

Architectural Excellence in Sustainable Design

Like many of its peers, Christian von Düring Architectes has embraced a clean, contemporary architectural style that has seen the firm thrive in recent years. Following Christian von Düring Architectes' success in the 2019 Design and Build programme, where they were recognised with the Excellence in Family Housing Design & Build Award (Bridge House), we spoke with Christian von Düring to find out more about his work and design ethos.

Image credit: Thomas Jantscher

Swiss architecture has always leaned towards a sort of experimental vibe: preferring to explore the balance between form and function, of fine lines and minimalism. Where others have flourished under opulent inspirations, many of their Swiss peers have veered in another direction entirely, seeing enduring success through more contemplative work that pushes the boundaries of shape, form, colour and architectural expression. This is firmly where Christian von Düring Architectes resides.



With a body of work that encompasses numerous sub-sectors of all sizes – like furniture, construction, urban design, landscape design, lighting and jewellery – it is clear that Christian's singular expertise seems eager to carry over into other jurisdictions. Eager to develop, to improve, to learn.... To simply, be better. This mindset is clear to see throughout the firm's portfolio, as Christian explains in more detail. "Christian von Düring Architectes works on all types of projects, to all types of scales. From product design, to city planning and landscaping. We now include participatory design processes in order to work with housing cooperatives and value the challenges presented by social housing."

Yet, Christian's speciality lies, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the sustainability space. "My speciality is to include sustainability consulting with all our projects. I am an EPFL architect (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) and am just finishing a Masters in Energy and Sustainability Engineering (HES-SO). I started my career as an architect with building renovations and developed my experience in private residences because private clients were the only people really interested in energy savings. Now, I'm focusing on housing cooperatives, which combines social collective housing with real sustainable objectives."

Ultimately, this ability to cater to their client's needs has differentiated the firm from a wealth of competition, as Christian takes a moment to discuss. "We listen to our clients and gather information to come up with a project that both resolves and anticipates all of their issues in a high-end, integrated and

uncluttered aesthetic. For example, the Bridge House has its peculiar shape in order to integrate a large program on a relatively narrow plot, while maintaining usable outdoor surfaces. A few years after it was finished, the clients said that they are still discovering aspects of my designs that have anticipated their way of living."

This diligent take on client-centricity has proven to be a prominent driving factor in the firm's growth as they gain traction through word of mouth, recommendations, testimonials and social media. On top of this, Christian also works frequently with state bodies: "I also work for the City and State of Geneva through competitions, like a public plaza for the city of Geneva that should be finished next year."

In his closing comments, Christian offers some insight into the firm's composition and how it aids their approach to customer service. "As I'm a relatively small firm in order to be available for all of my clients, I only have one partner who used to be a student of mine and, like me, specialises in sustainable design." This, ultimately, has proven to be the secret to their success and will remain a driving force for the firm in the years to come.

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