

HOUSE OF THE ESTATES



An early photograph of the House of the Estates soon after completion. The rich, polychromatic appearance of the building was seen as dignified, yet light and exuberant. The overall colour was described as sandstone. The photograph shows the imitation finish on nearly all surfaces. The main surfaces imitate the appearance of sandstone, the lighter-coloured moulding that of marble and the coarse blocks of the base resemble chiselled stone. Helsinki City Museum.



The wooden cabinet structure in the Bourgeois Hall conceals ventilation and heating equipment. Photos by Arno de la Chapelle.



The ceiling ornament in the smaller meeting room features so-called grotesque motifs inspired by the Italian Renaissance, framing a symbol representing a peasant livelihood. The composition includes a haystack, a rake, and a scythe.



The ceiling of the antechamber in the Clergy Hall is adorned with a decorative painted beam structure, featuring ornamented recesses with almost humorous angel motifs.



The doors of the assembly halls are the most magnificent and hierarchically significant in the building. The ensemble, which appears to be made of noble wood, consists partly of stained and lacquered oak and partly of painted and wood-grained pine, plaster, or stucco.

House of the Estates Renovation and restoration 2023-2025

Senate Properties, which is responsible for the State's high-end buildings, began renovating the House of the Estates in autumn 2023. The work comprises repairs to the building façades, extensive conservation of the richly decorated painted surfaces and upgrading the mechanical and electrical systems. In the same context, improvements will be made to the accessibility of the building.

Thirty years have passed since the previous renovation and it is now once again time for more extensive repair measures so that central government's key reception and seminar facilities can retain their dignified use and appearance. Designed by Gustaf Nyström, the House of Estates was completed in 1891 and on a Finnish scale is exceptionally rich in ornamentation both inside and out.

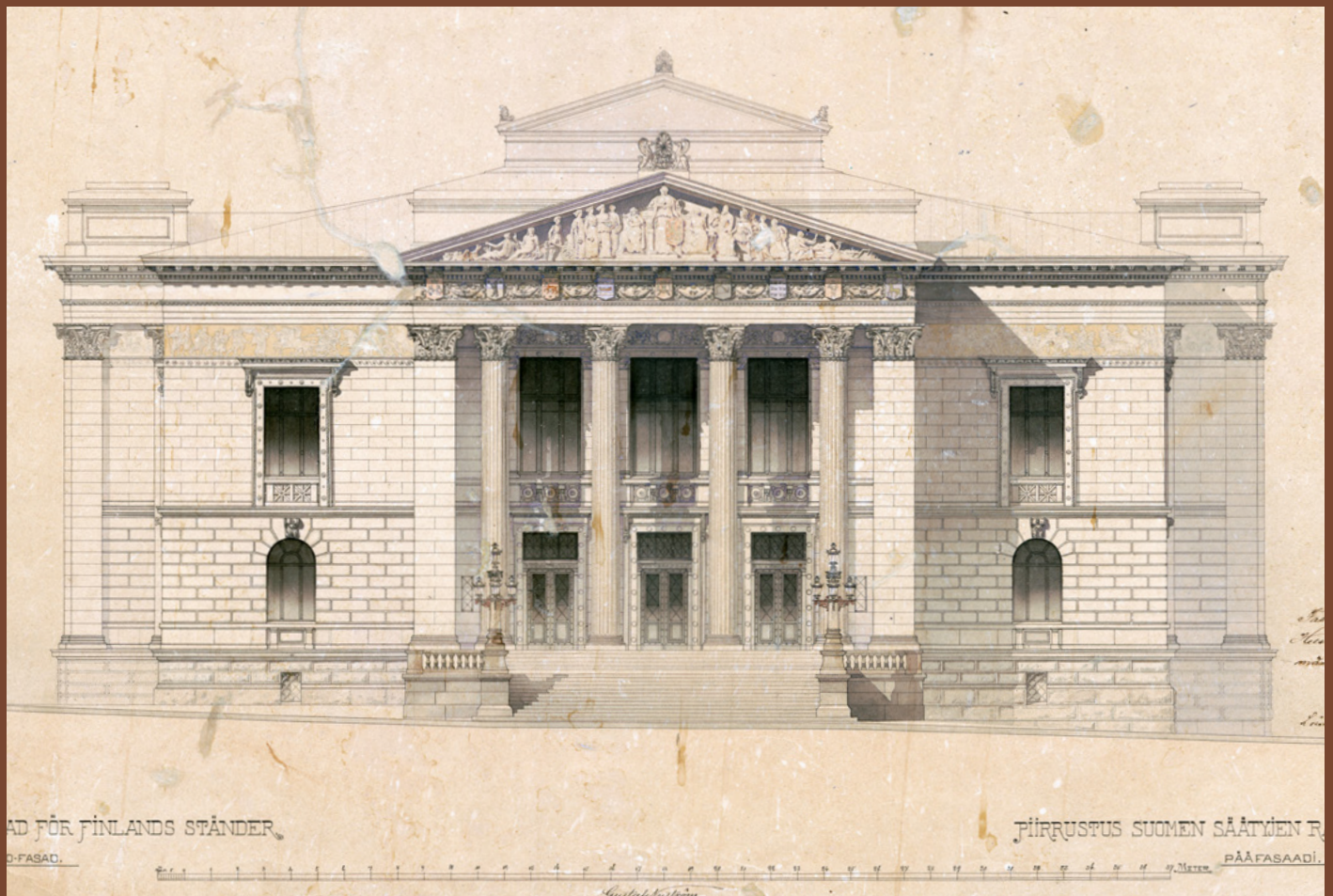
The repairs to the culturally and historically valuable building will employ many restoration and conservation experts. Repairs to the façades include rendering and painting work as well as replacement of the damaged plaster ornamentation and window repairs. The faded lively imitation sandstone painting will be restored to the façades. The complex steel roof will be updated and the bronze statue in the tympanum will undergo conservation.

The interior walls and richly decorated ceilings on the principal floors require extensive conservation work. Many studies and test treatments have already been done in preparation for this. The figures in the ceiling paintings in the principal rooms and the lion painting on the skylight above the main staircase are particular objects of conservation.

The mechanical and electrical systems have become obsolete. Since new more energy efficient ventilation machines require more space, new machine rooms will need to be built in the building. Far more electricity sockets and IT cabling are needed these days than in the 1990s. The institutional kitchen on the ground floor will be updated since it also serves government banqueting facilities other than the House of the Estates.

Accessibility to the House of the Estates will be improved by building a new ramp next to the back door and by providing two accessible toilets inside the building. The lift was replaced in the previous renovation. At the end of the project, the House of the Estates park and play area will be improved in collaboration with the City of Helsinki.

Renovation work started in September 2023 and has a cost estimate of around €38 million (VAT at 0%). The work will take two years and the House of the Estates will be out of use during repairs. The Senate Properties is responsible for project management. The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for the operation and use of the House of the Estates.



Approved design for the House of the Estates' façade. Approvals signed by the National Board of Public Buildings and the Senate in November and December 1888. Gustaf Nyström, 1888. The National Archives of Finland.



Unrealised design, F. A. Sjöström, 1884. The National Archives of Finland.

House of the Estates and architect Gustaf Nyström

Planning the House of the Estates

The House of the Estates was completed in 1891, but the planning of the building had commenced over a decade earlier. The architectural plans by architect Gustaf Nyström (1856–1917) were approved in December 1888, and the building was inaugurated for use by the assembly of the representatives of the estates in January 1891.

Nyström was only in his 30s when he was given the task of designing the House of the Estates. Initially, Nyström's teacher and employer Frans A. Sjöström was commissioned to produce the plans, but following his unexpected death, the project was passed on to his trusted student.

The House of the Estates is a prime example of its era, from its structures all the way to the painted ornaments. The influences of Nyström's studies in Vienna are reflected in the strong character of the building and meticulous use of classical architectural forms. In fact, influences from the Austrian Parliament Building in Vienna can be seen in some of the architectural elements of the House of the Estates.

State Archives and the House of the Estates

Two buildings designed by Nyström, the State Archives (now known as the National Archives) and the House of the Estates, make a particularly interesting pair. The buildings were designed and built around the same time, the State Archives building being completed one year earlier. The architectural style, construction methods and structural solutions, as well as many of the designers and supervisors involved, were the same on both projects. The contractor K. G. Sivenius was responsible for both construction projects, while the painting project of both buildings was supervised by master painter Salomo Wuorio.

Architecture of the House of the Estates

The main façade of the House of the Estates is dominated by a central avant-corps and the colossal columns that stretch over two stories. At the time, Nyström was criticised for copying Sjöström's ideas. In March 1888, Nyström vented his frustrations in a letter to his friend Br. Blomkvist:

"People are claiming that I copied Frans' ideas for the façades. This is not true, as I am sure you understand. The similarities between mine and Sjöström's façades are simply a result of us both using the colossal order. And the colossal order, I

believe, is the only way to impart character on the House of the Estates. But as you know, the colossal order is as old as architecture itself, and I do not believe Frans was applying for a patent for the order in Finland. Especially since he would not have been granted one. After all, Engel used it frequently before him. Well, that is enough on this topic, but I will say one more thing: surely it is understandable – or at least it should be – that, as Frans' old student, I have taken in many of his ideas and views."

The House of the Estates nods to many historical styles, and it has been described – sometimes disparagingly – as an example of architectural revivalism. The House of the Estates is a perfect specimen of western European architecture, while also featuring numerous early modern construction methods and HVAC solutions. While an effort was made to source building materials from Finland, the country's then budding construction industry was looking abroad for fresh ideas. Experts from Berlin and St Petersburg were consulted on the ventilation and heating systems, which were included in the design from the start. On the whole, the House of the Estates is a strong representative of its own era and not an imitation of any historical style.

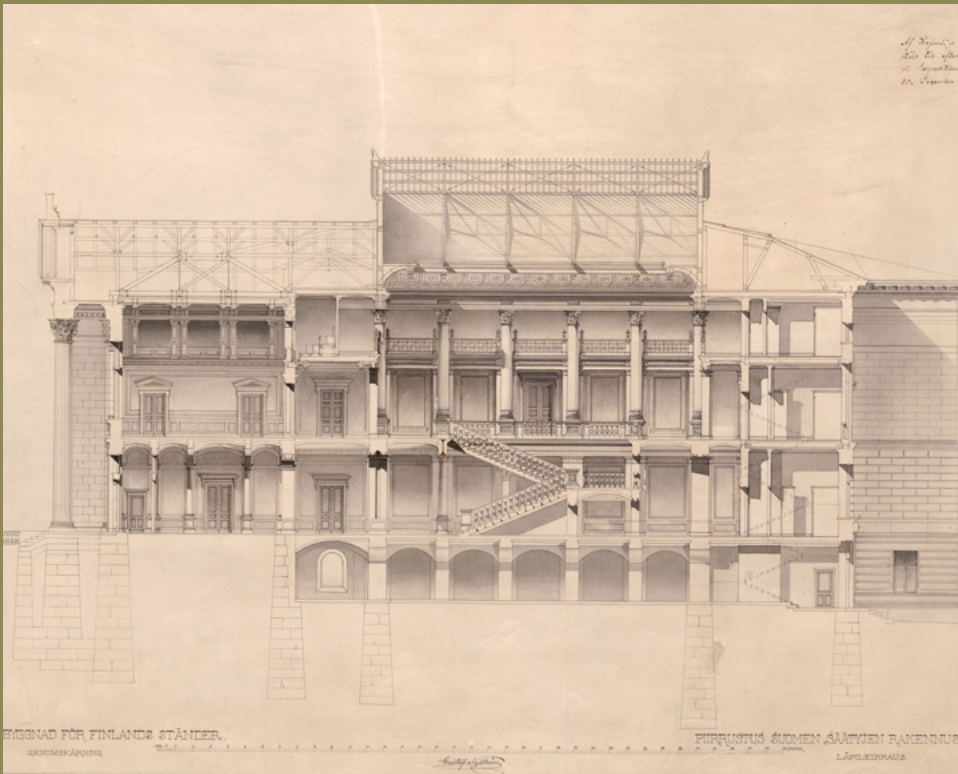
Cradle of democracy

In its original use as the place of assembly for the common estates, the House of the Estates acted as an early cradle of Finnish democracy. In 2023, the building serves as the meeting quarters for the Prime Minister's Office and, in this capacity, is still the stage for societal decision making that affects the lives of ordinary Finns. The beautiful ornate walls of the House of the Estates are a recurring backdrop to interviews given by politicians and ministers.

The House of the Estates took form in the autonomous principality of Finland with permission of the Russian Emperor. The project was the result of lengthy internal debate, a financial balancing act and a response to many practical needs. The assembly halls for the three common estates, located on the main floor, formed the nerve centre of the building. In addition to the assembly halls, there were estate-specific and communal spaces, large open foyers and dining areas. These shared spaces were an important step in facilitating communication between the estates, which in the past had assembled in separate locations. During the years of uncertainty at the turn of the century, as the Russian Empire sought to tighten its grip on the Finnish people, the House of the Estates was where the emerging Finnish identity was strengthened. The House of the Estates is a Finnish monument, and while its history may stretch back only a few generations, it embodies the social structures of the past.



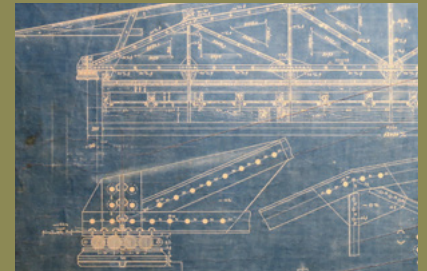
Contemporaries criticised Nyström's designs for the building's façades due to their dissimilarity, as if they belonged to different buildings. Photogrammetric projections of the southern and eastern façades, Tietoa Finland Oy, 2018.



A longitudinal section of the House of the Estates by Gustav Nyström is full of interesting details. This drawing conveys the overall vision for the space but also details the wall divisions and main structural choices. A longitudinal section of the House of the Estates. Approvals signed by the National Board of Public Buildings and the Senate in November and December 1888. Gustaf Nyström, 1888. The National Archives of Finland.



The iron frame of the glass ceiling above the main staircase is remarkably slim and delicate. This structure has remained mostly untouched throughout the decades and is a cherished feature of the building. Picture from 1979 by Veikko Laine, Finnish National Board of Antiquities.



An excerpt from the design by Nyström's agency of the iron roof truss above the grand assembly hall. The National Archives of Finland.



An early picture of the original colours and ornaments around the main staircase landing. The high-gloss lacquered faux marble columns are made of bricks while the landing floor structures are brick vaults supported by steel bars. The material initially intended for the flooring was limestone, but this was replaced by a novel, locally produced material: terrazzo. The decorative railings and handrails were cast at Högfors ironworks in accordance with Nyström's design. The first plaster model of Walter Runeberg's statue 'LEX' stands at the centre of the staircase. 1890s, Helsinki City Museum.

Construction and structures

In September 1888, the construction site, located at the western end of Majavan kortteli (Beaver Block), had been enclosed by a fence and the building committee initiated a process to find a main contractor. Calls for tender were published in newspapers, in both Finnish and Swedish, looking for contractors to handle the ground work, stone foundation and entrance stairs, or even to undertake construction of the entire building. Potential bidders were given the opportunity to see the plans “in the House of the Estates architecture agency at 12 Ritarikatu street every day at 9 a.m.–2 p.m. and 4 p.m.–7 p.m. with architect K. G. Nyström present to answer any questions concerning the suggested construction materials and other matters”. *Uusi Suometar* newspaper, 23 October 1888.

Sivenius is chosen as the contractor

Only two contractors submitted bids covering construction of the entire building, of which the preferred choice was by contractor K. G. Sivenius, who was also in charge of the State Archives construction project and had proven reliable. The contract stated that Sivenius would be responsible for almost everything related to the construction of the building. Only the ornaments, decorative plasterwork, painting, heating and water supply systems, lighting and fixed furniture were excluded from the scope of his contract.

In addition to overseeing the entire project, Sivenius, as Nyström's trusted right hand, was responsible for creating construction plans for the structural elements of the building within the load calculations provided in the contract. Actual structural drawings were rarely drawn up for buildings of this era, except for those being constructed from steel. However, the longitudinal section drawn by Nyström (see picture) provides an excellent overview of the structural principles of the building. Sivenius' notebook also contains calculations and details for some of the building's structures.

Underlying structures

The walls and roof of the House of the Estates are made of rendered brick blocks. In certain places the floor structures rest on brick vaults, but mostly they are supported by timber joists. The roof consists of timber roof trusses with triangle support structures. Only the skylight over the halls and central staircase is supported by iron structures. Moreover, the building has free-standing brick pillars and some cast iron pillars. The stairs have concrete steps supported by iron joists.

The House of the Estates continued the tradition of building in brick while employing new innovations, such as the use of iron structures and concrete moulding, in brave but deliberate ways.

Construction

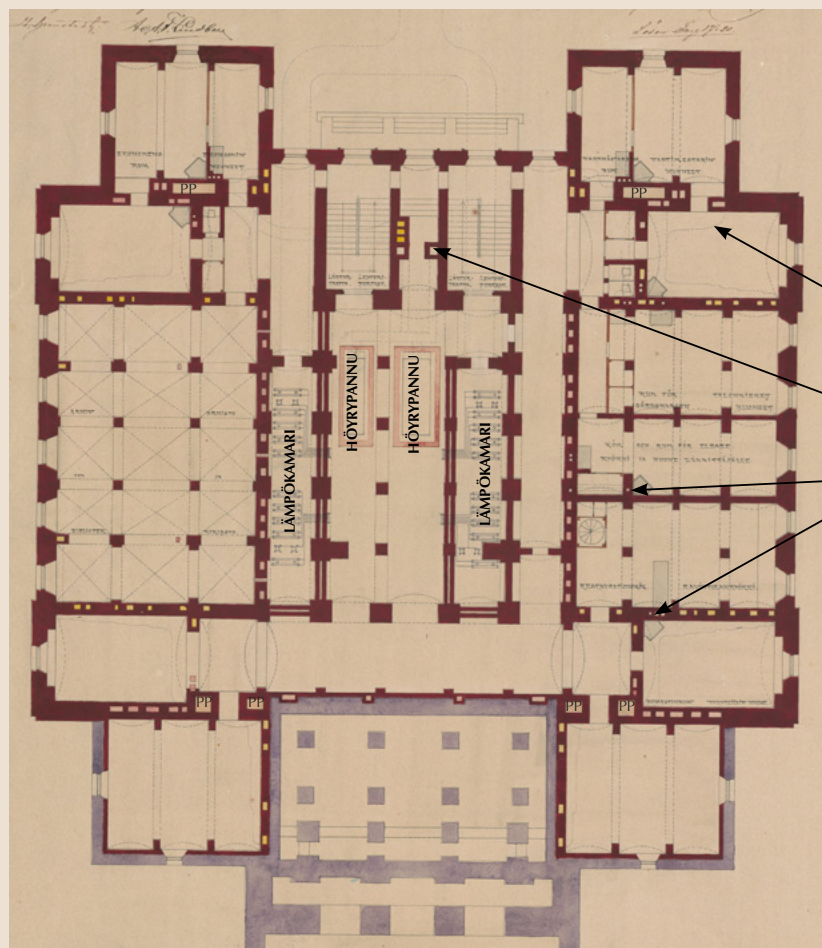
Digging the foundations was no small task, as Nyström insisted that the building be built entirely on the bedrock, which was known to be deep. A soil investigation carried out in 2022 confirmed the depth of the foundation pit recorded in the contemporary records. The bedrock was some 8–9 metres below the ground surface of that time. This means that the foundation pit must have been nearly ten metres deep. The construction contract includes special directions for the supporting walls of the pit: “Special care must be taken to ensure that they do not pose any threat to life or limb under any circumstances.”

The brick framework of the building was completed during one year, the active bricklaying stretching from spring to autumn in 1889. The contract dictated that the building must have a roof and be sealed to allow heating and drying by the start of winter 1889–1890.

Nyström gave detailed instructions concerning the use and quality of the building's bricks and mortar. The hardest brick grade he accepted was a dark iron colour, but selected dark, medium and light red bricks were allowed in certain locations. The use of underburnt bricks was not allowed. Any walls and pillars supporting lighter loads had to be made of dark or medium red bricks and pure lime mortar had to be used. The narrower pillars were made of darker, harder grade bricks and mortar with added cement to provide greater load-bearing capacity.

The building's diverse shapes and numerous ducts for the heating and ventilation system made construction challenging. Between the ground and first floors, the structure is mainly supported by brick vaults. Nearly all the walls and ceilings are plastered.

According to Nyström, he would have preferred to use more iron structures but, due to budget constraints, iron could only be used when absolutely necessary. The attic glass ceiling with its very light iron grid and the horizontal structure underneath made up of slim I-beams to support the stained glass are daring designs.



Brick chimneys

VENTILATION DUCTS

Exhaust air: captured from the rest of the building and channelled into the space below the ground floor.

Warm supply air: channelled from the heating chambers on the ground floor to the rest of the building.

PP Big exhaust air ducts from the cellar to the roof.

Exhaust air is captured by ducts that run under the floor on the ground level.

CHIMNEY FLUES

Two big flues connected to the central heating system.

Small flues connected to stove stoves and kitchen stoves in the apartments and kitchens.

Floor plan from 1888 with details related to the heating and ventilation systems. Nyström, The National Archives of Finland.

Building technology

Heating and ventilation in 1891

One of the central features of the building is its heating and ventilation systems. Integrating these systems into the building affected the entire construction process and required dedicated planning. Proposals with cost estimates were requested from potential contractors even before the final building committee had been appointed. In June 1888, the building committee chose a Finnish engineer, Berggren, as the contractor over German and Russian candidates.

The chosen system design would guarantee the representatives of the estates good environmental conditions and plenty of fresh air even during their lengthy meetings. The supply air would come from the park and be channelled to the heating chambers in the cellar. There, the supply air would be pre-heated, and humidified during winter, and then channelled through ducts inside the walls into the assembly halls. There are four exhaust ducts inside the internal walls of the four corner rooms. These ducts capture exhaust air in the building.

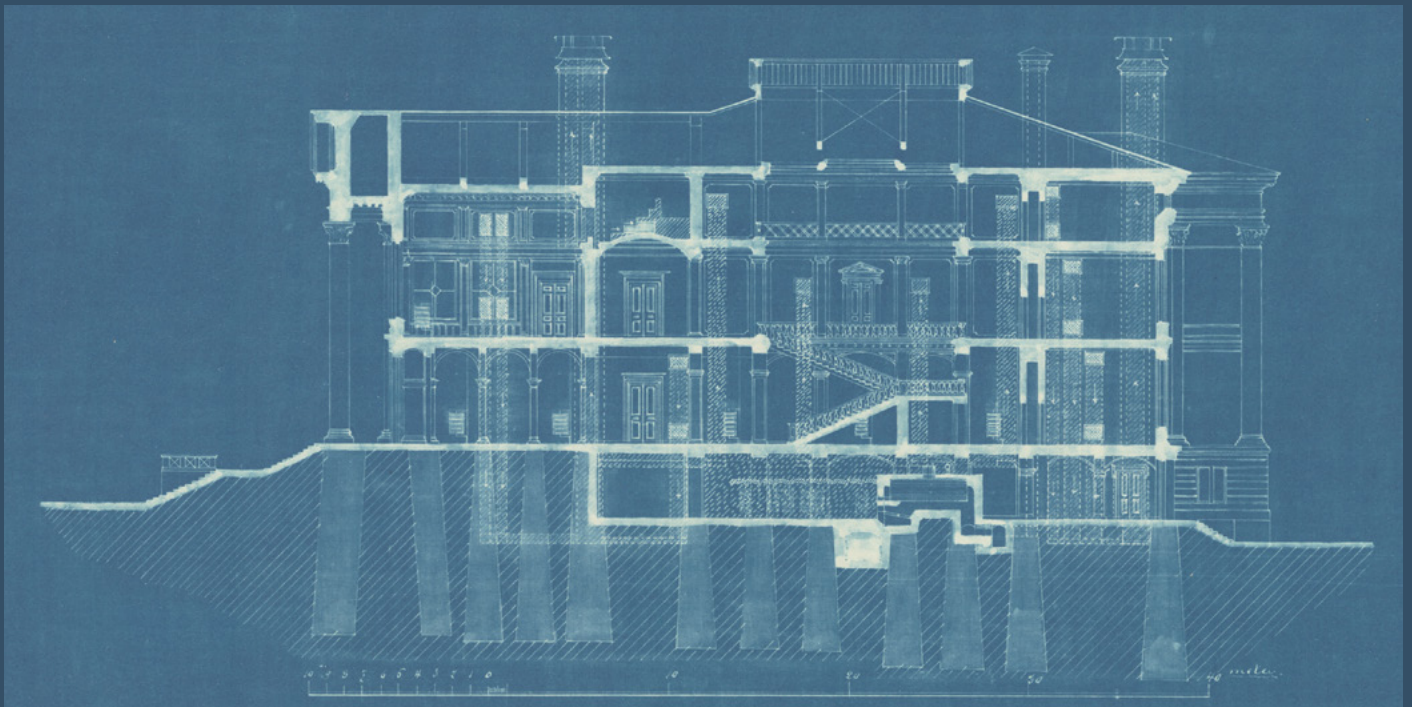
The steam generators in the cellar provided heat for the building's steam radiator system. In every assembly hall, there were steam radiators hidden inside wooden closets and cabinets resembling mantelpieces. This means that the building

had central heating and regulated, pre-heated ventilation from its initial construction. Only the ground floor apartments had tile stoves and kitchen stoves for the staff.

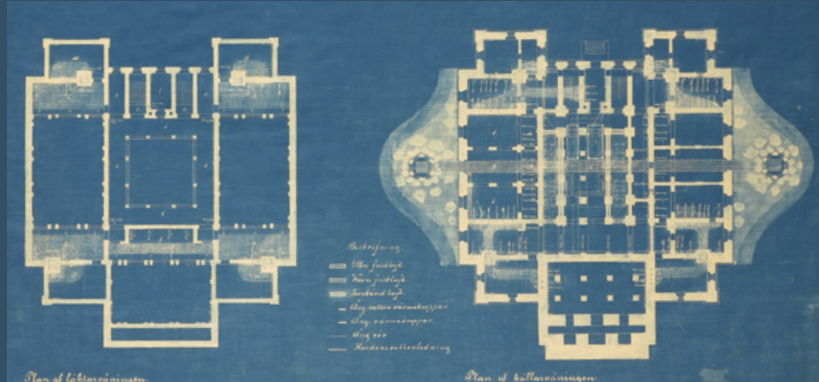
Electric lights and telephone lines

The lighting in the House of the Estates was designed to be fully electric from the start. The contract with engineer Wadén included all the installation work and light fixtures. According to the contract, the building would need 500 incandescent light bulbs with the power of 25 'normal lights', supplied with 110 volts and 0.9 amps of electric current. However, as power cuts were common, candle sconces and petrol lamps were installed on the walls as a backup system.

One telephone line was reserved for the entryway of each assembly hall and a fourth line for the main entrance vestibule. An additional line was installed at the House of Nobility. In addition to the public telephone network, an in-house telephone system was installed to connect the heating chambers and assembly halls in particular. Despite the in-house telephone system, a call bell system was also added to allow the assembly hall secretaries to communicate with the attendant of each estate in the entryways, dining hall or vestibule. Presumably, this form of communication was intended for indicating an upcoming vote in particular.



Section and floor plans, 'Ritningar till värmelednings och ventilationsprojekt till byggnaden för Finlands ständer i Helsingfors.' Berggren June, 1888. Nyström's collection, Museum of Finnish Architecture.



Berggren's proposal from June 1888 in which supply air is channelled in from two intake wells on either side of the building. This proposal was further developed in many ways, including by implementing ideas from experts abroad. An example of this is the big exhaust air ducts in the four corners of the building. Museum of Finnish Architecture.



A large steam radiator is hidden inside a wooden cabinet located against the wall of one of the committee rooms on the first floor. The picture is from the 1920s, Archive of Parliament.



The steam radiators in the big assembly halls were hidden inside ornate wooden cabinets that resemble a mantelpiece. In the picture on the left, taken during the 1988 renovation, the cabinet has been removed revealing the original radiator. The picture on the right is from 2017. Pictures by Helander-Leiviskä Architects and architecture firm Okulus.



Salomo Wuorio's interior ornamentation

Inspiration and ideals

The House of the Estates is a celebration of imitation techniques and accurately scaled ornamentation. The interior is a result of seamless cooperation between two professionals. A section drawing of the building and some of the preserved detailed drawings by architect Nyström showing spatial arrangements and ornamental principals give an idea of the framework within which these professionals worked. The responsibility for combining the various building materials, such as plaster, wood and gypsum, to achieve visual harmony and conform to the principles of classical architecture mainly rested upon one skilled painter-contractor. Salomo Wuorio was a young but experienced professional when he took over the task of overseeing the ornamentation at the House of the Estates.

Much of the building's visual language echoes Italian Renaissance architecture, although Nyström would have preferred Finnish art had the conditions for its acquisition been more favourable at the time.

Colossal project

The project contract required painting work to commence as soon as the building's surfaces were sufficiently dry, but no later than 15 May 1890. After this date, it was stated that the project should be completed in no more than five months! The walls and ceilings were mostly painted with soft distemper paint due to time and financial limitations. Soft distemper was more affordable, required fewer applications and dried in a fraction of the time of oil paints. Moreover, soft distemper was technically more suitable than oil paint because the building's brick structures released moisture, which soft distemper paint allowed to evaporate.

The painting work took a few months longer than expected and was completed on 22 January 1891, a few days after the building was inaugurated and the opening of the 1891 Diet. About this time, architect Nyström sent a letter to his friend Strömberg in which he describes the last-minute rush: "Finally everything was completed the day before the Diet convened. And what an effort it was! There was pounding, painting, polishing and plastering, and everywhere cleaners hovered about like spirits with dust rags in their hands. They were more numerous than newspaper articles on the latest discoveries of Koch. I was not really tired but rather some-

thing between half dead and resurrected. Öhman was fretting over the deadline while Tallqvist ran a tight ship and made sure that no one took smoking breaks. The electric lights went off every hour or so and each power cut lasted about an hour as agreed. I cannot describe the misery. Wherever I walked I ran into reporters, and they all wanted to know where to find the plenum plenorum – the plenary session. The building has seven telephone lines and they seem to be engaged at all times. But we made it, and everyone gave their all in the very short time we had. The generations to come will have all the time in the world to judge us. We painted the dates '1888–1890' on a first-floor corridor wall as an everlasting warning to anyone who thinks he can just cobble together a massive project such as this."

A luscious symphony of ornaments, colours and materials

As you walk through the House of the Estates, it is easy to forget the multitude of materials used in its construction, which in no way correspond to what you see on the surface. Rendered surfaces and ornamental casts of plaster of Paris masquerade as natural stone, wood, steel and bronze. Smooth surfaces are covered in vibrant colours, allegorical characters and ornaments.

There are no unadorned bare white surfaces, and each space has a unique character. The classical themes of the ornaments are easily recognisable and refined, the colours abundant, polychromatic and saturated. The walls are painted in dark colours and even the ceilings are any shade but white, contrary to today's norm. One of the aesthetic ideals of the era was to emphasise the atmosphere of each space.

National romantic reinterpretation 1900–1904

Towards the end of the 19th century, the original hurriedly painted surfaces of the heavily-used building were gradually being repainted throughout, still under the direction of architect Nyström. Inspired by a national awakening and new appreciation of local artisanship, the committee rooms were now decorated with Finnish themes and with softer and brighter colours. The matte, dark red soft distemper-painted walls around the main staircase were repainted golden yellow and framed with a brighter red shade of oil paint. These two heraldic colours, which appear on the so-called 'Lion Flag' of the Grand Duchy of Finland, had become national symbols and can be seen as a public expression of national pride. The original, rich Neo-Renaissance-style ornamentation remained unaltered in the assembly halls and vestibule and also partly around the main staircase and on some of the ceilings of smaller rooms.



Originally, time constraints prevented the use of Finnish art in the House of the Estates. Within the time available, Wuorio's expert painters produced some pieces that were somewhere between art and orna-

mentation. The pieces that come closest to actual works of art are the allegorical grisaille paintings by the Swedish-born artist K. G. Wetterstrand. His artwork, painted on a background imitating gold

mosaic, adorns the walls of the peasants' and bourgeoisie assembly halls. There are five works in both assembly halls depicting typical trades of the estate in question.



The stunning assembly hall doors have the appearance of precious timber but actually consist of profiled plastering, plaster cast ornaments, domestic pine and, in the case of the main doors, oak. All the door surfaces are finished to imitate mahogany, walnut or oak.



Originally, most of the ceiling and wall surfaces were painted with soft distemper paint. Only some columns, pilasters and selected surfaces were painted with oil paint. Nearly all the surfaces imitate another material or are covered in Renaissance-style ornamentation. The vestibule columns are particularly impressive, with their striking imitation marble staining gradually changing from green hues to brown towards the top of the column. Picture from the collection of the Finnish National Board of Antiquities.



On the vestibule ceiling, mythical creatures are shepherded by angels in a balanced composition together with vines, shells, flowers and butterflies.

Home of the Estates

Contemporary opinions

Due to it being a public building, the House of the Estates attracted significant attention during its construction and upon its completion in both urban and rural newspapers. Newspapers published detailed descriptions of the original design and prints of the assembly halls and façades. Reporting on the House of the Estates was mostly positive. The building was considered a success but most importantly was seen as serving an important function.

The Uusi Suometar newspaper commented on the newly built House of the Estates: "This purpose-built House of the Estates will undoubtedly facilitate cooperation between the estates. Between sessions, the representatives of the different estates can freely mingle in the spacious corridors, become acquainted with one another and together discuss any matters at hand. As a consequence, many misunderstandings can be rectified and disagreements settled before they even reach the pages of the Minutes. This will certainly save the precious time of the assemblies for more important matters. Nevertheless, it is a shame that the building does not house an assembly hall for all our nation's estates as the late Sjöström would have desired. The knights and nobility will remain in the separate House of Nobility. Even though a telephone line connects the other estates with the House of Nobility, there is no opportunity for daily, personal interaction, which would have been possible if the first estate were to have been convened under the same roof as the other estates."

Representing the nation

The basic layout of the House of the Estates, which includes a grand staircase surrounded by three assembly halls on the second floor, is present even in the early competition proposals by various architects.

Few buildings have such a symbolic layout as this building, designed for the representatives of the nation. The floor plan of the House of the Estates can be seen not only as a geometric composition but also as a reflection of the structure of the representative institution of that era. In this building, housing the three estates, the clergy assembly hall had the most esteemed location along the main façade, while the

peasant and bourgeoisie estates were located along the longer sides of the building such that the bourgeoisie faced south towards the city centre while the peasants faced north towards the countryside.

The House of the Estates was designed to represent the entire nation outside the nobility and serve the needs of its representatives in the best way possible. The front of the building as well as the steps to the main entrance were important outward signs of this function.

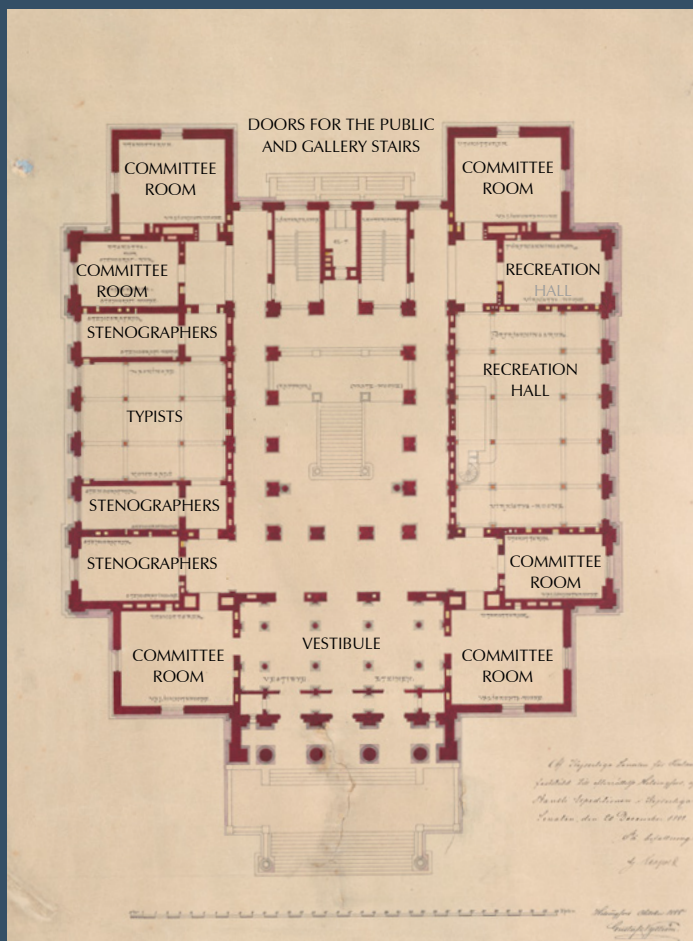
Even today, the front of the House of the Estates acts as a public platform for the Finnish government. For example, when COVID-19 restrictions cast the media out of the House of the Estates, ministers addressed journalists from the steps of the building – in any weather.

Formidable foyers and dignified halls

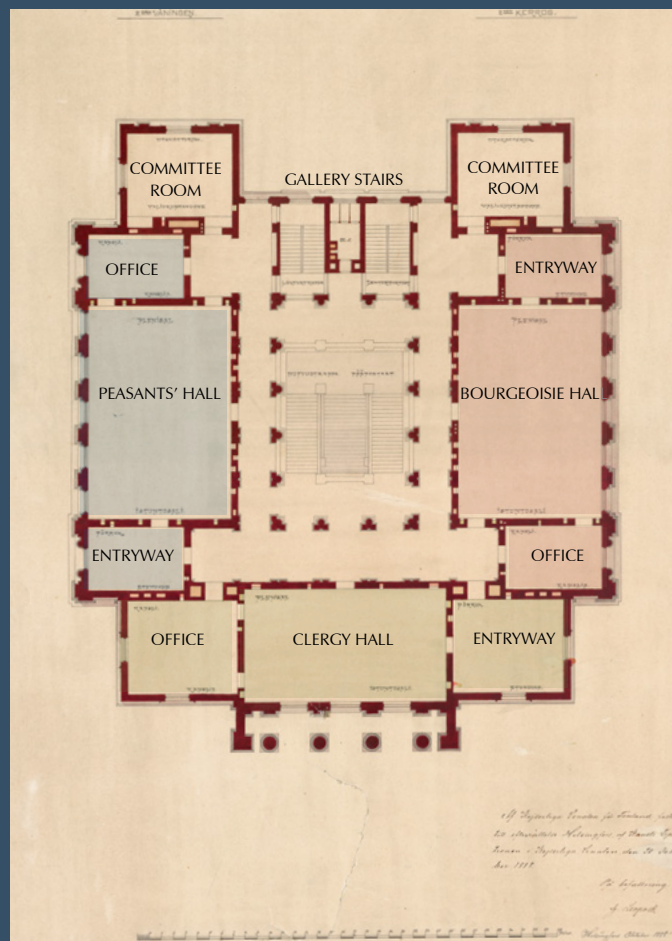
The building's symmetrical façade clearly indicates the position of the main entrance. Behind the colossal columns is a landing and windowed oak doors that lead into a bright entry space. From here, you continue into a darker space where pillars support arched vaults. This is the vestibule, a richly atmospheric and ornate space with green pillars and elaborately painted ceilings. This space serves almost as a prelude or slow movement before entering the heart of the building, the grand foyer with the main staircase.

The triple staircase has impressive dimensions, yet a gentle rise, and is surrounded by spacious corridors over three storeys. The first and second floors were for the representatives and the third floor was reserved for the public. The grand staircase was for the representatives only and led to the assembly halls on the main floor. The airy upper landing acted as a common foyer for the three assembly halls.

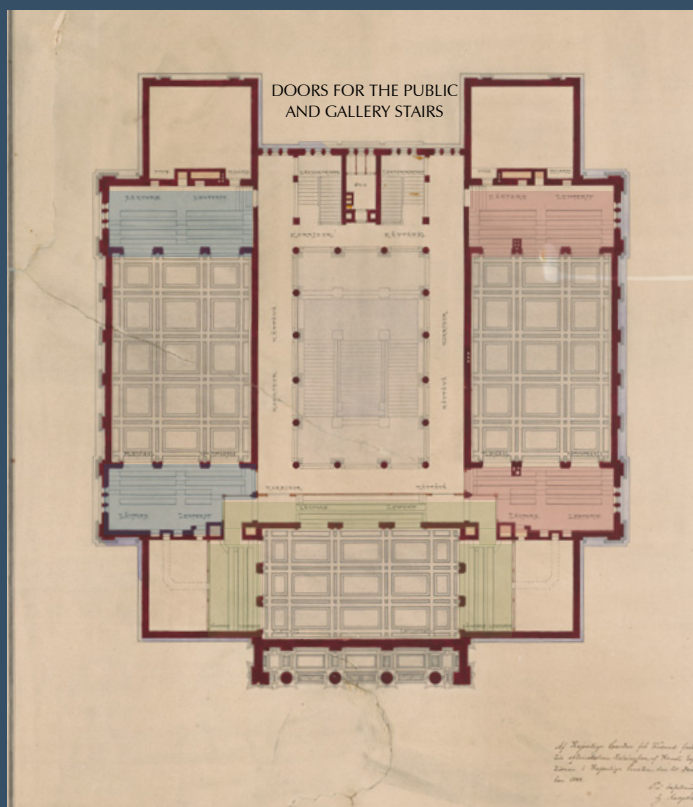
Originally, the staircase doubled not only as a meeting place for the different estates but also as a kind of a stage for democracy which the audience could observe from the upper gallery. The public entrance was on the eastern side facing the House of the Estates Park. The public could take the gallery stairs to the third floor to the galleries over the assembly halls.



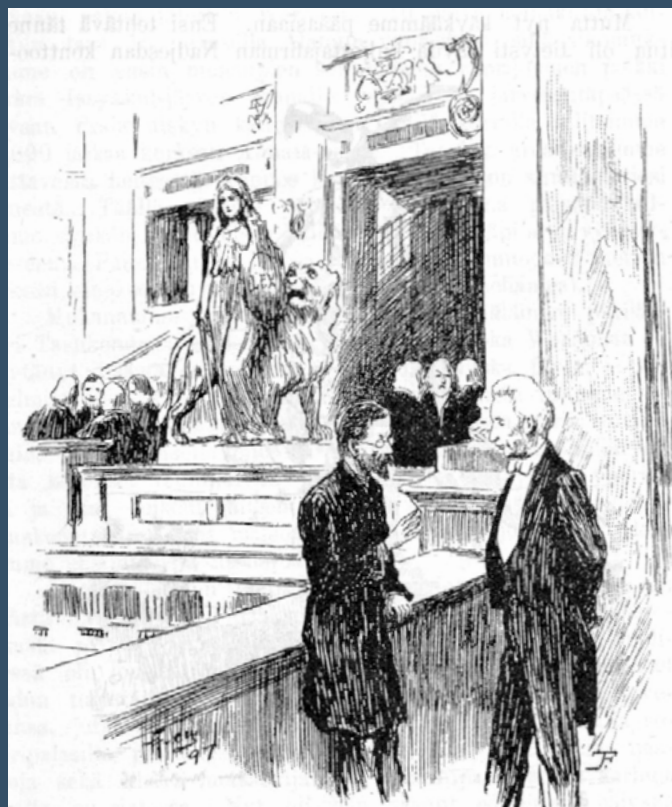
The first floor has committee rooms and common spaces contributing to the function of the building. Perhaps the most important of these spaces was the 'recreation hall', which housed a restaurant run by an independent restaurateur. The main entrance from Snellmaninkatu street, through the spectacular portico, was for the selected few only.



The second floor of the building is the main floor, served by the handsome grand staircase on a central axis. The floor plan shows the assembly halls of the three estates, entryways to the halls and offices. The size of the staircase and the surrounding foyers and corridors reflects the importance placed on cooperation between the estates.



Citizens who wanted to sit in during assembly sessions and follow the decision making would have to arrive through the back doors and take separate stairs up to the gallery floor. Floor plan by G. Nyström, 1888, the National Archives of Finland.



One of the important functions of the building was to allow the different estates to mingle. This has had an undeniable impact on the development of Finnish democracy. Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti magazine, 1 April 1897.



Only a few photographs of sessions held during the Diet remain. Top: the clergy hall, below: the peasants' hall.

The House of the Estates over the decades

The Finnish Parliament 1907–1931

The beginning of the 20th century was a time of civil activism. The Finnish people were awakening to a better understanding of their past but also of their future. Towards the end of 1905, internal turmoil in Finland manifested in a general strike and demands for universal suffrage. When the first 200-seat parliament was elected in March 1907, the role of the House of the Estates changed completely. Now, the House of the Estates represented outdated and hierarchical power, and the building simply lacked an assembly hall big enough for a unicameral parliament. There was wide consensus over the unsuitability of the House of the Estates for use as a parliament building. However, Finland was facing financial austerity and political instability and, for years, there was disagreement over the best solution. Should the existing building be extended or was an entirely new building needed?

Gustaf Nyström drew up several proposals for extending the House of the Estates but, in the end, a decision was made to launch an architecture competition and commission a new building. The new Parliament Building was completed in 1931, so for its first 25 years, the young Finnish Parliament found lodging where it could, including at the volunteer fire brigade building next to Ateneum Art Museum and at Heimola House (both since demolished). During these years, the House of the Estates provided meeting places and offices for smaller groups and served as a library.

Scientific societies 1931–1983

When the Parliament finally had its own dedicated building, the House of the Estates had many takers for potential occupants. In the end, the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies was deemed most suitable. The Federation, founded in 1899, promoted cooperation between scientific societies to advance scientific debate and the publication of scientific research.

Over the following decades, the House of the Estates was a frequent meeting place and conference venue for numerous societies. The Federation had a sizable library, which occupied an entire floor and the galleries. These were divided into two levels to provide additional floor space for the library. When the building was transferred to its new occupants in 1931, the heating system was changed and Berggren's so-

phisticated heating and ventilation system was almost entirely phased out. Instead, the building was heated by a hydronic radiator system, with passive ventilation provided through the old ventilation ducts.

Renovation 1988–1991

In the 1970s, active efforts were made to return the building to stately use. The building's façades were extensively restored over several years and potential uses were considered. The previous occupant, the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, was a conservative and sparingly funded manager of the building for 50 years. During this time, there were very few changes made to the building.

The Finnish National Board of Public Building and Helander-Leiviskä Architects initiated a slow but thorough renovation and restoration process. This was an extensive process that encompassed the entire building, interpreting it anew. The building was equipped with a new mechanical ventilation system using the original ventilation ducts. The electrical system was completely renovated and the lighting was redesigned, making use of the original fixtures. A full-scale professional kitchen was installed on the ground floor to offer high-end catering services, and more public restrooms were added. The old restrooms were replaced by a lift serving all floors.

The historical layers of the painted interiors were researched using archive sources and samples taken on site. A key objective of the restoration project was to combine the original 1891 colour scheme with the lighter art nouveau-style colour scheme from 1900–1904 so that these two distinct periods would blend smoothly. All the doors, windows and floors were renovated, with efforts made to save as much of the original material as possible. On the façades, the sandstone imitations in limewash and vibrant colours of the ornamentation were restored.

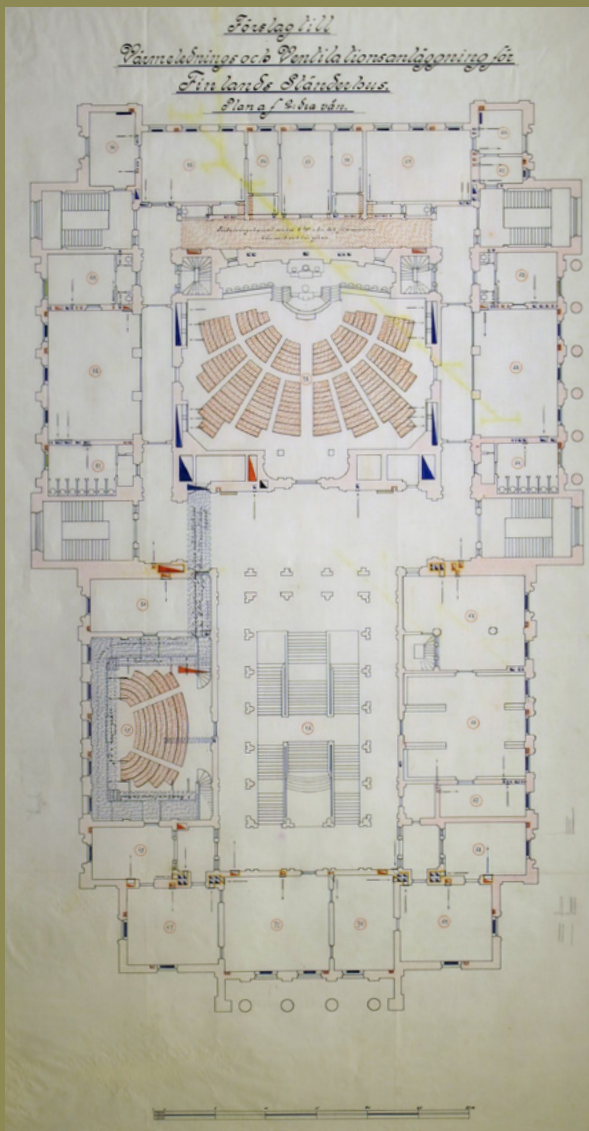
For its time, the restoration of the House of the Estates was a highly ambitious project. It aimed to combine old working methods and uses of materials with modern conservation principles. Surfaces were uncovered, reconstructed, restored and conserved. The House of the Estates worksite was like an academy of traditional materials and methods for a whole generation of conservator-restorers.



The dimly lit vestibule precedes the main foyer and grand staircase.



The grand staircase is set on a central axis and bathes in celestial light that pours in through the warmly tinted skylight. The skylight also allows in heat during the searing sun of summer as well as the early afternoon dusk and descending cool air of winter.x



Gustaf Nyström drew up several proposals to extend the House of the Estates to accommodate the new parliament. Nyström designed a 200-seat plenary chamber in a new annex over the House of the Estates Park. The House of the Estates' main floor assembly halls were to be divided into committee rooms and offices. The annex would have been bigger than the House of the Estates itself. Heating and ventilation system plan, the Finnish National Board of Building, the National Archives of Finland.



A meeting by the Constitutional Law Committee in 1918 chaired by K. J. Ståhlberg, who became the first President of Finland on 25 July 1919. Picture by E. Sundström, Helsinki City Museum.



Demonstrators in front of the House of the Estates demanding universal suffrage on 14 April 1905. Helsinki City Museum.



The distinctive colour in the peasants' hall is a vibrant blue and the bourgeoisie hall is claret. The beautiful wooden cabinets resembling mantelpieces house ventilation and heating equipment. These are still in operation today.



Scientific societies used the House of the Estates in diverse ways. Here, the bourgeoisie hall is used to store the Helsinki electoral district ballots in big sacks around the 1930 parliamentary elections. A young Urho Kekkonen (future president) behind the desk on the left. Picture by the Finnish Heritage Agency.



When scientific societies handed the building over to the Prime Minister's Office in 1978, much of the interior surfaces were heavily patinated. 1979, Veikko Laine, Helander-Leiviskä Architects.



In addition to societies, the building was used by various associations, the university and the State. In November 1945, the bourgeoisie assembly hall was the scene of the distressing post-World War II trials, where the Finnish wartime leadership was convicted. Picture by Hugo Sundström, the Finnish Heritage Agency.



The atmosphere of the library has remained unchanged over the decades. Picture by the Archive of Parliament.



Sculpture proposals for the plenary chamber in the new Parliament Building waiting to be judged in the bourgeoisie assembly hall (220). 1930, picture by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities.

Construction of the House of the Estates Park

The 1890s saw Helsinki's landscape and parks being developed with new vigour. In 1889, the city established the position of master gardener and appointed the Swedish gardener and designer Svante Olsson to the role. He immediately started major construction and renovation of gardens and parks throughout Helsinki. As a result, numerous beautiful and well-maintained parks and esplanades were created in the city, and their brilliant colours and flourishing vegetation made Helsinki one of the most beautiful cities in the Nordic countries.

Svante Olsson drew up plans for the Bank of Finland and House of the Estates squares in the early 1890s. The coloured site layout (Plan af skväreerna vid Finlands Bank & Ständerhuset) outlines the buildings, the small park in front of the Bank of Finland and the entire House of the Estates plot. The layout is symmetrical and follows typical compositions presented in books from the end of the 19th century. The composition was intended to highlight the symmetry of the building and included a green space between the House of the Estates and the Bank of Finland on both sides of Snellmaninkatu street.

The clearly shaped grass parterres bordering gravel paths behind the House of the Estates highlight the symmetry of Olsson's layout. The straight rows of trees contribute to the dignified and park-like appearance, suitable for the urban environment. The planted hedges are large enough to complement the grand scale of the building, both front and back. The intention was to position the vegetation so as to conceal and reveal the view through different lines of sight and thus make the park interesting and engaging.

Young linden, maple, elm, weeping ash and birch trees were planted in the park. *Betula alva laciniata* is a Swedish variety of silver birch that occurred spontaneously in an experimental nursery in Stockholm in the 1830s. This variety has beautiful silver leaves, and several handsome examples of this variety were planted around Observatory Hill Park and the House of the Estates Park. As a finishing touch, two elms were planted along Ritarikatu street in 1895, and these trees still stand there to this day.

Towards the end of the House of the Estates Park project, oversight of the work was taken over by Johan Valfrid Skogström (1867–1916). Skogström was from Sweden and

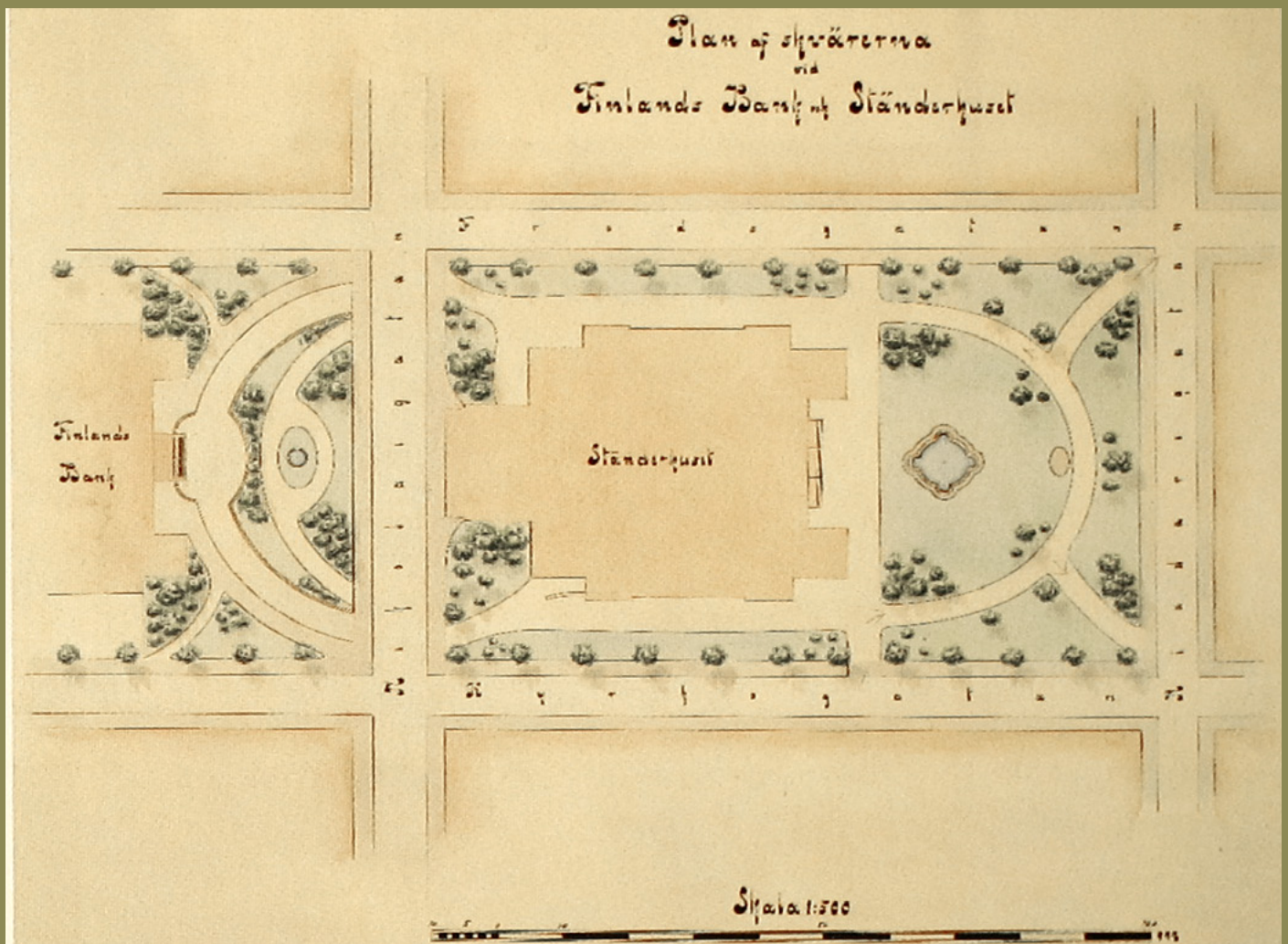
had trained as a gardener at the Royal Experimental Field in Stockholm. He moved to Finland at the age of 25 and worked as the head of the Helsinki Department of Park Management in 1892–1896. Subsequently, he founded his own landscaping and architecture firm in Helsinki. His firm provided plans for the Laakspohja, Oitbacka and Koskenkylä manors and Dalby and Hvittorp villas, for example. However, many of Skogström's commissioned works were left uncompleted, following his death in a train accident at the age of 49. After his death, his firm merged with the Olsson landscaping firm.

On 30 June 1892, the Helsinki department responsible for financial administration appointed the Department of Park Management to maintain the House of the Estates Park for the annual fee of 600 marks, equivalent to about 2,700 euros today. In 1910, this fee increased to 1,170 marks, or about 5,000 euros in today's money. Towards the end of the 1910s, the management of the park was transferred from the city to the State Department of Real Estate. However, this led to neglect and the park was soon in poor condition. In spring 1920, the city of Helsinki took over management of the park again and reached an agreement with the House of the Estates treasurer that 16,550 marks would be assigned for the park's renovation.

In July 1929, a violent storm tore down an old maple near Ritarikatu street, but the original layout of the park survived intact, as can be seen in an aerial photograph taken in 1943. In the 1960s, a sandbox was added to the park and gradually much of the House of the Estates' rear garden was turned into a playground.



The steps to the main entrance of the House of the Estates were framed by trees and shrubs in 1929. The lilacs have been cut into tree-like forms. There is a weeping elm on the left; another weeping elm has been removed on the southern side of the steps and replaced by a linden tree. Picture by Helsinki City Museum.



The House of the Estates Park layout plan from 1892. Picture: Häyrynen, Maunu: From scenic parks to reform parks: public parks and the park policy of Helsinki from the 1880s to the 1930s, Helsinki-Seura, 1994.



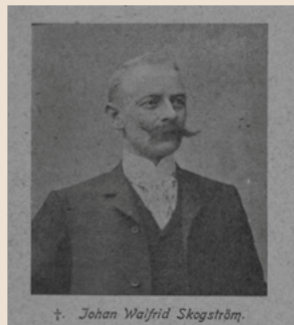
The park behind the House of the Estates around 1907. The fountain is still surrounded by more delicate flowers, before they were replaced by lilacs. A weeping ash can be seen in the middle and bottom right of the picture. The person in the picture is sitting on one of the original birch-leg benches. Picture by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities.

Park Manager Svante Olsson

Svante Olsson (1856–1941) was born in Skåne, Sweden. He worked as a garden apprentice in Copenhagen and for several royal castles in Sweden. After this, he acted as an assistant to the head gardener in Stockholm at a time when the city was initiating an extensive park construction programme.

Olsson was the Head Gardener in Helsinki in 1889–1924, and during this time he drew up plans and supervised renovation work for about 40 sites covering 70 hectares in total. Most parks in central Helsinki have been designed or renovated by Olsson. The House of the Estates Park and Ritaripuistikko Park, before that, were among his earliest works. Some of his other important works include the Kaivopuisto, Tähtitorninvuorenpuisto and Eiranpuistikko parks.

In addition to his post as Head Gardener, Olsson acted as a design consultant working on manor parks, for example. From the mid-1910s, Svante Olsson worked as a consultant on design projects run by his son Paul Olsson, who had trained as a landscape architect in Germany. During his time as Head Gardener in the 1890s and 1900s, Olsson brought the European tradition of city parks and German gardens, which were popular at the time, to Helsinki, and gradually to the rest of Finland. Svante Olsson was actively involved in various associations, organising garden shows and editing subject-specific magazines, and he was greatly respected in Finnish landscaping circles.



On the left, the House of the Estates Park designer Svante Olsson in 1916. Picture from *Finska Trädgårdsodlaren* magazine 9/1916. On the right, Johan Skogström, the likely supervisor of the construction and maintenance of the House of the Estates Park. Picture by Espoo City Museum.



In this photograph, taken in 1931, the greenery is almost 40 years old. The immediate surroundings of the fountain are green and thick with vegetation. Picture by Rönnberg, Helsinki City Museum.



The lindens have grown tall and block the view of the House of the Estates from the corner of Ritarikatu and Rauhankatu streets in 1907. The protective fence around the park is light and sparse. Picture by Brander, Helsinki City Museum.



Park workers on a break in the House of the Estates Park in the 1930s. Picture by Pälvi, Helsinki City Museum.



Grass and a curved path surrounding a fountain, 1907. The dimensions and colour tone created by the grass area and stone dust path are very different from the area's visual appearance today. One of the original birch-leg benches can be seen in the middle of the picture. Picture by Helsinki City Museum.



The fountain at the back of the House of the Estate around 1900. On the right, large shrubbery complements the scale of the House of the Estates. Smaller greenery along the path surrounding the fountain. Picture by Helsinki City Museum.

Renovation and restoration of the House of the Estates Park

The renovation and restoration of the historic House of the Estates Park, founded in the 1890s, is currently planned. Today, this public park is managed by Senate Properties.

Objectives of the plan

The aim of the plan is to restore the historic park while retaining the playground and related facilities. This means that Svante Olsson's old layout cannot be fully reconstructed and the playground and recreational area will be integrated into Olsson's original composition. As far as possible, the spirit of the turn of the 20th century will be respected in the choice of plants, materials and furniture, but these must also meet modern use and maintenance requirements.

Trees and plants

The existing trees will mainly be preserved, but some weak trees that pose a risk to the public will be replaced. An arborist specialising in the care of old trees has analysed the condition of the park's trees. During construction, special attention will be paid to ensure that conditions for the growth of the old trees are not diminished.

New trees will be planted such that the fountain's centre and diagonal axes remain unobstructed. Any gaps in the rows of lindens along Kirkkokatu and Rauhankatu streets will be filled. Young weeping ashes will be planted around the building's corners. A single elm and beech tree will be planted at the corner of Ritarikatu and Kirkkokatu streets, and small blossoming trees will be planted both inside and outside of the playground fence. The playground fence will be covered by climbers.

Groups of large lilacs will be planted on both sides of the main entrance steps facing Snellmaninkatu street as in the original layout. Seats and seasonal flowerbeds will be added at the corners of the steps.

Fountain

A crescent-shaped grass area will be created around the fountain, and the fountain itself will be framed by two arcs of cluster roses and perennials. The grass will be bordered by a gravel path but with a gentler curve than in Olsson's original plan to allow more space for the playground. Benches will be placed along the curved path.



Eastern side of the House of the Estates Park and the fountain viewed high from the House of the Estates. The fountain is surrounded by flowers in the form of an arc, a crescent-shaped grass area and a curved gravel path. A playground is located along Ritarikatu street. Virtual rendering of the park plan.



The House of the Estates main entrance and the surrounding lush lilacs and weeping ashes. Virtual rendering of the park plan.



The playground viewed from the corner of Ritarikatu and Rauhankatu streets. Ritarikatu street is on the left. Virtual rendering of the park plan.



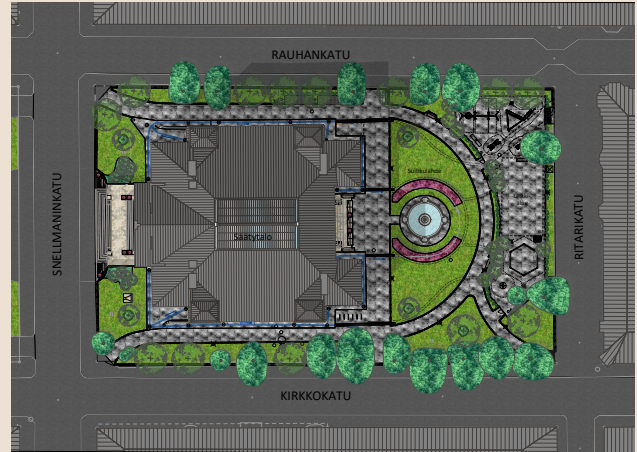
An evening view of the park viewed facing the House of the Estates high from Ritarikatu street. The playground is in the front of the image. Virtual rendering of the park plan.

Playground

The park's new playground, which will include furniture and playground equipment, will be located near Ritarikatu street. The selected furniture and playground equipment will be modern and purpose-built but their appearance will be subtle and they will not be located on the main viewing axes.

Lighting

The park's lighting will be replaced. The objective is to create lighting that allows the safe use of the park while subtly highlighting the park's architecture. Lights will not be installed on the main viewing axes but will be located in a way that respects the park's symmetry. The fountain will be accentuated with gentle spotlights during dark hours.



Illustrated plan for the House of the Estates Park renovation.

Pedimental sculpture

The bronze sculpture in the pediment of the House of the Estates is one of Finland's most significant public works of art. The pedimental sculpture was intended to echo patriotic sentiments. Carl Eneas Sjöstrand, one of the most renowned sculptors of the era, was commissioned to produce a draft. However, the commissioning of the actual sculpture was delayed. In 1891, the House of the Estates Building Committee, having taken over responsibility the matter, decided to organise an open design competition for the sculpture stating: "the estates think that the pediment should display as fine a work of art as possible," *Lukutuvan joululehti* magazine 1903, pp. 8–9.

The winner of the competition organised in 1893 was sculptor Emil Wikström. His work depicts the journey of the Finnish people towards the first Finnish Diet in 1809. The sculpture portrays this journey through the themes of civilisation, work and struggle. The central figure of the sculpture is Alexander I, who made his Sovereign Pledge at the Diet of Porvoo and confirmed the constitution of an autonomous Finland. This event has been seen as the start of independent Finnish governance. Therefore, the sculpture was significant not only because of its physical size and artistic merit but also because of its political message. The February Manifesto of 1899 was the outset of Russification measures, which was seen in Finland as an attempt to overthrow the Finnish constitution. When Emil Wikström's multi-part sculpture arrived in Finland in 1903, the political atmosphere was strained and the nationalistic symbolism of the sculpture was inflammatory.

Decades later, Wikström talked about the moment when his sculpture was installed and unveiled:

"The dark nights of autumn were already approaching as we started to unbox the pieces of the sculpture, transport them to the House of the Estates and hoist them up. Night after night, we laboured and the frieze started to take shape. In the daytime, everything up high was covered in scaffolding and sackcloth.

"Now I have to tell you something. When the frieze was nearly completed, Professor Nyström and I decided to hide a good-luck charm in the sculpture to advance all that is good and also to protect the House. Professor Nyström selected two verses from the patriotic song by Runeberg, which I then handed over to goldsmith Fagerroos to be engraved on a copper plate. Then, on a dark September night when all the workmen had gone home, I climbed up on the scaffolding and stepped in through the chest of the fallen soldier on the

right (there was still an opening where the soldier's armour is). I stumbled behind the sculpture and through the iron bars supporting the frieze until I reached the Faith motif. On the chest of Faith, I fixed the copper plate on which was engraved those powerful and patriotic verses that exude trust and confidence. Then I returned, and the armour of the soldier was sealed. On the next day, the scaffolding was removed and the frieze was ready for all to see. But the hidden copper plate remained a secret between Nyström and me for as long as Russian rule persisted here.

"The Coat of Arms of Finland is located below the feet of Alexander I, who stands in the middle of the frieze. On both sides of the Coat of Arms a floating ribbon reads: 'LEGES ET INSTITUTA FENNIAE SOLENNITER CONFIRMATAE' (the laws and institutions of Finland solemnly confirmed). These words seemed to echo our destiny. The words on the ribbon and the evidently patriotic mood of the frieze made the Russians furious. Of course, Governor-General Bobrikov was told about it the very same day, and he sent some men to investigate what was going on at the House of the Estates.

"The next day, Professor Nyström called me telling me that the Governor-General was demanding an explanation and that I should come over immediately to provide him one. Well, I had nothing to worry about. As they went through the various documents, they found my original draft, which had been personally approved and signed by Nicholas II nine years previously. This calmed Bobrikov down, and no-one faced any consequences. However, there was never a ceremonial unveiling of the frieze."



Sculptor Emil Wikström at his Paris atelier around 1900. The scale of the uncompleted frieze can be clearly seen in comparison to Wikström. The figures are about 2.2 metres tall, the highest point of the sculpture is 3 metres and it is slightly over 18 metres wide. The darker figures are made of clay and are still being worked on, while the lighter figures are already cast in plaster. Source: Gallen-Kallela Museum.

Pedimental sculpture



1. Ancient Finnish people and poetry

"On the far left, we see a swidden in a wilderness and a sheaf, plough and axe on a tree stump. As old as the cultivation of the land is the cultivation of the spirit: a Finnish man playing the kantele of Väinämöinen uses song and melody to express his inner sentiments."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

2. Education of the common people, family

"The beginnings of a literary culture: a mother teaching her child to read. This is the foundation of the higher material and spiritual cultivation represented by the next scene."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

3. Work and industry

"A farmer digging by the sweat of his brow, a workman with a hammer in his hand representing industry and, behind him, a salesman with a bag on his back. In the front, a calmly deliberating scientist with his slate and, symbolising the budding of Finnish art, a young boy carving out a figure."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

4. Law

Left of the centre scene is a woman symbolising Law. "Between the side scenes on the left and the centre scene, we see Law leaning on her tablet, on which the dates of our constitutions are engraved. She is pointing towards the heavens, whose everlasting righteousness is the guardian of the sanctity of law and the foundation of society."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

5. Representatives of the estates

On the left side of the Emperor stands the representative of the bourgeoisie, speaker Christian Trapp and representative of the nobles, the Land Marschal and baron Robert Wilhelm de Geer.

6. Sovereign Pledge

The centre scene depicts Alexander I of Russia during the Diet of Porvoo in 1809 making his Sovereign Pledge in which he guaranteed Finland its autonomous status as part of the Russian Empire. Finland was allowed to keep its constitution from the time of Swedish rule. The representatives of the estates witnessed the Pledge. Behind the Emperor is a throne, similar to the one used in

1809 at Porvoo Cathedral. "The gently gazing noble Emperor Alexander I is depicted in that memorable moment in which he declared the Finnish nation among the rank of nations. Behind him is a throne, and heralds on both sides sound their trumpets declaring the significance of this moment to the world."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

The inscribed Latin text LEGES ET INSTITUTA FENNIAE SOLENNITER CONFIRMATAE refers to this event, during which the laws and institutions of Finland were solemnly confirmed. The Latin spelling here is unusual: 'solemnly' is usually spelled 'solemniter'.

7. Representatives of the estates

On the right side of the Emperor stands the representative of the clergy, Archbishop Johan Tengström, and the spokesman for the peasantry, landowner Pehr Klockars.

8. Faith

Right of the centre scene stands a figure symbolising faith. Maintaining and upholding the Christian faith was explicitly mentioned in the Sovereign Pledge. The Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti magazine describes the figure in the following way:

"Faith, carrying in her hands a Bible and raising a cross, lifts up her weary eyes unto God, from whom comes strength and guidance, and in whose hand are the destinies of nations."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti nr 12, 1903.

9. Towards a better future and reconciliation

"In the next scene, we see Reconciliation, a woman dressing the arm of a wounded warrior. Next to them is a sturdy youth and a wise old man who places his hand on the youth's shoulder encouraging him to walk in the hope of a better future. It is this hope that the kneeling women are asking from God."

Kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

10. War and battle

"On the right, we see an honourable and realistic depiction of the growth of the Finnish nation through war and battle. On the far right is a fallen soldier under a cannon. Next to him, two soldiers are in the middle of a fierce battle."

Kyläkirjaston kuvalehti no 12, 1903.

Procession Frieze

The House of the Estates was built on a very tight schedule. As a result, there was not enough time to finish the works of art that were part of the original design and a decision was made to add them gradually once the building had been inaugurated. The frieze with ancient motifs on the building's façades was a result of this rushed process.

When the House of the Estates was revealed from under its scaffolding in August 1890, the new building received much praise, but the motifs on the façades also sparked criticism. A journalist from the *Nya Pressen* newspaper commented on the Procession Frieze painted on the upper part of the façade: "Perhaps the impression of frivolity and unmanliness would be diminished if the unappealing maiolica and heraldic colouring could be replaced and the utterly trivial procession removed. We consider this procession motif to be completely inappropriate, and its colours are off-putting and unattractive." *Nya Pressen* newspaper, 24 August 1890.

Art or ornament?

In the 1888 design by the architect Gustaf Nyström, a frieze depicting people and horses runs around the building and there is an imposing sculpture in the pediment. Nyström wanted both the sculpture and relief frieze to be done by a sculptor. A draft of the pedimental sculpture was commissioned but, due to a lack of resources, the frieze could not be assigned to an artist. Instead, Salomo Wuorio's firm was requested to paint a temporary frieze. This frieze would be a type of place holder for the artwork that would be added later. When the House of the Estates was first unveiled, its most prominent feature was this red and yellow frieze, with the pedimental sculpture having been delayed for a number of reasons.

Relief friezes similar to those on the House of the Estates can be found around the world and representing different centuries. The designer of the House of the Estates frieze was most likely inspired by the Alexander Frieze, created by the Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen from 1818 to 1828 to commemorate Napoleon's visit to Rome. Thorvaldsen in turn was inspired by the Panathenaic Frieze of the Parthenon in Athens. The Alexander Frieze is an iconic example of classical sculpture. From a Finnish point of view, an interesting comparison can be found at a Helsinki University vestibule where a relief frieze by C. E. Sjöstrand from the 1860s depicts the mythical Finnish hero Väinämöinen. In this frieze, characters from antiquity have been transplanted into Finnish mythical stories. The motifs and composition of the House of the Estates frieze were developed by S. Wuorio's designers, who would typically take inspiration from model books and other sources from abroad. However, their designs were never direct copies, instead they produced balanced combinations and interpretations. The theme of the Procession Frieze is the

delivering of a scroll which is passed on to the groups of older men standing on a dais on both sides of the central avant-corps. Research has suggested that the scroll represents law, which is handed over to the representatives of the estates by the young man symbolising the Emperor. This interpretation was put forward in a 2018 article on depictions of processions inspired by antiquity by researcher Ilkka Kuivalainen (in *Studies in Art History* no 50).

From temporary to permanent

As the pedimental sculpture became a priority, the plan to replace the frieze with a more Finnish motif was set aside. Emil Wikström's sculpture was finally completed in 1903. At this point, the façades were repainted and updated for the first time. The original richly coloured and lively imitation paintwork was replaced by lighter tones. As the massive bronze sculpture expressing national identity was installed in the pediment, a decision was made to paint over the Procession Frieze, which had received so much criticism. The building was given a new, updated appearance to highlight the sculpture, which was impressive both visually and symbolically.

Over the decades, the condition of the façades of the House of the Estates deteriorated. The new Parliament of the now independent Finland was unwilling to spend the money needed to refurbish the outdated building. When the new Parliament Building was completed in 1931, the House of the Estates became a meeting place for scientific societies. The decades that followed were a time of scarcity. Gradually, as the sun, wind and rain wore away the painted surface, the original frieze started to emerge once again. While maintenance of the façades had been minimal, the House of the Estates had received a quick lick of limewash as part of Helsinki's preparations for the 1952 Olympics. It is likely that some measures were taken to restore the frieze at this point. It was only in 1971 that the historical value and appeal of the frieze was truly understood and it was properly restored and conserved. This work was led by conservator-restorer Pentti Pietarila. The painting had almost completely worn off in some sections, but it was restored using limewash and, in places, the fresco painting technique. The figures were copied onto large plastic films which were discovered in the attic in 2023. The films were brittle and faded but still valuable and relevant proof of the original design.

During the previous extensive renovation of the House of the Estates in 1987–1991, the Procession Frieze was conserved again. This time, silicate was used as a binding agent because the limewashed surfaces had worn off so easily. During the present renovation project, the Procession Frieze will be conserved yet again.

Due to wear and repeated restoration, the precise original design of some of the figures in the more worn off places is mere guesswork. However, the original painting can still be uncovered in many of the more sheltered locations. The Procession Frieze is a notable example of a design at the interface of ornament and art and a reinterpretation of ancient classical motifs.

Procession Frieze



Group XVIII: Four women strolling behind two philosophers who are having a discussion.

Group XIX, Figures 115–124: A group of horses and riders and a chariot. The horses are rearing while the riders pull sharply on their reins. The chariot has stopped and a heroic soldier has stepped off holding a scroll in his left hand. He is holding a spear in his right hand and is wearing a Corinthian-style helmet that protects the sides of the face. He is also equipped with a chestplate.

Group XX, Figures 125–130: A group of six men standing. Their attention is focused on the men on the dais. The two men on the sides are younger. They wear their robes casually on their shoulders but are otherwise naked. They are both leaning — one on a low pedestal and the other on a shepherd's staff. The four older men with beards and covering robes represent learned men. They are listening to the central figure on the dais. Traditionally, the young man closest to the dais and standing apart from the rest has been understood to represent the Emperor. He rests his staff on the dais.

Group XXI, Figures 131–132: The bearded and robed philosophers on the dais have received scrolls. These old men have been understood to represent the spokesmen of the estates while the scrolls represent the laws confirming Finland's autonomy granted by the Emperor.



Group IX, Figures 61–64: The first procession ends with a scene in which three philosophers are sitting on a dais in front of a fluted column. A young, long-haired man is with them. The philosophers are wearing himation robes and the young man is nude. The philosophers are sitting on klismos chairs, which is a type of ancient Greek chair. The philosopher in the front is extending his arm to receive a scroll brought to him by the members of the procession. In his other hand, he holds another scroll. The scene between groups IX and VIII is the central scene and the culmination of the entire frieze.

Group VIII, Figures 54–60: At the head of the first procession, two philosophers and a woman have turned around and are handing over a scroll. Behind the woman, there is a horse and rider with two footmen.

Group VII, Figures 47–53: A four-horse team is halted and the horses are rearing. The man in the chariot is leaning forward to pass a scroll to the head of the procession. A lone woman with a leafy branch in her hand is following the chariot.

Group VI, Figures 41–46: The woman is followed by three horses and riders. One of the riders has dismounted his horse while the other two have halted. They are all facing forward.



Group V, Figures 32–40: A group of three horses and riders with three soldiers on foot. The riders are spaced apart. The first rider is walking his horse and holding a staff. Soldiers equipped with shields and swords are engaged in animated discussion.

Grupp IV, figurerna 28–31: den första soldaten blickar bakåt, sedan kommer en stillastående häst och en filosoffigur som håller i hästen. En ung, långhårig man står bakom hästen. Hästarna har ingen annan utrustning än betsel och tyglar. Ställvis har det nackband som ska finnas bakom hästens öron utelämnats eller slitits och blivit osynligt.

Classical design

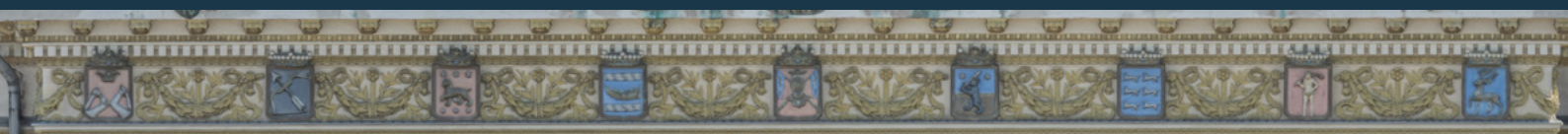
Classical architecture carries within it a multitude of meanings from the past. The shapes, forms and ornamentation of classical façades are not random or the personal invention of any one designer. Instead, they are the manifestations of a long and rich cultural history. Most motifs that appear in classical architecture originated in ancient Greece or the Roman Empire, and these have been both freely developed and fastidiously copied all over the world throughout the centuries. Architect Nyström was particularly captivated by the rich visual expressions of the Italian Renaissance, which in turn is inspired by classical antiquity.

The House of the Estates, with its rich ornamentation, is an exception among heritage buildings in Finland. Its ornamentation is deliberate and consistent and is clearly inspired by the European construction practices of its time. The large surfaces of the façade are rendered and limewashed to look like stone blocks. The main surfaces imitate sandstone, and the mouldings imitate marble. Moreover, plaster cast details have been used on many surfaces to create the impression of natural stone or metal, such as patinated bronze. The coats of arms of towns and regions of Finland add another historical layer to the façade. They were initially painted in bold heraldic colours, but in 1891, after much criticism from his contemporaries, Nyström decided to repaint them in a single colour. More recently, the original polychromatic design has been restored.

The picture on the right illustrates the building's most common ornamental features and their names. The colouring symbolises the stone imitation effect. The sandstone blocks show considerable variation, but there has been no attempt to replicate the uneven surfaces typical of natural stone. The classical order of the House of the Estates resembles the Corinthian style. On the long sides, there are also some small Ionic pilasters



The coats of arms of the historical regions of Finland on the central avant-corps



Karjala

Savo

Häme

Uusimaa

Varsinais-
Suomi

Satakunta

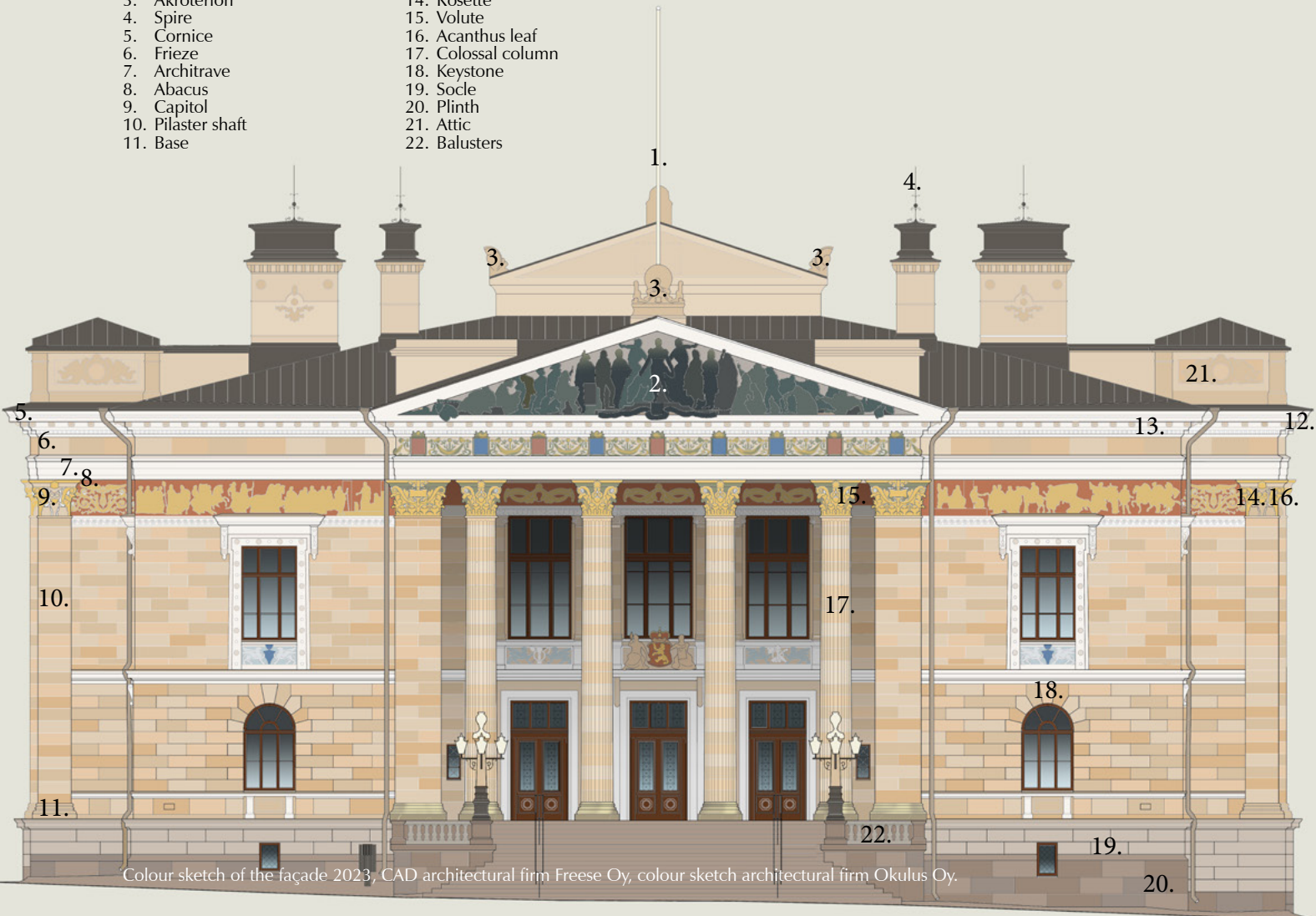
Pohjanmaa

Lappi

Ahvenanmaa

Classical design

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Central avant-corps | 12. Console |
| 2. Pediment | 13. Dentils |
| 3. Akroterion | 14. Rosette |
| 4. Spire | 15. Volute |
| 5. Cornice | 16. Acanthus leaf |
| 6. Frieze | 17. Colossal column |
| 7. Architrave | 18. Keystone |
| 8. Abacus | 19. Socle |
| 9. Capital | 20. Plinth |
| 10. Pilaster shaft | 21. Attic |
| 11. Base | 22. Balusters |



ENTABLATURE

The entablature is the uppermost horizontal structure on the façade, and it is divided into three subdivisions. The top part is the **cornice**, a dramatically protruding element that functions partly as eaves. The **consoles** below the cornice resemble projecting eaves or the ends of beams supporting the roof. A row of **dentils** runs under the consoles. The **frieze** is sometimes just a plain surface but can also be decorated. The **architrave** is the horizontal structure that rests on the columns.

COLUMNS AND PILASTERS

A column is a free-standing vertical structure, like the round columns of the House of the Estates central avant-corps. A pilaster is a vertical structure that stands against a wall. At the top of both columns and pilasters is a **capital**. In the Corinthian order, a capital usually consists of **acanthus leaves**, curved **volute**s and **rosettes**. The slab over a capital is called an **abacus**, while the bottom of a column is called the **base**.

Sometimes the shaft of a column has grooves or fluting, like the columns of the House of the Estates central avant-corps. Another way of adding interest to columns is entasis, when a slight curve or bulge is introduced to the column shaft. The bulge is in the lower third while the thinnest point is at the top. The House of the Estates columns have been given a very subtle entasis. The pilasters do not include this feature.

When a column stretches over two storeys and is a dominant feature of a building, it is known as a colossal column. The central avant-corps and free-standing columns of the House of the Estates form a portico leading to the main entrance.

WINDOWS

The second-floor windows have decorative frame mouldings, and the top mould is supported by tall, thin consoles. The frames are decorated by rosettes in two different sizes. A coat of arms surrounded by two winged lions sits in a recess below the window.

The first-floor windows are arched. The stone at the apex of the arch is called a **keystone**.

ART

The pediment sculptures are by Emil Wikström and were completed in 1903. The central figure of the sculpture is Alexander I, who confirmed the laws and rights of Finland as an autonomous region of Russia at the Porvoo Diet in 1809.

Above the main doors is a sculpture by Ville Vallgren in which two female figures, Lux (light or enlightenment) and Lex (law), hold the coat of arms of Finland.

The Procession Frieze by Salomo Wuorio's decorative painting firm adorns the building on three sides. This piece of ornamental art was inspired by reliefs from classical antiquity and was intended to be temporary.

PODIUM

The House of the Estates socle is particularly robust. Together with the entrance steps, it forms the basis or the podium often seen on ancient temples. The landing is surrounded by a railing consisting of **balusters**.

ROOF

The added attics on the roof make the appearance of the façades even more impressive. Each corner of the building has a decorative **attic**. A simpler attic is located behind the central avant-corps.

AVANT-CORPS

An avant-corps is a section of wall that protrudes from the main body of a façade. The House of the Estates has a **central avant-corps** on the main façade and two off-centre avant-corps facing the park. A gable or **pediment** with bronze statues stands atop the central avant-corps. A large fan-shaped ornament with human figures is located at the apex of the pediment. This type of ornament is called an **acroterion**. The pediment frieze displays the coats of arms of the historical regions of Finland. There are reliefs of vines with ribbons and **garlands** between the coats of arms.