



**«Architecture is more like a hobby. You really need to be in love with it»**

*Dear Jürgen, first of all, thank you for taking part in this interview today. You successfully finished a Bachelor's and Master's degree programme in Architecture at the University of Liechtenstein. What can you say about that period of your life?*

I really enjoyed my study time. At the beginning it was quite a challenge to adjust to study after completing apprenticeships as a draughtsman as well as a bricklayer in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, because I had to adapt to a new learning style – from a practical to a more theoretical approach. But when I got into the flow after the first year I did start to enjoy all of the studying time moments. The student-staff-ratio additionally favoured a good learning environment – the relationships between students and teachers were very good and the teachers have all been inspiring and full of good advises.

Also, of course, I remember my semester abroad in Mexico which was a real blast. It was great to have the possibility to make this experience of living and studying in a different culture and language. It highly enriched my life in many aspects. And in addition, it turned out to be really valuable as I met one of my two employees actually during my semester abroad. Markus and I have been always in touch and when I founded my own architecture office he came from Germany to Liechtenstein to work with me.

*Why did you choose the University of Liechtenstein? What was your decision based on?*

Why I chose uni.li? That was not a difficult decision to make. I was convinced by the university's syllabus. Of course I had also looked at other opportunities but the University of Liechtenstein and its personal learning environment convinced me. As I am a Liechtensteiner who loves his region, I also found it appealing that there was a possibility to study here.

Besides my studies, I always had time to work which was highly important for me to directly link the theoretically learnt aspects to projects in practise.

*According to your CV you are living a very active life. How did you manage to do so many things besides your studies: working, participating different projects?*

I am a very optimistic person and yes, really active. I like to do different things at the same time, to manage and to get involved in new and more projects simultaneously. That is why it was not a problem for me at all. I do everything with pleasure.

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*Completing numerous internships in Hamburg, Bangkok, New York, what have you learned about various architecture styles in different parts of the world? How do they differ and what did you like the best?*

During the summer vacations I was always looking for an internship to be able to gain more practical insights. Besides getting some working experiences, I was curious to discover different cities, countries as well as cultures. Every internship was different. And it was the best time in my life so far and will always have a place in my heart.

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In Hamburg I worked in a big office and a project I participated in was about building such a big office. In Bangkok I was working on the renovation of the buildings after the tsunami (working mostly with wood materials and creating “floating houses”). It was in the context of a group project work which was initiated by a regional university there. I got to know about this opportunity via the EUXTRA organization (<http://euxtra.com/en/>), applied and luckily got the chance to go to Thailand for the summer break. This was just half a year after the tsunami, which made my stay specifically challenging. It has been an eye-opening experience.

Also the architectural topics I was confronted with were very different. So, in Hamburg the architecture is pretty modern and luxury, while in Thailand the architectural project was focused on the practicability of the houses to make living close to the sea safer and in New York City I mainly dealt with interior designs such as equipping a loft.

*At the beginning of your career, when working on the architecture project, how much input was demanded from you? Is it just about drawing what your superiors ask you to draw, or do you have the opportunity to develop your own ideas?*

At the beginning of my career I was lucky to have a good boss, so I could implement my own ideas. I was independent. But also the boss was working together with me side by side. And this is really good because after the university you become kind of idealistic, but in real world the things are different. At the university the focus is more on design and creativity, in real world – on practical side.

*We also know that now you established your own architecture firm. Could you tell us, please, a bit about your company? What are the challenges and benefits of being your own boss?*

I knew from the beginning that I want to have my own architectural office. That was my goal. Of course, at the beginning it was quite hard and challenging, but now it is fine. We are working from the building side and now we are 3 people but in the future I plan to have 5-6 employees. I really like an easy and direct communication style in my team and that it is a young team. I don't see myself as a “big boss”, more like a “team player”, or at least in a nice balance between them.

The main pros and cons of being your own boss are connected with working hours. On the one side, you are more flexible, plus you really have the possibility to make something different, create something by yourself and lead your firm culture. On the other side, your working day lasts not just from 9am to 5pm but the whole day – you think all of the time about how your firm is doing, what is needed to be done, where to go, etc.

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*What was your experience with finding your first job? What would be your tips for our students when seeking for their first serious job?*

My experience with finding a first job was really good – I just applied to a firm and got the job without any problem. It is definitely because during the studies I got a lot of practical experience (through my internships).

*What does it mean to you to be an architect?*

To be a person who is in love with architecture. You really need to like it and to like what you do, otherwise nothing will work out. To be an architect means to understand that every project is special, you should be passionate about all of them and identify yourself with them. Creating something and constructing a house that later will be seen in the environment is the greatest achievement and satisfaction.

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*In your opinion, what characteristics in particular are needed to succeed in this field?*

Flexibility, creativity, ability to deal with pressure. It is more like a hobby! You need to love it to be successful and to be resistant to long working hours. It will be highly rewarding when you see the result.

*Talking to you as a creative person: if you could be any fictional character from a novel/movie, who would you be and why?*

Superman – he is so powerful!

*What kind of personal advice would you give to our current students? How did you find opportunities to gain international work experiences?*

Catch every opportunity to get practical experience while studying and try to get links (create network). And don't be afraid to try new things – studying is a time for discovering!



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