

GRÄFSNÄS CASTLE RUINS
Unfolding history by spatial storytelling



Thesis program
Johanna Bussqvist (140146)
Tutor: Katja Bülow
Spatial Design
KADK, School of Architecture



SUMMARY

Field of engagements

- *Introduction* s. 5
- *The assignment* s. 7
- *Scenography in architecture* s. 8

Context

- *Gräfsnäs today* s. 14
- *The castle ruins today* s. 18
- *The history of the ruins* s. 24
- *The legends of the ruins* s. 28
- *Timeline* s. 30

Method

- *UN goals* s. 33
- *Program* s. 35

Expected outcomes

- *Deliverables* s. 37
- *Schedule* s. 38

Appendix

- *CV* s. 41
- *Bibliography* s. 42

“The true quality of architecture is not revealed until it is a ruin, after everything that is not essential has decayed, when only the faded skeleton of the building is left.

As it falls into ruin, a building reveals the core of its idea, its inmost order, but it also loses its supernatural, inaccessible perfection; it humbles itself and starts to speak the familiar language of mortals.

A ruin, the foundation of a lost building and the fire wall of a burned-down house touch us because they prompt us to imagine the fate of their builders.”

Juhani Pallasmaa (1986)



Postcard of the ruins from early 1900's

FIELD OF ENGAGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

I am interested in working with scenography within architecture. For this project, the idea is to use a historical site and stories connected to the site to tell a story using tools from the world of theatre and film. Using the site both as stage and actor, working with unfolding narratives hidden in the spaces. As spatial/set designer I would like to work with framing and highlighting certain views to make historical architecture communicate its story spatially.

I grew up in Gräfsnäs. The history and legends of the castle ruins are icons for the area, and have given names to many of the area's roads and landmarks. However, the stories are only shown by outdated information signs in the park. There was an old exhibition in the ruins about its history, but it closed down several years ago. The older generations in the village proudly know the stories by heart, but something is needed to ensure that the interest and knowledge of the ruins live on in the younger generations.

An aspect that makes spatial storytelling an interesting field today is because information and entertainment is more picture-based and less text-based than ever. Perhaps spatial storytelling could prove a more efficient tool than merely information signs when communicating narratives in historical architecture?



Photo of the ruin from the 50's

THE ASSIGNMENT

I would like to tell the story of the castle ruins and its park by designing an architectural exhibition concept for visitors and locals. The interventions will be both temporary perception devices and added spatial elements that remain in the park. Together they form a storytelling route rooted in history.

Focus will be on spatial storytelling, framed scenographical views, perceived and imagined space. The devices will be designed with a *time machine* principle; to experience the past while standing in the present.

The assignment is regionally based, working with how to activate this iconic historical site that the locals take pride in. But the project also touches on questions like what role a historical culture location has in society today, and what the future could look like. A hundred years ago, the ruin was looked down upon by the locals, who used dynamite to destroy it further and use the stone as building material. What role will the ruin have a hundred years from now?

As part of the assignment, an broader concept for the installations will be developed. How to design for the peak season of the park, and what elements could reoccur the following years.

The idea is not to transform the ruin into something else, but to let the dialogue between existing and new be about how the added elements can highlight what is already there. Working with the ruin as a manifest of history, exploring its potential to unfold. What memories, secrets and fantasies could there be stored up, forgotten, in these spaces?

SCENOGRAPHY IN ARCHITECTURE

Perception and imagination

Juhani Palasmaa writes about how architecture can raise awareness about the boundary between the world and the self. “I experience this moment and my relationship with the world in a deep and meaningful manner. The architectural context gives my experience of being its unique structure and meaning through projecting specific frames and horizons for my perception and understanding of my own existential situation. The poetic experience brings me to a borderline - the boundary of my perception and understanding of self - and this encounter projects a sense of existential meaningfulness.” (2015)

There is something highly scenographical about having a unique experience by projecting specific frames on architecture. The concept of the proscenium stage within theatre is to see the performance through a proscenium opening. It is often decorated as a picture frame to enhance the border between fiction and reality (Reid Payne 1993). One of the cons of working with framing is the possibility to intentionally highlight something and leave out something else, steering the gaze of the spectator towards a certain experience.

Michael Eagan writes about the historical interrelation between scenography and architecture. “The separation of stage design from architecture is a modern notion. There has historically been less specialization and more cross-pollination of design disciplines.” (2010) He states that “the essential difference, of course, is that the stage is a fictional universe, a neutral

space for imagined places”. It would be easy to conclude that architecture is rooted in reality while scenography is rooted in imagination. However, Pallasmaa argues that imagination is very much anchored in reality and that the acts of perceiving and imagining take place in the same areas of the brain. “Although it is often considered to be a kind of daydreaming, and sometimes even as something suspect, our most basic activities, such as perceiving and memorizing places, situations and events’ rely on our imagination. The acts of experiencing and memorizing are embodied acts, which evoke imaginative realities with specific meanings.”(2015)

With a scenographic gaze on architecture

In an article from 1938, Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein talks about the film technique montage and architecture, claiming that only film and architecture can fully capture something three-dimensional. With the eye of a film maker he investigates an analysis by architecture historian Choisy, about walking around the buildings in Acropolis. He draws several parallels between how the different panoramas emerging along the route is like how you would use different shots to film a good scene, using a favourable first impression, symmetry in the perspective, and a repeatedly occurring grand statue.

Serial Vision was first proposed in *Townscape* (1961) by Gordon Cullen. The technique is drawing a series of sketches when walking through a city in uniform speed. He developed an experiential approach to how a living city environment should be read and understood. This technique is efficient when scenographically analysing and framing views in architectural experiences.

Spatial storytelling

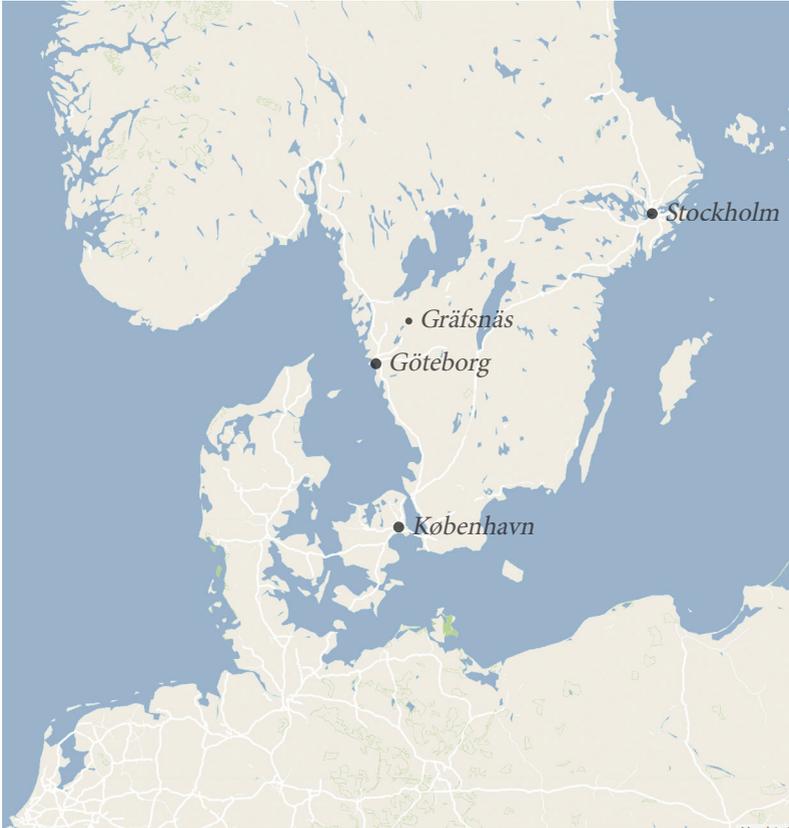
In an article about spatial storytelling, Lu Fangqing writes that museum architecture itself can be regarded as a medium of spatial storytelling, specifically of historical time. An example of this is the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem, where stories are manifested spatially and cognitively for museum visitors.

Juhani Pallasmaa writes in *Skala* (1986) about the qualities revealed in a ruin, the humble skeleton of the former building. He states that a ruin touches people since they prompt the viewer to imagine the fate of their builders. The architectural fragments uncover secrets and tell their “nostalgic tale of a lost age of glory”. In short, ruins are better storytellers than consisting architecture.



The nostalgic tale of a lost age of glory (the former castle, early 1800's)

CONTEXT



Situation plan, Southern Sweden
1:10 000 000



GRÄFSNÄS TODAY

Gräfsnäs is a small country village of about 400 inhabitants, located in the forest 60 km from Gothenburg. The village lies beside the lake Anten, and there is a café, an old railway and a big beautiful park. The peak season for the Gräfsnäs park is from early May, during blossom of the wood-anemone, until late August when schools start. The past summers, there have been several art installations around the park, mainly sculptures but also nature photo exhibitions and textile handcraft exhibitions in the more well-kept parts of the ruins.

There are two other attractions in the area that attract visitors, both of them offering the experience of “going back in time”. One is Kvarnbyn, a couple of small houses in the park close to the ruins. Most of them were built centuries ago, and are authentically furnished. The other attraction is the museum railway where it is possible to get on a 1900’s steam train and travel a few miles along the lake coast.



The castle ruins



Kvarnbyn

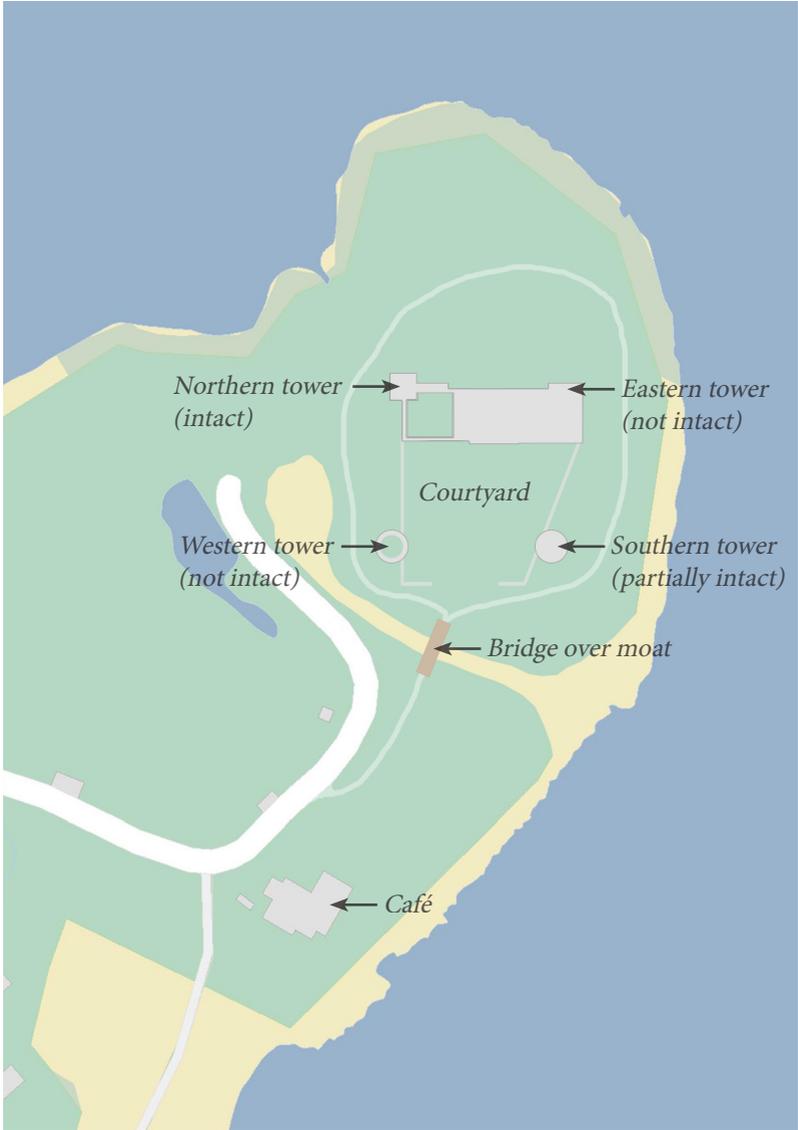


The museum railway



Situation plan, Gräfsnäs
1:20 000





Situation plan, the castle ruins

1:5000



THE CASTLE RUINS TODAY

The castle ruins and the park are a culture reserve since a few years, which marks that the place is of importance to conserve. This also goes for knowledge about the place, history and legends. However, now the only information available when visiting the area is by reading half-hidden, outdated information signs. The site has much potential of revealing more about its history than it is today. Today it is simply a ruin, a shell not keen on revealing its past.

How can the castle ruins provide a similar experience of visiting the past, entering history like the museum railway and Kvarnbyn? The big event of the year around the castle ruins is the Middle Ages week, which is a well-visited event where people dress up and knight games are arranged in the courtyard. But this only lasts a few days, and the ruins stand empty for most part of the year.



Information signs in the park



The ruins seen from the other side of the moat



The ruins seen from the courtyard



The eastern wall of the courtyard



In the remains of the western tower, looking at the southern tower



The remains of the eastern tower



The northern tower



The north side



Gomers Sten, seen from the park

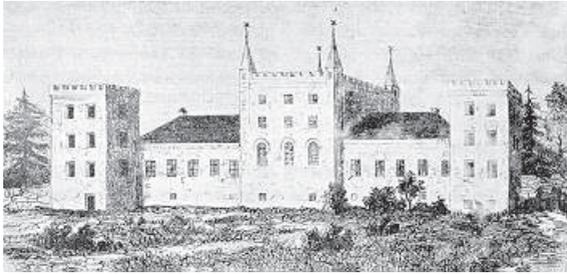
THE HISTORY OF THE RUINS

In the 1550's, count Sten Erik Leijonhufvud let build the castle of Gräfsnäs, on a ground where there had been another house in the Middle Ages. The defence castle was at this time one of the biggest in the region. The count's daughter, Margareta, became Gustaf Vasa's fourth wife and hence a queen of Sweden. The story says that she tried to hide in a coffin when the many years older king came to Gräfsnäs to take her with him.

1634, the castle burnt down. It was rebuilt as a late renaissance castle. It changed owners several times and burnt down again in 1734. It was rebuilt the same year. In 1814 it was renovated, and this version is some of what we can see the remains of today. The same year, an English park was made around the castle, from where majestic leaf trees are still standing today.

1834, the castle changed owner again, and burnt down the same day that it was bought. During the 1800's, the castle became more and more like a ruin. The last person who lived there was a fisher. After the death of the fisher, the castle became a place for young people in the area to arrange dances and gatherings. The local priest was against this and let remove the roof from the castle to prevent further gatherings.

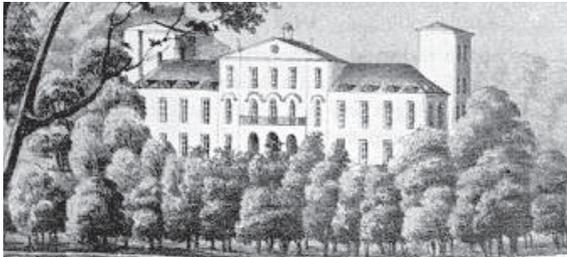
In the early 1900's, stones were taken from the castle as building material. One of the towers was demolished in 1911 because of this. From the 1930's the work of caring for the remains of the ruin started. Today the castle ruin is a great attraction for locals and tourists, especially during summer. Lots of events take place in the courtyard, for example school endings, mid-summer celebration, middle age days and more.



1500's



1600's



Early 1800's



Early 1900's

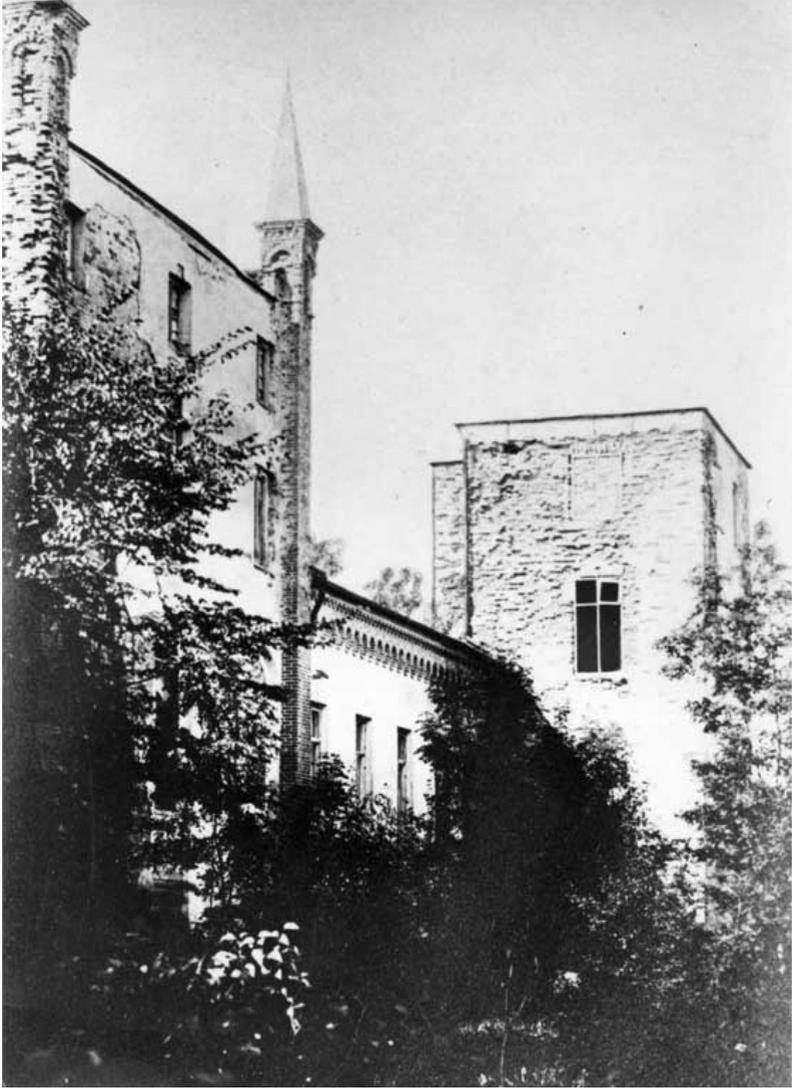
The fisher

The last people who used the castle of Gräfsnäs as a home was the fisher Nils Andersson and his wife, in the late 1800's. The rent was payed in fish, and one of the towers was used as a pig sty.

By this time, the castle was a ruin and the family lived in the few rooms on the east side that still had a roof. A text from 1872 describes the castle at this time. The tapestry was in rags, the walls full of scribbles and the canvases in the oil paintings completely torn.



Nils Andersson sitting outside the castle, 1890's



The back side of the castle, late 1800's

THE LEGENDS OF THE RUINS

The witch curse

In the 1500's, a cursed was placed upon the castle by a female worker making bricks for the castle. She said that the castle would be filled with hate and bitterness, no one would live there for more than three generations, and the castle would burn down to the ground three times and after that become a ruin for all eternity.

Gomer and the mermaid

Gomer was the owner of Loholmen, a castle on an island in the lake of Anten. One day he went out with his boat. He heard someone screaming, and rowed towards the sound. There he saw another boat with a villain who had tied a woman to his boat. Gomer fought the villain, and finally managed to throw him into the lake.

The woman he had saved was Hildegard, daughter of the owner of Gräfsnäs, and she had been kidnapped from the castle. She and Gomer fell in love, got married and lived happily together for three years.

One day, Gomer was out with his boat again, when a storm came which put him in grave danger. Then a mermaid showed up, and told him that she wanted revenge for the knight that Gomer had killed three years ago. The knight was the mermaid's friend, and now it was Gomer's turn to drown in the lake. Gomer pleaded to get one more year in his life. The mermaid consented, and the storm disappeared.

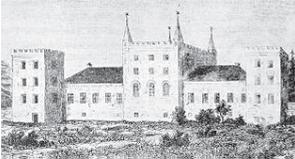
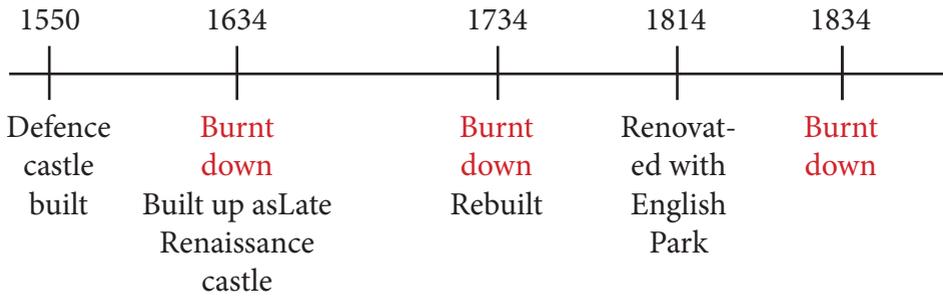
But one year later when the mermaid reappeared, Gomer refused to give in. Then the water of Anten rose so much that it reached the third floor in the castle of Loholmen. Gomer, who loved his wife and children dearly, chose to sacrifice himself. He went out with his squire Hjalmar to the lakeside, where Gomer lay his hat on a bush and said that as long as the bush is green, Gomer would still be alive. The mermaid then took Gomer. Hjalmar ran along the beach and called for Gomer, but received no answer.

The place where Hjalmar called for his master is still today called Kallarehäll (kalla = calling), and the rock where the mermaid took Gomer, is called Gomers sten (the rock of Gomer).

The skeleton in the wall

Once when the walls of the castle of Gräfsnäs was being renovated, they found a human skeleton inside the wall.

TIMELINE



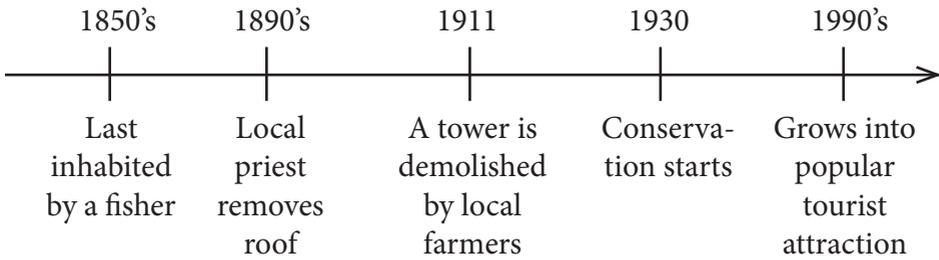
A good defense in case of a Danish invasion



A brag of wealth



A romantic castle in a beautiful park



A pile of stones ready to be used elsewhere



Archeological potential



Icon for Gräfsnäs, tourist attraction

METHOD

THE UN GOALS

Quality education

The ruins are part of the regional identity, which could be further strengthened if the knowledge could reach more people. Historical knowledge can be used to reflect on one's own time and place.

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



The installations serve as visual education both for young and old, without the need to know a certain language. This aspect makes it inclusive for tourists from abroad as well as refugees visiting the park (Gräfsnäs offers temporary housing for refugees).

Responsible consumption and production

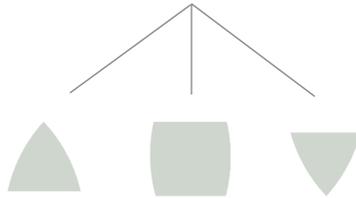
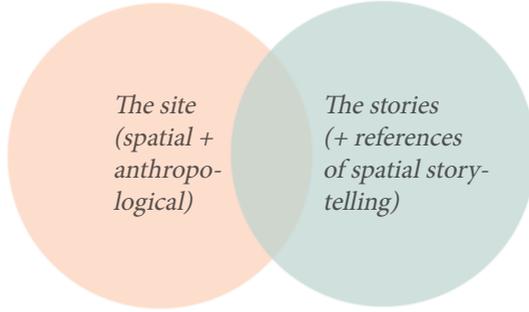
In a growing urban society, a goal of the project is to activate the countryside and make it more attractive for locals as well as tourists. The installations would be built in recyclable materials from local producers, and installed with concern of the nature in the area.

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION

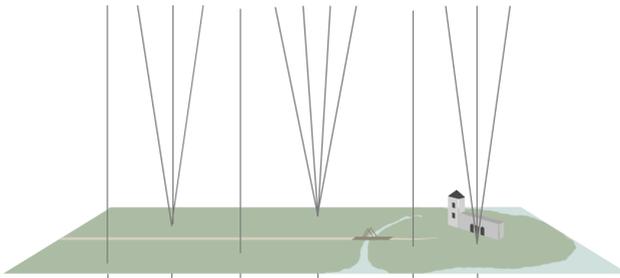


The whole park is a cultural reserve, which marks the importance of preserving the historical regional knowledge and environment. An increasing interest for the area could help funding maintenance of the park. By learning from history, sustainable solutions for the future can be found. The ruins have a history of being reused as building material for farmers. What should the function of the ruins be today and in the future?

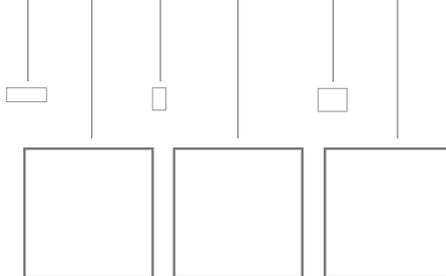
Research



Analysis



Design



PROGRAM

1. *Research*

- Historical program. Collect and sort among stories and legends.
- Spatial program. Investigate and map out current spatial conditions in and around the ruins.
- Anthropological program: Interviews, how the place is seen and used now by locals and visitors.
- Reference program. What other historical sites use spatial storytelling today and what makes it work well?

2. *Analysis*

- Scenographic analysis of the site, using serial vision.
- Combine stories with views, map out a historical route.
- Concept developing of what is temporary, what reoccurs, and what is needed for the route other than the perception devices.

3. *Design*

- Perceptual test models
- Final interventions and scenographic installations on site

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

DELIVERABLES

- Test models of perception devices (2-5 st)
- Final models of perception devices (2-5 st)

- Site plan Sweden 1:2 000 000
- Site plan Gräfsnäs 1:2000
- Site plan the park 1:200
- Diagram of scenographical analysis, plan and sketches 1:100
- Plan with historical route, devices and interventions 1:100
- Sections of devices placed on site 1:50

- Visualisations of views created by devices
- Timeline
- Process sketches and photos
- Collected anthropological research
- Program

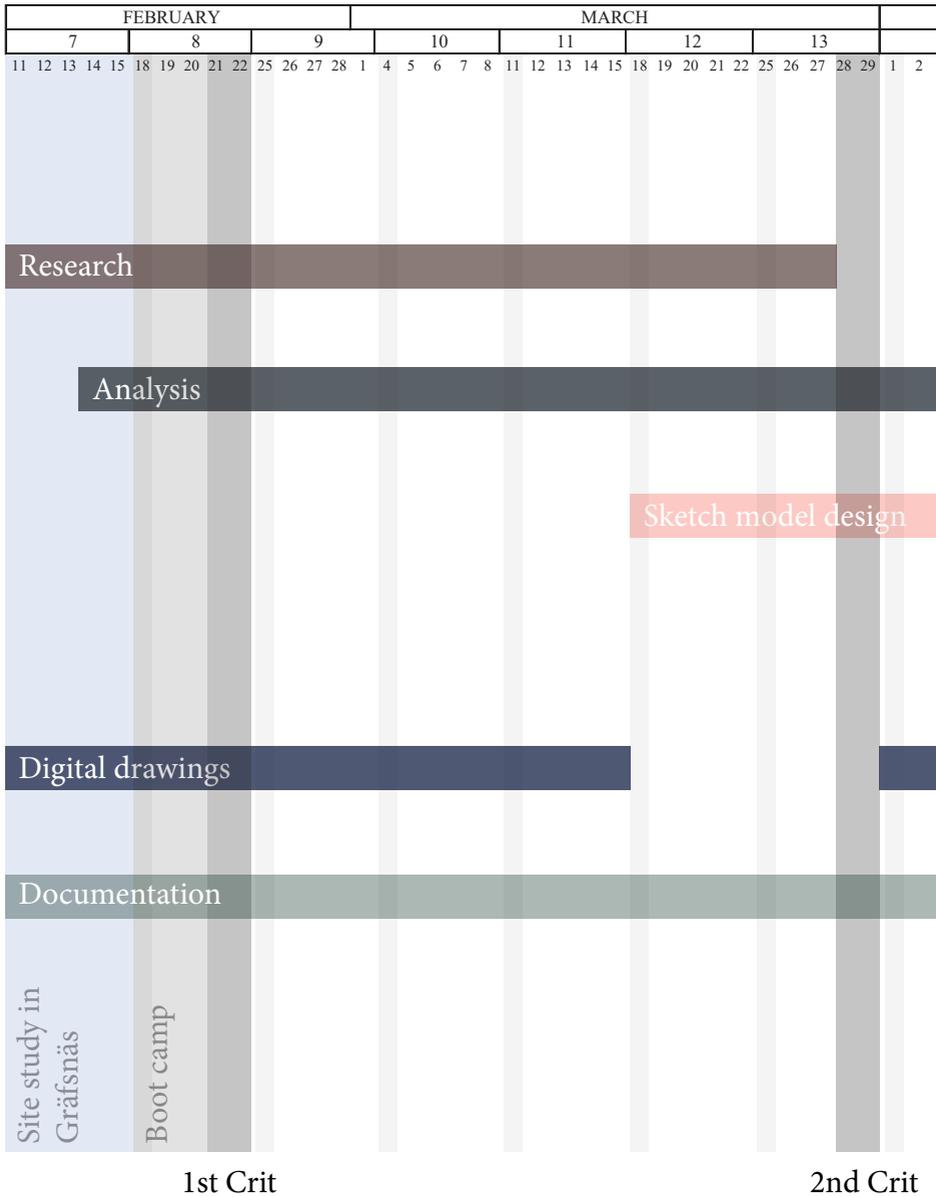


Site plans
Research
Timeline

1:50-drawings
Visualisations
Test models

Devices

SCHEDULE



APPENDIX

CV

Feb-June 2018 - Exchange studies at Victoria University, Wellington, School of Theatre. Courses in scenography and theatre history

Sept 2017 – Started Master program in Spatial Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

Sept 2016 – Jan 2017 Internship with set designer Erlend Birkeland at the Royal Swedish Opera, Stockholm House of Culture & City Theatre, the Royal Dramatic Theatre and Deutsche Oper, Stockholm and Berlin

Sept 2014 – June 2017 Bachelor in Architecture and Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

Aug 2013 – May 2014 Image and Space Layout, KV School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg

Aug 2012 – May 2013 Artistic Basis, KV School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg

Aug 2009 – June 2012 Technique and Design, Alströmer Upper Secondary School, Alingsås

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theory

Cullen, G. (1961). *Serial Vision in Townscape*. London: Architectural Press.

Eagan, M. (2010). What is Scenography? <http://www.artsalive.ca/collections/imaginedspaces/index.php/en/learn-about/scenography> [2018-09-12]

Eisenstein, S. (ca 1939). *Montage and Architecture*. *Assemblage*, 10 (Dec 1989), pp. 111-131

Lu, F. (2017). Museum architecture as spatial storytelling of historical time: Manifesting a primary example of Jewish space in Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum. *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 6(4), pp. 442-455

Pallasmaa, J. (2015). *Body, Mind and Imagination: The Mental essence of Architecture*. In *Mind in Architecture: Neuroscience, Embodiment, and the Future of Design*, pp 51-74. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press

Pallasmaa, J. (1986). *Erindringens værelser, Arkitekturen i maleriet, The Rooms of Memory*. In *Skala*, 5, pp. 22-25

Reid Payne, D. (1993). *Scenographic Imagination*. Third edition, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press

About the castle ruins

Bjärke Hemygdsförening (1984). Gräfsnäs i svunnen tid - En historisk rundvandring. Sollebrunn

Jägerbrand, M. (2016). Skildring av Gräfsnäs Slott - Återutgivning av text från 1872. Virvelvind Förlag, Lysekil

Wahlström, Widstrand. (1894). Svenska turistföreningens årsskrift 1893-94. Centraltryckeriet, Stockholm

Wahlström, Widstrand. (1906). Svenska turistföreningens årsskrift 1906. Centraltryckeriet, Stockholm

https://www.alingsas.se/sites/default/files/grafsnas_slottsruin_historia.pdf [2019-01-20]