

Welcome to

WastelLand



STUDIO BIGERT & BERGSTRÖM



From wasteland to prospect

Waste

Welcome to WasteLand – a new art and knowledge park by the Skellefte River, where a formerly contaminated industrial area is being transformed into a place of hope for the future. At the Scharins site, which for a long time was one of Västerbotten's most polluted locations, Europe's first climate action park is now emerging. After 17 years of remediation, nature has begun to reclaim the land, and here art, knowledge, play, movement, and recreation now come together in an entirely new environment. Under the motto From Waste to Promise, the former wasteland is becoming a lush space for the conversations of the future.



Opening on May 28

eLand

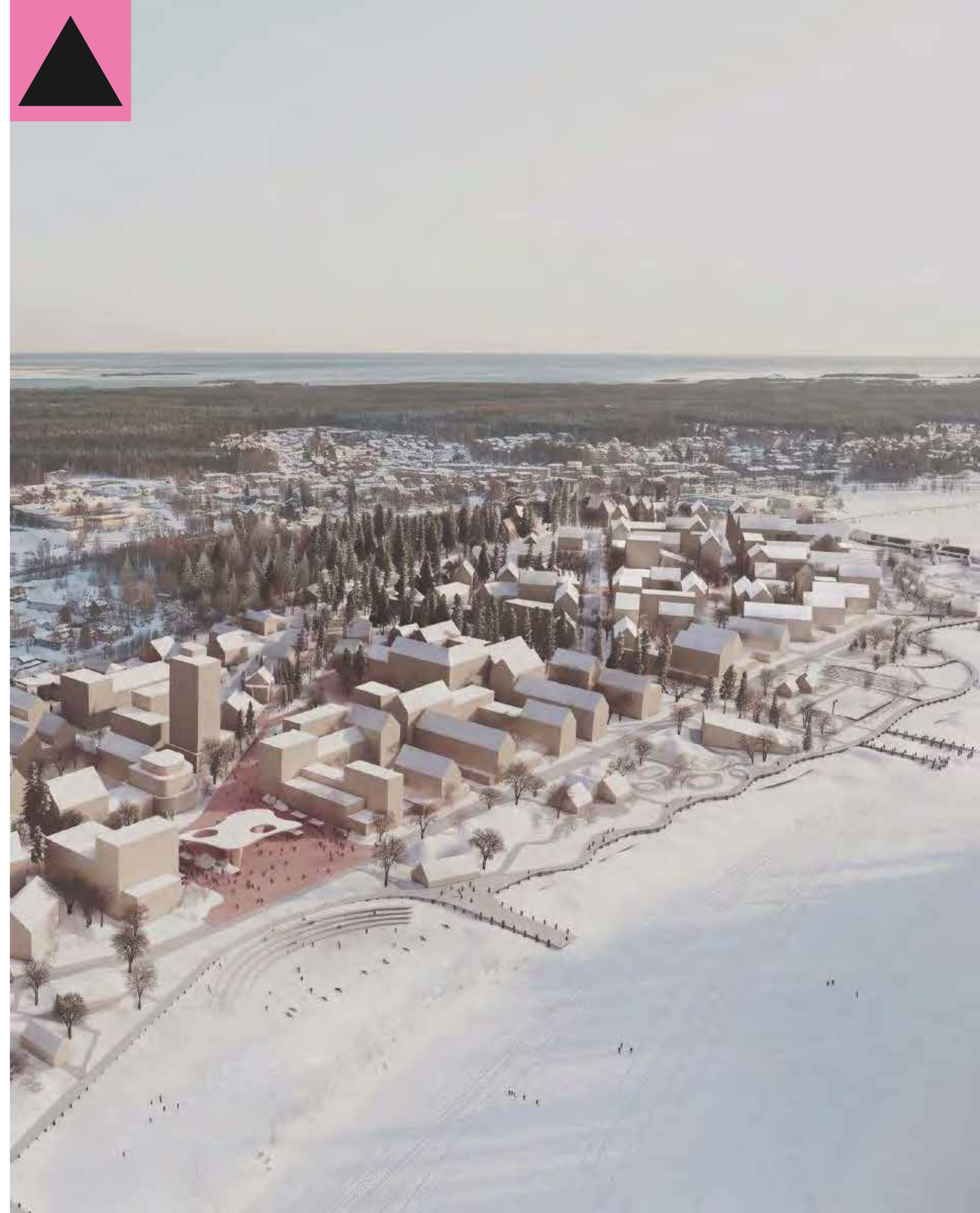
WasteLand will be inaugurated on May 28, 2026, in connection with Society Expo 2026. The park will then open as a new meeting place for anyone who wants to experience art, climate issues, and landscape in a new way – right in the middle of a place that is literally in the process of changing.

From waste to promise

Here, the transformation begins –from a heavily contaminated industrial site into an innovative park moving toward new urban development, where new values gradually emerge throughout the process. In Scharinsparken, climate research, art, industry, design, and cultivation meet in a dynamic exchange about the society of the future, creating a unique visitor attraction with global potential. The Wasteland exhibition engages and inspires everyone, from the business sector to schools and civil society.

The Skellefteå of the future

The Scharins area was selected in 2023 as one of the sites for the international architecture competition Europan 17, where young architects were invited to develop new and sustainable urban districts. The winning entry, Safescape, is characterized by a unique living environment for residents of Ursviken as well as an attractive place for the entire Skellefteå area. The ideas for the new residential district have been taken forward and are now under development.





From industry to sustainability

In the late 19th century, AB Scharins Söner was a significant family-owned company in Västerbotten, and in 1912 production of pulp began at a new factory in Clemensnäs, just outside Skellefteå. During the 1930s, manufacturing of wood fibreboard (Unite) was also introduced, continuing to varying degrees until the company was dissolved in 1986.

In several respects, the company was modern for its time, investing in housing and shared social and recreational facilities for its employees. However, today the memory of its operations is largely marked by extensive emissions of toxic chemicals from the factory, which leaked into the river.

Toxic substances were used in production and gradually accumulated in the soil. Among other things, the pulp was treated with the phenylmercury-based product Pulpasan to prevent mould and rot – a substance banned in Sweden in 1966. During remediation work in the 2000s, the top layer of soil was replaced with new soil, and leakage into the river was stopped.

Bigert & Bergström

Crystal Sauna

At the centre of WasteLand stands Crystal Sauna, a fully functional public sauna sculpture shaped like a giant asymmetrical lithium crystal. Clad in titanium-plated pink mirror steel, the work reflects the surrounding river and forest while also creating a striking new visual landmark. Inside the sculptural form is a warm, crafted interior – a “wood grotto” designed as a contrasting sensory experience.

Crystal Sauna is created by Bigert & Bergström, the artist duo behind internationally acclaimed public works such as The Climate Chambers and Solar Egg. In WasteLand, their new work becomes both a destination in itself and a symbol of a larger narrative: how a site shaped by pollution, extraction, and industry can be transformed into a place for public imagination, climate reflection, and future-making.

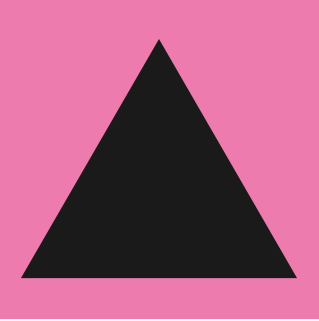


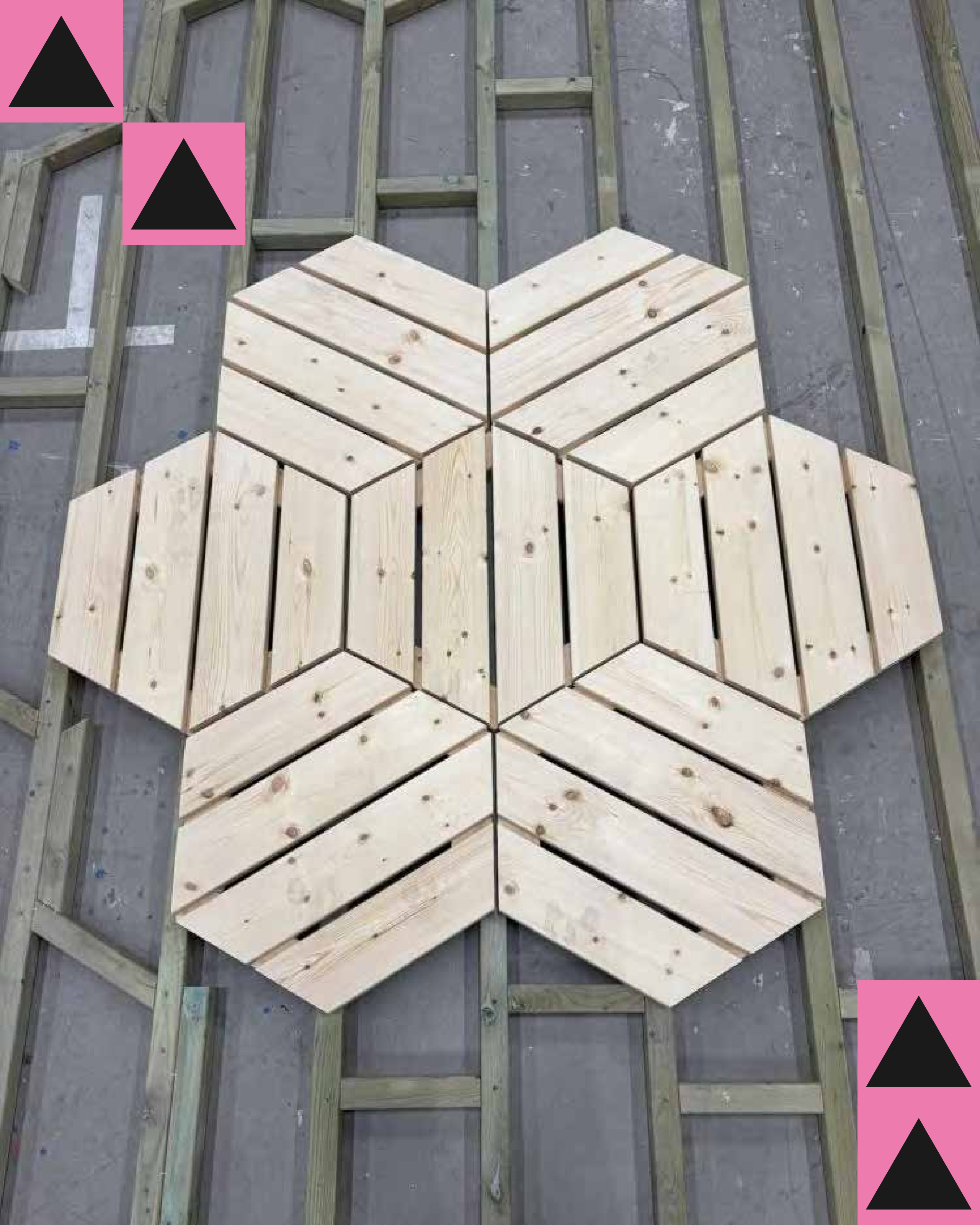


Crystal Sauna

Lithium

The Crystal Sauna is designed as a pink lithium crystal, assembled like columns of basalt stone. Lithium represents the element needed for new batteries and the electrification of a sustainable society. At the same time, lithium forms the basis of the world's most widely used psychopharmaceutical treatment for bipolar disorder.





Crystal Sauna

Wooden Grotto

The interior contrasts with the high-tech exterior and is shaped like an ancient cave — a tribute to humanity's earliest settlements in the Rift Valley of East Africa, where humans first learned to master fire. It is CNC-carved from a heat-resistant fine wood veneer with a certified spruce frame (SpaPlex). The sauna benches are handmade from alder wood.

The sauna floor and surrounding decking are built from naturally resin-rich northern Swedish heart pine. Using X-ray technology, the timber supplier Norra Timber selects heart pine that requires no chemical treatment to withstand moisture and decay. The decking is produced from the richest, most heartwood-dense sections of carefully selected northern Swedish pine logs. The high proportion of heartwood makes the decking especially hard, dimensionally stable, and naturally durable.

Bigert & Bergström

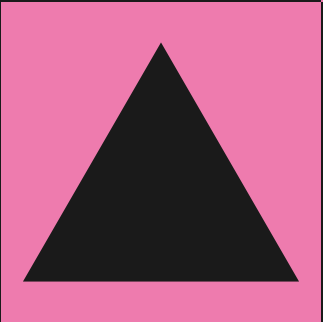
Rundgång

In the work Rundgång, the artist duo Bigert & Bergström explore what it means to walk in circles, both as a physical act and as an idea. The work is based on humanity's relationship to measurability, movement, and time, but also on the idea that a simple bodily motion can contain a form of reflection.

In the circle there is no destination, no goal – only return. Those who walk in circles take part in a repeated cycle, lap after lap. Walking becomes a meditation on time, space, and the body's own rhythm. The movement reminds us that progress does not always mean moving forward; sometimes development is more about returning, repeating, and deepening.

The circle, which is exactly 400 meters long, connects the standardized athletics track, the walking radius of urban planning, and healthcare's measures of health and vitality. By inviting researchers, urban planners, and politicians to walk together with the public, the artists offer an exercise in self-understanding and public dialogue.





Bigert & Bergström

Broken Greenhouse

In the area's overgrown forest labyrinth, an exhibition of five spectacular greenhouse sculptures is hidden. The works, created by Bigert & Bergström in collaboration with climate researchers, physically embody the UN's five future climate scenarios.



Ingela Ihrman

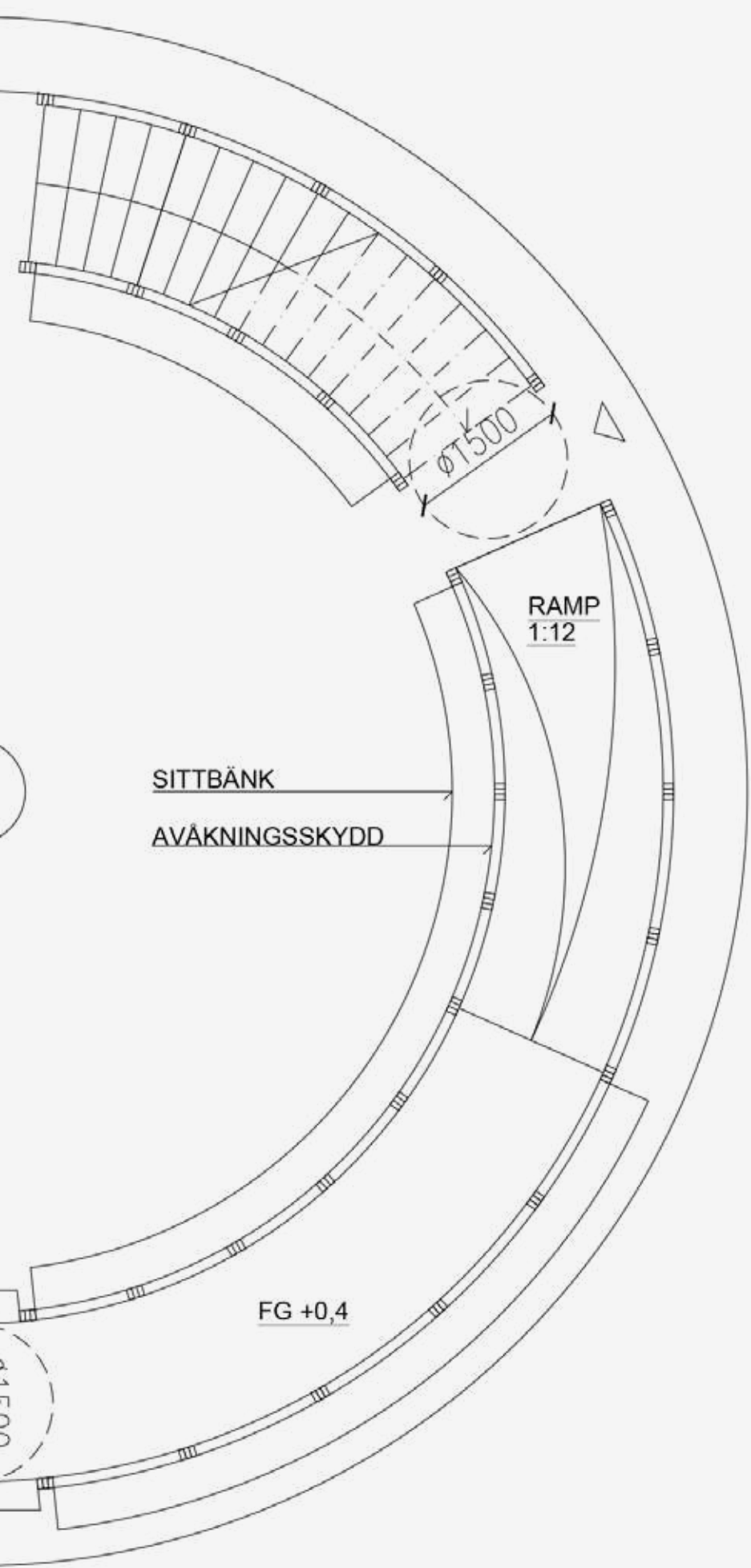
First Came the Landscape

At the meeting point between Ursviken's industrial history and the city's future rests a spine of wood. The twelve-meter-long skeleton is assembled from branches and roots – a physical body that reminds us that the landscape was here first, long before humans and industry. The Scharin area bears traces of both human achievement and environmental wounds.

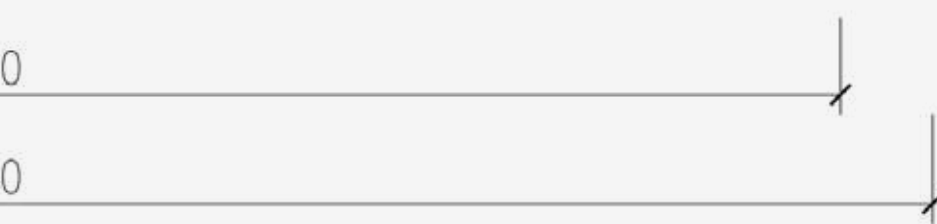
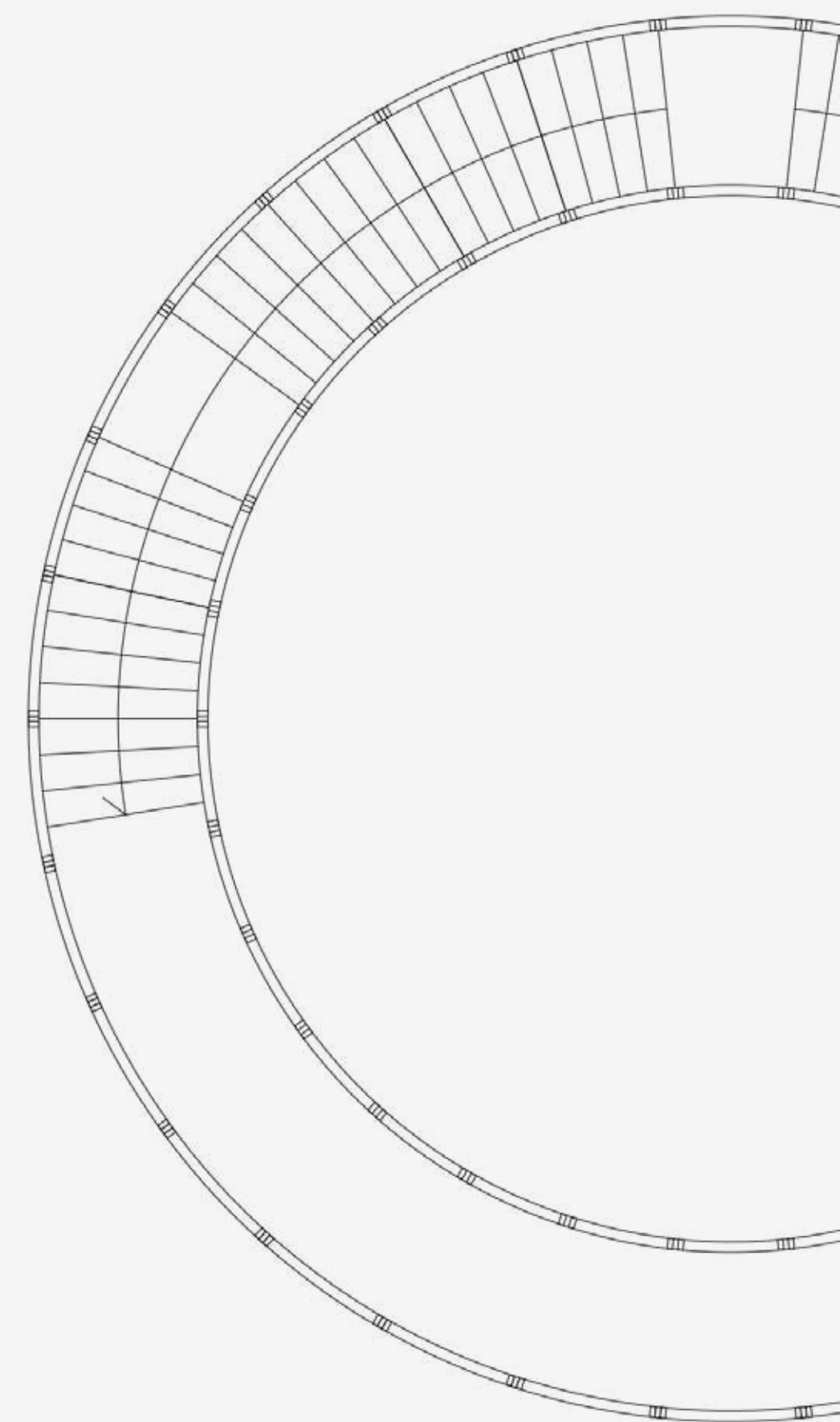
Ingela Ihrman's work is characterized by a strong craft tradition and a deep empathy for the non-human. Through her large-scale sculptures and performances, she explores what it means to be a living being among others.

The work is part of a series of large wooden skeletons the artist has created, including at the Eden Project in 2023. In Skellefteå, the sculpture forms a permanent part of Ingela Ihrman's exhibition at Skellefteå Konsthall in autumn 2026.

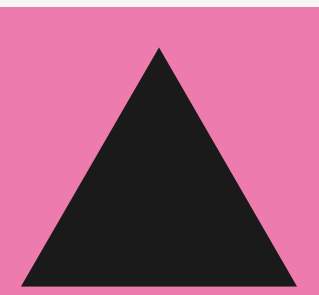
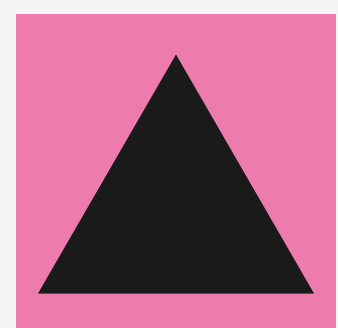




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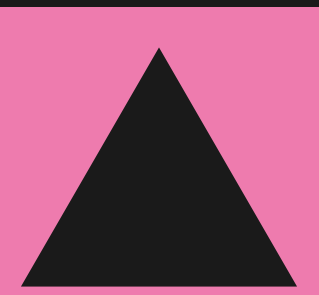
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Oslo School of Architecture and Design

Lookout tower

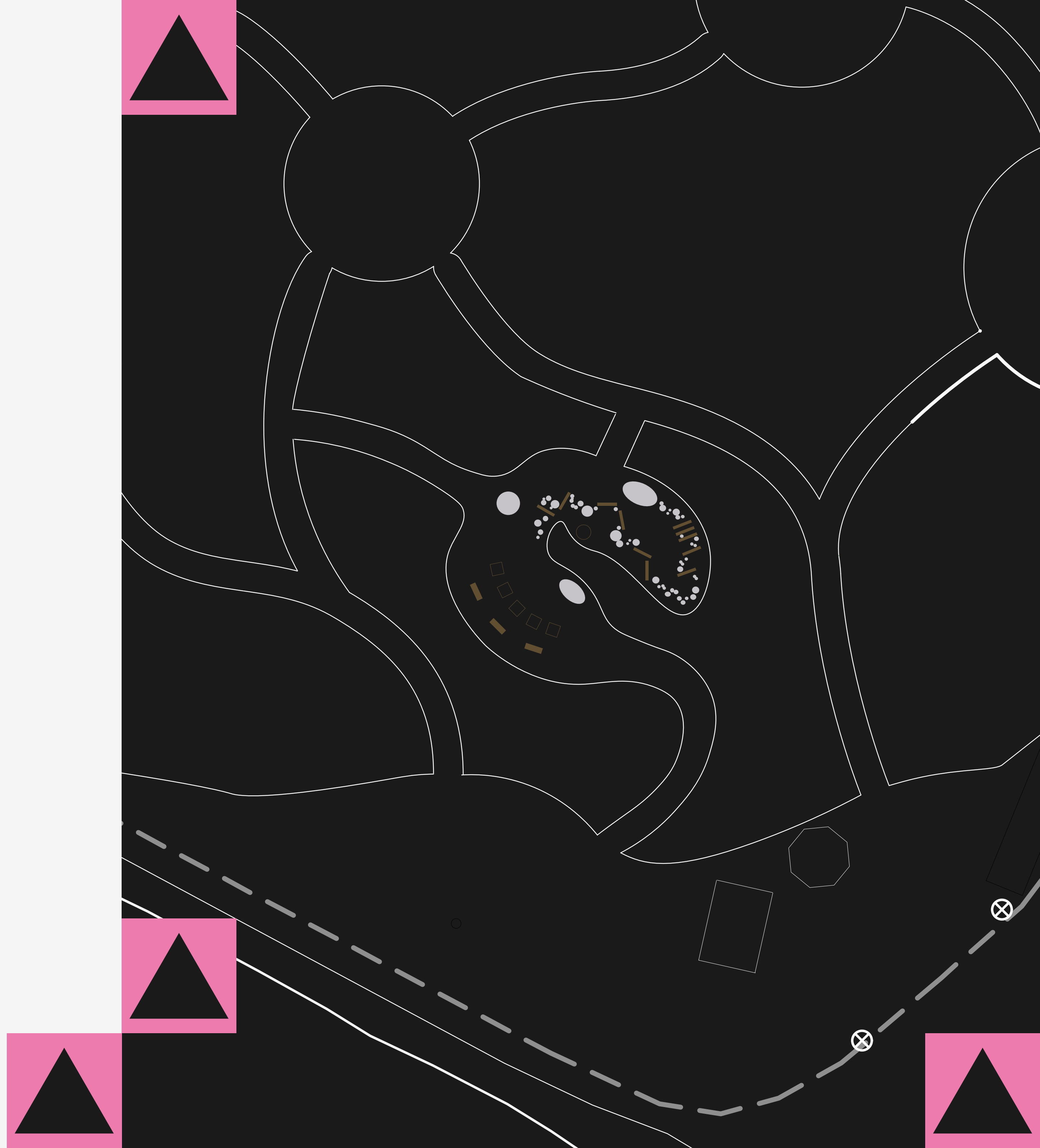
A combined lookout point and pavilion for reflection, designed by architecture students from Oslo. Here you can look out over the landscape and learn about the history of the former industrial site.



Luleå University of Technology

Playotope

The Playotope is an innovative play and recreation area designed for both children and adults in collaboration with Luleå University of Technology. It also includes a boules court, barbecue area, and a gaga ball pit.





Jessica Rohdin & Åsa Wikberg-Nilsson

Plant a seed

Plant a seed is a design installation that moves in the intersection between art, ecology, and care. Inspired by the principles of phytoremediation, the work uses sunflower seeds as both a symbol and a concrete method for soil purification, while also drawing attention to our responsibility toward the earth.

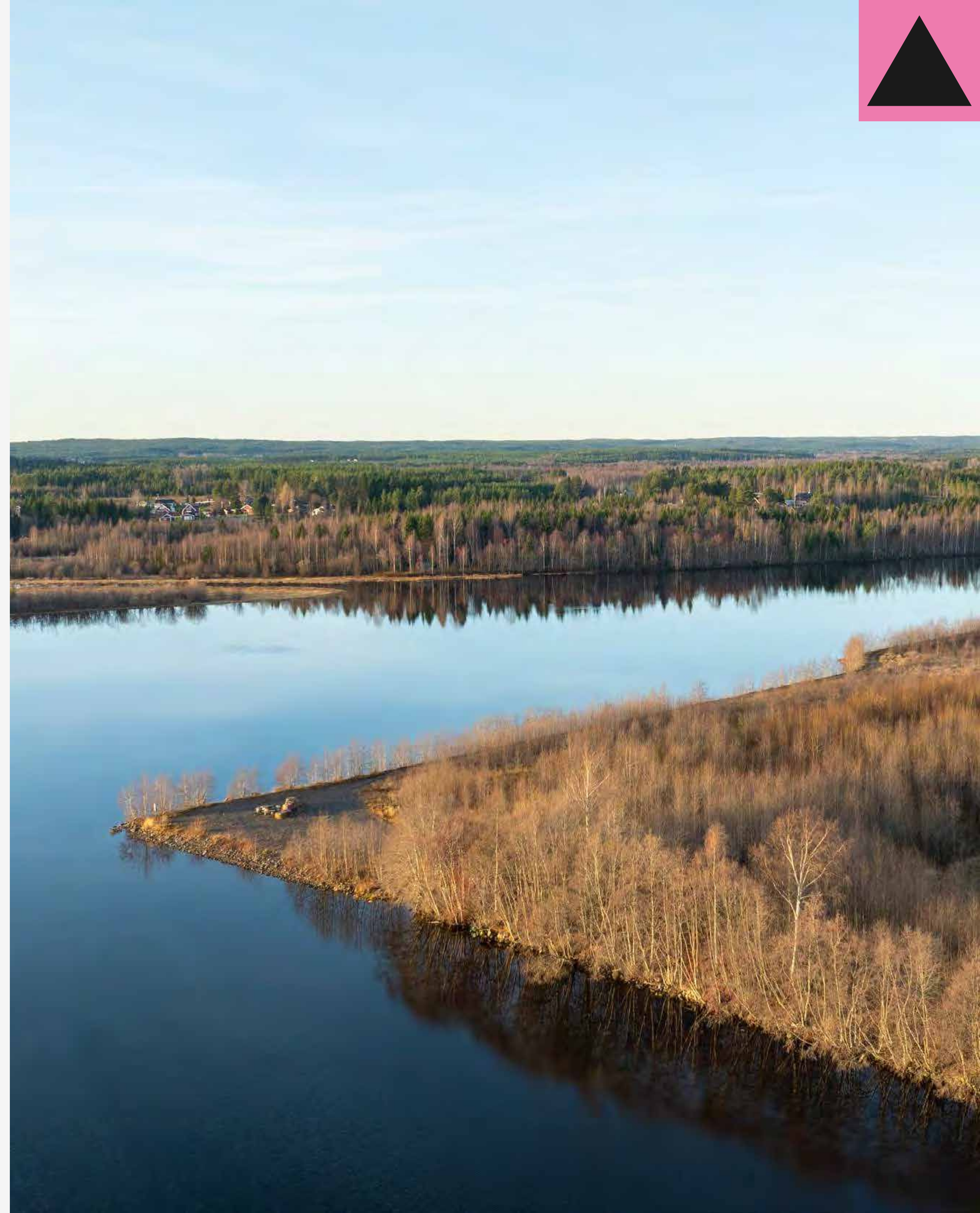
Plant a seed takes inspiration from the work *From Seed to Sim* (2023), where artist Irene Rasmussen explores how so-called "superplants" absorb heavy metals and toxic pollutants, thereby contributing to the remediation of contaminated land.

May 29–30

Walking Talks

On May 29–30, the program continues with *WasteLand Walking Talks*, in collaboration with Formas. Researchers, artists, architects, urban planners, and members of the public are invited to take part in walking group discussions through the park. Instead of traditional lectures, participants meet in smaller groups and move together through WasteLand and its artworks.

The discussions focus on climate change and climate adaptation, urban and societal development, as well as recycling and the remediation of historically contaminated land.



WasteLand



STUDIO BIGERT & BERGSTRÖM



Now we are creating the conditions for Europe's first Climate Action Park. A park where visitors can learn from new technologies and experience artistic interpretations of the challenges posed by climate issues. A place for engagement, inspiration, and recreation.

Would you also like to be part of contributing to this exciting place? Get in touch with us and we will tell you more.

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