



ESBJERG MARITIME CENTER

Posted on March 8, 2023 by martabuges



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In the seaport town of Esbjerg on the Danish west coast, a new maritime center has opened to the public. Developed by WERK Arkitekter and Snøhetta following a design competition in 2019, the center was created as a shared space for watersport clubs and visitors along the port, providing the town with a social maritime hub and an architectural landmark.



The new maritime center, dubbed “The Lantern”, is designed to put the community first. Housing multiple watersport clubs, boat storage, training facilities, a large workshop space and social functions, the center is a true hub for maritime activities. Its circular, open design invites visitors in from every angle, creating an accessible and inclusive building.



"The goal has been to create a unique destination that lights up the Danish west coast, so everyone can find their way to new communities by the sea," says Thomas Kock, Creative Director at WERK Arkitekter.







Room for Maritime Activities and Communities

Frank D. Foray, senior architect and project manager at Snøhetta, points out that the new center will invite activity, engagement and learning on the part of visitors:

"The maritime center has room for everyone: from experienced divers and professional kayakers to crab-fishing classes or random passers-by. The Lantern invites everyone to take a peek inside maritime life and out towards the sea with its endless horizon," says Foray.

The upper level of the building houses various clubs, including for rowing, kayaking, sailing, diving



and triathlon, as well as common areas, an educational center and training facilities. On the lower level, directly connected to the sea by a bridge, one can find the boat storage and workshop space. Large windows throughout the building's façade give plenty of daylight and visibility inwards, while also connecting the center to its surroundings. At night, a warm glow shines through the windows, lighting up the center like a lantern.







Inspired by Wooden Boat Construction

The building design is inspired by the geometry and craftsmanship of boats, paying homage to the maritime tradition and its significance in the port of Esbjerg. Round-shaped holes between the terrace and the boat storage and preparation area bring daylight down to the ground floor's core and create a vertical visual and social connection.

The façade has a rhythm and repetition inspired by wooden boat construction, both outside and inside. It also reflects the water's energy with the horizontal rippling effect of tossing a stone into the water. The changes in the angle of the panels generate varying shadows, inspired by the shapes of



kayaks. The wooden rhythm continues on the roof, where solar panels are integrated in a belt around the top edge.







Where Poetic Meets Practical

With a vision of creating a space that brings together poetic and practical functions, the Maritime Center aims to strike a balance between the mesmerizing and never-ending movements of the sea and practical everyday chores – a symbiosis between beauty, rawness, elegance and power.

The robustness of the center is evident not just in the building's ability to facilitate activities, but also in how it creates shelter from strong winds. The building is planned for high water in case the water overflows the new surrounding dam. Therefore, the structure up to the first floor is made of concrete, poured in one go. The wooden façade is designed to withstand harsh weather conditions,



while the building is designed with areas where visitors can take shelter.

One such area, and the heart of the design, is a raised, publicly accessible terrace, gathering all the different activities of the building. Connected with the first floor, the terrace is accessible from the two main stairways, creating an amphitheater. Here, visitors can enjoy the views and watch the activities on the smaller wind-protected terraces below.



