



Albin Aldén

# Staging Architecture

*Design of a theatre complex through  
conversion and additions to an  
existant church*

Chalmers Institute of Technology  
Master's thesis 2022  
Matter, Space, Structure  
Supervisor: Naima Callenberg  
Examiner: Daniel Norell

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and additions to an existant church*

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Spring 2022



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Master's Thesis in Architecture  
Chalmers University of Technology  
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering  
Master's Programme of Architecture and Urban Design (MPARC)

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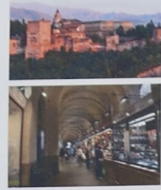
## Discourse & method

### Introduction

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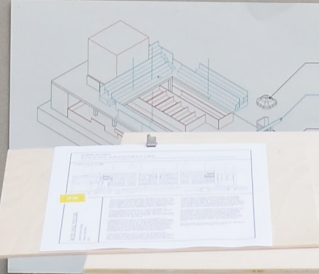
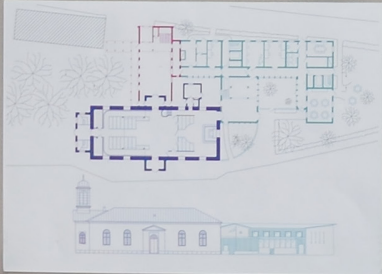
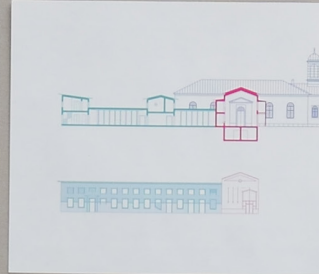
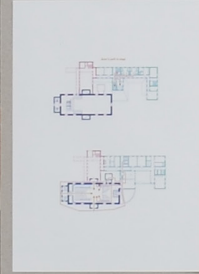
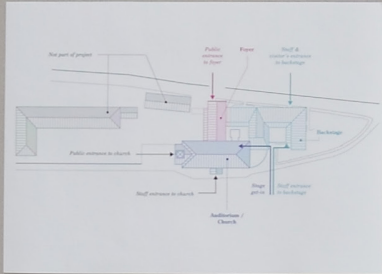
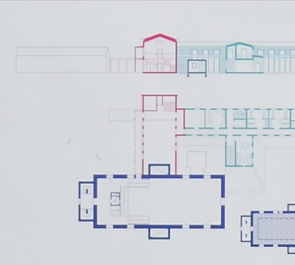
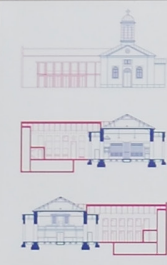
Text block with multiple columns of text, likely detailing the project's context and goals.



Text block with multiple columns of text, likely detailing the project's context and goals.



## Design proposal



Additional text or notes on a separate sheet of paper placed on the display board.

Initial studies

This board under 'Initial studies' features a site map on the left, a photograph of a person in the center, and a Venn diagram on the right. The Venn diagram consists of three overlapping circles labeled 'HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT LAWS', 'PROJECT', and 'CHURCH'. The board also includes several columns of text and small diagrams.

Concept

The 'Concept' board displays a colorful architectural drawing of a building with a red roof and teal walls. Below it are two diagrams: a red and blue floor plan on the left, and a colorful elevation of a building with a steeple on the right.

Context

The 'Context' board is filled with architectural drawings. It includes two large interior perspective drawings showing people in a room, several smaller diagrams of building sections and elevations, and columns of descriptive text.



# Abstract

This is a transformation project for the use of a church as both church and theatre. The backstage area and the foyer of the theatre are additions to the church, which itself is used as a more or less ready-made auditorium, with some relatively minor adjustments, thus retaining its usability as a church.

The project employs a methodology of staging that draws from the context, which is understood in a very wide sense. It includes the city, the specific church and its history as well as the history of the site and of churches in general.

I discuss the future of the churches of Sweden in relation to the theories of Italian architect Aldo Rossi, emphasizing the need for transformation as well as preservation. I propose that churches can be transformed today in continuity with how they've historically been transformed, thus preserving a tradition of transformation as opposed to conserving them in their current state.

Transformation and multi-purposing of churches becomes a way to preserve them for religious ceremonies. Very few churches are used at full capacity, but almost all of them have at least a small group of devoted members. In terms of property management, this implies that surplus churches need not be sold and completely rebuilt but could be partly rented out. This is the commission that is simulated in the project, one that I would anticipate to become more common than complete sale and reuse of churches for profane purposes only.

Architectural practice is understood as the synthesis of a complex and contradictory reality. This project seeks a synthesis between demands of heritage preservation, religious practice and theatre production, convinced that they together can generate a whole that is richer and more culturally relevant than its component parts.

*Keywords*  
transformation  
theatre  
church  
context  
Rossi  
staging  
history





# Introduction

This is a transformation project for the use of a church as both church and theatre. One starting point for this thesis is the situation of many of the churches of Sweden. More than any other Swedish building type, they seem to evoke history. Often some of the oldest buildings on their sites, they have for a long time defined the development of their context - up to a point where the context seem to have developed in another direction, leaving the church behind. They seem to speak to us of another time and another city, as if they imply a context different from the existing one.

At the same time, we should keep in mind something that Faulkner has summarized in an often quoted poem: "The past is never dead. It's not even past". What I mean to say is that even though churches seldom seem to be treated as architectural assets that can give pointers for future development, they cannot be ignored. They continue to effect the development around them, if only as obstacles for modern infrastructure. And while few churches are used at full capacity, almost all of them have at least a small group of devoted members who love their church.

Italian architect and theorist Aldo Rossi spoke of these issues in his seminal work, *L'architettura della città* (1966). Certain historical buildings, such as the Palazzo della Ragione in Padova, has continued to be used throughout the centuries while others such as Alhambra in Granada has lost their role for the life and development of the city, no longer "conditioning the urban area in which it stands and continuing to constitute an important urban focus". Both are permanent parts in the flux of the city, but they function very differently:

*In this respect, permanences present two aspects: on the one hand, they can be considered as propelling elements; on the other, as pathological elements. (...) It is evident that at Granada we experience the form of the past in a way that is quite different from at Padova. In the first instance, the form of the past has assumed a different function but it is still intimately tied to the city; it has been modified and we can imagine future modifications. In the second, it stands virtually isolated in the city; nothing can be added.*

## Churches in context

*Previous page, above*  
Mariakyrkan in the area of Stampen, Gothenburg, with Ullevi arena behind.

Authors own photograph.

## Aldo Rossi's theory

Rossi (1982), p 57-61.

*Opposite page, above*

The Alhambra in Granada, Rossi's example of a "pathological" permanence

Wikimedia commons, user name Jebulon. Retrieved 2022-05-09.

*Opposite page, below*

The lower galleries of the Palazzo della Ragione in Padova, a Saturday in the autumn of 2019. Today as much as in 1966 when Rossi first wrote of it, it is true that "even if everyone is convinced that it is a work of art, it still functions quite readily at ground level as a retail market. This proves its vitality" (p 59).

Authors own photograph.

## **Staging context: Teatro del Mondo**

Szacka (2016), p. 131 - 140.

Rossi (2010[1981]), p. 65 - 69; Rossi (1996), p. 188 - 203; Szacka (2016), p. 134.

Whether a piece of historic architecture becomes "pathological" or not has a lot to do with its *context*, according to Rossi. Typically, a pathological building is something that stands outside of the "technological and social evolution" of the city.

Returning to our churches, we could say that many of them are running the risk of becoming pathological permanences. Seldom do they constitute urban foci that developments in their context relate to in terms of access, scale, orientation, spatial composition, materiality or other ways. In short, it is not uncommon for many churches and church plots to no longer make sense in their context. This is perhaps most evident when they've been juxtaposed to large scale infrastructure, as in the case of Mariakyrkan, which this thesis will focus on.

Once "pathological", serving no purpose, they become dependent on maintenance for the sake of preserving cultural heritage. Buildings with a capacity to evolve with their context and that continue to be used have a good chance to remain across the centuries. We could speak of moving "beyond preservation" when keeping a use for our historically valuable buildings. Palazzo della Ragione is effectively protected by performing perfectly well as a retail market. But this also requires us to accept that buildings have to be transformed.

To get an idea of how an architectural practice could relate to the situation we have just described, we can look to Rossi's own work. In 1980, for the first International Architecture exhibition in Venice, *The presence of the Past*, Rossi designed a small floating theater, the *Teatro del Mondo*. At the end of the biennale, the theatre traveled across the Adriatic sea to the former Venetian province of Dalmatia. Here I will first of all discuss how this project can be said to *stage history* and secondly I will describe the notion of *context* that it embodies and that was hinted at above.

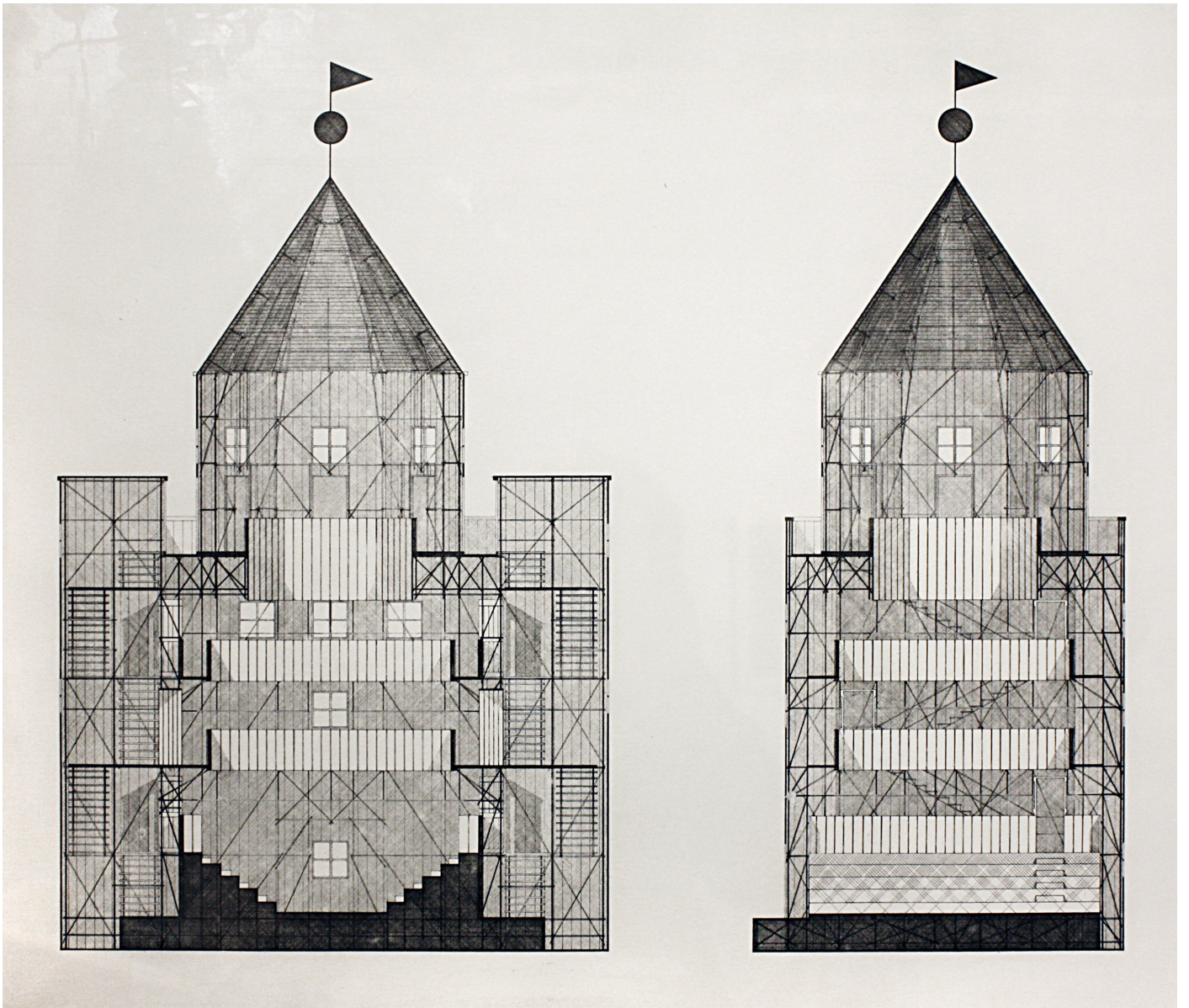
First of all, the theatre stages a myriad of historical references despite its condensed, geometric form. Some are visual and others more conceptual. I will later describe the three that I see as most important, which are the Venetian "Marriage of the Sea" ceremony, the Venetian tradition of temporary celebratory architecture and the anatomical theatre of Padova on the former Venetian mainland. However, Rossi has cited countless other references, including water-related buildings like lighthouses, gondolier's kiosks and beach cabins, the original Globe theatre in London, Palladio's Villa Capra, the clocktowers of Padova, the farm architecture of the Lombardy region and the "Venice made of wood" as seen in the paintings of Vittore Carpaccio.

These references are drawn from the context, understood in a very wide sense. This notion of context can be elucidated by returning to *L'architettura della città*. In this and later works, Rossi uses the term "urban artifact" to describe anything that partakes in the construction of the city, from architectural elements to the street structure and anything in between.



In relation to this key term, american architect Peter Eisenman has commented: “The italian *fatto urbano* comes from the French *faite urbaine*. Neither the italian nor the English translation adequately renders the full meaning of the original, which implies not just a physical thing in the city, but all of its history, geography, structure, and connection with the general life of the city”. Teatro del Mondo can be understood as an embodiment of this notion of context, from which references are picked and, as it were, staged.

Rossi (1982), p 22.





*Opposite page*  
Drawings of Teatro del  
Mondo from the exhibition  
“Aldo Rossi: La finestra del  
poeta” (2015).

Flickr Commons,  
Trevor Patt

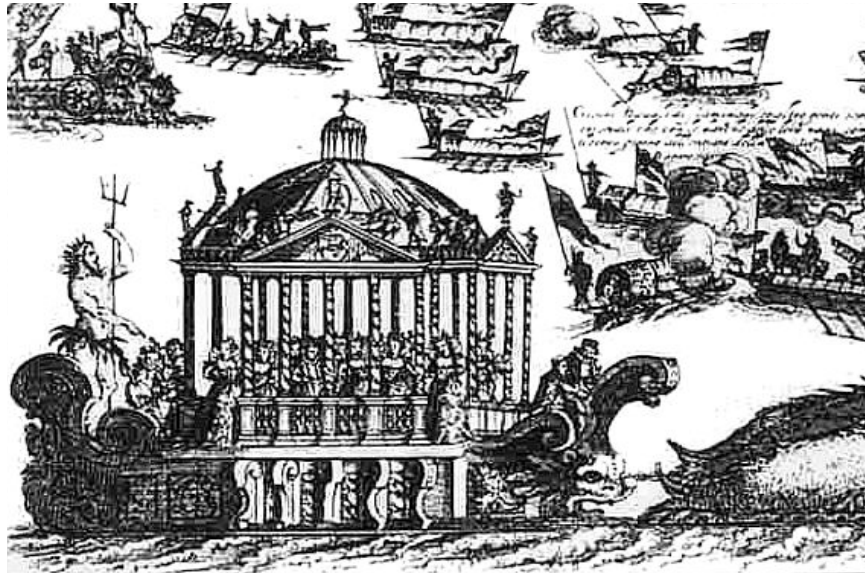
*Above*  
Teatro del Mondo anchored  
in Saint Mark's basin.

Flickr Commons,  
Angelo Plessas

## Venetian temporary theatres

Detail from an engraving by Giacomo Franco, “Il nobilissimo teatro deto il mondo”

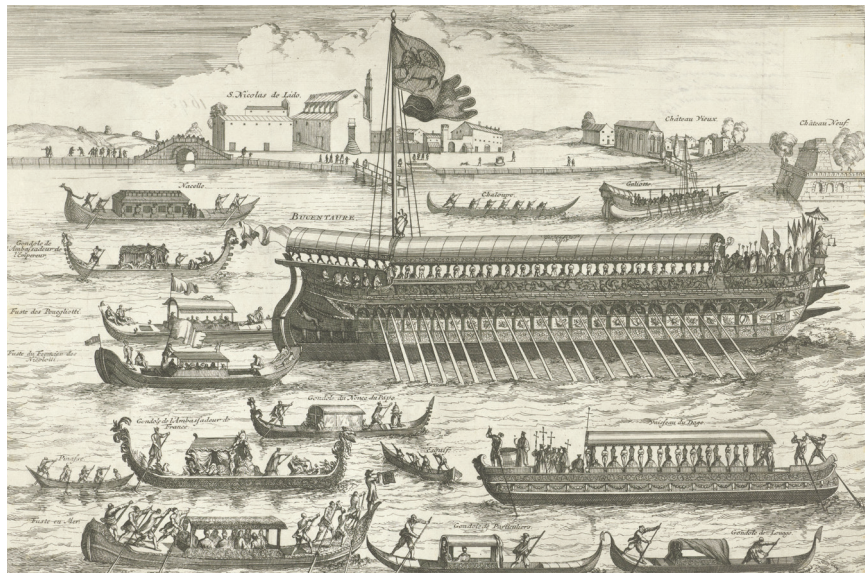
Wikimedia commons, user name Jacklee  
Retrieved 9/5 2022 and cropped.



## Venetian “Marriage of the Sea” ceremony

Caspar Luyken, “Bucentaurus omgeven door veertien gondels” (1695). Print in the collection of Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

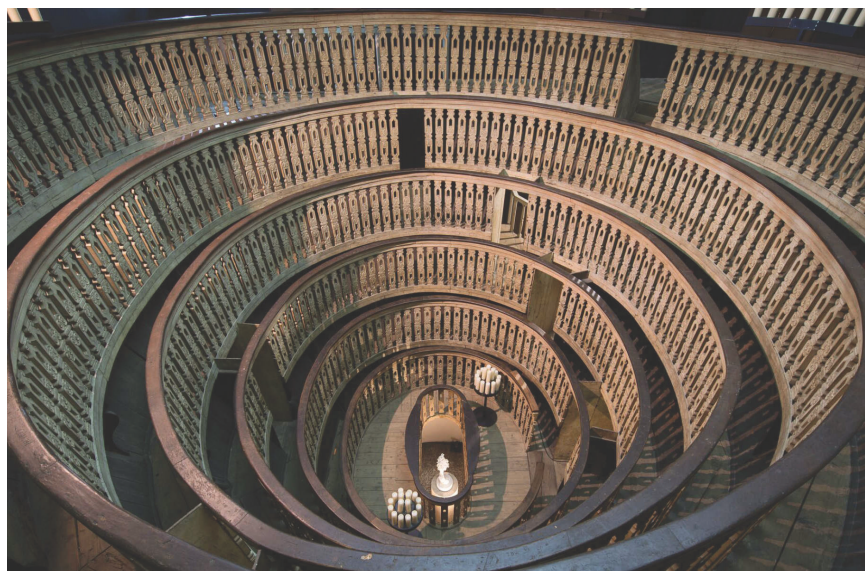
<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-1896-A-19368-1021>  
Retrieved 8/1 2022 and cropped.



## Anatomical theatre of Padova

Photograph of the anatomical theatre in Padova on the former Venetian mainland.

Wikimedia commons, user name Lanoyta  
Retrieved 8/1 2022 and cropped.



This engraving by Giacomo Franco shows a temporary theater construction mounted on a boat. It is an example of the tradition of “theatres of the world” common in 18th century Venice. Rossi’s theatre picks up the tradition of this type of ephemeral celebratory constructions.

Szacka (2016), p. 134 and Tafuri (1980), p. 7-9

To celebrate the venetian conquest of Dalmatia around the year 1000, a ceremony was established that continues to this day, in which the venetian head of state is symbolically married to the sea by dropping a consecrated ring into the water from a large boat known as the Bucintoro (3). This can be seen in the engraving to the left. Traveling by sea from Venice to Dalmatia, Rossi’s theatre recalls the origin of this ritual, placing the theatre itself in the centre of a veritable theatrical event.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2021), “Bucentaur”. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/Bucentaur>. Retrieved 8/1 2022.

The anatomical theatre of Padova was the first permanent anatomical theatre in the world, inaugurated in 1595. Dissections were performed in the centre to teach anatomy to students of medicine. In *A Scientific Autobiography* (1981), Rossi notes how the anatomical theatre very explicitly places the human body at its center, differing in that way from roman performances with backdrops. Rossi’s own theatre features a so-called transverse stage with audience on two sides on the bottom floor and an octagonal gallery above. The focus of the theatre is thus placed on the body of the actor, with a small window as the only backdrop.

Rossi (2010[1981]), p. 68.

Website of the University of Padova  
<https://www.unipd.it/en/palazzo-bo-and-anatomical-theatre>  
Retrieved 8/1 2022

**Methodological notes  
on staging, analogy and  
exalted rationalism**

It's important to note that Rossi doesn't speak of "staging". To my knowledge, he never clearly articulated specific methodology for his work, at least not in the manner that is expected of an academic project such as this one. He is, however, associated with the notion of analogous architecture, and I should say something about why I have not used this term.

Analogous architecture was the topic of a fairly recent book, *Analogue Oldnew Architecture* (2018) by Eva Willenegger and Lukas Imhof. The book traces the history of the notion of analogy at the ETH in Zurich, with an emphasis on the teaching of Miroslav Sik. This history starts with Aldo Rossi being invited as visiting professor in 1972, introducing the idea of "analogous architecture". He leaves soon thereafter but leaves a big impact on the ETH.

The "analogous method" subsequently shifts in clarity, emphasis and content, largely as a result of who tutors it. What remains seem to be the idea of a design that is analogous to some reference(s) - attaining some of its traits while at the same time being clearly different.

Willenegger & Imhof (2018),  
p. 11 - 15.

As for Rossi's own understanding of analogy, he planned to write a book on the subject in 1970, but it was never completed. In fact, he rarely used the term in his design classes at the ETH. The concept of analogy comes from analytical psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, who wrote in 1910:

Lampariello (2017), p. 272  
- 274.

*'Logical' thought is the thought expressed in words, that addresses itself to the outside world as a discourse. The 'analogical' or fantastic thought is sensible, figurative and mute, it is not a discourse but a rumination, material of the past, an act of revolt. The logical thought is 'thinking in words.' Analogical thought is archaic, unconscious and practically inexpressible in words.*

Freud & Jung (1994),  
letter of March 2nd, 1910.

If we take this notion seriously, he is essentially claiming that analogy is something very personal beyond explanation and impossible to express in language, seemingly excluding it as a methodology of any academic research such as this one. Students in Rossi's studio at the ETH produced results that replicated his design choices and that were stylistically very similar to his own work. Of this development, Florencia Andreola has written:

*Rossi does not assume responsibility for this drift, and often avoids offering explanations, simply appreciating the students' attempts at improving his own architectures. This way, however, precisely when it is seemingly understood, the enigmatic complexity of his thought starts to be lost: a thought that is untranslatable into standard projects, but at the same time arduous to be passed on effectively at a didactic level".*

Andreola (2020)



Rossi seems to have searched for a contradiction between a strong rationality on the one hand and a personal, emotional or “autobiographic” component characterized by “analogical thinking” on the other. In the preface to his Italian translation of Étienne-Louis Boullée’s theoretical work, *Architecture, essai sur l’art*, he coined the term “exalted rationalism” to describe such a contradiction. Apart from Boullée, he recognized this tendency in the work of Paul Klee, Le Corbusier, Adolf Loos and, to some extent, Louis Kahn. All of them managed to combine rationality with fantasy, autobiography and studies of the past.

Lampariello (2017), p. 229  
- 230 and Aureli (2011), p.  
141 - 176.

In my opinion, there is a sort of kinship between this exalted rationalism and a certain “mannerist neoclassicism” that characterizes a part of the work of Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz, another important reference for me.

Ultimately, I have found the concept of analogy to be as fascinating as it is unhelpful in all of its nuance and ambiguity. Properly elucidating Rossi’s ideas about analogy might, it seems to me, be very interesting for a master’s thesis in architectural history but beyond the scope of the present one.

As a methodological reference, I have chosen to focus instead on only one moment of Rossi’s practice, which is the Teatro del Mondo that I described earlier. I have preferred to interpret it and to use a term of my own - staging - in relation to it. I think this has made the understanding of my process more open to iterative reinterpretation on the part of myself as well as my supervisor and examiner. It distances the project from the authority of Rossi, even though he evidently has been very important to me.

Teatro del Mondo is particularly relevant for this thesis because it sought new ways of approaching heritage. Within the very restricted expectations for transformations in the city centre of Venice, he managed to carve out a space of freedom to contribute something new that had the capacity to redefine the situation and make us relate to the existing in a new way. His primary tool in this regard was ephemerality - the fact that the theatre would only exist for a limited time.

In a famous comment on Rossi’s theatre, Italian critic Manfredo Tafuri has said that “the ephemeral is eternal”, in the sense that Rossi managed to make a permanent mark on our understanding and imagination of Venice despite its short life span, not least by means of photographs of the project. This thesis has not employed ephemerality but has similarly sought ways to approach and redefine heritage without intervening materially to any larger extent.

Tafuri (1980)



# Thesis question

**How can a church be transformed into a theatre complex while retaining the identity and usability of the church as a church?**

# Background

Recent decades has seen a decline in the use of many of the churches of Sweden, and the Swedish church is in the process of adapting its building stock to match this transformation. Urbanization, demographic changes and a declining interest in the activities of the church have been proposed as causes of this shift.

Both church and state are stakeholders in the management and transformation of churches. In 2000, relationships between the Swedish state and church were reformed. The Swedish church continues to administer its buildings while the state provides financial compensation to cover the costs of management and restoration that adheres to antiquarian principles as defined by the Historic Environment Act and controlled by county administrative boards and the Swedish National Heritage Board.

The church has adopted four typical strategies to reduce its building stock. Ancillary buildings such as parish houses and rectories can be sold to move those functions into the church itself. The church can also be left unused while decay is counteracted (sv. "kallställning"). If these alternatives are unfeasible, the church can be deconsecrated and sold to other religious communities or, finally, sold for non-religious purposes. The financial compensation provided by the state is the primary reason that the two latter alternatives have been much more common on the continent than in Sweden. Nevertheless, at least 95 churches was deconsecrated and closed down between 2000 and 2018, of which at least 16 lie within the bishopric of Gothenburg.

There are, however, more complex alternatives to the four typical strategies outlined above. Churches can be sold without being desecralized. Services can still be hosted in accordance with the order of the Swedish church without actually being the property of the church. An example in Gothenburg is St Johanneskyrkan which was sold in 2018 to Göteborgs kyrkliga stadsmission. It is today used for social work, partly a café and partly a place of worship where services continue to be held.

It is not unusual for churches to host performances or concerts other than classical organ music. In 2011, a theatre adaptation of Lars

## **The situation of the church of Sweden**

Hillström et al (ed.) (2017)

E-mail correspondance and interview with Jan Spånslätt (sv. stiftsingenjör) in the bishopric of Gothenburg, autumn 2021

Kyrkans tidning 27/9 2018, "Alla 95 kyrkor som tagits ur bruk - stift för stift"

E-mail correspondance and interview with Jan Spånslätt (sv. stiftsingenjör) in the bishopric of Gothenburg, autumn 2021

<https://www.folkteatern.se/evenemang/1270>  
Retrieved 2022-05-10

Svenska dagbladet 11/5 2018, "Way out west går till kyrkan igen".

von Triers *Breaking the waves* was staged in St Johanneskyrkan in collaboration with Folkteatern. Annedalskyrkan has been a concert venue for the Way Out West music festival several times. However, there is to my knowledge still no church that is permanently repurposed for performances in the way that St Johanneskyrkan is permanently used as a café.

The multi-purpose church with a character of community center, in the manner of St Johanneskyrkan, seems increasingly relevant for a time in which many congregations face decreasing visitor numbers while nevertheless retaining a loyal group of members who love their church.

## The "found" theatre space

Strong (ed.) (2010), p. 72 - 73, 258

As for theatre, recent decades has seen a shift of interest towards the so-called "found" space, meaning that performances are held in spaces that were not originally designed for it. For example, the Roundhouse in London is a theatre housed in a shed that was originally used to turn around steam engines, which naturally has a big impact on the atmosphere of the space.

This interest in reuse of spaces for performances has also challenged ideas about the aesthetic neutrality of theatre auditoria, for example in the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris. Aesthetic neutrality is epitomized in so-called "black boxes". This is a flexible auditorium type that can be adjusted to several different relationships between actors and audience. It is painted black to give the production crew freedom to shape the space into whatever they want.

Edström & Piha (1976).

Strong (ed.) (2010), p. 92 - 93.

In a Swedish context, theatre director Per Edström and architect Pentti Piha argued strongly for this type of neutrality in *Rum och Teater* (1976) for reasons of flexibility. On the other hand, in *Theatre buildings: a design guide* (2010) that I have consulted for this thesis, auditorium designer Julian Middleton writes: "Over the past 20 years the starkness of the "black box" aesthetic has gradually been eroded. (...) Found spaces allow directors and designers a unique freedom and the creative opportunity to work with the individual character and atmosphere of a particular building".

*Opposite page, above*

The Roundhouse theatre in London, originally used to turn around steam engines.

Wikimedia commons, user name Hufton+Crow. Retrieved 2022-05-09.

As an architecture student, I can easily relate to this interest in the atmosphere of pre-existing spaces. In school, we've been taught to derive design solutions from obstructions and to work within a frame that limits our freedom but that paradoxically opens up our creativity. That the "tabula rasa" of the black box should not always and necessarily be the most desired auditorium is very understandable to me.

*Opposite page, below*

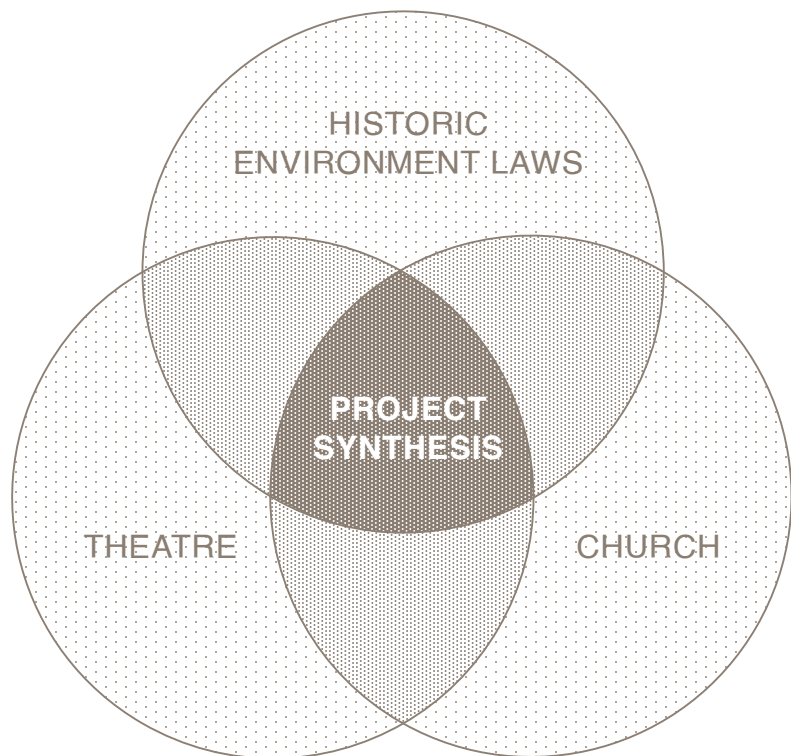
The Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, "frozen" in its patinated state of decay under the leadership of theatre director Peter Brook.

Wikimedia commons, user name Coyau. Retrieved 2022-05-09.

Nevertheless, this thesis does not argue for or against any given auditorium type. I have only raised the question here to argue for the feasibility of using a church as a theatre auditorium and to say that doing so is not only an interesting architectural design task but also something that has relevance within the field of theatre.



# Initial studies



*Above*

Diagram showing the three institutions that make demands on the project. The point is that the project needs to be a synthesis in which they don't end up contradicting each other.



## **Choosing church and theatre format**

Three institutions make demands on the project. First of all, there is the Swedish church, which would use the building as a space of religious ceremonies. Second, there is the theatre company, which would use it as an auditorium for theatrical performances. Finally, the Historic Environment Act restricts interventions into churches in its fourth chapter that deals with “ecclesiastical cultural heritage”. Certain churches that are particularly important in terms of cultural heritage are also listed in accordance with the third chapter, which prescribes additional protections.

The project needs to be a synthesis in which activities and institutional demands don't end up contradicting each other. There are many auditorium formats, many ways to practice christianity and many ways of transforming an existing building. However, not all of them will be compatible with each other. An important task in this project was therefore to choose an appropriate church and theatre format. In addition, the church should be used below full capacity to be relevant in relation to the question of superfluous churches and interesting from the point of view of my staging concept.

The major decision that makes a synthesis possible is to design the backstage area and the foaye as additions to the church. This keeps the church relatively free from interventions and thus allows it to continue working as a space of worship, while also avoiding solutions that would violate antiquarian expectations of carefullness in relation to the church interior. The church is effectively transformed by means of a transformation of its context.

That being said, such antiquarian expectations have not been studied in detail. The validity of any proposal would be up to the professional judgement of antiquarians working on the County administrative board. When intervening in the church, I have followed my intuition of what carefullness would mean in this situation, based on my experience of working with such questions during my internship.

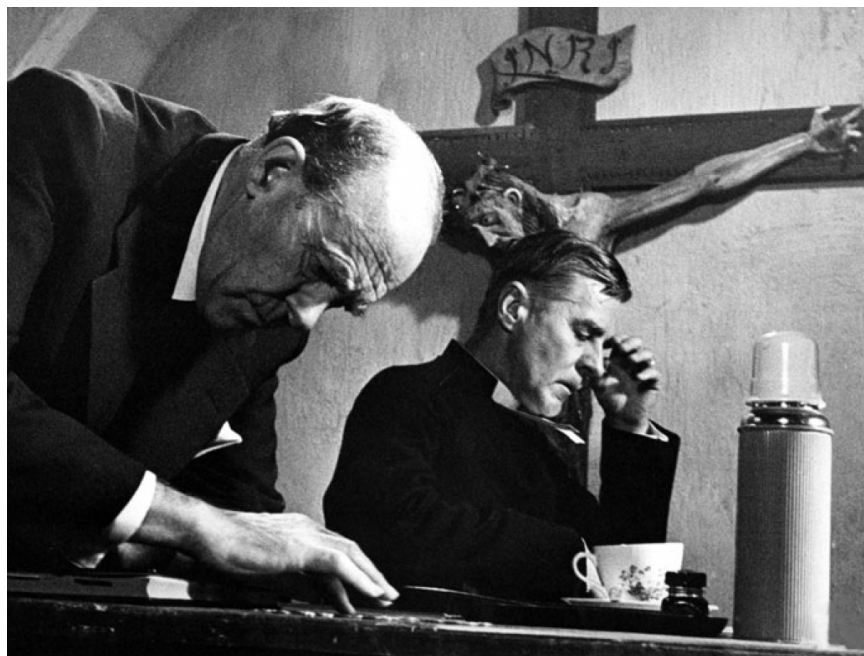
Carefullness also has to be discussed in relation to the exterior context in which I insert my additions, but I will do so in conjunction with a presentation of the specific church, which is Mariakyrkan in Gothenburg. On the following pages, I will describe some initial studies that allowed me to choose an appropriate church and theatre format.

**Ceremonial and profane space**  
*Typological study*

Some areas within a church is felt to be more sacred than others, the most sacred being those closest to the altar that are involved in ceremonies. This tends to be respected when profane functions associated with parish houses are built into the church, such as offices and café. One example is Vessinge church in Halland, illustrated below.

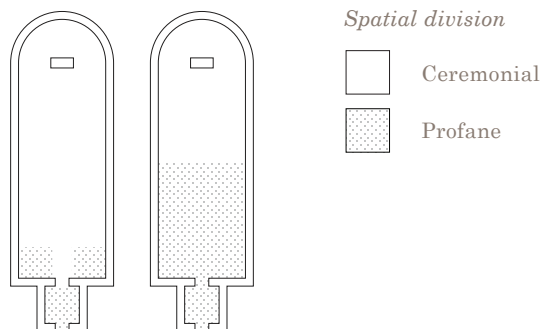
The following page outline some strategies for reducing the ceremonial part of the church, following the logic of the four different church types that exist in the Gothenburg area. The overall point is that the church type lends a grammar for how the ceremonial part of the church can be reduced.

*Right, above*  
Still image from Ingmar Bergmans *Nattvardsgästerna* (1963). The scene takes place in the sacristy after a ceremony, where the priest (Gunnar Björnstrand) drinks coffe with the churchwarden (Kolbjörn Knudsen), who is counting donations. Coffe cups and a thermos is juxtaposed with a large cross and the ceremonial dress of the priest, intermingling the sacred and ceremonial with the everyday profane in a way that seems very characteristic of the church as a workplace.



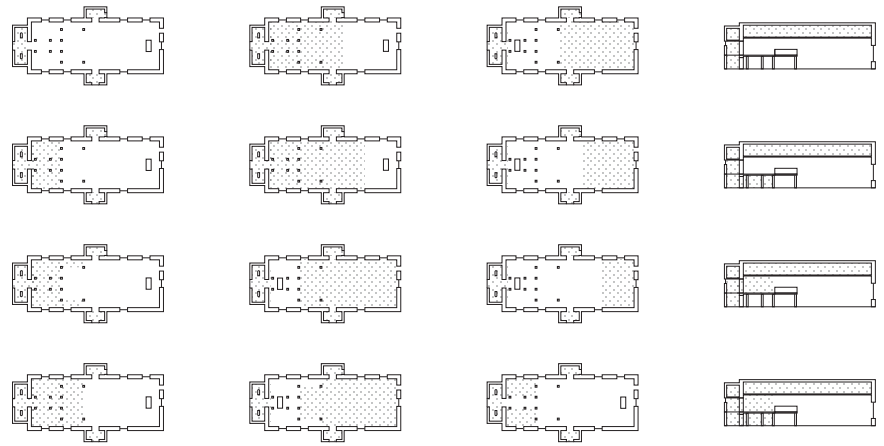
[www.ingmarbergman.se/](http://www.ingmarbergman.se/)

*Right, below*  
Vessinge church, before and after the ceremonial space was reduced to make room for offices, a café area, etc. Scale 1:800

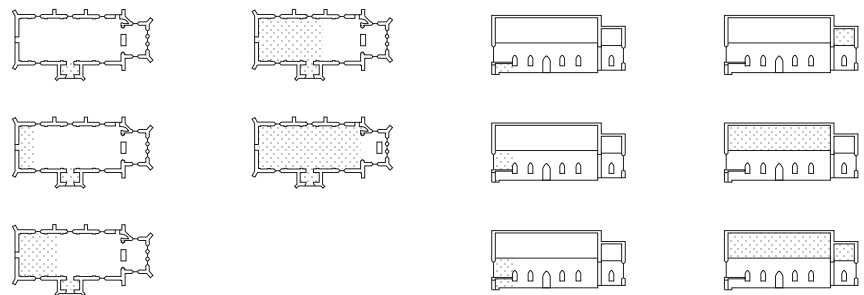


Hillström et al (ed.) (2017).

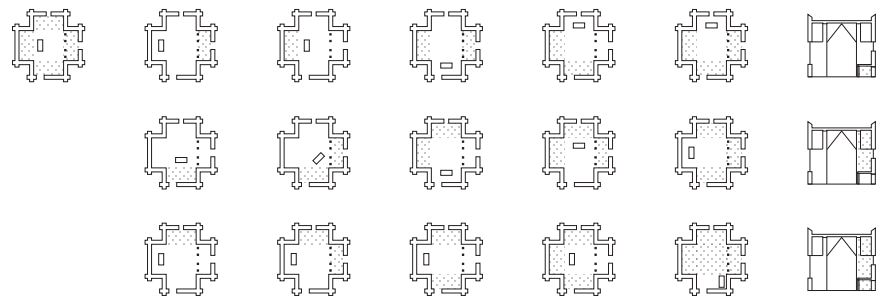
Possible reductions of the ceremonial space in a church type without a distinct choir (sv. "salkyrka"), using Mariakyrkan in Gothenburg as an example. This type offers more possibilities of reduction compared to the choir church type.



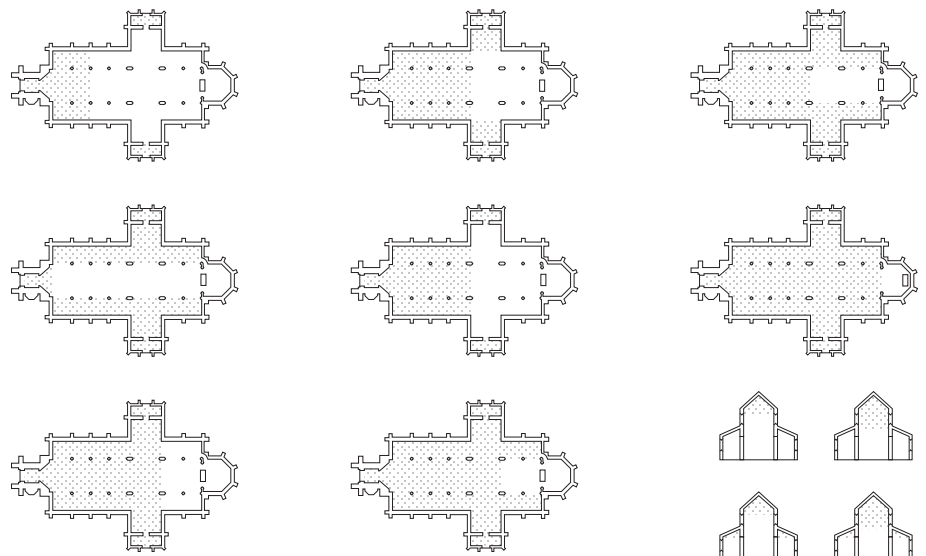
Possible reductions of the ceremonial space in a choir church type, using Sankta Birgittas kapell in Gothenburg as an example. The architecturally distinct choir makes a reduction of the ceremonial space to the choir an intuitive solution.



Possible reductions of the ceremonial space in central plan church, using Östra kapellet in Gothenburg as an example. This type seem to offer the most possibilities of division, but the impact on the overall experience of the space is relatively large.



Possible reductions of the ceremonial space in a basilica type church, using Hagakyrkan as an example. The tripartite layout define how the space can be subdivided.



*This page:*

Possible reductions of the ceremonial space in four different church types. The layout and graphic style of this study is indebted to typological studies in Johannes Brattgårds master's thesis "Metamorfos". Scale 1:1600.

**Gothenburg churches**  
*Mapping exercise*

The plan was used as a tool to understand the relationship between dates of construction, typology and location in order to pick a church that was appropriate for my study.

1. Örgryte gamla kyrka, 1200's [1000's]
2. Lundby gamla kyrka, 1300's
3. Tyska Cristinae kyrka, 1783 [1624]
4. Göteborgs domkyrka, 1815 [1621]
5. Mariakyrkan, 1815 [1767]
6. Carl Johans kyrka, 1826 [1788]
7. Sta Brigittas kapell, 1857
8. Engelska kyrkan, 1857 [1762]
9. Hagakyrkan, 1859
10. Östra kapellet, 1861
11. St Johanneskyrkan, 1866
12. Backa kyrka, 1868 [1100's]
13. St Pauli kyrka, 1882
14. Landala kapell, 1885
15. Örgryte nya kyrka, 1890
16. Oskar Fredriks kyrka, 1893
17. St Matteus kapell, 1907
18. Vasakyrkan, 1909
19. Annedals kyrka, 1910
20. Masthuggskyrkan, 1914
21. Brämaregårdens kyrka, 1925
22. Nylöse kyrka, 1929 [1627]
23. Helga korsets kapell, 1935
24. Johannebergskyrkan, 1940
25. St Olofs & St Sigfrids kapell, 1951-7
26. Björkekärrs kyrka, 1958
27. Härlanda kyrka, 1958
28. Norska sjömanskyrkan, 1958
29. Skårs kyrka, 1959 [1948]
30. Kungsladugårds kyrka, 1960
31. Biskopsgårdens kyrka 1961
32. St Markus & St Lukas kapell, 1961
33. Toleredskyrkan 1961 [1950]
34. Guldhedskyrkan 1966 [1951]
35. Högsbo kyrka 1966
36. Kaverös kyrka 1969
37. Norra Biskopsgårdens kyrka 1970
38. Burås kyrka 1971 [1951]
39. Brunnsbokyrkan, 1972 [1965]
40. Länsångårdens kyrka, 1972 [1965]
41. Pater Nosterkyrkan, 1973
42. Vårfrukyrkan, 1972
43. Bjurslättkyrkan, 1973 [1966]
44. Lundby nya kyrka, 1996 [1886]



## A meeting of typologies

### Workshop

As a way to decide an appropriate church and auditorium format for my study, I designed a workshop for myself in which I combined the plan and section of a given church with that of a given theatre reference. This allowed me to assess the scale and feasibility of a theatre housed in a given church.

After some quick experiments, I decided on the courtyard theatre type as the most appropriate auditorium format for my project. It has its origins in the British renaissance, associated with William Shakespeare. It is similar to an opera house in layout, but it's smaller to make it acoustically and atmospherically more appropriate for drama theatre.

The stage is a so-called thrust stage, meaning that it has audience on three sides, in front of the stage and on two or more balconies. These can be integrated with the organ balcony of many churches. The rows directly in front of the stage can be much less sloped than in other formats, making it possible to retain a more or less flat church floor.

Courtyard theatres lack the tall scene tower associated with proscenium theatres (also known as peephole theatres) that would require a large intervention into the roof of the church. This is because the focus is less on large scenographies (which typically favour a view from the front) and more on speech, props and the human body. The lack of large scenographies also make the space itself flexible and avoids the need to store scenography on stage between plays - which would disturb religious ceremonies.

Finally, courtyard theatres retain a spatial directionality that is typical of churches, unlike the arena format which has audience on all sides of the stage.

The courtyard format was tested in three churches of different scales that were all interesting from the point of view of my staging concept and that were seldom or never used at full capacity. None of them are declared listed and interventions into them are thus restricted only by the fourth chapter of the Historic Environment Act. I choose to continue with Mariakyrkan because of its relatively small size that seemed appropriate for the time frame of my study - and because I found it charming.

*Source on theatre types:*  
Strong (ed.) (2010), p. 8-11  
and 67-72.

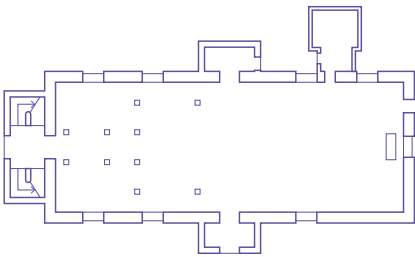
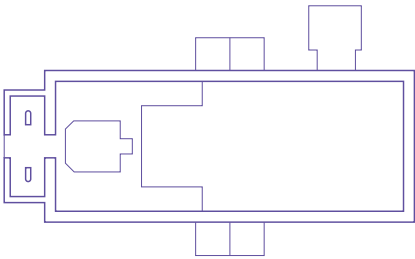
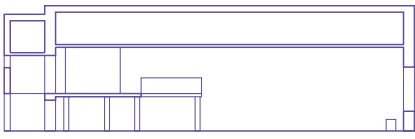
*Below right:*  
Typological representation of four different relationships between stage and audience. They are, from left to right, an end-stage (typical of proscenium theatres); a traverse stage (used by Rossi in the Teatro del Mondo); a thrust stage (typical of courtyard theatres); and finally an arena stage (typical of amphitheatres).

#### Legend

— Audience rows  
 Stage



## Mariakyrkan



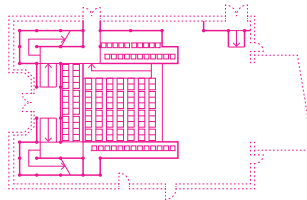
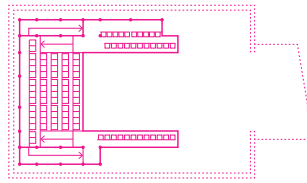
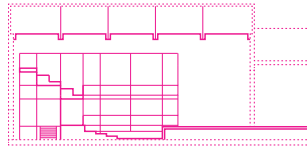
*Date of construction*  
1815

*Location*  
Stampen, Gothenburg

*Architect*  
Carl Wilhelm Carlberg

*Source*  
Stadsbyggnadskontoret

## Tricycle Theater



*Date of construction*  
1980

*Location*  
London, UK

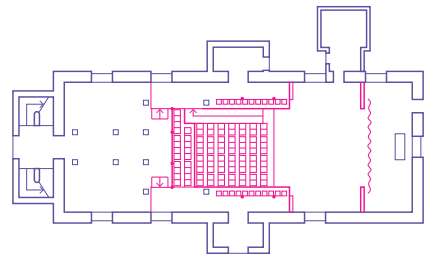
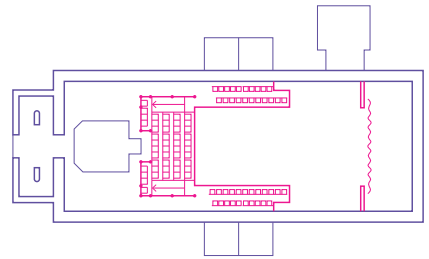
*Architects*  
Tim Foster Architects

*Seats*  
230

The auditorium is a self-supported construction within a pre-existing space known as the Forester's Hall.

*Source*  
Strong (ed.) (2010), p. 270-271.

## Combination of drawings

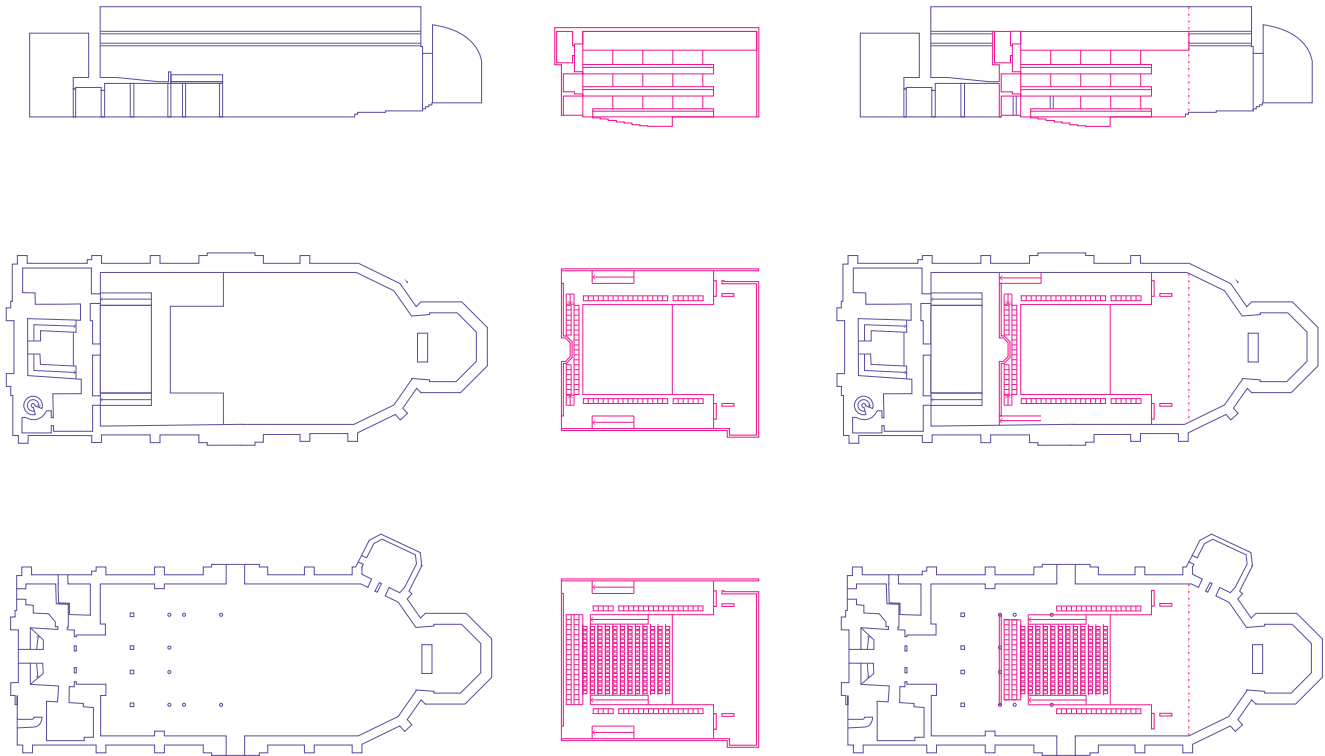


The theatre fits into the church space with some relatively minor adjustments and a small reduction of seats. A proscenium-like frame closes off the stage before the altar. The organ balcony can be reused to host the audience. The technical equipment and ventilation ducts above the auditorium space fits into the attic of the church. Of course, certain questions remained unanswered, in particular the question of the multipurpose functioning of the space as both church and theatre, but the workshop gave me an overall scheme and showed me the feasibility of a theatre for around 200 people in this church.

Tyska kyrkan

Cottesloe theatre

Combination of drawings



*Date of construction*

Mostly characterized by 18th century rebuildings, with traces of an original church of 1648, in turn predated by a moved wooden church of 1624.

*Location*

Stora hamnkanalen, Gothenburg

*Architects*

Johan Anders Reuss, Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz and several others through the centuries.

*Source*

Stadsbyggnadskontoret

*Date of construction*

1976

*Location*

London, UK

*Architects*

Denys Lasdun and Partners

*Seats*

400

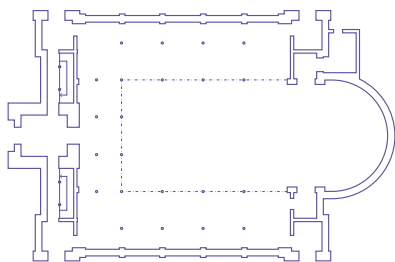
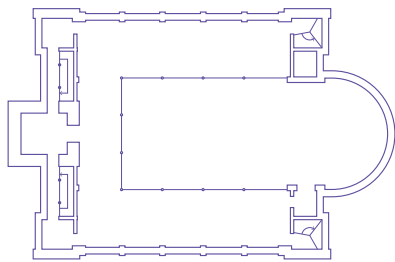
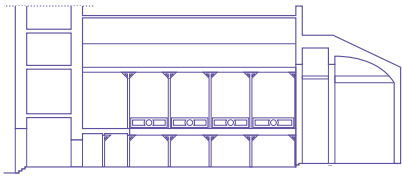
*Source*

Strong (ed.) (2010), p. 210 - 211.

The theatre fits into the church in a way that is similar to the previous experiment, but in a larger scale.



St Pauli kyrka



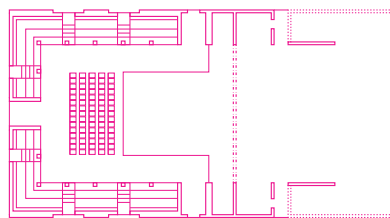
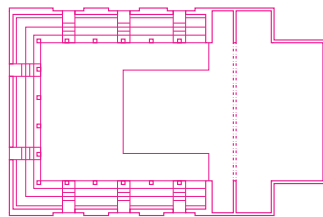
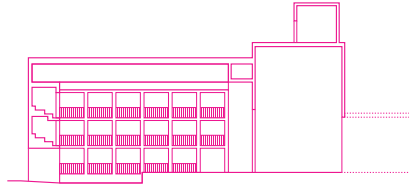
*Date of construction*  
1882

*Location*  
Olskroken, Gothenburg

*Architect*  
Adrian C. Peterson

*Source*  
Stadsbyggnadskontoret

Gdansk Shakespeare theatre



*Date of construction*  
2014

*Location*  
Gdansk, Poland

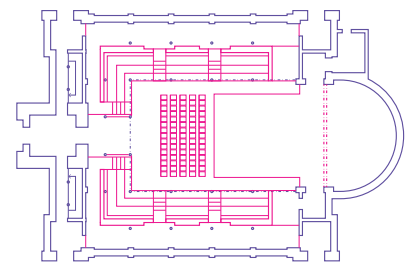
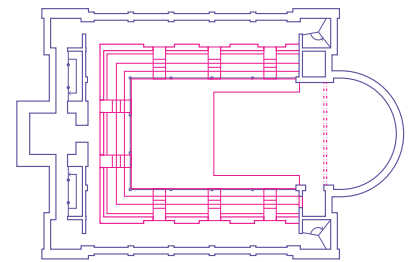
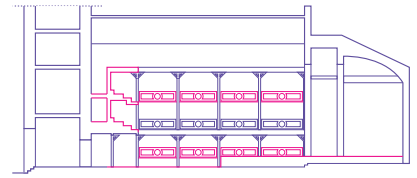
*Architect*  
Renato Rizzi

*Seats*  
450 · 500

*Sources*  
<https://teatrshakespearewski.pl/en/>  
<https://www.archdaily.com/595895/gdansk-shakespearean-theatre-renato-rozzi>

Retrieved 22-05-08

Combination of drawings



The theatre fits into the church as a “box in a box” with circulation on the edges, in an even larger scale than the previous experiments. The apse becomes clearly articulated as a back-stage.

# Mariakyrkan

## Choice of church

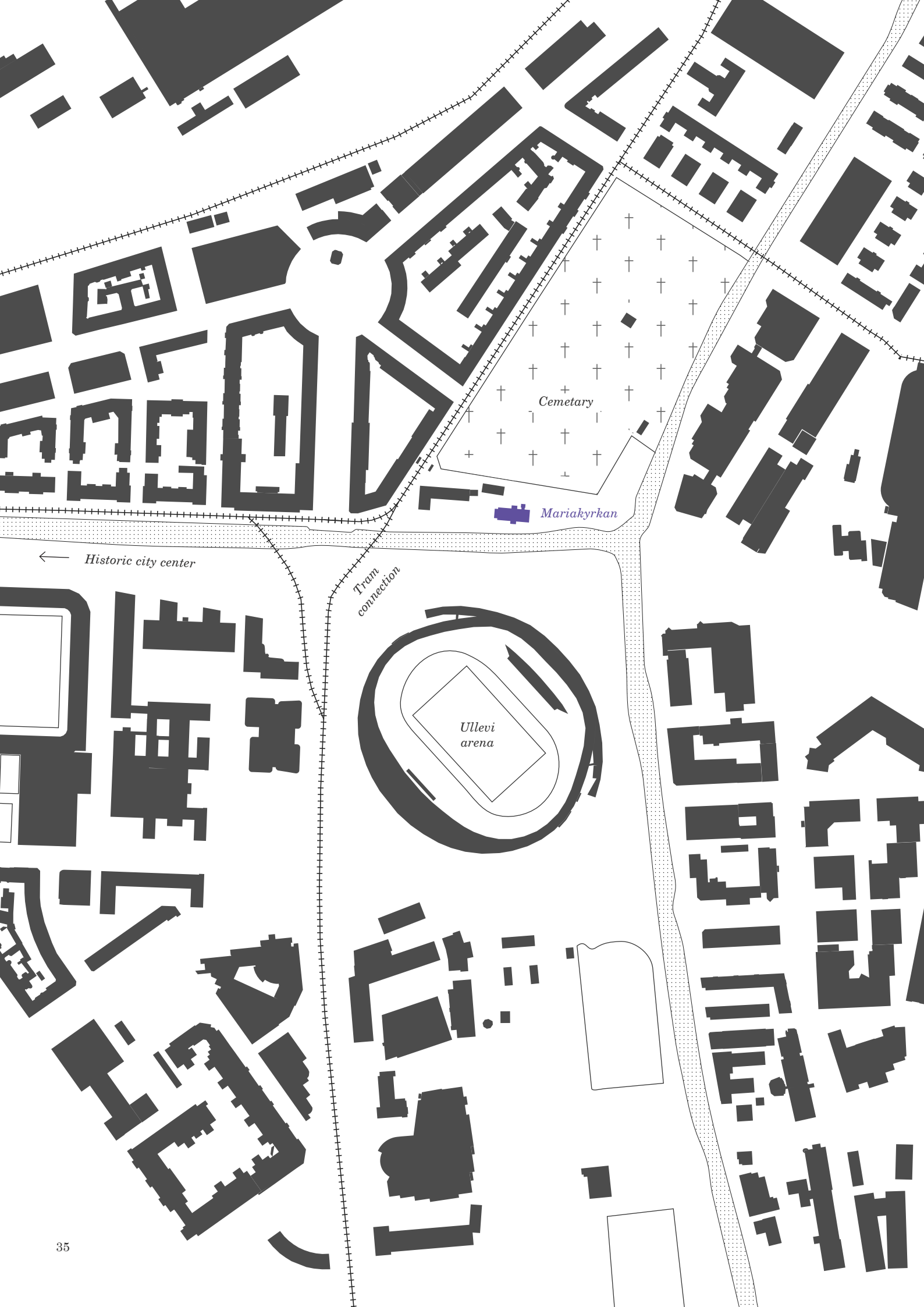
*Opposite page*  
Situation plan  
Scale 1:5000

*Bellow and on next spread*  
Photographs of Mariakyrkan  
by the author.

Mariakyrkan lies in the district of Stampen in Gothenburg. It is centrally placed, architecturally interesting and vastly underused, currently not hosting masses or other recurring ceremonies. It is used mostly for small ceremonies for which you might like to be in a smaller church that doesn't feel empty.

The church lies adjacent to the much larger Ullevi arena. It has historically been associated with the adjacent poorhouse. The building history of the plot is discussed in the following chapter.





Cemetery

Mariakyrkan

← Historic city center

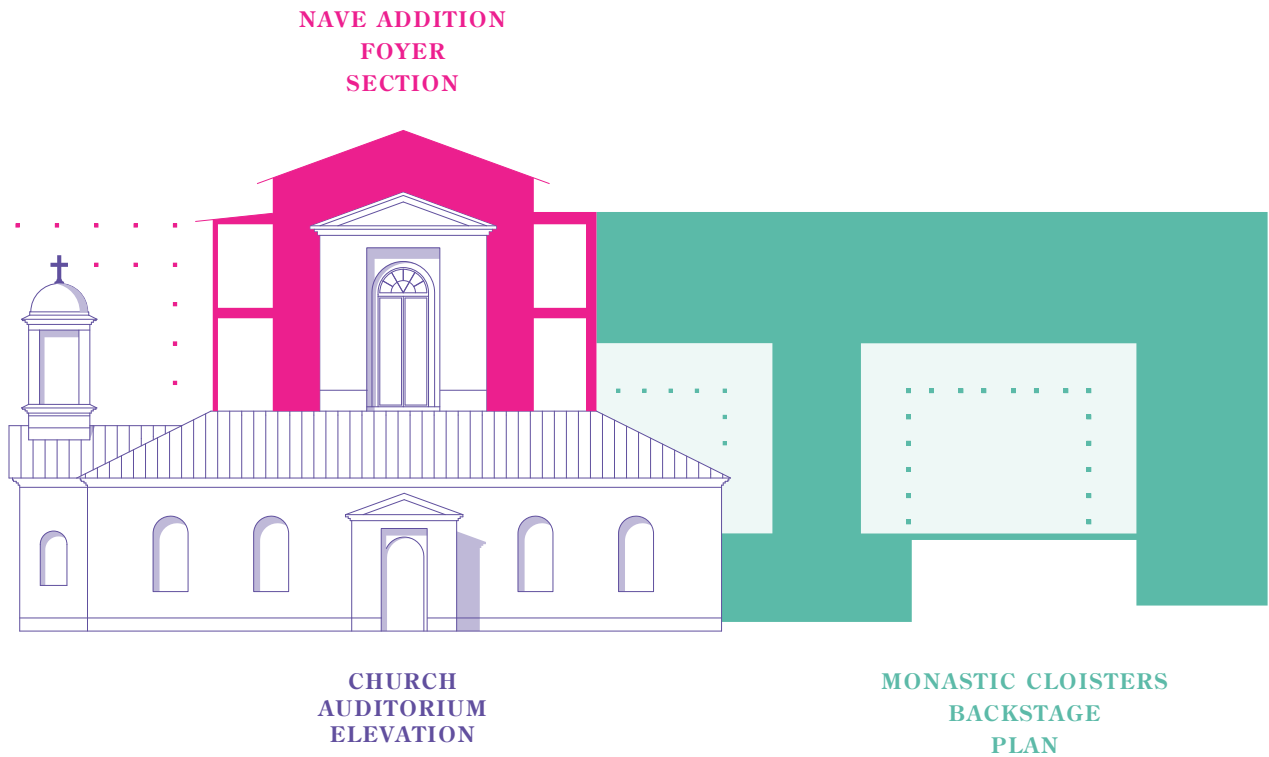
Tram connection

Ullevi arena





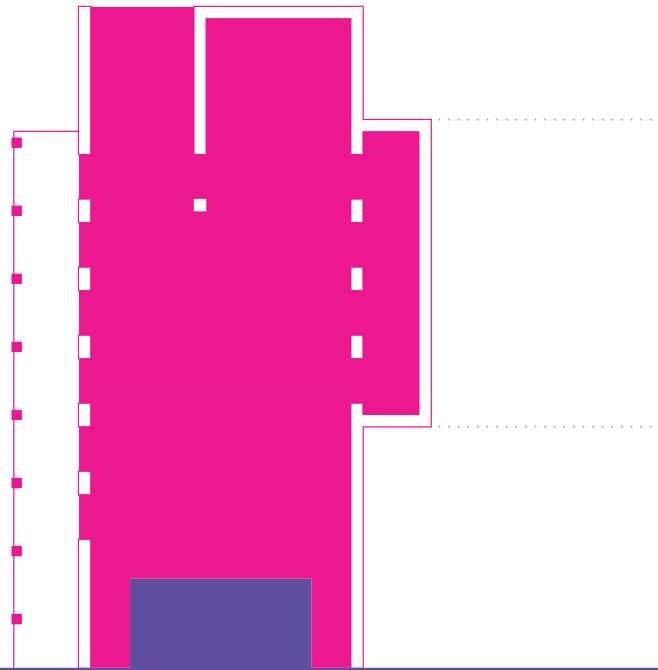
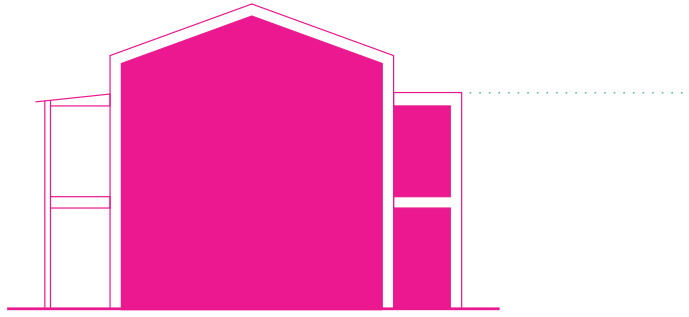
# Concept & staged context



I turn now to present a selection from the context of Mariakyrkan that I will stage in the project.

*Above:*  
Illustration of the concept.

The concept is a mediating link between these historical references and the design proposal. The church functions as auditorium while the foyer is staged as a new nave with a basilican section and the backstage as a monastery distributed around two cloisters.





*Opposite page:*

The foyer addition in relation to the church. From the point of view of the foyer, the church is reoriented on a new axis. From the point of view of the church as a church, nothing is changed.

The foyer has a deconstructed basilican section, one aisle being longer and exterior while the other is shorter and interior, built into the neighbouring building.

*Below:*

Study of the size and proportions of the foyer in relation to the church. One of the small “transepts” of the existant church, represented in white below, is built into the new foyer. Facing this is a new interior with an integrated elevator shaft. More on this in the following chapter.



## Church transformation practices before the 20th century

This spread shows examples of the tradition of rebuilding of churches that mostly existed prior to the 20th century. Churches have primarily been transformed by means of addition, most commonly in the manner of nr. 8 in this list. This is also what I have chosen to work with.

During the 20th century, construction of new churches were prioritized over rebuildings and existant churches were treated with increasing care. There is obviously good reasons for this, and we have this carefullness to thank for the continued existence of a lot of our cultural heritage. What seems to have been lost in the process, however, was precisely this immaterial heritage of transformation practices that for a long time offered a continuity between past and present.

This is interesting for this thesis because it offers a typological grammar for not only church buildings in their static state of completion but for their transformation into new states.




1. Widening the nave by placing columns on the foundations of the original wall, thus creating three aisles.
2. Transforming a church with aisles into one great hall by removing the existing columns and placing a more advanced roof construction on the old walls.
3. Constructing a larger church after an older church was burned down or demolished.
4. Enlarging and reorienting the church by extending the nave on its long side.
5. Extending the nave in either direction, often combined with the construction of a new choir (to the east) or tower (to the west).
6. Adding a new nave to an existing tower.
7. Reusing materials from an old church in the construction of a new one.
8. Adding a tower (a), porch (b), transepts (c), sacristy (d) or choir (e) to an existing nave.
9. Enlarging and reorienting the church by adding a nave that transforms the old one into its transepts.
10. Shortening the nave, often on the choir side.
11. Constructing a smaller church after an older church was burned down or demolished.
12. Demolishing the transepts.

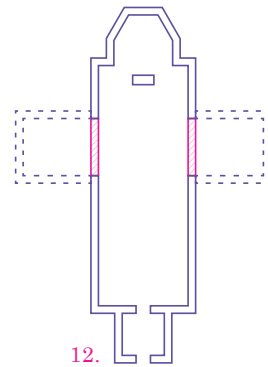
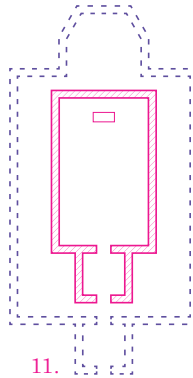
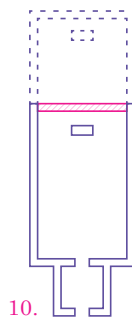
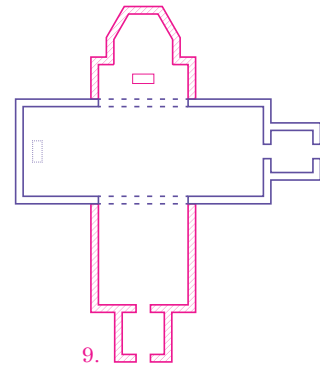
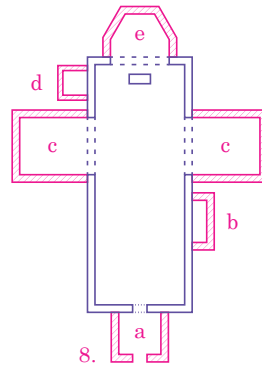
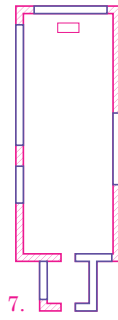
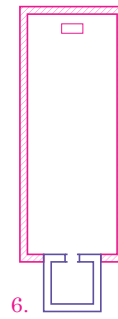
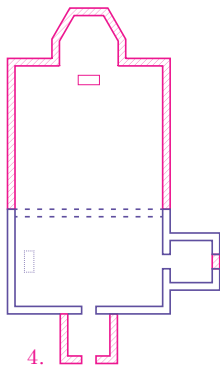
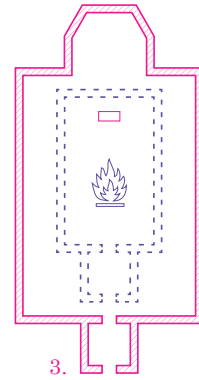
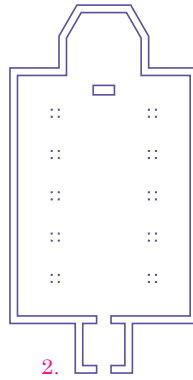
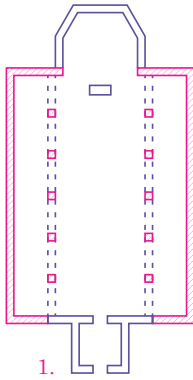
### Source

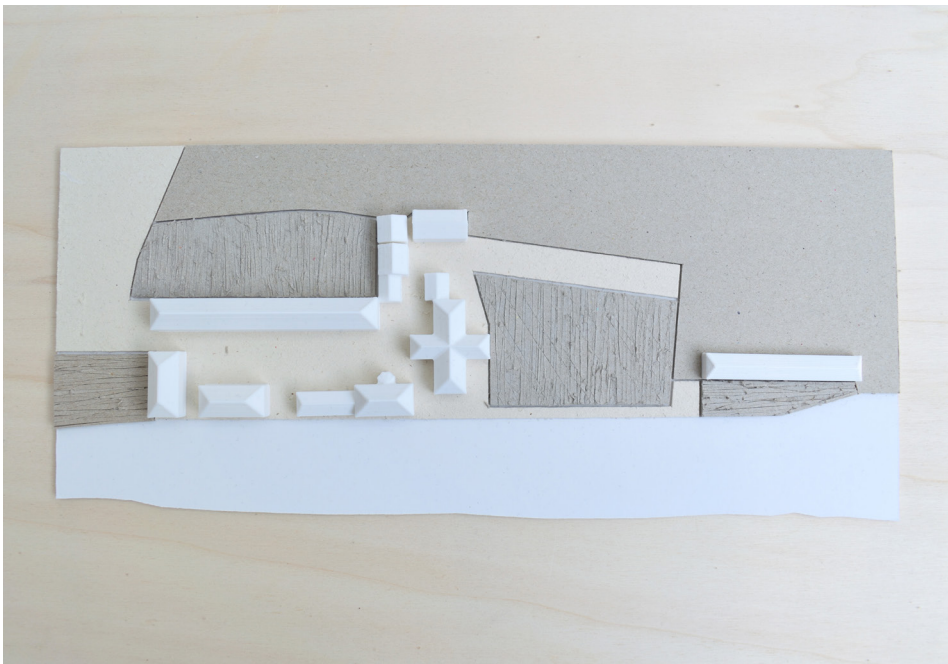
The drawings are based on the extensive research performed by the National Heritage Board within the research project "Sockenkyrkorna".

Dahlberg & Franzén (ed.) (2008), p. 45, 223, 273 - 287 and 307 - 311.

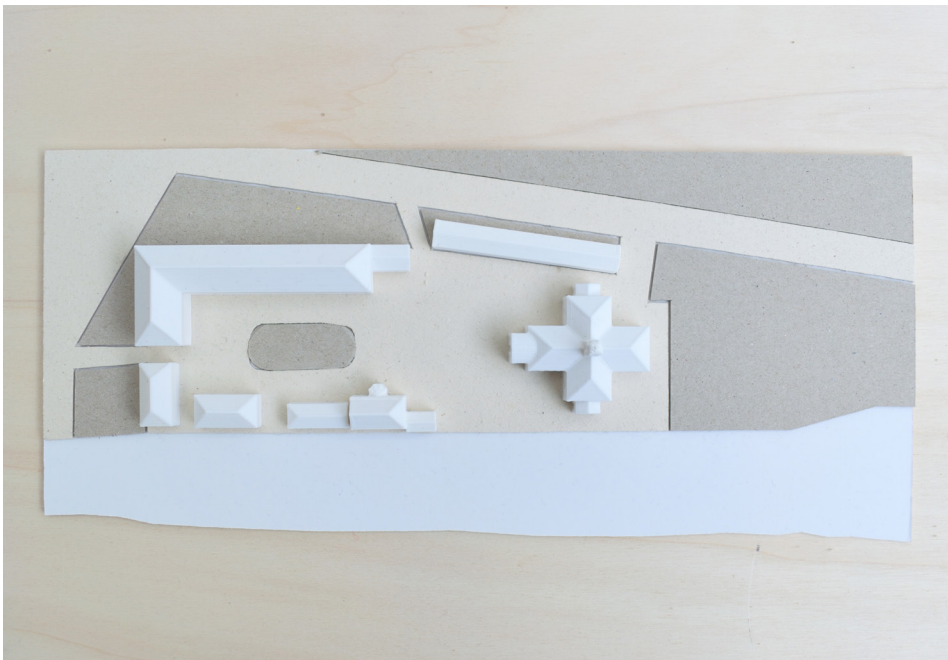
### Opposite page, legend

-  Demolished
-  Old wall
-  New wall

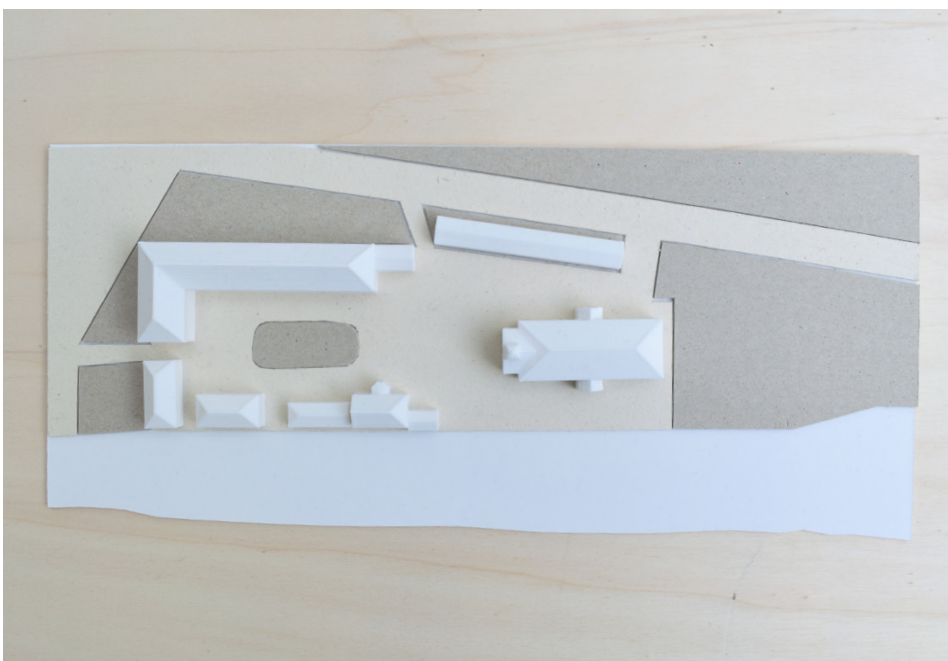




**Late 18th century**



**Late 19th century**  
*(as it would have looked if the first proposal was realized)*



**Late 19th century**  
*(as built)*

The history of the plot begins with the transformation of a series of industrial buildings from the early 18th century into a poorhouse. The new development can be seen in a 1767 drawing by the soon-to-be city architect Carl Wilhelm Carlberg. A dryhouse for malt was transformed into a church (1), the long building to the north (2) was used for dwelling and the buildings close to the church (3) functioned as clergy house for the priest. The rest of the buildings functioned as kitchen, mill, wash house, bakery and brewery (4-5), storage, privy (6-9) and barn (10).

One can speculate as to why the dryhouse for malt was reused as a church. Such dryhouses contain a large oven and was for this reason often placed away from other buildings. This might have made it seem institutional and church-like. The oven also becomes a house-within-the-house similar to the design of many altars, preaching chairs, or various types of aediculae. This is, of course, pure speculation on my part.

The dryhouse church deteriorated and was felt to be too small. C.W. Carlberg designed a proposal for a stone church that, in a classicist formal language, also seems to have cited the cross configuration of the previous church (11). This church was deemed too expensive. It was built according to a new design without the northern and southern transepts and was inaugurated in 1815 (12). By this time, Carlberg had designed a large new poorhouse (13). The smaller buildings on the north part of the plot (6-9) were eventually removed and instead a long economy building was erected (12).

Increasingly, what was once farm land attained the character of park space, adjacent to the growing northern cemetery, which was developed according to a design by Carlberg and inaugurated in 1804. It is evident that Carlberg, in his first proposal, wanted to articulate a north-south axis in addition to the east-western one. This would have linked the church to his nearby urban plan for the cemetery. It seems unlikely that the long economical building (12) would have been erected as it did if the first proposal had been accepted. One can imagine that in such a case, a more articulated relation to the cemetery would have been established.

## History of the settlements on the plot

The models are based on a synthetic interpretation of drawings, photographs and text descriptions. I should stress that they are speculative to a certain extent, especially regarding the height of the buildings in the first model, since this could only be approximated by looking at photographs of which we of course have none from this time.

### *Sources*

Lindblad (1993), Ahlforss (1925), Bäckström (1923) and photographs in the collection of Göteborgs stadsmuseum, accessed through Carlotta.

## Today

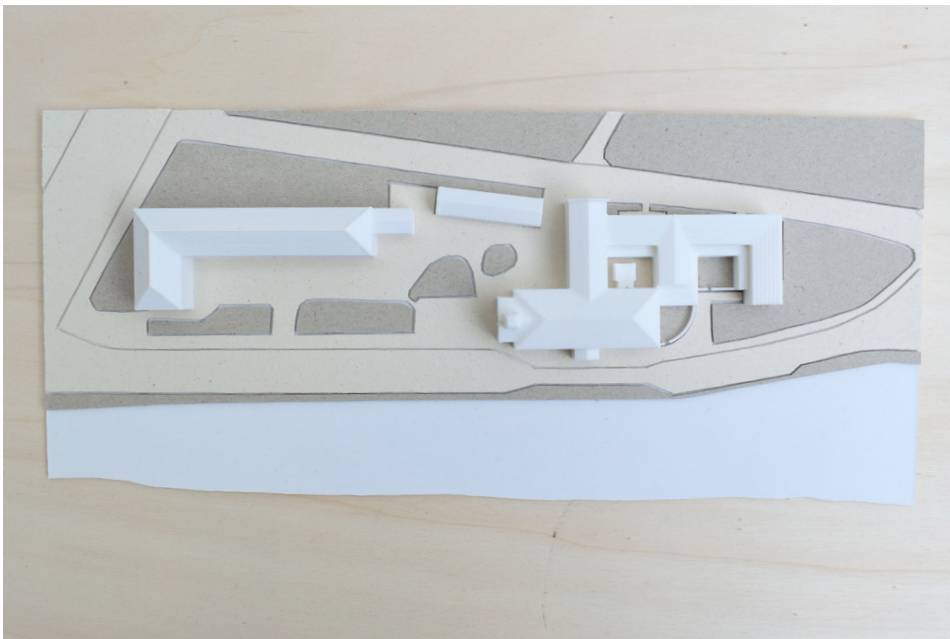
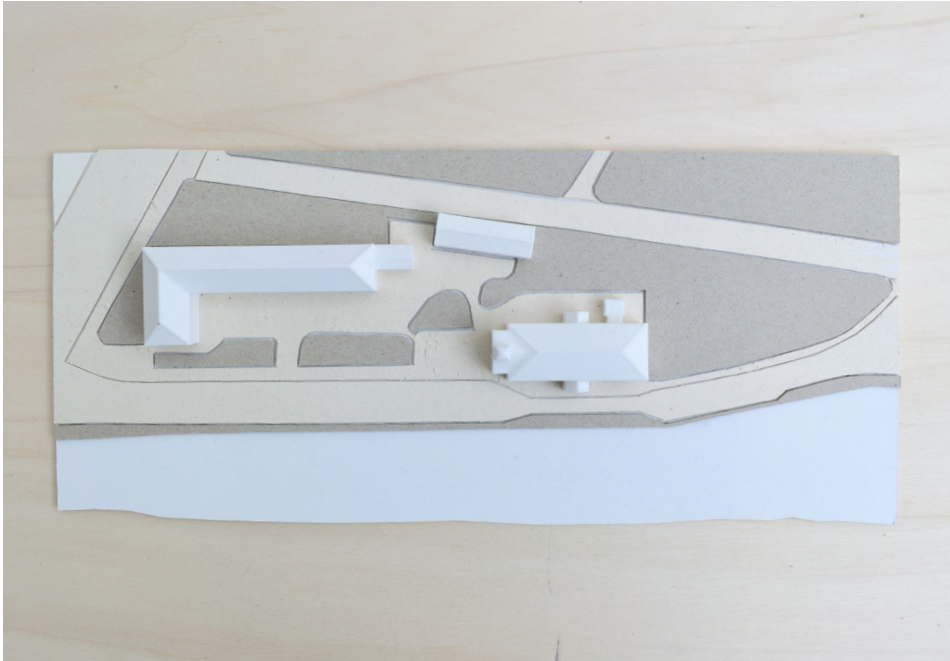
In the beginning of the 20th century, the southern part of the yard was demolished to make space for a road, tearing the yard open. A tram connection even went along this route at one point. A part of the long economical building eventually deteriorated and was demolished in the 60's. At that time, Sven Brolid designed a sacristy to the north and renovated the church.

## Proposal

The proposal is placed on a part of the plot that to a large extent has never been previously built upon. This has various reasons, one of them being the preciousness of that which remains of the yard, which is considered highly valuable from a cultural-historical perspective since it gives an idea of how large parts of central Gothenburg were built prior to the large city fires in the 18th and 19th centuries.

A strong relationship to the yard has always been present in this settlement. My addition creates a border on the eastern and north-eastern side of the current yard, as well as two new yards that reference monastic cloisters. In the new context with Ullevi arena and the surrounding infrastructure, this provides some of the more closed spatial intimacy of the original settlement (see the first model).

The foyer protrudes from the existing church in a way that is similar to the northern cross arm in Carlberg's first proposal. This reorients the church-as-theatre towards the cemetery and the pedestrian route leading from the tram stop. This means that the church-as-church and the church-as-theatre are entered from different directions, hopefully creating clarity for visitors. The "monastic" backstage area is less immediately integrated with the church and seems more like an addition than the foyer does. This is also to provide clarity for visitors, who should not try to enter the theatre through the backstage.



## Chancel screens

This spread shows examples of chancel screens, a type of semi-transparent construction that separates the choir and altar from the rest of the church. These have been used as a way to create a clear boundary between different degrees of holiness.

This is interesting for this project because on the one hand it creates a certain “backdrop” facing the nave, and on the other hand it introduces a separation between a more holy space and less holy one. This can be a way to separate areas belonging more to the church as church from areas belonging equally to church and theatre.

### *This page:*

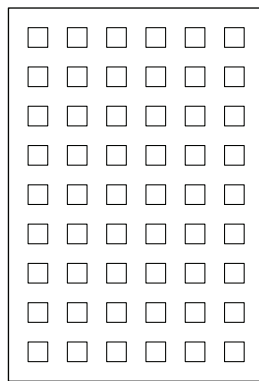
Types of transparencies that historically have been employed in the construction of chancel screens

### *Opposite page:*

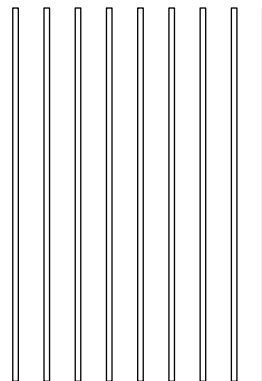
Examples of chancel screens with different ways of creating semi-transparency and separation between spaces. Also shown is how chancel screens can be integrated with other elements in the church.

### *Source:*

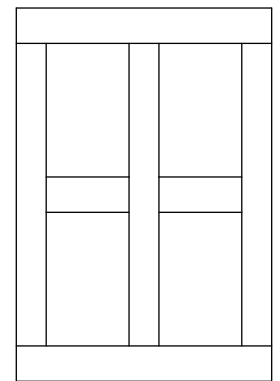
Nilsén (1991)



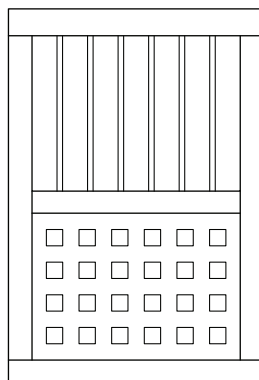
50/50 void & mass



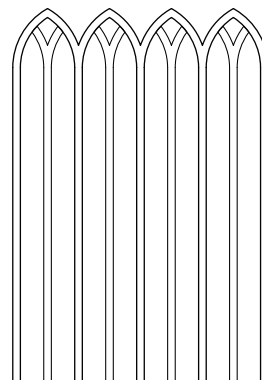
Sticks



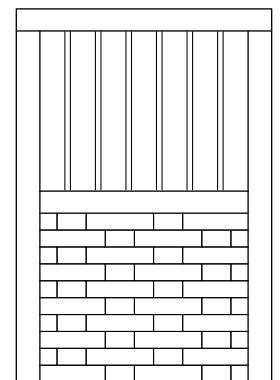
Tectonic construction



Combination of transparencies

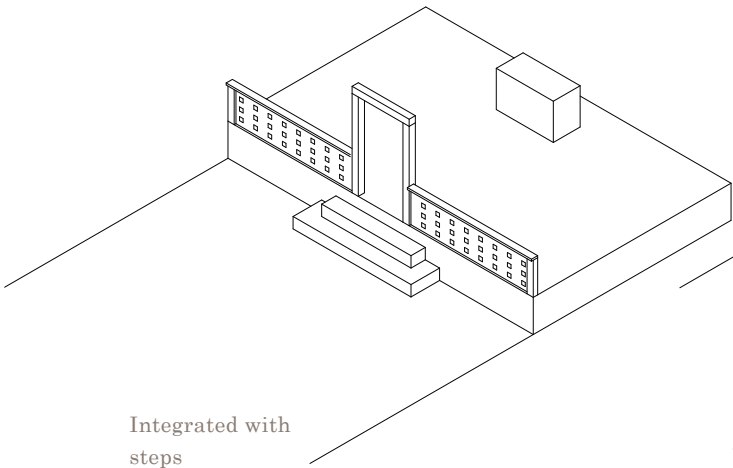


Stylistic variation

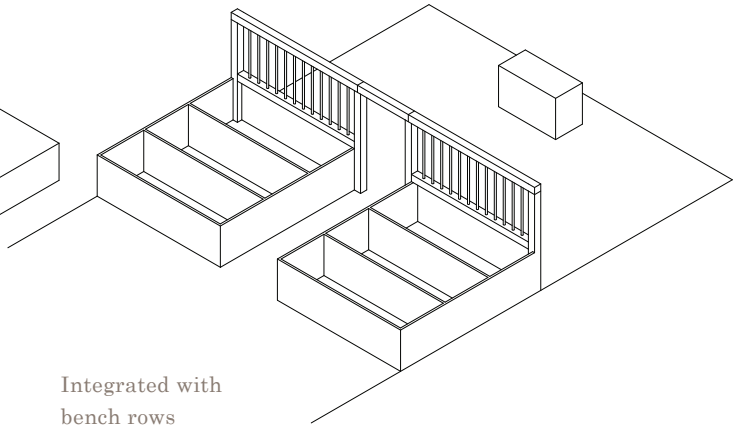


Combination with masonry

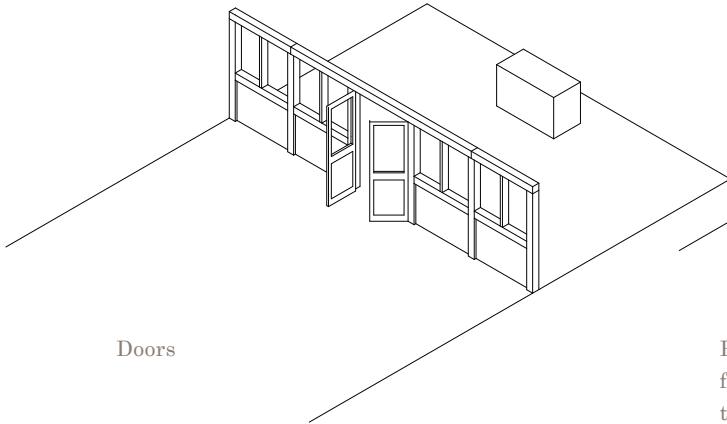




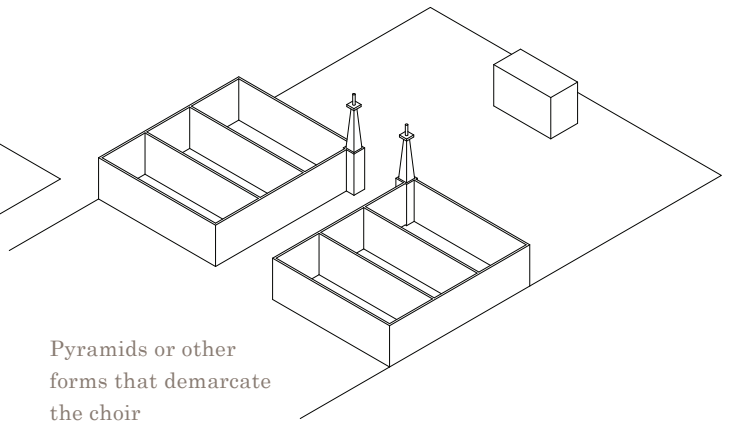
Integrated with steps



Integrated with bench rows

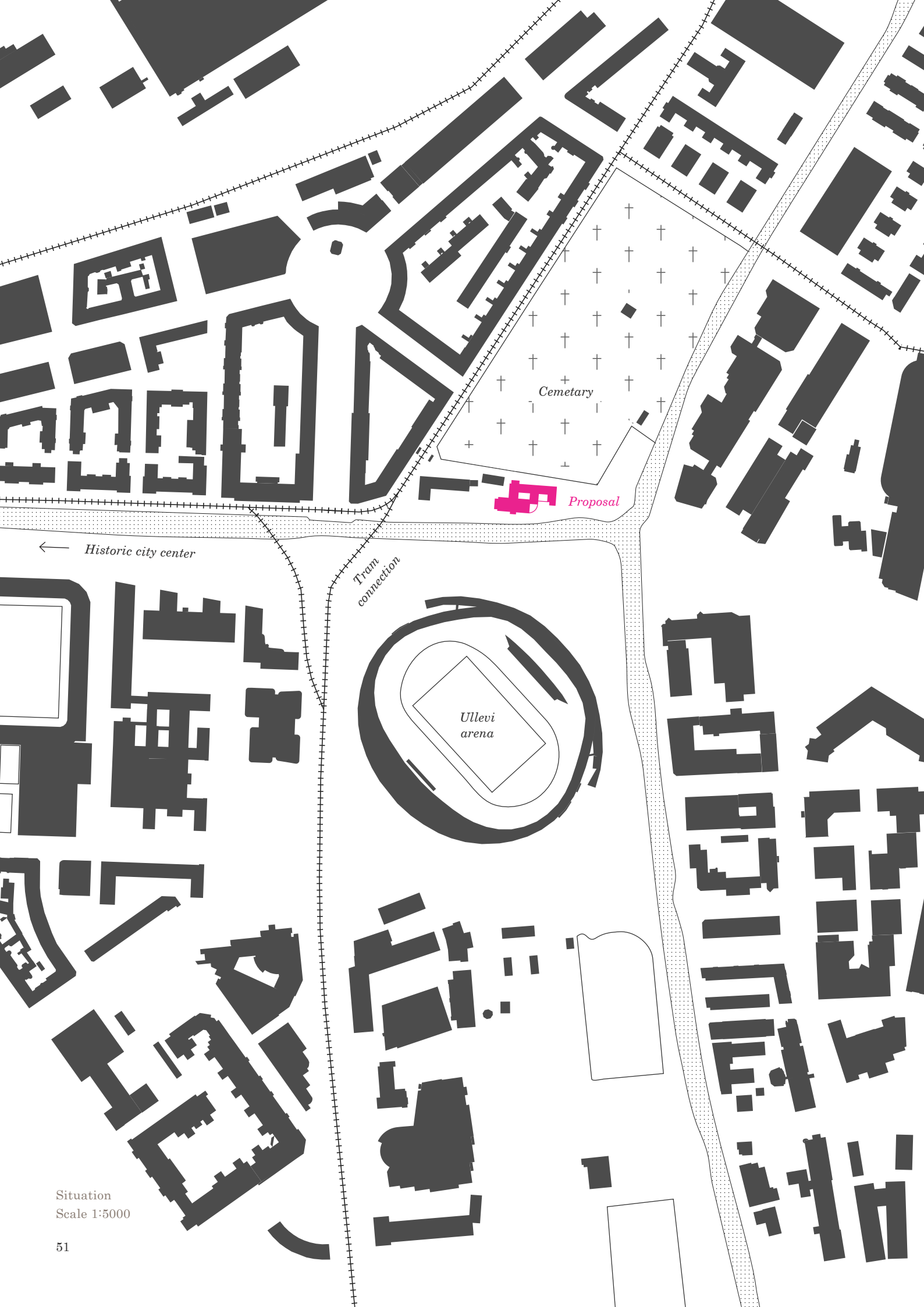


Doors



Pyramids or other forms that demarcate the choir

# Proposal



Cemetery

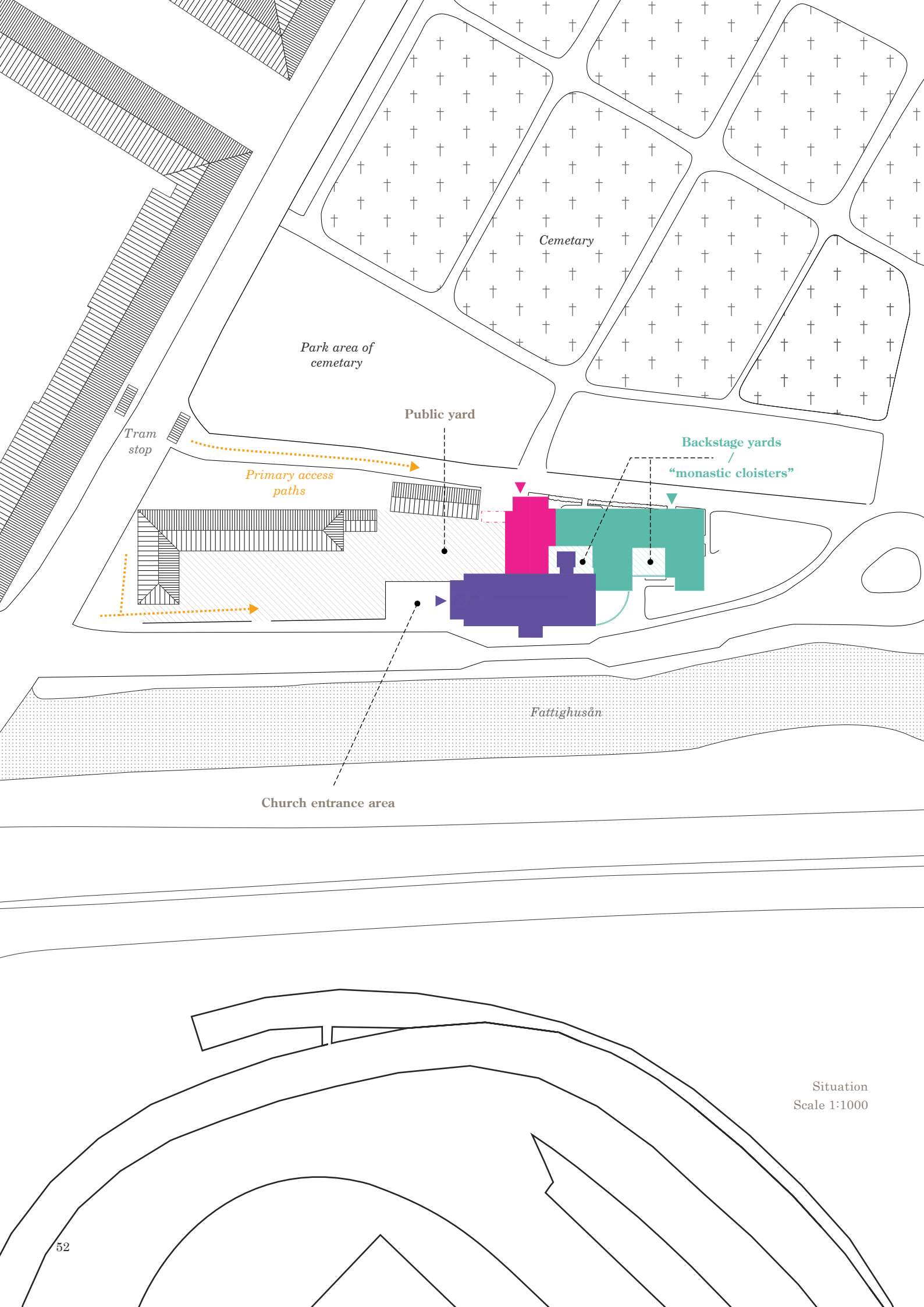
Proposal

Ullevi arena

Tram connection

Historic city center

Situation  
Scale 1:5000



Church entrance area

Fattighusån

Cemetary

Park area of  
cemetary

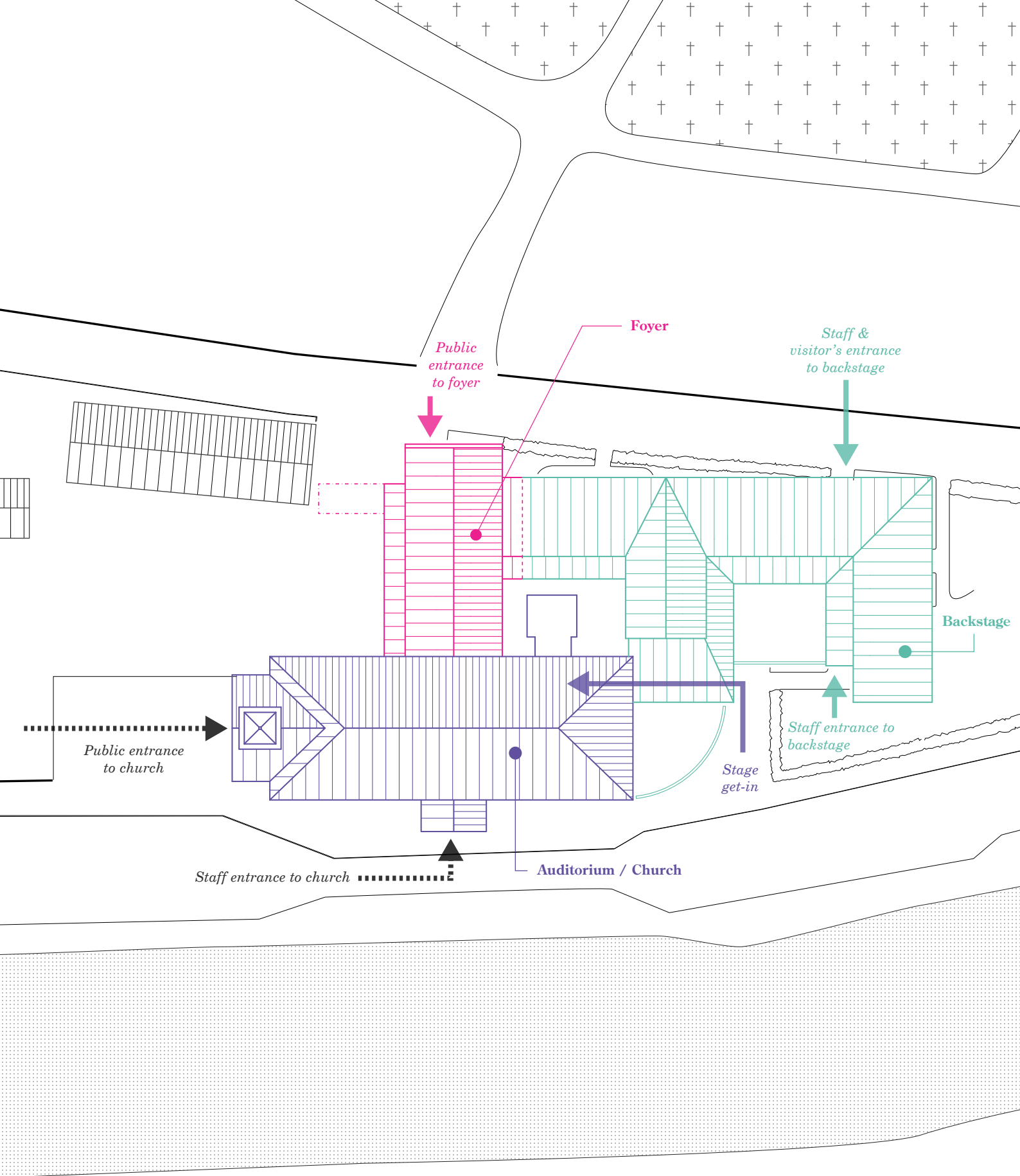
Public yard

Primary access  
paths

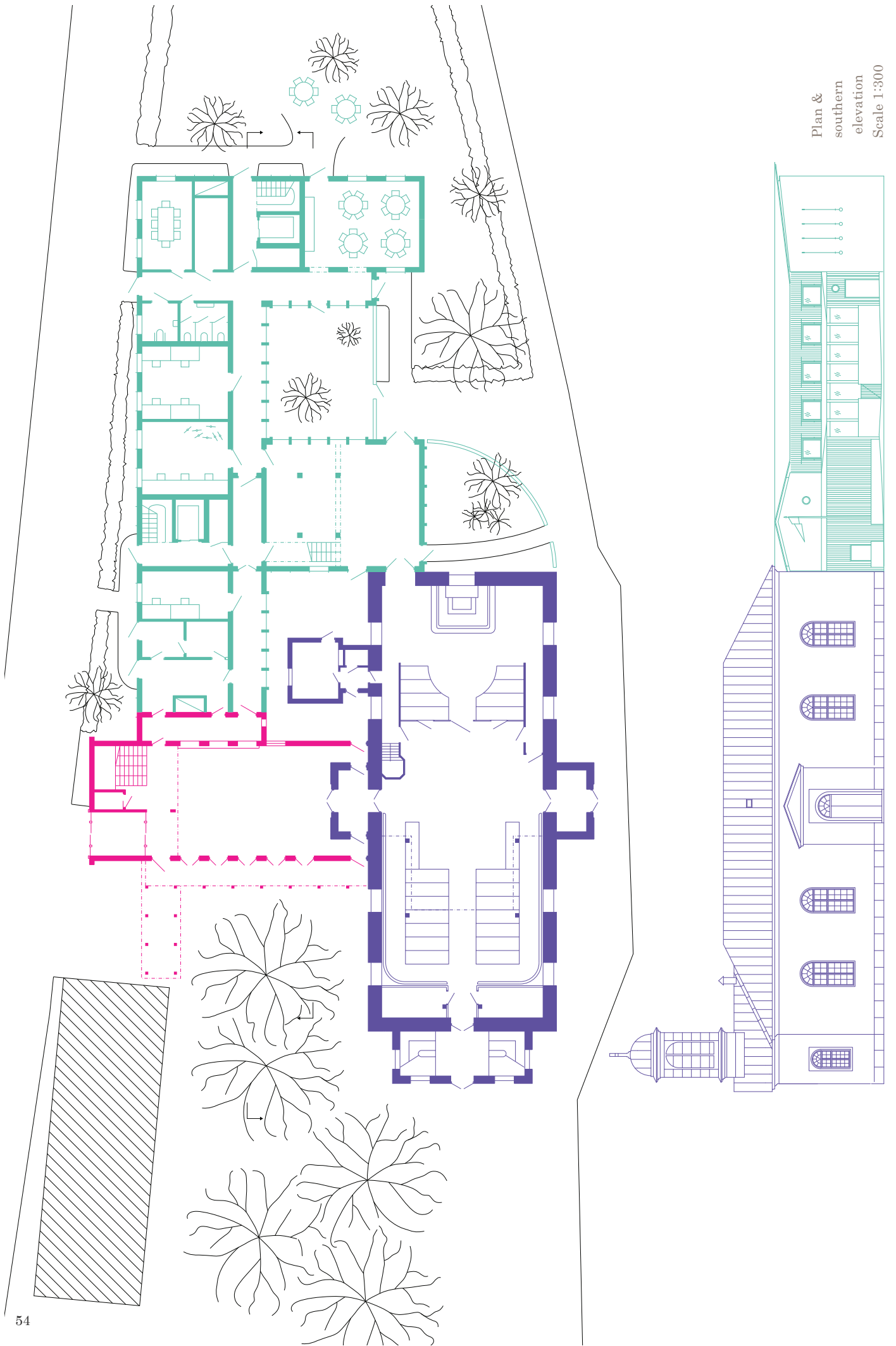
Tram  
stop

Backstage yards  
/ "monastic cloisters"

Situation  
Scale 1:1000

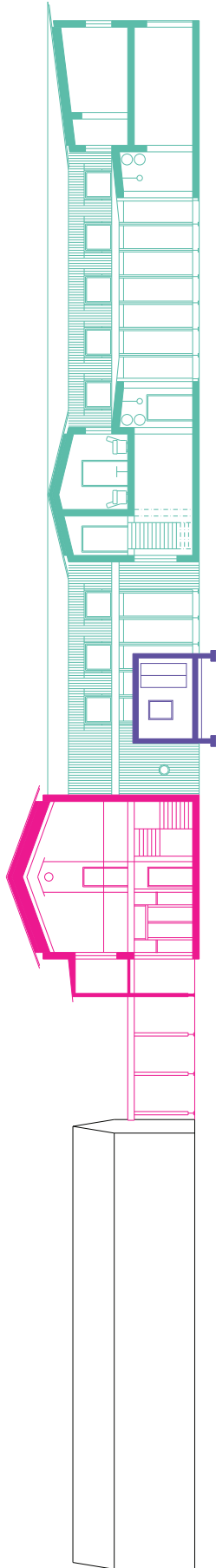


Situation  
Scale 1:400

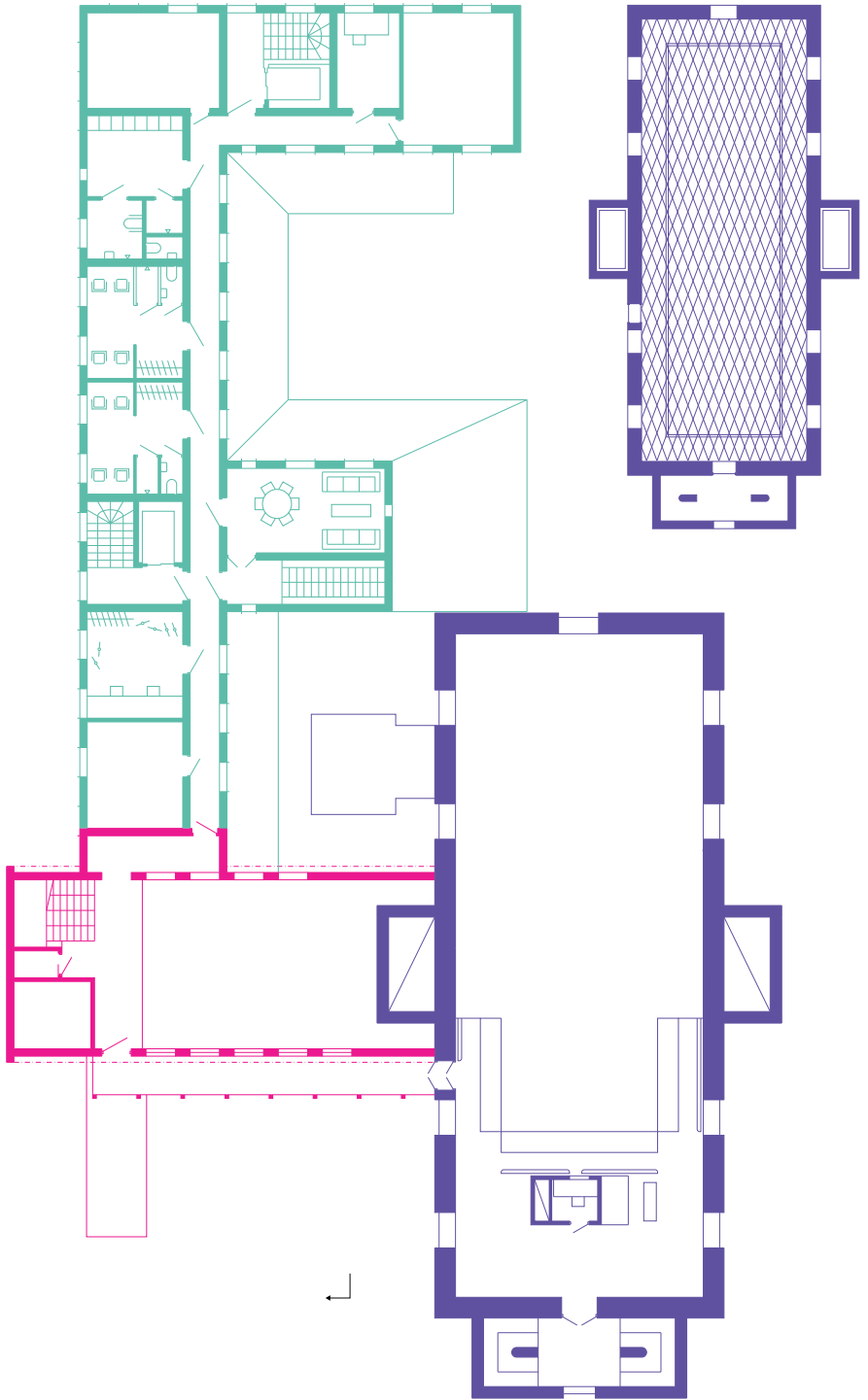


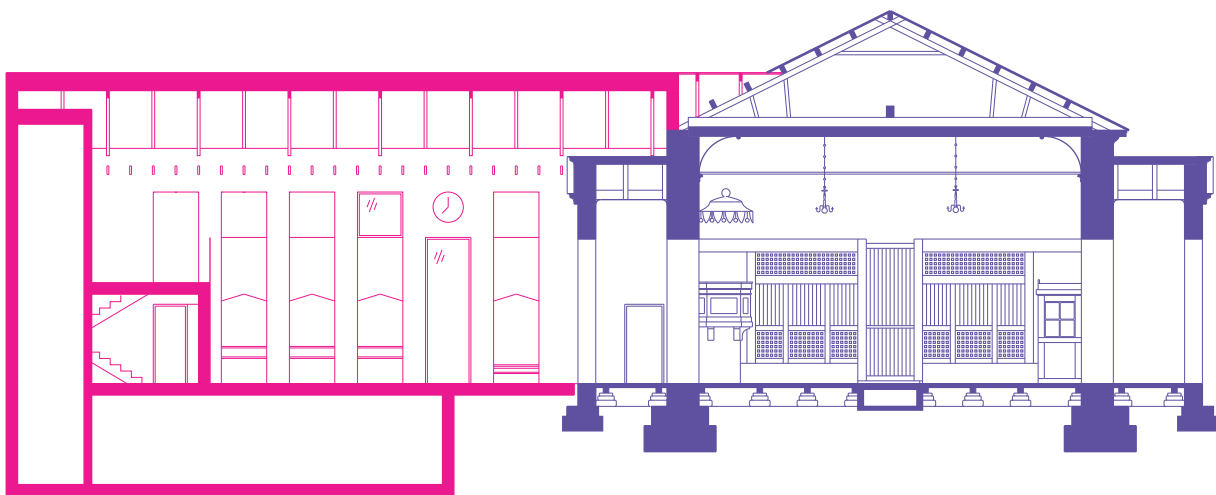
Plan &  
southern  
elevation  
Scale 1:300

Plan & section  
Scale 1:300

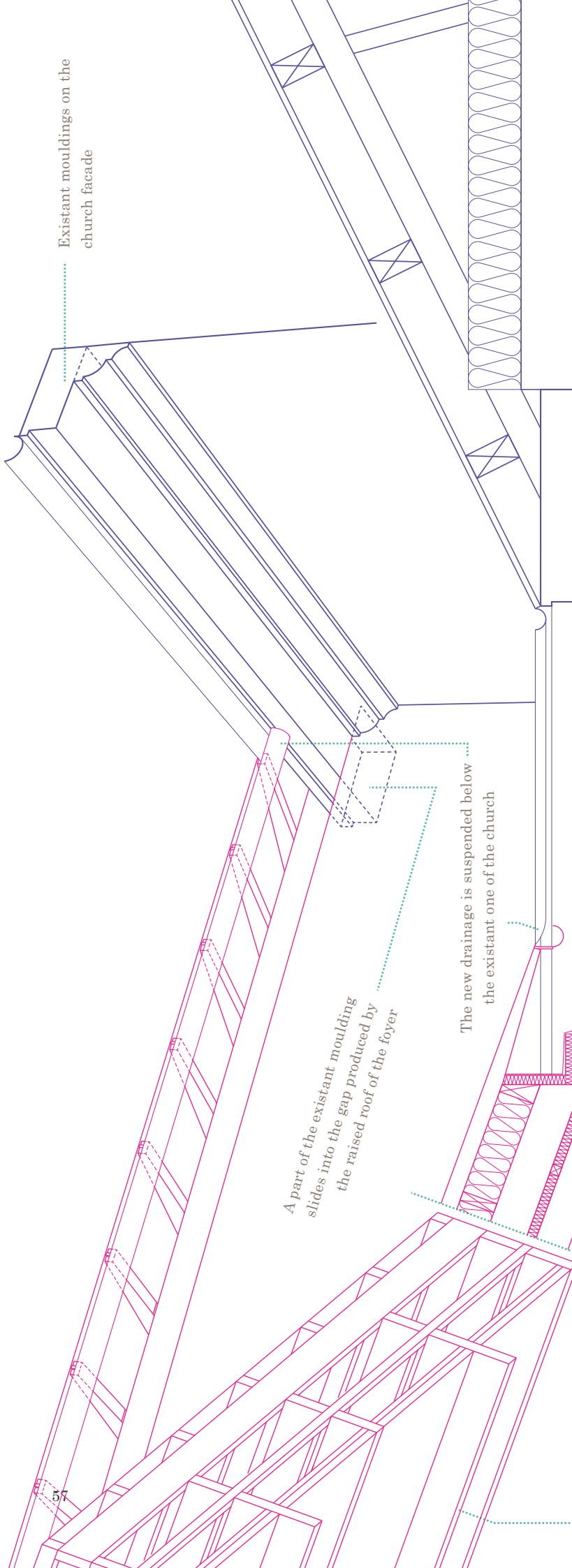


Ceiling plan  
with tension  
wire grid  
Scale 1:450









Existant mouldings on the church facade

A part of the existant moulding slides into the gap produced by the raised roof of the foyer

The new drainage is suspended below the existant one of the church

Section  
Scale 1:25

On the exterior, the roof is raised in relation to the wall. In the interior, it is lowered. This is to avoid that the raised roof becomes a cold bridge.

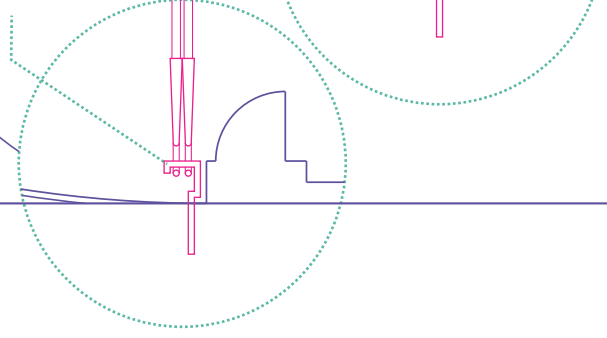
As seen in this axonometric representation, every other truss is exaggerated in its dimensions and protrudes into the space below; the rest show only their bottom surface

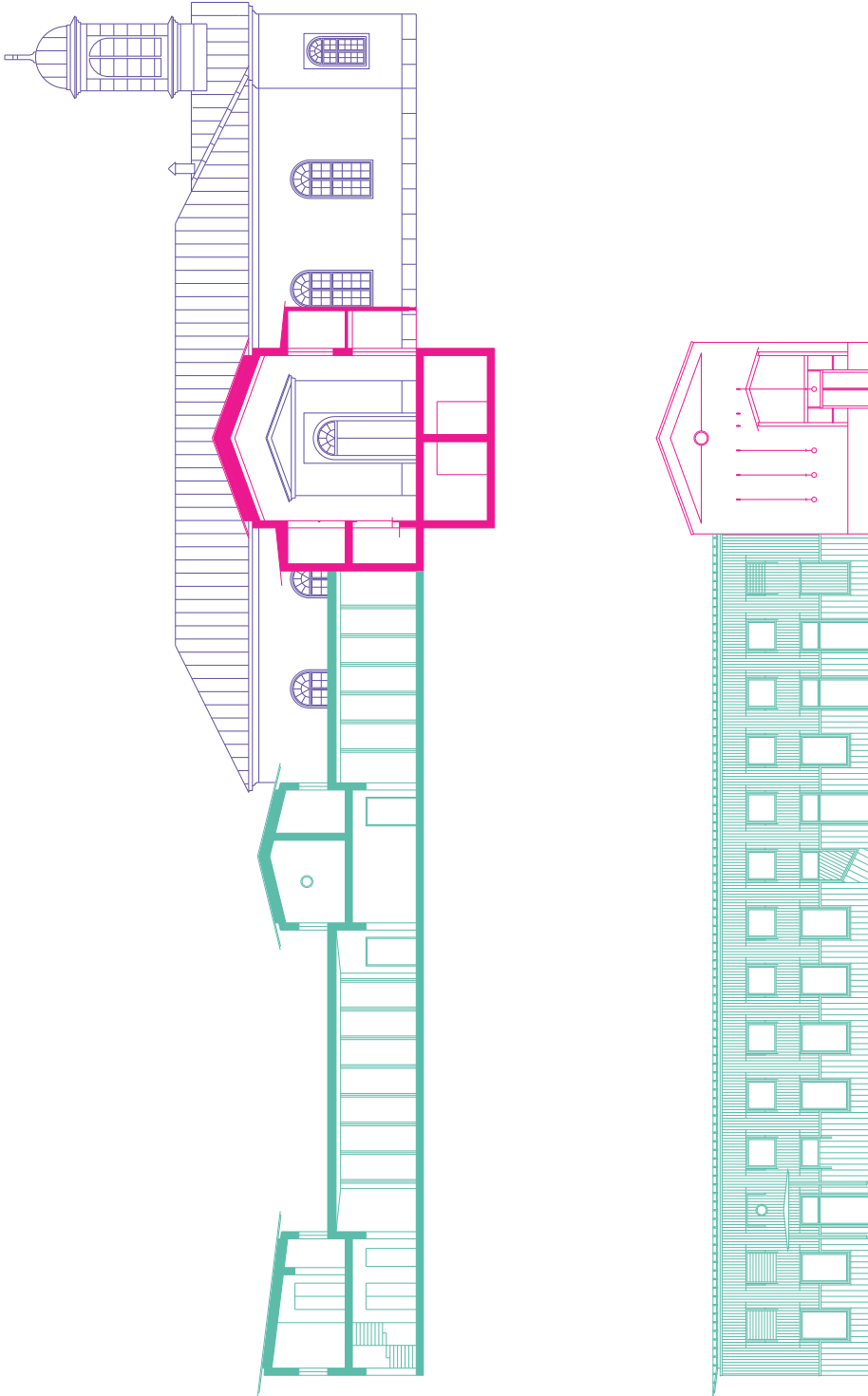
*This page*  
Details of the meeting between church and foyer



The foyer wall is made of plastered leca blocks containing isolation

Section (1:5) of the polished tension wire grid mounted above a molding in the interior of the church. Below is a plan of the same detail.





Section &  
northern elevation  
Scale 1:300

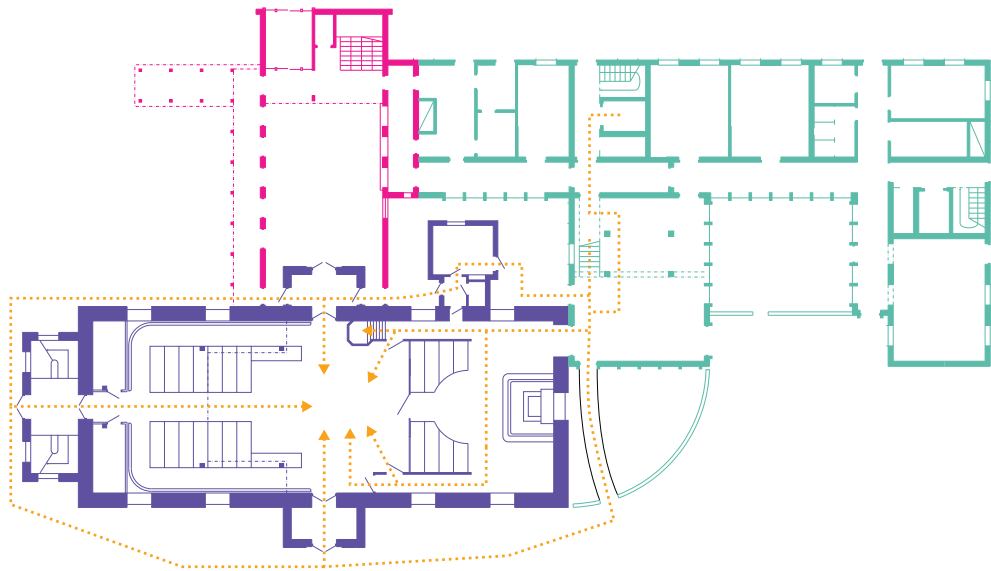
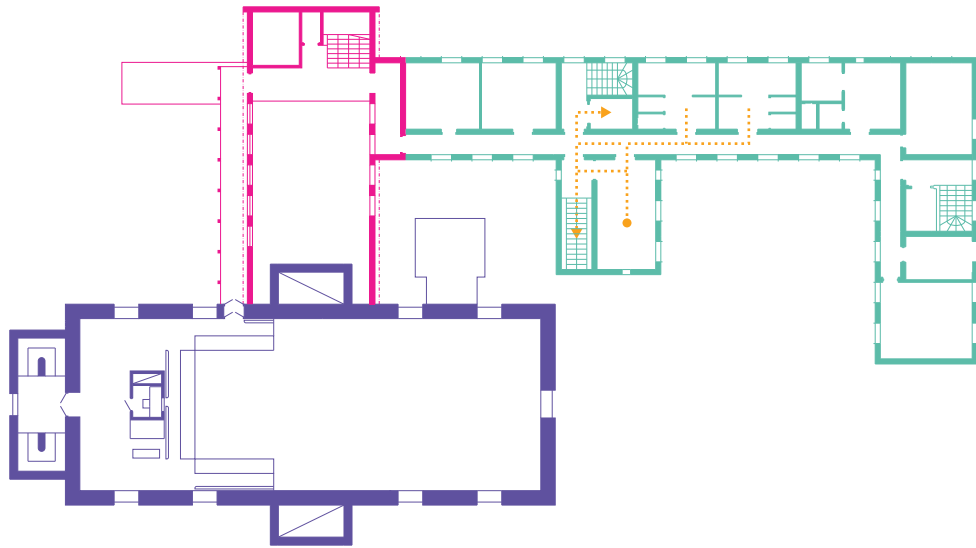
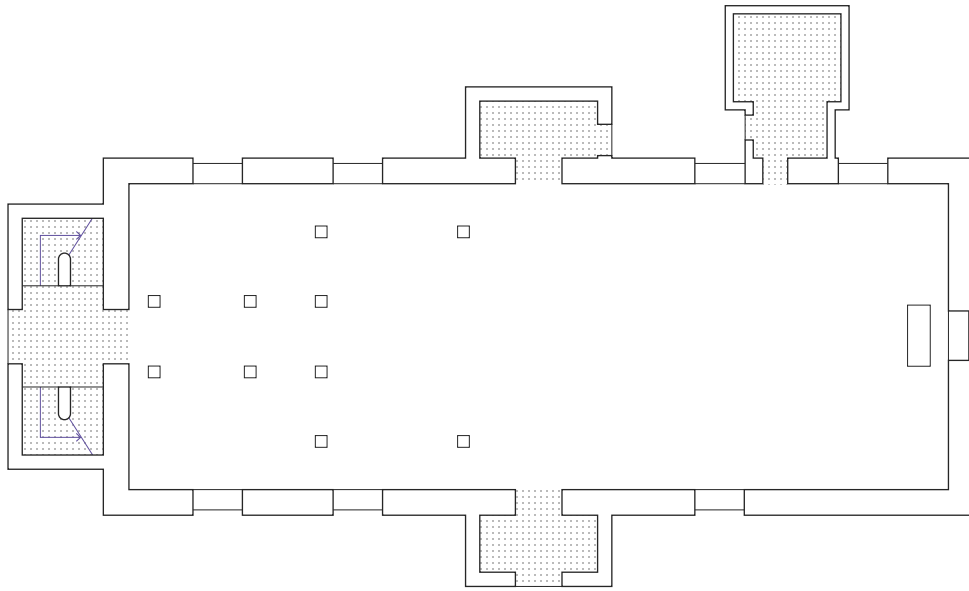
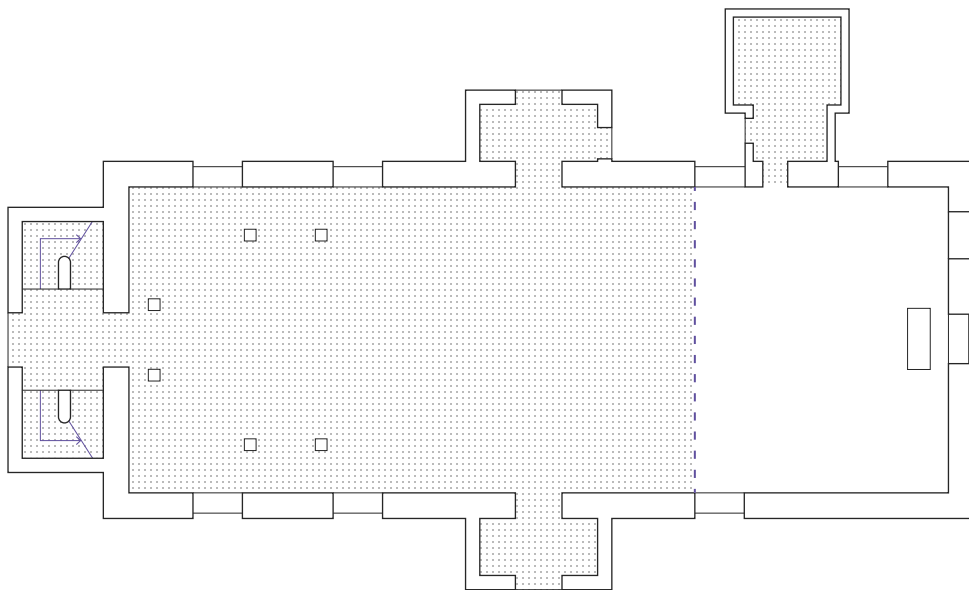


Illustration of actor's  
movement from loges to  
greenroom and stage  
Scale 1:450:





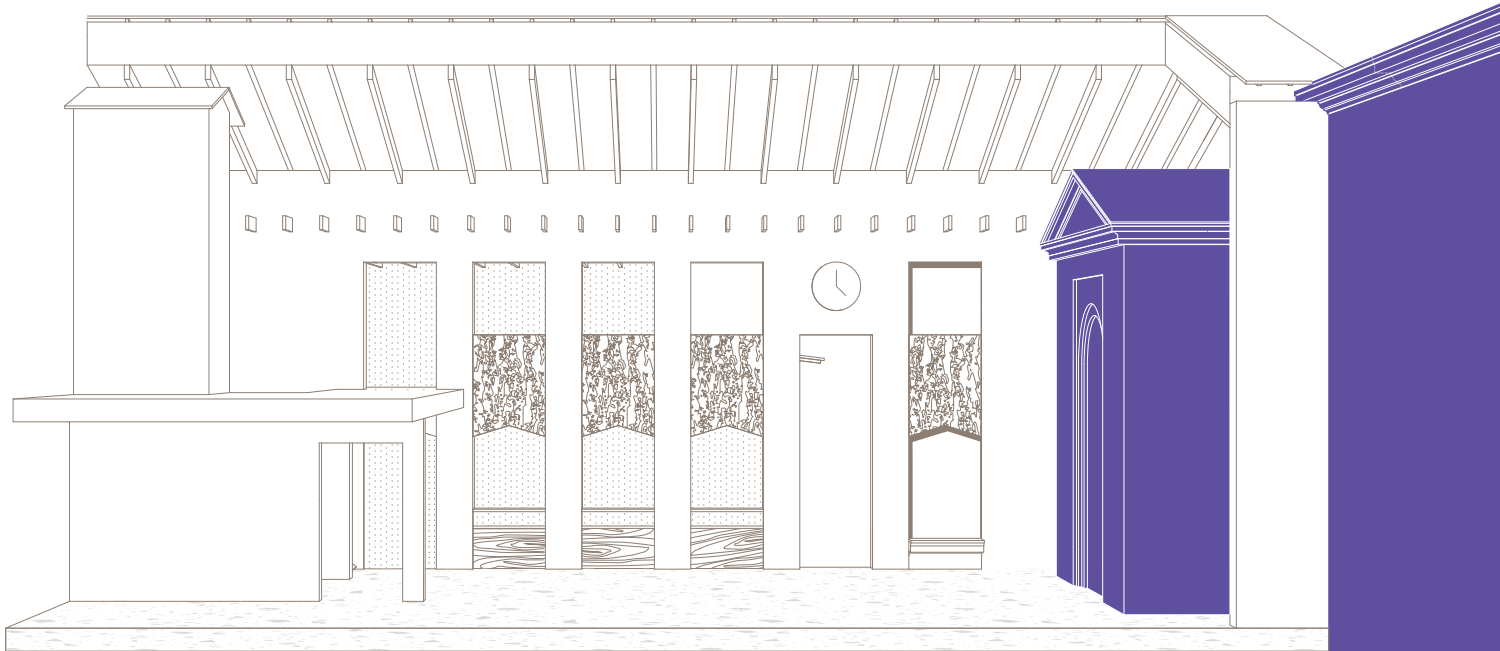
Before



After

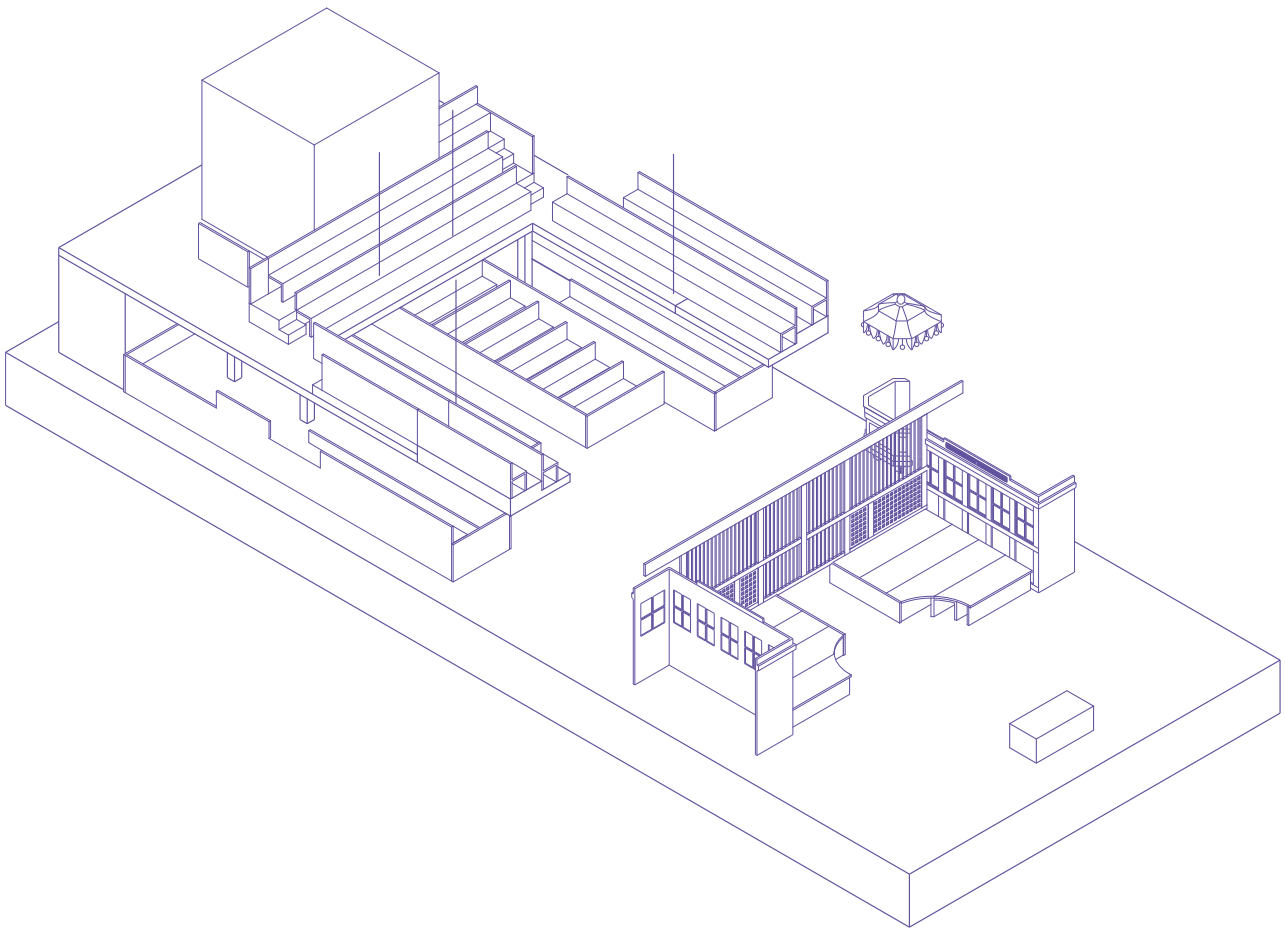
*Spatial division*

-  Ceremonial
-  Profane



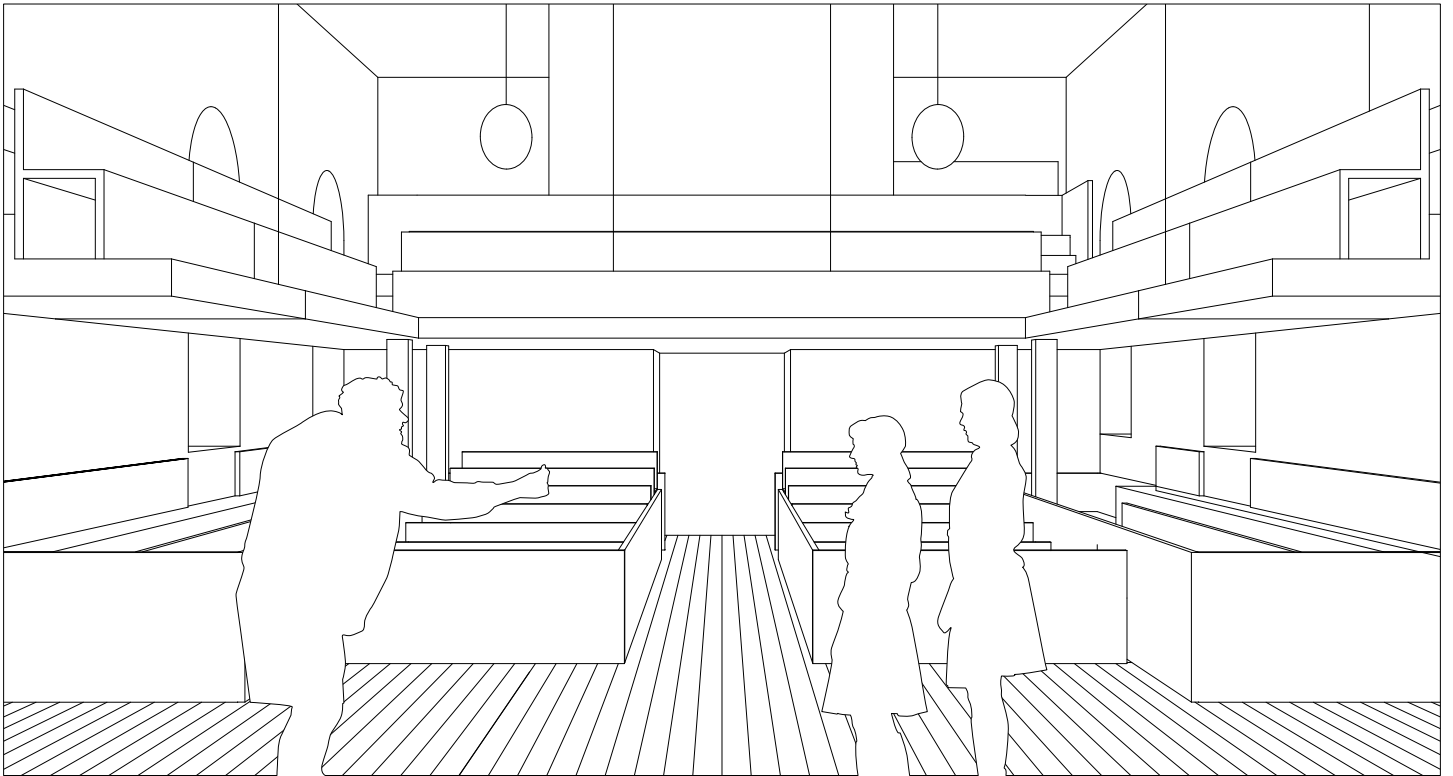
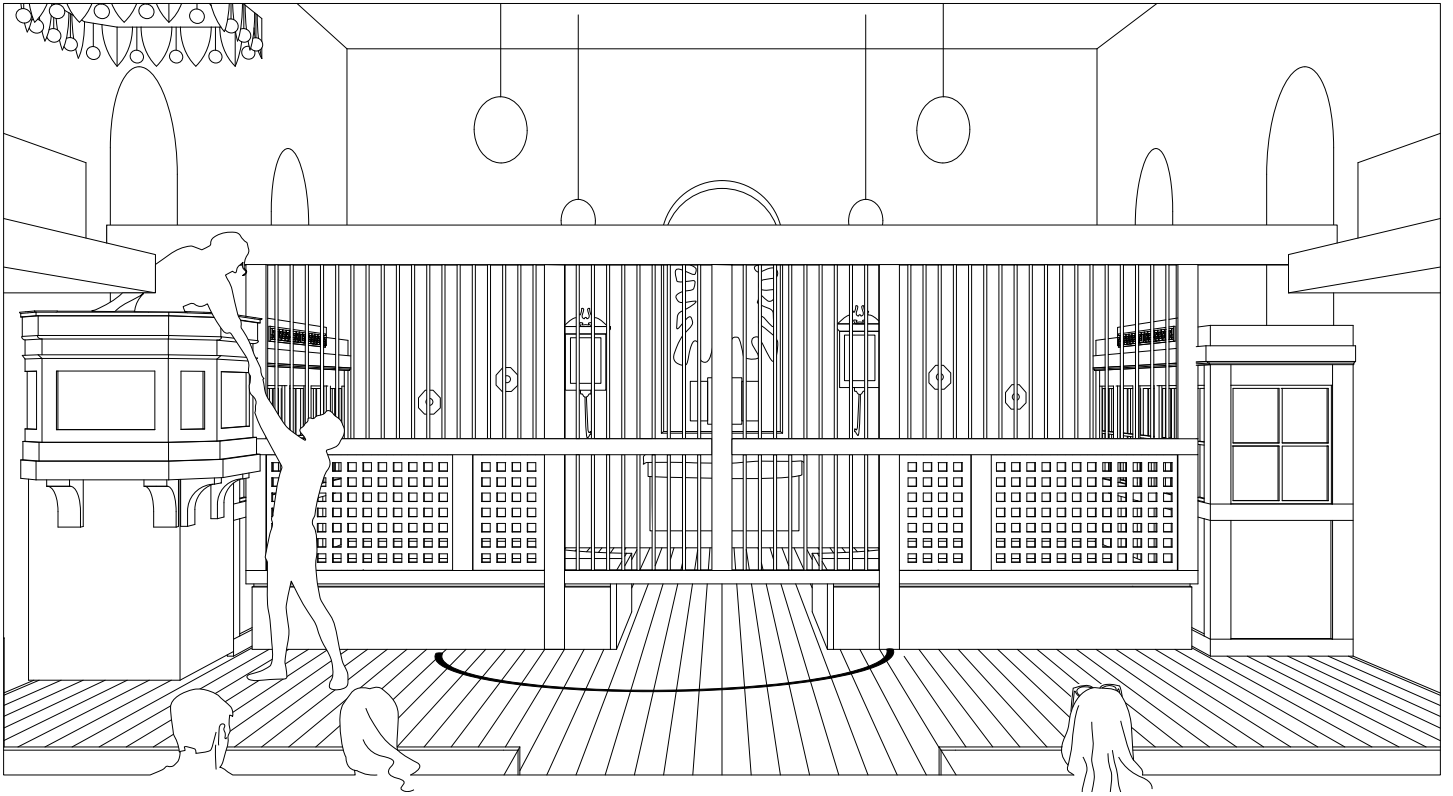
*Above*

Perspective illustration of the foyer, with exaggerated elevator tower to the left and the existant church transept to the right. In the middle of the image, one of the aisles of the basilica is seen, containing ticket office and bar on the lower level and balconies on the upper level. The wall openings are thus openings on interiors (dotted), windows (clear) and blind windows (shadowed)



*Above*  
Isometric representation of  
the church interior

*Opposite page*  
Perspectives from the  
church interior



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