

Re:Frame

A new museum model for Leüthenhaven, Trondheim

Re:Frame proposes a fundamental shift in how a museum can exist within the city. Instead of a static monument set apart from urban life, the project envisions the museum as civic infrastructure: open, flexible, and deeply intertwined with Trondheim's social, cultural, and urban systems.

The name itself carries significance: etymologically, 'Re-' means *again - a gesture of return, renewal, and revision*. In Re:Frame, it signals a museum continuously rethinking itself, embracing the possibility of constant negotiation of its role as both cultural institution, democratic platform and urban actor.

At its core lies the conviction that the museum should be an inclusive and dynamic environment. It is a place not only for preserving art but for making, dialogue, and encounter - a public space where difference can coexist, where new cultural forms can emerge, and where architecture itself invites participation and change.

The proposal takes shape through three interconnected concepts and strategies - Re:Connect, Re:Form, and Re:Act - that together define both the project's values and its design logic. They serve simultaneously as both a strategic vision and a practical framework, translating ambitions of openness, adaptability, and participation into urban, spatial and social form.

Across all scales, Re:Frame aspires to dissolve barriers between institution and city, between inside and outside, and between observer and participant. It rejects the notion of the museum as a finished object, proposing instead a living framework - an architecture of possibilities. It imagines the museum as an evolving civic platform, capable of responding to unknown futures and rooted in the belief that culture is not static, but something we continuously create together.

Re:Connect

The proposal reimagines the museum not as an isolated monument, but as a vital urban catalyst deeply woven into the everyday life of Trondheim. It reconnects the museum typology to the city, transforming Leüthenhaven from a fragmented parking lot into a porous cultural landscape.

Re:Connect / Urban Strategy:

- **Urban Porosity:** Inviting pedestrians, facilitating urban flow, and creating visible and tangible connections.
- **Active Ground Floor:** Urban activation and inclusive everyday life through transparent and inviting ground-level functions.
- **Soft Borders:** Blurring thresholds between inside and outside, fostering continuous activation and public accessibility.
- **Local Anchoring:** Strengthening local identity, placemaking, and historical continuity through thoughtful spatial interventions.

Urban Porosity – Weaving the City Together. Rather than imposing a singular, monumental building, the buildings on the site emerges as an ensemble of smaller, interconnected structures inspired by Trondheim's fine-grained urban fabric. Passages, open plazas, and intimate urban pockets replicate the city's historic "veiter," creating a permeable, pedestrian-friendly environment. Sightlines open toward adjacent cultural institutions, parks, and neighborhoods, enhancing accessibility and visual connectivity. This approach creates a civic infrastructure that seamlessly integrates museum and city, dissolving traditional museum boundaries and enabling an open, inviting urban rhythm.

Active Ground Floor – Extroverted Public Life. The ground floor is conceived as an extroverted environment designed for inclusive urban life and continuous public activation. Transparent façades and permeable entryways invite casual exploration, with diverse programs—cafés, craft studios, community workshops, and small studios — creating a lively street presence beyond typical museum hours. These everyday functions encourage spontaneous interactions, positioning the museum not only as a cultural institution but as a genuine neighborhood asset, embedded in local life and daily rituals.

Situated as a key part of the active ground floor, 'Vefa' is conceived as an open, flexible art hall bridging interior and exterior public life. Inspired by the spirit of local artist Hannah Ryggen - who wove political narratives into material form - the space supports experimental exhibitions, performances, and participatory practices. The name 'Vefa' is derived from the Old Norse word for *to weave*, reflecting its role as an multifaceted and experimental urban connector.

Soft Borders – Activating Thresholds. Soft, porous borders extend the museum's public presence, dissolving traditional distinctions between inside and outside. Generous thresholds and partially covered outdoor spaces act as transitional zones that foster informal encounters and interactions. By facilitating permeability and interactivity, the museum's edges transform from static barriers to dynamic sites of urban participation.

Local Anchoring – Identity and Historical Continuity. Acknowledging the historical layers of Leüthenhaven, the design thoughtfully integrates programs and spatial motifs drawn from local traditions. The central plaza is paved with reused Trondheim stone and planted with regional species, becoming a versatile stage for public life - supporting markets, performances, and everyday gatherings. Above, the rooftop garden 'Haven til Jens' extends this local anchoring, drawing inspiration from gardener Jens Nilsen Leüthen. The gesture of reuse and local reference establishes the museum as a meaningful and rooted place, embedding it firmly in Trondheim's ecological and cultural narratives.

At its core, the project envisions the museum as a transformative urban agent, embracing principles of openness, adaptability, and collective authorship. By shifting from a monumental landmark to a relational and accessible cultural landscape, the project invites for continuous urban dialogue and ongoing exchange.

Re:Form

Architecturally, the proposal challenges the historical museum typology - typically static, monumental, and closed - by introducing a responsive, flexible, and open spatial logic. Rather than imposing fixed forms, the Re:Frame museum curates conditions for flexibility, adaptation, and collective authorship. It imagines the museum not as a finished object, but as a living framework prepared to evolve, adapt, and respond to shifting cultural practices and emerging community needs.

Re:Form / Architectural Strategy:

- **Adaptive Reuse:** Building thoughtfully upon existing structures, taking the parking garage as the foundational layer for the new museum.
- **Flexible Modularity:** Employing a modular timber framework designed to accommodate evolving programs, curatorial practices, and changing use.
- **Local Heritage and Material Care :** Reinterpreting Trondheim's architectural traditions and embracing regenerative, biogenic, and reclaimed materials to reflect responsibility and care.

Adaptive Reuse – Using What We Have. Instead of demolishing the existing parking structure, the museum carefully integrates itself into the inherited concrete grid. By introducing strategically placed timber structures, the existing grid becomes the guiding tectonic principle for the new museum. This intervention allows the parking garage to remain operational, with integrated secure access points to reduce the visible impact of vehicles on the site. Through this approach, the museum both preserves resources and derives architectural meaning from what already exists, demonstrating value and care through adaptive reuse.

Flexible Modularity – Structures of Possibility. Rejecting the fixed forms of monumentality, the museums clearly articulated modular timber framework offers an honest tectonic expression. Its structural and spatial logic easily adapts, expands, or contracts, allowing dynamic curatorial strategies and future programmatic transformations. Movable partitions, double-height spaces, multiple access points and reconfigurable spatial sequences, support diverse use - from traditional exhibitions to collective making, public performances, or community workshops. Inspired by ideas of commoning and participatory design, the architecture becomes agile civic infrastructure, enabling continuous user involvement and adaptation over time.

Local Heritage and Material Care

The proposal draws inspiration from Trondheim's architectural traditions, reinterpreting familiar forms and techniques to shape a museum deeply rooted in the given place. Elements such as visible timber structures, overhanging roofs, and expressive wooden pillars echo the region's historical wooden architecture, yet are reimaged and reinterpreted.

The design prioritise biogenic materials, including locally sourced timber, and reclaimed elements from site demolitions. Beyond performance or aesthetics alone, these decisions communicate genuine care, circularity, and regenerative principles. Exposed timber joints, visible construction methods, and honest detailing celebrate the act of building, inviting repair, modification, and renewal. Design-for-disassembly principles ensure future adaptability and continuous resourcefulness, reinforcing the project's ethical material stance.

Overall, the proposal reframes the museum typology - not as a static icon, but as a spatial framework inviting for collective authorship and staying open to continual negotiation and change. The architecture is intentionally 'unfinished', allowing the museum to remain responsive, ensuring continued relevance and emphasizing participation, engagement and dialogue.

Re:Act

Moving away from the museum as a static archive for passive observation, Re:Frame proposes an alternative model of cultural engagement—active, open, and co-created. As the project's strategy for participation, Re:Act embeds involvement into every stage of the museum's making. It invites users to take part from day one - through building, testing, growing, and imagining together.

Re:Act / Activation Strategy

- **Early Activation and Urban Temporality:** Initiating civic anchoring from day one through temporary programs, visible construction, and transitional use of existing structures.
- **Participatory Making:** Embracing art as a shared, meaningful practice - grounded in care, material presence, and collective authorship.
- **Plurality:** Ensuring diverse use and public overlap through layered, inclusive programs spanning institutions, communities, and everyday life.

Early Activation and Urban Temporality – A Cultural and Local Neighborhood in the Making. The museum doesn't begin when the building is complete. From day one, Re:Frame introduces a series of pilot initiatives that reactivate Leüthenhaven and invite the city back in. Temporary cultural programs, repair cafés, small exhibitions, and shared urban gardens take root on the site and around the existing office building, transforming Leüthenhaven from a grey parking lot into a green, participatory public space.

Rather than waiting for the institution to arrive, Re:Frame supports cultural life as it unfolds. By participation, inviting informal use, and embracing visible processes, the project shifts focus from end-product to everyday experience – allowing placemaking and belonging to be gardened and grown over time. This anchors the museum in the local neighborhood and strengthens the foundation for long-term stewardship.

Participatory Making – Collective Processes, Collective Form

In Re:Frame, art is not only isolated behind security glass—it spills into workshops, public spaces, and urban life. The museum becomes a space for making, testing, discussing, and performing. Artistic practice is understood as a shared, situated process, where experimentation is valued over resolution, and dialogue over display. The museum becomes a space for collective experimentation, where boundaries between artist, maker, and user dissolve through shared acts of creation.

The intention is that user involvement, art, and making are not only processes, but also materially present in the architecture itself. The proposal introduces a new form of façade cladding—where shaping together becomes both method and expression. Through participatory workshops, Trondheim's residents are invited to leave their personal mark on the museum-to-be: façade shingles are inscribed and marked by local hands, emphasizing the value of making, creating, and shared expression. It reflects not a singular author's vision, but a shared commitment—rooted in local presence and storytelling as a collective act.

Plurality – Many Users, Many Rhythms. Through a rich mix of programs and different users and institutions, the plot supports activity across different times of the day, seasons, and user groups. Institutional boundaries are softened, allowing collaboration between art, education, research, and civic life. Spaces remain adaptable, welcoming spontaneous events and slow, evolving uses alike. This multiplicity strengthens local networks and fosters exchange and an active urban life.

The proposal reframes the museum not as a finished object, but as a dynamic civic framework. Its architecture is incomplete by design—inviting dialogue, participation, and transformation. The museum remains open - ready to evolve with new ideas, new voices, and the unknown future.