This work started with the analysis of cultural politics in Sweden within fields of architecture and design by using the example of ArkDes, which was under the threat of closing down. It resulted in a proposal for a Formmuseet (Design Museum), addressing the ability and need of a museum to reshape andrediscover itself. Defining an abstract museum room through comparison with a traditional gallery space, a shift from an object oriented exhibition towards representation, experiment and performance was suggested.
Situated in the center of Stockholm, the Skeppsholmen island has always been a city in a city. Due to its strategic position at maritime entrance to Stockholm from the Baltic Sea, the island was for centuries occupied by Swedish Royal Navy. In the middle of 20-th century warfare strategies changed and the Navy left Skeppsholmen. The buildings - shipyards, barracks, workshops – are since then occupied by cultural institutions such as Royal Institute of Art (1946), National Museum of Fine Arts (1955-58), Moderna Museet (1958), Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (1963), Museum of Architecture (1965) etc.

Central location, just opposite to the Royal Palace, and cultural and historical value of the built environment makes Skeppsholmen island a very sensitive place for architectural proposals. Many historical layers are represented on the island, from Swedish Empire time - The Admiralty House (1647-50, Louis Gilles) to modernity - Moderna Museet (1998, Rafael Moneo). This unhurried additional way to build on the island resulted in an amount of free-standing buildings covering the whole Skeppsholmen. Common for them is programmatic autonomy resulting in similar medium to large scale. There is no distinct common directionality among the buildings, only 250 meters long Tyghuset and referring to it Moderna Museet have a NW-SE axiality.

The most appealing place for the next addition to a rich variety of buildings on the island is the Exercisplan - a large, 120 by 50 meters flat surface in front of the Exercishuset. It would not be correct to label it as a square: it is merely an asphalt covered plane, which the visitors of Moderna and ArkDes have to cross diagonally. During the design process it was neither favorable to suggest a large solitary building for a Design Museum there, nor two smaller volumes opposite to each other. The proposal resulted in five linearly connected elements, with total area of 4,500 square meters, placed partly under the ground level.
The starting point for this work was an inquiry entitled Designed Living Environment [utredningen Gestaltad Livsmiljö] commissioned by the Culture Department of Sweden. The inquiry suggested a unified, “holistic perspective” for Swedish architecture, form and design, with the motivation that these domains “are a cohesive field which shapes the human living environment”.

One of the most controversial propositions of the Commission was closing down of ArkDes (the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design), previously known as the Museum of Architecture. That was preceded by few years of a doubtful experiment, starting in 2009, when the museum received an extended task to exhibit both architecture and design. ArkDes should as well function as a meeting platform and a sort of coordinator for all actors of both branches, while continue to conduct research, education and to maintain archives. All this under the same organization and under a roof of a rather small museum in Exercishuset [Exercise House] on Skeppsholmen island.

In my opinion, architecture and design are definitely two related, sometimes tightly interwoven, though separate disciplines. Each of them are broad enough and deserve to be treated from their own, usually very specific perspectives.

My genuine enthusiasm to preserve the Museum of Architecture and to understand possibilities of making it to a stronger voice both locally and internationally has led me to investigate Swedish cultural politics and policy makers and to study museums and exhibitions, institutional as alternative. It gave me a clear understanding of need of independent institutions for architecture and design.

The choice of Skeppsholmen for a proposal of a Design Museum was an architectural answer on the Inquiry Designed Living Environment. A close proximity of Applied Arts to Architecture and Contemporary Art is important for evolving new practices and crosspollination among the existing ones. At the same time this proposal is a clear statement of need of independent cultural institutions focusing on own field of knowledge.
The result of this work became a Formmuseum [Design Museum] - an exhibition space different from a traditional white cube gallery. I see it as a space for an experiment, a museum questioning an object-oriented exhibition in favour of representation, performance and projection as a medium.

The layout of the museum is mostly flat; the floor level is five meters under the level of square. The museum’s plan follows a grid with a cell of 4x4 meters, independently established within the context. The grid is manifested on the surface of the square, rendering a pattern of white stone. It continues down the slope towards the road south of the square. No major changes are brought to the landscape. Existing literally and figuratively on different levels of existence, all parts of the museum penetrate the square and the slope, contouring a public space in front of ArkDes building. The facade of the glass cube builds a border in the west; the 1.8 meter high wall of the “bowl” bounds the space in the east. The lanterns of the underground gallery become the sitting surfaces. The main entrance, starting at the beginning of the slope, leads the visitor down the ramp to the museum.

Besides the museum part, an administration building is proposed, placed on the other side of Konsthögskolan’s [Royal Institute of Art] building. It includes a theme library, administration and research quarters, meeting and workshop rooms as well as an auditorium for up to 200 people. There are two entrances to the museum. The main entrance leads the visitor down the ramp to the museum. The other one is through the administration building.
1. the Cube
2. the Gallery
3. the Bowl
4. light well
5. store
6. main corridor
7. café
8. reception
9. cloak room
10. locker room
11. bathroom
12. art delivery
13. foyer
14. auditorium
15. groop room
16. meeting room
17. storage
18. entrance ramp
1. passage
2. the Gallery
3. packing room
4. archives

A. Konsthögskolan - Royal Institute of Art
B. Ateljéhuset - Atelier
C. Skeppsholmskyrkan - Skeppsholmen Church
D. ArkDes
E. Moderna Museet - Museum of Modern Art
The concept of a white cube describes a modern museum room with its white walls, neutral grey floor, full control on illumination and detachment from the surroundings, on socio-political, historical and physical levels. Nobody, being inside, would feel any difference even if a gallery would be placed under the ground. Exactly that is done in the proposal for Formmuseet. A traditional gallery room is placed five meters under the square in front of ArkDes. Well lit with natural light from 30 lanterns, the 32x20x3.6 meters room represents a classical two-dimensional layout for a traditional object-oriented exhibition.

There are two more exhibition rooms in the proposal, with different spatial qualities in contrast with the first one.
The second gallery has mere a vertical character. It is a cube with edge of 16 meters, with three tiers of narrow balconies every four meters. The “cube” is placed in a larger steel and glass construction, working as a climate shell and providing access to the balconies. A flat, two-dimensional exhibition would feel dull in this room. Its three-dimensionality and size suggests a shift towards representation, performance, large spatial experiments, a vertical display of the exhibition and visitors’ movement.

The other important quality of the room is the light. All four walls and the roof of the inner cube are glass-laminated paper screens. They give the room its translucency and abundance of soft light with smooth shadows. The room “senses” the surroundings - the time of the day, the weather, the season. At night, at opposite, the light, colours, shadows and images are free to leave the room and flow further to the city.
EXTERIOR VIEWS

the "Cube" and the "Bowl"

Dan Flavin, untitled, 1992
Tetsuo Kondo + Transsolar, ZKM, 2015

David Chipperfield, Neue Nationalgalerie, 2014
Stefan Sagmeister, The Happy Show, 2013, MAK

Maurizio Cattelan, All, Guggenheim, 2011

Pipilotti Rist, Put your body out, MoMA, 2009
The last exhibition room is square in plan with a convex ceiling. In the center of the room it is possible to touch the ceiling with a raised hand. It is a dark space, with only natural light coming through the cut in the bowl-shaped ceiling. This room is opposite to the white cube; it is a black box, a place for experiment with light and darkness, with colours and projection of still and moving images. Above it - a bowl of an inner yard, 20 meters in diameter, a place inspired by works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. The idea of deprivation, like when the artists wrapped German Reichstag, in a controversial manner attracts the public’s attention to qualities of the subject they were deprived. The same effect is expected in the proposed inner yard. While being inside, only the sky above the white horizon of the “bowl” is visible, evoking attempts to retrieve the image of the surroundings from memory.

To an extent an architect can affect the future of the building. I’d like to propose a non-didactic, non-paternalistic museum, a place for provocation and dialogue, for questioning, challenging and critiquing the norms. A place for new practices which we haven’t seen yet.