

YANG LIPING
PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER

AN EVOCATIVE TOTEM-LIKE BUILDING

DALI, YUNNAN, CHINA



Studio Zhu-Pei



Founded in 2005 in Beijing, the practice focuses on art and cultural projects, blending forms, spaces, light and materials with great contextual sensitivity.



If the achievements of contemporary Chinese architecture over the last 30 years have gone hand in hand with the rapid expansion of Chinese cities, with the result that high-density urbanization is now the objective reality architects face, then the creation of architectural works that incorporate natural landscapes or human contexts in sparsely populated, extensive natural environments outside the metropolis represents a significant conceptual leap. Studio Zhu-Pei's Performing Arts Center for Yang Liping, a dancer rooted in the artistic traditions of a minority local community living between the iconic landscape of the Cangshan Mountains and Lake Erhai in the small southern Chinese city of Dali, is an outstanding example of this different paradigm.

A huge open-air platform, the building is a complete departure from the traditional central shoebox theater volume surrounded by subsidiary spaces. Echoing the geomorphology of mountains and lake, the raised and sunken building is made up of three functional components: the main body - an indoor theater beneath the platform; three vertical "birdhouses" rising and piercing through the platform; and an outdoor theater whose extended staircase sweeps up to connect the entrance level and broad roof. Zhu Pei has sensitively captured the unique elements of the regional landscape and local building and cultural traditions.

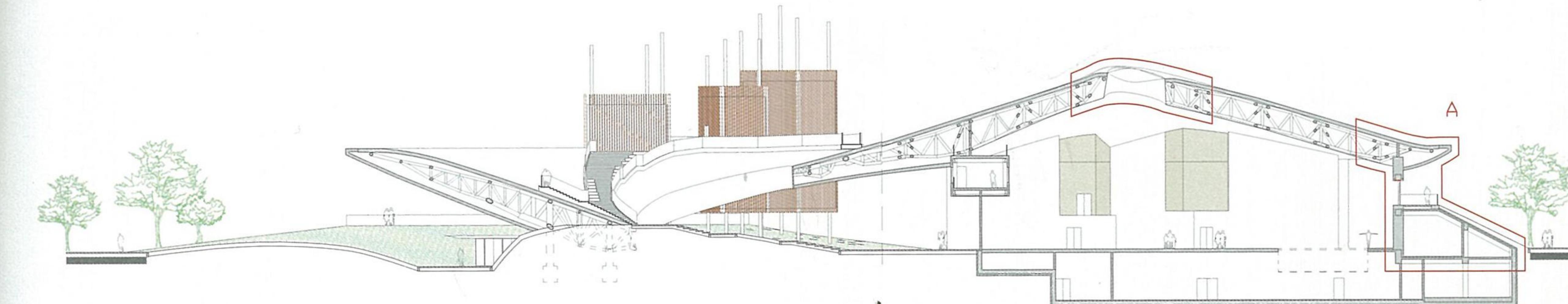
The only large public building in the vast low plain blanketed with low-to-medium rise residential housing, the theater complex is an obvious reference to the Cangshan Mountains and Erhai Lake that form the backdrop to the long low valley. The scenario recalls the title of Zhu Pei's solo exhibition at the Aedes Architecture Gallery in Berlin - *Mind Landscapes*, pivoted around the concept that buildings can become miniature regional landscapes.

As well as the huge amount of outdoor space for the performing arts, the program also allows the indoor theater to spill out into the open air thanks to operable partition walls. This intermingling of interior and exterior space was also a feature of Studio Zhu-Pei's Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Museum (THE PLAN 126). Here in Dali City, this strategy is even better suited to the local climate and customs. In fact, since its completion, the building has become a vibrant cultural center, popular with the local community.

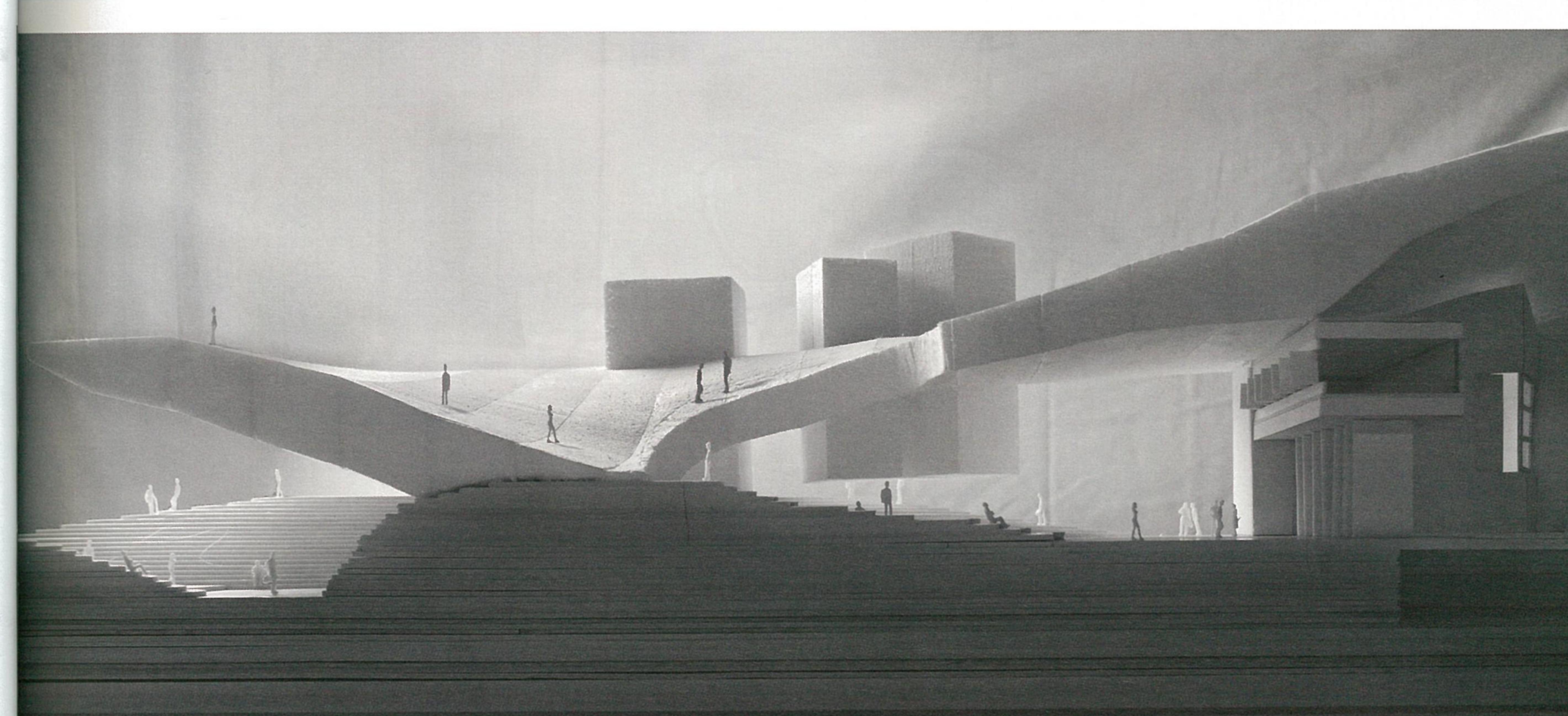
As well as its enormous breadth and form, the Center's reference to its immediate context is also reflected in the building materials: rougher natural elements - again a reference to the connection between heaven and earth - have been preferred over modern precision construction techniques. The three birdhouses resemble tree houses built on uneven tree trunks, conjuring up a vague imagery of the dense Yunnan vegetation. The undulating roof of the large platform is covered with greenish-gray natural stone chips, their edges deliberately natural and irregular. The underside of the roof is an intricate weave of wooden pieces resembling a bird's nest, a dynamic feature lending the building an explosive primitive power. It echoes the dance of local artist Yang Liping, and the traditional music and singing of the region.

Standing totem-like in Dali City between the mountains and the lake, the building seems to signal a refusal to be incorporated into an urban environment. At night, when the irregular bright tiles on the roof are lit up, it conjures up images of ritual torch processions in the surrounding villages. Like the film *Five Golden Flowers*, the Performing Arts Center embodies the history of the former community and public life of Dali, creating a powerful spatial experience with the aim of preserving and furthering the spirit of a region and its cultural identity.

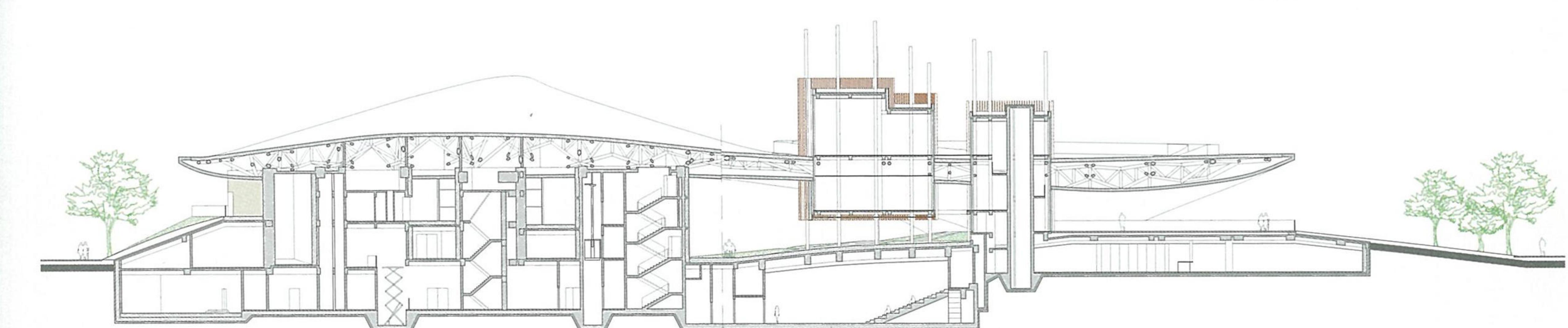
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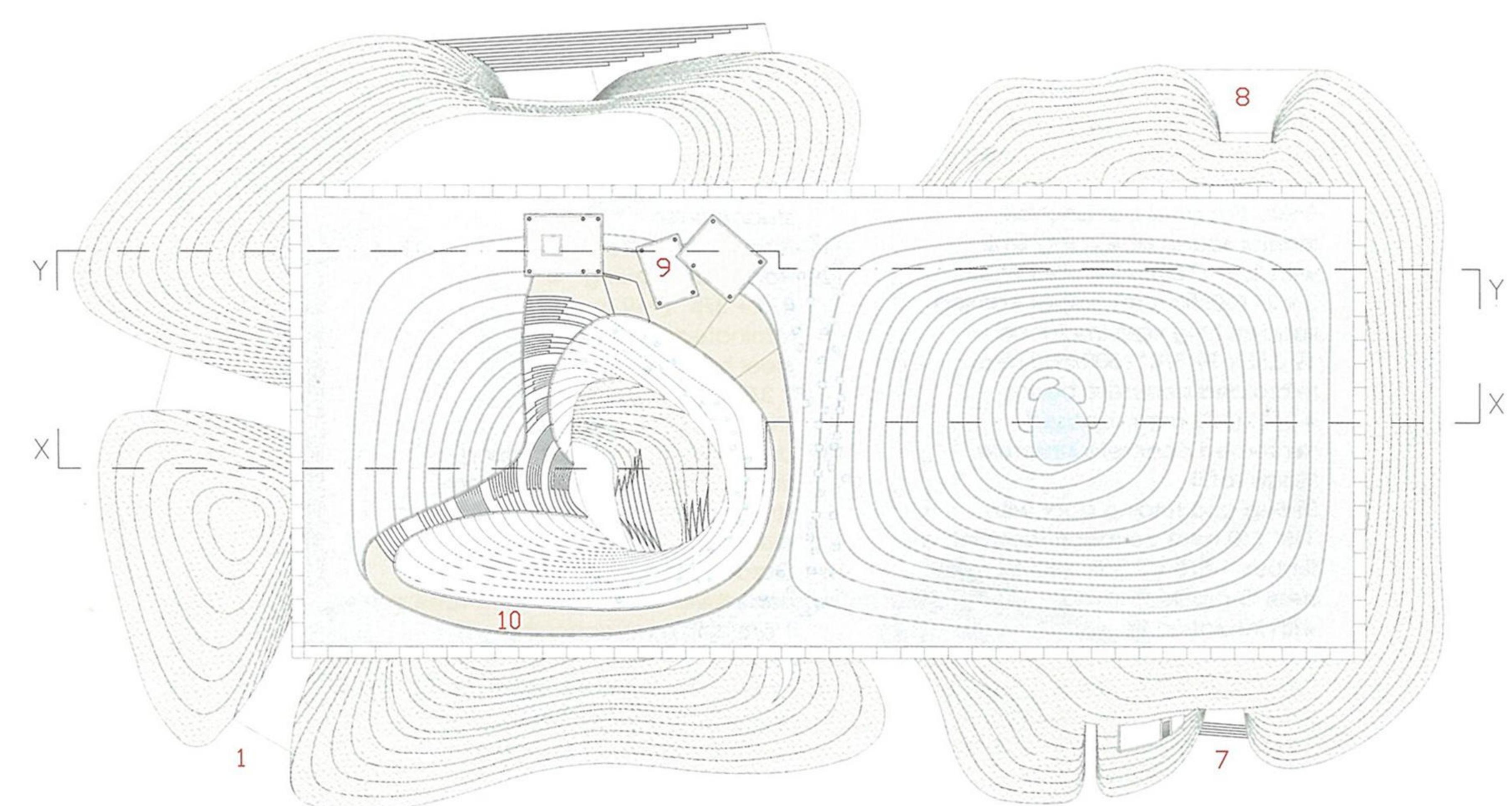
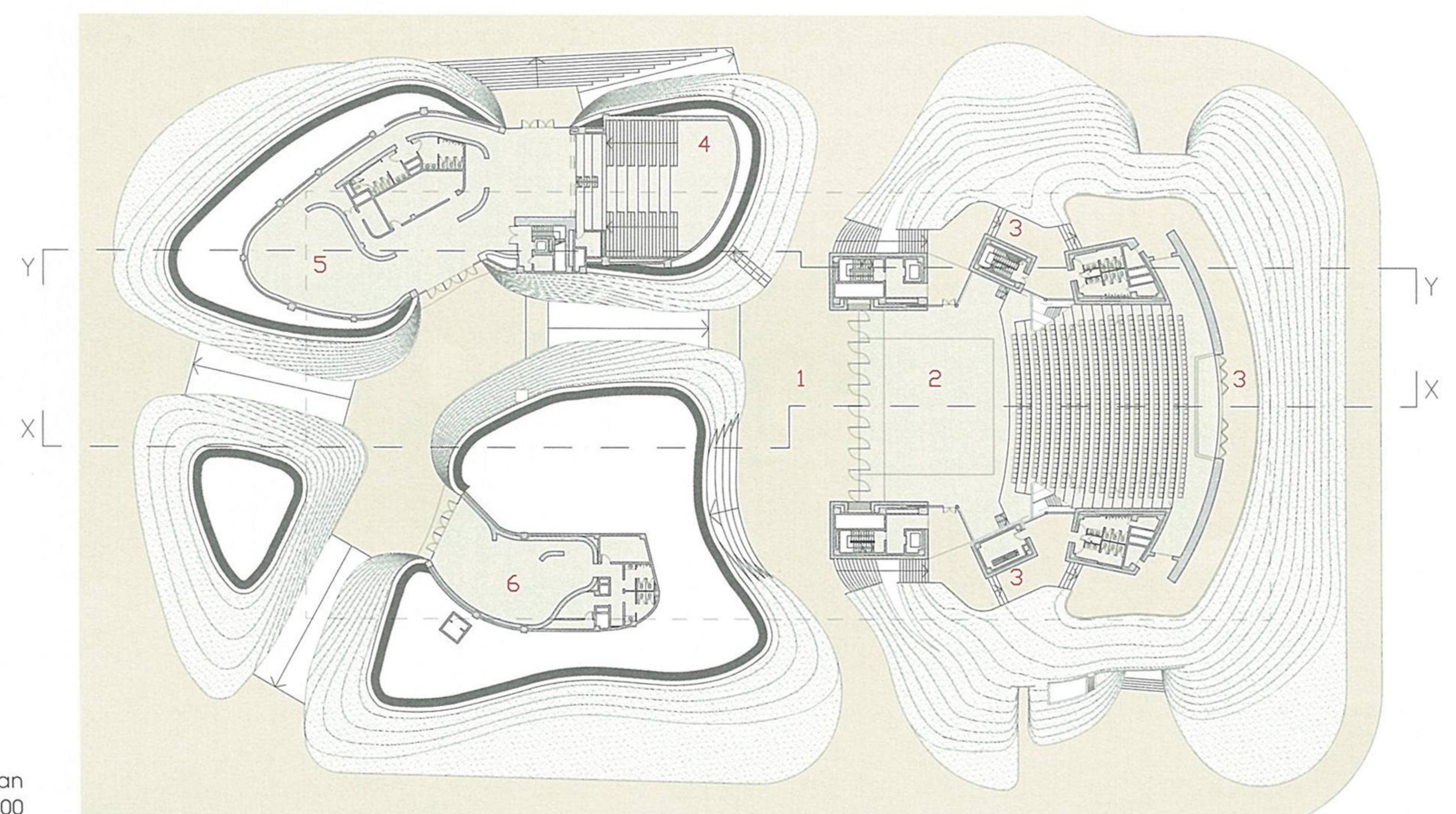


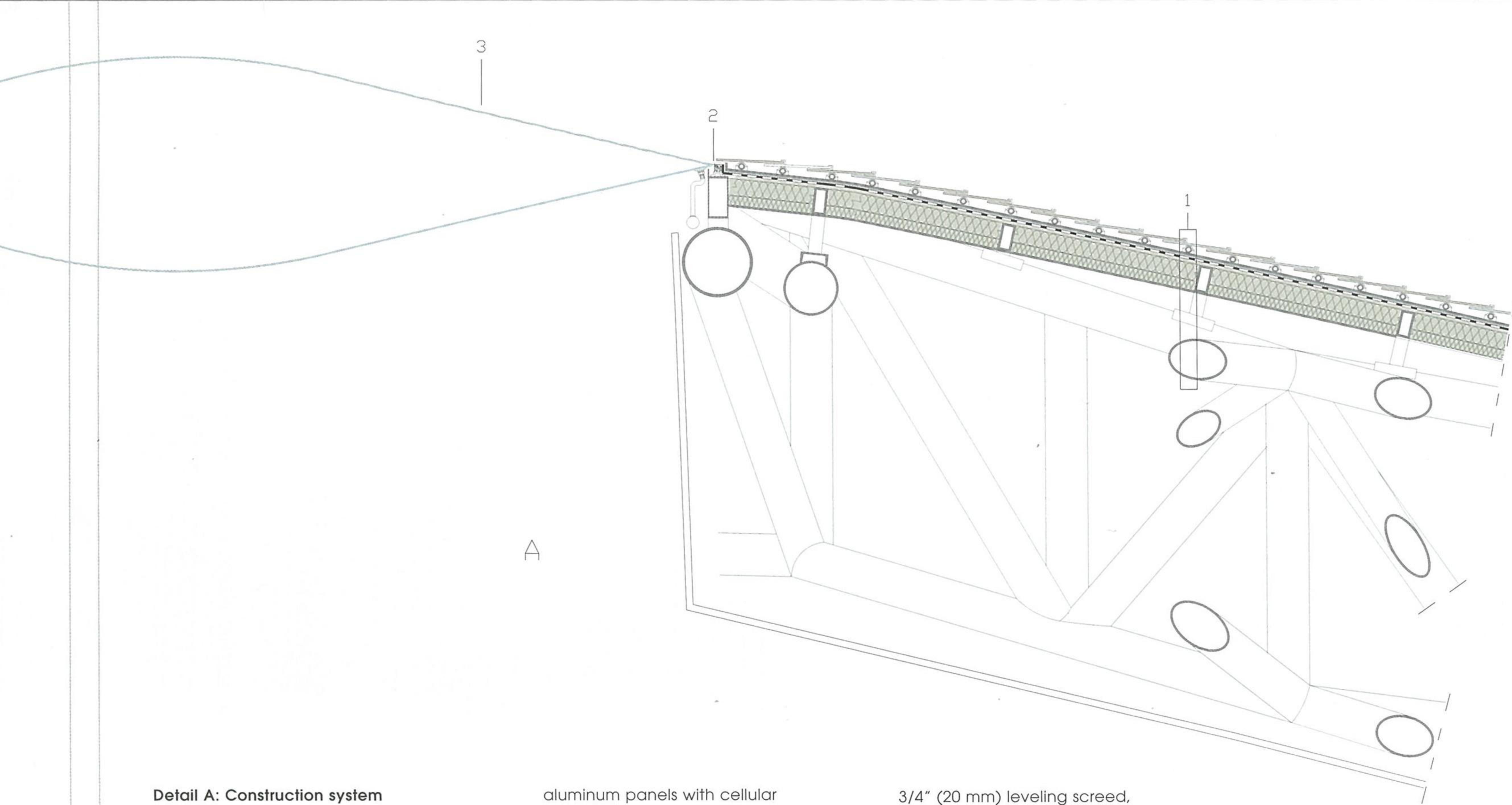
XX Section - Scale 1:700



YY Section - Scale 1:700



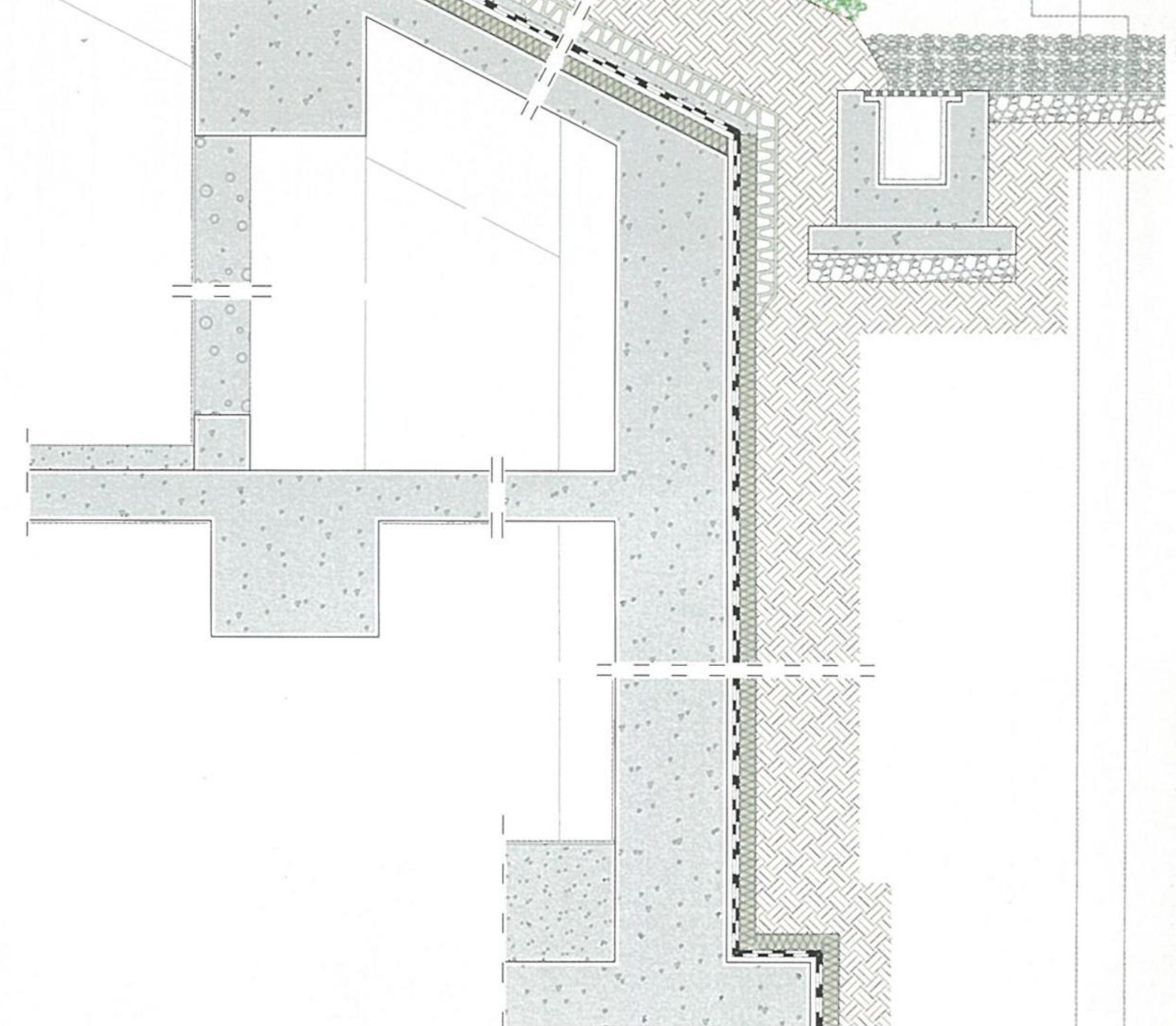
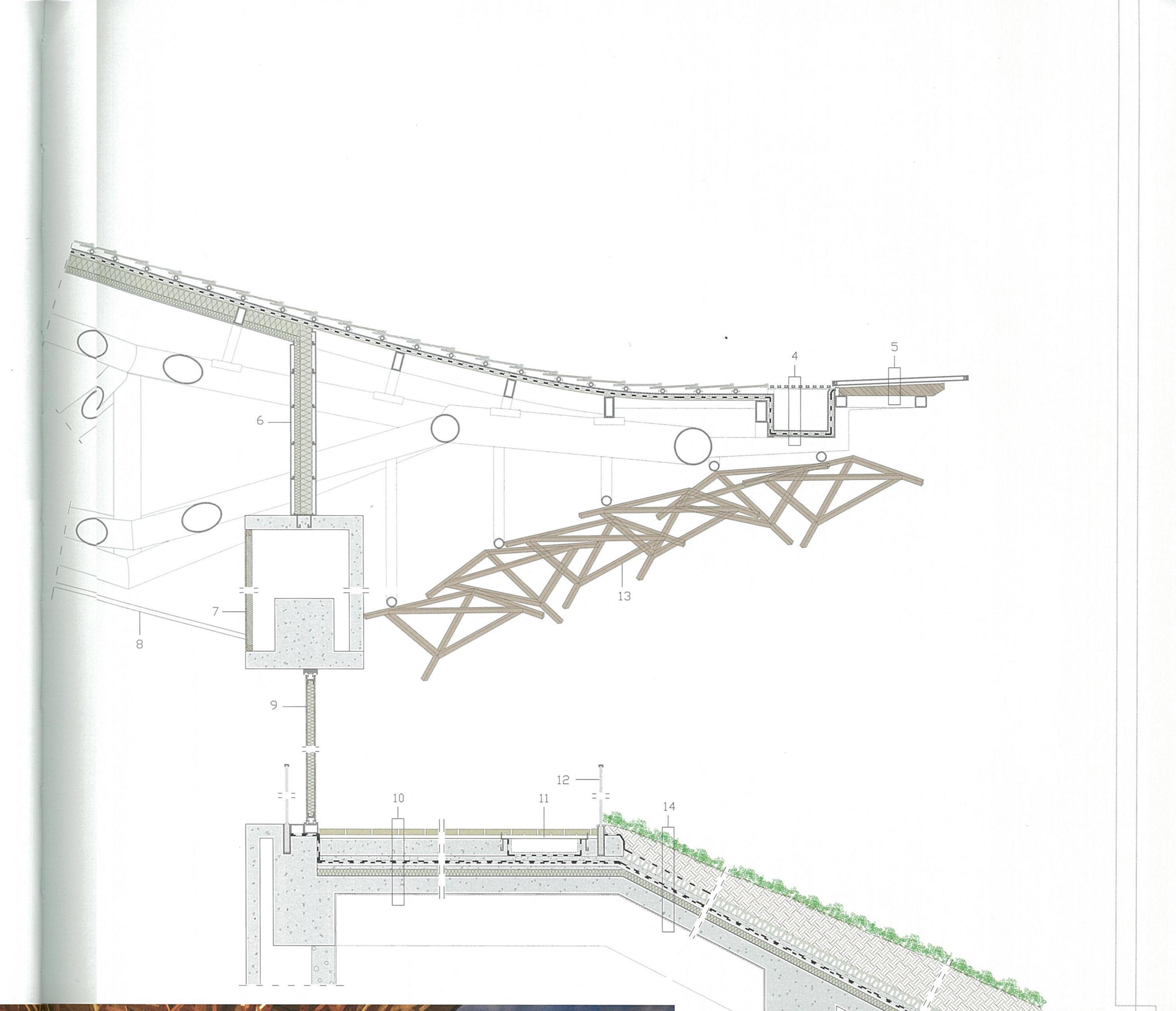




Detail A: Construction system
Vertical section - Scale 1:40

- 1- Roof comprising 3/8" (10 mm) local natural stone flags, Ø 1 5/8" (40 mm) aluminum pipe profile framing with steel clamps, flat steel bar, 5/8" (15 mm) screed, waterproofing membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) polyurethane rigid insulation, 6 1/4 x 3 1/8" (160x80 mm) steel box profile framing with sprayed PTFE coating and 4 + 2 3/8" (100+60 mm) mineral wool insulation, flat steel bar, principal lattice beam comprising steel pipe profiles of different dimensions
- 2- Steel clips connected to main structure securing ETFE membrane comprising
- 3- Central oculus over stage with ETFE membrane
- 4- Aluminum rainwater gutter and grille, 5/8" (15 mm) screed, waterproofing membrane, polyurethane rigid insulation, steel plate supports
- 5- Perimeter finish comprising

- 6- aluminum panels with cellular core, projecting shaped pine beam, 4 x 4" (100x100 mm) steel box profile framing
- 7- Wall with shaped steel panel finish, 2 + 4" (50+100 mm) rigid insulation, shaped steel panel finish, flat steel bar anchors
- 8- Interior sound absorbing wall with 3/8" (10 mm) timber finish, 2 x 2" (50x50 mm) timber framing sandwiching rigid insulation, 19 3/4 x 19 3/4" (500x500 mm) reinforced concrete beam, 4 3/4" (120 mm) exposed reinforced concrete structure
- 9- Stage soffit
- 10- Sliding and folding door with 3/8" (10 mm) corrosion-resistant timber, 1 5/8 x 2 3/8" (40x60 mm) steel C-profile framing with insulation fill
- 11- Rainwater gutter
- 12- Railing comprising 3/8 + 3/8" (9+9 mm) laminated glass with steel handrail and 2 3/8 x 10" (60x255 mm) steel U-profile anchor
- 13- Underside of roof comprising timber lattice suspended from structure by steel pipe profiles and aluminum alloy profiles
- 14- Garden comprising soil, studded non-woven drainage membrane, 1 5/8" (40 mm) concrete protective layer, root-repellent membrane, waterproofing membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) leveling mortar, 2 3/8" (60 mm) rigid insulation, 5 7/8" (150 mm) reinforced concrete slab, waterproof stucco finish





CREDITS

Location: Dali, Yunnan, China - **Client:** Dali Yang Liping Grand Theatre - **Completion Date:** 2020 - **Gross Floor Area:** 8,155 m² - **Architecture, Interior and Landscape Design:** Studio Zhu-Pei - **Principal Designer:** Zhu Pei - **Project Leaders:** Edwin Lam, Shuhei Nakamura - **Project Principal in Charge:** Virginia Melnyk - **Main Contractor:** The Third Construction of YCIH

Consultants

Structural: National Engineering Survey and Design, Professor Fu Xueyi - **MEP:** CCDI - **Theater:** dUCKS scéno - **Façade:** Shenzhen Dadi Facade Technology - **Lighting:** Ning Field Lighting Design - **Acoustic:** China IPPR International Engineering

Photography by Jin Weiqi

All images courtesy of Studio Zhu-Pei