

# Industrial & strategic design

Where transformation takes form



**Industrial & strategic design**  
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**Editor in chief**  
Creative Denmark

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**About Creative Denmark**

Creative Denmark supports international stakeholders and decision makers in exploring solutions, products, and processes within the Danish creative industries. As a not-for-profit public-private partnership, the initiative connects international demand for innovative solutions with Danish creative companies and competencies. The aim is to raise awareness about the transformative potential of Danish creativity as a driver for sustainability and enhanced quality of life.



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# Introduction

# 01

# Design as strategic intelligence

## Navigating change by turning complexity into clarity.

Geopolitical uncertainty, disrupted supply chains, and rapid technological development are changing what it means to be competitive. Organisations are being asked to continually adapt and manage risk under complex conditions where the full picture is often not available.

In this landscape, design takes on a renewed role as a core capability for creating direction. It enables smart, integrated decision-making and offers tangible development opportunities. Embedding design into organisational processes effectively strengthens resilience and builds a competitive advantage. Without this capability, complexity tends to fragment organisations rather than guide them.

We know for a fact that this approach works. In Denmark, 9 out of 10 companies that use design in this kind of strategic capacity report increased competitiveness. It benefits the bottom line – and goes far beyond it.

Design functions as strategic intelligence. It creates a shared language between people, technology, and production and is not confined to a single department or treated as a phase in a linear process. It is a way of working and thinking, rooted in collaboration, trust, and a deep respect for quality. In this context, design shapes how ambitions are transformed into systems, and how solutions are understood and valued.

As global challenges accelerate, the ability to work this way becomes essential. Design offers a way to navigate uncertainty and create coherence where others see fragmentation. Not by simplifying reality, but by giving complexity structure, meaning, and strategic intent.



**Martin Delfer & Christina Melander**  
DDC - Danish Design Center

**9 out of 10 companies that  
actively use design report  
increased competitiveness.**

# Design as a strategic driver

# 02

# Strategic choices shaped by design



Tina Mayn Andersen  
VELUX

Opinion: Tina Mayn Andersen

## Aligning intent and performance from launch to long-term use.

Design operates as a strategic capability rather than a decorative layer. In situations where conditions are unclear, or competing demands pull in different directions, it helps organisations decide what to prioritise and how to move forward. Danish design culture grew out of practical problem-solving, in which solutions had to work in real life and remain reliable over time. This heritage still matters. It shapes a way of working where innovation stays close to use, and where decisions are judged by how they perform once they leave the drawing board.

At VELUX, this way of thinking originates in necessity. The company was founded to transform unused attics into liveable spaces filled with daylight and fresh air, and that purpose still guides how design informs development. Its influence is often invisible, embedded in early decisions about materials, engineering, production logic, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, where the long-term impact of choices is set.

In this approach, pressure is not an obstacle. It is a condition that design actively responds to. Sustainability targets and regulation act as drivers for stronger solutions rather than constraints. Through real-life experimentation, including projects such as Living Places and the LKR Innovation House, ideas are tested, refined, and strengthened through use. This ongoing feedback helps ensure solutions evolve with context rather than reacting to short-term demands.

When design works strategically, it connects intent with action. It aligns responsibility with performance and turns long-term ambition into practices that function in daily life. In this role, design supports decisions that remain robust through change and ensures value is created from initial launch through long-term use.

## When design guides decisions

### User insight shapes complex development work.

- Design is rarely named at Coloplast, yet it shapes how work is done and how decisions are made. It functions as an organisational capability grounded in an understanding of users' everyday lives, with focus placed on experience rather than isolated products.

The company operates in a highly regulated medical environment, where design helps connect user needs with technical and commercial realities. User insight enters early and influences decisions before development paths are fixed. This makes it possible to question assumptions, adjust direction, or stop initiatives in time, and to concentrate resources on solutions that are relevant and dependable.

Across the organisation, designers work closely with colleagues from engineering, clinical, and business functions. Their role is to bring lived experience into discussions and help establish a shared language across disciplines. This supports clearer decision-making in a context where responsibility is distributed rather than hierarchical.

Design is not treated as a separate discipline at Coloplast. It is part of how the organisation works. The company refers to this approach as its "User Experience DNA", reflecting a culture where attention to peoples' lives shapes how they think and work over time.





Case: Novo Nordisk

## Design as an enterprise-wide enabler

Embedding design across the value chain, from research & development to launch.

- Living with a chronic condition can be difficult. For companies working in this space, taking a user-centred approach to product development ensures speed, relevance, and competitive advantage. For many years, Novo Nordisk has utilised design as a strategic discipline, linking user needs with scientific ambition and ensuring that decisions taken early in development support real-world experience.

At Novo Nordisk, design is embedded across the enterprise, from research and clinical development through to launch. It is used to help surface questions, challenge assumptions, and reveal opportunities that traditional processes may overlook. All to imagine and create ideal, optimised end user experiences. In this way, design is creating meaningful impact not only for patients, but also for the company's employees.

Strategic design becomes a source of value when it lifts everyday life. In competitive markets, user experience can be leveraged as a differentiator while improving the lives of millions of patients. By treating design as a mindset rather than a final layer, Novo Nordisk builds coherence across the value chain and ensures that development decisions strengthen both performance and the patient experience.

**Design helps organisations  
decide what to prioritise and  
how to move forward.**

# Managing complexity with design

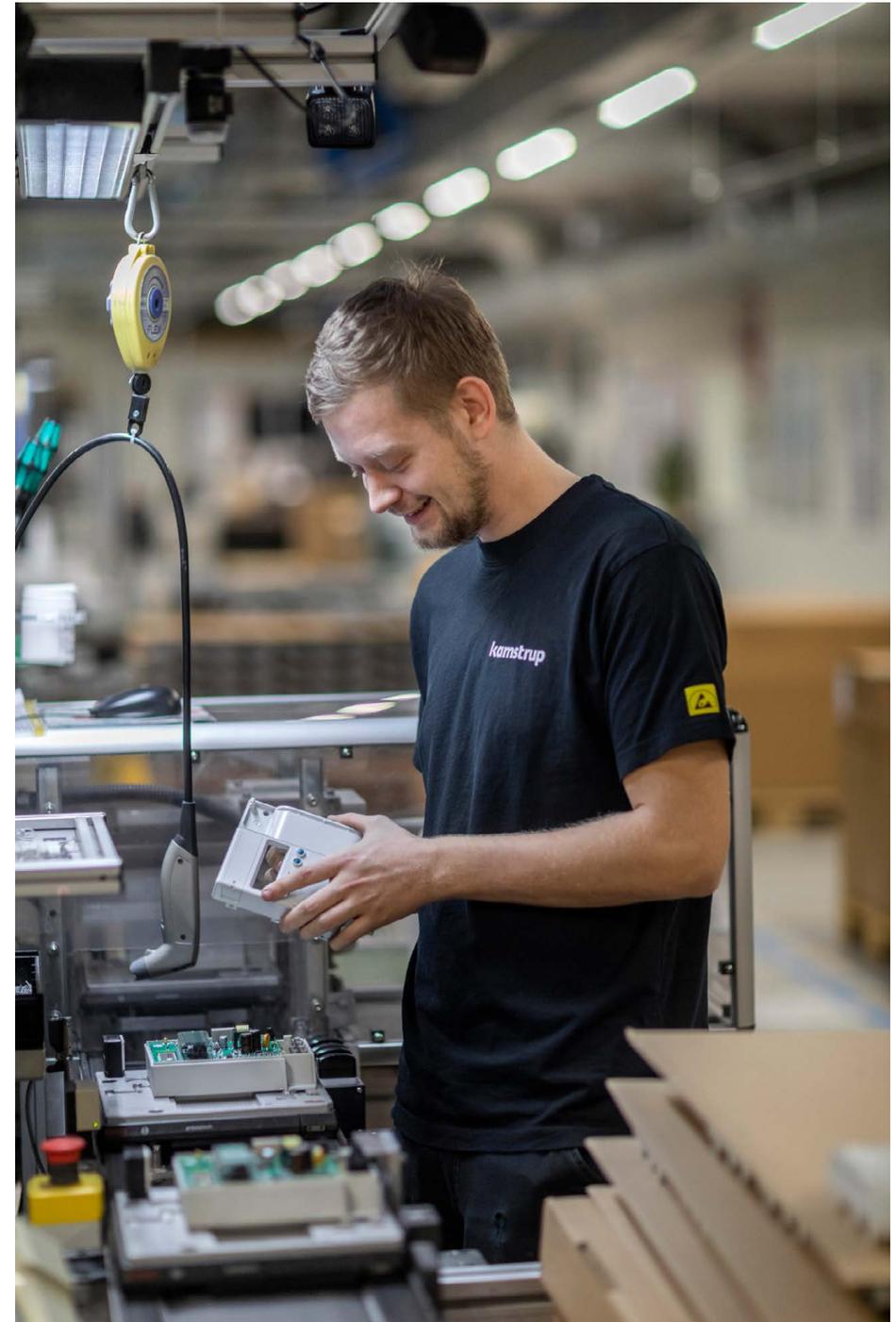
## Ensuring reliability from early development.

- At Kamstrup, design helps the organisation decide early in processes where later change would be costly. As a manufacturer of smart metering systems, the company works with infrastructure that must function reliably over many years and across large networks. Once systems are deployed, adjustment becomes difficult, which places responsibility on early choices.

That responsibility shapes how development begins. Teams study how meters are handled in real settings and use those observations to guide decisions about form, interface and system structure. By resolving friction before detailed engineering starts, Kamstrup improves the likelihood that solutions work as intended when deployed at scale.

Design also supports internal alignment. It gives engineers and specialists a shared framework for discussing priorities and trade-offs before complexity sets in. This helps maintain coherence from early concepts through to production, where consistency and reliability matter most.

In this way, design acts as a strategic driver rather than a finishing step. It helps Kamstrup translate responsibility into concrete decisions that hold up over time, ensuring that technical performance and long-term use remain closely connected.



# Design at the heart of production

# 03

# Aesthetics as a superpower



**Ditte Lysgaard Vind**  
The Danish Design Council

Opinion: Ditte Lysgaard Vind

## Industrial design connects production, use, and long-term impact.

Design is inherently linked to the world it serves. Today, that world is shaped by intertwined crises, shifting systems and a growing awareness of social and environmental limits. In this context, the strength of Danish design lies in its ability to work with complexity and respond with humanity. It treats constraints such as regulation and scarcity as drivers of ambition and gives shape to ideas that allow society to move forward with clarity rather than haste.

This demands that purpose, function and aesthetics reinforce one another. We need design that makes the logic of the systems we depend on explicit, challenges habitual ways of thinking and enables more deliberate collective choices. Whether designing technologies, materials, public spaces, or services, the task remains the same: to turn abstract challenges into desirable solutions.

Here, aesthetics are not surface qualities. In the Danish design tradition, they are embedded in decision-making itself, playing a deliberate role in strategy. Value is unlocked when everyday solutions, often treated as neutral or purely technical, are designed with visible care and intention, allowing what is necessary to carry dignity, durability, and public legitimacy.

Design can help societies navigate change by shaping the products and environments people rely on every day, making long-term consequences tangible in the present. Danish design enters the future not by reinventing itself, but by continuing a practice of working deliberately within shared constraints so societies can imagine, assess and commit to usable ways of living.

## Forming urban space with cast iron

### Industrial design embedded in urban life.

- GH Form works from a simple conviction: design matters when it becomes part of everyday life in the city. With roots in iron foundry, the company develops its own products for urban space, shaped by a long-term view of how public environments are experienced and maintained over time.

Design functions as a way of working throughout the process. It enters early and influences how solutions take shape, from proportion and surface to how objects meet the city and the people moving through it. Aesthetic judgement and technical knowledge are resolved together, allowing what is made to sit naturally in its surroundings.

This approach evolved as GH Form moved from industrial production to developing urban elements in close collaboration with architects and designers. The outcome is urban elements that remain in place and continue to function under demanding conditions while retaining their visual presence.

The same thinking guides material choices. GH Form works with recycled iron and documents environmental performance through Environmental Product Declarations for selected products. Sustainability follows from the alignment of design and making, where durability is understood as the ability to remain part of everyday use in the city.





## Making technology disappear

Industrial design removes stigma through production logic.

- Today, millions of people live with untreated hearing loss. Many delay seeking help due to the stigma around visible hearing aids, feeling they must compromise between discretion and functionality. At Oticon, industrial design is used to challenge these barriers by pushing the limits of how hearing care technology is produced and brought into everyday life.

With Oticon Zeal™, the company introduced an unseen hearing aid that combines advanced sound processing with rechargeability, connectivity, and same-day fitting. Though these capabilities are not new individually, they have never existed together in a single device. The design challenge lies in combining them without increasing size or complexity.

The solution uses encapsulation, a production method known from other medical technologies. By sealing sensitive components within a compact structure, Oticon redefined the relationship between form, performance, and durability, enabling industrial design and manufacturing to operate as a single system. The result is a hearing aid designed to fit seamlessly into daily life, reducing visibility and removing compromise so technology can support quality of life without drawing attention to itself.

**Over 80% of all product-related environmental impacts are determined during the design phase.**

## Inclusive play that builds understanding

A playground vehicle designed for shared movement.

- The WheelyRider is a playful fusion between a utility wheelchair and a manually powered go-cart, with form and proportions designed to invite activity and shared play. Movement defines the object and shapes how it is approached and used on the playground.

The concept grew from close observation of how wheelchairs enter children's play in everyday settings. That insight is translated into a vehicle driven by arm and upper-body effort, supporting physical development while introducing a shared way of moving. Play places children on equal terms, inviting empathy and social understanding through movement.

Manufactured by A WINTHER A/S and developed by design studio 3PART, the WheelyRider emerged through a design process shaped by user and market research, prototyping, and testing with superusers. Design connects pedagogy, engineering - and manufacturing into a coherent whole. Through design, this everyday object is able to strengthen physical skills and broaden childrens' perspectives. Inclusion moves from an ambition to a tangible experience in the playground.



## Design shaped through everyday use

Care environments where function and form evolve together.

- Pressalit develops bathroom and kitchen solutions through a design practice grounded in everyday care situations. Over time, this work has built a strong understanding of how repeated use affects people and how design can reduce physical strain while shaping spaces that function reliably in daily life. This approach is evident in the Matrix washbasin system. Through smooth height adjustment and sideways movement, the washbasin responds directly to the person using it. Daily routines become easier as the basin can be positioned with minimal effort, allowing the space to work intuitively in different situations. The design remains simple and precise, and its proportions, surfaces, and movement support use without demanding attention.

The Matrix system reflects a broader way of working at Pressalit, where design decisions are driven by actual use rather than predefined standards. Development takes place in close dialogue with care professionals, architects, and occupational therapists, whose insights help shape the solutions. With long-term use in mind, Pressalit applies user-centred design and aesthetic judgement to shape care environments that remain supportive and beautiful over time.



# Designing what comes next

# 04

# Educating for transformation



**Nicholas Rodes**  
The Royal Danish Academy

Opinion: Nicholas Rodes

## Building the capacity to work with complexity.

Design is a transformational practice. In every sketch, model, or concept lies the capacity to explore, articulate, and enact futures that do not yet exist. Designers learn to negotiate complicated realms of possibility, making highly complex challenges understandable and actionable. This is a capacity that finds application beyond physical form, in innovation and entrepreneurialism.

While Danish design is often framed in terms of craft and quality, with due respect to the celebrated modernist icons, it is not the objects of design that matter. Instead, it is the principles-led approach that underpins them, grounded in collectivity, collaboration, empathy, material sensitivity, and the ability to rethink how things are made, that gives the strongest work its enduring resonance.

From London to Copenhagen, I have observed how the best of Danish design exemplifies these principles. It reflects manufacturing ingenuity and shared purpose. It is born from creative ambition and a concern for design's impact in the world, from its systems of production to its material use.

At the Royal Danish Academy, craft extends beyond material technique. It rests on an ethic of care; through materiality, for people, cultures, environments, and the futures we aspire to shape. By designing with respect, acting from conviction, and embracing opportunity, our graduates develop the sensitivity, resilience, and systemic insight required to enact ambitious change amid complexity.

# Creating clarity in complex systems

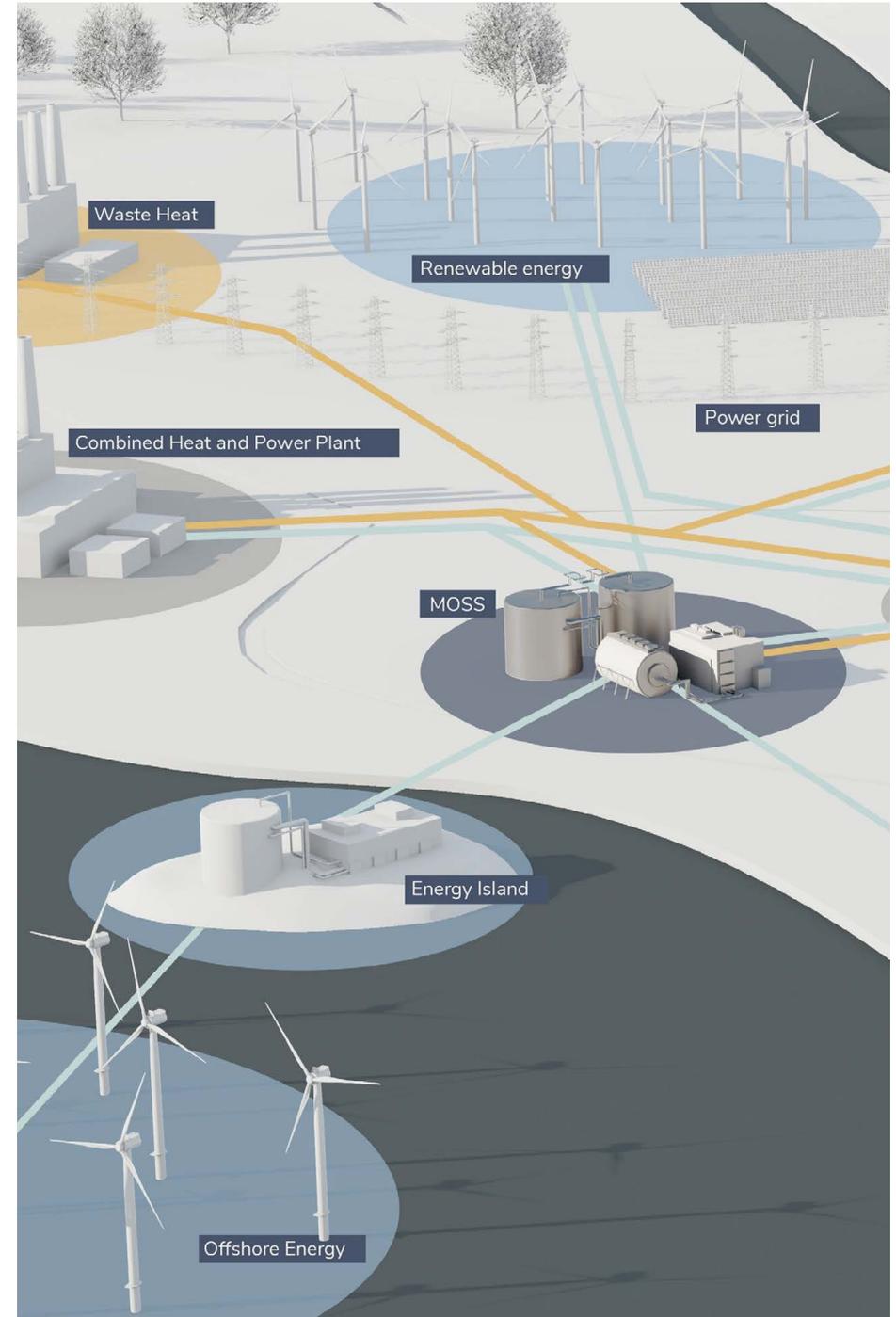
## Advanced technology made legible.

- Complex energy systems often struggle to become tangible beyond expert circles. In the Molten Salt Storage (MOSS) project, design plays a decisive role in turning advanced energy technology into something that can be understood, evaluated, and trusted.

The MOSS pilot plant, located in Esbjerg, Denmark, represents a pioneering achievement as the world's first thermal energy storage facility of its kind. It stores surplus green electricity in molten hydroxide salt heated to temperatures of up to 700°C, enabling renewable energy to operate as a stable resource within industrial systems.

Design agency KIRT x THOMSEN joined project developer Hyme Energy from vision to pilot. Design was applied as a strategic capability that clarified what the technology enables, how it differs from existing storage solutions, and how it fits within a broader energy landscape. This clarity supported the project from early research through deployment and played a key role in securing the necessary funding.

Design also strengthened dialogue with investors, authorities, and industrial partners. Connecting engineering insight with communication and decision-making helped align stakeholders around a system far removed from everyday experience and laid the groundwork for scaling a new form of energy infrastructure within the green transition.



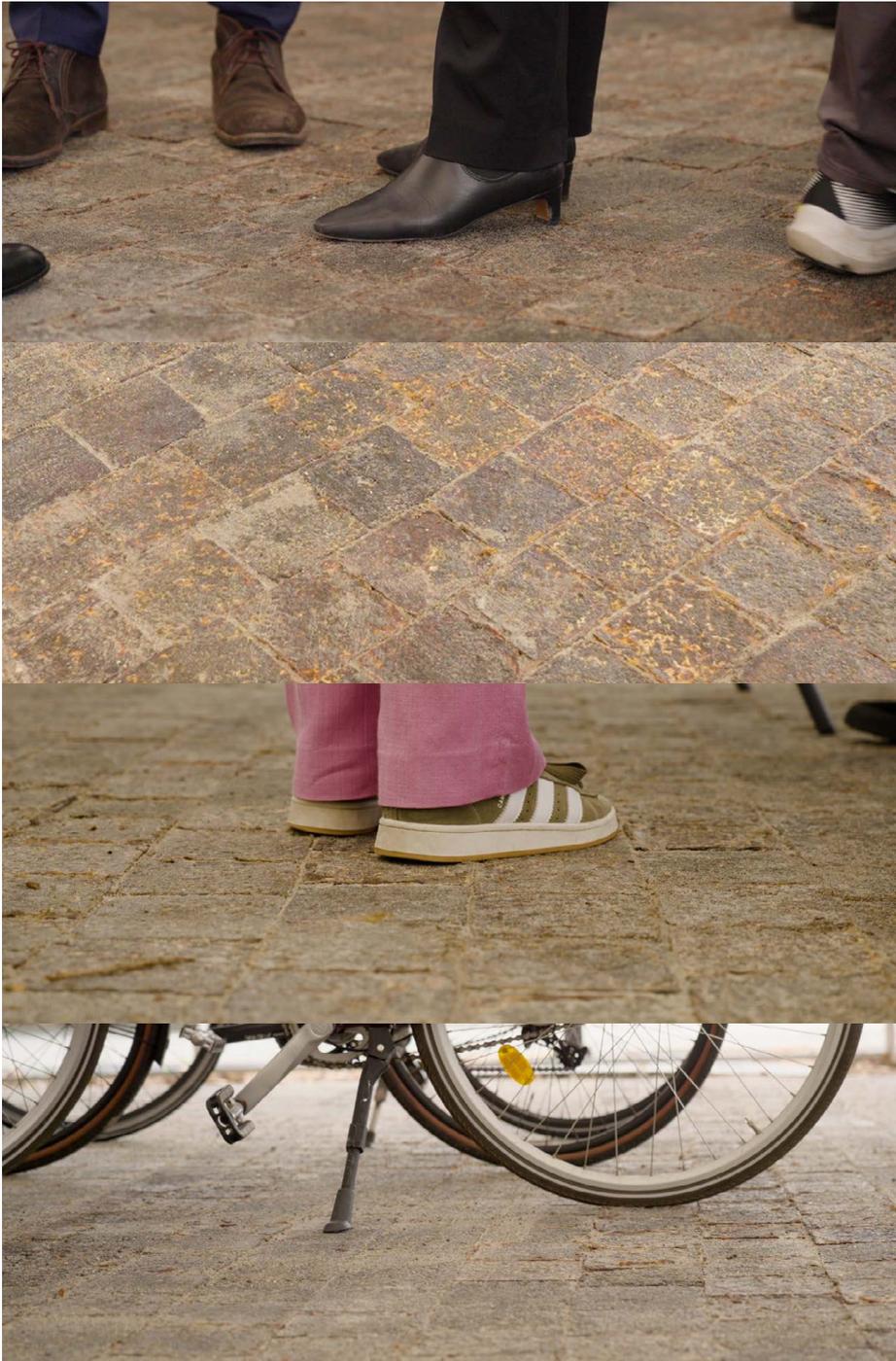
## Designing the next generation of materials

### Living systems in built environments.

- Visibuilt is opening a new chapter in material innovation. The company has created the world's first cultivated binder for outdoor paving materials grown with mycelium, developed through low-temperature processes and waste streams. Through a design-led development process that bridges material research and practical use, their product, visiPAVER, is now part of Copenhagen's visionary new neighbourhood, Fælledby, bringing a biologically grown material into urban use.

The project demonstrates how material research can be stabilised, tested, and prepared for real-world application. The binder used in the tiles is grown rather than extracted. It contains no fossil components and relies on fungi's natural ability to bind and strengthen organic matter.

Through iterative testing and material calibration, Visibuilt translates biological processes into a construction element that meets functional and technical demands. This shifts paved surfaces away from conventional, resource-heavy materials and points towards a future where cities can build long-lasting infrastructure through purposefully designed regenerative processes.



**Creative thinking is  
considered the 4<sup>th</sup> most  
sought-after capability in  
today's workforce.**

## From waste to material systems

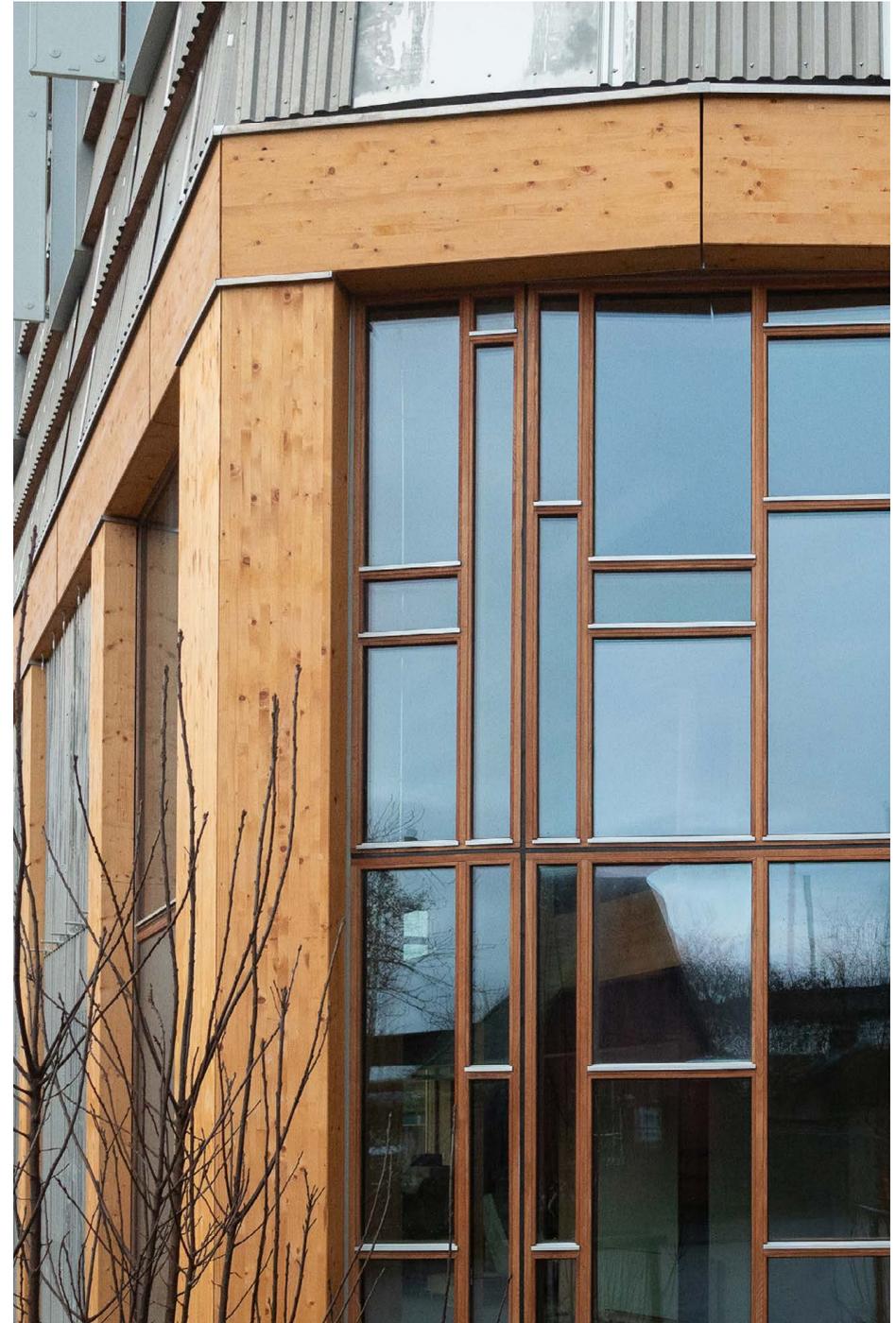
### Creating alternative resources for industrial use.

- a:gain turns secondary resources into new building products. Discarded and surplus materials are treated as an alternative source of raw materials, and design is the tool that makes these resources usable for professional construction. The focus is on creating repeatable products that perform, document, and deliver like any other industrial product.

Design plays a central role in turning raw material sources into defined products that meet industrial requirements. While materials originate from non-virgin sources, the outcome is comparable to traditional construction products with fixed specifications, clear documentation, and predictable performance.

This way of working requires close alignment between design, engineering, and production. a:gain collaborates with manufacturing partners to ensure that products integrate seamlessly into existing industrial setups and construction workflows. Design helps bridge material origin and industrial reality, aligning environmental ambition with regulatory requirements and market expectations.

a:gain's approach shows how design can enable a different way of building without compromising professionalism. By using design to encompass secondary resources, the company demonstrates how remanufactured and recycled materials can become reliable building products at scale.



# Perspective

05

# When imagination meets systems



**Kaave Pour**  
21st Europe & Everyday Technologies

Opinion: Kaave Pour

## How early design decisions shape what takes form.

We often think of stories as intangible and open to interpretation, while systems appear fixed and technical. Stories feel cultural and adaptable. Systems feel physical, enduring, and difficult to change. And yet, most systems begin as stories, shared assumptions about how the world should work, what progress looks like, and what should remain effortless or unseen.

These assumptions travel quietly. Long before anything is built, they shape intent and direction. By the time a system becomes visible, the story behind it has already settled. This is why early decisions matter. When values meet materials and ambition meets production, choices accumulate. Standards form, defaults harden, and what once felt open becomes difficult to change.

I have learned that the most important design work rarely announces itself. It happens before form, before optimisation, before scale. It happens when questions are still open and imagination still has consequences. This is why strategic and industrial design feel particularly relevant now. They are not about adding expression, but about carrying ideas into reality with care.

Across the cases in this publication, design appears not as a final layer, but as a way of thinking that guides decisions across systems, organisations, and value chains. In Danish practice, imagination is closely linked to responsibility. Creativity is carried into implementation, and ambition is measured by what holds over time.

The next era of design will not be shaped by novelty alone. It will be shaped by how well imagination survives implementation, and by which decisions are allowed to become permanent. If systems are stories set in stone, the question is which stories we choose to build next.



# What defines industrial & strategic design today, and how can it drive transformation?

Across industries and societies, design plays an increasingly important role in shaping development, adaptation, and sustainable growth. It delivers measurable value through performance, innovation, and competitiveness, while also influencing culture, behaviour, and long-term resilience in ways that are not always easy to quantify.

This publication highlights how industrial and strategic design operate across strategy, production, and material practice in Denmark. The featured cases show how design informs early decision-making and system thinking, while also taking form through craftsmanship, aesthetics, and industrial execution. In this way, design connects intent with use in real-world conditions.

Together, the cases and chapters offer insight into a design approach grounded in quality, care, and responsibility, with relevance far beyond Denmark.

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