

project outline

Observing is an act essential for piecing the present state into a unified and intelligible frame of reference. However, the act of observing slides so instinctively into the motions of day-to-day life that it is easy to take this process for granted. The capacity to react, in any given situation, conditionally rests on the quality of one's frame of reference, and, by implication, on one's manner and method of observing.

Although a seemingly primal and fundamental part of our interaction with architecture, prior to commencing this project, the process of observation is one that I had engaged with somewhat nonchalantly and without conscious intention. Oslo's Deichman Library, a building on the verge of retirement and in need of a new vocation, is the focal point of my explorations.

The selection of this building was initially somewhat intuitive, whereby I was drawn to the topical discussions regarding its potential transformation and, more importantly, the alluring mystery surrounding the generally perceived otherness of the structure. In order to understand the mystery of the Deichman Library building, this project prioritises the process of primary observation as a means of (re)constructing its architectural portrait. This portrait seeks to, from the outset, shift the frame of reference for observing the building and uses alternate methods to depict its likeness.

My observations are collected and articulated predominantly in the form of a book. The book includes several interrelated discussions regarding the Deichman building, sketches, drawings and photographs, and is accompanied by five architectural reliefs that elucidate architectural tropes fundamental to the ideas explored herein.



The Deichman; the centrepiece of this investigation.

preface

[extracted from the book]

Tucked in your hands is a secret, restless in anticipation, eager to be divulged.

This book is an invitation to a world that lies just below the shimmering surface, and it is my testimony that if you look long, hard and from just the right point of view, this hidden world will begin to materialise.

Manner and Method has been compiled after three months spent fastidiously observing and analysing a single building. Through this process, I have unearthed a secret gem, perhaps Oslo's best kept secret that, for almost a century, has been hiding in plain sight. This secret is the Deichman Library; a truly fantastic, *ambiguous, modern enigma*.

Like a hermit crab, eager for its new, bigger and shinier home, this coming Spring, the Deichman Library facility will be relocated to a new premises along the Oslo harbour. The current library will be left vacant, a shell of its former self, waiting to be colonised and given a new lease on life. This study was initially fuelled by topical discussions regarding the imminent transformation of the current library building, with many locals wondering in earnest, what is the future of the Deichman? I soon realised that, in fact, the answer to this question lay in another more fundamental question, which seeks, first and foremost, to ask: **what is the Deichman?**

This is the question that I set out to answer, with the hope of providing a fresh portrait of a monumental public building, about which surprisingly little is known and recorded. My findings are not presented in a report, as one would typically expect of an architectural survey. Alternatively, they are expressed as if this were a companion-book to the building. This format has encouraged me to explore modes of architectural representation that are not solely bound to the analysis of objective physical data, photos and drawings. Rather, I have allowed myself the freedom to delve into more subjective domains, with a focus on ideas, abstract illustrations and speculations. In this book, I wear many hats, posing, all at once and to the best of my abilities, as an architect, historian, preservationist and cold-case detective.

This process has given me a platform to indulge many of my tendencies; for critical thinking, for rifling through books I don't completely understand, for keeping indecipherable notes, for enthusiastic sketching and, above all, it has indulged my tendency to be curious. The result is deeply reflective of my manner and method of working; a series of observations and articulations expressed, like they were generated, through an interweaving of mediums, approaches and pursuits. While writing is certainly not my first trade, I have made a considered attempt to engage this challenging territory; with much inspiration drawn from the architects, artists and critics whose thoughts I have consumed throughout this process.

So, it is with this greeting that I invite you to explore my take on the Deichman Library, its relationship to Nordic Classicism and its place in modern Norwegian architecture.

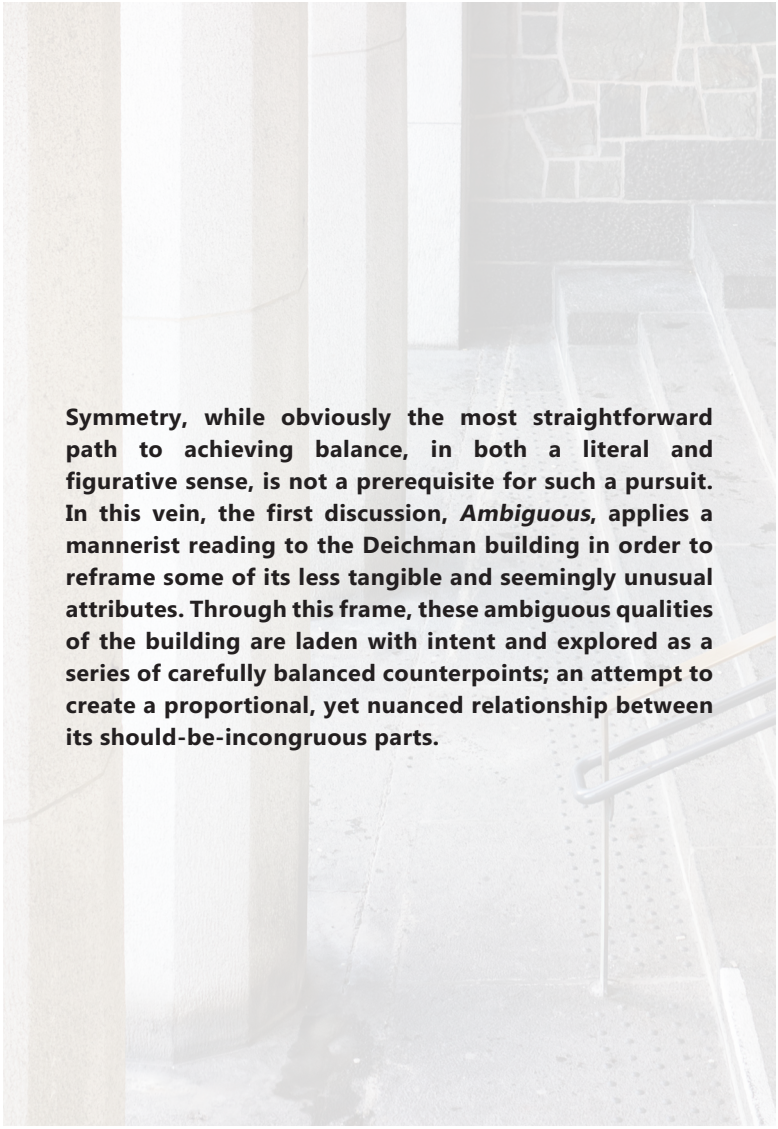
Ambiguous

Modern

Enigma



Ambiguous

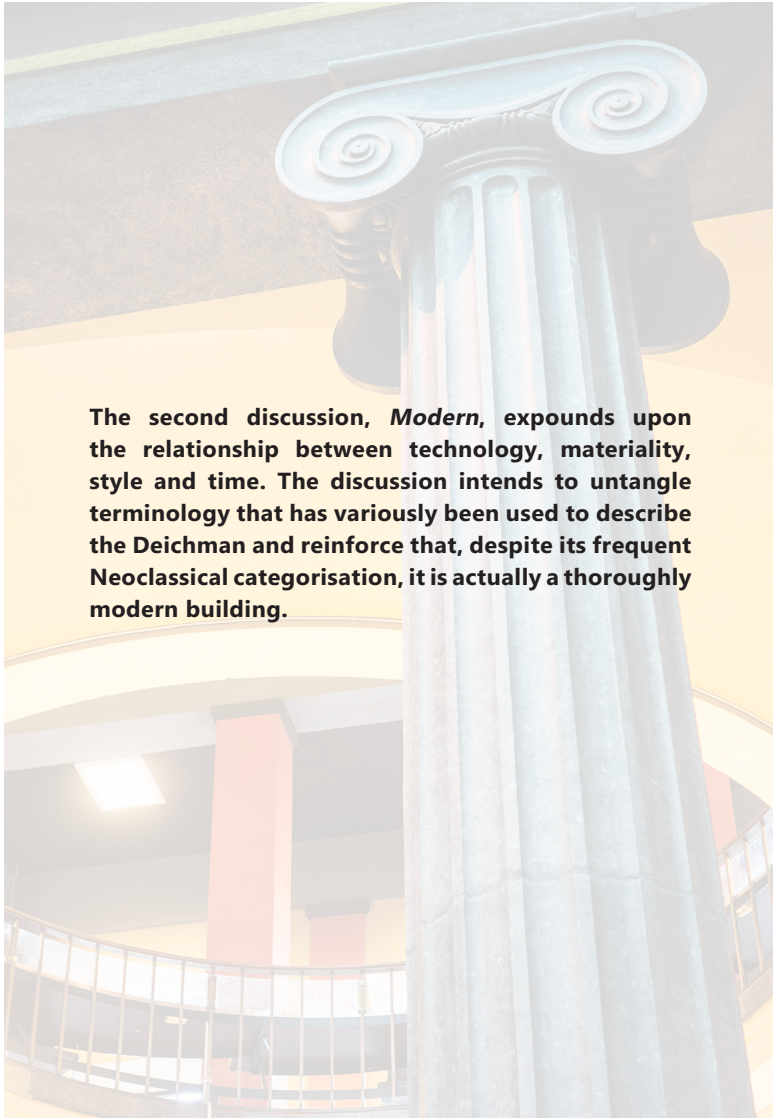
A photograph of a building interior, likely a staircase area, with a semi-transparent text box overlaid. The image shows a staircase with a metal railing, a stone wall, and several columns. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

Symmetry, while obviously the most straightforward path to achieving balance, in both a literal and figurative sense, is not a prerequisite for such a pursuit. In this vein, the first discussion, *Ambiguous*, applies a mannerist reading to the Deichman building in order to reframe some of its less tangible and seemingly unusual attributes. Through this frame, these ambiguous qualities of the building are laden with intent and explored as a series of carefully balanced counterpoints; an attempt to create a proportional, yet nuanced relationship between its should-be-incongruous parts.

Ambiguous



Modern

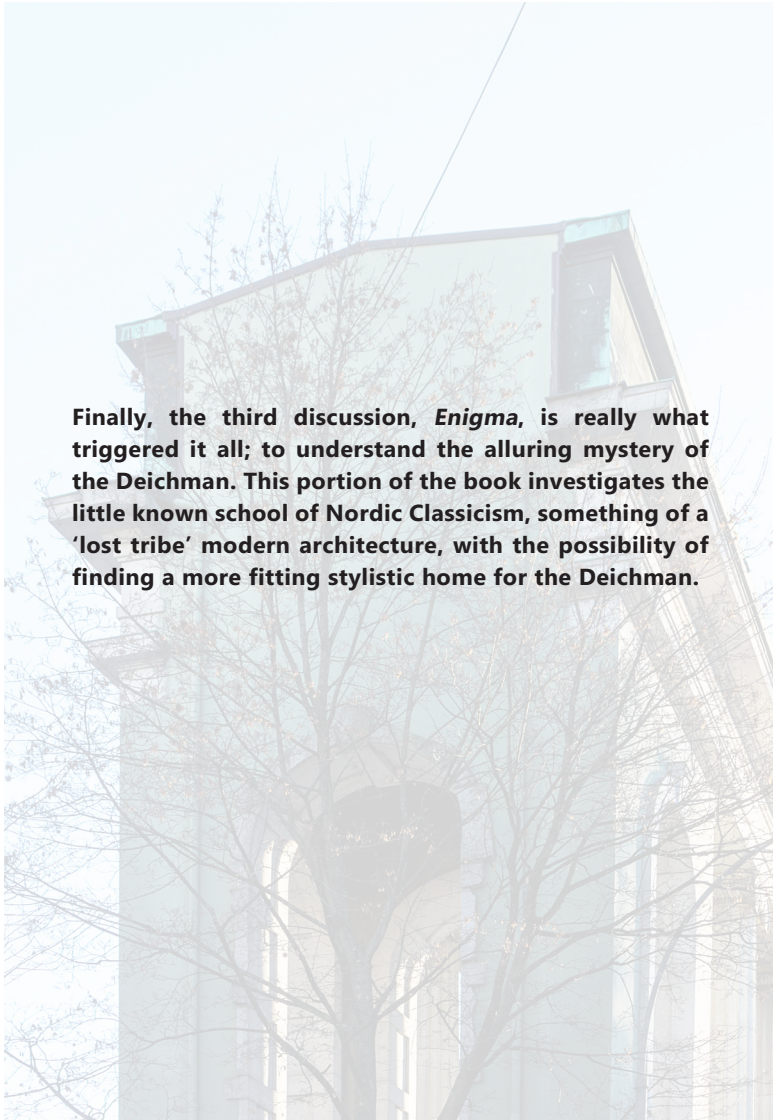


The second discussion, *Modern*, expounds upon the relationship between technology, materiality, style and time. The discussion intends to untangle terminology that has variously been used to describe the Deichman and reinforce that, despite its frequent Neoclassical categorisation, it is actually a thoroughly modern building.

Modern

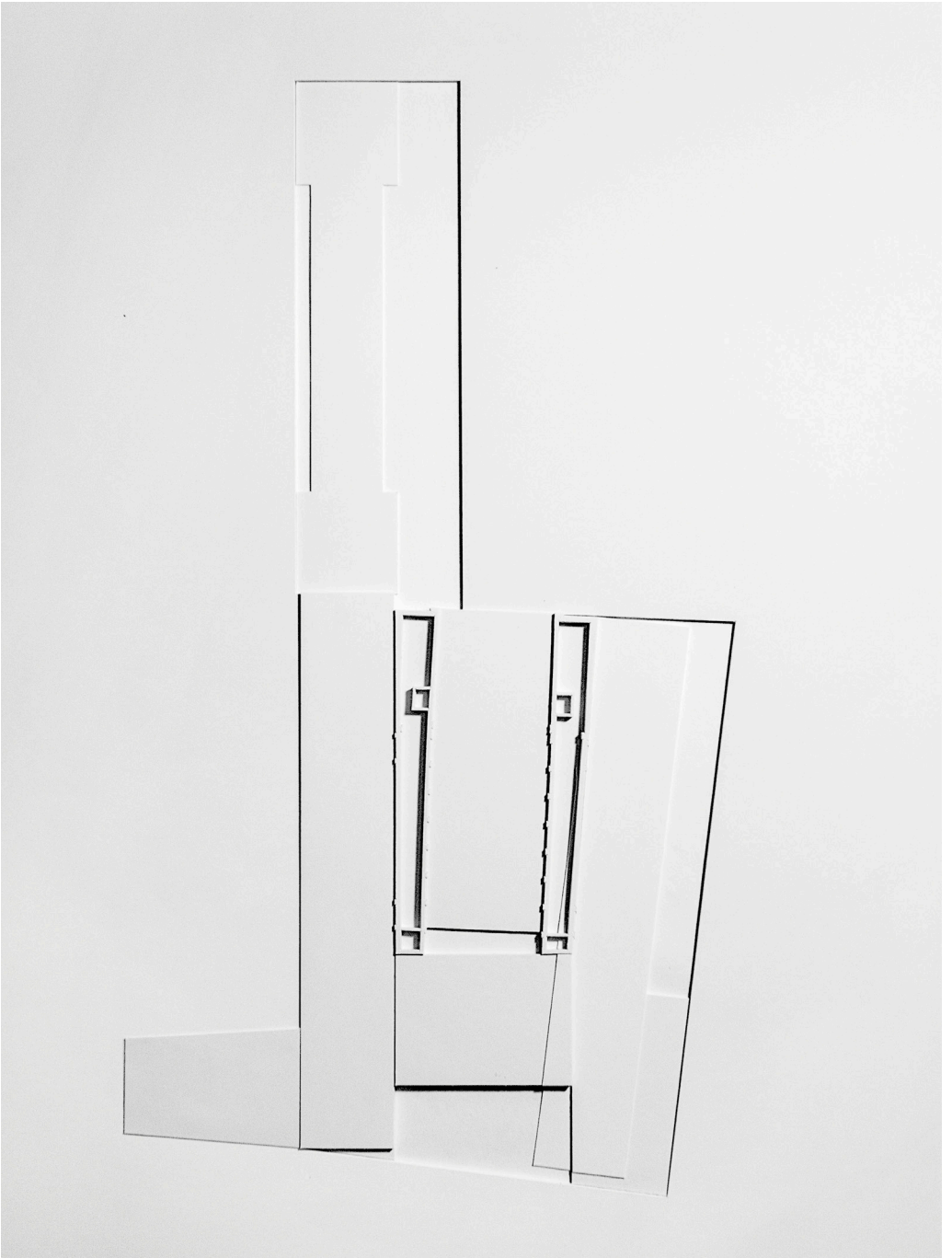


Enigma

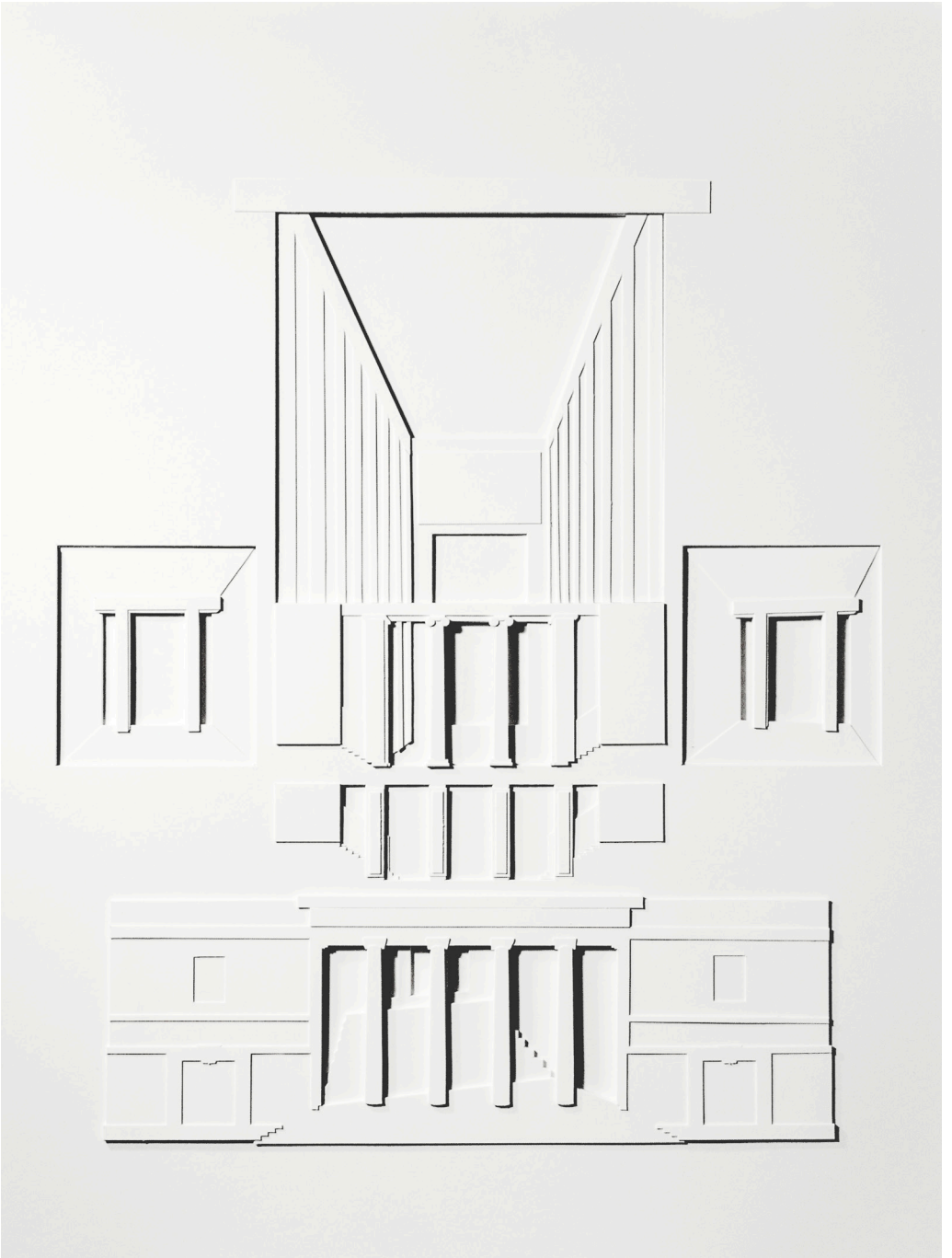


Finally, the third discussion, *Enigma*, is really what triggered it all; to understand the alluring mystery of the Deichman. This portion of the book investigates the little known school of Nordic Classicism, something of a 'lost tribe' modern architecture, with the possibility of finding a more fitting stylistic home for the Deichman.

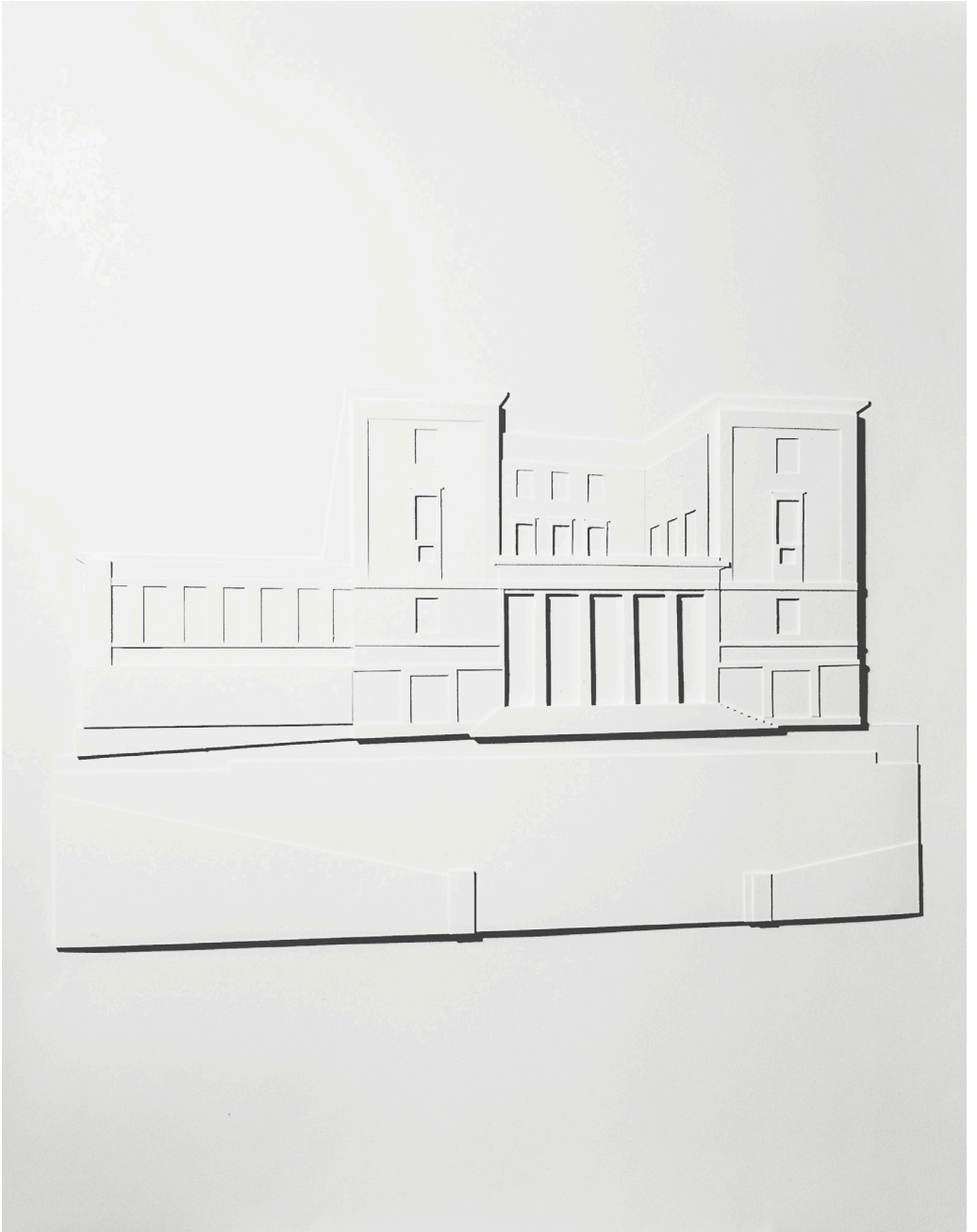
Enigma



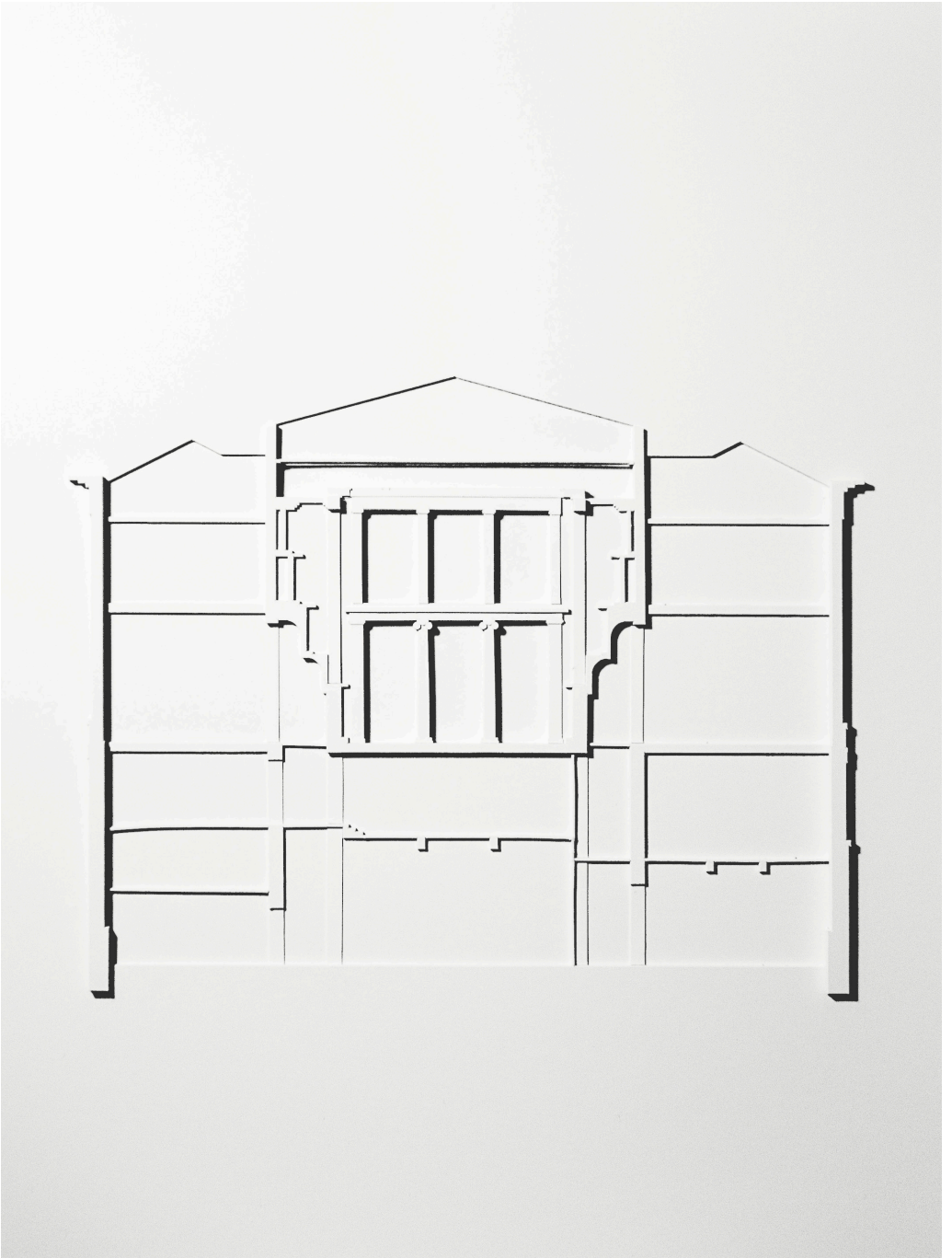
Skewed



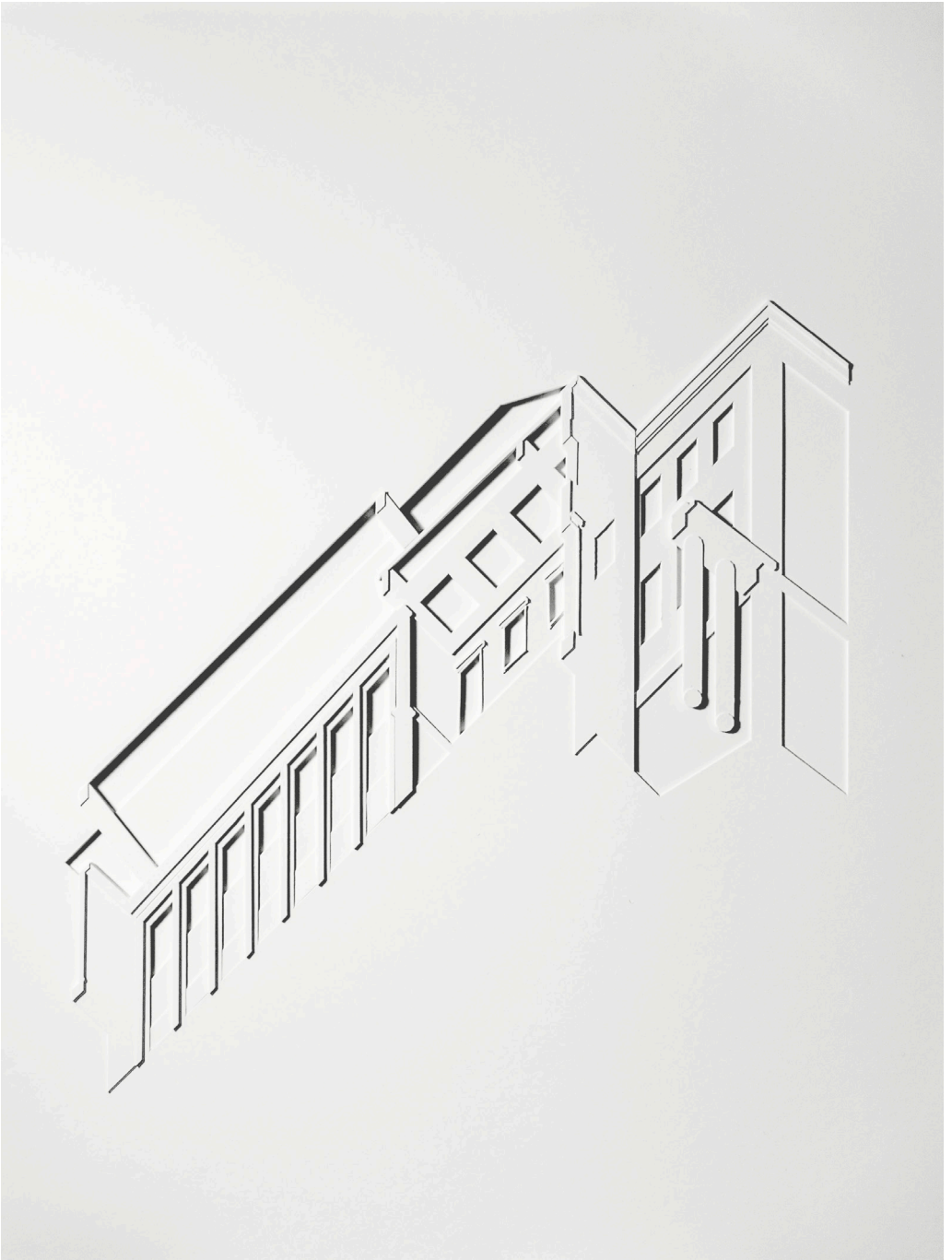
Disjunction



Tableau



Progression



Boundaries

