

# Tír Iontach

## A Community Library for the People of Sligo

### THE BRIEF

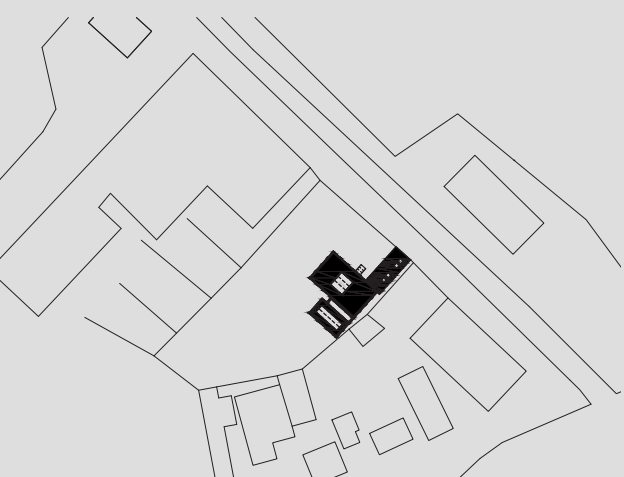
The need for a new library in Sligo is at the heart of the most recent Sligo County Council Library Development Plan 2017 – 2023. The existing provision is too small to adequately provide a modern library service for the town. Library use has changed – no longer simply a lending and reference tool, libraries are now seen as community hubs offering opportunities for people to meet, learn, and engage.

This brief is to design a new Central Library providing a community-focussed and flexible space for the entire community. Conceived as the key part of a larger regeneration of the quays, the design will provide space for community events, meetings, and reading and relaxing spaces for people to gather, to meet, or come alone. It will have zoned areas for children and adults, quieter areas for study and contemplation, and space for classes and other activities.

### WHY REUSE?

Dereliction in Ireland is a significant problem, particularly in rural towns and inner-city areas, where vacant and decaying buildings contribute to social and economic decline. The visual blight of derelict buildings undermines community morale, and valuable elements of Ireland's built heritage are lost to weather damage, vandalism, or eventual demolition, eroding the character and identity of historic streetscapes.

The Bachelor's Building on Sligo's quays is worth saving, and what better use than a community library? Built in 1905, it was the first building in Ireland to use a concrete construction method known as the Béton Armé system and is a fine example of industrial architecture.



Site at Deepwater Quay; The Bachelor's building today



### The Vision

The vision is to transform this worthy building from Sligo's past to a space for the whole community, while respecting and celebrating the industrial nature of its materiality, by retaining its concrete columns and metal windows. This building will celebrate the town's folk heritage and take advantage of the multi-aspect views over the sea and mountains and out to sea – powerful symbols of Ireland's identity, blending myth, history and place.

Visitors will enter and marvel at the verticality, their gaze drawn upwards towards the sky, evoking a sense of wonder and adventure. As the visitor ascends the building they will begin to see views of Knocknarea, Benbulbin and out to sea – powerful symbols of Ireland's identity, blending myth, history and place.

This journey in the library will take them into smaller spaces and reading nooks where the visitor can sit and feel cosseted and contemplate, read or dream; into larger spaces where they can come together to learn, play or connect. Mirroring connection to community and place, there is strong vertical and horizontal visual connectedness in this design – little of the public space is closed off.

Symbolism is represented throughout this design – the stairs represent discovery and adventure, the sea views and a series of bas-reliefs inspired by sea-myth and folk tale represent history and storytelling.

### CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT



Final Concept: An allegory representing wonder, myth and adventure

### The concept embraces folk-tale and story-telling.

The Bachelor's building is overlooking the sea which would once have dominated this site with numerous sail boats and steamships arriving and departing its waters. Myths and folklore grew up around the sea and there are many tales about mermaids, shape-shifting seals, sea-horses and other sea-creatures in Ireland.

Folk stories and myths are important because they tell us our history, they describe where we live, what our values are and who we are. Folk stories help with community bonding, strengthening ties, and they bring people together. They help people process experiences and encourage cultural exchange and understanding – they entertain.

### The concept is an allegory representing wonder, myth and adventure:

Stars represent enchantment and wonder;  
The moon represents truth and enlightenment;  
Ships represent discovery and adventure;  
Sea-creatures and waves represent our history and story-telling tradition.

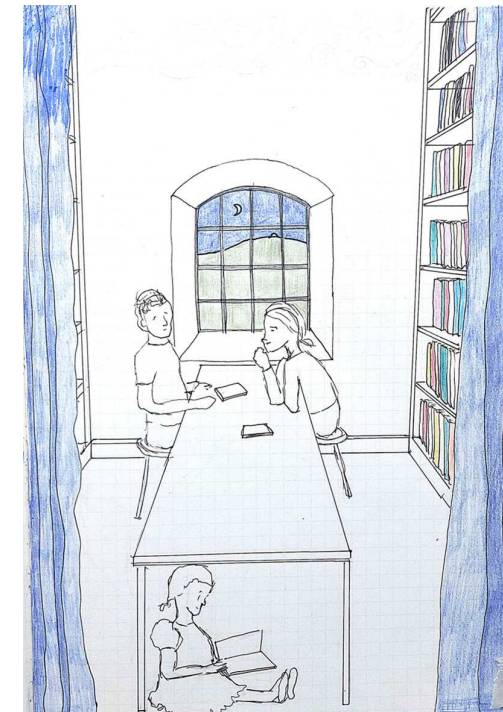
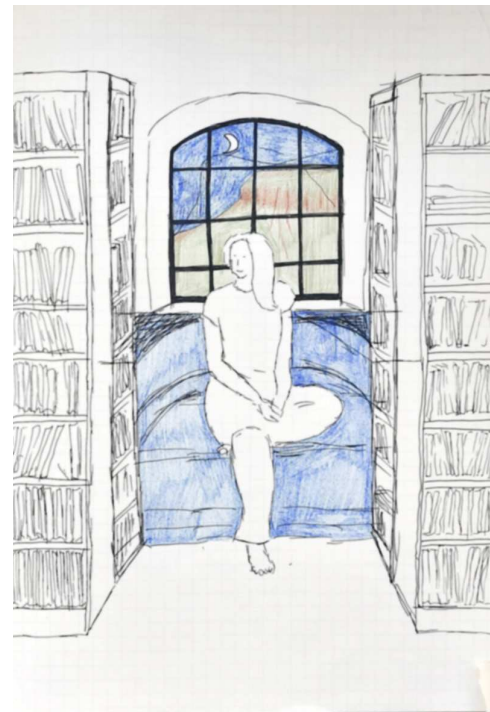


Concept image includes both clay models and origami inspired by the sea

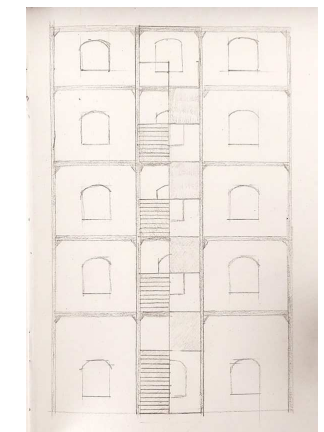
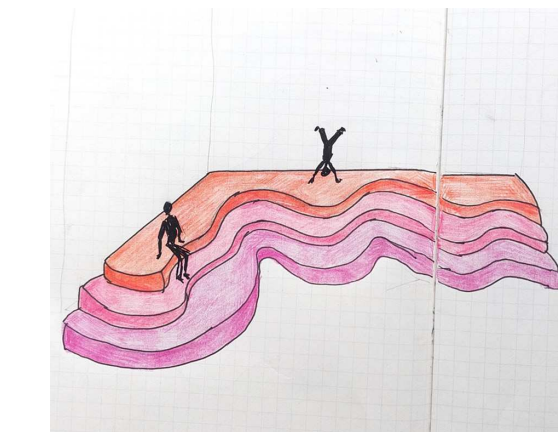
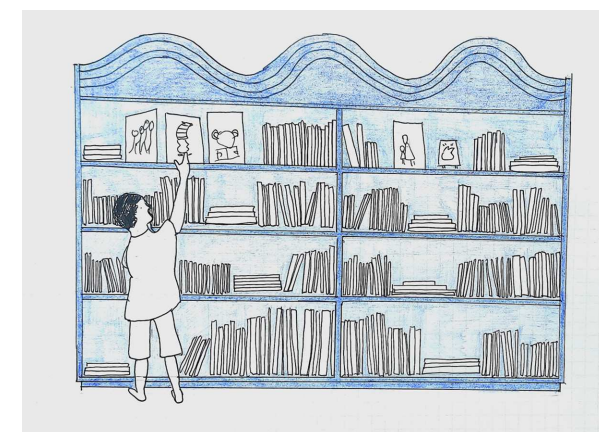
### Bas-Relief



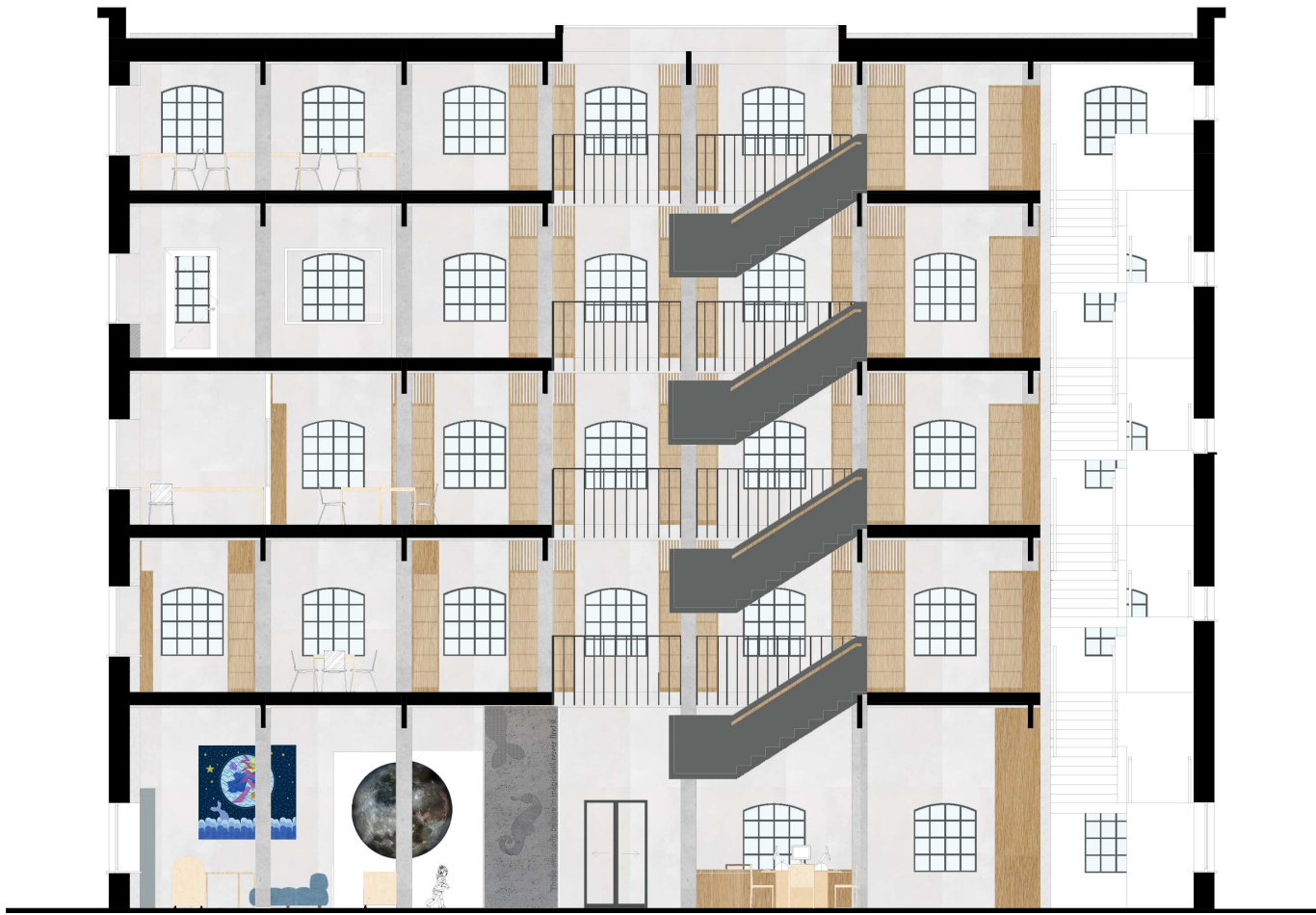
A series of bas-reliefs have been sculpted into the new limestone pins that delineate the children's area from the main reception space. The design is inspired by Irish myths such as the *Children of Lir* and from the Fenian Cycle.



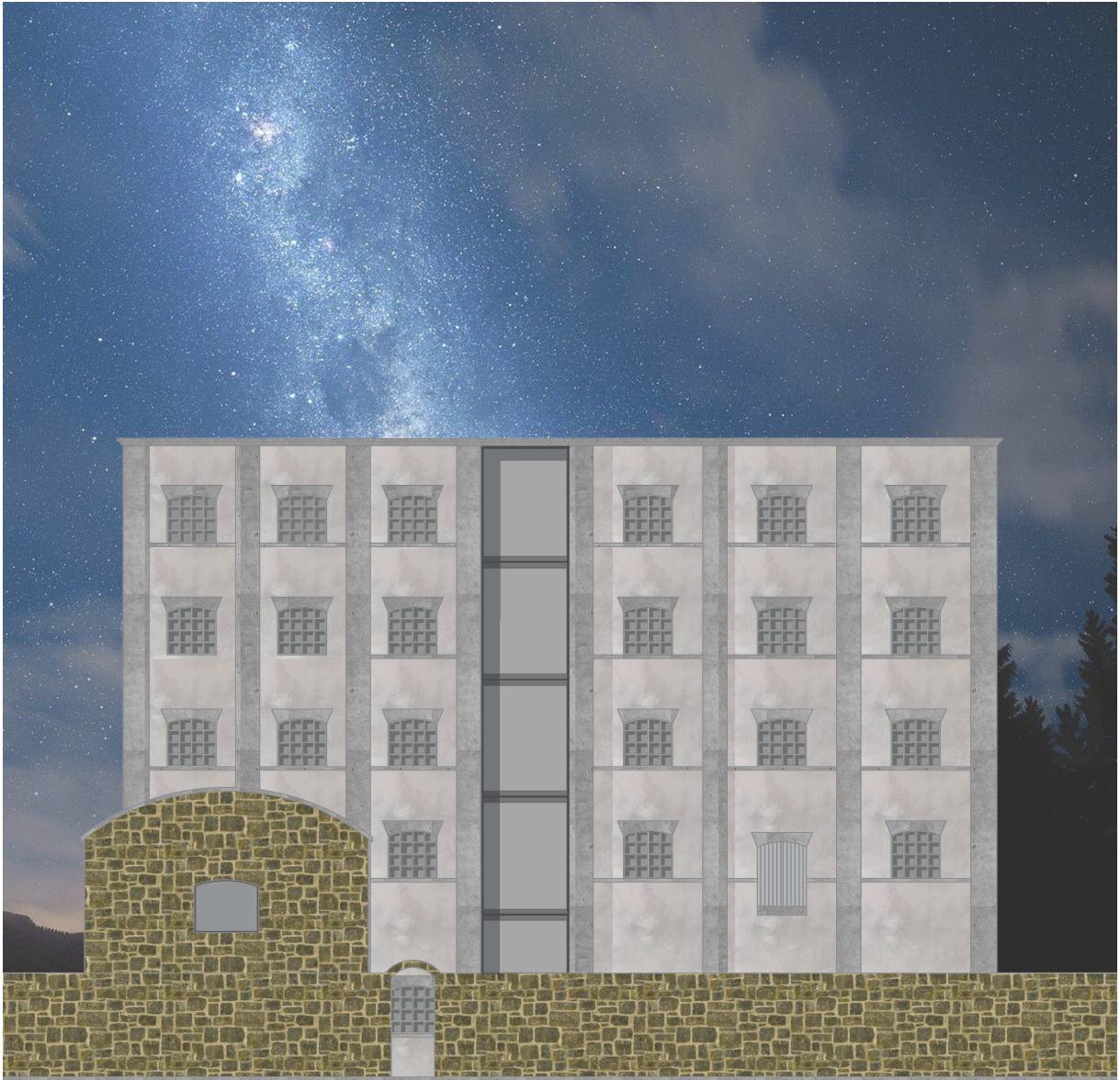
Early exploratory sketching





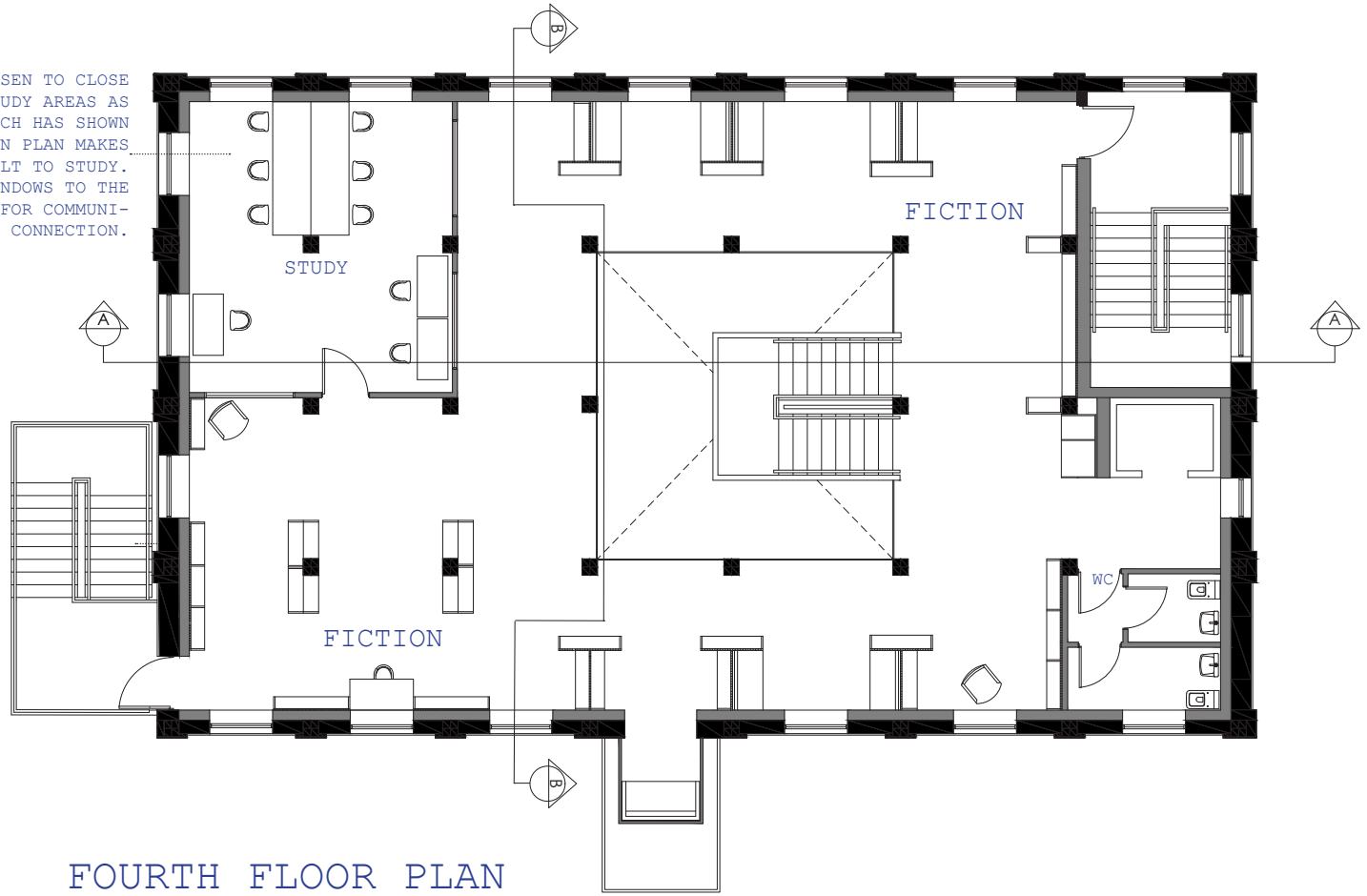


SECTION AA

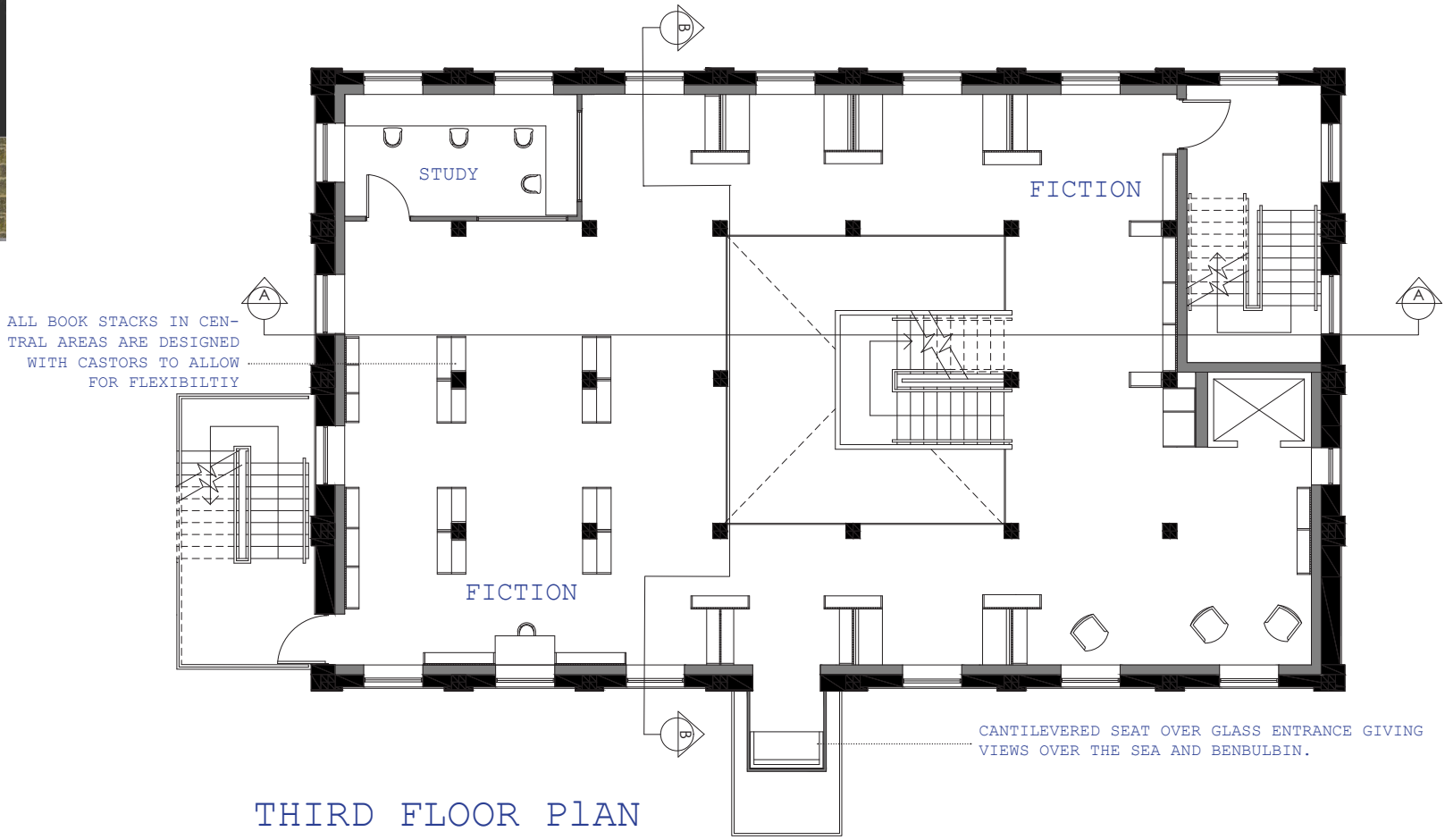


FACADE

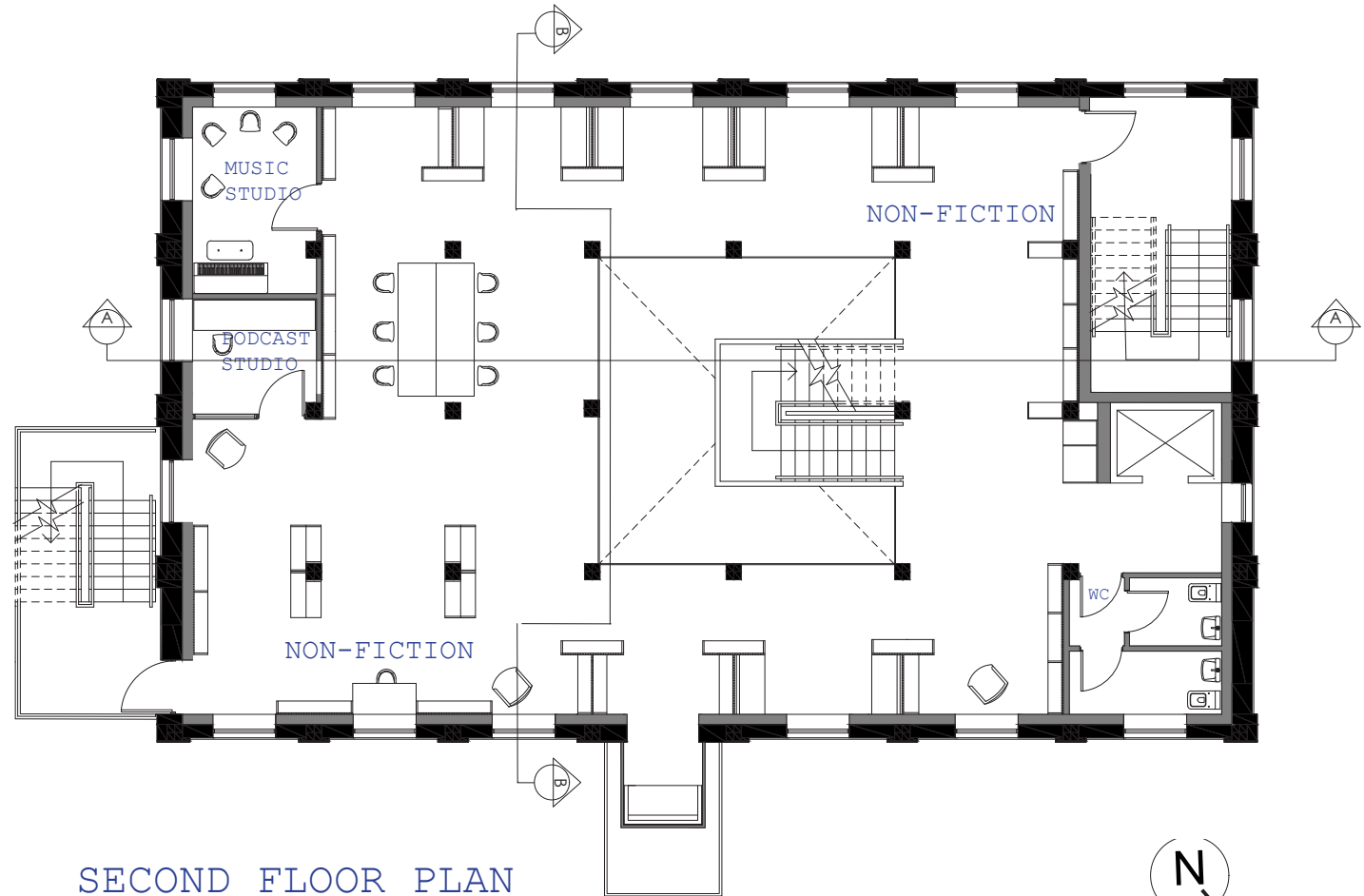
I HAVE CHOSEN TO CLOSE OFF THE STUDY AREAS AS MY RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT OPEN PLAN MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO STUDY. THERE ARE WINDOWS TO THE COMMON AREA FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION.



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



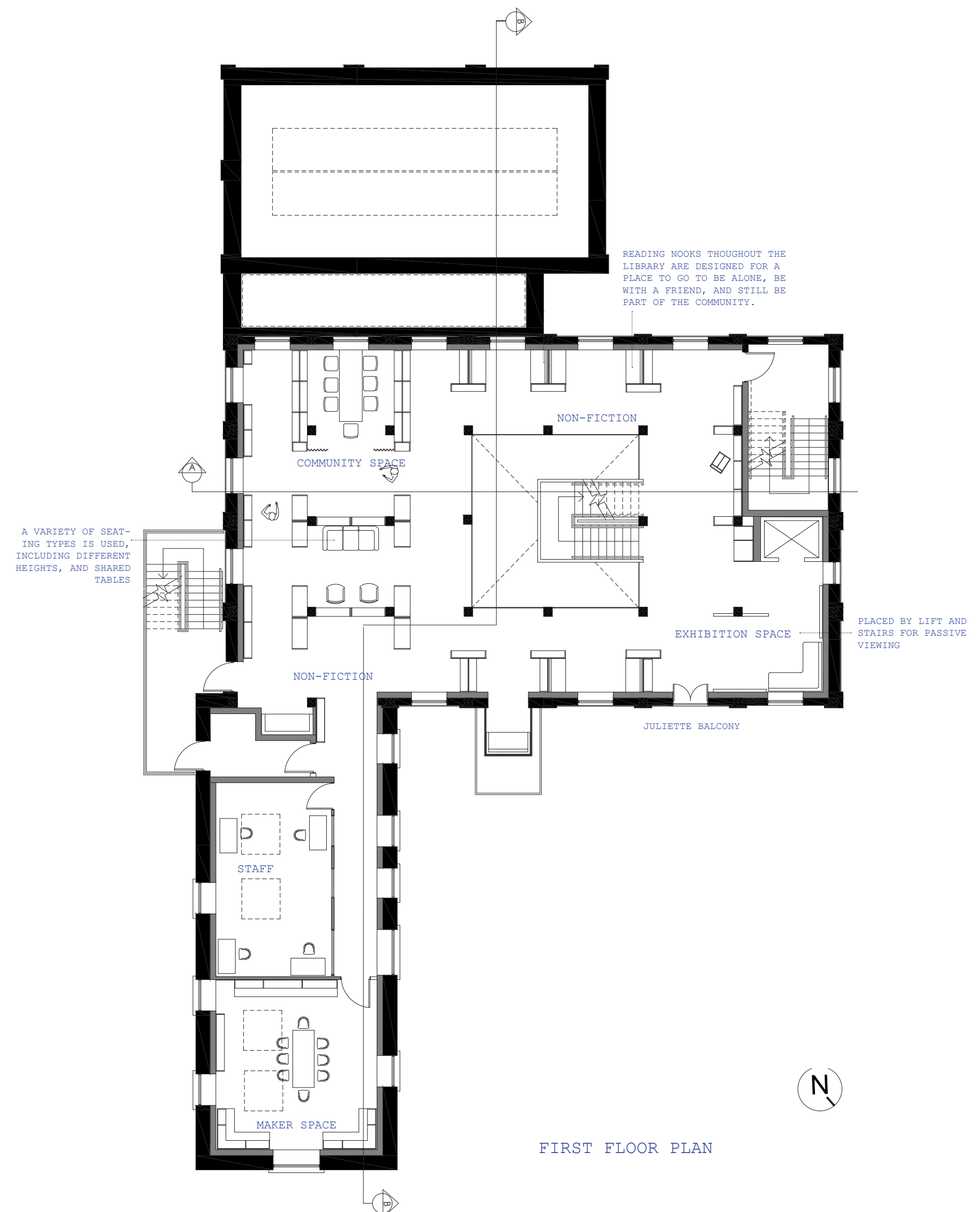
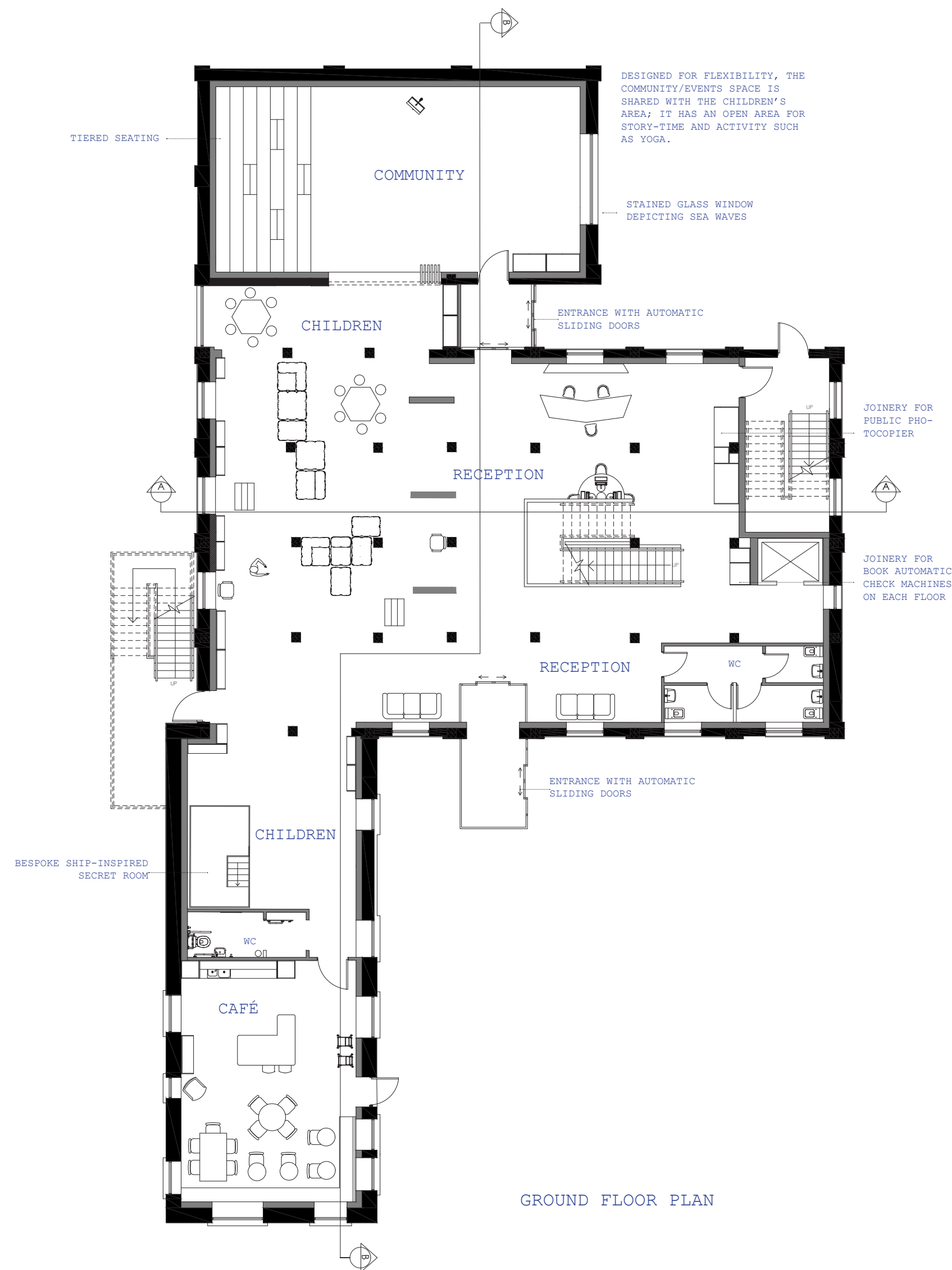
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



SECTION BB



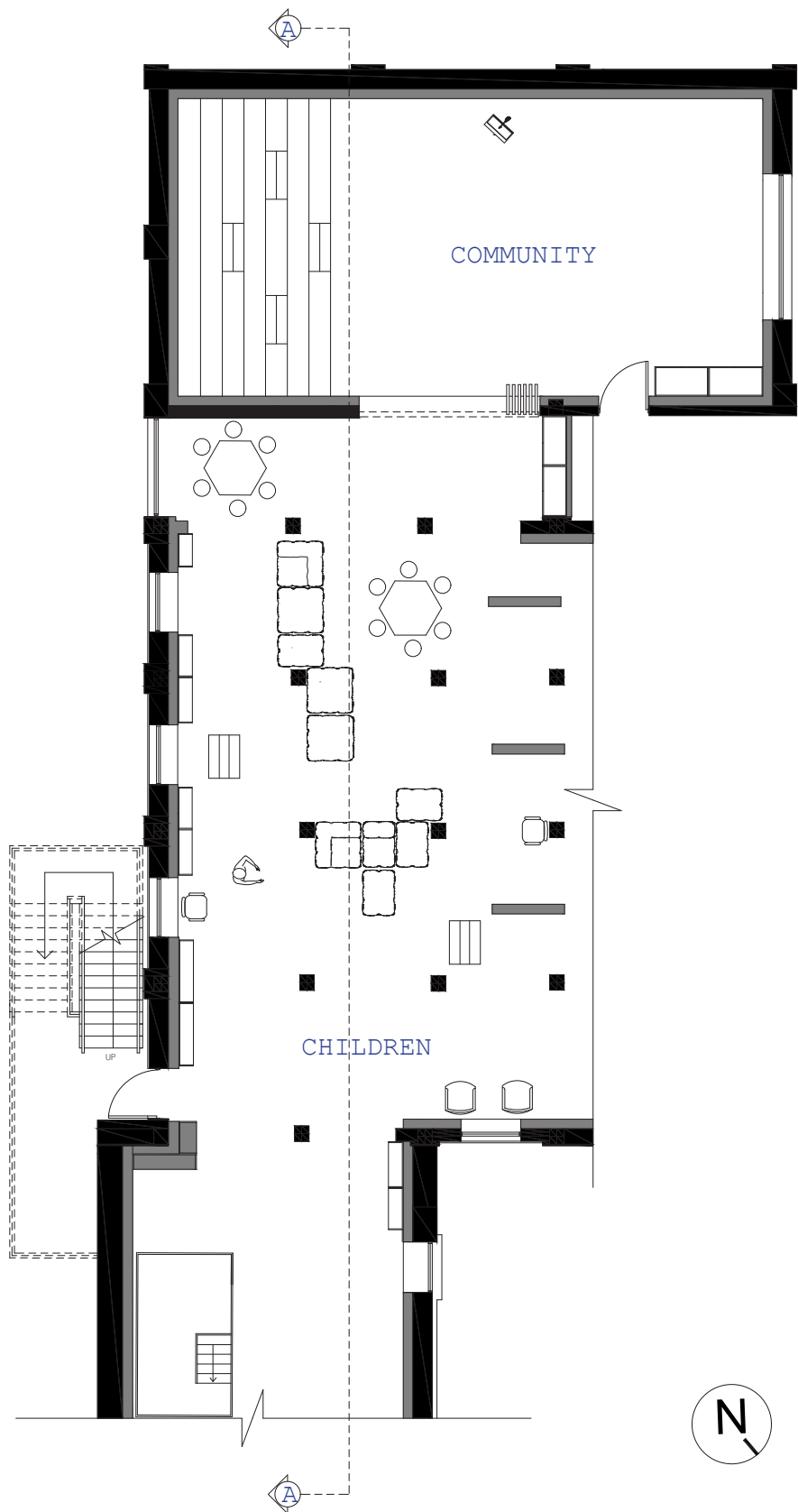






KEY SPACE: CHILDREN & COMMUNITY

This interconnecting space is flexible and designed to facilitate different activities. The community space can be fully closed off and used for classes and events, as well as a space for children's story-time or activity such as yoga. The children's library has furniture placed embracing the columns and architectural heritage of the building. New limestone pins have been added to delineate this area from reception, and some of their featured bas-relief is placed at eye level for smaller children. A ship inspired "secret room" for children to climb into is situated in an otherwise dark area of the space.



PLAN

FURNITURE & MATERIALS

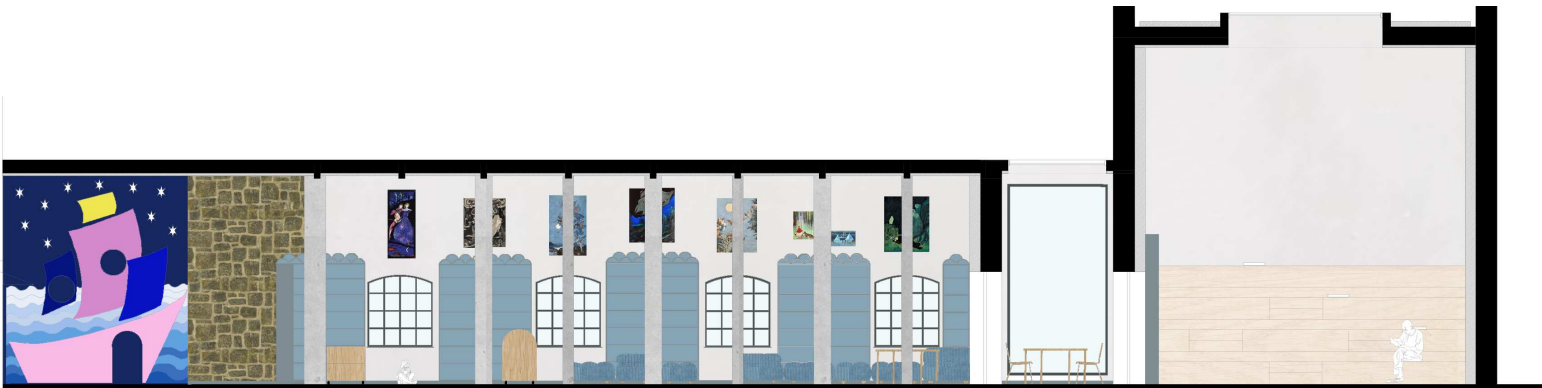
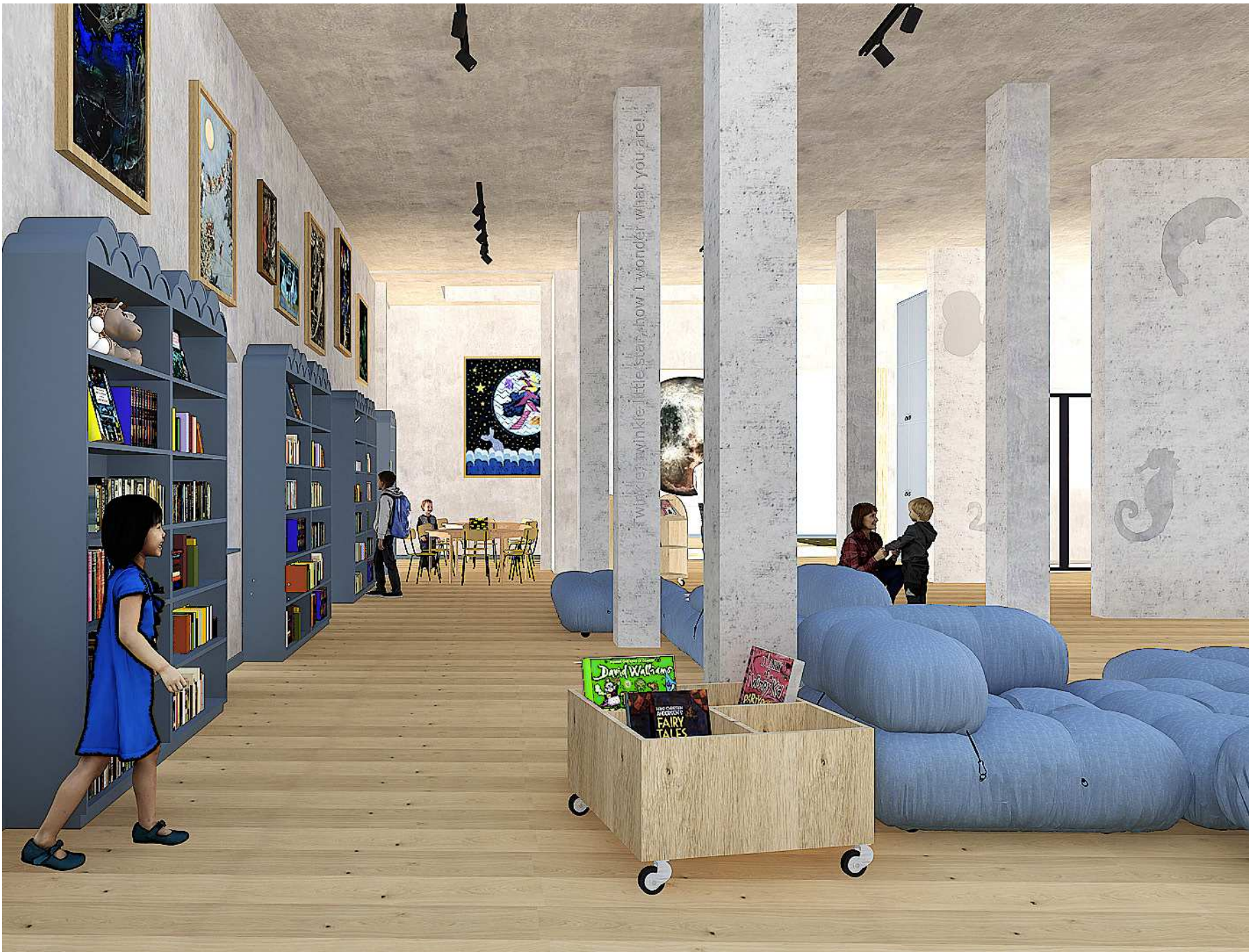
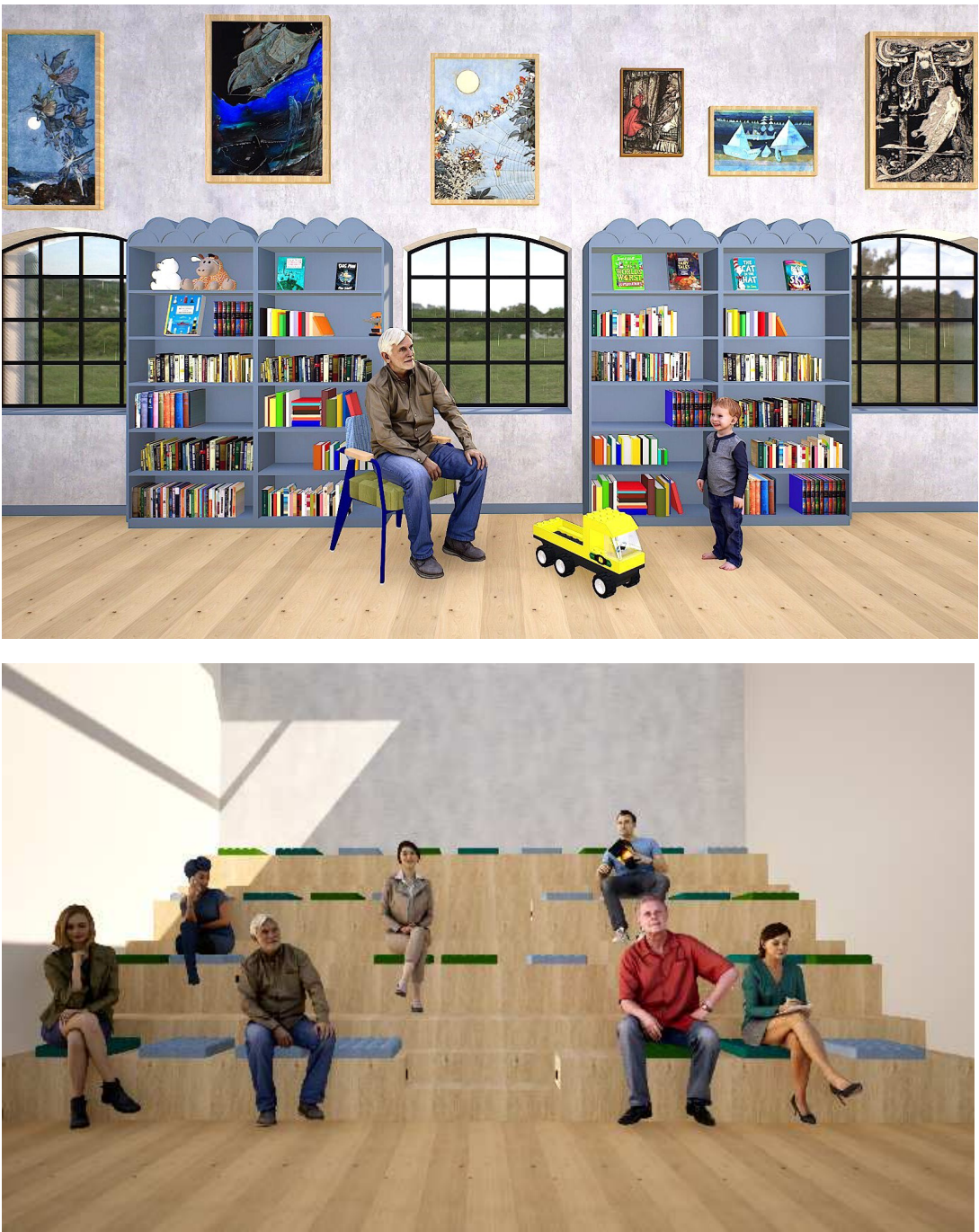
KEY

CHILDREN'S AREA

- 1. The Design Concept, Sarah Browser
- 2. Vitra Fauteuil Direction Chair
- 3. The Design Concept, Memphis Double-Sided Shelving
- 4. Lime Wash Wall Finish
- 5. Artwork Depicting Scenes of Folk-Tale & Myth
- 6. Artemide Track Lighting
- 7. B&B Italia, Camaleonda Modular Sofa
- 8. Oak Flooring, 200mm Plank
- 9. Ease, Children's Table
- 10. Ease, Children's Chair
- 11. The Design Concept, Sarah Browser

COMMUNITY AREA

- 1. Nordic Knots Rug
- 2. Oak Flooring, 200mm Plank
- 3. Matteo Mugnai Centipede Bench
- 4. Lime Wash Wall Finish
- 5. Moooi Moonon Carpet
- 6. Icons of Denmark, Skywood Chair



SECTION AA



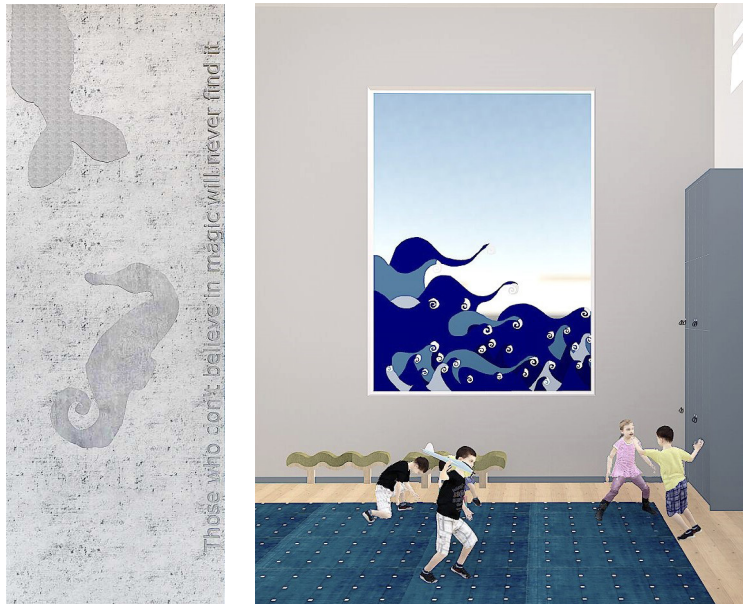
Secret room inspired by ship and sea



CHILDREN'S AREA



COMMUNITY AREA



Motifs from sea-myths inspired bas-reliefs and stained glass



# KEY SPACE :CAFÉ

This key space has particularly good views over the water and the mountains. The design is minimal allowing the gaze to connect with the outside without interruption. Natural materials are used including a variety of wood; the feel is fresh and light.



# KEY SPACE :READING NOOK

These reading nooks are designed for a visitor who may want to be alone, or meet a friend, but also feel part of the community. Spindles at the back of the book cases allow light to pass through, and also create a space that feels somewhat enclosed so the visitor feels cosseted. They have mountain views to gaze at and daydream, or be reminded of our past. As one travels up through the library, the nooks act as a visual connection to the views and help emphasise the verticality of the space.

