



**Elementary Road
School in New Gourna**

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Abstract

A country with a population of a hundred million and growing by three million each year and which has a geopolitical position like Egypt is significant and cannot be ignored from a global perspective and neither from Hungary. Just think about the Suez Canal or the country's role in Middle Eastern conflicts. Furthermore, the effect of these on Europe and obviously, the neighbouring countries.

The answer for the question, why is it important for us is simple. During the time that was needed to read the first paragraph 2.8 Egyptians were born. This fact alone raises serious economic and ecological questions, not even mentioning the role of the first world's responsibility.

If someone has ever been in a part of Egypt not specifically designed for tourists, then one can experience the genuine third world and able to see the dozens of children playing and begging on the streets. First the compassion hits us, then the frustration later the worry about the global conditions takes over.

Because of the extremely small number of schools and the stunning number of children the teaching runs in two shifts, mostly in old, outdated and in most cases, inside poorly designed buildings.

The effect of education on economy, demographical changes and the people's life is undeniable and obvious. The mentioned are more than enough for someone to have the urge to add as much known real help as one can.

Further motivation is given by the architectural heritage in New Gurna created by one of the most remarkable modernist Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy. Although he made mistakes, his intentions, the modern regionalist approach and the caring about the poor in the first half of his career were remarkable. Nowadays knowing the circumstances and considering the Arabic non-materialistic culture this whole phenomenon is fading.

The original plan of New Gurna included schools and public spaces. The former are not where they were intended to be and made in a totally different way and the latter are failed to fulfil their function. According to us a school which is synchronized with the local climatic and demographical conditions and also deals with the existing architectural and urban environment can be a needed and urgent help for the local community.



Henri Cartier-Bresson: Children playing in ruins (Seville 1933)

Elementary Road

Walkways raised one meter above the ground, rationally designed spaces turned towards the enclosed courtyard and seclusion from the outside world make the building a solid entity.

The square layout is opened up by arcades on the sides resulting in inner spaces of equal quality and smaller courtyards that differentiate the buildings organized around the central garden. To avoid a dramatic, temple-like effect, these openings are positioned towards the corners of the building, rather than its axes of symmetry. The design of the layout thus reflects Islamic geometry while providing functionality.

Appropriate ventilation is provided by perforations and mashrabiyas on the outer walls and lamellate closures on the walls of the rooms facing the courtyard. The floating roof above the outer layer of the roof is supported by reinforced concrete pillars and provides shade and cooling. For thermal performance the outer brick walls are 50 cm thick with sand filling in the middle layer. Except for the concrete roof, all walls and surfaces are made of bricks. Beside brick being the most readily available and most durable building material in the area, constructing the building from a single material accentuates the quality and uniformity of its architectural idea.

The plants in the courtyard designate the centre point of the school and promote separation from the disorganised outside world.

Any third building placed beside the mosque and the khan will define a square. By placing the library and the IT lab on this side and making it available to the public, the school can relate to the urban environment without losing the main point of its design.

The strict design and avoiding all mannerism the layout can become a “standard” and function either in the regions of New Gournā surrounded by farmlands or in the increasingly informal cities and villages of Egypt.

Probably this cookie cutter type solution is the only morally acceptable answer if we want to get involved in the life of the poor residents of a faraway, poor country as Europeans. Especially if in this country the size of residential areas is increasing continuously at the expense of farmlands. Under these circumstances it is not possible to give location specific answers. It is definitely an advantage to have a functioning building-type that is out of context. And functionality should be stressed here as there are many schools, even school-types in Egypt that lack adequate architectural quality, sometimes even proper orientation.

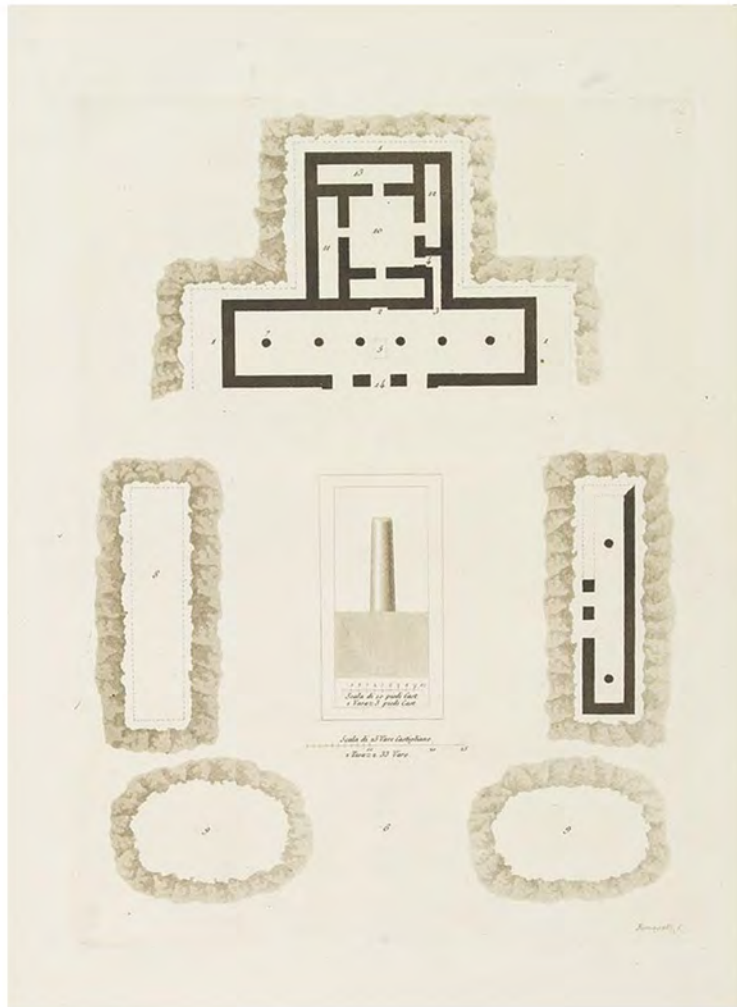
At the same time the cookie-cutter principle gives way to a modernist mass-produced attitude that - by now - has obviously failed. We would like to emphasize our opinion: architectural values shouldn't originate from either sociological, political or economic ideas. However we are aware of the crisis in the Middle East and we can't ignore the demographic crisis affecting Egypt. We think this design that works as both a proposal and a recipe in its humbleness will be worthy of the local architectural heritage and the everyday lives of the local people.



New Gourna Boys Primary School, photo Roger Viollet



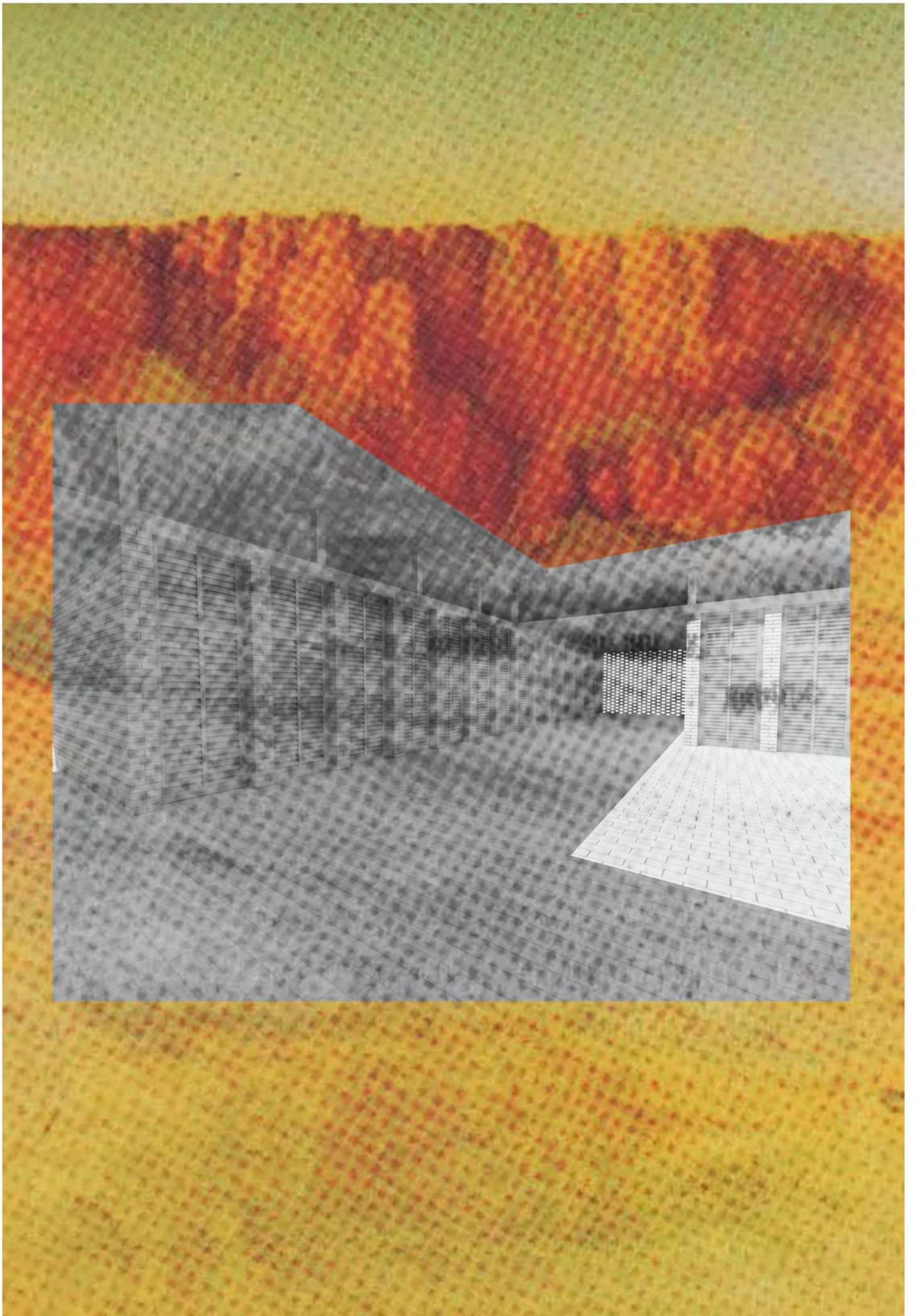
Valerio Olgiati - Paspels School

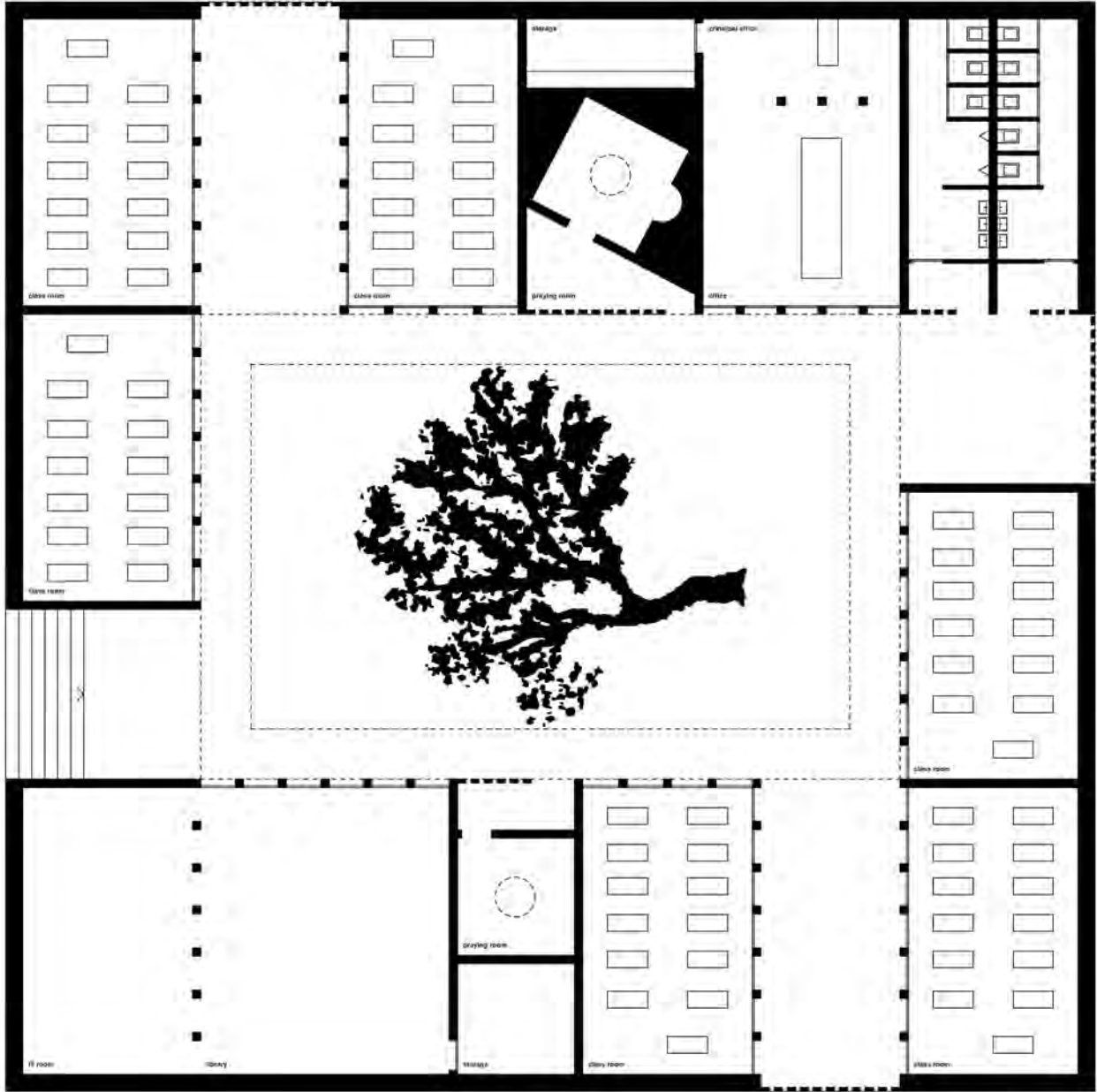


Zapotec Temple of Mitla, Oaxaca



Office Kersten Geers - 25 Rooms



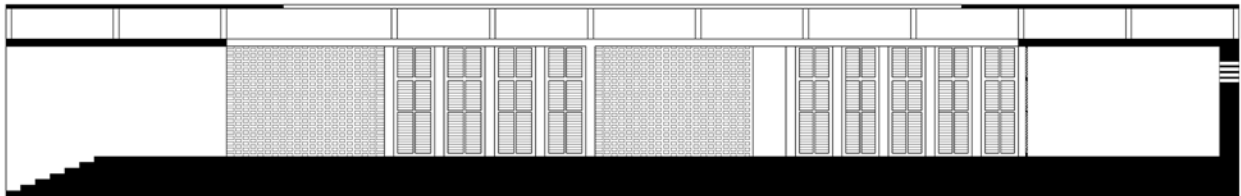


ground floor 1:200

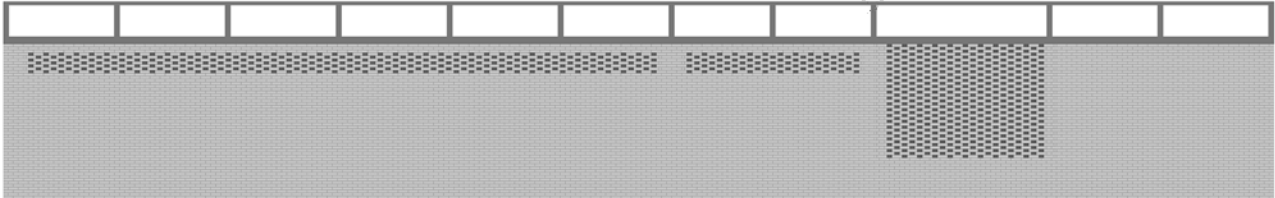




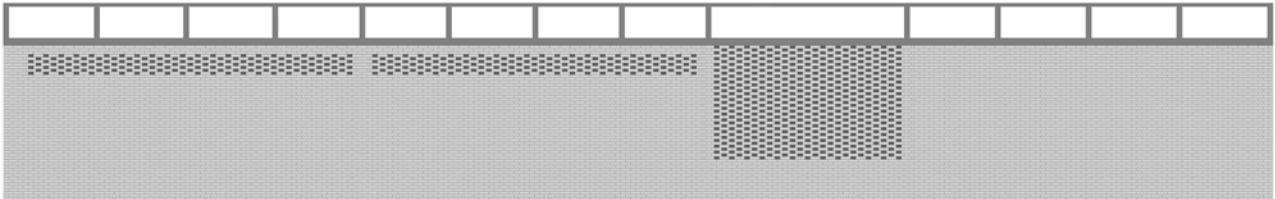
A - A section 1:200



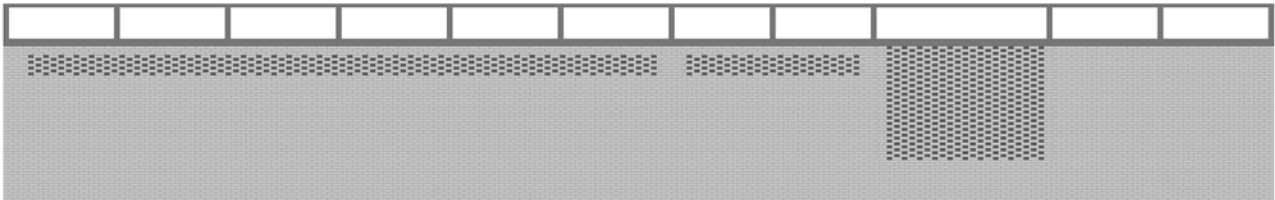
B - B section 1:200



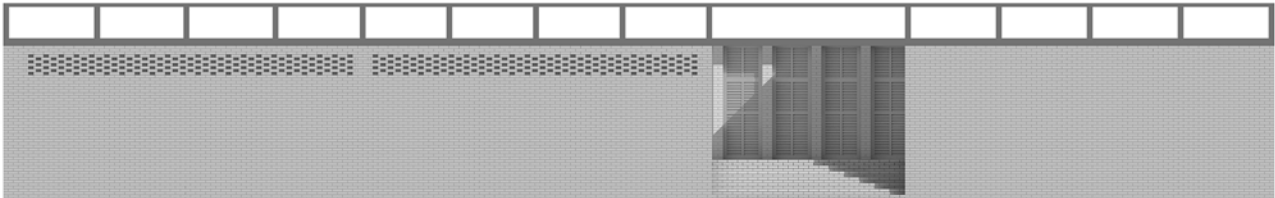
north elevation 1:200



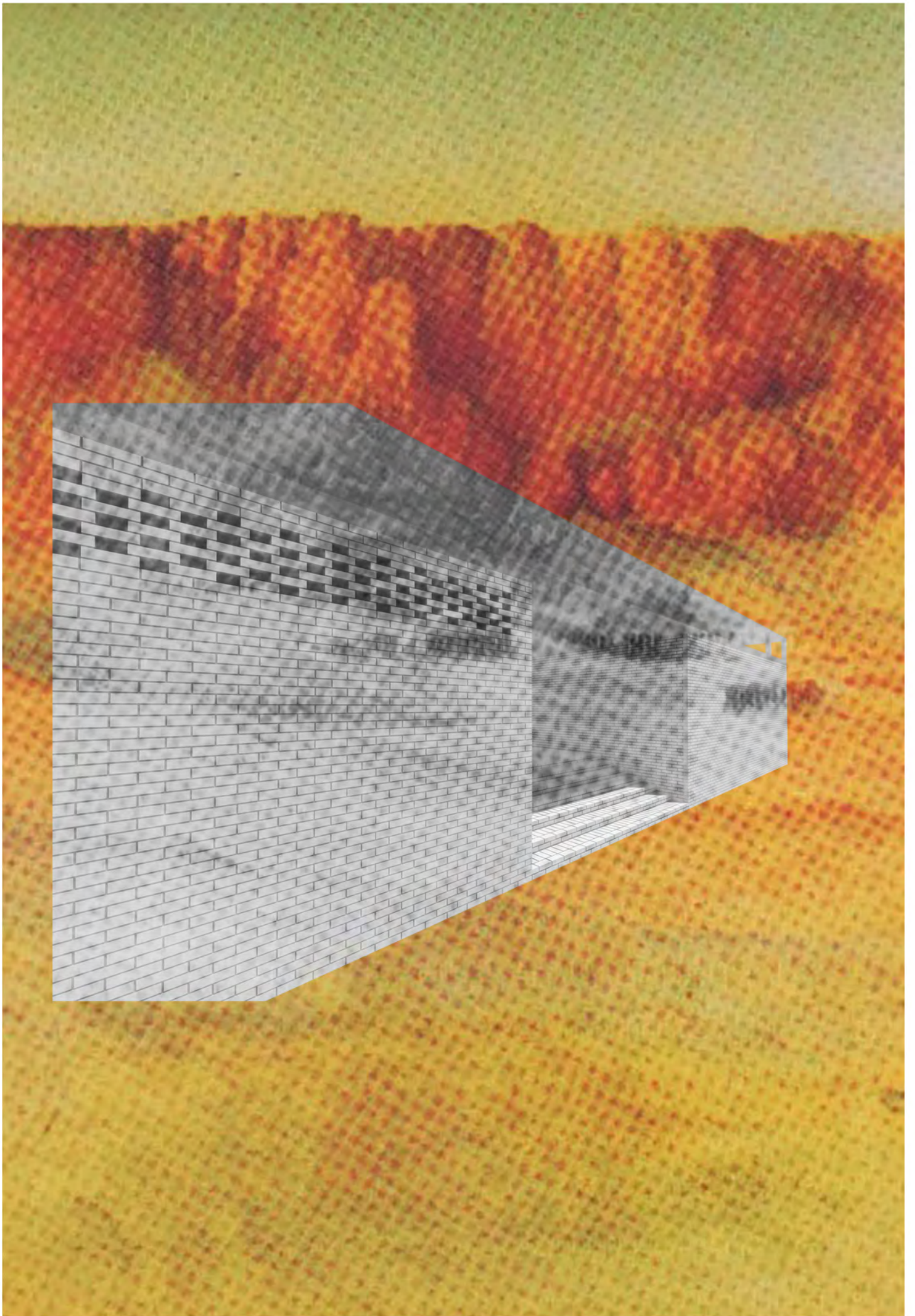
east elevation 1:200

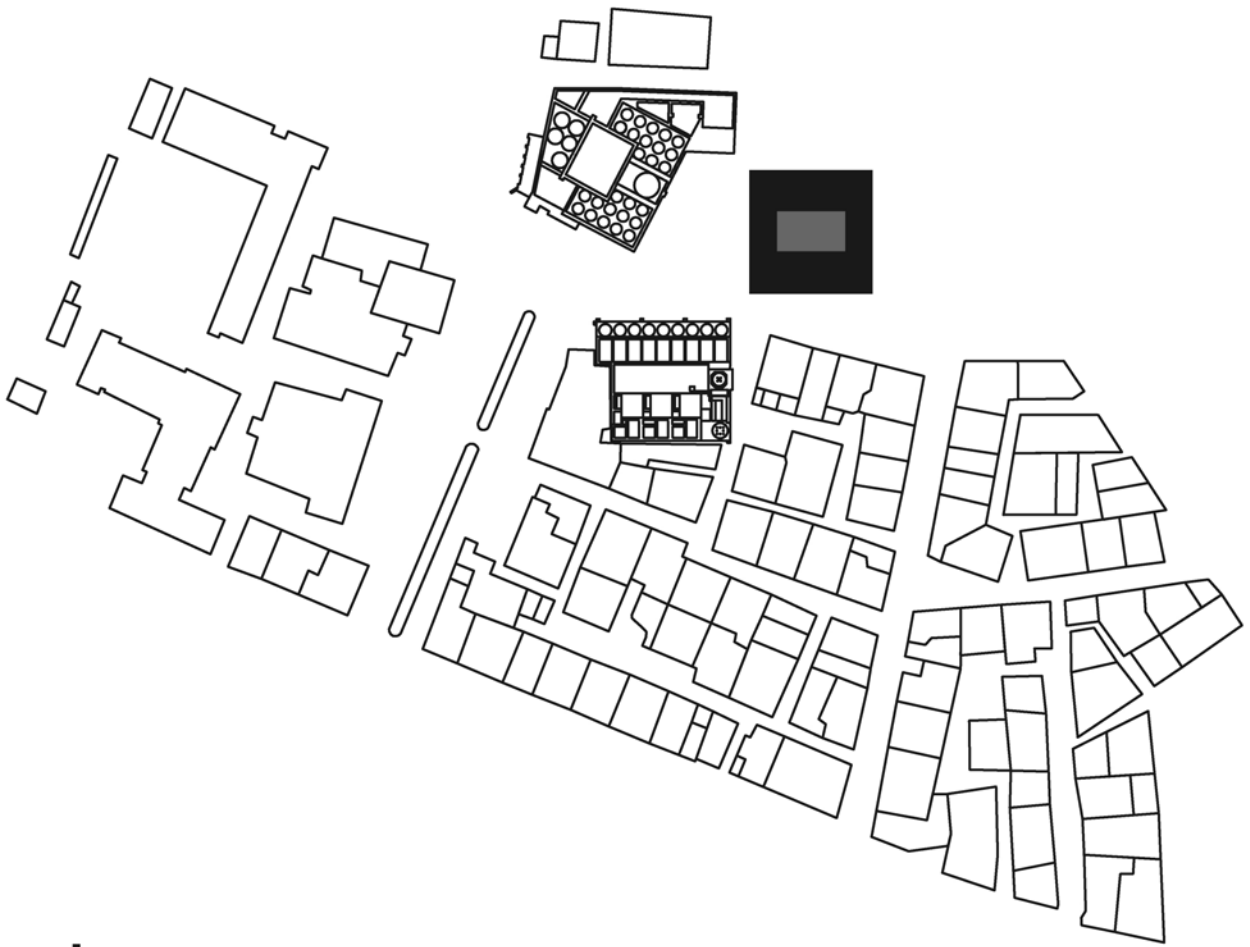


south elevation 1:200



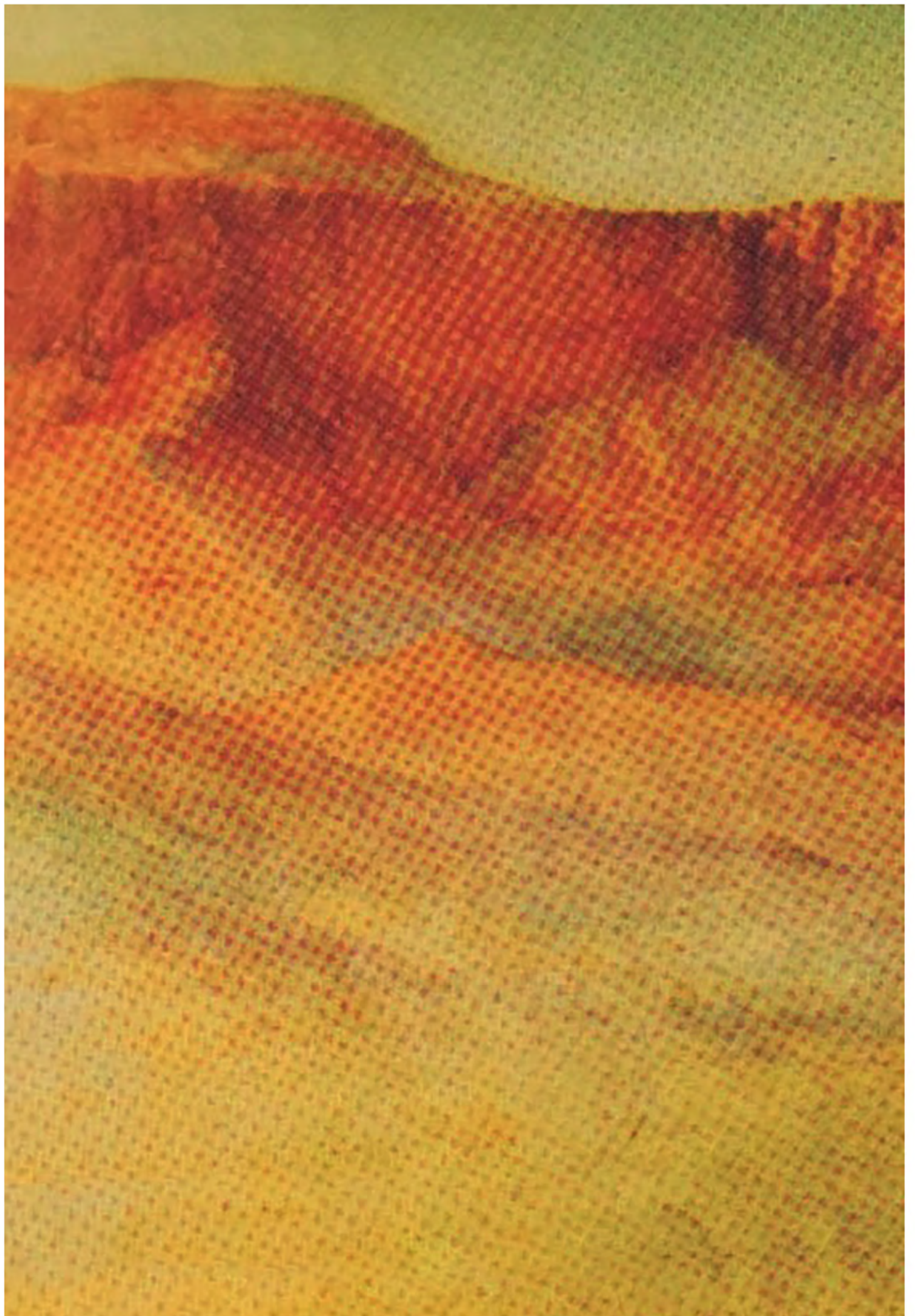
west elevation 1:200

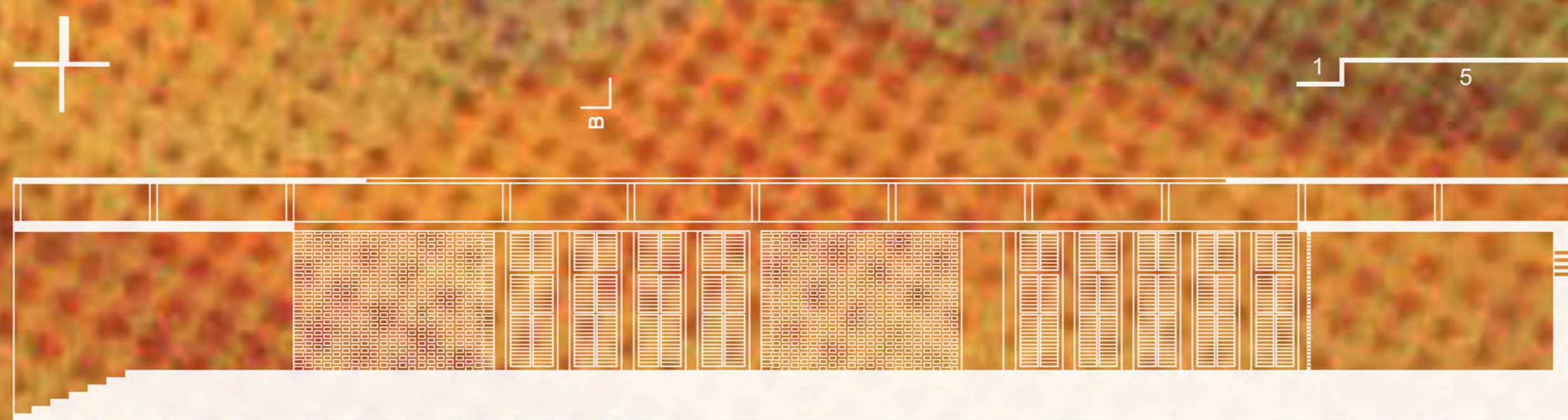
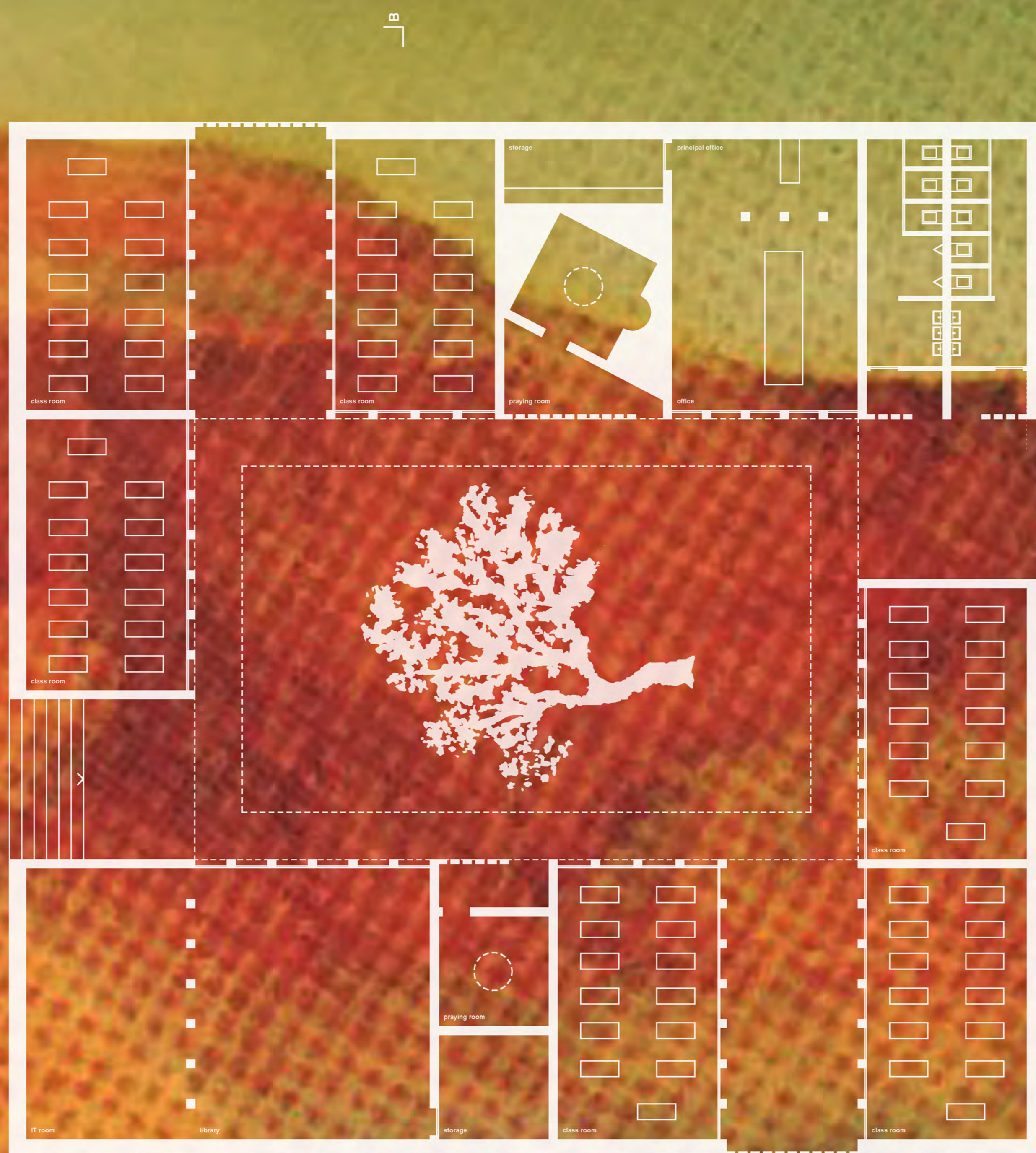




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site plan 1:2000





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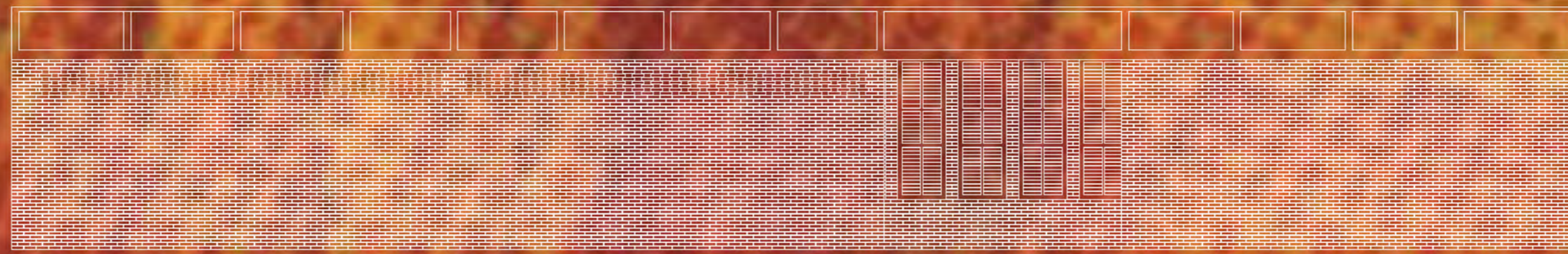
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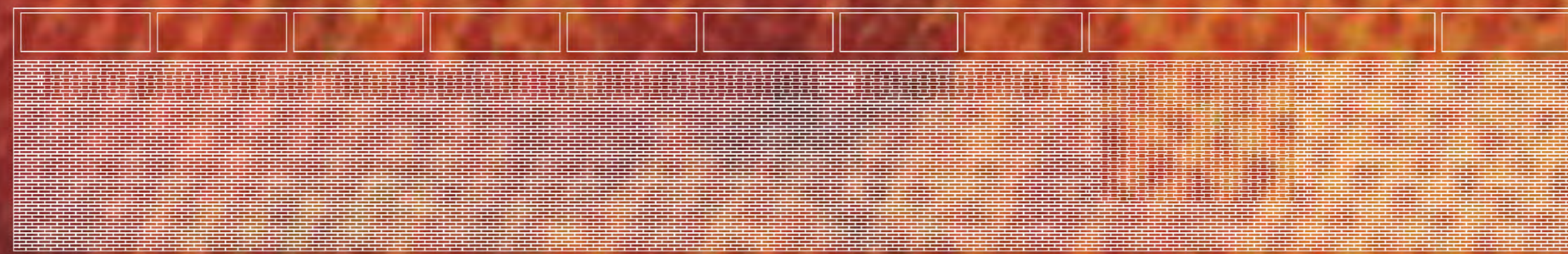
ELEMENTARY ROAD / BALOG ÁKOS, ZACHER BENDEGŰZ / KONZULENS: VASÁROS ZSOLT

IDENTITY AND CULTURE 6.
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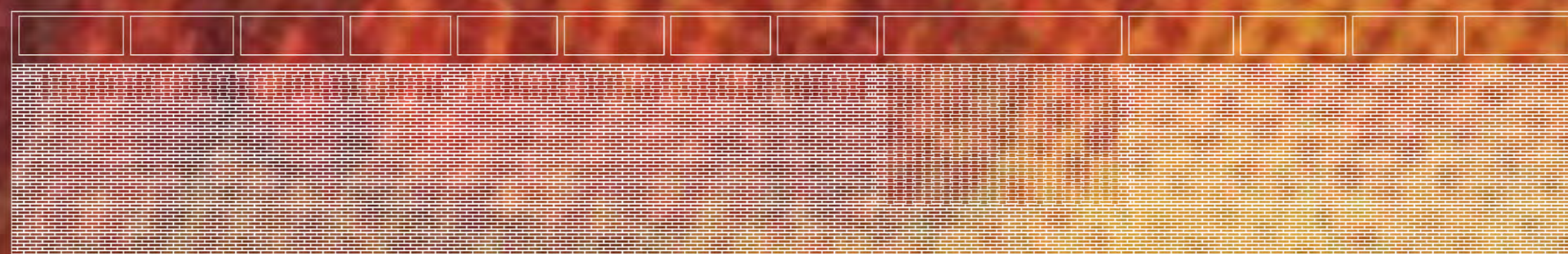
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west elevation



north / south elevation



east elevation



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