



Personal profile IKEA of Sweden

“One of my goals is to create a more relaxed, functional and beautiful world.”

Karin Gustavsson, Creative Leader and Range Manager at IKEA of Sweden

MY BACKGROUND

I was born in Oskarshamn, Sweden, in 1965 and first began working for IKEA in 1990. Then I left IKEA, and returned in 2005. I’m creative and passionate about design and arts. I’m very curious and always on the move – travelling, meeting people, working with our designers and searching for and developing new materials, techniques and ideas. I’ve lived in China and Italy. I’m a world citizen, based in Sweden. One of my goals is to create a more relaxed, functional and beautiful world.

WHAT I DO AT IKEA

I step into different roles, giving support where needed. As a Creative Leader, I work with temporary IKEA Collections. It’s fantastic because I get to work with and explore new ideas. As a Range Manager, I’m responsible for product development for part of our more permanent range.

I’M CURIOUS ABOUT

People and how we live, what we like to eat, how we manage daily life. Meeting people, going to markets, having dinner someplace new and tasting unexpected flavours and listening to the sounds. Right now, I’m inspired by crafts and traditional values, but mixing in the new, like our SVÄRTAN collection that combines crafts with modern techniques.

I’m also very concerned about the how and the what – how much do I need, what do I really need? That’s important in a world where we are concerned about raw material resources.

MY THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRATIC DESIGN

One project where I learned a lot about Democratic Design* was the BRÅKIG collection. Together with the ArtRebels artist collective from Copenhagen, we created “street art” furniture and accessories. I’m also very fond of Andreas Fredriksson’s (designer at IKEA of Sweden) pastel plywood chair. A great small, flat-pack item with fantastic design value. You could bring the chair with you in a bag! An icon for me and only €49.

WHY I LOVE WORKING AT IKEA

The people and the spirit! Everything is possible and everyone takes a responsible approach to their projects. But it’s fun, too! We try to be daring and innovative. We can make mistakes but, as we say, don’t make the same mistake twice!

A FAVOURITE IKEA PROJECT

The SVÄRTAN collection, created with Swedish fashion designer Martin Bergström and students at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in New Delhi. We held a workshop there where Martin created designs from the materials we developed with the students. SVÄRTAN reflects India today – modern but still with all that beautiful patina and heritage. It’s all in black, natural and greys – no colours. The opposite of the cliché image of India.

HOW IKEA CAN STAY INNOVATIVE

By consciously using materials and time. By creating new designs for a modern life at home instead of sticking to long-time traditional values. By sharing, listening and being humble with each other. We are all different yet with the same needs.

* The IKEA approach of always considering form, function, quality, sustainability and low price in order to make better everyday products for more people