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Studio Showcase - Way Studio

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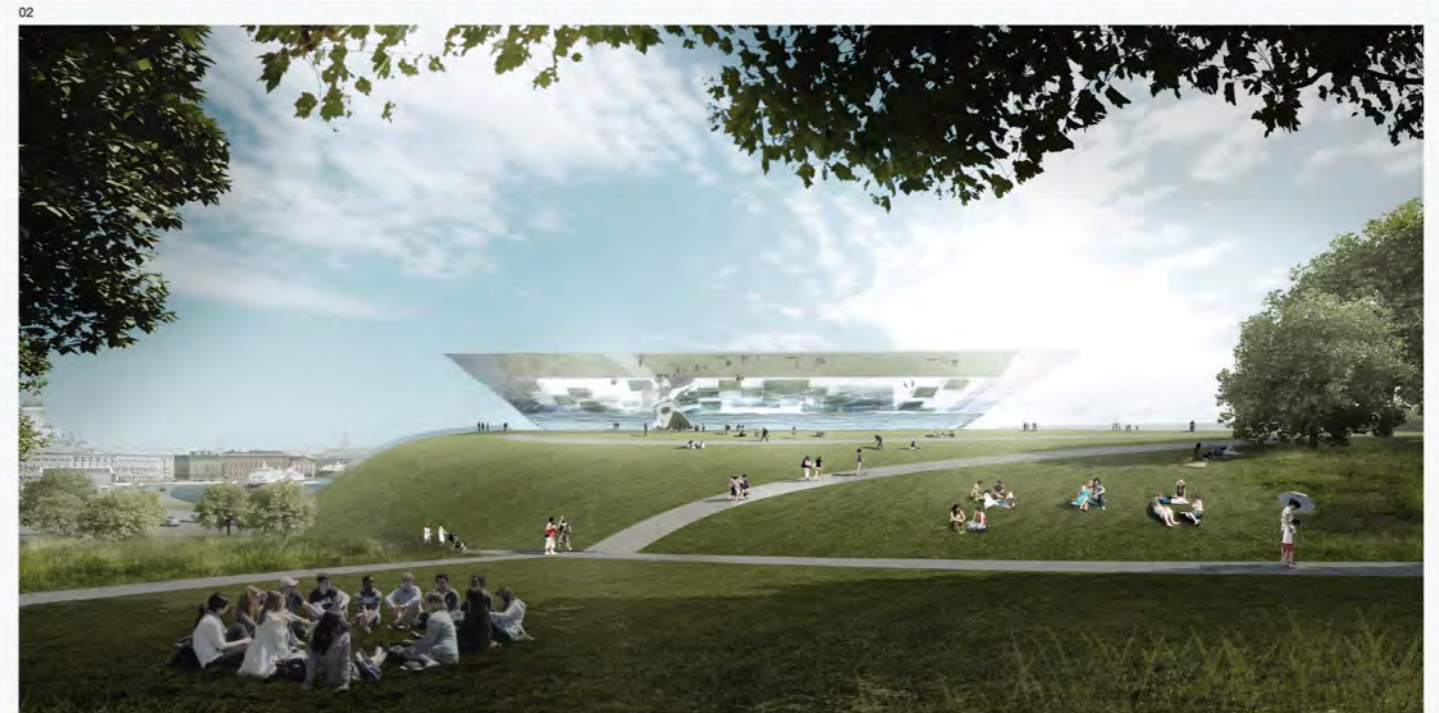
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WAY STUDIO

Beijing, China
www.way-studio.com

Way Studio is an innovative architecture and design studio with a focus on coalescing architecture with art and technology. It has focused on discovering new possibilities through cross-disciplinary collaborations. Its scope of work covers urban planning, cultural projects such as galleries, museums and opera houses, mixed-use buildings, architectural renovations, residential projects, exhibitions and installation designs. Its collaboration with other disciplines “results in an adaptive, flexible approach and methodology in our work”.

The studio has done a lot of inter-disciplinary work alongside artists, designers, consultants, engineers and others, always with a focus on finding new ways of doing things. It says it is interested in discovering the balance between people and Nature, culture and technology. Way Studio currently has offices in Beijing, Hong Kong and Vancouver.



01
“Dreaming Someone”, Architecture
& Interiors for MS-II Restaurant,
Beijing.

02
Guggenheim Museum, Helsinki.

03
LangFang Theatre, Langfang.

Can any comparison be drawn between the way design studios function and a rugby team plays?

The most obvious is team-work, of course; it is essential that everyone plays their own part well in the team for a functioning whole that moves together, and training, to build up "muscles" in order to perform when and where it matters.

Design is laborious work, which rugby also obviously is. You have to be dedicated and to really enjoy it more than a job to commit all the sweat and tears to become a designer.

Both are considered professionals, and there is a certain level of "talent" involved. Not just anyone can become a designer, there are certain artistic and logical pre-sets you need to possess in order to excel in this field.

What do you see as the main advantages and main drawbacks of working in a large or medium-sized design studio?

The advantages of larger studios are their resources such as available projects and clientele, but also suppliers and employees. It isn't just external resources but internal resources, too; the fewer the people in a company means less brain-power to use, as practices such as knowledge-share are great for growth in the workplace.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of larger firms are the politics involved; that is an inevitable by-product of any organisation with multiple people, where structure becomes a necessity. With structure comes power, and with power, competition and internal relationships to navigate. With smaller firms, it is vital to work as a tight-knit family, because you cannot survive otherwise.

It has been an on-going discussion alongside other similar-sized firms as to whether we can, and how we can, level that playing field by creating a network of smaller firms, a league if you will. The possibility would be intriguing.

How do you believe Design Thinking can help governments in public-service design to increase their effectiveness?

When we entered architectural education, we all carried naive dreams about changing or creating the future. As we mature, exit the bubble and enter reality, we realise that there is a limit to what we can do, often finding ourselves restricted by the other parties of the trifecta (architect, client and government). We have all the imagination, but none of the power! Though you would sometimes have to admit that it would be dangerous to give the inventor full reign.

Traditionally, the government will set the direction, while the designer will fill in the details, but more and more, designers are given the opportunity to create their own directions, testing grounds, creating incubators for pioneering thought and ideas. Governments often prioritise what is political correct over the necessities of the public. Designers on the other hand are less burdened with political pressures, and can therefore be more considerate to the experience of end-users. We believe that the role of the designer, in this case, is to push the government to dare to go beyond its restricted realms and help them dream bigger and higher. The designers remind them to reflect upon their decisions, to digest criticism, and turn it into the next project forward.

