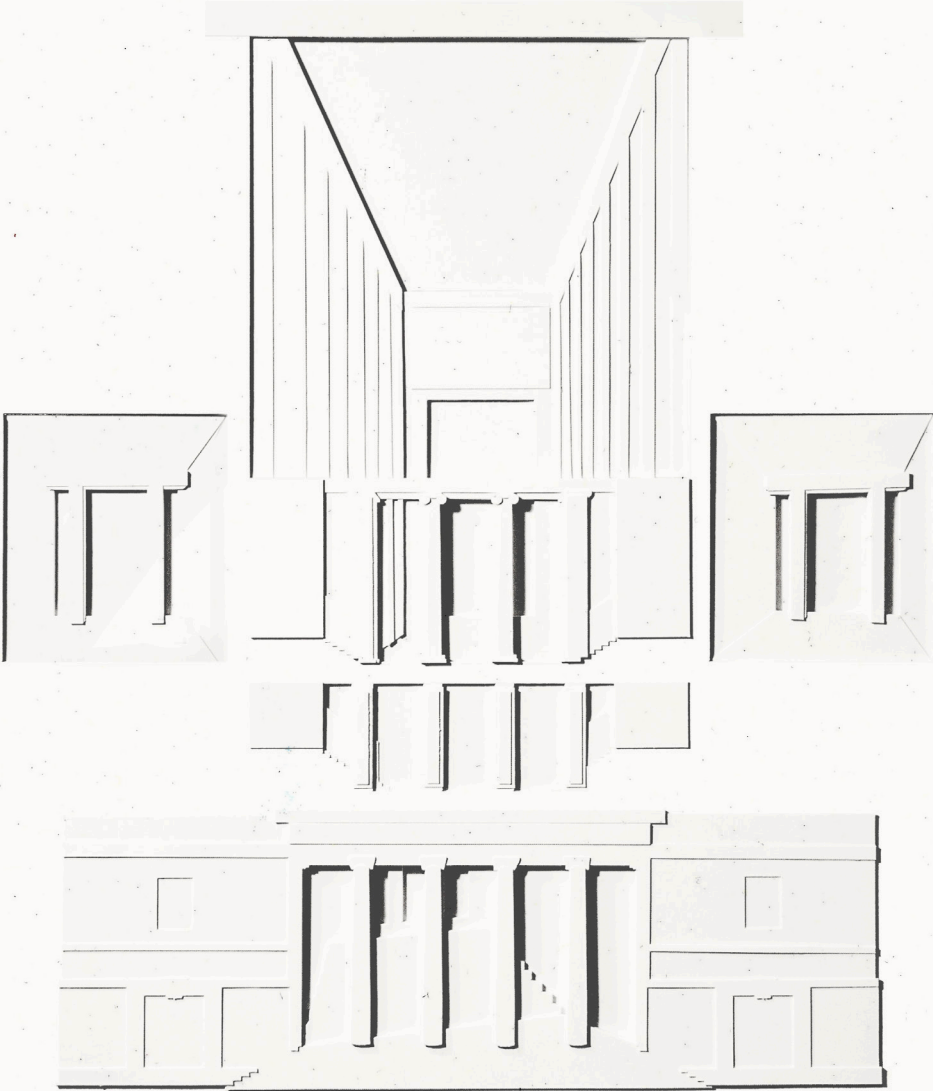


manner & method



kit bylett

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observing oslo's ambiguous, modern enigma

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Preface

Tucked in your hands is a secret, restless in anticipation, eager to be divulged.

This book is an invitation to a world that lies just below the shimmering surface, and it is my testimony that if you look long, hard and from just the right point of view, this hidden world will begin to materialise.

Manner and Method has been compiled after three months spent fastidiously observing and analysing a single building. Through this process, I have unearthed a secret gem, perhaps Oslo's best kept secret that, for almost a century, has been hiding in plain sight. This secret is the Deichman Library; a truly fantastic, *ambiguous, modern enigma*.

Like a hermit crab, eager for its new, bigger and shinier home, this coming Spring, the Deichman Library facility will be relocated to a new premises along the Oslo harbour. The current library will be left vacant, a shell of its former self, waiting to be colonised and given a new lease on life. This study was initially fuelled by topical discussions regarding the imminent transformation of the current library building, with many locals wondering in earnest, what *is the future* of the Deichman? I soon realised that, in fact, the answer to this question lay in another more fundamental question, which seeks, first and foremost, to ask: what *is* the Deichman?

This is the question that I set out to answer, with the hope of providing a fresh portrait of a monumental public building, about which surprisingly little is known and recorded. My findings are not presented in a report, as one would typically expect of an architectural survey. Alternatively, they are expressed as if this were a companion-book to the building. This format has encouraged me to explore modes of architectural representation that are not solely bound to the analysis of objective physical data, photos and drawings. Rather, I have allowed myself the freedom to delve into more subjective domains, with a focus on ideas, abstract illustrations and speculations. In this book, I wear many hats, posing, all at once and to the best of my abilities, as an architect, historian, preservationist and cold-case detective.

This process has given me a platform to indulge many of my tendencies; for critical thinking, for rifling through books I don't completely understand, for keeping indecipherable notes, for enthusiastic sketching and, above all, it has indulged my tendency to be curious. The result is deeply reflective

of my manner and method of working; a series of observations and articulations expressed, like they were generated, through an interweaving of mediums, approaches and pursuits. While writing is certainly not my first trade, I have made a valiant attempt to engage this challenging territory; with much inspiration drawn from the architects, artists and critics whose thoughts I have consumed throughout this process.

So, it is with this greeting that I invite you to explore my take on the Deichman Library, its relationship to Nordic Classicism and its place in modern Norwegian architecture.