THE SHAM MUSEUM

Exploring a potential return to architectural ornamentation

Masters Thesis in Architecture
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ABSTRACT

Set in the picturesque suburb of Clifton in Bristol, England I am proposing a small scale art museum. This museum will be a vehicle in which to explore the theme of decoration, a potential return to architectural ornamentation.

This design proposal will seek to understand the local building context by analysing specific architectural elements, their function and their role in ornamentation. Categories are devised based on the function for different types of ornamentation, a set of design rules I will implement in ‘Sham Museum.’

The museum will aim to bridge the gap between the familiarity of classical motifs to local residents and to challenge them with ideas of modern art. The art museum becomes an art piece, the visitors falling into a carefully concocted trap where they experience a morphing of a classical motif into modern art forms. Visitors first experience subtle variations of ornament gradually morphing into ornament that continues along a path to be structural and then spatial.

Examiner: Morten Lund
Supervisor: Kengo Skorick
SHAM
noun
1. a thing that is not what it is reported to be.
   “our health system is a sham”

adjective
1. bogus; false.

This curious folly was designed in 1755 but meant to look medieval to match the nearby wealthy estate. The rear of ‘Sham Castle’ is without any ornamentation as it was only supposed to be viewed from the front.

‘Sham Museum’ the name from ‘Sham Castle’ a stone edifice built to improve the view from a wealthy nearby estate. Whilst it was designed in 1755 but meant to look medieval to match the estate. The rear of ‘Sham Castle’ is without ornamentation as it was intended to only be viewed from the front from the castle. This reference perhaps gives you some ideas about the intentions of my project.

The other key point of departure was a trip to Skopje where I saw the results of an ambitious development program called ‘Skopje 2014’ where many Greek-revival buildings are springing up as a way to concretely a new Macedonian (FYROM) identity. This idea of fake architecture intrigued me. Buildings cannot help but make a statement even if the statement is you want to fit in.
Abstract
Point of departure

PART I
Site context
Introducing Clifton, Bristol
Introducing the site
Development approach in Clifton
Museum design approach

PART II
Local Architectural Analysis
The Dictionary of Ornament
Investigating different architectural elements
My interpretation of ornament

PART III
The Sham Museum
The front facade
The arches
Exhibition strategy
PART I: SITE CONTEXT

INTRODUCING THE LOCAL CONDITIONS
A historic neighbourhood boasting Georgian and Regency architecture.

These photos showcase the typical architecture of the area.

Bristol is a city in the South-West of the UK, near the border with Wales. Clifton is a suburb within Bristol, known for Georgian and Regency architecture. The site itself is within Clifton village, which is an area with plenty of shops and restaurants. The block is under renovation currently, plans to develop it are on hold as planning permission is sought.
Kings Parade, Clifton (Bristol)

A 1960’s eyesore at the centre of historic Clifton.

Set in the picturesque suburb of Clifton, in Bristol, England, I was inspired by the conservative mind set of local residents and the local urban fabric. Clifton is dominated by great examples of Georgian and regency architecture. Proposing a renovation of an ugly 1960’s building was always going to be challenging, balancing a fine line between emulating the past and proposing new ideas in architecture.

Site Development: The modern ‘menace’

The site is currently under development, with plans to build develop the site into residences, office space and a shop. The proposal above (image created by Kingswood Architecture firm) was denied planning permission with the closing comment shown.

“Many proposed developments are a menace in which the Clifton character is thrown to the winds in favour of a modernistic form. This must not happen in Clifton. Architects and promoters will have to think of some way to keep Clifton Clifton”
SITE CONTEXT

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MUSEUM DESIGN

Designing a museum in a historical setting poses various questions and challenges for the designer. Pictured are two possible approaches to museum design, it is designed to fit into the context or stand out? Albeit there are many strategies I designed I wanted my design for Sham Museum to be this, a building that is designed to fit into much older buildings will be slightly false. Below are some different viewpoints on this matter. My view is pictured last rather than dismissing local residents as morons anxiously complaining things were better in the old days I drew from this and addressing a more sensible approach to a modern interpretation of ornament.

Local photos showing a sudden change in architectural style. This change is often quite dramatic when half of the building has been destroyed (often in WWII as the area was bombed) and a modern replacement has been built.
PART II: LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

INVESTIGATING
ARCHITECTURAL
ELEMENTS
Pictured here are photos of architectural details from surrounding buildings at the site. I separated them by the detail and the material used.

By collecting these images of surrounding architectural details I started to investigate what effect each detail achieved.

For example, creating elaborate detail (in the balconies seen to the left) makes the heavy cast iron material appear lighter and the balcony becomes an ornate design feature.

The stone balconies below use perforations to use less material and also create design opportunities for ornamentation.
THE DICTIONARY OF ORNAMENT

3.

JUNCTION MEETING POINTS

CORBELS
stone

BRACKETS
cast iron

BARGEBOARDS
wood

CORNICE (edges)
PEDIMENT (triangle part)
ENTABLATURE (whole structure)
stone

Pictured here are photos of architectural details from surrounding buildings at the site. I separated them by the detail and the material used.
## The Dictionary of Ornament: in detail

### ELEMENT AEDICULE
- **Keystone**: Carved, ornamental form, covers the join or intersection between structures. Provides a fortification effect. Hides the roof and guttering.
- **Moulding around an arch**: Horizontal band of moulding. Visually divides structure. Often used as a material to build balconies with in this area. Emphasized masonry blocks at adjoining walls. Emphasizes structure. Textural device. Often used to indicate floor levels. Visual reassurance that the building is solid and stable. Frames the building. Emphasizes the opening. Adds interest and variety to structure. Decoration due to the key position. Grand articulation of structure. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.
- **Bargeboards**: A lining device on the top of a window or door. Breaks up the rectilinear door by adding a curved shape above. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.
- **Pressed**: Carved, ornamental form, covers the join or intersection between structures. Provides a fortification effect. Hides the roof and guttering.
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- **Bargeboards**: A lining device on the top of a window or door. Breaks up the rectilinear door by adding a curved shape above. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.

### ELEMENT ROOF
- **CONSOLE**: Bracket can be used either as a support of a column or as a decorative feature. Gives the building an imposing presence.‘Blank’ area of opportunity for symbolic decoration. Used to indicate floor levels. Visual reassurance that the building is solid and stable. Frames the building. Emphasizes the opening. Adds interest and variety to structure. Decoration due to the key position. Grand articulation of structure. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.
- **Parapet**: A wall-like structure around the edge of a roof. Provides a fortification effect. Hides the roof and guttering. Frames the arch and emphasizes the structural feature with or without ornamental foliage. Denotes security. Sometimes used as blocks to support the roof. 'Blank' area of opportunity for symbolic decoration. Used to indicate floor levels. Visual reassurance that the building is solid and stable. Frames the building. Emphasizes the opening. Adds interest and variety to structure. Decoration due to the key position. Grand articulation of structure. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.
- **BARGEBOARDS**: Ornamental brackets with unique S shape. Ornamental bracket with unique S shape. A motif to animate surfaces. Easy and cheap to create as pattern is simple and cheap (at the time) and could be very decorative. The cast iron-work the balcony is often used as a material to build balconies with in this area. Visually unites arch. Leads your eye to a key moment of opportunity for decoration due to the key position. Emphasizes structure. Breaks up the rectilinear door by adding a curved shape above. Adds interest and variety to structure. Decoration due to the key position. Grand articulation of structure. The panelling catches light, producing attractive shadows and a 3D effect.
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### FAMILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
<th>FUNCTION / STRUCTURE</th>
<th>TYPE OF DECORATION</th>
<th>EFFECT</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEDICULE</td>
<td>SPRANDEL</td>
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<td>PROJECTING CORNICE</td>
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<td>ROOF</td>
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<td>BOSS</td>
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### The Dictionary of Ornament

After collecting knowledge of local building details, I had research to create a dictionary of ornament as seen on the left.

I asked myself how ornament is used?

For example, the keystone – last voussoir or block to be set in the centre of an arch was originally used for construction purposes as it held the arch in place.

Development in technology meant it is no longer needed in the construction of an arch yet it became symbolic, it focuses the arch.

By analysing local ornament I dispelled the superficial side and explored the function of each detail.
INVESTIGATING ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

DOORS

Four different local doorways

Analysing the components of this doorway
I devised a set of categories as rules for why ornamentation is used.

**SYMBOLIC** (light blue)
Ornament can be used symbolically to signify a concept. For example, a keystone can be used to display a family name, to signify ownership and entrance to a property.

**CONCEAL / ARTICULATE STRUCTURE** (grey)
Ornament can conceal and at the same time, highlight structure, this would be ornament hiding plain joints with some elaborate foliage for example.

**ANIMATE SURFACE** (yellow)
Flat surfaces can be animated by creating visual complexity rather than just a flat plain surface.

These categories often overlap and of course are open to interpretation, however this is my interpretation. For example a selection of foliage at the impost (end) of a column as begins springing (where it goes into an arch) conceals this joint, yet highlights it with something else. Then it is also symbolic, the arch looks like it is sprouting from the column.
MY INTERPRETATION OF ORNAMENT

USING LOCAL CONTEXT AS A BASIS FOR ORNAMENT STUDIES

INITIAL ORNAMENT RESEARCH
Local context photos, references, initial sketches

Details I used as reference and inspiration

My sketches from local photos and reference details
The vast complexity of the different layers of history and meaning in the ornament opened up many design possibilities. In experiment 1 and 2, I looked at the idea of pattern on 2D surfaces, creating some sort of screen with perforations. This was not what I had in mind as I wanted a more 3D experimental approach, I wanted to represent ornamentation in the 21st century not a replica of the past.
Craving a more 3D approach, throughout the project I have been constantly referring to the artist David Altmejd who often uses motifs of familiarity in his work, in his case, the human figure and distorting it into forms which still hold this essence of the original motif but take on weird and disturbing characteristics.

Altmejd creates highly detailed sculptures that often blur the distinction between interior and exterior surface and structure, figurative representation and abstraction.

The proximity to what is seen typically as a historic museum allows viewers to relate to the building, but creates enough of a difference to create a weird tension.
Sketches of my ornamentation studies continued.

I decided I wanted ornamentation to be used in different types.

In type 1, the ornament serves to highlight the structure by adorning key junctions.

Example 1: Using ornament where a column meets the springing of an arch as pictured.
Example 2: Covering up a window frame, this highlights the window and create an ivy effect.
Example 3: Hiding the joint from the floor to wall by embellishing skirting boards with 3D foliage that looks like it is growing.

In type 2, the ornament serves to enliven flat surfaces.

Example 1: Decorating a spandrel to create more variety on the flat surface.
Example 2: Decorating string-courses to visually divide the structure.
Example 3: Decorated plain walls
Example 4: Panelling of a door to be decorated to create more variety on a flat surface.
Example 5: (left) ornament being used as a shading device to allow light into a space.
PART III: THE SHAM MUSEUM

INVESTIGATING
ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS
The front façade of the Sham Museum is based on the surrounding buildings with only a small hint that things are a little strange (one window is upside down.) Depicting a traditional front, I used techniques employed by surrounding façades. Textural devices such as rustication, emphasizing the ground floor blocks, denoting a sense of stability and security. After stating this allegiance to historic Georgian and Regency buildings, artwork within the museum should complement these old elaborate details.

Here I collected various sketches of surrounding buildings and analysed their façades.

1. Window sizes are larger closer to the ground due to light.
2. Balcony project out.
3. Rustication is used (chamfering of blocks to emphasize them.)
4. The entrance is in the middle of the front façade.
5. Pediments are used.
6. Regular semi-circle and rectangle shapes are used.
7. Architectural elements are evenly spaced and the same size.
8. Symmetrical
Facade Analysis: Paying homage to the surroundings

Facade Analysis: in detail

CLASSICAL FRONT

The different interior sections.

To visually divide the building to show viewers provide extra support and thus simple ornament.

An additional plain arch placed above an arch to

STRINGCOURSE

ornamental.

this one pictured

WINDOW TAX

window frame. Unlike

This support is holding

MOULDING

making it seem more stable and secure.

Chamfered bricks emphasizes the ground floor

JAMB LINTEL SUPPORT

the local building façades. These are purely sham

RUSTICATION

Each bay has been designed in accordance with

KEY

ORDER OF ORNAMENT

A modern extension

SHAM DEVICE

windows.

WINDOWTAX

and order of the

keep the symmetry

WINDOW TAX

These windows are actually boarded up. Light

is only needed from above in the corresponding

space for the art work. The idea of allowing

is only needed from above in the corresponding

These windows are actually boarded up. Light

don’t need to be as large as more sunlight can

doesn’t need to be as large as most light can

ground floor from their height. Windows

decrease the further up the facade you go. This

STRINGCOURSE

gradual phasing out of complexity creates a

penetrate into the higher up windows. This

gradual phasing out of complexity creates a

penetrate into the higher up windows. This

This support is holding

making it seem more stable and secure.

Chamfered bricks emphasizes the ground floor

RUSTICATION

essentially remain fake came from an old law

which stated properties were taxed depending

windows to symmetrically adorn a facade yet

space for the art work. The idea of allowing

is only needed from above in the corresponding

These windows are actually boarded up. Light

don’t need to be as large as most light can

doesn’t need to be as large as most light can

ground floor from their height. Windows

decrease the further up the facade you go. This

STRINGCOURSE

To visually divide the building to show viewers the different interior sections.

Facade Analysis: Paying homage to the surroundings
How can I coax visitors into engaging in modern art/architecture?

West Elevation

Depicting a traditional front, I used techniques employed by surrounding façades. Textural devices such as rustication, emphasizing the ground floor blocks, detonating a sense of stability and security.

Ornament starts to creep in, the closer you get to the building. There is a slight hint something might not be quite right.

A modern interpretation of ornament
DESIGNING THE ARCH
MAIN NAve OF BUILDING
COMBINING ORNAMENTATION AND SPATIAL STUDIES
EXPLOITING A CLASSICAL MOTIF: THE ARCH

IDEA 0
the 3 clay pieces used to make up the arch
"joined" together
arch is standing...
arch is growing...
full arch

IDEA 1

IN CONTEXT...
lighting
adapted light
line of ivy tunnel

FORM FINDING

Ivy Tunnel

ARCH EXPERIMENTS - FOR USE IN MAIN HALL (NAVE) OF OUL.
ARCH EXPERIMENTS - FOR USE IN MAIN HALL (MAPE). 150930 - PAGE 3

IDEA 8

Arch is created by hollowing out the ornament.

IDEA 5

Main role: " Nay."

IDEA 6

Arch types: Draw your eyes up.

ARQ. layer or ornament: Omnitess - "Know if space, and what?"

I like the simplicity + traditional - "West" of brick. [left + next]

INSERTING ORNAMENT

Junction meeting point.

Arch ornament (arch is natural), (where springing occurs) - growing

A02: Further experiments: Design related to arch that would actually work. It's a negative space.

A03: Many ornaments. Consider these shapes. Is this movement what makes it the simplicity of the idea?

A07: Use this principle.
ARCH EXPERIMENTS - 150930 - PAGE 1

1. **Context of Space**
   - **Step 1**: View from entrance
   - **Step 2**: Aisle, nave, aisle

2. **Building in 3D**
   - Dimensions: 8.3m, 6.3m, 4.1m, 3.3m, 2.3m

3. **Contrast**
   - Simple shapes, bold linear elements

4. **Columns**
   - How can they be made more interesting?
   - Long, thin, varied forms?

ARCH EXPERIMENTS - 151001 - PAGE 2

5. **Columns**
   - Long, thin, varied forms?
   - Contrast

6. **Garden Path**
   - Nice, linear, simple, uncluttered

7. **Italian Garden Path**
   - Like the contrast and the form of the columns.
How can I combine these different expressions?

ARCH PROGRESSION
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORNAMENT AND STRUCTURE
1. TRADITIONAL (grey)
2. ‘OIL AND WATER’ (orange)
   - Structure and ornament are separated
3. HYBRID (yellow)
   - Ornament becomes spatial
ORNAMENT: FINALLY EXPRESSIVE!
ornament has been promoted from structural slave

ORNAMENT: TAKING OVER!
ornament becomes the structure
The progression of these arches to form part of the central exhibition hall

Section view through the exhibition space

The arches within their natural habitat (The Sham Museum)
EXHIBITION STRATEGY

MAIN NAVE OF BUILDING

CENTRAL NAVE AND EXHIBITION SPACES
CONTEMPORARY / CLASSIC ART / ARCHITECTURE

Modern artwork complimenting historic architectural elements

CONTRASTS

white versus black
masculine versus feminine
minimal versus detailed
smooth versus textured
interior versus exterior

First Floor Plan

Second Floor Plan

STRATEGY

I choose to create a large central hall which could house a variety of different sizes of art. This central hall becomes the main nave of the museum, similar to other surrounding building, a format many people know and are familiar with. The use of the central nave allowed me to be flexible with the different types of artwork displayed. There are spaces where the architecture serves as an iconic backdrop to art work and spaces where the art work enjoys a blank canvas.
The central exhibition hall: artwork set against the progression of arches

LIGHT STRATEGY:
Ground floor windows can have screens placed over them if light needs to be controlled and only allowed in from the roof-light above.

ARTWORK:
The central hall needed to be large enough to house a large variety of art. This space is for free standing sculptures.

INITIAL ARCH:
At the entrance to this central space, the free standing arches start off in their classical form but the visitor can see ahead to the morphed progression casting their intrigue.

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL:
This space can be transformed into part of the artwork, for example by using light projections or paint.

LIGHT STRATEGY:
In these exhibition spaces, light is carefully controlled with artificial lights also allowing space for completely dark rooms ideal for video installations.

ARTWORK:
This space needs to be as flexible as possible to allow different types of art to be exhibited. The blank container quality of these rooms allow the art and not the architecture to stand out.