

STUDIO VISIT WITH  
HALLEROED

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
KIRA BUNSE





Question Everything

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1968-1970

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The husband-and-wife duo behind Stockholm based architecture firm Hallerod are a quiet force. Embodying the Scandinavian principles of reserved optimism, their work speaks loud so they don't need to.

Eschewing the classical rules of "good taste", they have succeeded in creating a singular visual vocabulary fusing eras, styles, and mediums. For a recent New York City flagship store design for the Swedish clothing brand Tôtème, the classic airy white light-filled space was centered around rich black lacquered Marc Newson-designed coffee tables off-set by vibrant printed seating by Josef Frank and caramel carpeting. The space, located in Soho is both modern and timeless.

Their Stockholm studio, photographed here by German photographer Kira Bunse, is an apt representation of their style: clean, modern without being cold with elements of color and texture. "I think our work is minimal but maybe more in a way of thinking than in an aesthetic sense. We try to be precise and clear about the base and then we work into that quite a lot of materials and textures. Not in an overwhelming or unbalanced way. It is hard for us to just add some nice detail or materials without it being a part of the logic of the concept"

When asked to explain their creative process: "I do the big stuff and he does the smaller stuff" Ruxandra replies with a laugh. "We always start the project together looking at the architecture and the space. Then maybe one of us will take the lead, she generally does, but we always start the idea together" adds Christian. "Our work is more commercial focused but when the pandemic started, a lot of clients stopped their projects, so we suddenly had more residential requests. It's nice to have apartments also"

Ruxandra develops: "It is a different way of working. For retail, you must work very fast because the client has taken a space that they want to open directly so you don't have much time to experiment. You work with their team, and it is easier to move on. With residential clients, it is a lot of trying and guessing: people can say something while meaning something else. They want to be creative, but it has to be practical in the end. You need to explain it more, to understand the use of everything in the home. When starting a new project, we mostly start by looking at the space. If the space is like a white box, then you start from a material idea. Usually, we start with looking at ways to redefine the space in an interesting way.

If it is a new client, we start with a more inspirational idea of what it will be in the end. We have a discussion, make a picture of what it could be and then start with the space and materials. For references I think it depends on the client, but we look quite broadly. When the client's thinking is more elevated, we usually work with art because some of them know and like art. It is also easier to talk about" continues Christian, their train of thoughts working in unison.

*“We are also so much more used to retail where art is a common starting point but you can’t show retail references to clients. When a new client comes to us and say that they want it to look like the Acne Studios stores or something we usually say no. They need to find their own aesthetics and voice.*

*So, for fashion brands, we always show them some art references or classic references. But in that environment, when you start it’s not so much about a room or a material; you need to find an attitude, an atmosphere.*

*It figuring out are they brave and crazy or are they more quiet? That’s why we use art or older references from the Sixties or Eighties. We are lucky that we can choose our clients. The clients we work with have a common language where we can show art and abstract pieces. One of them came with a photo of a mattress with flowers as a reference and we were like ok! We get it!” concludes Ruxandra.*

This approach to innovative thinking has seduced a long list of brands including Byredo, Acne Studios, Totême and the now defunct label CK205W39NYC designed by Raf Simons.

Is one project particularly close to their heart I ask? *“We never really look back. We are always doing something new and we always want to do something new. You learn from every project you do. Whatever new client you meet teaches you something. We find the most inspiration for your next project is the project you are doing now. You have to take all the learnings from that project onto the following one. But, of course, we do have some favorites: you like the project, the spirit, the client... Some projects we love because when you look at it again, it still looks really nice!*

*The best reward is when you don’t get tired of a project, and you can look back at it and still love it. We have one direction that is a bit softer and more organic, with wood, and another that is a bit more hardcore. We love them both obviously and we are not stuck in our own aesthetics or at least we try not to be. We are open to the evolution”.*

The couple, who met at the start of the millennium, were romantically involved, and married for many years before joining forces professionally following the birth of their daughter Yolanda. Splitting their time between Stockholm and a cottage on the isle of Blidö, the pair believe that being based outside of the traditional international circuit works to their advantage. *“What we appreciate when we work abroad is that by coming from the outside, you know what you like and what you are truly fascinated by. I think that maybe for the French or the Italian, who have more tradition of architecture, there is a sense of logic and understanding. For us, that tradition becomes something fake and it is hard to just add to a project. I think the Swedish way stands out in the international context and you are a little bit freer. You are not trapped in the scene.*

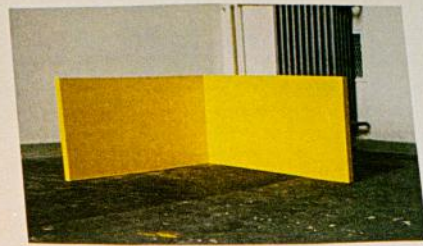
*I think to be successful you have to be very open and try new things. Always understand your context and what is outside of it. But also understand how things are made: what you can do in store or how to make small details. You have to be curious. Many young people, maybe out of fear or lack of self-esteem, become very stubborn about what things should be and I think it’s better to be more open and just let things kind of happen. Boring stuff can be interesting, you never know.”*





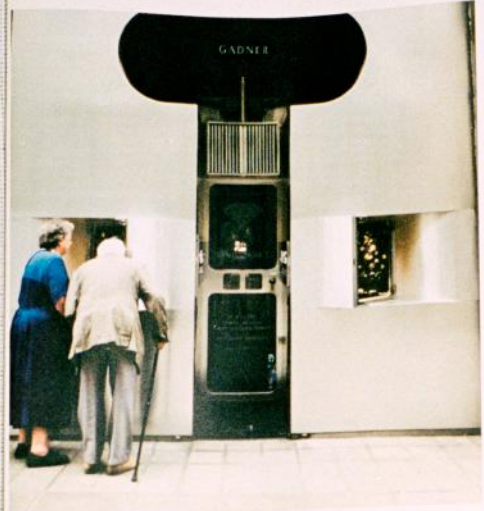


Shenzen MixC



Imi Giese, Untitled, 1967, wood and lacquer, each ca. 90 x 120 cm, Kunstakademie Dusseldorf, gallery, 1967

Short notes about the exhibition appeared in the daily press, for instance one by Christa von Helmholtz in the FAZ entitled "Gigantische latini



Window



The elegant curved line of the staircase in the 'Heavenly' series, journal in 1980, which the audience is to look at the ceiling.

