"Reading in the park – A new context for the library of Kungsholmen"

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My project is about the library of Kungsholmen, spaces for interaction and the activity of reading.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the public libraries of Sweden were born out of the idea that the "people" needed to be educated. Collective public education became the instrument by which the people would become more included in creating "Folkhemmet". The late 19th century saw the strong and distinctive symbols of the collective civic value and democracy. The access of knowledge and a built environment for everyone is two of the fundamental values when speaking of the library.

At Kungsholmen the library is cramped away within the rumbling noise of the intersection of Sankt Eriksgatan/Drottningholmsvägen. Here you find the entrance to the third most visited library in the Stockholm region with about 2000 visitors/day.

There has been a decision made for transforming the property that the library is a part of into a large shopping mall. As the early plans show, one of the entrances to the mall will cut straight through the library space leaving the visitors to pass through the shopping mall when moving within the library space.

The library holds a tempo and carries a certain atmosphere, an atmosphere that I find difficult to combine within a shopping mall environment. But also the fundamental thought that Valfrid Palmgren stated: "That it is the most important thing in a library to make children and women feel welcome". The library is a safe space to pass through a shopping mall with many different life spaces.

The street and its variety in scale is rather unique and the open space in front of the building is very rare in the city today.

My project started out with the thought of a new library. The new site and its context provided me with the possibility to create a new public plaza and to make Kronobergsparken more accessible to the people of Kungsholmen.

One important aspect of the new site has been to strengthen the importance and the relevance for the existing building. Built in a national romantic style in 1931 (architect Gustaf Laurelius), it gives a strong character to the area and adds a visual identity to the space. The building is also a landmark, a place where people gather, talk and enjoy each other's company.
SITE AFTER MY SUGGESTION FOR A NEW LIBRARY 1:500 (A0)

NEW SITE

SITE OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT OF KUNGSHOLMEN TODAY 1:500 (A0)

KUNGSHOLMEN

KRONOBergsgATAN

HANTVERKARGATAN
STRATEGIES ON SITE

A NEW PUBLIC SQUARE
Facing south the foreground of the site will be transformed to a new public plaza. This is something that Kungsholmen are in great need of today.

OPEN UP THE PORTICO OF THE EXISTING BUILDINGS
This gesture make it possible for the new plaza to extend under and behind the building thus creating three different zones for activity. (See below)

REMOVAL OF THE GARAGE + ROAD
When removing the barrier toward the park the site opens up to the north. The new square will then have a clear relationship to the fifty park.

The underground book shelves in not in use and could instead be utilized as an entrance to the library. As a large open archive presenting the opportunity to have a more specifically organized library above ground.

NEW LIBRARY BUILDING
Through four studies I came to the conclusion that the site was best suited for a review and richer clinic building following the grid of the existing buildings. Aligning these enhances the library’s view through the character of the street. It would reach towards the new plaza and at the same time establish a clear relationship to the new public square.

The design of the plaza is low impact and low maintenance and the square’s role is that of a space that one passes through rather than lingers in. Yet it is one that can hold enough people for any special temporary event. Due to the different zones created there can even be more than one event at the same time.

By the entrance to the library and the tower of books the pattern is scaled down.

A. The foreground to the fire station. Adjacent to Hantverkargatan and facing south. (600 sqm)
B. In the passage through the fire station. The character of this space is not very common in Sweden. A reference could be the City Hall with its colonnade that open up to the water (250 sqm)
C. The north part of the plaza which is defined by the juxtaposition of the library, park & the fire station. Facing the slope of the park the plaza becomes almost like a stage (700 sqm)

PUBLIC SQUARE
The foreground to the fire station of today is treated with cobblestone in a repetitive pattern that follows and emphasizes the grid of the building.

When transforming this into a public square the pattern will be brought through the building and meet the park and the library on the other side of the building. Thus creating three specific zones with different qualities.

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MATERIALS

CONSTRUCTION

Concrete (30 x 60) waffle slab with the longest span of 7.5 m.

EXTERIOR

The building has solid usual members that follows the grid vertically. The facade panels of Birch Plywood is attached to wooden pillars following the grid. The facade panels are treated with Iron Vitriol and coated for being able to handle severe weather conditions. The material needs regular maintenance but small cracks that add character to the building will most certainly appear since the facade material is rather cheap. The cost of exchanging the facade panels where needed is rather small.

Where the building meet the ground the concrete is cast in a form-work that has been ‘sand blasted’ or burnt and brushed so that the soft wood is peeled off. That result in a smooth wood character which respond to the wooden facade and the interior details in the building.

INTERIORLY

Details and window niches are clad in the same Birch Plywood as the exterior, only not treated with Iron Vitriol. The same material goes for the overhead sound absorption and the lighting.

FLOOR

The entrance floor has polished concrete while the rest of the library has a gray floor mat (high endurance) that gives a softer feeling to walk on and also works well for absorbing some of the sound.

ENGLISH

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THE ACTIVITY OF READING

We have to understand that the activity of reading not only is about the reading in itself, but about places, outlooks, affiliations and societies, and also the activity of reading is visible in the places where we meet. What we are calling the activity of reading, is a human activity that makes the place a place. Some of a reading situation's importance is the place making, for example in the private, silent reading, where reading is a situation that takes place in a specific and hard-to-define conditions.

The library holds many different activities with specific and hard-to-define conditions. Most of these concern the activity of reading with all its spatial and social characteristics.

Reading is a situation that takes place, the conception of space becomes part of the activity of reading. Depending on what you are reading, state of mind, personal preferences and so on, there need to be different reading situations.

1. READING IN THE LIBRARY: In the public reading room all readers become a fascinating view for each. Reading by yourself among others gives you a comforting sense of being a part of an ‘invisible’ community. I have visualized this at the third floor, when looking up from your book you have a visual contact with three floors of the library.

2. READING IN THE STUDY ROOM: The Studio Library. A private secluded room that you are able to shut close and have a desk of your own. Reading in here is about writing. You can work in a quiet and comfortable environment, with a clear and fantastic relationship to the park.

3. READING IN NATURE. If reading implies inwardness and a withdrawal from the environment, uninhabited nature, the wilderness, far away from the cities and the noise of the world at large, then this part of my building is your environment.

4. READING AT HOME. A safe place where the reader can forget himself and travel “inwards”. Because a person who reads forgets himself and his world, the place where you read must be a place where you can realign with the nature of the book. If you read at home, you read in the library.

5. READING AMONG THE CROWD. The city experience is intense and overwhelming, and modern man has to learn to be lonely amidst the crowd. Reading is an extreme way to do this. This stair is also a place to have a seat, read a book, and share a friend of your book.

6. READING WITHIN THE UNKNOWN. The activity of reading presents you with the possibility to enter a new world and experience new situations where you are experiencing a situation different from what you are reading. This could provide the opportunity to read a whole new novel. When you are reading a book in the Unknown Tower, you will be entered by the heart of the social structure of society, the library, and the library will be the heart of society.

Daniel Koch, researcher/teacher
KTH Architecture
**TABLE AND CHAIR**

Designed especially for the library of Kungsholmen, the table and chair relate to the material and structure of the building. The proportions of the legs are the same as the concrete facade pillars of the building and the material of use is birch plywood just as in the interior details and facade.

Constructing from engineered timber they are strong and stable and give a warm and pleasant impression that help you to sit down.

**CHAIR**

Inspiration for the chair comes from 'Vivi' by Thomas Bernstrand. In my design the proportions of the legs is the same as the structural pillars of the building. The legs are treated with iron-vitriol while the back and seat are natural.

**TABLE**

Birch plywood as the chair but with a finishing top layer of linoleum. The strong yet soft appearance of the linoleum make it a pleasant material to write on top of. The sound absorbing character of the material is perfect for the library environment.

**READING IN THE PARK**

At a few positions within the park there are reading- and workspaces where you find a table, chair, lamp and wi-fi (available within the whole park if center of a library card).

Both table and chair has the same form as the furniture designed for the interior of the library. The material is adapted for outdoor usage.

**CHAIR**

Legs are constructed out of galvanized steel with the same proportions as the wooden chair. The seating and back is cast in gray fiber-cement. Within the fiber-cement there are air present in the form of microscopically small pores. These act as expansion spaces when water freezes and prevent frost damage.

**TABLE**

The frame and legs of the table is made of galvanized steel with a table top made of fiber-cement giving it a strong and durable character.

**LIGHTING**

Lamp, solar panel and battery is integrated within the unit. With a power save mode it glows when dark outside. With motion detection it lights up when someone sits down.

**TOWER OF BOOKS**

A BOOK SWAPPING TOWER IN THE NEW PUBLIC SQUARE

Book swapping or book exchange is the practice of a swap of books between one person and another. Next to the playground there is a small box where you can drop of the book you have just finished reading. This tower was built in 1931 together with the brick building, it was constructed for two purposes:

1. For drying fire-hoses. A central vertical shaft reach from bottom to the top level of the tower. This was where they hung the wet fire-hoses when needed to dry.
2. As a practice tower for the fire fighters where they could climb ladders in four stories.

This tower has up until now been unavailable for the public. I reprogram the tower and make it accessible by making it into a book swapping tower.

The tower will be open for the public but follow the open and closing hours of the library.
WEST FACADE 1:100 (A0)

PLAZA, LIBRARY & BOOK-SWAPPING TOWER

AXONOMETRIC VIEW 1:100 (A0)

WEST FACADE 1:100 (A0)

READING SPOT IN THE PARK. TABLE, CHAIR AND LAMP (SOLAR ENERGY)

PLAZA, LIBRARY & BOOK-SWAPPING TOWER

WEST FACADE 1:100 (A0)
Imagine a library that had lots of space and lots of books in a rather small volume. To accomplish this, you would need large archives to store the unused books. The existing bomb shelter can serve as an archive. You will access the archive through an underground passageway from the library. The passageway is in the park area, which is accessible.

Reference project: the Bahnhof server hall in ‘Vita Bergen’ by Albert France-Lanord Architects.

**MODELS & PROCESS**

- Concept Model: The library is a diverse place with a number of activities taking place at the same time. This model was an early physical sketch for the multiple use of both the library space and the existing brick building on site today.

- Model of Private Room 1:50
- Model of Private Room 1:50
- Model of Reading in Public 1:50
- Model of Tower
The road to the underground bomb shelter together with the back of the garage are creating a distinct and unpleasant barrier toward the park.

During the process the building has been changing in spatial organization, number of floors and in size. This is a few of the models in scale 1:200 that I’ve been working with. The different changes have been tried out in a model in scale 1:100 as well.

SITE MODEL TODAY  1:200

MODEL STUDIES  1:200

EXPERIMENT WITH ENTRANCE FACADE MATERIAL

SITE TODAY

SITE AFTER MY PROPOSAL, MODEL 1:200

MODEL 1:200

SITE AFTER MY PROPOSAL, MODEL 1:200

MODEL 1:200

MODEL 1:200

RED PROFETATION, MODEL 1:200

EXPERIMENT WITH ENTRANCE FACADE MATERIAL

EXPERIMENT WITH ENTRANCE FACADE MATERIAL

SITE MODEL TODAY  1:200
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Architect  DAVID CHIPPERFIELD

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