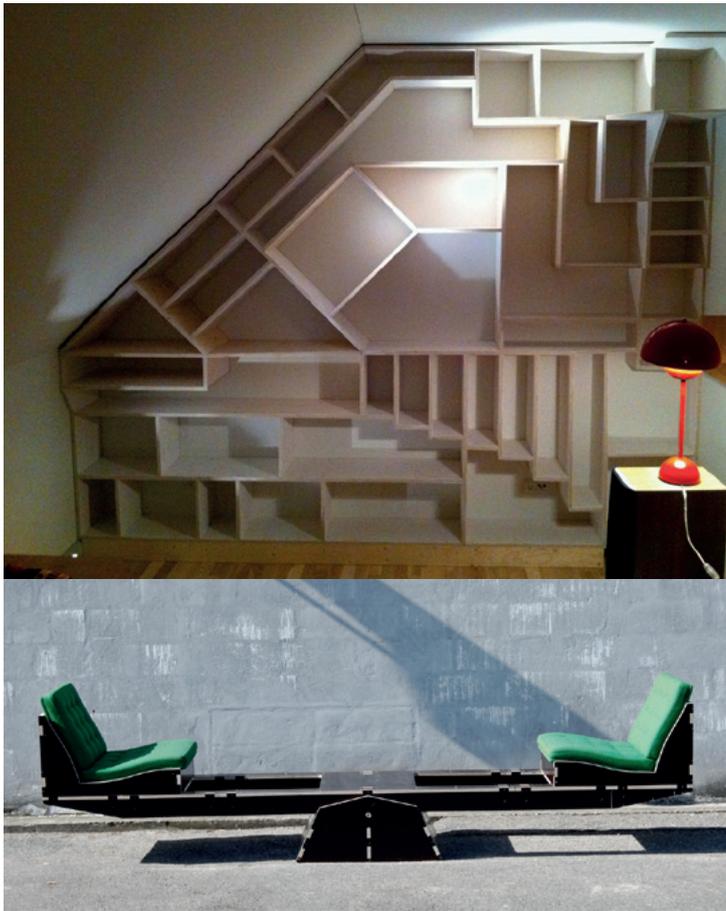


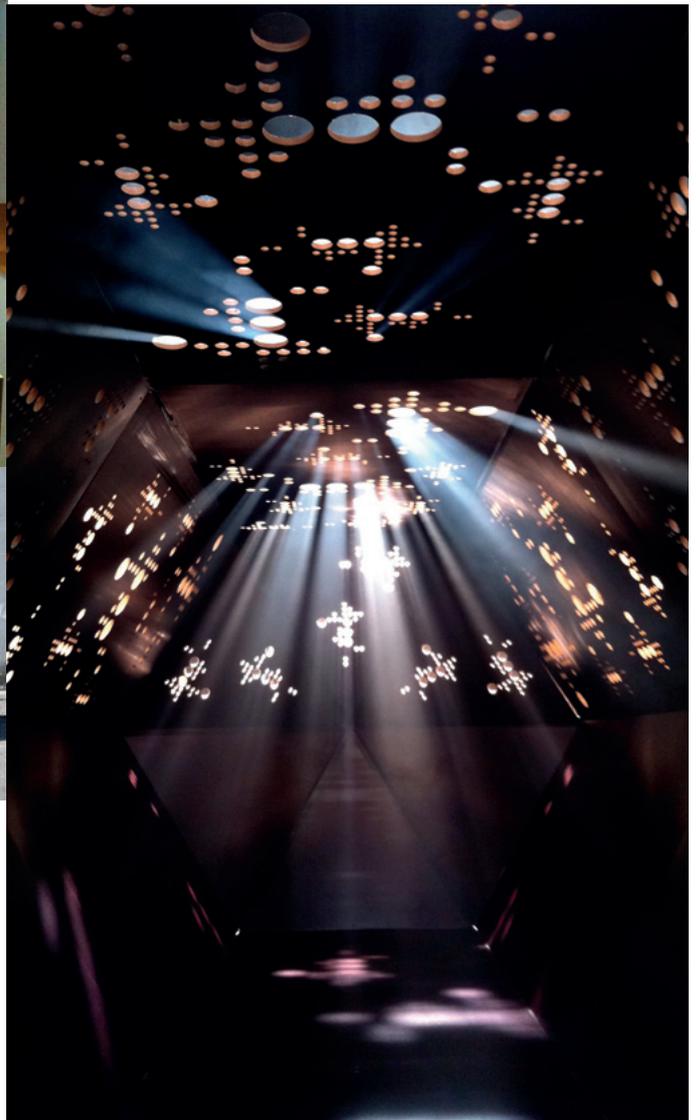


BYGGENAND BO

A QUEST FOR BEAUTY AND FUNCTION



Customised shelving, private client.
Light tunnel for Kato music video.
Tilting seats for Zulu Awards Forum



BO BENZON IS THE GO-TO GUY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ARCHITECTURE PROJECTS IN COPENHAGEN RIGHT NOW. HAVING FORMERLY HELD DOWN A DEMANDING POSITION AT BIG, BO HAS CHASED THE DREAM AND GONE SOLO GAINING WIDESPREAD ATTENTION AND A CLIENT LIST NOT TO BE FROWNED UPON INCLUDING TUBORG, RAW, COP15, MEDINA, ROSKILDE FESTIVAL AND AIAIAI.

Before I'd even met Bo, his name and reputation were well up on a pedestal. In the days leading up to Roskilde Festival 2008 I met an American guy whose sole purpose was to meet Bo, share ideas and gain inspiration. So his reach appears to stretch. I discover Bo works for Bjarke Ingels Group who are easily the most interesting architecture studio in Denmark, or at least the most well-marketed. He heads up the Yes Is More exhibition at DAC (Danish Architecture Center) and soon after completion he makes a run for it on his own, founding Arkitekturministeriet. 4 years on the go now and Bo is still sprinting to keep up with demand. 60-100 hour work weeks and what seems like an endless stream of uncompleted projects ahead keep him hungry and occupied. But why the break with an internationally respected studio that is modernising the face of Copenhagen and the world?

"After studying at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, I worked at BIG, but I'd always dreamed of having my own studio. I actually worked full time at BIG the first 2 years after starting up. It was tough, and meant many late-nighters and weekends, but I managed to keep it flowing and well separated. I stopped at BIG in 2009 after 4 and a half years. I loved

working at both PLOT and BIG, being involved in most aspects of an architecture firm strengthening their beliefs and facing the hard times of the industry. The working environment was fantastic and inspiring and I'll always remember the feeling when collaborators and clients came to the office. You could see it in their eyes, this was a very special company".

One can't live on reputation alone, and Bo got down to business attracting new clients and doing what he does best: making things.

"I didn't have a hard time getting assignments and projects. It actually came pretty much by itself. Despite the financial crisis I got more and more to do. I did almost everything from graphic design to building design and competitions. As it grew rapidly, most of the big projects I got were interior and event related, night-clubs and shops. But in general I tend to not set boundaries for the work we do. A lot of people focus on just one thing they are good at, but I try to focus on the things I'm not good at to get better. In that sense I have more possibilities, knowledge and network which works well in the creative business where everything



*Fitness bench for Danish Architecture center
Set design for Burhan G music video
Main stage design for TrailerPark Festival
Entrance desk for SIMONS nightclub*



is connected somehow anyway. The curiosity and attention towards many aspects in our society and the way we live is indirectly used as an intuition in every process of a project, and the more stuff you do, the more experience you get, the easier you grow your business.

Speaking of growth, Arkitekturministeriet's expansion seemed counter to the experience of other architects I've spoken with. In times of blanket layoffs and gigantic projects being halted mid-construction leaving skeletal signs of an industry wavering, Bo gradually secured a grasp on a market most studios had overlooked on their quest for the big contract: the little man. With When I ask him about moving away from what one may call traditional architecture—buildings and exteriors—he quickly sets me straight.

"The financial crisis definitely brought thoughts of interior design back to people because the exterior projects are another scale money-wise. But as I see it, architecture is not just buildings and houses or city planning. It's a big bowl of life, spatiality, texture, materials, light and shadow as well as money and needs that you stir around every time you do a project, big or small. A teaspoon or a skyscraper both demand very different aspects but if the idea is right, you should be able to do both. You could say that we have found a niche in the market. By having access to a CNC-router and a growing pack of employees, interns and freelancers we are producing most of our ideas and projects ourselves. We have removed the middlemen so to speak. It's a unique feeling to do a whole project from idea to delivery. Being an architect and having the opportunity to use my hands at least half the time is fantastic."

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"What I love about the projects I do now is that they rarely take more than a month or two. Most projects take a week and you see the results immediately and get people's reaction instantly. We are capable of doing several projects at the same time, and no two days are the same. The worst thing about

the big architecture firms is that you often sit with the same project for many months and sometimes half a year and for every 50 projects you do as competitions or commissions, if you are lucky 1 will be built. That often kills the creativity and drives you down."

Listed amongst his must-see buildings is Custom House, on Havnegade and the Mountain Dwellings in Ørestad. Sydney Opera House is in Bo's eyes one of the most beautiful buildings and settings in the world together with Renzo Piano's Cultural Center in New Caledonia. Given the chance he would build a multifunctional mansion for either Batman, James Bond or Darth Vader. He frets not mostly about bad design, but the fact that developers lacking taste have the nerve to spoil our view with their constructions. Luckily for those with taste, there are good people like Bo Bazon and his Architecture Ministers fighting evil on their eternal quest for a coexistence between beauty and function.