

Stockholm Furniture Fair February 2023



A Review



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Stockholm - The City

I've always thought of Stockholm as one of the few cities in the world where one could happily live. Safe, spotlessly clean, architecturally elegant, culturally mature - and very efficient. Everything works extremely smoothly. Dominated by water and interspersed with islands, it is manageable in size, with a population of just one million. Drawbacks? Maybe a few. The long, cold winters and sky-high prices. Where else does an egg sandwich from a station kiosk cost £9?

Swedish must be one of the most opaque European languages but getting around is invariably simple, with all signs in English, and English being spoken by almost everyone.

The Show

Unsurprisingly, most of the companies showing were from the Nordic region - 360 out of 500 - with only a smattering from each of 34 other countries, including Italy, Spain, Belgium and Eastern Europe.



After a relatively slow start on the opening day, the crowds, mainly from Scandinavia, picked up considerably for the rest of the week, and the queues for cloakrooms and the many eateries were very long.

In keeping with the Scandinavian aesthetic, the exhibition stands and their displays were decidedly unfussy and devoid of gratuitous embellishment, and quality of presentation and the perfect choice of lighting and colours made everything easy on the eye. There were a few stands where product finishes were chosen to shock and attract attention, but they were in the minority, and the visitor was left with a sense of having absorbed many examples of consistent, high quality, original design, outstanding manufacturing skills, and the use of the very best of natural materials.

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Trends

As has come to be expected from this exhibition, the originality of products and presentation was of a very high standard and there was plenty to excite the visual senses. Bright colours - used cleverly - and unusually conformed shapes were everywhere, and there was a great sense of fun about many of the products on display.

In line with today's international office and contract furniture industry, claims of sustainability, zero carbon, recycled materials and recyclable products were a dominant theme and, for many companies, those characteristics were placed ahead of appearance and function, leading to some unusual looking products.

This show has always blurred the lines between office and home furniture, but this year, spurred on no doubt by the post-Covid acceleration of home and hybrid working, it was often really difficult to determine by appearance whether an exhibitor or a product was targeting the residential or commercial market. As a result, there was little in the way of furniture which was destined only for the traditional office environment and much more emphasis on designs which would fit equally happily in a hotel lobby, a modern home or an office seeking to create a homely environment.

The show demonstrated perfectly how furniture and furnishings companies in this part of the world invariably fall into one of two categories. They are either one of the very large number of family-owned and managed, sometimes third or fourth generation, design and craft led - small companies. These companies typically use very high quality materials and often traditional skills and have not moved far, if at all, from the small town or village where they started life, and where the founding family still live.

In the alternative, they are one of the very small number of much larger Nordic companies such as Kinnarps, Martela, EFG or Flokk (the last of which were not exhibiting) - run by professional managers, that have become internationally powerful and recognised.

The Companies and their Products



Normada, from the town in Sweden of the same name, have taken sustainability to a new level using specially selected cellulose fibres from sustainably managed forests and 3D printing technology to create *The Nest*, open source furniture by business founder and lead designer, Johanna Westerberg.



Kinnarps, originally from the town of Kinnarp in southern Sweden, is now one of the largest office furniture groups in Europe, having made several acquisitions over the years, including Drabert and Materia. Their presentation at the show was more about the character of work, in this instance, mobility, than about the specific products.



One of the very few UK companies exhibiting was **Bisley** from South Wales which over the past few years has transitioned from its concentration on steel storage to more general ranges of office furniture.



The Valencia-based design upholstery and table specialists, [Andreu World](#), which has been growing rapidly internationally, had a large, busy stand.



One of Sweden's leading upholstery companies which invariably has imaginative upholstery products, [Bla Station](#), had developed their modular sectional design to include these well-designed, individual study enclosures.



[Mizetto](#), a small, owner-managed business from Kalmar in Småland, Sweden, founded and run by Malin and Richard Muskala, works closely with Addi, a three-person local design firm including on this space dividing storage and seating system, *Cottage*.



Esbjörn Jagebro from [Naava](#) from the Finnish capital, Helsinki, enthusiastically demonstrated the Green Wall system for improving air quality. Plants are in individual containers filled with loose pebbles, rather than soil, allowing the plants' roots to clean the atmosphere efficiently.



[Humanscale's](#) stand promoted their sustainability credentials with task chairs manufactured from re-engineered plastic fishing nets.



Another design-led upholstery company, [Jessa](#), from Oss in the Netherlands showed a range of chairs and sofas.





Karl Andersson & Söner from Huskvarna in Sweden, whose business dates back to 1898, presented ranges of beautifully handmade furniture, including their *Meander* solid wood benches – designer Hannes Åström and *Ondulé*, and enclosures designed by Anton Björnsing.



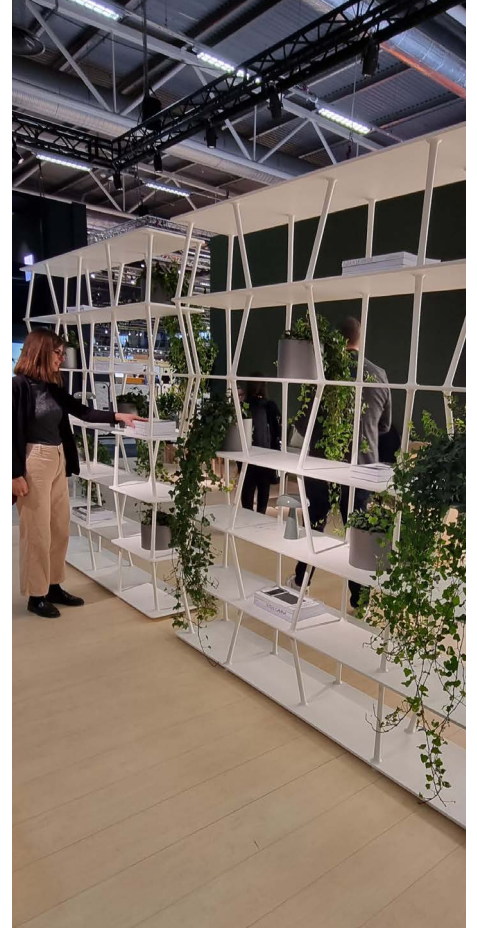
Ukraine was represented by **+Kouple** from Kyiv, a seven-year-old product design company founded by husband and wife team, Dan and Kateryna Vakhrameyev.





[La Cividina](#) based in Udine in Italy showed their *Osaka* seating system from French designer Pierre Paulin.

One of Italy's best known furniture makers is [Lapalma](#) from Padova; their beautiful *JAZZ* bookshelf system, designed by Giuseppe Bavuso and constructed from die-cast aluminium uprights, wooden shelves and concealed steel joints, is also completely recyclable.



One of the busiest and most colourful stands at the show was that of [Lammhults Möbel](#), from the Swedish town of Lammhult.



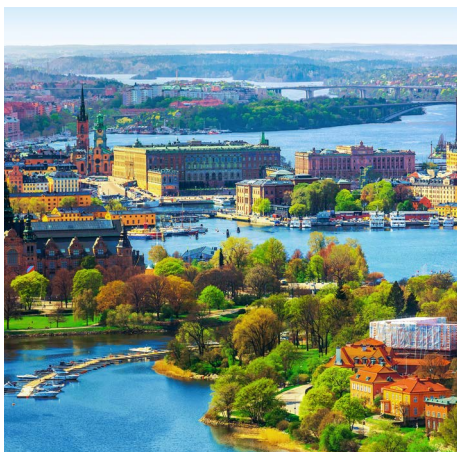
“The Bug” is part of a series of furniture designed – by Lovisa Pettersson – for outdoor work. Other products from [Lovisa of Sweden](#), based in Gävle, are “The Whale” and “The Ant.”



One of the few exhibitors from France was [Mojow](#), headquartered near Tours, showed colourful, inflatable seating which was surprisingly comfortable. Designed by Olivier Santini, the company’s owner, he describes his “crazy” idea as a new state of mind where curiosity and intuition invent the ways of life of tomorrow, where the received ideas are made to be jostled.



Nowy Styl from Poland are one of Europe's largest groups, incorporating the German seating companies Kusch + Co and Röhde & Grahl, and Sitag from Switzerland. They showed a wide selection of their group's products.



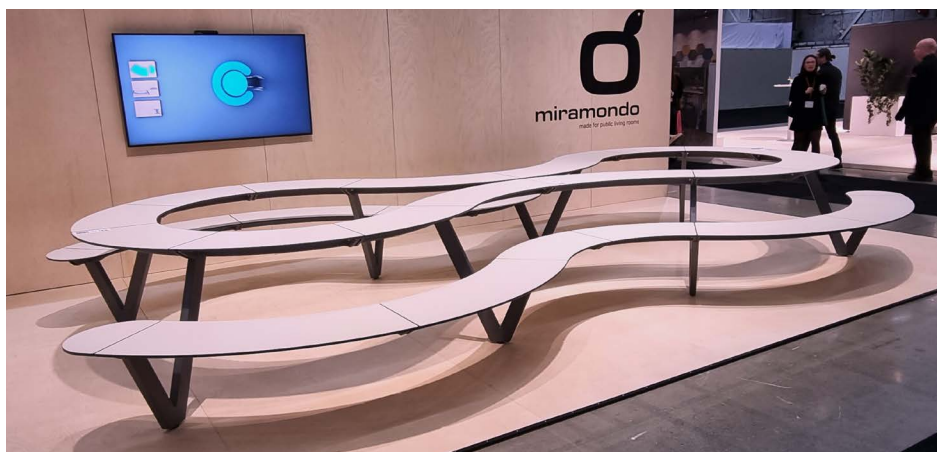
Naver Collection is one of those Danish companies that creates beautiful, simple, products using real wood, and outstanding craftsmanship, designed by cabinetmakers Søren Nissen and Ebbe Gehl.





This, slightly wild, wall storage unit or room divider, *Sfumato*, was from the Croatian company, [Nunc Design](#).

One of the companies at the show specialising in furniture for public spaces was [Miramondo](#) from Sooß in Austria. Their imaginative-ly-named *King Arthur* table was a show-stealer.



One of the more attractive enclosures on show was the *Tune* sofa and pouf from [Zilenzio](#) who hail from Örebro in Sweden. Specialists in acoustics, their motto is "selling silence."





[Playoffice](#) from Stockholm exploited the whimsical, showing a pool table, an outdoor ping pong table and this popular swing.

One reminder of the deeply embedded craft-base of Scandinavian furniture makers was this fascinating display of leather working from the leather tannery and specialists, [Tärnsjö Garveri](#).



This attention-grabbing shelving system designed by Nisse Strinning came from [String Furniture](#), based in Limhamn, Sweden.



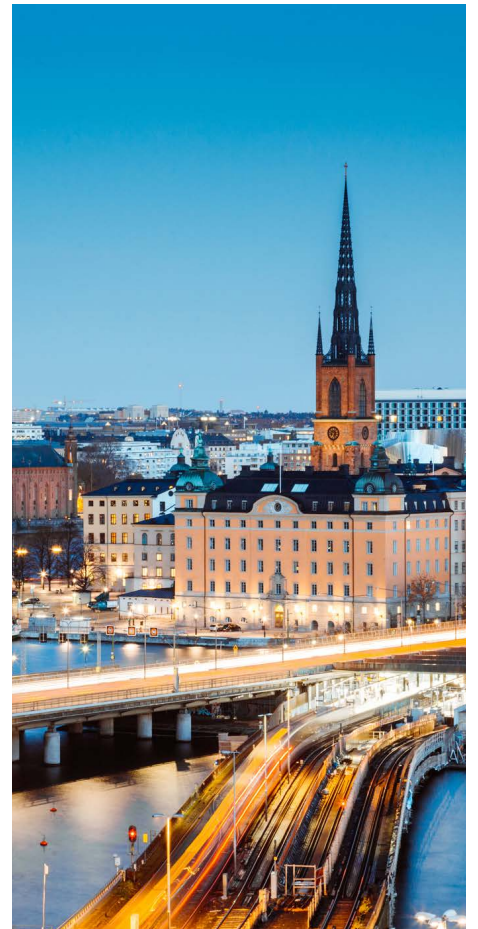


An original feature at the show was a popup restaurant, made in Sweden from materials to be recycled at the end of the show – the Underbar – located between the stands and designed by Jonas Bohlin and Christine Ingridsdotter. It looked very glamorous.



And finally, the Norwegian company, VAD, from Stordal had an attractive display of upholstery. Their popularity probably owed more, however, to the teddy bears they were giving away to all the young ladies who were passing by.....

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