Global influence of Scandinavian design

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In a relatively small part of the world sits a powerful and influential design force that has inspired the look and feel of the modern home. Through its signature style of **clean lines, flawless craftsmanship and warm functionality**, design classics have been produced and the gap between craft and industrial production has been challenged.

It was in the 1950s that Scandinavian designers really began to become more mainstream beyond their own country. Designers including **Verner Panton**, **Arne Jacobsen**, **Josef Frank** and **Alvar Aalto** were soon followed by brands such as Bang & Olufsen, Artek, Marimekko and Saab.

In the late 1970s, Scandinavian retailers began to move into Europe and the US, and Ikea brought affordable contemporary design to the masses.

Fact file

Scandinavia is the cultural and historic region of the five Nordic countries: **Denmark**, **Finland**, **Iceland**, **Norway** and **Sweden**.

**Scandinavian Design: Beyond The Myth**

A travelling exhibition commissioned by the Nordic Council of Minister and Nordice Cultural Projects Abroad, **Scandinavian Design: Beyond The Myth** is at the **Rohss Museum of Decorative Arts & Design** in Gothenburg until February 25 2006, after which it moves to the **National Museum of Art, Architecture & Design** in Oslo.

**Global Scandinavian retailers**

- **Ikea**
- **Ilva**
- **Skandium**
- **Scandinavia House**
  The Nordic Center in America
  58 Park Ave Ny NY 10016
  (212) 879 9779
- **House Of Copenhagen**
  E-business promoting and selling a selection of high-end Danish Design.
- **Hygge Life**

During the past 30 years, Sweden's Ikea has been a major retailer outside Scandinavia, and brands such as Marimekko, Svenskt Tenn and Design House Stockholm have opened their own stores outside Finland and Sweden respectively, while Skandium in the UK is a retail concept entirely dedicated to Scandinavian design and its heritage.

In May 2006, Ilva, a new furniture retailer hailing from Denmark, will expand into Europe with stores opening in the UK. Ilva promises to be "Ikea for grown-ups", with delivery lead times not exceeding five days.

Principles behind Scandinavian design

The main principle is functionalism, allowing the functional element to be considered as much as the design. Other defining characteristics include the defining use of light, earthy muted tones, truth to materials and minimal ornamentation.

Surface pattern

The most best known textile designs from northern Europe are:

Marimekko and Svenskt Tenn. Both brands are now widely available outside Scandinavia.

Svenskt Tenn's designs by Josef Frank are very recognisable and the company has launched its only store outside Stockholm, at Liberty in London W1. Svenskt Tenn is now in its 81st year and is chiefly known for its bold, botanically inspired prints.

Marimekko is a leading Finnish textile manufacturer with a very distinctive style. Many of the designs are still as popular now as they were in the 50s and have been widely exhibited throughout Europe, Asia and the US, having an enormous influence on contemporary textile design. The brand is distributed globally alongside many standalone stores.
WGSN comment

Typically Scandinavian style is organic in form and functional in creation. Well-designed products that enhance quality of life through their functionality and practical beauty have made Scandinavian design cherished and sought-after.

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