

OSLO JULY 22



HOYBLOKKE GOVERNMENT BUILDING OSLO AFTER BREIVIK ATTACK, 22 JULY 2011.

OVERVIEW

The Government Building in Oslo Norway was designed by Erling Viksjø (1910-1971) and completed in 1958. Designed in a late modern brutalist style, the “Hoyblokke” incorporated sandblasted cast concrete “murals” after designs by the artist Pablo Picasso rendered in a process patented by Viksjø called “Naturbetong”. Part of a complex of Government Buildings situated in the heart of Oslo, it housed the Offices of the Prime Minister of Norway among its other functions.

Mid-day on July 22, 2011, a racist, far-right militant, Anders Behring Breivik, drove a truck laden with explosives to the main entrance of the building and walked away. Ten minutes later it exploded, killing eight persons and injuring scores of others, causing enormous damage to the government center. Later it became clear that this first attack was only a diversion; as while emergency response to the horrible scene of the explosion was unfolding, Breivik, posing as a police officer, boarded a ferry to Utøya Island, the site of the Norwegian Labor Party youth camp. Breivik then opened fire on the vacationing youth present, killing 69 adolescents. Like Timothy McVeigh and the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, it was a case of domestic terrorism aimed at the built symbol of Government, the Hoyblokke, combined with a terrifying Columbine-like hunting down of innocent, unsuspecting adolescents on small Utøya Island.

The targeting of symbols of power and governance in the form of significant works of architecture in significant locations in significant cities is a fairly recent phenomenon, one that is reoccurring with disturbing frequency worldwide. Our interest this semester will be the process of what comes next; what is the role of architects and urban designers in the design of an appropriate response? Like the quandary posed by the abrupt destruction of the World Trade Center Twin Towers, Oslo's officials and the larger population has struggled with what to do next. The fact that the Hoyblokke survived structurally intact has made this quandary even more difficult. Should it be restored with the previously occupancy of government offices is a show of defiance? Or was this so traumatic an event that a different response is needed, one that veers towards memorialization of the victims and the site?

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A Competition for a temporary memorial for the site was held this year and the results can be seen here: <http://www.architecturenorway.no/stories/other-stories/hoyblokka-revisited-2014/>

The schemes have been well received by the residents of Oslo. However, being temporary solutions, the ultimate determination of the final form and nature of the future use of the site is still an active discussion.

The task of the Studio will be to propose the future use for the stabilized structure of Viksjo's Hoyblokke, proposing how to reintegrate it into the life and fabric of today's post-Breivik Oslo. What is the most appropriate next architectural step, incorporating the latest theory of preservation and urban marking of events of major import? Complicating this issue is the existence of significant works by Picasso embedded within the architecture.

The Studio will travel to Oslo the third week of September, visiting the site and meeting with faculty and students of Oslo's AHO, the chief planner of Oslo, as well as members of the planning process for the Government Complex. Students will then propose solutions that incorporate all of these various difficult issues into a proposal for the future of the Hoyblokke Site.