Malene Bach and
Bertelsen & Scheving Arkitekter ApS

TRANSFORMATION

The Danish Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Climate

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Before the transformation

A sympathetic office machine

by Jens Bertelsen

Functionality is always in the driver's seat in modern architecture in order to provide an efficient framework for everyday life. While style and decoration often mask the functional picture of historical architecture, buildings from the past frequently have a functional stringency that can be evoked if one examines their original purpose and requirements. That means taking buildings literally.

Such is the case with the three properties that house The Danish Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Climate (KEBMIN) in numbers 2, 4 and 6 on Stormgade. Each of the three buildings has its own functional origin, which we utilized to the full in our treatment of each building. In no. 2 Stormgade the floors open within the existing structure. In no. 4 the floors have open plans, while no. 6 is a listed building and therefore has been restored to the original main structure of simple 'rooms' in what was a townhouse. New interiors provide 'fresh air' on all floors in all three buildings.

A modern office environment

The goal was to create a pleasant indoor climate by controlling acoustical conditions and providing variation in the rooms.

The renovation of the three properties on Stormgade has made them much more useful, lively and varied: more bicycle parking in the cellar, a new fitness room towards the courtyard, a large open-plan reception area, a meeting centre facing Frederiksholms Kanal, a varied course of open-plan offices and traditional enclosed offices. All unnecessary separating walls were removed, so that informal meetings can be held throughout the buildings in spaces lit by daylight from both sides. The office machine has become sympathetic.

The acknowledging principle

by Jens Bertelsen

The first challenge of any transformation project is to see, understand and accept the existing conditions. The next step is to find opportunities and set limits, so that the desired change can either respect what exists or set a more radical course because the architectural values are not great enough to warrant saving. This is what we call working with the acknowledging principle.

First and foremost, this approach to transformation projects means that we acknowledge the history, the architect, the architectural and spatial qualities, and the original idea.
Next we acknowledge that a building has often undergone many changes, adaptations and expansions in order to accommodate the functional demands of changing times. All the same, we must be aware of the fashion of every era, for many changes are made over time to satisfy a change in fashion or new functions. Not every change is negative: change can have improved a building, which is why it is important to acknowledge the history of the change, the architect(s), and the architectural and spatial qualities. The object is to see and experience what has been maintained.
Finally, we acknowledge daily life and the people who use and own the listed building and that which is worth preserving, and therefore we are receptive to critical views, requirements and preferences with regard to the historical aspects.
All together, the acknowledging principle is about finding the core of the original idea – if it is to be found, that is – while we 'help' the aspects worthy of preservation or the listed building to accommodate practical requirements. What we then have is a critical, balanced synthesis of the original and the future, where the preservation values and artistic values are strengthened rather than weakened, so that they will live on.

This is the way we have worked with the three different buildings on Stormgade.

The three personalities

The listed

Number 6 Stormgade was built in 1831 as a townhouse. Stories were added in 1851-52 and the building was listed, which means that the original room division must be maintained. That is why this building still has a classic room division, and this is where individual offices are located, for example.
The hallways on each floor have been given a stronger dark nuance, providing a beautiful framework for the preserved reliefs. The offices are lighter in colour, which gives them a feeling of spaciousness.

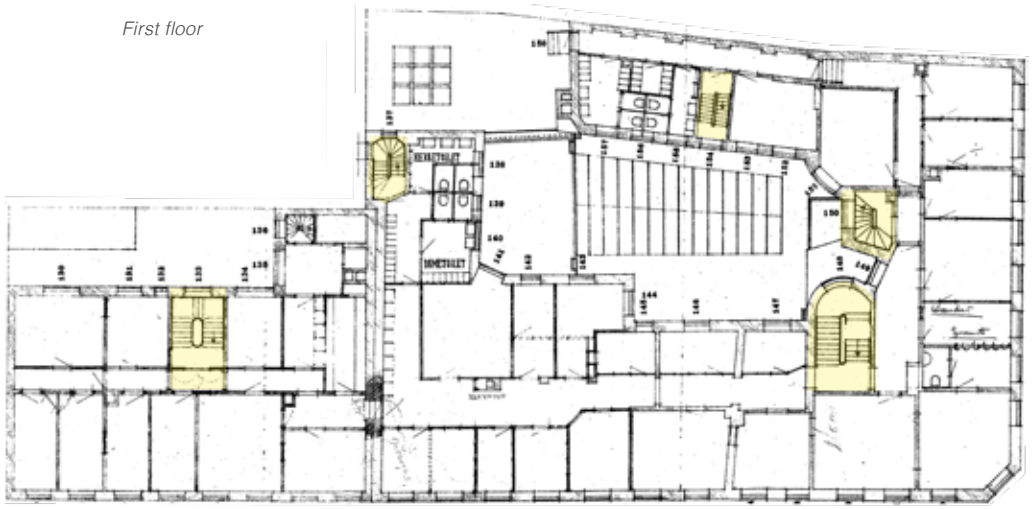
The bold

Number 4 Stormgade was built in 1906 as a warehouse with through-going structural flooring, so each floor could be gutted from street to courtyard to create space lit from both sides. We used this flexibility to create a new stairway, which will become the new main entrance for the whole building. Here the colours are concentrated sculpturally on the through-going stairway.

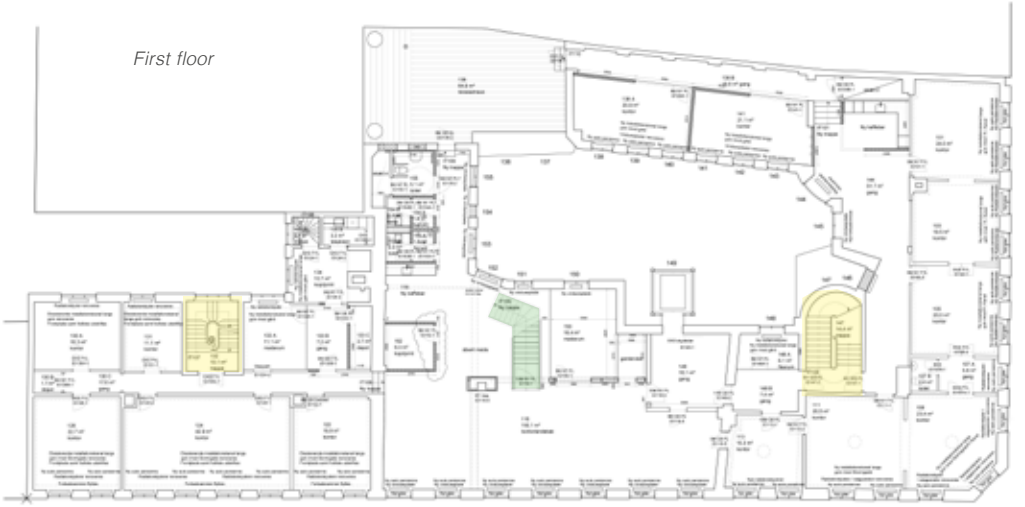
The extroverted

Built in 1854-55, number 2 Stormgade is a townhouse worthy of preservation. Here we were able to do more than if the building were listed. The original small rooms have thus only been retained on the minister's floor, while the rest of the building was opened as much as possible, although still with individual offices.
The minister's offices are a series of painted rooms that provide a chromatic scale *en suite*.

First floor

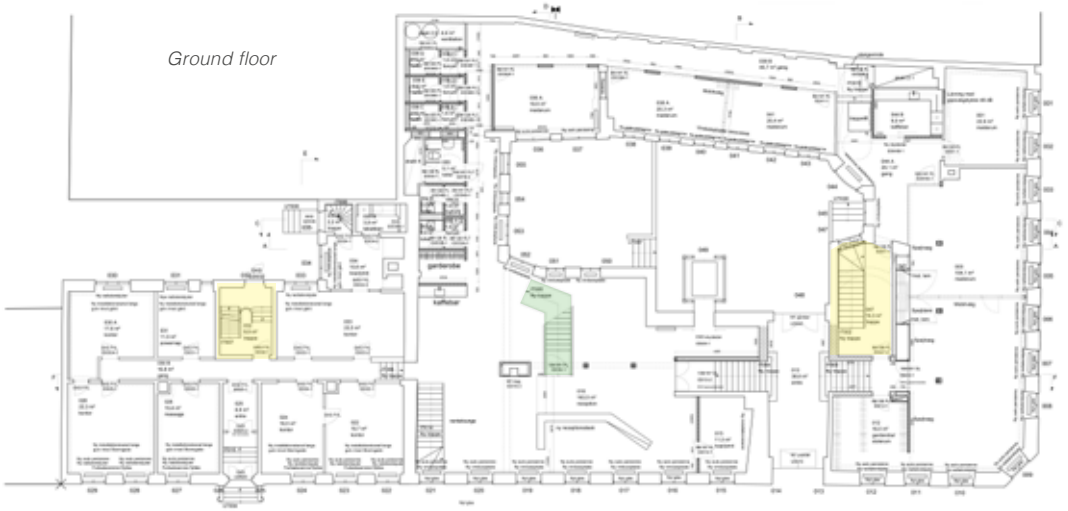


First floor



Ground floor

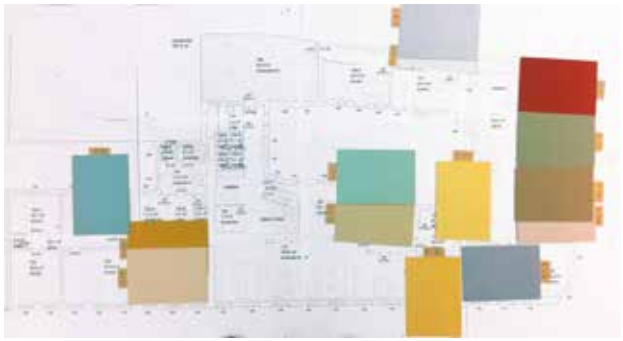
Ground floor

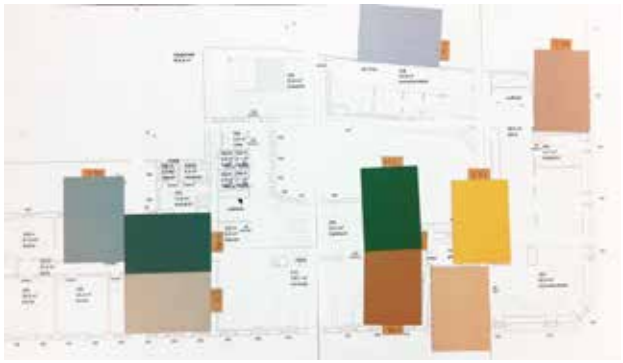


Nos. 2, 4 and 6 Stormgade before the transformation with previous entrances marked

Nos. 2, 4 and 6 Stormgade after the transformation with new entrances marked

Number 4 Stormgade during the transformation





The integrated art project

by Malene Bach

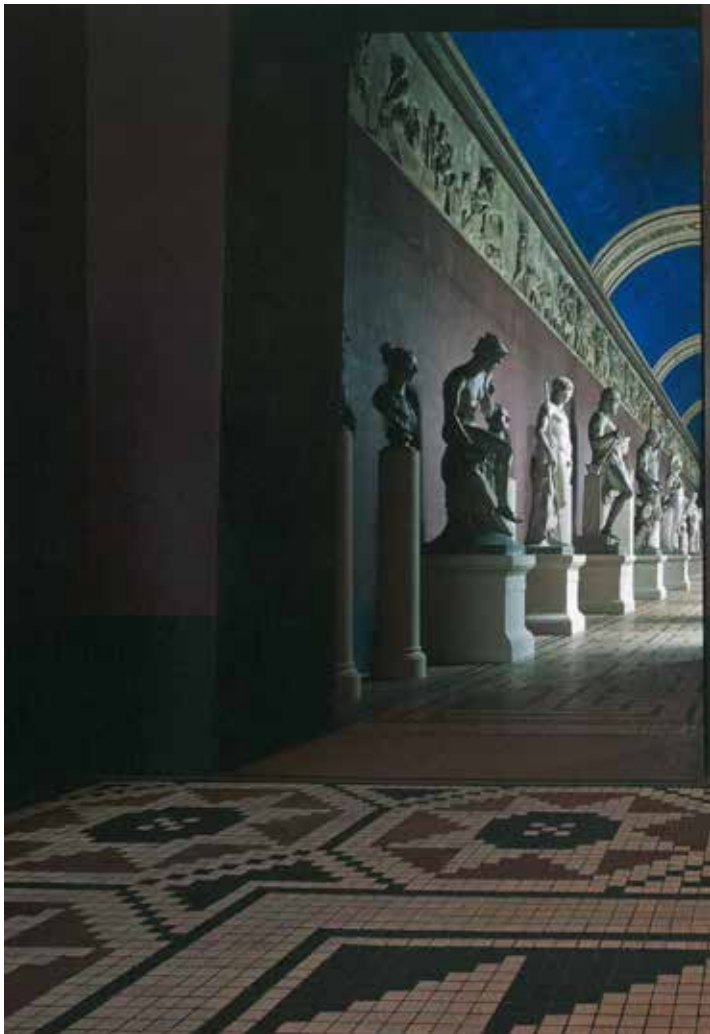
In the project from The Danish Building & Property Agency, contractor, and Bertelsen & Scheving Arkitekter ApS, Royal Building Inspector, emphasis was placed on the desire for a distinctive and thorough artistic colour matching of the three connected buildings from three different periods.

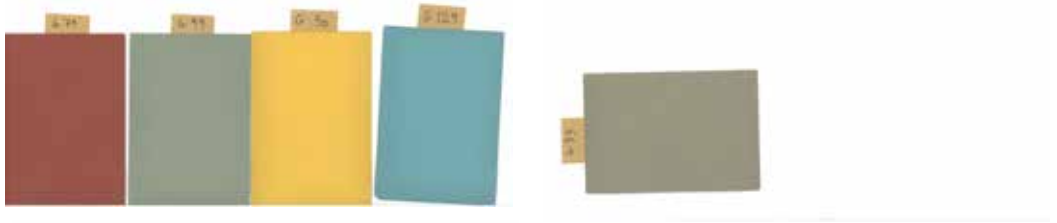
Because there was no original colour material to be found in the buildings that I considered appropriate to use as a basis, I looked for a welcoming contextual connection to which KEBMIN's buildings could be related. The location at Slotsholmen with a lovely view of Bindesbøll's building, Thorvaldsen's Museum, plus the Christiansborg riding grounds, canal and Gl. Strand , summons forth a piece of Danish architectural history. Because the view along Stormgade is otherwise dominated by the grey façade of the National Museum of Denmark on one side and the courtyard on the other, one's gaze is drawn by the view, space and colours towards Slotsholmen, and I wanted to incorporate all that into this building.

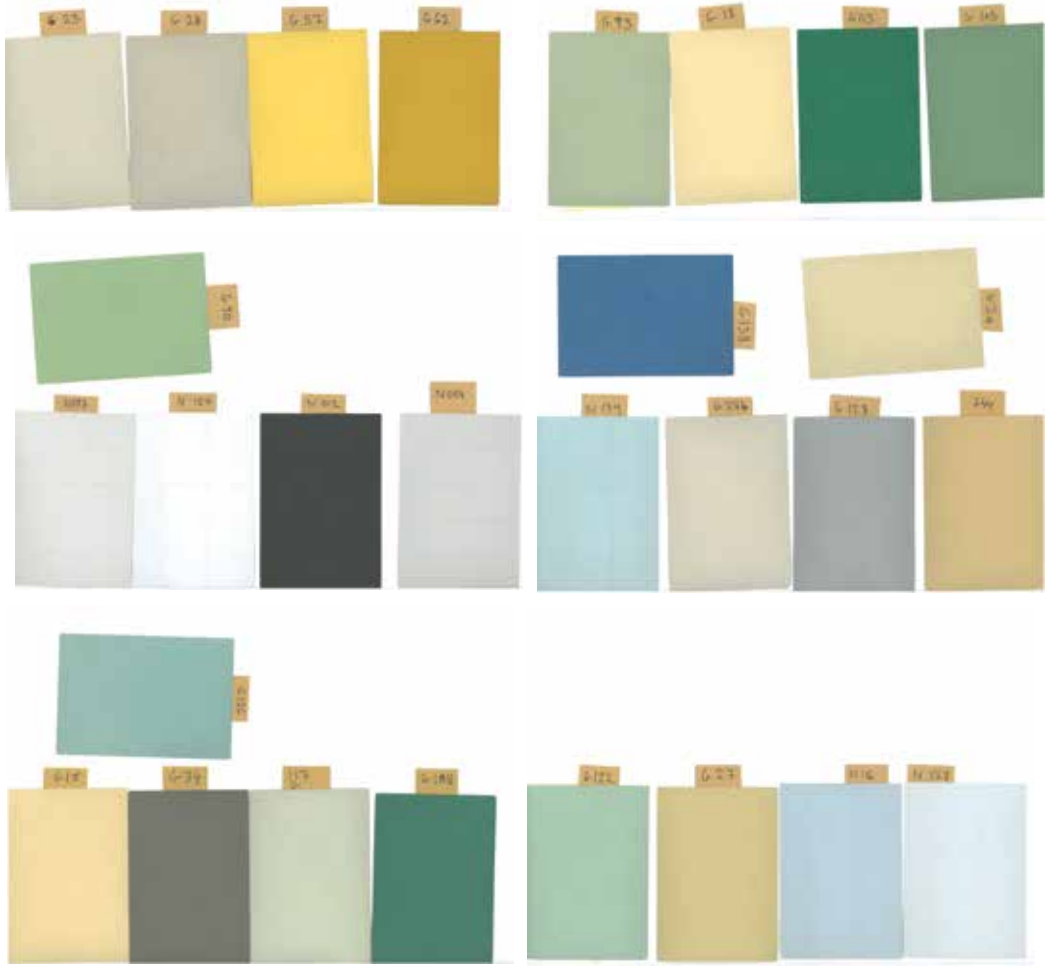
Therefore I decided to base the colour palette and all of the integrated decoration on Bindesbøll's generous architecture from the middle of the 1800's in the form of Thorvaldsen's Museum, characterized by its colourful and geometric ornamented space. This then became the theme and the starting point for my artistic work in numbers 2-6 Stormgade: to use a piece of Danish cultural history to establish a contextual connection that points to an artistic approach to architecture.

View of Thorvaldsen's Museum and Slotsholmen from one of the minister's office

Thorvaldsen's Museum







Opposite:
Work with the colour palette
Below:
The long sound-reducing runners are ornamented with a new version of a classical floor pattern. Each floor has a different colour composition

The enclosed staircase running through number 4 is part of a painted geometric colour composition that follows the planes of the staircase and uses colours from the respective stories. The painting underscores the form, and the overall expression is of the geometric shape and colour conceived as one entity.
The integrated art project was developed and executed by pictorial artist Malene Bach in dialogue with architect Jens Bertelsen. The many facets of the enclosed staircase come into view as one moves through the buildings.

The bold

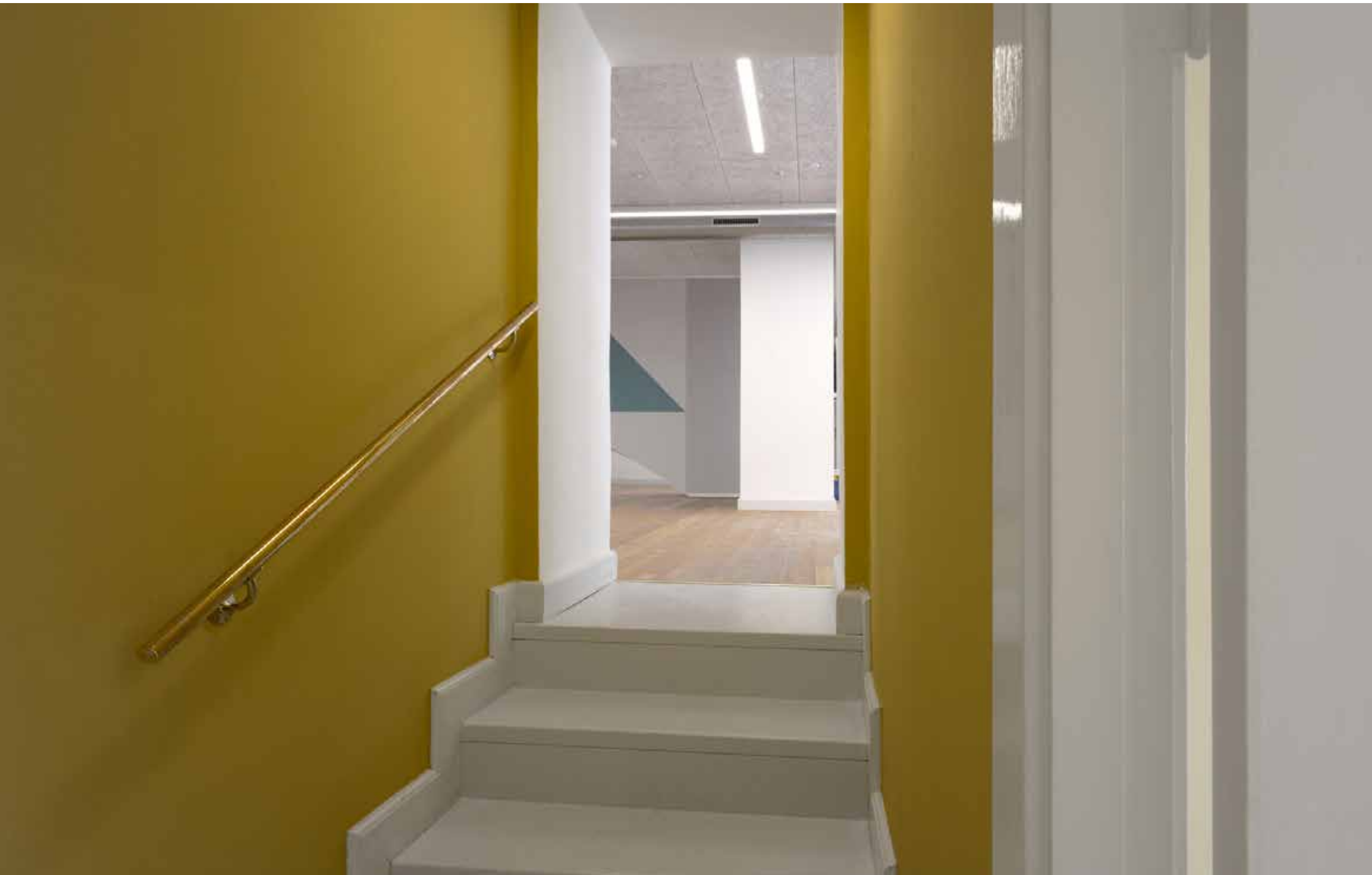
In continuation of the inspiration from Thorvaldsen's Museum, in addition to the colour palette, the project also invited working with geometric ornamentation on walls and floors. Film on glass walls created dynamic and varied compositions based on simple geometric principles. In the conference room, one long wall is covered with mirrors that expand the space and provide a reference to the gala ballrooms of the past. In order to interrupt the profane and direct translation of reality in the mirrored wall, the entire long wall is painted in a geometric pattern with a purpose-made mother-of-pearl lacquer that accentuates the reflected light. This gives even more spatiality to the mirrored surface.

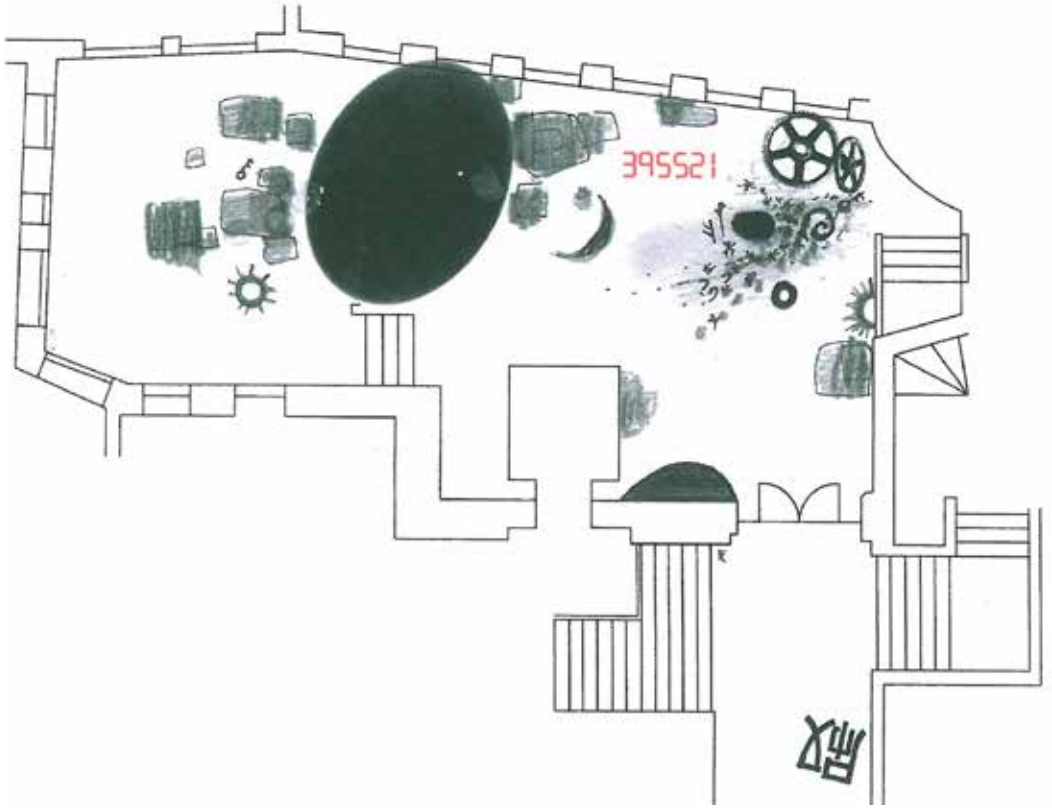
The extroverted

Because parts of the buildings in numbers 2-6 Stormgade are listed and also bear the hallmarks of the building period, I wanted the new colour palette to lie in a natural continuation of a classical way of providing colour to rooms and buildings, both in terms of nuance and composition. This classical form must not be confused with a conservative approach. I was not concerned with doing something 'historically correct', but rather with establishing a new connection between the three buildings, their use and location. At the same time, the colour palette is meant to fit with modernization and allow a contemporary expression.

The colour palette was developed on the basis of some old series of colour samples from the Copenhagen Painters' Guild. They were scanned and adjusted relative to the individual rooms. I involved Sten Valling, Byens Farve, as my consultant, with his considerable experience with colours and paints in listed buildings. It seemed obvious to use environmentally friendly and older types of paints, as one of the goals of KEBMIN is to appeal to green building.

The listed





Stormgade fairy tale

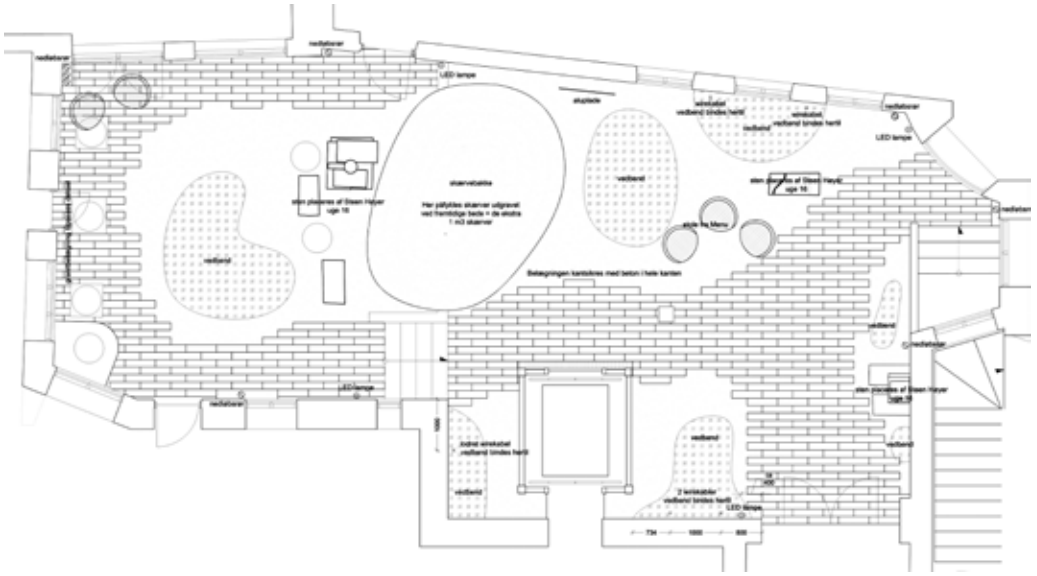
by Steen Høyer

'Fairy tale courtyard project for the Danish Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs and The Agency for Palaces and Cultural Properties, in cooperation with architect Signe Høyer Frederiksen.

a. The courtyard space signals expectation and time with a digital countdown from a ruinous building site with white gleaming glass elements, sandstone fragments, crushed gravel, ivy and gilt traces from another age. An interplay of time, history, expectation and hope.'

– Steen Høyer, 2006

Steen Høyer changed the artistic treatment of the courtyard, adding new elements and removing others. A large aluminium plate now stands at an angle along one wall, attracting glimmers of light from the sky down into the courtyard. Wall lighting and chairs have been added and greenery continues up the walls in several places so that the courtyard will be lush and green to look at in future.



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