

Jen Aitken

CUTOUTS

Cutouts proposes to transform the Glen Road pedestrian underpass into an immersive skeletal sculpture. An intricate cast-in-place concrete relief will span the entirety of the walls, ceiling, and north retaining wall of the pedestrian tunnel, visually deconstructing its broad expanses into more intimately sized tactile components. Through its sweeping scale and punchy geometric shapes, *Cutouts* will attract the passing public's attention with strong visual impact, giving a sense of specificity to an otherwise generic piece of urban infrastructure. Repeated visits may reveal different details and characteristics of the artwork, in different light and weather conditions, developing an intuitive bodily understanding of the tunnel and surrounding area over time.

The shapes of the composition are derived from my ongoing observations of the built environment in Toronto. Without steering the public toward a predetermined meaning, the abstract shapes of *Cutouts* will indirectly evoke a number of ideas and interpretations. The irregular grid-like arrangement of the shapes, for example, suggests a simplified city map. The layered positive and negative spaces in the concrete walls might recall the overlapping leaves and gaps of light that form the tree canopy over Rosedale Valley. The prominent theme of layering in *Cutouts* can be seen as a conceptual response to the rich accretion of the project site: The different trajectories of Bloor Street, Glen Road, the subway line, and the Rosedale Valley are all layered on top of one another, and their intersection has influenced each of their respective forms and structures over time. By introducing convoluted and overlapping contours into the Glen Road tunnel, Cutouts will offer a poetic perspective on the ad-hoc history of the area.

I designed the relief by imagining three slabs of material layered onto the tunnel surfaces, and cutting out a different composition of shapes from each layer. The misalignment of all of these stacked voids will create additional unexpected shapes that are nested together. Though the concrete underpass will be cast in one single pour, its surfaces will still suggest it is made of three of three laminated slabs, which the observant public might imagine sliding like panels to discover more shapes through other possible misalignments.

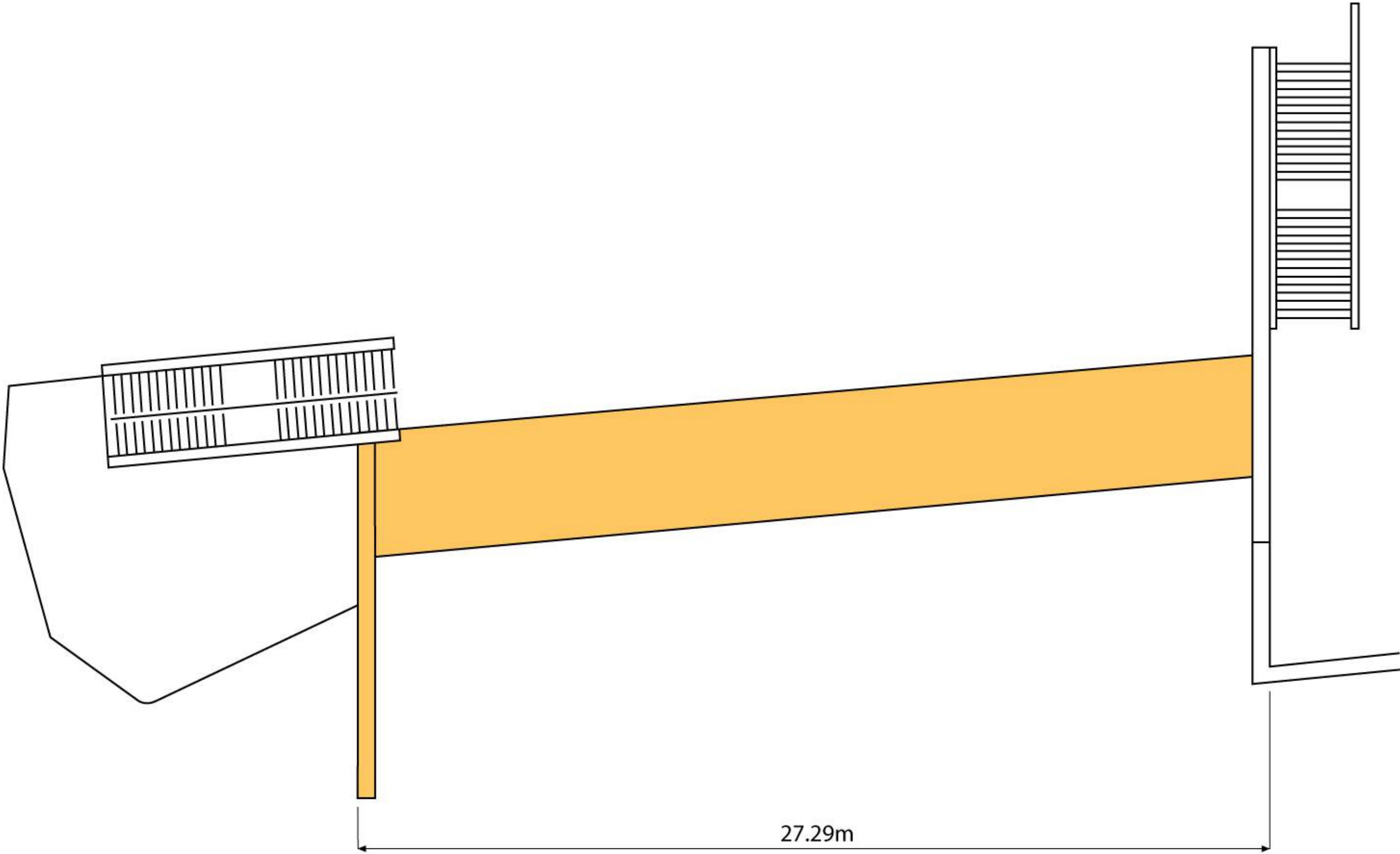
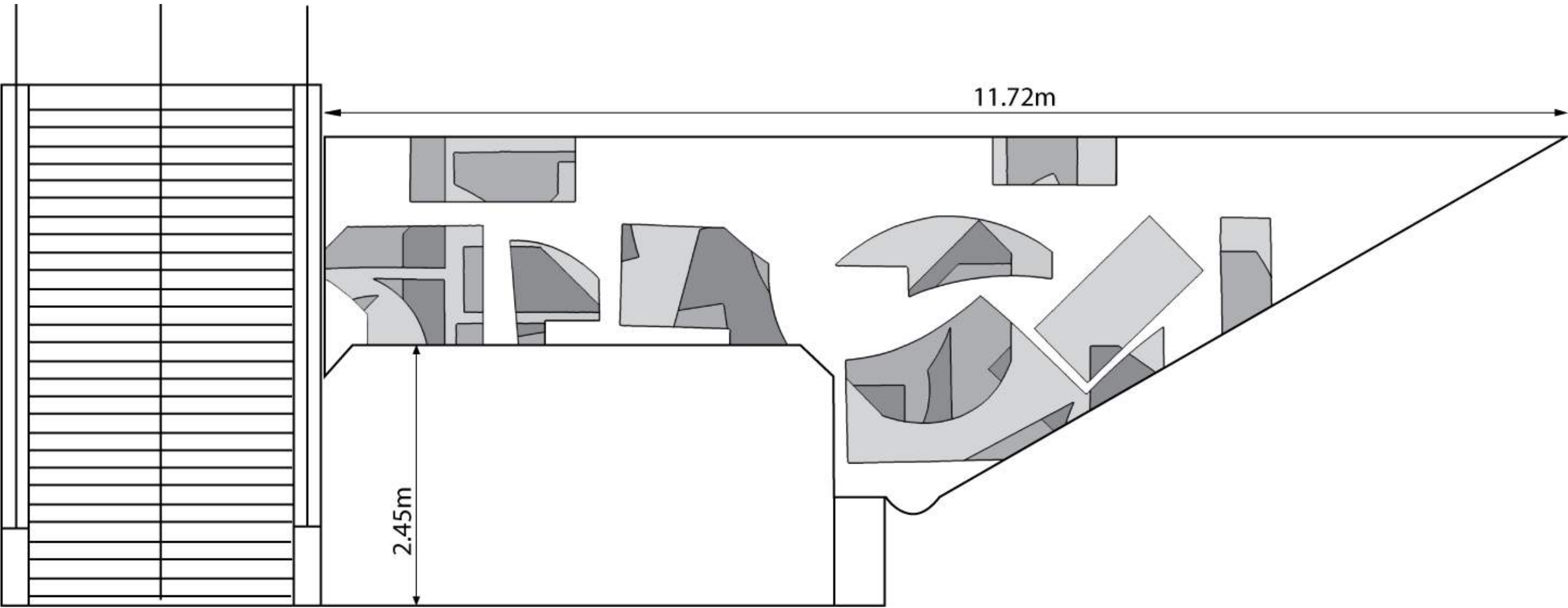
Like much traditional relief work in stone architecture, *Cutouts* will make the underpass surfaces appear more permeable — tempering the often imposing material nature of concrete with depth, texture, shadow-play, and a delicacy. By introducing idiosyncrasy and animated detail into the underpass, *Cutouts* will add nuance to the juxtaposition of the built structures of the area and the dense urban ecology of the Rosedale Valley. As an increasingly busy thoroughfare, the Glen Road site presents a compelling challenge for a sculptor: How can an artwork engage with three-dimensional space without physically obstructing the public's path? In response, *Cutouts* proposes a simple but extensive intervention into the construction process of the new underpass. Without adding any additional material to the site, *Cutouts* will amplify the sculptural qualities



inherent to the tunnel itself, offering the public an immersive experience of texture, line, plane, and material process.

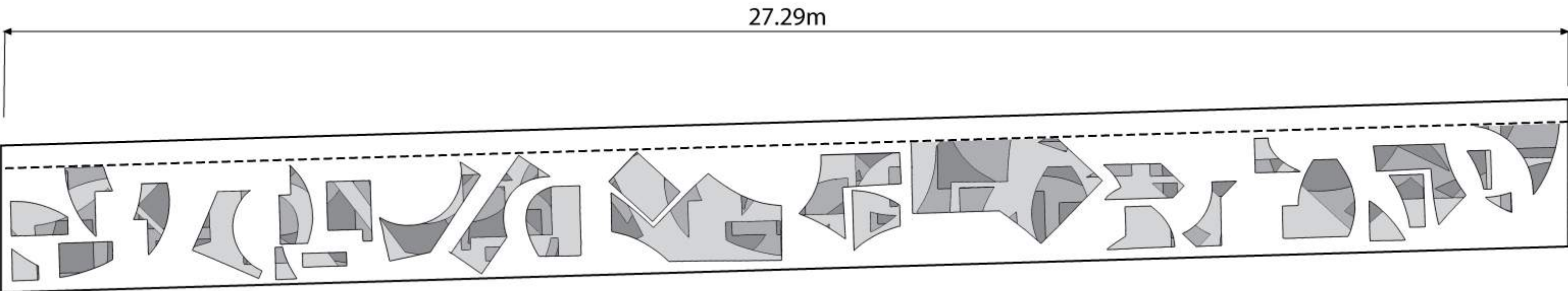
My fundamental aim for this project is to invite passing pedestrians to slow down and momentarily become attentive and curious viewers, observing a commonplace piece of infrastructure as a work of sculpture. I hope that the conscious perception *Cutouts* encourages might linger, providing an aesthetic lens through which area residents and visitors may view their broader urban environment and enrich their everyday visual awareness.

- ☐ Concrete at 0 inches deep
- ☐ Concrete at 3/4 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 1 1/2 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 2 1/4 in deep

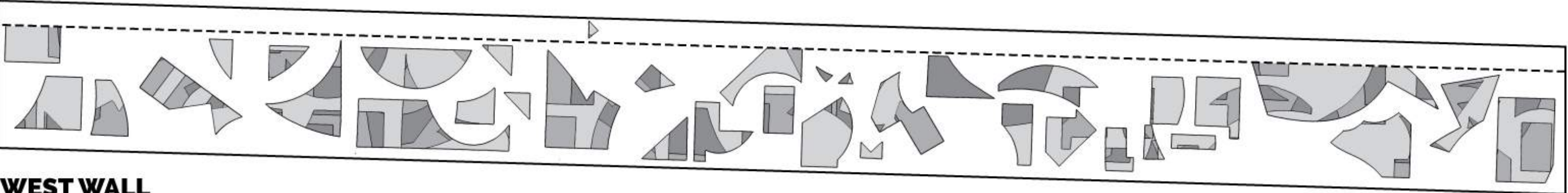


Interior Tunnel Patterns

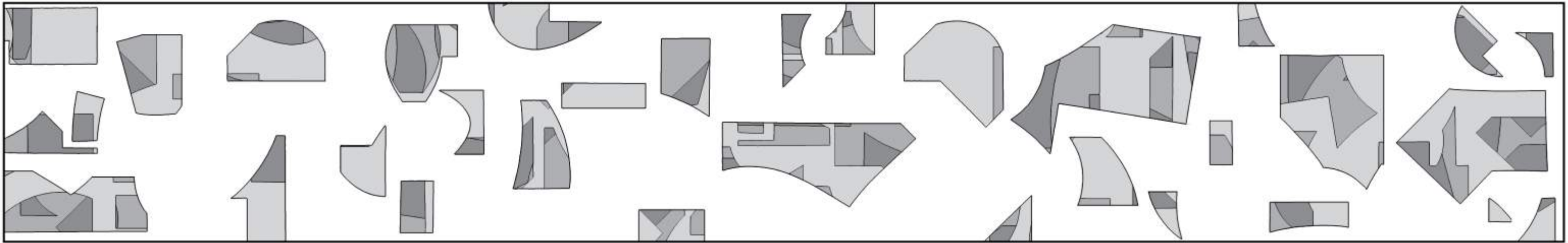
- ☐ Concrete at 0 inches deep
- ☐ Concrete at 3/4 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 1 1/2 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 2 1/4 in deep



EAST WALL



WEST WALL



CEILING

Unfolded Interior Tunnel Patterns

- ☐ Concrete at 0 inches deep
- ☐ Concrete at 3/4 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 1 1/2 in deep
- ☐ Concrete at 2 1/4 in deep

