

Arkitekten Gitte Juul er i dansk sammenhæng en pioner, hvad angår det at arbejde på stedet og i samarbejde med kunstnere og brugere i forhold til primært temporære projekter. I hvert fald to af de projekter, hun har medvirket i, vil være kendt af flere læsere fra omtaler i Arkitekten, nemlig InstantHERLEV og SOUP i Urbanplanen, København (12/09). Nu arbejder Gitte Juul bl.a. i Ballerup som kunstnerisk leder af projektet Kontoret for Kunst i Byen. I 2010 udsendte hun bogen "Tænke – bygge – bo". Kjeld Vindum har talt med hende om det at udfordre værkbegrebet og arkitektrollen – også i forhold til kunsten. In a Danish context, architect Gitte Juul is a pioneer when it comes to working on site and in cooperation with artists and users on predominantly temporary projects. At least two of the projects she has been involved in will be familiar to readers of Arkitekten: InstantHERLEV and SOUP in the residential development Urbanplanen in Copenhagen (12/09). Among other activities, Gitte Juul currently works as artistic director for a project in Ballerup: Kontoret for Kunst i Byen (The office for art in the city). She is the author of the book "Tænke – bygge – bo" (Thinking – Building – Living), which was published in 2010. Kjeld Vindum has spoken with her about challenging the conventional concept of the work of art and the architect's role, both generally and specifically in relation to art.

KJELD VINDUM

GITTE JUUL INTERVIEW

GITTE JUUL: FINT AT DER ER NOGET JEG IKKE KAN STYRE I'M FINE WITH THE FACT THAT THERE ARE THINGS I CAN'T CONTROL

Prøv at fortælle, hvordan du kom ind i InstantHERLEV- projektet. Var du med fra begyndelsen, eller kom du med, efter at det var formuleret?

Jeg blev inviteret til at lave et projekt hos InstantHERLEV institute, som foregår på billedkunstneren Anja Frankes private matrikel i et forstadsområde. Institutionen har gennem årene etableret sig ved at diskutere forholdet mellem det private og det offentlige rum. Den diskuterer nogle af alle de koder, der er i parcelhusområdet. Og jeg havde så frie hænder til at formulere, hvad jeg specifikt ville tage fat i.

Men rammerne var sat, i og med at problematikken var parcelhusområdets koder?

Anja Franke definerede, at det var forhaven, jeg skulle arbejde med. Den del af hendes private matrikel, som hun har udliciteret til InstantHERLEV institute. Så det var ikke på tale, at jeg skulle lave noget andet. Jeg var også godt tilfreds med forhaven, fordi jeg længe har haft lyst til at tage fat i nogle af parcelhusområdets ikoner. Hækken, der adskiller fortovet og den private sfære. Den er simpelthen så vigtig en ting for de fleste, der bor i parcelhus. Og så det der med indkørslen.

Jeg ville gerne forsøge at skyde nogle andre elementer ind, som gjorde, at man måske reflekterede over, om det kunne være på andre måder. Måske kunne de private carporte flyttes og samles centralt, så man kunne bruge de frigjorte forhavearealer til noget andet. Eller man

Tell me how you became involved in the InstantHERLEV project. Were you part of it from the beginning, or did you join after it had already been articulated?

I was invited to do a project for InstantHERLEV institute at the private suburban home of visual artist Anja Franke. Over the years, the institution has established itself by discussing the relationship between private and public space. It debates some of the many codes that prevail in a residential neighborhood. I was given free hands to articulate specifically what I wanted to address.

But the project was defined in the sense that it was to deal with the codes at play in a single-family home neighborhood?

Anja Franke specified that I was to work with the front yard; the part of her private lot that she has turned over to InstantHERLEV institute. So there was never any question of me doing anything else. I was quite happy to work with the front yard, as I have long wanted to take on some of the icons of the single-family home neighborhood. Like the hedge that separates the sidewalk and the private sphere; it's such a crucial element to most of the people living in these homes. And then there's the driveway.

I wanted to interject some novel elements in an attempt to make people reflect on whether things might be different. Perhaps the private carports could be moved and placed in one central location, free-



kunne prøve at omfordеле nogle ting. Jeg startede med at tage en hækkesaks og klippe hækken ned til en meters højde. Så fjernede jeg alle fliserne, hvor bilerne holdt, og stablede dem.

Hvad skete der ved det?

Det, der sker, er, at der, når bilerne er væk, og hækken pludselig er skæret ned, opstår en direkte kontakt med folk, når de går forbi. Der kommer enormt mange spørgsmål til, hvad det her går ud på. Det er jo tilsyneladende to ret grænseoverskridende ting. Så blev der lagt ny jord på, jordforbedret og anlagt en spritny have, hvor der dels blev sæt et væld af planter og plantet krydderurter, som var fordyrket i drivhus. Haven skulle kun indeholde spiselige planter, så der var et meget specifikt arbejde med at udvælge hvilke. Jeg rådførte mig med beboere i nabologet, for det der med haver er noget, folk går meget op i. Og de ved, hvad der er godt, og hvad der er spiseligt, så vi havde mange diskussioner omkring, hvad der var det rigtige at plante. Hele den der proces og langsommelighed i det var rigtig vigtig. Og så oplever jeg i den her slags projekter vigtigheden i at være tilstede og i at være den, der går og arbejder. Det er meget svært at få dialoger, at få erfaringer, ændre adfærdsmønstre og alt det her, hvis man ikke er der. Det er faktisk hen over hækken, de her ting foregår.

ing up the front yards for other purposes. Or maybe things could be redistributed. I set out by taking a pair of hedge clippers and cutting the hedge down to a height of one meter. Then I removed all the slabs where the cars were parked and stacked them.

And what did that accomplish?

When the cars are gone, and the hedge is suddenly pared down, you establish a direct contact with the people passing by. They ask a lot of questions about what you are doing, as these two steps are, apparently, fairly norm-breaking. Next, new soil was added and improved, and a brand-new garden was created; lots of seeds were sown, and herbs were planted that had been cultivated in a greenhouse. The garden was to contain only edible plants, so I had a very specific task of choosing which to include. I asked the neighbors for advice, as people here are really into their gardens. They know what works, and what's edible, so we had a lot of discussions about what were the right plants to include. That process and the slow approach were crucial. Also, in this type of project, I find it essential to be present on site, actually working. It's very difficult to have dialogs, gain experiences, affect behavior patterns etc. if you're not personally present. It's when you're talking across the hedge that you work things out.



SOUP 2007 Restaurant. Foto/Photo: Malene Nors Tandrup



SOUP 2007 Bibliotek. Foto: Anders Sune Berg SOUP 2007. Library. Photo Anders Sune Berg



Men der skete noget?

Det, at det er et kunstprojekt, er en diskussion, man skal føre. Koderne og hele det interessefelt, der ligger i at gøre de her ting, er jo noget, de fleste mennesker ikke umiddelbart tænker over. Men da den første skepsis havde lagt sig, så skete der noget. Jeg kunne jo godt se, at der i starten, når jeg gik og arbejdede derude, var rigtig mange, der var utrygge, for de gik over på det modsatte fortov og kiggede derfra. Da jeg så begyndte at gå og plante og bygge møbler derude, var der noget meget konkret, man kunne tage fat i; "jamen, jeg har et bedre stykke værkøj hjemme i garagen, du kan låne", eller; "skal jeg ikke lige hjælpe med den der, den ser lidt uhåndterlig ud". Og da jeg havde problemer med nogle planter, der ikke lige artede sig, som de skulle; "jamen, det er nok, fordi du har gødet for meget". Så kom der en diskussion om nogle super lavpraktiske ting, og den første utryghedsfornemmelse over, hvad det var, der foregik, forsvandt.

Det er altså typisk for hele din tilgang til at være arkitekt, at man skal lave tingene på stedet?

Jeg synes, det giver utrolig meget at arbejde på stedet. Jeg skitserer altid først, og jeg tegner også sådan groft omridset af eller ideen til, hvad det kunne være. Men jeg tegner aldrig fuldstændig færdigt med færdige mål og helt udspecifcret, så jeg bare kan gå ned til tømmerhandelen og bestille det. For jeg har opdaget, at der altid opstår nogle ting undervejs, som bidrager til udviklingen, og som får formen til at ændre sig. Det kan handle om, at man griber nogle tilfældigheder, at der pludselig opstår en chance for, at man kan få fat i nogle velegnede materialer, og så ville de færdige tegninger have været en begrænsning. Og så er der det, at når man går og bygger det fysisk på stedet, og det går lidt langsomt, fordi man går og venter på, at man skal finde det rigtige materiale, eller så var der lige nogle, der havde tilbuddet at hjælpe, men så kunne de først to dage efter – så virker det, mens det skrider frem, som om det bliver bedre. Der er også noget godt i at gå og arbejde selv med sin egen krop. Noget er lidt tungt, og der er nogle uhåndterlige længder, og lige pludselig skal man være til det. Der opstår et eller andet i den form for kommunikation, som gør, at tingene får en lidt anden karakter, end hvis man havde udtaenk det fra starten.

Hvad er det gode ved det?

Det gode er, at man får skærpet nysgerrigheden og kommunikationen.

And something actually did happen?

Framing this as an art project requires dialog. The codes and the larger field of interest related to doing these things are not something most people tend to think much about. But once the initial skepticism had died away, things did begin to happen. At first, when I was out there working, I could tell that a lot of people felt insecure, as they observed from the opposite sidewalk. Once I began to plant and to build furniture out there, there was something tangible to address: "I've got a better tool for that in my garage that you can borrow," or "Let me give you a hand with that, it looks a bit unwieldy." And when some of the plants weren't thriving, someone would say, "You probably gave them too much fertilizer." That sparked a discussion about down-to-earth practical issues, and the initial apprehension went away.

Would you say that this way of doing things on site is typical of your approach to architecture?

I find it really beneficial to work on site. I always do drafts first, where I outline or conceptualize the possible outcome. But I never produce a finished drawing with precise measurements and specifications that I could use to place an order at the lumberyard. Because I've found that things always happen during the process that contribute to the development and lead to changes in form. It may be a matter of seizing an unexpected opportunity, like getting your hands on particularly well-suited materials, where a complete set of drawings would have posed a limitation. Also the process of building something, physically, on site, where things move a little slowly because you're waiting to find the right material, or maybe someone promised to help but couldn't make it until two days later – it seems that the project improves as it develops. And there's something great about working, using your body. Some things are a little heavy, and there are unwieldy lengths, and suddenly it takes two people to do something. Something happens in that form of communication that adds a different character than if you had had it all planned out from the beginning.

What is the benefit of that?

The benefit is that it heightens your curiosity and enhances communication. It creates a space that lets you reflect on the approach to production and the type of knowledge we value. It takes a great deal of trust to work in a partnership, but simply doing it actually helps build

Der skabes et rum, hvor man får lejlighed til at reflektere over måden, vi producerer på, og over den form for viden, vi værdsætter. Det kræver stor tillid at arbejde i arbejdssætter, men ved blot at gøre det styrkes denne tillid. Det bliver til en måde at være i verden på, en måde at drive kunstnerisk praksis på og en strategi for at tilegne, producere og formidle viden. Hele min motivation for at arbejde blandt et ikke-eksklusivt publikum direkte på byens pladser og villaveje er at bearbejde nogle påtrængende kunstneriske spørgsmål på en visuel måde, som kan danne afsæt for en videre kollektiv diskussion. Min erfaring fra både SOUP, haven i Herlev og Ballerup er, at arkitekturen på denne måde får mulighed for at gribe ind og arbejde parallelt med samfundets gængse normer og inspirere til refleksion over et steds potentialer og baggrunden for brugernes opfattelse af en given situation.

Men har de så indflydelse?

Optimalt set har brugerne indflydelse, i kraft af at de kan agere i det rum eller på den platform, som er skabt i fællesskab. Platformen er jo dannet på baggrund af de eksisterende kvaliteter og ressourcer, som de specifikke steder og situationer byder ind med. Arkitekten sætter nogle tegn og producerer nogle indgreb, som brugerne forholder sig til og ofte omtryrder og sætter i spil på nye måder.

For mig er det interessant med en form for interaktiv proces. Jeg er ikke ude efter at producere et enmandsværk til et område uden dialog, som andre kan komme og kigge på og have en mening om... Og når nu min interesse ligger i at skabe noget for og med andre, så synes jeg, det er vigtigt, at man har sådan en lidt mere åben tilgang til det.

Hvordan har du oplevet det samarbejde med kunstnere, der har været i begge projekter?

Jamen, jeg synes jo, at det er interessant, at grænserne flyder mellem billedkunsten og arkitekturen. For det meste arbejder arkitekter med funktioner, mens billedkunstnere ofte arbejder med dysfunktioner. Dette konceptuelt forskellige udgangspunkt er vigtigt at forholde sig til i et samarbejde. Skellet bliver til dels nedbrudt det øjeblik, man mødes i marken med nogle konkrete problemstillinger og konkrete brugere. Så handler det om at få et overordnet fælles fodsag, og når det er på plads, kan der sagtens opträde forskelle i karakteren af fysiske indgreb.

this trust. It becomes a way of being in the world, an artistic practice and a strategy for acquiring, producing and conveying knowledge. My entire motivation for working with a non-exclusive audience, directly on city squares and in suburban neighborhoods lies in addressing urgent artistic issues in a visual manner that can form the basis of an ongoing collective discussion. My experience from SOUP, the garden in Herlev and the project in Ballerup is that it lets architecture intervene, apply a parallel perspective on society's norms and inspire reflection about the potentials of a site and the basis of the users' perception of a given situation.

But do the users really have a say?

Ideally, the users have a say because they can act in the space or on the platform that has been created in a communal process, as the platform emerged from the existing qualities and resources that the specific sites and situations offer. The architect leaves marks and creates interventions that the users relate to, often altering them and activating them in new ways.

I find the interactive process really interesting. I'm not looking to produce a solo performance for an area, without dialog, something for people to look at and form an opinion about... And since my goal is to create something for and with others, I find it essential to take a more open-ended approach.

How do you view the collaboration with artists that has been a part of both projects?

Well, I think it's interesting to see the boundaries between visual arts and architecture begin to blur. Typically, architects work with functions, while visual artists often work with dysfunctions. These different conceptual points of departure are important to address in a working partnership. The distinction is partly dismantled the moment you meet in relation to real issues and real users. Then you have to find common ground, and once you have that in place, there might well be difference in the character of physical interventions.

In none of these cases has the architect been the sole initiator. The artist has been involved from the outset, and sometimes the architect has joined the process later. And in InstantHERLEV the artist-architect relationship has been turned on its head?



Kontoret for kunst i Byen, Ballerup 2011. Fotos: Erling Jeppesen Office for Art in the City, Ballerup 2011. Photos: Erling Jeppesen

I ingen af tilfældene har det kun været arkitekten, der var initiativtageren. Kunstneren har været med fra begyndelsen, og nogle gange er arkitekten kommet ind senere. Og i InstantHERLEV kan man godt sige, at situationen med kunstner og arkitekt er vendt lidt rundt?

Ja, det kan man. I Urban-projektet startede vi jo fuldstændig samtidigt, og hele den diskussion med, at arkitekten er den, der formulerer, og kunstneren den, der udsmykker, er måske ikke den, jeg er mest optaget af. Jeg er mere optaget af, at man har den tværfaglige dialog. Og at man formulerer projektet sammen og dermed også giver lidt afkald på sin personlige værkidentitet. Det kan godt være, at man laver isolerede værker og har en værkproduktion sideløbende med, men i det øjeblik, man så går ind i de her mere interventionsagtige på stedet-projekter, synes jeg helt klart, at det er en fordel, hvis man starter med at finde et fælles sprog. Hvis man finder ud af, hvad rammerne er, hvor langt man vil gå med sit eget, hvornår man trækker sig lidt tilbage for noget andet.

Så det med at afgive værket til fordel for processen, det har du det udmaerket med?

Ja, eller man kan måske sige, at jeg har det fint med at afgive det individuelle arkitektoniske værk til fordel for et mere inkluderende, kollektivt værk.. Det er det, jeg undersøger eller prøver at eksperimentere med. Der er jo lidt forskellige grænser i de forskellige typer projekter, men jeg synes, det er interessant hele tiden at udfordre sine egne grænser. Altså at undersøge, hvordan man forstår interventionerne socialt, politisk, kulturelt, etisk og æstetisk. Det er klart, at det kræver en masse tillid at sige: Det her rum tror jeg på, jeg tager ansvaret for det hele, og at alle skal tage ansvar for det hele. Det kræver meget, fordi man ikke nødvendigvis ved, hvor det er på vej hen, og der er tilfældigheder i det. Man bevæger sig måske ud ad et spor, og lige pludselig er man nødt til at dreje skarpt til højre, fordi situationen ændrer sig. Men i virkeligheden er det vel ikke meget anderledes end de fleste byggesager, hvor der er økonomi og bygherrer og alle mulige inde over, og hvor diskussionen også drejer sig. Så generelt tror jeg, det må være en fordel at være åben over for forstyrrelser.

Hvordan bruger du dine klassiske arkitektkompetencer, og virker de i de her processer?

Jeg tror ikke, jeg har været med i nogen projekter, hvor jeg ikke har sidet derhjemme om aftenen og arbejdet. Selvom det har været tværæ-

Yes, you could say that. In the Urbanplan project, of course, we became involved at exactly the same time, and the debate about the architect as the one who articulates while the artist handles decoration, that's not where my main interest lies. I'm more focused on the interdisciplinary dialog. And on articulating the project together, thus also giving up some of your personal identity in relation to the artwork. You might still create isolated works and have a parallel artistic production, but the moment you enter into the more interventionist on-site projects, I think it's definitely an advantage if you start out by developing a common language. Setting the boundaries, determining how far you want to take your own work, and when you are going to retreat slightly in order to make room for something else: That's one level. The next level, then, is how open you are going to be in a discussion with potential users.

So, you're fine with the idea of giving up the artistic or architectural work for the process?

Yes, or you might say that I am fine with giving up the individual work of architecture in favor of a more inclusive, collective work.. That is what I am exploring or experimenting with. Different types of projects of course operate with different boundaries, but I find it interesting to continue to challenge my own boundaries. Examining my understanding of the interventions in a social, political, cultural, ethical and aesthetic sense. Naturally, it takes a great deal of confidence to say, I believe in this space, I assume responsibility for it all, and everybody should assume responsibility for everything. That's a tall order, since you don't necessarily know where it's all headed, and there are random elements to it. Maybe you're headed in one direction, and suddenly you have to turn sharply to the right because the situation has changed. But in fact, that's not so different from most construction projects, where you're dealing with the budget and clients and all sorts of factors, and where the discussion can also sometimes take some surprising turns. So in general, I think it's an advantage to be open to disturbances.

How do you use your classic architectural skills, and are they useful in these processes?

I don't think I've done a single project where I haven't spent evenings at home working. Even if they've been joint cross-aesthetic projects, I still sit at home, drawing, working out the conceptual aspects etc., because you always have to have something to bring to the table. You

Kontoret for Kunst i Byen er et samarbejde mellem Ballerup Kunstråd og By, Kultur & Erhverv – et nomadisk projektrum, hvis aktiviteter ønsker at anspore alle, der færdes i Ballerup, til at reflektere over, hvad Bymidten er, og hvordan Bymidten kunne blive.
www.ballerup.dk/kfkunst

Tænke – Bygge – Bo dokumenterer et eksperiment i substans, form og socialitet – visioner for at tænke, bygge, udforske og designe en etage-boligbebyggelse på nye måder og sætte fokus på børns mulighed for at være med til at udforske vores omgivelser samt de sociale konstruktioner, som det fysiske miljø er med til at skabe.
 Red. af Gitte Juul, tekster af Mette Gitz-Johansen, Gitte Juul, Mark Vacher, Ballerup Kunstråds Forlag, 2010.

SOUP er et tværestetisk projekt mellem kunst og arkitektur, initieret af Statens Kunstfond – udført af Kaj Nyborg, Cai-Ulrich von Platen, Gitte Juul, Carsten Hoff og kunstinstitutionen Overgaden m.fl. samt Urbanplanens beboere.
www.sloverurbanplanen.dk



don't show up empty-handed. So I draw, but the drawings are not visualizations that illustrate the eventual outcome. Since the form often changes along the way, I can't predict how it's going to look. I find it much more interesting to create something that has a development potential. Asking qualified questions, figuring out the organizational and practical aspects, how we can work together, and how we should produce things, and all these manifestations that are included in the development of the project. In that context I'm fine with the fact that there are unforeseen events that I can't control. In fact, I consider it a challenge. To see whether you can still achieve an outcome where you feel that the architecture has not been compromised but enriched. If one were aiming for a more classic 'work', one probably wouldn't give the users as much latitude; the context would be different. But in a diverse, socially oriented project, architecture sometimes has to stand aside slightly in favor of other aspects that are more related to manifestations.

If you were to comment on the direction architecture ought to take – in relation to its role in the world ...?

I would say that there is more than one direction. I don't think that all architecture should be tied up in social arrangements with large numbers of users, where architecture abstains from producing a finished form – but in many cases it does seem highly relevant and appropriate. SOUP illustrated that building a platform where artistic statements mix with everyday practice in the realization of small measures can lead to something bigger. Architecture might benefit from striving to understand situations, resources and issues that are not at the level of the building and attempting to interlace the various structures. Other approaches would also be worth exploring. For example working partnerships where development takes place across disciplinary boundaries in face-to-face processes, and where the outcome is not necessarily pre-determined. I enjoy open-ended processes, and I would love to see an architecture that not only based its appeal on renditions and visualizations of a finished outcome but took a more complex approach to all the possibilities that exist.

Translated by Dorte Herholdt Silver