Unclear Boundaries and Faraway Views

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Located in the Harbour of Cork, this work encourages the Harbour to turn back upon itself and re-establish the collective memory of transport by water. It was inspired by the Harbour Authority's decision to introduce a passenger ferry network, servicing the City and the towns along the harbour. The meeting of the people and their harbour is to be finely nuanced through new installations, which facilitate the landing of these new vessels. Without these comprehensible points, which together create boundaries and act as threshold, the harbour is immense and continually shifting. These interventions intend to create a middle space between the landscape edge and the vast harbour: a type of 'airlock' which prepares the pedestrian for passage, using tools of sequencing and reframing to direct views. The project is investigated through mapping with an architecture that addresses the shifting scale along the harbour and a conversation begins between the macro and microcosm.
The site, located in the South of Ireland, encompasses the entire Harbour of Cork. Historically due to its proximity to the Atlantic it was a prosperous area for trade and industry but saw large decline in the 20th century. Transport by sea was common place for passengers between towns or countries, and for trade and fishing.

Cork Harbour, 18th century.
England Passenger Ferry, 19th century.
The peripheral European location of Ireland allowed for the survival of many aspects of the cultural landscape. In communities where people live in close connection with the natural world their history is powerfully tied to their agriculture and like the city the landscape is replete with these field artefacts or monuments.

Southern Ireland, Cork Harbour.
Characterised by a sequence of uncontained space and described by shifting and multiple readings, there is an indefiniteness associated with the edge landscape. This space, unturned to human dimensions, is not read through form or measured conventions, but fluctuates between different readings of scale. One is ever aware of the distant context but simultaneously engaged in the near space. The eye reveals a working landscape in this harbour: a pattern of individual smallholdings, shed, fence, tarmac and field. The area which surrounds these holdings is a free space of fluidity and at a large scale, far from the programmatically defined expression of the city.

Rural Peripheral, working landscape.
Rural Peripheral, uncontained space.
A tide of potential difference 4.4m affects the harbour, allowing only partial access for larger ships. The photographs used in this presentation were all taken between the 25th and 31st of October 2012, the image showing the various high and low water levels at this time.
As the draught capacity of trading ships increased, and with the intensity of visiting cruise liners and vehicle passenger ferries, the harbour had to be dredged to a High Water depth of 13.9m. This Channel can be seen clearly cut into the Harbour Plan.

High and Low Water Lines.
The harbour is a sum of three parts; the City and its docklands, the suburban-industrial Upper Harbour and the Lower Harbour. This work will concentrate on the Lower Harbour which is a rural peripheral landscape interrupted by smaller towns. The passenger network was reintroduced as traversing the harbour by boat geographically reduces the distance and the time, compared to travelling around it by vehicle. The work will concentrate on installations in three towns, Monkstown, Cobh and Aghada, which display shifting questions of scale.
In essence our existence is dependent upon the value we place on differences. The difference between the abrupt, hectic nature of our cities compared to the slow, more smoothly flowing rhythm of rural existence. The Irish Town is a sum of a fixed number of elements: the church, the school, the pub, the shop, and in some cases gathering point for public transportation, a bus stop or a ferry terminal. Studies of the towns in question show certain scales of programmatical requirements which are lacking in the area.

Elements of the Irish Town.
Although significantly diminished from the scale of its trading past, the life in the harbour is vast. The vessels vary significantly from recreation, travel, trade, industry and naval.
The programme for this work is based upon three elements: waiting, threshold and storage, and will be explored through three sites. These three questions of scale allow an architecture that accommodates the life of the harbour in all of its magnitudes; from one rowing boat to one cruise liner. An architecture that addresses the Cyclical nature of transportation networks, seasons and tides and becomes a space for both summer spells and evening squalls.

Three Scales of Installations
The installations, all act as threshold space between transportation and the landscape. The experiential quality of arrival and departure is signified by framed views where each installation frames the next destination. The work examines the ritual of arrival and departure from sea to land with the harbour as the conveyor. One requires privileged points in space and time, be it for frequent or infrequent actions; these points or nodes are to be placed along the harbour with the apex of this network being located on the City’s quay. Like lighthouses the new installations will act as navigation points along the network.

Signified and Signifier.
Monkstown, primarily a commuter village, represents the smallest scale of the Harbour Network. This town forms a node on the larger network, as arriving from the nearby town of Cobh one would view Monkstown in these frames.
Monkstown 2.
Monkstown 3.
As each element is connected by a larger infrastructural network and so are the installations connected to their surroundings. An axis exists in the town between the church, the school and the shop, and which will now terminate in the proposed terminal.

Monkstown, Axial Route.
The programme arose from the basic need of shelter. The concrete shell protects passengers from the weather of the harbour, and provides seating areas for waiting. As monkstown is located on the edge of the dredged channel, the localised depth is 12m allowing for an efficient placement of the structure for tides and access.
The design contrasts an irregular landscape with a geometric clarity and is pierced by light in two openings. The structure remains embedded in the sand and mud, proudly displaying the lines of the tide on its exterior.
As the waiting space shifts to accommodate the tide so does the circulation. The stair can become a level walkway to allow for high water, while the ramp shifts for universal accessibility. The interior space is dynamic, passengers experience a shifting volume with the rise and fall of the tide.

Monkstown, Sectional and Elevational Relationship at High and Low Water Mark, 7.1m and 1.9m.
This dynamism is enabled by an oak heartwood pontoon. Likewise the exterior ranges between a tower of 8m rising out of the mud to a much lower 3m domestic piece of architecture that appears to float on water.
Monkstown, Model Scale 1:150
The vastness of the harbour is interrupted by markers such as military fortifications and lighthouses, which lie between the nodes on this network.
Aghada is a small village with an active connection to the sea with local fishermen and recreational sailing.
Aghada Pier.
A pre-existing pier wall extends 230m out from land and enables sailors to reach their boats, at a point where the channel line drops. For this reason the proposed structure is placed projecting outwards from the wall to allow the passenger ferry access to the terminal in all tide conditions. The angled plan is directed towards the next terminal, Cobh, and becomes a navigational node.

The architecture is similar to that of Monkstown but has a tripartite division. One side allows passengers to embark upon the ferry while the other provides a platform for personal boats to be moored, for short visits to the village or for maintenance. The additional function of this installation apart from shelter is storage. Small boats for fisherman, used to access their larger vessels moored further out in the harbour, or boats for recreational use can be stored in the central passage of this boathouse terminal.

Like Monkstown the architecture is dynamic with the floating platform moving up and down with the tide. The shell, however, is pierced with additional openings to allow light to the central storage and along the sides to give passengers fleeting glimpses of the harbour when the tide is high.
Aghada, Situation Plan.
Aghada Plan.
Aghada Section and Elevation.
Aghada, Model Scale 1:150
As mentioned before a duality exists when departing from or arriving to an installation. These next views are shown as a sequence when departing aghada and arriving to Cobh. The third, final and largest installation, located in the historic town of Cobh, accounts for one of the largest magnitudes of the harbour; the recreational ferry.
Cobh 2.
Cobh, Ferry Crossing.
Historically Cobh is one of the most prosperous towns in the south of Ireland, known for its trade and transportation routes including to America. The site is located on the edge of the town next to the railway which provides opportunities for the ferry to link into.

Cobh, Situation plan.
This threshold space contains passengers before they disembark and also includes a café on the first floor. Passengers whom wish to access the passenger ferry travel through the building and descend to the lower water line through a passage carved deep within the quay wall. The carving is implemented to respond to restrictions on adding appendages to the wall of Cobh. This ramp and waiting platform are movable and shift according to the changing tide and echoes the language of the moving ramp in the previous works.
Alternatively Those passengers wishing to embark onto or disembark from their liner are accommodated on the first floor plan and roof of the building.
The architecture changes dramatically from the previous two installations. The materiality is still the same but in a way mirrored. The latter are comprised of a movable timber element encased in a white concrete shell while in Cobh the movable element becomes the dynamic variable facade screen which allows the building to be opened and closed to the harbour and visiting cruise boats. While the fixed immovable concrete elements become the internal structure, the floors and the stairs.

Cobh, Long Section and Elevation.
Cobh, Short Section and Elevation.
Cobh, Materiality.
The passenger ferry will be operating throughout the year, the cruise boats generally only visit seasonally. It would be the intention to use the building as an informal exhibition and gathering space and the roof used as raised park opened to the public with the café being opened throughout the year also.
Cobh, Model Scale 1 : 150
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The Harbour, with site Highlighted

A question of three scales