

HHF Architects

BIG Bjarke Ingels Group

The Puzzle House

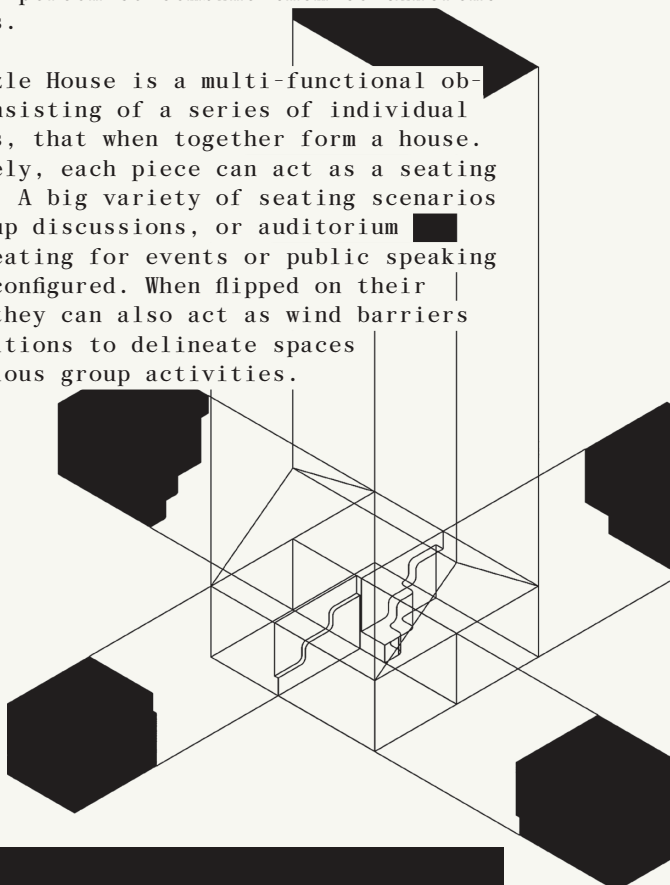
Embassy of
Switzerland in Denmark

Architecture
in Residence

A Swiss-Danish collaboration
between HHF^{CH} and BIG^{DK}

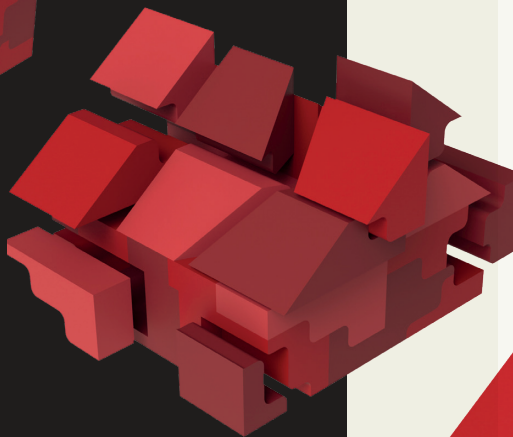
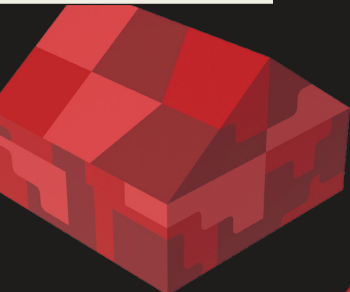
Resulting out of a collaboration of Swiss and Danish architects HHF and BIG, the Puzzle House triggers social interaction as most elements need to be carried by more than one person to combine them to different settings.

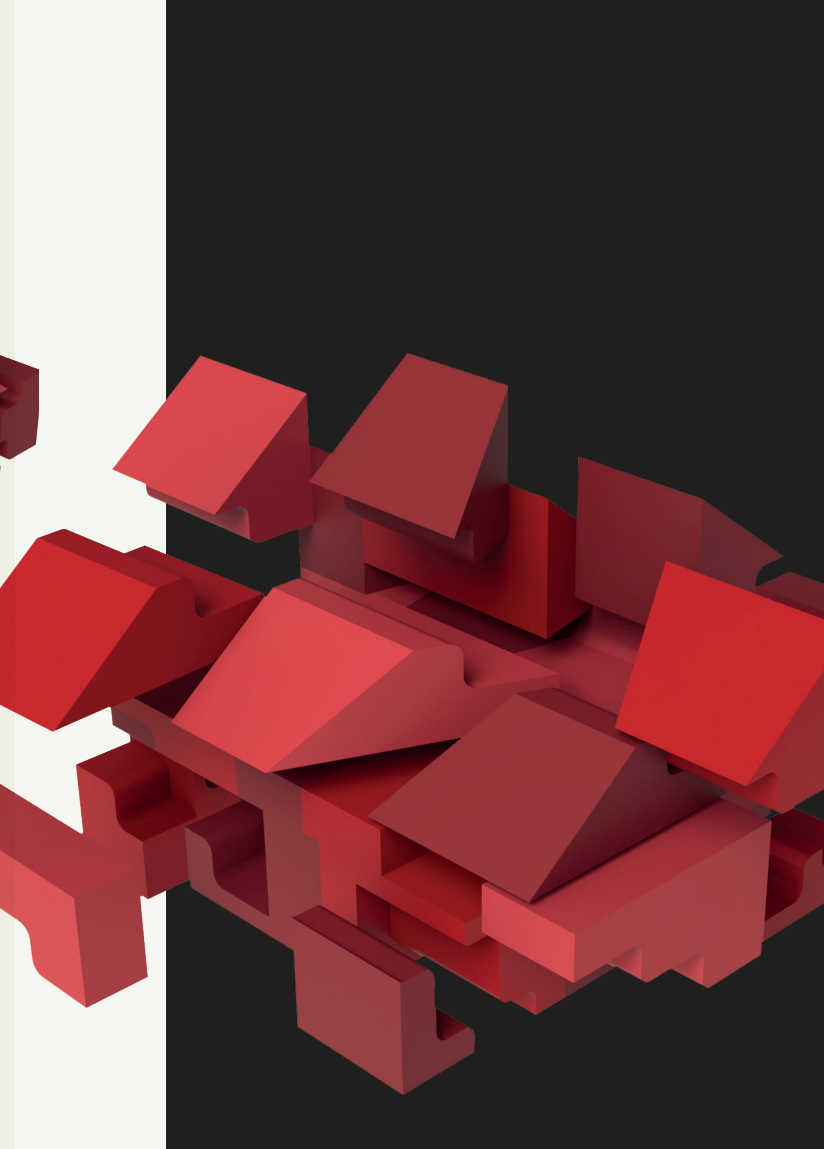
The Puzzle House is a multi-functional object consisting of a series of individual elements, that when together form a house. Separately, each piece can act as a seating element. A big variety of seating scenarios for group discussions, or auditorium style seating for events or public speaking can be configured. When flipped on their sides, they can also act as wind barriers or partitions to delineate spaces for various group activities.





The Puzzle House





How Switzerland and Denmark connect

Kristof Alexander Hertig in discussion with the architects Bjarke Ingels (BIG) and Simon Frommenwiler (HHF)

Kristof Alexander Hertig: Bjarke, when you think about Switzerland, what are the first things that come to your mind?

Bjarke Ingels: One of the things that I find most interesting about Switzerland is that it has this mixture of influences from northern and southern Europe. In a way there is a Germanic influence: everything orderly structured, trains that run on time and punctual clocks. On the other hand, there is the Latin environment with French and Italian influences. You could say this results in a combination of extremely perfected execution with a somewhat underlying madness. Or in other words, the Swiss have a love for order and organization combined with a love for life, leisure and pleasure. At least that is something I see in all my Swiss friends, who all have great abilities to execute on projects but also a very life-loving attitude.

KAH: Simon, what is your impression of the Danes from a Swiss perspective?

Simon Frommenwiler: Coming from quite a conservative country, I experience people in Denmark generally as very open minded and liberal. I would also say that they are also more open and friendly with each other in everyday life, which is something I really appreciate. Switzerland is much about infrastructure and the belief in functional things. I feel sometimes there is a certain mistrust in designing for the beauty of things which definitely appears to be different in

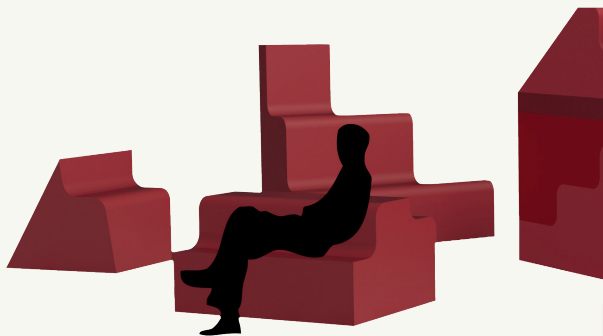
Denmark. The Danes create with the beauty of things in mind, without compromising on functionality. In general, the average quality and level of design in Denmark is astonishingly high, and not only for products in the high-segment market.

KAH: Bjarke, do you have a favorite piece of architecture in Switzerland?

Bjarke Ingels: Maybe to just pick my first architectural encounter with Switzerland, of course, there are the Zumthor'esque works, but I would say the Vitra campus is very indicative of something that I find quite Swiss. I think of Basel as a cosmopolitan city, and a strong power within art and manufacturing. The Vitra campus — that paradoxically is a Swiss company on the German side of the border — is probably the best architectural collection where you can go and see original works by a very diverse group of international and Swiss architects. The campus also embodies the perfection in execution on one hand, combined with some sort of cosmopolitan radical touch on the other.

KAH: How about you Simon?

My first impression of Danish architecture that I can think back to, I was young and on a trip with my parents, is the Louisiana Museum. That was sort of an aha moment for me. Seeing this amazing landscape by the sea with its unique integration of pavilions and art made a big impression on me. I think that was actually a revelatory moment that I still remember fondly. Today I'm fascinated by the quality and design of public space and infrastructure in Denmark. Danish cities seem to be less afraid of sometimes very specific designs and uses, which go far beyond the pure functionality.



KAH: Your collaborative project «Architecture in Residence» is quite an interesting combination too. It is taking place in Denmark but at the same time on Swiss grounds at the Embassy. What was tempting you to initiate that project?

Bjarke Ingels: I think firstly, the current Swiss Ambassador to Denmark Benedikt Wechsler, is a person who possesses many of the characteristics that I described earlier which makes something, or in this case someone, very Swiss. He possesses this great ability to execute and make things happen but combines it with a lot of pleasure throughout the process. So it was tempting to collaborate from the beginning, because we knew it would happen and it would be fun. Secondly, the suggestion came up during CHART Art Fair, where I invited Simon to join. So early on we already had all the ingredients for a fun and successful collaboration.



KAH: What made this collaboration tempting for you Simon?

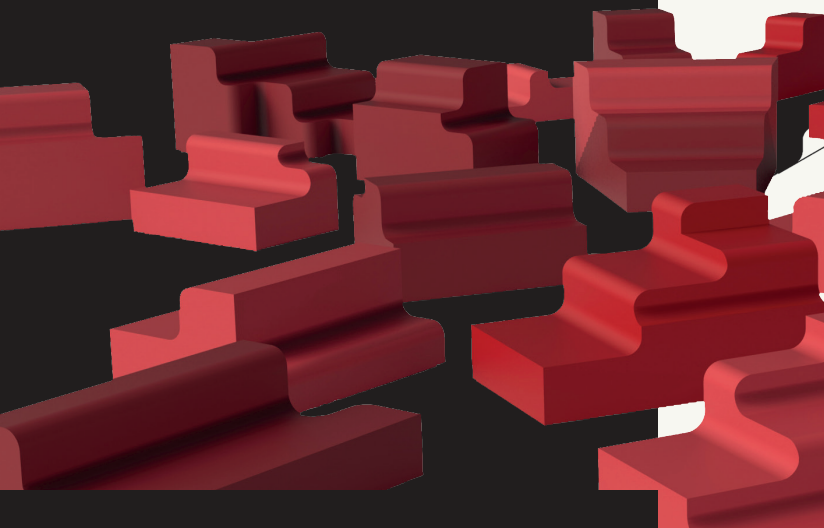
Simon Frommenwiler: During CHART, we were already discussing low-cost, small-scale architecture, so somehow the topic was already in the «AiR». Additionally, the Swiss Embassy's grounds in Copenhagen offered a beautiful frame for the project, with a unique garden location right next to the sea. The concept of the Open Embassy is also a very contemporary and clever approach to rethinking an institution that is in danger of becoming outdated vis-à-vis its original function. I think to reflect on that is very interesting. Ideally, the Puzzle House is a playful contribution to this discussion, which fosters different kind of interaction between people. Also, at our office HHF, we have a strong belief in the power of infrastructure. This is something that we share with Bjarke and BIG, — which in my mind is also the common trait between the Swiss and Danish mentality. We felt we were the right partners to push something into an interesting, playful and hopefully new direction.

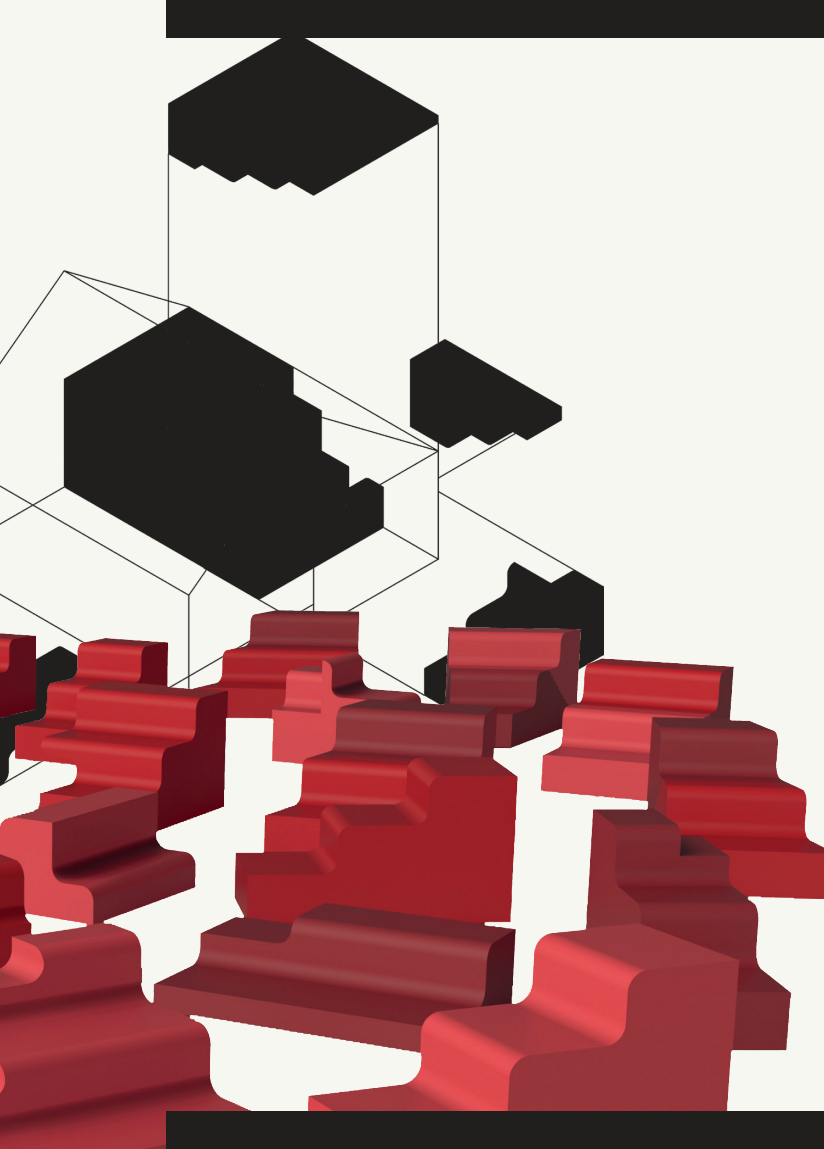
KAH: Speaking of new directions, what is your goal with the Puzzle House? Is there a message you want to give?

Simon Frommenwiler: I would say one important message we want to give is that even small-scale projects can make a difference if they are done in a meaningful way. The Puzzle House itself is also conceived to physically offer a venue for events and discussions and triggers social interaction as most elements need to be carried by more than one person to combine them to different settings. To put the puzzle back together people need to talk to each other. It will be interesting to see to what other and unforeseen combinations the elements will be combined.

Bjarke Ingels: The Puzzle house is this odd hybrid hovering somewhere between sculpture, architecture and furniture. The lightness of the foam and the endurance of the rubber coating makes it an interesting hybrid between hard and soft, indoor and outdoor. Dense enough to stack — cushioned enough to be comfortable. So light it can be moved by hand, but so heavy that it stays where it is. One of the greatest and most pioneering collaborations between Denmark and Switzerland in the world of design, is arguably the work that Panton and Vitra did together — like the Panton Chair and the Living Tower — both examples of how untraditional materials uses and experimental ways of sitting, lying and climbing has become timeless classics. On the surface quite far from the conventional cliché of Danishness and Swissness — but when you dig deeper a true manifesto for the understanding of material attributes, simplicity and informality. Without any comparison to Panton — I'd still say that many of the same elements are at play here in the Swiss Embassy's backyard. The result — as an introduction of the idea of Open Embassy — becomes an environment that becomes like LEGO in the hands of the visitors — Swiss and Danes — to be dissolved and reassembled in countless formations to serve as the backbone for future cultural exchanges between hosts and guests.

The Elements





About the Curators

HHF Architects

HHF was founded in 2003 in Basel by the architects Tilo Herlach, Simon Hartmann, and Simon Frommenwiler, whose personal, academic and professional track records are resolutely global in orientation. In little more than a decade, HHF has researched and built projects in Switzerland, France, the United States, Germany, Montenegro, China, Mexico, and Inner Mongolia. And while global commissions marked by a growing lack of distinction may be our twentieth-century legacy, HHF is a different story altogether.

At ease in extremely varied contexts, the office develops projects that are the fruit of long conversations with clients of atypical ambition: a stop-over for pilgrims, a children's park, a collectors' storehouse, a revolutionary temple reuse in the Balkans, an observatory and insect museum on the loops of the Seine, downtown retail centers, and luxurious and appealing apartments and boutiques. Such projects are always a gamble. HHF architecture is a conciliatory practice of sorts, one that seeks to transform, not assault, that manipulates what it finds simply to change the game, and accepts the past in order to create as a springboard for continuities.

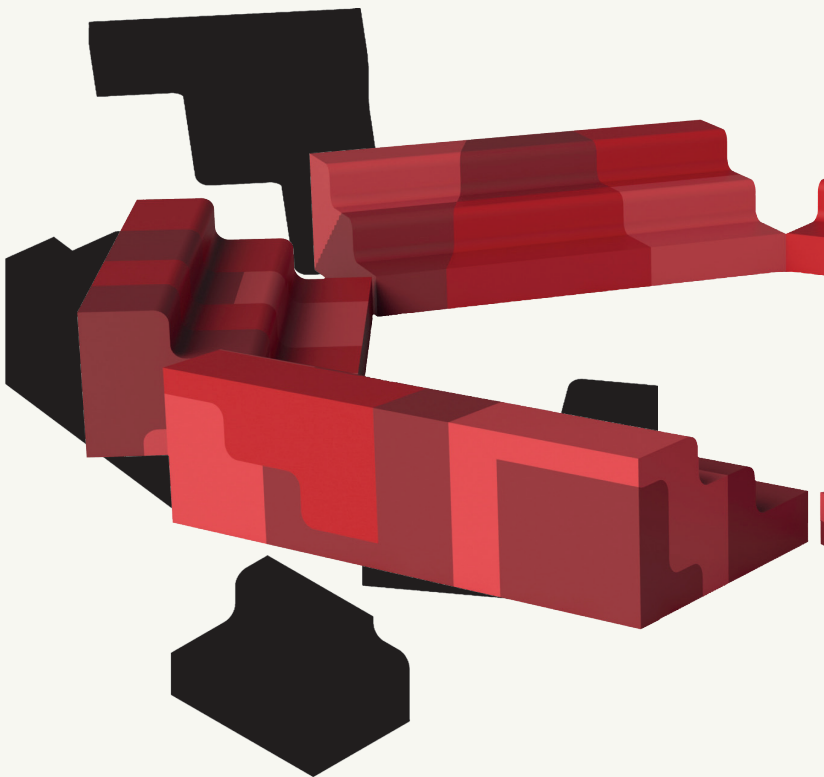
It prefers paradigm shifts to throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and it keeps an open mind regardless of what happens, and what people want. In brief, it is not about empty gestures but about a strong attitude. Passage is the narrative thread in HHF's projects. Everything proceeds from the sequence to be lived or travelled. Each project is a tool to amplify what is there — a landscape, situation, or feeling — and thereby transform whoever it touches.

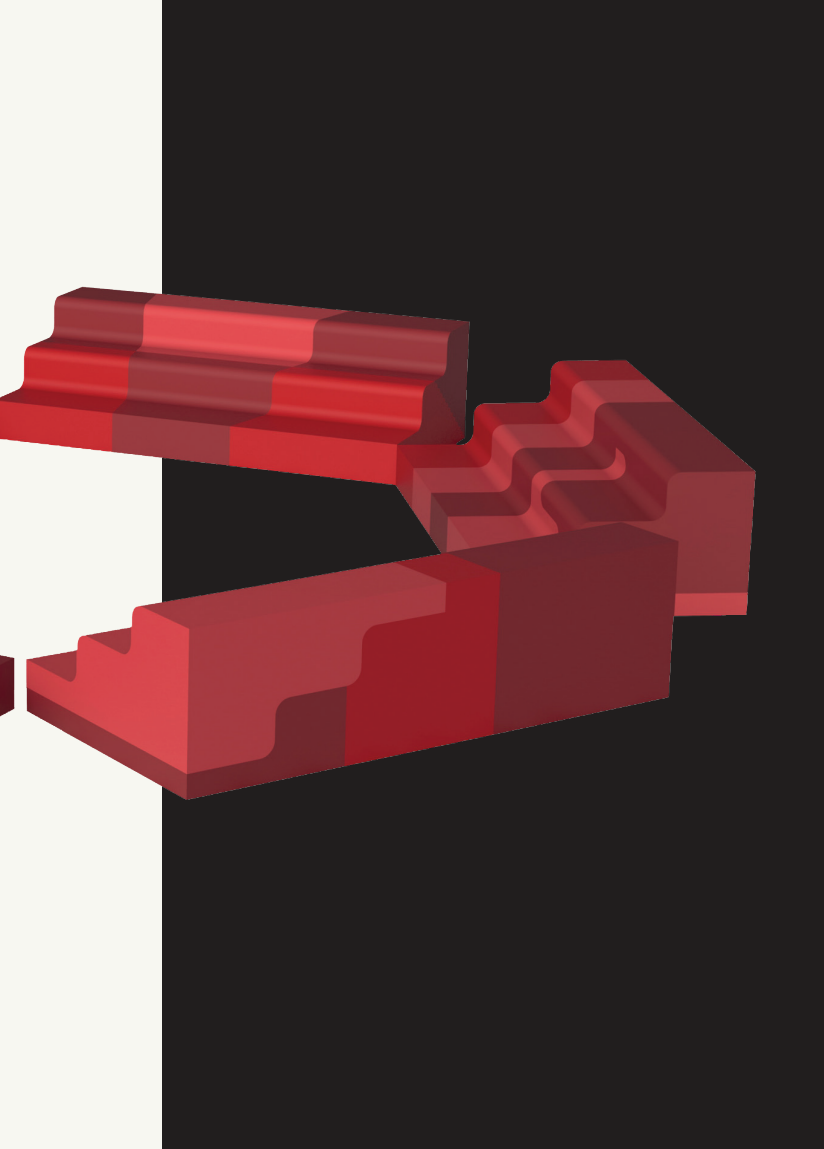
«HHF — Unfinished», the title of the second monograph of HHF, underscores the suspended character of any architectural venture: suspended in time, momentarily beyond the pedestrian stroll, beyond what was or will be, and hence wide open. This constructive approach is rooted in the observation of whatever is present and available (seek a resource, of whatever sort!).

It is this notion of economy so essential to architecture, which is read here as an imperative of relevance. Respond to a problem in the most pertinent way. Proceed by borrowing, adding, subtracting, or preserving, in order to make the most of whatever is at hand. Do the least possible for minimum impact and optimal effect. Reuse. Produce tailor-made solutions only when the market has nothing else appropriate to offer.

These maxims, the building bricks of HHF, are manifest in its Lichtstrasse project, winner of the Swiss Architecture Award 2015. They are evident likewise in HHF's capacity to superimpose various scales in order to reconfigure terrains and connect the smallest to the largest element, the infrastructure to the superstructure. HHF thus keeps dialogue flowing — with architects and students, and with artists such as Ai Weiwei, who has been a friend and ally almost from the start.

And it practices architecture like a never-ending game of ping-pong with its peers. Some claim architecture is a combat sport whereas HHF sees it more as an exercise in suppleness: a sweeping bow to the present day. With their design studio at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, they try to pass this spirit on to the next generation.





About the Curators

BIG-Bjarke Ingels Group

BIG is a Copenhagen, New York and London based group of architects, designers, urbanists, landscape professionals, interior and product designers, researchers and inventors. The office is currently involved in a large number of projects throughout Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. BIG's architecture emerges out of a careful analysis of how contemporary life constantly evolves and changes.

Not least due to the influence from multicultural exchange, global economical flows and communication technologies that all together require new ways of architectural and urban organization. We believe that in order to deal with today's challenges, architecture can profitably move into a field that has been largely unexplored. A pragmatic utopian architecture that steers clear of the petrifying pragmatism of boring boxes and the naïve utopian ideas of digital formalism.

Like a form of programmatic alchemy we create architecture by mixing conventional ingredients such as living, leisure, working, parking and shopping. By hitting the fertile overlap between pragmatic and utopia, we architects once again find the freedom to change the surface of our planet, to better fit contemporary life forms.

Bjarke Ingels founded BIG — Bjarke Ingels Group in 2005 after co-founding PLOT Architects in 2001 and working at OMA in Rotterdam. Bjarke defines architecture as the art and science of making sure our cities and buildings fit with the way we want to live our lives. Through careful analysis of various parameters from local culture and climate, ever-changing patterns of contemporary life, to the ebbs and flows of the global economy, Bjarke believes in the idea of information-driven-design as the driving force for his design

process. Named one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World by TIME Magazine in 2016, Bjarke has designed and completed award-winning buildings globally.

In 2018, Bjarke received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog bestowed by Her Majesty the Queen Margrethe II. In 2011, Wall Street Journal named Bjarke The Innovator of the Year; he received the Danish Crown Prince's Culture Prize in 2011; the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2004; and the ULI Award for Excellence in 2009. Alongside his architectural practice, Bjarke has taught at Harvard University, Yale University, Columbia University, and Rice University and is an honorary professor at the Royal Academy of Arts, School of Architecture in Copenhagen.

He is a frequent public speaker and continues to hold lectures in venues such as TED, WIRED, AMCHAM, 10 Downing Street, the World Economic Forum and many more. In 2018, Bjarke was named Chief Architectural Advisor by WeWork to advise and develop the firm's design vision and language for buildings, campuses and neighbourhoods globally.

Architecture in Residence


The history of AiR

Architecture in Residence AiR started in 2017 with groundbreaking projects involving Swiss and Danish schools of architecture and design as well as a variety of industry partners. Through collaboration with Petersen Tegl, Swis-spearl, Laufen Bathrooms, Swiss Krono, the Royal Danish Academy School of Architecture, Design and Conservation (KADK), ETH Zurich, Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA), Academy of Art and Design Basel (FHNW HGK) as well as the Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH) tangible results were created: A unique fire place, a modern outdoor kitchen, a wooden architectural folly and a master plan for the landscape architecture at the property of the Swiss Embassy.

An Embassy is a platform, which brings people together in order to promote the interests of our country. In our case mainly between the host country Denmark and Switzerland. However because our two countries are very open to the world and share an international mind-set, the outreach goes way beyond our national borders.

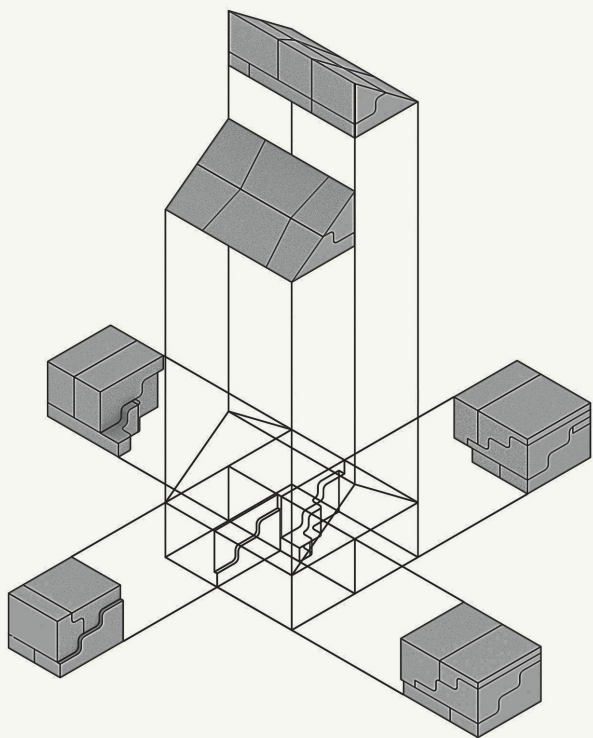
On the basis of this philosophy AiR set out three goals:

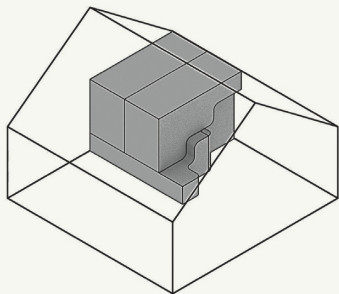
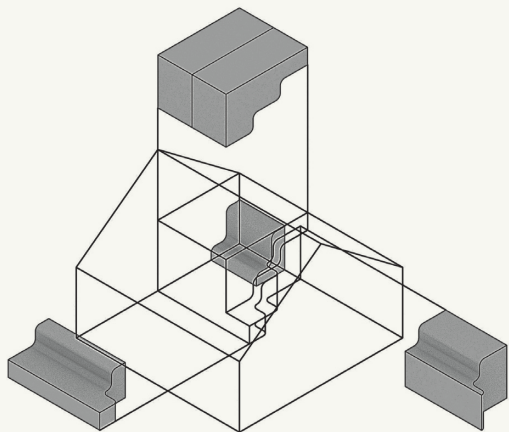
1. Construction of temporary buildings or installations in the context of the Swiss Embassy, which can serve as a public showcase of Swiss and Danish excellence in architecture, craftsmanship, new technologies and design. The fireplace is an excellent connector of people. Everybody gets attracted by the magic of the light and is naturally drawn into conversation with people, one wouldn't have met in a more formal setting.

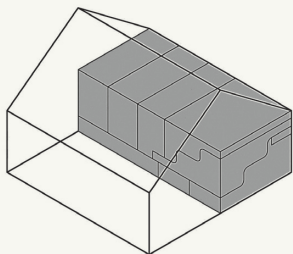
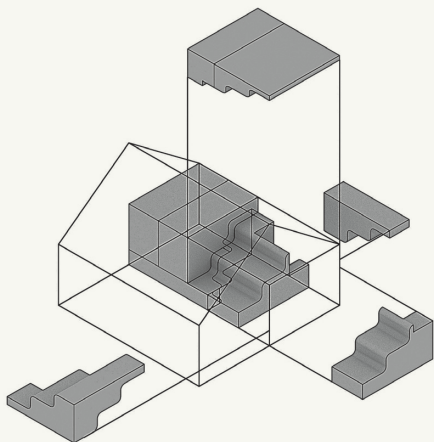


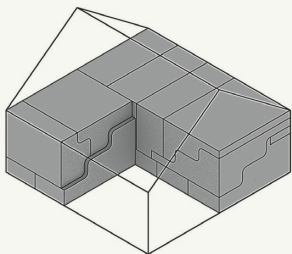
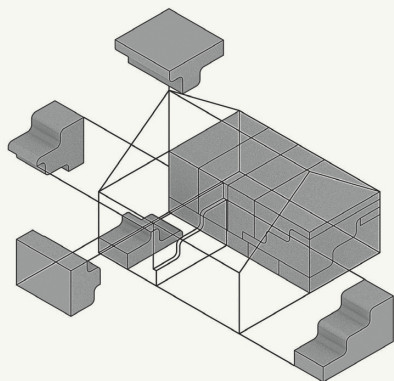
2. Architects, manufacturers and designers from Switzerland and Denmark collaborate to design such a project. The extravagant outdoor kitchens designed by students from the Academy of Art and Design Basel (FHNW HGK) in collaboration with Swisspearl and Laufen Bathrooms was an interesting example for a cross-transfer of expertise between research, manufacturing and different sectors of industry.

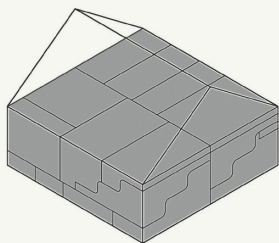
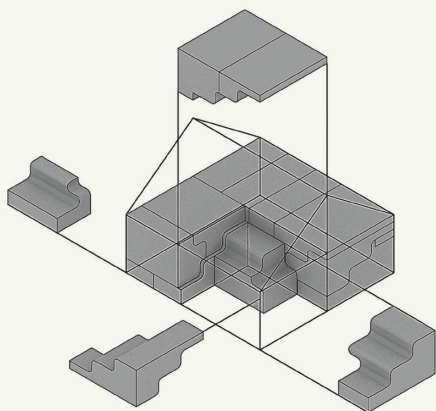
3. Each project shall draw from the relevant expertise of Swiss and Danish schools of architecture and design, as well as from industrial partners supporting AiR. Students from the University of Applied Sciences from Bern in the field of Wood Architecture came to Denmark with the support of Swiss Krono, a company from the wood industry, and got inspired by the local ship-building expertise. The wooden sculptures «Levanto» impressed many visitors.

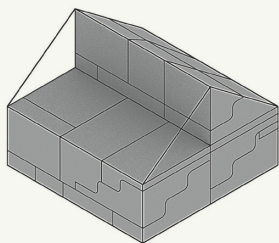
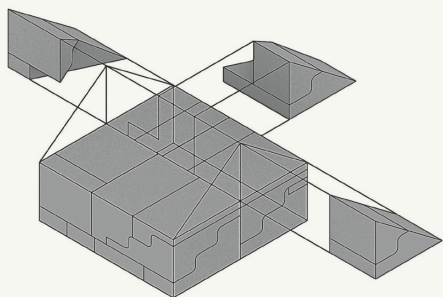


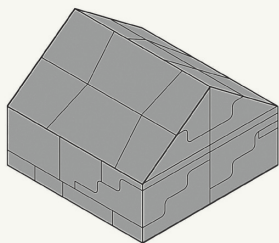
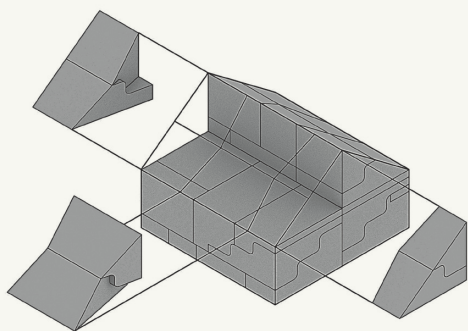












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