

JAAKKO
HEIKINHEIMO

Cinis
A non-religious
sacral space



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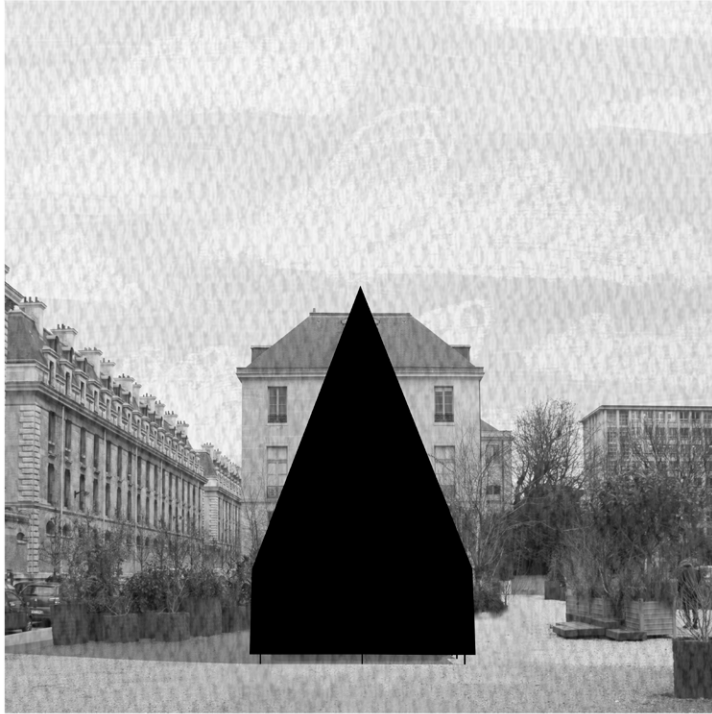
Cinis
A non-religious
sacral space

“Colors are light’s suffering and joy”

-Goethe¹

As the surfaces of the Cinis-space are pitch black,
the colors are being reflected
only by it's visitors.

1 Van Hurtman, Alexis, p.153.



Cinis, visualisation from outside

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Preface

It has been a great privilege to work around such a challenging theme. I am very pleased of all the help that I got from the people that have been involved into the Cinis-project.

The director of my theses has been professor Rainer Mahlamäki from the University of Oulu, Department of architecture. In the role of tutoring has been the professor of building performance and construction, Janne Pihlajaniemi.

The crew from Littow architects gave me very helpful advise regarding the field of architecture in France. A part in the undertaking of Cinis goes also to the Finnish Institution in France whose personnel has been helpful and interested in the project, as well as the city planning department of Paris.

Helsingissä, 12.11.2016, Jaakko Heikinheimo



Foreword

In the beginning of September 2014 I had the occasion to move to Paris for work and study. Strong memories of the cityscape were still on my mind from the years 2000-2002, when I was living there as a child. I had now the chance to get to know the city again from a different perspective. During that period and the idea of my thesis began to build and focused.

Paris with its diverse roots to different cultures, the city provides a powerful field of several religious institutions. Although in Paris like in the whole republic of France the doctrine of laïcité or secularism is dominating ever since the revolution of 1779.

What is the thing that one feels the sacrality? And how to absorb sacrality from religious spaces to unreligious architecture? Is it possible?

Cinis is a physical gambit over that subject.

During this work, I signed myself out of the Christian religion (both institutionally and religiously). Nevertheless, the power of sacral architecture had left a indelible impact on me. I continued widely my excursions to all of those famous religious spaces that the city of Paris had to offer to me. Soon I started to work around the Cinis-project, which I then choose as the theme of my theses.

I started this project all by myself. It gave me the possibility to get into a very interesting and fascinating literature. As the team got bigger, I was stucked on the timetable. On the other hand it was very educational to see how different is the field of architecture in France comparing to that in Finland. There are different approaches and different meanings all the way from the theory of architecture to the dividing of responsibilities on the construction business.

**PART I, Sacral phenomena in the
Constructed field**

1.2 Different senses and their status in relation to sacral architecture

''Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediation takes place through the senses''

- Juhani Pallasmaa⁴

There are complex phenomena forming the puzzle of sacredness in architecture. Clearly, the answers are not coming only from the rather concise vocabulary of architecture.

Some of the questions can be explored over other fields, like the one of the neuroscience. In this case we refer to the different subjects around the contemplation.

People experience the awe-inspiring feeling in widely different ways, depending for instance on one's genetic and cultural environments as well as one's previous experiences.⁵

More precisely, we define ourselves in a space by our senses. Vision, smell, hearing, taste and touch are the strongest of them. After all, we have minor receptors, that help us to recognise heat, and pain and keep the right balance of our body. The kinaesthetic sense gives our body the awareness of where its parts are located. Thought can also be regarded as a sense. With it we understand, evaluate and process experiences.⁶

All of them might be in use when orientating in a space, whether it is sacral or not. Obviously, they all have a significant role in the understanding of our selves in this constructed environment.⁷

As far as architecture itself is concerned and its different elements, there are different categories that can be separated in parts just as our senses can be observed individually. Paul Goldberg talks in his

4 Juhani Pallasmaa, 1994, p. 11.

5 Gallagher, C., 2001, p. 23.

6 Hekkert, P., 2005, p. 35.

7 Goldberger, P., 2010, p. 3.

speech, *Architecture, Sacred Space and the Challenge of the Modern*, about the contemporary architecture and refers also to the questions of sacral architecture. According to him, scale, shape, texture, materials, light, plan, mass, acoustics, smell and volume are the eight main categories that are used often to understand architecture and its impact in our society.⁸

An overwhelming space can even be a threat. As an example of it there is that so-called Stendahl's Syndrome which is a psychosomatic reaction which is provoked by an overinspired space. The illness or symptoms is named after Henri-Marie Beyle (1783–1842), who was a French author, also known by his pen-name Stendhal. When visiting Santa Croce's Cathedral in Florence, he became overly emotional about what he saw. At the age of 34, he described his negative experiences:

“ Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty...I reached the point where one encounters celestial sensations. Everything spoke so vividly to my soul. Ah, if I could only forget. I had palpitations of hearth, what in Berlin they call ‘nerves’. Life was drained from me. I walked with the fear of falling”.

The symptoms, also called as tourist's disease was given its name by psychiatrist Dr. Graziella Magherini in 1979.⁹

1.3 The role of time in architecture

Talking about sacredness in architecture, time faces its essentials as a subject that needs to shed some light on. The way the environment converts our normal sense of time is one of the most fascinating phenomena in architecture. It clarifies the meaning of the word timeless. What is timeless now was once truly new.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for the viewer everything is new at the first sight. We understand the outlines of the architecture as a vital strength in our own time. That is one of the very essential of the sacredness.

⁸ Goldberg, Paul, p. 3.

⁹ D. Griffiths, M., 2014, p. 2.

¹⁰ Ghesquiere, N.

As Mark de Reus refers us:

“Good architecture endures the test of time and instils itself into the collective psyche of society.” ¹¹

Timeless, a word that has created its own genre in the field. There are buildings that stick still to their own time. And then there are great buildings that follow us on our present period. Timeless does not mean to have no time, like rootless means having no roots. A building connects to all of the other times and it is more or less the continuum of them. Time is a vital subject when we talk about any given space. One of the most important things about the architecture is the way in which it transcends our normal sense of time and with that clarifies the meaning of the word timeless.

1.4 Sacredness and space as a word

“Raumgestaltum” ¹²

Definition in english: The spacial form

A space seems to be a crucial phenomenon when talking about sacredness in architecture. It defines the relation of light, shadows, sounds and forms a type of three-dimensional environment for the visitor. Since the times that we started to do enclosures with structural improvements or in general some type of shelters to our dwellings, the notion of space as an essential element of architecture must have existed as a primitive form. ¹³

Nonetheless, space as a word did not take part of the standard architecture vocabulary until the 18th century. The creation of the sacred architecture was indeed very much a creation of sacred space. But the fact that the term was not used until recent times is more than just a passing significance. It seems that the concept of space was too abstract for the designers of its time.

¹¹ De Reus, M.

¹² D.W Smith, R. McIntyre, 1982, p. 365.

¹³ Honour, H., & Fleming, J., p. 37.

As Vincent Scully has shown, people were not crafting space as such. Although they did create different environments that today we do not hesitate to think of them as powerfully spiritual spaces.¹⁴

Structure was the thing that mattered for classical theorists, in a period which defines architecture as the art of building. This did not necessarily imply the enclosure of space but might well equally be a solid object or an obelisk.

The change came in the middle of the eighteenth century, as a result of the introduction of romantic gardens. Then the places came up with words like *amorphous* and *unproportionable*. They clearly had more positive qualities than those flat surfaces.

I.R. Gérardin, on the composition of landscapes and the means of embellishing nature in the neighbourhood of the dwellings (1777)¹⁵ criticised those who were trying to pill the production of every climate and monuments of every century in a small *space*. Anyway, the word space was very seldom used in this context. It came into fashion with any three-dimensional space, not before the mid-19th century.¹⁶

1.5 Modest versus divine approaches

Do we confer the quality of sanctity upon spaces or do certain spaces confer sanctity upon us? Often, we think that architecture in itself creates the sacred start. We confer the quality of sanctity upon spaces. Certain spaces seem to confer us. Sacred seems to be however more than simply what we choose to sanctify.¹⁷

History follows us where ever we go. Many religious places are often some type of reproductions of the spiritual environments from their homelands. They are reminders of the strong foundations. They call for the values and dreams that were once

14 Scully, Vincent

15 Collings, P., 1965

16 Collings, P., 1965

17 Goldberg, P., 2010, p. 3.

built.¹⁸ These places provide often a sense of promise as well as security to their users. Usually they are placed also there where people are and they are easily accessible. Even some of the big shopping malls and halls have a need to be blessed these days. People from everywhere, with a totally different past often need a constructed place for the nourishing of the sacred.

There is a tendency across all contemporary religions to argue that the heart of religion lies in religious architecture and that the soul of the building lies in its people, not in the material of which it is made. Some of us seek places for its sacred character, others are simply pilgrims of stunning architecture. The aesthetic and the sacred co-exist. Some of the architects tend to assume that the power of the experience comes wholly from the architecture, which is strongly questionable.¹⁹

Often people find that religious space is transcendent at least as much because of what they bring to it. This is not to minimise the potential of architecture to create a sense of awe or the aura of the sacred. After all as debatable is the question of how could a place built by human beings truly reflect the glory of God.

Oskar Verkaaik writes pertinently about the subject on his book of anthropological perspectives of religious architecture:

‘‘Given that many people of religion tend to downplay the importance of religious buildings as merely representing the outside or the superficial part of their religion, it is remarkable how much time, energy and -above all -money are put into the construction of new religious buildings all over the world.’’²⁰

The city of Paris, for instance, is filled with Jewish congregations. There, the synagogues are taken place mainly on leftover urban environments.²¹

As was earlier mentioned, Jewish tradition has never been particularly architecturally orientated. At least not as much as

18 S. Vosko, R.,

19 Goldberg, P., p. 4.

20 Verkaaik, Oscar., 2013

21 Finland has similar tendencies among Muslims who have their prayer-houses in various places which are not mosques.

some branches in the Christian religion. Although, there have been impressive synagogues built over the time. Anyway, almost always, they tend to follow the rules of local, vernacular architecture.

No matter how is the architectural aspect of the synagogue, it is never supposed to overshadow the scatty of the word. The presence of the Torah brings the importance of the written word in synagogue architecture.²²

''the place where people meet to seek the highest is the holy ground''

-Felix Adler²³

Regarding Felix Adler, the founder of the Ethical Culture movement, architecture itself should never be seen as more important as the connection of people themselves. It may no be an accident that the Ethical Culture emerged in large part of Judaism's reform movement, since the Jewish tradition has never been particularly known for its great architecture.

The aim of Judaism and the Ethical Culture movement is to be modest and to celebrate what men and women can do. Unlike the synagogues, catholic churches are mainly considered sacred spaces as themselves. The architects of the ornamental baroque churches had a different approach to the sacral. By creating an overwhelming grandeur, they could evoke the spiritual. This effect takes part in the majority of the Christian churches in Paris. As one of the most known is the medieval catholic cathedral of Nôtre Dame.

22 Goldberg, P., p. 3.

23 Adler, Felix

1.8 Modernists and their atheistic approach to architecture

"Architecture is the researching out for the truth"

-Louis Kahn²⁴

Modernists believed that the idea that a building would acquire its spiritual quality comes by how profoundly it represents human aspiration. Not because it shows the glory of God.

The very idea of rationality, which is the soul of the modernistic architecture, contradicts religion. Modernism, being often totally rational, in its most pure idea, is altogether incompatible with the qualities of sacred or religious space. Thankfully modernism was not always true to its claims and not nearly as traditional as it was supposed to be.²⁵

Definition: *ineffable espace*, the un-understandable space.²⁶

Le Corbusier designed a famous chapel at Ronchamp, in Eastern France in 1954.²⁷ He described this building, which has remarkable, sensuous curves to it, as containing "ineffable space". It brings us to a very paradoxical question. In any architecture, the discipline most dependent on materiality (the ultimate expression of materiality) must try to answer to the question of what is not material.²⁸ It is no surprise then that we tend to start, as Le Corbusier did in his expression of Ronchamp, with the idea of space, not structure. Space is less rational and it is obviously less material.

"Jokainen tila on aina myös näyttämö, etenkin jos se on välitila, selväsi määriteltä, mutta samalla kuitenkin avoin kaikenlaisille tapahtumille. Väli tilassa vierauden hienovarauden voima pääsee valloilleen, presensistä tulee representaatio."

²⁴ Kahn, L.

²⁵ Goldberg, P., 5.

²⁶ The un-understandable space, Oxford dictionaries

²⁷ Kroll, Andrew

²⁸ Goldberg, P., 5.

Every space is also a stage, especially if it is a space between two spaces well defined, but at the same time free for all kinds of events. In this space between two spaces the strength of strange let loose, present becomes representation.

-Christian Boltanski²⁹

1.5 The paradox of being sacred and logical

“The main goal is to create the atmosphere of mystery and immateriality, the sacred space. The church is the “earthly heaven”

-St. Germanus³⁰

The materiality contradicts the un-materialistic world. As an other paradox is the architecture it self. Structure must always have a logic. Otherwise it cannot do its mission, to stand. Sacred is different. It determines the logical. What is essential in creation of structure is far out from the point when it comes to the sacred. If the goal is to make sacred architecture, there is a contradiction between the medium and the end. The practice must be rational, even as the end cannot be.

“No one ever talks about sacred structure. As an example Gothic architecture has sacrality in it’s structure. Although when we talk about that, we talk about space and light.”

Paul Goldberg³¹

29 Boltansky, C. Translated by author.

30 St.Germanus

31 Goldberg, P., p.6

So architecture it self seems to be paradoxical. A structure must have logic or it cannot stand. Sacred is clearly different from that.

1.11 The game between nature and the built environment by Tadao Ando

I don't believe architecture has to speak too much. It should remain silent and let nature in the guise of sun light and wind.

-Tadao Ando³²

We live a life that is still too near by the nature for being its own. We are referring nature in every situation and valuing some part of nature more than anything else that we could possibly imagine.

Tadao Ando surely is an architect that needs to be mentioned when the sacral architecture is the subject. Often, his architecture is a game between nature and a built environment. We can see in his architecture a situation of controlling and letting free. In his opinion, we often come closest to nature by being the most man-made, not by deferring to nature but actively re-interpreting and playing with the idea, that we can control it, by abstracting it. We borrow from nature the space upon which we build.³³

As an example of Ando's sacral architecture is a chapel, that I had a chance to visit in Paris. It is situated in the courtyard of UNESCO headquarters, in the 16th arrondissement. The visitor needs to be invited by someone who works on the building, and get in through pretty severe security checks. I was lucky enough to get in.

The chapel is a round concrete structure, a solid cylinder. The simplicity and the way it plays with natural light seems to have a lot of similarities with the church of light, in Japan. The concrete structure gives no sympathy to the nature surrounding. It creates by its ability of architecture a sense of awe. It seems that in this case, no one brings an expectation of ritual or a

32 Ando, T.

33 Ando ,T.

predisposition to religious experience. The contrast between the heavy concrete and nature works in this case, although the nature has a short distance to the surrounding concrete jungle.

1.12 Museums and galleries playing the role of churches and chapels

“The art museum has supplanted the church as the pinnacle of architectural ambition, but a more curious ecclesiastical shift may be taking place inside the museum’s walls. These days we frequently use religious language when talking about art. We make ‘pilgrimages’ to museums or to landmarks of public art in far-off locales. We experience ‘transcendence’ before major paintings or large-scale installations.”

-Jason Farago, 2015³⁴

In the western culture we have bought the aesthetic and the sacred together, which is why art museums seem to be a strong competitors for cathedrals. It is not by accident that we have made the art museum the most active arena of architectural expressions today. There is no sense of community of faith in the museums that was the motivation of the cultures that built the great sacred spaces of earlier eras. We use art museums as emblems of our aspiration with far more conviction. The aesthetics for the sacred are not being replaced. At least the western world seems to be more and more attracted by the beauty rather than the divine.

Regarding the aura of the sacred, our time is in many ways also very different. One can not design the physical reality of God although we are able to contemplate the idea of a God.

Alain de Botton argues about the role of art museums and churches. In his opinion art museums, in their role as the ‘new churches’ should take the role of serving the inner psychological needs, on today’s secular society.³⁵ In the old days the function of churches was fulfil the role of sanctuary, redemption, consolation

34 Farago, J.

35 De Botton, A.

and meaning.

Art museum curators fulfil their patrons' 'inner needs'. They carry out this task by presenting their collection not according to time periods or schools of influence, but according to experiences the viewer will have of love, courage and other virtues and consolatory emotions.

De Botton writes:

“We have too easily swallowed the modernist idea that art that aims to change or help or console its audience must by definition be “bad art”... and that only art that wants nothing of us can be good’. What if museums decided that art had a specific purpose, to make us a bit more sane, or a little bit wiser and kinder, and tried to use the art in their possession to prompt us to be so?”

De Botton seems to be aware of our psychological health and the power of art. He wants to influence our moral formation. He suggests that museums can become churches if viewers can learn these lessons through art.

PART II, Cinis

2.1 What does Cinis mean?

Definition: the definition of ash in latin

Cinis is small, non-religious, public sacral space.

2.2 Approaching

The 4th arrondissement, in the hearth of Paris, is known for many remarkable buildings from different eras. In this area there are for example the town hall and the modern Pompidou Center as well as the mediaval district of le Marais, known as the gay and the Jewish district of Paris. It is also known for its cosy cafés and narrow streets and an overall multicultural exposure.

The site Cinis is located in this 4th arrondissement. The famous Place de la Bastille is just nearby and the Cathedral of Nôtre Dame is only 10 minutes away.

In the hearth of the 4th, stands a pocket-type of a square, Place du Père Teilhard de Chardin. It is own by the private library, bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Together with the local architecture museum, Pavillon de l'Arsenal, and a residential building, they frame the site. It is surrounded by a couple of quiet streets and ends to the boulevard Henri IV, which goes straight to the hearth of Bastille. There is also the entering to the metro station Fully-Morland.

2.3 The site

As mentioned before, Cinis is not a custom-designed to any place. It transfers the long tradition of mobile buildings and chapels and it is an offgrid-type of thinking. It is obvious that it suits not to be placed wherever.

Although the place is surrounded by different kinds of architecture

from different eras and various streets, the place itself is surprisingly quiet. It is filled with a couple of trees and a flat surface of fine gravel. The site has been used as the platform of various pavilions and events by the local architecture museum, Pavilion de l'Arsenal. Even though the site is owned by a private institution, it is kept open to the public. Anyone, in any time of the year is welcome to enjoy this public place.

2.4 Cinis as a building

We define organic order as a kind of order that is achieved, when there is a perfect balance between the needs of the parts and the needs of the whole from which nothing can be taken away.^{36 37}

Even though eyes are more exact witnesses than ears³⁸, it might be good to relax them by not using them constantly and by giving power to other senses.

Cinis is a public, non-religious sacral space. In a way, the secular, state of France seems a reasonable place for a building of this kind. It is a mixture of old Scandinavian wood church traditions and other religious buildings. As mentioned in Chapter I, we tend to create the connection with something that we call the "higher power". In this approach, there is no hierarchy towards the unseen. That explains the symmetrical composition of the floor plan with its entrances on both sides. Therefore it is a place to respect each other, without any given order based on hierarchy. It is then a very democratic and somehow modernistic answer to the challenges of the sacral architecture.

It (the chapel?) can be moved to anywhere as it is built from elements, respecting then also the traditions of the movable timber-buildings which comelines with the trend of mobility.

2.5 The dark space

36 Alexander, C.

37 Piano, R.

38 Heraclius

"All human relations untouched by love take place in the dark"

Richard Rorty

Life is a combination of tragedy and comedy. The architecture has then a potential of being the music of this tragedy and comedy.³⁹ The approach of Cinis has been to find out the right notes for the melody.

When the sun is setting the darkness falls over the building site. They say that there is the blueprint⁴⁰. Regarding architecture with its variety nuances, dealing with light is essential. Anyway, it does not mean that light needs to take the dominant role in the space. In the nature, many things follow the light. The human is not familiar with that rhythm anymore.⁴¹ In our urban metropolis the sun does not set anymore, the darkness needs to be found again then.

It is said that a room is not a room, without natural light.⁴² Cinis formes itself with the surrounding natural and artificial lighting. As mentioned in the very first page, Colors are light's suffering and joy. The visitor plays then an important role in the space where the light is filtered by the roof-structure.⁴³ In Cinis, all the surfaces of the building are to be converted by the *second* deepest black on the market, as the famous artist, Anish Kapoor who owns the right to the darkest paint, the Vanta Black.⁴⁴

Under the trees, the urban dweller might restore his troubled soul and find the blessing of a creative pause.⁴⁵ The wooden structure of Cinis strains off the light, shadows, rain and everything else that surrounds us. Together with the smell of wood and tar it bring us memories of something that was once pure nature. Wood is also a contrast for the thug concrete around the neighbourhood. The small scale of it is the contrast for the urban structure which is formed in this case by the heavy, Hausmanien boulevards.

39 Aalto, A.

40 Calvino, I., *Invisible Cities*

41 Kivistö, M.

42 Kahn, L.

43 Goethe, J.

44 Vanta Black as a material, absorbs 99% of the light

45 Gropius, W.

2.6 Practical approach to the urban challenges

Cinis provides a certain amount of shelter for anyone. It's an open space, which does not require any personal to be used. Its facades are mainly translucent. Anyone can then guess from a distance if there is someone inside it. To avoid the undesirable use of it during the night time, it lives the possibility of being illuminated for the outside with spotlights on the ground. Its purpose is not to be a house for homeless people and that's one reason why the design of it is not suitable for settling down.

2.7 Ecologicality

Cinis is done with 99% of renewable natural resources. Its point-like foundation-piles leave almost the entire flat untouched. As it is done with a modular structure, it can be easily reused in other places over and over again.

2.8 Final thoughts

Architecture does not always need to be so noisy. In this hectic reality that surrounds us constantly, it seems very challenging to focus on only a couple of things per time. I guess that more close to our primitive senses are those couple of things, the more we find our selves in the right path.



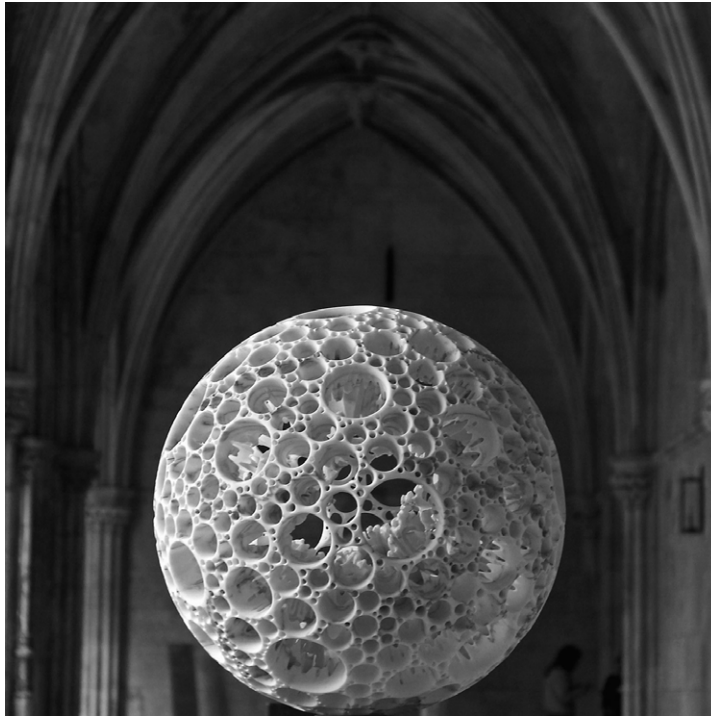
Allegory of the five senses by Pietro Paolini



One of the pearls of the Baroque-architecture is the Dôme des Invalides in Paris.

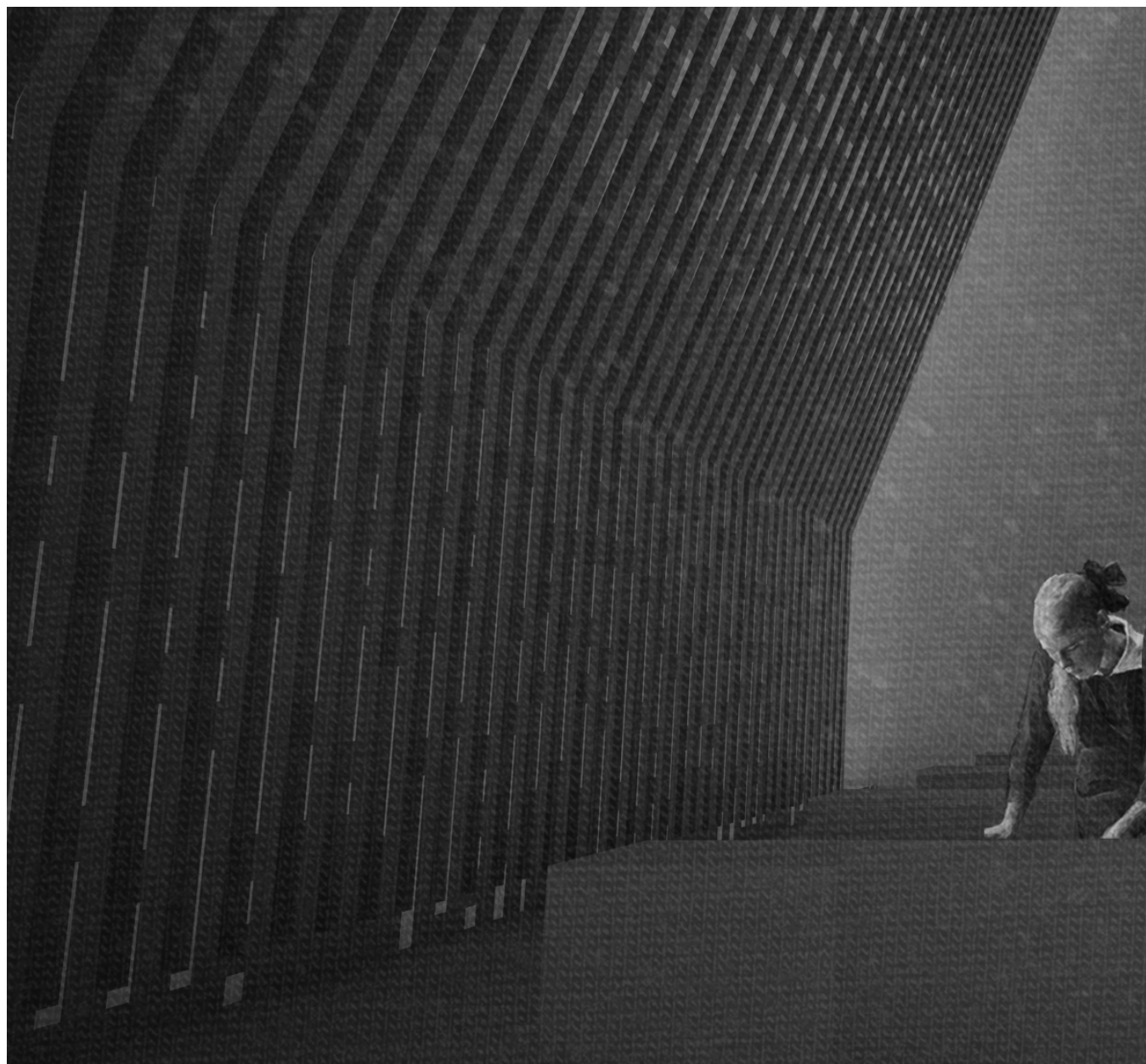


Meditation space by Tadao Ando situated in the inneryard of UNESCO Paris.



Temporary art installation situated inside the Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis Church in Paris.

PART II,
The architectural approach of Cinis





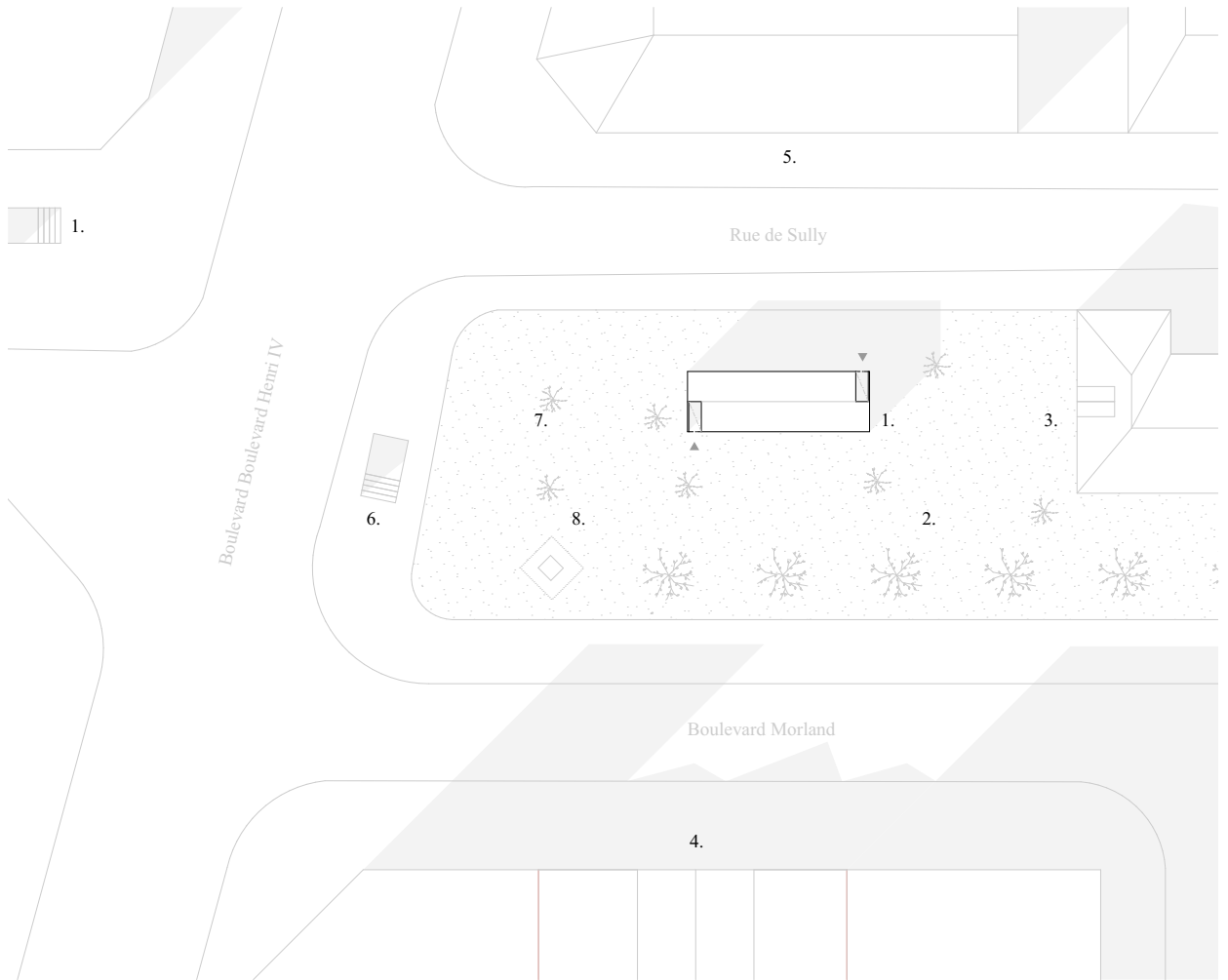




Notre Dame

Bastille

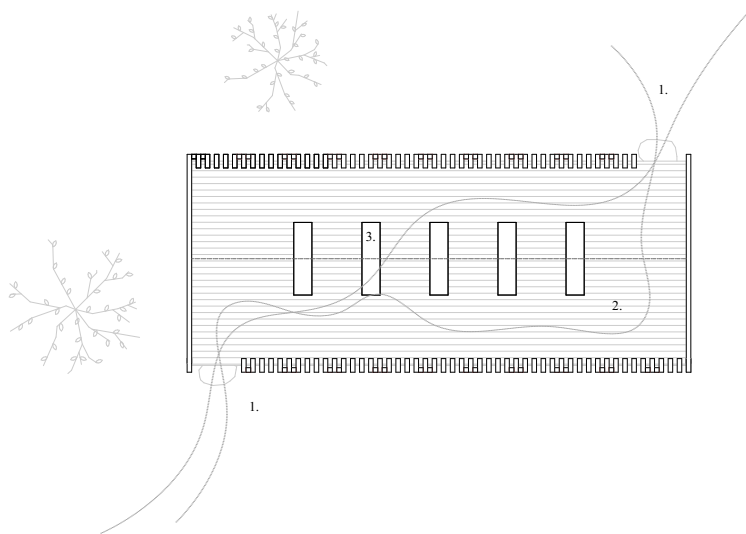
Cinis





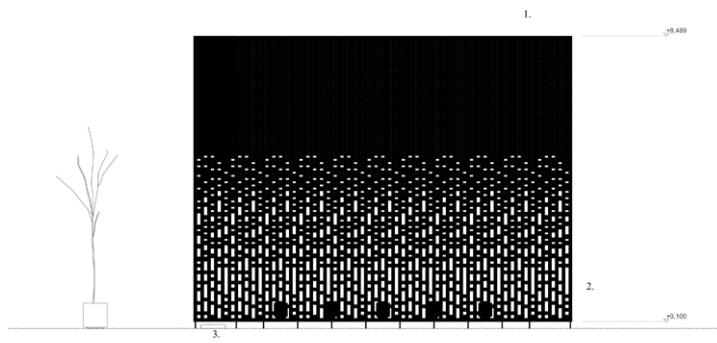
Masterplan

1. Cînis
2. Place du Père Teilhard de Chardin
3. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal / Private library
4. Pavillon de l'Arsenal / Local architecture museum
5. Residential building
6. Metro Sully Morland
7. Seasonal vegetation by the city of Paris
8. Sculpture by Jean-Robert Ipoustéguy



Floor plan

1. Entrance
2. Side aisles for main traffic
3. Seats



Facade materials

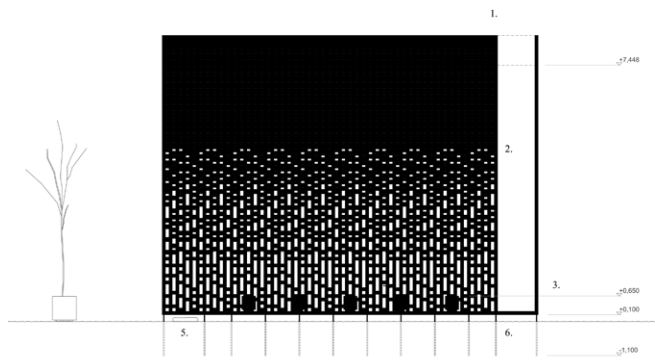
1. Siberian tamarack.

Wood needs to be fresh/humid during the construction of the elements, so that the entire becomes more solid.
Surfaces painted on pitch black paint, suitable for external use.

2. Siberian tamarack.

Surfaces painted on black tar, witch is toned pitch black paint.
Suitable for external use.

3. Flat slate-stone as one step



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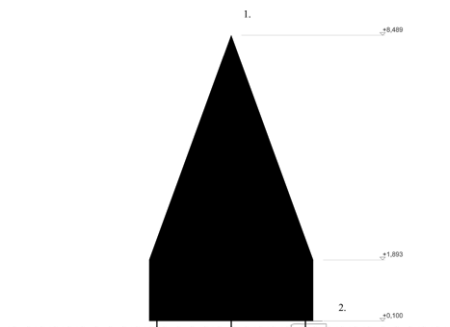
4. Siberian tamarack.

The wood needs to be dry, so that that colour is light grey from the beginning. No external treatment.

5. Flat slate-stone as one step

6. Pile-screw fixing

Paalipiste Oy, Ruusvipaalu



Facade materials

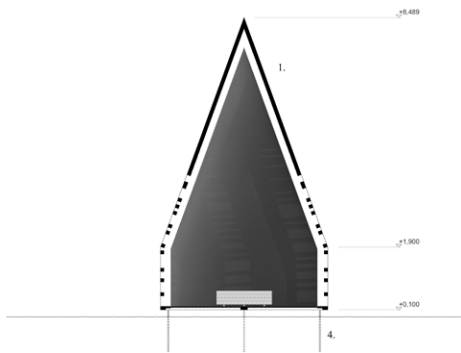
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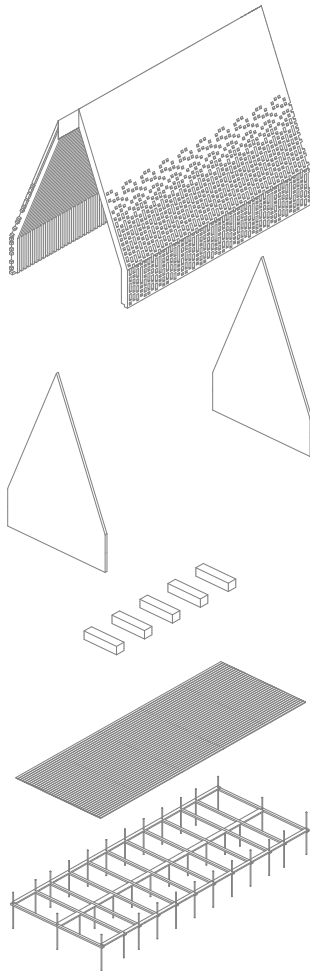
Wood needs to be fresh/humid during the construction of the elements, so that the entire becomes more solid.
Surfaces painted on black tar, which is toned pitch black paint.
Suitable for external use.

3. Siberian tamarack.

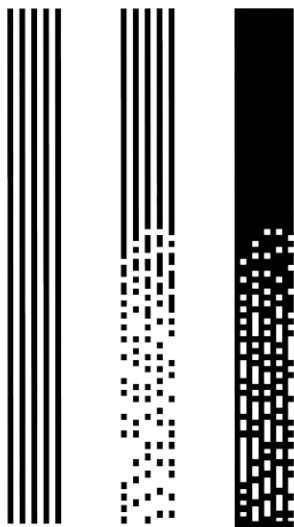
The wood needs to be dried, so that that colour is light grey from the beginning. No external treatment.

4. Pile-screw fixing

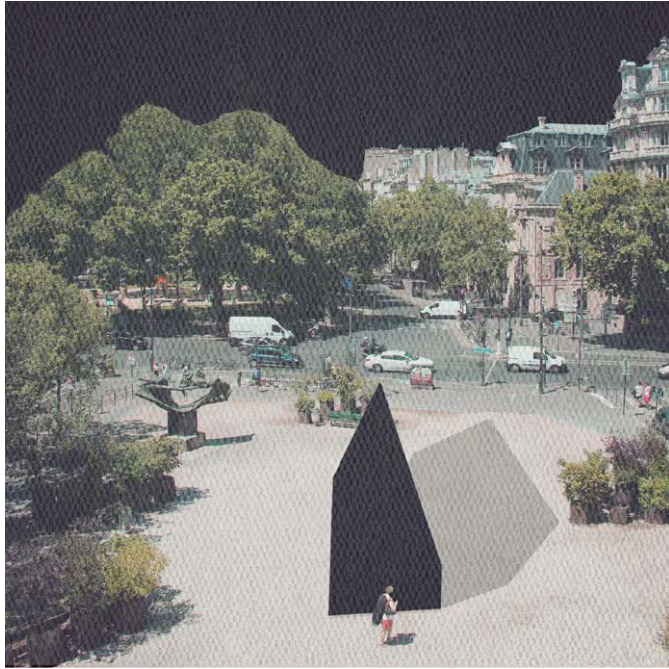
Paalupiste Oy, Ruuvipäälä



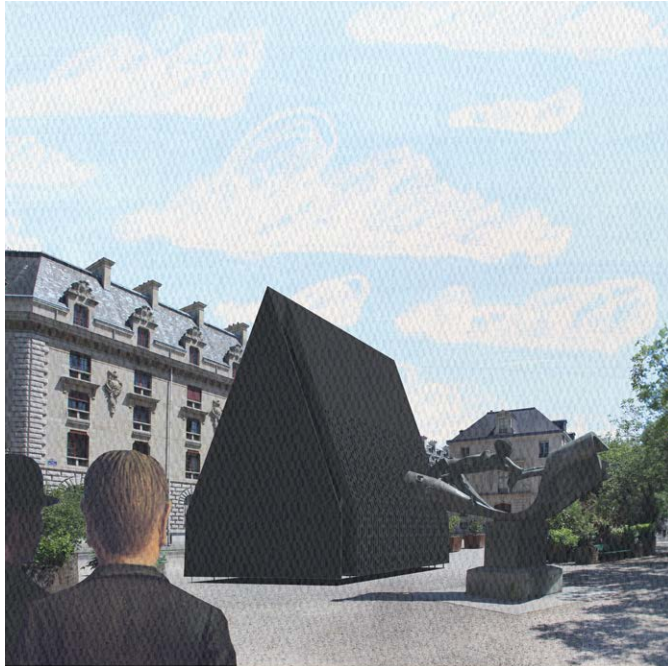
Axonometric picture of the plan



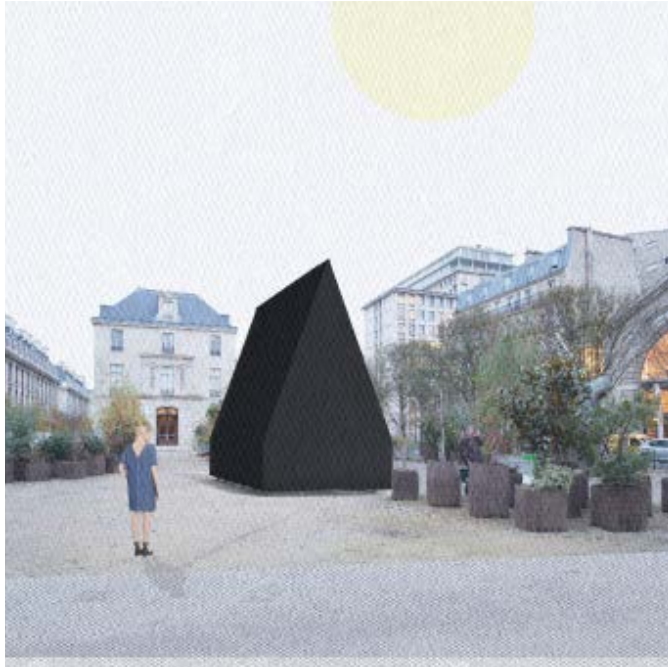
formation of the elements



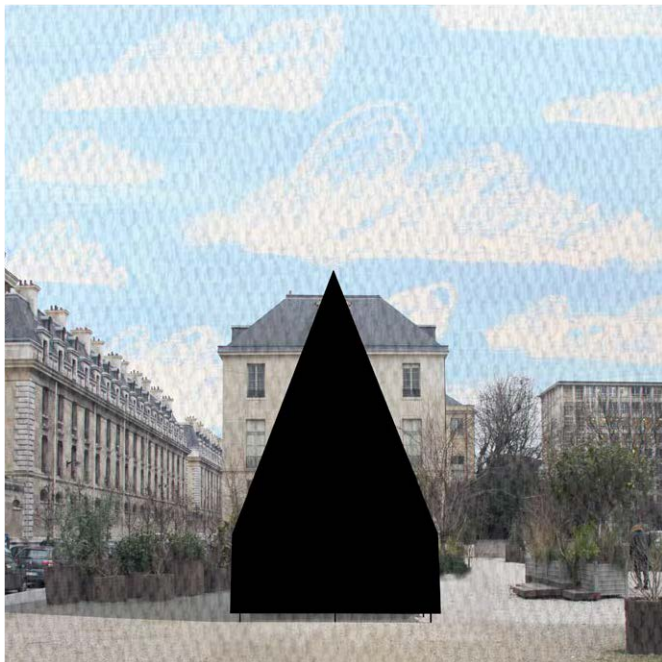
View from the librairie



View from Boulevard Henri IV



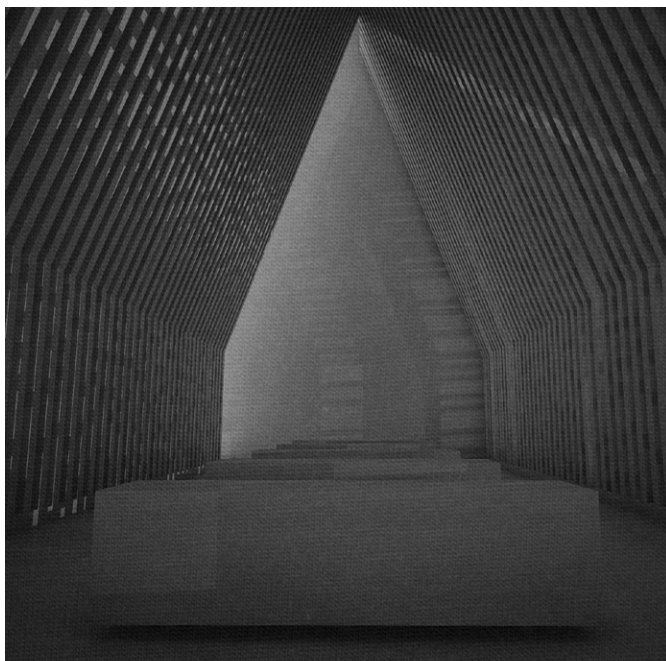
view from Boulevard Henri IV,
exit from metro



View from Pavillon de l'Arsenal



Projection-picture of the facade



View from inside



View from inside

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Art installation, Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis Church in Paris

Picture taken by the author

