the calculation: externalities. As Arthur Pigou defined it in the early 20th century, an externality is the effect – positive or negative – that an activity has on third parties or on the environment without being reflected in its price. Architecture cannot limit itself to the direct cost of a solution; it must consider its environmental, social, productive, and territorial effects. Compensating does not mean justifying damage but guiding the project so that its external consequences can become collective value. Building with timber, for example, can stimulate the management of forest land – which in Spain covers more than 55% of the territory – fostering a forestry economy capable of reducing abandonment, biomass accumulation, and wildfire risk. Using local stone, such as Mallorcan *marés*, can revive trades, quarries, and local economies; today only sixteen active *marés* quarries remain in Mallorca, within a much larger historical landscape of extraction. Building with earth, finally, can help transform part of the concrete industry towards cleaner processes, reducing dependence on cement, a sector responsible for approximately 7-8% of global CO_2 emissions. Thus, compensation is not a subsequent operation, but a design strategy: ensuring that every material decision produces benefits beyond the building itself.

Balance as equilibrium operates between systems that cannot be optimized independently. The environmental, economic, and social spheres are not separate fields, but interdependent dimensions that affect one another. Environmental strategies are not

always economically viable; economic strategies are not always socially equitable; and social strategies are not always environmentally bearable. Equilibrium does not appear in any one of them alone, but at the point where they can be sustained simultaneously. *Balance* means finding that unstable intersection between the viable, the equitable, and the bearable: a form of moderation that prevents one dimension from imposing itself on the others.

Balance as oscillation, finally, reminds us that equilibrium is never definitive. Buildings are not closed, static objects, but open, dynamic systems, continuously exchanging energy, matter, and information with their surroundings. Their behaviour depends on their ability to adapt to changing conditions: temperature, air, humidity, radiation, or use. From this perspective, comfort is not achieved by setting a single stable condition, but by regulating multiple parameters simultaneously. If the outside temperature rises, the building can respond by increasing air velocity, reducing humidity, activating solar shading, or drawing on the thermal mass of its materials. As in living systems, there is no single path to equilibrium, only different ways of approaching the same state of well-being. Oscillation does not mean failure, but response. It means accepting that the building changes so that comfort remains.

Understood in this way, *balance* is not a final state, but a way of designing. Adjusting, containing, measuring, compensating, balancing, and oscillating are actions that shift architecture from the production of objects towards the organization of processes. Against the expansive logic of efficiency, *balance* introduces sufficiency; against the accumulation of layers, precision; against hidden externalities, responsibility; against fixed stability, adaptation. Architecture does not seek to impose a closed solution, but to remain in relation with the resources, climate, territory, and ways of life it sustains.

Profiles

WAVe 2026, through its *Balance* edition, brought together numerous international realities with the aim of fostering a dialogue between universities, professionals, and territories. The visual contribution of Bêka & Lemoine completed this unprecedented geography through diverse narrative registers, highlighting the value of space, the bodies that inhabit it, and human relationships.

Bêka & Lemoine

Artists-filmmakers working at the intersection of visual arts and non-fiction cinema, Bêka & Lemoine have, for twenty years, explored how people experience, perceive, and relate to space on emotional, social, and cultural levels through innovative narrative and cinematic forms. Their films have been widely screened and awarded at major international documentary film festivals and exhibited in both solo and collective exhibitions at leading art and architecture institutions, including Fondation Beyeler (Basel), Fondation Cartier (Paris), Fondation Prada (Milan), MAXXI (Rome), the Venice Biennale (Venice), Barbican Art Gallery (London), among others. In 2016, MoMA (New York) acquired their complete body of work produced up to that date. Their films are part of other renowned collections including MAXXI (Rome), CNAP (Paris), and Fondazione Prada (Milan). They have directed over thirty films, including Koolhaas Houselife (2008), Barbicania (2014), The Infinite Happiness (2015), Moriyama San (2017), Tokyo Ride (2020), and the 14-film urban odyssey Homo Urbanus (2017-2025). In 2023, they published the book 'The Emotional Power of Space'.

***Balance. Different Types of Equilibrium* is a small book, a breviary conceived as an initial framework for comparison and discussion on the theme of balance in architecture, in relation to the society and the historical moment in which we live. An 'archipelago' of universities, together with a number of leading international architectural practices, reflected on the meaning of the word *Balance*, the central theme of the 26th edition of WAVe (International Architecture Workshops) at Università Iuav di Venezia.**
A broad research community engaged in writing and reflection through the contributions of scholars from different parts of the world and with diverse backgrounds, with the aim of outlining a shared picture of the various realities of architectural schools and professional practices, as well as the transversal teaching and working methodologies that characterise these highly specific approaches.

American University of Sharjah, College of Architecture, Art and Design, (AUS), Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

College of Architecture, Art and Design (CAAD) is a community of makers, scholars and industry partners who believe design changes lives. From studios and labs to exhibitions and public programs, CAAD advance creative leadership that addresses real challenges and sparks new possibilities. The faculty publish, exhibit and prototype at the highest levels, while mentoring students to think critically, design responsibly and collaborate across disciplines.

Jason Carlow
Jason Carlow (1974) is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture at American University in Sharjah. He has taught architecture and design at universities worldwide for 25 years and is the co-author of Cities of Repetition (AR+D Publications, 2024).

Igor Peraza Curiel
Igor Peraza Curiel graduated from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and holds a PhD from Kumamoto University, Japan. He is Professor of Practice at the American University of Sharjah and has worked with EMBT and Arata Isozaki, integrating practice, research, and teaching.

CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India

Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, is one of the vital centres of thought and education in the field of Architecture in India. It aims for excellence in its teaching and research programs. It aims to give its students a breadth of cultural exposure that shapes a reflective and critical outlook based on social and environmental awareness and responsiveness. The faculty enjoys an excellent reputation nationally as well as internationally.

Smit Vyas
Smit Vyas is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, CEPT. He offers design studios for the undergraduate and master's program and courses in architectural history, theory, drawing and documentation. Smit heads STUDIO 4000, an award-winning design practice based out of Ahmedabad.

College of Architecture Myongji University (CAMU), Seoul, South Korea

The College of Architecture in Myongji University, consists of the majors of Architecture, Traditional Architecture, and Space Design. Related topics are actively reinforced between majors. Specialized programs focused on architectural education have the advantage that human and physical competencies can focus on architectural design education and has the curriculum system to allow for a variety of elective courses and for advanced majors.

Kyeong Jae Lee
Kyeong Jae Lee (1982) is a registered architect (KIRA, AIA, NCARB) and Assistant Professor at Myongji University, trained at Yale under Gehry and Eisenman. A decade of practice and research has been devoted to marrying the tools of the present with the slow wisdom of architecture – for design that genuinely serves people.

ETSAM Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain

The ETS de Arquitectura de Madrid is the first Special School of Architecture established in Spain, founded in 1844 as the heir to the teaching of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, which began in 1744. ETSAM's mission is to transmit knowledge with a commitment to society, in relation to architecture, building and urban planning, as well as to the challenges of scientific and technological knowledge and innovation, serving as a leading reference institution.

Nieves Mestre
Nieves Mestre (1976) is a PhD architect and Associate Professor at the ETSAM School of Architecture, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. In 2007, she co founded Combolab with Eduardo Roig, a practice focused on the critical and ecological dimensions of architecture.

Eduardo Roig
Eduardo Roig (1974) is a PhD architect and Associate Professor at the ETSAM School of Architecture, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. In 2007, he co founded Combolab with Nieves Mestre, a practice focused on the critical and ecological dimensions of architecture.

FaAAD Facultad de Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile

The Facultad de Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño of the Universidad Diego Portales is part of a city campus, which allows students to engage with the complexity of urban life and drives the promotion of interdisciplinary learning also with other disciplines, units and centres within the University. The FaAAD has academic staff who are active leaders in their fields, complementing the curriculum with the regular participation of top-level international experts, the promotion of academic placements abroad, and a wide range of exchange agreements.

Alejandra Celedón
Alejandra Celedón is an architect, Universidad de Chile (Santiago, 2003). Master from The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL (London, 2007) and PhD in Architecture from the AA School of Architecture (London, 2014). Dean of the Facultad de Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño de la Universidad Diego Portales.

New York Institute of Technology School of Architecture and Design (NYIT), New York, United States

The mission within the New York Tech School of Architecture and Design is to provide a design- and technology-based 21st-century professional education that enables leadership in the profession and within the community. Three core values, or educational aspirations, guide its approach: Design Intelligence, Building Technology and Leadership. The history of the School of Architecture and Design has been closely associated with the development of New York Tech as an institution of higher education.

Evan Shieh
Evan Shieh is an architect, urbanist, Assistant Professor at New York Institute of Technology, founding director of Emergent Studio, and a graduate of Harvard University GSD. His research and professional practice lies at architecture's intersection with urbanism, landscape, and infrastructure.

Università Iuav di Venezia, Italy

Born in 1926 as the Higher School of Architecture of Venice, Università Iuav di Venezia is today a small-sized university with a strong experimental vocation: the first among Italian universities to introduce design laboratories, its didactic model combines theoretical training in the humanities with laboratory work oriented towards making and experimentation, coordinated by architects, artists and designers.

Benno Albrecht
Benno Albrecht has been Rector of Università Iuav di Venezia since 2021. He completed his studies at Iuav with Vittorio de Feo and he then worked with Vittorio Gregotti and Leonardo Benevolo. He received architectural prizes for his projects and buildings, he won design competitions and his projects were shown in Italy and abroad.

Angelo Maggi
Angelo Maggi is professor of Architectural History, History of Architectural photography at Università Iuav di Venezia. He earned his PhD in Architecture and Visual Studies at the Edinburgh College of Art. He is full member of the PhD School in History of the Arts (Ca' Foscari University Venice) and he is acting as Vice-Rector Iuav for International Relations.

Tiziano Aglieri Rinella
Tiziano Aglieri Rinella, architect and PhD, is Associate Professor of Interior Architecture at IUAV University in Venice. He previously held academic positions in Dubai and Milan, was a Le Corbusier Foundation fellow and UNESCO consultant, and has authored over 100 publications on architecture, interiors, and Modern Heritage.

Michel Carlana
Michel Carlana (1980) graduated from the Università Iuav di Venezia, where he currently carries out collaborative and research activities. With Luca Mezzalira and Curzio Pentimalli, in 2010, he founded the architectural office Carlana Mezzalira Pentimalli based in Treviso, Italy.

Fernanda De Maio
Architect and PhD in Urban Design. Full Professor of Architectural Design at the Università Iuav di Venezia. She was co-founder of the architectural office Na.o Mi. and from 2008 Consultant for Architecture of the Im.Ing Engineering based in Naples. Among her academic publications, the recent Sebastian Irarrazaval. Scritti e Architettura, Lettera22, 2025, in Italian and Spanish, is particularly noteworthy.

Simone Gobbo
Simone Gobbo (1980) graduated from the Università Iuav di Venezia, where he currently carry out collaborative and research activities. With Alberto Mottola and Davide De Marchi, in 2007, he founded the architectural office DEMOGO based in Treviso, Italy.

Guido Morpurgo
Architect (PhD) and National Academician of San Luca, he is an associate professor of interior and exhibition design at Iuav. After having been associate in the firm Gregotti Associati, he founded in Milan the studio Morpurgo de Curtis Architetti whose works have received several awards.

Univerzitet Union-Nikola Tesla (UUNT), Belgrade, Serbia

As a community of higher education institutions, the University Union-Nikola Tesla enables the exchange of knowledge and experiences in various educational and scientific fields, potentially opening up space for multidisciplinary studies. The mission is to encourage high academic standards and enable the acquisition of knowledge aligned with social needs and national development. It is focused on the education of experts in construction, architecture, urban planning, management, business, ecology and environmental protection, real estate management, and international politics and security.

Bojan Končarević
Bojan Končarević (b. 1984, Sarajevo) is an architect navigating between continents, research and practice. Formed in Belgrade and Tokyo (Ito scholar, PhD KumaLab UTokyo), his work spans cultures and scales. Based in Belgrade, he teaches, designs and operates within local and global.

FARAGUNA

FARAGUNA is an office dedicated to architecture, adaptive reuse, scenography, and behavioral design. Its work explores the transformation of existing structures and the design of new environments across a range of scales and contexts, investigating how space can shape experience, negotiate its surroundings, and adapt to changing environmental and cultural conditions. The studio's approach is inherently interdisciplinary, integrating architectural vision with external expertise, and combining theoretical, technological, and artistic knowledge within the design process.

Andrea Faraguna
Andrea Faraguna (1981) graduated from the Università Iuav di Venezia, where he later completed his PhD. He runs the studio FARAGUNA based in Berlin. In 2025 he received the Golden Lion at the Biennale Architettura for the National Pavilion of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Felgendreher Olfs Köchling

Christian Felgendreher (Bremen, 1980), Johannes Olfs (Breddorf, 1979) and Christina Köchling (Unna, 1979) graduated in 2008 from the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Between 2010 and 2015 they trained at some of the most renowned architecture practices in Basel, Zurich, London and Berlin. In 2015 they founded Felgendreher Olfs Köchling Architekten, an office based in Berlin. Alongside their professional practice, they are engaged in teaching at the Technische Universität Hannover, the Technische Universität München, the Technische Universität Dresden and the Technische Universität Cottbus.

Christina Köchling
Christina Köchling (1979) did an apprenticeship as carpenter, studied architecture at the University of Arts Berlin and worked in Basel before she founded Felgendreher Olfs Köchling Berlin in 2015. She was guest professor at TU Dresden and BTU Cottbus and has lead the studio Bauentwurfslehre at Bauhaus-University since 2023.

Jean-Benoît Vétillard architecture

The projects developed by the atelier Jean-Benoît Vétillard architecture have all begun or ended their lives in the form of drawing. Some are being built, others are under construction. The atelier questions the architectural design process as much as the built reality, explores the causes as well as the consequences, the course as well as the destination. He strives to deal with different scales, architecture, scenography and design, without preconceived hierarchy.

Jean-Benoît Vétillard
Jean-Benoît Vétillard (1984) teaches design studio at ENSA Paris Est. Graduated from the ENSA Bretagne (France), he founded his own architectural studio in Paris in 2014, across architecture, scenography, and design.

Piovenefabi

Piovenefabi is an architecture studio founded by Ambra Fabi and Giovanni Piovene, based in Milan and Brussels. The studio produces architecture, urban research, territorial visions, and public design works regardless of the size, commission, or client. When dealing with a shared context and its almost infinite interpretations, Piovenefabi believes spaces and objects can act as supports for both personal and collective experiences.

Ambra Fabi
Ambra Fabi (1981) studied in Mendrisio and Paris Belleville. She worked at Architeckturbüro Peter Zumthor und Partner. She has been teaching assistant in Mendrisio (CH) and professor at IED Cagliari and KU Leuven Sint Lucas Brussels. She is currently teaching at École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture in Marne-la-Vallée Paris Est, UCL LOCI St Gilles et ULB La Cambre.

Giovanni Piovene
Giovanni Piovene (1981) graduated in architecture from IUAV in Venice. He co-founded Salottobuono (2007-2012) and the San Rocco magazine, and curated the book and exhibition Book of Copies. Together with Ambra Fabi he founded Piovenefabi studio in 2012. He is currently professor at École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture in Marne-la-Vallée Paris Est.

LAN (Local Architecture Network)

LAN (Local Architecture Network) was created by Benoit Jallon and Umberto Napolitano in 2002, with the idea of exploring architecture as an area of activity at the intersection of several disciplines. This attitude, which has now become a methodology, allows the agency to explore new territories in search of a vision involving social, urban, ecological and functional issues.

Umberto Napolitano
Umberto Napolitano (1975) studied architecture in Naples and Paris. Co-founder of LAN in 2002 with Benoit Jallon, he works between practice, research and international lectures. He has taught at Columbia GSAPP, AA London, TU Vienna and Politecnico di Milano. He is a member of the French Academy of Architecture and Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.

PARABASE

PARABASE is an entity registered by Carla Ferrando and Pablo Garrido Arnaiz. PARABASE combines the development and construction of architectural projects with research and teaching. They have been visiting Professors at the Bauhaus University in Weimar and ETH Zürich and currently they are visiting Professors at TU Wien.

Carla Ferrando
Carla Ferrando studied architecture at ETSAV, Barcelona and at the Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e). She collaborated with firms such as Diener & Diener Architekten, Basel, and Herzog & de Meuron, Basel, before cofounding PARABASE together with Pablo Garrido Arnaiz in 2021.

Pablo Garrido Arnaiz
Pablo Garrido Arnaiz studied architecture at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (ETSAB) and at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio. In 2021, he cofounded PARABASE together with Carla Ferrando, following professional experience at Foster & Partners, Madrid; Miller & Maranta, Basel; and Herzog & de Meuron, Basel. Since 2014, Pablo Garrido Arnaiz has been a cofounder and editor of Cartha Magazine.

PERIS+TORAL ARQUITECTES

PERIS+TORAL ARQUITECTES is a Barcelona-based studio formed by Marta Peris and José Toral. Their work focuses on collective housing, new ways of living, and construction systems that respond to social and climate challenges, combining research, practice and teaching.

Marta Peris
Marta Peris holds a PhD in architecture and has been a lecturer at ETSAB since 2002. She presented her doctoral thesis in 2016, entitled *The Japanese house through the cinema of Yasujiro Ozu*, published in 2019 under the name *Ozu's House*.

José Toral
José Toral has been an associate professor in the Department of Architectural Projects at the ETSAB UPC since 2016, specialising in the study of public space and urban projects. His work has been recognised with the RIBA International Prize 2024, the Detail Award 2024, the Wood Design & Building Award, being finalist of the EU Mies Award 2022 and shortlisted in 2018 and 2024.

Quaderni Iuav. Esperienze

Michel Carlana, Simone Gobbo (edited by), *Balance. Different Types of Equilibrium*, 2026.