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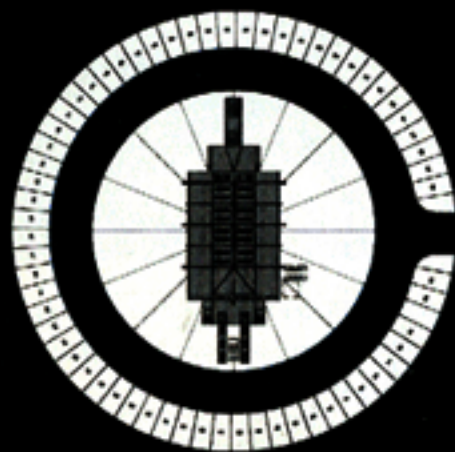
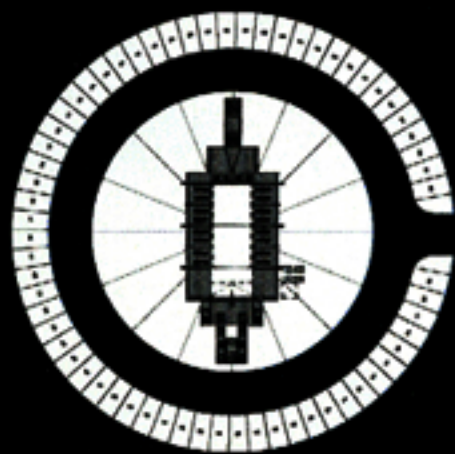
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Thom Mayne's Perceptual Shift

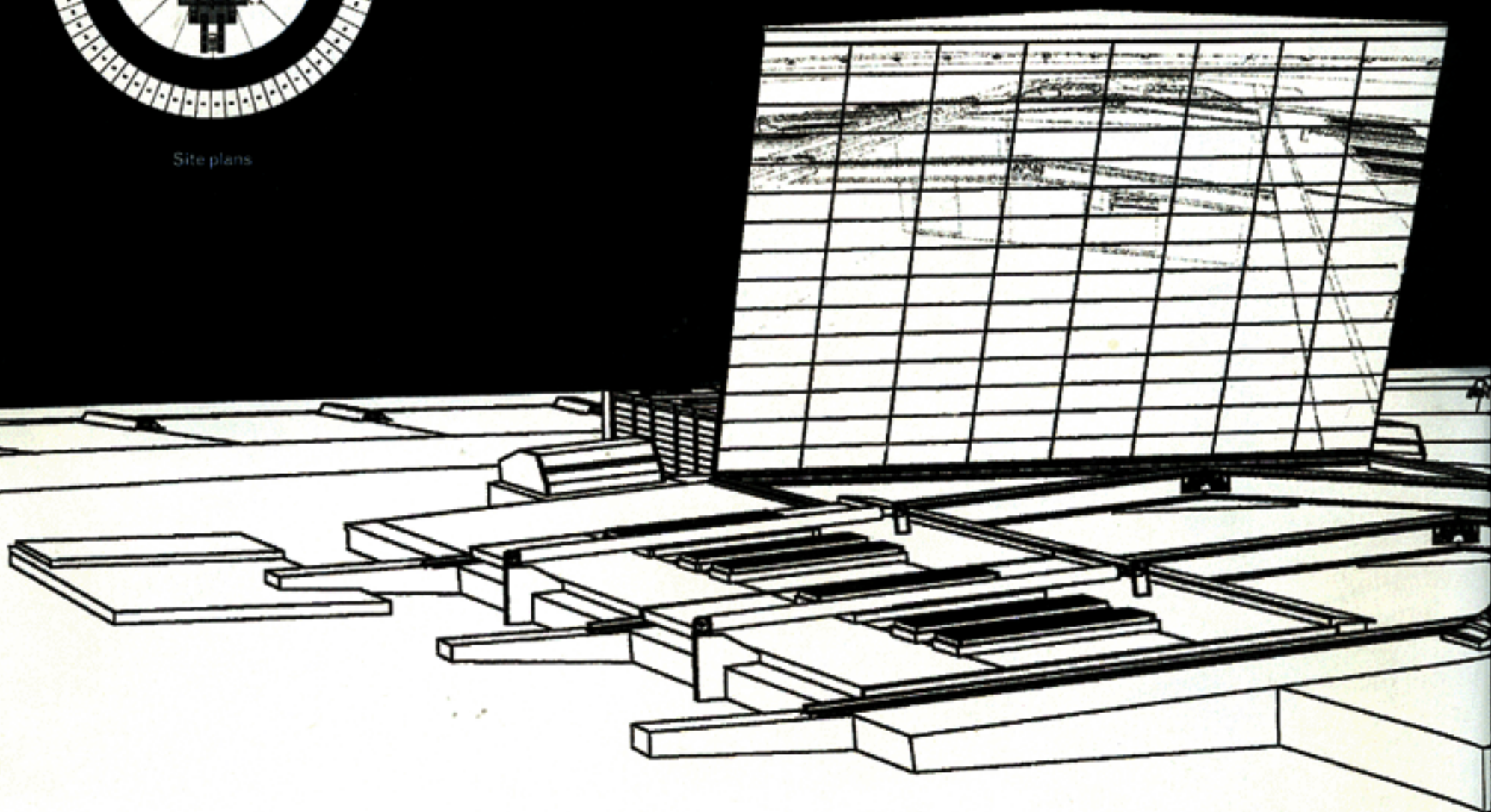
and introducing:

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YOUNG ARCHITECT EVOKES LEBANON'S BELLIGERENT PAST IN AN UNDERGROUND BEIRUT NIGHTSPOT. BY FARÈS EL-DADAH



Site plans

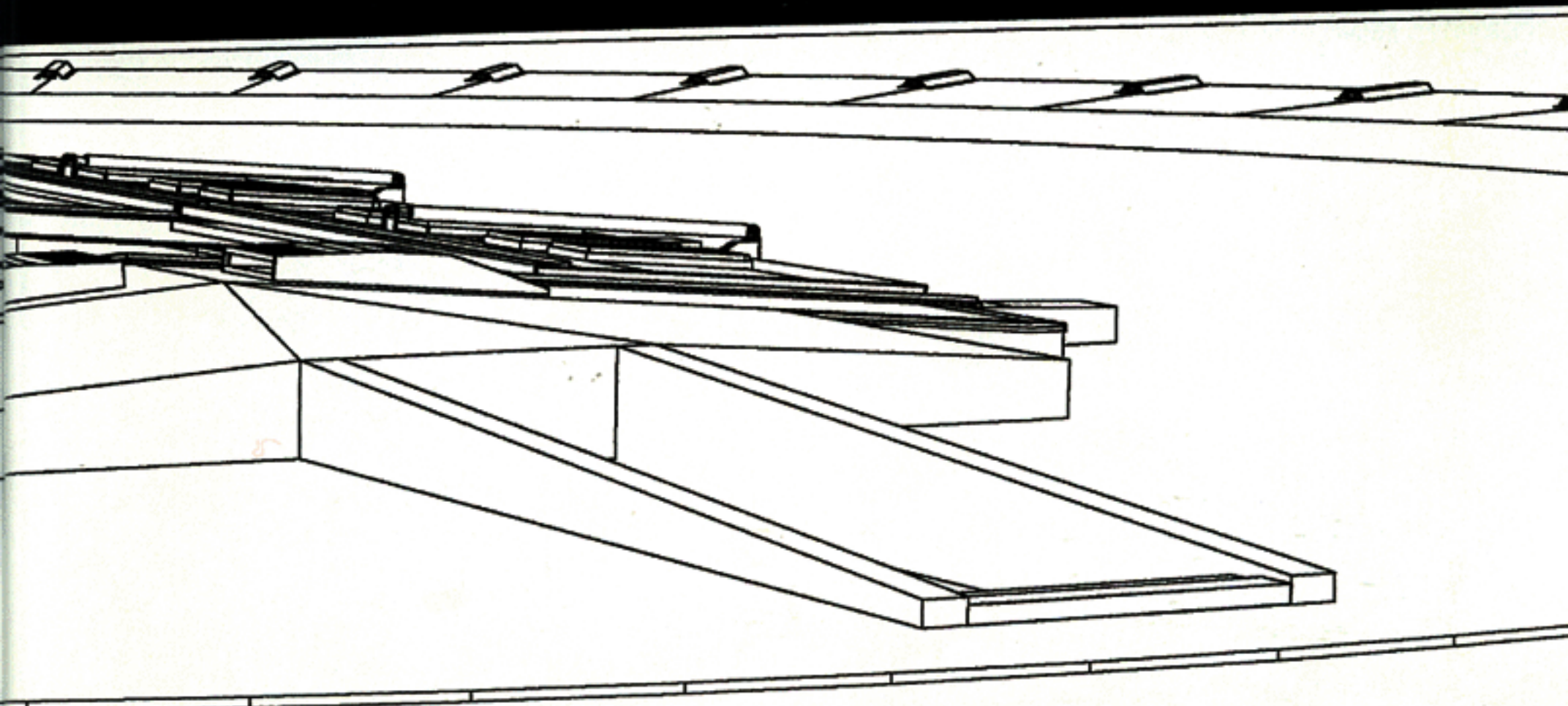


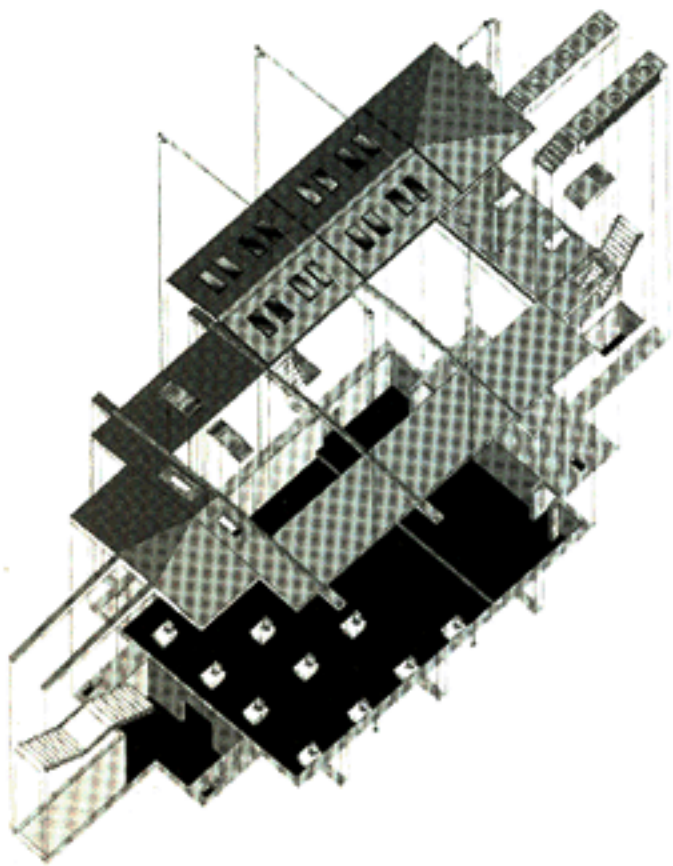
AWAY METAL

B 018 began as the number of an apartment famous for its parties. It has since developed into the trendiest bar in Beirut—with nonetheless a morbid twist. In its new location, one now literally dances on the site of the city harbor's former quarantine station, which in 1939 was transformed into a refugee camp for Armenians fleeing Turkish persecution. It later became home to exiled Palestinians who, in the mid-1970s, were forcibly evicted by Lebanese militias. The site's belligerent history aside, the form of the bar itself is riddled with military associations that operate on all possible levels.

On a field of concrete, cars are parked in a carousel formation, headlights pointing toward a low-lying metal contraption with exposed pistons. A stair at the south end of the structure leads to two successive underground "airlock" spaces manned by scowling (yet fashionably dressed) bouncers. A gunner's slit provides an eye-level glimpse of what lies beyond: a 60-by-40-foot room lined with scarlet-colored velvet drapes that could well be the set of an early James Bond movie (a 1950s martini lounge also comes to mind). Strewn across the floor are a series of fixed-in-place sofas with collapsible backs that, when closed, serve as elevated dancing surfaces. Drinks sit nearby on monolithic marble shrines appointed with pictures of dead

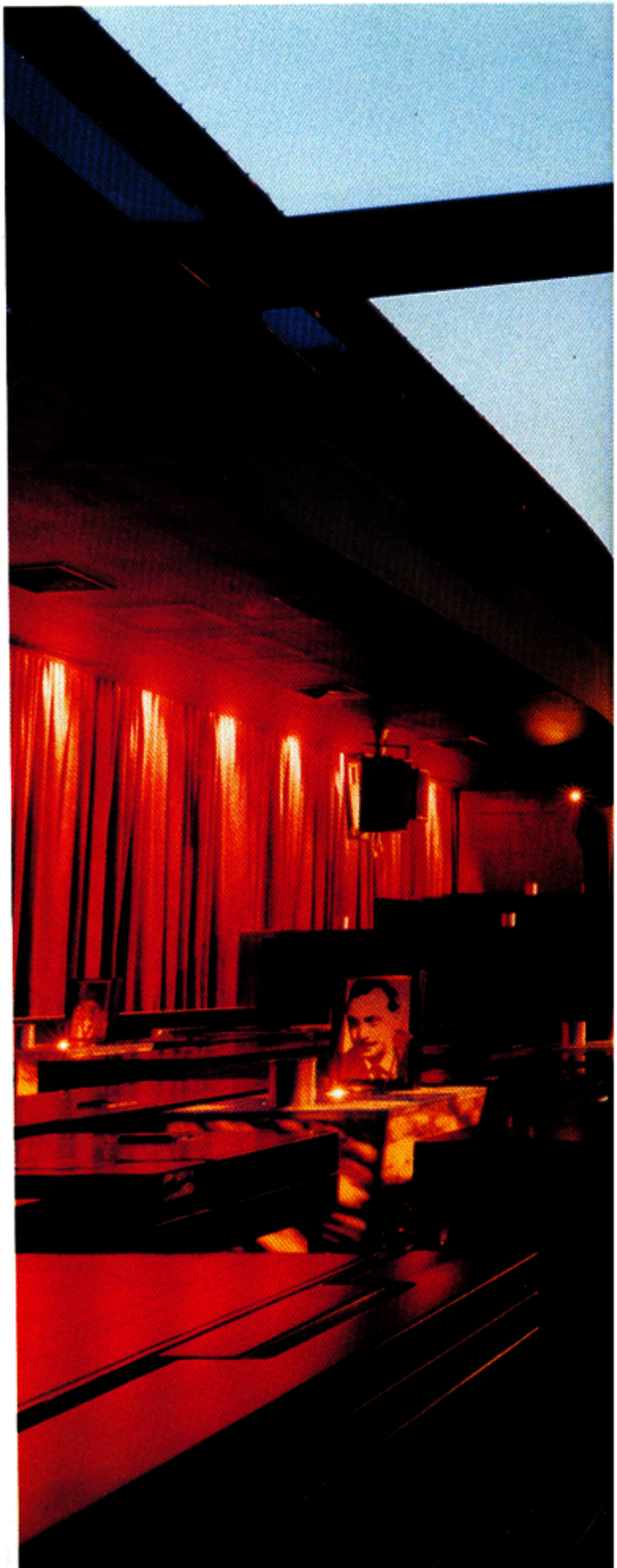
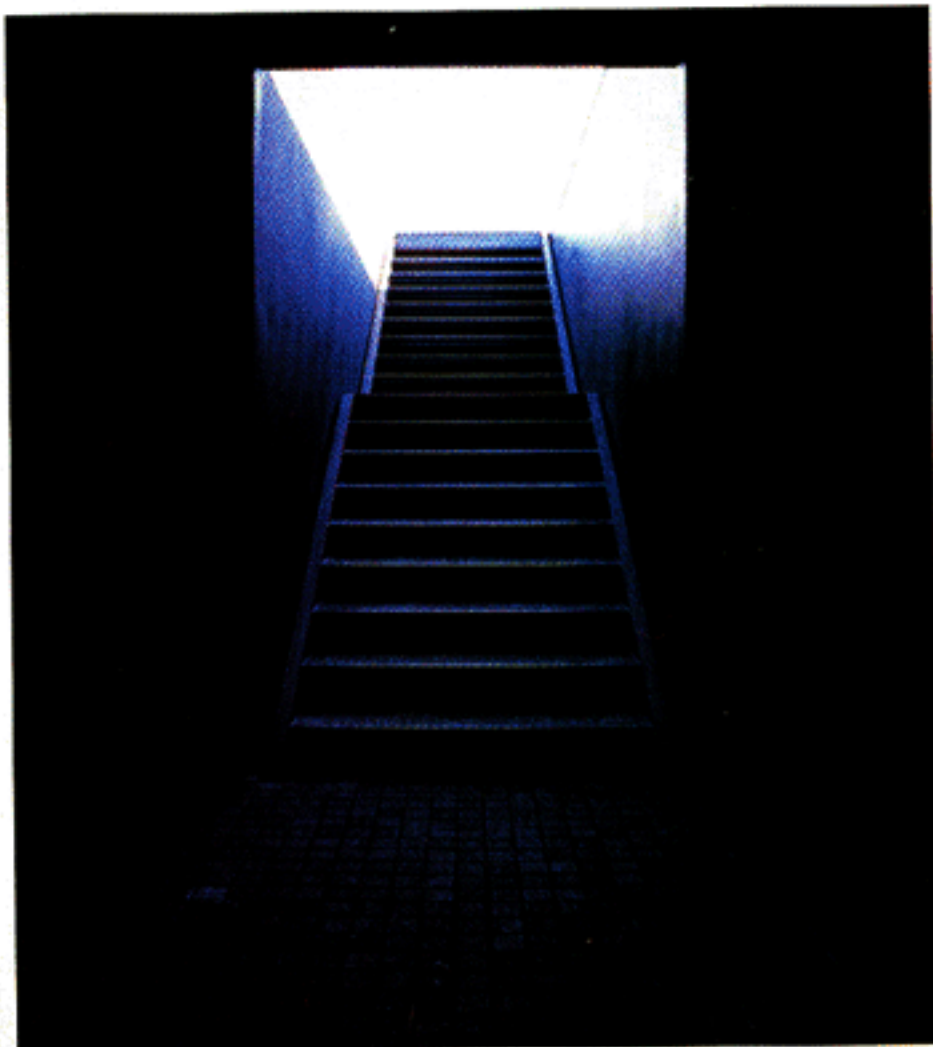
The bar's steel roof structure recalls a bunker or missile silo. As shown in the site plans (facing page), it lifts open on its north end, and slides open to the south.





Exploded axonometric

An ominous staircase (below) at the south end of the structure leads down to the bar proper—a 40-by-60-foot underground room. The roof slides open on pistons for most of the length of the room (right). At the north end, the roof opens like a hatch; a mirror on its underside offers patrons a blurred vision of the world above.









Red velvet curtains (facing page) line the walls; fixed-in-place sofas with collapsible backs double as platforms for dancing when closed. Skylights illuminate the bar when the ceiling is closed (above right). Photographs of dead pop stars (right) sit on marble tables at the center of each seating arrangement. At night, the tables glow from within (below right), and light bounces off the red curtains.



(jazz great Louis Armstrong and Egyptian chanteuse Umm Kulthum, among others). Along the bar at the far end of the room, high-back stools are equipped with projector lights aimed at the room behind (the scope of the lights is controlled by swiveling the seats). The roof retracts in three parts, two of which slide out. A hatchlike third over the bar is covered on the inside with mirrors, which when open works much like a periscope that reveals a blurry composition of the world above to those dancing beneath (and vice versa).

War is something to which B 018, designed by Lebanese architect Bernard Khoury, never ceases to allude. While it may look like a bunker or an underground silo, it also belongs to a particular “esthetic” of war best represented by protective measures produced during Beirut’s 17 years of civil warfare (1975–1992). Black drapes, eight stories high, were drawn across gaps between buildings to veil one warring faction from another and thereby shield pedestrians from a sniper’s predatory gaze. Building entrances were blocked by neatly arranged stacks of concrete blocks that left a space just wide enough for one to slither in obliquely, while keeping shrapnel at bay. Such grim installations were dismantled at war’s end and are understandably not remembered as having any esthetic value, just a functionally vital one.


At B 018, one has no choice but to dance on tables: Decadence is required. To insist, however, on military connotations—not to mention dancing on the allegorical graves of musicians or “undesirables” who previously occupied the spot—is at best decadent in the literary sense of the term. Much like late-19th-century French novelists who reacted against romanticist trends, B 018 also refuses to participate in the naive amnesia that governs all other Lebanese postwar reconstruction efforts. These recent building campaigns myopically reproduce the region’s colonial urbanism without acknowledging what the young republic has since gone through, both architecturally and socially. ■



Lebanese architect Farès el-Dahdah is an assistant professor and Chairman of Graduate Affairs at the Rice University School of Architecture in Houston.



Exposed pistons (above) indicate the roof's retractability; cars park around it in radial formation. The bar appears poised for attack (right) at the edge of dense downtown Beirut, on a site that once served as the city harbor's quarantine station.

Debut	Bernard Khoury
	Beirut, Lebanon
<p>Architect Bernard Khoury was born in Beirut in 1968, and studied architecture in the United States—first at the Rhode Island School of Design and later at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Khoury returned to Beirut to establish an architecture and furniture-design practice in 1994. He taught an experimental studio at the American University from 1995 to 1996.</p>	

B 018, BEIRUT, LEBANON

CLIENT: B A 4 **ARCHITECT:** Bernard Khoury Architects, Beirut, Lebanon—Bernard Khoury (project architect); Richard Saad (project assistant) **ENGINEERS:** R.A.A. (structural); Nagib Nabhan (mechanical); Antoine Yazigi (electrical); Nadim Honein (civil); Ohanian (HVAC) **CONSULTANTS:** Interdesign (furniture manufacturer); Mitsulift (hydraulic systems) **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Ayoub Contracting **COST:** \$460,000 **PHOTOGRAPHER:** Anne Françoise Pellisier, except as noted





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