GERARD REINMUTH,  
KAREN KJAERGAARD  
Danish Design at the House  
2013 | Sydney Opera House

Danish Design at the House (DDATH) was an exhibition curated and 
designed by Gerard Reinmuth and Karen Kjaergaard on the occasion of the 40th 
anniversary of the completion of the Sydney Opera House (SOH). The exhibi-
tion was executed for the Danish Ministry of Culture and the Cultural Agency 
within that Ministry, Kulturstyrelsen. The site for the exhibition was the 
difficult Western Foyer space in the base element of the SOH.

The Ministry has been working for some years on methods for exhibiting 
Danish commercial innovations in the context of, and as outcomes of Danish 
cultural pursuits more generally, particularly in the areas of design and craft. 
Reinmuth was selected and then paired with a Danish curator with expertise in 
crafts to develop a new exhibition typology that brought people into contact 
with Danish art and product innovation in a non-commercial way. The first 
contribution of the work lies in the way this dilemma was addressed via a curato-
rial and design strategy that focused on the six windows by Utzon in the foyer 
and organised installations based on six themes and featuring six architects, six 
designers and 25 companies with innovative products. The second contribu-
tion was in the design solution for a space that has been difficult for the SOH to use 
and was widely regarded as the first time the space has been successfully 
programmed and organised.

The project was a major new direction for the Danish Government and its 
success has subsequently led to the preparation of an International Policy for 
further exhibitions. The exhibition was widely regarded and featured in numer-
ous publications and also on television and other media.
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Poster outside the Opera House
Photo by Toko
GERARD REINMUTH, KAREN KJAERGAARD
Danish Design at the House

1. Exhibition view

2. Exhibition view

Photo by Toko
GERARD REINMUTH, KAREN KJAERGAARD
Danish Design at the House

1. Exhibition view, detail
   Photo by Toko

2. Exhibition view, detail
Exhibition views
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Exhibition views
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Gerard Reinmuth speech with Denmark’s Crown Prince Frederik and his Australian wife, Crown Princess Mary
Danish Design at the House
catalogue
with curatorial statement and index

Photos by Toko
Lightyears

Luminous lighting that creates a mood and enhances the ambiance.

Foyer Lounge

Within the Western Foyer, specific installations of furniture and lighting complement both the exhibition on the functioning of the foyer space in its various modes. A highlight is the Northern end where a screen forming a series of visual elements of the special ties with the construction of the Denver Opera House. Another area of interest in the Northern area is a seating zone that provides a seating landscape as well as live images of Danish design culture from Viskedomark.

Eilersen

Furniture designed for human comfort.

Bang & Olufsen

Audio-visual products that are user-friendly and interactive.

Technology

A strong tradition in materials has provided a sound foundation for advances in technology and material developments. Danish products often feature a range of technological advances that indicate changes to an entire industry in terms of new capabilities, efficiencies, and production.

Paustian

Furniture technology through sustainable materials.
Danish Design at the House

Curated by Australian architect Gerard Reinmuth and Danish architect Karen Kjaergaard, Danish Design at the House was officially launched on Friday 15 October by the Danish Minister for Culture, Her Excellency Marianne Jelved. Patrons of the Sydney Opera House fortieth anniversary celebrations – Their Royal Highnesses The Crown Prince and Princess of Denmark – were special guests of Opera House CEO Louise Herron, as were Sydney Mayor Clover Moore and NSW Minister for the Arts George Souris. Architectural "royalty" was present too – Sydney Opera House architect Jørn Utzon’s son Jan and other members of his family attended, along with eminent Sydney architects spanning three generations.

Reinmuth and Kjaergaard have placed their "exhibition of small things" in one of the building’s only Jørn Utzon interiors, the long narrow Western Foyer beside the Playhouse, Studio and Drama Theatre. It’s an awkward space in which to curate, but this part exhibition / part trade show succeeds because of its intimate scale and thoughtful execution. Instead of trying to contain the contents of the six windows together, they have done the opposite, singling each one out, projecting it into the foyer with a theatrical box in which are arranged the six displays of domestic and industrial designs, art and craft – classic and new. The effect is more singular and voyeuristic than the “immerse” style of exhibition currently doing the rounds, and it works because it’s focused. Promised from the foyer, each window becomes a telescope through which you look or walk into, examining the objects with a controlled glimpse of the concourse and harbour outside.

"The idea is to promote Danish companies in a way that refers back to the design quality and history of Danish design; along the lines of an art exhibition," explains Reinmuth. The Danish Agency for Culture supported the idea, providing the framework and funding to employ him as curator. Reinmuth’s practice, Terrier, has had an office in central Copenhagen for several years, working on cultural and public projects including the recently completed Aarhus housing complex in the north harbour area of Aarhus.

"It’s fantastic to get this level of government support for a design project, as you know it’s not that common in Australia. The Danes really understand design as an integral part of trade and culture. And the fortieth anniversary of the Opera House is a big deal to them – The Crown Prince Couple and a couple of Danish ministers have come over especially for the event. It’s very close to their hearts. What we’ve created is not strictly a retrospective, there are some classic pieces, but much of it is quite new – so it’s as much about the future of Danish design, as it is about the past. In this context, it’s an exhibition of beautiful little things with an extraordinary family history behind them."

Danish Design at the House is on at the Sydney Opera House until 12 November 2013, as part of its fortieth anniversary celebrations.
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Supporting evidence

Exhibition review in Architecture Australia

Danish Design at the House, Architecture Australia
http://architectureau.com/articles/danish-design-at-the-house/
Architect and designer Gerard Reimnuth has plugged into Denmark's creative powerhouses to curate a stunning exhibition for a Sydney icon's big 4-0.

Danish Design at the House

In the late 1980s, future architect and design expert Gerard Reimnuth was a year 11 and 12 classmate of one Mary Donaldson at Hobart College. Both had a Danish destiny. Reimnuth would eventually meet and marry a Dane, architect Marie-Louise Holst, and expand his architecture firm Terbov into Hobart and Sydney's Chippendale to a third branch in Copenhagen.

Donaldson, meanwhile, came to Sydney and landed herself a Danish partner, too, whom she married in 2004. Reimnuth wondered if Crown Princess Mary, as she is now known, with four children to Crown Prince Frederik, would remember him. He found out at a Canberra function last year, at which she was a special guest.

He was introduced to her as "Gerry, an architect from Hobart". Princess Mary shook his hand politely, and moved along the line, not stopping to chat. But two hours later, when an aide whispered in her ear it was time to leave, Princess Mary headed straight for Reimnuth. "Hello, Gerry, how are you going?" she said, as the years melted away. "Wasn't it cold going up the hill in that bus in the middle of winter in Hobart?"

The old classmates will have time to chat again this month when Prince Frederik and Princess Mary return to Sydney as patrons of the 40th anniversary of the Opera House. Among the royal couple's duties: opening Danish Design at the House, an exhibition Reimnuth is curating. "They have an intense interest in design, arts and culture," says Reimnuth of the royal couple. "It makes them great ambassadors for both countries."

The exhibition will be displayed in bay windows on the Opera House's Circular Quay side, and includes Danish innovation ranging from furniture, lighting and fashion to medical and engineering equipment. Reimnuth, 42, who is the founder of the International studio at Denmark's Aarhus School of Architecture, says the secret of Denmark's design success has been an intimacy between makers and designers - often the same person - and the country's social-democratic values of "comfort, humanism, generosity and openness."

He poses here with a Poul Kjaerholm chair, designed for Fritz Hansen 50 years ago, and a more recent Lightyears lamp - examples of the longevity of Danish design and the potential to mix and match its different vintages. "The Danish tradition is not intellectual, it's about making nice stuff."

Reimnuth never met the Opera House's designer, the late Jørn Utzon, but after giving a lecture in Denmark he became friends with Utzon's grandson, the designer Jeppe Utzon, and they shared space in the office of Utzon's son, architect Kim Utzon. Now they're all collaborating on a United Nations building in Sweden.

It also includes jewellery from Oie Lynggaard of Copenhagen, the official jeweller Puver with the Royal Danish Court.

Danish Design at the House runs from October 25 to November 11.
40.sydneyoperahouse.com
Danish Design at the House

The Royal Couple will participate as protectors of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Opera House and award the Royal Couple Pricing 2013.

The Royal Couple will visit Sydney, Australia, on the 25th to 28th of October as patrons of the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Opera House. On this occasion The Royal Couple will participate in celebrations and will at the same head the presentation of The Royal Couple Pricing 2013 ...

During the visit, The Royal Couple will take part in several events marking the Opera House’s 40th anniversary, including ... the openings of a Danish design exhibition and an international architecture and design symposium.

Supporting evidence

1. Exhibition review in The Guardian

2. Announcement from the Danish Royal Court

3. English translation of the Danish announcement