

# Embassy of Identity Sendiráð Auðkennis

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Year of graduation 2023

Thanks to:

Statens fastighetsverk (National Property Board of Sweden), Lennart Karlsson and Gustav Vrang  
for answering questions relating to the subject.

Mikael Ekegren,  
for fun and interesting tutoring sessions.

Classmates and friends,  
for making the thesis process fun from beginning to finish.

All figures are own produced if not otherwise stated.

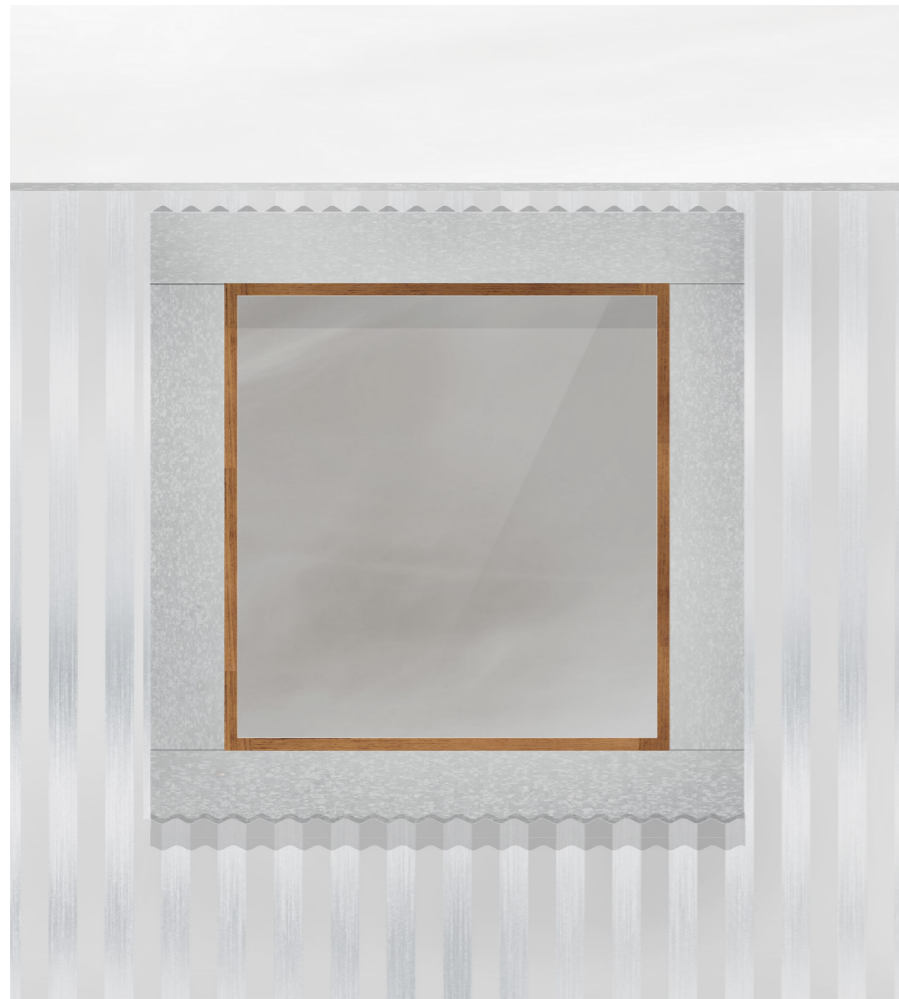


**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



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## INTRODUCTION

### Abstract

Architecture is not only about designing buildings, but also about telling stories. Through the built environment, architecture has the important potential to tell a story about a country's past and present identity. This thesis explores how to create a structure that is not only efficient but also shows a deep consideration for its surroundings, improves the user's experience, and holds meaningful spatial architectural qualities.

The research question focuses on how to make a design intervention in a setting where the existing built environment needs to be handled with great care. The research subject is explored through a proposed design of an office extension for the Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik. The method used to answer the question is conducted through research by design.

Theoretical framework used for this thesis is based on strategies extracted from case studies on how to design in an environment sensitive to change, as well as theories from practicing architect from the field. The design process is carried out through an iterative process, involving model-making, sketching and conducting interviews with main stakeholders.

The thesis aims to spark public interest in architecture and its past and present history. But also, through designing a new extension to the Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik, spark interest for this delicate, multilayered and often concealed typology by proposing an example for future design that also challenge the traditional layout of an embassy.

The hope with the thesis is to start a conversation about the role of architecture in society in relation to our built identity. To question if our design additions added value to its surroundings compensates for what might be lost. In addition, discuss the importance of context in design by giving specific suggestions on how to build in a sensitive environment.



## Student Background

2017-2020	Umeå School of Architecture, Bachelor's program
2020	Chalmers School of Architecture, Master's program: Architecture and Urban Design
2021-2022	Architectural Internship, Semrén + Månsson, Gothenburg
2022-2023	Chalmers School of Architecture, Master's program: Architecture and Urban Design

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7,5	Sustainable Development
22,5	Healthcare Architecture
4,5	Nordic Architecture
3	Architecture and Technology
22,5	Housing Inventions
7,5	Master Thesis Prep
22,5	Residential Healthcare
30	Master thesis - Building and Tectonics

## Research Question



*How can the spirit of a protagonist building be emphasized through architecture?*



Icelandic nature.  
Photograph Oskar Persson

## Aim

The purpose of this thesis is to create a design proposal for a new Swedish embassy office for the speculative client, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Property Board of Sweden, in Reykjavik, Iceland.

The aim is to design with consideration of the local history and building traditions through materiality and form and to respect the present city structure and its identity. And to also, protect the original built structure already existing on the site and to design with great caution in relation to it.

With the intention of creating a semi-open space that could be used by the public, the aim is to challenge the ordinary design of an embassy that normally uses a strict and specific program.



Silhouette of Iceland and the location of Reykjavik.



Embassy of Sweden in Berlin.  
Photograph Åke E:son Lindman

## Scope

Due to the security surrounding the building typology, this thesis is an interpretation of how the Embassy could expand. The subject is protected by confidentiality and therefore I have made certain assumptions about the existing building and program that have not been confirmed by the main stakeholders.

The main focus of the thesis is therefore how to adapt to an existing protagonist building with cultural importance. Today there are around seventeen Swedish embassies spread out in the world designed by Swedish architects. Designing a new embassy in a foreign country is a very uncommon task. The political trend is that more and more embassies are closing down or reducing their operations. The future of embassy design will most likely only be about transforming, extending or adding to an existing building.

Other than materiality and program, the thesis will not focus on how to make a Swedish design in a foreign country. Often architectural competitions on embassy design deliver a brief on how to show the national architecture in the design. However, this could be done in a brief to design from scratch with a loose connection to the surroundings but should not be the main focus when adapting to a current scenario.

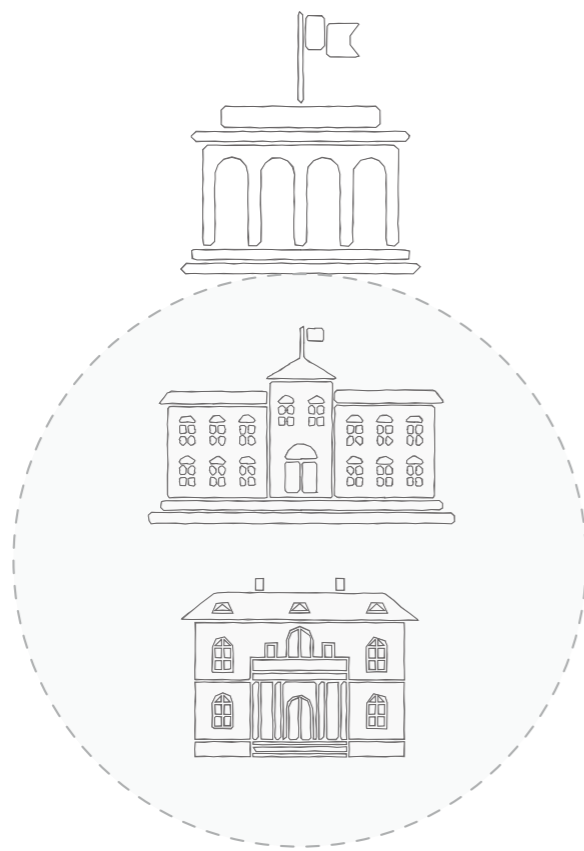


Illustration showing how an embassy can be divided into a Chancery and a Residence.

## Definitions

### Embassy

A government organization outside the country's borders. An embassy is commissioned to maintain diplomatic connections in the local context where it is situated. Moreover, to assist and support the safety and well-being of the national citizens that are currently in the area assigned to the Embassy. Other assigned missions of the Embassy are to establish good political connections, cultural exchange, and to collaborate with local organizations. And to create local interests of the represented country in the host country (Regeringskansliet, n.d.).

### Residence

Refers to the building in which the Ambassador lives. The building usually has space to host events and dinners. Those meetings are less formal than the ones in the office (US. Department of State, 2013). The Residence in this thesis is also referred to as the protagonist building.

### Chancery

Is referred to as the office building that houses the diplomatic missions of the Embassy. The chief of mission together with its staff work in this building (US. DOS, 2013).

There are embassies which combine both the Residence and Chancery into one building or site. In this thesis the Chancery will move to the residence site, so the Embassy is located in the same spot.



Embassies from top left: New Deli, Beijing, Brasilia and Santiago de Chile.  
Photographs Åke E:son Lindman

## BACKGROUND

### Brief

The representational building typology of an embassy contains many layers of complexity. This multifunctional space should be open both, to signal peace and diplomacy to the world and the public, but still be very secure and closed off. The design of an embassy has an opportunity to bring influences from its home country, but it can also take influences from the host country. Today there are more than seventeen built embassies around the globe that are designed by Swedish architects. They all have clear specific features in their designs that respond to the local culture where they are situated.

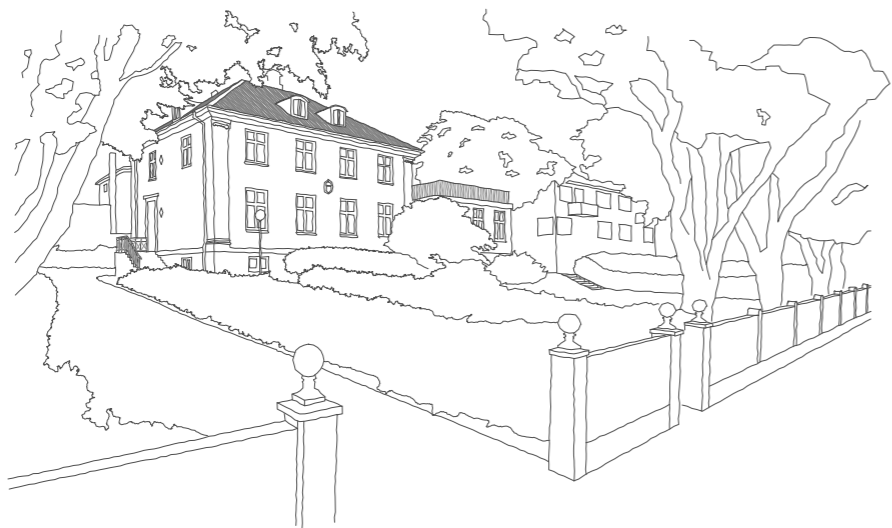
#### Finding a scenario

In order to create a design scenario as close to reality as possible, extensive work has been done to find a country and a site to work with. The work has been through conversations with the National Property Board that is responsible for Swedish properties in the world. The National Property Board manage one unbuilt site in Islamabad, Pakistan but due to security reasons information about the object and why the

site is unbuilt could not be obtained. Through findings from a text on the National Property Board's website, the idea of working with an extension to the Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik emerged.

Today the Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik is operating in two buildings that are situated in different parts of Reykjavik. The Residence is in an attractive, central area, while the Chancery is in a five-storey building in the commercial center surrounded by three motorways. The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs have discussed a potential move but decided to extend the current leasing contract (SFV n.d.).

By moving the Chancery to the site of the Residence the Embassy of Sweden will be able to operate in one location instead of two. It will bring visitors to an attractive, central neighborhood in Reykjavik but also highlight the Residence villa.



The Swedish Chancery and Residence in Reykjavik.



Site plan 1:30 000





Hallgrímskirkja.  
Photograph Petra Lundh

## Context

The Icelandic capital of Reykjavik is home to nearly 120 000 people. The Reykjavik region stands for around 70 percent of Iceland's total population (WPR, 2023).

The architectural history of Iceland is rather short compared to its European neighbors. What has determined the building design is mainly the tough climate conditions and lack of material resources. Sweden compared to Iceland has a long building tradition of using wood while Iceland has few trees. For the early settlers in Iceland this meant that they had to be creative in using the ground as shelter and that is why Iceland's architectural history begins with turf houses (Khan, 2017). This later changed in the 18th century when the industrial era made it possible for Iceland to import building materials from other parts of the world. By using stone, the buildings became better suited to withstand the harsh climate. In the mid 18th century, the new technology of corrugated steel was imported and introduced on the building market (Jóhannesson, 2000). This facade material is still frequently used today in many shapes and forms.

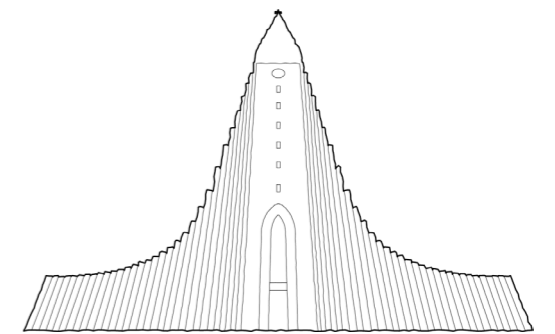
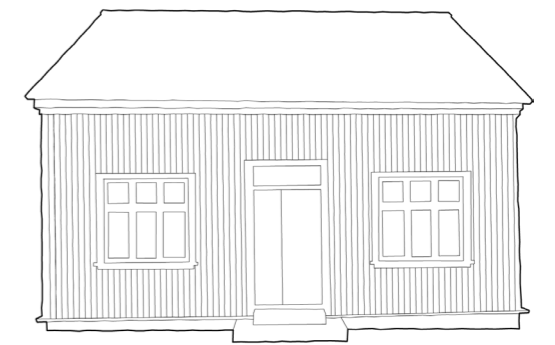
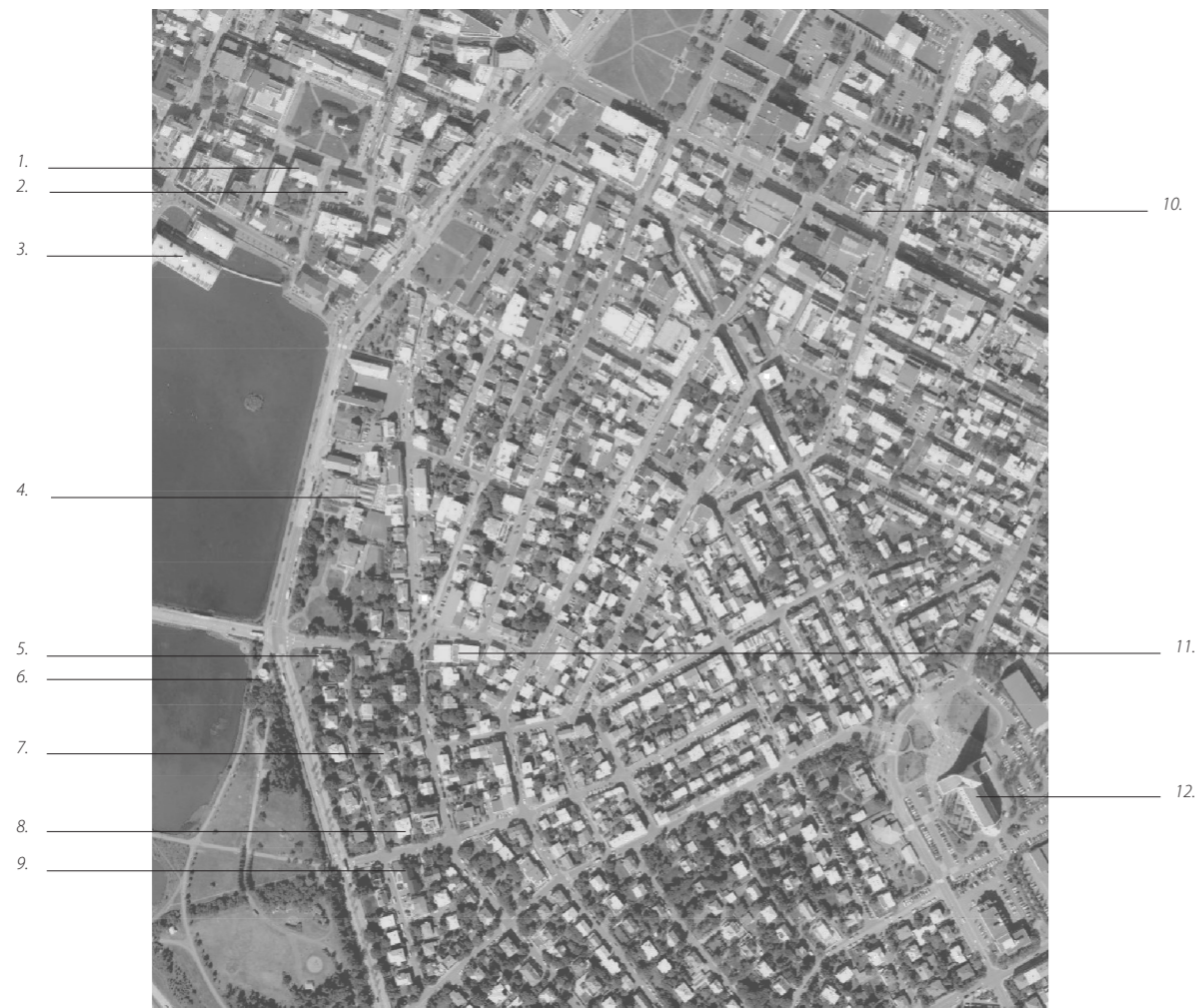


Illustration of turf houses, a house with corrugated façade and famous Hallgríms church.



**Central Reykjavik**  
Aerial map Loftmyndir ehf



- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Alþingishúsið - Parliament         | 7. Embassy Residence of Sweden                     |
| 2. Dómkirkjan í Reykjavík - Cathedral | 8. Embassy Residence of Norway                     |
| 3. Reykjavík's City Hall              | 9. Embassy of Norway                               |
| 4. The National Gallery of Iceland    | 10. Embassy of Denmark                             |
| 5. President Office                   | 11. British Embassy Reykjavik & Embassy of Germany |
| 6. Hljómskálinn Pavillion             | 12. Hallgrímskirkja - Church                       |

## Site

The Site is in the most central district of Miðbær in Reykjavik. The neighborhood's character is shaped by large stone villas, generous gardens and old trees. Located on the same street is the Office for the President of Iceland and the Embassy of Norway. In the close neighborhood one can also locate the British and the German Embassy.

On the site sits the Swedish Residence, a stone villa built in 1924, and designed by Gudjon Samúelsson. Some people would argue that Samúelsson was one of the most influential Icelandic architects. During his life he became the first Icelander to be educated in architecture, he was the State Architect of Iceland, and he designed the famous Hallgríms church (Nugent, 2018).

Although the site and building structure are sensitive to change, it has been done before. The attempt to have the Chancery and the Resident in the same building was realized with an extension of the south corner. According to stakeholders this was not a successful addition to the original building and not enough space for the Chancery.



The Icelandic architect, Gudjon Samúelsson.



The Swedish Residence in Reykjavik.  
 Photograph Statens Fastighetsverk

## The Residence

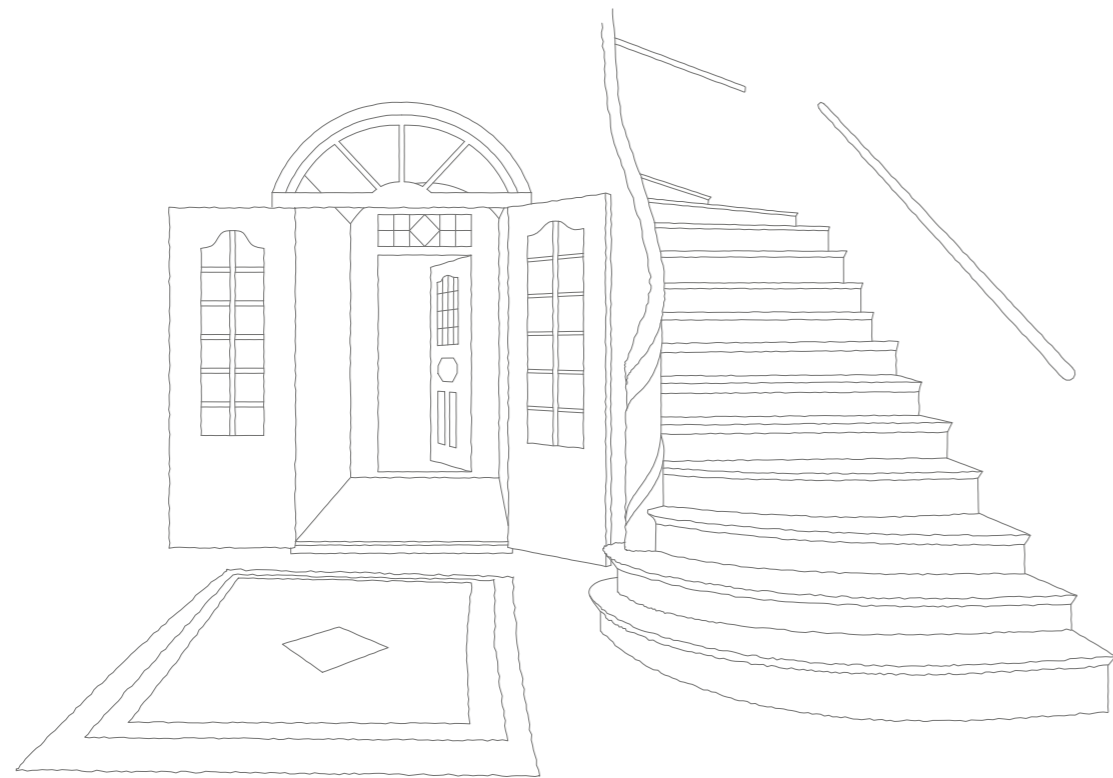
The character of the Residence is best described in its details.

On the outside this can be seen by the large wooden entrance door with overhead light that finds its way into the entrance hallway. Once inside, the hallway's vaulted ceiling enfolds and leads its guest further in. Continuing the spatial sequence through double glazed doors to a double height greeting space that is dominated by an impressive large wooden staircase. The staircase has

detailed carvings all along its continues railing. But perhaps the most eye-catching element in the room is the three-and-a-half-meter large window with colored glass images. The following representational rooms have grand stucco ornaments on the walls and in the ceiling. One of the rooms is painted in a light pastel yellow tone and on the wall hangs large paintings.



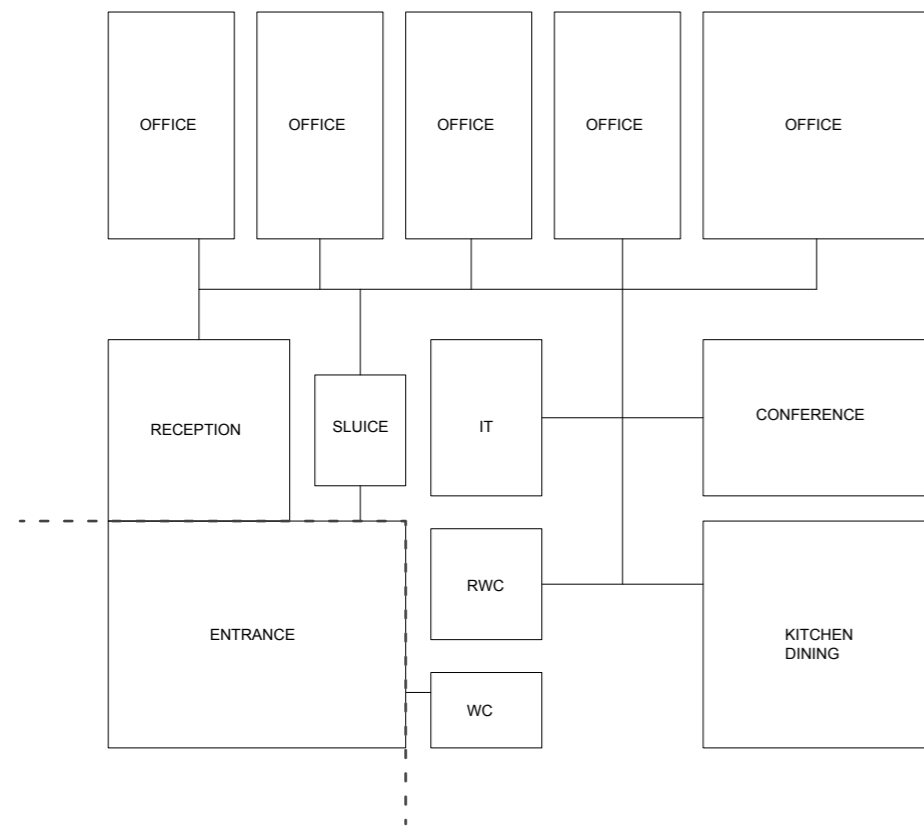
Details of the Residence.  
 Photograph Embassy of Sweden, Iceland



Residence entrance hall.



Details in representational halls.  
Photograph Embassy of Sweden, Iceland



The space programme for the five employees working in the office.

## Desired Space Program

The Space Program made after discussions with the National Property Board.

Room	amount	square metres	Description
<hr/>			
<b>Visitors</b>			
Entrance	1	2	Entrance for both visitors and staff.
Waiting area	1	25	With reception
WC	1	3	Restroom for visitors
<hr/>			
<b>Staff</b>			
Sluice	1	4	Safety barrier
Cloak room	1	4	
RWC	1	5	With shower
Small office	4	12	Or one large space
Large office	1	20	Ambassadors' office
Archive	1	12	
Server/IT	1	8	
Conference	1	14	
Kitchen and dining	1	20	
<hr/>			
		<b>165</b>	



Curated exhibition space in the Residence's former office.

## Local Demands

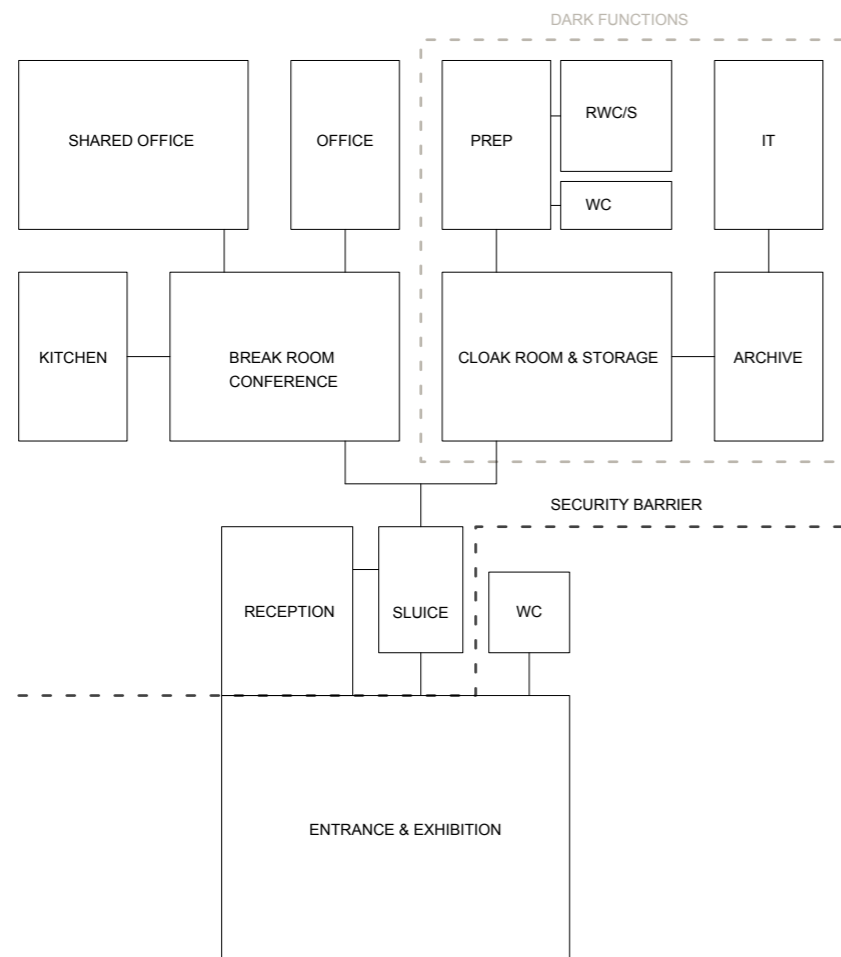
### Programmatic

The program of the Embassy is tailor-made to fit the host nation. The size of the institution is closely linked to how many Swedish citizens are living in the country, how large the population is or the comprehensive work and relation between the nations. In Sweden politicians decide about the diplomatic employments, where and how many employees should be sent out.

Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik is small with only six employees. Due to the small amount of Swedish citizen the Embassy rarely works with issuing passports. However, a more significant commission is Swedish tourism, networking and coordinate collaborations. Community engagement through events and exhibitions are ways to engage locals to find out more about Sweden.

### Security

Security is an important subject regarding an embassy. After speaking to people from the National Property Board I have learned that Iceland is one of the safer nations concerning safety measures. It is not uncommon for Icelandic people to not lock their front door or leave their children unattended. And while looking at other embassies around Reykjavik the walls and gates surrounding the buildings are low. This also includes the President Residency located on the same street as the Swedish Residence. This may have to do with the low crime-rate in Iceland and low threat scenario. In fact, Iceland has one of the lowest crime-rates in the world and Icelandic police patrol unarmed (Clark, 2013). Therefore, the design proposal will depart from a low security level.



Proposed new program.

## New Space Program

The New Space Program was made after researching how the Chancery works today.

Room	amount	square metres	Description
<b>Visitors</b>			
Entrance	1	2	Public entry
Exhibition	1	28	In connection with entrance
Waiting area	1	6	Inside the exhibition
WC	1	3	Restroom for visitors
<b>Staff</b>			
Sluice	1	4	Safety barrier
Reception	1	9	
Cloak room and storage	1	15	Personal lockers
Prep room	1	7	With a large basin
RWC/S	1	5	With shower
WC	1	2	
Archive	1	7	
Server and IT	1	7	
Break and Conference	1	15	
Shared office	1	15	One large space
Small office	1	7	Ambassadors office

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***“Architects must accept that they are trapped in history - and that’s part of the richness of culture”***

- David Chipperfield (Cook, 2013)

## THEORY

### Architecture as a cultural practice

An architect that views critical on today’s buildings is the London-based architect Adam Caruso. He advocates that architecture is a cultural practice. And that the importance lays in how we link architecture of today with our history. He means that the lack of today’s mainstream buildings is that that are only built with one purpose, unlike old buildings that have the ability to be transformed into something new. (Louisiana channel, 2017).

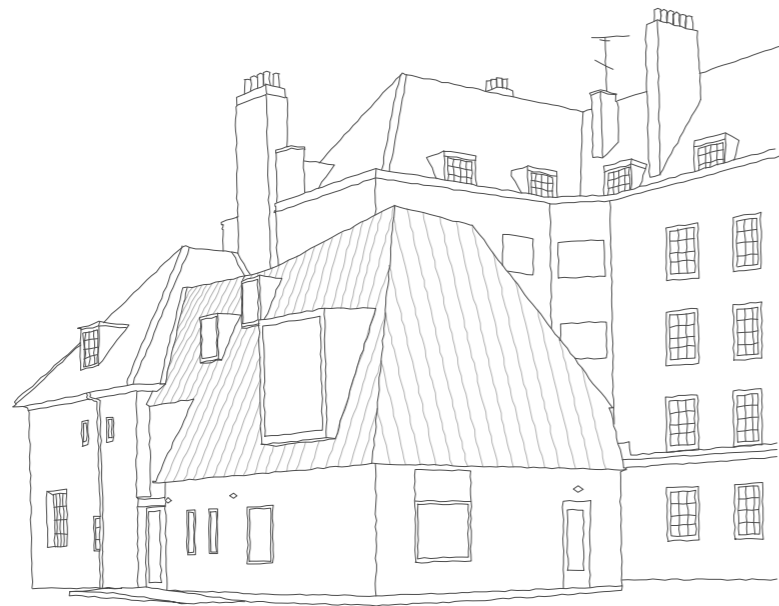
The British architect David Chipperfield have also during his career worked with the idea of a cultural practice with roots in history. His buildings are prominent but do not seek unnecessary attention. The many strategies of his designs are to blend old and new in a playful way. Chipperfield believes that modern architecture can co-exist with the old but the key to success is to look at the local architecture in order to find the right scale (Cook, 2013). Trying to answer the question of:

***’How can you build something in a place that seems to belong to that place?’***

- David Chipperfield (Cook, 2013)

The Swiss architect Peter Märkli gives clues and ideas of where to begin while being new in the profession. He says that young architects cannot learn much from modern architecture, and that the key is to look at history in order to understand and learn about how to make some details and expressions. He says when intelligent young architects design today, they should not only look at the conditions of today but also have a look at other epochs. And to ask themselves what can be designed with old knowledge today? (Studio Alternativi, 2020)

In conclusion, the three architects share a common ground that architecture is a cultural practice that should be rooted in history. They emphasize the significance of connecting modern architecture with our past and understanding the importance of a local context to create buildings that fit in with their surroundings. They also give insightful information on the role of architecture and its relationship to history and the surrounding context.



New Horizon Youth Centre in Somers Town by  
Adam Khan architects.

## New Horizon Youth Centre

The New Horizon Youth Centre has been studied to learn how a new building can adapt and relate to its historical context and immediate neighbors.

The building located in Somers Town, London, is a refurbishment and extension of a youth house. It is evident that the architect has looked to its surroundings when it comes to proportions as well as the hip-shaped roof. The complex shape connects the existing roof with the new extension. The spatial use of the roof is programmed to its full potential. To fill the spaces inside the roof with light the inspiration of dormers and introduced by its neighbors. However, the position and size of them are a lot freer than the surrounding buildings. The colors of the roofs of the new and old houses are still similar. But another difference between the addition and its inspiration is the materiality of the copper roof that encloses the volume.

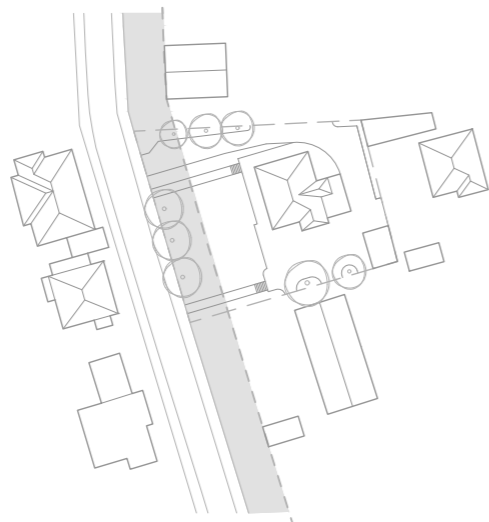
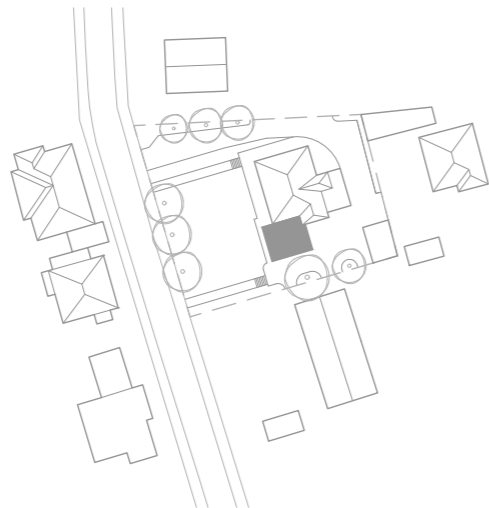
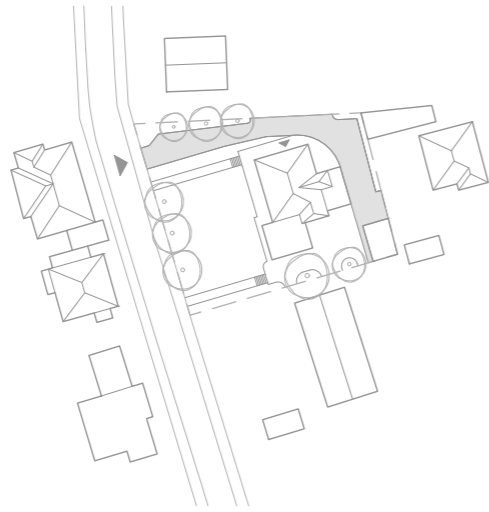


The new addition of the Gladstone Library in Hawarden by architects Caruso St John.

## Gladstone's Library

The Gladstone Library in Hawarden shows how proportions and materiality can be sources of inspiration to adapt to the surroundings. The library was founded in 1889 and is recognized as the UK's Prime Ministerial Library. The building is designed to blend in with its historical landscape and interiors. In addition, the building's design aims to not only respect its surroundings but also shape its own identity. The architects' intention was to not challenge the existing gothic style in the area but rather create a modest cousin inspired by it.

Gladstone Library in Hawarden is a great example of a case study on how to design a building effectively yet adapt to its context by looking at the use of proportions and materiality. The architects succeeded in balancing the need for a distinctive identity with great respect for its surroundings, but also managed to create a building that will continue to inspire future designers.



## DESIGN PROCESS

### Site Analysis

#### Entrance

Both guests and residents arriving by car enter the Residence site from the northwest part. The main entrance of the villa faces north alongside the road. The dead-end road leads to a small private garage facing south. This main flow will be kept but strengthened to avoid confusion about where to enter the site.

#### Extension

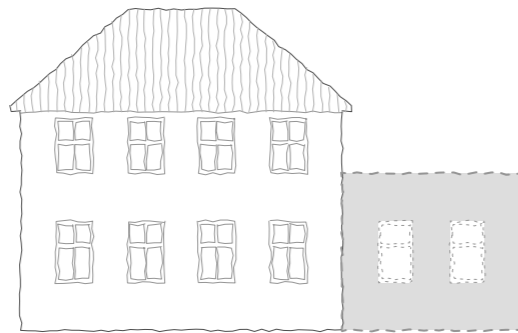
The decision to remove the extension built in 1937 by Gunnlaugur Halldórsson is made after discussions with main stakeholders. In comparison with the original built villa the extension is in poor condition and has a different design language on the inside.

#### Neighborhood structure

The new building volume will adapt to neighboring structures by not placing itself too close to the street.



Site analysis of the Residence.



Three design strategies on adaptation.

## Design Strategies

There are many possible ways of working with a protagonist building. Identified below are three different ways one could use:

### **Blending in**

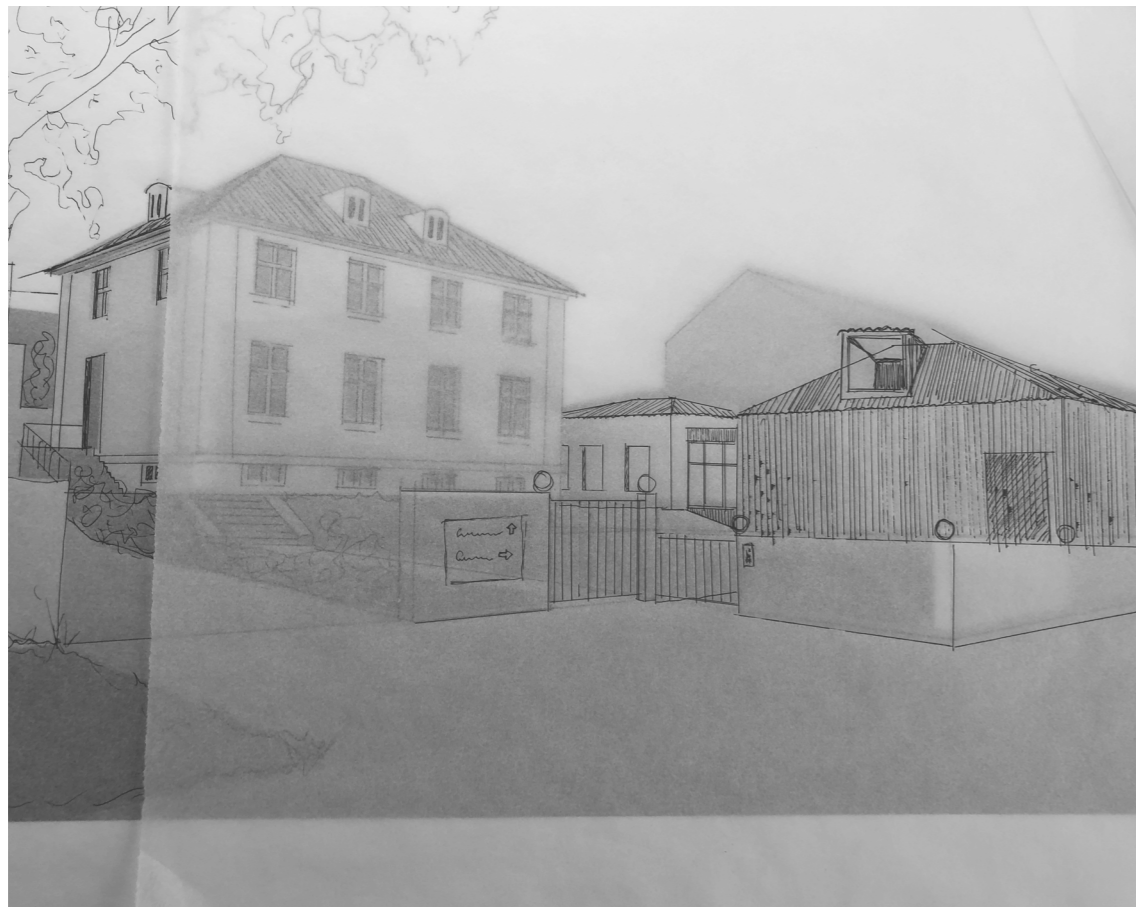
By blending the old design with the new it becomes nearly impossible to see what changes have been made and where they begin or end. To achieve an unnoticeable blend seems to be difficult. The current extension built in 1937 is more likely to be discovered from the inside where the detailing differs significantly from the original villa.

### **Contrasting**

The strategy of contrasting the villa with an extension or new volume next to it can be successful. The difference between the distinctive old and the new can bring more attention to the protagonist with perhaps different façade materials that contrast each other. The risk of working with this strategy is that the new addition will take too much attention.

### **Mimicking**

Another strategy is to take inspiration from the protagonist building by working with the same or similar proportions in the design but on a different scale. Materials can influence the new design but do not have to be the same. This strategy opens up for modern interpretations of an older building.



Sketch process of using the same entrance perspective from the street.

## Design Iterations

The design iterations have helped to understand the relationship between the new structure and the protagonist.

### Position

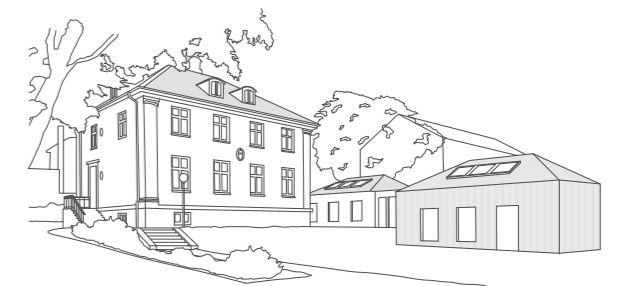
The iterations have resulted in an active stance in how to approach the protagonist. The decision to not cover nor block the sight of the most significant façade towards the street was made in order to keep the hierarchy of the Residence villa. First iterations are merged with the villa and the volume stretches out into and embraces the garden. Because of the sloping site the attempt to connect the buildings fails and the new extension appears too dominant.

### Program

To find a better scale yet keep the size of the program new attempts were made to separate the new addition with the Residence. By evaluating the importance of the program, a physical connection to the Residence the final decision was to not connect the buildings. The program allows the building to be divided into two parts: an office and a public. The public program towards the street and the office towards the more private part of the site where also a basement with dark functions is placed.

### Proportions

All iterations are working with proportions that can be found in the Residence. The volumes are sized to match parts of the villa. The size and repetition of the windows have been an important reference from the Residence. The final iterations use the design strategy of mimicking and creating miniatures with a modern twist where the roof angles are taken from the villa but twisted and also how the dormer can be translated.



Design iterations on volume and positioning.



Site model 1:400

## DESIGN PROJECT

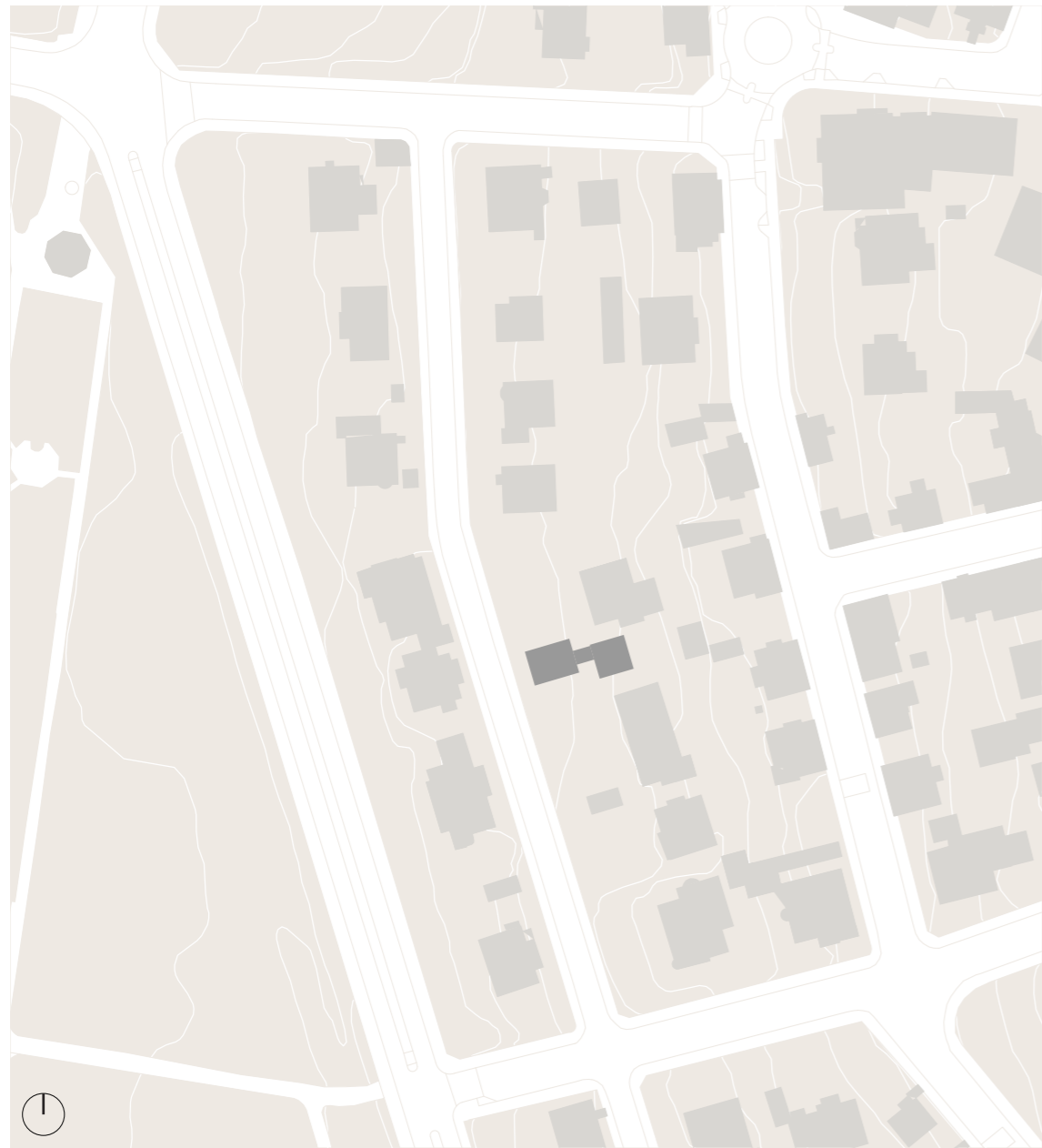
### The New Chancery

Located in the south left corner of the sloping landscape on the Residence site, the project is designed to blend in with its surroundings. Its modest location ensures minimal disruption to the sun conditions of neighboring villas. The volume scale of the building is carefully considered, with sizes that complement the neighboring buildings, slightly pushed apart. The Residence has been restored to its original appearance, leaving a wind-protected gap between the buildings where an exterior staircase connects the new flow between them.

#### **Movement**

Wayfinding for visitors should be easy regardless of whether you are attending a dinner with the Ambassador or applying for a passport. All public entries to the site are from the northwest gate, where an entrance area has been designed outside the gates with landscaping design and sculptures welcoming the visitors.

The layout of the chancery clarifies where public and private areas are. The building closest to the entrance and street contains public spaces, while the one farther back is reserved for the more secure and private office section. This means that the use of the already existing southwest entrance and walkway is preserved and assigned to staff entering the site.



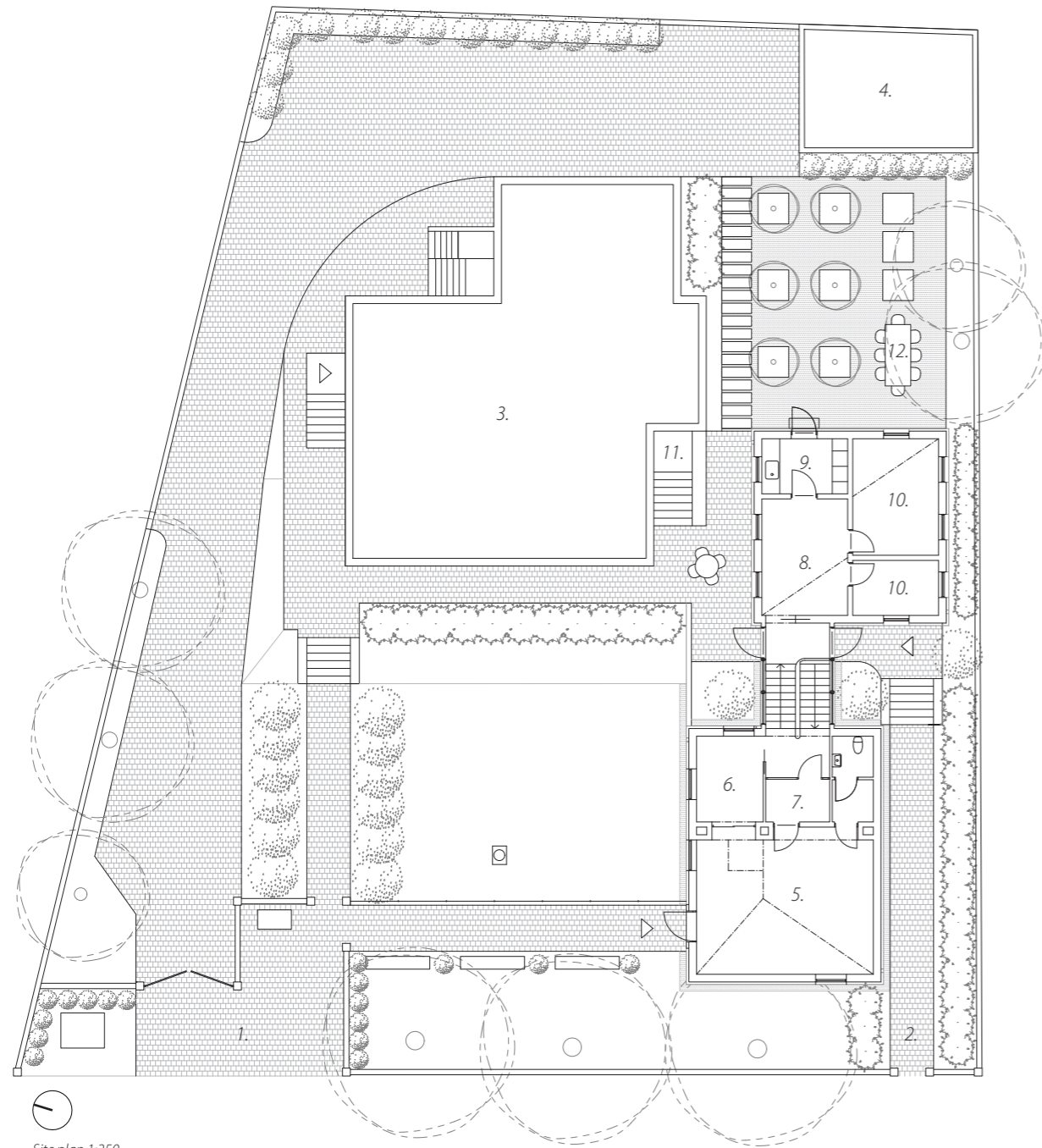
Site plan 1:1500

0 50 100 m



Site model 1:100





Site plan 1:250

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Entrance Square                | 7. Sluice                      |
| 2. Staff Entrance                 | 8. Break and Conference        |
| 3. Residence                      | 9. Kitchenette                 |
| 4. Garage                         | 10. Office                     |
| 5. Public Entrance and Exhibition | 11. New Staircase to Residence |
| 6. Reception                      | 12. Staff Patio                |



Staff entrance from street.



West elevation 1:200



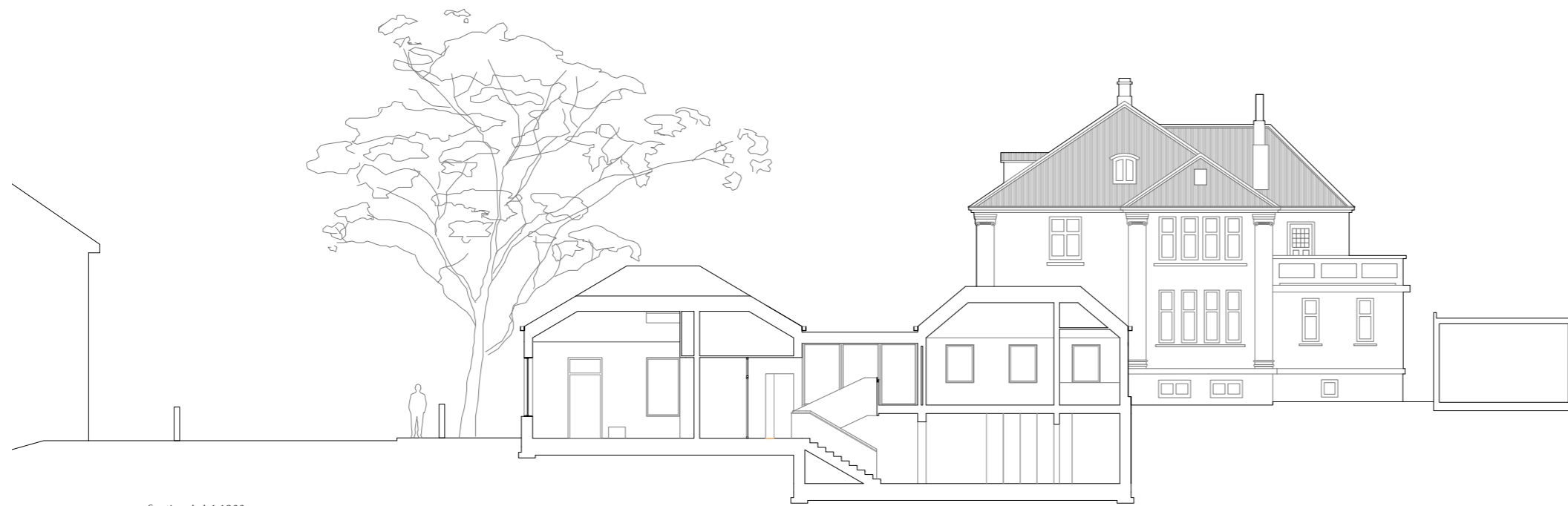
North elevation 1:200



East elevation 1:200



South elevation 1:200



Section A-A 1:1200

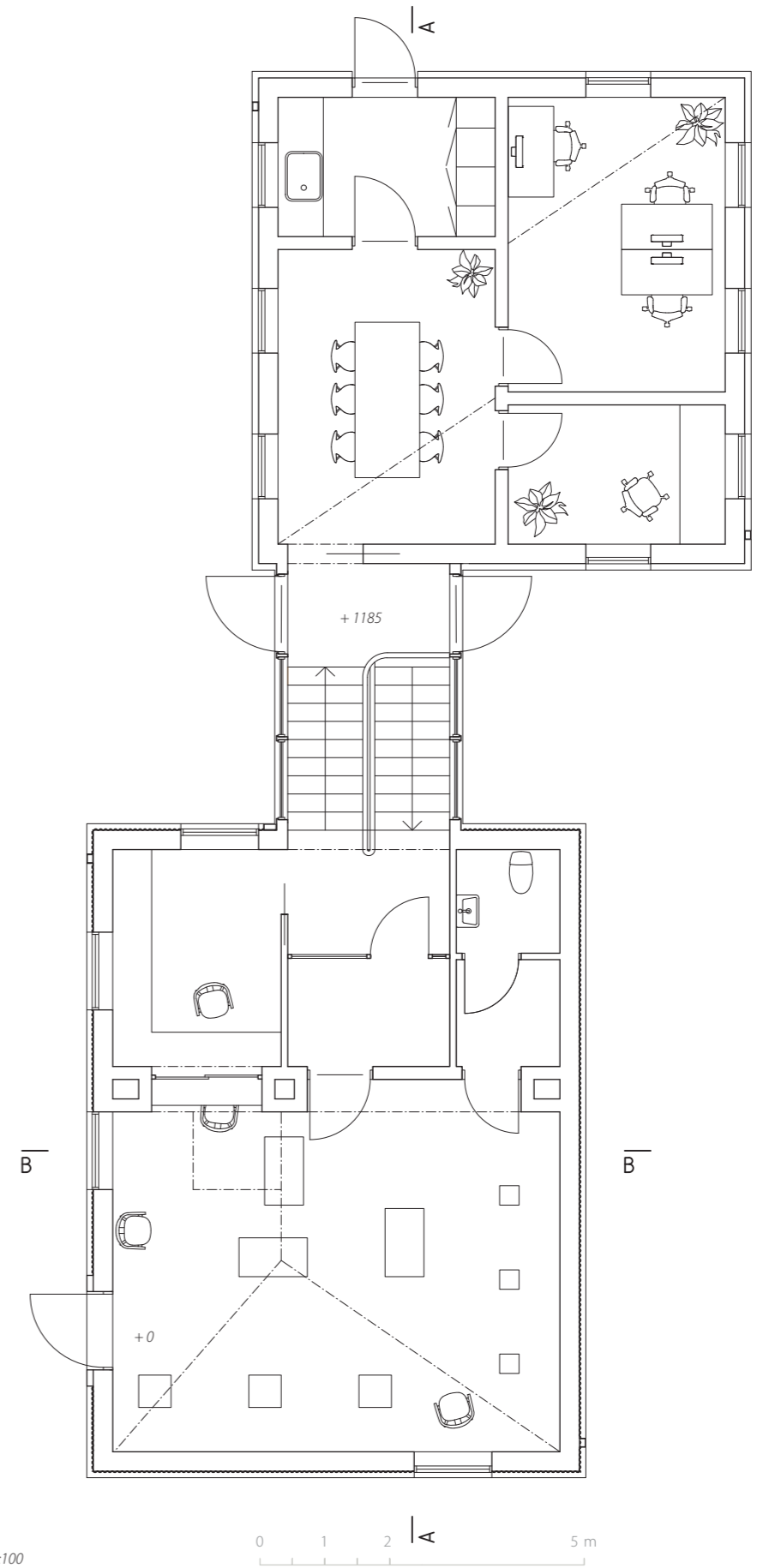
### **Inside the Exhibition**

As you approach the building, the contrast between the rough steel exterior and the warm wooden interior is striking. The wooden ceiling embraces you as you enter the large, dark wooden door. At first glance, the ceiling appears to be made of light concrete. However, if you look closely, you can see the white pigmented birch plywood's intricate wooden grains.

The tall ceiling height towers over five meters high, and despite the few numbers of windows in the room, they all generously spread the light across the space. Here, you can observe various art pieces on display or look through the large wooden window towards the Residence Garden. While moving around the space more details appear in the eye catching warm wooden niches. They perform the function of acoustic panels and in addition gives a similar impression of the sinus profiled corrugated façade. The purpose of the space is to draw attention to the artwork while simultaneously functioning as a work of art itself, featuring natural materials in its design.



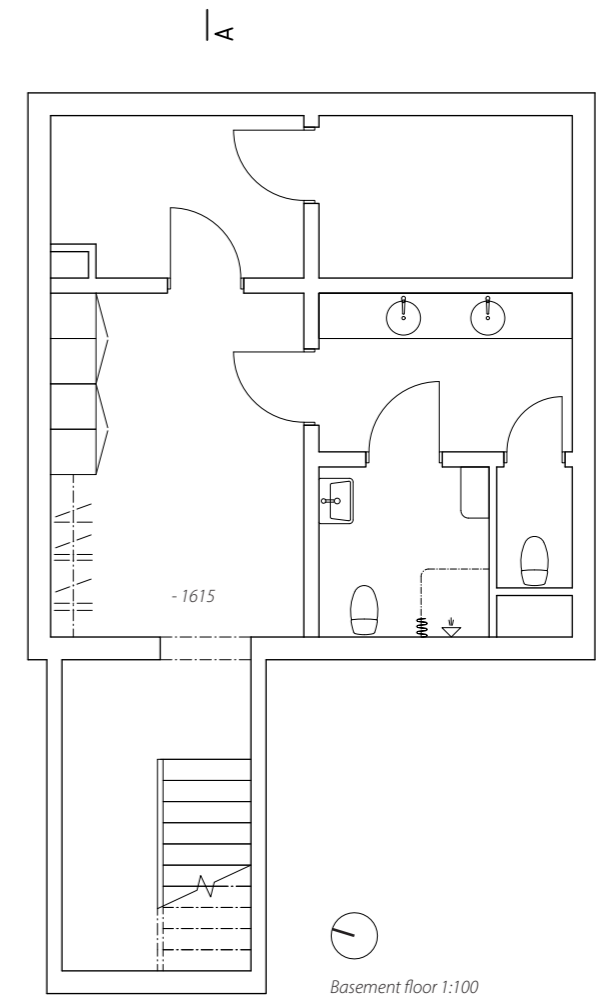
Entrance of exhibition space.



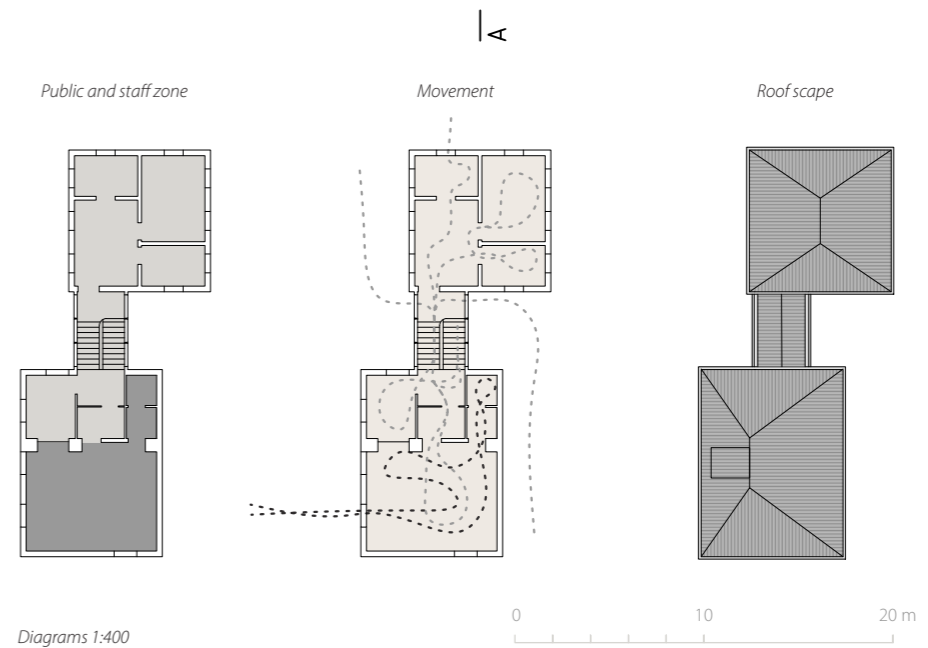
Floor plan 1:100



Exhibition space.



Basement floor 1:100



Diagrams 1:400

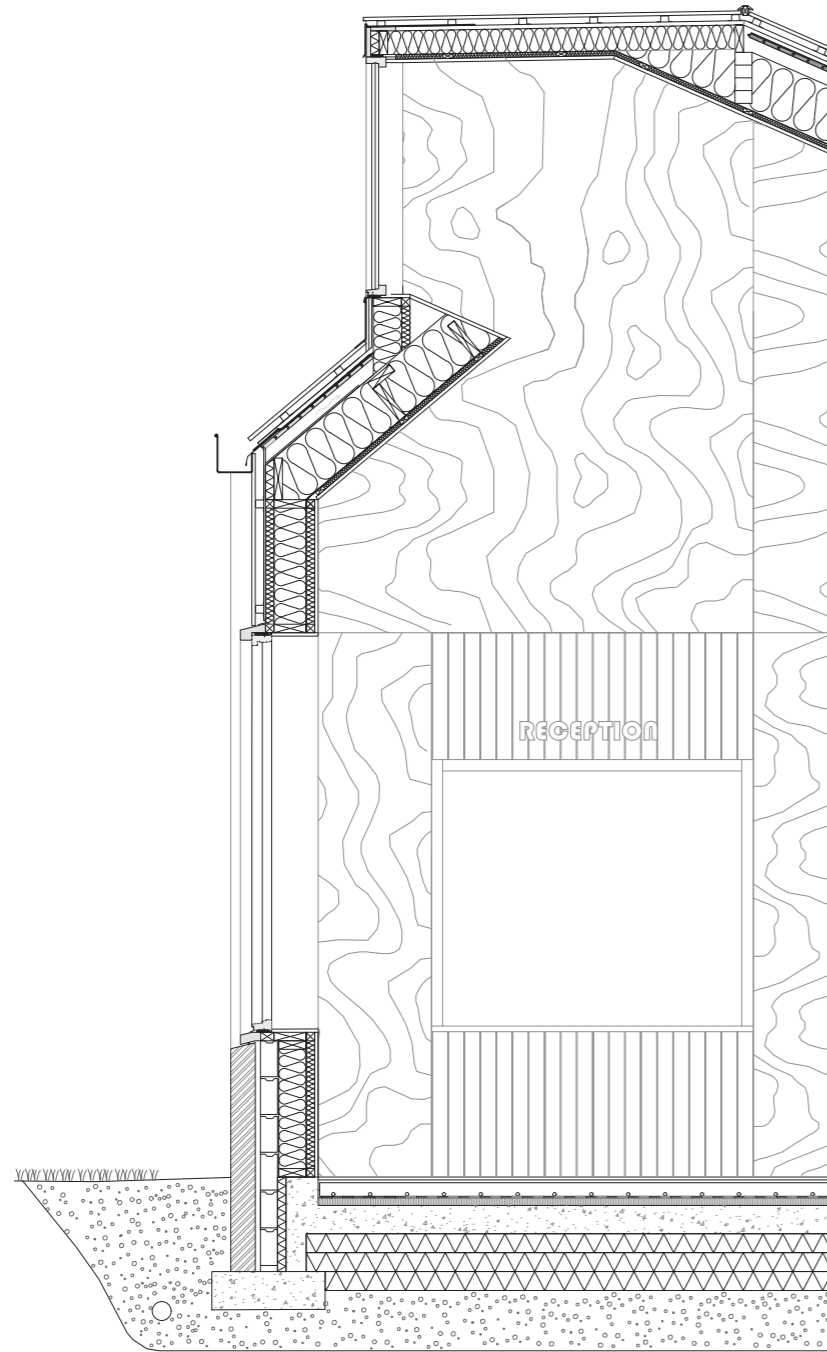


#### **Inside the Office**

The staff entrance, which is glazed, serves a dual function of connecting the public exhibition and reception areas and providing access to the cloakroom, staff restrooms, and a technical space located on the lowest floor, which is the most secure area of the facility.

The office space has two spacious rooms that can be used as workstations, a break or conference room. In addition, there is one small office room and a small kitchenette with a door leading out to a more private backyard that the staff can enjoy as an extended break area.

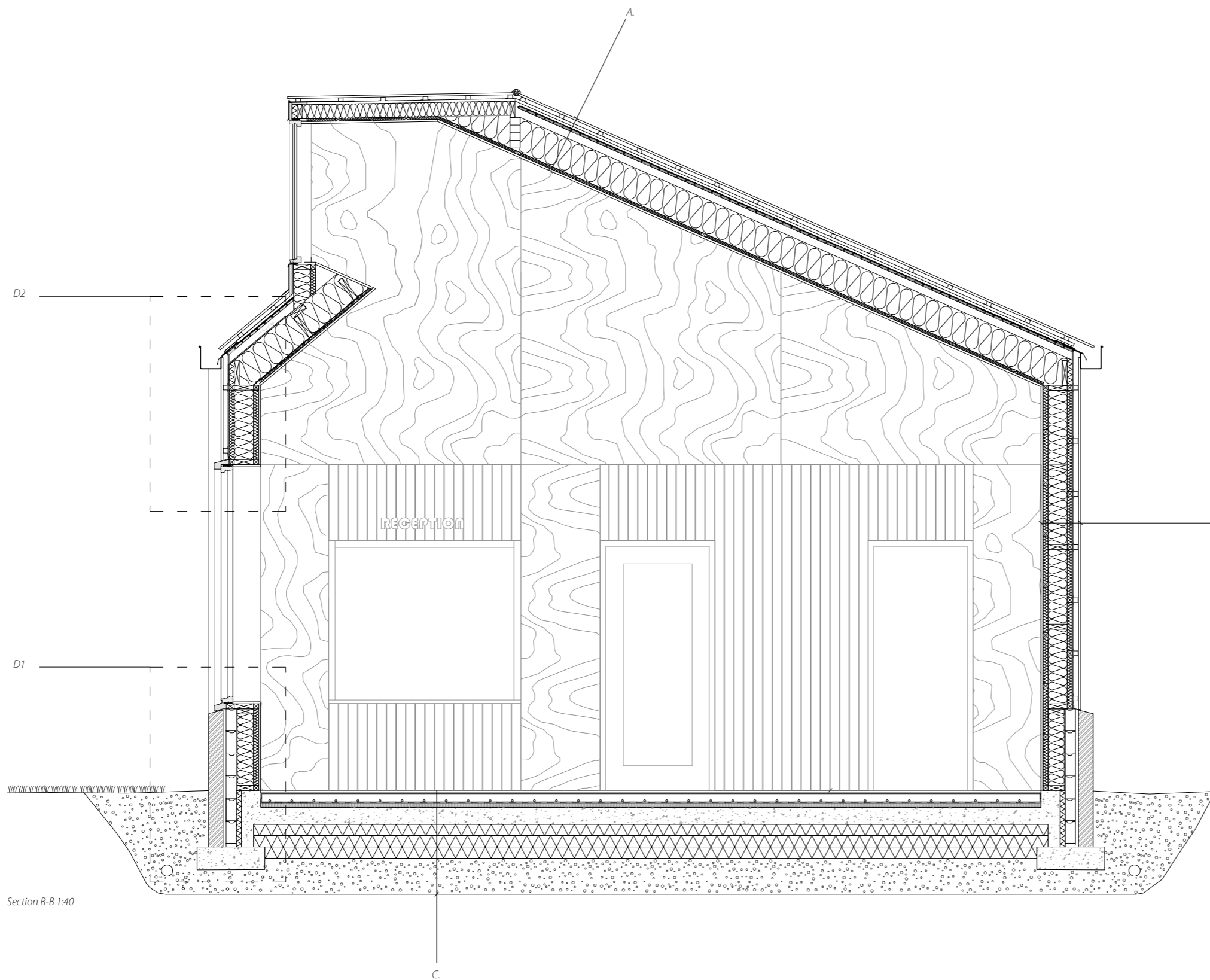
*Interior perspective of stair connection.*



Section 1:40



Elevation 1:40



- A. Roof 505**
- 18 Sinus profiled galvanized steel
  - 34 Steel batten
  - 25 Roof battens
  - 25 Battens
  - 1 Tar paper
  - 20 Tongued grooved timber with sawn face
  - 60 Air gap
  - Wind protection layer
  - 8 Masonite board
  - 270 Mineral wool insulation and joist 220 x 70
  - 1 Vapor barrier
  - 25 Mineral wool insulation and joist 25x70
  - 18 White pigmented birch plywood
- B. Wall 351**
- 18 Sinus corrugated galvanized steel
  - 45 Steel batten
  - 9 Gypsum board
  - 45 Mineral wool insulation and joist 45x45
  - Wind protection layer
  - 170 Mineral wool insulation and joist 170x45
  - 1 Vapor barrier
  - 45 Mineral wool insulation and joist 45x45
  - 18 White pigmented birch plywood
- Floor 990**
- 15 Stone floor tiles
  - 15 Mortar
  - 80 Floor heating
  - 15 Separating layer
  - 40 Impact sound insulation
  - 200 Concrete slab
  - 3x100 Insulation
  - 319 Washed macadam
  - 20 Woven fabric

Section B-B 1:40



*Sinus corrugated galvanized steel façade and roof*



*Limed washed facade*



*Teak windows and exterior doors*



*White granite façade plinth*

## Material and Detail

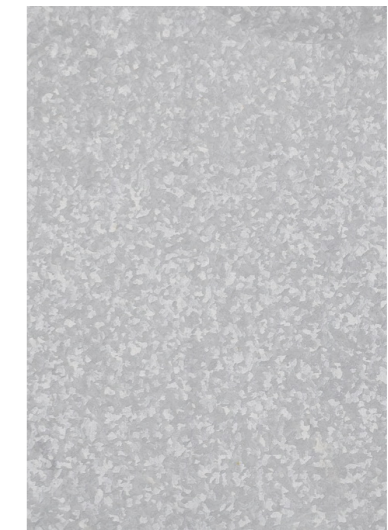
The exhibition façade has sinus corrugated steel that echoes the roof of the residence, while the outer façade of the office volume is limewashed and resembles that of the Residence. Both façade treatments can be found in the neighboring houses and are commonly used around Reykjavik. But what is not as common is the untreated raw galvanized steel used instead of having it painted. This allows the façade to absorb the surroundings better by letting light and colors reflect onto it.

Most roof angles in the design are to be found in the sloping angles of the Residence, as well as the dormers of the original villa which served as an inspiration. These roofs are covered with the same corrugated steel as the façade.

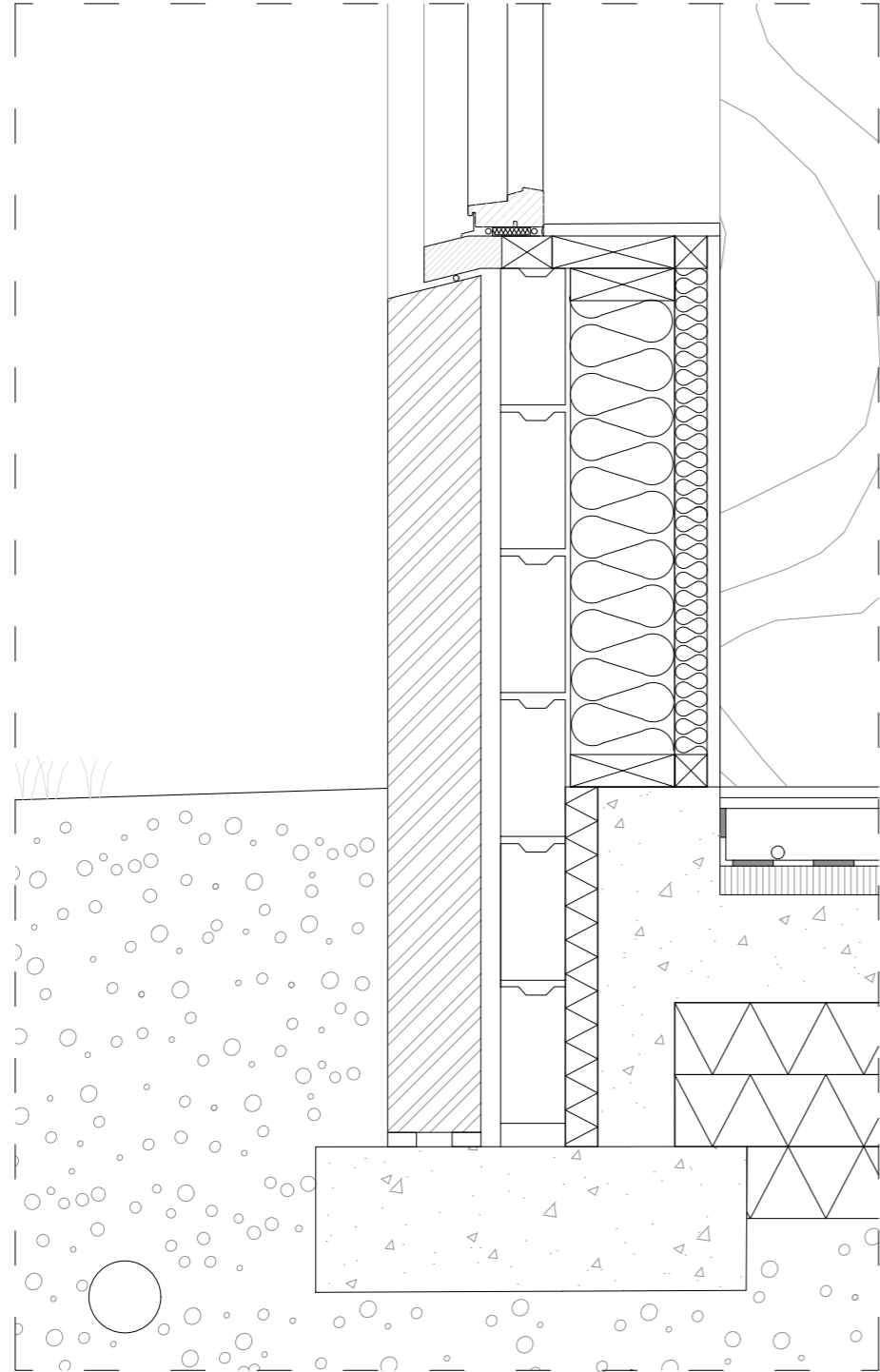
All exterior windows and doors are in dark teak wood that allows them to pop out even more from the façade and withstand weather better than other wooden materials. The miniature addition sits on various sizes of white granite plinths as a modern twist of its inspiration.



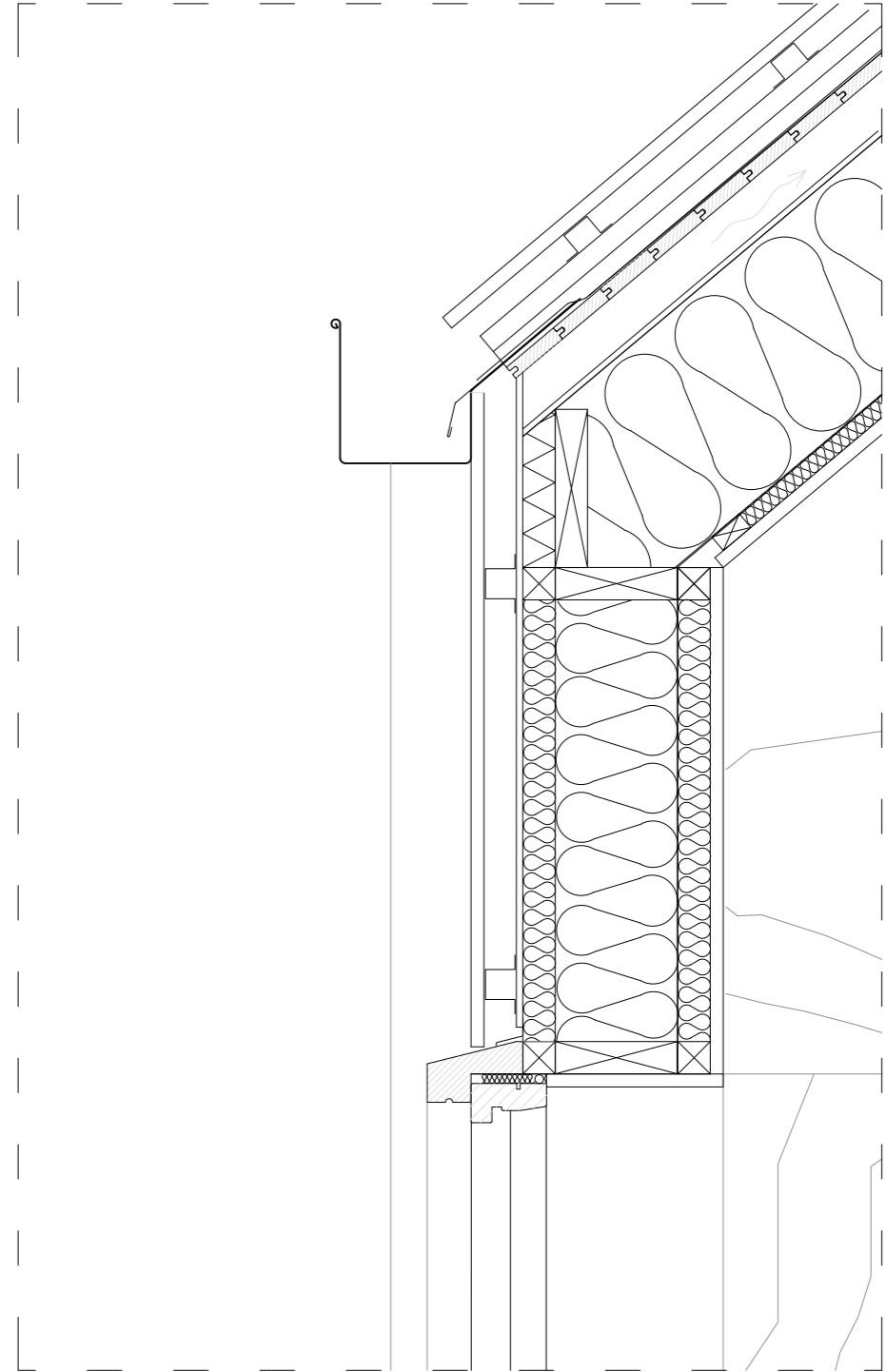
*White pigmented birch plywood*



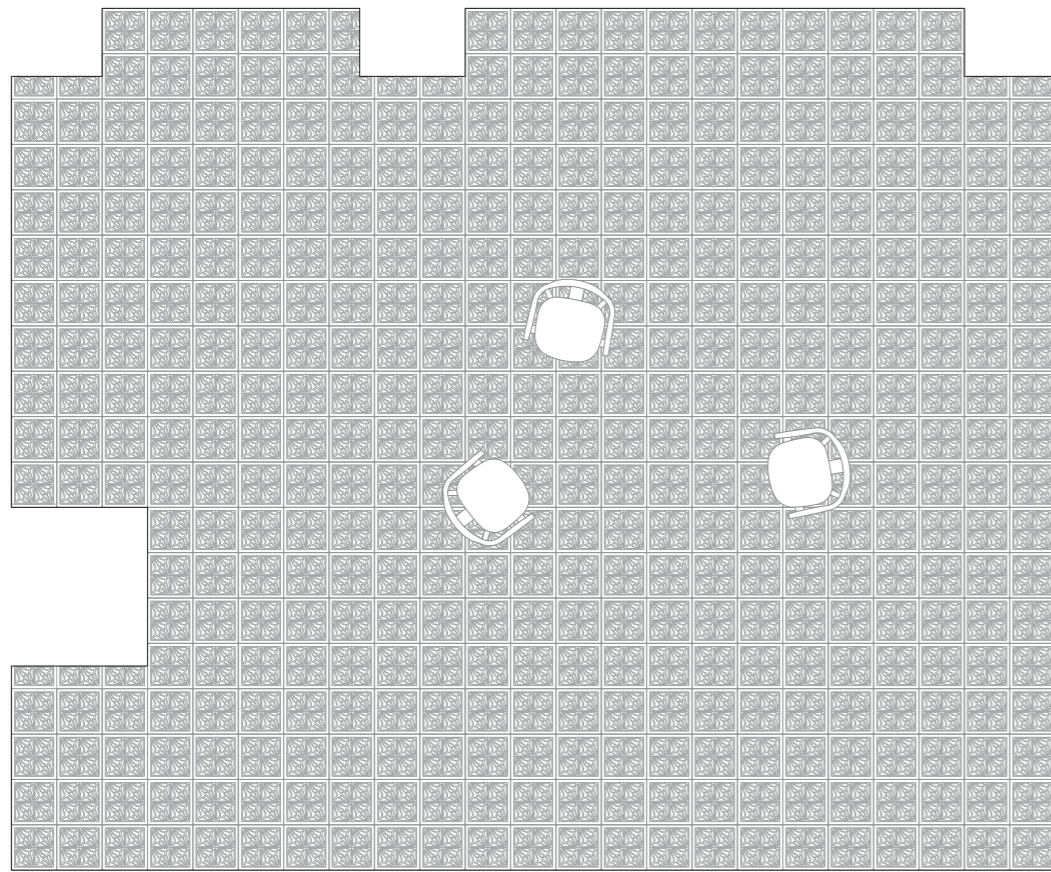
*Galvanized steel façade details*



Detail D1 1:10



Detail D2 1:10

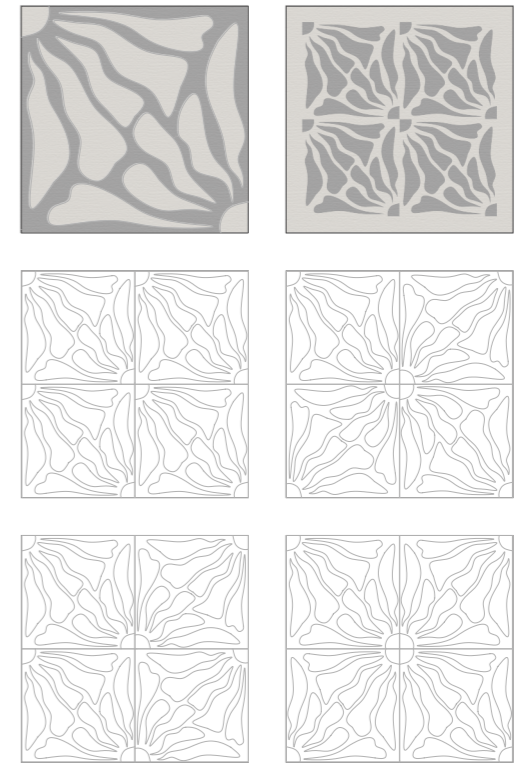


Floor tiling in Exhibition 1:50

## Solander 250

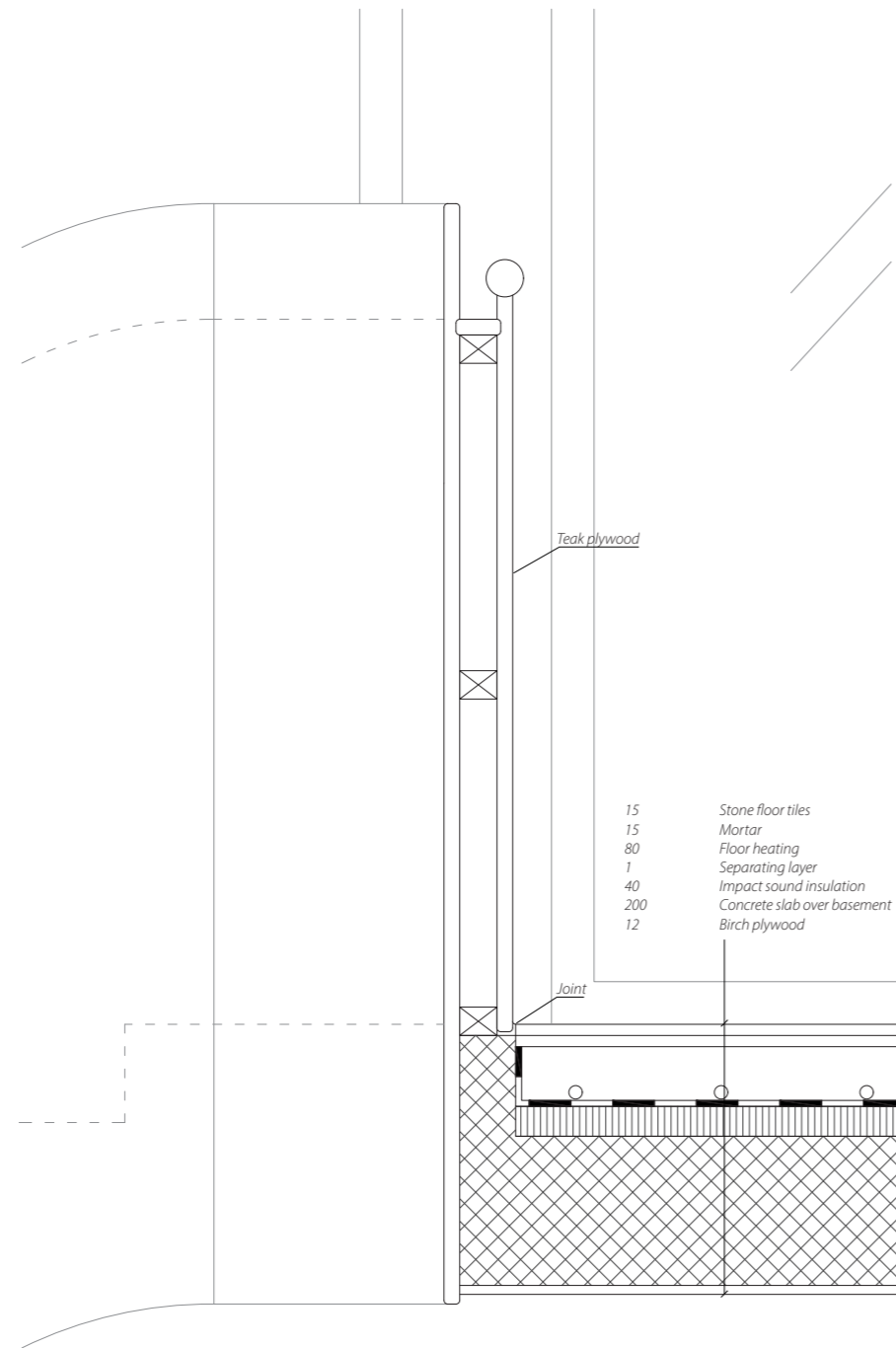
For two years Embassy of Sweden on Iceland together with Icelandic partners is initiating one of the largest Swedish-Icelandic collaborative projects. By inviting the public of Iceland to reflect upon its Nordic historical identity through the Linnaeus apostle Daniel Solander. The botanist Solander came to Iceland 1772 on a scientific expedition where he performed taxonomic research on plants that is still very important today. The collaborative project invites not only locals but also scientists and artists from overseas to exhibit and share their work (Ahlberger, 2021).

The new chancery building pays homage to the historical event through its floor design. The floral pattern imprinted on the floor represents Solander's journey to Iceland and serves as a reminder of the significant relationship between the two nations.

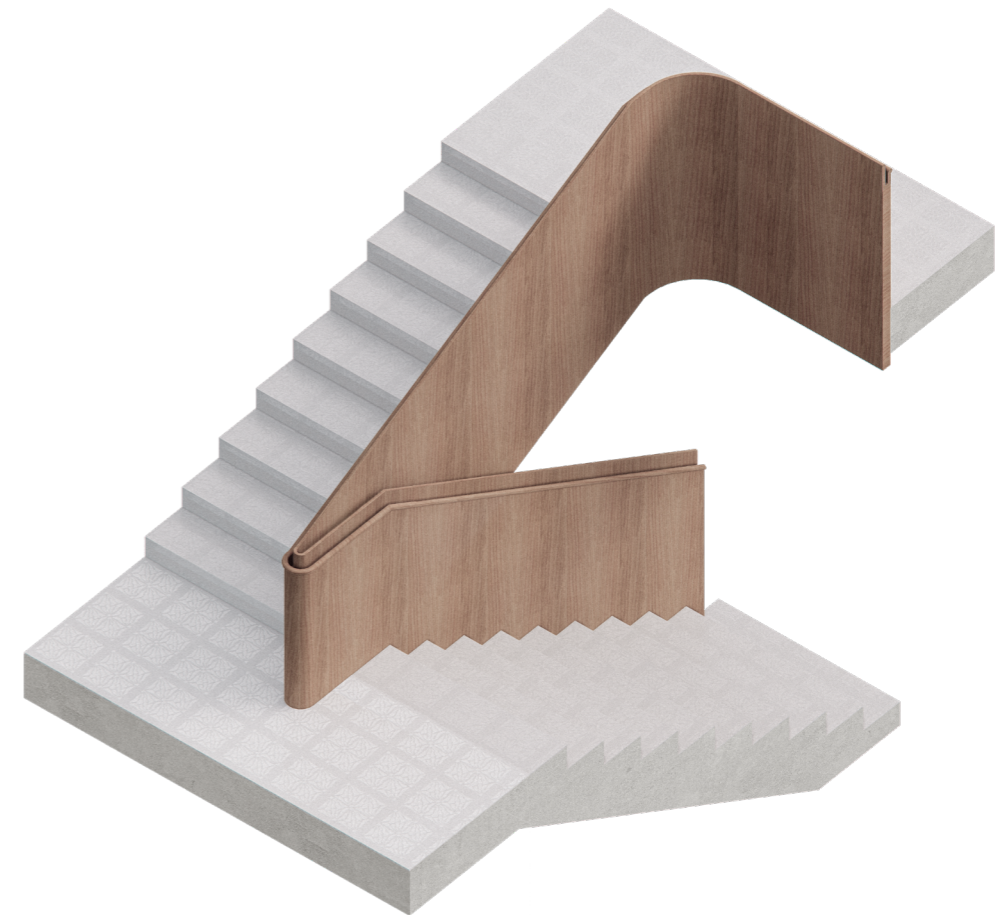


Floor Tile 1:10





Stair detail 1:10



Isometric view of staff staircase



*Perspective of public entrance.*



## Reflections

### Challenging the Program

The classification of information concerning the typology of an embassy has been a considerable challenge to this thesis project. The difficulties have, however, piqued my interest in exploring and questioning the architecture behind it with great curiosity.

The appearance of an embassy needs to convey both a sense of openness and closeness. The program is intricate and varied, and therefore the architecture should respond to its needs. To achieve this, spaces should be designed to host multiple purposes, suitable for the program. For example, the public entrance room designed in the project allows for other activities to take place. It is not just a waiting room with a reception, but also as a venue for exhibitions and public meetings.

The design solutions made at the Embassy of Sweden in Reykjavik is however not applicable in all countries where Sweden has diplomatic operations. The need for tailor-making embassy architecture to fit its context and program is of great importance. In the case of designing in Iceland, where security considerations do not play a major role, the possi-

bilities open up to challenge the traditional layout of the typology. The design brief leads me to reflect on whether we should prioritize designing a secure space to protect national secrets or a place that invites engagement with our culture.

### Approaching a Protagonist

The modest attitude towards the Residence is based on the city planning office's wish to preserve the structure of the area but also my own wish to respect the original design. In the future, it is more likely that the design will be approved if the dominance of the Residence is preserved. To achieve this, I explored various ways to intervene in similar situations while still respecting the Residence's significance.

The way of approaching the protagonist will be different amongst architects. Some would argue that the protagonist would stand out better if its new addition acts as a counter opposite while others would argue that it takes too much attention from the Residence. Acknowledged architects like Adam Caruso, David Chipperfield and Peter Merkli, have valid points about the architectural profession that could be studied in the case of working in

a setting with strong identity like this addition of a Chancery in Reykjavik. By looking at the past we can learn a great deal about architecture. And especially when it comes to designing spaces that could function for many different programs.

### Future of Embassy Design

The need for architects to work with the existing built environment is becoming increasingly important, as cities and neighborhoods around the world are predominantly already built. The thesis aim, to adapt a new design to an existing situation, is a reflection of this reality. In my opinion, this shift in focus is equally, if not more, important than only focusing on a finalized design for a Swedish Embassy.

When the future of design most likely will be on densification and transformation of existing structures, the ability to adapt and integrate with the surrounding environment is crucial. I believe every designer can benefit from this brief, as it relates to how our designs complement and reflect the existing surroundings. For us architects it is crucial to consider our way of impacting through our designs on

the environment and the communities they serve, not only in terms of functionality and aesthetics but also sustainability and resilience.

Finally, architects need to be able to work with these complexities of existing structures, to understand their history and cultural importance, and to find innovative ways of integrating them in new designs.

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