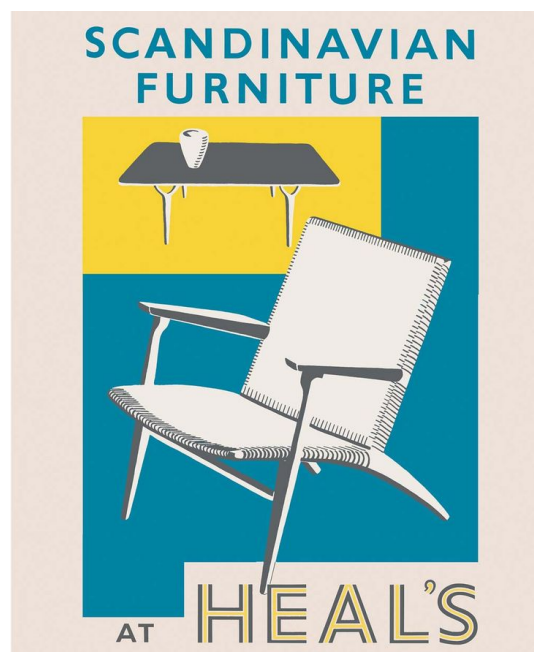




The Origins

In 1951 the exhibition, *Scandinavian Design for Living*, was held at Heal's Furniture showroom in London (Halén 2005). Though the exhibition was comparatively small in international exposure, it marked the first time that the term *Scandinavian Design* was used to describe collectively furniture and lighting design from Scandinavian countries, helping to bring into existence the concept of *Scandinavian Design*. Over the next few years, numerous international exhibitions with *Scandinavian design* in the title and exhibiting *Scandinavian products* cemented *Scandinavian Design* into the design lexicon.



Original artwork for the 1951, Heal's, Scandinavian Design for Living exhibition poster.

Numerous commentators have remarked upon the concept of Scandinavian Design, (which is sometimes referred to as Scandinavian Style), coming into existence as a marketing tool to promote design from the Nordic countries. Designers working in the Scandinavian, Nordic, countries post World War II seemed to share similarities, linking them not just geographically but thematically in design approaches. As Nelson (2004) says, 'The phrase, Scandinavian Design, is only about fifty years old.' The so-called 'Golden Age' of the 1950s is often cited as the apex of the design movement, when an unparalleled volume of international design icons emerged from Scandinavia (Nelson 2004). In the introduction to her book, *New Scandinavian Design*, Nelson asks if 'there is such a thing as Scandinavian Design?' She found that 'During the processes of assembling the volume, this was by far the most common question that arose during conversations with hundreds of contemporary Scandinavian designers, curators, policy makers and entrepreneurs (Nelson 2004).' Was the 'Golden Age' of Scandinavian Design symptomatic of a paradigm shift? Was there an underlying methodology or philosophy that led to this phenomenon? Or was it nothing more than a marketing tool? No manifesto, guidelines or parameters were ever published, so why did so many designers and architects from Scandinavia produce work that could be linked thematically, or was the link arbitrarily attributed to them? If the term Scandinavian Design has a date given to its inception does also have a date given to its death; or is still alive today?

Scandinavian Context

Scandinavia is a patchwork of countries at the top of Europe, stretching into the Arctic, comprising Denmark, Sweden and Norway which share a linguistic link. Finland and Iceland are often included in Scandinavia due to the close historical, political and geographical ties; the term given to the grouping of all these countries is Nordic. For my purpose, I shall refer to all the countries as Scandinavian, as Scandinavian Design is commonly referred to as originating from all five countries. The Scandinavian countries' combined land mass is greater than Britain, France and Spain put together, upon which live around 24 million people, mostly residing in the agriculturally rich south, where most of the large towns are located. The regional identity is partially derived from the fact that most of Scandinavia is separated from the rest of Europe by the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia and has as Gaynor (1987) states 'preserved both [its] isolation and cultural integrity'. Each of these countries has its own distinct identity and outlook and should be thought of individually, though a collective identity is evident.

Griffiths (2002) remarks that 'although the origins of the Scandinavians are masked by time, and have always been the subject of disagreement and controversy, there is no doubt that from a linguistic point of view the Danes, Swedes and Norwegians were closely linked; the Finns were entirely separate. The closeness of the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian languages has allowed these groups to understand and co-operate with each other. For the Finns the task has been much harder despite their determination to be identified with Scandinavian attitudes, values and policies.' [v] Until the 1920s, all educated Finns spoke Swedish, though Finnish became increasingly generally spoken after independence in 1917.

The Origins of Art and Design within Scandinavia.

In the 1530s the Reformation turned Scandinavia Lutheran (Steffensen 2007). From the Sixteen hundreds, Scandinavian furnishing styles were based on external Renaissance influences which young nobles, who travelled through Europe, had brought back to Scandinavia, particularly to Denmark (Derry 1979). In the Eighteenth Century, the beginnings of a native Scandinavian neo-classicism emerged, popularised by the court of King Gustav III of Sweden (1746-1792). It became the dominant furniture style, filtering down within Scandinavian society and is still influential today (Morley 1999). In the Nineteenth Century Biedermeier, Jugendstil and Secession movements influenced the development of Scandinavian furniture, particularly in Denmark and Sweden (Morley 1999). The prevailing influence in Scandinavian furniture design, between the mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century, was National Romanticism. In Finland, Norway and Iceland this was due to popular desire to express indigenous cultural national identity suppressed under imperial and monarchical hegemony. In Denmark and Sweden National Romanticism arose due to their loss of Schleswig-Holstein and Finland respectively (Bony 2005). This combined with the British Arts and Crafts movement and was overlaid with the Scandinavian Neo-classicism (Morley 1999), though emphasis varied from country to country.



Eliel Saarinen's chair from the Koti (home) collection, 1903. The chair alludes to the Finnish Karelian artistic tradition, form which the National Romanticism drew inspiration (Fiell 2002)[1].

What is Scandinavian Design?

'A Study of present-day Scandinavian design' wrote Beer (1975), 'is a basic lesson in sound design principles and dependable artistic taste. It has worldwide appeal, the ability to blend harmoniously with other periods and styles, and suitability for today's living. Its essence is the insistence that useful articles should be, not just sturdily constructed, but also beautifully formed.'

'Traditionally, Scandinavian design has been associated with simple, uncomplicated designs, functionality and democratic approach. These are the characteristics that must be reassessed in the light of recent research on modernism. In any case, Scandinavian design provides us with a paradigm in order to understand the making of the modern world, and we see that it still has meaning for people the world over. The concept has been a substantial theme for scholarly debates, enlightening exhibitions and marking agendas for the last fifty years.' (Halén 2005)

The concept of Scandinavian Design could be thought of as being quite amorphous and indefinable. The word 'design', loaned from English, was only introduced to Swedish in 1940. The word 'design' assimilated the Swedish words *formgivning* (form giving) and *slöjd* (craft), to give an overarching concept that includes industrial production to craft (Jonsson 2005). Scandinavian Design is often used to describe a particular type of design, of which Nelson (2004) claimed that the 'Golden Age' was represented by 'functionality, modesty, equality, beauty'. As Murphy suggests 'social responsibility and ethical problem-solving' should be included in the qualities of Scandinavian Design as well as empathetic properties. Designers were often trying to address common needs with a humanistic ethos, linked to puritan values[vi] that can be traced back to Lutheranism (Salamon 2005) (Bony 2005). Resourcefulness and efficacy of use of materials is evident. Gaynor (1987) says 'In a land with relatively few resources, simple solutions proved best.' Organic forms, often inspired by nature, are commonly represented. As Fiell (2002) state that this affinity towards 'the natural world rather than the machine, led designers from Alvar Aalto and Arne Jacobson to Jens Quistgaard and Tapio Wirkkala to pioneer the concept of Organic Modernism which became a major theme within Scandinavian Design.'



Tapio Wirkkala's laminated birch platter executed by Marti Linndqvist, 1951, typifying his reverence of the natural world

Many mid-twentieth century Scandinavian designers were influenced by developments in the Bauhaus school, though as Bauhaus design expressions were thought to be too austere, Scandinavian designers generally translated them into a form of Functionalism which held humanist values at its heart a softened Modernism (Fiell 2002). As Falvey pointed out 'A term synonymous with Scandinavian Design is "Humanistic Design"; a parallel drawn not simply because the products are easy to live with but because the underlying philosophy is less ego-driven and more focused on making life better in a practical way.' The high levels of craftsmanship characteristic of Scandinavian countries can be partly attributed to comparatively late industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth century (Sylla 1991) not eroding the craft skills base, as well as the strong tradition of craftsman's Guilds. This craft base has helped through close interaction between designer and craftsman to produce high quality products suitable for industrial production. It is partially through the process of industrialisation of craft traditions that the concept of Scandinavian Design emerged, as seen in the works of Hans Wegner, Peter Hvidt & Orla Mølgaard-Niesen and Kerttu Nurminen.



Hans Wegner, Model no. 551, 1949, lionised as the 'The Chair' due to the 1960 CBS presidential debate with John F. Kennedy. The chair derives its form from craftsmanship approach to furniture construction exemplifying the use of craft as a central theme with Scandinavian Design (Feill 2002).

'The essentialist approach to design the logical arrangement of only those elements which are absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of a particular purpose – practised by Scandinavian designer and makers for centuries as a result of material shortages became an important principle of Scandinavian Design, which in the modern era corresponded with the best approaches to industrial manufacture. (Fiell 2002)

Design encompasses many areas including applied art, engineering and architecture. Many world-famous Scandinavian companies were pioneers in their area of design. These firms, including Volvo, Husqvarna, Nokia, Hasselbald, Fiskars, Electrolux, Bang & Olufsen, Luxo, Ericsson, Lego and Saab, are noticeably product or industrial design oriented. Many such companies absorbed concepts found within Scandinavian Design. The 'movement' of Scandinavian Design is best understood and often referred to as a theme found in Scandinavian lighting, furnishings, interior design, applied arts and (to a lesser extent) architecture, Scandinavian Design exhibitions showed such products.

Individual National Scandinavian Design Approaches

Anker (1970) announced 'Today these countries have so much in common that they appear to be a single entity –at least to the outsider. Their populations have, in ethnic composition, in their way of life, in their religion and in their social and political institutions so many similarities, so much in common, that one might with some justification speak of Scandinavian culture.'

This idea of a homogeneous Scandinavian culture is not necessarily accepted internally. Sommar (2003) pointed out 'From a Scandinavian perspective, the differences between the individual nations were greater than the similarities.' There is a perceived outsider's view of what Scandinavia represents, which can mask individual Scandinavian countries. This masking can partly be ascribed to how their design output has been collectively assessed, as selective similarities have been portrayed together giving rise to a unified impression which does, to a degree, exist, though its exaggeration simplifies disparate national trends. The distribution of centres of excellence within production of goods are to be found in the 'Danish furniture making industry, the Finnish glassmaking industries, or the Swedish consumer product industry.' as stated by Fiell (2002).

Iceland and Norway's relative lack of industries, infrastructure and, until comparatively recently, their poor economies and relatively small populations, (though Iceland and Norway now have some of the highest GDP per capita in the world (Petterson 2008)) are some of the reasons that these countries have not excelled in design output in comparison with the rest of Scandinavia. For this reason the canon of Scandinavian Design features only slender representation of Norwegian and particularly Icelandic work. The heavy investment in education, promotion of design, as well as government assisted international bursaries for design students (2003) has breathed vitality into the current design scene in the two countries.

Political Outlook

One of the binding factors within Scandinavia is a shared political and sociological outlook. Fiell (2002) remarked, 'Perhaps the single most important unifying trend in the Nordic region over the last 500 years has been the movement away from tyranny towards a social world in which the voice, desires and efforts of the individual have played an increasingly significant role – one in which the maintenance of the prosperous, modern, democratic nation has been crucial'. The importance of the rights of the individual is core to Scandinavians' political development, leading to the current political climate of social democratic liberalism which is evident from the 1930s. Modern Scandinavia only came into existence at the beginning of the twentieth century, circa 1920 (Fiell

2002), with all of the countries, particularly Finland, Iceland and Norway, concerning themselves with nation building and defining their national identities, in which design played a major role (Tägil 1995). This political outlook is thought of as one of the most socially progressive and inclusive in the modern world, influencing a pervasive backdrop in which Scandinavian society, culture and design has been formed.

This political viewpoint has been reflected in regional design output which has often had a strong social context within the work. The social context in which many of the designers have worked do not seem to have come from a direct set of doctrines that Scandinavian designers have adhered to, but more an infusion of Scandinavian temperament. It would be false to say that this pan-Scandinavian social/ political context was universally applied to Scandinavian design or ran through out Scandinavian history, but it has had an effect on a large number of Scandinavian designers and was influential in what is termed as Scandinavian Design. This political backdrop is most evident in mid-twentieth century design and is still event in work produced today. The Fiells' suggest (2002) 'For the majority of Scandinavian people, design is recognized not only as an integral part of daily life, but also as a means of effecting social change.'

Anne-Louise Sommer (2006), commenting on the emerging design identity linking it to political development, 'The aesthetics of the designs embodied the vision of a refined modernism as well as epitomizing the Nordic ideals of a growing and democratic welfare state. The notion of 'the good life' saturated the designs. The idea of the 'human approach' was essential to the designers not only in Denmark but in the Nordic countries as well.'

The influential 'Design in Scandinavia' exhibition that toured America for three years started in 1954. Anna Stenros remarks (1999) 'It was no coincidence that the exhibition coincided with the worst stage of the Cold War', as the show was used partly in a political way to show the international community that in terms of society and culture Scandinavia (and Finland in particular) belonged to the Western democratic world (Fiell 2002).

Theory Supporting Scandinavian Design.

Only a few Scandinavian writers and thinkers were influential in helping to set boundaries in which twentieth century Scandinavian design has evolved. The most prominent commentators that shaped twentieth century Scandinavian Design were Swedish; though intellectual discussion emanated from all Scandinavian countries, partly from the writings of practitioners and architects, often with universities and schools promulgating individual lines of thought. Apart from the time of the World Wars, the Scandinavian countries and particularly their capitals, have benefited from excellent transportation links throughout the twentieth century, which combined with the linguistic similarities between the countries, has enabled easy communication of ideas.

Many of these ideas have roots based in the commentators' reactions to the poverty they saw around them, which was prevalent in Scandinavia in the fin de siècle years and early twentieth century. Griffiths (2004) reporting on the plight of the Swedish urban poor says that 'A study of urban workers in Stockholm in 1895 found that 17 per cent lived in one room with no kitchen, 42 per cent had one room and a kitchen. Most Stockholm workers spent twelve hours at work a day'

Perhaps the most important and commonly referred to writers and thinkers connected to Scandinavian Design are Ellen Key and Gregor Paulsson.

Ellen Key

Ellen Key (1849-1926) was an influential Swedish ethical thinker and literary essayist whose published works covered social reform, education, individualism and the home. 'Her particular standpoint' concluded Gunnela Ivanov (2004) 'claimed a sort of causal relationship between beauty and the moral good, a "religion of beauty" with a basis in an ideal home environment, including furniture and kitchenware.' In her 1899 essay, *Skönhet i Hemmet* 'Beauty in the Home', she discusses the nature of design and what designers should aspire to (Lengborn 1993). In this essay, echoing William Morris, she introduces the widely disseminated phrase *Skönhet för Alla* (Beauty for All) which became a rallying cry for many Scandinavian designers who tried to produce goods that would bring affordable beauty to the home. As Key says in *Skönhet i Hemmet*, 'Not until nothing ugly can be bought, when the beautiful is as cheap as the ugly, only then can beauty for all become a reality.' (Nelson 2004)

Gregor Paulsson

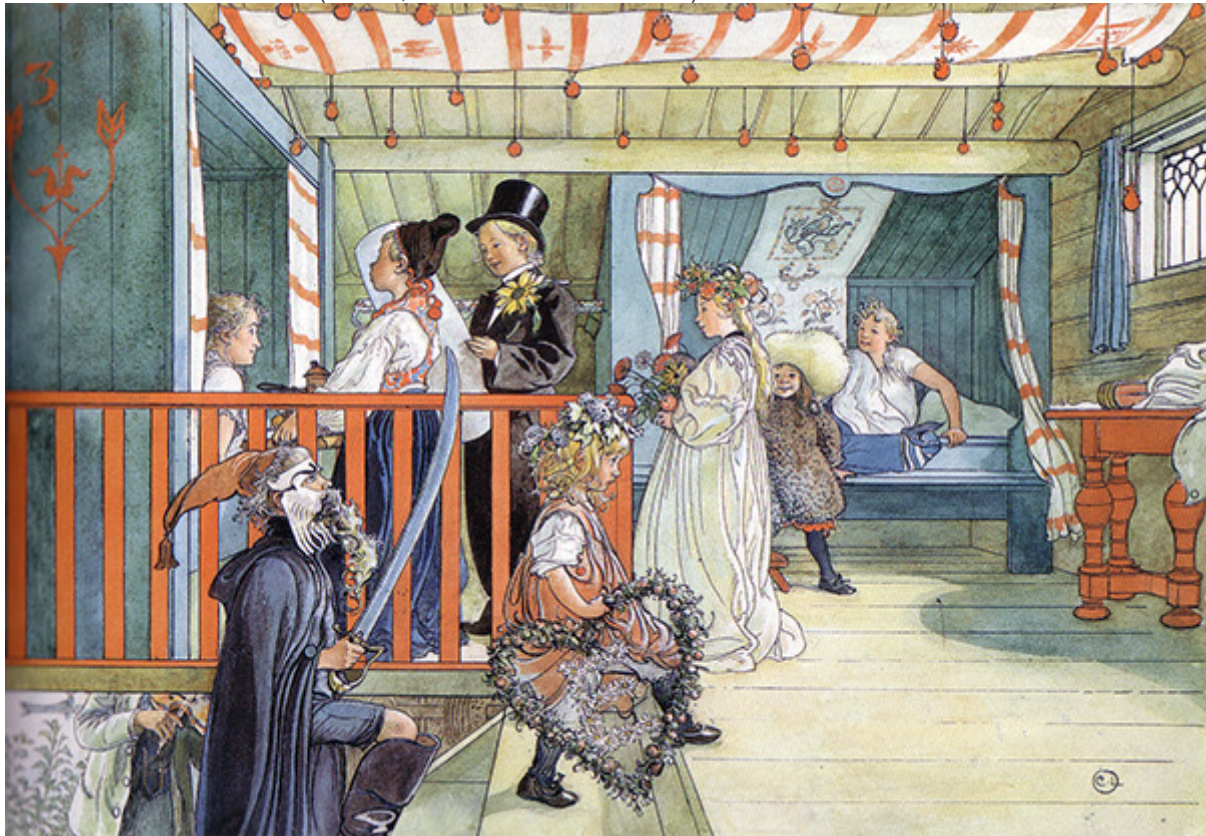
Gregor Paulsson (Sweden, 1899-1977), who trained as an architect, was the head of the influential Svenska Slöjdföreningen (Swedish Society of Industrial Art), during the decisive years 1920–1934. Ivanov (2004) comments, 'Paulsson's contribution was his critical stand against exclusive elitism and attempt to adapt it all to a sort of social democratic pathos, that is, quality consumption for the workers and the people at large.' The 1919, publication of Gregor Paulsson's influential pamphlet 'Vackrare Vardagsvara' (More Beautiful Things for Everyday Use), urged manufacturers to focus on low wage earners and incorporate better design aesthetic into utilitarian goods. (Jonsson 2005). Paulsson was influenced by the British Arts and Crafts Movement, the Swedish National Romantic Movement and the German Deutscher Werkbund. He wanted an improvement of taste, like the one aimed for by the British Arts and Crafts Movement, though differing from that movement was his positively enthusiastic acceptance of modern technology and industry to the point of expecting that it would inspire new forms, types, or standards for cheap high-quality mass consumption. Jönsson (2005) said 'Crafts practitioners remain trapped in prejudices that have their origin in the fact that the entire crafts movement of the preceding time period had its origins in a reaction against industry.'

Paulsson wanted to embrace new technology to enable a higher standard of living for all, while fostering Swedish traditions. 'Against the background of an increasing industrialization there were attempts to merge art or form with economics' (Ivanov 2004). Today IKEA could be seen as a good example of a company which has partly based its philosophy on the phrase *Vackrare Vardagsvara* and still uses the terminology in its promotional literature.

Early Protagonists of Scandinavian Design

In 1899 Carl Larsson (1853-1919) published his most influential book, *Ett Hem* (A Home), with 24 reproductions of his watercolour paintings undertaken at his home at Lilla Hyttnäs in Sundborn, Sweden, with an accompanying

text. Ett Hem and later publications portrayed the ideal Swedish home and family life, marking the beginning of Swedish Style (Snodin, Stavenow-Hidemark 1997). Snodin and Stavenow-Hidemark (1997) state that 'The Larsson ideal, unpretentious and family centred, and carried out in small light rooms economically furnished, was found to fit exactly the needs and conditions of modern life. At the same time the real house at Sundborn began to be re-examined and was seen to contain many practical ideas, related by commentators to the functionalism which had dominated Swedish design since the 1930s. With the advent in the 1960s of mass producers of good design, notably IKEA, was inevitably among those selected and has since reached a world market through that firm's international success.' (Snodin, Stavenow-Hidemark 1997)



Carl Larsson, Nameday in the Storehouse, 1898, from the Ett Hem publication. This picture illustrates a simple aesthetic that has been adopted by much of Swedish and Scandinavian design (Snodin & Stavenow-Hidemark).

The Birth of Scandinavian Functionalism

Functionalism or as it was known in Scandinavia, Funkis, (Kristensen 2007) is perhaps the most important methodology running through Scandinavian Design, though the origins of Functionalism are based in Germany. The birth of Functionalism is closely linked to the Bauhaus School. 1923 the head of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, said of the teachings of his school 'Art and technology - a new unity.' (Fiedler 2000). Heavily influenced by socialist ideology, artistic endeavours should be linked to industrial practices leading to accessible high quality products. In 1925 Gropius said 'A thing is defined by its essence. In order to design it so that it functions well – a receptacle, a chair, a house – its essence must first be explored; it should serve its purpose perfectly, that is, fulfil its function practically and be durable, inexpensive and beautiful.' Of this statement it has been said that it is 'the

most succinct description of a functionalism based on (utilitarian) objects' (Heinz Hirdina, 2001). This understanding of the "essence" and functionality of a product become integral to Scandinavian Design.

The resulting output from the Bauhaus were perhaps too Euclidean in form and too emotionally cold for the Scandinavian temperament. Much of Bauhaus design often imposed rather than responded to human needs. In 1950 Reyner Banham commented on the Bauhaus that it was 'A kind of in-deterministic functionalism' Fiell (2002) comment that 'Through its preoccupation with the machine aesthetic, the Modern Movement could never gain a real and substantial foothold in Scandinavia, although their designers shared many of its fundamental goals, including the creation of well-designed democratic objects for everyday use. The pure stripped-down Functionalism of Bauhaus design lacked the humanism that was [and still is] such a vital characteristic of Scandinavian design. It is, therefore, understandable that it was Scandinavian designers who first offered the world a more accessible and less doctrinal form of modernism, with softened forms and natural materials.[v](Fiell 2003). As Iziercich (1999) states, 'as the influence of Functionalism began to permeate Scandinavian design principles, it gave designers the opportunity to create works which were recognised both locally and internationally as, for example, distinctively Finnish or unmistakably Danish.'

The 1930 Stockholm Exhibition

It was the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, visited by five million people, primarily organised by Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940) that unleashed Functionalism upon Scandinavia[vii]. (Jonsson 2005). Of this exhibition Laursen[viii] (1999) suggests that Scandinavian design history is divided into a 'before and after' Stockholm. Shand (1930) commended the fact that 'Sweden has deliberately elected to turn her back on the fields of her former triumph [graceful neo-classicism] to explore the uncharted currents of the Modernist Maelstrom'



Erick Gunnar Asplund, Model no. GA-2 armchair for Nordiska Kompaniet, 1931 (Feill 2002)

Kaare Klint

In Denmark, Kaare Klint's teachings laid the foundations for the philosophical basis of modern Danish furniture design. Many of his pupils, including Nanna Ditzel, Grete Jalk, Hans Wener, and Børge Mogensen, were to become the vanguard of Danish modern furniture designers. Klint (1888-1954) studied fine art before training as an architect in his father's practice which founded Le Klint lighting company (Fiell 2002). In 1924, having spent four years working independently as a designer, he was made a lecturer at Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (Royal Copenhagen Academy of Fine Arts), helping to establish the furniture department. In 1944 he became the professor of architecture while he still played a prominent role in the furniture department, until the year of his death (Julier 1993). In the 1920s, his pioneering work in the field of anthropometrics led to the first major scientific analysis of the human body's relationship to furniture (Fiell 2002). As Anders Munch and Uffe Lentz (2003) point out 'This scientific approach became related to ideas of neo-classicism expressed in formalistic studies of proportion systems'. His furniture and teaching promoted traditional craft techniques, while applying human-centred design principles. This led to numerous



Kaare Klint, Deck Chair for Rud Rasmussen 1933

Only one piece of his furniture was ever industrially manufactured (Fiell 2002), Klint preferring traditional craft workshop production. Due to his high level of technical craft knowledge, his students were grounded in traditional furniture construction. A thorough understanding of workshop practices is evident in the professional output of many of his former students, who often translated craft skills into the Modernist demand for mass-production for which Danish furniture became famed. Craft knowledge applied to mass production can be observed in the work of Ole Wanscher and Peter Hvidt & Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen who trained under Klint.



Kaare Klein's, Ole Wanscher, Model 110, Rosewood Rocking Chair for France and Daverkosen, c. 1951



Peter Hvidt & Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen, AX chair for Fritz Hansen, 1950 – one of the first mass produced Danish chairs.

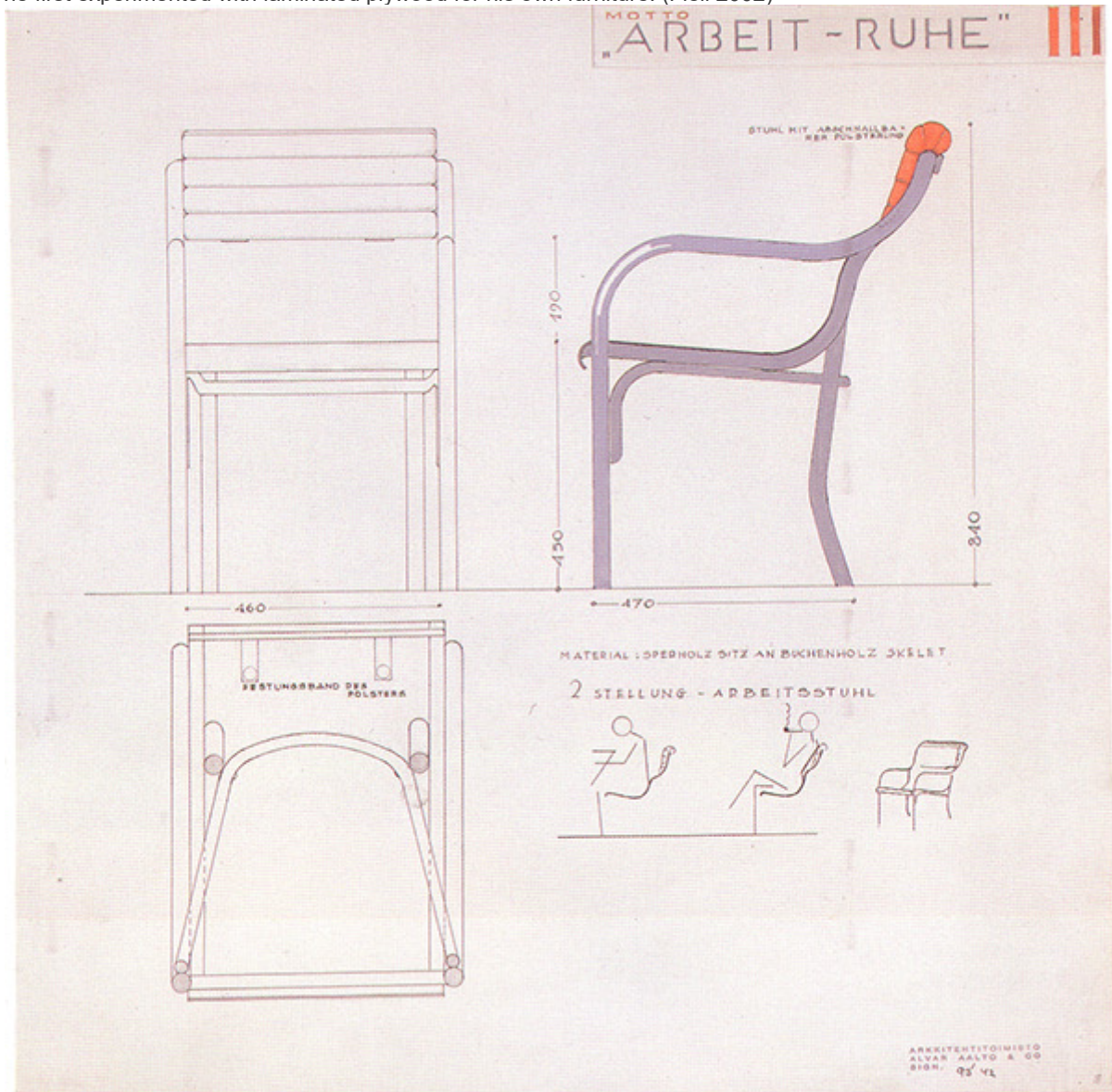
(Fiell 2002)

Alvar Aalto

‘Beauty is the harmony of purpose and form.’

Alvar Aalto (1898 -1976) is usually considered to be Finland’s greatest modernist architect and designer. With his wife Aino Marsio Aalto (1894-1949), he was a pioneer of Modernist Functionalism in Finland and Scandinavia (Fiell, 2002). Aalto gained international prominence through his architecture, enabling him to promote his design work abroad. He extended his design activities, often collaborating with Aino, into the realm of furniture, lighting,

glass and textiles, which he remarked upon: “[...] They are for me branches of the same tree whose trunk is architecture.” (Schidt 1985) In 1927 Aalto changed from the predominant architectural and design style in Finland, modified neo-classicism, advocated in the second decade of the twentieth century by perhaps the most influential early twenty century Finnish Architect, Eliel Saarinen, to a form of functionalism. This was marked by his design of the Turun Sanomat building in Turku (1927), at which time having been inspired by Thonet furniture he first experimented with laminated plywood for his own furniture. (Fiell 2002)



Aalto's entries for the 1929 Thonet Mundus Furniture design competition. (Tuukkanen 2002)

Englund & Schmidt (2003) suggest that 'When Alvar Aalto first encountered the tubular-steel furniture of the Bauhaus in the late 1920s, his reaction was to adapt the Bauhaus design principles to a manufacturing process that better fitted both the Finnish tradition and his own idea of functional furniture. Aalto's main challenge was to find a way of bending wood in the same way that the Bauhaus architects and designers bent steel. After much experimentation, Aalto developed a new technique using steam and heat to bend and mould wood – a technique that is still in use today. 'For Aalto, wood represented a more human, sympathetic material for a better; more democratic world.....His choice of wood can be seen as a political statement, not just a functional

choice (Englund & Schmidt 2003).’ One of Aalto’s motives in using birch-wood was to utilise and add value to Finland’s abundant resource of the material.

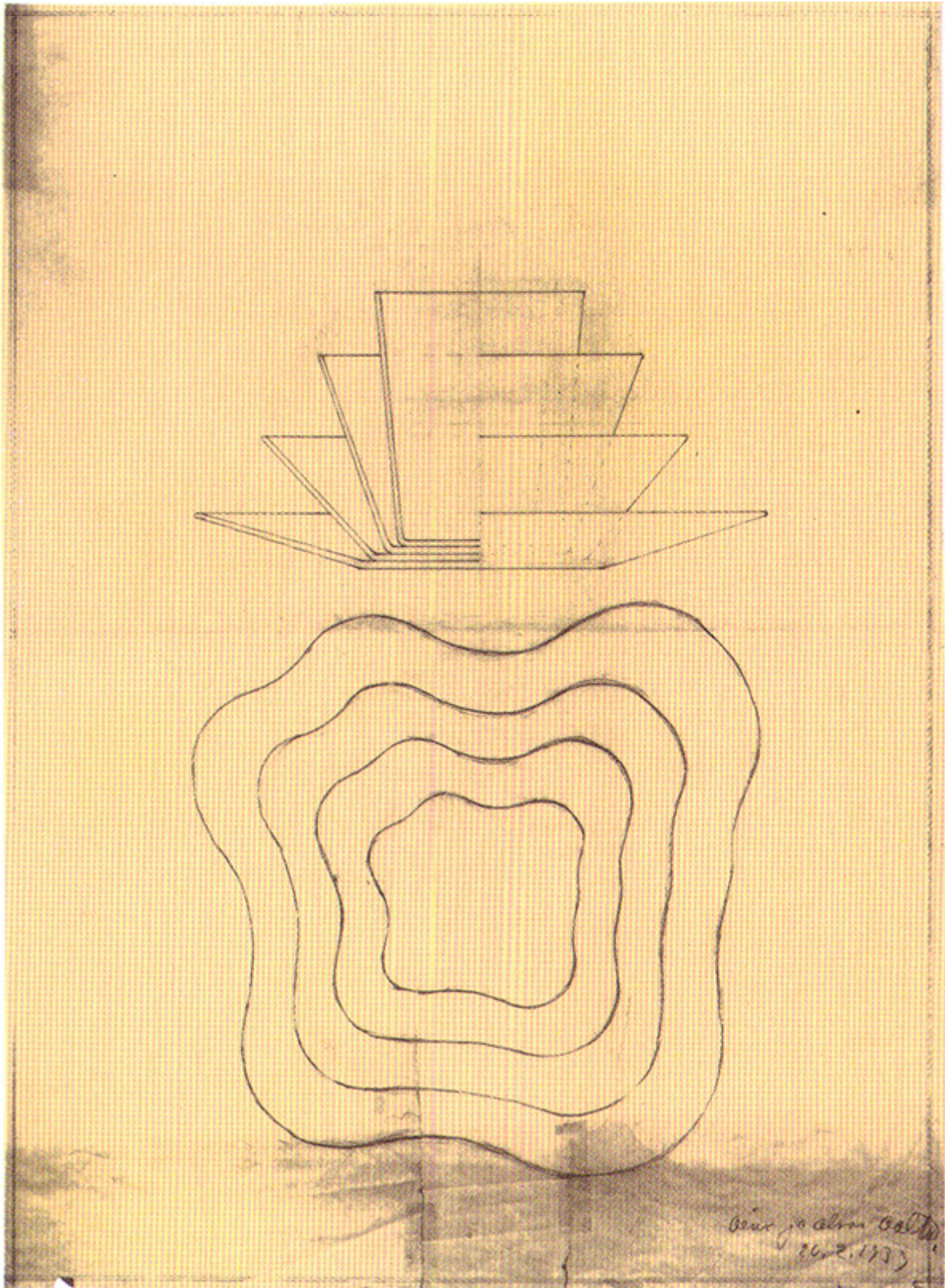
In 1935 he and Aino set up the manufacturing company Artek with Marie Gullichsen. According to Fiell (2002) ‘Artek furnishings are completely synonymous with Modern Scandinavian interior’. The majority of bentwood furniture designed by the Aaltos emerged between 1932 and 1947 and Aalto’s furniture mostly predates the origin of the term of Scandinavian Design in 1951, but has now become retrospectively included and has become a major theme within it (Tuukkanen 2002).



Aalto Easy Chair 1937, Manufactured by Artek, Moulded laminated armrests with cross-woven leather seat (Tuukkanen 2002).

Aalto often drew inspiration from Finland’s natural environment and in particular from lakes, of which Finland has over fifty five thousand. Through abstraction of Finland’s natural world, he derived the curvaceous forms found in his designs. Jackson (1998) called Aalto’s forms ‘profoundly satisfying visual solutions that converted the faint-hearted to the otherwise austere face of modernism’.[i] His innovations in architecture and notably, furniture design helped foster Organic Design,[1] with which Scandinavian Design has become associated (Dempsey 2002)[ii]. According to Jackson (1998) ‘Without Aalto, Organic Design would probably only have existed in a marginal way, as an offshoot of Surrealism’[iii]. Organic Design in Scandinavia became themed in the work of the Finn Tapio Wirkkala (1915-1985), the Danes Arne Jacobson (1902-1971), Finn Juhl (1912-1989) and Verner Panton (1926-1998), and is practiced today by the Finn Teppo Asikainen (b.1968). Aalto’s developments in bending wood for furniture laid the foundations that the Finn Ilmari Tapiovaara (1914-1999), the Swedes Carl-Axel Acking (1910-2001), Bruno Mathsson (1907-1988) and Dane Arne Jacobson amongst others built upon.

[1] Organic Design refers to design with fluidity of form, often connect to expression found within nature. It is a term commonly used by design commentators, though this author cannot find exact definition of it. The first time Organic Design was prominently used was in conjunction with the 1940 Museum of Modern Art exhibition in New York, Organic Design in Home Furnishings (Demetrios 2002). Organic Design is part of the Organic Modernist movement, which encompassed broad range of arts has been better defined, ref Dempsey 2002.



Aalto sketch of Flower vases, 1939



Flower vases by Iittala 1939 (Tuukkanen 2002)

Aalto's influence helped disseminate Organic Design, across the globe. In the late 1930s Aalto lectured at Cranbrook University, Michigan, where Eliel Saarinen had become the head of architecture. Eliel's Saarinen's son, Eero Saarinen and Charles Eames were students there. Eero Saarinen and Eames were directly influenced by Aalto's teachings and became some of the greatest exponents of Organic furniture (Demetrios 2001). The Italian Carlo Mollino (1905-73), the Japanese/ American Isamu Noguchi (1904 -1988), were also influenced by Aalto (Jackson 1998). They, with Eero Saarinen and Eames, demonstrated that Organic Design was not restricted to Scandinavia and, though it has become part of the characteristics of Scandinavian Design, Organic Design could be dissected from Scandinavian Design as a self contained concept, with its own parameters. (Demetrios 2002). *Organic Design is part of the Organic Modernist movement, which encompassed broad range of arts has been better defined, ref Dempsey 2002.*



DCW chair 1945/46 by Charles and Ray Eames was one of their first Organic chairs. Ideas of form adopted from Aalto, have been applied to plywood. The technological advances of the Eames would be referenced by Scandinavian Designers, noticeably Arne Jacobson and Poul Kjærholm (Stungo 2000).



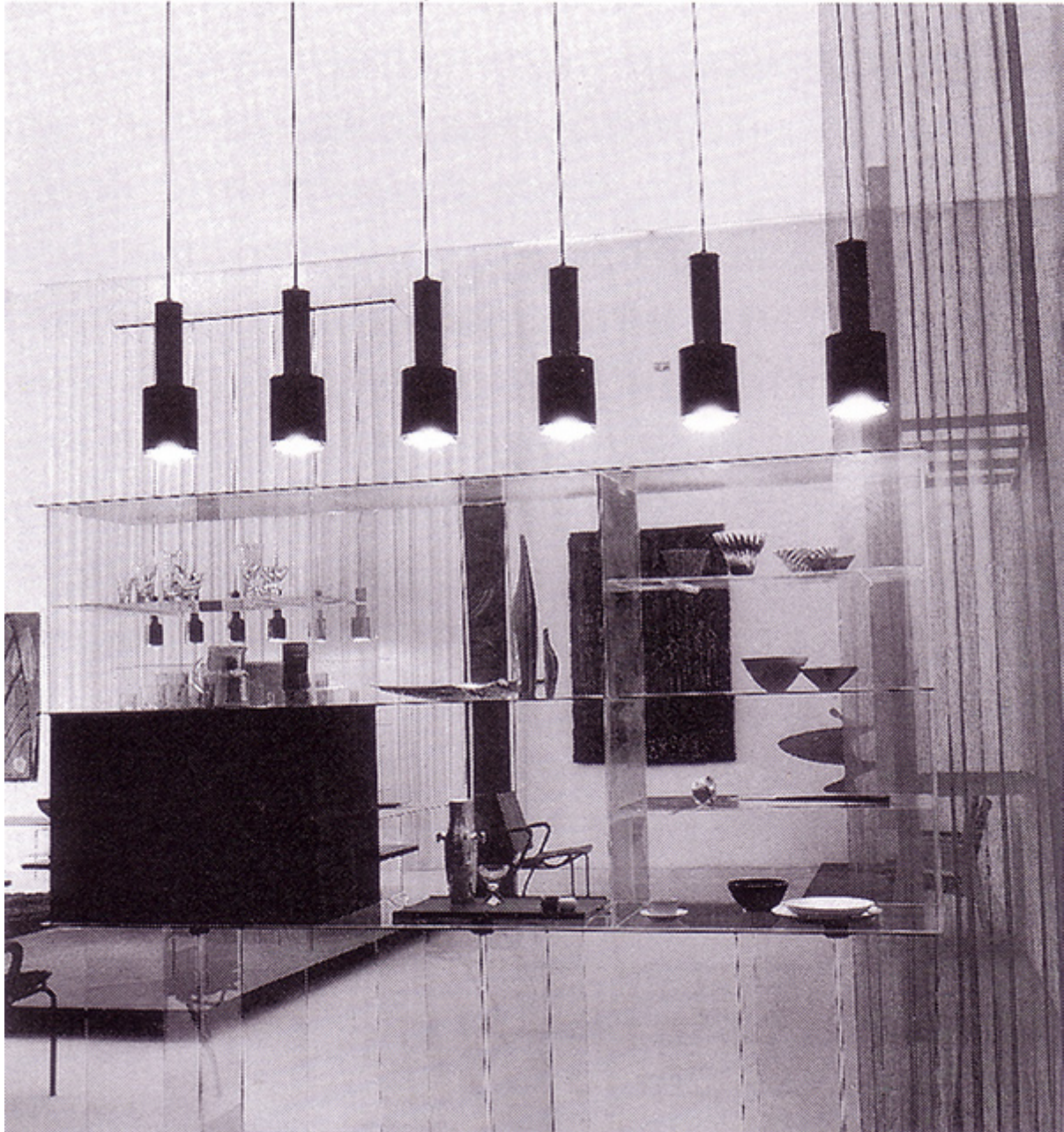
Table by Carlo Mollino, first manufactured in 1950 was original designed for G & A Rosselli Ponti House, is redolent of Aalto forms, with Eames connotations. (Ferrari 2006)

Aalto's legacy was to proliferate Scandinavian Functionalism, containing Organic Modernism, which led to a distinct form of furniture that has now been associated with Finland and Scandinavia. Fiell's (2002) state 'It is Scandinavian designers' promotion of Organic Design that has had the greatest influence on the evolution of Modernism over the last fifty years'.

The Halcyon Years

The 'Golden Age' is a term that refers to the unparalleled international attention that Scandinavian design received after World War Two, due to the prolific output of groundbreaking design by Scandinavian designers working at the height of their creativity (Nelson 2004). This period can be considered to have started around 1951. The Heals exhibition received relatively little international coverage in comparison to the 1951 Milan Triennales, where Sweden, Denmark and Finland (Norway claimed to be too 'poor' to exhibit that year) received great praise, (Sommar 2003) with Demark and Finland winning four 'Grand Prix' awards, two each (Bony 2005).

Bony (2005) talking of the Milan Triennales 'Scandinavia dominated it for 20 years.' Referring the period starting, in 1951, Halén (2005) surmises is most systematic with Scandinavian Design.



Finnish pavilion at the 1954 Milan Triennial, exhibition designed by Tapio Wirkkala. (Stenros 1999)

The Key Exponents

The emergence of Scandinavian Design is underpinned by the unprecedented number of internationally acclaimed products emerging from the 'Golden Age', leading to the critical mass required for comment and contextualisation. This proliferation of talent excelling themselves in those years is partly due to being nurtured within the cultural milieu, though Scandinavia seemed to be blessed with such a quantity of indigenous creative talent, similarly to Renaissance Italy, fortuitousness in the abundance practitioner must have played a role. Key exponents in Scandinavian Design often transcended design discipline boundaries so it is difficult to compartmentalise them into particular types of practitioners. Designers working at the height of Scandinavian

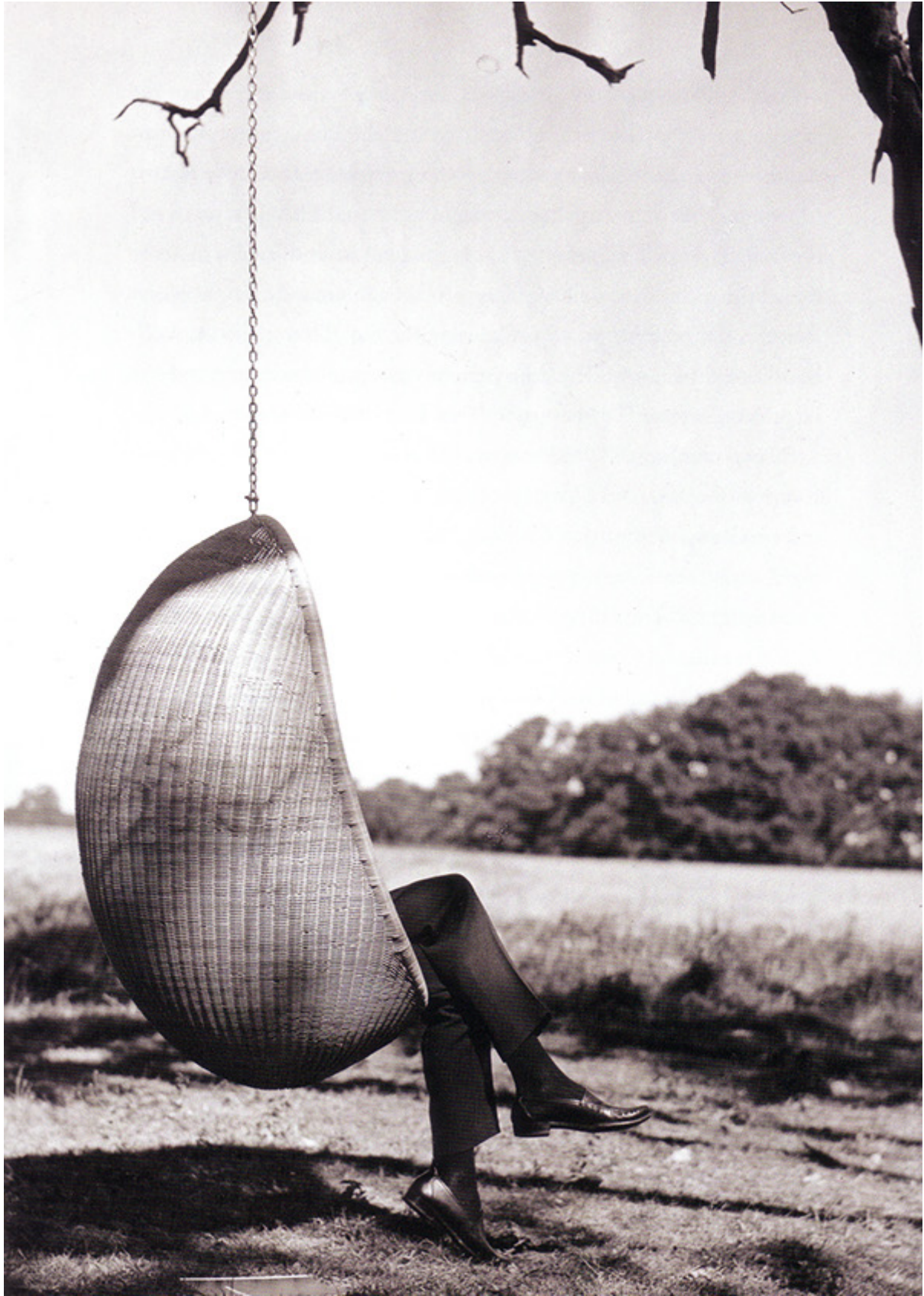
Design included Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobson, Kaj Franck, Bruno Mathersson, Poul Kjærholm, Poul Henningsen, Nanna Ditzel, Kay Bojesen, Carl-Axel Acking, Finn Juhl, Verner Panton, Tapio Wirkkala, Hans Wegner, Ilmari Tapiovaara, Grete Jalk, and Ingegerd Råman.



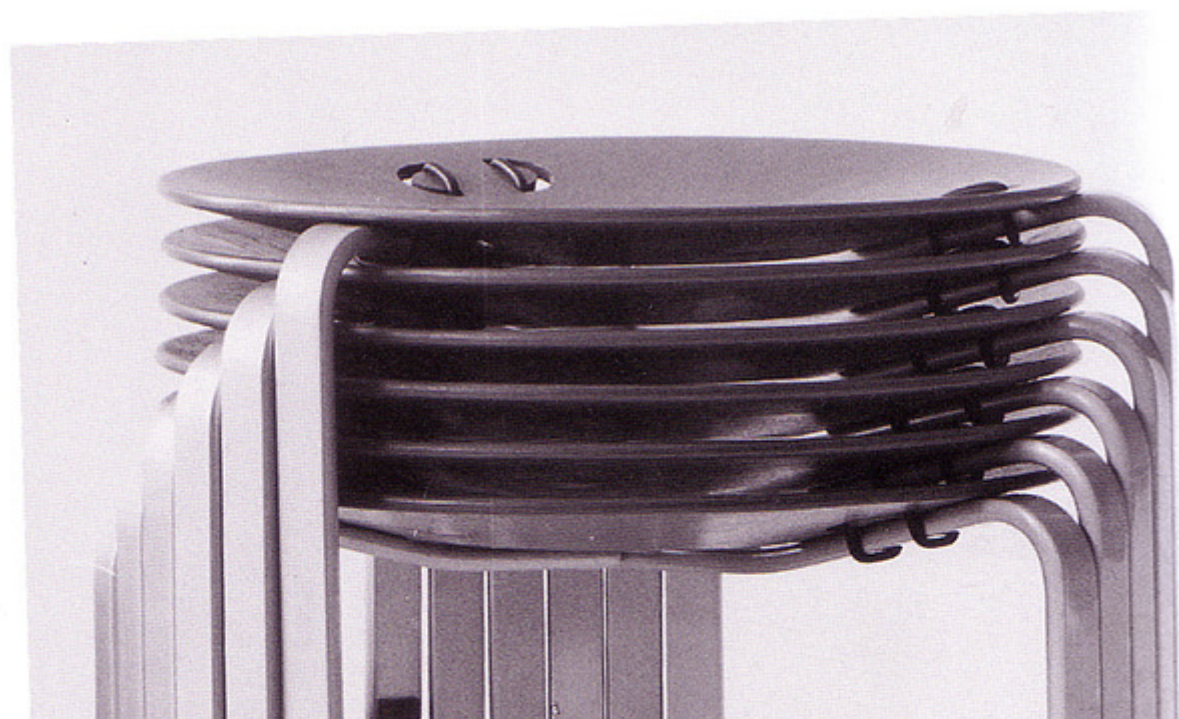
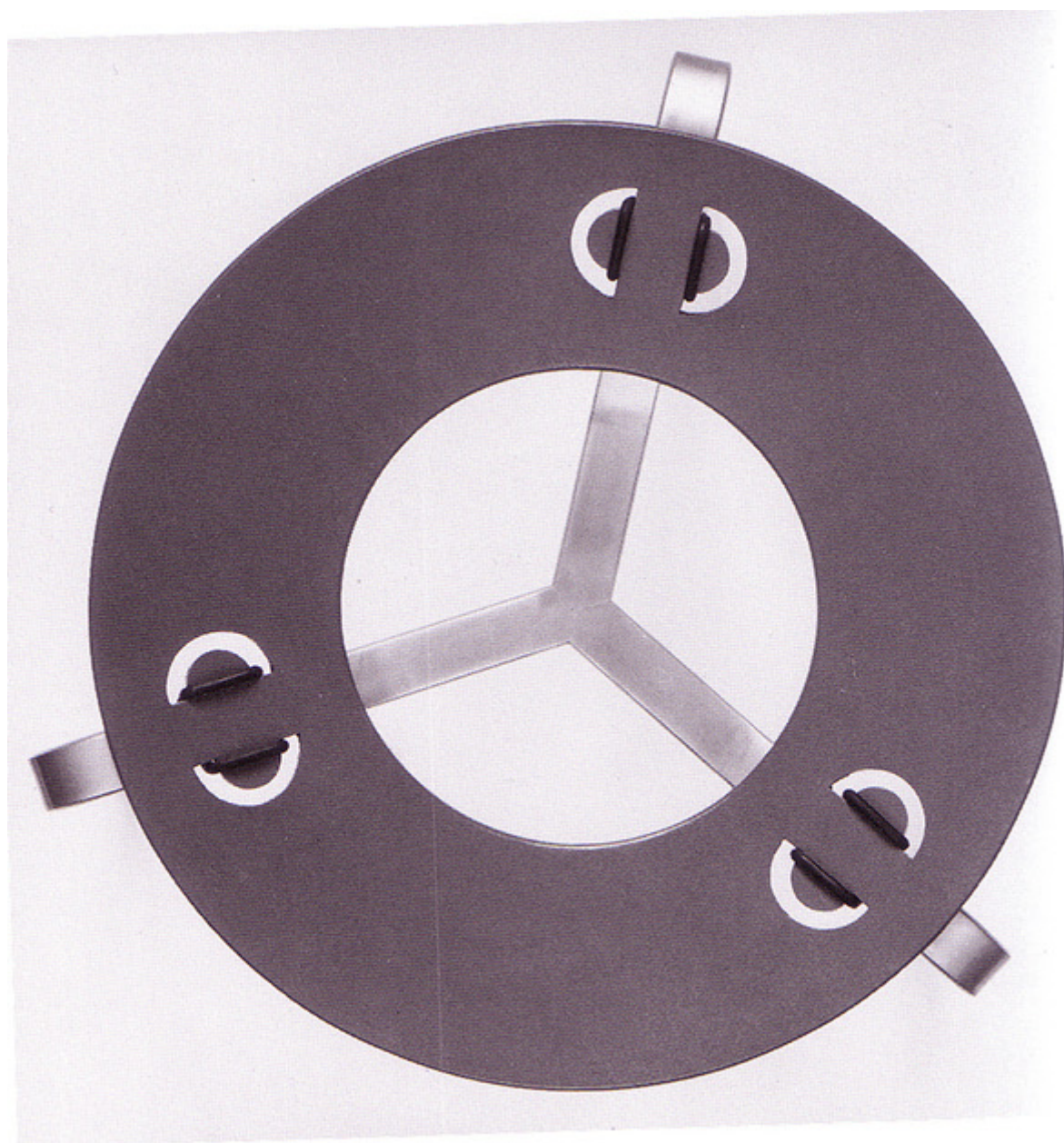
Kaj Franck, glass plaque for Nuutajärvi-Notsjö, c. 1965. It is representative of the colours found in Scandinavian Design (Fiell 2002).

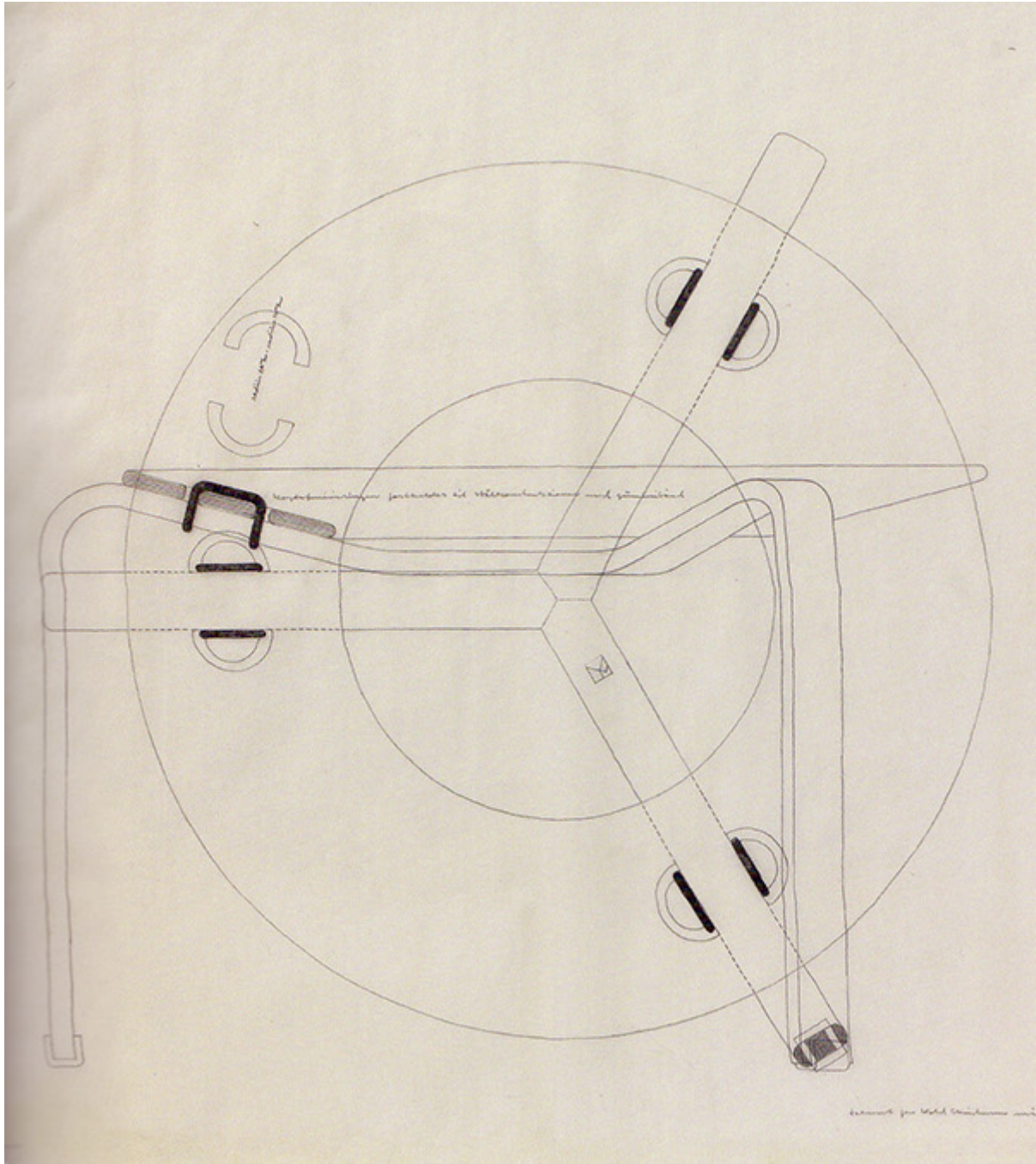


Poul Henningsen, PH Artichoke lamp for Louis Poulsen 1957. Poulsen's lamp demonstrates direct reference from nature, combined with a functionalist understanding of how to disperse light. (Fiell 2002).



Nanna Ditzel, hanging egg shaped chair for R. Wengler, 1957 (Møller 1998).





Poul Kjærholm, PK 33, stool, 1958, (Harling 2001). Kjærholm is one the most celebrated designers from the 'Golden Age'. He reflected Scandinavian design ethos, though he was perhaps more heavily influenced by Bauhaus aesthetics than his contemporaries.

Anna Stenrons (1999) said of the era that 'from the beginning of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s a modernism of high international standards in architecture and design became established in the creation and formation of the environment in public context, and formation and to a marked degree also in private milieus. The tableware, coffee-pots and chairs lionised in later writing and exhibitions belonged to the everyday environment of a large sector of the population.' A form of design cohesion seemed to exist. Munch & Lentz (2003) suggested of Denmark, with regard to Klint's teaching in particular 'The Danish design profession worked in the post-war years within a single paradigm constituted by common delimitations, theories, methods, values and references'

It also reflects the focus of Functionalism as Nelson (2004) states of that era, 'a receptive attitude towards new technology with realistic view of human needs.'

Arne Jacobson

Arne Jacobson (1902-1971) is generally considered the most celebrated architect and designer in post-war Denmark. After graduating in architecture from the Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi in 1927, Jacobson soon became recognised for his modernist approach to architecture with the winning design for the house of the future in 1929 (Fiell 2002). Of Jacobson's design for the Århus Town Hall (1937-1942), the Fiells (2002) say 'it was distinguished by soft, flowing lines that not only revealed a decidedly humanistic approach to Modernism, but also predicted the bold, organic forms of Jacobson's later work'

Jacobson was influenced by Charles and Ray Eames innovations in double-curved steam bent plywood which had been developed for the US air force during World War Two. In 1951, Jacobson persuaded the Danish furniture company Fritz Hansen (which was at first reluctant), to manufacture his stackable, 3 legged, moulded plywood chair. Of this chair, named the Ant, Laursen (1999) comments 'It was Jacobson's economical design that became a commercial success. More than a million Myren [Ant] were sold. This chair is the first true industrial piece of furniture and also the icon of modern Scandinavian Design' Tøjner & Vindum (1996) claim that 'The Ant marked a turning point in Arne Jacobson's career as a designer. With this chair he distanced himself from the Danish furniture tradition and furniture craft, as well as from excessive modernism. (Tøjner & Vindum 1996)



Arne Jacobsen, set of Modle no. 3100 Myren (Ant) chairs for Fritz Hansen, 1951 (Fiell 2002)

The landmark SAS hotel in Copenhagen (1956-60) allowed Jacobson to exercise total design, being responsible for every detail, from the construction of the building to the textiles, light fittings, glasses, cutlery, and furniture and furnishing within it (Fiell 2002). The SAS hotel's futuristic look encapsulated the pervasive optimism of the age (Fiell 2002). The Egg and Swan chairs (1957) designed for the SAS hotel best illustrate the design style of Jacobson's and elucidate Scandinavian design aesthetic. (Tøjner & Vindum 1996).



*Arne Jacobson, Swan chairs in the entrance lobby of the SAS Royal Hotel,, Copenhagen, 1955-1960
(Feill 2002).*

Verner Panton

It could be said that the homogeneity of Scandinavian Design was cracked by the rise to prominence of Denmark's enfant terrible, Verner Panton. Panton (1926-1998) graduated in architecture from the Kunstakademi in 1951. In 1951, he was in Arne Jacobson's office, working on experimental furniture projects including the Ant chair (Fiell 2002). Panton founded his own design company 1955 in Copenhagen to explore innovative architectural and design projects including Cardboard House (1957) and Plastic House (1960). Vegesack & Remmele (2000) point out that it is 'unfettered joy of experimentation, which can be regarded as a central characteristic of Panton's work.' Panton's 1960 Astoria restaurant in Trondheim, with its unusual forms redolent with the Op Art that permeates Panton's career, led Poul Henningsen to comment on the impact Astoria Hotel had on Scandinavian design, "[Astoria restaurant] is a square peg in a round hole' (Fiell 2002). Vegesack & Remmele (2000) commenting on Panton's work between the mid-fifties and mid-seventies, pointed out that 'he had a substantial influence upon the direction and development of inter-national design' (Vegesack & Remmele 2000).

After Panton moved to Basel in 1962, he produced the bulk of his work. The Panton Chair for Vitra (1967) has become Panton's icon of design. The Panton chair was the first ever single-form, single material cantilevered chair, manufactured by one-shot injection moulding, from newly developed material, polyurethane hard-foam (Fiell 2002). Panton conceived his S Chair, for Thonet, in plywood experiments 1955. This expression of form, echoing Gerrit Rietveld's 1934 Z chair, was imbued with organic qualities found in Scandinavian Design. With the production in 1965 the ethos of Scandinavian Design became subverted with Pop sensibility, due to the chair being manufactured from a plastic (Luran-S, a polystyrene thermoplastic), a material which epitomized the zeitgeist in global design trends.



Verner Panton, Panton Chair, 1959-1960, manufactured by Vitra. (Fiell 2002)



Verner Panton, S-chair, Modle 275, for Thonet, 1965 (Fiell 2002)

'With his uniquely colourful and synthetic vision of the future, Panton rejected the Danish tradition of refining existing furniture types and using natural materials, but at the same time held onto the Scandinavian belief that design should first and foremost be about durability, unity and integrity.' (Fiell 2002)

Many of Panton's most acclaimed achievements were undertaken outside Scandinavia. Panton's geographical location never divorced him from the pantheon of Scandinavian Designers. As Panton's reputation grew, it reflected a duality in Scandinavian Design. Panton's work shows a synthesis of Scandinavian Design with pluralistic global design methodologies, which conversely became synthesised into Scandinavian Design via Panton. A Pop playfulness in Scandinavian Design was left in Panton's wake. In the sixties and seventies designers like Jrjö Kukkapour (Finn) and Eero Aarnion (Dane) built on this, eroding the purity and prised open the door to Post-Modernism.



Jrjö Kukkapour, Karuselli (Carousel) chairs for Haimi, 1964-1965 (Feill 2002)



Eero Aarnio, armchair for Asko, c. 1967 (Feill 2002)

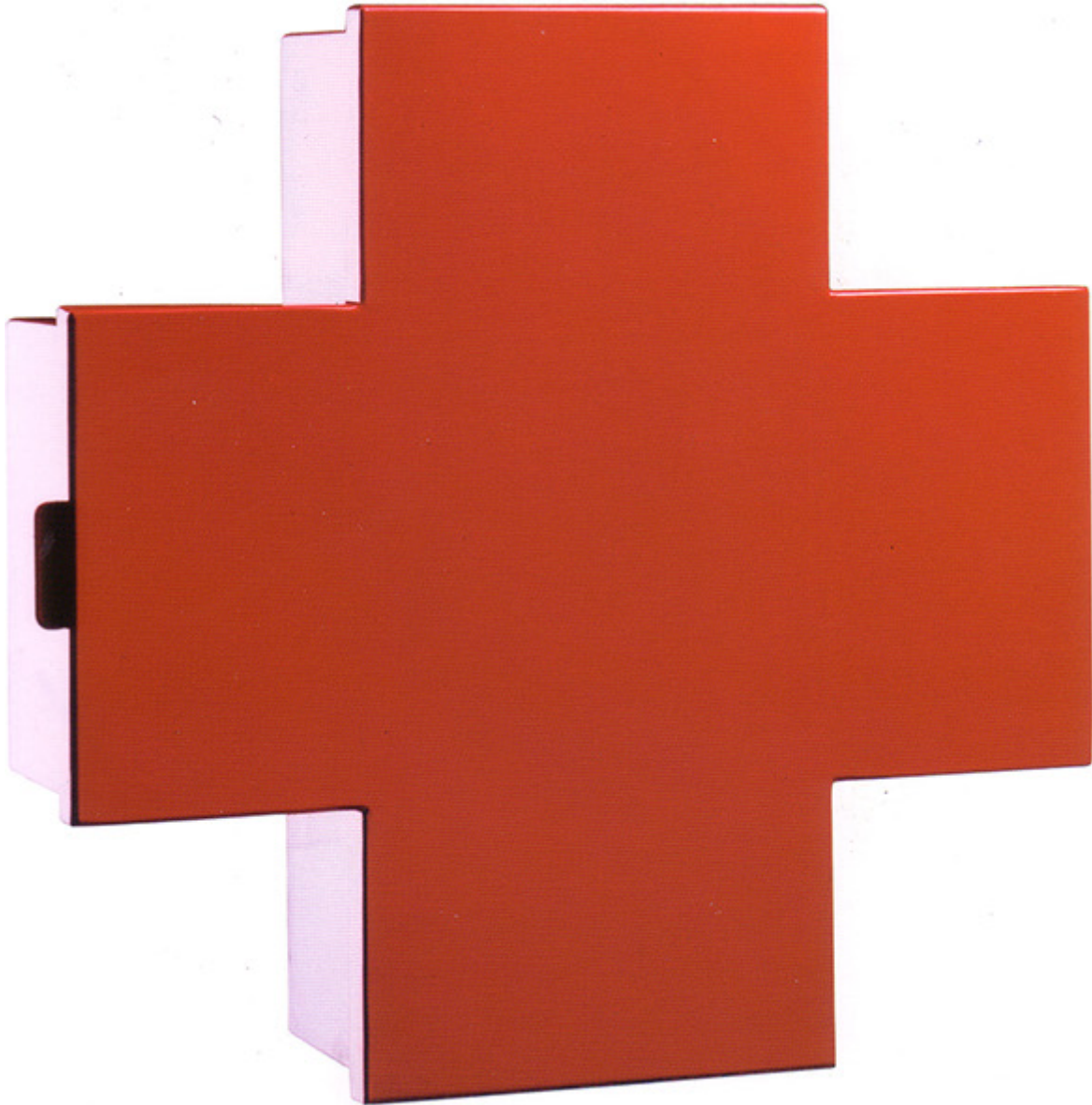
What happened to Scandinavian Design?

The flowering of post-modern design in the 1970s and 1980s, typified by Ettore Sottsass and Memphis, marked a shift of international apprehension, with less focus on Scandinavian Design (Julier 1993) (Halén 2005). Talking of the period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, Englund & Schmidt (2003) say 'Italy continued to churn out a large number of innovative and exciting products, beside which Scandinavian design looked dated and predictable.' The complexity of responding to mass consumerism and rising labour costs did not fit the craft disposition of 'Golden Age' Scandinavian Design that favoured production in small companies (Nelson 2004) (Munch & Lentz 2003). The Ideas in Scandinavian Design was never entirely engulfed by postmodernism had and has integrated with the new trends, as demonstrated by IKEA (Munch & Lentz 2003) (Fiell 2002).



Jonas Bohlin, Concrete chair (self-production), 1981- re-issued by Källemo (Fiell 2002).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s there was resurgence in Scandinavian Design. In this period Scandinavian companies started to reissue "classic designs" (Feill 2002). In this period a new wave of Scandinavian designers started to gain international recognition, with Thomas Erickson, Pia Wellén, Björn Dahlström, and Thomas Sandell working for prominent international manufactures, like the Italian furniture company Cappellini (Englund & Schmidt 2003).



Thomas Erickson, Progetto 9208 medicine cabinets for cabernets for Cappellini, 1992 (Feill 2002)

Twenty First Century Scandinavian Design

Of the current seen there is a new influx of fresh talent, including Mathias Bengtsson, Christian Flindt, Norway Says and Louise Campbell. The cultural heritage of Scandinavian Design is being reappraised; partly in light of its relevance to new environmental concerns (Nelson 2004). From the confines of 1990s minimalism, new forms of expression have emerged, such as ornamentation (Nelson 2004). Laursen (2004) comments 'Functionalism is

now only one of a number of concerns. It is still in there somewhere during the process, but it isn't the most important. The conceptual aspect is more in focus'



Louise Campbell, Between the Chairs for Bahnsen Collection 2003 (Nelson 2004).

Laursen (2004) comments 'Functionalism is now only one of a number of concerns. It is still in there somewhere during the process, but it isn't the most important. The conceptual aspect is more in focus.' This change in priority reflects how the social agenda of previous year has become less relevant to today's practitioner.



Christian Flindt, 2005, Parts of a Rainbow, Producers Flindt Design (Gura 2007)

Of present design in Scandinavia Gura (2007) says 'Though the cultural associations of Scandinavia remain strong, the furniture produced in these countries is no longer so easily identified by the traditional design characteristics with which it was so long associated. Metal and plastics now appear as often as wood, lively

colour is ubiquitous, and silhouettes are refreshingly varied as designers make freer use of curves and asymmetrical forms.'



Mathias Bengtsson, Slice chair, 2002 (Nelson 2004)

Conclusion

A mock funeral service was held in 1980 for the term Scandinavian Design by a group of Oslo designers (Halén 2005).

'The hallmarks of Danish design have been usurped by other designers, according to David Fella of Desgnit, one of Scandinavia's largest design studios. Apple's iPod, for example, is a product which seems to take cues from Danish Design by combining an aesthetic shell with functionality.' (Denmark.DK)

It could be said that the essence of Scandinavian Design is the work emanating from Scandinavia between 1950 and 1970 due to homogeneous caricaturists. Perplexingly it is not exclusive to these dates and has been often referred to as beginning with the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition^[iii] leading to the present, though its continual blurring of definition by commentators in the field has led to much confusion as to what the term means as there are no definitive descriptions, only a general thrust of intertwined observations. There is no doubt that Scandinavian Design does exist. Its shifting parameters could be symptomatic of any art or design movement. The core values can be best observed in the work of many prominent designers working in the post war era.

When talking about Scandinavian Design (or Nordic Design), what is predominantly talked about is Danish, Swedish and Finnish within which there are different design emphases. Norway and particularly Iceland's contribution is limited to more recent developments predominantly after the post World War Two when cohesions in Scandinavian functionalism had started to dissipate. Therefore, the phrase Scandinavian Design is not emblematic of a region design identity, but is more a useful way of conjoining and marketing countries with geographical proximity while masking national design differences and prominences. There were always designers outside Scandinavia, Charles and Ray Eames (America), Robin and Lucian Day (Britain), Geo Pionti (Italy), who worked with similar parameters to those found in Scandinavian design. This is not to say social values emanating from Paulsson and Key

Paulsson's writings had, and still holds, a profound influence, mainly on Swedish designers, though his writings have been absorbed internationally, influencing amongst others Hugh Casson in his organisation of the Festival of Britain. Paulsson's work in retrospect seems to have had little impact on the majority of Scandinavian manufacturers, who still are primarily concerned with producing goods for a wealthy clientele. A superficial impression has been created that Scandinavian Design is concerned with addressing utilitarianism, through price accessibility: public consciousness is imbued with the shadow of the Scandinavian design megalith, IKEA. Paulson's and Key's dictums have been absorbed, though the bias of Scandinavian Design gravitates towards middle to high income customers.

'The hallmarks of Danish design,... have been usurped by other designers, according to David Fella of Desgnit, one of Scandinavia's largest design studios. Apple's iPod, for example, is a product which seems to take cues from Danish Design by combining an aesthetic shell with functionality.'

Without Ikea primarily counterbalancing the Scandinavian manufactures' heavy bias towards producing products that are unaffordable by the poor, the plight of the low earners Paulsson and Key were trying to address seems to be mostly ignored. Fiell (2002) states 'Ainos Aalto and Alvar Aalto's design of inexpensive furniture intended for the home market can be seen as a direct response to the austerity of the time.'^[v] The Aaltos' E60 stool, designed with utilitarian ambition for "the little man" (Stenros 1999), manufactured by Artek, retails in Britain for £117. Artek is typical of many Scandinavian companies in its manufacturing quality and price range, giving a

clear example how much of Scandinavian design has become financially elitist, excluding the poor, who are only able to buy clones by Ikea. Through Ikea the ideas of Paulson and Key have disseminated. So it is possible to view Scandinavian design as a reality, though it has mythic connotations.



Ikea Frosta stool[i] retailing at £7.99



Aalto E60 stool[1], Artek, retailed by Scandium at £117