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Treasure hunt

Eikund uncovers Norway's design treasures

As a small fishing village on the western coast of Norway, Hellvik is perhaps best known for its unspoilt beauty and vast wilderness than bustling design scene.

However, all eyes are currently on this Nordic spot as a thriving community of Norwegian designers is making waves both nationally and internationally, thanks to their elegant designs, marrying high-quality materials with functionality and timeless aesthetics.

Local firm Eikund is driving the change. Founded in 2016, by friends - Jørgen Tengesdal, Morten Hippe, and Frode Tingbø - Eikund has carved out a unique niche for itself over the last three years. Since its inception, the team has been on a steady mission to put Norway's forgotten mid-century classics by iconic Norwegian designers, such as Fredrik A. Kayser, ☺



← The Kryset lounge chair, originally designed by Fredrik A. Kayser in 1955

✦ The Eikund team at their Hellvik factory in Norway

Torbjørn Bekken and Arne Tjomsland, back in the spotlight.

Norway's design history has gone largely unnoticed. When the country discovered oil in the North Sea in the late 1960s, production on its west coast came to a halt, with nearby Stavanger becoming Norway's booming oil capital. While the population rapidly grew, design may have, as a result, become of secondary importance. Eikund is now rectifying this by bringing the designs back to life.

Largely influenced by the modernist trends that were popular throughout Europe during the late 19th century, the pieces embody a modernist flavour, in which form follows function. Regarded not as a style, but rather a collection of ideas, modernism promoted sleek lines and functionality at its core.

Over a one-year period, Eikund has examined both private and public archives to obtain original drawings and information of these modernist marvels; a process Tengesdal likened to a 'treasure hunt'. "We discovered several hundreds of drawings and factory designs from the 1950s and 60s", says CEO Jørgen Tengesdal, "fifty of which are original classics that can be produced."

The resulting collection is imbued with a timeless Scandinavian quality. Current offerings include a tasteful collection of chairs and tables, crafted out of high quality woods at the firm's Hellvik factory, but decorative items like the popular Isbjørn range of Nordic inspired characters, initially designed by Arne Tjomsland between the 50s and 60s, also make up their range.

While the firm honours its home-grown talent and the country's rich design legacy, Eikund's own journey found its inspiration a little closer to home in Hellvik. "It was important to have a local name and local connection", says Tengesdal, revealed in the company's name itself. Inherently, Eikund's origins are found in the Norwegian word for *eik*, meaning 'oak', but interestingly, its name also draws a direct



link to Hellvik's municipality, Eigersund, as a golden oak leaf graces its coat-of-arms. At that, a nearby island and one of the oldest place-names in the country, shares the firm's name. Now known locally as Eigerøya, meaning "the island covered with oak trees", Eikund's intertwinement of locality, history and contemporary design deeply root its new existence.

At their Hellvik factory, somewhat hidden away in the wild Norwegian nature, Eikund brings the classic pieces back to life. Large ☺

↑ The original Kryset lounge chair drawing by Fredrik A. Kayser, 1955



boulders of rock encircle the headquarters, while a surrounding oak forest suitably draws a further connection to the firm's name. The 3000 sq m expanse was originally home to a well-known local staircase manufacturer. Today, Eikund occupies about 600 sq m of the premises, and shares the remaining space with other woodworking firms, who as a collective, carry on the building's artisan past. Utilising only the highest quality woods for production, which are approved with an A+ rating certification, Eikund works largely with oak and walnut, the former sourced from Europe by a German firm, while the latter comes from North America.

"At the heart of production is this CNC router", says Tengesdal, a computer-controlled cutting machine handled by an in-house engineer and producing Eikund's pieces to the highest standards at great efficiency. Further to this, it ensures that each item is identically and consistently produced with the help of wooden jigs to avoid creating bespoke pieces that differ individually. Once cutting and gluing has been completed, the wooden pieces then undergo a coating process of one of three types: soaking, white oil, or a water-based lacquer,

either natural or black.

Eikund's in-depth knowledge of wood carries through to the next step. "Humidity is very important", explains Tengesdal, whereby the items are stored in a carefully regulated room that controls both temperature and humidity to avoid the wood from expanding or shrinking too much. Sewing and packaging complete the production process. Premium textiles and Scandinavian leathers - available in a muted colour palette of coffee, mocha and black - come courtesy of Danish firm Sørensen, Swedish company Tärnsjö Garveri and local wool company Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik. Together, their raw materiality highlights Norway's distinctive design character, one that focuses on traditional and high-quality materials, reflecting the country's rich history and untouched nature.

Sustainability is integral to Eikund without it being a marketing ploy. Unused pieces of either wood or leather are upcycled as Tengesdal explains, "Maybe we could make figures with these", he contemplates, "but right now, we give any unused wood to a local school. We don't want to have too much waste." While unused wood scraps are donated to future woodcrafters, remaining ☺

↑ Production of the Krysset lounge chair at Eikund's Hellvik factory

↓ A worker sands the Krysset lounge chair





← Wooden frame of the
Kryssset lounge chair

↓ The final result in black
lacquered oak



leather is utilised to make the brand's sophisticated leather coasters.

It is this consideration and focus on collaboration that not only demonstrates the firm's push towards sustainability and community, but also reveals Eikund's wider ethos. "We visit all our suppliers first. The standard of quality is very important for our business to be a high-end producer", explains Tengesdal, "but we also try to develop a lot of local co-working partnerships." Even Oslo's most recent hotel opening, Amerikalinjen (as featured in OnOffice's May 2019 Modern Issue), saw Eikund team up with Northern, who similarly, are changing the face of Norwegian design.

"We're in touch with the local tourist industry", says Tengesdal, "We want people to get a bigger expression, a bigger idea of the area." With a striking harbour and breathtaking scenery it is not difficult to see why the region makes a charming holiday hotspot for many. But behind its beauty is a close-knit community working together for the good of their nation by honouring its almost forgotten designers. As the country's classic icons, both old and new, take the design world by storm, Eikund remains the quiet force behind their rediscovery and Norway's rewritten design history. ■

Follow Eikund's treasure hunt across Norway as it happened by scanning this QR code.

