Urban Interiors

How can I bring the interior scale to the urban environment?
How can I use the site to impact the design of furnitures and spaces?
1. Introduction
- Why do I want to work with the public space?

2. Intent
- How to work with the public space with an interior architect approach

3. Approach
3. Looking back on previous projects
3.1 Observing public spaces
3.2 Unclear limit between interior and exteriors
3.3 The materiality of public spaces

4. Method
4.1 the built environment as a tool
4.2 Which impact to the space?

5. Outcome
5.1 Exhibition

6. Bibliography
1. Introduction

-Why do I want to work with the public space?

I often find myself disappointed with what the city of Stockholm offers when it comes to activities and places to hang out at. The disappointment is according to me a result of the lack of spaces that allows for people to meet and where they can take their own place in the public space. But it is also due to the lack of spaces that make us look at our surroundings, get inspired from it, aware of it or question it. Whether you find yourself in a dense city center or in a less crowded suburban context, the pace and the scale related to the human body is not in focus. What can be found is a monotonous allee of benches, a table if you are lucky. Furnitures or spaces designed with the focus of building something that will survive the wear and tear of the city. But what about the importance of details, materiality and comfort for those furnitures? What about the scale for those spaces?

When moving trough the city I realise that I find the same stores, the same cafés and the same spaces built with the same type of materials and with the same activities and people in mind. As interior architects we are educated to work with architecture in a scale that is close to our own, human scale. We create the environments that people meet directly, the materials, the furniture, the way a space is planned and so on. I think that this type of spaces and the scale is important also in the urban landscape as well as in the interiors of buildings.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* from 1961, Jane Jacobs talks about the importance of the street life and the encounters we make with people in the streets. She argues that it is important both for the social aspects, that we feel that we can trust our fellow man especially for children. But also for the sake of the safety in our streets and urban landscape. If people that lives in a city are using the streets, if they are filled with activities, cafés, bars and stores the streets belongs to the people that lives in the city. She also talks about the need for smaller spaces that offers different activities and that the park can not fill the function for all outdoor spaces.

I find these ideas interesting and I would like to work with how to bring down the scale in our urban landscape.

The two main questions I have used as a starting point for my research in this project are:

**How can I bring the interior scale to the urban environment?**

**How can I use the site to impact the design of furnitures and spaces?**

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1 Jacob Jane, 1916-2006, was a journalist and activist writing about city planning mostly known for *Death and lifes of American cities*. Active years 1961-2004
When starting to formulate my interests and intentions with this project I realised how big this subject is and how hard it is to suggest something as a solution for what I feel is missing. It is easy to have opinions and to know about the problems but it is hard to know exactly what to do about it.

What was clear to me from the beginning was that I wished to add objects and smaller spatial fragments to spaces in the city. Spaces where I could see that people were spending time but that wasn’t cared for. I wanted to, like a detective find traces of peoples own made attempts to form meeting points. Perhaps around an activity or around a spot that has been found and made to an unofficial meeting spot because of its different qualities.

Since I have never worked with the urban environment before I step onto unfamiliar grounds when it comes to the vast scale, the roughness of the usage and the harsh climate that demands materials and constructions that can last both the Swedish winter and summer. To get started and to not feel too overwhelmed by the subject I started to study what people are doing in the city, both inside and outside. What these environments looks like, how they are constructed, what they are constructed of and what the similarities between public spaces inside and outside are.

The art critic Viktor Shklovsky writes in his essay Art as technique about how art has the ability to make us reflect on the environment we find ourselves in and I have tried to apply his thinking on interior architecture and furniture design. I think he captures what became crucial to me in this project in this following quote:

After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it, hence we cannot say anything, significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways.

My next step, after having studied some of our public spaces, and having read Art as technique, where Shklovsky describes the technique of defamiliarization, and how Tolstoy uses this in his writing to make the reader aware of one’s conscience or feelings. I wished to look at the built environment as if I didn’t see for example, a bike rack or a light pole but at cylinder in metal with a certain dimension, or a bended metal pipe with a certain angle and distance to the next bent pipe.

1. Shklovsky Viktor, *Art as technique*, 1917

2. Intent - How to work with the public space with an interior architect approach
I went outside to interact with the already built environment. Observing through the meeting between the merging and the built made me realise that certain elements of the urban space are only seen for their purpose or worse, they have become completely invisible. Those meetings I found reveal elements for more than what they are supposed to be. The function becomes obsolete to express a shape, a materiality.

I wish that by using the already built as parts of new constructions, be able to create strong contrasts in the environment we are used to see in a certain way and I hope it will be experienced differently. Perhaps give it another value. Through the technique of “defamiliarization” in my case by using the built as a central part of my constructions/furnitures/spaces I would like to frame parts of the city for people to inhabit and to be able to reflect on the city and the environment they are living in.

The Brussel based office Dogma works a lot with the relationship between architecture and the city. In their project Stop city they aim to work with limits in architectural form by framing an area with giant slabs, housing a city vertically. Between the slabs trees are planted horizontally. They suggest a city without architecture and without the possibility to expand. Perhaps this way the city can be kept free from spaces formed by capitalism and neo-liberal urban policies.

“Stop city refrain from architecture; it is a model of a city in which there is no architecture as traditionally intended, but only the attempt to architecturally frame the city. Our proposal pursues the idea of an ohne eigenschaften architecture – an architecture without attributes – in other words an architecture that is freed from image, from style, from the obligation to extravagance, from the useless invention of new forms. Stop City is architecture freed from itself; it is the form of the city.”

The thought of the city being “freed” from architecture is interesting since so much in our society is about placing our lives and our identities in and around overstyled environments. But I am working with the city from a smaller scale perspective

and I wish to frame smaller areas to create spaces for people that might change the hierarchies of what is considered valuable, by using architecture and form instead of freeing the city from it.

1. Dogma architects, Vittorio Aureli Pier & Tattara Martino, Stop City, 2007 p.2
2. Intent
- How to work with the public space with an interior architect approach

Dogma Architecs, *Stop city*, 2007
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Peter and Alison Smithson were connected to a movement started in the 1950’s post war England, referred to as the “Kitchen Sink social realism art movement”. Even though they were not artists but architects they got inspired by the way photographers and artist used the everyday life as part of their art, without any attempts of trying to make it more beautiful or censored. They were the architectural equivalent, to the artists of the “Kitchen Sink social realism art movement”, determined to break down the barriers between high and low culture. After the war they purchased a plot with a ruin of a house still standing there. When building their house they kept the chimney and one of the walls. The decision to keep the old parts of the house, some of the parts that had been a part of the interior now became a part of the exterior. The difference in styles the new meetings that occur and the outdoor spaces that resembles an interior is parts I would like to work with in my project as well. The border between private and public and the shift of the scale that exist between an urban space and a home interior interests me, the act of bringing something that we are normally used to see inside to an exterior environment also adds to the “defamiliarization” of the environment.

Through my process I also wish to use different activities taking place on the site when shaping the spaces and furnitures. Out from the activities I want borrow functions from rooms in a home interior related to leisure. Like the living room or the dining room, such as bringing down the light with smaller lamps resembling reading lamps. Or using the same seating angle of a lounge chair and brining in small tables connected to the lamps for closer meetings where you can have a coffee, play cards or read a book. I hope that by mixing the environment of the home with the social activities taking place in the public space new type of rooms might emerge.

Henri Lefebvre wrote in The production of space from 1974 that space can be organized in three parts with direct relationship to each other. He calls them, the Physical space, the mental space and the social space. To describe shortly what he means by that, The Physical space is the space that we can experience with our senses, what we meet, see and feel. The materiality of the space and the objects that we interact with. The mental space is the space that we represent and the space we depict. The social space is the space for human interaction. The space were we have our experiences, our feelings, and our fantasies. These three spaces are inseparable according to Lefebvre.

1. Smithson Peter & Alison was Architects, associated with New Brutalism especially in architectural and urban theory Active years 1954-1990
2. Lefebvre Henri, 1901-91, was a french marxist philosopher and sociologist most known for his critique of everyday life
2. Intent
- How to work with the public space with an interior architect approach

Furthermore he writes about the dominated space and the appropriated space to describe the power relations in different spaces. The dominated space is a space that is dominated, controlled and produced by the leading production system, which would be Capitalism in this case. It dominates the way we work, sleep or have our leisure time and it also dominates the way our cities are being planned and built. The appropriate space is according to Lefebvre when people take production in their own hands and changes how the space is produced. He sees these theories as tools to analyze and change the society, if we understand how the space is being produced we can also change it.

Perhaps there is a link in the way that Lefebvre looks at space and the way I use the site and the activities going on at the site when developing my spaces and furnitures. I wish that the site and my created spaces will have a symbiotic relationship, the added elements on site, in this case furnitures and walls needs the site to function in the same way as I believe that the site needs them.
To give a further insight of what has lead me to my main field of interest for my exam project I have chosen to show two examples from earlier projects that I find important as a background to where I stand today.

In this project from last year I started to investigate the public and private spaces in relation to each other by using parts of several theaters and displacing them in an apartment housing in Bredäng, Stockholm. This idea evolved from a movie I saw, where the main character took a space in a theater and made it her own. During this project I realised that the act of taking on a space, finding its secret corners, inhabit it and shaping it to your own needs out from existing circumstances is something I would like to continue to explore.
Previous project, parts of several theaters were placed in a housing building in Bredäng, Stockholm, 2017
3. Approach
3. Looking back on previous projects

As I created new spaces out from the given structure of the theater I continued to develop my method of letting one space or element shape another in this prototype of the oblique city, by Claude Parent, where I let the space shape the pewter by pouring melted pewter onto the sloping walls and floors. I wanted another material that was a clear contrast to that of the blocks smoothen out the terrain and make small platforms in the gaps between the blocks.
3. Method
3.1 Previous projects

Previous project, *chamfer the oblique*, 2017
3. Approach

3.1 Observing the public space

Observing public places in the city, the pictures are showing parts of Orminge Centrum, Nacka, Stockholm.
I documented the way from my parents home in Nacka, via Orminge Centrum to Slussen, ending up at Centralen and Kulturhuset in the city center of Stockholm. I found that a lot of the available activities have to do with consuming things such as, shopping, eating, drinking and buying services. If the wish is not to spend money there are a lot of places in the city that are unavailable. The public space in the city is therefore often a space that people just pass through without looking at it, or without looking at each other. A lot of time is also spent on traveling, going from one place to another, in busses or subway. When traveling, passengers get in contact with each other. People who never met before, sit or stand close to each other, they touch physically but almost everyone are looking at their phone or are listening to music. Disconnected from the physical space and therefore not very aware of the surroundings or the people surrounding.

3. Approach
3.1 Observing the public space

Observing public places in the city, the pictures are showing parts of Stockholm city, Bruno gallery, T-centralen, Sergels torg
3. Approach

3.2 Unclear limit between interior and exterior

The exterior facades are now the interior walls and the ceiling is made of glass to keep the connection with exterior.

The interior ceiling continues out through the entrance out in the exterior.
3. Approach

3.2 Unclear limit between interior and exterior

The street is like a passage in a mall and vice versa

A square like Serges torg have many similarities with open spaces inside a mall or as the bar in Bruno gallerian
3. Approach
3.3 The materiality of public spaces

Exemple of materials in our urban public spaces.

First row Orminge Centrum mall in Nacka, Stockholm
Second row, Bruno Gallerian in Slussen, Stockholm
During this documented journey I made through some parts of Stockholm, I was focusing on the different activities taking place in public spaces around the city. What they are built of, what kind of materials, what the meetings look like between materials but also between the interior and the exterior. I found that the exterior and the interior often looks alike and are planned according to the same logics. Malls and big public buildings like Kulturhuset resemble the streets and the plazas in a city, filled with boutiques and cafés. Kulturhusets open spaces, passages and corridors are filled with the same type of activities as in our streets. People sit on benches reading something, or eating something they brought with them. There is also a corner where one can play chess, and people that are not welcome anywhere else are seeking shelter, just sitting towards a wall or on a bench.

One of the entrances under the Sergel obelisque is an example of how the interior continues to the outside of the building. It has the same material, the same lightning and the same colours following from the inside to the outside.

And in streets like Götgatan for example, where a part of the street is car free and therefore open for pedestrians, the same stores as in Gallerian next to Sergelstorg, or as in almost all of the malls around Stockholm can be found. At Götagatan you also find Bruno gallerian, an inner-yard made into a mall with clothing stores, a bar and a restaurant. The interior walls are the facades of the buildings, the bar is situated as on a plaza but placed under a glass roof. It is inside but the materials and the connections to outside are still very much the same as when it was a part of the exterior.
3. Approach
3.3 The materialty of public spaces

Material meetings on floors/grounds inside and outside
3. Approach
3.3 The materialty of public spaces

Material meetings on floors/grounds
The two first are drawings of Sergels torgs tile pattern
The last drawing is from the floor of kulturhuset (non scale in this document)
My next step in my study of the public urban space was a discovery journey through the streets of Stockholm to find elements that I could interact with. I wanted to create meetings with the already existing to create a shift. I leaned against, hanged from, followed the shapes and made cut outs on the already built. In my investigation I tried to use contrasting materials to the ones already existing on the site. Through this process I realised that specific structures recurred throughout the urban environment. Everywhere I went the two most repeated geometrical volumes of shapes I found was the cylinder and the 90 degree corners of cubes. My meetings was almost always built around those geometries.
4. Method

4.1 the built environment as a tool
4. Method

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4.1 the built environment as a tool

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4. Method
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4. Method
4.1 the built enviroment as a tool

In this material test I developed my outside try outs from the bike rack where a sheet follows a curve and I started to formulate my ideas around how I could use this as a way to frame areas on the site. This element has given shape to the concrete components I have created for Medborgarplatsen.
4. Method
4.1 the built environment as a tool
Also this material test comes from my outside try outs from the bike rack where a sheet follows a curve
4. Method
4.1 the built environment as a tool
Throughout my research I have realised how the early outside tests, the material investigations, the site and the drawings all have informed each other and lead me to the decisions I have made.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space
4. Method
4.2.2 Impact on the space

I sandblasted the wooden pieces to get a rough surface to make an imprint from. I then made casting molds from them and casted in concrete. Having the rough surface from the wood in concrete, I spackled the relief with plaster, I then got these concrete pieces with a clear pattern of the wood.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space
4. Method
4.2.2 Impact on the space

I tried the same method with a bigger piece of wood, I made a tiled surface in the middle of the wooden block, I found that the lines of the fibres in the wood enhanced the geometrical shape.

I also found that this could be interesting in a meeting between a wall and a body the same way I had made tiled surfaces in my first step, when adding elements outside to get closer or to lean against a pole.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space

I also casted a modell where the pattern of the fibres follows the wall down to the floor, I found that it makes it more into one unit.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space
In this model I wanted the armouring in the concrete visible. I find it interesting that the two materials have such different appearance and properties and how they need each other. The steel is easy to bend and makes a contrast to the massive concrete blocks. Here I also did an inside and an outside surface. The outside surface has a rough imprint of osb and the inside is (supposed to be) smooth.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space

The New York based office, Young & Ayata has worked with the imprint that the wood makes in the concrete to enhance the feeling of how the windows are being “sucked in” to the volume. I find it interesting how the treatment of the surface works to strengthen the geometrical qualities of the building.
4. Method

4.2.2 Impact on the space

Young & Ayata, *DL1310 apartments*, Mexico City, Mexico, 2017
1. Context
1.3 Medborgarplatsen
After my initial tryouts in the urban environment I wanted to work out from a specific site and apply the meetings I found in this method onto a space.

I see the site as a tool to help me find both geometrical shapes and spatial qualities but also as a tool to find out for whom and for what these spaces should be. This means that the site is important, because it will give me a lot information necessary for the development of the content and the design of my spaces. But it is also at the same time general in the way that it could be any square or any street in an urban context.

When researching a site to work out from I looked for a place where a lot of different people meet and move through. I think Medborgarplatsen is interesting to work with out from these criterias. It is surrounded by trafficked streets, shops, a mall, restaurants, a library, a cinema and a community centre. It is also a passage for people commuting, walking across the square from Södra stations shuttles to the subway located on the other side of the square. Medborgarplatsen is because of this visited by many people, both locals, living nearby, and non locals.

The site is not particularly treated with an interior scale nor is it adapted to the humans passing there. In the center is a square covered with cobblestone framed by city benches, trash cans and food trucks. I got interested in the vastness of the place and how it’s used as a passage or a meeting point. When I look at Medborgarplatsen I see a public space that feels left behind, a place that is not cared for. By bringing in interior elements adapted to the human scale into this vast space I want to make it more human.
1. Context

1.3 Medborgarplatsen
1. Context
1.3 Medborgarplatsen

Medborgarplatsen was founded at the same time as Södra station was constructed due to the development of the railway in the 1850’s. The lake that’s where Medborgarplatsen now lies was then covered, it had been a place where the city could get water, do laundry and fish for many years, but it had become more and more intoxicated from waste so it was now considered being a health issue.

The square was first named Södra Bantorget and was meant as a marketplace where people could buy the farmlands product that came to the city with the trains. The name Medborgarplatsen was given to the site in 1939 when the community centre was built.

The oldest house on Medborgarplatsen was built in the 17th century, it is located on the north east side of the square. Since then buildings have been built around the square in different epokes and the result is a building typology of very mixed styles and scales.

Since 2016 the city is working on a big renovation of the community centre, the aim is to make Medborgarhuset to an easily accessible and open meeting spot with lots of activities such as, drama classes, a big library, a new swimming hall.

I find the (town) square and what it represents historically as well as today interesting. It is a place in the city that has united people in revolution and connected people in trade and leisure.

It is therefore a space in the city that attracts all kinds of people, with different interests and different reasons for entering the space.

Perhaps this makes the town square a perfect place for my urban interiors.
Context

4.1 Use the site as a tool to design

Merging my idea of an urban interior at the site of Medborgarplatsen I used the already built as a base for my study. I call those interventions “meetings”. These observations became the unfolding of my method, by connecting to the physical elements at the site I started to use the grid of the cobblestone covering the square to play with the rythm and the physical movement between the elements. This became the template for the positioning of my interior spaces. These site plans shows the four main ways I have looked at the site, which is:

- the already existing built elements
- the patterns on the site
- the way people move in the space
- how the light is affecting the site
Context

4.1 the built environment as a tool
Standing on the square I realized how much the grid of 4,5X4,5 m squares are dividing the big space in to smaller. It is also of course because the grid is what everything is planned after. The light poles are centered in a square with three squares in between and the benches and trash cans are also positioned according to the grid. I wanted to use this grid of squares tiled with cobblestones to enhance the feeling of smaller spaces by adding wall fragments. The shape of the walls comes from one of my additions made outside on the bike rack. Where I let a sheet of metal follow the shape of the inside of the bent pipe. I have then used a circle that has the same diameter as one square and the grid system to decide the measurements and proportions of the walls. Where the concrete wall ends the metall continues and grabs a hold of a light pole.

The casts I had made with wooden patterns as reliefs on defined geometrical shapes made me realise the potential in using the cobblestones on Medborgarplatsen as a mediator between the urban space and the interior tradition, by using the pattern of the cobblestones in a similar way to that of the wallpaper.

By adding these walls and decorating them with the same pattern as on the ground I wish to frame parts of the square and hopefully make it visible for the people spending time there. I also wish to add an element that you can relate to that is closer to the human scale than a wall of building.

All of my additional spaces are centered around the light poles in order to use the existing light that already marks a space on the square. The exception from the rule is the two benches placed in the area that today is being used as an automated passage from södra station to the metro station in björns trädgård. I placed them there to change the way people move in the space and to direct the movement to become more of a journey than a passage from A to B. Both spaces and furnitures has a construction dependent on their interaction with the already built on the site.
5. Outcome
3. Method

3.1 the built environment as a tool

Casting the fullscale material sample of the walls at the site
5. Outcome

Casting the fullscale material sample of the walls at the site
This space is inspired by the street musicians, this is one of three rooms with higher walls, where I wanted to create the feeling of a small stage, but also a wall that you can lean on in the sun protected from the wind, with an integrated side table to place your coffee on.
In this bench I have worked with the back of the bench using the same angle as typically used in a lounge chair to create a more comfortable seating and the construction of the chair is dependent on the light pole already existing on the site. I’m intrigued by a construction that carries itself and how the different elements are collaborating.
First sketch model of the bench that I built in fullscale for the exhibition
5. Outcome
This picnic/board game/ice skate area is placed around the ice rink at Medborgaplatseen. The bench works from two sides where the side that goes towards the inside of the rink uses the rink as seat.
5. Outcome
I want to bring down the light to make small spaces with the help of small directed lights. The directed lamps in my different urban interiors are all relating to and has a construction dependent on their interaction with the functions of the furnitures.
5. Outcome
I have tried to divide the site in more intimate spaces out from the given framework and qualities of the site as well as the challenges that comes with it. By creating a scale more related to the human body I wish to change the perspectives from which we view Medborgarplatsen to offer the people spending time there a possibility to find their own place in the public space. I have found that the site and my created spaces has a symbiotic relationship and I hope that they together will create a space that you want to inhabit.
5.1 Exhibition

When building the exhibition I wanted to show all the parts of the project in an understandable way. Since I have been working with a big site but with a small scale it was hard to know how to show the placing of the spaces and furnitures on the square and at the same time show how I have been working with details in their area meeting with the already built environment. I chose to do a big drawing scale 1:100 of the whole square, the view is in an axonometric plan view. This way the viewer will see how the space are placed and they get a picture of the spatial qualities. To show even further how the spaces might be experienced I also did drawings of three of the spaces in scale 1:5 where the materiality and the placing of the furnitures are more visible. I made a model of one of the walls in scale 1:10 and showed a material sample in full scale to show how I have been working with the treatment of the surface of the concrete. I also did one of the furnitures in full scale. The bench that is constructed around a light pole. I wanted the visitors to be able to see how it interacts with the light pole and to stage a little piece of the site to get an understanding of how it could be to sit there. I also made a small lamp to show how I have used the typical shape of a reading lamp to bring down the light on the site and how I have made it other materials than typically used indoors. The lampshade is casted in transparent rubber, the same material as the bench would be constructed in if built for the site.
5.1 Exhibition
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