Milwaukee is geographically and culturally divided by its bridges, waterways, and freeway connections, creating an intricate and sometimes surprisingly complex patchwork of urban conditions and diverse neighborhoods. Located immediately south of the Menomonee River Valley, at a point of tension between a dense, fine-grained residential neighborhood and its coarse-grain industrial counterpart across the Burnham Canal, our project seeks to mediate between the area’s contrasting urban textures, celebrating the surrounding typological richness while simultaneously stitching together pieces that currently lack connection. Our initial design investigations revolved around the existing alleyway dividing the property in half, part of a long view corridor of alleys interconnecting the adjacent city blocks. Rejecting the program brief’s suggestion to abandon the alleyway, we instead reinforced its axis with an expressive, folding ribbon that marks the main entrance into the complex and functions as the monastery’s organizational and circulatory spine. The ribbon creates spatial boundaries, provides shelter from the elements, leads into and through the church, and ties together the two distinct, intertwined building volumes accommodating the program. One of those volumes houses the friary itself, occupying a monolithic concrete block with narrow apertures - a simple, repetitive structure facilitating an introspective life of solitude and meditation. The other is a lighter, wood clad form with abundant glazing, an inviting building that provides space for those functions that directly serve the community.
left: cemetery massing studies

opposite: exploded axonometric floor plans
opposite:
- site model
- east elevation

right:
- exterior from alley
- ribbon studies
opposite:
church

right:
section models
west elevation