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A new type of playground to go on tour in Central Denmark Region

Children and the young at heart in Aarhus, Randers, Hadsten and Holstebro can celebrate the European Cultural Capital by exploring a 300 m² landscape, as My Playground tours around the Central Denmark Region. The space has been created by the architect firm Gustin, experts in play and design, in co-operation with European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017.

My Playground consists of more than 35 white cubes of various sizes up to three-metres-high, with inlaid, changing LED-lights. The cubes can be combined in countless different ways and stand on a base of safety-rubber. An in-built smoke machine means that the entire playground will sometimes be shrouded in dense fog, while the participants, both big and small, can explore the unknown.

“*My Playground* builds upon a totally unique Danish tradition, where the body's limits are challenged through free play, whilst at the same time focusing on learning and aesthetics. It is a mobile landscape for play, where one can set their own limits, trying to challenge and further themselves. It is an innovative and poetic glimpse into the playgrounds of the future.” Explains Rebecca Matthews.

“*My Playground* rewards the naturally curious. One can climb to the skies, listen to musical soundscapes inside the cubes, jump, swing, play, talk and disappear amongst the dense fog. This is a place that makes you stop and where your curiosity will be awakened,” adds Juliana Engberg.

Each of the towns will host *My Playground* for six weeks. In this period the site will become the beating heart for a local activity programme with theatre, dance, choir, gymnastics, street sports and much more. It is free and everyone is invited – young children, youth, families, daycare centres, fans of art and architecture and everyone else. *My Playground* is supported by Nordea-fonden.

Proud Danish tradition for quality playgrounds

The Danish tradition of developing good quality playgrounds goes back to the 1940s - the world's first ever playground was built in Copenhagen in 1943. In the 1960s the goal was to encourage free play and creativity without control from adults. In the 1970s and 1980s the equipment playground design dominated. The idea of a playground inspired by and created from nature came during the 1990s and in the 2000s came the 'interactive computer playground' and a trend of so-called 'narrative playground design'. The increasing focus has sought to increase the physical activity of children and young people, moving away from a sedentary life filled with screens.

“There are a number of reasons why Danish-designed playgrounds are gaining so much attention around the world. One explanation is that we try to build the playgrounds to fit different kinds of children – some are shy, some are social, some like wild-play and some just like to chill out. Kids are like grown-ups – we are all different, and since the 'classic' playground design only considers physical play, it is this variation in personality that is a high priority for *My Playground*.” Explains Stephan Gustin, landscape architect MAA, MDL, from the architecture firm Gustin Landscape. He continues:

“We created a set of 'building blocks' that can be configured in several ways to fit different places. We created these white cubes with refined decorations that have the feeling of a 'non-specific' landscape, meaning that you can create your own story, your own drama and your own fantasy. The cubes will then transform and blend into different environments. This could not happen if it looked like a giant ladybug - or classic swings and slides. *My Playground* has a lot of round spots like a ladybug and you can climb, glide and swing, just in a different way than usual.”

Photo1: European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 presents a new type of mobile playground, which will tour around the Central Denmark Region for the rest of the year. Photo by Per Bille



Photo2: European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 presents a new type of mobile playground, which will tour around the Central Denmark Region for the rest of the year. Photo by Brian Rasmussen

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