

Opening of the Danish Design Symposium "Innovation via Design" in Shanghai September 2007.
A speech by Carsten Joergensen

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you very much for the invitation to speak at the Design Symposium "Innovation via Design".

It might be the irony of history that the Danish Minister of Science, Technology & Innovation Mr. Helge Sander today is opening the first event at the new Danish Innovation Centre in China. Especially considering China as the country which has generated the most of the innovations on which the globe today are building and developing its entire existence. Not only did you in China discover seeding in rows you too discovered the seed drill. Remember the first seed drill was introduced to Europe in the sixteenth century; 3500 years after you in China had invented it.... It is needless to say what these two agricultural innovations mend to the world when knowing that these increase a harvest by approximately 50% compared to seeding randomly by hand.

Today a tiny country called Denmark is approaching one of the biggest countries in the world with an innovation centre and with a symposium called "Innovation via design"?

I beg your pardon!Can't China do it by themselves with such a long history and tradition in sublime innovation and design?

A convincing answer might be the 3500 years separating invention of a seed drill from those innovations following in the west and consequently fertilising a very unique national, social and mental development in a very small country like Denmark and which made Denmark international famous as an ideal society due to outstanding innovations in philosophy, science and education. As a result of this the term >Danish Design< became as famous as any global brands today and a basic in modern international design innovation and social thinking.

As always in the development of highly cultivated societies of mankind it is undeniable individuals who create visions for the future. And I postulate that Denmark compared to others has fostered a remarkable higher percentage of such individuals who not just changed the perspectives of life for the Danes but the rest of the world. Be it industrial products as thermostats from Danfoss, furnitures from Fritz Hansen, toys from Lego, lamps from Louis Poulsen, household utensils by Royal Copenhagen, Stelton and Bodum, entertainment electronics from Bang & Olufsen, Architecture by Jörn Utzon, the Sidney Opera not to forget Arne Jacobsen as one of the forerunners of the modernist design and architectural movement in Scandinavia now so hot in the rest of the world.

For all of these Danish companies mentioned and all the others not forgotten one thing is crucial to their international success. Design and innovative thinking comprising a deep respect of mankind and its environment and an understanding of the ever changing world around them.

This specific of any Danish innovation and design development exceeds the sheer fact that design sells the product. No, it is a way of thinking! In today's competitive global market it is not just design as a stylish and aesthetic makeup of industrial output which is in question. No product will stand the critic of a sophisticated consumer and industrial buyer if it does not offer innovative and new technologies with environmental sustainable and social values despite what country of origin.

Let me say that "Innovation via Design" in its specific Danish approach will tell you that none of the both is considered innovative nor design if it does not change people's behaviour and life. Danish Design has not changed the everyday life of people around our small globe by sheer luck; but it has done this due to a deep understanding of people's needs in a modern society and done it with the small country's few competitive tools. Education, Innovation and Design.

In my personal view shared between Europe and China I will make you aware of that: China is indisputable in the need of sophisticated marketing tools to compete and increased values, being that of quality and perfection. We all know that Design does not save the world and global economy but Innovation via Design can make our world a tiny bit better through exchange of creative and innovative understanding if the global economic growth shall become a sustainable growth.

Why a small country, >although a big innovative design nation<, is making an exchange platform for innovation in design in China might for all the tea of China be obvious. But why should Danish Design be better than any other great design nations?

This is surely reflected in all of the Danish design companies presentations represented at this symposium and they have much more to say, why good design is good business and why Innovation via design in a global market is an even better business.

I hope you will all enjoy the design symposium