
Infill development in context:
Case Study of Riga Circus extension

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Abstract

This thesis explores a broader understanding of infill development in historic surrounding. Historic structures are viewed as mediators for the new design to carry on the *sense of place* and provide continuity in the city. Continuity in the city scape is provided by forming relations between existing built fabric and new additions in the city, creating a synergistic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Buildings and city scape are perceived as a living changing artefacts, providing link with past tradition, identity and perception of time passage.

Accordingly, this thesis proposes a contemporary circus addition to the existing circus complex as an infill development, constructed through the negative spaces and defined by surrounding historic built fabric.

This thesis is divided into four main sections. Chapter I reviews existing literature in the field of context and contextualism as a methodology for infill architecture. Chapter II covers research and analysis of circus concept, semiotics and historical development of circus. Chapter III includes the analysis of the site and existing Circus Building. Chapter IV describes the research design and infill strategy for contemporary building to come in alliance with the pre-existing surroundings.

The design process aims to identify a set of complementary aspects and design objectives that would assist in analysis of the existing historic fabric within the evolving context and allow to form relation between new contemporary building and pre-existing context. How can a new structure embody the sense of the place and be a part of continues urban fabric. Consequently, the aim is to assess the compatibility of the new building in historic context.

The main thesis question is how to fit in a contemporary circus building/extension in a dense historic urban setting providing the progression of city scape, context and harmony with the existing buildings.

Key words: circus, contemporary building, context, contextualism, *continuity*, extension, infill, *sense of place*.

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Chapter I

Contemporary architecture as successor for existing context

Change and transformation is an integral part of a city; whether radical or subtle, it is ever present in city at varying degrees through time. Change is inevitable, but it can be directed and adjusted to provide the best possible outcomes for an integrated whole of city. Development, including alterations or additions to the city scape, can be appropriate if it provides the means to enhance or regenerate historic aspects, or to create new elements which will make a positive contribution to local identity and a sense of place.

When Aldo Rossi stated that '*l'architettura sono le architetture (architecture is the product of past architectures)*¹', he described the endurance of architecture which references the existing built environment as the basis for new form to arise. In other words, to draw on traditions and context in order to establish continuity, and a new individuality, in a contemporary urban ensemble. New architecture within a historic urban setting would act as a part of the continuous spatial evolution of existing city through time.

The city scape is a living, changing artefact of human use, embedded in a complex, stratified and interconnected environment. It is reconnecting the physical remnants of the past with the ever evolving social and cultural reality of the present to strike a balance between history, current needs and opportunities. In this progression of the city every intervention in a pre-existing context is based on the interpretation and evaluation of the context.

*"Architects invent nothing; they redefine the value of form by virtue of its relationship to other elements in a composition."*²

-Alvaro Siza

1 A. Rossi "*The architecture of the city*" The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1984, p. 127.

2 A.Siza interviewed by T. Glažar, V. Grimmer, A. Rusan, A. Vodopivec, ORIS, Porto, 2006, p.20.

Context in architecture

Word *context* arrives from Classical Latin '*contextus*', a joining together, origin, originally, past participle of *contexere*, to weave together ; from *com-*, together + *texere*, to weave.³

Context can be understood as combination of phonemes, circumstances, facts, events and settings coming together and forming a wider whole, background, environment or framework. In architecture context is reality that every building has to face when it appears as a physical matter. It can be regarded or neglected but it is inevitable.

It is important to understand that the context is not something fixed, it is a link in-between settings formed in a wider span of time. The context is understood as anthropologically charged landscape. A physical substance that has been shaped and changed according to understanding, circumstances and conditions of past.

In architecture term contextualism is used as a methodology for design to recognise and respond to circumstances and conditions of specific place. The design of the building is selectively related to the immediate physical or cultural context - the history of a place. Appropriately, buildings are designed to reinforce the physical characteristics of an area and city by extending them. Starting point for this methodology is the evaluation of the existing architectural fabric and inference that the existing architectural fabric is valued as important to the urbanism of the city. Contextualism aims to create the relationship and dialogue of unity; a notion that aspires to move in a coherent manner within its entirety whilst carving a niche for itself. The contents of context and its varying concrete and abstract notions are reflected in the architecture from the perspective of architect. Compliance of context and contextualism in design process can link the new architecture to the past, thus, enclosing it into a continuous development of whole.

³ John Wiley & Sons, Inc., *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, Wiley Publishing, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, 1967.

Continuity incorporated in context

When Albert Einstein published his General Theory of Relativity⁴ one of his positions was that space can not be separated from time, instead time is inseparable part of a space. Even though this is a simplified understanding from what Albert was dealing with, it is possible to assume that architecture is concerned with time just as much as with space, and space can be a mediator how we experience time. In other words, built heritage has the ability to connect us throughout time, create a bridge between 'now' and 'then'. The past is embedded in present and it has the ability to continue in future if the space is shaped as a continuation.

But what kind of space can capture the relation to the past and time itself, is it one separate building dating back to the particular time that reveal the notion of time. Or is it a continuous spatial evolution of interconnected environments that actually reveal the passage of time and transmit the traditions and knowledge. This interconnected environment can be understood as context that reconnects the physical remnants of the past with the ever evolving social and cultural reality of the present day.

Consequently, context has the ability to connect us to the past. If the new architecture is susceptible to pre-existing context of the place, connection is established to carry on the transfer of knowledge, values and traditions to contemporary architecture. Continuity is accomplished even though the physical matter itself is completely new and corresponds to contemporary needs. This kind of transmittance between existing and new architecture exceeds every life span of particular building. If the building relates to its surroundings it relates to all history of the place and architecture.

Intervention in a context is a compromise between building and built landscape that project narratives of the past to future, enabling us to continue the experience of our culture and identity in city. Viewing the city as construction over time is an urban design theory, introduced by Aldo Rossi in *The Architecture of the City*⁵.

For Rossi, the city is a stage that soaks in human events and feelings, and so, with every new event contains a memory of the past and a potential memory of the future. Once the city loses its distinct character, it becomes a city with no identity. The extreme changes to the cityscape challenge our understanding and recognition of the city, threatening our collective and personal identity reflected in human built urban fabric. Maintenance of the continuity and identity in our urban fabric has been carried out due to moderate progression an appreciation of existing built heritage that has worked as an inspiration for new architecture to come.

4 A. Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and General Theory*, Methuen & Co Ltd, December, 1916.

5 A. Rossi, *The Architecture of City*, The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Massachusetts, and London, England, MIT Press, 1984.

Development of Contextualism

The principles of contextualism in architecture have always been present even though the term itself appeared in 1970's. In Roman times context was referred to as - *genius loci* meaning "the spirit of the place"⁶ There existed specific rules to regulate that the new buildings would be designed in a way to make a harmonious and coherent fit with existing built context. Such rules as a good building practice and maintenance were some of the cornerstones in celebrated *De Architectura* (known today as *The Ten Books on Architecture*), the significant guidebook by *Vitruvius* in the first century BC. He accentuated the importance of planning the towns and designing the buildings according to the context and noted that the building has to conform to the nature of the country and diversities of climate. *Vitruvius* emphasized the knowledge of all sorts and particularly history as of great importance:

A wide knowledge of history is requisite because, among the ornamental parts of an architect's design or a work, there are many underlying ideas of whose employment he should be able to explain.⁷

Later, in renaissance *Decorum* - arriving from *Vitruvius* décor was a strategy for communication to the surroundings by symbolism.⁸

In period of modernism buildings' connection to the context was disrupted since the building was perceived autonomously from its surroundings form arriving from its function. In the middle of 20th century a criticism towards the modernism became harsher and other ideas for the treatment of surrounding evolved. As a reaction to Modernism in 1960's Postmodernism or Late modernism occurred striving to react and to be sensitive to the context within which it is built.

In Italy Ernesto Nathan Rogers, editor of the Milan-based magazine 'Casabella' was criticising modernism for dealing with architecture works as abstract problems apart from the context. Together with Aldo Rossi, who later wrote the influential book 'The Architecture of the city', they referred to the history of the city and heritage in their architectural studies. They aimed to promote a continuum between architectural works and their natural and historical surroundings.

6 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, 1980.

7 *Vitruvius, The Ten Books on Architecture*, Translated by: M. H. Morgan, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1914. p.13.

8 P. Kohane and M. Hill, *The Eclipse of a Commonplace Idea: Decorum in Architectural Theory*, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 5, no. 1, 2001, p.63-76.

One of the Rogers most important concepts “*le preesistenze ambientali*” meaning- *surrounding pre-existence* appeared in Casabella articles in the 1950’s.

“*In order to combat cosmopolitanism, which works on behalf of a universal feeling which is not yet sufficiently rooted, and which erects the same architecture in New York, Rome, Tokyo or Rio de Janeiro(in the countryside just as in the cities), we should try to harmonize our works with the pre-existing surroundings, be they natural or historically “created by human ingenuity.”*”⁹

According to Rogers architectural work should respond to its particular space and time by embodying the history of its context. Rossi proceed the topic of: *history of the city, memory and locus*.

In his book “*The architecture of the city*” he developed term *locus*, meaning: a rational construct between a work of architecture and its location.

“*One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city’s predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artefacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it.*”¹⁰

Approximately at the same time in USA Robert Venturi in 1950 wrote his master thesis called “*Formal association between building and its urban context*” Forming the understanding that context is important in architecture as buildings can derive meaning from it by not pointing out single solitary object but by enhancing a greater whole.

“*Setting gives building expression; its context is what gives a building its meaning. And Consequently change in context causes change in meaning*”¹¹

The term contextualism arrived from the discussions in 1970’s held in University of Cornell studios under the guidance of Colin Rowe, Stuart Cohen and Tom Schumacher, as students of Rowe published on Contextualism.¹²

9 E. N. Rogers, “*Les preexistencias ambientales y temas practicos contemporaneos*”, in *Experiencia de la Arquitectura*, Buenos Aires, Nueva Vision, 1965, p. 34, translations from “Rafael Manero: *Building, teaching, writing*” by Francisco Gonzalez de Canales and Nicholas Ray. Yale University press 2015, p. 232.

10 A. Rossi “*The architecture of the city*” The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1984, p. 124.

11 R. Venturi, *Context in Architectural Composition: M.F.A. Thesis, Princeton University. Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture. A View from the Drafting Room*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1950, p. 319.

12 T. L. Schumacher, *Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations*, Princeton Architectural Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England, 1996.

Later Row together with Fred Koether touched upon a contextualism in their book "Collage City" where contextualism was used as a solution for the duality addressing city theory and the two basic contexts¹³

- Building standing alone (as they were perceived in modernism)
 - Space curved in-between building (streets square and connections)
- where contextualism could merge those two aspects together in the city.

In the end of 20's century contextualism was addressed as "fuck context" in Rems Koolhaas book "S,M,L,XL. Written together with Bruce Mau. Addressing the issue with the of context and scale of contemporary architecture which had exceeded the scale of any urban tissue.

*"Together, all these breaks-with scale, with architectural composition, with tradition, with transparency, with ethics- imply the final, most radical break: Bigness is no longer part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most, coexists. Its subtext is fuck context."*¹⁴

In 1988 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley curated an exhibition De-constructivist Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Together with the exhibition they published a catalogue in which they address contextualism being a very limiting approach.

*"In recent years, the modern understanding of social responsibility as functional program has been suppressed by a concern for context. But contextualism has been used as an excuse for mediocrity, for dumb servility to the familiar. Since de-constructivist architecture seeks the unfamiliar within the familiar, it displaces the context rather than acquiesce to it. The projects in this exhibition do not ignore the context; they are not anti-contextual. Rather, each makes a very specific intervention."*¹⁵

The exhibition is considered to be a shift of direction in architecture from Post-modernism to De-constructivism.

After this critique towards the concept of contextualism from de-constructivist point of view the overall focus of architecture discourse has deviated from it and contextualism is recognised mostly in circles of architecture heritage professionals and taught under architectural heritage departments. Even though because of the rapid expansion, change and fast pace of development and construction in our cities we are facing strong change of characteristics and risk for loss of touch to the sense of place and built heritage in our new architecture. Continuity in development of city and architectural traditions can be distracted from the practice if new architecture won't be able to reflect on building traditions and surroundings.

¹³ C. Rowe, F. Koetter, *Collage City*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England. 1975.

¹⁴ R. Koolhaas, B. Mau, *S,M,L,XL O.M.A.*, The Monacelli Press, New York, USA, 1995, p.502.

¹⁵ P. Johnson, M. Wigley, *De-constructivist architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, 1988, p. 17.

Engaging with surroundings

Since the modernism times the notion of a building as contemporary object has been tempting to many architects. Object with particular function designed autonomously from the surrounding where it will be placed, form arriving from the function. This kind of approach in architecture has led as to a situation where similar or even same buildings are found in different location in world. This generalized approach has showed its limits to recognise the constraints and circumstance of a specific place creating a disturbance in continuity in these places.

Building should be perceived as more than just object for certain function, since it reaches its complete significance only when engaged with the specific place or city. It has the opportunity to address wider scale, intervening and bending in the city scape. In other words, it is the architect's task to express architecturally his era and simultaneously get involved in a dialogue with the context, in which he builds.

The notion of context refers to the existing reality, to the given in its broad sense, whereas the notion of place has additionally a phenomenological connotation. The place is a totality made of concrete things and has an identity that comprises various aspects. It has a physical identity (land-form, climate, environmental characteristics), a built environment identity (structure and organization of the urban setting as an imprint on the ground and as a section, size of its buildings, articulation of the building volumes, architectural morphology and materiality). Additionally, it is characterised by its economic identity that encompasses all the economic activities. Its social and cultural identity refers to all social and cultural events; and, finally, its historical identity is related to the collective memory of the inhabitants (monuments, landmarks, events taken place in the city, narratives). Considering all these parameters together, every place has a particular character and is designated by a special atmosphere.

Every intervention is based on the interpretation of the place since the new should be approached not in isolation but as totality with the existing surroundings. Every specific building is designed for a specific place and the relation and cooperation to surroundings is just as important as the incipient function since these two factors can benefit one another.

Chapter II Research on Circus

Circus: definition and meanings

*Just as the history of circus is elastic and inconclusive, so is its definition. Circus, Cyrk, Cirque, Circo, Zirkus etc. is known in almost every country in the world, but there are no absolutely consistent elements.*¹

Word 'circus' originates around 1350 - 1400
From Latin - circle; from greek 'kirkos' - ring.

Definition of 'circus' in English:²
(noun)

1. A travelling company of acrobats, clowns, and other entertainers which gives performances, typically in a large tent, in a series of different places.
 - *Informal* A large group of people travelling together on the circuit of a particular high-profile activity.
 - *Informal* A public scene of frenetic, noisy, or confused activity.
2. (In ancient Rome) a rounded or oval arena lined with tiers of seats, used for equestrian and other sports and games.

Definition of 'circus' in English:³
(noun)

1. a: large arena enclosed by tiers of seats on three or all four sides and used especially for sports or spectacles (as athletic contests, exhibitions of horsemanship, or in ancient times chariot racing)b : a public spectacle
2. a : an arena often covered by a tent and used for variety shows usually including feats of physical skill, wild animal acts, and performances by clowns
 - b : a circus performance
 - c : the physical plant, livestock, and personnel of such a circus
 - d : something suggestive of a circus (as in frenzied activity, sensationalism, theatricality) *a media circus*
3. a *obsolete* : circle, ring
4. b *British* : a usually circular area at an intersection of streets

1 Reginald, Bolton, 'Why circus works. How the values and structures of circus make it a significant developmental experience for young people', Ph.D. Thesis, Murdoch University, Perth, 2004, p.128, <http://www.regbolton.org/images/pdf/Why_Circus_Works-Reg_Bolton-PhD.pdf>, accessed 4 April 2017.

2 'Circus', Oxford Dictionaries, Oxford: University Press, [Website], 2017, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/circus>>, accessed 7 April 2017.

3 'Circus', Merriam-Webster.com, Merriam-Webster, [Website], <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/circus>>, accessed 7 April 2017).

The circus has been one of the most influential forms of mass entertainment means in human history. Yet, it is important to note, the concept and term 'circus' is rather hard to define and to place in clear time and place boundaries as there coexist several circus genres within the field. Besides, often '*circus*' is seen through perceptions and interpretations rather than particular and 'known' rationale. Also, it is difficult to determine, when exactly the concept of circus has emerged, as several theories are known and favoured.

Development of the circus

Wherever the circus came from, it started like this: someone captivated attention by doing what others could not do. This display of startling agility: walking on one's hands. Springing hands to feet, over and over. Juggling balls, or knives. (...) In short, making a spectacle of oneself. The body as spectacle is the origin of the circus.⁴

Circus before buildings

The beginnings of the history of Circus as phenomenon can be found as early as ancient Rome. Word 'circus' here refers to a rounded or oval arena lined with tiers of seats, used for equestrian and other sports and games. One of the greatest such example is Circus Maximus, dated in 6th century BC, the oldest and largest public space in ancient Rome. It was hosting such events as chariot races, gladiator fights, wild beast hunts, and a variety of other shows, processions and popular entertainment-forms. In the book *The Greatest Shows on Earth* Linda Simon notes that: 'The Roman circus celebrated human superiority: of one man over another, of man over beast.'⁵ During interludes in-between animal bailing, chariot races and gladiator fights, jugglers and acrobats offered a light diversion to the audience.

After the collapse of Roman empire, it is hard to trace the concept of circus and its further development precisely. The building typology as *circus* disappeared and fell out of use as scope for mass entertainment. The entertainment-form of circus was not connected to the building or specific place. Instead, nomadic performers, animal trainers and showmen travelled between towns throughout Europe, performing at local fairs. Such performers were perceived with great interest as they 'arrived from nowhere else and disappeared, were news in themselves, different, exotic, even a bit dangerous.'⁶ Often, they were travelling and performing together with musicians, jesters, jugglers, fortune tellers and dancers. Besides, for the most time, they were living together in caravans.

By the middle of 17th century, besides the 'glee-men' - tumblers, jesters and jugglers, trick-riders are becoming popular, especially so in England. Those were travelling around the country performing their feats. Due to the nature of the horse riding itself, the ring was devised, allowing audience to keep the sight of the performance. The further reason for the invention of rings and riding in circles was the generation of centrifugal force, in order for riders to keep their balance while standing on the back of galloping horse.⁷ Trick-riding was a famous entertainment, however, like all itinerant performances, financially unstable. Hence, about the middle of the 17th century, travelling performers began to settle down in or near the cities.

In order to describe circus development before the Traditional Modern Circus appeared, it is crucial to observe that circus performers and troupes

⁴ Linda, Simon, *The Greatest Shows on Earth: A History of the Circus*, Reaktion Books, Limited, 2014, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁷ Dominique, Jando, 'Short History of the Circus', Circopedia, <http://www.circopedia.org/SHORT_HISTORY_OF_THE_CIRCUS>, accessed 8 April 2017.

were mainly nomadic, travelling from town to town and providing amusement for lower-class people. Their shows were based on the element of surprise, hence the skills of their performances were not that extraordinary. Nevertheless, the performances as acrobatics, juggling, animal training and performing of equestrian tricks formed the future development of Traditional Circus and have not disappeared from the circus culture until the present-day.

Prosperity of the Traditional Circus

After the long years of nomadic culture, around mid 18th century, circus eventually settled down. It is accepted that the Modern Circus was founded by a former cavalry Philip Astley. He opened a riding school on 1768 in London, where he thought in the morning and performed and established trick-riding shows in the afternoon. He performed his feats in a ring of 12,8 m (42 ft) in diameter, which is the size used by circuses ever since. Later on he brought together the elements of the Modern Circus by hiring acrobats, wire-walkers, jugglers and clowns to fill in the interludes between acts. Gradually, Astley improved his arena, first with canvas cover, later with a partial shed, and finally with a roofed building.

Originally, circus performances were performed in circus buildings. At first these were mostly temporary wooden structures, but soon enough every major European city had built at least one permanent circus building, which architectural solutions at first reminded of theatre architecture. Circus buildings remained the main choice for circus performances for a long period of time, up to middle 20th century.

By the late 18th century the circus had spread widely throughout Europe. On the contrary, in North America the development began slowly and took rather different character. America was still new, developing country with few cities large enough to maintain long-term permanent circuses. Furthermore, settlers were firmly pushing the American frontier westward, establishing new communities.⁸ To arrive at their public, entertainers had no choice but to travel light and fast. Those were prerequisites for development of North American circus.

The first important force to secure 'traveling light and fast' was J. P. Browns' invention of full canvas tent (1825), which replaced the usual wooden construction. At first, tents were small, housing one ring and a few hundred seats. It took around 10 more years for the tents to become popular. The other such trigger was, undoubtedly, industrial revolution and railroad development in particular. Before 1872, most of the circuses were using horses and wagons as the main means of movement from town to town. This form of transport was not too efficient, as it was slow and limited in cargo space. But in spring of 1872, Barnum and his partners⁹ loaded their show onto 65 railroad carriages and thereby gave birth to the age of travelling railroad circuses. American circuses thus became model of logistic efficiency. Since that time an up to now-days American circuses are using railroad as the main means of the travel.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ 'Barnum and Bailey' Circus in United States was one of the leading circuses for forty years (1841 - 1919), when they merged with other success-story of 'Ringling Brothers' and became 'Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus' - author's note.

Around the same time H. Bailey had purchased an African elephant, which he exhibited with great success around the country. Menagerie grew fast, and soon exhibition of wild animals took an important part of circus form in North America. By the end of 19th century, the unique character of the American circus had emerged: it was a traveling tent-show coupled with menagerie and run by businessmen. Altogether, very different model from that of European circuses, which for the most part remained under the control of performing families

At the end of 19th century, in Europe and America, increasing popularity of the circuses required new means to attract and surprise the audience. This is the time in circus history when feats became more dangerous, menageries grew huge and circus buildings transformed in several ways. The buildings emerged into aquatic circuses and multiple-ring circuses in order to exhibit all the animals and feats at the same time.

Breaking point of Traditional Circus

Parallel to multiple ring circuses and overall prosperity of circuses, several changes took place that influenced the way people perceived circus. Certain events describes below led to so-called Breaking Point, changing the flow of the circus movement irrecoverably.

In December of 1859 Charles Darwin's theory *On the Origin of Species* had been published. It had a vast influence on circus further history. Western Culture was electrified with the idea that humans and beasts existed on a common continuum. Considerable number of spectators were agitated by the fact, that to force animals to perform trainers used weapons, whips, tight collars, electric prods and other painful tools. Besides, the animal living conditions were yet another reason to question circuses' principles. Society felt disturbed by the exploitation of 'human predecessors', as many people saw animals now. Hence, a number of animal protection societies appeared to create an awareness of such issue and fight for the animals' rights.

Linda Simon describes the situation as follows: 'By the late nineteenth century, humane reform movements that had focused on the poor, enslaved and children embraced animals.' As a result of pressure by the society and animals rights groups¹⁰, great number of circuses dispensed with animal acts. A necessity for new ways to attract the audience became urgent.

To find new means of circus entertainment, human body became the main research and experiment object. At the time, human perfectibility and, on the other hand, imperfections and abnormalities became the main point of interest. The human body's physical abilities became a significant feature of the new ideas. Gymnasts, acrobats and aerialists came to represent, according to Tait "the promise of human physicality, its future".¹¹ Yet, on the other side, human differences and imperfection became of high interest. Such malformations of human-kind were exhibited in the freak shows and sideshows of the circuses.

These changes in the ways of perceiving tradition circus acts were mirrored in the ways circuses functioned: some of them gave up on wild animal use, some became fully engaged with human physical acts and dangerous. Changes in the overall circus program led to the alterations in circus architecture as well.

The other turning point in Traditional Circus development was the inter-war period. Describing 20th century circus development Hoh points out, that 'The period between the world wars was marked by economic depression and political turmoil throughout the world, which caused several circuses to struggle for their existence.'¹² Circus decline was deepened even more as its audience was attracted to other emerging forms of entertainment, such as cinema (Lumière brothers conducted the first public cinema show on March 22, 1895), radio broadcasting (ears in 1922), television (appears in 1936).

¹⁰ Notably, such animal rights group to emerge was *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA) - *author's note*.

¹¹ Peta, Tait, *Circus bodies: Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 15.

¹² LaVahn Gerry Hoh, et al., 'Circus: Theatrical Entertainment', Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 January 2017, <<https://global.britannica.com/art/circus-theatrical-entertainment/20th-century-developments>>, accessed 9 April 2017.

As a result, circus experienced a rapid decline and changed some of its marketing strategies.

Circuses had to look for a ways to attract new audience. At the time, circus gradually transformed into family orientated entertainment form aiming to children audience. Wall notes, that children became the new circus target audience as they ‘(..) were less demanding, willing to overlook a mangy tiger or an acrobat’s frayed costume.’¹³ Besides, children are growing, therefore one and the same programme could be performed over and over again.

The above mentioned changes irreversibly have altered the character of Traditional Circus. However, as such Traditional Circus exists presently and, in some ways, provides us with an ‘image’ of the circus as it was on its times-of-prosperity.

Traditional Circus nowadays

It appears that, in the course of the last half century, under several means of political, socio-economical and cultural burdens, various trends have emerged from the one ‘timeless’ (traditional) circus. Yet, they have, over the time, coexisted within and influenced one another. Rather than a linear and continuous development process, circus has emerged into at least three varying types.

Semiotician Bouissac branches out these three genres as follows:

1. The *Traditional* ‘Modern’ *Circus* with its complement of acrobats, animal trainers and clowns;
2. The purely *Acrobatic Circus* with a theatrical and whimsical elements; and
3. A new genre - the artistic, aesthetic, educational or community circus, that is otherwise known as ‘*New*’ or ‘*Contemporary circus*’.¹⁴

As Jando notes in the *Short History of the Circus*, old circus performers may have resisted change, but a few producers, at least, tried to shake up the shows in which they appeared by modernizing staging, lighting, and musical accompaniment.¹⁵ However, most German, Russian and French Tradition Circus troupes have not altered the substance of their programs, still producing wild animal acts in order to meet remaining public demand. Yet, what has changed is the style of presentation and the conditions in which their wild animals are kept and displayed. Also, from the late 20th century, a variety of circus schools and public institutions and organizations emerged to improve and promote Tradition Circus art.

As a result of dynamic changes in Circus character, Bouissac concludes, that, “*On the one hand, traditional circuses adapted to the expectations of their audiences, and on the other hand new circuses devolved toward brilliantly renewed ancient forms.*”¹⁶

¹³ Duncan, Wall, *The Ordinary Acrobat: A Journey Into the Wondrous World of Circus, Past and Present*, New York: Knopf, 2013, p. 229.

¹⁴ Paul, Bouissac, *Semiotics at the circus*, Göttingen: Hubert & Co: GmbH & Co. KG, 2010, p. 184.

¹⁵ Jando, loc. cit.

¹⁶ Bouissac, op. cit., p.183.

New Circus

*The circus is a tiny closed off arena of forgetfulness. For a space it enables us to lose ourselves, to dissolve in wonder and bliss, to be transported by mystery.*¹⁷

Henry Miller

As already stated, by the mid-twentieth century, significant changes in the ways people perceived circus appeared. Several factors influenced the transformations, such as animal protection movement, economical situation and the development of technology that offered new ways of entertainment. As a result, acrobats, their physical skills and new, more meaningful ways of their artistic expression became the central character of new circus.

Early such change can be noticed in mid-twentieth century. Simon depicts the new movement of clowns' character: 'New clowns aim not so much to amuse their audiences, but to make them think. (...) Their object, instead, is to get the audience to see the world in a new way. (...) Some new clowns aim to provoke discomfort and even fear.'¹⁸ Such turning point in the social influence of circus performers is explained by semiotician Bouissac: 'The extent to which they succeeded in raising socio-political awareness or deeply altering the very essence of the circus remains to be assessed. But there is no doubt that they ushered in an aesthetic revolution in the circus.'¹⁹

Secondly, Circus as phenomenon changed as the new circus is characterized by the formation of conceptual performance by synthesis of traditional circus elements with other art movements. New circus applies and includes 'non-circus' arts in their performances - contemporary dance, video art, extreme sports and the fine arts, too. Besides, the goal of the show is to create continuous performance as a fusion of all the arts. The idea and semiotics of the performance has changed significantly, bringing compassion and cognition of several socio-political concepts into first place.

¹⁷ Henry, Miller, *The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder*, 5th edn, New York: New Directions, 1948, p. 48.

¹⁸ Simon, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

¹⁹ Bouissac, loc. cit.

Consequently, the variety and complexity of the means of expression of new circus requires certain level of cognitive and intellectual maturation as well as sufficient acculturation. Looking at the circus performances in this context, it is clearly visible, that ‘The supposedly essential link between children and circuses, although historically and culturally motivated, is nevertheless a misconception if it means that circus acts are made for children.’²⁰

However, the genre of the New Circus is still considerably limited in space and time. The new form of circus has spread in Northern Europe, where wild animal use in circuses has already been banned. English-speaking countries, such as Canada, Australia, and more recently, India, have followed the trend. Yet, the traditional circuses in the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, and Southern and Eastern Europe, continue to perform resistant to those changes.

As the new circus movement has started relatively recently, there is still a lot to discover and learn both, for the circuses and their audience. We all, yet, need to clarify and grasp, what can new circus offer, as we still lack an understanding around the circus art. It should be more than just a tent filled with wild animals and red-nosed clowns..

Semiotics at the circus

All cultural events, especially those related to performing arts, are rooted not only in popular tradition and historical societal modes, but also in human physiology and psychology as both have emerged over long time span through natural selection. Circus has an extraordinary quality in this respect as it is rooted in typical actions that can be said to have been crucial for human survival in the deep time of the species when ‘extreme situations offered constant challenges not yet mediated by cultural artefacts’.²¹ Such activities are now performed in the circus ring, using several attributes, to demonstrate acrobats’ abilities to survive in dangerous actions.

These core actions are described in the book ‘*Semiotics in the Circus*’ by Bouissac as follows: ‘(1) balancing and progressing on narrow surfaces; (2) grasping hanging supports that avoid deadly falls; (3) clearing obstacles by jumping and climbing; (4) throwing or catching objects in a way that allows a person to reach targets or keep a number of valuable items intact; (5) controlling animals both to exploit the resources afforded by some and neutralize the aggression of predators; and, (6) no less important for a social species, negotiating social situations.’²²

The circus acts are based on artificial modelling of extreme situations, and, consequently, on needed skills to overcome the challenges they represent. However, important for recognition, is the fact that those skills are somewhat alien to those we need to perform in our every day life, as the social and cultural realm has developed and we no longer exploit such actions.

Yet, we are amazed and intrigued by the actions performed by wire walk-
²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²² *Ibid.*

ers, the aerialists, the jumpers and climbers, the sharp shooters and trainers of wild and domestic animals. Whatever act the circus artists perform in front of us in the ring, it resonates and echoes in our minds and bodies. Such physical and psychological empathy was recently explained by the findings of mirror neurons in our brains (Stamenov and Gallese 2002; Hurley and Chater 2005). Such discovery unveils, perhaps, why circus is so engaging as it reaches out to our primal brain, and triggers a familiar physical memory which is encoded in our deepest part of genome and is at the physical foundation of our social realm as much as it creates active empathy. This is undeniably the basis of the reason the circus being claimed to be timeless. In other words, circus is not dependent on a specific historical period construed by its cultural construct.

However, besides the 'timelessness' of circus semiotics, the form of circus in some means is also temporal, closely related to site-specifics and follows socio-cultural evolution. As circus always takes place within a specific culture, it illustrates through its own spectrum particular ethic values and social norms, historical and political references, aesthetic standards, the remembrance of circus tradition itself, and even occasionally explicit references to local issues involving social or ideological struggles.

The flexibility of the circus in the time of globalization and its adjustment to ever changing cultural contexts keeps maintaining an intense field for semiotics. The portrayal of the primal repertory of human survival acts in the ring provides a rich and yet bold imagery of the fusion between nature and culture. The attention and awareness to both - biosemiotics and cultural semiotics are crucial if one is to come to grasp the circus's symbolic complexity and the hidden agenda and gratification it provides.

Chapter III (chapter written by Marta Prikule)

Research on site

Riga Circus in context with development of Riga

To acknowledge and interpret Riga Circus and its cultural and social role, the context of Riga and its history plays an important role. As such, the lot of Riga Circus on the present-day Merķeļa Street has been in a close relation to all succeeding physical changes in city planning, especially so during the times from 17th century until the First World War. The Circus location is not to be seen circumstantial, but rather as a complex issue regarding the development of Riga in its extension beyond its medieval core.

In short, as many of the European cities, Riga has rather typical plan consisting of three main urban typologies as follows:

1. The Old Town of Riga - a medieval core of origins on the right bank of the Daugava River dating back to 1210, when the city was founded. The old town amongst the bank of Daugava is physically and culturally the most significant spatial flair that shapes and defines the cityscape of Riga.
2. Semi-circle of boulevards with a green belt on both sides of the City Canal, transformed from former fortification walls and moat in the middle of 19th century.
3. Former suburban quarters, surrounding the boulevards with dense built-up areas with a rectangular network of streets and architecture of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Although similar to other European cities, Riga is one of the very few cities whose physical extension beyond its medieval core was undertaken by successive, comprehensive plans. Altogether there were seven plans developed: in 1652, 1771, 1813, 1815, 1856, 1872 and 1883. Some of them being more extensive than others, all were important in shaping the physical form of the city beyond the fortification walls, as it grew and transformed from a suburban fringe into the central area of Riga. Much of this area together with the medieval city core, now constitutes the Historic Centre of Riga included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Riga Circus is amidst the Historic Centre of Riga.

In order to assess the town planning contribution of each period to the present day location and appearance of Riga Circus in the unity of Riga's central area, all time periods and plans are analysed in terms of the following aspects: (1) the character of the current Riga Circus placement; (2) development of adjacent areas to Circus current location; (3) effects on the area adjacent to Riga Circus.

Circus in context with suburbs in 17th century

Afore the year 1652, when the first suburban plan was introduced, current Riga Circus location was in close proximity to medieval fortifications. At the time of 17th century suburbs became an organised built-up area consisting mainly of single-storey wooden buildings along the street, and extensive plantings of trees inside the blocks. Current Riga Circus plot was amidst the growing suburbs, however, there does not exist accurate information of what existed on the specific block.

Circus in context with suburbs in 18th century

The 18th century suburban plan gives a clear understanding in relation to the present-day situation as the plan introduced lasting changes that affected future development of Riga. The lot of Riga Circus is set within the esplanade - a 400-m-wide belt of open space. However, the esplanade itself was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it significantly altered the general form of the city, introducing an extensive open space, to be used for recreational purposes. On the other hand, its wide expanse separated the suburbs from the fortified city even more, resulting in division in its commercial, cultural and social facilities. The separation of the two made the segregation of classes even more immense.

The other factor important to note in the present-day Circus location is its proximate position to north-east (currently Central District), south-east and also undeveloped marshy areas between the two (currently - Latgale Suburb). Although the present-day location of Circus building is included into the Central District its ties with the other two districts emerged already in the 18th century.

Circus in context with suburbs in the first half of 19th century

The plans from the first half of 19th century indicates significant and lasting features that influenced the location and status of the present-day Circus, namely, the plot its located is within the green belt in a close distance to newly introduced Vērmanes Park and other public areas in between the medieval city and suburban area. However, as significant is the aspect of undeveloped area south-west from the present-day Merķeļa Street, as it later showed to become an important communication node in the city while also developing into an obscure part of the area.

Circus in context with suburbs in the second half of 19th century

Urban development in the second half of the 19th century defined the city fabric of Riga. Even more, it outlined the current character of the plot and area surrounding Riga Circus. The most significant changes were former fortification walls transformed into green park belt. The city alongside the newly introduced park belt developed into several functionally different zones. North from the present-day 13. Janvāra Street was designed as a residential part with parks and public buildings, while southern area was envisaged for transport and commercial development.

Although the plot of current Riga Circus is located amidst the residential/public zone, it has strong relation and influences from hitherto undeveloped area in the south-east. In fact, the four building blocks (one of them holds the current Circus plot) are a unique pattern in else green belt holding merely public buildings.

The other important and everlasting introduction in the city was the circular *round-point* on the central boulevard axis, which connected five radiating streets one of them being current Merķeļa street. Ergo Merķeļa Street links the two functional zones of the city and therefore holds an important role in city's transportation network.

In summary, the development of built fabric alongside the inner park belt was early defined creating common character of place. On the other hand, the building blocks in-between the planned railway station and otherwise contin-

uous green belt lacked its role in the city. As a result, the area of Riga Circus building emerged into space of motion rather than space of place.

Circus in context with present-day situation

The current Circus character has been strongly influenced by the previously mentioned changes in city planning. Circus location is situated in a rather unique area in a proximity to several different city zones, having various historical backgrounds. Such context has resulted in an unprecedented urban block amidst where one of the building is Riga Circus. Circus location is formally a part of a green-belt, however being more characterized by the adjacent area that was formerly undeveloped and resulted as a transportation sector. The railway station and several other main transportation network hubs are allocated only couple hundred meters from the circus building. As a result, the Merķeļa Street is a highly important street to link railway station and the other parts of the city.

Ergo, the Merķeļa Street is an intensive Street running through the very heart of Riga Centre. Albeit the Street is only 560 meters long it is of high importance as it starts from Marijas Street next to Central Railway Station Square and stretches to Brīvības Street. Merķeļa Street is also an important public transport node and has five bus stops, hence the great crowd gathers along it. The street holds residential buildings with retail spaces, public buildings - Riga Circus and Latvian Society House and the very first City Park - Vērmanes Park.

Furthermore, the Circus quarter is bordered by two streets - the previously described Merķeļa Street and A. Kalniņš Street, which currently holds the delivery access to the building. The street is narrow and serene, and runs only around 200 meters, ceasing into the Vērmanes Park.

All things consider, the area of the Riga Circus and the Merķeļa Street, upon which the building is located, is a dynamic urban space, having its benefits and drawbacks. For one, the location can profit of its lively atmosphere and central position in the city. On the other hand, the area has its image of a poor and inferior locality. Nevertheless, Riga Circus and its location is seen as a potential focal point of an area to give a certain sense and meaning to the place.

Riga Circus Building: historical overview

The very first known circus performances in Latvia are mentioned in literature as early as 1783, but, initially, all of those were held in temporary wooden cabins or cloth-tents, travelling from town to town. As for the first temporary wooden building built in Riga is mentioned a construction built in the midst of Vermansky garden.

By the late 19th century, Riga became industrial city; hence the leisure-time and entertainment forms grew rapidly. During the time, new art-forms emerged to fit the needs of lower class townspeople - servants, service and factory workers and youth. Establishing new ways of mass-culture, several ever-popular yet neglected entertainment forms emerged. One of them being circus. In many European cities, driven by the high demand, permanent circus venues were being built. The program of circus revealed emerging

industrial society's mentality, values and desires. Featuring the human victory over the wild animal, circus in the consciousness of masses became a symbol of humanity's progress. In short, by the late 19th century, circus grew into highly popular entertainment form.

In Riga, by late 19th century, the formation of the modern Circus began. It is related with Prussian citizen - equestrian Albert Salamonsky, who established and built the first permanent circus quarter in Riga and called it '*Salamonsky Circus*'. By the time he built Riga Circus in 1888, he had already founded circus in Berlin and in Moscow. It is important to note that Riga Circus building is the only permanent circus building in the Baltics.

From the very beginning, Riga Circus was mainly used for performances held by foreign circus artists. Hence, it was initially represented as exclusive establishment, and it remained so until the 1940's, when circuses in Soviet Republic were nationalized. Due to this change, Latvian artists were included in Riga Circus troupe, and national identity became increasingly relevant. Consequently, by the 1974, the first fully Latvian troupe performed in the ring.

The other noteworthy change in Riga Circus emerged within the time of 1940's, when Soviet circuses gradually started to host circus schools and other educational forms. By the mid 20th century, circus served as a platform for artists, their training and social activities. The circus of Soviet Union made great use of circus performances - acting and character of performers, their symbolic attributes, and the dialogues of the clowns, to convey the ideology for the inner consumption.

Through the years of Soviet time, Riga Circus flourished and became an important form of mass entertainment. However, with the collapse of Soviet Union and the Fall of the 'Iron Curtain' Riga Circus gradually declined. New forms of mass entertainment emerged, and the overall audience had changed, thus favouring other means of leisure. Due to several reasons (see paragraph '*Riga Circus Building: spatial analysis*') Circus was closed in the year 2016 and remains so until the present day, when new Circus strategy is sought for.

Riga Circus since 1940's and until its closure in 2016, followed the Traditional Circus genre. Hence, the main attraction for the audience, during the whole of Circus history, were menageries. Along with animal feats in the ring, aerialists, acrobats, clowns and equestrians remained significant element of Circus acts. Since the year 2008, Riga Circus studio re-established the educational role to train future circus artists.

Recently, protests against using animals in circuses began to appear in the streets of Riga, indicating the changes in societies' perception of understanding around the circus art. Currently, a broad and intense debate in the mass-media between the two oppositions takes place. Such discussion is, perhaps, current, as a law to ban wild animal use in circuses is viewed in the highest instances, following the example set by other countries.

As mentioned previously, Riga Circus is currently closed and 44 out of 62 circus workers were laid off. The remaining employees keep organizing the performances, providing administrative support, to produce shows to be performed in culture houses and schools. Today Circus awaits its reconstruction as well as reorganization of its overall strategy, programme and functions in order to correspond with contemporary circus movement.

Riga Circus Building: spatial analysis

Riga Circus Building has an unusual and rather complicated history. The building, erected in 1888, was later altered, rebuilt and transformed several times. Important to note, similarly to the original built, the further alterations were mostly done illegally, without approval or building permit.

The architect of the original building is Janis Fridrihs Baumanis (*Jānis Frīdrihs Baumanis, 1834-1891*), the very first educated Latvian architect. The building at the time consisted of circus arena with spectacular cupola and two wings facing present-day Merķeļa Street. Initially, the main circus façade towards Merķeļa Street was built in classicism manner - highly popular style at the time. The building is also known for its extraordinary construction techniques. The structure of circus arena/cupola is made from railroad rails and its faceted dome is constructed from 16 meridian ribs joined by three main circles, which are located in the ribs' fractures and visually divide the cupola into three 'belts'. The main composition of the building - the ring - is 13 m in its diameter, and circus arena could accommodate up to 1,700 visitors at its earliest construction.

The first alterations were done only ten years later - in 1892, when, due to the need for menagerie, stables for horses and elephants were built in the back of the circus building. The arena was adjusted and balcony with gallery introduced. Also, alterations in the front façade facing the present-day Merķeļa Street were implemented, including new outer iron stairs leading towards second level and an iron construction marquee over the sidewalk. The further changes in the building underwent in 1924, when the facade was altered and several auxiliary buildings built in the back of the circus building. Perhaps, the most extensive refurbishment were carried out in the year 1953 - the façade was simplified and detailing abolished. Several technical buildings, including garage, workshop premises and guard shed, were built. The reconstruction of Riga Circus Building done in the 1960's transformed it as we can experience it at the present-day.

As from year 2013, under the law issued by Ministry of Culture the building is recognized as cultural monument of State significance²³. Yet, at the present-day Riga Circus Building is closed due to its technical state - as the building has not been renovated since the 1950's. Riga Circus was closed for audience in February 2016, and is on hold for renovation works.

The brief history of the Circus Building displays how the building has gradually accumulated several changes and alterations. Instead of having specific, fixed in time and space, transformation, the building 'grew' mutually with local processes and habitat through the years. Yet, the mutual semiotics, atmosphere and 'feeling' of the particular place in particular cultural domain has not been lost. The layering from time and social bygones are embedded deep into the walls of Riga Circus Building.

Potential development guidelines for Riga Circus quarter

²³ The order of the Ministry of Culture Nr.126; issued in 11.11.2003

Chapter IV

Contemporary building in a historic context.

New additions and transformations is an integral part of a city. Buildings, street scape, and urban areas evolve and change according to the needs of their inhabitants and present time. New pieces of built environment have to accede and coexist with already built ones and together they form the street, quarter, neighbourhood and city. In this evolution of built heritage and contemporary additions it is vital for the place to establish relation between new and old that would provide continuation and inheritance for the sense of place.

The relationship between historical architectural substance/context and contemporary addition evolve as one of the main objectives for the project for Riga contemporary circus extension: the manifestation of transformation/ evolution/expansion and continuity in the passage of time; how we as contemporary society reflect on the past and the concept of time itself in our present day architecture. As Aldo Rossi constitutes in his book 'The architecture of the city':

“The union between the past and the future exists in the very idea of the city that it flows through in the way that a memory flows through the life of a person; and always, in order to be realized, this idea must not only shape but be shaped by reality.”¹⁶

16 A. Rossi “*The architecture of the city*” The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1984 p. 131.

Infill strategy for Riga circus extension.

A contemporary extension has to be fitted in a context of historical buildings in a rather dense urban fabric. The extension has to correlate with an existing circus building creating a whole complex together and at the same time respond to existing context on Kalniņa street.

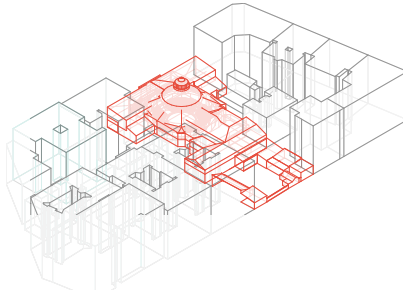
Infill development of Riga circus within a historic urban setting would act as a part of the continuous spatial evolution of city through time. In my approach the city scape is perceived as a living, changing artefact of human use embedded in a complex. It is a stratified and interconnected environment, reconnecting the physical remnants of the past with the ever evolving social and cultural reality of the present to strike a balance between history and current needs and opportunities.

To create a continuity in city scape and to avoid bursts in existing city development the new circus extension has to come in alliance with pre-existing buildings and the pattern of block. A dialogue has to be set that would shape the unity in wider city scape. In order to establish these relationships, it was important to understand the development patterns and design principles that gave rise to the existing conditions.

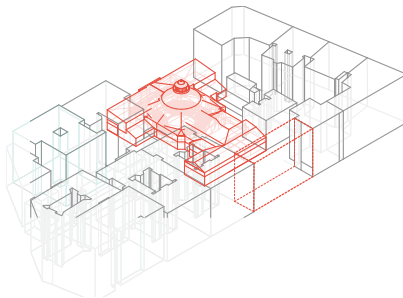
To become a fragment of a whole Riga circus infill intervention must imply the presence of an underlying order capable of being extended. In this way, order within the city is achieved by incremental design interventions that focus on the establishment of physical continuities between adjacent and new building to come.

In my intervention I aim for symbioses between existing urban context and new contemporary architecture to create a “moment of change” that simultaneously fulfils a new set of physical, social and cultural needs that can be defined at that moment, while allowing the existing historic context an opportunity to participate in this evolution. In this way, preservation of city scape and new construction may be viewed as complementary elements within this continuous, temporally fluid system. The intention for the building and site design is to respond to the context on a variety of scales from immediately adjacent structures to the character of the neighbourhood and city as a whole in all aspects of architectural design, including building orientation, scale, proportions, massing, materials, and architectural language.

The site comes with a strong set of pre-existing factors shaping the building and its appearance to come. It is a highly dense, surrounded by 19th century neoclassical buildings on both sides from Kalniņa Street and with existing expressive circus building from the back, built in the end of 19th century. Urban pattern is set in 18 century establishing a strong block pattern curved by streets for the whole area. The contemporary circus infill would work in a close relationship with the existing traditional circus building and it is important in design process to establish hierarchical relationships between the existing circus building, its unique cupola and new building.



Existing situation from Kalniņa street.



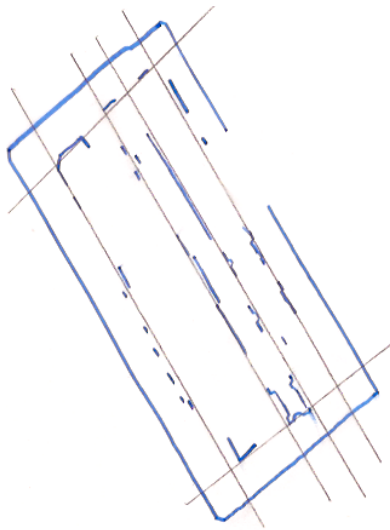
Infill building following the established built border on Kalniņa street.

Until now, the performance of existing circus building and its back has affected the site, leaving it as a gap in urban structure. Since the use of back premises in existing Riga circus building have shifted and the back buildings of the complex will be used for another functions, opportunity occurs to place a new infill architecture with new functions needed for the contemporary circus establishment creating a united circus performance complex in one block.

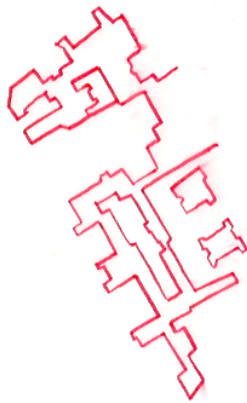
The new infill building would pursue the established built border following the Kalniņa street with some sensitive derogations to emphasize buildings inner spatial structure and entrances. The idea of continuous infill along Kalniņa street was determined to be important to maintain the historic patterns of the block development. The main façade of the new building would fit in the existing perspective of the street preserving the established built border.

The approach for infill on the inner side of the block resulted with the new building shaping two courtyards with passages connecting them together with the whole complex. The passage along the existing circus building and the stalls would become a gateway to experience the whole circus quarter and open its inner structure to public eyes while on the other side there would be a functional connection to ensure service flows.

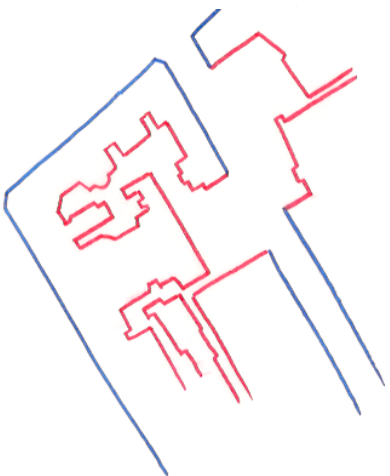
The massing and placing of new volumes would be in relation to the surrounding context while building it self would honestly reflect on what happens inside and communicate its purpose. This filling of the gap with a volume deriving from the pre-established structure of the block illustrates how the design is aware and is in alliance with the pre-existing context of the site. While my interventions to the site would partake and communicate the character and history of the pre-existing context, it would not replicate and create false sense of historical building. The approach would encourage incorporation of a modern architectural vocabulary while respecting the physical experience and social values derived from historic city development patterns.



The outer structure of the block where site is located.



The inner structure of the block where site is located.



Outer and inner structure of the block together.

The design intervention aims to identify a set of design strategies, respecting the existing historic fabric within the evolving context of the city and to reclaim under-utilized gaps within the historic fabric to create a synergistic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Several design criteria were selected to keep track in analysis of existing surrounding and to juxtapose the design outcome to the surroundings. With help of those criteria a correlation is established with the visual context of site.

Massing

Three-dimensional character of the building mass is massing.

The massing of the volume refers to the existing circus building, having a smaller scale space towards the street while the biggest volume, hosting theatre, large training space and restaurant on top, is set back from the street, hidden in the back of building. The main façade of the building is separated in three smaller fractions to enhance the verticality of façade and split the large massing in a smaller fractions being more appropriate to the over all scale.

Sitting

Concern about the occupation of the building to its site and the relation of it with street or other spaces and other buildings.

The occupation of the building is organised similarly to existing circus building, having smaller inner spaces towards the street while large scale spaces are placed inside of block avoiding situations where large parts of façades towards the street would be closed, with no windows and detailing. The façade towards the Kalniņa street would be provide visual connection to the inside of building and would relate to the street scale. The large volumes hidden in the back of building are stacked on top of each other creating a strong architectural form that creates a dialogue between the existing circus cupola and new additions hosting multi transformable theatre, large training facility and a restaurant on top of the pile.

The composition of new volumes is situated so that the façade towards the Kalniņa street would correlate to the context of the street, while the larger, more expressive volumes are positioned towards the existing circus building responding to the circus context on other side of the building.

Height

Consider about the consistency of new buildings with their neighbouring building roof-lines, the existing height of the neighbourhood.

The height of the building has consistency with adjacent roof-line of the whole block. The height of all buildings in the area varies in small amplitude up to 24m in its maximum. The only exception on the block is existing circus building, where only the cupola reaches to the height of 24m while all other building volumes are two stories in height.

To respond to the different heights of ledges in the existing context, a small derogation in facade is created on the top floor of new building. A terrace that sets back one side of the top floors façade, create a derogation negotiating the difference in heights between two neighbouring buildings.

Set back

Respect to the set back of buildings from the street

The idea of continuous infill along Kalniņa Street was determined to be important to maintain the historic patterns of city development. The inner structure of the block resulted in organization of building volumes around two

courtyards which connect the new building to existing circus building and provide circulation in-between. The courtyards derive from the negative spaces of the block that is closely related to insulation of buildings.

Orientation

Consider about the respect of the entrance of buildings with its neighbouring buildings.

The orientation of the new building derives from its close relation to neighbouring buildings, since the facade follows the established border with small derogation to advert the entrances to the building and courtyards. The entrances in the building are not facing on the street façade directly but are incorporated into passages to emphasize and indicate the inner courtyards and connections between the whole circus complex.

Rhythm

Organization and size of the component of a buildings facade that is usually repeated .

Rhythm is a very strong character for the existing buildings on Kalniņa street where it is established by the repetition of windows as well as in iteration of smaller detailing on the façade. The new façade would partake the existing vertical rhythm pattern and incorporate it in a contemporary form language creating a harmonious relation to the existing street scape.

Material & Colour

Material helps to establish a significant local distinctiveness by manifesting the colour and leading a various range of vernacular building traditions and materials.

The materiality of the building derives from the connection to the existing circus building which is made from brick and metal construction inside with some additional metal details on the façade. Use of the same materiality would strengthen the overall appearance of the complex as one unity. The colouring of the brick would be variable between the three volumes of new building and would react to the neighbouring buildings on the Kalniņa Street.

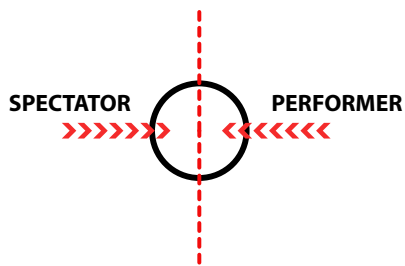
The façade on Kalniņa street would be covered with brick, while the inner volumes would be treated separate parts in overall composition and each volume would differ in its materiality. Usage of different materiality in volumes would indicate on different functions inside them.

Scale

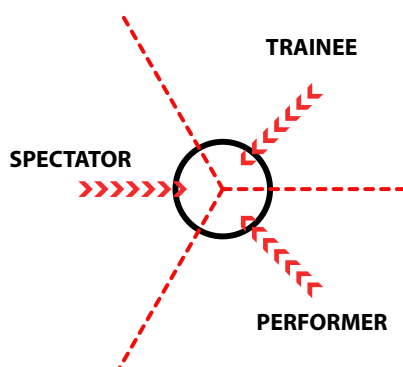
Concerns dimensions of buildings and perception of it relative to the objects around it.

The building has to respond differently in its scales to different sides of it. From the front the building would appear as monumental façade perceived together with the neighbouring buildings. The human scale on the street level would be gained with the visually opened ground floor and colonnade following the street front.

The back of the building is perceived from two rather narrow courtyards. So to adjust the buildings scale to the courtyards, the volumes in the back are shifting as they go higher up creating terraces from where the whole complex can be seen. These derogations in a façade would create gradual change in scale as the building meet the ground in back courtyards.



Clear front and back relation in the building between spectator and performer.



Implementation of another user of complex.

Designing contemporary circus building

Changes in contemporary circus concept and how it interacts with society are demanding for different additional spaces next to existing circus building. The concept of circus has altered since from being a closed artist society sharing their knowledge and trade within a close loop circus community is becoming more opened. The circus establishments are finding different ways of how to interact with society and attract more people into the circus disciplines. One of the ways is to share their trade and let other people to have a completely different kind of experience of circus and its traditions. People are invited to try and learn the circus trade them selves.

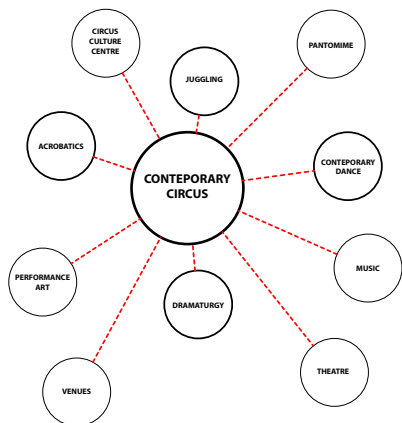
This new openness to the society not only demands for specific spaces that can host lectures, practices and have a common space with axes able information on the subject, but rearranges the relation of complex to public and service axes. The traditional circus establishments have worked with a clear separation in-between public and service spaces, booth meeting in the arena. This kind of conventional arrangement of axes has shaped circus buildings, hence establishing clear front and back. Front being more sophisticated and delicate architecture serving as a public space and dealing with large flows of people. While back dealing with services flows of performers and spaces for animals usually being a completely hidden from spectators and public eyes.

Implementation of another user of complex brings on other layer of sophistication to the complexity of flows in circus complex. Semi public space is introduced to the whole complex allowing the specific public axes to inner grounds of circus “back”.

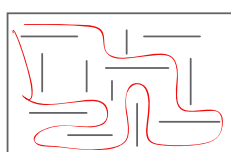
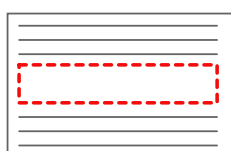
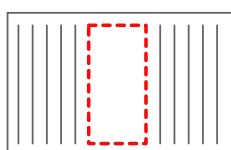
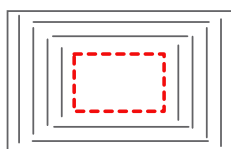
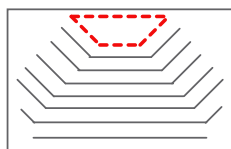
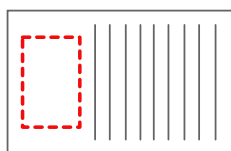
Transition in complex and its logistic is the back bone of the project that dictates how the spaces interact with each other, how and where the trainee meets the trainer, performer meets the spectator and spectator becomes involved. Certain rules are applied that provide the complex with ability for three different flows to inhabit the complex without interference in-between providing specific meeting points.

To create a contemporary circus platform that can host a variety of different disciplines and encourage multidisciplinary in performance art development certain kind of spaces are selected:

- Multifunctional performance and venue space** (Public interface)
- Training and learning facilities** (Semi-public interface)
- Personal and guest residencies** (private interface)



Spatial interrelation between different disciplines.



Multifunctional performance space with possibility to transform for different events.

Another aspect of contemporary circus that affects spatial relations and demands for other kind of spaces and premises is interrelation between different disciplines. It affects performance spaces as much as training facilities since they have to be adaptive to different users. These interdisciplinary synergies can take place only if there are spaces that can be rearranged, transformed and can support these disciplines.

Adaptable spaces with different sizes in height and width are needed to accommodate wide range of actions. Spatial design can enhance these synergies by providing relations in-between different spaces with a need for the spaces to work together at the same time and provide possibility for spaces to be united and linked visually. Places for meeting and social interactions can work as catalyser that lead to cooperation and interaction in performance. Additional multifunctional performance space is necessary to respond to variable needs of performers. In additions to existing rounded circus arena located near by, new transformable black box theatre is introduced to accommodate shows and performances based on theatrical performance format with ability for flexible stage and seating layout that could be rearranged for different venues, shows and used as additional rehearsal room.

This kind of multifunctional performance space could attract other disciplines and events adding diversity in usability and providing additional rental possibilities to the complex. The space with its accommodation possibilities would be a unique attraction point for performance arts in the whole context of Riga since there is lack for flexible performance spaces that could accommodate more than 200 people at one time.

A contemporary circus building is designed as a cluster for different kind of activities connected to performance arts and circus tradition. Variety of events and different kinds of artistic expression of body and mind would only enrich and serve as a catalyser for future development of circus concept, enhancing its ability to transform and change along. Architecture of the building has to serve as a platform for diversity and mutation being a place of possibilities to happen. The program of the new contemporary circus building provides an opportunity for the Riga circus complex to expand its potential for accommodation of contemporary performance art development, while remaining tangibly connected to its social and cultural legacy.

Design intentions

After analysing the initial investigations into a site strategy and program organization design intentions were set:

- Design and fit spaces demanded for contemporary circus in relation to the existing circus building.*
- Design a cluster of functions that engage and encourage creative multidisciplinary development of contemporary circus and performance arts.*
- Reclaim the under-utilized areas of the block.*
- Preserve the existing character of the street scape.*
- Open the inner hidden structure of the block for public.*
- Organize exterior courtyards that provide work connections, gathering spaces, places of retreat and service.*
- Reveal the complex from different perspectives and heights. To use the visual and physical connections between complex.*
- Reveal the circus Complex from Kalniņa Street.*
- Provide the complex with clear distributed flows for public and service axes.*
- Introduce multi transform-ability to the use of complex.*
- Create a continuous development of site, engaging with pre-existing context of site and urban fabric of the whole area.*

Conclusion

A continuity incorporated in new building is achievable if the building relates and comes in alliance with the pre-existing context. In this relation and engagement to the surroundings the building reaches its full potential becoming a part of whole. A new infill development can be a part and contributor to a pre-existing built heritage that creates a synergistic whole. It can be an opportunity for the site to facilitate changing needs and priorities of current time at the same time preserving and continuing the context of site.

The extension to the Riga circus complex shows, not only how the circus could expand to become a stronger institution within the city, while still retaining its unique character, but also how such an intervention could create a tangible connection with the past, facilitate the needs of the present and allow for further changes in the future. The intention of project was to respond to the existing context in a variety of scales from immediately adjacent structures to the whole character of the block and city as a whole in all aspects of architectural design, from building orientation, scale, proportions, massing, materials, and architectural language. The infill was designed in accordance to its surroundings at the same time fulfilling the needs of a contemporary circus buildings and providing all the necessary connections for the circus complex to work as one whole. In most cases the susceptibility to the surrounding context served as a starting point for the design to evolve, while the limitations of the size of the plot and established block height was challenging in order to fit a well functioning contemporary circus program that would support and supplement interrelation between different performance disciplines.

The main challenge of the project was to strike a balance between undertaking and transiting the spirit of place and at the same time create a contemporary platform for performance art development. Pre-existing context was used as active participant to evolving design just as much as the program of contemporary circus. By weaving together old and new through themes of continuity and a 'sense of place,' the design can create a symbiosis between the history and the needs and opportunities of today and tomorrow.

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