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Arden Grove Arts and Education Center

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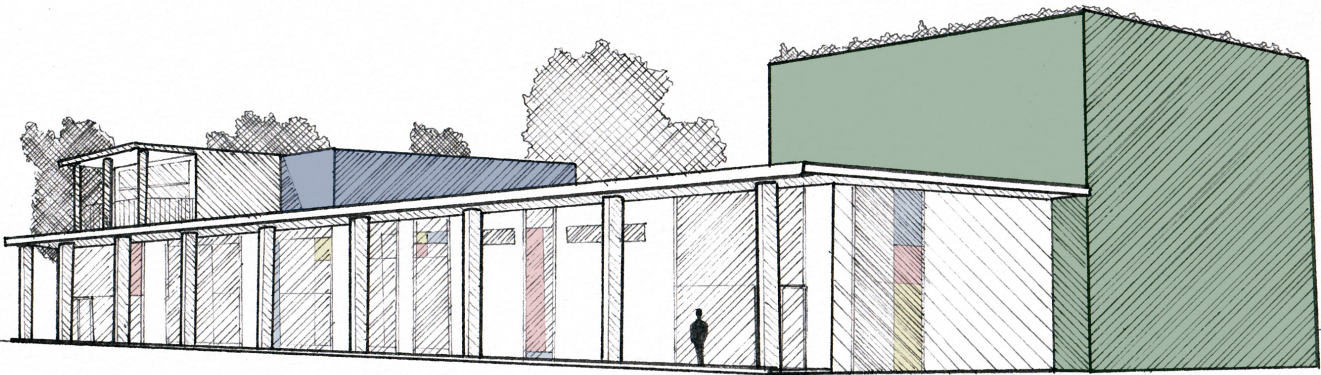
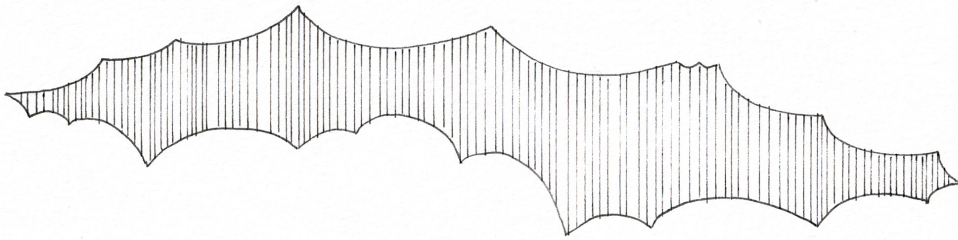
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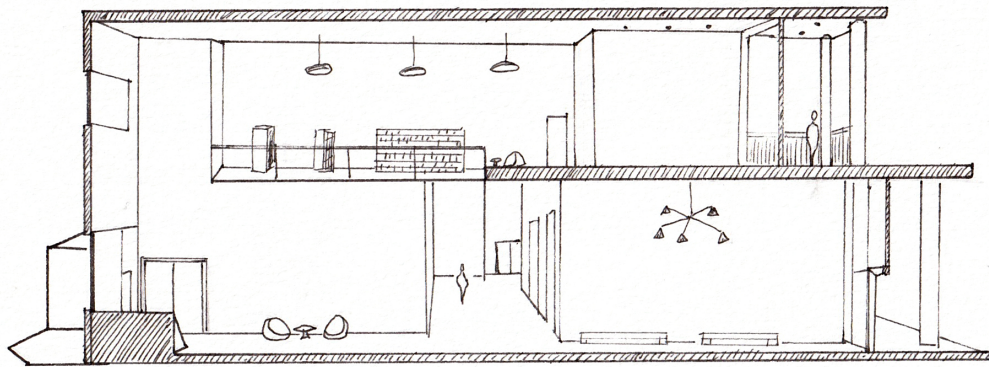
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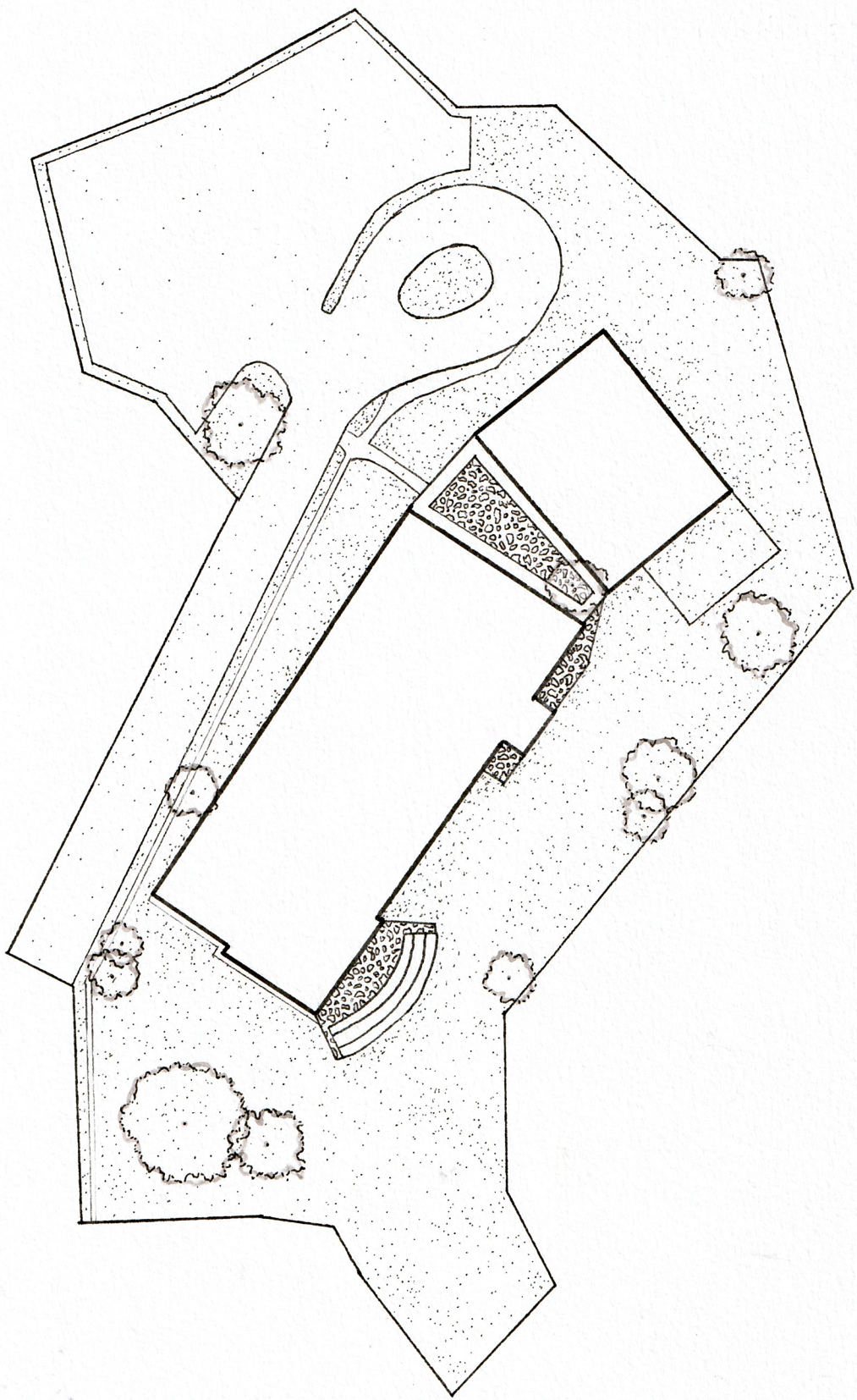
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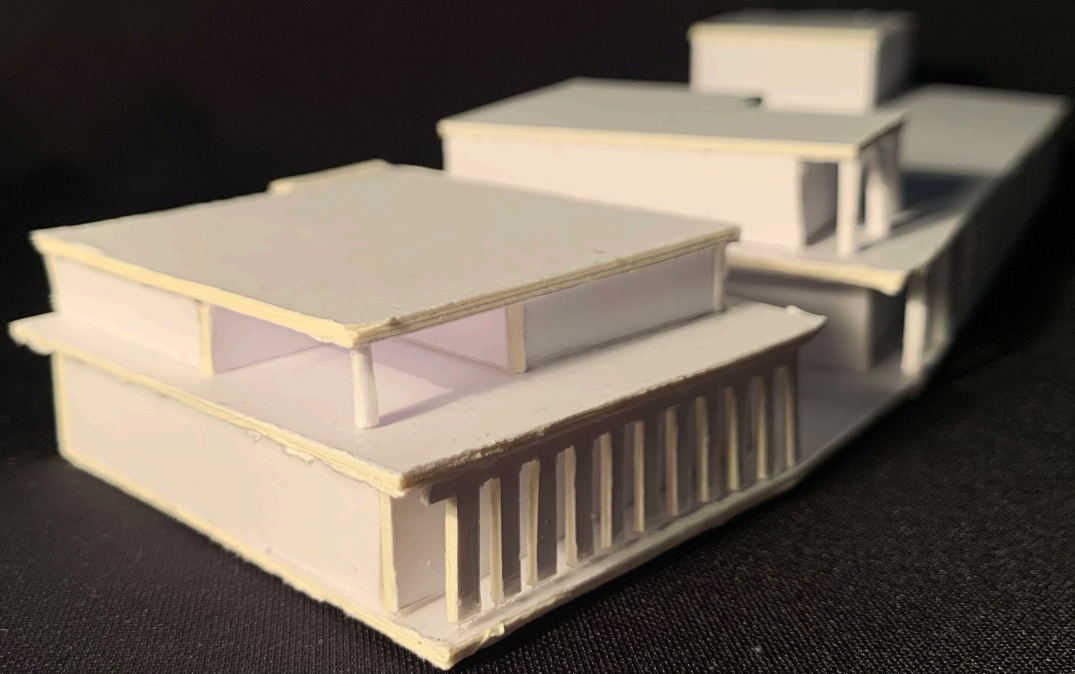
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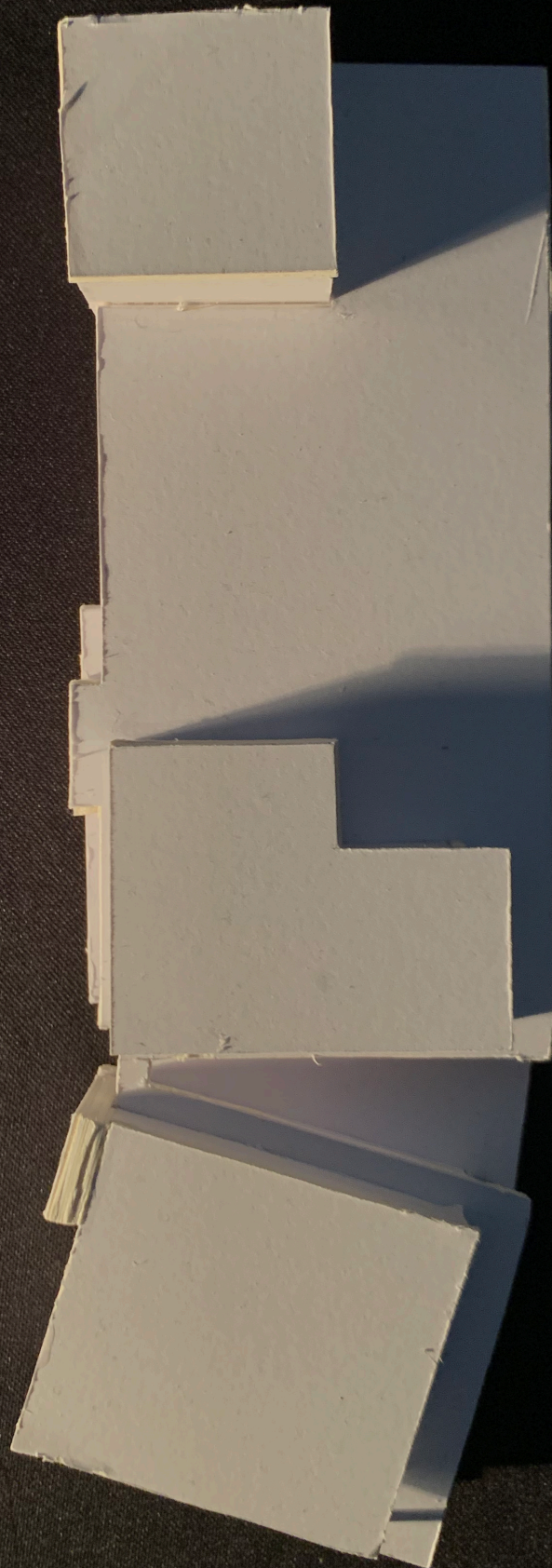
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Research Thing Submission

Olivia Bowness

This project served as the capstone for my self-designed Architectural Studies major. The aim of this process was to synthesize the knowledge from the courses in art history, studio art, engineering, mathematics, and experiential design that I took for my major to create a truly interdisciplinary final project. I decided that the semester-long project would be to research and design the Arden Grove Arts and Education Center, a schematic design proposal aimed to bring accessible education and community enrichment to downtown San Antonio. This involved creating drawings, models, and a written narrative to represent the program, design, and function of the center.

Once I had established the foundation of my design project, I began the research process. I started with a personal approach, recalling aspects of my years in Montessori education that would be applicable to my design and interviewing friends of mine in the Music Education major for their feedback on what would make the campus the optimal learning environment for the arts. I also visited the site on which this design project would be “constructed,” in order to learn more about the physical landscape and its context within the city.

I then spent time on websites such as Pinterest, Architectural Digest, ArchDaily, Dezeen, and Office Snapshots for preliminary inspiration images and possible design precedents. These images served as the foundation for the aesthetic design of the center, but concrete decisions could not be made without in-depth research into four different categories: architecture for education, architecture for the arts, climate responsive design, and local architectural precedents. I looked through both physical and digital resources available in the library, which I then

combined with knowledge from past architectural history classes at Trinity and time spent observing local architecture to begin the design process.

I incorporated my research findings into the schematic design for Arden Grove. For example, in *Building Schools: Key Issues for Contemporary Design*, the authors talk in depth on the importance of open, accessible spaces that maintain a level of security as well. I thought about this issue a lot when planning the layout of the arts center, and eventually settled on designing around two main, publically accessible entrances that are immediately greeted by reception areas, to allow for free movement within the building while maintaining a level of separation from the general public. From an aesthetic standpoint, I drew from several local vernacular architectural languages that I came across during my research. I incorporated the Hill Country vernacular “dog run” style design seen in early German settlements, the flat roofed design of both Indigenous and Colonial San Antonio architecture, and the broad eaves, expansive curtain walls, and volumetric design as seen in O’Neil Ford’s works around the city.

Besides the drawings and models of the center's design, another aspect of this synthesis project was the research paper portion. This paper aimed to lay out what I have described earlier as the influences of the design process, as well as provide a historical context in which my project is situated. This includes researching and writing about the history of performance art buildings, primary education architecture, the Montessori method and its influence, as well as a brief architectural history of the surrounding area. It was important to me to contextualize Arden Grove in the city and compare it to other historical and local precedents to show the plausibility of its success as a culturally significant feature of San Antonio.

This project not only got me to learn more about interests I have in human-centered design, but I truly got an interdisciplinary workout. I read, wrote, walked, looked, drew, built,

and presented for this project, and it forced me to grow in so many different areas. It was an incredibly rewarding process, and it was worth all of the countless hours that I put into it.

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