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NEW

THE HOLMENKOLLEN SKI JUMP

above Oslo, by Julien De Smedt's JDS Architects,

has now opened for competition. Contrary to what one might think, a ski jump is not a simple job, an excuse for an architect to go wild. ↗

This picture The jump could be the longest cantilever in the world.



OSLO

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This picture The ski jump conceals a large number of functions Below A view from the top of the cantilever

A multitude of strange spaces had to be accommodated, De Smedt says: the ski jump itself, the judging booth, the spectators areas, a ski museum – even a private lounge for the Norwegian royal family. De Smedt’s strategy was to combine all of these awkward elements into one single built form. “Magically, everything fits in there,” says De Smedt.

The strategy is successful. The sweeping curve of the superstructure remains unified all the way down to the arena at the bottom, and the spectacle of the ski-jumping is accentuated by expressing the tower as a large, gravity-defying truss. De Smedt suspects this might be “the longest cantilever in the world”. One of the results of this is that the lifts inside the tower have to run at an angle from a lobby carved out of the mountain, adding a certain James Bond villain charm to



the structure – and a reminder of De Smedt and Bjarke Ingels’ 2008 Mountain Dwellings.

Rather than the structural achievements, however, what really excites De Smedt is the extension of the public realm to the very top of the tower, in the form of a public viewing

gallery. “It’s social, just like an urban square, but obviously it’s floating above the city,” he says. With all the drama of this structure it seems a little strange for De Smedt to be most proud of this small aspect of the project rather than the technical theatrics of the form, but he

needed to push hard for the platform not to be caged off. It’s a good thing too, as from this precarious vantage point visitors can enjoy a magnificent view down to the city below, because, as De Smedt says, “Oslo is an icon as well.” **DOUGLAS MURPHY**