



THE SEAM

The nature of Svalbard seems, paradoxically, intent upon instigating its own very traditional preservation of the Soviet showcase town, combating its inevitable decay. Meanwhile, what little human intervention the site sees, appears to accelerate its deterioration. In these remote circumstances, traditional methods of preservation are neither appropriate nor desirable. Archiving and exhibiting artifacts from the compound, becomes merely another exhibit of Soviet era detritus, while depriving the history of the site itself. Maintenance or renovation as a cultural artifact as a whole is not economically feasible, and would likewise deny the modern history of the town. Thus we find that Radical Preservation is not merely a brief, but a necessity for the future of Pyramiden.

Our proposal is to maintain the unique atmosphere and history of the site, by creating the possibility for redeveloping the majority of the complex. White washing the bulk of the existing compound while leaving carefully selected seams untouched, creates a canvas for future development, and distills the history of the structures, amplifying their impact. The resulting juxtaposition of old and new, utopian and dystopian, expresses the complex history of the town more acutely than traditional preservation could hope to.

This temporary intervention could serve as a permanent solution. In summer the stark mass of the redevelopment, perforated with seams of forgotten past will evoke the history of the site, crisp white surfaces reminiscent of a town that for a time at least was a symbol of utopia, mellowed by the signs of its decay, held in permanent stasis. Through the rest of the year, the transformed structures will fade into their arctic surroundings, emphasising the historic seams of the mining town.

