

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS

REDEFINITION OF THE LOBBY OF MACBA STUDY CENTER

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT "MELA – MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES IN/OF THE AGE OF MIGRATIONS"

Study Center of MACBA, Barcelona, June 2011

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1. Context: The MeLA Research Project

The current Open Call for proposals for the lobby of the MACBA Study Center takes place within the broader context of a larger research project, MeLA – Museums and Libraries in/of the Age of Migrations, and constitutes one of MACBA’s contributions to such research.

MeLa European Museums and Libraries in/of the Age of Migrations is a four-year research project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme, which aims to delineate new approaches for museums and libraries in a context characterized by a continuous migration of people and ideas. Its main objectives are to advance knowledge in the field and to support the museum and library communities, as well as practitioners, experts and policymakers in developing new missions and forms of museums and libraries “in the age of migration”.

MeLa intends to define new strategies for the multi-inter-transcultural organization, conservation, exhibition and transmission of knowledge in ways and forms able to reflect the conditions posed by the migrations of people, cultures, ideas, information and knowledge in the global world, and aims to evaluate how much such changes can interfere with the physical structures and the architecture of exhibition places.

The MeLa Project involves nine European partners which have all been chosen for their specific expertise and skills in the fields of the project. The Consortium therefore includes five universities (POLIMI – Politecnico di Milano, UNO – University of Naples, GU – Glasgow University, UNEW – University of Newcastle, RCA – Royal College of Art, London), two museums (MNHN – Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris and MACBA – Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona), a national research council (CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Milano) and a small enterprise (CIID – Copenhagen Institute for Interactive Design) from five countries (Denmark, France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom). This relatively shrunk geographical distribution is due to the choice to build a Consortium mainly based on a thematic structure aimed to achieve a large interdisciplinary network of excellence.

To fulfill its objectives, the Project has been divided into several Work Packages (Activities), each of which will stress and deepen specific aspects of the central project topic through different Research Tools. Each Partner will participate in all the research activities and WPs, addressing its own specific interests and skills, and can also be involved as Leader of one or more WPs.

For more information about the MeLA Project, please visit: www.mela-project.eu

For more information about the current Open Call, related inquiries, or technical questions, please contact either of the following at the MACBA Study Center:

Mela Dávila Freire, Head of Study Center, mdavila@macba.cat

Eric Jiménez, Study Center Assistant, ejimenez@macba.cat

They will consult with members of MACBA’s Architecture Department regarding any technical questions or concerns posed by applicants related to this Open Call.

2. Technical Requirements

2.1 Aims

The role fulfilled by the Study Center's ground floor, a "friction zone" which shares features with museum exhibition areas, library reading rooms and event spaces, is currently in the process of being redefined. This Open Call aims to gather ideas for the drafting of a new space pattern, yet undefined in a standardized form. We aim to do this with the help of specialists –architects— who will be able to approach the project from new perspectives, and will hopefully be not biased by traditional Museology in the task of giving physical shape to the uses and requirements that we have drafted on paper.

Taking the ideas and proposals gathered through this Open Call, we intend not only to be able to translate into physical terms such uses and requirements, but also to strengthen the relationship and communication between the Study Center's building and MACBA's main building (designed by Richard Meier), as well as enhance the Study Center's impact within its urban context.

The aim of this Open Call, therefore, is not to select or award just one project, but rather to select and then disseminate those proposals that include the most relevant, creative and/or feasible solutions.

It must be underscored, however, that this is not an Open Call for theoretical proposals. The selection committee will value especially those ideas that can be carried out in practical, effective ways.

2.2 Participants

Although this Open Call is produced in the context of the European research project MeLA – Museums and Libraries in/of the Age of Migrations, it is open to any academic institution from the fields of Architecture, Interior Design, Curatorial Studies, etc., which wishes to take part through the organization of a seminar or academic project related to this Open Call. Postgraduate students from any of these or related fields are welcome to submit individual or group proposals.

As of June 2011, the following institutions have confirmed their participation in this Open Call:

- Escuela Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona – ETSAB, Barcelona
- Escola Eina, Barcelona
- Royal College of Art, London
- Instituto Politécnico de Milán, Milano
- School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation of Columbia University, New York

2.3 Content of Proposals

Proposals must have a three-part structure and should address the following:

- Brief theoretical introduction and case study, ideally with some illustrations (20 to 50 pages).
- Proposal for intervention in two areas: Plaça dels Angels square, and MACBA Study Center (exterior façade, lobby in the ground floor).
- Proposal addressed specifically to the Study Center lobby, defining a multipurpose space used for the presentation of documents, small events, presentations, etc. (See "7: Some Examples of Possible New Uses for the Lobby" below for further details.) Such a plan should address the exhibition of documentary and archival materials and/or other displayed items (i.e. in vitrines, on stands, etc.) in a mixed-use space, attempting to (re)define the relationship between objects and visitors.



Proposals are not expected to include technical installation information related to electricity and other technical supplies. The estimate for the cost of production of proposals should not be higher than approximately 60.000 €.

2.3 Delivery Format

- a. Introduction and case study: 2 printouts in DinA4 size or similar plus MsWord.
- b. Proposal for intervention: 2 printouts in DinA3 size or similar plus CAD files, with elevations and sections (1:100), outside area (1:200), Study Center's ground floor area (1:100) and details of ground floor (1:50).
- c. Proposals for displays and other related elements for the lobby of MACBA Study Center: 2 printouts in DinA3 size or similar plus elements' details (1:10).

2.4 Selection Committee

The committee will include one person appointed by each of the academic institutions officially participating in the present Open Call, as well as MACBA's Director, Head of Architecture, and Head of the Study Center.

The committee will select the most salient proposals which fulfill the objectives detailed in Section "Aims" of the current Open Call, which are further expanded and detailed below, under Section "5: Redefinition of Uses for the Lobby" of this document.

2.5 Deadline and Delivery Details

The deadline for delivery of proposals is January 25, 2012. The Selection Committee will make public its selection of the best proposal(s) by the end of March, 2012.

Proposals may be sent via courier or regular post, by the deadline specified above, to this address:

Mela Dávila
Responsable del Centro de Estudios y Documentación
Plaça dels Angels 8
08005 Barcelona – España

2.6 Acknowledgement of Best Proposals

The selected proposals (which may be more than one) will be acknowledged by making them public through the MeLA Project Dissemination Plan (either in printed or digital form), through MACBA's institutional website, and/or through any other appropriate means, in order to disseminate them and make their content and solutions publicly accessible, particularly to persons in specialized and related fields such as Museology, Architecture, etc.

2.7 Legal Basis

Authors of proposals will remain the owners of all intellectual property rights related to the proposals produced in answer to this Open Call. MACBA, however, reserves the right to use proposals, in full or in part, so as to realize them or produce them for the Museum's own use. Commercial uses, as well as their use by third parties, are explicitly excluded from this permission.

By producing a proposal, authors accept that they will grant reproduction rights so that proposals can be disseminated as described in Section 2.7 above (“Acknowledgment of Best Proposals”). Likewise, authors will grant MACBA and the MeLA Research Project Consortium permission to make their contents available to the press, in the context of both entities’ own communication campaigns.



3. The MACBA Study Center. Structure and Staff, Building

3.1 The MACBA Study Center

The MACBA Study Center opened its doors in December 2007, aiming to extend and enhance the role of the Museum by creating links between the production of exhibitions and the production of knowledge in relation to contemporary art. With the creation of the Study Center, MACBA broadens its field of action, expanding it to include research, debate and the dissemination of ideas.

Collect and Preserve

The Study Center has the task of assembling a Research Collection specialised in contemporary art practices. This collection includes artist publications, archives and any kind of documents which are relevant to art history, as well as reference publications from fields such as Postcolonial and Gender Studies, Communication, Philosophy, Sociology, etc. It complements the MACBA Collection in order to enhance and broaden its potential for generating new perspectives on contemporary art.

One of the Center's primary objectives is to preserve the memory of contemporary artistic activity in the local context, but its guidelines do not set limits or geographic criteria for the acquisition of new material. In terms of chronology, the Center's holdings extend from World War II to the present, the period also encompassed by the artworks that make up the MACBA Collection.

The Study Center collects various kinds of original documents –from personal photographs and letters to artist books, copies, invitations, posters, pamphlets, print and digital magazines– as well as reference books and audiovisual resources. These materials are preserved either in the Library or in the Archive, according to the conservation and consultation guidelines that are most suitable in each case.

Research

Access to a Research Collection increases enormously the specialists' possibilities for the interpretation and analysis of issues related to contemporary art. With a view to fostering and supporting research that can contribute new visions to this field of knowledge, the Study Center has launched a Guest Researchers Program, at the same time that it continues its close collaboration with MACBA's Independent Study Program, addressed to postgraduate students.

Disseminate

The third major objective of the Study Center is the active dissemination of its collections. To this end, the temporary exhibitions which have been held in the gallery located on the Study Center's Lobby have presented different themes selected from the documents in the Archive and Library Collections.

Other distribution strategies will gradually be implemented, as the Study Center's Research Collections continue to grow. These include print and digital publications, the digitalization of specific documents, and setting up networks with other similar archives, among others.

3.2 Structure and Staff

The Study Center comprises an **Archive** of artist publications, personal archives of artists / critics and other special materials such as posters, multiples, etc., and also a **Reference Library** specialising in contemporary art practices and Cultural Studies, with a strong emphasis on Postcolonial and Gender Studies.

The staff is composed of 9 regular members (library and archive team, secretary), 4 free lance cataloguers who work in the Center's premises on a daily (but temporary) basis, and a varying number of interns



ranging between 2 and 5, depending on the season. Besides, four guest researchers (changing every three months) also use the Center's premises on a daily basis.

The average number of library users is 22 per day, a number which has risen steadily since the Study Center opened three years ago. The average number of archive users is 7 per month (these users devote not just some hours, but usually a number of days to their consultations), a number which is also increasing.

3.3 Building

The building that hosts the MACBA Study Center is next to the museum's main building, but it is independent and totally separate from it. It has four floors, whose contents are the following:

Floor 0, or the lobby, serves as an entrance and reception space (reception desk, lockers), and also as an exhibition space. This is the space about which the present report has been developed.

Floor 1 hosts three classrooms, where sessions of the Independent Study Program lead by MACBA take place. Only students and professors of this postgraduate program have access to this area.

Floor 2 hosts staff offices and the special materials archive, plus two meeting rooms. This floor is only accessible to staff members.

Floor 3 hosts the library's Reading Room and Special Consultation Room, both open to the library users, and also the library storage room (for staff only) and desks devoted to guest researchers (not accessible to the public).

4. Starting Point: The Lobby as an Exhibition Area

With a perspective shaped by the Study Center running for three years, and having organized six quite different exhibitions, we have reached a number of conclusions:

- The Study Center building has not gained in terms of public visibility. Despite its size and privileged location in the Plaça dels Àngels, next to the MACBA main building, the Study Center continues to be basically a flat, dull façade, and thus invisible both to users of the MACBA building and to the wider public that daily walks across the Plaça dels Àngels square.
- The strong link between the main museum's building and the Study Center's building remains equally opaque to the public.
- Likewise, once inside the Study Center's Lobby, visitors have no idea of what services are available to them in the building until they cross the entrance and exhibition hall, walk in front of the locker area and reach the lift (where the uses of each floor are indicated on panel which is also relatively small).
- In other words: the Study Center presents a rather dull "public face", and the public who enter the entrance / exhibition space remain unaware, during their visit, of the other areas of activity in the Center.
- In spite of having a varied nature, the documentary exhibitions held in The Lobby to date have one common denominator: they have closely followed the exhibition model employed in the main museum building, which expects visitors mainly to contemplate or view the exhibits. Documents, however, require different dynamics of approach, more centered on active reading and interpretation, and which could often be grounded in a dialogic model (e.g., somebody explains their contents to a small number of people, or their contents are exposed and discussed in a round table).
- The temporary exhibitions featuring documents from the Centre have offered, so far, materials which have already been "filtered" by time, since they have been selected to form part of the Centre's holdings --or, at least, to be displayed in each particular exhibition—because of their (already established) historical value. Yet, this "historical" perspective leaves aside an important function of the Study Center: to foster the knowledge and discussion of artistic involvement in publishing activities (in the widest sense) in the most immediate present – what is now published, who publishes, how and why something is published, and so on.

That is to say: the task of the Study Center is not only collecting material from the past, but also presenting this material and its producers to the wider public, while at the same time giving thought to the very activity of publishing in real time and in the present. The classical exhibition format that has characterized all of the shows presented so far in the Study Center's Lobby has proven to be too static and inflexible to fulfil this function.

5. Redefinition of Uses for the Lobby

By redefining the uses (and therefore reshaping the physical space) of the Study Center's Lobby, we aim to achieve the following:

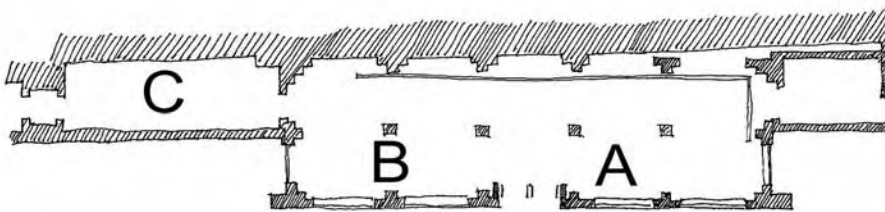
- To create a space which enables alternative strategies to the exhibition to be developed, aimed at fostering the study and research of contemporary artistic practices in general and, in particular, in relation to the Study Center holdings and its wide-ranging areas of activity.
- To achieve greater visibility for the Study Center and all the activities and services it is capable of programming and/or housing: library / archive / Independent Studies Programme (PEI) / areas for researchers / etc.
- To establish a clear visual link between the Study Center and the other parts of the MACBA "conglomerate" in and around Plaça dels Angels, made up of the main building, the Capella, the Auditorium and the Center itself.
- To turn the Lobby of the Study Center into some kind of metaphorical "recipient" which is transparent and open towards the outside, and which invites the public to go inside and discover what's in there.
- The creation of a new, hybrid space is proposed, one which is dynamic and social and whose configuration is sufficiently flexible and transformable to enable the development of functions associated with many other spaces, but without being just any one of them: classroom / lounge / cinema / assembly hall / auditorium / exhibition hall / meeting room / reading room / café / workshop.
- The physical definition of the new space should be oriented towards achieving two features:
- To turn The Lobby into an area which is permanently occupied by people -- be they users of the Study Center, students of the postgraduate program, users and staff of MACBA in general and maybe even the general public -- who engage in activities related to study and reading. In other words: to turn it into an area where visitors / users can connect to the Internet, work with their own computers, read, work in groups, watch videos (programmed or on demand), and so on.
- To create an area for small-scale public activities, half-way between a classroom and an auditorium, in which the frontiers between the teacher/speaker and the listener do not exist, and conversations can be held at a truly egalitarian level, both physically and metaphorically.

In practical terms, and bearing in mind that this space opens its doors at 9 am and closes them at 7:30 pm, this means the following:

On a regular basis, throughout most of the day there will be no program of events, so that the space could be spontaneously occupied by people who wish to engage in any of the activities mentioned in point 3.1. At given moments of given days, however (mostly in the evenings, but not only), different departments of MACBA could schedule activities in this space that are appropriate to its hybrid formal features: small round tables, work groups, workshops, internal meetings, etc. Proposals by the Study Center and the MACBA's Independent Study Program would figure prominently among these activities, but there would --and should -- be space for many more initiatives coming from other areas of the MACBA.

6. Desired Physical Features for the New Space

- First and most fundamental: the new space must be a transparent space. This involves two things: its content should be visible from the outside, for instance creating night-time lighting of the interior space so as to achieve a lantern effect; and, from the outside, it should be seen as a welcoming space in which there are people, equipment, and activities going on; in other words, a living space.
- On the inside, a way must be found to indicate at first glance all the services and activities that occupy the other floors of the building: library / archive / Independent Study Program / etc. It is important that visitors know quickly the type of facility they have just entered, and what they can do find there.
- It should be a versatile space, with display systems developed for documents (as opposed to common displays for works of art), modular furniture that enables visitors to group tables and chairs together or use them separately, sit on chairs or sofas (or the floor), write on a giant board, watch videos on a relatively large screen (screenings for ten, twelve or fifteen people), or display selections of publications on the walls, tables or pedestals, etc. And it should be equipped with several computers connected to the Internet, with Wi-Fi coverage, a projector and any other technical resources or furniture necessary to enable the space to be adapted to an endless number of working methods, whether by groups or individuals.
- Broadly speaking, the space will always need to serve three main functions, which could be (though not necessarily) organized into three physical areas with flexible perimeters and thus modifiable in line with the programming. This is one of the current possible ways to distribute these functions along The Lobby:



- A – Most exposed zone: Programmed activities / study space
- B – Semi-exposed zone: Reception and distribution of the public according to the reason for their visit (transit area), information
- C – Less visible zone: Presentation of small selections of materials and recent acquisitions

7. Some Examples of Possible New Uses for the Lobby

- Displays, or presentations (we consciously avoid the use of the term “exhibitions”), of materials – books, magazines, printed matter, etc.—coming from the Study Center’s Archive and Library, which are shown in innovative ways more adapted to their “documentary” features than the traditional “frame-on-the-wall” and vitrine systems which are mostly used by museums.
- Presentations by independent art publishers.
- Presentations of journals on art and contemporary culture
- Presentation of archival projects, be they the Museum’s own, initiatives of other institutions (e.g. Daniel Langlois Foundation archives), or the result of collaboration projects (e.g. Free Software and Cultural Institutions project – SLIC).
- “Guided” tours of selections of artist’s books and other special materials coming from the Archive, carried out by their authors / critics / Independent Study Program professors / etc., for small groups and with the materials within easy reach of participants.
- Presentations of digitalization projects carried out in the Study Center, either using the video screen programming or with the physical presence of the project members in each case (e.g. Muntadas’ *Between the Frames*, performances by Esther Ferrer, etc.).
- Informal presentations, addressed to the MACBA staff, by the Study Center’s resident researchers.
- Training sessions with databases and other resources, addressed to library users.
- Etc., etc., etc.

8. Similar Spaces Operating in other Institutions

- Institutional Archive of **Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona**: Permanent space for consultation of the documentary holdings, created by the CCCB over its many years of activity and following four thematic presentations. It is a warm, pleasant area, with Wi-Fi service for users.



- **Fundació Tàpies, Barcelona:** Multi-use archive hall with moveable walls and a panelled floor containing electrical and Internet connections. The intention from the outset of the project was to create a space which could be adapted to different activities and projects.



- **New Museum: Museum as Hub, New York:** Conceived as a flexible and social space, designed to involve the public through multimedia work-stations, exhibition areas, screenings, symposiums and other activities.

- **Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven:** Library exhibition space with displays changing every 2 months, programmed in collaboration with artists, collectors, publishers and institutions. The exhibitions include paper documents, bibliophile editions and artist's books, selected from a different perspective for each occasion.



- Façade of **Medialab Prado**, Madrid: Giant screen which shows projects by different artists. They also organise a “festival of urban façades”, and thanks to this screen have managed to bestow visibility on a building which had previously gone completely unnoticed.



- **Forum des Images, Paris:** Film library with on-demand screening. The institution constitutes an example of how a municipal film library can occupy a modern setting, with technical advances and original ideas placed at the service of the general public.



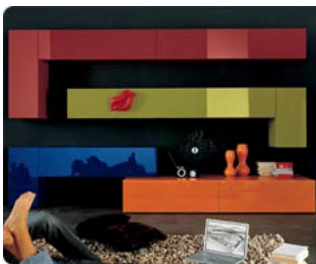
9. Some Examples for Creative or Interesting Settings, Furniture Pieces *et al.*

- **For the floors:** Spaces that feel private, different, comfortable. In a variety of materials, with different options of modulation and use.





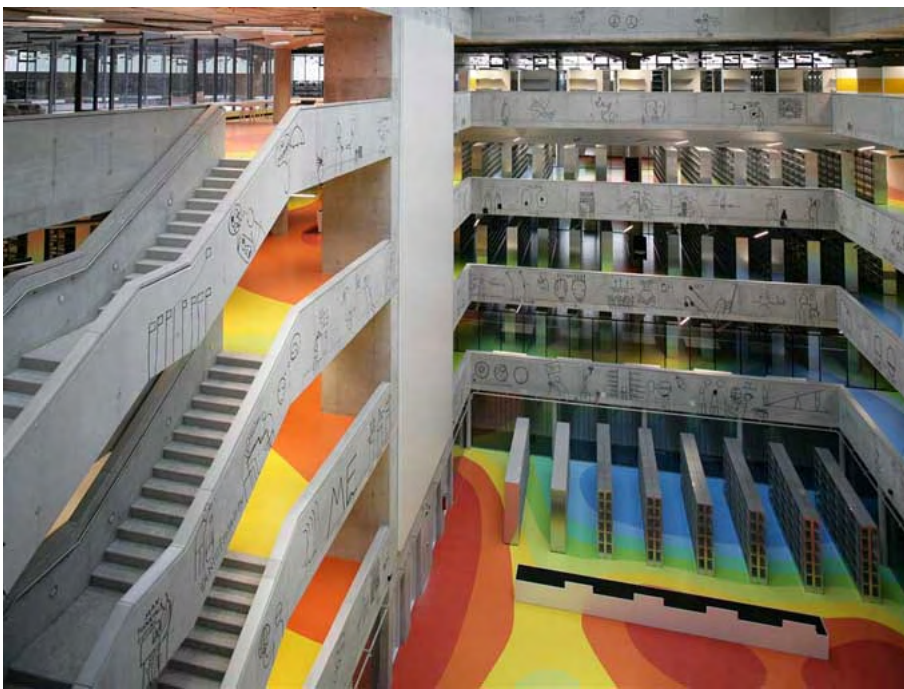
- **Modular** shelves, modular reading and work stations; and modular elements that enable the space to be changed in a matter of minutes.



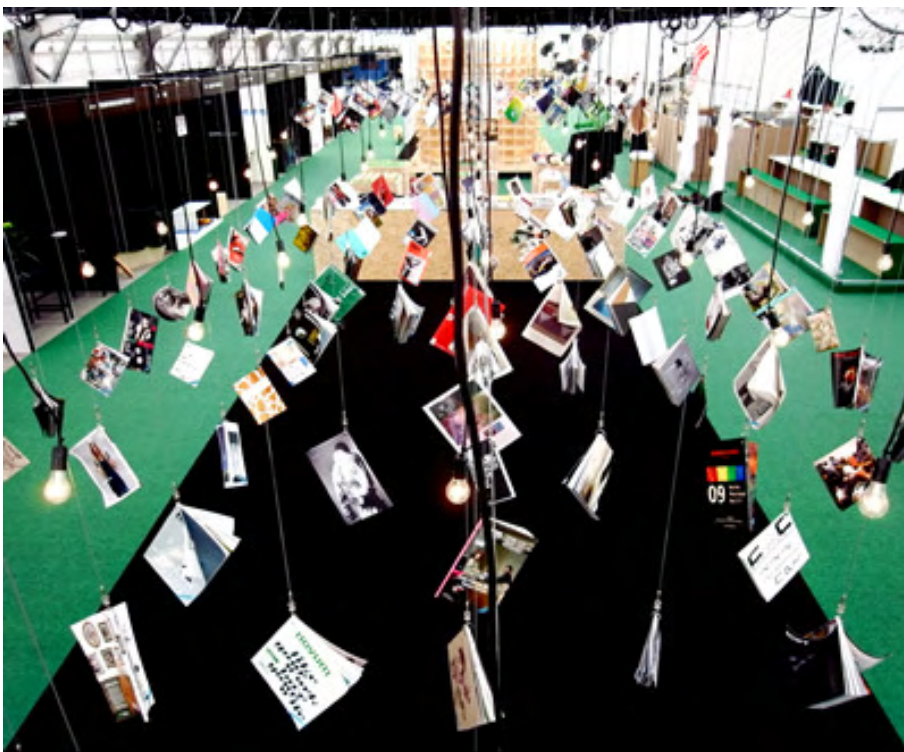
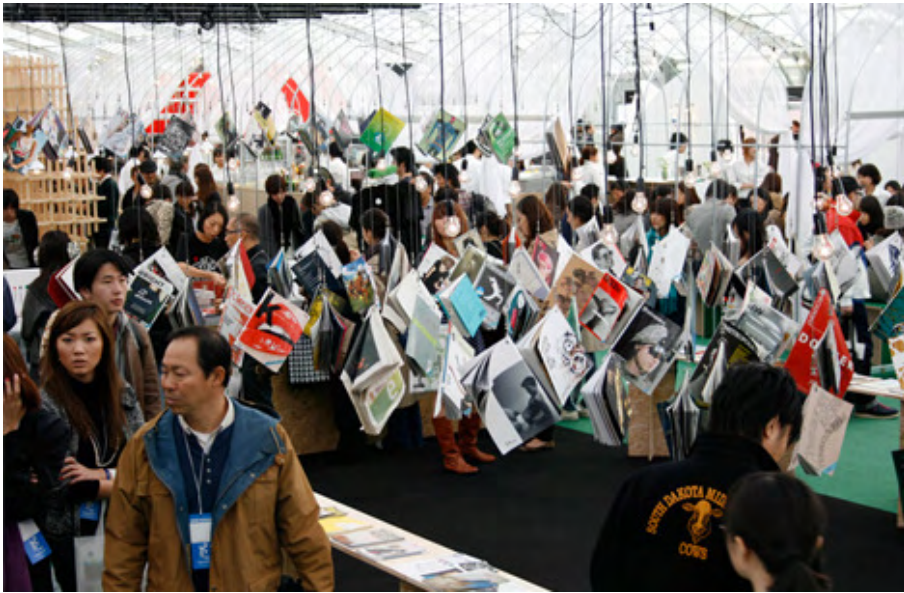




- **Effective minimal interventions:** Examples of minimal interventions in spaces that would be otherwise monotonous and not highly visible.



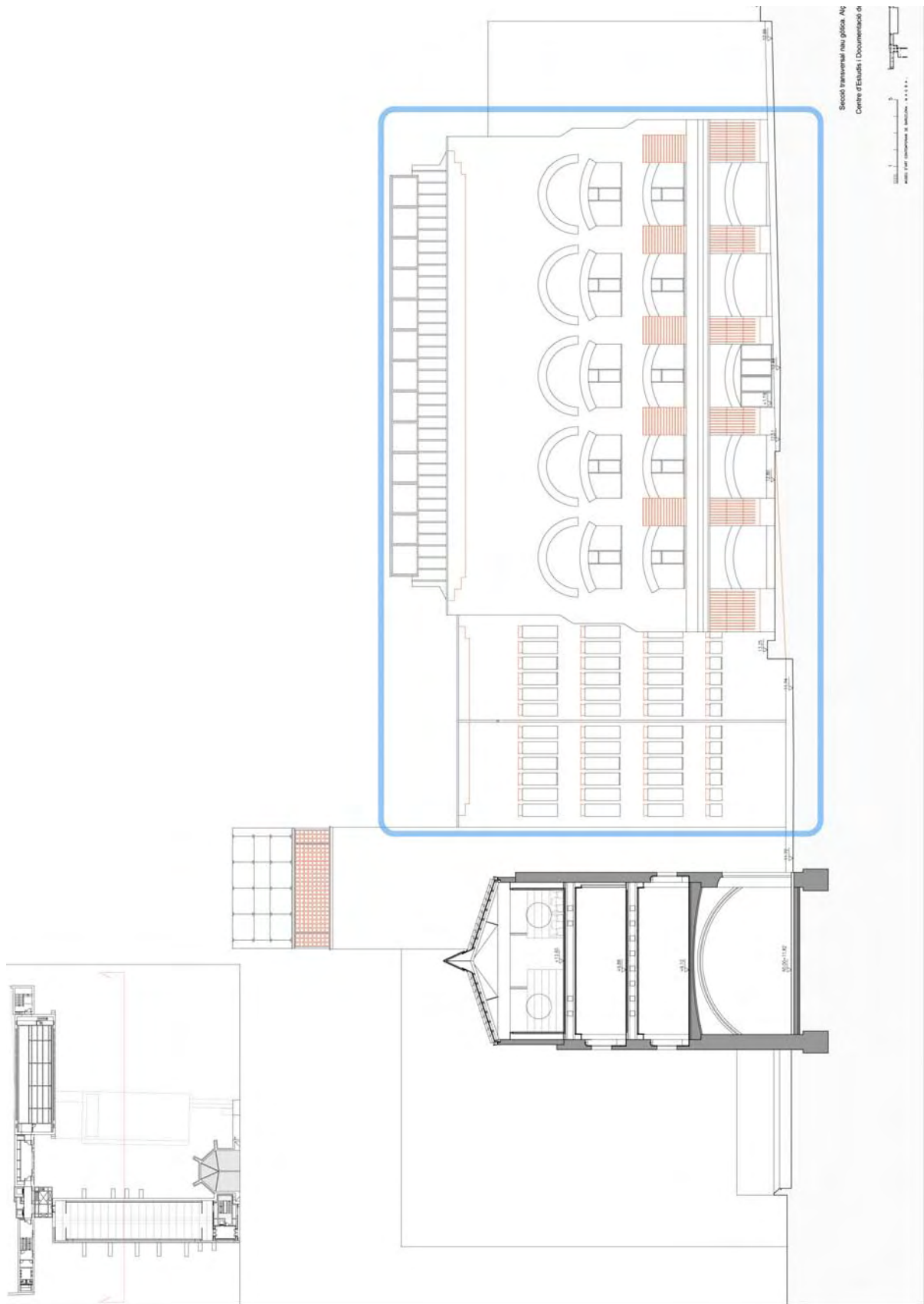
- **Other formats:** Different ways of exhibiting documentation which avoid simple viewing of the showcase being the only method of display.



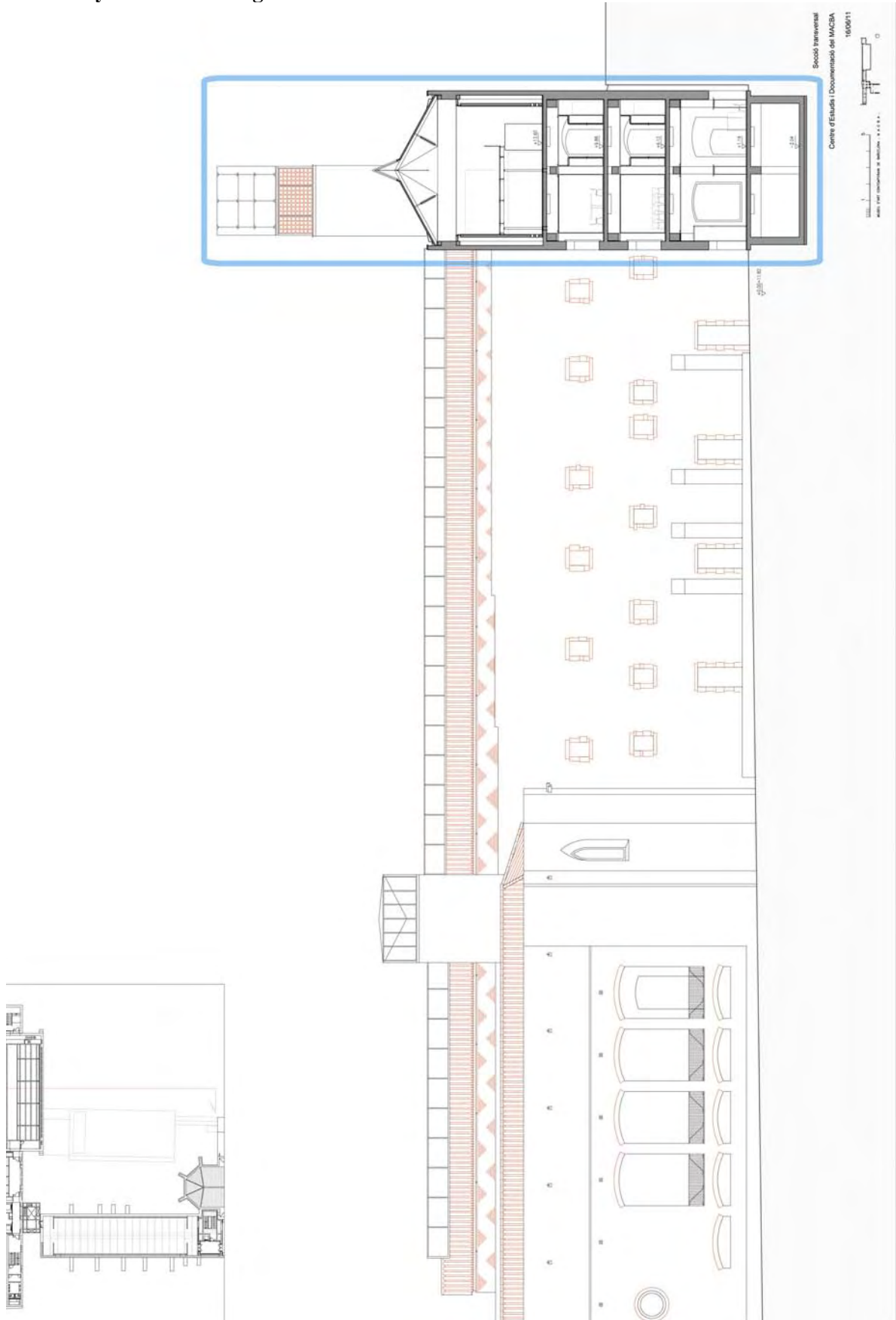
- **Rethinking of transit space:** the assembly of a central module, for example, would allow new user-transit routes to be created in the hall.



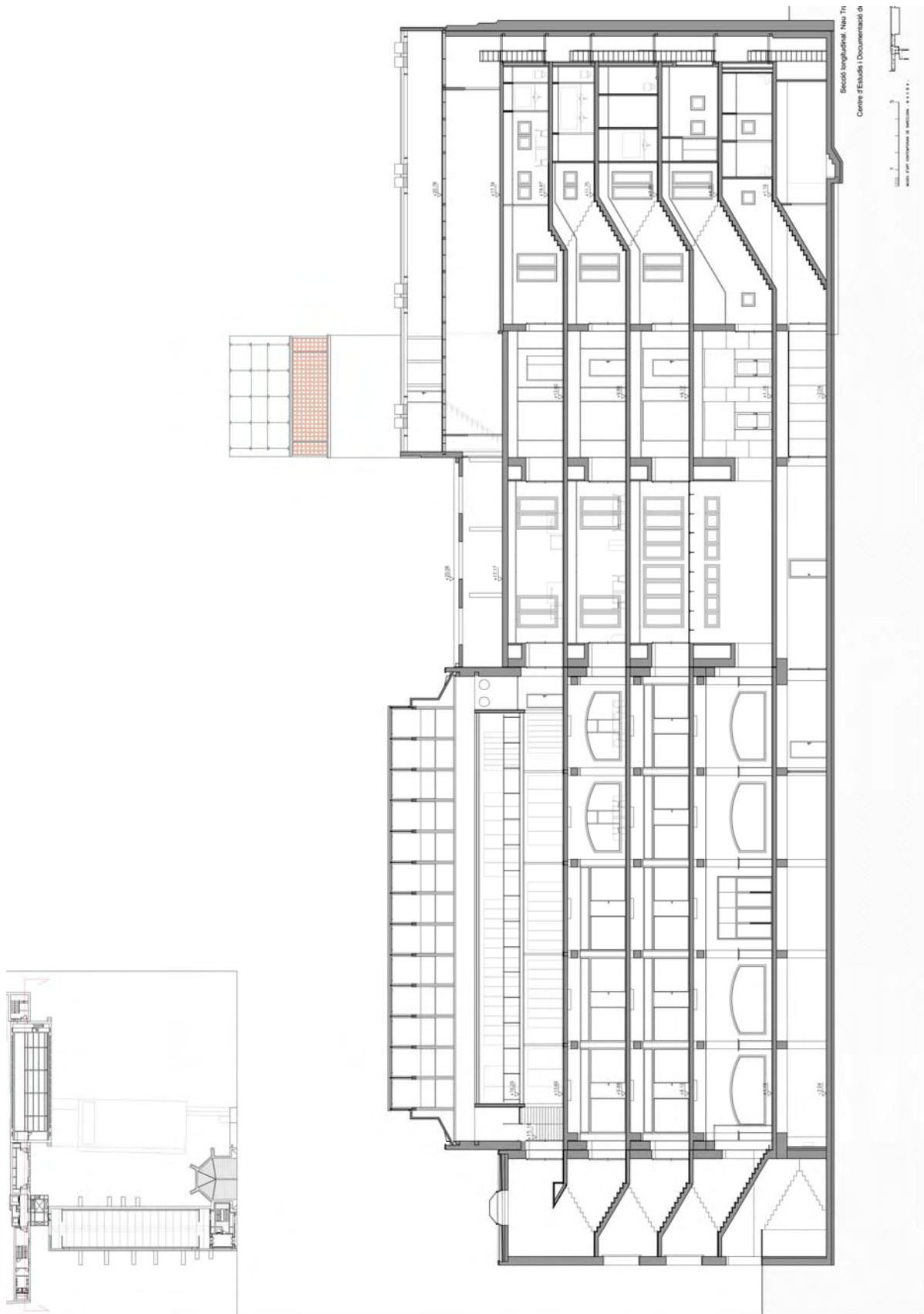
10.2 Study Center Building – Frontal Elevation



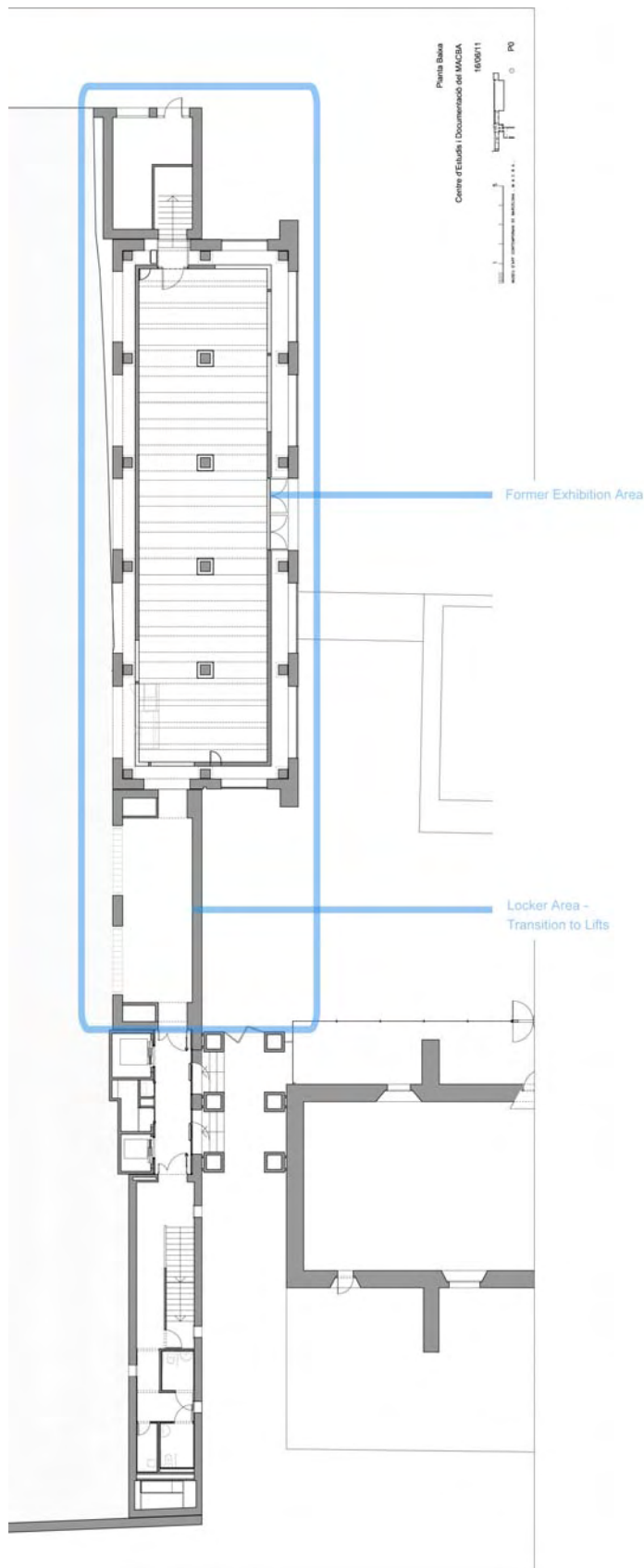
10.3 Study Center Building – Cross Section



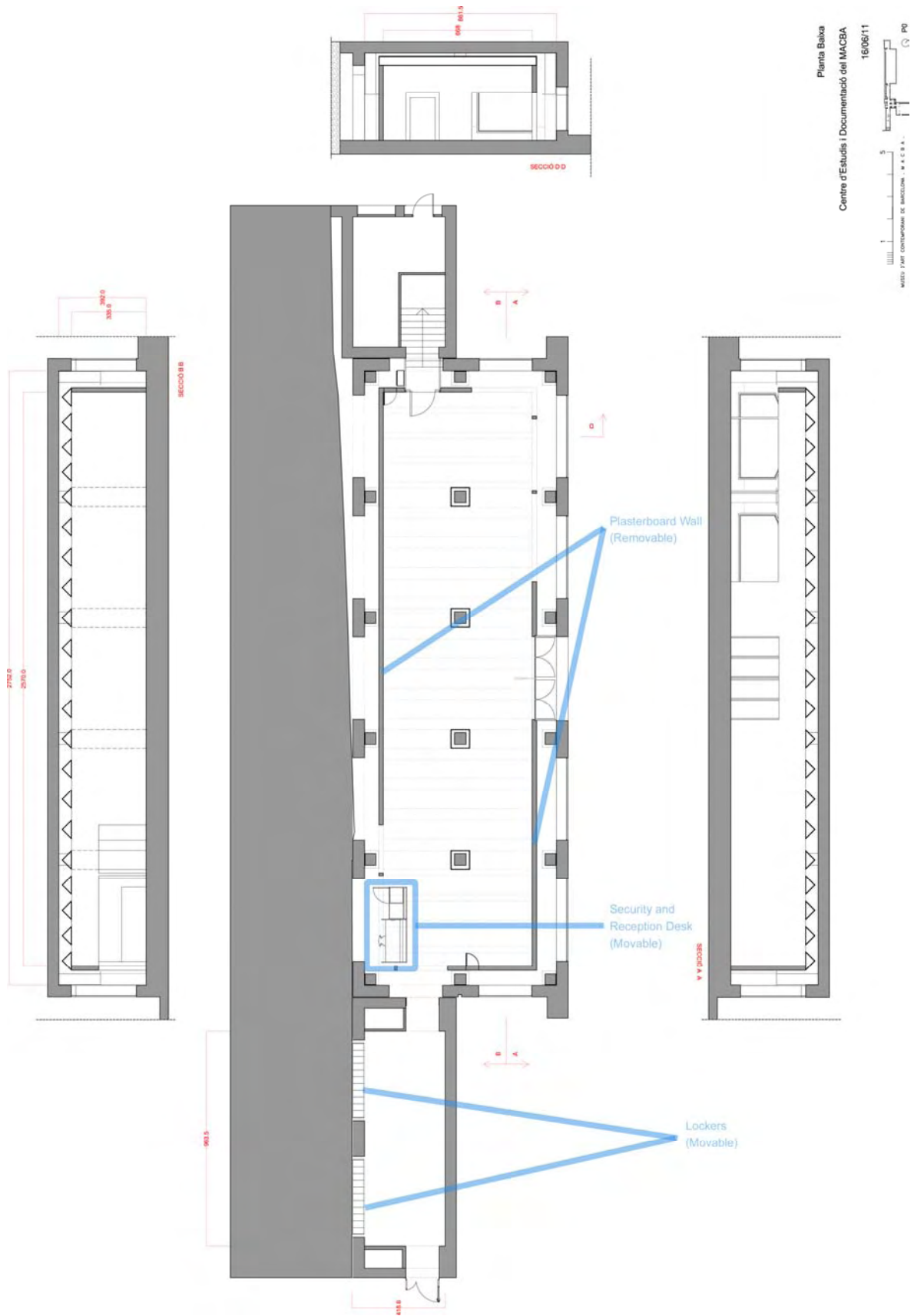
10.4 Study Center Building – Longitudinal Section



10.5 Study Center Building – General Floor Plan

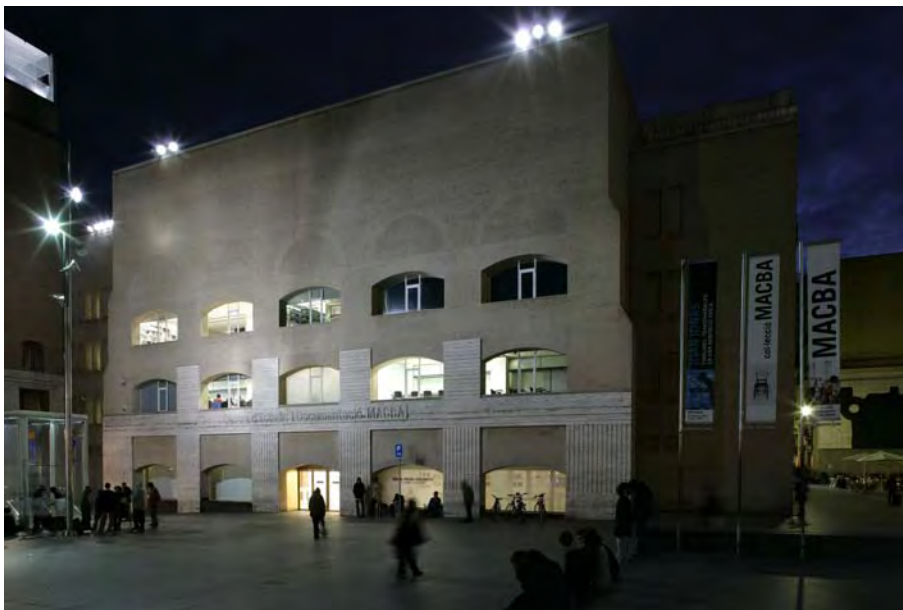


10.6 Study Center Building – Detail. Area to Be Redesigned



Planta Baja
 Centre d'Estudis i Documentació del MACBA
 16/06/11
 MUSEU D'ARTS CONTEMPORANIS DE BARCELONA - MACBA

11. Some Photos of Study Center Building, Surroundings and Exhibitions Presented to Date



Study Center Building



Exhibition - Archives and documents (03/12/2007 - 08/06/2008)



Exhibition - Possibility of Action: the Life of the Score (17/06/2008 - 05/10/2008)



Exhibition - Reading Room 1: Brazil (11/02/2009 - 12/06/2009)



Exhibition - The Malady of Writing. A project on text and speculative imagination (20/11/2009 - 25/04/2010)



Exhibition - With a Probability of Being Seen. Dorothee and Konrad Fischer. Archives of an attitude (15/05/2010 - 12/10/2010)