



New Scandinavian Design

By Katherine Nelson

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New Scandinavian Design is an ambitious survey of the creativity and innovation of one of the most energetic design cultures around today. Not to be outshone by the classic furniture that made "Scandinavian design" a catchphrase of the 1950s, today's generation of designers is updating modernism in fresh and unexpected ways. Tweaking the myth of fair-haired citizens producing sober beech furniture, *New Scandinavian Design* goes "beyond blond" to feature work that is anarchic, conceptual, and playful, while still exhibiting hallmark qualities of honesty and utility. Profiles of each Nordic country and illuminating interviews explore the trends and top products. Well over 400 full-color photographs of contemporary furniture, housewares, textiles, and consumer electronics make this an authoritative overview. Expertly researched and inventively designed, this substantial volume is as commanding and attractive as its subject.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Top designers enjoy celebrity status in Scandinavian culture, and no wonder—their creations have invaded almost every living space within reach of an IKEA. But the region's old emphasis on plain colors and molded wood are long gone. As this ambitious survey of Scandinavian design affirms, a new generation of artisans has updated the region's iconic 1950s modernist creations with playful color, technological savvy and pluralistic openness to ideas. The reason these traits exert such an overwhelming influence on the international design market, Nelson argues, is that they give form to the core values of "comfortable living and social equality," without shying away from gentle subversion and conceptual envelope-pushing. Through pictures and exposition, the design journalist explains how conceptual pieces, from chairs and vases to tables and lamps, give voice to "Scandinavian cultural and artistic ideals." Primary among these, Nelson suggests, are democracy, honesty, poetry, innovation and craft. Nelson also includes interviews with each country's top designers and curators, elucidating the forces that stoke their creativity and propel their designs to paragon status in international markets. Color-saturated layouts—plus the studio-chic plastic book cover—mirror the brightness and whimsy of the design objects themselves, and the book contains more than 400 photos of cutting-edge designs in furniture, housewares, textiles and electronics. All in all, Nelson effectively parses a design culture that uses the past as springboard and the ever-changing present as inspiration.

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About the Author

Christopher Mount is an educator, writer, and curator specializing in 20th century architecture and design. He curated Arne Jacobsen's centenary exhibition for the Scandinavia House in 2002. He lives in New York City.

Katherine Nelson is a New York-based design journalist and former editor of the award-winning eDesign magazine.

Raul Cabra is the principal of Cabra Diseno, a San Francisco design firm.

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