

Ruins as Transformative Mediator between Human Memory and Historical Context.

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INTRODUCTION



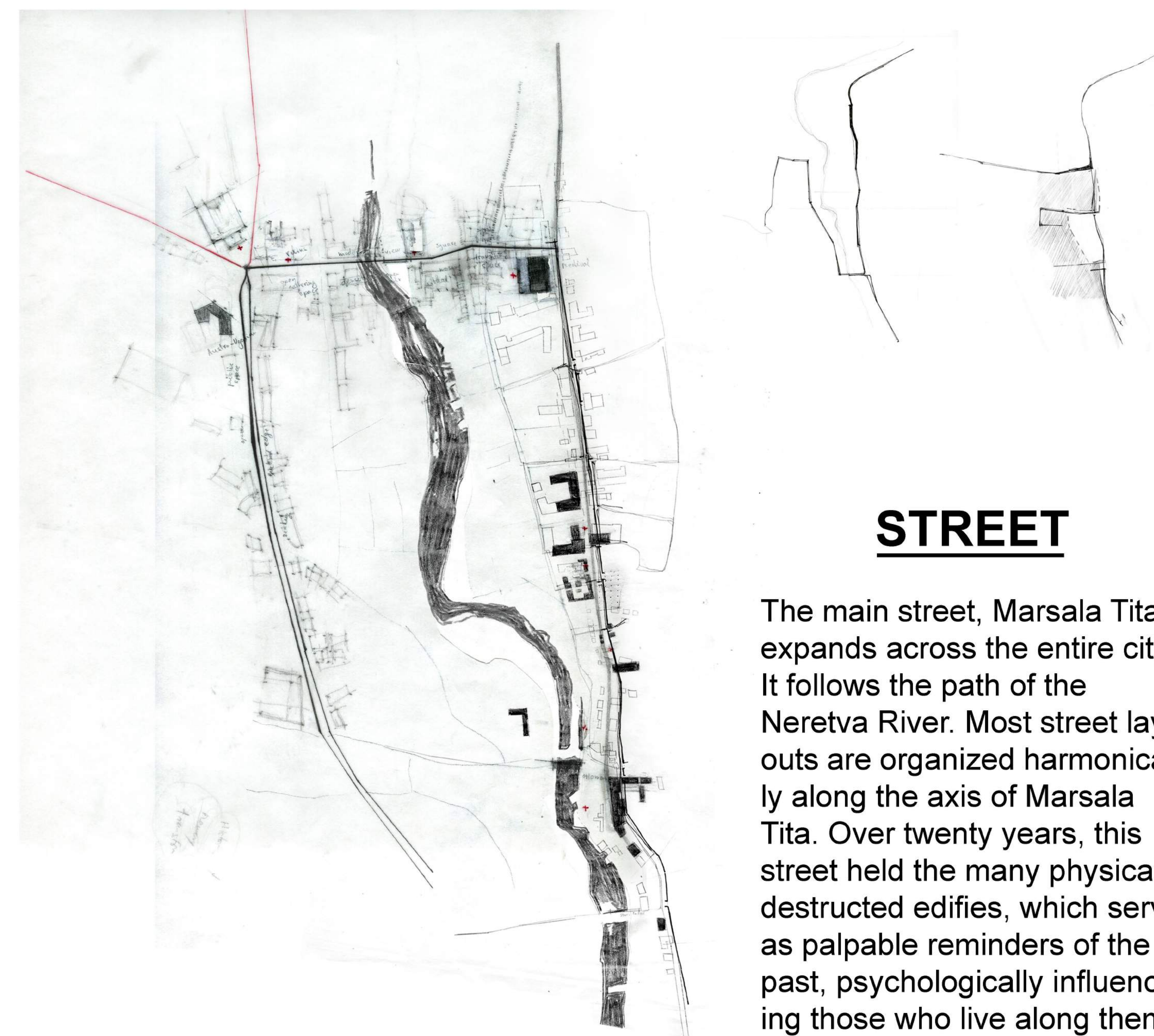
The Bosnian War was an armed conflict among three nationalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 1992 to 1995. This frightening moment in history evolved individually in each region, depending on religious structure. The aftermath of this traumatic event and human conflict is still experienced in the cities in the form of destroyed edifices and resulting landscape of ruins. Their presence in a place serves as a palpable reminder of the past, psychologically influencing those who live among them. I witnessed this while growing up in the post-war society of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where I observed how the tangible remains of the war affected those around me. The war is so recent that the whisper of dark memory and painful history is omnipresent in the surrounding landscape. People accept the reality of destruction and exist in its wake instead of forging towards a new progressive future. City of Mostar is a place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where multiethnicity and cultural division is experienced through architecture and urban context. Most of the historic city lay in ruins, mirroring the time before and after war. Once mixed population of Serbs, Bosnians and Croats created imaginary division line, relocating Bosnian Muslim to the east and Bosnian Croats to the west. The story of Mostar war has been analyzed by many experts, but very little of them try to resolved the question of how to rebuild the damaged city and shift the cultural values.

METHODOLOGY

Methods of designing and building in the conflict charged environment require time and engagement with the phenomenological nature of the ruins. Through my observations of the ruins of the city Mostar, I try to understand how post-war human memory filters human perception of the context's history. I am interested in how this process evolves operating on scalar change and proceeds from the analysis of the urban structure to the detailed landscape of ruins. Memory, time and transformation are used as media to mold the concept of city, street, building and detail. These analyses reveal the roots of conflict and restraints that are still present in the culture of the city, providing a base for transforming ruins into an architecture that will serve future generations.

CITY

The name Mostar, meaning "bridge keeper, was first mentioned in 15th century. The city structure first developed on the edges of the timber bridge on the Neretva River, and later expanded from the east to the west of the river. After the Bosnian War, the city was divided into two zones, the Bosnians moved into the historic, old city on the east, while the Bosnian Croats moved to the modern, large-scale neighborhoods on west. An analysis of present maps shows potential boundaries, that clearly divide urban zones economically, politically and architecturally. The main dividing line is the street Bulevar/ Dr. Ante Starcevic, while the secondary boundary is the street Mostarskog Bataljone/ Kralja Zvonimira. Each of these streets has two names depending on territory to which they belong to.



STREET

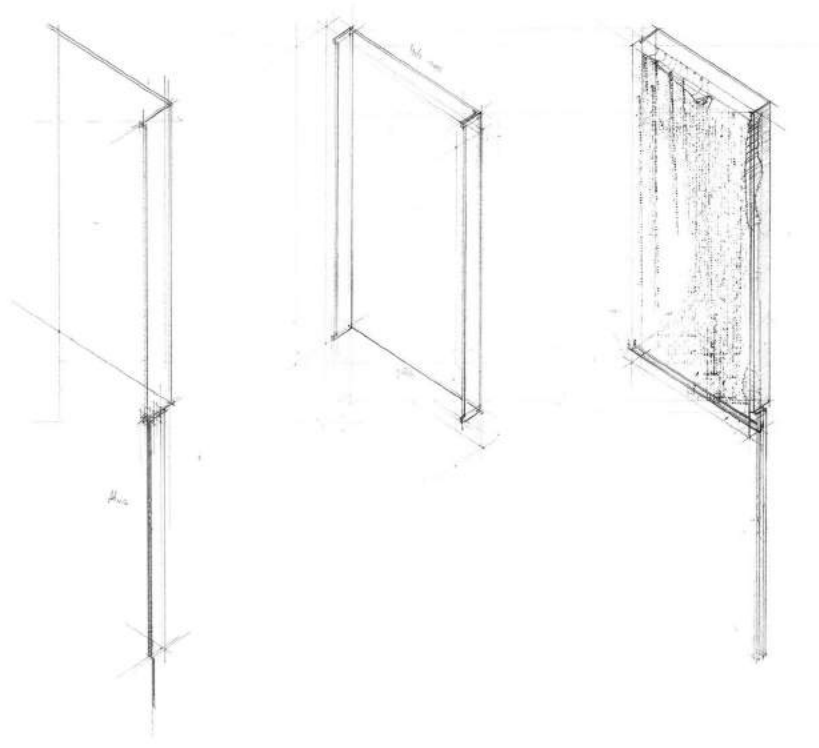
The main street, Marsala Tita, expands across the entire city. It follows the path of the Neretva River. Most street layouts are organized harmonically along the axis of Marsala Tita. Over twenty years, this street held the many physically destroyed edifices, which serve as palpable reminders of the past, psychologically influencing those who live along them.

BUILDING

Contemporary ruins are structures destroyed by a traumatic event such as a natural disaster or a human conflict. Their presence speaks about the recent memories, questioning their own existence. As an architecture student, I observe and wonder how we should rebuild, preserve, or destroy something that holds the story of a dark and painful history. The analogy of parasitic architecture has affected my understanding and interpretation of ruins through time. I believe that adding to, shaping, and filling the existing structures will both preserve past human memory and allow new history to come.

DETAIL

The analyses of the single ruined structure suggest an emphasis on the detail. More precisely, they question how the single piece of a ruin is held in a place and what materials are proper to use. Details are moments that are puzzled together into a story about time.



CONCLUSION

Memory is a filter through which we understand history, which later leads us towards the transformation of ruins. Analyzing a development of the urban context of the city Mostar through time, we can understand the relationship between boundaries and zones set by the conflict. Further, observations of a street, allow us to map itineraries formed by human memory and history frozen in destructed buildings. In addition, once when the program of each building is perceived, the roots of conflict and restraints that are still present in the culture of the city are revealed. These results lead us to think about the importance of preserving a ruin in time. Details become meaningful measures of history, providing a potential spatial transformation that will allow human memory to step out from forced boundaries.

REFERENCES

- 1."Ideas and Realities: Rebuilding in Postwar Mostar." Journal of Architectural Education Vol. 54 (May & June 2011): 238-49.
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