

# assemblage city

matter space structure 2023

context

and

conflict

in

urban

development



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**ASSEMBLAGE CITY**  
*context and conflict in urban development*

Master Thesis in  
Architecture & Urban  
Design

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## abstract

This thesis tackles the polarized debate around the call for classism as opposition to current urban development. It critically examines the effects of responding to these demands, and seeks to find alternative ways of addressing the conflict in urban development.

The thesis is set in a speculative development scenario, where a central site in Gothenburg has been chosen as a testbed for investigation. The aim is to analyze how a new addition can be designed in order to transform the site, positioned between a turn-of-the-century neoclassical neighborhood built for the wealthy, and a neighborhood formerly for the poor, disadvantaged and the working class from the same era, that was regenerated in the 1970's.

In recent years, architectural style has been heavily discussed in Gothenburg. Politicians, the municipality, civilians, organizations and architects are part-taking in the debate where two main sides can be identified. On one hand, the municipality of Gothenburg is advocating for high density development, manifested in large scale typologies, creating profit for economic power figures. On the other hand, the politicians have decided that new construction should be made in "classicist styles". Instead of being a demand from those in economical power, this is portrayed to be a demand of the public.

The thesis uses the manifesto Collage City (Rowe & Koetter, 1979) as a point of departure for urban development, as well as assemblage theory to

highlight the need for the formation of socio-material assemblages.

The work is structured around a mapping phase that leads to the formation of an archive. This archive is used in the development of a design proposal. Literature studies as well as historical research about the site has been an ongoing work throughout the work.

The aim is that the design addition becomes a mashup of the stylistic mix present at the site, and that the addition correlates to its surroundings. The result is meant to act as a conversation piece, positioned in a polemic debate; a sort of Potemkin Village which portrays on one side what is asked for by the public, and on the other hides the actual issue of the neoliberal economy that no longer answers to the need of the public.

**KEYWORDS:** Urban development, classicism, assemblage, criticism, politics.

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## background

In recent years, architectural style has been heavily discussed in Gothenburg. Politicians as well as the municipality, civilians, organizations and architects are part-taking in the debate where two main sides can be identified.

Before the election in 2022, it has been proposed by the Social Democrats in Gothenburg that architecture from now on should be made in a classical style, (Göteborgsposten, 2021, 2022). After the Social Democrats and the social liberal Green Party won the municipal election in 2022, the Social Democrats have continued working towards more classical architecture (Sveriges Radio, 2022).

For the past ten years, the municipality of Gothenburg has been advocating for high density development, manifested in large scale typologies, creating profit for those in economic power. Examples of these kinds of buildings include the residential building Karlatornet and the planned neighborhood of Karlastaden by SOM / Serneke, a number of hotels such as the finalized projects Kineum by Reflex / NCC and Draken, as well as the proposed +one by Tham & Videgård / Svenska Mässan, and office buildings like City-Gate by Henning Larsen / Skanska and Gårda Vesta by White / Platzer. There are many more highrises that

have already been erected, and even more to come. The myth that the skyscraper is the only way to create a dense city has been proven to be false by Rem Koolhaas, quoted by Claes Caldenby in Arkitektur (2022) where he argues that skyscraper architecture is "peak measurability", referring to both their height and the idea about dense cities, but also the fact that they follow the economy and that politicians in Gothenburg have a notorious "economical mode of thinking". How have the skyscraper building boom in Gothenburg influenced the classicist reaction that have completely taken over the architecture debate today?

Studies by the SOM institute in Gothenburg shows that 64% of the people in Gothenburg want more buildings to be made in classical styles (Enström & Andersson, 2021). The question posed by the institute, did not in fact specify what classical architecture in the correct sense of the word is, but asked whether or not people wished to see more materiality in new buildings.

The debate between professionals and politicians does not in fact regard materiality, something most architects are keen on working with. Neither does the question posed consider scale, ornamentation or detailing in new buildings. Interior qualities, locations and which kinds of buildings (public, private, housing) should be prioritized are not mentioned either.

The fast-paced exploitation that has defined the urban development of Gothenburg for the past decade, makes the counterreaction that is seen today inevitable. For a counterreaction to be prolific and make for

actual change, the questions that are asked need to address the actual issues of the debate. The methods to address the problems relating to low quality architecture need to be intended to solve the problem, not create new ones, or they need to be revised if they are not in fact creating the change they intend to make.

Does it come down solely to stylistic choices? Is a zeitgeist approach to urban development a method that solves issues faced in urban development? What could a collage approach in architecture entail, and could it act as method as well as an outcome? Are the premises of architecture and urban development archaic, or built upon dated notions of economics and profit structures? What is the role of the architect if designing comes down only to creating profits for big corporations? On the other hand, what is the role of the architect if there is only room for one style to be used in the production of architecture?

**'What opinion do you have about the following query regarding Gothenburg? New buildings should, to a greater extent, be built in a classical style, for example with façades made of stone, brick and wood.'**

*Question asked by the SOM institute regarding what kind of architecture the people of Gothenburg want. (Enström & Andersson, 2021). Translation by author.*

## collage city

In their 1979 manifesto *Collage City*, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter write:

*"if we are willing to recognize the methods of science and bricolage as concomitant propensities, if we are willing to recognize that they are - both of them - modes of address to problems, if we are willing (and it may be hard) to concede equality between the 'civilized' mind (with its presumptions of logical seriality) and the 'savage' mind (with its analogical leaps), then, in reestablishing 'bricolage' alongside science, it might even be possible to suppose that the way for a truly useful dialectic could be prepared."*

Today's architecture debate is heavily focused on polemic debate rather than dialectic conversations. Up until the election of 2022, the municipality of Gothenburg has been advocating for a heavy city development - the pace in which we build has not been seen ever, not even during the million home's program (P4 Göteborg, 2021). According to Rowe and Koetter, a useful dialectic stems from the conflict of contending powers. The manifesto criticizes the *tabula rasa* approach of the urbanist modernist movement of the 20th century and their suggestion is to approach city planning as a collage rather than a

place that can be built and torn down in favor of new, emerging ideologies. While some architects refer to cities as living, everchanging organisms where complex issues are dealt with to 'regenerate' them for the greater good (Inte alltid det bästa valet att bevara varje hus, Arkitekten, 2023), the 'complexity' oftentimes seem to boil down to profit for investors, placemaking and buzzwords about sustainability instead of public spaces with purpose, care for existing spaces and structures, and ways to use architecture as a progressive force towards societal change.

Rowe and Koetter do not argue for a city in stagnation, but rather for finding ways to acknowledge the city as an existing collage where the layers that come about only with time is what gives spaces character. They argue that emancipation from the bureaucracy of liberal democracy lies in everybody's interest and that theory and practice needs to be part of their useful dialectic. With 17th century Rome as their reference study, they claim that its unique nature stems from the inherent dialectic and interdependence between its parts. In their own words, utopia and tradition needs to exist in correlation to each other.

The conflict between the classicists and the non-classicists is, in a way, focused around these two opposites. However, the useful dialectic between the two are missing.

## retrotopia

In his work *Retrotopia* (2017) Zygmunt Bauman refers to what seems to be the general trend of looking back to a made up utopia of the past - what one could consider *Arkitekturupproret* to do - 'retrotopia'. According to him, this utopian past is an illusion and it is not as innocent as it is sometimes portrayed. The idea that the past was a homogenous world with clear roles between the people in it is not true. Instead, this romantizing is a way for people to protect themselves from an uncertain future. Power and politics has been separated leading to less trust in governments and municipalities, people notice that their lives are changing and as a reaction, retrotopia is created.

Economic inequality and crony capitalism have led to erosion of democratic institutions according to the Oxfam report *An Economy for the 99%* (2017). Public goods have been privatized and politics are no longer what runs states - companies and the rich do. Rising economic inequality is a threat to democracy, and according to the report, mainstream political parties are no longer trusted among their voters, leading to far right alternatives gaining traction. While the call for classical architecture might not in general be a materialization of far right politics, the nostalgia and



Figure 1. Ekmansgatan 5 by Inobi / Albert Svensson. Example of newly produced classicism. Source: Inobi

conservative ideals that are advancing are doing so in multiple arenas of society, and they all seem to be counteractions to the same neoliberal agenda that has been dominating the political landscape since the 1970's.

## production of space

According to Henri Lefebvre, different actors produce the *physical space* that we inhabit - politicians, architects, landowners, as well as state- or municipal apparatuses. The *discursive space* is constructed in our minds by the way we talk about or represent different spaces, and these differ from person to person, something that is mostly obvious in the construction of discursive space in parts of a city that exist in the periphery. The *representational space* is characterized by the lived experience of the people that inhabit spaces. The representational space is a social construct, meaning that a person's connotations to a space affects their view of it beyond what that space looks like or how it is represented.

Classical architecture as the most valuable and desired style is constructed and reconstructed in people's minds by the way it is discussed. It does have qualities that architects and citizens alike tend to enjoy, but these qualities are not necessarily bound to one specific style. With the Lefebvrian analysis of production of space, it is possible to start to map the contending powers, as mentioned by Rowe and Koetter. The municipality, i.e. politicians and clerks at the City Planning Authority, as well as landowners and architects

or city planners have the power to construct physical space, but they also have the power to shift the focus from being on the physical aspects of architecture to also include other aspects of architecture into their planning policies.

The actors as well as citizens are influenced by both discursive and representational space, but inside the category of actors that are able to construct physical space exists yet another power dimension. Landowners and developers have money, meaning that they in fact have the final say in all material production of space. Due to market forces and late stage capitalism, this shift in focus from municipally driven processes to free market driven processes, planning comes down to purely economical interests.

Even though architects can be seen as complicit in the city development and regeneration, processes taking place, the actual power they hold are in fact incredibly small. In Marxist terms, architects are part of the superstructure due to the academic nature of the work, but one could also argue that architects are producers, meaning that architects also are part of the base. Since there is a dialectic relationship between the two, this is possible.

In the ongoing debate between Arkitekturupproret, city planners, politicians & architects, a dichotomy has been constructed. This dichotomy has also been reconstructed with politicians leaning more towards favoring the idea of "building more in classical styles". Since 2022, this is written into the official budget for Gothenburg for the four upcoming years.

The experimenting with making classical façades today, not as a translation but rather as a reconstruction of them (Jacob, 2012) - poses an important question: is it possible to make façades that are not slimmed down to the bare necessities to make the shell of the building act as something else than just that?

**An example of socio-material networks can be seen in the development of a city. The city is not just made up of the physical structures and materials that constitutes its material properties, but also the people who inhabit it, the social and economic systems that govern it, and the technological infrastructure that supports it. All of these elements interact with each other in complex ways, and the city is constantly changing as a result.**



## assemblage theory

In their 1987 book *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari explain the assemblage as a heterogenous collection of elements that come together to form a new whole. It is a dynamic and incidental formation that is constantly changing and adapting to its environment. These elements can include everything from people to animals, environments such as cities or forests, but also technologies, institutions and ideas or ideologies. If these come together to form something new, an assemblage is formed.

With emphasis on the importance of fluidity, contingency and change, the concept of becoming is one of the most fundamental characteristics of reality and it is closely related to the concept of assemblage.

Becoming and assemblage are closely related concepts, where the former is the description of the processes of fluidity, contingency, and openness.

## socio-material networks

Assemblage theory emphasizes how places are shaped through the process of socio-material networks. These networks are seen as complex structures and key components in the production of the city as a spatial entity. This framework is used to highlight the importance of these two aspects, the social and the material, and how social aspects creates fluidity that is inherent to the city due to these aspects.

The socio-material networks approach is a tool that can aid in the understanding of how neoliberal policies and practices impact the social and material elements of urban spaces. When public spaces and services are privatized, access to them becomes restricted based on income and locality, leading to the formation of exclusive social networks that exclude certain groups of people.

This also goes for material elements of urban spaces when it comes to issues regarding housing and other vital infrastructure. When the interests of private developers are prioritized over those of the public, urban spaces are developed in ways that prioritize profit over the needs of residents or the expression of the structures that are intended to cater to citizens' needs. This is made both by

eradication of structures and spaces that are necessary, but also by providing structures and spaces that cater mainly to the wealthy.

By examining the ways in which neoliberal policies impact the socio-material networks that make up urban spaces, a more critical understanding of the negative impacts of neoliberalism on urban development can be thought out. In this work, the socio-material networks theory is used first as a way to describe this issue, then to comment on the dichotomy between the social and the material that is posed in today's debate.

## contending powers

Arkitekturupproret claims that "architecture only consists of one thing - the façade" (Kulturnytt Special, 2023). Opponents to the organization argue that this is not true - architecture is three dimensional and can hold values that are not purely aesthetic. Arkitekturupproret are right about one thing - the façade plays a crucial role in architecture, a role that has oftentimes been downplayed in the production of late-modernist architecture. On the other hand, the opposing side are right in their statement as well - architecture is (supposed) to be three dimensional and bring values both aesthetically, technically and for the users of the spaces.

In the fast-paced city development that has been defining for Gothenburg for the last decade, none of these two arguments are actually materialized. Façades are made with little to no detailing or tactility and most brand buildings are no longer public spaces but instead private housing, hotels or office buildings. While they often contain some public spaces, thus giving access to the public, the grandeur of the buildings comes down to their height, making them icons of capital investment and the contractors behind them. The rooftops are accessible to some extent in the hotels and residential buildings, but they become

a luxury that still excludes most people because of their commercial nature.

The actors that are in fact those with the most power are the one's that are also the most conspicuous in their absence. Construction companies and real estate companies are the one's with the most money, and how that money is invested is what makes the most difference (Mirzaie & Michanek, 2023).



Figure 2. Wiesbaden, c. 1900 (inverted).  
Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (London: The MIT press, 1983).

## thesis questions

How can a design addition act as a comment on the polemic debate in urban development?

How can architecture be developed as assemblages, mirroring its context as a socio-material network?

## intention

The intention of this thesis is to critically examine the effects of the neoliberal paradigm and how it has affected urban development.

Instead of the generic architecture proposal, this work is set in a speculative scenario where the project aim is to create a conversation piece, portraying on one side what is asked for by the public, on the other side hiding the actual issue of the neoliberal economy that no longer answers to the needs of the public.

It is not to be seen as a solution but instead meant to act as an additional voice in the debate.

Street food kiosk & residential building.  
By author.



Flower kiosk & residential building.  
By author.



Fish market kiosk & public buildings.  
By author.





## method

This thesis aims to use a transdisciplinary approach to architecture, where theories from philosophy and history of ideas act as points of departure for developing representations and manifestations of these ideas. The literature studies will be used to inform the design proposal, and to put it in the context of conflict.

The research approach is research through design, where insights from archiving and mapping acts as a basis for the design work.

The work begins with an extensive mapping of the site of and around kv. Cypressen. The mapping is conducted through site visits where the character of the site is captured through photographs, 3D scanning and sketches. These are used for maps and drawings that acts as representational and operational tools during the continuation of the work.

With the site specific mapping finished, the next phase begins. Archival drawings are used for analyzing the façades that surround the block. The analysis is done through tracings of original drawings. The drawings from the analysis are made into an archive to be utilized throughout the duration of the work. The other part of the archival phase is the

historical overview of the site and its conditions over time. Considering the topic, the historical mapping uncovers previous conflicts and how they have been manifested historically.

The concept of assemblage as explained by Deleuze & Guattari (1987), as well as juxtapositioning and mash-up are used in order to explore possible design outcomes.

To create a design proposal, the theories and the material from the archive are synthesized.

Artistic choices, speculation and interpretations are an inherent part of the method, as well as it is part of all design work. Instead of claiming objectivity or posing truths, these aspects are to be seen as productive parts of the method.

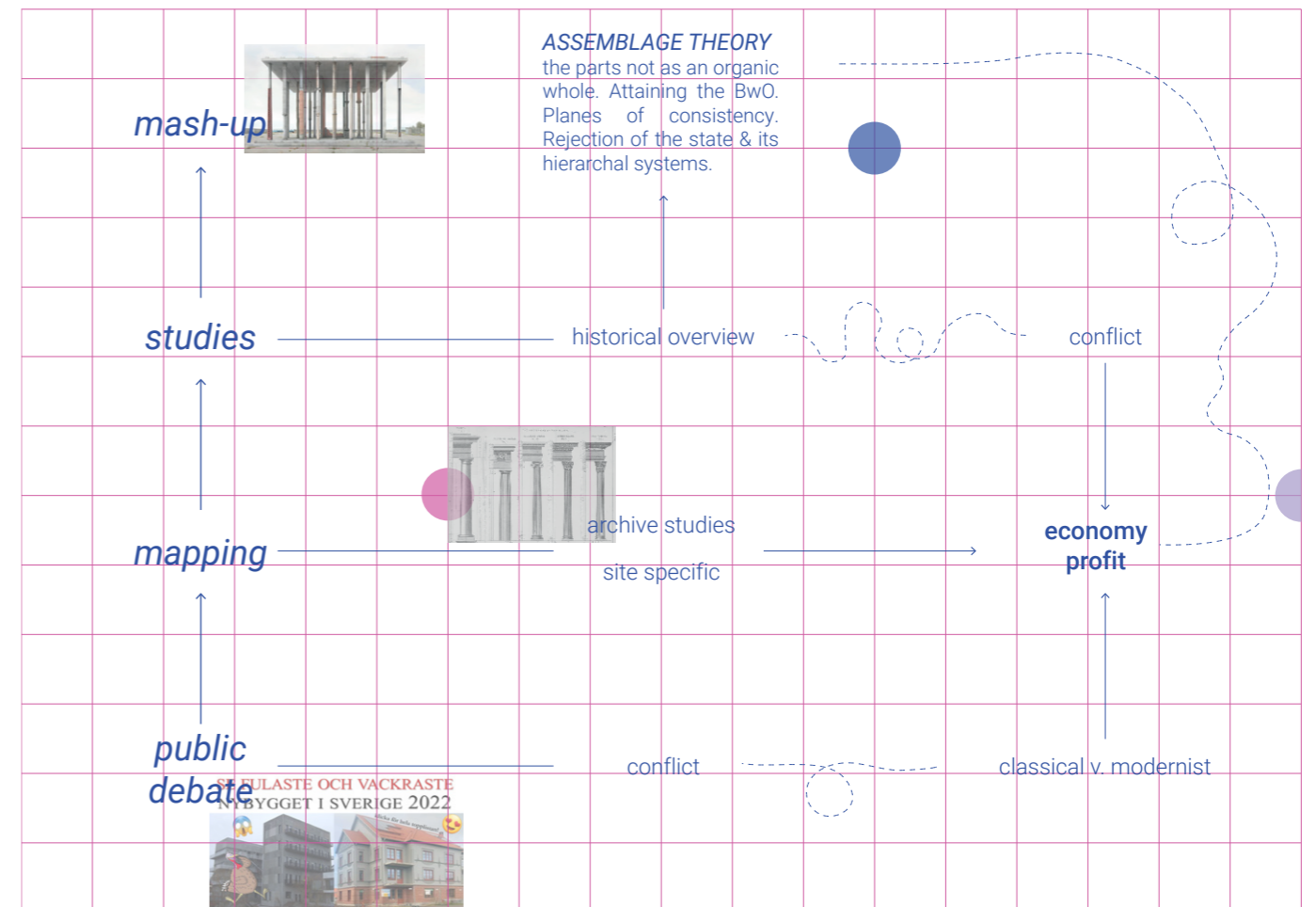


Diagram showing connections between the different parts of the project and how they result in a final design.

## method references

In the Beaux Arts plates, different components from different buildings are combined and drawn with great care for detail, shadow and materiality. The different scales of different parts make them appear as intentional scale displacement. The realistic nature of the work is disrupted by the skewed scaling and composition of the elements, as well as the fragments being represented outside of their intended contexts.

The building on 168th Upper Street by Groupwork + Amin Taha is a translation of the building that once stood at the site. Its predecessor was bombed during the Second World War, and after many years of different proposals for an infill at the plot, Groupwork + Amin Taha proposed this reiteration of the original. The original drawings are used to create the new building, but instead of handing them to a mason, the office have redrawn and adapted the drawings for a factory creating prefab concrete slabs. Everything from patterns to ornaments and wall papers are imprinted in the slabs created for the translation of the old building. It is a reconstruction as much as it is a translation of the preexisting building at the site, which makes it both contextual and out of context. The red, pigmented concrete fuses the parts which

makes all fragments a whole. The block coloring along the intentional displacement and change of scale in openings are effective ways to make the design contemporary, while simultaneously - or exactly because of that - paying homage to the original.

The last and final method reference is Giacomo Pala's *Hypnerotomachia* sculpture. It uses a language that the viewer recognizes as 'antique', but at a closer look it carries the promise of modernity in a number of ways. First, through the strict grid that cuts through the parts in an almost arbitrary way, second through the characters that makes up the sculpture. Just as with the former reference, the grid creates a sense of contemporarity, and the figures and symbols range the genderless C3PO from Star Wars grabbing the genitals of an atlant, an Abacus leaf that sits on the atlant's head and a volume that brings the mind CNC cut topographies.



Figure 6. Scale displacement of fragments. Massin, ca 1925.



Figure 7. Displacements & misreadings of former building on 168 Upper St, London. Amin Taha. Dezeen.

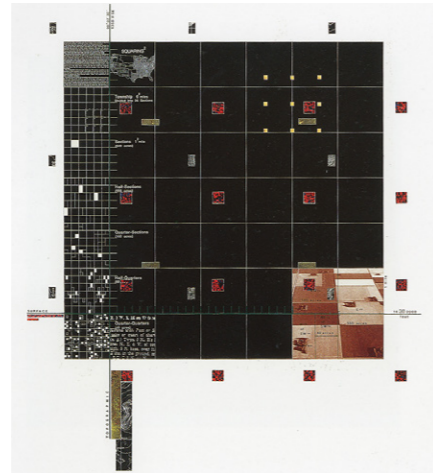


Figure 8. Changing of historic symbols into modern day equivalents. *Hypnerotomachia* by Giacomo Pala.

## visual references

The representations of this master thesis lends inspiration from art, architecture and landscape mapping. The visual language of James Corner in his *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* (1996) is used for the mapping of the site. With the white grid inside where his findings are placed creates a contrastful and suggestive map where the reader can interpret the findings in an individual way. The combination of graphics, systems and photos creates both a diagram and an artwork.

In Luis Callejas work *Weightless (w/o. y)* the airport as an infrastructural landscape and remnant of the anthropocene is reimagined. Farm animals gets a helium balloon attached to them which then leaves ground and claims the space above them, rendering flying impossible. The speculative project as a way to imagine possible futures through disruption of societal concepts that, according to preconceived notions are seen as 'self-evident', could potentially aid people in imagining a different future and in turn, actually change the demarcate trajectories.



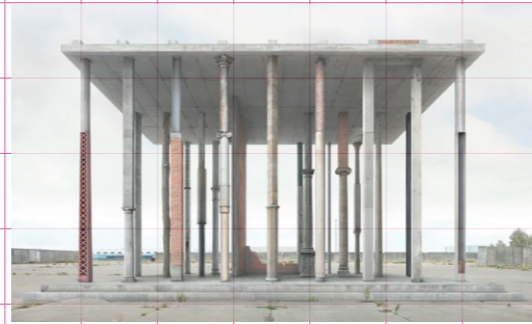
9. *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape. Critical mapping. White on black, grids, systematizing findings.*  
By James Corner through Yale University Press.

10. *Weightless London. LLCA office.*  
By LLCA office.





HOW CAN THIS BE TURNED INTO SOMETHING NEW?

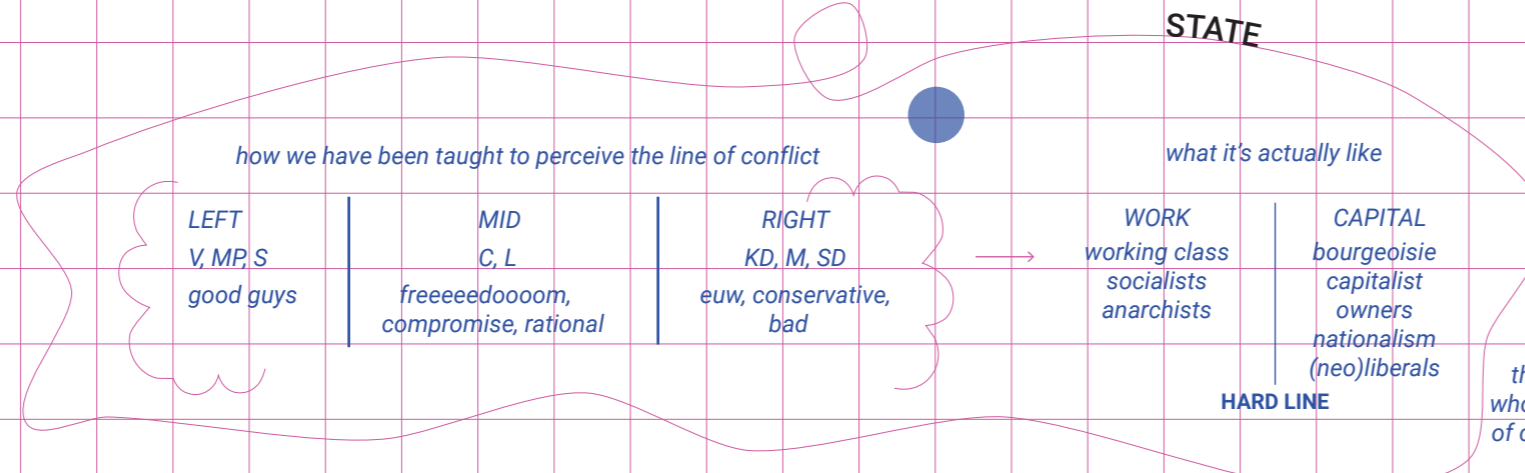


WHAT WOULD A COMMENT ON CLASSICAL v. NEOLIBERAL LOOK LIKE?

Swedish architecture have focused on equality and higher standard of living. Income equality is low (but rising rapidly) in Sweden. With heavy industrialization in the 1960's, large scale companies took over the market and the never-ending rise in profit demands makes for cheap architecture with low quality and high rents.

OWNERS OF destroys welfare, divides, privatizes, always want GROWTH (company size, profit, higher buildings for bragging + more to make money from)

THIS BECAME A WAY FOR THE MARKET TO TRAP >> MAKE PRODUCTION CHEAPER MEANS PROFIT MARGINS GROW BIGGER WHILE WORKERS MAKE LESS AND WORK MORE!



STOPS LINES OF FLIGHT

ASSEMBLAGE the parts are not an organic whole. Attaining the BwO. Plane of consistency. Reject the state & its hierarchal systems.

CULTURE vs. STATE vs. FEELINGS

Deleuze & Guattari

The war machine / Becoming a nomad

MY POSITIONING

WHAT IS TRANSLATION? Walter Benjamin, Sam Jacob, Jonatan Lethem

PoMo: learn to like what you don't like; every answer can be the right one

A TRANSLATION OF THIS

- SUMMERSON
1. Know the rules
  2. Break the rules
  3. (...and love the classical order)

THEY'RE MISUNDERSTOOD THIS

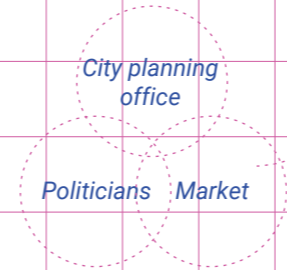


The Classical Language of Architecture Summerson

ORDER [as opposed to confusion] Vignola

Ordnatio, dispositio, eurythmia, symmetria, decor, distributio Vitruvius

THE STYLE DEBATE



developers contractors

Higher standard of living, GDP.

Lower cultural & aesthetic value, less tactile, less maintainable, less cared for

"The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction [...] of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life [...]. The conflict springs up from there. [...] This threat is expressed, among other disturbing effects, by the spreading before our eyes of a mediocre civilization which is the absurd counterpart of what I was just calling elementary culture."

ARCHITECTS?



DEBATE professionals, citizens, organizations, politicians

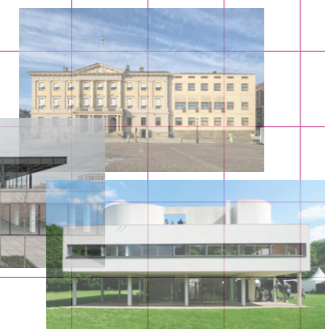
Paul Ricouer

Craftsmanship vs rationalism Modernism

Adolf Loos



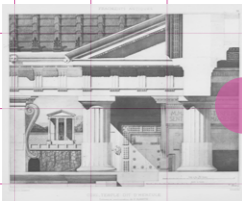
Reality



Early modernists knew the rules, that's why they could break them! By breaking the rules of classicism they, in a way, also followed them

order as a way of making design work a craft, creating methods, not leaving it to chance?

rules for architects - Vignola made the orders make sense



PART OF THE INDUSTRIAL PROCESS





Figure 11. School class with a girl in "Brackkläder" (Poor man's clothes)  
Image source: Carlotta.



Figure 12. Kids playing at Aschebergsgatan  
ca 1915.  
Image source: Carlotta



Figure 13. Gibraltar Poorhouse ca 1900.  
Image source: Carlotta.



## role of site

The site, *kvarteret Cypressen*, is a small park located between Landala torg and Aschebergsgatan in central Gothenburg. Vasaplatsen is located approximately one kilometer north of the site, while Chalmers University lies a few hundred meters south of it. By doing a reading of the architecture around the site, an understanding of the conditions and conflicts prevalent in the neighborhood is gained. The site is a border as well as a connection between multiple programs and styles, and with the mapping of the site, these layers are uncovered.

## historical overview

In the mid to late 1800's, Landala mainly consisted of farming land, but Gothenburg was expanding. During the late 1800's, Vasastaden was built with Stora teatern (The Grand Theatre) as the first building to brand the new neighborhood. The expansion of the inner city was unpopular and people dismissed the idea of moving "to the countryside", across the canal, but the expansion was deemed necessary because of the large increase in the



population due to heavy industrialization. In 1820, only 16 500 people lived in the city, but 80 years later, in 1900, the number had increased to over 130 000 inhabitants.

However, most people moving into the city came from rural Sweden in order to find work at a factory. This meant the majority of the people that were in dire need of residency were those seeking employment. With large class differences during the time, those that did not find employment needed to get provision elsewhere and ended up taken care of by the poor relief, something that was seen as the worst thing that could possibly happen to a human being, and maybe rightfully so.

According to Sahlgrenska and the Medicinal Museum (2022), the city's expansion in the 1800's meant that poorhouses were built around the city. One close to the city-hall was outgrown before it was even finished. It was replaced with a larger one at the plot where the former Post Office is located today, right by the Central Station. The facility was heavily criticized due to the fact that people from all walks of life and with vastly different 'problems' were being held at the same establishment - mentally ill, single mothers, the elderly as well as those seeking employment were bundled together - some were in need of actual care while others were just poor. In the beginning of the 1800's, work was part of everyday life at the establishment, but the poor grew in numbers and the expenditures rose to levels that the city could not handle. This was solved by switching from wage labour to forced labour at the institution. Soup from the soup kitchen was the only salary offered.

During the 1870's, the city decided that a more permanent solution was needed to take care of the poor and disadvantaged. Now, mentally ill people, the elderly and those fit for work were going to get divided into groups at the poorhouse. The Gibraltar Poorhouse was planned and later erected in 1888. The fact that the establishment was going to be located on the outskirts of the city, made it possible for the residents to work as farmers on the lands connected to the institution. Most of the crops could be sold which kept the poorhouse economically afloat, while a small percentage of it fed the people that lived there. In the 1930's, all people in need of care were moved to Lillhagen outside of Gothenburg while the elderly were moved to different locations. The former Gibraltar Poorhouse turned into Vasa Hospital and was later sold to Chalmers University to which it belongs today.

During the late 19th century, almost half of the, now demolished, *Landshövdingehus* (translation ~ "Governor House", a type of three story, stone and wood residential building erected between 1876 and 1940 for the working class, specific to the Swedish (south-)west coast and Gothenburg in particular) was built in Annedal and Landala. Only one from the early stock is left in the area today, *Sångsvanen*, built in 1901. Up until the 1960's, the oldest stock of Landshövdinge houses in Gothenburg stood in this part of the city

Parallel to the erection of the Gibraltar poorhouse and the working class neighborhood of Landala, Vasastan is built. This city district is the 19th century equivalent of a gated community - it just does not have the actual

gates around it. This part of the city was meant for the rich, and to this day its inhabitants have higher educational levels and salaries than the medium of Gothenburg as a whole. When the zoning plan for Vasastaden was made in 1866, the income differences were so big it is hard for us to even imagine them today. The purpose of Vasastaden was to regenerate the slums on the outskirts of the city centre. The state and municipality made a choice to displace - or in Deleuze-Guattarian terms to deterritorialize - the people living in the area to replace, or reterritorialize it, with the people belonging to the highest classes of society.

## urban "renewal" and modern times

During the "urban renewal" and later million's home programme, mainly taking place in the 60's and 70's, all but one of the former working class dwellings of Landala were demolished and replaced by high-rise buildings with mainly prefabricated concrete slab façades. These, along with the six file 'street' Aschebergsgatan, and the traffic junction of Aschebergsgatan and Amund Grefwegatan are what dominates the site today.

The site chosen for this thesis lies on the border between these very different neighborhoods. The ornamented buildings with their spacious suites in Vasastaden meets the old, masonry school buildings, the

Figure 14. Landala torg ca 1870.  
Image source: Carlotta.

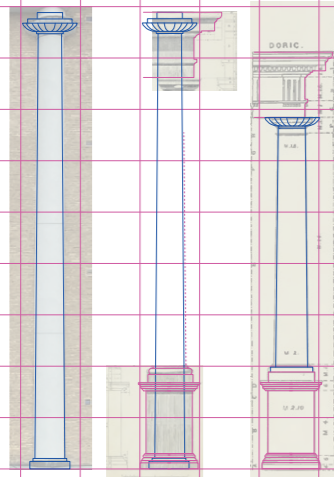


## location, location, location...

poorhouse, what's left of the working class heritage of the turn of century Landshövdinge house, and the concrete dwellings of the 1960's and 1970's. This is what makes the site one of conflict. Not only is there a wide variety in architectural styles, a wide palette of materials and ornaments, different typologies, but there are also different social, economical and academic classes that inhabit the place. These conditions makes it both a material and a social assemblage.

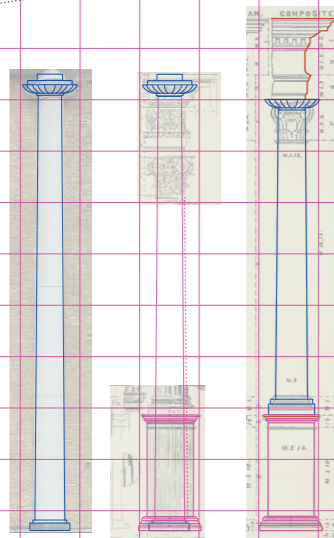
The site is located in a central neighborhood meaning it could be of potential interest for future "urban regeneration"; the discussion usually goes that "land this central is too valuable to be left untouched". As a counterargument, the surging demand for greenery in city centers due to climate change makes parks in central parts of cities seen as increasingly important.

As of today there are no known plans for exploitation of the plot, meaning this project is speculative in nature.



Transformation of pilasters into the typical classical grammar of a Doric column (with base) according to Vignola. Based on the capital of the original.

TRANSFORMED BASED ON THE LOOK OF THE CAPITAL



Transformation of pilasters into the typical classical grammar of the composite column (with base) according to Vignola. Based on the slenderness of the original.

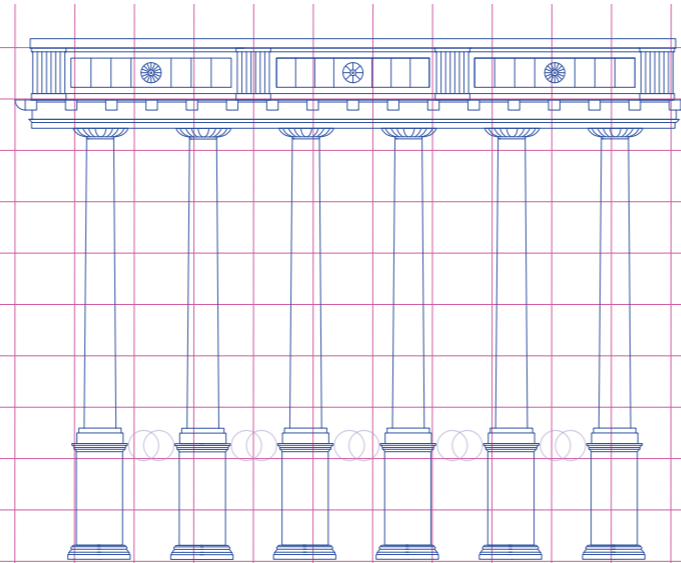
TRANSFORMED BASED ON PROPORTIONS (DIAMETER & HEIGHT)

**orders**

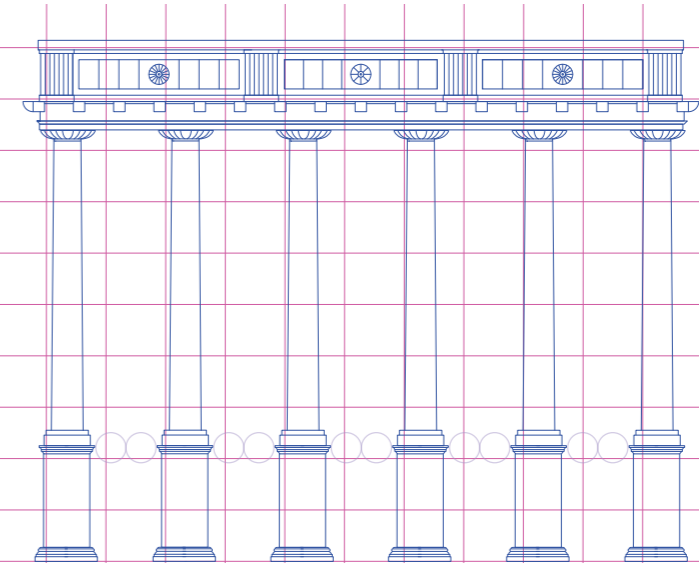
- TUSCAN - greek column, the shortest and stubbiest - signals masculinity.
- DORIC - greek column, somewhat more slender and more detailed than the tuscan - signals masculinity.
- IONIC - roman column, slender with volutes as capital - "genderless" column that signifies scholarly elders.
- CORINTHIAN - roman column, the most refined of the orders - signifies the virgin Mary.
- COMPOSITE - Combination column "invented" by the renaissance architects to explain a fifth order as seen in for example the Colosseum.

**intercolumnation**

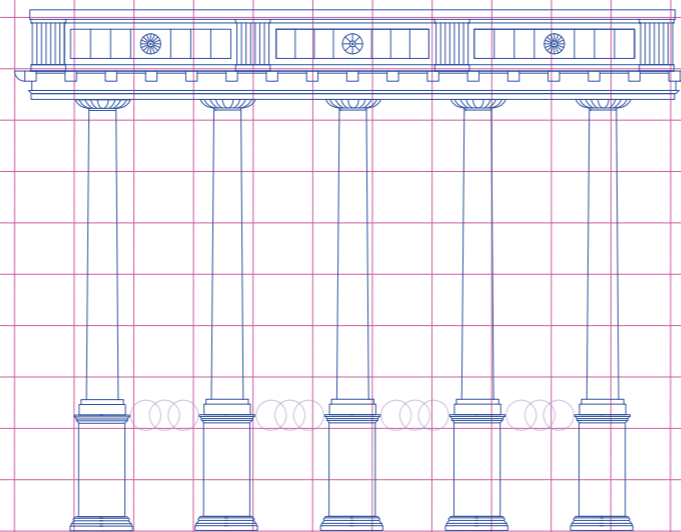
- PYCNOSTYLE - 1,5 diameter between
- SYSTYLE - 2 diameters between
- EUSTYLE - 2,25 diameters between
- DIASTYLE - 3 diameters between
- ARAEOSTYLE - 4+ diameters between



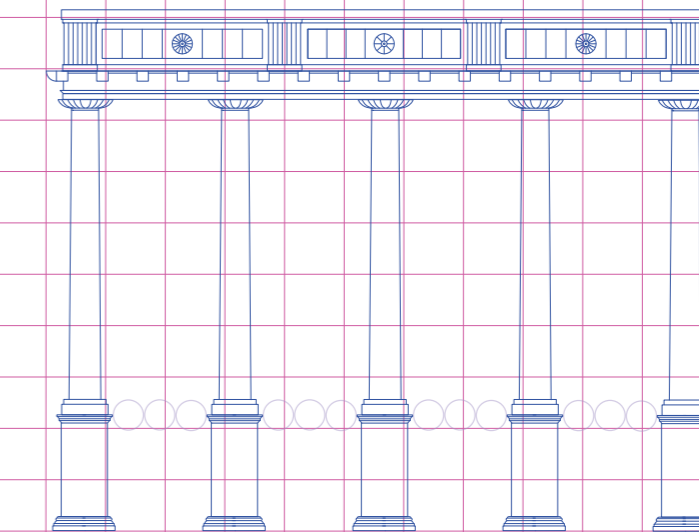
PYCNOSTYLE - 1,5 diameter spacing between columns



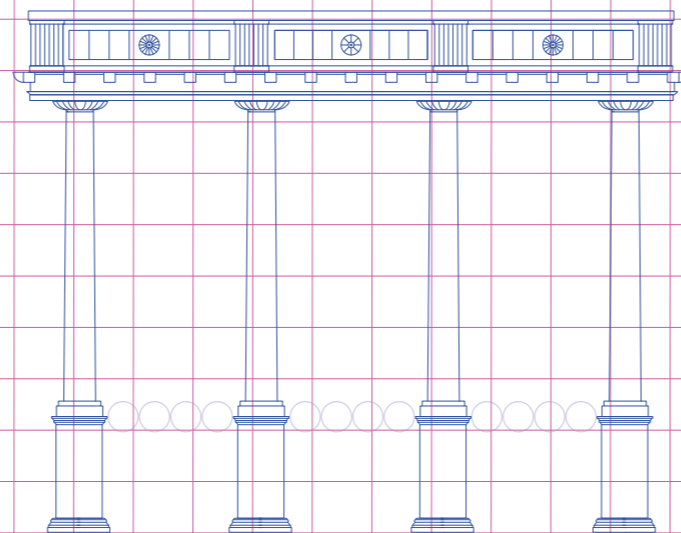
SYSTYLE - 2 diameter spacing between columns



EUSTYLE - 2 1/4 diameter spacing between columns



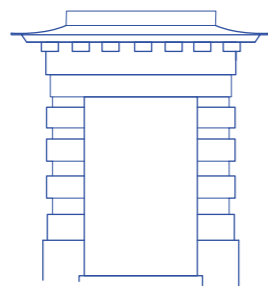
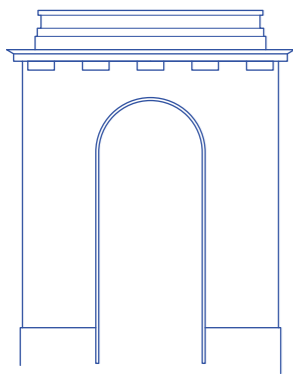
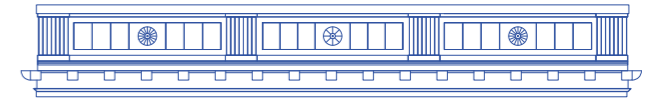
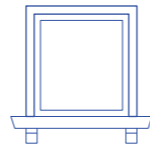
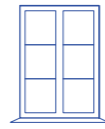
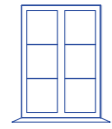
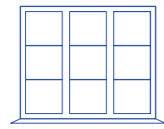
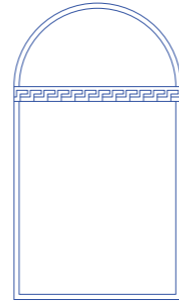
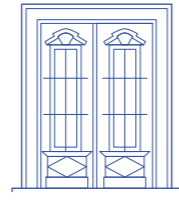
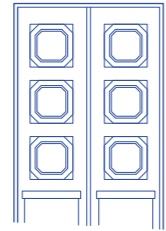
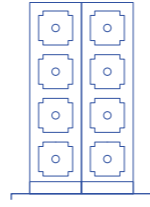
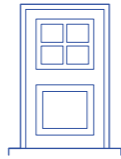
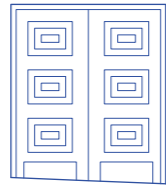
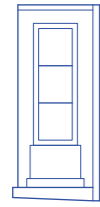
DIASTYLE - 3 diameter spacing between columns



ARAEOSTYLE - 4 (or more) diameter spacing between columns

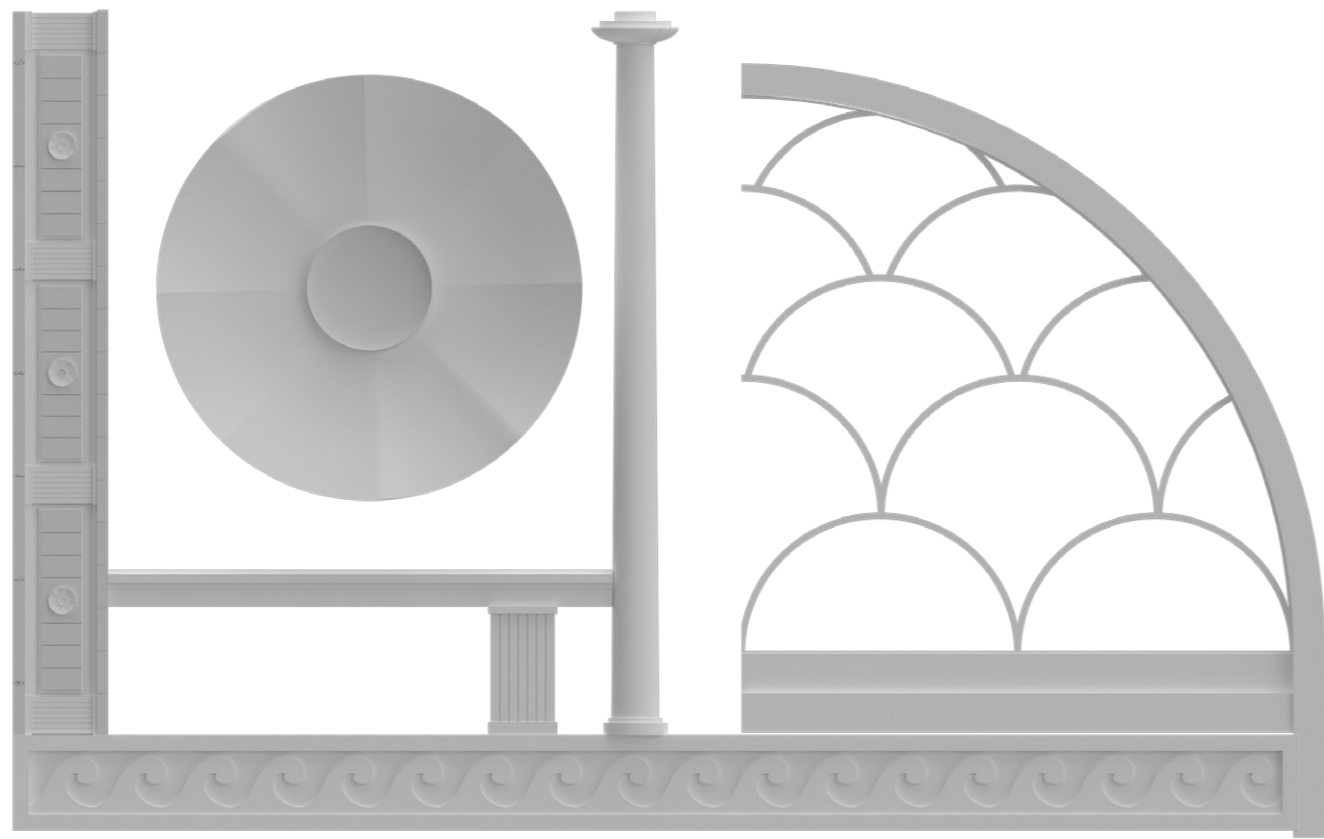
**vitruvian rules**

- ORDINATIO - the relationship between the fragment's measurements
- DISPOTIO - placement of the fragments
  - ichnographia - measurements of the plan
  - ortographia - facade proportions
- EXPRESSION FORMS FOR DISPOTIO
  - scenographia - perspective drawing (plus plan & section, elevation)
- EURYTHMIA - composition of the fragment
- SYMMETRIA - relationship between the whole and the fragment
- DECOR - to follow the rules, placing of the parts & to create grandeur
- DISTRIBUTIO - plot/location usage, materiality, how and where to plan for specific programs and for whom
- quantitas - the part of the building that is chosen as the module for proportioning the other parts

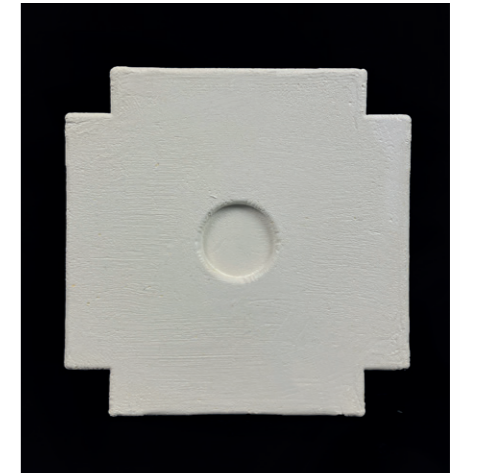
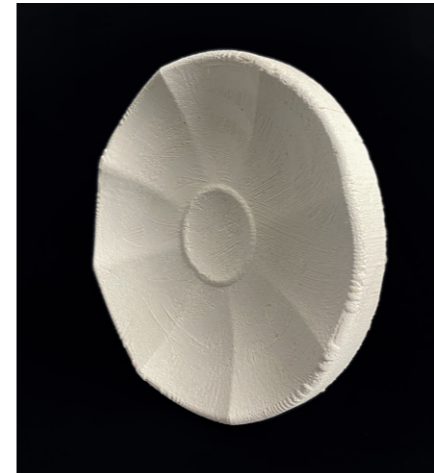


Taxonomy of fragments from buildings at the site. Openings, ornaments and tectonic elements.

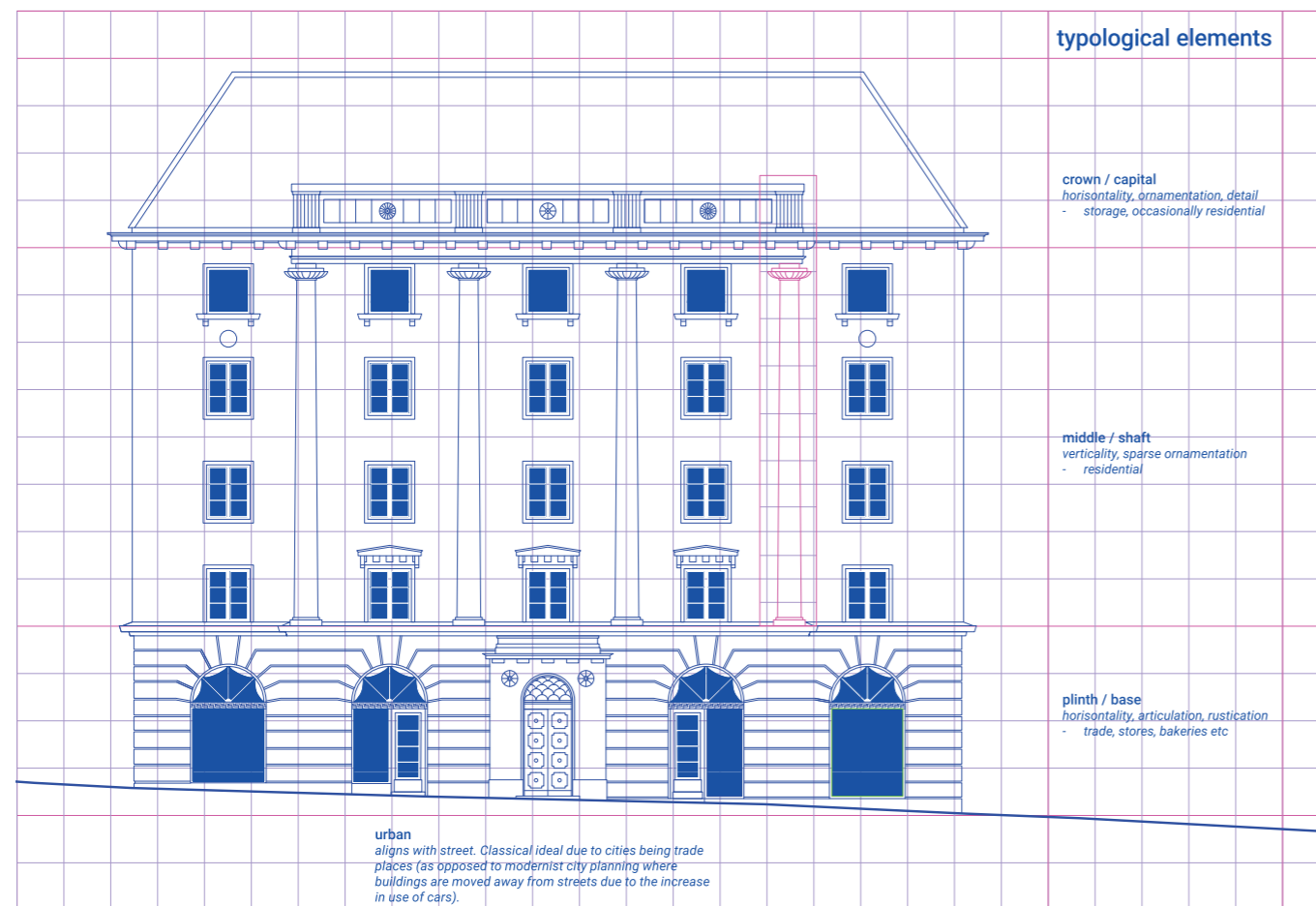




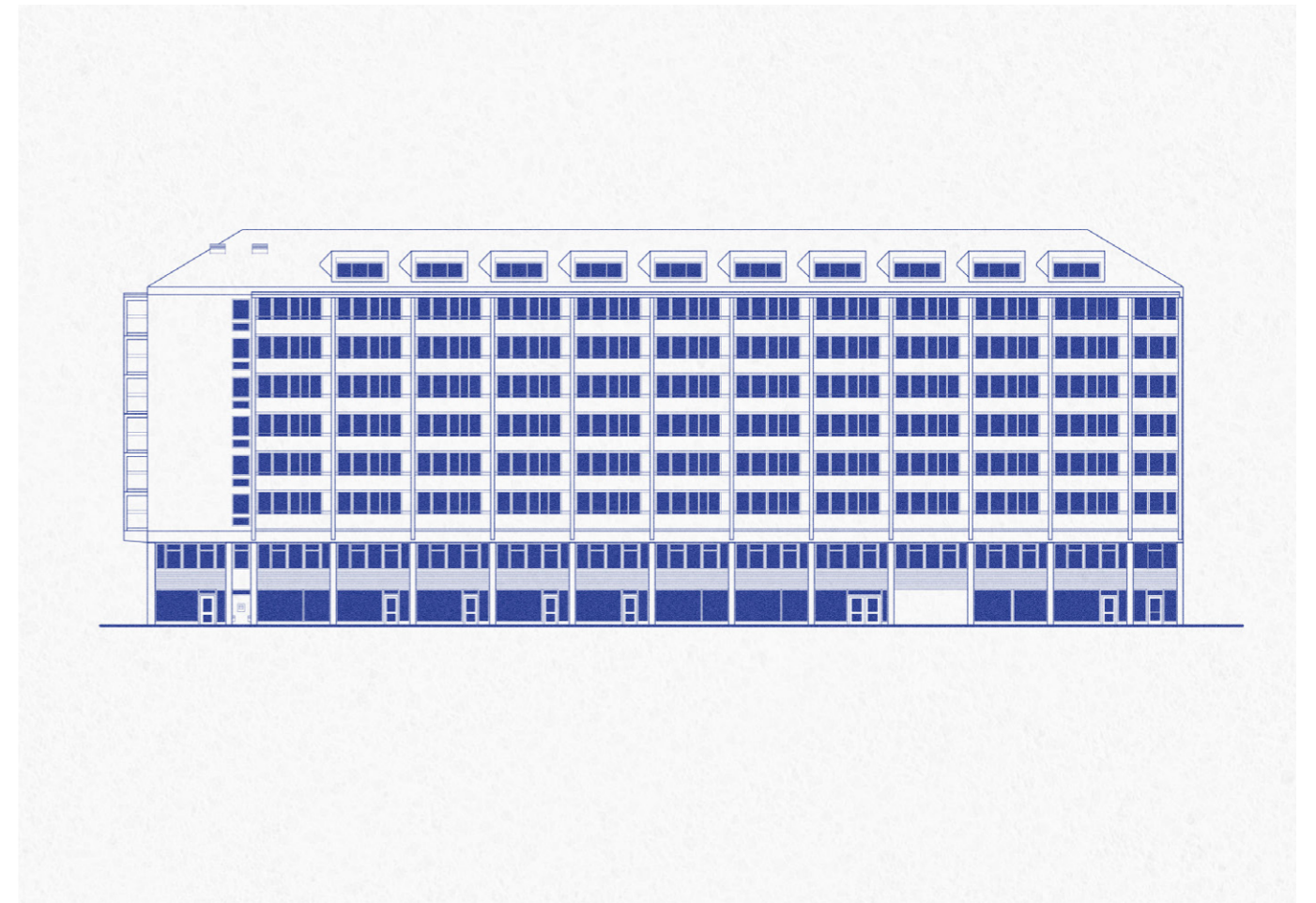
Scale displacement of ornaments.



Castings of ornaments / fragments at the site (kv Syrenen).



Analysis of parts according to the grammar of the Chicago school. This style acts as reference for Gothenburg's brand building and high rises today. Analysis of pilaster and how it relates to Vignola's principles on proportions.

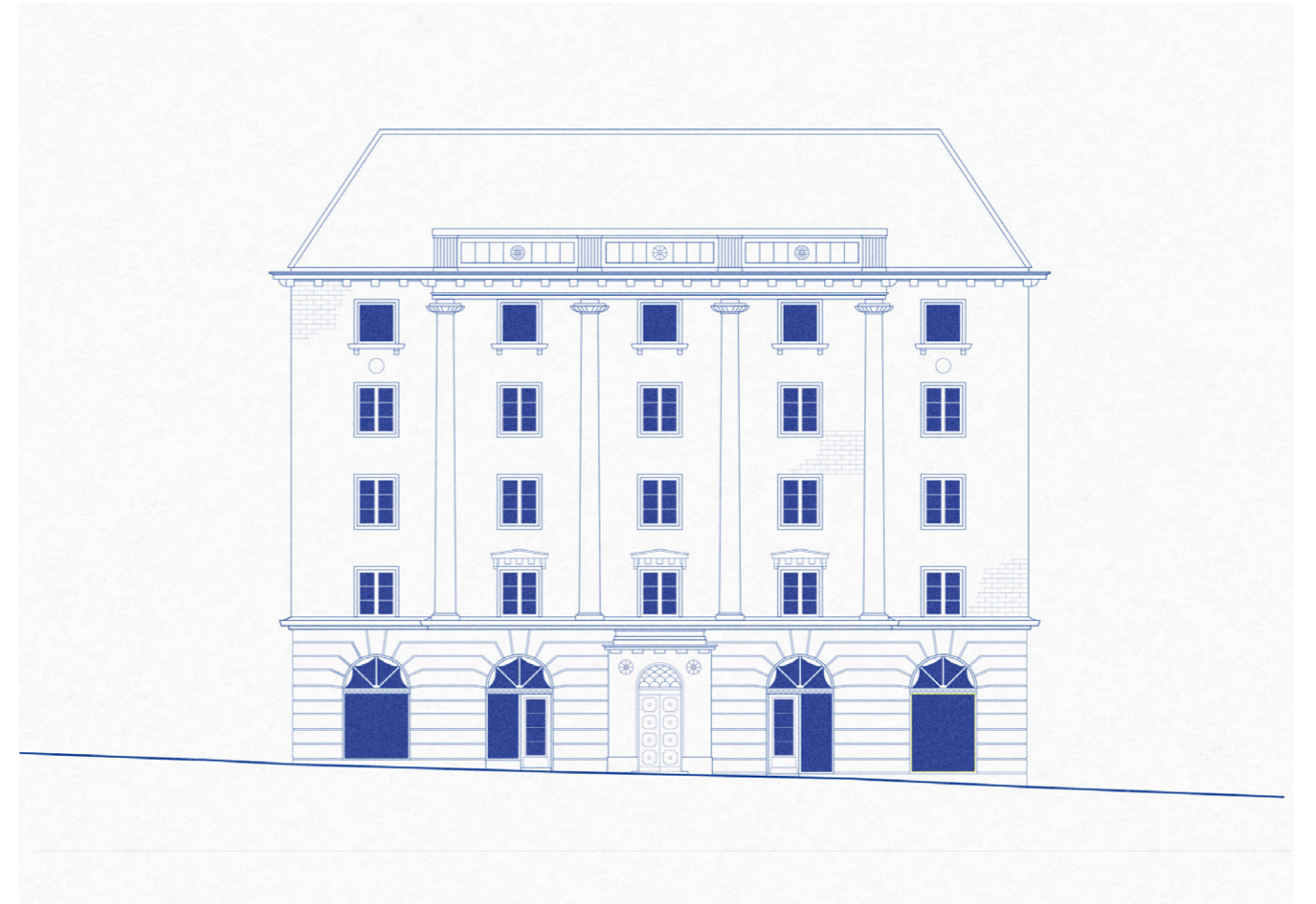


Kv Morkullan. Façade facing east.

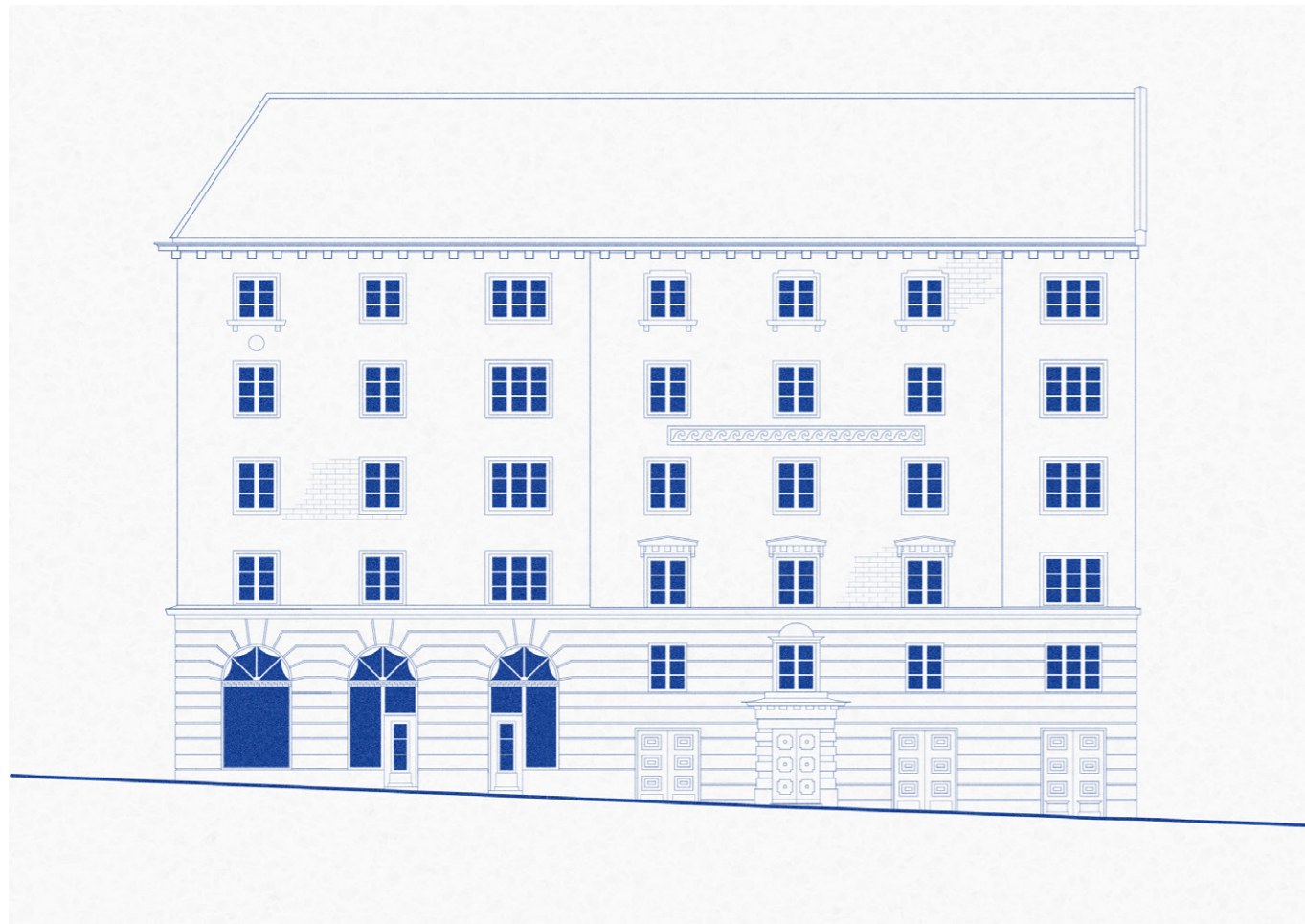




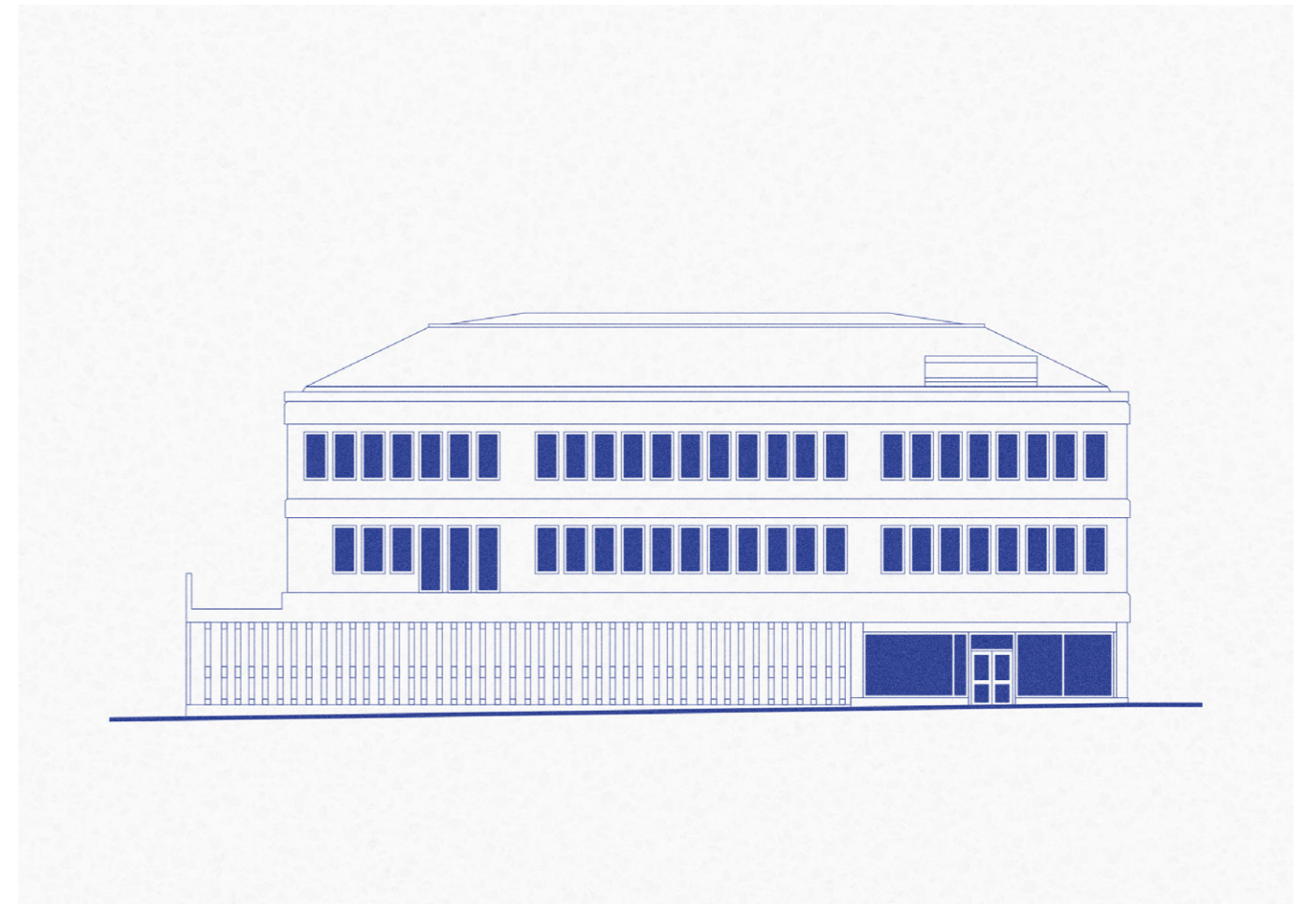
*Gibraltar Poorhouse. Façade facing north.*



*Kv Syrenen. Façade facing south.*



*Kv Syrenen Façade facing south.*

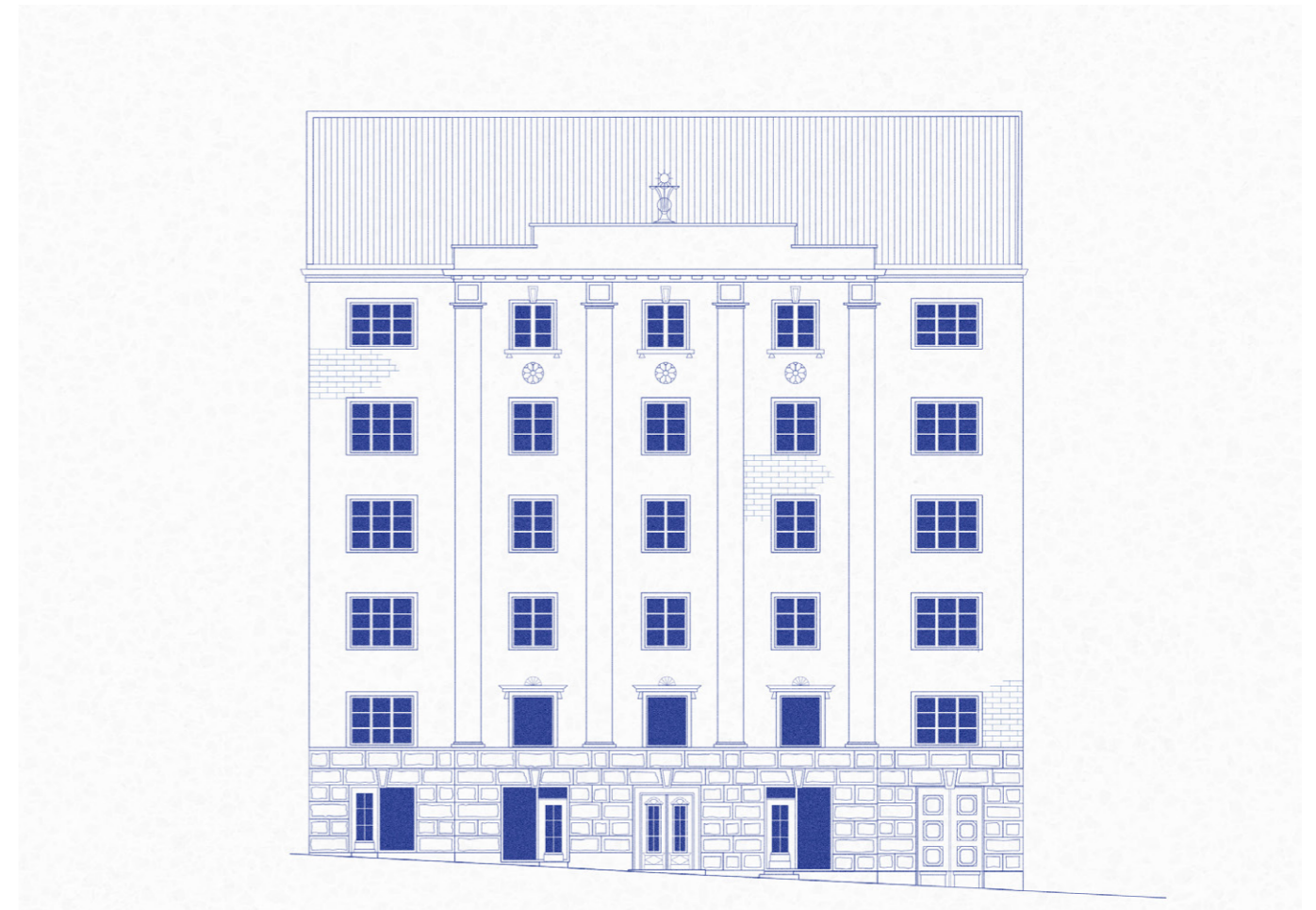


*Kv Morkullan. Façade facing north.*

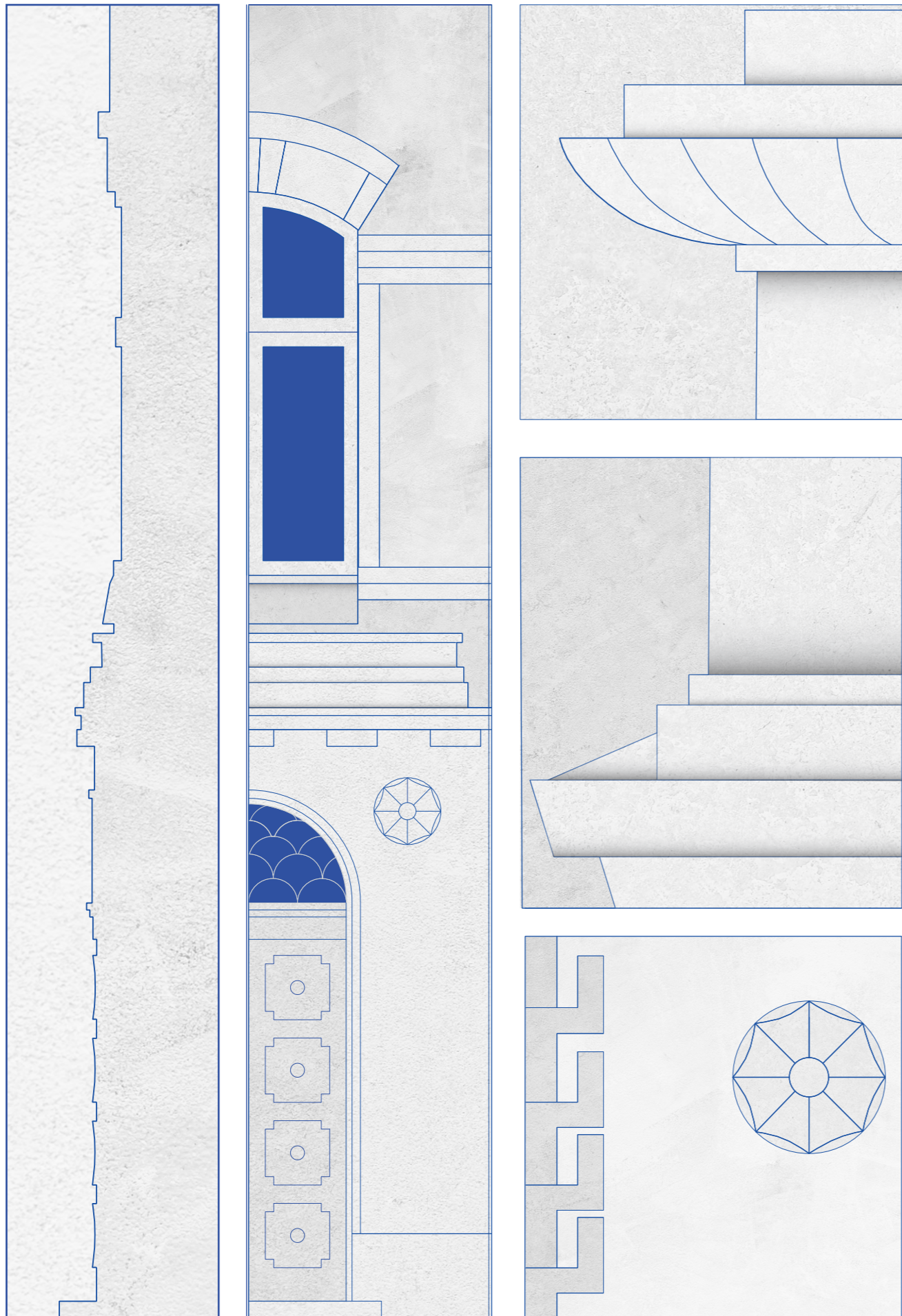




*Kv Platanen. Façade facing west,*



*Kv Syrenen. Façade facing south.*



Analytique of buildings at the site.



## façade analysis

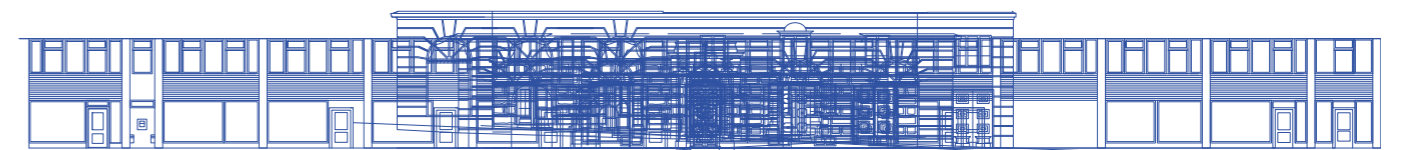
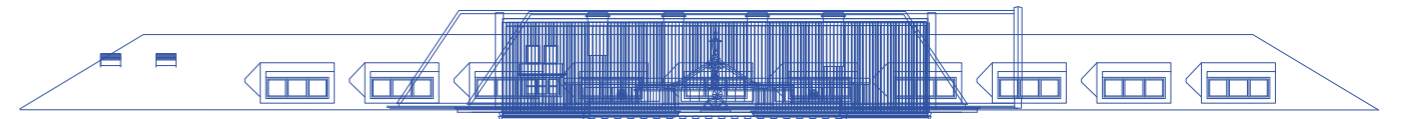
The 19th century city, planned along boulevards that meet and create public spaces, stems from Haussman's Paris (Linton, 2023). In Vasastan, north of the site, it is adamantly clear that the neoclassical neighborhoods came about mainly for the wealthy. The earliest examples shows a richer ornamentation in the lower floors and the ornamentation gets more sparse at the top floors. When the buildings around Landala were erected, the Swedish Grace style dominated, meaning that the ornamentation was more sparse overall, but the concept of more detailed and ornamented residential floors on the first story is still exercised.

The materials in the buildings tend to be brick and mortar combined with grout. The plinths, or ground floors, have a different texture or color than the top floor, oftentimes both material and color differs from the middle parts of the buildings. Ornaments and pilasters are white when they are made of grout. If the ornamentation is the brickwork, there tends to be a horizontal banding of brickwork that differs with a few shifts between them. The crowning of the buildings are often finished with a high architrave or a decorative gable.

For the modernist buildings, the

design is rational. Prefabricated concrete elements with exposed load. The division of the façade is clearly horizontal, with a balancing in the vertical direction, mainly through the pillars attached to the console bars holding the balconies. The ground floors have large windows that are separated by horizontal wood panels, painted yellow. The buildings around the square have the same façade materials, but instead of yellow wood, the detailing is carried out in a brownish red sheet metal.

The old school at the site is made in red brick with black horizontal brick banding a few shifts apart. Around the large, well-defined entrances, rich ornamentation is placed. The other public building at the site, the old Gibraltar Poorhouse, have temple gables, geometrical ornamentation and grey brick that divides the different parts of the façade.



*Overlay of buildings at site, divided into plinth, shaft and crown.*

## design strategies

The theoretical framework acts as a point of departure for why a design addition is necessary at the site. To be able to make the physical assemblages, a set of rules are set up to arrive at a design proposal.

~ The existing functions at the site are not allowed to be relocated to other parts of the city.

~ The site for intervention is a park and the structure that is being added needs to respect this fact.

~ The addition should comment on the polemic debate between Arkitekturupproret and the actors that disregard their views.

~ The design should enhance or highlight the socio-material networks already existing at the site.

## delimitations

The design proposal is not intended to be a completed building, but rather act as a conversation piece that examines the role of the façade and how it can act as either a transition between spaces, or an enhancer of socio-material assemblages.

The design is speculative in nature, and investigation is a large part of the process.



Figure 19. Vara Stationshus. Functionalist building painted monochrome blue. By Årskort Guld SJ blog.

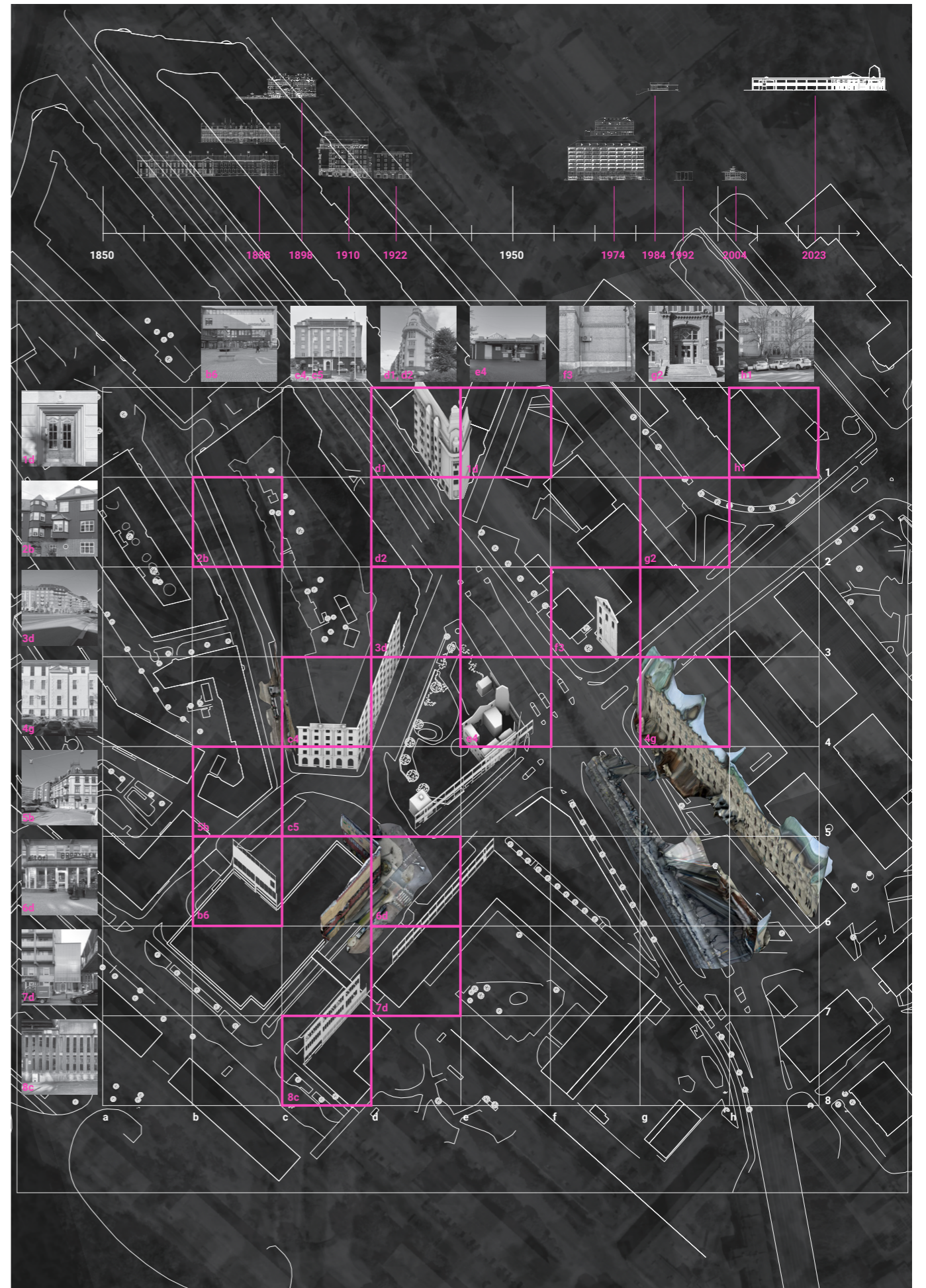
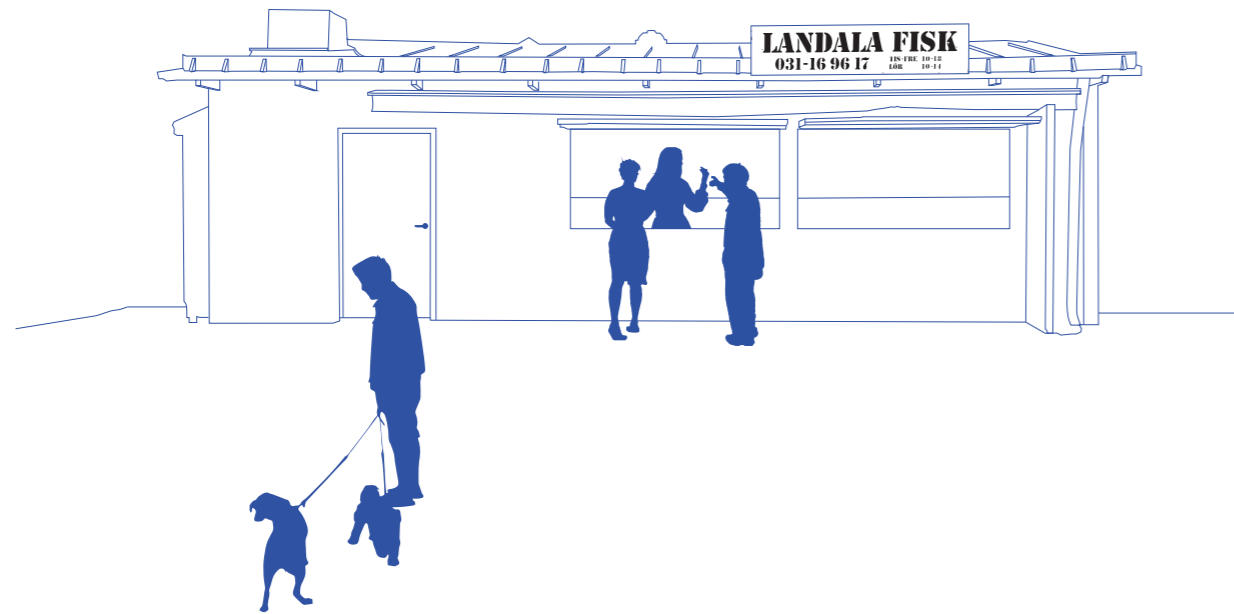


Figure 20. Alfriston Performing Arts, Mary Duggan. Monochromatic pink. By Mary Duggan

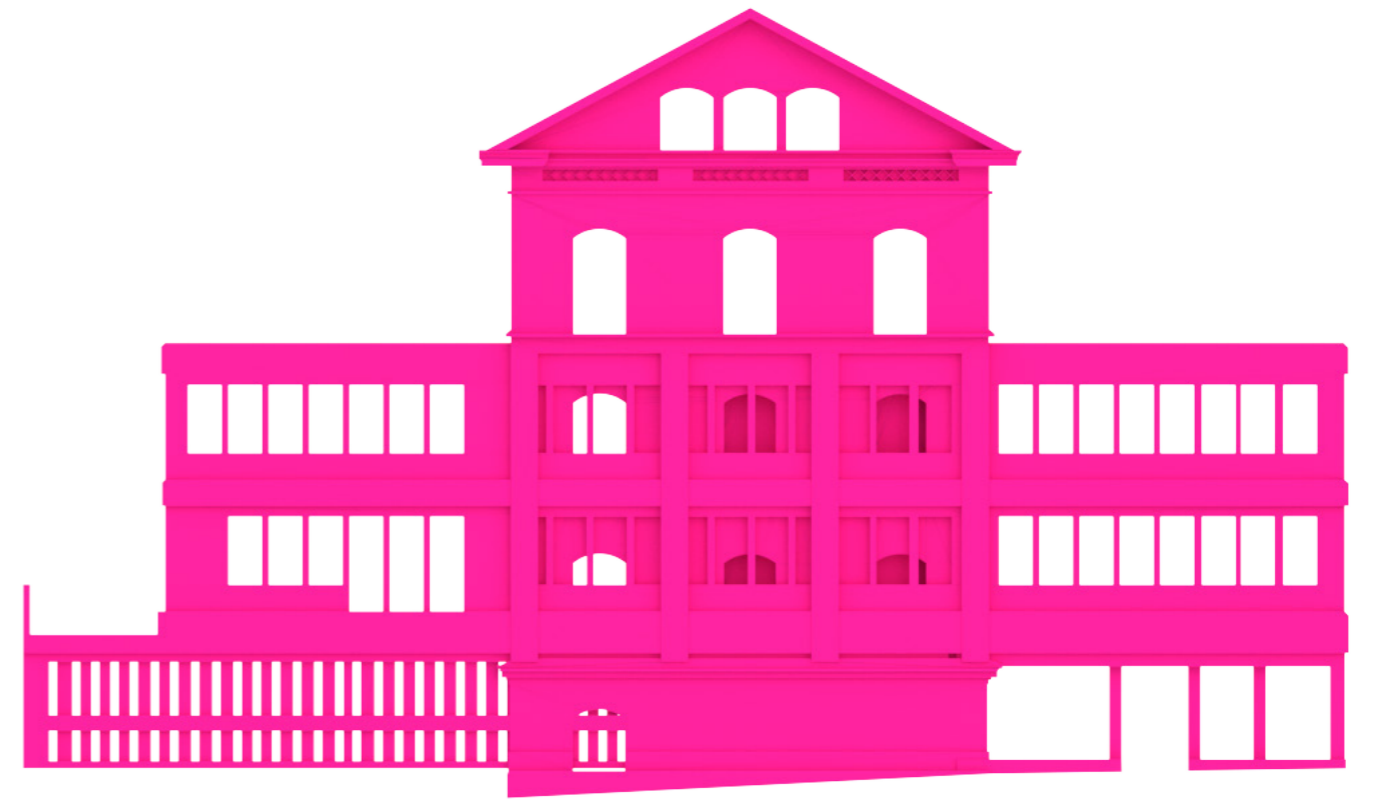
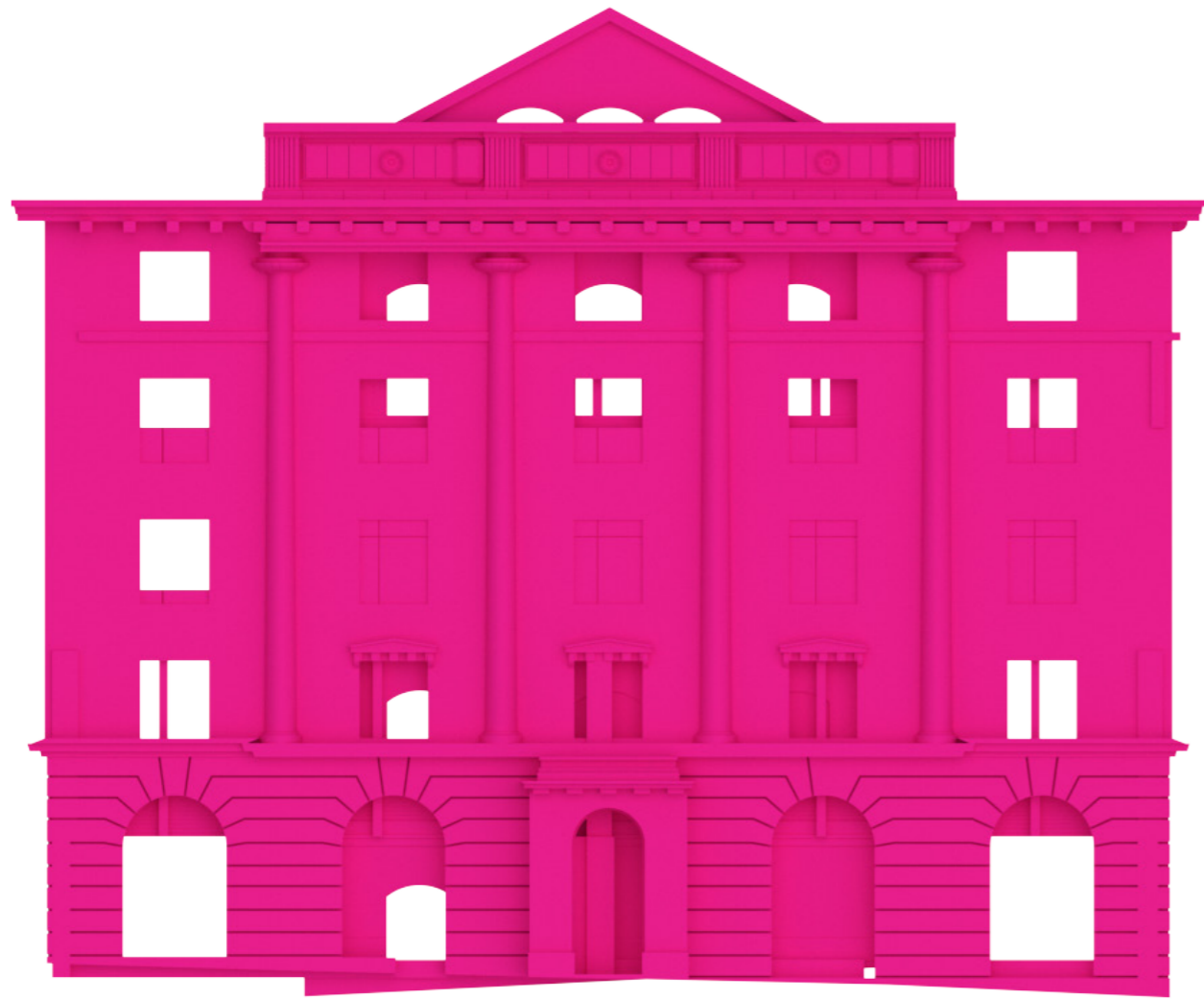


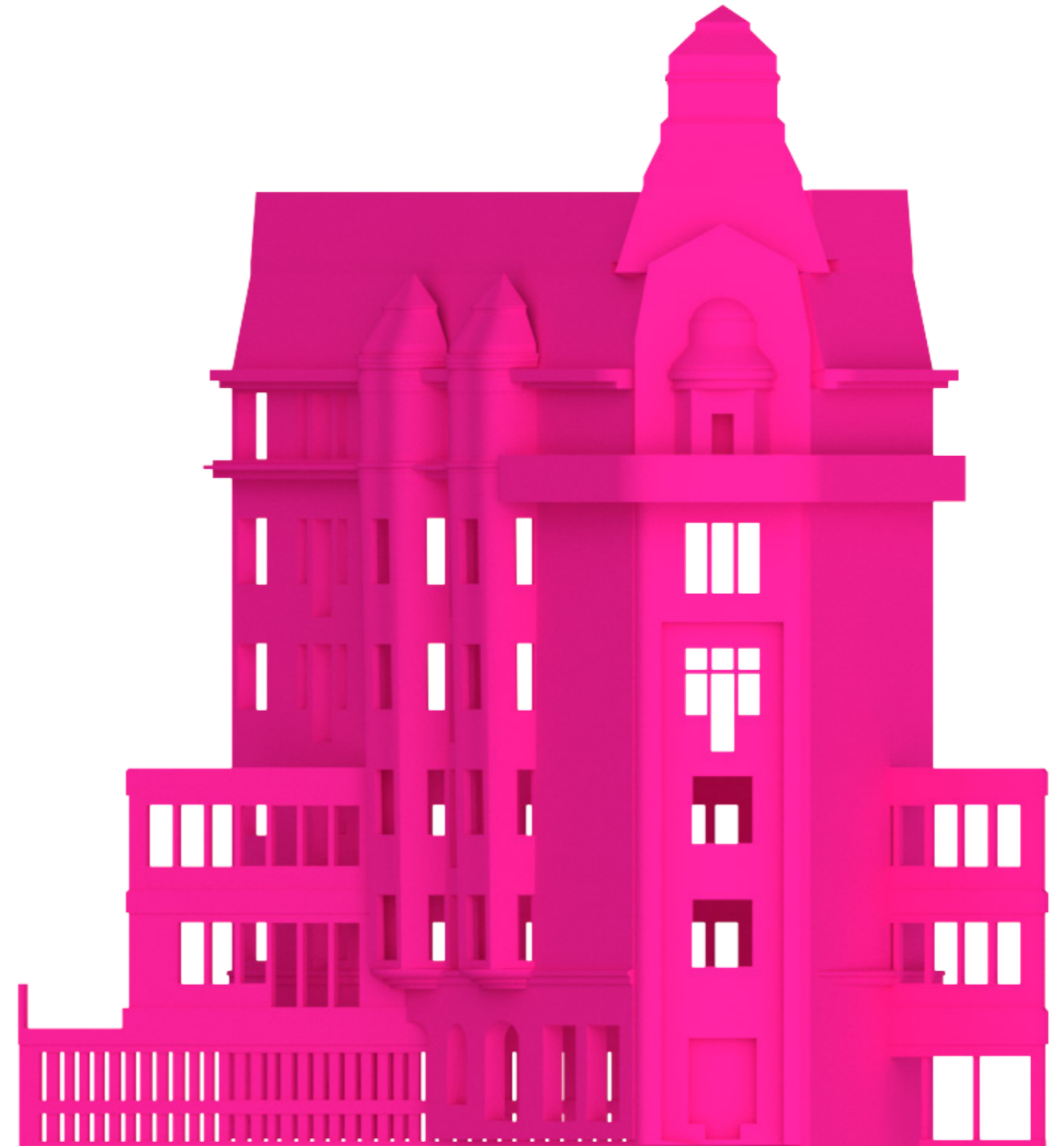
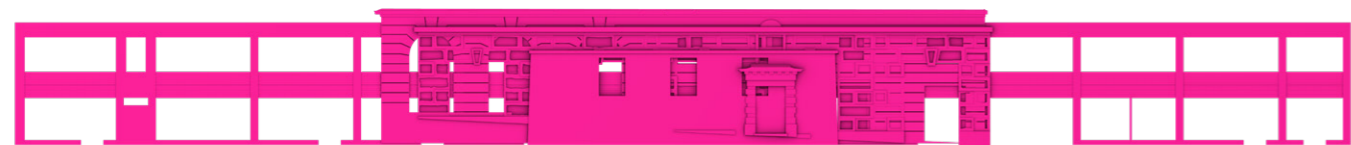
Figure 21. Naked and Famous bar by Lucas y Hernandez-Gil. Color blocking for bar interior. By J. Delgado / Dezeen.

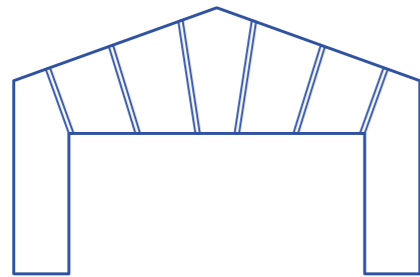
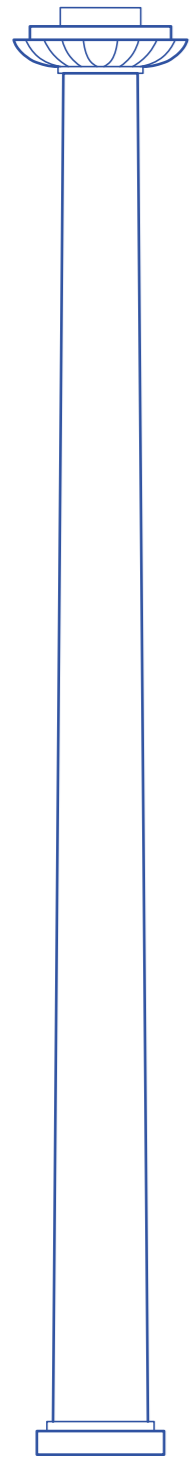
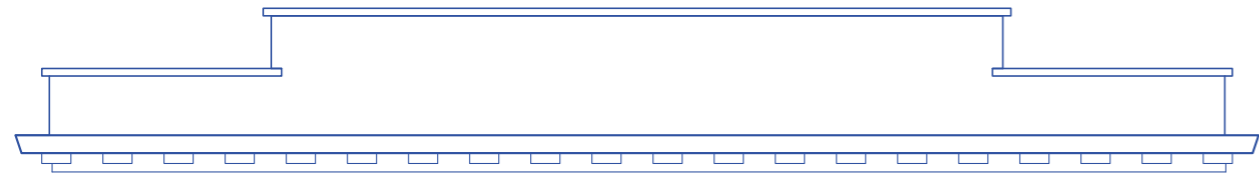


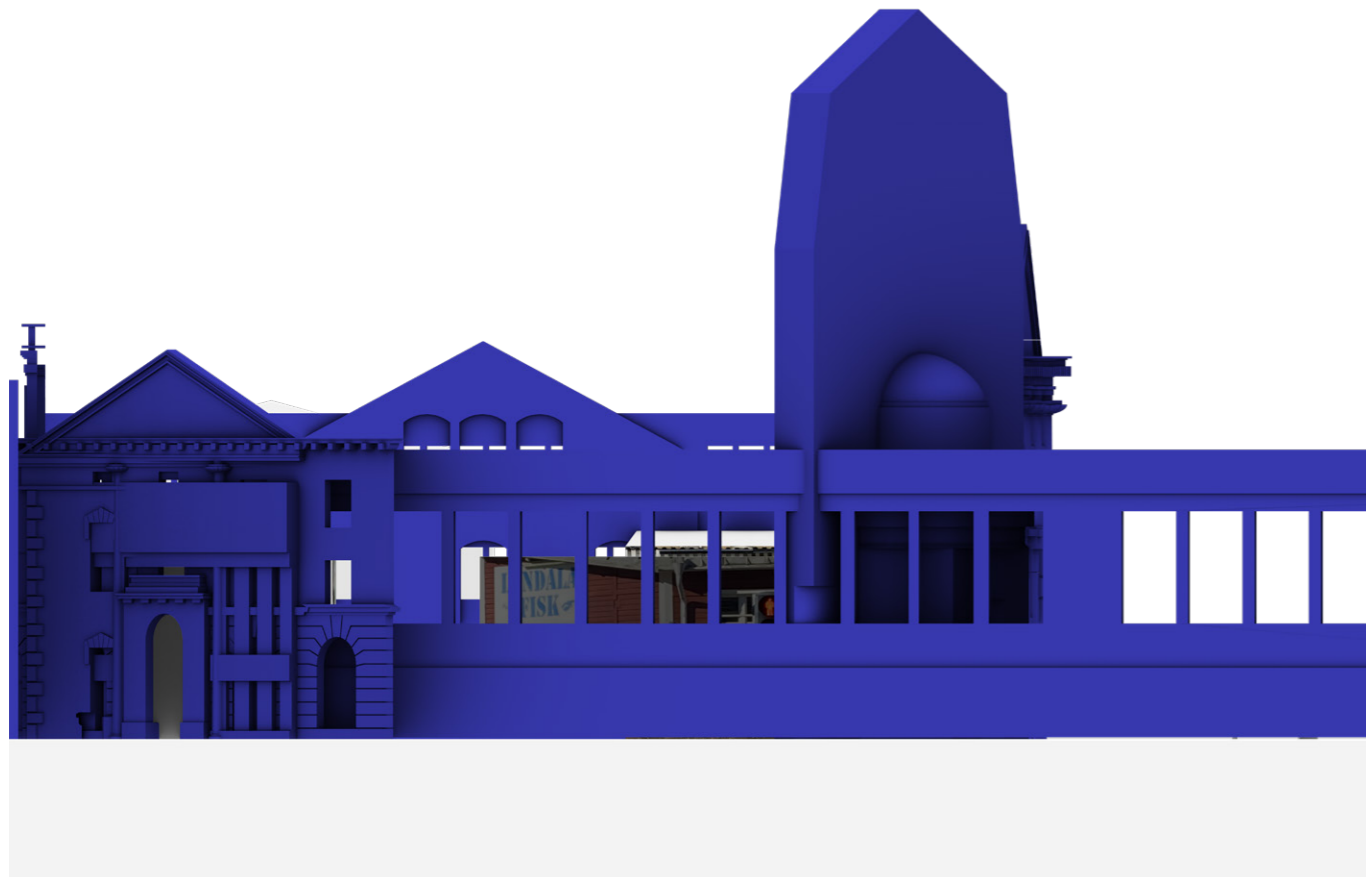




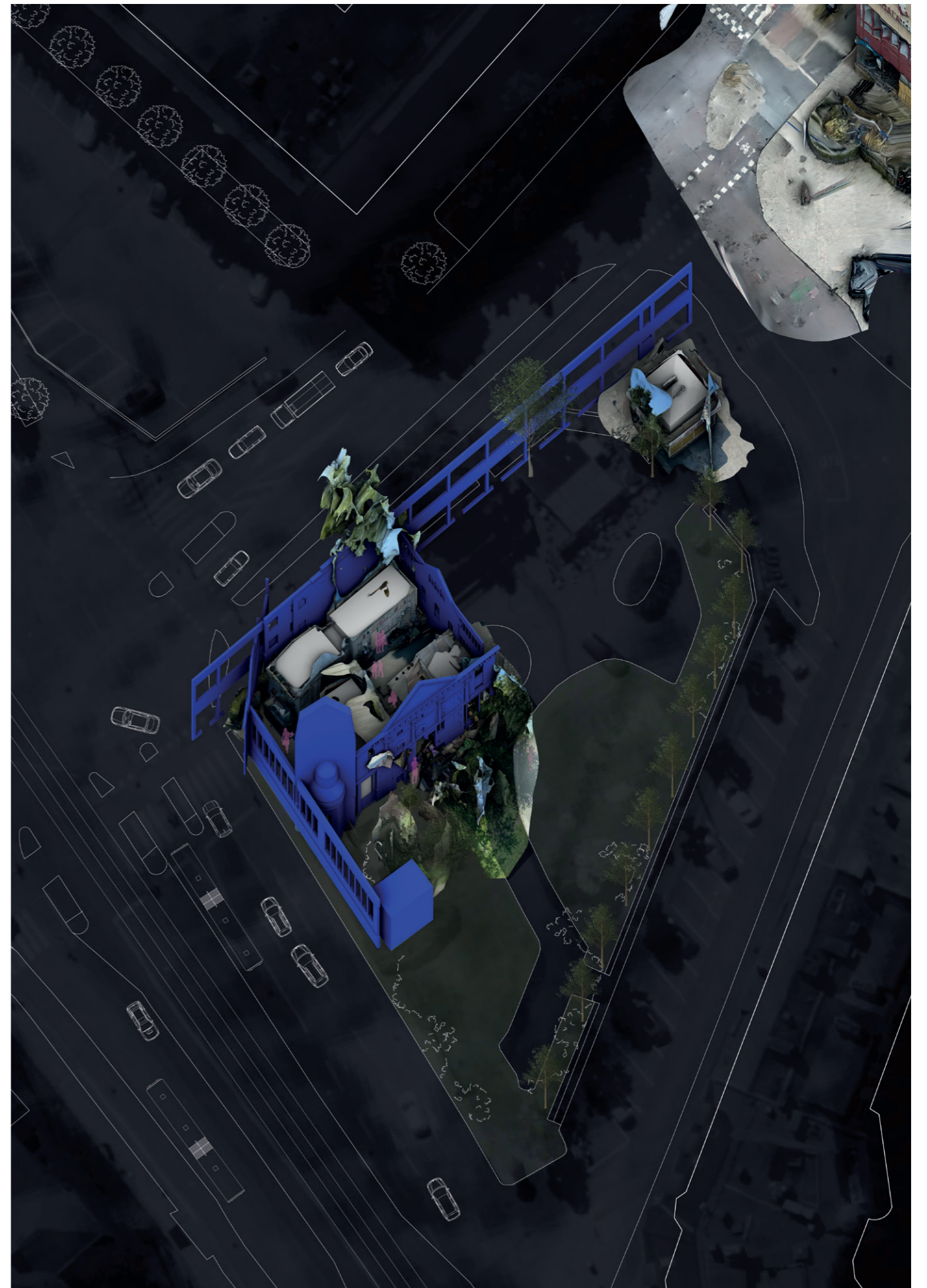








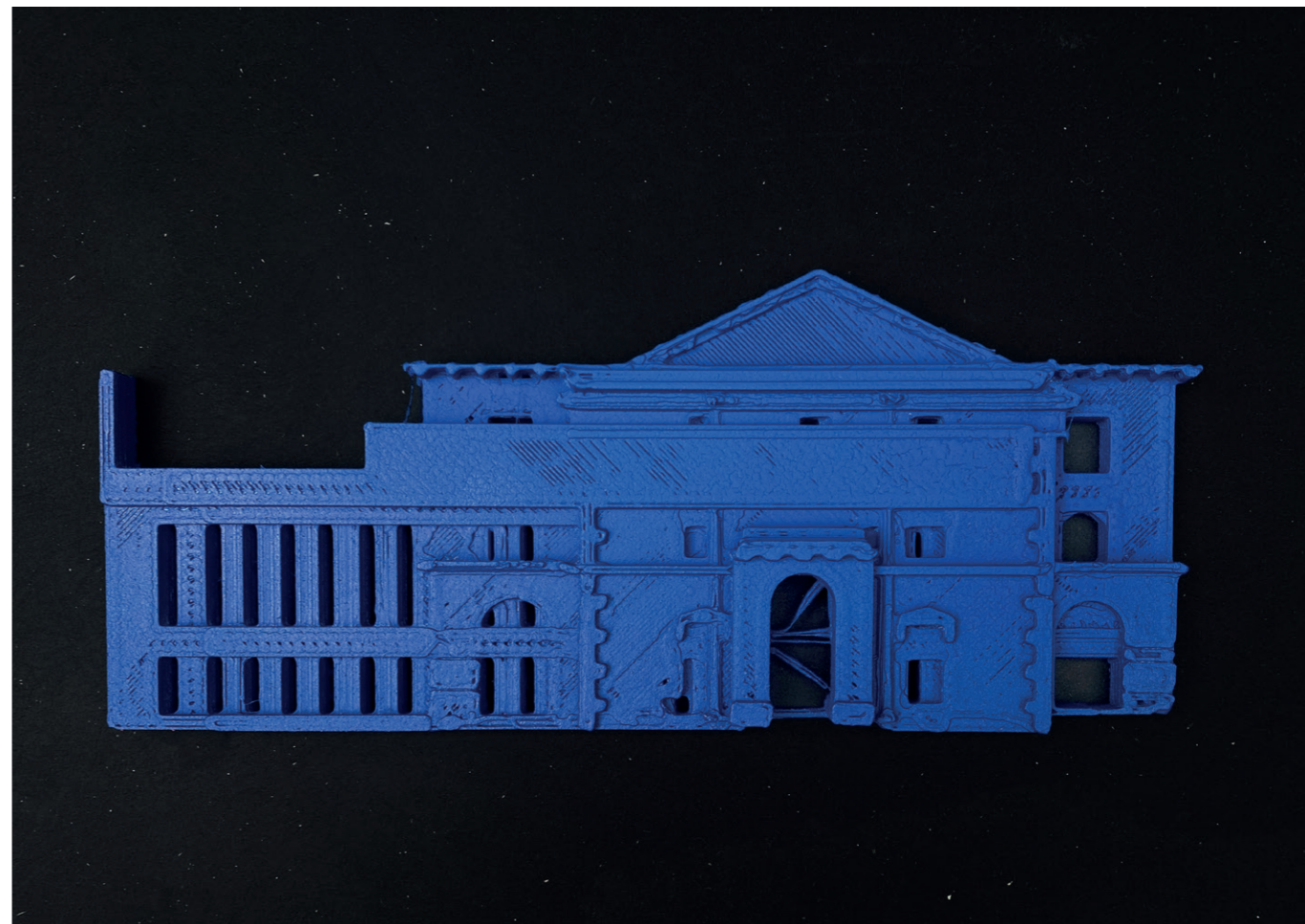
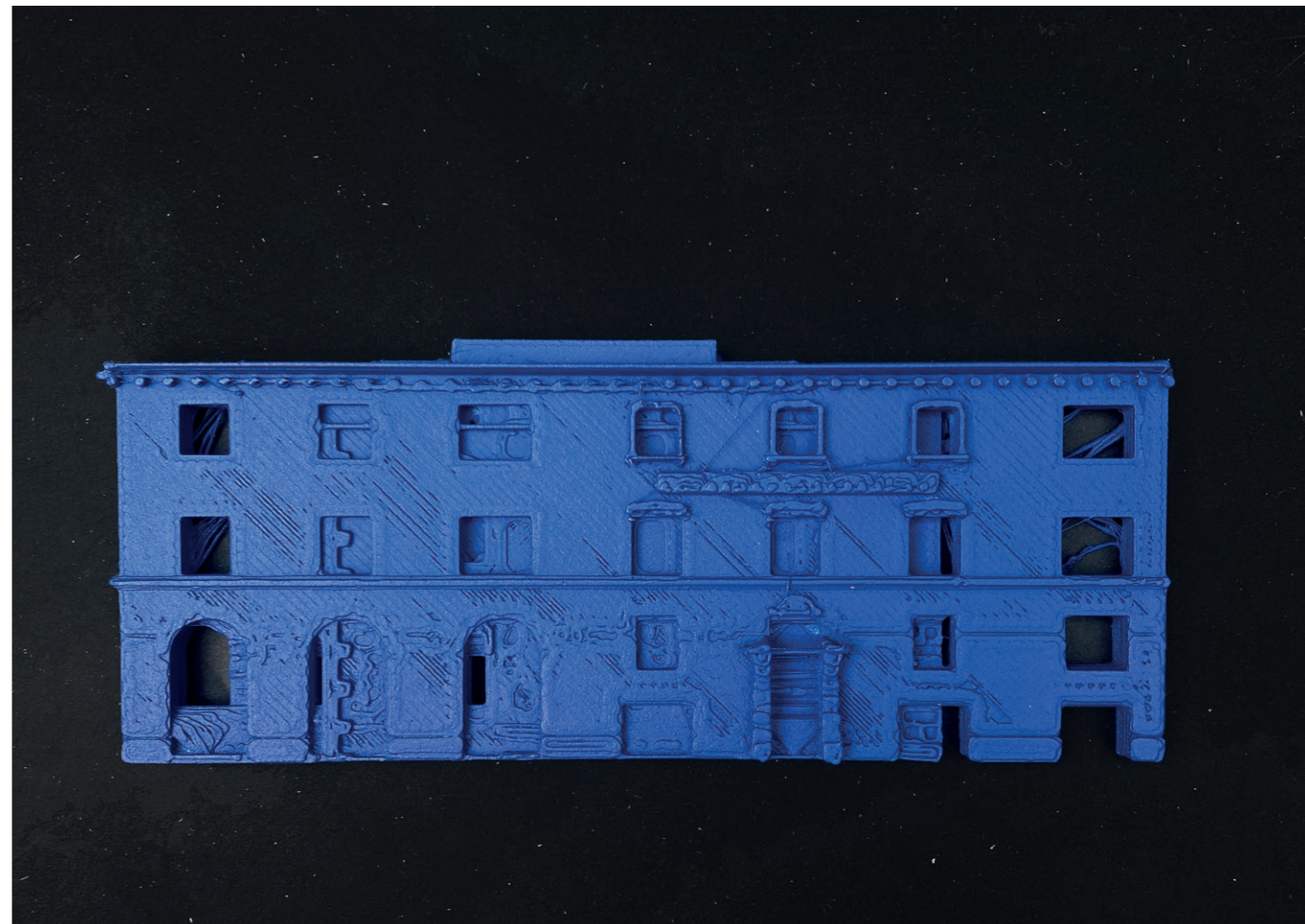
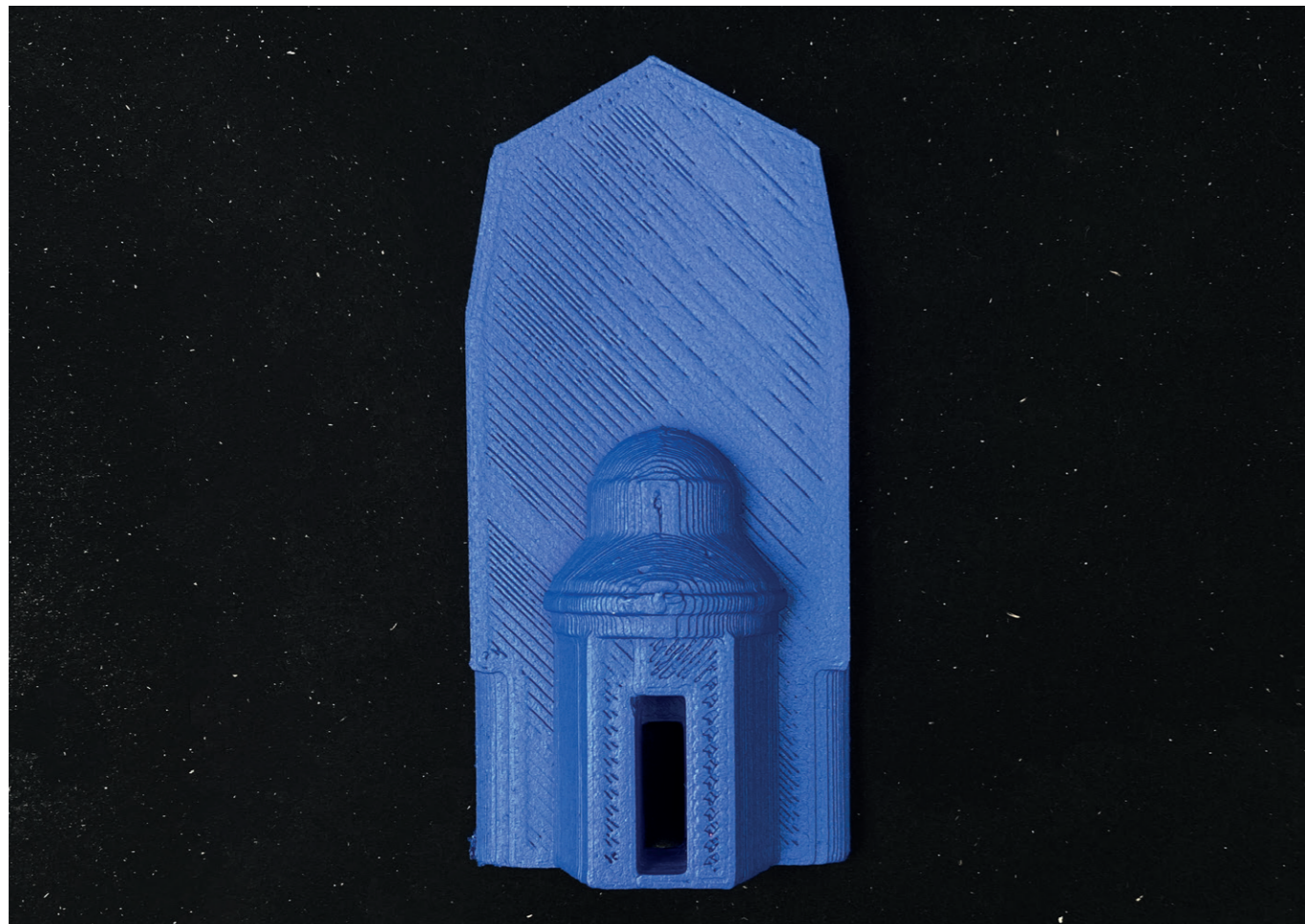














## discussion

Space is produced and reproduced through a number of processes that affects how people view it. While the portrayal of a neighborhood matters greatly to the way it is viewed by the wider public, the different styles are connected to different planning ideals that give more or less to the residents and citizens in terms of spatiality. In classical neighborhoods such as Vasastan, the main quality is that the grid it is built upon makes movement follow a logic - public and private exist in correlation. Rowe and Koetter (1975) explains it with 17th century Rome: the fusion of different functions and modes in the renaissance city creates an interdependence between the parts, and the parts creates the collage that in turn is the foundation of the city. The classical city, the renaissance city and the neoclassical city exists not only to serve the inhabitants of a specific neighborhood but it sets a structure that is of benefit for all inhabitants. In the skyscraper boom that Gothenburg has undergone, on the other hand, the parts exist as lonestanding icons, that lends little structure to the city as a whole.

The concept of assemblage (to gather and put together) is used to develop a design proposal that merges the different façades framing the site. By using the material assemblage as a

design strategy, the aim is to create a design that comments on the fact that socio-material relations are not taken into consideration when architecture is discussed in the polemic debate taking place today. The spaces where functions and activities takes place are the spaces where meetings and interactions can take place. The sheds at the site does not reach a high threshold of originality per se, but they carry meaning for the people working there, as well as people living in the neighborhood.

By framing these activities with a material assemblage, where the parts going into it is a mashup of everything at the site, the interior becomes the symbol of the social, and it is juxtaposed to the exterior that is the material. By adding a kind of scenery that reflects the surroundings of the site, a transition between the different public spaces are created, and the interactions at the site are highlighted. The true value of the design is not that the configuration of the space has changed, but that the social relations have gained an elevated position through the use of the material.

The speculative project as a way to imagine other possibilities for what city development can entail, or highlighting already existing, viable and

important social structures, holds a potential for change that comes down to the fact that it lets the viewer desire. By imagining what is not seen as possible, new ideas can be born and architecture could potentially become a tool for change again, rather than a way to create profit for large corporations. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1987), desire is a productive force in and of itself, and not just a force that exists in relation to the Lacanian concept of Lack. Furthermore, they use the concept of "state" to explain how desire is stopped through the process of legislation.

While it is easy to position actors such as the municipality or the actual state apparatus inside of this term, Arkitekturupproret could be seen as an extension of the notion of the state. The criticism posed by the organization is not in fact productive, neither does it challenge the status quo of the building sector. What could be seen as an experimentation with more deliberate façade designs, is in fact pure nostalgia and repetition, as opposed to actual experimentation that would include translations of the past. In the words of Walter Benjamin (1923), "Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages.". In terms of architecture, one

could argue that since the 1930's, modernism has become the universal language of architecture. It draws heavily from classicism in its early years, meaning that there has already been one translation, but to translate it back to classicism, the reciprocal relationship between the two needs to be pinpointed and addressed.

The role of the architect has been downplayed in favor of profit. Once architects gave up their power to the large corporations in the 1960's, the role has become more like that of a consultant, and less of a designer that uses creativity to solve problems and work contextually. By re-establishing political and philosophical theory as central parts of our work, we could challenge and possibly disrupt the idea that architecture boils down to managing technical solutions and understanding of legislation.

Without being an actual response, this work aims to question what is seen as value in urban planning, and for whom the value is created and upheld. By highlighting the importance of the façade as a room defining element that can act both as a signifier and as a transition between social and material spaces, a conversation on the topic of conflict is meant to be the outcome.

## reflection

The starting point for this thesis work was the architectural ornament and ways of reinterpreting what that is in a modern context. I have long wanted to work with architectural details as my starting point. In the modernist tradition we are fostered in, this is not something that is emphasized in the production of architecture, and developing methods to work with the smallest scale of a building is intriguing to me. The polemic of classicist versus "non-classicist" was always part of the discourse, and as the work developed, it became hard to find ways to use the ornament as a way to address the debate I wanted to respond to.

The mapping that I started with was very focused on understanding what classicism is, and what the classical ornament means in the context of classical architecture, which in turn might raise questions about the relevance of the mapping. As the work developed into a critique of the polemic debate, and how the building boom in Gothenburg has created a counter-reaction, the material from the mapping instead became an archive for the further design work, and the context as a way to address conflict became the response instead.

The methods for the work included

historic research and mapping of the site, as well as using archive material to in turn create an archive for the design work. The synthesizing of the material into a final design was made by overlaying the façades with each other and then adjusting these overlays to follow an order. The façades on opposite sides of the site were overlaid with each other, and then each new façade that was created was adjusted to fit in both X, Y & Z. The adjustments included cutting off pilasters, creating openings and elongating parts of the façades.

As a starting point for the design work, I tried using my taxonomy with fragments, placing them on the façade of a volume at the site, but the additive way of working made the design too controlled in its appearance, which is why I changed my mode of working. The choice to leave the interior of the design completely bare has been a bit of a struggle. On one hand, I think it highlights the fact that the façade exists to a large extent for the people that passes by a building, those that do not get to experience the interactions that takes place inside of it. On the other hand, one fact that I want to highlight is that the interactions are an intrinsic part of all architecture, that without the interactions there is nobody to create architecture for. This might feel like a counter-intuitive

choice, but I came to the conclusion that the juxtapositioning of the social and the material was a better way to manifest the divide between the two, and how this divide dominates the way architecture is discussed today.

Had the work spanned over a longer time period, a more in-depth study on how these theories have been used in other work, specifically on conflict, I would have wanted to look deeper into how my sources have been used before to address similar topics, or how others have used conflict in urban development as a design strategy.

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## student background

### education

2021 – (2023) | 120 ETCS

**Chalmers University of Technology**

M.Sc. in Architecture

Architecture & Urban Design

2018 – 2021 | 180 ETCS

**Chalmers University of Technology**

B.Sc. in Architecture

2017 – 2018

**KV Art School**

Foundation Year - arts

2013 | 30 ECTS

**University of Gothenburg**

Russian language & literature history

### work experience

*February – August 2022*

**ASSISTANT FOR GOTHENBURG'S  
CITY ARCHITECT, GOTHENBURG**

Temporary position for tenured assistant. Sub. jury member in parallel commissions, program development in competitions, interim project manager & more.

*2023 (ongoing)*

**AMANUENSIS, ARCHITECTURE &  
URBAN DEVELOPMENT: A CULTURAL  
AND HISTORIC ORIENTATION,  
CHALMERS**

Reading, commenting & grading papers.

*2022 – 2023*

**AMANUENSIS, ARCHITECTURE AND  
URBAN SPACE DESIGN, CHALMERS**

Graphic design, curation, maintenance and disassembly of course exhibition.

# ASSEMBLAGE CITY

*context and conflict in urban development*

Master Thesis in  
Architecture & Urban  
Design

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