

# PERSPECTIVE

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# NEWS

## Scandinavia Authentic

BY JOHN D. KRETSCHMER, PRODUCTION DESIGNER



A clear blue sky and emerging spring warmth greeted me upon arrival to the National Film School of Denmark in Copenhagen. Such kind weather had yet to arrive in New York City, where I had departed the night before. The school is located on the site of a re-purposed navy yard and it is surrounded by various supporting art schools: music, theater, architecture, etc. A solid line of parked bicycles flanked the doors to the historic building, while film students scurried about, more outside than in, on this sunny day. I can simply say, they had me at “bicycle!”

We chose a format where each designer could present their work and their processes and we invited the audience to raise questions on the spot. This made the whole experience more conversational. And furthermore, the delicious Scandinavian lunches and dinner, served at the school, provided an opportunity for real interpersonal discussions. The learning this weekend went both ways.

Jette and Niels represented the Danish market, which is confined to 5.5 million people with their own particular language. The attendants themselves represented the similarly small Swedish-language and Finnish-language markets. The audience was eager to learn about my and Alice’s experiences from the much broader, and much bigger, English-language markets. We were also able to compare our structures, production norms and processes, to hopefully guide and validate the work, approaches and advances to be made in the smaller Scandinavian film and TV industries. Particular headway was made in this regard during the “round-of-beers-at-a-local-pub-session” on Saturday night.

During my presentation, I was thrilled to be joined on stage by my dear friend, and Danish director, Charlotte Sieling. Charlotte and I have worked together on *Homeland*, and in a way, we could literally bridge the distance between the Danish and American ideals. I was also thankful to learn from the work presented by my fellow panel members that included, but was not limited to, *Word of God* (2017) – Jette, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) – Niels, and *Suffragette* (2015) – Alice.

During our final “catch-all” session, I was pleased that we entered into a rather significant discussion on workplace safety. And we also discussed the (near) future trends in the business, whereas the likes of HBO and Netflix are beginning to produce native-language shows in these Scandinavian markets. And that fact alone made the entire weekend highly relevant and hopeful.

I would like to thank Tina Wagner Sørensen, Head of Post Graduate Training, for the generous invitation and the opportunity given to me to



I was invited to host a seminar on Production Design, along with Production Designers Jette Lehmann and Niels Sejer of Denmark, and Alice Normington from London. The chosen theme for the weekend was “authenticity.” And I was honored to join the discussion, recounting my experiences working on *Homeland* in particular, as well as bringing a perspective from the American film and television market in general.

**A.** THE SCHOOL IS LOCATED ON FREDERIKSHOLM ISLAND IN THE HARBOUR OF COPENHAGEN.

**B.** SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS, FRONT ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: JOHN D. KRETSCHMER, ALICE NORMINGTON, NIELS SEJER AND JETTE LEHMANN. SECOND ROW LEFT, CAROLINE REICHHARDT, SECOND ROW CENTER, TINA WAGNER SØRENSEN.

About half of the audience of sixty-five were working Production Designers from Denmark, Sweden and Finland. One quarter were students of Production Design from Denmark and Norway, and the rest of the group consisted of various Scandinavian film professionals and students, including writers, directors, cinematographers and sound designers. Throughout the weekend, the audience was bright and attentive. I was certainly amazed by the scores of exotic first names that I was introduced to, and that I have never heard the likes before.

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bicycle that I used to get back-and-forth, and to convey deep into Copenhagen as far as I could. On my cab ride to the airport on Monday morning, I was amazed by the endless peloton of bicycle commuters, four abreast, heading into the city. I found that sight to be a very fitting farewell.

**A.** INTERIOR OF THE NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF DENMARK.

**B.** THE COPENHAGEN COMMUTE.



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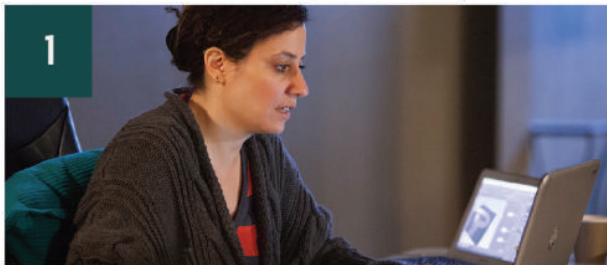
share and learn. I would also like to thank Caroline Reichhardt, training coordinator, for the fine execution of the seminar, as well as my travel and accommodations. My hotel stay included a rental



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