

# THE ELEMENTS OF WORK

**ICONS**

## WELCOME TO THE ELEMENTS OF WORK

In these pages, you'll encounter inspirational new materials, discover the interplay between furniture, emotion and the world of work and find new and established voices examining contemporary Danish Design.

From the elements that mark our designs' compositions to the functionality of the pieces themselves, every detail within this book has been carefully considered and selected to illustrate how furniture design can be redefined to support our modern work patterns and build meaningful connections to the spaces we inhabit.

Thanks for reading, we hope you enjoy your stay.

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## THE SENSE OF PLACE

What elements create our contemporary workplaces? The same elements that always have: a mix of people, technology, furniture and a collective desire towards a greater ambition.

The rise of coworking spaces, flexible working practices and connected technologies all bring focus and freedom to the worker in our knowledge-based economy – enabling them to choose the best place to interact and perform their tasks. While the activities themselves may vary, there are patterns in their essence. The contemporary workplace needs environments in which to focus, collaborate, socialise and relax. Furniture is a vital component to these environments which adds balance and meaning to these spaces.

Considered furniture design supports and improves our natural work patterns. As tools, furniture enriches collaboration, concentration, learning and experimentation. Furthermore, the aesthetics and tactility build emotional connections – helping us to find spaces where we feel at home and take pleasure in our work.

From the framework through to furniture finishes, each component is explored to find its natural, sensory properties. This instructs each product's composition, activity and setting.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are always the strongest. On arriving, a new space should invite you into it; providing visual and physical warmth while telling the compelling story of the company.



Form sofa  
Spire slate coffee table



Form sofa  
Spire marble coffee table



Form sofa



Smile Lounge low back chair swivel base  
Spire marble coffee table

Woodstock meeting table  
Arena chair swivel base





Form sofa  
Spire slate coffee table / Bark lounge chair



Bark lounge chair



Spire marble coffee table



Smile Lounge high back chair wood base

**A HOME AWAY FROM HOME**

Good things come to those who wait.  
Developing a lounge setting that helps you relax, breathe  
deep and find your finest ideas is the lifespring of modern  
creative work. Find where action and original  
thought combine.

LOUNGE



Private high back sofa  
Spire granite coffee table



Through the lens of minimalism and simplicity, our products provide the multi-functionality that is essential for modern work.



Private high back sofa / Smile Lounge high back chair wood base  
Spire marble coffee table / Level laptop table



Twist coffee table



Spire marble coffee table



Smile Lounge high and low back chair swivel base



## HEE WELLING

WE HAVE MAINLY WORKED ON MINIMISING THE USE OF MATERIALS IN OUR DESIGNS, BOTH DUE TO THE VISUAL AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS.

Welling is an award-winning designer based in Copenhagen. His philosophy is expressed in the simple geometries and spirited contours of his products. All superfluity and ornamentation have been stripped from his designs, creating a sense of permanence.

**Tell us about your working space – is it nice and tidy or organised chaos?** I try my hardest to keep my working space nice and tidy (and most of the time it works out fine), but in periods when we are swamped and have a lot of deadlines, it can get a bit chaotic!

**Do you see any distinction between designing for the home and designing for the workplace?** In many of our recent projects, the differences between the home and the workplace have been reduced, and the distinctions have blurred. During the last couple of years, many of our design briefs proved useful for the office, soft contract and home.

**How does sustainability factor into product design for you?** We focus on optimising our products – the construction, the use of materials and the production techniques to remain as sustainable as possible.

We have mainly worked on minimising the use of materials in our designs, both due to the visual and the environmental aspects. I am thrilled to see that sustainability has become a significant issue for the whole furniture industry and that includes not only the manufacturers but also the sub-suppliers and end customers – everyone is starting to play their part.

**What do you find to be the most challenging aspects when designing something new?** It is very different from project to project. In one project it is the construction, in the next, it is the aesthetics, and in the third project, it is the price target.

**This year marks the tenth anniversary since the launch of the Smile Chair, what has changed in the design of the Smile Lounge?** The construction, the visual expression and the general outline of the shell are based on the Smile chair. We wanted to take those ideas and concepts, transforming that design into a great lounge chair.

Over the past year, we have been working on developing and optimising the visual balance, between the surfaces of the seat/back and the thin edges, but also focusing on both the low and high version with different bases. The comfort in the Smile lounge chairs has had an essential focus through the design process, and we are proud of the result – it really is a wonderfully comfortable sit.

**You've been involved in teaching at the Danish Design School, how do you think this informs your own practice? What does teaching bring to you as a designer?** One of the great things about teaching design students is that you have to argue and discuss every detail of the design, so you really get into the essential parts of the project. From there it is possible to guide the student towards taking the best and most logical decisions. When that succeeds, and a great project comes out of it, you feel honoured and proud. For me as a designer, the teaching process also helps to be sharper and more focused on my own products and design process.

**What designs have captured your imagination recently?** I am a huge fan of the playful, twisted designs that come out studio Nendo. It is always one of the must-sees during the Milan fair.



EC1 modular sofa / Level laptop table / Firkant pouf  
Knock on Wood coffee table / Smile Lounge high and low back chair swivel base



Light and colour, form and tactility are combined to charm and draw the eye.





Spire granite coffee table



One moment we're relaxing and the next we're at work.  
Furniture needs to be modular and flexible to accommodate our changing needs.

EC1 modular sofa  
Spire marble coffee table

**THE SHAPE OF CONVERSATIONS**

We're often more than the sum of our parts.  
Comfortable and informal, the casual meeting setting is  
a creative hub for gathering and disseminating information  
- finding those synergies in team-based work.

INFORMAL MEETING



Woodstock round table  
Arena chair wood base



In areas as diverse as upholstery and veneer moulding, carpentry and steelwork, we partner with Danish craftsmen for whom furniture making is part of their heritage.

Kant high table  
Nam Nam wood high back bar stool



Kant high table  
Nam Nam wood high and low back bar stool



MIA LAGERMAN

FOR ME, DESIGN IS AN ONGOING PROCESS.  
THERE CAN BE SO MANY PARAMETERS INVOLVED IN  
A DECISION — NEEDS AND DESIRES FROM MANY  
DIFFERENT PARTS IN THE CHAIN.

While many designers often are accused of getting lost in the form or concept of their products, this safely cannot be said for Lagerman. Her work makes you aware of the intense scrutiny she pays to the ultimate user of the products – driving home the mantra of form following function.

**Tell us about your working space – is it nice and tidy or organised chaos?** My working space is a combination of both, I like it orderly around me and in my head. Unfortunately, I have a very personal way of organising my things. The way I work fills the studio very quickly filled with items from ongoing projects. I think this is what you call organised chaos.

**Do you see any distinction between designing for the home and designing for the workplace? If so, how do they differ?** Designing for the workplace is far more complex, there are so many regulations to take into consideration, whereas you are mostly free from these when designing for the home.

**Could you talk us through the development of the Sky Chair?** The Sky chair project is very complicated in its simplicity. Combining a moulded wood shell or a plastic shell, with wooden legs, metal tube and tread leg frames. It's about finding the solution for several materials with different characteristics and making it fit together.

**You suggest on your website that your works are in "constant development" and "a journey." How do you know when your design is completed?** As long as it not a bad idea, it is still a good one. For me, design is an ongoing process. There can be so many parameters

involved in a decision. Price, supplier, changes; needs and desires from different parts in the chain.

**How does the concept of sustainability affect the way you design?** Working with sustainability is an integral part of my thinking when approaching design. We use FSC wood for the shell of the Sky Wood chair and recycled ocean plastics for the Sky Ocean chair. These were central issues in the design. The problem of non-renewable woods and plastic waste are massive problems for the environment and every step we take to reduce this burden can help life on earth.

**Your projects often involve materials such as wood, and stone – even ocean plastic with the new Sky chair. What do you look for in the qualities and characteristics of materials when designing?** Qualities and characteristics, if you add functionality and aesthetics – you've almost answered the question!

**What do you find to be the most challenging aspects when designing something new?** To make the best of the situation I am in.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring designer?** If you absolutely have to be a designer, I would suggest complementing the career with a varied education. Being a designer, you must have many talents.



In collaborative workplaces, casual meetings are an essential requirement. Stackable, storable solutions transform any space into a workspace.



Woodstock flip top table  
Sky Wood stackable chair



Kant meeting table  
Sky Wood stackable chair



The same level of detail and craftsmanship goes into the tabletop cover as it does with the each table's form.  
The careful selection of materials makes all the difference.



## MANUFACTURE AND CRAFT



## QUALITY AS STANDARD

The performance and aesthetics of our collection rest heavily on the raw materials we use in the composition. From the underlying structure right through to the finishes, we carefully consider each component to emphasise and extol its natural and sensory properties. The creation of our collection is physically demanding work and requires a level of expertise and diligence not found anywhere else. From our Danish workshops and production facilities, we're able to connect and collaborate with a team for whom furniture making is intrinsically part of their culture and heritage.

We're guided by a combination of the creative spirit, traditional craft techniques and the latest production technologies. In areas as diverse as plastic and veneer moulding, carpentry and steel work, the mix of experience and innovation helps our furniture to find its home in workplaces on the cutting-edge of change.

While we're a young company, we see sustainability, design and production as all part of the same process. We aim to ensure our products last for many generations ahead and merge technological, environmental and social considerations into our strategy. Through each of our operations, we're building a circular methodology - from raw material extraction to design, production, reuse and recycling.

**GIVING LIFE TO NEW IDEAS**

How best to nurture ideas?  
An ideal presentation space should be like its host:  
quietly confident and motivational while creating a  
substantial, positive impact on the audience.



Firkant pouf / Level laptop table / Arena chair swivel base  
Woodstock flip top table

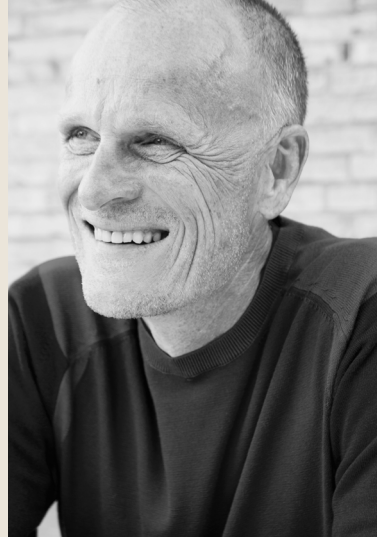




Woodstock flip top table  
Arena chair swivel base with castors



These items are as elegant when stowed as when in use.  
Movement is designed to be smooth and straightforward, perfect for rapidly changing workplaces.



## HANS THYGE

DESIGN IS ABOUT TELLING STORIES.  
 YOU NEED TO DEVELOP THESE STORIES AND LET THEM  
 ENTER YOUR MIND. IF YOU TAKE THE ESSENCE OF THIS,  
 DESIGN IS ABOUT THE POWER OF IMAGINATION.

For Hans Thyge, all materials possess exciting properties that are to be challenged and brought out in the design process. He believes that design is a question of stimulating memories and dreams and paving the way for new design perspectives.

**You work on projects that span over product design, graphical and architectural fields. How does your approach change between these disciplines?** While varied in their approach, architecture and design do have certain similarities. Both are about space, volume, materials, proportions, functionality and much more. You could say that buildings and interiors are the containers of our lives and product design is directly linked to the human body and storytelling.

Architecture and interiors always relate to a particular physical space, so they are dependent on specific contexts and situations, whereas product design should be more self-contained. You should be able to see design objects in a variety of places; therefore, they become independent stories and sculptures.

Object design mainly applies to the human scale, which connects your eyes and body to the object. You feel the materials and comfort, and therefore details and function are extremely important.

**What do you find to be the most challenging aspects when designing something new?** To tell a story or solve a complex problem in an interesting way and as simple as possible. We love simple stories that have a clear message.

**When discussing the Arena Chair, you suggest "Good design is about relating to all senses." What senses do you feel the Arena appeals to?** First of all, Arena relates to the visual sense. The soft-shaped shell is inviting and appealing to the eye. The proportions in the chair are really har-

monic. Furthermore, Arena relates to the tactile sense with light curves and a softness that is comfortable and supports you in the lower back. The armrest allows you to relax in a leisurely manner. So good design appeals to the body and the mind, and you achieve this by affecting the senses... it is actually about sensuality.

**What advice would you give to a young designer?** Work work work. It is as difficult to become a good designer as it is to learn to play Mozart on the violin. You need to rehearse over and over again. From the "Power of imagination" to creating a finished product it is a long way. 90% of the process comes from hard work and your experience of how form, material, colour etc. work all together to tell your stories precisely.

Get some practice in a studio or working directly in a company as only working on and improving on real things makes you grow.

**How does the Forum table withstand the 'heavy' demands of the contemporary workplace?** The astonishing thing about the Forum table series is that it has visual weight and, unlike many tables in the workstation or meeting setting, it has a deliberately grounded approach. It strongly complements the surrounding architecture with a hand-crafted look and subtle details and solid wood. These details add design value and a homely feel, which, I believe, intrigues many users.

In what ways are designing for the home and designing for the workplace different? Designing for the workplace has more rigorous requirements

such as solidity, multifunctional use, space efficiency, ease of cleaning etc. Whereas residential design can be more playful and less restricted. That being said, the office environment is beginning to adopt more features from the domestic area, partly as people do not want their working environments to be sterile or stereotyped.

**In our previous interview, you mentioned the aim of good design is to "tell stories that touch our emotions." What story does the Forum table tell?** Forum tells a story of simplicity and quality craftsmanship in the language of solid wood. When I see the Forum table, I think about sturdy plank tables in solid wood, reminiscent of another time mixed with modern contemporary lines and proportions. It blends an interesting heritage element into the modern office environment.

**We've had some great success this year with the Woodstock series, what do you think appeals so much to companies about the table family?** Woodstock's unique story is the combination of cast aluminium and wood not typically seen together in this way. It is a strong essence of contrasts and tactile expression.

Woodstock looks both modern and familiar, and we really like it when we awaken this feeling in people because then we know we have achieved something beautiful.



Technology has released us from the desk and now follows us around the workplace.  
Settings occur wherever our behaviours lead us.

Level laptop table



Arena chair swivel base  
Woodstock flip top table



Facit workstation  
Arena chair gas lift swivel base with castors



Facit workstation  
Arena chair gas lift swivel base with castors

**CREATIVITY THROUGH CONNECTION**

From training to executive decisions, the versatility of the conference setting is an essential part of work. Here, personality shines through which is why these settings are often sophisticated and accommodating with adaptability to the needs of the modern world.

Facit meeting table  
Arena chair swivel base





Refined profiles, intuitive functionality and natural materials. There's a luxury found in such simplicity.

Forum meeting table  
Arena chair metal base



Forum meeting table



Texture changes perception.  
Harnessing tactility in surface materials is integral in forming a comfortable environment.



Facit workstation



The circle of designers with whom we collaborate are connected in their fascination for craft, tactility and functional design. Their attention to sculptural detail connects the essential elements to the total form.



Woodstock meeting table  
Arena chair swivel base





Facit meeting table  
Arena chair swivel base

**SHARING IN GOOD COMPANY**

Re-energise and recentre within your work community. Whether a quick coffee and a catch-up or a space to relax into lunch, the cafe setting should appeal to all walks of life with a relaxed and harmonious spirit.



Bank table  
Nam Nam wood chair



While work is important, furniture can help create places to relax and socialise.  
Places for casual conversations.





High or low, these multifunctional settings invite you to occupy different situations, behaviours and activities.  
Support is always found in the item's structural solidity.

Bank table / Nam Nam wood chair  
Bank high table / Nam Nam contract low back bar stool



OWNER **JESPER MØLLGAARD JENSEN**

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## THE LONDON HOME OF DANISH DESIGN

Icons is a Danish furniture company with a singular and straightforward purpose: to enrich peoples' lives at work. Over the past decade, we have worked with new and established designers from an array of different disciplines, all with the ambition to create furniture that is inviting, functional and builds an emotional connection with its users.

Everything we create is made to support the activities and behaviours of modern work. This means we put the people who use our products in the centre of our design process. This approach has enabled us to create a unique collection that adapts to changing needs and experiences, while continually inspiring its users.

From our teams in London and Copenhagen, we've grown an international outlook to the workplace. By way of the Danish Design philosophy of minimalism and simplicity, our products complement the varied world of work and can be found in offices around the world.

Based in Clerkenwell, London, the heart of the UK's Design District, our headquarters acts as both a showroom and coworking environment with over 1500 visitors using our furniture and space over the last year. This live testing environment provides the perfect space to understand the interplay of ideas, design and work patterns that inform our product design.

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