

Team Two: Density & Culture

Black Diamond

Copenhagen, Denmark

Extension to the Royal Library

Year Completed: 1999

Architect: schmidt hammer lassen



Project Summary:

The “Black Diamond” is a characteristic new library building at the waterfront of Copenhagen. The building from 1999 is designed by the Danish architects Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen as an extension of The Royal Library and lies adjacent to the old library cathedral of Hans J. Holm from 1906. However, in form and materials it strikingly contrasts the old library building.

The name refers to the prismatic sharp edges and the black marble plates and glass of the exterior, that reflects the water of the harbour. Also from the wave-like balconies of central foyer, that cuts into the building as 24 meter high atrium, there is a panoramic view over the harbour. The variety of cultural activities of the new building has turned The Royal Library into a central cultural centre of Copenhagen as part of the harbour promenade.

The seven stories of the building contain not only traditional library functions such as the four new reading rooms, but also a concert hall, exhibition galleries, bookshop, café and restaurant. The ceiling of the bridge between the old and the new is decorated by the Danish artist Per Kirkeby. In the old building of The Royal Library a Jewish museum has been designed by Daniel Libeskind in 2004 with sloping floors and light wooden interior.

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Group Leader: Nathan Smith, schmidt hammer lassen

Volunteer: Cecilie Osterby

Team Members:

Kim Herforth Nielsen (3XN)*

Daniel Elsea (Allies & Morrison)

Neil Billett (BuroHappold)

Susanna Sirefman (Dovetail Design Strategists)

Karen Frome (Rise Projects)

Gert Wingardh (Wingardhs)

Raymond Quinn (Arup)

Gunilla Kronvall, Architects Sweden

Henrik Oxvig, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

Mads Farsø, Copenhagen Architecture Festival

Thomas Vilmar, Rockfon

Mode of Transportation: Walking

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Prompts: Site Visit

15 MN Nathan presents the space, explains the project

30 MN Team walks around the site, and answers the following questions

- Explore the site, and consider where is the Black Diamond is:
 - a) Alleviating some of the stresses of density in the surrounding neighborhood?
 - b) Providing opportunities for increased density in the surrounding neighborhood?
- What unique design elements to the library invite passersby to interact with one another?

(Write or sketch)

- Who is the Black Diamond made for? What design elements give clues to the intended demographic for its use? (Write or sketch)
- When do you think this space would be the busiest? The quietest?
- Where in the design of the Black Diamond is there evidence of a user input?
- How do safety elements in the design of the Black Diamond impact its potential to facilitate or alleviate density for its surrounding area?
- How does the building engage its surrounding student community at the university? Where is there evidence of this relationship?
- Consider if the Black Diamond was somewhere else: What would change about the design of the building without this specific space on the harbor, as well as this specific surrounding community?

Prompt: Afternoon Session

As a group, pick either:

- 1) An iconic library or cultural center from another European city outside of Copenhagen.
- 2) Another cultural center in Copenhagen

The project you choose must be in a city that most team members know and have visited.

Consider the design elements and responses from your morning site visit to Black Diamond, as well as the knowledge of Copenhagen from your local team members. Work together to write a 200-word abstract and draw an accompanying sketch that engages and enhances the cultural center you've chosen for the year 2060 as a density alleviator and/or facilitator for its surrounding neighborhood. The space should:

- Accommodate a multigenerational audience and be equitable
- Include flexible programming for local interpretation
- Welcome strangers to interact with one another in new ways
- Consider the cultural center as a center of public space
- Offer unique services to local residents