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10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY FOR THE DOLPHIN CHAIR

"There was something about that chair..." Designer Bjarke Nielsen and DAN-FORM celebrates the 10 year anniversary for the Dolphin chair. Read about the creative process and how it became such a success.

On a sunny day in 2004, furniture designer Bjarke Nielsen came to DAN-FORM with an idea.

He called it "Dolphin" and showed a beautifully curved chair with a back clearly reminiscent of a dolphin's tale.



- There was something about that chair. The organic shapes gave it a sense of motion and life. Something welcoming, says Jørgen Mensen, founder and former CEO of DAN-FORM.

But as with all design projects, there can be a really long way from idea to final product. Even though Bjarke had gone through numerous amends to the chair, he and Jørgen commenced on another round together. Bjarke working in CAD whilst Jørgen worked 'old school' with pen and paper.

- We were on it from dusk till dawn. With styrofoam, corrugated cardboard sheets, wire and 'you name it'. It's both terrifying and scary to think that when you remove one millimeter in one place, it will massively impact somewhere else – and sometimes you change the whole expression to the point where you think; "Wait, we have to remember what we wanted to achieve!", Jørgen Mensen says.

A FAILURE IN COLOGNE

Finally, the "Dolphin" was done and with great expectations, DAN-FORM launched the chair at the Cologne fair in January 2006. The launch was an anticlimax. Nobody seemed interested in the chair and Bjarke and Jørgen returned disappointed to Denmark.

PRESS RELEASE

- We started thinking and discussing the whole process end to end. However we agreed we wouldn't make any new adjustments, Jørgen Mensen says.

A year went by and suddenly we started receiving orders. In Denmark a renowned furniture retail chain bought the Dolphin and showed it in its fall catalogue and that kickstarted sales. First in Denmark, then the German market and from here, the demand spread out throughout the globe.

Today, 10 years later, Jørgen Mensen refers to the Dolphin chair as a classic. It has sold in large quantities to both residential homes and mundane hotels and conference rooms - from Stockholm to Dubai.

AIRPLANE RIVETS AND PIRELLY RUBBER

Since the launch, Dolphin has been created in multiple materials, from veneer to lacquered wood, velvet, canvas, leather, lamb and cow hide - and even a special aluminium covered back with airplane rivets.

- We also tried with Pirelli rubber. The idea was great and the end product looked good, but we couldn't get the material to stick to the bentwood. I couldn't believe it would be this hard! So we had to leave that idea behind. The same thing happened when we tried to add steel to the seat. Again a "trial and error" situation - we've had a quite a few of those, Jørgen Mensen laughs.

Today, DAN-FORM and Dolphin have made it official, with a design patent, the model is now registered as DAN-FORM's.

- One may wonder why it hasn't happened before. But as many of our colleagues in the industry has learned, it has been quite difficult to apply for a patent in the EU. That has become far easier now. And on top we have so many other projects going on. Sometimes you don't see things for what they are before you take time to look back. Time flies! Jørgen Mensen says.

Speaking of other projects, DAN-FORM has recently introduced the chairs "Flair" and "Butterfly", the latter is designed by Marianne Bjarloev and has already brought on quite some interest in the market. DAN-FORM has also started a cooperation with the design duo Says Who to develop furniture for the next Cologne fair in January 2016.

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