



Understanding Architecture

jürgensarchitekten is an architecture and design studio based in Munich, Germany. Founded by Natalie Jürgens in 2007, the studio works on small scale, but high-quality, projects in various fields. We spoke to Natalie about her work, her passion and her approach to new clients and projects.

Before founding jürgensarchitekten, Natalie had already worked in the industry for 8 years for high end trade fair exhibitions in the automobile sector, and she tells us she still loves her work!

"If you love what you do, nothing else really matters," she exclaims. "Enthusiasm is contagious!"

An intensive, highly creative and profound work process, mostly with tight time schedules, is the firm's speciality, and one of the most important themes for Natalie and Jürgensarchitekten, due to her previous background, is corporate architecture.

"We have been co-operating with different companies for many years and design not only trade fair stands for them, but also showrooms, special corporate events and even working

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spaces," she explains. "As our job takes often place in the trade fair halls, we are automatically part of pulsating future trends.

"We really get to know our clients with all their facets, and this is, on the one hand absolutely necessary to make this job, and on the other hand our key to success over years.

"For our customers, we stand for creativity and trendsetting design and we pride ourselves on listening to our clients and meeting, and exceeding, their needs. We consider our clients as our most important partners looking for the best solution of our task. The product of the designing process should be the baby of all involved partners, last but not least, the client."

Feedback from clients about Natalie and her team is very positive, and the firm has been described as being 'easy to talk to' regarding customer's wishes. She tells us how she approaches new clients to ensure success, and takes us through her design processes.

"We are not the shining stars in the architectural sky, but real individual human beings which understand human belongings - regardless of which kind of client we deal with (commercial or private).

"Regarding the design approach, we work very much 'hands-on', meaning sketching, modelling, testing materials, collecting images, and even writing. During the process, we aim to change the perspective and try to see the project from a completely different point of view in order to increase the design experience.

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So how does Natalie continue to come up with innovative solutions and maintain her success as an award-winning architect? She takes us through her thought processes when it comes to finding inspiration.

"This is something I often think about," laughs Natalie. "As the head of jürgensarchitekten, I enjoy re-inventing and re-thinking my company from time to time.

"Obviously, this is a typical and necessary quality of an entrepreneur, but for me, it is an inspiring and creative process that comes naturally and keeps me (and the company) alive. I think it is essential to remain open-minded towards other fields other than architecture."

jürgensarchitekten has built up a large network of contemporaries, consisting of experts all over Europe in many different domains, such as special-effects graphics, lighting, visual merchandising, arts, films and media, urban development and logistics.

"Depending on the task we are presented with, we can build up a team of experts quickly and easily, all of whom are inspiring and will push one another forward."

Most successful project

One of Natalie's most successful projects recently was the latest trade fair design for her long-term client, Pfeleiderer, which took place in January of this year. She tells us more about the project and what she and the team learnt from it.

"It was a big success, not regarding awards or publications, but concerning the harmony between client and the stand as the design perfectly represented the company's range and the way they see themselves," explains Natalie.

"We developed a huge 3D relief consisting of a kind of puzzle, with parts which interlock one to each other. It was like a big Tetris game for adults that had been frozen as a certain point in time.



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"We had single boxes filled with the Pfleiderer products: coated and uncoated chipboards, high pressure laminates (HPL) in more than 300 different decors, chipboards for special uses like fire protection or light weight issues etc., and this huge range of products was organized in a logical and clearly arranged way through the boxes."

The Pfleiderer team loved the stand immediately and gave Jürgensarchitekten the feedback that the stand was the perfect tool to work with.

"At a glance, they could find the product they were looking for - but at the same time, and in the same space, the amazing artwork material collages intrigue those looking and they experience something new. The boxes told the Pfleiderer story like a comic strip.

"What did we learn from this?" ask Natalie. "Learning for us never ends; every project turns out with great and, sometimes, surprising experiences."

Recently jürgensarchitekten were selected as one of the Architecture Top 50 by BUILD magazine. Natalie tells us how delighted she was to receive such an accolade and what this means for her firm.

"After 10 years of creative work, we are incredibly proud to be chosen! As Jürgensarchitekten is a small studio, it was a big surprise to be elected by a global acting magazine and we appreciate very much that BUILD considers also some 'Davids' and not only 'Goliaths' in its nominations.

"Even more for our clients than for us, this is a strong sign for the individual way of working we pursue. When we win awards or get other positive feedbacks, the client can feel proud, too, because he feels like an important part of the process and in fact also is."

So what does the future hold for the architecture industry? And for Natalie and her dedicated team?

"I observe the trends on the trade fairs, and surprisingly, most of them endure several years.

"Still one of the strongest themes for the last few years, and probably for the next years and decades, will remain sustainability. But the way people deal with it, becomes more playful and joyful. Sustainability has become not only a lifestyle, but an omnipresent necessity, which can release power and creativity.

"I am for example fascinated by radical concepts like creating neutral spaces which can be occupied and utilised by completely different uses and users - depending on the demands of the situation. For me, such concepts reflect the tasks we are prompted to solve in the changing world we are living. Transferring these thoughts onto my work, I love to deal with existing structures. Even regarding trade fair design, which seems to be an enormous battle of materials, we design the stand always in terms of re-using it and in surprisingly new ways - that's the art about it!"

Corporate architecture will stay the firm's special competence, and it is now working on widening its activities towards more permanent installations and retail design. Both fields require high end design combined with tough time schedules, which is fortunately one of Natalie's, and her firms', core capabilities.





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