

format met with Rasmus and Knud Holscher for a chat to mark the 40 year courtship between d line and the Holscher family.

from the hallowed halls of oxford

It's 1962, The Everly Brothers are cryin' in the rain, Elvis can't help falling in love, and 32 year old Knud Helmuth Holscher is sat at his desk in Oxford. With his then partner „needs-no-introduction“ Arne Jacobsen, Knud is responsible for the Bernard Sunley building to be completed in 1968 and later the Mary Sunley and Alan Bullock buildings at the northern edge of the main quadrant of St. Catherine's College in Oxford, The City of Dreaming Spires, famous the world over for its University and place in history. Knud is perusing a stack of brochures, trying to find stuff suitable for the college from a plethora of manufacturers; there's a nice lever handle there, a perfectly decent

outlet somewhere else and all from different companies, and it strikes him, "Wouldn't it be great if there was just one system?!" And along comes Peter Thorley – „By all accounts, an amazing human being and true visionary. I knew him from the company called Ramsay, and he and I and a former employee of Arne Jacobsen's, named Alan Bulls, discussed the idea, made some sketches for a new hardware series - intended to include everything that an architect would need for a house in aluminum and named it Modrick. It ended up receiving a British Design Award and within three short years, created a massive turnover. „And I thought, that's amazing! And that is how it all began, really," Knud Holscher recalls.

Following his sojourn in Oxford, Knud Holscher returns to Denmark and is employed by the architectural firm Krohn & Hartvig Rasmussen of which he later becomes partner. One of the owners encourages Knud to enter the competition for Odense University, which he wins. From this day till now, Knud Holscher has attracted international attention and acclaim with products like d line, a series of architectural fittings, the Quinta and Jilly spotlights for the German light fixture manufacturer ERCO, the busstops for AFA JCDecaux in Copenhagen and Aarhus and the lfö sanitary series to name but a few. Many of these designs have become part of everyday life. Knud Holscher may be advanced in years and the last of an iconic

who
Rasmus and Knud Holscher
location
Knud Holscher Design, Copenhagen
writer & photography
Anett Kristensen

school of an architectural generation, populated by stalwarts, the like of Hans Jørgen Wegner, Arne Jacobsen and Poul Kjærholm but the Holscher portfolio speaks for itself and is ever increasing as Rasmus Holscher gets ready to take over the realms and continue and renew his father's legacy and philosophy, which is founded on functional and minimalist design and which has created continuity in d line's product range for more than 30 years. The series now includes five individual product groups all built around the same design philosophy and visual language that, when combined, create a total solution.

holscher + d line

Following the success of the Modrick Series and winning the

University project, Knud Holscher is contacted by one of the original owners of d line and the d line brand, Rolf Petersen, and asked to create a new series in stainless steel and not in aluminum, because the properties of aluminum are such that it wears quickly and hoping that this new series will be earmarked for the University

project - at the time the largest scaled project ever in Denmark; 750 thousand square meters - „As a young architect, you never say no!" Knud explains. Never had he imagined however, that 40 years on, he would still be working with d line. And Knud continues, „I've had a fantastic partnership with d line for four decades with very

few interruptions; we've butted heads a couple of times but more often than not it's gone fantastically well. With very few fluctuations, I must say that it has been a fabulous, wonderful course. I hope - for d line, but certainly for us - it has been a crazy and wonderful process."

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Knud Holscher



„We compliment each other professionally. And if we aren't at each other's throats, it is because we are not ambitious enough. We bring out the best in each other," says Rasmus Holscher.

fact



Knud Helmuth Holscher

Born May 6, 1930 in Rødby, Denmark. Danish architect and industrial designer of international renown.

Architecture

Odense University, Denmark
Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, Denmark
Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain
Copenhagen Airport, Finger B, Denmark
Copenhagen Airport, Domestic Terminal, Denmark

Industrial design

d line, architectural hardware, since 1971
ERCO track lights Quinta, since 1990



one of the many models on display at the Holscher studio in Copenhagen

the Seed baby pram,
designed by Rasmus Holscher



fact



Rasmus Holscher

Born 23 January, 1968 in Usserød, Hørsholm. Danish designer.

Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole
Architect maa, Architecture and
Design, 1994 - 1998
Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole
Architect, Architectura, 1992 - 1998
Architect with Holscher Design
since June 2000

bridging a generation

Knud Holscher retired from Krohn & Hartvig Rasmussen at 65 and established Knud Holscher Design where he was soon joined by his son, designer Rasmus Holscher. Knud has left his mark on the world of architecture and design and it is a mark that Rasmus Holscher is continuing and he will eventually be taking over the running of the design company when Knud Holscher decides to retire. He is however himself not sure when that will be, „When I keel over, Rasmus will take my place. The annoying thing about life is the finality of it,“ Knud admits and he continues, „We have a great mutual respect and understanding.“ They never discuss work off the premises, Rasmus and Knud have long ago decided not to talk shop when they are off the clock, and they don't. „It's important not to get things mixed up,“ Rasmus explains. Albeit, they both agree that that may be easier said than done, it just works for them, always has.

Knud goes on to explain how it is true that everyone looks to him – for now – he's quite sure however that eyes will shift to Rasmus in future. According to Holscher the Younger, „Knud's massive experience and lucidity is indispensable.“ When asked, if they

compliment each other, Rasmus' reply is prompt, „We compliment each other professionally. And if we aren't at each other's throats, it is because we are not ambitious enough. We bring out the best in each other.“

awards, a prince and a bacon slicer

Knud Holscher has a million stories to tell from his life as an artist, an award winning designer and architect and he is frequently invited to chair the jury to assess the work of egressing architects. In discussing these matters, Knud recalls one anecdote in particular; He won another British Design Award for a second series, called Meridian Two and it was presented by none other than Prince Phillip. The award was proffered for his design of a toilet seat, and upon presenting the award, the Prince remarked, "That's a real bacon slicer, that is!"

Both Knud and Rasmus agree that function is every bit as important as design, the many awards they have received for their work is testament to that fact. Among them, the Red Dot Design Award for product design in 2007 for the innovative Ifö Sign Art toilet. The Design Plus Award, The Good Design Award, The Athenaeum, The Prince Eugen Medal, The F-Prize, The Honorary Royal Designer for Industry, The ID Prize. The list of international design prizes and awards, Knud Holscher has received for his work, is impressive and constantly growing and makes him one of the most honoured contemporary Danish architects and designers. Knud has also designed an award for his peers; the ar-d award, which will take place in November 2011 and which will be presented by The Arcitectoral Review for Emerging

Architecture – a competition that d line is again this year principal sponsor of.

toeing d line

Both Rasmus and Knud Holscher will tell you that designing new products is never easy, coming up with novel, viable ideas is challenging. With a partner like d line that Holscher Design has a long-standing relationship with it is sometimes even harder, because of the natural limitations of the expression it presents, having to produce everything in steel. Like in Oulipian writing where you choose specific verbal constraints as a means of triggering ideas, the material – steel – and the possible techniques connect directly to the product's theme and energy. And it echoes the dominant phonemes of the iconic language of design as new elements are merged and renewed.

Knud tells us that several of Rasmus Holscher's newer designs – a collapsable pram and a multi-flexible candlestick - are as complex to draw and produce as say a shower stall for Ifö or a towel rack for d line. At present, Rasmus Holscher and his team of designers are working on a door stop for d line. They call it the Turtle

Stopper. And it's a great challenge, which may come as a surprise, but figuring out the dimensions, and making sure the screws and bolts are invincible is no small task. But it's also the fun bit.

frozen music

We discuss weaknesses and strengths and how they influence their creations.

Knud is keen to express how the inventiveness of some of their employees is absolutely priceless, „Someone will come up with a bunch of ideas but will perhaps not be the best planner, but we need both, it's our strength!“ Knud explains. And he goes on to say, „It is not our desire to be huge, we take pleasure in doing well, designing usable products that make sense. And functionality is an intrinsic part of our design ethic“. Continuing this train of thought, Rasmus Holscher remarks that creating things for the world, is indeed a very serious business. It was Goethe who once said that architecture is frozen music and according to both Rasmus and Knud Holscher it truly is when it's done right and uncompromisingly, but as Knud interjects, „Unfortunately, a lot of architecture isn't frozen music.

I see a lot of ugly designs but beauty is what touches me, and we are indeed living a privileged life. We have the best job in the world!“

an affair to remember

The Holscher d line partnership has indeed been an affair to remember, and one both parties hope it will thrive and flourish in years to come.

We have been talking to Knud and Rasmus Holscher in their domicile at the former Laurids Knudsen's Mechanical Establishment, a six story tall iron and concrete building in outer Nørrebro in Copenhagen. Creative minds cohabitate the domicile; now architects, film makers and photographers enjoy the handsome and impressive dimensions of the place.

It's been two scores or 40 years, Elvis has hung up his blue suede shoes, the balladeers no longer croon as honeyed and Little Stevie Wonder is all grown up, but Holscher's iconic designs have stood the test of time and are indeed frozen music literally perpetuated in stone and steel, for us to look at, admire and be inspired by.



Jens Christian Larsen, associate of Knud Holscher Design



the thermal vacuum jug in plastic and stainless steel, designed by Knud Holscher



still from KHD studio



Rasmus Holscher's free-hand drawing of the Seed baby pram

Knud Holscher Design

– established in 2005 - create products, graphics and strategies in respectful cooperation with their clients.

Knud Holscher's relationship with d line was forged in 1971 and continues to this day.

Holscher Design has been in cooperation with Danish and international clients for close to 40 years.