

# A NARRATORIUM | SLAVE MUSIC

Savannah, Georgia USA  
Undergraduate Submission

Design intent was to create a conceptual building or space that “provokes a story”. This project is extremely concept oriented and students were encouraged to design with no constraints.

The structure guides you through multiple spaces that narrates slave life through music; from their oppression guiding you towards their symbol of freedom. There are attributes that the site acquires that symbolized slavery in Savannah: the Barracoons were used to temporarily hold slaves as they were traded from inter-colonial slave businesses in South Carolina. As well as Bay Lane being the hub of all slave trading in Savannah. This area was the epitome of slave interaction that developed an idiosyncratic culture, which produced musical notation that is unique and holds a deeper meaning of what music could mean.

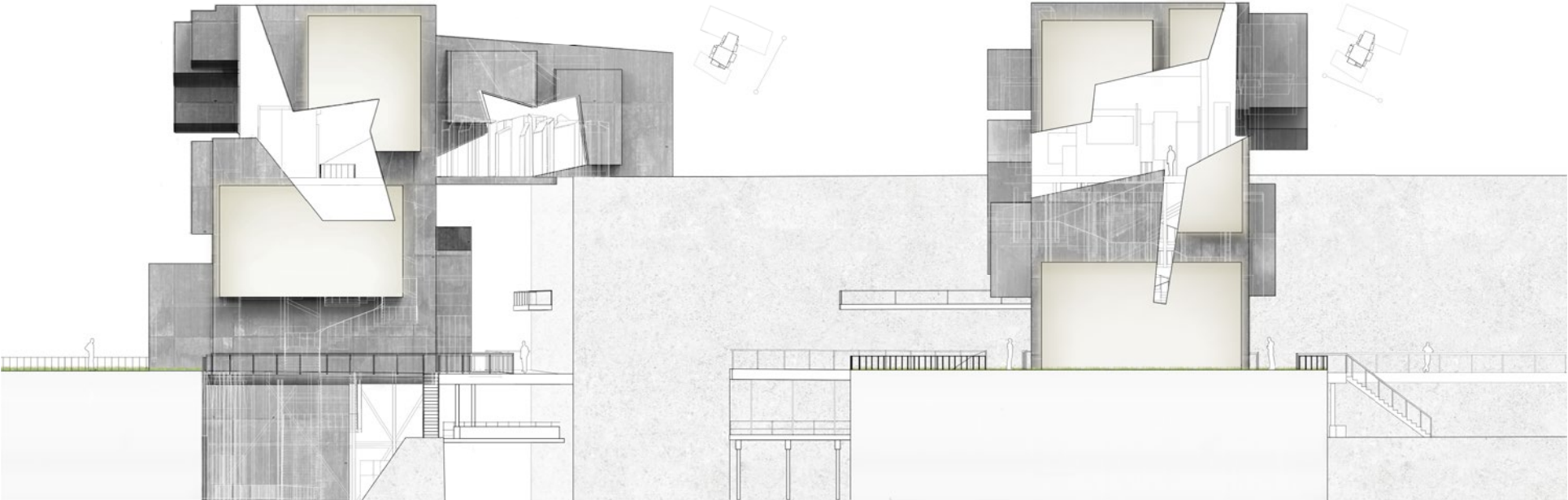
Slave music is unlike any genre that holds distinctive features such as intricate rhythmic patterns, off key notes, incorporation of hums, foot patting and a strong rhythmic drive. These songs represented the sorrows of their lives as well as a way of communication. They sung multiple songs that were intrinsic to helping each other. It was their secret language that marched them towards freedom and was their anthem as they fought through their industrious labor. What drove the narratorium are four songs that represent their music of communication and the slave’s emotional states that manifested their lives.

All four song corresponds with each level, meaning they transition from songs that represent enslavement, working your way up to songs that communicated slave’s freedom. The first song is Dear Darling Nelly Gray which represents the spontaneity of slave trade. Second song is Steal Away which commemorated Nate Turner for the heroic rebellion he started. Third is an unknown song that Harriet Tubman used to sing to communicate to slaves who were trying to escape up north. The last was Follow The Drinking Gourd, which informed slaves to travel up north a specific way, which led to the underground railroad.

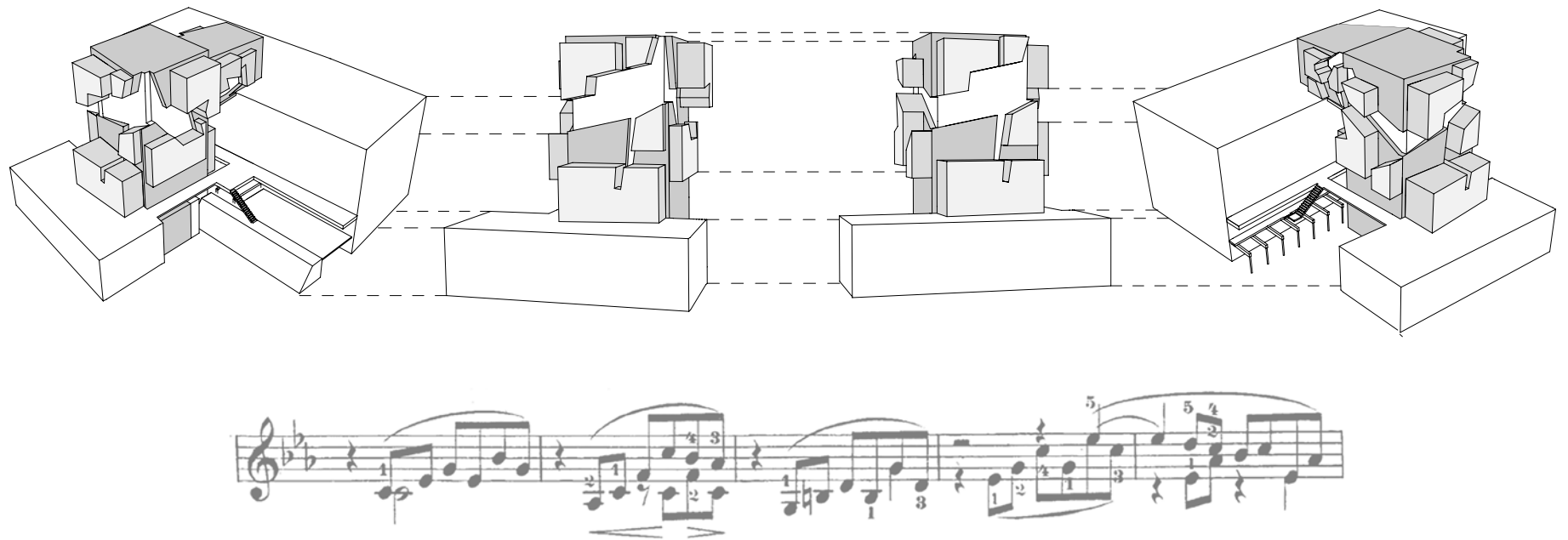
01 | Section of the different levels



02 | South and East Elevations

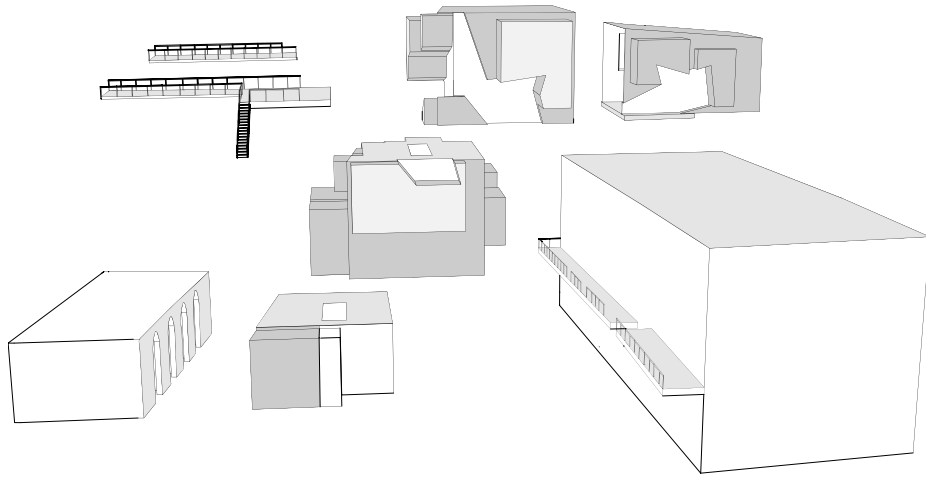


## 03 | Form

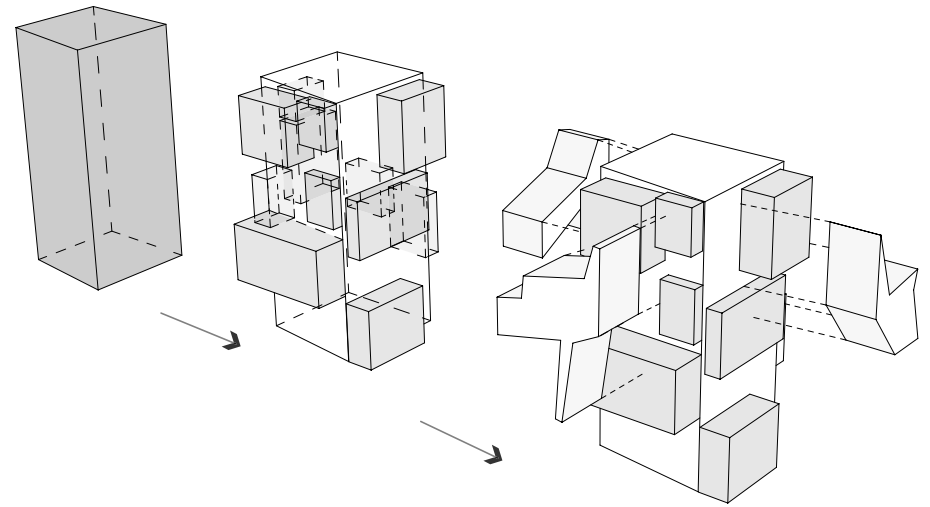


The form was inspired by musical time signatures and how notes in a measure are accentuated/less accentuated depending on what beat they represent. I thought of this visually with undulating surfaces that acted as the complex rhythmic patterns, off key notes of slave music as well as symbolizing the spontaneity of slave life, and portraying a dominant presence on site. (Sheet music came from Robert Schumann: Mignon)

## 04 | Diagram 1 & 2

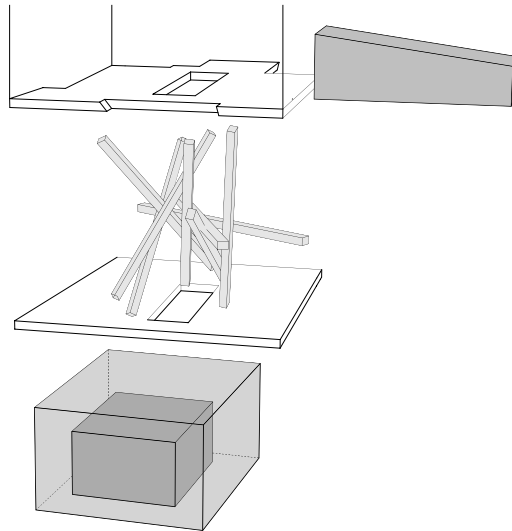


As development on my concept and site progressed, the project revealed patterns, which later on was tied to musical time signature. The site has 4 spaces to interact as well as choosing four different songs = 4 spaces.

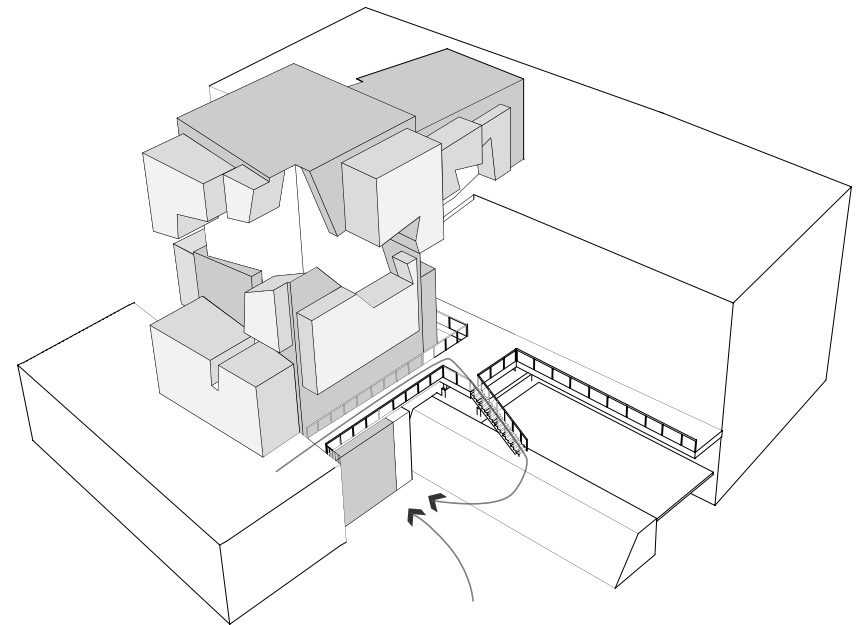


With the connection between the site and spaces, I created a massing that reflected the notion of musical time signatures. I wanted to create a massing that went against a formal pattern because there are distinct characteristics of slave music that make it unique.

05 | Diagram 3 & 4

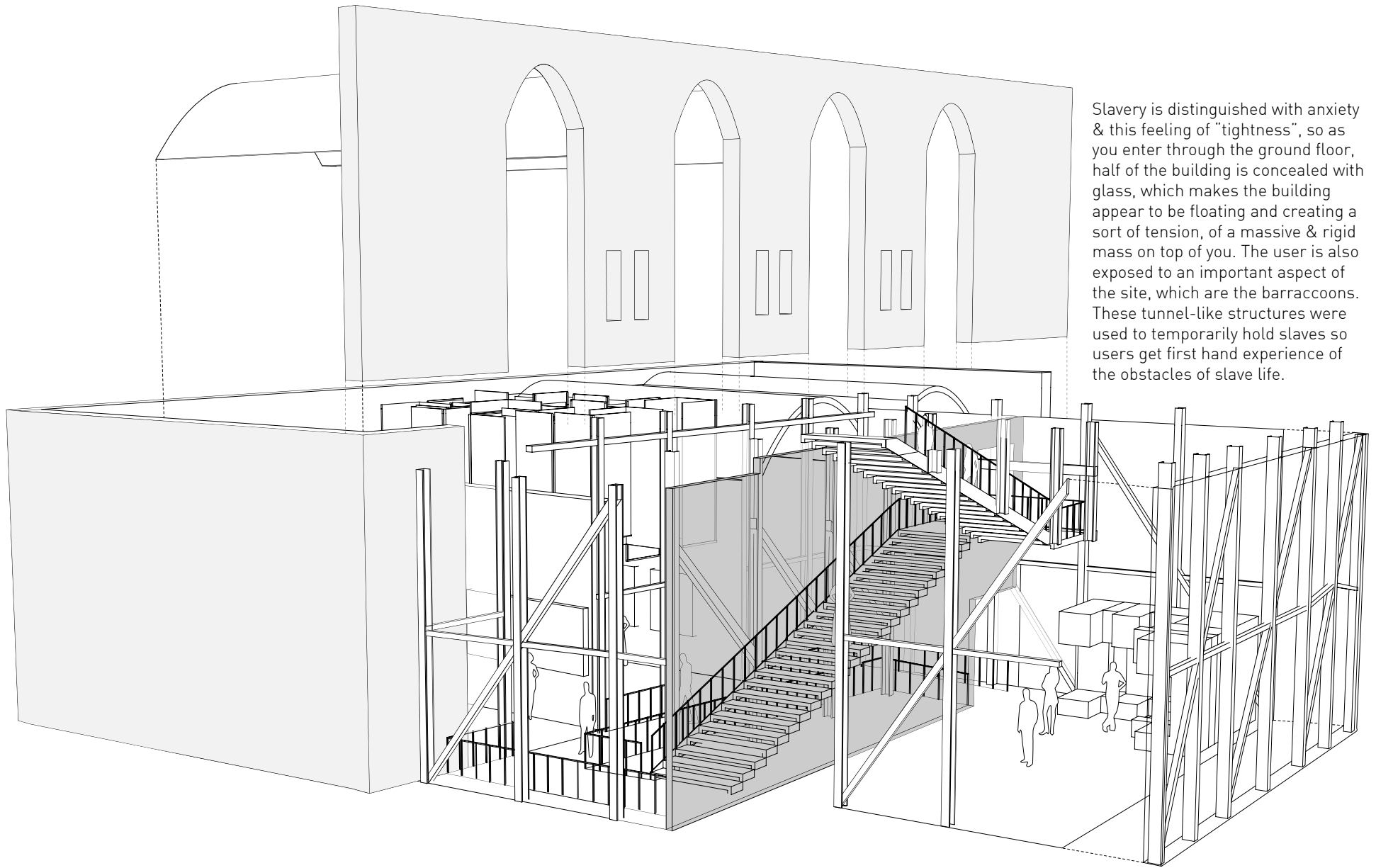


Depending on which song/theme is playing, each level has a different connotation that corresponds to the theme of slavery. Starting from oppression, transcending to freedom.



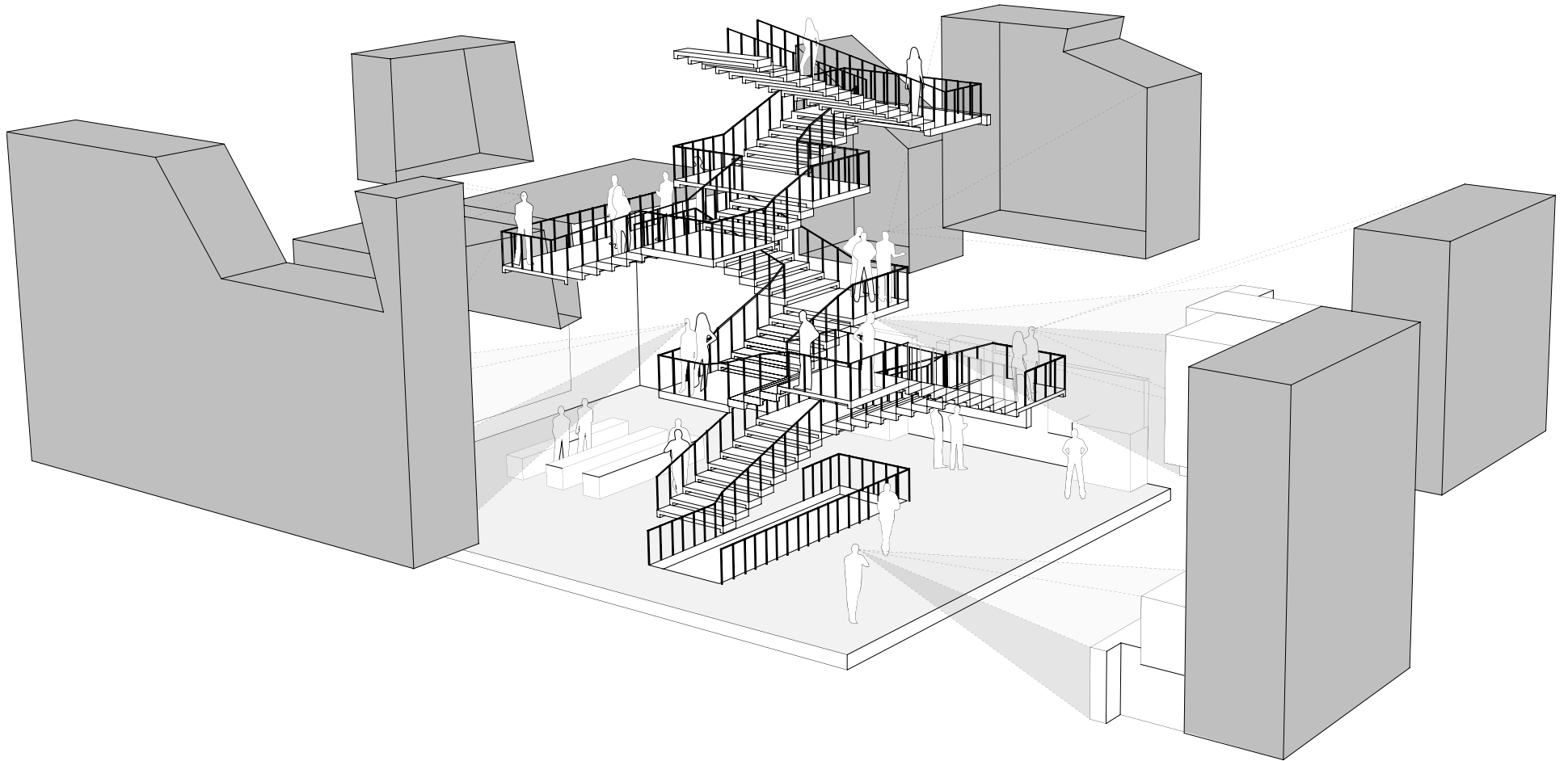
The site is in a peculiar spot which can be accessed in different ways. You can enter the building from Bay street by walking down the bridges and stairs or from Factors Walk which can be accessed from Bay street.

## 06 | First Floor Interior



Slavery is distinguished with anxiety & this feeling of "tightness", so as you enter through the ground floor, half of the building is concealed with glass, which makes the building appear to be floating and creating a sort of tension, of a massive & rigid mass on top of you. The user is also exposed to an important aspect of the site, which are the barracoons. These tunnel-like structures were used to temporarily hold slaves so users get first hand experience of the obstacles of slave life.

## 07 | Second Floor Interior



This floor is the second interactive space that leads you into the horrors of rebellion slave life. Each extrusion, lines up with the stairs/landing which project video clips of slaves before, during, or after the affects of a rebellion. This space is not only an auditory but visual space that takes you through a chaotic journey that African American slaves had to go through to reach freedom. The concept was to create a chaotic space that took the user on a journey that resembled the unstable and riotous life of slavery.



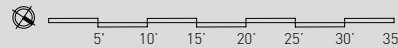
## FIRST | FLOOR

There is a sudden change between the space you enter and the barracks. As you enter into this space, darkness and the echoing of the music encapsulate you.

○ Barracoons /  
Historically used to temporarily hold slaves.

○ Concrete Wall /  
Weathered concrete wall supported by an exposed cross beam structure throughout this space.

○ Glass Wall /  
Glass wall supported by an exposed cross beam structure.



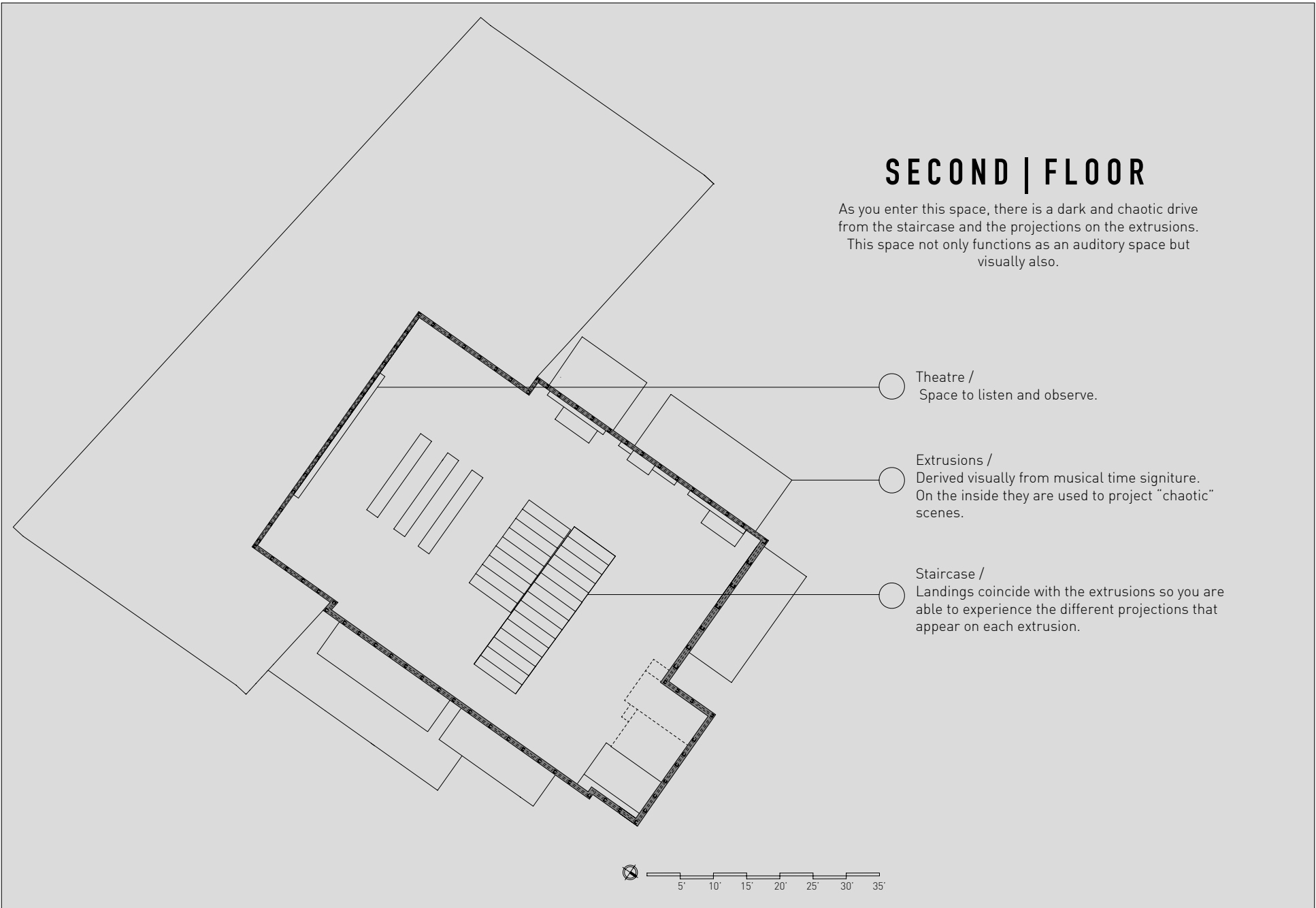
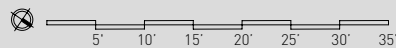
## SECOND | FLOOR

As you enter this space, there is a dark and chaotic drive from the staircase and the projections on the extrusions. This space not only functions as an auditory space but visually also.

○ Theatre /  
Space to listen and observe.

○ Extrusions /  
Derived visually from musical time signature.  
On the inside they are used to project "chaotic"  
scenes.

○ Staircase /  
Landings coincide with the extrusions so you are  
able to experience the different projections that  
appear on each extrusion.



## THIRD | FLOOR

This floor is open and light brightens up this floor creating a more inviting space. There are also interactive spaces that portray the ways slaves in the south reached freedom.

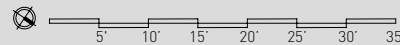
Interactive Space- Maze /  
Symbolizes the interaction  
between Harriet Tubman  
and escaping slaves.

Transition Space /  
Open space between the  
third and fourth songs.

Interactive Space- Pathways /  
Symbolize the different pathways  
taken by slaves: One symbolizes  
the journey towards the north  
star and the second symbolizes  
the Tombigbee River which slaves  
traveled through.

Recessed Window /  
Creates that tention of  
escaping captivity from  
its northern orientation  
but recessed to create a  
sence of doubt.

Narrowing Space /  
Creating a physical focal  
point by narrowing the  
space as you get closer  
to the end of the structure.



# POLY-SEM-IC IMAGES

Having more than one meaning, multiple nuances  
Each images correspond to different spaces in the building.

01



02



03



04





**Physical Model**  
Matte board, bass  
wood, & frosted plexi