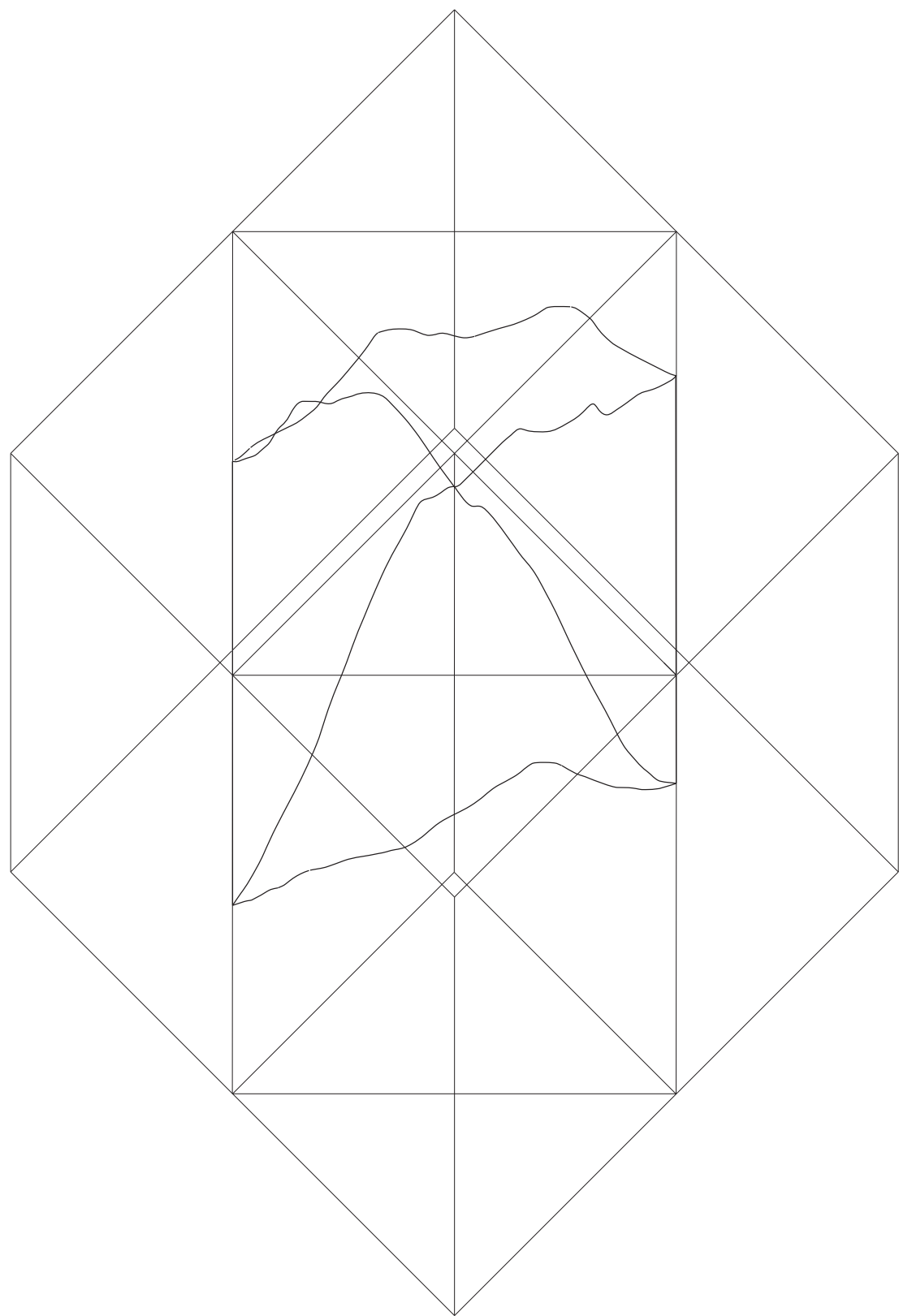




# HOW TO DOMESTICATE A MOUNTAIN

ANNA  
NEIMARK &  
ANDREW  
ATWOOD

1—We inscribed the unmanageable in a bounding box.

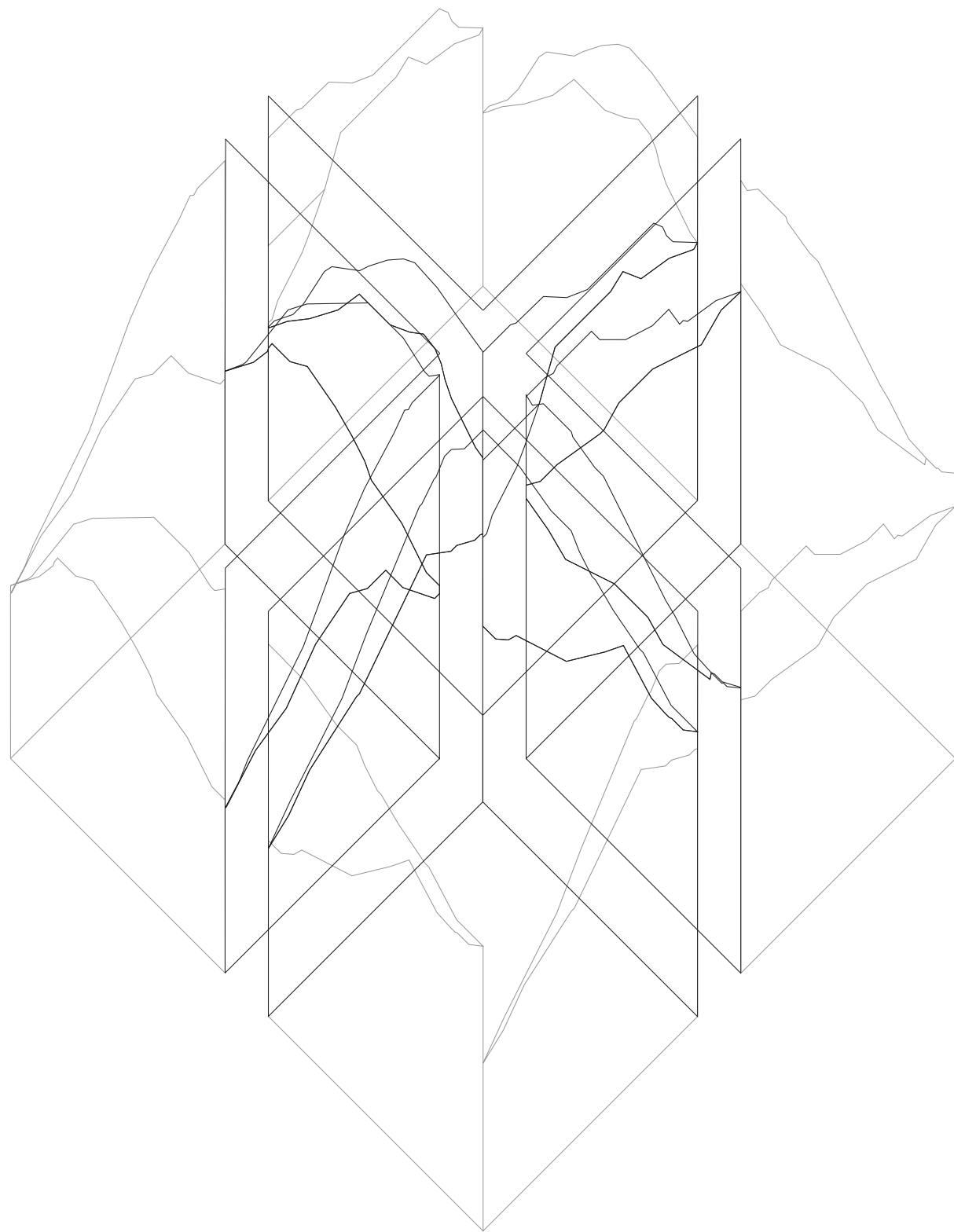


**2—Subdivided into four quadrants for sanity.**

Crossing the deck, let us now have a good long look at the Right Whale's head. As in general shape the noble Sperm Whale's head may be compared to a Roman war-chariot (especially in the front, where it is so broadly rounded); so, at a broad view the Right Whale's head bears a rather inelegant resemblance to a gigantic galliot-toed shoe. Two hundred years ago an old Dutch voyager likened its shape to that of a shoemaker's last. And in this same last or shoe, that old woman of the nursery tale, with the swarming brood, might very comfortably be lodged, she and all her progeny.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, (New York: Signet Classic, 1980), 409



**3—Constructed orthographically projected elevations for each part as we understood them.**

Mountains are full of wonder. They are primordial symbols of time, glacial time, but also a record of the subtle fluctuations in seasons, changes in the sky. They are wild, stochastic, unpredictable. They have no discipline. They have no referent. Each mountain's identity is itself. It does not make sense to speak of errors when one speaks of mountains because they have no formal norm against which to stray.

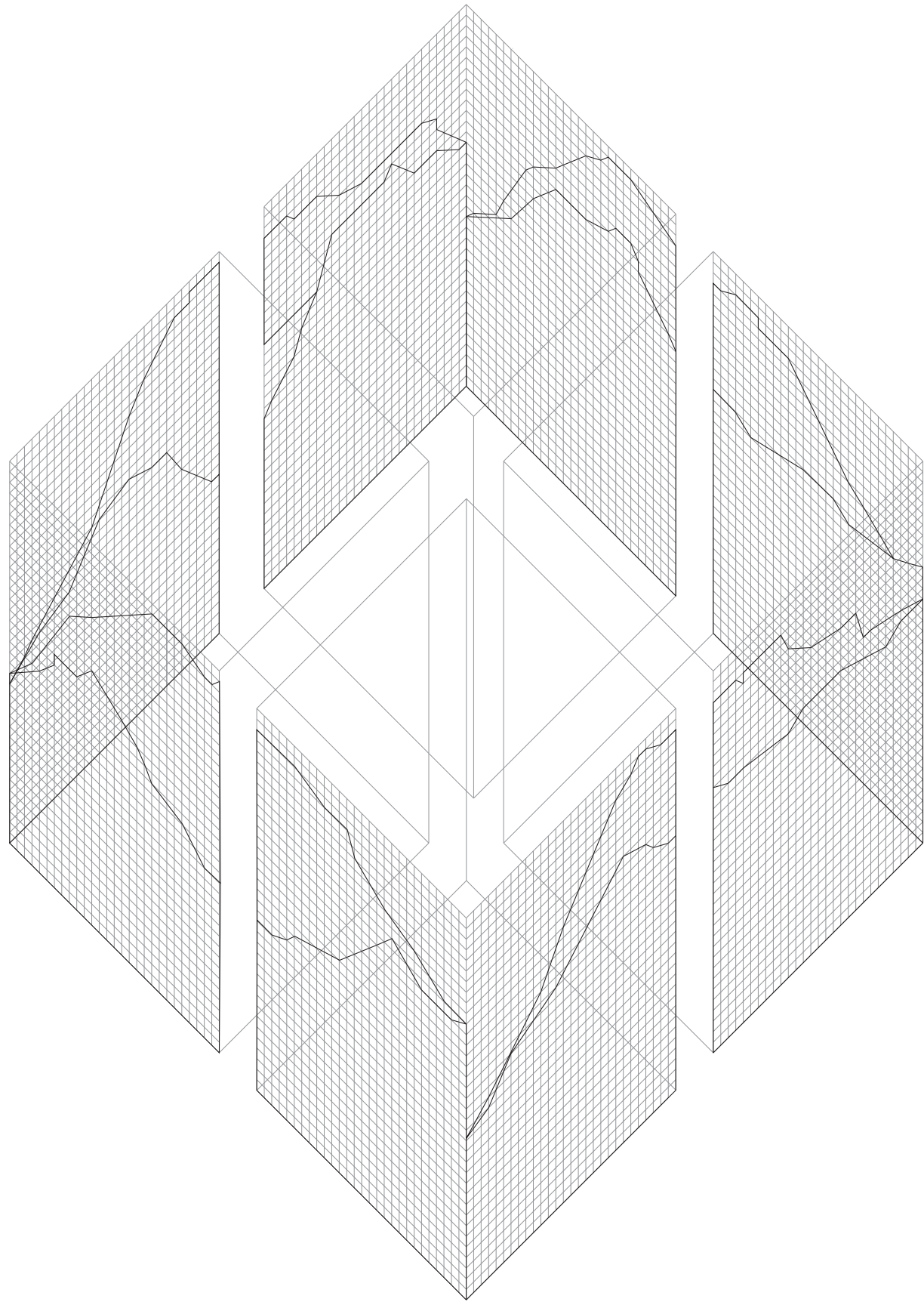
A house is rarely wonderful. It is mostly a mundane composition of parts, frames, volumes, and walls. It is willful, determined, controlled. Necessarily positioned at some distance from nature, it is regulated through architectural convention. Remember the primitive hut? "It is by approaching the simplicity of this first model that fundamental mistakes are avoided and true perfection is achieved."<sup>2</sup>

A domesticated object has all the attributes of the original, corrected through a system of disciplinary norms. It is an analogous form, "created not by genius, inspiration, determination, evolution, but by two modest actions (which cannot be caught up in any mystique of creation): substitution (one part replaces another, as in a paradigm) and nomination (the name is in no way linked to the stability of the parts)."<sup>3</sup>

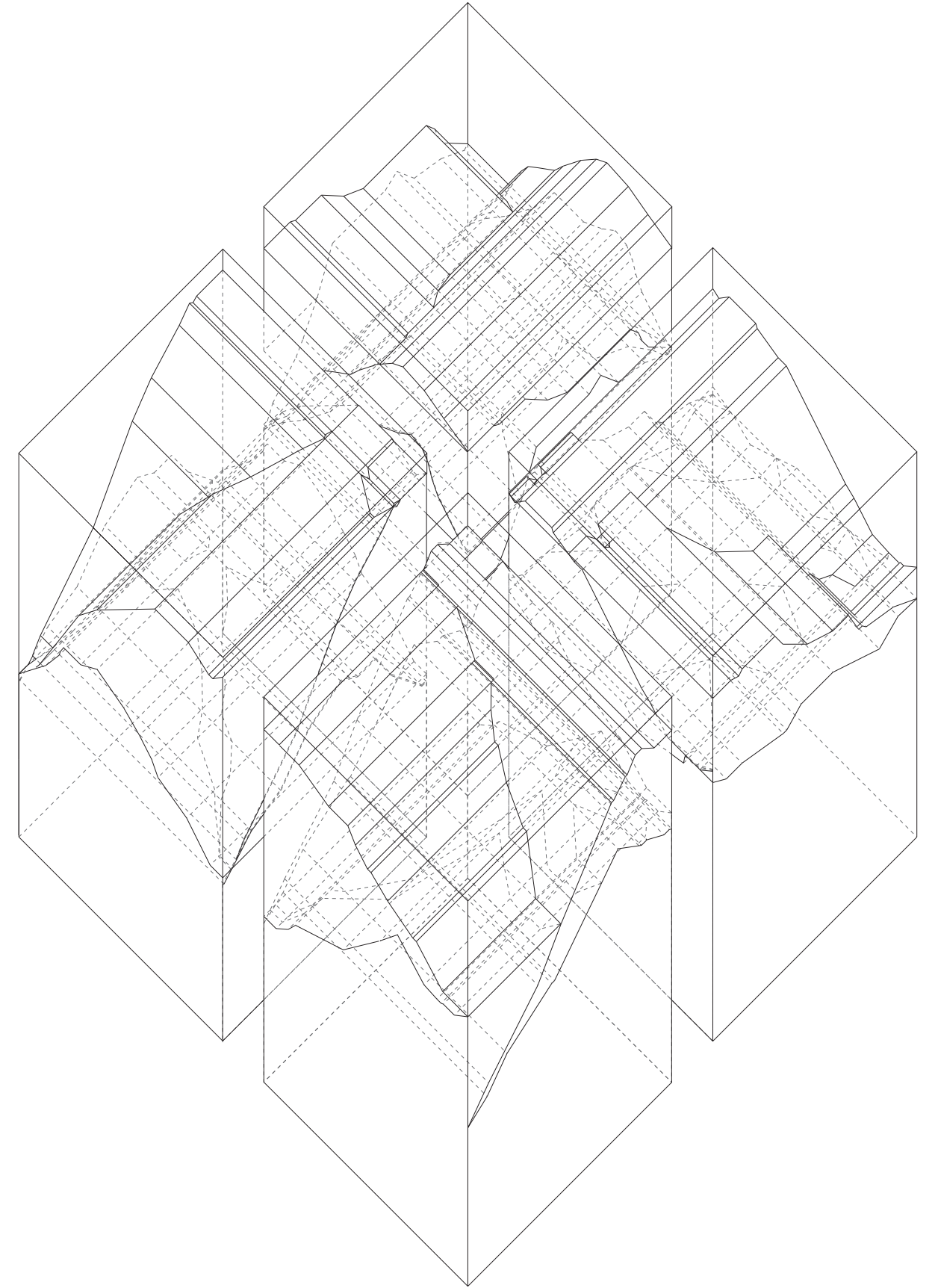
If literary metaphor can turn the Right Whale's head into a house, how might architectural drawing convention help to domesticate a mountain? Here are our twelve steps.

<sup>2</sup> Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essay on Architecture*, trans. Wolfgang and Anni Herrmann (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977), 12-13

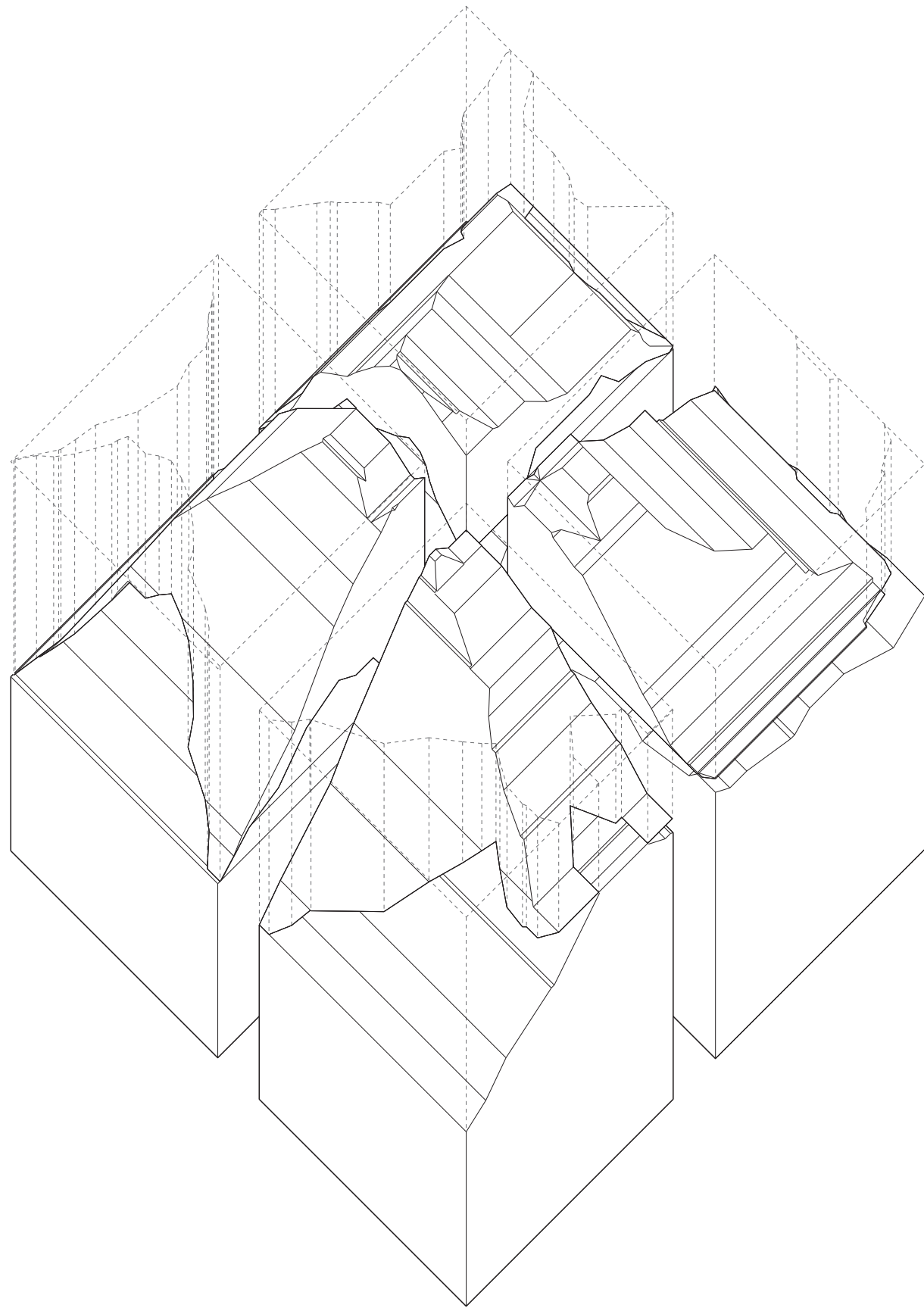
<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Ship Argo," *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 46. Rosalind Krauss refers to this passage in the introduction to the collection of her essays, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, as a model for producing meaning without the myths of authorship or origin, but through shallow shifts along a planar surface (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).



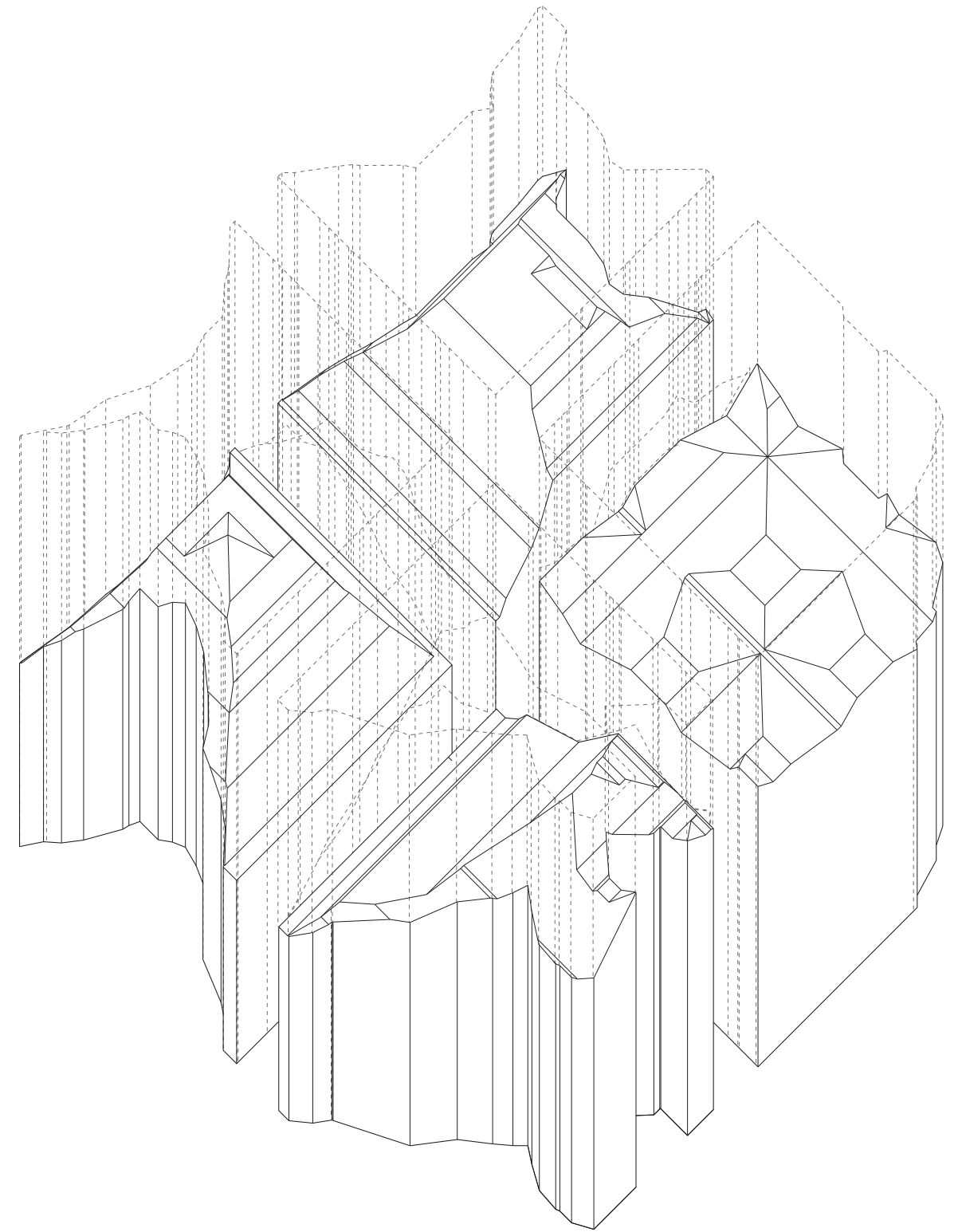
4—Corrected the new elevations to an orthogonal grid for inventory.



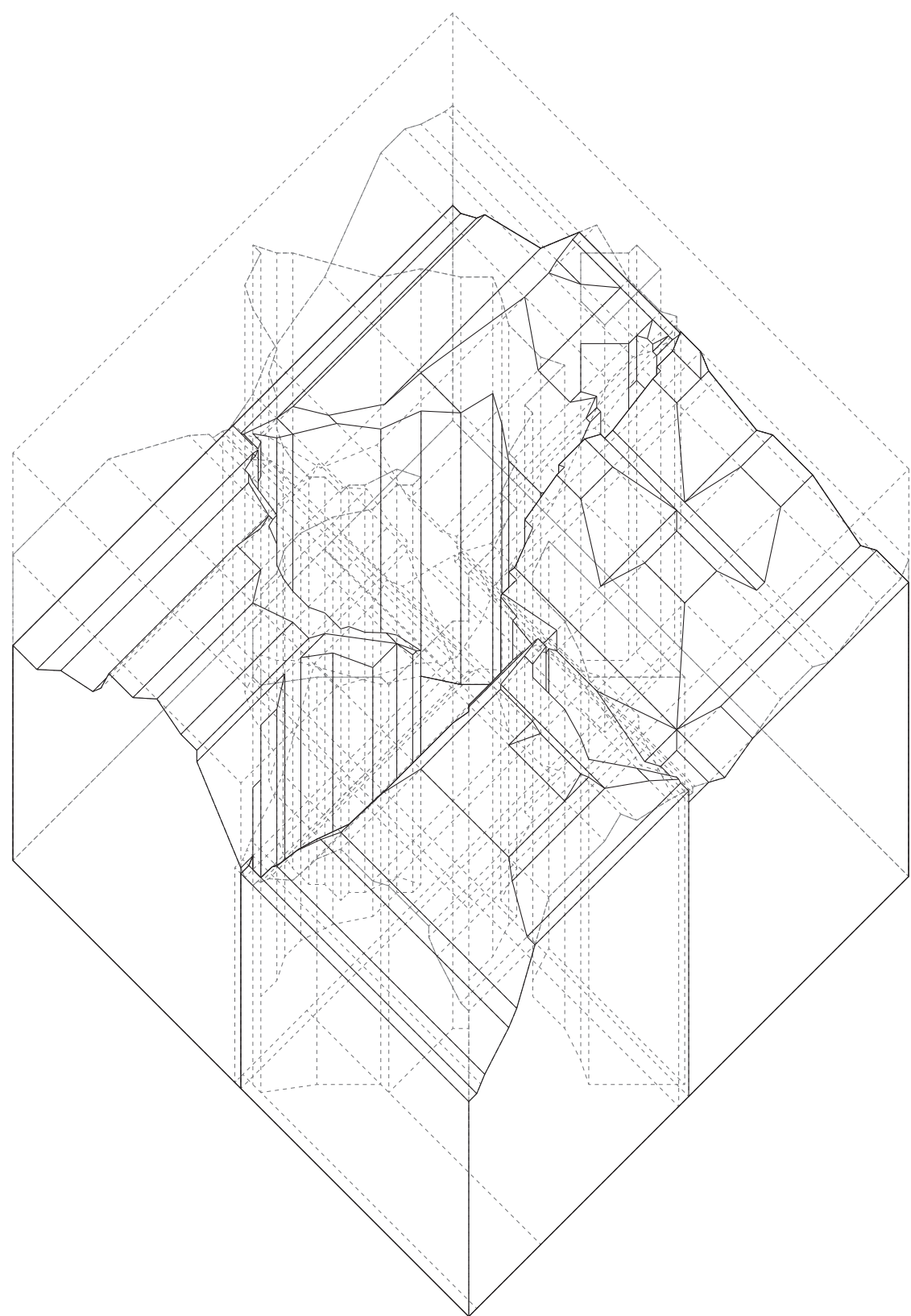
5—Extruded exactly the drawings.



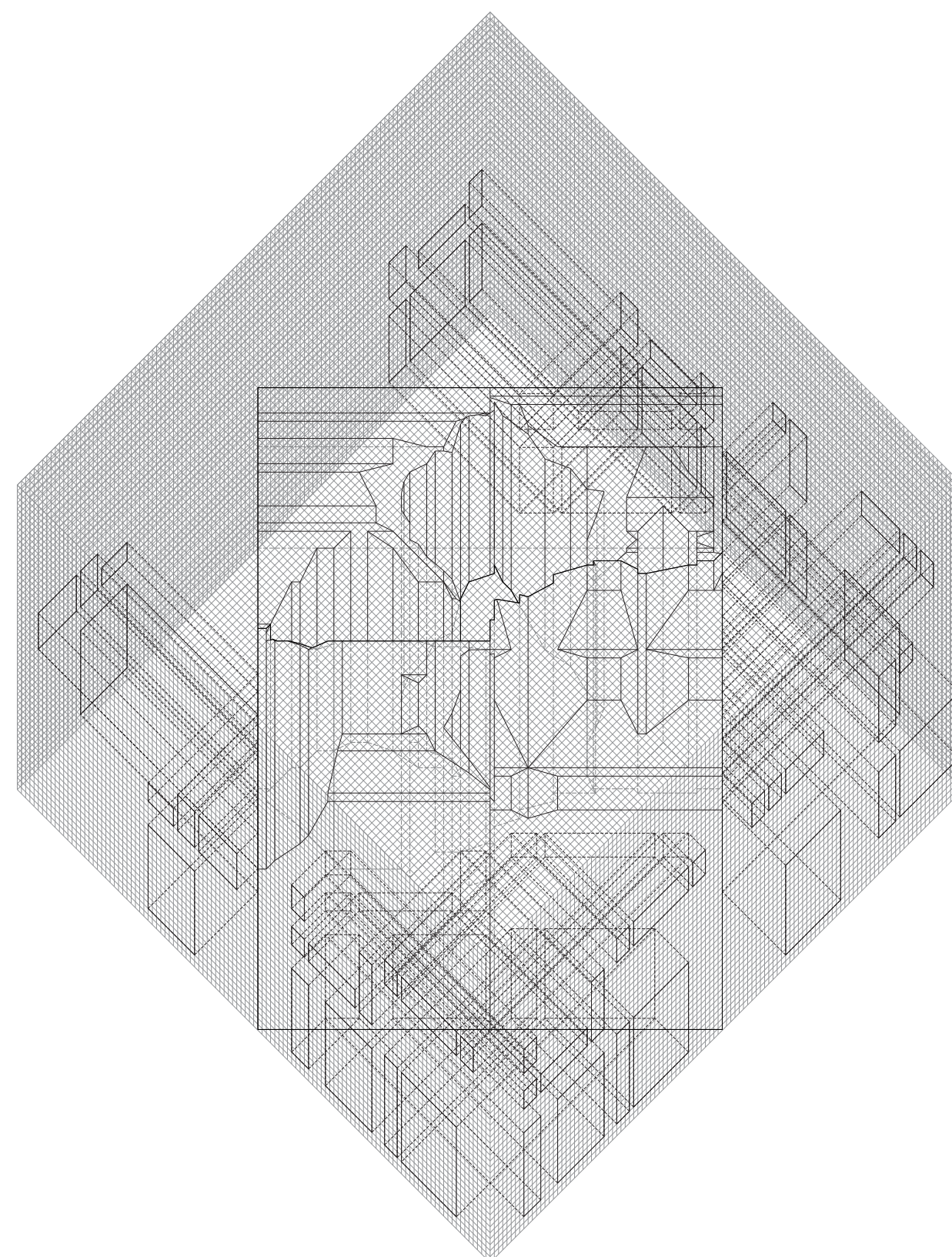
**6—Trimmed all shortcomings.**



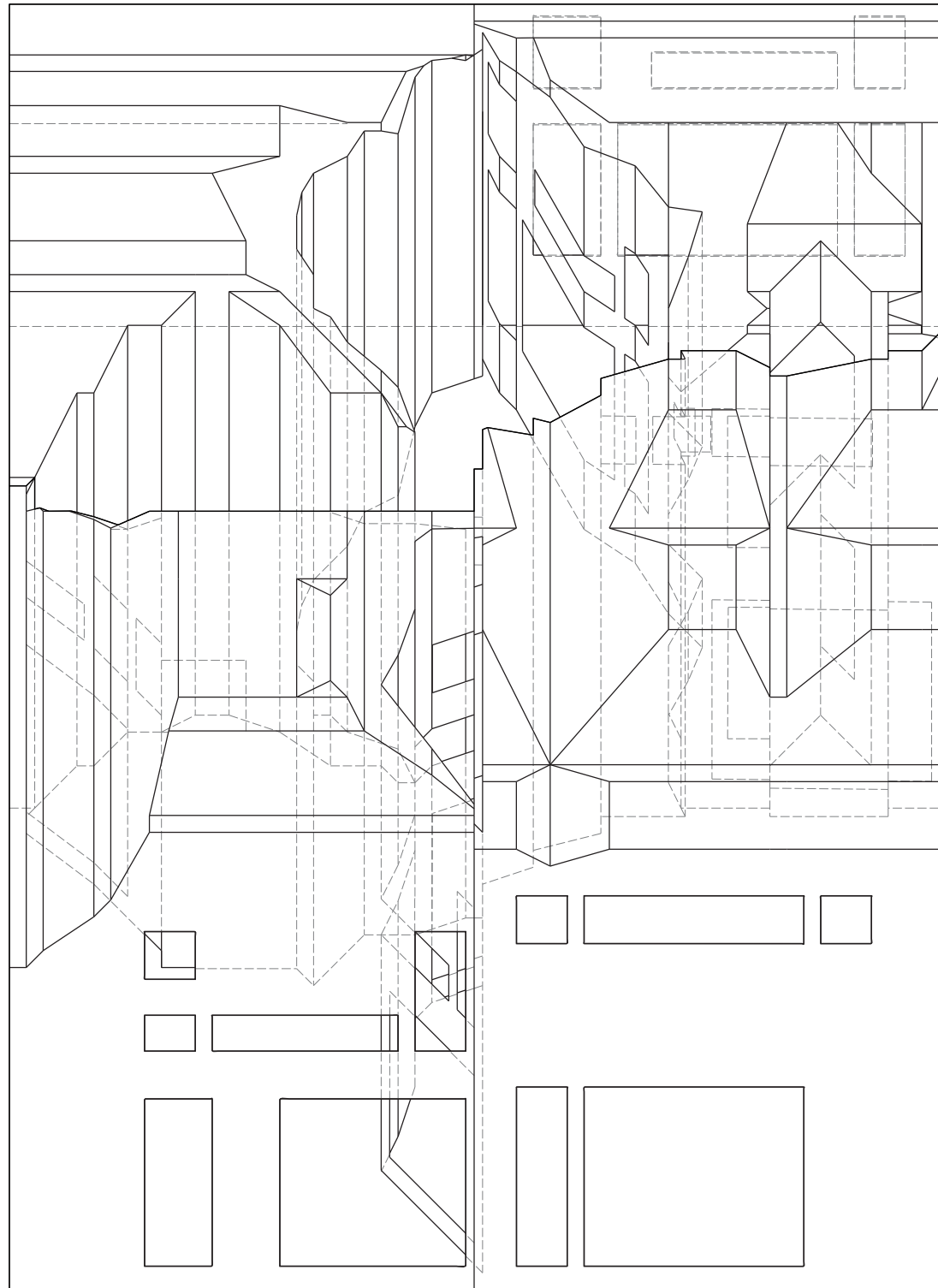
**7—Projected the underbelly curves through a cube to remove all defects of character.**



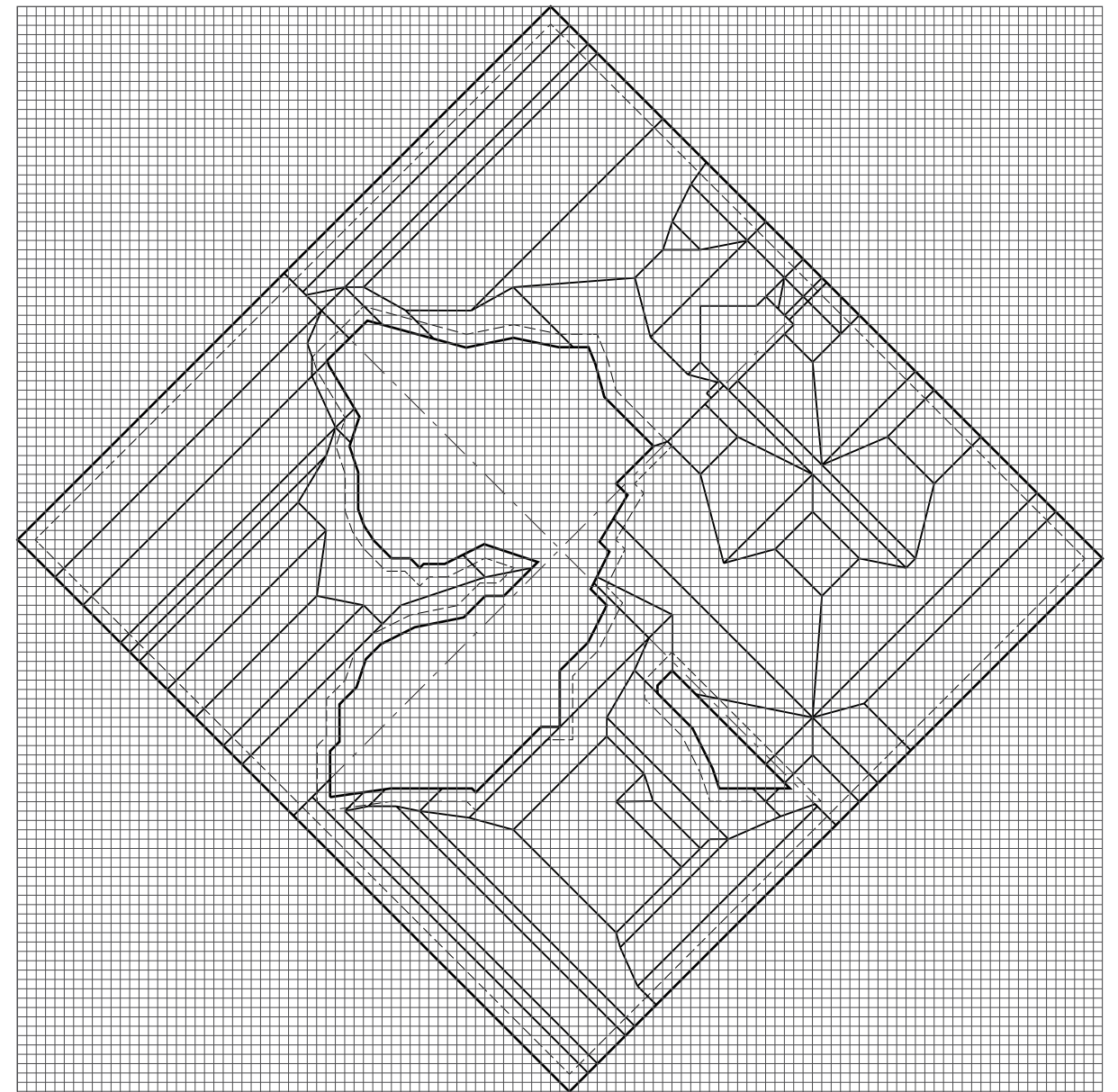
**8—Rotated the willing quadrants 180 degrees.**



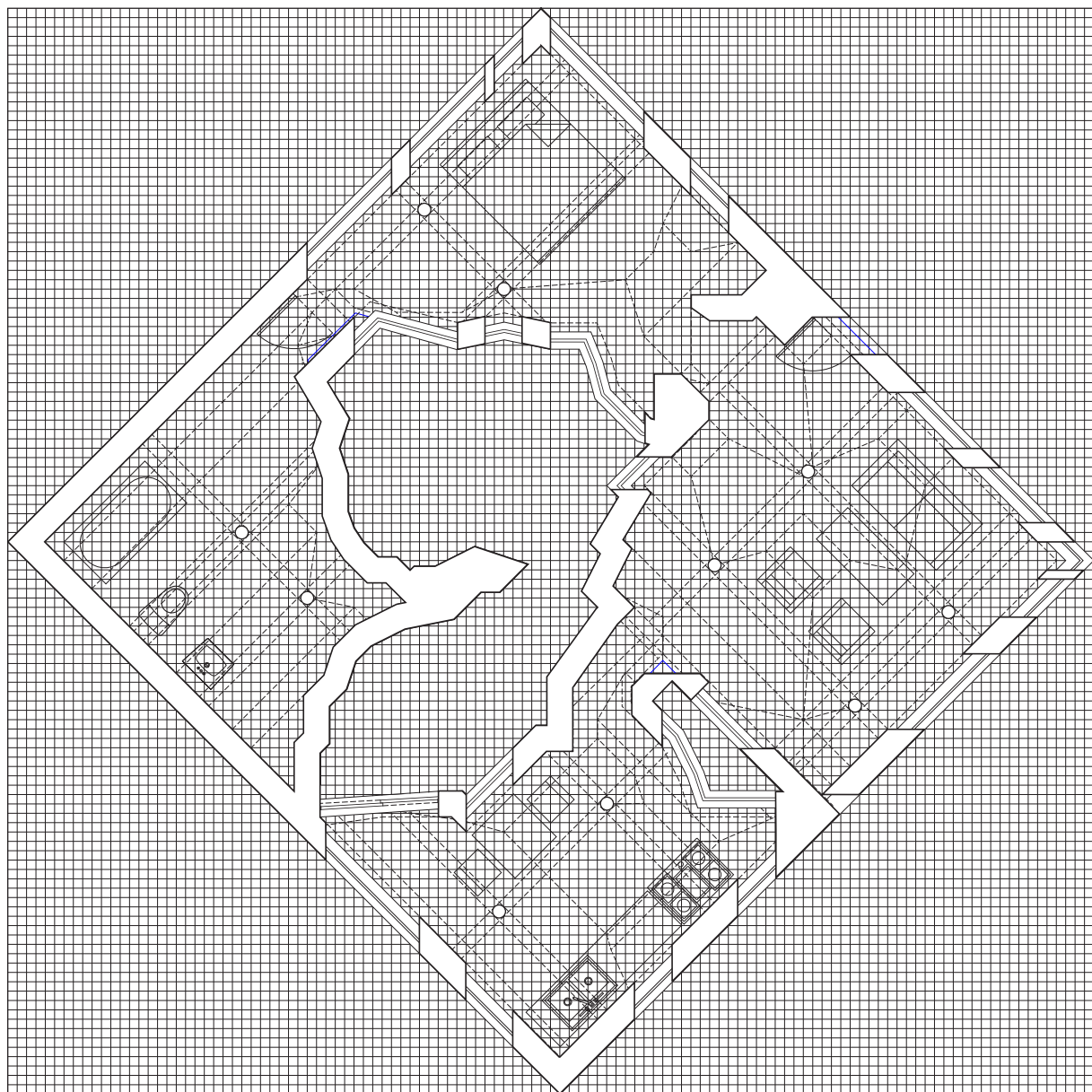
**9—Projected apertures from the bounding diamond,  
and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.**



10—Called it a house only for the power to carry that out.



11—Turned the plan 45 degrees whenever possible.



**12—Having had no spiritual awakening as the result of these steps,  
we nonetheless tried to carry this message to architects,  
and to practice these principles, as we furnished.**