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Stream: Master in Architecture (Architecture and Conservation Studies)

Project: Valletta Terminal

This design project transforms the area surrounding Valletta Ferry terminal, providing the ferry route between Sliema and Marsamxett. This project is a proposal for a space that works with the existing context while providing a new lease of life, brought about by studying how the area used to work, why, and the impact of the immediate context of the fortifications.

The story of the terminal is studied with respect to the social, historical and functional values. As it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the area harboured a strong connection with the sea. This was through the experiences of stepping out onto something external, by a (1) gradual descent and of (2) the act of walking over the water. These two elements introduce the concurrent theme of exposure and protection, which is exacerbated by the immediate presence of the fortifications. The fortifications are a source of protection through their solidity, expressed as a barrier.  Therefore, there is the opportunity to design a barrier through which solidity is fluid. Therefore, a form that challenges the solidity that protects you while regaining the lost contact with the sea. The sense of protection versus exposure becomes linked with the play between transparency and solidity.

These notions come together to form a series of ‘stepping stones’ with a fluid, see-through barrier. This fluidity is experienced as one moves in the area, either approaching the terminal or moving away, since the apparent solidity of the barrier changes. Furthermore, one is stepping out directly onto the sea; experiencing a sense of protection from a stable structure while being exposed due to the see-through barrier. This is carried out through the design, by creating a duality of the ‘stepping stones’ being visually floating while physically stable.

The area is envisioned as a terminal and a recreational public space, with routes linking the street with the terminal, thus engaging people with the open elements by walking over them. The roofs of the buildings of the water polo pitch were an opportunity to establish a direct gradual descent towards the terminal and over sea, due to the changes in level of the site.  The ‘stepping stones’ as a system have the opportunity to serve as a broader strategy, as shown in the masterplan as an example, linking the upper fortification entrance with the harbour through a descent.