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# *TECTONICS OF SANCTUARY*

## *VOLUME I*

*DESIGN REPORT*

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The juxtaposition of timber and stone, vulnerability and strength, refuge and danger are the key foci of the design thesis. Using the material composition of the City of London, and St Paul's Cathedral as its urban paradigm, I explored how the perceptions of different materials have shaped their usage within the city. Stone represented strength and security, and so during the Great Fire of London, people stored their valuables within the stone walls of the cathedral. In contrast, timber was seen as vulnerable and posed a greater risk to the safety of the city.

Arguably, timber responds to fire in a more certain way; thicker members burn slowly, their surfaces charring before their structural integrity is destroyed. Therefore, it demonstrates a greater level of predictability when assessing potential fire destruction. Nevertheless, the post-1666 redevelopment of London implemented many rules reducing the usage of timber construction and forbidding the exposure of timber on the streetscape. Timber was subsequently encased with protective materials, creating a stronger aesthetic within the city, by the use of stone façades, which accentuated the feeling of security.

The contrast between the two different materials directed my design thesis through the exploration of balancing vulnerability and strength as the material language of my architectural proposals. Initially, I took the existing stone tower as the centre point of my designs, and then added my intervention to create a series of buildings that work within a similar typology. Through my research of the church remnants, I discovered their connections with music, performance and community interactions, and so I believed a Music and Performing Arts Academy would amalgamate the history of the three churches into a common typology.

Implementing structural and egress strategies allowed me to develop the proposal to a higher resolution, through the empirical nature of the testing. The design concept was evolved through data provided by the computational models, in order to ensure the design met fire regulations in response to evacuation and structural integrity. This enhanced my depth of enquiry, allowing my final proposals to function within the conceptual and technological framework.

The designs are situated within a timber frame structure, with various degrees of exposure; this plays on people's perception of vulnerability. Stone or plaster linings provide psychological security, as those rooms are perceived to be safe. The fire stairwell exit is through the remnant stone tower and so the feeling of safety is echoed, as people still run to the protective quality of stone during a fire, reiterating the response during the Great Fire of London so many years before.

