

MOMENTS

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**CREATIVITY
GENERATES GROWTH**

NILOFER MERCHANT
HONOURS INDIVIDUALITY

**PRIMO
PICKS**

PERFECTLY PAIRED
FOOD AND DRINKS

**MEETINGS WORTH
REMEMBERING**

COLLABORATION PUTS
GOTHENBURG ON THE MAP

**She creates
the cities
of the future**

HELLE JUUL
ON INNOVATIVE
URBAN PLANNING

VÄND
FÖR SVENSK
VERSION!

CREATING SPACE FOR MEETINGS

For Danish architect Helle Juul, urban planning is about seeing the whole picture and creating meeting places. Architecture is much more than just a building. It is a catalyst for social development.

TEXT GÖRREL ESPELUND PHOTO STEFAN EDETOFT

“THERE’S A GREATER understanding of architecture’s role in the society we live in. Before, people saw a building as an isolated object with no context. Today, we use architecture as a catalyst in urban planning;” says Helle Juul.

She is one of the founders of the architecture firm Juul Frost, which is based in Copenhagen. The firm has around 30 employees, and Helle Juul readily emphasises the interdisciplinary expertise found there.

“Right now, we have a philosophy student and a psychologist with us. We evolve and learn from one another together. Working with people who are interested in the same subjects, but who have different perspectives and starting points is incredibly inspiring. Really, it’s downright magical.”

According to Helle Juul, a good architect is someone who can take stock of the entire process and see the whole picture. “It’s about being sensitive and listening to everyone, from the sound technician to the construction engineer. You have to stick to your basic ideas and the core of the project while also allowing others to influence the final result.”

Juul Frost works in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, but Helle Juul does not think Scandinavian architecture shares any common traits. Rather, she sees three cultural starting points that must be taken into account: Swedish industrialism, Danish commerce and agriculture, and Norwegian oil resources.

“One clear difference is how architecture programmes are formulated in the three different countries. Sweden’s development has been more technical, while Denmark’s has been more artistic.”

HELLE JUUL COMPLETED her Ph.D. in 1994 from the School of Architecture at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Her doctoral thesis incorporated the ideas of Argentinian author Luis Borges about the fact that nothing ever stays the same. “We renew ourselves constantly, and Borges describes it so well. Encounters with other people enrich us and help us grow; I find that so incredibly fascinating.”

Meeting places and public spaces that create opportunities for interactions have also become one of Helle Juul’s signatures, especially when she works ➤

FACTS HELLE JUUL

Age: Born 1954.

Lives in: Copenhagen.

Job: Architect at architecture firm Juul Frost, which she founded in 1990 with her spouse, architect Flemming Frost.

Recently: The architecture firm recently won the Kristiansand 2041 assignment, which will shine a light on the future of urban development. Participating in the Nordic Architecture Fair at the Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre in 2017.



DTU Skylab is an innovation hub at the Technical University of Denmark. This small project has extraordinary qualities that Helle Juul enthusiastically highlights as a typical example of how Juul Frost works. It is a welcoming building where the core activity is innovation. An informal learning environment has been created here and the architecture encourages social interaction. Skybox is one of the meeting rooms, a large black box with a bright yellow interior that appears to float freely in the space.

with urban development and planning university and campus areas.

In the past, higher education institutions had contact anxiety with the rest of society. But innovation is a contact sport and requires places where society and the university can come together, reckons Helle Juul.

SHE POINTS OUT three examples that Juul Frost is behind and in which meeting places and flexibility are central components: the Skylab at the Technical University of Denmark, where an informal classroom has been created for people working individually or in groups, and where they have opportunities to integrate with one another.

Novahuset at Örebro University, which has given campus a new openness with the School of Business, housing for researchers and a campus neighbourhood that also welcomes residents of the city.

Media Evolution City (MEC) in Malmö, an incubator building with a restaurant, meeting facilities and more, where people can book meeting rooms for three hours or workrooms for three months.

“These are three different buildings that are important because they represent social arenas that connect companies, the university and the city and invite people to participate. For me, this involves creating frameworks for spontaneous meeting places that give people chances to come together, regardless of whether they belong to the building or if they’re coming in from the outside.”

She also wants to point out the Oslo Opera House

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HELLE JUUL, ARCHITECT

as an example of successful urban planning in the neighbouring country.

“What I find really exciting isn’t just the building, but its relationship to its surroundings. Because even though opera might be considered a little snobby, it’s a welcoming building where young people meet up on the roof for a picnic. The Opera House means different things to many different kinds of people, and that’s completely fantastic.”

THE OSLO OPERA HOUSE also demonstrates today’s heightened awareness of the importance of architecture for the city and the people who live there.

But Helle Juul also believes that tomorrow’s architects will face brand new demands.

“In the future, the architect will also have to work with the overarching strategic frameworks for the development of a city. And that is a unique trait that must be built up and developed,” says Helle Juul. 