Free your mind

A TREATMENT
ARENA FOR
REHABILITATION
IN PRISON

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Master in space
Konstfack
2013
I firmly believe that shapes that we are surrounded by influence us - both consciously and subconsciously. It is important for me as a designer to be aware of what my design communicates to be able to customize the experience of it.

There will always be misunderstandings and interpretations that I do not have control over, but to have as a goal to master this “language” is important for me in order to create functional environments and objects.

Cecilie Holmboe
In Scandinavian prisons today there is an increasing focus on the rehabilitation of criminal behaviour. Through work, education and treatment programs the probation services goal is to bring about change and encourage the inmates to live a better life after time served, not simply provide secure custody.

My project is about how interior architecture can contribute to the therapy that is a part of this rehabilitation. With having respect, humanity and tolerance as core values in my project I want to communicate that everyone deserves a second chance and that we can not give up on anyone.

Working with the symbolism and philosophy of basic geometrical shapes within the design phase I have created a separate pavilion on the prison site. The pavilion is the context of the therapy space and is an addition to the existing architecture.

The result is a space that through form, function and material choices has the goal to facilitate the therapy and influence the inmate during the sessions to improve the outcome of the treatment.

“When we begin to see our world in simple shapes, our reality begins to simplify, and awareness comes about in a natural flow. Observing in terms of reduction eliminates unnecessary judgement.”

AVIA VENEFICA
VISIT AT X-CONS HANINGE

I arrived at X-CONS right before lunchtime a cold day in late January. I entered the building and met Dennis Aksay inside. He was the only one there. He offered me coffee and we sat down in his office.

Ahead of this meeting I had contacted several prisons in the Stockholm area to try to arrange a visit. I find it ironic how hard it actually is to get inside a prison without knowing anybody or having someone to visit there. At this point I was not exactly certain what the focus of my research was going to be, but I wanted to start with finding out more about how it is to live in a prison.

Due to the time plan I had to find other ways to get inside information. I knew about a Norwegian organization that helps ex convicts find their way back into society after the release. Although I knew I wanted my project to be somewhere inside a prison I found it was a nice way to start my research with talking with someone who had experienced serving time and was now on the outside.

I found the corresponding organization in Sweden - X-CONS. X-CONS has several independent departments placed all over Sweden. The organizations goal is to help people from the moment they are released from prison to stay away from crime and drugs by offering a new honest, common and drug-free social network.

Former criminals that have succeeded in creating a new life without crime, run it. They offer social activities like organizing trips and a festival, help with economical planning, housing situation, employment, dealing with drug addiction and gambling problems.

Dervis “Dennis” Aksay is the manager of X-CONS in Haninge outside of Stockholm. I e-mailed him and explained my project and what I was working on and he called me up and we arranged a meeting the week after.

As we sat down in his office Aksay explained that the organization works as a youth club for young adults in the area. They work just as much with preventive work in giving the kids a place to hang out after school, as an alternative to getting in trouble, as towards prisons in the area. After this introduction he showed me around in the building. He showed me the pool table, kitchen area, the disco/play room with computers and hang out area while he talked about what work they do and what goals the organization have. It was obvious he was proud.

As it was getting close to lunchtime, Dennis suggested we go to the Chinese resataurant next door and continue the interview there.

After a quick Google search before the meeting I found out that Dennis was no stranger to pri
son himself. I found it was hard for me to know exactly what to ask about and I was excited about hearing him tell it him self. I find it interesting to notice what parts that the person is most interested to talk about without me leading too much.

After ordering food and sitting down I asked Dennis about his background. He laughed and said loud and clear: “I was a criminal!” Although this was not news, his answer chocked me a little. Curious to find out how he got involved with criminal activity, I asked if he could tell me his story from the beginning. Dennis explained that after getting kids at a really young age, he was forced to marry the mother of his children. This was in Turkey, where he is originally from. He came to Sweden alone at the age of twenty-one. It was hard being alone and the criminal environment was an easy way to get in touch with people and get “friends”. From this time and forward he became more and more involved with smuggling drugs, robberies and blackmailing people who owed him money. His cocaine addiction got heavier and at one point he was even forced to operate on his nose that the drug had taken a toll on. He struggled with aggression issues as a side effect of the drug habit, and was in and out of jail for many years. He even showed me a gun shoot scar on his leg.

I could not believe that the man he was talking about was the same man who sitting in front of me. How had he managed to get where he was today??

In 2005 he attended a treatment program initiated by the prison he was then in. At this point he attended the program as a part of his plan to fool the system. The goal was to convince the prison authorities that he had put his criminal behaviour in the past. He felt clever when he succeeded with his plan and back in the free world he continued on the criminal path. This resulted in a new arrest and in 2008 he was caught in Malmö. Back in prison he made the biggest decision in his life so far. Dennis suddenly saw his life with new eyes. He told me that he had written a list. On one side he wrote: “I am criminal. What do I have?” It was easy for him to list a number of things under this point - money, fast cars, drugs, parties, ladies – an action life. On the other side he wrote: “I am not criminal. What do I have?” He answered: The respect of my family and honesty - this weight heavier than anything.

When Dennis was released, he started from scratch building up what is now the successful organization X-CONS Haninge. Dennis managed all by himself to turn his life around and use his criminal background to help others. He contributes to the society with his experience and knowledge from his criminal past. This gives him confidence and motivation to keep going and staying on the right side of the law.

A WAY IN

During my visit at X-CONS, I asked Dennis if he knew a way for me to get to visit a prison in
Stockholm. He regularly goes and visits institutions to give lectures and share information about X-CONS, so he knows how it works. Dennis told me that the reason for me not getting answers to my e-mails probably was that they did not have any time and that I had to have a connection to somebody familiar to the institution. So he suggested that I would go with him on his next visit. This made me glad since that gave me the opportunity to experience this myself and maybe talk with some of the inmates.

The upcoming week I joined Dennis on a visit to Prison Institution Asptuna that is located south of Stockholm on Lake Aspen in Botkyrka. This institution is an open prison and is therefore primarily intended for those who are serving prison terms in a year or less, and those who are at the end of a long sentence. Asptuna also serves inmates who have not yet timed penalties (the so-called ‘life sentence’) but because of the good character of the national institution has received application granted for the execution time of Asptuna. It was built in 1965 and expanded in 2004 with four newly built residential services with six locations with self-management in every department. Asptuna has room for hundred and ten inmates and employ forty persons, where twenty-one of whom are women.

I met up Dennis and one of his colleges at X-CONS in the afternoon, and we drove there together. I had tried to prepare my self mentally for this visit, but during my talks with Dennis I had realized more and more how hard it was to put myself in the shoes of an imprisoned human being. I had written down some questions, but not knowing if I would be able to talk with someone and how open they in that case would be, made it hard for me to prepare. Dennis had been joking about that I should just stay close to him in case something where to happen. Although I knew he was only fooling around, it made me kind of nervous.

**THE VISIT**

The security was less strict than I had imagined. The only thing we had to do was to go to the reception and hand in our id cards in exchange for a rubber visitor card. Dennis had called beforehand and cleared that it was ok that I was with them. We had managed to time it with the inmates’ fika break, so we sat down in the common area with around fifteen of the guys. I felt like an alien. We started with introducing ourselves, and after Dennis and his colleague, I explained why I was there and what I was working on. They seemed interested and Dennis gave me the opportunity to ask questions. At that point I realized that I was afraid to ask. I did not know the codes.

This got me to think about a documentary I have seen the week before, Miami Mega Jail. Here several of the inmates talk about the language they use amongst themselves to separate themselves from the guards and other gangs in the jail. There is a codex that you have to know to be accepted, and for the newly arrived prisoner you can only learn it the hard way. I could now understand more about what that meant. Not that anything would happen to me if I asked the wrong question, but I was afraid to come off as
disrespectful. Was it ok for me to ask what they were sentenced for? Was that something they talked about amongst themselves? Dennis, that actually knew several of them from serving time back in the days, was really helpful and asked questions about age and when they are getting out. I could see how he, with his background, benefited from speaking both “languages”.

After a slow start several of them started to talk more. I told them about my project and how I believe that our physical environment influences us all, and that I was researching how that could matter in a prison context. At first they did not understand exactly what I was asking, but then I rephrased it: “-Is it a point to design a prison environment as cruel as possible to make criminals not want to end up there again?” An inmate answered: “-you get used to everything”. He did not think it would have any effect, except maybe for young first-timers. I find this interesting in the way after some time you see yourself blind on the surroundings – whatever they are.

It turned out that several had experiences from other prisons in Sweden and they described Asptuna as paradise – they could basically do what they wanted as long as they stayed inside the premises. If they were to go outside the electrical band strapped to their ankle, would give them away, and they would risk going to a stricter prison. Asking them if they where involved in any courses or therapy groups they said that it is voluntary and that what most of them did was hanging around watching television. One guy, who had been in Hall Prison, one of the strictest prison institutions in Sweden, could tell me that there they were locked in for 23 h of the day, and he appreciated then much more the possibility to go out and talk with someone.

In the car on the way back, I felt kind of exhausted, but also excited. I had gotten confirmed thoughts I had before the visit, and learned things that I could use in my project. At the same time I had gotten a face on a small group of the people I was going to design for – my target group. And I felt closer to what I wanted my project to be about – that everyone deserves a second chance! I had also experienced how hard it was to relate to what an imprisoned person is going through, but that although they are in prison, they are just human beings like you and me.

Hearing Dennis’ story and after the visit at Asptuna, I realized how important rehabilitation is – both for society and for the criminal offender. The turnaround operation that Dennis had done demands a huge amount of determination and motivation. Not everyone has that kind of strength. This got me to think: What happens with the people in prison that do not possess Dennis’ abilities? Do the Prison and Probation Service help in any way? And in what way is that? And how could I, the designer, contribute in the situation?

**HOW COULD I, THE DESIGNER, CONTRIBUTE IN THE SITUATION?**
THE SYSTEM

Swedish Prison and Probation Service’s (SP&PS) aim is preventing crime, increasing public safety and contributing to a safer society. SP&PS is a government agency that is part of the Swedish judicial system. The main tasks of the Prison and Probation Service are to implement prison and probation sentences; to supervise conditionally released persons, to implement instructions for community service, and to carry out pre-sentence investigations in criminal cases.

Swedish Prison and Probation Services vision is to bring about change, not simply provide secure custody. They want to encourage the inmates to live a better life after serving their sentence.

Prisons have security classifications. Closed prisons are divided into Classes 1-2 while open prisons have their own group, Class 3. Most control is applied to the closed Class 1 prisons. The primary reason for the distinct security levels is to place the right inmate in the right prison based on a risk analysis.

Inmates in prison have employment obligations. However, you cannot force an unmotivated inmate to participate in treatment programs, so an important task for The Swedish Prison and Probation Service staff is to improve the motivation of those inmates.

REHABILITATION

The part of rehabilitation that concerns criminal behaviour is called penology. Penology means to restore to useful life, as through therapy and education or to restore to good condition, operation, or capacity.

The assumption of rehabilitation is that people are not permanently criminal and that it is possible to restore a criminal to a useful life, to a life in which they contribute to themselves and to society. A goal of rehabilitation is to prevent habitual offending, also known as criminal recidivism. Rather than punishing the harm out of a criminal, rehabilitation would seek, by means of education or therapy, to bring a criminal into a more normal state of mind, or into an attitude that would be helpful to society, rather than be harmful to society.

So how they work with rehabilitation in Swedish prisons today? At the arrival to an institution an individual implementation plan is drawn up for all convicts. The plan is being established by the penitentiary staff along with the prisoner what objectives relevant to him or her and what steps need to be taken to achieve the objectives. It may be to help out with economy issues, housing, education, work and abuse of drugs. The content of the plan is also important for what kind of employment the convict will have in prison. An evaluation of the inmate’s situation and how the plan works are done on a regular basis. Another part of this is treatment.
In other words, the rehabilitation is divided into three parts - treatment, education and work. I have focused on how design can contribute in the treatment part of the rehabilitation.

THE TREATMENT PROGRAMS

In prisons in Sweden during the 2000s - often in collaboration with other countries – there have been developed new treatment programs. These are conducted in accordance with specific manuals and with specially trained presenters, behavioural scientists and psychologists. Treatment programs have demonstrated on a scientific basis to have an effect on recidivism in crimes. SP&PS has a dozen of these scientifically accredited crime and substance misuse programs for various target groups, including domestic violence program; Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), substance abuse program “Dare to Choose” and sexual offenses program; Relationship And Cohabitation (ROS). Several of the programs are cognitive and behaviour oriented. It can happen in the form of courses, group talks and one-on-one therapy.

INSPIRATION

An inspiration during this entire project has been the design by Interior Architect Beate Ellingsen and her team in Halden Prison in Norway. This was the first time in a Nordic context that an interior architect was involved in the design of a prison. The prison opened in may 2012 and created controversy all over the world, discussing if it is “too nice” and comments that sounded like “If you are going to commit a crime, do it in Norway. Because if you get caught, you’ll end up in a hotel!”

Visiting Asptuna I asked the inmates there if they had heard of Halden Prison in Norway. Their response was laughter, and like the critics, they described it as a hotel. Several of them could agree upon that Norway’s Prison politics is way ahead of the Swedish system. I have no proof of this, but found it interesting since I was looking at prisons in both countries. The thing with Halden Prison as I see it is that it is not freer than other penitentiary institutions with the same security level. It is just that it has been designed with a set of values that is quite uncommon in a prison context. With humanity and respect as core values, Halden Prison represents a new era in prison history. I could see that modern architecture was being confused with freedom since it is such a big contrast to a lot of other less modern prison buildings.

The thing I find most interesting with Halden Prison is the attitude to focus on the future of the inmates. The purposes of a Prison institution not only to punish the criminal and protect the society, but also to give people a second chance. This means treating an imprisoned person with humanity and respect and providing him or her with the tools to change their own behaviour and way of thinking.
GEOMETRY AS METHOD

The thesis work started out with a workshop held by Matti Klenell and Lars Petterson, two Swedish furniture and product designers. Working on the assignment in the wood workshop here in Konstfack, I started thinking about how I work with design. I realized that whether it is researching a concept or visualizing a feeling, I always tend to use geometry in one way or the other.

I have for as long as I can remember been fascinated by geometry. It is not the math that I’m particularly interested in. I am interested in it as a topic - the psychological and philosophical aspect of geometry, and I have tried to understand my fascination through reading. Egyptian history, Bauhaus, religious teachings and astrology are examples of areas I have touched upon in my research. Working with the circle, the square and the triangle I find a calm that for me represents a kind of “back to basic”. From the beginning of time it has been through these shapes that human beings have tried to understand the world. They are simple and complex at the same time, and are, for me, what creates the magic. We teach our children basic shapes to help them conceptualize the shape of their world. A quote that I came over that describes my approach to geometry and how I used it in this project is this: “If we begin to see our world in simple shapes, our reality begins to simplify. Observing in terms of reduction can help to eliminate unnecessary judgement”. I find that this is in many situations what people need to do, especially in prison.

For me the geometry is an inspiration and a design method. I see the basic, platonic shapes as a set of rules or formulas that I use as a guide in the form giving process. The geometry represents a security, although I define or choose the rules or formulas I work by myself. The rules become the brief and provide me with arguments for design solutions.

How I work has become especially clear to me after starting on my master degree at Konstfack in Stockholm. Now after soon five years of studying this field, I am able to see my process from the outside. I can look back at projects I have done during my bachelor and see that in the projects I feel I failed or did not turn out that good, I was not true to my method, although at that point I was not aware of what my method was yet. The reason for this is that it is grounded in me somehow. I appreciate structure, predictability and rules, not only in my design but in my everyday life as well. This does not mean that I am not spontaneous or curious; it is a way for me to organize my life and my work. I am a designer that works easier with a given brief than with total freedom, and when the brief is not given the geometry helps me.
THE LINK

It is not just the actuality of the chosen field of this thesis that made me want to work with this area. During the workshop I realised that there was a parallel between my method and a prison. A prison exists as a consequence of some people’s failure to follow the rules that makes our society function - the juridical system. A prison is based on broken rules and can only function when people inside follow them. The similarity is that there are in both cases crucial what rules you choose to follow. My method can become my prison – it can both punish and help me - I have to use it in the right way. This is also how I see spending time in prison – you can choose to use it wisely and take advantage of the rehabilitation that is offered and if not, risking going back again.
MEANING IS PRODUCED THROUGH THE INTERACTION OF INDIVIDUALS
CONTACT

During the research phase I have worked on getting in contact with as many people as I could that could have any sort of link to or could give me information that could be valuable for my project. As I got deeper into the research phase, it has become more and more important for me that the design choices I make in the project are grounded in reality and based on real peoples experiences. This is because of the seriousness in the situation. It is about peoples future and their own and society's security.

Interaction has been a recurrent topic in my projects since I started Konstfack, especially working with patterns and the interaction between two- and three-dimensional shapes.

While researching the word interaction, the term interactionism came up. Interactionism is micro-sociological and believes that meaning is produced through the interactions of individuals. This is also translatable to a method of research. Interactionists want to understand each individual, and how they act within society. In extreme cases, they would deny class as an issue, and would say that we cannot generalize that everyone from one social class thinks in one way. Instead they believe everyone has different attitudes, values, culture and beliefs. We all have different stories to tell and everyone deserves to be listened to. I cannot listen to all the stories, but instead I have focused on getting in contact with people that play different parts in the situation I was working with.

In research, interactionists gather qualitative data and reject statistical (quantitative) data, a method preferred by structuralists. Inspired by this, I found that in my research phase I had to try to work as a micro-sociologist. In talking with people I wanted to consider the situation and use the interactionists method of unstructured interview.

A BRIDGE INTO DESIGN

As a sketch method I have written several critical fictions. Writing the fictions I have forced myself to describe the desired outcome of my project during the process. This has been help for me in working with the design and also to communicate my project.

In my oral exam presentation I ended the presentation with reading a fiction that I have written as a walk through of the experience of coming to the space and attending a therapy session. You can find the fictions on page 35.
The goal with the research phase was for me to get “into prison” and find the focus of the project, starting out with only the attitude that everyone deserves a second chance.

I find that the increasing focus and time spent on treatment programs inside the Scandinavian prisons demands also an architecture that supports this work. I am a true believer in that the physical environment can influence the inmate during the therapy. If this is done right it can have a positive impact on the outcome. If the environment is not right it can have the exact opposite effect.

To get a picture of what kind of spaces that are in use for the therapy today, I contacted Karoline Anker and Thale Åsli. Anker works in Ila Detention and Security Prison outside of Oslo, and Åsli works in Bergen Prison in Hordaland on Norway’s west coast. This is two of the largest Prison Institutions in Norway. They are both old, but quite modern. Both Åsli and Anker work with the security in the prisons as guards. What I wanted to know was if there are specific spaces used for the rehabilitation, how you get to these spaces, what the interior is like and so on.

In Ila there are a couple of rooms that are used for this purpose. Anker shortly described the rooms as light yellow with concrete walls, random furniture, linoleum flooring and in a basement. To get there you have to go down a pair of stairs and go through a narrow hallway that she described as claustrophobic. I think that it is not only the design of the space that is important for the outcome of the therapy, but also the transition between the rest of the prison and the therapy space.

Åsli could tell me that Bergen prison was not initially built with the thought that there should be treatment rooms/venues here. So today it is offices, meeting rooms, etc. that are being used for these activities. This is a clear indication that the prison needs to be altered and departments has to be adjusted to the new needs that is a consequence of new treatment programs. In Bergen Prison there is on average about two rooms in each department used for therapy, groups etc. These rooms are characterized by the fact that they were not originally intended for this purpose and Åsli finds that this does not benefit the situation. They have cell windows, linoleum floors and painted concrete walls. In some of the rooms the staff has tried to "freshen up" with artificial plants and curtains are usually absent. Sofas and sofa chairs are put in some places, but not always. The room has usually clear signs that it is taking place in a prison.

There are also a number of rooms that should
not be used for such activities as it is not sound-proof enough, and that people who stay in the hallway can hear sensitive information. She also mentioned was that it would be good for the efficiency of the therapy to have permanent rooms for the therapy because now they often have to move around.

So my general impression from talking with them was that the spaces that in use today are an attempt to create a functional environment for the therapy, but that the existing architecture are setting boundaries.

CREATING A CONTEXT FOR THE SPACE

This insight made it obvious to me that giving the activity an own unit or department outside the actual prison building but inside the prison fence was a right decision for several reasons. With an independent building I would be able to create a solution that fits in almost all prisons that have some ground to build on. Since this means that I am not dependant on the existing architecture, I can design what I mean is the optimal solution for the activity. With giving the activity a permanent space to take place in, I would signalize the importance of the rehabilitation and give it a higher status than it has today. This will create predictability for the inmates in that the therapy is the same place every session and therefore makes it easier to jump back in the therapy process from session to session. Placing the activity outside of the prison building changes the experience of using the space – the psychological aspect of leaving the prison building and entering another space – the transition. I see this act as a parallel act to being released, as a “practice”, physically and mentally.

With creating an environment that is a contrast to the rest of the prison environment I want to encourage the inmates to change. I want an unusual architecture to be a symbol to remind the inmates of the world outside of the prison walls. The goal with the treatment and the therapy is to encourage and motivate the inmates, so that the prison does not become the home for the rest of their lives. To succeed with improving the therapy situation I need to have the past, the present and the future in mind in the process and in the design, thinking about associations to forms and material.

INTERVIEWING THE THERAPIST

To get a grip on the more emotional side of the therapy situation I needed to talk to a therapist that leads the sessions. In hope of getting a better insight in how the inmates experience the therapy and how the activity is played out, I contacted Kristin Burley, a colleague of Anker at Ila Prison and Security Institution. Burley is a clinical sociologist and works directly with the inmates in the therapy situation. Many of the design choices are based on our talk.

The interview started with questions about Bur-
leys background. She could tell me that before Ila she worked at a crisis centre for women, so she has experience from both sides of the story - the victims and the criminal offenders. Burley has worked at Ila since 2004.

Asking about how the inmates attitude towards the therapy are, Burley could tell me that although there are in many cases mandatory, all of the inmates want to attend the therapy sessions and appreciate this offer. It is good for the inmates to experience the interaction and group dynamics with the other inmates under controlled circumstances. For the inmates in isolation the interaction in the therapy situation is even more important. Burley works with both the group talk sessions and the one-on-one talks.

I continued with asking about the space, with focus on how she experienced that the room they are in during the therapy influences the inmates. A therapy situation can initially be very challenging for most of us. For the therapy to be effective it is required that you are open to sharing private experiences and emotions. This can be very uncomfortable if you are not used to it, and it can take time to get used to and relax in that kind of situation. Through the design and material choices I want to help along this process. The space is very important, and the inmates are much more sensitive than you can imagine she could tell me.

THE RULE

Since I am not an architect, I have kept the design of the pavilion I have created on a conceptual level. I have focused on the movement in the space, material choices in the interior and the feeling of privacy.

By using my method I have developed a geometrical rule that both the interior and the exterior relates to. As a starting point for the plan of the space and the base for my rule, I have altered a basic geometrical shape – a rectangle. The rectangle represents the shape of the spaces the inmates are used to and by using it as a starting point I will be able to create a balance in the contrast between the prison space and the therapy space without it being to new and unfamiliar. It can also symbolize structure and masculinity - an appropriate base for the activity.

The rectangle shape is 7 times 5,5 meters, 38,5 square meters - a size that I find suitable for the activity based on the size for the spaces it is in today. I divided it diagonally, mirrored one part and put them back together. The result is a square with two ninety-degree corners opposite of each other and one corner with 104 degrees and one with 76 degrees.

The rule is following each side’s parallel line on the opposite side of it. Drawing up these inside the square shape I have developed a pattern similar to the construction of a snail shell. This has become the base for the movement in the space. The movement forms a spiral that works so that you gradually end up in the core of the space where that therapy happens. A spiral can symbolize both expansion and contraction. I find that the moving pattern is a parallel to the act of being in therapy – you contract into yourself to expand your mind.
There is one entrance and one exit in the pavilion. This is to emphasize the process that being in therapy is – that when you leave, you are in a different place than when you came in.

Working out this rule was important to have a solid base – a safety – for the next part of the design phase; deciding the more concrete parts, measurements, walls and doors etc. At this point I had to decide what the space needed to contain to work as a support for the therapy, and based on the research, the brief was like this:

- A space that is a contrast to the rest of the prison.
- A space that can be used by groups as well as only two persons.
- A space that provides you with privacy, but at the same time feels free.
- A space that is predictable.
- A space that can bring about change.
It has been goal for me in the design of the space to create a balance between different elements - contrast and privacy. Burley told me that many of the inmates suffer from paranoia in the way that they can easily think that they are being monitored. To give a sense of privacy and communicate trust in this situation is crucial for the efficiency of the treatment, so I wanted to communicate that as a user of the space you are sheltered, but that you at the same time can look out.

In the plan it is the angels that differ from ninety degrees that drives the movement in the space forward. In the elevation I have kept the lines horizontal and had focus on how I could bring daylight in and at the same time keep the privacy in the space. The inside and the outside of the entrance area are on the same level. A stair brings you up to the level of the seating area that is the core of the space. Here the ceiling is lifted equivalent with the height of the seating level and a row of glass windows runs along this part of the space to bring in light.

Looking at the psychological aspect of the act of going up and into something, I want to promote the feeling of safety and that you have an overview – you are able to look out, without anybody seeing you from the outside. From the outside, the fact that the seating area is on a higher level than the place you enter, is not visible. The feeling of safety is also promoted in that there shall be no doubt in that the space is grounded.
THE INTERIOR

The core of the space where the therapy is held is square – a predictable and simple shape that is easy to relate to. Still using the parallel sides of the uneven rectangle in the plan, the interior relates to the outside lines, not to the walls in the actual space. The furniture is a consequence of the architecture it is in. This means that the bench system, that runs along the three walls in the space are twisted and ends the spiral movement.

The benches are fixed along the walls inside the space with a casted concrete base and wood seating on top. The backrest is quite high, 80 cm, and shall seem protective. I decided early in the process that I wanted to create one space that could be used for both group sessions and one-on-one talks. I have worked with the distance between the benches. It is important that the inmates feels that they have their own space, but at the same time that they are part of a group. All the interior is fixed because I want there to be predictability in that the room looks the same from time to time you go there. This is a help to get you back into the therapy where you left off in the previous session. The flexibility is in where you choose to sit in the space.
A DISTRACTION AND A FOCUS POINT

Being familiar with a therapy session myself I experienced the importance of having something to rest or let your eyes wander on, as an alternative to eye contact. While talking about sensitive subjects that can be linked with regret and shame, my aim with applying pattern in the interior is to make this situation easier with having something to look at. I want the pattern to work as an art piece where you can discover new things in from session to session.

I have developed this pattern over time - or rather the rule the pattern relates to. It started out with a course where my task was to research interaction. The result was an investigation on the three-dimensional tetrahedron shape and how it could be translated into a two-dimensional pattern. The pattern is half regular and half intuitive, and can appear random, but the fact is that it is only made out of two different pieces that is placed in a very controlled way.

The pattern is the detailing in the otherwise very abstract space. It is represented in two different ways in the space - in different material and scale – as bars in the windows and in the benches.

The solid concrete bench is covered with cherry wood pieces that form the pattern and shall be a warm contrast to the concrete. The copper ornaments some parts of the windows and is the other representation of the pattern in the space. The bars work with the light and shall transform the light concrete walls and floors into a canvas for the shadow. Cherry wood and copper are within the same colour scheme but with different properties. Linking these materials together in two interpretations of the same pattern shall signalize thoughtfulness in the design.

That the same pattern is being represented in different materials and sizes several places in the space is not suppose to be obvious, but something that you may notice after a while coming back there again and again. The experience of the pattern changes according to where you choose to sit in the space.
Burley told me that her clients are very sensitive to the amount of light in the space, especially from artificial light sources. If she forgets to dim down the light, comments like “What is this? An interrogation room or what??” has occurred.

The Norwegian product designer Daniel Rybakken and his approach to daylight versus artificial light sources inspire me. In a lecture he held in the beginning of February at Konstfack he explained his fascination with sunlight in interior. Sunlight that comes from for example a window in an interior gives you information of the outside – you are reminded of the fact that you are a part of a bigger picture and that the context goes beyond the walls that surrounds you.

Being reminded that there is something outside of the prison walls is a big part of the rehabilitation work. So I wanted to bring in natural daylight – as a reminder of this and a seldom phenomenon for inmates at the high security prisons.

In the space I have, inspired by Rybakken, worked with finding a balance between transparent and solid surfaces - walls and windows. The natural light play the main role, but is supported by discrete down lights in the ceiling when the natural daylight is not enough.
TRUST IN MATERIALS

In a therapy situation there is important to be honest – to the therapist and the people in the group, but first and foremost to yourself. I want to signalize the importance of this in the choice of materials in the space and the phrase “what you see is what you get” has been my mantra.

I have chosen few materials with contrasting properties. Together they shall gradually guide you from the outside and in, from plain concrete to warmer surfaces in wood and copper. I want to create a contrast to the rest of the prison where painted concrete surfaces, linoleum floors and plain surfaces in most cases are everywhere.

The combination of simple basic materials - wood, glass, metal and untreated concrete – shall express sincerity and encourage trust and honesty.
The last thing I talked with Kristin Burley about was how she deals with the fact that her clients have in many cases done horrible things. I asked her if she thinks there are some inmates there is no hope for. She answered: “I am not allowed to think in that way”.

I admire this attitude and have brought it with me throughout the process of designing the therapy space and think it describes an attitude that we all shall strive after.
EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE. NOBODY DESERVES TO BE GIVEN UP UPON.
Evaluation

THE ORAL EXAM

After my presentation, where I finally saw my project as a whole and the first time that I had some distance to it, there was time to discuss the solution. The critics were Bengt Drakenmark and Pelle Backman, both architects. What I experienced as the most important thing we discussed was what kind of prison the treatment space would fit in. During the process I have not decided on what kind of security level the pavilion is most suited for. During my talk with Burley from Ila Prison and Detention institution we talked about the importance of this kind of interaction for the inmates - especially for the people in isolation. Now I can see that my space would be most effective for persons in the security level 1 prisons, because of the contrast in environment and for the importance of the interaction with other people.

THE SPRING EXHIBITION

Working on how to exhibit my work as I see it, I could choose to focus on one part of the project and exhibit for example only the pattern. As I sketched on it I realized that doing it like this, the project would loose its context. So I decided on showing a little bit of all parts, where the most important would be the 1:10 scale model. Posters with pictures and information about the pattern, plan and the context were displayed on the wall behind. I exhibited in S3 – a quite intimate space - together with two students from Bachelor. They had also worked with space and were showing scale models as well. I find that our projects fitted well together.

Observing the audience during the first weekend I realized that the spring exhibition was not really the right medium for my project. I was dependant on people stopping up and taking time
to read the posters that I had made. Since the exhibition in itself is huge and most people are overwhelmed before they actually entered my space, this was too much to ask for.

THOUGHTS

Before the final graduation dinner at Konstfack all the graduates of 2013 from IA department and our teachers met in the Perception Studio to mingle and hand out scholarships. Four from Bachelor and four from Master where given a scholarship out of Ulla Fröberg-Cramér stipendieanstalt. One of the teachers read out a description of a student’s work and time at Konstfack before announcing whom it was. When it came down to the last Master student this was read out loud by Anna Odlinge:

“During your years at Konstfack you have both tried to find your own modes of working and to understand what you as an interior architect can do for people – all people. With your project you show how it is possible to manage difficult design tasks and not to lose your artistic integrity while doing so. You created for yourself a design task that seldom lands on an architect’s working desk and found a way to research it thoroughly. You also managed to use your modes of operation – your modes of design – while creating a space for possible change. You also show how it may be possible for an interior architect to lead the way through an entire building construction.”

Hearing the words ‘all people’ I realized it was my work she was describing. With this as proof I feel I have succeeded with what I set out do and work with at Konstfack and is determined to continue to use my skills as an interior architect to help people – all people.
Critical fictions

WORKING WITH THE PAST – PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

He had been there for two years and six months already. He knew the system now. All the routines. Who he could talk to if he needed anything. Who he should stay away from. He would not call those around him friends, rather kindred spirits. He felt safe. Safer than outside when he thought of it.

This period represented only a fraction of his total time served. He had managed to become forty-three years old and since the first arrest at the age of nineteen, he had spent more time on the inside than outside. In recent years he had begun to reflect on why he had ended up where he did, again and again.

There were held discussion groups in the institution he was in now, a form of therapy that he initially had been opposed to. The aim with it was to get the convicts to "open up". He had not previously been so interested and did not see the point of sitting down to unravel the past. What was done was done, he thought, nothing to do with that now. The drug habit had taken him three weeks to get rid of. It had been like going through hell, but it was nothing compared to sit and talk about himself. He felt exposed in a way he had never done before, though not for others than himself. That was perhaps the worst aspect of it - looking at himself in the mirror, in retrospective. What had he done with his life? How did he get here?

He was born a little bit outside of Drammen. His father worked as an accountant and his mother a nurse. He and his two year older brother had never gotten much pressure from home about what they should do in life. They both did fine in school. The future was not really an issue at home and as young men, they were generally pleased to have free rein and almost no supervision. Now, in retrospect, he could see that he had managed the freedom the wrong way.

"Idleness is the root of all evil" was a saying he had grown up with, without it properly was taken into account in the home he came from. It was not until he was at the age of forty-three that he fully understood its full meaning.

To make a long story short, he used his free time to hang out with his brother and his friends. They had not much to do other than to sit and chat. It became common to drink alcohol and smoke marijuana if you were lucky enough to get hold of it. One thing led to the other and innocent drugs were increasingly replaced with stronger ones – more expensive drugs that demanded more money. Nobody had a decent income, since no one had real job in lack of proper education. To resort to petty crimes became the solution. Before he knew it several in the gang had become acquaintances of the police and it was now more difficult to remain anonymous and simultaneously entertain the growing need for drugs.

The days came and went and were pretty much the same. You were always alone and you were never alone. He rarely got visits. His parents had stopped coming and the relationships he had established between his periods of imprisonment, did not go deeper than that the contact got lost when he was caught again. He had spent many years blaming the system and the government for his situation. Every period he had spent in prison had been used to plan new crimes and
conspiring to get allies on the inside. But as time went on he realized more and more how little benefiting his behaviour had been, to himself but also to his surroundings.

The institution he lived in was more modern. When he had been put there after the conviction, he had been given information about how the institution functioned from day to day, but also what kind of priorities they had there. This was not so unusual, he just wondered why they bothered to pursue a gang of criminal losers. What the institution focused on was getting the inmates to spend their time behind bars constructively, not just to work and participate in cooking and order, but to look inside themselves and reflect over their actions. And to be able to do this he needed a push in the right direction.

He had felt lonely for a long time, but noticed that participation in the discussion group acted as a support. He was not particularly active, but just to sit and listen to the others made him not feel so alone anymore. And then there was also something about coming into this room where the different forms of therapy were held.

The space was separate from the other departments. It did not fit in with the rest of the architecture. There were certain details that he did not recognize from something else, while at the same time it reminded him of something. It was designed so that it worked for conversations privately and for occasions where one would gather in groups. The department and the cells he was accustomed to was made out of concrete, linoleum, fixed furnishings in light birch veneer and soft coloured painted surfaces - an environment that worked for most people in the way that it was nothing special about it. Neutral. In this room there was a different atmosphere.

Most of the interior was fixed. There were skylights in the seating section. A rare treat for an inmate. In this space there was a lot of talk about the future. At first it was strange to sit and plan for something that was so far ahead. He still had a little under three years left. It was nice to let your eyes wander along the room’s walls and get somehow entertained and give freedom to let the thoughts live their own life. It was a kind of subtle patterning that emerged after sitting in the room for a while, he eventually noticed. The nice thing was that this triggered something in him. It gave him hope in a way he could not properly describe - an urge to see something other than the inside of a prison for the rest of his life.

The tone between the inmates was usually pretty harsh, but he noticed that this changed in this space. In the department it could be pretty tough - men who would assert themselves and not show any weaknesses. It was comfortable with the quiet atmosphere here. He was not particularly interested in religion, but it was like a kind of solemn in here, but at the same time had a casual and an open feel to it. He noticed all inmates interacted with, respected and benefited from the use of this space, each in their own way.
The institution he lived in now was more modern. When he had been put there after the conviction, he had been given information about how the institution functioned from day to day, but also what kind of priorities they had there. What the institution focused on was getting the inmates to spend their time behind bars constructively, not just to work and participate in cooking and order, but to look inside themselves and reflect through treatment programs and therapy.

This was not so unusual, he just wondered why they bothered to pursue a gang of criminal losers. At the same time it was nice that for once in his life he got the impression that the people around him was sincerely interested in investing in his future.

The aim with the therapy was to get the convicts to "open up". Just the thought of sitting down and unravel the past had in the beginning given him shivers down his spine. What was done was done, he thought, nothing to do with that now. The drug habit had taken him three weeks to get rid of. It had been like going through hell, but it was nothing compared to sit and talk about himself. He felt exposed in a way he had never done before, though not for others than himself. That was perhaps the worst aspect of it - looking at himself in the mirror, in retrospective. What had been done with his life? How did he get here?

As he would experience through the group talks, he had the same story as many other inmates in his department – starting in a young age hanging out with the wrong crowd, petty crimes that had escalated alongside with an increasing drug habit.

In the beginning the talking was uncomfortable. But there was something with this space that they where in. Like no other space inside the prison he felt safe. It was designed so that it worked for conversations privately and for occasions where one would gather in groups, and be appreciated the predictability that the therapy was held the same place every time. It made it easier for him to get back into the mode and back in the process where he left of last session.

Coming to this separate pavilion had become sort of a ritual. It was nice with an excuse to go outside on the way there, but the fact that it was not part of the existing architecture made the situation more valuable in a way.

It was certain details that he did not recognize from something else, while at the same time it reminded him of something. The contrast to the prison made him long for the outside. Was the inside of a prison the only thing he would see for the rest of his life?

The tone between the inmates was usually pretty harsh, but he noticed that this changed in the pavilion. In the department it could be pretty tough – men who would assert themselves and not show any weaknesses. It was a nice change with the quiet atmosphere here. He was not particularly interested in religion, but it was like a kind of solemn in here, at the same time it had a casual and an open feel to it, as he noticed that all inmates interacted, respected and benefited from, each in their own way.
Thank you!

Dennis Aksay, Thale Åsli, Karoline Anker, Kristin Burley, the inmates at Asptuna Prison Institution and all the other people that have helped and contributed with sharing your experiences and expertise.

Katarina Bonnevier, Jonas Osslund, Fanny Stenberg, Matti Klenell, Lars Petterson, Vesa Honkonen and especially Anna Odlinge for tutoring, support and guidance throughout the process.

The In Space master class of 2013 for helpful talks, inspiration and for creating a good atmosphere in the studio.

My family and friends, particularly Line and Benedicte, for enduring my ups and downs these last couple of months.

And my dear Johan for listening, coaching and being by my side regardless of my mood!