

SCANDINAVIAN HEROES

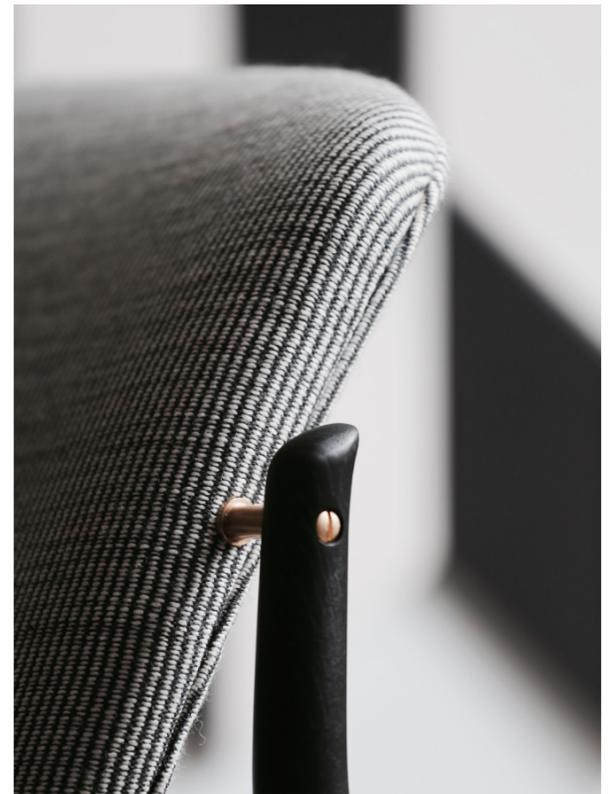
HOW SWEDISH INTERIOR DESIGNER
STAFFAN TOLLGÅRD FOUND A HOME FOR
ONE OF THE MASTERS OF DANISH MODERN



It was a Czech artist that first brought Finn Juhl to the forefront of my design mind. Nearly ten years ago we worked with a creative, free-spirited artist on her Chelsea home. She had an eclectic, enquiring mind and combined art from around the world with pieces of contemporary and vintage furniture to create a very compelling family home. Finn Juhl's Poet sofa was one of the pieces we used in her study and I remember then thinking how relevant it looked today more than 75 years after its birth.

I grew up in Stockholm on an island in the inner archipelago. Mid-century design wasn't a fashion - it was a way of life for us and every home had a piece of furniture in it that would now be called a design classic. Although we didn't own something from him, Finn Juhl was a name we all knew. At that time our design practice worked on a variety of residential projects but we didn't have a retail space to show the pieces we loved. I filed the Poet sofa in the back of my mind along with the select heroes of design that I have assembled over the years of working in the design industry, sure that I would have a home for it in the near future. I was right - it just took a little longer than I had imagined.

"MID-CENTURY DESIGN WASN'T
A FASHION - IT WAS A WAY OF
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Opposite page: Poet Sofa in Chelsea Home, London project;
This page clockwise from top: Poet Sofa in classic upholstery;
Details on France chair as seen in our London showroom;
France chair on display; additional carved arm details of France chair

FROM DENMARK TO LONDON

Three years ago we made the decision to open a space in the Pimlico design district that would combine our design practice with enough space to show the pieces that we felt represented the best of contemporary design. A place to curate and create, with stories and the history of designers and their work at the heart of what we do. When I found out that Finn Juhl's pieces were being remade in Denmark by OneCollection I realised that I had an opportunity with our Design Store to help tell this fascinating story. The London Design Festival was a perfect piece of timing – and the idea of an exhibition began to take shape.

Finn Juhl wanted from a young age to be an art historian but was pushed into architecture by his father. His work moved

between furniture, interior, product and industrial design, its impact felt way beyond his native Denmark from the 50s onwards. The Chieftain chair designed in 1949 is a sculptural translation of this dialogue between history, art and furniture design. When Juhl originally exhibited the chair he showed it with photographs of weapons from anthropological studies.

At the same time as using new methods of production together with the values of artisan craftsmanship Juhl conflates contemporary modes of living with something more enduring – older answers to the questions of living. The Chieftain chair is one of my all-time favourite pieces of furniture and I think it is the ability to move between continents and eras that makes it a design classic for me.



Clockwise: Chieftain chair designed in 1949 available in teak and walnut; sinuous lines of the Baker sofa; Baker sofa upholstered in contrast wool fabric; precise and exquisite carved details of the Chieftain chair

ICONIC PIECES

The Baker sofa is another piece that holds many of the unique markers of Finn Juhl's creative and technical expression. We see the principles and sinuous lines of modern art, just as we do in the Poet sofa. The sofa's body is divided in two, a separation of elements that creates a visual lightness and naturally exposes the wooden spine which supports and separates the upholstered wings. It feels elegant and playful, at one in a new world of modern art and free spirits, but only allowed by the craftsmanship that holds centuries of experience.

The France Chair marks another moment in Finn Juhl's journey and holds the story of how he adapted and evolved his work to make commercial sense and so opened up the American market to Danish mid-century design, at the forefront of what became known world-wide as 'Danish Modern'. Designed for France & Son, in fact a British entrepreneur who brought Danish design to the US in the 1950s, the France chair was intended for industrial production and has a simpler expression than many of Juhl's other chairs. But Juhl's signature is visible in the chair's organic shapes and the liberated upholstered elements which seem to float as if they were freed from the law of gravity and make the chair seem almost aerodynamic.



Clockwise: France chair designed for France & Son in 1949; Nyhavn Table and Tray Unit designed with coloured trays according to Goethe's famous colour circle which are available in a yellow / red scale and a blue scale; shown with the 46-Chair designed in 1946

A NEW CHELSEA HOME

It is this playful, liberated expressiveness, lightly underpinned by a profound mastery of industrial and craft processes in Finn Juhl's pieces that make them such powerful icons of design – and deserving of their place in design history. It is a pleasure and a privilege to give some of Finn Juhl's extraordinary works a home in our Design Store.

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This Autumn, beginning at the London Design Festival Staffan Tollgård Design Store will exhibit pieces from Finn Juhl by One Collection with an exclusive range of fabrics by Raf Simmonds. For more information contact monique@tollgard.co.uk



Clockwise from top left: Pelican Chair and Table ; Pelican Chair inspired by modern "free art"; France chair with Table designed by Finn Juhl for Bokirke in 1953