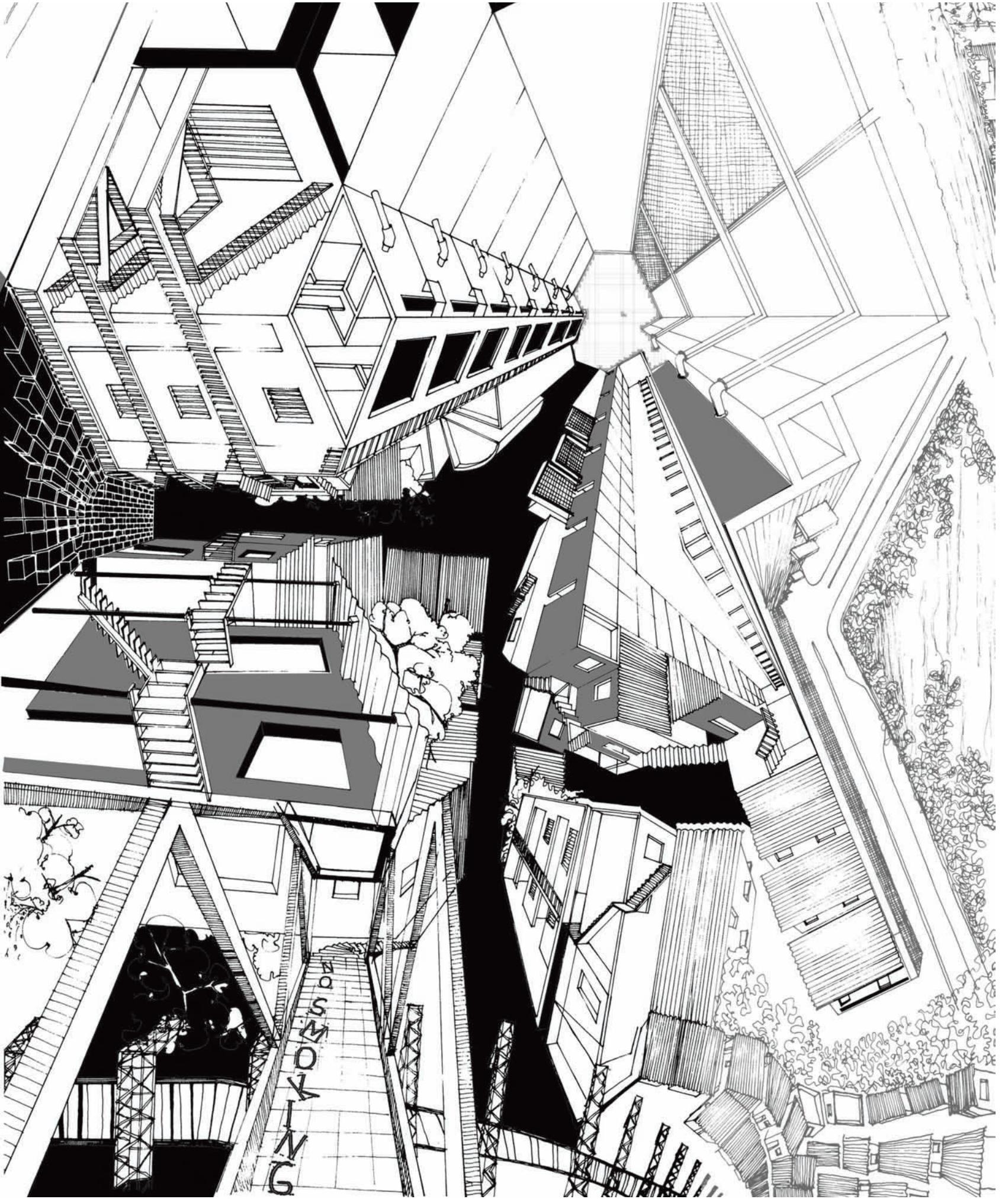
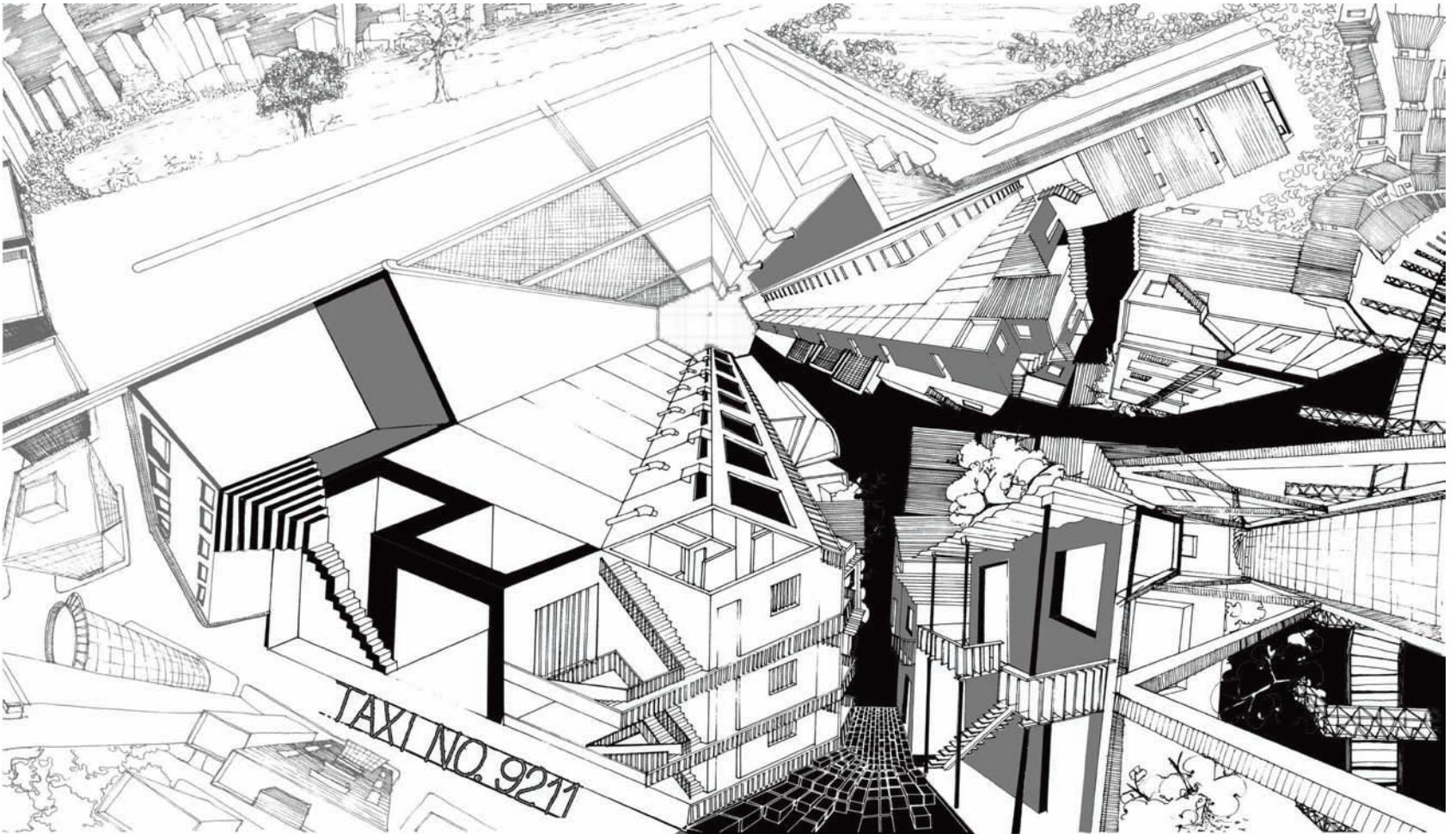


JOURNEYS OF
JOHN ABRAHAM
DHARAVI'S CINEMA
LANDSCAPE

GEORGE JACOB







Dharavi in Mumbai for a long time was one of the world's largest slum-colonies of urban artisans, to which was added a huge business in recycling in more recent times. A cosmopolitan location inhabited by migrant workers from all over the country, and representing almost every religion and caste of India's demographics, the slum rose to international repute during the period of economic liberalization (from the 1990s) as a site that provides a 'colourful' glimpse of an alternative modernity from below. Countless documentaries, alongside the aid money that has poured in, have made Dharavi a significant international symbol of the era of globalization. Bombay cinema, however, has responded to these developments with its own vision of the site as being populated by delinquent youths, illegal economic activities and crime, and 'urban folk' behaviour consisting in the main of endless festivity and a robust attitude towards sex.

The drawing here attempts to plot three journeys through Dharavi undertaken by the actor John Abraham in three recent films: **Dhoom** (2004), **No Smoking** (2007) and **Taxi No. 9211** (2006). In each film the actor traverses a differently imagined cinematic landscape. The drawing is plotted along three axes so that as the viewer rotates the map around, s/he gets access to three imaginations of the settlement: the **Dhoom** axis represents the new urbanity of the Bandra-Kurla Complex with its view from the towering buildings at the edge of the shanties of Dharavi; the **Taxi No. 9211** axis represents the street view from inside the lanes of Dharavi; and the vertical axis of **No Smoking** takes the viewer below the ground, to an imagination of a dark labyrinth under Dharavi.

