

The Nordic Embassies in Berlin



The embassies of the Nordic countries in Berlin are all gathered together in a single complex: Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland each have separate German representations here, alongside a communal reception and information centre.

Designed by the Austrian-Finnish partnership of Alfred Berger and Tiina Parkkinen, the complex has a keyhole-shaped plan, enclosing six uniform-height structures. Intersecting paths both separate and link the individual buildings, which are constructed in such a way as to create the illusion of sections that have been carved out of a single block. A further allusion to the connection between the Nordic states is the presence of water, in the form of shallow ponds and channels touching on all five embassies.

Wrapped around the site and enclosing the six buildings is a 226-metre long copper band consisting of 3,926 prepatinated louvres. This distinctive wall feature is a unifying element for the whole complex. The individual louvres are fixed to a 15-metre high vertical support made up of hollow-section stainless steel that is attached directly to the embassy buildings. In the spaces between the buildings, a free-standing hollow-section stainless steel frame bears the loads.

A variety of reasons prompted the architects to choose stainless steel as the material for the frame for the copper band. In terms of functionality, the benefit is that copper and stainless steel do not suffer from contact corrosion, and also stainless steel is regarded as virtually maintenance-free. This point had

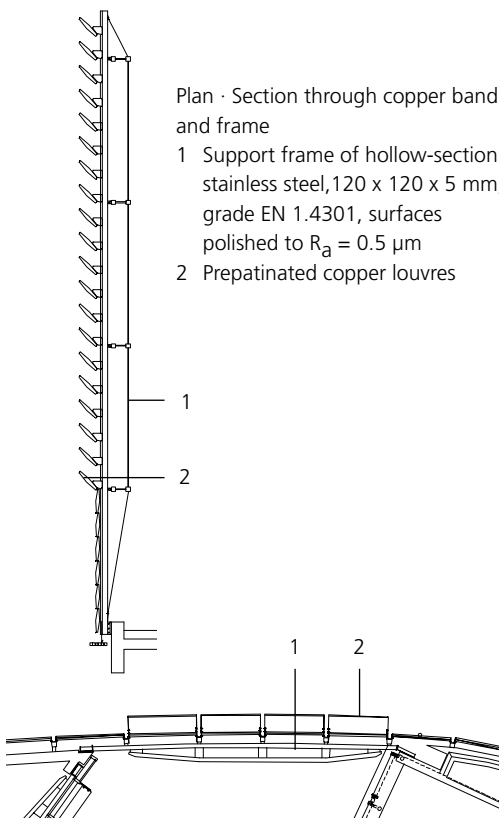
The Nordic Embassies:

- 1 Reception and information centre
- 2 Finnish Embassy
- 3 Swedish Embassy
- 4 Norwegian Embassy
- 5 Icelandic Embassy
- 6 Danish Embassy





Glazed panels near the ponds allow the curious to glimpse inside the complex.



special significance, as cleaning the frame once the copper louvres had been mounted would be a complex undertaking. Furthermore a stainless steel frame proved to be not much more expensive than a construction in coated steel. Design considerations were the final decider: the materials concept produced by Berger and Parkkinen for the embassy complex called for the use of uncoated, unfinished surfaces – the natural properties of the individual materials were to be allowed to shine through.

Between the buildings the copper louvres in the encircling screen are fitted onto a frame of hollow-section stainless steel.

The atmosphere at the embassy complex is characterised by a dialogue between a range of materials typical of the Nordic region. Each individual embassy building has its own distinctive identifying features. The Danish embassy, close by the entrance to the site, has a calm, unified exterior, with a façade of perforated steel sheet. The small, slit-shaped perforations lend an amazing transparency to the façades, while also protecting against direct sunlight.

Opposite is the Finnish embassy, its double façade of a larchwood lattice frame in front of the windows creating a lively, rhythmic impression, particularly when the shutters are

open. At night the outer skin closes up, the resulting monolith resembling a simple wooden block.

The Icelandic embassy on the other side is clad with red rhyolite. The rich, warm tones of the stone façade lend a vibrancy to this comparatively small building.

Located at the back of the complex, a solid block of granite draws the eye. Weighing 130 tonnes, this calm pole marks the centre of the Nordic complex and forms the end wall of the Norwegian embassy. Butting up to both sides of this stone face are façades of clear and milky glass. Horizontal glass louvres protect the interiors from direct sunlight.

*Left to right:
Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish embassies.*



The façades of the Swedish embassy feature two different types of construction and two contrasting colours: black, highly polished granite panels and coarsely ground, white limestone with matt glass sun screens fixed horizontally.

A perfect partner for natural stone, wood and glass, is stainless steel – used for fixing points, mountings and framing on the different façades.



The sixth building on the embassies site is the Felleshuset, or 'house for all'. With its horizontal timber cladding and narrow glazing strips in between, this shared reception and information centre looks, from the outside, like a single hollow space enclosed in a wooden container.

Perforated stainless steel panels on the façade of the Danish Embassy protect against direct sunlight.

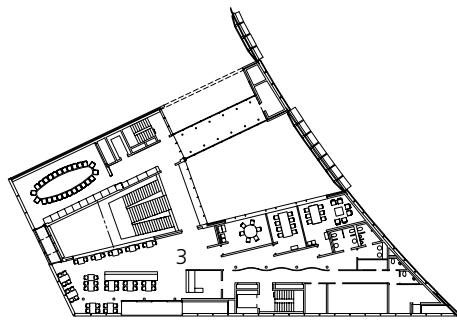


The shared reception and information centre is the only building on the site generally accessible to the public.

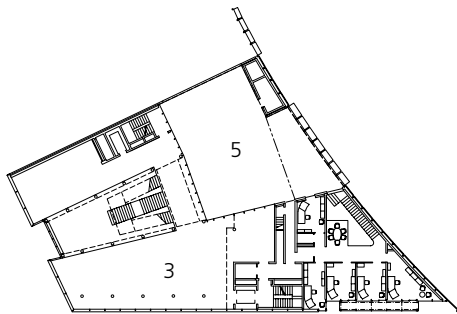


A textile canopy marks the border between public space and the interior of the embassies site.

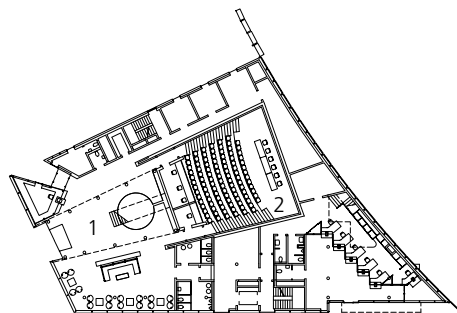
The Felleshuset is the only building in the Nordic Embassies complex that is open to the public. It contains a 100-seat auditorium for concerts and other events, plus exhibition rooms, a roof terrace and a canteen. Also accommodated here are the consular departments of the five countries.



3rd floor

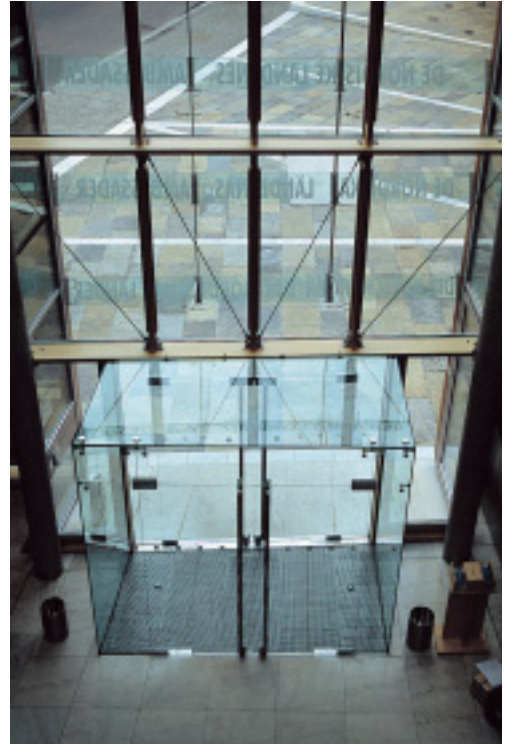


1st floor



Ground floor

- Plan · Section
 Reception and information centre
- 1 Foyer
 - 2 Auditorium
 - 3 Exhibition area
 - 4 Canteen
 - 5 Terrace



Fine stainless steel fixings, almost invisible from a distance, hold the glass panes of the draught lobby in place.

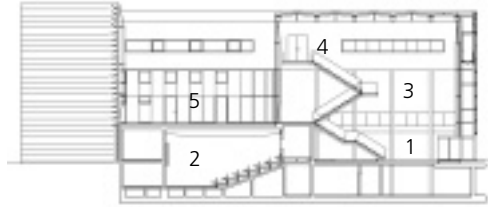
The glass façade is braced with fine stainless steel cables.



Inside the Felleshuset, attention focuses on the full-height atrium which divides the building into two halves. Both front and rear walls of the atrium are fully glazed, with fixing points holding the individual panes of the draught lobby in position. The laminated timber and glass façade of the Felleshuset is secured to the reinforced concrete columns by means of welded stainless steel connectors.

As in each of the Nordic embassy buildings, here, too, the design is typically Scandinavian, articulated in the use of superior materials and clear structures. Blue-green effect glass, exposed grey concrete, warm wood tones and gleaming stainless steel are the materials and colours that predominate. The furniture and fittings in the interior are kept plain and simple, harmonising well in shape, detail and material with the complex as a whole.

Matt glass treads in gleaming stainless steel frames lend a light, graceful air to the triple-flight staircase.



Longitudinal section

The natural characteristics of wood, glass, exposed concrete and stainless steel are used to good effect in the Felleshuset.





Stainless steel is an excellent intermediary at points where different materials meet, harmonising and clarifying the contrasts.



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*Elegance and purity:
stainless steel, exposed
concrete and wood for
furniture and fittings.*

