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## Space to grow

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# SPACE TO GROW E

Dutch-born designer **ROSAN BOSCH** is a master of interior design with strong opinions about how to improve the way we work, learn and play, as HKDI students discovered when she led an innovative workshop in Hong Kong.

*DANIEL JEFFREYS reports.*

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osan Bosch has sharp eyes. As she moved among students at HKDI to examine their designs for new meeting spaces her irises dilated to signal that she was forming a question, one that would cut to the issue's core.

"Why have you put the seating here?" she asked, pointing at one team's design on a computer screen. "Is that going to create the best flow?"

Bosch was at HKDI to hold a five-day workshop at which students from the disciplines of design, architecture and landscape architecture gathered to develop ideas, concepts, design proposals and models for new meeting places at HKDI. The students worked together in small teams to develop design proposals that would attract students from across disciplines to meet, interact and work together more freely. Flow was the key to success.

"A good design has points of entry and exit," said Bosch as she examined a model with three levels of white space. "People need to feel

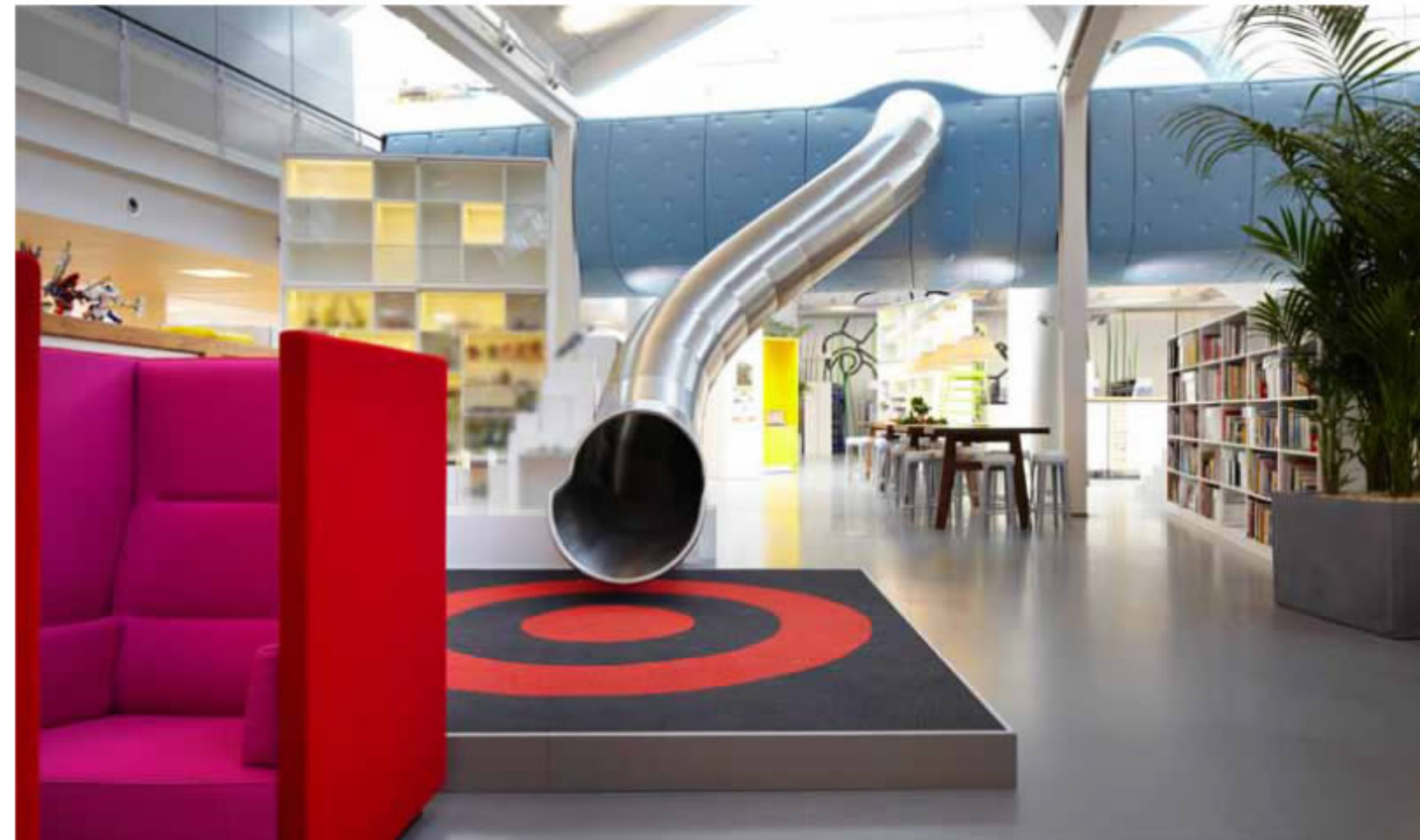
the meeting space is inviting but not constricting."

Bosch is well qualified to give advice. Since 2011 she has run the Rosan Bosch Studio in Copenhagen, where she has continued the groundbreaking work she did at Bosch & Fjord from 2001 until the launch of her own-name company. Her philosophy is that the "physical environment makes a difference to the way we act in the world." This led her to create designs that are active exercises in social change, designed to promote productivity, learning and social interaction.

"When we do a design we focus on how the end-user wants to grow within the space," she says. "This means the design has to generate positive responses. A design for a company needs elements that encourage creativity while a design for a hospital needs features that promote wellness."

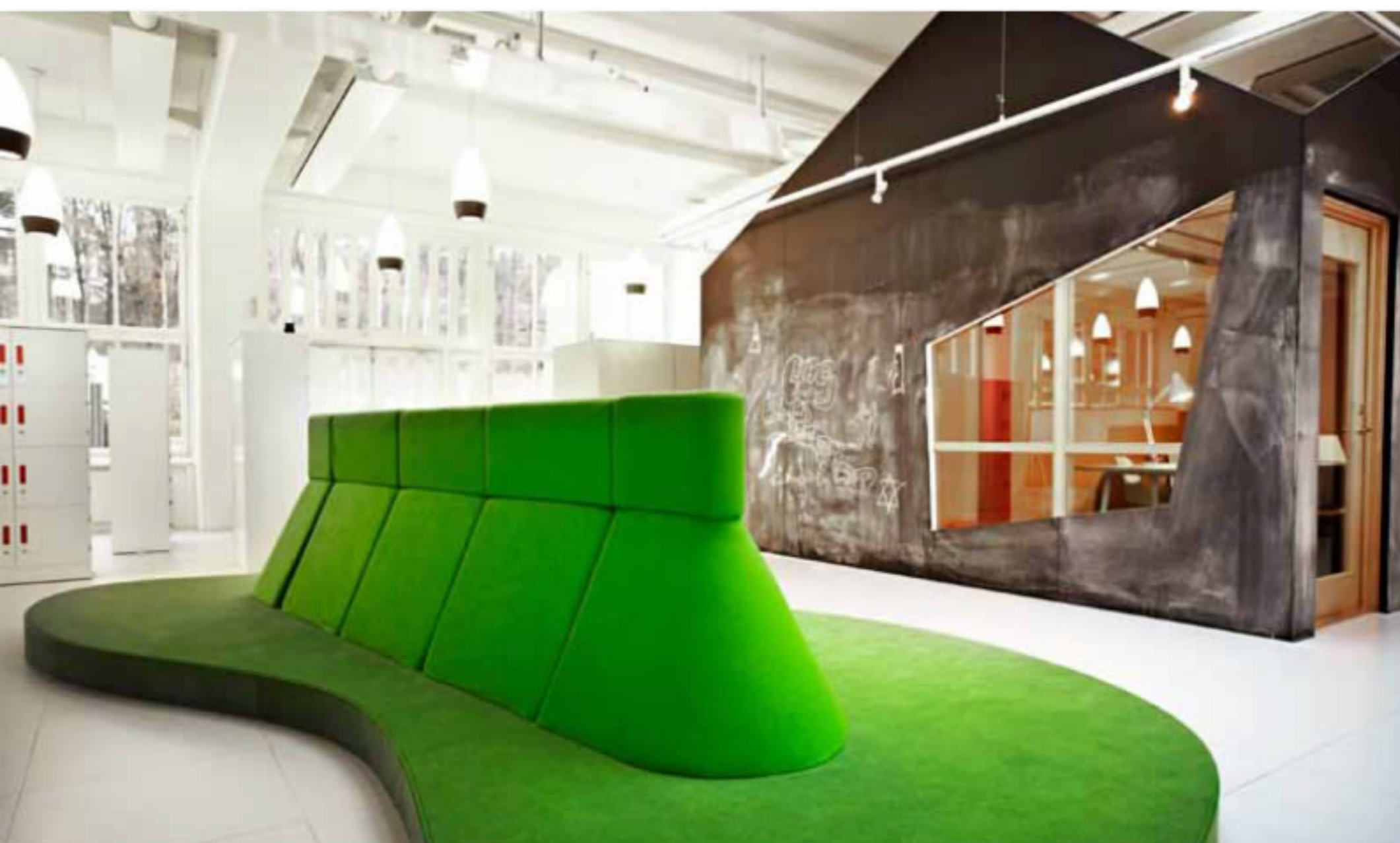
This approach with its focus on human outcomes rather than issues like space efficiency has led Bosch to produce prize-winning design solutions for many major companies. One of her most notable projects was for Lego, the toy company, which commissioned Bosch to create a new working environment for its development team. The result was wallpaper with giant blades of grass, tables with tiny bonsai gardens and a slide connecting two floors.

"We needed to create an environment in which the designers could enter a child's fantasy world,"



ALL IMAGES ROSAN BOSCH/UTD

ABOVE ROSAN BOSCH



says Bosch. "The outcome was a work area that emphasises fun, playfulness and creativity, which supports the playful character of their work."

The key features of Bosch's design were an oversize seating area with a light blue colour that transformed a dowdy walkway into a light, fluffy cloud. The cloud twists and turns and unfolds to form sofas, sitting podiums and the slide. The giant blades of grass with an oversize Lego man create a striking contrast with the bonsai gardens that are populated with tiny Lego people.

"We wanted to challenge the designers' sense of scale and make them question who is big, and who is small," says Bosch. "We needed the environment to be a place where the designers' imagination could be unleashed."

Creating positive energy is a key goal of Bosch's work. She sees design as "a powerful tool for change." This approach was very visible in school template she created in Stockholm, Sweden for the Vittra free-school organisation, which promotes individual, experience-based learning.

Before she began work on the Vittra Telefonplan in Hågersten, Bosch had already rejected the classic classroom setup with desks and chairs, seeing it as a design solution from a previous century, when children did not have laptops but sat rigid as a teacher scraped chalk across a blackboard.

She replaced all that with a giant iceberg, a cinema, and room for relaxation and recreation that now accommodates many different types of learning. Children can study independently on their laptops as they sit on one of Bosch's "soft islands". If they need to work with other students on a project,

« WE WANTED TO CHALLENGE THE DESIGNERS' SENSE OF SCALE. »

they congregate in spaces like a tiny house called "the village" for group work or the more open "organic conversation furniture".

Jannie Jeppesen, the principal of Vittra Telefonplan writes on the school's website that the design is intended to stimulate "children's curiosity and creativity" and offer them opportunities for both collaborative and independent time.


The open nature of the campus and Bosch's unusual furniture arrangements reflect the school's philosophy that "children play and learn on the basis of their needs, curiosity, and inclination," which is an accurate reflection of how people of any age learn outside of formal educational environments.

"The principles of the Vittra School revolve around the breakdown of physical and metaphorical divisions as a fundamental step to promoting intellectual curiosity, self-confidence, and communally responsible behaviour," reported Architizer in reviewing the school. "Spaces are only loosely defined by permeable borders and large, abstract landmarks."

Vittra Telefonplan deliberately uses its interior design as a means of developing the school and its educational principles, which reflect Bosch's belief that design has a defining impact on the way people live their lives.

"We should approach every design project as an opportunity to affect the way people live," says Bosch. "Designers have too often focused on the way something looks rather than on what it does to the people who use it or encounter it everyday. For me the function of design is to make people's lives better."

In the HKDI workshop Bosch emphasised this point in every conversation she had with students, especially those who had created meeting places that were too abstract or played too little attention to how much interaction their spaces would create.

"The way we create spaces and the manner in which we fill them has an impact on our moods, our productivity and the quality of our relationships with other people," she says. "That's why good design is so important." 

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