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## AHEAD OF THE GAMES

This week's dispatch from the world of design starts in the **athletes' village for the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games**, which has been planned with as much deference to the past as it has vision for the future. Then we talk shop on the sofa of **interior designer Joyce Wang**, pay homage to **Czech modernist Jan Vaněk** and flip through a **photobook devoted to Cortina**, one of the settings for the upcoming Games. First down the slope is Gabriele Dellisanti, who is looking into the state of Swedish design.

OPINION: [GABRIELE DELLISANTI](#)

## Can Swedish design be saved?

When it was announced that the 2026 editions of the Stockholm Furniture Fair and the adjacent Stockholm Design Week would be cancelled, it felt less like a pause and more like a reckoning. Established in 1951, the Stockholm Furniture Fair has long been the most important industry fair in the Nordics. The event is taking a year to look inwards and plans to return in 2027 with a “fresh start”.

For now, that vacuum has been filled by a citywide event called Stockholm Design Days, which is unfolding in showrooms and galleries across the Swedish capital this week. The drama surrounding its emergence seems to have galvanised the scene, with brands putting on grand demonstrations to show that Stockholm is still a force to be reckoned with. String Furniture, for instance, has taken over an entire 15th-century building: one floor is dedicated to new editions of its shelving system and a trolley, while the remaining levels have been given over to local studios that have turned the space into a compelling group exhibition. Elsewhere, Stockholm Creative Edition (*pictured*), which gathers the work of young and emerging designers, has brought forward its annual showcase from May to bolster the week's programme.



There is, undeniably, unease – and chatter – about what next year will hold. But there is also a new frankness in how people speak about the state of Swedish design. Conversations turn to the need for established brands to become bolder custodians of the country's legacy – here comes the inevitable, if bittersweet, comparison with how Danish furniture brands have pulled this off so successfully, helping to bolster the 3 Days of Design festival in Copenhagen. In practice, people speak about the need for a more assertive use of Sweden's design history, alongside support for a new generation of designers. The aim is to build a unified and distinctive narrative that compels visitors to make the trip north in a frigid February 2027.



At a dinner on Monday evening, an editor from a local magazine told me that he believes it will take a tide-shifting “cultural phenomenon” for Stockholm to reclaim what he referred to as its lost status as Scandinavia's design capital, though he could not define what that might be. And that, perhaps, is the crux of it. The fair's pause has exposed a gap but also an opportunity. What happens next is less about formats and calendars, and more about whether the Swedish design industry can decide what that phenomenon should be – and have the confidence to build it.

*Gabriele Dellisanti is a Copenhagen-based journalist and Monocle contributor. For more news and analysis, [subscribe to Monocle today](#).*