Erika Lagerbielke describes how she tackled the challenge of designing a wedding present for the Crown Princess on behalf of the Swedish people.
In the 20th century, a roster of names from Scandinavia changed the way the world looked at design and architecture. Their legacy continues to make an impact today, as new and exciting talents emerge.

The lasting impact of Scandinavian design

For such a small region, Scandinavia is big on pioneering design. If it had simply given the world Arne Jacobsen — the Danish-born father of Modernism — that would have been achievement enough. But its list of design names is long and distinguished.

In furniture, there’s Jacobsen, Var Aalto, Poul Kjærholm, Hans Wegner, Vernor Panton and Bruno Mathsson; in ceramics (and other materials), Stig Lindberg; in architecture, Gunnar Asplund, Jorn Utzon, Poul Henningsen; and, of course, Jacobsen and Aalto again. And that’s just scratching the surface.

But it’s the list of design names in the past now; they are still important and enduring. Asplund, Jorn Utzon, Poul Henningsson; in architecture, Gunnar Asplund, Jorn Utzon, Poul Henningsen; and, of course, Jacobsen and Aalto again. And that’s just scratching the surface.

Creative force

Those names are in the past now; but they are still important and enduring. Asplund, Jorn Utzon, Poul Henningsen; in architecture, Gunnar Asplund, Jorn Utzon, Poul Henningsen; and, of course, Jacobsen and Aalto again. And that’s just scratching the surface.

Form and function

Of course, the traditional “form follows function” concept still appeals to the Scandinavian design psyche. It is, says Professor Jones, embedded in its DNA. Professor Erika Lagerbäck is the leading Swedish glass designer who recently created a pre-wedding gift for the Crown Princess couple on behalf of the Swedish people. “Sweden was a poor country for a very long time,” she says. “It has strong roots in a farming society and a harsh climate. And it has big, successful names who promoted the idea of simplicity. Plus, Sweden has a small population and there aren’t that many of us working in the design industry. Within that industry, there’s a general consensus as to what is ‘good’ design. I think that’s part of the reason for our attraction to it.”

Whatever the reason, this publication studies the past, present and future of the Scandinavian aesthetic; and it celebrates those creative spirits who emerged from a region of just 24 million people and changed the design world forever.

TIPS

Take a designer break

1. Copenhagen features various designer hotels. The interior of Hotel Fox, in the city centre, has been designed by 21 international artists, who have turned each room into “an individual piece of art”.

2. The Scandinavia Show 2010, takes place at London’s Olympia Conference Centre, 9-10 October. Design will be showcased as part of the event and include furniture, lighting, fabrics and carpets.

WE RECOMMEND

Professor Ronald Jones
Rising stars to look out for

Hot trends

1. The big designers from Scandinavia making their way over to the UK

2. The best design spots for your holidays
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**Question:** Has Scandinavian fashion seen a change in recent years?

**Answer:** Scandinavian fashion is on the rise, with home-grown designers and high street brands developing international reputations.

Scandinavian fashion is known for its cool elegance and simplicity. Designers such as Paola Suhonen and Hanna Särén have become big names. And so have Stine Goya, Lillemor Kristin Aadnevik, whose designs have been worn by Sienna Miller and Gwyneth Paltrow, among others.

In Sweden, fashion is not high. In fact, it’s understated — and very accessible. Cities such as Stockholm and Gothenburg are making waves in the fashion industry.

*The really clever part of Scandinavian design? Its timelessness.*

**Works of art**

For example, the Oeuf Chair is a regular Scandinavian design feature; it and its counterpart — the Marcel Breuer chair — are both architectural masterpieces. A chair that is works of art. “They’re amazing designers,” says Måleraat. “Their designs are structural and sculptural. It’s their identity.”

The Swedish high street fashion industry is a mix of bigger stores and smaller boutiques. And fashion is, undoubtedly, a passion. “When you dress up, you don’t dress up for others, you dress up for yourself.”

**Stylish simplicity**

The Scandinavian Modernist aesthetic — which is strong in a pared-down elegance — is still prevalent today. Designers such as Arne Jacobsen and Hans Wegner have made waves with their sumptuous furniture and accessories. You can see variations on these designs in any contemporary New York bar.

**Iconic Scandinavian furniture**

- **Designed by Arne Jacobsen:**
  - The Egg Chair
  - The Mim Chair
  - The Ant Chair
  - The Grand Prix Chair

**Egg Chair, by Arne Jacobsen**

“Egg Chair” — one of the most celebrated icons of Scandinavian design — is a self treatment device in the form of an acu-pressure mat developed for relaxation and stimulating energy in the body.

**Recent scientific results have proven that Bed of Nails really helps relieve back pain.**

Bed of Nails is a new phenomenon about to hit the UK. Combining oriental history with Scandinavian modernity, it’s a self-treatment device in the form of an acu-pressure mat developed for relaxation and stimulating energy in the body.

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Rising stars of Scandinavian design

**Question:** The history of 20th century design features a roll-call of iconic Scandinavian names. So, in the 21st century, are more groundbreaking talents being discovered?

**Answer:** Yes, says Professor Ronald Jones of the famous Konstfack design school in Stockholm. Watch this space...

“There’s something about Swedes,” says Professor Ronald Jones. “They have a word to describe their ethos which translates as…well…not ‘modesty’ exactly… It’s more like: ‘Just enough - not too much.’ That notion pervades their sense of design.”

Jones is Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Konstfack, the world-renowned University College of Art, Craft and Design in Stockholm (notable design alumni include Stig Lindberg and Lena Bergstrom). Look back through the history of design, and iconic Scandinavian names — such as Jacobsen, Aalto, Wegner and Mathsson — crop up time and time again.

“And that’s great from a teaching point of view,” says Professor Jones, “because it gives the students something to live up to.” There are, he says, some notable talents coming to the fore.

**FACTS**

- The origins of Konstfack can be traced back to 1844, when artist and ethnologist Nils Månsson Mandelgren began a Sunday Drawing School for Artisans.
- The first two female students - Sofi Granberg and Matilda Andersson – began studying in 1857.
- In 1945, Konstfack was created with departments including textile, decorative art, sculpture, ceramics, furniture and interior design. The school changed its named to Konstfack in 1993. It has 900 students and is situated in the Telefongatan – the old Ericsson telephone factory - in Hägersten to the south of Stockholm.
- He gives the example of a rollercoaster ride which “takes place over time, is entertainment and valuable - it was no doubt designed by an interdisciplinary team before we knew to call them ‘experience designers’.”
- Ronald began wondering how design will play a role in this new economy and wanted to start a university programme to find new talent with the answers.
- "No one had done it before and I couldn’t get anyone in the USA to listen to me. But (the Swedes) said come here and do it. That doesn’t happen, in my experience, in other countries. They are risk-takers in design — and education.”
- There are now emerging design practices in Sweden which stand apart from the conventional “pale wood” stereotype, says Professor Jones. “More than 50 per cent of our graduates are international students. So there’s this incredibly powerful mix of the strong, Swedish tradition with international influences.”
- “I think characteristic simplicity will always feature in the work because that’s the DNA of Swedish design. But different hybrids will begin to appear.”

**PROFESSOR RONALD JONES** stands outside Konstfack, the world renowned University College of Art where he teaches rising stars.

An American by birth, Professor Jones moved to Sweden because he saw an opportunity to create a brand new department in a brand new discipline: Experience Design. This is an emerging field which seeks to discover how design will be relevant in a world where more and more product is ‘intangible’.

“Eighty-six per cent of what the USA produced last year was intangible,” says Professor Jones. “Healthcare, education, software design - things you can’t touch, hold or feel.”

**Designing the future**

**The Swedish tradition for producing prestigious design talent is continuing. Here are just three names to watch out for:**

Many rising stars of the design world are graduates of Konstfack, says Professor Ronald Jones.

One name to watch is FRONT, the all-female Elle Deco Award-winning collective who create innovative furniture and accessories (letting rats and snakes make shapes on carpets, for instance). Another is JOAKIM OSCARSSON. “Joakim started as an industrial designer and then transferred to Experience Design where he produced some highly experimental work,” says Professor Jones. “He’s worked professionally for Phillips and is just an extraordinary talent.” Oscarsson directed, designed, and produced a music video for Swedish pop band The Je Ne Sais Quoi.

FARVASH RAZAVI, meanwhile, is a Konstfact graduate who combines science and art. “Her work is truly interdisciplinary,” says Professor Jones. “She, literally, invented the new material she used to make her projects with. In one case this is paper pulp… but you would never recognise it as such. Visually her work is stunning.”

**TONY GREENWAY**

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The Swedish Crown Princess and her new husband were recently given a set of glasses as a gift from the Swedish people. The designer was internationally renowned glass artist Erika Lagerbielke, whose work is sold all over the world—and who rises to the challenge of working with such a delicate and unforgiving material.

Professor Erika Lagerbielke grew up in a design-conscious family, so perhaps it was inevitable that she would do something creative with her life. Becoming one of the most important glass designers of her generation, however, probably didn’t figure in her own design business in glass, textiles and metal, and is chair in glass design at Linnaeus University.

“I think some materials have characteristics that fit well with your own,” says Lagerbielke. “I like the duality between hot and cold glass. When glass is warm and soft you have to make some rapid decisions. When it’s cold, it’s hard, fragile and very precise. And, as a person, I work on intuition and analysis.”

Wide brief
Lagerbielke keeps close contact with the craftspersons who produce the glass from her conceptual ideas and sketches. “That’s the fun part,” she says. “Things I think will be easy turn out to be quite difficult. But then glass is a strange material. It’s alive.”

It’s also unforgiving. If you make a mistake in clay, you can repair the damage easily. With glass you have to start all over again. “Yet I want the process to be complicated!” laughs Lagerbielke. “I want people to be impressed by the results!”

For the Crown Princess and her new husband, Lagerbielke produced a set of 1,000 Orrefors glasses. “Parliament called me and asked to discuss the project,” she says. “The brief was very wide, so I made sketches and sample prototypes. We were in close contact during the process and they were very open to discussion.”

A cool head
Yet, even with Lagerbielke’s vast experience, it wasn’t easy to keep a cool head during such an important commission. “I had some trouble starting!” she admits. “It was the project of my lifetime and had to be the best I had ever done. It’s tough to write that as a headline in your sketchbook.”

In the end, starting wasn’t a problem (the ideas began to flow); but stopping was. “The hard part was to say ‘now I’m done’. I didn’t want to overwork it.”

One of Lagerbielke’s favourite portfolio pieces is the Intermezzo champagne flute, with a droplet of blue inside the stem. She created it in 1985, but it’s still sold in Harrods and more upmarket crystal and china stores. “That was a bestseller,” she says. “It still is. It had never been done before, I was new to the industry and I was young. That was exciting.”

Now she enjoys branching out and working with other materials. “In design you can get pigeon-holed,” she agrees. “I love glass – but it’s good to show people I can do other things too.”

SCANDINAVIA IN LONDON

• Totally Swedish, Crawford Street, London
A concept developed by Annette Nathan and Teresia Bergsand, who met while working at the Cavendish Hotel in London. TS is now five years old and features Swedish food, children’s products and handicrafts to both homesick Swedes and UK nationals who simply love Swedish design.

• Skandium, Various London locations
Founded in Britain by three Scandinavians, Skandium has a range of furniture, lighting, textiles, kitchenware and accessories by big brand names from across the region.

• Nordic Bar, Newman Street, London
A contemporary-looking bar near Oxford Street which serves up food, drink and traditions from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. The interior uses natural materials in its design—and its lighting has been created with the Aurora Borealis in mind.
Denmark is an island nation of only five million people and the southern-most Scandinavian country. Denmark consists of about 400 islands, many of which are uninhabited. The capital, Copenhagen, is situated on Sealand, the largest island. In medieval times, Roskilde was one of the most important cities of northern Europe and the seat of the Danish crown. Roskilde Cathedral is where the royals of Denmark are buried.

The climate is similar to the UK's. From June to August, the average daytime temperature is 21°C. In February — the coldest month — the average is 1°C.

Fly to Copenhagen from most UK airports or go by ferry from Harwich.

Vesterbro is the latest chic area to be seen in — the old meat-packing district, now home to new galleries, bars and restaurants. The Christmas markets (13 November-31 December), says Ruffhead, showcase “Christmas how it used to be” with hand-crafted gifts, seasonal food and a festive atmosphere.

The Danish cuisine scene has grown in international stature recently. The traditional Danish lunch is the Smørrebrød, heaped with either prawns, salmon, egg or meat. “Denmark is famous for the three ‘Bs,’” says Ruffhead. “Beer, butter and bacon. But things have moved on and we’re proud that NOMA has been voted the best restaurant in the world in 2010, serving local dishes using local ingredients.”

Denmark is also a country of outstanding natural beauty, from the dramatic, clean, long and sandy beaches of the west coast to Skagen in the North. You can travel to Odense on Funen island (birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen) or to Roskilde for some Viking history.

Wherever you go, “hygge” awaits.

**FACTS**

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- In medieval times, Roskilde was one of the most important cities of northern Europe and the seat of the Danish crown.

**Question**: Why has Denmark grown in popularity as a holiday destination over the past few years?

**Answer**: A laid-back lifestyle, emphasis on design and culture — plus good travel links with the UK — have increased tourism numbers.

**HOW WE MADE IT**

More than a 1,000 years ago, Britain was a popular destination for Scandinavians. “These days,” says Astrid Ruffhead of Visit Denmark, “the invasion is the other way around. And we’re very welcoming.”

The people of Denmark have a word for it, actually: “hygge” — which doesn’t have an equivalent in any other language but, roughly translated, means to be “cosy”, “together”, “friendly” and “to enjoy the day”. Brits have cottoned onto this together”, “friendly” and “to enjoy the day.”

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**INSPIRATION**

**Hygge** — why it’s great to be a Dane

**‘Arne Jacobsen is the father of Danish Modernism and you can still see his work in Copenhagen’**

Astrid Ruffhead
Visit Denmark

**SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN MUST-SEES**

Bryggen, Bergen, Norway

- Situated on the western coast of Norway, Bryggen — the old Bergen merchant quarter — has been continually ravaged by fires, the last in 1955; but it’s been rebuilt using traditional methods, and some 62 colourful buildings remain. Since 1979 Bryggen has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway

- This isn’t just one building: it’s a collection of beautiful venues, comprising the Norwegian Museum of Architecture, the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Gallery (which displays more traditional works).

Modern Museum, Stockholm, Sweden

- A roll-call of art superstars - Picasso, Dalí, Matisse – feature in the Modern Museum’s art collection, which spans from 1900 to the present day. Swedish artists include such names as Vera Nilsson.

Ice Hotel, Jukkasjärvi, Sweden

- This is very James Bond: a hotel which is built every winter out of blocks of ice and snow. As such it’s more than just a place to lay your head. It’s a continually evolving work of art and an architectural marvel.

Aalto Studio, Helsinki, Finland

- The home of Finnish design genius Alvar Aalto — which he and his wife Aino designed and built in the mid-1930s — loosely incorporates Functionalist principles. Nearby is the white-rendered Aalto Studio, which houses the Alvar Aalto Foundation, the Alvar Aalto Archives and the Alvar Aalto Museum of Architecture.

**TIP**

**SEE FOR YOURSELF**

1. Bryggen, Bergen, Norway

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