

# Research Plan

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# Stockholm Exhibition 1930

Context

Entrance pavilion

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Context.

In setting out his plans for The Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, Asplund came hot on the heels of the great modernists and their exhibitions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, facing a Swedish environment missing the pomp and pageantry of their Central European counterparts. With the Nordics left reeling by the great depression of 1929 and its declining export economy<sup>1</sup>, there came a rapid dissolution of rural life, an associated crisis of urban housing, and equally of ways of living.

The Swedes' struggle with modernity had been addressed by an earlier exhibition that had championed technology and change, but had not grasped its place in Scandinavian life. With the rising Social Democratic party's increase in public investment, and their support for a leaner more functionalist ideology, Asplund arrived in 1930 with a motivated support base and 10 years of experience in refining the built elements of Swedish culture<sup>2</sup>.

In his role as curator and lead designer, Asplund is bringing neither a period of neo-classicism, nor of strict modernism. He is proposing a manifesto of acceptance<sup>3</sup>. Taking in hand the new reality and evolving the elements he believes best serve his public. This is his attempt at a language squeezed in-between a prevailing national romanticism and a very international style.

In all of his attempts at this Asplund is looking for a purity of form. He understands that classical architecture had given a rigour of elements to the canon, but proposed that the geometrical arrangement he had built a career on was made accessible by modern construction.

*'Today's and tomorrow's willpower in our developing architecture'*

– Asplund in *Acceptera*, 1931.

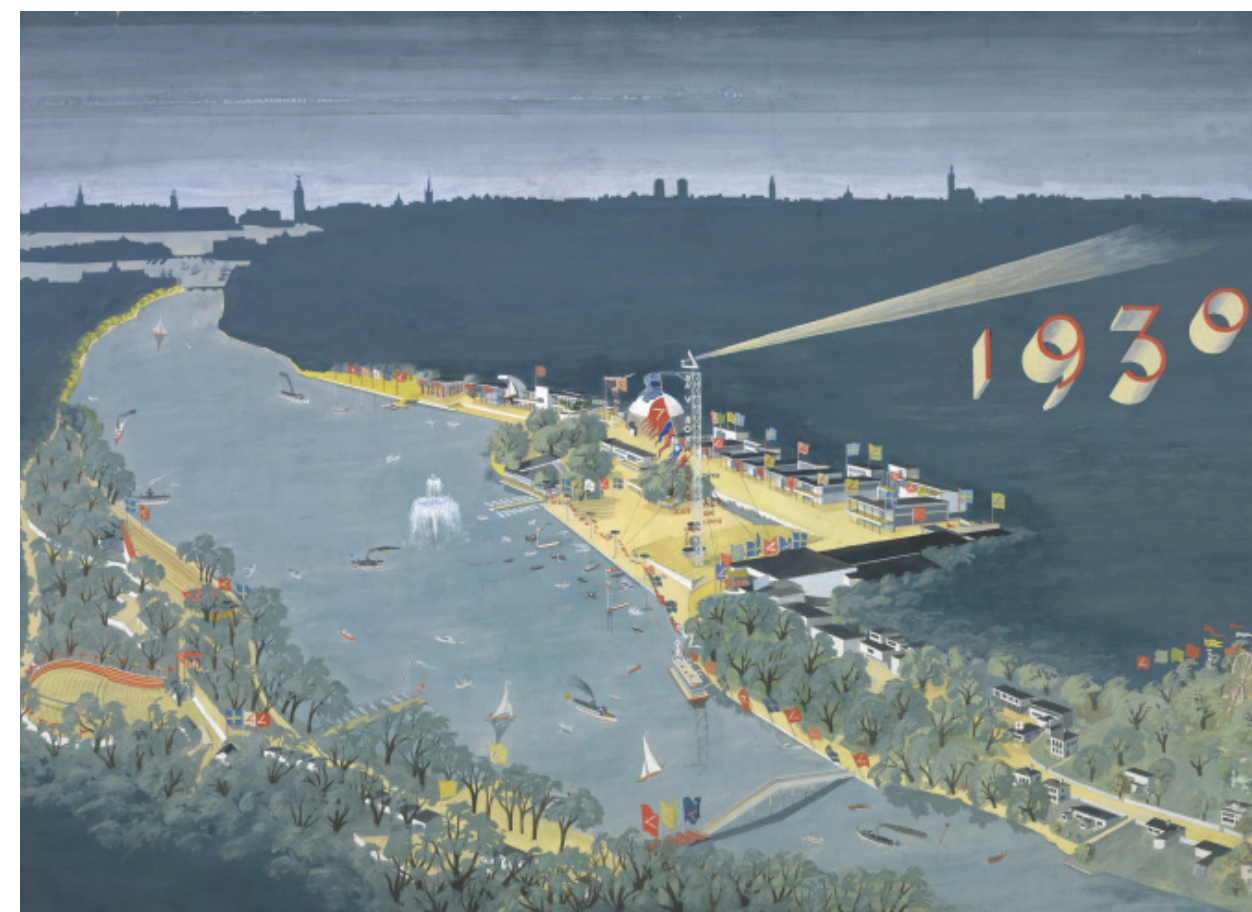
So there becomes a focus on not just the welcoming of this new aesthetic, but on its connection to a spirit of production and material newness that is distinctly modern. This is where the entrance pavilion and transport hall become so representative.





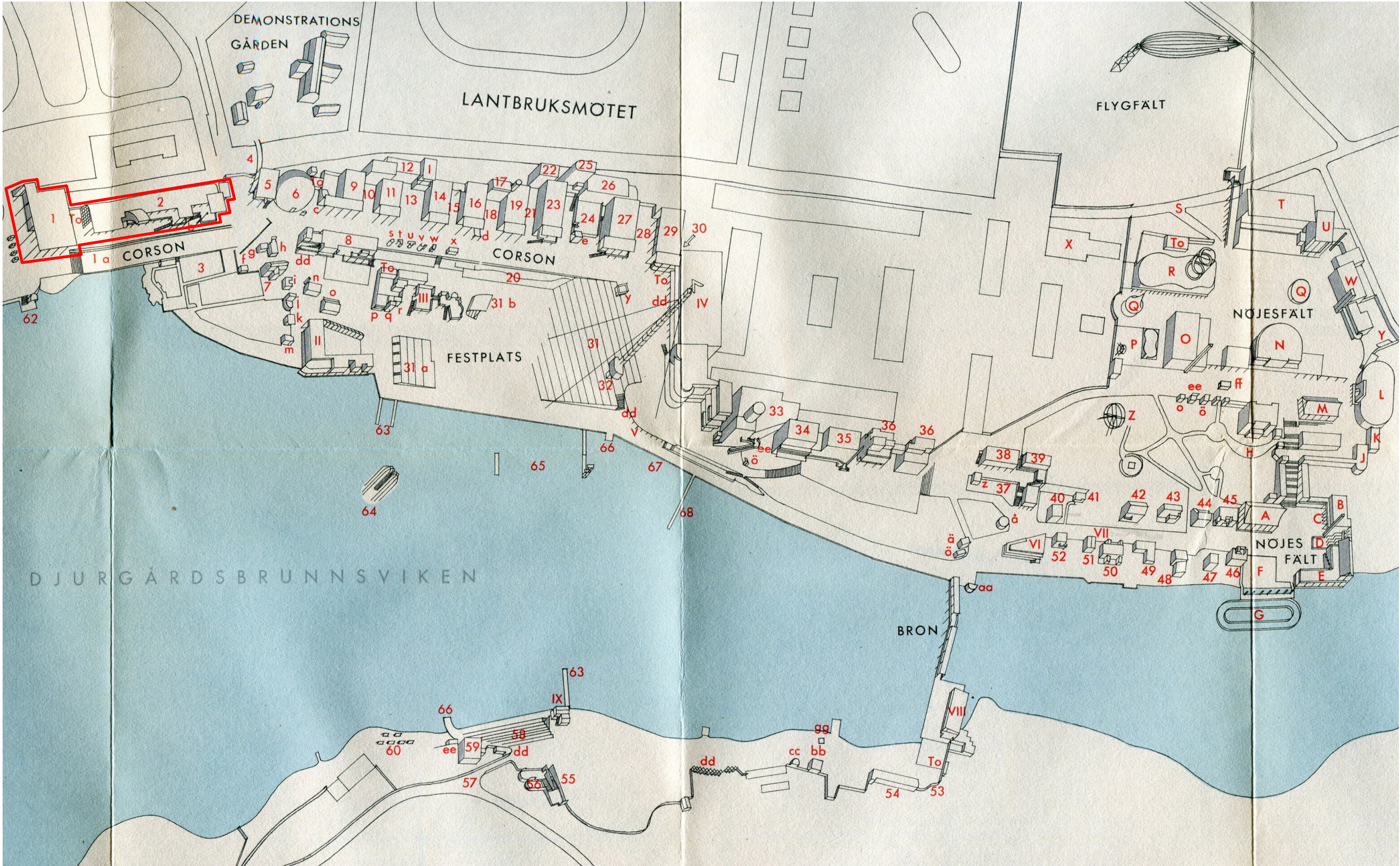
Cover of the Acceptera manifesto (fig. 1) and its authors: architects Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Eskil Sundahl, Uno Åhrén, and art historian Gregor Paulsson (fig. 2).





Pamflet of the Stockholm Exhibiton (fig. 3) and aerial render (fig. 4).





(fig. 5)





Entrance pavilion.

In the approach from the terminus of a newly built tram line<sup>5</sup> Asplund parks a machine like facade. Drawing visitors through a forest of columns, past freely dimensioned windows, and under a massive ceiling. Facing the lake around which the exhibition is organised he draws his typical plan of stepping axes, and carves out a series of simple moves into a geometrically rigorous, but well executed entry sequence.

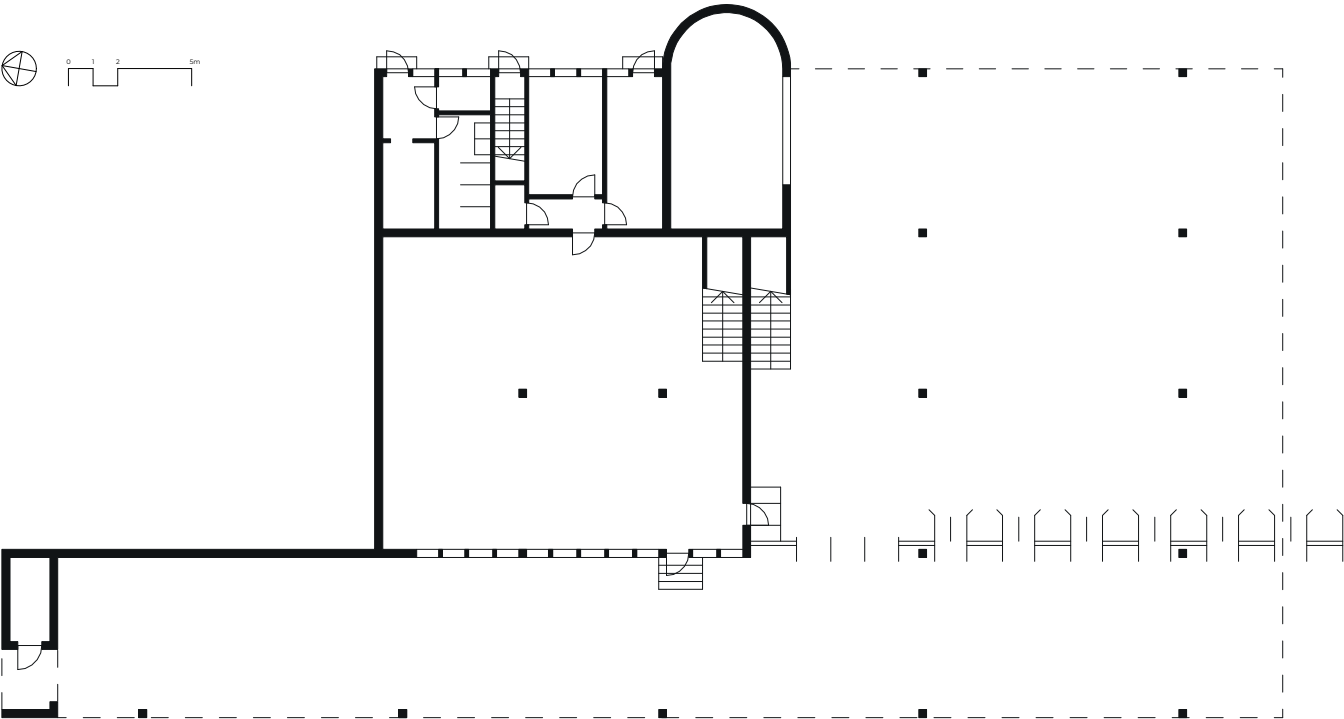
This entrance pavilion is resplendently wrapped in the flags of the world, and dramatically lit at night. In an exhibition of four million attendees, of which three million were Swedes<sup>6</sup>, the drama of the elements which at the time would have been almost entirely new should not be understated. The tectonic arrangement of the buildings at the Stockholm Exhibition was employed as a means to illustrate modern potential. Many spaces, objects, and materials moved from foreign luxury to be part of the widely available lifestyle.

*‘Forms which do not threaten, but invite.’*

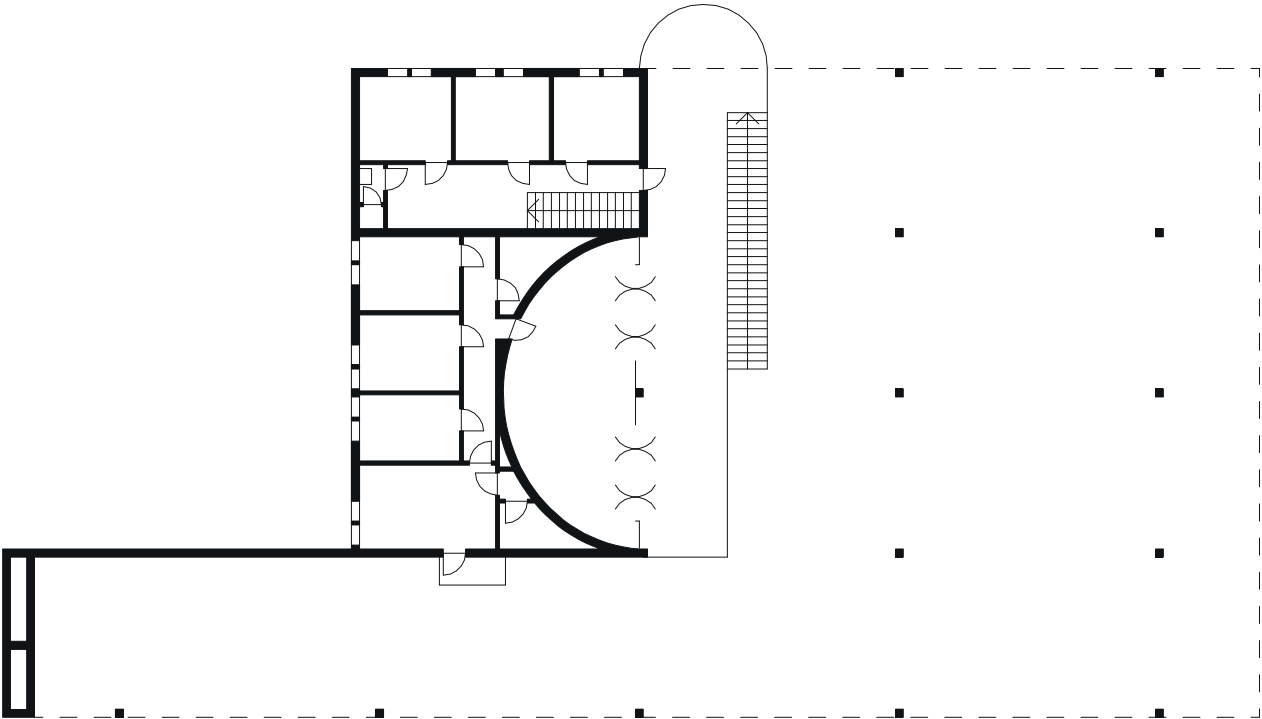
– Asplund, 1930.



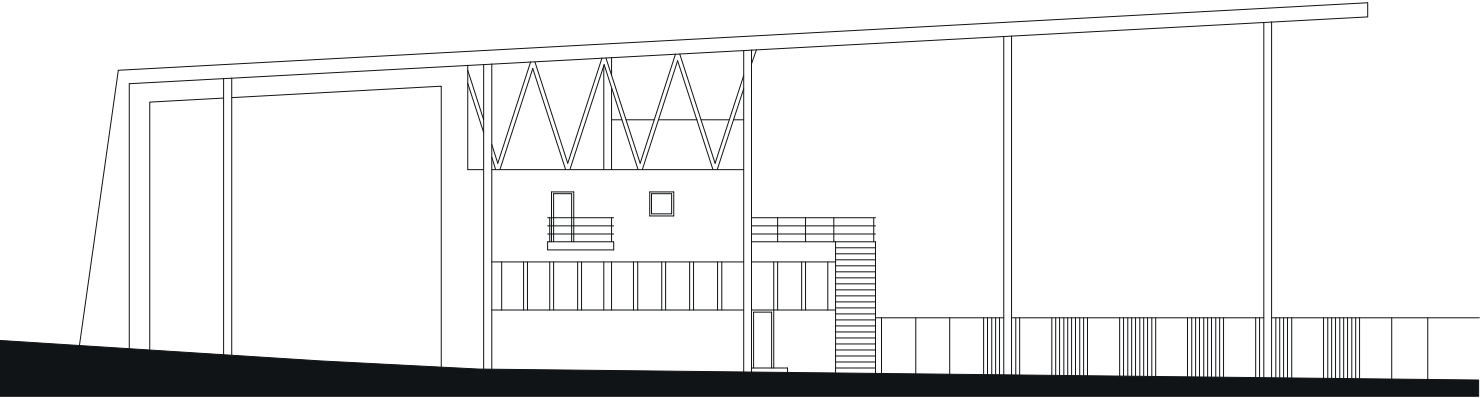
Two renders of the entrance pavilion, during the day decorations through flags (fig. 6), during the night decorations through lights (fig. 7).



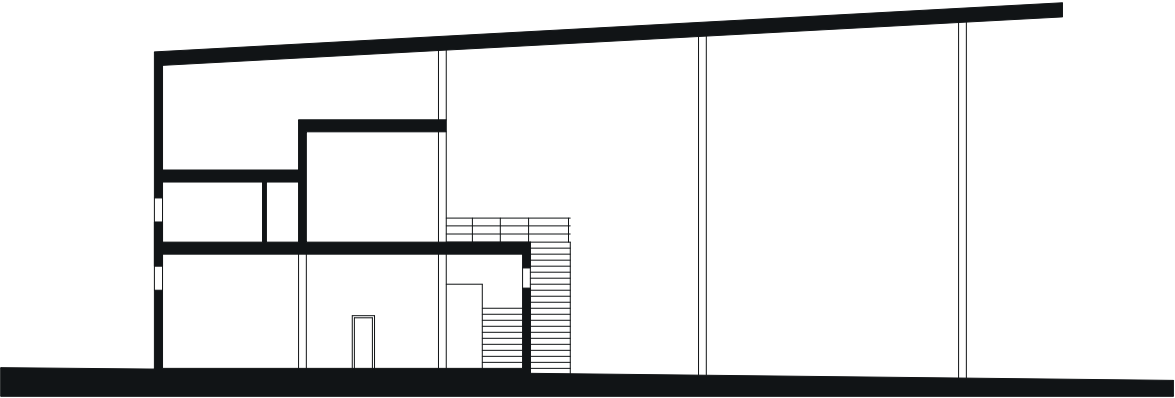
Ground floor



Second floor



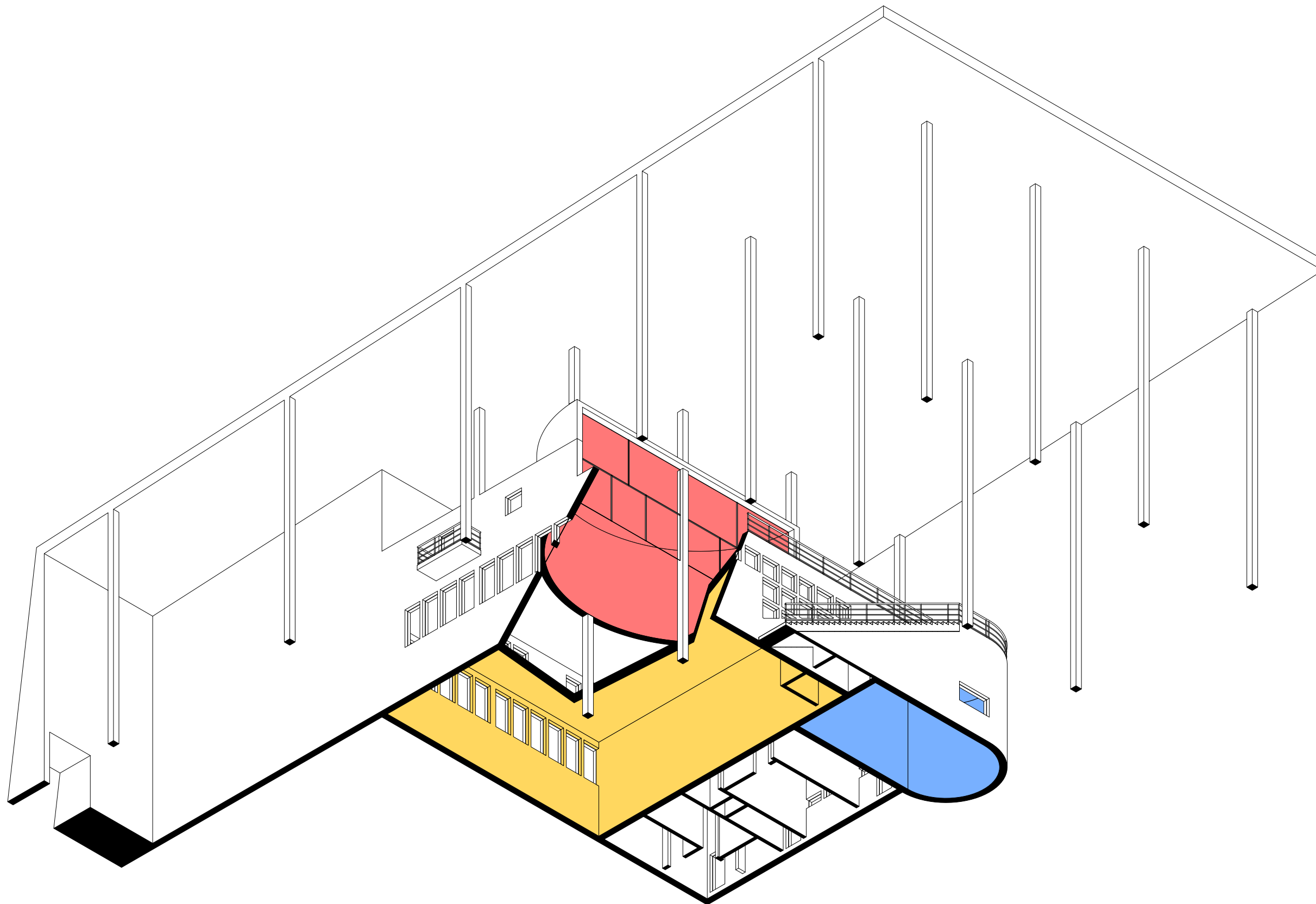
Front facade



Section

Recreated drawings of the entrance pavilion (fig. 8).





Worm's eye axonometry of the entrance pavilion showing the different functions of rooms (fig. 9):

Yellow, offices and functional spaces

Blue, circulation with stairs to first level

Red, exhibition space



Archival image of the entrance pavilion (fig. 10).





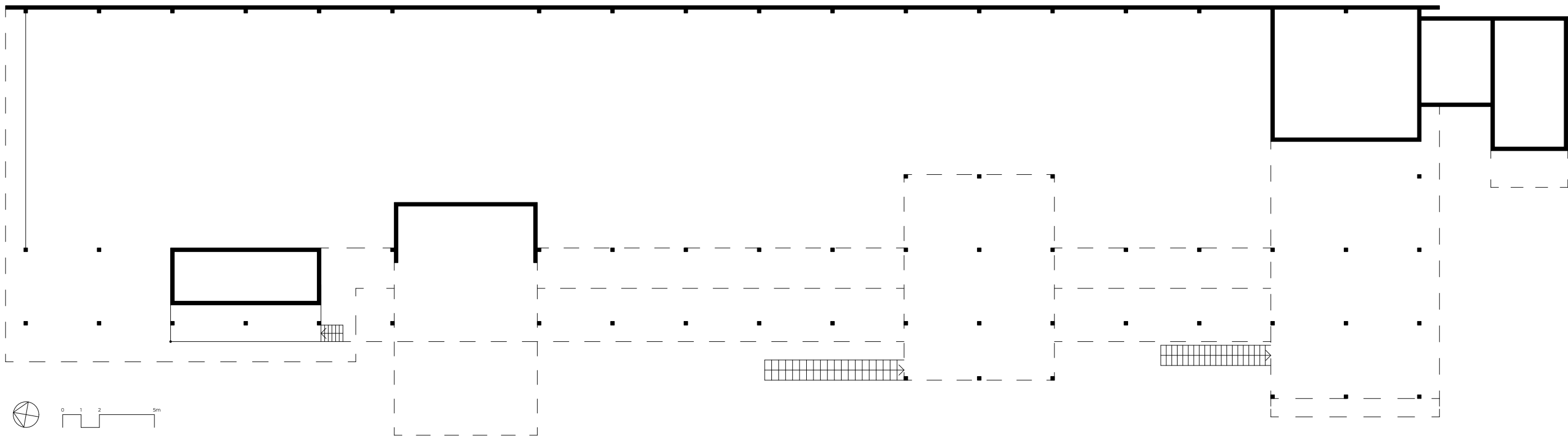
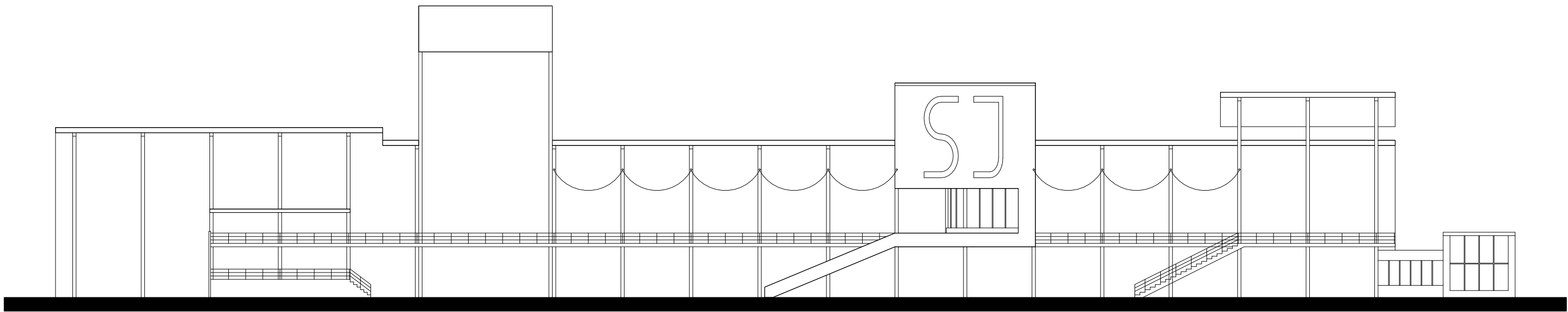
### Transport pavilion.

This invitation to a new modern way of life was in a sense an act of acclimatising the public. Through the display of new building types alongside comparable and attractive transport vehicles an argument could be made that Asplund relaxed the tendency of modernism towards revolution, and instead adapted it into an enhanced expression of the Swedish culture.

In his transport pavilion, cars, trains, boats, and planes: all already accepted advances of modernism were displayed with a direct equivalence to the built fabric they occupied<sup>8</sup>. Again within a very simple axial hall made possible by newfound steel spans Asplund exhibits an aeroplane under a roof that takes it figuratively under its wing. He shows boats under canopies tension hung from the material of their sails, and parks rows of cars within a factory like frame<sup>9</sup>.

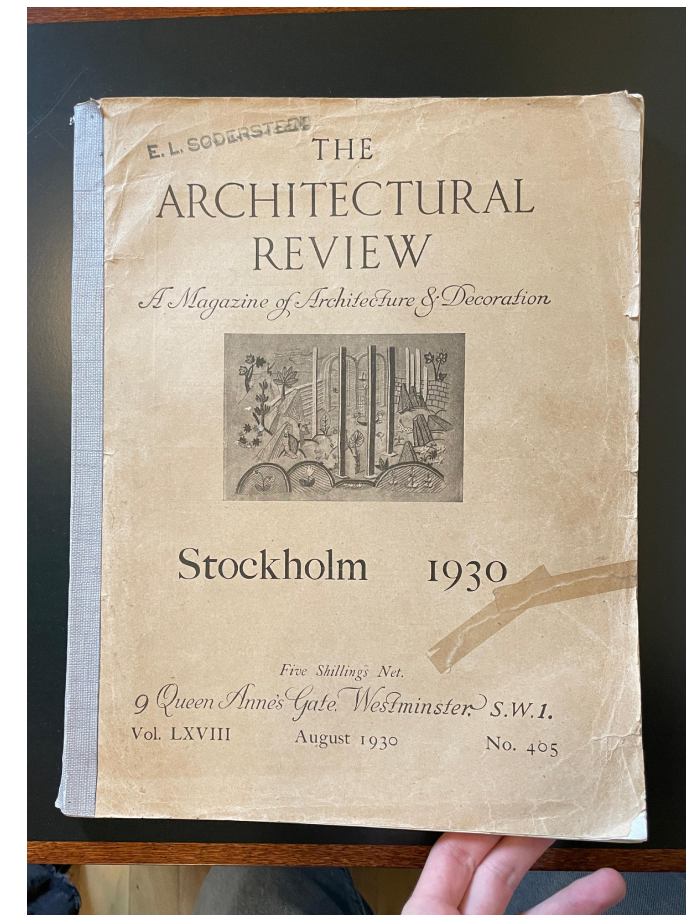
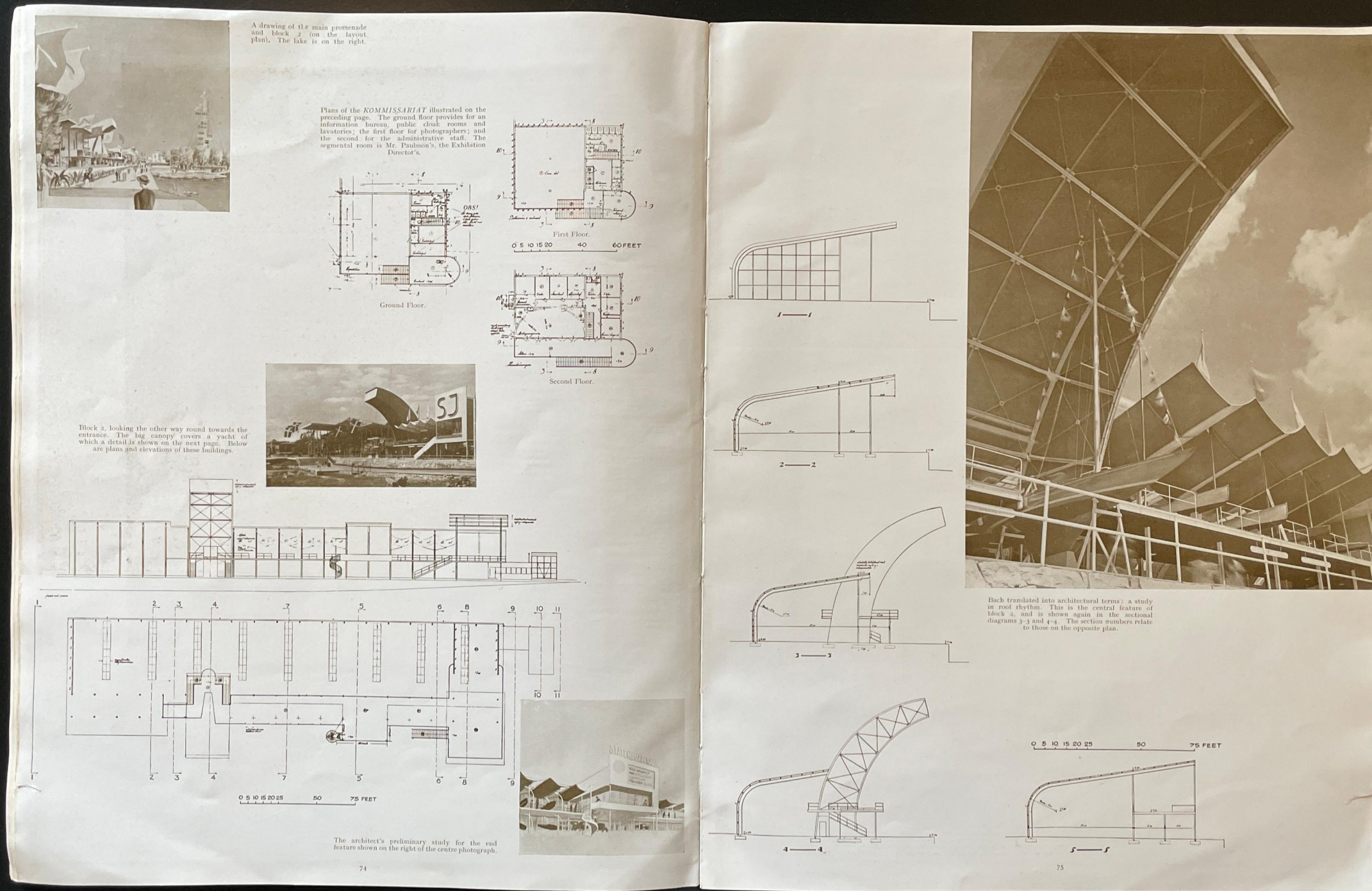


Render (fig. 11) and archival photograph (fig. 12) of the entrance pavilion and transport pavilion.



Recreated drawings of the transport pavilion (fig. 13).

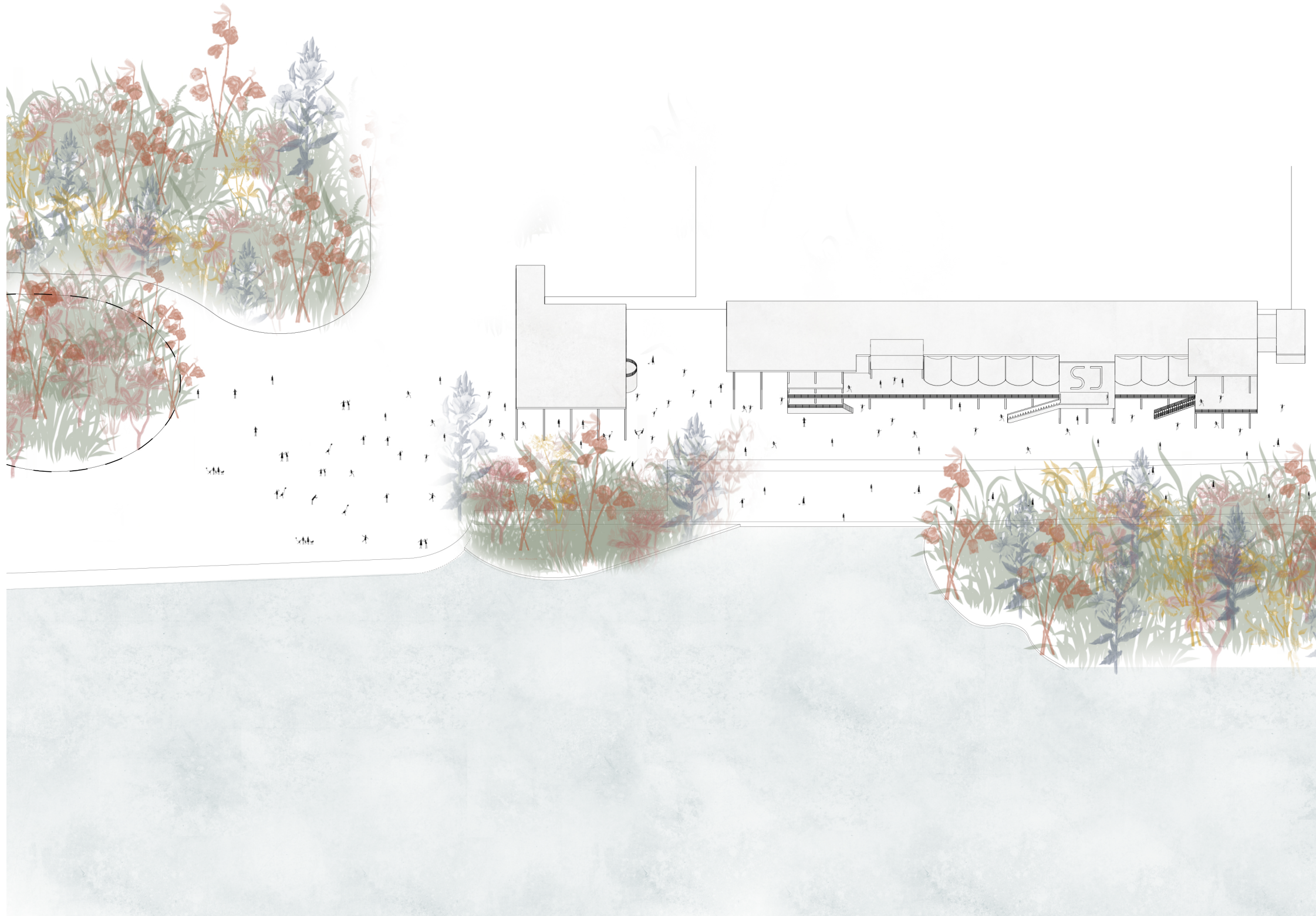




Drawings of the entrance pavilion and transport pavilion (fig. 14) found in a magazine (fig. 15) in an office of the bank building by Lewerentz in Stockholm.

Drawings showed the buildings in an earlier phase, the actually built pavilions had slight changes: the SJ lobby on the transport pavilion was added and the rooms were divided slightly differently in the entrance pavilion.



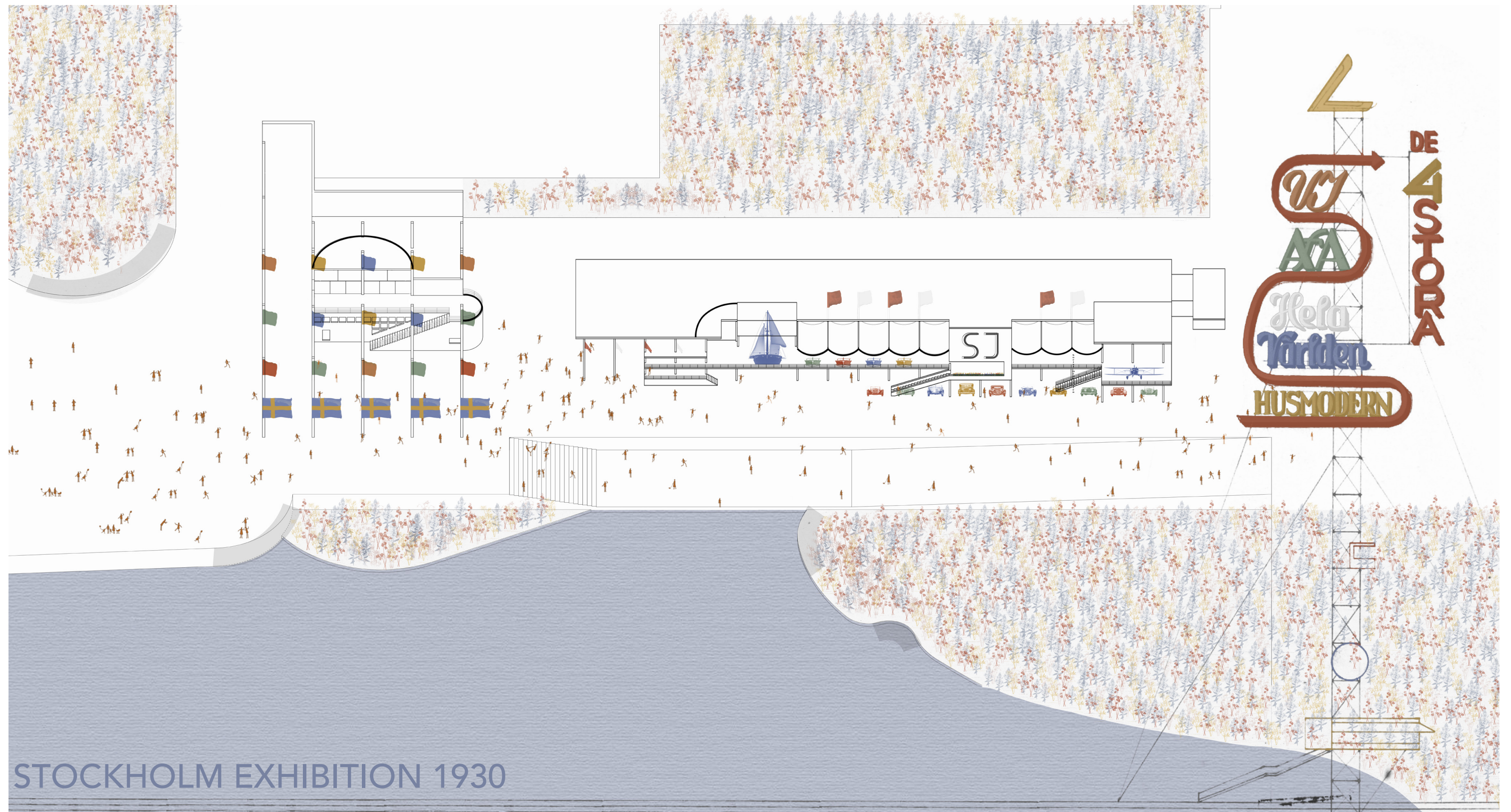


Impression of the influence of flowers and people on the two pavilions (fig. 16).



Impression of how the elements on the pavilion actually decorate the building. The building acts like a shelf (fig. 17).





## STOCKHOLM EXHIBITION 1930

CARLOTTA LUCIANO, JAMES FLAUS,  
JAN YKE VAN DEN BOGERT, NATALIA SIMONARSON

Final drawing visualising the essence of the exhibition (fig. 18): the architecture as mere shelves for life, exhibits, nature and ideas.





(fig. 19)

#### Conclusion.

Asplund's offering and his invitation to a new way of life was in a sense an effort to acclimatise the public. Through the display of attractive and equivalent objects and building types an argument is made to relax the tendency of modernism towards revolution. He seeks not to reinvent, but to accept and adapt modern forms into a progression of his game of elements. The geometric rigour, the curated movement, and the taste for ornament are all still present, but have been brought into an optimistic and outward display of Swedish culture.





# Viipuri Library 1935 – Alvar Aalto

Context  
The building  
Conclusion

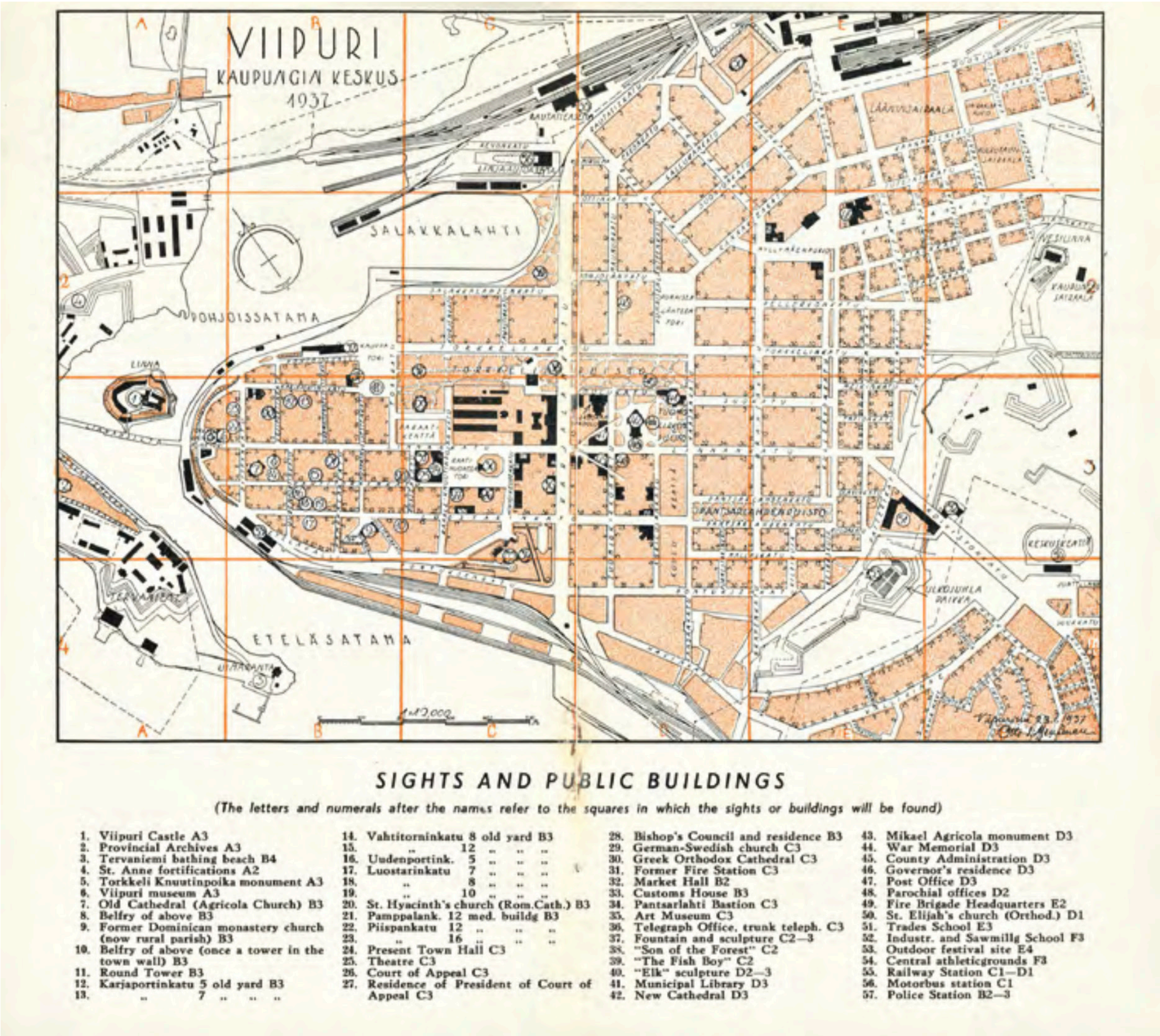
Context.

The library as an institution has a rich history and significance in Finland that might be challenging for those in mainland Europe to fully grasp. The remote geography and oral nature of its language and traditions meant that not much of Finnish history had been written down. In fact, it wasn't until 1835 that the first book of oral histories was transcribed. At the time of the Viipuri Library's design, Finland's written history was only as old to Aalto as the project is to us today<sup>10</sup>.

Viipuri in 1927 was Finland's second city, and held immense importance in its development as a nation state. Its library was one of the first modern buildings in the growth away from the Russian empire, and holds within it a deeply relevant nationalism<sup>11</sup>. Both in its formal features and its intent.

Despite this energetic spirit of opportunity, Aalto's original design is notable for its prominent neoclassicism. Much like earlier Nordic works by Asplund it featured a decorated frieze wrapping a series of monumental civic volumes. This was of course not the eminent style in a young and relatively liberal Finnish government, and after two years the scheme was shelved in favour of a more modern and exciting interpretation<sup>12</sup>.



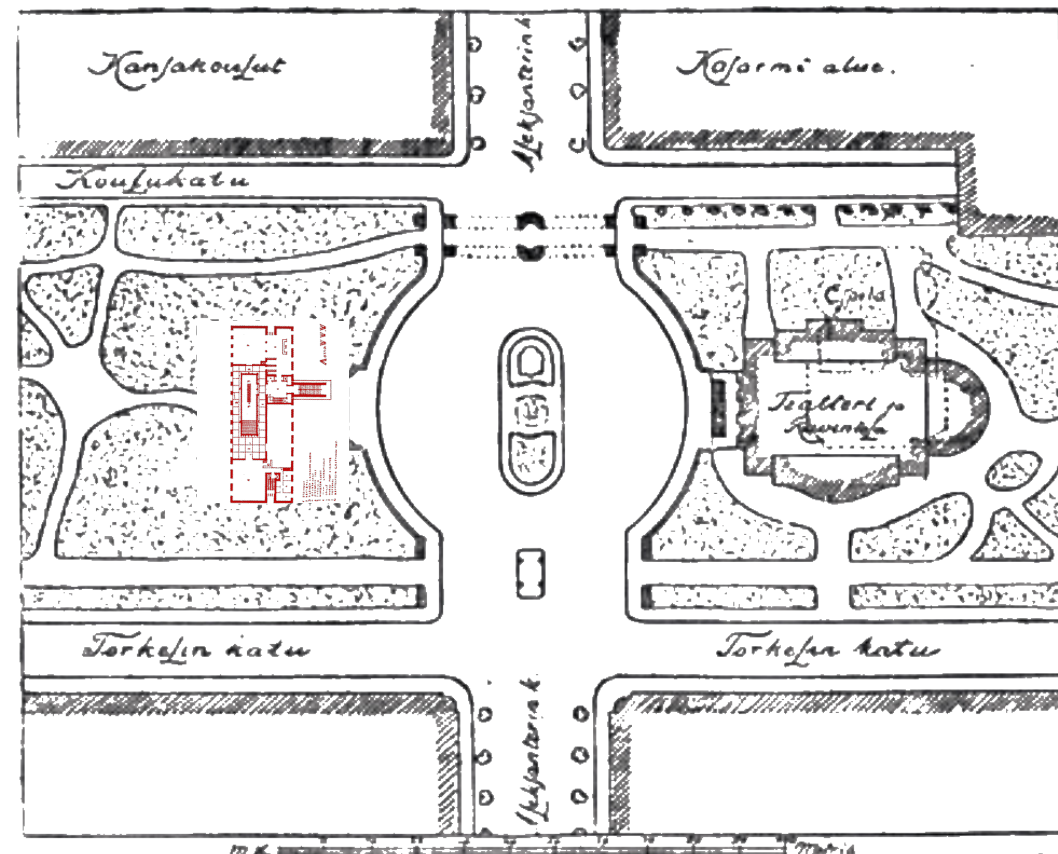


Location of the library in a plan from 1937 (square D3) (fig. 20) and today (fig. 21).



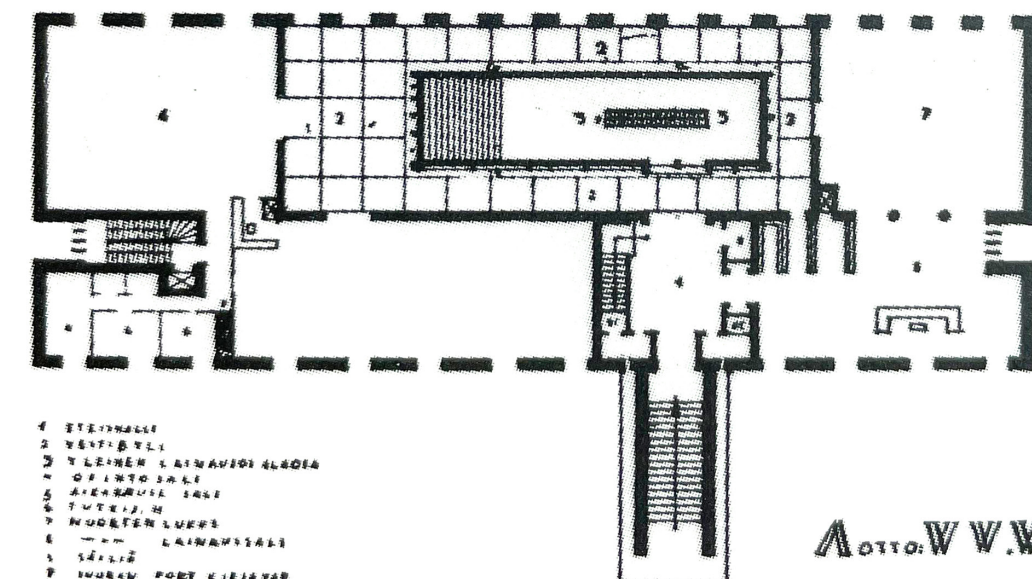
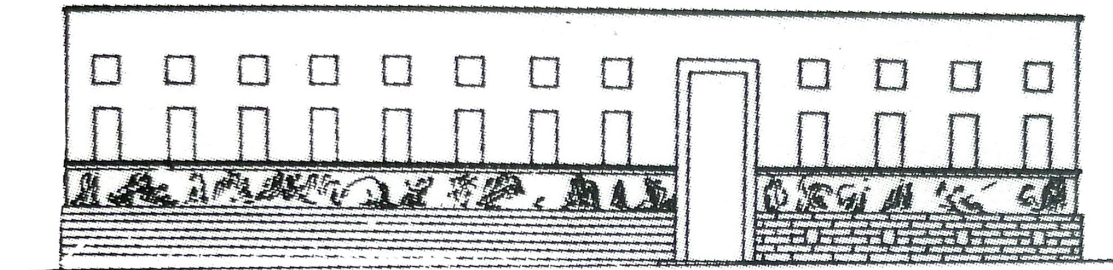
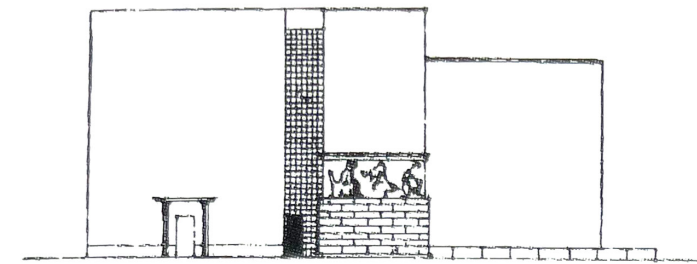
**Wiipurin Sanomat**

## Monumentaallinen paikka Wilpurissa.



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(ruot)  
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eri el  
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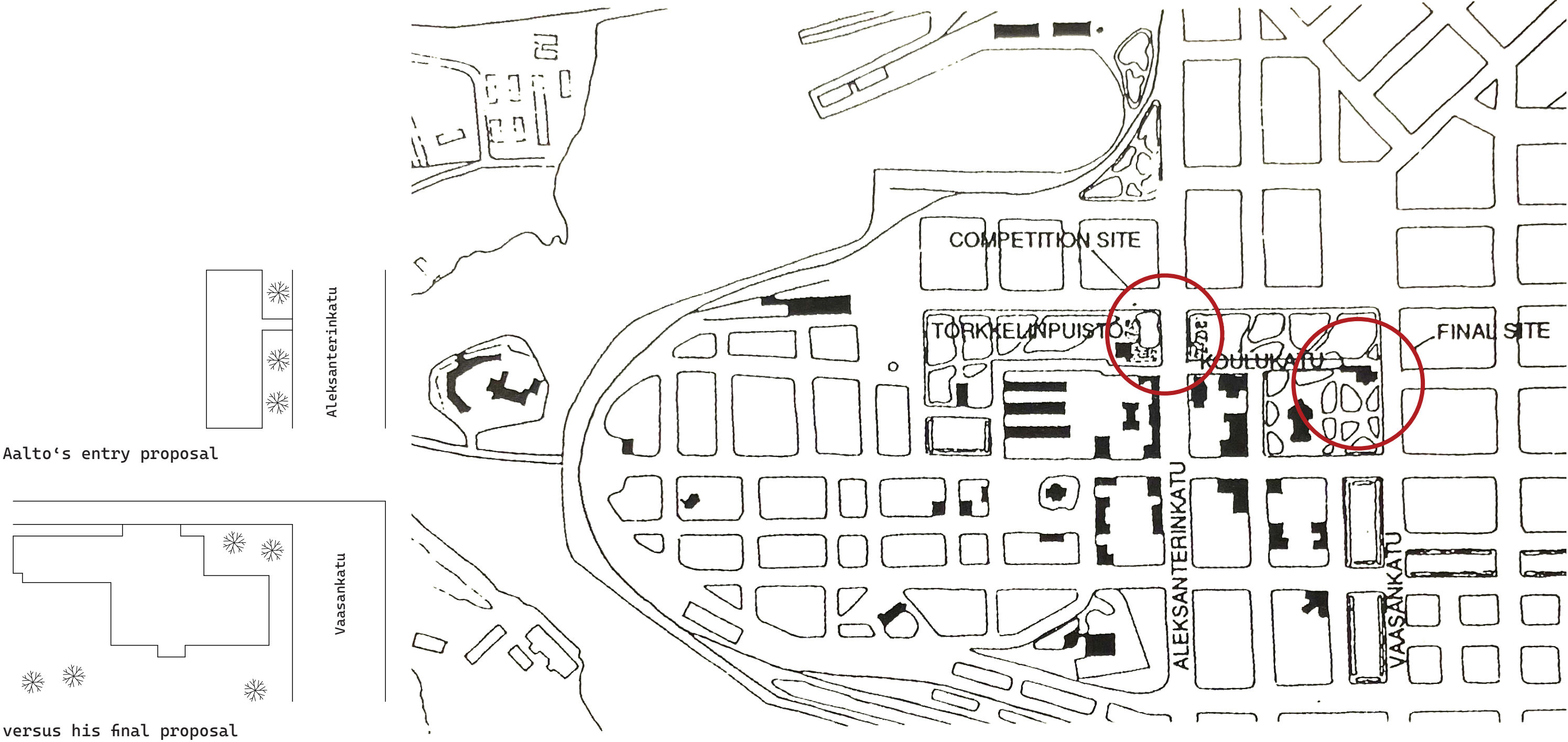
Eldehús under monumentaalkifen	tu bálkifennuvaltimo — Friedriks-	Soð sunnittelum ístíðum, en se	Viel
patlan læmteffs Bispurim toðistao	trastie.	voipursilaimu, þoa patlan ajan þoðs	



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ALOTTO: W V V

Above a plan how the square in front of the library could have looked like (fig. 22). To the right Aalto's winning proposal from 1927 (fig. 23).



Diagrams (fig. 24) showing the changed orientation towards the street and the changed location from the original proposal to the final proposal.

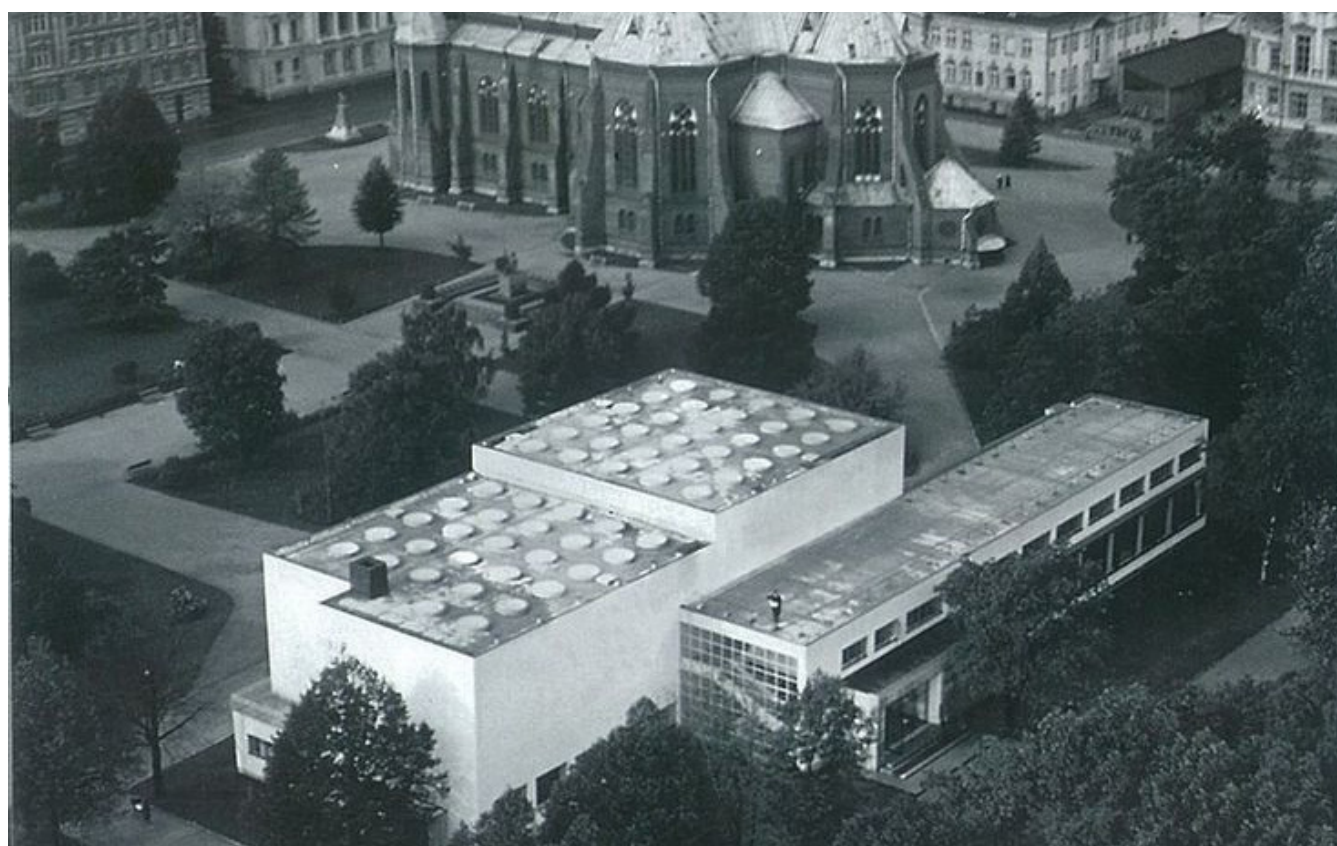




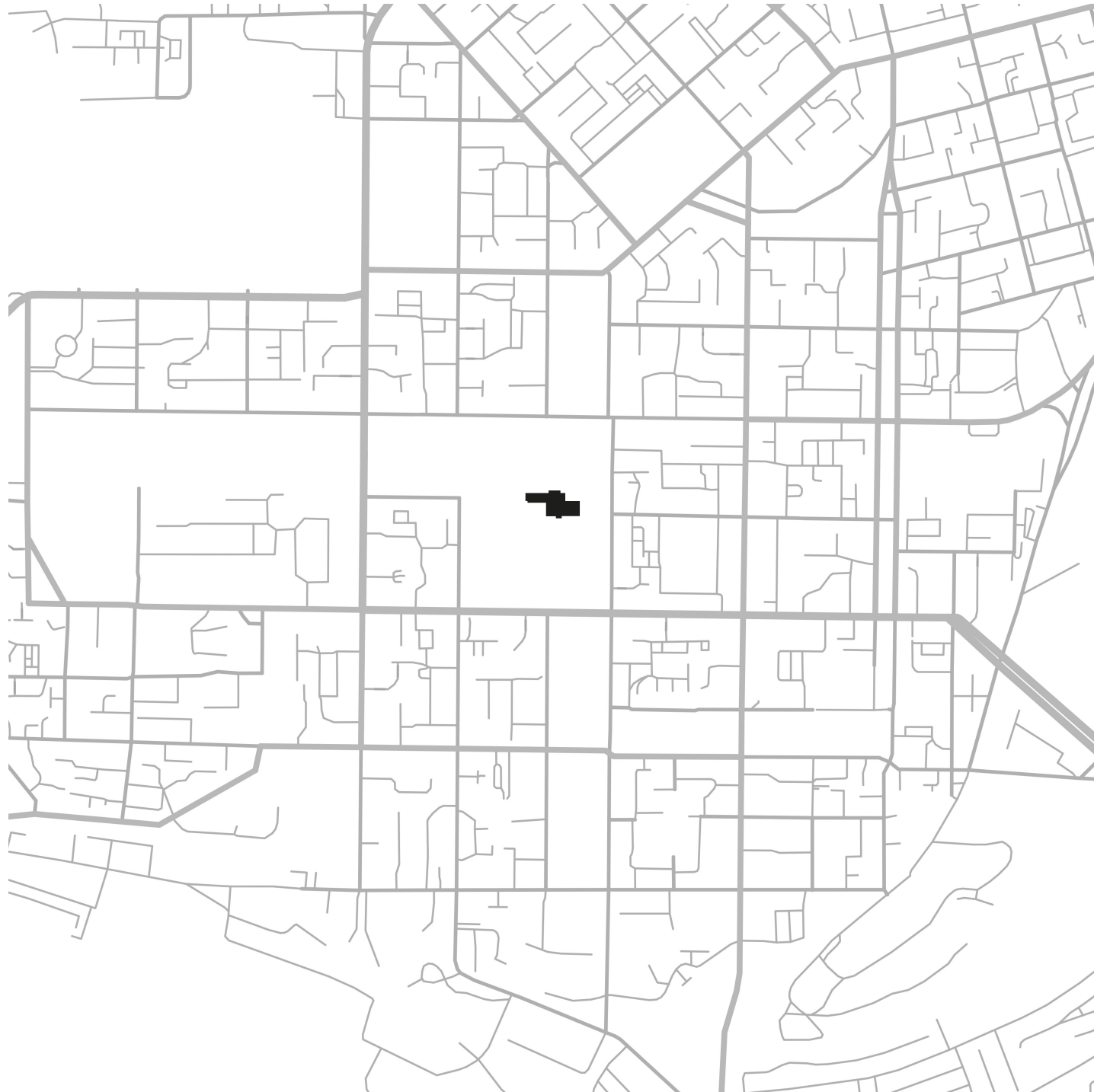
### The building

The result, built from 1931–35 is a series of white rendered volumes that stand proudly in Viipuri's central park. Each volume is well lit, enjoying generous steel spans that emphasise the library's relationship to national ideas of growth and prosperity. Despite the harsh Finnish winters, much of the building is widely glazed and visually connected to green space. A commitment to the provision of accessible public rooms becomes clear through a plan that offers multiple entrances, including a separated children's section, all carefully arranged around a central pinwheel.

In section there is a real complexity involved in the way Aalto organises his toolkit of civic rooms. As each slides past the other there is a controlled sequence of shared view and connection through a domesticated environment<sup>13</sup>. Inhabiting elements of Finnish culture on an intimate scale, despite its seemingly austere white exterior.



Aerial photographs (fig. 25 & 26) of the library, in the background the now destroyed church.

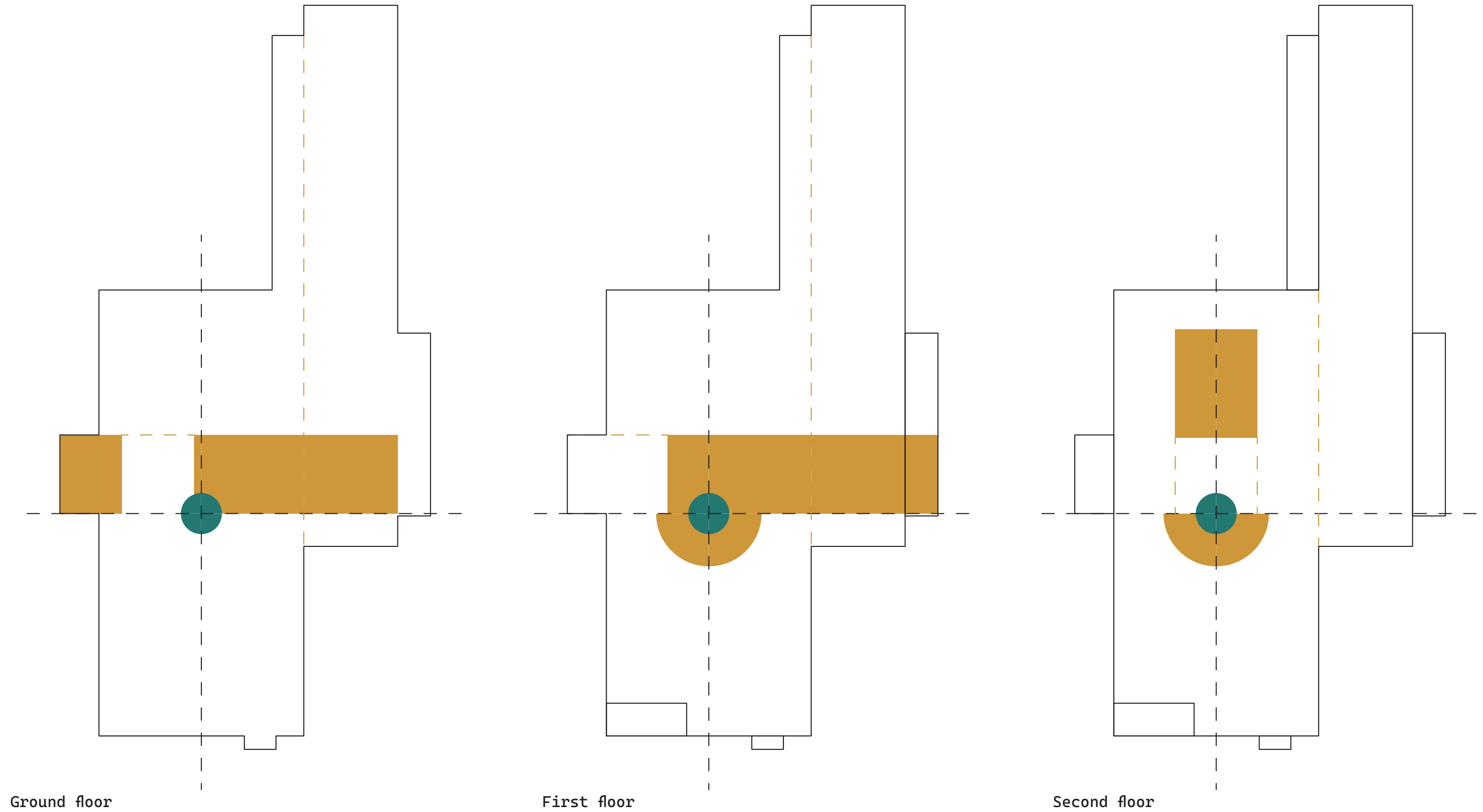


(fig. 27)

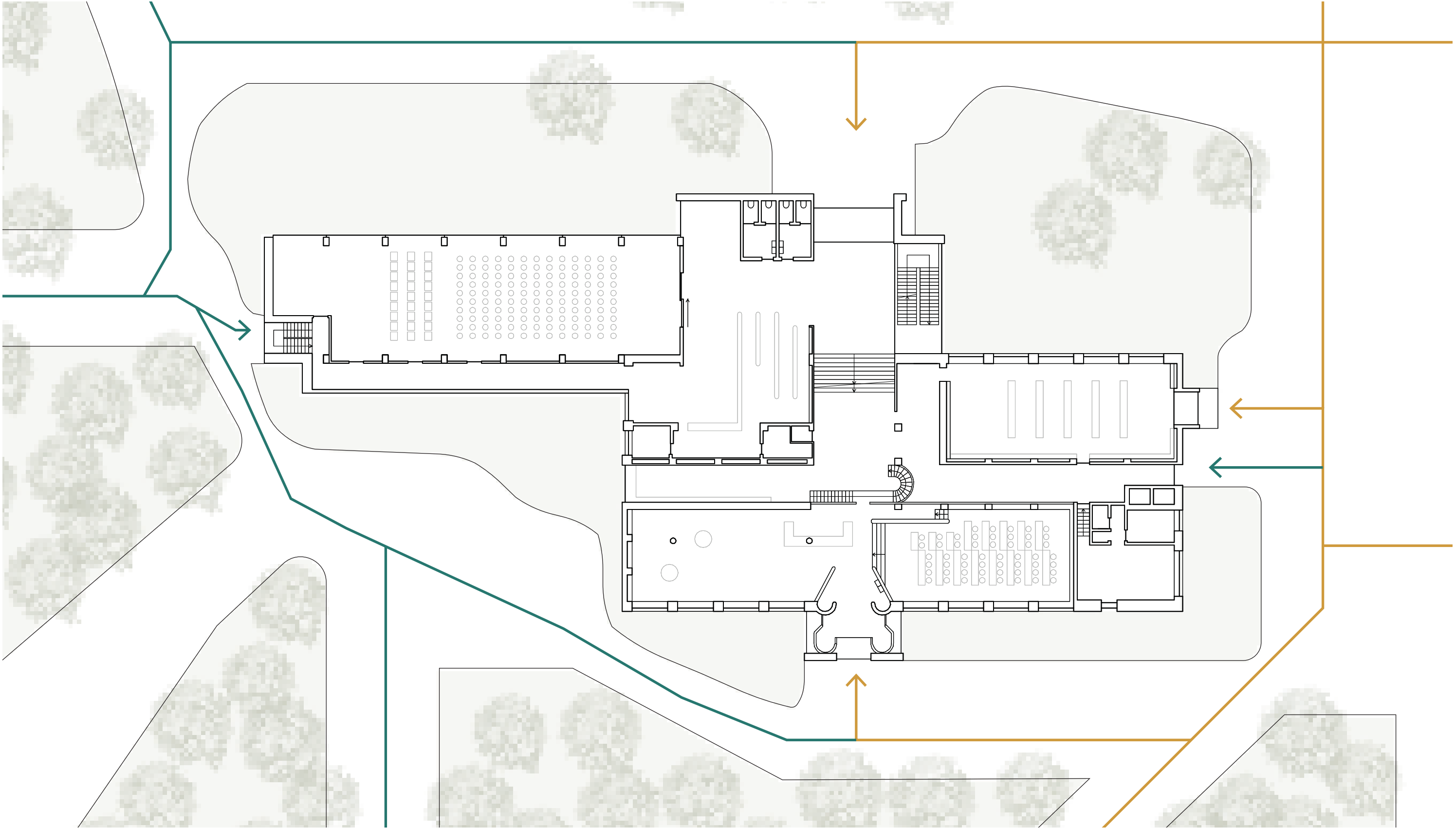
Location of the library in Viipuri. Notable is its freestanding place in the green line that goes through the city.



(fig. 28)



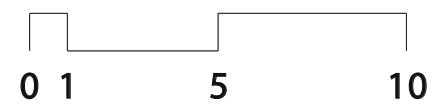
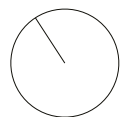
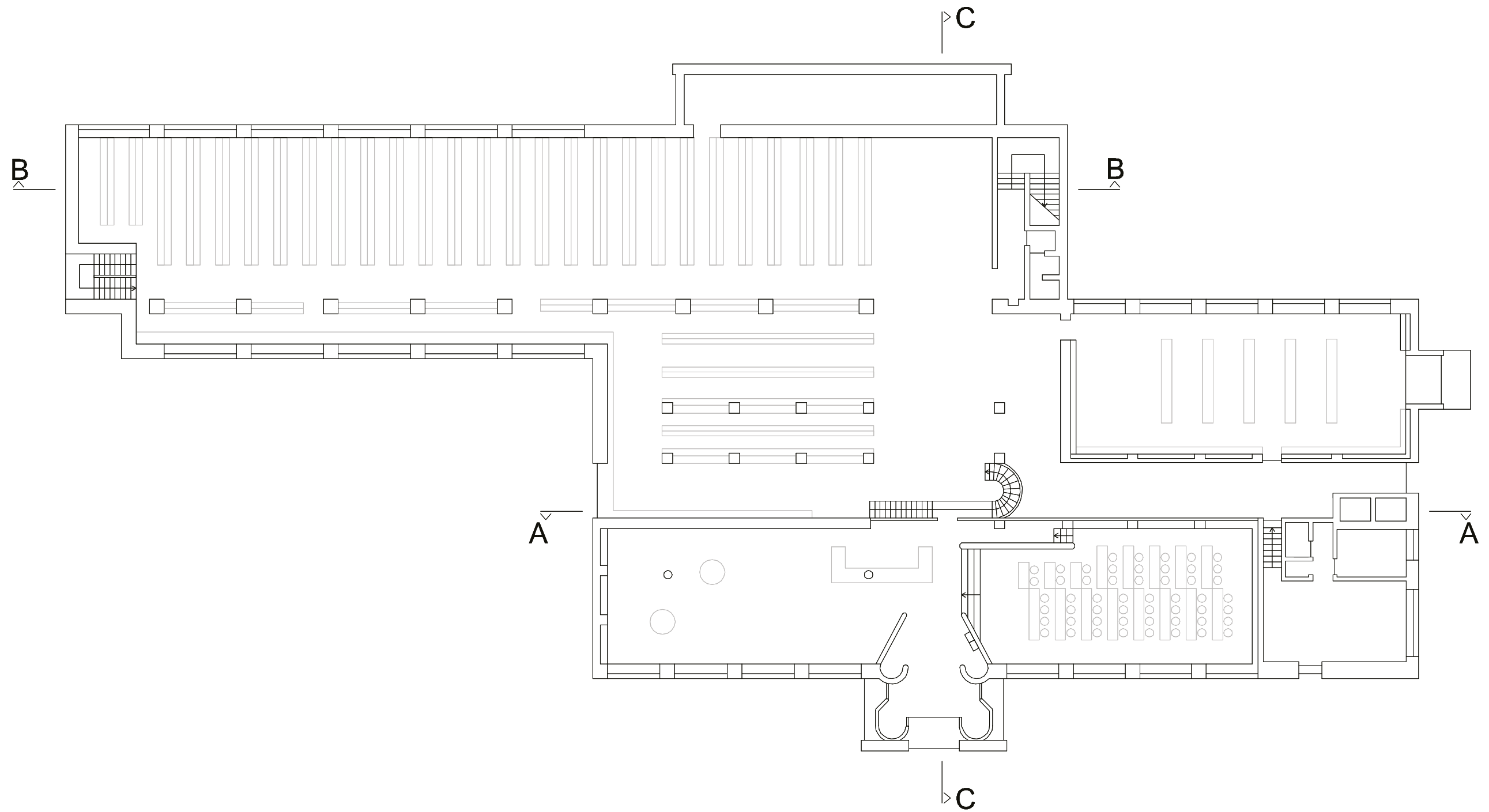
Diagrams (fig. 29) showing central entrance zones, twisting around the circular element into the main library room.



Plan showing the seperate entrances (fig. 30): Gold public entrances, green employee entrances.

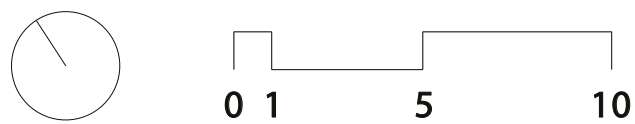
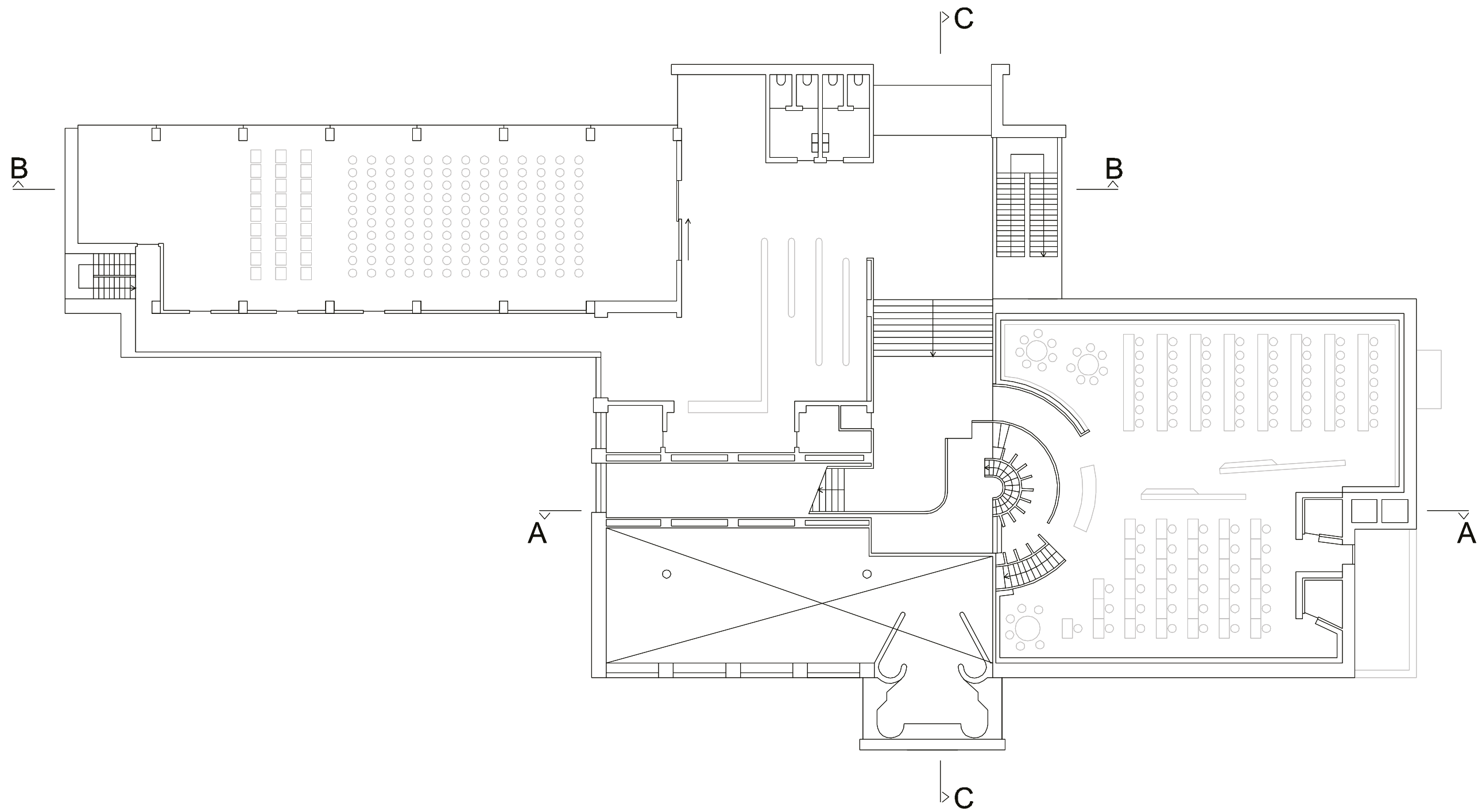


(fig. 31)

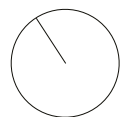
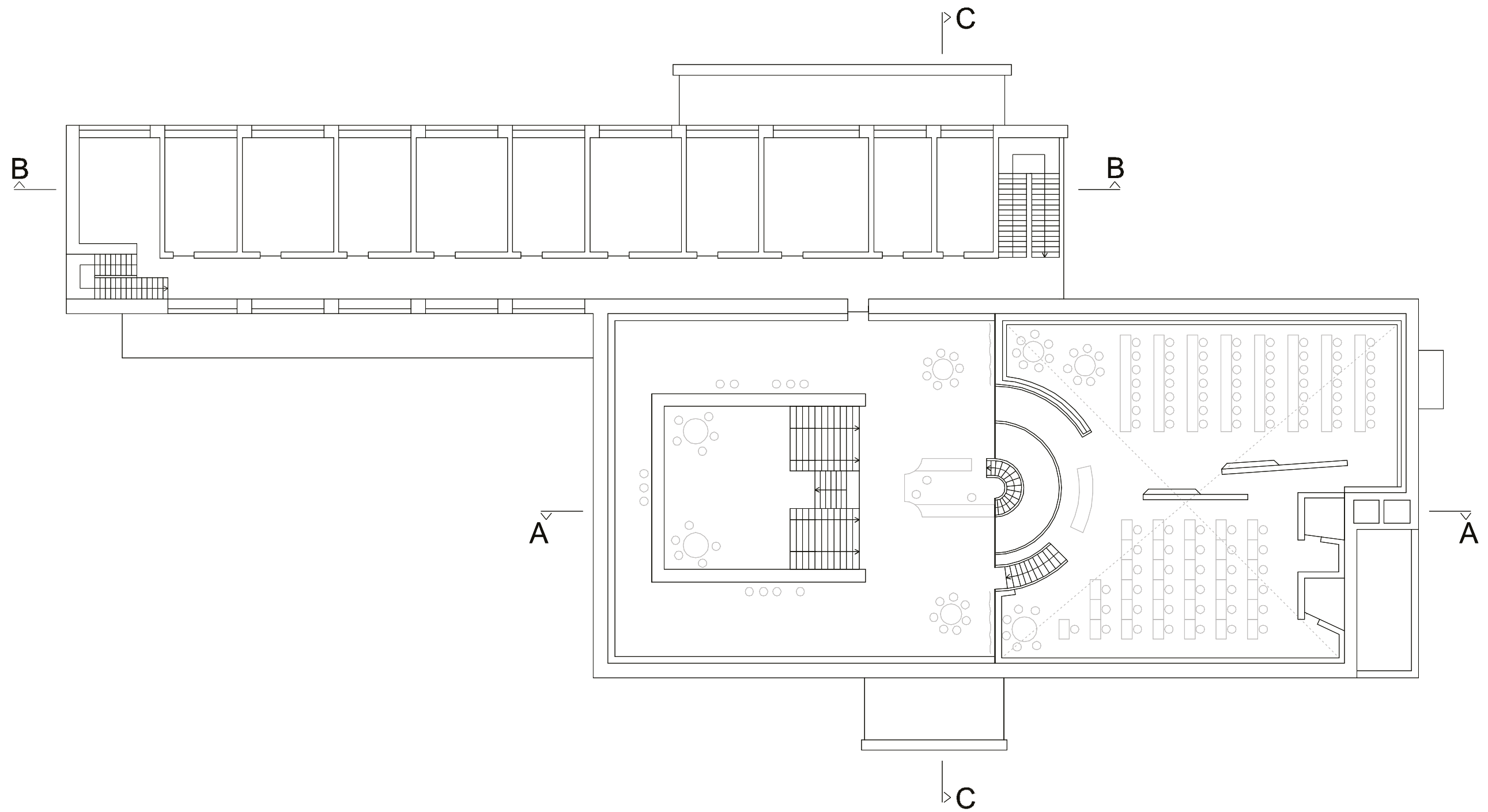


Ground Floor  
1:200

(fig. 32)



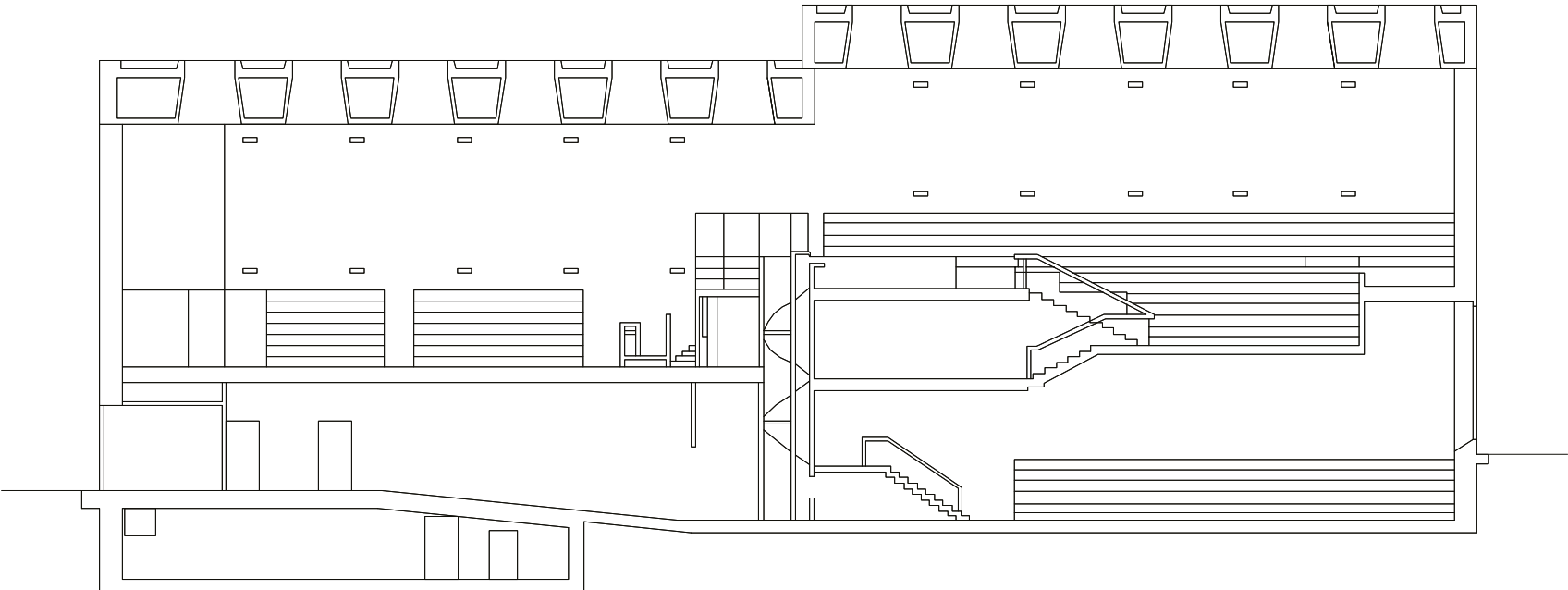
(fig. 33)



0 1 5 10

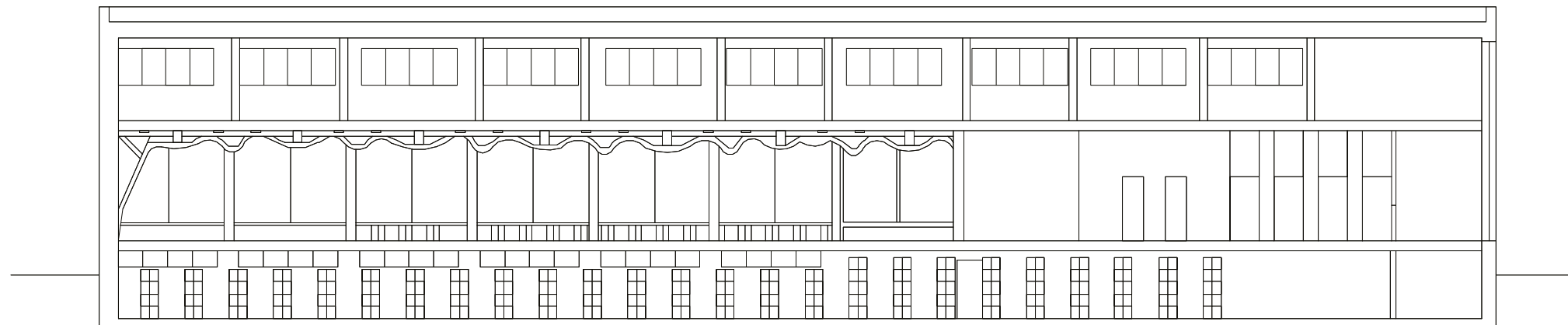
Second Floor  
1:200

(fig. 34)



0 1 5 10

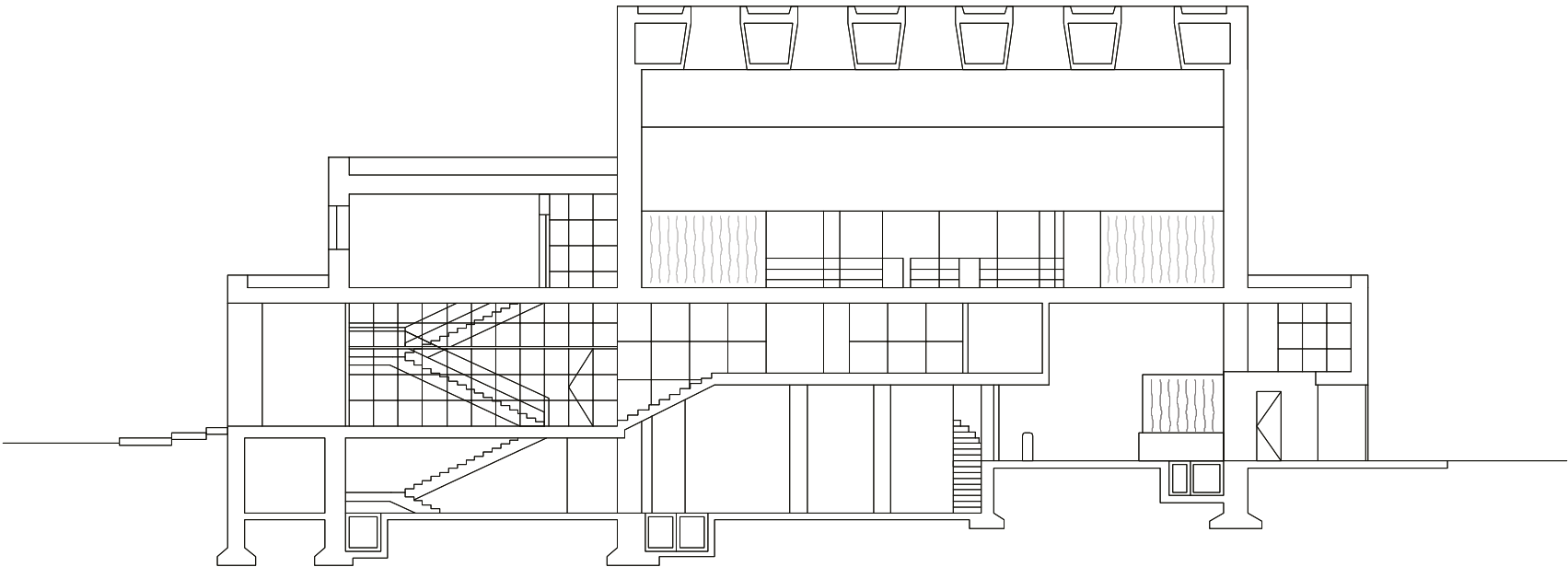
(fig. 35)



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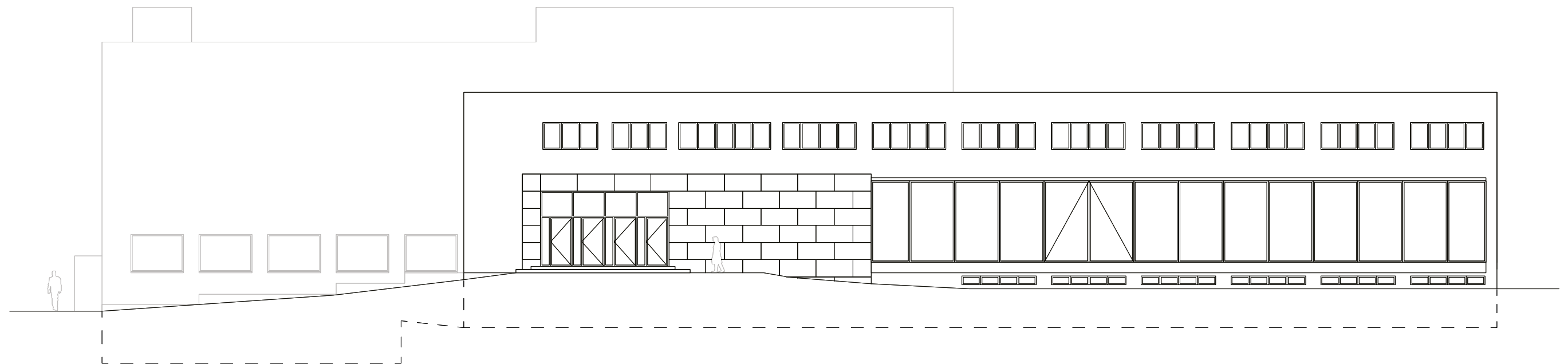
Section B-B  
1:200  
31

(fig. 36)



0 1 5 10

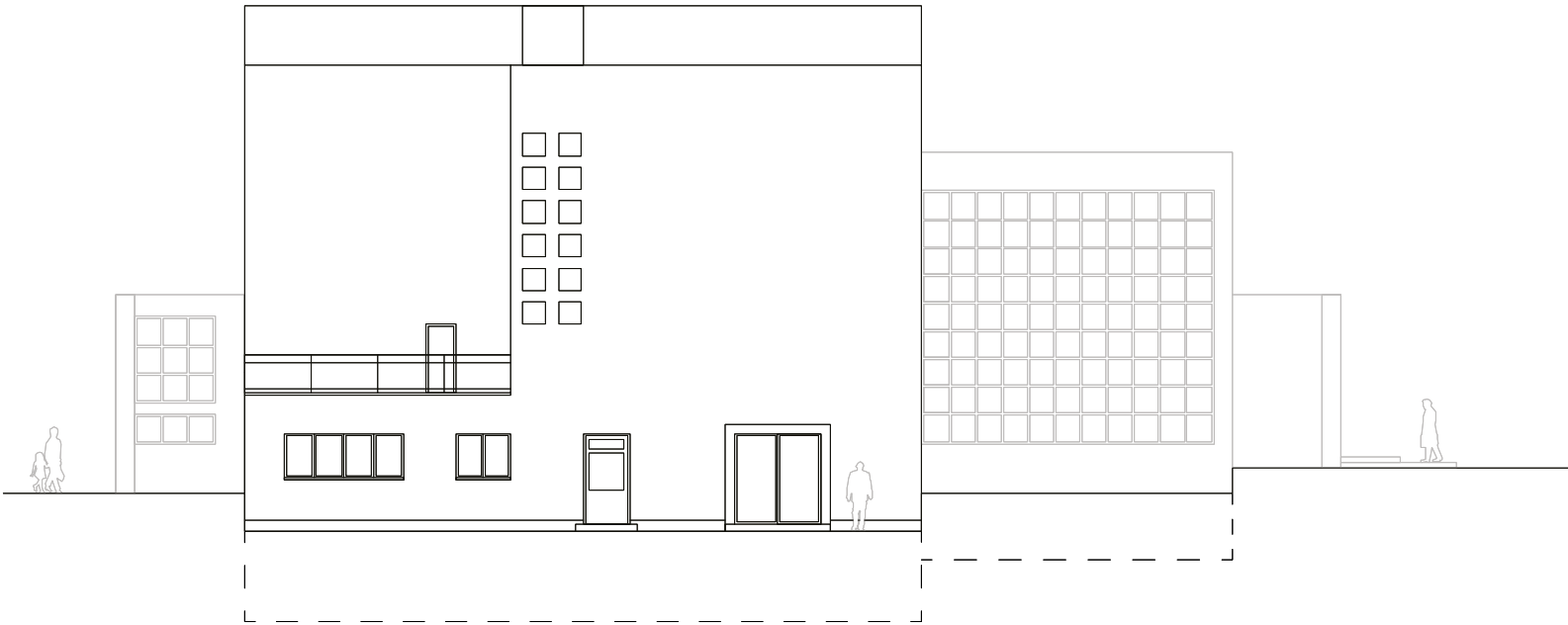
(fig. 37)



0 1 5 10

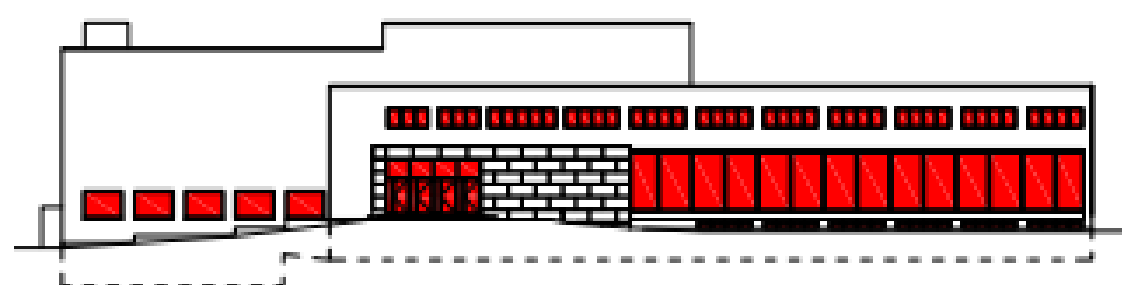
Elevation north  
1:200

(fig. 38)

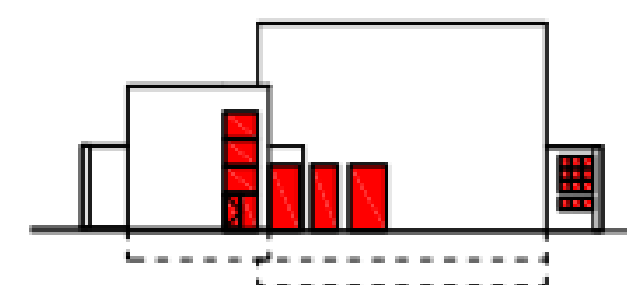


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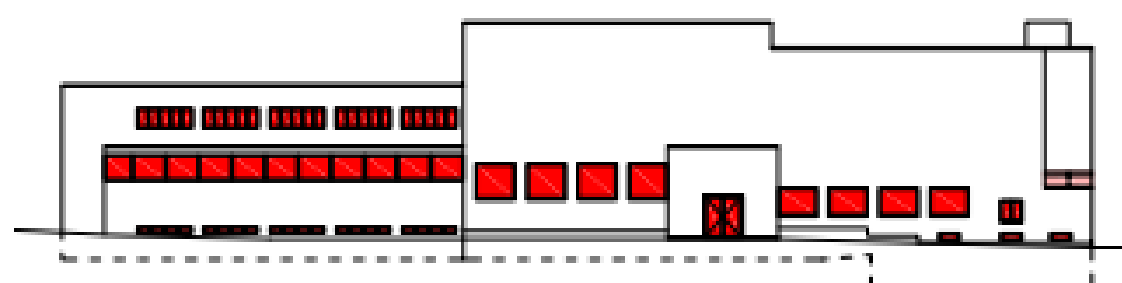




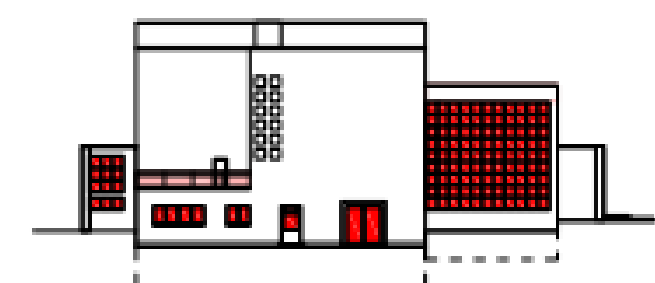
Northwest elevation | S 1:500



Southwest elevation | S 1:500



Southeast elevation | S 1:500



Northeast elevation | S 1:500

Analysis of Aalto's carefully chosen openings (fig. 39).



Moments at the main entrance, where a monolithic stone element is placed to contrast with the surrounding white landscape<sup>14</sup>, lead through to a crafted handrail that guides you around a room dramatically top lit. Aalto's sketches emphasise his consideration of the finely tuned experience of sitting, reading, listening and speaking. At a time where the Nordics were looking more and more towards a machine for living, its clear that his considerations for the more detailed experiences of use have been finely tuned.



(fig. 40)



(fig. 41)

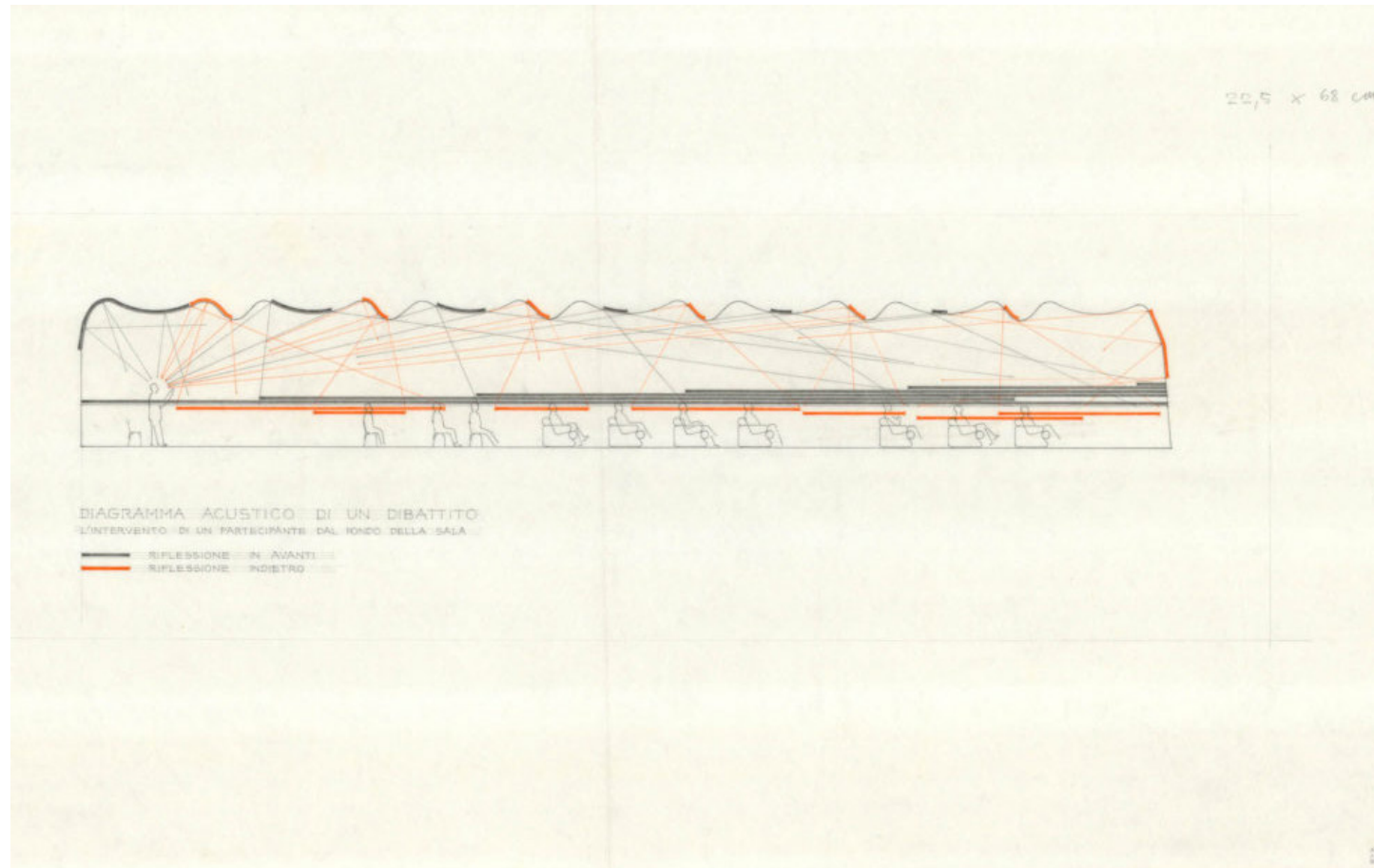


36 (fig. 42)



(fig. 43)

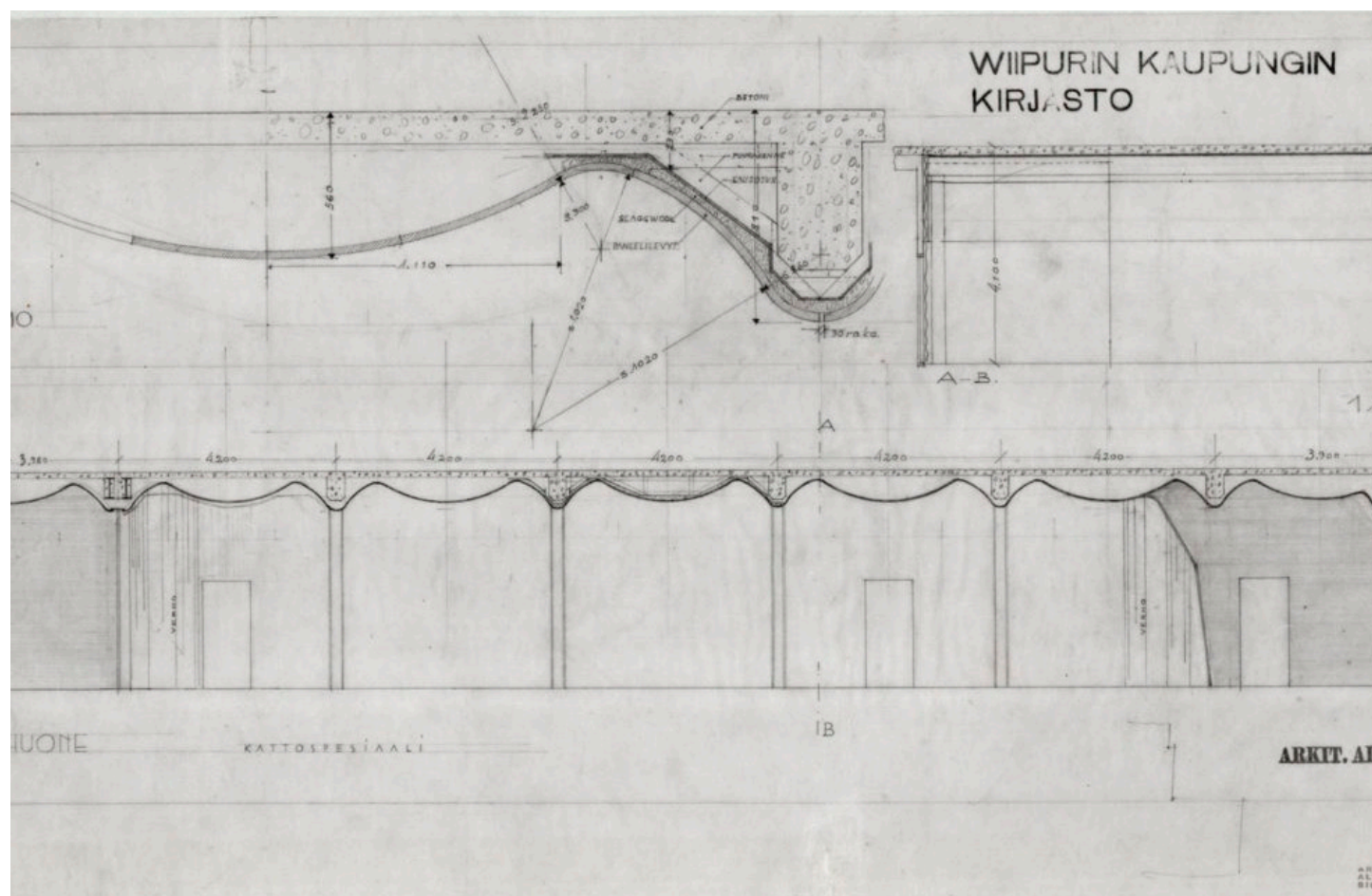




(fig. 44)



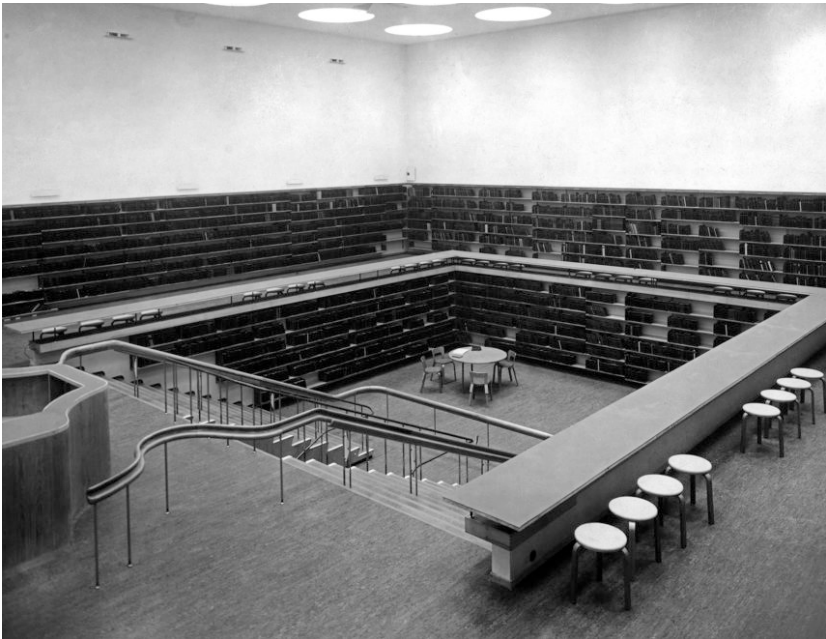
(fig. 45)



(fig. 46)

The lecture room of the library with its acoustic ceiling which is also prominently on display from the outside.

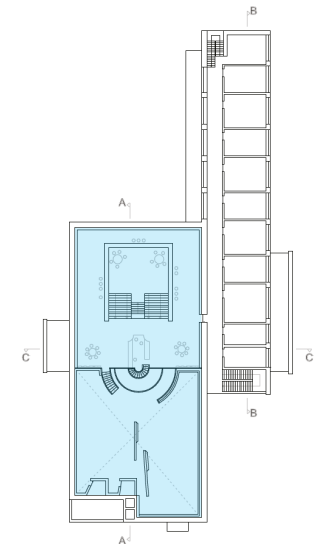




‘Two’ reading rooms



(fig. 47)

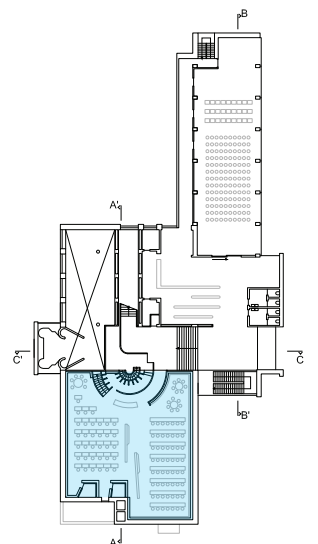




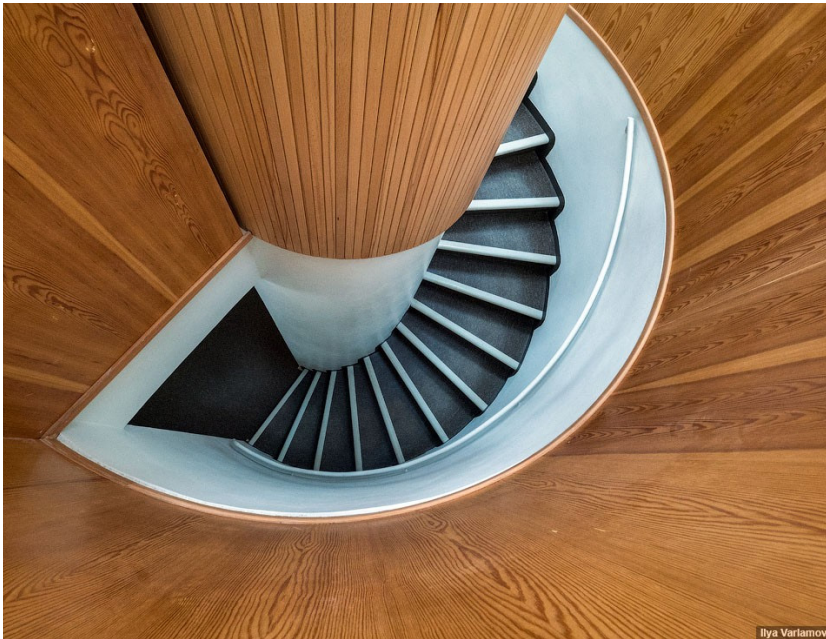


Lower half of the 'two' reading rooms

(fig. 48)



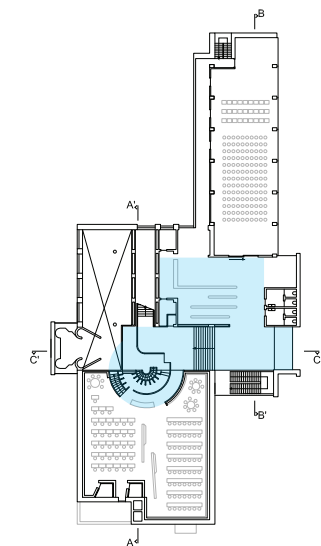




Main entrance and employees staircases



(fig. 49)

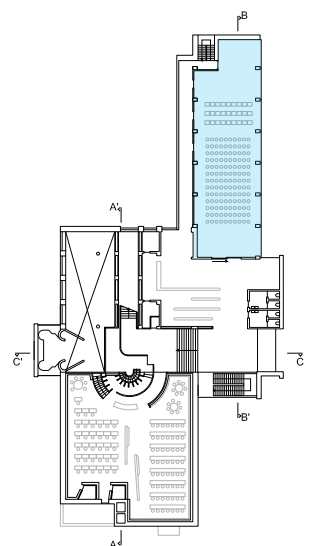




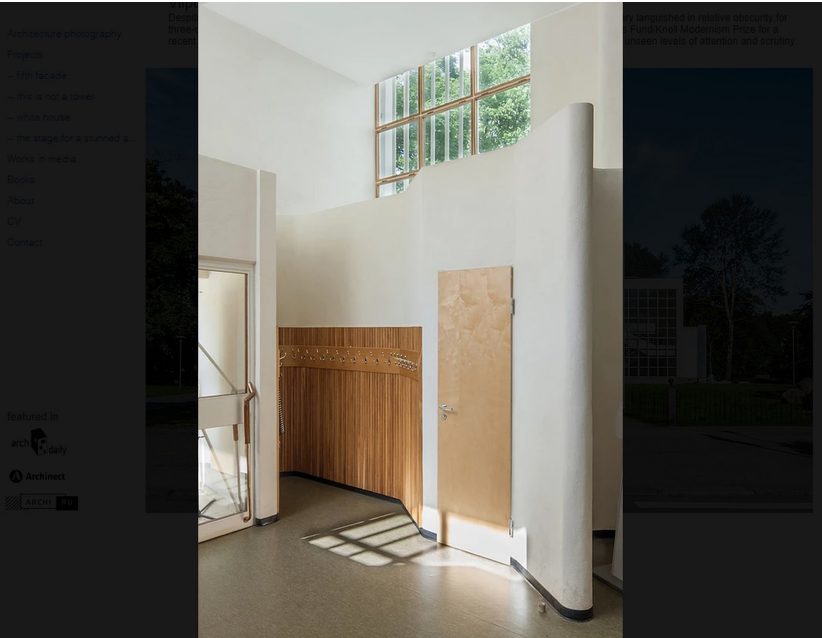


(fig. 50)

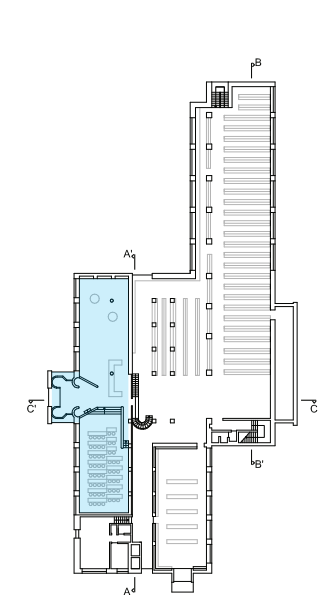
Lecture room







Childrens library



(fig. 51)







(fig. 52)

#### Conclusion.

The Viipuri Library reflects a pivotal moment in Finnish history, where it played a vital role in the perception of a developing national culture. The scheme appears to understand its responsibility to portray and expand on Finnish culture, carefully crafting places to learn, speak, and develop in a quickly changing state. While taking a long stride in to the opportunities presented by modern construction, Aalto manages to keep both feet firmly in Finland.



# Personal reflection

For me the research has revealed two main points, the first is about the shift from Classicism to Modernism in Scandinavia and the second about materiality.

Even though Classicism and Modernism are often seen as complete opposites they are more of a radical evolution rather than an actual revolution. Especially when the Nordic countries took some steps in between. At the end of the 19th century, architects developed Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts, and Jugendstil. All these movements were attempts to invent a new architectural language distancing them from historical revival architecture. They showcased new ways of ornamentation, new construction methods, and new meanings. In the Nordic countries this led to the National Romantic movement which was looking back at a simpler pre-industrial time with an interest in regional vernacular architecture.

When attitudes towards National Romanticism changed, and the Nordic countries advanced industrially and economically, the dominant style shifted towards Nordic Classicism. Nordic Classicism was not just a neoclassical stylistic revival but a renewal, as young Nordic architects sought to reinvent themselves like had happened with the National Romantic movement. During Grand Tours, architecture students noticed simplistic Italian vernacular architecture. This simplistic attitude got a strong expression in Nordic Classicism. Even though it has the ornaments, they are used less frequently while the focus lies on massing and composition of the buildings (even being a bit playful with it).

The shift from Nordic Classicism to Modernism was then not so strange. Again, it was an interest in reinventing a new architectural language whilst stripping it of ornaments. This shift

could be seen as more revolutionary rather than evolutionary as the 1930 Stockholm exhibition had a catalyst functioning in this process. Even though Modernist ideas distanced themselves from classical ideas, the Nordic development was maybe a bit more rooted in tradition. We see this quite clearly in the Stockholm City Library where the west wing is described as Modernist whilst it fits in well with the Nordic Classicist original library. Even though it was now completely stripped of ornamentation, compositions, and proportions stayed similar.

The second point is about the use of materials. In both libraries materials have been very specifically used to cater to specific atmospheres. In Viipuri library, Aalto made the entrance harsh, cold, stoney and formal whilst its lecture room is bright, warm, and wooden creating a domesticity for which he is famous. In the Stockholm library, Asplund plays with light and dark walls in the entrance hall and uses reflective materials to make rooms appear larger like in the erotica section. However, both libraries use materials that are part of the evolution of local products. In Stockholm the overall building is constructed quite traditionally with brick and stucco (in the traditional colours) whilst in Viipuri the furniture is bentwood.

Before starting the graduation year, I have already briefly looked into such tradition and culture through Swedish designers from various disciplines. So far, I haven't been able to research as much as I would have wanted, that is something I want to work on the coming period. I did already take a quick dive into Nordic Classicism which showed me a development of style with an eye for tradition which I enjoy. Maybe this small dive can be a starting point for analysing the Nordic library context further and finding elements to relate to.



# List of figures

Fig. 1, 2: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acceptera>

Fig. 3: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm\\_Exhibition\\_\(1930\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm_Exhibition_(1930))

Fig. 4: <https://theswedishrugblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/the-stockholm-exhibition-of-1930/>

Fig. 5: Seelow, A.M. (2016). Reconstructing the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. (1st edition). ARKITEKTUR FÖRLAG.

Fig. 6, 7: <https://theswedishrugblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/the-stockholm-exhibition-of-1930/>

Fig. 8, 9: drawings by Jan Yke van den Bogert

Fig. 10: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stockholmsutst%C3%A4llningen\\_1930\\_Huvudentr%C3%A9\\_och\\_kommisariat.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stockholmsutst%C3%A4llningen_1930_Huvudentr%C3%A9_och_kommisariat.jpg)

Fig. 11: <https://theswedishrugblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/the-stockholm-exhibition-of-1930/>

Fig. 12: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/3741.htm>

Fig. 13: drawings by Jan Yke van den Bogert

Fig. 14, 15: photographs by Jan Yke van den Bogert

Fig. 16: drawing by Carlotta Luciano

Fig. 17, 18: drawing by Natalia Simonarson

Fig. 19: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/3741.htm>

Fig. 20: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-building-that-disappeared-%3A-the-Viipuri-Library-Berger/62c65794e-3faacb856d1ea80a02bb9c178adef4>

Fig. 21: drawing by Carlotta Luciano

Fig. 22, 23: Spens, M. (1994). Viipuri Library, Alvar Aalto. (1st edition). ACADEMY EDITIONS.

Fig. 24: diagrams by Natalia Simonarson

Fig. 25, 26: <https://www.archdaily.com/630420/ad-classics-viipuri-library-alvar-aalto>

Fig. 27, 28: drawing by Carlotta Luciano

Fig. 29: diagrams by Jan Yke van den Bogert

Fig. 30: drawing by Carlotta Luciano

Fig. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38: drawing by James Flaus

Fig. 39: diagrams by Carlotta Luciano

Fig. 40: <https://www.archdaily.com/630420/ad-classics-viipuri-library-alvar-aalto>

Fig. 41, 42, 43, 45, 46: <http://architecture-history.org/architects/architects/aalto/objects/1927%E2%80%931935,%20Viipuri%20LibraryMunicipal%20library,.html>

Fig. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52: <http://architecture-history.org/architects/architects/aalto/objects/1927%E2%80%931935,%20Viipuri%20LibraryMunicipal%20library,.html>

Fig. 53: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/3741.htm>

Fig. 54: Seelow, A.M. (2016). Reconstructing the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. (1st edition). ARKITEKTUR FÖRLAG

Fig. 55, 56: photograph by James Flaus

Fig. 57, 58: photograph by Natalia Simonarson

Fig. 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/3741.htm>

Fig. 65, 66, 67: Seelow, A.M. (2016). Reconstructing the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. (1st edition). ARKITEKTUR FÖRLAG.

Fig. 68, 69: <https://theswedishrugblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/the-stockholm-exhibition-of-1930/>

Fig. 70, 71: Seelow, A.M. (2016). Reconstructing the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. (1st edition). ARKITEKTUR FÖRLAG.

Fig. 72: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/3741.htm>

Fig. 73: Seelow, A.M. (2016). Reconstructing the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. (1st edition). ARKITEKTUR

Fig. 74, 75, 76: <https://garystockbridge617.getarchive.net/amp/collections/stockholm-exhibition-1930?page=2>

Fig. 77, 78, 79: Spens, M. (1994). Viipuri Library, Alvar Aalto. (1st edition). ACADEMY EDITIONS.

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# Appendix

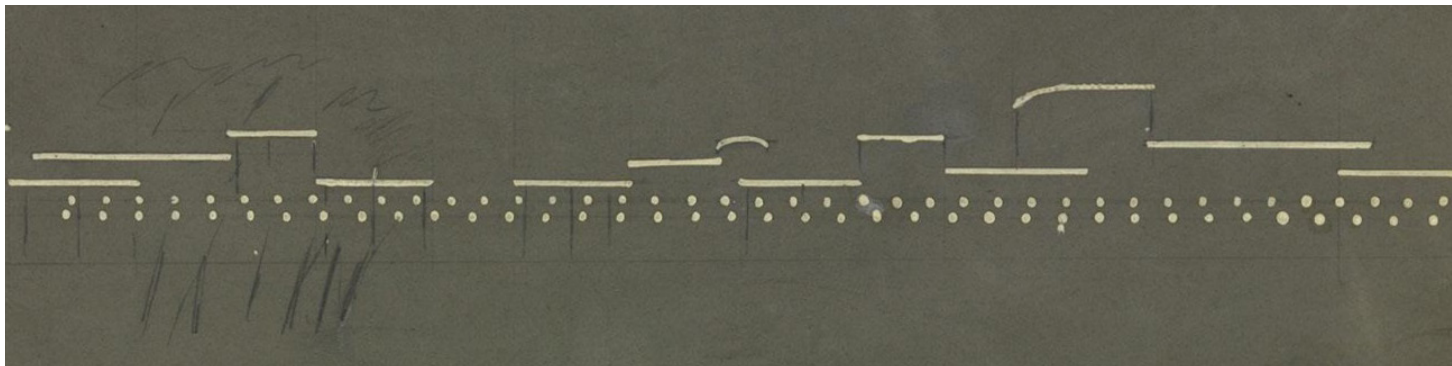
Bonus images Stockholm Exhibition 1930

Bonus images and drawings Viipuri library 1935 – Alvar Aalto





(fig. 53)



(fig. 54)



(fig. 55)



(fig. 56)



(fig. 57)



(fig. 58)

Lewerentz created the logo for the exhibition. It is based on the Egyptian goddess Isis of fertility and love. He simplified and stylized the pair of wings into a powerful elegant sign.





(fig. 59)



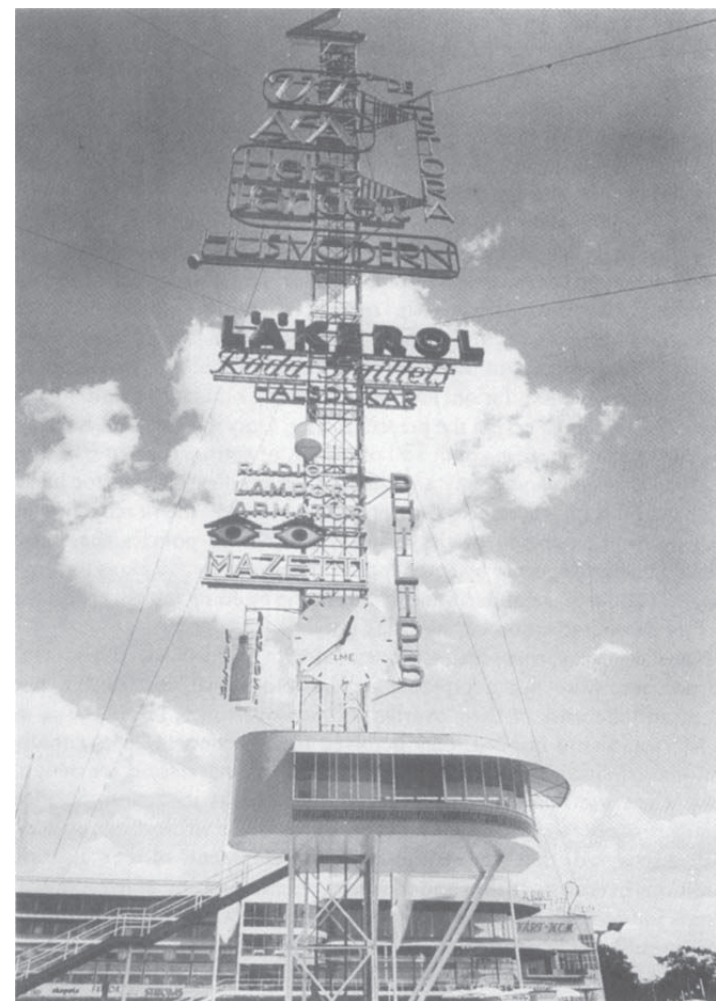
(fig. 60)



(fig. 61)



(fig. 62)



(fig. 63)



(fig. 64)

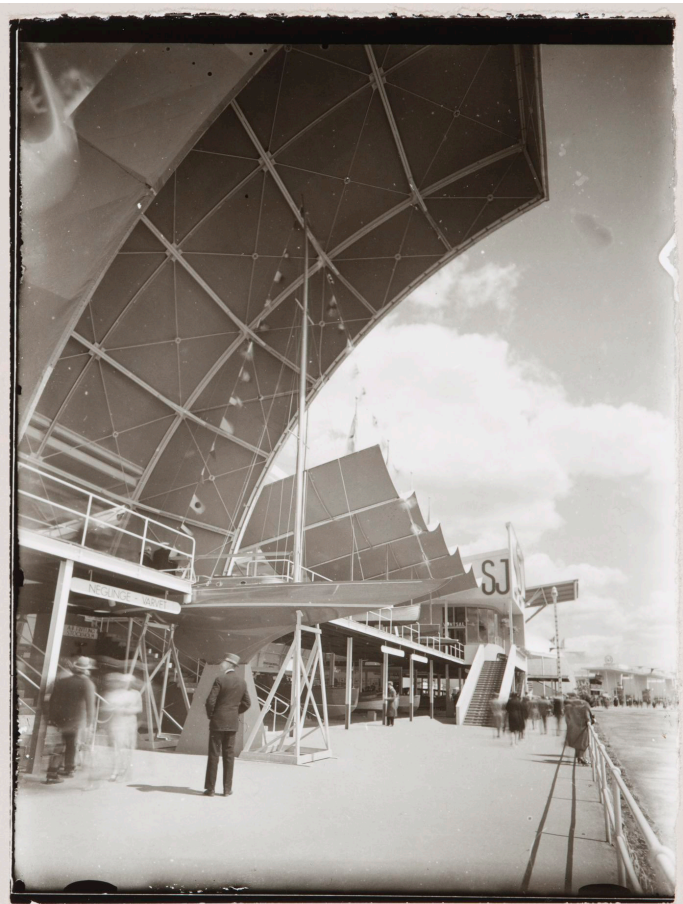




(fig. 65)



(fig. 66)

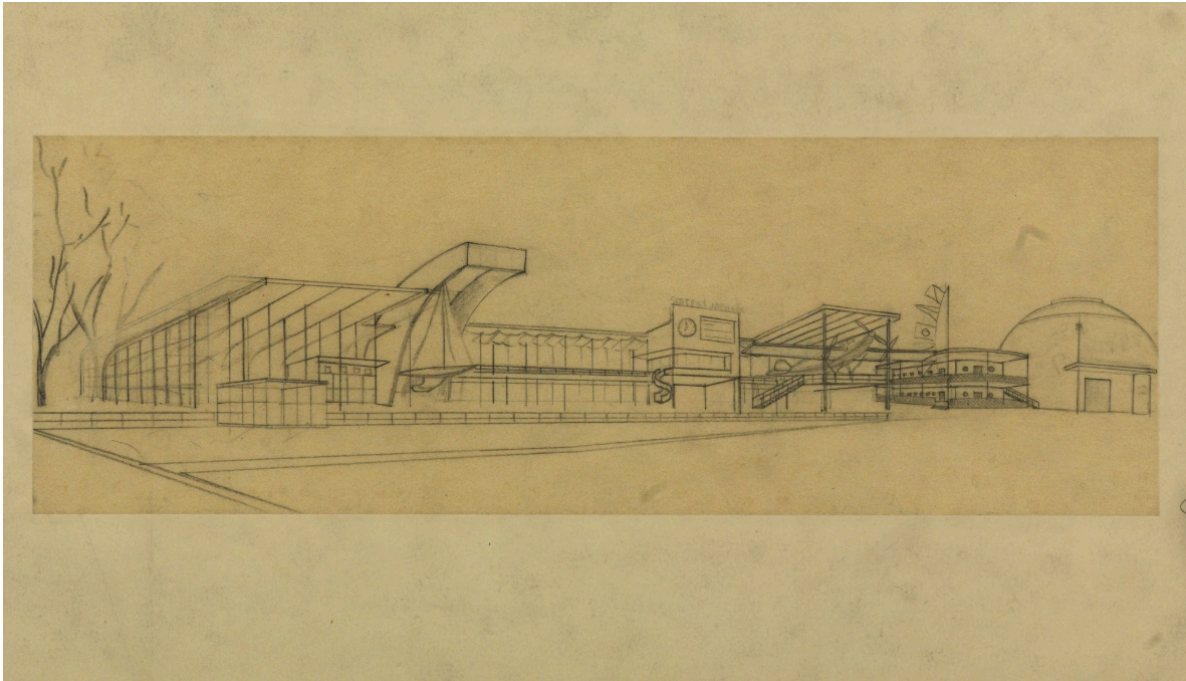


(fig. 67)



52

(fig. 68)

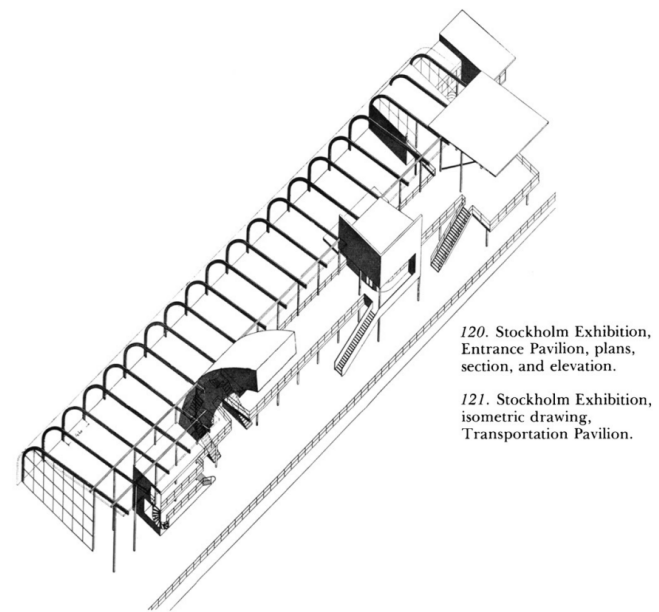


(fig. 69)



(fig. 70)





(fig. 71)



(fig. 72)



(fig. 73)



(fig. 74)

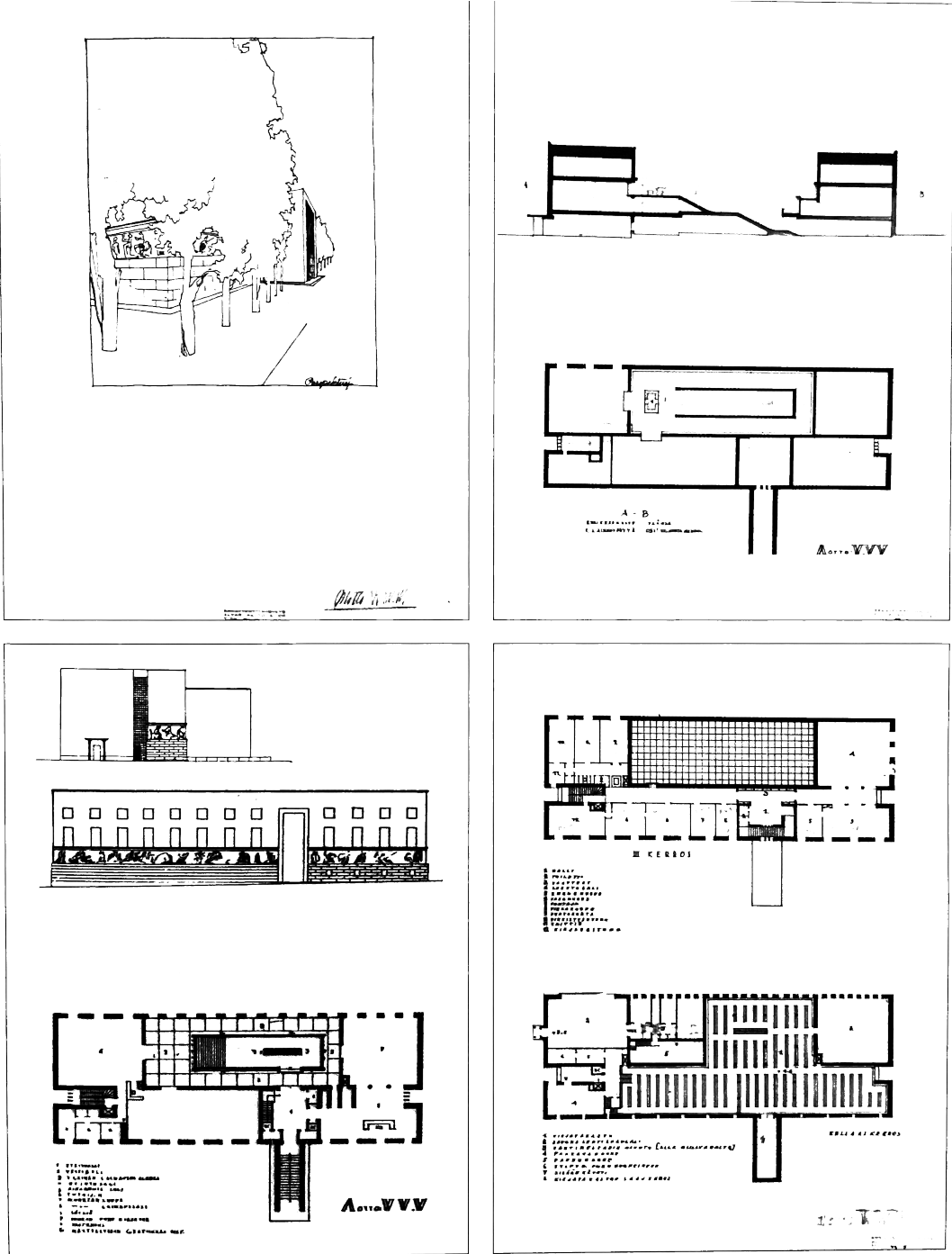


(fig. 75)



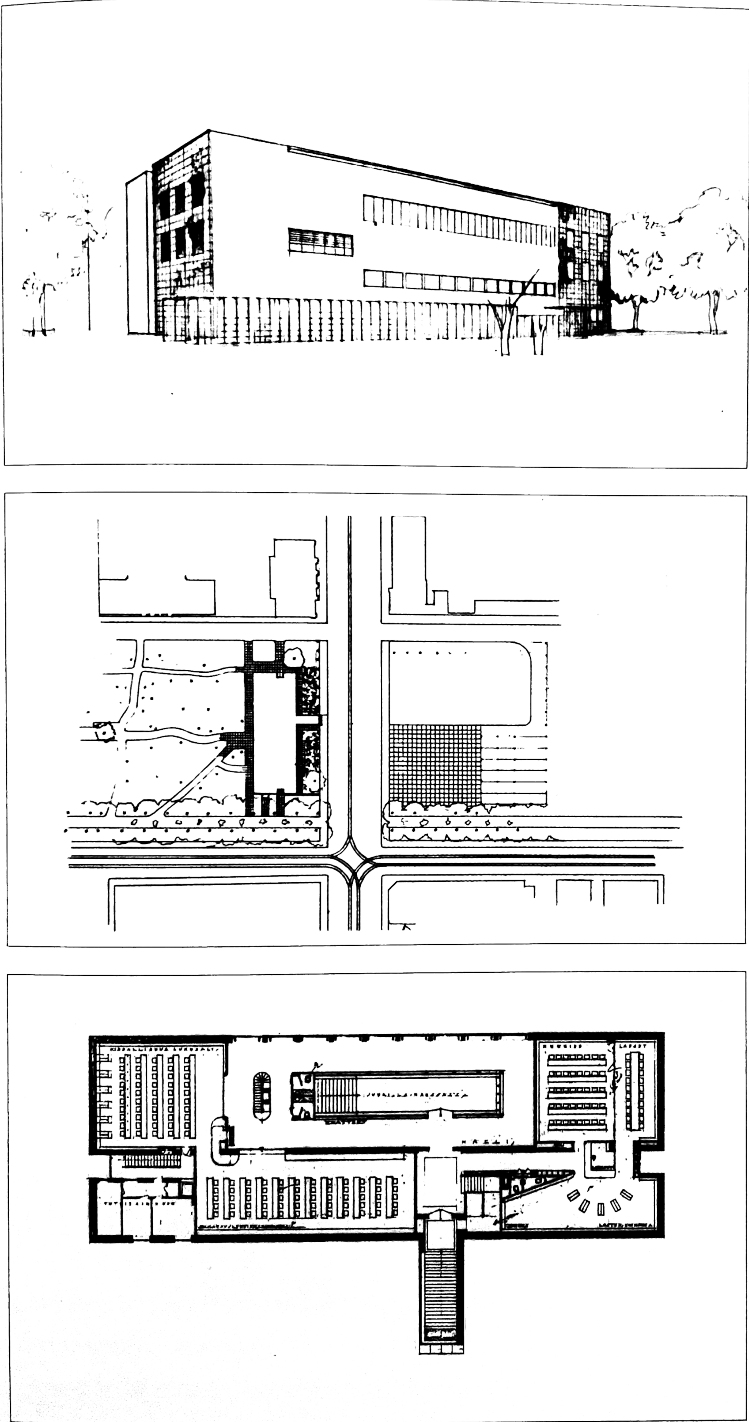
(fig. 76)





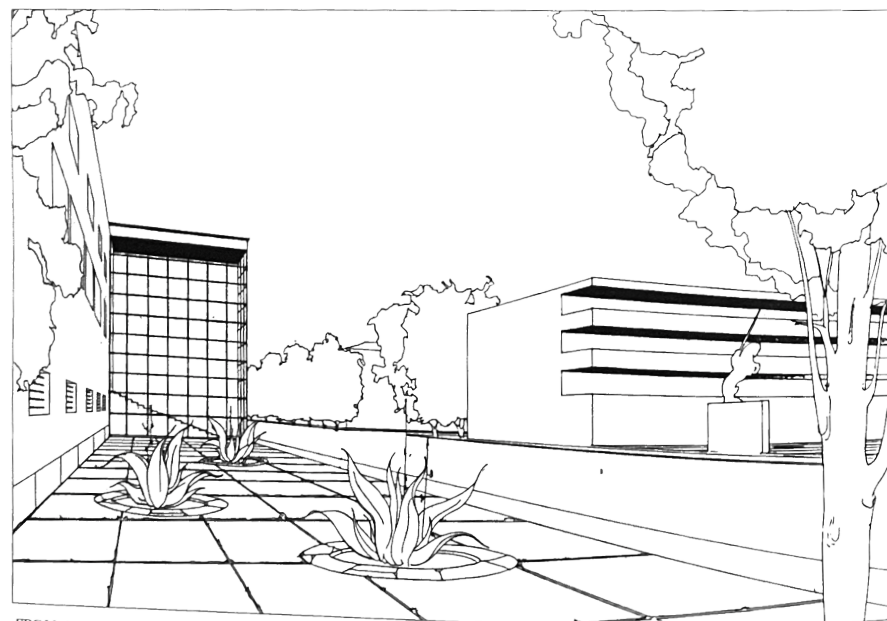
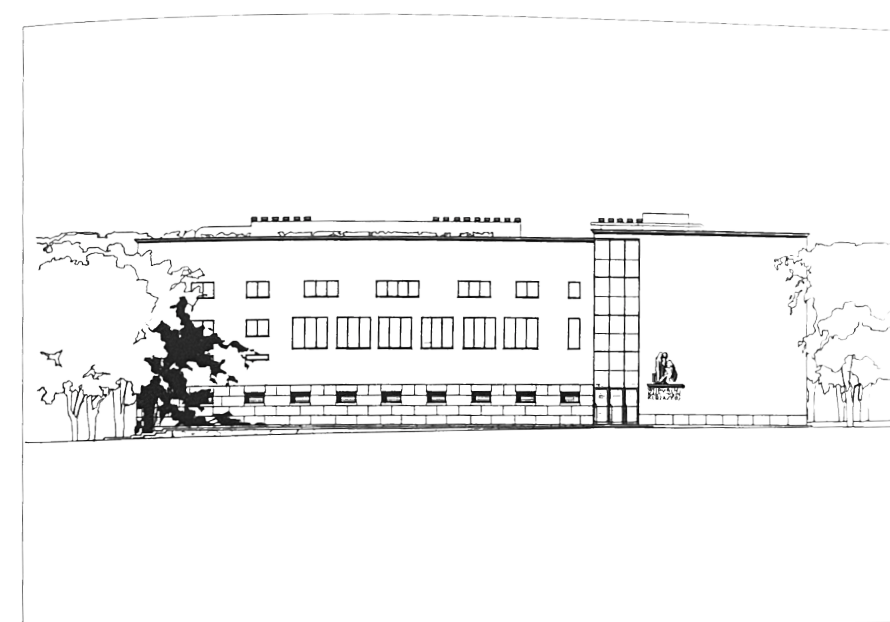
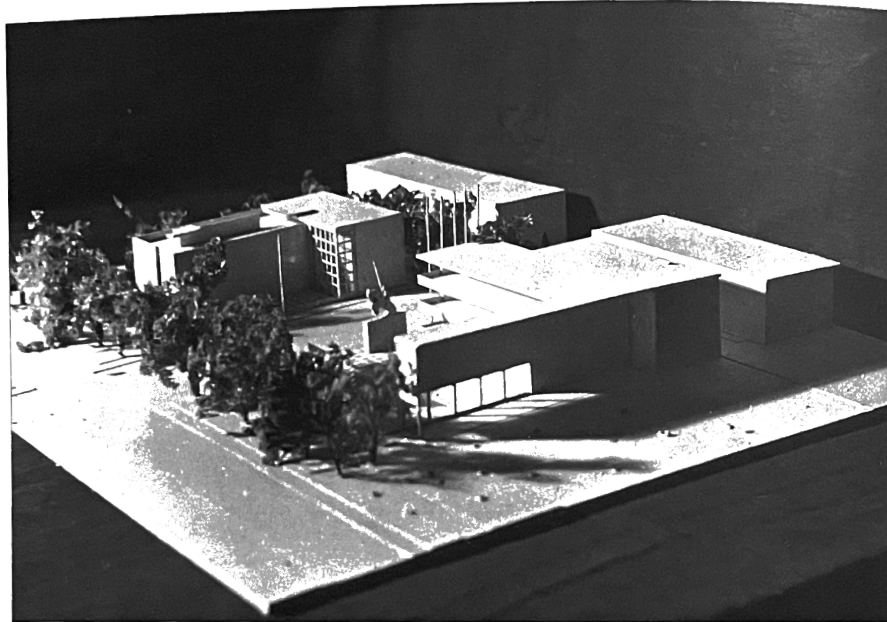
First scheme concept sketches (Source: Acanthus, p8) FROM ABOVE, L to R: Entrance perspective; section and floor plan of main level; north-east elevation, main north elevation and entrance level plan; floor plans of second floor and basement

Original proposal from 1927 (fig. 77).

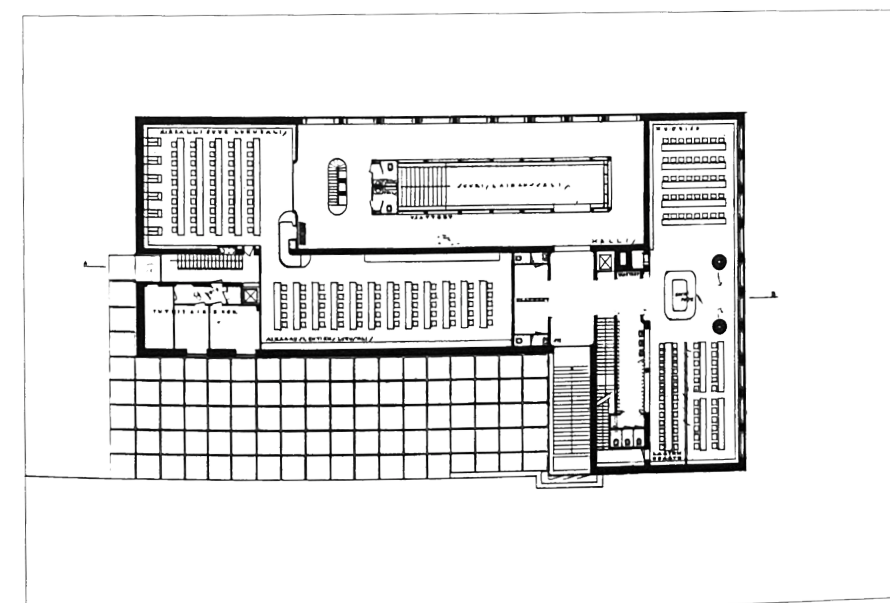


FROM ABOVE: Elevation perspective, second version, 1928; site plan, second version; ground floor plan

Reworked Modernist proposal from 1928 (fig. 78).



FROM ABOVE: North view of model, third version, 1929-32; perspective of Aleksanterinkatu



FROM ABOVE: Street elevation; ground floor plan

Changed proposal from 1929 (fig. 79).