Time fragments: design proposal for Theodosius's Forum, Istanbul

by Alessandro Camiz

The 3D laser scanner survey of the remains of the Forum of Theodosius in Istanbul, conducted by Zemastek in cooperation with Giorgio Verdiani, was the foundation for the design developed during the international workshop Architecture and Archaeology. Theodosius' Forum, Istanbul. The design proposes the partial demolition of the Şimkeşhane building, defining a new excavation of the area of the forum, revealing the ancient Mese. The project also includes a small pavilion as the gate of the archaeological area, with an Analogical and digital Augmented Reality (AR) device displaying the reconstruction of Theodosius' arch.

Fig. 1 - The design proposal plan and section (DRUM Design, 2023).

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THEODOSIUS' FORUM IN CONSTANTINOPLE

We conducted a preliminary research on the topography of Theodosius' forum in order to define a credible hypothesis on its form and location. To define the plan (fig. 1) we examined the archaeological findings of the area, the main historical sources, and the diachronic sequence of cartographical representations of the area starting from Giovanni Andreas Vavassore, Byzantivm sive Costantineopolis, 1535. The comparative analysis of the monuments described in the Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitana for the regions VII and VIII of Constantinople allowed us to establish the location of the Basilica Theodosiana on the northern side of the Mese. We identified the Thermae Carosianas on the north with the great Nymphaeum at the end of Valens aqueduct, and the porticus connecting this forum to the other one dedicated to Constantine. We defined the location of the tortile column of Theodosium, by comparing Vavassore's plan, where it is depicted still standing, with other later plans such as the Alman Mavilleri (1913-1914). This hypothesis seemed sufficiently coherent with the description of the forum given by the Patria Constantinopoleos.

"About Taurus. That in the Taurus there is a stele of the great Theodosius, but it was formerly of silver, Although he received those from the nations who came, there were former palaces there and a palace of

the "Romans", although in the so-called "Alonitzin". On top of the great column Theodosius was placed, and his sons, Honorius on the stone arch to the west, and Arkadius on the stone arch to the east, above the arches of the great tetradesians columns. And in the middle of the court is a great horse, whom some call Jesus the son of Naeus, and others Bellerophon, who came from the great Antioch. And the four-sided stone horse is covered with the history of the city's end, of the future gates of this city." (Preger, 1901).

The plan was essential for the design. Since the design intends to partially re-establish the forum within the surrounding most central area of Beyazit and its monuments and urban tissues, it was necessary to outline our interpretation of what the forum and its monuments used to be.

Designing within an archaeological area, in our opinion, is almost impossible without a detailed survey of the context. The needed survey is usually multiscalar, operating at the territorial scale, the building scale, and at the scale of the architectural fragments. Architectural fragments which in this case are abundantly lying on the sidewalks without any indication of their importance. We are very thankful to Fahrettin Doğan Tekin (Zemastek Yapı İnşaat Restorasyon) for the LIDAR survey of Theodosius' forum and to Giorgio Verdiani (University of Florence) for the scientific coordination of the LIDAR survey and the photogrammetric survey of the architectural fragments. Without their contribution, it would have been impossible for us to define a credible design proposal. If we could generalise this principle, we should say that in an archaeological area, survey and design must walk together, at the same time, instead of being two separate and independent actions as usually happens. Upon this principle of scientific cooperation, we have based the action of more than 10 years of activity within the workshops and summer schools organised by the International Network for Architecture and Archaeology. INAA is an international network of scholars, researchers and practitioners who in the past 10 years have been working in the field of Architecture and Archaeology. Each year it organises a summer school open to students of architecture, restoration, archaeology and design. https://www.architecture-archaeology.com/

DIDa: Fig. 3 - 3D digital model of the stand designed to show the architectural fragments (DRUM Design, 2023).

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF THEODOSIUS IN ISTANBUL: DESIGN PROPOSAL

Currently the only visible remains of the forum are two bases of the columns of the monumental arch, and a collection of architectural fragments, mostly belonging to the arch as well, scattered along the sidewalk of Ordu Caddesi. The fragments consist mainly in marble elements belonging to the architectural order of the arch, very singularly a Heracles Corinthian. The columns had notches on the shaft, just as Heracles' classical statues depicted the club, and to enhance this symbolism, the column's imoscape displayed the hand of the mythical figure sculpted. The arch was built to hold the statues of the two sons of Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius, and perhaps it was meant to express a menace to the population in times of trouble. The bases and the fragments are the result of an excavation, that was possible after the partial

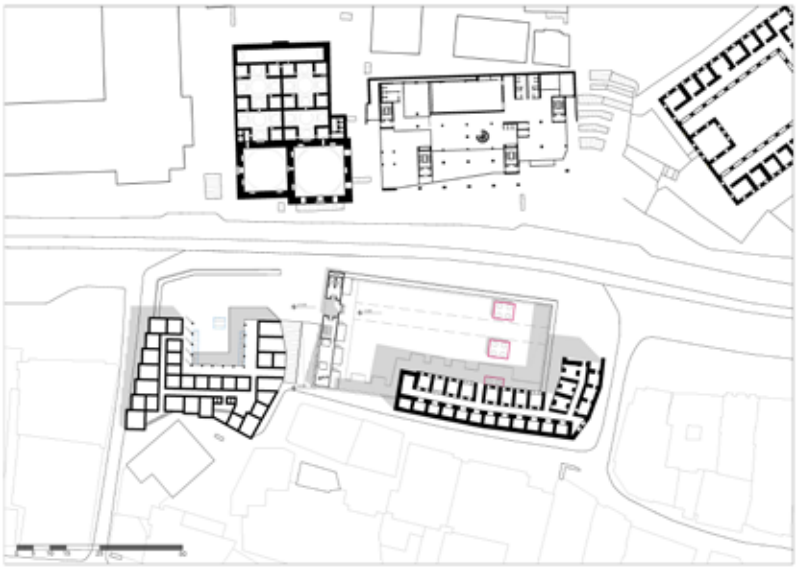

Fig. 2 - 3D digital model of the design proposal with materials (DRUM Design, 2023).

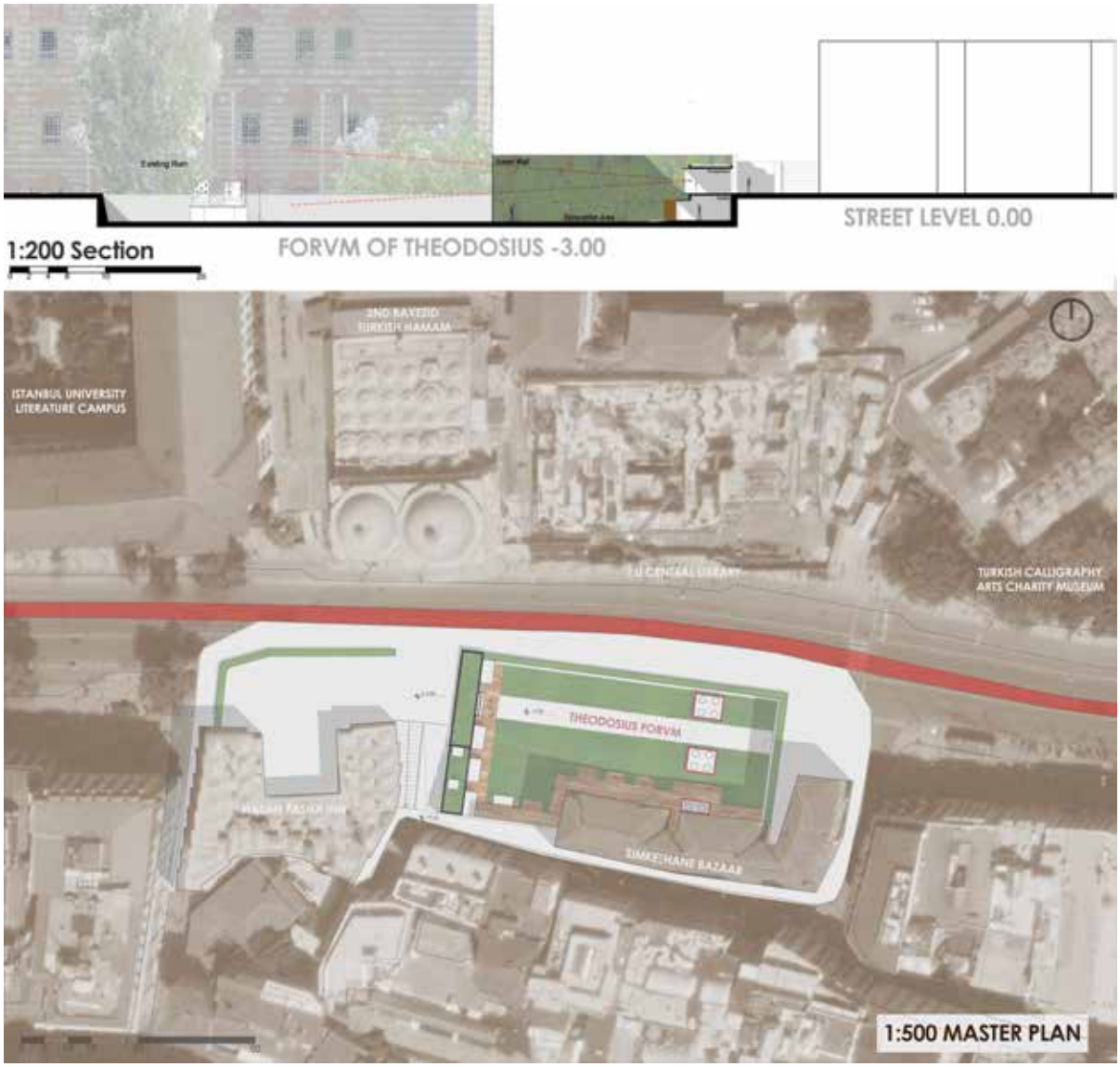

Fig. 3 - 3D digital model of the stand designed to show the architectural fragments (DRUM Design, 2023).

demolition of Şimkeşhane, by British archaeologists Stanley Casson and David Talbot Rice (1927-1928) leading to the discovery Theodosius triumphal arch (A.M.W. 1929). After the excavations, there was a partial anastylosis of some columns on top of the bases, still visible, the side of the Şimkeşhane was reconstructed in order to function as a market again, and another base is currently visible in one of the shops on the ground floor. After the understanding that most of the Şimkeşhane as we see it is not the original building but a modern reconstruction, we came to the conclusions that it could be possible to demolish it (partially) in order to establish a wider and deeper excavation capable of uncovering the pavement of the forum and the Mese. We based the design on this assumption and on a number of key design concepts such as time, limit/ enclosure, levels, entrance, fragments, public space and narrative. After the subtraction provided by the proposed archaeological excavation our proposal included the partial anastylosis of the columns over their bases, a small pavilion providing the entrance to the archaeological area on the street level, a vertical distribution to reach the archaeological level, small archaeological laboratories and deposits on the lower lever. Within the entrance gate, a glass with the printed reconstruction of the arch would provide to the visitor the analogic augmented

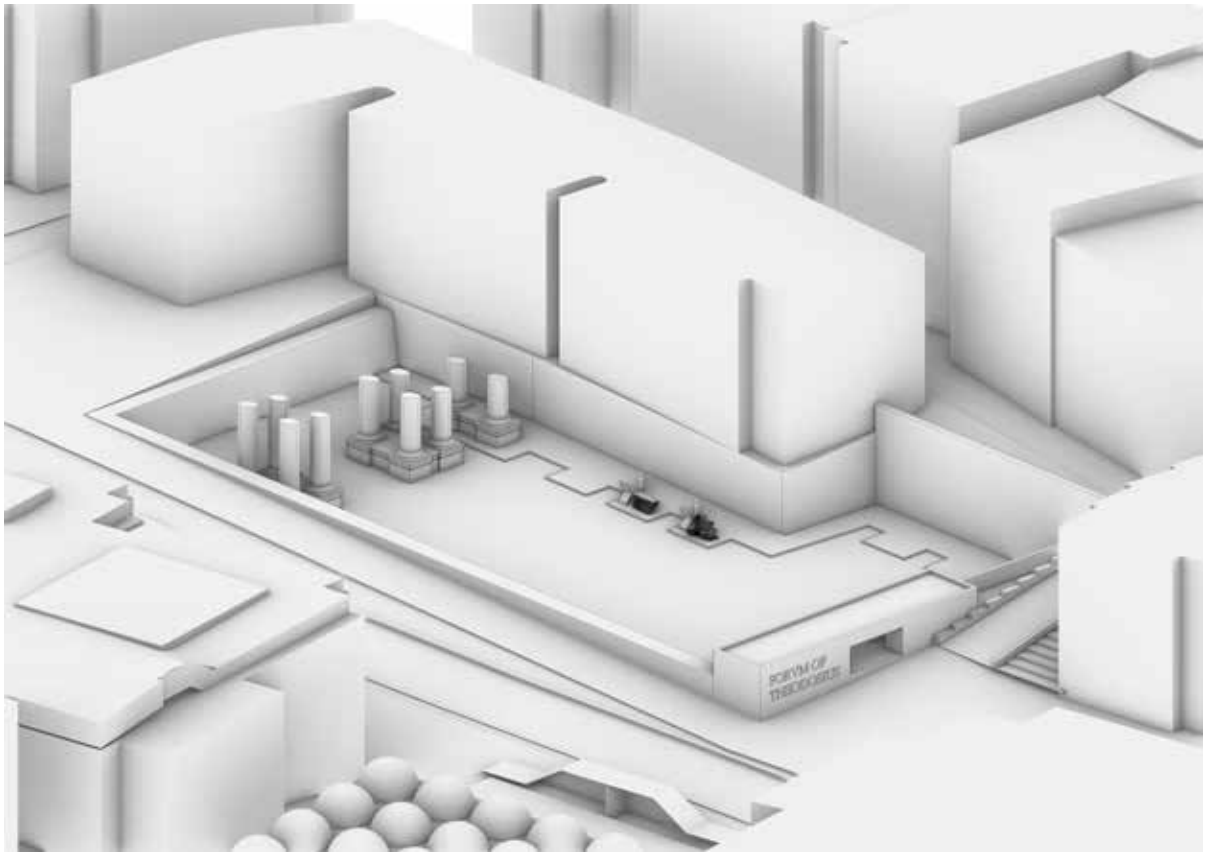

Fig. 4 - Analogical and digital Augmented Reality AR for the reconstruction of Theodosius' arch. (DRUM Design, 2023).

Fig. 5 - Analogical and digital Augmented Reality AR for the reconstruction of Theodosius' arch. (DRUM Design, 2023).a Fig. 5 - Analogical and digital Augmented Reality AR for the reconstruction of Theodosius' arch. (DRUM Design, 2023).

reality view of the forum. On the lower level, we designed a path for the visitor, displaying on properly designed stands with captions, the remaining fragments. We conceived the retaining walls of the excavation, as well as the pavilion itself, as entirely covered with a green wall system.

CONCLUSIONS

Not only as we mentioned, the digital survey of the premises were essential for the development of this proposal, but

also the deep understanding of the site and the ongoing identified process. A conformal design is based upon the understanding of all the phases, including the first construction, the collapse following the historical earthquakes, the subsequent ottoman buildings constructed atop, but also the modern excavations and restorations. The knowledge of these phases in an archaeological area is the starting point for a properly conceived design, a design conceived as the continuation of an identified ongoing process.

CREDITS

This project was developed during the +10 ISTANBUL RESEARCH WORKSHOP 2023, Architecture and Archaeology. Theodosius' Forum, Istanbul, organised by the Dynamic Research on Urban Morphology DRUM Lab, at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of Özyeğin University, Istanbul, from 10th to 21st July, 2023. The design team "DRUM Design: Theodosius' Forum, Time Fragments" was directed by Alessandro Camiz, (Özyeğin University) with the tutors Mariagrazia Leonardi (University of Catania), Hülya Yavaş (Özyeğin University), Berke Baybaş (Özyeğin University), Tan Atayurt (Özyeğin University) and Erdinç Can (Özyeğin University) and the students: Dur Ali Mohammed Mudhafar (Özyeğin University) and Vera Akbülbül (Özyeğin University).

Chronology

337-373 Valens Aqueduct
370, april 9 church of holy apostles inaugurated
373 Nymphaeum Maius (prefect Clearchus)
375 Thermae Carosianae
378 Valens dies at Hadrianopolis
379 Theodosius I Augustus
381 Council in Constantinople
383 Theodosius quinquennalia in Constantinople
386 Construction works start for the column
393 Forum Tauri is renamed after Emperor Theodosius I, and inaugurated as Forum of Theodosius
394 Theodosius I Emperor
395 Theodosius dies kal feb (Chron, Pasc. 565) in Milan
395 Column of Theodosius
395 Theodosius statue kal aug (Chron, Pasc. 565)
395 Arch of Theodosius
407 earthquake, "aereae tegulae Fori Theodosii a tectia excussae in Coenopolim delatae fuerint, (Chron, Pasc. 570)
465 Fire burns the Basilica (Mango, 1985)
480 Earthquake Statue of Theodosius falls
506 Statue of Athanasius replaces Statue of Theodosius
532 Nika riots
527–565 Basilica A
558 the central arch and the statue of Arcadius collapsed
740 Earthquake destroys the arch
1454-1458 Eski Saray is built
1460 Construction of the Mint (Sirmakesh Han)
1500-1505 Beyazıt Hamam
1500-1505 Bayezid II Mosque
1509 Earthquake damages Mosque
1540–1541 Eski Saray is destroyed by a fire
1535 Giovanni Andreas Vavassore, Byzantivm sive Costantineopolis
1557 Süleymaniye Mosque is built
1572 G. Braun and F. Hogenberg, Byzantium nunc Constantinopolis
1573–1574 Mimar Sinan restores the mosque
1625-1632 Eski Saray is restored
1687 Another fire destroys Eski Saray
1749 Fire-watch timber tower in Beyazıt
1756 Great Fire of Cibali destroys Beyazıt Tower
1836-1837 Ministry of Wa-rBâb-ı Seraskeri
1828 New Beyazıt Tower
1889 Earthquake damages the Beyazıt Tower
1927-8 excavations in Simkeş Hanı by British archaeologists Stanley Casson and David Talbot Rice.
1928 Discovery of Theodosius triumphal arch (Rice et al 1929)
1942 Sedad Faculty Istanbul University
1948 and 1961 Works to enlarge Ordu Street and Beyazıt Square

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Abstract

The Laser scanner survey of the remains of the Forum of Theodosius in Istanbul, conducted by Zemastek in cooperation with Giorgio Verdiani, was the foundation for the design developed during the international workshop Architecture and Archaeology. Theodosius' Forum, Istanbul. The design proposes the partial demolition of the Şimkeşhane building, defining a new excavation of the area of the forum, revealing the ancient Mese. The project also includes a small pavilion as the gate of the archaeological area, with an Analogical and digital Augmented Reality (AR) device displaying the reconstruction of Theodosius' arch.

Keywords

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