

This Hour of Dread

CHOREOGRAPHY AND DIRECTION Né Barros







The Collapse Tale

NÉ BARROS

Approximate duration: 55minutes

Age Rating: +12

For **Esta Hora de Espanto**, Tiago Mesquita Carvalho writes:

“The river of history runs swift, and all dive in to reach wherever it flows. The old world still soaks in the last rays of dusk and, though words may sing, ruin grows, and night falls.”

This piece, conceived as a kind of choreodrama, revisits the body as landscape — a recurring theme in my work — to summon radical, limit images of a foreseeable catastrophic future. It is also the landscape on the brink of transformation that interests us, particularly in the extremity of disasters and the apocalyptic.

In *Lastro* (2015), under a strange sky, bodies gradually occupied a place, generating routines and bonds. There, choreographed movement and scenographic elements created the theatrical space: a space in flux, a place made of memory.

In **Esta Hora de Espanto**, some of these notions re-emerge through the body and through text — a fiction penned by Tiago Mesquita Carvalho. Drawing on the imagery of catastrophe, the work returns to questions around the body and its limits, figuration and disfiguration in dance. Fear, a futile attempt at understanding, unpredictability, and the violence of disaster linger in this tale, where characters slowly reveal and unravel themselves.





Portrait to ward off the end

Rita Xavier*

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I have a call.[...]
Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

SYLVIA PLATH – *Lady Lazarus*

* PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at CEHUM/CECS, University of Minho; curator; programming and communications consultant for cultural projects; columnist at Público.



After the ballast, the awe





In *Lastro*, by Né Barros, the sky of 2015 had already collapsed over the seas and the earth. The (un)foreseeable catastrophe had left muddy traces on forgotten bodies. But within the anatomy of the fall, there was still the weight pressing against the ground as a boundary of support, and the counterweight of movement rising as vertical reconstruction. Through the cadence of that dance, one could glimpse a landscape still permeated by human sensibility.

Ten years later, *Esta Hora de Espanto* (2025) once again listens to the apocalyptic landscapes that course through bodies, across (in)decipherable times and places. Yet now, in the antechamber of the end, facing a near-barren desert and debris, there is no longer even a ground to support anything at all. “The earth will be dark, as it was when it did not exist. Silent. There will be no more wind, nor rain, nor sun. Nothing more will be born. The forest will die. The rivers will dry up. The ground will become hot like a stone of fire. All living beings will disappear. This is what will come. It is the fall of the sky”, prophesies the Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa.

The prophetic description of the end — not only of a physical world but of a world inhabited by beings, filled with ghosts and memories — reverberates throughout the performance. It summons a landscape that, in dying, takes sky and earth with it. The stage becomes a heterotopic place, offering a liminal experience, in the fissure between presence and absence, between the spoken and the unspoken, light and darkness, everyday life and ritual, life and death — binaries that are of little use to the language of dance as a tool that probes geographies and bodies in becoming.

In a real and symbolic context, in which ecosophies of the sensitive are co-opted by Westernised regimes of knowledge and power, the body dissociates, gesture is swallowed by discourse, gaze becomes armour, and desire dries up. Nature, in turn, becomes nothing more than a screen wallpaper. All that remains is to rehearse astonishment — that instant of opening: a tremor before the abyss and the revelation of the life-death-life cycle.

What image remains on the reverse of that sky — one that fell in the first act, became forest in the second, and now burns on the ground we tread?

What movements remain in our bodies, when everything around us becomes a spectacle of the end?

Here lies the ruin of the world –

The collapse must be named





The word becomes present in the “choreodrama,” drawn from the fiction by Tiago Mesquita Carvalho of the same title, but gives it a body. It is no coincidence that the title *Nesta Hora de Espanto*, which updates the medieval *Danse Macabre* for our times, becomes *Esta Hora de Espanto* in the piece’s rendition.

The subtle omission of the preposition renders the narrative more direct. *Esta hora* becomes this very here and now (of fiction and of the real). It is, therefore, not only a call to a world-territory described through language, but also to a body-territory that listens to itself and translates into gestures and choreographed convulsions.

The symbolism of the *Danse Macabre* emerged in Europe mainly from the 14th century onwards, in the wake of pandemics such as the Black Death. It proposed an iconography of death that was both grotesque and comic. Its moralism was inspired by the Psalms, such as those of Lamentation—prayers pleading for the spirit’s cleansing in the face of death—or by the Book of Job, already a kind of mourning manifesto for an archetypal figure of awe before apparent injustice, undeserved pain, and other mysteries.

Faced with the horror of that “ultimate truth,” death is anthropomorphized, leading everyone—young and old, poor and rich, kings and servants—through a narrative of shared vulnerability.

But what interests Né Barros is no longer Man in dialogue with Death, but rather the depiction of a final fate and the wild pulse of bodies in continuous movement over the edge of the abyss.

Welcome to this after-party





At the beginning, an ancient fatigue lingers in the air. The antechamber is an underground rave for seven performers marching in a functional trance. In this ritual, women and men appear to persist in a state of overlife—alienated, unhearing, and untouched. They dance the collapse and fallacy of the progress that colonized their bodies, leaving their nature barren and exhausted, turning them into “hyperactive zombies,” as Suely Rolnik would say.

The costumes juxtapose elements of multinational streetwear brands with a baroque jabot collar, or the mirrored sheen of robotic makeup on eyes that still refuse to hide. Transtemporal collisions. In the cyborg-marionettes we see the uncamouflaged expression of culture—urban or classical ballet—etched in their dancing forms.

Despite the claustrophobic, mechanical atmosphere, suggested by sound and light, a possible escape tears through in the rediscovery of their own animality. The performers also feel their way forward on all fours, seeking balance among the wreckage. To once again become alive.

Within the landscape, outside myself –
**After cosmophobia,
somatophobia**





They still gather, still seek the touch of another, yet within a plasticity that never quite becomes erotic, for desire has already departed. Studies suggest that the more urbanized a city becomes, the less contact exists between its inhabitants. A sensory disconnection brought about by digitalization, the maintenance of post-pandemic distancing, the awkward impersonality that gradually erodes the possibilities for deep empathy, and the coaching sessions for self-knowledge offered in the lucrative hypermarkets of the soul, all under the aegis of neoliberal individualism.

A crisis of sensibility materializes in the lace masks the performers pull over their faces. The decision to wear these funereal veils evokes the reduction of living beings to numbers and categories, as found in totalitarian and exclusionary regimes, hardcore pornography, institutionalizing logics, or technographic systems of identification. The face is erased to suppress singularity, as Levinas reminded us — whose thought inspires the choreographer — erasing also the ethics of emotional connection.

As an elective affinity, I invoke the only original work Adriana Varejão created for the exhibition *Entre os vossos dentes*, in transatlantic dialogue with the work of Paula Rego, exhibited at the Gulbenkian Foundation's Modern Art Center. She called it *Renda Renascença*, a reference to the noble delicacy of the fabric and the purity of the white with which baptismal, wedding, and funeral dresses were traditionally made. Yet the lace, seen under a magnifying lens, reveals the craquelure of the painting exploding—exposing every fissure of the skin beneath the veil.

This hour is not the final judgment





The actress gives voice to the word; she is the trumpet-bearing archangel announcing to humankind the end of the age of civilization. This is no longer a matter of judgment, for morality has been lost in the “insatiable thirst” of the men of history, who destroyed communities and severed the bonds of fortress-families.

But it is not through the word that one awakens from anesthesia or cries out for redemption. As Didi-Huberman suggests, what survives the dust of ashes is not emptiness, but a place where ruins persist, not to be grasped through a totalizing explanation, but to be witnessed. If the time of catastrophe pushes us toward anything, it is to notice beyond seeing. To perceive with all our senses.

Let oneself be amazed





In the final scene, these living-dead pose. They fix a portrait of the now that conceals relational subjectivity and anesthetizes pain into a ready-made, consumable mold. A now of devastation, exhaustion, and scarcity, in the face of which it becomes vital to practice that sensitive fold of movement that twists, disobeys, and pulses—perhaps to glimpse another possible. A radical aesthetic curiosity for the openings that insinuate themselves from the ruins. It's not just about offering "ideas to postpone the end of the world," to quote Ailton Krenak, but, with Suely Rolnik, about opening a path for the world so that life can pass through, as a micropolitical gesture. Having the courage to suffer through the many deaths that befall us might well be the last destiny of the living being, a radical practice for a singular and shared life.



Né Barros

Né Barros is a choreographer, dancer, and researcher whose artistic work is deeply intertwined with academic and theoretical exploration. She is a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Porto, in the Aesthetics, Politics and Knowledge group.

She began her training in classical ballet and later pursued contemporary dance and choreographic composition in the United States (Smith College). She holds a PhD in Dance (University of Lisbon) and a Master's in Dance Studies (Trinity Laban Conservatoire, London), and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute of Philosophy. She also studied Theatre at ESAP – Escola Superior Artística do Porto.

As a choreographer, Né Barros has collaborated with visual artists, photographers, filmmakers, theatre directors, and musicians. She has created most of her work with Balleteatro, while also working with the National Ballet of Portugal (Passos em Branco, awarded Best Choreography), Ballet Gulbenkian, and the Aura Dance Company (Lithuania).

She is the author of several books, including *Performances e Pós-fenomenologia* (2019), *Da Materialidade na Dança* (2009), and *Dança: Corpo e Casa* (2001), and editor of volumes such as *Deslocações da Intimidade* (2015), *Artes Performativas: Novos Discursos* (2013), *Das Imagens Familiares* (2013), *Story Case Print* (2009), and *Metamorfoses do Sentir* (1998).

Né Barros is a professor at ESAP and has been a guest lecturer at various institutions. She is also co-founder of Balleteatro and co-artistic director of the Family Film Project – International Film Festival of Archive, Memory, and Ethnography.



Carlos Guedes

He has a multifaceted compositional practice that spans dance, theatre, and film, in addition to conventional concert music. His works have been performed in numerous festivals and concert halls, both nationally and internationally. His eclecticism brings together a wide range of approaches, integrating music technology (industrial music, techno, and spectral music). Collaboration is at the heart of his practice, both with other artistic disciplines and fellow musicians. Recent projects include *Neve* (2021, Balletteatro, choreography by Né Barros), *Jardineiro Imaginário* (2022, Teatro de Marionetas do Porto, directed by Isabel Barros), and *Formation of Soof*, an immersive audiovisual installation created for the Abu Dhabi Pavilion at the London Design Biennale (2023), which was awarded the Biennale's Theme Medal.

In 2021–22, he was composer-in-residence with the Drumming GP ensemble, where he developed *Time Poetries*, a cycle of works for percussion and electronic music.

He is Associate Professor of Music at New York University Abu Dhabi, with affiliations to the university's computer engineering and NYU Steinhardt's music technology programs.



Esta Hora de Espanto

Choreography and Direction **Né Barros**

Music **Carlos Guedes**

Text **Tiago Mesquita Carvalho**

Performance **Afonso Cunha, Deeogo Oliveira, Beatriz Valentim, Joana Africano, Marta Almeida,**

Production **Balletteatro**

Co-production **Teatro Nacional São João**



Lighting Design **Nuno Meira**

Costumes **Joana Africano**

Executive Production **Celine Marie**

Rafael Ferreira, Vivien Ingrams

Live Music **João Miguel Simões**

Ridder's

- Touring Team: 12
 - 8 performers (or 6 dancers + 1 actress + 1 musician)
 - 2 technicians (sound & lighting)
 - 1 production manager
 - 1 choreographer
- Working schedule: minimum 2 days
 - pre-setup + 1 day for setup + 1 day for the performance

Ballet Teatro / Esta Hora de Espanto

Technical Rider 2025

Contacts:
Technical Director: — / FOH: Diogo Cocharro
TOUR MANAGER: —

SOUND (FOH)		
PA (in order of preference)	Meyer Sound; L-Acoustics; D&B; Adamson, JBL	Calibrated and in-phase sound system capable of producing 110 dB(a) without distortion and with homogeneous coverage across the venue, divided and available in the following zones: Main (L,R,C) + Subs + Front Fills
MIXING CONSOLE	Midas PRO Series; Soundcraft Vi Series; Yamaha DM series	The mixing console should preferably be positioned at audience height and centered in relation to the stage. Never under counters or in closed booths.

SOUND (STAGE)		
MIXING CONSOLE	Tablet connected to FOH mixing console, with WIFI coverage on stage.	
MONITORS	Meyer Sound, L-Acoustics, Martin Audio, Nexo, D&B, Next	4x monitors on stands. Monitors must be in perfect condition and capable of sound reproduction without distortion.
In-Ears	1x wireless or wired	
Inter-Com	1x intercom FOH and ROH	

STAGE PLOT and CHANNEL LIST	
See the attached documents.	



SHOW Esta Hora de Espanto

VERSION DATE 2025

FOH Diogo Cocharro

PRODUCTION MANAGER Ballet Teatro

STAGE BOX	INPUT	ALT.	INSTRUMENT	MIC/DI	STAND	STAGE POSITION
	1		Kick In	Shure Beta 52	Small	Upstage Center
	2		Snare Left	SM57 / Audix / SE	Clamp/Medium	Upstage Center
	3		Snare Right	SM57 / Audix / SE	Clamp/Medium	Upstage Center
	4		HiHat 1	SM81	Medium	Upstage Center
	5		OH L	AKG 414	Large	Upstage Center
	6		OH R	AKG 414	Large	Upstage Center
	7		Percussion L	SM81	Medium	Upstage Center
	8		Percussion R	SM81	Medium	Upstage Center
	9		HiHat 2	SM81	Medium	Upstage Center
	10		Headset Actress	DPA 4088/4066		
	11		PC 1	BSS/Radial		FOH
	12		PC 2	BSS/Radial		FOH
	13		PC 3	BSS/Radial		FOH
	14		PC 4	BSS/Radial		FOH
	15		Headset Spare	DPA 4088/4066		
	16					

OUTPUTS	AUX		DESCRIPTION			STAGE POSITION
	1		Monitor on Stand L			Upstage Left
	2		Monitor on Stand R			Upstage Right
	3		Monitor on Stand L			Downstage Left
	4		Monitor on Stand R			Downstage Right
	5					
	6					
	7		IEM L Wireless/Wired	Drums		Upstage Center
	8		IEM R Wireless/Wired	Drums		Upstage Center

OUTPUTS	MTX		DESCRIPTION			
	1		MAIN L			
	2		MAIN R			
	3		MAIN C			
	4		SUBS			
	5		FRONT FILL			



Esta Hora de Espanto



Show Credits

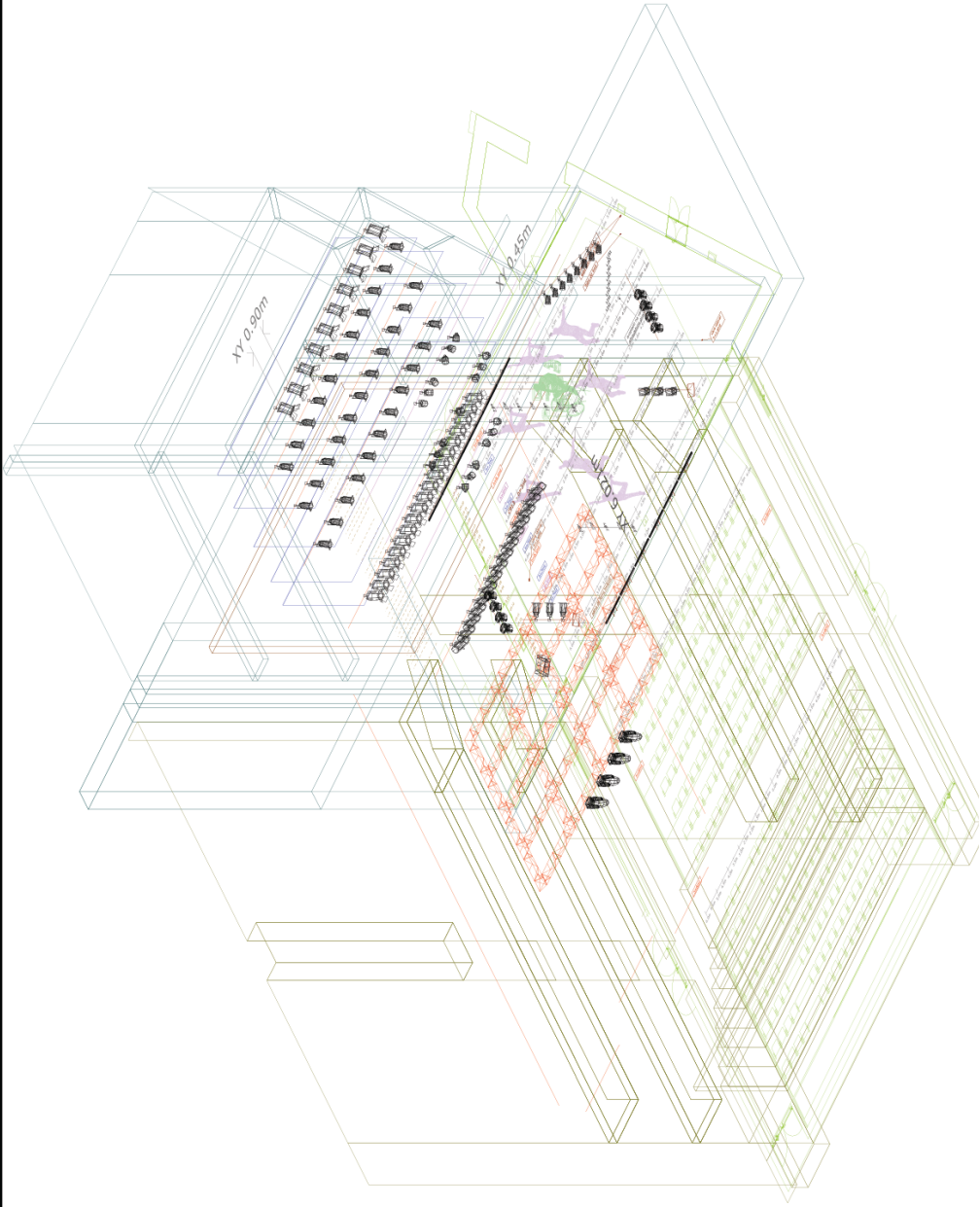
Lighting Designer: **Nuno Meira**
Director: **Né Barros**
Venue: **TeCA**

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Show Credits

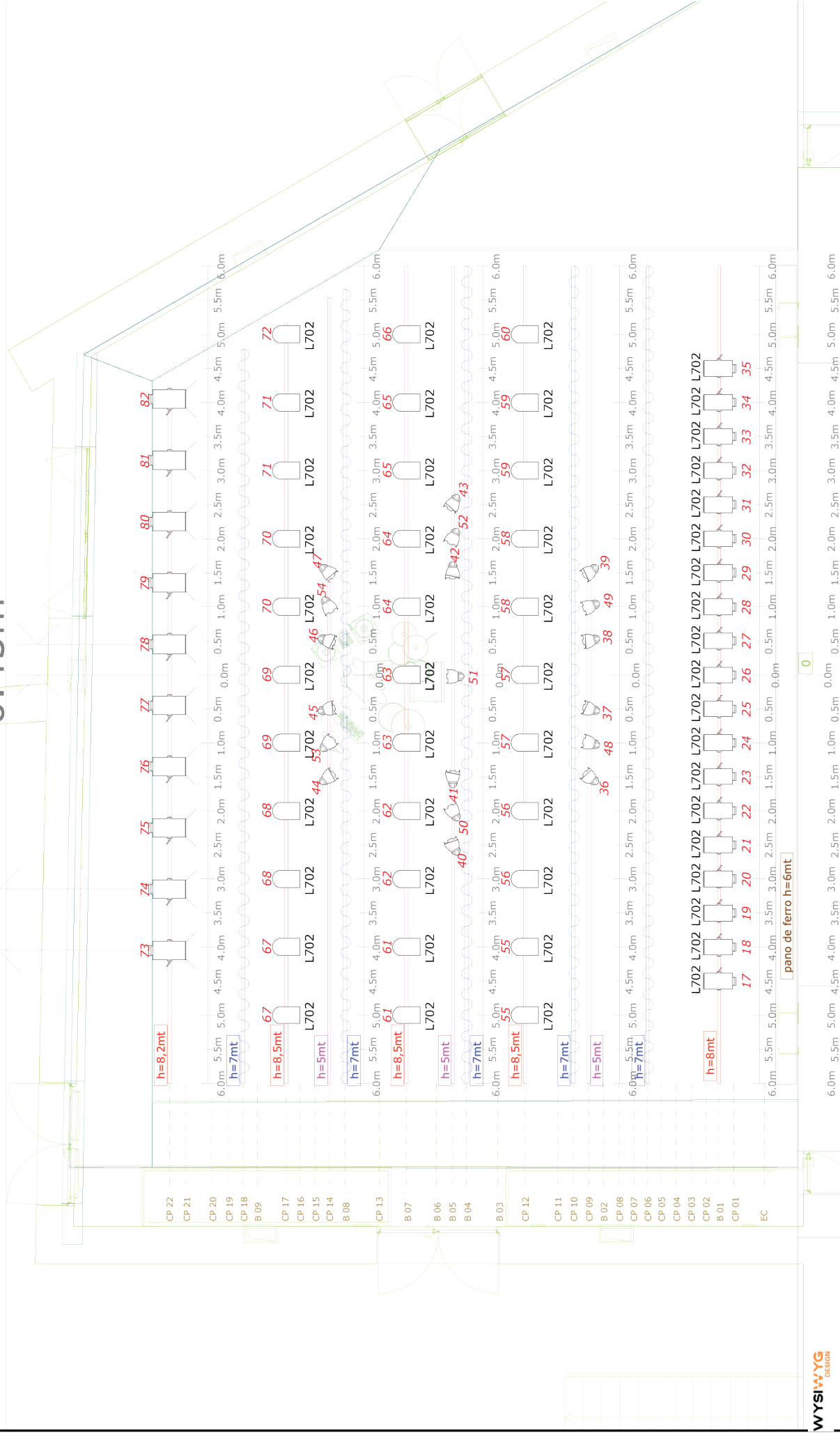
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L251 Quarter White Diffusion	Stellar	8
L702 Special Pale Lavender	PAR 64	33
L702 Special Pale Lavender	ADB Europe C103	19
R114 Hamburg Frost + L702 Special Pale Lavender	RJ 613SX	15

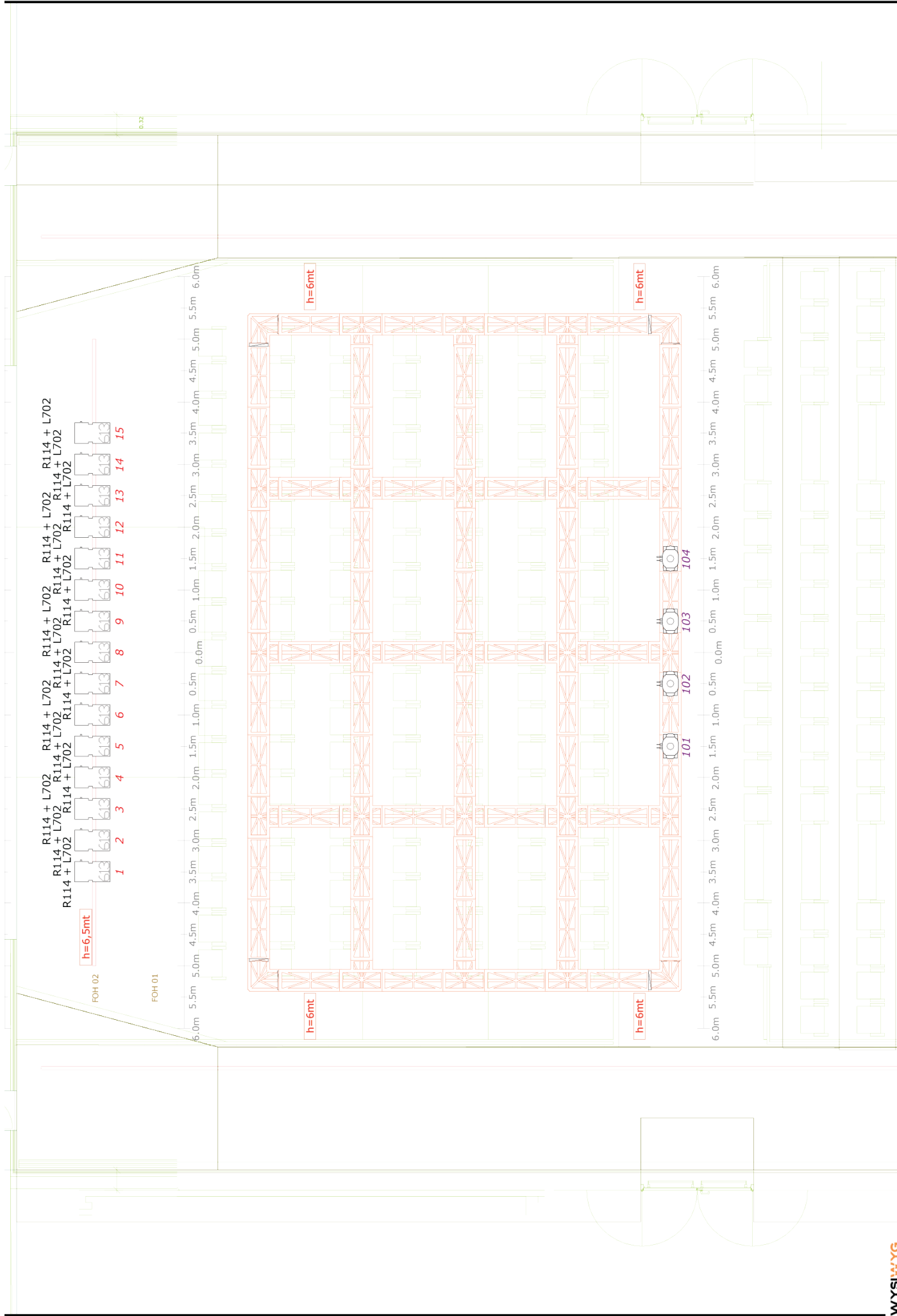
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	LEDWash 6000MC	8
	Stellar	8
	RJ 613SX	15
	ADB Europe C203; 245mm Barndoor [1]	10
	ADB Europe C103; 185mm Barndoor [1]	19
	Source 4 Par NSP <=>CP61	12
	Source 4 Par MFL <=>CP62	7
	PAR 64 CP62	39
	RJ SOLO fluorescentes luz fria	12
	Base Hazer Pro	1



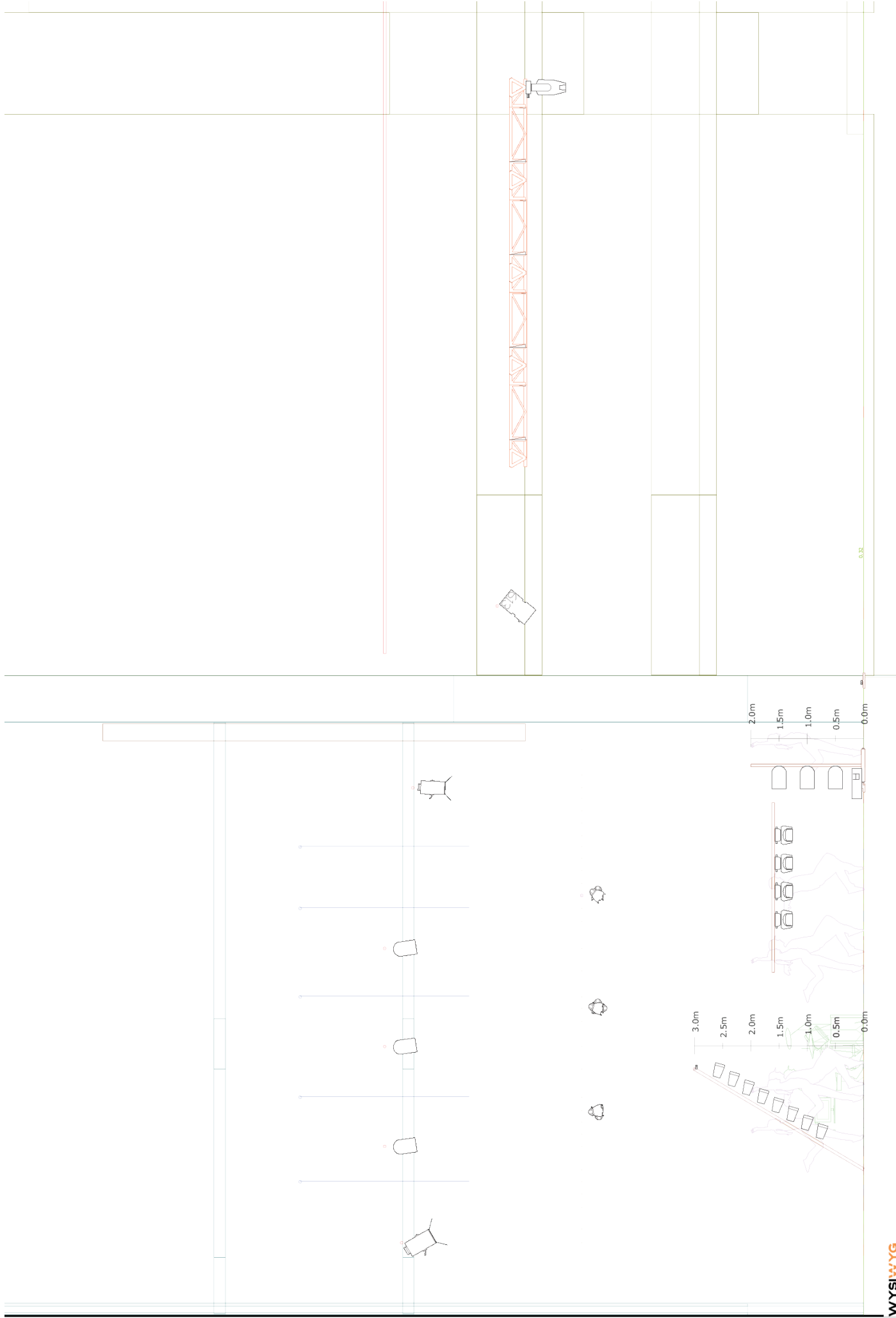
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0.45m









TRAILER:

<https://vimeo.com/balleteatro/estashoradeespanto2025trailer>

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