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Niels Bohr’s guest house (1957) was the first building by the Danish architect Vilhelm Wohlert (1920-2007). Rooted into the Danish tradition and the principles of the Skønvirke, represents a renewal based on absorption of foreign influences: American architecture and Japanese tradition. Wohlert’s work ranges to different kind of commissions. Despite their disparate scales and functions, they show Wohlert’s commitment to human comfort, his dedication to precise construction, and the respect for materials. Features that are more evident than nowhere in the modest guesthouse that he created for Niels Bohr, Nobel Prize in Physics (1922), in a remote virgin forest in the northern of Sjælland.

He creates an abstract self-contained object that preserves the open space of the clearing around it. The architect’s task will be understand the vocation of the place, establishing a new site where architecture and nature will live together, the “genius loci” will endure. The individual is readied for the experience of architecture, where the manner of approaching the building becomes significant. The perception is slowed in order to deprive the user of mental assumptions and in this way a level of intimacy is reached. The building alludes to the modern concept of the pavilion as a piece that is conceptually its own entity.

The adopted solution seems deceptively simple; a floating timber clad box, over a flat platform, opened to the southwest and closed to the northeast. The wood box has the responsive character of a living organism, which is always changing according to variation in daylight or temperature. The building alludes to the fact that everything in nature is constantly undergoing change and evolution. Folding doors and shutters generate extensions of the rooms. The unexpected lack of closure, the air circulation and the elements that give flexibility, create an evocative air of freedom and fluidity. This circumstance reminds the idea, first formulated by Heraclitus, that the world is a flow statement. It performs an example of the modernity as the refinement in the technique of boundaries and the idea that architecture is not a material object but the space generated inside. It could be seen as an ikebana, the Japanese art of flowers; “the art of space” where is produced a circulation of air between its components. Ikebana is something alive that expresses features of the building; the third dimension, the asymmetrical balance, an interest for the material, its texture and the emotional effect that emanates. The architect establishes an intimate relationship with materials which express their age and their wear together with the enriching experience of time. The wood ages and returns to the earth and in this way the building disappears, and thus is a connection made with both ecology and death. The concept of the elimination of the superfluous and the exhibiting of a material’s natural aspect are common to Oriental culture. It is architecture designed for the perception of all the senses. As traditional Japanese house, the architecture is adjusted to the measure of man, the human scale. The keys of its aesthetic effect are its harmony and balance, conveying serenity and beauty. The encounter with nature is the most basic lesson of project, but the Danish attitude towards her is not domination but conciliation, where a world of relationships is gentle to human beings. It is a lesson of the thought that nature, life and architecture are united.

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