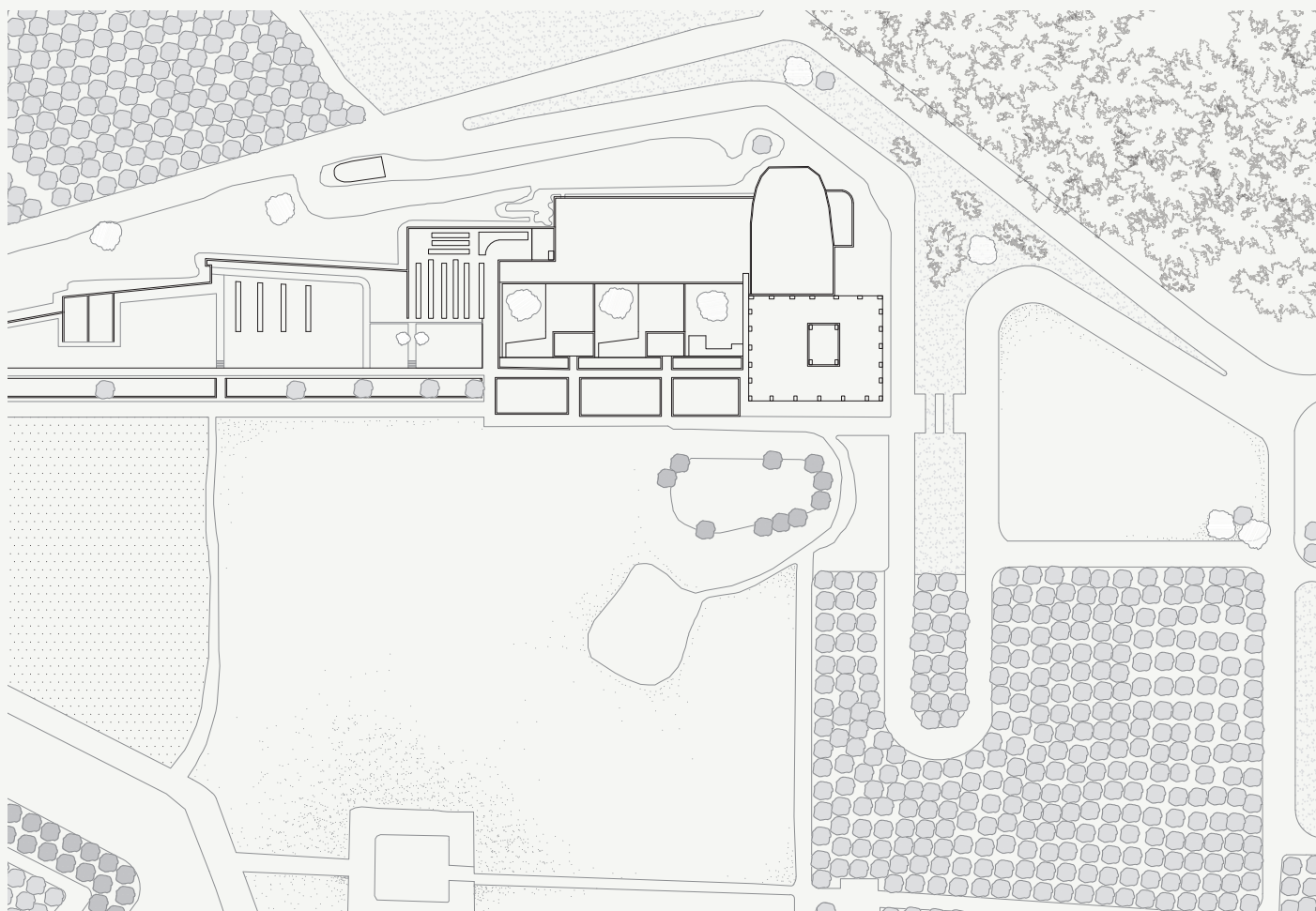


Asplund I Research Plan



by Snigdha Ray, Julia Palega, Sora Kaito and Janis Kivlinieks

Contents

–Summary of Research into a building by Gunnar Asplund with
Collection of existing drawings and images and own Analysis
Drawings

–Summary of Research into a Modern Public Library with
Collection of existing drawings and images as well as own
Analysis Drawings

–Individual Texts

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Woodland Crematorium by Gunnar Asplund

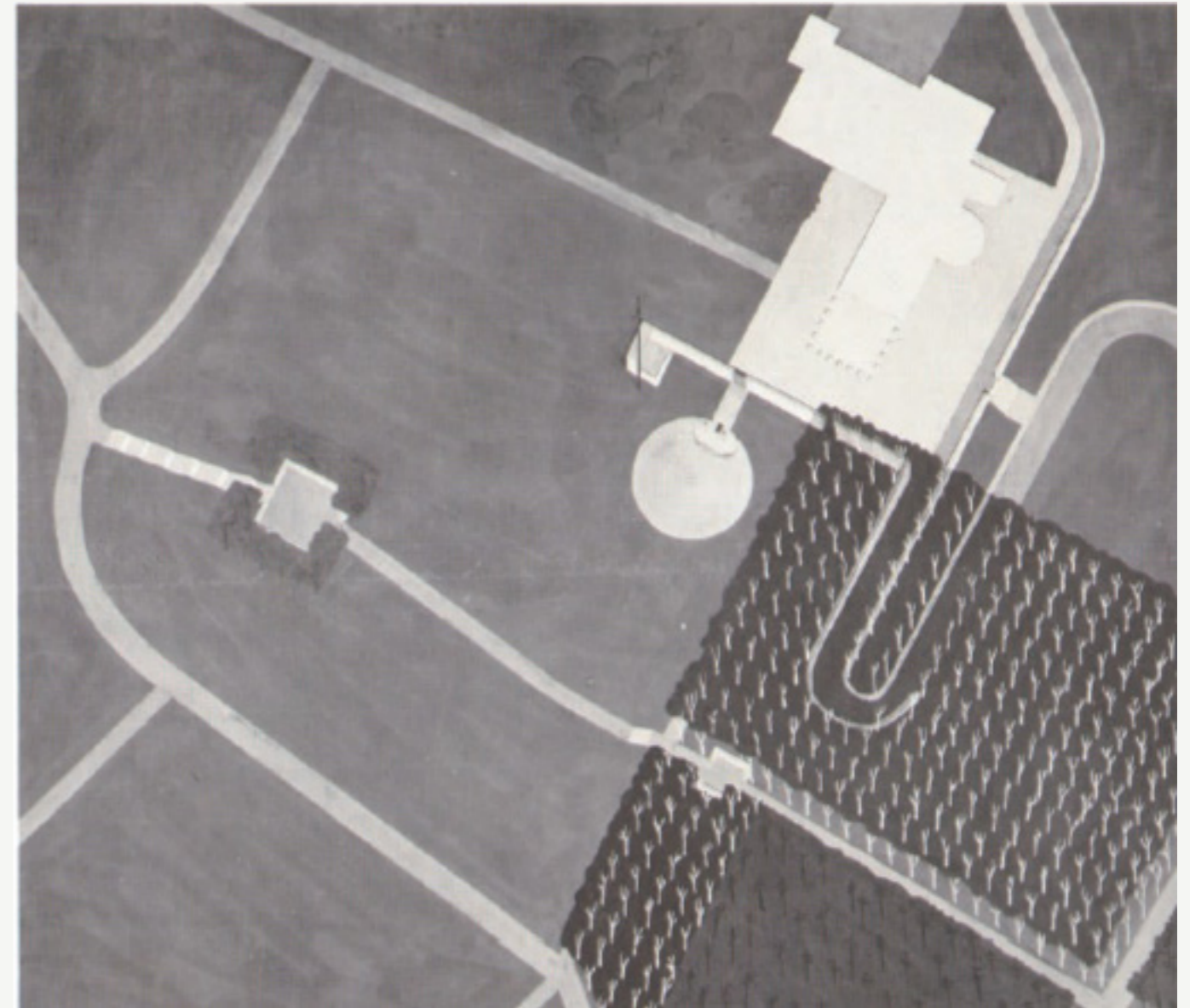


Figure 1.1 *Initial Site Concept by Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz*

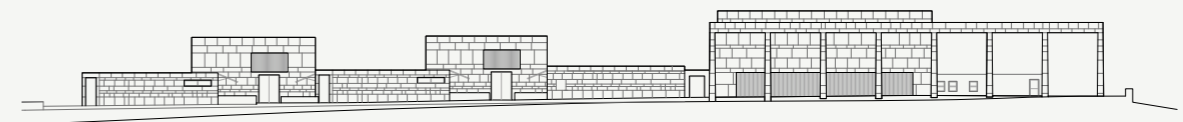


Figure 1.2 *The Longitudinal Elevation depicting various Stone dimensions*

Woodland crematorium and the cemetery was designed and built during a period of transformation in Sweden. Undergoing the end of the union between Norway and Sweden, the national goal was to embrace the Swedish heritage in the form of National Romanticism and modernity following the Democratic Party¹. In the cemetery the main aspect of Swedish heritage, which Asplund and Lewerentz wished to embrace is the local pine forest. (Figure 1.4)

The idea of ‘Folkhemmet’ shows the government wanted to be more inclusive. It is reflected in the Crematorium’s multi – religious and rather symbolic, not Christian expression.²



Figure 1.3 View from the Pavilion, Photograph by Andy Liffner. Stockholm, Sweden.

Our Analysis:

Spatiality

The main spatial feature of the woodland crematorium is the collaboration between architecture and the landscape to define and enclose outdoor spaces and blur the lines between the inside and outside. The building is composed of three chapels, and three adjacent courtyards in similar shape. (Figure 1.7) The Chapels however do not provide the view to the courtyards, to distinguish the area for conducting services from the meditative spaces.³

The spatial experience of the chapels is determined by the symbolic meanings, often employed by Asplund in his architecture. The curved wall in the chapel of the Holy Cross resembles a burial cave, a symbol appropriate for death and rebirth.⁴

¹Woollen, M. (2018). *Erik Gunnar Asplund: Landscapes and Buildings*. Routledge: 5-17.

² Woollen, *Erik Gunnar Asplund: Landscapes and Buildings*, 82.

³ Woollen, *Erik Gunnar Asplund: Landscapes and Buildings*, 130-131.

⁴ Wrede, S. (1980). *The architecture of Erik Gunnar Asplund*. In *The MIT Press eBooks*: 204. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/1328.001.0001>

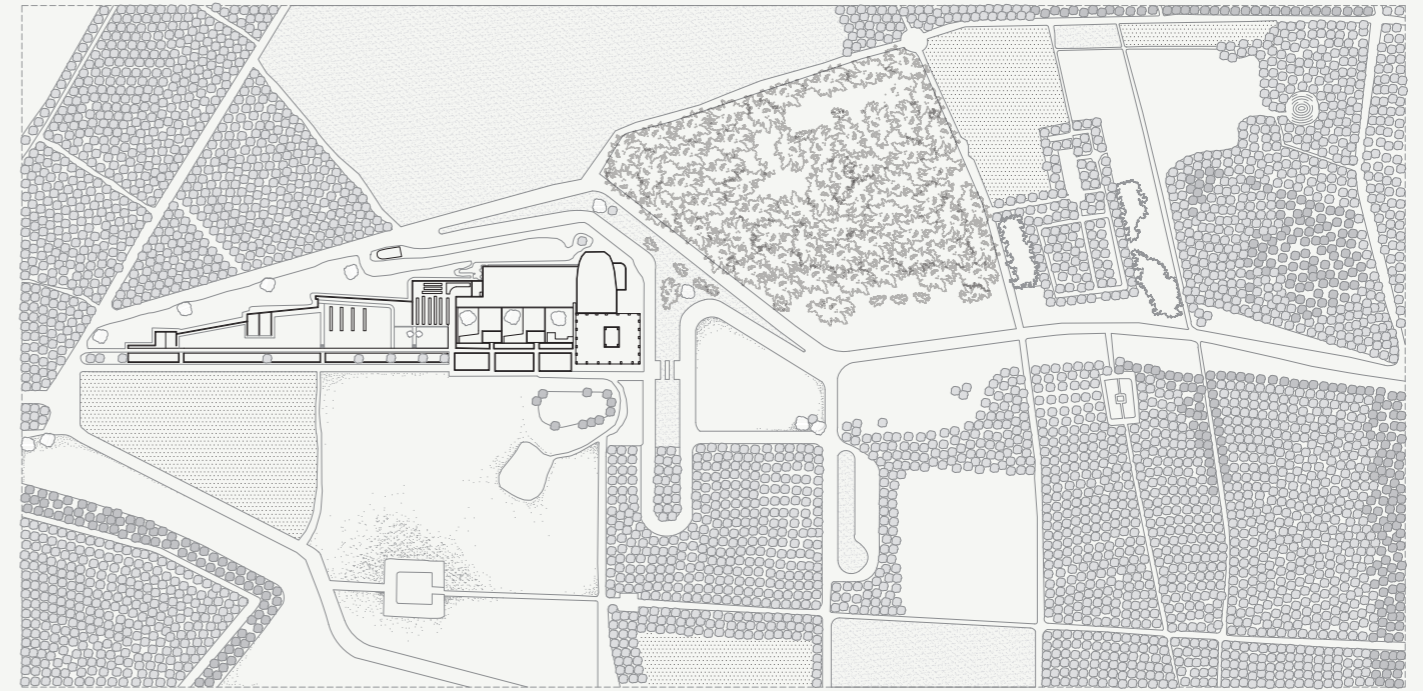


Figure 1.4 Site of the Woodland Crematorium

Landscape

Asplund has treated the relationship of this building with the landscape with great care. He embraces both the small moments, like pavement leading to the building, and a small clock placed subtly on the site, and the monumental landscape. There are two routes leading to the crematorium: a Christian one with consolidating cross on the path, and a non-Christian one through the meditation Grove.⁵

The landscape plays a big role in experiencing this building as it presents itself to the mourner framed by the loggia, providing comfort in the time of loss. (Figure 1.4)

Composition

As each chapel has a corresponding courtyard and a waiting room, the path of the users was designed in such a way, where two sets of mourners never cross paths. (Figure 1.6).⁶

The composition of the main façade reflects the functions of the building. Waiting rooms and courtyards are of similar height and create a visual plinth, for the higher Chapels. (Figure 1.7).

The main focal point is the loggia located asymmetrically in front of the Chapel of the Holy Cross, creating a composition, which allows this terrace space to be divided in two. One side intended for ceremonies, with the openable Chapel wall, making the other side less formal.

Functionally the building holds all the technical elements in the basement, allowing the ground floor to be more free in composition. (Figure 1.12).

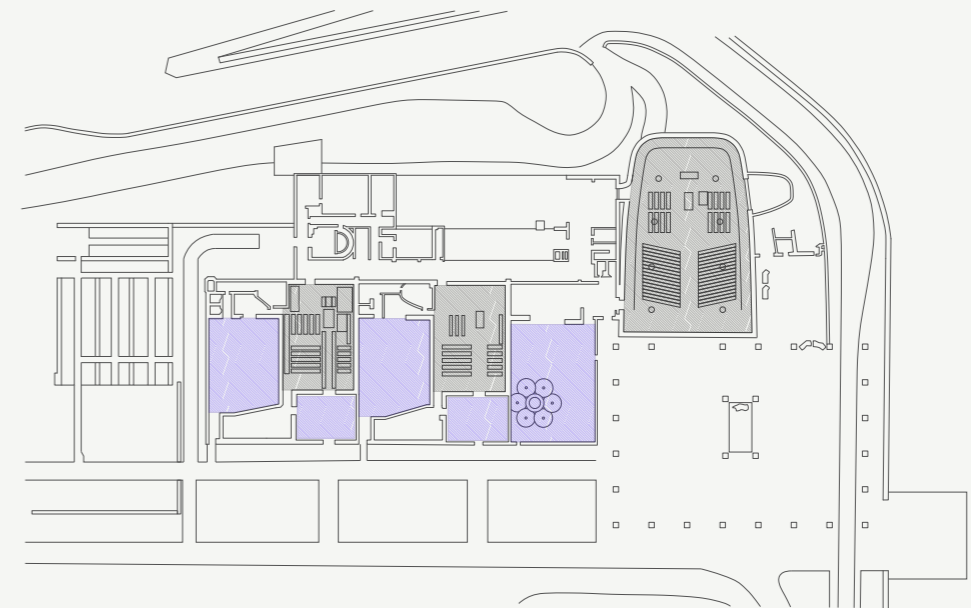
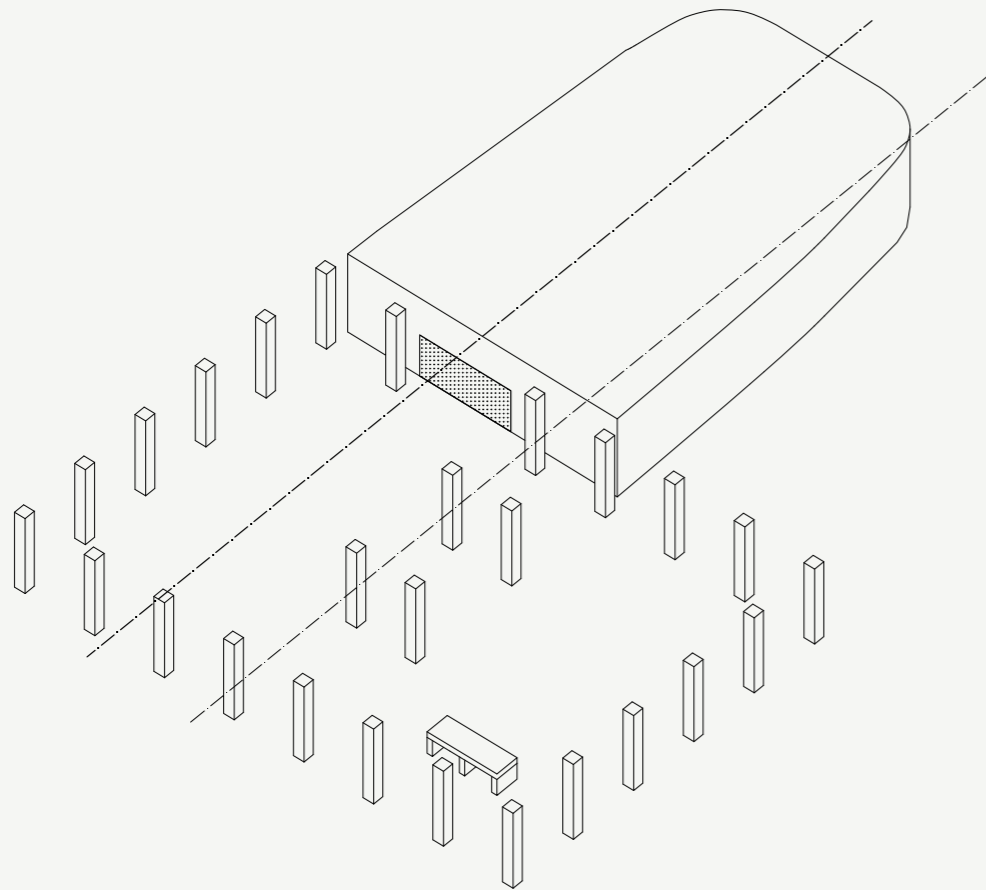


Figure 1.5 The Chapel of Faith, Hope and Holy Cross

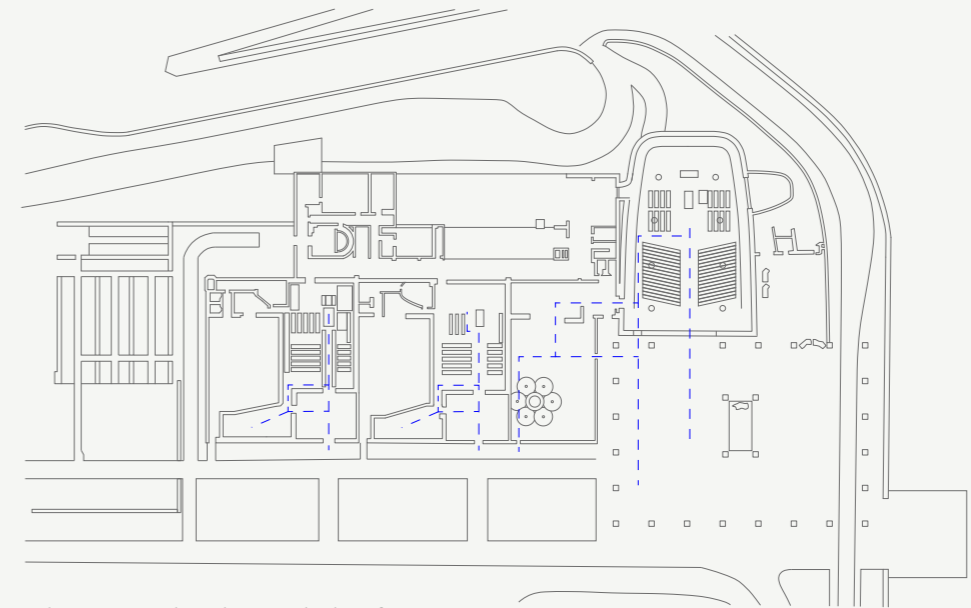


Figure 1.6 Showing analysis of Route

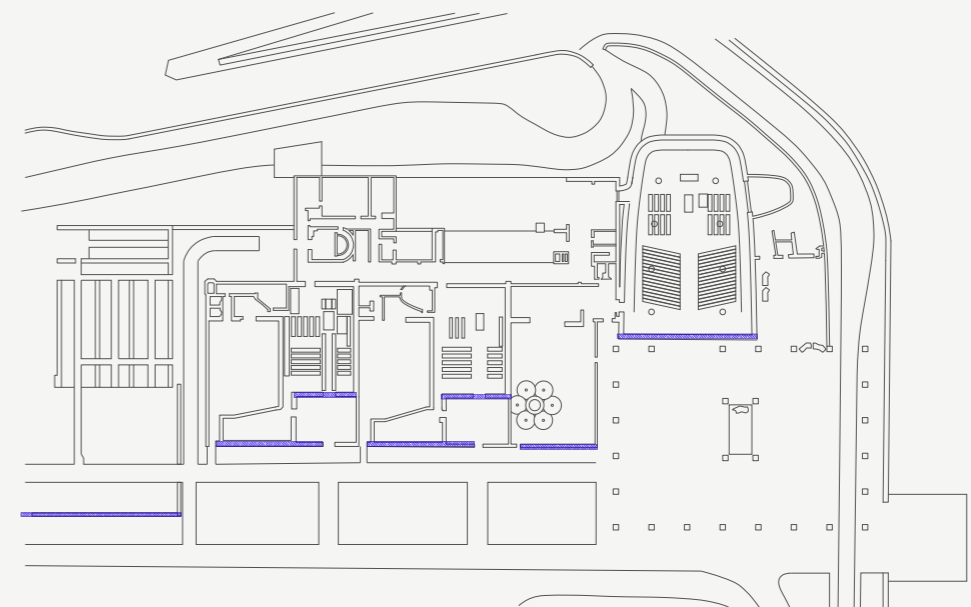


Figure 1.7 Showing analysis of spaces and courtyards

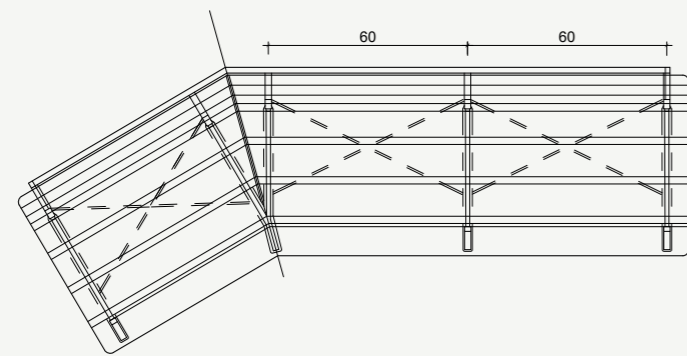
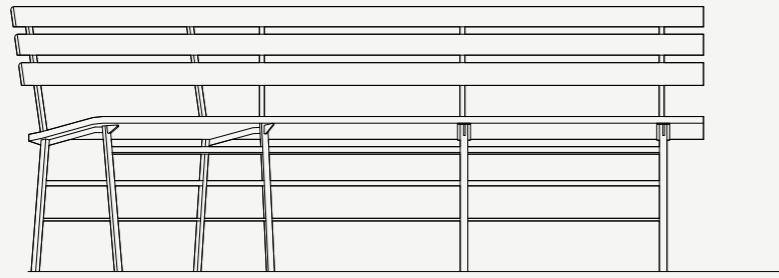


Figure 1.8 Ornamentation; Asplund's Bench, 1939

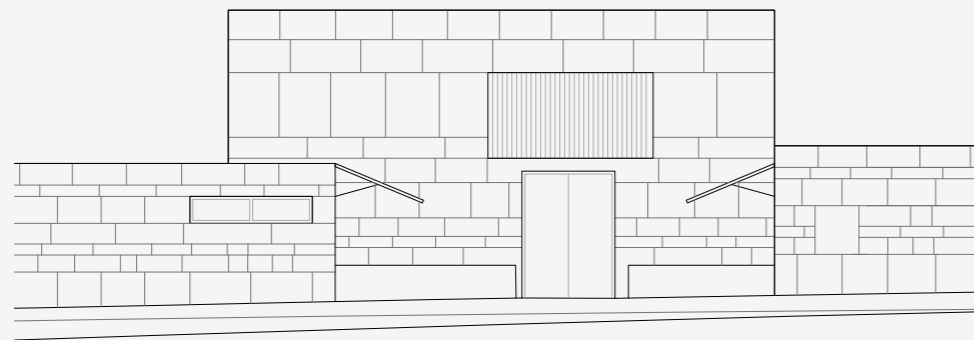


Figure 1.9 Ornamentation; Shading Structures on courtyard entrance

Ornament

Detailing throughout the building often serves a symbolic purpose. An example of this are burial ovens in the shape of coffins. (Figure 1.10).

Additionally great importance is put on furniture, that serves an important role in the design. The outside benches are designed in a way, so its easier to talk with another person in grief. (Figure 1.8).

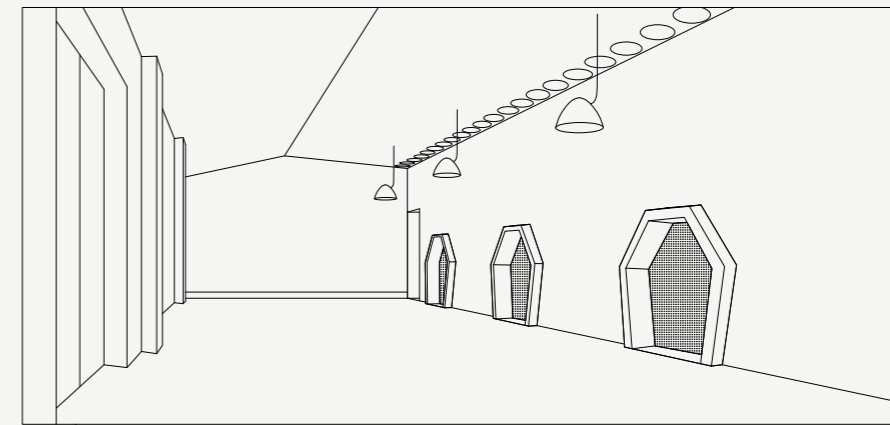
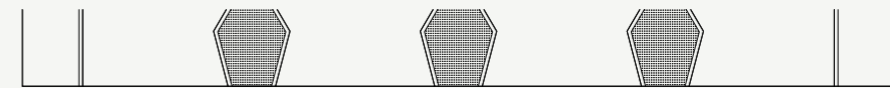


Figure 1.10 Detail, underground ovens in the crematorium

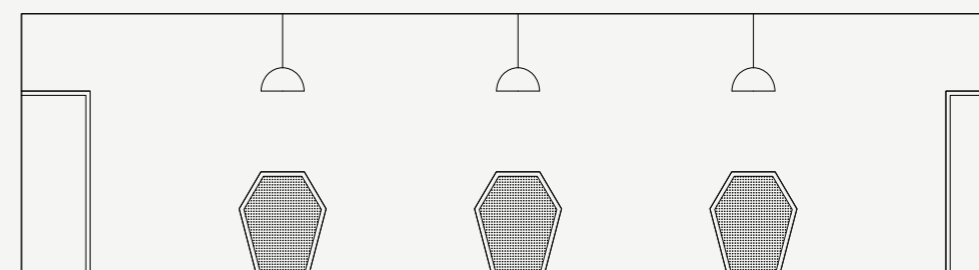


Figure 1.11 Detail; Ovens

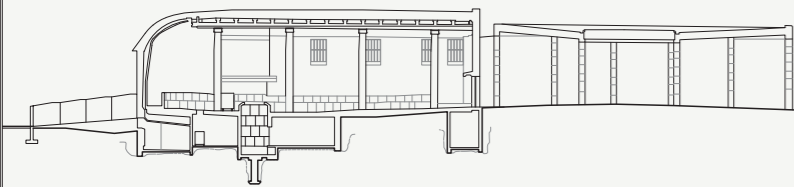


Figure 1.12 Longitudinal Section across the main chapel and pavilion

Summary

The most important aspect of the building is its relation to the magnificent landscape, which we tried to capture through our essence drawing. (Figure 1.13). The building on the left opens up through the courtyards to the pond and the landscape. Vertical arrangement of the drawing highlights the stone path, leading the mourners through the cross and alongside the façade to the main chapel. Drawing encompasses an ordered and functional composition of the building in relation with the monumental landscape, which is emphasized more than the architecture.

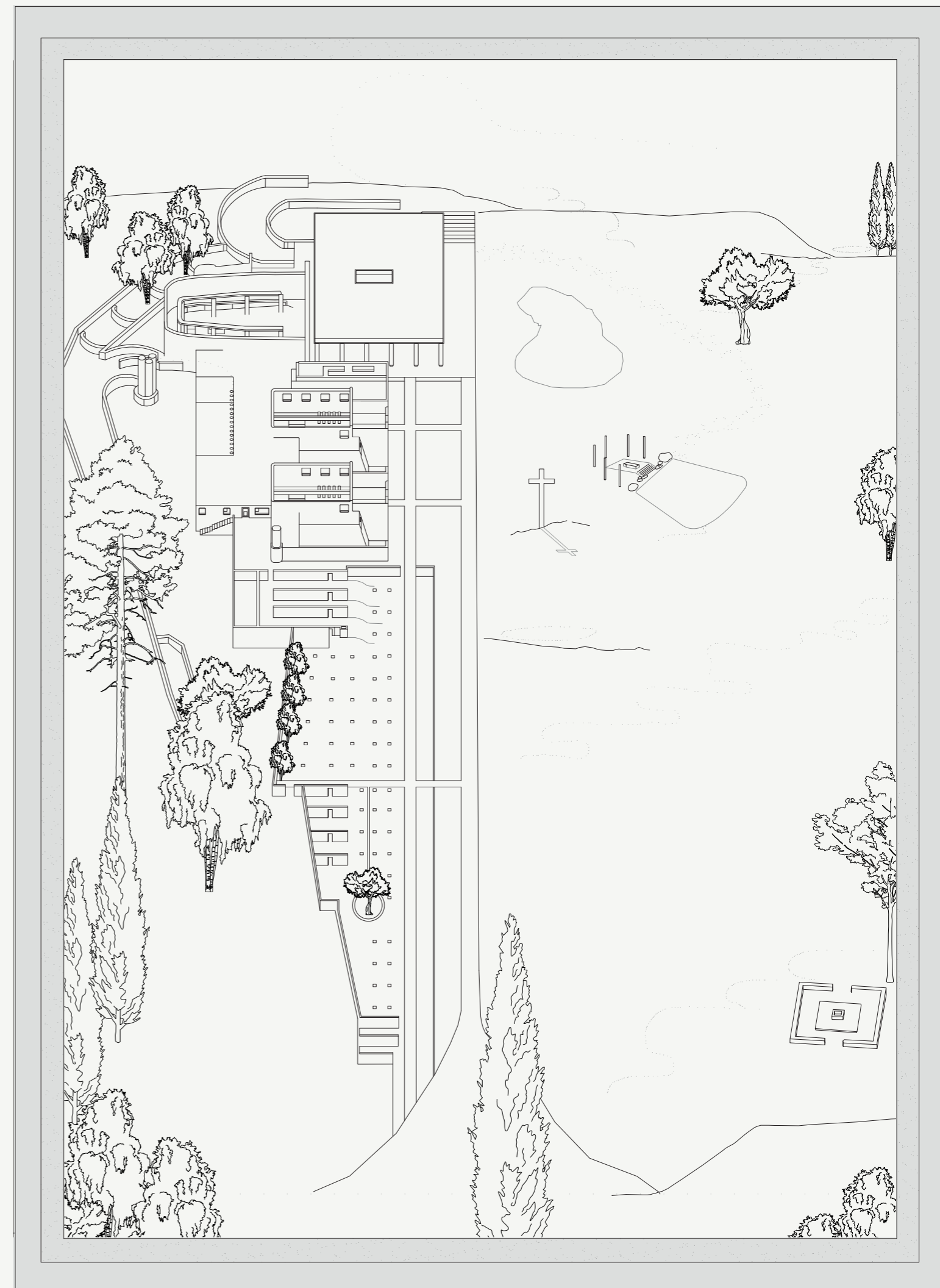


Figure 1.13 Final Essence Drawing, Woodland Crematorium

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin by Hans Scharoun

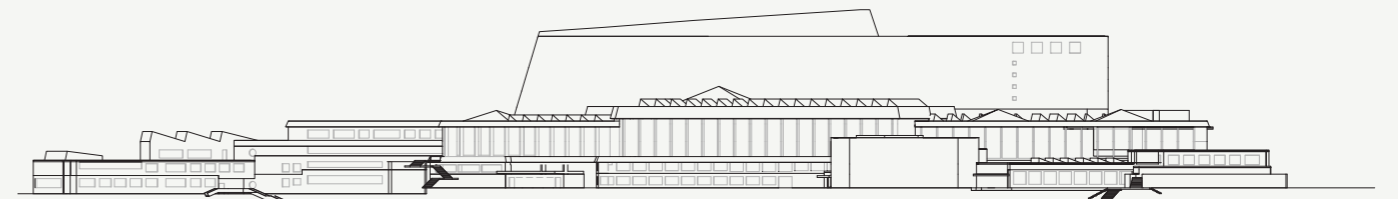


Figure 2.1 Berlin State Library, Hans Scharoun, Front Elevation



Figure 2.2 Main reading Hall indicating the mezzanine access

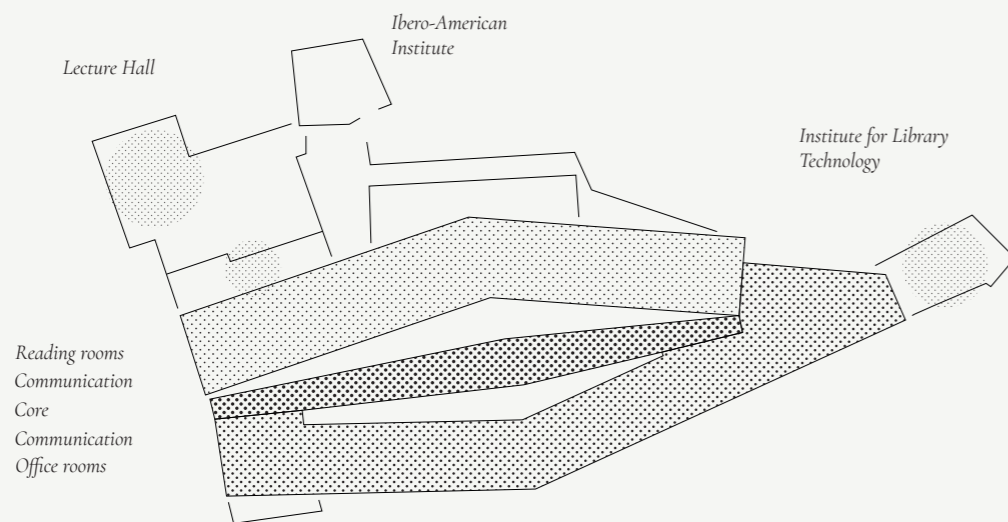


Figure 2.3 Zoning of the Building; Key areas

Introduction

One of the prolific examples of 20th-century modernist public buildings - the Berlin State Library designed by Hans Scharoun in 1963 is one of the several impressive public buildings in the Tiergarten district as part of Berlin's Kulturforum. Originally it was a representation of a spiritual band that would run from East to West Germany and house all major cultural and administrative sectors, but it quickly grew into a political manifesto as the competition between Eastern and Western city planners grew in the city. After winning the competition Scharoun had the opportunity to implement his ideas of the Kulturforum as an urban landscape. The large scale and the positioning of the project already implied some ideas of United Berlin. Scharoun used his architectural design to show the refusal of the status quo¹.

The Building in its Urban Context

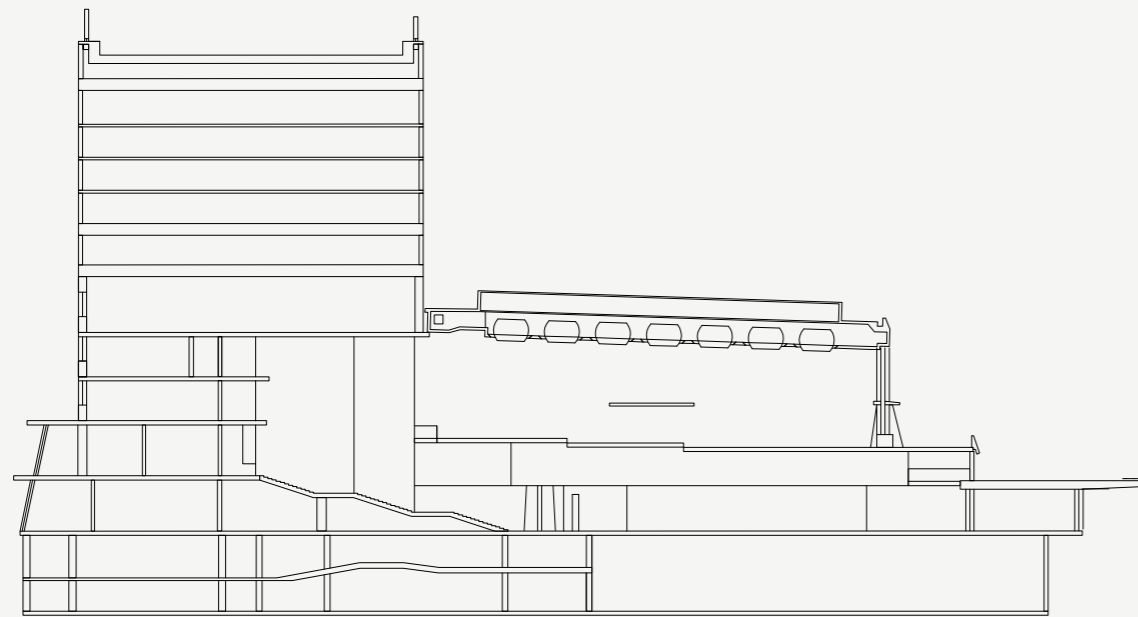
The library was intended to complete the east side of Kulturforum and set the hard boundary between the urban plan and the projected motorway. The east side of the building works as a shield to the new expressway by positioning closed support spaces, store rooms and closed racks towards it. In addition, the scale of the horizontal bulky facade seems to be designed to be conceived from a moving car and even then to be an impressive and remarkable landmark.²



Figure 2.4 Ground Floor Building Plan of the Library

¹ Hans Scharoun - J. Christoph Burkle

² Hans Scharoun - Peter Blunder Jones



Building Section aa'

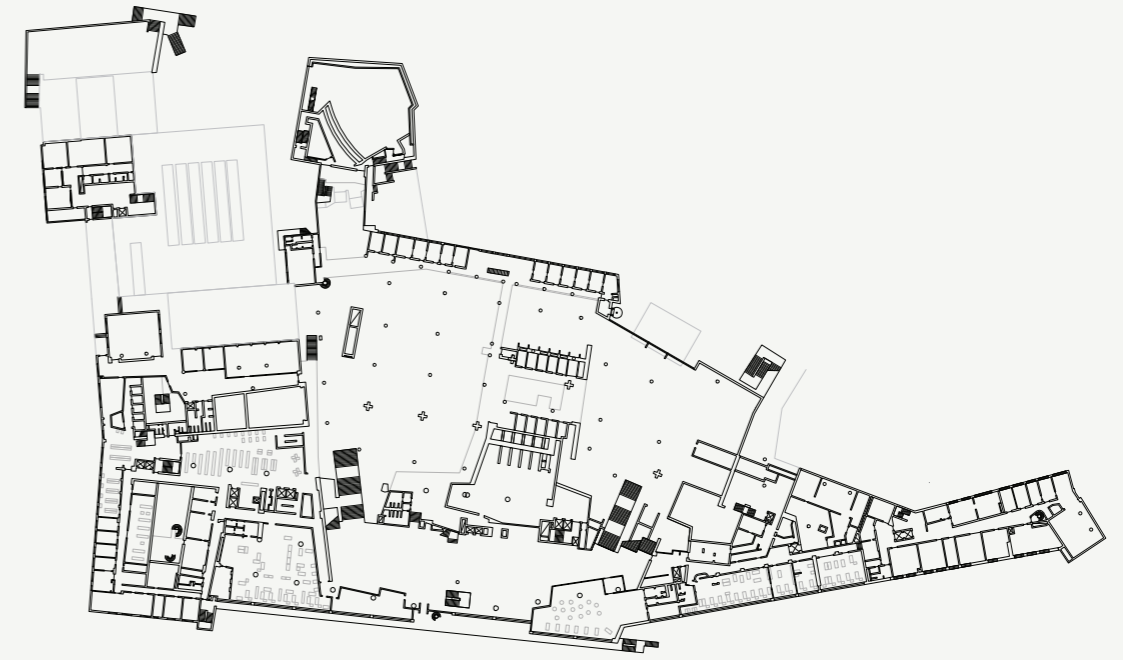


Figure 2.5 Floor Plan of the Upper Levels (1)

On the east side, the building responded to the rest of the urban landscape by positioning the reading rooms and other annexes as a step down towards the open ground of the Forum. However, the reading rooms pick up the cubic form of the Mies's Nationalgalerie, while the terracing of the visitor's residence responds to the form creating what Scharoun referred to as 'Vally'.



Figure 2.6 Floor Plan of the Upper Levels (2)

Spatiality and Composition

Besides the library's internal functions, the building complex provides space for the Ibero-American Institute, a large lecture hall and school for Librarians and the Institute of Library Technologies. Each function almost developing as a separate unit with its own entrance and internal courtyards for daylight.

There is huge emphasis put on spatial experience as the library is highly differentiated in a manner that never becomes overwhelming or claustrophobic. The path of the visitor referred to by Scharoun illustrates the guiding principle of guiding visitors from one space to another in manners that never feel imposed but as a sequence of events that gently guides the person from the entrance hall up to the large reading rooms.

The interior of the main reading hall creates quite a unique feeling of spatial landscape with large platforms stepping up creating new spaces that still refer back to the users and all the functional requirements of the library. The different functional units such as the various reading rooms catalogue areas and issue desks are inserted into organic continuous open space, covered by sun-screened ceilings referred to by Scharoun as 'Skyscape'.

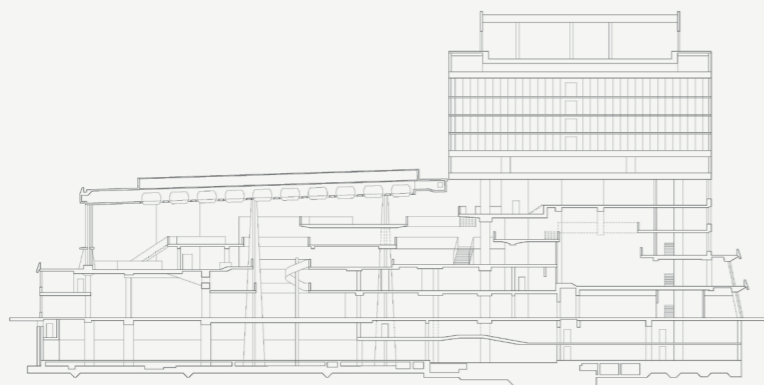


Figure 2.7 Cross Section bb'

Summary

Scharoun's works often offer the idea of subjectivity or individuality of human nature. The project does not try to prescribe or replicate other architectural languages but tries to ground itself in its own time and place. By doing so the projects become easily interpreted by their users and not appropriated by political or power structures.

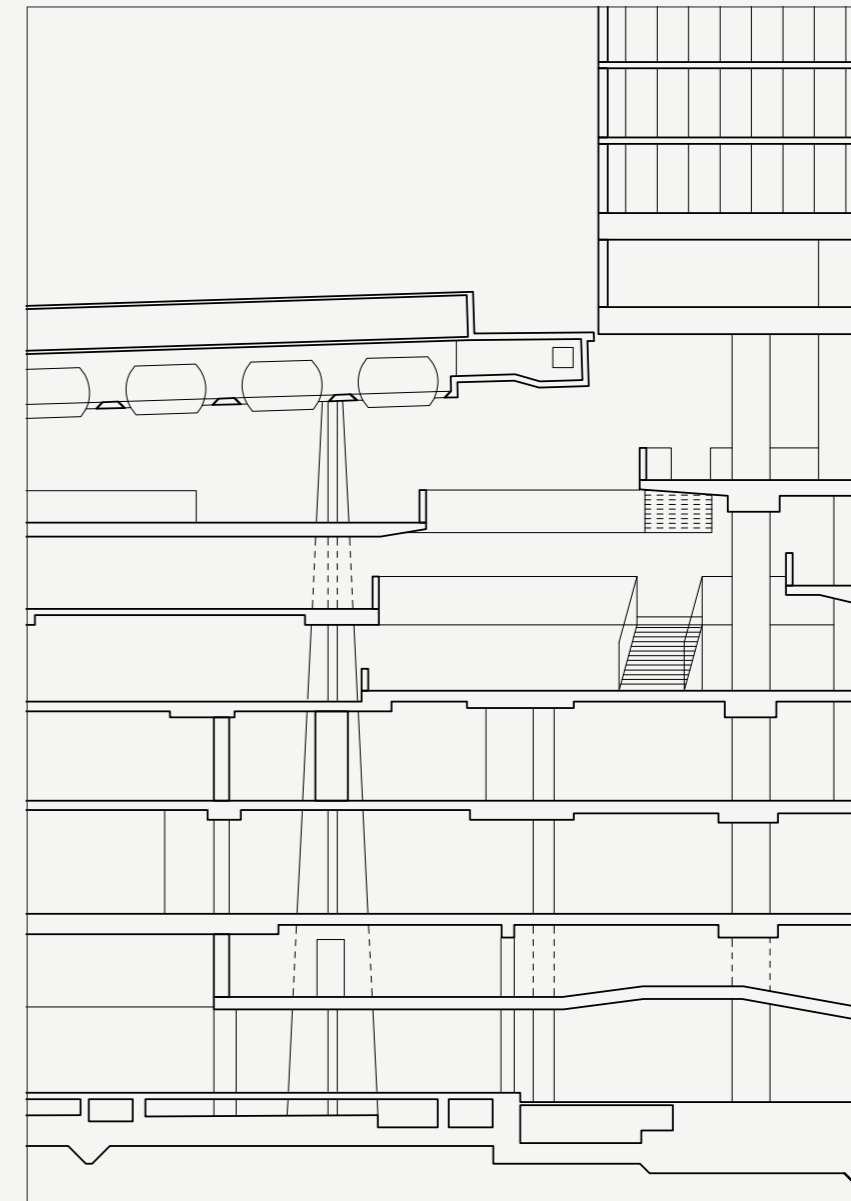


Figure 2.8 View of the Internal Relationships between Levels

General Short Introduction about situation and context

The Public Library serves as an urban modus for the last of classical architecture, and the bridge towards modern, functionalist architecture in Sweden. Over the years, many factors have played a role in determining its future use and significance, such as social, political, cultural, and environmental challenges.

Observations:

Threats- Digitization, Extreme privatization vs quiescent expectations into equality/Utilitarian use

Heavy collection, heritage factor, and transitions
 Urban library systems are undergoing a significant transformation with the rise of digitized infrastructure for reading and publishing. Systems today allow customers to walk without paying at a register and check out books without direct access to a librarian; a principle also followed in the current Central Library of Stockholm. Everything is available at the push of a button and while this means novelty in use, the traditional presence and purpose of a library as an exclusive and monumental space for imparting knowledge is much reduced. In order for it to exist in its current capacity, the aspects of community, exchange, and experience need to be explored as vistas that help in its re-emergence and extension. The library already engages with other public libraries through inter-library loans. This indicates that the library, on a grassroots level, still can be reimagined as a democratic construct propagating a further scope for an inclusive outreach.

Precedents

Many of Asplund's designs are reminiscent of his other designs, with regard to certain gestures and elements.

The library has a classical front and back room that uses the poche as an intersectional space or divider, however, in a vague manner does not strategize on its height. The relation between higher spaces to lower levels is seen only in the mezzanine wing, with other rooms being larger halls with traditional arrangements. It supports a modest arrangement of orientation and use, with rigorously ordered reading spaces where people, follow and fall into space. At the same time, it is also monumental.

Reflection

Thoughts and ideas, matters of interest, gaps, positions

As a result of studying the oeuvre of Gunnar Asplund and the methods of implementation of his ideologies onto his designs, upon visiting the Woodland Crematorium, his partnership, and departure with Lewerentz, all help inform us of the navigations required in carrying out a project of large socio-cultural and political importance. On a certain level, while answering the brief we are answering tendencies that shape macro as well as micro behaviors. Sweden's desire for a multicultural and democratic public institution is uncontested. From an outsider's perspective on European and Norwegian/Swedish architecture, the following gaps and positions presently help align the society and culture and these are my broad observations:

-Domesticity is inherently a commonly reflected feature of public architecture.

-The national and local have (or wish to promote) a synonymous identity.

-Silence is an active force in Swedish Architecture. The silence suggests a force that is anti-object. It is constructed in space by deliberation.

-The landscape: A rarity: Views offered by the library suggest as if the long free hill extends over the plinth of the structure and indoors. Also acts as silence against the backdrop of the library.

-Patterns of use, such as control of daylight upon the page, levels of distribution of bookshelves, circulation systems, and the acoustic performance of rooms derive inventions.

-We often encounter a conventional axiality, resulting in a kind of aperspectival space for grouping of activities, separate or common. Hence, the common space is not just sociable but also socially permeable. Through this, we learn more about analyzing patterns of inhabitation, agency, and control.

-A reader's best advantage is living light and a librarian's is 'engineer's' light.

-Details are often incorporated in the language of the architecture and not borrowed.

-The precision of geometries creates Standardisation and that leads to the perceived simplicity of a structure.

Statement

These are my general observations and inform the following methodologies. (tbd).

Position

Themes: framework and components of a library
In terms of the physical manifestation of the space itself, parameters such as depth, pitch, movement, and occupation are key elements in the design of a library, directly influencing culture and society as a result.

The inquiries about the role of the future library, what kinds of audiences the library attracts, and what could be potential agendas of a library come to the surface. Through these, I wish to explore further ideas such as that of Communal home and communal office and Education as Network, and Education as Accident in Cross-pollinating environments. In a way, to also envision the space, as a combination of the House, Salon (i.e. public meeting room), and the Shed (i.e. a place to rest).

Extensions and terminals –

For future use, an approach could be to preserve the components of the library that house its collections and archives, and significant gestures made by the architect and re-construct areas around it, perhaps including an extension.

Context and Surrounding

Its significance and impact lie in integrating its larger use into the public, internally, and at the level of the cityscape. Perhaps mediation of the program by conducting seasonal activities hosted in areas of public use (such as the pond) has some potential.

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