

My applying to the Scan|Design Internship program was based on both my previous experiences in Copenhagen as well as being familiar with the work of HLA. I had attended the Copenhagen Classroom program while on a summer FLAS studying Danish at Copenhagen University in 2009 as well as being in the city on a 3-month Valle Scholarship this past summer. While in Copenhagen, I had seen a number of buildings that had been designed by Henning Larsen. The designs that had really piqued my interest in HLA were the IT University, which was adjacent to the building that I had class in during the summer of 2009, and the more recent Harpa concert hall and conference centre in Reykjavik, Iceland. In addition to the overall quality of design that comes out of Copenhagen, and Scandinavia in general, the experience seemed like an ideal transition from grad school to an office environment.

After reading the intern handbook and filling out the questionnaire, I expected to gain a variety of experience and work the 37.5 hours of work/week that is the Danish workweek. Both of these assumptions were a bit off. I had amassed somewhere near 320 hours of overtime by my departure, and this was after taking off a couple of weeks while my family was visiting. I came to find out that the intern handbook was outdated, although this was being addressed as I was finishing my time in the office. In defense of the firm, the hours worked is entirely project dependent. The time that I spent there was plagued with slow work and few new competitions. The typical competition schedule was a few typical 37.5 hour weeks followed by gradually increasing hours until you finish with a few 100+ hour weeks culminating in an all-nighter or two. This is actually not so bad if one is able to work on competitions from start to finish. The problem is that teams grow at the end of a competition, so new people end up coming on just for the production end. I played the production role a few times without much rest, so I had quite a few hours overtime. The good part was that I met a lot of the people in the office and worked in a number of roles on a variety of projects, including a hospital, two office headquarters in different phases, a theatre, a bridge and an aquarium. The part I liked least was the time without much rest or foresight into how many hours would be required on a job. Everyone was always very flexible, though, and normally open to input or understanding if time off was requested.

My housing was in the intern apartment owned by the firm, which is a ten-minute walk down Vesterbrogade from the office. It was a five-bedroom flat with a galley kitchen and a huge living/dining area. The bedroom was about twelve sq meters, but given the hours worked and the convenience of location (Vesterbro is a pretty great neighborhood), I was pleased overall. The convenience, however, could be a tradeoff if living with people who all work long hours is bothersome (Read: it can be a mess). Worth noting, though, is that as a resident in the intern apartment, rent is cheap and deducted directly from the paycheck, so if the visa office is slow (mine was delayed three weeks beyond the sixty-day "max") it is not a complete loss of funds. Also, being immediately plugged into a network of friends that know the office as well as the other international people is invaluable in navigating the system. The social benefit more than outweighed the messiness factor in my case.

Having been to Copenhagen a number of times already, the cultural encounter was minimized. This was due partially to having less pressure to see everything, and mostly due to the heavy workload. If I did not know the city fairly well already, I would have been highly disappointed. It is possible to gain a cultural knowledge in the office, though, and I did take two domestic trips through work to Aalborg and Vyborg in Jutland. Also, the Danes in the office are still very much the majority, so I heard quite a bit of Danish, especially being on an all Danish team for my first competition, and the Danes are open in sharing and comparing what is "typical Danish."

I had no interaction with the Scan|Design coordinator, other than emails being forwarded on from other friends within the Scan|Design system. There may have been one or two emails exchanged, but, in the end, I never was able to enjoy any of the amenities or get together due to the hectic work schedule. Getting in touch beforehand would have been a nice idea, or having a more clearly

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understood network such as is the case with on the exchange with the Royal Danish Academy. I never clearly understood the role of the coordinator or what the responsibilities were in regard to internship.

The program is best suited for those who do not mind long hours in the office. It is much different from the studio setting, where the more efficient/less exact people finish early and enjoy hours outside of school. Working on a competition team means that everyone is there all the time. The work is never done, and the hours seemed unavoidable for what was trying to be produced. The other side is that this leads to a studio like setting, with the greatest amount of work getting done when the office is empty and music is played loudly. The ideal candidate should also be skilled in both physical and digital model making, and well versed in a variety of programs. I worked in Microstation, AutoCAD, Rhino, VRay, and the Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator and Indesign). Training was given in Microstation, but people are pretty open to helping out within reason.

My overall experience at HLA was good. The hours were much longer than anticipated, but the people were great. I was interested in talking with others at a similar point in their education from other programs because we are exposed to so little variety being somewhat isolated in the Northwest. Additionally, the work is something that is not easily found in Seattle. Competing internationally on big projects with other well known firms is exciting, and the office is not formulaic in any approach. There is little hierarchy for the most part, and opinions are respected regardless of where they originate.

It would also be hard to end without expressing, again, what an amazing and unique opportunity the internship was. I also wanted to mention that the space itself, the office, is gorgeous. And the lunch is pretty good, too, and free.