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1. Eysturkommuna Town Hall - Osbjørn Jacobsen, Henning Larsen
2. Kolumba Museum - Peter Zumthor
3. Gubbio Cemetery Extension - Andrea Dragoni & Francesco Pes
4. The Yellow House / Das Gelbe Haus - Valerio Olgiati

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INTRODUCTION:

In our contemporary context, we are often encouraged to look toward the future. Design is constantly adapting and advancing. Today architects often design based on a desire to be innovative and original. In some contexts, architectural moves are done in personal interest without responding to a place or its cultural needs. Cultural context is important because it describes the special characteristics of a place that provide people with similarities and points of connection. Failure to respond to these cues leaves communities with architecture that feels universal and insignificant to their place.

What if looking to the past provides more meaningful solutions to contemporary architecture? The past opens up the possibility to explain elements of architecture through vernacular design traditions, contextual clues of a place/its climate, and interpretations of human experience specific to a place. The study of the identity and character of a place is essential in bonding people to the places they live and exist within. When buildings reflect and adapt based on this context they have the power to give meaning not only to those familiar with the context but also to outsiders, as a place can be represented through a building.

This study focused on the significant relationships of each building to its surroundings and its approach to human experience within a specific culture, rooted in its traditions and context. Examining these relationships can allow an important dialogue between past and present to influence a building and its intended users.

With on going globalization, now more than ever buildings should work to be a part of their community. In *Towards A Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance* (1983), Kenneth Frampton addresses the ongoing issues of the universalization of the built world. More grounded architecture "may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site." Each of these elements intrinsically links a building to its environment, because it is not universal. Frampton sets up a framework for architecture that continues with contemporary values while referencing the broader history of the context.

The ambition of the research was a means of exploring four unique buildings that connect to their culture. The study allowed me to better understand architecture's potential dialogue between a site and its history as a means of creating a framework for contemporary architecture.

The criteria for the research included choosing buildings that made a clear connection to their past, created interesting spatial atmospheres with lighting and materials, and addressed their position within the present context. Each of the buildings not only contended with these considerations but presented unique themes specific to each project that inevitably shaped the final conclusions of the research.

The first project is the Eysturkommuna Town Hall located in the Nordragota region of the Faroe Islands, designed by the architect Osbjørn Jacobsen of Henning Larsen. Finished in 2018, the town hall serves as an office, conference hall, and public gathering space. The building works to integrate traditional materials into contemporary architecture and fit within its dramatic natural surroundings.

The second project is the Kolumba Museum in Cologne Germany, designed by architect Peter Zumthor. Finished in 2007 the building preserves hundreds of years' worth of ruins and artifacts within its contemporary design. Its design works to respect years of history through its curated lighting and material choices.

The third project is the Extension of the Gubbio Cemetery in Gubbio Italy, designed by Andrea Dragoni and Francesco Pes. Finished in 2011 the cemetery provides over seven new blocks of above-ground mausoleums while creating new public spaces for meditation. The building utilizes local materials while creating a dialogue between past and present public spaces.

The final project is the Yellow House, designed by Valerio Olgiati. The project was repurposed and refinished by 1997. The new building serves as a blank gallery and museum for local exhibits. The design behind the building challenges its local vernacular and demonstrates simplicity in a form open to interpretation.

Each of the four projects allowed a better understanding of how architecture could connect to its past while being a part of the present. Much like Frampton's framework, each of the projects considers the vernacular as a means of critically advancing—tying the architecture to the specificities of its place. With knowledge of elements such as lighting and materiality demonstrated in each project, an attitude toward contextual contemporary architecture is possible.

METHODOLOGY:

Each of the following chapters will follow the organization of an introduction, a description of the past and present, building descriptions, an architectural analysis of experiential and aesthetic characteristics, and interpretations.

The analysis of all projects was highly reliant on the relationship of the building from past to present. Before traveling to each site, I studied each building through photographs, existing drawings, and reading about the history of the place. This information allowed me to write a small historical analysis of each building's pertinent regional history. Similarly, once arriving at each location, I documented the local context with photographs, sketches, and notes on present experiences. The comparison between the past and present of each project and their context influenced the final interpretations of the study. For each project, a thorough building description was also created. The descriptions assess factual elements of each of the projects found in research, photographs, sketches, and diagrams.

The architectural analysis of experiential and aesthetic characteristics include lighting, materiality, and acoustics—the main factors of study within the project. The documentation is consistent with photographs, sketches, and diagrams. This analysis aims to demonstrate the important role that lighting and materiality have on the ability to connect architecture to its place.

The final section explains the concluding interpretations considering all of the previous elements of the study. The interpretations written were a product of my experience throughout each building and how they conformed to previous ideas, regarding past or present, or how they moved away from them. This study allowed me to better understand the role of personal experience, especially in connecting to the larger goal of understanding how architecture fits within its context.

EYSTURKOMMUNA TOWN HALL

NORDRAGOTA, FAROE ISLANDS

HENNING LARSEN | 2018

PAST:

Fig. 01 map in relation to the Faroe Islands

Approximately 1,523 km from the nearest mainland, the Faroe Islands rest in the north east Atlantic Ocean. Since the sixth-century, people have inhabited the cold, wet, and rugged islands. The islands are characterized by lush moss, grass, and mountain bog that cover steep mountains surrounded by dark blue fjords and inlets. Little to no trees or vegetation grow on the island as strong westerly winds and consistent gales blow throughout the landscape.

The earliest recorded inhabitants on the island were Irish and Scottish monks. Many of these Celtic Christians were inspired by the biblical stories of Jesus' exile into the desert. The word *Poustinia* describes a place, such as the desert, to find prayer and silence. Many believe that early Celtic Monks made a treacherous journey across the ocean to the Faroe Islands to find *Poustinia* and raise flocks of sheep. As a result, the barren islands became characterized by cold stone and brick settlements solely created to outfit and supply monks and their flocks of sheep.

Fig. 02 & 03 turf homesteads in Kirkjubøur c. 11th century

Around the year 800, the Vikings from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden traveled in search of new land and territory.[1] Many traveled on to Iceland but stopped in the Faroe Islands. Early Vikings began by raiding these islands for any resources available. Later on, settlers followed and set up homesteads on higher vantage points. Evidence of early Viking settlements can still be seen today in towns such as Kvivik. Here technical methods of thick stone walls were placed strategically on the landscape for exposure to the elements. Centuries later they still remain in basic outlines and ruins.[2]

1 "Kvívík, Streymoy." Viking Archaeology. Accessed December 8, 2022. http://viking.archeurope.com/settlement/faroe-islands/kvivik-streymoy/.

2 Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). Faroe Islands. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.britannica.com/place/Faroe-Islands-Atlantic-Ocean

The people of the Faroe Islands have been greatly dependent on the climate of the place. For hundreds of years, Faroese people learned to live off a cold and brutal climate. The people relied on their flocks of sheep, fishing, and whaling around the islands, and for many, it was a risky place to live. Architecture in the area grew out of utility and basic necessity. As a result, Faroese architecture became highly reliant on using local materials and buildings. More specifically homesteads were dependent on turf building. Thick stone walls were collected from the naturally rocky-volcanic area and composed many homesteads. Settlers strategically arranged buildings with large stone walls on sides of strong wind-facing environments. They used siding materials which were often created from floating driftwood. This material comprised more sheltered spots on the building. Turf was also harvested and used as insulation as well as sound and wind barriers. As a result, older homes and buildings while blending within the landscape worked efficiently for their users. This established a clear utilitarian language based on the available materials and reaction to the harsh climate.

Fig. 04 & 05 old church in Saksun, Saksunar Kirka c. 1858, featuring turf roof construction

PRESENT:

Fig. 06 illustration of the size and scope of the capital city of Torshavn

Today close to 50,000 people still inhabit the Faroe Islands. One-fourth of the population lives in the capital city of Torshavn.[3] Many others still live in remote homesteads throughout the islands. There are only 120 small villages and towns in the country. As a result, many of the islands are highly remote and spread out. As I spent time on the islands, I learned that despite the it's cold and isolated nature, the communities in many towns reflect quite the opposite. Children are always playing outside, even despite the gray weather, and many demonstrate that they rarely feel the need to worry about locking their car. Local events and festivals are continuously happening. Wherever you went, despite obviously being from a foreign place, people were kind and willing to help.

Walking through local towns and villages seemed quiet and deserted. It was easy to imagine how little the basic identity of the place has changed since the first settlers arrived. Unexpectedly when inside local restaurants or shops, I was surprised by warmer friendly environments. Many restaurants beamed with warm atmospheres and were filled with conversation. Quiet streets served as a mask to a lively community.

3 Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). Faroe Islands. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.britannica.com/place/Faroe-Islands-Atlantic-Ocean

While I spent time in Old Town Torshavn or even driving throughout the islands, I noticed how relevant old buildings were to the current community. Buildings from years past were still under original use or repurposed. I began to notice that architecture mainly consisted of two forms there. Most were either existing structures for homes or farming and reflected those qualities in design—careful to recycle existing buildings. The others were more exceptional buildings that were dignified in their program. Churches, government buildings, and universities most commonly reflected this nature and often branched out from the surrounding style of small village houses or stone farm buildings. Architecture with modern qualities, of large glass paneling and abstract forms experimented with defining modern Faroese architecture. These buildings represented the current culture and left me to consider how such a historically and geographically rich place moves forward with modern means of design.

Fig. 07 & 08 example of the two main variations of architecture: utility & exceptionality (Fig. 07 photo of Vesturkirkjan Church Torshavn, c. 1975)

Fig. 09 road system on the Faroe Islands

While the islands may be drastically remote, the infrastructure displayed throughout the islands is impressively current. Much has been done in that each of the islands is accessible by car, except for two which require a ferry ride if weather permits. Large underwater tunnel systems are in place and newly paved roads reach even the most remote villages within the areas. Alien-like windmill fields are visible around Torshavn. These are strategically placed on the hilltops of the city to take advantage of the strong gales helping to power the city. On most days, there is too much fog to view these structures until you are driving right next to them. Their stark scale and qualities are a reminder that even the most desolate places are working to keep up with current progress.

Fig. 10 windmill field outside of capital Torshavn

Fig. 11 exterior view of the Eysturkommuna Town Hall

BUILDING HISTORY & ARCHITECT:

Finished in 2017 The Town Hall Eysturkommuna was the first of a phase of regenerative community buildings intended to revive the villages of Norðragøta, Gøtugjógv, and Sydrugøta. The building would act as a physical and metaphorical bridge between the communities to unit them into the municipality of Eystur. The council members needed a space for individual offices, conference rooms, and gathering spaces.

The design behind the town hall needed to respond to the demanding and dramatic landscape to fittingly represent the people of the three villages. Local architect, Osbjørn Jacobsen served as lead designer and his native background would bring a valuable understanding of the area to the project. While studying the building, I had the opportunity to meet Jacobsen to visit the Town Hall and his office. Jacobsen, while from The Faroe Islands, spent time studying and working overseas in Denmark becoming a part of the largely known firm Henning Larsen. Henning Larsen's work is commonly known for its spectacular multi story city centers, museums, public housing, and more. Jacobsen would later expand to form a small firm in the town of Sydrugøta, in the Faroe Islands. Here he focuses on community projects that address the need for more public spaces. His practice of architecture strives to create a language for Faroese architecture. He describes his viewpoint by stating, "A central theme in traditional Faroese architecture is the blurred line between nature and building, the fact that the spectator has difficulties distinguishing where the landscape ends and the building begins. The primary conceptual idea behind the design of the Town Hall is driven by the notion of this fleeting line between landscape and building – I believe that could be one way to approach modern Faroese architecture." His interpretation of building new architecture on the islands is reliant on including context and incorporating it into the design. This incorporation adds meaning and connection for the people that will use the building. The mark left on the landscape is carefully considered and purposefully placed.

Fig. 12 diagram of three villages in region

PROGRAM & DESCIPTION:

Within the multi angular structure, the resolution to the Town Hall is composed of office spaces (large and small), utility rooms such as kitchens and archives, and meeting or conference rooms. Each function of the program sits within the switchback shaped building angling individual rooms and bridging across the stream.

From the exterior, the building appears like an unfolded piece of landscape as native turf covers the structure. The roof is accessible as a path over the building that takes users up and down the building. Both sides of the Town Hall provide options of angular incline to a rooftop bench which views the dynamic ocean and mountain landscape. It becomes an extraordinary space to sit quietly and enjoy the view.

Fig. 13 view to the south-east displaying the building's landscape-like qualities

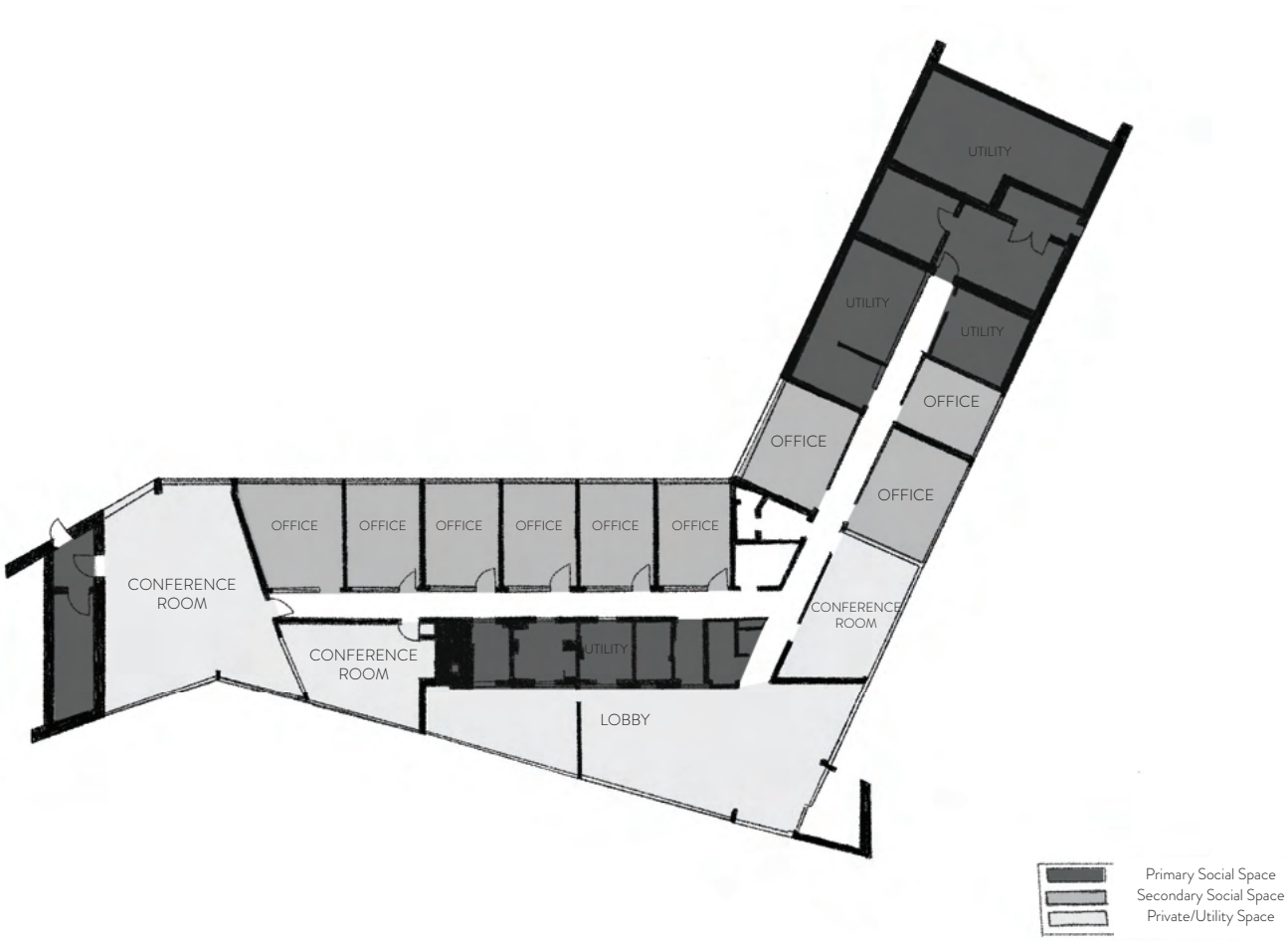


Fig. 14 spatial floor plan diagram

On the interior, from the lobby a simple palette of light wood and concrete are introduced and extend throughout each space. Sleek light fixtures are elegantly placed in each space establishing an atmosphere of simplicity. Timber acoustic paneling is displayed in more significant spaces for its functional and aesthetic qualities.

A large reception room is found in the middle of the building, acting as a buffer space between the large conference room and the private offices and work rooms. The wall separating the public space from the private areas consists of a system of black sliding panels which were initially used to open offices and private conference rooms to the public. The town hall works to incorporate receptions for private and public occasions and allows the architecture to actively serve the community.

Fig. 15 & 16 interior photos of conference room

photography by Nic Lehoux, courtesy of Henning Larsen

Fig. 17 exterior view of conference room and office spaces

The conference room is settled above a creek with a round window cut into the floor from which the meeting table is shaped around. This was done as a reference to North American native tribes who proposed and signified importance in the circle as a democratic forum. The space itself results in a multifunctional room in which not only politically instrumental things take place, but also community events such as plays and concerts put on by locals.

Large panes of glass expand through the center of the building exposing the dominant conference room. The conference room is wrapped in acoustic timber panels that allow sound to be absorbed and create a light quality that is consistent throughout the building. Artificial lighting fits within this wood composition that extends across both walls onto the ceiling. The warm wood meeting tables are unitized and custom-made in how they transform to serve many purposes. Care is taken to actively allow the space to serve many functions.

The eastern portion of the building holds the council members and staff meeting rooms and offices. The building wraps and angles such that rooms face surrounding views of the landscape and the town. The wrap and angular quality is also found in the layout and advance of each individual office and room. A long hallway connects office spaces on either side at times meeting up with the exterior to provide a view outward.

ELEMENTS:
MATERIALITY

Given that the Faroe Islands are remote, the need to work with the land is imperative. Buildings constructed before 20th-century advances still stand as testimony of the quality of traditional construction. For many buildings, basalt fieldstones were largely used as foundations and the rest of the structure was commonly built from wood which was waterproofed with tar until the 19th century. Faroese architecture presents a unique solution with turf roofs. A thick layer is placed on the top of the building with birch as a proto-flashing material. The dense roofing creates an insulated and soundproof enclosure.

The Town Hall purposefully utilizes these traditional methods as a way to relate to the people that it serves. From the outside of the building, black tar painted wood panels wrap around the angular exterior. This not only emphasizes the sliced earth qualities intended by the architect, but it relates to the local history of dark tar-covered wood-paneled buildings. Similarly, the turf roof acts as a buffer of continuous material from the earth to the built form. The turf roof also speaks to the language drawn on by past generations. The architect intentionally realized the benefits of using this local material in its insulative and efficient properties. This alone becomes one of the most defining and establishing qualities of the building itself. [4]

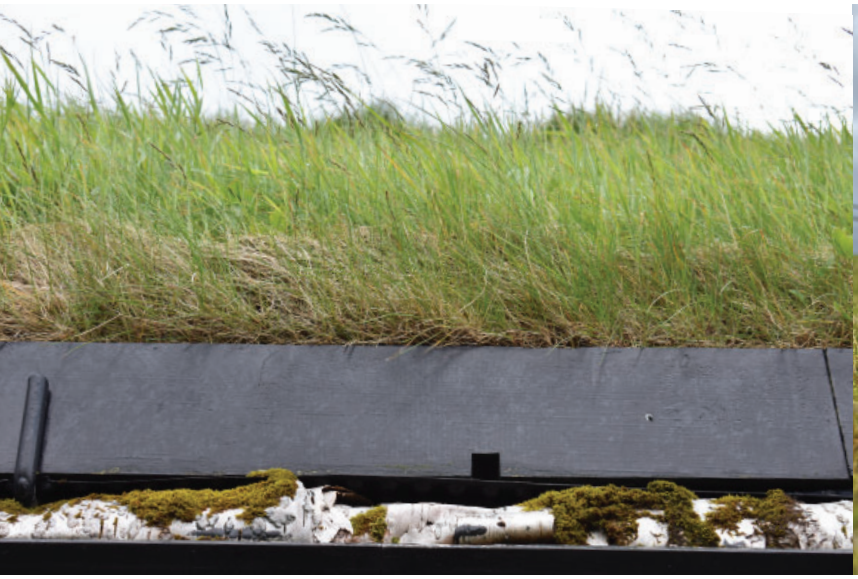


Fig. 18 & 19 comparison of old turf roof at Saksunar Kirkja, Church of Saksun, c. 1858 vs. contemporary turf roof at town hall

4 Connectivity and 'green' craft: Exploring the infrastructure and architecture of the Faroe Islands. Default. (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sah-blog/sah-blog/2016/10/25/connectivity-and-green-craft-exploring-the-infrastructure-and-architecture-of-the-faroe-islands

ELEMENTS:
DIALOGUE

By speaking to the architect, Osbjørn Jacobsen, of Henning Larsen in the Faroe Islands, I grasped a better understanding of the purpose of the building and his outlook as a contemporary Faroese architect. In conversation and interview, I realized the importance he places on human experience and on the life of the Town Hall. Upon asking how community members intially reacted to the building, especially with its bold qualities, Jacobsen stated that many were reluctant to accept the building at first. Through time they better understood the connections and symbols the building was trying to impart. Today, it is a symbol of pride for the small community and acts as an outward representation of both localities.

Jacobsen's approach to architecture in the Faroe Islands also seeks out the appropriate outlook for new buildings in this environment. Jacobsen expressed he realizes the significance of blurring the line between the landscape and the building. He posed to me, "In the relationship of building to landscape, where does the human experience fall? Does the incorporation and value of landscape positively affect the people who inhabit the spaces?" In the Town Hall, not only does it reflect landscape on the exterior, but it is continuously referencing what is beyond through large windows and cutouts in the floor to expose immediate scenery. The building continuously provides all users with beautiful views from most every room. In this, one realizes the care taken to afford all users a positive experience and engage in this connection to the landscape.[5]

Circulation and access are a means of correspondence for experience of the building. The access to the roof is an upfront example of how people are meant to utilize the architecture. The carved-out space apart of the Town Hall to sit directly atop the building allows people a place to contemplate and view. This approach of creating accessible architecture emphasizes Jacobsen's goal of blending the architecture with the landscape.

5 Smith, T. (2022, July 4). Interview with Ósbjørn Jacobsen. personal.

INTERPRETATIONS:

The Town Hall has become a beacon of past history to present communities. Much care and importance are placed on useful and meaningful parts of history. These parts continuously impact and influence the relationship of their community to its place. The architecture realizes and makes aware that history should continue to be represented in buildings for years to come.

People within the area have come to take pride in the building and indirectly in the supportive historical architecture. It establishes a reality where rural communities can feel empowered by buildings of the past and present. Not only does it uplift its community, but it provides opportunities for engagement. It resists the urge to become just like its vernacular but finds a way to continue with contemporary means of design.

From an outside perspective, the Town Hall is the representative of its communities. It makes others aware of its past and it connects to its dynamic surrounding. It is an important reminder that even the most remote and rural settings deserve meaningful architecture.

KOLUMBA MUSEUM

COLOGNE, GERMANY

PETER ZUMTHOR | 2007

PAST:

The history of Cologne, Germany dates back to Roman expansionism. In the year 38 BCE with the help of the local tribe Ubii the Roman general Agrippa colonized the area. The Rhine River was a vital resource and focal point for the settlement of Cologne. In the next 300 years, the city would see expansion with various Roman leaders. Notably, Constantine the Great would construct a bridge across the Rhine River in the year 310, to expand transportation and the built environment. Much evidence is left from the prosperous and booming city, such as ceramics and glass that were highly produced during these times. Much of the architecture is also left buried under the existing city, attesting to the once large Roman inhabitance.

Early Cologne, was also characterized by its prodigious Christian community. The Roman Emperor Charlemagne named the city to be archbishopric in the eighth century, which distinguished the city with more leadership. Consequently, the power of the archbishop would create difficulties with merchants in the medieval period, when production and industry were flourishing. [6]

Due to the growth of Christianity during the medieval period of Cologne, churches embraced the widespread Romanesque style of the time. Over the course of the tenth to the thirteenth century, twelve new Romanesque Churches would be built in Cologne. Here the style that referenced Roman and Byzantine architecture would seem to fit the needs of larger congregations due to pilgrimages. Romanesque architecture displayed barrel and groin vaults, vaulted windows and thresholds, as well as pointed bell towers and rounded apses. These features would accommodate relics from saints and a growing population of clergy and congregation.[7]Cologne became distinguished by these abundant churches.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries would bring a surge in industry, transportation, and politics. Major railways were built proposing Cologne as an ideal railway center, leaving a major impact on the organization of the city. Influential thinkers such as Karl Marx, Friederich Engels, and Ferdinand Freiligrath would express new ideas and liberal viewpoints influencing future political and economic ideals for Germany.

6 Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). History of cologne. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.britannica.com/place/Cologne-Germany/History

7 Romanesque art and architecture overview. The Art Story. (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.theartstory.org/movement/romanesque-art/

Fig. 20 “Old Cologne” featuring St. Maria im Kapitol Church and 15th century buildings in back ground

The twentieth century would bring two world wars that would completely change the city and the people within it. During World War II, the night of May 30, 1942 would bring 1,046 bombers. As a result, 90% of the city of Cologne would be flattened and turned into ruins. The allied forces during World War II would drop close to two million metric tons of bombs over Germany and Nazi-occupied portions of Europe.[8]While the war would produce an immense amount of deaths, most would be left homeless. This would be especially true in larger cities such as Berlin and Cologne.

Although there was vast devastation, people would spend decades rebuilding and recovering from the war. Much of Cologne was reduced to rubble, but perhaps the most impressive building would remain standing. The Cologne Cathedral, begun in 1248 and finished in 1880, withstood the bombings with minor damages. The building was constructed out of regional limestone which has weathered to dark charcoal hues. The Cathedral is a testimony to the gothic style with two towering bell towers and five aisles on the interior. The church itself is 516 feet tall acting as a beacon to the city.[9]

8 Tretheway, M. G., & Tribune, I. H. (1992, June 2). 1,046 bombers but Cologne lived. The New York Times. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/02/opinion/IHT-1046-bombers-but-cologne-lived.html

9 Centre, U. N. E. S. C. O. W. H. (n.d.). Cologne cathedral. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from

Fig. 21 city of Cologne after World War II bombings *photo courtesy of Department of Defense/National Archives, Washington, D.C.*

Fig. 22 front elevation of Cologne Cathedral Drawn by J. Jourdan *and engraved by J. Bury for 'Monuments Anciens et Modernes' Deuxieme Serie, by Jules Gailhabaud, Paris 1847.*

Fig. 23 view of Cologne Cathedral entering the city by train

PRESENT:

Riding into the city from the train, the Cologne Cathedral stands as a prominent icon. The train station, originally built in 1859, reflects a booming industrial notion from its time. A large cast iron structure covers the thousands of travelers moving in and out. The station serves as a vital lifeline to the city.

Although the cathedral stands as a reminder of a long-standing history, new buildings surrounding it initiate a different atmosphere. Throughout the city modern architectural interventions often take their place infilled between older structures. The square makes apparent the theme of reconstruction of the historical city.

Fig. 24 aerial view towards modern Cologne

Fig. 25 Cologne train station view from cathedral square

In Cologne, the layering of past and present becomes evident. Historical buildings populate small sporadic portions of the city and larger thoroughfares are filled with modern apartments and shops. These streets are filled with vendors advertising up-to-date products and trends. The high rise buildings overwhelm and engulf you as you make your way through the streets. Even though the deep-rooted history is present, it is harder to notice as much of the city was reconstructed with contemporary buildings after the war. These rebuilt fragments of the city have created some environments that often felt cold or bare.

Cologne becomes an example of how movements throughout history add layers to a city, influencing their atmospheres. Experiencing this mix between a few Romanesque churches or colorful medieval buildings and more modern apartments or developments expresses the social and political movements that have shaped Cologne. How does architecture move forward in a fragmented urban context?

Fig. 26 layering and fragmentation in Cologne 02

BUILDING HISTORY & ARCHITECT:

photo courtesy of Helene-Binet

On April 2nd of 1853, the founding of an art museum for the Diocese of Cologne was approved. After the Christian Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts in the Archbishopric Cologne was instituted there became overwhelming demand for a place to store and display significant artwork to their period, especially in relation to keeping up with current popular Gothic style. There was also a concern about preserving works that had been previously endangered and not appropriately cared for. The society felt that establishing a gallery would accomplish these goals and display Christian relics for the surrounding community. Ultimately, the purpose was to proliferate morals and motifs emphasized in these pieces.

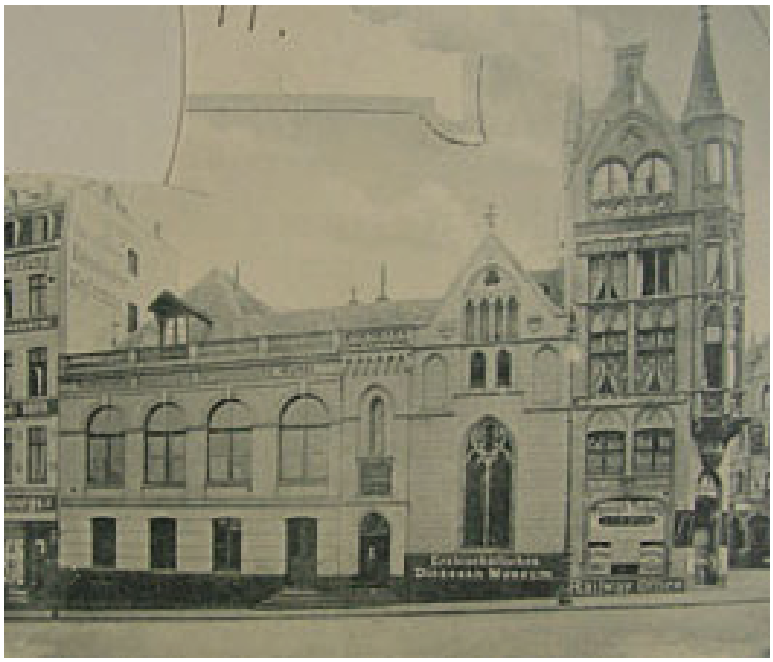


Fig. 27 The Old Kolumba Museum 1855 known as the "Diözesanmuseum"
Photo Courtesy of Kolumba Website

The museum would survive until the late 1930s. In its years it would experience direction from various art society leaders. At the beginning of World War II, the museum would close and the bombing of May 30, 1942 would destroy close to 55 works that had been unsuccessfully stored away and hidden.

The museum would reopen and operate in other various locations for many decades after the war. In the 1970s and 1980s, the galleries would experience various exhibitions including modern and contemporary art. In 1996, an architectural competition for a new museum on the church ruins as a site was proposed and later awarded to Swiss architect Peter Zumthor.

Zumthor and his team of designers and engineers would work on the project from 1996 to 2007. As an architect, Zumthor is known for his meticulous work in perfecting the details of his projects and curating buildings with intentional atmospheres. During the same time period, Zumthor was finishing his work at the Thermal Baths in Vals, Switzerland. He is often celebrated for his outstanding use of materials and lighting that distinguish the building and create intimate experiences in the program. With his experience and perspective on architecture, Zumthor seemed to be the appropriate architect to design the atmospheres at the Kolumba museum.

PROGRAM & DESCIPTION:

The program to the museum would be receptive to the history and context. The preamble competitions outline would solicit,

> "In order to sensitize perception: We desire a lively museum that corresponds to the reality and the dignity of what already exists here, an architecture that creates space but exercises restraint, uses durable materials, a minimum of technology, displays simplicity and functionality in the details, is meticulously executed in keeping with the materials; in short, a natural setting for people and art."[10]

Here the winning design would entail an entrance lobby that would funnel visitors to the open-air restoration/ruins, upstairs atmospheric galleries, or the outside courtyard. Each function plays a part in the coexistence of past and present in the building.

From the street, the Kolumba Museum is characterized by its unconventional exterior mass and void qualities. The building, while blending with much of the surrounding palette of the city, exhibits and reveals the interior in lighting and proportion of its spaces. The exterior is a patchwork of themes important to the building: lighting, materiality, and history. It exists as an infill and addition to what previously remains delicately building upon older layers, as if to fossilize the ruins as they were left in the wreckage.

Fig. 28 & 29 fossilization and infill of ruins demonstrated on the building

10 Museums-history :: 1852 – 1905. KOLUMBA. (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://www.kolumba.de/?language=eng&cat_select=1&category=18&artikle=68

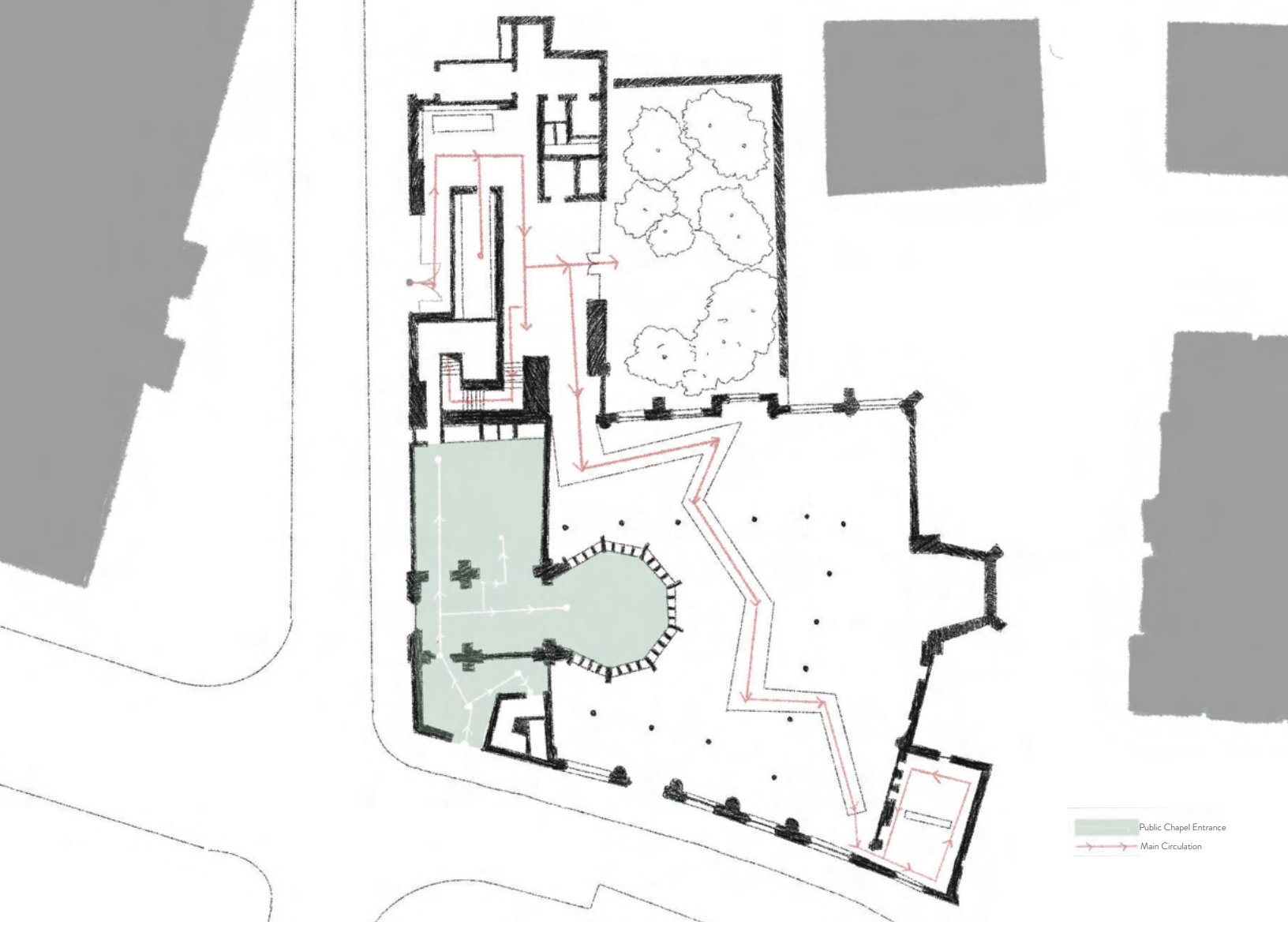


Fig. 30 entrance circulation diagram

The entrance resides on the west side of the building, subtly directing visitors into the building—intending to be nothing more than an entryway for visitors. The lobby is placed at the end of the entrance hall enlisting a long check-in desk, discreet wood locker room, and inset cabinets displaying postcards and merchandise. Opposite the lobby desk begins the circulation to the courtyard, ruins, and gallery space on the upper floors. The lobby is naturally lit through large glass doors that expose the extent of the courtyard space. In the place of the once medieval church graveyard, the new courtyard is a small outdoor space bounded by a travertine-like stone that continues the earthy color palette suggested by the museum. This outdoor space is shaded by a thin grove of honey locust trees, establishing a natural environment protected from the city. The space acts as a quiet-blank place to read or contemplate when visiting the museum.

The ruins are accessible on the base floor and are hidden behind a tall warm leather curtain. A culmination of ruins spread across the ground. Figure 30 clearly explains the history analytically, in person it is much harder to distinguish. The excavation dates back to Roman development in the first to mid-fifth century, exposing what used to be residences. From the 7th century on five different constructions of Gothic and Romanesque churches are evident in the outlines left on the ground and corresponding material type.[11] Zumthor creates a zig-zagging pathway leading visitors through the excavation site. Specific moments in the room are emphasized with irregular angles in the path. Some of the angles become very tight in order to view important details while some become wide to allow more people to observe the view from that point.

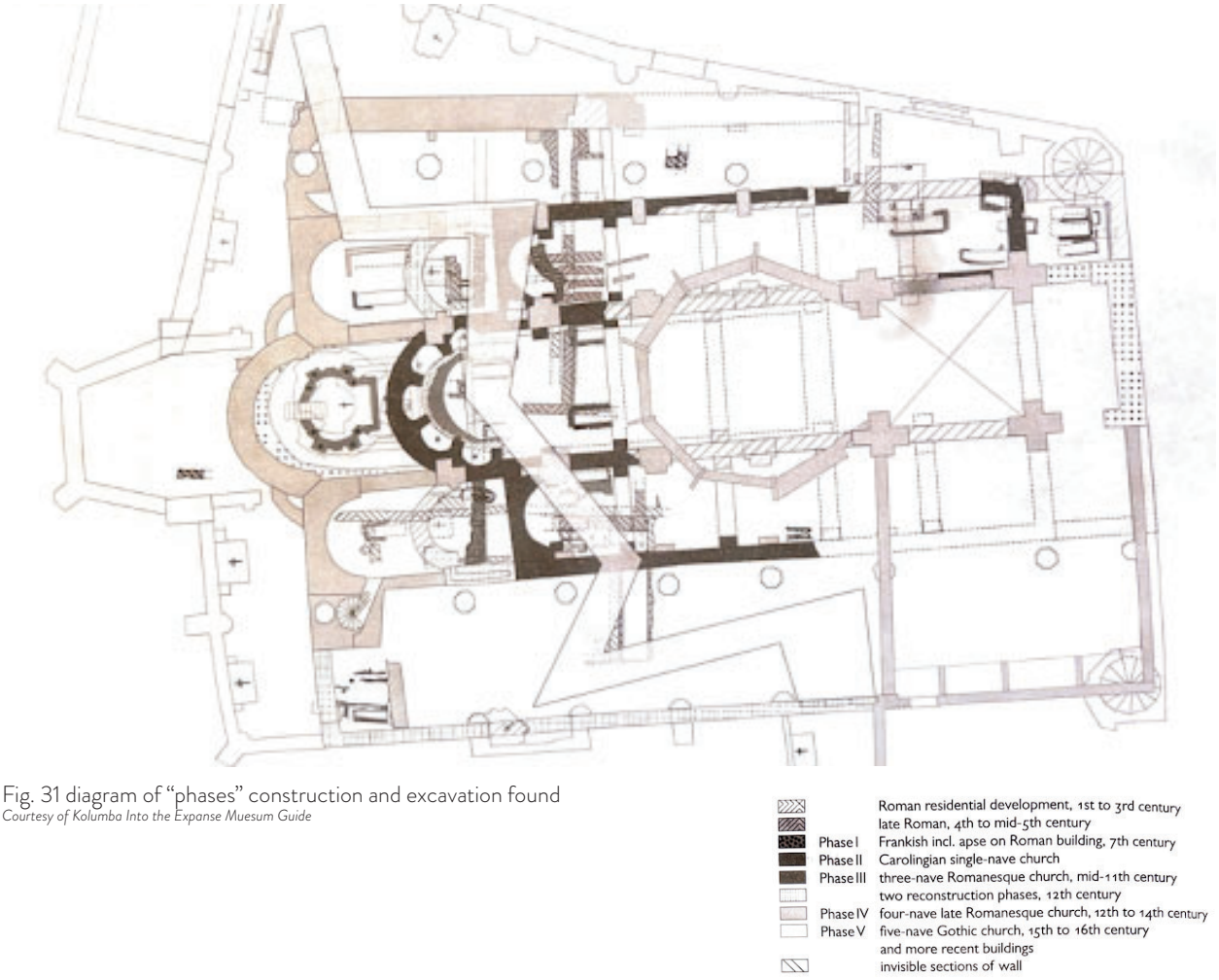


Fig. 31 diagram of "phases" construction and excavation found
Courtesy of Kolumba Into the Expanse Muesum Guide

11 Kolumba/MiQua, artists and authors, Cologne. (2021). Into the vastness. Aspects of Jewish life in Germany (1st ed., Vol. Kolumba Vol. 61).

A chapel is completely enclosed within the excavation room. It was built in the 1950s by Gottfried Böhm after a late-Gothic statue of the "Mother of God with Child" survived the bombings during the second world war. The octagonal structure was built in the contemporary style of its time to commemorate the spirit of the story of the "Madonna in the Ruins." The chapel actively asserts its presence in Kolumba's history. It serves as an added layer of history and voice to the story and background of the long-lived site.

Fig. 32 Chapel of Madonna in Ruins after construction on once destroyed Kolumba site
Courtesy of Akalın, Aysu & Çelik, Ayşe, Architectural Hybridity in Contextual Representations for The Moment of Synchronic Essence

Fig. 33 Chapel of Madonna in Ruins enclosed in Kolumba Museum present day

The upper floors are accessible through the winding stairs opened in the foyer. Narrow hallways featuring extending stairs lead visitors into introspective atmospheres. Some of the gallery rooms are coupled together while others are separate and require a defined entry. Religious and historic artifacts are strategically stored in minimal glass display boxes or along the wall determining flow and circulation throughout the spaces.

A variety of exhibit rooms are found between the first and second floors. Various materials and lighting qualities are adapted to what is being displayed. In bright open rooms, larger singular pieces of art are exhibited. In small spaces displaying records or writing, the spaces are often dark and intimate. The museum provides a thorough approach to curating the work and finding the appropriate experience for each piece. This becomes especially important in supporting the museums neutral characteristics. These characteristics allow the building to become a good base for the history of the building and its area to become the main focus.

Fig. 34 display hallway second floor

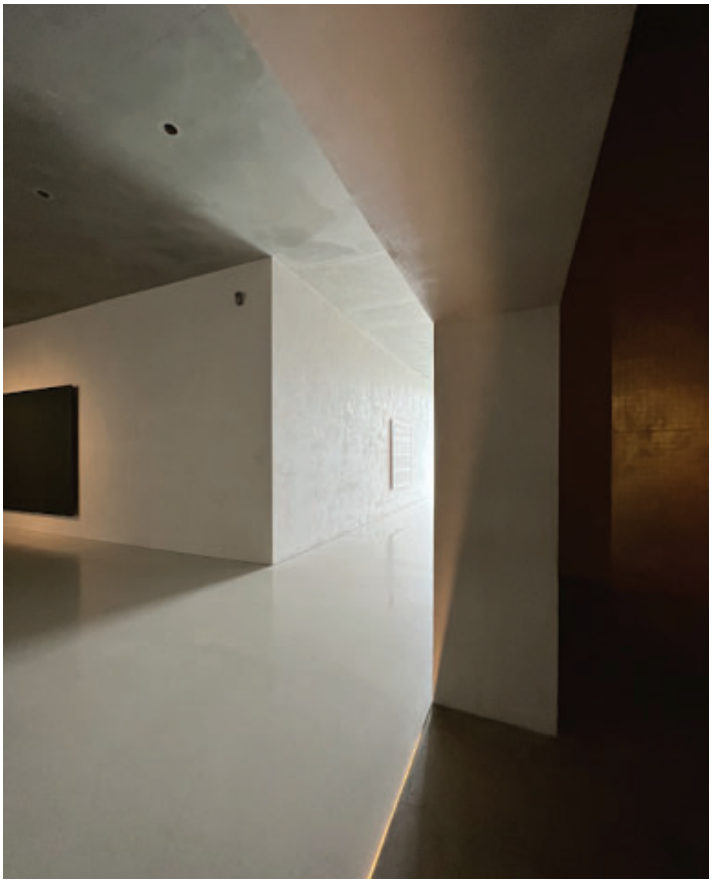


Fig. 35 & 36 varying lighting conditions in exhibit space

ELEMENTS:
LIGHTING

Fig. 37 natural light apertures in the Kolumba Museum

Light is a key component in Zumthor's process of establishing spatial atmospheres. Within the Kolumba museum, unique and specific techniques create diverse ranges and moods in each space. Throughout the museum, natural light is harnessed in powerful ways, and artificial lighting is purposefully placed in support.

Within the excavation room, hundreds of gaps/voids are left in the slim bricked exterior. In this condition, sunlight is filtered through the apertures to influence the density of light in a purposefully dimly lit room. On a cloudier day, such as the one I visited, the room is darker creating a moodier space. The apertures not only serve the function of protecting the excavation, but it relays a message sensitive to the history of the building. Even though the wall is not fully whole, beautiful atmospheric opportunities are the result, and much of the same message is found in the purpose behind the museum.

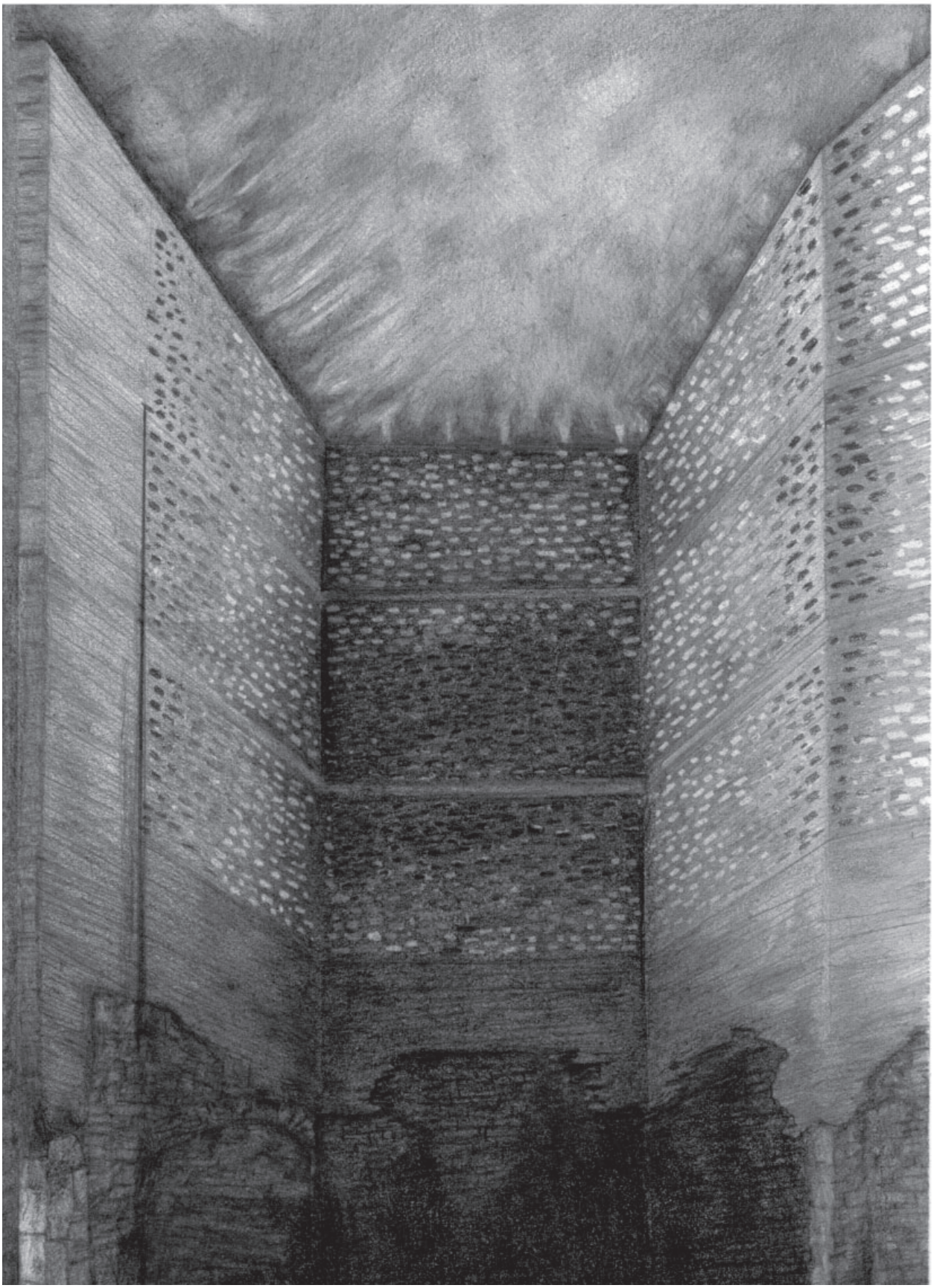


Fig. 38 graphite rendering of excavation room lighting apertures

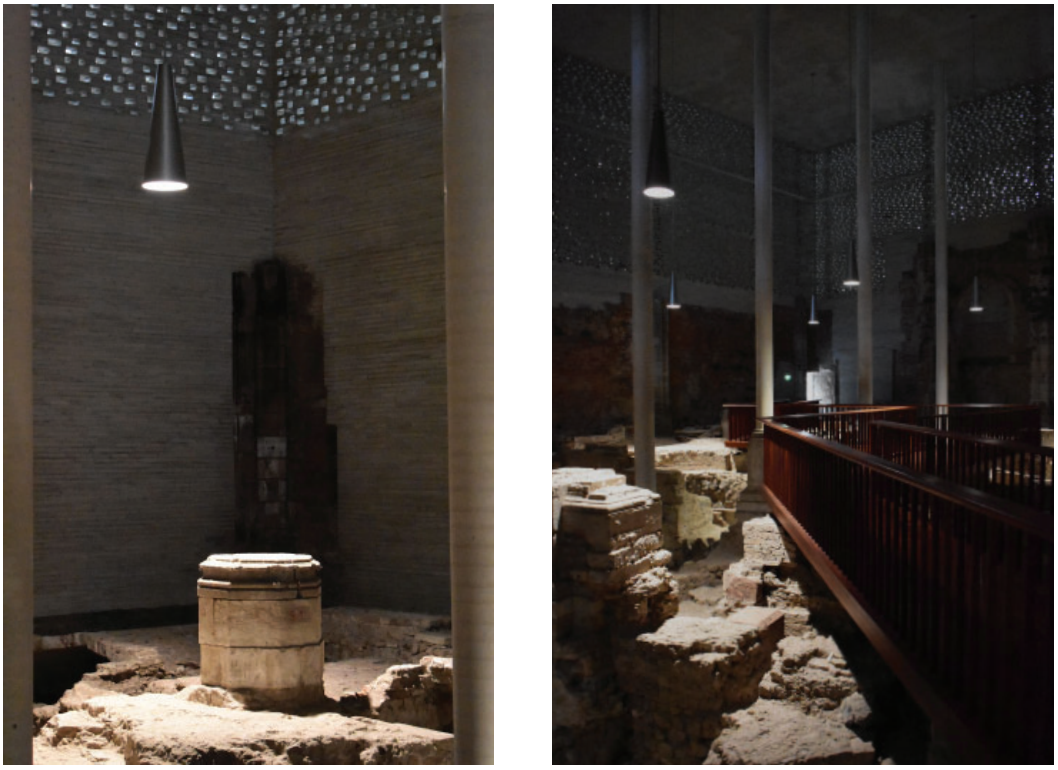


Fig. 39 & 40 artificial lighting conditions found in the excavation room

To view the ruins, metal pendant lights are sporadically placed within the room. The length of the pendants extends to at least half the height of the room to closely illuminate the remenants. The negative space unlit by the artificial light intensifies the contrast between what is dark and bright.

Within the gallery spaces, there is close attention to detail in the placement and tones of lighting. Warm artificial lighting corresponds with the building material choices and further emphasizes them. The language of brightness changes from space to space, with some areas with direct spotlights and others with diffuse concealed sources of illumination. Ultimately, the great care taken to uniquely light certain exhibits heightens the experience and meaningfulness of the place.

Fig. 41 lighting changes within the galleries

ELEMENTS:
MATERIALITY

The Kolumba Museum is highly characterized by its blends of neutrally colored materials. The strategy of tactile materials fits within the theme of preserving and honoring what has been left behind. This theme fits well, especially seen on the exterior. Zumthor developed a flat tile-like brick that would fit indetectably within old masonry. Upon studies of these relationships, in photographs and sketches, the relationship between old and new is respectful of the past and acts like a sealant to preserve what was previously left behind.

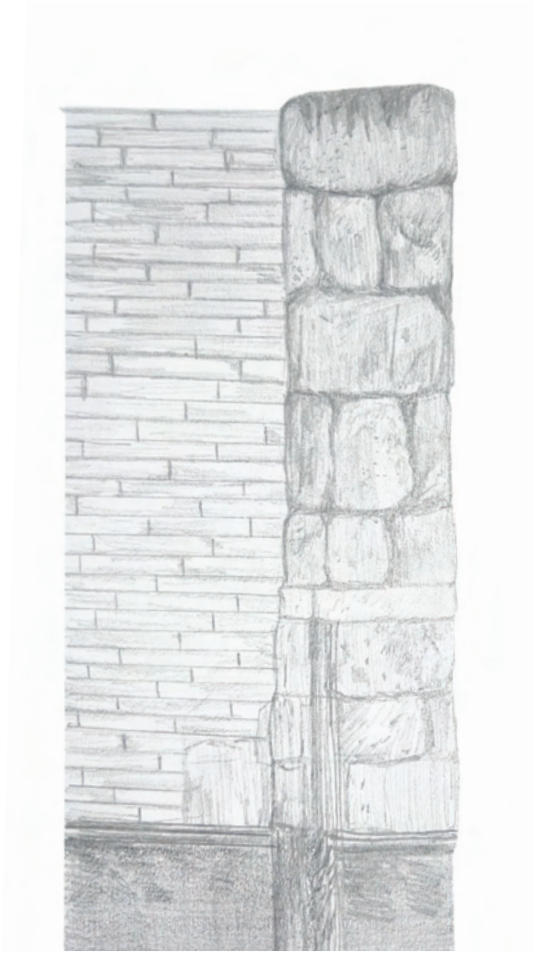


Fig. 42 quick sketch of materiality of old and new

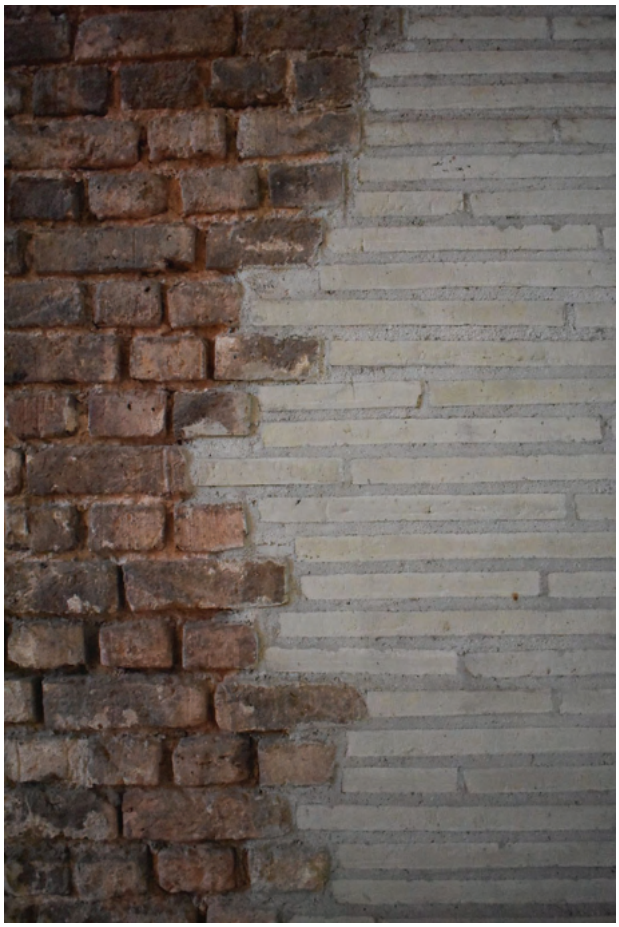


Fig. 43 old masonry walls sealed by new tiles

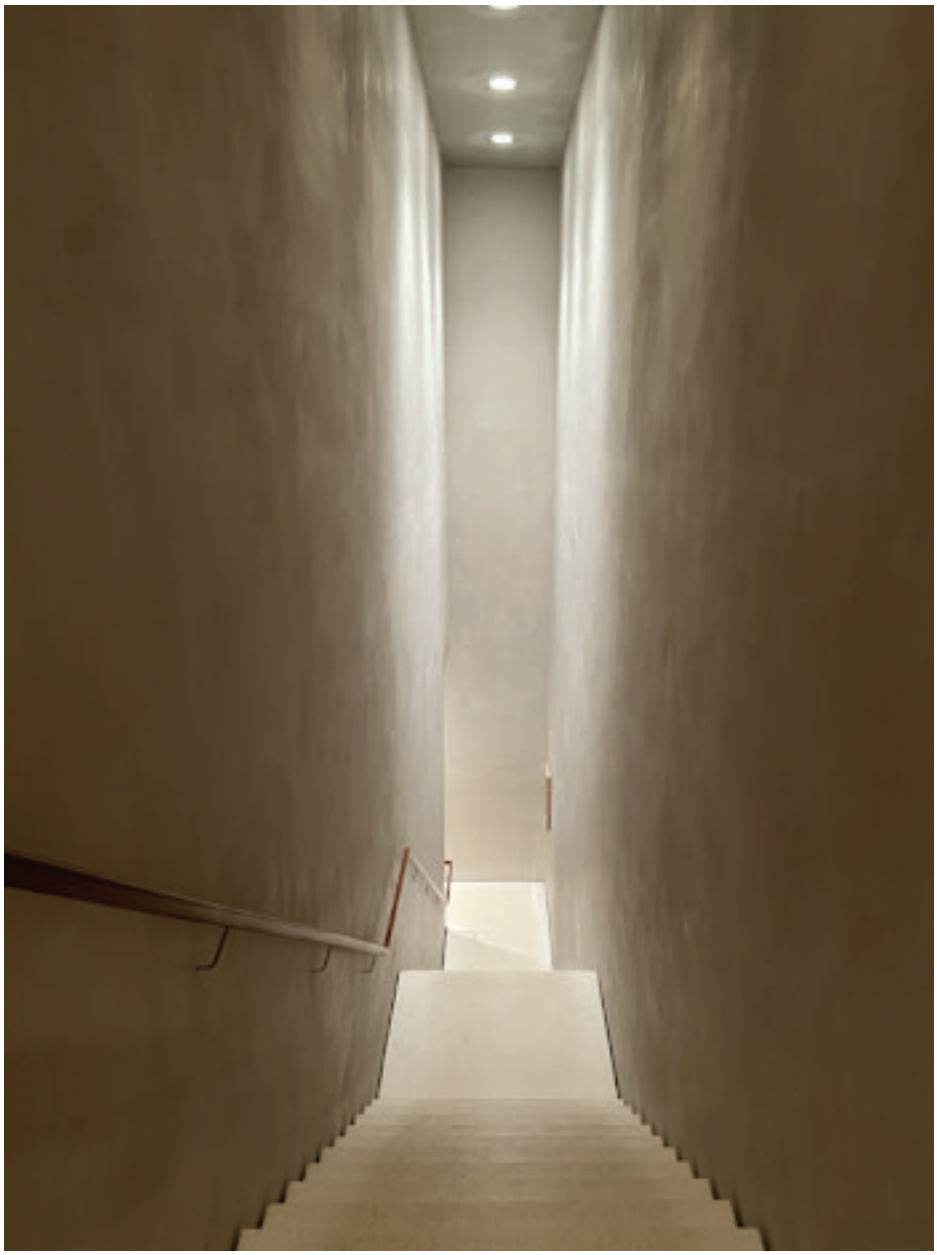


Fig. 44 tactile qualities of wall material, especially in the narrow stair condition

On the interior, the material plays a supportive role in the lighting and of the pieces exhibited at the museum. As it follows the neutral tones established in the building, tactile qualities of the material are perceivable—especially in their interaction with light. All of the gallery walls have an apparent texture and quality that feels very intimate, intended to be experienced. The smooth plaster-like quality further emphasizes the meditative atmosphere.

INTERPRETATIONS:

After visiting the Kolumba Museum a solemn haze and fog surrounded me. I was quietly impacted by the time spent in silence and contemplation. I took stock of the exhibits that I had seen as well as the varying atmospheres that were displayed. The circulation through the building with minimal windows and outward views begins to isolate the viewer. Disconnected from the city, the messages hidden in the history of the museum the created the potential for a more impactful experience.

Personally, the experience of this museum stood out against others I had previously visited. The collection of atmospheres are influential in having a wide range of reactions and emotions as you go from space to space. The beginning of the experience is largely reliant on the presentation of the past and what is still existing. In that, you can become overwhelmed by the layers of history that are preserved for you to see. New portions of the museum are visited through narrow stair hallways that transfer you to clean-subtle environments. Within these spaces, time is not easily perceived and you are left to focus and reflect on the work.

With over 2,000 years of rich history, the Kolumba Museum is a precedent of how contemporary architecture could approach history. Significant impacts are made from the role of supportive and neutral designs that allow the past to be preserved and interpreted by all. Contemporary architecture should strive to build atmospheres that allow visitors to reflect and have a personal experience within the architecture.

EXTENSION OF THE GUBBIO CEMETERY

GUBBIO, ITALY

ANDREA DRAGONI + FRANCESCO PES | 2011

PAST:

Hidden away on the valleyside of the region of Umbria is the small city of Gubbio. The earliest signs of inhabitance in the area date back to the Paleolithic Period. In the 3rd century BC, the people of the ancient tribe of Umbri established a settlement with a center likely for religious and political uses. They lost possession to the Romans in the first century AD.[12]

The Romans had a longstanding period of residence in the area. Their practice of pottery and ceramics would be left as evidence of their presence there. Their infrastructure in aqueducts and road systems, characteristic of Roman settlement, would leave a lasting impact on the city.

In 552, the Goths attacked and took over the city resulting in considerable destruction. They would rebuild and inhabit the area, becoming a powerful commune designated as a diocese.[13]

Gubbio later surrendered to the Montefeltro Dukes of Urbino who were powerful and influential.[14] The Montefeltro Dukes, more specifically Federico da Montefeltro, remained in close circles with the Medici family.[15] This influence, during the Renaissance Period when much of Italy's history experienced rich development, would positively change and develop the city.

The possession by the Montefeltros would benefit the city with landmark architecture, such as the Palazzo dei Consoli. It was built in the 14th century out of local stone.[16] The palace would symbolize the rapid growth of the time period and the affluence of city leaders. It would also be a solution to the desire for more public space and advancement in urban planning. Consequently, the methodology and layout of the Palazzo dei Consoli would act as vital groundwork for public space specialized to the people of Gubbio for years to come.

Eventually, Gubbio would become part of the Papacy and join the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. The region would be known for years for its proficient work in ceramics and pottery as well as its regional stone and brickwork.

12 "Gubbio History." Trip2Italy.com. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.trips2italy.com/umbria/gubbio-history.html#:~:text=Gubbio%20was%20a%20city%20of,where%20Rome%20exported%20its%20lunatics.

13 "Gubbio." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/place/Gubbio.

14 Grottole, Rosa Di. "The Biggest Christmas Tree in the World, Gubbio, Umbria." La Gazzetta Italiana. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.lagazzettaitaliana.com/region-of-italy/8225-the-biggest-christmas-tree-in-the-world-gubbio-umbria.

15 "Leon Battista Alberti." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/humanism/Leon-Battista-Alberti#ref127942.

16 "Medieval Skyscraper: The Palazzo Dei Consoli in Gubbio Italy." DESIGN and ART MAGAZINE. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.designartmagazine.com/2013/07/medieval-skyscraper-palazzo-dei-consoli_1.html.

Fig. 45 Palazzo Dei Consoli from above

Fig. 46 & 47 old renaissance buildings and alleyways in Gubbio

PRESENT:

Stepping through the ancient city gates, the history of the old village is directly expressed. Old cobblestone roads narrowly wind up the sharp hillside on which Gubbio rests. Within the city pockets of public spaces in piazzas or squares, serve as a respite from steep streets and the hot summer climate.

The city is densely populated with buildings that rise up to the base of Mt. Ignino. The stone structures reveal their age, as most were built in the rise of the medieval period of the 14th century. Made from local travertine stone, the city soaks in the warm heat from the day and releases at night. At dusk, the buildings absorb the pink and purple hues from the setting sun.

Fig. 48 locals gathering in public spaces at dusk

Fig. 49 Piazza Grande under modern day use

During the day, European tourists roam throughout the quiet city. Some come to enjoy a private getaway in the Umbria region, known for truffles. Others spend their day hiking up the steep hillside and visiting museums and historical landmarks. The Piazza Grande elevated two stories above is filled with those enjoying the breeze and views. Built in the early 14th century, the Piazza links the famous Piazza dei Consoli and Palazzo Pretorio. Both palaces displayed the once prosperous past of the Gubbio and still act as distinguishing features today. The Piazza references some of the first forms of public places and values proportional elements from Renaissance styles. It successfully serves as a gathering point for locals and tourists.

Beyond the village walls, modern expansion develops outwardly into the valley. Across from the 2,000-year-old Roman Theatre, are soccer fields and houses. The neighboring streets and houses are familiar and characteristic of any small European town. Views beyond the town are picturesque with fields of wheat and rolling hills. While the city is mainly utilized by visitors during the daytime, locals take back the squares and streets by night.

Fig. 50 Gubbio Cemetery surrounding view of rural homes

BUILDING HISTORY & ARCHITECT:

Fig. 51 exterior pathway in Gubbio Cemetery Extension

The extension of the Gubbio Cemetery was an exploration of new forms of public space for the city. The functional purpose behind the extension would be an addition to the large complex of mausoleum graves. In Italy, cemeteries usually consist of above ground buildings and structures which hold caskets and urns as resting places for one individual or often family units.

The original cemetery, built in the 1990s, developed a dense geometric language. Interconnecting pathways meet at a concentric point to the compound providing an open public space. Individual units keep with the universal palette of red brick and local travertine, but each differ in design and style. As the former structure has expanded over time, the collective qualities and spaces of the cemetery have become distant and detached.

Fig. 52 view from old cemetery grounds

Designed by Andrea Dragoni and Francesco Pes the extension was completed in 2011. Native to the Umbria region, Dragoni and Pes' background and knowledge of the area would benefit the addition to the historical city. Much of their existing work previously employs the use of regional materials and design in spirit of strong historical themes found locally. The architects also were inspired by James Turrell's "Skyspaces" which were a study of spaces for mediation and reflection in the natural world. These spaces rely on the exposure of natural skylights and a combination of thoughtfully composed volumes.[17] Dragoni and Pes, used these influences to develop a mindset for the design.

Fig. 53 James Turrelll Skyspace in the Rocky Mountains, *Photo Courtesy of David Lauer Photography*

17 Jenna McKnight |1 July 2022. "James Turrell Creates 'Transcendent' Skyspace Installation in the Rocky Mountains." Dezeen, July 6, 2022. https://www.dezeen.com/2022/07/01/james-turrell-skyspace-installation-rocky-mountains/.

PROGRAM & DESCIPTION:

The bid for the expansion of the cemetery specified a larger capacity for new and existing graves. It also entailed the introduction of more public mediative spaces outside of the historical city. The spaces were created to explore a new version of public gathering—in quiet reflection. The new compound would present twelve rows of upraised graves laid out by direct orthogonal paths and alleyways. Amongst the cemetery blocks, open-air public spaces would act as buffers between the mausoleum graves.

The character of the addition would contrast the original dark brick blocks. Pale travertine stone composed each unit. The newer side of the cemetery became a city of repetitious stereotomic masses. The new blocks take on proportional and geometric characteristics. Each of the masses play between equal spacing and repetition, but divergence in shape and extrusion is carefully thought out in the lineage across the site. Dragoni and Pes, while working to establish with a tight geometric character in configuration and building shape, accepted a hierarchy across the organized blocks. In the initial masses proportion of space and style in exterior qualities were adjusted to fit within the program.

From the entrance visitors are met with the intersection of old and new. A small separate mass, across from the addition acts as a more private place to sit quietly. A beginning space to the cemetery is established in an angular opening that breaks from the rectilinear nature of the blocks. The initial area is split between a duo of mausoleums. The intermediary space provides immediate opportunities to gather in ceremonies or places to pause and reflect individually.

Fig. 54 & 55 spatial conditions inside of the extension

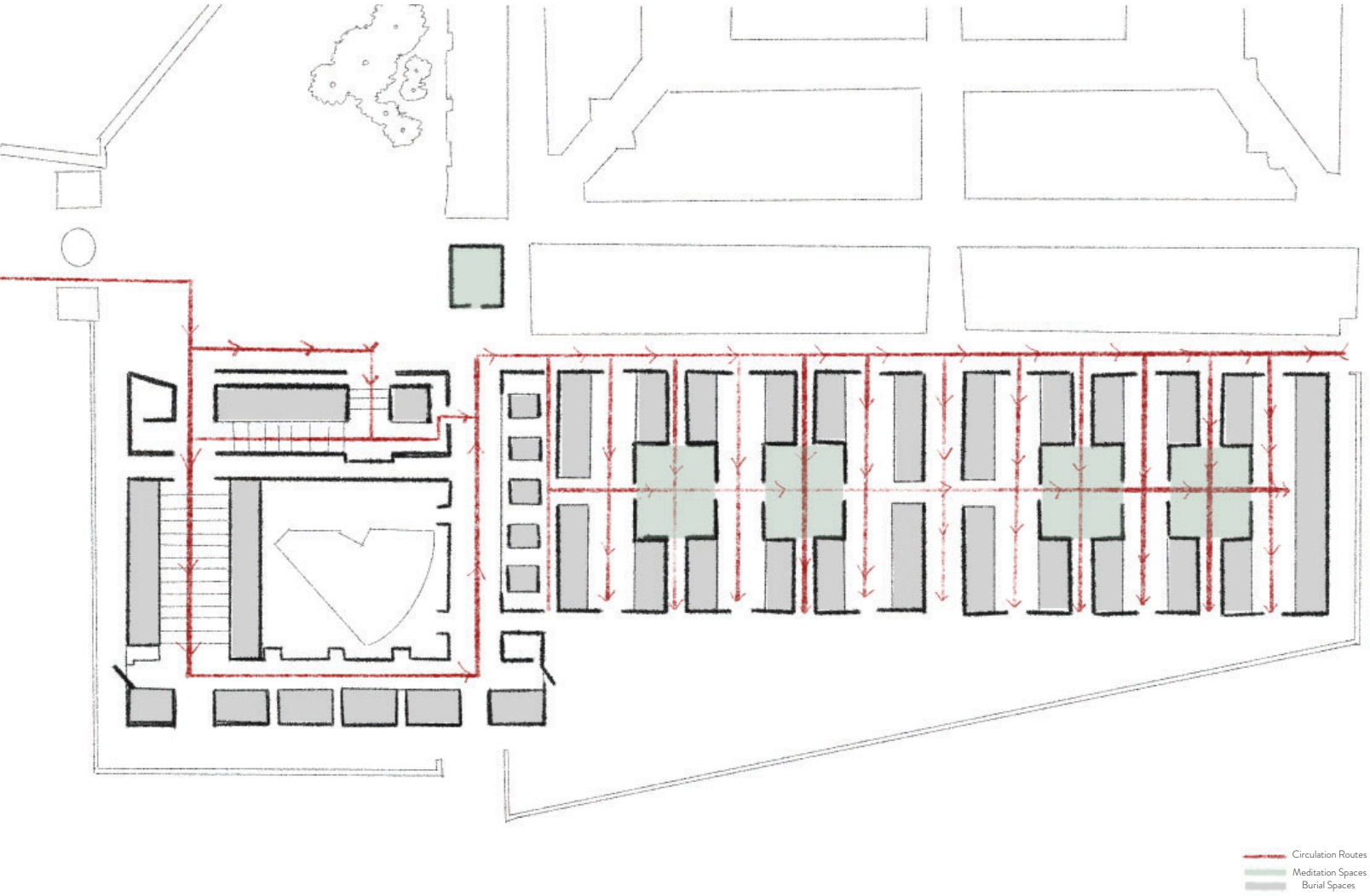


Fig. 56 diagram of meditation and burial spaces with circulation routes

Direct circulation is established in enclosed and outdoor hallways. These central axis' set up a foundational datum for the masses to organize around. Long circulatory spines are strategically broken up and separated by transverse walkways between specific spaces. Routes of circulation and connection between spaces are visible, especially further into the site.

Proportional and rational planning of the grave blocks allows prospection into designated "silent squares."[18] The architects deliberately delineated these "silent squares" for introspective atmospheres. Each courtyard has a large square skylight and artwork from local artists is integrated into the space. Every element of the space is in an effort of creating a respite amidst an existential function.

Careful considerations of the consistency of both mass and void throughout the progression of the site emphasize the themes behind the program. The architecture establishes a powerful presence within the program and desires to serve more than just the function. It implores people not only to visit the cemetery but to be impacted by the qualities and considerations of the architecture.

Fig. 57 & 58 interior view of mediation spaces, "silent squares"

18 "Gubbio Cemetery Extension." Minimalissimo. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://minimalissimo.com/articles/gubbio-cemetery-extension.

ELEMENTS:
LIGHTING

Fig. 59 square skylight in meditation spaces

The lighting conditions within the Gubbio cemetery play an important supporting role in the architecture. A repetitive theme of mass and void relies directly on natural light from the area and further connects the architecture to its place. Natural light and the absence of it further develops the intended moods of each block. Within all of the grave blocks a space flows from the Norhwest to the Southeast entrances. This allows warmly lit moods with continuously changing shadows on all surrounding surfaces. In the meditation space, a single square opening lights the room from above. The atmosphere here radiates cooling and calming qualities. A deeper connection to the place is created in the care taken to know the qualities of the natural light and design the architecture from this knowledge. This greater understanding allows for the light to be manipulated to correspond with desired moods.

Throughout the day, light is captured through view frames in skylights and breaks between the material. The act of proportioning the opening and spaces allows for the building to develop varying atmospheres depending on the time of day, conditions of the weather, or time of year. Lights and shadows progress and transgress down into the architecture as the sun rises and sets. These varying conditions create transcendent experiences for visitors that directly connect to the conditions of the place. The atmospheres are continuously changing based on the immediate conditions of each individual day. Each visit to the cemetery can vary.

Fig. 60 & 61 example of transcendent lighting qualities reflecting mood

Fig. 62 & 63 direct example of deliberate extrusion to craft desired lighting condition

Lighting is designed to provide experiential opportunities while designating specific spaces. At times blocks of the architecture are informed by the desired lighting conditions. Seen in many of the initial burial sites, the architecture unnaturally extrudes or breaks from its rectilinear form. Within many of these extrusions or subtractions, certain lighting effects are created. Some in order to diffuse light into the space, while others are placed to direct views.

ELEMENTS:
MATERIALITY

The material choice of the new extension is one of the most important elements of the architecture tying the building to its place. The use of local travertine stone has crucial connections to the history of the area as well as the success of curating specific atmospheres. The stone is a binding feature to the program and to many elements of the design, especially in lighting,

Travertine stone has had a longstanding history in the area. Since the Roman inhabitance in the region, this specific stone has been material for the construction of theatres to residences. Especially in the city, travertine has been widely used for its strong functional and aesthetic qualities. At the cemetery, a contemporary application of the stone adds a familiar ambiance to that of the city—seeking to relate to the community it is built for.

Fig. 64 & 65 comparison of old travertine within the city context and new use of travertine within the cemetery

Fig. 66 glowing effect of stone with composed shadowsand lights from openings

Much like the reaction of the buildings in the town center, as earlier described, the stone in the cemetery absorbs and reflects exterior conditions. During the day the heat from the sun is absorbed by the massing so that at night warmth is released into the spaces. By morning the stone has cooled reflecting a different thermal environment throughout the day. Even these simple considerations of temperature variation have lasting impacts on those who frequent the cemetery.

While the sun plays a role in the thermal characteristics of the spaces, it also interacts with their visual qualities. Differing conditions in the sun produce varying conditions in the quality of the material. Bright-sunny mornings create a warm glowing effect on the travertine. Conversely, dark-clouder afternoons produce a colder passive reflection from the stone. In general, the combination of the material with light enhances the decisions in the placement of openings. Further atmospheres resulting from those openings have the influence to completely affect the experience within those spaces.

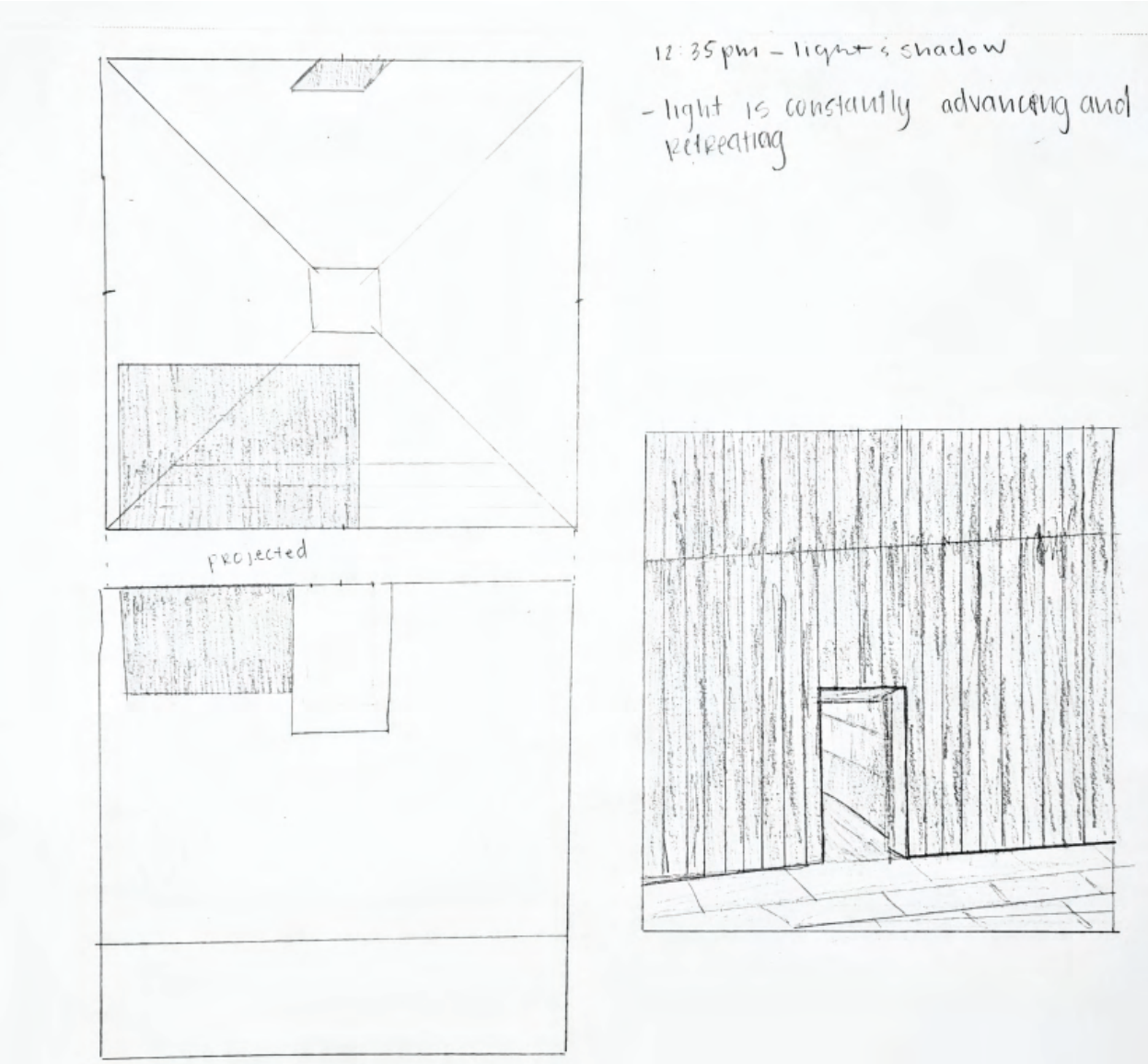


Fig. 67 digrams and sketches of moments of shade and shadow

INTERPRETATIONS:

Despite the initial intimidating function of the architecture, visiting the cemetery broke down many of the stereotypes I had unconsciously set up for the program. Because of past experiences, I partially expected the space to have an uncomfortable and unfriendly ambiance. Previous cemeteries I had visited often felt vast and unwelcoming. In these places there was usually no place to sit and reflect, which differs from this extension's concept. I further realized after spending consistent time sitting within the quiet spaces and walking amongst the encompassing alleyways how impactful the nature of the building was.

The cemetery served as a solemn final resting place for people in Gubbio. It searched for appropriateness in its respecting and acknowledging of time-honored materials and history. While it also strove to define new ideas for public spaces and places to be mindful of greater life themes.

Unlike many other cemeteries, it also worked to be an inviting place for visitors. Throughout the day family members moved in and out of the gates with flowers and mementos to place at loved ones' graves. The architecture effortlessly provided private spaces to reflect and think of loved ones. The extension is an example of how important careful and respectful design is, especially in this setting.

THE YELLOW HOUSE / DAS GELBE HAUS

FLIMS, SWITZERLAND

VALERIO OLGIATI | 1997

PAST:

Surrounded by four European countries, Switzerland stands out for its sublime mountain terrain and rich history of quality craftsmanship. The country extends about 135 miles from its longest point and 220 miles from its widest point.[19] Although its size contrasts most of its neighbors, the nation presents a wide range of cultural and ethnic diversity. Within the country, at least five different languages are widely known and utilized—dependent on particular regions.

The establishment of the nation dates back to the thirteenth century. An alliance of cantons, such as states or regions comprise Switzerland. These cantons were formed in efforts to organize against the Hapsburg Dynasty, widely known as a powerful German dynasty that controlled early Switzerland and surrounding neighbors. [20]

The Canton of Grisons or Graubünden is one of the most easterly cantons in Switzerland featuring widespread mountains and glaciers. Mountain ranges such as the Bernina Range include mountains that reach up to 13,284 feet in elevation. Within the vast mountain ranges, glacial rivers such as the Rhine River weave throughout valleys and geographic depressions.

The valleys of the Graubünden were originally the southern part of Raetia, set up by the Romans in 15 BCE. The emperor Charlemagne designated the area a county in 806 CE and the region was ruled from the episcopal see of Chur. The prevalence of rule by the bishops would influence the area for centuries as The Gotteshausbund, founded in 1367, would stem from rising power of the bishop. Additional leagues with similar intentions would be created in the area until wars and land disputes would be settled in the sixteenth century. In 1526, the temporal jurisdiction of the bishops of Chur were abolished. The Canton of Grisons entered the Swiss Confederation roughly 300 years later.

Within the nineteenth century, Switzerland would experience vast industrial growth. Goods from the country would be known and exported worldwide for their exceptional quality. Luxury items of clocks and furniture would be highly valued by those who could afford them, no matter their geographic location.[21]

19 "Switzerland." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland.
20 Canton." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed January 9, 2023.
21 Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Graubünden." Encyclopedia Britannica, March 16, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/place/Graubunden.

While Switzerland was known for its luxurious and prosperous side, the majority of the country was composed of regions such as Graubünden. This region was characterized by its remoteness and aptness to utlize local resources. The backbone of the nation was its collection of farmers and villagers inhabiting lush regions of alpine meadows.

Because of this, the vernacular architecture widespread across the region was of utilitarian nature. Barns and farmhouse structures, often identified as chalets, would create a universal language for architecture in the area.[22] The elementary nature of timber construction seen within these structures would develop into residences and buildings that would make up entire towns and villages in the Grison region. The character and setting of these remote lands would be continuously identified by its vernacular for years to come.

Fig. 68 & 69 vernacular chalets made from stucco and timber

22 Mathias, David. "The Swiss Chalet - Design for the Arts & Crafts House: Arts & Crafts Homes Online." Design for the Arts & Crafts House | Arts & Crafts Homes Online, August 17, 2018. https://artsandcraftshomes.com/house-styles/the-swiss-chalet.

PRESENT:

Today the Grisons region is still immediately recognizable by the combination of small villages and expansive mountain terrain. Colossal mountains act from the area as a backdrop to larger cities such as Zurich. In the city, modern life continues as normal. The fabric of the city resembles many other major European towns. The train station and rivers act as the respective hearts of the city. Historic buildings dot the skyline while old and new buildings fill in the gaps.

Around 140 km south of Zurich rests Flims, a small town and outdoor destination. The village is nestled by a rocky mountain range that fosters skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer. On the outskirts of town cows and crops fill bright green fields in high and low depressions in the topography. Windy roads lead into the town center. Houses and chalets are situated angularly to fit better within the topography. As a result, streets are angular and tricky.

Fig. 70 view of Grisions region from car

The vernacular language of stucco and timber chalets is found throughout most buildings. Adaptions to old techniques are found amongst the traditional architecture. These contemporary buildings experiment with reinterpreting materials and their technical qualities. This becomes an interesting example of how contemporary principles are adapted in traditional settings.

Over all Flims is quiet and peaceful. Houses are adorned with bright flower boxes and bright paint colors. Residences are lovingly cared for and villages take on a warm quality. Highly populated by tourists the town, has an upbeat mood to it as families walk along the sidewalks and cyclists bike by.

Fig. 71 view of Flims

Fig. 72 building made of exposed concrete

Fig. 73 contemporary home using adaptive wood techinques

BUILDING HISTORY & ARCHITECT:

The small town of Flims, Switzerland is largely known for its remarkable skiing slopes and resorts. The architecture supports tourists and locals with quaint chalets and buildings. Within the town, a singular white building stands out and speaks against the village's architectural language.

In 1995 the yellow house on the main road through the town was decidedly set for reconstruction and renovation. After the architects' father Rudolph Olgati died the same year, the city would turn the old yellow mansion into an exhibition space. Rudolph Olgiati was a famous Swiss architect, especially in the 1950s who advocated for modernist styles such as New Objectivity in conjunction with the valuation in referencing historical architectural principles.[23] Because of his previous ownership of the house, the project would be turned over into the hands of his son Valerio Olgiati.

Fig. 74 G. Schäfer House Designed by Rudolph Olgiati *photo courtesy of Pedro Dionísio*

Fig. 75 Apartment building Urech Heroldstrasse 25, Chur | 1972 - 1973
photo courtesy of Ralph Feiner, Malans

23 Dixit, AuthorAtharva Dixit "Atharva, AuthorAtharva Dixit, and "Atharva Dixit. "Rudolf Olgiati - Experimenting with Cubism among the Alps - RTF: Rethinking the Future." RTF | Rethinking The Future, November 18, 2021. https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/know-your-architects/a2131-rudolf-olgiati-experimenting-with-cubism-among-the-alps/.

Valerio Olgiati lived in Flims and practiced throughout the region. He would adaptly transform and design the new exhibition space. Valerio would have a different philosophy towards his practice than his father in that he practices "non-referential" architecture; "non-referential architecture is not an architecture that subsists as a referential vessel or as a symbol of something outside itself. Non-referential buildings are entities that are themselves meaningful and sense-making and, as such, no less the embodiment of society than buildings were in the past when they were the bearers of common social ideals."[23]He believes that his buildings can be genuine while having no referring and defining symbols. Many of his works are unique in form while solving spatial, lighting, and material necessities.

Fig. 76 old Yellow House under ownership of Rudolph Olgiati [24]

Fig. 77 current Yellow House

The new Yellow House would be finished in 1997, two years after the initiation of its re-purposing. Intending to be a cultural center and blank exhibition space for temporary galleries. *Blank* would be the quintessential word in describing the strategy behind the design and aesthetic. The original houses' walls and ornamentation would be violently stripped and the entire interior would be reconstructed. All that would remain from the old construction would be the dense stone walls. The original window pattern was readapted and new frames were cast from concrete to emphasize the intended stereotomic qualities. Olgiati purposefully altered the original roof shape to be hidden behind the parapet. Both moves were intended to make the building appear monolithic or as one single mass.

23 Ionel, Andra. "Non-Referential Architecture: Ideated by Valerio Olgiati, Written by Markus Breitschmid." sITA, no. 7 (2019). https://doi.org/10.54508/sita.7.18.
24 "Die Architektur." Das Gelbe Haus Flims. Accessed January 13, 2023. https://www.dasgelbehausflims.ch/die-architektur/.

The new building would consist of a minimal side door entry to a small lobby-entrance space. Small matching windows would consistently layout out all sides of the building, lighting each gallery space. Three floors of neutral bright spaces would be a blank canvas for moving exhibits. At the back of the building, a white timber staircase connects each floor, carefully fitting into its space. The top floor exhibits an intricately simple timber structure painted white to blend within the spatial environment.

The Yellow House works successfully to integrate the structure and lighting to create a successfully neutral space. The structural column diverges from the natural path to kink at an angle to support the roof. Within the project, care is taken in the details to appreciate the simple nature of the architecture. The subtlety of the interior works as a quiet reflection from an entirely contrasting volume within the city.

Fig. 78 second floor gallery space

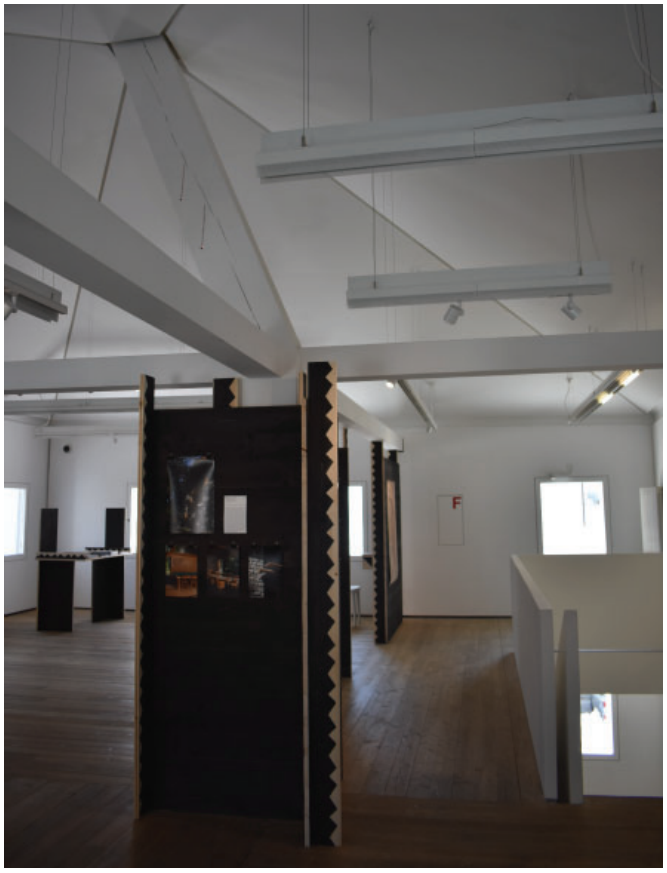


Fig. 79 third floor gallery space featuring angular timber structure

Fig. 80 first floor gallery space

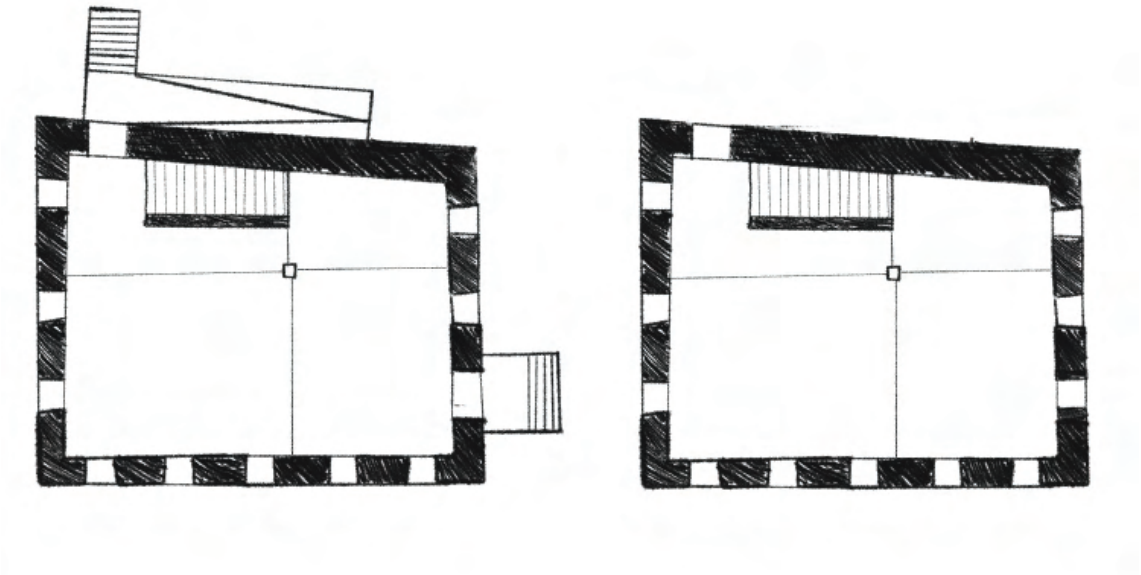


Fig. 81 sketch of floor plans

ELEMENTS:
LIGHTING

Fig. 82 natural light washing over structural members and ceiling

The lighting strategy of the Yellow House follows the simple theme of the building. Lighting plays a supportive role throughout the gallery. The atmosphere of light is a result of stronger themes executed in the monolithic qualities. Spotlights are used to softly light the spaces, but more notably the lighting contributions are made by the subtraction of the exterior.

On each floor, varying artificial lighting strategies are employed. Each floor uses spotlights or hanging lights as a means of illuminating exhibited works. It also works to subtly illuminate the architecture. Light diffuses into the patterns created by the structure. On the first few floors brightness dips in and out of the ceiling textures. These small elements emphasize the careful details within the building.

Uniform openings were established in the structure to emphasize its massive quality. The dense wall thickness acts as a buffer for light to diffuse into the space. The continuation from bright colors on the exterior to the interior encourages a calming neutral atmosphere for work to be displayed. Thin panes of glass attach at the back of the openings, further exposing the stone exterior and creating the effect of being directly connected to the outside. The organization of these panes gives exterior an appearance of no glazing at all. Within each window, views of local vernacular and context are framed adding to the experience and nature of the building.

Fig. 83 simple natural lighting strategy

Fig. 84 thick window openings to framing outdoor views

ELEMENTS:
MATERIALITY

Fig. 85 exposed material on the exterior (with seasonal "flower boxes" for the current exhibit)

The material consideration plays an immense role in the design of the reconstructed Yellow House. The decision to expose the stone was key to displaying the message Olgiati intended in contrasting conventional material choices displayed in chalets and residences. Often local construction has utilized not only wood but stone which is convered in stucco. Olgiati displays a violent act of stripping the building, integral to displaying the structural essence of the building. The unfinished and stripped quality of the building revolts against the traditional ornamentation of many of its neighbors.

Logistically, the stone material was one of the only remaining elements from the old structure. Most other parts of the building were torn down but the stone was uncovered and roughed up for more texture to enhance visually. Careful white lime washes allow the texture of the stone to be critically perceived and intensified. The rough quality adds to the simple shape of the building.

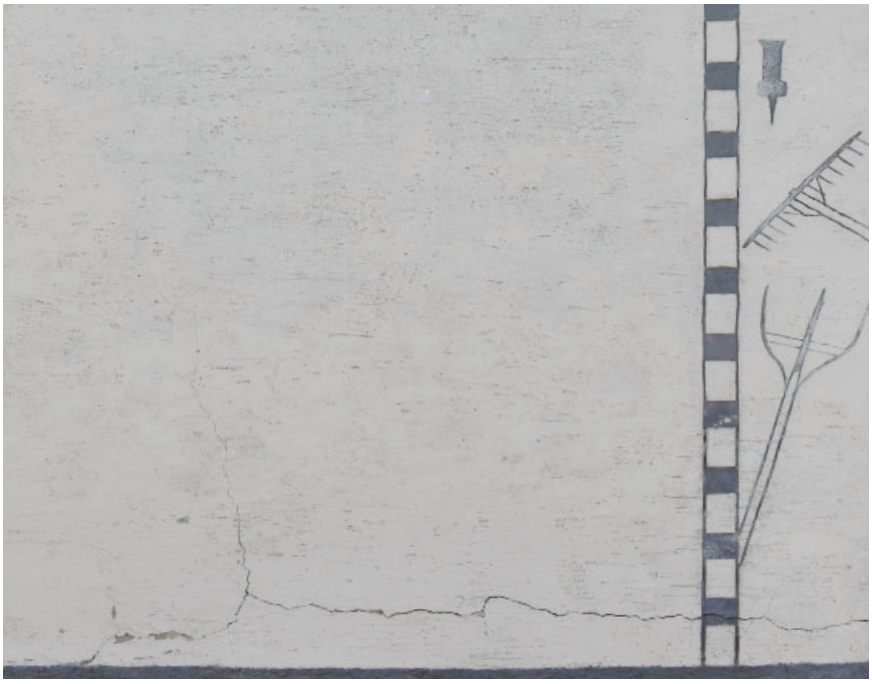
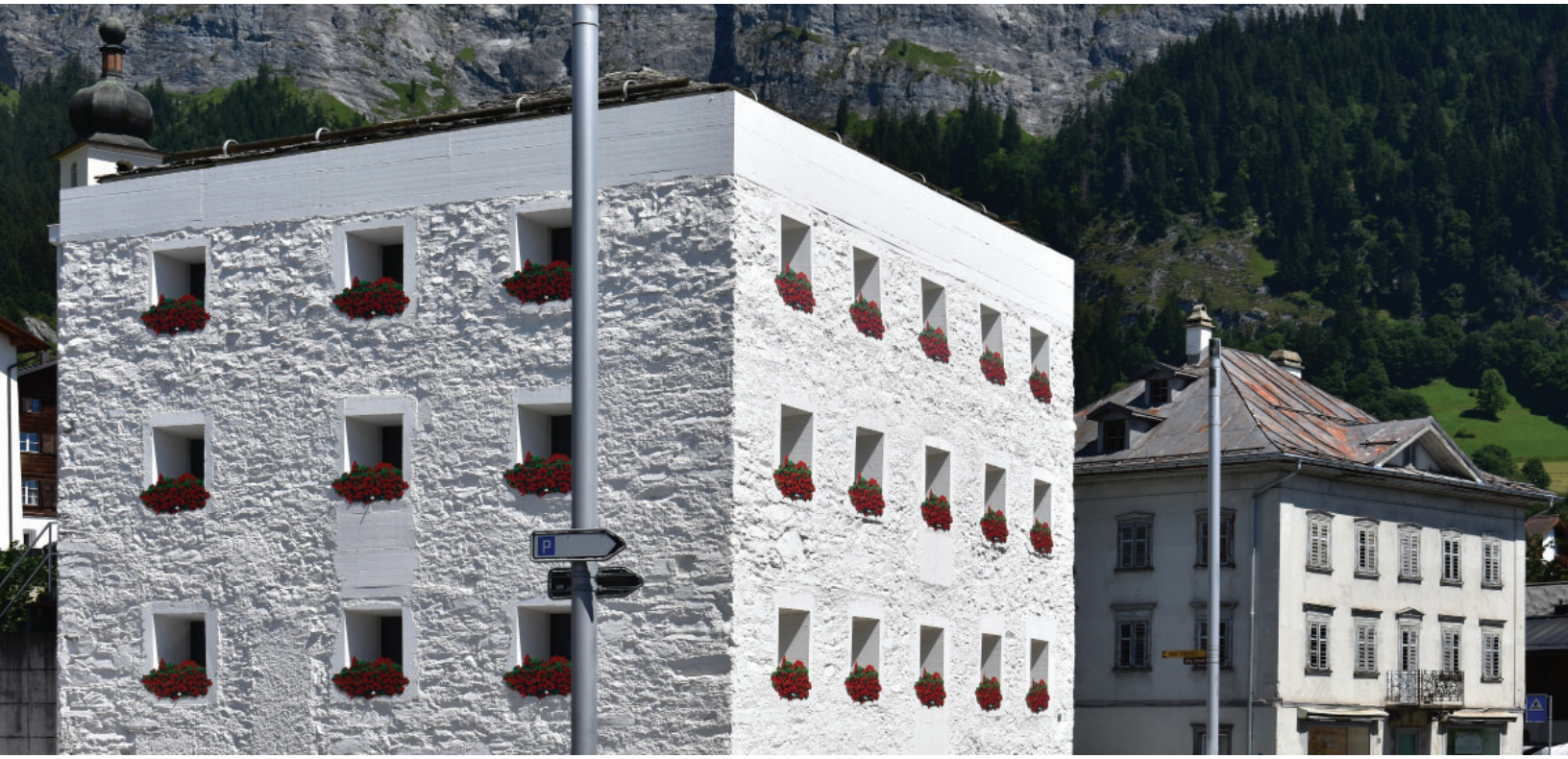


Fig. 86 traditional stuco exterior with ornamental paint details found on neighboring building

Fig. 87 exterior texture on the Yellow House

INTERPRETATIONS:



Visiting the Flims and much of the region, I realized and appreciated the lineage seen in houses and buildings. It is apparent the valuation of taking care of existing structures, adorning them with flowers and preserving their bright colors. These buildings dot the intense mountain landscapes apt to exist within such an outstanding landscape.

Contrastingly, the Yellow House intends to stand out against the character of many buildings its placed around. It intends to be a powerful element to the context. The nature of the building is to instigate reactions and interpretations from its visitors. It is a building that asks people to question its form and place within its environment. The Yellow House compels visitors to interpret the architecture to better understand it. It implores people to compare it to its local surroundings.

Its direct message is to reject surface level design and emphasize the essence of the structure. It allows users to see the structure that is often behind the regions vernacular architecture. Even though its appearance breaks away from its traditional neighbors and its stark qualities solicit mixed reactions, it has become an icon to its context. It honors the important consistancies of the establishment as it presents primal elements of constructing architecture. It is widely celebrated as an architecture of thoughtful resistance.

REFLECTIONS:

With the unique opportunity of traveling to and experiencing four diverse buildings, it has led me to develop a greater understanding of ways that architecture could fit into their surroundings and meaningfully work for the community. Each of the projects was accompanied by initial themes and ideas based on an outsider's perspective. After visiting, my perceptions were adapted and enriched by the experiences of the architecture within its context.

Throughout the process, I was pleasantly surprised in recognizing the intentional connections of the architecture to its historical context, landscape, and character of the community. Many of the projects found varying ways to adapt to each of these elements and in many cases, it helps to enrich and empower their communities. Generally, these buildings incorporated important familiar elements of their context which seemed to help them blend within the communities they served.

In the search of finding contemporary architecture that strives to belong to its environment, I was continuously enriched with vastly different solutions. Some projects like the Eysturkommuna Town Hall had an obvious visual connection to previous architecture in its materials and methods, while others like the Yellow House rejected visual connections in traditional exterior appearances. Both buildings reacted to their areas' history and became important icons for their community affecting future contemporary architecture in their areas. Many of the projects like the Kolumba Museum and the Gubbio Cemetery Extension greatly utilized elements of lighting and materiality as a means of creating a greater atmosphere fit for their conditions. The careful consideration of these elements inspired the architecture to become more unique and specific to its place.

Ultimately this study has demonstrated that architecture can be specific to its context and meaningful to its users. No matter the program or function, all places deserve contextual architecture that endeavors to relate to their past and present.

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