

Grand Tour 2007: The Gulf of Finland

Professors Tricia Stuth and Ted Shelton
University of Tennessee, Summer 2007

In the summer of 2007 I was privileged again with the opportunity to travel abroad with the College of Architecture and Design for a three week sketching tour— this time traveling around the Gulf of Finland. Through the course of our travels we visited Sweden, Finland, Russia, and Estonia examining architectural and cultural conditions of “palimpsest”. A palimpsest by definition is a used piece of parchment that has been scraped clean or simply faded, allowing additional levels of information to be layered on top.

The once turbulent region around the Gulf of Finland exhibited this condition almost immediately. Places of unrest such as historical military embattlements (now romanticized as pastoral landscapes) of Helsinki and Tallinn rang the most clearly of a history of occupation and subsequent liberation. Others such as the Palace Square in St. Petersburg evoked a similar emotion, but are masked by a sense of nationalism and tourism. Though subtle, the palimpsest does exist, and knowledge of the scale and brutality of events such as the October Revolution allow access to the cultural history of the space.

Times of peace in recent era have brought prosperity to the region. Contemporary structures are melded within the historical context— sometimes forcibly (see McDonalds placed directly underneath Asplunds library to right), but often with greater care and success; adding again to the palimpsests and layers of available understanding.

The sketches completed during the tour attempted to capture experiential and representational qualities of these spaces and conditons.



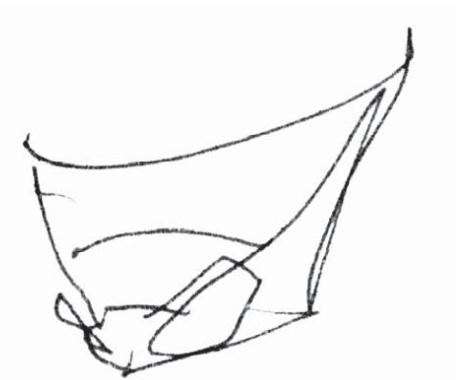
Stockholm Public Library, Asplund; Stockholm, Sweden;
May 11, 2007; pen and colored pencil



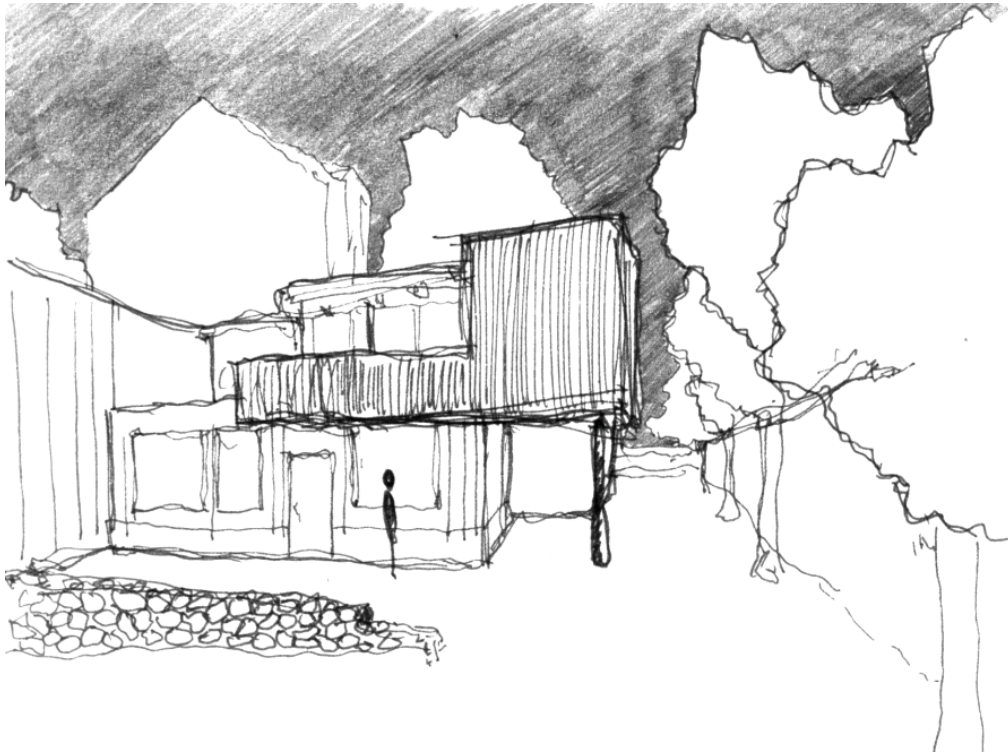
Photo montage and associated sketches



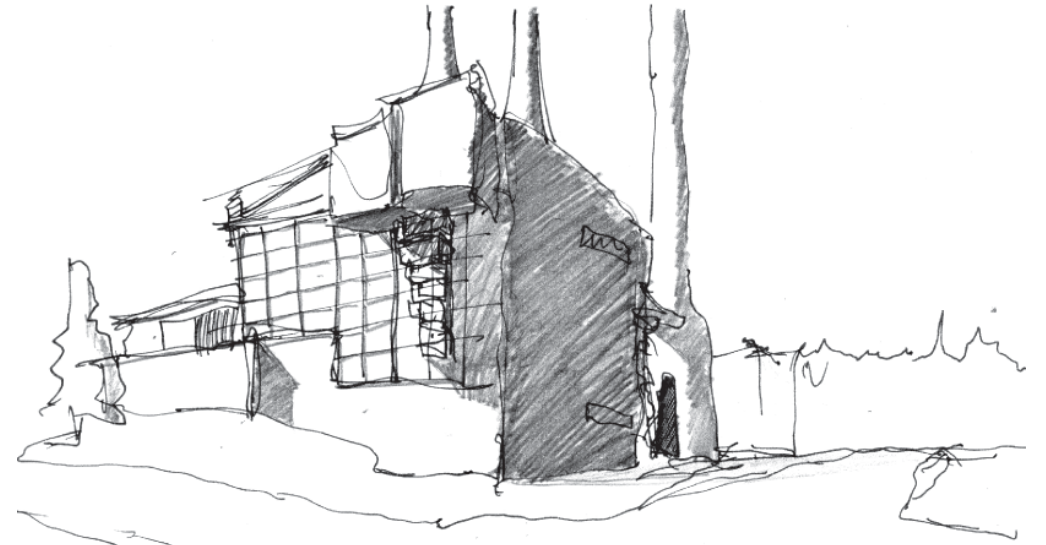
St. Isaac's Cathedral; St. Petersburg, Russia;
May 21, 2007; pen and marker (left)



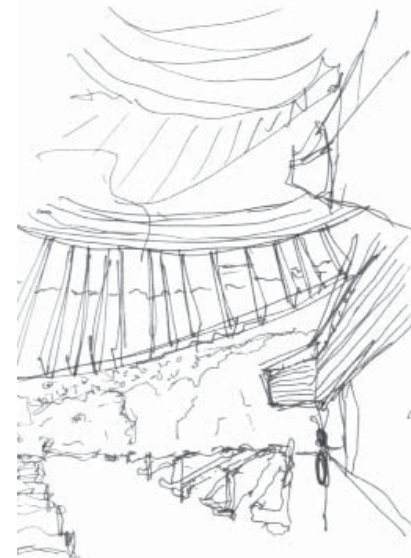
Helsinki University of Technology Auditorium, Alvar Aalto;
Otaniemi, Finland; May 17, 2007; pen (above)



The Aalto House, Alvar Aalto; Helsinki, Finland; May 16, 2007; pen and pencil



Helsinki University of Technology factory, Alvar Aalto; Otaniemi, Finland; May 17, 2007; pen and pencil



Church in the Rock, Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen; Helsinki, Finland; May 15, 2007; pen (left)



Tallin, Estonia; May 25, 2007; chalk pastel (above)