

The ugly, the inside and the human - the virtual Carlsberg

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The project 'The virtual Carlsberg' is a 100% digital based project about the old Carlsberg brewery, which was established in 1847. It has a holistic perspective towards the history of this cultural site and challenges the preserving policy in Denmark.

Carlsberg - an industrial heritage site

For more than 150 years Carlsberg has been located on the same site in Valby in Copenhagen, brewing beer for the Danes and a growing international market. The Carlsberg enterprise has changed a lot over the last 150 years, and as a result of the globalization the brewery production is leaving the historical site in Valby. The production has moved to the countryside in Jutland, which means that a large area in Valby is freed up for urban development. Over the next 10 to 25 years a new city district will develop.

Some of the historical buildings will remain and will be reused in other contexts, while others will be torn down to make room for new buildings more suitable for urban functions such as housing, cultural activities and private enterprises.

In many ways the history and development of Carlsberg reflects the changes in society, industrial history and the development of the city of Copenhagen. From being a national, family-based firm established by the brewer I.C. Jacobsen, Carlsberg is now a multi-national joint-stock company.

The main purpose of the project 'The virtual Carlsberg' is to tell the history of the industrial heritage as well as connecting the history to the physical site; to see it from a broad perspective including the physical architectural qualities as well as the production technology, the conditions for the workers and the relationship between Carlsberg and its surroundings.

It is the totality combining the different point of perspectives that interests us. This approach is also provoked by the Denmark preservation policy which has been mainly focusing on the physical side and the architecture, with no concern for what has happened inside the buildings. Both perspectives are important in telling the history of a cultural heritage site.

"The virtual Carlsberg" is a digital project on the website www.humlenedcarlsberg.dk - unfortunately only in Danish - consisting of three points of entry and three different layers of communication:

- a 3D simulation of the physical site of Carlsberg in Valby in the year 2007,
- an audio universe of montages with workers at all levels in the organization of Carlsberg, and
- a knowledge database

One point of entry to the website is by an interactive 3D simulation of the site in Valby from 2007. You can walk as an avatar through the whole area and get a physical 1 to 1 experience of the scenery. It is an interactive relation where you can walk around as in a computer game in all directions and look for new adventures. You will find information on selected spots about the existing buildings concerning architecture, function etc.

Walking around an avatar you will also meet the second communication layer which is the audio universe. This consists of 35 audio montages of workers from the brewery. Workers as the main characters in one story can be side characters in another. The focus in this layer is memories, and the montage is a suitable and perfect tool to communicate and present a universe where identification is a keyword. While the story is being told, you can navigate through a selected range of material and sources on the history of Carlsberg. This leads us to the last layer of communication.

The knowledge database consists of a large body of material arranged by a taxonomy of industrial history developed for this project with four main pillars: culture, production, physical environment and relations to the surroundings. This ensures that not only the architectural history of the industrial society is being told, but also the everyday working life, the history of the business enterprise etc. The knowledge database consists of digitalized sources, pictures, video, articles, memories, plans of buildings etc. Through this layer it is possible to go directly to the sources or read about it in a more communicative way in one of the many articles.

The goal of "The virtual Carlsberg" has been to make an interactive and audio playground where through different layers of communication you can experience the cultural heritage sites from different perspectives depending on interest.

The holistic point of view is also a comment to the preserving policy of Denmark not only to focus on the empty shells of the buildings. The content – the inside, the ugly and the human – is just as important factors in telling and preserving the history of a cultural heritage site as Carlsberg.