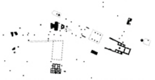
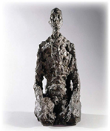
SUPERPOSITION - INTERSTICE - CLAIR-OBSCUR

A *GROUNDSCAPE* AS A CATALYST FOR NEW TYPES OF INTERACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PARISIAN URBAN FABRIC

As the line that separates what is above from below the ground is acknowledged, the term Groundscape points out on that last layer that constitute our cities and that has yet to be investigated. To acknowledge the potential of subterranean architecture is the first step in understanding this layer as an urban membrane that separated the lower and upper levels. The thickness that constitutes the slab of the Esplanade des Invalides in the 7th arrondissement of Paris is suggested as the site for investigation. The site, reminiscent of the expansion of the Parisian rail network, witnessed a major transformation at the start of the 20th century, when a new steel sub-structure was built as a cover for the train tracks leading to the newly built Invalides train station building. Today, the remaining connexion to urban transport justifies its activation both during day and night. The slab, which provides cover above the railway tracks and raises the esplanade, is supported by a system of 231 of cast iron columns. The project is about discovering the potential of what already exists. The intention to make it a public space, open to all in the city while intertwining between the display of art and other activities embedded in the city provoked new types of interaction, comprised of changing uses between day and night, new opportunities for social interactions and the possibility to experience art in our everyday life.



Archipelago as a curatorial concept was introduced by the French philosopher Edouard Glissant. An archipelago has no centre, it consists of a string of different islands and cultures. Similarly, he suggests that the curatorial vision of an archipelago can be applied to museums in a city where culture is part of a larger cultural network that extends outside the museum as an institution.

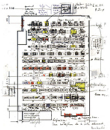


Giacometti, Alberto. [illegible], bronze, 1961.

How can our society relate to the work of Alberto Giacometti today? What is the place for his artworks in our cities?

The opportunity to provide an architectural answer to these questions is given within the framework of an urban project to develop the undergrounds of Paris. By 2026, it is planned that the former Invalides train station on the esplanade des Invalides hosts the Giacometti Foundation Museum.

The Giacometti Foundation, which manages the largest collection of artworks by the Swiss artist Giacometti, keeps the largest part of its collection in depot. It currently curates temporary exhibition in a limited space located in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. With this project, it has the ambition to open its collection to a wider public.

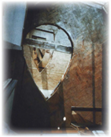


Herzog & de Meuron, une exposition, conceived by Rémy Zaugg, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, [illegible] – 29 May 1995.

How to intertwine the planning of an exhibition within an existing urban fabric?

Technological and artistic evolution have always been inseparable. The only difference today lies in the speed of this evolution. When David Chipperfield asks this question with some hint of provocation: "If fifty people on bicycles around a city is an artwork, why does it still needs to be attached to an institution?" He does not only questions the necessity for such an institution but points out that the challenge of the museum today lies in the difficulty of anticipating what art will look like in the future. As a result, current thinking about the museum is giving rise to new types of spaces. This is the case of the Jumex museum in Mexico City where the integration of a non-specific space, without a defined program takes the form of a "glass box". This flexibility and this opening up of possibilities around culture let us ask :

What architectural features ensure accessibility to a wider audience?
What happens when culture is integrated into the public realm?
What kind of activities, exhibitions, events and collection should the museum envision?

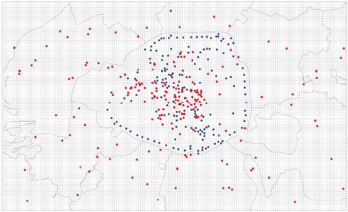


Matta-Clark, Gordon. Office Baroque 1, 1977.

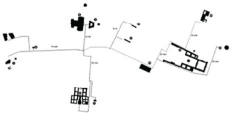
How to enhance the qualities of a site in the centre of Paris to let art be an integral part of the urban fabric? How to define the relationship between the artwork and its context while enhancing the plurality of perception?

The encounter between the place and the artwork, highlights the question of the dialogue between a work of art and its immediate context. This question is linked to perception and more particularly the relationship between the viewer, the artworks, between the perceiving subject and the perceived subject.

As described in the Context Film, the site of the Esplanade des Invalides is in constant movement: pedestrians, cars, bicycles, metros weave a constant and dynamic network of transport.
It is in this urban context that a project is set with the guiding principle of fragments - architecture and words.
The words - Superposition - Interstice - Clair - Obscur - reflecting the impressions of the site, become the starting point of the project.

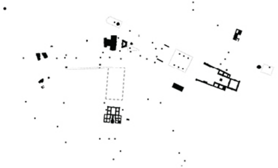


● Public art ● Museum and other cultural institutions

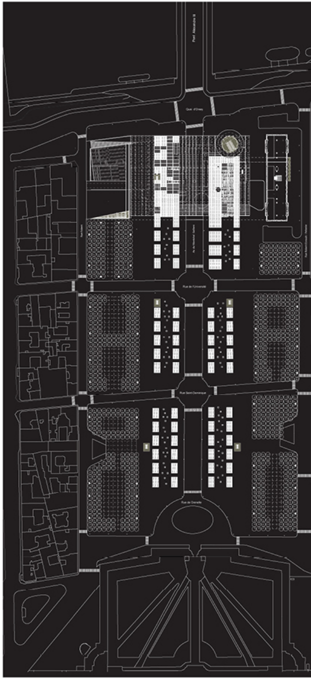


Existing Art Institutions
1. Musée du Quai Branly - 2. Palais de Tokyo et Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris - 3. Musée des Egouts de Paris - 4. Hôtel des Invalides (musées militaires, tombeau de Napoléon) - 5. Musée Rodin - 6. Grand Palais - 7. Petit Palais - 8. Musée de l'Orangerie - 9. Musée du Jeu de Paume - 10. Musée d'Orsay - 11. Musée du Louvre - 12. Musée de la BnF - 13. Bourse de Commerce - 14. Pinault Collection

Paris as an art archipelago

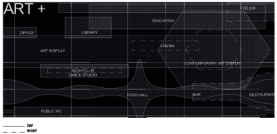


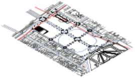
Types of Public Space where art is displayed



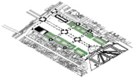
SITE PLAN

- ESPLANADE DES INVALIDES - SCALE 1:5000

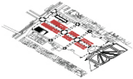




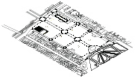
1. TRAFFIC AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT
The esplanade is defined by the car traffic axes that separate the esplanade in six parts which have in common the same type of green spaces.



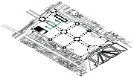
2. WOODEN URBAN AREA
The green spaces are designed as a grid composed of the similar type of tree, the silver basswood and urban furnitures such as benches and street lamps. The wooden urban area will serve as an anchor point for new routes linked to the exhibition of sculptures occasionally throughout the site, reinforcing the new identity of the esplanade.



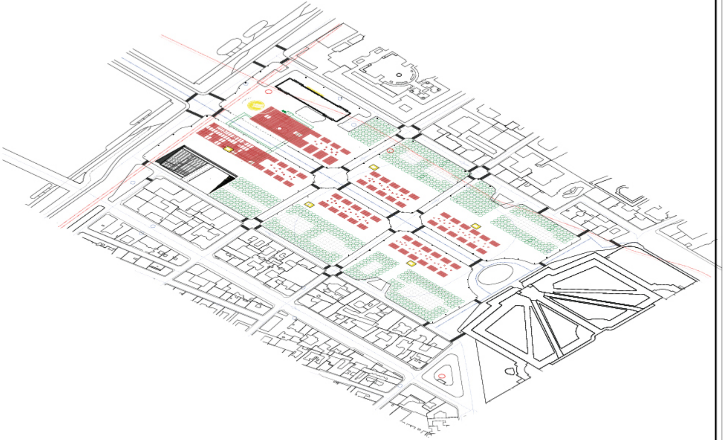
4. PEDESTRIAN SURFACE
A new pedestrian surface acts as a separation layer between the esplanade level and the underground space. This layer lets light pass into the underground space while at night, artificial light and luminous volumes like large lanterns illuminate the esplanade. Thus, light becomes an element of identity of the site both on the small scale of the objects exhibited and on the large scale of the public space.



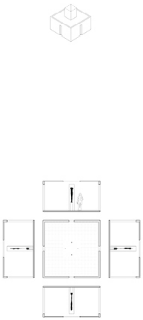
4. NEW ENTRANCES
New entrances make the access to the underground accessible to all. The new entrances include a ramp, a direct access from the esplanade, the access from the main historical building and a connexion from the Invalides metro station.



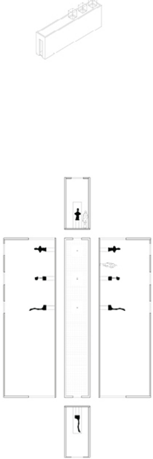
5. FOOTBRIDGE
A Footbridge is inserted as an integral component of the esplanade. It is designed as an independent element suspended from the existing structure constituting the slab.
It serves as a direct vertical access to the underground while offering a path to experience art while it is displayed or performed along the way to the metro station.



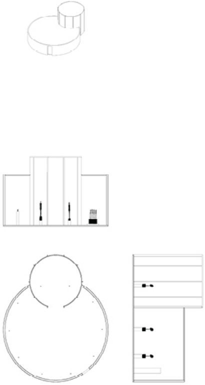
PAVILLON 1 : LE CARRÉE



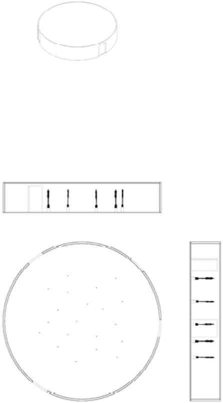
PAVILLON 2 : LA LONGUE GALERIE



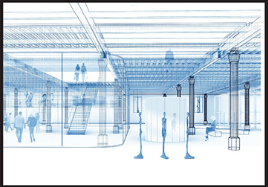
PAVILLON 3 : LA VITRINE

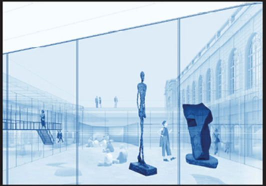


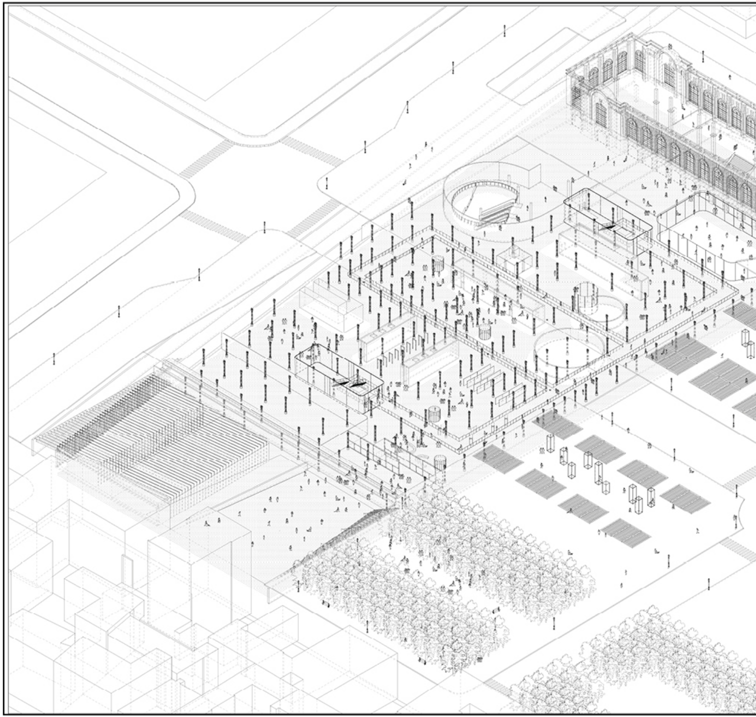
PAVILLON 4 : L' ARCHIVE

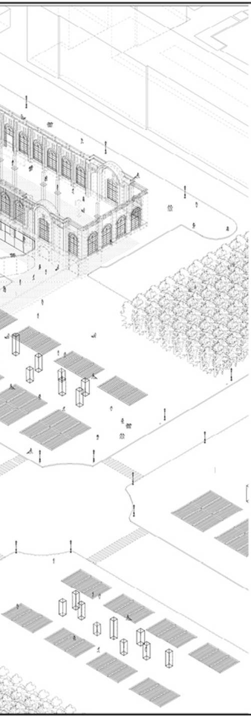


GIACOMETTI DISPLAY PAVILIONS - SCALE 1:100







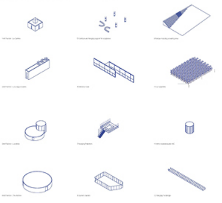


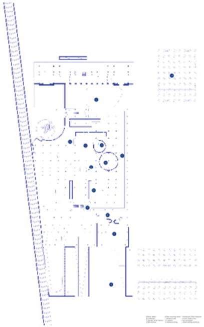
By day the underground part of the esplanade is mostly dedicated to the exhibition of art while accommodating a variety of daily activities that responds to our contemporary lifestyle and offers spaces for activities including dancing, shopping, eating, reading...

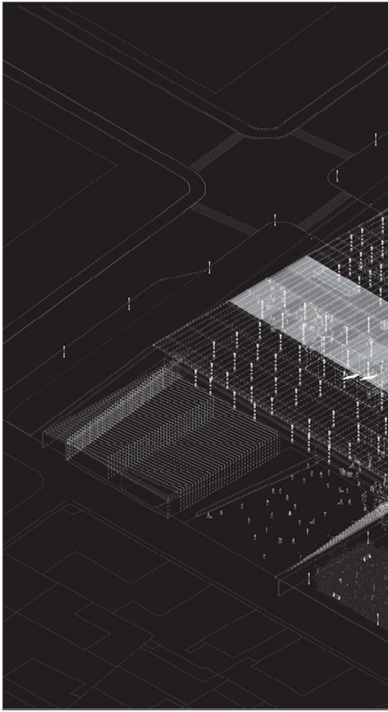
The center is accessible from a large ramp that connects the esplanade to the underground. A direct access from the upper part of the esplanade gives an direct access to a footbridge leading to the main Invalides metro station. The main historical building offers spaces for rent that can accommodate office spaces, artist's studio, cafeteria, or workshops.

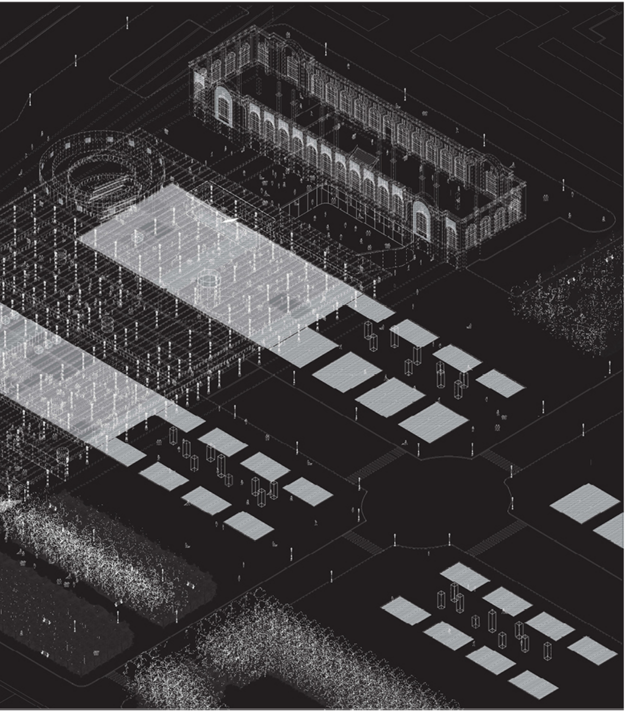
The display of art acts as much as a backdrop for daily activities than as a main reason to visit the center. The artworks made by the 20th century artist Alberto Giacometti are displayed in pavilions scattered around the site. They act as independent stands designed to let the encounter between the work of art and the spectator be a calming experience of art perception in the context of a dynamic city. Contemporary and emerging artists are given a flexible space in the city to display their art that can take the form of performance, installation, or participative artworks. The temporary art display is organized through seasons following the calendar of art fairs in Paris.

GIACOMETTI X INVALIDES **BY DAY**





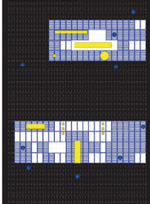


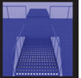


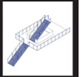
By night, the esplanade is lit up by the activities happening underground. Its new transparent surface makes the activities happening underground activate the esplanade by night.
The theme of nighttime lighting gives an identity to the esplanade and a welcoming atmosphere by night. While visitors are given access to art spaces and other activities during the late evening, the extruded volumes that emerge from the art pavilions below illuminate the esplanade and punctuate the public space.
A light art festival, happening twice a year, takes place on the esplanade making it a place for temporary outdoor display while reinforcing the theme of artificial lightning. The facade of the historical building is used as a background for art projecting shows.

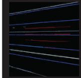
The suspended staircases are designed to let light shine through their structure. It is lit up from bellow and the light shines through circular glass blocks inserted in the patterned metallic staircase. Similarly, the new circular and transparent metro station pavilion gives substance to artificial lighting while giving more importance to the Invalides metro station.

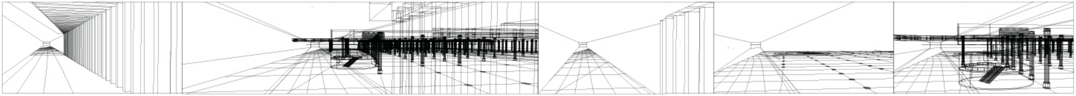
GIACOMETTI X INVALIDES

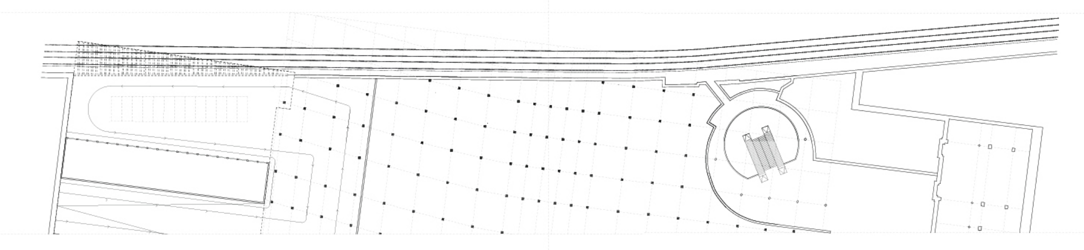


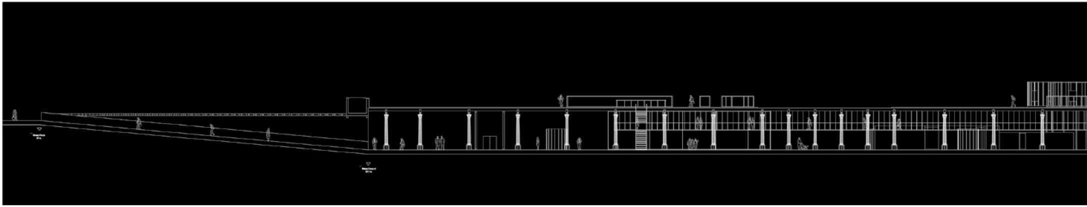


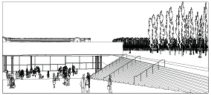


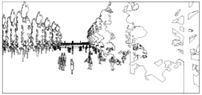


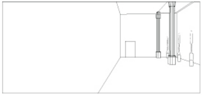


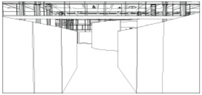


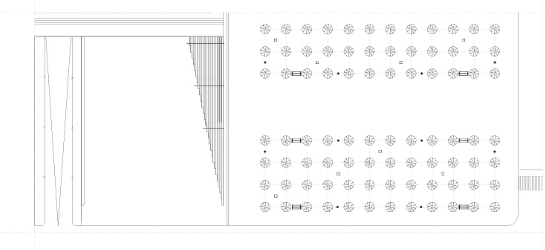


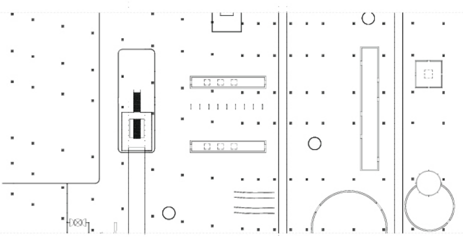


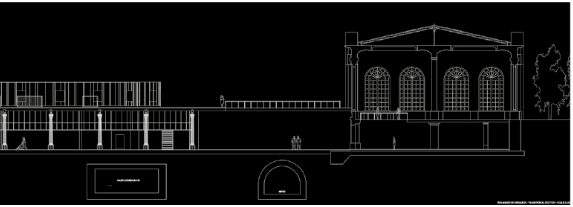








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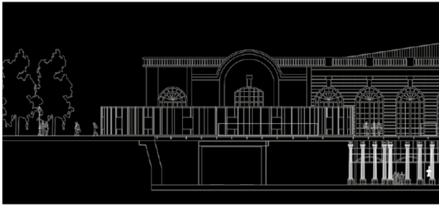

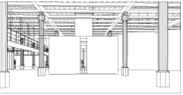

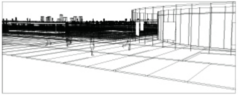

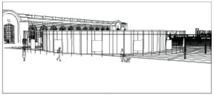

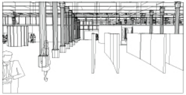

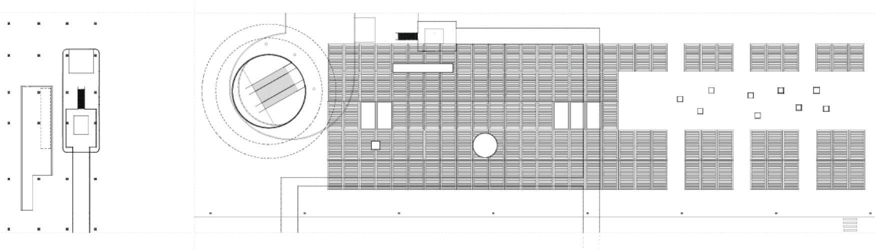

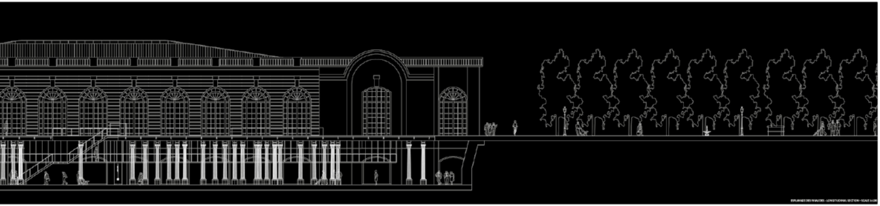

ESPLANADE DES INVALIDES - LONGITUDINAL SECTION - SCALE 1:100