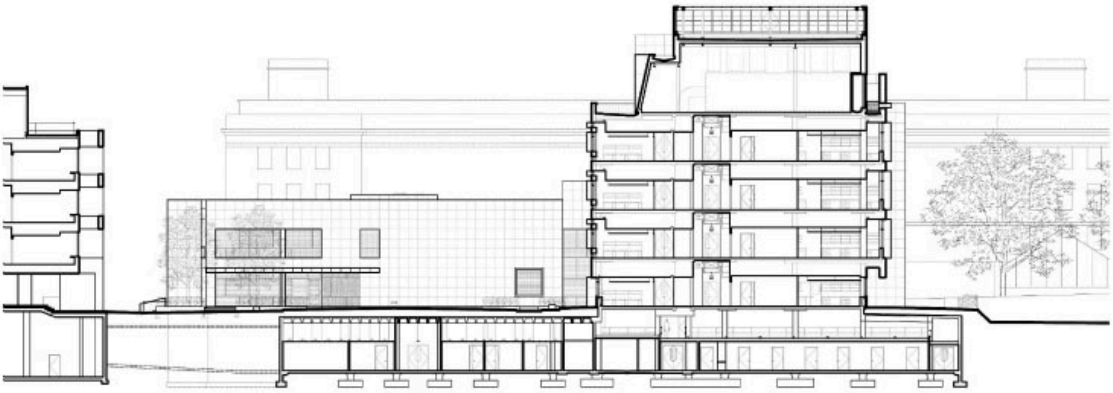
Some thoughts on sections…

Henri T. de Hahn
10.03.2017



Cornell's Weill Hall, Cornell University, NY, Richard Meier, completed 2008

- Sections represent the drawing at the vertical sectional cut and are not an illustration of multiple sections laid on top of the other. The latter may be a wise process to cross-reference how each section works with the other, but when presenting sections, one isolates each sectional cut individually.
- Similarly to the comments offered in *Some thoughts on plans…* sections do show relationships with the immediate outdoor landscaping of the building. As described many times, to showcase a building in section without any natural extension of the building may misrepresent the fundamental ideas that you established when designing your project. Projects and the ensuing building/architecture are not objects; they showcase complex spatial relationships that establish a sense of belonging –a sense of place- to mother earth. This is done conceptually and ideally through strong physical attributes that offer how the building -in this case the sectional attributes - create and alter the immediate and/or far site OR how the immediate and far site generates, creates and alters the overall organization of your building, particularly the sectional quality at that particular moment.
- Paralleling comments offered in *Some thoughts on plans…* may I suggest that letters define your sections, i.e., section A; section B, etc. While plans are readable through a certain ordering system, sections do not follow any strict rules. However, typically sections shall be either aligned vertically or horizontally. I invite you to showcase the most important section of your choice close to the most important plan of your choice so that the readability between the two is clear.
- As many of you have already brought your airplane pavilion from 1/8 to 1/4 inch scale, please present your section(s) at either of those scales. As stated during studio hours, I tend to favor that a plan be at one scale and the section at a larger scale. This is a subjective remark, as you all know how much I favor sections. Again, as with your plans, please be mindful that when you draw at a larger scale, additional information must be shown (i.e., the indication of the spacing of the window mullions versus a simple line indicating glass). Give it a try and through multiple iterations, you will feel at ease very soon.
- The section of your pavilion's interior should reveal conditions of support, span, roof, ceiling, enclosure, windows, doors, opening, vertical arrangements of spaces, horizontal/vertical circulation paths, landscape strategies, water features, ground, etc. The impact of the interior spaces in section is of critical importance as they give a three-dimensional reading of the vertical connections between the internal spaces and places, as well as between the interior

and exterior as you develop horizontal conditions between the inside and the outside and vice versa. Please include a human figure in each section to establish a sense of scale.

- Similarly to the plan "cut", the section "cut" shows three sets of information: first, what is cut; second, what is seen beyond the plane of the cut –elevation(s) of interior walls as well as objects and events that occur in close proximity in front of the sectional cut; and third, what is behind the vertical plane of the sectional cut. Continuous lines, with lesser line weight than the line weight at the sectional cut, indicate elements that are in front of the picture plane (elements that can be seen) versus discontinuous lines –dashed lines–which represent represent objects, contours, edges, which are behind the picture plane.
- Finally, as with the comments offered in *Some thoughts on plans…* each of your sections should represent all the necessary information of your airplane pavilion (including immediate exterior features!) at the sectional cut. But beyond all the information that you provide correctly for a comprehensive reading of what is seen at the moment of the cut, a section should be an architectural idea showcasing key spatial arrangements that complement or inform the plan about ideas, program, function, geometry, shape, size, hierarchy of each of the spaces you create within the pavilion, the edge of the pavilion (vertically called walls or facades, or horizontally called ceilings and roofs), AND all relationships with the immediate and nearby exterior.
- This last point suggests that there are two different types of sections –the longitudinal section and the lateral section. One features the longest length of the building while the other one showcases the other spatial relationships within the shorter width of the building. Of course, this is a flexible rule and rarely do buildings take the shape of a Swiss chocolate box!

Note 1: A sectional cut is typically done as a straight line cut, and almost never as a series of parallel plane cuts. This uniqueness, like a plan, is based on one abstract planer cut to understand what is happening at that moment. Thus, choosing your sectional cut, either longitudinal or lateral, requires thought. In choosing the cut you are highlighting key architectural and landscape features and the spatial qualities of your project in section (i.e., window and door openings, skylights in ceilings and roofs, major or minor changes in level (from steps to stairs), and special conditions of vertical circulation). It is important to locate each lateral section cut (section cut across the short dimension of your project) and longitudinal section cut (section cut through the long dimension of your project) with great care.

Note 2: While the history of architecture provides ample and useful exceptions, typically one does not cut through a column as its rendering would have strong similarities with a sectional cut that is a wall. Cutting through the column would indicate a discontinuity in space similar to walls rather than expressing a continuous spatial condition.