PAN-cabins:

Info about the project

Text by Architect & professor Espen Surnevik - Oslo – Norway

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Client: PAN-tretopphytter (PAN treetop-cabins) Founders Kristian Rostad & Christine Mowinckel
Architect: Espen Surnevik – professor at The Oslo School of Architecture
Collaborating structural engineer: Finn-Erik Nilsen

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Contractor woodwork: Bygg- og Tømrermester Terje Nymoen AS
Contractor steelwork. ARMEC AS

Project type:
The project is cabins which can be rented from www.panhytter.no

Location:
The eastern part of Norway, close to the Swedish border, two hours driving north of Oslo.

Gjesåsen (place) – Åsnes (local district) – Hedmark (district) – Norway

Site:
Large forest-property owned by the Clients, as part of the huge forest-area called "Finnskogen" (Finlandian-forests) in Norway.

Project size:
There are built two PAN-cabins based on the same drawings but customized to fit specific to the local site and topography. Client considers building two more cabins.

Cabins size:
Cabins are approximately 40 square meters inside, and have a free height inside of 5,4m, free length inside of 8,4m, and a free width inside 3,7m.

Cabins: functions:
There is a mezzanine with a double bed, and there is possibility for six sleeping places in total. Extra sleeping places is provided by beds that are integrated into the inner walls, and which can be tilted out when needed. The cabins are supported with a complete bathroom with water-toilet and shower. There is a small kitchen and a fireplace. The cabins are full insulated and have electrical heating in all the wood floors.

Cabins materials:
The cabins have a main structure made of steel which are suspended 6m into the bedrock in order to take up all wind loads on the cabins. The cladding is mainly in black oxidized zinc and black steel. There are used a large number of different steel-dimensions and steel-qualities in order to the required need on each and every detail. Interior are made manly of wood with highly precision crafted details of pine-wood. Textiles are made of local 100% wool.

About Architect Espen Surnevik:

Espen Surnevik (1973) is a Norwegian contemporary Architect having his own architectural practice in Oslo but working with projects in a wide range and geographical area. Besides his practice he is also a teaching professor at the Oslo School of Architecture.

Espen Surnevik`s works stands in the Norwegian regional tradition, with a belief that site and culture provides a evident Architectural potential to a project either it should be located in the Sahara ore in the mountains of Andes. Espen Surnevik operates in a field where he views Architecture as a discipline of Art which have the ability to reach out to the emotional and intuitive feeling of man.

Based on the regional aspect, Espen Surnevik`s approach is not based on a style, but in a belief that every situation is unique, and therefore can create a new answer based on phenomenology. The projects local history, the local nature, the local climate, and the local materials becomes, in combination with the clients will and program, the inspirational force that the Architectonic approach runs out from.

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Other works by Architect Espen Surnevik:

Espen Surnevik is having a small practice where he draws all projects and details himself. Therefore, the portfolio over built projects are few, but intended to be focused, with full attention trough the planning- and buildingperiod.

Våler Church - He`s main work are, so far, Våler Church (2011-2015) which deals with the Christian theme of resurrection, as the Church where to replace a old Church that got lost in fire (2009). Among four Architectural prizes, Våler Church have received the Norwegian Governmental Award of Architecture in 2016 (Statens Byggeskikkpris 2016).

Vacationhouse - From 2013-2017 Espen Surnevik worked on a vacationhouse-project on the vest-coast of Norway facing the North-sea. This project deals with a labyrinthic free plan that structures the life inside the house, and which investigates how the different rooms relates to the long-distance views, towards the sea, and the short distance views inwards. to characteristic geological formations at the site.

Porsgrunn Church - From 2015- Espen Surnevik has been overall focused on the commission to build the new main Church in the Norwegian city of Porsgrunn. The project is planned, and now under construction, cladded in white porcelain-tiles on the inside and outside. Plans, facades and sections are based on strict geometrical, and structural, geometries that interact together to form construction, and investigating the play of daylight sliding in between the different volumes. The project will be finished in the autumn 2019.

All Projects can be viewed in photos and drawings on Espen Surnevik`s web-page: www.espensurnevik.no

PAN-cabins thoughts of concept:

When the PAN-Clients asked me to develop the PAN-project in their forest, I had to use a long time to reflect on the task, theme and commission. There was a big will to try to develop something unique for the forest that could relate to the beautiful landscape and its colours, from the rocks to the small plants and big trees.

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Tove Jansson - The particular history of the area, where people from Finland immigrated in the sixteenth century and settled, has created a pan-Nordic culture with mixed traditions that are very strong and interesting. This aspect lead to dive into the Finish artist, and writer, Tove Janssons work. Janssons work is most famous for her creation of the Mu'mins, but her texts and drawings define a whole mythology, I will say, created around the Nordic view on nature and the Finish forests. For Me it represents a genuine feeling of how the Nordic individual relates to the long distances between settlements in rural Scandinavia, the loneliness, the dark winters, and the cold climate. Jansson puts words and illustrations to the illusions that is created inside the mind, of fear and the worm security, that occurs in us all when in contact with the bear elements of the Nordic nature.

Jansson, for me, also deals with the ambiguity between nature and civilisation with here cultivated, and intellectual, buildings placed into mythic natural landscapes. This creates an almost surrealistic relation between the controlled and the unpredictable, what we can create and restrain, and what we must accept as the destiny of nature.

Janssons work became a framework from where the language for the PAN project could be developed.

Example of one of Tove Janssons Illustration where small buildings becomes a part of big questions. A bridge leads to the building and brings the entrance-sequence into a ritualic journey which gives you time to reflect.

The firetowers - The Clients vision was to create a project high up over the ground, to create a playful relation to the forest, and to create a positive enclosed feeling of security as a contrast to the dark nights in the forest. In order to do this the project needed a construction that not only could be pragmatic but had to be evident to the idea and to the forest. I worked on finding some kind of structural idea that had some relation, ore tradition, to the forest and the context.
In the cold forest-belt, that surrounds the northern hemisphere, there is represented an Architectural typology, that can be found in Scandinavia, in Russia, and in North-America. It's the firetowers that are built to overlook the huge forests in search of smoke and fire in the dry seasons.

Example of firetower and how seasons sets expressions on the structure.

These firetowers forms structures that can be viewed as interesting intellectual element put in as a contrast to nature and the forests. Almost as an Art-installation placed out in the landscape. At the same time these optimal constructive structures also express the laws of nature (physicks) through its optimal representation of construction. In this sense the surrounding nature and the man-made firetowers find a kind of interesting relation and dialogue.

The constructive language from the firetowers gave the Architectural ingrediencies to create a constructive identity for the PAN-cabins.

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The A-frame lodge - I was in search of structural form for the cabins. Something that was not just a free and good-looking shape, but a volumetry that had a type of primal clarity and constructive significance. As routed in my work on Churches I wanted the small-scale cabins to give some monumental, and existential, experiences to the people that should live there. Another typology came into my mind, the A-frame lodge, well known from USA and Canada. This primal shape had the potential of being both intimate, in its width, and monumental in its height. At the same time, it represented something basic, almost like an archetype that have always been around as an idea since Pythagoras described the maths for the triangular shape.

Example of A-frame lodge in the forest-context

The triangular form of the cabin was optimal to create a direct visual and constructive relation between the cabin and the bearing steel-structure underneath. The triangular also provided the possibility to introduce a mezzanine in the middle of the cabins. The mezzanine encourages Us to the joyful experience of prepositions in Architecture as our bodies moves through a building. (over, under, besides, behind, in front of, trough etc.) This playful sequences are also an important theme for the projects entrance, which starts by leaving the forest by entering up trough a spiral stair that leads over a bridge and in to the cabins.

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The materials – The materials used in the project seeks to be a contrast to the tactility of the forest. Rather than building the project in wood, that you find directly in nature, its used different types of ennobled metals which don't occur in nature in a homogenic and refined way. The project has investigated how to produce black matt surfaces that could have an extreme degree of light absorption. This became interesting to get the expressive structures not to stand out from the forest in colour, but rather blend in with the darkness of the threes when viewed on long distances. The use of homogeneous metal surfaces gives the cabins a distinct character which is important to underline the cabins as an intellectual, manmade, object put into nature.

The outer roof-cladding are made of black oxidised zinc-panels, shaped as the surface of pine-cones found in the forest.

On the inside natures own materials are used to provide an intimate and warm atmosphere. Floors and walls are cladded with pine-wood. Textiles in pure wool are selected with colours found in the forests.

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I will thank my devoted Client and all collaborating engineers and craftsmen that have been working together with me on realizing this project.

espen surnevik