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BA Year 3 - Atelier: Continuity in Architecture

Project: Celebrating Shrewsbury's Architectural Heritage

A library as a place of engagement

This project celebrates Shrewsbury's landmarks by establishing a connection between the building and its surrounding context. Located within the city's Quarry park, the library's stacked mass creates a height variation that maximizes views to the nearby Quarry park and St. Chad's Church, two of the city's main points of interest. The cantilevers frame the vistas towards the surrounding park and create a sheltered space on the ground floor that allows the library's programme to spill outside and engage the public. The building's façade manifests Shrewsbury's architectural heritage by mimicking the elements of the city's Tudor buildings. The pattern incorporated on the upper floors becomes an integral part of the library's interior programme, allowing users to "sit" within it and enforcing the idea that a library is a place of engagement rather than a repository for books.

During the last 8 weeks I made two models at two different scales (1:50 and 1:500), helping me think of the design in different ways. The 1:50 sectional model allowed me to visualize the interior qualities of the space and explore how light filters inside and creates different shadows according to the façade's pattern. This scale was important for me to highlight the interior finishes and the relationship between the exposed steel structure and the inhabitable façade. One of the main challenges I faced when making this model was making sure the cantilevers would stand up, since their weight initially tipped them forward. To solve this issue, I placed rocks inside the core, which allowed me to shift the centre of gravity form the front of the model to the back, allowing it to be stable (as seen in image 2). On the other hand, the 1:500 model allowed me to represent the proposed library in its existing context and show its relationship with the nearby park and church. In this model I also show the proposed viewing tower on another part of the park, and the pedestrian circulation across the site.

Both models were entirely hand-made out of balsa wood (which I ordered online), grey board and cardboard (which I had at home). Being at home with limited access to materials and tools made me think of unique ways in which I could use everyday objects for the construction of my model. For example, I reused the cardboard from old boxes and used clothes pegs and books to join pieces together and glue them down. I also used a nail file to sand the pieces since I didn't have sandpaper at home.

1:50 sectional model process images



Image 01: To make the parquet I cut rectangular pieces of balsa wood and individually glued them to the carboard floor. Once this was done, I used a nail file to sand the floor and make it smooth and even.



Image 02: I placed rocks inside the core to make the back of the model weigh more than the front, which allowed the cantilevers stand horizontally straight.

1:50 sectional model final images



Image 03: Exterior image of proposed building showing the cantilevers and inhabitable Tudor-style façade pattern incorporated on the upper library floors.



Image 04: Interior image of the library's 3rd floor with photoshopped exterior view of the surrounding park.



Image 04: Interior image of the library's 4th floor with photoshopped exterior view of the surrounding park and church.

1:500 model



Image 06: Model showing the relationship between the proposed library and its surroundings; including the park, church, and a proposed tower that incorporates the same pattern as the library. It also shows the pedestrian circulation around the site (shown in black string).