

# DESIGN & CRAFT

## Overview

That Denmark has had more impact on modern design than perhaps any other country in the past century has been a mixed blessing. It has struggled ever since to live up to its heyday of production and ingenuity of design spearheaded by a collection of world-renowned, still-revered household names from the mid-century. But it's not all bad news either. Just as the country pioneered a new way of thinking about and making furniture and homeware in the post-war period, so it is today extending the boundaries of how design can impact daily life. And it's not just chairs and tables. In 1997 Denmark was the first country in the world to incorporate design into its political agenda, with a view to shaping social and corporate welfare. The country today is one of the leaders in understanding the value of design as a vehicle for systemic change across business, politics and society. — HM

## Q+A

### Thomas Lykke

Founder of OeO design consultancy

Lykke (*right*) founded OeO in Copenhagen in 2003 with a vision to revitalise the state of Danish design, nurturing a young generation and helping businesses to realise their full potential.

### What sets Danish design apart from its Scandinavian neighbours?

What we share is human and democratic values in design. Where we're different is that we've assimilated influences from other cultures.

### Is there a good support network in place for young Danish designers?

We don't have initiatives for young designers as you find in Holland or Singapore. My advice is to explore the world – talent is only 10 per cent of success, the rest is hard work and building international relations.



### How is the contemporary Danish design scene?

Over the past decade there are new players taking risks again, looking to the international stage.

### What does OeO do?

We help companies realise their business potential through design, combining strategic thinking with a conceptual approach. — HM [oeo.dk](http://oeo.dk)  
See our report on *Stellar Works* in the main magazine

## Preserving skills

*Keeping things Danish-made*

Danish manufacturers, like others all over Europe, are facing tough competition from companies outsourcing their production to Eastern Europe and the Far East. Though many of the larger brands now outsource, there is a growing commitment to preserve heritage skills in the hands of Danes. Georg Jensen has found a halfway solution. Its stainless-steel manufacturing takes place in the Far East but last year, thanks to turning profit for the first time in seven years, the brand has been able to keep all silversmithing in its Copenhagen workshop, and has a thriving apprenticeship scheme. — HM [georgjensen.com](http://georgjensen.com)



## In the shadow of Jacobsen

*Escape from the mid-century*

Denmark has arguably the biggest mid-century modern design heritage. A brief visit to the Kunstindustrimuseet in Copenhagen reveals how significant the great Danes have been in developing what we understand as modern furniture. No one looms larger than Arne Jacobsen; you'll find his

stamp in almost every home, café and shop throughout Denmark. This continued homage to the mid-century master shows a healthy appreciation of his legacy, but there's an argument that it has prevented younger designers from stepping out of his shadow onto the international stage. It's only in the past 10 years that there's been a concerted effort to look forward and not just back. — HM



## Rud Rasmussen

*Master of Danish craftsmanship*

You might have to look a little harder to find it than five decades ago but Danish craft is still some of the finest in the world and Rud Rasmussen's showroom and workshop in Copenhagen is all the proof you need. The workshop started in 1869 and continues to build on attention to detail and craftsmanship. Producing designs from masters such as Kaare Klint, Mogens Koch and Børge Mogensen, this is Danish design and craft, past and present, at its very finest. — HM [rudrasmussen.com](http://rudrasmussen.com)

## Font design

*A nation of creative types*

Danish font design is a thriving and enterprising scene. Copenhagen-based e-Types is leading the way, designing fonts for Danish newspapers, Danish ferry brand Bornholmer Færgeren and even Google. Last year the digital foundry opened a store, Playtype, in the Vesterbro district of the capital, selling home-grown fonts and a series of posters and mugs. Elsewhere Nina Lee Storm has a small but prolific agency in Middelfart and sells her hand-carved fonts to local businesses, KLM and the Royal Danish Air Force among others. — HM [playtype.com](http://playtype.com); [leestorm.dk](http://leestorm.dk)  
*See our film on [monocle.com](http://monocle.com)*



## CODE

*Danes need a great design fair*

CODE (Copenhagen Design Fair) had its second event in September and though there were some brilliant brands on show, such as Artefact (right), there needs to be a more concerted approach to lure Danish companies and designers from Stockholm's furniture fair in February back to home turf. — HM [copenhagendesignfair.dk](http://copenhagendesignfair.dk)



## Secondhand shopping

*Long live Danish furniture!*

Given the founding Danish principle of everyday design is making things to last, there's a wealth of secondhand homeware shops the length and breadth of the country. That mid-century Danish furniture and homewares last so well – indeed many would argue it only improves with age – maybe explains why homes, restaurants, cafés and bars favour buying secondhand rather than new, contemporary design. — HM

## New Nordic design

*Not everything is stuck in 1957*

Though it's hard to escape all things mid-century in Danish design, the past five years have seen a surge from younger companies. This new Danish wave, spearheaded principally by Normann Copenhagen, Mater and Muuto, has by no means severed its ties with the past, but rather focused on working and experimenting with new forms, new designers, new marketing and sales strategies. Normann has a sumptuous Copenhagen concept store, Mater wears its ethical design principles on its sleeve, while Muuto has cornered the market for younger consumers. Together these brands don't just provide a platform for younger, homegrown designers to see their products in production; they are successful brands paving the way for a new generation of Danish design. — HM [normann-copenhagen.com](http://normann-copenhagen.com); [mater.dk](http://mater.dk); [muuto.com](http://muuto.com)



## The INDEX: Award

*Aiming to be a big hitter*

The biennial INDEX: Award, which began in 2005, is arguably the most succinct proponent of Denmark's commitment to contemporary design. Financed by the state of Denmark (the Crown Prince is the patron), it is lauded as the most lucrative design award in the world, with a prize value of €500,000.

The INDEX: Award celebrates design as a solution to problems in five categories: body, home, work, play and community. The 2011 winners included Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena's Elemental social housing project and Yves Behar's "VerBien" or "See Better to Learn Better" scheme to provide Mexican children with free eyewear. — HM [designtoimprovelife.dk](http://designtoimprovelife.dk)

## Best toys

*The art of putting design into fun*

One of Denmark's more playful exports is its toys. The wooden animals by Danish greats such as Kay Bojesen and Hans Bølling have had a second life thanks to recent reissues by Rosendahl and ArchitectMade respectively. It's not just wooden animals though. Lego is one of Denmark's most enduringly successful, privately owned companies. Founded by Ole Kirk Christiansen in 1932 in Billund, the ubiquitous plastic building blocks have travelled a long way since. Net sales grew by an impressive 37 per cent from 2009 to 2010 and Lego is now the world's third biggest toy manufacturer. In addition to the original Legoland park at Billund, opened in 1967, Legoland Windsor, California, Deutschland and Florida are soon to be joined by a new park in Malaysia in 2012. — HM



**Big school:** The historic Danish Design School has merged with the Glass and Ceramic School of Bornholm, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the Danish School of Architecture.

## Global names

*Danish interior domination*

Denmark is home to some of the global domestic and contract markets' most successful, recognisable brands. Vola bathroom fittings, Erik Jørgensen sofas, Kvadrat fabrics, Carl Hansen furniture, Gubi lighting, Stelton kitchenware, Royal Copenhagen ceramics – you'd be hard-pushed to find an interior in the developed world that isn't home to something of Danish origin. Perhaps the most instantly recognisable is Fritz Hansen, which holds the licence for Arne Jacobsen's ubiquitous Egg and Swan chairs. Jacob Holm, president of Fritz Hansen, explains how this legacy, though a lifeblood for the company, doesn't mean it's resting on its laurels: "Our tradition in working with visionary designers is carried forward today by partnerships with international designers who interpret Fritz Hansen's design values in their own way." — HM



## Montana

*A contemporary success story*

Based in Haarby on the island of Funen, Montana Møbler is one of Denmark's more contemporary manufacturing success stories. As with so many of the resilient design companies that have managed to keep production local, Montana is devoted to making one thing brilliantly: shelving and storage. It was founded in 1982 by Peter J Lassen who designed the basic Montana system, which today is customisable from 42 basic units and 49 lacquered colours and surfaces. Every element is still made and assembled in its Haarby factory and, though its export markets are relatively local, now run by Lassen's son Joakim, Montana is expanding pragmatically. Montana has showrooms in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo and Köln and has seen its turnover double to €30m in the past decade. — HM [montana.dk](http://montana.dk)

**Look and learn:** The Danish Design Museum has a permanent exhibition about Denmark's formative history of design using the people and things that have shaped modern design.

**Gifted:** The Trusteeship Council Chamber in New York's UN headquarters was a gift from Denmark to the US. Designed by Finn Juhl, it is being refurbished and will be unveiled in 2012.