

# TOWARD A QUALITATIVE ARCHITECTURE

*A Phenomenological Study Of  
The Gothenburg Museum Of Art*

EMIL KARLSSON

*Master Thesis  
Critical Spatial Perspectives  
Chalmers University of Technology  
Department of Architecture  
& Civil Engineering  
Examiner Kristina Grange  
Supervisor Nils Björling*





# TOWARD A QUALITATIVE ARCHITECTURE

*- A Phenomenological Study Of The Gothenburg Museum Of Art*



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

*Toward a Qualitative Architecture*  
*- A Phenomenological study of the Gothenburg*  
*Museum of Art*

*Emil Karlsson*

*Chalmers School of Architecture*  
*Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering*  
*Architecture and Urban design*  
*Critical Spatial Perspectives*

*Examiner Kristina Grange*  
*Supervisor Nils Björling*

*Master Thesis 2021*

EMIL KARLSSON



1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Genesis 11:1-9

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Theoretical place	7
<i>Norberg-Schulz</i>	7
<i>Heidegger &amp; Phenomenology</i>	8
<i>Place</i>	10
<i>Auret's critique</i>	12
Physical place	19
<i>1:10 000 - The city and the building</i>	21
<i>1:1000 - The area and the building</i>	28
<i>1:100 - The building and the function</i>	30
<i>1:10 - The building and the detail</i>	32
A physical place revisited	37
<i>1:10 000 revisited - place and politics</i>	38
<i>1:1000 revisited - style</i>	40
<i>1:100 revisited - form or function</i>	42
<i>1:10 revisited - materiality</i>	44
Conclusion	49
References	52

Abstract

The Gothenburg Museum of Art is, after one hundred years of service presently in need of renovations and an extension. The museum's location was and still is revealing of the city's interest in physical representative space but also the important function and status of the museum as a cultural institution. The role is in a large degree not only cultural but also social, economic, and political. An architectural project of this magnitude cannot contently be made simply of factors such as form and function but must be expanded by critical questions of architecture's role, scope and ultimately meaning. This thesis aims to determine how phenomenological notions of place can illuminate and determine questions regarding architectural discourse beyond concrete physical factors.

To test the hypothesis that the phenomenological place can add to our practical projects in architecture, a study was made of the theories in architectural discourse mainly by Christian Norberg-Schulz and Martin Heidegger. Simultaneously an inventory of Götaplatsen and Gothenburg Museum of Art was made engaging with questions of meaning in various levels of the city and building. These two studies were then combined in a discussion and analysis. The concept of place and architecture was shown as not having a fixed meaning and must be interpreted on a case-by-case basis. The modern society is in a large degree affected by calculative thought and strives for efficiency rather than qualitative authenticity.

The results suggest that a deeper meaning of architecture lies not in a fixed absolutism and efficiency but in an understanding of it as authentically concerned concretization of our existential being-in-the-world.



# Introduction

## *Background*

Introducing this thesis was the artwork *The tower of Babel* by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, accompanied with the envisaged biblical text. It is a representation of the story of how the unified and monolingual people of earth were scattered by the wrath of god. The painting poetically invites one to question what does architecture really mean to us? Is its function to reach the heavens and must it do so by a specific form, and how much are we thus affected by our place when creating?

The thesis concerns the Gothenburg Museum of Art which was inaugurated in 1923 as an exhibition building of the jubilee celebrating Gothenburg's 300th anniversary. Through the nearly one hundred years of service the museum has gone through some large changes but it is now once again in need of renovations and an extension to develop it into "a modern, energy effective and logistical well-functioning art museum building of international standard" (Higab, 2021).

To understand what an extension should be it was thus essential to understand what the role of an art museum really is supposed to be. A question that has changed considerably since the museum's inception. The museum's location was and is revealing of the city's interest in physical representative city space but also the important function and status of the museum as a cultural institution. The role is in a large degree not only cultural but social, economic, and political. Lately, the role of the art museum has changed into an experience centre beyond the mere visual senses. A market-oriented viewpoint has thus arisen, but it misses the other principal tasks outside of economy. A museum has a mission to collect, preserve and teach not only of aesthetics and critical thinking but ultimately also ourselves.

An architectural project of this magnitude cannot contently be made simply of factors such as form and function but must be expanded by critical questions of architecture's role, scope and perhaps also meaning. One theory in viewing architecture's meaning is made by the architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz building upon the works of the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Norberg-Schulz used theories of phenomenology as a ground to establish his views of architecture and its existential purpose for humans in a theory of place.

## *Purpose & Aim*

This thesis shows how phenomenological place can lead to other perspectives guiding a presumptive extension to the Gothenburg museum of art beyond the standard discourse. It is an effort to critically examine architecture through philosophy

## *Research Questions*

*What design strategies can 'place theory' establish for the Gothenburg museum of art?*

*How can 'place theory' illuminate factors such as social, economic, political for architecture?*

## *Method*

The method is qualitative research into texts and themes through the lens of phenomenology. This pertains the meaning of experience of architecture through hermeneutic inquiry thus understanding its existential role in ontology. The first part establishes the theory, giving a background so that it later can be applied to inquiries regarding the site and building. The second part presents these inquiries with various understandings and meaning to the building and place through different levels. They are then revisited in the third part and discussed with the theories from the first part.

## *Theory*

The theory is mainly situated in a phenomenological and ontological discussion regarding architecture and place. A brief study is made of the theories of Martin Heidegger, explaining the formative inspiration for Christian Norberg-Schulz. The focus is the latter's phenomenological theories regarding place and what this means for architecture. These are then expanded upon with Hendrik Aurenth placing Norberg-Schulz more firmly in Heidegger's theories of ontology and phenomenology.

## *Delimitations*

Norberg-Schulz's career spans many concepts and theories but the focus in this thesis is his thoughts regarding place. Various ideas and thoughts from Norberg-Schulz for example his usage of pictures and the romanticizing imagery of specific places are left out. I believe the overall notion of place can be enhanced by an extraction and viewed more together with Heidegger than seeing them in a vacuum of only himself.





HÄGGERBLAD  
CENTER

GÖTEBORGS KONSTMUSEUM

GÖTEBORGS  
KONSTHALL





## Theoretical place

### *Norberg-Schulz*

Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) attended the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich starting 1945, where he met and attended group meetings with the well-reputed art historian and architectural theorist Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968). The influence Giedion instilled was profound and gave Norberg-Schulz the appreciation of modern architecture as an artistic movement that was going to heal the split of thought and feeling. (Auret, 2015, p. 76) Although a believer of modern architecture at its core, Giedion believed that something was lacking in the buildings achieved. The modernistic re-interpretation of the individual dwelling was all well and good but had to be combined with a restoration of contact between the individual and the community. He thought that the movement had to be imbued by a so-called *new monumentality* and *new regionalism*, also seen as *continuity* and *change*, which strived towards inspired architectural imagination. To Giedion the modern movement had eschewed the powers of feeling for powers of thinking. This had the influence that Norberg-Schulz sought a new tradition trying to solve the meaning of architecture.

The underlining intention of Norberg-Schulz's work was to identify meaningful architectural responses to address the "*loss of place*". He saw science as a culprit with its reliance on rationality and abstractions providing only a quantitative outlook of the world. It distanced mankind from a qualitative poetic world. (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, pp. 5-6) The loss of place signified that architecture had failed to give character and coherence to life as a larger totality. (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, pp. 189-190) By failing to provide character it thus gave limited possibility for identification which resulted in sense of alienation. (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 168) However Norberg-Schulz did not mean that the loss of place should be answered by copying old architectural styles. Adhering to the Giedion's time constructs of continuity and change meant viewing architectural works in an interaction that continuations or conservations needed to be changeable simultaneously as changes had to be continuations (Auret, 2015, p. 78).

The other large impression that would influence Christian Norberg-Schulz, and much more relevant to this study, is the existential works of Martin Heidegger.



## Heidegger & Phenomenology

To understand Heidegger and what his aim was, it is essential to understand his context in that of phenomenology. Phenomenology as the philosophical tradition launched in the first half of the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl. He defined phenomenology as *a science of the essence of consciousness* centered on the idea of intentionality, explicitly from a subjective first-person point of view (Husserl, 1913/1998, pp. 33-35). That means phenomenology is the study of structure of consciousness and our subjective conscious experiences. Experiences such as but not limited to emotions, thoughts, perceptions, imaginations, and desires. The important underlining structure that permeates our experiences are their so-called intentionality. They have a directedness towards something, which means our mental content is directed towards something outside of it. Each act of consciousness must be conscious of or about something. The meaning of a specific experience depends on the conceptualization or understanding in our minds. This leads to phenomenology as a study of meaning (Smith, 2018).

Continuing the thought of intentionality Husserl proposed that the study of phenomenology should bracket the question of an existing world around us. Whether the world existed or not did not matter, what mattered and what should be studied was that he had an experience of a world around him independently if it actually did. The important factor was how the object of study is meant or intended. This view of humans as subjects relating to objects and bracketing questions of existence were however not self-evident for all (Smith, 2018).

Working as Husserl's assistant and then becoming his successor of philosophy chair at Freiburg University, Martin Heidegger sought to use phenomenology to question philosophical discourse. He wanted to start anew with a fundamental ontology studying structures of *being* and how it is disclosed in our human existence (Haddad, 2010, p. 89). Heidegger's pivotal work is *Being and Time* from 1927, one of the most influential works of philosophy in the twentieth century (Auret, 2015, p. 4).

Martin Heidegger objected against the thought of bracketing the world in discussion about our relation to it. Instead, we should according to him interpret our actions and the meaning of the things for us through the lens of our contextual relations to

things in the world. Heidegger thought that humans did not relate to the world as scientifically detached or subjects contemplating objects, and that consciousness was not central to the human situation. We are instead as Heidegger calls it *being-in-the-world*, a replacement of the words of subjects and objects to overcome this question. We are in amongst it all not as observing beings but as coping beings. Important is what it means to be, to *is*, instead of to *not*, and why this is a critical question for beings. We beings are what he calls *Dasein*, directly translated as there-being, and used instead of existence or a subject. *Dasein* is special because "in its being this being is concerned about its very being" (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 12) or that "in its very being its own being is an issue for it" (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 33) which separates us to other things.

Later Heidegger marked a turn in focus from mainly a phenomenological methodology towards a mythopoeic one focusing on the nature of elements and reflecting on poetic or artistic practices. For Heidegger life was grounded in poetics and with it provided a poetic mindset which was the only way of understanding existence and its meaning through its authentic depth (Auret, 2015, p. 101). Norberg-Schulz was one of the first from the architectural field that tried to bridge Heidegger's thoughts and translate it into a phenomenological theory of architecture (Haddad, 2010, p. 89). Inspired by Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz understood the necessity of moving away from the view of subjects and objects for the existential notion of *Dasein* and its ontological being-in-the-world. This meant that life could be rediscovered as a totality of interaction between concrete qualities. He thought that humans are positioned in-amongst that totality of qualities, seen in an emplaced existence which could be architecturally expressed (Auret, 2015, p. 103).

By combining Giedion's time constructs with Heidegger's theories of existence and *being-in-the-world* Norberg-Schulz formulated his theories of the *art of place*. He expresses these thoughts in the well-known book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979) with the phenomenological notion of place as an existential dimension of truth and architecture a concrete manifestation of human's dwelling (p. 6).



## Place

Norberg-Schulz starts from the notion that our existence is made of tangible phenomena, such as trees, or intangible phenomena such as feelings, interrelated into a sort of complex background called *place*. He further links this with Heidegger's concept of *dwelling* and explains it as that which humans can do when they can orient and identify themselves within their place. This means that when humans find their place as meaningful that they can dwell. To dwell thus must be something more than simply seeking shelter. Such a place where dwelling unfolds is inhabited with a special character which is called *genius loci*. To him architecture is supposed to visualize the genius loci, thus creating meaningful places, and letting man dwell (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, pp. 5-6). Place is thus something more than an abstract location but a qualitative dynamic totality that is deeply intertwined with our way of life (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, pp. 7-8).

Norberg-Schulz thought a place had a *stimmung*, an atmosphere, that could be concretized in buildings. This concretization should form as a revelatory poetic speaking matching the destiny of the place (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 136). The understanding of the *stimmung* in the proposed dweller could be seen as a *übereinstimmung*, or correspondence, and forms the basis of being-in-the-world (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 185). A building answering the genius loci thus poetically work as a revelation of the place. Buildings seen in architectural poetic revelation works by gathering and setting-into-work the truth of place (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, pp. 65-66). Genius loci is a force determined by continuity and change that asserts dominance over people and places. People cannot exist without the identity of place and our belonging to it (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 22). It works as a mediator envisioning all different meanings seen in a place, but it is not static essence and should instead be seen as a living reality (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 18). To Norberg-Schulz (1979) the genius loci therefore cannot only be copying old models but must be constantly reinterpreted (p. 182). But since people are dependent on the place and its identity it must also respect the spirit of it and work for its continuation, named *stabilitas loci* (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 180). Through a respectful preservation of the place it will survive historical forces seen in economic, cultural, and social effects. Norberg-Schulz (1979) thus does not see a respectful interpretation as stagnating our development but that our lives are rooted in a meaningful history (p. 196).

Hendrik Andries Aret, in his doctoral dissertation *Care, Place and Architecture: A Critical Reading of Christian Norberg-Schulz's Architectural Interpretation of Martin Heidegger's Philosophy* (2015), points to Norberg-Schulz's enduring ambition throughout his career that architecture should understand and interpret the way of life imbued in the place (p. 160). The importance of a phenomenological understanding of space is to him seen in our colloquial saying of life "takes place" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 6). He saw the possibility of architecture setting-into-work the truth of our lived spatiality seen in place calling it the *art of place* or *stedskunst*. The aspiration of the art of place was an authentic concretization, and only then could it become the *art of living* or *livskunst*. This describes his idea that architecture should aspire in a concrete response of Dasein's being-in-the-world, i.e., concretize human life in a specific place. To him architecture still lacked a phenomenological understanding that could, instead of rational thinking, instill the art of place qualitatively (Aret, 2015, p. 161).

### *Auret's critique*

According to Auret, Norberg-Schulz, as one of the most far-reaching and prolific interpreters of Heidegger's philosophy in architecture, neglected or misconstrued the important aspect of time. Norberg-Schulz saw life as taking place primarily in a spatial definition between earth and sky. He saw time, akin to Giedion, as continuities and changing interpretations. This was established by Giedion to pose the question of what could and what could not be changed in human nature. He wanted to unite architecture under a sort of structuralist umbrella where a contemporary architecture was linked by a united truth with predecessors (Auret, 2015, p. 205).

Except Heidegger saw the human situation not just as a spatial emplacement but also the fundamental fact of time in that we are situated between birth and death. Dasein has a way of being, seen in *being-toward-death* in which through life we gain an understanding of authenticity and meaning by our fear of death (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 247). This is a notion that is quite strange but also makes sense when seeing it as Dasein can relate to a possible future event that it will never experience in the present moment, and that this dramatically influences its existence. Heidegger wants to move beyond a linear understanding of time in past, present and future and more see it as a unity in temporality. Dasein is time, lives within it, is attuned backwards and projects itself forwards (Auret, 2015, pp. 199-200). The crucial factor of Dasein's being-in-the-world is our unmistakable concern or *care* for our situation giving us existential meaning. We cultivate or take care of things which is just not a factor of a continuity or possible changes. Viewing people as beings of care, sees them as concerned and engaged in individual and shared contextual situations. Dasein is thus care and authentically being-in-the-world (Auret, 2015, p. 14).

Auret (2015) sees the art of care as chance to liberate Norberg-Schulz's works from structuralist tendencies and idealistic archetypes and situate him more firmly in ontological phenomenology (p. 1). It is simply just not the art of place that makes stedskunst become livskunst but also the art of care. It moves place away from enduring continuities that can be appropriated by ethnic or political groups and into an ecstatic humanistic cultivation based on the way people live and concretize the world. A main point is to see that we do not need to find meaning or care and then create but

that we as beings of care has always cared and been concerned about our situation (Auret, 2015, p. 296). By this line of reasoning we see that places are not inherently meaningful, but people instill it with such since we are open to meaning. This frees architecture of having to correspond to a specific ideal such as archetype, gestalt or strong place and consequently, not working as assertive but as revelatory (Auret, 2015, p. 301). Dasein's *sorge* seen in concerns and cultivations establish meaning for the place instead of a continuous albeit changing property of a place. Thus, a strong identity should according to Auret instead be seen as a similar investment between people for extended periods (Auret, 2015, p. 308). He also emphasize the fact that this does not exclude new revelations or appropriations of place but in fact proposes it. Restricting place to a continuous spirit excludes political forces possible of reforming the place and life contained (Auret, 2015, p. 309). Auret (2015) sees the art of care as politically empowering, not specifically enforcing responsible political architecture, but instead that our concerned existence already infuses architecture with certain political stances (p. 311).

In the end, despite adhering to Heidegger's philosophy, Norberg-Schulz delimited his foray of architectural phenomenology by categories and structuring of the lifeworld. To Heidegger this obfuscates our lives by insisting on a level of certainty which he would call calculative thinking (Auret, 2015, p. 309). The calculative way can be seen in that the metaphysical tradition has turned being into *becoming*, *seeming*, *thinking* and *the ought*, distancing it from the ontological aspects Heidegger sought of our existence (Auret, 2015, p. 299). The overt chasing of meaning through correctness, categories and thus calculation has led being into something that is no longer ready-to-hand but instead present-at-hand (Auret, 2015, p. 206). This means that we try to be by assertion rather than revelation which according to Heidegger means we are no longer open to wonder. We can now see this quite clearly from Norberg-Schulz's interpretation and how his architectural 'ought' has turned architecture away from the already concerned beings into something metaphysical (Auret, 2015, p. 300).

When Norberg-Schulz thought society's, alienation stemmed from the loss of place Heidegger would instead argue that it came from turning beings into objects described



mathematically and further controlled technologically. It has thus turned Dasein's relation with being groundless and passionless (Auret, 2015, pp. 201-202). Auret, in the end, shows the contemporary usage of Norberg-Schulz, Heidegger and his work situated as a bridge between them. When combining Norberg-Schulz's art of place with the art of care he examines architecture through Heidegger with the terminology of *tyranny of efficiency* and *tyranny of lived experience* (Auret, 2015, pp. 21-22).

Heidegger thought that behind technology was a framework or *Gestell* composed of the previously mentioned calculative thinking. The care of Dasein is thus sidestepped by a system no longer revealing the world as *poiesis*, poetic making as an act of concerned revelation, and instead demanding maximum yield at minimum expense, i.e., the search for efficiency (Heidegger & Krell, 1993, pp. 318-324). Technology renders humans to standing reserves or stockpiles in service to its purposes (Heidegger & Krell, 1993, p. 309). The *gestell* thus turn things into commodities that simply can be used and discarded. Auret (2015) thus argues that thinking turns to ordering of facts, measuring to quantification and, making to efficiency that the being of care turns to indifferent and impoverished (p. 315). He (Auret, 2015) poignantly asserts that "caring for the world is not a matter of efficiency" and that this quest of efficiency can quite explicitly be seen in the response for a demand of sustainability (p. 22). A matter that he shares with Norberg-Schulz who saw the solution to the ecological crisis in the that architecture should emanate from the way people live authentically in places, a phenomenological understanding of place (Auret, 2015, p. 22). The main point is not that efficiency by itself is problematic and unwanted but that it cannot form the basis of our existence. An efficient result can be sought, and in future probably more so, but it must emerge appropriate to the being of care and not instead of care.

Auret (2015) notes an emphasis in architectural phenomenology on experiences seen in the works of Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Pérez Gómez (p. 316). Heidegger would however caution against the effort in creating *lived experiences* because they also have been contaminated by the *Gestell* of modern technology (Auret, 2015, p. 317). For Heidegger experiences are not an appropriate tool for an ontological analysis of Dasein since they stem from ecstatic care (Auret, 2015, p.

249). They metaphysically seem to arise in a need for the present instead of care. Our society affected by technology acts calculating with generating an ought in how to experience and a hunt for lived experiences which essentially obfuscate the real concerned being-in-the-world (Auret, 2015, p. 300). When experiences are influenced by an ordering or calculation, they become a commodity and thus objects of lived experiences. This works against Heidegger's thoughts of an object among object and instead sets humans as experiencing subjects that judge experiences developed by objects (Auret, 2015, p. 317).









## Physical place

To understand the effect of place let us now focus on the Gothenburg Museum of art to see what can be learned about the context and its differing meanings. The study is made centering on architecture and situated in four scale levels. The levels work by giving varying examples how place affect the museum and should be seen as non-exhaustive inquires. They are now perhaps more remnants of an earlier conception of sketches I thought I would complete, but I still think they illuminate well the various levels in how one can approach architecture. They are not strictly phenomenological but more akin to critical inquires of architecture.





Maps meant to show the expansion of gothenburg for the tercentenary exhibition 1923.

1890

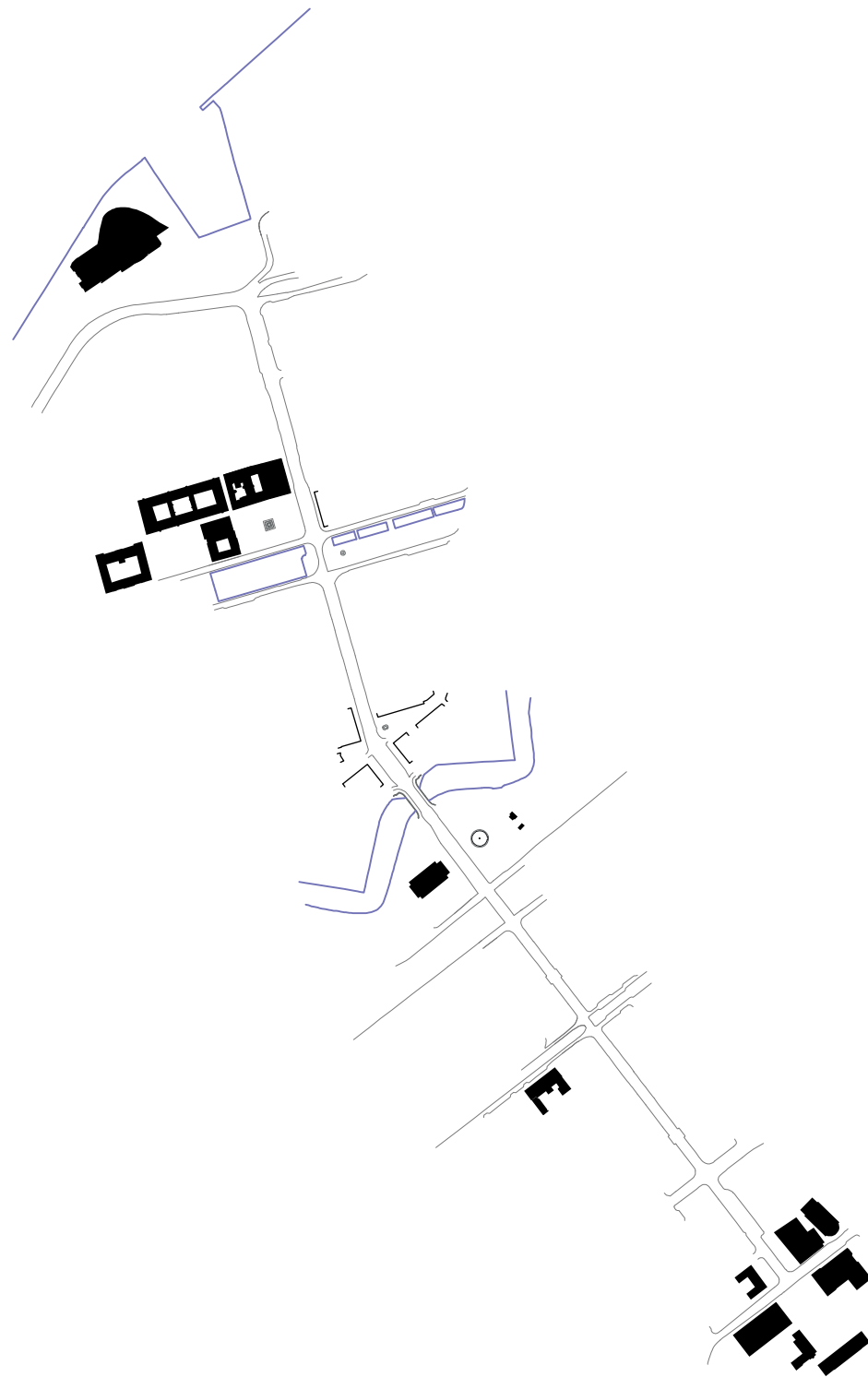
1921

## 1:10 000 - The city and the building

In the scale of 1:10000 the question of meaning for the museum can be examined by looking at what the city imposes on it. To interpret the Gothenburg museum of art and it's meaning for Gothenburg one can see to its history, in what context it was built and then expanded. Stina Hagelqvist (2015) writes in *From temple to Factory: Gothenburg museum of Art as a Space of Convergence and Conflict*, regarding the museum's construction and points a statement by the then director Axel L. Romdahl regarding the dependence of the city and it's donors (p. 334). To her it is a clear sign of that architecture is a product of social and cultural processes and positions. With the 1923's tercentenary exhibition Gothenburg had a possibility of showing itself as energetic, modern and cultivated in an international arena. The museum's placement springs from the exhibition and is a sign of how city space then was supposed to act representatively. As chief city engineer Albert Lilienberg had created competitions concerning for example Drottningtorget and Gustaf Adolf's square with an aim of harmonious spaces to heighten the city's sense of identity (Hagelqvist, 2015, p. 385). Lilienberg was also involved regarding Kungssportsavenyn and his opinion, that the city's premier street should be rounded off with a monumental plaza, was decided by a city plan and included in the competition. By the placement of the exhibition's entrance to Götaplatsen a forced solution to the site was possible.

The site of Götaplatsen had by then emerged as representative location for the bourgeois elite of Gothenburg. Flanked by newly constructed patrician residential villas in Lorensberg, the glamorous Vasastaden and affluent apartment blocks on Kungssportsavenyn, Götaplatsen was supposed to set an appropriate tone for all these new residential areas of Gothenburg's elite. Hagelqvist (2015) proposes that both the placement and the site should be seen as a manifestation of the bourgeois city identity especially concerning the donative culture that had contributed to several cultural buildings (p. 340). It is suggestive of times past that the museum and its two later extensions from 1968 and 1998 are all financed by donations, specifically from the shipping industry. From the donations and its stipulations, hidden arrangements can be seen of not just the overall development but details such as floor plan and interior choices. It is therefore indicative of the relation but also dependence of Gothenburg's political, economical and cultural power elite. Important for the specific project is a





### *Art and power - institutions of Kungälvavägen*

Inspired by Edmund Bacon and his overtly abstract analysis of baroque avenues in Rome (Forty, 2000, p. 24), these following diagrams illustrate Kungälvavägen and its extension in central Gothenburg. The idea was to use Bacon's reductiveness of the city to show basic questions or preferences structured in a loose notion of mapping.

mix of, few but powerful, politicians, local government officials and entrepreneurs in close liaison and with often overlapping interests. This consequently led to politicians in specialist roles and others in a position of dependence. Hagelqvist (2015) notes however that the project is not the result of a single person or factor but should instead be seen as an area of convergence of people and pursuits (pp. 342-343).

Plagued with a recession and limited funds the building was already at completion too small for its purposes and further extensions were therefore discussed. The museum would in the coming years host many lectures and temporary exhibitions that would further illustrate the building's shortcomings. But the increase in public events is not only a sign of the transformation of the visitor's role and the visit itself, but also the art museum's relation to the visitor and the city. In the 1950's critique was directed at the museum to be a bourgeois institution with the focus of art. It was instead turning towards pluralistic institution with focus on the public (Hagelqvist, 2015, p. 366). To Hagelqvist the clearest sign of the development can be seen in the modifications and extensions made in 1968 and 1998. The museum directory wanted in the late 1950's a clearer contact to Götaplatsen and the city. They wanted to move away from the high castle of art with monumental structures, stairs, terrasses and make it more available, instead reaching out to the visitor with a friendly gesture. The reinterpretation would thus contain a new entrance, restaurant, lecture hall, and spaces for both permanent and temporary exhibitions. The addition of 1968 and its entrance on the eastern terrasses led to displaced focus of the previous dominating monumentality but the accessibility was however only theoretically enhanced. The new entrance, with discreet design and obscured location, did not lead to the wanted success and the old entrance was still in parallel use (Hagelqvist p.374). In the 1990's discussions would start anew regarding the museum building's shortcomings. In 1996 a new entrance was centrally placed under the stairs and terrasses leading towards a new entrance hall, boutique and exhibition halls and an interior staircase leading up to the middle of the sculpture hall.

The change the museum has gone through is telling of the transformation of the role of the art museum but in a large degree also the change in society. The strict



### *Money - the commerce of Kungälv*

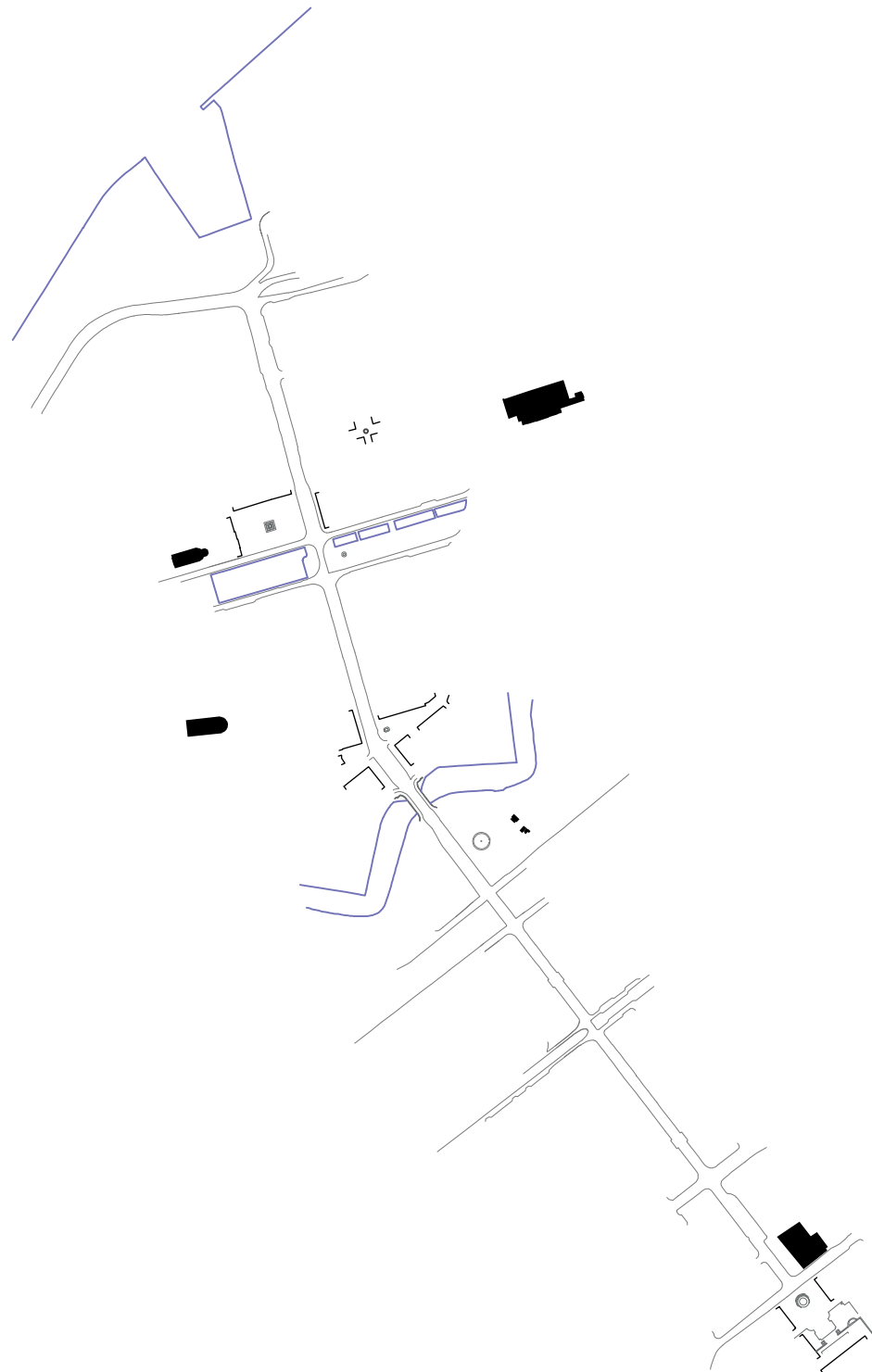
I think that what is most interesting is perhaps not what *is* shown but what *is not*. The generalization of the city into key concepts succinctly succeeds in turning dense city structures full of life into either explicitly protruding figures or obfuscating white mass.

hierarchical monumental architecture indicative of bourgeois society has changed towards an accessible experience center with focus on capitalistic tendencies such as consumption and branding. This is a change that can be seen globally, discussed by Alexandra Stara in *The Louvre Effect* (2015). According to Stara (2015) the public museum was invented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, established as an authoritative institution of education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, expansion with museums for every object that humans make or find in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the building of museum for its own sake in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (p. 50). They are then prestige projects and tourist attractions where the building itself should be seen as a masterpiece, ironically oftentimes outshining the art inside of it. It is a tendency that, according to Stara (2015), is part of a neo-liberal push on museums to become self-sufficient and entrepreneurial in a world of shrinking state funding. A satisfactory collection of art is by this consequently not a warrant for their existence (p. 51).

With the French revolution the Louvre changed from a palais to a museum but the effect in question is the one brought forward with the revitalization of Beaubourg with Centre Pompidou. Epochal in nature it changed the notion of museum from high art to shopping mall akin to Cedric Price's Fun Palace, demonstrating the importance of branding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Stara p. 59). The archetypal museum of the Louvre as great tourist destination and world-famous masterpieces underwent a large redevelopment in the 1980's. Adding underground spaces to improve organization, circulation and public access the project culminated in the hated but also acclaimed glass pyramid. Stara stresses however that the revitalization is indicative of much more than a transformation of the museum's relationship to architecture and contemporary art. Deprivation of stately allowance led to new entrepreneurship culminating in the full fledged shopping center Carrousel du Louvre. There the Parisian department store Printemps opened a store at prime location (Stara, 2015, pp. 64-65).

In this light the Gothenburg museum of art, its historic alterations and the coming extension is more easily understood. Another donation by the shipping company Stena Line and its Foundation has made a study possible for the future of the museum. The pre-study *Gothenburgs Konstmuseum Förstudie avseende om- och tillbyggnad av*





### *Free - the costless Kungsportsavenyn*

Thus the spirit of Kungsportsavenyn and the Gothenburg Museum of Art cannot be seen in separation from the totality of life that the city exhibits. In delimiting architecture of the city into simple structures of representation or commercialisation they misrepresent the very complicated nature of it all.

*Göteborgs Konstmuseum (2021)* focuses mainly on accessibility for visitor, personnel, and the art. It assumes that the exhibitions spaces on the backside from 1968 will be demolished making a slender, symmetric, and parallel building with connections possible. Speaking in modern terms of flexibility the placement close to the old building enables future extensions. The notion of a central staircase is once again in focus but this time together with elevators exiting to a courtyard creating a central axis and clear way for visitors through both the old building and new. The previous epochs of near absent view of the worker are here changed and instead somewhat elevated with daylight enhanced working stations and better communications with the aforementioned staircase. The personnel are however in both these cases equated with the art as recipient of attention. Lastly in true spirit of 21<sup>st</sup> century planning the courtyard is linked with an expectation of creating spontaneous encounters together with expanded functions in public events such as music, lectures but also businesslike possibilities in mingling and conferences. The project is quite reminiscing of the Louvre refurbishment with an underground organization and opening the museum for 21<sup>st</sup> century neo-liberal tendencies.

What the addition to Gothenburg museum of art finally will impart most clearly is perhaps our contemporary view of art, its locale, its visitors but also our cultural and political ambitions. Notwithstanding the overarching societal inclinations, a critique thereof and possibility of change is possible but perhaps another view is needed.



### *1:1000 - The area and the building*

In the scale of 1:1000 I would like to discuss the area of Götaplatsen and narrow the question of meaning to aesthetic style in architectural configuration. Hagelqvist (2015) makes a poignant comparison of the Gothenburg museum of art as a temple (p. 351). Like a Hellenistic sanctuary, with an open arcade and terrasses creating a plateau raised above its locale and overlooking the city. She further notes that if we previously thought of the meaning and dependence on the city as political, social, economic, and cultural we should now also look to physical factors.

The symmetrical fixation of the street's development, which previously was meant to align itself towards Södra Vägen, is not without resemblance to the culminating results of Haussmann's broad strokes with Paris. But it can of course also be seen in its historic context as in roman and Greek orthogonal planning. It is however not only the symmetry and length of the street that is important, but also the small inclination. The slight gradient along Kungssportsavenyn accelerates into more elevated terrain finally causing a resolution and crowning. The resolution comes in the colossal arcade serving as a leitmotif for the long ascent up to the temple. The main architect Sigfrid Ericson thought the site needed a timeless dimension unifying the local characteristics and monumentality. He further asserted inspiration of the vaulting from Roman architecture (Hagelqvist, 2015, p. 352). At Götaplatsen near the pinnacle, the passage and entrance are (the entrance situation is by 1998 remade) delayed by lateral stairs prolonging the ascension. There the full scale of the immensely heavy, towery and classically deprived façade hits the pilgrim. To enter the temple one last staircase remains, crowned by the arcade, and there at the peak a narrow bronze gateway emphasizes the demarcation between the dead and the living in a final crossing.

The art historian Jeff Werner notes in *Hang 'em High* (2009) that the gesture resembles a transport to spiritual levels, echoing the antiquity and its temples on hills - the abode of the gods (p. 118). But he also stresses a more cynical interpretation in that the imposing architecture would serve as a delimiting role discouraging the ones seeing it as a cheap entertainment or shelter from the elements. Hagelqvist (2015) refer to the grand gesture and passage as an act of civilization, not only of the terrain but

also of the visitor and its visit (p. 352). She further remarks that this choreographed ascension and its interaction between city and building is quite prevalent at this time in architecture (Hagelqvist p.354). Examples can be seen in the Stockholm public library (Gunnar Asplund, 1928), Stockholm Concert Hall (Ivar Tengbom, 1924-26) and of course the more literal example in the resurrection chapel at the Woodland cemetery (Sigurd Lewerentz, 1925). They all speak of spatial organization, processions and sequences that are distinct characteristics of 1920's classicism. The two large subsequent modifications and extensions in 1968 and 1996 sought to a large degree stem this orchestration and perhaps delimitation. By reordering the procession, with an entrance prior to the many staircases, the monumentality of the building was in a large degree warped into new heights now looming tall and alone on Gothenburg's acropolis.

### *1:100 - The building and the function*

In the scale of 1:100 the meaning of the museum can be examined by looking on what the building actually is supposed to accomplish. Kristoffer Arvidsson writes in *Architecture for or as Art – the conflict between form and function in the present-day architecture of art museums (2015)* that the function of an art museum has changed greatly (p. 112). The change is not only a transformation as seen in previous scale levels but also in the very mission to display art and art itself. An art museum does not consist solely of painted works of art but for example also installations, performances, video, and audio. The museum building has also practically developed requiring better surveillance, lighting, and climate provisions. Arvidsson notes however that the interesting outcome of this functional shift is that it has not led to a more careful architecture but rather the reverse. On the one hand we have a functional mission of the museum but on the other there is a question of form. When observing this interplay and what our time encourages, we can also see what this says of our cultural view on art and its function for society. Because as Arvidsson (2015) notes, architecture and especially the museum is never a neutral capsule but instead controls our experience the art (p. 116). Interestingly though, the spatial structure of a museum prescribes other fictive spaces visualized in art, and to fully grasp them one must often delve into them leaving the architectural configuration behind. Questions thus arise if architecture should be repressed or expressed for its purpose and if that purpose really is to serve art.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century's view of art's function can be seen in secular sanctuaries clad in classicistic shrouds echoing the enlightenment ideals, with richly decorated insides emphasizing the works of art. The 20<sup>th</sup> century's modernistic view changed the museum into a more austere experience, purging ornamentations and decorations. The modernistic approach sought universality and placelessness but in more pure form than other institutional buildings of the time, specifically the inside which culminated in the white box. This transformation speaks of an effort in isolation of aesthetics devoid of social and political contexts. Postmodernism instead saw the building as a text of coded signs offering eclectic expositions of architectural history. The functionality of an art museum is thus slightly broadened to include the architectural experience together with the art instead of just for it (Arvidsson, 2015, pp. 122-123).

But does not architecture absolve its *raison d'être* when no longer serving its function? Arvidsson (2015), citing another Larry Shiner, notes that a competition between art and architecture is in itself not a problem but when it distracts from the art it loses its function as museum (p. 150). Arvidsson however departs from Shiner's thoughts of intrinsic value to form and stresses that bad functionality causes a dissonance. A larger proportionality of dissonance leads to whole buildings seen as ornaments, rendering the art redundant. To find reasons for the bereft of art by architecture Arvidsson points to the cultural concept of art and its wanted effects. When it previously was meant to enlighten citizens to higher moral plains it now aimed at creating situations which stimulates increased consumption (Arvidsson, 2015 p. 160). The modernistic art ideals exposed in white boxes combined with a globalized museum and tourism industry has led to a homogenization of the art museum concept. And when the art and its exhibitions no longer seem unique and thus cannot stand on its own the museums must in a race to the bottom create strong brands and spectacular architecture to entice new visitors. Arvidsson in the end notes that the evolution and prioritization from contemplating citizen to experiencing consumer seen in contemporary architecture speaks of economic preferences. Other values such as critically examine our perception of art and diversification of the participation thereof might ultimately be harder to advocate for in a more economically reigning society (Arvidsson p. 170).



### *1:10 - The building and the detail*

In the scale of 1:10 the focus lies on the museum and its details. Perhaps the most striking character to the Gothenburg museum of art is its usage of brick. To understand the meaning of brickwork in the museum we must also see the historic context it has developed in. According to the architectural historian Gustavo Giovannoni writing in *Brickwork in Italy – A Brief Review from Ancient to Modern Times (1925)* the adoption of brick seen in architectural history depends more so on geological factors than artistic or historical (Giovannoni, 1925, p. xi). He further points to river valley civilizations and how they through alluvial deposits, fertile soils consisting of silt, sand and clay deposited by rivers, materialize architecture through brick. The effect of abundance of stone can be seen in how monumental stone architecture developed in Egypt along the Nile contra brick in Babylonia along Tigris and Euphrates. The romans used brick profusely and with its powerful and centralized government had the possibility to overcome natural conditions and introduce standardized systems (Giovannoni, 1925, p. xii). As fireproof, strong, cheap it was an ideal material possible of solving large rational constructions. Influenced by Greek and Babylonian brickwork the romans perfected the brickmaking and used it both in private and official capacities. The art of the brickwork spread from Northern Italy with the help of monks in the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century to northern Europe.

Gothenburg is noted for its yellow brickwork and originates from Dutch immigrants and ideals. It is specifically the yellow Flensburg brick that has given many old buildings in Gothenburg its characteristic color. Examples can be seen in the East India Company building and the Gothenburg cathedral. The cathedral is interesting as a clear and noted inspiration for the Gothenburg museum of art and architect Sigfrid Ericson (Hagelqvist, 2015, p. 352). The museum's arcade façade is seen in curved niches formed into blind arcades in the church and windows are strikingly similar. Ericson himself describes the cathedral's architect Carlberg, and his works, as essential to catch the timeless quality which the site of Götaplatsen needed. It was an effort in combining local character with a monumentality and he further asserted influence from vaulted architecture from Roman utility buildings (Hagelqvist, 2015, p. 352).

Although the pedigree might be geological at base the result of using brick is different in our diverse cultures. These variations in brickwork stem from constructive solutions such as vaults in openings or roofing. From these structural problems we gain esthetic aspects. They accentuate through their form how weights and loads are managed through the construction back to the earth. The esthetic development might seem separate in nature but is often intertwined. Perhaps has the brick come full circle seen in contemporary Sweden when it is mostly used as an aesthetic surface layer in the façade. The usage of brick has fragmented from a material solving both form and function into a strict formalistic undertaking. One explanation of this phenomenon is made by Olov Schultz and Magnus Månsson in *Bärande murverk – I modern arkitektur (1994)*. They see the change made from a fragmentation of construction and its solutions. Instead of having a comprehensive view of how to construct a building its now innumerable parts optimized and solved severally. (Schultz & Månsson, 1994, p. 11) They propose seeing a building not as a consumable and instead as a variable resource. Brick is an ideal material that through simple and sustainable constructions also can give honest aesthetic results, but it must be used in its full capacity.



*H. Blomberg - Gothenburg Cathedral*









## A physical place revisited

The physical place seen in the previous scale levels and their ideas regarding Götaplatsen and the art museum can be further analyzed when combined with the theories of Norberg-Schulz and Heidegger described in theoretical place. It is an effort in valuing and describing more fundamental observations and themes.



### *1:10 000 revisited - place and politics*

The 1:10000 scale showed the society of Gothenburg inferring ideas on the architecture of the art museum. From a boastful bourgeois effort clad in philanthropic spirit of giving the citizens the possibility of experiencing fine art to challenging its authoritative and monumental approach and lastly an opening towards an experience center for consumption. Not only does this show the transformation of art museum and society but also architecture. Understanding these questions instead in a backdrop of qualitative dynamic totality, as Norberg-Schulz saw it, enables us to comprehend society's development more fully. With universal suffrage for men in 1911 and women not included until 1921 the exclusive nature of the start of the museum might not seem as strange. The subsequent want for an accessible experience is a shift in power relations in society and architecture was a large part of that development seen in modernism. The neo-liberal tendencies, discussed in 1:10000, will affect the museum as it has done to the rest of our society and place. We thus understand more fully what Aretz meant when he asserted that our concerned existence already infuses architecture with certain political stances. People are open to meaning and care in architecture, thus wanting to project their lives and what it means for them by ordering. But what should we thus make of the loss of place that Norberg-Schulz and Sigfried Giedion wanted to architecture to solve?

Let us go back to Heidegger's thoughts of the Gestell of modern society and our dependence on technology has led to an objectification of reality, thus with no room for value. Humans are reduced to a material open for planning and organization or resource that can be used up. This perspective seems bleak, but I think that he is not alone in his longing for a different situation, which poignantly can be seen in for example Yimby or Arkitekturupproret. The modern life is marked by a place that has expanded far beyond our small societies, but it has also fragmented the participants. As the German philosopher Karsten Harries (1937-) notes in *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (1997), the individual now participates in more groups, subcultures, and activities and that these are mattering more and more (p. 172). We are changing our distance to other people by our technological achievements but does this in the end give us greater intimacy or sense of community? Harries points to an ethical function of architecture to help people orient themselves in the world and situation. It

should concretize the community's ethos and give an answer to our collective being-in-the-world (Harries, 1997, p. 4). We see examples of this ethos once occupied by sacred architecture and since the death of god seen in city halls, palaces, theaters and museums as comparable significance to us (Harries, 1997, p. 356).

I think it is important here to note that our situation towards place, how we might seem to not escape it, does not necessarily preclude human agency or for that matter criticism. On the contrary, it is imperative that we see to the human condition, needs and desires and our being-in-the-world to stay authentic, not a conformal obsession to objectifications in what Heidegger would call, *das Man* - the them. A place might seem oppressive in nature and that one cannot escape an already defined and embedded situation, resulting in continuities and changes seen by Norberg-Schulz. But this excludes the choice in what and how to care about oneself and place. This must not inauthentically spring from an objective fixed platonic place but from one's own authentic beliefs together with one's place. This opens place for shifts, otherwise deeming the situation as stuck in endless continuities and perfunctory changes. People thus gain sincere revelations of one's place and culture and how they are shaped by it, but also the understanding of other enriching places and cultures that can shape and expand its being-in-the-world.

Architects cannot however be alone in this process and seldom are. We can control our efforts and proposals but not the results which are part of a larger appropriation from society. We are thus interpreters of such appropriation and can help shape it. Architecture can aspire to concretize our collective identity, place, ethos but it cannot be blamed for the loss of the same. We cannot make people dwell, that they must do themselves. We must however beware of authoritarian definitions of ideal dwelling; they are no more than uncertain speculations and should be seen as golden calves (Harries, 1997, p. 364). The stability the golden calf instill lacks the notion of temporality and our shifting place, charging us instead as transcendental.



### *1:1000 revisited - style*

Let us then look back to the Hellenistic temple on Götaplatsen and what its style means and ultimately what styles mean. Buildings are by large an interpretation, as Harries notes (1997), part of a hermeneutic function in that it tries to articulate the way of life through built responses (pp. 147-150). These built responses interpret our place and undoubtedly carries social significance. By and large they convene people into community through shared histories and images of what is considered ideal dwelling. Trying to understand the classical architecture of the Gothenburg museum of art is thus to try understanding what the aim is of such imitation of older styles. Harries (1997) denotes it as “perennial platonism” valuing beauty as opposition to time (p. 228). It implies a longing for timeless imagery as ordering of our human situation. This articulation of dread for death strikes us, after understanding our emplaced nature as care, as extremely situational. Does it not seem peripheral viewing architectural configuration to a timeless spirit, concretizing place in a one-sided manner for all of us?

Perhaps this critique stem from our modern spirit of critical reflection, especially after seeing post-modernism making conventions seem arbitrary. Before the arbitrariness was however modernism that sought a modern architecture without the shackles of history and its ornamentations. When reimagining architecture, the situation of sheltering was by and large answered but the idea of dwelling was not according to for example Giedion and Norberg-Schulz. The loss of place speaks of disenfranchised people no longer identifying with their built environment. I have already mentioned Yimby and Arkitekturupproret and I think they should be noted once again here as clear signals of something amiss. When viewing our modern age ripe with calculative building ordering architecture in a manner of efficiency we might shelter people but not fully creating places that let them dwell. Although the aforementioned groups seek solutions likening that of 20’s classicism resembling the superficiality of post-modernism we could perhaps understand them better in a misconstrued effort in search and need of an architecture of care.

Seeing architecture as emplaced care and understanding our need to visualize this explains why the modernistic tabula rasa did not ultimately solve the question of dwelling. It is not that we must go back to specific styles, for they are part of the past,

it is that we must find ways to concretize our care for the world in a matter beyond calculative efficiency and more responding to quality. Stylism might seem arbitrary now but quality is not, and letting people be proud of their houses are equally as important. As David Chipperfield poignantly puts it, paraphrased by Gert Wingårdh in an interview (Folkhemmets estetik, 2020) regarding facades made of prefabricated concrete slabs “People are not stupid. [They can understand] this is a building which is the most inexpensive to construct which leads to the impression that one’s life is not highly valued.”

Simply copying old styles and architectural ideas seems to most architects strange, and to face the brunt of the critique from society perhaps even stranger. For the history of architecture and hermeneutic function of a large part of it belongs to the ruling elite. The architecture they so ordered exemplified a social order structuring our societies letting people understand their place. The modernistic dismissal of such power relations emanating from architecture’s ornamentation and style is perhaps now hard for a modern citizen to understand. Perhaps is also the link from architect to contractor not as visible now as back in the workings of the church or kings. With the emergence of capitalism, it has now in large part come to corporations to create a not insignificant part of our housing stock. Charging corporations with a lack of quality when they, like our modern society, strive after efficiency might seem rich. However not doing so results in otherwise letting das Man order our situation. Letting the basic human need of dwelling become a commodity dictated not by the people who are to dwell there but instead by the cash flow they represent sound dystopic enough. Notwithstanding its elitist ruling and power relations seen in for example the church, it at least tried qualitatively to craft buildings trying to visualize its thoughts of this strange existential emplacement.

Instead of seeing styles or aesthetics as something to use and discard trivially we should understand that it is part of a larger tradition charging architecture with meaning representing our place. Structuring our existence in the most efficient manner will not lead to a satisfactory understanding since caring for the world is ultimately not a matter of efficiency. We do not have to look back for inspiration for motifs but looking back at charging architecture with meaning is of utmost importance.



### *1:100 revisited - form or function*

Perhaps is this the point where one can discuss the question of form deeper while also looking back at the scale 1:100. We have seen museums change from rich bourgeois visions to austere modernistic white boxes and finally buildings perhaps fully escaping function and becoming artwork itself. Harries (1997) notes that architecture as art for art's sake and aesthetic perfection "renders talk of the requirements of dwelling or function simply irrelevant" (p. 24). Architecture to him must be seen in that regard as deficient or impure because it can never function as autonomous but must always adhere to requirements of building (Harries, 1997, p. 28). We more fully understand this when we couple it with not just functionality in the ordinary architectural sense but also an ethical function.

This change of function into artistry can be better understood by reading it in the light of our modern consumption habits and the objectification of experiences. As Heidegger saw it, technology and our calculative thinking has created an *ought*, hunting for objective experiences. When objectifying experiences, they become a commodity that obscures authentic experiences of being-in-the-world seeing us as subjects ordering objects. I would like to compare the visit of an art museum to that of a restaurant visit analyzed by the sociologist Joanne Finkelstein, cited by Peter Englund in *Förflutenhetens landskap: Historiska essäer from 1991* (p. 156). She notes that the restaurant has turned to a social aquarium made to see and be seen where food has lost its meaning and been commodified. What you then buy is not food itself but a possibility to live out a fantasy or a feeling of happiness thus commodifying feelings and experiences. When turning towards materiality we start living superficially, trying to fulfill our lives by conquering the external aesthetic world.

The capitalistic technology and its disinclination of fully solving problems is instead creating new ones that thus can be rectified with new goods or experiences. Because does the art museum no longer fulfill its purpose of showing art? One explanation is simply that the visit and experience of art is no longer the purpose but to gather the most amount of money from the visitor. Artworks no longer satisfies the visitor, and the cultivated citizen is the one that now consumes the most. Another explanation is perhaps that our concept of art has changed, and that the modern citizen no longer as easily grasps what the museum and its art was once thought to do. Because the large

buildings crammed with art describing a society now no longer discernable demands an often educated or spiritually attuned visitor. As Heidegger poignantly points it regarding visiting old sites of importance "the world of the work that stands there has perished" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 40). Art for art's sake implies meaning in being absorbed by it and it should instead, as Harris puts it, truly concretize the human situation (Harries, 1997, p. 63). We can thus by it, conquer the loss of place through a shared valuing and seeing the real place. Artworks describe their places in the same vein as architecture does, necessitating an effort from the visitor of just not superficial glances. Harries, citing the architect Rudolf Schwarz, on understanding a baroque church lies not in just simply beholding an aesthetic object but to partake in it with body and soul as one would have done then authentically (Harries, 1997, p. 362).

The art historian McClellan notes in *The Art Museum – From Bilbao to Boullée (2008)* that the museum is one of the last sites in a democratic urban setting where visitors can understand their sense of place, community, and themselves (Architecture, Synthesis, para. 8). To expand the concept of such a museum with neo-liberal diffusions might seem desirable but does not really adhere to its ethical functional nature. Perhaps is not the number of visitors or their cash the right way to discern the functionality of an art museum but the qualitative experience they gain by seeing other people's notion of our existence in artform. The solution lies not in cookies or giftbags but more so in education and helping visitors understand the artworks thus partaking in them ecstatically as an authentic being-in-the-world.

### *1:10 revisited - materiality*

Nearing the end of this discussion of mattering meanings to Gothenburg museum of art and its architecture let us revisit the scale of 1:10 and our usage of brick. A material that defines the art museum of Gothenburg so clearly should be understood in its long-standing tradition to not only Gothenburg but European history of architecture and even mankind. The concept of the brick is perhaps also one of the clearest examples of what Heidegger meant with understanding something ready-to-hand. In our most ordinary sense, we do not question the brick and its essence, but it is simply there and is used without theorizing. Made of clay into a form that is easy to use with our hands it visualizes our building craft perfectly.

When Louis Kahn supposedly asked the brick what it wanted to be, and it retorted a vault we understand the rhetoric as letting the material speak for itself. This material revelation lets properties excel such as showing stone as heavy or clay as plastic and modular, perfect for bricks that together creates our buildings. This representative factor of material let us attune to time and different ideals to situate oneself in a tradition of architecture. It very clearly shows, not only to architects but also laymen, like the prefabricated concrete slab façade interpreted as cheapness above, the inherent meaning in structuring our existence using material with their own embedded traditions. It also shows our long-standing traditions and handcraft which many of our modern material lack the possibility of. Brick that not only solve form and function but as now shown also an ethical function has, as written above in 1:10, seen a demise into a strict formalistic and aesthetic aspect.

The change, seen as a fragmentation of solutions put forth by Schultz and Månsson in the part 1:10, can also be understood as a calculative and efficient mindset according to Heidegger. Now being restricted to facades, in some cases even prefabricated slabs of concrete with bricks inlaid, means seeing brick reductively to only serving an aesthetic value. Instead of using it as functional and ethical it now functions only as a reminiscing portrait of an aesthetic past. Should we let these perversions take hold or could we not now criticize them? Let us use brick not only as an aesthetic material but also see the ethical and simultaneous sustainable way of building.

Norberg-Schulz wanted through place theory describe our situation as one of belonging to the world instead of domination. Nature must be respected and not only be free for our modern consumption (Auret, 2015, p. 3). To him a phenomenological understanding of place, concretizing emplaced existence of care, was paramount. Leading us not to see the modern situation as only efficient production but letting us dwell sustainable.

Notwithstanding the possibilities and benefits we have received from technology, the drawbacks as only premiering an efficient mindset is shown in our incapacity of solving the ecological crisis. Does not the technological and capitalistic mindset render us calculative so that we now cannot fully put our other values first but after efficiency? As mentioned before, let us seek efficiency not as a source but as a result. Thus, not excluding works of value to us because they are not efficient capitalistically but in that they do not correspond efficiently to our caring nature.









## Conclusion

This thesis aimed at gaining a more fundamental understanding of architecture and its meaning to help gain design techniques for an extension to the Gothenburg Museum of Art. Through using phenomenological understanding of place, I have analysed the site and building thus positioning it in architectural ontological discourse. It was my aim to try understanding architecture beyond simple measures of just form and function and the more complex nature of built environment. Through the scale levels and the revisiting analysis, some main points were reached.

The reciprocal nature of place and architecture was shown, thus from it and to expand it we use architecture to concretize our existential emplacement. Architecture also shows a reciprocity from architect and society in an appropriation that we architects can try interpreting but never authoritatively install. Place is never of a fixed essence bound for conformity to one objective truth. Hence architecture does not mean a specific style or aesthetics, and we should always tread carefully around others that exclaims primacy of architectural interpretation. Thus, people are not directed by a relativistic meaning, but we must understand that relativistic, all people care. We must recognize our human situation in a place structuring our existence in a concerned manner. Our modern efficient mindset has rendered a large part of our built environment placeless by not engaging with architecture through a qualitatively effort of care. True to life can never be to assess our sparing caring engagement to the world in a manner of efficiency seeing life as a quantitative matter.

We must charge a modern extension with trying to concretize our place, reintroducing quality before efficiency and quantity. We should understand architecture as infused with an ethical goal, bringing us together and celebrating fundamental facets of life that give us meaning. The art museum in its core is one of the last outposts of democratic critical thought but it has also turned towards calculation and profiteering. That path will not lead us to a better understanding of ourselves, because it instils the visit to an ought celebrating consumption and not authentic qualitative experiences.



Phenomenological discourse might not lead to specific concrete designs or examples of ideal dwelling. But it does open for design strategies of trying to stay true to our caring existence. Architects should strive at creating architecture letting people dwell but in the end, this is something they themselves must do. Perhaps must we better explain to others outside the field that the result of our built environment is not simply only in the hands of architects but that they must also demand a heightened concern from the developers. Right now, there is people caring and architects wanting but societal constructs efficiently restricting.

Let me now in the end turn to the tower of babel in Brueghel's painting. Can humankind with its architecture transcend this earthly existence reaching divinity or meaning, and if so is that a matter to architects? Norberg-Schulz's sought meaning in architecture is perhaps comparable to that one which humankind possessed while erecting the tower. Such a relativistic meaning is nothing but a vain project, asserting oneself as transcendental. The scattering of people and languages strikes me now poetically as that similar of place. Perhaps is the goal not to seek meaning in a fixed essence but as a horizon of possibilities.

Let us thus re-enter the temple of Götaplatsen, distill with reverence and let us be moved away from everyday life contemplating other peoples' concretization of place and existence.





## References

Arvidsson, K. (2015). *Architecture for or as Art – The conflict between form and function in the present-day Architecture of Art Museums*. Sciascope, 7, 133-195

Auret, H. A. (2015). *Care, Place and Architecture: A critical reading of Christian Norberg-Schulz's Architectural interpretation of Martin Heidegger's Philosophy*. (Doctoral thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa)  
Retrieved from: <https://scholar.ufs.ac.za/handle/11660/2242>

Englund, p. (1991) *Förflutenhetens landskap: Historiska essäer*. Atlantis.

*Folkhemmets estetik*. (2020, October 11). [Video]. SVT Play. <https://www.svtplay.se/video/27972475/folkhemmets-estetik>

Forty, A. (2000). *Words and Buildings – A vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. Thames & Hudson

Haddad, Elie. (2010). *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Phenomenological Project in Architecture*. Architectural Theory Review. 15. 88-101

Hagelqvist, S. (2015). *From Temple to Factory – Gotenburg Museum of Art as a Space of Convergence and Conflict*. Sciascope, 7, 335-391

Harries, K. (1997). *The ethical function of architecture*. The MIT Press.

Higab. (2015). *Göteborgs Konstmuseum Förstudie avseende om- och tillbyggnad av Göteborgs Konstmuseum*. <https://goteborgskonstmuseum.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/goteborgs-konstmuseum-forstudie-om-och-tillbyggnad-20210222.pdf>

Heidegger, M., & Krell, D. F. (1993). *Basic Writings*. HarperCollins.

Heidegger, M. (2001) *Poetry, Language, Thought*. (Albert Hofstadter) Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Heidegger, M. (2013). *Vara och tid [Sein und Zeit]*. (Jim Jakobsson) Göteborg: Daidalos. (Original work published 1927)

Holy Bible: King James Version (1769). [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible\\_\(King\\_James\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(King_James))

Husserl, E. (1998). *Logiska undersökningar [Logische Untersuchungen]*. (Jim Jakobsson) Stockholm: Thales. (Original work published 1913)

Norberg-Schulz, C. (1979). *Genius Loci – Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. Rizzoli

McClellan, A. (2008). *The Art Museum from Boulée to Bilbao*. University of California press

Roccatelli, C., Verdozzi, E., & Mars, G. C. (1925). *Brickwork in Italy*. American Face Brick Association.

Stara, A. (2015). *The Louvre Effect*. Sciascope, 7, 51-113

Schultz, O. & Månsson, M. (1994). *Bärande murverk - i modern arkitektur*. Arkus

Smith, D. W., (2018, June 21). *Phenomenology*. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>

Werner, J. (2009). *Hang 'em High*. Sciascope, 1, 58-231

Brueghel, P., the Elder. (1563). The Tower of Babel [Painting]. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter\\_Bruegel\\_the\\_Elder\\_-\\_The\\_Tower\\_of\\_Babel\\_\(Vienna\)\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_ProjectFXD.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Bruegel_the_Elder_-_The_Tower_of_Babel_(Vienna)_-_Google_Art_ProjectFXD.jpg)

Gothenburg City Planning Office. (1923). Göteborg 1890 [Illustrative map]. <https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/start/byggande--lantmaterioch-planarbete/stadsbyggnadskontorets-kundservice/historiskt-material/kartor-fran-jubileumsutställningen>

Gothenburg City Planning Office. (1923). Göteborg 1921 [Illustrative map]. <https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/start/byggande--lantmaterioch-planarbete/stadsbyggnadskontorets-kundservice/historiskt-material/kartor-fran-jubileumsutställningen>

Blomberg, H. (2005, September 12). Göteborgs domkyrka [Photograph]. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6teborgs\\_domkyrka\\_den\\_12\\_sept\\_2005,\\_bild\\_3..JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6teborgs_domkyrka_den_12_sept_2005,_bild_3..JPG)) CC BY-SA 3.0

Other pictures taken by the author