
Drawing, Dwelling and Cultivating Agricultural Imagination

Xue Wei

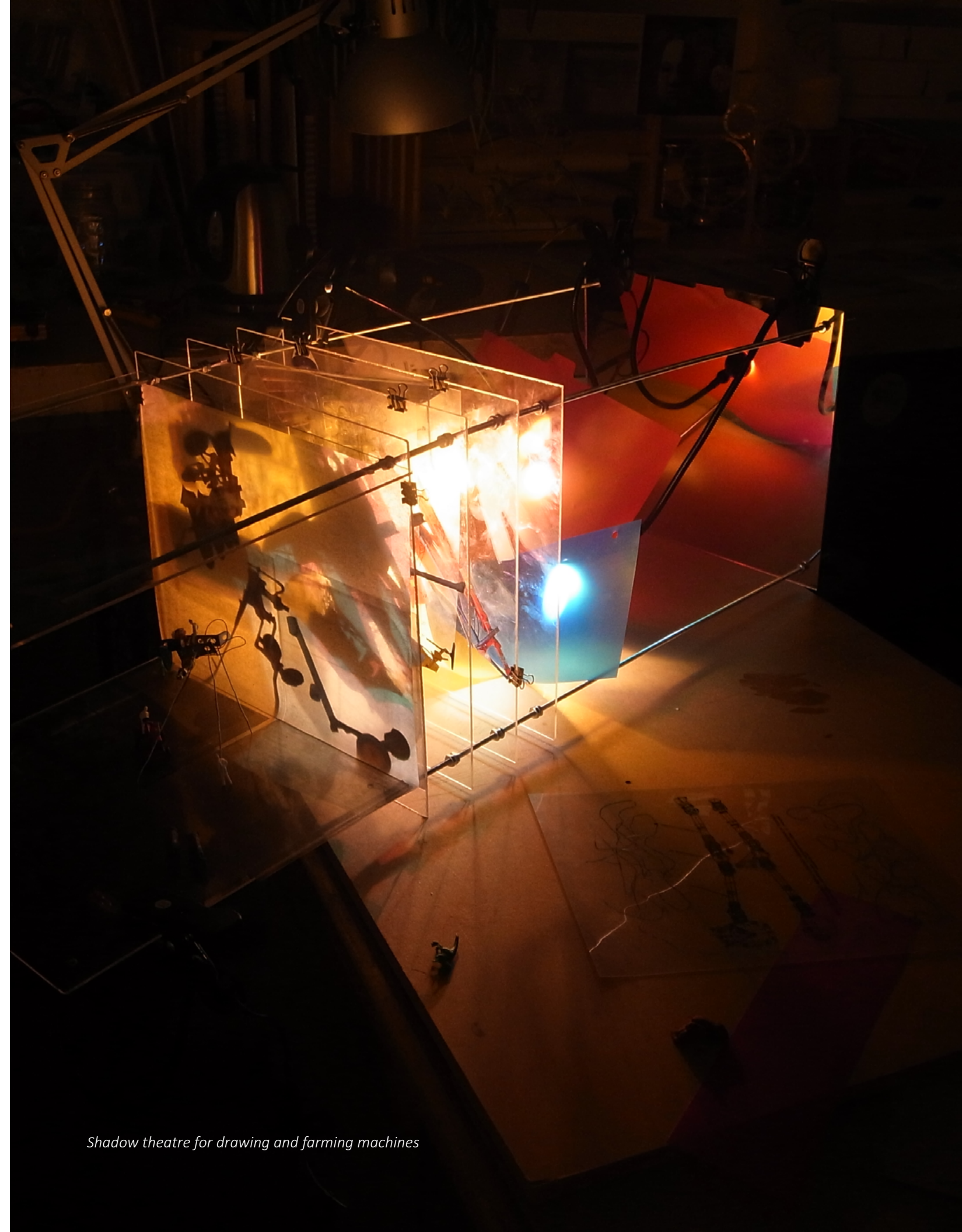
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In an era of instant information, when everything seems to be explained away, Phantasmagoria Studio challenged students to genuinely wonder about the world, about regional topographies, about shared human conditions, and about architecture.

In response to this challenge, Xue Wei pursued his fascination with the fantastic agricultural equipment and landscapes surrounding and shaping the city of Winnipeg. His project began by studying how farming machines, both new and old, geometrically re-configure the earth by drawing large-scale on, in and with the ground. Though techniques of collage and capriccio, and engaging fragments of tractors, plows, combines and threshers, Wei fabricated a fleet of analogous drawing machines. This ensemble of re-invented equipment generated a crop of geographic shadow studies, yielding both illuminating imagery and wonder-inducing dwellings: one permanently perched within an irrigation system's pivoting armature, others ephemerally arrayed in its orbit. Planted on the expansive property of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin, this "machine for living" brings order to the surrounding campsite, where thousands of visitors gather each year for the Thresherman's Reunion—a kind-of Burning Man Festival for the Canadian heartland, celebrating Manitoba's agricultural history with parades of antique farm machines. The central dwelling is designed for the festival's grounds-keeper, providing a place to live, sleep and dream amid fields periodically flooded with farming-enthusiasts. Made from pragmatic devices associated with the agricultural trade, this seasonal dwelling serves as a magical locus of collective re-orientation, providing a place to contemplate horizons extending far beyond the obvious field.



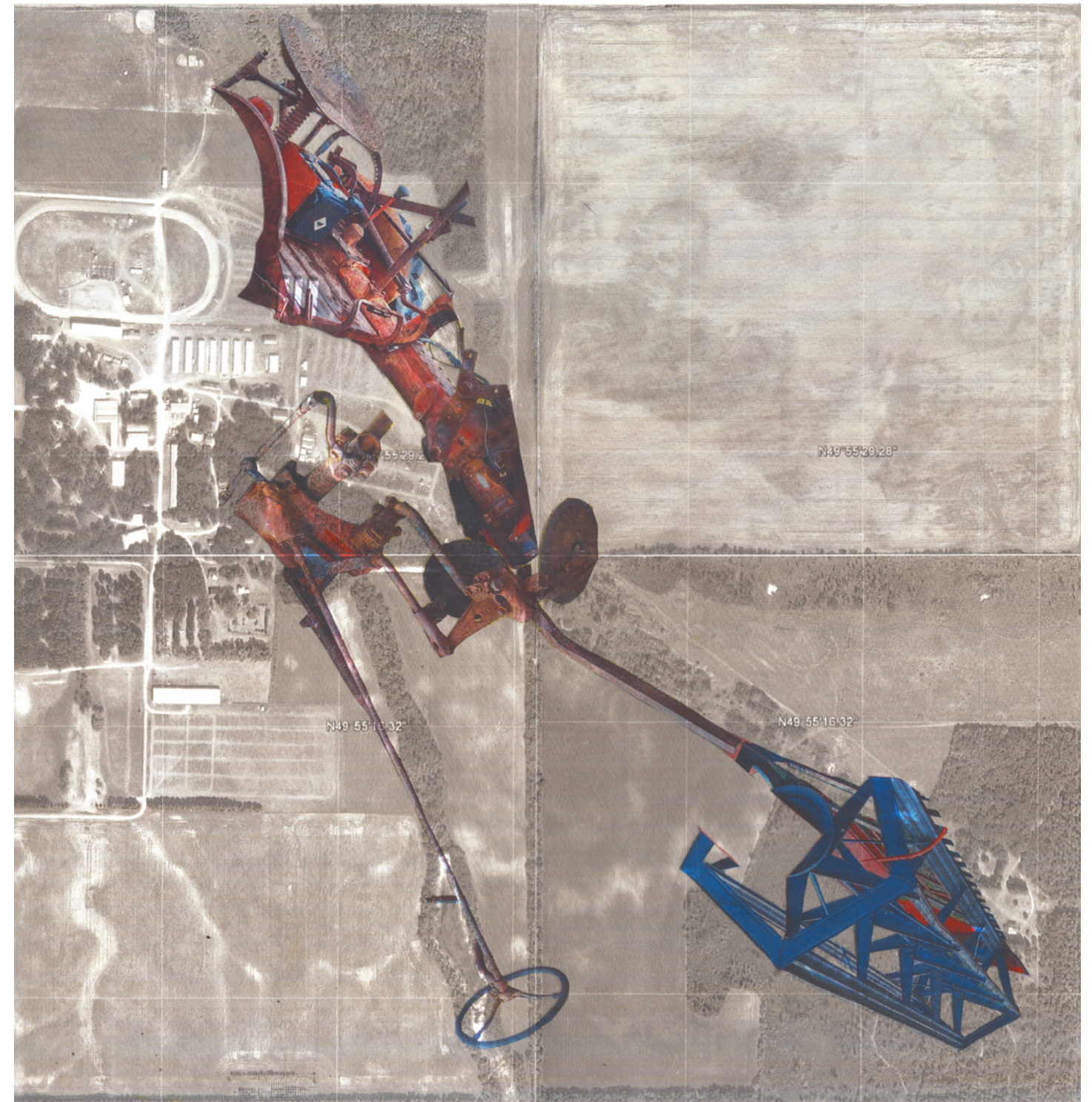
Shadow theatre for drawing and farming machines



Geographic shadow study

In the second term, Wei brought the magic of the countryside to the centre of the city by designing an urban complement to the rural museum. The new Manitoba Agricultural Museum and Farmers' Market is sited on Winnipeg's former rail yard site, at the juncture of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, known as the Forks. Located within an open area between the elevated railway and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the new Agricultural Museum is well planted: between

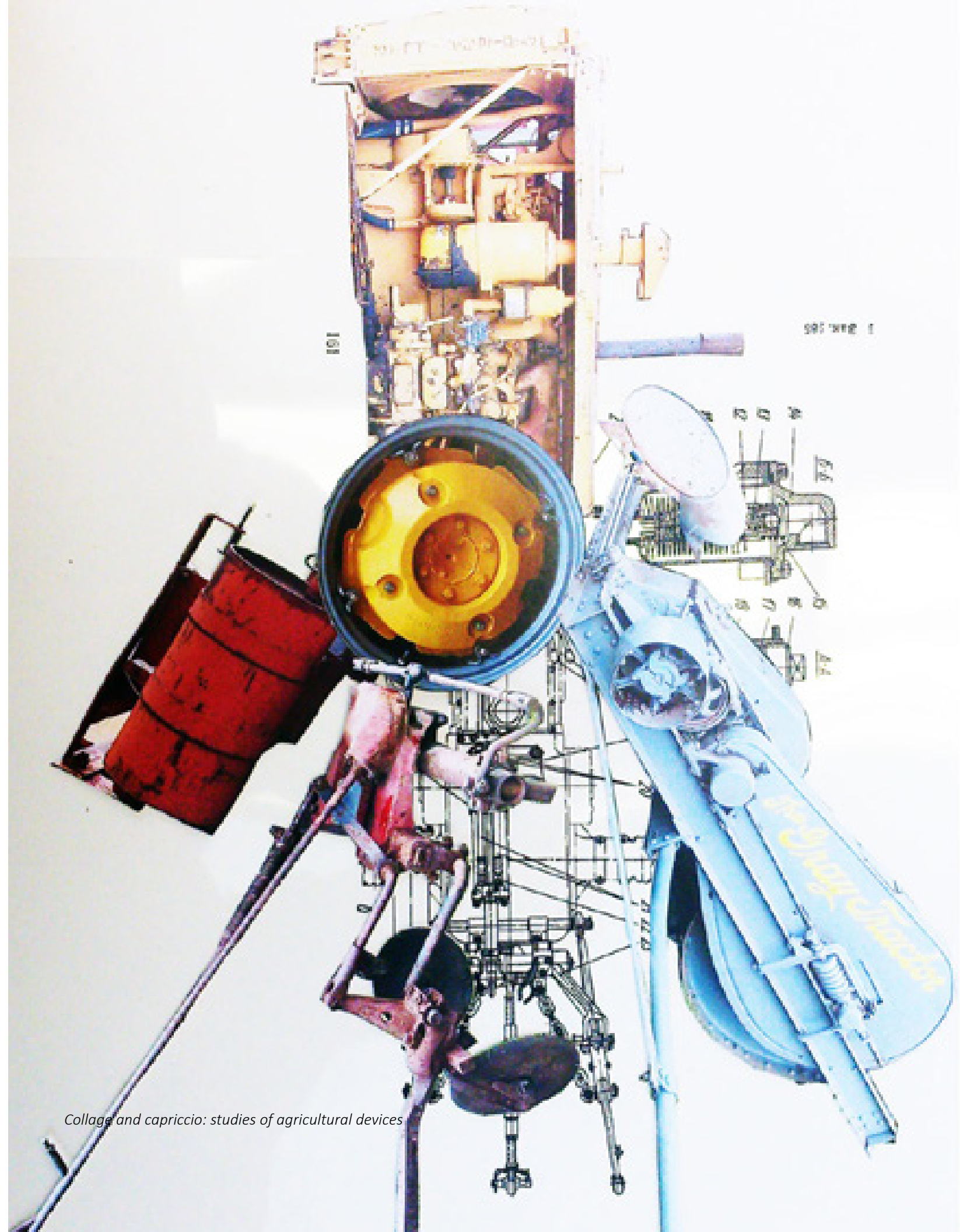
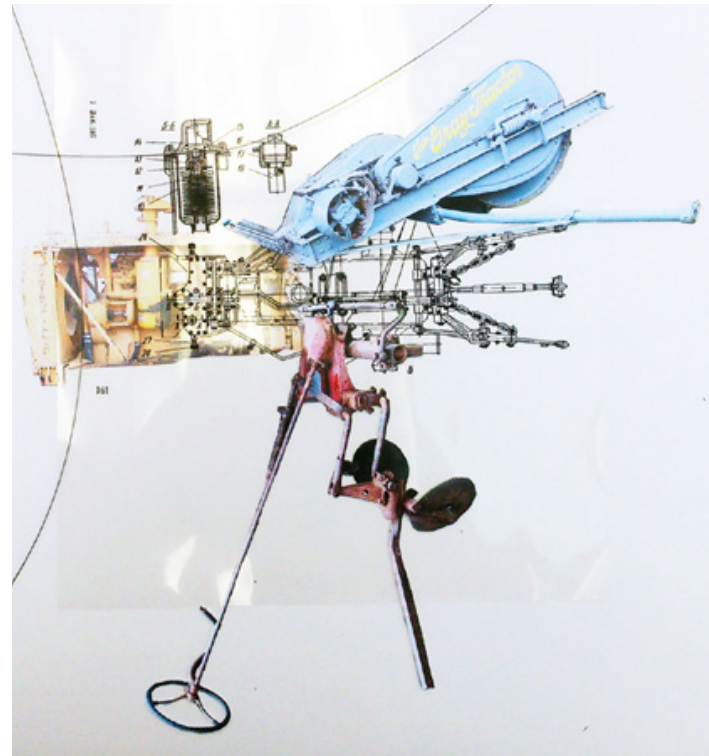
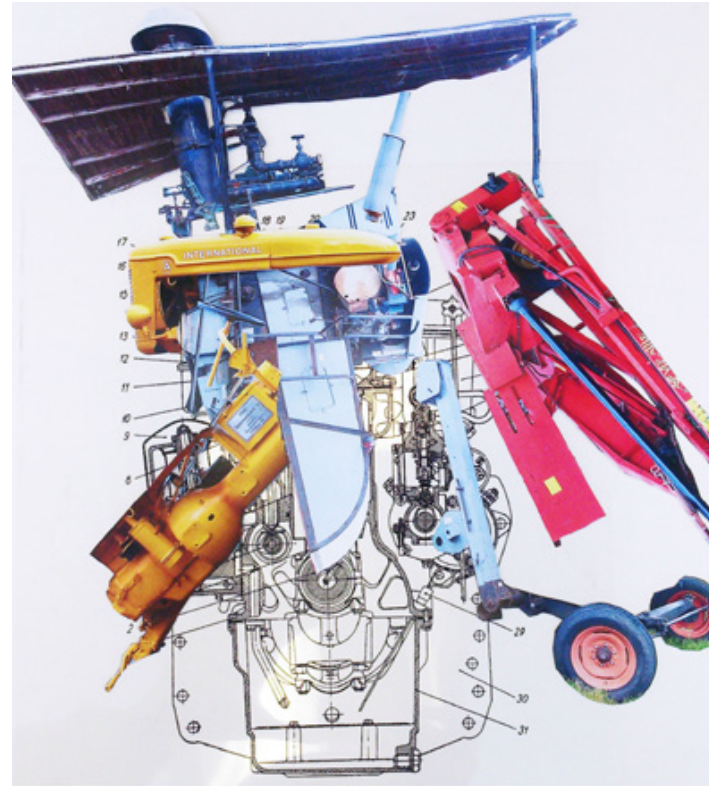
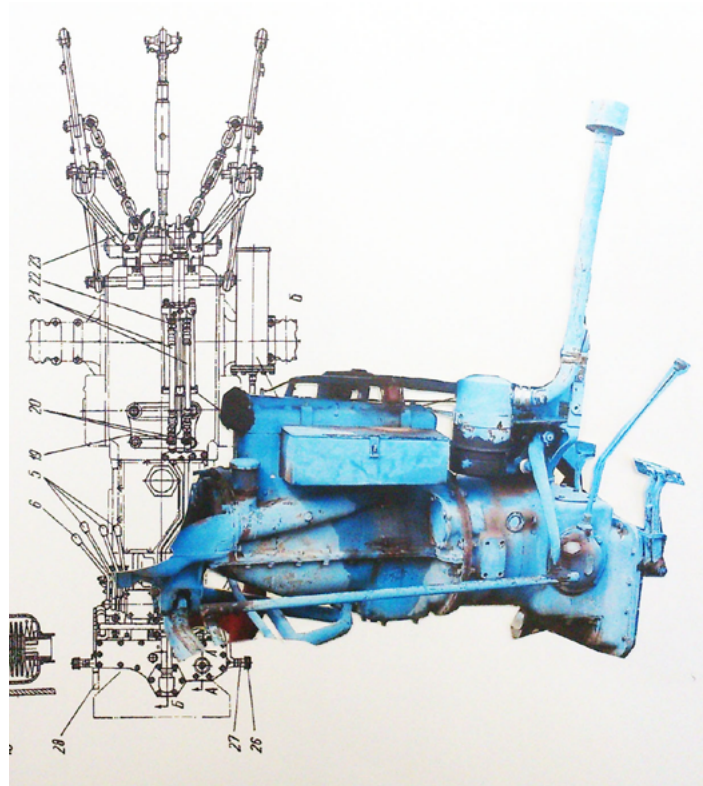
active infrastructure linked to the prairie's agricultural history, and a national institution calling for justice on many fronts—including land rights, ecological protections, and respect for indigenous sites. As a public space, the Forks is also a place of play. Designing in creative response to each of these opportunities, Wei's hybrid Museum-Market evokes a vast agrarian ruin while accommodating urban festivities in a generous marketplace and public park. The museum features



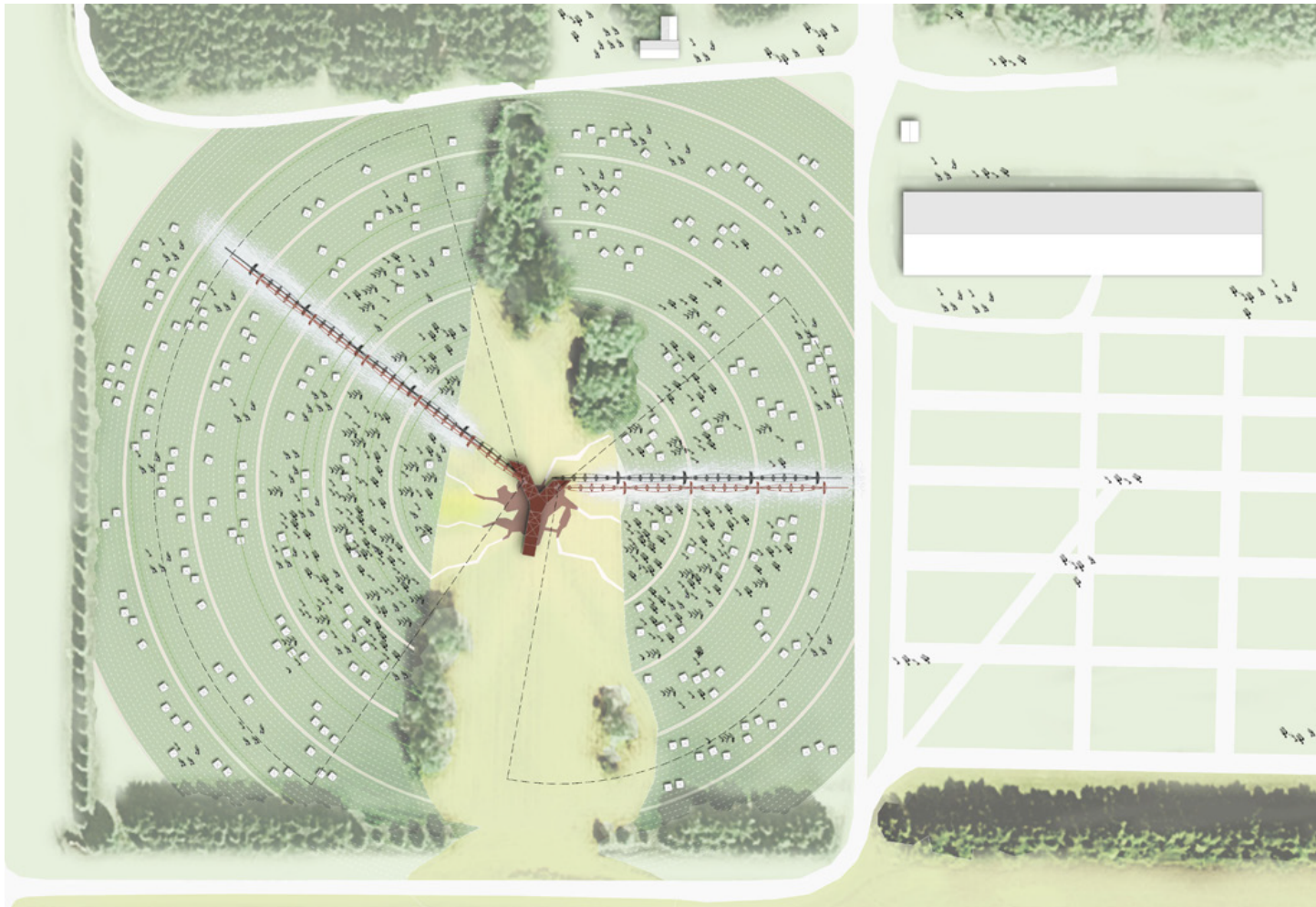
Aerial view: Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin, Manitoba

dramatic spaces for the display of agricultural equipment large and small. Backlit at night, the functional farm equipment undergoes a metamorphosis. Becoming characters in an interactive shadow play, they tell stories of transformative strife and prosperity on the prairies. The building geometries reinterpret the logic of the land; its structure learns from the syntax of silos; and its colorful finishes emanate dreams of lush and lively bounty. Roving gates, tracks and screens—

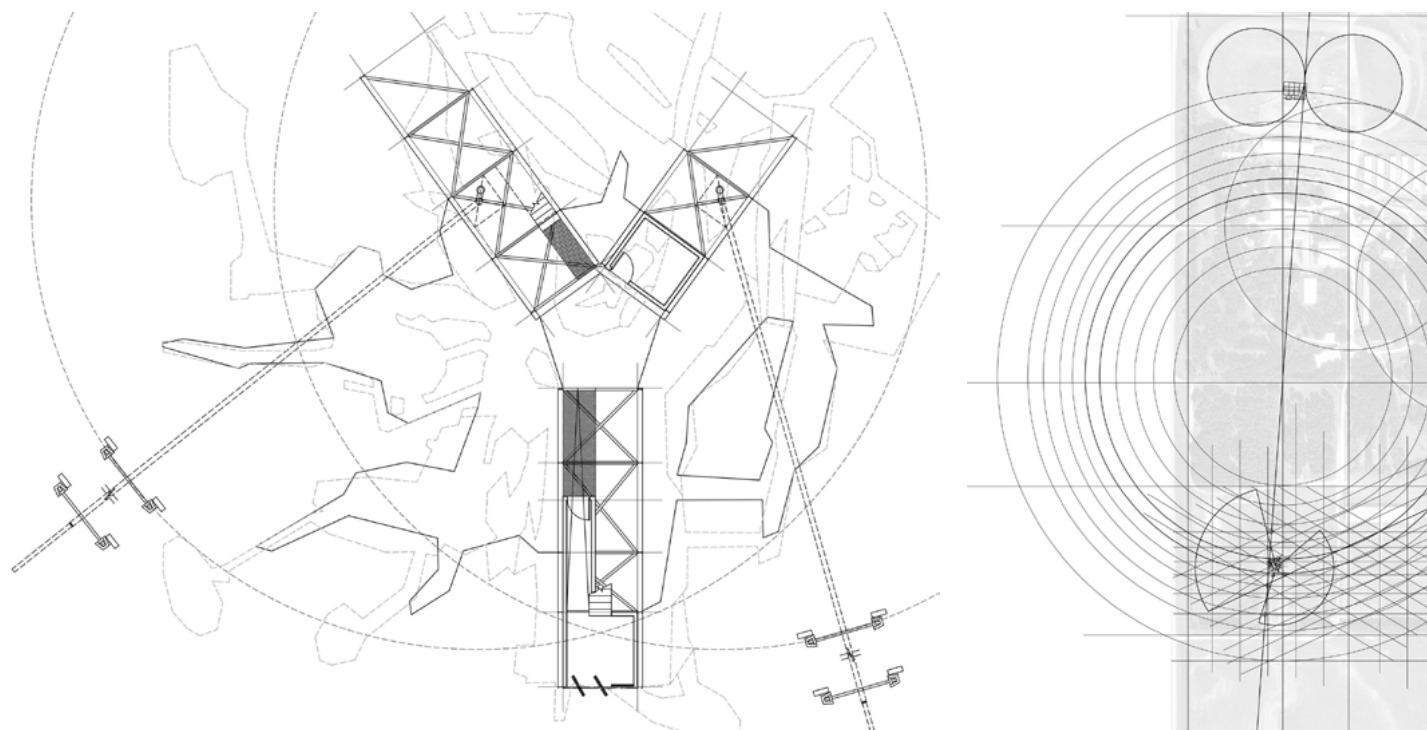
reinterpreting the rhythmic mechanisms of farms and railways—animate building thresholds, while facilitating daily deliveries of fresh produce. This phantasmagoric edifice, a machine in a garden, cultivates urbanity while reminding urban dwellers of their fundamental interdependence with surrounding farmland and nourishing dreams.



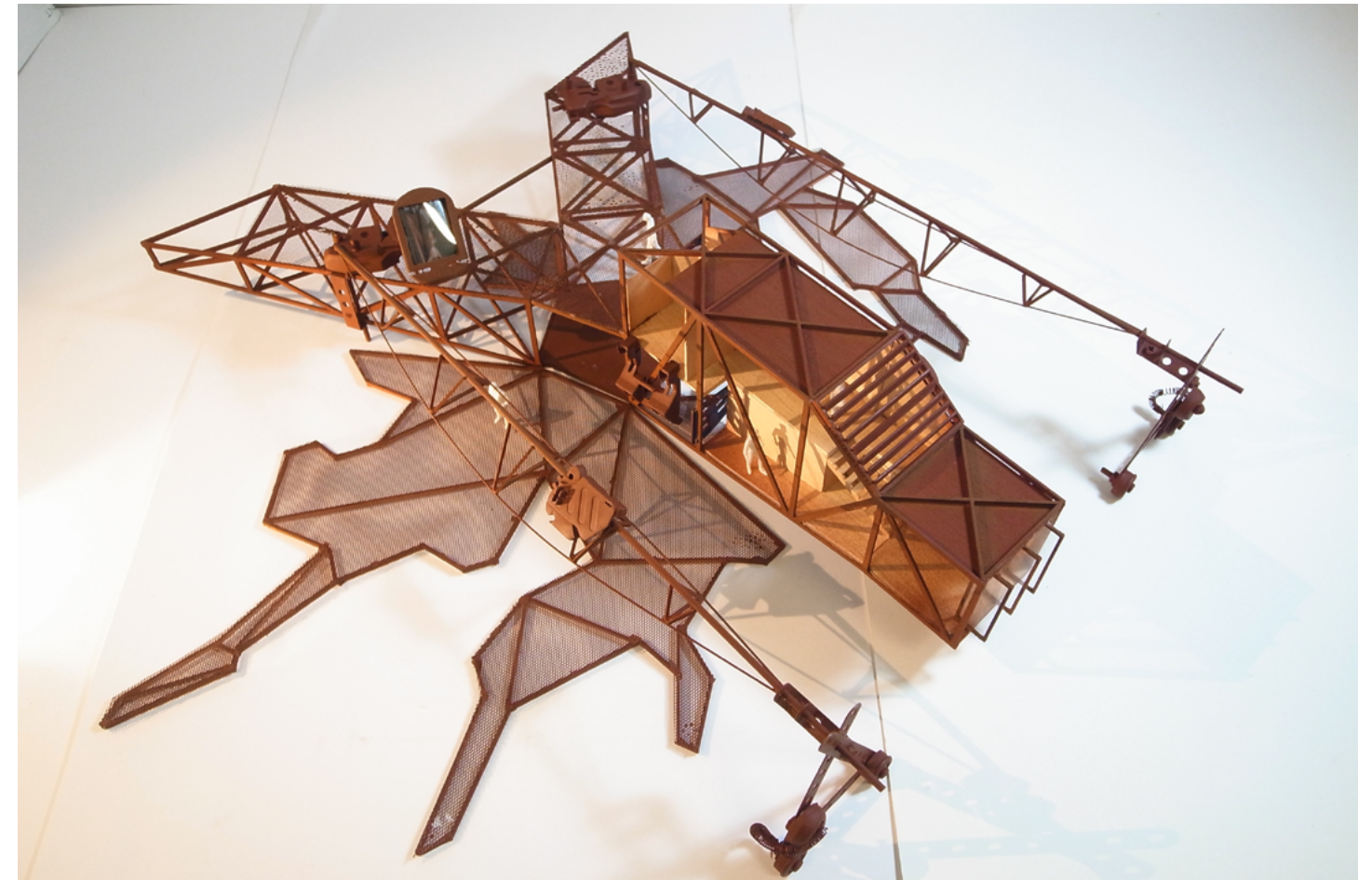
Collage and capriccio: studies of agricultural devices



Agricultural festival grounds site plan, with ordered campsite



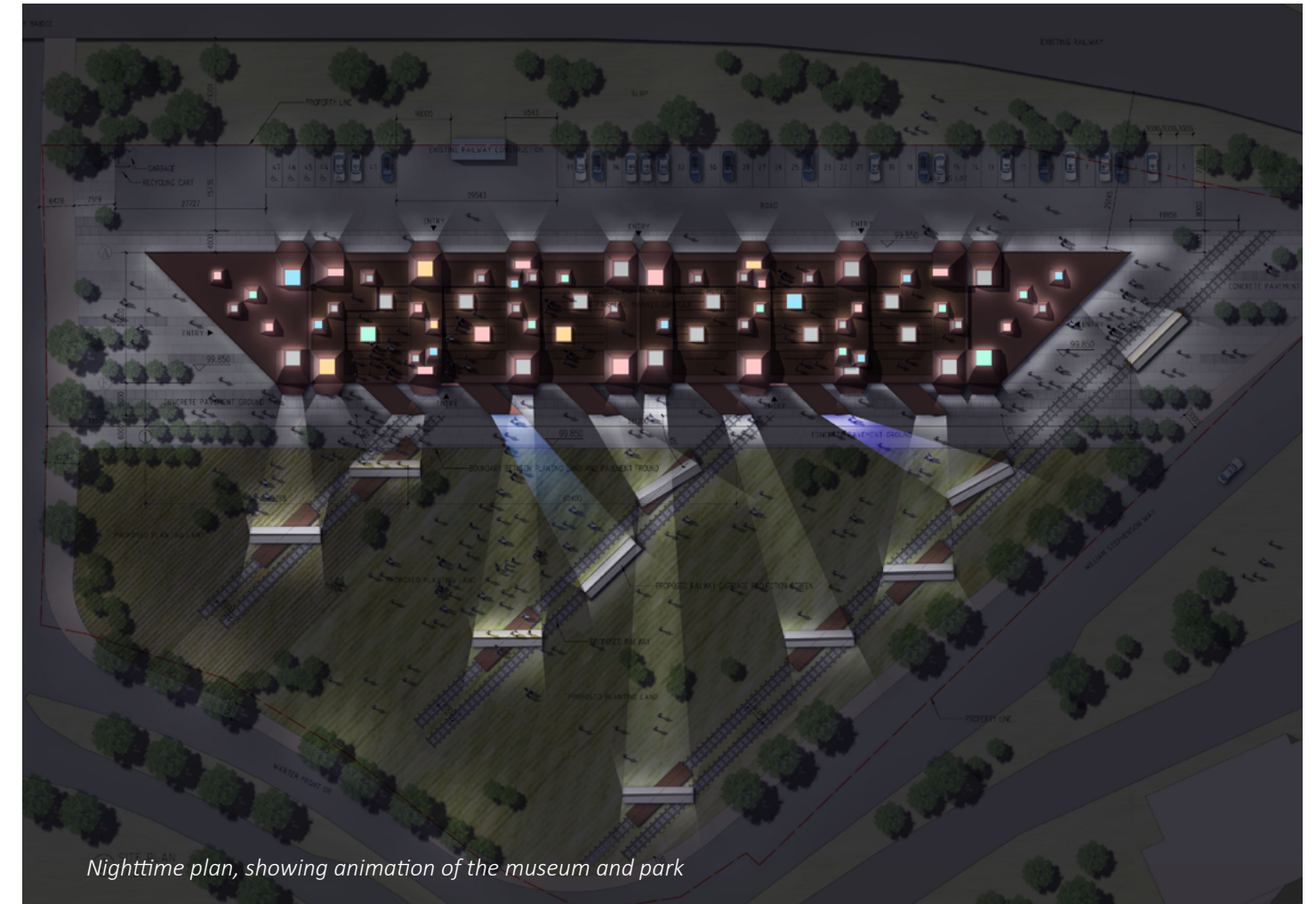
Plan of the grounds-keeper's dwelling (an adapted irrigation armature)



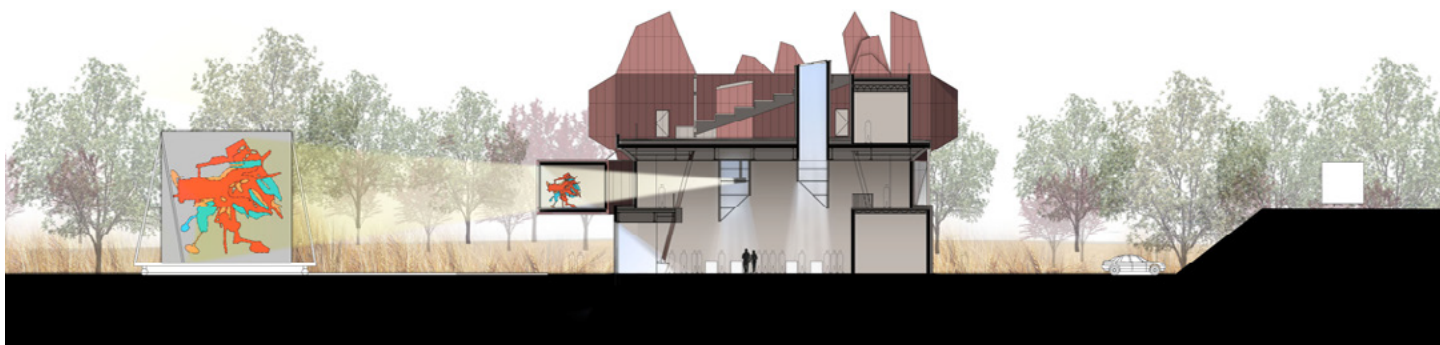
Model views of the dwelling, with activation and contemplation of fields



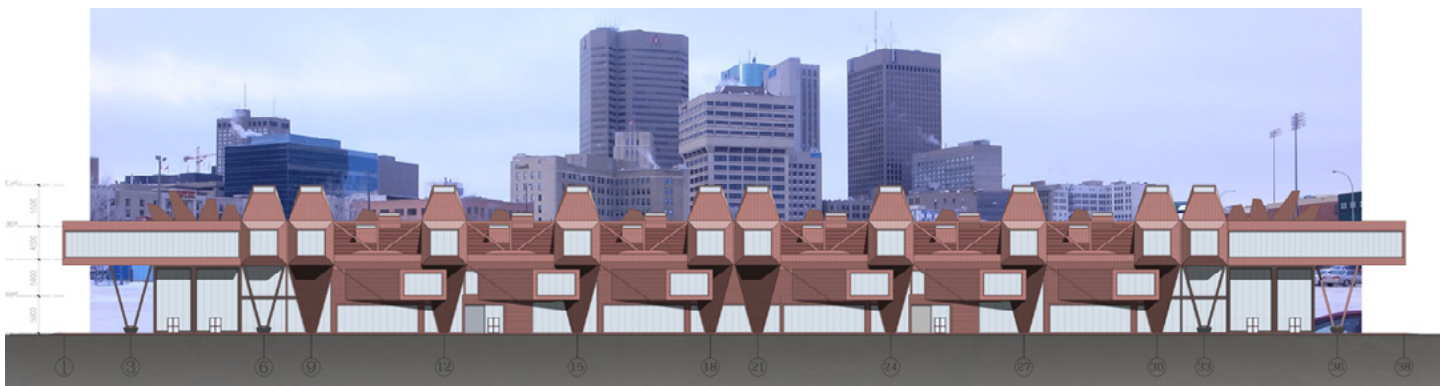
Plan: new Agricultural Museum and Farmer's Market and Park at Winnipeg's Forks



Nighttime plan, showing animation of the museum and park



Section, showing relationship to elevated railway and park



Elevation, with downtown Winnipeg in the distance



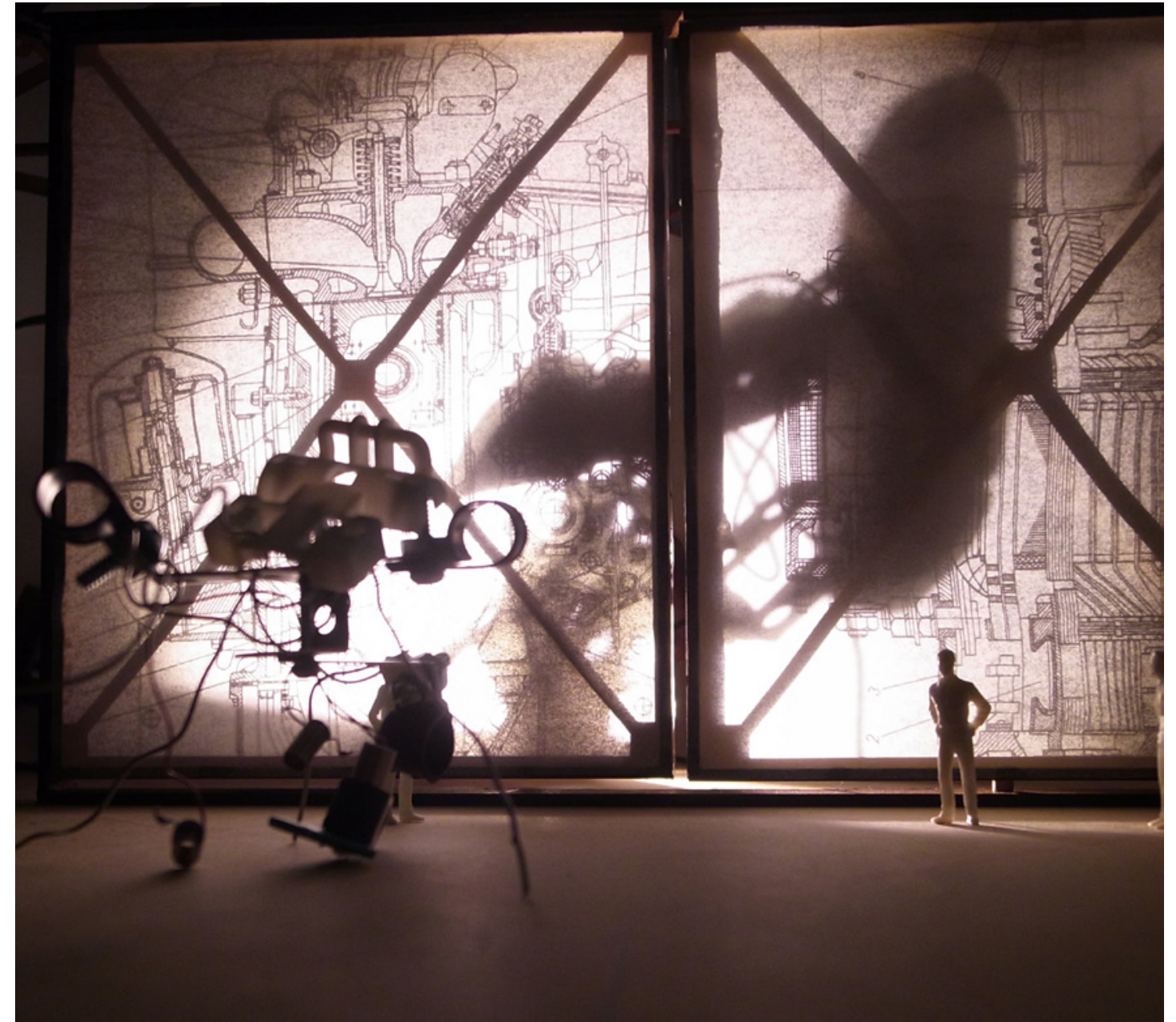
Model details of exhibition spaces



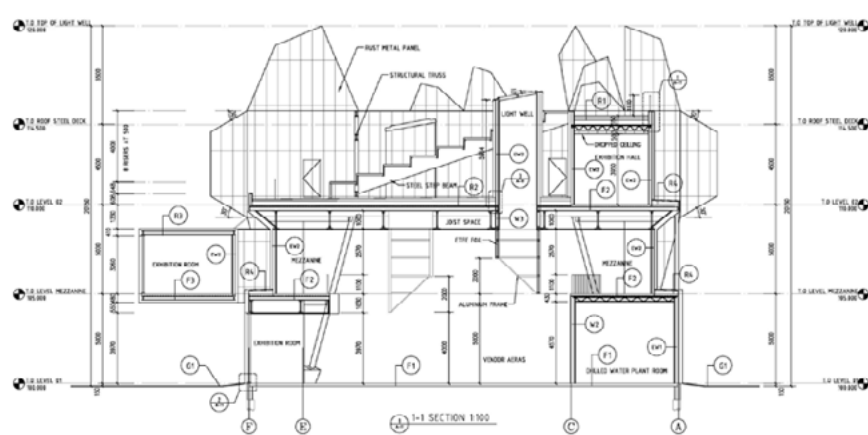
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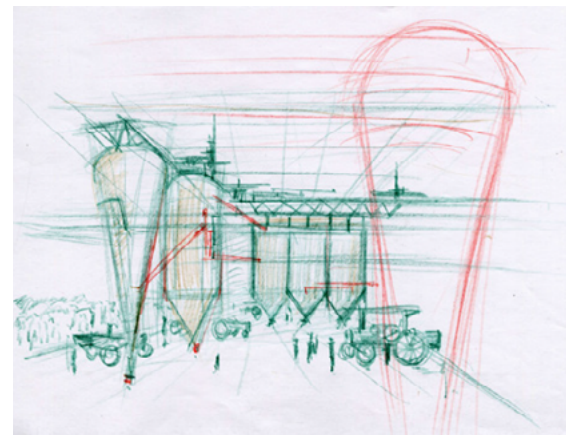
Model details of exhibition spaces



Shadow studies of the Museum's agricultural equipment



Construction details and design sketches



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