

[terra] forma

2 // Urban Adaptive Reuse + Expansion — Academic Work



Course: ARCH 492

Location: Rome, Italy

Date: September – November 2024

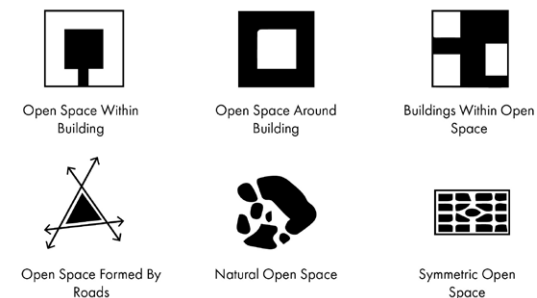
Role: Design, digital and physical 3D modelling, visualization and rendering, diagram development

Collaborators: Audrey Chen, Kailing Mai

Instructor: Beatrice Bruscoli

Software: Rhino, Enscape, Photoshop, Illustrator

Exhibitions: Roma XLV Cambridge & Toronto Shows 2025



Testaccio Context

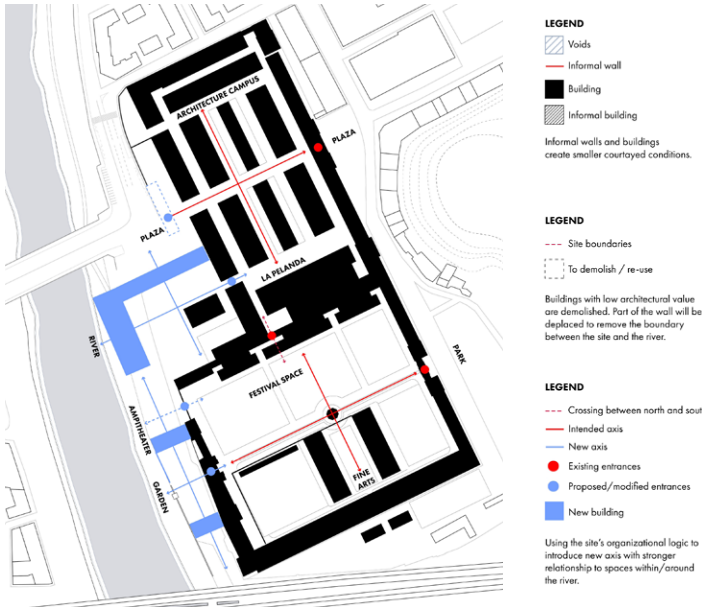
Despite its central location near major transit, the Ex-Mattatoio contrasts with its dense urban context, while preserving the organization of open space and circulation.

How can transforming a former slaughterhouse reconnect a community with its river, its history, and with one another?

[terra] forma reimagines the ex-Mattatoio in Testaccio, Rome, as a civic landscape that restores connection between people, place, and the Tiber River. Once a fragmented industrial complex, the site is reshaped into a continuous civic ground that supports cultural exchange, education, and collective growth. The name [terra] forma, meaning “formed by the land,” reflects the project’s central idea of grounding architecture in the material, historical, and social fabric of Testaccio. By extending the Mattatoio’s historic axes toward the river, the design weaves together open courtyards, gardens, and covered passages, creating a spatial network that dissolves boundaries between built and natural environments. Through this continuity, the project reframes the site as an accessible public terrain that encourages movement, gathering, and renewed relationships between the city and the river.

Three programmatic zones structure the proposal: Community and Showcase, Recreation and Education, and Creativity and Growth. Each zone transitions from public to private, encouraging intergenerational interaction through flexible courtyards and shared outdoor rooms. Retaining the Mattatoio’s rectilinear massing and pitched roofs, the design introduces light-filled interiors and new material interventions that reinterpret the site’s industrial identity for contemporary civic use. Circulation paths and thresholds are carefully arranged to maintain visual continuity and invite movement across the site.

Rooted in the history of Testaccio as both a working-class district and a place of cultural production, [terra] forma envisions a civic commons where architecture, landscape, and community coexist along the banks of the Tiber.

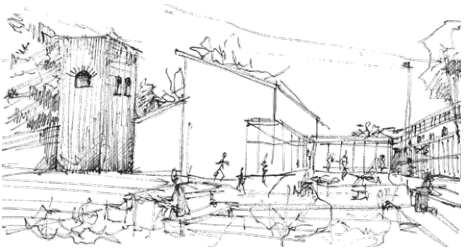


Site Organization and Axial Strategy

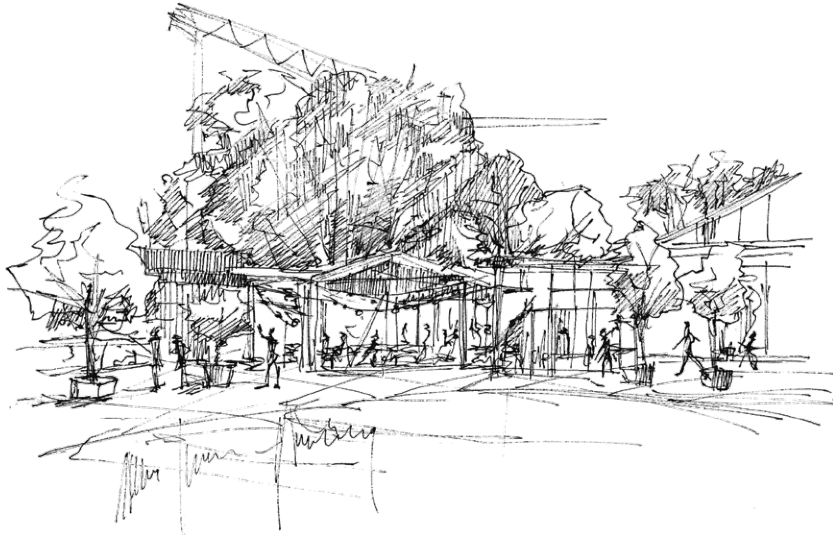
1748	1873	1883	1901	1909	1931	1987	1988-1990	2002	2020s
TESTACCIO HILL DOCUMENTED Testaccio Hill was documented on Nolli's map of Rome, highlighting its prominence as a historic landscape with ties to ancient Roman trade.	PLANNING THE SLAUGHTER HOUSE Rome initiated plans for a centralized slaughterhouse in Testaccio to meet the city's growing industrial needs.	CONSTRUCTION OF THE EX MATTATOIO Work on the Ex Mattatoio began, setting the stage for Testaccio's transformation into an industrial hub.	OPENING OF THE EX MATTATOIO The Ex Mattatoio officially opened as one of Europe's most modern and advanced slaughterhouses.	TESTACCIO'S INDUSTRIAL FLOURISHING Testaccio grew into a thriving working-class district, with the slaughterhouse driving its economy.	PANOPTICON-INSPIRED RENOVATIONS Radical renovations at the Ex Mattatoio introduced designs for increased oversight, reflecting fascist ideals.	RESTORATION OF THE COMPLESSO DELLA BORSA The restoration of the Complesso della Borsa began the shift toward preserving the site's industrial legacy.	CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATION Major renovations repurposed much of the Ex Mattatoio for artistic and cultural uses.	COMPLETION OF MACRO TESTACCIO The renovation culminated with the opening of MACRO Testaccio, solidifying the site as a cultural center.	CULTURAL HUB AND HISTORICAL LANDMARK The Ex Mattatoio serves as a cultural hub for art and social initiatives, while Testaccio Hill remains a historic site blending ancient and modern significance.
ANCIENT AND PRE-INDUSTRIAL ORIGINS			INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION			CULTURAL REVIVAL			

Testaccio + ex-Mattatoio History

The site's existing organizational logic is clarified and extended to strengthen spatial and urban relationships across the campus. Informal walls and secondary buildings are selectively removed or reconfigured to soften rigid boundaries and create smaller, more porous courtyard conditions. New and reinforced axes organize movement between north and south while establishing clearer visual and physical connections to the river. Existing entrances are retained where they support current circulation patterns, while new and modified access points introduce more legible public routes through plazas, gardens, and festival spaces. Together, these interventions reframe the site as a continuous civic landscape, balancing preservation with selective removal to open the campus toward the river and its surrounding public realm.



These early studies explore the landscape of Testaccio and its relationship to the broader terrain of Rome, focusing on the textures, slopes, and material conditions that define the site. The sketches were produced at an early stage to register the layered ground of Testaccio, where earth, stone, vegetation, and water meet, and to develop an intuitive understanding of how the ex-Mattatoio sits between the city and the river. Clay was initially used as a medium to sense the site's topography and massing, allowing form to emerge through pressure, gravity, and erosion rather than precise control. Rough architectural structures were then introduced into these studies to test how new interventions might embed into the slope, extend toward the water, and negotiate the existing industrial fabric. Rather than representing resolved design, these sketches operate as spatial probes, grounding the project in the material and topographic character of the landscape before architectural definition.



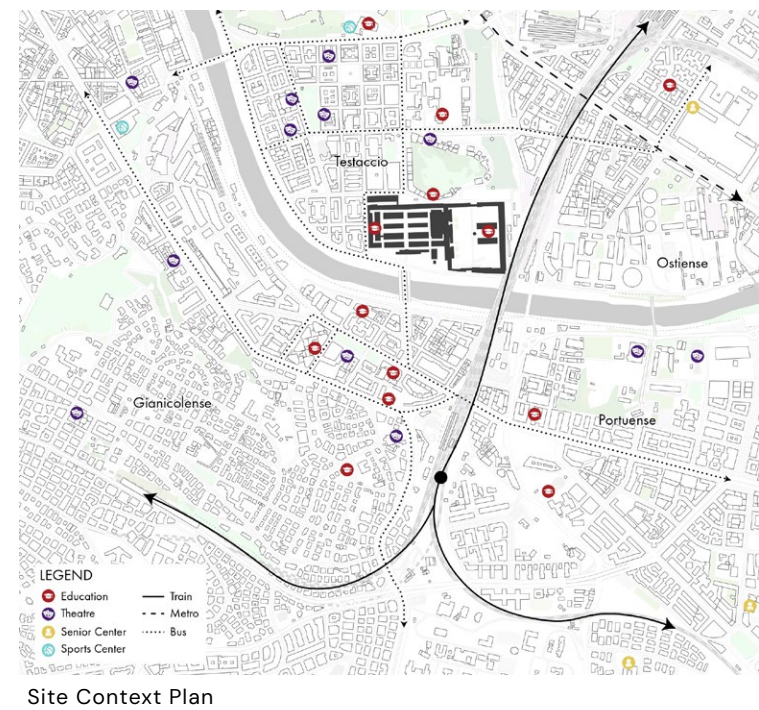
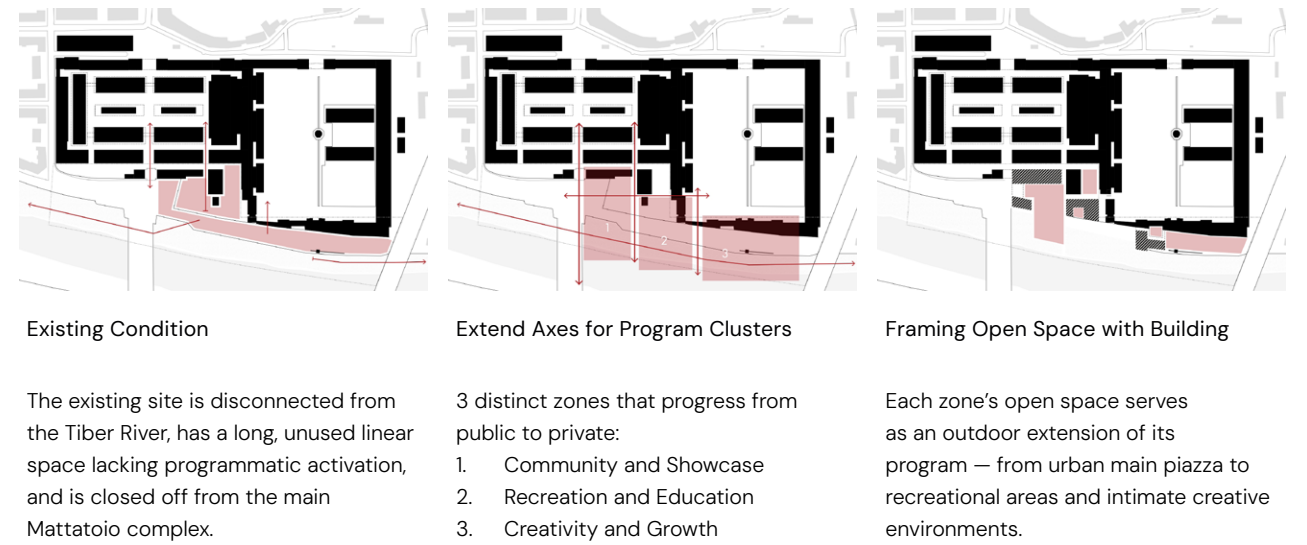
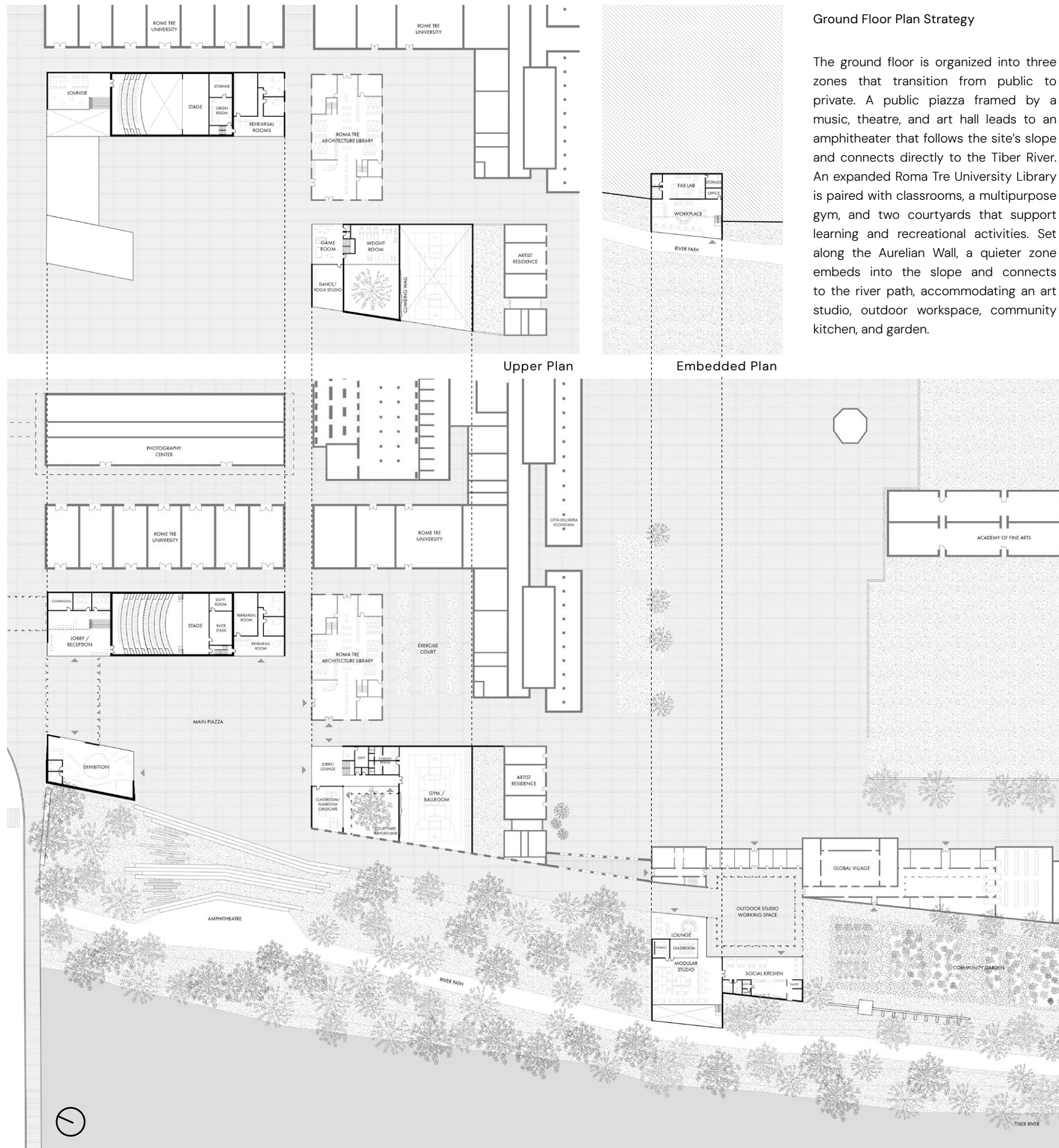
Early Site Sketches + Massing

These atmospheric studies capture the essential spirit of Testaccio through its tactile materiality, intimate social rhythms, and the enduring presence of history. By focusing on the textures of Rome, worn stone, cracked plaster, softened edges, and surfaces shaped by weather and touch, the images register time as something physically embedded in the city. Details such as laundry lines, weathered facades, and worn thresholds reveal a lived material culture shaped by use, climate, and care. These observations ground the project in the lived reality of the neighborhood and form the foundation for a design approach that connects Rome's past to its contemporary civic life.



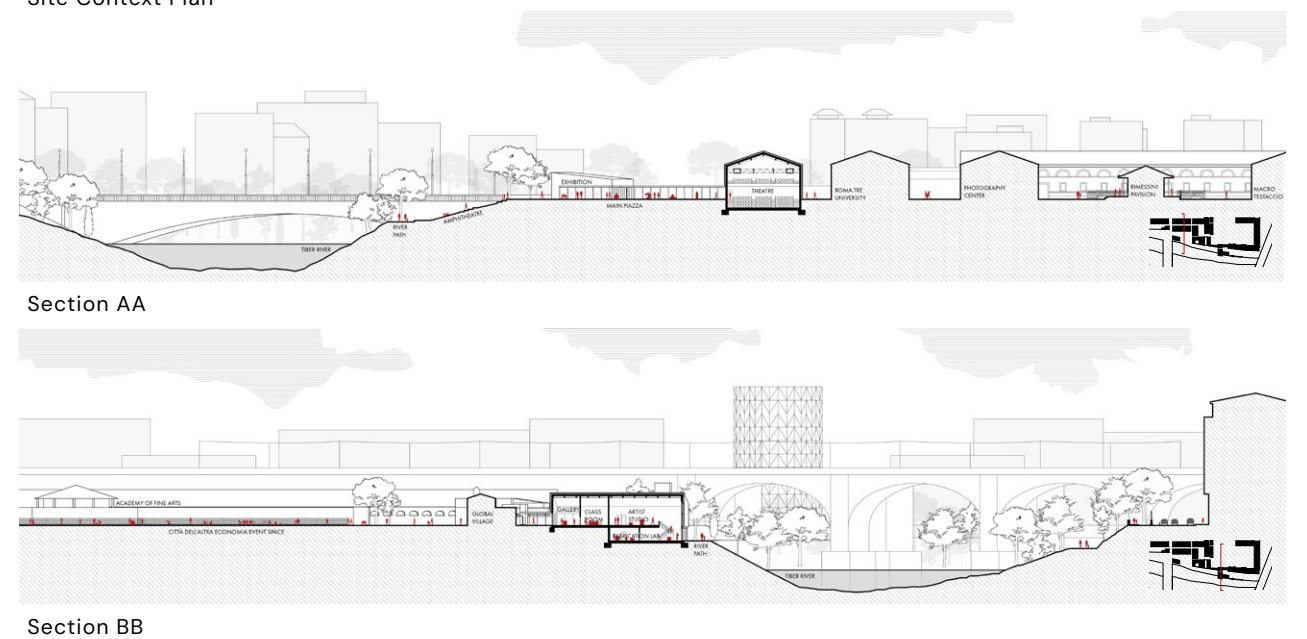
Preliminary Site Texturing Studies





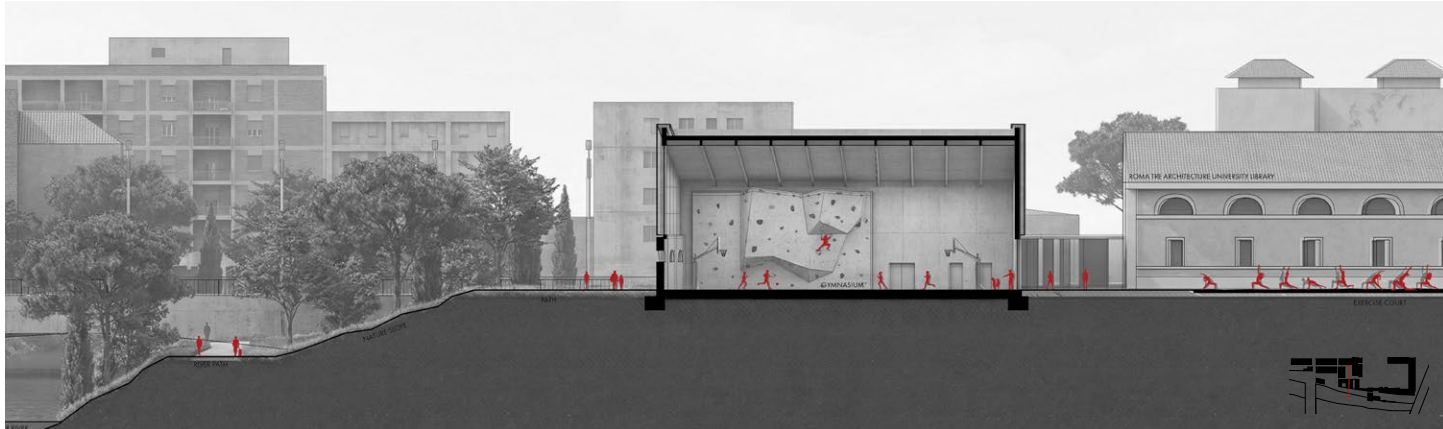
The ground floor is organized into three zones that transition from public to private, allowing the building to mediate between the city, the river, and more intimate community spaces. At the most public edge, a piazza framed by a music, theatre, and art hall acts as an entry point and gathering space, drawing visitors into the site. This sequence leads to an amphitheater that follows the site's slope, creating a direct connection to the Tiber River.

Moving inward, the program shifts toward education and recreation, where an expanded Roma Tre University Library is integrated with classrooms, a multipurpose gym, and courtyards that support learning and informal activity. Along the Aurelian Wall, the ground floor becomes quieter. Here, the building embeds into the slope and connects to the river path, housing an art studio, outdoor workspace, community kitchen, and garden that support creativity and everyday use.

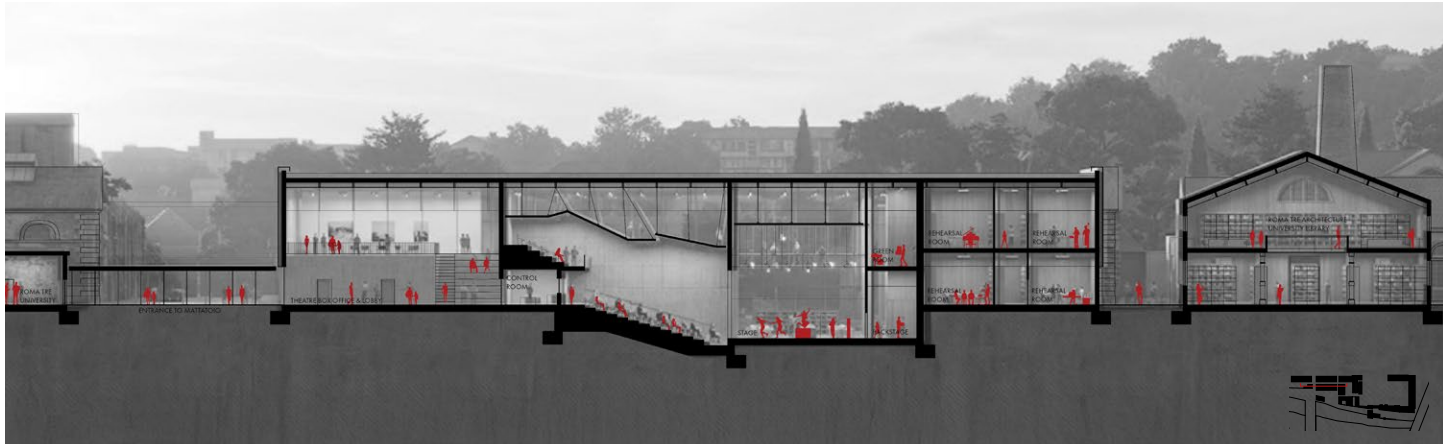




Entrance View



Gymnasium Section



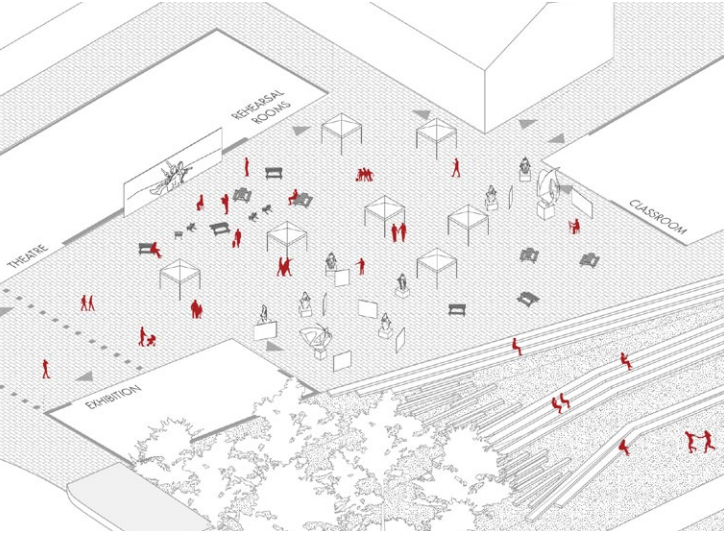
Theatre Section



Longitudinal Unfolded Section



Main Piazza



9AM:
Farmers Market



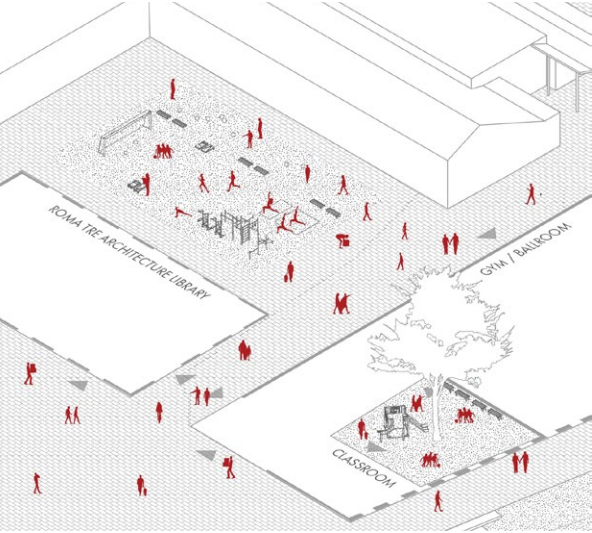
12PM:
Art Exhibition



9PM:
Outdoor Cinema



Exercise Court



9AM:
Yoga Class



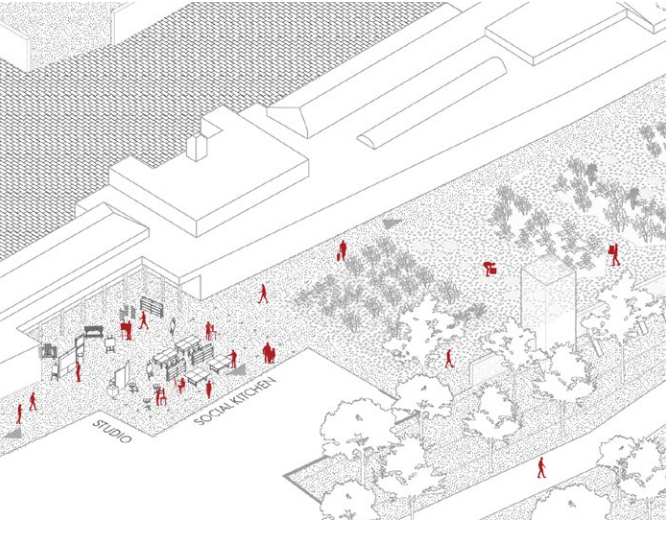
12PM:
Bocce Tournament



6PM:
After-School Sports



Artist Courtyard



9AM:
Private Artist Workspace



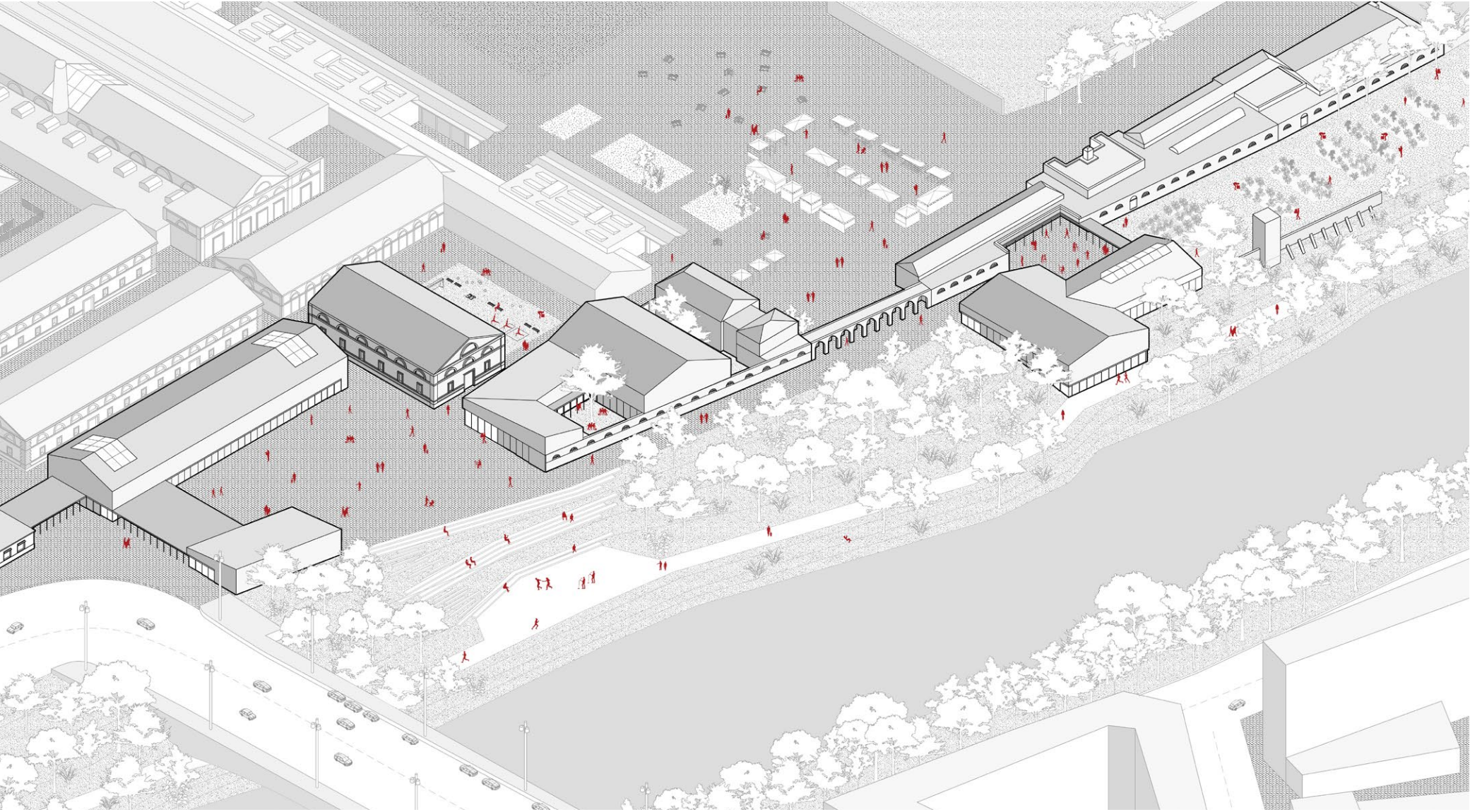
3PM:
Art Workshops



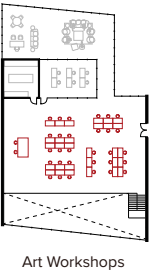
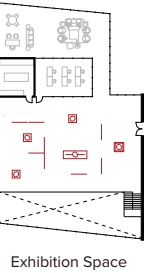
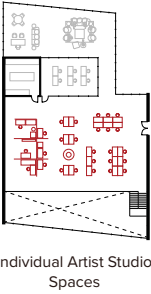
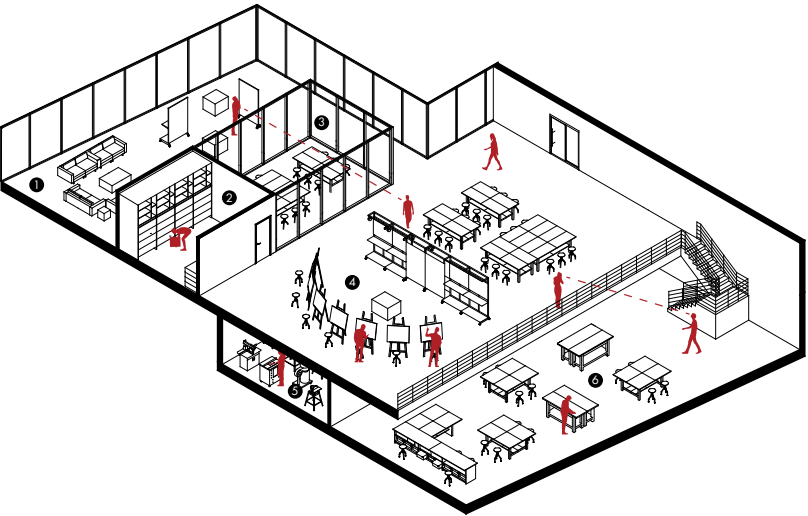
7PM:
Artist Social Events



Artist Working Courtyard & Community Garden View



Axonometric



Artist Residence

The space is designed to support the artists who informally occupy the adjacent Global Village while welcoming more children and seniors from the Testaccio community. The studio features an open and flexible layout that can easily adapt to various uses, including artist studio spaces, exhibition areas, and community art workshops. Additional facilities, such as a fabrication lab, a fixed classroom, a community kitchen and garden, create opportunities for intergenerational interaction and education. Programs like wood working, sewing, and cooking not only foster skill sharing across generations but also provide employment and volunteer opportunities.