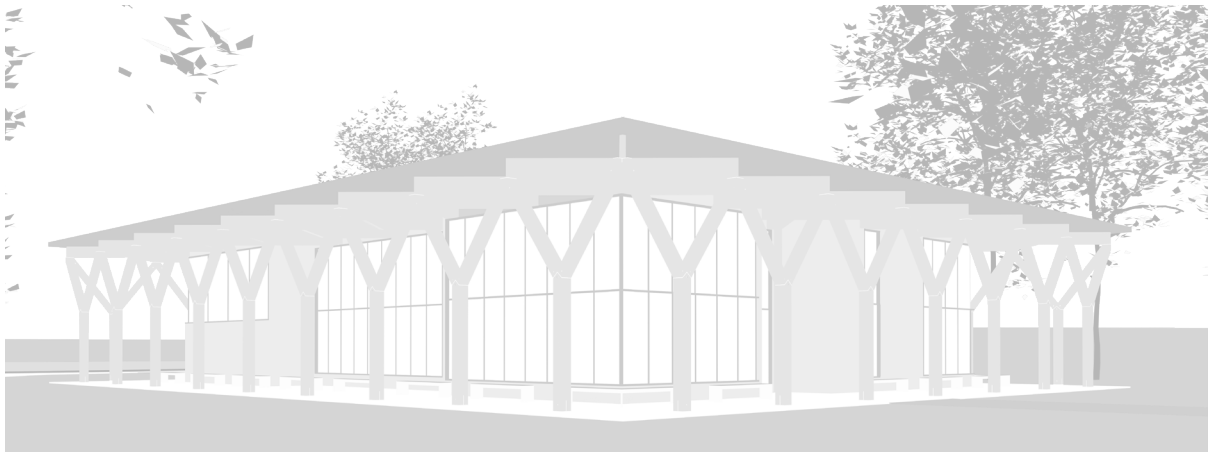


# CEREMONIAL SPACES



*An research in ceremonial space without religion*

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Examiner: Björn Gross  
Supervisor: Mikael Ekegren  
2023-05-30

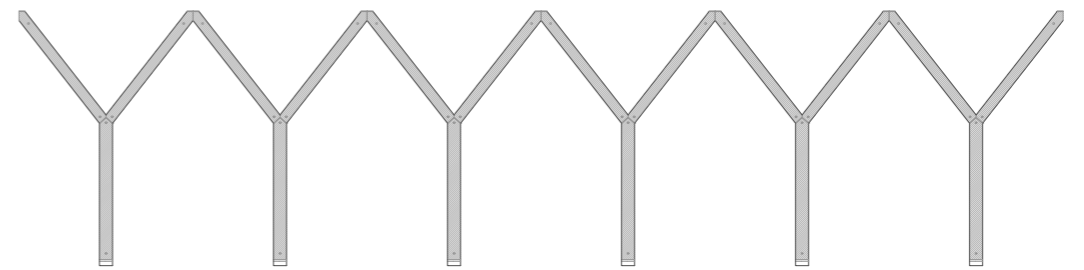


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## ABSTRACT

Ceremonies means a formal gathering that marks an important happening in one's life. Depending on the organization or religion ceremonies have different formats and environments. The common factor is that all ceremonies mark an important event in someone's life. Architecture that hosts these types of gatherings are often extravagant and creates a monumental atmosphere.

Today religious buildings are often associated with ceremonies as we grieve or celebrate loved ones. In Sweden churches are often associated with these happenings. But over the last decades the Swedish church has seen and lost in both ceremonies and members. This shows that churches might not be a suitable option as they are often decorated with religious ornaments. Therefore I want to explore the possibility of a secular ceremonial building in Slottsskogen, Gothenburg. The building will be flexible and inclusive for people with different beliefs and aims to give a new meaning to the ceremonial space.



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## BACKGROUND

In my thesis project I have focused on designing a building for ceremonies such as weddings, name ceremonies and funerals. Traditional ceremonial architecture is often decorated with symbols creating an atmosphere that is fixed for the religions or political purposes. But in this case I wanted to explore the possibilities of a building that is neutral and open so that all people no matter what type of faith or ideology can feel welcome. The aim of the project has been to give a new meaning to what a ceremonial building can look like.

Today the landscape for ceremonies has drastically changed over the last decades, from the mainly religious ones to an increasing demand for civil ones. Therefore there is a need to explore how this changing belvies and faith can be reflected in the built environment so that a ceremonial architect can be relevant and suitable for future needs and changes.

## STUDENT BACKGROUND

## EDUCATION

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Architecture and urban design, MSc<br>Chalmers University of Technology                        | 2021- current   |
| Erasmus studies in Venice<br>Università luav di Venezia (Università luav di Venezia)           | 2022- 2023      |
| Bachelor's degree of Arts in Design<br>HDK University of Gothenburg - School of Art and Design | 2016-2018, 2021 |
| Bachelor's degree in architecture<br>Chalmers University of Technology                         | 2018-20         |
| Artistic education<br>KV School of Arts  | 2015-16         |

## EXPERIENCE

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Social community space in Bergsjön<br>Project work, Familjebostäder   | 2022    |
| Architectural Competition<br>Wernstedt Sketch, 1st Prize  | 2022    |
| Architecture internship<br>Semren & Månsson   | 2020-21 |
| Internship project development<br>Serneke assistant May-August<br>Insight into the planning of Karlatornet, administrative tasks in excel | 2015    |

## RESEARCH QUESTION

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The project is about creating ceremonial architecture without religious associations. The purpose is to form a building that can mark important stages in life but also be open and inclusive for any type of faith.

## 1.3 AIM

The aim in the project have been to design and building that is not giving association to a fixed environment that relates to a religious or political organization.

#### 1.4 DELIMITATIONS

The project focuses on shaping and defining what a secular ceremonial space is and designing a proposal for such a building. In this project I will not investigate specific demands from functions such as funerals, weddings etc. The project will instead focus on exploring the possibilities of a ceremonial building within a city context. In the end I will discuss the qualities of a ceremonial building that is not bound to any religion or ideology.

#### 1.5 METHOD

The project has been about not working with religious buildings as a reference and seeking an expression and atmosphere that is very different from the religious ones. Therefore I started gathering reference projects that weren't connected to religion. The aim was to try to challenge the concepts of a ceremonial space and thereby rethink the concept of the perception of such buildings.

#### 1.6 CLIENT

During the research process, I came in contact with the organization The Humanist, which can be considered as a client for this kind of project. They believe in the individual right to think and make their own decision. They Humanist organize ceremonies that are in some ways typical for religious ones, such as name ceremonies and funerals, but instead of something otherworldly the individual are the focus. So after interviewing them I made some guidelines for the space distribution and function for building.

#### 1.7 BACKGROUND ABOUT THE HUMANIST

The humanist is an umbrella organization active in 70 countries, in Sweden, they have existed here since 1979. Their aim is to create secular ceremonies and instead of believing in something otherworldly they focus on the human experience and ability to freely think. The organizations have today around 40 active officials that officiate ceremonies around Sweden.

*"The humanist worldview centers on humanity and human values, as opposed to supernatural entities like gods. Humanism unites compassion and reason in an effort to create a better society, where we ourselves are responsible for what happens. Democracy and human rights are universal values and must exist for all people, regardless of where one lives." (Humanisternas Idéprogram | Humanisterna, n.d.)*

INTERVIEW WITH THE HUMANIST

In the start of the project I had an interview with Janna Aanstoot (Officiant), Annelie Berg (Officiant) and David Rönnegard (Chairman), to form an image on both the organization, practical information about the ceremonies and how they imagined a civil ceremonial building to be.

After the interview I took with me principals and concepts to form the building. I used this as a guideline for the building in forming the concept for designing the floorplan. The interview was also a way to set values for the building. As the officiant had direct experience with organizing these ceremonies.

Some principles that I took with me from the interview is:

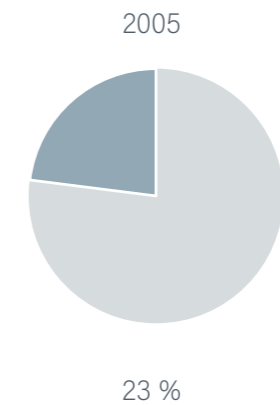
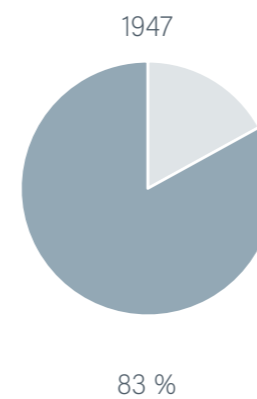
- Flexibility in the rooms because the ceremonies should be based on the individual or individuals character, therefore the rooms need to be neutral and flexible
- Two ceremonial rooms, one for bigger and one smaller
- The building can be used for gatherings for different occasions not necessary only ceremonial, such as a cafe that also can be used as a funeral fika or discussion about life
- Architectural expression that is extra such as large windows, high ceilings etc.
- Outside landscape where the ceremonies partly can take place and that is photogenic
- Centralize the individual rather than something otherworldly
- Different expression than the religious buildings, without an altar viewed centralized
- Room that is universal but has a strong character

INTEREST CIVIL CEREMONIES

1.9 INTEREST CIVIL CEREMONIES

In an European survey conducted in 2005 only 23 percent of Swedes answered yes to the question of whether there is a God compared to 1947 where 83 percent answered yes. This might appear as if Swedes are simply losing their faith but another survey in 2005 says something else. To the question if it is some form of other or life force, alternatively to a god, 53 percent answers yes. Therefore the spirituality of believing in something otherworldly is still relevant but the concept of religion being fixed in the term of one God one religion is not as relevant as before. (Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund et al, 2021)

Is there a god?



Is there an alternative to God?

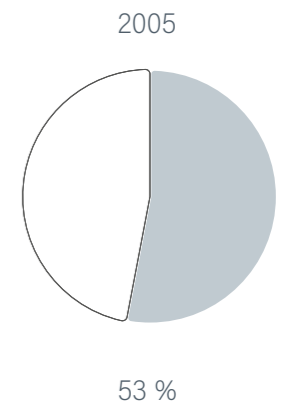
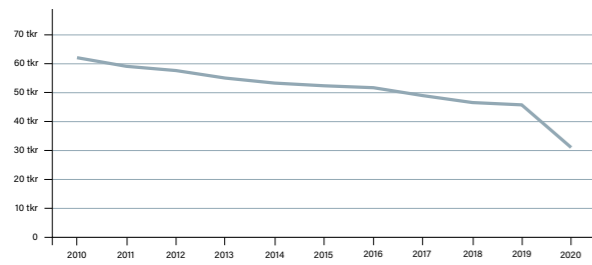


Fig.1

### 1.10 CEREMONIES IN SWEDISH CHURCH

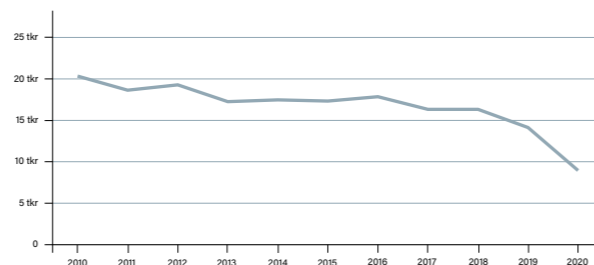
NUMBER OF BAPTIZED PER YEAR

\*THE GRAF IS SHOWING THE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE BAPTIZED IN SWEDISH CHURCH FROM 2010-2020



NUMBER OF MARRIED COUPLE PER YEAR

\*THE GRAF IS SHOWING THE AMOUNT OF PEPOLE GETTING MARRIED IN SWEDISH CHURCH FROM 2010-2020

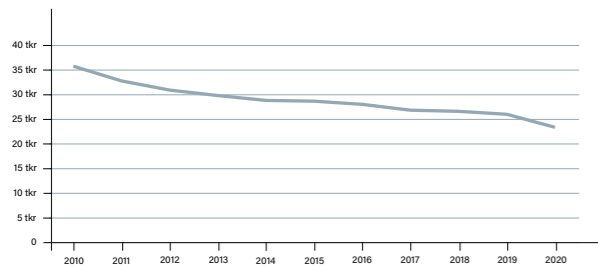


#### BAPTISM

#### MARRIED COUPLE

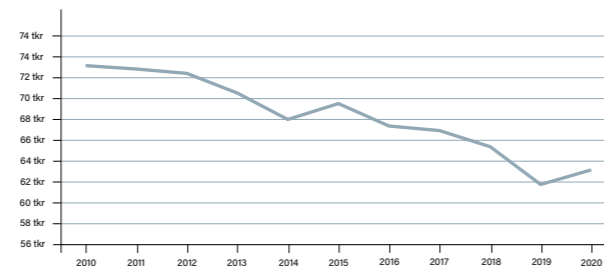
NUMBER OF CONFIRMATIONS PER YEAR

\*THE GRAF IS SHOWING THE AMOUNT OF CONFIRMATIONS IN SWEDISH CHURCH FROM 2010-2020



NUMBER OF FUNERALS PER YEAR

\*THE GRAF IS SHOWING THE AMOUNT OF FUNERALS IN SWEDISH CHURCH FROM 2010-2020



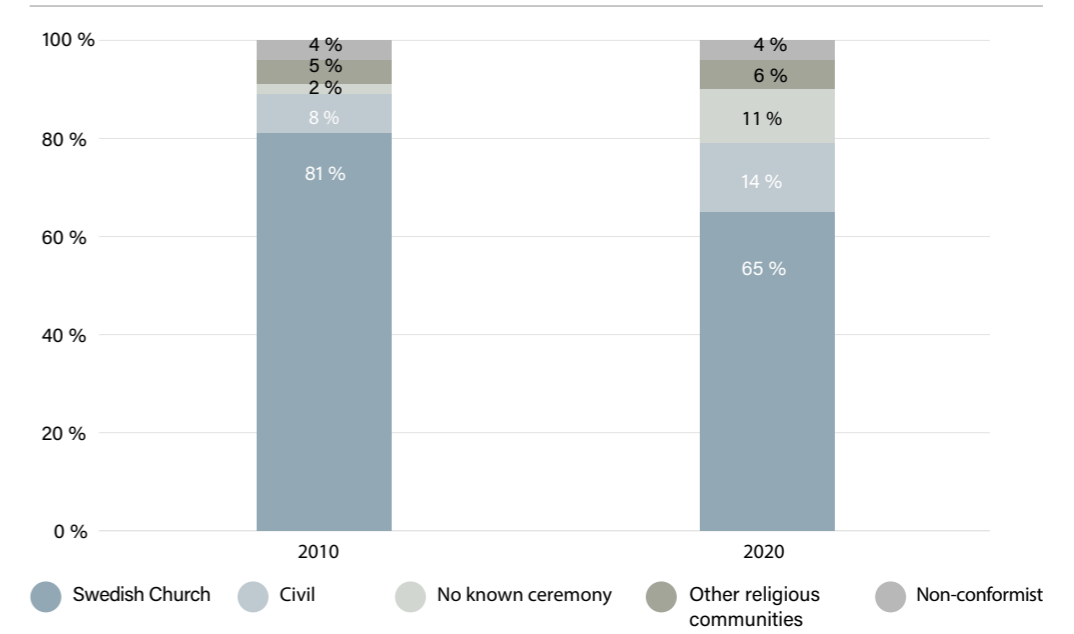
#### CONFIRMATION

#### FUNERAL

Fig.2

### 1.11 BURIAL ARRANGEMENT

Burial arrangements, percentage distribution of SBF's total funerals in 2010 and 2020



Source: Sweden's Association of Funeral Directors

Fig.3

### SUMMARY

The data shows a clear decrease for ceremonies in the Swedish church and an increase in the demand for civil ceremonies. There is also change in faith that people are moving away from the fixed religion in a more spiritual approach. One other trend is to not have any ceremonies for funerals, this is a quite choking data and partly because of social distance during the pandemic, but not only. One reason might be that there are missing spaces that reflect the modern demands for ceremonies and thereby a civil ceremonial building could rebuild the interest.

REFERENCES

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

Fort Worth, USA  
Tadao Ando  
Built 2002  
(Sveiven)

- Inspiration for project
- Minimal material palette
- Y column that frame the structure
- Connection to the outdoor landscape



REFERENCES

Skogsljus Chapel Crematorium

Gävle Krematorium  
By ELLT  
Start 1954  
(Gualandris, 2020)

- Inspiration for project
- Window placement
- Expression that blends in with the exterior



SITE

The project site is located in Slottsskogen near "lilla dammen". I chose this site because I was inspired by how churches in Venice are placed. I recently had exchange studies there and found inspiration in how city life and private ceremonies coexisted. The church are closed from the outside but often provide spaces around the building for urban life. Therefore the ceremonial building is placed close to the city center of Gothenburg. The reason for not placing the building in a similar way as an venetian church is because I don't want the building to represent power as religious architecture often does. The location in Slottsskogen provides associability, natural and design landscape and is a place that is well known and generally liked in Gothenburg.

Example of church that exit in the city center in Venice

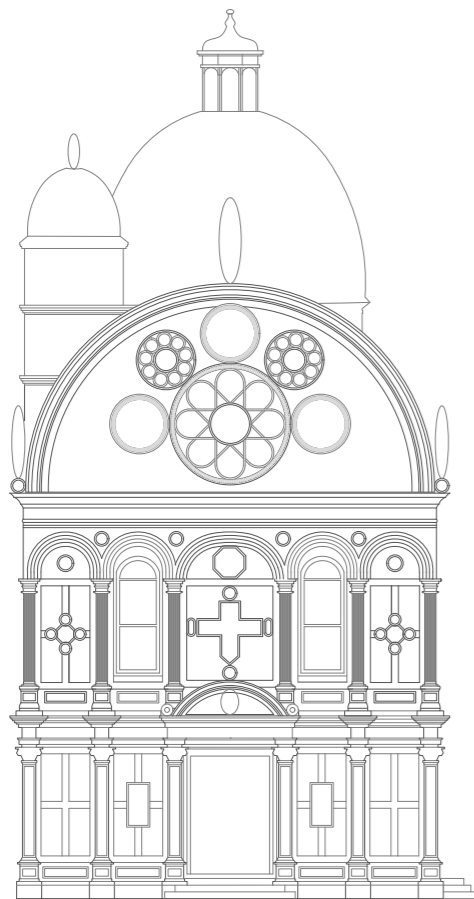


Fig. 10

Church of Saint Mary of Miracles Venice

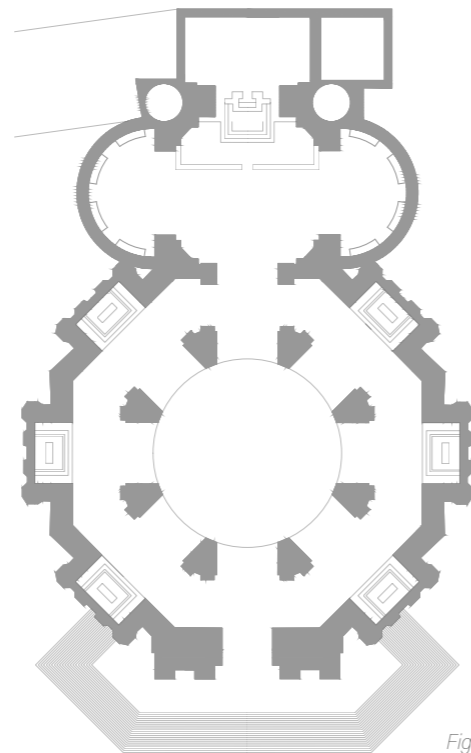


Fig. 11

Basilica di Santa Maria

SITE



Fig. 12

PLACEMENT

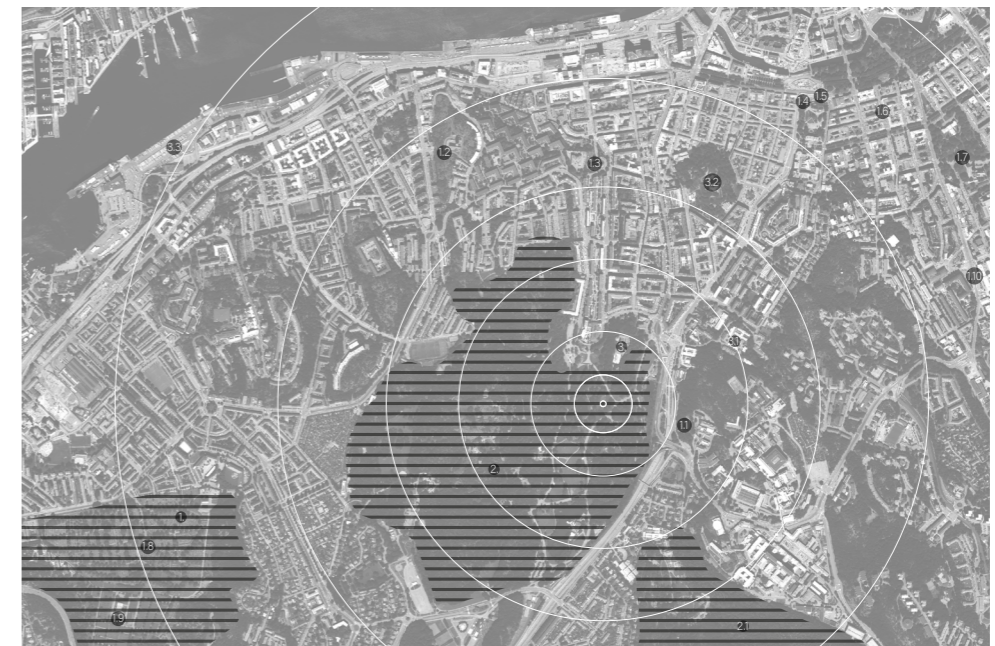


Fig. 13

SURROUNDING AREA

Religious places

- 1. Västrakyrko Gården
- 1.1 Annedalkyrkan
- 1.2 Mastuggskyrkan
- 1.3 oscar frediks kyrkan
- 1.4 Hagakyrkan
- 1.5 Smyrnakyrkan

- 1.6 Betlehemskyrkan
- 1.7 Vasakyrkan
- 1.8 Sankt Matteus kapell
- 1.9 Sankt Markus kapell
- 1.10 Landala kapell

Public parks

- 2. Slottssogen
- 2.1 Botaniska

Attractions

- 3. Natur historiska
- 3.1 Konst epidemin
- 3.2 Skansen krona
- 3.3 Stena piren

## SIGHTLINES

With the thoughts from them humanist as well as the aim to create a new type of ceremonial building I chose the location in Slottsskogen. The project site is in a public park in Gothenburg that is approachable and commonly well known and liked. The site is close to Linneplatsen and is facing Lilla Dammen, the site is on a central location in the park as is meant to be humble and not symbolize power as traditional ceremonial architecture often does.

One of the important elements in the design for the building is the sightline to the pond and the movement coming up from the hill from Linneplatsen. And as you walk from Linneplatsen you see a path leading up to the building and with a sightline to the pond.

Another important element for the site have been to preserve the existing nature so the building is placed within the boundaries of the existing trees. One other strategy for the site was to include public functions within the footprint of the building. So around the building there is a path with benches where people can use the space.

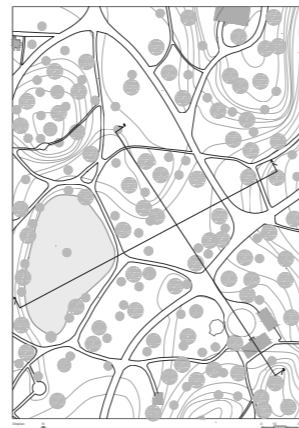
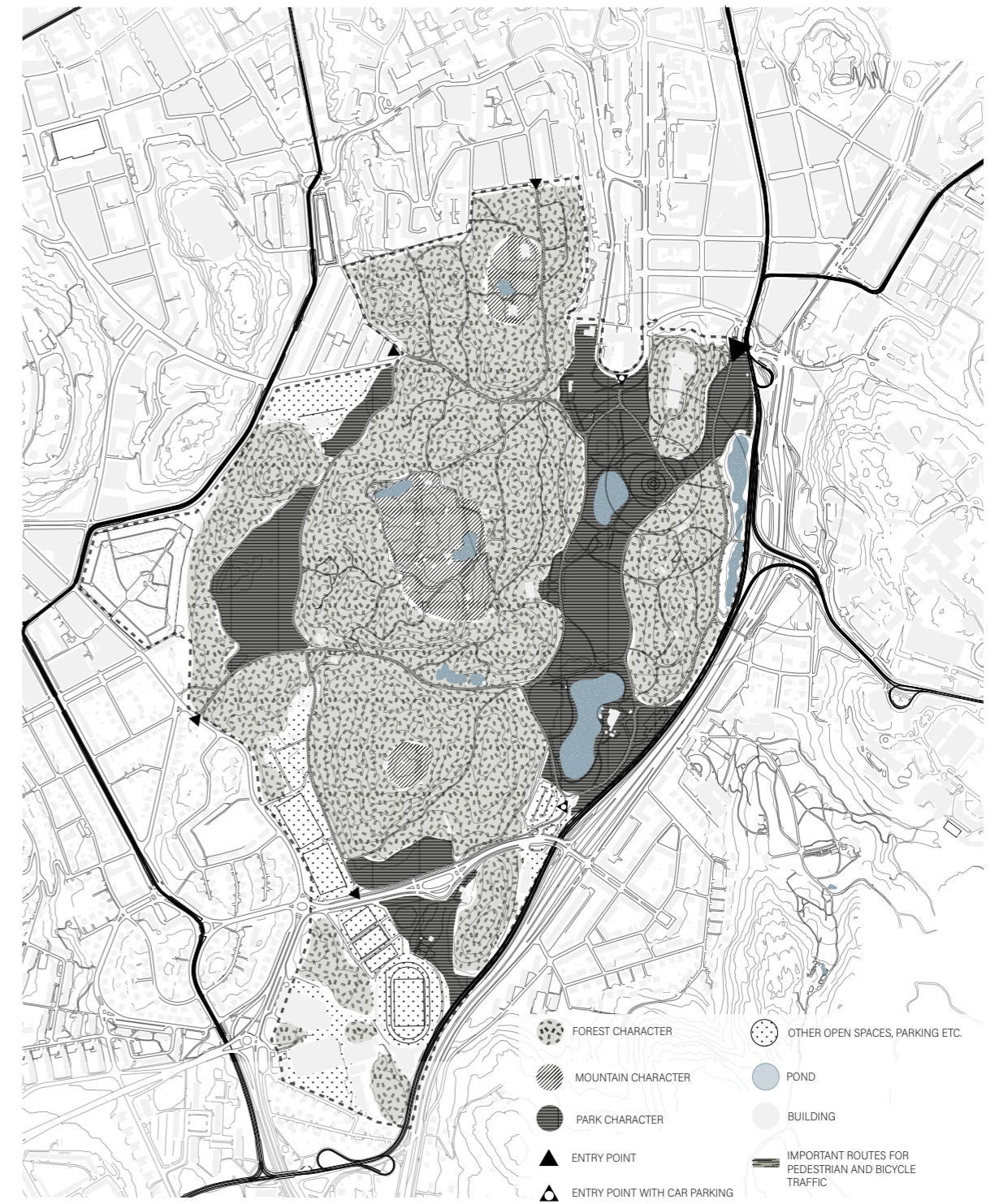


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS



LANDSCAPE SLOTTSSKOGEN

Fig. 16

PICTURES FROM THE SITE



Fig. 17



Fig. 19



Fig. 18



Fig. 20

SITE

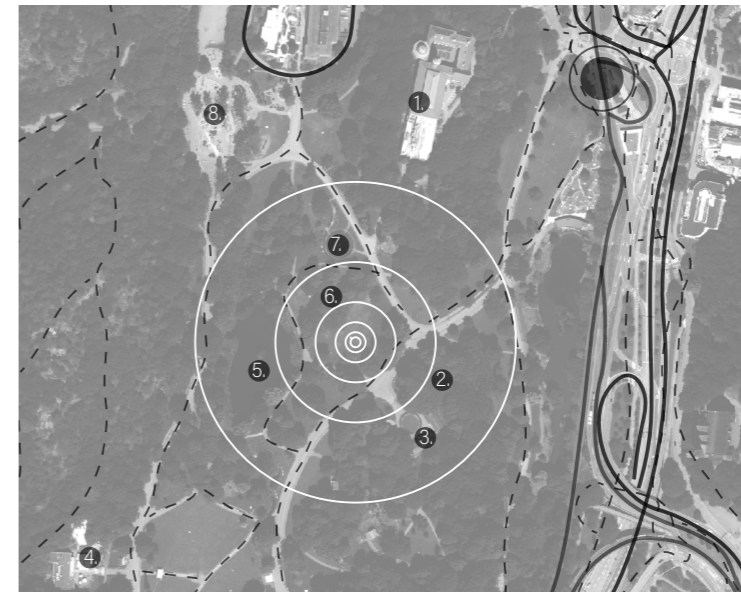


Fig. 21

SITE TODAY

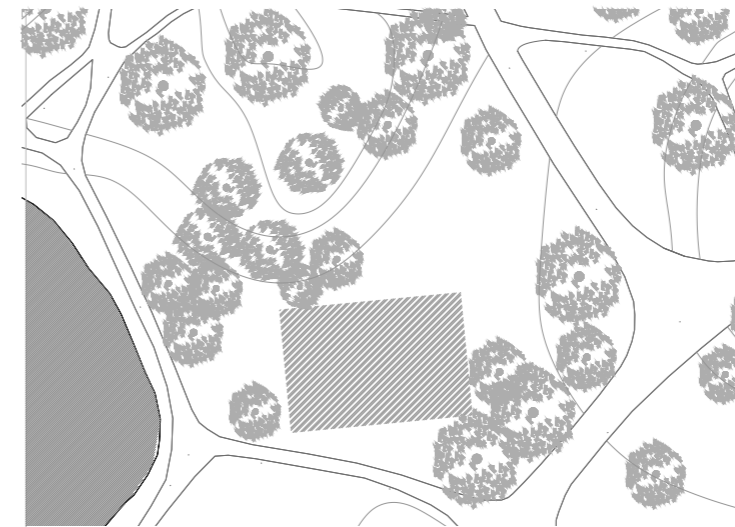
1. Naturhistoriska
2. Gräfsnäs Farm
3. Folkdansringen Göteborg
4. Café Björngårdsvillan
5. Lilla dammen
6. Det som håller mig kvar, bär mig vidare
7. Slottsskogens Labyrint
8. Lekplatsen Pliikta

STRATEGIES & CONCEPT



AXO FROM MAIN ENTRANCE TO LILLA DAMMEN

Fig. 22



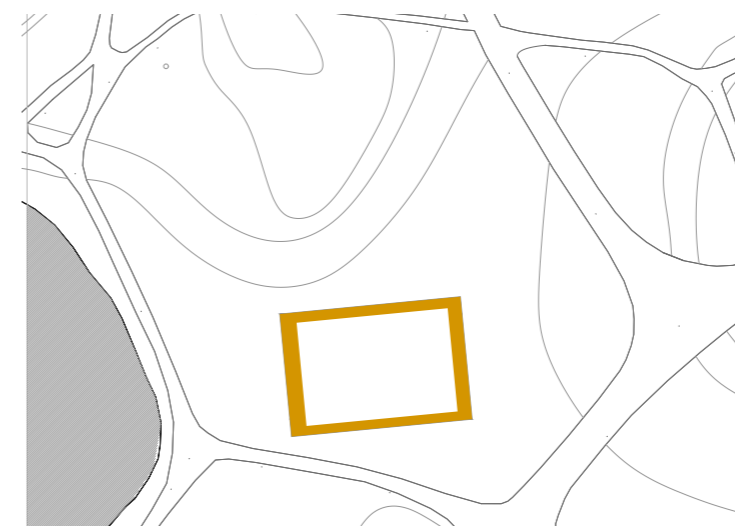
BUILDING WITHIN THE BORDERS OF THE EXISTING TREES

Fig. 24



ENTRANCE CONNECTED TO LINNEPLATSEN

Fig. 23



PUBLIC SPACE AROUND BUILDING

Fig. 25

DISTRIBUTIONS OF FUNCTIONS

Footprint 1000<sup>2</sup>  
 Building 528m<sup>2</sup>  
 Public space 472m<sup>2</sup>

Functions in the building:

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Entrance hall & Foyer | 205 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Ceremonial hall       | 140m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Small ceremonial hall | 50m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Café                  | 40m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Support function café | 10m <sup>2</sup>   |
| WC                    | 25m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Office                | 25m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Technic/ storage      | 8m <sup>2</sup>    |
| Wardrobe              | 25m <sup>2</sup>   |

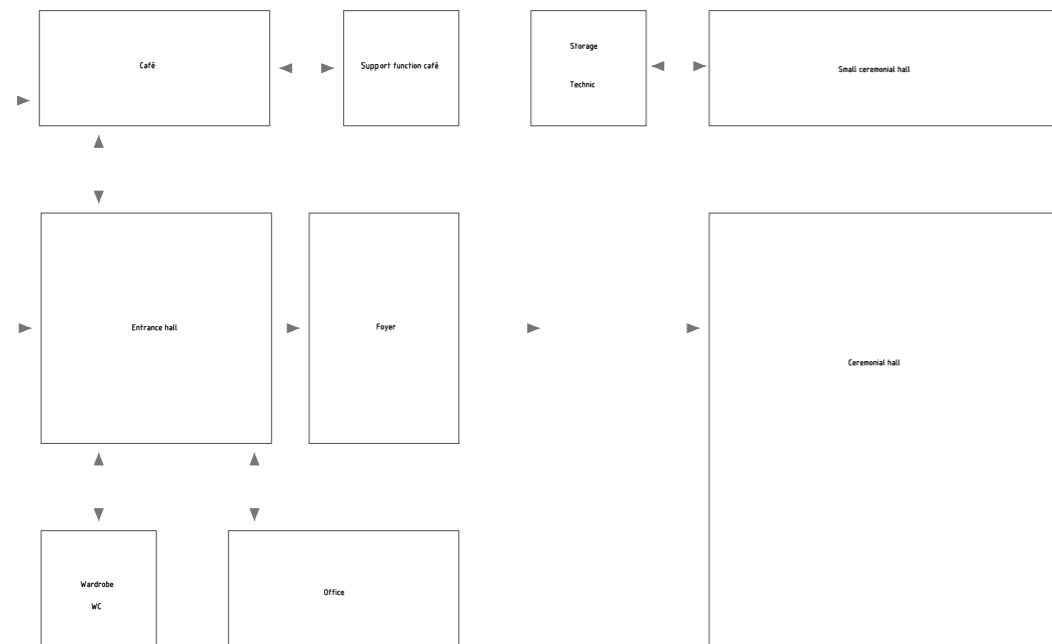


Fig.26

CLOSE AND OPEN

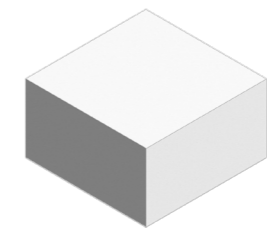
The building is an hybrid building that combines the functions of an religious building with an pavillion character. The reason for this is that both characters fit in with the requirement from the humanist. Therefore the focus has been to combine both open and close functions together.

Religious buildings character:

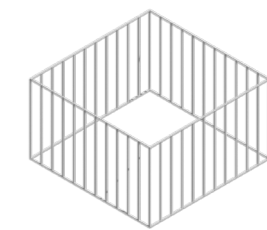
- Close to the outside
- Hevy structure

Pavilion character:

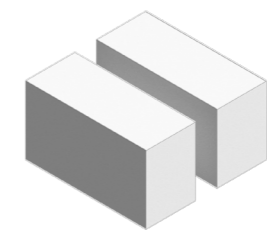
- Open/ transparent
- Light structure



PRIVATE CORE



TRANSLUCENT SHELL



STRONG AXO

Fig.27

SITEPLAN

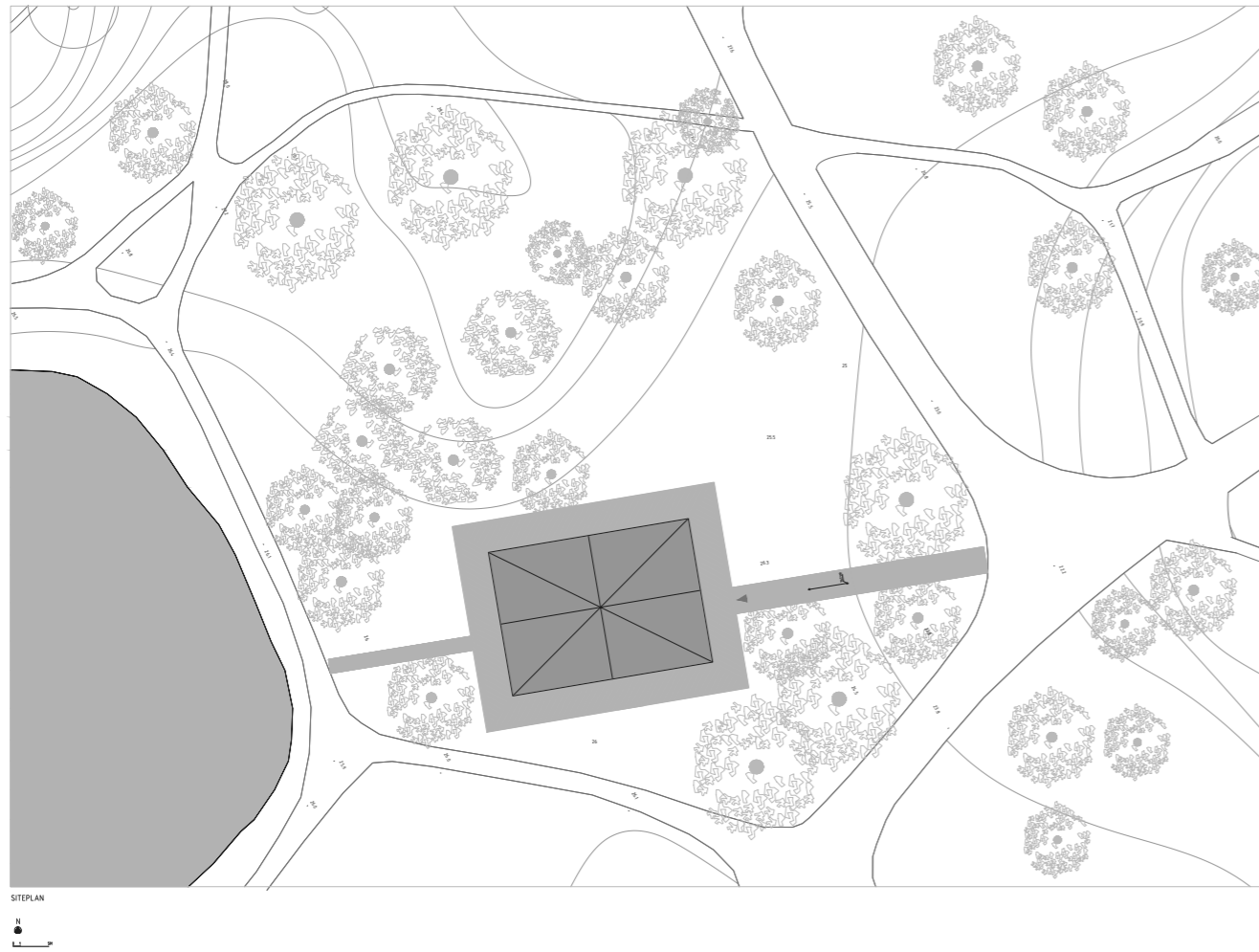


Fig. 28

LOAD BEARING SYSTEM

The building is highly inspired by an art museum by Tado Ando where the design has concrete Y shaped columns that frames the exterior landscape. Instead of concrete the load bearing system for the building is designed in glued laminated timber with a grid shell roof and Y shaped columns.

The placement of the rooms and windows are in harmony within the grid of the column and ceiling. The visibility of the structure was an important element for the design as I wanted the expression to be humble and honest so that the building thereby the building has a limited number of decorative elements. The load bearing structure also creates flexibility in the future.

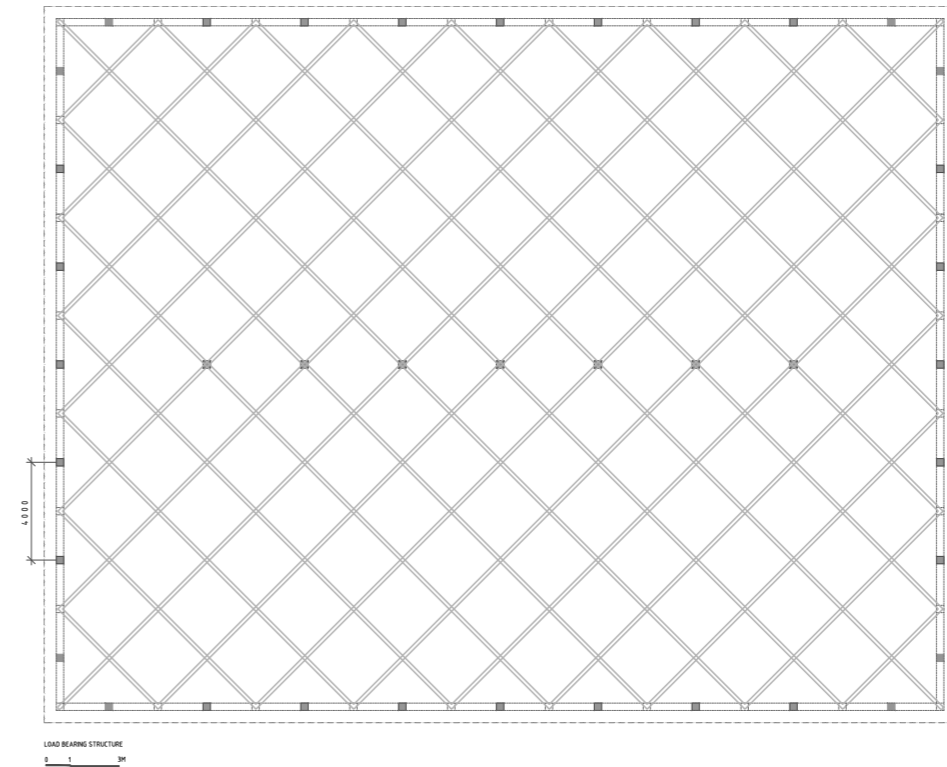


Fig. 29

MATERIALITY

The building has a simple platter of material similar to Tado Ando, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. The construction is in glulam beams and columns, wood, concrete island glass is the main material, the exterior face clad in Norway spruce paneling and the interior floor, ceilings and walls are in oak panels. The expressions are meant to be warm and inviting and the spaces neutral so that ceremonies can be shaped depending on who the ceremonies are for.



CONCRETE



OAK



NORWEGIAN  
SPRUCE

Fig. 30

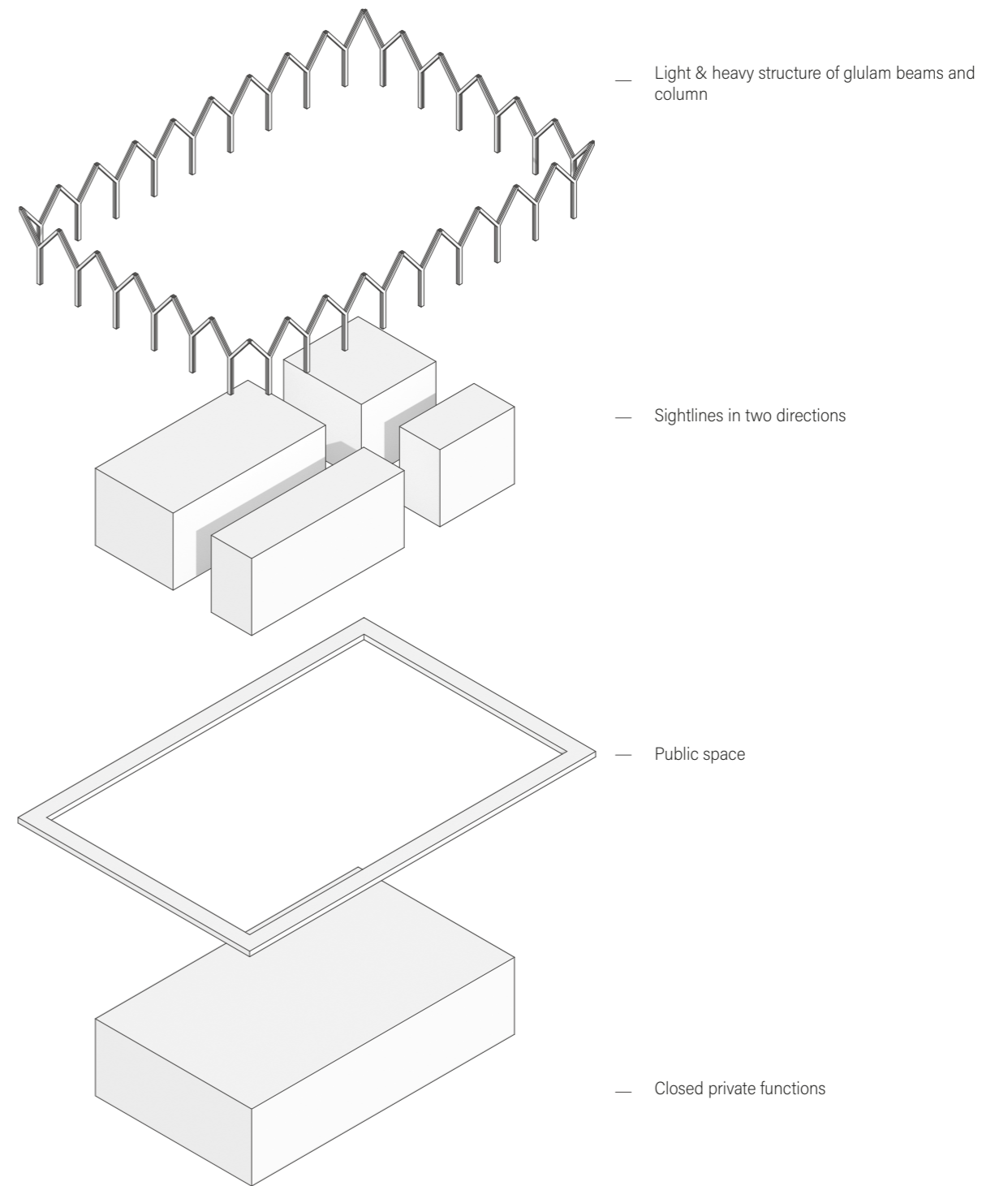


Fig. 31

LIGHT

Light filtered by the Y glulam column and with glass curtain walls in wood to create a depth in the building, the building is offsetted and the windows are carefully placed to both be private but still have connection to the outside. They are placed similar to the Gävle crematorium.

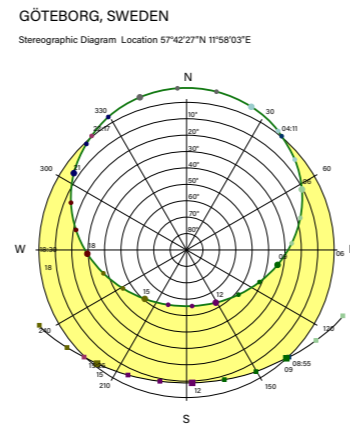
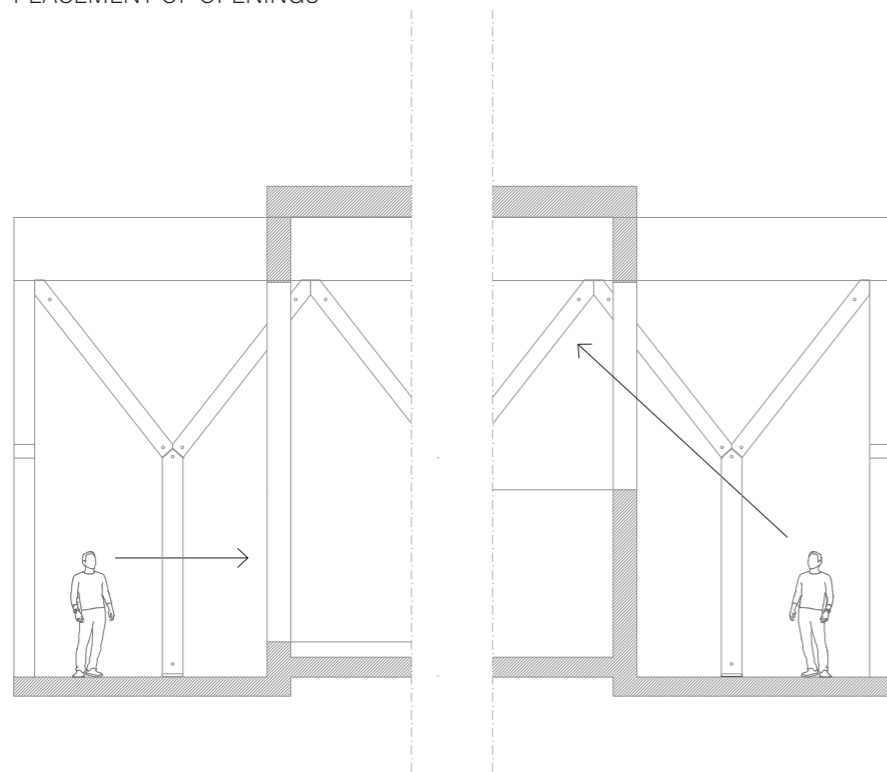


Fig. 32

PLACEMENT OF OPENINGS



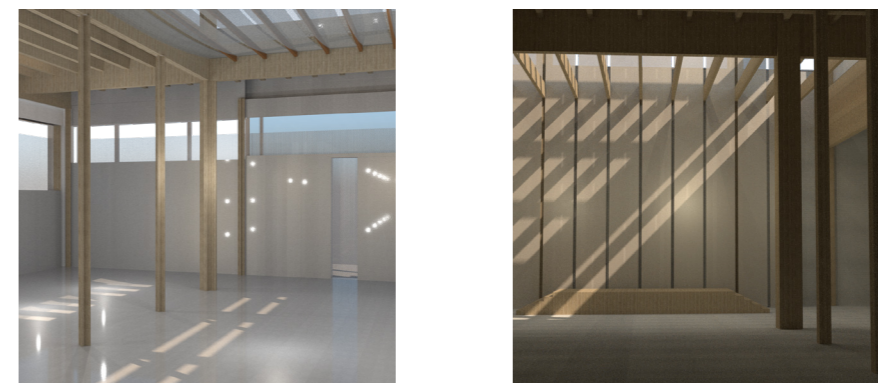
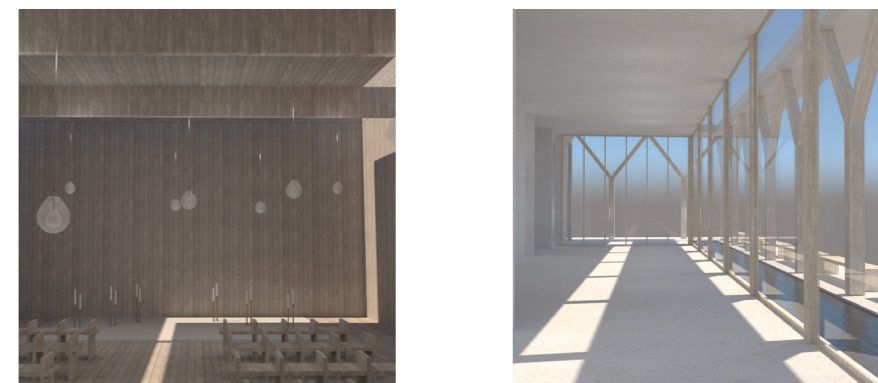
Entrance, corridors & cafe

Ceremonial room & foyer

Fig. 33

LIGHT STUDY

I have tried placement of windows and different expressions for the building. With the concept of both being open and closed I first explored skylight and then decided to use horizontal windows where the surrounding and Y column helps create shows and depth to the ceremonial rooms.



Renderings that test different structures for light

Fig. 34



ELEVATIONS

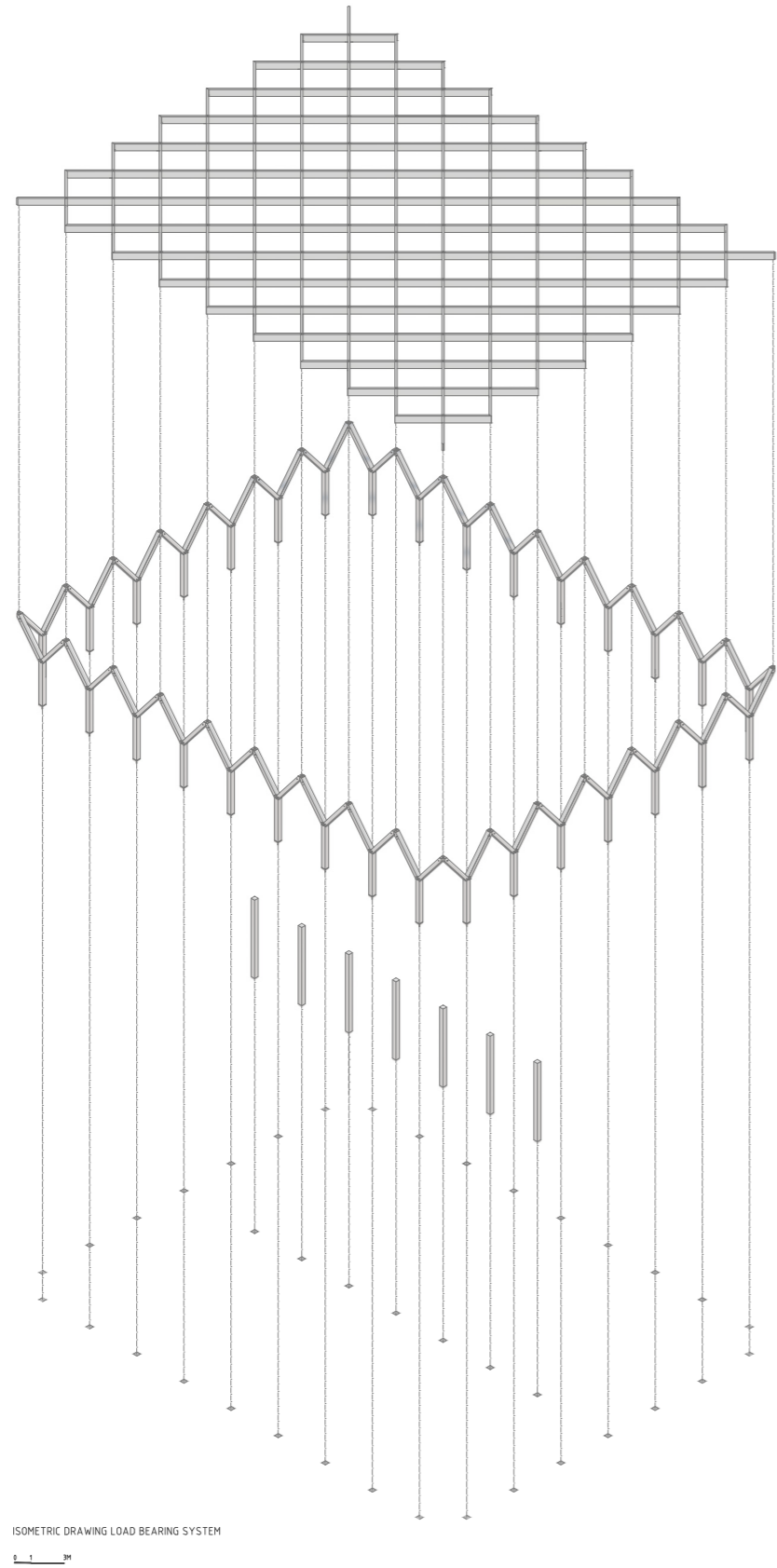


Fig. 39

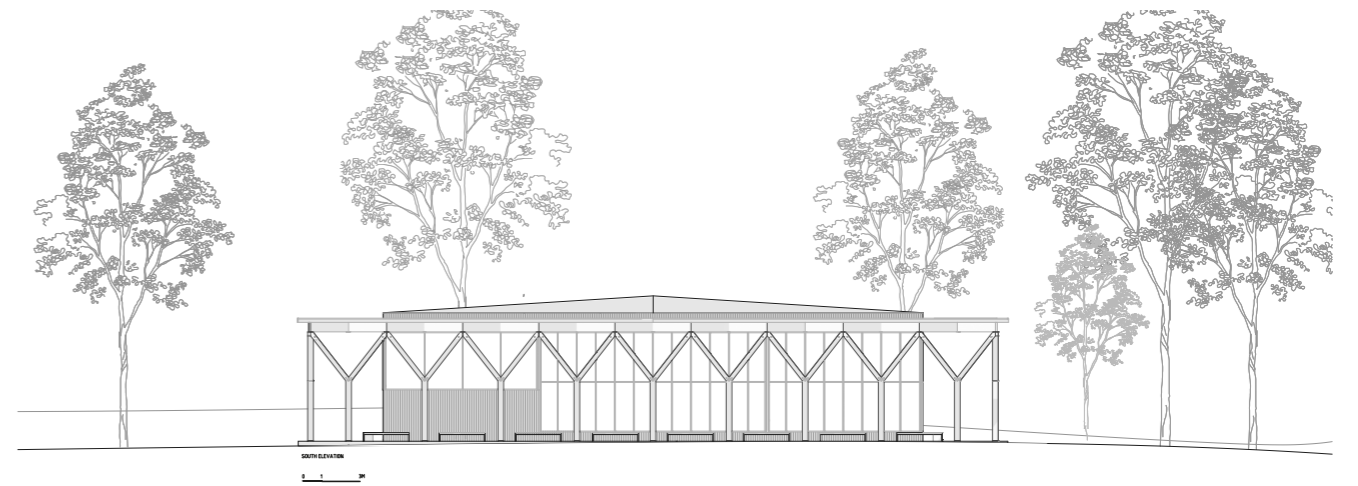


Fig. 40

ELEVATIONS

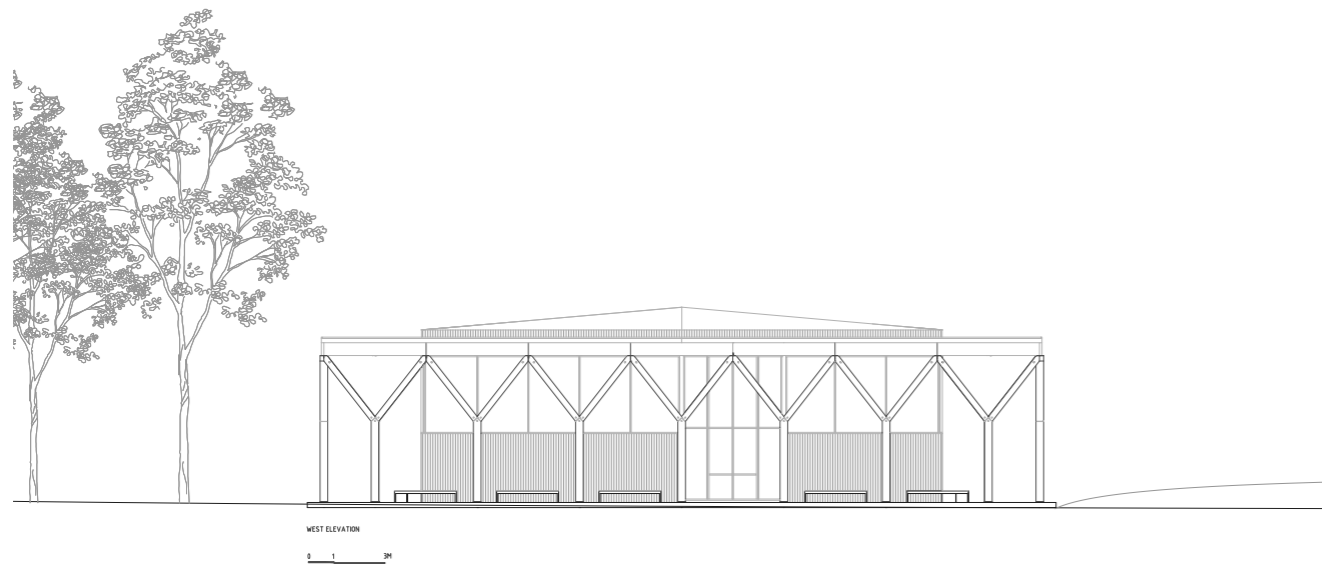


Fig. 41

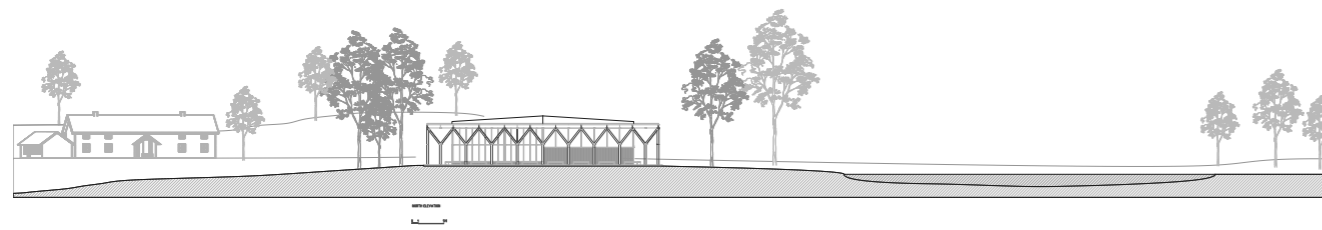


Fig. 42

SECTION

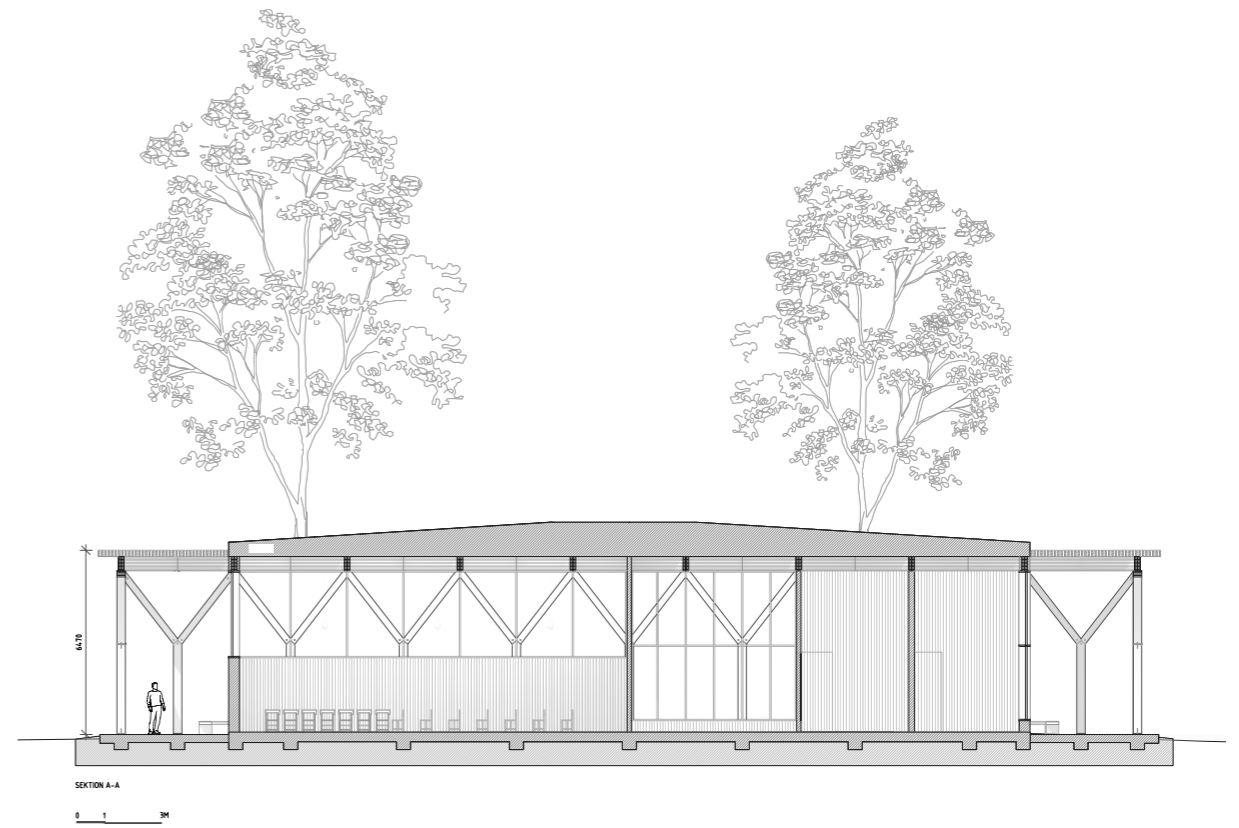


Fig. 43

ROOF PLAN DRAWING

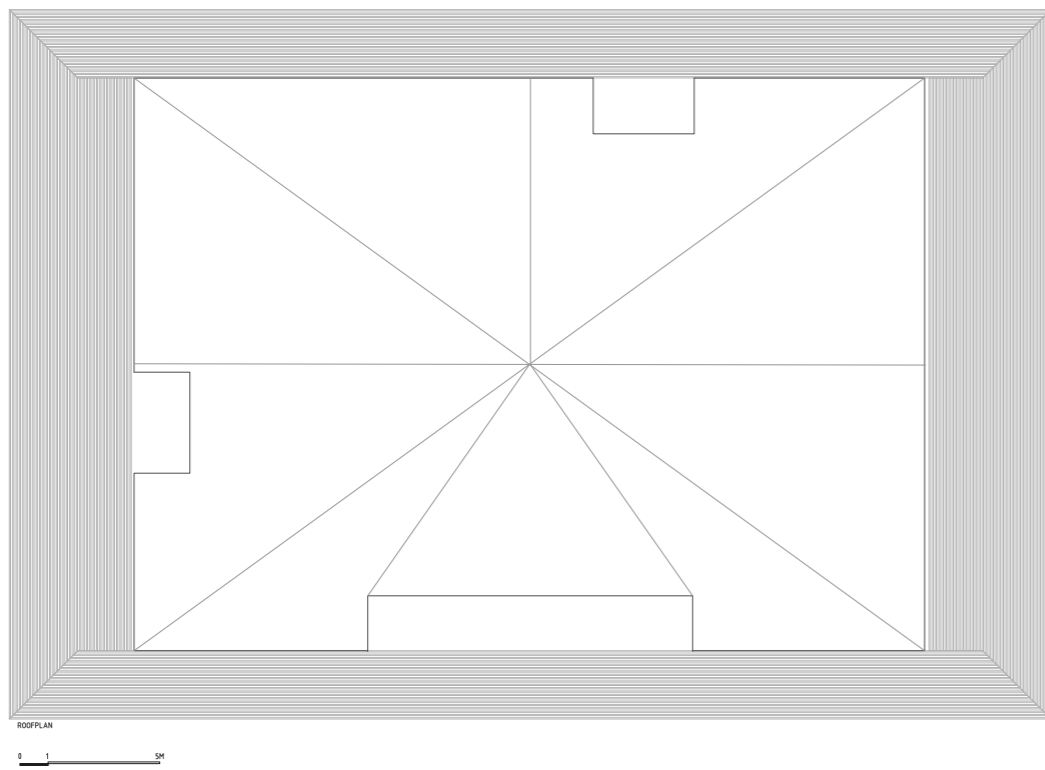


Fig. 44

PLAN DRAWING

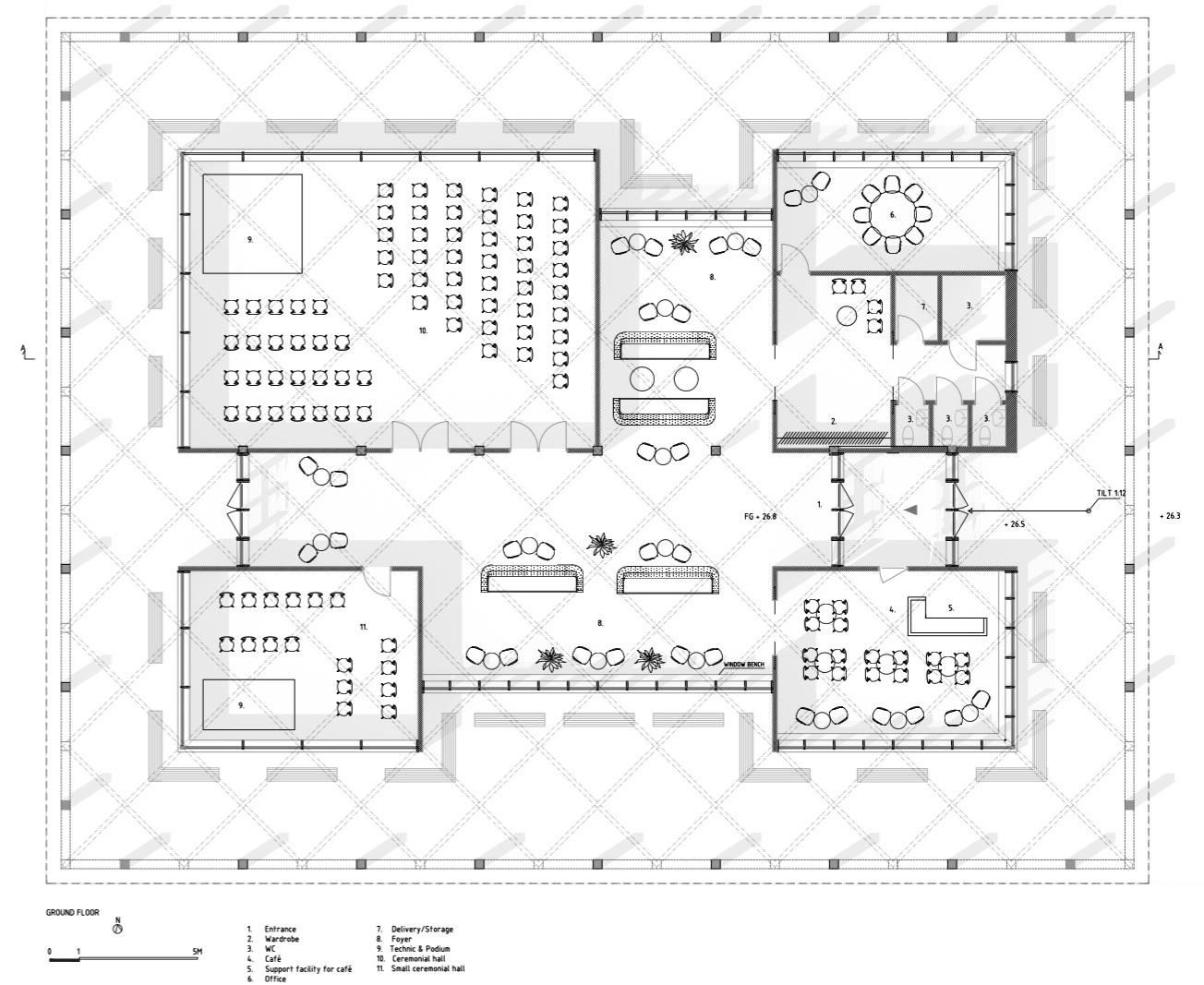


Fig. 44

## EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

The building is placed as a pavilion in an English garden landscape where all sides of the building are open and with a transparent structure.



Fig. 45

## EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

The Y column creates arcades around the building that frames the park landscape and where people can sit in small or large groups on the outside benches and have sunshadeing from the pergola roof. Openings are placed close to the connection points of the loadbearing system so that the structural elements are visible from the inside and out. The building is placed as a pavilion in an English garden landscape where all sides of the building are open and have a transparent structure.



Fig. 46

## INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

Inside the ceremonial rooms the atmosphere is natural so that the ceremonies can be shaped depending on who the ceremonies are for. In the rooms for the ceremonies the windows are placed horizontally and higher up than the rest part of the building. This is so that both private ceremonies can coexist next to public life.



CEREMONIAL ROOM

Fig. 47

## INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE



FOYE

Fig. 48

HALLWAY TO CEREMONIAL ROOM



Fig. 48

VIEW FROM LILLA DAMMEN



Fig. 49

LANDSCAPE PHYSICAL MODEL

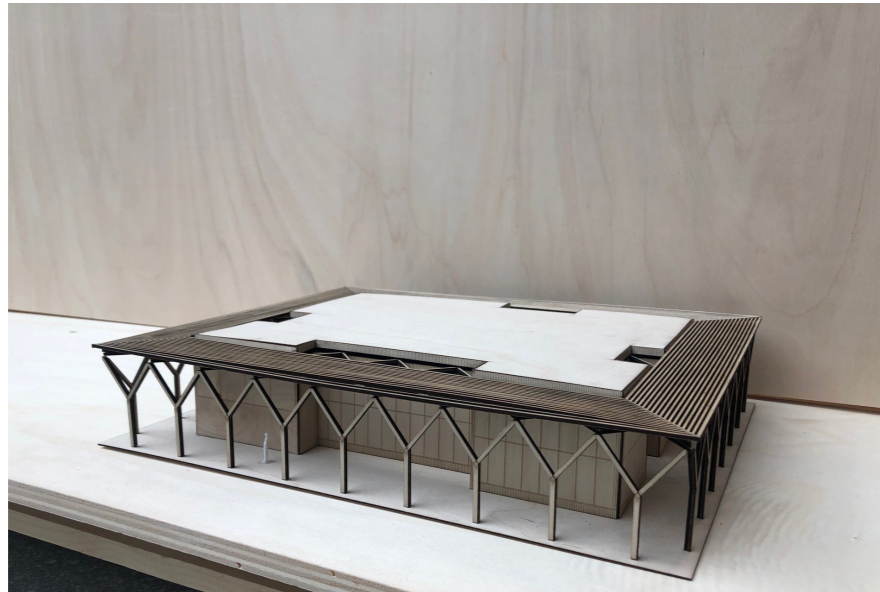


Fig. 50



Fig. 51

LANDSCAPE PHYSICAL MODEL



Fig. 52



Fig. 53

## REFLEKTION

The site became an important element for the design. The combination of ceremonies in public parks is something that works well. In the end I'm quite pleased with how the building is placed in the landscape and structural elements. The ceremonial rooms are something I would like to work more and have found interesting.

Those types of neutral rooms for ceremonies are quite limited and something that can be worked more with. But in the end I think the hybrid format of the building is interesting and works well for civil ceremonies.

## Theoretical &amp; practical references

## Images

Fig. 1 Authors illustration, source of data Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund, Jakob, J., & Ramström, S. (2021). Nio perspektiv på en mänsklig rättighet. Religionsfrihet.

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Fig 12-14 Authors illustration, Google Maps. ( n.d.). [map of Gothenburg]. Retrieved 2023-03-17, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@57.7037614,11.9751632,14z>

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Fig 22-25 Authors illustration, Chalmers Geodata Portal. (n.d.). <https://geodata.chalmers.se/>

Fig 26-29 Authors illustration

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Fig 32 Authors illustration, Sunrise, sunset, dawn and dusk times around the World. (n.d.). Gaisma. <https://www.gaisma.com/en/>

Fig 33- 53 Authors illustration

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