

Alexander von Branca Residenztheater, 1986 Umbau

Semesterarbeit von Chiara Saccomanno
im Rahmen des Seminars 'Architektur sammeln, dokumentieren
und präsentieren - Alexander von Branca im Archiv des
Architekturmuseums' im Sommersemester 2019
Signature: bra-285, 627 drawings in the Archive of the
Architekturmuseum der TUM

The Early theatre

The Residenztheater known as 'the Resi' between the residents of Munich is located in Max-Joseph-Platz. It has been through several renovations and reconstructions along the years. For the first time it was built in 1751, at the behest of Kurfürst Maximilian III. Joseph after the Salvatortheater was closed and a fire struck the St.-Georg-Theatersaal. The theatre was built outside the residence by François de Cuvilliers in Rococo style. Over the years, the theatre, which could only accommodate 560 people, became too small for the needs. Thus in 1800 the Nationaltheater was built as the headquarters of the Bavarian State Opera; however the Residenztheater continued to be used for small performances. After a short period, when King Max II Joseph used the Residenztheater as a decoration magazine the theatre was renovated.

During the Second World War it was destroyed, but the auditorium and the side rows for the public had previously been moved thanks to the architect Rudolf Esterer. They were used to create a new theatre inside the residence that is now known as the Cuvillies theatre.



fig 1 : Max-Joseph-Platz, Munich, Google Earth, July 20

The reconstruction

Between 1949 and 1951 the theatre known today as the Residenztheater was built on the foundations of its predecessor. Apart from the perimeter walls, the new building had nothing in common with the previous one. The architect Karl Hocheder and the stagehand Adolf Linnebach worked on the project building one

of the most versatile stages of the period. The new project had to meet the new needs: twice as many seats and all modern theatre systems. However, there was no lack of criticism: the project was considered too expensive and the architectural style chosen was not conform to the importance that the theater had for the city of Munich.

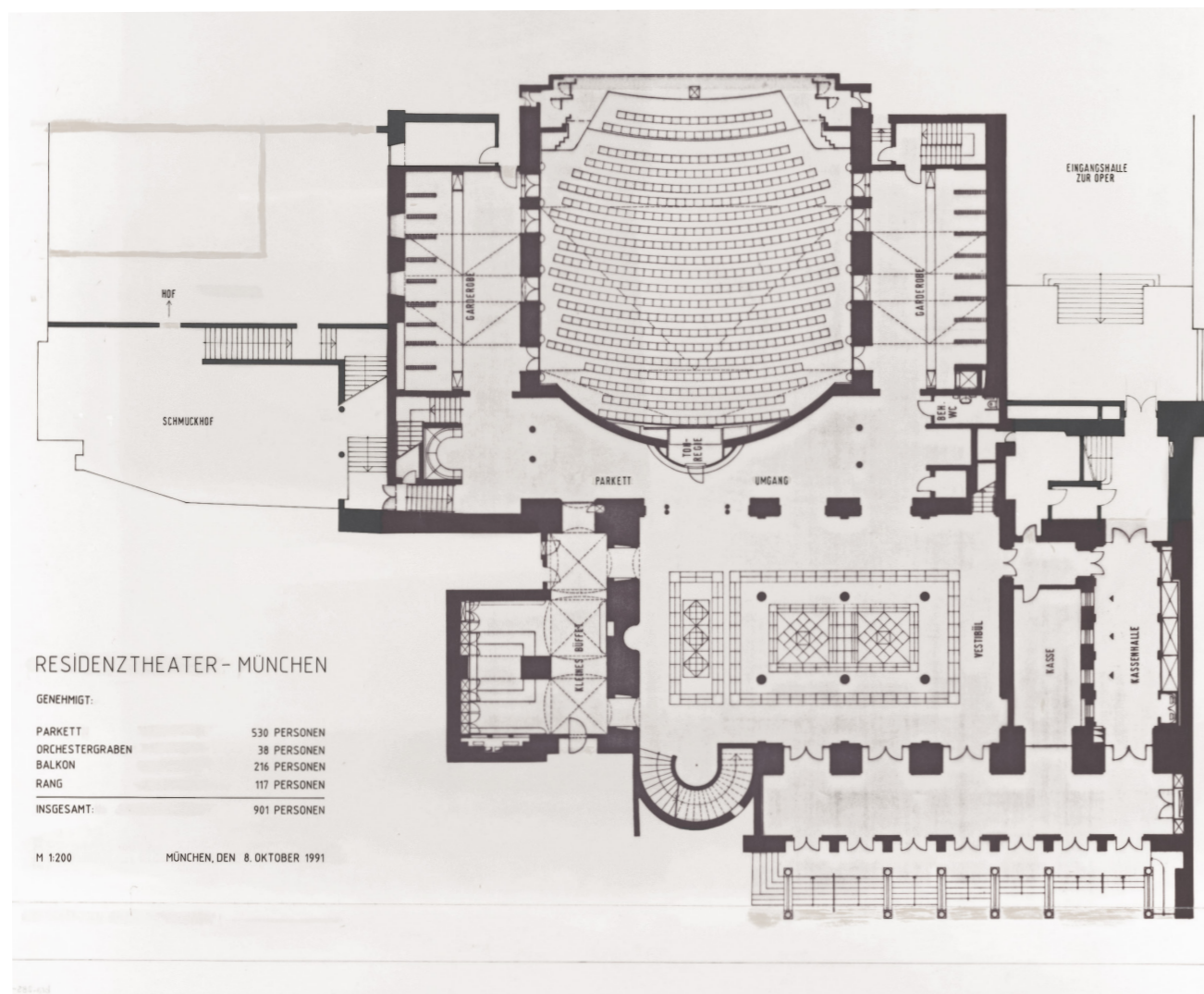


fig 2 : Groundfloor plan, Glossy paper, 1991

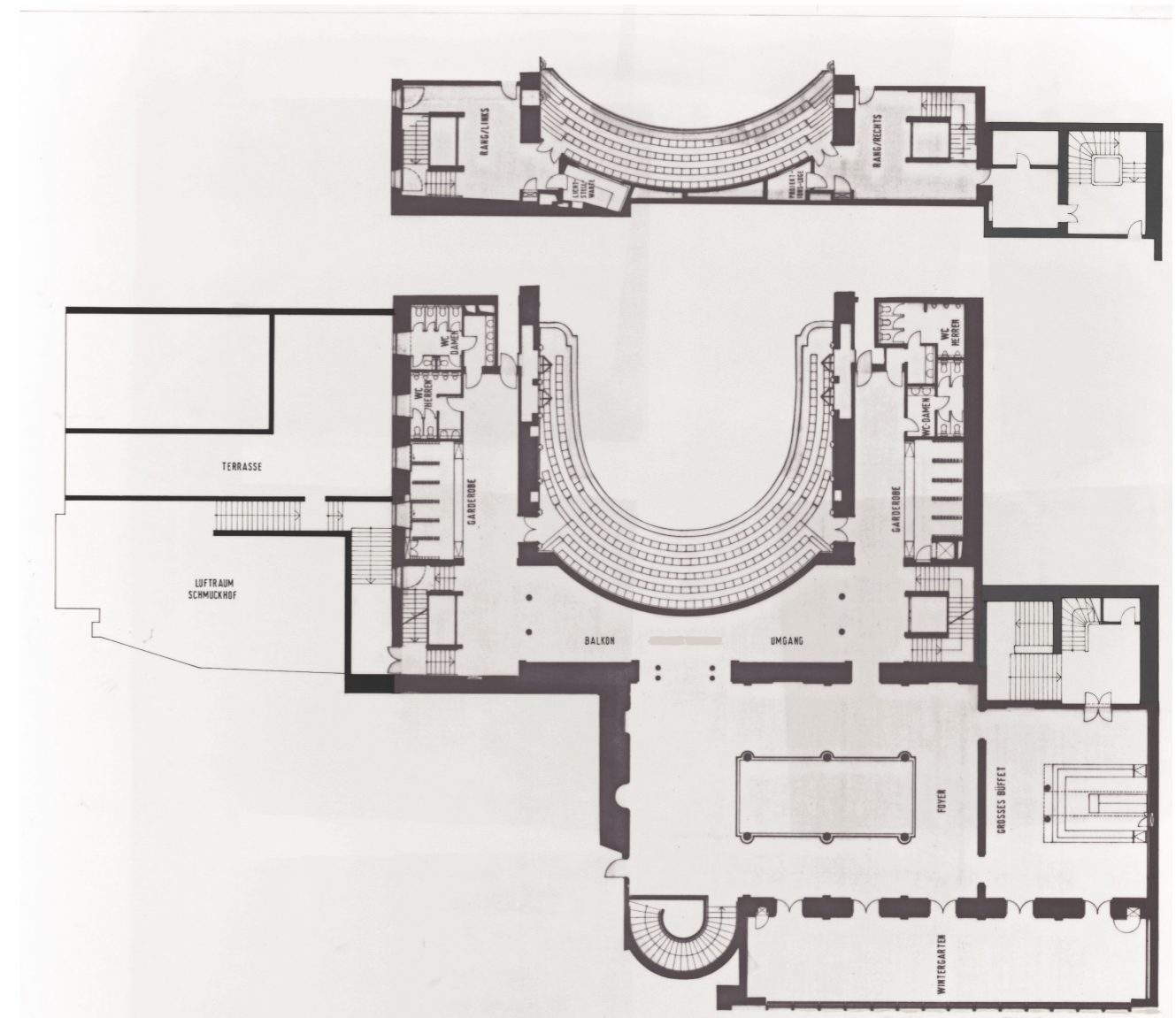


fig 3 : Second/Third floor plans, Glossy paper, 1991

The renovation by A. von Branca

In 1988, Alexander von Branca took care of the renovation of the Residenztheatre. The aim of the project was to work on the existing building in order to create spaces of higher intensity and atmosphere that a such important theatre required. Branca's intervention did not involve drastic changes in volume, the theatre building continued to develop on three levels: the ground floor with the entrance marked by seven glass doors, a foyer, a buffet, stalls and wardrobes; the first floor with a winter garden, a second buffet, a double height and entrances to the second level of the stalls; the second floor with an entrance for a few other seats.

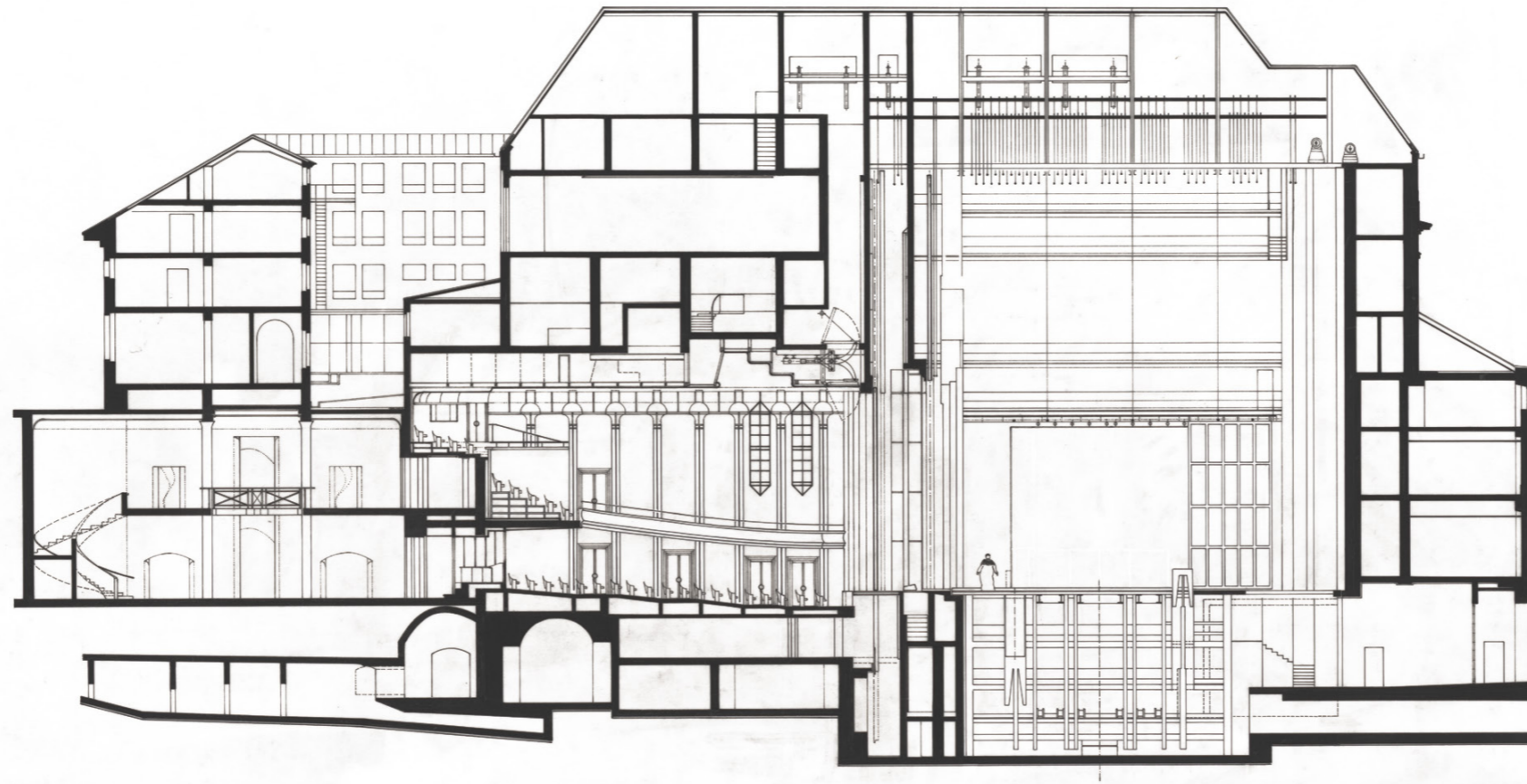


fig. 4 : Section, Glossy paper

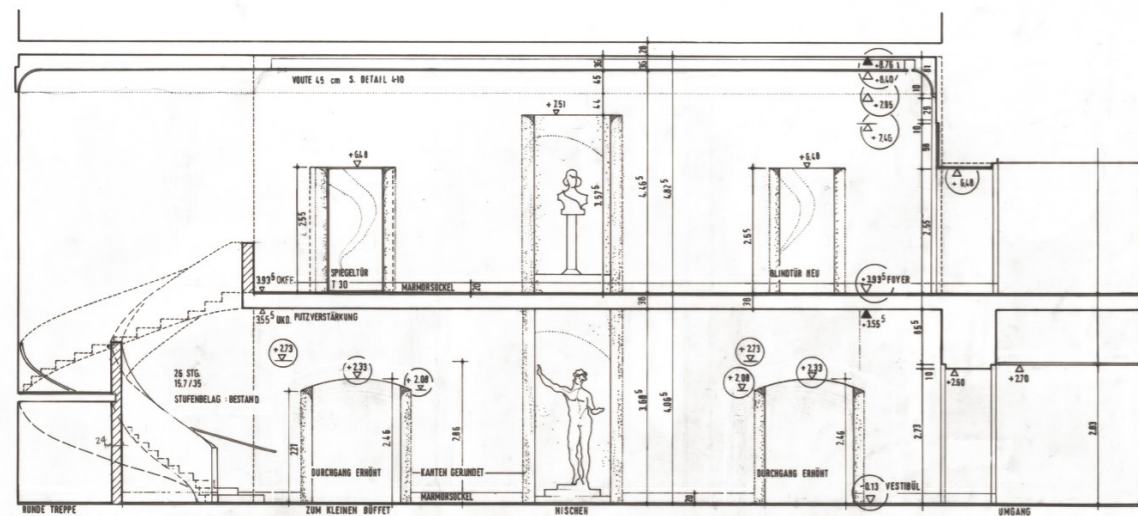


fig. 5 : Section D, Glossy paper, 1987



fig. 6 : Section, Glossy paper, 1989

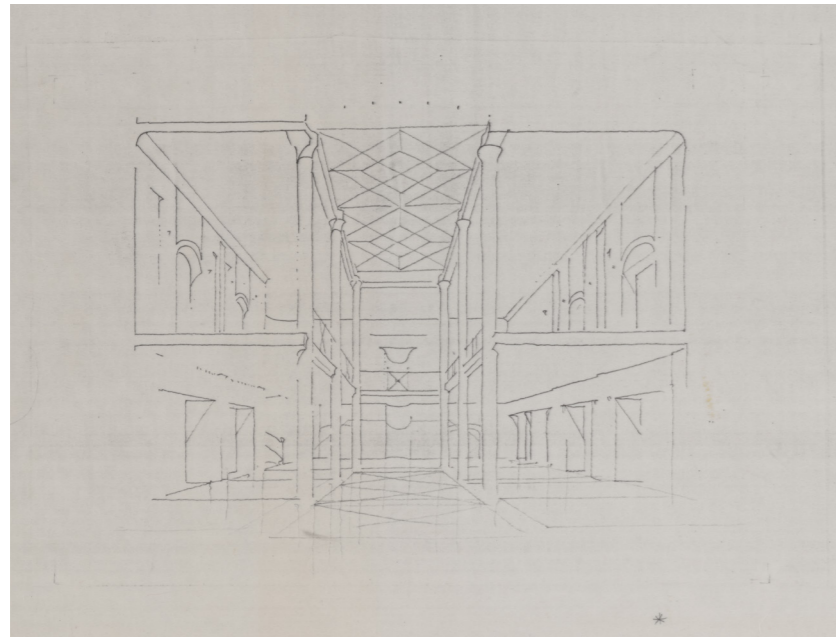


fig. 7 : Perspective sketch, 1981



fig. 8 : photo first floor, 2019



fig. 9 : photo buffet ground floor, 2019

Colours and materials

In order to design different atmospheres the architect worked with colours and materials, in this way he brought the play outside of the stage transforming the entire building into a show. For the entrance and the foyer of the ground floor, light colours, marble flooring and mirrors were chosen to enlarge the space. A wide beam of light coming from the central double height (fig. 8) highlights the space creating an atmosphere of peace and calmness. In contrast to that, the buffet (fig. 9) on the left is characterized by a blue

tending to black plaster and low ceilings which leads

to a darker atmosphere. The alternation of different sensations and feelings continues up through the beautiful staircase which connects the ground floor with the first floor. The white staircase (fig. 5) is located next to the buffet and, since there are no windows, it has not enough natural light. We move from a well-lit space (foyer) to a dark and narrow area (staircase) and then again to a space of greater breath: the foyer on the first floor with the double height and natural light from the wintergarten.

Another area where the architect used colours as an architectural tool was

the stage, the auditorium and the galleries. The architect's intention was not to create distractions for the spectators, in this way they would feel completely surrounded by the magic of the play. Among his sketches it is possible to see the different colour he tried: red and black or grey and black (fig. 10/11). The colors then chosen were red and black and from a recent photo (fig. 14) it is possible to see that such palette was also used for the furniture and for the half columns which

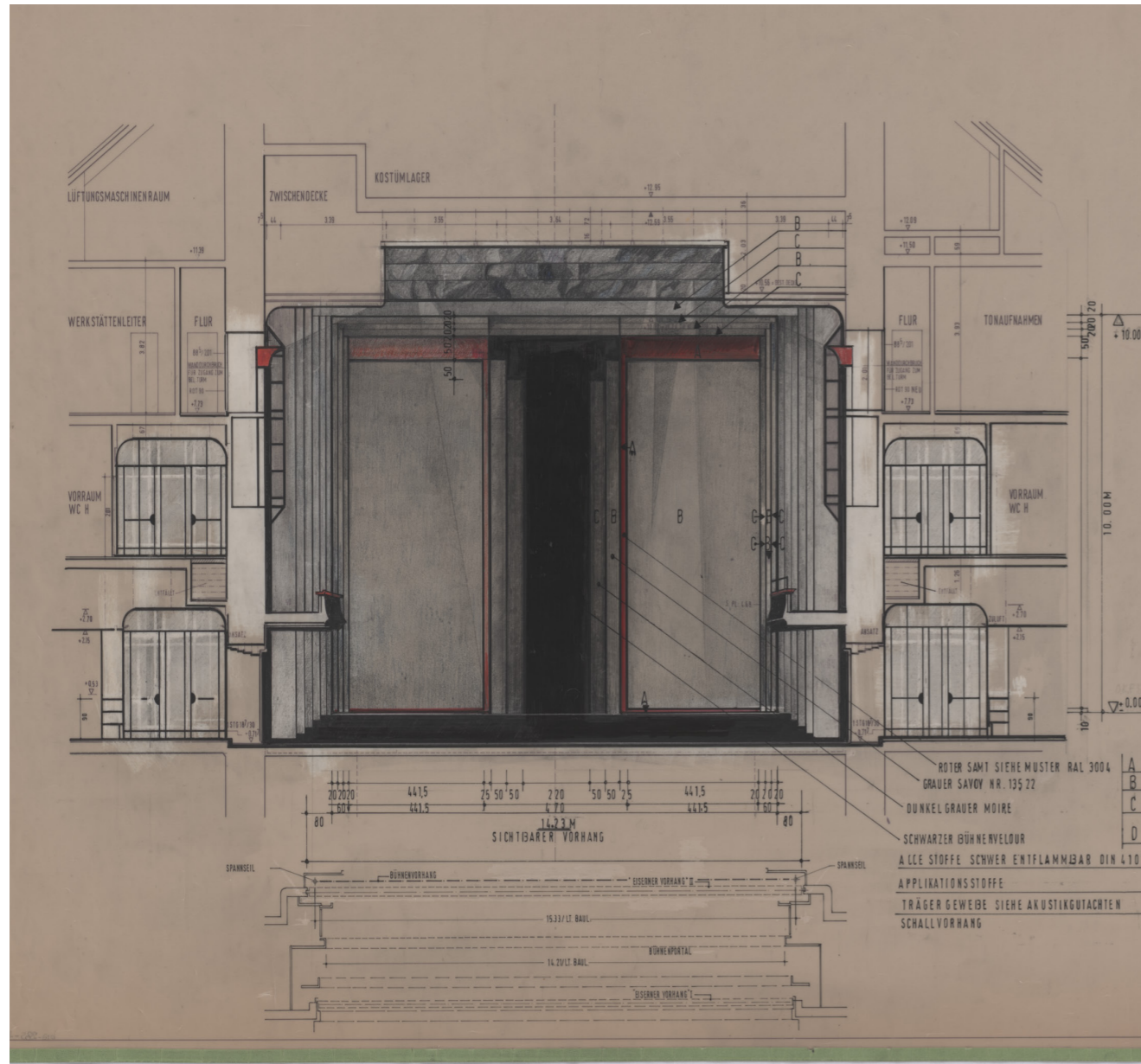


fig. 10 : Stage section, Glossy paper, 1987

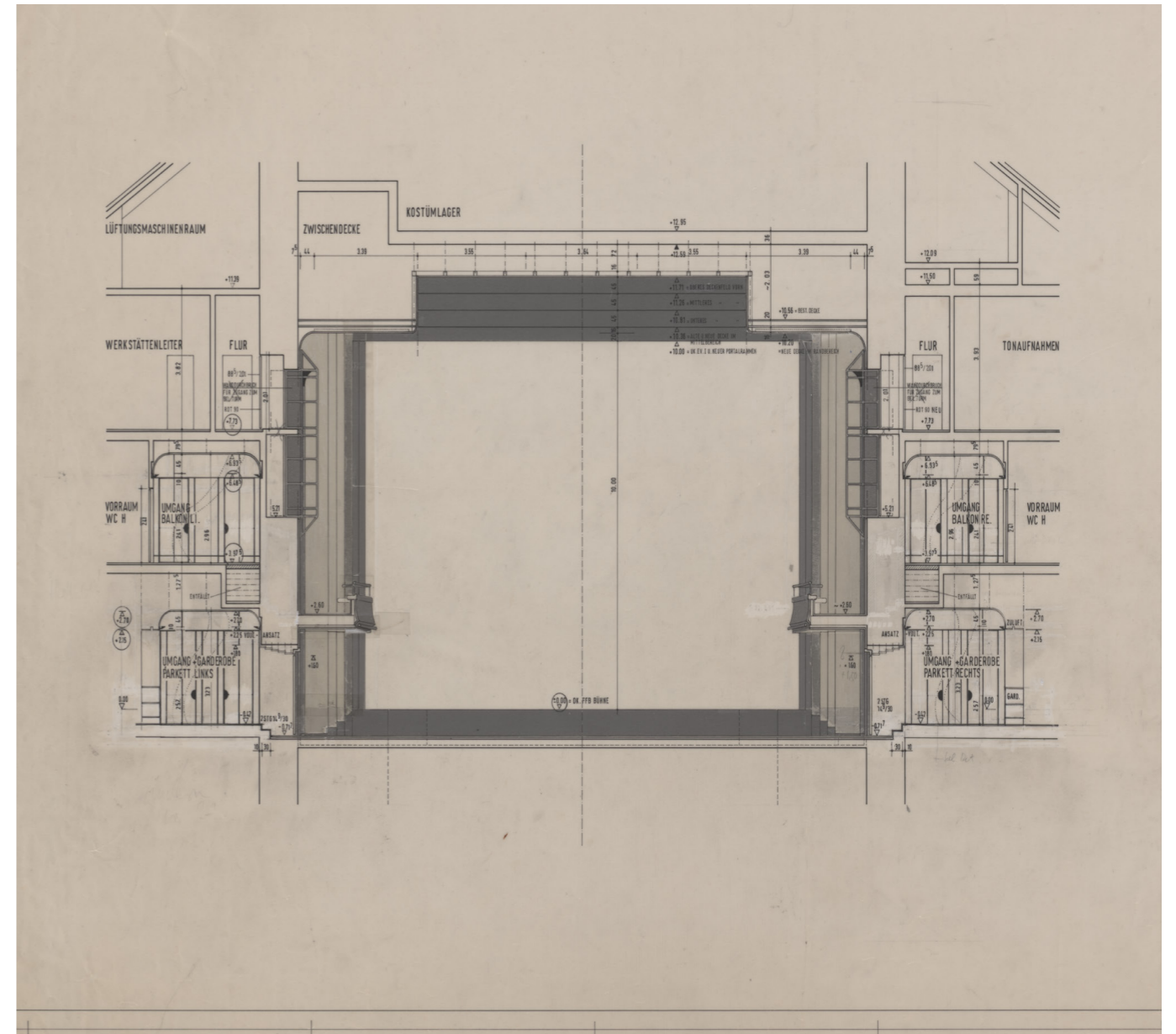


fig. 11 : Stage section, Glossy paper, 1987



fig. 12 : Section, Glossy paper

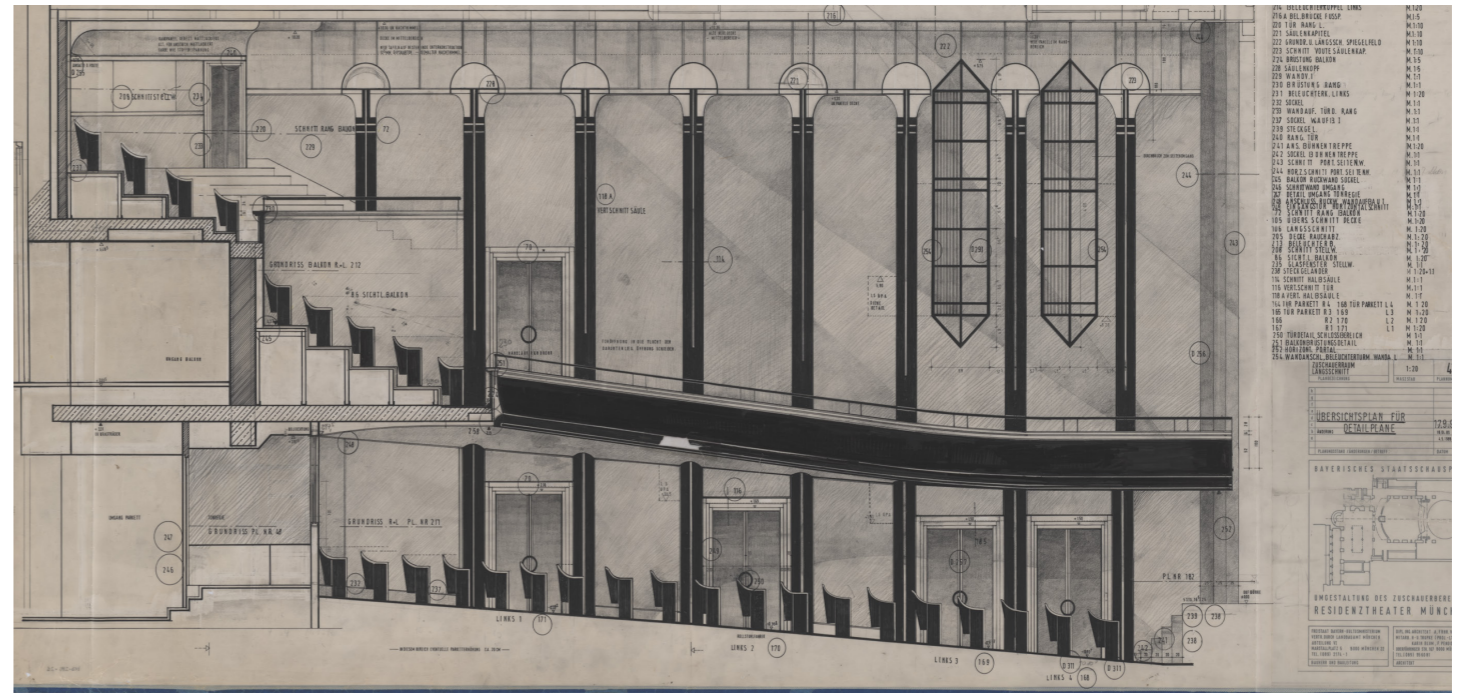


fig. 13 : Visitor's room, Glossy paper, 1990

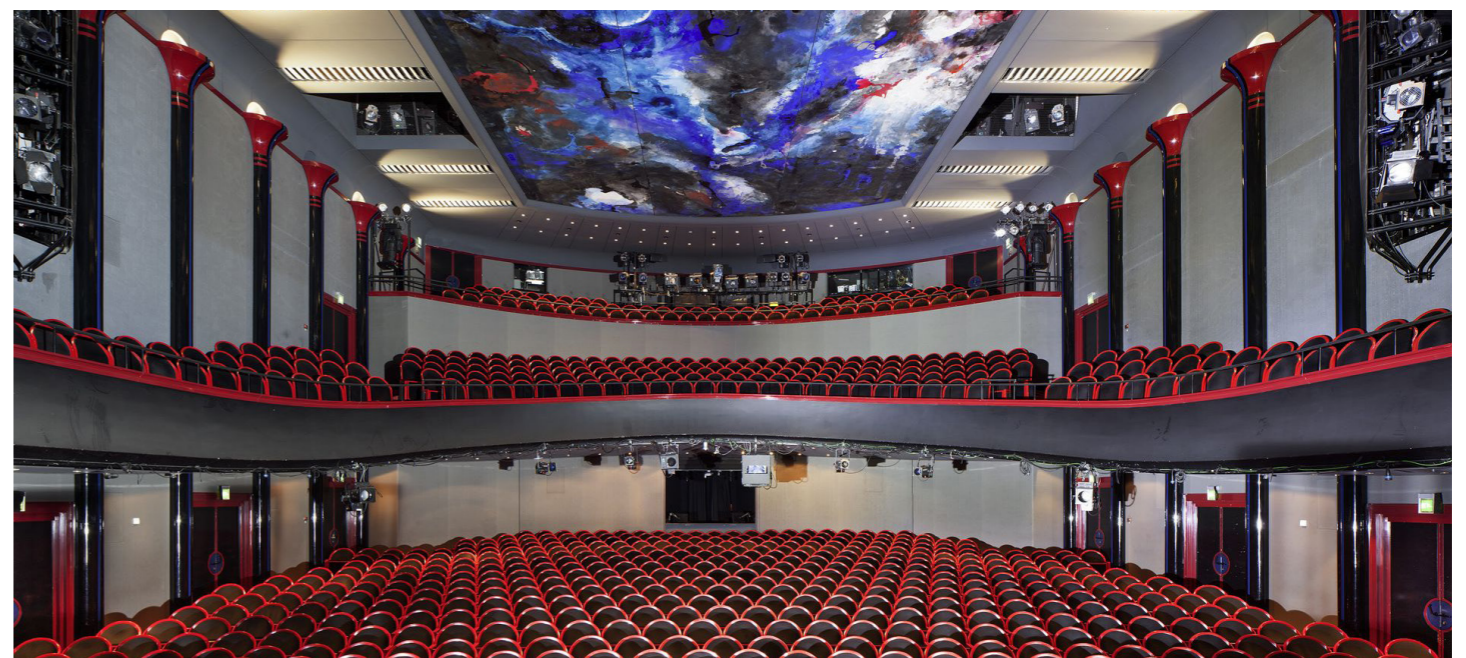


fig. 14 : Auditorium Stalls

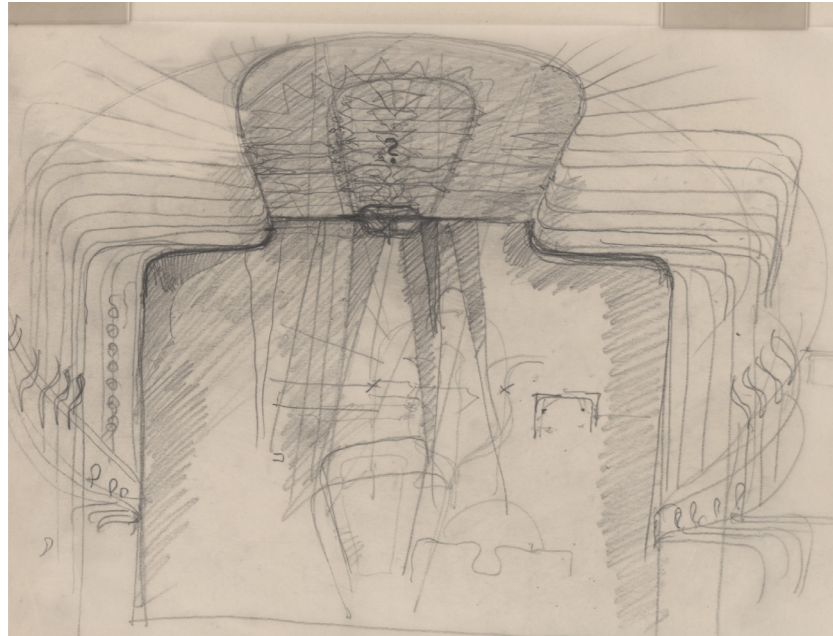


fig. 15 : Auditorium ceiling sketch

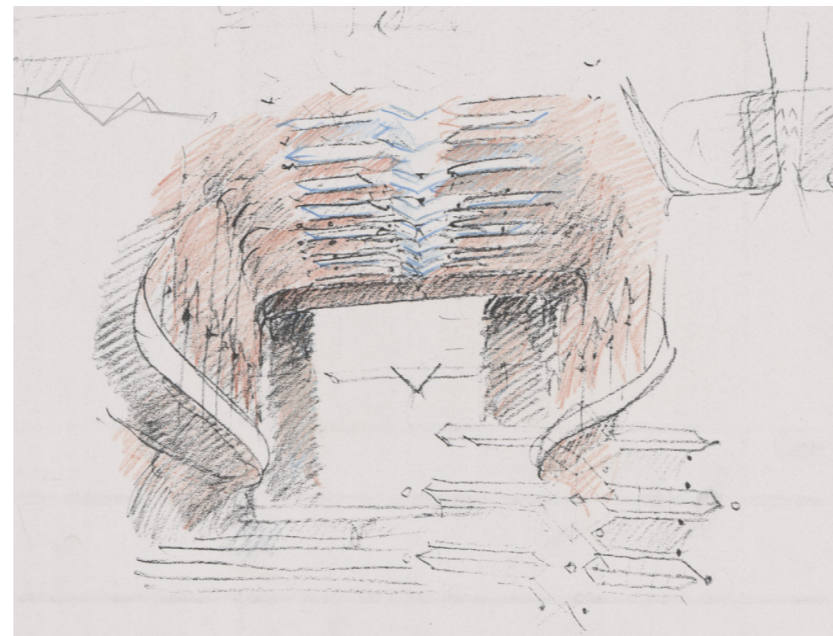


fig. 16 : Auditorium ceiling sketch

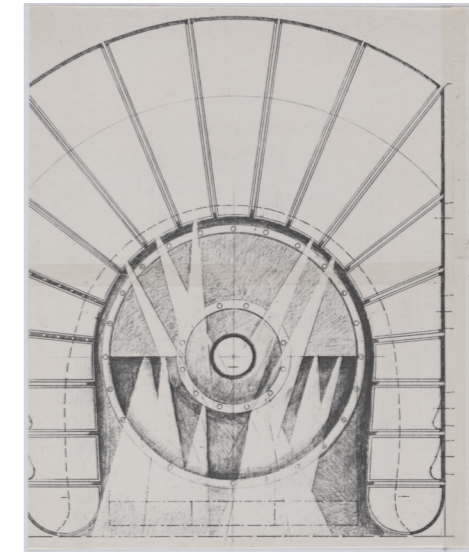


fig. 17 : Ceiling Underside view sketch, 1983

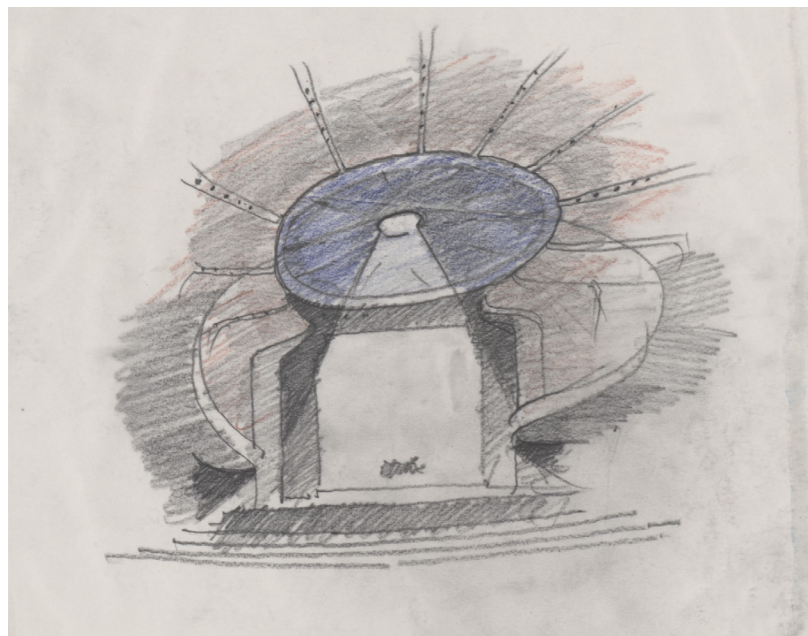


fig. 18 : Auditorium ceiling sketch

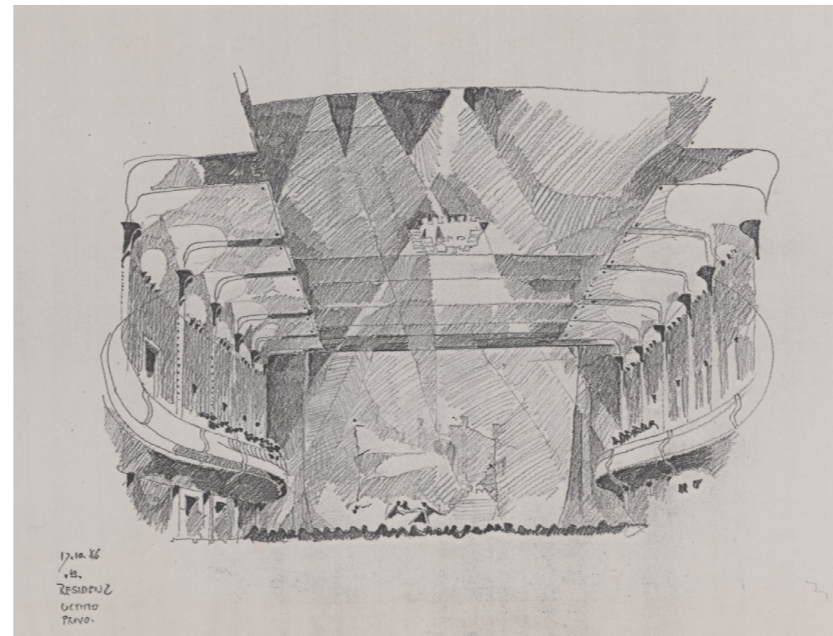


fig. 19 : Auditorium ceiling sketch , 1986

Alexander von Branca sketches show different perspectives of the Auditorium ceiling. The first (fig. 15) is marked by a large question mark which suggest the architect's doubts about this point of the project. This was followed by various sketches with different colour test (orange and blue or blue and red) and decoration until the last sketch with the caption 'Ultima provo' (fig. 19). His vision was never realized, for the ceiling was chosen a painting by the artist Fred Thieler representing a sky with the same colors used for the stage and the stalls (fig. 14).

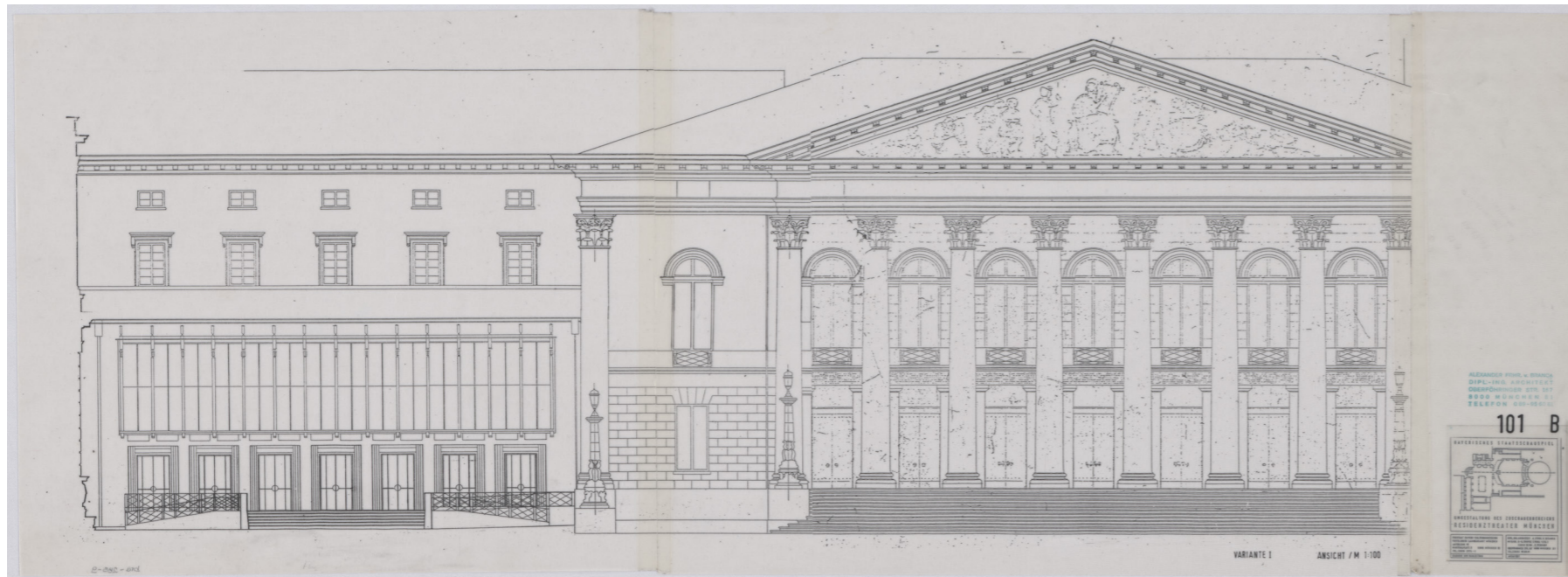


fig. 20 : Variation I (Section)

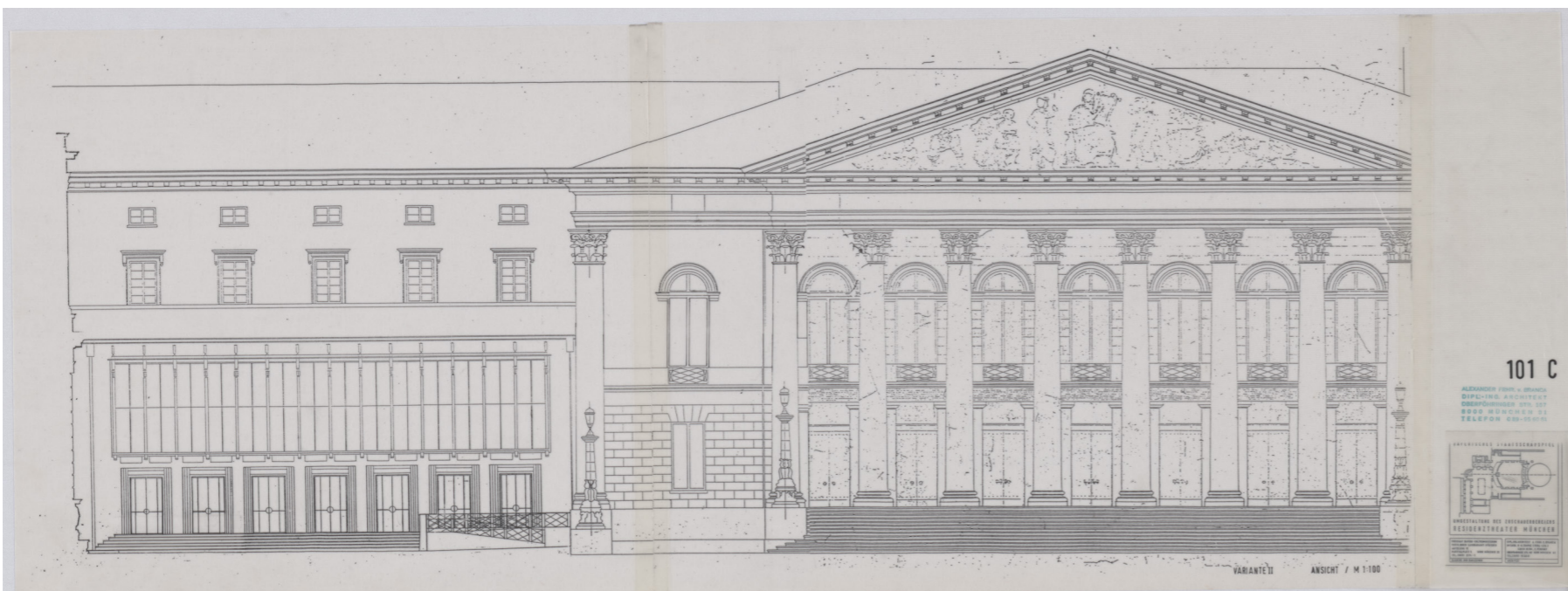


fig. 21 : Variation II (Section)

Regarding the exterior Alexander von Branca didn't change the design by Karl Hocheder. The architect just worked on the entrance, drawing two elevations which show two variations for the access trough the staircases. The decoration and rhythm of the facade in perfect harmony with the Nationaltheatre remained unchanged.

Kostantin Grcic Residenztheater

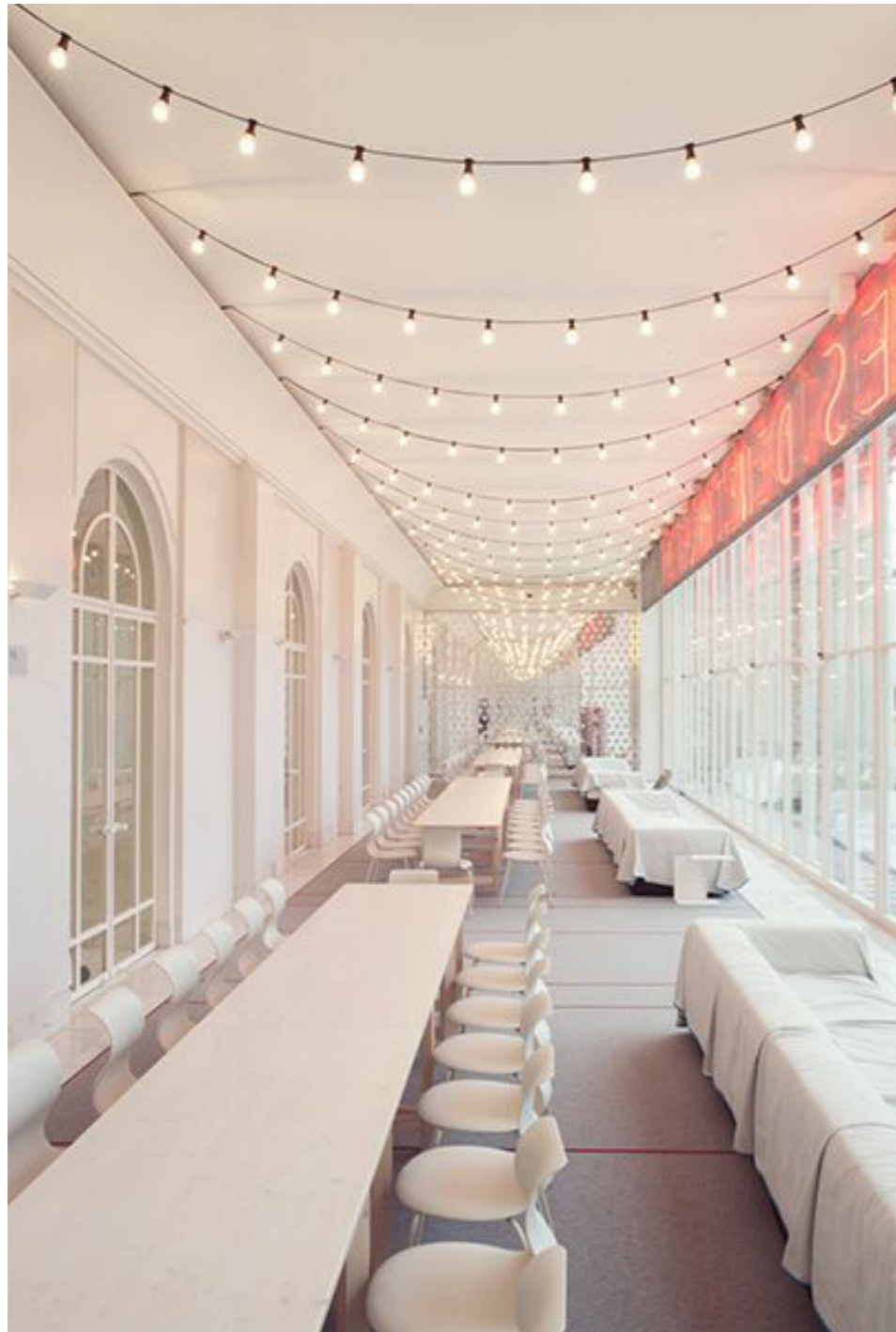


fig. 22 : photo wintergarden Kostantin Grcic design



fig. 23 : photo from Max-Joseph-Platz

Wintergarden renovation

In 2011 Kostantin Grcic, a German industrial designer, redesigned the foyer and the wintergarden. He decided for a simple and elegant style which refreshed the atmosphere of one of the most loved place by the people of Munich. Despite the limit of time and budget the simple interventions affected the areas giving them a new life. Simple fluorescent tubes were used for the interior, Individual wall surfaces were wallpapered in matt white and the mirror walls were covered with a white dot grid. The neon lettering located in the wintergarden (fig. 23) established again a relationship with the exterior.

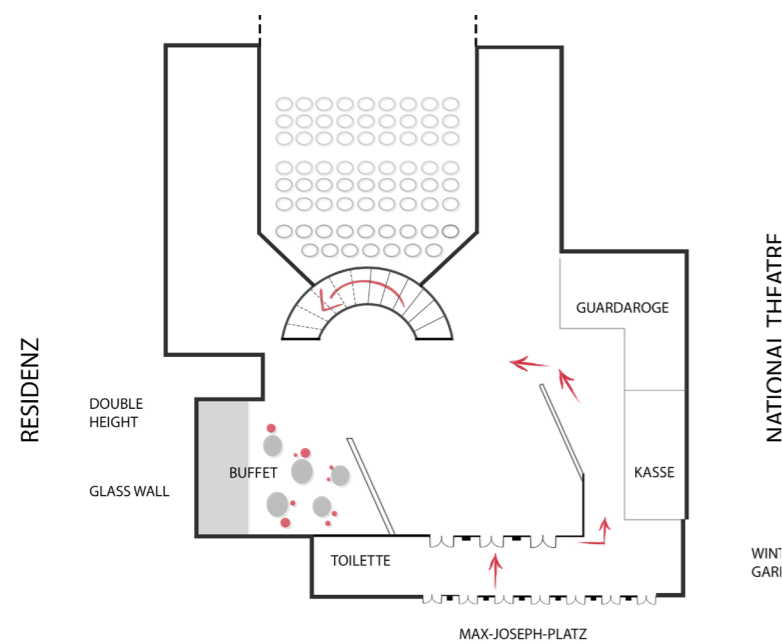


fig. 24 : Grand floor plan,
Chiara Saccomanno 2019

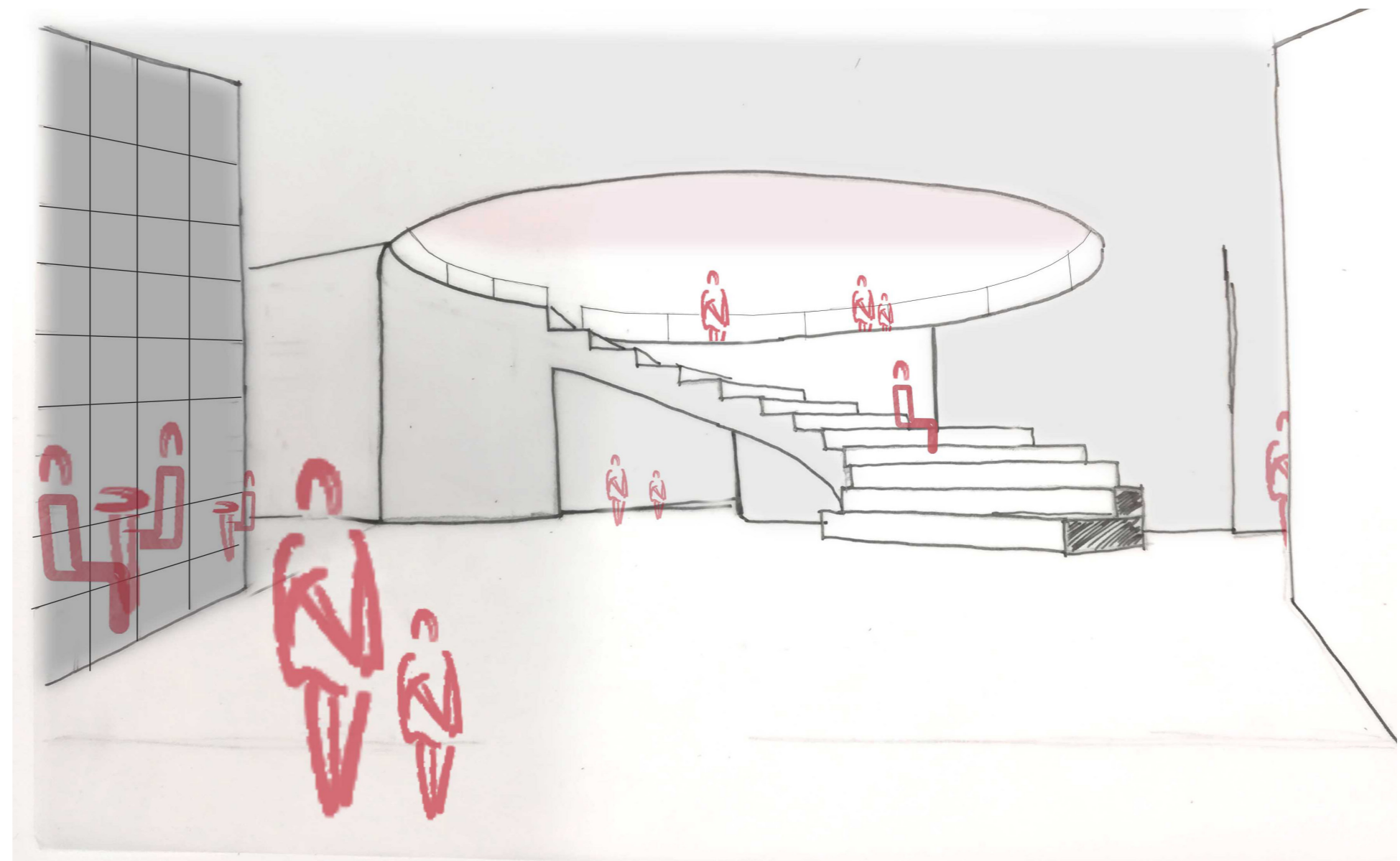


fig. 25: Perspective sketch of the ground floor , Chiara Saccomanno 2019

As we saw Alexander von Branca brought the show through all the building with colours and materials. A weak point is the east side of the foyer. Indeed after the beautiful entrance, in the foyer, you will come across a white wall that seems to break the atmosphere created so far. Moreover the stair designed by Branca is hidden on the left by the perimeter walls. My project would be to move the staircase in front of the east wall of the foyer so to make it its new fulcrum. In this way, already from the entrance, the visitor's gaze will be captured by the staircase that will immediately transport him into the magical atmosphere of the theater. Another change that I would make concerns the buffet room on the ground floor, replacing the current wall with a glass wall in order to make it brighter and in connection with the rest of the space.