



Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo
The Oslo School of Architecture and Design

DIPLOMA PROGRAM FALL 2018

Diploma candidate: Åsmund Steinsholm

Institute: Institutt for form, teori og historie

Main supervisor: Beate Hølmebakk

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink are positioned to the right of the supervisor names. The top signature is for Beate Hølmebakk and the bottom one is for Lars Danielsen Holen.

Second supervisor: Lars Danielsen Holen

External supervisor:

Company cooperation:

Title of project: The matter of sound: a museum for musical instruments

THE MATTER OF SOUND

A museum for musical instruments

CANDIDATE:

Åsmund Steinholm

SUPERVISOR:

Beate Hølmebakk

“an investigation of the relationship between body and object, material and construction, and the advanced cultural expression of musical soundmaking, through a museum for musical instruments”

01 INTRODUCTION

Written by Beate Hølmebakk

Architecture is built.

The verification of architectural quality comes through perception of built space.

Student's projects are rarely built, thus the quality of this work must be discussed on other terms than those applied on work that is realized. Therefore in addition to the discussions of social responsibility, function and spatial/material form; we must be concerned with conception, narrative, context and format; concepts that are central in the constitution of paper projects.

In order to create a common ground for these discussions in the context of the AHO diploma, the Oslo Stories project offer a thematic framework to students who are interested in developing an individual (or collaborative) architectural project within a common context.

ON THE BRIEF

Oslo Stories presents a common brief with ample possibilities for each student to individualize the content and focus of the project according to her/his architectural interest. The brief is that of a museum on a given site in Oslo. In the pre-diploma each student selects a collection to be exhibited in the museum. Thus the collection will work as a generator for the individual design- process. In each student's diploma program the collection is presented as an inventory and through a description of it's historical and cultural context.

A generic spatial brief is given for each student to tailor to her/his needs:

The fictive museum must have exhibition space suitable for your collection. In addition it must offer well planned out door space to be used as part of the exhibition and/or for the public. The building's interior should be approximately 4000m³. In addition to exhibition areas and outdoor areas the building must supply:

Entrance area with staffed reception (minimum 1 person)
Office (minimum 2 people)
Meeting room
Small coffeeshop (bar + seating for minimum 20 people) Storage for chairs
Storage for coffeeshop
Public washrooms (minimum 1 male + 1 female)
Staff washroom with lockers (minimum 1 male + 1 female)
Maintenance room
Technical space
Parking area for disabled/special deliveries

ON THE SITE

Three sites are offered for the project. The sites differ in size and character and in their relationship to the urban fabric. As such the choice of site entail specific challenges concerning the siting and massing of the museum project:

I Within the urban fabric

The site in Smedgata is situated between Bispevika and Tøyen.

It is an infill site on Enerhaugen's oldest street with an area of approximately 1 300m².

II On the edge of the urban fabric

The site on Akershusstranda is situated at the end of Kvadraturen facing Bispevika.

The site, which is partly on top of the Oslofjord tunnel, has an area of approximately 1 700m².

III Outside the urban fabric

The site at Museumsveien is situated at Bygdøy.

It is a large forested hill-site of approximately 5 800m².

02 WORKING ON THE MUSEUM

The museum is many things. It is a place for strong aesthetical experiences, an institution for learning and research, but also a tool to construct ideas of place and society. The museum is the reception area for the visitors – the lobby, the cafe, a shop, wardrobes and bathrooms – places close to the street. It is also the orchestrated route you are lead through to experience a certain, more or less preconceived narrative or sequence of impressions. But the museum is even bigger than this, it is also the dust free workshops of the conservers, the offices of curators, marketing staff and scholars, it is the workshops of exhibition craftsmen. Often, more than anything, the museum is storage: row upon row of shelves where thousands of broken pieces and fragile objects are kept, away from harmful

light and the polluting breath of visitors. The museum is the desperate attempt to preserve. To freeze in time objects deteriorating, dust grain by dust grain.

The museum is littered with paradoxes: preservation vs. displaying, specificity vs. generality, truth vs. lie etc. My interest in the museum lies in the meeting of the front and back, the pristine and the withering, the specific and the complex. Few other types of buildings have a similar capacity to be so much “bigger than itself”, both conceptually and in its role in the city – this, and the fact that the museum holds a potential for both the specific and the complex is what makes it a good case for a diploma project.

03 COLLECTING INSTRUMENTS

After having decided that I wanted to do a museum for my diploma I began the search for content. I wanted to fill my museum with something that have architectural potential, and that touches upon an aspect of architecture that I don't have experience with. The reasoning was that I wanted to learn something new. Initially this led me to the idea of making a museum for acoustical spaces. My thought was to make an assemblage of spaces with different, distinct acoustical characteristics for performing specific kinds of music. This idea prevailed for some time, but I soon realized that it lacked richness, in addition it was hard to imagine how exactly such a project could be explored and presented. As a consequence I strove to concretize the topic, trying to find a related theme that had some of the same potential for working with sound

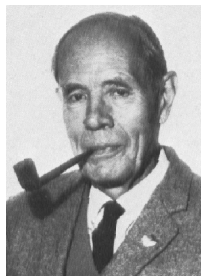
in architecture, while at the same time evoking other, more visual and tactile qualities. The result was the idea of making a museum for musical instruments.

Musical instruments have many different qualities. As objects they are in themselves beautiful, with shapes and tectonics closely related to their specific function. As cultural artefacts they speak of the societies they belong to, of its traditions, rituals, craftsmanship, art and entertainment. As tool, a musical instrument tell us something about humanity and its urge to make music, but also about the individual musician that wielded the instrument, alone or in groups, rehearsing or performing.

Having concluded that musical instruments would be an exciting topic for my museum I searched for a suitable collection, and found just that. I discovered that NMH (the Norwegian academy of music) has a collection of historical instruments. Even though some of these are on display in the library and halls of the school, NMH isn't a museum. Only a few of the instruments are shown, and they are not publicly accessible. In addition, the exhibition and storage facilities aren't ideal for most of the instruments: many of which are made of organic material that is especially vulnerable to light, shifts in temperature and air humidity etc.

Trygve Lindeman

Unknown photographer - http://lindemanslegat.no/?page_id=13



Olav Gurvin

Unknown photographer - Oslo Museum: image no. OB.F05895b OB.F05895b (Oslo byhistorisk samling/City historic collection).



The collection is comprised of about 500 objects, mainly from Europe, Asia and Africa (in that order). The collection primarily consists of instruments for use in traditional folk music and for classical art music. The materials vary from tortoise shell and brass, to fine wood and sinew. All the instruments are acoustical. Most of the pieces in the collection came from two sources, namely the private collections of Trygve Lindeman, cello player and long-standing director of NMH, and Olav Gurvin, Norway's first professor of musicology at the University of Oslo.

As a means to begin to get an understanding of the collection and how to categorize it I have organized the collection into a cardfile, making individual cards with an image and additional information for each object. The material presently available to me is a list of the objects, with little or no information other than the name of the instrument and a number that give reference to its provenance. In addition I have about 1200 images marked with the same number, but otherwise unorganised. The cardfile system will be an important tool to test different ways of categorization, and to evaluate which objects I "have" and what I might need more of.



Cardfile Åsmund Steinsholm

<p>kar-rassel</p> <p>BESKRIVELSE: Human shape. Appears to be sleeping.</p> <p>GEOGRAFISK OPPRINNELSE: Afrika</p> <p>LAGET AV: Wood, paint</p> <p>NUMMER: MH-G 253</p> <p>NOTAT: Rythm instrument for hand use. Close relationship to the body. Sound: Dry / Trickling</p> <p>Possible vitrine should allow for the viewer to come up close. Displayed individually to highlight its particular form? It's closed eyes could indicate dark environment. The waist has grooves for grip – strong urge to touch. Vitrine could have handles that mimic the the action of gripping and the materiality. Height from floor: around a meter.</p>	
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Example of index card Åsmund Steinsholm

04 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF INSTRUMENTS

To attempt to briefly sum up the historical and cultural context of musical instruments is a task similarly comprehensive as attempting to sum up the significance of say, books. There is obviously a limit to how thorough and accurate one can be over a couple of pages. But at least it is an opportunity to explore some of the theoretical foundation that can act as a framework for the development of my diploma project.

As a beginning some general thoughts on the nature of musical instruments: As the term musical instruments implies, it is an instrument intrinsically linked to the creation of music. But what is music exactly? A common definition of music is that “it is the art of organizing sound in pleasing or thought-provoking ways”. But this definition poses some problems, partly because the meaning of the term music has expanded significantly in the past century. For instance: the occurrence of rap music marked a shift away from singing, to rhythmic declamation of lyrics – leading to claims that this wasn’t “really” music. Similarly John Cage’s famous composition “4 33”, that directed the pianist to sit at the keyboard for that length of time, stirred controversy. The emergence of noise music in the 20th century is yet another example – with this category of music, experimentation with found sounds in the form of recordings were introduced. This led to musical expressions that completely broke with the idea that music should have harmony, rhythm, or even that the sounds had to be made by humans. A linguistic twist on this last point is that you in the English language (as well as in Norwegian) for instance find the terms “whale song” or “bird song”. This implies that the sounds don’t even have to be organized by humans in order to call it music. This isn’t even just a linguistic anomaly, in some agricultural and pastoral cultures, where much of the work happens outside,

people sometimes sing in counterpoint with natural sounds – man and nature makes music together.

The term musical instrument describes an object that is used by a human being to produce sounds in order to make music. Another definition could be: a musical instrument is an extension of the human body that enables the user to make sounds that he otherwise wouldn’t be able to make. This definition implies that, at some point in history, the need to expand on the “sound-making” possibilities of the human body has occurred. If one imagines present days musical instruments as a link in a long line of instrument evolution, human’s sole reliance on its own body to make sound ended in some prehistoric human society and instrument has developed ever since, forming different categories and sub-groups along the way. Another interpretation can be that this step from body to instrument happens constantly. If you for example find yourself in a situation where someone accompanies singing with a guitar, and you turn to smacking your palms to the table in order to make a sufficiently loud sound you have by your action turned the table into an instrument.

No matter how one imagines the first instrument to have come about, there is no doubt that instruments have played, and still play an essential role in the making and performing of music, both historically and presently. Thus, instruments are linked to almost any cultural activity or situation imaginable. Music and its instruments are connected to rituals such as marriages and coronations, to festivities such as carnivals and clubbing, and to “art” through concerts and recordings. Today music and instruments have turned personal in an unprecedented way in the sense that anyone can listen to anything, anywhere, with the help of a mobile phone or other devices. There is something profoundly

human in the urge to make music. It can be observed in the child that invents small tunes while playing. And it is evident if one considers the scope of situations in which music can be present.

Music and instruments is important signifiers of identity. What music you listen to or what instrument you play can be a signifier of social class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Hence, certain instruments can be connected with certain social characteristics. Gender norms for example dictates that it is more appropriate for a female to play the piano than percussion. Learning to play an instrument has been, and still is regarded as valuable. Historically, playing certain instruments was part of young women's education in the upper classes. And in folk culture being thought by a master to play an instrument such as the fiddle could mean that a young man could be secured an income. Given that instruments and learning aids are more accessible and affordable today than it has been historically, musical education has become more democratized. But still, which instrument and genre of music you play, and on what level, to some extent signifies what social class you belong to.

The act of making, organizing and reading sound in a musical way is fundamentally ingrained in humans, both on an individual and social level. Musical instruments and the skill to make and wield them plays an important part in this, in every culture, past or present.

This text leans primarily on the book "Ethnomusicology: a very short introduction" by Timothy Rice. Given that the text is meant as a personal annotation of relevant discourses and academic concepts, I have not deemed it necessary to reference the source more accurately.



The Three Musicians
Diego Velázquez (1599-1660)

05 MUSINGS ON AN ARCHITECTURE FOR MUSIC

Music is liquid architecture; architecture is frozen music

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Or as it is can be found in the book “Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life”, by Goethe and J. P. Eckermann:

Monday, 23d March.

“I have found, among my papers,” said Goethe, “a leaf, in which I call architecture frozen music. There is something in the remark; the influence that flows upon us from architecture is like that of music”.

It’s an intriguing idea, that there is some sort of kinship between the essence of music and that of architecture. The idea of such a relationship probably didn’t arise with Goethe; it can be traced to the understanding of rhythm, proportion and harmony in the Renaissance, and beyond. Since, the idea has formed the basis of avant-garde architectural and musical work such as that of Iannis Xenakis, a pupil of Messiaen and collaborator to Le Corbusier. In his works of music and architecture Xenakis explores the mathematical and structural relationship between the two.

Another take on the matter could be to consider that there is some shared characteristics in the way one perceives music and architecture, aesthetically.

To speculate: maybe there is a link in how both architecture and music has the ability to be all-encompassing. I cannot think of any other art form that I in the same way can “submerge” myself in. When listening to a piece of music that moves me, all I have to do is to close my eyes and focus on the music, and it can feel like it is all that is. With architecture it is rarer, only occasionally I have experienced

the feeling that there is nothing else than I, and the space that I’m in. But thinking back on those instances the sensation does feel similar. At the same time it differs from what I experience when reading a book or, looking at an image. Maybe there is something fundamental and immediate about the experience of music and very clear architecture...

However, whether or not it is something distinct about the relationship between architecture and music as compared to other art forms ultimately doesn’t matter when it comes to the task at hand. What matters is to consider what is the appropriate architecture to house the instruments of music. When considering this I believe that the instruments and their music can lend some clues to what might shape the architecture:

First and foremost an instrument is meant to be used to create music. If an instrument doesn’t make music one can even argue whether it is an instrument at all; this is contradictory to the paradox of the museum as time capsule. As a consequence the museum should house music, not only store inaudible remnants of “musicing”. Given that live music is an ephemeral thing the architecture should be a musical backdrop for the objects when the music stops. To achieve this the architecture needs to be composed. Any piece of music needs some form of structure, something that tells of its shape, even if the shape is almost unrecognisably abstracted it needs some sort of structuring prerequisite – nothing comes from nothing – the same goes for instruments, and architecture. Hence the structural framework of the architecture is paramount. Together with the organization of spaces it is what defines the relationship between the different elements of the architecture. Furthermore it needs colour: what brings character and atmosphere to a piece of music is the way you instrument the different melodies and harmonies

– a piece written for oboe sounds acutely different played on a trumpet. This, in addition to the way the individual musician and the conductor phrase and accentuate the notes is what brings character to the performance. This can be equalled to the choice of materiality and the design of details in a piece of architecture.

Finally, whether comprising of pieces or one single body, a musical piece, as well as a piece of architecture, needs clarity. Each part needs to contribute to the whole.

I will search for an architecture with spaces that possess strong and clear atmospheres based on the relationship between structure, material and detail – rhythm, proportion and harmony.



‘Music is liquid architecture; architecture is frozen music’

John Pawson
<http://www.johnpawson.com/journal/music-is-liquid-architecture-architecture-is-frozen-music-johann-wolfgang-von-goethe>

06 FOCUS AND METHOD IN THE DIPLOMA WORK

In my diploma work I will investigate the fundamental characteristics of the instruments in my collection. After making a selection of a few central objects I will evaluate their character based on the way one interact with them to make sound, what kind of music they are used to make, and their materiality and tectonics. This investigation will function as a basis to consider and develop the appropriate architecture in which to exhibit the objects. I will conduct the investigation of the characteristics of the instruments through both systematic and intuitive drawing and modell studies, as well as interviews and conversations with

relevant scholars, practitioners or craftsmen. In addition I will consider how to position myself in relation to museological history and current discourse on the matter. This investigation will be conducted through studies of relevant references and literature. It is my intention to do all my investigations in varied media such as drawing, model making, audio recordings etc. The development of the project will go on parallel to the investigations letting the different elements of the work influence each other. It is my hope that the finalised project and my reading of the instruments character will be an integrated body of work, easily read as a whole.

07 EXAMPLES OF SIMILAR WORK



Eleonora of Aragon in Palazzo Abatelli,
by Francesco Laurana

Masaaki Sekiya

As a reference for my project I have chosen to delve into the works of Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978). However it is important to note that the objective of this study is to understand Scarpa's thoughts, and ways of working with exhibitions and its architecture, not to reference his very particular design vocabulary. Through his career Scarpa worked comprehensively on museums and exhibitions, both permanent and temporary. His thoughts on-, and designs for exhibitions has been widely influential. For instance Sverre Fehn's "Storhamarlåven", and his design for an exhibition of Viking artefacts at the Museum of cultural history in Oslo, is closely related to the work of Scarpa. Scarpa approached every object with profound interest in its character and "needs", and with great empathy for the visitor's experience.¹

Through thorough analysis of each object, Scarpa chose qualities imbedded in them to highlight. Robert McCarter points to this in his description of Scarpa's famous renovation of Palazzo Abatellis into the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia:

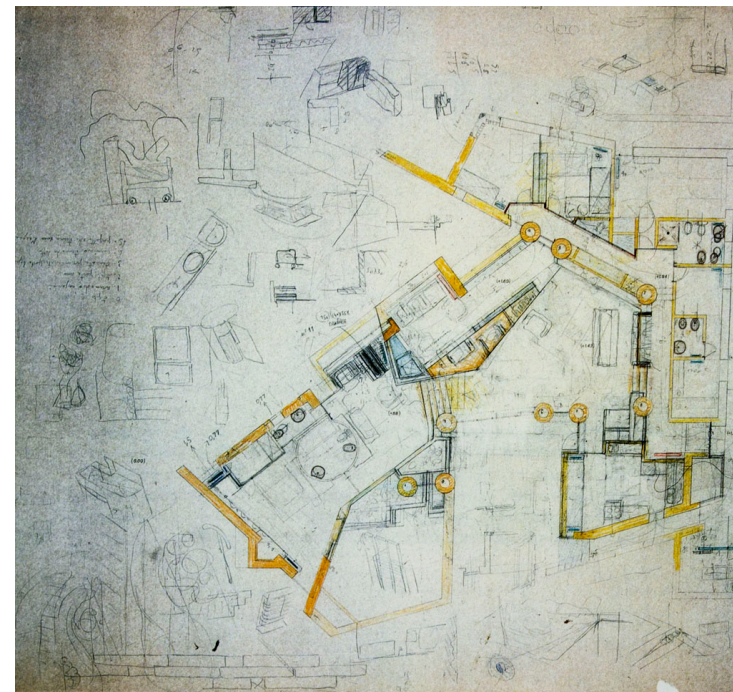
Throughout the museum, each artefact has its own individual and unique mode of being presented to us, which seems exactly right for that particular object. Yet, we also note that the brackets, wooden panels, pivoting supports, frames, stands, and bases share a common formal, material and detailing language - giving the whole experience a strong sense of unity.²

Often Scarpa even referenced characteristics of non-architectural objects directly in his buildings, for instance

the Venetian gondola inspired Scarpa in the design of constructions in several of his buildings.³ Scarpa is also known for his innovative interaction with the past, much of his work being interventions in existing building fabric. The latter might not be directly related to my diploma project, given that it will be a new building. But Scarpa's sensitivity in dealing with architectural transitions, borders and joints is a subject of great interest to me. In fact, the reason why I initially thought that Scarpa's work could be an interesting case study is the way he combines a multi-layered, composite material palette into a whole, through intelligent joining and separation. The composite character of his work⁴, bears a resemblance to the composite nature of musical instruments. There is one other significant difference, necessary to point out, between my pending diploma project and the work of Carlo Scarpa: Whilst my project only will, and can be a paper project, Scarpa's projects is fundamentally linked to the act of building. As Robert McCarter points out in his comprehensive monograph on Scarpa from 2013:

At the beginning of construction, Scarpa's designs were only developed to a very schematic level; revelations uncovered in the existing buildings' fabric, together with insights inspired by the act of making and the engagement of craft, often altered the direction of the design process, both dramatically and subtly.⁵

It is my intention to try to decrease this gap through the way I work on my project, for instance through model making. In addition I find Scarpa's use of drawing, as a cognitive tool for research and analysis as well as designing, inspiring.⁶ This is present in his drawings that show several different sketches juxtaposed on the same sheet of paper. I wish to attempt to have a similar approach in my project, working in a variety of medias and scales in parallel.



Villa Ottolenghi

Drawing by Carlo Scarpa

Notes

- 1 McCarter, 2013, p.48.
- 2 McCarter, 2013, p.70.
- 3 McCarter, 2013, p.35.
- 4 YouTube, 2014
- 5 McCarter, 2013, p.4.
- 6 Domusweb, 2012

Bibliografi:

Domusweb (17. May 2012). Carlo Scarpa: The Architect at Work [Internet], Domusweb. Available from: <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2012/05/17/carlo-scarpa-the-architect-at-work.html> [Read 20.April 2018].

Youtube (31. March 2014). Richard Murphy lecture about the work of Carlo Scarpa [Internet], SSoA. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_78_KQZiP8 [Watched 16.April 2018].

McCarter, R. (2013) Carlo Scarpa. New York, Phaidon Press Inc.

08 WORK FORMAT

Process:

- I** Detailed studies of central objects in texts, audio recordings, drawings, and models
- II** Diagrammatic studies of relationships between objects
- III** Study models and analytical drawings of the chosen site and its surroundings, and of the project in the chosen situation
- IV** Study models and drawings for spatial and structural concept
- V** Study models and drawings of important details
- VI** Development of project as a whole in various scales and media

Presentation:

- I** Final plan and section drawings in 1:100
- II** Situation plan 1:250
- III** Drawings of exhibition mounting and architectural details 1:10/1:5
- IV** Situation model 1:200
- V** Modell of project 1:50/1:100
- VI** Illustrations in relevant media
- VII** Diagrams describing the project at different scales, in various media
- VIII** Audio describing instruments
- IX** Booklet, presenting objects and their characteristics

09 WORK PLAN

15. /8.	Start of diploma semester		Cultivation
	Conception		Close focus
	Context and narrative		Atmosphere and details
	Site and the architectural body 1:200	14./11.	1:50
12./9.	First pin-up		Third pin-up
	Development		Finalization
	Spatial and material form		Defining format
	Structure and function	14./12.	Bringing it all together
	1:100		Deadline
17./10	Second pin-up		