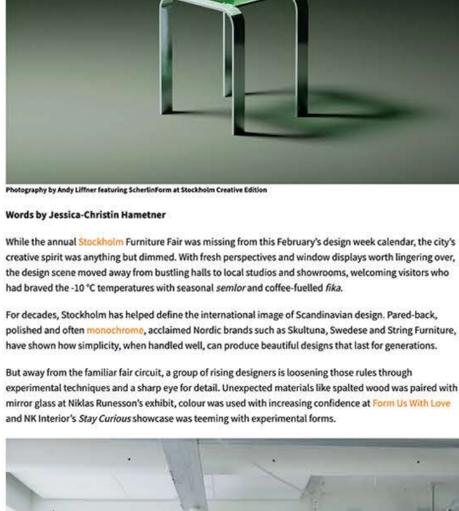


The Swedish designers experimenting beyond Scandinavian norms

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With Stockholm Design Week and the annual Stockholm Furniture Fair on hold this year, a new generation of Swedish studios is breaking the familiar rules of Scandinavian design, finding fresh ways to connect, collaborate and engage audiences



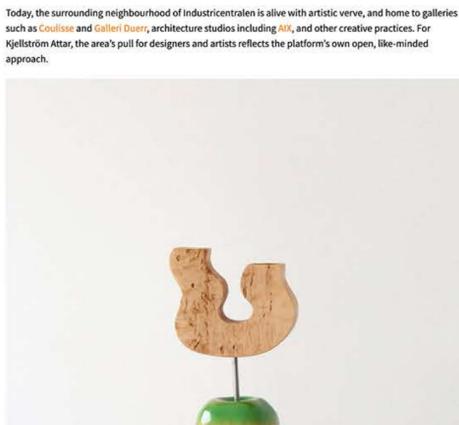
Photography by Andy Liffner featuring Scherlin Form at Stockholm Creative Edition

Words by Jessica-Christin Hammetter

While the annual Stockholm Furniture Fair was missing from this February's design week calendar, the city's creative spirit was anything but dimmed. With fresh perspectives and window displays worth lingering over, the design scene moved away from bustling halls to local studios and showrooms, welcoming visitors who had braved the -10 °C temperatures with seasonal *semmlor* and coffee-fuelled *fika*.

For decades, Stockholm has helped define the international image of Scandinavian design. Pared-back, polished and often *monochrome*, acclaimed Nordic brands such as Skultuna, Swedese and String Furniture, have shown how simplicity, when handled well, can produce beautiful designs that last for generations.

But away from the familiar fair circuit, a group of rising designers is loosening those rules through experimental techniques and a sharp eye for detail. Unexpected materials like spalted wood was paired with mirror glass at Niklas Runesson's exhibit, colour was used with increasing confidence at Form Us With Love and NK Interior's *Stay Curious* showcase was teeming with experimental forms.

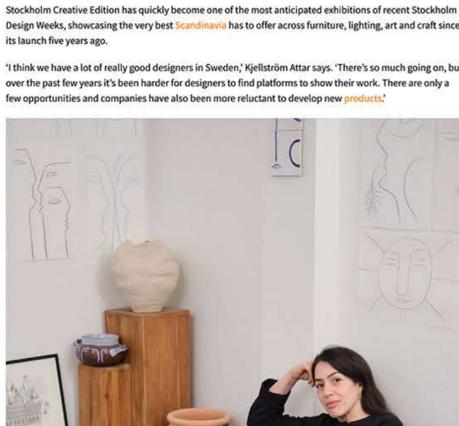


Photography by Andy Liffner featuring Philippe Attar (left) and Ulrika Kjellström Attar (right)

At *Industricentralen*, a former factory building on Hudiksvallsgatan designed by the renowned Swedish architect Ragnar Östberg and completed in 1937, Stockholm Creative Edition brought together a group of forward-looking designers, studios and brands, exploring new ways of working with material, function and form.

'With the founding of Stockholm Creative Edition, we wanted to show both Swedish and international design in a more contemporary setting, one we feel is perhaps more relevant today,' says Kjellström Attar, who set up the platform with Philippe Attar in 2021. 'The aim was to make design more experiential.'

Today, the surrounding neighbourhood of *Industricentralen* is alive with artistic verve, and home to galleries such as *Coilsson* and *Galles Diers*, architecture studios including *NK*, and other creative practices. For Kjellström Attar, the area's pull for designers and artists reflects the platform's own open, like-minded approach.

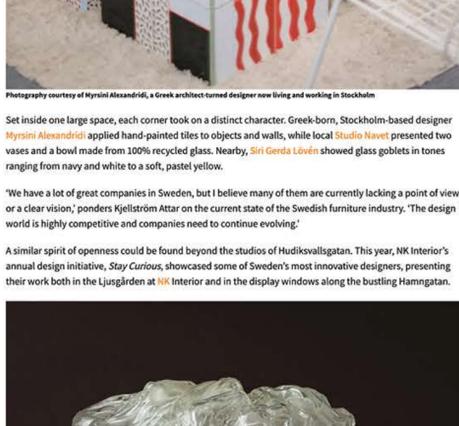


Photography by Andy Liffner featuring Public Studio's handmade candleholder produced in Stockholm

'We're curious and always keep a close eye on what's happening across the Nordic region,' says Ulrika Kjellström Attar. 'With this edition, I'd like to see the industry start noticing what's really happening within Sweden itself.'

Stockholm Creative Edition has quickly become one of the most anticipated exhibitions of recent Stockholm Design Weeks, showcasing the very best *Scandinavia* has to offer across furniture, lighting, art and craft since its launch five years ago.

'I think we have a lot of really good designers in Sweden,' Kjellström Attar says. 'There's so much going on, but over the past few years it's been harder for designers to find platforms to show their work. There are only a few opportunities and companies have also been more reluctant to develop new products.'

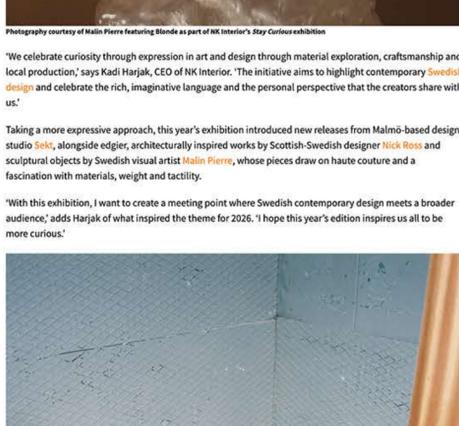


Photography courtesy of Myrsini Alexandridi, a Greek architect-turned designer now living and working in Stockholm

Stockholm Creative Edition, each corner took on a distinct character. Greek-born, Stockholm-based designer *Myrsini Alexandridi* applied hand-painted tiles to objects and walls, while local *Studio Naver* presented two vases and a bowl made from 100% recycled glass. Nearby, *Siri Ganda Lövdén* showed glass goblets in tones ranging from navy and white to a soft, pastel yellow.

'We have a lot of great companies in Sweden, but I believe many of them are currently lacking a point of view or a clear vision,' ponders Kjellström Attar on the current state of the Swedish furniture industry. 'The design world is highly competitive and companies need to continue evolving.'

A similar spirit of openness could be found beyond the studios of Hudiksvallsgatan. This year, NK Interior's annual design initiative, *Stay Curious*, showcased some of Sweden's most innovative designers, presenting their work both in the *Uppgården* at NK Interior and in the display windows along the bustling *Mingmatan*.

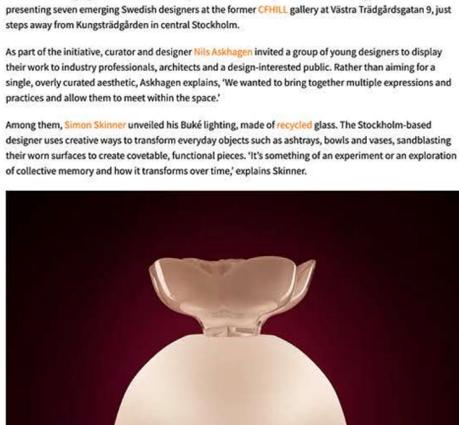


Photography courtesy of Malin Pierre featuring Blende as part of NK Interior's Stay Curious exhibition

'We celebrate curiosity through expression in art and design through material exploration, craftsmanship and local production,' says Kadi Harjak, CEO of NK Interior. 'The initiative aims to highlight contemporary Swedish design and celebrate the rich, imaginative language and the personal perspective that the creators share with us.'

Taking a more expressive approach, this year's exhibition introduced new releases from Malmö-based design studio *Sebt*, alongside edgier, architecturally inspired works by Scottish-Swedish designer *Nick Rossi* and sculptural objects by Swedish visual artist *Malin Pierre*, whose pieces draw on haute couture and a fascination with materials, weight and tactility.

'With this exhibition, I want to create a meeting point where Swedish contemporary design meets a broader audience,' adds Harjak of what inspired the theme for 2026. 'I hope this year's edition inspires us all to be more curious.'



Photography courtesy of Nick Rossi who presented his work as part of NK's Stay Curious exhibition

This way of showing work spread across Stockholm this year, with smaller studios reaching international audiences through galleries and alternative platforms. A case in point was *The Building*, an exhibition presenting seven emerging Swedish designers at the former *CFHLL* gallery at Västra Trädgårdsgatan 9, just steps away from Kungsträdgården in central Stockholm.

As part of the initiative, curator and designer *Nils Askhagen* invited a group of young designers to display their work to industry professionals, architects and a design-jungie public. Rather than aiming for a single, overly curated aesthetic, Askhagen explains, 'We wanted to bring together multiple expressions and practices and allow them to meet within the space.'

Among them, *Simon Skinner* unveiled his *Buké* lighting, made of recycled glass. The Stockholm-based designer uses creative ways to transform everyday objects such as ashtrays, bowls and vases, sandblasting their worn surfaces to create covetable, functional pieces. 'It's something of an experiment or an exploration of collective memory and how it transforms over time,' explains Skinner.



Photography courtesy of Simon Skinner featuring his Buké table lamp

'These pieces are made from vintage glass,' he explains. 'And if you're from Sweden, you'll recognise many of them, maybe from your grandmother's or grandfather's home,' he says of what inspired his work. 'So, taking that familiarity and then putting it into a contemporary context is really what interest me.'

Other standout designs included *The Swedish Green Series* by *Truls Goldschmidt*, who works with discarded *Kolmårdsmarmor* – functionalist marble slabs sourced from a building in Nacka, a municipality east of Stockholm. Developing a modular system that is based on the marble's specific dimensions, Goldschmidt employed a standard 30 x 30 mm framework, using materials such as oak and aluminium.

Comprising a table, bench and shelf, the core series features a marble top secured within the frame and is designed for flat-pack assembly. New to the collection is a chair, made entirely from aluminium slats and conceived with the same flat-pack approach. 'I find it interesting how objects can be redesigned and reimagined depending on how we interact with them,' adds Goldschmidt.



Photography by Johan Wirén featuring Truls Goldschmidt's The Swedish Green Series, The Chair

Finnish furniture brand *Made by Choice* showcased a range of pieces, including the brand's *Kolho* lounge chair, designed by artist *Matthew Day Jackson* for *Hauser & Wirth* back in 2019, alongside the quirky *Liekksa*, conceived in New York by *Smarkitecture* and produced in Halikko by *Made by Choice*.

'The story and philosophy behind our company, and the process of picking up new pieces for our portfolio, is that we always have a project to design them for,' says Anti Olin, CEO and partner of *Made by Choice*. 'We don't work in a traditional way, where a designer proposes a new piece, takes it to a fair and hopes it sells – we always have the first client lined up, even if it's just 20 or 30 pieces.'

At *Form Us With Love*, the recent changes to the design week calendar have inspired the studio – like many other local brands – to expand their own collaborative platform beyond the traditional fair cycle. The Stockholm-based design agency unveiled *Testing Grounds Showroom*, which transforms the studio's usual week-long event into a four-month temporary showroom and platform.



Photography courtesy of Made by Choice featuring the brand's Kolho lounge chair designed by artist Matthew Day Jackson for Hauser & Wirth in 2019

Previous iterations have included a co-working lab, an experimental furniture installation for *Samsung*, and – in 2025 – a fully functioning bistro. This year, *Form Us With Love* highlights ongoing collaborations with *Savo*, *String Furniture*, *Tarkett* and *Forming Function*, inviting visitors to engage directly with the designs and reconsider the role of a showroom today, alongside a programme of monthly events.

'We thought now was the time to bring people together and talk about what design week really is, what defines a fair and what a showroom can be,' says Jonas Pettersson, who co-founded the studio with John Löfgren in 2005. 'It was about creating conversations around broader questions – why we gather people, how brands build physical spaces and how other industries, like *running clubs*, can inspire the design world.'

With this year's design fair on pause, Stockholm has found new ways to connect and collaborate. Through platforms such as Stockholm Creative Edition, NK Interior's *Stay Curious* exhibit, *The Building* and *Form Us With Love*'s *Testing Grounds Showroom*, a new group of Swedish designers is challenging the familiar rules of Scandinavian design with fresh confidence.

Photography courtesy of Form Us With Love featuring the brand's Testing Grounds Showroom/exhibition

From recycled glass and functionalist marble to hand-painted tiles and modular flat-pack furniture, these creatives are setting the bar high, creating bold, imaginative pieces that weave a contemporary edge into classic Scandinavian design.

With a rich programme of installations, exhibitions and events, this year may have been a different kind of edition, but the city's collaborative spirit continues to cement Stockholm as a global creative hotspot. Until the next editions of Stockholm Design Week and the annual Furniture Fair, we'll be watching closely and looking forward to the bold ideas this Nordic design capital will bring next.

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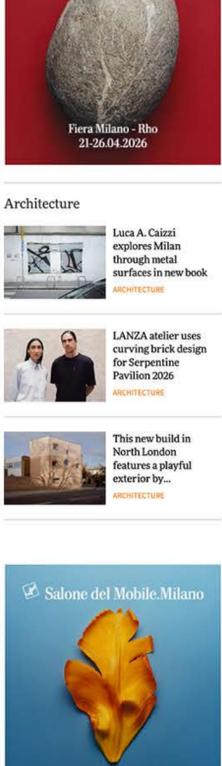
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