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# What happened in Stockholm when Design Week disappeared?

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Stockholm in 2026 should have been quiet and deserted.

Following the official announcement of the cancellation of Stockholm Design Week 2026, countless speculations arose within the industry, with some expressing regret and others resentment. Grand Relations, a public relations firm focused on architecture and design, emerged from nowhere to plan Stockholm Design Days 2026. This initiative brings together representative Scandinavian design brands, platforms, and showrooms to present the "worthy of being seen" Scandinavian designs to the world.

The grassroots forces filled the temporary absence of the official presence, and this unique planning environment fostered an exhibition ecosystem brimming with "desire" and even "fighting spirit." Brands, in more flexible forms, erected curtains and opened their doors in Stockholm. After a heavy snowfall, the ecosystem of the international design exhibition was quietly rewritten.

## 03

### Finding one's place again in unstable natural conditions

In Scandinavia, light is never simply an "on/off" cycle, but a natural condition that profoundly permeates the rhythms of life. Near the Arctic Circle, the white nights of summer blur the boundaries of time, with the sun still hovering above the horizon at midnight; while in winter, daylight is compressed to extremely short periods, and long stretches of darkness become the daily backdrop. Even in cities that don't truly experience polar day and polar night, this stretching and contraction of light continues to shape the Scandinavians' perception of space, emotions, and daily order.

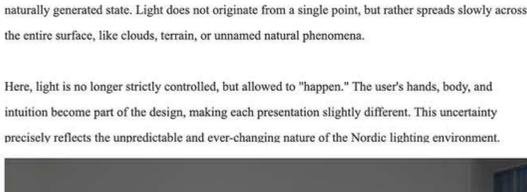
It is in this environment that Nordic lighting design has developed a unique character: lamps are not merely functional devices, but are endowed with the roles of comfort, guidance, and companionship. Light needs to be used judiciously, needs to coexist with darkness, and needs to respond to people's psychological and physical experiences. During this year's Stockholm Design Day, several lighting works from different Nordic contexts responded to this proposition in their own ways.

#### Solen Sonja: As Daylight Rises

Solen Sonja's origins lie not in form or technology, but in a family memory. Its founder, Anna Lundqvist, is a product designer, lecturer, and design facilitator who has long been committed to making technology more human-scaled.

During the long, white nights of the northern summer, her grandmother, Sonja, would often call her father late at night, thinking it was already dawn. The constant presence of light blurred the lines between day and night, and confused the sense of time. To help his mother rebuild her sense of day and night, Lundqvist's father made a lamp: it would light up during the day and turn off at night.

Years later, Lundqvist transformed this memory into Solen Sonja. It doesn't attempt to "illuminate the space," but rather gently hints at the passage of time through the changing states of light. The significance of this lamp lies not in its brightness, but in its understanding—understanding how the body perceives the world, and how design can respond to real and concrete people on an extremely small scale. Lundqvist's Solen Sonja lamp is exhibited in Stockholm Creative Edition.



Solen Sonja exhibited at Stockholm Creative Edition 2026

#### MAAP: Making light lose its boundaries

Unlike Solen Sonja's intimate narratives, MAAP presents a more open experiment with light. This wall lamp, designed by Erwan Bouroullec for Flos and curated by Nordie Nest during Stockholm Design Day, is more like an activated wall than a traditional lamp.

MAAP is made of Tyvek material, which is lightweight yet tough. It needs to be crumpled and shaped to complete the final installation. The geometric order is broken in this process, replaced by a naturally generated state. Light does not originate from a single point, but rather spreads slowly across the entire surface, like clouds, terrain, or unnamed natural phenomena.

Here, light is no longer strictly controlled, but allowed to "happen." The user's hands, body, and intuition become part of the design, making each presentation slightly different. This uncertainty precisely reflects the unpredictable and ever-changing nature of the Nordic lighting environment.



MAAP was exhibited at the Nordie Nest exhibition.

#### SAAS Instruments: Love the light, protect the darkness

If MAAP discusses the boundaries of light, then SAAS Instruments from Finland has always focused on the balance between light and darkness. This family-owned lighting company, founded in 1978, brought its work to the exhibition Where Finnish and Swedish Design Meet, curated by the Residence of Finland in Stockholm, to present its stance in a dialogue between Finnish and Swedish design.

SAAS's lighting fixtures don't pursue dramatic expression, but rather emphasize guidance and restraint. As founder and CEO Håkan Långstedt says, in Scandinavia, light is an emotional experience that influences one's rhythm and spatial perception. Therefore, the task of design is not to dominate the space, but to leave room for people to breathe. We love light, and we also protect darkness.



SAAS Instruments exhibited at the Residence of Finland exhibition.

## 04

### Old Materials, New Materials: Recycling, Experimentation, and the Nordic Spirit

In Stockholm Creative Edition 2026, materials themselves became the vehicle for storytelling: old objects were given new life, and discarded resources were transformed into furniture and objects with aesthetic and functional value through innovative processes. This is not only a sustainable practice, but also reflects the Nordic design's continued focus on materials, craftsmanship, and the spirit of experimentation.

#### Carl Lindström's DOORS series: The rebirth of an old door

In the field of circular design, Carl Lindström's DOORS project provides a highly symbolic example. He transforms discarded objects into functional furniture by reusing old doors. Each piece retains the original door's structure, color, and the marks of time—cracks, patina, nail holes, and worn paint become part of the design. These "historical imprints" not only give the furniture a unique visual language but also allow each piece to tell its own story within the space.

Unlike traditional woodworking, the DOORS series does not pursue perfect novelty, but rather breathes new life into the materials while acknowledging their past use. This design strategy makes the furniture both sustainable and culturally rich, reflecting the Nordic design's respect for the inherent qualities of materials.



DOORS on display at Stockholm Creative Edition

#### STUDIO NAVET's Lava series: Flowing poetry in glass

STUDIO NAVET is a Stockholm-based interdisciplinary design collective run by Maria Johansson, Lina Huring, Cecilia Wahlberg, and Helena Svensson. The studio's work blurs and flexibly integrates spatial design, art commissions, and object development. In the exhibition, they present the Lava series for Fölk Reykjavík, a collection of glass works that straddles the line between handcrafted and mass-produced pieces.

The Lava series features a unique production process, where hot glass is poured directly into open molds, allowing the form to develop naturally. The glass solidifies like lava, resulting in unique shapes; each vase and bowl is slightly different. More importantly, the glass is sourced from 100% recycled materials from the Swedish industrial recycling system, giving the pieces both environmental responsibility and visual impact. Through this process, STUDIO NAVET combines the fluidity of glass, the uniqueness of the material, and the serenity of handcrafting, allowing each piece to retain the rationality of industrial production while showcasing the dynamism and poetry of handmade creation.



Lava on display at Stockholm Creative Edition

#### Interesting Times Gang: Nordic Experiments with Biomaterials

At Industricentralen, the award-winning Swedish interior architecture and product design studio Interesting Times Gang collaborated with materials innovation company Shimper to launch a limited-edition Kelp Chair and Shelf Life furniture collection, combining circular design with Nordic material experimentation. The furniture's main body is made from oyster shell biocomposite material, derived from sustainable resources, offering both durability and lightness. The surface is covered with Shimper's wood-based fabric, exhibiting a unique shimmering texture, untouched by artificial dyes, allowing the furniture to subtly change color under different lighting conditions.

This series of works demonstrates that materials are not only tools for constructing objects, but also a language of expression. Through material selection and processing methods, the designers imbue each piece of furniture with its own rhythm and environmental adaptability. Beyond functionality and comfort, the Kelp Chair and Shelf Life furniture also present a Nordic experimental spirit: the interaction between materials and forms, the exploration of sustainability, and a focus on visual and tactile sensations.



Kelp Chair on display at Stockholm Creative Edition

Scandinavians typically call Stockholm "Sthlm," a word with five consonants and no vowels, essentially unpronounceable. Like the light in a city, it both exists and is hidden; like the furniture and lamps in an exhibition, it is both material and carries memories and emotions.

The grassroots forces at this Stockholm Design Day, just like the city's name, were quiet yet resilient and clear. The absence of official involvement fostered freer forms of creation; the interplay of light and shadow, old and new, materials and craftsmanship in the Nordic region engaged in a silent dialogue within the city. Each piece was like an unspoken vowel, growing in silence, free within restraint, and igniting a glimmer of light in the darkness.