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HANNE KJÆRHOLM HOUSES

PHOTOGRAPHER BY PER IN

SCANDINAVIAN ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

LØVENBORG

2002

RESTORATION OF A TOWN HOUSE

Architect professor Anton Rosen (1859-1928) designed some of the most unusual and distinctive buildings of the early 1900's. Despite this, he was considered by his contemporaries as a strange, and in general not very important architect.

On the street of Vesterbrogade, just a short walk from Copenhagen's main railway station, in an area that originally lay outside the medieval fortifications, Anton Rosen in 1906 was commissioned to design a commercial building. It was called 'Løvenborg', and was characterized by Rosen's interest in the new architectural trends in Europe, which is especially evident in the facade's Art Nouveau decorations. In addition, he introduced for the first time in Denmark an entirely new construction principle, the curtain-wall, where in this case the facade facing the street 'hangs' about one metre in front of the building's supporting columns. At that time, this was an extremely advanced building method, which only a few years earlier had been introduced in the United States.

In the decades that followed its completion, 'Løvenborg' was poorly maintained, and it wasn't until the 1980's that its special characteristics and importance were recognized. At the same time many began to realize the basic qualities in Anton Rosen's work, which thus experienced a kind of renaissance. 'Løvenborg' was classified worthy of protection and the facade was restored by the National Forest and Nature Agency. However, behind the fine Art Nouveau inspired motifs the disrepair had increased, so that in year 2000 when the Margot and Thorvald Dreyer Foundation purchased the building, an extensive renovation was necessary.

In collaboration with architect Birthe Just, Hanne Kjærholm accepted the commission and in 2001 they began the necessary detective work to restore the building to its original appearance. The building was to be modernized with up-to-date installations and facilities without spoiling its spirit. The Dreyer Foundation decided to occupy the third floor where under several layers of paint, the original colour scheme and decorations were found and recreated. This, in its elegant fashion, makes the boardroom one of the most significant office spaces in the city. In one corner of the room the original paint and patterns are preserved. In the stairway there were also old paint traces behind the doorframes, which contributed to re-creating the original atmosphere with the aid of the old windows with glass paintings, the original ceiling and the concealed stucco decorations. Under the panels covering some of the doors, the original finely moulded woodwork was discovered and the doors were cleaned and equipped with copies of the original brass hardware.

As one of its main purposes the foundation provides funds to the benefit of the Danish architecture profession. Where the building's other floors after restoration were taken into use as offices, the Foundation decided to establish a guest apartment on the upper floor under the steep roof, which was offered to the Royal Academy's school of architecture for their use. Here they can house foreign professors and scholars who visit to teach or carry out research for shorter periods of time.

Hanne Kjærholm and Birthe Just have designed the roof apartment where not many traces of its original use remained, so that three guests can live there, each with their own room. The individual rooms are equipped with furniture designed by three of Denmark's most known designers; Hans J. Wegner, Arne Jacobsen and Finn Juhl. There is also a common dining room with an open kitchen and a living room with furniture by Poul Kjærholm. From the common area there is access to an outdoor terrace from which one can enjoy the fine view over the city rooftops.

Several of the guest teachers who have lived in the apartment have expressed the feeling of being privileged to stay in the centre of Copenhagen in an extremely modern equipped building, yet one full of history and character. ■



The roof terrace with furniture in teak and galvanized steel by Niels Jørgen Haugesen.



The common living room with furniture designed by Poul Kjaerholm.





The common dining- and living room with furniture designed by Poul Kjaerholm and pendant lamps by Poul Henningsen.





The room with furniture designed by Hans J. Wegner.

