

# A FEVER OF CREATIVITY IN SOUTHERN SWEDISH CITIES

What makes a city memorable? Could it be its history, culinary experience, or even its expression of creativity?



**Public art:** Artwork can be enjoyed inside and outside of galleries and museums in Scania cities. Dunkers Kulturhus (Culture House) in Helsingborg realized the potential of public engagement in art when it put this installation outside the building.

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**T**he Scania cities in Sweden are laden with creativity and this is the foremost impression visitors get of them.

Scania, or Skåne as locals call it, is the southernmost county in Sweden and is geographically and culturally situated in a very strategic position.

This county faces Copenhagen in Denmark, one of Europe's hub cities, and faces Germany and Eastern Europe to its south-east. Cultural encounters, then, are part of the dynamic beat of every Scanian city.

The main Scanian city is Malmö, which is the third-largest city in Sweden. The city is famous for multicultural encounters due to its character as one of the friendliest cities to migrants and refugees. This has been the character of Malmö since the Second World War until now, amid an ongoing refugee crisis.

In Malmö, the cultural encounters are articulated in many ways and embody the rich dynamics of everyday life. They are ubiquitous in public spaces and take many different forms in official public monuments, unique designs and architecture, government-commissioned art installations and unauthorized street art.

Among them is *Elsewhere*, a series of video art installations inside the platforms of Malmö Central Station. *Elsewhere*, or *Annorslädes* in Swedish, is created by a Chilean-born artist, Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez, who resides and works in Paris. The artwork was first installed and screened to the public on Dec. 7, 2010.

Now the video has become an inherent part of the train station. Showing a series of

uninterrupted moving scenes, the artwork can be seen on both sides of a wall in the underground city tunnel.

Consisting of a total of 90 hours of footage, this video art intrigues passers-by with an interesting sense of feeling. The video images are in slow speed but keep repeatedly moving, similar to what passengers see through a train window.

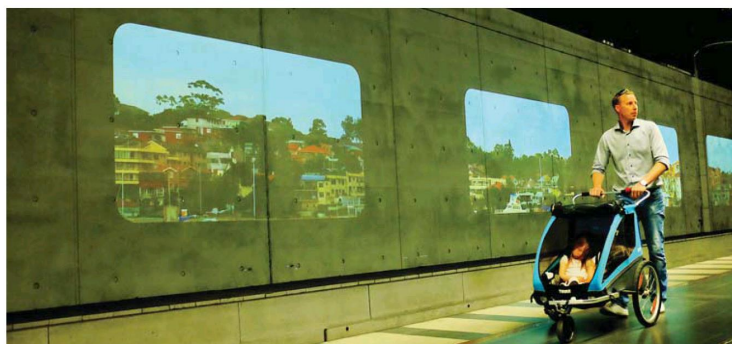
Creative expression in Malmö takes different forms. The most notable forms are graffiti and mural arts in nearby Mällevångstorget in Malmö. On one side of the street can easily be seen a dedicated wall for street artists. Any artists can create their graffiti without asking for prior official permission.

Unauthorized street art is abundant in Malmö. In 2014, the city hosted the first Art-scene, the biennial street art festival in Sweden. Many artists from various countries contributed to fill the city's streets with art during the event.

Helsingborg, which is located around 45 minutes by train from Malmö, also offers visitors interesting details of everyday life in its city lanes.

The details in some street corners give us captivating stories. One of them acknowledges the role of renowned Swedish film auteur Ingmar Bergman, who was once the Helsingborg City Theater manager and lived in the city for three years. The recognition comes in the form of a square tile on a Korean restaurant wall and people call it Ingmar Bergman *Plats*.

Every *plats*, or plaque, on city corners has a different story, but there is a similar pattern among them. The *plats* are displayed to acknowledge the role of a significant individual or group, to give the context of the place where this monument is located, and to provide a point for collective memories with-



**Public space and artwork:** While waiting for trains at Malmö Central Station, passengers are exposed to an intriguing video art installation, *Elsewhere*. It showcases different landscapes and neighborhoods from all around the world in slow speed to challenge rapid urban life.



**Public right to leisure:** People enjoy leisure time at a public park in Båstad, a coastal town in northern Scania. Creative public parks offer open space to play with offspring, lie in a hammock or simply sit quietly and enjoy the breeze.



**Juxtaposition:** A public toilet stands in the city of Helsingborg. Located downtown amid old buildings and historical spots, this modern-look facility contrasts with the surrounding setting.

in the urban communities.

Through these *plats*, memory and history are articulated through a creative medium and laid on the street for public consumption.

Other cities in Scania offer different varieties of creative senses too.

With its long tradition and cultural history, Lund, the student city, has transformed into another hotspot for creative initiatives. Student-based communities and multicultural-related activities are among the main actors that play significant roles behind all creative events and work in this city.

While Ystad, a town on the eastern side of Scania, has so much more to offer than its famous megalithic artefact, Ales Stenar, and its white sandy beaches.

Ystad is also the home of the Ystad Studio, a film production studio, and Ystad Cineteket, a film museum. Through Ystad Studio and Ystad Cineteket, this city has always been associated with audio-visual production.

Every city has its own long history, dynamic beat, as well as its complex problems and interesting multi-encounters. Having their own uniqueness, cities around the globe show their characters through visual and creative ways and parade them in public spaces. And cities in Scania, Sweden, are definitely places that know how to express their characters in creative ways.



**Piece of history:** A *plats* (plaque) relating a story is displayed in Helsingborg. Plaques are displayed to tell specific stories about a place.

— PHOTOS BY ZAKI HABIBI