

# REFLECTION

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Interiors Buildings Cities  
Msc4

## House of Music

The graduation project "House of Music" elaborates on the notion of designing a major new concert hall and music school in the City of London. The new concert hall will be situated at Museum of London which is located at the edge of the modernist Barbican complex, meanwhile, Museum of London is going to move to West Smithfield to give room to this major new concert hall. The assignment of the graduation project is also formulated by an ongoing competition brief, thus this hypothetical project will partly follow the brief of the competition.

The Museum of London sits in the very centre of the City of London, meanwhile, it's one of the important elements in the network of public institutions of this district. The city of London is an important historical financial district, tourists from over the world visit iconic, 17th-century St. Paul's Cathedral, traces the city's history at the Museum of London and take in performances at the huge Barbican arts centre. More importantly, for the citizens living in London, there is a very popular leisure and cultural route starting from Tate modern, passing by St. Paul's Cathedral and come across Museum of London and finally arrives in the huge art and cultural centre of Barbican. This route forms a crucial network at the bank of Thames. In the bigger picture, this route extends to South Bank Centre where Queen Elizabeth Hall, National Theatre and Royal Festival Hall locate, which are now very popular public institutions for people to meet, hang out and even work. Thus the location of the site Museum of London is a significant point in the network of public institutions and cultural facilities in the city of London, even in the whole of London. So this new major concert hall has the chance to receive a large number of visitors not only audience coming for the events of concerts, but it will also accommodate the citizens and tourists. Now Barbican is such an isolation from the city and can not be accessed easily by the public.

Then the first question for me is how does the concert hall redefine the relationship between Barbican and surrounding city? How does it accommodate its citizens in the contemporary culture?

Firstly the major initiative idea of the project, it's a fascination with gardens. London is a city of secret places, of unexpected country lanes and hidden gardens, especially Barbican has all these incredibly beautiful enclosed pleasure gardens: there are gardens formulated by water and fountain, conservatory and tropical plants, very tranquil introverted residential garden, the view of the stunning picturesque landscape can be seen almost everywhere in Barbican.

There are also other things on the site that formulate my design meanwhile related to this notion of picturesque landscape. In regard to its modernist and brutalist nature, the introverted form of Barbican as post-war buildings have shaped the context of the site and formed the core of this cultural institutions and housing complex. Despite that, the Barbican complex is circulated with a high walk system, namely pedway, which generates the leading character of Barbican. The City of London Pedway Scheme was a grand plan after WWII, a partially elevated pedway was planned to be built after the destruction of the city after WWII, that evolved out of a plan to transform traffic flows in the City of London by separating pedestrians from street level traffic. What actually has been achieved is mainly the Barbican Highwalk system.

The meandering high walk network combined with the inner gardens and water fountain can be perceived as a choreographed sequence of urban spaces and urban figures. The view of the gardens unfolds alongside the route of the high walk. This strategy is also rooted in the British garden history, similar manners have been used in Sissinghurst Garden in Kent, England. We can also grab a link of the Far East influence here, the manner of using the route and picturesque technics to frame the view of the garden, the layers of the landscape unfold while the meandering walk is one of the major concepts of Eastern gardens.

Coming back to the site, one significant archaeological fragment around Barbican is the Roman Walls. During the WWII, a large area of the City of London was devastated by German bombs, particularly in the period of Blitz. The reconstruction of the ruined areas gave the opportunity to the birth of Barbican complex and the investigation of the ancient remains of London which lay underneath the modern city. To respond to these

archaeological remains around Barbican, the architects used Roman Wall as the reference for the Triumphal Arch (the folly) at the west end of the Barbican designed by CP&B in 1954, it showed the traces of the material spirit which appear as Modernist continuations of the remains of London.

Before we started the designing of the project, we had the research workshop with Mark Pimlott, one of the studies is about London's open spaces, walks and sequences, the precedence we did is Nash Sequence. Nash also uses the picturesque landscape tradition when he designs Nash sequence, the All Souls Church, Langham Place can be regarded as a folly in the sequence.

Another Roman-Wall-like object on site is the roundabout of Museum of London, the museum is a condensed building at the edge of the introverted world of Barbican, is going to be replaced by the new musical and cultural facility.

Part of my answer to the questions above is the design strategy that by maintaining this roundabout of Museum London, and stitching together the southern edge of the Barbican by a continuous brick wall, the sequence of garden landscapes which form an outstanding character of pleasure and leisure for the Barbican interior is extending and steps out into city, meanwhile the roundabout can be seen as a form of folly, in response to the existing folly.

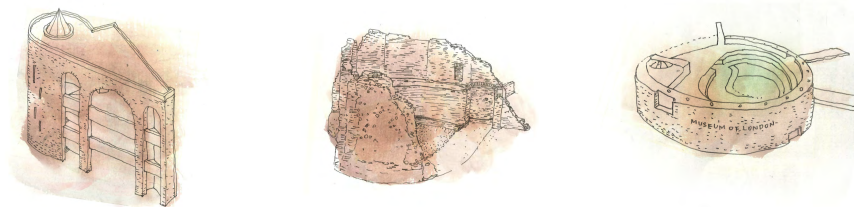
Materialization is another crucial part of the project, which helps us to visualize, to think out, to construct and control the building in our imagination. Materials are the central element, it's what you can see what you can touch and smell and even hear it. My emphasis on the material is out of the desire to observe, explore and comprehend the surroundings, to establish the relationship with things existing on site. We can regard Barbican as a found evidence of the materialization, which has a brick base on the lower part and concrete structure on the upper part. And all the folly on the site is made of different bricks.

The material is the ultimate element to make architecture visible, but the material is a media, an equipment but not the theme. For this project, architecture is complemented and supplemented by the phenomenon of colour, colours are the more basic effects, they are superficially more visible, cover the material base and they outran it. Of course, colour is produced by materials, and it takes a variety of form, pigments may be

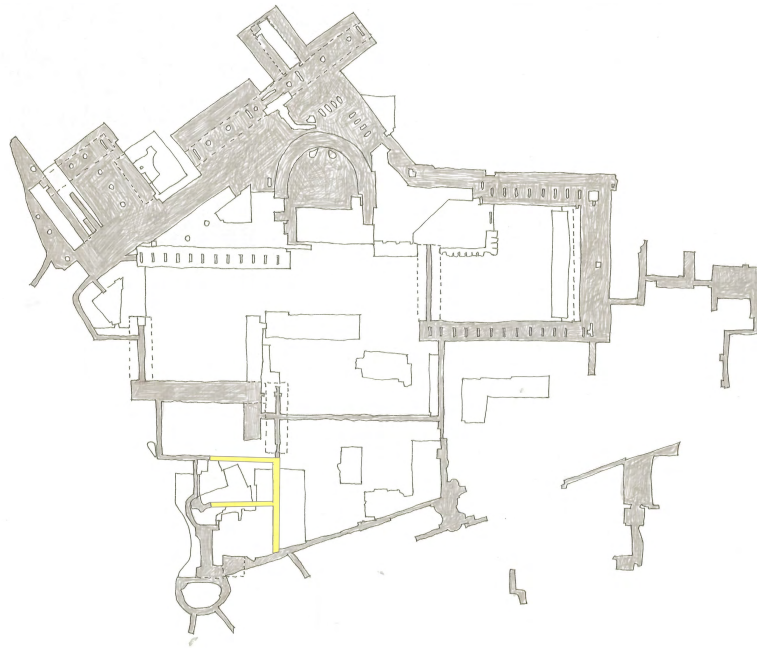
mixed in concrete, or a glass coat of paint on the wood panels, or a coloured glaze on the brick. I'm also interested in shadows of colour, they are coloured light, depicting the different atmosphere of the interior, in the direct feel of perception.

Zooming out from the context of Barbican, what is worth mentioning in regard of the bigger theme of the studio this year "Festive City", is the Festival of London in 1951 which has shaped the essence of Festivity and public life of London. It was an exhibition built on the south bank of Thames and was held to celebrate the history, traditions and arts of Britain after WWII. According to the description of Sir Hugh Casson who is the chairman of the committee of Festival Architects, "Eight and half million people visited this place through summer 1951, yes it was over it was part of London's past, it had joined all the other exhibition, all the crashing military parades, the glittering state occasions, all the ceremony and display that come and go, and help to make the public life and tradition of this city... But I remember the first time we went there, as soon as you push through the turnstiles and pass the impatience attendants there was a surprise, a sudden sense of space and leisure, we built a place to walk about, a place if you like for pleasure... outside the smoke were in charge, inside it blazed with bright nursery colours...altogether it somehow captured that inexplicable lift of the heart..." To respond to the theme "Festive City", what does 'festive' mean in this project? As Hugh Casson mentioned, "festive" in my concern is a sense of pleasure in the place, a lightness of feeling, a kindness. More importantly, it's about people, about the performers and audience, about the lives the place accommodates.

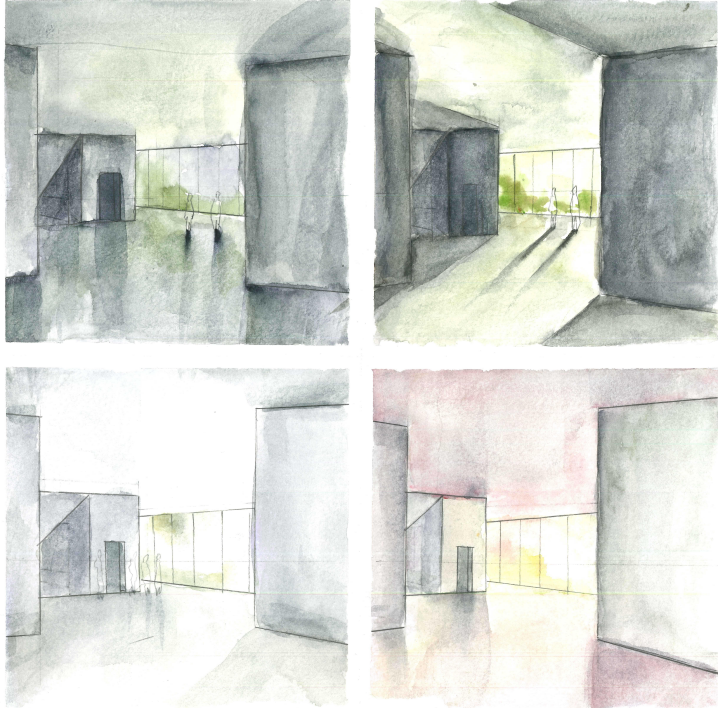
To conclude, there are three key ideas included in my project:



The roundabout is maintained as an archaeological fragment, and the garden sequence which steps out into the city, within the roundabout, meanwhile the Museum of London is replaced by tacking together the continuous southern edge of the Barbican, the new concert hall opens up Barbican and accommodates its citizens with a series of gardens.



Extending and completing the meandering high walk of Barbican, the high walk interferes and connects with the public interiors and the gardens as a public route. As the strategy used in British gardens, the layers of space unfolding alongside the high walk.



The colour as a form of material to translate the concept of the interior, the interiors corresponding to the site, the gardens. For example, the colour of the interior depicts the colour of the daylight from morning to sunset, from plants in gardens from spring to winter, even in its thinnest form as a reflection of the concrete surface.