

The overall PhD project, “The works of the Danish architect Hans Christian Hansen (HCH, 1901-1978): materials, materialization and context”, aims at documenting and analyzing the built works by HCH developed under the policies of the Danish Welfare State between the late 1930’s and early 1970’s as a project leader at the office of the City Architect in Copenhagen. The purpose of the project is 1) to provide knowledge of a little known Danish architect and body of work, which is material and tectonic-wise extraordinarily rich, and quite unusual in its geographical, historical and cultural context and 2) to situate HCH’s works within a general tectonic discussion from a bottom-up approach.

The PhD project is developed following a Research through Design methodology. Experiments, of different nature and duration, are supposed to expand on the overall knowledge of the project. In this way, the specific methodologies differ according to each experiment. However, as a general perspective, the project starts out at the building site, rather than the archive. In the one hand, this is due to the lack of HCH’s personal information, and in the other hand, due to the author’s believe on the capacity of the built works to provide with relevant data.

The dissection and mapping of the 19 built works -which corresponds to the number of HCH’s built works counted up to date- through 5 materials -concrete, ceramic, wood, eternit and metal- divided in sub-categories such as material format, structural or non-structural implications, cladding or in-fill purposes and finally its specific application in form of, e.g a wall, a slab, window, a handrail, pillar-beam structure,... should support and communicate the hypothesis that HCH uses rather few materials within the same building and throughout the 19 buildings, giving shape to the same or/and different elements in which it is possible to recognize the primary material format. If we look at it from another point of view, we also realize that sometimes, the same element/detail is solved with different materials or material formats or that, what aesthetic-wise looks as the same has different structural/ construction implications.

Slender wooden battens placed horizontally along a white wall correspond to each building. Those battens have a length of 80 cm -they are originally 240 cm but need to be cut in three pieces to be transportable- and are supported by 2 nails each. The total dimension of the map is 190 x 720 cm and should be placed about 20 cm above ground. Photos of 8 x 8 cm printed in 250 gr paper are placed according to material format and purpose in a specific building line.

People is encouraged to touch the photos. Often, there is more than one material situation in a building, which means that beneath the first photo there are other similar examples or repetitions. People is also encouraged to take one photo close to another one to see similarities in the way that two different materials address the same construction situation.

