

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Frank Gehry, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Creating a Masterplan for urban development is to me, just like creating a unique painting, a great sculpture or a contemporary 3-D installation. They all need a gifted touch of artistic feeling, just as they all have to contain an infinite number of human aspects to come alive.

But no doubt that among all the artforms, the cityplan is the most complicated to realize, - not only because of the responsibility to society, but also because money and politics are important players.

But first and foremost it is a matter of vision and will.

Therefore it's a great pleasure for me ó as the director of the new Danish art museum ARoS ó to congratulate the city of Sønderborg with its new Frank Gehry-masterplan, - a plan that in a magnificent way outlines the development of the town and defines how the meeting of land and water is going to proceed in the years to come. With Frank Gehry's quite unique sense of architecture and urban spaces it is a fantastic step Sønderborg now takes into the future.

Apart from congratulating Sønderborg I find there is also reason to congratulate Frank Gehry himself. Not only because of the convincingly grand Masterplan, but also because he is actually one of the first architects from abroad, who has been offered the opportunity to create something spectacular for Denmark. In contrast to all other sorts of influence that we Danes happily receive from abroad, we have to admit, that we - in the field of architecture including city-planning - have not been very open minded towards new international inspiration.

This plan for Sønderborg marks that Denmark is now breaking free of its architectural cocoon and is becoming part of the international world society.

That Danish architects until now should have had a monopoly-like status might sound contradictory, because Danish architects have with great success been working around the world for many years.

One of the first Danish architects to become internationally famous was also working on how to connect water and architecture. He did that down under in Sydney Australia. His name was ó as you know - Jørgen Utzon!

Just like Frank Gehry, Utzon and his Operahouse also challenged the present concept of architecture, and thereby demonstrates what imagination, skill and artistic power can do to architecture.

Last week I was in Sydney, and was pleased to find in a book on the opera, Frank Gehry's praising statement about his Danish colleague and the opera house, - I quote: "The groundbreaking Danish architect had constructed something well ahead of its time, far ahead of available technology and he persevered through extraordinary malicious publicity and negative criticism to build a building that changed the image of an entire country" .

That is exactly what architecture can do to a nation, - or a city-plan can do to a city - when it is most visionary and artistic; Provide it with a new image - and new images. Make it more exciting to live in, to visit and stay in. The truth is that architecture and the way a city is developed influence not only the way we live and act but also the way we think. Therefore, the design of architecture and urban space has a significant impact on people, now, as well as in the future.

A good city-plan should besides functional housing, interesting institutions and dynamic infrastructure offer spaces for cosy love corners, for magnificent views, for colours, for dreaming and all kinds of human demands, both physically and mentally. It seems to me that the Gehry Masterplan contains it all.

Last year at AROS Aarhus Kunstmuseum we had the pleasure to show a Frank Gehry exhibition that took us behind the architecture and presented to us the advanced computer programme that Gehry developed to control large building projects. The programme is now being used for the completion of the big cathedral Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, which is the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi's greatest architectural art work. The exhibition also gave an impression of the house which Frank Gehry right now is constructing in Århus for the Danish Cancer Society. A little art work which presents new sides of Gehry's architectural expression.

Entering a Frank Gehry house is like entering a spectacular art work with many dimensions.

Here in Europe we know Frank Gehry's architecture from the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao which has become an icon of modern museum architecture.

With that building Mr. Gehry, you also gave us, art-and museumpeople, something we did not know we needed. My colleagues in Bilbao - just like the rest of us - used to believe that simple box-like galleries ó the white cubes ó were the best frames for presenting an art work. You gave us new artistic and very organic spaces, which immediately were appreciated by the artists for giving new power to a work of art. And later with a smile were accepted by museumstaffs all over the world.

Like Utzon changed the image of Sydney you changed the image of Bilbao Spain. And by doing so you have both enriched our world with architectural icons and challenged all of us with new spectacular experiences.

Maybe one day the Guggenheim Bilbao building will be on the UNESCO World Heritage list of preserved buildings and thereby becoming the World's 9th wonder. ó the 8th position is taken, as Jørn Utzon's opera house in 2007 was preserved alongside the Pyramids and the Great Wall of China.

Only time will show if The Sønderborg Harbor Masterplan someday in the future is going to be number 10 or 11 on the UNESCO list.

Thinking of the great forces that are joined behind the Sønderborg Harbor Masterplan I have no doubt that it will be realized. Maybe time will change some details, but the overall idea should not be changed. It may be a plan for Sønderborg, but when it has become reality I am sure its greatness will make all of us Danes very proud.

Therefore I will just say: Well done, great initiative. Thank you Frank Gehry. Congratulations Sønderborg.

**Jens Erik Sørensen
Director
ARoS Aarhus Art Museum**