

A Material Turn



in Danish Design

Nikoline Sander & Linda Nhu Laursen

A Material Turn in Danish Design

By Nikoline Sander & Linda Nhu Laursen

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Foreword by

Linda Nhu Laursen

Head of Design Research, AAU Design Lab

”Design heritage is not something we preserve unchanged, but something we actively reshape to remain relevant. In doing so, I see a future of design defined by how intelligently we work with what already exists.”

Linda Nhu Laursen

In 2024, I shared a vision with the furniture industry: that together, we could take greater responsibility for the materials we use. With this ambition, we joined forces across the value chain to create a material turn - or perhaps a material return - in Danish design.

Together with leading Danish furniture brands, manufacturers, and designers, we initiated a series of experiments exploring how overlooked material resources can be the foundation for design. We revisited materials often regarded as imperfect, surplus, or discarded. Rather than treating waste as the end of a lifecycle, we approached it as the beginning of a new one.

In this publication, we revisit our collective efforts. Drawing on principles that have long defined Danish design: honesty, functionality, and profound authenticity in materials and manufacturing, we explore how these ideals can meet the demands of a changing industry. This effort is both practical and

forward-looking, finding new material approaches that push the boundaries of production and market relevance.

For me, these designs are remarkable not only for what they are, but for what they represent. They embody trustful collaboration around a shared vision. A common industrial agenda and a belief that Danish design can continue to renew itself by responding thoughtfully to the challenges of its time.

On these pages, you will find what becomes possible when an entire industry moves in a common direction. When design is more than the objects, we create and thoughtfully considers the materials and integrate the entire value chain. More importantly, this publication marks the beginning of a broader conversation. It invites further discussion on how a material and collaborative turn in Danish design may help build a more responsible and resilient future for the industry.

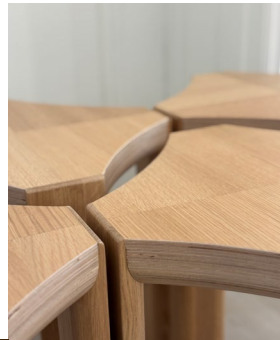
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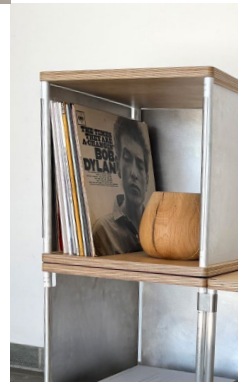
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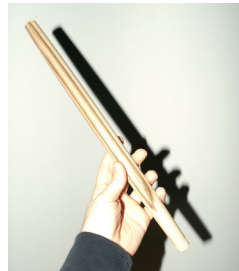
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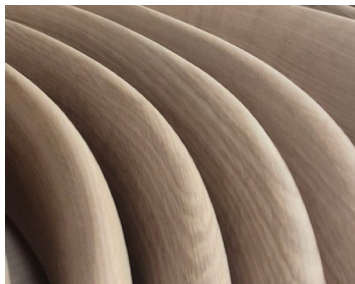
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Prologue by

Nikoline Sander

PhD Fellow in Imperfect Aesthetics, AAU Design Lab

This publication addresses those who read, shape, study, or simply live with design. It invites reflection on how we encounter materials and the expectations we place upon them when they are embodied in design.

What you will encounter here are six design experiments that offer a new perspective. Developed within the ZeroWaste research project, they began as an investigation into how the furniture industry might use what is typically rejected and minimise future generation of waste. In these experiments, NORR11, Fritz Hansen, FRIIS & MOLTKE, Muuto, FDB Møbler, and BOLIA, together with designers and manufacturers, do not seek perfection in the conventional sense but instead propose another kind of refinement: one grounded in care, responsibility, and authenticity.

The materials are worked with in different ways. Their variations and irregularities are embraced, challenging the assumption that quality depends on uniformity.

What is often labelled “imperfect” emerges instead as a product of expectation. This does not imply a reduction in design quality, but rather a redefinition of it. A turn towards understanding how material awareness can coexist with, and even strengthen, contemporary design practice.

Through words and visuals, we invite you to encounter these design experiments as propositions - opening a conversation about how design might evolve when materials, in all their complexity, are taken as the point of departure. We also invite you to acknowledge the openness required to present work before its outcomes are fully determined. Such gestures reflect a readiness to test new directions and to reconsider what contemporary design can, and should, aspire to be. A material turn is not a fixed solution, but an ongoing effort shaped across the value chain.

Enjoy the reading.

“Danish design is undergoing a material turn.
Across the industry, attention is shifting.
Materials are no longer simply the means through
which products are realised, they have become
central to how we take responsibility in design.”

Linda Nhu Laursen - Head of Design Research, AAU Design Lab



A special thanks to the collaborating brands and manufacturing companies:

FRITZ HANSEN

muuto



NORR11

=||| FRIIS & MOLTKE
ARCHITECTS

MØBLER
- A PHILOSOPHY -

BOLIA

K V I S T

hammel[®]
harmony in the making

Fritz Hansen x Mikkel Huse

Following the form of an icon





Fritz Hansen

Patrick Runge Clausen

Head of Sustainability and Compliance

“This project is driven by a desire to experiment with materials and processes, exploring what is possible. It encourages innovation in an area we don’t usually prioritise as much.”

Patrick Runge Clausen

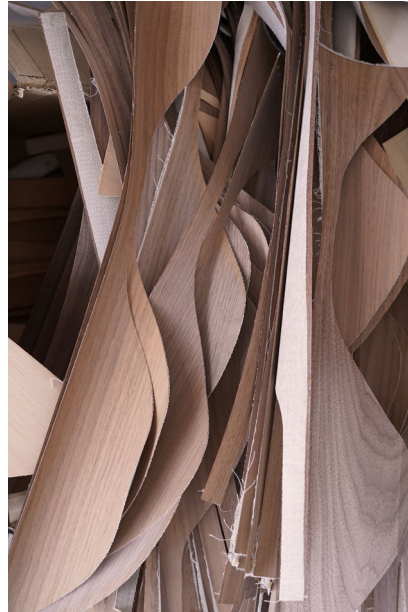
Founded in 1872, Fritz Hansen is a cornerstone of Danish design, renowned for its timeless craftsmanship and enduring relevance. The brand combines traditional cabinetmaking techniques with industrial innovation, producing furniture that balances elegance, functionality, and longevity. Collaborations with iconic designers such as Arne Jacobsen and Poul Kjærholm have shaped its legacy, resulting in pieces that have become modern design classics. While grounded in heritage, the

brand continues to evolve, engaging contemporary designers to reinterpret its values for a modern audience, ensuring its collections remain both relevant and forward-thinking.

As Head of Sustainability and Compliance, Patrick Runge Clausen searches for new responsible pathways for Fritz Hansen, including this experiment of utilising the offcut material from the renowned Series 7 chair.

“It is the most iconic and most sold chair, we have. We sell an estimate of 60.000 – 70.000 chairs a year. The chair has a distinct shape, so you always end with veneer offcuts in the same shape, which sparked our ambition to explore the potential of this material.”

Patrick Runge Clausen



Reshaping and reframing an offcut

We all know the Series 7 chair. Its silhouette is unmistakable. But every time that iconic shape is cut, it leaves behind another form: the negative space of the chair, a sculptural veneer offcut. Chair after chair, these leftover pieces accumulate.

With these offcuts as his starting point, designer Mikkel Huse launched a design experiment: to create a piece of furniture shaped entirely by what the chair

leaves behind. A way of showing how leftover, tricky forms can give rise to new iconic expressions.

The result is a showpiece stool constructed from three identical elements. Together, they form a seat that naturally extends into the legs of the stool. Simple in its construction, yet rich and complex in its silhouette. For every six Series 7 chairs produced, enough veneer is available to make one Clover stool.





”It is exciting to approach the design process from a different angle, focusing on the shape of the material rather than the final product. It was a revealing realisation that starting with the material can still result in a visually appealing product.”

Patrick Runge Clausen



Mikkel Huse

The Clover stool

“The idea was to stay as close as possible to the shape of the waste material, using it to its fullest potential. This strengthens the story, keeping the offcut closely connected to the final design, which was my main goal. The form evolved into a cloverleaf, and I like the idea of this three-petalled clover because the repetition helps you understand the shape.”

Mikkel Huse

The industrial designer Mikkel Huse works closely with biomimicry, drawing deep inspiration from the patterns, systems, and structures found in nature.

With offset in the specific offcuts of The Series 7 chair, the stool is inspired by these organic shapes, yet with strong emphasis on creating a small piece of furniture that draws on the lines provided by the shape of the offcuts. The stool is constructed from veneer sheets

in a three-legged composition, where each leg is formed from two mirrored offcuts – one from each side of the original chair.

The naming of the stool, Clover, adds the final touch to the design. It links back to nature as a reminder that valuable opportunities can grow from the materials we too often overlook, Mikkel Huse explains.





“I really enjoy design when it moves away from only being the object and then moves into the production. These objects, they have a longer story when it comes from this technical standpoint and goes into an aesthetic standpoint. I think it is very interesting. For me, it was very difficult, but I really liked the challenge.”

Mikkell Huse





“While the museum has a strong grasp of what has happened in the past, and to some extent what is happening now, the events program often tries to capture what will happen in the future and where design is heading. This is perhaps one of our most important tasks: to show that design must also be capable of something different, both now and in the future, because there simply are not the resources to keep doing the same thing over and over. These experiments point to a sense of hope that it is possible to think differently and perhaps find ways to reduce something.”

Ole Huld

*Event Manager,
Designmuseum Danmark*

NORR11 x Pilgaard Design Studio

Marks of authenticity





NORR11

Ludvig Kjærulff

Co-CEO

”For years, we had wanted to develop a stackable wooden chair and when the opportunity arose to explore a new approach, we were ready to pursue it. Being bold is part of our identity, and that means taking on challenges without knowing the answers beforehand.”

Ludvig Kjærulff

The Danish design company NORR11 creates furniture for the international contract market, that exudes attitude and relevance, intended for everyday use. Their designs balance architectural clarity with a contemporary sensibility, resulting sculptural, bold, and sophisticated pieces.

Despite their Danish heritage, their designs mix boundaries between time periods, design directions, cultures and materials, in a desire to push boundaries and thread new pathways. The company was founded on a vision of continuously creating designs that spark curiosity, and a commitment to creating timeless pieces on the leading edge of design.



”These are nature’s own marks. They are not flaws, but something authentic. We should question whether such traces of nature truly deserve to be rejected.”

Marianne Thompson - Product Manager, NORR11

Finding authenticity in materials, marks, and making

NORR11 set out with a bold ambition: to design and launch a stackable wooden chair made entirely from what the furniture industry routinely rejects. In traditional manufacturing, wood is discarded for showing too much character – natural marks, colour variations, knots, mirrors or subtle imperfections that fall outside strict quality standards.

In this experiment, these qualities are redefined as nature’s own marks – seen not as flaws, but as signs of authenticity. From this material starting point, NORR11 questions whether such materials should

be discarded at all, and whether our expectations of material perfection are too high.

For NORR11, the result becomes more than a new design. It reflects a process of care and co-creation between brand, designer, and manufacturer. Through the chair, NORR11 quietly suggests a shift towards a more careful relationship with materials and, ultimately, with the planet. By launching this chair, NORR11 demonstrates that authenticity can be designed into furniture through transparency and through valuing already circulating resources.



“This chair has the same structural quality as any other NORR11 product. The differences are purely visual. First-grade wood does not necessarily mean better furniture.”

Uno Kofoed - Product Developer, NORR11



Pilgaard Design Studio

The Evig Chair

NORR11 partnered with industrial designer Esben Pilgaard from Pilgaard Design Studio to guide the design of the chair. With a focus on precise aesthetics, everyday function and sustainable principles in his designs, Pilgaard worked closely with the entire team to let imperfect materials lead the design rather than limit it.

Pilgaard began with a functional archetype – the stackable wooden chair – filling a gap in NORR11's portfolio. Once the design had found its shape, the team set out to find overlooked materials within production, in volumes sufficient for commercial use. This required close collaboration with their manufacturer, Kvist Industries, and a willingness to challenge established ways of working. To ensure

a stable material supply, the team turned to an unexpected source: oak marked by small insect holes, typically rejected for furniture production. When the primary stream of rejected wood from production is low, it is supplemented with this material. Structurally sound and of high quality, it carries visible traces of life once present.

The result is the Evig chair. Stackable in sets of six, and made from offcuts, aesthetically rejected wood and oak with traces of insects. Rather than concealing these marks, the Evig chair embraces them, and celebrates knots, mirrored grains, and colour variations as natural aesthetic embellishments. Each chair is unique, bearing the imprint of its origin and highlighting how nature leaves its signature.





“My standpoint as a designer is that we need to rethink the way we consume. My work should always contribute something beyond itself, whether in terms of the environment, the climate, or biodiversity. From the very beginning of this project, we shared the ambition of making it a success: creating a chair from what is usually rejected. It has been a rewarding process to be part of, and I am proud that we made it work. That feels truly significant.”

Esben Pilgaard Jørgensen

6 principles for working with imperfect materials

When designing with imperfect materials, a range of principles can be applied. Depending on the intended expression, imperfections can be addressed by excluding, concealing, integrating, embracing, highlighting, or even amplifying them within the design. Together, these principles

represent a spectrum of ways of working with material imperfections, allowing such materials to be reintroduced into furniture design while balancing aesthetic intentions with the degree of material transformation.





“Imperfect materials fall short of established requirements. Yet these experiments demonstrate their capacity to belong meaningfully within furniture design. Perhaps it is not the materials that require reassessment, but the standards by which we define their perfection.”

Nikoline Sander

*PhD Fellow in Imperfect Aesthetics,
AAU Design Lab*

Muuto x Lise Vester

Controlling the challenging corners





Muuto

Julie Lykke Myhrvold

Head of Design

“It is healthy for everyone to meet their scrap face to face and form an opinion about it. You can see scrap as a challenge, but you can also choose to turn it around and see it as an opportunity. We have an obligation to treat it as an opportunity – designing from scrap, rather than designing in ways that generate more of it.”

Julie Lykke Myhrvold

Muuto is grounded in the Scandinavian design tradition, where timeless aesthetics, functionality, craftsmanship, and honest expression are central. Building on this heritage, the brand reinterprets it through contemporary materials, techniques, and bold creative thinking, always aiming to introduce new perspectives.

At the heart of Muuto's approach is an interest in how design shapes human experience. Their work explores why certain spaces evoke emotion and

how objects, through colour, material, form, and tactility, affect how we perceive and feel within an environment. Interiors are seen as sensory landscapes, where even small details can resonate differently depending on the individual.

Their designs aim to be intuitive and engaging, contributing character and atmosphere without dominating a space – ultimately encouraging reflection on what makes an environment feel balanced, personal, and meaningful.





Shaping rhythm with repeated corners

Driven by the hunt for a steady waste stream to create a commercial product, Muuto explored their own waste and paused at the production of round tables. In the production of circular tabletops, four corner offcuts always remain – shaped by necessity rather than intention. Muuto, together with designer Lise Vester and supported by Kvist Industries, set out to answer a simple yet challenging question: *what purpose might the four unused corners of a round tabletop hold?*

From these corners, a new stool takes form. What was once negative space becomes the essence of a resource-minded design, transforming waste into

something warm, tactile, and lasting. Lise Vester has designed a piece that invites multiple roles: stool, side table, pedestal, or something yet to be defined by its owner. It carries a subtle twist – seen in its angled composition, its heavy and bold yet simple proportions, and its layered construction that celebrates rather than hides the nature of plywood.

Joined together, the four veneered corners create a mosaic of colour and grain – each piece is aligned in grain direction but unique in natural variation. The seat is lifted by four solid legs, almost like a gem held in place by delicate prongs.



“We need to reconsider the idea of always designing in the easiest way. If we had chosen the easy approach for this stool, it wouldn’t have been made from four separate components, each built from three layers – twelve pieces in total. Instead, it could have been produced as a single element, which would have been far simpler for the manufacturer. But by working with our own material scrap, we can accept a higher degree of manual work, and with that, a greater level of care.”

Julie Lykke Myhrvold



Lise Vester

The Muuto stool

Lise Vester's work often draws on rhythms and patterns found in nature, seeking to evoke a quiet curiosity in the encounter with an object. With this piece, she invites exploration – of how to sit, how the silhouette shifts with perspective, and how layers emerge. Repetition also plays a role, as the stool is envisioned not only as a singular object but as part of a wider composition, where multiple pieces interact like rhythms unfolding in space.

What began as an unfamiliar challenge in receiving a full pallet of corner offcuts at her studio, has

developed into a robust and sculptural design. The form remains closely guided by the geometry of the offcuts themselves, allowing the material to define both structure and expression.

The stool is made from Muuto's own waste materials. The seat is composed of twelve corner offcuts from the production of their popular round coffee table, while the legs are crafted from solid wood sourced from the Workshop table series. Designed with both function and versatility in mind, the stools can be stacked in sets of three.





“I have been very faithful to the material and to my own way of thinking about design. There have been moments when I wondered whether it might be too simple in a way – whether I had really designed anything at all, and whether it was too directly taken from the circular offcut. But I really value the honesty of it and the fact that you can see its story. The freedom comes in the wide legs the stool has been given, adding an extra sculptural quality to the piece. Seen from one side, it appears solid, while from the other it feels more delicate and lighter. This creates a play of light and shadow and allows for different expressions depending on where the design is experienced from.”

Lise Vester



“Danish design heritage was built through collaboration across the value chain. As we face a new material reality, its future may once again be shaped by collective action and a profound sense of shared material responsibility.”

Linda Nhu Laursen

*Head of Design Research,
AAU Design Lab*

FRIIS & MOLTKE

Designing flexibility with plates
and hollow spaces





FRIIS & MOLTKE

Line Frier & Mikkel Bahr

***Partner and Creative Manager of Transformation and Interior &
Partner and Creative Manager of Design***

As one of the leading Danish architecture companies, FRIIS & MOLTKE moves fluidly between architecture, interior and design – working across scales from structural frameworks to the objects within them. Their work balances function with atmosphere, shaped by a legacy of soft brutalism expressed through bold gestures and exposed systems. An insist on honesty, simplicity, and robustness runs throughout. Lines are clear and precise, and materials are chosen not for luxury, but for integrity, seen in concrete, yellow bricks and pine. Their designs

emerge where needs are unmet, extending naturally from their architectural projects into objects that inhabit them.

Within this context, the FRIIS & MOLTKE partners, Line Frier and Mikkel Bahr, turn to the exploration of a versatile storage unit made from discarded materials. Rooted in a sensitivity to interiors and product design, they approach this experiment with an intention to shape atmospheres and resonate with the rhythms of everyday life.



“What is particularly interesting about this furniture, is its robustness – its ability to uptake a variety of materials and accommodate changes in character. It can adapt to its context, whether it leans towards something more refined and exclusive or remains raw and honest.”

Line Frier

Inviting honest materials to speak and develop

How can a simple, characterful storage piece be designed using small material leftovers, offcuts, and secondary-grade materials? This question set the FRIIS & MOLTKE team on a journey to explore the potential of overlooked materials. Yet the real challenge did not lie in the materials themselves, but in creating a design precise enough to work across both varied materials and contexts. Their response is a simple, flexible storage unit without a backplate – an open, hollow space that invites display and interaction with the objects of everyday life.

The unit is designed as a modular framework, that

welcomes a wide range of materials, depending on what is available and desired. In this way, the material becomes the defining character: from rejected pine plywood and slices of marble to expressive oak or reused metal sheets from the building industry. To Line Frier and Mikkel Bahr, there are endless material opportunities.

The next challenge lies in insisting on the presence of pure materials, allowing them to speak for themselves, and in turn, convincing the user of the beauty they hold. Central to the design is an honesty that lets each material's history remain visible.

“This piece of furniture invites an alignment of expectations with the consumer. The premise of the unit is the presence of life upon it: fingerprints on the metal, scratches on the pipes, and marks in the wood that speak to its natural origin.”

Mikkel Bahr





“The industry tends to be afraid of the consumer. We know that untreated materials are incredibly beautiful. But when we use such materials, the ones that aren’t sealed in lacquer or paint, but are allowed to live their own life, we see how they evolve alongside us. They become something that changes and develops over time. This is a quality we actively seek to preserve.”

Line Frier

The Plade furniture



”I am drawn to the combination of materials and the duality between them. The horizontal wood and the vertical metal. The effect becomes especially compelling when the units are stacked, allowing the materials to stand out and creating this double proportioning.”

Mikkel Bahr

A simple cube, stringent in proportions and intention. Like a building block, a small piece of architecture, it invites variation: open, partially enclosed, or more closed, expanding in both form and scale. Designed with flat packing, reparability, and longevity in mind, the unit can be taken apart and reassembled over time, emphasising its purpose as an object meant to evolve rather than remain fixed.

Its clarity lies in its honest construction. Built from four distinct components and a series of repetitions, the storage unit is held together with visible screws and

snug fits that express how it is made. This simplicity allows it to adapt easily across contexts; from the home of a record collector to the buzzing office landscape, from compact living to larger spaces. It adapts over time, carrying its material story forward.

The prototype brings this thinking into focus. Made from rejected pine plywood, marked by surface irregularities and voids, and raw aluminium bearing traces of hands who touched it and of elements who meet and connect when joining multiple pieces.

FDB Møbler

Designing an entry point





“Meaningful transformation rarely happens all at once, it develops through a series of deliberate steps.”

*Linda Nhu Laursen - Head of Design Research,
AAU Design Lab*

From design heritage to new opportunities

We are living in a time where companies must find new ways of working with resources, materials, and value creation. It is easy to imagine that transformation requires radical breaks from existing practices, but in practice, change often begins where companies already are.

This is precisely where design competence, and these experiments, reveal their strength. Design has a unique ability to translate complex challenges into tangible opportunities. To bridge ambition and action. To make new directions visible and achievable, also for the most conservative companies. Perhaps most importantly, design can make the responsible choice the attractive choice.

Throughout this project, we have collaborated with companies positioned at different stages of their

journey. Some have explored new material flows. Some have challenged established production practices. Others have chosen to build on their own history, identity, and existing capabilities. In all cases, it is important to meet companies where they are.

FDB Møbler is a good example of this approach. Over the course of a year of collaboration, it became clear that the most interesting place to begin was within the company's own design DNA. The brief evolved into a coat rack based on the characteristic wooden spindles known from FDB's iconic spindle-back chairs, a design language that has already secured FDB's place in Danish design history. The pursuit was to create a smaller piece that could function as an “entry point” – both as an accessible introduction to the brand and as a functional element in the threshold of the home.



Ole Kiel - CEO, FDB Møbler



Jonas Søndergaard Nielsen - Head of Product and Design, FDB Møbler

FDB Møbler

The spindle-back chairs

“Today, we use spindles with visual imperfections, unsuitable for oil or lacquer finishes, in painted chairs to avoid material being wasted. While consumers often seek natural wood that does not appear natural, this coatrack embraces those imperfections and leaves them visible.”

Ole Kiel - CEO, FDB Møbler

FDB Møbler originates from the Danish cooperative movement of the 1940s, where furniture was developed to provide well-designed, functional, and affordable designs for a broad public. Owned by 2,1 million Danish households, FDB Møbler designs to the Danish homes, and this democratic principle continues to guide the brand, positioning furniture as objects that make room for and support everyday life.

The FDB design language is defined by simplicity,

clarity, and material honesty, with clean lines and durable construction supporting long-term use. Influential designers such as Børge Mogensen helped establish an enduring aesthetic in which form follows function and craftsmanship remains central. Today, FDB Møbler builds on this legacy by reintroducing classic designs alongside new interpretations. The result is a collection of timeless pieces designed to remain relevant across generations.





“We quickly fell in love with it. It clearly references our spindle-back chairs, and we recognised a shared DNA and history. After all, Poul Volther’s chair is what we are known for.”

*Jonas Søndergaard Nielsen - Head of Product
and Design, FDB Møbler*

The Femø coatrack



“This shows what design competence can do: meet companies where they are, build on what already exists, and gently move it forward. It reminds us that meaningful change rarely begins with revolution, but often with a thoughtful reinterpretation of what we already value.”

*Linda Nhu Laursen - Head of Design Research,
AAU Design Lab*

The design translates familiar elements into a new setting, as previously rejected spindles, known from iconic FDB pieces such as Poul Volther's J46 and Jørgen Bækmark's J80 and J81, are recontextualised from chair backrests to wall-mounted forms.

Developed at AAU Design Lab by Clara Olivia Birkekær Christiansen and Mathias Lund, the design process centred on refinement through subtle variation. By adjusting proportions, rounding, and the angling of the wooden elements to create rhythm, the design evolved through small, but deliberate shifts.

Modest yet adaptable, the coatrack functions both as a single unit and a continuous composition. Its modular structure allows it to grow over time, supporting evolving spatial and functional needs. Balancing visibility and utility, it shifts between being concealed by everyday use and standing as a subtle architectural element. It becomes a demonstration of how even a modest object can hold a larger conversation. Not only about the object itself, but about how design heritage can find new applications and renewed relevance in a changing world.



“I was inspired by the balanced composition of angles, spacing, and spindles in the FDB chair backrests, and I aimed to explore these details in the design of the coatrack.”

Clara Olivia Birkekær Christiansen



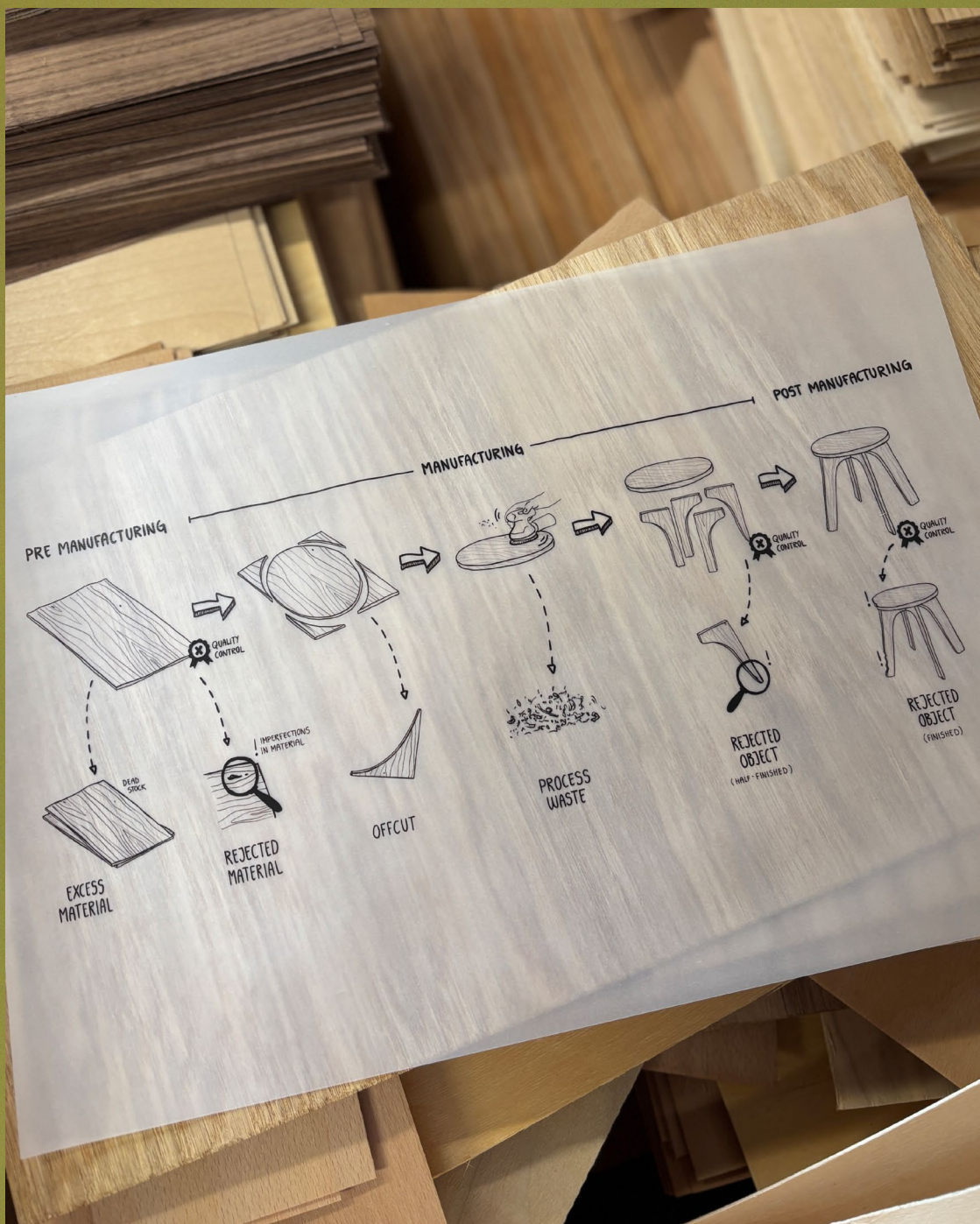
A material turn beyond cascading

In today's furniture production, imperfect and discarded materials are often guided along pathways of material cascading, finding new purposes in lower-value applications. Wood marked by surface irregularities may be used in painted furniture, while smaller offcuts are transformed into chipboard or pellets for heating, ensuring that little goes to landfill.

This project extends the logic of waste reduction already present in the industry by exploring how such materials can be valued differently. It seeks to elevate the use of imperfect materials by challenging the criteria that define their perceived limitations, rather than allowing them to cascade downward. This material turn may involve embracing surface imperfections or exploring furniture designs made through the joining of smaller pieces of wood.

The experiments point towards a more open relationship with materials typically set aside. Yet discarded materials are far from a uniform category. Each carries its own history, potential, and challenge – inviting designers, brands, and manufacturers to reconsider the role of materials in design. From offcuts shaped by constraints of size and form to visually rejected materials, forgotten deadstock, and the complexities of managing material flows, these materials call for new ways of seeing and working.

The diversity and richness of these material histories point towards a material turn. One that views discarded materials not as an endpoint, but as a point of departure for design approaches that celebrate material character, aesthetic variation, and a renewed sense of care and respect for the material itself.



BOLIA x Studio Nooi

Reimagining to reduce





BOLIA

Jens Nyholm Nørgaard

Product Manager

“I think it is important to approach waste in two ways. One is to prevent it in the first place. That begins in design. If a designer truly understands the materials and processes, they can create designs that significantly reduce waste. Two is to utilise the waste and design products out of it. The first is to me, the starting point.”

Jens Nyholm Nørgaard

BOLIA unfolds as a design universe shaped by a cultivated landscape of expressions and atmospheres. Its furniture and interior pieces support contemporary living through a balance of relevance, comfort, and function. Rooted in Scandinavian design traditions yet informed by an international network of designers, the brand represents a global interpretation of New Scandinavian Design. The collections are defined by soft forms, refined detailing, and a strong sense of material presence.

Behind this sensibility lies a highly data-driven

approach. Insights into how people live, use, and move within their environments inform the development of the collections, ensuring that aesthetics and function remain closely aligned with contemporary needs. A process of ongoing refinement underpins the work of BOLIA, guided by responsible practices and thoughtful material choices. From improved production methods to solutions that support repair and longevity, the ambition is to create designs that endure. This commitment extends across both new and existing pieces, ensuring they retain their value and relevance over time.



“We are almost certain that we will continue selling around 5000 chairs each year. Honestly, I don’t think people will notice that the backrest is divided. It will be what we present in stores, and therefore what customers come to recognise. Yes, there is a difference, but that is the beauty of it.”

Jens Nyholm Nørgaard

Every little bit helps: Redesigning a back rest

Many furniture designs already live in our homes, quietly becoming modern classics. Though established in the market, they continue to be produced, creating opportunities for subtle improvement when new questions arise. This experiment builds on one such question.

BOLIA's Merge Dining Chair features a steam-bent solid wood backrest. As Jens Nørgaard notes, this process results in a rejection rate of around 20%, either because the piece gets out of shape or because the wood oxidates and darkens. The challenge became clear: how can a small design

adjustment reduce this rejection rate?

In collaboration with the designers of the chair, Studio Nooi, and the manufacturer Hammel Furniture, BOLIA explored alternative backrest constructions. By examining this single component in depth, the team arrived at a solution that demonstrates how even minor redesigns can lead to meaningful improvements. Addressing waste prevention within an existing product line ensures a direct effect, as this chair already performs in the market. In this way, material use can be reduced with minimal commercial risk compared to designing new products from waste.

Studio Nooi

The Merge Dining Chair

”By gluing together thinner strips of bent wood rather than bending a single large piece, you can significantly reduce waste while maintaining strength and performance. A uniform appearance of the finished piece can be achieved by carefully selecting wood strips based on colour and grain.”

Ruggero Bastita – Studio Nooi

The Merge chair is one of BOLIA's best-selling products, originally designed by Studio Nooi, the Italian duo Giulia Pesce and Ruggero Bastita. With collaboration central to their design practice, they revisited the chair to gently refine and optimise the backrest.

Six alternative solutions were explored, ranging

from dividing the solid backrest into two or three pieces to experimenting with finger joints and angled connections. Through a close study of existing production methods and guided by considerations of appearance, material efficiency, and technical performance, the team identified a promising approach: splitting the solid backrest into three pieces glued together.





”Sometimes, small adjustments and apparently simple solutions can significantly improve the sustainability, efficiency, and overall impact of a product.”

Giulia Pesce – Studio Nooi





”One of the things I find interesting is that the brands did not see it as a challenge to get people to buy into the idea. I often wonder whether people can tolerate things like wormholes in a chair or dents in a surface, but it seemed that this is not the main challenge. The real challenge may be to transform the industry in some way and make an impact there. People seem, in a way, to be curious and open to new things.”

Lars Hedebo

Design Editor, Politiken

Kvist Industries





A furniture manufacturer in development

Kvist Industries A/S is a Danish furniture manufacturer known for high material quality and close collaborations with brands such as Muuto and Norr11. Through this project, Kvist has embarked on a new journey – one that goes beyond production alone and challenges how a manufacturing company can engage with material value.

Using waste materials is widely seen as a positive ambition, however, turning this idea into practice requires a fundamental shift. Waste cannot be treated like virgin material: it cannot simply be ordered in fixed quantities and sizes, nor should more waste be generated to reuse it. Reducing waste demands early and close collaboration between design and production, and rethinking value chains. Kvist already minimises waste by sourcing precisely dimensioned wood, but handling waste for reuse requires gaining an overview of quantities, dimensions, aesthetic surface variety, and materials flows – four critical parameters when turning what was previously

overlooked into something that can be actively designed with. Mapping and documentation become essential tools, laying the foundation for using waste materials in long-lasting furniture rather than downcycling them for heating.

Equally important, the process reshaped Kvist's role as a manufacturer. This project became a dialogue with brands, based on co creation and testing rather than fixed specifications. Design decisions were informed by real material availability, positioning Kvist as an active development partner rather than a passive supplier.

Internally, the project initiated a cultural shift. Waste moves from being overlooked to being brought into the open – both mentally and physically. In the workshops, dedicated spaces are created for materials destined for a new life, reinforcing a shared responsibility for seeing potential where there was once only a pile of waste.

“When aiming to design more responsible, CO₂ is not everything. There is also biodiversity, reduction of waste and multiple other perspectives.”

*Santa Staskevica – Group ESG and
Business Development Manager,
Kvist Industries*

“Making furniture from waste relies heavily on a close collaboration between brands, designers, and manufacturers. Waste is not a conventional stock material we can simply draw from – it emerges through our practices and availability. This makes the process complex, but our experiences show that, despite these challenges, it is possible.”

Kim Berg Jacobsen – CCO, Kvist Industries





Epilogue by

Marie-Louise Høstbo

Gallerist and Architect MAA

“The future of Danish design begins with what is already here: with knowledge and established relationships.”

Marie-Louise Høstbo

Being invited by Linda Nhu Laursen and AAU Design Lab to contribute to *A Material Turn* in Danish Design has been a reminder that contemporary design cannot be measured by visual novelty alone. In Denmark, we inherit a strong design tradition. But respect is not repetition. It is the ability to apply accumulated knowledge to the conditions of the present and, through them, look forward with greater precision.

What the projects in this publication make visible are not simply a material turn, but a change in attitude. Across the experiments, materials are not treated as neutral resources, but as conditions that actively shape the design process. The task is not simply to make better objects, but to ask exacting questions. What can industry, designers, and researchers learn from one another? The projects presented here demonstrate how collaboration can lead to a deeper and more precise understanding of both the problem and its possible solutions, as it has happened before in Danish design history.

The future of Danish design begins with what is already

here: with knowledge and established relationships. Transformation, repurposing, and waste prevention are understood not as stylistic gestures, but as necessary design competencies.

We are relearning them while looking forward and learning from other fields. This is not a return to the past, but a continuation of its most valuable principles under radically changed circumstances. At a time defined by planetary pressure, limited resources, and renewed awareness of our connectedness with nature, Danish design must remain curious and willing to question established conventions.

To move forward, Danish design must continue to share knowledge across disciplines and allow responsibility to become a source of aesthetic and cultural renewal. The collaborations gathered here and AAU Design Lab's willingness to move between research, industry, and design practice show how established boundaries can be shifted in practice. They do not offer a finished answer. They offer something more useful: a way of working.

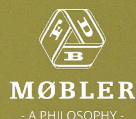
Thank you

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