

Stockholm: The Urban Center of the Nordic Countries

Pierluigi Serraino

Syllabus

Stockholm's dominance as a financial and cultural center among the countries facing the Baltic Sea is long established. Its civic tradition has been the source of a remarkable design lineage ranging from architecture, to planning, to product design, and landscape architecture. Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz are two towering figures in the modernist period that set an unparalleled standard in site-specific design. This course delves into the ideas and protagonists of a city with a worldwide influence.

Lesson 1. STOCKHOLM: CAPITAL OF A NEUTRAL NATION

Common to the Nordic Countries is their cultural, material, and socio-political development outside of the influences of the Roman Empire. As a center of Christianity, Sweden saw in Stockholm a reference point for the Northern nations straddling an orientation toward European influences together with a proud sense of independence. Careful in safeguarding its distinct identity, Stockholm sponsored a tradition of architecture blended with the natural environment albeit dense with historical references. Classical and Gothic idioms found a unique synthesis in the nation's capital. This talk explores the implications of this vantage position in this metropolis' urban and architectural identity.

Lesson 2. NATIONAL ROMANTICISM IN STOCKHOLM

The transitional period that saw the transformation of Sweden from a rural to an industrial nation found its architectural expression in the National Romantic Movement, a parallel artistic development to the Art Nouveau in France and Belgium. Although its manifestation took place in all the Nordic Countries, the pinnacle of its embodiment in a building was the Stockholm City Hall by Ragnar Östberg completed in 1923. Its eclectic blend of Medieval, Gothic, and military architecture gave a concrete vision to a sensibility steeped into the historicism of the 19th century and the bold use of brickwork as a symbol of Sweden's architectural identity. The second class will delve into this debate.

Lesson 3. THE MODERNIST ARCHITECTS OF STOCKHOLM

The nation's neutrality during World War I and II made it a particular fertile turf for architectural manifestations all throughout the 20th century. A major event that ushered Sweden into full modernity was the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, an event of profound effects on the nation's development and abroad. Many consequential architects, among them Erik Gunnar Asplund, Sigurd Lewerentz, and Sven Markelius, took part in it and will create the modernist tradition in Sweden. The country's emphasis

on the democratic access to design for all social strata was the point of pride in the European scene and became the model for other aspiring nations to match its standards. These and other events will constitute the content of the third delivery.

Lesson 4. STOCKHOLM TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Claesson Koivisto Rune, Studio Marge Arkitekter, AndrénFogelström, Studio Richard Lindvall, and Dive Architects are but a few of the names in the latest generations of Stockholm-based architects and designers. Like any other major urban centers, the Swedish capital is also the playground for foreign architects to flex their design muscle and contribute to the nation's heritage. This final talk will provide a survey of the latest in architecture and design in Stockholm and its influences on the surrounding countries.