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MAY 2014

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Profile

Thomas Bennedsen

Creative director,
Skagen

The Dane on simple comforts and his first watch crush

Your brand draws on 'inspiration from the welcoming spirit of hygge'. What is hygge exactly?

Thomas Bennedsen: Hygge is a special Danish word that simply doesn't exist in other languages. It encompasses feelings that revolve around comfortable simplicity: spending time with close friends or family, or sitting in a good chair with a good book and a cup of tea. For us at Skagen, it is also the feeling we wish you to have when you interact with us and our products.

How do Skagen watches reflect the lifestyle of your customer base?

TB: We think our customers choose to wear items that speak to them and not items that speak about them. Through simple, straightforward design, our watches offer some relief from the complexity of life.

How does Skagen's Danishness express itself?

TB: Our collection reflects refined Danish craftsmanship, minimalism, the sophistication found in Copenhagen, and the relaxed, active personality of Danes – which you certainly feel if you visit the seaside town of Skagen [after which the brand is named].

What was the first watch you owned as a boy?

TB: My love for watches was hatched with the arrival of the Swatch watch in the mid-1980s. My very first one was the transparent 'Jelly Fish', but my first serious buy was a vintage automatic Revue Thommen, at an auction. I am from an aviation family, so I have a soft spot for aeronautical instruments and motors in general – I got my first car at eight, a 1958 dusty-blue VW Beetle that I drove around on our farm.



ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

1989: US-BASED DANES HENRIK AND CHARLOTTE JØRST LAUNCH A BUSINESS SELLING DANISH DESIGN

1992: THE PAIR SELL THEIR FIRST OWN-BRAND WATCH, STEERING SKAGEN IN A NEW DIRECTION

1995: BLOOMINGDALE'S TRIALS SKAGEN WATCHES

1998: SKAGEN IS ONE OF THE FASTEST-GROWING COMPANIES IN THE US

2002: THE BRAND EXPANDS ACROSS EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

2007: THE FIRST OFFICE IS ESTABLISHED IN HONG KONG

2012: SKAGEN IS PURCHASED BY FOSSIL

2014: JEWELLERY AND BAGS ARE PRESENTED AS PART OF THE SKAGEN COLLECTION

Skagen recently collaborated with the industrial designer Hiromichi Konno. Do you think that Scandinavia and Japan share a similar aesthetic?

TB: Yes, it is interesting to me how two cultures situated so far apart can share so many similarities. Both are ancient seafaring cultures and both have an extraordinary efficiency in creating beauty with a very simple aesthetic. There is a natural tendency in both cultures to create simple things, free from clutter, drawing great inspiration from nature.

Can you tell us about Skagen's new collection, shown at BaselWorld 2014?

TB: We have created a line that really expresses our love for clean, minimal design and craftsmanship, in a range that spans from watches you can wear at the beach house to watches you can wear to a state dinner. We have gone through every detail. The French writer and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said, 'A designer knows he has reached perfection, not when there is nothing left to add but when there is nothing left to take away.' This has been our guiding principle, and we think this collection is the strongest we have presented. ★

www.skagen.com