

SAMEGÅRDEN



A SPACE OF ONE'S OWN



Print of an artwork called "Garjját" by Britta Marakatt-Labba,
hanging on a wall in Samegärden.
Picture by Mona Kazemi.

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ABOUT SAMEGÅRDEN

Location:	Kiruna / Giron
Built year:	1973
Architect:	Istvan Poroszlay
Details:	Lars-Levi Sunna
Owner:	Föreningen Kiruna Samegård / The association of Kiruna Samegård
Function:	Hotel, museum, office and meeting space. Kiruna's only Sámi exhibition.
Site area:	1338 m ²
Building area:	306 m ² (17.5m×17.5m)



Picture by Mona Kazemi

THE MOVING CITY

Kiruna owes its origin and complications to the mountain, which also gave the city its name. Gironvárri, in northern Sámi means “grouse mountain”. The city was built in 1900 to serve the mining company Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag (commonly known as LKAB). Giron was renamed to Kiruna for easier pronunciation for the workers moving in and not being familiar with the Northern Sámi language.

As years have passed, the mine has crept closer to Kiruna due to the ore deposit resembling a tilted plate lodged in the ground. The deepest part of the deposit is almost directly underneath the city, and the cavities left after removing the ore are slowly causing the ground to collapse, forcing the city to move further away from the mountain. A move of some parts of the city started in 2017, but the more the industry mines the further the inhabitants have to relocate.

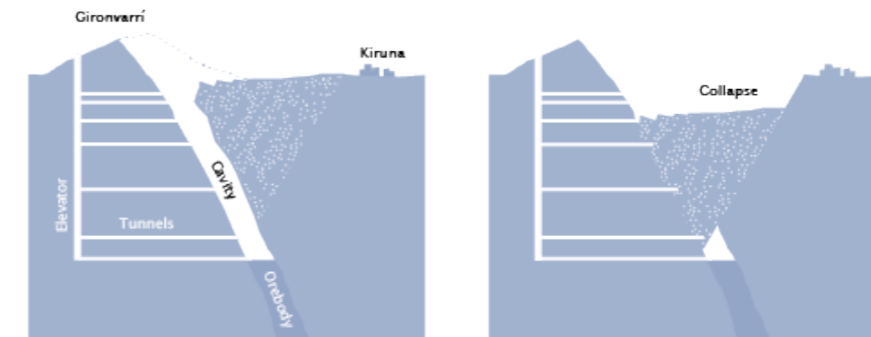


Illustration of the consequences of the mine.



The previous line showing the affected area - Samegården left on the edge.



The previous and the the new line with Samegården included in the area.



KIRUNA - NORTH OF SWEDEN, MIDDLE OF SÁPMI

The ground on which Kiruna lies has an older history than the city itself. Kiruna lies on the border between the Gabna and Leavas Sámi villages, and the area around the mountain has been year-round pastures for reindeer herders. Eight Sámi villages are represented in Kiruna by Sámi communities and economic associations, with Sámi members who work with reindeer herding within the boundaries of the respective communities.

Sámi Communities in Kiruna:

Mountain Sámi: Könkämä, Lainiovuoma, Saarivuoma, Talma, Gabna, Laevas, Girjas.

Forest Sámi: Vittangi.

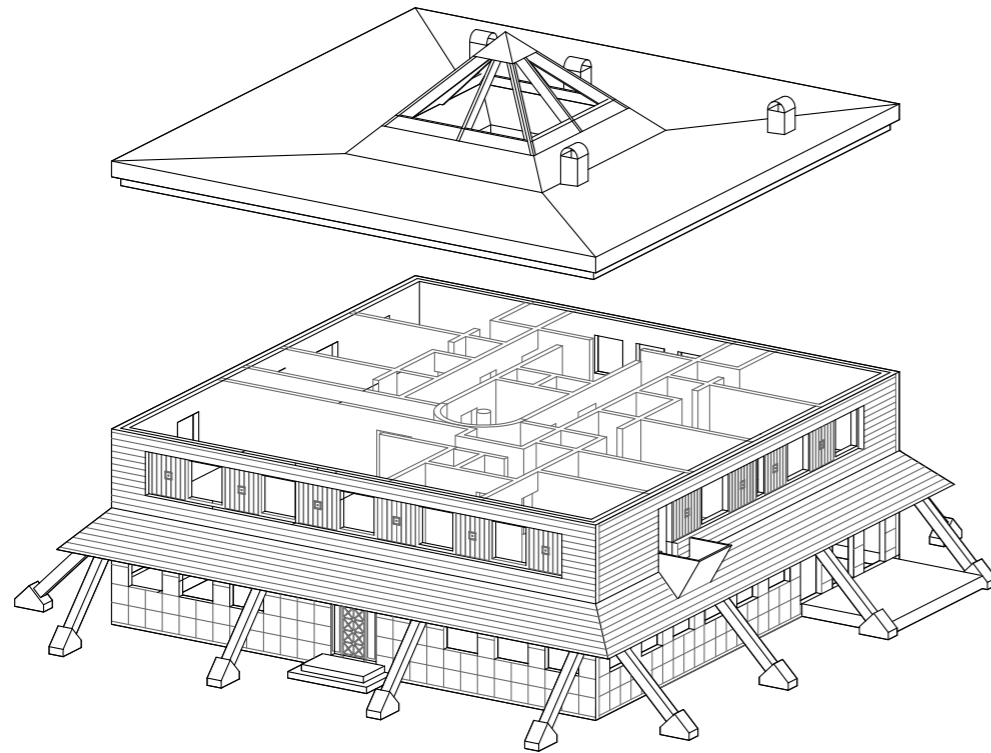


Picture by Mona Kazemi

SAMEGÅRDEN - A STATEMENT OF INJUSTICE

In the middle of the 1900's, Kiruna was a meeting place for Sámi from neighboring villages. They frequently traveled to Kiruna to discuss business and share knowledge and news. At this time, Sámi were not allowed or welcomed in the regular hotels, so they were forced to build a place of their own. After ten years of effort by the Sámi, Samegården was finally built in 1973. The funding came from the municipality, the County Labor Board and LKAB (the mining company).

The top floor is made up of rooms for rent, and the bottom floor is reserved for meeting rooms, offices and exhibition spaces. Samegården is not an institution or a monument. It was built, and is still used, as a space for community.

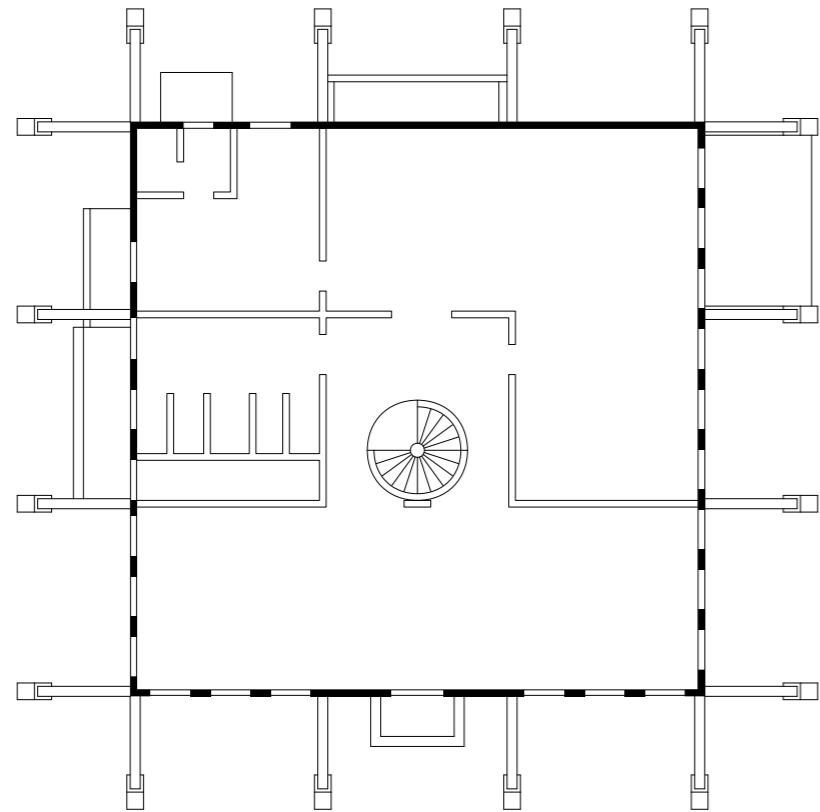


SÁMI EXPRESSION MEETS THE 70'S

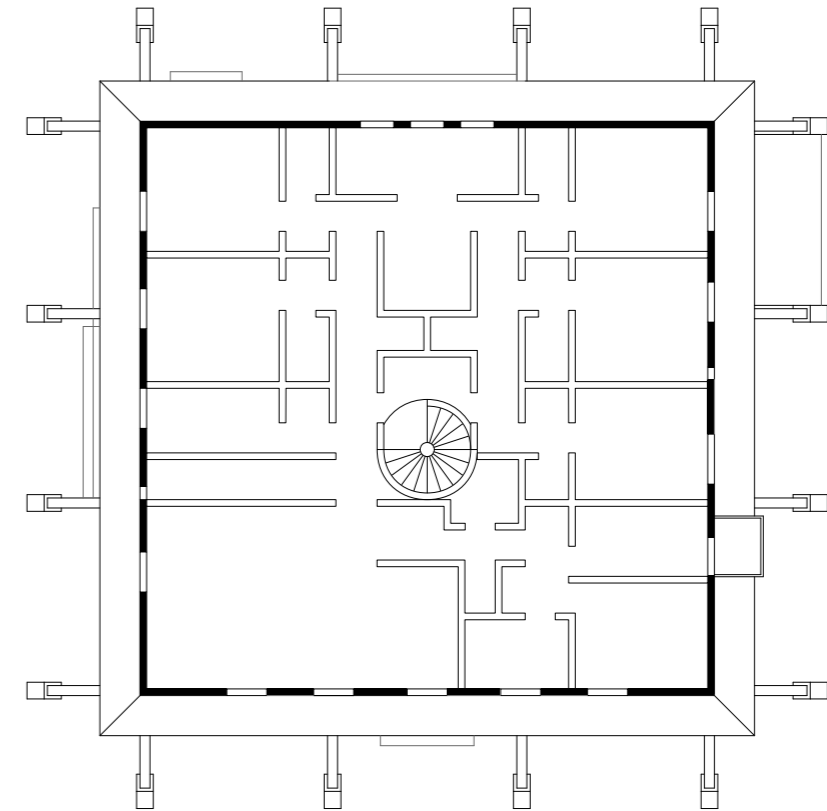
The architect Istvan Poroszlai was not Sámi but came to Sweden and Kiruna as a refugee from Hungary sometime during the middle of the 20th century. At first glance, Samegården looks like a typical functionalistic 70's building. It has many contemporary design features, like a flat roof, brutalist facade materials, and rational floor plan. But when you look closer at the details, colors and ornamentations of the building, you start seeing the connection to the Sámi culture. Lars-Levi Sunna is a Sámi doujáren (craftsman) and artist that was included in the project of Samegården, and is the maker of, for example, the carved door handles.

Although, parts of the building seems to gesture at some traditional Sámi building practices such as the tilted pillars, which resembles the wooden poles of a lávvu, and the glass pyramid in the middle of the roof, which likely imitates the reahpen (the opening for smoke in the top of a lávvu).

Other than the communal function of the building, it is the details and ornamentation of Samegården that makes the building special and unique in terms of architecture.



Plan of first floor



Plan of second floor



Picture by Mona Kazemi

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The future of Samegården is unclear. Since September 2025, the impact area, meaning the area of Kiruna that must be moved or demolished because of the mine, included the building. But since it wasn't previously, Samegården has not yet been assigned a plot in the new city center. This fact worries the board of Samegården since the functions of the building, like the hotel, exhibition and offices require a central plot. However, those are quickly running out. Furthermore, they have expressed the desire to combine Samegården with Giron Sámi Teáhter (Kiruna Sámi Theater) and the Sámediggi head office, which resides in another building in Kiruna, into one grand building.

Even if Istvan Poroszlay's Samegården likely will be demolished, a new building that meets the demands for the Sámi people in and around Kiruna will hopefully be finished in 2029 according to Samegården's board chairman Börje Allas.

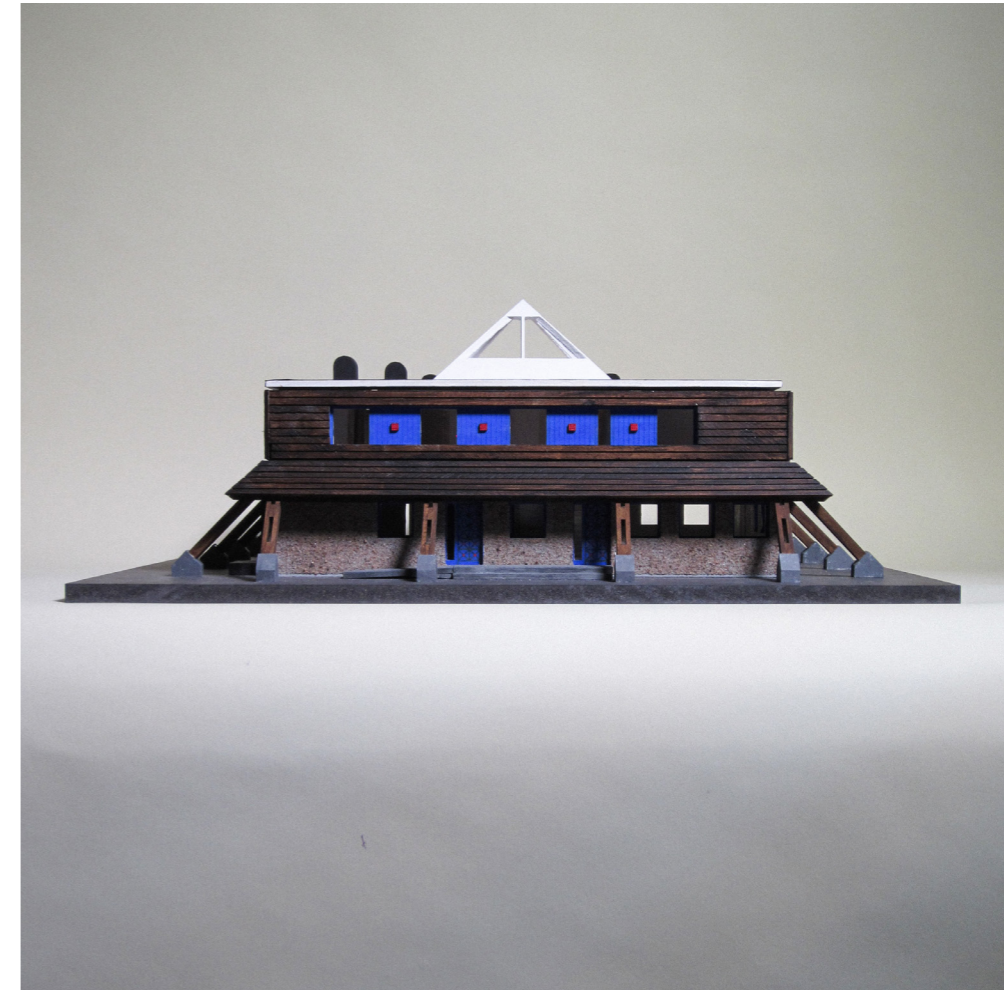
PRESERVING SAMEGÅRDEN

MAIN MODEL

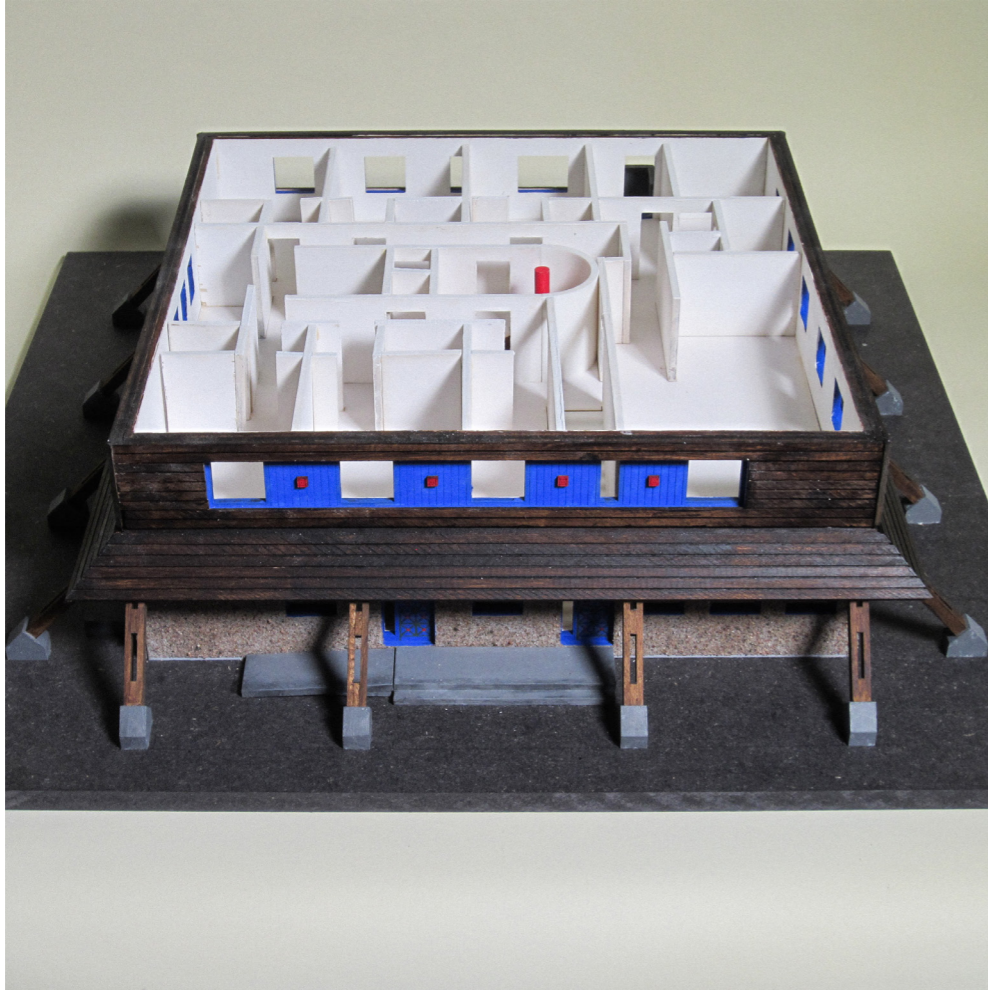
1:50

Since Samegården is likely being demolished, the main model is made to look as realistic as possible in the material and colors, as a way of documenting it. This includes, for example, the wooden panels on the upper half of the facades and the stone panels on the lower half. However, the model highlights the original and more vibrant color palette than what it actually looks like today, since the actual building has been affected by time and weather for more than 50 years.

By lifting the roof of the model, one can see the plan of the rooms on the second floor where Samegården has its main lodging for guests. The spiral staircase in the heart of the building is also painted completely red to enhance it and make it stand out as an important function and detail.



Front view of the main model - entrance facade.



Main model - second floor.



Main model - close-up of corner detail.

LAYERS OF THE LAND - LEFT ON THE EDGE

CONCEPT MODEL

SCALELESS

Do you know what is beneath your feet? Are we showing appropriate respect to the layers that make up our land and our history? What does it mean to live on the edge of understanding, external decision making and (in)justice? And how much are we ready to destroy in search of profit?

The concept model shows the sought-after iron ore situated underneath the long Sámi history and presence in this land. Samegården is standing right on the edge of the model showing the fact that the building was right by LKAB's previous red line marking the "to be demolished or moved"-area, and also the uncertainty and confusion that have been caused by the line moving back and forth in the last decade.



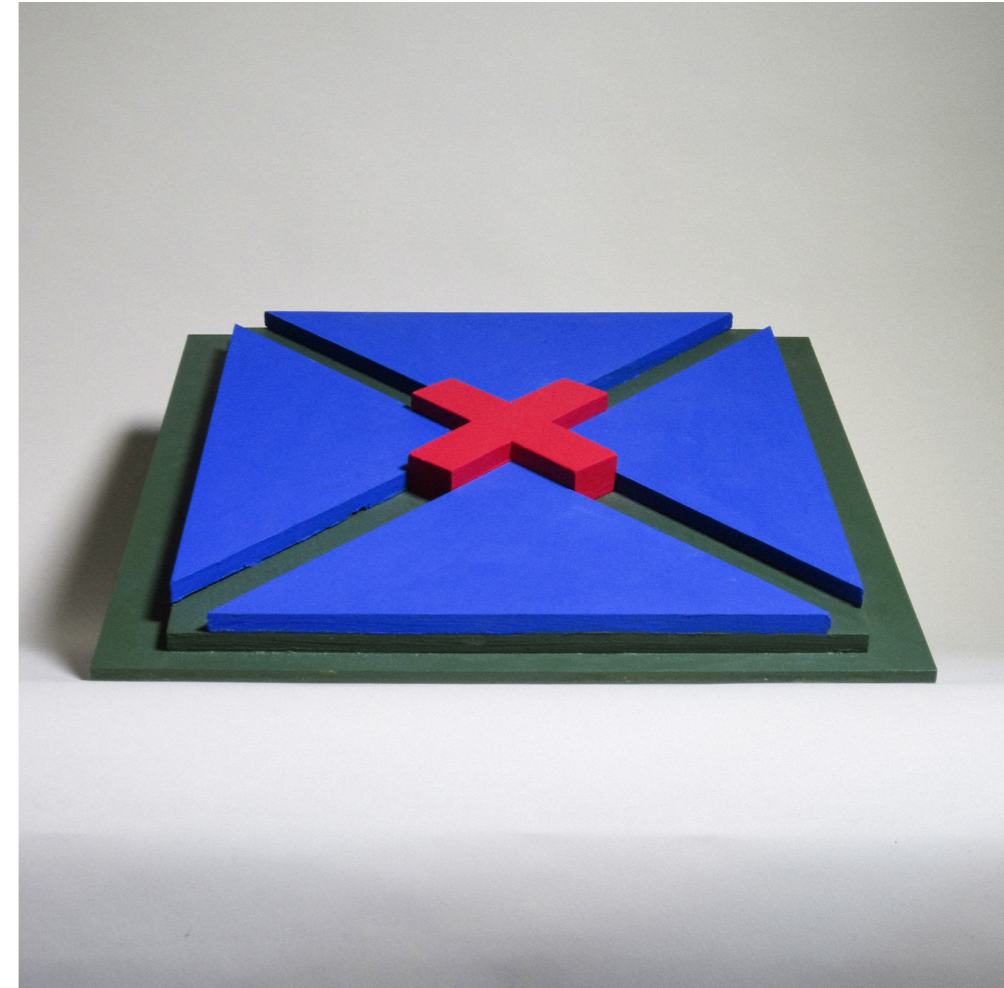
Concept model - front view.

THE DOOR WITH A SÁMI PATTERN

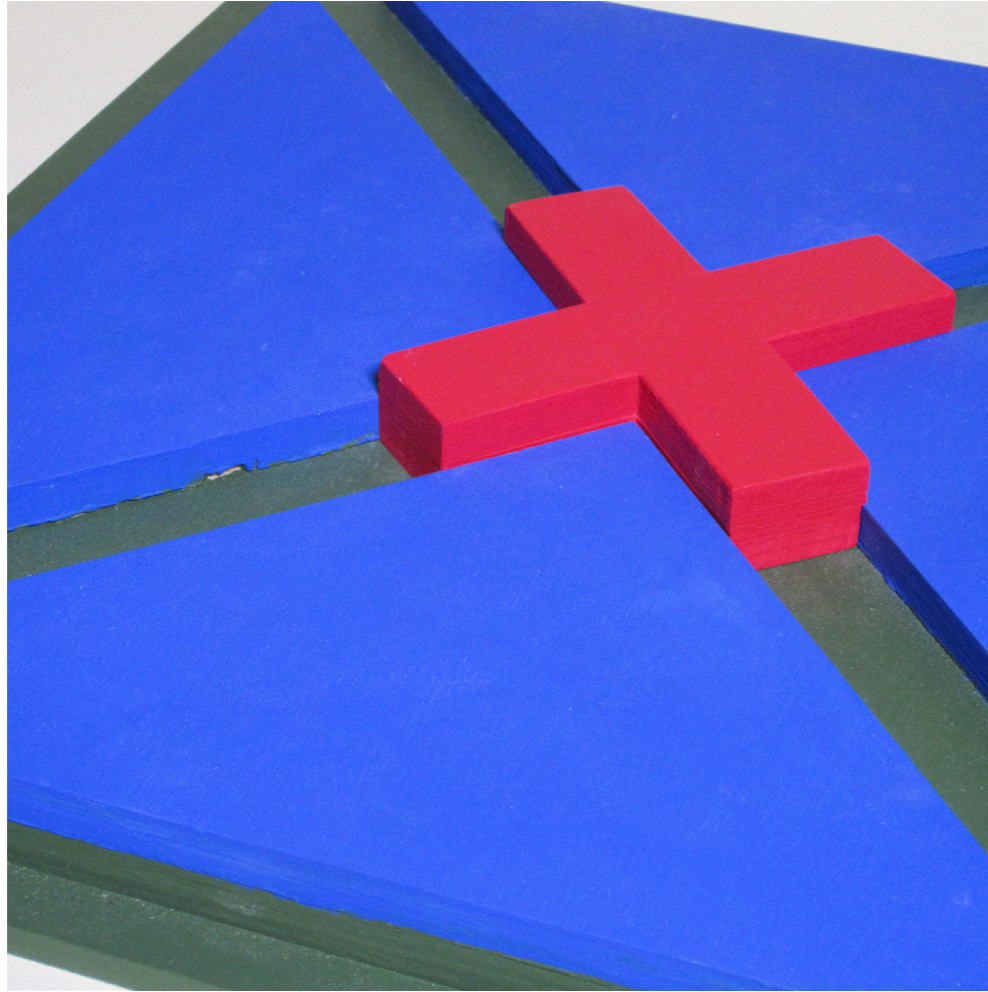
DETAIL MODEL

1:1

The detail model focuses on one of the many ornaments in the building. This one shows the wooden pattern that can be found on the exterior doors painted in red, green and blue.



Detail model - front view.



Detail model - close-up showing color scheme.



Concept model - showing the depth of the cube.

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