

THE NEW ANCIENT

A Bathhouse in Gothenburg



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ABSTRACT

The ancient bathing culture has lost its significance. The preceding fundamental function of public bathhouses implicating the ritual of washing and revitalization has become relieved throughout time and independence. Whereas public bathhouses are still existing in the urban context, they have often become places either reduced to sports and educational purposes or exclusive facilities.

Questioning how the typology of the ancient bath can be new interpreted meeting a contemporary vision in the context of Gothenburg, this thesis finds its focus on the investigation of atmospheric and spatial qualities inspired and influenced by the exploration of artworks of the painter Jean-Léon Gérôme as well as of historical baths in Gothenburg.

The artworks illustrating baths in a dignified manner, involving a calm surrounding with social interactions are used as a main reference and inspiration for this thesis. By analyzing and translating a selection of artworks into drawings, characteristic tectonics and haptic design features influencing the atmospheric perception are captured. These features are reapplied and transformed in a new design of a public bath at Skeppsbron in Gothenburg aiming to create a place where relatable social as well as recreative activities, as illustrated in the paintings can be imagined. Through this intention, the chosen method states its purpose outgoing from the interior and its detailing – having the individual experience, the sequence of spaces as well as the basic function of water combining hygiene and well-being as a main focal point.

In that sense, the proposal seeks to be a less literally interpretation of the chosen references, but intents to maintain a readable relation to its original meaning.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

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Figure 1. Steam Bath (JL Gérôme, 1889).

MOTIVE

What makes this painting of a public bath so interesting and why do we appreciate this kind of space? Is it the atmosphere, the light, the heaviness, the volume, maybe the human interactions or could it be the environment that is so different from what you expect from a public bath? Why have I never experienced this kind of milieu in Gothenburg and why are bathhouses today rather hectic?

Susrustas ajur veda, by many seen as the oldest medical book connects bathing with a recreational purposes and wellbeing (Torstensson, 1877). In the painting from Jean-Léon Gérôme a similar relation can be perceived. People are interacting bare with no clothing in a calm space.

While public baths in the ancient Greek and Roman empire were a main part of society (Sweet, 2015), time has created bathhouses with a different agenda finding their focus either in sports or educational purposes as it is the case in swimming halls or in luxurious features as they can be experienced in rather exclusive facilities as spas. Whereas swimming halls are often standardized, in many cases perceived as loud, hectic and large, spas are comparatively rather expensive and in that sense limited in accessibility - a fact that reveals a lack and creates a space for a revival of the old typology involving a calm surrounding, a public place for encounter as well as for withdrawal - *the new ancient*.

ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK

Objectives

Resuscitate historical typology in the context - Is the typology of the ancient bath a lost knowledge that is no longer built in a modern context? To what degree is it still existing in Gothenburg?

Historical restoration and new interpretation - To what extent should the ancient bath be interpreted literally? How can it be transformed to meet a contemporary vision?

Urban relevance - How can the proposal of a new public bath be integrated and contribute to the development plans of the city of Gothenburg?

Program and atmospheric perception – How can the program as well as the tectonic characteristics found in the ancient typology affect the atmospheric perception in order to create a place for encounter and retreat?

Research question

How can the ancient bath be new interpreted through paraphrasing selected artworks of Jean-Léon Gérôme meeting a contemporary vision in the context of Gothenburg?

Method

The principal initial point of the thesis is established through the study of former and existing bathhouses in Gothenburg as well as through the analysis of historical artworks, which are used to reproduce models, plans and sections. In that sense, the thesis is divided into two methods: Method I is based on studies on drawings of selected bathhouses in order to find linkages to possible sites and the program. Method II is using artworks as a tool to understand the represented rooms within the historical context in a simple and intuitive way. Through the experimental translation of chosen artworks into a 3D model, the method aims to represent plans and sections in its radically honest form, making the layer of tectonics apparent in order to define characteristic and shaping features for the design.

Delimitations

The proposal is located in Gothenburg where certain links to the ancient bathing culture have been observed within historical as well as existing public bathhouses. A special focus is placed on centrally located historical and present public bathhouses involving an important social and public function. According to that criteria, a selection has been made placing the focus rather on the programmatic, atmospheric and local factors instead of registering all bathhouses that existed or exist in Gothenburg.

Finding its focus in the exploration of spatial qualities in the selected references and artworks, the program of the design does not necessarily follow the original program of the chosen buildings. In that sense, the thesis can be seen as a rather free interpretation which bases on a personal understanding of atmospheric characteristics within the chosen foundation of historical artworks and the context.

The artworks regarding the chosen method have been selected intuitively with the focus on rooms representing baths with a strong impression in terms of mood, atmosphere and social interactions which we, the authors personally regard as qualitative and appreciated spaces.

METHOD I - CONTEXT

Historic context

The roots of bathhouses in the context of Gothenburg trace back through the history and find their origin already in the year 1628 (Schänberg, 1956). Despite the fact that a number of bathhouses existed in the early years of Gothenburg, it should be noted that these bathhouses were in overall referring to the period of decadence. The facilities were restricted in terms of public accessibility and could only be afforded by the upper-class. The need and the wish to make the bathhouses more public and generally accessible in order to promote hygiene and health arose with the distribution of cholera in the 1830s (Schänberg, 1956). As a consequence, *Renströmska Bad- och tvättanstalten* or *Hagabadet* originated in Haga as the city's official public bathhouse.

The fundamental idea of the bathhouse changed by time and by the installation of domestic private bathrooms and is nowadays either relieved by functional sport baths or exclusive spas involving a restricted public accessibility for regenerative bathing - again.

Aim of the method

As a pre-study as well as a tool to understand the historical context, an investigation on former and existing bathhouses in Gothenburg has been made.

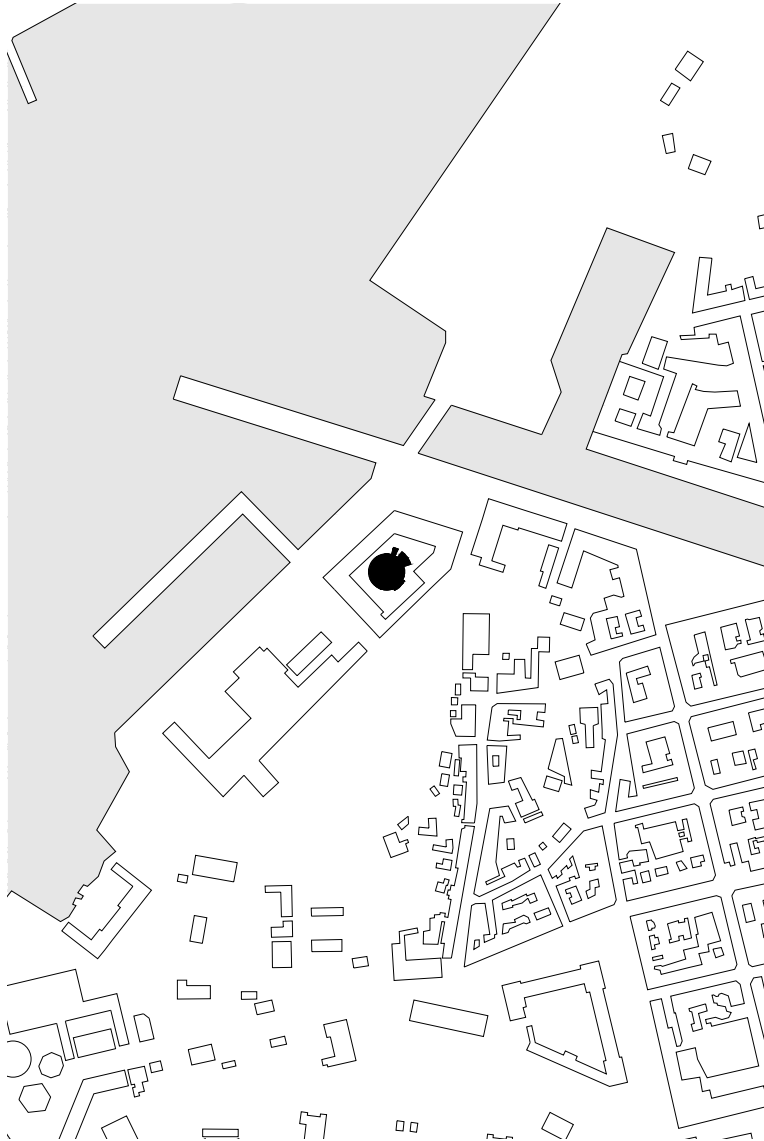
Prioritizing local, programmatic and cultural meanings rather than a complete encyclical register, a selection of historical bathhouses has been conducted involving the bathhouse *Rotundan*, *Simskolorna* and *Hagabadet*, having a central location, the closeness to the water as well as similarities in the plan layout in common. The studied examples are applied as a base and guidelines in terms of possible linkages to site, program and materiality.

ROTUNDAN

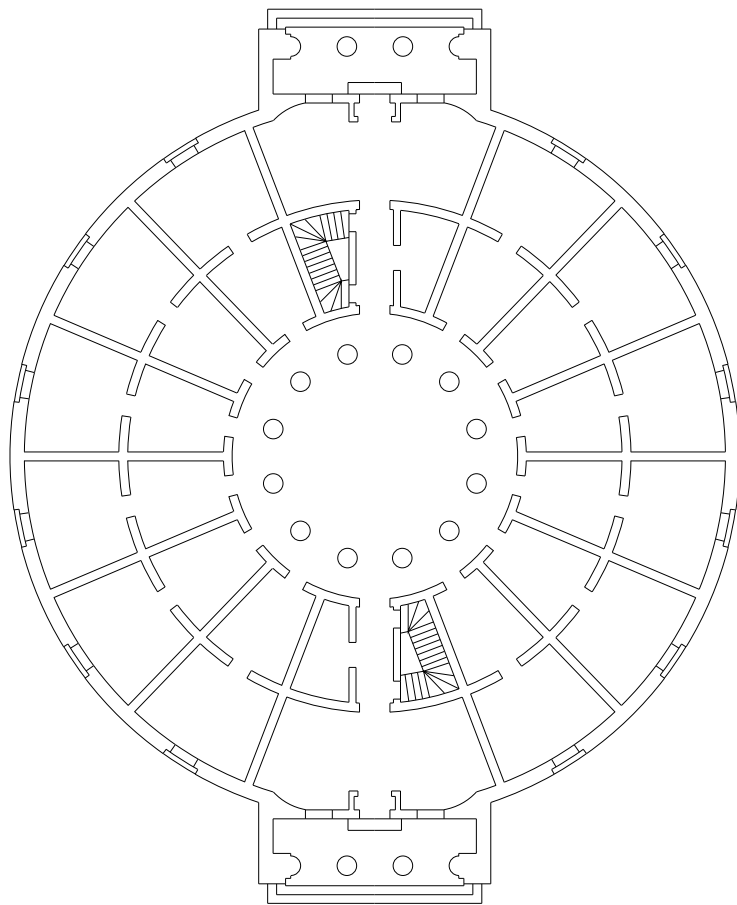


Figure 2. Badhuset (Otto, 1844).

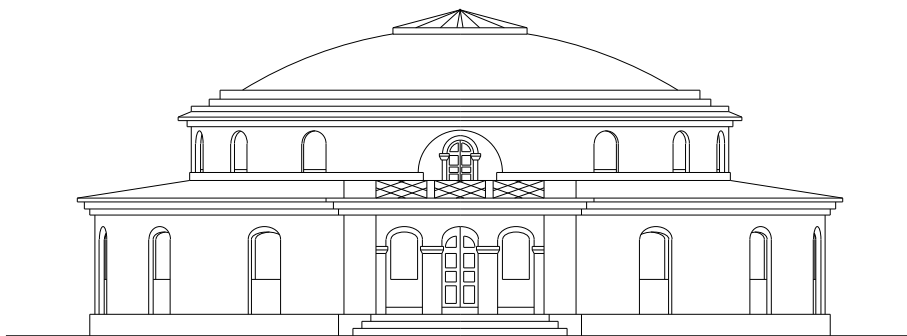
The bathhouse *Rotundan* was popular for its exclusivity and luxuriance at its time. It was built in 1830 initiated by the industrialist A. Keiller and located at Skeppsbron 1 in Gothenburg. The building, as indicated by its name, is a rotunda involving a circular plan layout. It contained twelve rooms with bathtubs in white marble, one separated building involving a Russian (Finnish) steam bath as well as a bath comprising seawater from the fjords. The main building was, as well as the separated steam bath executed in Flensburger stone. Due to its exclusive characteristics, the services of the bathhouse became too expensive for its visitors. Consequently, the facility was closed in 1856 and converted into a warehouse until it was demolished in 1911 (Schänberg, 1956).



Site Plan - 1860 - 1:5000



Plan - 1.250



Elevation - 1.250

SIMSKOLORNA

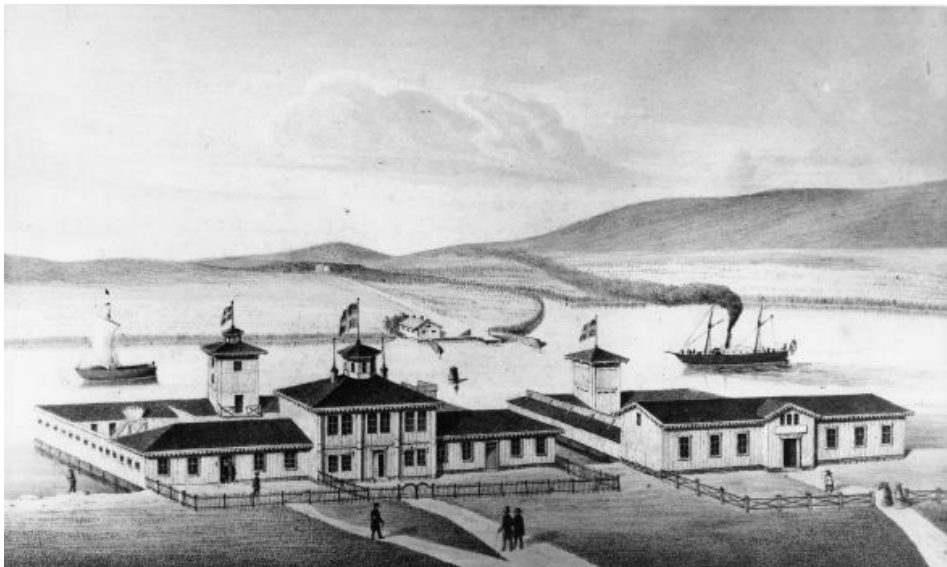
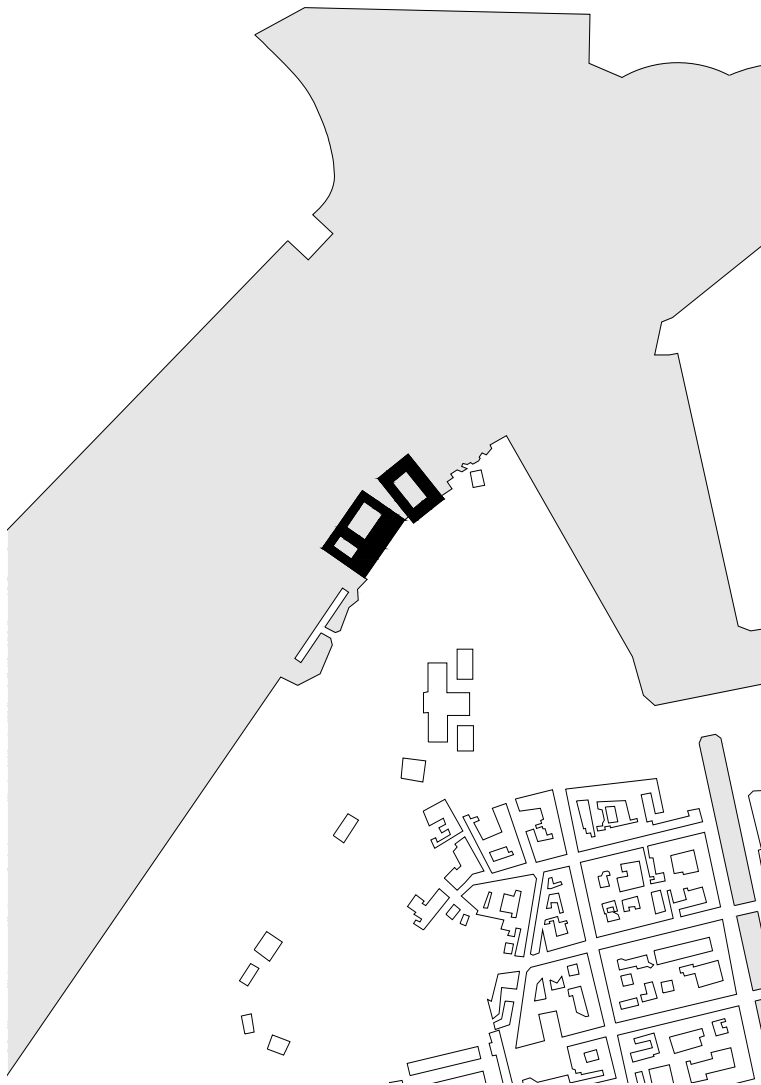
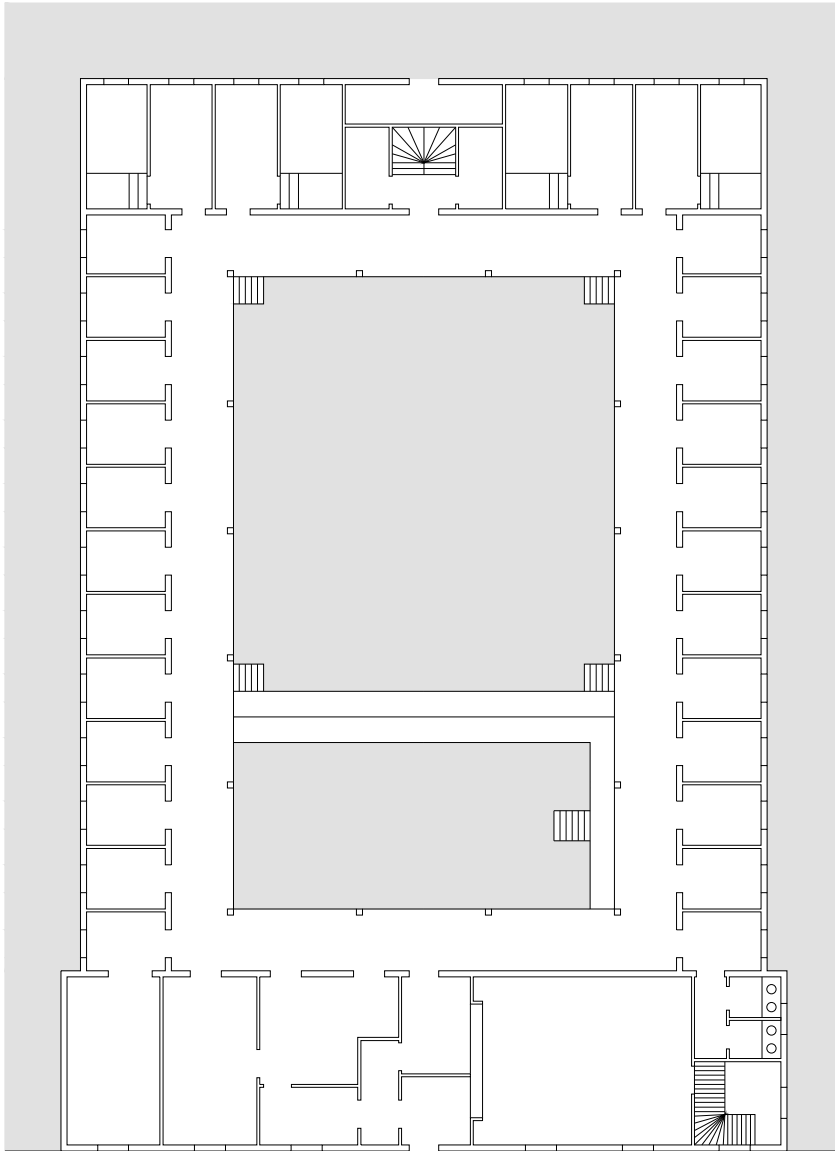


Figure 3. Göteborgs Simskola (GHM, 1859).

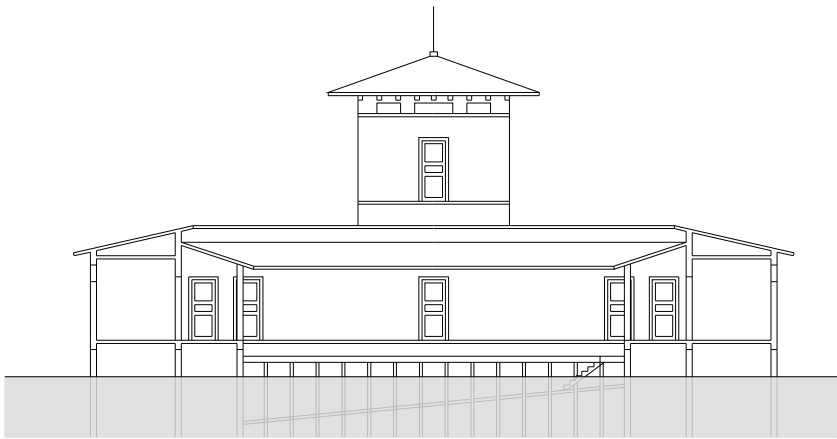
In 1854 a new bathhouse was built located at Lilla Bommen after the former swimming school burned down after twenty years of existence. The new construction of the facility implied a steam bath as well as a part with bathtubs. It expanded in 1869 involving the addition of a warm-air room, swimming pool, a sea bath and a sitz bath (Schänberg, 1956). It was demolished by the opening of *Löfströmska Badinrättningen* 1875 (Lagerberg, 1923).



Site Plan - 1860 - 1:5000



Women's Bath - Plan - 1.250



Women's Bath - Section - 1.250

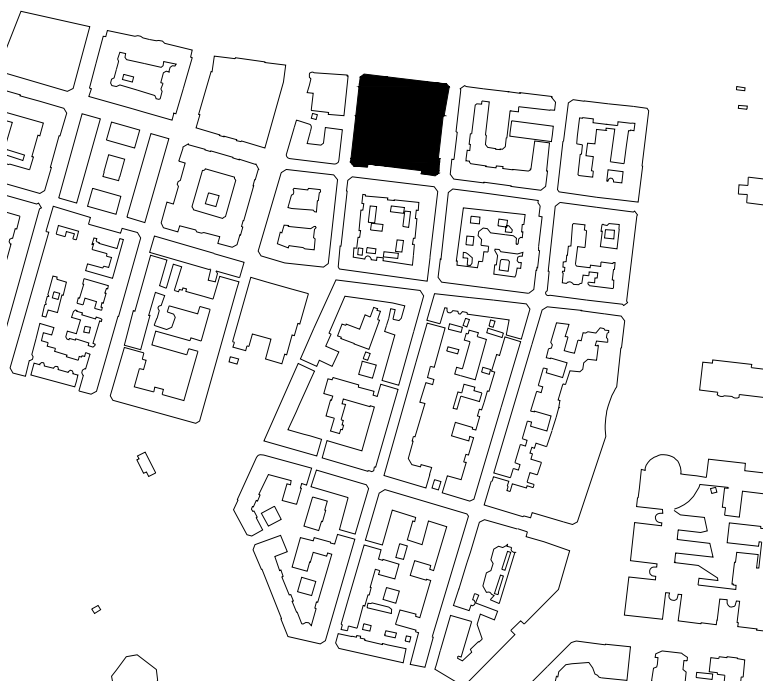
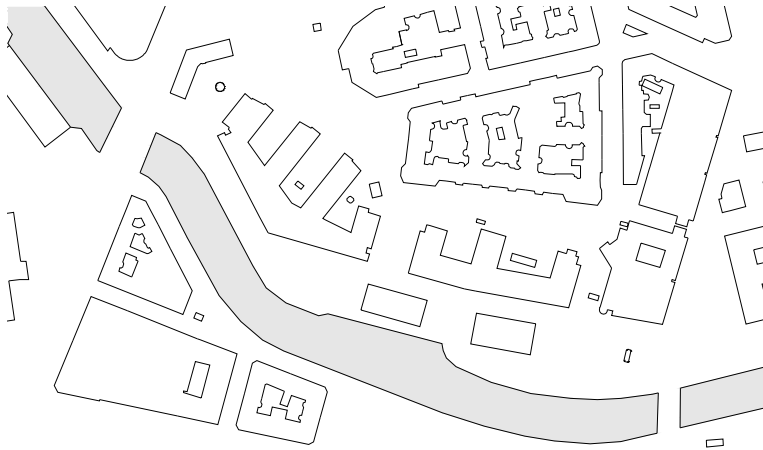
HAGABADET

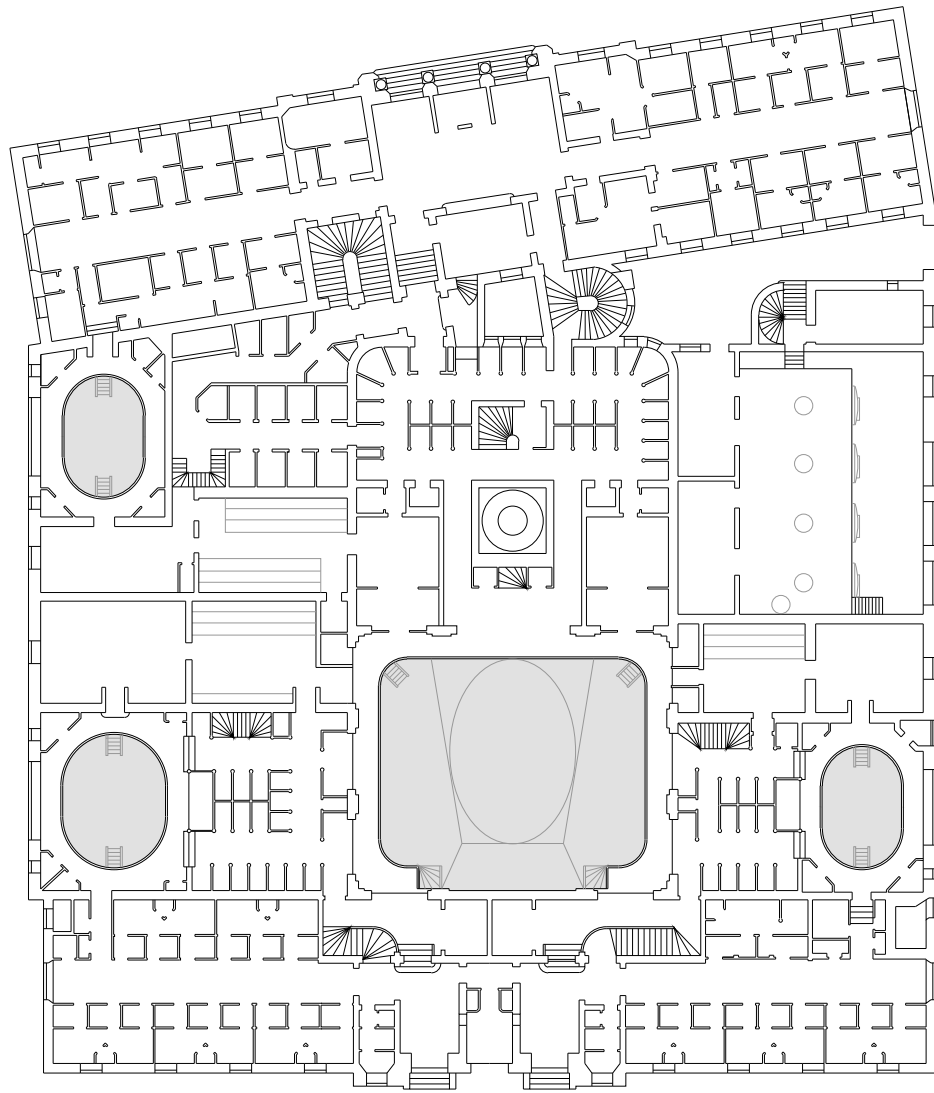


Figure 4. Hagabadet.

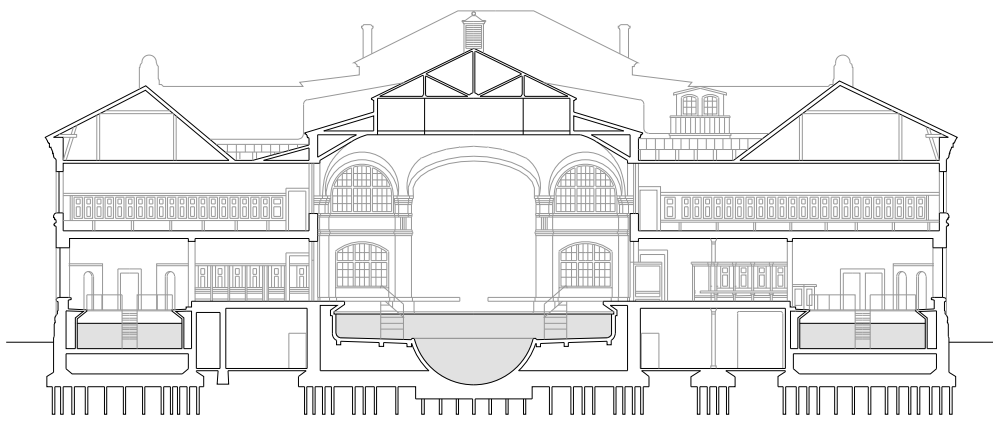
To promote hygiene and public health as primary objectives for the donation from Sven Renström, the construction of *Hagabadet*, which was primary named *Renströmska Bad- och tvättanstalten* finds its origin in 1869 (Schänberg, 1956). The public bathhouse is located in the city district Haga in Gothenburg and was finished in 1876. It was built according to the plans of P. J. Rapp, C. Curman and A. Kumlien in a Romanesque style consisting two two-storied buildings and one-story wings executed in a bright brick facade. Initially it was separated into an upper and a lower class compartment, also separating men and woman. The upper class part was accessible from Allégatan, the lower class had the entrance located in Haga Östergata. After a fire destructed large parts of the original bathhouse in 1903, it was renovated and re-opened in 1906 following the plans of the architect W. Klemming (Schänberg, 1956).

With the opening of the modern and more functional public bath *Valhalla*, the *Renströmska badanstalten* was closed in 1956 (Schänberg, 1956). Being re-opened in 1997 under the name *Hagabadet*, the bath is until today used as a public spa, also including a gym, conference spaces, a restaurant and other various medical, recreative and sportive facilities (Hagabadet, 2018).





Plan - 1917 - 1.400



Section - 1917 - 1.400

METHOD II - ARTWORKS

Choice of art

Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), was a French painter who was during his lifetime popular for his vivid historical scenes and Orientalist genre pictures (Allan & Morton, 2012). Based on a perceptible objective exactitude characterizing his paintings, his work is being labeled within *Academic Realism* in the History of Art (Ackerman, 1997).

Jean-Léon Gérôme's paintings are characterized by a highly calm, appealingly and colorful environment. Placing the focus on his paintings of baths (*The Great Bath of Bursa*, *The Bathers* and *Steam Bath*), social interactions and the representation of nude women are reflecting an important motive.

Beside, the paintings reveal tectonics, materiality and detailing of the surrounding in an extremely accurate and neat way.

As an antagonist of modernism and representative of kitsch, he was dismissed for much of the twentieth century (Allan & Morton, 2012). Analyzing the artworks as a part of the pre-study of this thesis, this method aims to reflect on the art of Jean-Léon Gérôme in a new perspective as well as a base of inspiration.

Aim of the method

As a tool to understand the dimensions, proportions and tectonics of the interior spaces of ancient baths, a selection of historical artworks by Jean-Léon Gérôme and their translations into a 3D model, plans and sections has been an initial point of inspiration for this thesis. As a motive and in contrary to the study of plans, the artworks reveal another layer making social interactions, moods and atmosphere visible, that the architecture is enabling. With the relation between the architecture and its perception, the choice of the artworks has been based on a personally sensed strong atmospheric impression as well as on rooms, that represent a part of the classical plan layout of the ancient baths.

As the chosen former and existing bathhouses introduced in Method I, the selected artworks share a strong focus on a generous central room as the main part of the bath where social interactions are imagined to take place. In the contrary to the plans of the bathhouses of Method I, the paintings are not showing the entireness of the building, leaving space for an own imaginary.

Beside, this method is being applied, to specify and place the focus on tectonic and haptic details, scale and light – details and characteristic features affecting atmosphere and perceived mood as another base for a new design.

GÉRÔME - THE GREAT BATH OF BURSA



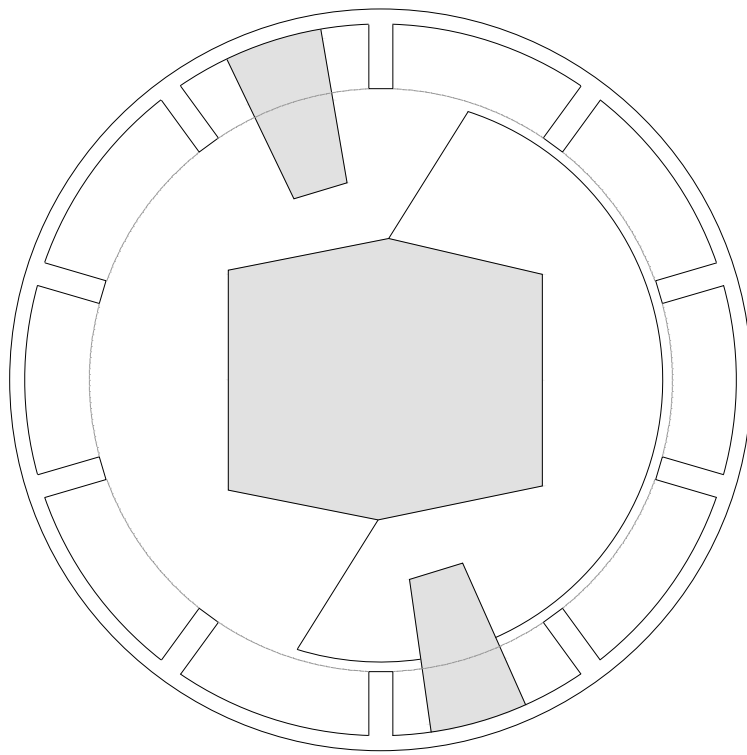
Figure 5. The Great Bath of Bursa (Gérôme, 1885).

The Great Bath of Bursa is a composition that originated from a combination of memories of sketches made ten years earlier (Ackerman, 1997). The painting is showing a generous space dominated by massive round arches. Various groups of women are gathering around the central basin, communicating on different levels.

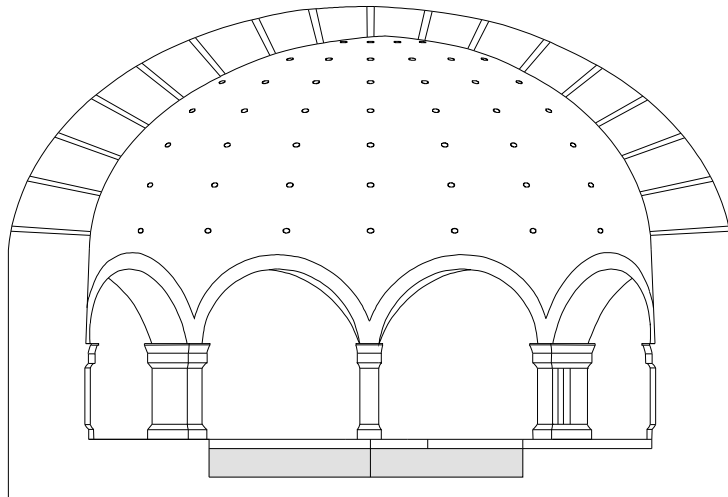
Translating the painting into a plan and section a circular room of 40 m diameter and 21m room height, involving a major central pool was generated. The round arches are composing niches and through the assumption of a dome roof with various openings, the space is bathed in natural light from above. Through the dimension and enormous proportions the room is perceived as an highly open and rather expressionistic space.



Figure 6. The Great Bath of Bursa. Imagined 3D Model.



Plan - 1.400



Section - 1.400

GÉRÔME - THE BATHERS



Figure 7. The Bathers (Gérôme, 1889).

The painting *The Bathers* is illustrating a room dominated by massive round arches of stone generating niches and a central basin. The painting could be read as a close up, showing social interactions between the women bathing on an eye level.

Translating the painting into a plan and section a quadratically room with the dimension 21 m x 21m and 6,5 m room height was induced. With the assumption of a dome roof with small openings, light is directed into the room from above. In contrary to *The Great Bath of Bursa*, the room is of a smaller dimension, but is still perceived as a rather open and generous space.

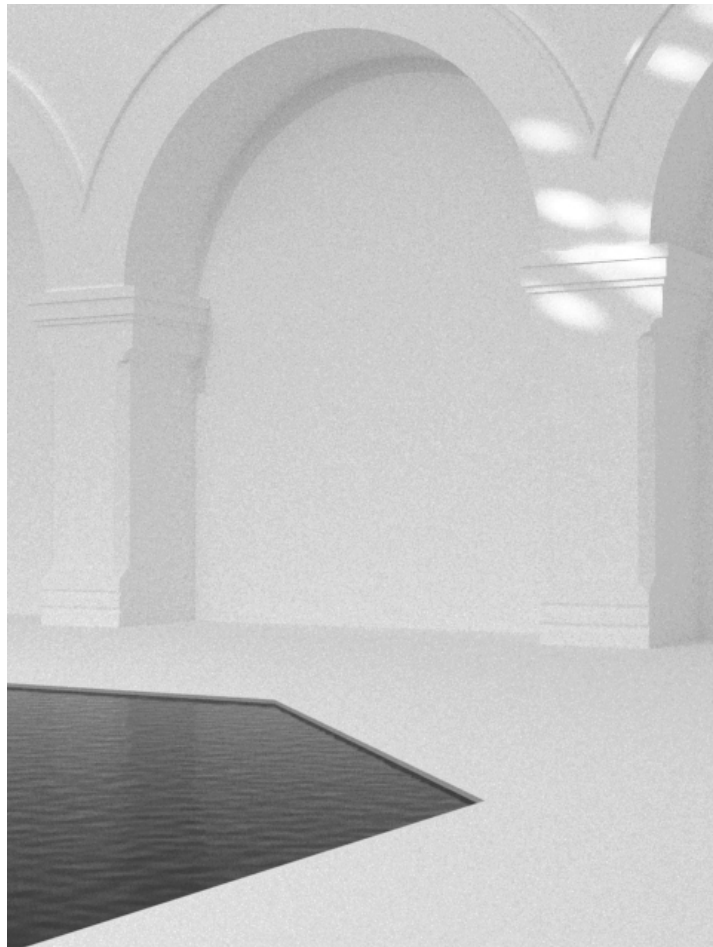
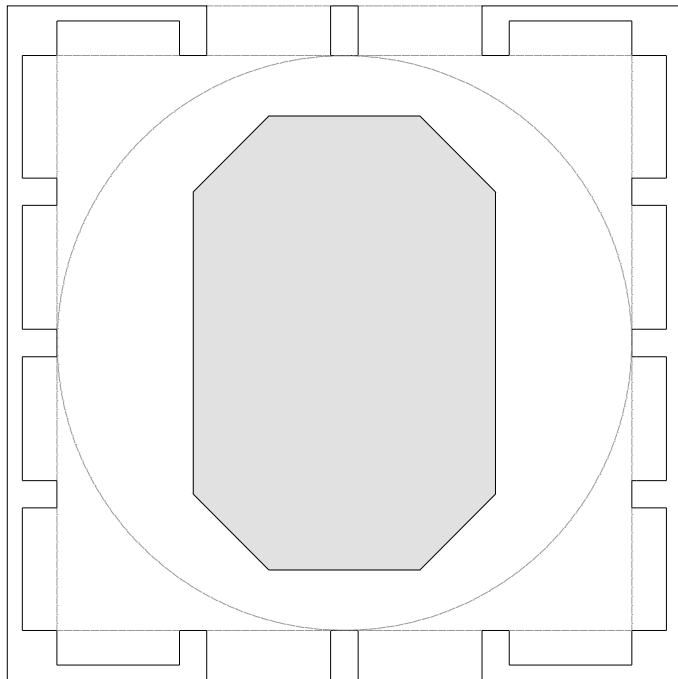
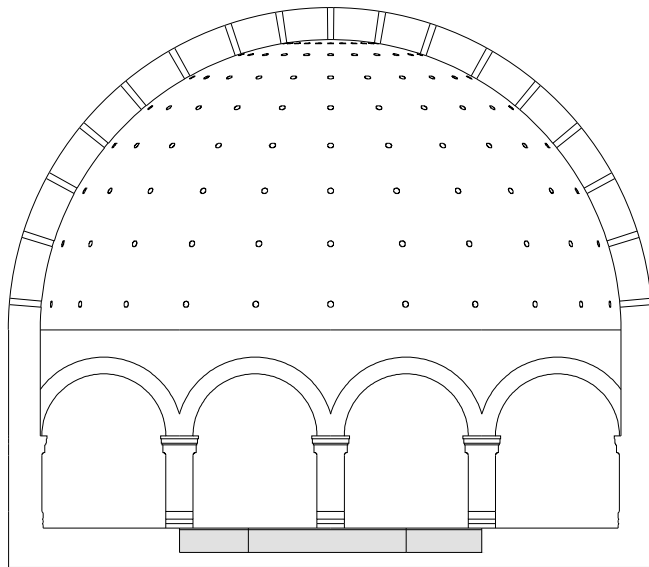


Figure 8. The Bathers 3D Model.



Plan - 1.250



Section - 1.250

GÉRÔME - STEAM BATH



Figure 9. Steam Bath (Gérôme, 1889).

The painting *Steam Bath* is showing the ritual of a woman bathing her feet. The room is dominated through a lower level foot bath in the foreground and a colonnade in the background.

Paraphrasing the painting into a plan and section a circular room of 20 m diameter and 9,5 m room height, involving a lowered round pool was generated. Assuming the pillars are surrounding the room in the form of a colonnade passage, a higher and a lower part is induced. Through an opening in the roof, the room is bathed in warm light leading to calm and meditative perception of the bath.

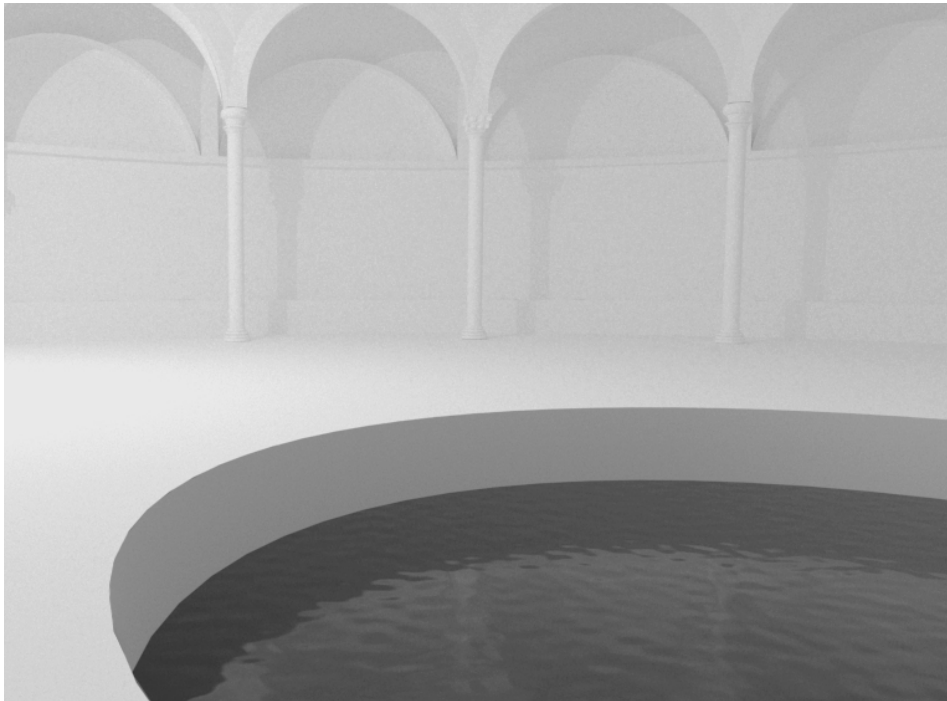
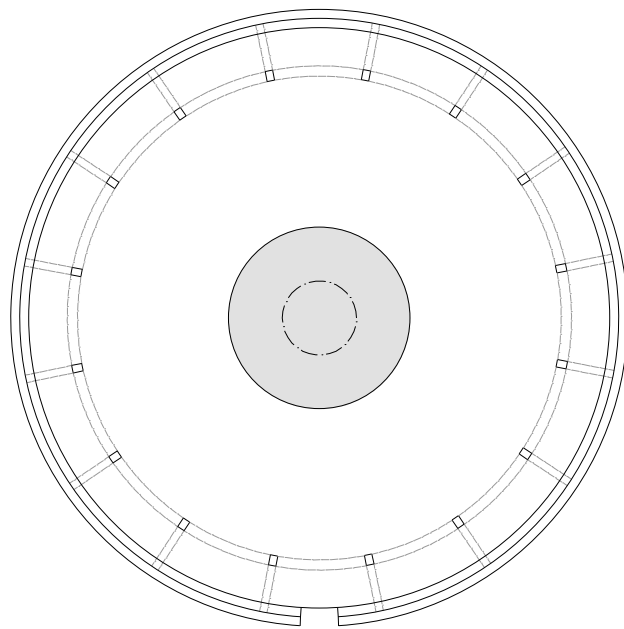
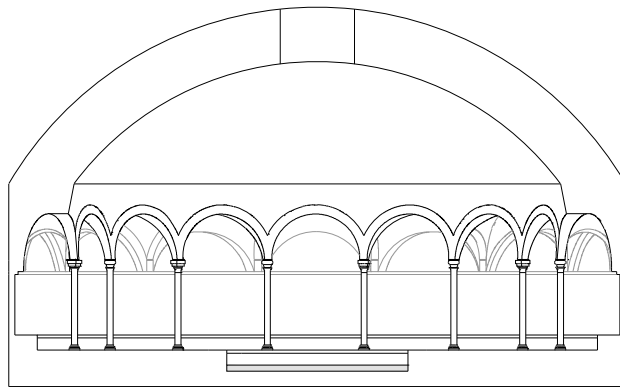


Figure 10. Steam Bath, Imagined 3D Model.



Plan - 1.250



Section - 1.250

PART II

SITE



Figure 11. Skeppsbron 5-6 (GHM, n.d.).

Concluding Part I by referring to the analyzed historical roots within the context of Gothenburg through Method I as well as having a closer look at the ongoing urban development plan of the city, we consider the area of Skeppsbron as an appropriate location for a new public bathhouse. The choice of the site is based on its central location, its historical background involving bathing culture, its closeness to the water as well as the existing plan for the integration of a new bath by the city at the waterfront.

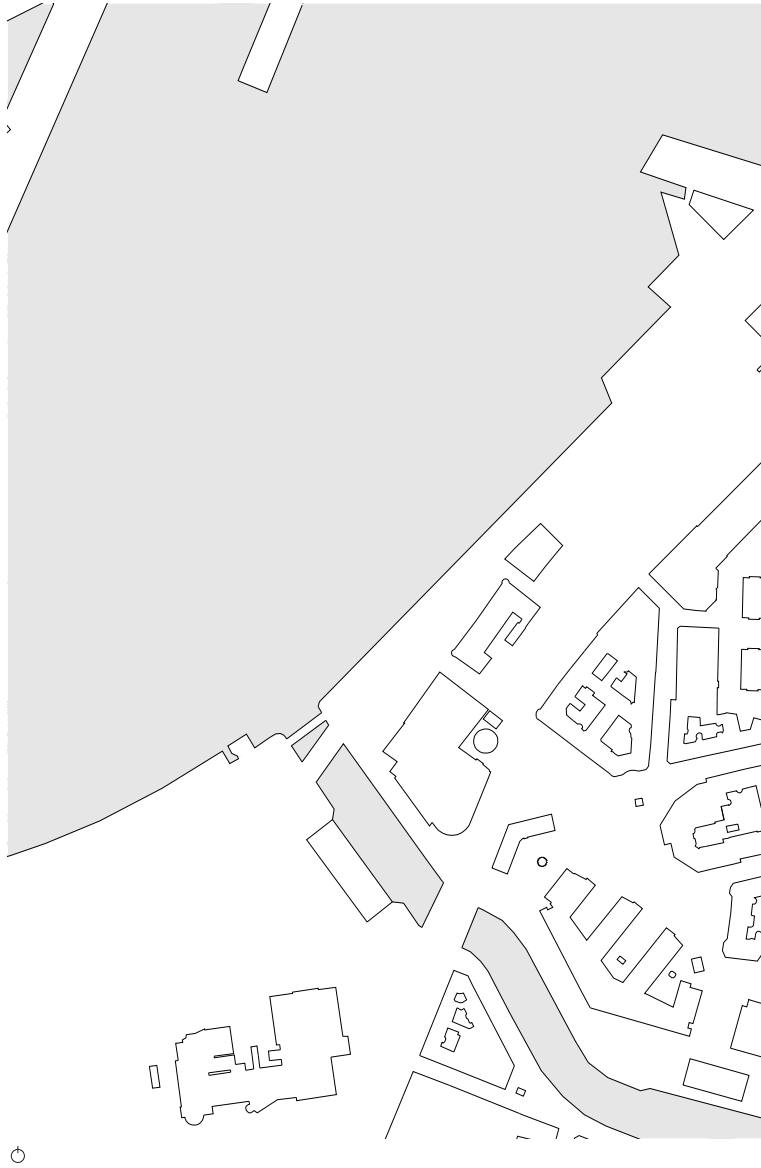
Site analysis

The southern part of Skeppsbron has a historical value with buildings as *Kinesiska Muren* from 1914, *Merkurhuset* from 1897, and *Rosenlundsverket*, a district heating factory with roots from 1846 (Söderberg, 2012).

Rosenlundsverket's appearance has changed in steps through modernization giving it a multifarious look (Andersson, Andersen, Ljuggren & Stegersjö, 2013). The characteristic façade towards Skeppsbron is a pattern of blue metal sheets on the higher volume and a yellow metal façade on the lower volume.

Kinesiska Muren by Hans and Björner has a powerful volume that rises six floors with a steep roof and a gavel towards Skeppsbron (Söderberg, 2012). The base and ground floor are finished in natural stone and a gray-brown plaster. It has a free composition with gavels and windows different sizes, also with the use of bay windows (Söderberg, 2012).

Merkurhuset by Ernst Krüger with a symmetrical palace appearance is characterized by elements as towers and a specific composition regarding materials and color contrasts. The façade is shaped in a fair-faced bright red plaster with plentiful of natural stone elements (Söderberg, 2012). In the base that is constructed by granite and limestone a certain playfulness is created by the mixture of rough-hew and a smooth finishing (Söderberg, 2012).



Site Plan - Today - 1.5000



Elevation Kinesiska Muren - 1.500



Elevation Merkur - 1.500

Site development

To develop Skeppsbron into Gothenburg's new central meeting point by the river is the aim of the future development plan of the city, which has been created in dialog with the residents of Gothenburg, businesses and experts in the field (Älvstaden, 2018).

Important features are to preserve *Merkurhuset* and *Kinesiska Muren* that have become a part of a city block structure. Also *Rosenlundsverket* is preserved with an proposed addition.

The wharf is planned to be expanded creating a living coastline along the river together with a park, a bath and new buildings accommodating beside housing, offices and public functions (Älvstaden, 2018).



Development Plan - 1:5000

PROPOSAL



Figure 12. Proposal at Skeppsbron.

The proposal is placed as a solitaire along the waterfront at Skeppsbron in Gothenburg underlining its public presence and its connection to the water in a literally way. Through the placement a new park and a square are being framed without blocking the view out on the river. Also the views outgoing from the main axis and roads Surbrunnsgata and Bryggaregatan are consciously not being blocked.

In the regard of the future development plans of Gothenburg, the proposal intends to compliment the plans, contributing with a public building for a new colorful and living central part of the city.

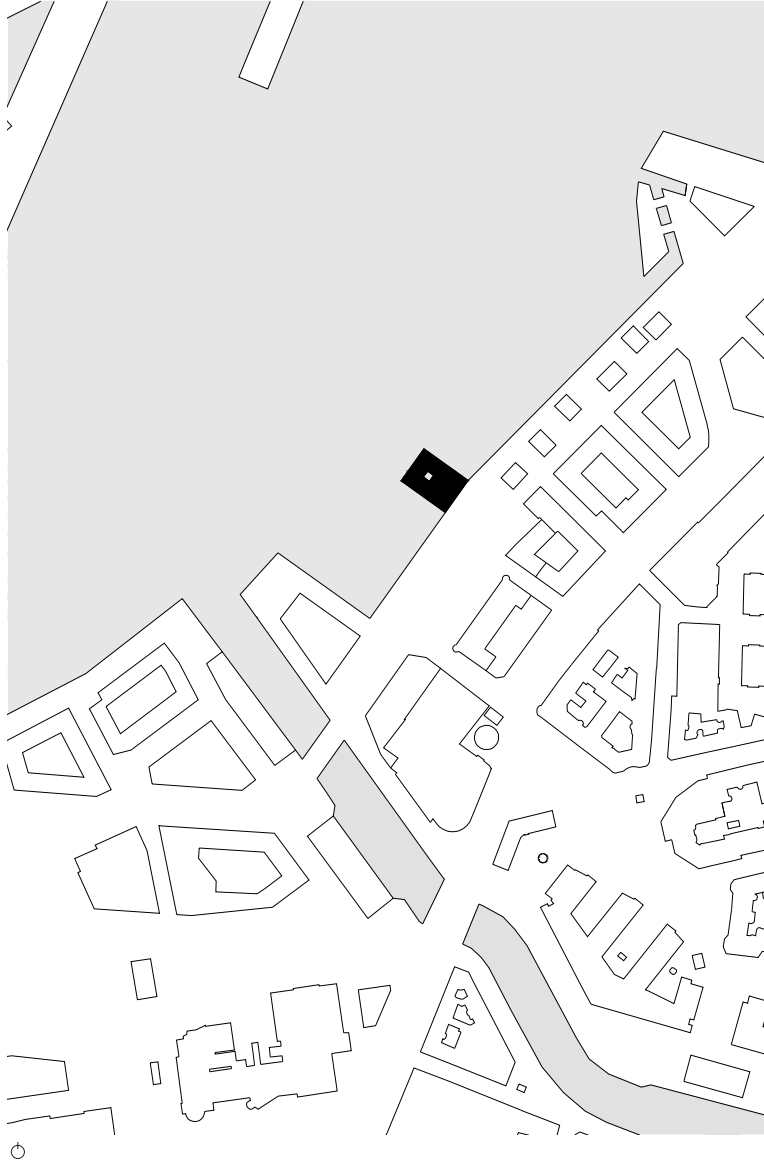
The proposal is characterized by its clear geometrical language and its simplicity. The bathhouse is organized in two levels and involves a minimalistic program focusing on two main rooms (the relaxation, open level and the enclosed bath) connected by a generous atrium within a sequence of different smaller rooms.

Outgoing from the square, the proposal appears as highly introverted and hiding what is happening behind. Having entered and passaged the foyer and changing rooms, the building is opening up into three directions with an unblocked view that can be enjoyed while relaxing. Through the atrium the space is already giving a hint on what is waiting downstairs.

Continuing one level down, the level of the main bath is situated. In contrary to the ground level for relaxation, the floor of the bath is extremely enclosed and is indicating a perceptible different atmosphere dominated from the light from above. In connection to the main bath, smaller rooms are accessible involving a hot bath, a cold bath connected to the river, as well as a room with a drinking station functioning as a passage to the showers.

On the whole, the proposal is seeking to be designed in precise detailing. Through the methods of using former bath as well as the artworks, the focal point is being placed on the main room with its enclosed perception and the indirect light from above. Further, the focus is placed on the handling of detailing (as the edge of the water and the floor for instance), the scaling as well as the materiality outgoing from the references.

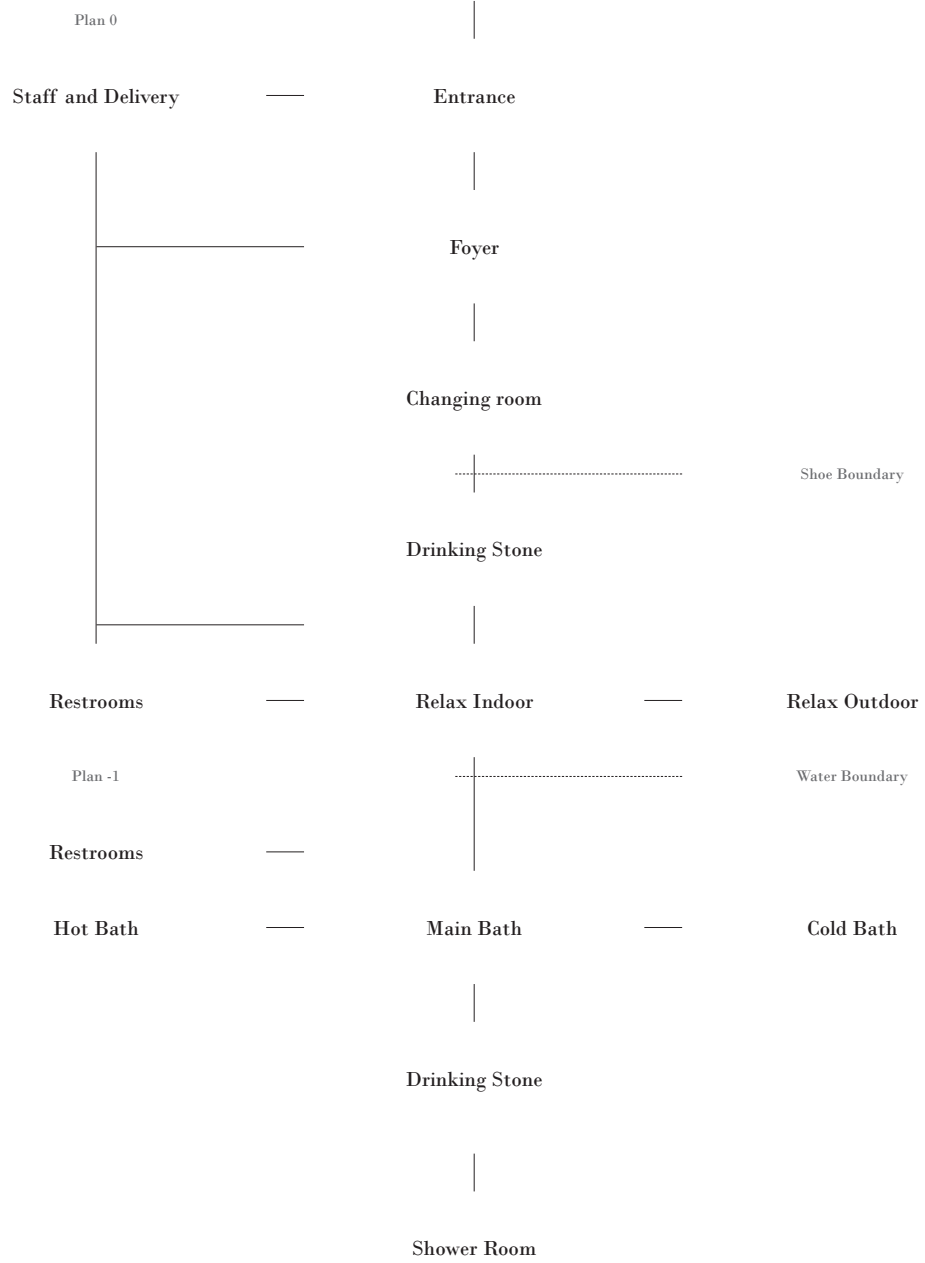
Through the application of in-situ concrete and ivory marble, a massive and solid occurrence is being generated which is referring to the ancient typology of roman baths.



Site Plan - 1.5000

PROGRAM

Ground Floor (0)	
Entrance	27 m ²
Foyer	97 m ²
Changing Room	47,3 m ²
Threshold, Drinking Stone	23,5 m ²
Relax Space	511,4 m ²
Bathrooms	8,7 m ²
Delivery and Storage	10,8 m ²
Bath Floor (-1)	
Main Bath	607,4 m ²
Cold Bath	23,3 m ²
Hot bath	23,5 m ²
Threshold, Drinking Stone	23,5 m ²
Shower Room	119 m ²
Bathrooms	8,7 m ²
Delivery and Storage	10,8 m ²
Basement (-2)	
Delivery and Storage	10,8 m ²
Staff Changing, Washroom	22,4 m ²
Staff	23,5 m ²
Cleaning Room	13,2 m ²
Recycling	14,1 m ²
Laundry	14,2 m ²
Technique	454,1 m ²
Circulation space	90,5 m ²
Total floor area	2.184,7 m ²

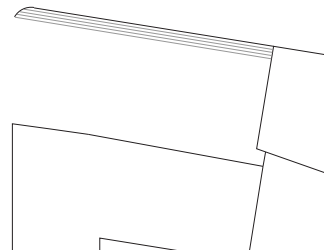
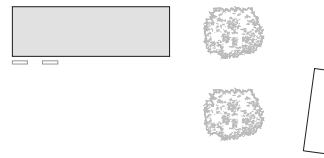
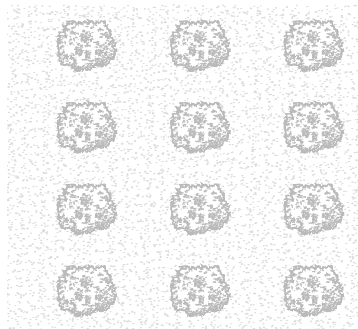
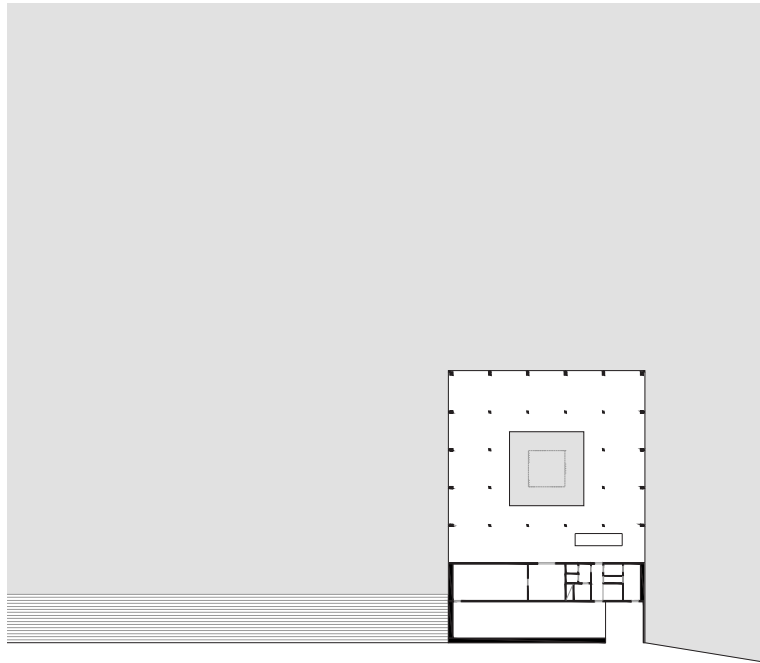


Space Diagram

DESIGN



Figure 13. Entrance.



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Site Plan - 1.1000



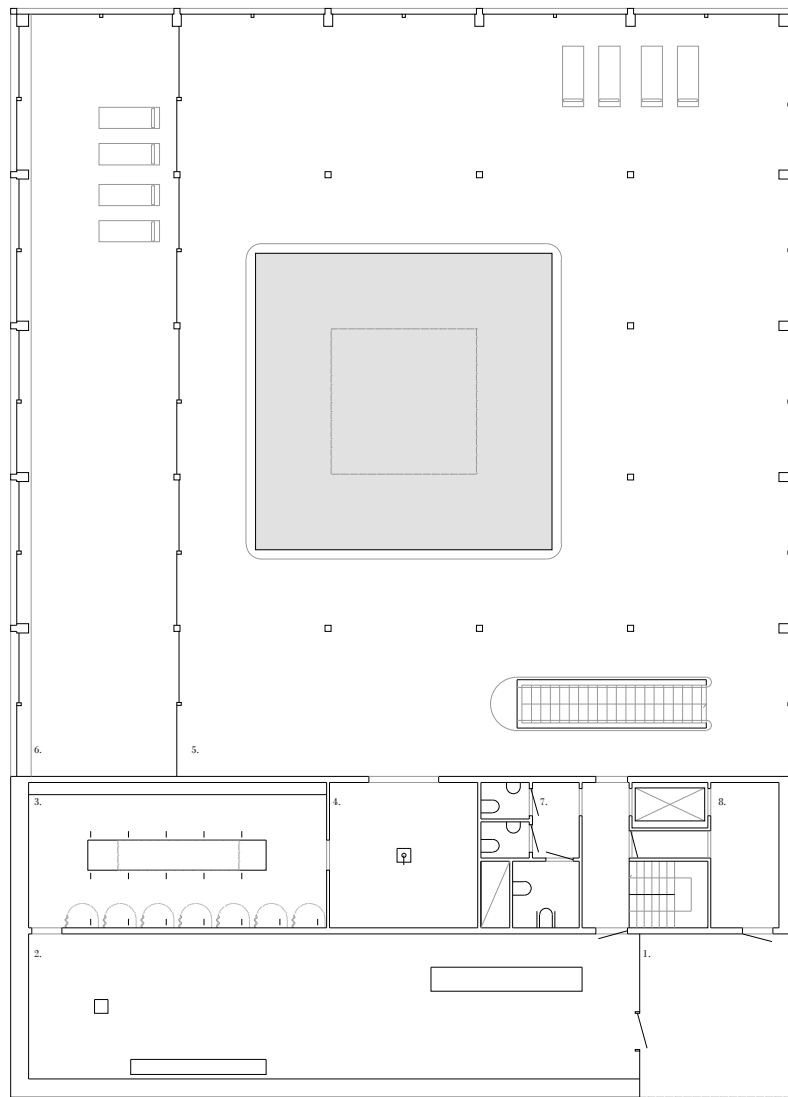
Figure 14. Reception.



Figure 15. Foyer.



Figure 16. Atrium.



- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Entrance | 5. Relax Indoor |
| 2. Foyer | 6. Relax Outdoor |
| 3. Changing Room | 7. Restrooms |
| 4. Drinking Stone | 8. Staff and Delivery |

Entrance Plan - 1.250



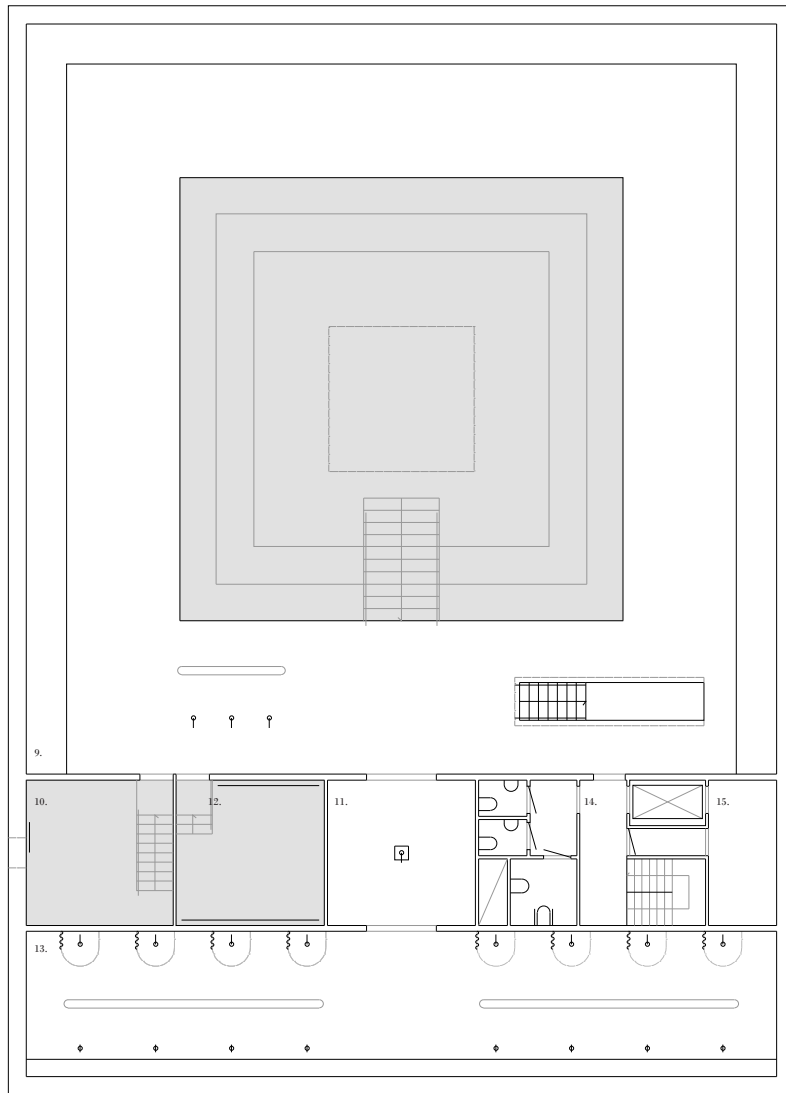
Figure 17. Loggia by Day.



Figure 18. Loggia by Night.



Figure 19. Main Bath.



- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 9. Bath | 13. Shower Room |
| 10. Cold Bath, Sea Water | 14. Restrooms |
| 11. Hot Bath | 15. Staff |
| 12. Drinking Stone | |

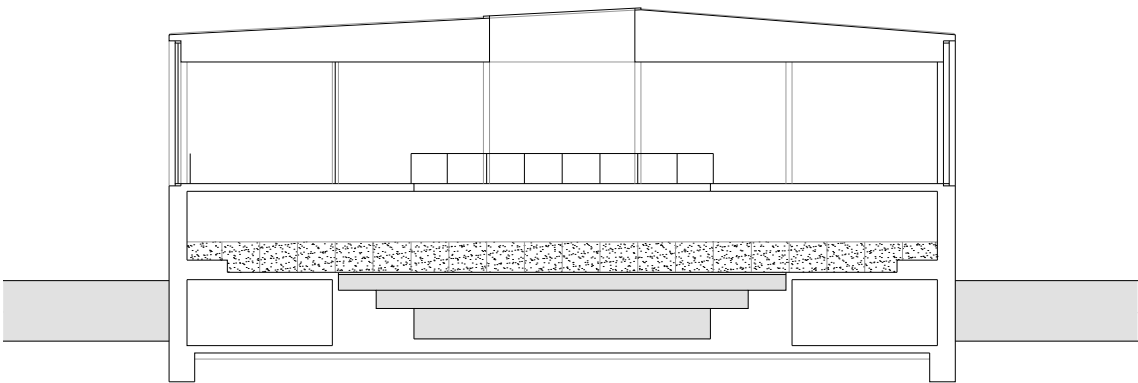
Bath Plan - 1.250



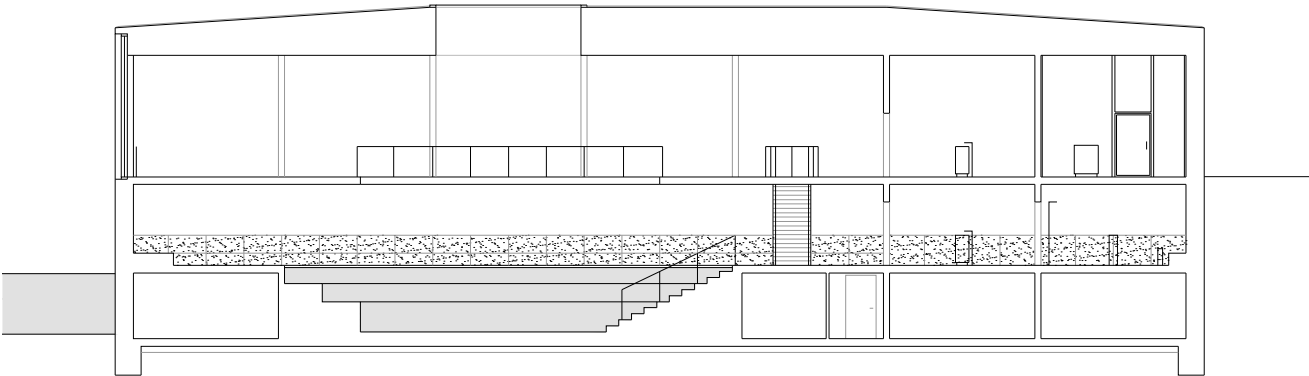
Figure 20. Main Bath by Day.



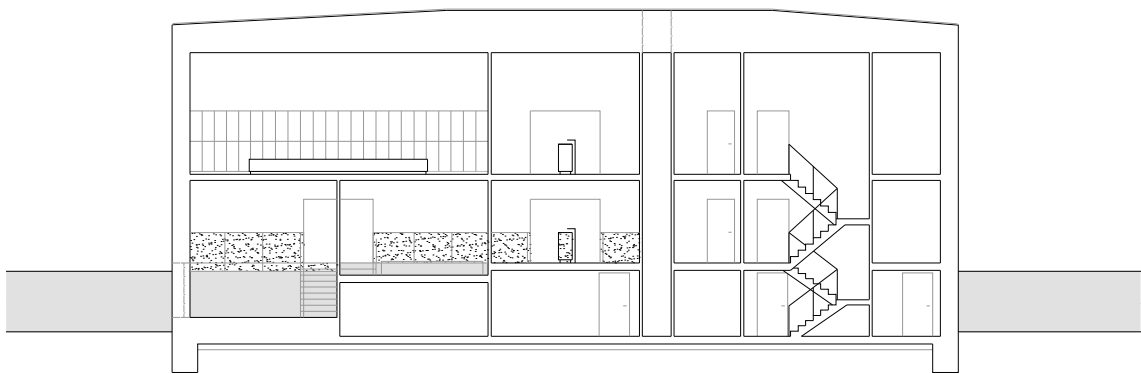
Figure 21. Main Bath by Night.



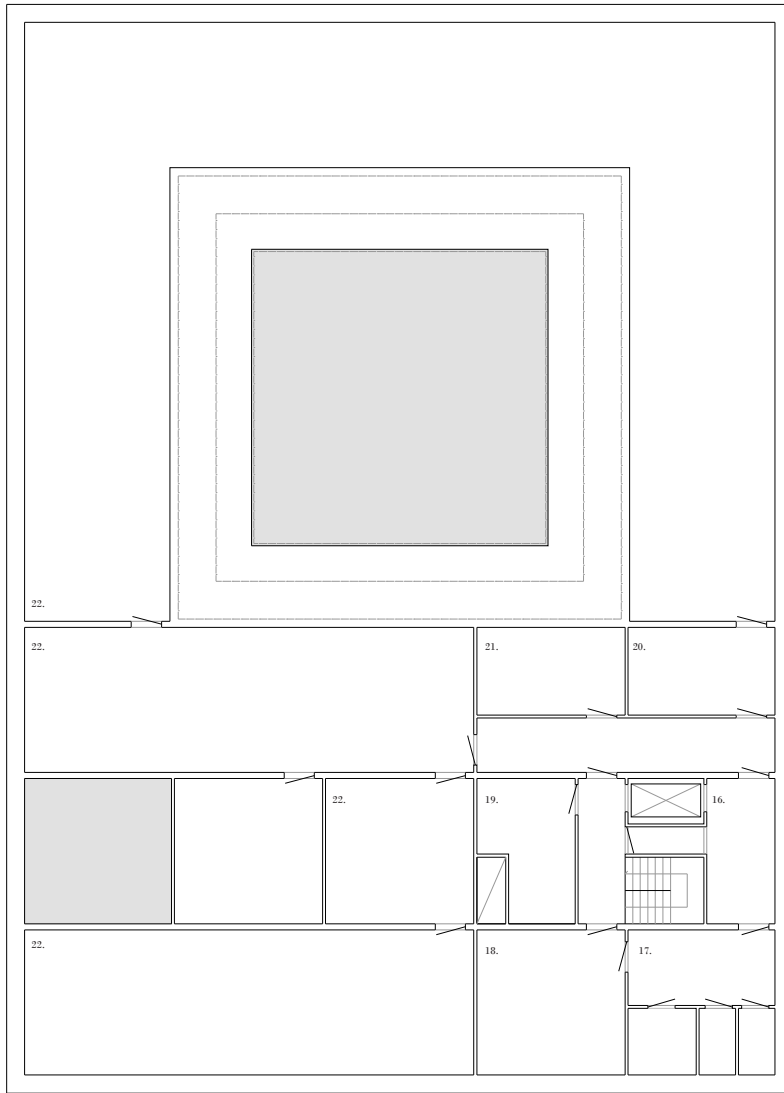
Section I - 1.250



Section II - 1.250



Section III - 1.250



- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| 16. Staff and Delivery | 20. Recycling |
| 17. Staff Changing, Washroom | 21. Laundry |
| 18. Staff | 22. Technique |
| 19. Cleaning Room | |

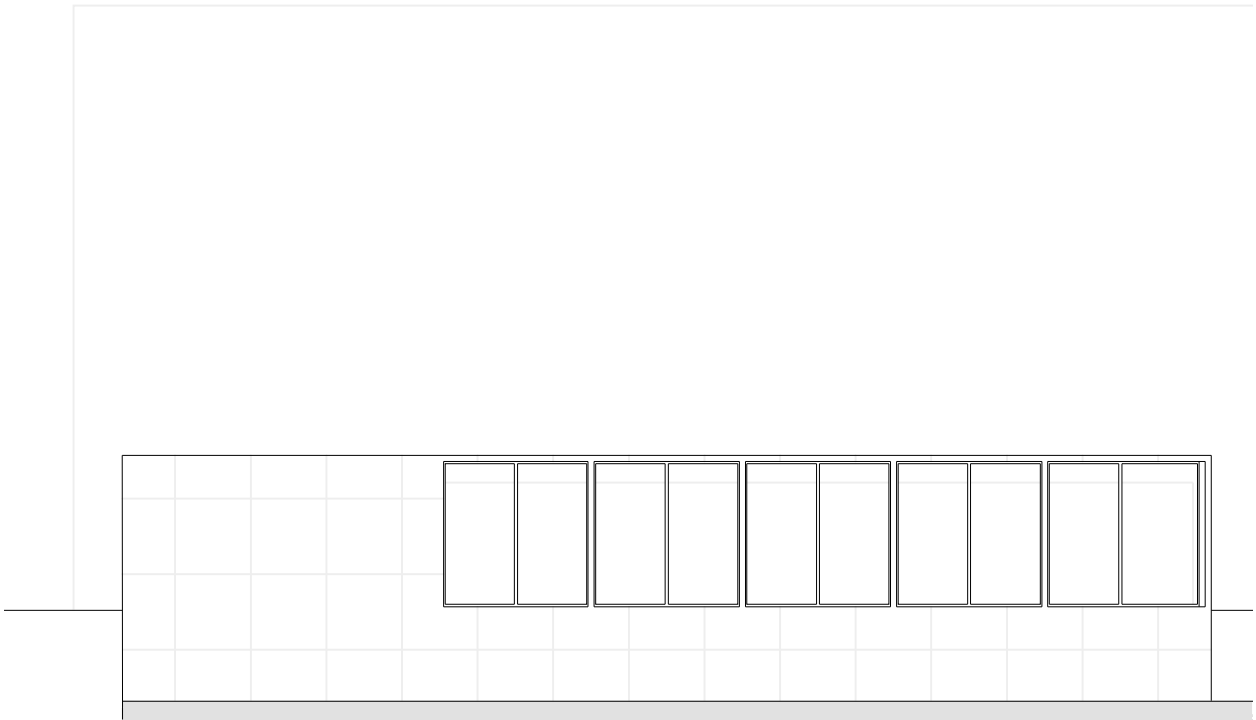
Basement Plan - 1.250



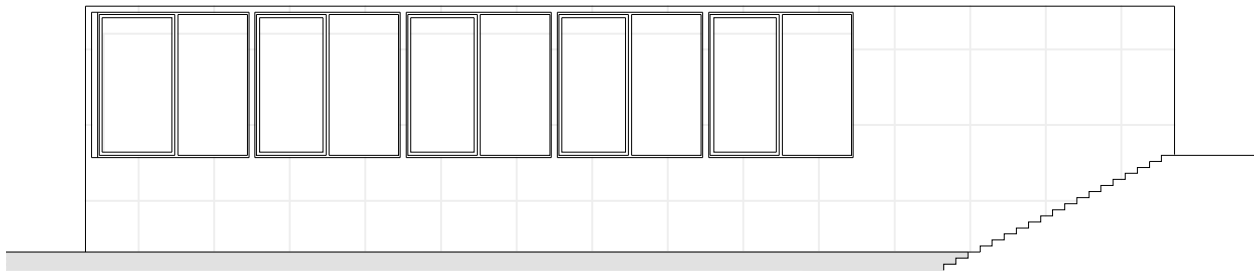
SE Elevation - 1.250



NW Elevation - 1.250



NE Elevation - 1.250

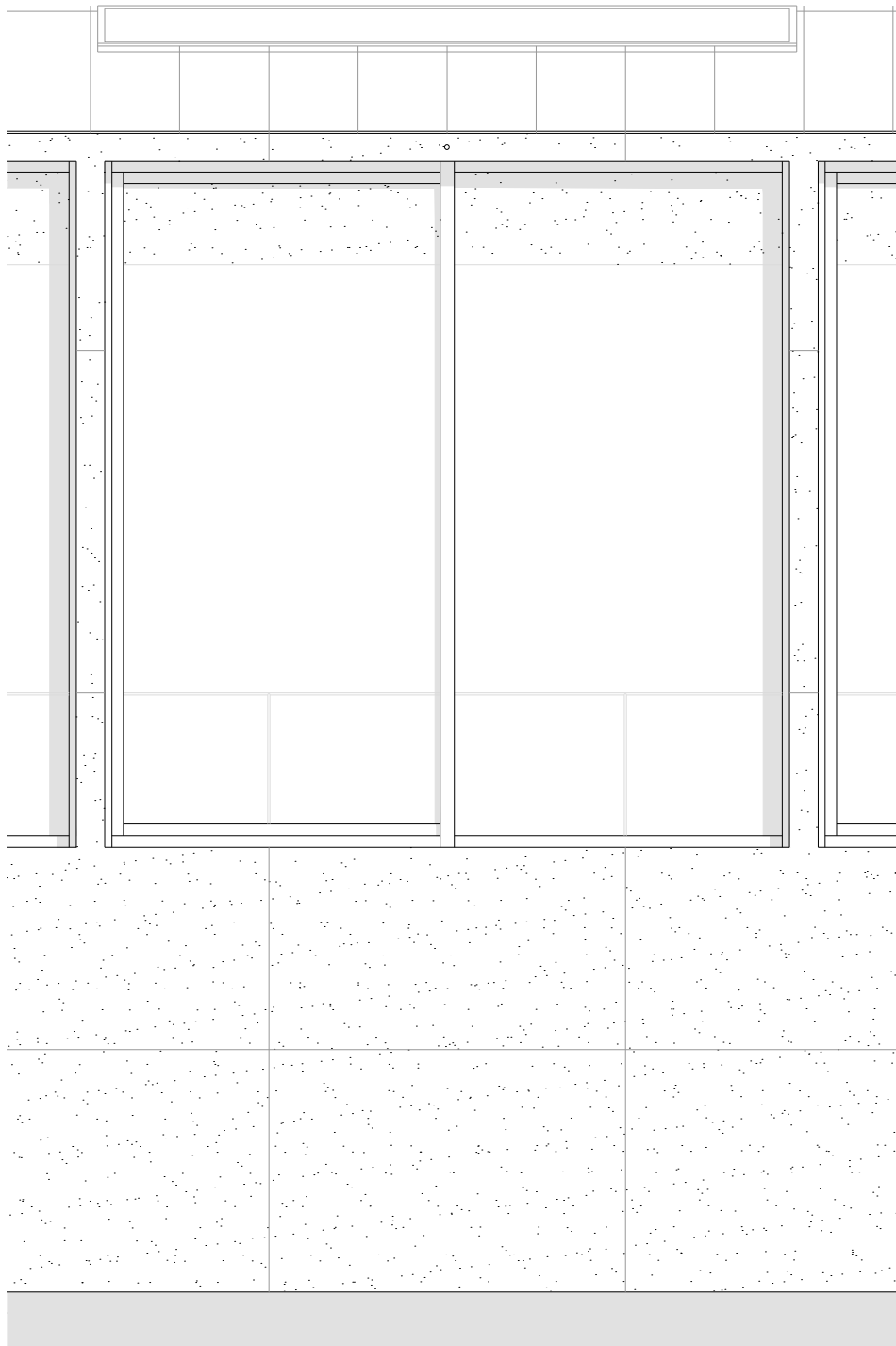


SW Elevation - 1.250

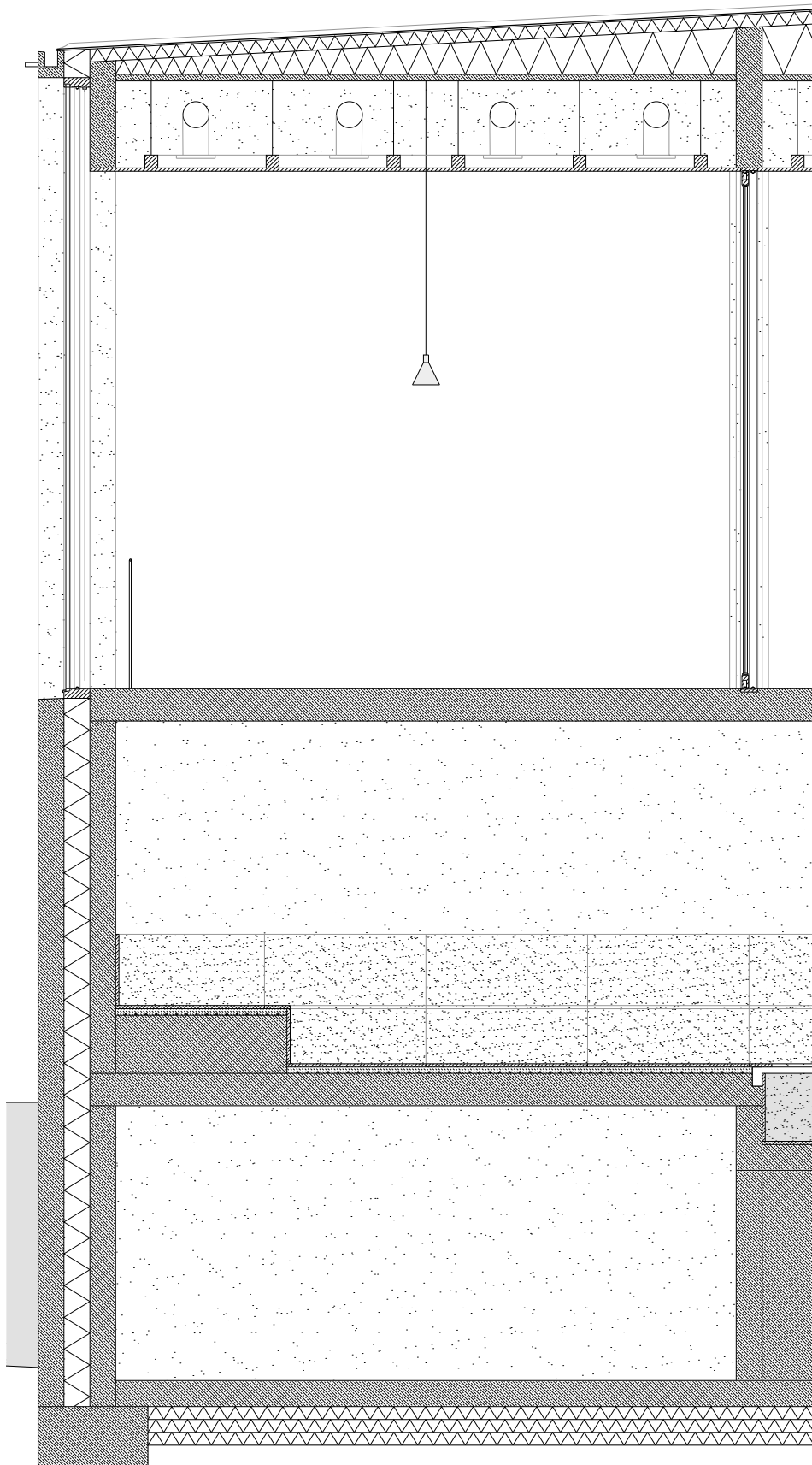
DETAILS



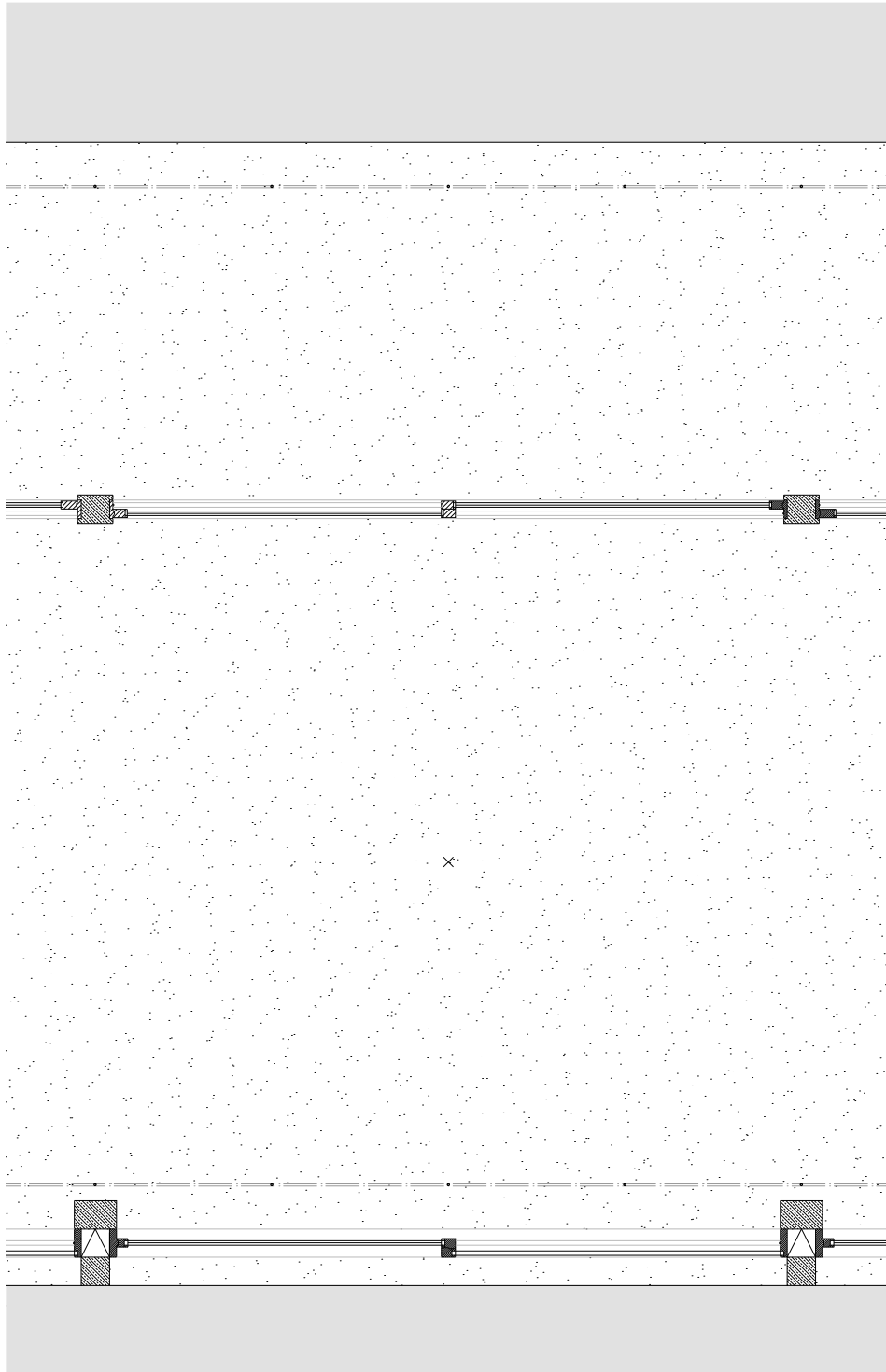
Figure 22. Facade.



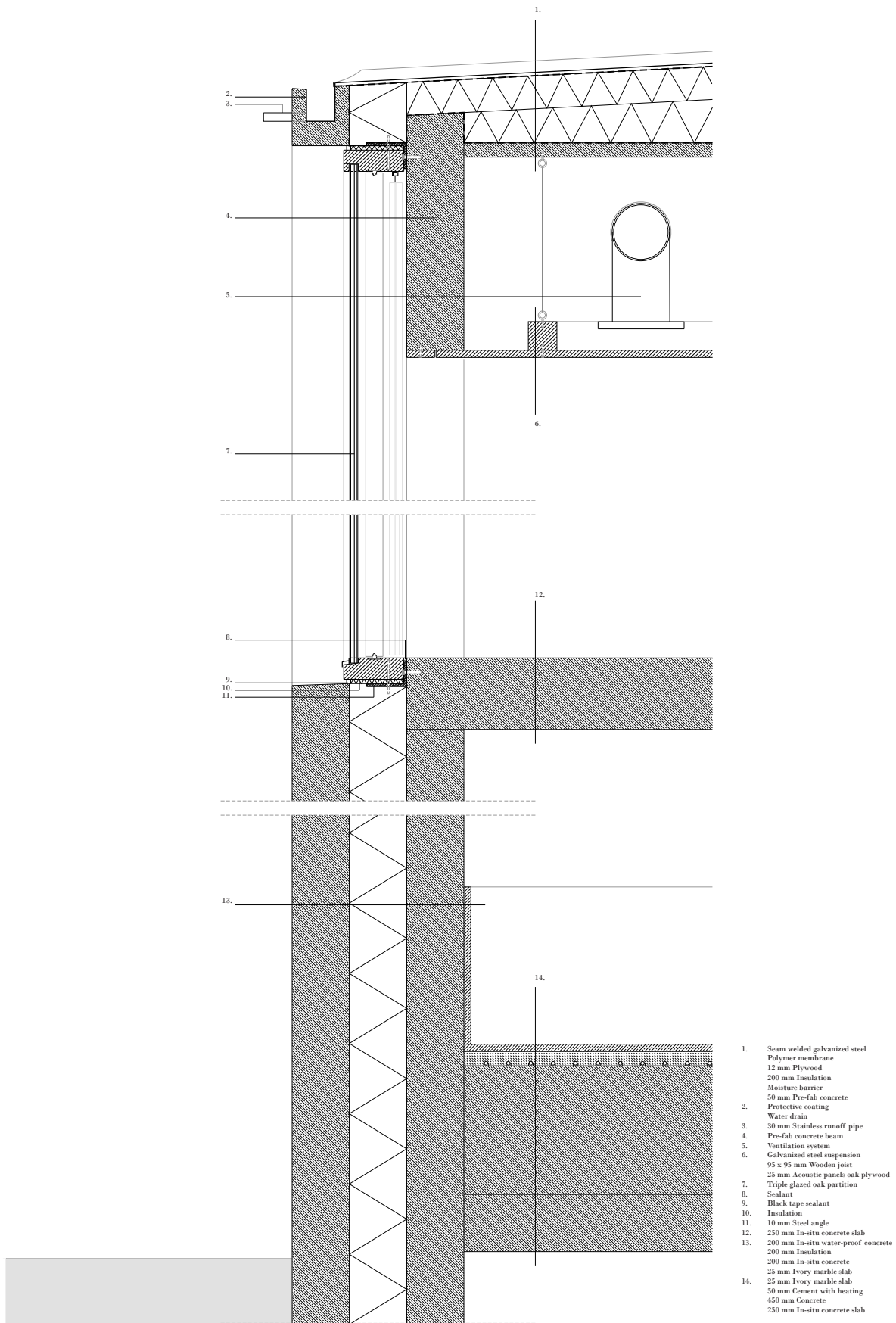
Elevation - 1.50



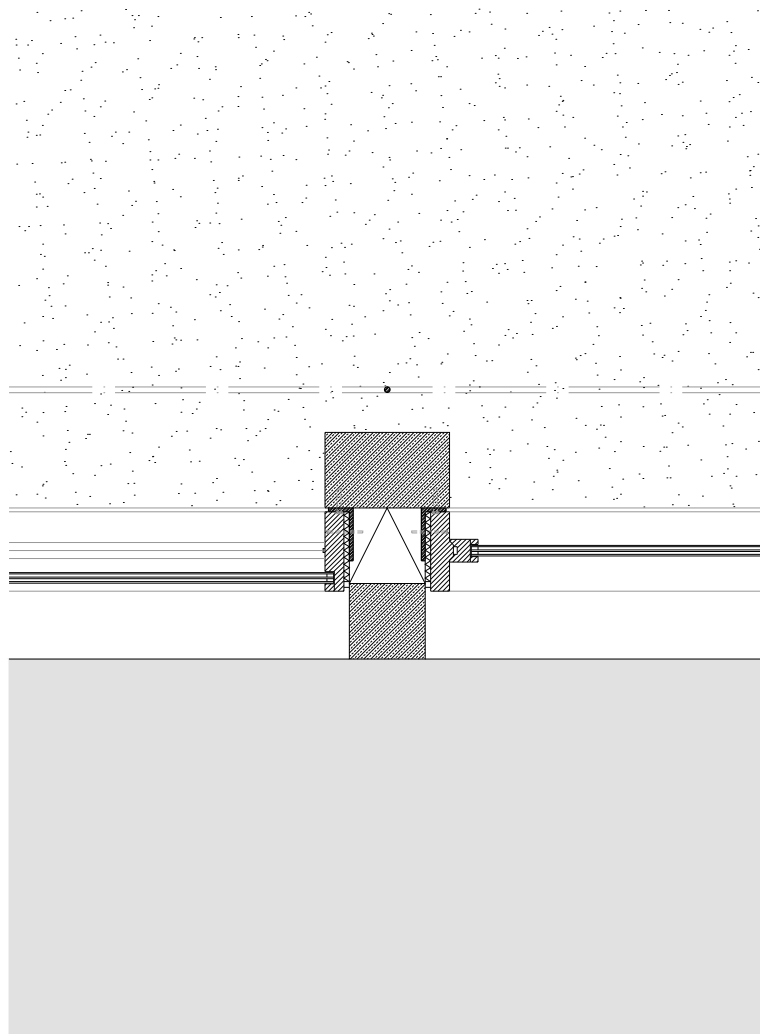
Section - 1.50



Plan - 1.50



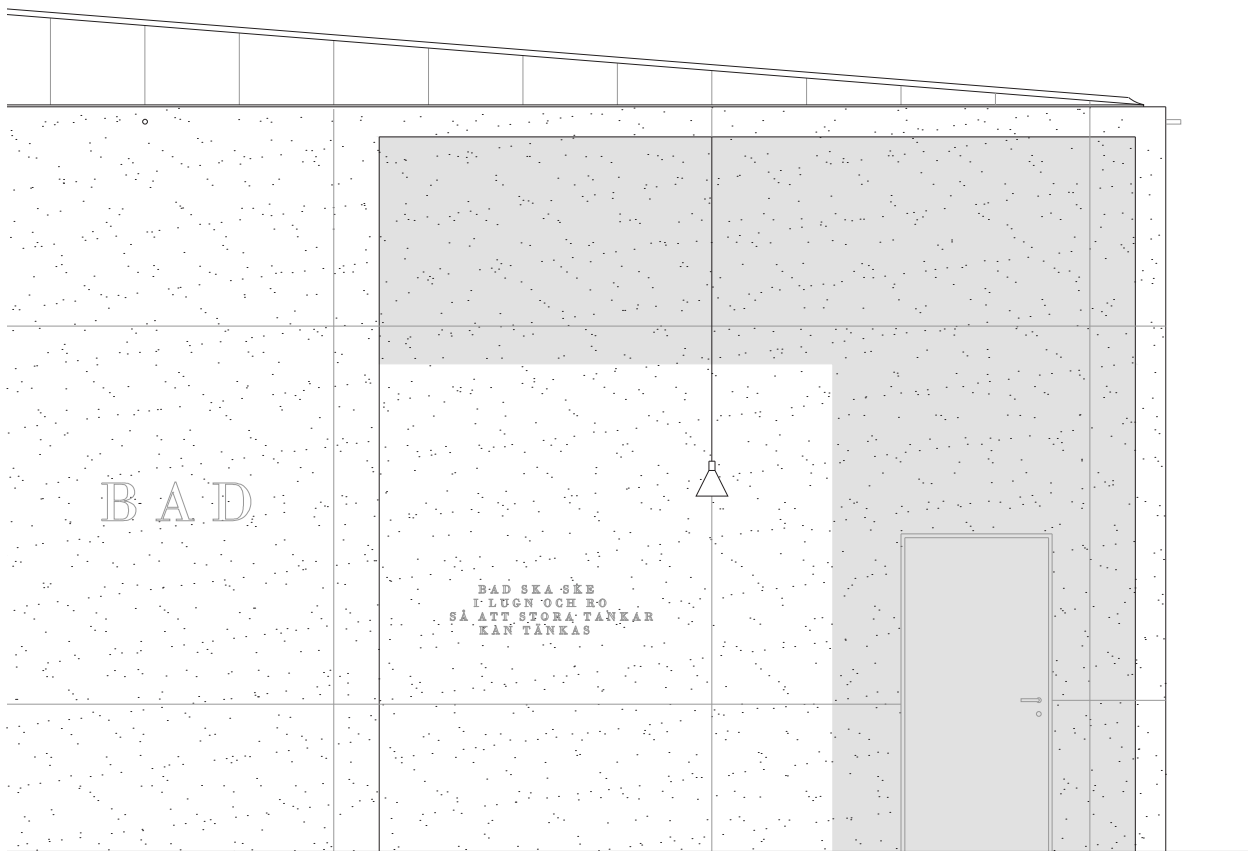
Section - 1.20



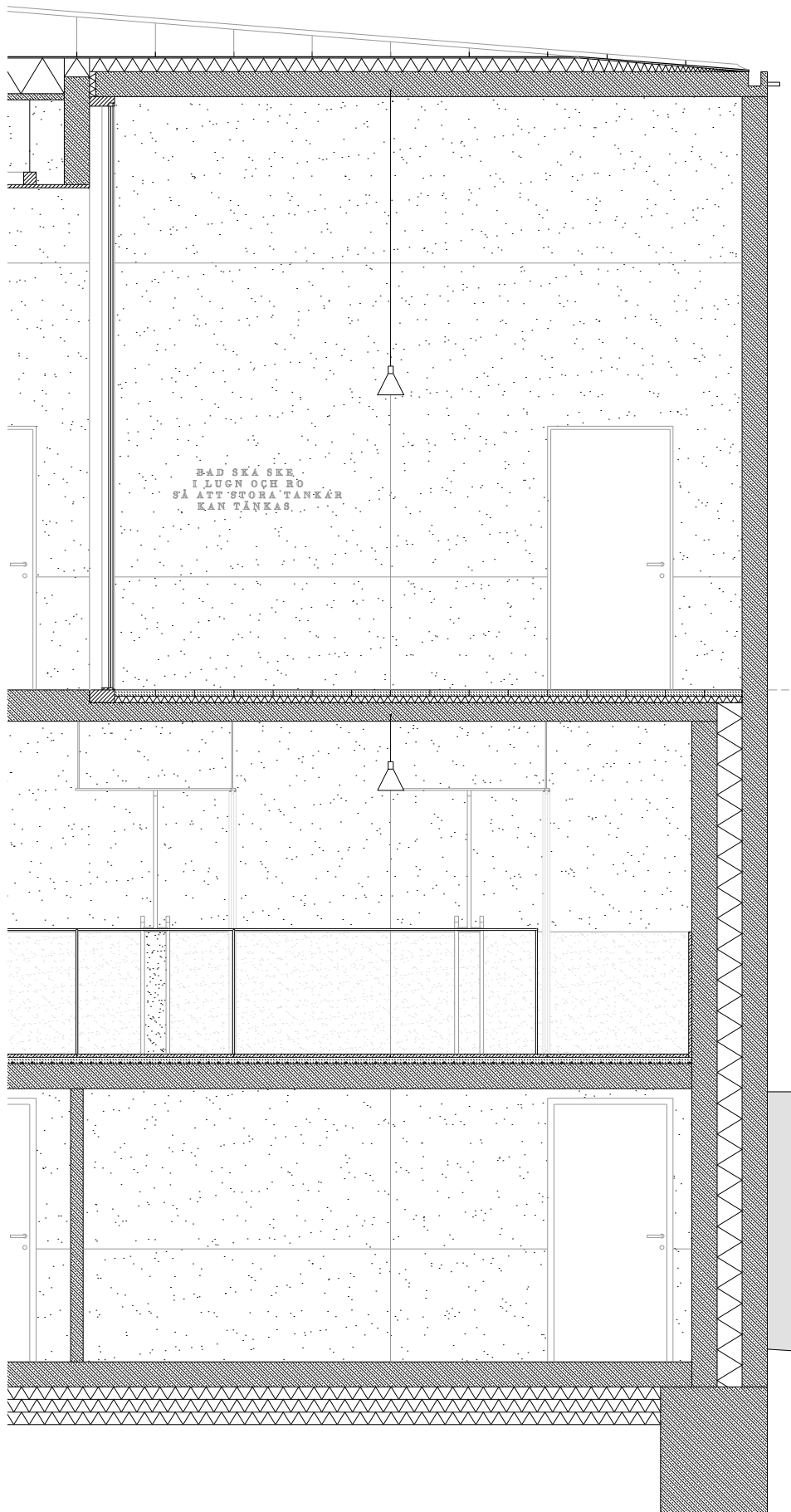
Plan - 1.20



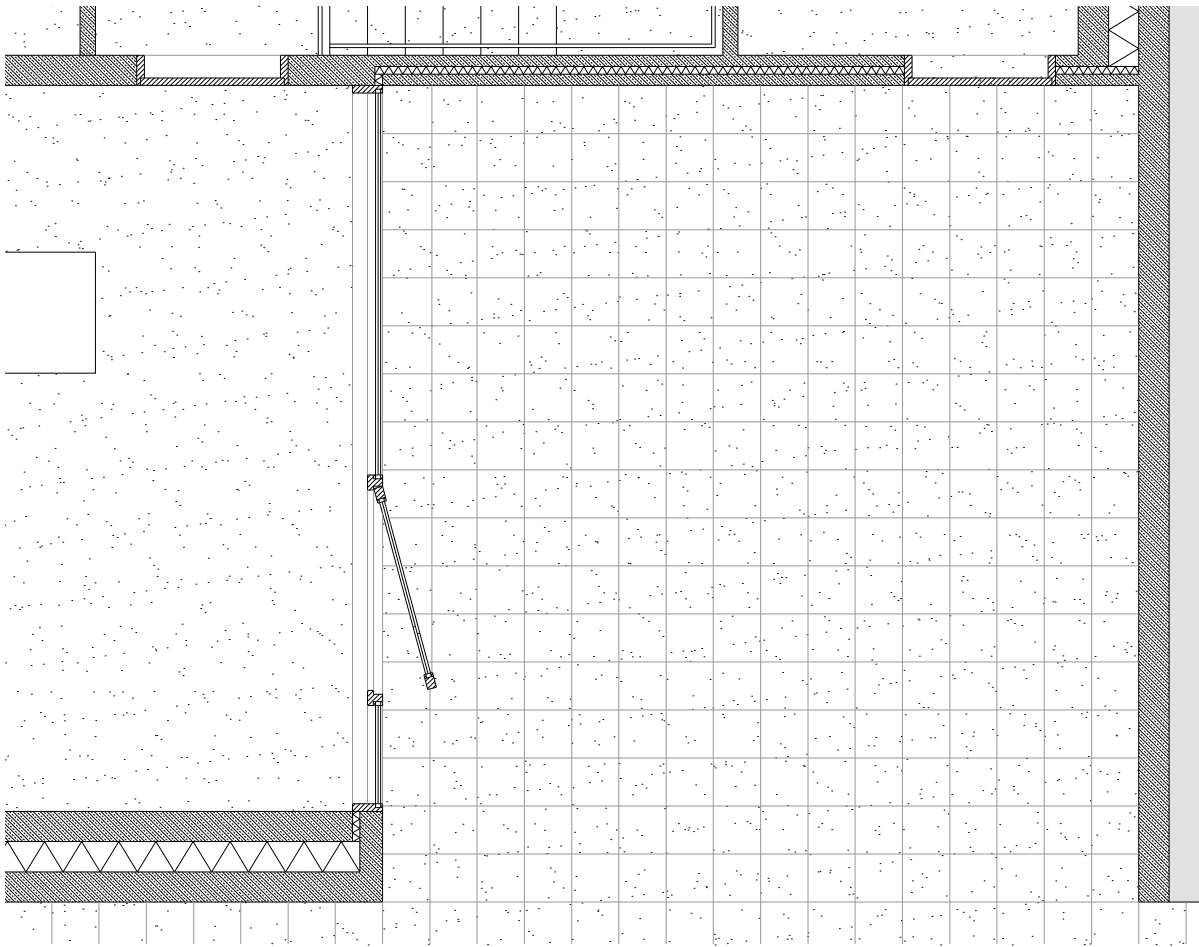
Figure 23. Entrance.



Entrance Facade - 1.50



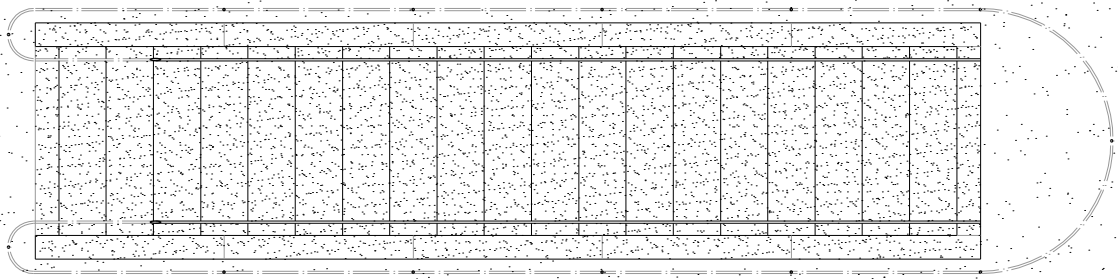
Entrance Section - 1.50



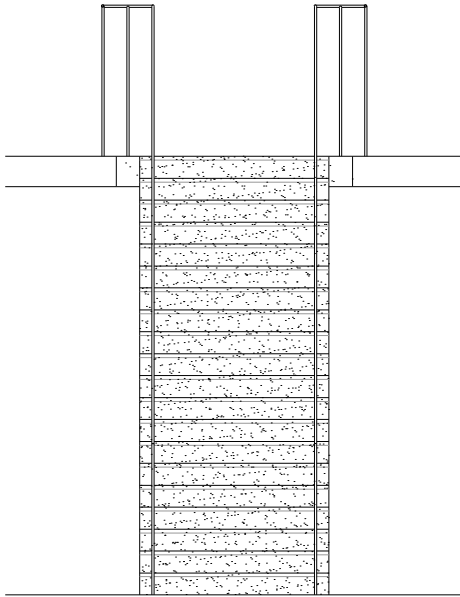
Entrance Plan - 1.50



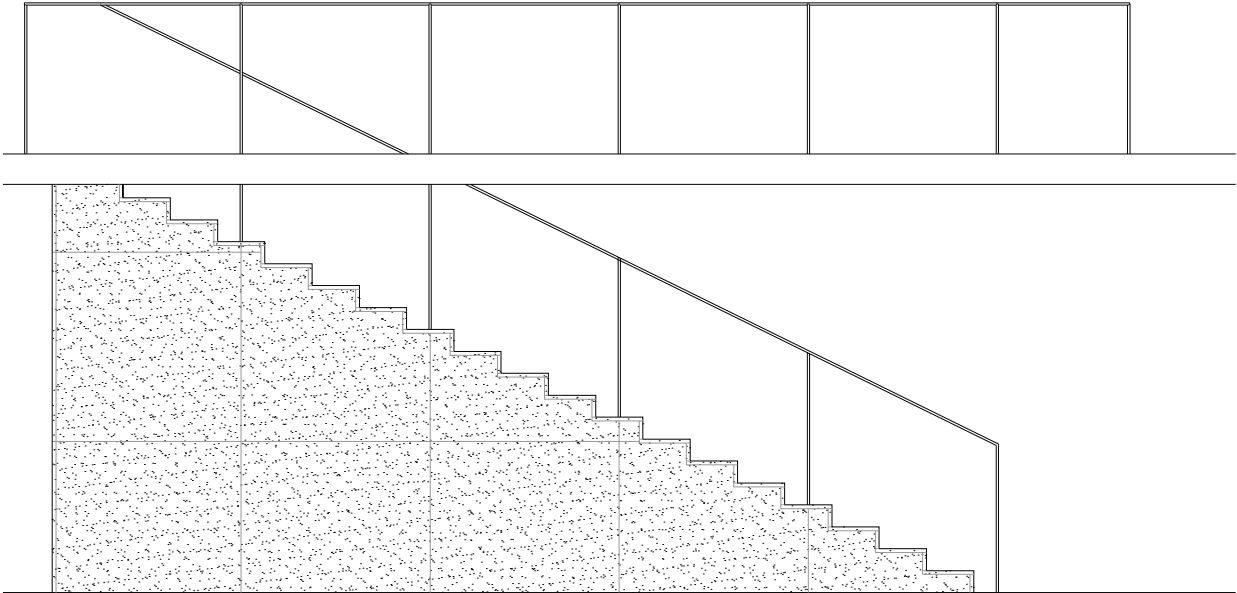
Figure 24. Staircase.



Staircase Plan - 1.50

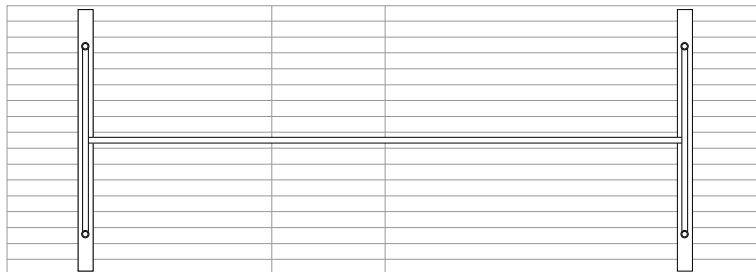
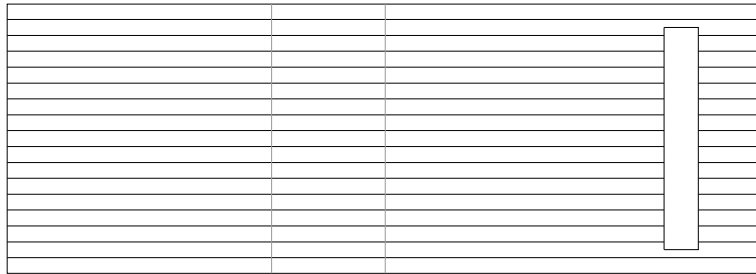


Staircase Elevation - 1.50

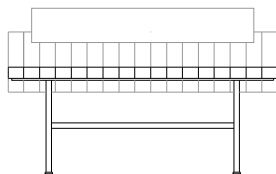
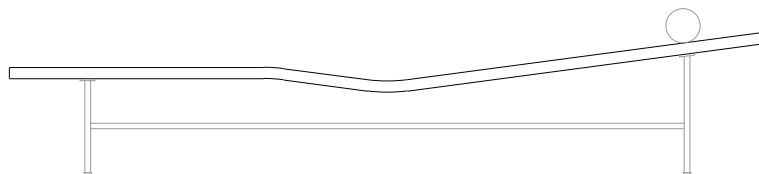


Staircase Elevation - 1.50

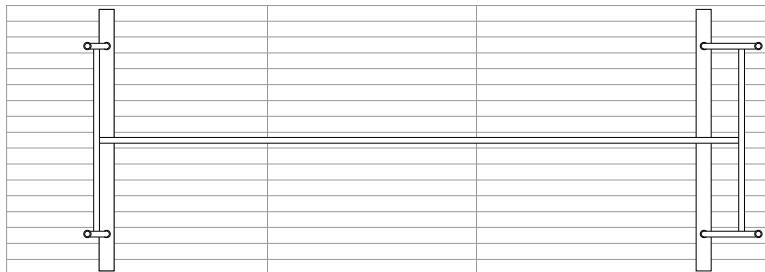
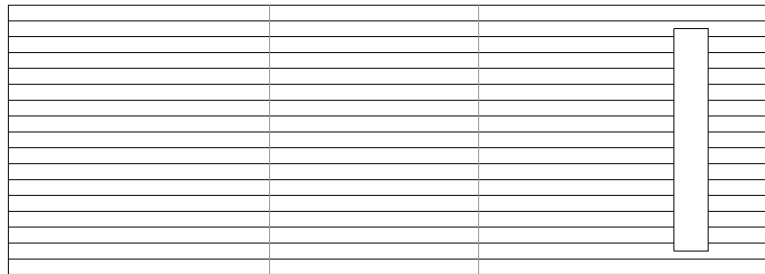
FURNITURE DESIGN



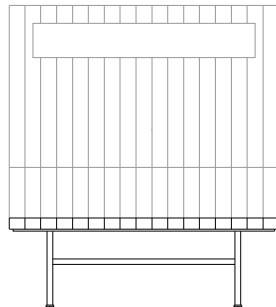
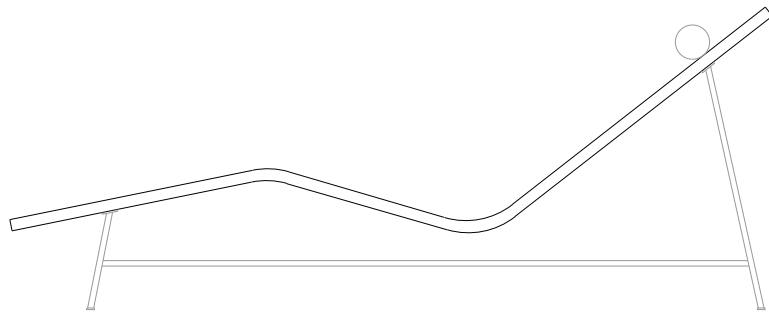
Relax Chair I - Plan & Underside - 1.20



Relax Chair I - Elevation & Elevation - 1.20



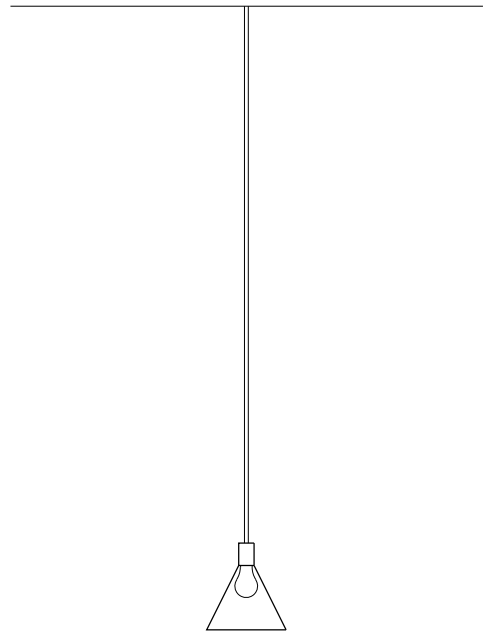
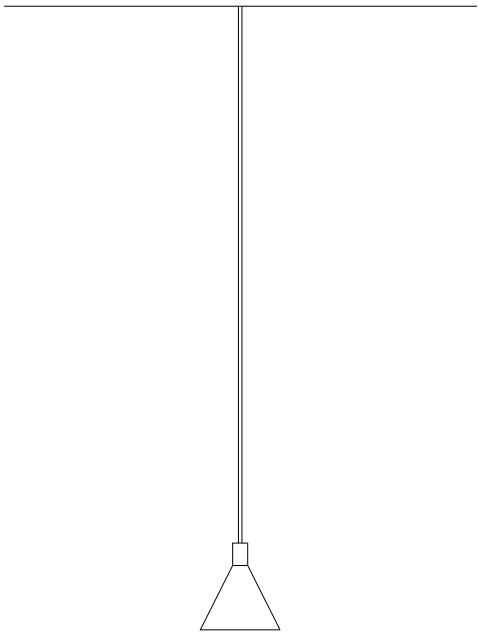
Relax Chair II - Plan & Underside - 1.20



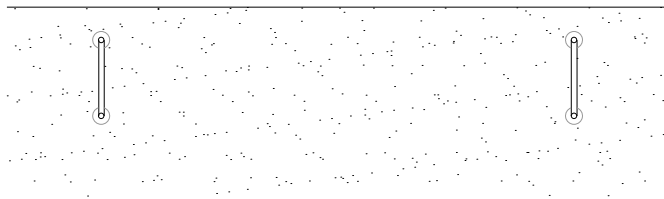
Relax Chair II - Elevation & Elevation - 1.20



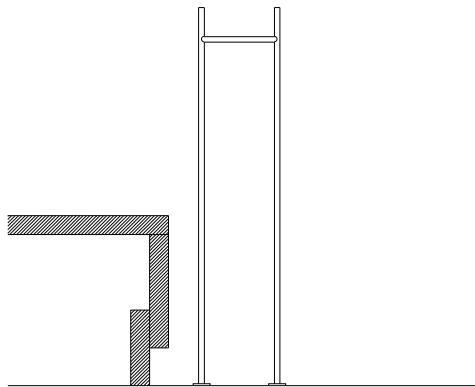
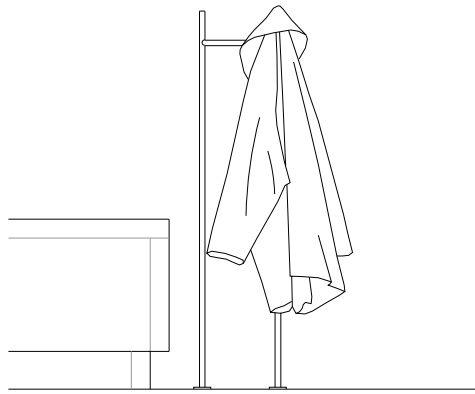
Lamp Plan - 1.20



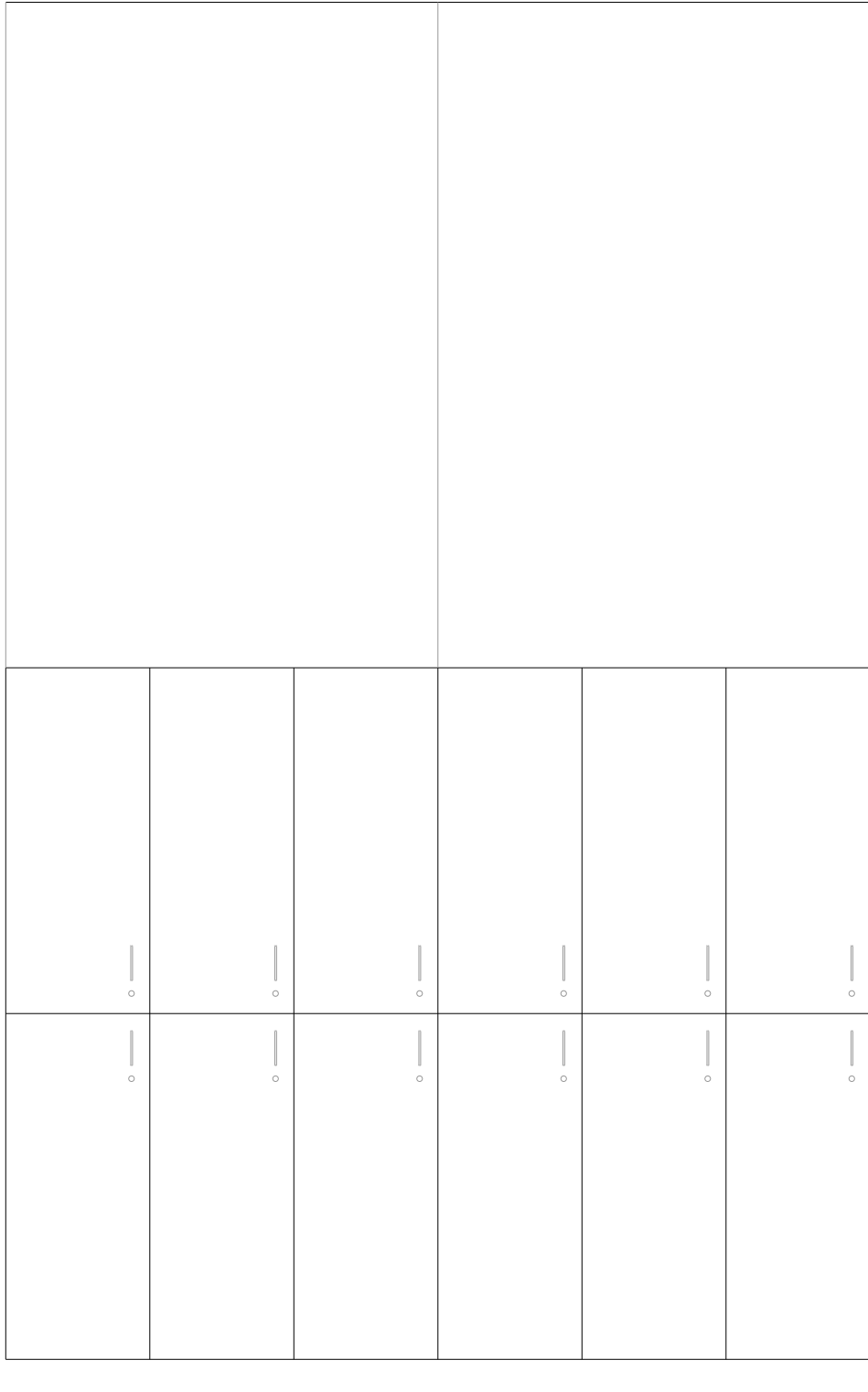
Lamp - Elevation & Section - 1.20



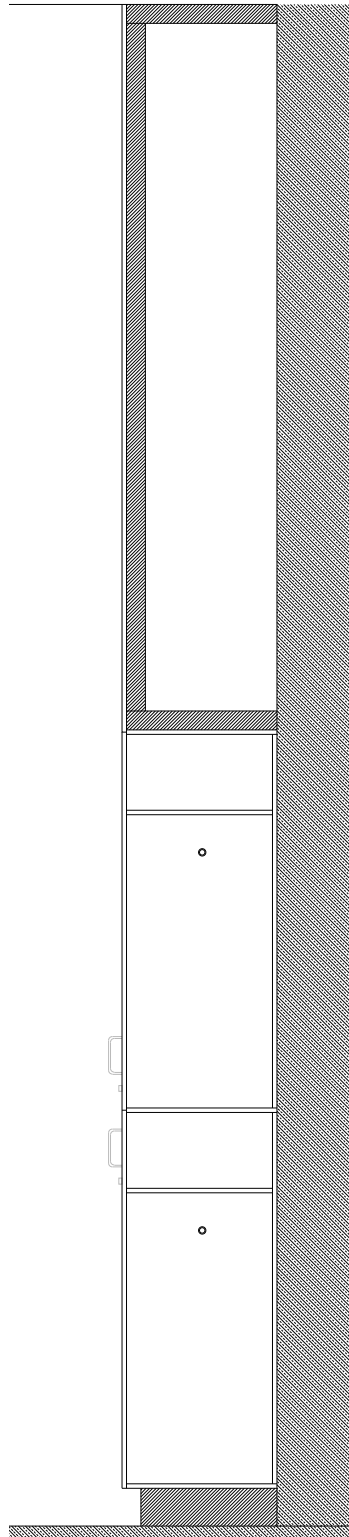
Changing Bench - Elevation & Plan - 1.20



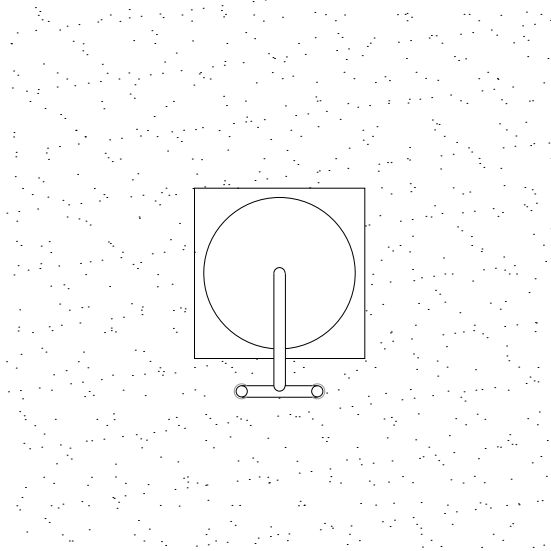
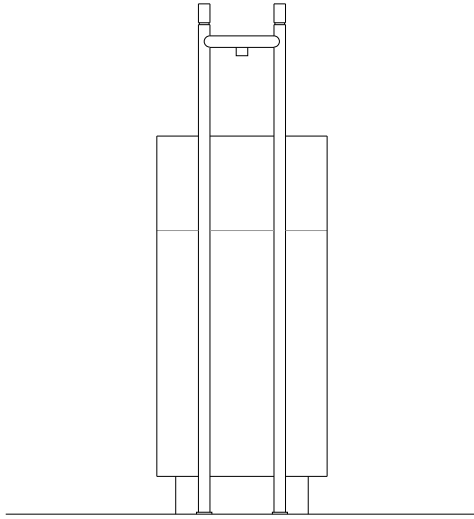
Changing Bench - Elevation & Section - 1.20



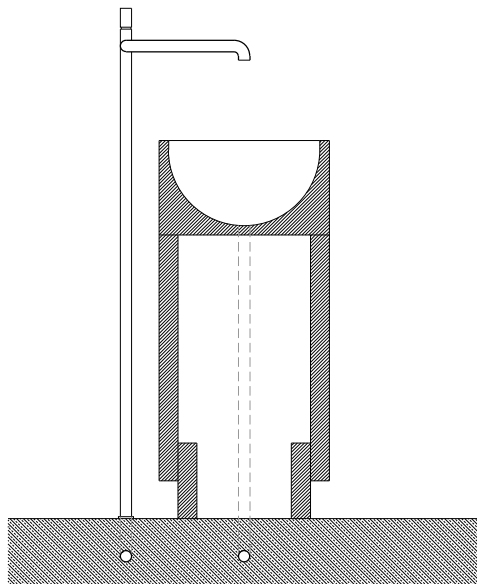
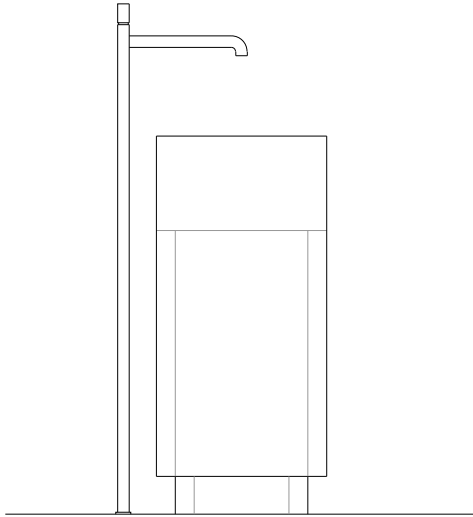
Locker Elevation - 1.20



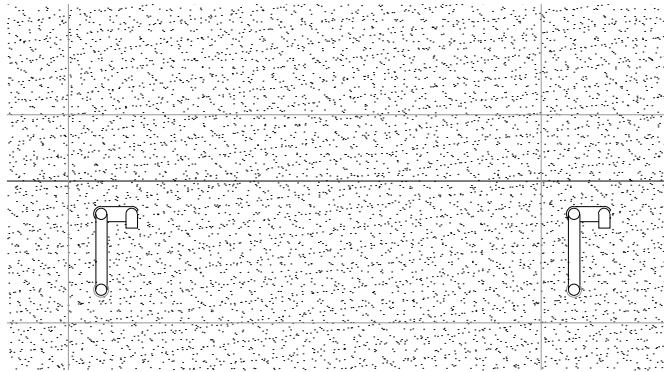
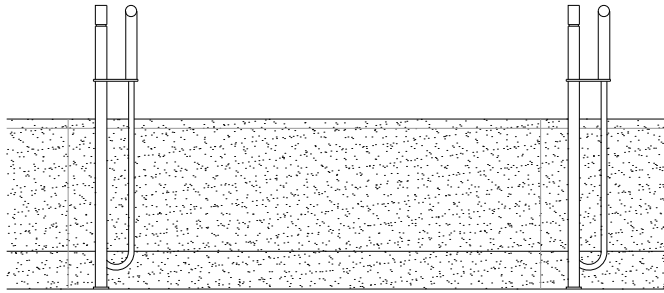
Locker Section - 1.20



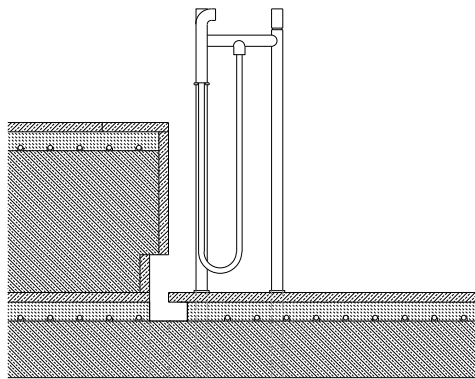
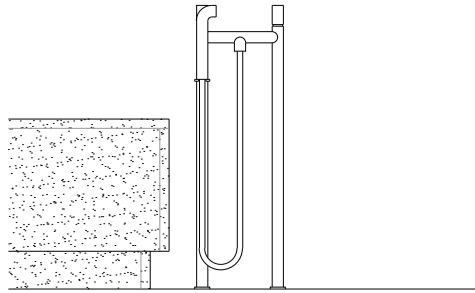
Drinking Stone - Elevation & Plan - 1.20



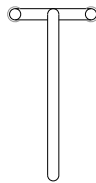
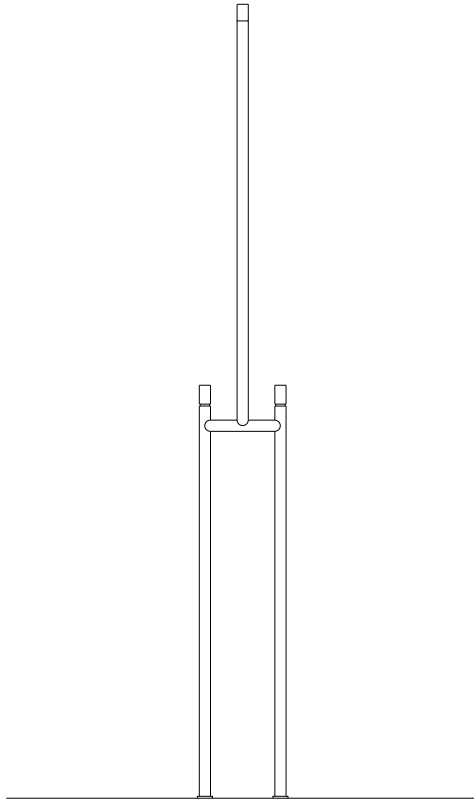
Drinking Stone - Elevation & Section - 1.20



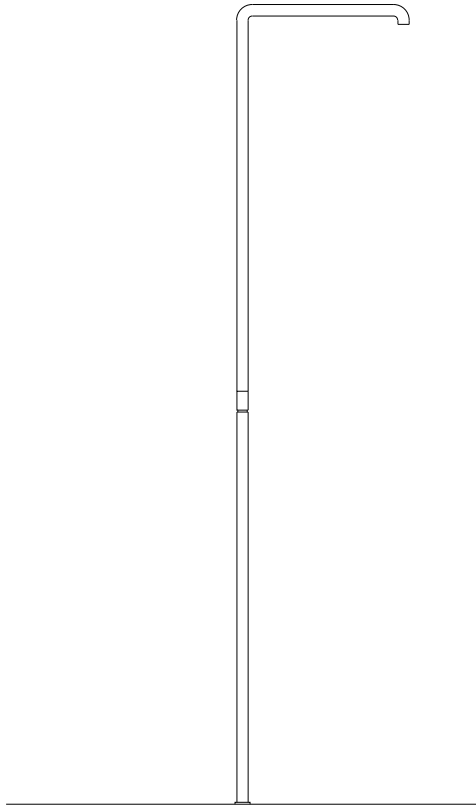
Shower Bench - Elevation & Plan - 1.20



Shower Bench - Elevation & Section - 1.20



Shower - Elevation & Plan - 1.20



Shower Elevation - 1.20

MODELS



Figure 25. Site Model - 1:1000

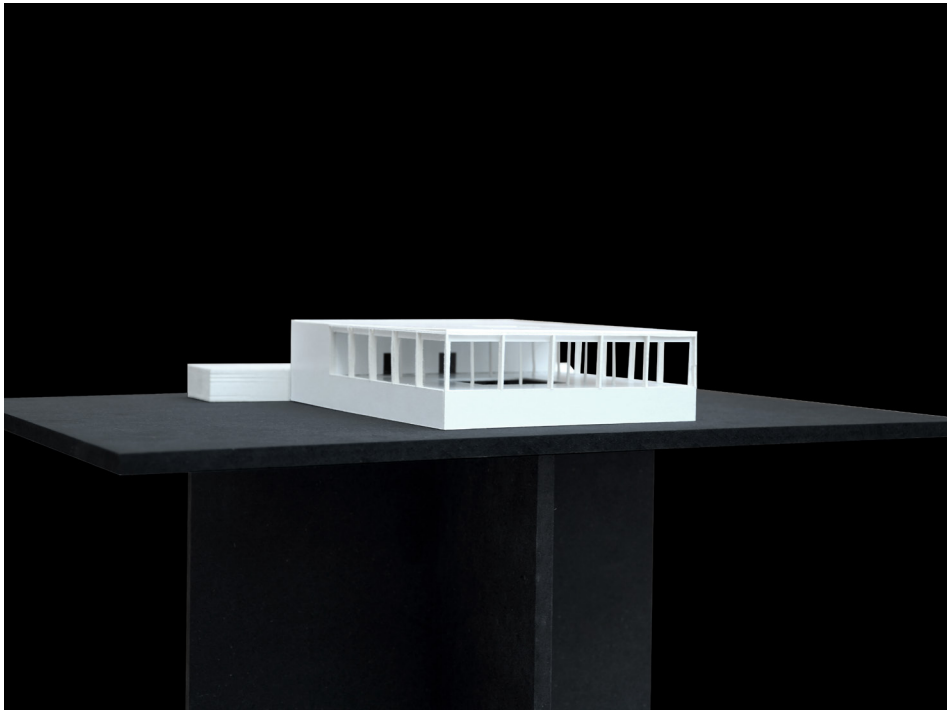


Figure 26. Building Volume - 1.200

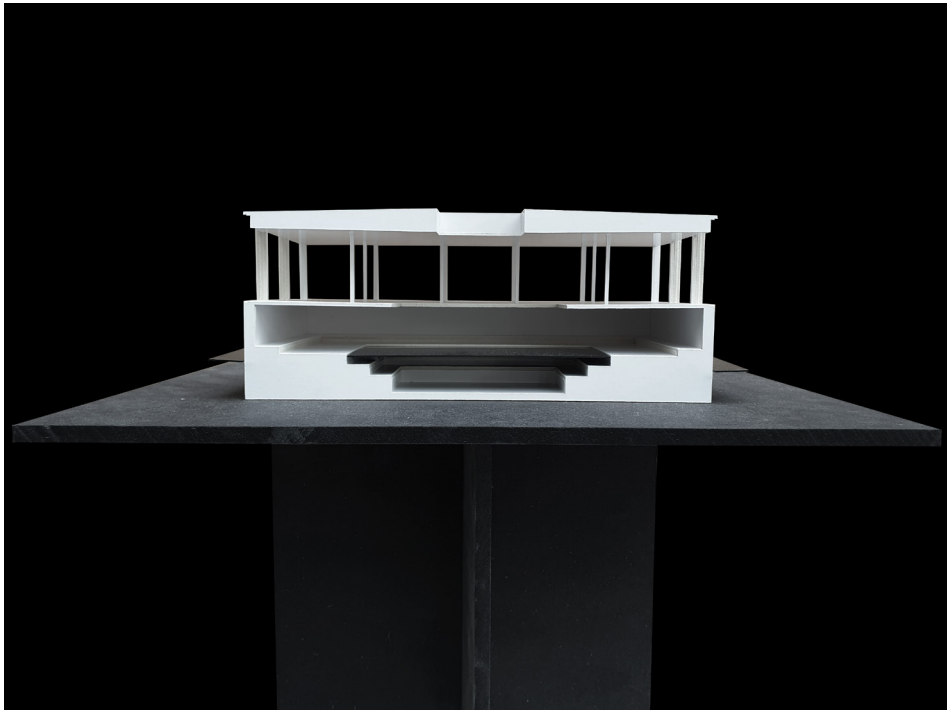


Figure 27. Section Model - 1.100



Figure 28. Detail Model - 1.20

DISCUSSION

Based on the question on how the ancient bath can be new interpreted by paraphrasing the artworks of Jean-Léon Gérôme in the context of Gothenburg, our proposal is mirroring different spatial and atmospheric features based on characteristics we found through our investigations on the chosen artworks. Dominated by one central placed main bath as well as a certain enclosure, the proposal is drawing an apparent parallel to the main motive of the paintings of Jean-Léon Gérôme. Paraphrasing the main bath of Gérôme's paintings into our proposal, factors as the geometrical form, the proportion of the space as well as a heaviness through the application of stone as a main material resulted into a main bath where the ritual of bathing is more likely connected to the ancient as to the modern type of bathhouse. A place, which is through the implementation of the described aspects characterized by light, height and materials, affecting the spatial and atmospheric perception and which is generating space for both encounter and withdrawal.

The proposal is working with a sequence of rooms as a journey from the outside to the inside, involving beside the initial focus on the main bath, both open and more private spaces as well as functional spaces needed in a contemporary proposal.

In contrast to the chosen historical references, the proposal is mirroring a highly simple and geometrical form language. Further, the design is underlining small details regarding both construction and objects as furniture in the sense of how the building will be perceived and in order to create a wholeness. As also been analyzed in the artworks of Gérôme, artefacts are playing an important role as a part of the composition.

With the proposal and through the applied method, the thesis aims to highlight that modern public bathhouses have lost their connection to the original fundamental idea whereby a bathhouse is implicating the ritual of washing and revitalization within a calm and protected surrounding. Based on the artworks of Gérôme as a foundation of inspiration, the result stands in contrast to public swimming halls in terms of focus and program - creating a revival of a place for the mind and where one can find peace and calmness.

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Image

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Architecture and Urban Design
Building and Tectonics

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