



Above: Villa NK. Below: Villa Victor, winner of Most Beautiful Villa in Sweden in 2009.

Eco-certified, life-affirming houses – because you can't put a price on health

It will be 20 years in January since Ross Architecture & Design was founded and Pål Ross started designing houses without straight lines, inviting customers to live in a work of art. Countless awards and around 300 projects later, another milestone has been achieved as the studio is now the first ever architect office to be eco-certified by Svanen.

By Linnea Dunne | Photos: Ross Architecture & Design

"We're delighted and proud, of course," says Pål Ross himself. "But we're upset as well. What this means is that there are loads and loads of architect offices that haven't decided to take this step, and that's crazy."

Ross came up with the idea of giving his houses the Svanen stamp of approval after food shopping about a year ago. In the supermarket, there were two piles of bananas. On his way home, Ross realised that a simple label had made him pick one type of banana over another without hesitating even for a second. "There and

then, I made the assumption that someone else had done the hard work for me, making sure that there were no pesticides, that the plantation workers got a fair wage, that no child labour was involved and so on. The bananas were prob-

ably noticeably more expensive, but I didn't care," he recalls. "So I decided that I wanted to communicate our commitment that same simple way."

The journey towards achieving the Svanen certification was complex to say the least, as every single supplier and manufacturer contributing to the construction process had to be scrutinised and approved. But it was unquestionably worthwhile, the architect insists. "It's a bit of a game-changer," he says, using another food analogy to illustrate. "Before there



was organic milk, no one ever thought of non-organic milk as being bad in any way – it was just milk. Bringing about an alternative gives consumers that choice and makes them aware of the difference.”

Leading the way

At the heart of it is a sense of responsibility towards the customer, and by achieving Svanen certification, Ross Architecture & Design hopes to send a strong and clear message to other architecture studios out there: if there’s a will there’s a way. Not that Ross leading the way is anything new. He has been doing his thing with razor-sharp focus from day one, and slowly but surely, award by award, he has convinced the architecture scene that the Ross construction process is superior. “It’s the way to build houses for the future,” he says. “People have stopped questioning me.”

The award-winning architect is hopeful that, in time, the industry will follow suit also in regards to the eco-certification of architecture. As he puts it, no one disagrees about the fact that toxins are bad. And it is when speaking about the health benefits of his houses that Ross really gets excited, that his philosophy comes full circle. “You can’t put a price on health. For 20 years now, we’ve been designing life-affirming houses, focusing on creating environments that flow the way life does and add to the overall happiness of their inhabitants. Avoiding the materials and solutions that contribute to allergies and make people sick has always been a central part of this.”

Design for happiness

Much like we will feel good the moment a song we like starts playing on the radio, beautiful spaces add to our sense of well-being. The difference is that you can turn the radio off when a song you dislike starts playing – but you cannot switch off a poorly-designed home. “We only get one life,” declares Ross, who only designs houses for clients after interviewing them and getting to know their habits and desires in detail. “Life’s too short to walk up spiral staircases that flows the wrong way and makes you twist your back, or cook in kitchens that force you to turn your back on your children and guests.”



Above left: Pål Ross in Villa Atrium. **Top right:** Inside Villa NK. **Right:** Villa Äntligen. **Below:** Inside Villa Äntligen

It is possible to design a happy life? Ross thinks so, at least to an extent. Ask a child who lives in one of his designs to draw a house and you will certainly see evidence that we are shaped by the environments that surround us: these children do not draw rectangular box houses. But right now, Ross is closing in on nursing homes,

arguing that the less time you have left the more precious every day is. “Perhaps one day I’ll end up designing a nursing home and running it myself,” he ponders. “I have worked with 300 families to date, significantly improving their lives. Imagine bringing that same happiness to a whole crowd of elderly all at once?”



What some customers said:

“Once you get in contact with Pål Ross, you cannot imagine working with another architect, ever.”

The owners of Villa NK

“The result exceeded all expectations. It’s a great pleasure to live in this wonderful environment, a hotbed of lust for life.”

The owner of Villa Poesi

“It was some kind of magic, perhaps what they call art.”

The owners of Villa Excellence

Awards and achievements:

1996 – Ross Architecture & Design is founded

2009 – Ross project Villa Victor is awarded Most Beautiful Villa in Sweden

2010 – Receives honours for contributions to a good architectural culture

2013 – Receives award for Building of the Year in Haninge County, Stockholm

2013/2014 – Receives European Property Award, Best Architecture Single Residence, Sweden

2015 – Achieves Svanen eco-certification

Pål Ross is a full member of the Artist’s Club in Stockholm.

Ross Architecture & Design holds the highest level of Credit Worthiness by the UC.

For more information, please visit:
www.ross.se