



The Concept of the Embassy Complex

Connections between countries and political alliances in Northern Europe have a long history. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden comprise the so-called Nordic Region and have a common representation of interests in the Nordic Council (since 1952) and in the Nordic Council of Ministers (since 1971).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the German Parliament's resolution to relocate the capital from Bonn to Berlin, the often considered idea of a common Nordic embassy complex was able to be realised. The vision of five national embassy office buildings with one common building open to the public, the Felleshus / Pan Nordic Building, enclosed by a band of copper, corresponded to the fundamental idea of individual freedom, combined with a feeling of unity.

The almost 230 metres long and 15 metres broad copper band is the distinguishing feature of the design of Berger and Parkkinen. It consists of approximately 4,000 pre-patinated lamellas and gives the complex a unified appearance from the outside.

The area inside the copper band, the plaza, is transected by geometric lines. The area within these lines forms the plaza, and the sides of the four intersecting lane strips are defined by the sides of the buildings. The lane strips form streets between the individual embassy buildings. Three water basins between the buildings are an architectural reference to the connecting seas between the Nordic countries. The embassy buildings, in turn, are grouped to correspond to the arrangement of the countries on the map.



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The Architecture of the Felleshus

Maple Wood, Glass, and Exposed Concrete

The Felleshus / Pan Nordic Building, which is open to the public, combines the security, working and representation functions of all five embassies. The house also serves as central passageway to the embassies.

The name »Felleshus« (Danish) denotes the sense the building imbues and what it is used for – a house for all, a house in which to meet and interact. The Felleshus has an auditorium for concerts, readings, film viewings and conferences, exhibition spaces, conference rooms, a spacious terrace and a public canteen.

The facade of the building is panelled with maple wood. The entrance opens up in the form of a centrally placed glass front as high as the building. The glass-roofed entrance hall spans all floors and is flanked by slender columns. On the second floor an extensive exhibition area and the terrace open up. On the next floor is the Nordic canteen.

The walls and columns in the Felleshus are made of exposed concrete. Complementing this, the use of maple wood imparts a warm, bright atmosphere. The floor is of light-coloured Swedish marble. The building is the public space for the entire complex and presents a functional, modern and inviting ambience to visitors.



Architecture of the Royal Danish Embassy

Glass, concrete, wood and stainless steel

The Danish Embassy is located in the southwestern part of the embassy site. It fits in directly and forms a continuation of the 15 m high and 230 m long copper band which encloses all of the Nordic Embassies.

The Danish Embassy was designed by the Danish architect team 3xN Architects. Their objective was to create a building that would meet the representative requirements of an embassy, would be vibrant and inviting, and would feature Danish design and technical expertise.

A glass-roofed atrium forms the heart of the embassy building. It is flanked by two different building wings, one of which is an organically formed structure, running parallel to the wave-like copper band. Thus, the wave form is also apparent in the atrium of the embassy. Elegant curved wooden lamellas add to the warm character of the organic form.

The second building wing opposite is an angular prism. A stairway runs up in a straight line along its long side. Several bridges cross the relatively narrow atrium, thus connecting the two parts of the building. A concrete rectangular unit extends up under the glass roof; it contains elevators and common rooms of the different departments. The tall, slender form of the concrete rectangle underscores the height of the atrium. Toward the common plaza of the Nordic Embassies, the building is almost completely covered with perforated stainless steel panels. These provide protection from the sun and appear amazingly transparent. They give the embassy a harmonious, unified appearance.



Architecture of the Embassy of Finland

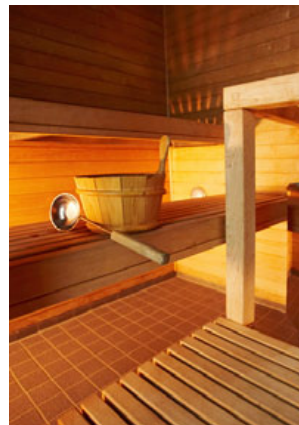
Larch wood, steel and light-coloured concrete

The Embassy of Finland borders to the east on the 230 m long copper band that encloses all of the Nordic Embassies.

The building was designed by the young Finnish architects Rauno Lehtinen, Pekka Mäki and Toni Peltola of Viiva arkkitehtuuri Oy. Its shape resembles a kantele, the age-old Finnish string instrument. The architecture is simple and austere and provides a dignified and timeless environment for the work of the embassy.

A central hall incorporates all floors, which can be reached by a wide stairway. All of the rooms offer natural daylight. Unusual for an embassy building are the two saunas and the fireplace room on the ground floor. Almost without exception, the furnishings are from Finland.

Following the overall concept of the Nordic Embassies, the materials are used in their pure form. The wood, glass, steel and light-coloured concrete are not surface-treated, which is shown to best advantage in the façade. On the plaza side the building is faced with high-format larch wood panels. In the course of time the wood will patinate to a silver-grey. The façade is also impressive after dark, when the interior lighting radiates warm light to the outside.



Architecture of the Embassy of the Republic of Iceland

Red Ryolite, Glass, Concrete, Lava

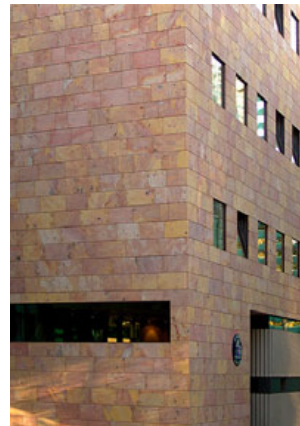
The Icelandic Embassy is situated in the western part of the embassies' premises and borders on the copper band, which surrounds all of the Nordic Embassies.

The building designed by the architect Pálmar Kristmundsson symbolises the rough nature of Iceland and makes a reference to Icelandic building tradition. It consists of a two-part rectangle structure with a glass atrium in the middle.

The five-storey front block contains the embassy offices and is clad with red ryolite which, depending on the rays of the sun, reveals a splendid play of colours. The four-storey rear block is clad with wave-formed, sandblasted concrete panels, which are reminiscent of corrugated iron, a typical building material used in Iceland. Both parts of the building have grass-covered roofs.

The glassed atrium looks out onto the copper band and a pool of water which visually connects the Icelandic and Danish Embassies. The floor of the atrium is covered with black lava slabs which are illuminated from below with red light.

The materials for the façade, the natural stone floors, the maple parquet and the interior decoration made of differently treated larch and maple wood originate from Iceland.



Architecture of the Royal Norwegian Embassy

Granite and milk glass

The embassy building of Norway is situated in the northern part of the site of the Nordic Embassies. The back of the building borders directly onto the copper band that surrounds the entire embassy ensemble.

The design by Snøhetta from Oslo, probably Norway's best-known architectural office, features simplicity in the floor plan with offices parallel to the external façade and a warm colour scheme for the rooms and furnishings inside the building.

The most striking feature is a 15 m tall granite slab at the front side of the Embassy. It is 900 million years old, weighs 120 tonnes and was quarried from a Norwegian fjord.

The façade envelope consists of transparent glass and milk glass. The greenish colour of the material suggests the coolness of Norwegian glaciers.

In the rear part of the embassy there is an atrium with grass areas, a terrace and a café for guests and staff. The different materials converging here offer an interesting interplay of surfaces, reflections and shadows.

In contrast to the cool exterior of the building, the interior has a pleasantly warm appearance. This is achieved by the colour scheme of the walls, by the wood of the wall panelling and by the furnishings. Especially in the evening, when the building is illuminated from within, it radiates comfortable warmth.



Architecture of the Swedish Embassy

White limestone, glass and black granite

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden is located in the northeastern part of the embassy ensemble. The design of the Gothenburg architect Gert Wingårdh refers to the aesthetics of classical Swedish Modernism, for example in the window band and the wall strip of the western façade.

With large glass fronts in the western and southern façades, the embassy building opens onto the plaza. Toward the street side the horizontal louvers of the copper band are open, allowing insight into the embassy building. Both of the façades facing the plaza – following the structure of the copper band – have horizontally accentuated rows of windows. But otherwise the façades are quite different from each other. The façade facing south is framed with white Gotland limestone, the western façade, by contrast, consists of panels of polished black granite, which are arranged in strips.

The central element of the four-storey atrium is a spiral staircase faced with birch wood which winds its way up and connects all of the floors. The walls are also panelled with this wood. The panels are joined by thin copper strips, resulting in a grid structure.

Visitors are led along a large, curved limestone wall into the building. The conference room appears to be floating on the water outside the building.

