

Stenens Hus, Hunnesbostrand, Sweden

A Place for Everyone

Introduction

Todd Saunders Architects has been working on an extraordinary project with a group of locals from Hunnesbostrand to explore the possibilities for a new Museum dedicated to Stone called Stenens Hus. The site is in the area along the sea where each summer there is a summer exhibition of Contemporary Stone Culture. This beautiful site is unique and very much a place that the community loves. As architects, we very much respect this and our intention is to create a building that does not take away any of the positive aspects of this beautiful coastal park. Our intention is to make this place a place for the people of Hunnesbostrand, Sweden and for visitors from around the world to enjoy. We have been extremely meticulous during the whole process to see what is the “best” solution for all. Our design is one that gives more to the community than takes away. We are extremely grateful to have been able to help formulate such an important and necessary building. We love the solution we present here and think this is our best building to date and we very much look forward to visiting the building and watching the people of Hunnesbostrand and others enjoy this special place.

The Thought Process

Todd Saunders is Canadian living in Norway and is very much accustomed to democratic design processes. We always start by listening and understanding before we make a drawing. Often we just make diagrams and explore the possibilities of what a building can become. In the process with Stenens hus, the discussion focussed very much on where the building could be placed. We have listened to the local group because, as they have loved their all their lives, they know and understands the site much better then we ever could. We tested out various ideas. Some worked well and some didn't. Near the end we all agreed that the building had to be as much a part of the land as it did of the water - the cliffs, park and the sea are the elements that needed to be conserved and celebrated on such a beautiful site.

After a long and thoughtful process, we suggested that the building be placed partly on the land and partly on the water. The museum is an amphibious building – half on land, half on water. We feel that this is the best site that compliments the surrounding landscape, protects the existing conditions of the park and the ways the locals use the park today and for the future. We feel that this is necessary to make it a one-of-kind building that will set it apart and distinguish it from many of the museums of the world.

The process taught our studio much about the value of taking our time to make decisions, to listen to the locals that know and understand the land, therefore giving an inclusive design process. We called it the “Swedish Way” and see that a democratic process works. Everyone has been heard and taken seriously in our group and we hope that the next steps are to involve more people from the community with their input.

A Museum as Place for All

The museum is not really a building per se, but a new public space. It is a positive new guest in a park that the people of Hunnesbostrand love and feel it's their own. Our architecture creates more

public space than it has taken away - usually the opposite happens when one makes new building on a site (this was the case when the developers tried to turn this site into a housing project as they took away something valuable and gave nothing back). Our design does the opposite and actually adds to amount of m2 of park space by adding a building. The dimensions of the building and park space are below:

Building 1 (Entrance) = 413 m2 (Gross)/ 375 m2 (Net)

Building 2 (Auditorium) = 420 m2(g)/ 377 m2(n) 150 Seats

Building 3 (cafe)= 125 m2 (g)/ 108 m2(n) 20-30 outdoors and 20-30 seats outdoors

Building 4 (Restaurant)= 415 m2 (g) / 372 m2 (n), over 100 Seats

Building 5 (Exhibition) 777 m2 (g) / 718 m2 (n)

Total area: 2150 m2(g)/1950 m2(n)

Terrace app. 3100 m2 (including ramp/amphitheatres)/ 1450 m2 flat área (without ramp and Amphitheaters).

Area added to town (terrace /Amph. over water)= 1460 m2

We give more back.

Stenens Hus is not a museum in the traditional sense. It is a place where one can look at the past, present and future uses of stone in the Hunnesbostrand area. Stone in this area has a fascinating history that very few people know about. The existing quarries are doing some spectacular world class work, and here one can also display and discuss the future of stone in any cultural and industrial setting.

It is a building that everyone can enjoy. Free to roam over and through. It is also a piece of architecture that one can interact with and experience any time of day, any time of the year.

Four Buildings in one and a Park on the Roof

The Museum consists of four different space, all contained in one building. All four spaces are united under one roof - The roof top park. These spaces wrap around a courtyard to create a park space on the outside and a courtyard park in the middle. One can easily walk through the composition of buildings from all directions. The museum consists of the following spaces:

Part 1) A lobby with a reception, public bathrooms, cloakrooms and a staff and meeting room. The lobby is the first place one will enter and can get information on the park, town, and museum.

Part 2) An auditorium for plays, film screenings, talks/lectures and other performances. This space also has a lobby that includes public washrooms and cloakrooms. We are exploring the ideas of removable / folding seating so that the space can be turned into one large room for events and even additional exhibition space.

Part 3) The Art Gallery is a large open space, which is the artistic heart of the museum. It includes public bathrooms and cloakrooms. This space has the most beautiful view imaginable and is distinctly unique, there is no other art gallery like it in the world. It will be a special place to exhibit and will certainly attract the best contemporary artists and performers. It also includes workshops so visitors can experience stone workers creating, which is something not many people ever get to experience.

Part 4) We have included a 372m² restaurant that can seat over 100. This is the most perfect place to enjoy local Swedish Food. Perhaps this can be the best fish restaurant imaginable, the restaurant itself will become a destination (Fåvik is in Sweden and this is possible).

My first experience of Sweden was in 1994 with a young family on Midsummer's Eve, this memory and feeling has stayed with me ever since. I can imagine this space with a long table seating up to 100 people, the windows to the front are all open and we can all experience a Midsummer's Eve dinner that people will never forget. The possibilities are endless.

We have included a café at one end of the space which is more intimate and is set apart from the courtyard of the building. This is a smaller Café is a perfect place for locals to have their morning Fika and even meet in the evenings to watch the sun go down.

Part 5) The roof as a park. All four sections of this building are combined under one roof. The roof is an important element as we call it the fifth facade. One will be able to see the building from the cliff above so its very important that the roof is as aesthetically pleasing as the facades. The roof park is a community space, with an amphitheatre, diving platforms and an area for picnics on the roof so you people can take on the incredible surrounding views.

All the buildings are independent of one another and can be independently operated on their own. They all have public washrooms and cloakrooms. Its an opportunity to have one museum where parts can be opened and closed depending on the needs of the community. During the long summer months, it can be open late into the night for events like an film festival, so it can be used up to 18 hours a day. Additionally each space can be used for private events or events that the municipality organise for the community of Hunnesbostrand. The idea is that the building is fully flexible and adaptable to change, to suit the needs of a community and it will see them through to it's future needs. We are convinced that this building opens up endless opportunities.

Stone as a Raw and Beautiful Material

The museum is built of stone. We chose the materials on the advice of the community, with an understanding of the history of the site. The locally-sourced granite stone facade is rough-cut. Our inspiration for this came while visiting a local quarry, by seeing how this stone is cut we saw how beautiful this roughness can be. The rough stone looks as if it has been taken straight from nature. The facade reflects the appearance of a cliff face and the surrounding rock formations. Inside the courtyards, the same stone continues, yet we would like it to have more refined and human finish.

In the next steps of the design process, we want to collaborate with some of the many talented stone workers and sculptors. So we can explore the beauty and potential of how stone and architecture can be made. A few areas of interest are the s are the amphitheatre stairs that lead down into the water, which could be an art project. Additionally, perhaps the walls inside and outside could be a collaboration with an artist? There are numerous other opportunities. With all the talented stone

people in this area of Sweden, a natural next phase of this project would be engage further with the local community, perhaps with a workshop or competition exploring the question : What is the possibility of Stone in Architecture?

How this Museum will Enhance Positive Change

Our idea and the intention of the local advisory group was to create a building that gave something to everyone in the community. We designed it with a group of 70 years olds in mind and a group of 7 years olds in mind. It is meant to be a gift to the community. It encompasses everything that relates to the term “public architecture”, it is an architecture for all. The democratic process, “The Swedish Way”, guided us into making a humane building that will help the community bond and come together. It’s a meeting place for the community and is meant to serve the same purpose as Central Park in New York, The Library in Stockholm or St. Peter’s Square in Rome.

It is a bit arrogant for an architect to tell people how to use a building. We are different architects. We like the community to show and tell us how they want to use this building. The possibilities are endless and this is what is exciting for us to create such a building. We allow for lots of interesting things to happen. I imagine eating dinner here with my daughters and them going swimming after, while I continue a conversation with one of the Portuguese stone workers that moved to Sweden years ago. I’m sure we all imagine different things, but this is the beauty of architecture without defined borders.