



Personal profile IKEA of Sweden

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Mikael Axelsson, Designer at IKEA of Sweden

MY BACKGROUND

I was born in 1983 in Karlskoga, Sweden. I've been an IKEA designer since 2013.

WHAT IS YOUR SPECIALITY?

Objects are interesting when function, construction and aesthetics coexist and strengthen each other. They're often pure and obvious without unnecessary additions. That's why I prefer modern Scandinavian style. I like all kinds of materials and usually visualise ideas through sketches, models and digital models.

HOW DO YOU WORK?

In a team, closely with product developers and technicians. I spend a lot of time in the prototype shop trying different solutions.

WHICH FORMATS DO YOU WORK IN?

Often hand sketching, usually then physical models, mock-ups and scale models, then 3D models. I prefer longer sketching and mock-up testing in the prototype shop, rather than rushing into final 3D models. I often find the best solutions when building physical prototypes.

NAME A PROJECT YOU ARE PROUD OF!

TORHAMN kitchen and FALSTERBO shelf and hook rail – rigid and proper with a traditional and historical connection. I was inspired by Shaker style – functionality, simple design and handmade craftsmanship.

FUTURE PROJECTS?

Projects that help people. I am also working on chairs – tricky and extremely satisfying when you find the right proportions and expression.

A PROJECT WHERE YOU LEARNED ABOUT DEMOCRATIC DESIGN

There's so much to think about when designing a kitchen. Quality is extremely important. When designing TORHAMN kitchen, it was high-price, by IKEA standards, which made it really exciting. The genuine, honest material – ash – and a surface treatment that makes it feel untreated. So it all feels handcrafted, yet austere and simple. We used the whole ash, which produces a more mottled effect, adds life – and lowers the price.*

YOUR IKEA DREAM ASSIGNMENT

I've thought a lot about helping people – a reaction to the refugee crisis. I've worked a lot with sustainability, and I sometimes feel that furniture is a very superficial industry. So it's great what IKEA is doing with these houses for refugees. Imagine working and helping people who really need it. Supporting social entrepreneurship helps people such as women and their handicrafts, ensuring they receive a wage they can live on.

HOW CAN YOU AND IKEA BE INNOVATIVE IN THE FUTURE?

Imagine a furniture service where we took the products back, recycled them, got back to the original raw material and could melt it down and make new products. Truly sustainable. A lot just gets thrown away, which feels both provocative and frustrating in terms of Democratic Design. If a big company worked like this, it could have a tremendous impact.

HOW DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL WHEN THEY MEET YOUR DESIGN?

That there is nothing unnecessary. Everything's there for a reason. Material, function and design reinforce each other. I also want my products to be relevant over time.

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