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# Mindful architecture

Each project is a carefully and independently considered at architecture firm Vindveggen, to make sure that the construction is the best it can be for the environment and for its future inhabitants.

By Maya Acharya | Photos: Terje Solvang

From cabins to apartment complexes, size is not important at Vindveggen, a Norwegian architecture firm located in Lillestrøm, a short drive from the capital. Owned by architect Martin Glomnes, Vindveggen works with the ethos to create environmentally-friendly architecture that pleases.

Glomnes's firm was founded in 1955 as Skjeseth & Solvang Arkitekter, before changing its name to Vindveggen two years ago. The name, directly translated as 'The Wind Wall', has its origins in a historic reference to a 650-metre long wind wall, built in the early 20th century to

protect the area of Lillestrøm and its timber stocks from heavy winds.

## Building dreams

"We don't like to limit ourselves – we enjoy contributing to both everyday architecture and bigger projects. The important thing is that we as a company can develop, learn about new materials and new solutions, and constantly be shifting our own boundaries," says Glomnes. In fact, one of the company's slogans is 'none too big, none too small'. The various types of buildings reflect a region in growth. "There is a good market on both sides, big and small. We don't want to exclude any-

one. Also, with the smaller projects you have a closer relationship with the client. You feel like you are building personal dreams," Glomnes muses.

One of the smaller projects that the firm has been especially pleased with aesthetically is Bjørnslett – a cabin in the beautiful rural area of Øyeren. The cabin is small, but opens up graciously towards the water, letting in plenty of light.



"We don't want to exclude anyone," says architect Martin Glomnes, owner of Vindveggen, with reference to his company's slogan 'none too big, none too small'.

But aesthetics are only the tip of the iceberg for Vindveggen. "Our focus is on robustness, durability and building things that work well with the environment," Glomnes says. "We are always excited to try out new building principles, especially related to energy."

### Norwegian wood and new innovations

Recently, the company has been working a lot with insulation. "Traditionally, a concrete structure would consist of a sort of shell on the outside and insulation as a kind of undergarment on the inside," Glomnes explains. "What we've been trying is the reverse. We have been experimenting with exterior insulation, which is rendered with a finish so it looks like a regular brick house on the outside. This allows insulation around the whole building while heat can be retained in the concrete on the interior. In the summer, which this year has been surprisingly hot, it would feel a bit like being in a basement as the concrete cools down the building."

The managing of hot and cold in homes is vital in a country of sharp contrasts and natural extremes such as Norway. The most essential thing, according to Glomnes, is to consider each project separately. "You can't just jump to the conclusion that because wood has a lower carbon footprint, it must be the best material to use. Sometimes, it makes more sense to use concrete or steel due to factors like longevity and robustness. Other times wood is best. Basically, you have to consider each case individually to find the right solution," he asserts, adding: "The most important thing we think about is using quality materials that don't come from far away."

Another particularly impressive project is Solåsen, a large apartment complex project in which Glomnes's firm is using the material Öko Skin for the first time – an extremely durable, low-maintenance concrete-like board. This is used in combination with a local type of oriented strand board wood. The materials are adjusted and moved according to where the sun is facing.

### Challenging conservatism

The ever-growing technological advancement has also had its impact on the ar-

chitecture industry, meaning architects nowadays have to 'keep up', as Glomnes puts it. "We see, for example, that heat pump solutions have become more and more popular, and that technology in general has become a lot greener – which of course not only affects us on a daily basis but is vital for the future."

The firm owner continues: "The biggest challenge is actually often convincing the owner of the building or the client that these things are important to take into account. In the property owner industry we still see a lot of conservatism when it comes to taking the impact on the environment seriously. Some people are

aware of the importance of this before they come to us, but others do what they need to do without thinking much about these issues."

However, with firms like Vindveggen, there is a sense of progress being made. "The most exciting thing about architecture to me is to be able to be part of a process that leads to creation – building something in order for it to become something," says Glomnes.

For more information, please visit:  
[vindveggen.no](http://vindveggen.no)



Photo: Martin Glomnes