

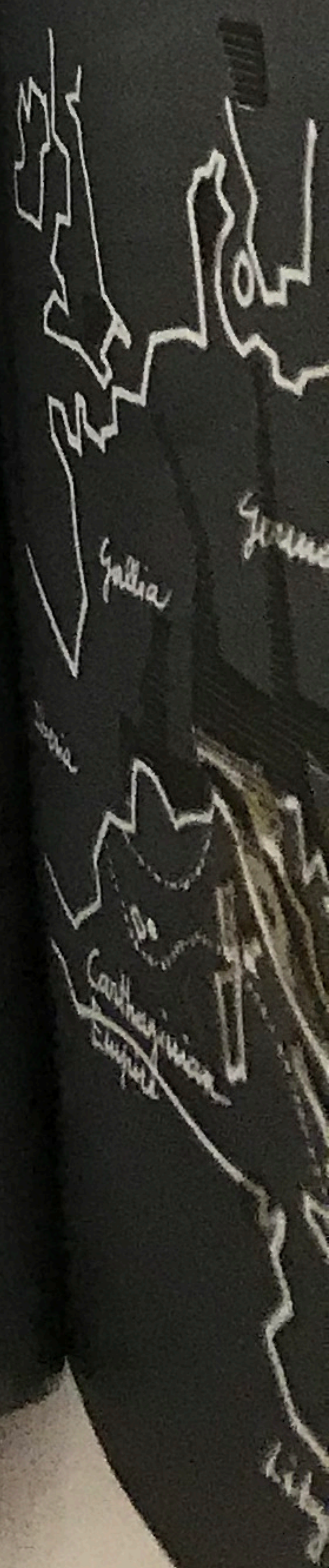


People of mysterious origin who provided their gaily painted tombs with eternal picnic baskets, the Etruscans ruled central Italy when, in the words of Robert Graves, the Romans were still a "robber village founded by fugitive slaves." Etruria, dominated by sacred cities which are today Perugia, Tarquinia, Cerveteri, stretched from the Tiber to the Arno; Etruscan artifacts have been found in France, Egypt, and as far north as Sweden. In the VIIth Century B.C. the seafaring Etruscans rivaled the Greeks and Carthaginians for control of the Western Mediterranean, but by the 1st, the last of the great cities had fallen and the Etruscan civilization was absorbed by Rome.

The Etruscans were ignored until the 18th Century; they were snubbed in the 19th as "provincial", but the great discoveries of the painted tombs of Tarquinia and the Apollo of Veio indicated a sophisticated and vigorous art quite alien to the formal concepts of Greece. The Etruscans are still a mystery: no one can yet translate their language, and new excavations turn up every day.

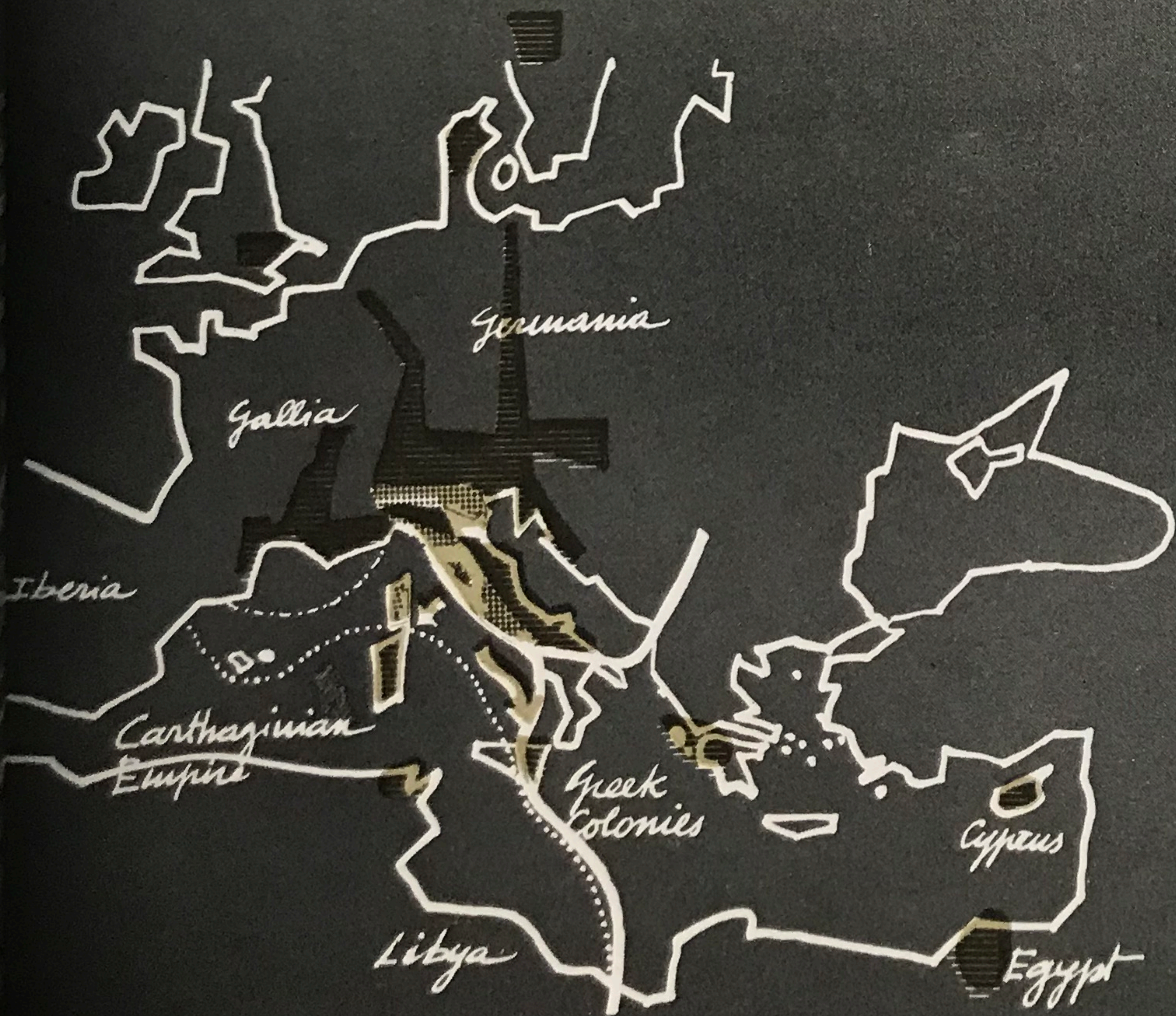
In Rome, the best of the Etruscan finds have been housed in the Villa Giulia, designed in the 16th Century by Vignola for Pope Julius III. This, and two pseudo-Renaissance wings somewhat incongruously sheltered the 19th Century's idea of a museum. Early this year, the Villa Giulia reopened a completely remodeled North Wing; its controversial interior sheds light on the Etruscans, modern museology, and the moral problems of the architect.

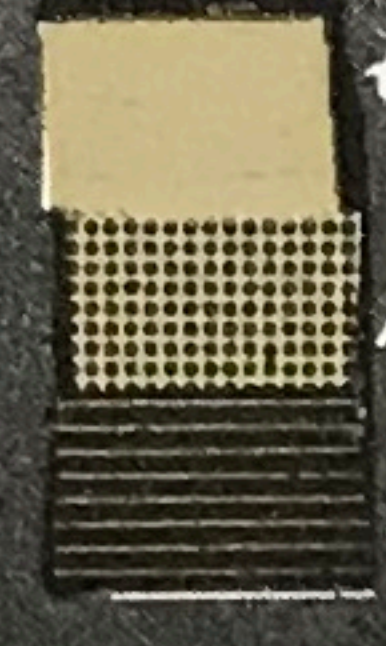
DAYLIGHT FOR





DAYLIGHT FOR ETRURIA



 *etruscan territory*
political influence
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FOR THE VILLA GIULIA A DARING SOLUTION: CLEAN SWEEP AND AN INTERPOLATED GALLERY

courtesy museo nazionale di villa giulia

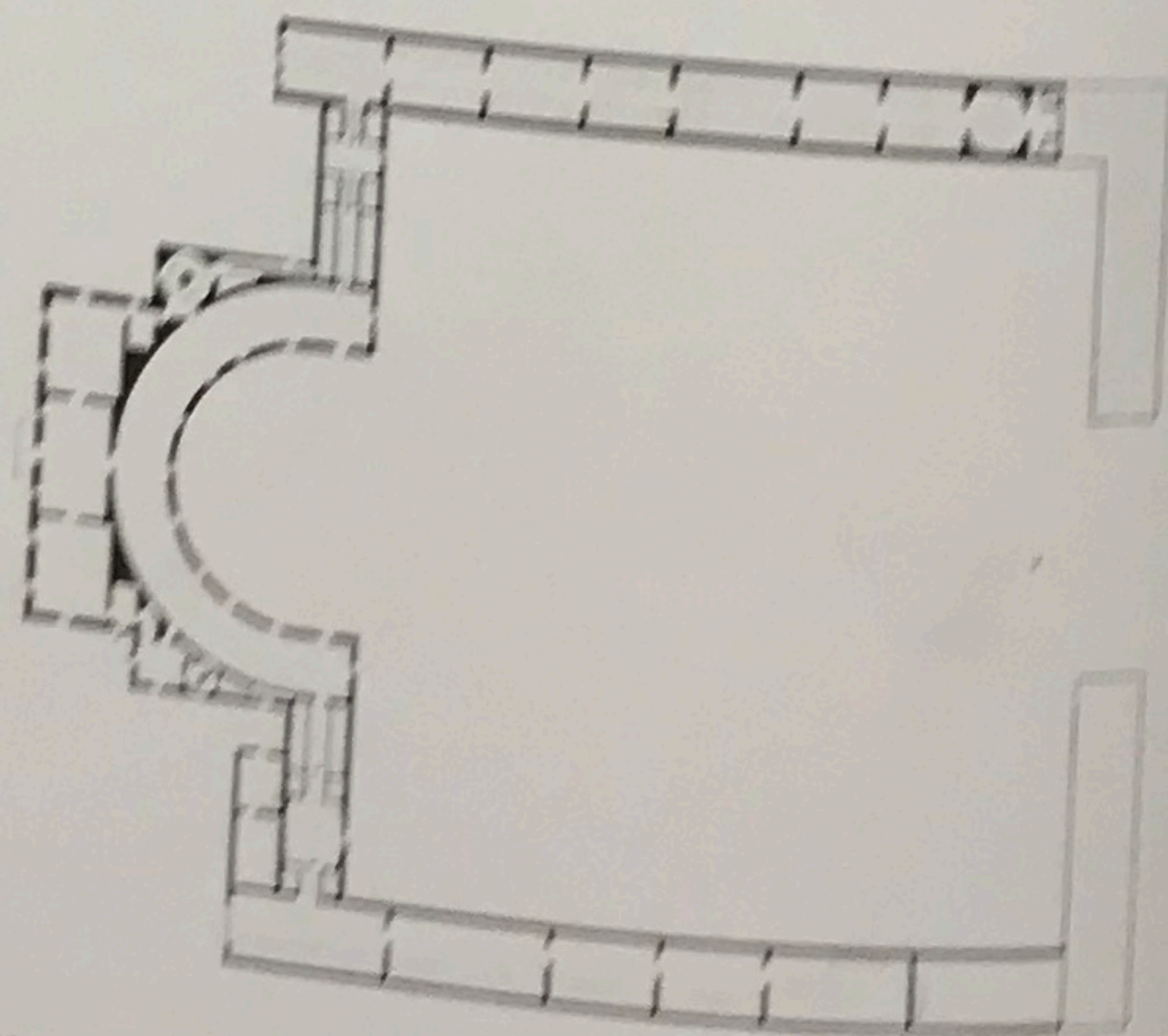
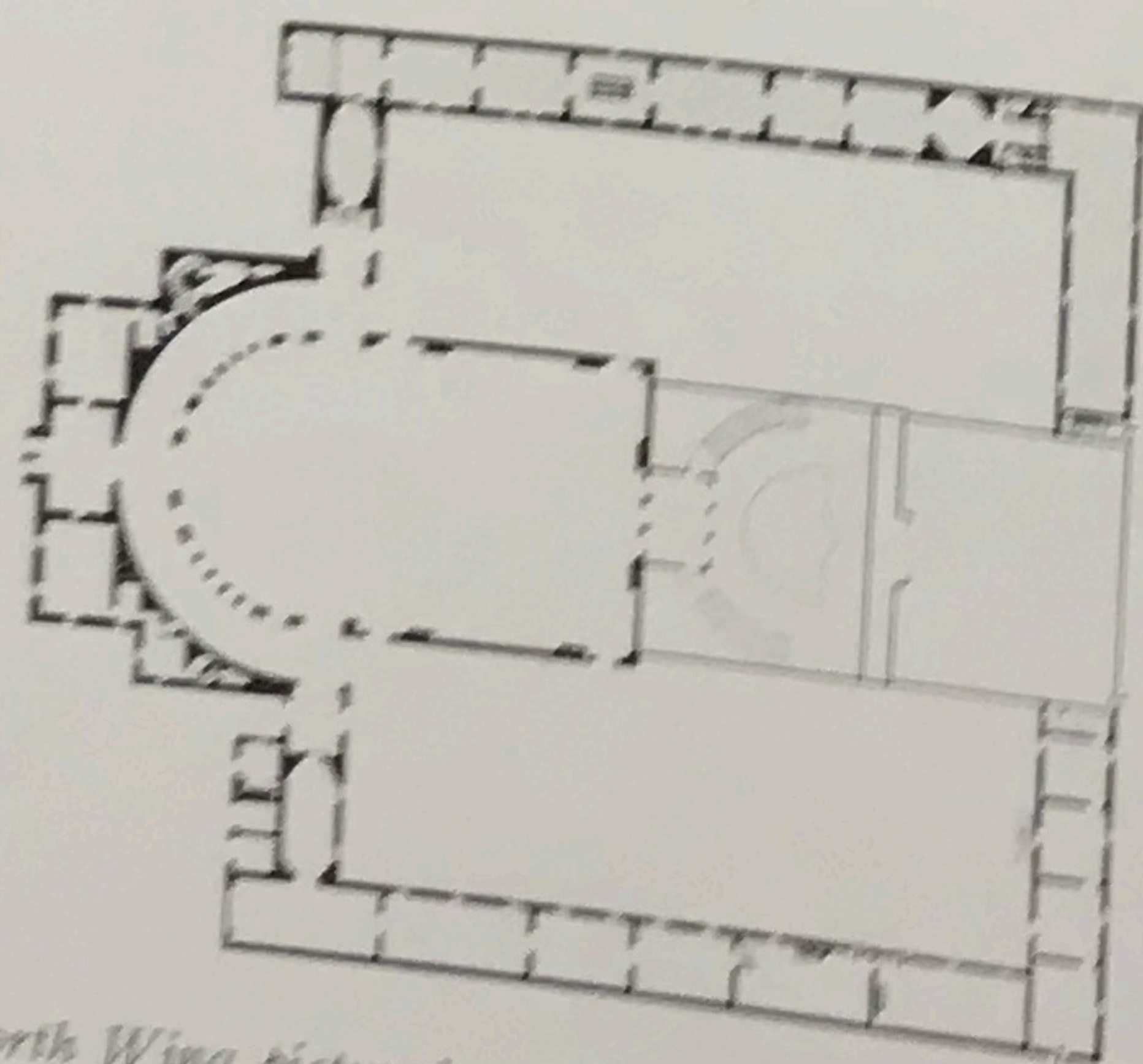
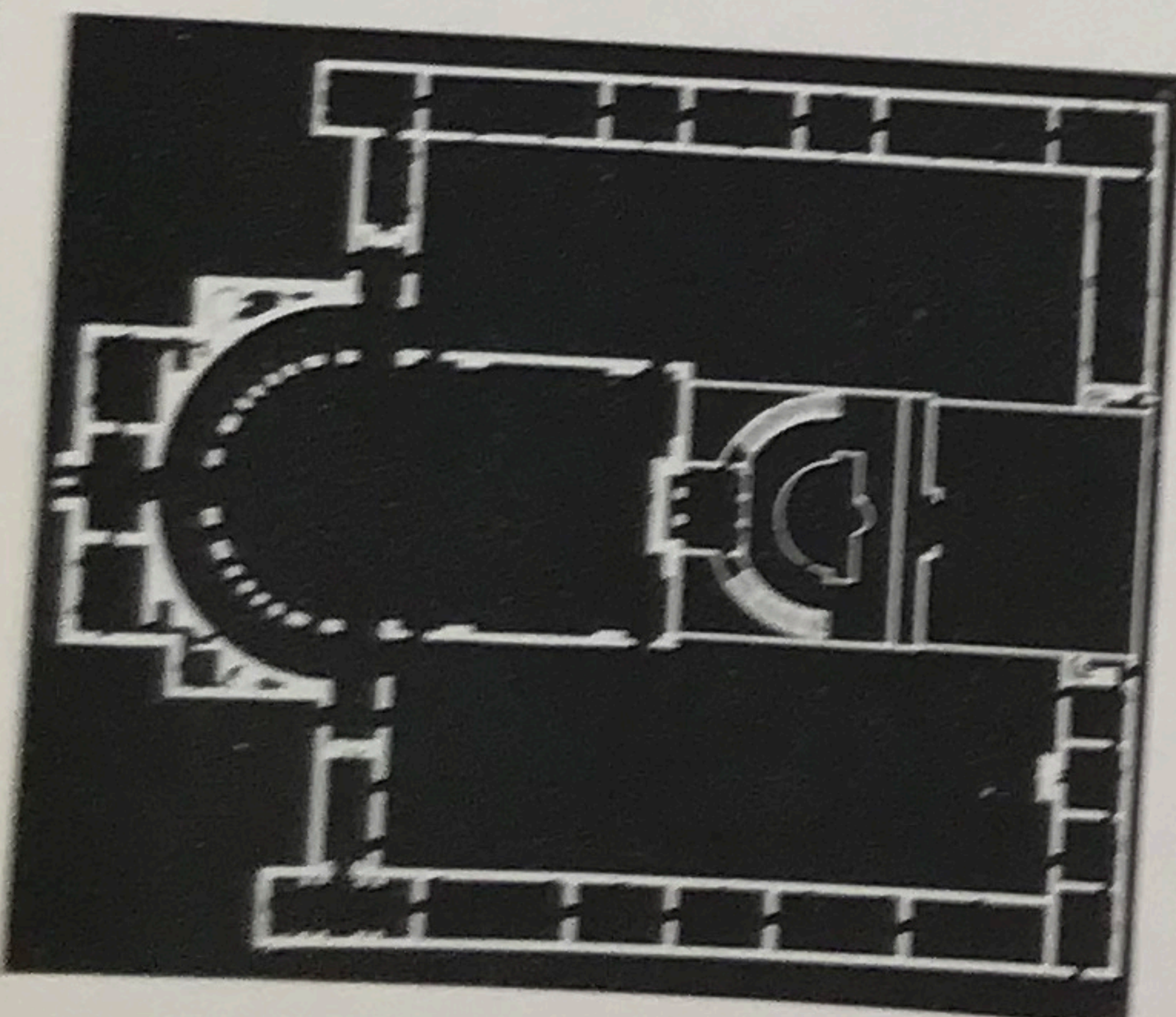
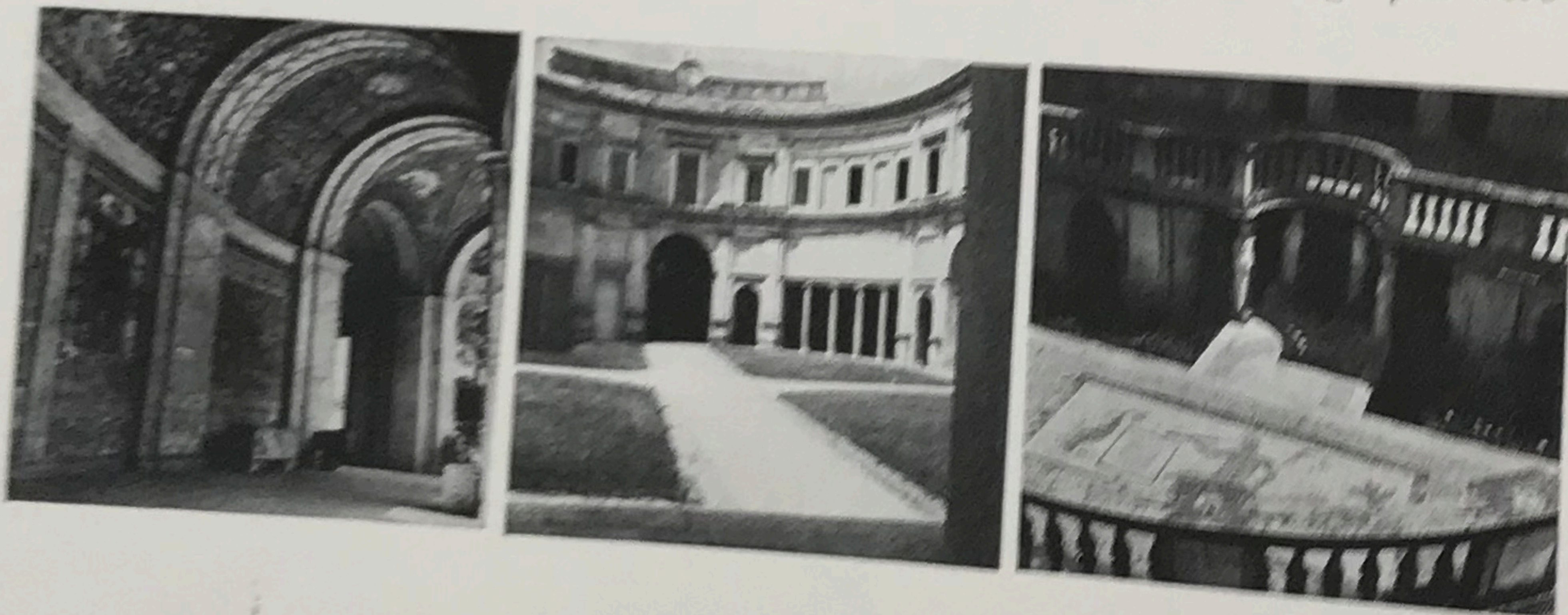


When the antiquated space arrangement was recognized to be inadequate, the Museum Direction — Superintendent Prof. Renato Bartocchini and, because this is a National museum, the Director General of the Antichità and Belle Arti, Prof. Guglielmo DeAngelis D'Ossat — decided on a complete renovation and engaged a young architect, Franco Minissi.

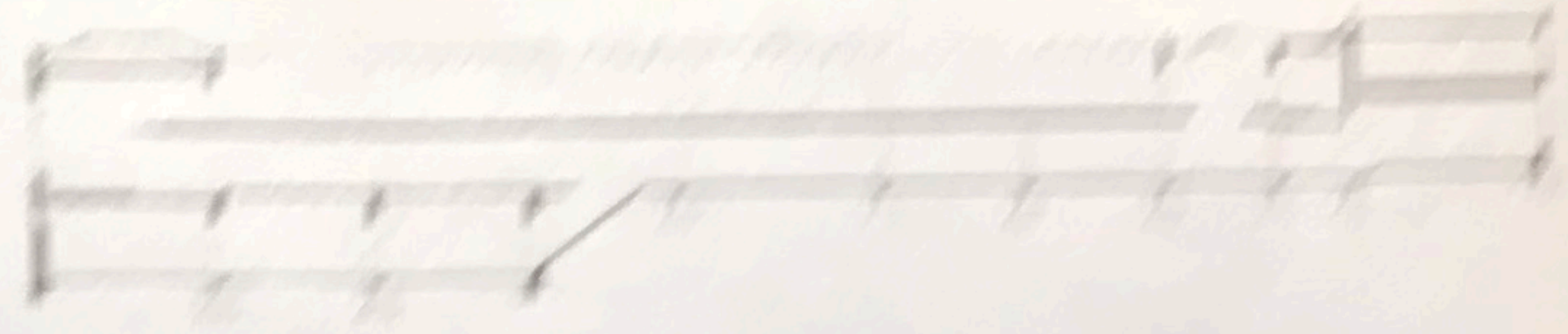
The problem of the Villa Giulia is a challenging one common in Italy: the restoration of a monument historic in its own right and its amalgamation with elements of another epoch into a harmonious whole. The Villa Giulia is particularly challenging because it also involves creating, in the wings, an entirely new ambiente. The "moral" question in such a problem is how much to leave, or "When does a monstrosity become a historic monument?" This, and the aesthetic problem of creating, with these hand-me-downs, a complete structure which is neither imitative nor too glaringly disparate, though created with contemporary means.

The Museum as it was consisted of three separate sections: the horseshoe-shaped villa itself, with its frescoed loggia and historic ceiling paintings, and the two modern wings whose cavernous one-story interiors had been embellished with Corinthian columns and heavy oak cases. A visit to the museum entailed at least three separate trips. The architect's solution was to sling a balcony down the length of each wing, increasing the museum space by 2/3 and, more important, creating a link with the second floor of the villa. The balcony in the North Wing, although it looks suspended, rests on "shoulders" formed by the pared-down walls which formerly divided the rooms. By making the balcony a kind of gangplank, the architect allowed light from the enlarged skylight to flow down and around the sculptures on the ground floor (all these photographs were made with natural light).

Pastoral frescoes by Giovanni da Udine, airy arched loggia, colonnaded portico and wide double arc of balustraded steps leading in sunken ninfeo ("nymph's temple") are legacy of the original villa. Long flanking wings added ca. 1870 and 1925 blend inoffensively with exterior villa architecture but inside, string of box-like vaulted and corniced rooms sheltered works in dark wood cases (top).



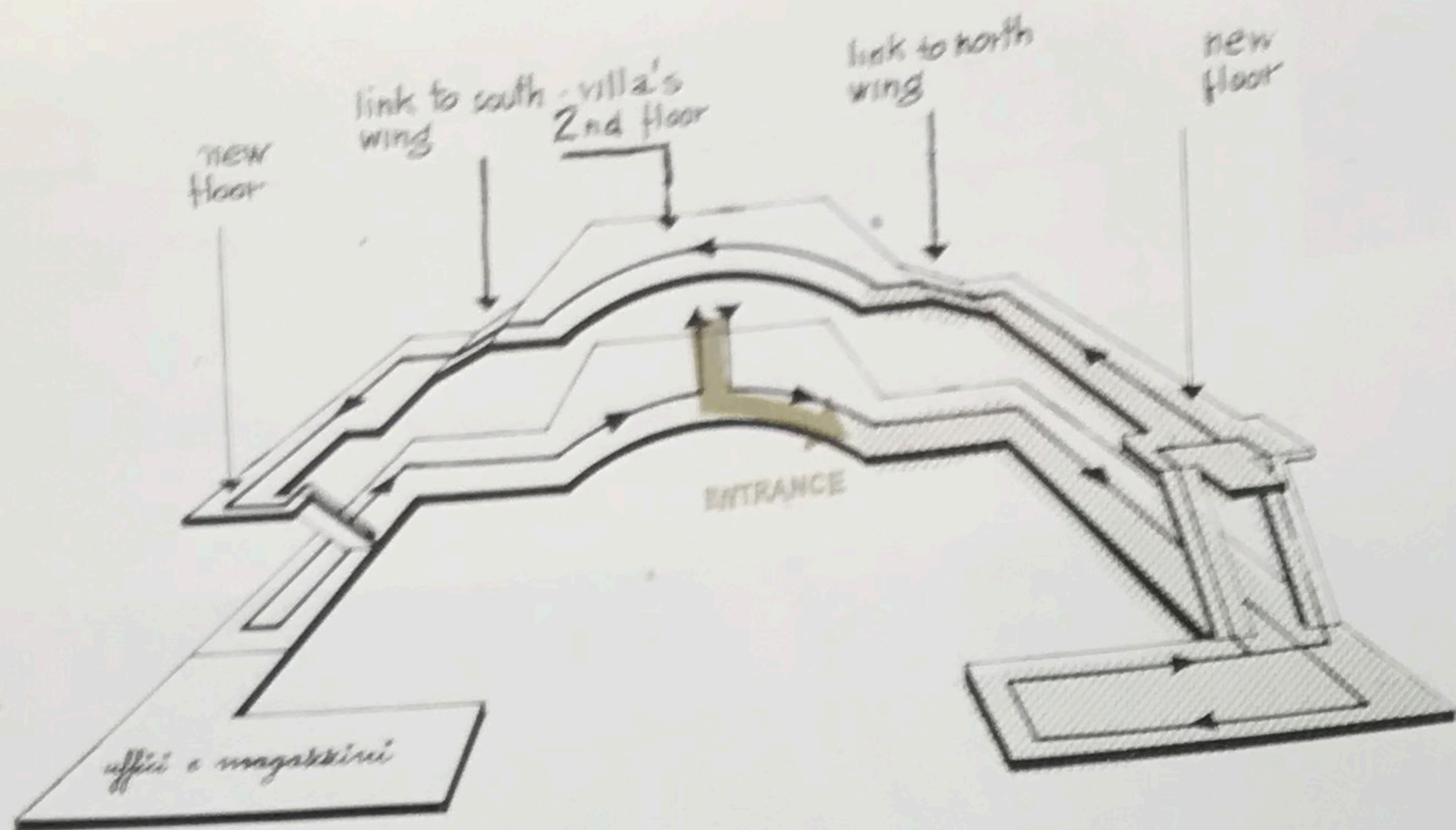
Shaded area indicates reopened North Wing pictured on these pages. Single museum entrance is now through center of villa, through loggia to oval foyer. Stepped corridor over foyer links wing through new balcony with villa's second floor.



Section of north wing shows interpretation of balcony, new stairs down to basement, increased daylight. Slightly lowered floor increased volume.



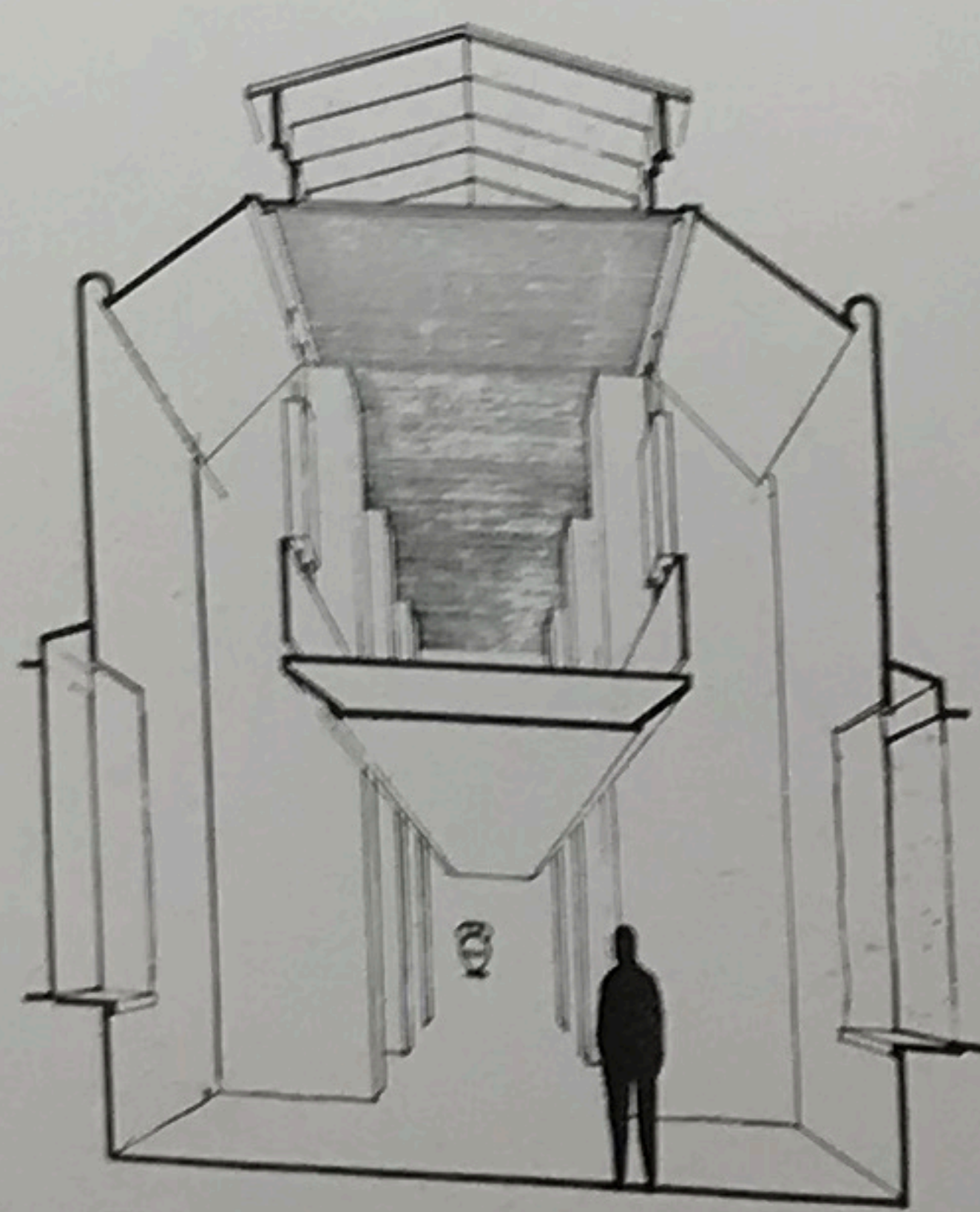
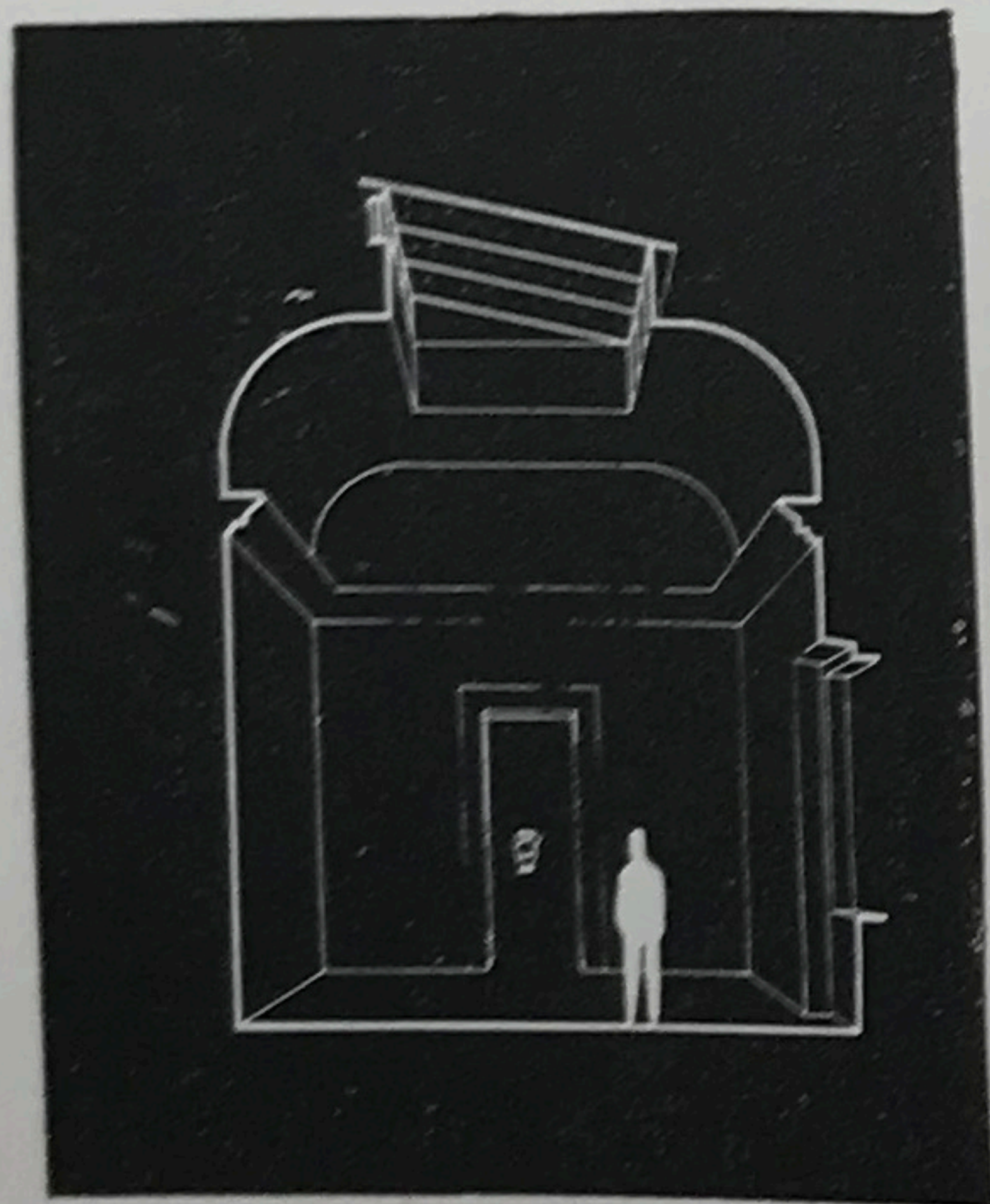
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New balcony makes possible single non-repetitive itinerary or intermediate short ones. Starting with vestibule (bottom) rooms are arranged by major Etruscan territories. A raised platform affords introductory view down the gallery, contemplation of some of Museum's oldest sculpture, like early VIIth century man riding a sea monster (facing page, left and below). Glass cases hold most important and representative finds from each of various excavations, kept together, while overflow is systematically stored in basement "antiquarium" open to serious students. Far right: melancholy IIIrd century sarcophagus figure from Tuscania watches robed stairs which lead down to study rooms, reconstruction of one of Cerveteri tombs.

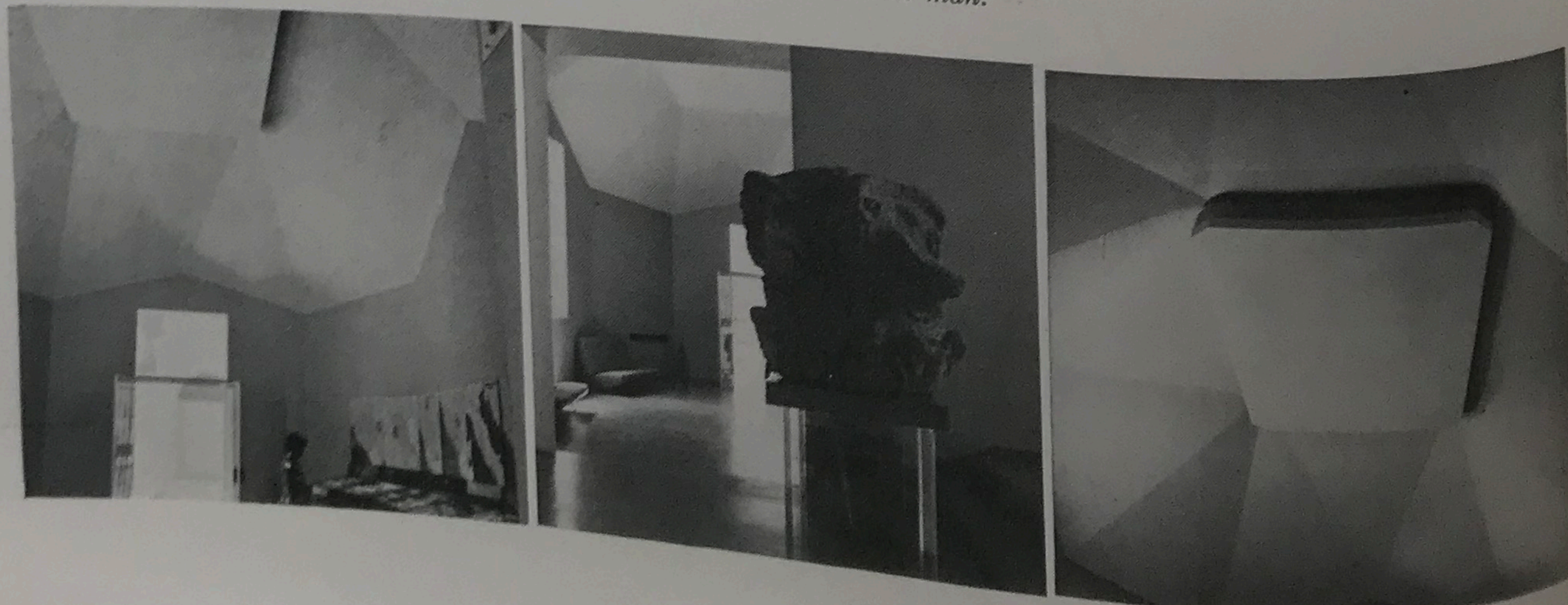
The remodeling: a welcoming space and accessible sculpture

Apart from the architectural problems come those of the interior — in this case, museology, or the relation of the architecture to the object to the man, and then the relation of the objects to each other. Apart from its architectural function, the balcony created a space more compatible with the objects and with the viewer. The idea both of the architect and the Museum direction in this remodeling was to put the viewer in closer and more intimate contact with the objects on view. As one official put it, "the colors of our walls have been criticized as not serious enough, but they create a welcoming and cheerful atmosphere which brings people to the object. It's like an air hostess — gives people confidence." To this end walls have been painted pale shades of green and terra cotta pink with linoleum slightly darker. Liberated from their cases, important sculptures are casually dotted about on clear or cream-colored plastic supports which, though questionable [should plastic, a non-bearing material, support a structural stone capital?], add to the refreshing airiness of the interior.

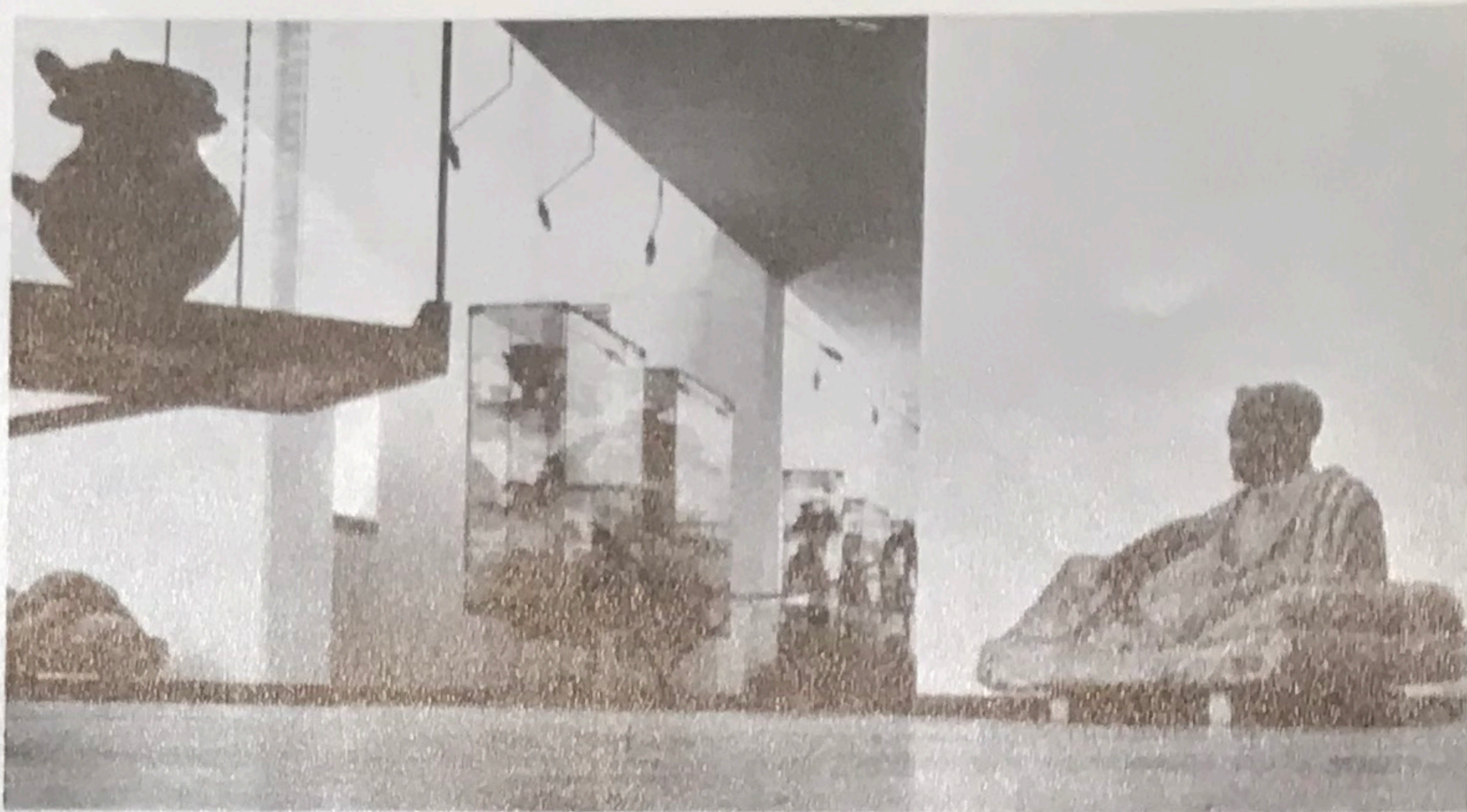


Above: Before and after comparison shows relation of space to object and man.

Below: Oval vestibule prepares visitor for modern interior. Maps correspond with disposition of rooms inside. Angular vaulting allows higher ceiling under passageway above, provides psychological transition from arched loggia. Indirect light from translucent plastic sides of flat panel throws pattern into reverse, draws room together. Colors: pink, darker pink, gray-green. Maps and photographs, planned by Dr. Roberto Vighi, are illuminated, set in bronze shelf.



possible single
territories. A raised platform
view down the gallery
of Museum's oldest
century man riding a sea
age, left and below). Glass cases
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systematically stored in basements
to serious students. For right
17th century sarcophagus figure
lrd century robed stairs which lead
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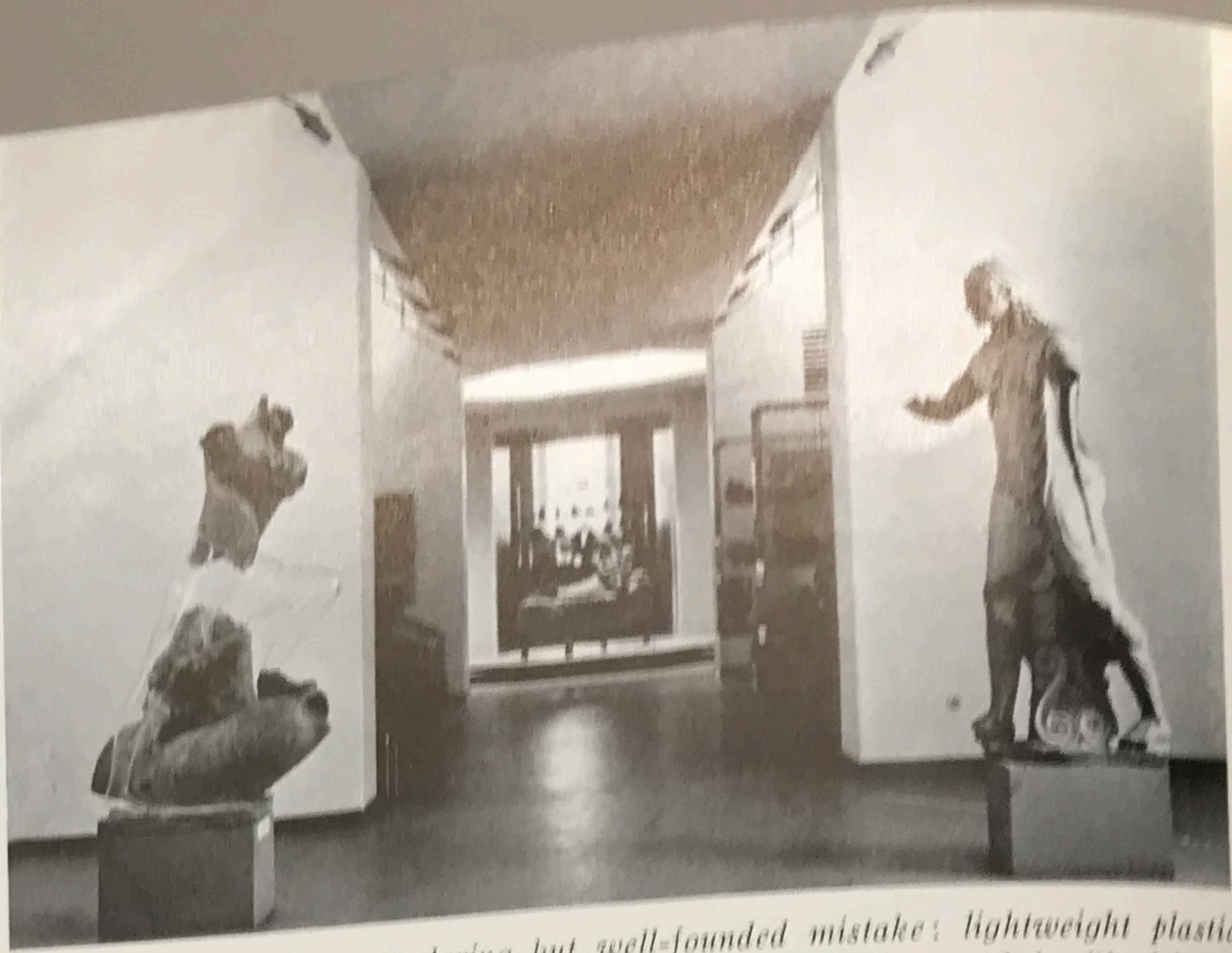


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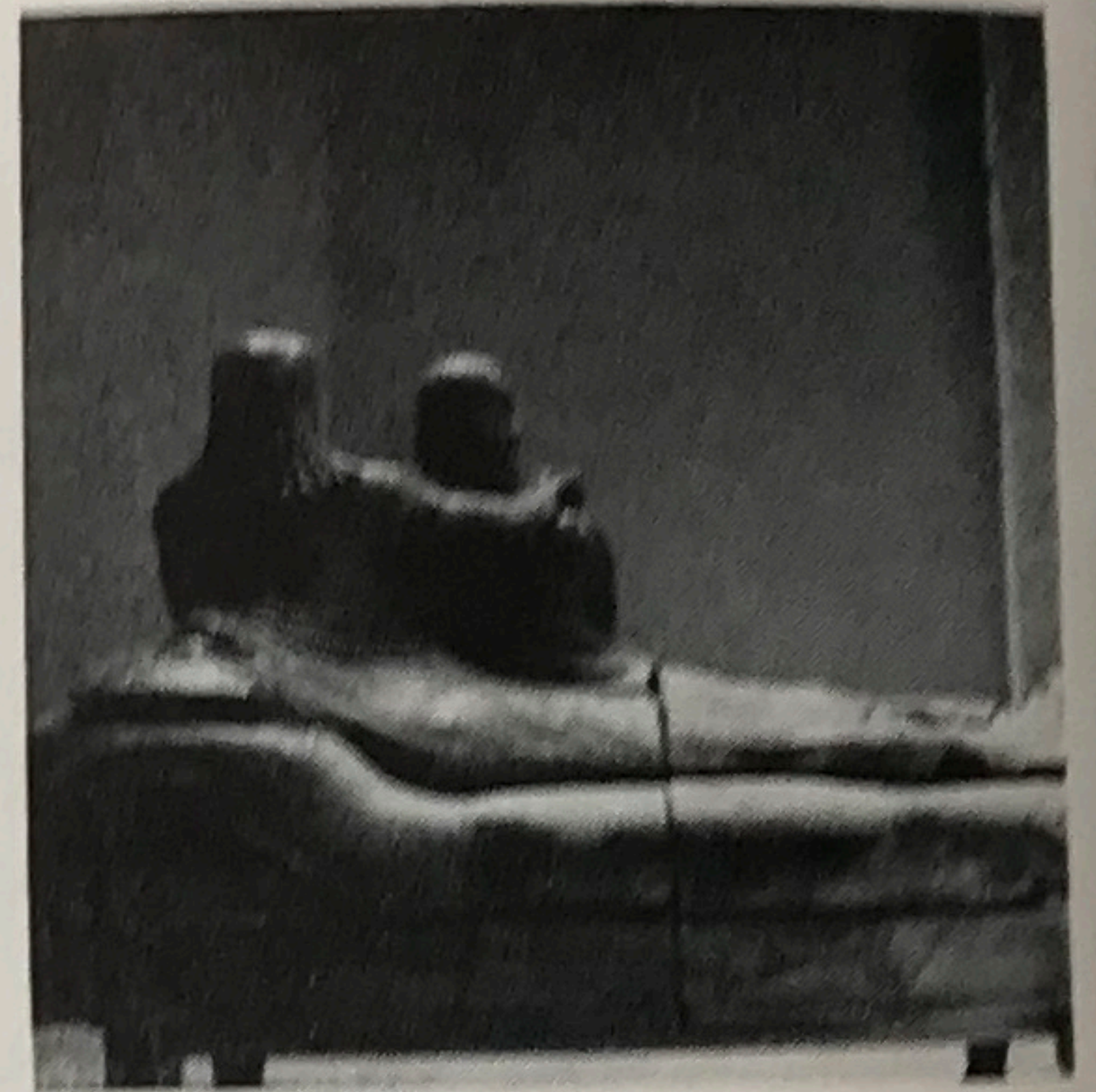
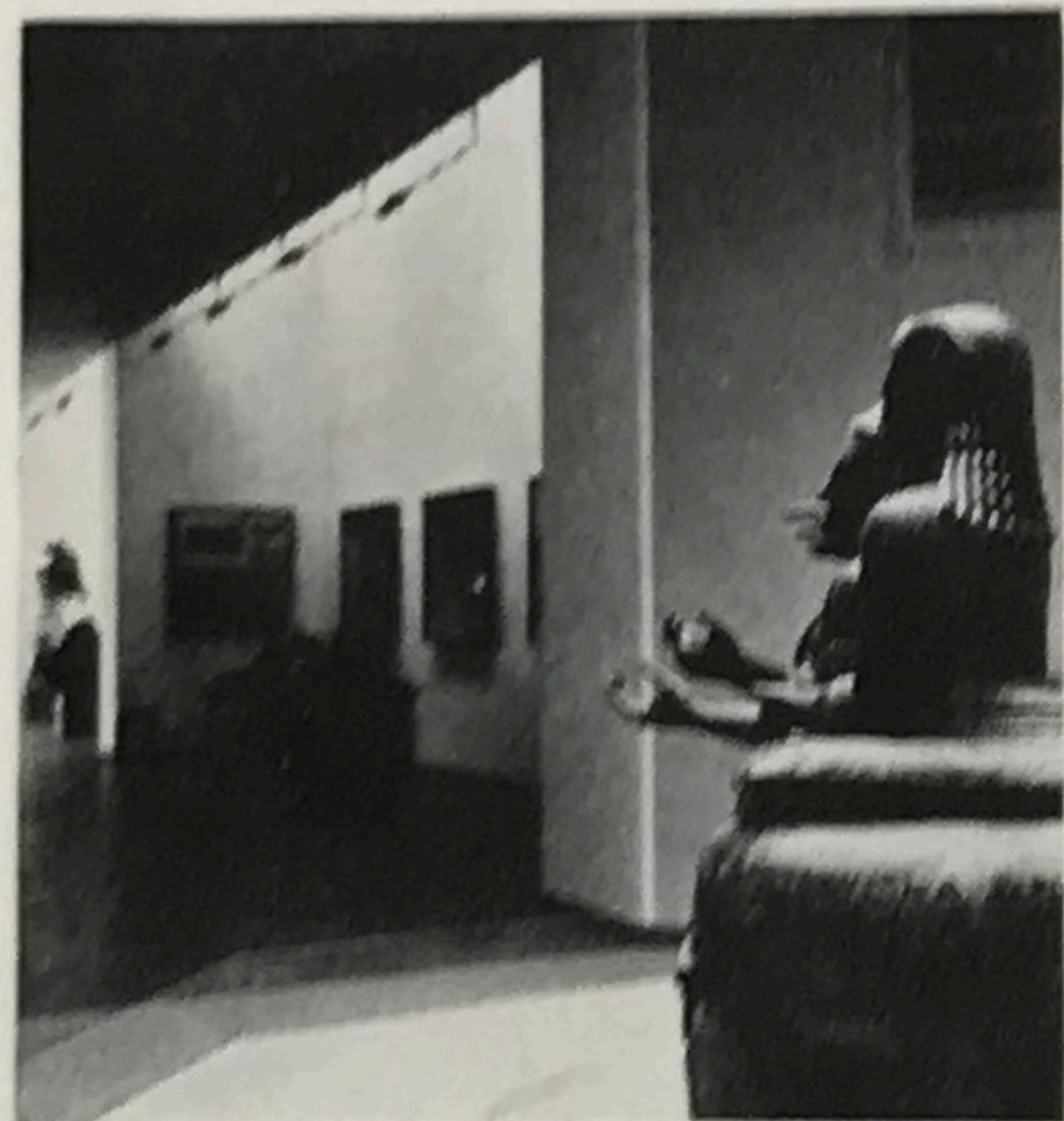
Below: Oval
pares visitor in
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disposition of
Angular ceiling
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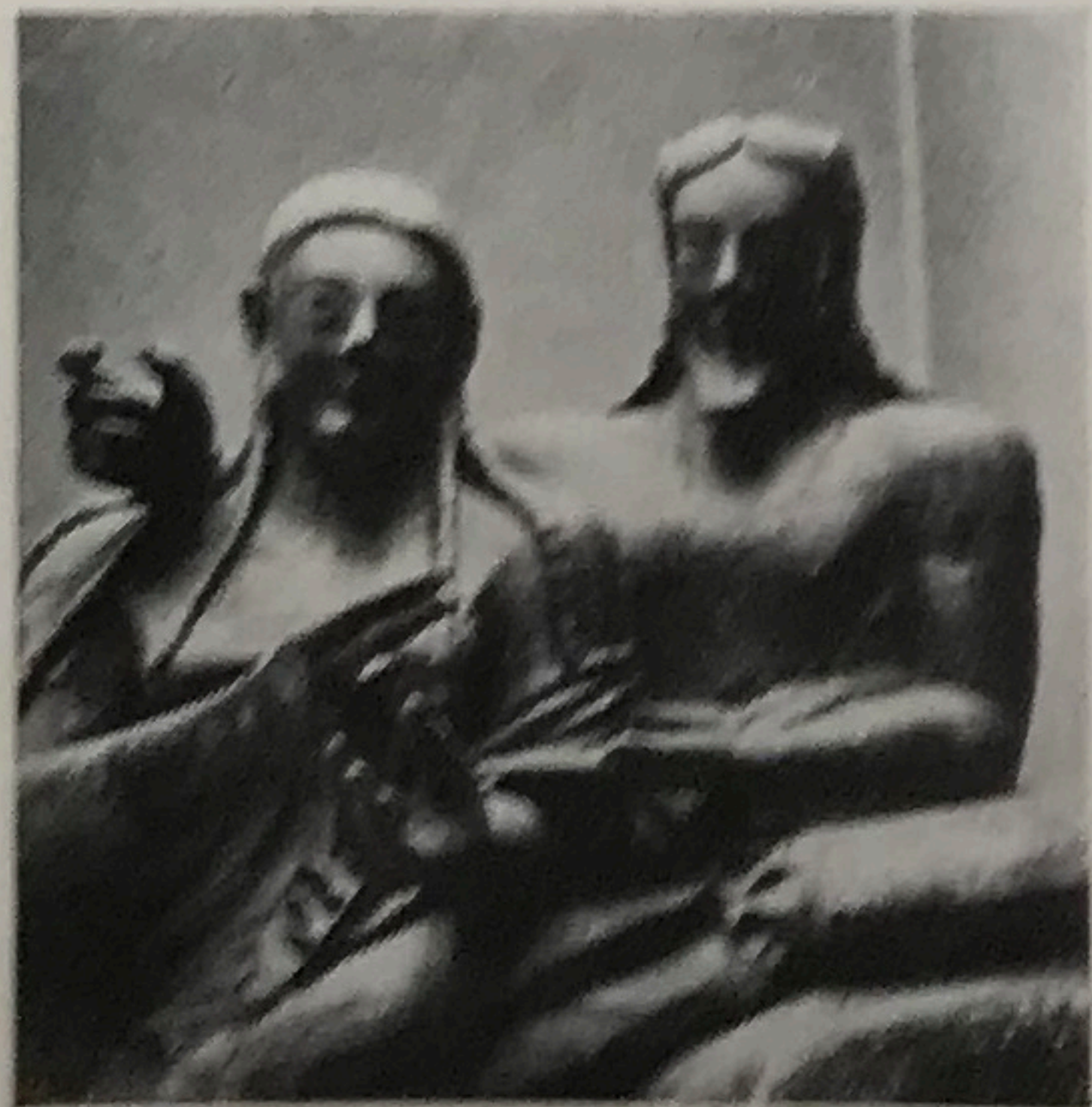
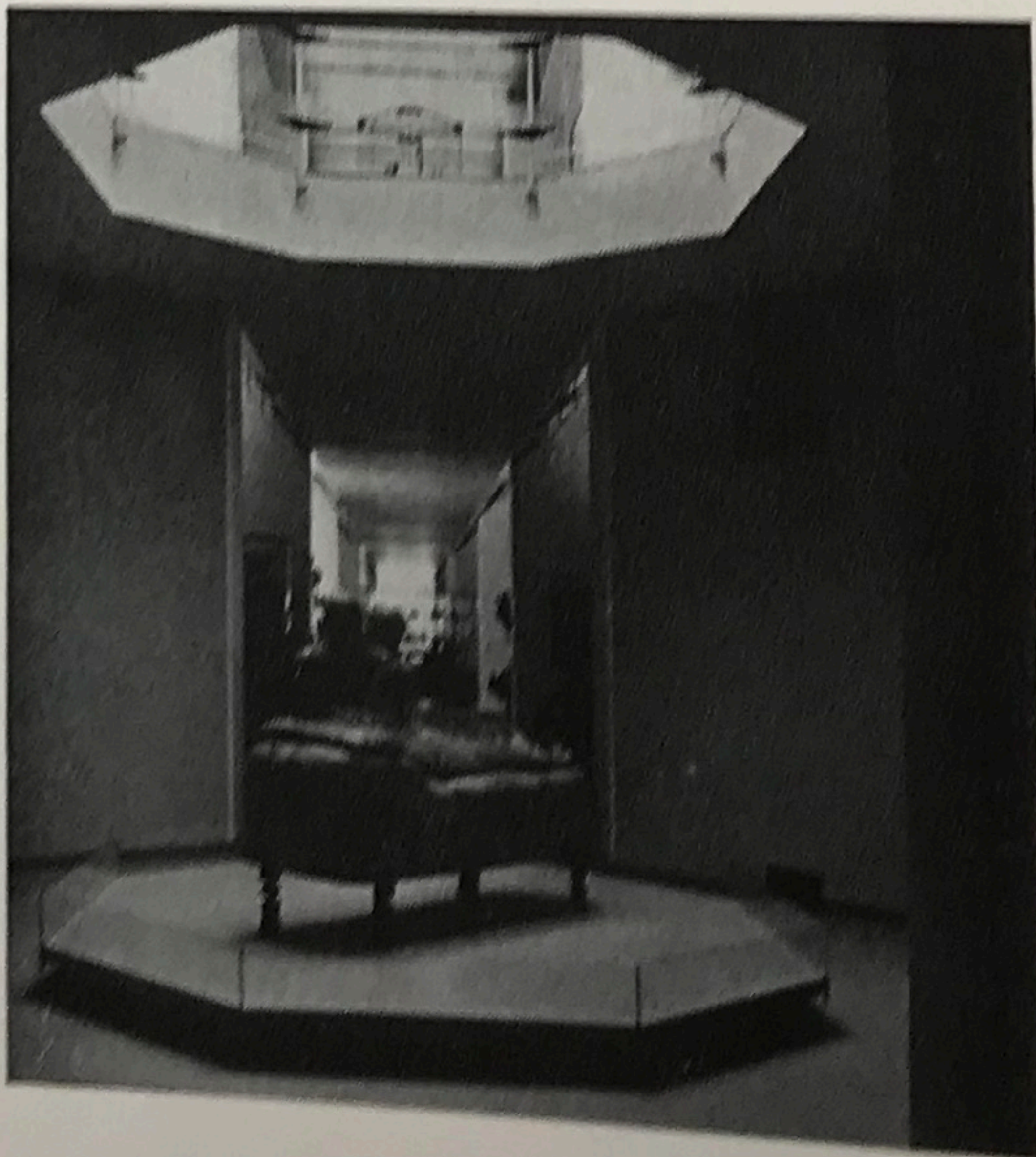


Sharply criticized plastic reconstruction of lifesize clay Hercules was daring but well-founded mistake: lightweight plastic was thought to join large fragments without endangering delicate clay in case of future dismantling, and be "invisible." Shiny transparent plastic has now been painted to blend with sculpture. Right, life-size terra-cotta Apollo of Veio.

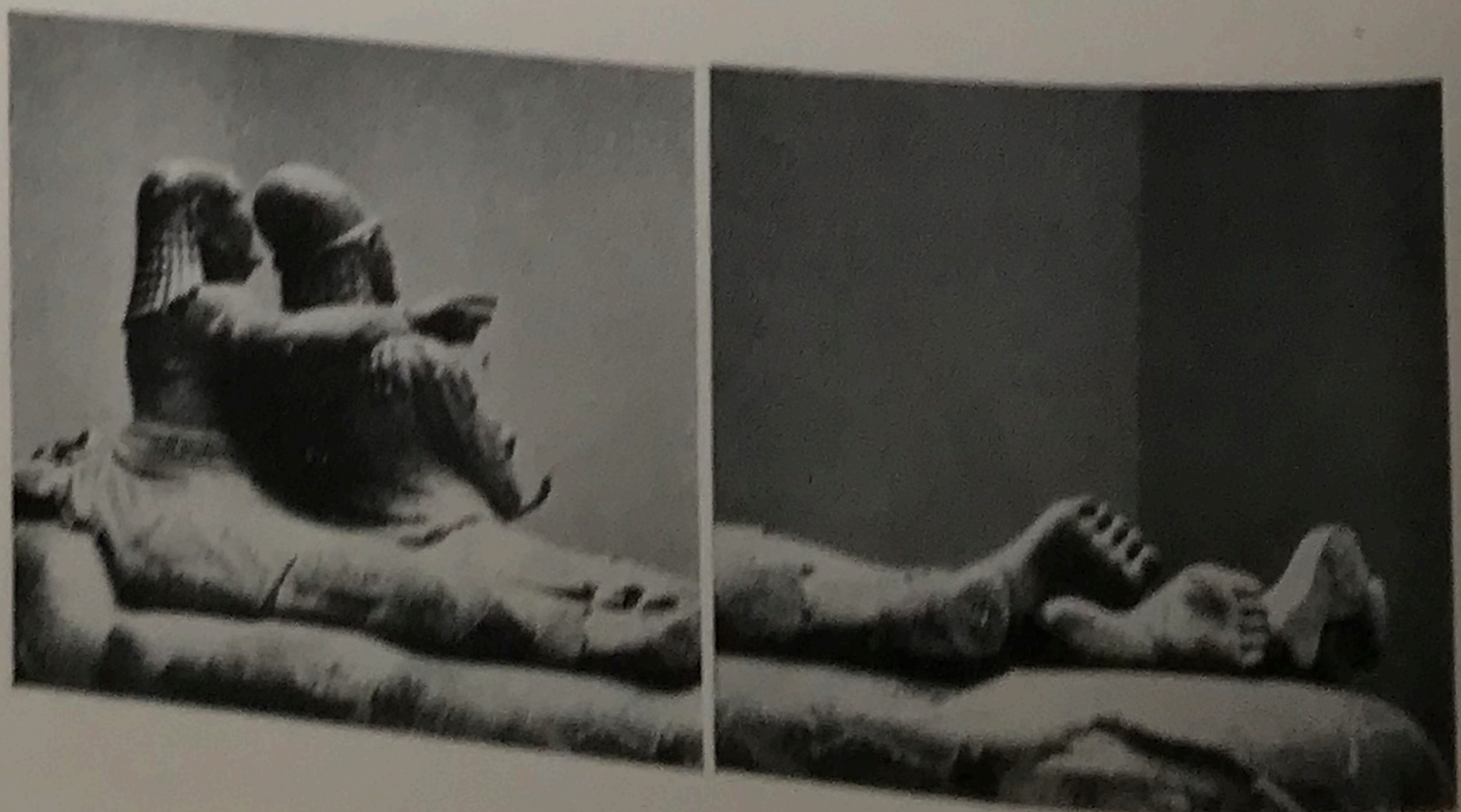
The masterpieces: light, air, and experimental restoration



Octagonal platform under cut-out in balcony permits all-around view of newly re-restored late VIth Century B.C. masterpiece, Etruscans' incredible skill moulding large complex terra cottas. Fragments of conjugal sarcophagus were found in necropolis of Cerveteri (page 86).



Reconstructed fragments of fingers and feet are aluminum painted slightly different color from original areas, removable to permit possible revisions.

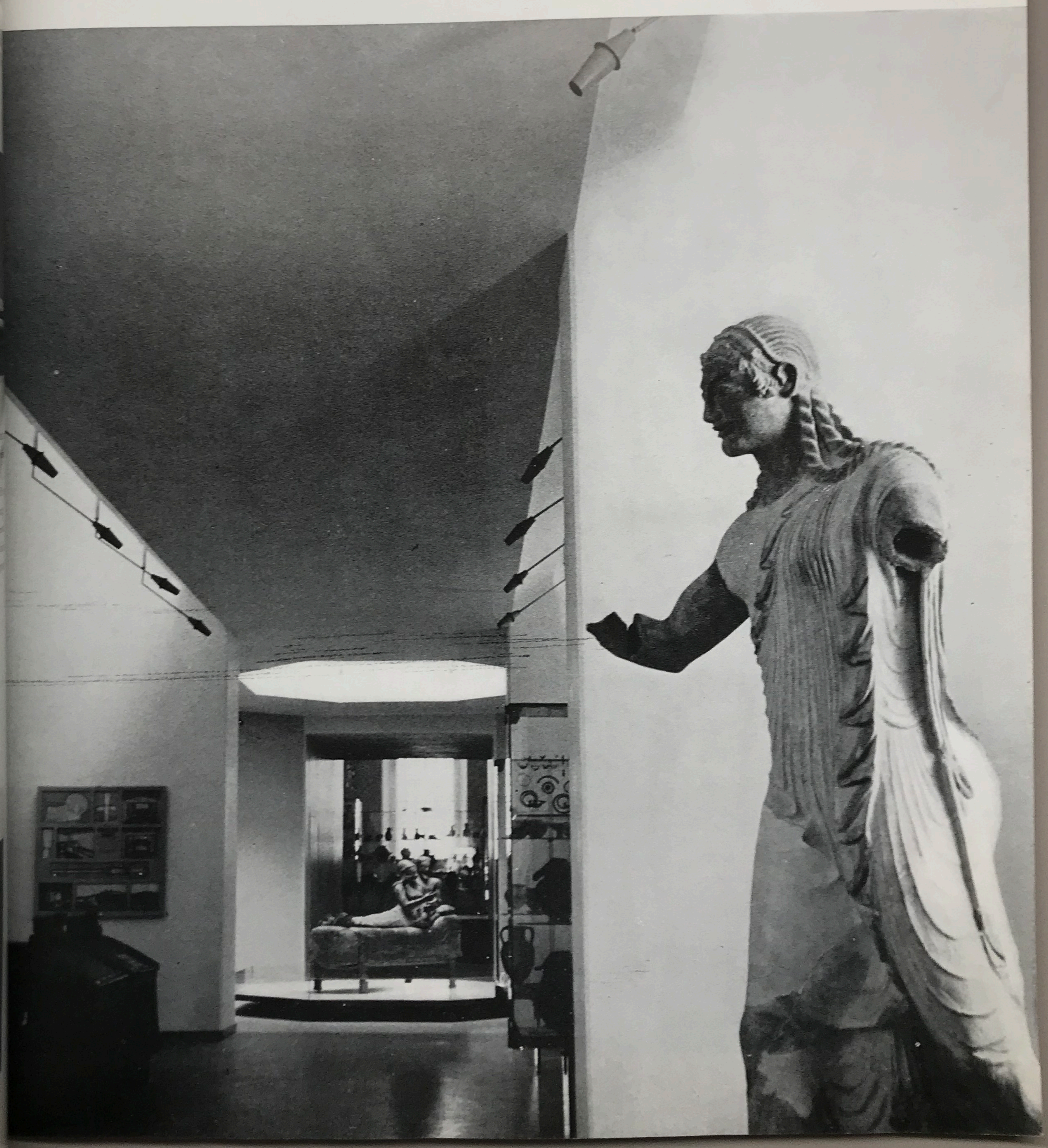


Two of the most frequent criticisms leveled at the new interior attack the lights ("I feel as though I were walking through a battery of machineguns") and a too-frequent and faulty use of plastic. One might also question the trick of making the gallery look suspended from the light-carrying tubes (see page 89) without some structural clarification. Another, more penetrating criticism might be that precisely in trying to create a free and uncluttered atmosphere the architect has allowed the *tecnica* of the interior to supersede the works of art themselves. The fault is one of enthusiastic experimentation, which is also responsible for the unconventional and highly successful setting for one of the Museum's *chefs d'oeuvre*, the sarcophagus of the *Sposi* which, restored and liberated from its case, becomes the pivot of the North Wing.—M. S.

... well-founded mistake: lightness
... of future dismantling, and be
Right, life-size terra-cotta Apollo

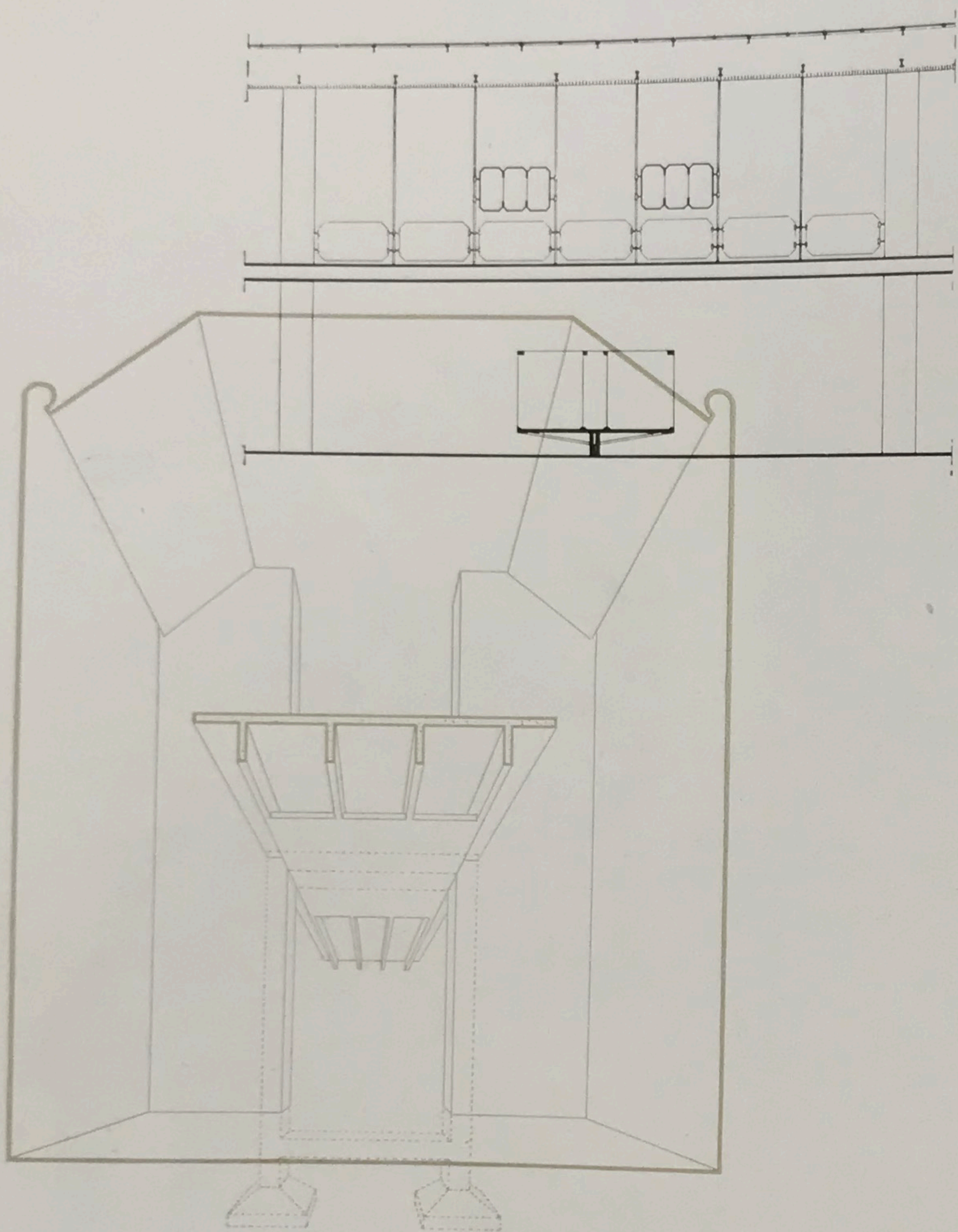


Octagonal platform
balcony permits display
newly restored in 19
Century B.C. material
incredible skill making
complex terra cotta
conjugal sarcophagus
in necropolis of Cerveteri

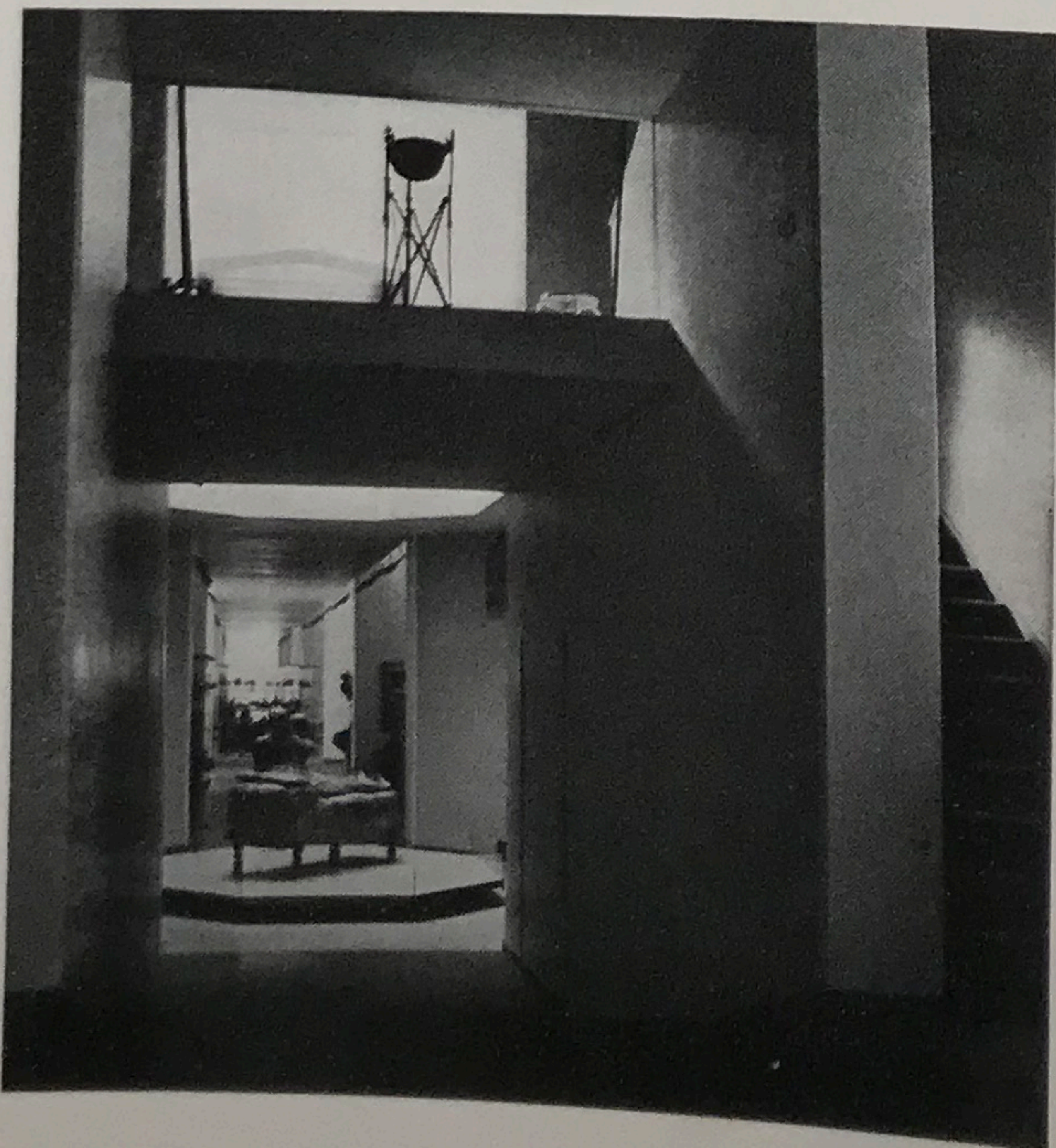


Behind the Sposi, three steps up and a right turn lead to long roomful of tomb paraphernalia from Cerveteri (next page), or a double flight of stairs to the balcony, where small bronzes and terracottas are displayed in an alternating rhythm of freestanding and hung glass cases. White metal tubes which conceal light wiring also support glass-panel railing held by screwed-on wood and brass clamps. Hanging cases are also screwed on, do not rest on glass although they seem to. Fixed white metal fins filter light from the long skylight, continuous except for the octagonal dome over the Sposi. Alternating four- and six-sided glass cases rest on heavy glass fins, joined by black angle-iron supports. Dark red linoleum of floor also lines bottom of cases.

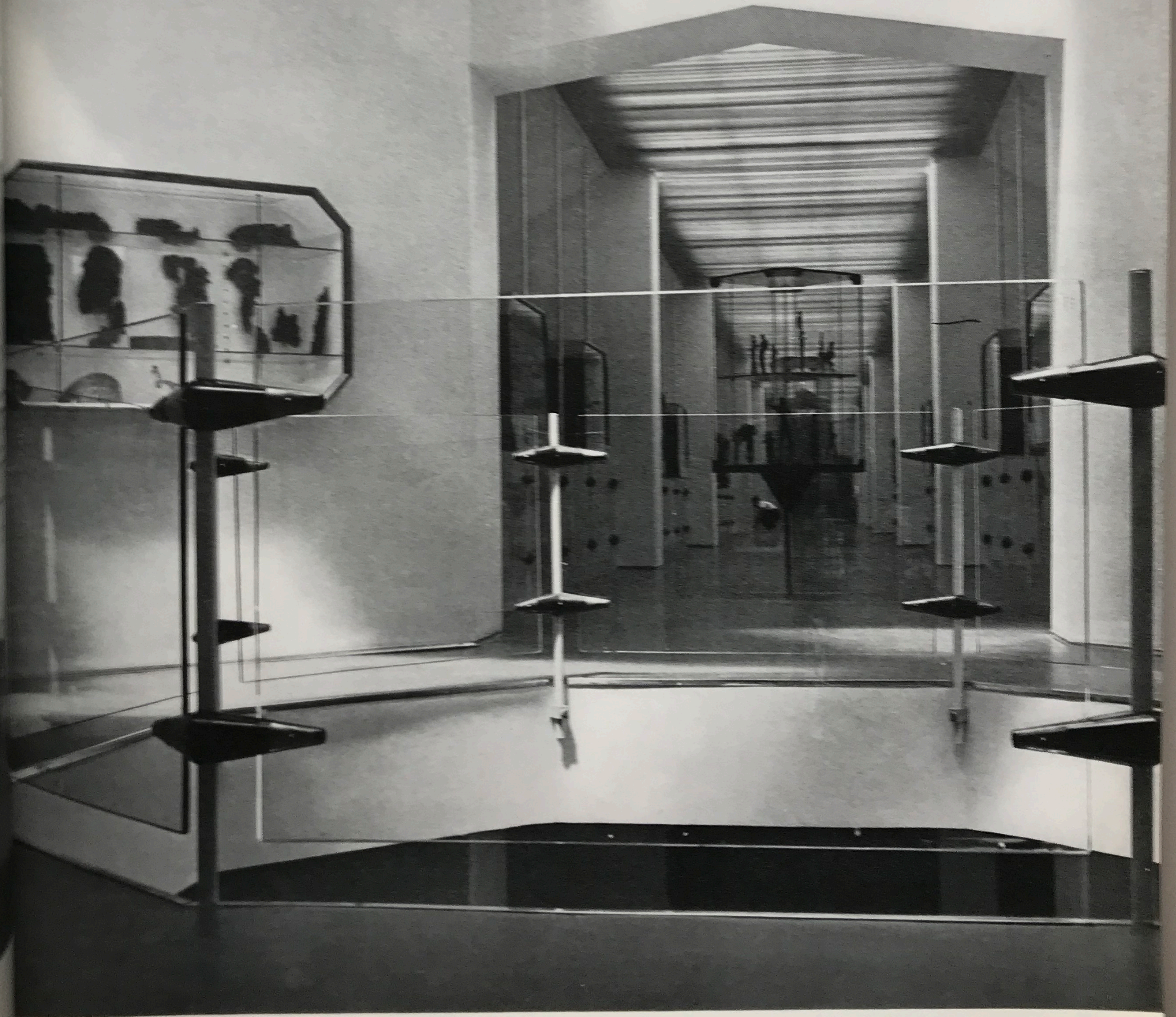
The gallery: glass-railed catwalk on concrete shoulders



Reinforced concrete balcony rests on concrete frame incorporated into remains of old wall partitions; slanted cove eliminates dark corners, reflects light from skylight.



ominating polygon: success in the skylight, but does the museum look like a showroom? A recurring criticism of the polished wood shadow box.

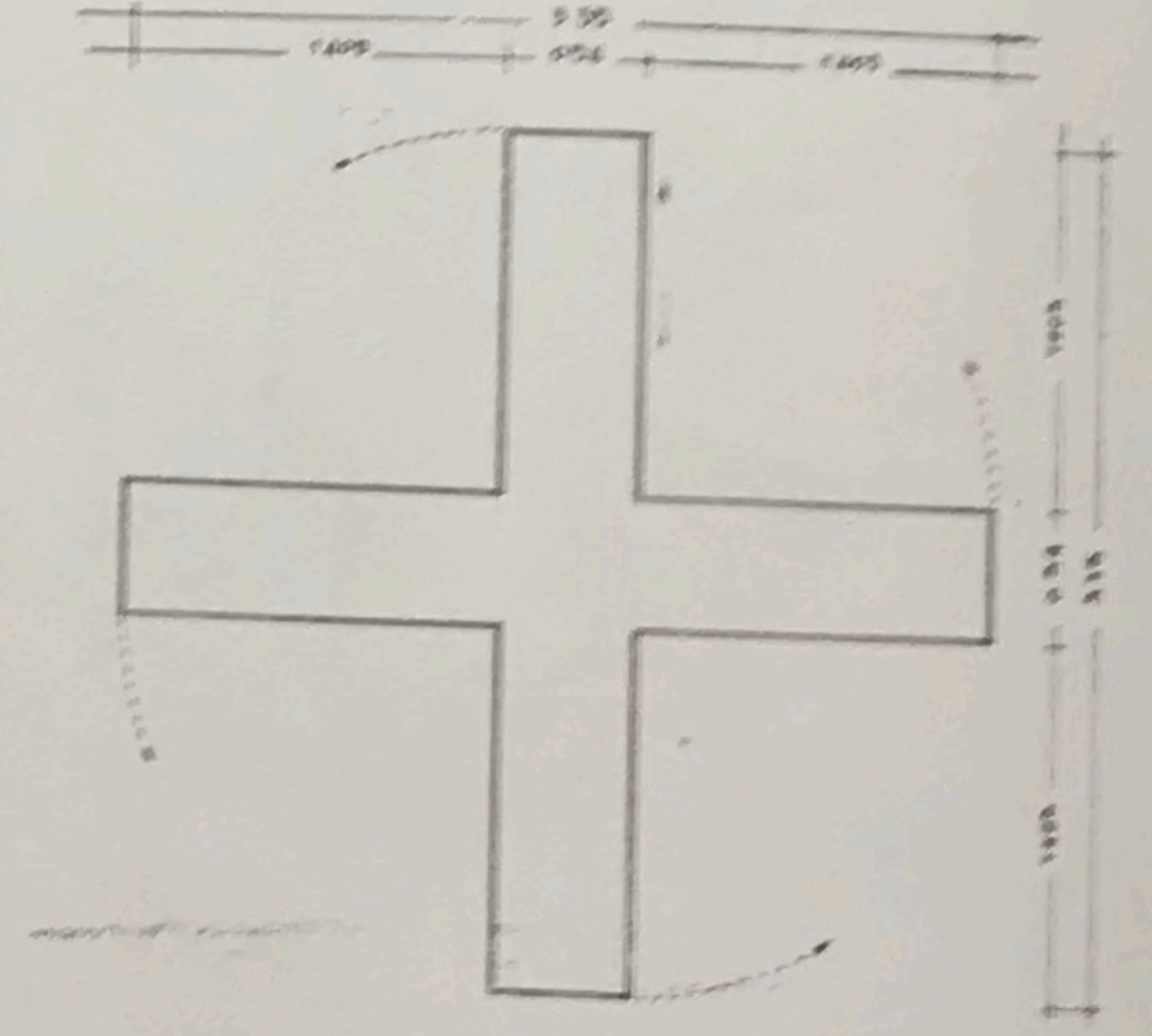
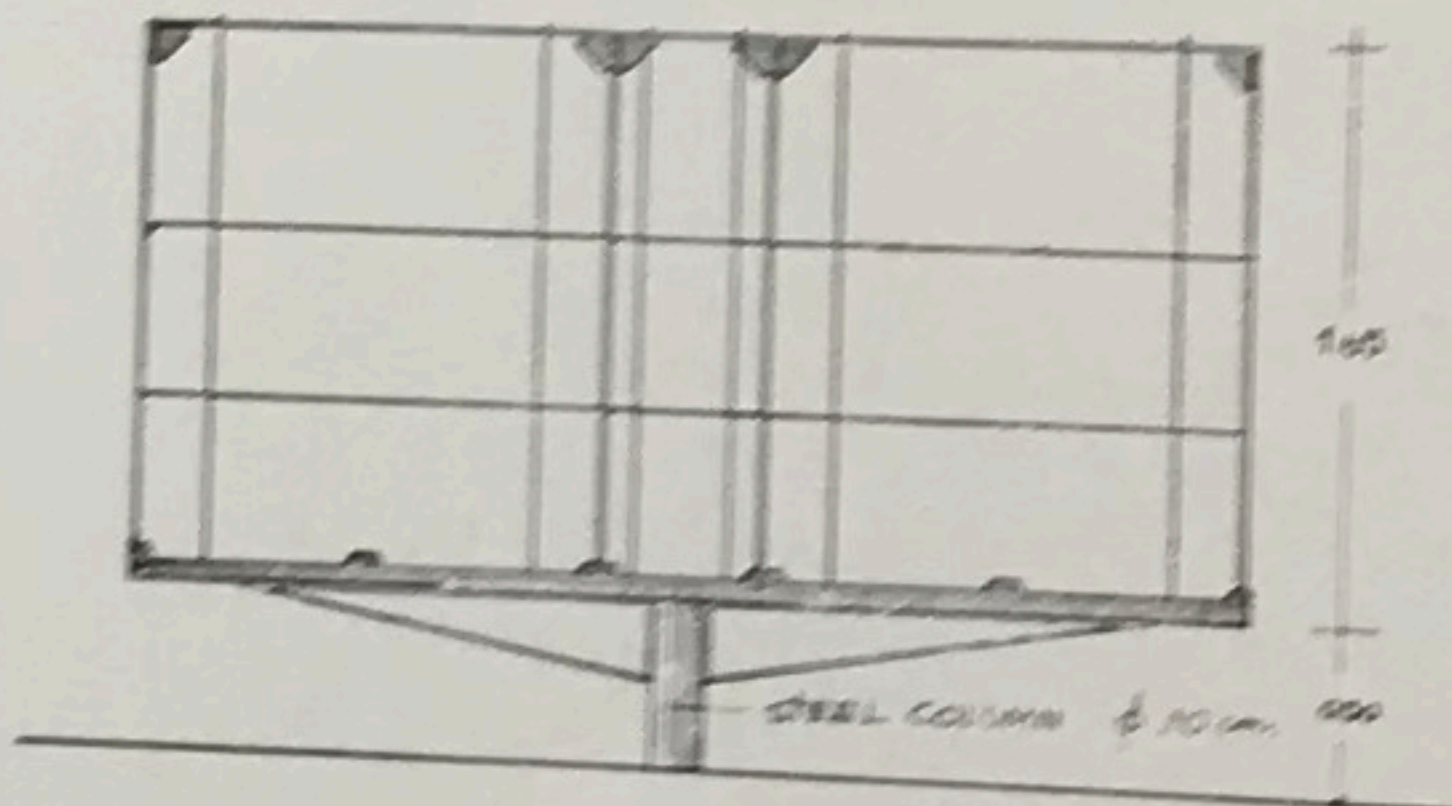


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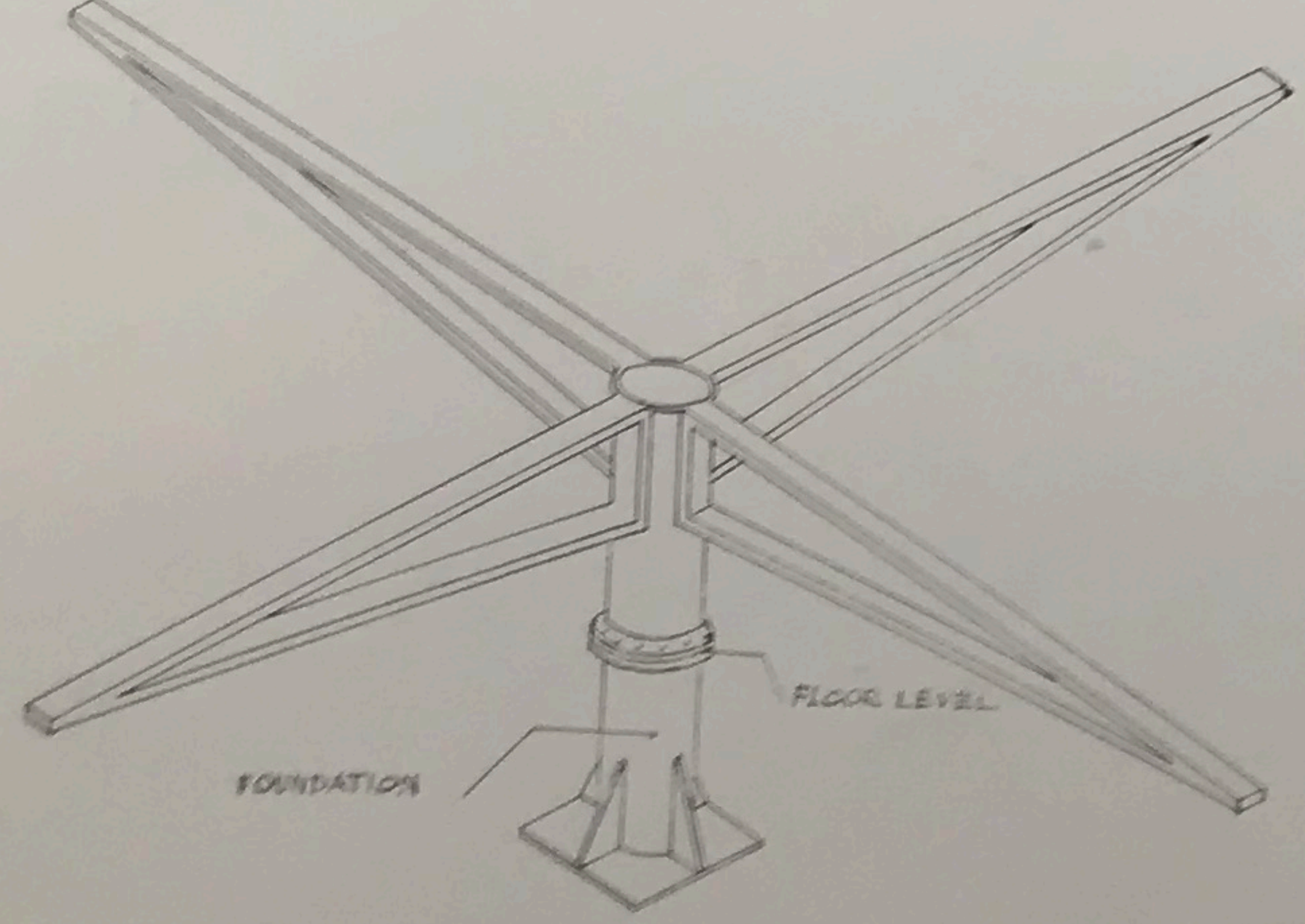
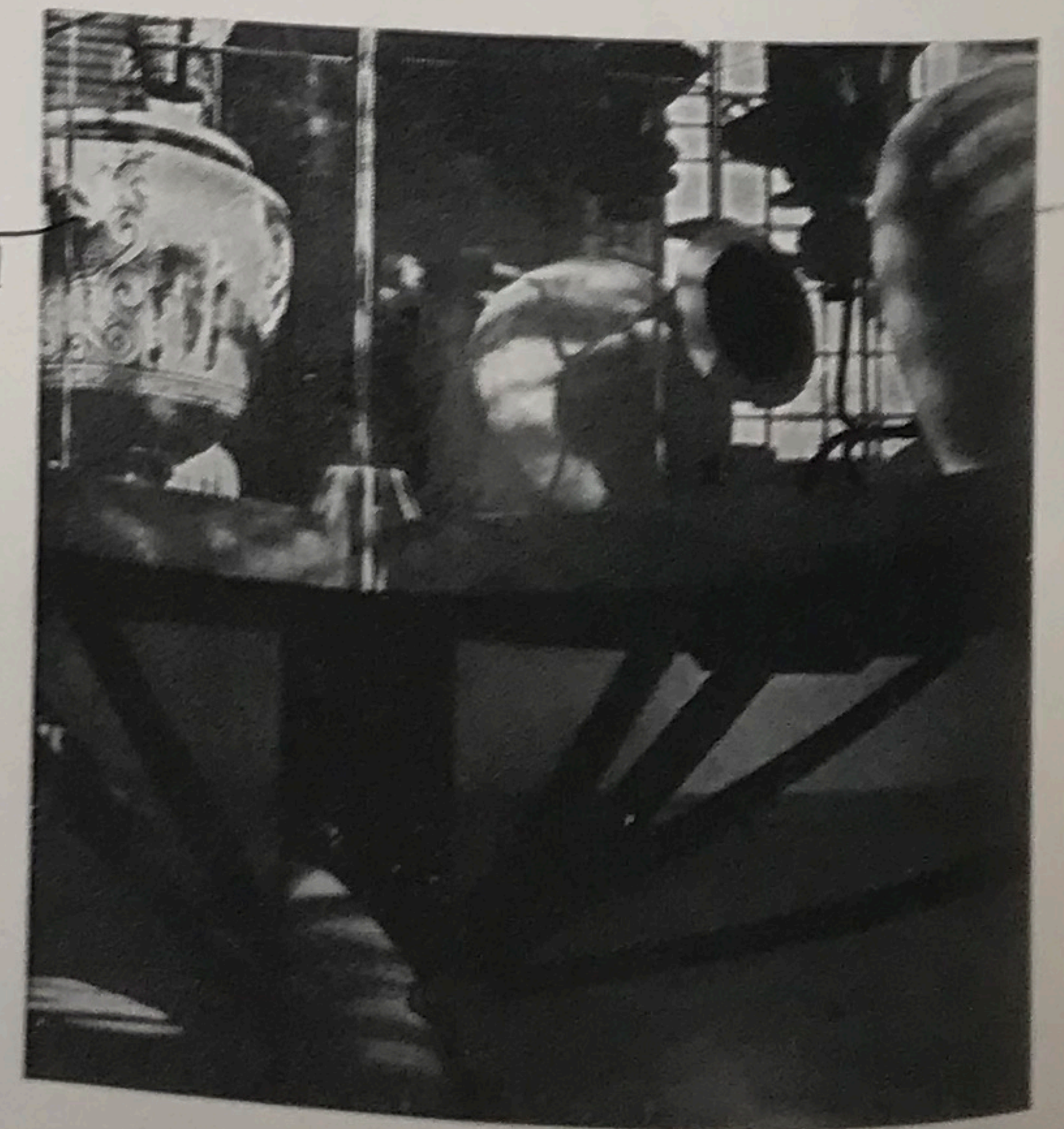
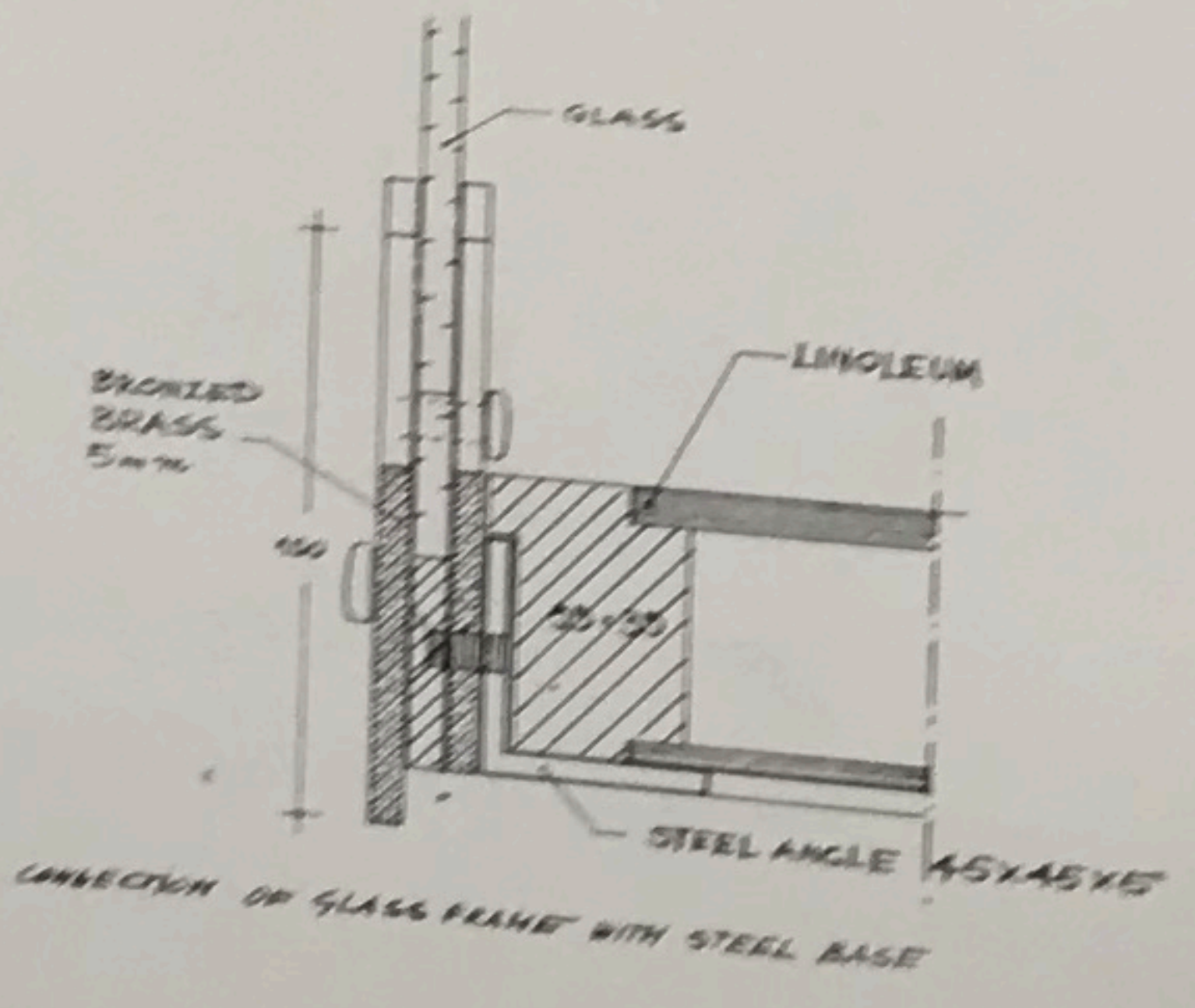


We would like to thank Dr. Mario Moretti
 and the Museum staff for their
 patient and goodhumored cooperation.

Module for the museum, airy showcase sums up its virtues and the nature of its experiments



Glass cases in several versions were
 made to architect's design by
 Fontana, Milan, to display objects
 with least visual interference.



Dark green lally column and steel angles support cruciform bronze-
 joined case. Future three-armed version will look less technical,
 eliminate reflections; too-prominent spotlights will be changed.



At the end of the balcony sits a pair of comfortable blue foam rubber and brass benches, like others in the Museum, designed by Marco Zanuso for Arflex. Behind, a view down over the first sculpture hall. Nearby, a row of III-II century cinerary urns and, to the right, the stepped passageway which marks the end of the North Wing and the link with the original villa. At the first level, its height permitted by a faceted dome like that of the vestibule below, a small widened landing shelters six gray-blue BBPR Arflex chairs and a black-iron-supported glass refreshment bar. Lit by thick inverted glass skylights, second level completes transition to high-ceilinged villa's second floor, and a new problem for the architect. Here he will have existing dark red hexagonal-tiled floors, walls that are dun-colored or covered with red damask, High Renaissance stucco and painted ceilings, of equal importance with the Etruscan works, from which to form a coherent "double museum." Only when this section is reopened can the Museum be judged as a whole and the experimental North Wing as a part.

