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TO IMPROVE
LIFE

INDEX: Award winner 2005 LifeStraw by Vestergaard Frandsen is a life saving and revolutionary water-purification tool for use in the developing world. Photo courtesy of Vestergaard Frandsen.

SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN

Design plays a crucial role in the environmental performance of products and services throughout their lives.

From choosing the right materials and planning effective processes to creating radical and coherent product and service concepts, design helps transforming the challenge of sustainability into an asset and opportunity for businesses to increase their profit and create new markets while generating value and quality for people and the planet.

Design to improve life

The hallmark of sustainable design in Denmark is the biennial INDEX: Award. A total award sum of 500,000 Euros, financed by the state of Denmark, makes it the biggest design award in the world. But this is not what makes the award

stand out. The award is given to 'design to improve life' within the five categories: Body, Home, Work, Play and Community that together span the spectrum of human activity.

By focusing on problem solving instead of excellence in traditional design disciplines the INDEX: Award puts design at the center of creating a sustainable future.

A living and vigorous tradition
It is no coincidence that the INDEX: Award resides in Denmark. Danish designers and design companies have a long tradition for cross-disciplinary works combined with a people centered and holistic approach.

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In the beginning of the 20th century – long before people centered innovation was born – the Danish architect Kaare Klint was appointed professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. There he introduced a rational approach to design based on studies of human proportions, function and needs. This break away from considering furniture as individual objects of art, constituted Danish design as a problem solving discipline and paved the way for today's Danish design being a key figure in sustainable development.

Integrated with society and technology

The beauty of the designs from the golden era of 'Danish Modern', created by Arne Jacobsen, Hans J. Wegner, Børge Mogensen and their peers in the 1950's and 60's, often overshadow the fact that these design icons were deeply rooted in the development of the welfare society. As construction of public institutions like schools, libraries and social housing exploded, designers found themselves struggling to create a modern society based on social equity and economic growth.

This challenge called for Danish designers to take into account how they could use their skills to improve people's lives; price, function and durability now being equally important as materials,

proportions, details and surfaces.

Design, crafts and arts together with engineering and manufacturing now developed into a wide-ranging set of design tools. Taking advantage of new technologies, new materials and international inspiration, a new holistic approach was born.

New decades, new challenges

Today this approach is taken even further: Moving beyond designing FOR people to designing WITH people. Danish designers, the industry and public institutions are working together to meet the emerging challenges of climate change and resource scarcity. Not only by reducing, recycling and reusing, but also through strategic collaborations introducing new technology in crafts and integrating products and services in closed Cradle to Cradle cycles.

Design is deeply integrated throughout the Danish society, and whether it is water pumps or insulin pens, waste handling or welfare technology, public spaces, furniture, fashion or crafts; design plays an important role in creating new solutions for our common future.



The PH lamp (above 1958, below 1967) designed by Poul Henningsen is still in production at Louis Poulsen. Photo: Louis Poulsen



A lot of Børge Mogensen furniture was created for , and available through FDB a Danish chain of convenience stores where he worked 1942-50. Now produced by Fredericia Furniture. Photo: Fredericia Furniture

Further information

For more information please contact the DANISH DESIGN CENTRE, Denmark's professional knowledge centre for design and innovation. www.ddc.dk