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Stream: Master in Architecture (Architectural Design) [First Year]

Project Name: Rethinking the Student House: Retaining Rhythms

The site, being the University Campus, was perceived as a type of neighbourhood itself, diffusing a unique sense of energy in the form of human activity and interaction. It was therefore very clear for us that what was needed to be valued and retained in this scenario, was not the built fabric itself, but rather these rhythms of activity which in turn seem to retain a bigger sense of memorabilia to the users of the site. In doing so, the columns and beams of the existing building were retained as a skeleton frame supporting the already existing energy, and ultimately the way we experience the tangible rhythm of the space. To better understand these tangible and intangible rhythms, they were broken down in terms of flow, pace and effort, which later helped to emerge a range of proposed spaces with a spectrum of public, semi-public, semi-intimate and intimate spaces, starting from the most public spaces at ground level and the most intimate at the top-most level.

The choice of material supporting the design programme has a twofold effect. Timber was introduced alongside the existing concrete and limestone to clearly define the “new” from the “old”. Moreover, a significantly higher amount of existing walls were retained at ground floor level, when compared to the upper floors. Thus the building as a whole could be now interpreted as if the temporary timber elements are taking over the masonry permanent base. This increase of timber elements along the vertical axis also supported the transition of spaces along the same vertical axis, adding a warmer feeling to the most intimate spaces at the ultimate levels.