



Experiment 2015

**BLÅ STATION**



# EXPERIMENT 2015

**HONKEN, POPPE & MORRIS JR.** The myth of the solitary designer is alive and well. Alone with their drawing board or modelling in clay, expanded polystyrene or with a 3D printer. Like a reflection of our individualistic era. But of course there are other approaches.

Like when Blå Station decided to run an experiment in which designers coach each other in an entirely open design process. Peeking into each other's sketch books, arguing about how narrow an armchair can actually be, how stackable and resistant a sofa can be made. Criticism and self-criticism at meeting after meeting. And of course you have to experiment with how to work if you want to create design classics. Especially as Blå Station had decided to develop three at a time.

When two of Johan Lindau's designers accepted the challenge to each create a self-confident, audacious typical Blå Station product for public environments, they also took on the task of selecting a third designer. They insisted that it should be a woman, ideally from another country – or why not an entire design team?

**Stefan Borselius** and **Thomas Bernstrand** spent large parts of last year's furniture fair considering who would be suitable. And after much head scratching rather surprisingly concluded that it should be their own employer, Blå Station's relentlessly challenging **Johan Lindau**.

The structure of the challenge, which means that each designer has the other two as an examiner, is illuminating. Now Johan would learn what it felt like to be constantly criticised. And he also has an

excellent grasp of the different requirements of the production process.

The result is a furniture collection which is like a little suburban gang; three distinct characters, each with their own voice, and at the same time the best of pals. Three teenagers with the same opportunities but from different backgrounds and cultures. Thomas Bernstrand's Honken is a generous bon vivant from the apartment block, demonstrating curiosity and an open mind. It works as an inviting armchair or an intimate, flirtacious two-seater sofa, constructed of robust sheet and expanded metal but with sensually turned legs.

Stefan Borselius' Poppe grew up in a semi and is straight-backed, proud, obstinate, and used to having his own way. Exact sitting angles and the thinnest possible shell are the key features here. Despite its minimal dimensions, Poppe's comfortable embrace tempts the user to stay awhile.

And Johan Lindau's Morris Jr mooches round in a terraced house before setting off into the world and becoming a mobile, flexible and intellectually sensitive figure. Morris Jr has nothing against a little disorder when it's party time, but then can be easily set back in place with its wheeled steel legs, and with the cushion as the cherry on top.

Whether the experiment has created three design classics it's still too early to say, but without doubt the three designers have reached new heights through each other's tough and constructive criticism. The result is three armchairs which have become even more individualistic than if the designers had worked on their own, and entirely in the spirit of Blå Station.

## A NEW FORM OF DESIGN COLLABORATION

One brief – three products

Three designers – two + one invited

A new challenge and a 100% open design process!

### DESIGNERS

#### Selected by Blå Station:

**STEFAN BORSELIUS**. Designer of many of Blå Station's iconic products.

**THOMAS BERNSTRAND**. Designer and playmate since 2012.

**The third designer** should be chosen by the two selected designers, in line with Blå Station's priorities: team, woman, young, foreign or in combination.

The third designer was to be selected, asked and announced during the Furniture Fair in week 6 of 2014.

### DESIGN BRIEF 2015

A typical, self-confident, independent Blå Station product – with an obvious attitude.

A modern classic, inspired by historical classics – but taking as its starting point the needs and opportunities of the future.

In addition to inspiration and creative joy, there were some guidelines.

- Logistics
- Subcontractors
- Environment
- Stock management
- Assembly
- Quality
- Transport
- Price
- Variation with moderation
- Tool costs
- Future
- Storytelling
- Documentation throughout the process
- Product deadline: 1 December 2014

What product are we seeking and what should it be able to provide? What pitfalls do we want to avoid? What environments are to be furnished? What is ideal for Blå Station? An armchair.

Blå Station chose the first two designers: Stefan Borselius & Thomas Bernstrand. Between them, they chose a third; a woman, a design team or a foreign designer was the aim. They chose **JOHAN LINDAU**, Blå Station's MD, designer and design manager, a Swedish man in his prime. Sometimes, that's just how it is.



# DESIGN BRIEF 2015





**JOHAN:** "But how narrow do you think we can make an armchair, Stefan? You don't want to feel insecure or as if you're about to fall off!"

**THOMAS:** "But making it as narrow as possible is the whole point, Johan. We've got to push it as far as we can!"

**STEFAN:** "The brain may not be convinced, but the body feels how comfortable it is and tries to conform to Poppe's stature. You don't sit in it, but with it!"

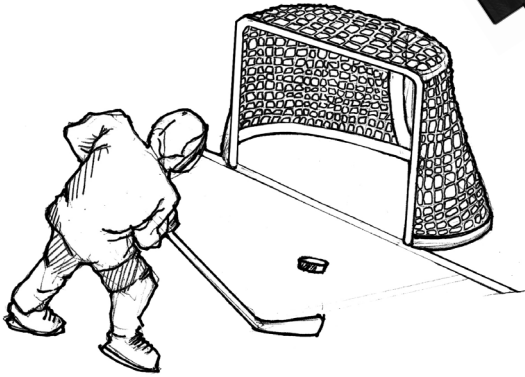
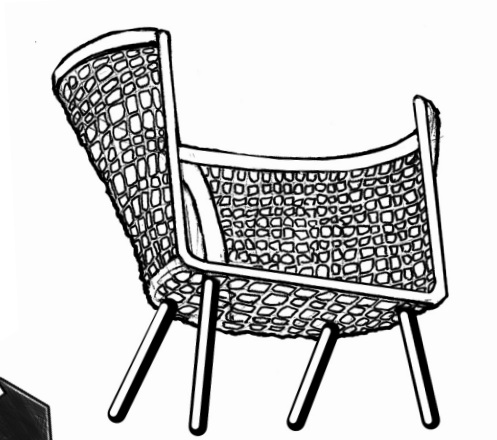








Thomas Bernstrand



**THE TASK** was to design a modern classic. Hardly a simple assignment, but certainly an inspiring challenge. We discussed what made a classic and just why they lasted. We realised that some items of furniture have become classics because they have a wonderful form, while others were designed by a known designer, are part of a known interior design or constitute a basic range for a well-established company. What the majority of classics have in common is that they were developed over a long time and with a sensitive approach to form and function. Classics can grow old gracefully.

A piece of furniture designed in the 1950s and still sold might perhaps not even have been introduced today. Creating a classic in 2015 is not the same as it was 50 years ago. Today enormous numbers of new pieces are launched, and achieving visibility among this huge selection is considerably more difficult now. But of course it's still possible.

I love products sold at car boot sales and auctions, which people buy even though they are terribly scruffy. Some pieces of furniture can be in very poor condition, but you buy them anyway, straighten them out, apply a new layer of varnish, make them a new cushion or polish them. The result may not always be perfect, but that's not important, because these layers create a beautiful patina of history.

Another reason for loving this kind of furniture is that it is actually the most environmentally friendly. Well-used furniture which is discarded only to be picked up by someone else who gives it a little TLC and a new existence. But not all of it can be saved after a long life. This requires particular characteristics which

I wanted to give my armchair. It must be possible to straighten it out so that it wouldn't end up at the tip just because it happened to fall off the removal van.

So I designed Honken with a frame of metal and loose cushions. The frame is manufactured of sturdy 30 mm tubes, a base plate of 6 mm sheet metal and expanded metal. This is rigid, impact-resistant and designed to survive tough environments. And if it falls off the removal van, Honken can be repaired. The dents can be removed and it can be repainted. No cushion lives for ever, so when Honken's cushions are worn out in 50 years or so, it will need new ones. But Honken will survive.

It was also important that it was easy to manufacture Honken. Being stackable reduces the number of pallets required and thus transport costs between factories and on to the final customer. Armchairs aren't often stackable, so it was a challenge to design this one without losing out on form and comfort. Honken's frames stack into each other and the legs are delivered separately and can be easily assembled by the customer. At the same time, it had to be small enough to fit onto an SJ pallet, making possible the most effective means of transport. Less transport, better logistics, reduced freight prices and good for the environment.

I wanted Honken to have presence but not to feel clumsy or difficult to use. Expanded metal makes it slender and elegant, and also transparent so that Honken has generous dimensions without concealing other furniture or being perceived as bulky. I have made Honken into a large armchair or a neat little sofa for close friends.

# HONKEN

Thomas Bernstrand + Lindau & Borselius 2015











# HONKEN TABLE

Thomas Bernstrand + Lindau & Borselius 2015





Stefan Borselius



**EVERY ITEM** of furniture has its place. Large, comfy armchairs are wonderful, but they can be difficult to place. Small stools without back supports lack comfort.

Product design is always about adaptations and compromises. Everything from material choice to manufacture, transport, storage and function. Well-built, elegant furniture can easily become too expensive, and if it is cheap there may have been compromises regarding working conditions or the environment. High levels of comfort often lead to large items of furniture. In many of my products I focus on dimensions, ensuring high comfort without the piece being too large; products such as the 2005 Peekaboo wing chair. Experimenting with materials led to me make that chair in formfelt, a thin textile material. Peekaboo was the first item of furniture in formfelt, which is now a common solution. Asking questions can lead to something new. A designer should ask questions!

This time, I wanted to see how far I could go with dimensions. How narrow can we make an upholstered armchair without losing function? Are there limits to our expectations about how a piece of furniture should appear or be?

It was important that the armchair should be a real armchair to sit in, not an art project or just a perch. The ambition was to find a form that would fit into many environments; which retained the airiness and space of the room. There isn't always space for much furniture in a particular environment, but there should be space for a Poppe. This wasn't to be an armchair that you sit in or a stool that you sit on, but rather an armchair that you sit with. A narrow style that

provides mobility. I didn't want it to be merely easy to move around and furnish with, but also easier for the user to move with the chair. Carl Malmsten created the Farmor armchair, which exudes femininity and a homely atmosphere, but the name ("Grandmother") comes from its function. It is indented at the waist so that grandmother can sit and knit. Poppe's narrow styling means that not only can grandmother knit a sweater, but also that the grandchildren can play FIFA or friends can gesticulate while socialising.

The work started with various sitting tests to determine different width measurements for the seat, back and neck. The armchair could have been narrower still, but we chose an optimal minimum size to enable more people to find it comfortable and relaxing.

A tall armchair provides a clearer function and expression, while simultaneously giving greater comfort and security in a narrow space. On the basis of these measurements, I sketched volumes on paper and made a variety of models in paper, clay, expanded polystyrene, and printed in 3D. The soft parts welcome the body and the substantial lumbar support ensures that the armchair provides the comfort we were seeking.

The result was a neatly tailored slim armchair with forms which are adapted to the human body but also with its own unique expression. "Typical Borselius", was one reaction. Poppe is like a remote relative of the Oppo armchair. Two different armchairs with different backgrounds, challenges and volumes.

# POPPE

Stefan Borselius + Bernstrand & Lindau 2015



FÖRBJUDEN GENOMGÅNG







Johan Lindau



**HALF A CENTURY** ago, in 1964, my father, the designer Börge Lindau, took part in a similar experiment. Kai Haglund, owner and manager of Haglund och Söner, Scandinavia's leading roller blind factory, wanted to start working with furniture and design, which were his genuine passion.

Kai carefully chose the three designers who would form the basis of his furniture collection. The choice fell on the renowned John Kandell, the already established Björn Hultén, and finally the unestablished design team, which had recently been attracting attention and for whom a brilliant future had been predicted; Lindau & Lindekrantz. The presentation at FORM Design Center in Malmö was a success and was covered by the major Danish design magazine *mobilia*, in a special edition, no. 124, autumn 1965. The article concluded with "And we will hear much more of Lindau and Lindenkrantz". And how true that was!

Unfortunately Kai Haglund died not long after starting the project, and the project with him.

Börge Lindau and Bosse Lindekrantz produced a number of different products for Haglund och Söner, including a recliner called Atrium and an attractive, generously proportioned and comfortable armchair called Morris. Both are masterworks in my eyes. Since I was a child, I have felt that Morris was one of the best products from my father's collection. This is perhaps because when we had it at home I would climb onto my mother's lap for a hug as she sat in the chair.

When I was invited – against my will – to take part in this, "my own Blå Station experiment", I naturally took Morris as my inspiration. My challenge was to interpret Morris in the light of what became Börge's trademark – namely innovative, high-quality furniture for public environments – but I also wanted the transformation to retain a feeling or detail of the caring environment of the home.

After having studied my immediate surroundings, browsed through glossy magazines and discussed the question with my wife Malin, we realised that one of the most common and homely decorative features is a cushion. This cushion was to be the soft value, the homely detail, in my interpretation. The cushion should provide the ornamentation, comfort and variation; the rest should be support, neutral and easily intelligible. The cushion has no particular orientation but can be changed, rotated or oriented as desired.

I also wanted to work with mobility as a natural interplay with the user; not as a challenge but rather as an understanding and acceptance. I'm one of those people who want to tidy up and make things look nice when I enter an attractive public space which the users have furnished according to their particular needs and functions. Because this can look very untidy and far less attractive than the architect intended. With wheels on the armchair, the furniture becomes both usable and easy to move without injury. I named my interpretation Morris Jr.

# MORRIS JR

Johan Lindau + Borselius & Bernstrand 2015







# REFLECTIONS

By Leo Gullbring, Januari 2015

**WHAT** happens when three strong designers suddenly have to monitor each other's design process? Sit and examine every detail. Criticise and simultaneously be criticised. Do they fight? Or is all peaceful and calm? It takes time to create an item of furniture, particularly if it is intended to last for a long time and aspire to becoming a design classic. Should the designers have more time? Or should they work in a different way? 18 months ago, Johan Lindau and Stefan Borselius were on a plane home from a business trip. Johan was complaining about how the process of designing new products is always so stressful and long; soon it's only a year before the Stockholm Furniture Fair is upon them again.

"Stefan came up with the idea", says Johan. "What if we started before Stockholm Furniture Fair", he said. "Then we'll have the fair to see what we don't want to do!" And I immediately liked this and thought "Why not have two of our best designers choose a third, then run an entirely open design process where everyone contributes? Every product will have a father, but also two godparents. Could that work?"

"I thought it was a great idea", says Stefan. "My aim was to involve a woman, ideally from another country, or perhaps a design team. That would provide dynamic unpredictability. But then Thomas and I thought that Johan would be involved in everything anyway, because he's the producer, and four cooks would be too many." "I was a little dubious", says Thomas. "Letting someone else be involved in one's design process can be a very sensitive issue for many designers. But why not? I like constructive conflicts; it was worth trying!"

Johan wasn't exactly flattered that they chose him; shocked and perplexed would be more accurate. Certainly he has produced several design products over the years, but that was the past. Today he occupies the role of design manager and Blå Station's MD. Nor did he want to compete with the designers. But one February evening at a restaurant in central Stockholm, he allowed himself to be convinced (after first getting an OK from his sister and vice MD, Mimi Lindau). It could be a nice twist! Together they would each design an armchair.

"The advantage of Johan's participation was that we adapted the products for production from the beginning", emphasises Thomas. "It's just like a film; the producer is often as important as the director and scriptwriter. But talk about extremely high demands! As a designer, I would be happy if I succeeded in creating a single design classic during my career. Now we were to come up with three of them!" "A sofa is a sofa is a sofa. Not many people succeed in creating new furniture typologies", interrupts Johan. "Contemporary and trendy designs are very short lived. If you want to produce a classic, you have to remove everything that's excess and distil out clearly comprehensible products. And that means linking backwards in time, understanding how we live now and estimating future needs which we haven't yet quite formulated."

And here is Stefan with a whole sketch pad full of incomplete ideas. Questions about seating angles in the spirit of Bruno Mathsson, how the chair is formed to support the body. How narrow an item of furniture can actually be, and how its form makes it something of an individual in the room.

Thomas runs a PowerPoint presentation and already knows exactly what he wants to do. An armchair-sofa which copes with tough handling, a shell that can have dents removed, which can be repainted, rather like a well-cared for classic car. A design that can live its own life beyond the designer's intentions.

Johan has a sketch pad with a rough idea about reviving and renewing one of his father's forgotten classics. A mobile little piece of furniture, and a whole lot of reflection about the comfort of the cushion.

Everyone on his own track and with entirely different work methods. A perfect set up for arguments between three strong characters who are now working on top of each other?

"When you're alone, you often sit on a project for too long", says Stefan, testing out the comfort of supernarrow Poppe. "This process has been quicker; the producer has been present the whole time. Of course we've argued about how narrow the seat can be made, but the products are clearly better than if we had each worked separately."

"Being able to browse through Stefan's sketch book is an exercise in trust", says Thomas, slumping down into Honken. "Johan can be determined and impulsive, and sometimes I try to avoid conflict. But constructive criticism and engaging debates about proportions, dimensions, angles, etc. is good and leads forward."

"I'm used to being able to change my mind completely during the process, but you can't do that when you're part of it", says Johan. "I've already started to plan for the 2016 experiment!"

# SUPERSTRAW

Osko + Deichmann 2015





# STRAW

Osko + Deichmann 2010



# SUPERKINK

Osko + Deichmann 2013



# DENT DRESSED

o4i 2014





DENT

04 | 2013 - 2014



# KAFFE

Thomas Bernstrand 2014











**GINKGO**

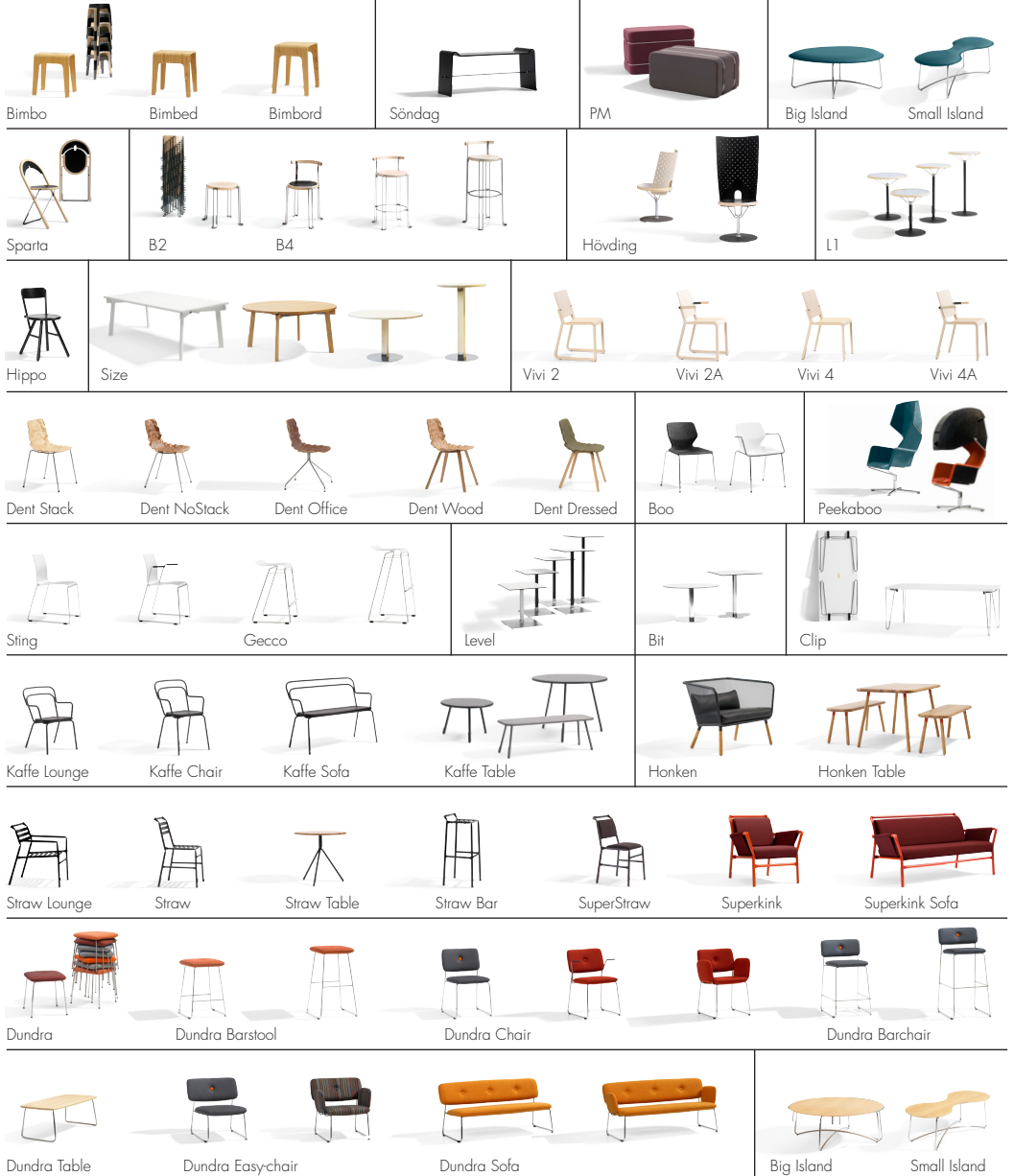
Stone Designs 2014



**CODE 27**

Stefan Borselius & Johan Lindau 2014

# COLLECTION 2015





Antoinette



Klim



Ginkgo



Element



Visp



Babel



Ping-Pong



B25



B26



L25



Innovation C



Wilmer C



Wilmer CS



Wilmer CT



Wilmer S



Wilmer T



Poppe



Puppa



Oppo L



Oppo H



Oppocement



Polstergeist



Ally



Ally Sofa



Taylor



Taylor Sofa



Koja



Koja Hotel



Koja Sofa



Code 27A



Code 27B



Code 27C



Code 27ABC



Pond



Mika



Morris Jr



Mono



Dunder



Dunder Sofa



Qvarto



Qvarto Table

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