

Scan|Design Foundation Architecture Internship Program

Henning Larsen Architects Internship: January - June 2013

Kate Murphy / September 2013

I applied to Scan|Design's six-month 'Intern Exchange Program' at Henning Larsen Architects in Copenhagen, Denmark due in large part to my study, travel and work experiences in Copenhagen prior made possible through the UW Architecture Department, as well as a desire to work and live in Copenhagen for an extended period time. I initially became interested in Scandinavian design after participating in UW's 'Architecture in Scandinavia' program, led by Peter Cohan and Jennifer Dee in the summer of 2010 during which we spent time in all four Scandinavian cities, finishing our travels in Copenhagen. While on this trip I instantly fell in love with Danish design and the city of Copenhagen. The following year I took part in a Scan|Design funded a Master's Studio at UW in Seattle co-taught by the Danish architect, Lene Tranberg, of Lungaard & Tranberg Arkitekter. After having a great experience in the studio working with Lene, I used the money I had received from a scholarship and self-funded a trip to Copenhagen to work for Lungaard & Tranberg for the month of August 2011. I had a fantastic time both living and working in Denmark, and had been yearning to go back, so when I found out about the Scan|Design 'Intern Exchange Program' (and after talking to Peter Cohan one-on-one more in-depth about the opportunity), I knew I had to apply - and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. In January 2013 I packed up my life in Seattle and moved to Copenhagen to begin work at HLA and the adventure began... Overall, the HLA internship was a great experience during a time of transition between school and the professional world for me. Through the experience I learned a lot in the office with respect to architecture and design, as well as got the chance to travel and have a much needed, unforgettable adventure in both Denmark and greater Europe - all of which was made possible in large part thanks to a very generous grant from the Scan|Design Foundation.

Throughout working at HLA for the six months, I gained a whole new insight into the professional and international architecture world given the firm's size and number of projects in the works in its multiple offices. Founded in Copenhagen by Henning Larsen over fifty years ago, HLA has grown to employ over 200 architects, designers, builders and engineers with offices in Copenhagen, Riyadh, Munich, Oslo and Istanbul. The firm currently has projects in over twenty countries and most recently became a finalist for the Mies van der Rohe Award for their Harpa concert hall in Reykjavik, Iceland (the facade was a joint collaboration with the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliaason). Of the five offices, not surprisingly the Copenhagen office is the largest. Located right on Vesterbrogade in the heart of Vesterbro, the office takes up the top three floors above a local grocery store. The bottom floor is home to the competitions department (competitions are how the firm gets a majority of its work), the sustainability department and the model shop, while the floor above is occupied by architects working on projects currently under construction. The very top floor (which has stunning views of the city) is the 'canteen'.

During the six months I worked at HLA I worked on over a dozen projects, ranging in length from a couple of days to well over a month. The projects I was part of were mostly either competitions or pitches to acquire new work, ranging in scale from smaller architectural projects in Nigeria and Qatar, to larger scale urban planning projects such as creating a 'vision' in Gothenburg, Sweden, working along with SLA landscape architects (a few days I even worked at SLA's office, a cool experience). While most often working in front of the computer in the digital world, I interestingly enough started my internship doing hand drawings, well sort of. On my first day of work I came into the office and a few hours later was sent to the Danish Architecture Center (DAC) to help draw a giant map of Copenhagen ... by hand! The marker-drawn, fourteen-foot high map turned out to be part of a two-month long exhibit at the DAC called "In Dialogue with the World," in which HLA participated along with two other Danish firms. Looking back, there were a few days here and there I helped out in the model shop (and learned to love the wire foam cutter), but for the most part work was digital. I would highly suggest knowing Rhino very well as that is what is used most in the office as a 3D modelling tool. There is a rendering department (called 'Visuals'), but knowing V-Ray is still a plus. The office does not use AutoCad, but instead uses Microstation to do 2D drafting - however, there is a day-long tutorial course offered for interns to teach this program. Knowing Adobe Creative Suite is also a must - I spent a lot of time doing diagrams in Illustrator, layouts for presentations in InDesign and helped with renderings at times and used Photoshop frequently. If I needed help, the other interns and architects alike were very helpful in answering my technical questions and helping me learn the programs better.

My daily working hours varied depending on the type of project and its timeline/deadline. The normal Danish working week is 37.5 hours and time over is 'overtime.' Depending on the project, I had to work some weekends here and there, but overall it all seemed manageable. The experience was a lot like studio at school, where the time commitment and late nights came in waves. All of us interns racked up a lot of overtime hours, but we were then given vacation (work permitting) to compensate - which I found to be a great trade-off when I had friends visiting and/or times I travelled outside Copenhagen for more than a weekend. Working on competitions definitely required the most time and late nights (past midnight some nights), however, when working late into the evening, HLA would cover the cost of your dinner (100 DKK) - a very generous gesture and eating meals with other architects on 'your team' made for some memorable evenings.

My overall experience at HLA was truly a great one in large part thanks to the people I worked with, from whom I learned a lot professionally, culturally and socially. The people I met at HLA included a mix of more senior Danish architects and other interns like myself from other programs from around the world, including Iceland, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Ireland and of course, Denmark. I worked with closely with some, lived with some and some I just talked with at lunch or over coffee in the kitchen during a break., but regardless definitely formed some lifelong friendships with other international architects for which I am so grateful. The office culture at HLA is truly special - the firm acts like a family at times and simply stated, everyone is so nice. One of my favorite parts

of the day was lunchtime when the office eats together daily in the canteen at noon sharp (lunch is free for interns, a bonus!). During the warmer days in spring, we even sat outside on the rooftop deck above Vesterbrogade - during this setting I got to better know Danish and international architects and interns alike. Another social tradition of HLA I enjoyed with others was the Friday Bar once a week at which we enjoyed cold Carlsbergs in the canteen supplied by HLA. and chatted for hours before heading home for the night. It was always something to look forward to. A true highlight was the summer office party which I got the privilege of helping plan the whole week before. HLA employees from all five offices gathered in Copenhagen for an all-day workshop and ended the evening with an all night summer party that included dinner, drinks, dancing and more. It was a night to remember and tons of fun. Overall the office has a very positive outlook and and great collaborative energy.

Outside of the office setting, I also had a fantastic experience. I lived in the 'HLA Intern Apartments' on Vesterbrogade, about ten-blocks from the HLA office. As housing is very hard to come by, I was lucky enough to get a spot in the five-bedroom apartment. The bedroom itself wasn't too large, but was furnished and did the trick. Owned by HLA, the apartment's rooms are rented out to five different HLA interns for six-month periods and the rent is taken directly out of our intern paychecks (any remaining salary was deposited into our checking accounts). The rent was a good deal compared to other places (I paid 3500 DKK). Given how expensive it is to live in Copenhagen and find housing, I enjoyed the easiness of living in the 'Intern Apartments.' The apartment has a large common room and kitchen with a dishwasher and washing machine, as well as a large courtyard in the back with a bbq. Overall I enjoyed living there with fellow international HLA interns (from Poland and Iceland), as well as used the space for some good parties and brunches - always a plus and some great memories there!

Of course one of the best parts of this 'Intern Exchange' was simply being in wonderful Copenhagen and living through all the seasons. This internship marked my third - and longest - venture to this beautiful, Danish city. Given my past Danish adventures, I knew the city pretty well upon arriving, but honestly nothing competes with truly living and working in a place for this length of time to really to make it feel like 'home.' Unlike my past visits, this time I got to experience (and survived) a true Danish winter, and as short and dark as the days were in the beginning, Copenhagen was truly a winter wonderland. Luckily, the snow finally melted, and spring (slowly) arrived towards the end of April, and all of a sudden the city was filled with Danes soaking up the sunshine on the streets, along the canals and in the parks. During my free time I explored in the city along with my new best friend, my bicycle, and tried my best to see everything Copenhagen has to offer (on a budget, of course). I visited almost every city museum twice, ventured out to the Arken and the Louisiana, strolled through parks and cemeteries at sunset, visited the sea baths at the beach rain or shine (or snow), went to the occasional flea market in search of Danish kitsch (and succeeded), had the token tourist beer at the Carlsberg factory, and of course have visited many architectural gems, new and old, throughout the city. I had a few friends even visit me for a few days here and there and together we explored the city by bike. I did manage to leave Denmark (after scheduling time off work) and met my mom in Barcelona, Spain, where we travelled together for five days. If I had any advice to a new intern it would be to just explore, explore, explore ... in your free time after work and on the weekends, work permitting - with friends, or alone - by bike or by foot, regardless of the weather. Copenhagen is so easy to get around (given it's flat topography and compact city grid) and there is always something cultural going on to take part in or just observe from up close or afar.

Finally, with respect to Scan|Design, one of the highlights of my experience was those activities connected to the Scan|Design Foundation. While in Copenhagen I got the chance to reconnect with a handful of former Danish Scan|Design friends who studied in Seattle over the past years, including Anne Bjerre, Andreas Skov Petersen, Birk Daugaard, Christoffer Gotfredsen, Marco Berentz and Gustav Svårdhagen (actually a Swedish Valle scholar). I was lucky enough to be invited by Anne (whom I bonded with during two studios together at UW) to join her and her family at their summer house on the West Coast of Jutland (mainland Denmark, about four hours by train) for the long Easter holiday weekend in March- an incredibly beautiful place it was, we had a very 'hyggeligt' (cozy) vacation together! I also took part in a handful of events organized (and so generously fully funded) by Scan|Design. In mid-April Scan|Design treated a group of us to a day trip to visit Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus. I had dreamed of experiencing Olafur Eliasson's "Your Rainbow Panorama" in person and finally did - it was fantastic, exceeding all expectations! The adventure continued to Norway the following month - in the month of May, Scan|Design treated us (about twenty students) to a weekend trip to Oslo. Together we took an overnight boat there and back, staying one night in Oslo. The Norwegian adventure on boat and in the city of Oslo was a highlight architecturally speaking too - we saw Snohetta's Oslo Opera House and the ski jump by JDS Architects, as well as the new art museum by Renzo Piano. In Copenhagen, Scan|Design also hosted a number of events including a bowling night, soccer game outings (or football shall I say), city cruises at sunset on a Netto boat and funded smaller, more intimate group dinners at Natalie Gulsrud's apartment. The Scan|Design coordinators which included Marianne Stoelen, Kristine Amalie and Jacob Matzen Thomsen were all fantastic as well - their energy and enthusiasm was very much appreciated and at times even contagious. It was very nice to have this Scan|Design community to do things with in addition to my HLA community.

The Scan|Design community and relationships that have developed over the past years between Danes and Americans, in Seattle and Copenhagen, are truly priceless and, as corny as it sounds, I have formed friendships at UW and now HLA thanks to Scan|Design that I know will continue forever! Danish author Hans Christian Andersen once wrote, "*To move, to breathe, to fly, to float, To gain all while you give, To roam the roads of lands remote, To travel is to live.*" I couldn't agree more: "To travel is to live," and that is exactly what Scan|Design and HLA so generously gave me the opportunity to do! I have no regrets about my decision to live and work in Copenhagen. Taking part in the Scan|Design 'Intern Exchange Program' was one of the best things I have and likely will ever do - an experience like no other which I will truly never forget thanks to all that I learned at HLA, all the people I met along the way, and all the places I explored. *To travel is to live.*