

Fjordenhus, first building by acclaimed artist Olafur Eliasson and his studio, opens in Vejle, Denmark

- For immediate release -
1 June 2018



Photo: Anders Sune Berg, 2018

Fjordenhus (Fjord House), the first building designed entirely by artist Olafur Eliasson and the architectural team at Studio Olafur Eliasson, will open on 9 June in Vejle, Denmark. Commissioned by KIRK KAPITAL, the company's new headquarters offer a contemporary interpretation of the idea of the total work of art, incorporating remarkable site-specific artworks by Eliasson with specially designed furniture and lighting.

Rising out of the water, Fjordenhus forges a striking new connection between Vejle Fjord and the city centre of Vejle—one of Jutland peninsula's thriving economic hubs. As one moves from the train station towards the harbour, Fjordenhus comes into view across the expansive plaza of the man-made Havneøen (The Harbour Island), a mixed-use residential and commercial area currently in development. From here, residents and visitors can access the ground floor of Fjordenhus via a footbridge or stroll along the jetty designed by landscape architect Günther Vogt.

The building's public, double-height entrance level is dedicated to the relation of the building to the water, drawing attention to the plane where the structure plunges beneath the surface, its curved edges framing glimpses of the surrounding shores and harbour. The building is permeated by the harbour itself, and its two aqueous zones are visible from viewing platforms. Both the architectural spaces and Eliasson's artworks engage in a dialogue with the ever-changing surface of the water.

Formed by four intersecting cylinders, Fjordenhus soars to a height of twenty-eight metres (ninety-two feet). Rounded negative volumes have been carved from its facades of custom-glazed brick to create an extraordinary architectural statement of complex curved, circular, and elliptical forms, torqueing walls and parabolic arches. In its unique setting—a hybrid of natural and industrial-urban contexts—the building highlights Vejle's future as a centre not just for today's generation but also for generations to come.

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Olafur Eliasson notes, 'I am very thankful for the trust shown by the Kirk Johansen family in inviting me, with my studio, to conceive Fjordenhus. This allowed us to turn years of research—on perception, physical movement, light, nature, and the experience of space—into a building that is at once a total work of art and a fully functional architectural structure. In the design team, we experimented from early on with how to create an organic building that would respond to the ebb and flow of the tides, to the shimmering surface of the water, changing at different times of the day and of the year. The curving walls of the building transform our perception of it as we move through its spaces. I hope the residents of Vejle will embrace Fjordenhus and identify with it as a new landmark for the harbour and their city.'

The completion of Fjordenhus marks the shift of Studio Olafur Eliasson's major architectural activities to a new international office for art and architecture, Studio Other Spaces (SOS), founded by Eliasson and his long-time collaborator, architect Sebastian Behmann, in Berlin in 2014. As an architectural counterpart to Studio Olafur Eliasson, Studio Other Spaces will be the vehicle for Eliasson and Behmann to carry out large-scale interdisciplinary and experimental architectural projects of a scope similar to Fjordenhus, in addition to works for public space. Projects are currently in development around the world, from Paris to Addis Ababa.

Architect Sebastian Behmann, head of design at Studio Olafur Eliasson, says, 'Throughout the process, we were very attentive to the choreography and sequencing of spaces, using modulation of light and acoustics to heighten all the building's sensory aspects. One experiences Fjordenhus as a sculptural presence in the harbour, an interaction of solids and voids. These voids—the main points of interaction between inside and outside—are the major design element and form the parabolic, multi-story windows. Our clients grasped the value of devoting the ground story of the building, alongside the plaza with its jetty, to the experience of the building's relation to its environment—and to the public.'

Image and text downloads available here:

<http://olafureliasson.net/press/fjordenhus>

Video available upon request here:

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Tours of Fjordenhus can be booked, for a limited time, here:

www.fjordenhus.dk

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Social media:

#fjordenhus

Twitter: @olafureliasson

Instagram: @studioolafureliasson / @studiootherspaces

Facebook: @studioolafureliasson

Olafur Eliasson:

Artist Olafur Eliasson (Iceland/Denmark), born in 1967, works in a wide range of media, including installation, painting, sculpture, photography, and film. Since 1997, his solo shows have appeared in major museums around the world. As part of his practice, he engages with arts education, policy-making, and issues of sustainability and climate change. Eliasson's architectural projects include the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007, designed together with Kjetil Thorsen; Your rainbow panorama, a 150-metre circular, coloured-glass walkway situated on top of ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Denmark (2006–11); and Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre (2005–11), which won the Mies van der Rohe Award in 2013 and for which Eliasson created the facades in collaboration with Henning Larsen Architects.

olafureliasson.net

Sebastian Behmann:

Architect Sebastian Behmann, born in Germany in 1969, has worked with Olafur Eliasson since 2001 and is head of the department of design at Studio Olafur Eliasson, as well as co-founder of Studio Other Spaces. Major projects with Eliasson include the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007 in London, Cirkelbroen (The circle bridge) in Copenhagen (2015), and Fjordenhus in Vejle, Denmark (2009–18), in addition to numerous installations, pavilions, and international exhibitions.

About Studio Olafur Eliasson:

The team at Studio Olafur Eliasson consists of over one hundred people, from craftsmen and specialised technicians to architects, archivists, researchers, art historians, cooks, and administrators. They work with Eliasson to develop, produce, and install artworks, projects, and exhibitions, as well as on experimentation, archiving, research, publishing, and communications. In addition to realising artworks in-house, Eliasson and the studio work with structural engineers and other specialists and collaborate worldwide with cultural practitioners, policymakers, and scientists.

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About Studio Other Spaces:

Studio Other Spaces is an international office for art and architecture founded by artist Olafur Eliasson and architect Sebastian Behmann in Berlin in 2014. It grew out of Eliasson and Behmann's work together on such projects as Fjordenhus in Vejle, Denmark (2009–18), and the facades of Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre, Iceland (2005–11). Studio Other Spaces pursues a research-based approach to the production of space that seeks to expand the established architectural vocabulary. By conceptualising spaces from their most fundamental level, the studio is able to disclose their utopian potential through innovative architectural forms.

studiootherspaces.net

About KIRK KAPITAL:

KIRK KAPITAL is primarily a business and investment company that seeks to create long-term capital return for the benefit of current shareholders and generations to follow. In addition, KIRK KAPITAL provides investment advice and other family office services to its shareholders and a foundation.

Fjordenhus: Fact sheet

LOCATION

Havneøen 1, 7100 Vejle, Denmark

KEY DATES

Concept Phase: 2009–2011

Design Phase: 2011–2013

Building Phase: 2013–2018

Inauguration: 9 June 2018

DESIGN

Artist: Olafur Eliasson

Architectural Design: Sebastian Behmann with Studio Olafur Eliasson

Project Architect: Caspar Teichgräber

LOCAL ARCHITECT

Lundgaard & Tranberg Architecture

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Vogt Landscape Ltd.

CLIENT

KIRK KAPITAL A/S

SETTING

Vejle Fjord in Jutland stretches east from its head at the city of Vejle to its mouth at the Kattegat Sea. Fjordenhus stands in the water alongside Havneøen (The Harbour Island), a man-made island that was developed in response to a concept by Vejle Municipality to revitalise the harbour area, introducing important new residential components into a traditionally industrial environment. For those approaching from Vejle's main urban axis, the building appears as the focal point, surrounded by water and with the Vejle Fjord Bridge in the background. The concrete and cobblestone surfaces of the expansive plaza in front of the building are echoed in the design of Günther Vogt's jetty, while the cylindrical forms and distinctive brickwork of Fjordenhus nod to the historical harbour typologies of warehouses and silos. Set against the backdrop of the fjord, the building itself breaks the smooth plane of the water.

BUILDING

Accessible by footbridge, the twenty-eight-metre-high building is formed by four intersecting cylinders with brick facades from which ellipsoidal negative spaces were removed to create complex curved forms and arched windows. The varying floor plans of the different levels are organised around circles and ellipses, with specially designed furniture and lights, and are connected by spiral staircases and round vestibules. The double-height ground floor, which is open to the public, is permeated by the fjord and contains two aqueous zones with site-specific artworks by Olafur Eliasson. The KIRK KAPITAL offices occupy the upper three floors. Perched atop the building is a green roof with vegetation and solar panels. By night, Fjordenhus is lit from within, resembling a lighthouse.

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BRICKS

Classic Danish brick is the predominant material of the building's inner and outer walls. The brick forms the smallest possible building unit and follows the organic shape of the building. Fjordenhus's intricate brickwork shapes visitors' impression of the building as they approach. From afar, the building's surface seems orderly, but upon closer inspection, the different shapes and slightly irregular staggering of the bricks' depth reveals a lively, organic surface. The brickwork incorporates fifteen different tones of unglazed brick; additional colours of glazed bricks are integrated into the carved-out sections to produce colour fades – green from the bottom and blue from the top – that reflect the water and sky. In the stairwell, scattered silver bricks reflect the sunlight shining in from above. The bricks function not only aesthetically, but also technically: hollow ventilation bricks are placed throughout the walls to modulate both sound and temperature. Every corner, niche, and arc required an individual brick-laying solution; each brick was specially fit into the complex curvature of the concrete walls, the overall brickwork lying flush with the curved steel frames and glass elements of the facade.

FLOORS & CEILINGS

The floors and ceilings of Fjordenhus are formed by white concrete slabs, creating spaces 3.2 metres in height on each level. They conceal the distribution of technical infrastructure such as the heating and cooling systems. The grid pattern of cut-out negative circular volumes in the ceiling reduces the overall weight of the ceiling. These hollows also serve to hold light fixtures and modulate the acoustics of the space. Pietra Piasentina stone was used to cover all the floors. Unlike classic granite stones, Pietra Piasentina can only be found in boulders quarried from the hills of Friuli, Italy.

WINDOWS & DOORS

The double-curved, 3D-formed windows precisely follow the geometry of Fjordenhus. Steel frames span several floors of the building, while the window voids form the main element of the facade. In some areas, rotating doors were introduced to accommodate the geometrical challenges of the building's overall shape. All of the doors and windows are tilted; by design, the walls contain no right angles.

CARPETS

The kilim carpets, each with a diameter of 9.4 metres and placed in the centres of the drums, were handwoven in Varanasi, India. Looms were custom-built so the carpets could be woven seamlessly, and each carpet comes in a different monochrome colour. The smaller, elliptical entrance rooms linking the stairwells to the main office spaces are fitted with hand-tufted carpets. All the carpets have been deliberately designed to be sound-absorbant.

FURNITURE

The office spaces on the building's first, second, and third floors feature several custom-made furniture pieces designed by Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson. Wood was introduced as the dominant material for the additional built-in cabinets, bathrooms, kitchens, and staircases in the private spaces.

Fjordenhus family table

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated aluminium

75 x 704 x 200 cm

Fjordenhus conference table

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated aluminium

75 x 525 x 210 cm

Fjordenhus meeting table

Bent oak, safety glass, powder-coated aluminium, padded and fabric-covered aluminium

77 x 225 x 155 cm

Fjordenhus canteen table

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated aluminium

Height 75 cm, diameter 240 cm

Fjordenhus lounge table

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel

Height 35cm, diameter 132 cm

Fjordenhus executive desk

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel

75 x 274 x 164 cm

Fjordenhus working station L

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel, padded and fabric-covered aluminium

Height 67 cm (max. 120 cm), diameter 240 cm

Fjordenhus working station S

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel, padded and fabric-covered aluminium

Height 67 cm (max. 120 cm), diameter 190 cm

Fjordenhus O-shelf L

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel and aluminium, acoustic-foam- and fabric-covered plywood

Height 101 cm, diameter 108 cm

Fjordenhus O-shelf S

Oak veneer, laquer, powder-coated steel, steel

Height 47 cm, diameter 40 cm

LIGHTING

The lighting for the building has been custom-designed by Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson. Some fixtures are freestanding, others imbedded in the structure. All of the fixtures throughout Fjordenhus are powered by LED bulbs, and the freestanding lamps in particular have been created using handblown glass in six different colours.

Fjordenhus floor lamp (open) (22 pcs. total)

Handblown coloured-glass lamp shade, brass framework, brass cooling body with LED, textile cable

172 x 57 x 53 cm

Fjordenhus floor lamp (closed) (21 pcs. total)

Handblown coloured-glass lamp shade, brass framework, brass cooling body with LED, textile cable

208 x 57 x 53 cm

Fjordenhus table lamp (open) (65 pcs. total)

Handblown coloured-glass lamp shade, brass framework, brass cooling body with LED, textile cable

53 x 26 x 20 cm

Fjordenhus mezzanine lamp (9 pcs. total)

Glass ring, powder-coated stainless-steel framework, reflector, LED

Height 79 cm, diameter 61 cm

ARTWORKS

The various spaces throughout Fjordenhus contain unique artworks by Olafur Eliasson. These installations span the publically-accessible water spaces and ground floor of Fjordenhus, as well as the other floors within. Fjordhvirvel, a central piece in this body of artworks, draws in the viewer while also drawing attention to the water and weather that encircle Fjordenhus. The spheres of Undervandsforventning and Den indre himmel visually link the lower and upper spaces and create a formal dialogue between the curvature of the building, the daily cycles of the fjord, and the arc of the sun's path across the sky. The same is true for the light works Fjordreflektor, Fjordenhus meridian, and Cirkelspejl, which emphasise an interplay of light and surface. These pieces, enmeshed with the architecture, further the synthesis of water and light in Fjordenhus, a total work of art.

Fjordreflektor (Fjord reflector), 2018

Materials: projector

Dimensions variable

An enclosed circular space is open to the water of the fjord, onto which a powerful spotlight shines down from the ceiling. Reflecting from the waves on the water's surface, the light casts a shifting, shimmering pattern onto the space's concrete ceiling – a continuously changing drawing produced by the dynamic interplay of light, water, and wind.

Undervandsforventning (Underwater expectation), 2018

Materials: stainless steel, spotlights

Height 350 cm, diameter 320 cm

The waters of the fjord flow through a semi-enclosed space at the bottom of one of Fjordenhus's circular drums. Half-visible just beneath the surface of the water is a sphere composed of six intersecting circular steel planes with a lit dodecahedral void at the core.

Fjordenhus meridian (Fjord house meridian), 2018

Materials: brass, LEDs

Diameter 260 cm, depth 100 cm

A sculpture formed by three luminous, intersecting brass rings is suspended from the ceiling of Fjordenhus's entry foyer. The rings' inner-facing surfaces are made of white acrylic glass and brightly lit from within, illuminating both the structure itself and its surroundings.

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Cirkelspejl (Circle mirror), 2018

Materials: aluminium, mirror, brass, LEDs, in three parts

Height 85 cm, diameter 204 cm

This sculpture comprises three identical forms installed on the ceilings of the three vestibules that lead out of the entry foyer. In each part, a luminous ring appears to pass through the surface of a mirror, uniting actual and virtual space. The sides of the ring are made from brass; its inner- and outer-facing surfaces are brightly illuminated from within. The ring is, in fact, an illusion composed by a half-ring form and its reflection in the mirror.

Fjordhvirvel (Fjord vortex), 2018

Materials: stainless steel, coloured glass (blue, green), LEDs

Height 468 cm, diameter 700 cm

Coiling tubes of stainless steel produce a dynamic, vortex-like form that inhabits one of Fjordenhus's ground-floor foyers. Within this complex, swirling lattice are suspended numerous triangular panes of handblown glass in shades of blue and green. Brilliant light shines out from within the work, filling the surrounding space with an intricate pattern of shadow and coloured light. The diameter at the top of the vortex is seven metres; it descends to a point above visitors' heads.

Den indre himmel (The inner sky), 2018

Materials: stainless steel, paint (white), aluminium, steel, acrylic, light bulb, heliostat, control units

Various dimensions: sphere and dome: height 275 cm, diameter 353 cm; heliostat: diameter 150 cm

This sphere occupies the oculus of Fjordenhus's boardroom, creating a connection between the interior space and the sky above. The top of the sphere emerges through the roof, where sunlight is directed onto the sphere by a heliostat during the day; artificial light illuminates the work from within during the hours of darkness. Filtered by the artwork, the light casts a complex pattern of shadows onto the room below.

DESIGN TEAM

Artist: Olafur Eliasson

Architectural Design: Sebastian Behmann with Studio Olafur Eliasson

Project Architect: Caspar Teichgräber (2013-2018)

Project Architect: Ben Allen (2012-2013)

Project Architect: Felix Hallwachs (2011-2012)

Project Architect: Ricardo Gomes (2009-2011)

Design and Site Supervision: Reinhard Ostendorf

Design and Production Supervision: Ilja Leda

Geometry: Phillip C. Reiner

Visualisation: Robert Banovic

**Studio Olafur Eliasson Team
for Fjordenhus:**

Nestor Perez Batista

Theis Bloch

Sylvain Brugier

Jan Bünnig

Ruben Bygvraa

Bendix Carabetta

Michelle Chen

Michel David

Heide Deigert

Taylor Dover

Jesper Dyrehauge

Anna Engberg-Pedersen

Emilie Engbirk

Martin Enoch

Sophie Erlund

Noel Fäh

Laura Freiling

Matthias Gerber

Yolandé Gouws

FJORDENHUS

Maria Björk Gunnarsdóttir
Thomas Blumtritt Hanisch
Jennifer Hauger
Frank Haugwitz
Friedrich Herz
Erik Huber
Jöran Imholze
Holger Jenal
Ruben Jodar
Lisa Jugert
Roger Kaiser
Camilla Kragelund
Inga Krieger
Al Laufeld
Gianna Ledermann
Sharron Lee
Meng Li
Luca Longagnani
Lars Lubnau
Julia Lutz
Margaret Lutz
Riccardo Mariano

Elizabeth McTernan
Jan Mennicke
Andreas Meyer
Niel Meyer
Daniel Mock
Anders Hellsten Nissen
Marina Pedrazzini
Marc Paetzold
Francisco Regalado
Miranda Robbins
Bettina Roeder
Kerstin Schmidt
Vajra Spook
Tobias Tavella
Myriam Thomas
Lisa Tiedje
Christian Uchtmann
Michael Waldrep
Matt Willard
Alexander Zerning
Linda Zhang

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Manager: Flemming Hoff Jakobsen, Hundsbæk & Henriksen A/S
Construction Manager: Jørn Andreasen, Hundsbæk & Henriksen A/S

CONSULTANTS

Technical Supervision: Hundsbæk & Henriksen A/S
Engineering: Cowi A/S
Environmental Engineering: Transsolar Energietechnik GmbH
Consulting Engineering: ArtEngineering GmbH
Acoustic Engineering: Gade & Mortensen Akustik A/S
Fire Counseling: Hundsbæk & Henriksen A/S
Safety: Eggensen Miljø & Sikkerhed APS

CONTRACTORS

General Contractor: Jorton A/S
Pit, Plaza, and Jetty: Per Aarsleff A/S
Facade and Stairs: Waagner-Biro Stahlbau AG
Stone Floors: Top Granito SRL
Bricks: Petersen Tegl A/S
Custom Bricks: Neue Ziegel-Manufaktur Glindow UG
Carpenters: Jakon A/S and Gribskov Inventarsnedkeri A/S
Curtains: Kvadrat A/S and Rudloff's Raumausrüstung
Carpets: Kinnasand GmbH and Neumann GmbH Bodenbeläge
Custom Metal Works: Jens Lauritsens Eftf. ApS
Custom Lighting: Lichtbau
Furniture: Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson
Lamps: Olafur Eliasson and Studio Olafur Eliasson

Fjordenhus has been an exciting opportunity for us to bring years of research in diverse fields – urban space, light conditions, nature, physical movement, how we use our senses – together in one project that truly melds artistic and architectural vision.

In the design team, we experimented from early on with how to create an organic building that would respond to the ebb and flow of the tides, to the shimmering surface of the fjord, and to the ephemeral qualities of daylight, changing at different times of the day and of the year.

Fundamental to the concept of Fjordenhus is the notion that there is no one ideal position from which to view the building. As you move around and through the structure, your perception of space changes continuously, constantly defined and redefined by your movement. It is the time it takes you to pass into or through the building that defines your experience of space. The level floor grounds you, but at the same time, the walls curve, lean in or out, and perpetuate a sense of movement. Every line seems negotiable, depending on where you are – your movement makes the building soft; it gives you agency.

Another key element of this project was to create the most immediate relation between a building and its environment. The outer walls, which are normally seen as a membrane between inside and outside, are spaces in Fjordenhus – sometimes the spaces are part of the interior and other times they open to the surroundings as balconies. And there is a porosity to the building: while it stands directly in the water, which permeates parts of the ground floor, the building is shot through with many different openings that frame views of the fjord and the natural elements, which makes the presence of nature felt.

More relational than monumental, Fjordenhus is co-created by its shifting fjord context as well as by the people experiencing it. It makes you conscious of your own presence – conscious not only that you are seeing the building, but that the building is also seeing you.

– Olafur Eliasson, artist

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When the Kirk Johansen family asked us to design their new headquarters we embraced the challenge to define a building right at the heart of what matters most to Vejle: the fjord. We planned the building as a central element of the harbour, a structure set between the city and the water. We wanted to create a strong connection to this setting, whether it was seen from the city centre or from the surrounding hills, whether from Vejle Fjord Bridge or from boats entering the harbour.

The building honours its unique setting in a direct, radical way. Instead of just being beside the water, it is placed directly in the water. Visitors can engage with all of the site's natural elements – water, light, wind, sound. For those approaching from Vejle's main urban axis, the building appears as the focal point, surrounded by water and with the spectacular bridge in the background. Following the harbour edge, they reach a generously proportioned plaza that separates the building on one side from new apartment blocks on the other. Set against the backdrop of the fjord, the building itself breaks the smooth plane of the water.

The basic form of Kirk Kapital's headquarters was inspired by the harbour's surrounding architecture. We carved precise volumes out of the building's massive brick cylinders, subtracting the interior space out of the overall volume. These negative volumes form the elliptical cuts in the facade and act as independent spaces. The windows, normally seen as separating inside from outside, are a singular design feature of Fjordenhus. The vertical spaces within these soaring carved voids connect sky to water.

Designing a structure of this scale and purpose was like developing characters in a play or novel; we considered the relation of the elements to each other, the setting, the overall story we wanted to tell. We carefully balanced the characters. So many elements interact with each other here, from Olafur Eliasson's artworks to the views out over the fjord, from the bricks themselves to the luminous, metal-cast stairwells; from the lighting and furnishings to the harbour setting. Now it is Fjordenhus itself that will carry the narrative into the future.

– Sebastian Behmann, architect

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