

A black and white photograph of the Cooper Union building facade. The building features a series of large, arched doorways on the ground floor, each flanked by tall, rectangular columns. Above the arches is a row of windows. A group of people is gathered in the arches and on the sidewalk in front of the building. Some are standing, some are sitting on the steps of the arches. The overall scene is a busy, public space.

CONSTRUCTION GUIDE

FREE AS AIR AND WATER

A LITTLE FREE LIBRARY AT THE COOPER UNION
may - september 2013

Design Team: The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture's Design III studio with Maja Hjertén Knutson and Christopher Taleff, design leaders; Michael Young, David Allin and Lydia Kallipoliti, faculty team

Community Partner: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Architecture

We have sited our Little Free Library project in the gaps between the double columns in the portico of the foundation building at The Cooper Union. The idea is to have books fill the voids and thereby make use of these little forgotten public spaces. One of Peter Cooper's original programs for his "Union" was a free reading room on the first floor. At the time of its opening in 1859, all libraries in New York City were private, requiring membership for entry. The Cooper Union's reading room was the only one that was open at night, providing an literary escape for the working classes. It had a large collection of both domestic and foreign newspapers. By 1863, the room received 4,000 visitors per week, more than all other reading rooms and libraries in the city combined. With the renovation of the Cooper Union in the 1970s, the public reading room was closed.

It is through the inspiration of this first historic reading room at Cooper that we wish to approach the project, re-emphasizing the book itself, the act of reading, and the potential for a free exchange unconstrained by curatorial oversight. The Little Free Library offers the potential for respite and a moment's escape from the city, but chance encounter as well. Peter Cooper thought that education should be "free as air and water". We would like this project to echo Cooper's own ethos of the exchange of thought, ideas, and knowledge.

We are using a thin but strong steel frame as a bookstack. The idea is to create a rather discrete structure, directing the attention to the books as free objects floating in the the public space.

The steel frame can be adapted to different conditions and sites. We are using a brake to bend the steel plates. This method provides an infinite number of possible shapes and forms for the bookshelves, that become unique and site-specific wherever they are inserted.



MATERIAL LIST

1' x 8' STEEL SHEETS, THICKNESS 10 gauge = 3/16"

CLEAR COAT SPRAY PAINT

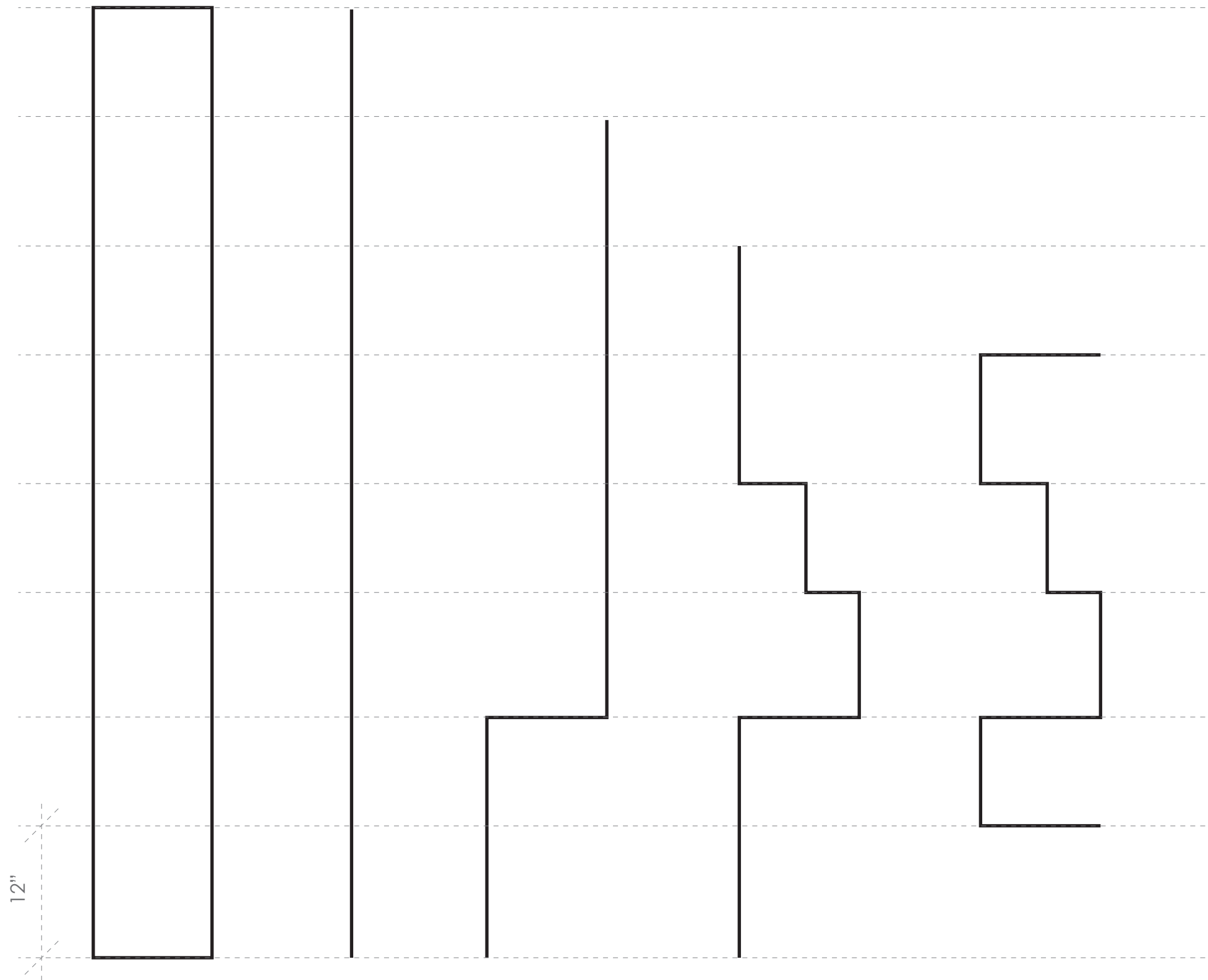
ADHESIVE RUBBER FILM

BOOKS

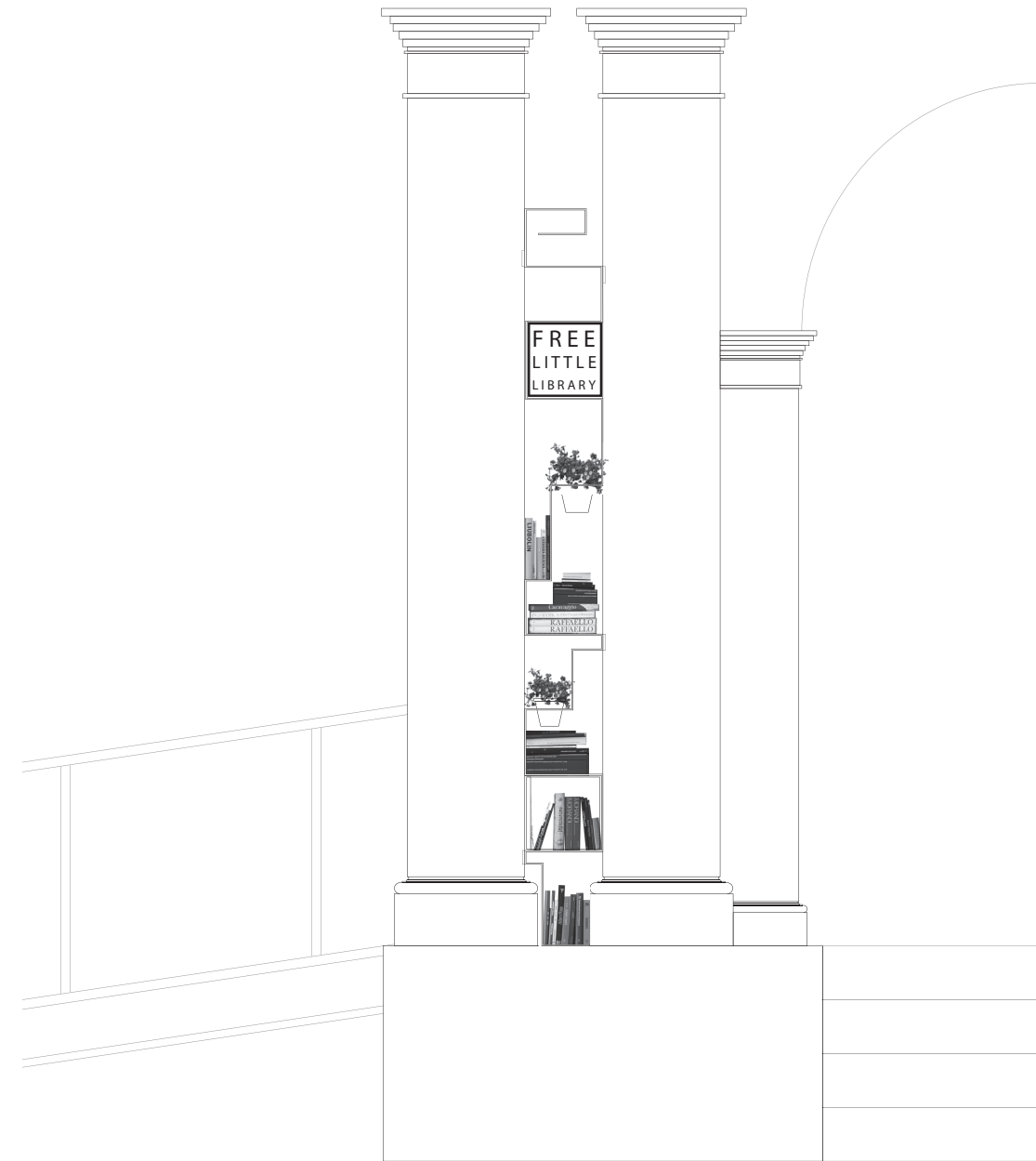
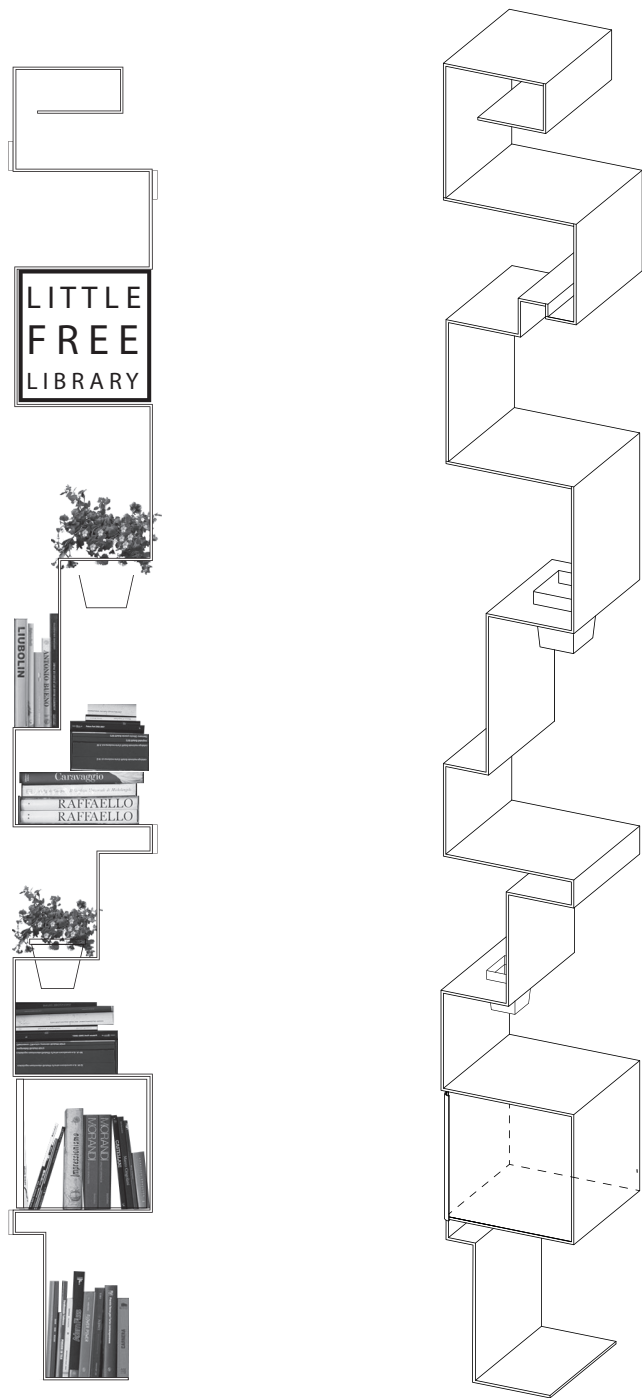
HOW TO CONTRUCT

1. FIND AN UNUSED GAP IN A PUBLIC SPACE.
2. BEND STEEL PLATES (PEREFEABLY WITH HELP FROM SOME GOOD FRIENDS).
3. SPRAYPAINT THE STEEL WITH A CLEAR COAT.
4. IF THE LIBRARY WILL BE ISTALLED ON A SITE WHERE THERE IS A RISK OF DAMAGING THE SURROUNDING MATERIALS, AN ADHEVISE RUBBER FILM CAN BE MOUNTED ON TO THE OUTSIDE OF THE STEEL PLATES.
5. INSERT BOOKSTACKS INSIDE GAP.
6. INSERT BOOKS.

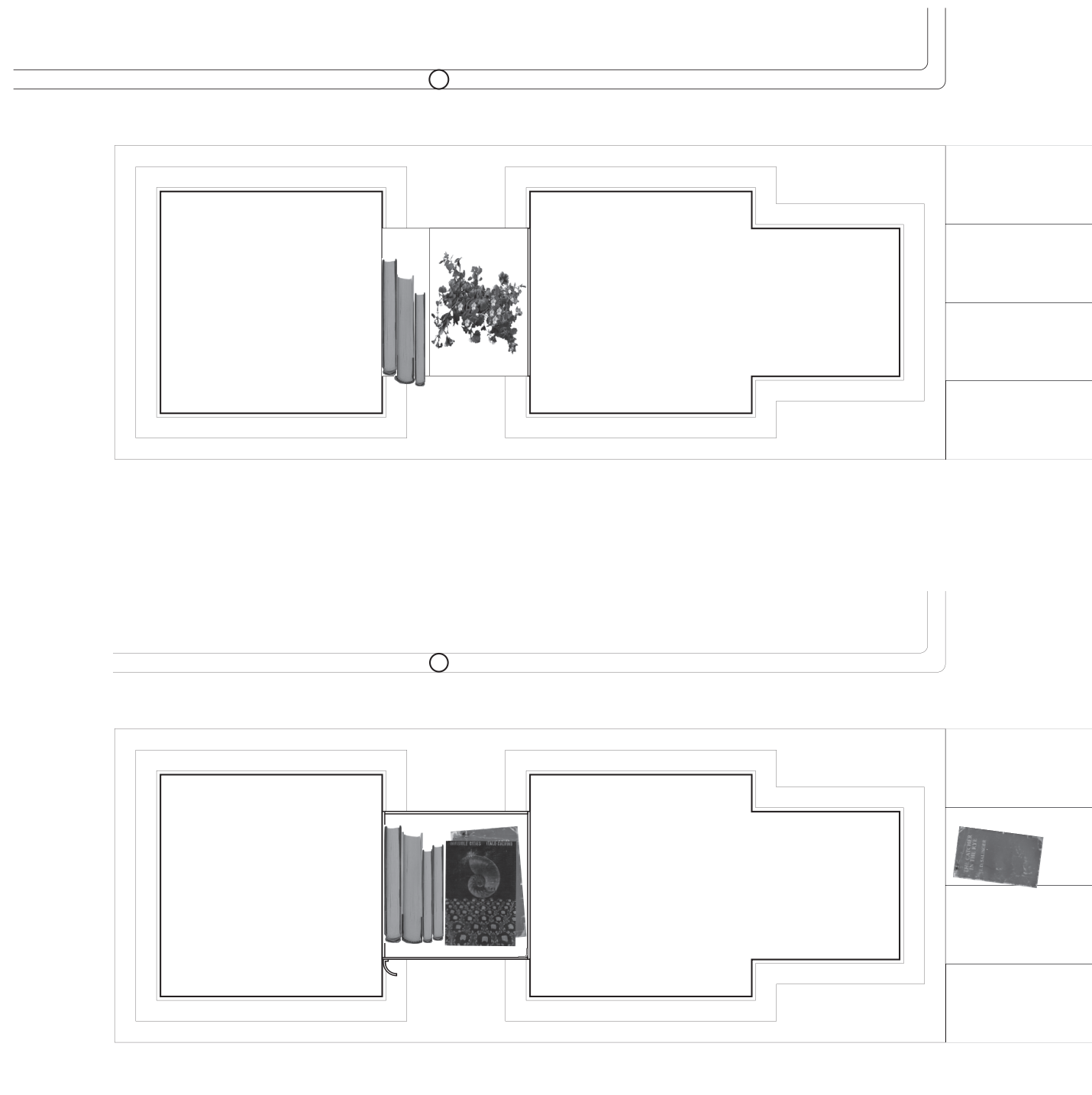




FRONT AND SIDE ELEVATIONS - BENDING STEEL SHEETS 1" = 1' - 0



ELEVATION 1" = 1' - 0



PLANS 3" = 1' - 0



