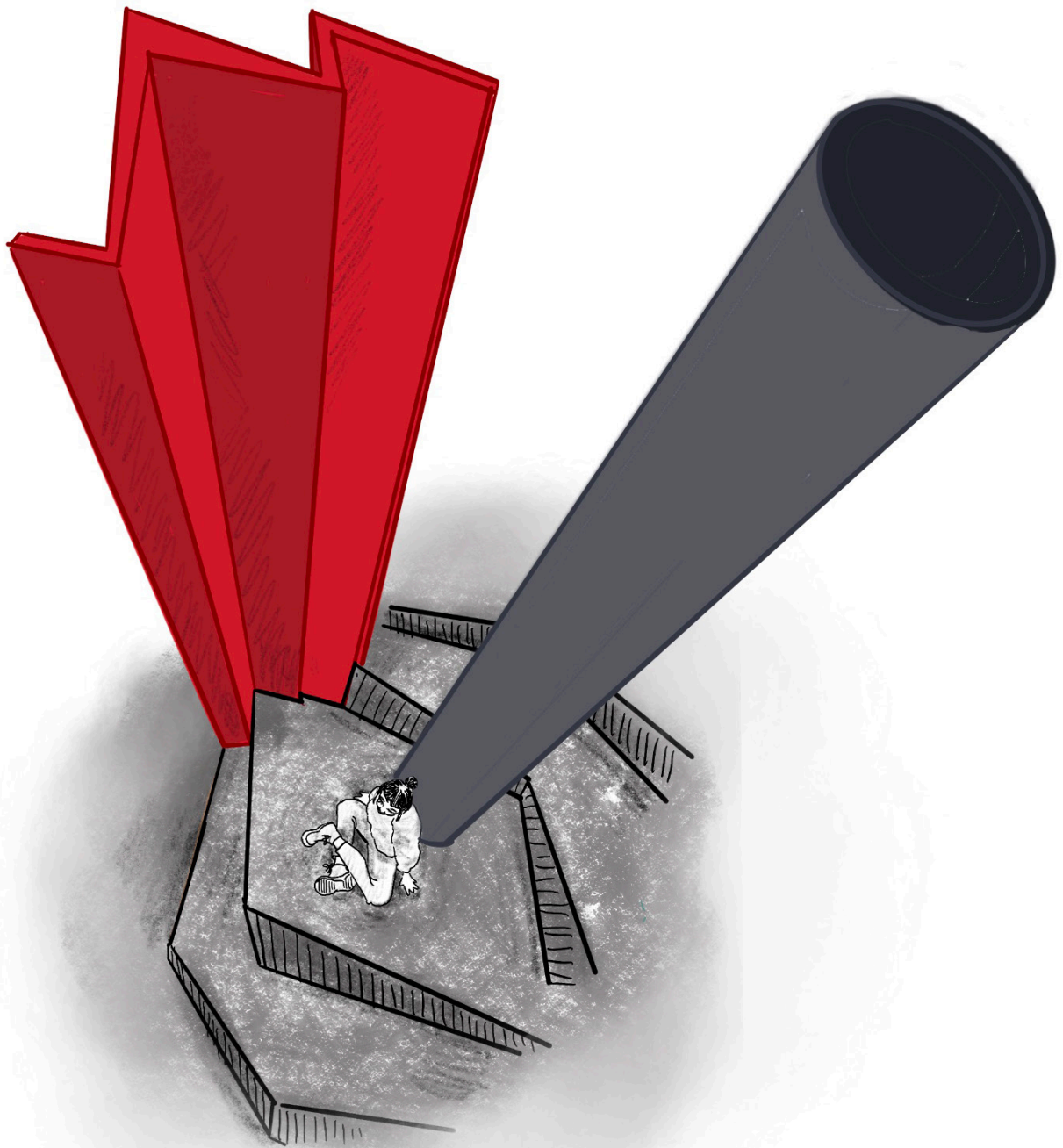
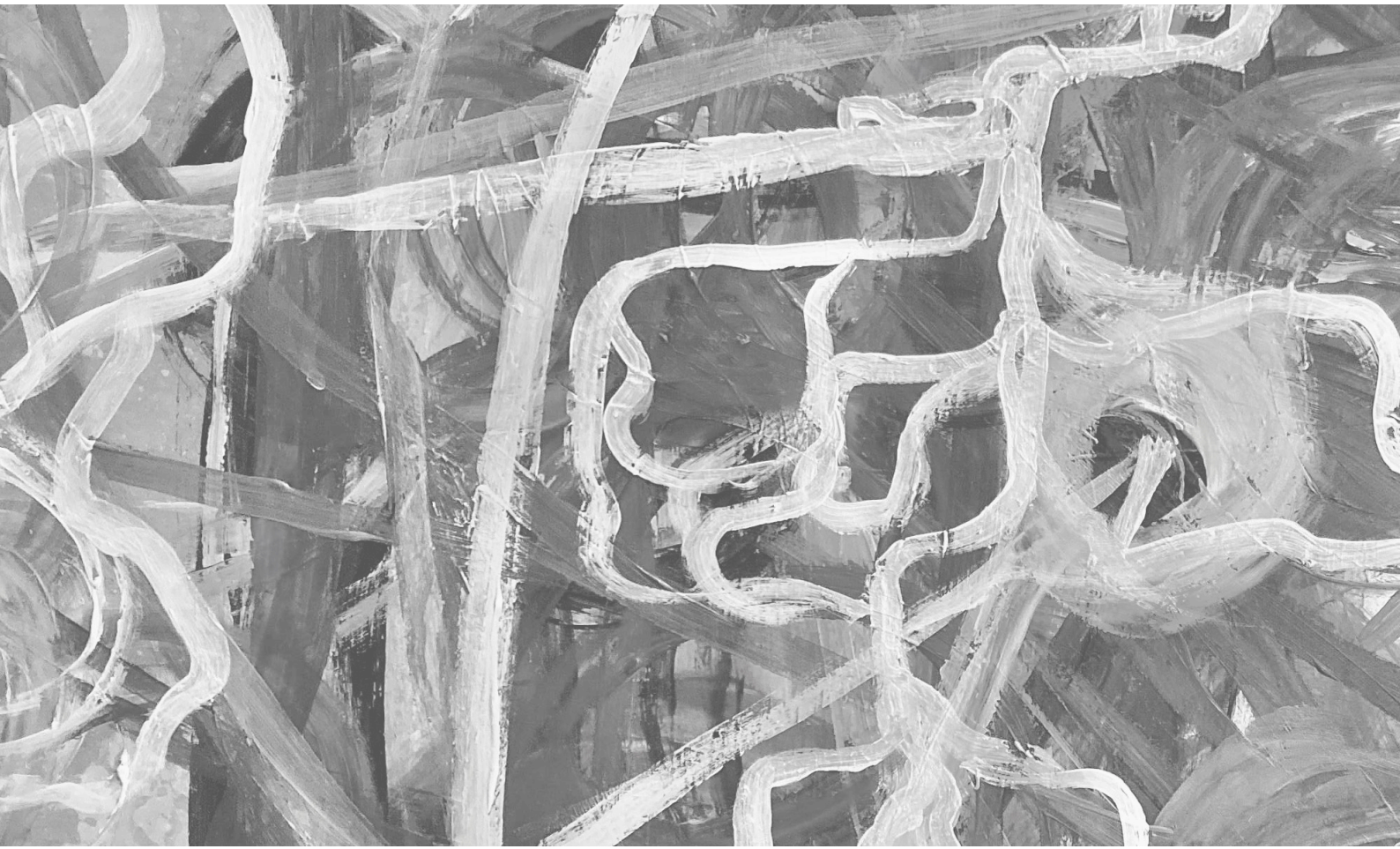


The Pillars, The Curtain and The Platform

The Performing Arts School under the Bridge





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Tutors

APP- Cristian Stefanescu

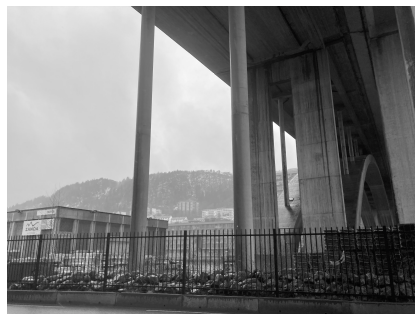
DAV- Vibeke Jensen



Concept

Between the folds of the red "curtain walls", rooms stacked on top of each other peek through. Each of them tells the story of a school in action. The ever-evolving streams of ideas, turning into movement, dance, and spatial exploration. Constantly in a state of chaotic activity under the roof of the bridge. A space flowing in between a rhythm of concrete pillars, creating a different situation around every corner.

From far away, it is a curious sight, red walls reaching up over the bridge, touching each of the sides. Moving up close, windows in all various sizes and heights show the different actions of life inside. Through one window students are unloading wooden panels into the workshop, and in the room above someone has just finished painting a fabric and has opened the folded door to a balcony, looking down at the people walking by. Through the window the concrete of the pillars is only just visible. Moving further along there is a staircase going up. At the end of the steps the landing broadens, transforming a platform between pillars, red folded walls and wooden stacked boxes that reach all the way up to the underside of the bridge. Each box, each window and balcony frames a new situation and view. Relating to the bigger context, the untouched structure of the bridge goes all the way across the water to the other side, reaching towards the mountain.





Looking inwards, the pillars are hidden and revealed, pushing through floors and through rooms, appearing in the different windows along the way. Here, two buildings create a small passageway, open up towards the concrete sealing of the bridge, the view only broken by smaller bridges connecting the activities inside. In the building on the right someone practises a dance number, and further along students practising lines are gathered. On the other side, a teacher holds a lecture to a group of students, and in the room above someone has just finished their work for the day, turning off the lights.

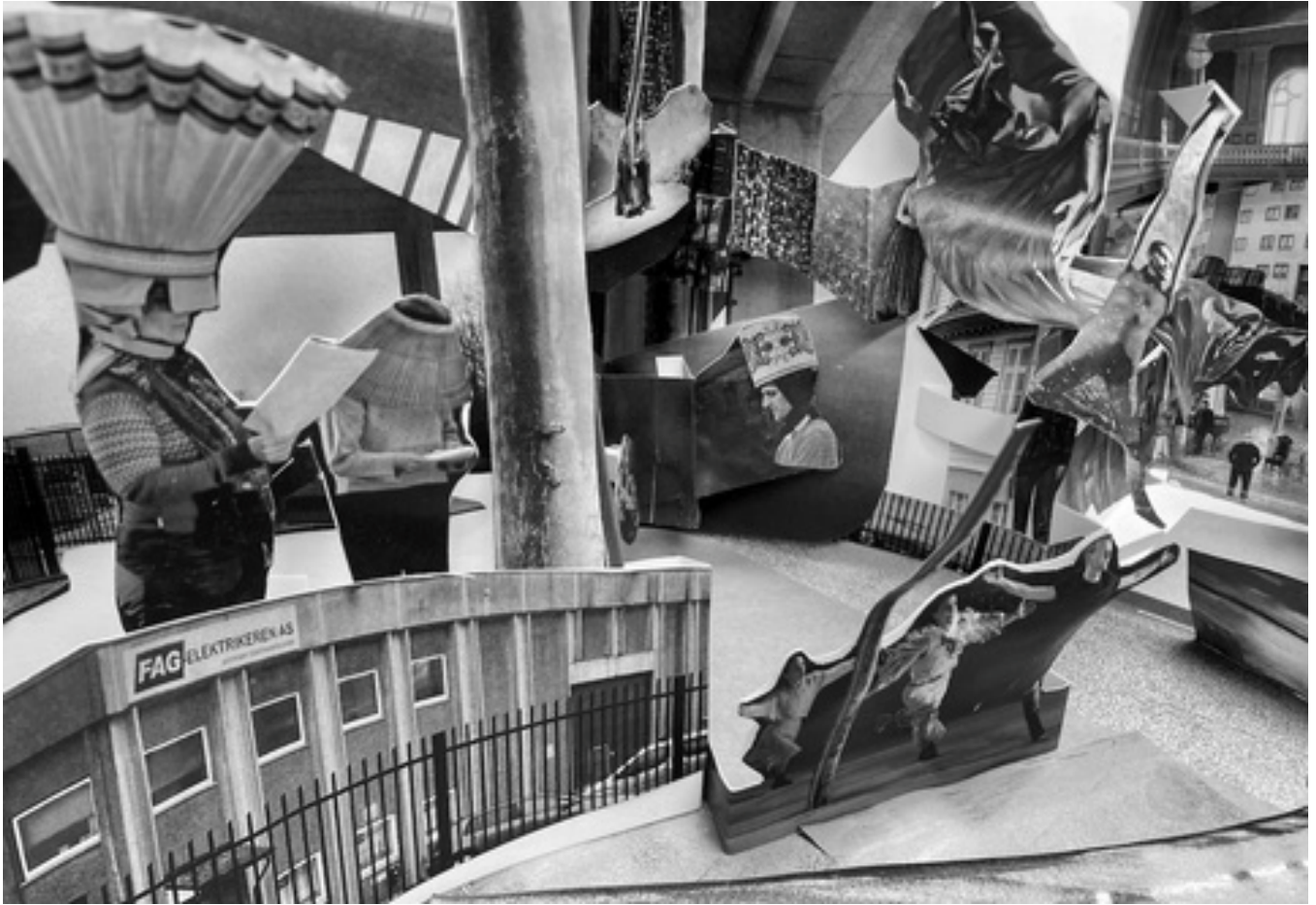
At the end of the passage a cyclist crosses the school, quickly glancing through a window at someone rigging lights. Turning towards the streets of Møhlenpris a staircase to the top of the bridge appears. At each landing there is a different view, each step bringing the underside of the bridge closer. Looking down one of the streets past the housing of Møhlenpris, Cornerteateret appears in the distance.

Focus

Growing up, I loved exploring creativity, and I found my community within the arts, film, theatre, music and, in recent years, as a student of architecture. Creative fields are social fields, and in a society like Norway, that has become more introverted, individualistic and lonely, offering these platforms that focus on collaboration, discussions and learning from each other is important. Creativity is universal, independent of what social status or background you have, and creative institutions and platforms should exist for anyone who wants to pursue their passions.



Crosscourse 2024: Transition in Motion



First thought: the Bridge and the performing arts, collage pop-up

“The Pillars, the Curtain, and the Platform ” proposes a new creative educational institution in Bergen, The Performing Arts School under the Bridge. The project offers a central platform for education in acting, dance, performance, light and sound design, scenography, costume design, and stage production. The site is under Puddefjordsbroen at Møhlenpris, where the structure of the bridge has been the starting point for the project’s focus on exploration of expression, spatial qualities and interfaces between the inner life and urban context. I have been intrigued by Puddefjordsbroen for a long time, finding the unique atmosphere and site context exciting and complex to work with. This interest has led to an attempt at discussing what a performing arts school can be in the context of Bergen.

History

Puddefjordsbroen was built in 1956, reaching over from Møhlenpris to Laksevåg, connecting and extending the city of Bergen out towards the West. When it was built, several workers' houses (nicknamed "The Blood City" (Blodbyen) after the red coloured facades of the buildings) were torn down on Gyldenpris at Laksevåg. Over four decades later, in 1999, Puddefjordsbroen was extended with an identical construction on the south side of the original, leading to more of the old housing at Møhlenpris being torn down. What is left under the bridge is an old building from the 1700th century, Monclairhuset, today housing a reuse shop that sells everything from old furniture and doors to cables and cutlery.



The rest of Møhlenpris grew with the turn of the 19th century, from open fields and lands to shipping industry and housing. The area was regulated as small quadratic quarters of apartment complexes, mostly rented out to poorer families and workers at the shipping industries. Towards the park, Nygårdsparken, bigger flats with a higher standard of living were built. This led to the unique typology of Møhlenpris, where the mediaeval city structure of Bergen, with narrow streets and cluttered houses was replaced in favour of apartment complexes placed within the grid structures of streets. Today, many of the apartments are a mix of student housing, rented and self owned apartments, leading to a variety of people from different backgrounds living in the same place.



In recent discussions around the city development of Møhlenpris there is a wish to make part of the area car-free, giving the streets to the pedestrians living in the city. In 2050 the area north of Puddefjordsbroen: Dokken will begin new development of a variety of new programming for the city, including new neighbourhoods and establishing a pedestrian path along the waterfront at Puddefjorden.



Plan for new development at Dokken

The contrast of the site

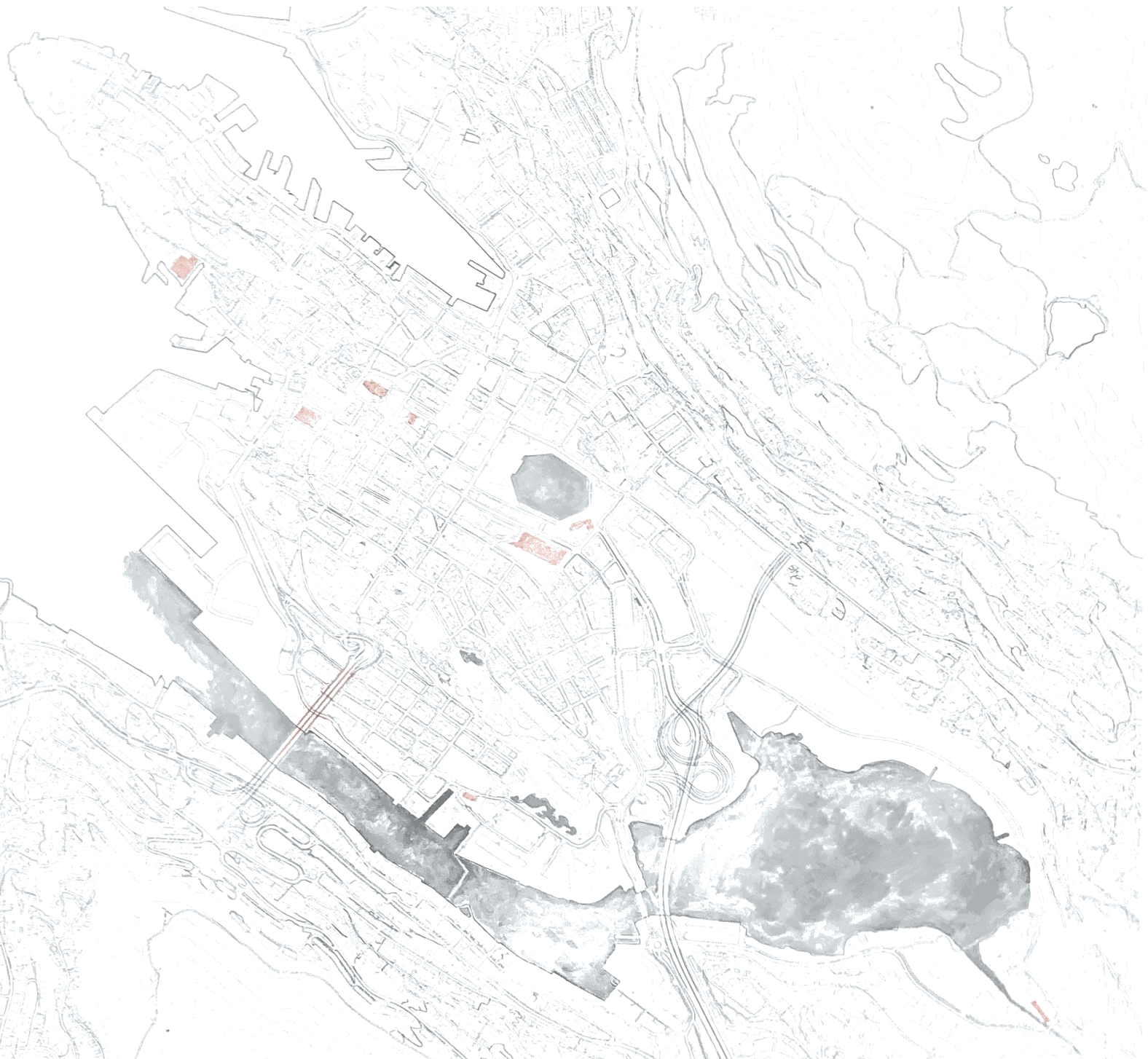


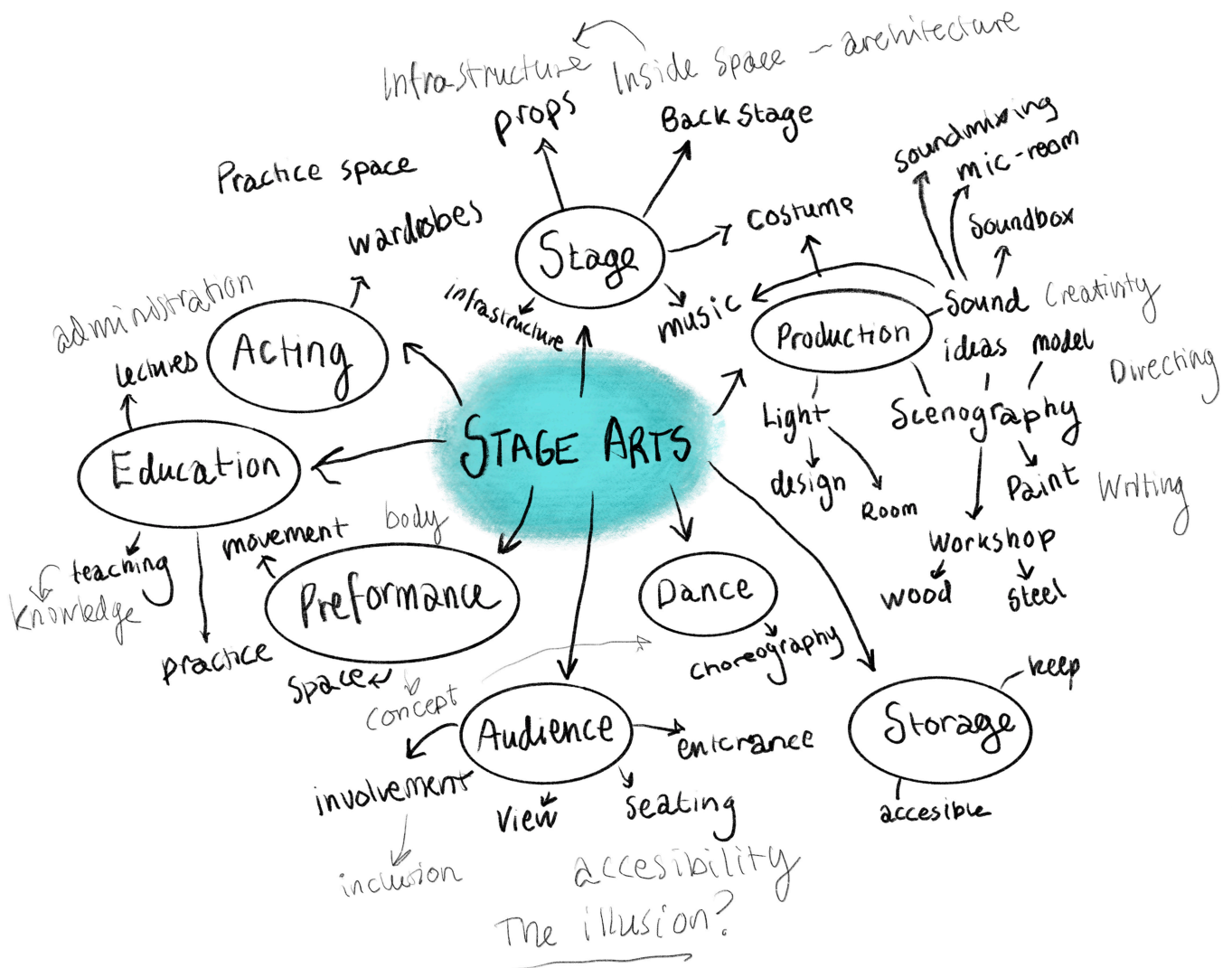
The bridge creates a busy path along the way of traffic and people. In contrast to the bustling top, the underside of the bridge at Møhlenpris is quiet and almost abandoned. The space created by the huge bridge construction has become a backyard for cars, trash and unused space. Only occasionally people walk by, to stop by the charity shop under the bridge, to park their car, or just passing through. The area beneath Puddefjordsbroen has been the same for several decades, the space underneath looking like an empty ribcage.

The bridge connects the city across the fjord, but where it lands it divides space, creating a clear boundary between the exciting housing at Møhlenpris and the soon to be new development at Dokken. Using the contrast to play with the qualities of the bridge: form an open space to smaller situations, from concrete to wood, from colourless to colourful, from bare to filled with activity. Transforming the space under the bridge from a big empty space to a school filled with life. A site that can be seen across the fjord: that can reach out and radiate life.

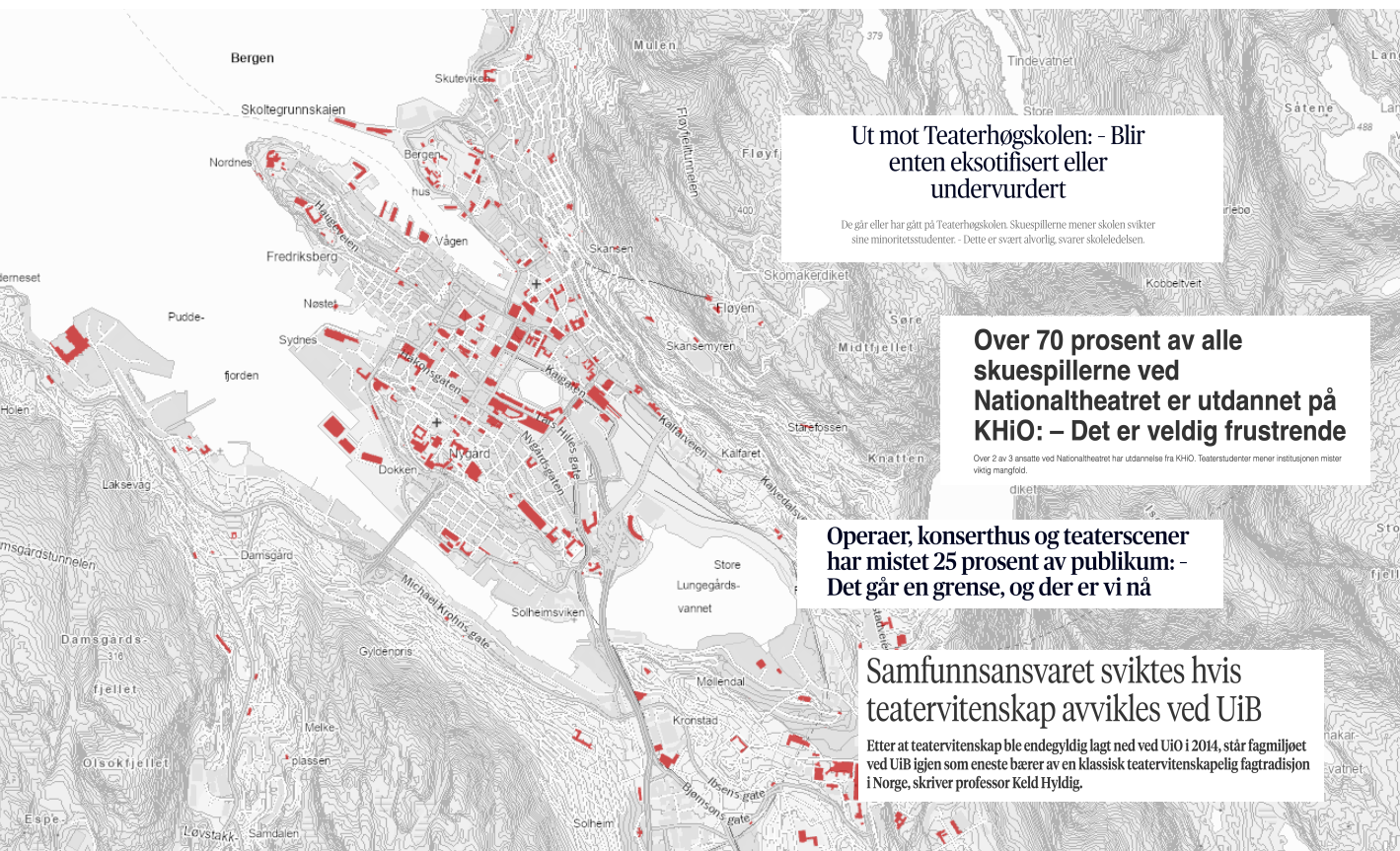
Context

The site under Puddefjordsbroen is centrally located within the city, close to other educational institutions like the University of Bergen (UiB), Bergen Business School (BI), Bergen Arts School (KIB), and the Grieg Academy of Music. Bergen also houses performing arts institutions like The National Stage (DNS), Det Vestnorske Teateret, the new Performing Arts Centre at Sentralbadet, Bergen Dansesenter, Wrap, and its closest neighbour on Møhlenpris: Cornerteateret.





Bergen offers no higher education in the practical field of performing arts, even though The University of Bergen is the only university in the Norway that offers a bachelor in Theatre Science. There are a few other public institutions in Norway that mostly offer bachelors in acting and scenography: The Arts school in Oslo, Nord University, NTNU in Trondheim and the College in Østfold. The latter has already been in discussions of allocating to Bergen.



Map of Bergens publicly owned buildings

In recent years there has also been media coverage about the lack of representation in admissions to the bachelor programs in Oslo, where most of the practising actors have been educated. Very few places are offered here, and as a result many people don't get the chance to be educated within the field. It is important to offer a variety of people a place within the education of performative arts, and Bergen can help broaden the field within the country, offering better access to education and creating a more varied preformative arts community.

Bergen already has a broad community of institutions and independent actors within the field of performing arts. While doing research for this project, I talked to different people working with theatre, dance, performance and production. Several of them talked about the gradual underfunding of independent fields over the last decade. Dukkenikkerne, who used to make traditional theatre dolls for productions, disbanded in the early 2010s. Jan Holden, who still uses the old little workspace at Nordnes, told me he was on the brink of giving up on the field, not because of the work, which he still enjoys, but because of the difficulty in applying for funding. Wrap at Møhlendal offers workshop areas and practice space for artists. Also they were concerned with the de-prioritisation of funding to independent artists. They set up a system where artists rent space short term based on means, funding from the state. A dancer I met at Bergen Dance Centre, who had just moved from Australia to Bergen, missed a bigger community of young people practising dance professionally.

The performing arts institutions of Bergen



The dynamics of performing arts

Performing arts plays with the depictions of the past, present and future. Creating different realities to explore our surroundings and ourselves, the values of society and our own identities within it. It creates a visual language to communicate, experimenting with expressions and movement, to connect to other people. To tell stories of wonder and joy, but also of injustices, of politics, of society and of one's own objective understanding of the world. To have the opportunity to express yourself, to find dedication and mastery in a creative field, is an opportunity that should be given to anyone, regardless of resources.



Bergen Dansesenter, performance in progress

DNS, Painters studio



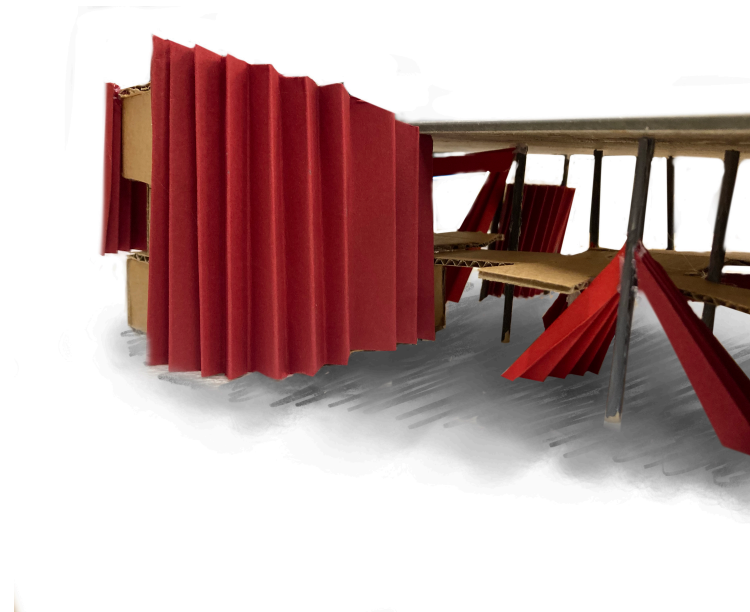
After working backstage at The National Stage (DNS) since the age of 16 I have seen the dedication of everyone working there, from actors to scenographers and costume sowers to stage workers. Creating and working together to transform the stage into different worlds and stories. It is in the chaotic nature of the backstage, where people move in and out, transporting set pieces, changing costumes and changing scenes, fascinating things happen.

Design vision

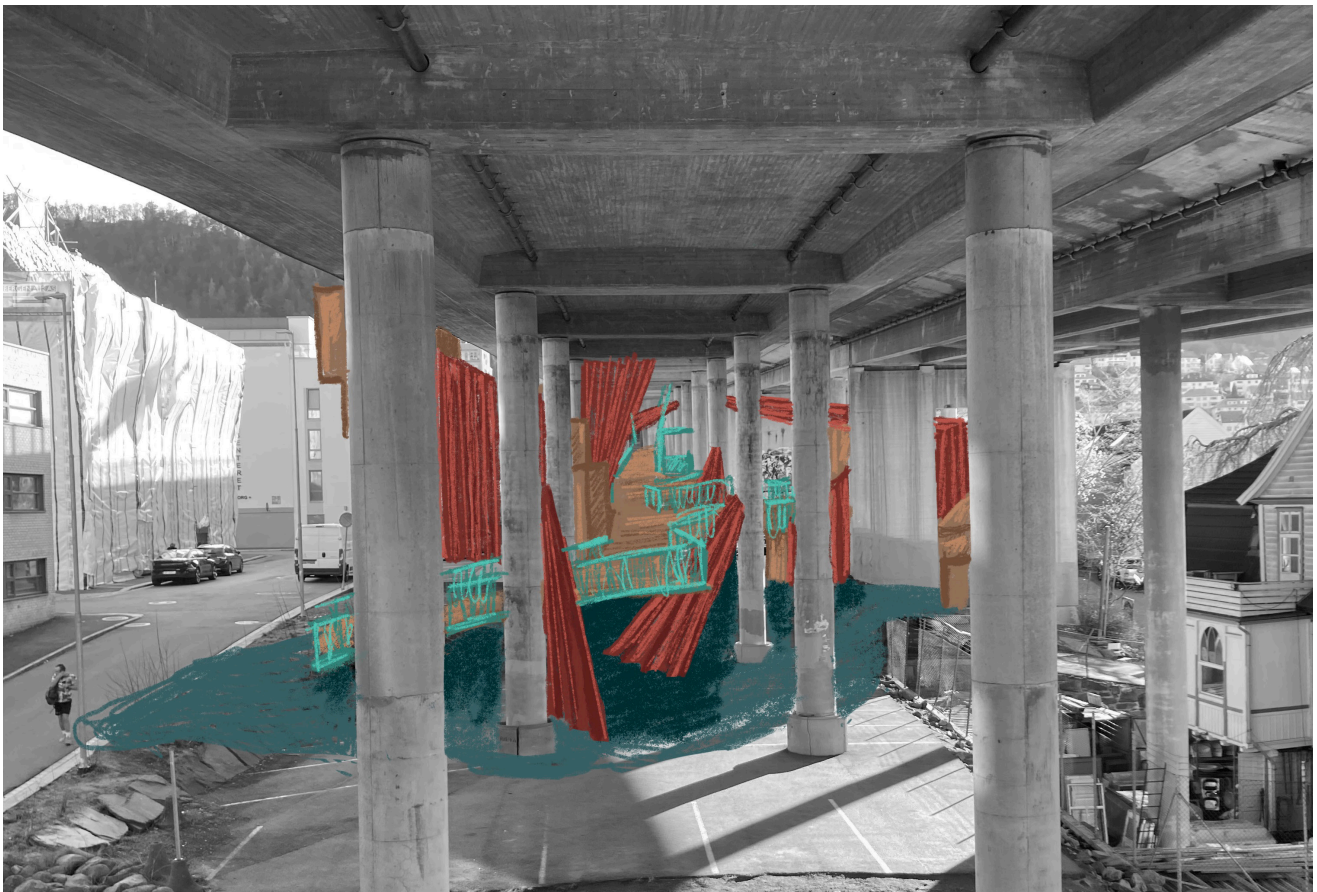
In my project I want to highlight these qualities happening behind the scenes. To see the building as a space that values the process of performing arts, as a centre point for community and discussions, and as an extroverted place, creating an interest beyond the limits of the building. The goal is to show how architecture can support and encourage creativity and identity in a school, closely working with the ideas of scenography to envision the school as a dynamic, evolving space. Seeing the educational institution as inspiring, flexible, and responsive, creating resonance between the creative field and the people it inhabits.



The result is the transformation of the neglected urban space under Puddefjordsbroen, where the continuous activity of the school gives a new relation to the area. The school blurs the boundaries between passersby and the school's inner life, inviting people to look into the activity of the backstage: production, rehearsals and performances. The spatial organisation consists of a series of situations and places that are used in dynamic ways. The Performing Arts School under Puddefjordsbroen offers a new life that occurs between the structures of the pillars, curtains and platforms.



Early concept sketches





Crosscourse 2024: Transition in Motion
Tracing motion with a pinhole camera 3h