BAUHAUS ETERNAL REVOLUTION
We welcome KAISER idell™

ME AND MY CHAIR
Gallery-owner and curator GREGER ULF NILSON about international art photography and iconic Danish design

UNORTHODOX FUNCTIONALIST
Jaime HAYÓN
“I’ve always been a bit of a rebel.”

A MASTER OF MATERIALS
An introduction to SHIGERU BAN’S innovative architecture

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JAIME HAYÓN WITH FAVN™ photographed by NIENKE KLUNDER
Even though the new decade is still young, it has quickly proved to be a time of upheaval. The changes taking place worldwide are both social and economic in nature, and certainly appear dramatic as we stand in their midst. However, despite the conflicts, the big changes taking place are nurturing a belief that new and better democracies will come into being, fostering a hope that a budding sense of humanity will gain the upper hand in future.

Humanity and a strong sense of democracy where everyone is entitled to say what they think are core values in Fritz Hansen’s DNA, in the Danish design traditions which we uphold and in the society of which we are a part. Breaking attitudes is essential for us to remain a dynamic and forward-looking company. We are forced to challenge ourselves on a daily basis. We must never shutter ourselves in, but allow ourselves to be provoked and remain open to outside influences.

Since summer 2008, we have had the pleasure of being challenged by the uniquely talented Jaime Hayón. A Spanish designer who struck me as being remarkable the first time we met. His directness, open-mindedness and all-embracing creative outlook which knows no bounds are unique. Since we started collaborating, his enthusiasm has rubbed off on everyone involved in developing the Favn™ sofa, and it shows in the final result. Add to this Jaime Hayón’s unusual grasp of design, which has made it possible for him to take Fritz Hansen’s idiom as his starting point while producing a result which is just as much his own. A sofa that elegantly reinterprets and builds further on Fritz Hansen’s unique furniture history, but which also stands for what it is: An icon.

JACOB HOLM CEO
THE BAUHAUS LAMP MAKES A COMEBACK

BY SIGNE LØNTOFT

BAUHAUS WAS NOT A SCHOOL OR A STYLE. IT WAS A REVOLUTION THAT HAS SO FAR LEFT ITS MARK ON THE PAST 100 YEARS OF DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE. FOLLOWING FRITZ HANSEN'S ACQUISITION OF THE RIGHTS TO MANUFACTURE THE CLASSIC LAMP KAISER IDELL™, WE DRAW A PORTRAIT OF THE BAUHAUS MOVEMENT, WITH WHICH THE SILVERSMITH AND DESIGNER CHRISTIAN DELL WAS HEAVILY INVOLVED.
From the outside it resembles a raw factory building with monumental proportions and a stringent glass facade. The architect Walter Gropius was also fascinated by industrialisation's new possibilities when he designed the building complex which from 1926-1932 housed the famous Bauhaus school. Today, architects and designers make pilgrimages to the school building in Dessau in the former East Germany in the hope of breathing in its history. Here they are looking 90 years back in time when the building was a hive of activity with the artists Paul Klee, Kandinsky and the architect Mies van der Rohe teaching at the school, while Marcel Breuer worked on his famous chair and the silversmith Christian Dell on his classic lamp designs, including the KAISER idell™ series. Bauhaus has become a mythical place and is today included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Because we now know that the school managed to start a revolution before it closed its doors after orders from Hitler’s National Socialist German Workers’ Party in 1933.

All in all, a lot happened in the 1920s. The Russian revolution and the First World War had shifted the political balance of power, Einstein had once and for all consigned God to the grave, and Freud had focused the spotlight on the dark side of life. The world was ready for something new, and the 1920s became a time of cultural unrest and upheaval. Avant garde art flourished, Fritz Lang made the cult film Metropolis, and youth danced the Charleston in the newly opened jazz clubs. The spirit of the age was young and radical, with intense experimentation.

Not least within architecture and design. Take an over-furnished Victorian home from the early 20th century with its heavy curtains and knick-knacks and compare it with Le Corbusier’s, Eileen Gray’s, Mies van der Rohe’s and Arne Jacobsen’s architecture and furniture design just a decade later. It is clear a revolution has taken place. "Bauhaus was far more wide-ranging and innovative than you can imagine today. It was a laboratory, a cultural think-tank and a philosophical movement, and its influence cannot be overestimated," wrote W Magazine’s design editor Diane Solway when MoMA in New York opened its major Bauhaus exhibition last year.

It all started on 1 April 1919 when Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar was founded in the German town of Weimar by the architect Walter Gropius. The young German silversmith Christian Dell was soon employed to build up and develop the school’s ambitious metal workshop. Bold and talented artists and designers flocked to the school from the outset. In 1926, the school, after financial problems, moved to the industrial town of Dessau, where a completely new building was built of iron, glass and concrete. In the following seven years industrial production really took off. In architecture, new ideas were being expressed in the form of simple, prefabricated modules which could be combined as needed. Within the fields of interior design and the design of furnishing accessories and furniture, Bauhaus had an almost bigger impact. The school had obligatory drawing lessons, focusing on geometrical shapes and cubes, balls and cylinders, which strongly influenced the students’ design – and subsequently that of many designers around the world who were inspired by Bauhaus. Bowed steel tubes and ramrod straight wood components became distinctive Bauhaus features, based on a desire to create design that could be mass-produced. And steel chairs by architects like Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe and their successors such as Arne Jacobsen are today icons for modernism.
“WE FUNDAMENTALLY BELIEVED THAT DESIGN COULD NOT BE REDUCED TO AN INTELLECTUAL OR MATERIAL DISCIPLINE, BUT SIMPLY HAD TO BE INTEGRATED INTO ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE” - Walter Gropius
In Bauhaus’s famous metal workshop, innovative work was being carried out with various materials and styles. Wilhelm Wagenfeld, one of Christian Dell’s students, worked with smooth shapes that influenced the design language, even though they could not be industrially manufactured despite their industrial look. The same shapes recur in jugs, bowls and containers from the Bauhaus workshops. Christian Dell’s elegant and industrially robust lamps set new standards for lighting, while Marianne Brandt, who took over the management of the school’s metal workshop when Bauhaus moved to Dessau, created beautiful silver-plated metalwork, among other things the famous Bauhaus teapot.

Christian Dell (1893-1974) who, following the Bauhaus era, headed the metal workshop at the art school Frankfurter Kunstschule, is particularly well known for his fantastic lamps. The most famous are the lamps in the KAISER idell series, which were produced in collaboration with Gebr. Kaiser & Co. Fritz Hansen has recently acquired the rights to the KAISER idell series and the KAISER idell™ brand, as the lamps with their timeless design perfectly match Fritz Hansen’s design profile. Like Poul Kjærholm’s and Arne Jacobsen’s furniture, the lamps are design icons where aesthetics and functionality unite wonderfully to exude robust elegance and Bauhaus quality. The series consists of table lamps, floor lamps, a wall lamp and a pendant. The KAISER idell series is distinguished by its characteristic dome, embossed with ‘ORIGINAL KAISER idell’, and by the then revolutionary ball joint which makes it possible to adjust the lamp in countless directions. The design creates a special sculptural effect in the room while the hand-lacquered shade and base in original colours beautifully reflect the light. The KAISER idell series was produced for four decades and is a German classic on a par with the VW Beetle or the Porsche 911. The lamp is also at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York as an example of outstanding design. Bauhaus and MoMA are linked by more than aesthetics: “Bauhaus lies in MoMA’s very DNA, as the museum was born out of the same ideas as the Bauhaus movement,” the museum’s respected head curator Barry Bergdoll has said.

Bauhaus was a school for art, architecture and design, but in reality was involved in far more than aesthetics. The dream was a new society with equal opportunities for everyone. The idealistic advance guard imagined it could develop design so that it was suitable for industrial mass production, making high-quality design available to all walks of life. “We fundamentally believed that design could not be reduced to an intellectual or material discipline, but simply had to be integrated into all aspects of life,” said Walter Gropius when, many years later, he talked about his visions behind Bauhaus.

The revolution arrived, but it was not at all what the Bauhaus idealists had envisaged. The desire to keep the prices of Bauhaus design down failed. Today, all products from the school’s designers are regarded as sought-after and highly exclusive design classics. However, the design language from Bauhaus succeeded nevertheless. There is not a product today that does not, either consciously or subconsciously, relate to the ideas from the German design school. For almost a century, the Bauhaus movement has made its mark on both timeless craftsmanship, modernism’s heirs and the mass-produced hits each season at the large interiors shops.

See more at www.fritzhansen.com
RIN™ MOVES BACK HOME

Six years have passed since the idea for the sophisticated RIN™ was conceived by the Japanese designer Hiromichi Konno. The chair was designed for a modern office environment, but demand in recent years has resulted in a collaboration between Fritz Hansen and the textile manufacturer Kvadrat on a new upholstered model for private homes. See more at www.fritzhansen.com/news

FANTASTIC BAMBOO

Fritz Hansen is expanding its rug collection in 2011 with the Bamboo rug designed by Danskina. As the name implies, the rug is made of bamboo. Producing a Danskina rug takes up to eight weeks, with the bamboo or linen being carefully transformed from raw material to finished rug. In future, the long-haired bamboo rugs will be a central element of the look presented by the Danskina and Fritz Hansen. See more at www.danskina.nl

NATURE CALLS

The Series 7™, still an icon of timeless design, is being presented this year in natural oak. Oak is a strong wood with a natural grain which helps to enhance Arne Jacobsen’s organic design. The nine layers of veneer and two layers of Indian cotton are moulded and finished by hand, guaranteeing the Series 7’s durability. See more at www.fritzhansen.com/news

BERGMANN’S FLORAL ART

A delicate balancing act between European floral traditions and an acquired Japanese sense of detail has made the Dane Nicolai Bergmann one of the most sought-after decorators in Japan. From the elegant interior of his shop Nomu in Tokyo, classic Danish furniture is being presented alongside 34-year-old Bergmann’s floral decorations. See more at www.nicolaibergmann.com
WE LIKE

GERMAN QUALITY BOOKS, AN ITALIAN SENSE OF ARCHITECTURE AND GROUND-BREAKING DANISH PHOTOGRAPHY. HERE ARE SOME RELIABLE RECOMMENDATIONS.

01 MAGAZINE DOMUS
Founded by the Italian architect Gio Ponti in 1928, it has been a leading magazine covering architecture and product design ever since. The 7,000-page back catalogue is being republished by Taschen. See more at www.taschen.com

02 PUBLISHERS STEIDL
Gerhard Steidl’s publishing company in Göttingen is one of a handful of publishers that prints its own books. In terms of forward-looking art books of the highest quality, Steidl is the name. This year, the sculptor Richard Serra’s Notebook, a retrospective book on the photographer Lewis Baltz and several Karl Lagerfeld publications are being added to Steidl’s extensive portfolio. See more at www.steidlville.com

03 ARTIST DAVID HOCKNEY
David Hockney is nothing less than multi-talented. Since the 1960s, he has repeatedly driven artistic standards with his Polaroid collages, distorted illustrations, psychedelic landscape paintings, and today he makes art on an iPad. See more at www.hockneypictures.com

04 PHOTOGRAPHER KELD HELMER-PETERSEN
Before modernism seriously became recognised, there was a Danish photographer paving the way forward. Keld Helmer-Petersen, born in 1920, made a breakthrough with his book 122 Colour Photographs in 1948. Pictures which filled an eight-page spread in the well-known Life magazine.

05 LITERATURE FRANZ KAFKA
Franz Kafka, the master of alienation and claustrophobic thoughts, has been published in new colours. Art director Peter Mendelsund has created a series of colourful and elegant front pages for some of Kafka's classic works. See more at www.schocken.com

06 FURNITURE PK91™
Poul Kjærholm’s stringent design made him a master of minimalism and an outstanding representative of functionalism. This year, his legendary folding stool PK91™ celebrates its 50th anniversary. The stool is available in canvas and leather. See more at www.fritzhansem.com
The fact that the Spanish designer and artist Jaime Hayón (pronounced “Haj-me Haj-on”) is now part of the Fritz Hansen family will probably come as a surprise to many cognoscenti. The designer, who became well known in 2006 with the theatrical collection Showtime that surprised with countless historical references, does not, on the face of it, match Fritz Hansen’s culture and DNA, and even though Hayón’s frisky play with design has caught people’s attention, the young Spanish designer is still some way from Fritz Hansen’s understated elegance – or so everyone thought. Because, once again, the 36-year-old Spanish designer has taken a tiger leap of the kind that demands self-confidence, a flair for one’s craft and impressive, innate creativity. A leap which only few can master, but for Hayón the past ten years have seen him winning a string of awards for his designs, making him a young captain of a flamboyant, humorous and European style. "Designers tend to take themselves a bit too seriously."
I get a lot of fun out of doing what I do. And I think that is evident in my work,” says Hayón, and even in his everyday clothes the well-dressed Spanish designer and his distinctive blue eyewear break with the dressed-in-black designer stereotype. Hayón is not afraid of colour – or of being in the spotlight. Alice Rawsthorn, design critic on the International Herald Tribune, is one of those who has followed Hayón’s development as a designer over the past decade. “Jaime Hayón belongs to a group of European designers who made their name in the noughties with a gushing, visual language and who easily juggles between product design, interiors and graphic design. We are living in a post-industrial world where most items have been reinvented so many times that it is becoming increasingly difficult for designers to improve what already exists. However, Hayón has nevertheless succeeded in refining the look.”

During his career, Jaime Hayón’s showmanship has caused critics to question whether or not his considerations are based on deeper considerations, and whether he is better at marketing himself than at creating relevant, enduring design.

“It is a misunderstanding when people believe that my design is more about fun or marketing than functionality. Functionality is always paramount for me, yet I still think that good design should combine function and personality. I try to avoid intellectualising my work and concentrate instead on doing what I love: Designing. And this is exactly what I did in collaboration with Fritz Hansen,” he explains. “For years I’ve admired Fritz Hansen’s sense of quality and its relevance which are shared by the designers they take on. I will try to live up to this with Favn™.”

Developing the sofa started in summer 2008. It has been an intense collaboration and called for numerous visits to Fritz Hanzen’s premises north of Copenhagen. A typical working process for the Danish furniture
manufacturer, which helps to quality-assure the final result and create long-lasting design. But it did not come as a surprise for Jaime Hayón. “I knew from the outset that it would be a long-term project. Fritz Hansen seldom takes new designers on board, and when they do they are very careful about it. It is an approach that ensures a unique result,” he says, adding: “The starting point for the actual construction and the design was a desire to create an organic and feminine sofa. A sofa which looked simple, elegant and comfortable. These are the qualities I value in a piece of furniture. Striking the right balance between these qualities – where everything is important and nothing superfluous – is unbelievably tricky.”

Fritz Hansen’s head of design, Christian Grosen Rasmussen, says: “Jaime Hayón is extremely creative and artistically very inspiring. It is impossible to avoid being absorbed by his universe, as he tackles his assignments with great passion. At the same time he is ultra professional, and really masters his craft. Hayón can alternate between discussing very abstract to very concrete aspects of a project in a split second, without losing touch with the overall picture – a fantastic quality in a designer.”

The fact that Jaime Hayón plays as much as he does with references and different crafts is possibly because he has led an unusually cosmopolitan and creative life ever since his childhood. Linguistically he switches deftly between English, French, Italian and Spanish, and today he is constantly travelling between London, Barcelona, Treviso in Italy and to customers worldwide. Jaime Hayón was born in Madrid in 1974 to a Venezuelan mother and a Spanish father, but already as a teenager he was travelling to San Diego in the USA, where he worked for a skateboard manufacturer. Here he was immediately hooked on the rebellious subculture, graffiti and the DIY attitude. “My family cultivated a creative outlook on life. I always cooked with my mother, where we experimented all the time. As a teenager, I started skateboarding, and through that met other creative types. Everyone worked non-stop to cultivate a personal style. It was imperative if you wanted to be a successful skater.” Subsequently, Hayón started creating graphics and designs for skateboards and T-shirts and in so doing realised that he had a passion for expressing himself creatively. “I’ve always been a bit of a rebel. You might be able to take my skateboard away, but I’ll always be a skateboarder at heart.”

His young formative years continue to inspire Jaime Hayón. It can be seen in his sketchbooks, which are filled with graffiti-like doodles. It is often here that the ideas for his final designs take shape. His drawing style is free, but often involves savage black. Unlike the plain and naive graffiti, they are more sophisticated drawings, reminiscent of Picasso or Jean-Michel Basquiat. After his time in the US, Hayón started studying design at the IED Madrid Design School. Halfway through his course, he won a grant to study for a year at the prestigious L’École Nationale Superieure des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, where the head of department was the French product designer Philippe Starck. Starck’s postmodern aesthetics and fondness for presentation are a recurring theme when looking at Hayón’s early work.

A talent-spotter working for Benetton’s renowned creative director, Oliviero Toscani, encouraged Hayón to join Benetton’s communications research centre ‘Fabrica’ in Treviso, near Venice. Hayón was only 22 years old when he arrived in Italy, but within the space of 12 months he had been appointed head of 3D design – and Toscani’s right-hand man. “Toscani was demanding and very radical in his approach, so I had to be incredibly strong to avoid being steamrolled by him. But the place gave me a unique opportunity to develop my skills. I was very young, and had to learn a lot really, really quickly: How to manage a design team, how to conduct oneself with
clients and develop new concepts. It was an intense period and Toscani was a tough boss, but I have always admired him and greatly value everything he has taught me,” says Hayón, who was at Fabrika from 1997 until 2004, where he organised exhibitions, ran workshops, employed people and managed big budgets. However, with time his role became increasingly administrative – and less creative. “I can remember that after work I created a kind of parallel universe, throwing myself into illustration,” he says.

The drawings came into being as goth-like, comic Onion Qee figures, which in the noughties acquired cult status in the UK, the US and Japan. At the same time, Hayón curated an exhibition for Oliviero Toscani at David Gill’s well-known gallery in London, a gallery which is particularly famous for showing exclusive and experimental design. Hayón grabbed the opportunity and invited David Gill to Treviso to look at some of the sculptures he had created in his spare time. Gill showed up in Italy, and immediately urged Hayón to exhibit in London. This resulted in Mediterranean Digital Baroque – a surrealist installation of ceramic plants and animals. This was Hayón’s breakthrough, and a creative path he has followed ever since.

Since the Mediterranean Digital Baroque exhibition in 2003, Hayón’s career has really taken off. He has been awarded a string of prizes, including Best Installation in Icon Magazine, Breakthrough Creator in Wallpaper and Elle Deco International Award, and has also had solo exhibitions worldwide. His customer list has literally exploded and, unlike many of the noughties’ popular designers, Jaime Hayón is capable of evolving continuously.

Today, Hayón has moved his studio from Barcelona to London. His workforce has grown so he now has more than ten permanent employees, as has the customer list which counts names such as Established & Sons, Camper, Swarovski, Bissaza and Baccarat. But the Spanish designer continues to resist any notion of habitual thinking. His trade mark is constant development. With Fritz Hansen, the aim has been to create furniture design that unites durability with rebellious attitude.

“I only start projects which I believe can produce something new and unique. If you don’t have that feeling from the outset, then whatever you make will be just another ‘thing,’” he says. “I think we have succeeded with Favn, which for this very reason is a continuation of my work so far. For me, it is an organic and personal piece of furniture, like a warm embrace of comfort and quality. My hope is that the sofa will pass the test of time and achieve the status of a classic – far off in the future,” he concludes. See more at www.hayonstudio.com

“I’VE ALWAYS BEEN A BIT OF A REBEL. YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE MY SKATEBOARD AWAY, BUT I’LL ALWAYS BE A SKATEBOARDER AT HEART.” - Jaime Hayón
WITH YIELDING, ORGANIC SHAPES, THE SPANISH-BORN DESIGNER JAIME HAYÓN HAS CREATED A SUPREMELY ELEGANT AND FEMININE SOFA, FAVN™, WHERE THE COMFORT QUALITIES DO NOT COMPROMISE ITS DESIGNER STYLE. A PIECE OF LOUNGE FURNITURE THAT LEADS BEAUTIFULLY ON FROM ARNE JACOBSEN’S CLASSICS.

"Creating Favn™ has been an experimental dialogue. Thinking in a holistic approach. Not challenging the machines, but thinking and discussing who we are and how we live. Back to the human approach while being innovative and taking risks," says Jaime Hayón.
Jaime Hayón is behind this year’s new product. A sofa that matches Fritz Hansen’s range of iconic furniture, and which still meets the furnishing requirements typical of the modern city dweller.
2011 sees one of the design world’s big personalities being welcomed into the Fritz Hansen family. Over the past decade, 36-year-old Jaime Hayón has – with self-confidence, a flair for his craft and innate creativity – successfully balanced the role of designer and artist.
The sofa is upholstered in these ten colours, chosen by Jaime Hayón:
Taupe, Chocolate, Red, Dark blue, Sage green, Clear beige, Violet, Moutarde, Light grey and Black
FAVN™, LIGHT GREY

The Egg™ and the Swan™ are a perfect match together with the Favn™ sofa. Here you can see clearly how Hayón’s aesthetics lead beautifully on from Arne Jacobsen’s modernist classics. The sofa table is also designed by the Danish architect.
Favn™, VIOLET

Poul Kjærholm’s distinguished lounge chair PK22™—designed in 1956—facing Hayón’s inviting Favn™ sofa. A characteristic of both pieces of furniture is how elegant design merges together with carefully selected materials. The table is designed by Arne Jacobsen.
“My aim has been to create a simple, comfortable and elegant sofa. However, striking the right balance between these qualities – where everything is important and nothing superfluous – is hard work,” says Jaime Hayón.
“Design needs to solve the problem and be long lasting. But it is important to remember that my design is made for humans - to be used by humans. I believe that design should provoke emotions. Design should make you feel good. Create happiness,” says Hayón.
FAVN™ is created in 10 unique versions which each consist of three carefully selected textiles. The colours shown above are: Red, Violet, Dark blue, Chocolate, Clear beige, Light grey and Moutarde.
FAVN™, CLEAR BEIGE

Today, we organise ourselves so we can switch between work and relaxation. This need is supported by furniture design that allows an overlap between leisure and work.

The above shows Ant™, the table Essay™ by Cecilie Manz and the Favn™ sofa.
Favn™, MOUTARDE

Favn™ – the Danish translation for embrace and the name of Fritz Hansen’s new sofa – underlines Jaime Hayón’s ambition of creating furniture that functions as a warm embrace of comfort and quality.
Favn™, RED

Favn™ has not been created from a specific brief, but developed through a creative dialogue between Fritz Hansen and Jaime Hayón. A working process reminiscent of the collaboration with Arne Jacobsen — but which nevertheless reaches out towards the future.
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL TREES IN THE WOOD

BY HAKON MOSBECH PHOTO MIKAEL OLSSON

GREGER ULF NILSON HAS BEEN ONE OF SWEDEN’S MOST PROMINENT AND AWARD-WINNING GRAPHIC DESIGNERS SINCE THE 1980S. AS CURATOR, HE HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE OF THE WORLD’S BIGGEST PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITIONS, AND TODAY HE MANAGES THE GUNGALLERY FOR SWEDISH AND INTERNATIONAL ART PHOTOGRAPHY. BUT AT HOME IN STOCKHOLM HE IS SURROUNDED BY DANES – FROM THE DINING ROOM TO THE BEDROOM, FROM THE SOFA TO THE BOOKSHELVES.

See more at www.gungallery.se
What does furniture design mean to you?
“It means a great deal. It’s like the architecture around me. Something I can rest my eyes on. Something that makes me happy. Not like ‘ha-ha-happy’, but rather a moment of peace in an otherwise busy existence. I am continually moving in and around my furniture. It’s like trees in the woods. If you are walking down a woodland path, it’s best if the trees are beautiful to look at – with good branches for climbing.”

Does your choice of furniture tie in with your work as a graphic artist?
“Definitely. As an art director I am also working with proportions, aesthetics and functionalism. And as a designer it helps that I am surrounded by clean lines. If I have too many thoughts churning around in my head, I need nice and simple objects around me in order to be able to think. A kind of purity of style and humanism, which I also hope pervades my work.”

Do you own a piece of furniture which tells a story?
“Oh yes. In 1999, I found two PK22™ chairs in a shop in Bredgade in Copenhagen. When the chairs were delivered to my address in Stockholm, Anna, my girlfriend back then, who was an actress at Dramaten, the royal theatre, opened the door. ‘So, are you the star?’ asked the fellow delivering the chairs. Anna didn’t have a clue what he was going on about. But the chap repeated the question: ‘Yes, are you the star?’ ‘What do you mean?’ she replied. ‘Well, these chairs come from Bo Widerberg.’ It turned out that the Danish chairs I had bought in Copenhagen had belonged to one of Sweden’s greatest film directors, Bo Widerberg. He had died shortly before I bought them – they came from his estate. So in a way I feel that I got my chairs from Widerberg, one of Sweden’s all-time film directors.”

What was the first piece of designer furniture you bought for yourself?
“I come from a home where design was not given that much of a priority. Nevertheless, I decided when I was only eleven years old that I wanted to be a designer and artist. From then on, I started spending time furnishing my bedroom. I bought things in IKEA, and found shelves and a hi-fi unit which I liked. But it was only once I left home that I could finally buy what I wanted, among other things a Marcel Breuer chair and a Poul Henningsen glass lamp.”

Does Danish furniture design play a special role for you?
“Without a doubt. When looking around my home, I’m surrounded by Danes. I’m sitting in a Poul Kjærholm chair right now. I have a Mogens Koch bookcase. I also have furniture by Verner Panton, Arne Jacobsen, Piet Hein, Børge Mogensen and Henning Koppel. I have a Bang & Olufsén TV. Even Danish photographers have invaded my home: Henrik Saxgren, Jacob Holdt, Krass Clement and Tina Enghoff, for example. There’s even Carlsberg in my fridge!”

What is special about Danish designer furniture?
“It is genuinely stylish and functional, but at the same time possesses a strong element of humanism and craftsmanship compared to, for example, the hard Bauhaus look. Danish design is far softer in appearance. They are fine objects to sit on and admire in your home. The pieces of furniture are my little Danish friends. It is rather incredible that I live in Stockholm but am completely surrounded by these Danes. In fact, I think that if you visited anyone in Sweden with a nice home with designer furniture, you would definitely find more Danish furniture than Swedish.”

Why do you think that is?
“You have a very strong furniture tradition. At the same time, it relates to a period which means a lot to me personally. Even though Poul Kjærholm’s chairs and Henning Koppel’s flatware are relatively old designs, they still feel surprisingly modern. It is important for me that my home is not just stuck in the present. It lives in the present, but it has historic roots. It’s just the same with the most beautiful trees in the woods.”
A TOUR OF THE
REPUBLIC

CRAFTSMANSHIP AND PROUD TRADITIONS DATING BACK TO 1872 FUSE WITH MODERN OPERATIONS AT THE REPUBLIC OF FRITZ HANSEN™ HEADQUARTER.

BY MAJ JUNI

The sweet smell of leather hangs in the air. Two cutters with busy hands deftly cut a large piece of pale cowhide into a shape that matches a low version of Arne Jacobsen’s Oxford™ chair. We are in the cutting room at Fritz Hansen’s main premises in Allerød, north of Copenhagen. It is a green area surrounded by single-family houses, which over the years have shot up on rectangular plots. The cutting room walls are adorned with rows of metal moulds held together by transverse slats such that they resemble harps in a myriad of sizes. Even though the moulds are flat, the contours of the classic Fritz Hansen furniture can be made out as curves from the Egg™ and the Swan™ and Poul Kjærholm’s straight lines. A sense of recognition which only exists because Fritz Hansen’s furniture is the incarnation of Danish design which, with its unique blend of simplicity, functionality and inherent beauty, is valued worldwide. Fritz Hansen has been based in Allerød since 1904, and the present headquarters consist of several buildings in continuation of a sawmill which was constructed for the furniture manufacturer in 1937.
Seven years ago, the buildings were architecturally united with a glass construction, creating the main entrance for Republic of Fritz Hansen™. Here you encounter a toppled tree trunk, where a number of seats from the recognisable Series 7™ chair have been set into the bark. On the upper storey, the tops of the surrounding trees seem extremely close, as if they are penetrating the glazing. However, on closer inspection the branches have their roots in individual pots, placed indoors beside round tables and Swan chairs in green and brown shades. The association is obvious – we are in a forest where majestic birds bob calmly on the lake. The building is filled with sculptural constellations like this, where every single piece of furniture is from Fritz Hansen’s own collection. For example, in the largest meeting room, where 50 or so Swan chairs in eye-catching colours stand like a flock, continue to quacking once the participants have left the meeting. In a well-lit corner on a corridor stand two Egg chairs, which remind you of a nest if you happen to need some time out.

A short way from there in the old sawmill, Bjarne Jensen has just finished assembling the parts of a chair designed by Poul Kjærholm. “Look here,” he says, and lets his finger run over the base of the frame where a serial number is engraved in the steel. After three decades at Fritz Hansen, thousands of pieces of furniture have passed through his hands. With the exception of the Series 7 chairs, which have their own dedicated factory in Vassingørød nearby. One of the former factory halls is now used to house a museum that tells the history of Fritz Hansen, and thus also that of Danish furniture design. Here the furniture is placed on timelines according to the designer. Names such as Verner Panton, Arne Jacobsen, Jørn Utzon, Piet Hein, Henning Larsen, Hans J. Wegner and many others leap out at you. Not to mention the name of the cabinetmaker who started it all, Fritz Hansen himself.

In addition to being shown to visiting guests, the museum plays an important role internally by making employees feel that they are an important part of the story. Here they can see with their own eyes what has been at stake since it all started in 1872, and discover how the iconic furniture took shape. It is nothing to do with fashion and trends, but about creating something which can tolerate being looked at and used for a long time. A key part of the museum exhibition consists of a materials study, which provides an insight into how the various materials come into being. In one large pile are the layers of high-quality veneer which are pressed together to create Series 7 chairs. Here, visitors can come and see with their own eyes how the famous PK22™ chair is woven in wicker, intricate craftsmanship that is beyond any machine. Moreover, no machine exists that can upholster a Fritz Hansen chair. Hans Mannerhagen, one of the company’s best upholsterers, is highly talented in this art. His job is to produce the most special pieces of furniture and to test new materials. At the moment he is busy sewing the final stitches into walnut-brown leather on the back of the Egg easy chair, one of the company’s absolute classics. “You never know really how long it’s going to take, because it depends on the material. Some leathers are stiff, others are tough – what is most important is achieving a perfect result. Three chairs a week is maximum,” explains Hans Mannerhagen, and continues the work with his hands which, even though modernity has very much arrived at the building in Allerød, is still at the heart of operations.

See more at www.fritzhansen.com
A MASTER OF MATERIALS

BY SIGNE LØNTOFT PHOTO JONGOH KIM

He was ‘green’ long before ecology and sustainability became fashionable, and he creates fantastic structures from unconventional materials such as paper and sand. Meet the Japanese star architect SHIGERU BAN, who has designed one of the world’s most sophisticated golf centres, furnished with furniture from Fritz Hansen.

“Japanese culture is ancient and very strong. Those that start collaborating with Japanese architects therefore often expect exotic solutions, the sort that are clichéd Japanese. I don’t do those kinds of solutions.” - Shigeru Ban
A massive canopy woven from moulded wood spans the lobby. Twenty-one elegant columns support the roof, creating a space that is halfway between a cathedral and a pavilion. Here, the changing light from above is exquisitely drawn inside. The natural organic shapes and materials continue in the interior decoration, which includes timeless furniture design by the Dane Poul Kjærholm and Hiromichi Konno from Japan. Fritz Hansen has supplied the beautiful furniture, among other things Arne Jacobsen’s classic chairs the Egg™ and the Swan™, and the newer futuristic RIN™, which has been created by the young designer Hiromichi Konno.

We are at the Haesley Nine Bridges Golf Club and Resort – one of the world’s most exclusive and sought-after golf resorts – on the sub-tropical island of Cheju in South Korea. Here, the Japanese star architect Shigeru Ban has once again surpassed himself with a sculptural and inviting architectural gem which, by using wood in new ways, creates beauty with integrity. The award-winning golf resort was completed last year, since when the unique surroundings have attracted the world’s golf-playing jet set – and architectural pilgrims wanting to see Ban’s latest work with their own eyes.

The 53-year-old architect was born in Japan, but spends his time today commuting between his three main offices in Tokyo, New York and Paris. “Japanese culture is ancient – and very strong. Those that start collaborating with Japanese architects therefore often expect exotic solutions, the sort that are characterised as being clichéd Japanese. I don’t do those kinds of solutions,” says Shigeru Ban. He is a cosmopolitan lover of life who has been quoted as saying that he refuses to work in a country which doesn’t have a proper food culture. However, the statement shouldn’t be taken completely at face value as Shigeru Ban has projects all over the world. He is well known for combining modern and ambitious design with strong ecological and humanitarian commitment. A sense of commitment that caused the New York Times to christen him ‘the accidental environmentalist’. He has demonstrated his adaptability and efficiency by becoming involved in aid projects in disaster areas: He built a church made of paper following the earthquakes in Kobe, Japan, in 1995 – the church was intended as a temporary building, but the lightweight construction of cardboard rolls was so popular that it is still standing. He also built refugee camps in Rwanda in 1999 and a school in Sichuan province in China after the devastating earthquake in 2008. The school was completed with nine well-equipped classrooms just a month after the first drawings were made. An unbelievably fast process in a profession where a decade can easily pass between concept and inauguration.

At the same time, Shigeru Ban has been ground-breaking in his experiments at developing sustainable architecture based on recycled materials. The temporary shelters for earthquake victims in Kobe, Kaynasli and Bhuj were made of paper, which is easy to obtain, and easy to recycle when the buildings need to be pulled down. In addition to its sustainability, the material creates light and airy rooms, and Ban’s paper buildings now feature on architectural study programmes worldwide. The architect has said that he was inspired to use cardboard and paper as he sat and watched a fax machine spitting out cascades of paper, and observed how the paper collected, creating a new structure.

Shigeru Ban’s latest experiment entails building houses from sand in Dubai. Ban has also sought to employ the most sustainable solutions for the golf centre in South Korea. All the wood has been sourced locally, and not even a single nail has been used to create the massive roof construction – it is woven like a Swedish Christmas paper heart.

Shigeru Ban’s early interest in architecture was born by a fascination for everything that was beautiful and strange. He grew up with his mother, a fashion designer who often returned from Paris with suitcases full of exotic treasures from a sophisticated world far removed from Tokyo. Ban built his first architectural model as a 12-year-old, and went on to study architecture in Tokyo, Los Angeles and New York. You can feel the international element in Shigeru Ban’s work. At the same time, however innovative and spectacular his projects, they always reflect the purity and simplicity that characterises both the Japanese and Scandinavian architectural and design traditions. Ban himself holds the view that far too many architects conduct themselves as if they were in the fashion industry, more preoccupied with the current hip style than with creating an original look. For almost three decades, Shigeru Ban has been focused on developing new architectural structures, and the result is modernist without pandering to trends.

See more at www.shigerubanarchitects.com
It has always been there, resting on its heritage and history, but now the philosophy behind Fritz Hansen’s proud design tradition has been put into words. When Christian Grosen Rasmussen took over the helm as head of design at the long-established Danish furniture manufacturer 18 months ago, one of the first things he did was to describe the framework that defines Fritz Hansen’s design. A framework based on the company’s long history and heritage. Basically, the design philosophy embraces three levels that involve seeing, feeling and knowing. The first level is the visual – the shape and the proportions. “Whether it is a person or a piece of furniture you are looking at, the visual aspect is the first thing you notice. Therefore it is important,” explains Christian Grosen Rasmussen. The second level is the emotional, which can neither be seen with the naked eye nor measured. “It can be hard to put your finger on it. But perhaps what is most important is the right combination of sound, sensation and smell – and the right interplay between them.” The third and last level in the design philosophy is the rational. It is about the ‘more hard-core’ things. Quality, strength and price, for example.

Fritz Hansen furniture is thus unfailing on both the visual and emotional levels as well as the rational. In the design philosophy, each of these is developed with a number of values. At the visual level they are called ‘original, pure and long-lasting’. Just as there are originals among the existing designs, so too must tomorrow’s design boast originality. “We devote a lot of energy to high-quality production, for example finding the right leathers and surfaces. Of course it costs money, and it obviously doesn’t make sense to invest a lot of energy and resources in this unless the product also has a long visual lifespan. The design must not be too fashionable,” he explains. At the emotional level, the design must live up to the values ‘genuine, serene and Danish’. In other words, quality and design must be genuine, the products must be serious, restrained and sculptural and, finally, they must build on the Danish design tradition. “The special Danish aspect is perhaps a value that we have not focused on that much recently, but we would like to cultivate it more. It is about our approach to design and the way in which we live and prioritise high-quality design, which is typically Danish.” Finally, there is the rational level which is amplified in the values ‘high quality, refined and ageing with beauty’. Furniture from Fritz Hansen must be of the best available quality, which also means that existing products must continuously be improved. They are also ingenious and produced to perfection. Last but not least, this quality must ensure that Fritz Hansen furniture ages gracefully.

When Fritz Hansen creates new furniture in collaboration with external designers, our values must not impose a straightjacket but draw up the lines within which the designers have free play. “We don’t run around talking design philosophy the whole time, even though we go to considerable lengths to explain our thoughts. It is a tool for us when assessing things, and the three levels can function to differing extents at various stages in the design process. Sometimes you might be working intensely on a product for several months without thinking about it until suddenly you stop and ask yourself: ‘Does this work?’ When you know what you need to do, you also become better at hitting the bull’s eye,” concludes Christian Grosen Rasmussen.
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