

Fontys Academy MAU | Graduation Project 22-23

DUROSTORUM MUSEUM FORUM

MUSEUMS AS PLACEMAKERS

volume

MELISA ALI



Table of Content

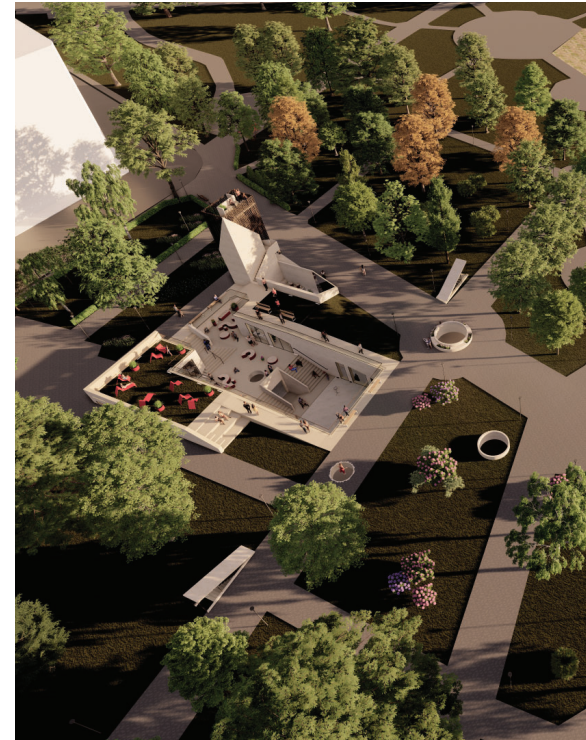
Introduction	6
Essay	8
Project Introduction & Concept	14
Logbook	16
• Winter school	18
• The Underground Labyrinth	22
• All Underground	24
• The Cloister	28
• Symmetry	30
• The Staircase	36
• The Layers	40
• Detailing and Consultation	44
• Last Modifications	50
• Seeking out Advice	52
Research	54
• Silistra Location	56
• The Region	58
• The City	60
• The Climate	62
• The History	64
• The Transformation	66
• Dobrudja	68
• The Traditions and Customs	72
• Traditional Food and Drinks	74
• The Satellites	76
• Culture and Education	78
• The History Museum	80
• The Theater and Library	82
• The Social Interaction	84
• Danube Park	86
• What do people think?	88
• What about museums?	94
• Case Studies	96
• References and Acknowledgment	98

Introduction



Meet the graduate

Throughout my educational journey, I have seized every opportunity to immerse myself in diverse cultural landscapes, allowing me to gain profound understanding of various global perspectives. I pursued my studies in different countries, embracing the enriching experiences offered by each unique location. My interest in the culture-architecture interaction derived naturally from these past experiences and my passion for travelling and exploring every corner of the world. Through that my passion for creating environments that blend art, culture and history has emerged. My graduation project is a homage to my hometown, while also representing my positioning as an architect.



Durostorum Museum Forum

The Durostorum Museum Forum is a graduation project set in the charming town of Silistra, Bulgaria. Nestled in this small town with a rich history, the museum holds immense potential to transform Silistra into a prominent cultural center within the region. This project serves as a stepping stone towards cultural and economic change for the town. The museum's vision extends beyond merely showcasing historical artifacts and attracting visitors from outside; it aims to create a vibrant public space for locals to gather and actively participate in various engaging activities. By fostering a sense of community, the museum forum encourages cultural exchange and social interaction among Silistra's residents. Through workshops, performances, and different programs, the museum becomes a hub for creativity, learning, and entertainment. The Durostorum Museum Forum not only highlights the town's heritage but also plays a pivotal role in revitalising the local economy by boosting tourism and generating employment opportunities in the hospitality and service sectors. With its multifaceted approach, this project signifies a promising beginning for Silistra's transformative journey towards becoming a thriving cultural and economic hub.

From Static to Dynamic: Architectural Design Propelling Museums as Forums of the Future

Introduction

The evolution of museums and their position in our society has been a fascinating journey, marked by significant transformations and re-imagining of their purpose. Traditionally, museums were perceived as static institutions, primarily concerned with the preservation and display of cultural artifacts. However, with the changing needs of society and the evolving role of museums, there is a growing recognition of their potential to serve as dynamic forums that foster interdisciplinary dialogues and community engagement. One crucial aspect that has emerged in the evolution of museums is the role of architecture. Architecture has become a critical factor in shaping the visitor experience, facilitating engagement, and redefining the museum as an active democratic space in society. In the past, museum architecture often emphasised grandeur and authority, aiming to impress and intimidate visitors. However, contemporary museums have embraced a more inclusive and interactive approach, utilising architectural design to create spaces that foster dialogue, exploration, and participation. This reflective essay explores my research process, methodology, and design evolution for the graduation project titled “Durostorum Museum Forum” that investigates and tests such idea of museum in my hometown Silistra, Bulgaria.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis states that museums play a crucial role as effective placemakers, impacting the socio-cultural and economic development of their communities. Museums achieve this by creating inclusive and engaging spaces that promote a sense of belonging, identity, and civic pride among individuals. Museums act as cultural hubs that bring people together, irrespective of their backgrounds, ages, or interests. They provide a platform for individuals to connect with their community's

history, heritage, and artistic expressions. By showcasing diverse collections, exhibitions, and programs, museums foster inclusivity and encourage people from various walks of life to participate and engage with the cultural offerings. This inclusivity strengthens social cohesion and promotes a sense of belonging among community members. Moreover, museums contribute to the economic development of their communities. They attract visitors, both local and from outside, who spend money on admission fees, souvenirs, dining, and accommodation. The influx of tourists generates revenue and employment opportunities, supporting local businesses and the overall economy.

Methodology

The research methodology employed for this project encompassed a site visit to Silistra, interviews with locals, consultation with professionals in the field, a comprehensive literature review, and various museum visitations. The main method was, however, an extensive testing of different designs and layouts.

Site visit Silistra

The visit enabled me to analyse my hometown from a different perspective and experience the location in the context of my graduation project. During my visit, I took the opportunity to explore various cultural institutions, including the local museum. However, I was disappointed to find that many of these places were characterised by dark and uninviting atmospheres. The facilities appeared outdated and limited in their functions, failing to create an engaging and immersive experience for visitors. One of the most noticeable aspects was the spatial arrangement of these institutions. They felt closed off and lacking in openness, which contributed to an overall sense of being

unwelcoming. The lack of natural light and poor lighting choices further exacerbated the gloomy atmosphere. Instead of feeling invited to explore and engage, I felt somewhat isolated and detached from the surroundings. The visit continued with a walk around the central area of the city, observing the changes that have occurred over the years and the connection between different places. One of the main focus points was the Danube Park, where I mapped out the usage of various parts and activity in there. I also noted the vegetation density and possible intervention points for my project.

Interviews

Conducting interviews with both current and former residents of Silistra provided valuable insights into the community's desires and expectations for the museum. Several individuals were interviewed, encompassing both those who still reside in the city and those who have moved away for various reasons. The interview process began with general questions about Silistra, including reasons for leaving, favorite aspects of the city, areas they felt were lacking, and opportunities for improvement. As the interviews progressed, more specific questions were posed regarding the current state of cultural institutions, opinions on the preservation and promotion of the city's cultural heritage, and overall experiences related to the cultural landscape. The interviews were conducted with a set of guiding questions, allowing for spontaneous and open-ended responses. The overarching consensus from all the interviews was the evident lack of cultural events and facilities in Silistra. This shortage of opportunities, particularly for the youth, was identified as a major factor contributing to their departure from the city at a young age. Furthermore, the interviews highlighted the absence of engaging activities and spaces for children, which could stimulate curiosity and broaden their horizons. The participants expressed the need for accessible and enriching cultural offerings that would nurture the development and interests of the younger generation.

Literature Review

In my literature review for the project, I utilised various books that addressed different aspects of architecture, particularly focusing on the topic of museums and their role in society. One of the key references I relied on was “Contemporary Museum Architecture and Design” by Georgia Lindsay. This book proved to be a valuable resource as it featured essays

written by professionals who design, work in, and study museums. This diverse range of perspectives provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the complexities associated with museum architecture. Moreover, the book offered a wide array of examples and case studies, allowing me to explore different approaches and designs in the field. Another book that significantly contributed to my literature review was “The Cultural Role of Architecture.” This particular book delved into the ambiguities surrounding the definition of culture in our global society and its impact on architectural ideas. By examining the relationship between culture and architecture, this book provided me with a broader understanding of how cultural influences shape architectural designs and concepts. It allowed me to explore the cultural significance of museums and their architectural representation in different contexts.

Consultations

For my project, I proactively reached out to a range of professionals for their feedback and consultation. This diverse group of experts included an artist, landscape architects, architects specializing in various fields, a structural engineer, an MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) planner, as well as local professionals. By consulting these professionals and incorporating their expertise, I was able to develop a well-rounded project that considered various aspects of design, functionality, aesthetics, sustainability, and local context.

Visting other museums

Travelling and visiting other museums have been a significant source of inspiration for my project, enriching my understanding of museum design and the potential they hold. One particular museum that left a lasting impression on me was the Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art in Luxembourg. The museum's design prioritised ample space for sitting, allowing visitors to engage in contemplation, reflection, and observation of the artwork. I was also lucky to witness a live performance in the entrance area, which showcased how the museum could serve as an event venue, fostering a dynamic and immersive experience. Additionally, the museum's café area felt like a vibrant public space, offering diverse seating options and encouraging social interaction among visitors. Another notable museum that influenced my project was the National Gallery of Torshavn. Located amidst a small forest in the city, the museum seamlessly blended into its surroundings, creating a tranquil setting for visitors. The museum's café embraced communal interaction, providing a welcoming space for visitors to relax and enjoy refreshments after explor

ing the galleries. It served as a perfect spot for a refreshing tea break after a leisurely walk, enhancing the overall museum experience.

Furthermore, the Museum Quartier in Vienna left a lasting impression on me. The square situated between the museums became a vibrant and active public space, surrounded by cultural institutions, cafes, art stores, and ongoing exhibitions. This lively atmosphere attracts people from various backgrounds, creating an inclusive and dynamic environment. The Museum Quartier serves as a hub for all types of profiles, ensuring there was always something happening and offering a multitude of engaging activities for visitors. I as well, as a previous resident of the city used the MQ as regular meeting place and enjoyed the activities that took place in there. These experiences and observations from various museums have significantly influenced my project, inspiring me to incorporate elements such as ample sitting areas, flexible event spaces, inviting café areas for communal interaction, and the creation of vibrant public spaces that foster inclusivity and engagement.

Testing

The iterative design process predominantly entailed conducting extensive tests on various design iterations and configurations. By engaging in a series of trials and errors, I explored a multitude of possibilities, striving to identify the most optimal solution. Embracing a mindset of continual improvement and avoiding premature commitment to initial concepts facilitated deeper exploration, resulting in a heightened level of complexity for the project. In addition to leveraging 3D software tools, I frequently supplemented my investigations with physical models, which proved invaluable in gaining a more precise and comprehensive understanding of the spatial qualities involved.

Design Process

Throughout the process, the design underwent significant changes. For instance my first vision for the museum project revolved around creating immersive exhibition experiences. I believed that each room should have a distinct architectural design that responded directly to the narrative being conveyed. However, as I embarked on the research and testing throughout the design process, my perspective underwent a significant transformation. Through my exploration of different ideas and engagement with the research material, I realised the importance of providing a more neutral and adaptable space. For ensuring museums thrive as dynamic in-



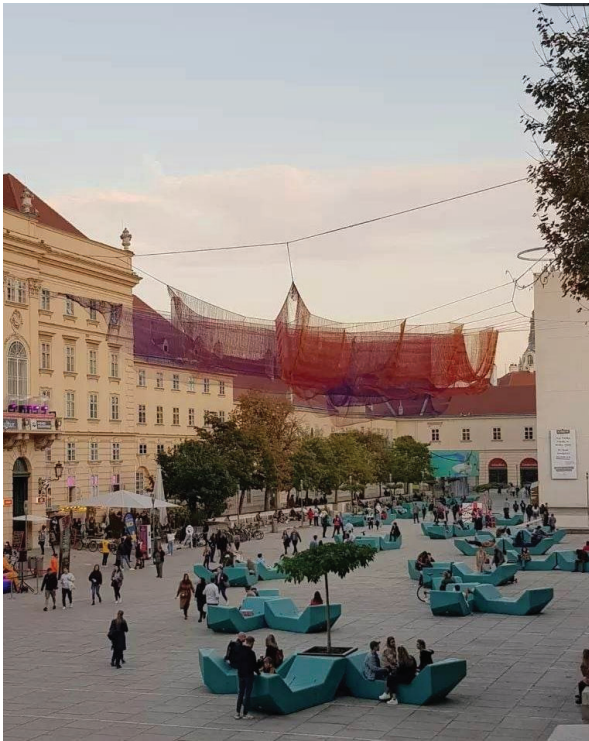
The cafe area, Luxembourg



One of the sitting areas, Luxembourg



National Gallery of Torshavn



The Museum Quartier, Vienna

stitutions that can reinvent themselves, an open space with as little as possible limitations became the natural conclusion.

One of the major challenges I encountered during the design process was working with an underground site. Anticipating the final result became more difficult, and it was crucial to avoid creating a feeling of being trapped underground. To overcome this, I prioritised creating an open and inviting atmosphere. For more accurate understanding of the space I tried to use different programmes that enabled me to achieve a more realistic analyse of the lighting conditions. In order to strengthen the sense of orientation I tried to avoid using full height walls and use the perimeter wall as a guidance. The visitor can follow these walls and get around the museum without encountering any obstructions. The concept of “placemaking” emerged as a guiding principle in my design approach. This concept inspired me to explore spatial strategies that would connect the museum with the surrounding park, emphasise natural light, and provide visual cues of openness. A lot of the design choices were taken and changes were made for ensuring the place is naturally welcoming the people even if they are not visiting the museum.

Material selection also played a pivotal role in the design evolution. Initially, I envisioned incorporating rammed earth into the construction of the museum, as a reference to the region's history of using this material. However, consultations with experts revealed that being underground and experiencing high water pressure posed challenges for implementing this material. As a result, I opted to use concrete, which allowed me to mimic the feeling of the earth while leveraging its different characteristics and textures to highlight the interplay between openness and closeness in the space.

Conclusions from the design process

- Maximising the role of placemaking: The design of the museum focuses on understanding how museums can serve as active placemakers, fostering inclusivity and connectivity with the surrounding environment. By seamlessly integrating the museum with the adjacent park, creating multifunctional spaces, and actively engaging with the local community, the aim is to establish the museum as a vibrant cultural hub that appeals to both residents and tourists.
- Embracing adaptability and flexibility in museum design: Recognising the importance of designing spaces that can adapt to changing exhibition requirements and evolving societal needs. The open exhibition area provides the flexibil-

ity to accommodate future changes and configurations, empowering curators with greater freedom in curating exhibits. Additionally, the lower patio of the museum offers a versatile space that can transform from a decorative pool to an ice-skating rink, as well as being adaptable for various events and performances.

- Unleashing the transformative potential of museums: Exploring how museums can transcend traditional roles and serve as catalysts for societal transformation. In this context, the physical design of the museum plays a crucial role, in facilitating interactions and inspiring creativity. The architecture of the building itself is intentionally designed to have an inviting language, encouraging visitors to utilise the museum’s facilities, and creating an atmosphere that counters the perception of intimidating and closed-off institutions.

Further Development

A further development that requires additional investigation, constrained by limited time, pertains to the broader vision of the museum. The aspiration is for the museum to function as a growing organism, expanding its presence into the surrounding Danube Park and the city itself. The aim is to establish satellite extensions of the museum that not only contribute culturally but also foster social connections. This innovative model ensures the continuity of the museum and its deep connection with the daily lives of residents, while simultaneously boosting the local economy and utilising the city’s rich cultural heritage.

A pilot proposal is included as part of the project (further explained on page 74-75) based on preliminary research of the city’s cultural heritage. One example of such a satellite branch is a restaurant strategically located near the city bazaar. Here, traditional dishes using local produce are served, offering an authentic culinary experience that reflects regional cuisine. This restaurant goes beyond simply providing meals; it becomes a platform for cultural exchange, as visitors can participate in culinary classes and workshops that celebrate the flavours and techniques of the region. Integrated within the restaurant is an exhibition showcasing the history and significance of the local cuisine, deepening visitors’ understanding and appreciation of the culinary heritage.

However, in order to realise this vision, in-depth research is needed to explore the feasibility, practicality, and potential impact of such satellite extensions. This investigation would involve considerations of urban planning, architectural design, and community engagement. It would be essential to

assess the compatibility of these extensions with the existing urban fabric and green spaces, ensuring a harmonious integration.

Conclusion

The research process has been transformative, leading to a deeper understanding of museums as dynamic forums. Through engagement with the local community, professionals, and extensive research, the potential of museums to catalyse interdisciplinary dialogues and community growth has become evident. The design evolution reflects the dynamic nature of museum spaces, emphasising adaptability, openness, and contextual sensitivity.

Looking ahead, museums will continue to act as catalysts for social change and progress. They will serve as platforms for democratic discourse, encouraging dialogue and exploration of diverse perspectives. The architecture will play a crucial role in enabling these functions by designing spaces that foster interaction, collaboration, and co-creation.

Moreover, architecture will contribute to the democratisation of museums by considering the diverse needs and experiences of visitors. Inclusive design principles will ensure that museum spaces accommodate people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds, promoting a sense of belonging and active engagement.

Moving forward, it is essential to explore innovative approaches to museum design, considering evolving community needs and societal contexts. This graduation project provides a foundation for envisioning museums as vibrant, inclusive, and transformative spaces that actively shape the future. By integrating community engagement, adaptable design strategies, and a deep understanding of local contexts, museums can become dynamic forums that inspire, educate, and empower individuals and communities.

Project Introduction & Concept

Project Introduction

The graduation project delves into the concept of a museum as a placemaker in my hometown of Silistra. Silistra, a city with a rich history and a strategic location, possesses immense potential to transform into a cultural hub and catalyst for both cultural and economic growth in the region.

Silistra, a city steeped in history, boasts a remarkable past that spans centuries. From its origins as a Roman stronghold to its strategic position along the banks of the majestic Danube River, the city has witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, leaving behind a tapestry of diverse cultural influences. It is within this historical backdrop that the project envisions a museum as a catalyst for change and revitalisation.

The graduation project proposes the development of a museum in Silistra that goes beyond mere preservation of artifacts. It aims to be a dynamic and engaging cultural institution, one that connects the city's past with its present and future. By showcasing the rich history of Silistra, the museum becomes a beacon of cultural pride and identity, offering visitors a profound understanding of the city's heritage and its significance within the larger regional context.

Beyond the cultural aspect, the project recognises the immense economic potential that such a museum can unlock. By positioning Silistra as a cultural center, the project envisions an increase in tourism, attracting visitors from far and wide. This influx of tourists, in turn, stimulates the local economy by creating job opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and boosting the hospitality and service sectors.

Moreover, the proposed museum does not exist in isolation but serves as a vital piece in the larger puzzle of transforming Silistra into a comprehensive cultural hub. By integrating the

museum with other cultural institutions, educational facilities a vibrant cultural ecosystem is created. This synergy encourages collaborations, exhibitions, and events that inspire creativity, foster innovation, and nurture talent within the community.

As a placemaker, the envisioned museum acts as a catalyst for urban regeneration, breathing new life into neglected areas of Silistra. The project proposes careful consideration of the architectural design, ensuring it complements the city's existing urban fabric while providing a modern and inviting space for cultural experiences.

Concept

The concept of the museum located near the ancient ruins of Durostorum in Silistra showcases a harmonious blend of history, nature, and modern design. The museum is located underground, allowing it to blend harmoniously with the landscape of the park. The roof of the museum is transformed into lush green terraces, serving as versatile spaces for daily activities.

The museum's design takes inspiration from an amphitheater, providing a versatile space for events and performances. The patio, divided into two levels, serves as a central gathering area. The first level houses public facilities such as the café forum and museum shop, offering both indoor and outdoor spaces that create a vibrant and interactive small square.

A level below, a multifunctional pool adds an element of dynamic versatility to the museum. During the summer, it provides a refreshing escape, while in winter, it transforms into an ice skating rink. This area can also be adapted as a stage for various activities, further enhancing the museum's flexibility. Descending the last stairs, visitors reach the museum. The ex-

hibition space of the museum offers ample room that can be transformed and rearranged to accommodate different exhibitions. The absence of obstructing walls ensures a fluid and open environment. Unlike traditional museums, the back-of-house areas are not separated but integrated into the visitor experience. This allows visitors to explore and see the inner workings of the museum, fostering a deeper understanding and connection to the curatorial process.

The patio on this level serves as a meeting place for both employees and visitors, seamlessly connecting them to the outside world. Natural light plays a crucial role in the design, ensuring that the museum does not feel confined or underground. Illuminated by daylight, the exhibition areas radiate a warm and inviting ambiance.

The museum's lift takes on a prominent role, serving as a focal point of the design. Extending further, it transforms into an observation tower, allowing visitors to admire breathtaking views of the Danube River and the city's skyline. At night, the tower transforms into a mesmerizing light tower, illuminating the surroundings and captivating onlookers with its dazzling light show.

The museum's concept not only offers an immersive journey through history and culture but also showcases the integration of nature, modern design, and innovative features. It provides a dynamic and engaging space that invites visitors to explore, learn, and appreciate the rich heritage of Silistra while enjoying the beauty of its surroundings.

Logbook

learning through testing

Documentation of the design process and the decision taken along the way. The major changes are documented to give an insight on how the final result is achieved.



Winter School

the independent pavilions

Participating in the Winter school afforded me a unique opportunity to reevaluate my project with a fresh perspective. Throughout the program, we rigorously tested the concept of a museum in three distinct locations, engaging in comprehensive discussions to assess the advantages and drawbacks of each potential outcome. After careful consideration, we collectively reached the consensus that independent pavilions, interconnected with one another, held the greatest potential for success within this specific scenario.

Drawing inspiration from this conclusion, I proceeded to develop the concept of "tree pavilions" situated within a park setting. Regrettably, upon further examination, it became evident that the resulting design appeared contrived and overly conspicuous, failing to achieve the desired aesthetic and functional integration.



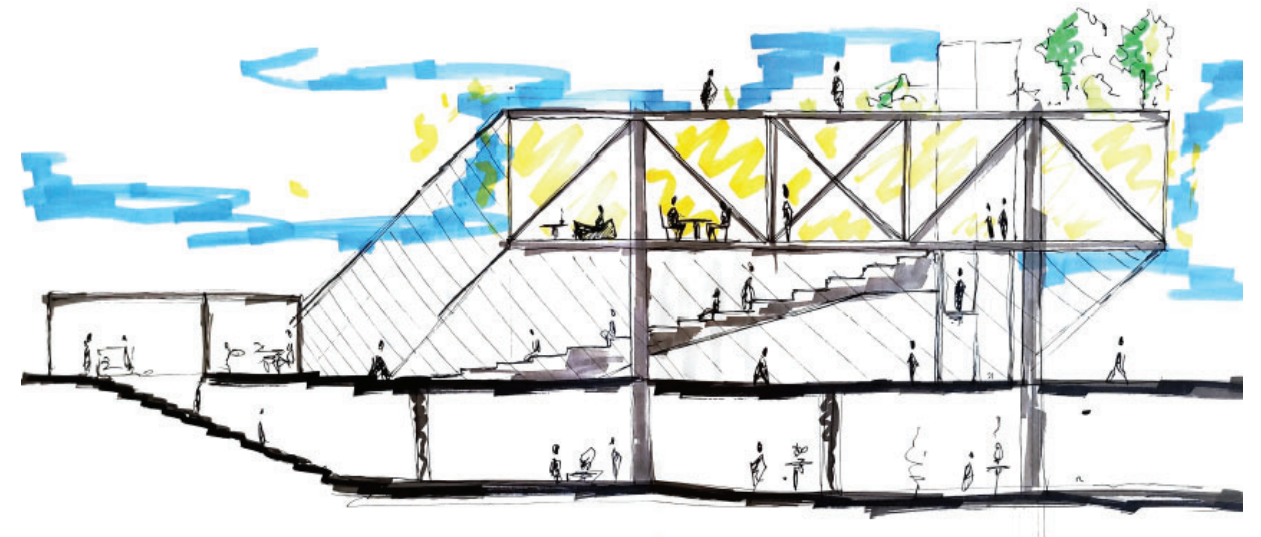
results from designs for each location



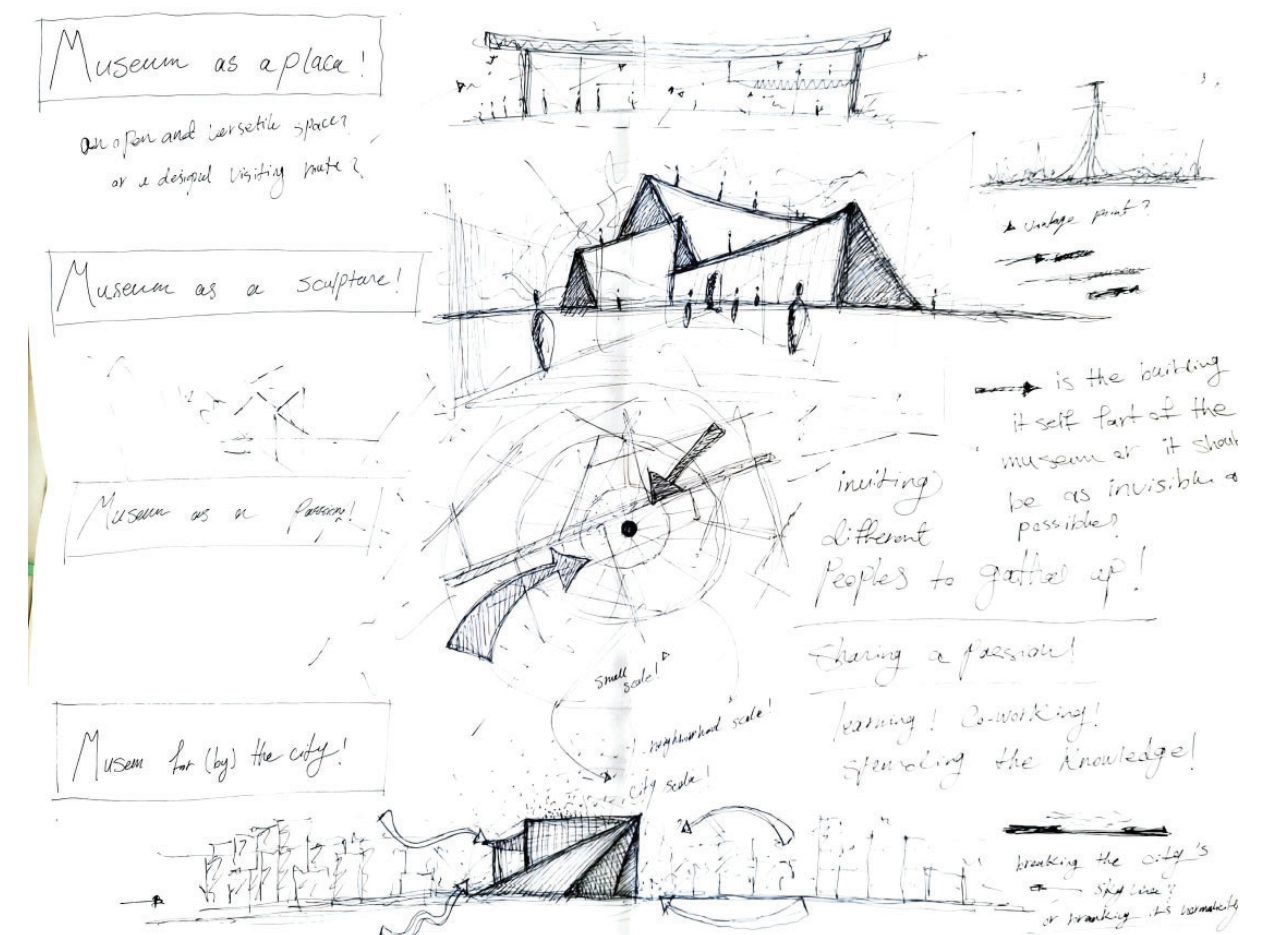
proposal for the existing museum



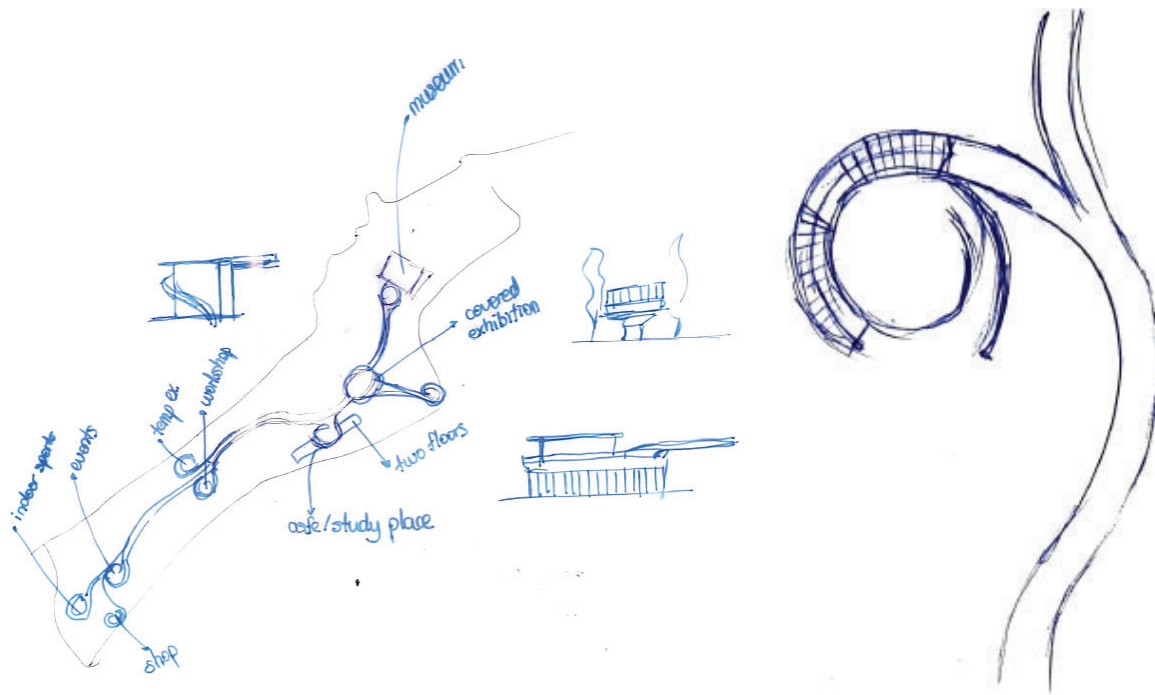
teams debate - park vs. city square



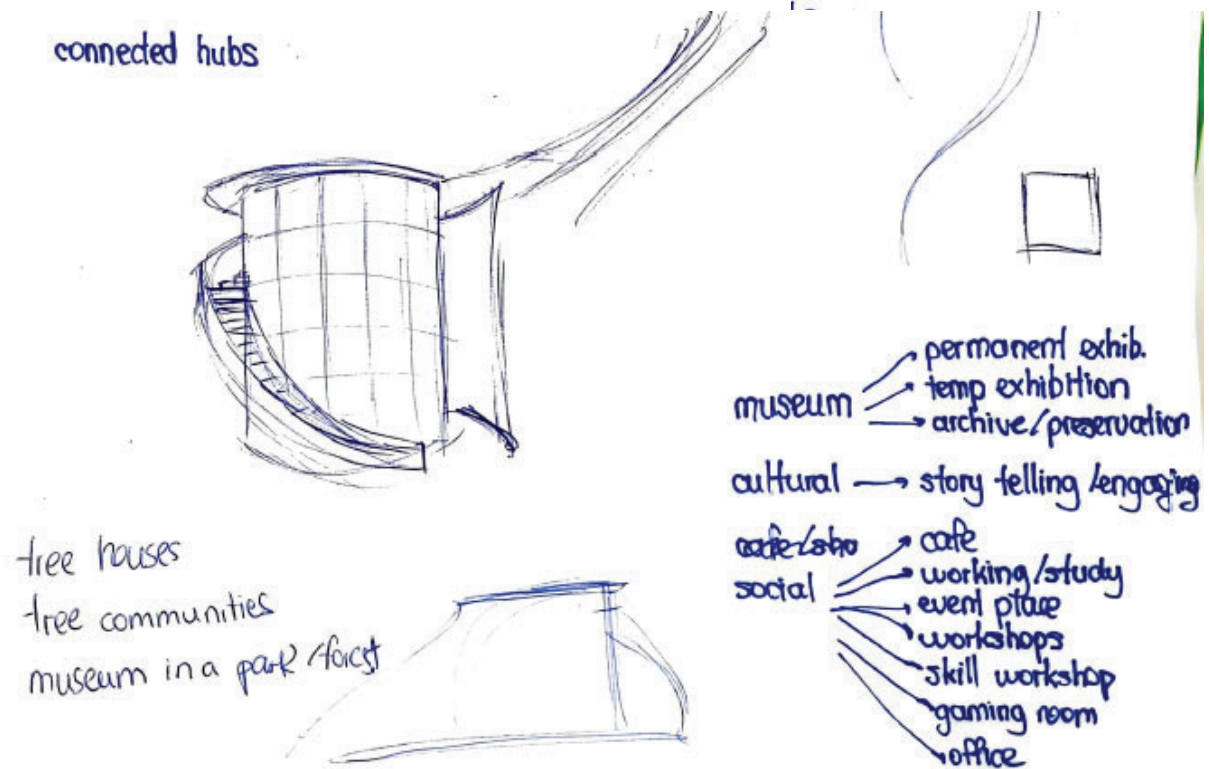
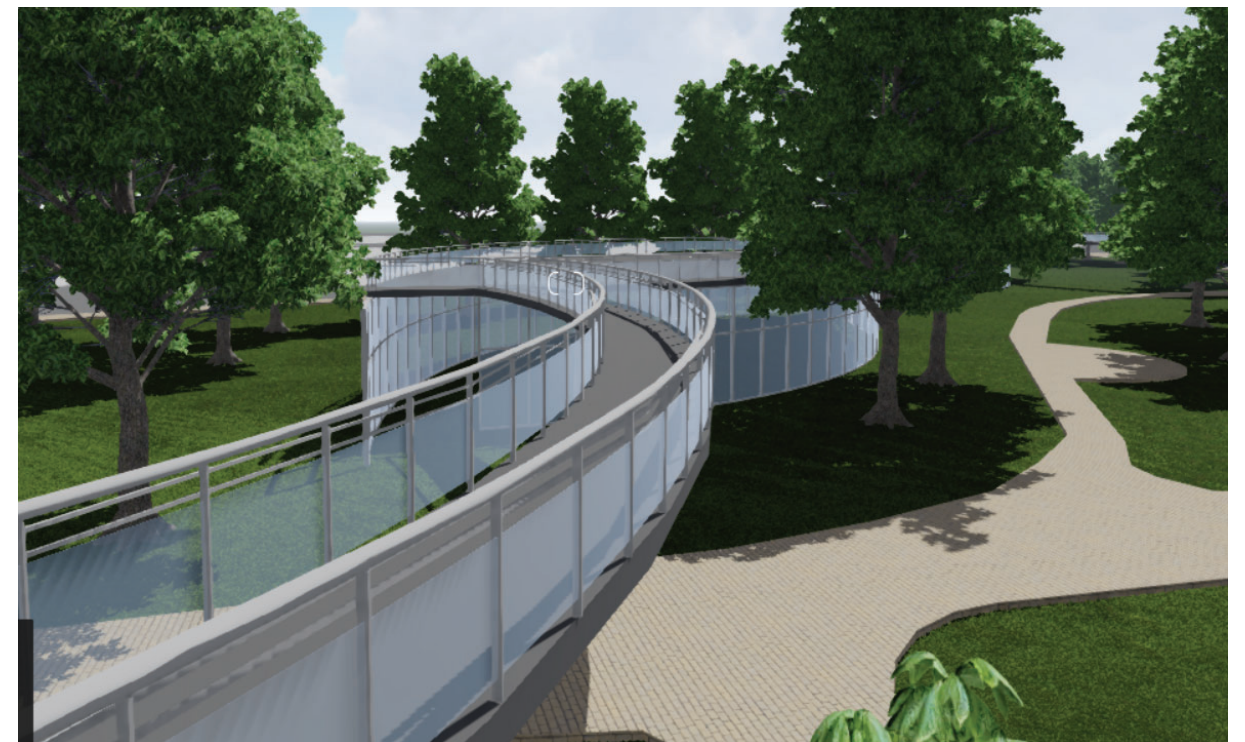
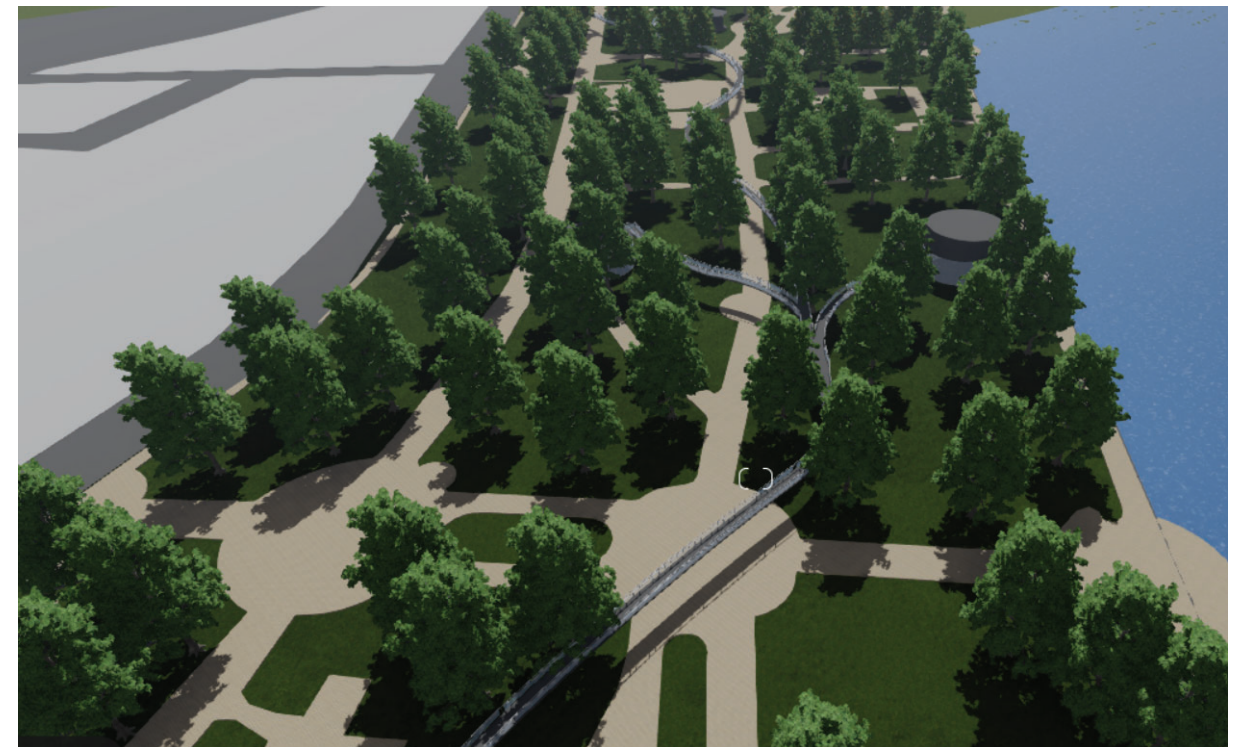
proposal for the square intervention



first day sketch about museum from a student

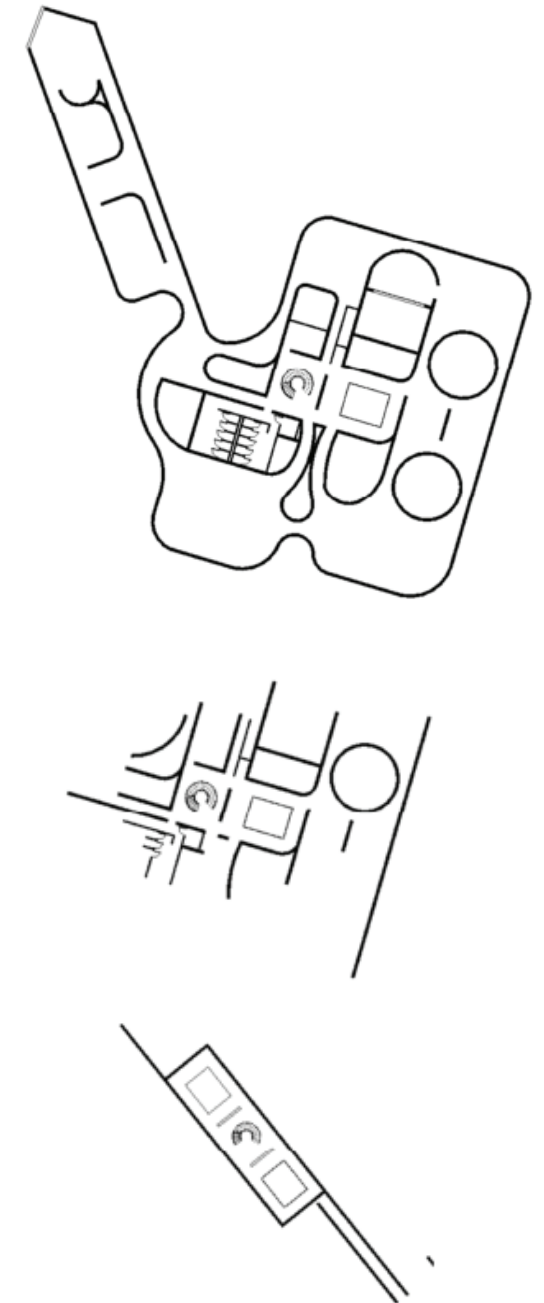
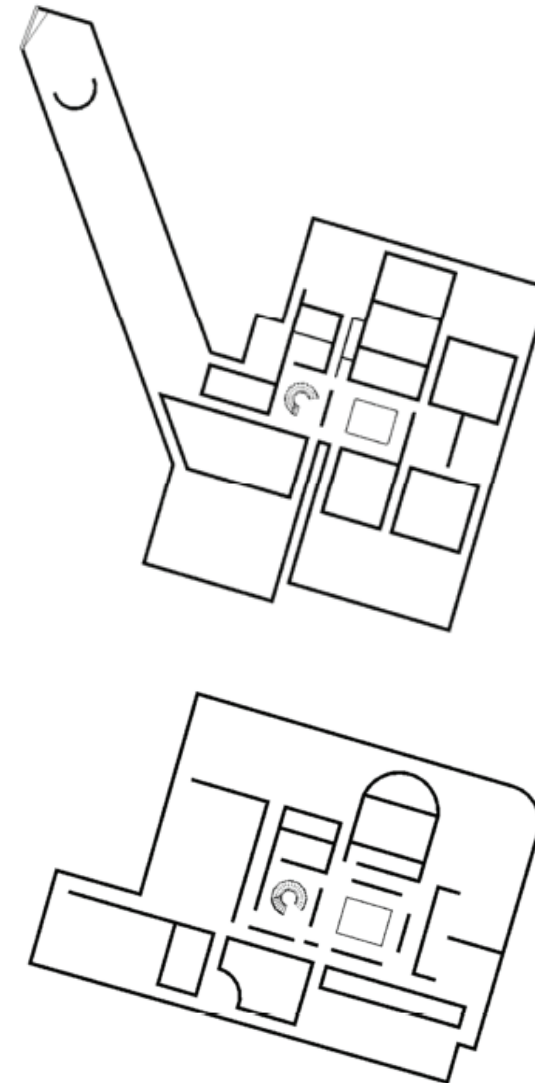
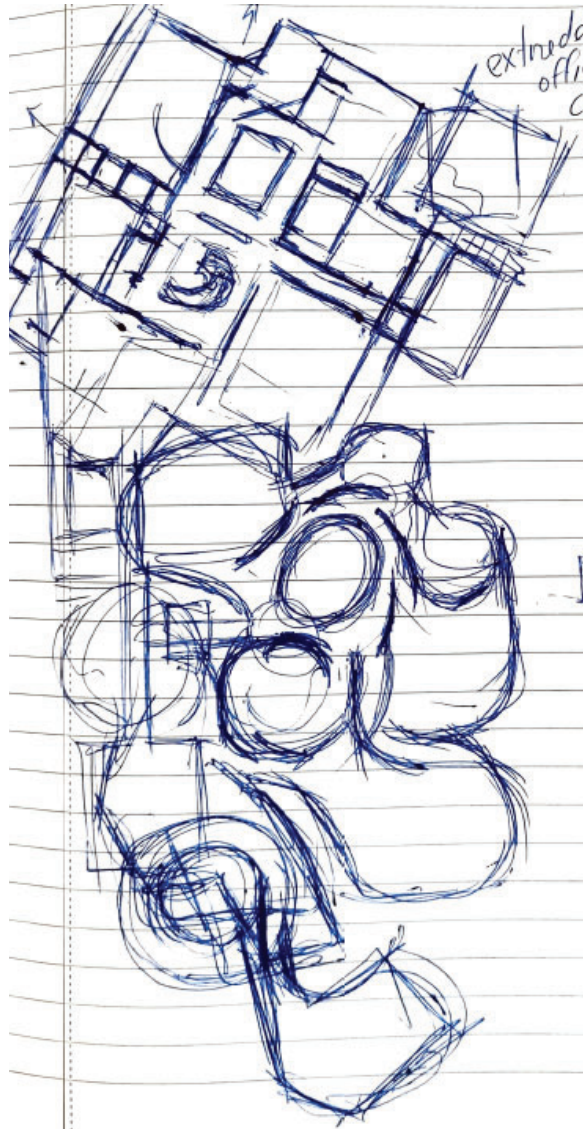
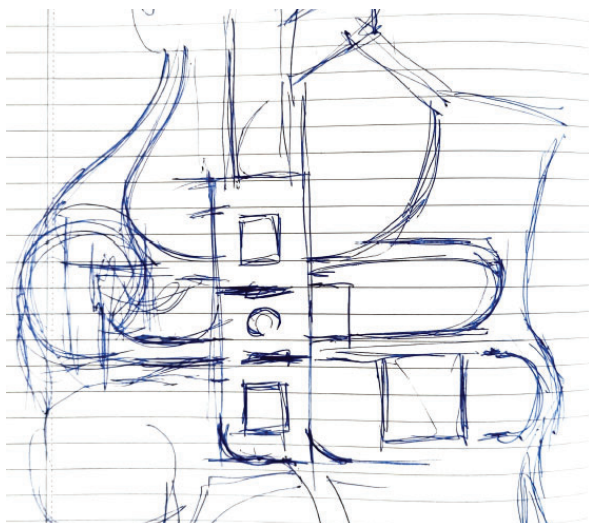


sketch of elevated bridge connecting hubs in the park



The Underground Labyrinth

Following the conceptual design phase, I proceeded to develop the layout for the museum. The intention was to establish a reception area on the ground level, leading visitors on a descending path towards the exhibition space. I aimed to create a sense of intrigue and discovery, ensuring that every corner held something new to explore. However, upon visualising the design in 3D, I realised that it resulted in dark and claustrophobic spaces. The excessive number of walls impeded the sense of orientation and hindered the overall experience. Additionally, I became fixated on incorporating the ancient ruins into the museum, attempting to adapt the layout to accommodate them. However, after thorough testing, I concluded that this inclusion did not significantly contribute to the narrative I intended to convey. Consequently, I made the decision to abandon the idea, recognizing that it did not enhance the overall storytelling of the museum.



First start with trying to integrate the ancient ruins to the museum layout. Next is redlining spaces and rounding corners for smoother circulation. Third image simplifying the design and leaving out the ancient ruins connection. Reducing the layout to the core of the design.

All Underground

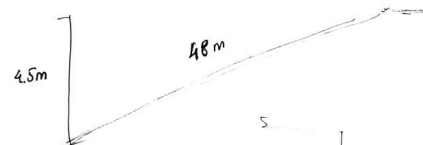
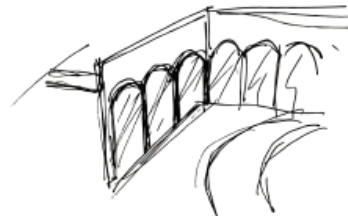
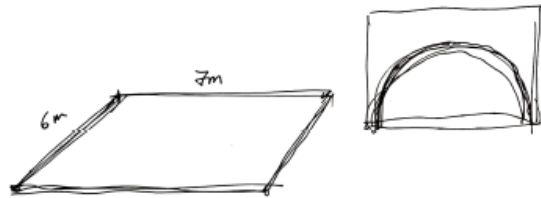
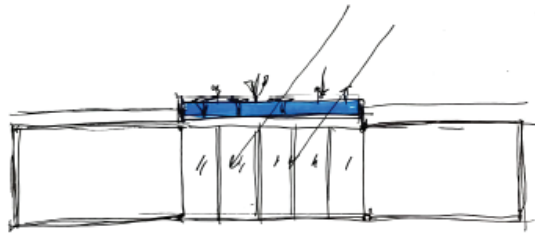
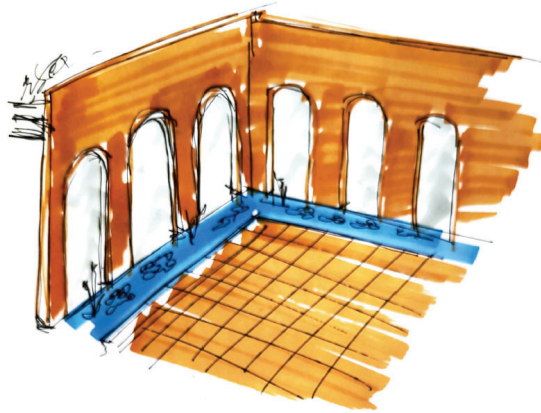
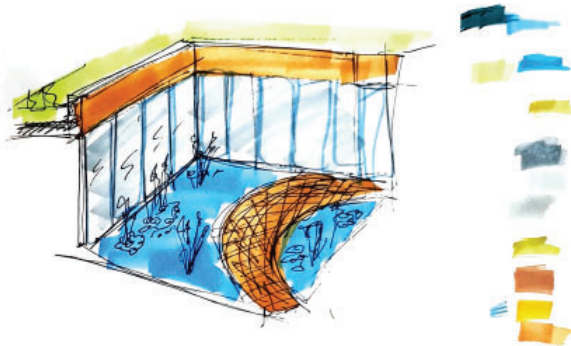
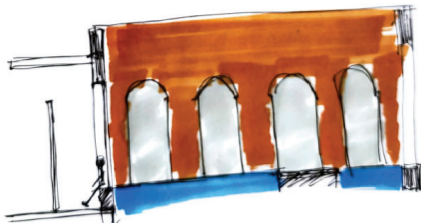
introducing the design principles

I grappled with design decisions and sought guidance from my tutor to establish design principles. These principles included making the museum completely underground, incorporating perforated openings for natural light, prioritizing transparency with minimal walls, allowing for pauses between exhibitions, and ensuring publicly accessible areas such as a café or shop.

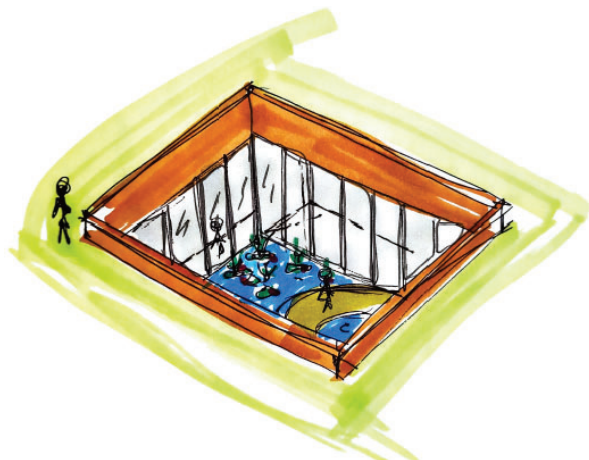
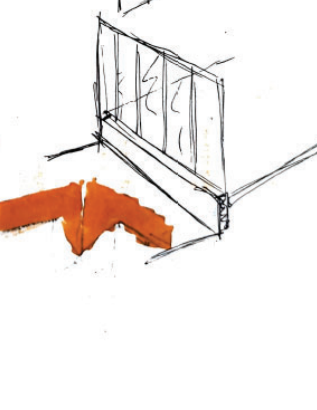
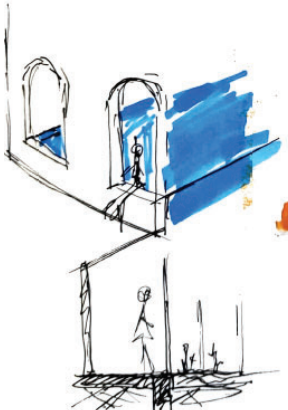
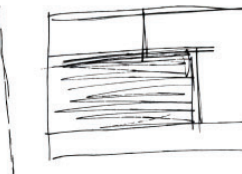
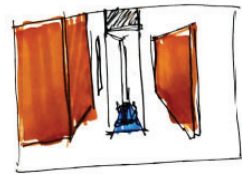
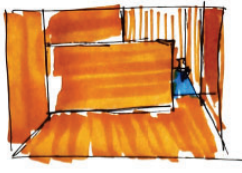
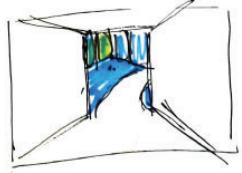
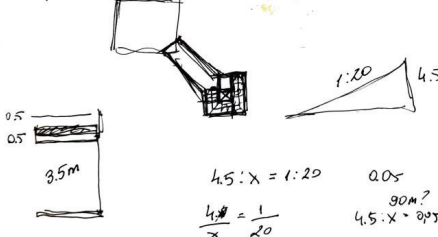
In my design process, I opted to position the entire museum underground and arranged the various programs around a central patio. I experimented with different patio layouts, exploring options with or without water features, as well as different facade arrangements and connections between the interior and exterior spaces.

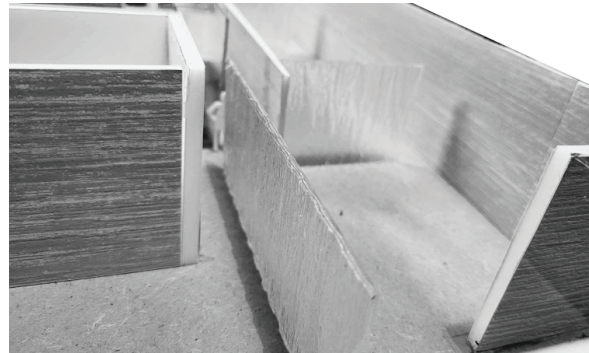
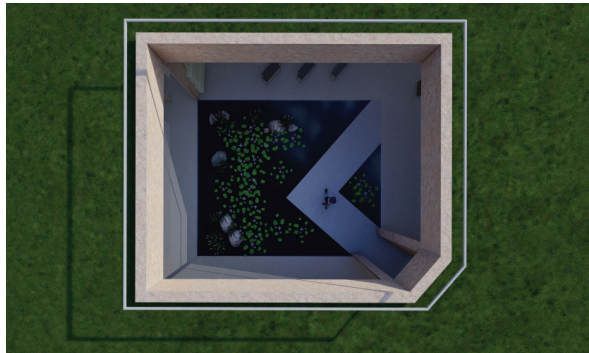
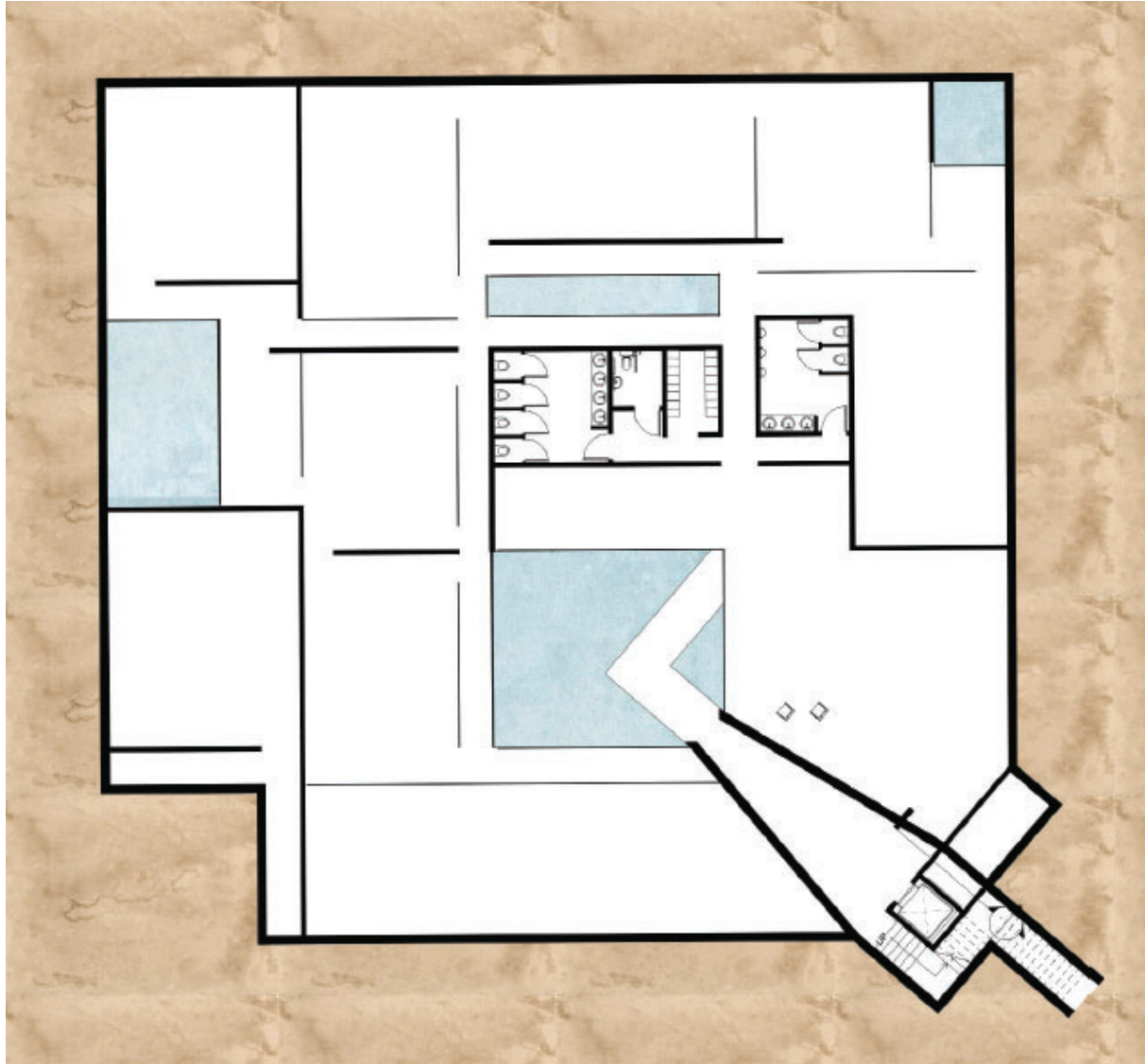
Initially, I envisioned a sloped terrain leading naturally to the patio as the entry point. However, upon further calculations, I realized that the length would be excessive. Consequently, I shifted my focus to refining the area around the staircase and lift that connects to the patio.

Overall, the layout of the museum did not meet my expectations and required further development. Through modeling and visualization, I quickly recognized that the space felt too confined and failed to evoke the desired ambiance and experience.



up to 9 m - less 8%



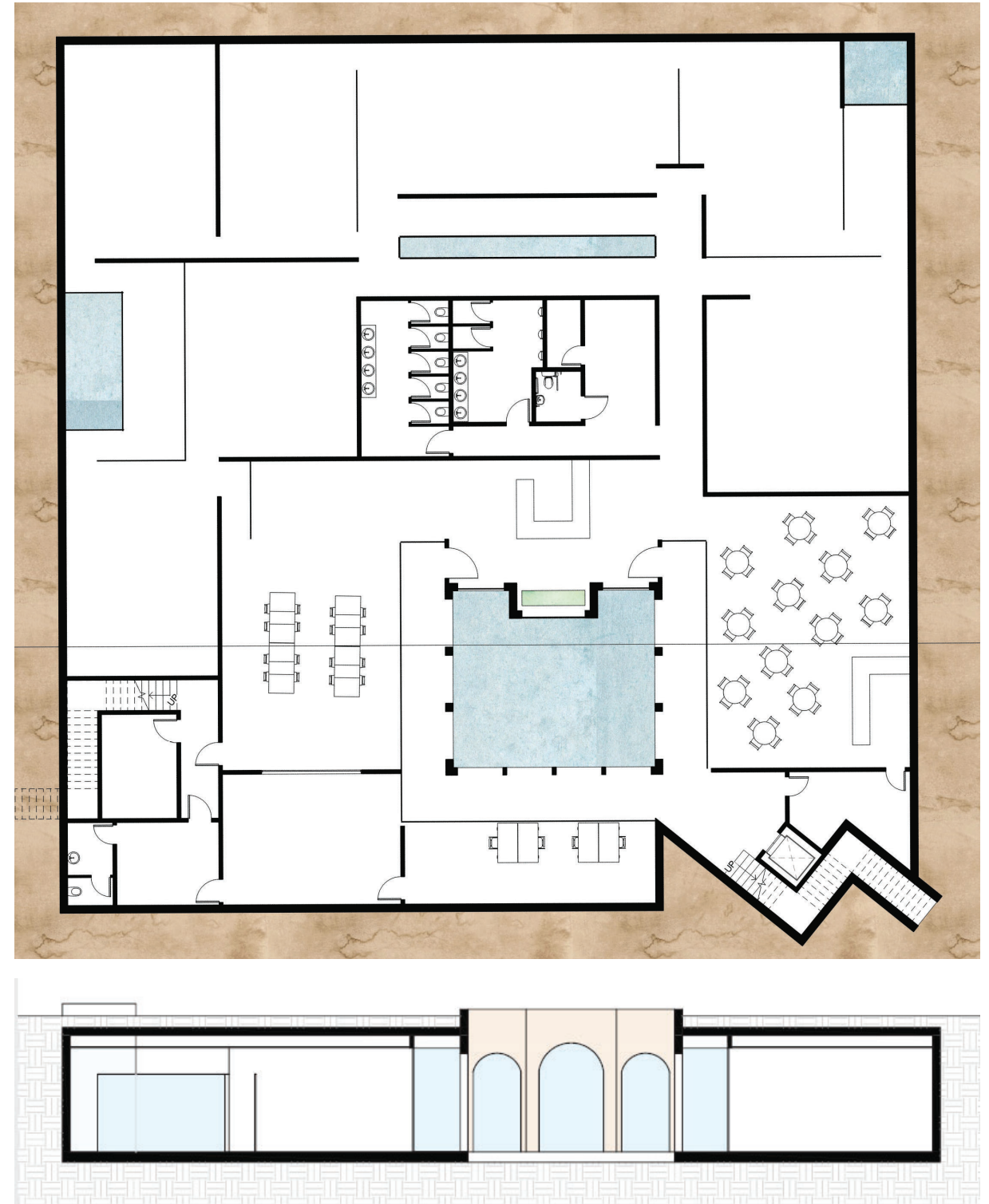
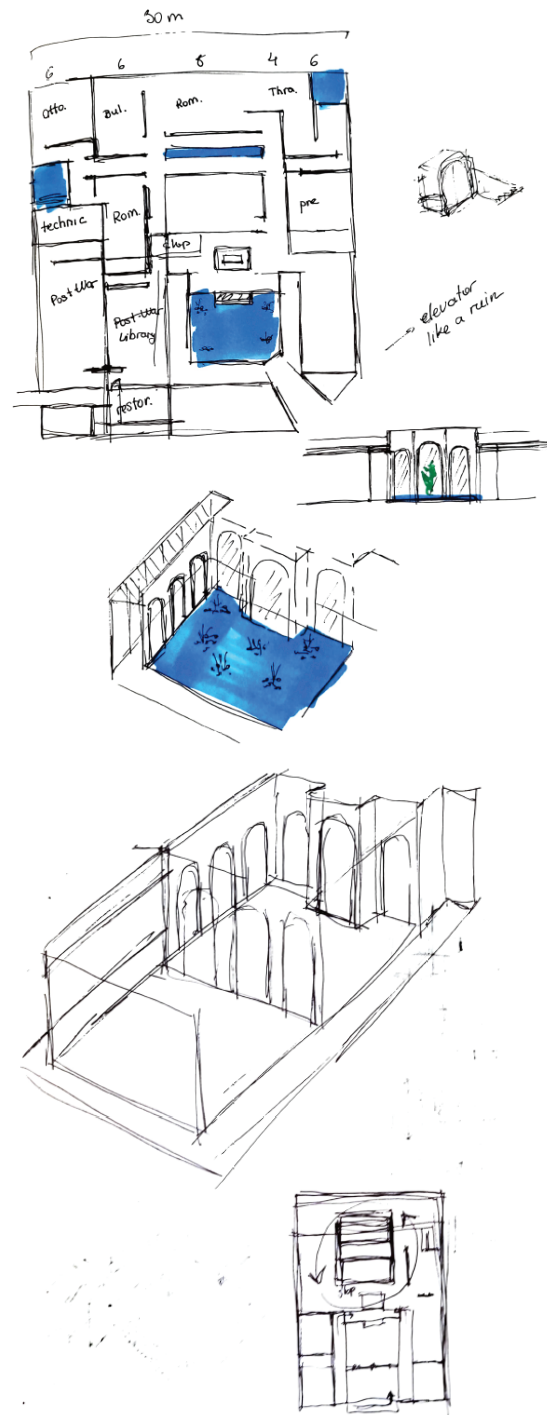


I made a physical model to test the layout. I tried to work with opacity of the glass. However, the area felt too restricting and spatially too confined. Therefore, even before completing the layout I moved on with improving the design based on the findings gained from the testing.

The Cloister

Building upon the previous layout, my aim was to enhance the significance of the patio. Drawing inspiration from cloisters, I integrated a pathway along the water and re-imagined the exhibition space. I strategically placed the public areas, such as the cafe and library, along the patio, followed by the exhibition area. Furthermore, I reintroduced the water element inside the museum through glazed openings.

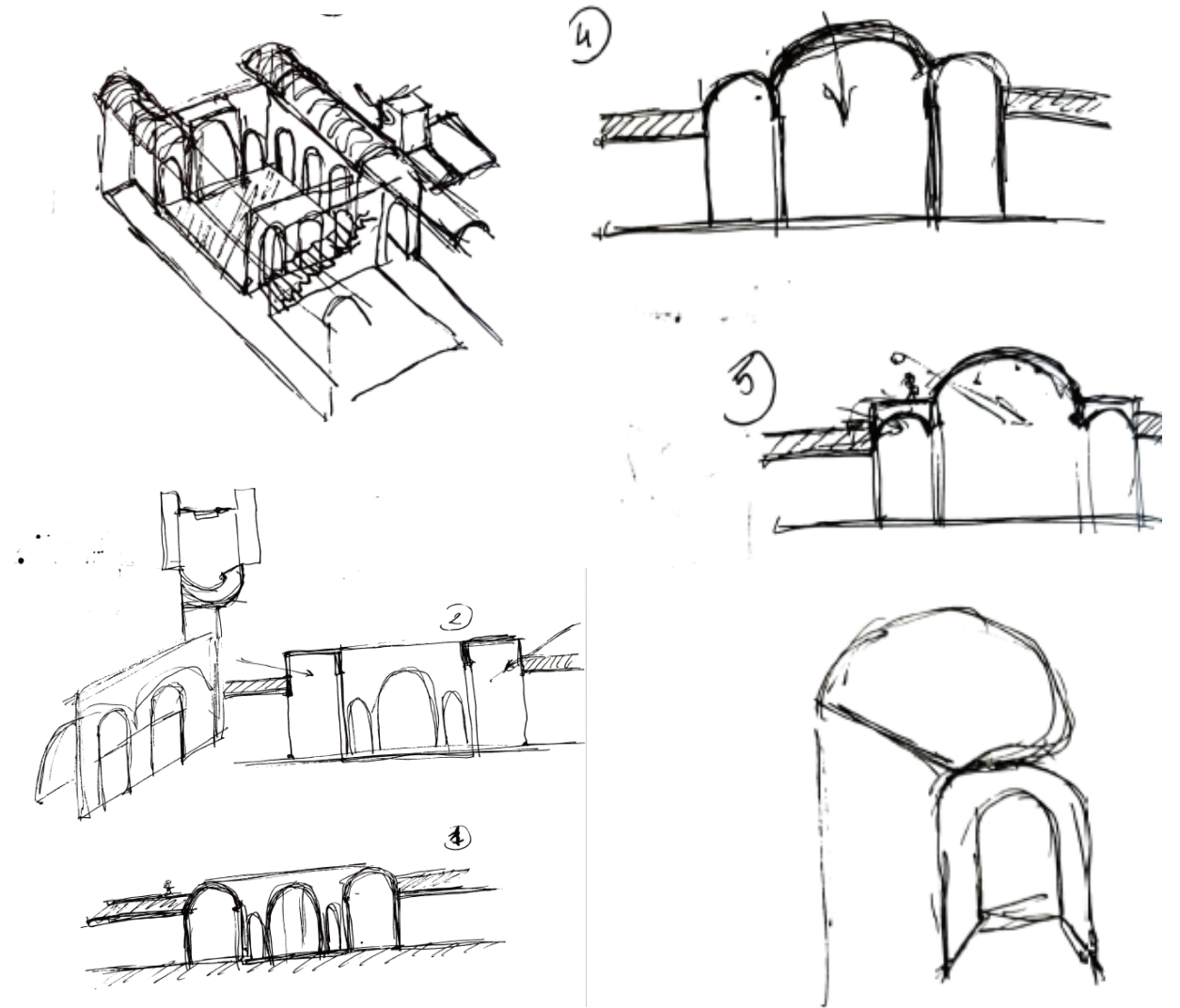
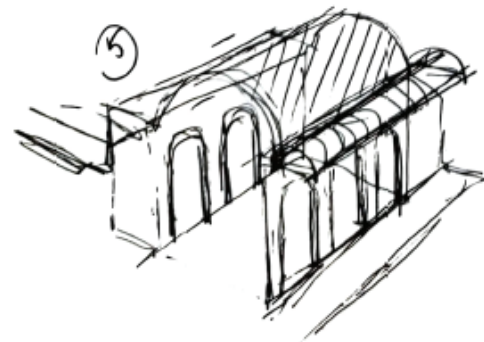
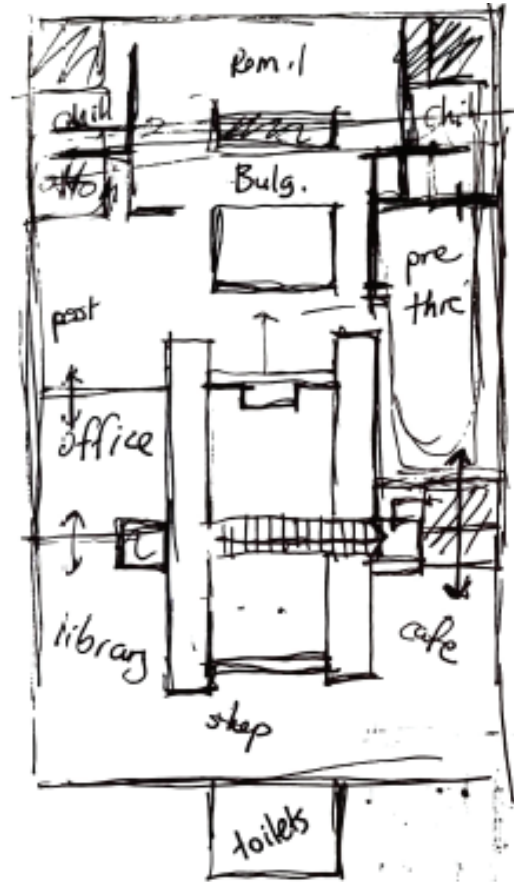
However, I encountered a lack of coherence between the spatial organization and the exhibition space, resulting in a somewhat weak connection.

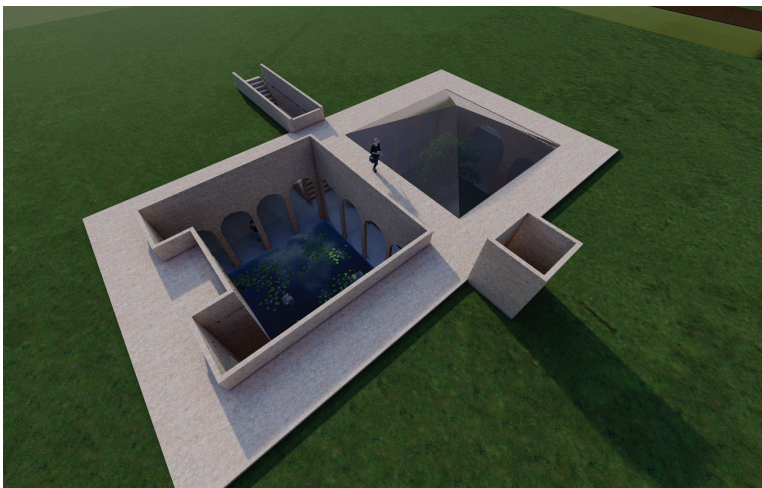
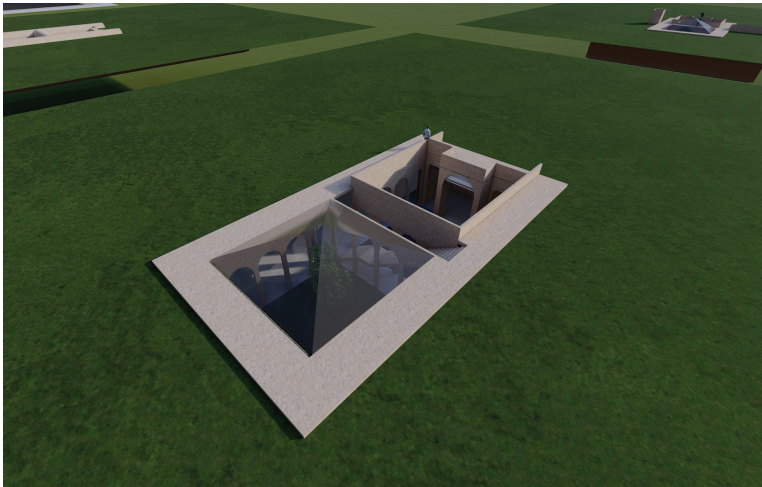
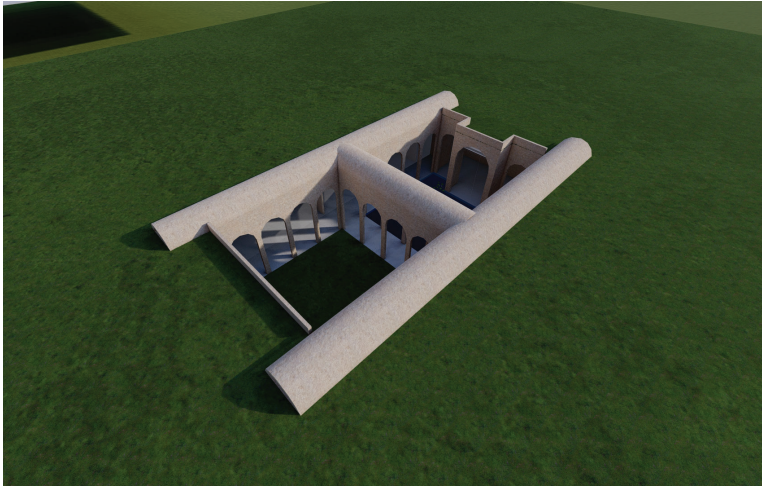


The Symmetry

Throughout the design process, I dedicated my efforts to expanding the public space and incorporating symmetry into the development of the plan. I thoroughly explored and visualized various iterations for the patio, meticulously considering its interaction with the surrounding park. By sketching and modeling multiple variations, I aimed to find the optimal arrangement that would create a harmonious connection between the patio and the park.

Additionally, I extensively tested different entry possibilities, carefully evaluating their impact on the overall experience. The roof of the patio became a focal point of my attention, as I sought to establish a connection between it and the park level. This involved a deliberate exploration of architectural elements that would effectively bridge the two spaces, ensuring a cohesive and integrated design.

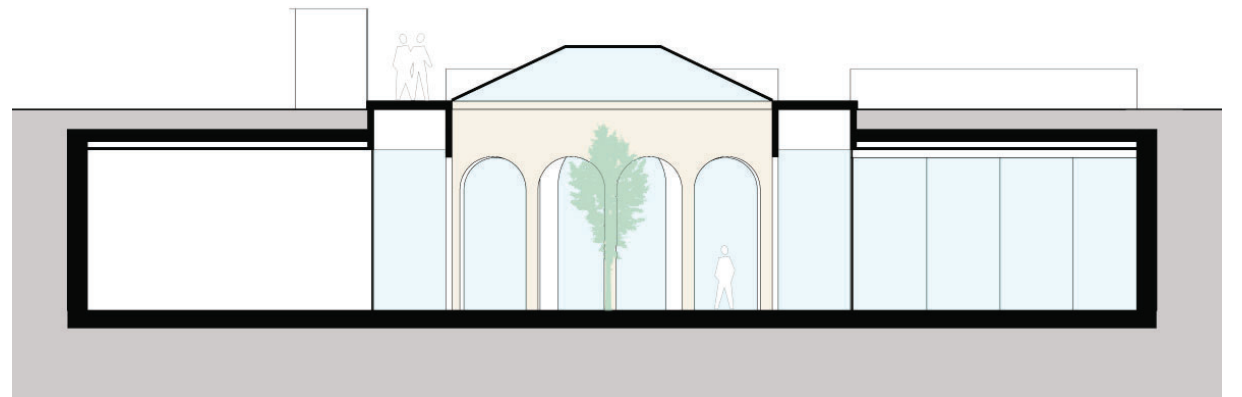
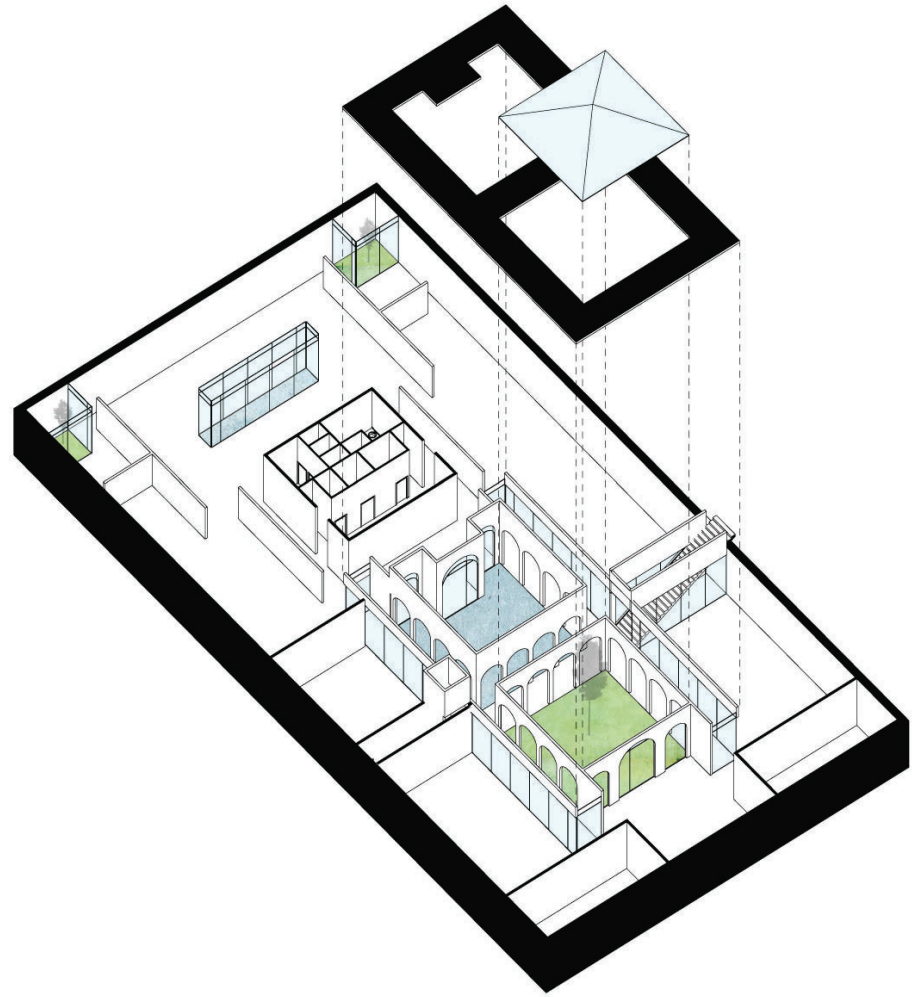
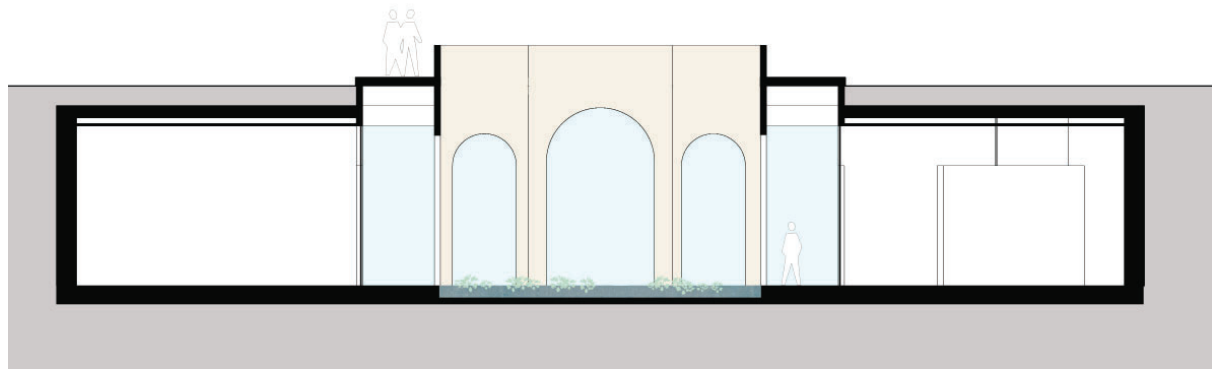
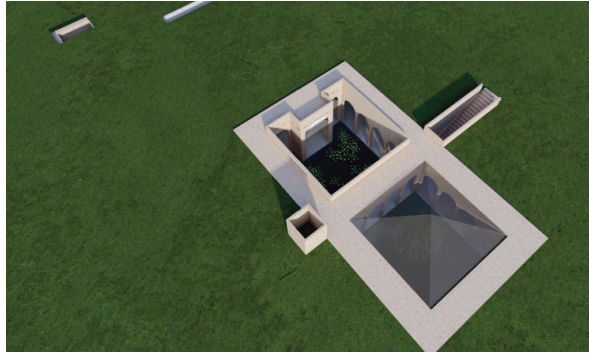
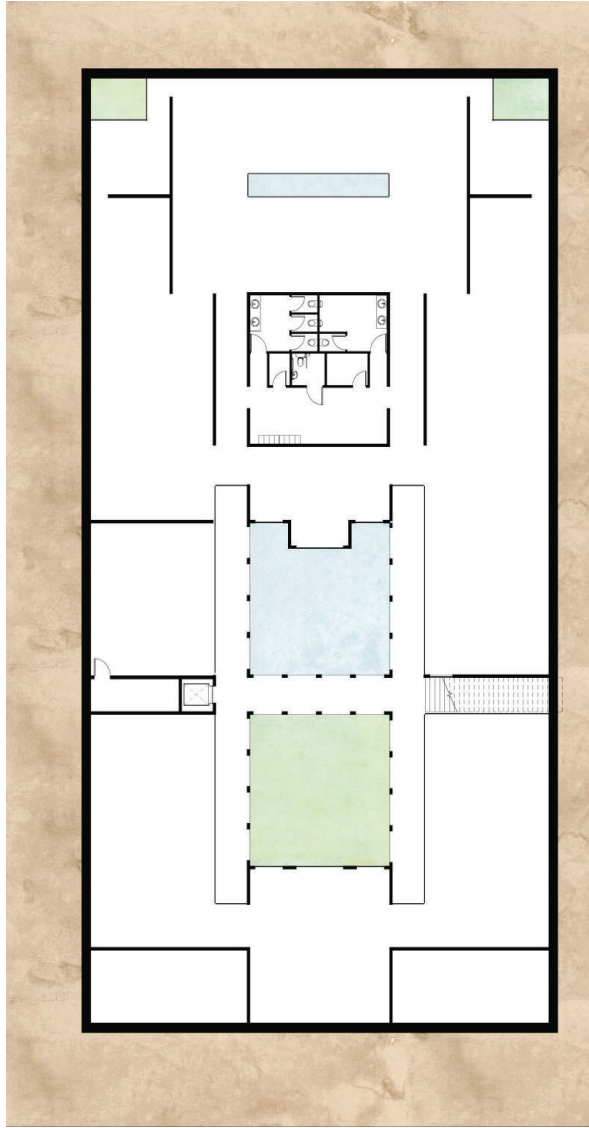




The provided images on the left side showcase the iterative process of integrating the park level with the patio roof. In the first image, the focus was on highlighting the arches, making them visible from the park level as well. This initial exploration aimed to establish a visual connection between the two spaces. The second image represents a transition towards transforming the building into a more public space. The design began to emphasise the importance of creating an inclusive environment that invites people to engage with the museum. In the third image, the concept of public inclusion was further developed. The design sought to expand upon the previous iterations, considering ways to enhance the accessibility and appeal of the museum as a welcoming destination for visitors.

The provided images depict various iterations for the entrance to the patio. In the first image, a descending pathway is shown, positioned in the middle of the two patios. This design choice creates a visual and physical connection between the entrance and the central space, enhancing the overall experience for visitors. The second image illustrates an alternative entrance design, where access is gained from one side of the building. This configuration offers a glimpse into the cafe and exhibition area, providing a sense of intrigue and enticing visitors to explore further. Both designs aim to optimize the flow and engagement of visitors, while also considering the visual connection and accessibility between different areas of the museum.





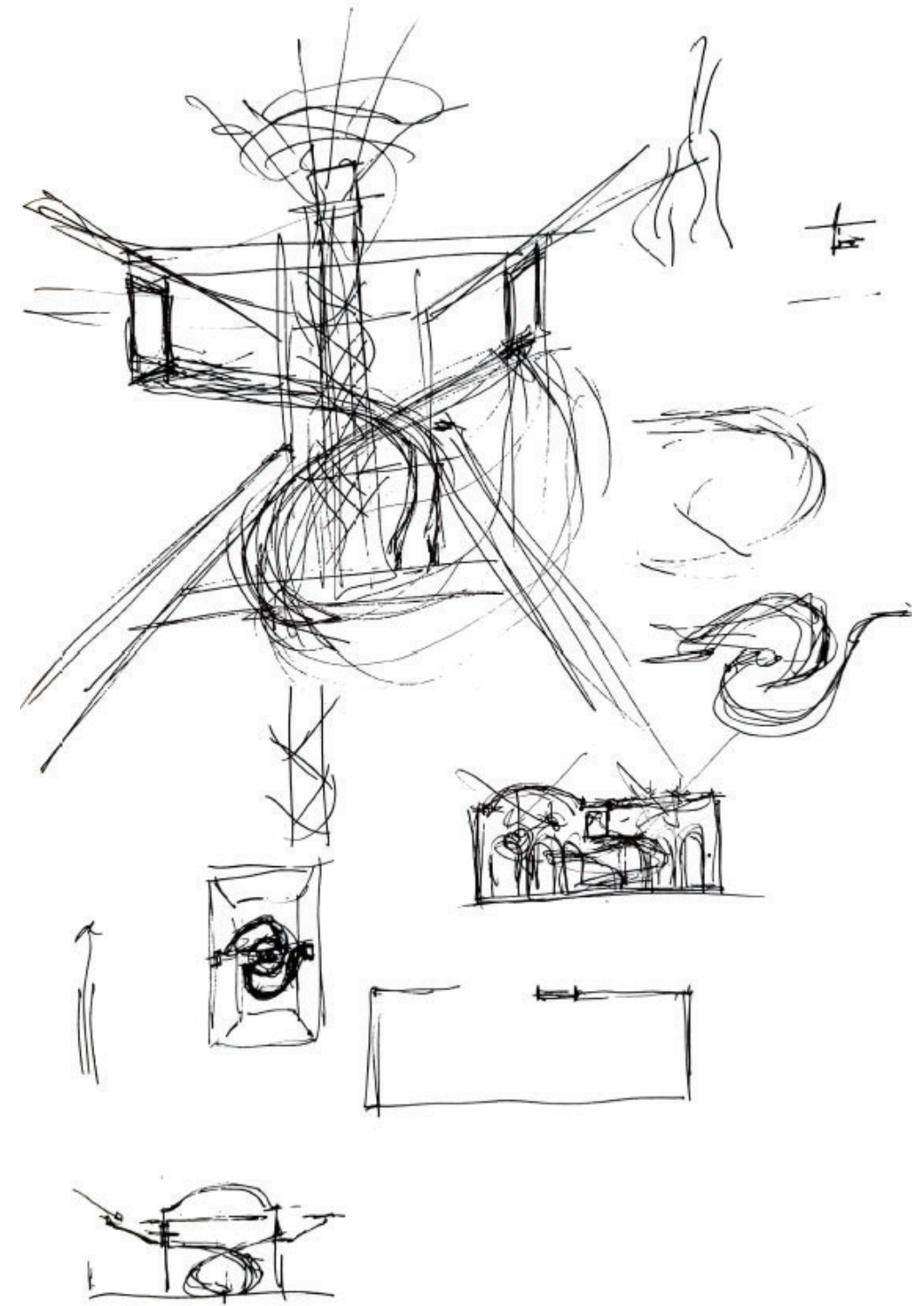
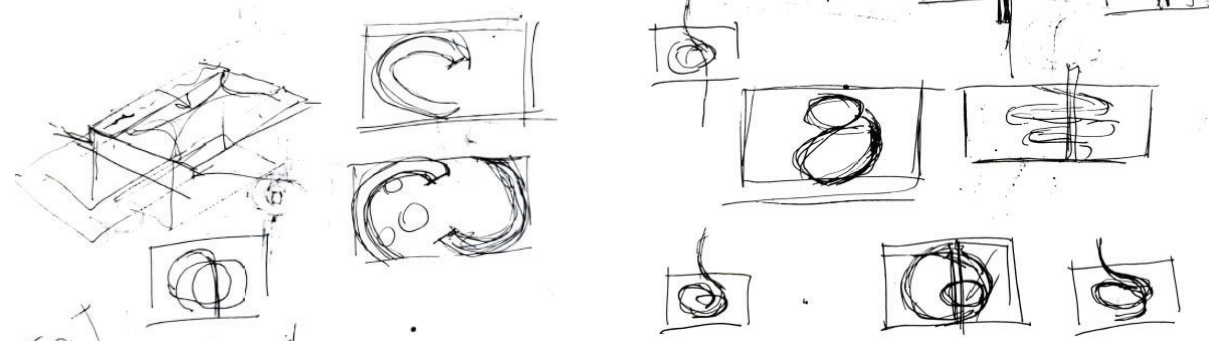
The Staircase

emphasis on the entrance

Next, my attention shifted towards determining the entrance to the patio. I decided to exaggerate the staircase, making it the central focus of the design. My intention was to create a seamless and continuous flow as visitors entered the patio. I wanted to emphasise the spatial connection and evoke a feeling of descending into another world.

In my exploration, I delved into surrealist gardens and sought inspiration from subliminal interpretations of nature. However, as the emphasis turned towards the staircase, I realised that it began to overshadow the main concept of the museum. It became apparent that the prominence of the staircase was detracting from the overall vision and purpose of the space.

With this realisation, I understood the need to reevaluate the design approach. It was important to refocus on the central idea of the museum and ensure that the staircase design served as a harmonious complement rather than a dominant feature. Balancing the visual impact of the staircase with the museum's primary concept became my priority in order to maintain a cohesive and coherent design narrative.





The Layers

introducing different levels

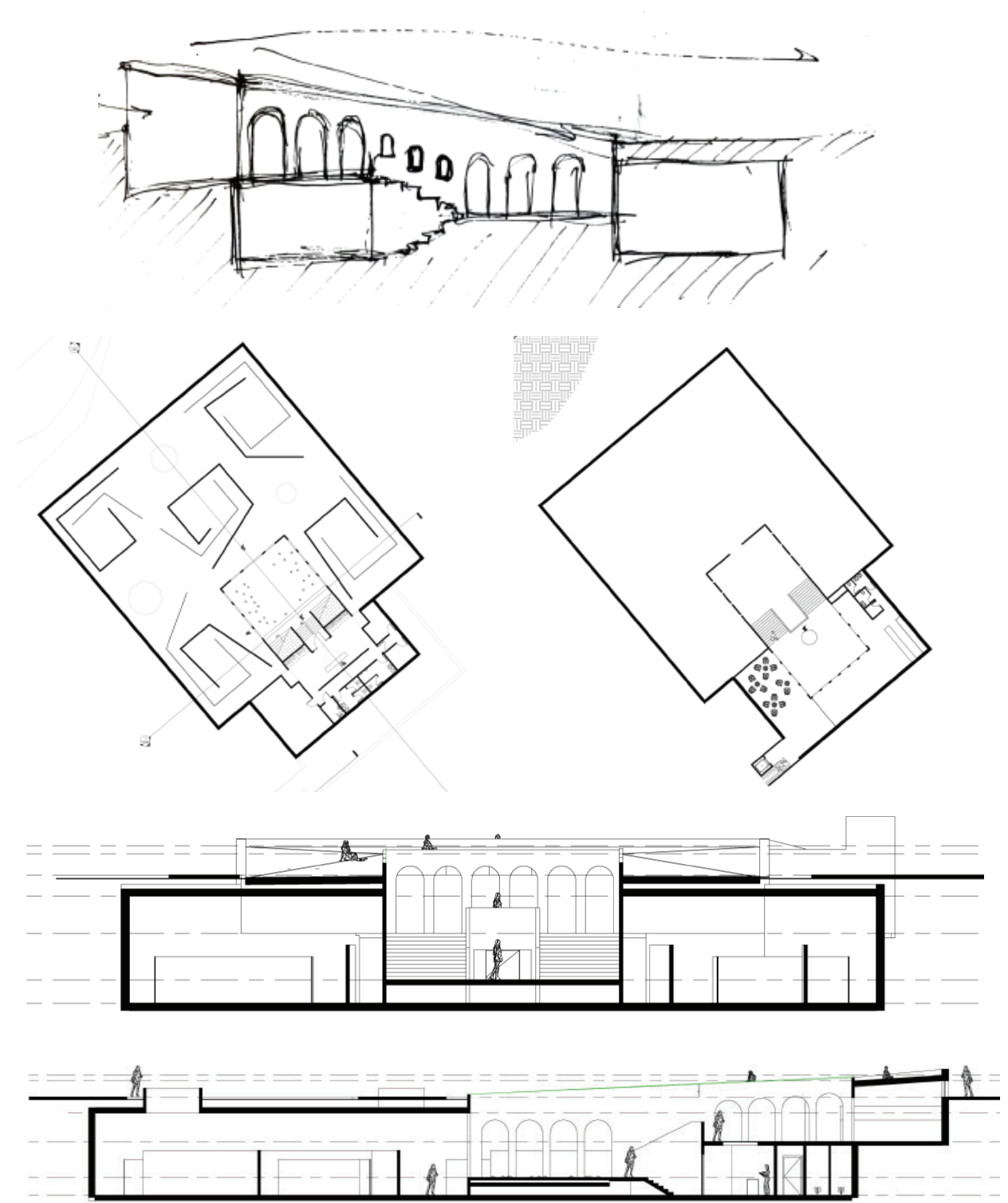
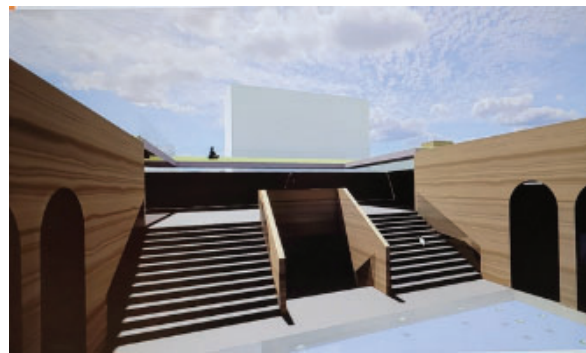
After the preliminary design presentation, I took a moment to reflect on my true objective and what I aimed to accomplish with my design. “Place-making” had always been my primary focus, but it seemed to have gotten lost along the way during the design process. It was crucial for me to step back and reassess my design approach, leading me to introduce different levels into my project.

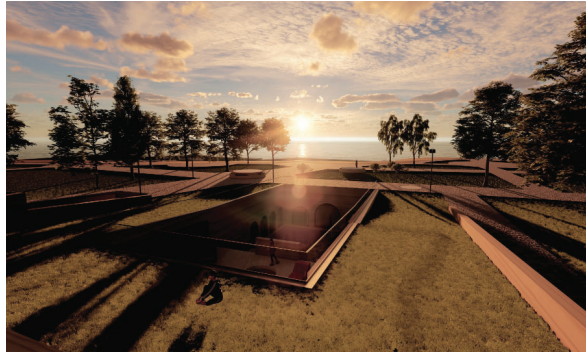
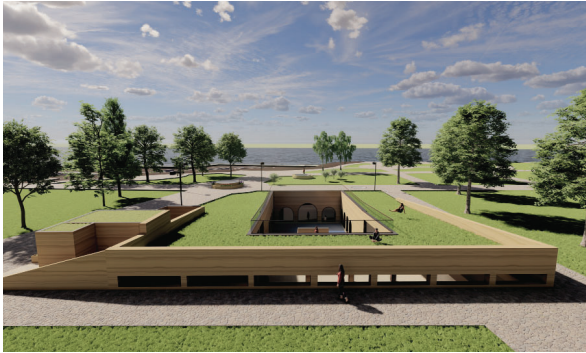
Gradually, my design began to transform into something that effectively conveyed the intended narrative. Much of the creative ideation occurred during those contemplative moments before falling asleep, allowing me to vividly visualize the concepts without extensively sketching them. As a result, the layout of the roof underwent changes from the initial idea, and the museum level underwent further elaboration.

Throughout this process, I also made the decision to switch rendering programs to enhance the accuracy of lighting in my visualizations. This change allowed me to create more realistic and compelling renderings that effectively showcased the interplay between light and space within the design.

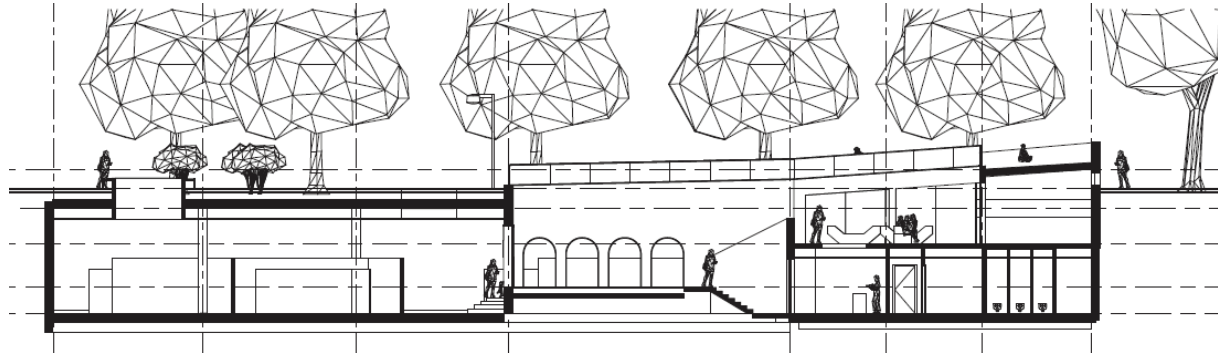
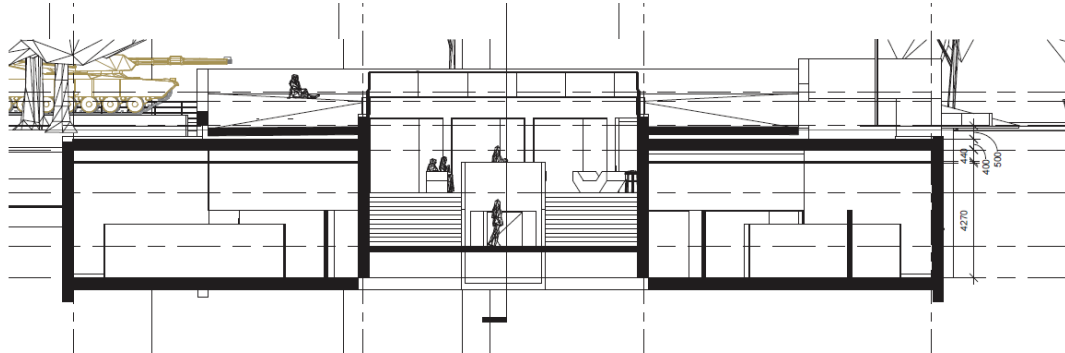


By reevaluating my goals and refining my approach, I was able to regain focus on the essence of place-making and bring my design closer to its intended purpose. The incorporation of different levels, the evolving roof layout, and the improved rendering techniques all contributed to the overall enhancement of my design concept.





I further developed the design by expanding the BoH area on the museum level, aiming for a free-flowing space that harmonises with the exhibition area. Additionally, I incorporated a patio on the museum level to bring in natural daylight to the office space and create a welcoming area for relaxation and socialising.



Detailing and Consultation

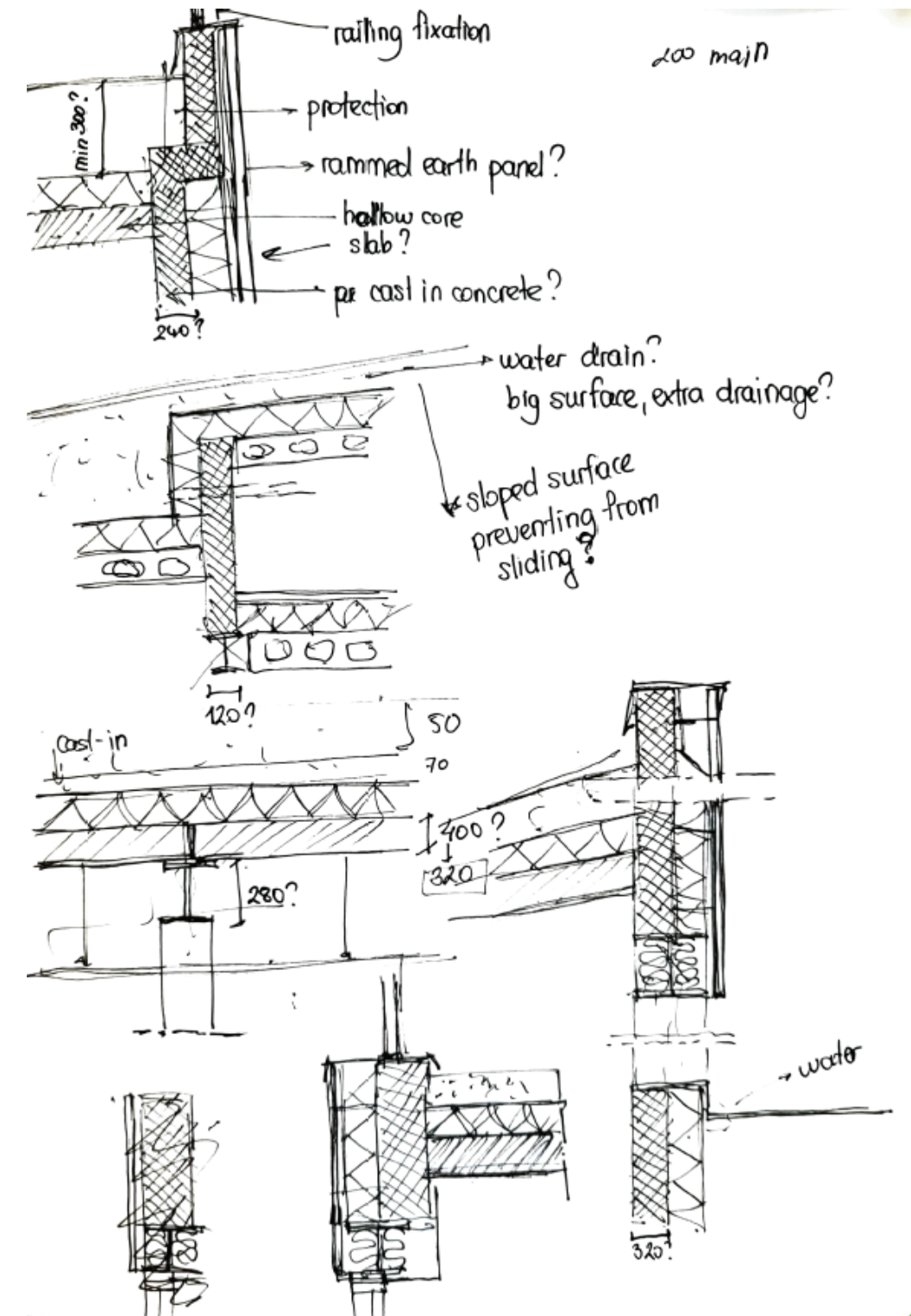
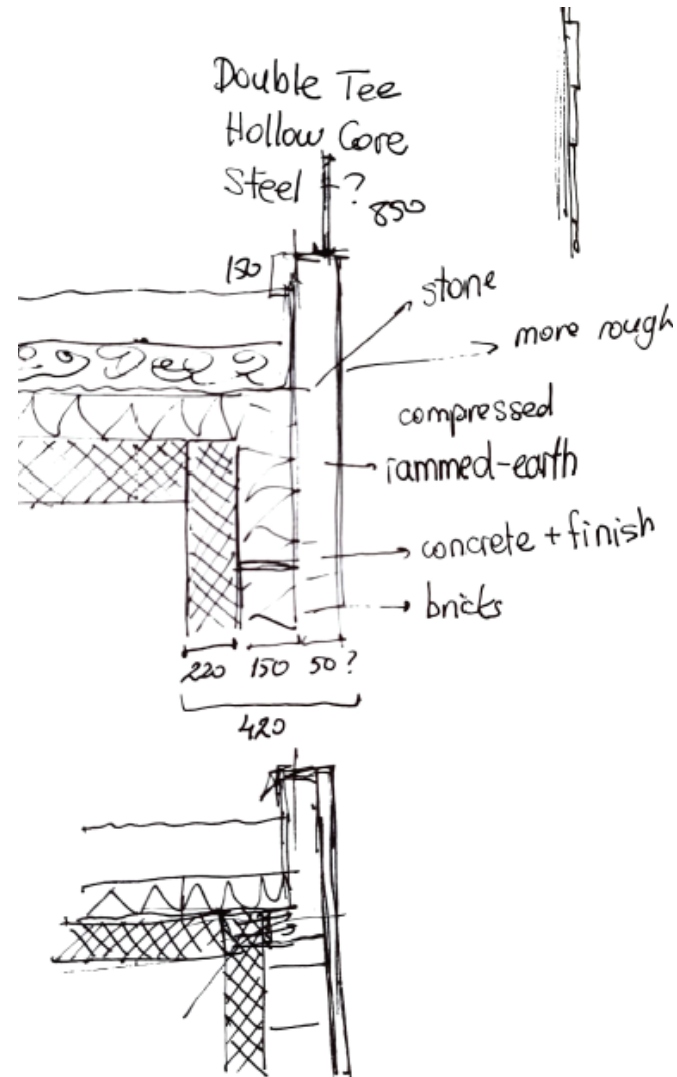
delving into the structure of the building

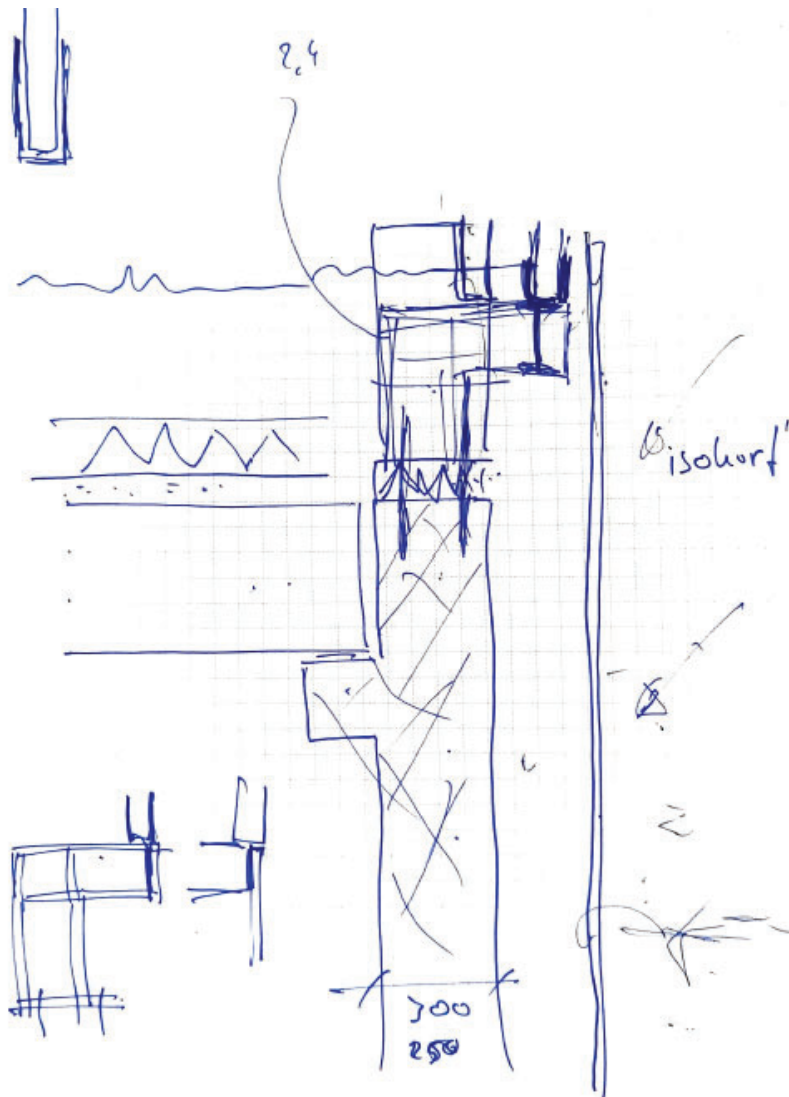
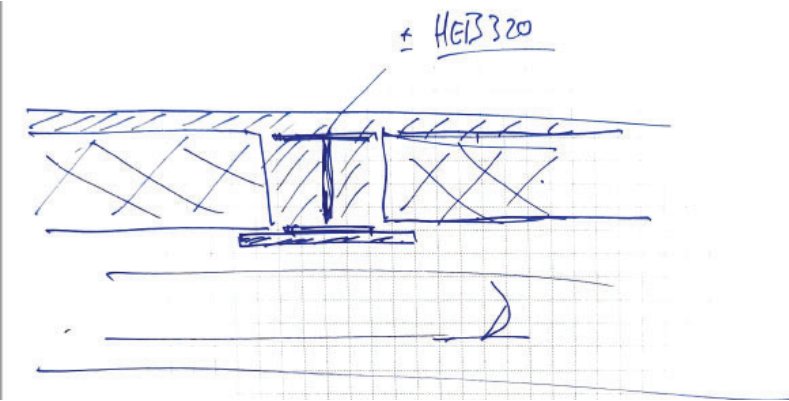
I proceeded with the design by delving deeper into the structural aspects of the building. To gain a clearer understanding of how various elements would integrate harmoniously, I began sketching detailed drawings. These sketches allowed me to visualise the intricate connections and relationships between different components of the design.

Recognizing the importance of ensuring the feasibility of the building, I sought the expertise of a structural engineer. His valuable insights and technical knowledge provided guidance on the practicality and structural integrity of the design. Through collaborative discussions, we addressed specific concerns and considerations, ensuring that the design could be successfully realised.

In addition to the structural aspects, I also consulted with the engineer regarding water pressure and the intricacies of constructing an underground space. Understanding the complexities of building below ground level was crucial in refining my design and ensuring its practicality. The insights shared by the engineer allowed me to make informed decisions and implement necessary precautions to mitigate potential challenges.

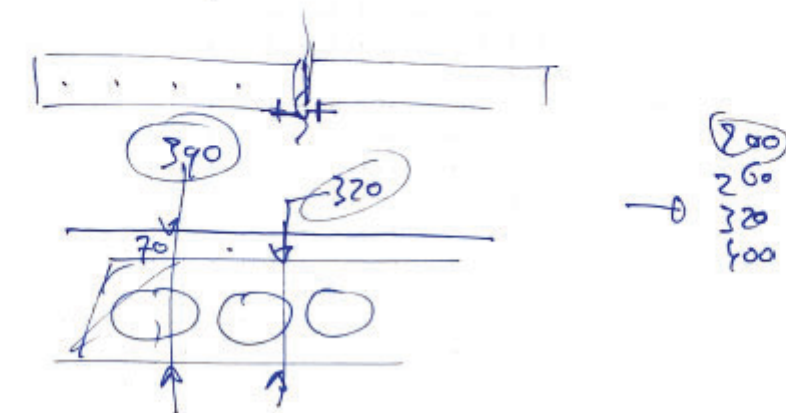
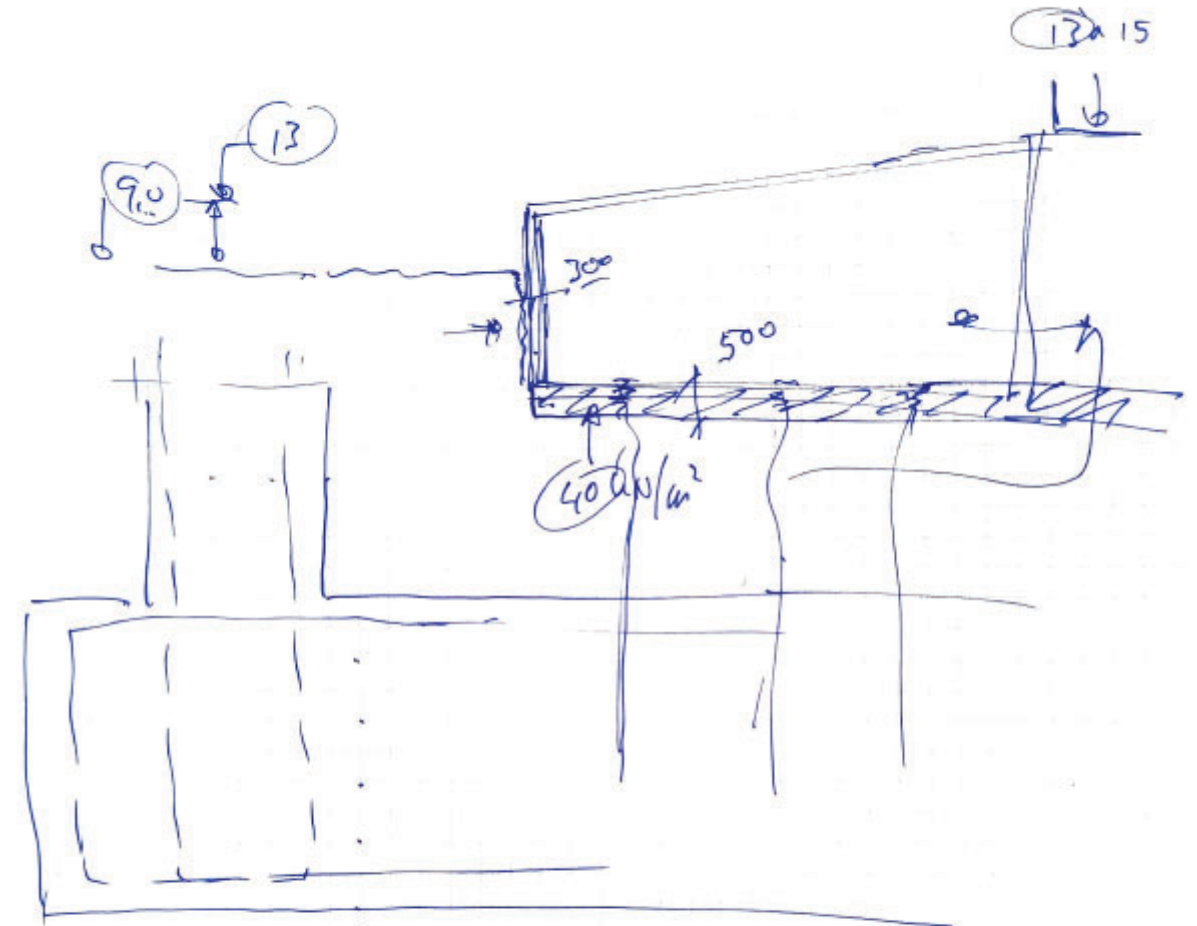
This collaborative effort and expert consultation greatly enhanced my understanding of the design. By exploring the structural intricacies, seeking expert advice, and addressing vital considerations, I gained valuable insights that guided the refinement and development of my design.





The sketches on these pages were generated during my productive consultation with the structural engineer. Together, we thoroughly examined the intricacies of the building's underground design and carefully considered the implications of water pressure. Furthermore, we extensively explored various crucial aspects pertaining to the structure of the building, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of its architectural elements.

7.4.23



Detailing and Consultation

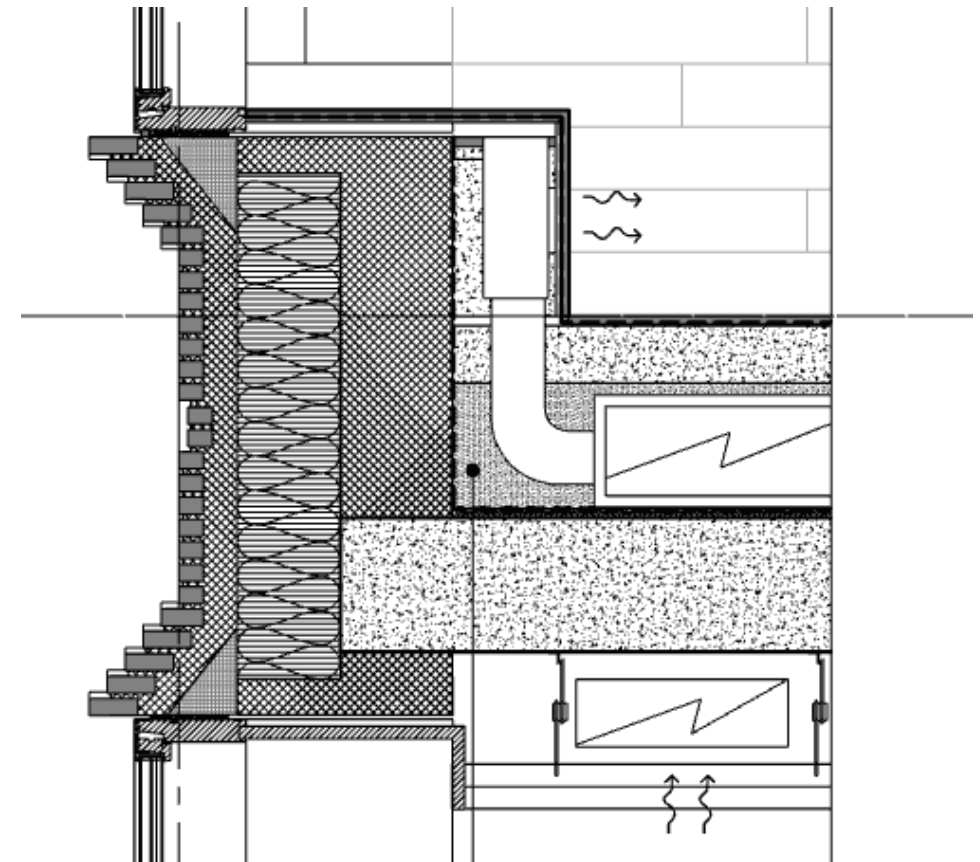
the influence of HVAC on the exhibition space

Another crucial aspect of detailing involved understanding the impact of HVAC systems on the layout. Initially, I aimed to avoid using suspended ceilings to preserve the natural finish of the structural ceiling and maximize the height of the exhibition area. To explore this concept, I tested an open ceiling design with visible ducts. However, I found that this approach negatively affected the exhibition space's aesthetics.

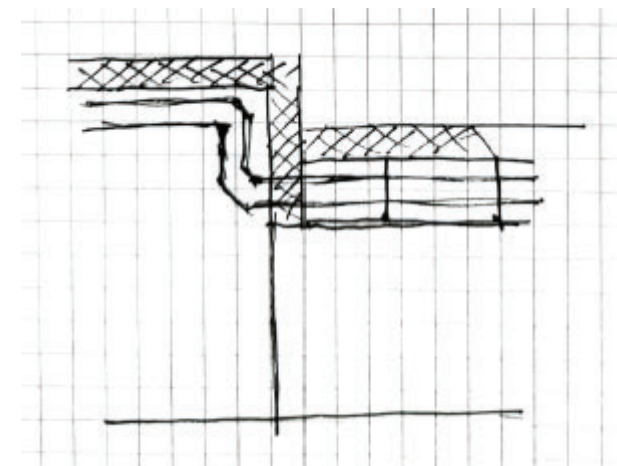
To find suitable solutions, I sought the expertise of an MEP planner. Collaborating with them, we worked towards integrating the necessary HVAC elements into the design while maintaining the desired visual appeal. One solution we implemented was the addition of a dedicated technical room to cater specifically to the exhibition area's needs.

During the consultation, it became evident that my initial estimation for the technical room was insufficient. Consequently, I expanded its size to accommodate the required equipment and ensure optimal functionality. Additionally, to achieve an unobtrusive airflow distribution, I decided to integrate the supply and exhaust air ducts within the floor, positioning them within the insulation layer. This design choice allowed the floor grills to serve as the source of air supply, while the columns, concealed by plasterboard walls, served as the points for exhaust air extraction.

By collaborating with an experienced MEP planner and considering the specific requirements of the HVAC system, I was able to find effective solutions that maintained the desired aesthetic and functionality of the exhibition space. These considerations and adjustments were vital in achieving a successful integration of the HVAC system within the overall design.



example given and used for duct placement in the floor



Last modifications

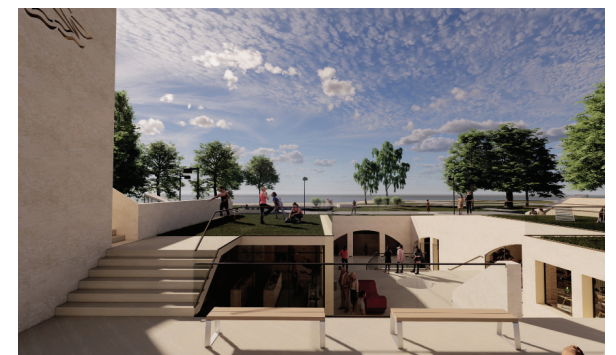
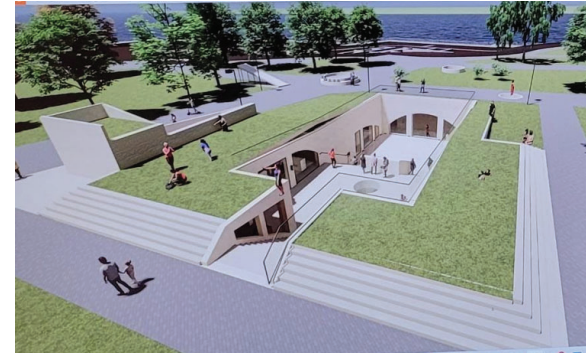
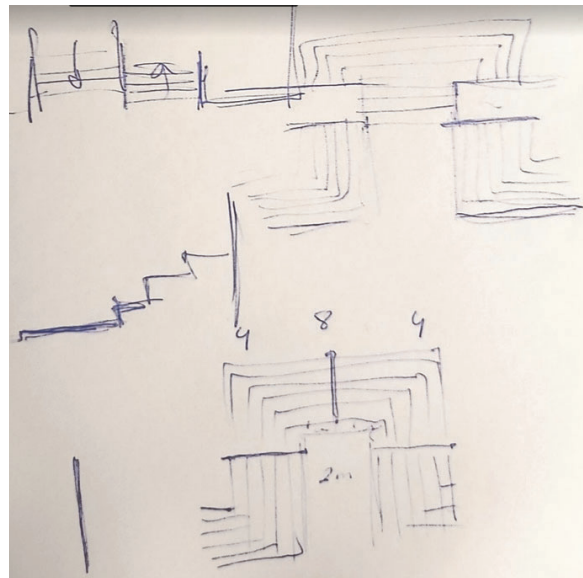
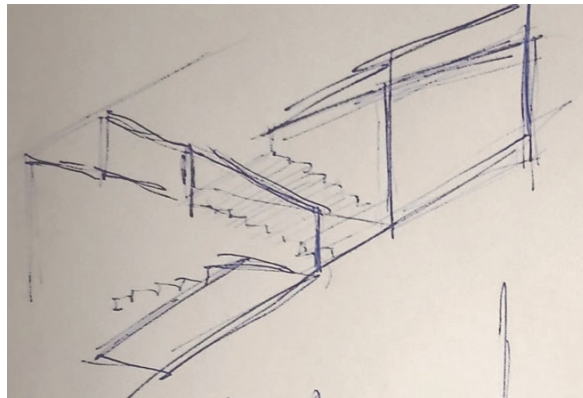
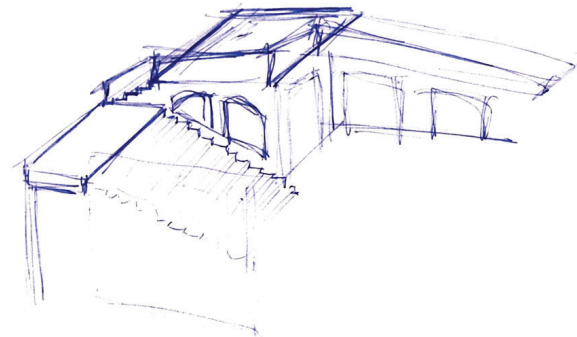
in tears “burning” the idea

For the definitive design presentation, I felt well-prepared and confident that with a few modifications, I could proceed to the exam without much worry. However, despite receiving very positive feedback, the questions posed during the presentation called for a fundamental change in the design. At first, I resisted the idea, fearing that it would ruin my perceived “perfect” design and that I wouldn’t have enough time to test the new approach. But after much contemplation and soul-searching, I made the decision to address these questions head-on, as they pertained to the connection between my statement and the design.

Although my initial proposal aimed to embody an inclusive and open design for the museum, I realized that it had become somewhat closed off. To rectify this, I began exploring different ways to open up the building and the patio, while minimizing major modifications to the overall layout. After numerous attempts, I arrived at a solution that divided the patio into two asymmetrical parts: one serving as a recreational area and the other functioning as a terrace and more open space. In this new configuration, the lift became the focal point of the design.

To further refine this concept, I experimented with various options to transform the lift into a light tower and observation deck. By incorporating these elements, I sought to create a dynamic and engaging feature that would enhance the overall experience for visitors.

Although these changes required considerable effort and perseverance, I recognized their importance in aligning my design with the underlying principles and goals of the project. The process of exploring and implementing these modifications ultimately resulted in a more compelling and coherent design that better captured the essence of inclusivity and openness.



Seeking out advice

consulting landscape architects

In order to achieve the desired goal of creating a more engaging and seamless extension of the park, I sought the expertise of two landscape architects for their advice. They provided me with valuable suggestions and shared several case studies that I could reference in my project. Their input proved instrumental in shaping my design approach.

One of the key aspects that emerged from our discussions was the idea of transforming the staircases into interactive and social gathering points. By incorporating seating elements and encouraging interaction, I aimed to foster a sense of community and connectivity within the museum space. This concept not only added functionality but also created opportunities for visitors to relax and engage with one another.

Furthermore, I decided to keep the roof areas relatively uncluttered and open, akin to the feeling of lounging on a beach during a sunny summer day. To achieve this, I opted for loose furniture arrangements that could be easily rearranged and adapted to different events and activities. This approach allowed for flexibility in the use of the roof areas, particularly as audience spaces for various events.

By avoiding the inclusion of excessive fixed elements, I ensured that the roofs remained versatile and adaptable. This design choice aimed to prevent overcrowding and allow for a more immersive and enjoyable experience during events. It also emphasized the connection between the museum and its surroundings, reinforcing the idea of an extended park-like environment.

The guidance provided by the landscape architects, coupled with the inspiration from the shared case studies, enabled me to refine my design concept and incorporate elements that truly complemented the overall vision of the project. Their expertise and advice proved invaluable in creating a more engaging, dynamic, and harmonious space that seamlessly integrates with the surrounding landscape.



Research

Summary of the main findings and information used for the development of the project. The section includes, but is not limited to the information from the research phase.



Silistra Location

Nestled in the scenic northeastern part of Bulgaria, along the lower stretch of the Danube River, lies the regional city of Silistra. This historic city not only shares its border with Romania but also enjoys close proximity to Bucharest, the capital of Romania.

Silistra’s strategic location within a radius of 120 km provides excellent connectivity to other major Bulgarian cities, as well as convenient access to the Black Sea through both sea and road routes. The city’s railroad network further enhances its accessibility, offering connections to various parts of the country. Additionally, the presence of two international airports, Bucharest Otopeni and Varna, ensures convenient and direct international connectivity, making Silistra easily reachable for travelers from around the world.

Beyond its advantageous location, Silistra boasts an abundance of natural beauty and a historical heritage. Within the city’s borders lies the remarkable Srebarna Nature Reserve, a pristine freshwater lake that serves as a vital breeding ground for numerous species, many of which are rare or endangered. This reserve, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, showcases Silistra’s commitment to preserving its untouched

natural treasures and offers visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the wonders of its diverse ecosystem.

Conclusion

Silistra, with its ideal location, excellent connectivity, and remarkable natural and historical attractions, beckons adventurers, nature enthusiasts, and history buffs alike. Whether exploring the tranquil beauty of the Danube River, embarking on a journey to nearby cities, or discovering the enchanting biodiversity of the Srebarna Nature Reserve, Silistra promises experience for visitors seeking to delve into the captivating charms of northeastern Bulgaria.



Srebarna Nature Reserve



Dalmatian pelican

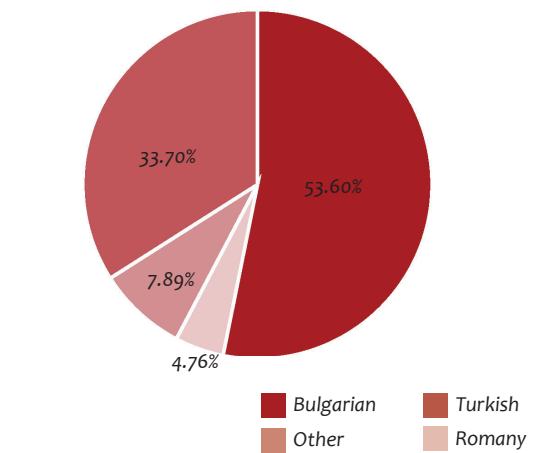


The Region

The Silistra region is situated in the Danube Plain, characterised by predominantly flat terrain with altitudes reaching up to 200m. Encompassing a total area of 2868 km², the region consists of seven municipalities, with Silistra being the most populous among them.

The region's economy is primarily driven by various sectors, including agriculture, machine building, woodworking, furniture production, dairy and meat industries, as well as sewing enterprises. However, it is important to note that the Silistra region is regarded as having one of the lowest levels of investment activity in the country. This has resulted in a significant outflow of the working-age population through external migration. Typically, the younger population leaves the region to pursue higher education in nearby cities or abroad and tends to remain there due to better employment prospects.

Historically, Silistra was a small town with a population of approximately 40,000 people until the 1950s. Following its designation as a regional city, Silistra experienced substantial investments and transformed into an industrial hub, attracting job seekers from surrounding areas. Consequently, the population of Silistra grew significantly, nearly doubling by 1985. However, after the collapse of the regime, the city faced an economic crisis, leading to an ongoing decline in population. Many residents opt to migrate to larger cities or prefer rural areas for agricultural employment, exacerbating the population decrease.



	Silistra region	Silistra municipality
1934	138.340	42.108
1946	151.514	43.523
1956	162.662	46.227
1965	170.442	55.452
1975	175.754	69.023
1985	174.107	75.802
1992	161.063	71.889
2001	142.000	61.942
2011	119.474	51.386
2021	104.869	43.814

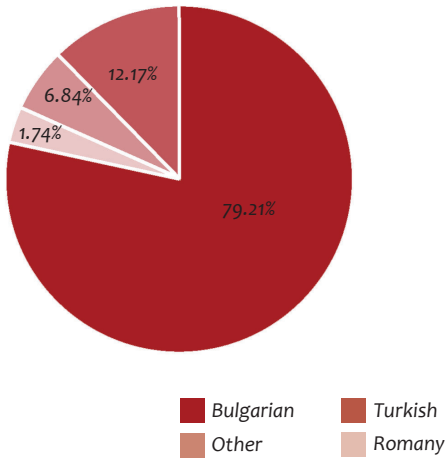


Conclusion

The Silistra region, situated in the scenic Danube Plain, presents a unique economic landscape and demographic challenges. While it boasts various industries such as agriculture, machine building, and woodworking, the region struggles with low investment activity and significant outmigration of its working-age population. The historical growth of Silistra as an industrial city has been countered by economic difficulties and population decline in recent years. It is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to address these challenges and implement strategies that promote investment, job creation, and overall development in order to revitalise the region and foster a sustainable future for Silistra.

The City

Silistra, a city located approximately 20 meters above sea level, boasts a relatively flat topography. The compact layout of the city contributes to its pedestrian-friendly nature, allowing residents and visitors to easily navigate between the main areas. Three primary roads serve as crucial connections between Silistra and nearby settlements. The railway and bus stations are conveniently located in close proximity to each other (point 1 and 2), facilitating transportation access, while also being situated near the city center (point 4). Additionally, Silistra features a passenger terminal (point 5) that caters to ferry transportation, offering further connectivity options. Within the city limits, there are several islands, some of which are well-suited for recreational and tourism purposes. Until recently, regular day tours were organized, attracting locals to one particular island that boasts a sandy beach, making it an idyllic retreat during the summer months.



Conclusion

Silistra, with its flat terrain and favorable urban layout, offers a walkable environment for residents and visitors alike. The city's well-connected transportation infrastructure, including the railway and bus stations, ensures convenient travel within Silistra and to nearby settlements. The presence of a passenger terminal for ferry transportation further enhances connectivity options. Moreover, Silistra's possession of islands within its boundaries presents opportunities for recreational

activities and tourism, such as the popular sandy beach island that has served as a delightful summer getaway. Overall, Silistra's geographical features and accessible amenities make it an appealing destination for individuals seeking a pleasant urban experience within a picturesque setting.



Climate

The hibernating city

Silistra is characterised by a moderate continental climate, falling within the Danubian climate sub-region. The city experiences a hot summer, an early spring, and a severe cold winter. Temperature extremes range from an absolute minimum of -32 degrees Celsius to a maximum of 40 degrees Celsius, with an annual average temperature of 11.6 degrees Celsius. Rainfall patterns in Silistra are uneven and often insufficient during the spring and early summer months. The fluctuating water levels of the Danube River occasionally lead to flooding events.

The climate of Silistra significantly influences social interactions within the city. As spring arrives, the landscape transforms, with vibrant vegetation breathing life into the once-gray cityscape. People venture outdoors, and the park becomes a bustling hub for gatherings and activities. During the scorching hours between 12 and 17 o'clock, residents tend to retreat indoors or seek shelter in cafes and bars. With the onset of autumn, the pace of life gradually slows down, and the cityscape takes on a monochromatic hue. The colder temperatures prompt social activities to move indoors, predominantly in cafes and restaurants. In a sense, the city appears to enter a state of hibernation. This seasonal shift can have an impact on the overall well-being of residents, with the winter months often described as “boring” and marked by a sense of inactivity.

Conclusion

The moderate continental climate of Silistra, with its distinct seasons and temperature extremes, shapes the dynamics of social interaction within the city. From the colorful awakening of spring to the subdued atmosphere of winter, the climate dictates the patterns of outdoor activities and gathering places. Residents adapt to the heat of summer, seek indoor refuge

during the scorching hours, and transition to indoor venues during the colder months. This seasonal variation can impact the overall mood and well-being of individuals, with winter often perceived as a period of reduced excitement. Understanding and acknowledging the influence of the climate on the social fabric of Silistra is essential for promoting community engagement, well-being, and the development of suitable indoor spaces to foster social interaction during the colder months.



History

2000 years from Durostorum to Silistra

Silistra's strategic location has played a significant role in its historical development, making it a crucial center for trade, transportation, and politics over the centuries. Prior to its foundation by the Romans in the 2nd century, Silistra was part of the Thracian region. During the Roman era, the city was known as Durostorum. In 1388, Silistra became a part of the Ottoman Empire and remained so until the 19th century. Following the Russian-Ottoman war, the city briefly fell under Russian control before being occupied by Romania for nearly 40 years until 1940, when it was ultimately integrated into Bulgaria.

Upon its designation as a regional center, Silistra underwent significant transformations. Many of the mosques built during the Ottoman period, which numbered nearly 20, were reduced to only two. Numerous buildings from the Romanian occupation period were demolished, giving way to new concrete structures. The period of extensive construction in the 1970s and 1980s led to the unearthing of archaeological remains from ancient Durostorum, although these discoveries were often neglected. In the book "Ancient Durostorum," the difficulties faced by local authorities in managing these findings are emphasised. In many cases, the museum was not informed of discoveries made during construction, resulting in the destruction of some remains. Winter construction combined with limited research funds further hindered proper documentation by archaeologists. Nonetheless, the intensive construction activities in and around Silistra have contributed to the relatively rapid uncovering of valuable insights into the ancient history of the city.

Conclusion

Silistra's rich history, spanning various periods of rule and occupation, has often been neglected and insufficiently studied.

This historical neglect presents an opportunity for further research and exploration of the diverse layers of Silistra's past, which have been inadvertently obscured over the past century. Unmasking these hidden layers of history through dedicated research and preservation efforts would not only enhance our understanding of Silistra's historical significance but also contribute to a deeper appreciation of the city's cultural heritage. With ample potential for archaeological investigations and exploration, Silistra holds the promise of revealing untold stories and shedding new light on its captivating past.



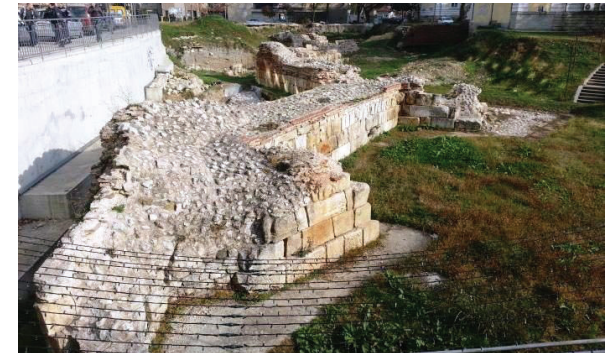
1. The Roman Tomb - 4th century



2. Medjidi Tabia Fortress - 19th century



3. Kurshunlu Mosque



4. Fortress Wall of South Entrance



6. Cathedral and Residencies



7. Roman Baths - 4th century



The Transformation

The creation of “Little Havana”

Prior to the 1950s, Silistra was a small town characterised by a lack of prosperity, absence of apartment blocks, and reliance on carts for regular transportation. However, in the early 1950s, Silistra underwent a significant transformation when it was designated as a regional city, marking the beginning of extensive construction efforts. From 1952 to 1970, a series of state-owned enterprises were established, leading to the evolution of Silistra into an industrial city with factories specializing in woodworking, steel production, textiles, furniture manufacturing, leather processing, and grain processing. The expansion and reorganization of economic and industrial sectors in Silistra necessitated a workforce from outside the city, resulting in extensive construction projects in the 1970s that gave rise to new high-rise residential buildings. Furthermore, the construction of various cultural institutions contributed to the city's educational and cultural prosperity. To improve connectivity between Silistra and the rest of the country, new roads were constructed. In 1970, an airport was inaugurated, offering flights to the capital city Sofia, followed by the opening of the train station in 1974. These rapid developments and infrastructural improvements did not go unnoticed, and Silistra even garnered the nickname “Little Havana” in recognition of its flourishing growth.

Conclusion

Silistra's rapid transformation and growth during this period demonstrate the city's capacity for adaptability and progress. The moniker “Little Havana” highlights the recognition of Silistra's remarkable advancements and serves as a testament to the city's thriving development. Understanding the historical trajectory of Silistra's transformation provides valuable insights into the city's socio-economic evolution and underscores the importance of continued development and investment in the region to sustain its growth and prosperity.



Overview of Silistra with new high-rise buildings appearing



Overview of Silistra with low-rise buildings before the



Construction of new roads and buildings



The Kurshunlu Mosque



View of the city centre with no-longer existing mosque



No longer existing building, replaced by a Youth Centre



Construction of modern cafes



Public pool along the Danube River



The main road and city centre



View of the city centre, now pedestrian area

The Transformation

The new industrial image

New industries appeared in Silistra, some of them still continuing till this date. Below some of the important enterprises:

KAMASHIT (Камъшит) 1951

Initially focused on processing reeds and papyrus from the Danube marshes. The company utilized papyrus for knitting household items and producing baskets used in vegetable production. Reeds were used to create rosettes for horseshoeing ceilings. Today, KAMASHIT operates on a smaller scale, manufacturing bags for renowned brands like “Furla” and “Armani.”

VINPROM (Винпром) 1952

It was established for the production of local wines, contributing to the city's viticulture industry.

LIPA (Липа) 1955

A state-owned furniture enterprise that has played a crucial role in the production of furniture in Silistra

DUNAV (Дунав) 1958

Specialises in the production of refined and bottled sunflower oil, contributing to the city's agricultural and food processing sector.

ОРГТЕХНИКА (Оргтехника) 1964

Is a manufacturer and exporter of modern electronic devices. It began with the production of coin counting machines, spiritographs, and electro photocopiers. Notably, ORGTEHNIKA manufactured the first electro-calculating machine “Elka 6521,” making Bulgaria the second country, after France, to produce such “small” computing equipment. In 1979, during a significant year for Bulgari-

an cosmonautics, the Silistra-based plant fulfilled important orders for the “Interkosmos” program.

Conclusion

These enterprises, along with others not mentioned, have contributed to Silistra's industrial growth and have played a vital role in shaping the city's economic landscape. They have provided employment opportunities and contributed to the development of expertise in various sectors. Silistra's industrial image continues to evolve, adapting to changing market demands and technological advancements. The presence of these industries underscores Silistra's potential for further economic growth and highlights the importance of nurturing and supporting local enterprises to sustain the city's industrial prosperity.



Photo of factory workers



Photo of factory workers



Photo of factory workers - Orgtehnika



Elka's manufactured by Orgtehnika



Exhibition space for lighting fixtures by Kamashit 1974



Kamashit today - a small enterprise



Furniture by Kamashit



Baskets by Kamashit

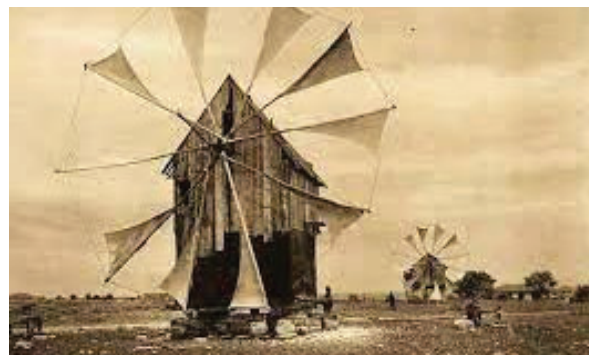
Dobrudja

The granary of Bulgaria

Dobrudja, the region to which Silistra belongs, is recognised as one of the six Folklore Regions of Bulgaria. Renowned for its grain production and animal husbandry, Dobrudja contributes approximately 15% of the country's annual grain output, earning it the titles of "The Granary of Bulgaria" or "Jitnitsata na Balgaria." During the 19th century, the region boasted around 250 windmills used for grinding corn flour, wheat, and bulgur. While most of these windmills have disappeared over time, one notable functioning windmill can still be found near the village of Blenitsi.

The fertile soil of Dobrudja plays a vital role in sustaining the region's agricultural sector. The local economy heavily relies on farming, with agriculture serving as a significant component. Furthermore, the region is known for its large herds of horses and sheep, making animal husbandry a common practice.

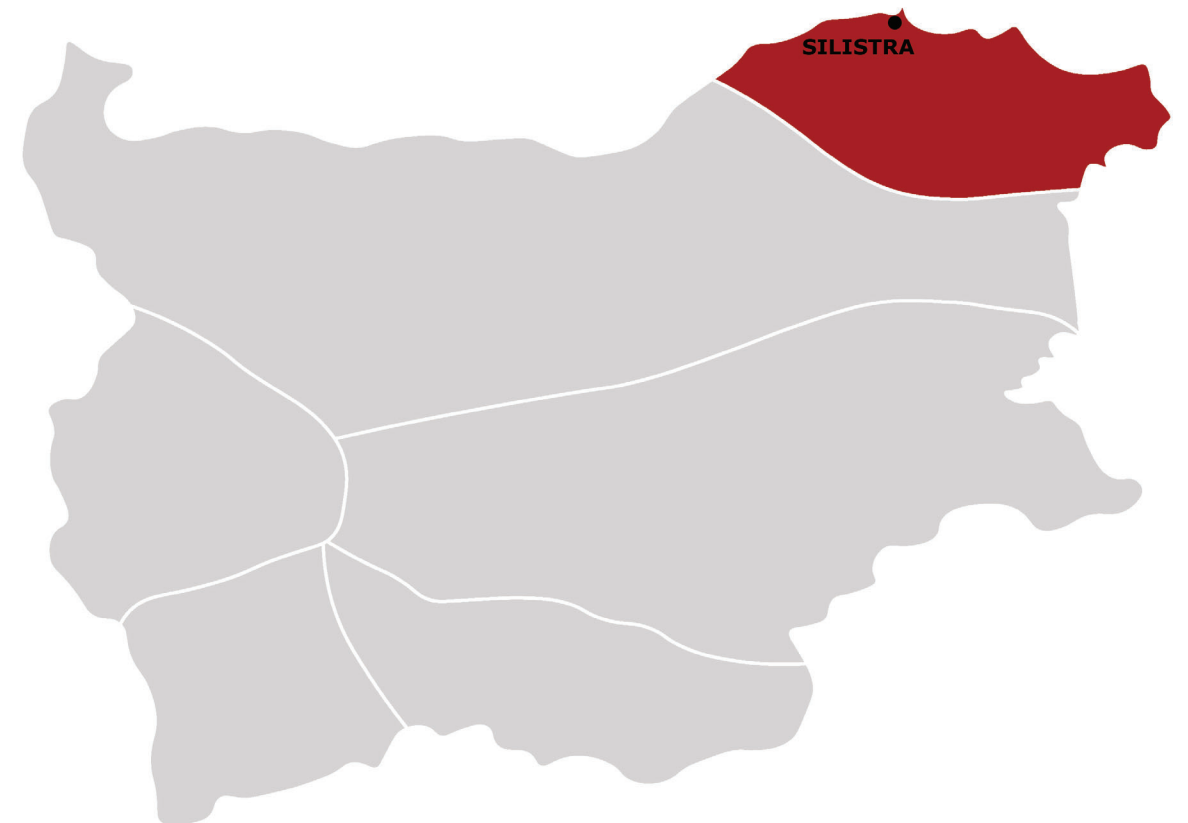
The Dobrudja Folklore Region possesses its own distinct traditional music, dances, and costumes, which contribute to its cultural uniqueness. The region is characterised by noteworthy local customs and celebrations that add to its rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the region encompasses a diverse population, including various ethnicities such as Gagauz, Crimean Tatars, and Turks, with the Turkish community being the largest among them.



Windmills from Dobrudja region



One of the few remaining, still working windmills near the Belnitsi



The folklore regions of Bulgaria

Conclusion

Dobrudja's unique cultural identity is preserved through its distinctive traditional music, dances, and costumes. The region's local customs and celebrations contribute to its cultural richness. Moreover, the diverse ethnic composition, including the prominent Turkish community, adds to the region's cultural tapestry. Understanding the significance of Dobrudja and its cultural heritage provides valuable insights into the historical and socio-economic fabric of Silistra and the surrounding region.

Traditions and Customs

The Dobrudja region in Silistra is not only characterized by its agricultural significance but also by its rich traditions and customs. These customs are deeply rooted in the local culture and often revolve around important agricultural events and seasonal festivities.

KOLEDUVANE

On Christmas Eve, “koledari”, people, mainly men, go around the houses to ward off evil spirits. It is believed they bring health, barns full of grain and blessing to the visited households.

BRAZAIA

It is a little known custom that is performed at Christmas. Brazaia is a masked man who resembles a whimsical, fantastical animal, richly decorated with woolen, multicoloured ribbons and bells on his horn. The tradition originates from the masquerade kuker games of the Turkish population in Bulgaria.

BUENETS

It is another popular ritual for the region of Dobrudja, which is mainly known in Eastern Bulgaria. It is performed during the Easter fasts and the goal is health and fertility. It is performed by a maiden chosen as the leader of all the maidens, called “buenek”. She is accompanied by the rest of the girls and the “bride” - a little girl dressed as a bride. Together they visit every home and sing songs for prosperity.

KUKERI

One of Silistra’s villages called Aydemir hosts the largest Kuker and Mask festival on northeast Bulgaria. The traditional Kuker holiday and celebrations on the occasion of

Sirni Zagovezni attract people from outside the region. The custom was brought to the region by settlers from Odrinska Thrace in the 19th century. It originally is performed by men and is associated with hope for better.

LAZARUVANE

One of the most long-awaited holidays is connected with the awakening of spring, with the hopes of love and family. It is celebrated everywhere in Dobrudja always on Saturday, one week before Easter. As part of it, women cook wheat and knead bread in memory of their deceased parents.

CONCLUSION

These customs and traditions embedded in the Dobrudja region reflect the close connection between the people and their agricultural way of life. They not only preserve the cultural heritage of the region but also provide a sense of unity and identity among the local communities. Understanding and appreciating these traditions enriches our understanding of the Dobrudja region’s cultural fabric and its deep ties to its agricultural roots.



Koleduvane



Buenets



Lazaruvane



Brazaia



Kukeri



Traditional Cuisine

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in initiatives aimed at promoting and celebrating the local cuisine of the Dobrudja region through the organisation of festivals and events. These initiatives serve as platforms to showcase and highlight the culinary traditions, indigenous ingredients, and gastronomic heritage of the area. With its rich agricultural land, the region offers a diverse array of culinary resources, with grains and meat being prominent ingredients in the local cuisine. Additionally, the cultivation of apricots and local grapes contributes to the production of rakia and wines, adding to the region's culinary diversity.

One such festival that exemplifies the commitment to preserving and popularising traditional dishes from the Dobrudja region is the culinary Festival “Feast of Dobrudja.” This event serves as a platform for showcasing homemade, traditional dishes that have been passed down through generations, aiming to safeguard and promote the culinary heritage of the area. By reviving and celebrating these old feasts, the festival not only preserves culinary traditions but also creates opportunities for the wider community to appreciate and participate in the rich gastronomic culture of Dobrudja.

Another notable example is the watermelon madjun festival held in a specific village within the region. This festival celebrates the historical significance of watermelon madjun, a traditional concoction that has been used for medicinal purposes, particularly for soothing sore throats, for over two centuries. By organising this festival, the village not only preserves the knowledge and practices associated with watermelon madjun but also shares this unique aspect

of the local culinary heritage with visitors and locals alike.

These culinary festivals not only serve as platforms for promoting and preserving traditional dishes but also contribute to the cultural identity and tourism development of the Dobrudja region. By celebrating the region's unique flavors, ingredients, and culinary practices, these initiatives create a sense of pride and appreciation for the local gastronomy while attracting visitors who are eager to explore and experience the distinct culinary traditions of the area.

CONCLUSION

The recent initiatives to create festivals that promote the local cuisine in the Dobrudja region play a vital role in preserving, promoting, and celebrating the rich culinary heritage of the area. Through these festivals, traditional dishes, ingredients, and culinary practices are showcased, contributing to the cultural identity of the region and providing opportunities for locals and visitors alike to experience the unique flavors and traditions of Dobrudja's gastronomy.



Clay pot used for baking bread



Rakia from apricots



The watermelon madjun



Sarma liver and bulgur “bulgureno”



Madjun from watermelon



Images from the culinary festival



Images from the culinary festival



Images from the culinary festival

The Satellites

The cultural heritage of a city is a valuable and treasured resource that should be preserved and shared with the public. The integration of the city's cultural heritage as satellites or extensions of the Durostorum Museum Forum presents an exciting opportunity to enhance the cultural landscape and engage a wider audience. By incorporating these heritage sites as extensions of the museum, a cohesive network can be created that showcases the city's rich history and provides an immersive experience for visitors.

These satellite sites function as vital cultural hubs, extending the reach and impact of the Durostorum Museum Forum. They offer diverse cultural programming, including exhibitions, performances, workshops, and educational activities that cater to a wide range of audiences. By engaging local communities, artists, scholars, and stakeholders in their development and operation, a sense of ownership and inclusivity is fostered, ensuring their relevance and sustainability.

Importantly, the integration of cultural heritage into daily activities ensures the museum remains relevant and accessible. By intertwining with the routines of residents and becoming an integral part of their lives, the museum fosters a sense of pride in cultural identity. It becomes a source of inspiration and a platform for residents to contribute their knowledge and ideas.

The collaborative nature of this concept involves active engagement with the community. The museum seeks input and participation from residents in the planning and implementation of these satellite branches, empowering them and creating a sense of ownership and belonging.

This collaborative effort ensures the continued relevance and success of the cultural heritage initiatives.

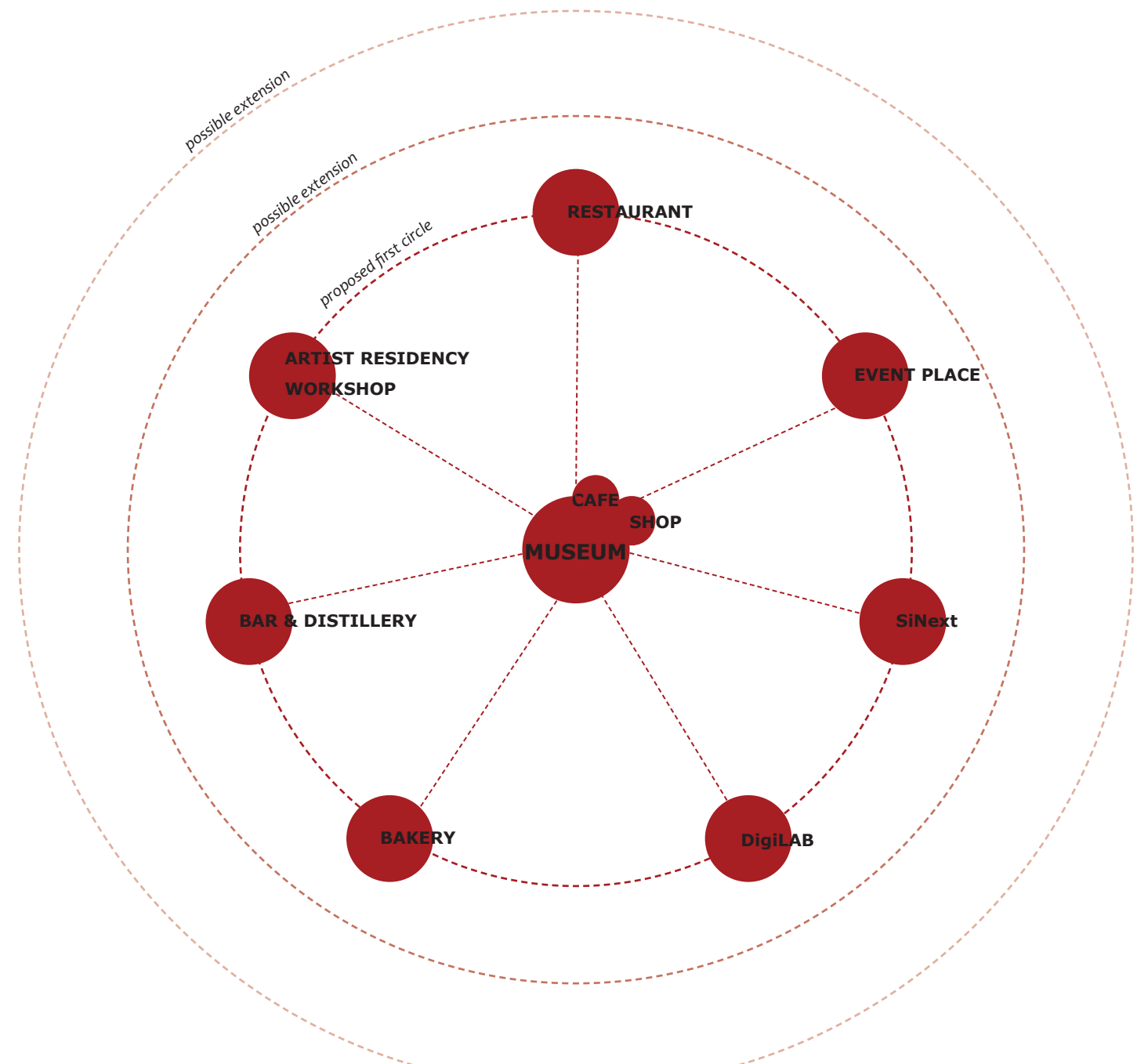
Furthermore, the symbiotic relationship between the museum and the local economy is emphasized. By incorporating branches that engage with cultural heritage and offer economic opportunities, the museum becomes a driver of local prosperity. For example, a restaurant supporting the use of local produce benefits local farmers and suppliers while attracting visitors seeking the unique regional cuisine, contributing to the city's revenue.

In conclusion, the integration of the city's cultural heritage as satellites or extensions of the Durostorum Museum Forum is an innovative approach to preserving and promoting cultural assets. By creating a cohesive network of cultural hubs, engaging local communities, and fostering collaboration, the project ensures the continuity of the museum and its deep connection with the lives of residents. This concept not only revitalizes the city by showcasing its rich cultural heritage but also contributes to the development of a sustainable and inclusive community.

THE DIAGRAM

The diagram on the right showcases a proposed expansion plan for the museum, incorporating satellite buildings around the park and the city. These extensions aim to preserve heritage, create a vibrant social environment, and have been designed based on thorough research.

The main museum building serves as the core of the expansion, housing a café and museum shop. A restaurant offers local cuisine with fresh market produce and hosts



exhibitions and culinary classes. An event space showcases folklore with classes for enthusiasts. SiNext focuses on temporary exhibitions of contemporary and future art expressions. The DigiLab is a dedicated space for youth to experiment with digital technologies and learn about the city's industrial past. The bakery offers delicious baked goods and explores the region's agricultural history. The bar and distillery provide a space to enjoy traditional

drinks, learn their history, and witness production. An artist residency and workshops encourage young professionals to contribute to the cultural scene.

Overall, the expansion combines preservation, social engagement, and diverse experiences to enhance the museum's offerings and the city's cultural landscape.

Culture and Education

The cultural institutions in the city were constructed between 1950 and 1980, but unfortunately, they have not been adequately maintained or upgraded to keep pace with technological advancements. The main institutions, including the theater, puppet theater, art gallery, and city library, are all clustered in the city center, near each other. Additionally, there are other noteworthy institutions such as the Regional History Museum, the youth center, and the Ethnographic Museum. On a hill outside the city, the Fortress Medzhittabia serves as a museum.

However, despite the presence of these key cultural institutions, there is a notable lack of diverse event venues within the city. The options for hosting events are often limited to the outdated theater facility, which may not adequately meet the needs and expectations of the community. This scarcity of alternative event spaces hampers the city's ability to accommodate a wide range of cultural activities and gatherings.

On the educational front, the city holds regional significance as it attracts students from nearby villages and municipalities for high school education. This influx of students contributes to a vibrant and active youth population within the city. The educational institutions, represented in blue, consist of primary and high schools.

The dynamic nature of the city's youth, combined with the concentration of cultural institutions, sets the stage for an environment rich in artistic and intellectual potential. However, there is a pressing need to expand the options for hosting diverse events and cultural activities. By addressing this gap and providing modern event spaces that cater to the evolving needs of the community, the city can further nurture its vibrant cultural scene and provide enhanced opportunities for its youth to engage, learn, and flourish.



The theater



The inside of the library



The Art Gallery



The Youth Centre



The History Museum

The museum, established in 1898, underwent several relocations before finally settling into its current permanent space in 1990. The museum is housed in an old bank building with approximately 400 sqm of space spread over two floors. Its primary focus is on conducting research and studies about the region, which still holds many undiscovered treasures. Additionally, the museum oversees the management of the Ethnographic Museum, the Roman Tomb (currently inaccessible to visitors), and the Medzhiditabia Fortress. However, its exhibitions only cover the prehistoric, ancient, and medieval periods, leaving a gap in capturing the history from medieval times to the recent past.

Located on a main road near the city square, the museum's small building lacks a strong connection with the outside world, often going unnoticed by passersby. While the museum displays artifacts in its garden, the building itself fails to establish a meaningful relationship with its exterior surroundings.

Entering the building feels cramped and claustrophobic. The narrow entryway, which also serves as the ticket and gift shop area, leads to an interior that still retains its banking layout and lacks refurbishment to suit the exhibition requirements. The lighting is dim, and artifacts are displayed in an outdated manner. It is evident that the space is insufficient and does not allow for expansion. During the visit, newly discovered objects were found scattered on the floor and staircase, highlighting the lack of space for proper preservation. Despite the region's rich history, the museum frequently receives requests for assistance in discovering new sites or artifacts, yet lacks the necessary space to carry out such work effectively. Furthermore, the

building does not provide barrier-free access, limiting its overall accessibility.

Unfortunately, the museum falls short of meeting current social expectations for such institutions. It remains in the category of “look-read-leave” museums, failing to attract a significant number of visitors who could also contribute to its financial stability and potential for improvement.

From an interview with Dayana Marinova, from Silistra:

“When you enter there is a cold feeling. When I go to places like this (museums) somewhere else, I am always fascinated how I am being greeted.... (referring to the museum in Silistra) You enter and you pay in a small window, you barely even see the person behind it. It is just an exchange of money and a ticket. When you enter you have no idea where to start first, what's the whole story behind the building. Forget about even the art that is inside.”



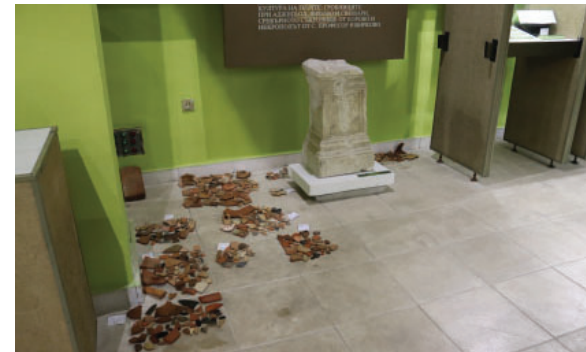
The entrance of the museum



From the ground floor exhibition



From the ground floor exhibition



New findings displayed on the floor



The findings stored at the staircase



From the ground floor exhibition



From the second floor exhibition



From the second floor exhibition



From the second floor exhibition auditory area

The Theater and Library

The theater, constructed in 1970, serves as the primary indoor event space in the city. In addition to theater performances and concerts, it is frequently used by local schools for their celebrations and activities. However, the building is facing several challenges. Firstly, it lacks a proper ventilation system, resulting in an uncomfortable experience for the audience. Moreover, the stage is small and lacks the necessary technical equipment to accommodate events with varying requirements.

Despite its central location at the city square, access to the theater is restricted. During my visit to the facility, I encountered obstacles when trying to explore the interior. The staff at the entrance informed me that permission was required to gain entry. This limited accessibility hinders the public's ability to engage with the theater beyond scheduled events. The restricted access prevents the community from fully experiencing and engaging with the institution's offerings.

In Western Europe, libraries serve not only as repositories of books accessible to the public, but also as vibrant social spaces for studying, reading, and spending time outside of one's home. However, the library in Silistra falls short of this ideal. Despite its location in the city square, the library's functions are limited to merely storing and lending books upon request. The entrance to the library is uninviting, and upon entering, visitors are directed to the upper floor where the kids' section is situated. Moving further up, there are separate "rooms" housing other materials. The dimly lit corridor creates an atmosphere that encourages one to leave the building as quickly as possible. At the end of the corridor, there is a room with a closed door labeled as the "reading place," giving the impression that it is off-limits to visitors.



The theatre entrance



The theatre entrance from the 80's



Inside of the theatre



Inside of the theatre



The library entrance



Library ground floor kids' section



Ground floor of the library



Second floor of the library

The Social Interaction

During the summer in Silistra, the sunny and warm days draw people outdoors, where they spend their time in parks or outdoor cafes. However, when winter arrives with its cold and snowy days, the city undergoes a transformation, becoming almost deserted. The park is no longer a preferred option, and residents are left with limited indoor alternatives. Unfortunately, Silistra lacks socially inviting communal spaces, forcing its residents to either stay home or seek refuge in cafes and restaurants. Despite the abundance of such establishments in relation to the city's population, they all share common traits: they are often loud, noisy, and permit smoking indoors. The café culture found in larger cities, where one can find a quiet and cozy place to work or study, is virtually non-existent in Silistra. Cafes have become the main socializing venues, starting from a young age. When speaking with the residents of Silistra, they all use the same word to describe the city during the winter: boring. Although the summer season does not bring any additional events or festivities to the city, the simple presence of good weather and the option to spend time outdoors make it more enjoyable. Furthermore, businesses experience significantly lower profits during the winter months compared to the summer. As discussed in the previous chapter, the cultural institutions also fail to contribute to improving the situation.



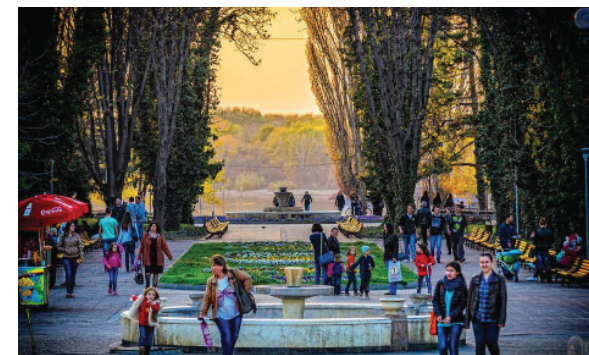
the main square for the outdoor cafes



inside of one of the cafes



inside of one of the cafes



the park in early autumn



the park in late autumn

The Danube Park

Undoubtedly, the Danube Park is the city's shining gem. As the first public park in Bulgaria, established in the 1870s, it holds immense importance for the city and its residents. Nestled along the picturesque Danube River, the park offers breathtaking views of Romania. Divided into distinct segments, it features a children's playground, open sports facilities, and even a skateboard area. Moreover, the park boasts a hotel and a seasonal cafe/restaurant. Notably, it is also home to ancient ruins, accessible to the public and adding a touch of history to the park's allure.

During the spring and, particularly, the vibrant summer months, the park truly comes alive, becoming the pulsating heart of the city. Beyond providing much-needed shade during scorching days, it serves as the ultimate gathering spot, fostering social connections and community interactions. However, with the onset of winter and the absence of enclosed areas, the park recedes into a peaceful slumber, awaiting the return of warmer days.

Recently, the park underwent an extensive renovation project sponsored by the European Union. The primary focus was on upgrading the park's infrastructure and rejuvenating the playground. While these changes undoubtedly enhanced the park's appearance and improved accessibility, the project failed to introduce new layers of functionality. As a result, the park's functions and programs remained largely unchanged.

In close proximity to the park, one can find a high school and a dormitory. The dormitory primarily accommodates students from nearby villages who attend high school in the city. Typically, these students stay only during weekdays, with two to three students sharing modest-sized rooms. Unfortunately, the shared bathrooms and toilets are inadequate for the larger group of residents. While the presence of a canteen and study areas is beneficial, they often fall short of meeting the students' needs due to insufficient resources and materials. Interestingly, the park has the potential to serve as an excellent gathering place for students, offering an ideal setting for studying, engaging in extracurricular activities, and fostering a sense of community.



early years of the park



early years of the park

The accompanying map and photos provide a glimpse of different sections within the park. One notable feature is the presence of ancient ruins, which showcase the historical significance of the area. Additionally, the park encompasses diverse attractions such as a seasonal café, and a hotel. Visitors can also enjoy a range of recreational amenities including playgrounds and sports facilities, offering ample opportunities for outdoor leisure and physical activities.





During my visit to the park, I carefully observed and mapped out the different areas, taking note of their activities and dynamics. It was important to understand how the park was being utilised by visitors. Additionally, I conducted an analysis to identify potential intervention points that could minimise any negative impact on the landscape. By studying the park's existing features and considering possible interventions, I aimed to strike a balance between enhancing the park's functionality and preserving its natural beauty.

What do people think?

Given the project's focus on meeting the needs and enhancing the lives of Silistra's residents, establishing connections and actively listening to their voices played a pivotal role. Throughout the process, I maintained regular communication with various individuals, conducting interviews either in person during my visits to my hometown, over the phone, or through recorded sessions. I made a concerted effort to engage with both current residents of Silistra and those who had moved away, although interestingly, it was relatively easier to connect with individuals who no longer resided in Silistra, particularly within my own age group (individuals in their twenties).

During the interviews, I initiated discussions with open-ended questions regarding participants' sentiments and perspectives on Silistra. I inquired about the city's positive aspects, areas that could be improved, and delved into understanding how individuals typically spent their time in Silistra, including their preferred destinations and activities.

Subsequently, the conversations shifted towards exploring participants' experiences with museums and cultural institutions in Silistra. Unanimously, a common thread emerged, emphasising the city's lack of opportunities for the younger generation. Beyond the absence of a university, the primary concern highlighted was the limited availability of job prospects and career advancement opportunities.

Each participant expressed dissatisfaction with the scarcity of engaging activities and cultural developments within the city. They remarked that the current marketing strategies and organizational methods appeared outdated. No-

tably, some individuals noted that the younger generation's return to Silistra during the pandemic, due to the opportunity for remote work, brought about a more dynamic atmosphere and increased engagement.

In response to these insights, I endeavored to incorporate these findings into my design approach. I restructured the building's layout to enhance versatility and adaptability for various occasions. Crucially, I aimed to create a space that would cater to all age groups, ensuring inclusivity and addressing the diverse needs of the community.

What about museums?

Museums have undergone significant transformations throughout history. Initially, they were exclusive spaces reserved for royals and their guests, serving as showcases for personal collections. Over time, museums evolved into cabinets of curiosity, focusing on scientific collections and displays. However, they still remained accessible primarily to the higher class residents of society.

The opening of the British Museum and the transformation of the Louvre into a museum marked a turning point, making museums accessible to a broader audience. Exhibitions were displayed behind glass, creating a barrier between the visitor and the objects. Museums then sought to cultivate an air of inaccessibility by incorporating design elements such as grand staircases and classical antiquity.

The direction of museums changed dramatically with the emergence of the Pompidou Centre, which diversified the functions of museums and integrated a social element. This was followed by the Bilbao Museum, which sparked the phenomenon known as the Bilbao Effect. Commissioning renowned architects to design iconic buildings transformed the image of museums. Other cities attempted to replicate this success by hiring well-known architects and opting for high-profile buildings with designs bearing the signature of renowned architects that sometimes are overshadowing the identity of the city itself.

Advancements in technology and new approaches to creating art shifted the focus from the exterior to the interior of museum buildings. Creating immersive experiences and utilizing various media to stimulate the senses became integral to the museum experience. Visitors were no longer passive observers but active participants in the exhibits. This raises the question of what lies ahead for museums and whether they can embrace a larger responsibility.

Moving forward, museums can be envisioned as place-makers, playing a central role in socio-cultural development. They actively engage with their communities, fostering inclusivity and creating engaging experiences. The design of museums is becoming more responsive to the landscape and local identity, forging a stronger connection between the institution and its surroundings.

In conclusion, the evolution of museums reflects a dynamic process of adapting to changing societal needs and expectations. From exclusive spaces to inclusive cultural hubs, museums have evolved to incorporate social elements, iconic architecture, immersive experiences, and community engagement. As museums continue to evolve, they have the potential to take on larger responsibilities in shaping the cultural landscape and contributing to sustainable socio-cultural development.

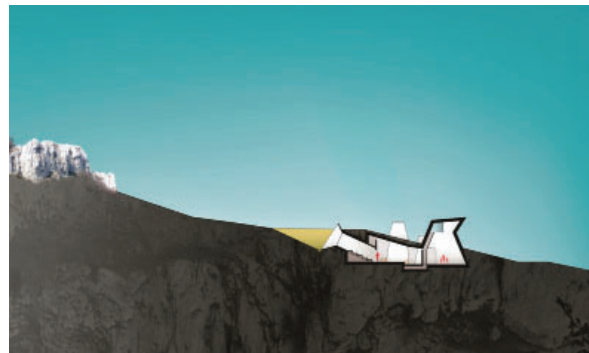
Case Studies

Archeopark Pavlov, Czech Republic

Pavlov is an ancient archaeological site that has a rich history dating back to Palaeolithic times. The majority of the buildings at the site are constructed underground, seamlessly blending with the natural surroundings. The exhibition area spans approximately 500 m².

Positive outcomes of the design include:

- The embedded design that harmoniously integrates with the landscape, preserving the scenic views.
- The exhibition space successfully combines contemporary audiovisual technology with traditional museum displays, providing an immersive and engaging experience for visitors.
- The interior design of the exhibition area reflects the lifestyle of cave dwellers, utilizing materials and elements that evoke the atmosphere of that era, thus allowing visitors to connect with the past on a deeper level.

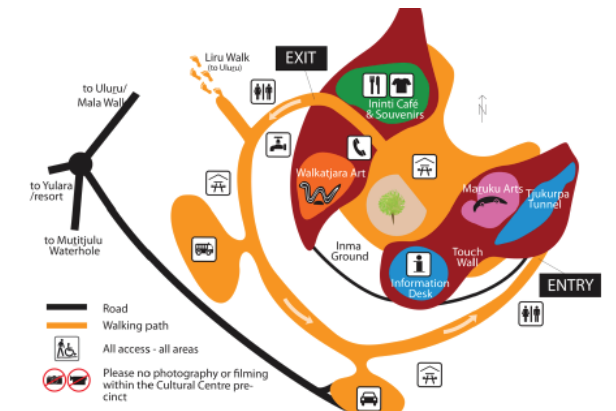


Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre, Australia

The local culture holds profound significance to the Aboriginal community, and its essence cannot be adequately conveyed through mere presentation—it must be experienced firsthand. The design of the buildings in this project was developed in close collaboration with the local residents, ensuring their active participation in every stage. The community members contributed their artistic skills in painting, ceramics, glasswork, and other intricate details, infusing the project with their unique craftsmanship.

Positive outcomes of the project include:

- The design draws inspiration from local elements, capturing the essence of the surrounding environment and reflecting the cultural heritage of the area.
- Local materials are thoughtfully incorporated into the construction process, reinforcing the connection to the land and emphasizing sustainability. The involvement of the community throughout the design and completion stages further strengthens this bond.
- The purpose of the project extends beyond mere display; it serves as an educational platform, allowing visitors to not only observe but also learn about the local culture. The intention is to provide a holistic and immersive experience, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation.
- The project aims to create a sense of pride among the local community, establishing a landmark that authentically represents the identity and cultural significance of the place.



Case Studies

Oodi Helsinki Central Library Finland

The central library seamlessly integrates with its surroundings while still managing to stand out. This multifunctional space offers a diverse range of activities and areas that are easily accessible to visitors. Upon entering the ground floor, there is a seamless transition from the outside environment. Moving up to the second floor, various spaces cater to different needs, including a gaming area and a toolkits corner equipped with sewing machines, printers, and other useful equipment. The upper floor serves as the focal point of the building, with the library spanning the entire space and other functions thoughtfully incorporated. The glass facades not only provide panoramic views of the city but also feature a terrace. An open cafe and a variety of seating options enhance the visitor experience. Personally, I had the pleasure of utilizing the working and studying spaces, which were truly delightful.

Positive outcomes of the design include:

- The building's design eliminates any threshold fears, drawing visitors inside and creating a welcoming atmosphere.
- Clear and intuitive navigation throughout the building facilitates ease of movement and exploration.
- The space is cleverly divided using a combination of color schemes and furniture placement instead of relying on walls, resulting in an open and interactive environment.
- The library offers a wide range of services and amenities free of charge, providing access to valuable resources and fostering a sense of inclusivity.



City revitalisation Roubaix France

Roubaix, situated near Lille, was once a thriving industrial city heavily reliant on manufacturing. However, with the decline of the textile industry, the city faced significant job losses and entered a period of crisis. To address these challenges, an extensive urban regeneration project was initiated, encompassing various aspects, including the implementation of a cultural strategy to position Roubaix as a vibrant cultural destination. As part of this initiative, the central square and civic buildings underwent renovations, and the La Piscine Museum was established.

Positive outcomes of the project include:

- Leveraging the city's industrial heritage as an asset and capitalizing on its historical significance.
- Fostering community engagement and participation through a range of cultural activities.
- Creating new avenues for economic growth and development within the city, diversifying income sources and stimulating prosperity.



Case Studies

Growing trend in museums as public squares.

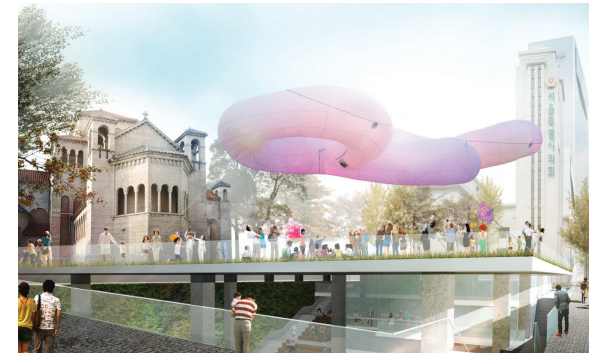
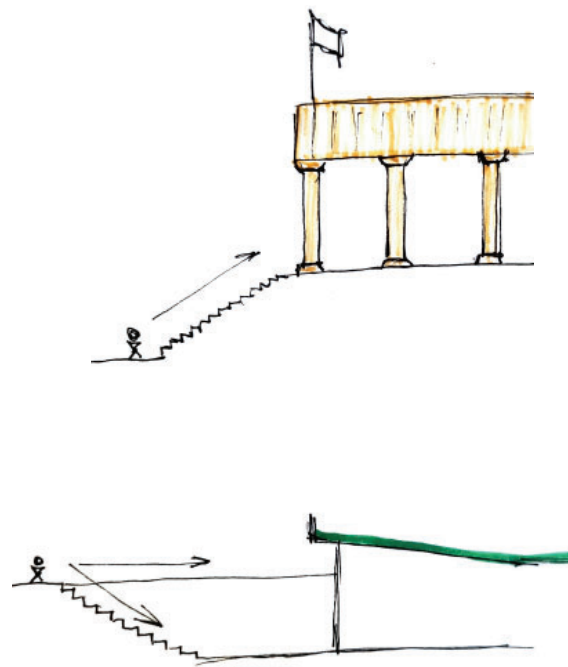
During my research, I have encountered numerous exciting projects and proposals for cultural squares and museums that embrace a more inviting and accessible architecture. Unlike traditional museums, which were often perceived as monumental temples with imposing staircases to ascend, these new proposals adopt a different approach. They emphasize a design philosophy that is inclusive and engaging, where the architecture of the buildings promotes a sense of connection and integration with daily activities.

In these innovative museum designs, there is a shift towards creating spaces that are welcoming and encourage public engagement. Instead of elevating visitors to a separate realm, the architecture now aims to seamlessly integrate the museum into the fabric of everyday life. It becomes a place that people can easily access and explore as part of their daily activities, rather than a distant and exclusive institution.

These contemporary museum proposals prioritize public interaction and participation. They incorporate design elements that facilitate social gatherings, cultural events, and educational activities. The architecture embraces a descending approach, inviting visitors to explore and discover the various exhibition spaces, installations, and interactive displays. The aim is to foster a sense of connection between the museum and its visitors, allowing for a more immersive and enriching experience.

By reimagining the role of museums and cultural squares,

these new proposals seek to break down barriers and create inclusive spaces that inspire curiosity and dialogue. Through their architecture, they actively strive to become integral parts of the community, enriching the cultural fabric and enhancing public life.



proposal for competition to design cultural square in Seoul



proposal for competition to design cultural square in Seoul



proposal for competition to design cultural square in Seoul



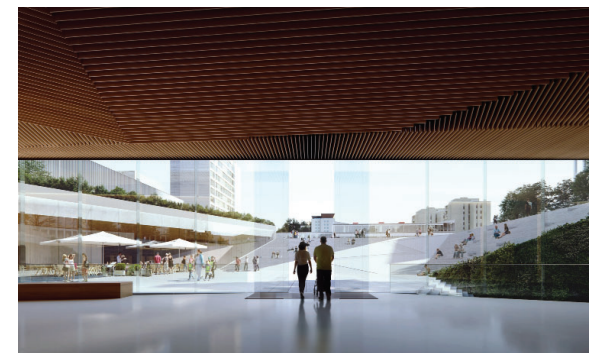
proposal for competition to design cultural square in Seoul



competition winner for Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem



Arts Pavilion proposal for West Kowloon Cultural District



proposal for competition Tapiola Cultural Centre



proposal for competition Tapiola Cultural Centre

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Now, here's to hoping that this is the grand finale of my academic acknowledgments. Let's close this chapter and move on to a future free from the perils of endless thank-you notes. Cheers!

