

Design 'My essential Nordic design': The
Scandinavian creations designers couldn't
live without





Step into a stylish apartment anywhere from Beijing to Brooklyn and you're likely to find yourself, perhaps unknowingly, among the produce of one frosty European corner with an outsize impact on the world of design.

For the past five decades, flashier designs have jostled for the limelight, while the Nordic countries - with a combined population of only 25 million -- have gone in a different direction.

Since the 1960s, Denmark and Sweden have been celebrated for their mastery of simple, modernist products -- with neighbors Finland, Norway, and Iceland catching up each year. A focus on making items elegantly fit-for-function has earned their creations a place in the hearts, and homes, of the design-savy. Not least, designers themselves.

"Many of these products were created before you and I were born," says Kristian Andersen at Copenhagen's Northmodern, the year-old design fair he directs, which showcases Scandinavian and intentional design. "But what they all have in common is there was a tremendous amount of care and love taken into that design process and production process."

Speaking as visitors arrived at Copenhagen Bella center -- passing a massive display by Danish heritage silverwear brand Georg Jensen, before contemporary brands like Menu, and young distributors Roam -- Anderson says the appeal is "a quiet, minimalistic approach to design," paired with quality production that makes products last.

Yet, today, Nordic design is reinventing itself, he says.

Contemporary Nordic design draws deeply on the 20th century history of functionalism but refuses to be limited by that. "New Nordic," as the designers have taken to calling their work -- perhaps in a bid to align themselves with the world-conquering cuisine that bears the same name -- emphasizes Scandinavia's less-appreciated humor, and a taste for flashes of vibrant virtuosity.

At Northmodern, we talked to seven aficionados -- designers, directors, CEOs, and TV personalities -- about the enduring appeal of Nordic design.

We asked each to show us the Scandinavian design essentials from their own homes that they couldn't live without.

Eric Landon

Eric Landon is master potter and co-founder of Tortus Copenhagen, ceramicists with an incredible social media following. He selects the 6mm White Chair by Amanda Lilholt Hurup.

It is... a hand-welded chair which is both intense and complex, yet elegant, a difficult balance to achieve. I feel like I am floating when I sit on it.

It's my essential... because it's the apple of my eye in the studio these days. Because it constantly invites me to sit. Because unlike many other aesthetically beautiful chairs, this one is actually a delight to sit on!

Nordic design is... like many good poems. Using just a few words very effectively.

My tip: In the coming year definitely look out for the folded light works of Danish designer Amanda Taarup Betz. She has many great designs in the works with her own unique approach to lamp shades!

Barbara Coignet

Barbara Coignet is the founder and director of [Parisian luxury sustainable design community 1.618](#). Her agency works with over 140 brands to curate 1.618 fair in Paris and a hall at Northmodern devoted to high-end sustainable design. She selects the Kovac Family Lamp.

It is.... a smart, poetic and original lamp, made in Sweden with eco-consciousness and inspired by biomimicry!

It's my essential... because this piece seems alive thanks to its custom opening. It reminds me of a nautilus and, more broadly, nature. At night, it's another lamp: shadows make the place beautiful!

Nordic Design is... unique with some small, recognizable thing. Simple lines, modern, innovative and useful but above all intelligent without frills or superfluous. The Scandinavian designers are also very involved in sustainability, which is very cool and modern, too.

My tip: Because design is everywhere, you have to look at the innovative bike company Biomega, and especially their new electric one! Biomega is the first design company to dedicate its resources to the bicycle and to turning it into a pure design product. Biomega's initial design quest was to create a sense of optimism within sustainable transport.

Thomas Hansen

Thomas Hansen is director of [Frandsen Project](#), a creative development team specializing in lighting products designed in Denmark. He recently launched [Rewired](#), a brand manufacturing lighting in Denmark. He selects the Carl Hansen CH25 chair.

It is... a beautiful timeless design in superior quality.

It's my essential... because it is extremely well made and the all black finish adds a "coolness" that distances the chair from other classics.

Nordic design is.... much more than a somewhat clichéd term like "New Nordic". It all started with the good designs being made locally by craftsmen. I personally believe that Danish and Nordic design is interconnected with Danish and Nordic engineering and production, at its core.

My tip: I think Scandinavian design will become even more diverse in the coming years. Brands want to stand out and make Danish design their own thing. How it will be done, I look forward to seeing. But my guess is we will see more companies moving production back to Denmark, others might create super-profiles like we have seen with VIPP. You are never in doubt when it is a VIPP product you are looking at.

Kristian Andersen

Kristian W. Andersen, is fashion and design director of both [Northmodern](#) and [Copenhagen International Fashion Fair](#). He selects H.C Andersen cutlery.

It is... my favorite everyday refined silver cutlery.

It's my essential... because, yes, you need to polish, but the feeling of handcrafted Danish designed silverware every morning for breakfast is so much more pleasant than stainless steel. The touch and feel, and the weight of the somehow much more fragile products feels alive and needs your attention.

Nordic design is... for me, the absolute choice of craftsmanship -- i.e. old-school sustainability, lifetime long products, great investment and the pleasure of beautiful objects in your house and life -- in some cases at the same level of fine arts.

My tip: My heart beats for the Danish designers with a production in Denmark. Have a look at great Dane Janus Larsen from [Noyer](#).

Check out the great rewired brand from [Frandsen projects](#) and of course [Sixten Erfurt](#).

Mads Arlien-Søborg

Mads Arlien-Søborg is TV presenter on Denmark's DR network, design ambassador, and partner of ["We Made It" design agency](#). He selects the Wegner Y-chair.

It is... a blue Y-chair from Carl Hansen & Sons.

It's my essential... because I love the design and quality of classic Scandinavian furniture, but the color is twisting the classic appearance.

Nordic design is... reinventing itself these years. Many new interesting brands are entering the market bringing a new and fresh take on Nordic design, while the classics are more popular than ever. So no reason not to be positive.

My tip: Keep an eye on Danish brands such as Roomstore, Frama Cph, Gubi and Novel Cabinet makers. These brands will be the new leaders in Scandinavian design bringing international influences into the Scandinavian design tradition.

Lars Mehlum

Lars Mehlum is CEO of Danish high-end kitchen, bathroom and wardrobe manufacturer [Boform](#). He selects the Kubeflex House by Arne Jacobsen.

It is.... the Kubeflex House designed by Arne Jacobsen in 1969.

It's my essential... because it is a fine example of how Arne Jacobsen all through his working life remained ahead of his time. His idea was to make prefabricated modules which enables the buyer to get a flexible house that would meet the various requirements. The combinations are endless.

Nordic Design is... about brilliant ideas meticulously discarded of all "nonsense" (the needless) which makes many of the designs timeless classics.

My tip: [Trapholt Museum](#), an oasis filled with interesting Danish design.

Birgit Tarp

Birgit Tarp is interior designer and concept developer at Copenhagen studio [Design Circus](#). She selects a Multiform kitchen.

It is... the Multiform kitchen in lever-cut black stained oak.

It's our essential... because it's minimalistic, high quality, handmade and matching the architecture.

Nordic design is... timeless with some discrete, beautiful details. It gives the feeling to last forever.

My tip: For accessories to the kitchen decor, look out for Louise Roe, Anne Black, AYTМ, Nicolaj Engros and Tortus.

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