

YES IS MORE

Close Up: BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group

Exhibition at the Danish Architecture Centre 20 February 2009 – 31 May 2009

Strandgade 27B, 1401 Copenhagen.

Open seven days a week 10am – 5pm, Wednesday until 9pm (admission free 5pm – 9pm)

In recent years, Danish architects have impressively renewed and expanded architectonic language. By staging the exhibition, 'YES IS MORE', the Danish Architecture Centre (DAC) zooms in on one of Danish architecture's most successful and innovative architectural companies, BIG – BJARKE INGELS GROUP..

This exhibition forms part of a pilot project called 'Close Up', in which DAC takes a long, hard look at new tendencies, theories and challenges within Danish architecture – using exhibitions, debates, seminars and teaching sessions. Close Up is financed by Realdania and supported by the Danish Ministry of Culture

The exhibition sets up a platform for, and extends an invitation to, a dialogue about a number of Danish architectural companies that have forged striking, ground-breaking concepts to create a kind of holistic architecture quite out of the ordinary. In recent years, building construction in Denmark has been like a river in flood. Danish architects have experimented, expanded and developed their potentialities; and Danish architecture has taken great strides in terms of design and visual form language, new technologies, new skills, professionalisation, internationalisation and sustainability – to such an extent that Danish architects have in so many ways radically renewed and expanded the Danish/Scandinavian architectural tradition.

Teetering as we are on the brink of a financial meltdown, there are a number of relevant questions: How have Danish architects renewed and developed Danish architecture in recent years? How have they broken new ground? And how can Danish architectural companies carry their experience and huge potential further onwards in this 21st century. 'Close Up' is a platform for debate, zooming in on innovative thinking, new opportunities and new challenges within Danish architecture today.

Through the exhibition, YES IS MORE, this platform is launched as one broad, insistent invitation to embark on a voyage of discovery, reaching behind the final design to the creative process itself, focusing on how BIG as an architectural company realises its potential in constant dialogue with the society around it. A large, colourful series of cartoons unfolds across the walls of the exhibition, inviting visitors to step behind the projects to experience the constant transformation of ideas into projects. A collage of quotations and images illustrates the evolutionary process that characterises BIG – where differences and opposition along the way become an inspiration to further development and part of the final design. In the centre of the exhibition, a large conglomeration of models rises like a major city lit up at night, marking the transition from a simple form to the more complex, innovative structure of the final design. As an extension of the exhibition there will be a number of dialogue meetings to encourage architectural discussions about the development and renewal of the Danish/Scandinavian aesthetic tradition in our day.

BACKGROUND FOR THE PILOT PROJECT, CLOSE UP

Through this pilot project, DAC aims to start a discussion concerning the development of architecture in recent times and its present status – thus opening the way to potential future developments. Centred round the exhibition, YES IS MORE, a whole range of challenges will be presented and debated: design, internationalisation and fashioning in interaction with contemporary trends. Using unconventional approaches, humour and an international focus, BIG has created its own unmistakable, iconic architectonic language and has contributed to the renewal of the Danish architectural tradition, based on a vision to free architecture from tired clichés, choosing instead to see modern life as a challenge and inspiration.

Developments in Danish architecture are, however, the result of a complex set of new premises and challenges, working together to create the potential for a new kind of range and diversity in this field. The dialogue meetings will pursue and expand the current debate with a focus on five overall challenges:

1. The development and renewal of the Danish/Scandinavian aesthetic tradition.
2. The professionalisation of architecture as a commercial enterprise.
3. Digital approaches to construction and new forms of cooperation in the construction world.
4. Globalisation and increased internationalisation.
5. The sustainability of products (buildings, planning) and running a business.

Together, these five dimensions have enabled Danish architecture to lift itself out of the grip of existing conventions.

In recent years, Danish architects have made manifest an *innovative, aesthetic visual language*, with such effect that Danish architecture has been lifted above and beyond the historical heyday of Danish modernist design. Development of the inclusive approach to design has taken place with respect for tradition, but with much attention to input from the international scene and to experimentation. A number of newer Danish architectural companies have played a special role in defining this development, though a majority of the established companies have helped to nurture and implement it.

As a branch, Danish architecture is not the same as it was twenty years ago. Danish architects have wholeheartedly adopted new IT technologies and *digital building construction*. Using 3D projection, the development of CAD technology, 3D scanning and rapid-prototype 3D print, architectural companies have been able to work with a much more advanced form of architectonic language. Moving even further, some companies have set up research and development departments, focusing on intelligent building materials and their influence on aesthetic visual language and project design. This focus by Danish architects on new technologies is, however, but one element in a new emphasis on *optimising production and work processes*, in which the development of new materials and cooperation across building projects and professional and company boundaries works to optimise the whole design and construction process.

In terms of management, architectural companies have been through a process of *professionalisation*, with creative management supported by boards of directors with business acumen and by standards involving certification arrangements and quality assurance. One further example of the increased professionalisation of architectural companies is a focus on communication and interdisciplinary staffing policies.

All this is reflected in an increased focus on *internationalisation*. Danish architects are being called upon in a new way to join international architectural competitions; they are winning these and building prestige projects all over the world – projects characterised by a sense for humanist design, a great sense of context, by meeting delivery deadlines, by quality and the ability to work across professional and cultural divides. There are also examples of Danish architectural companies shouldering their responsibilities in terms of company management and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): for example, in 2008 twenty-one Danish companies collectively signed up for the UN Global Compact on the basis of DAC's exhibition, 'Building Sustainable Communities', financed by Realdania.

In global terms, climate challenges have been on the agenda for the past few years and the role of architects in this connection has been delineated. Towns and their architecture are among the major climate offenders. This, combined with the explosive growth of urban populations all over the world, has handed architects a special role in meeting the challenges, which at the same time present massive opportunities. Danish architectural companies have gained an international competitive advantage in this area, and they have picked up the gauntlet in a big way. *Sustainable architecture* has become a buzzword in company development: here there is great potential for creating and contributing to the future development of Danish architecture – and is at the same time an area of competence that has to be mastered.

In the wider perspective, one may ask whether a new discourse has not arisen within architecture and urban planning, a discourse which creates the breeding ground for the establishment of a new kind of architectural activity in which new competencies are brought into play and in turn set up new potential solutions to the advantage of urban planning and of society as a whole.

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