DENSITY OF EXPERIENCE

An exploration of heritage and transformation through Kaparen in Gothenburg

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Chalmers School of Architecture Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering Architecture and Urban Design, Building Tectonics Lina Andersson 2021

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ABSTRACT

Situated on Stigbergstorget in Gothenburg is the old cinema Kaparen, built in 1940. Kaparen is one of few remaining cinemas in a rather preserved condition from this time. Hence a relatively unique cinema with a strong functionalistic character. During its lifetime, the building has undergone several renovations to serve new functions but is today empty and without maintenance. The history of Kaparen shows that the original purpose of a building may eventually be revised and change its original program or structure to meet the constant changes of society. This thesis aims to explore how such a transformation can be performed whilst respecting and preserving the identity of the original building. This is investigated through a design proposal of Kaparen with a focus on refurbishment and addition, rather than preservation.

To test how the interplay of past and present can result in an enhanced architectural experience, the historical and current context is essential. A study of texts regarding architectural transformation, Swedish functionalism, and the development of cinemas as a new building typology together with an inventory are performed to deepen the understanding of the chosen site and building. From these, a design proposal is developed by iterations of drawings, spatial investigations in digital models, and visualizations.

The result shows a holistic approach, where the overall experience has been stressed since a desire to highlight all time layers in the building would risk it becoming historically identity-less. In conclusion, it is evident that there is no absolute answer on how to approach our architectural heritage, but rather approaching each individual situation separately with the totality in mind. How can a historical building be without losing its identity?

How can the interplay of past and present be managed to enhance the architectural experience of a building?

How can a historical building be transformed with a new function

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	
Introduction	1
1. THEORY	4
Historical context	5
Architectural transformation approaches	7
2. INVENTORY	10
Development of Kaparen	11
Site analysis	17
3. PROGRAM	24
Space program	25
Design strategies	27
4. ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES	30
Extension approaches	31
Extension strategies	33
5. DESIGN PROPOSAL	36
Site plan	37
Site sections	39
Transformation documentation	41
Elevations	43
Old meets new	47
Exterior situations	49
Floor 0	51
Floor 1	53
Sections	55
Café	57
Event hall	59
Conclusion	61
Bibliography	63

BACKGROUND

In the early 1930s, at the same time as the major impact of functionalism in Sweden, a new architectural task evolved with newly developed technologies. The sound film was launched which led to several new cinemas being built in Sweden, where the new technology and functionalistic style left a clear mark. Of the several thousand cinemas that were built before the 1960s, there is only a small proportion remaining in a reasonably preserved condition. The old cinema Kaparen on Stigbergstorget in Gothenburg is one of them, built in 1940.

The old cinema has undergone several renovations to serve new functions but has in recent years been unused, without maintenance, waiting for a new owner and function. To meet the constant changes of society, a new function and architectural arrangement should now be proposed to enable future use of this building. Within the field of architectural heritage and transformation, the question of how to relate to history when adding new is essential. A relatively unique cinema with a strong functionalistic character will now be transformed to serve a new function, but how should that be performed?

AIM

This thesis aims to explore the interplay of past and present in an architectural transformation project. This will be investigated through refurbishment and addition to the functionalistic cinema Kaparen in Gothenburg. The outcome of this study aims to discuss the challenge in adapting the building to new intentions whilst respecting and preserving, or perhaps even enhancing, its identity.

OBJECTIVES

How can a historical building be transformed with a new function without losing its identity?

How can the interplay of past and present be managed to enhance the architectural experience of a building?

METHOD

Initially, the theory provides the context through literature studies. An inventory is performed for a deeper understanding of the site and building. Conclusions are made from the theory and inventory that help formulate the program and design strategies. From these, a design proposal is developed by iterations of drawings, spatial investigations in digital models, and visualizations. The objectives are tested on the design and answered in the conclusion.

THEORY

To understand the historical context of the former cinema Kaparen, the Swedish functionalism and the development of cinemas in Gothenburg have been studied. The historical principles and current approaches on building maintenance have been studied with a guidance document by the Swedish national heritage board as the main reference.

DELIMITATIONS

This investigation is mainly focused on refurbishment and addition, rather than preservation. The design proposal relates freely to current regulations of the site, e.g. the master plan, since that would limit the purpose of the investigation.

STUDENT BACKGROUND

2015-18 Architecture and Engineering, Chalmers

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3

1. Theory

At the end of the 1930s, functionalism had made a complete impact in Sweden, with the Stockholm exhibition in 1930 as the main breakthrough for the Nordic countries. The epoch deals with, among other things, a new aesthetic that is about the form consciously expressing the building's function and construction. Functionalism also introduces new working methods, such as separation of functions, as well as an ambition for anonymous architecture, which means that the building, and not the architect, should speak.

At the same time as the rise of functionalism in Sweden, new architectural tasks emerged as a result of new technologies. In the early 1930s, the sound film was launched, which resulted in several cinemas being built in Sweden (Lundahl, 1980). This technological development meant that the cinemas were released from the need of imitating the theatres and a new building typology evolved. In Gothenburg, the cinema Flamman was the first cinema being built for the new sound film. It was built in 1935 by Sten Brantzell and its character with its magnificent entrance and prosperous salon expresses the strong faith that existed in the cinema industry during this period (Bjelkendal, 2009).

Five years later, in 1940, the Gothenburg-based architect Nils Olsson designed the cinema Kaparen on Stigbergstorget in Gothenburg. Kaparen was considered a large cinema, with its 801 seats, which is not obvious when looking at the low-rise building (Bjelkendal, 2009). There are clear similarities between Kaparen and Flamman, which makes one assume that Nils Olsson was inspired by the already built cinema across town. The resemblance is most striking concerning the materials and color palette with yellow plastered facades, details in cupper, and the characteristic tiles in turquoise that adorn both the entrances. The interior of Kaparen, as well as the name, have taken inspiration from the area's connection to shipping, with the artist Gunnar Erik Ström as responsible for the decoration. These two had previously worked together, in 1935, on the refurbishment of the cinema Victoria (Bjelkendal, 2009). It can be assumed that the architecture was shaped by the new requirements for good acoustics that the new sound film made, as the shape of the salon has been controlled by the sound and the walls were clad with red beech panels.

Around the 1960s, the three great decades of the cinema were over, partly because of the impact of television in Sweden. The following period was therefore marked by closures, rebuilding, and demolition (Furberg, 2008). In 1984, the cinema Kaparen was closed and the building was transformed into a post office and later into a grocery store (Bjelkendal, 2009). During these renovations, the exterior has been largely preserved, while the cinema's interior has been greatly affected by the new functional adaptions.

Of the several thousand cinemas that were built before the 1960s, there is only a small proportion remaining in a reasonably preserved condition (Furberg, 2008). The cinema on Stigbergstorget is one of them but has in recent years been empty, without maintenance, waiting for a new owner and function.



Figure 1. Cinema Kaparen, 1940, Nils Olsson



Figure 2. Cinema Flamman, 1935, Sten Brantzell

When making a transformation project there are several different approaches one could have. Throughout history, the view on building maintenance has constantly alternated and the field is highly affected by politics and societal change. The field is complicated and there is no explicit view on how to approach our architectural heritage, neither globally nor nationally. Nor has it done so historically.

HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES

In the early 1800s, John Ruskin claimed that restore is worse than death, hence the monument must finally die. He argued that the result will always appear as a new building. During the late 1800s, the principle of stylistic unity, embodied by Viollet-le-Duc, gets a major impact and Helgo Zetterwall became the main successor of this principle in Sweden, known for his radical cathedral restorations. The strict restoration principles of unity were later questioned and interest in the building's identity grew and John Ruskin's view on restoration as an impossibility was discussed again (Robertsson, 2002).

In the early 1900s, Sigurd Curman developed a new approach to restoration in Sweden, inspired by the Italian Camillo Boito's theory of historical restoration, "restauro storico". The patina of the building was considered valuable, and the changing course of history should shape the restoration, meaning that all the time layers should be considered, and old craft methods were essential. The impact of World war II brought completely new problems for building restorations in Europe, resulting in debates of different restoration approaches being appropriate for different situations (Robertsson, 2002).

Erik Lundgren was the leading restoration architect in Sweden in the mid-1900s. He questioned historical reconstructions and instead searched for fundamental principles for design. He emphasized the historical continuity and aimed for a distinction between new and old in the spirit of functionalism. Though, his restorations received criticism for deleting too much of his predecessor's work (Robertsson, 2002).

In the late 1900s, the architect Ove Hidemark described his approach to restoration, which is still of great importance today since he has educated a great number of people that are still active within the field. He emphasizes the importance of using the same material and technology with which the building is constructed. He stresses authenticity but also the overall experience and therefore criticizes the desire to highlight all times layers in a building, as such a building risks becoming historically identityless (Robertsson, 2002).

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Swedish National Heritage Board, RAÄ, is responsible for the area of cultural heritage and cultural and historic environments in Sweden. By commission of the government, they have established a method aiming for general principles for building maintenance in the cultural environment sector. The method implies that buildings should be looked at from five different approaches: knowledge, wariness, maintenance, relation to history, and material and technique.

Initially, they emphasize the importance of inventory before making decisions on future usage and interventions. All interventions should be motivated and changes need to be well documented. A wariness approach when refurbish entails that the characteristics should be the starting point of the interventions. Solutions should correspond to the building's design and technical performance and the interventions should ease future maintenance (Robertsson, 2002). A challenge within the field of building maintenance is how to value different time layers in a building when making a transformation. If time layers are removed as a result of restoration- or refurbishment interventions, it is of importance to state its value in comparison to what is achieved, by valuing the condition, execution, and what the element represents (Robertsson, 2002).

The board claims that when making a new design in a historical environment, the additions should be executed with distinction from the original, without misrepresenting the totality. In some cases, the integrity of the kept environment can be so strong that it is inappropriate to complement with distinction. Sigurd Curman managed to find a middle path between these approaches when from distance consider the stylistic unity and totality while increasing the readability of what is new and old when moving closer (Robertsson, 2002). The addition can thereby be executed with inspiration from the existing environment or its principles but be distinguished by abstraction.

To devote awareness of a building's original values does not just include a dedication of the original appearance, but also knowledge of the materials and technique of which the original was created and what this represents. RAÄ advocates the use of the same materials and construction methods that were originally used during the construction when making restorations and refurbishments. If modern construction methods and materials are used, one should assure that their technical appearance is well-attuned with the original construction (Robertsson, 2002). For example, the aging of modern materials differs from traditional materials which will affect the appearance from a long-term perspective. According to RAÄ, there is no common stylistic approach for additions in a historical environment. In some cases, a stylistic unity is preferred, while in other a contrasting design. The most suitable approach needs to be decided for each situation. Overall, it is stated that one should see beyond the current trendsetting and value-laden assessments of, for example, "the style of our time" or "pastiches" (Robertsson, 2002).

What can be concluded from these guidelines is the necessity of making a thorough inventory of the building before making decisions of future usage and interventions. Also, that an inventory requires knowledge in a broad field of disciplines since all decisions need to be well-established and documented. Concerning different approaches for additions and refurbishment, it is evident that there is no one right answer, but rather approaching each individual situation separately with the totality in mind.

9

2. INVENTORY





Cross section, Cinema, 1940

Floor 1, Cinema, 1940



Long section Cinema, 1940



Floor 0, Cinema, 1940



Long section, Postoffice, 1984

Floor 0, Postoffice,1984



Long section, Grocery store, 2003

Floor 0, Grocery store, 2003







Floor 1, current condition



Floor 0, current condition



















Kaparen is located on Stigbergstorget, a square in the district of Majorna in Gothenburg. The site is close to the city center and well-connected by public transport. Stigbergstorget is one of the main meeting places in Majorna, surrounded by restaurants, bars, dwellings, and cultural activities. Kaparen can be seen as a signature building for the area, with its strong functionalistic character and exposed placement, and therefore plays a key role in the urban context. It is surrounded by the main street Karl johansgatan in the north and the calmers street Allmänna vägen in the south, and the accentuated entrance faces the square in the northeast.

The character of Kaparen varies essentially on these two streets. Karl johansgatan consists of several stores and businesses and there are some existing businesses in Kaparen located along this street today. Allmänna vägen, one of the oldest streets in Gothenburg, is characterized by old wooden houses which makes the monolithic facade of Kaparen contrast substantially to its surroundings. The former cinema was originally designed as a freestanding volume but is today partly intergrowth with the surrounding buildings since a loading dock was built on the former passage connecting Karl johansgatan and Allmänna vägen.



View from Allmänna vägen



View from Karl johansgatan







0 1 5 m





0 1 5 m

3. PROGRAM

The proposed program for the transformation of Kaparen is a reinterpretation of its old function, intending to work with the presumptions of the building and not against them. The building will therefore be a cultural center for concerts and other appearances.

The area is already known for its rich cultural life, with places for concerts and restaurants. Kaparen can become another player among these activities, where the possibility of collaborations should be promoted, rather than competition. The existing concert halls in the area do not have the capacity for a larger audience, which Kaparen could offer. The ambition is for the building to be given the pre-conditions to be used around the clock by a wide range of people.

The main function of the building is a café, which can be a place to visit on its own, and an event hall where the visitor can enjoy food and drink while looking at a performance on stage. The hall allows for flexible programs, e.g. concerts, standup, and lectures. The existing stores along Karl johansgatan are preserved, as they are already established and contribute to the urban space.

The second floor and the proposed addition contain supporting functions, such as kitchen, staff areas, performance studios, and rentable rehearsal studios. The organization of functions is an effort to keep the character and qualities of the spatiality of the former cinema.

Current area (floor 0-2): Proposed area (floor 0-2): 1055 sqm 1260 sqm

CAFÉ/BAR

Bar Storage WC visitors x 8 WC staff x 1 Broom pantry

EVENT HALL

Bar Auditorium Stage Backstage

KITCHEN

Kitchen Dish room Cold store Broom pantry Garbage room

STAFF AREA

Office Dressing room x2 Resting room Break room

PERFORMER STUDIOS

Performer studios x3

Lounge

REHEARSAL STUDIOS

Rehearsal studios x3 WC x1

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT ROOMS



Floor 1 - 2



Floor 0

CLARIFICATION OF THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURAL IDEAS

Certain elements that are not part of the original structure can be removed to enhance the clarification of the original architectural ideas. These interventions need to be valued in comparison to what is achieved, concerning condition, execution, and what the element represents.



ENHANCE THE READABILITY OF A FORMER CINEMA

Parts of the former section should be re-created to enhance the readability of being in a former cinema salon. The readability has vanished during earlier adaptions to a post office and grocery store.

ENHANCE THE READABILITY OF FORM AND FUNCTION WITH THE ADDITION

The placement and execution of the addition should enhance the former clarity of form and function by inserting the supporting functions in the addition and follow the logic of elementary forms.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE STRUCTURE

The great bearing length of the structure should be considered in future design interventions. The time-specific construction should be readable and influence the architectural experience.

ACTIVATE THE FAÇADE TOWARDS ALLMÄNNA VÄGEN

The façade towards Allmänna vägen can be re-designed to satisfy its presumptions. The sun-exposed wall should contribute more to the urban space and the monolithic character can be challenged.



RECREATE PART OF THE HISTORICAL FLOW CHART

The former flow chart of the cinema should influence the development of the proposal, concerning the division of spaces and the experience of the building.



4. ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES



THE SEAMLESS EXTENSION The extension is seamlessly part of Kaparen, concerning form, material and proportions.



THE LINK

The extension relates partly to the existing architecture, but makes clear distinction between new and old.



THE INDIVIDUAL The extension strikes out of its own with a modern expression. There is no clear connection to the existing. harmonize









Figure 3. Expansion of the East Wing of the Museum of Natural History, Berlin, Diener & Diener Architects

Figure 4. Extension to Gothenburg Consert Hall, White arkitekter

Figure 5. Townhouse in Landskrona, Elding Oscarson

As a starting point for the design, different transformation approaches for an extension were analyzed through references, sketches, and volume studies. The different approaches were categorized into three different examples, concerning how they harmonize or contrast to the existing building. With the inventory, program, and design strategies as a framework, the seamless approach seemed most suitable for the continuation of the proposal.

The main argument for this approach concerns the supporting function of the extension since a prominent extension would rather express that the building consists of a public function. The analysis also showed that a contrasting addition, concerning form and style, adheres more to the surrounding buildings rather than Kaparen.

The extension has the possibility of enhancing the qualities of the original building, by embracing the character of secondary functions and public functions. The readability and logic of the existing form should therefore be continued and enhanced by the extension. This can be expressed as the full potential of the original volume has been added to the building.

This approach does not imply that there cannot be a distinction between new and old, but that the overall experience of the existing building and extension should be received as a totality. The readability of the different time layers can increase when moving closer, by abstraction of details and variation in textures.

HARMONIZE

Materials Scale Relation form/function

CONTRAST

Abstraction of details Construction Texture

ENHANCE

Rythm Readable volumes Connection to the urban environment

The current condition of Kaparen, with the loading dock excluded.





5. DESIGN PROPOSAL

SITE PLAN







SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B



0 2 10 m

TRANSFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

EXTERIOR INTERVENTIONS



View Allmänna vägen



View Karl johansgatan



ELEVATION ALLMÄNNA VÄGEN



ELEVATION KARL JOHANSGATAN

0 1 5 m



ELEVATION STIGBERGSTORGET

ELEVATION SOUTH-WEST

OLD MEETS NEW











STIGBERGSTORGET

The accentuated entrance of Kaparen is expressive and inviting towards the square Stigbergstorget. The appearance of the entrance is kept with the tiles in turquoise and the characteristic canopy roof but has been renovated with new glassed windows and a centered double door with wooden frames. The most evident interventions are the new squared windows that allow daylight into the café, the former foyer of the cinema. The characteristic entrance should remain the main feature of this façade, and therefore the newly added windows are designed with the concern of keeping the appearance of the closed, curved, plastered walls surrounding it. The former parking lot in front of the building has been re-designed to allow for a more flexible space.

ALLMÄNNA VÄGEN

The former monolithic character has been challenged towards Allmänna vägen, by introducing a new rhythm to the façade. The newly added windows are placed high enough to avoid insight into the event hall. Public benches have been added along the façade to enable usage of the sun exposed wall, which is already today an attractive spot for visitors to enjoy their coffee or ice cream. The extension an apparent part of Kaparen, concerning the continuation of materials and form. The extension is withdrawn from the original building to clarify the division of volumes and function. This arrangement embraces the character of the secondary functions and the event hall.

FLOOR 0

1:200



0 1 5 m

FLOOR1

1:200



SECTIONS

1:200











Concrete floor





CAFÉ

When entering the building from the main entrance at Stigbergstorget, the first room you access is the café. This part of the building is the former foyer of the cinema, which has influenced the design concerning the division of functions and movement. The new interior volume, that separates the café from the event hall, consists of a bar and restrooms for visitors. The curved exterior walls are highlighted with a curved seating area along with them and new windows have been added to allow for more daylight.

The interior has been designed with green plastered walls and a light wooden panel that highlights the horizontality of the room. The entrance has been distinguished with vertical tiles in beige, which reflects the existing external tiles in turquoise that adorn the entrance. The same tiles, but in a deep green color, cover the new volume of the bar and thereby separates the volume from the rest. The materials express functionality and durability, concerning their placement and purpose.





Plastered wall





Green granite bar desk







Concrete floor

Light wooden panel



Green leathered seating

Wooden benches

EVENT HALL

The event hall is a reinterpretation of the former cinema salon. The floor has been differed by approximately two meters and the spatiality of the room is achieved by the doubled ceiling height. The newly added windows allow for daylight when preferred, depending on the occasion since the event hall should allow for a flexible program. The time-specific construction influences the architectural experience of the room and is highlighted with a distinctive colored plaster.

The light wooden panel continues from the café and aligns with the new windows. The curved seating area is constructed in wood with green leathered cushions and the moveable tables allow the visitors to enjoy food and drink while looking at performances on stage. When visiting the event hall, the readability of being in a former cinema salon should be evident.





Plastered wall





Linoleum burgundy

This thesis' aim was to explore the interplay of past and present through an architectural transformation of the former cinema Kaparen in Gothenburg. The study has resulted in a design proposal focused on refurbishment of the old building and an extension where different approaches has been analyzed through literature, references, and iterations of design. The challenge of adapting the building to new intentions whilst respecting and preserving, or even enhancing, its identity has been essential in the process of this thesis.

A fundamental part of the process was to make a thorough inventory of the site and building before making any decisions on future usage and interventions. The building should be transformed respecting its history but also in relation to the architectural experience, concerning both the building and its surrounding. An early insight was the risk of forgetting the importance of the urban context in parallel to the historical context. An extension should therefore relate to the historical building but the transformation approach should also reflect the impact to its surroundings.

Since Kaparen is part of an architectural heritage that has vanished, through demolitions and harsh renovations, I found it necessary to emphasize the identity and character of the functionalistic cinema rather than putting a distinctive stamp on the building. The transformation approach has therefore focused on increasing the readability of the former cinema by formulating design strategies as a result of the inventory, and use these as a framework for further design decisions. It is important to understand that an inventory to some extent is subjective and that a collaboration over different fields of knowledge therefore should be encouraged. Making a transformation project is often expressed as a desirable assignment for an architect, but the urge for that desire could be criticized. It is problematic when approaching the assignment as an opportunity to put your individual mark and therefore overlooking the main purpose of maintaining our architectural heritage. Making a mark for the future does not have to imply a distinctive style or innovation, but could rather focus on the quality and care for details. Architecture whose main purpose is not to stand out can still be expressive and strong.

A common approach when making contemporary extensions is to make a clear distinction between new and old, through contrasting style, form, and materials. Contrast could be an effective method to enhance the existing character of a building, but it needs to be executed with clear objectives. What does it contrast with and what values does it provide for the existing building and its surrounding?

The transformation approach executed in this thesis resulted in a holistic perspective where the extension and interventions are in harmony with Kaparen, aiming to enhance the existing character and identity. The overall experience has been stressed, since a desire to highlight all times layers in the building would risk it becoming historically identity-less. Though, there is no absolute view on how to approach our architectural heritage, since each individual situation needs to be handled separately with its condition and context in mind.

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